

Waiheke Rangatahi Needs Assessment

July 2024

Report prepared by Point and Associates and the Rangatahi co-design team for the Waiheke Local Board



Contents

Waiheke Rangatahi Needs Assessment.....	1
Executive Summary	3
Research design	3
Key Insights	4
Summary of recommendations	5
Introduction.....	9
Rangatahi co-design team	9
Project approach	9
Research Methodology	10
Defining the research question	10
Mapping and background research	11
Co-design youth needs	11
Waiheke literature scan	15
Survey findings.....	18
Insights.....	21
Co-design team reflections and recommendations	21
Rangatahi Māori	23
Hang-out and recreational places.....	23
Activities and events	26
By rangatahi, for rangatahi	28
High costs of living.....	30
Transport.....	32
Employment pathways	33
Skill building	35
Meeting new people.....	36
Wellbeing.....	37
Community connections	39
Perceptions of wealth.....	40
Working effectively with rangatahi.....	41
Conclusion	43
Appendix One.....	45
Information sheets and consent forms	45
Appendix Two.....	50
Survey questionnaire	50

Executive Summary

This project gives visibility to the wants, needs, and aspirations of rangatahi aged 14-24 on the island. It builds on previous youth projects and research, and was led by a rangatahi co-design team supported by researchers Point and Associates.

The research was guided by a participatory, co-design approach, ensuring that rangatahi were involved in every stage. The rangatahi co-design team was central in shaping the research questions, designing data collection tools, analysis, and developing recommendations.

Research design

The research employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of rangatahi. The methods used included:

Survey: A survey was conducted to gather quantitative data from rangatahi on Waiheke Island. This survey explored their views on various aspects of life, such as available activities, employment opportunities, wellbeing, and engagement in the community. The survey provided valuable insights into the most significant challenges and improvements needed for rangatahi. 212 people filled out the survey, and 134 met the criteria for inclusion in the study.

Focus Groups: Four focus group discussions and interviews were held with 33 rangatahi from diverse backgrounds, including rangatahi Māori and takatāpui/rainbow youth to gather in-depth qualitative data. These focus groups provided a platform for rangatahi to share their experiences, challenges, and aspirations, allowing for a deeper understanding of their issues.

Stakeholder Interviews: Adult stakeholders, including community leaders, service providers, and educators, were interviewed to gain additional perspectives on the opportunities and barriers facing rangatahi on the island. These 23 interviews with 32 stakeholders provided a broader understanding of the community context and the support available for youth.

Co-design Workshops: The rangatahi co-design team workshopped to discuss emerging themes and insights from the data. These workshops allowed for collaborative reflection on the findings and the development of recommendations that were directly informed by the voices of rangatahi.

The community on Waiheke Island has had a long history of involvement in various cultural, sports, creative, and recreational activities. These opportunities have played a crucial role in fostering community wellbeing. However, both rangatahi and adults supporting them have identified gaps where the community and the Waiheke Local Board can improve the range of activities and support available, ensuring that young people have more opportunities to

thrive.

Key Insights

Rangatahi Māori Engagement

Rangatahi Māori have expressed a strong desire for more cultural activities, such as kapa haka and te reo Māori wananga, and for opportunities like forming a Piringakau waka ama team. Issues of racism and a lack of suitable counsellors were also identified as significant barriers to their well-being.

Hang-out and Recreational Spaces

A key gap identified was the lack of hang-out spots and recreational spaces for rangatahi, especially in winter and at night. Most rangatahi seek more accessible and diverse hang-out spots that offer them a sense of autonomy and connection. Currently, in winter, the only indoor option is the library.

Activities and Events

Rangatahi expressed a need for more activities and events, particularly during the evenings. They highlighted the importance of providing creative outlets and varied recreational options.

By Rangatahi, For Rangatahi

There is a strong preference for activities and events that are designed and led by rangatahi. They emphasised the importance of funding and support for youth-driven projects and a more inclusive communication strategy to reach young people effectively.

High Costs of Living

High living costs, lack of affordable food options, and expensive transport were identified as major challenges for rangatahi, limiting their ability to participate in activities and access resources. The cost and limited availability of transport options, particularly for off-island activities, present a significant barrier. The high living costs affect people's ability to volunteer, and this decrease impacts the sustainability of activities.

Employment Pathways and Skill Building

There is also a need for more robust employment pathways and job opportunities that cater to rangatahi interests and provide them with the necessary skills. Rangatahi have highlighted the importance of skill-building opportunities, particularly gaining a driver's license.

Wellbeing and Community Connections

Rangatahi identified Waiheke's natural environment as beneficial for their wellbeing but

expressed concerns over access to mental health support and the prevalence of vaping. Stakeholders noted a need for more resources to support rangatahi, particularly those aged 19-24. Services were not effectively reaching rangatahi, as they were promoted in channels that didn't connect well with them.

Perceptions of Wealth and Funding Challenges

There is a perception that all Waiheke residents are wealthy, which impacts local organisations' ability to access funding. In reality, there are significant disparities in wealth and income.

Working Effectively with Rangatahi

Effective engagement with rangatahi requires building respectful relationships, involving the entire whānau, compensating young people, and empowering them to lead their projects. Culturally relevant approaches like Te Whare Tapa Whā are crucial to ensuring a long-term commitment to youth development.

Summary of recommendations

Partnership and Collaboration

- Evaluate potential partnerships based on their ability to work collaboratively with rangatahi.
- Continue collaborating with the rangatahi co-design team to support and develop new initiatives.
- The co-design team works with the Waiheke Local Board to prioritise immediate and long-term recommendations and identify promising ideas for prototyping.
- Establish a youth network to improve connections among rangatahi, community organisations, and services.
- Foster collaborations across the creative communities and individuals.

Cultural Engagement and Inclusivity

- Provide more opportunities for rangatahi Māori to engage in cultural activities, for Māori, by Māori, such as forming a Piringakau waka ama team.
- Recognise and address the experiences of racism faced by rangatahi Māori. Implement strategies to ensure equity and inclusivity, creating safer and more supportive environments for all rangatahi Māori.
- Support safe spaces for rangatahi Takatāpui and rainbow youth, including creating social support groups hosted by a community organisation.

Spaces and Activities for Rangatahi

- Establish spaces where rangatahi can relax and socialise. These spaces should be flexible and accommodate various activities and needs.
- Improve and expand popular spots like the library and skate park to include more youth-friendly amenities such as comfortable seating, games, and spaces for social interaction and extend their availability into the evening.
- Install lighting in the skatepark to extend its usability into the evening, providing a safe and popular hang-out spot for rangatahi.
- Expand creative activities like sculpting, printmaking, writing, murals, and installations.
- Establish safe and inclusive venues for activities at night, such as cafes and social spaces.
- Organise regular events at night, including music gigs, dance parties, and movie nights.
- Create small, paid roles to coordinate activities.

Rangatahi-Led Initiatives and Empowerment

- Resource rangatahi through funding and partnerships, e.g., local government, businesses, and philanthropists funding youth-led initiatives and projects providing resources.
- Provide mentorship to support rangatahi in creating their activities and spaces.
- Provide small grants or seed funding to support rangatahi in organising their events and activities.
- Involve rangatahi in planning and developing activities and events, ensuring they are relevant and appealing to their peers. Gather feedback to refine and improve offerings.
- Resource an initiative for rangatahi to promote activities, services, and events through relevant social media platforms popular with rangatahi.

Wellbeing and Mental Health

- Re-establish and expand mental health services on Waiheke, including partnering with organisations like the Kari Centre to reduce wait times and ensure access to services.
- Create and share comprehensive information about available health services, costs, and how to access them.
- Provide accessible resources and support for rangatahi who wish to quit vaping or other substance use.
- Continue to support and expand access to nature-based activities, which rangatahi have identified as beneficial for their wairua and wellbeing.
- Conduct regular assessments of mental health and support services to identify gaps and ensure services are meeting the needs of rangatahi.

Access and Affordability

- Develop and support programmes that offer affordable rental properties specifically for rangatahi and low-income families.
- Advocate for discounted public transport for rangatahi, making it more affordable to travel on and off the island.
- Waiheke Local Board to advocate for local restaurants, cafes, and supermarkets to offer discounts and specials for rangatahi.

Employment and Skill Development

- Provide affordable food options like food trucks at rangatahi events and spaces.
- Prototype a cooking club where rangatahi meet regularly to prepare and enjoy meals together, fostering community connection.
- Provide travel subsidies for families and rangatahi to access educational, cultural, and recreational resources in Auckland and beyond.
- Work with local gyms to provide discounted or free memberships for rangatahi and explore installing gym machines and pull-up bars in shared public spaces, such as parks.
- Develop initiatives to create and promote quality job opportunities in diverse sectors.
- Encourage the Waiheke community and businesses to participate in employment pathway/careers day on the island.
- Create a centralised platform or hub where rangatahi can easily access information about available jobs and career pathways.
- Provide more skills-based programmes to support rangatahi to obtain necessary documents such as driver's licences, IRD numbers, and bank accounts.
- Establish mentoring services to guide and support rangatahi, particularly those transitioning from school to work.
- Foster partnerships between established businesses and young entrepreneurs to offer mentorship and guidance, helping them to build and sustain their own ventures.
- Encourage local businesses to actively participate in employment programmes, including offering internships, apprenticeships, and entry-level positions.
- Expand existing programmes to cover the cost of driving lessons in Auckland for rangatahi.
- Explore solutions for transporting cars to Auckland for driving practice, such as community transport arrangements (vans) or partnerships with local businesses.
- Develop partnerships with transport providers to offer discounted or subsidised travel options for rangatahi needing to travel to Auckland for driving practice.

Enhancing Community Connections

- Utilise social media platforms to promote events and services, share stories and build a sense of community among rangatahi.
- Provide regular events and activities specifically for rangatahi to provide structured opportunities for meeting new people.
- Strengthen the role of popular venues like the skate park and Ahi Pao hospitality nights by supporting and organising more frequent and varied events that encourage social interaction.

Responding to Wealth Perceptions

- Create and distribute a detailed profile of Waiheke from the latest census, including income data and cost of living comparisons to the Auckland region, that could be used to educate funders about the island's economic landscape.
- Advocate for including Waiheke Island's socioeconomic challenges in broader funding narratives. Work with local media and stakeholders to challenge stereotypes.

Monitoring and Feedback

- To ensure lasting improvements for Waiheke's rangatahi, the co-design team recommends conducting regular research and feedback to address evolving needs.
- Continuously gather feedback from rangatahi to identify their interests and preferences for new activities.
- Engage with local sports organisations and stakeholders to identify ongoing and emerging needs, ensuring facilities meet requirements.
- Prioritise the resumption of rangatahi services and activities paused due to COVID-19.

Conclusion

This project has provided a comprehensive overview of the needs, aspirations, and challenges faced by rangatahi on Waiheke Island. Through a rangatahi-led, participatory approach, this research has highlighted key areas where support and opportunities can be enhanced, ensuring rangatahi are empowered and able to thrive. The findings emphasise the importance of cultural engagement, accessible spaces, diverse activities, affordable living and transport, employment pathways, and mental health support. Addressing these areas will require ongoing collaboration between rangatahi, the Waiheke Local Board, community organisations, and stakeholders. By centring rangatahi voices and prioritising youth-driven initiatives, the community can create a more inclusive and supportive environment that fosters the wellbeing and growth of Waiheke's young people.

Introduction

In this report, rangatahi and adults working alongside them share insights on how we might improve the quality of life for rangatahi on the island and the opportunities and barriers to meeting the needs of 14-24 year olds.

The Waiheke Local Board commissioned Point and Associates (Point) as researchers to lead this project with rangatahi to give visibility to the wants, needs and aspirations of youth aged 14-24 on the island.

The project continues previous youth projects specific to Waiheke and is being conducted in collaboration with Waiheke Adult Literacy. It aims to provide future-focused insights and recommendations that will be used to advocate for youth, inform future engagement activities, and support youth-centred initiatives.

Rangatahi co-design team

The project was guided by a co-design team of five local rangatahi, including mana whenua and tangata whenua, and spanned ages 15 to 23 years.

The team actively participated in all project phases, including designing research methodologies, engaging with rangatahi through surveys, focus groups and interviews, analysing data and key insights and recommendations, and presenting the findings to the Waiheke Local Board.

Jules Radford-Poupard from Point supported the team, and rangatahi were paid a living wage throughout the project.

Project approach

The approach is built upon the foundations of Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) and co-design methodologies. These methodologies are deeply rooted in the principles of empowerment and active engagement, recognising the immense potential of rangatahi to drive meaningful change in their communities. These approaches put rangatahi into the driver's seat of the research process. They provide the tools and opportunities for young people to identify issues, participate in the design process, collect data and analysis and take a lead role in reporting and advocating for change.

This rangatahi-centred approach revolves around supporting diverse rangatahi on the island to co-create and shed light on issues and solutions that are important to them.

Research Methodology

The project sought to engage diverse rangatahi and adopted a three-part approach to achieve the project objectives.

The project scope was broad, aiming to identify a variety of ways to enhance the quality of life for rangatahi on the island. However, this approach's limitation is a lack of detailed exploration of specific issues.

Defining the research question

Defining a research question is a critical step in the research process. It provides focus and direction and helps inform decisions about what data to collect, how to collect it, and how to analyse it.

The co-design team came together early in the research to define the research question:

"How might we improve life for rangatahi on the island and the opportunities and barriers to meeting the needs of 14-24 year olds?"

To further refine our approach, the team focused on three key elements of the research question: "improve," "life," and "we."

Improve: The design team defined "improve" as seeking to improve the lives of rangatahi by encouraging a focus on changing attitudes and behaviours rather than applying temporary short-term solutions. The goal was to enhance the quality of life for rangatahi over time. To ensure lasting improvements for Waiheke's rangatahi, the team recommends conducting regular research to address evolving needs.

Life: The design team defined "life" in terms of quality of life (QoL), using topics from the Quality of Life survey¹, such as housing, transport, health and wellbeing, safety, community, culture, and economic wellbeing. Additionally, they incorporated wellbeing models like Te Whare Tapa Whā.²

We: The rangatahi co-design team defined "we" in the research question inclusively to encompass members of the Waiheke community, iwi, schools, Piritahi Marae, community organisations, social services, local businesses, philanthropists, medical centres, and churches. This inclusive approach also includes the Waiheke Local Board, Auckland Council, and central government.

The report's recommendations extend beyond the scope of the Waiheke Local Board and encompass findings that may benefit community organisations, Waiheke High School, Piritahi Marae, social services, philanthropists, and local businesses.

¹ <https://www.qualityoflifeproject.govt.nz/about-the-survey/>

² Durie, M. H. (1985). A Māori Perspective of Health. *Social science & medicine*, 20(5), 483-486. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536\(85\)90363-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536(85)90363-6)

Mapping and background research

The data collection in this phase involved interviews with agencies and providers of youth services to map initiatives and activities and identify gaps and challenges related to provision. An adult researcher, supported by the Auckland Council, Waiheke Community Broker, and Waiheke Adult Literacy (WAL), identified key stakeholders actively working with young people on the island. We then used a snowball technique, engaging with initial participants identified by Auckland Council and WAL and asking these participants who else we should engage with.

We aimed to assess services, constraints, and provision gaps through interviewing. In total, 23 interviews were conducted with 32 stakeholders, providing valuable insights for this report. Broadly, the following sectors were canvassed:

- Social services (including violence prevention, addiction, police, and housing services)
- Various sports codes, including rugby, soccer, netball, athletics, and ju jitsu.
- Art, music, dance and creative sectors
- Waiheke High School staff
- Youth organisations
- Piritahi Hau Ora
- Piritahi Marae
- Auckland Council community services
- Philanthropic funders
- Environmental sector

In addition to the interviews, we conducted a desktop review of existing literature and resources to build upon previous work on the island.

Co-design youth needs

Point recruited, trained and supported a diverse team of rangatahi to co-design the research process, gather data and identify important needs of rangatahi.

The Auckland Council, Waiheke High School, and adult stakeholders collaborated to invite young people to join the co-design team through a widely shared flyer. Before joining, potential members met with Point and Associates to discuss the project. The goal was to form a diverse team encompassing a range of ages, ethnicities, mana whenua, and genders to ensure a broad representation of experiences.

Initially, the project was expected to have four co-design sessions. The first session focused on building relationships and creating a code of care. The second was on defining the research question and choosing data collection methods. The third was on making sense of the data, and the final session was on presenting the findings to the local board.

The co-design team's level of participation and leadership exceeded expectations, leading to the co-design team meeting 8 times for co-design sessions between mid-March and August.

Most members also received additional coaching to hone their interview and focus group facilitation skills. The team facilitated all focus groups and interviews and was involved in survey design and promotion.

Survey

Point and the co-design team created the project survey (see Appendix Two) and it was administered via SurveyMonkey. It was tested by 14 rangatahi, who completed the draft survey and provided feedback to the design team. Based on their input, the survey was then adjusted and refined.

The survey was distributed through various channels, including emailing all eligible students at Waiheke High School, by prefects at an assembly, on the Facebook group Waiheke Community Notice Board, and through an Instagram page #RangatahiCo-Design created by the rangatahi co-design team. It was also shared through several community networks, including WAL's mailing list and the Waiheke Local Board e-news. Additionally, posters with a QR code for the survey were placed around the island.

Two hundred twelve people filled out the survey, and 134 met the requirements to be included in the study by fully completing the survey, falling within the target age range, and either they or their families currently living on the island.

Focus groups and interviews

We held four focus groups led by rangatahi and supported by a Point researcher. The groups are:

- Waiheke High School general
- Waiheke High School takatāpui and rainbow
- Piringakau³ Rangatahi Māori
- Waiheke takatāpui and rainbow 19-24 years

We attempted to organise a focus group for older rangatahi who work on the island and/or commute to Auckland for work or tertiary studies. However, scheduling conflicts prevented this, so we opted to conduct interviews instead. Similarly, we conducted interviews with high school students who were either commuting to school in Auckland or attending boarding schools off-island. In total, we engaged with 33 rangatahi. For clarity of reading, all quotes have been attributed to focus groups, whether from rangatahi focus groups or interviews.

Project code of care

The co-design team developed a set of principles to guide their work together and with rangatahi participants. They also agreed to support each other by regularly checking in and did this by using the group chat. If they experienced distress, they connected with someone

³ Piringakau, meaning "close to the heart", is the name for the Māori department, kapa haka group, and Māori students and whānau at Waiheke High School.

in the group or the project lead. The co-design team decided to aim to make decisions by consensus and committed to taking time to gather more knowledge when needed.

Manaakitanga – We care for people, showing hospitality and generosity, and work to make people feel safe.

Kotahitanga – We are all connected to each other and our tūpuna. We are a team committed to our rangatahi and wider communities.

Whanaungatanga – We build connections and work together for the benefit of all people.

Mana Motuhake – We uphold the self-determination and autonomy of rangatahi. We prioritise and elevate rangatahi needs.

Te Tiriti – We recognise Te Tiriti within our mahi and educate ourselves and rangatahi about Te Tiriti. We understand and recognise Ngāti Pāoa rangatahi as mana whenua and the roles of tangata whenua and tangata tiriti in the project.

Data analysis

All focus groups and interviews were transcribed, and the data was de-identified. Point conducted the initial coding of the focus groups and interview data using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006)⁴. Point also analysed the survey data.

The information was compiled into a data pack for the co-design team. The co-design team then had two sense-making sessions with Point to group similar codes into overarching themes, identify significant patterns, review these themes to ensure they accurately reflect the data, and draft recommendations.

Consent

Three invitations were sent out for potential participants to join the project. The first invitation was for rangatahi to join the co-design team, the second for rangatahi to participate in a focus group or interview, and the third for stakeholders who work with rangatahi (see Appendix One). Rangatahi, aged 14 and 15, participated in focus groups with the consent of their parents or carers.

Limitations

The quantitative data (survey) we collected may not represent the entire rangatahi population on Waiheke Island. The project needed around 250 completed survey responses to achieve this. In addition, most survey respondents were female (62%), and three-quarters were 14-18.

⁴ Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3:2, 77-101.
<https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>

We supplemented the survey data with interviews and focus groups to address lower numbers of specific populations in the survey, such as rangatahi schooling in Auckland. Males made up at least half of all focus groups.

Waiheke literature scan

Over the past 15 years, research programmes and hui have been facilitated to engage on topics affecting rangatahi on the island. This included a large-scale study in 2009 and more recent research into activating spaces such as the library and a youth centre, improving rangatahi mental health and supporting Waiheke High School with an alcohol and other drugs policy and processes.

The most significant study was done in 2009 by AUT researchers Jackson and Willcox.⁵ They conducted a comprehensive needs assessment to explore the leisure activities of young people aged 12-24 living on Waiheke Island to determine if participation in organised leisure activities is associated with engagement in antisocial behaviour. The study involved surveys and focus groups with 211 young people, parents, and community organisations. The survey, based on Youth2000 and Youth 2007 national surveys, covered participation in organised sports, arts, music, cultural and social clubs, and views on living on Waiheke Island, including engagement in both antisocial and prosocial activities.

The findings revealed that 56% of respondents felt there was nothing to do in their area, with this sentiment increasing with age and being more pronounced among rangatahi Māori. Despite high levels of community cohesiveness (86% felt they belonged all or some of the time), major concerns included the lack of activities, high living costs, isolation, lack of shops and nightlife, and negative perceptions from outsiders.

Participation rates in organised activities varied: 35% in social, cultural, music, or arts (higher in females but decreasing with age), 47% in off-island clubs, and 67% in organised sports (majority male, with 46% off-island). Participation in anti-social behaviour was high, especially for dangerous driving; for example, one-third of respondents had been driven in a car by someone who had been drinking or driving dangerously. Drug use was also high at 46% of all respondents.

Barriers to youth engagement included not knowing where to voice their opinions, not being asked for their input, shyness, and being perceived as too young to contribute.

The assessment recommended employing a youth coordinator, providing dedicated funds for youth activities, creating a youth hangout space, raising parental awareness, sharing positive youth stories, changing community attitudes towards youth, and increasing participation in organised activities, especially for females. It also suggested enhancing the availability of cultural, music, and dance activities, offering positive Te Ao Māori experiences, and developing Waiheke-based solutions for alternative education needs.

The review highlighted the common issues faced by rural youth, such as boredom, lack of high-quality leisure activities, transport options, and places to hang out, along with other

⁵ Jackson, N., and Wilcox, S. (2009). *Young People on Waiheke Island, Leisure Behaviour and Perceptions of Living on the Island*. Auckland, AUT University.

concerns like the absence of shops, gossip, and marginalisation. Key factors impacting youth wellbeing included reliance on volunteers and the importance of belonging, connectedness, and the natural environment. Popular activities among respondents included sports, Ostend markets, and socialising with friends.

The Piritahi Hau Ora Trust conducted extensive work on youth suicide on Waiheke Island in 2013. The report revealed several key findings: youth are highly engaged in supporting each other around sensitive issues like suicide when they are empowered to do so. The RAID movement, a kaupapa embraced by the rangatahi on the island, was particularly well-received. Additionally, celebrating rangatahi is as crucial as suicide training and awareness. The report emphasized that service providers should support rangatahi in developing their own methods for suicide prevention.

In response to an identified need for a dedicated youth centre, the Waiheke Youth Centre Trust (WYCT) embarked on a project to develop Surfdale Hall as a youth space. At that time, WYCT was supported by a Waiheke Youth Network, which also included Waiheke Youth Voice, Waiheke High School, Piritahi Hau Ora and youth-focused organisations such as the Waiheke Youth Music Trust. Youth aged 10 to 24 years made up 14% of the Waiheke population. In 2018, the Waiheke Local Board granted a new community lease to WYCT and approved a community outcomes plan aimed at creating a safe, sustainable community facility focused on youth-centred initiatives. The project began engaging rangatahi to generate ideas. Some initial successes were achieved, such as the main hall being used for youth activities, workshops, and family group conferences. Unfortunately, the youth hub project faced several challenges, including the impacts of COVID-19, difficulties accessing additional funding, lack of capacity, prioritising the needs of vulnerable rangatahi, and the discontinuation of the Waiheke Youth Network and some other local youth organisations. Since 2022, WYCT has continued to offer an after-school programme at The Rock while managing Surfdale Hall as a venue for hire by the wider community for meetings, workshops, and private events.

Community Action Youth and Drugs (CAYAD) is an initiative that collaborates with the community to reduce the harm caused by alcohol and other drug (AOD) among rangatahi. In 2020 and 2021, CAYAD worked with Waiheke High School to establish policies and procedures related to AOD. In 2023, Piritahi, CAYAD, Waiheke High School and parents and caregivers came together and committed to implementing a Whole School Approach called [Tūturu](#). This approach was designed to enhance the support provided to all students by schools and health services. While originally focused on alcohol and other drugs the approach has now expanded to address various aspects of young people's health.

Unfortunately, there is limited Census 2023 data available apart from some basic age statistics. In the Census 2023⁶, there were 420 rangatahi aged 15-19 and 321 aged 20-24,

⁶ Data supplied by the Waiheke Local Board.

compared to 402 (15-19 years) and 357 (20-24 years) in 2018.

The report does not include information on how the findings relate to *I Am Auckland—the Children and Young People’s Strategic Action Plan*. This plan is currently under review and being developed into a new Thriving Rangatahi Strategy, which will sit under the Ngā Hāpori Momoho/Thriving Communities Strategy.

Survey findings

In the first section of the survey, questions 1-5, relate to demographic information. An overview of the demographic characteristics of the survey respondents is provided below.

Age: The majority of respondents, 74% of the total sample, fell within the 14-18 year age range.

Ethnicity: The overall sample identified with a range of ethnic identities: 58% identified as New Zealander/Pākehā, 38% as European, 24% as Māori, 4% Asian, 1% Pacific, and 1% other.

Gender: Most respondents identified as female (62%), male (28%), and trans and non-binary (7%).

The following table outlines the answers to what respondents are currently doing, e.g., working on the island, attending Waiheke High School, etc. Respondents were asked to select all categories that applied to them.

Most survey respondents attend Waiheke High School and almost half of all respondents have a job on the island. Of the 82 respondents who attend Waiheke High School, 37 also have a job on the island.

Question.5: <i>Please tick as many boxes that apply to you for what you are CURRENTLY doing.</i>	%	Number
Attending high school on the island	61%	82
Have a job on Waiheke	46%	61
Tertiary studies commuting to Auckland or elsewhere	14%	19
Not studying or employed at the moment	6%	8
Attending high school in Auckland or elsewhere	4%	5
Attending alternative education or home-schooling	3%	4
Tertiary studies on island or online	1%	2
I am a parent/carers	1%	1
Doing an apprenticeship	1%	1
Have a job commuting off-island	1%	0
Other	6%	8

Biggest improvements

Question 6 of the survey asked respondents to select the *five things that would improve life on the island for you and other young people*. The options for improvements and challenges (question 7) were determined based on previous research findings, topic areas related to the quality of life research, input from the rangatahi co-design team and testing with 14 rangatahi to ensure the categories were comprehensive and relevant.

Below is the frequency table for this question. The top five improvements, highlighted in blue, are significantly larger, while the bottom six, highlighted in red, are significantly lower improvements for those surveyed. Significance in this context refers to the results being unlikely to have occurred by chance or random factor.

Of note, while more cultural activities is 16% (n=22) of the base, it is statistically significantly more important for Māori at 47%.

Question.6: <i>What are the top FIVE things that would improve life on the island for you and other young people?</i>	%	Number
1. More hangout spaces	63%	85
2. Activities at night (e.g., dancing, café)	57%	77
3. Expanded job opportunities	46%	62
4. Affordable transport options	44%	59
5. Skill-building workshops (e.g., first aid, driver's licence)	41%	56
6. More music, art & creative activities	32%	43
7. More outdoor & exercise activities	26%	35
8. More sports options (including casual sports)	26%	35
9. More clubs (e.g., book club, run club)	19%	25
10. Family and community-friendly activities	18%	24
11. Youth Centre	16%	22
12. More cultural activities (e.g., kapa haka, waka ama etc)	16%	22
13. Youth involvement in decision-making	15%	20
14. More spiritual activities	1%	2

Biggest challenges

Question 7 of the survey asked respondents to select the *five biggest challenges for themselves and other young people on the island*. Below is the frequency table for this question. The top five challenges, highlighted in blue, are significantly larger, while the bottom six, highlighted in red, are significantly lower challenges for those surveyed. Significance in this context refers to the results being unlikely to have occurred by chance or random factor.

58% of respondents chose limited hangout spots/recreational places as the most frequent challenge, and this was significantly more important for the 14-16 age group, at 77%. Also of note, while limited recreational opportunities is 15% of the base, they were significantly more important for 19-24 year olds, at 32%.

Question.7: <i>What are the top FIVE biggest challenges for you and other young people on the island?</i>	%	Number
1. Limited hangout spots/recreational places	58%	78
2. High cost of living	53%	72
3. Difficulty travelling off the island	47%	64
4. Lack of job opportunities	47%	64
5. Absence of nightlife	47%	64
6. Opportunities to meet new people	32%	43
7. Lack of retail shops	30%	41
8. Lack of transport options	25%	34
9. High costs for sports and creative activities	22%	30
10. Insufficient mental health and wellbeing services	19%	26
11. Issues with drugs and alcohol	17%	23
12. Limited recreational opportunities	15%	20
13. Inadequate health services	9%	12
14. Few leadership opportunities	7%	9
15. Concerns about safety	4%	5

Insights

Many dedicated individuals on Waiheke Island have worked tirelessly over the years to help rangatahi thrive through sports, arts, culture, music, and creative opportunities, activities, and spaces. While there is so much to be proud of in terms of rangatahi engagement and the availability of activities and spaces on the island, both rangatahi and the adults supporting them have identified specific areas where the community and the local board can enhance experiences and improve wellbeing outcomes for youth.

A set of recommendations is provided after each section. These recommendations were developed by Point and the rangatahi co-design team. They are intended for a broad audience, not just the Waiheke Local Board. They may be useful for community, social services, philanthropists and commercial opportunities.

Co-design team reflections and recommendations

Here, the rangatahi co-design team shares their motivations for participating in this project and emphasises its importance. They highlight their experiences growing up on Waiheke, the community's unique challenges and strengths, and their desire to ensure that future generations have better support and opportunities. They have also put forth several recommendations they have identified as important to address the needs of Waiheke youth.



You grow up on Waiheke, and there are really good and bad things; it's been an experience not being a white person and being a little neurodivergent. I see the best and worst of the island. I have a deep love of where we live and the people around me. Growing up with these irreplaceable people, the Waiheke community is beautiful. I'm part of this so our voices are heard, and we're not forgotten just because we're young. We are the future, and our opinions are important. We nurture our youth, look after ourselves, and look out for everyone.

Co-design member



I've grown up here with people who have spent a lot of time on Waiheke. I fall into the demographic that hasn't left the island for university, so I've spent time here as a young person out of high school. I've seen what could be improved for people my age and younger. I want to help in ways I could have been helped and for the next generation of Waiheke rangatahi to have more support, more entertainment and more opportunities for connection than I did.

Co-design member



I think for some things, it doesn't feel like a choice; it needs to be done. That's why I felt inclined to do this mahi—there are so many gaps in representation. If we fill those gaps, the next generation won't have to deal with the same issues we have. Having seen this with myself, my whānau, and friends, it's about ensuring voices are heard. At the end of the day, the most important thing is the people. It's like the harakeke bush: grandparents, parents on the outside, and in the middle, the babies who need nurturing. This allows for a safe and nurturing environment for growth, free from barriers. The barriers now won't be there for rangatahi of the future.

Co-design member



When I heard about this project, I knew it was something I wanted to be part of. I work in a role closely related to how rangatahi are represented and included in the community, and I am also rangatahi myself. With a background in psychology, I have always wanted to make a change for people. Living on Waiheke for four years, I noticed gaps in how rangatahi are represented and catered for. This project allowed me to explore and confirm if these gaps were a universal experience for rangatahi on the island. The narrative for rangatahi has often been somewhat negative, and our needs seem to come second, third, or not at all. It was important to me to be a voice so our needs can be heard and met, and to contribute to change not just for now but for future generations.

Co-design member



Recommendation:

- To ensure lasting improvements for Waiheke's rangatahi, the co-design team recommends conducting regular research and feedback to address evolving needs.
- The co-design team works with the Waiheke Local Board to prioritise immediate and long-term recommendations and identify promising ideas for prototyping.
- Regularly host rangatahi events at the Artworks complex utilising the library, WAL, theatre, cinema, and other venues to provide diverse evening events and activities.
- The Waiheke Local Board partners with the rangatahi co-design team, to organise a community event for presenting the research findings, insights and recommendations to key stakeholders.

Rangatahi Māori

Rangatahi Māori need more opportunities to engage in cultural activities.

The rangatahi Māori focus group shared that they would like more opportunities to participate in kapa haka and te reo Māori wananga at school and on the marae. They also expressed a desire to have a Piringakau waka ama team. While more cultural activities were 16% (n=22) of the survey base, they are statistically significantly more important for Māori at 47% for improving life on the island.

Focus group participants said they faced obstacles to their taha hinengaro and tinana wellbeing due to racism, a shortage of suitable (younger and Māori) counsellors, and a lack of places to hang out. Additionally, many focus group participants did not see a future for themselves on the island due to high living costs or a desire to explore life beyond the island.



Recommendations:

- Provide more opportunities for rangatahi Māori to engage in cultural activities, for Māori, by Māori such as forming a Piringakau waka ama team.
- Recognise and address the experiences of racism faced by rangatahi Māori. Implement strategies to ensure equity and inclusivity, creating safer and more supportive environments for all rangatahi Māori.

Hang-out and recreational places

A significant gap is the lack of hang-out spots and recreational places for rangatahi, especially during winter and at night.

In the survey, 63% of rangatahi chose more hang-out spaces as the most needed improvement to the island. This was also identified as the biggest challenge (58%). Limited hang-out spots were significantly important for the 14-16 age group, with 77% expressing the need for more spaces to hang out.

Hang-out spaces, as defined in academic literature⁷ are places where rangatahi can gather and socialise with limited or no adult supervision. In urban areas, shopping malls and other commercial spaces that are considered safe have become important hang-out spots. Skateparks are also popular as hang-out locations.

⁷ Play and Recreation, Health and Wellbeing (2020) <http://ndl.ethernet.edu.et/bitstream/123456789/15054/1/252.pdf#page=214>

In the focus groups, rangatahi identified several hang-out spots on the island, including the library, the skate park, outside Countdown and Jerry's (Onetangi Four Square), the Ostend Pizzeria, and the beaches during summer. Potential hang-out spots like recreation centres and sports parks were also mentioned, but they have specific focuses and were often busy. It was highlighted that there is a lack of social spaces in winter, with the library being the only indoor option. Some focus group members expressed a desire for more "third spaces," which are communal spaces between work/school and home.

Popular suggested amenities were an arcade, a pool hall, and a bowling alley.

"I would love for there to be a space/centre that is directed more for teens that allows a bigger hangout area that might involve more affordable shopping stores."

Survey respondent

You can do stuff here [Waiheke] but it's more like casual hangouts you can't really go like shopping or something like that. That is why we go to Auckland".

Focus group respondent

"Spaces just for youth - I know the library has one, but you can't be loud in it, so there is no place to hang out where you can be yourself".

Focus group respondent

"Nothing really to do except use drugs and alcohol because there are no other activities like in Auckland unless it's summer, there are no indoor spaces".

Focus group respondent

Survey responses indicated that a youth centre was the third least favoured option for improving life on the island, receiving only 16% of respondent's support. The focus group feedback was varied; some high school students liked the idea of a space with fun activities like foosball tables, while others preferred to improve on and expand existing youth-friendly activity spaces, using the skate park as an example.

"Other than the library and Rock, which serves a certain group that really loves that space, there is nowhere else".

Adult stakeholder

"Want something to make it less boring, near Countdown area. some where the buses go, near the skatepark".

Survey respondent

"We mismatch a lot of resources into physical spaces to create the places for connection when it is the activity that creates connection".

Adult stakeholder

Takatāpui and rainbow focus group members were concerned that having a single youth centre could potentially be exclusionary to them.

Some stakeholders also observed that Waiheke doesn't have dedicated space and activities for the diversity of our young people. e.g., takatāpui and rainbow young people.

*"There is a large LGBTQIA+ community on the island.
Some of them know each other, and others are reticent to engage.
Don't necessarily have supportive parents, and there is bullying.
We need key people to be those connectors and drivers. Find the people".*

Adult stakeholder

*"Skatepark used to be cool because I used to skate, and then I started actually talking to the people at the skate park, and then I didn't want to go anymore.
The skatepark has one friend group that are – I don't want to generalise – but not so friendly to minority people as in some racist and homophobic kids so it easily becomes quite an isolating area. It's fun if you catch it on a good day when it's empty".*

Focus group member



Recommendations:

- Establish spaces where rangatahi can relax and socialise. These spaces should be flexible and accommodate various activities and needs.
- Improve and expand popular spots like the library and skate park to include more youth-friendly amenities such as comfortable seating, games, and spaces for social interaction and extend their availability into the evening.
- Support safe spaces for rangatahi takatāpui and rainbow youth, including creating social support groups hosted by a community organisation.

Activities and events

Rangatahi told us there were too few things to do on the island, and they wanted more activities, especially at night.

In the survey the second most frequent choice to improve life on the island was the introduction of activities available at night e.g., dancing, cafe (57%). The absence of nightlife was rated as the third most frequent challenge on the island with 47% of respondents acknowledging it. Further investigation is needed to determine the specific types of activities.

Some previous evening activities, including music events, have faced challenges in finding appropriate venues where rangatahi felt comfortable without infringing on the enjoyment of older attendees. Similarly, noise constraints have led to previously successful evening events being discontinued at the Rock.

The topic of activities was popular in the focus groups, and it's worth noting that the lack of activities was more significant for 19-24 year olds compared to 14-18 year olds. Current popular activities on the island include sports, visiting the beach or pool, skating, basketball, hiking/walking, sailing, op shopping, biking, going to the movies, visiting the library, and travelling to Auckland for activities and shopping with friends. Previous thriving activities that rangatahi and stakeholders mentioned were the library photography club, Piritahi Hau Ora short film competition and various music events.

The skatepark received widespread accolades as a success story among survey respondents, focus group participants, and adult stakeholders. Many people expressed a desire for the skatepark to be equipped with lighting to extend its usage, especially in the winter.

"I think a lot of the issues with drugs and alcohol for young people on Waiheke are directly linked to the lack of recreational activities available, specifically free and all times activities. I know the amount of drinking and casual drug use pulled back massively among my friends when the skate park reopened and we began spending more time there, we had something to do other than sit around and get f'd up."

Survey respondent

"Need lights at the skate park - people [are] driving their car with headlights (including parents) to light up the skate park".

Adult stakeholder

Focus group participants suggested ideas for new or improved activities. These ideas included more events, community sports teams, an enhanced cinema experience, vibrant nightlife (including a gay bar), a driving range, art workshops, a bigger pump track, and more bike trails.

Stakeholders said there appear to be more sports opportunities than music, art and creative activities for rangatahi. According to the survey, rangatahi rated music, arts and creative activities at 32% for improving life on the island, which was higher than the desire for more sports club options, including casual sports, e.g. basketball, at 26%. Additionally, several stakeholders said rangatahi under 14 were better catered to than those over 14.

"There is a massive gap for youth. They go into town to do stuff, and there is not much on the island to do if they are not involved in sports. They are bored."

Adult stakeholder

"Artworks Precinct could broaden into a cultural outlet. How can we all come together and build that for youth?"

Adult stakeholder

Stakeholders also observed the impact from the number of students who school in Auckland to access sporting opportunities. This leads to a decrease in the number of rangatahi participating in sports clubs and other activities based on the island.

"A lot of people choose to go to High School in town, and our numbers get quite a bit smaller. We do our best for the kids who stay".

Adult stakeholder sports organisation

"One of the big reasons families choose to go to town is often sporting reasons. Have an exodus of sporting families".

Adult stakeholder

Sporting organisations have identified physical barriers to the growth and development of certain sports due to poor field conditions, insufficient lighting for multiple codes sharing pitches, and a lack of female changing rooms.

COVID-19 has had a lingering impact on activities and events on the island, with some services and activities yet to resume.



Recommendations:

- Resource rangatahi through funding and partnerships, e.g., local government, businesses and philanthropists funding youth-led initiatives and projects providing resources.
- Provide mentorship to support rangatahi in creating their activities and spaces.
- Expand creative activities like sculpting, printmaking, writing, murals, and installations.
- Expand outdoor activities like bike trails, a bigger pump track catering to rangatahi, and a driving range to offer more diverse recreational opportunities.
- Establish safe and inclusive venues for activities at night, such as cafes and social spaces.
- Organise regular events at night, including music gigs, dance parties, and movie nights.
- Install lighting in the skatepark to extend its usability into the evening, providing a safe and popular hang-out spot for rangatahi.
- Continuously gather feedback from rangatahi to identify their interests and preferences for new activities.
- Engage with local sports organisations and stakeholders to identify ongoing and emerging needs, ensuring facilities meet requirements.
- Prioritise the resumption of rangatahi services and activities paused due to COVID-19.

By rangatahi, for rangatahi

Rangatahi want activities and events developed and designed by rangatahi for rangatahi, with the support of adults when needed.

Many of the rangatahi in focus groups said that current activities needed to be more appealing to them as they were more suitable for an older audience. When we asked about what care and connection look like on the island, focus groups emphasised the need for activities and events specifically funded for rangatahi.

"I don't think they (Waiheke community) don't care, we just don't see they care. Not just saying they are doing something, doing it with us, rather than for us".

Focus group participant

"Have some sort of nightlife, something that has events semi-regularly for young people. A lot of concerts are targeted at older people".

Focus group participant

Rangatahi expressed their desire to know what was available on the island, and adult stakeholders also shared concerns that rangatahi were unaware of available services. Many activities, events, and services were promoted in places that did not effectively reach rangatahi, such as community pages on Facebook.

"Hard to contact people our age, FB community pages, only reason I am on that is because my Mum is, I am not actually active on it".

Focus group participant

"Social media for young people - is there something for young people to use? e.g., contact number for Friends of the Street, I need this this, jump on and find out. Asked did you guys see this? It was all over Facebook, and they don't connect to any of those Facebook things. Why? Cause our parents are on there".

Adult stakeholder

" Have small seed funding for youth do get things started, do a small event, really easy to access. If we want things for our young people they need to be the ones to activate it. We need to empower them to create what they need. One of the only ways for that to happen is support and money".

Adult stakeholder.



Recommendations:

- Resource an initiative for rangatahi to promote activities, services and events through relevant social media platforms popular with rangatahi.
- Provide small grants or seed funding to support rangatahi in organising their own events and activities.
- Involve rangatahi in planning and developing activities and events, ensuring they are relevant and appealing to their peers. Gather feedback to refine and improve offerings.
- Make sure events and activities are inclusive, safe and accessible to all rangatahi.

High costs of living

High living costs are negatively impacting the lives of young people.

Half of all survey respondents rated high living costs as one of the biggest challenges for them and other young people living on the island. Many focus group rangatahi mentioned the lack of affordable food available on the island and the difficulties in finding affordable rental properties. Most focus group rangatahi over eighteen told us they lived with their parents or relatives because they could not afford to live independently. Almost 50% of Waiheke High School survey respondents currently had jobs on the island.

Most adult stakeholders also talked about the rising cost of living, which is leading to families struggling to make ends meet. They observed that families are experiencing food insecurity and moving housing frequently. As a result, they saw people working more to support themselves, and some young people were leaving school to work and help their families.

Additionally, focus group rangatahi found it challenging to engage in island activities due to the high ticket prices for events, and many mentioned a need for more affordable gym memberships. Almost a quarter of survey respondents chose high costs for sports and creative activities as one of their five biggest challenges on the island, and this was also observed by adult stakeholders who observed high costs made it difficult for families to access sports, cultural activities and other necessary social services. Some of these activities and services were located in Auckland, and the travel expenses were too high for many families to afford.

"A lot of behavioural problems because parents are fighting about the cost of living, financial stress and [X] lessons for \$2.50 - cheapest lessons on the planet - and families just can't get the dollars".

Adult stakeholder

"Kids are isolated on the island - especially parents that can't afford to take their kids off-island. Cultural experiences, etc, things that broaden kids' minds, it's really hard to access them".

Adult stakeholder

Sponsorship and funding are crucial in enabling rangatahi to participate in activities. Stakeholders shared local sources of sponsorship and funding, which were available through the Waiheke Local Board, Spirit of Waiheke, Youth Development Trust, Rotary and SeaLink (for sports teams). Additionally, several businesses on the island support sports teams and social services.

"Funding for tuition classes, a chance to do something otherwise wouldn't be able to".

Adult stakeholder

"Rugby club have sponsorship with SeaLink, no travel costs, otherwise quite a few wouldn't play".

Adult stakeholder

"We need to look at sponsors and philanthropists for funding. Have so many ideas and linking up the three schools and clubs - at least a full-time job".

Adult stakeholder

Most stakeholders have voiced concerns over a decrease in volunteers, which may affect the sustainability of their activities without community support. They attributed the decline in volunteering to people being unable to commit time because of work commitments. Several stakeholders proposed remuneration for individuals in certain roles and ensuring that volunteers are reimbursed for transportation costs when accompanying teams off-island.

" Prices on the island have gone really really up, rent is super expensive, supermarket, petrol to pay the bills is challenging and to donate time ([during] work time hours around 3 pm) that is when you keep on working, donating that time and losing money to pay bills is a game-changer". Adult Stakeholder



Recommendations:

- Provide affordable food options like food trucks at rangatahi events and spaces.
- Prototype a cooking club where rangatahi meet regularly to prepare and enjoy meals together, fostering community connection.
- Offer affordable recreation activities, including sports and cultural events. Promote the Spirit of Waiheke Trust.
- Create small, paid roles to coordinate activities.
- Provide travel subsidies for families and rangatahi to access educational, cultural and recreational resources in Auckland and beyond.
- Work with local gyms to provide discounted or free memberships for rangatahi and explore installing gym machines and pull-up bars in shared public spaces, such as parks.

- Develop and support programmes that offer affordable rental properties specifically for rangatahi and low-income families.
- Waiheke Local Board to advocate for local restaurants, cafes and supermarkets to offer discounts and specials for rangatahi.

Transport

High transport costs and lack of transport options have created significant challenges for rangatahi.

Almost half of the survey respondents (46%) said affordable transport options would improve their and their friend's lives on the island. This was particularly relevant, as rangatahi wanted to participate in activities off-island. Many rangatahi in the focus groups told us they could not afford to leave the island. Some rangatahi suggested the use of electric ferries which could lower costs and have a reduced environmental impact.

"Improvements around easing the financial burden of commuting on and off the island every day - better student discounts?"

Survey respondent

"I have friends that would love to visit, but it's a challenge financially when ferry prices are >\$50 return."

Survey respondent

"Ferries so expensive, you have to figure in the price of the activity you want to do as well as the boat price".

Focus group participant

Some focus group members also mentioned that bus services did not reach their residences, which restricted their mobility, and others were restricted from going out at night because of bus and ferry timetables.

Adult stakeholders also told us that transport expenses were a significant barrier to rangatahi participating in activities. Many sports teams incurred extra transport costs for games held off-island.

Several adult stakeholders highlighted the need for more frequent buses that reach all island areas. Navigating the roads was deemed hazardous due to inadequate lighting and parked cars, making walking and cycling unsafe. Where a bus provided convenient access to an activity with a nearby bus stop, stakeholders said it resolved transportation challenges for attendees.

"Bus routes do not necessarily get youth to where they want to go".

Adult stakeholder

A late-night driving service called Friends of the Street, available for high school students aged 14 and above, was highly appreciated as it was free and the drivers were friendly. Many rangatahi aged 18 and above expressed a desire for similar services, as the cost of taxis, their only transport option late at night, was beyond their reach.

"Drink driving on the island is terrible, Friends of the Street was really good but only available to High School. Taxis are expensive and the buses don't run late or to the whole island".

Focus group participant



Recommendations:

- Advocate for discounted public transport for rangatahi, making it more affordable to travel on and off the island.
- Increase the coverage of bus services and extend services to accommodate late-night travel.
- Develop dedicated bike lanes to encourage cycling as a viable and safe transport option.

Employment pathways

Better employment pathways and increased job opportunities are needed for rangatahi on the island.

Expanded job opportunities were the third most frequent improvement that survey respondents wanted to make to life on the island for themselves and their friends. Focus group participants also pointed out the limited quality of employment options.

After leaving school, rangatahi found limited employment prospects on the island. Tertiary students mentioned, *"it feels as though you need to work at least part time all year round, if not full time, to stay level financially"*. They also noted a lack of training and opportunities for management roles, as well as a lack of available work over winter or very short shifts.

"I feel as though we are not always valued in our workplaces, because we are young people, and that kinda sucks".

Focus group participant

"I work at [hospitality], basically no shifts during the winter,

one or two, or really short shifts".

Focus group participant

Also, a wider range of job opportunities would be massively beneficial - even just knowing what jobs there are on offer would be helpful, as it's often hard to know where to apply when seeking employment."

Survey respondent

Adult stakeholders have emphasised the need for more robust pathways and employment opportunities for rangatahi, especially in industries like hospitality. Better guidance and support are needed to help rangatahi determine their next steps after finishing school. Waiheke students require improved access to open days and career expos in Auckland, as they are currently inaccessible due to transport costs. Waiheke Adult Learning (WAL) supports building apprentices, which is a significant industry on the island. They also offer driving lessons and first aid certificate training.

However, many stakeholders have identified a gap in mentoring services for rangatahi on the island. Other organisations, in addition to WAL, are interested in creating employment pathways, such as in environmental work. Additionally, stakeholders have identified other barriers to obtaining employment, including obtaining a driver's licence, IRD number, and bank account.

"In the age bracket coming out of school, nothing for them to do, not into sports, the drugs are quite full on - on the island, and they get sucked into their vortex with nothing to do but party and hang with my mates".

Adult stakeholder

"Huge gap when young people have left school, if they have a pathway hallelujah, if not, you are on your own, you figure it out, asking for help can be hard, building relationships, providing opportunities".

Adult stakeholder

"Young people like having somewhere to come and get support (apprenticeships), act as a mentor and sounding board and talk with their peers, and it's not at the pub".

Adult stakeholder



Recommendations:

- Advocate for discounted public transport for rangatahi, making it more affordable to travel on and off the island.
- Increase the coverage of bus services and extend services to accommodate late-night travel.
- Develop dedicated bike lanes to encourage cycling as a viable and safe transport option.
-

Skill building

Skill building, especially gaining a driver's licence, was important to rangatahi.

41% of survey respondents said skill building, e.g., first aid and driver's licence, would improve life on the island for them and their friends. Gaining a driver's licence was a common topic of discussion in focus groups and was frequently raised by stakeholders. The main obstacles identified were the expenses associated with travelling to Auckland to gain experience on the motorway. Many rangatahi shared their struggles with passing the driving test due to a lack of this specific experience.

"When I sat my restricted it was the second time I ever drove in Auckland because it is so expensive to bring a car over to Auckland and all the lessons were booked out with AA. Impossible to get my licence".

Focus group participant

"Driver's licence is a huge issue on the island; often, first-time youth drive on the motorway or at 100km/hr is when they are sitting their tests and often causes test failures. The added cost of doing lessons in town is very expensive".

Adult stakeholder



Recommendations:

- Expand existing programmes to cover the cost of driving lessons in Auckland for rangatahi.

- Explore solutions for transporting cars to Auckland for driving practice, such as community transport arrangements (vans) or partnerships with local businesses.
- Develop partnerships with transport providers to offer discounted or subsidised travel options for rangatahi needing to travel to Auckland for driving practice.

Meeting new people

Rangatahi want ways to meet new people, but opportunities are limited post-school on the island.

Rangatahi who grew up on the island and school on Waiheke talked about feeling very connected to other rangatahi, which had both positive and negative aspects. On the other hand, rangatahi who moved to the island after finishing school found it more difficult to meet new people outside of their jobs. During focus group discussions, participants mentioned that activities such as sports teams, Ahi Pao hospitality nights, and the skate park provided opportunities to meet new people. Overall, they said there needed to be more places and amenities to create opportunities for meaningful connections. A few focus group members mentioned that they learned about events through local newspapers, which helped them feel connected to the island's communities.

"Ahi Pao hospo nights were cool. Good place to meet new people, hard to meet new people on the island especially when you are out of school".

Focus group participant

"Only way to make friends is job or school, no other way to meet people".

Focus group participant

"Only time I literally met new people from the skatepark, one activity that is free on the island and you share a similar interest".

Focus group participant

Rangatahi who travel to Auckland and beyond for schooling and boarding shared that this can create a social barrier for them due to a lack of free time. They also mentioned that ferry travel times can be challenging for participating in social events, sports, and accessing health care since most services close at 5 p.m. They noted that many social events and activities were facilitated by Waiheke High School students or geared towards middle-aged adults.

"One of the reasons I started boarding was playing sports after school, you didn't have to do a massive commute it was just right there".

Interview participant

"Really hard to get to sports practice, get home at 5.30pm and wouldn't make or arrive half way through".

Interview participant

"It's definitely a long commute. X is my only friend on the island. I don't really have any friends outside of people on the boat".

Interview participant



Recommendations:

- Utilise social media platforms to promote events and services, share stories and build a sense of community among rangatahi.
- Provide regular events and activities specifically for rangatahi to provide structured opportunities for meeting new people.
- Strengthen the role of popular venues like the skate park and Ahi Pao hospitality nights by supporting and organising more frequent and varied events that encourage social interaction.

Wellbeing

Rangatahi identified factors that supported and hindered their wellbeing.

Many rangatahi talked about how Waiheke's natural environment nourished their wairua and wellbeing. They mentioned the easy access to bush walks and the proximity to beaches. Rangatahi who participated in the survey rated safety as a minor challenge on the island. Safety concerns were raised in the focus groups when rangatahi experienced racism, homophobia and transphobia.

Rangatahi experienced difficulties in accessing mental health support, especially after leaving school, and faced long waits to access specialist care in Auckland (Kari and Taylor centres), which significantly impacted their wellbeing. Vaping was also discussed as a concern, and some participants felt better that better approaches were needed to support cessation.

"Wairua and that type of thing it's probably better on the island than in the city. You are more connected to nature than just being around cars". **Focus group participant**

"Vaping an issue and at school, but literally telling kids not to do it who are addicted to nicotine won't work". **Focus group participant**

"Lack of info about counselling and mental health support systems when you are out of school". Focus group participant

"We are broke, and we have fun, but out of necessity, because there is nothing else we can do, if there were more accessible activities like working out and also better mental health support I think it would be a different island because it's accessible to young people who are having trouble with the island". Focus group participant.

Stakeholders have observed a rise in mental health distress and illness among rangatahi on the island. They have also seen a decrease in available services and a general lack of partner agencies to support rangatahi. The strain on existing services is leaving families in distress and in need of support. The Kari Centre has not provided a regular service on the island since the COVID-19 pandemic, creating a significant gap in timely mental health services. Lengthy waiting times are further delaying support. While community organisations like Piritahi Hau Ora, Waiheke Health Trust and Reach Out provide support, there is a critical need for more resources to support rangatahi mental health, especially those aged 19-24. Another issue also noted by several stakeholders was the high number of young people vaping.

"Kari Centre doesn't have a presence on the island - pre-Covid, used to come and do a day and see young people, that went out the window with Covid and hasn't come back, it's like a 2-3 month referral, and we have a lot of referrals going to them". Adult Stakeholder

"Big issue for parents at the moment is vaping". Adult Stakeholder

"In Auckland City there is a wide range of partner agencies for getting right supports in place for young people, which is very important. Who can address their needs like Driver's licence, mentoring, drug and alcohol addiction, family counselling, youth gym programmes? There are limited partner agencies on the island and many must travel to Waiheke or young people and family travelling off-island" Adult Stakeholder



Recommendations:

- Re-establish and expand mental health services on Waiheke, including partnering with organisations like the Kari Centre to reduce wait times and ensure access to services.
- Create and share comprehensive information about available health services, costs and how to access them.
- Provide accessible resources and support for rangatahi who wish to quit vaping or other substance use.
- Continue to support and expand access to nature-based activities, which rangatahi have identified as beneficial for their wairua and wellbeing.
- Conduct regular assessments of mental health and support services to identify gaps and ensure services are meeting the needs of rangatahi.

Community connections

Community connections play an important role in community and youth development.

Stakeholders found that building meaningful relationships with the high school and other organisations and sectors significantly enhanced community and youth engagement, support and growth. Small paid roles that connected with the high school and other schools boosted parent involvement and increased sports registrations. Additionally, coverage from the Gulf News reporting on community and sports activities also generated positive publicity.

Waiheke High School has established connections with many sports clubs, often facilitated by personal relationships with teachers. However, many stakeholders noted how stretched teachers currently are with their responsibilities, making it hard to commit to extra-curricular activities.

There was enthusiasm from stakeholders for a youth network and better connections among the creative communities and individuals.

Existing networks (e.g., Community Network Waiheke and Waiheke Collective, among others) are working very effectively. However, relationships with Ngāti Paoa need to be strengthened to develop Māori-led services.

"Teachers are getting more and more stretched with what we are required to do at school, struggling to get teachers to commit to after school and

weekends". Adult Stakeholder

*"Need to connect the dots, need easier ways of connecting all creative people".
Adult Stakeholder*



Recommendations:

- Establish a youth network to improve connections among rangatahi, community organisations and services.
- Foster collaborations across the creative communities and individuals.

Perceptions of wealth

Perceptions of wealth are impacting some organisations' ability to get funding.

There is a common perception that everyone living on Waiheke Island is wealthy. In reality, the island has large disparities in wealth and income. At the 2018 census, the median household income of \$69,600 for Waiheke was significantly lower than in the Auckland region (\$93,900).⁸

"We don't get a lot of funding from [Sporting Organisation]. I heard that we don't get funded is because the perception is the island is full of rich people - rich island full of millionaires".

Adult Stakeholder



Recommendation:

- Create and distribute a detailed profile of Waiheke from the latest census, including income data and cost of living comparisons to the Auckland region, that could be used to educate funders about the island's economic landscape.
- Advocate for including Waiheke Islands' socioeconomic challenges in broader funding narratives. Work with local media and stakeholders to challenge stereotypes.

⁸ Tātaki Auckland Unlimited Report. *Waiheke Local Economic Overview 2022*. <https://knowledgeauckland.org.nz/media/2677/waiheke-local-economic-overview-t%C4%81taki-auckland-unlimited-2022.pdf>

Working effectively with rangatahi

Insights from stakeholders share critical ingredients for working effectively with youth.

The stakeholders who participated in the project bring extensive knowledge and wisdom of working alongside rangatahi. We have incorporated these insights to ensure effective engagement with rangatahi. This approach emphasises the importance of relationship building and cultural sensitivity, as well as the need for practical support and long-term commitment. Most importantly, the initiatives and events that have the most successful are those driven by rangatahi.

- **Whanaungatanga.** Building trusting and respectful relationships and connections through whanaungatanga. Ensure that the “right” people support rangatahi, those who are representative of and resonate with rangatahi.
- **Work with the entire whānau whenever possible.** Involving the entire whanau enhances support and connectivity.
- **Compensate young people.** When young people contribute to developing and leading activities in sports, arts, and culture, remunerate them for their involvement.
- **Empower rangatahi to drive their projects.** Provide funding and mentoring opportunities for rangatahi to develop their projects, activities and events. Offer support where needed, such as with funding applications and health and safety matters.
- **Engage young people in established groups and spaces.** Connect with rangatahi in their existing environments to foster a sense of belonging and comfort.
- **Protect the confidentiality of young people’s information.** This is crucial for rangatahi, who may have many inter-connections on the island.
- **Use holistic models like Te Whare Tapa Whā.** These models enable a culturally relevant, comprehensive approach to wellbeing.
- **Be mindful of the busyness of young people’s lives.** Recognise and respect how much we are asking of them to avoid overburdening.
- **Make long-term commitments.** Rather than focusing on short-term projects alone, demonstrate a long-term commitment to the well-being and development of rangatahi.
- **Accessibility.** Ensure that activities and opportunities are accessible to all rangatahi by considering factors such as location, transportation, and financial barriers.

**Recommendation:**

- Evaluate potential partnerships based on their ability to work collaboratively with rangatahi.
- Continue collaborating with the rangatahi co-design team to support and develop new initiatives.

Conclusion

The insights derived from the rangatahi survey, focus groups, and key stakeholders working with rangatahi on the island sheds light on the needs and opportunities for improving the quality of life for rangatahi.

Some similarities and differences from previous studies stand out. In the 2009⁹ report, 56% of respondents felt there was nothing to do, a sentiment still prevalent today. Both reports emphasise the need for more cultural activities for rangatahi Māori and highlight a lack of activities, high costs of living, and a lack of nightlife. The 2009 study included concerns about antisocial behaviour and drug use, which have not featured as prominently in this study. This report emphasises the need for accessible mental health support.

At the heart of this project is the need for hang-out and recreational spaces, particularly during the winter months and at night. While existing facilities like the skatepark are popular, there is a strong call for additional versatile spaces where rangatahi can socialise, hang out and participate in meaningful activities. This is especially important due to the limited options for activities at night and the high costs associated with many current activities, which restrict participation and engagement.

The high cost of living on the island compounds these challenges, with many rangatahi, their families, and whānau struggling to afford basic needs such as food and housing.

Rangatahi need job opportunities and expanded career pathways to support their economic independence and career development. Skill-building programmes were identified as necessary, especially support for obtaining driver's licences.

The issue of transportation also emerged as a significant barrier. Many rangatahi face difficulties accessing activities and services due to high transport costs and limited options.

A lack of affordable and engaging activities for rangatahi has created a void, and rangatahi have highlighted the need for more dynamic, youth-centred events and activities, ideally developed by and for rangatahi with the support of adults when required. There is also a need for increased visibility and accessibility of existing services, as many rangatahi were unaware of what is available due to promotions not reaching them.

Mental health support is another critical area of concern, and the impact of COVID-19 has left gaps in mental health services. Rangatahi, particularly those aged 19-24, are experiencing mental health distress and require more immediate and accessible support.

Community connections are vital for youth development, and stakeholders found that building meaningful relationships with Waiheke High School and other organisations significantly enhanced youth engagement, support and growth. Small paid roles could increase the provision and coordination of activities. Stakeholders were enthusiastic about a

⁹ Jackson, N., and Wilcox, S. (2009). *Young People on Waiheke Island, Leisure Behaviour and Perceptions of Living on the Island*. Auckland, AUT University.

youth network and better connections within the creative communities.

By focusing on these key areas and leveraging the collective efforts of the island's communities, Waiheke can create a more inclusive and supportive environment that fosters the growth and wellbeing of rangatahi.

Appendix One

Information sheets and consent forms

Waiheke Youth Research: Invitation to join a co-design team.

The Waiheke Local Board, in collaboration with Point and Associates (www.point.co.nz) is embarking on a youth-focused project to understand the needs, wants, and aspirations of rangatahi aged 14-24 on Waiheke Island. The project uses a co-design approach – this means we are designing and doing the project with rangatahi.

The project aims to understand what could enhance the quality of life for youth on the island.

Point and Associates will recruit and support a paid youth co-design team to guide the research. Point with guidance from the co-design team, will create a user-friendly resource with key findings and insights to inform future advocacy and youth engagement activities and guide funding decisions.

The opportunity

Point and Associates will recruit a dynamic, paid (living wage @ \$26.00 + holiday pay) youth co-design team to actively contribute to every project phase. The role will include,

- Designing research methodologies
- Engaging with rangatahi to understand their experiences and perspectives
- Analysing data and identifying key insights

The co-design team's collective efforts alongside Point and Associates will identify key insights, findings, and recommendations for the Waiheke Local Board.

The commitment

There will be four paid design sessions, each lasting approximately 2 hours. Additionally, co-design members can help gather stories and experiences from rangatahi. This might be doing interviews, intercept surveys or other ways of gathering feedback that the co-design group decides on.

Support

You will receive guidance and support from Jules (she/her) of Point and Associates. Jules lives in Ōmiha, is passionate about the project and is available to talk in more detail and answer any questions. P 021 989 745; E Julie@point.co.nz

You can also connect with Fiona Gregory [from Auckland Council at fiona.gregory@aucklandcouncil.co.nz](mailto:fiona.gregory@aucklandcouncil.co.nz) and Jo Nuttal [from Waiheke Adult Learning at jo@wal.org.nz](mailto:jo@wal.org.nz).

Thanks for considering being part of this initiative!

Waiheke Youth Research: Invitation to join a focus group or interview.

Kia ora!

The Waiheke Local Board, Point and Associates (www.point.co.nz), and a Waiheke rangatahi co-design team are conducting a project to understand the **needs, wants, and aspirations of rangatahi aged 14-24 on Waiheke Island**. The project aims to understand what could enhance the quality of life for youth on the island.

What will happen in the focus group/interview?

You are invited to **share your thoughts and experiences** about enhancing the quality of life on the island for young people. The focus group will last **45-60 minutes** and will be facilitated by someone from the rangatahi co-design team. If you are participating in an interview, it will take about 20 minutes.

As a thank you for participating in a focus group/interview, we will provide **kai and give you a \$30.00 Gift Pay voucher**.

Your thoughts and experiences will help the local board and Waiheke community with future advocacy and youth activities and guide Local Board funding decisions.

If you are aged 14 or 15 we also require your parent/carer's consent which is near the end of the consent form on the next page.

Your rights

- We will ask your **permission to record** the focus groups/interview in the consent form. We wish to record the focus group/interview to record what you share accurately.
- We may also **take notes**.
- If you do not want anything recorded, you can ask for the recording or note-taking to be **stopped at any time** during the focus group/interview.
- **Voluntary Participation:** Taking part in this focus group/interview is entirely voluntary. You can choose to participate or stop at any time.
- **Withdrawal:** If you decide to leave the research, we will remove all your contributions until mid-July. Even if you stop participating in the focus group/interview, you'll receive the full koha.
- **Confidentiality:** Anything you share remains confidential. We won't disclose your name or any identifying information. Quotes used in the report won't link back to you.
- **Secure Storage:** All information, including audio, is securely stored in our cloud-based system

Support

We care about your safety. If you share something concerning or worrying, you will receive guidance and support from Jules (she/her) of Point and Associates.

Consent Form

Below is a consent form for your review. If you have any queries or concerns, please contact Jules at 021 989 745 or julie@point.co.nz.

You can also talk with Fiona Gregory from the Auckland Council for more information. Please email

fiona.gregory@aucklandcouncil.co.nz and Jo Nuttall from Waiheke Adult Learning, please email jo@wal.org.nz

Please tick to indicate you consent to the following.

I understand that taking part in this research is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from it at any time without disadvantage. Until late mid-July, any direct quotes can be removed if I withdraw from it.	☐
--	--------------------------

I understand that my participation in the focus group/interview is anonymous and that nothing I share that could identify me personally will be used.	☐
---	--------------------------

I know who to contact if I have any questions about the research.	☐
---	--------------------------

I consent to the focus group/interview being audio recorded and having notes taken.	☐
---	--------------------------

I consent to being part of the research.	☐
--	--------------------------

Consent by participant:

I give consent to take part in the focus group/interview.

Participant's preferred name:

Signature:

Date:

Consent by parent/carer: (needed for participants aged 14-15)

I give consent for _____ [name] to take part in the focus group.

Parent/carer name:

Signature:

Date:

Waiheke Youth Engagement Research: Invitation to Participate

The Waiheke Local Board have contracted Jules Radford-Poupard from Point and Associates (www.point.co.nz) for a research project focused on understanding the needs, wants, and aspirations of rangatahi on Waiheke Island.

The primary goal of the research is to understand what could enhance the quality of life for youth on the island.

Point will be supporting a paid youth co-design team to undertake the research. Point will create a user-friendly resource with key findings and insights to inform future advocacy and youth engagement activities and guide funding decisions.

Your involvement

As someone who has actively worked alongside young people on the island, we believe your insights are important and valuable.

We want to interview you about your experiences. The conversation will take about half an hour and can be face-to-face or online at a time and place that suits you.

What are your rights?

What you share is anonymous. You will not share your name or anything that may identify you. We may share quotes, but we won't identify you and we will get your permission before publishing the report.

All information, including notes, is kept in our secure cloud-based storage.

You can stop being part of the research at any time. If you change your mind about being involved, we can remove your contributions up until the report is finalised in late May 2024. Please contact Jules if you no longer want to be part of the research.

Consent Form

Below is a consent form for your review. If you have any queries or concerns, please get in touch with Jules at 021 989 745 or julie@point.co.nz.

For more information, you can also talk with Fiona Gregory from the Auckland Council, please email fiona.gregory@aucklandcouncil.co.nz and Jo Nuttall from Waiheke Adult Learning, please email jo@wal.org.nz

Thank you for considering participation in this important initiative.

Interview Consent Form

Please tick to indicate you consent to the following.

I understand that taking part in this research is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the research at any time without disadvantage. Until late May 2024 any direct quotes can be removed if I withdraw from the research.



I understand that my participation in the interview is anonymous and that nothing I share that could identify me personally, will be used.	☐
--	--------------------------

I know who to contact if I have any questions about the research.	☐
---	--------------------------

I consent to the interview being audio recorded, and having notes taken.	☐
--	--------------------------

I consent to being part of the research.	☐
--	--------------------------

Consent by participant:

I give consent to take part in the interview and research.

Participant's preferred name:

Signature:

Date:

Declaration by member of research team:

I have given a verbal explanation of the research project to the participant and have answered the participant's questions about it.

I believe that the participant understands the study and has given informed consent to participate.

Researcher's name:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix Two

Survey questionnaire

Improving life on Waiheke Youth Survey

Kia ora,

Are you aged between 14 and 24? We want to hear from you! The local board is keen on positively impacting young people on the island, and we want to know what matters to you.

A team of young researchers is gathering your opinions to help shape future funding and advocacy efforts.

Your voice counts. By taking a few minutes to complete the survey, you are shaping your future and your community's.

Curious about the research? Feel free to reach out to Jules, our lead researcher, at 021 989 745 or julie@point.co.nz.

Thank you for making your voice heard!

Ngā mihi nui,

The Point and Associates Team

1. Do you or your family CURRENTLY live on Waiheke Island?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Improving life on Waiheke Youth Survey

2. What is your age?

☐ 14-16

☐ 17-18

☐ 19-20

☐ 21-22

☐ 23-24

☐ Another age

3. What is your ethnicity? e.g., Māori, Pākehā/European

4. What is your gender?

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Trans
- ☐ Non-binary
- ☐ Prefer not to say Another gender (please state)

5. Please tick as many boxes that apply to you for what you are CURRENTLY doing.

- ☐ Attending high school on the island
- ☐ Attending high school in Auckland or elsewhere
- ☐ Attending alternative education or home-schooling
- ☐ Doing an apprenticeship
- ☐ Have a job commuting off-island
- ☐ Have a job on Waiheke
- ☐ Tertiary studies commuting to Auckland or elsewhere
- ☐ Tertiary studies on island or online
- ☐ Not studying or employed at the moment I am a parent/carer
- ☐ Other (please specify)

* 6. What are the top five thing that would improve life on the island for you and other young people?

- ☐ More sport club options (including casual sports e.g., basketball)
- ☐ More music, art & creative activities
- ☐ More cultural activities (e.g., kapa haka, waka ama etc)
- ☐ More outdoor and exercise activities
- ☐ Skill-building workshops (e.g., first aid, driver's licence)
- ☐ Affordable transport options
- ☐ Expanded job opportunities
- ☐ More spiritual activities
- ☐ Activities at night (e.g., dancing, cafe)
- ☐ Youth centre
- ☐ Youth involvement in decision-making & leadership
- ☐ More clubs (e.g., book club, run club)
- ☐ More hang-out spaces
- ☐ Family and community-friendly activities

* 7. What are the top FIVE biggest challenges for you and other young people on the island?

- ☐ Lack of transport options
- ☐ Difficulty travelling off the island
- ☐ Limited hangout spots/recreational places

- ☐ Inadequate health services
- ☐ Insufficient mental health and wellbeing services
- ☐ Few leadership opportunities
- ☐ Lack of job opportunities
- ☐ High costs for sports and creative activities
- ☐ Limited recreational opportunities
- ☐ Lack of retail shops
- ☐ Absence of nightlife
- ☐ High cost of living
- ☐ Issues with drugs and alcohol
- ☐ Concerns about safety
- ☐ Opportunities to meet new people.

8. Thank you for taking the survey! Feel free to use this space to share any experiences or thoughts that could improve or remove barriers to improve life on the island.

9. If you would like to go into the draw to win one of five \$50.00 Prezzy Cards please share your contact details.

Name	
Email Address	
Phone Number	

10. We will also be doing some focus groups to hear more about people's experiences living on the island. If you want to be involved please leave your contact details.

Name	
Email Address	
Phone Number	