

Mako Mama - Mangopare Single Parents Project

Final Report

Contents

Introduction	4
Background & methodology	6
Environmental scan of research and policy	6
Project Gender online survey research	6
Project Gender focus groups	12
Ngāti Kahungunu insights	12
Stakeholder hui insights.....	13
How report recommendations were generated	13
How this report is structured	14
Areas of impact identified for urgent action	16
1. Celebrate Us.....	17
2. Support Us.....	18
3. Respect our Mana	19
Eight key action areas	20
Key action area #1: Improve attitudes towards single parents and reduce the stigma they experience in all areas of their lives	21
Summary of solutions for Key Action Area #1	21
Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 research results relating to Key Action Area #1.....	22
Key action area #2: Provide an easy way for single parents to access information about what support is available to them	26
Summary of solutions for Key Action Area #2	26
Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 research results relating to Key Action Area #2.....	26
Key action area #3: Improve access to basic rights/needs for single parents	30
Summary of solutions for Key Action Area #3	30
Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 research results relating to Key Action Area #3.....	31
Key action area #4: Improve access to paid work for single parents	42
Summary of solutions relating to Key Action Area #4.....	42
Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 research results relating to Key Action Area #4.....	43
Key action area #5: Call for changes in government policy that will positively impact single parents	49
Summary of solutions relating to Key Action Area #5.....	49
Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 research results relating to Key Action #5.....	50
Key action area #6: Support single parents to receive the protection that financial services offer ...	53
Summary of solutions for Key Action Area #6	53
Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 research results relating to Key Action Area #6.....	53

Key action area #7: Support to manage home and family life.....	57
Summary of solutions for Key Action Area #7	57
Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 research results relating to Key Action Area #7.....	57
Key action area #8: Work to protect, rather than investigate, single parents who reach out for help	59
Summary of solutions for Key Action Area #8	59
Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 research results relating to Key Action Area #8	60
Full set of stakeholder opportunities & solutions.....	61
Appendix 1.....	67
References	78

Introduction

Tēnā koutou katoa,

On behalf of Project Gender and Ngāti Kahungunu, we are thrilled to present the final report for Mako Mama - Mangopare, the Single Parents Project. This work has been commissioned and funded by the Peter McKenzie Project: we tautoko their dedication and determination to achieve meaningful systemic change and we thank them for their faith in our mahi. Their support has enabled us to amplify the voices of single parents across Aotearoa and we thank them for this.

Mā whero, mā pango ka oti ai te mahi.
(With red and black the work will be complete).

Mako Mama - Mangopare has been over a year in the making: in 2021, the Peter McKenzie Project approached Project Gender with the concept of a piece of work that would lead to actionable outcomes to achieve equity for single parents. Informed by new, primary research and significant stakeholder consultation, we committed to providing evidence-based recommendations on how to best proceed towards developing a strategic framework for change that is feasible and fit-for-purpose.

This report is the culmination of the past nine months of work. In that time, we have:

- Completed an Environmental Scan, reviewing relevant policy and secondary literature.
- Conducted the Single Parents Online survey (since named the Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 online survey), with a targeted social media campaign and the support of all stakeholders. The campaign reached over 400K people. 3,545 survey responses were received (the initial target was 1,500 responses).
- Profiled the project on Breakfast TV, as a result of the survey campaign.
- Held seven focus groups with single parents across the motu, including via Zoom.
- Developed a partnership with Ngāti Kahungunu in the Hawke's Bay.
- In partnership with Ngāti Kahungunu, held a stakeholder hui with 35 attendees on the 22nd September 2022 in Wellington; attendees included a mix of Members of Parliament, policy-makers, private sector representatives, and those with lived experience of the system.
- Held an additional 10 1:1 hui with sector stakeholders.
- Received guidance and recommendations from a Project Advisory Group, which has supported the project team throughout the year with insights and recommendations.

Project Gender and Ngāti Kahungunu have worked in partnership on this project. Our objectives were to ensure the experiences and voices of whānau Māori were iwi-led and followed the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The name Mako Mama – Mangopare was gifted by Ngāti Kahungunu elder Ngahiwi Tomoana and represents the fierce love female Mako sharks have for their young and the protection the Mangopare (Hammerhead shark) provides for the school. This sentiment is representative of the many single parents we heard from during the course of the Mako Mama – Mangopare project and is the central theme of our report and our subsequent solutions and recommendations.

(To view Chrissie Hape, CE of Ngāti Kahungunu speaking to the naming of the project, visit <https://www.makomamamangopare.nz/>).

We have structured this report to be actionable and consumable: as will be immediately apparent, the evidence and factual basis is both broad *and* deep in nature. However, our intention is for this to be a living document that truly supports change (our worst fear is that it lives on a shelf). We begin with context, scene-setting and our methodology, and then present three top impact areas that we have identified for urgent action. We then shift into evidence-building and present eight 'Key Action Areas'. Our research findings, insights and a summary of recommended

solutions relevant for each action area are presented in each of these eight sections, after which we present our full set of recommendations in a final section.

Additionally, we have created a standalone website, in order to 'house' some of the audio-visual components of the report. Some of the stories and insights shared that have shaped this mahi are most authentic in their original presentation. Our hope is that, in time, there is an opportunity to build this repository of information. Please visit www.makomamamangopare.nz to view.

Many people have supported Mako Mama - Mangopare. As well as the generous support of the Peter McKenzie Project, we would like to specifically acknowledge the following people and organisations who made this project possible:

- The Project Advisory Group. Particularly as we framed up the engagement process and scope of this mahi, This group was invaluable in testing, supporting and advising this work. Special thanks to **Tui Te Hau, Deborah Mackenzie, Penny Henderson, Josie Glasson, Jean Hera and Leanne Inder.**
- Thank you to everyone who attended and participated in the Stakeholder Hui and the subsequent 1:1 hui: Members of Parliament, policy-makers and analysts, academics, representatives from the private sector, community advocates and more. We have been honoured by your generosity of time and energy to look at how we can best create change.
- We would like to thank Ngāti Kahungunu for joining us in partnership. Your manākitanga and genuine enthusiasm for Mako Mama - Mangopare has been an absolute gift to this mahi and we cannot wait to work with you on the next steps. Ngā mihi maioha.
- To our team & everyone who worked on this incredible piece of mahi: thank you. Your commitment, dedication and care has been present throughout the project and we thank you for your expert analysis, research, coordination and – most importantly – your determination to see this Mako Mama – Mangopare create real and meaningful change. To everyone who contributed – thank you.
- Finally - to the more than 3,500 single parents who supported this project by sharing their insights, frustrations and suggestions for change. We hear you. We know that you know - more than anyone - what needs to change. We thank you for trusting us with your stories and we are committed to taking your voices forward. **He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tangata he tangata he tangata!** (*What is the most important thing in the world? It is people, it is people, it is people!*). Ngā mihi nui; kia ora rawa atu. We hope that we've done you proud.

This is the beginning for Mako Mama - Mangopare: we invite you to join us to create meaningful change for whānau in Aotearoa.

Ngā mihi nui,
Project Gender & Ngāti Kahungunu

Tania Domett
Angela Meyer
Erin Jackson
Dr. Jennie Coker
Chrissie Hape
Melanie Humphries

Background & methodology

In December 2021, Project Gender were approached by the Peter McKenzie Project with an opportunity to work together towards enhancing equity for single parents in Aotearoa. As a first step, the Peter McKenzie Project required exploratory work to be carried out with relevant sector stakeholders that involved identifying interest in, and opportunities for, a long-term and collective approach to bringing about systemic change.

We already knew, based on Statistics New Zealand data and multiple studies carried out by academics, policy institutes and government agencies, that in Aotearoa single parents and their children experience deprivation and other forms of disadvantage and that the system is dysfunctional. The most significant of these reports was the 2019 Welfare Expert Advisory Group (WEAG) Report on the state of the social security system in Aotearoa New Zealand: *Whakamana Tāngata: Restoring Dignity to Social Security in New Zealand*, which found that the “current welfare system is no longer fit for purpose and needs fundamental change”. However, despite WEAG making 42 clear recommendations, these had not yet been acted on in any substantive way.

Project Gender’s response to the Peter McKenzie Project was to design a project that would ultimately deliver a sector-led strategic framework for action, but at the same time would centre the voices of single parents as key experts providing evidence on where change needs to happen the most. In our view, it was critical to find out first from single parents themselves: how they interact with the system e.g. government agencies, service providers, landlords, schools; in what ways the system supports them/does not support them, and (especially); what their ideas for system change are. The Peter McKenzie Project agreed and the large-scale primary research carried out by Project Gender has enabled us to present an up-to-date picture for 2022 of how the single parents system operates across a range of different demographic and psychographic groups in Aotearoa, and most importantly to deliver robust evidence and recommendations of where and in what ways and how change needs to occur.

Environmental scan of research and policy

As a first step, Project Gender carried out an environmental scan of recent research and policy relevant for single parent whānau in Aotearoa. The purpose of the scan was to initiate the Project Gender team on the current landscape and ecosystem navigated by single parents, which would in turn:

1. Support our survey and focus group design
2. Provide context for our research results where relevant
3. Inform our engagement with sector stakeholders

The literature scan was structured by the four key search areas:

1. Existing, relevant New Zealand legislation and policy that is targeted towards single parent households i.e. what is the current landscape and ecosystem navigated by single parents?
2. Existing, relevant New Zealand academic literature and government reports (e.g. Families Commission) that explore the status of single parent households.
3. A scan of any prior initiatives and interventions carried out by New Zealand NGOs and other civil society actors that have been directed at enhancing equity for single parents i.e. what has happened before and how successful was it?
4. A global scan of comparative countries’ government policy settings and civil society activity to better understand the scope of what may be possible and potentially successful in the New Zealand context.

Project Gender online survey research

Project Gender designed and built an online survey in advanced survey software Alchemer, with support and input from a group of single parents who provided advice on question design and language.

The online survey was live for 6.5 weeks and a prize draw for one of three \$250 Prezzy cards was offered to all respondents who completed the survey. The survey was launched with a targeted social media campaign and the

support of all stakeholders. In addition to the online campaign, a strategic PR campaign was implemented. The online campaign reached over 400K people across social media (primarily on Facebook and Instagram), while the PR campaign's highlight was an interview on Breakfast TV which supported the promotion of the survey.

3,545 survey responses were received (the initial target was 1,500 responses). We received an overwhelming response from single parents who finally felt 'heard' (*"My heart... God it's wonderful to feel heard... I'm crying."*).

Research shows that while many single parent families fare well, a disproportionate number experience high levels of disadvantage, both in absolute terms, and when compared to other family types (Ministry of Social Development 2021). We therefore did not look to achieve a sample representative of all single parents, but instead gave a safe space for the single parents not currently experiencing positive equitable outcomes, to share their experiences and their ideas on what needs to change. The survey was designed and distributed in a way to best support the function of providing stakeholders with insights from the voices of those who need change the most.

We received complete online survey responses from a total of 3,548 single parents living in New Zealand. Respondents qualified for the survey if they selected all of the following:

- "I live in New Zealand"
- "I do not currently live with a partner/spouse"
- "I have a child/children under 18 years of age who live(s) with me at least half of the time and who is/are financially dependent on me"

Women/Wāhine make up 96% of our survey sample, Men/Tāne 3% and Non-binary people 1%¹. 12% of our sample are under 30 years old, 42% are aged 30 – 39, 36% are 40 – 49 years and 9% are aged 50 years or more (see Figure 1).

As shown in Figure 2, 27% of our sample are NZ Māori, 77% NZ European/Pākehā, 7% Pasifika, 8% Other European, 2% Asian and 3% other ethnicities. 26% currently live in the Auckland region, 14% in Canterbury, 12% in the Wellington region, 10% in the Waikato and 38% are from the remaining New Zealand regions, with 82% living in urban locations (see Figure 3).

¹ "Women/Wāhine" includes all respondents who selected "Female" and not "Non-binary" (regardless of any other selection). "Men/Tāne" includes all respondents who selected "Male" and not "Non-binary" (regardless of any other selection). "Non-binary" includes all respondents who selected "Non-binary", and respondents who selected "Genderqueer", "Gender-fluid", "intersex", "transgender", "takatāpui" or "Don't know/Questioning/Unsure" but did not select "Male" or "Female".

Figure 1: Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 Online Survey sample by grouped gender and age (n=3,544 and 3,408 respectively)

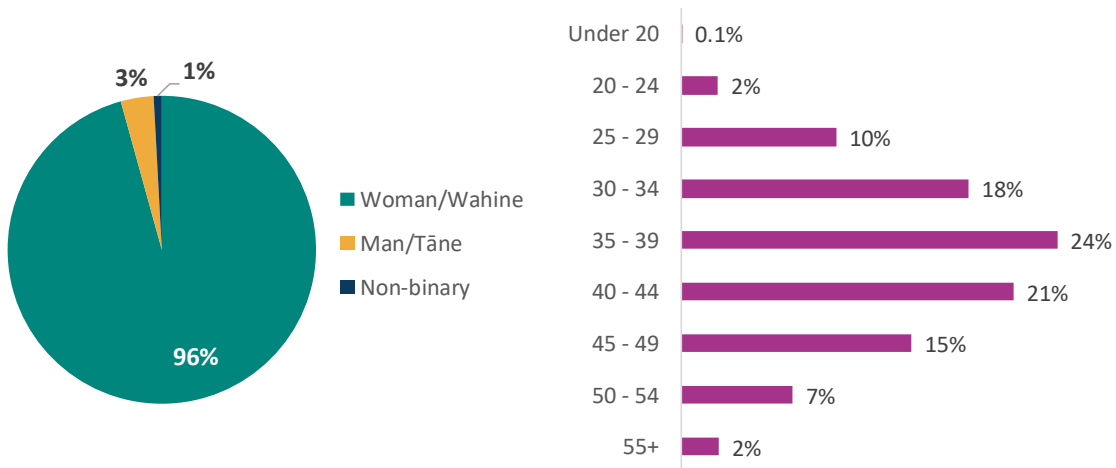


Figure 2: Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 Online Survey sample by ethnicity (grouped where <2%) (n=3,544)

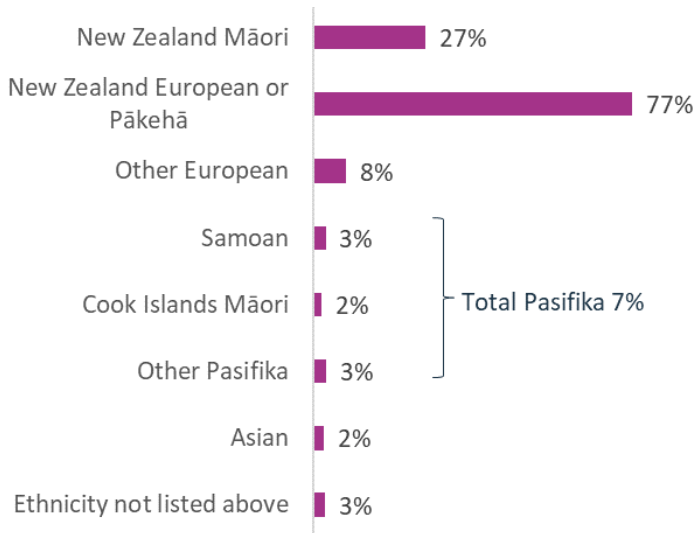
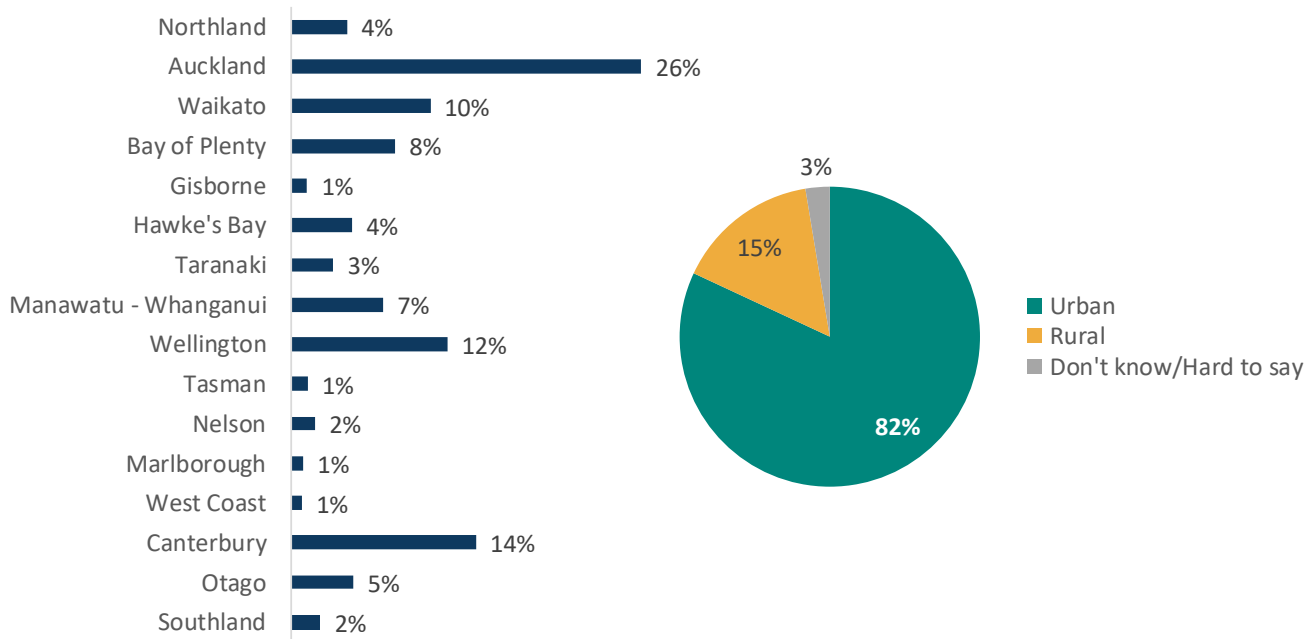


Figure 3: Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 Online Survey sample by region (n=3,543)



87% of our sample are heterosexual or straight, 8% bisexual, and 5% are lesbian, gay, pansexual, asexual, or use another term to describe their sexuality. In terms of current relationship status, 63% are single, 33% are separated or divorced, 3% are widowed, 7% have a boyfriend/girlfriend that they do not live with, and 2% have a partner/spouse that they do not live with.

32% have children under 5 years, 44% have children aged between 5 and 13 years, and 30% have children aged between 14 and 18 years (see Figure 4). 23% have been a single parent for less than 3 years, 30% for 3 – 5 years, 18% for 6 – 8 years, and 28% for 9 or more years (see Figure 5).

Figure 4: Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 Online Survey sample by age of children (n=3,531)

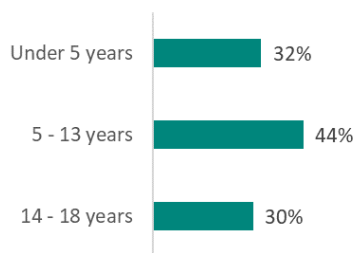
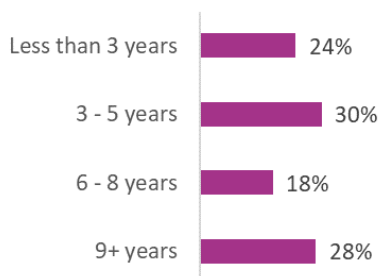
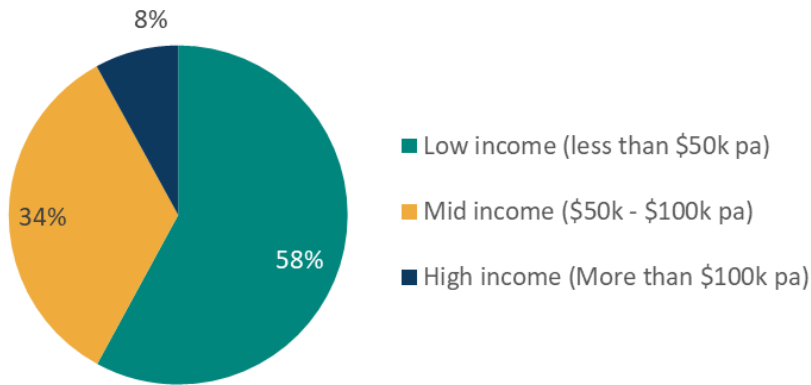


Figure 5: Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 Online Survey sample by years as a single parent (n=3,523)



As shown in Figure 6, 58% of our sample reported an annual personal income before tax of less than \$50,000 NZ and were coded as “Low income”, 34% an income of \$50,000 to \$100,000 (“Mid income”) and 8% an income of more than \$100,000 (“High income”).

Figure 6: Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 Online Survey sample by income bracket (annual personal income before tax, n=3,380)



46% of our sample reported having one or more disabilities, most commonly a diagnosed psychological condition (30%), followed by a mobility impairment (8%), ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) or ADHD (Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder) (7%), and low vision or blindness (6%) – see Figure 7. 37% of our respondents have one or more children with a disability, most commonly ADD or ADHD (14%), followed by a diagnosed psychological condition, ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) (both 9%), and Dyslexia (8%) – see Figure 8.

Figure 7: Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 Online Survey sample by parent disability (n=3,543)

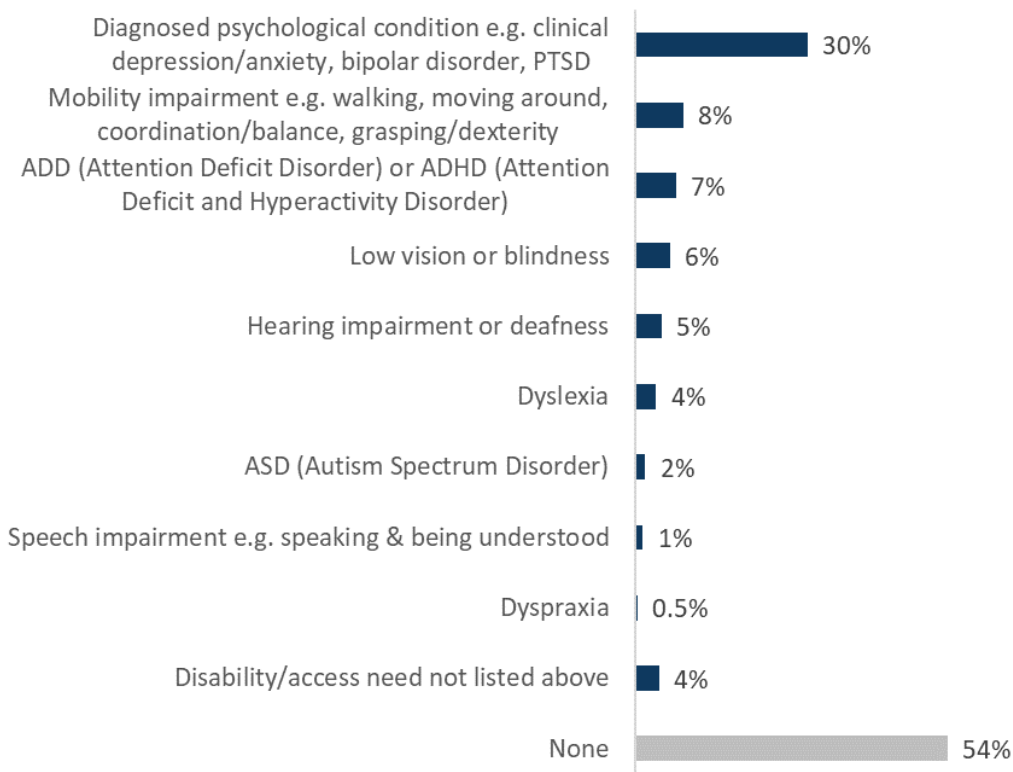
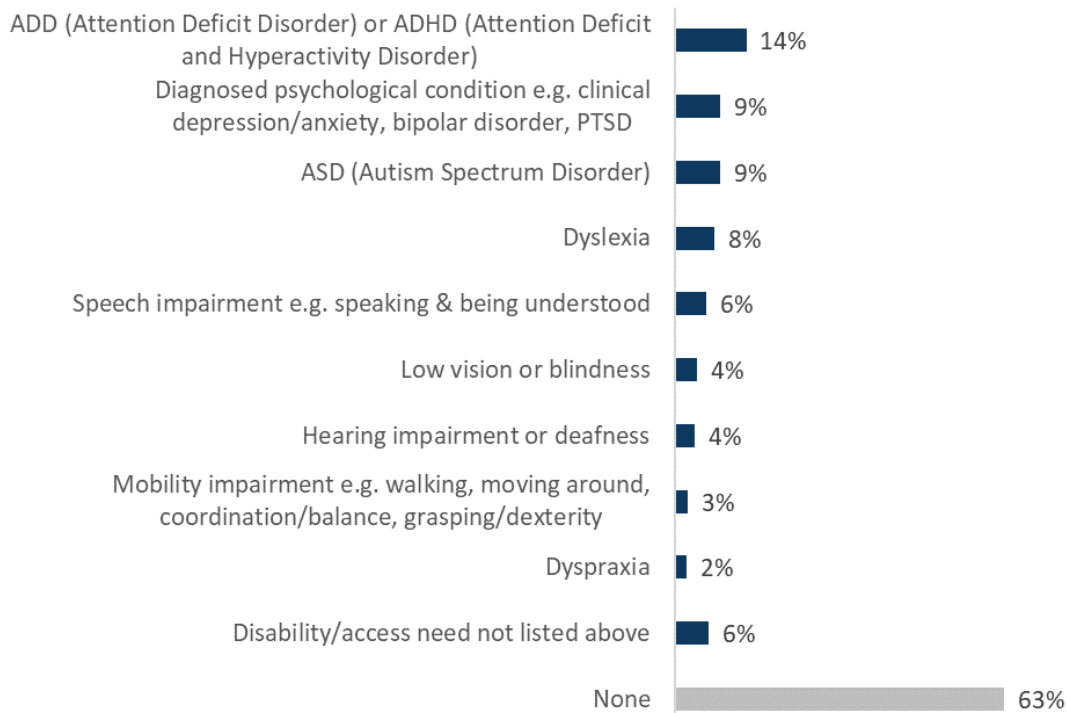


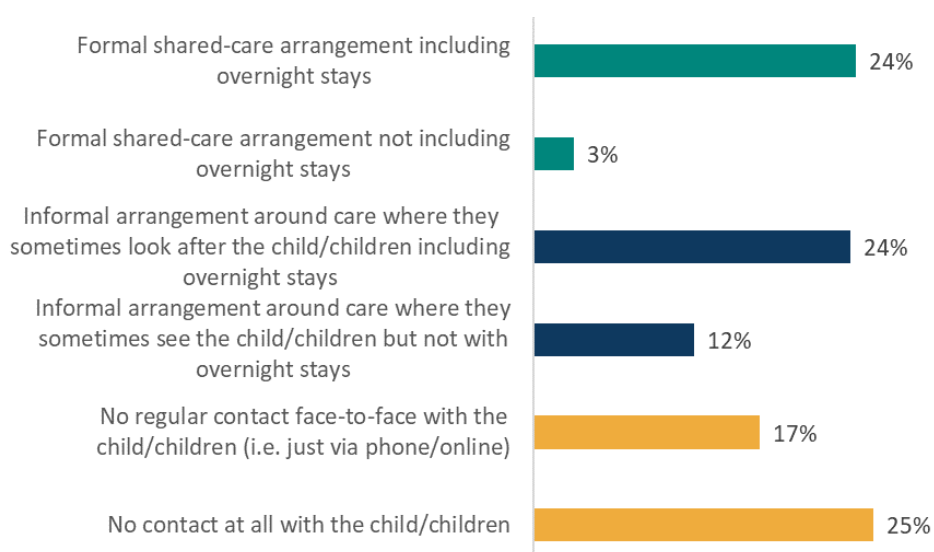
Figure 8: Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 Online Survey sample by child/children disability (n=3,543)



A quarter (25%) report that currently, the other parent has “No contact at all with their child/children”, and a further 17% report that the other parent has “No regular contact face-to-face with the child/children” (see Figure 9). Just 9% find it “Very easy” to communicate with their child/children’s other parent about things to do with their children, and a further 14% find it “Easy” (See Figure 10).

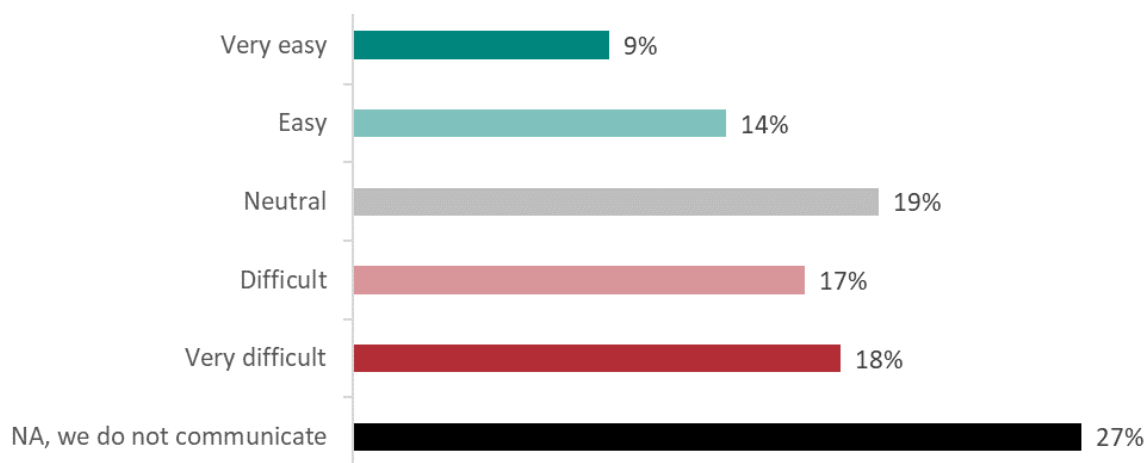
Please note, for Figures 9 and 10, single parents by choice, and those who reported that the other parent(s) had passed away, were not included in these questions (this accounts for 10% of our sample). Please note also that the percentages in these figures total more than 100% because respondents with more than one other parent of their child/children could select an option for each.

Figure 9: Care arrangement with the other parent(s) of child/children (n=3,152)



Source: Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 Online Survey

Figure 10: “How easy is it for you to communicate with your child/children’s other parent about things to do with your child/children, i.e. their health, school, other aspects of their care?” (n=3,168)



Source: Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 Online Survey

Project Gender focus groups

Project Gender carried out seven focus groups with single parents, who were recruited by us through a call to action that went out on our social media platforms and through the online survey sending them to a separate form. This “above-the-line” approach to recruiting was designed to ensure that we gathered new, fresh insights from single parents. The focus groups were facilitated by Tania Domett and Allyssa Verner-Pula from Project Gender.

The purpose of these focus groups was to better understand from those with recent, lived experience of being a single parent what their experiences are, what policies and programmes would, in their view, improve their lives, and what ideas they have for system change. Focus groups were facilitated in a way that encouraged free-flowing, open conversations, with facilitators using pre-defined questions as required to maintain focus towards the core purpose.

We carried out two focus groups in Auckland, one in Palmerston North, one in Christchurch and three via Zoom, with a total of 48 participants. Focus groups lasted one to two hours. It was not appropriate to collect detailed demographic data from all participants but, through our recruitment process, we ensured that we had diversity in terms of age and ethnicity. Young single mothers (under 30 years) as well as those with older teens were represented across the seven focus groups, and we also saw good representation from Māori, Pasifika and Asian single mothers. All participants were single mothers – we had initial interest for a single fathers focus group, but all follow-up efforts by Project Gender to confirm a date and location received no return communication. Focus group participants were given a koha of a \$50 Visa Prezzy card and in-person participants were also provided with kai. Participants were welcome to bring their children.

Ngāti Kahungunu insights

*The journey we have been on with **Mako Mama - Mangopare** has centred our whānau voice in a way that is empowering and strengths-based. We have connected with different roopu and heard from them what they need to thrive...Ngāti Kahungunu’s objective in this work is to enhance the mana and wellbeing of Ngāti Kahungunu. This will be achieved by empowering the iwi to achieve success at the levels of whānau, hapū, Taiwhenua and Taura here. Iwi will determine what success is from its own goals and aspirations.”* Mel Humphries, Te Kura Programme Coordinator, Ngāti Kahungunu

In order to guide strength-based opportunities for single parent whānau to thrive, Ngāti Kahungunu describe the following process:

- **Kotahitanga** – a united purpose
- **Whanaungatanga** – who we are and our collective stories

- **Kōrero** – our words
- **Manaakitanga** – what can sharing our stories do to help others
- **Awahi** – where to from here, how will we bring about change

Stakeholder hui insights

Project Gender carried out a stakeholder engagement process with relevant organisations and individuals to learn what appetite exists for collaboration on projects aimed at enhancing equity for single parents. We met with over 30 organisations/individuals during both the main stakeholder hui event in Pōneke, and supplementary one-on-one hui arranged individually².

The main stakeholder hui run by Project Gender and Ngāti Kahungunu was held in Pōneke in Wellington on September 22, 2022. Present were over 35 representatives from government agencies, business, universities and Members of Parliament. The purpose was to identify opportunities for positive change, innovation, systemic reform, policy changes and ways in which government, the private sector, communities, and unions can accelerate the ability of single parents to thrive.

Chrissie Hape, CE of Ngāti Kahungunu opened the hui with karakia and her reflections on the insights from Ngāti Kahungunu and formally gifted the project the name Mako Mama - Mangopare (a recording of Chrissie speaking is available via <https://www.makomamamangopare.nz/>). We presented the initial findings of the eight key action areas and the insights from Ngāti Kahungunu. The participants formed smaller groups and each group was given two key action areas to workshop opportunities for positive change. These were then shared with the wider group and workshopped further. The conversations were robust, insightful and we were very grateful for the time and expertise of the participants.

The voices of single parents were central to the process. 60 direct quotes that we had gathered from our survey and focus groups were displayed on the walls.

In addition to this hui, Project Gender met with key stakeholders one-on-one, including representatives from Child Poverty Action Group, unions, lawyers, insurance brokers, and senior advisors from the Human Rights Commission. They provided their suggested solutions and advice.

How report recommendations were generated

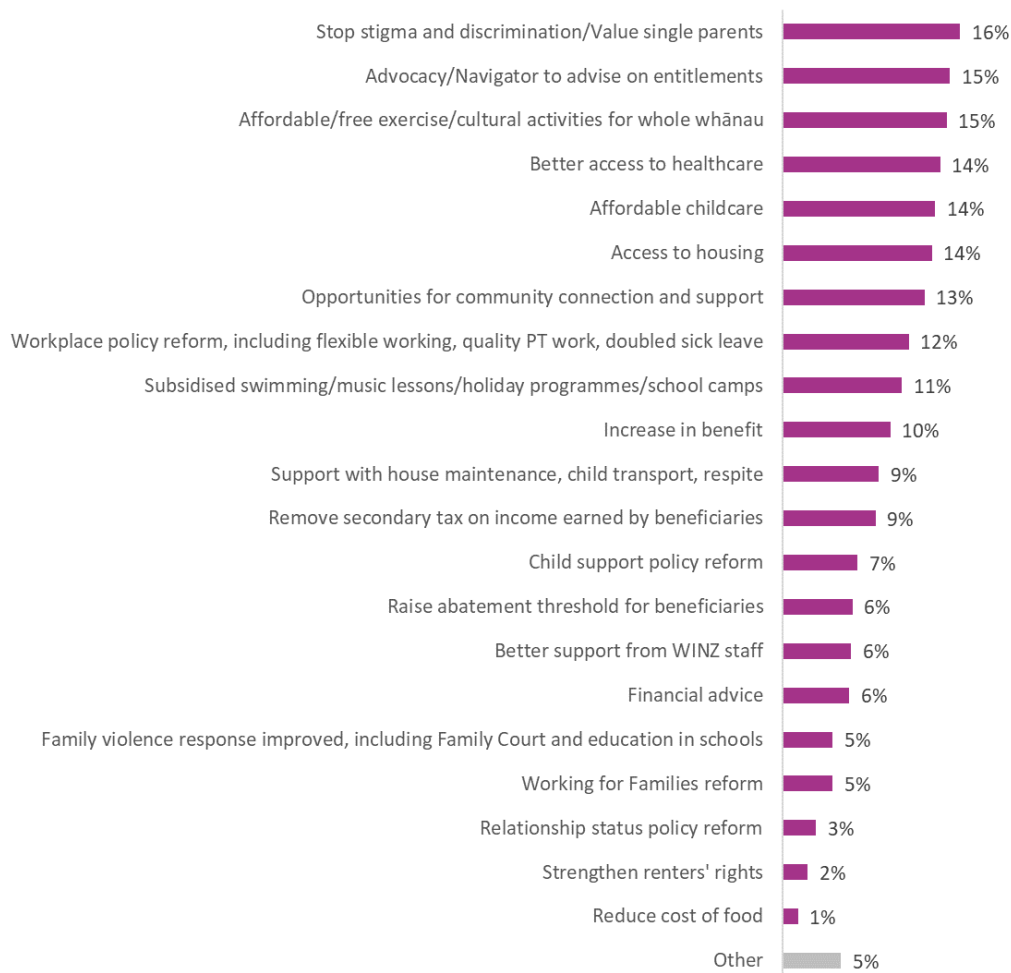
Insights on the needs of single parents (gathered via Project Gender's online survey and focus groups and Ngāti Kahungunu's mahi) and insights from sector stakeholders on their appetite and capacity to collaborate for systems change (gathered via the one-on-one and main stakeholder hui), together with the environmental scan, have been synthesised into eight key action areas which we have then drawn on to generate over 80 recommended solutions. These are shared throughout the report and collated [here](#) in the section – Full set of stakeholder opportunities. We present the top three impact areas for urgent action [here](#).

At all times, we ensured that the voice of single parents was central, with all action areas and recommended solutions aligning with the insights that they shared with us about what change was needed. In addition to the insights presented in the research results under each action area, additional guidance was provided by drawing on qualitative responses given in response to the final online survey question, "What things should be in place so that single parents and their tamariki enjoy a great life? Please tell us your ideas for what supports and services are

² Please note, for confidentiality reasons we cannot include all individual and organisation names in the report, but have provided a list to PMP directly for their reference.

needed”. We coded 1,000 (860 usable) open text comments using thematic analysis into 20 themes (see Figure 11) and present examples illustrating each theme in [Appendix 1](#).

Figure 11: “What things should be in place so that single parents and their tamariki enjoy a great life?”, coded open text (n=860)



Source: *Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 Online Survey*

How this report is structured

First, we present the top three impact areas identified for urgent action. Then the report is structured into eight sections, one for each of the following action areas, which were synthesised based on the insights from single parent whānau and sector stakeholders that were collected through multiple channels:

1. Improve attitudes towards single parents and reduce the stigma they experience in all areas of their lives
2. Provide an easy way for single parents to access information about what support is available to them
3. Improve access to basic rights/needs for single parents
4. Improve access to paid work for single parents
5. Call for changes in government policy that will positively impact single parents
6. Support single parents to receive the protection that financial services offer
7. Support to manage home and family life
8. Work to protect, rather than investigate, single parents who reach out for help

Each section presents a summary of the proposed evidence-based solutions applicable to the action area, followed by the relevant quantitative and qualitative results from the Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 survey and focus group data and Ngāti Kahungunu insights, from which the action area was developed.

Results for each of the eight action areas are presented, where sample allows and where relevant, by income, gender, disability and ethnicity. We also explore the impact of length of time respondents have been a single parent and age of child/children.

In each action area section, we also present relevant secondary research and policy to provide context for and supplement our Project Gender results and Ngāti Kahungunu insights.

The final section of the report presents our full set of recommendations in the form of validated solutions, for individuals, business, not-for-profit or government agencies to take up in collaboration with others.

Areas of impact identified for urgent action

In order for the 64,000+ Single Parent whānau in Aotearoa to thrive, a fundamental shift is required in how government, business, and society think about and engage with single parents.

Project Gender, Ngāti Kahungunu and sector stakeholders have identified three areas of impact to best accelerate the changes needed.

Stakeholder and sector groups are very supportive of ensuring there is action on each of these impact areas. These impact areas focus on systemic change and are beyond the remit of individual stakeholder groups, who have expressed that they do not have the capacity or capability to lead this mahi, however they are committed to collaborating and supporting these areas.

Many sector groups work on the front lines delivering services that support single parents, others are research and advocacy experts; there is currently no one organisation that has the capacity and capability to lead and co-ordinate the implementation of these three impact areas outlined in this report.

These impact areas address the desperate need for change and will provide the systemic impact required to make meaningful and lasting change:

1. **Celebrate Us:** Promoting positive narratives of single parent families within the media and community through a nationwide campaign to reduce stigma.
2. **Support Us:** Creation of a 'Navigators Portal' and the development of a nationwide single parent network to deliver it.
3. **Respect our Mana:** Protection not investigation via training and ongoing support for policy makers, frontline staff, government officials and communities towards ensuring Single Parent whānau are protected and have equal opportunities to thrive.

1. Celebrate Us

Promoting positive narratives of single parent families within the media and community.

Why: A primary prevention and social change approach is needed to address high rates of stigmatisation of single parents in New Zealand and create safer and more inclusive communities and families.

What: A nationwide media, marketing and communications campaign (similar to the "It's not okay" campaign). The campaign would aim to change behaviours; mobilise communities; and address social attitudes that stigmatise single parents.

A multi-year multi-layered campaign, underpinned by social marketing and community development principles. It would involve media advertising and PR; partnerships with community groups, iwi and hapū, sports groups, councils, businesses; government agencies and networks; media advocacy and training; campaign champions; an advocacy website; printed and online resources; and research and evaluation.

This would also be supported by policy change advocacy – involving working with government and officials from across the political spectrum.

An integrated campaign is one of the ways to have success across individual, families/whānau and community level behaviour change; increased help-giving by family and friends; mobilised communities, and create a shift in social attitudes.

The campaign will:

- increase awareness and message infiltration.
- increase willingness to support single parents.
- lead to changes to organisational culture.
- develop a sense of community ownership.
- lead to an increase in the protection of single parent whānau.

Who: Project Gender can lead a strengths-based campaign to celebrate the contribution of Single Parents to our society.

A national campaign and the campaign team are critical in providing the expertise to deliver this. Project Gender and Ngāti Kahungunu are equipped to lead the development, project management and delivery of this campaign.

Our partnership approach involves local ownership and leadership of the Campaign, local messages and the development of local champions and community advocacy as key instruments through which a comprehensive communication/education strategy could be delivered.

Budget would be required to develop, project manage and deliver the first part of the campaign including creating content and media placement costs, and research and evaluation.

Ideally, government funding would contribute to the cost of distribution and media placement; media partnerships with TVNZ and Radio NZ, NZME and others would also be explored.

A full scoping process would be undertaken, and budget developed, should this be of interest to PMP.

2. Support Us

Creation of a 'Navigators' portal.

Why: An online portal is needed to enable Single Parents to access all of the support available to them, provide interagency coordination, collaboration and communication; and establish and/or promote protocols, guidelines and systems between relevant agencies and service providers nationally, regionally and locally for information sharing and coordination of services.

What:

- The creation of an integrated portal for Single Parents to engage with all government agencies, private support services and job boards.
- Development of a nationwide Single Parent network that can be hired to deliver the Navigator service.
- Promotion of the portal via an integrated marketing and community engagement campaign.

Process: Building on the insights we have delivered through the Mako Mama – Mangopare project, Project Gender and Ngāti Kahungunu would employ a detailed service design process to develop and launch an easy-to-use portal and network of single parents who are employed as Navigators.

There are three clear phases for piece of work:

1. Developing the scope and project plan. Including project management, discovery, stakeholder engagement, strategy and content planning, establishment of an advisory group, and reporting.
2. Design and creation of the portal and network – including development, CX and UX testing and launching a website, sourcing and logistics, locating and training of Single Parents.

3. Delivery and promotion of the portal and network – including a multi-channel above and below the line marketing and communications and PR campaign.

Scope could include:

- Working with DIA to scope the possibility of integrating backend solutions developed for [Smart Start](#)
- Securing a technology portal for parents to report incidents.
- A new ‘buddy system’ to support single parent whānau.

Who:

Project Gender and Ngāti Kahungunu are able to project manage and lead the development of the portal and network.

Dedicated design and development providers would be contracted for the build.

There is an opportunity to partner with the relevant government agencies and businesses.

A full scoping process would be undertaken, and budget developed, should this be of interest to PMP.

3. Respect our Mana

Protection not investigation.

What: Reframing state responsibilities for single parents towards protection not investigation and ensuring an intersectional lens is applied across all agencies.

How: In order for policy makers and government to be able to fully realise the need for change we recommend:

- Training to ensure policies and legislation move towards providing strength-based opportunities for single parent whānau to thrive.
- On-going support and guidance be available to staff to help implement the learnings from the training.

The kaupapa of the training would be taught applying this process:

- Kotahitanga – a united purpose
- Whānaungtanga – who we are and our collective stories
- Kōrero – our words
- Manaakitanga – what can sharing our stories do to help others
- Awhi – where to from here, how will we bring about change

Who: Ngāti Kahungunu could provide training and wānanga focussed on the above process by centring the experiences of single parent whānau as outlined in this report.

Project Gender can provide on-going specialist support across policy, programmes and projects to ensure that single parents needs are recognised and integrated in government policies, legislation and work programmes.

A full scoping process would be undertaken, and budget developed, should this be of interest to PMP.

Eight key action areas

Mako Mama - Mangopare has worked with representatives from single parent whānau, government, business, unions and other sector stakeholders to identify opportunities and solutions for innovation, policy change, and other types of systemic reform that the sector can collaborate on to accelerate the ability of single parents to thrive.

These opportunities and solutions are presented in the following eight key action areas.

Key action area #1: Improve attitudes towards single parents and reduce the stigma they experience in all areas of their lives

Summary of solutions for Key Action Area #1

Ensure government systems support single parent families, specifically by:

- Reframing state responsibilities for single parents towards **protection not investigation** and ensuring an intersectional lens is applied across all agencies.
- Recognising that children are now a more 'precious commodity' – i.e. we have lower rates of childbirth - ensuring policies are reflective of valuing children.
- Providing training to support policy makers and government to ensure policies and legislation move towards strength-based opportunities for single parent whānau to thrive.
- On-going support and guidance be available to staff to help implement the learnings from the training.
- Creating single parents' networks that operate similar to LGBTQI+ networks within government.
- MBIE to ratify the [IPO convention clause 190 Violence and Work](#) which outlines recognising the right of everyone to a world of work that is free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment.
- Acknowledging that gender-based violence and harassment disproportionately affects women and girls, and recognise that an inclusive, integrated and gender-responsive approach, which tackles underlying causes and risk factors, including gender stereotypes, multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, and unequal gender-based power relations, is essential to ending violence and harassment in our society and enabling single parent whānau to thrive.

Ensure businesses support single families, specifically by:

- Encouraging rental agencies to eradicate single parent discrimination.
- Ensuring products and promotional materials reflect single parent families.
- Offering single parent family tickets for products, services and fees, e.g. public pools, campgrounds.
- Ensuring products and promotional materials reflect single parent families.
- Creating single parents' networks that operate similar to LGBTQI+ networks, within business.

Media industry

- Promoting positive narratives of single parent families within the media and community through a nationwide campaign.
- Sharing stories of single parents by broadening the definition of 'family' to reflect modern whānau and incorporate single parent families.
- Sharing stories of the untapped potential of single parents - especially relating to their underemployment - for businesses and government.

Ensure communities support single parents, specifically by:

- Continuing to advocate for single parents' rights by broadening the definition of 'family' to reflect modern whānau and incorporate single parent families.

- Supporting a strengths-based campaign to celebrate the contribution of Single Parents to our society.

Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 research results relating to Key Action Area #1

Across all focus groups carried by Project Gender, a consistent theme was the stigma and discrimination experienced by single parents. For example:

Like honestly, the judgment and the stigma [was bad]. So I left my husband and it was like a hugely stressful time, living in a small community. He was well-respected and that, you know, all of that. I moved into my new house and it was really hard. My son's best friend's dad said, "Oh no, I don't want him to sleep over there because she'll be drinking" and I'm like, "Oh my God, I don't drink. You know, like, I didn't change just because I'm a single mum, your kid was safe with me the last ten years!" (Focus group participant, July 27th 2022)

There needs to be less stigma attached to being a single parent. It's not always a personal choice! (Focus group participant, June 29th 2022)

WINZ treat single parents like second class citizens trying to rip off the system. The lack of recognition of the stress you are under as a single parent is just astounding. It's not just financial, it's also the fatigue from never getting a break, losing your social connections, and yeah just the stigma attached to being a single mum (Focus group participant, June 29th 2022)

Ngāti Kahungunu's insights strongly support this action area. Summarising key kōrero from their roopu, particularly with their Mama under 20, Ngāti Kahungunu shared:

"We have no voice – the voices of our Te Kura wāhine are unheard due to the stigma of being a teen mother."

Supporting quotes from Ngāti Kahungunu's kōrero include:

- *"My whakapapa is used against me" – "Their whakapapa on you never changes"*
- *"Always been embarrassed for being a solo mum"*
- *"MSD look at me like I'm less than"*
- *"I am not heard – I don't have a voice, because I'm young, brown and female"*
- *"To not be discriminated against and given a chance"*
- *"MSD treat me like I'm a desperate Māori trying to milk them – You would think you were asking for money from their personal bank account"*

Respondents to the Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 online survey were asked *"Have any of the following ever treated you unfairly or discriminated against you because you're a single parent?"*, and were presented with a list of agencies, professionals, community groups and individuals (see Figure 12). Two thirds (67%) of low-income single mothers³ said they had been treated unfairly or discriminated against because they are a single parent by at least one option, most commonly WINZ, selected by 32%. 19% of low-income single mothers said they had been treated unfairly or discriminated against because they are a single parent by landlords, 19% by real estate agents, and 17% by employers.

Results from our small sample (51) of low-income single fathers suggest similar experiences for men, with 66% of low income having been treated unfairly or discriminated against because they are a single parent by at least one option, and WINZ, real estate agents, landlords and employers again being the most common.

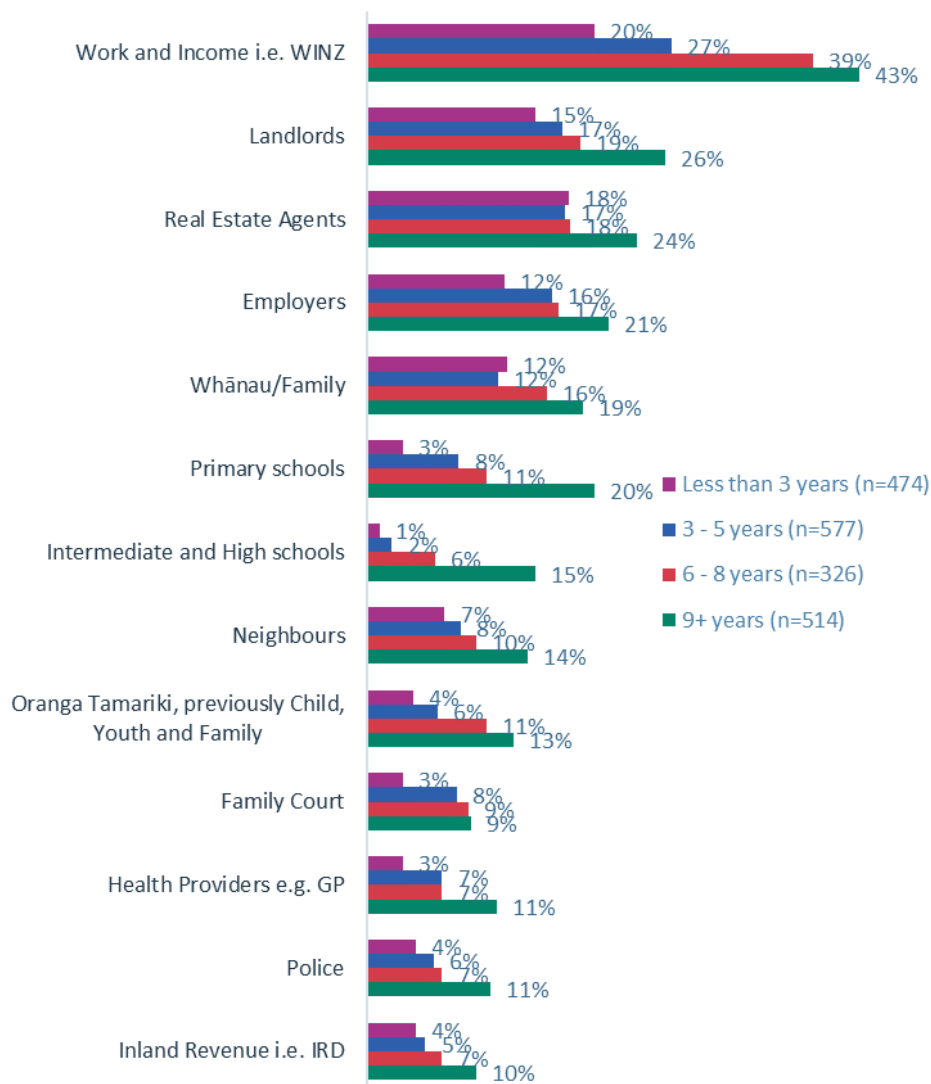
³ The sub-sample "single mothers" includes women and non-binary respondents.

35% of low-income wāhine Māori single mothers have experienced being treated unfairly/discriminated against because they are a single parent by WINZ, 24% by real estate agents, and 21% by landlords. 28% of low-income Pasifika single mothers have experienced being treated unfairly/discriminated against because they are a single parent by WINZ, 21% by real estate agents, and 17% by landlords.

Disabled single parent whānau in the Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 online survey results are experiencing higher levels of unfair treatment/discrimination, with 41% of low-income disabled single mothers with disabled children having been treated unfairly/discriminated against by WINZ, compared to 33% of low-income disabled single mothers without disabled children, and 23% of non-disabled single mothers without disabled children. Low-income disabled single mothers with disabled children are four times more likely than non-disabled single mothers without disabled children to have been treated unfairly/discriminated against by primary schools (20% vs. 5%).

Unsurprisingly, the longer a respondent has been a single parent, the more likely they are to have ever experienced being treated unfairly/discriminated against because they are a single parent (see Figure 11). For example, 43% of low-income single mothers who have been a single parent for 9 years or more said they have been treated unfairly/discriminated against by WINZ, decreasing to 20% of those who have been a single parent for less than 3 years. 26% of low-income single mothers who have been a single parent for 9 years or more have been treated unfairly/discriminated against by landlords, decreasing to 15% for those that have been a single parent for less than 3 years.

Figure 12: Share of low-income single mothers who have experienced being treated unfairly/discriminated against by each option because they are a single parent, presented by the length of time they have been a single parent (includes all options where the combined sample result was more than 5%)



Source: Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 Online Survey

According to Statistics New Zealand, in 2020, “compared with the total population, sole parents were nearly twice as likely to have experienced discrimination in the last 12 months...and more likely to report lower levels of trust” (Statistics NZ 2020).

The secondary literature consistently shows that single parents feel diminished and judged during their interactions with the benefit system (WEAG 2019; Think Place 2014; King 2017; Martin 2020; Auckland City Mission 2020; Barber 2021; Centre for Social Research and Evaluation/Te Pokāpu Rangahau Arotake Hapori 2010b; Cram et al 2021; Dale 2013; Garden et al 2014; Gray and Crichton-Hill 2019; Healey and Curtin 2019; Lee 2019; Meese et al 2020; Moeata and Elizabeth 2022; Strickett and Moewaka-Barnes 2012; Families Commission 2005). Berentson-Shaw (2018) and Masselot (2015) argue that neoliberal reforms in Aotearoa New Zealand over the last four decades have helped generate the idea that seeking income support is a failure of the individual, with solo parenthood being singled out as abnormal and generating social problems requiring government action.

Humpage and Moore point out that most of the Welfare Expert Advisory Group's recommendations in 2019 relating to treating benefit recipients with dignity and respect have not yet been implemented (2021, p.3).

Lee (2019) describes the discrimination experienced by single parents with a disabled child and calls for "critical transformation of perceptions of single mothers and disability, and urge[s] social work and healthcare professionals to challenge stereotypes and biases towards single mothers" (p.1).

Ware, Breheny and Foster (2016) find that the stigma and discrimination experienced by single parents is intensified for Māori, noting the "persistent pathologising of teen parenting" and argue that "Discourses about being Māori, young, a parent and needing financial assistance frame young Māori parents as at risk of long-term welfare-dependency and a threat to their own children. Welfare assistance is demonstrated to be a disciplinary practice to punish young Māori mother beneficiaries for deviating from the preferred normative life-course trajectory" (pp. 1-2). Breheny and Stephens also describe the negative perception of young Māori parents and argue that "good" motherhood appears to be associated with "older (white, middle-class and married) women who have a 'natural ability' to mother" (2016, p. 11; see also Breheny and Stephens 2007b and 2010).

Key action area #2: Provide an easy way for single parents to access information about what support is available to them

Summary of solutions for Key Action Area #2

Ensure the government systems supports single parent families, specifically by:

- Improving interagency coordination, collaboration and communication by identifying barriers to interagency coordination, collaboration and communication at all levels; and continuing to establish and/or promote protocols, guidelines and systems between relevant agencies and service providers nationally, regionally and locally for information sharing and coordination of services.
- The creation of an integrated 'Navigators' portal for Single Parents to engage with all government agencies, private support services and job boards. Development of a nationwide Single Parent network to deliver the 'Navigator' service.
- Promotion of the portal via an integrated marketing and community engagement campaign.
- Acknowledging that gender-based violence and harassment disproportionately affects women and girls, and recognise that an inclusive, integrated and gender-responsive approach, which tackles underlying causes and risk factors, including gender stereotypes, multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, and unequal gender-based power relations, is essential to ending violence and harassment in our society and enabling single parent whānau to thrive.

Some of these recommended solutions are supported by previous research including:

MWA (2018) recommend the following "The systems that provide support are complex and could be more straightforward. Benefits and entitlements are confusing and hard to navigate...If the system is not made simpler, mothers told us they would like a champion or trusted person to help them to navigate it...One of the best things government can do is make the system easier for them to understand and navigate..." (p.4).

A need that was identified by Lee's 2019 study was for a disability navigator service that provided options around supports that were available and how to access them. Given that single parents are carrying the parenting load of two parents, so have limited time and energy to research and follow up with agencies, this is especially important" (Lee 2019, p.79).

Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 research results relating to Key Action Area #2

Across all focus groups carried out by Project Gender, a consistent theme was the lack of clarity around what support/benefits they were entitled to, with many participants saying that it often felt like information was being deliberately withheld from them. For example:

I found out that if you're a single mother, and you don't have any physical help, you're entitled to 15 hours a week, domestic support through WINZ – it's actually called domestic support – and it took me months to find this kind of information. If I'd known this had been available, it would have stopped a lot of ill health on my part. (Focus group participant, August 10th 2022)

It's a problem not having a case worker, because they can't keep track of your situation. My childcare subsidy got cut nine times in one year. I was hysterical I remember on my birthday ringing them up like hysterical being like – what do you want from me? I already can't afford to eat. I'm barely making any money because no one wants to employ me. I can't rent a house because they won't even let me view them as soon as they find out I'm a single mum. And now you're cutting off my only form of being able to provide income to try and get a house when I'm like the bottom of the rung. (June 17th 2022)

Yeah it's not our choice, and also can they please line up their services. It seems like what qualifies for one then doesn't line up for what another agency wants - it's like you are in a pinball machine. You get flipped from one agency to another. If you do this, then you can't do that. It doesn't feel like they're really helping, if you qualify

for this one once, then you're over the threshold for Kainga Ora for example. So if nothing lines up you just can't progress... (Focus group participant, June 17th 2022)

Humpage and Moore (2021, p.3) report that benefit recipients' experiences of engaging with Work and Income often involved "problematic attitudes of Work and Income staff...a lack of transparency regarding entitlements and inconsistent and inefficient system processes" (p.3).

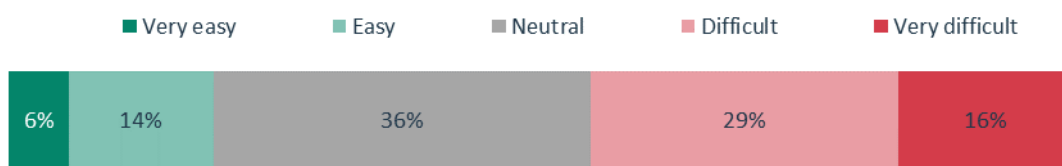
Ngāti Kahungunu's insights strongly support this action area. Summarising key kōrero from their roopu, particularly their Tāne Māori, Ngāti Kahungunu shared:

"Knowledge is power – give us the whole picture not just pieces of the puzzle."

Supporting quotes from Ngāti Kahungunu's kōrero include: "You have to become part of the system before you get the support you need".

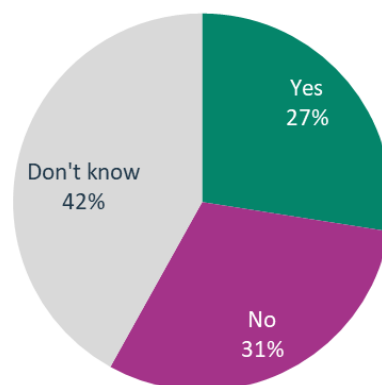
Respondents to the Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 online survey were asked "How easy do you find it to understand what benefit payments you are entitled to?". 45% of low-income single mothers find it "Very difficult" or "Difficult" to understand what benefit payments they are entitled to (see Figure 13), and 42% said they "Don't know" whether they are entitled to benefit payment(s)/child support payment(s) that they are not currently receiving (see Figure 14). A further 27% of low-income single mothers believe they are entitled to benefit payment(s)/child support payment(s) that they are not currently receiving, which means that only 31% believe they are currently receiving all that they are entitled to in terms of benefit payments.

Figure 13: "How easy do you find it to understand what benefit payments you are entitled to?" (low-income single mothers n=1,825, excludes "Don't know/Can't remember")



Source: Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 Online Survey

Figure 14: "Do you believe you're entitled to any benefit payment(s)/child support payment(s) that you're not currently receiving?" (low-income single mothers n=1,870)



Source: Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 Online Survey

43% of low-income wāhine Māori single mothers find it "Very difficult" or "Difficult" to understand what benefit payments they are entitled to, and 30% believe they are entitled to benefit payment(s)/child support payment(s) that

they are not currently receiving. Just 25% of low-income wāhine Māori single mothers believe they are currently receiving all that they are entitled to in terms of benefit and/or child support payments.

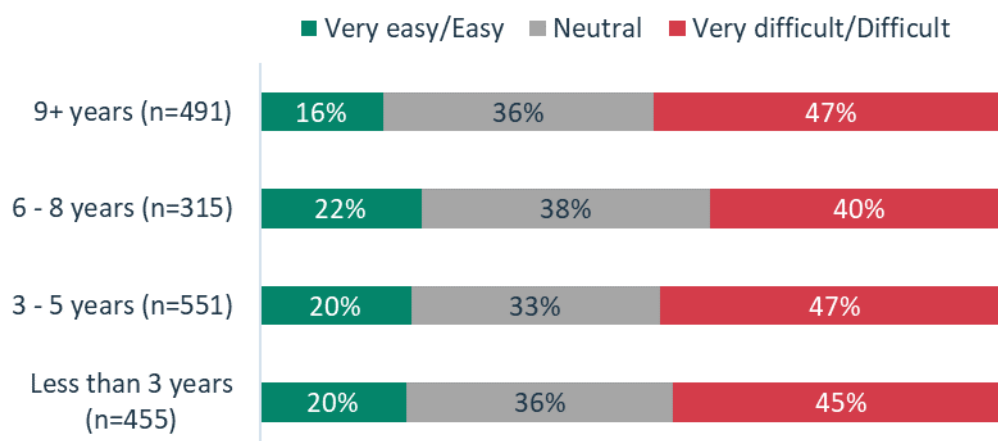
Low-income Pasifika single mothers report better understanding of the benefit payment system than other demographic segments, with 27% finding it “Very difficult” or “Difficult” to understand what payments they are entitled to. However, the same issue with accessing what they are entitled to is evident, with just 26% believing that they currently receive all that they are entitled to in terms of benefit and/or child support payments.

Results from our small sample (51) of low-income single fathers suggest similar issues with understanding and access benefit payment for men, with 39% finding it “Very difficult” or “Difficult” to understand what benefit payments they are entitled to, and 29% believing they are entitled to benefit payment(s)/child support payment(s) that they are not currently receiving. 24% believe they are currently receiving all that they are entitled to in terms of benefit and/or child support payments.

Disabled single parent whānau experience more difficulty understanding what benefit payments they are entitled to, we assume due to the higher complexity of the different benefits they may be entitled to. 52% of low-income disabled single mothers with disabled children find it “Very difficult” or “Difficult” to understand what benefit payments they are entitled to compared to 40% of non-disabled low-income single mothers without disabled children.

And the difficulty in understanding, and accessing, all that single parents are entitled to does not improve with time and experience - there is not a way to “learn” the system as it will constantly evolve for each individual depending on their, and their whānau situation. 45% of low-income single mothers that have been a single parent for less than 3 years find it “Very difficult” or “Difficult” to understand what they are entitled to, similar to the 47% of those that have been a single parent for 9 or more years (see Figure 15). 33% of those that have been a single parent for less than 3 years believe they are currently receiving all that they are entitled to in terms of benefit and/or child support payments, the same share as for those who have been a single parent for 9 or more years.

Figure 15: “How easy do you find it to understand what benefit payments you are entitled to?” – responses for low-income single mothers by years as a single parent



Source: Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 Online Survey

The difficulty of navigating and accessing the benefit system was a common theme in the secondary literature. The Ministry for Women’s (MWA) 2018 report - *Something’s Got to Change* – presents research based on interviews with 40 single mothers in Whāngarei, South Auckland, and Gisborne: “Almost unanimously, these mothers told us that the benefit system is complex and changes to their benefit entitlements are hard to understand. Many said they did not know or understand what they were entitled to. They wanted clear and transparent decisions over entitlements and abatement rates that supported them and their children” (p.3).

Single parents participating in Waldegrave, King, Maniapoto, Tamasese, Parsons and Sullivan's 2016 study reported that the Ministry of Social Development's Work and Income did not let them know their full entitlements as sole parent beneficiaries and stereotyped them as though they were wanting to take advantage of the system (2016, p.678).

In her 2019 study of single parents with a disabled child or children, Lee found that there was a "lack of a readily available database of support agencies, and the relationships with service providers and professionals. Mothers outlined their experience of finding out about support agencies by accident, the passive nature of support agencies, and their frustrations in dealing with some service providers and professionals.

Key action area #3: Improve access to basic rights/needs for single parents

Summary of solutions for Key Action Area #3

Ensure the government systems supports single parent families, specifically by:

- Ensuring all staff are trained in applying an intersectional lens across all touchpoints, policy changes and interactions with Single Parents with a specific focus on Māori Single Parent whānau.
- Ensuring Kainga Ora are aware of the specific housing needs of Single Parent whānau and accommodate them accordingly.
- Encouraging the Commerce Commission to investigate single parent discrimination in renting and provide a set of recommendations for positive change.
- Redefining the Sole Parent Support from a weekly payment that helps single parents find part-time work or get ready for future work to a weekly payment that supports Single Parents to parent their children.
- Acknowledging that gender-based violence and harassment disproportionately affects women and girls, and recognise that an inclusive, integrated and gender-responsive approach, which tackles underlying causes and risk factors, including gender stereotypes, multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, and unequal gender-based power relations, is essential to ending violence and harassment in our society and enabling single parent whānau to thrive.
- Acknowledging that in 2015 New Zealand became a signatory to the SDGs and that currently we are not achieving the targets for the Gender Equality indicators; our scores are: reduction of gender wage gap (52), female representation in Parliament (67), indications of intimate partner violence (50), percentage of women in senior managerial positions (51).⁴
- Noting that violence and harassment is incompatible with the promotion of sustainable healthy families and impacts negatively on the ability for single parents to be well.

Ministry of Social Development

Apply benefit changes to support single parents by:

- Implementing all recommendations to Working for Families as outlined by The Child Poverty Action Group.
- Changing relationship status policy on Single Parents benefit eligibility to be less restrictive, punitive and patriarchal.
- Changing abatements by allowing a longer period of time before removing entitlements to benefits and related subsidies. This will enable Single Parents to build up capital and support.
- Ensuring policies prioritise the ability for parents to actively parent their children.
- WINZ to scope funding single parent insurance -and /or providing interest free payment options.
- Scoping the opportunity for WINZ to include funding for home and contents insurance as outlined in [this report](#) from CPAG.
- Enabling Single Parents to attend WINZ interviews with their children.

⁴Each indicator has been indexed so that the value for 2015 equals 50. Achievement of the target is set at 100. So, a score of 75 would mean that New Zealand is halfway toward achieving that target. A score below 50 means that we have moved further away from the target since 2015.

Ministry of Business, Innovation and Enterprise

- MBIE to ratify the [ILO convention clause 190 Violence and Work](#) which outlines recognizing the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment.

Ensure business supports single parent families, specifically by:

- Banks to consider child support payments as income when single parents apply for mortgage loans.
- Investigating insurance options for Single Parents especially 3rd party, Health, Contents insurance.
- Developing and implement a Vulnerable Customer Framework to identify ways to help and support Single Parents (should they require it).
- Making it mandatory for employers to publish flexible working options for all roles.
- Implementing the Fair Pay legislation recommendations.
- Registering their gender pay gap on [Mind The Gap](#).
- Registering their paid parental leave policies on [The New Zealand Parental Leave Register](#).
- Encouraging Sport NZ to fund after school sports with a focus on ensuring they are affordable for single parents.
- Encouraging Dental NZ to provide discounted or free services to Single Parent whānau – this could be done in partnership with philanthropic organisations to offset the cost.

Ensure communities support single parents, specifically by:

- Partnering with intergenerational organisations to provide skills and knowledge trades, e.g. older people connecting with single parents to provide home maintenance support.
- Working with schools to improve after-school childcare schemes, and travel to and from school.
- Supporting a strengths-based campaign to celebrate the contribution of Single Parents to our society.
- Offering single parent family tickets for products, services and fees e.g., public pools, campgrounds.
- Ensuring products and promotional materials reflect single parent families.

Some of these recommended solutions are supported by previous research including:

Waldegrave et al (2016, p.686) argue that “Security and suitability of housing could be improved through social housing that is well tailored to meet the needs of sole parents, with a full range of different social housing products for rentals as well as home ownership. Mortgage assistance programs developed specifically for them, combined with educational assistance, would increase housing equity and access too often denied to them. For some cultures, as with Māori and Pacific sole parents, the availability of larger, four or more bedroom, units would enable families to live in higher concentrations of extended family housing, if they choose to”.

The Ministry for Women 2018 report Something’s got to change: Insights from mothers found that many single mothers were dealing with both physical and/or mental health issues, that they were experiencing problems accessing specialist healthcare, especially for their children, and that they needed health and social services to listen to them and provide help without judgement (p.685)

Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 research results relating to Key Action Area #3

Across all focus groups carried out by Project Gender, a consistent theme was how difficult their financial situation is, making it hard for them to access basic needs for them and their whānau.

So, looking at the ‘what do we need’, and again it is going back to those thresholds with work and income. If they were to be taken from the gross amount to the net amount, we would then be more in line to be able to

provide a healthy home, food, healthcare, we would be able to look after our children and our own health and well-being as well (Focus group participant, August 10th 2022)

Housing security is huge. If you have somewhere safe and dry and warm to call home then a lot of your problems go away because you have a place to sort out your problems. The next thing would of course be financial security because financial stress is a huge factor for so many single parents... And then it would be of course food security. Yeah, more funding for housing projects and services, more funding for social services and for iwi led initiatives. I could go on for ages about this. (Focus group participant, June 29th 2022)

Ngāti Kahungunu's insights strongly support this action area. Summarising key kōrero from their roopu, particularly with their Mana Wāhine, Ngāti Kahungunu shared:

“Decolonisation NOT Colonisation – our mana wāhine were very clear that they thrived in spite of the system, navigating the system was only made possible with the support of wider whānau”.

Supporting quotes from Ngāti Kahungunu's kōrero include: *“Support with my mental health when I needed it most, 3 years later I am finally getting therapy”, “No support for my kids who have been traumatised - Education system shuts them out”, “Addiction support, trust, understanding”.*

Ease of access to whānau basic needs

Respondents to the Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 online survey were asked “How easy is it for you, overall, to access the following for your whānau?” and presented with a list of basic rights/needs to score for (see Figure 16). Supporting the focus group data, Figure 16 shows how income plays a large role in how easy single mothers find accessing many basic needs for their whānau. For example, just 8% of high-income (over \$100k per annum) single mothers find it “Very difficult” or “Difficult” to access healthy food for their whānau, compared to 28% of those on a medium income (\$50 - \$100k) and 45% of those on a low income (less than \$50k).

30% of low income and 28% of medium income single mothers find it “Very difficult” or “Difficult” to access a healthy home for their whānau, compared to 12% of those on a high income. Within the low-income sample, renters are more likely to find it difficult to access a healthy home for their whānau – a third (33%) finding it “Very difficult” or “Difficult” to access a healthy home compared to 22% of homeowners.

Ease of access to clothing, healthcare, dental care, school education, extra-curricular activities for children, and everything a whānau/family needs to feel connected to their culture and community also all improved with income for single mothers (see Figure 16).

Data from the June 2020 quarter of the Household Labour Force Survey (Statistics New Zealand 2020), notes that nearly one-fifth (18% of single parents) state that they do not have enough money to meet every-day needs, compared with 5.2% of partnered parents. A further 43% of single parents stated that they have only just enough to get by on (Statistics New Zealand 2020). Around a quarter of single parents had reported receiving help in the form of food, clothes, or money from non-governmental organisations such as foodbanks and churches at least once in the previous year. Of those who had received this type of help, two thirds had done so more than once (see also Krassoi, Peach and Cording 2018; Families Commission 2010; Galicki 2020; Prickett et al 2020; and for the effects of COVID-19 see McAllister et al 2021

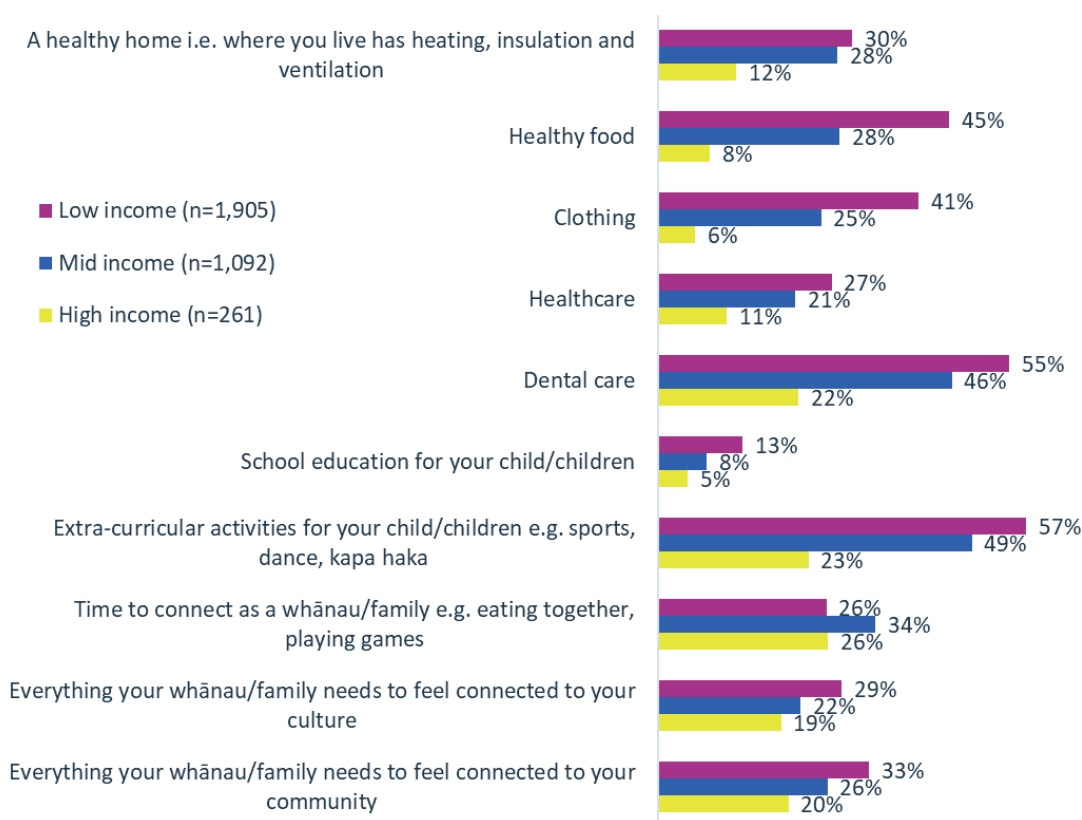
Equitable access to housing is a critical social issue in Aotearoa. Overall, homeownership has fallen in every region since 1991 (and is at its lowest since the 1950s), especially in Auckland. Based on 2018 Census data, home-owners tend to have higher income levels and are more likely to be partnered, with 69% of people who were partnered

saying they owned their dwelling or held it in a family trust compared with 29% of non-partnered people (Statistics New Zealand 2020).⁵

Data on housing quality from the June 2020 quarter of the Household Labour Force Survey shows sole parents of a dependent child are nearly four times more likely than partnered parents to be living in housing that has a “major problem with dampness or mould” and just over twice as likely to be living in housing that has a “major problem heating/keeping warm in winter”.

Data from the 2015/2016 New Zealand Health Survey shows that food insecurity is a critical issue for single parent households: 40% cannot always eat properly and over a quarter rely on others or food banks to provide food when they don't have enough money to meet their needs (compared with just over one in 20 coupled parents) (Superu 2018, p.45).

Figure 16: Share of single mothers by income bracket answering, “Very difficult” or “Difficult” when asked: “How easy is it for you, overall, to access the following for your whānau?”



Source: Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 Online Survey

However, finding “time to connect as a whānau/family” was equally difficult for low- and high-income single mothers – with 26% of each group saying it is “Very difficult” or “Difficult” for them. Similarly, we saw less income-driven differences for how easy it is for single mothers to find time for themselves to do things they enjoy, e.g. hobbies, exercise, other things that interest them or that they enjoy, and access learning opportunities, with 68% or more of all income brackets finding it “Very difficult” or “Difficult” to get this time for themselves (see Figure 17). Higher incomes do appear to be able to “buy” single mothers slightly more “time away from your child/children that is just for

⁵ Please note that this includes people who are not parents.

yourself”, but even so, 63% of those on a high income are still finding this difficult (77% of low income and 72% of medium income).

Figure 17: Share of single mothers by income bracket answering, “Very difficult” or “Difficult” when asked: “How easy is it for you, overall, to access the following for your whānau?”.



Source: Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 Online Survey

39% of low-income wāhine Māori single mothers say they find it “Very difficult” or “Difficult” to access everything their whānau/family needs to feel connected to their culture. 30% find it “Very difficult” or “Difficult” to access a healthy home, 53% healthy food, 47% clothing, 32% health care, 57% dental care, 18% school education, 54% extra-curricular activities for their child/children, and 27% time to connect as a whānau/family. Eight out of ten low-income wāhine Māori single mothers (80%) are finding it “Very difficult” or “Difficult” to have time away from their children that is just for them, 65% to access learning opportunities for themselves, and 69% to do thing that they enjoy.

37% of low-income Pasifika single mothers say they find in “Very difficult” or “Difficult” to access everything their whānau/family needs to feel connected to their culture. 34% find it “Very difficult” or “Difficult” to access a healthy home, 46% healthy food, 41% clothing, 27% health care, 47% dental care, 20% school education, 50% extra-curricular activities for their child/children, and 31% time to connect as a whānau/family. Three quarters (75%) of low-income Pasifika single mothers are finding it “Very difficult” or “Difficult” to have time away from their children that is just for them, 66% to access learning opportunities for themselves and 68% to do thing that they enjoy.

Superu (2015) find that Māori living in single parent households with one or more children under 18 years have the lowest home ownership rates among all whānau types and experience high levels of economic insecurity. Just 36% report that they have enough income to meet their everyday needs. Krasso, Peach and Cording (2018) describe the significance of colonialism for the disadvantage that Māori are experiencing with housing: “The ... housing disadvantage findings for whānau needs to be set against the background of historic economic and social inequalities that have entrenched Māori housing poverty and intergenerational disadvantage. When viewed through this lens, it is not surprising that Māori families are most likely to experience significant and multiple disadvantage” (2018, p.11).

The decline in home ownership from the 1990s happened faster for Māori and for Pasifika: New Zealand European are nearly twice as likely to own their homes than Māori and almost three times as likely as Pasifika.

According to Superu (2018: 5), housing for Māori is much more than the physical dwelling. Applying a tikanga Māori lens to policy and research on housing is required in order to grow and design communities that nurture whānau. They warn that Māori housing must not be an ‘add on’ to mainstream housing policies.

Disabled single mothers are more likely to find it hard to access all basic needs for their whānau, especially those with disabled children. 19% of low-income disabled single mothers with disabled children find accessing school education

“Very difficult” or “Difficult” compared to 7% of non-disabled low-income single parents without disabled children. 71% find accessing extra-curricular activities for their child/children “Very difficult” or “Difficult” compared to 44% of non-disabled low-income single parents without disabled children. Similarly 38% vs. 19% for healthcare, 39% vs. 23% for a healthy home, 59% vs. 34% for healthy food, and 47% vs. 22% for “everything your whānau/family needs to feel connected to your community”.

83% of low-income disabled single mothers with disabled children both find it “Very difficult” or “Difficult” to do things that they enjoy, 79% to access learning opportunities for themselves and 86% to have time away from their children, just for themselves. This compared to 67%, 68%, and 73% for non-disabled low-income single parents without disabled children.

And the ease of access to basic needs does not improve for single parents with time. Instead, single mothers report finding it progressively harder the longer they have been a single parent. For example, 38% of those who have been a single parent for 9 years or more find it “Very difficult” or “Difficult” to access a healthy home for their whānau, compared to 25% of those who have been a single parent for less than 3 years, 53% find it “Very difficult” or “Difficult” to access healthy food compared to 37%, 48% compared to 30% for clothing, and 33% compared to 19% for “Everything your whānau/family needs to feel connected to your culture”.

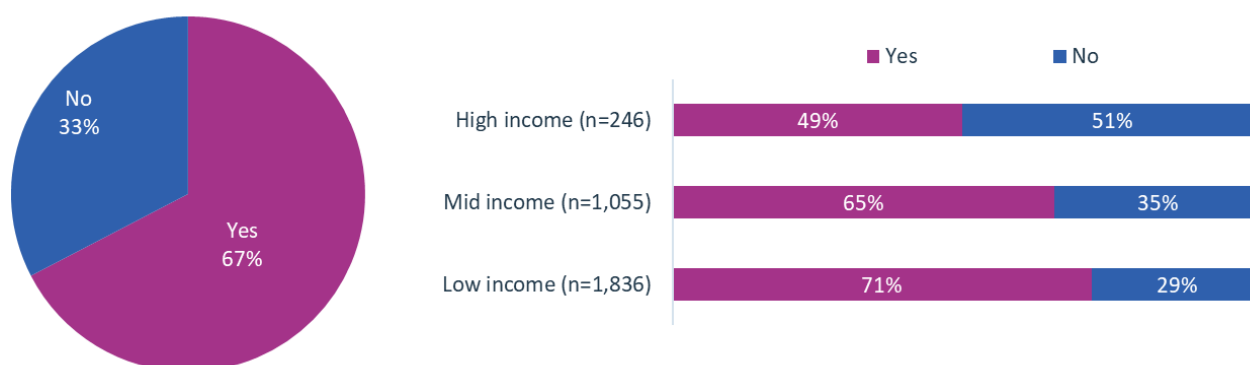
Single parents are therefore looking to other ways to support their families, with 52% of low-income single mothers in our sample accessing some sort of non-monetary support for their whānau/family, most commonly food parcels, accessed by 39%, and clothing donations, accessed by 20%. Over a third (37%) of those accessing food parcels to support their whānau/family do so at least once a month.

The basic right to be safe

Two thirds (67%) of single mothers in our sample have experienced violence and abuse from someone they were in an intimate relationship with (see Figure 17). The incidence rate of intimate partner violence (IPV) decreases as income level rises in our survey sample - 71% of low-income single mothers having experienced IPV, compared to 65% of mid-income and 49% of high-income (see stacked bar charts in Figure 18).

In eight out of 10 of these cases (80%) the person from whom they experienced violence and abuse was the other parent of their child/children (with similar rates across income levels). As a result, a third (33%) of low-income single mothers experiencing IPV find it “Very difficult” or “Difficult” to be safe from someone they used to be in an intimate relationship with, and for 25% it is “Very difficult” or “Difficult” for their child/children to be safe.

Figure 18: Share of respondents having experienced violence and abuse from someone they were in an intimate relationship for all single mothers (pie chart, n=3,284) and by income level



Source: Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 Online Survey

76% of low-income wāhine Māori single mothers have experienced IPV, 83% of these cases being from the other parent of their child/children. 31% of these wāhine find it “Very difficult” or “Difficult” to be safe from someone they used to be in an intimate relationship with, and for 21% it is “Very difficult” or “Difficult” for their child/children to be safe.

67% of low-income Pasifika single mothers have experienced IPV, 86% of these cases being from the other parent of their child/children. 31% of these women find it “Very difficult” or “Difficult” to be safe from someone they used to be in an intimate relationship with, and for 23% it is “Very difficult” or “Difficult” for their child/children to be safe.

We saw higher rates of IPV in our disabled whānau respondents, with 82% of low-income disabled single mothers with one or more disabled children having experienced IPV and 77% of low-income disabled single mothers without disabled children, compared to 58% of non-disabled low-income single mothers without disabled children. 35% of low-income disabled single mothers (with or without disabled children) find it “Very difficult” or “Difficult” to be safe from someone they used to be in an intimate relationship with and for 25% it is “Very difficult” or “Difficult” for their child/children to be safe.

59% of our small sample of single fathers (all income levels combined) have experienced IPV, in 85% of cases from the other parent of their child/children. 34% of these men find it “Very difficult” or “Difficult” to be safe from someone they used to be in an intimate relationship with, and for 30% it is “Very difficult” or “Difficult” for their child/children to be safe (i.e. lower levels of IPV for single fathers but, if it has occurred, the ability to be safe, and keep children safe from the other parent is similarly difficult).

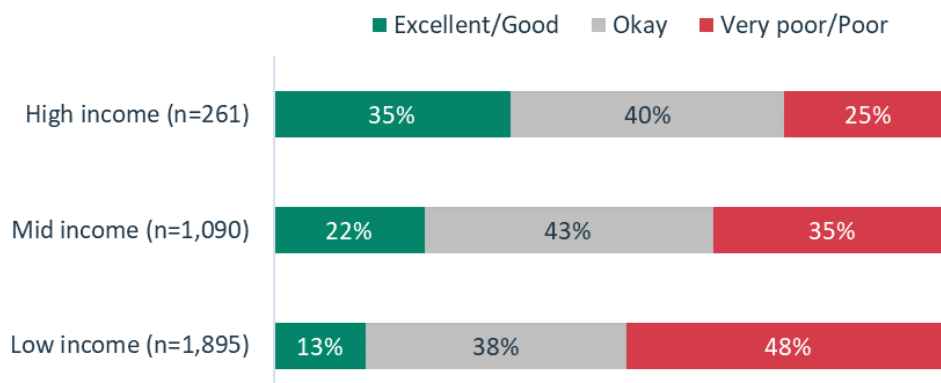
The Ministry for Women’s (2018) report *Something’s got to change: Insights from mothers* highlighted the legacy of violence that many single mothers had experienced with their ex-partners and how this was an enduring source of stress, and mental and physical unwellness for these parents. Some mothers in the study related how the depression, anger, and behavioural issues that their children were experiencing were related to violence they witnessed and experienced when the mother was with her partner. Waldegrave et al (2016, p.686) identified the need for a greater availability of safe houses for mothers to escape from family violence with their children—or for fathers who have been violent to their partner and/or children to move to, so the mother and children can remain in their family home.”

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased rates of IPV in Aotearoa. During the first year of COVID-19, Women’s refuge reported a surge in demand for their services of around 30% more than normal for their services during the first national lockdown (McAllister et al 2021: 8).

Impact on the overall physical and mental health of single parents

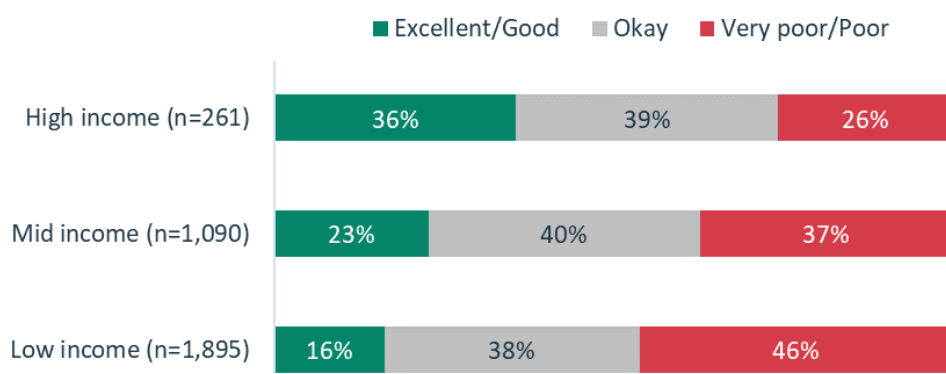
The results indicate that the difficulty single parents face in accessing basic needs is having a negative impact on their overall physical and mental health. Almost half (48%) of low-income single mothers self-rate their overall mental health as “Very poor” or “Poor”, and 46% self-rate their overall physical health as “Very poor” or “Poor” (see Figures 19 and 20). When we see that with a higher income this incidence of “Very poor” or “Poor” health reduces to 25% and 26% for mental and physical health respectively, we see that this is not purely the impact of supporting children as a single parent, as those with more money available to access basic needs for them and their whānau are more likely to experience good health.

Figure 19: Self-rated overall mental health for single mothers by income level.



Source: Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 Online Survey

Figure 20 : Self-rated overall physical health for single mothers by income level



Source: Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 Online Survey

47% of low-income wāhine Māori single mothers rate their overall mental health as “Very poor” or “Poor”, and 51% rate their overall physical health as “Very poor” or “Poor”. 43% of low-income Pasifika single WNB parents their overall mental health as “Very poor” or “Poor”, and 54% rate their overall physical health as “Very poor” or “Poor”.

Over half (56%) of disabled low-income single mothers rate their overall physical health as “Very poor” or “Poor”, compared to 35% of non-disabled low-income single mothers. 60% rate their overall mental health as “Very poor” or “Poor” compared to 34% of non-disabled low-income single mothers.

Results from our small sample (51) of low-income single fathers suggest that they are generally experiencing better (self-rated) health than low-income single mothers - 31% rating their physical health and 31% their mental health “Very poor” or “Poor”. Given that low-income single fathers are less likely than low-income single mothers to find it “Very difficult” or “Difficult” to find time to do things that they enjoy e.g. hobbies, exercise and other things that interest them/help them relax (53% vs. 74% of single mothers), and to have time away from their children just for them (56% vs. 77% of single mothers), improving access for low-income single mothers to child-free time where they can do things that they enjoy appears to be an important focus for improving their physical and mental health.

Superu’s 2018 report examined looked the prevalence of a range of health outcomes for adults and children in Aotearoa New Zealand from different family types, using data sourced from the New Zealand Health Survey. They found that sole parents experienced higher rates of poor health outcomes, including poor mental health, psychological

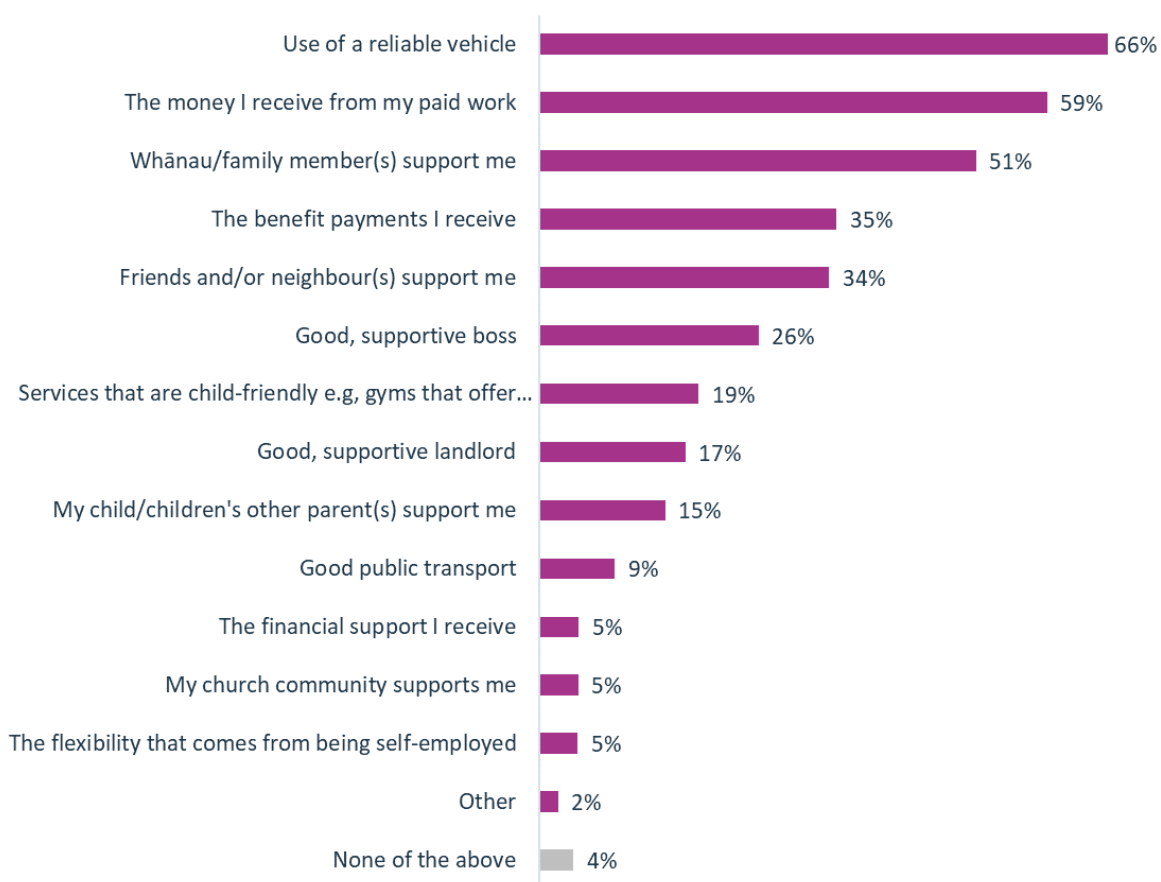
distress, asthma, and obesity, compared with adults from other family types. The children of sole parent families also experienced higher rates of health-related disadvantage compared with children of coupled parents, including higher rates of asthma and obesity.

Lack of financial resources was found to have a strong association to many of the relatively poorer outcomes found for sole parent families compared with coupled parent families. These included children having unmet primary healthcare needs, including dental care, because of cost or a lack of transport: “Sole parents with young children had the highest rates of unmet need for every measure we considered. In the previous 12 months, almost half had experienced unmet need for primary health care, with nearly one in three not visiting the GP and one in six not visiting after-hours when they had a medical problem because of cost. Over a third had unmet need for a dentist and one in six had foregone filling a prescription because of cost, even with the subsidies available.” (Superu 2018, p.37; see also Statistics New Zealand 2020; MWA 2018, p.685). Other studies consistently find that single parents and their children face higher rates of poor physical and mental health (Collings, Jenkin, Carter, and Signal 2014; Tobias, Gerritsen, Kokaua, and Templeton, 2009; Tobias, Kokaua, Gerritsen, and Templeton, 2010; see also Waldegrave et al 2016; Baker and Tippin 2002).

Enablers/Barriers to accessing basic needs

For those that said it was “Very easy” or “Easy” to access one or more basic needs (as per Figures 16 and 17), the “Use of reliable vehicle” was the top enabler making it easy for them to access these things for them and their whānau with two thirds (67%) of single mothers selecting this option (see Figure 21). This was followed by “The money I receive from my paid work” (59%) and “Whānau/family member(s) support me”. A “Good supportive boss” was also highly rated, with 55% of those in the high-income, and 47% of those on in the mid-income group saying this factor helped to make it easy for them to access basic needs for them and their whānau.

Figure 21: “What helps make it easy for you to access these things for you and your whānau?” – single mothers who said they found it “Very easy” or “Easy” to access one or more basic needs (n=2,944)



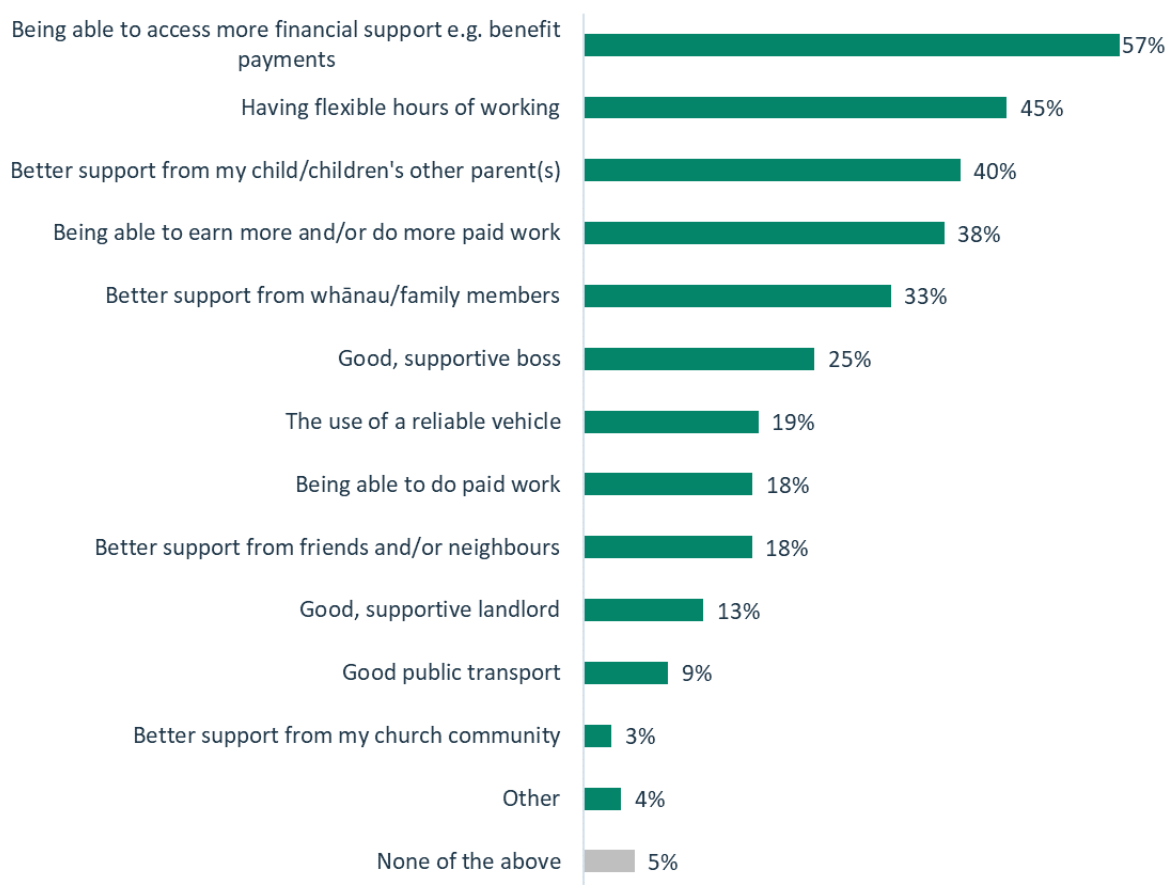
Source: Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 Online Survey

82% of low-income single mothers said they found it “Very easy” or “Easy” to access at least one of the basic needs presented by the survey, 91% of mid-income and 97% of high income. For low-income single mothers, “The benefit payments I receive” was the second most important enabler making it easy for them to access things for them and their whānau, selected by 52% (after the use of a reliable vehicle, selected by 63%). 94% of high-income single mothers said it was “The money I receive from paid work” and 55% of these high-income respondents said that a “Good supportive boss” that made it easier for them.

For the single mothers that said it was “Very difficult” or “Difficult” to access one or more basic needs, “Being able to access more financial support e.g. benefit payments” was the top factor that would help to make it easier for them to access basic needs for them and their whānau (57% selecting this option – see Figure 22), followed by “Having flexible hours of working” (45%) and “Better support from my child/children’s other parent(s)” (40%).

Given that 28% of the low-income single mothers in our sample said that the other parent of one or more of their children has “No contact at all with the child/children”, and these respondents were less likely to select “Better support from my child/children’s other parent” (presumably because they do not consider this an option, but they would possibly have selected “Any support...” were this option presented), the real share of single mothers who would benefit from a more equitable share of childcare is likely to be higher than reported here.

Figure 22: “What would help make it easier for you to access these things for you and your whānau?” – single mothers who said they found it “Very difficult” or “Difficult” to access one or more basic needs (n=3,269)



Source: Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 Online Survey

97% of low-income, 95% of mid-income, and 89% of high-income single mothers find it “Very difficult” or “Difficult” to access one or more basic needs for them and their whānau. “Being able to access more financial support e.g. benefit payments” was top for both the low and mid-income groups (61% and 58% respectively, compared to 30% of the high-income group). 50% of low-income and 39% of mid-income single mothers said that “Having flexible hours of working” would help them to access basic needs. 27% of the low-income, 4% of mid-income and 0% of high-income groups said, “Being able to do paid work” and 35% of the low-income, 50% of mid-income and 33% of high-income groups said “Being able to earn more and/or do more paid work” would help.

For low-income wāhine Māori single parents, the “use of a reliable vehicle” was the top factor making it easy for them to access basic needs for them and their whānau (63% selecting this option). Second was “Whānau/family member(s) support me” (58%) and third, “the benefit payments I receive” (51%). For low-income wāhine Māori single parents that currently find it difficult to access one or more basic needs, “Being able to access more financial support e.g. benefit payments” was the top factor that would make it easier (61%), followed by “Having flexible hours of working” (55%) and “Better support from my child/children's other parent(s)” (43%).

For low-income Pasifika single mothers, the “use of a reliable vehicle” was the top factor making it easy for them to access basic needs for them and their whānau (64% selecting this option). Second was “Whānau/family member(s) support me” (56%) and third, “the benefit payments I receive” (53%). For low-income Pasifika single mothers that currently find it difficult to access one or more basic needs, “Having flexible hours of working” was the top factor that would make it easier (62%), followed by “Being able to access more financial support e.g. benefit payments” (59%) and “Better support from my child/children's other parent(s)” (44%).

Single fathers were less likely than single mothers to say that “better support from my child/children’s other parent(s)” would make it easier for them to access basic needs for their whānau – just 24% selecting this option compared to 40% of single mothers. Given that single mothers were twice as likely as single fathers to say that the other parent of their child/children has “No contact at all with the child/children”, this is not surprising.

Low income disabled single mothers report the same factors that make it easy for them to access basic needs for their whānau – i.e. reliable vehicle (62%), benefit payments (56%), and whānau/family member support - and the same factors that would make it easier – i.e. “being able to access more financial support” (65% vs. 56% non-disabled), 49% “having flexible hours of working” and 44% “Better support from my child/children’s other parent(s).

Key action area #4: Improve access to paid work for single parents

Summary of solutions relating to Key Action Area #4

Ensure the government systems supports single parent families, specifically by:

- Updating tax policies to ensure childcare can be claimed as expenses for tax purposes (this will benefit all parents).
- Adding child care subsidies to Single Parent benefits.
- Aligning policy and action plans with the goals of the Women's Employment Action Plan to include Single Parents.
- Redefining the Sole Parent Support from a weekly payment that helps single parents find part-time work or get ready for future work to a weekly payment that supports Single Parents to parent their children.
- Developing programmes to ensure women are able to obtain their drivers licences.
- Acknowledging that gender-based violence and harassment disproportionately affects women and girls, and recognise that an inclusive, integrated and gender-responsive approach, which tackles underlying causes and risk factors, including gender stereotypes, multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, and unequal gender-based power relations, is essential to ending violence and harassment in our society and enabling single parent whānau to thrive.

Ensure businesses systems support single families, specifically by:

- Creating flexible employment and providing or subsidising affordable childcare for single parents.
- Developing employer benefit schemes that provide flexible, cost-effective childcare is available for single parent families
- Allowing employees to work during school hours and consider a 'no meetings after 3pm rule'
- Allowing single parents to use sick leave to care for their children.
- Making it mandatory for employers to publish flexible working options for all roles.
- Implementing the Fair Pay legislation recommendations.
- Ensuring that the hourly part-time pay rate is the equivalent of full-time hourly pay rate.
- Registering their gender pay gap on [Mind The Gap](#).
- Registering their paid parental leave policies on [The New Zealand Parental Leave Register](#).
- Ensuring that the hourly part-time pay rate is the equivalent of full-time hourly pay rate.
- Subscribing to and implementing the PSA Gender Pay Principles.
- Integrating flexible working policies by default.
- Ensuring a gender lens is applied to all workplace policies.
- Encourage employers to enact single parent inclusive HR policies.

Ensure communities support single parents, specifically by;

- Continuing to advocate for single parents' rights by broadening the definition of 'family' to reflect modern whānau and incorporate single parent families.
- Encouraging Sport NZ to fund after school sports with a focus on ensuring they are affordable for single parents.

These recommended solutions are supported by previous research including:

MWA (2018) recommend extending the 20 hours free to all under 3-year-olds in order to help mothers into education, training and employment.

The Ministry of Women report, 'Something's Got To Change' (2018b, p.10) argues that helping single mothers on the benefit get their drivers licence would be hugely beneficial: "Driver licences are used by employers as a qualification. Nationally, just over half of young mothers cannot legally drive their child. Just one quarter of young Māori mothers have a restricted or full licence. In Auckland, 70 percent of young mothers do not have a driver licence. A lack of driver licences adds additional barriers to training, finding and staying in work, and is a safety issue for the children and driving public. Providing young mothers with the resources and childcare to obtain their driver licences would be hugely beneficial." (see also Families Commission 2010, p.10).

Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 research results relating to Key Action Area #4

Across all focus groups carried out by Project Gender, a consistent theme was how difficult it is for single parents to access paid work due to their childcare responsibilities but also that high abatement thresholds, whereby benefits are cut once income over a certain amount is earned act as a disincentive.

It's so degrading having to go in there [WINZ]. I've got a trade, try telling them you can't find work, good fucking luck, but the childcare is only for 6 hours a day. So what, I go and find a career in the trades for 6 hours a day? That doesn't exist. (Focus group participant, June 17th 2022)

This whole thing of you can only earn \$100 a week or whatever and then they start taxing your benefit massively. Those thresholds need to be bigger. Benefits need to be more, child allowances need to be more, and you should be allowed to earn substantially more. It should be like an ease-off the benefit, not an immediate cut. (Focus group participant, July 27th 2022)

Ngāti Kahungunu's insights strongly support this action area. Summarising key kōrero from their roopu with their over 20 Te Kura wāhine, Ngāti Kahungunu shared:

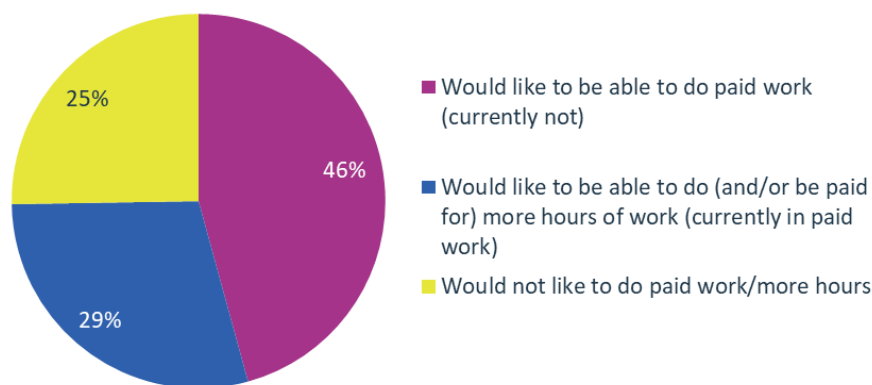
"We don't just want a job, we want a career and opportunities to study/work that fit our lives as sole carers for our tamariki.

Give us the opportunity to be our best – we need childcare support to support our growth – the system restricts our options".

Supporting quotes from Ngāti Kahungunu's Mama under 20 include: "I can't afford to work – If I work 40 hrs a week, after paying childcare I only earn \$100 more than on a benefit, that's \$2.50 per hour", "We want to be the best version of ourselves for our tamariki, no work experience, no job, no job, no work experience", "Free childcare", "Mummy hours", "Why is it that you are more financially safe on a benefit, than to work".

Respondents to the Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 online survey were asked whether paid work was currently a source of income for them. If it was, then they were asked "would you like to be able to do (and/or be paid for) more hours of work than you currently are?". If not, they were asked "would you like to be able to do paid work". Many single parents want to be in some, or more paid work. We saw a high desire in low-income single mothers for more paid work, with 59% of those already in paid work saying they would like to be able to do (and/or be paid for) more hours of work than they currently are, and 90% of those not currently in paid work saying they would like to be able to be. This means three quarters of low-income single mothers either want to be in paid work if they are not already (46% of all low-income single mothers in our sample) or be able to do more paid work if they already do some (29%, see Figure 23). 91% of those on the sole parent benefit, and not currently in paid work, would like to be.

Figure 23: Desire for paid work beyond current situation (low-income single mothers, n=1,837)



Source: Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 Online Survey

Reporting on their 2006 study of work, family and parenting, the Families Commission (2010, p.9) found that single parents were more likely than partnered parents to believe that paid employment makes them a better parent (64% agreed, compared with 55% of all parents in paid work), and that their children’s relationships with their extended family were stronger because the parent was in paid work (44% compared with 36% of all parents in paid work) (MSD 2006).

The Ministry for Women (2018b: 3) report that “The mothers told us they want to work and for it to be good work. Having a child, they said, made them want to change their lives. Being a mother is a strong incentive to get involved in work, education or training to provide for their family, and to be a role model for their children. Having a family, they said, changed their aspirations and made them open to opportunity.”

For two thirds (66%) of the low-income single mothers responding to the Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 survey who want some, or more, paid work, needing to look after their child/children was what was getting in the way for them, with 37% also saying that they are unable to afford childcare (see Figure 24).

Needing to look after their children was understandably a more common barrier to paid work for those with children under 5 years – over three quarters (76%) selecting this, compared to 58% of those without pre-school children.

Based on Household Labour Force Survey data, Statistics NZ suggest that lower rates of employment for single parents may be partially due to greater difficulty in accessing childcare (Statistics New Zealand, 2018).

MWA argue that the cost of childcare continues to be a major barrier for single mothers’ access to paid employment: “sole mothers are more likely to resign, turn down or stop looking for paid work, or be unable to change usual work patterns, as a result of childcare difficulties” (2018b, p.11).

The National Council of Women (2019b) argue that childcare costs are a significant barrier to paid work for single parents in Aotearoa New Zealand: “Childcare costs for sole parents in NZ are some of the highest in the OECD (The cost of childcare as a percentage of income for sole parents in New Zealand is the sixth highest of 35 countries), even with 20 hours free early childhood education (ECE) and other childcare subsidies” (the OECD estimates that childcare costs in Aotearoa New Zealand account for 25% of the income of a sole parenting mother in full time paid work).

Figure 24: “What is getting in the way of you doing the hours of paid work that you would like to do?” (low-income single mothers wanting more/any paid work, n=1,365)



Source: Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 Online Survey

Aligning with the Project Gender focus group results, the second most common barrier to paid work for the single mothers responding to the Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 online survey was that their benefit payment would be reduced (38%).

Scott and Masselot examined New Zealand’s welfare-to-work schemes and find that most single parents prefer to work but mandatory welfare-to-work often leads to low paid, precarious employment where employment and childcare are in conflict and “solo parents are often denied control over major life decisions and everyday routines by welfare-to-work obligations’. Contextual factors such as a lack of suitable employment and childcare, social support and welfare assistance may lead to welfare-to-work being “counterproductive with respect to health and wellbeing” and there is evidence of adverse effects. Scott and Masselot call for further research on the health and wellbeing of single parents in mandatory welfare-to-work programmes (2018, p.261).

Berentson-Shaw argues that welfare-to-work programmes seldom work because “...interventions that expose a family to more financial and psychological stress (as where benefits are made conditional on participation in low-paid, precarious work, and where high-quality, fully subsidised childcare is not provided), do little to restructure the conditions which cause and maintain poverty in single parent families” (2018, p.31; see also Berentson-Shaw 2019, p.47; Kaushal et al 2006; Waldfogel 2007; Duncan et al 2008; Duncan et al 2014).

To make up for not being able to access the paid work they would like/need to access, 23% of low-income single mothers exchange goods or services without using money e.g. looking after someone's children in exchange for them doing odd jobs around their home.

For low-income single mothers currently in paid work, a wide range of factors enable them to do the hours that they do, and therefore the income that they receive (see Figure 25). The top four enablers all relate to flexible and/or part-time work being offered within a supportive workplace culture - i.e. factors that workplaces and employers can control ("Good supportive boss" (68%), "Being able to work flexible hours" (65%), "Good, supportive colleagues/workmates" (57%), and "Being able to work part-time" (50%) - see Figure 24). The next most selected enabler for paid work is "Being able to Access a reliable vehicle" (47%).

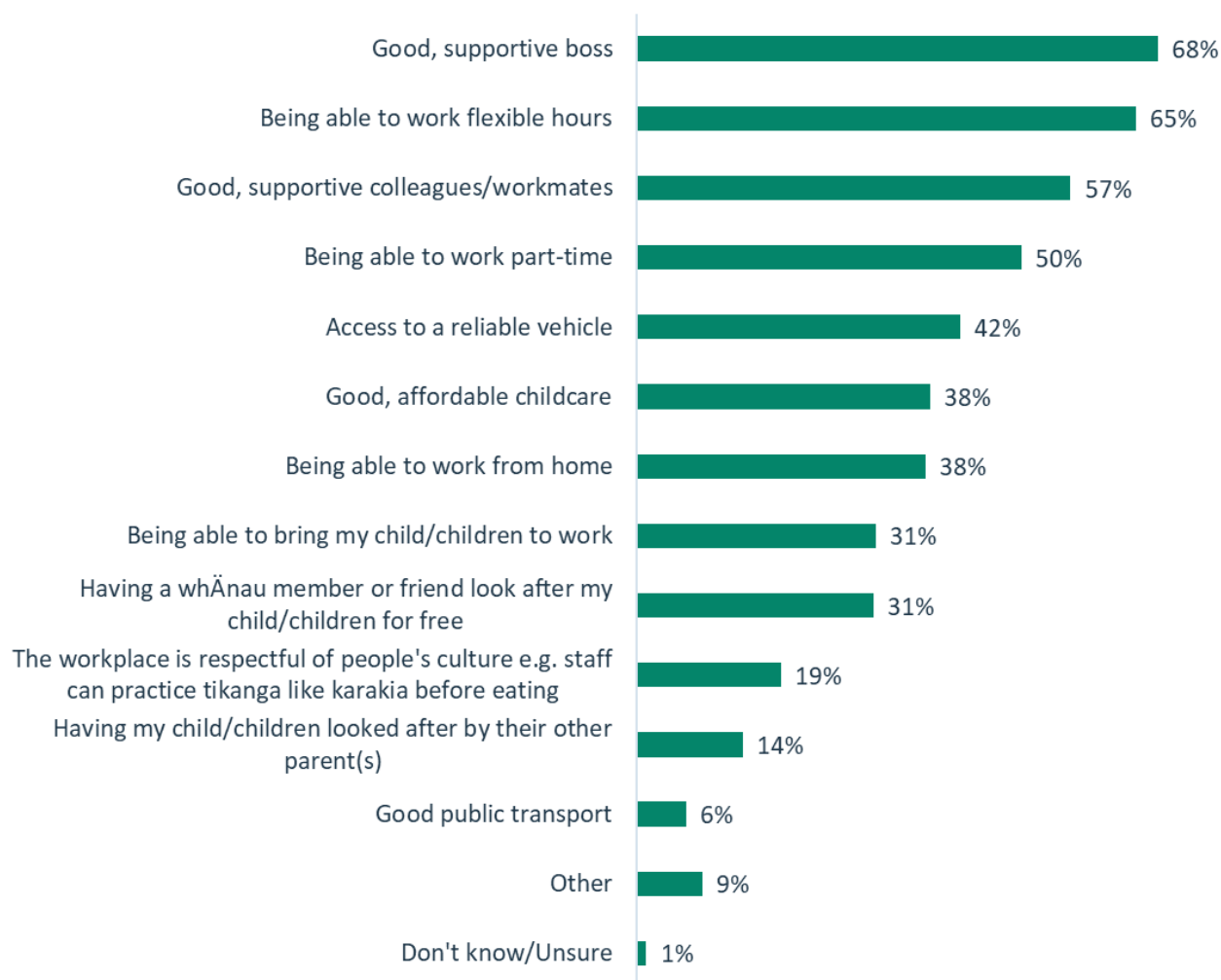
Many parents require flexibility in the workplace in order to be able to access paid employment, however, this is particularly the case for single parents.

Waldegrave et al 2016 find that single parents experience difficulty finding employment that is flexible enough to work with their childcare responsibilities (2016, p.682; see also Families Commission 2010, Dale et al 2010; Think Place 2014).

Beyond enabling access to more hours of paid work, a focus on enabling access to better quality paid work for single parents is also crucial. Just 56% of low-income single mothers in paid work agree that the work they are currently doing do matches their qualifications. 88% low-income single mothers have qualifications with 64% having more than a high school qualification.

Berentson-Shaw argues (2018, p.16), the need for flexibility can require some single parents to seek work that they are overqualified for (Berentson-Shaw 2018: 16). The Families Commission finds that choosing a job for the perceived flexibility it offered could result in underemployment or under-utilisation of skills" (Families Commission 2010: 10). For example, a single parent participating in the study said she was unable to use her degree to gain paid work: "Same with me in science ... that's why I'm typing, because it is flexible and all that... I've actually been looking for a job [using my degree] in microbiology ... but they just do not have part-time jobs" (Families Commission 2010, p.10)

Figure 25: “Which of the following is important for you to be able to do the hours of paid work that you do?” (low-income single mothers currently in paid work, n=929)



Source: Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 Online Survey

90% of low-income wāhine Māori single mothers not currently in paid work would like to be, and 61% of those already in paid work would like to be able to do (and/or be paid for) more hours of work than they currently are. The most common barrier to paid work for those that would like to do more, or any, is “I need to look after my child/children” (65%), followed by “I’m unable to afford childcare” (39%). For those in paid work, 65% say that a “Good supportive boss” enables the hours that they do, 60% “Being able to work flexible hours”, and 57% “Good supportive colleagues/workmates”.

93% of low-income Pasifika single mothers not currently in paid work would like to be, and 60% of those already in paid work would like to be able to do (and/or be paid for) more hours of work than they currently are. The most common barrier to paid work for those that would like to do more, or any, is “I need to look after my child/children” (64%), followed by “I’m unable to afford childcare” (39%). For those in paid work, the majority (78%) said that a “Good supportive boss” enables the hours that they do, 72% “Being able to work flexible hours”, and 57% “Good supportive colleagues/workmates”.

Low-income disabled single mothers are less likely to be in paid work than low-income non-disabled single mothers (42% vs. 58% respectively). However, they are more likely to want more (or any) paid work, with 78% compared to 70% either wanting paid work if they do not already have it, or to be able to get more hours if they do. We see similar childcare-related barriers, and work-place set-up and culture-related enablers in disabled and non-disabled

segments, but “My health” and “My confidence/self-esteem” came up as more common barriers to paid work for low-income disabled single mothers (39% and 31% respectively, compared to 11% and 17% for low-income non-disabled single mothers).

Results from our small sample (51) of low-income single fathers also show a high desire for more paid work with 83% of all low-income single fathers either wanting to be in paid work if they are not already, or wanting to be able to do more (and/or be paid for) more hours of work if they are. The most common barrier to paid work for these fathers is “I need to look after my child/children”, and second is “Other responsibilities at home e.g. housework, managing whānau/family life”. Flexible working hours and being able to work part-time are the main factors enabling the low-income single fathers currently in paid work in our sample to be able to do the hours that they do.

Key action area #5: Call for changes in government policy that will positively impact single parents

Summary of solutions relating to Key Action Area #5

Ensure the government systems supports single parent families, specifically by:

- Reframing childcare from being a private profit-making venture to a public good.
- Reframing state responsibilities for single parents towards **protection not investigation** and ensuring an intersectional lens is applied across all agencies.
- Improving interagency coordination, collaboration and communication by identifying barriers to interagency coordination, collaboration and communication at all levels; and continuing to establish and/or promote protocols, guidelines and systems between relevant agencies and service providers nationally, regionally and locally for information sharing and coordination of services.
- Redefining Sole Parent Support from a weekly payment that helps single parents find part-time work or get ready for future work to a weekly payment that supports Single Parents to parent their children.
- Encouraging the Commerce Commission to investigate single parent discrimination in renting.
- Acknowledging that gender-based violence and harassment disproportionately affects women and girls, and recognise that an inclusive, integrated and gender-responsive approach, which tackles underlying causes and risk factors, including gender stereotypes, multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, and unequal gender-based power relations, is essential to ending violence and harassment in our society and enabling single parent whānau to thrive.
- Acknowledging that in 2015 New Zealand became a signatory to the SDGs. *(Each indicator has been indexed so that the value for 2015 equals 50. Achievement of the target is set at 100. So, a score of 75 would mean that New Zealand is halfway toward achieving that target. A score below 50 means that we have moved further away from the target since 2015.)* The Gender Equality indicators are; reduction of gender wage gap (52), female representation in Parliament (67), indications of intimate partner violence (50), percentage of women in senior managerial positions (51). Currently New Zealand is not achieving the rate needed to achieve these targets.
- Noting that violence and harassment is incompatible with the promotion of sustainable healthy families and impacts negatively on the ability for single parents to be well.
- MBIE to ratify the [IPO convention clause 190 Violence and Work](#) which outlines recognizing the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment.

Treasury

- Applying an intersectional gender lens across all government budgets - to be actioned as a matter of urgency.

Ministries for Women, MBIE, and Education.

- Ensuring enrolment forms for schools reflect single parent whānau.
- Aligning policy and action plans with the goals of the Women Employment Action Plan to include Single Parents.
- Quantifying the scale of underemployed single parents and developing strategies and programmes for them to be employing in work appropriate to their skill levels.

Ministry of Justice

- Creating a more whānau centred family court approach as outlined in recommendation by [The Child Poverty Action Group. \(CPAG\)](#).

- Family court to acknowledge the psychological, technically time-consuming work, and childcare requirements for single parents' involvement in legal proceedings by providing financial support.

Ministry of Social Development

- Implementing all recommendations to Working for Families as outlined by The Child Poverty Action Group.
- Changing relationship status policy on Single Parent benefit eligibility to be less restrictive, punitive and patriarchal.
- Changing abatements by allowing a longer period of time before removing entitlements to benefits and related subsidies. This will enable Single Parent to build up capital and support.
- Adding child care subsidies to Single Parent benefits.
- Ensuring policies prioritise the ability for parents to actively parent their children.
- WINZ to scope funding single parent insurance -and /or providing interest free payment options
- Scoping the opportunity for WINZ to include funding for home and contents insurance as outlined in [this report](#) from CPAG.
- Creating Single Parent's networks that operate similar to LGBTQI+ networks, within government agencies.
- Changing the Green eftpos card, supplied by WINZ, to be less stigmatising.

Some of these recommended solutions are supported by previous research including:

The National Council of Women argues that Aotearoa New Zealand needs to increase the amount people can earn before their benefits are reduced (2019b).

The Ministry for Women, in their 2018 report *Something's Got to Change*, make the following recommendation: "Reducing the high levels of benefit abatement could also assist mothers to transition into full-time work" (pp.3-4).

National Council of Women argues that Aotearoa New Zealand needs to better support single parents wanting to work by increasing the childcare subsidy, making it easier for people who need it to get the childcare subsidy, and increasing the amount people can earn before their benefits are reduced (2019b).

Maldonado (2017) find that child support in countries that pay an advance maintenance if the other parent does not pay, reduces poverty for single-parent families; however, the effectiveness varies across countries and over time.

The global literature provides evidence that the impact of welfare-to-work reforms on parents' and children's financial wellbeing has been negative (Alexander et al 2005; Blaxland 2008; Marks 2007; Miranti et al 2011; Saunders et al 2008; Fisher and Zhu 2018). For example, in Australia, Wilkins (2013) finds that following the introduction of the Welfare to Work reforms, the single-parent poverty rate jumped from 19% in 2005 to 24% in 2007 and remained above 23% in subsequent years.

In Canada, the Child Canada Benefit (CCB) was introduced in 2016, a set of child benefits which increased benefit levels overall, but also introduced more means testing such that the net benefits received by higher income families were reduced. The CCB has garnered international attention as an example of effective policy for combating child poverty (Baker, Messacar and Stabile, 2021).

Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 research results relating to Key Action #5

Abatement thresholds

Across all focus groups carried out by Project Gender, a consistent theme for single parents was that they wanted to enter into paid work, or do more hours if they were already working, but they were prevented from doing so because their benefit would be reduced or cut completely (see previous section).

Aligning with these insights, the Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 online survey results show strong desire from low-income single parents for paid work, yet for the 38% of the low-income single mothers who want to do more, or any,

paid work the fact that their benefit payment would be reduced was a barrier to them finding, and taking on hours of paid work.

Berentson-Shaw (2018) argues that Working for Families is designed around coupled parents as the norm with single parents the deviation from this (see also Dwyer 2005, who describes the design of the WfF system as within the “breadwinner” paradigm where the nuclear family is the default).

Berentson-Shaw describes how the WfF policy settings operate for single parent whānau: “the rules of the [WfF] policy create a series of pinch points for single parent families. For example, the minimum work hours requirements for the in-work tax credit (which are 30 hours for two-parent families and 20 hours for single parent families) can be shared however they wish between members of a couple in order to qualify for the tax credits. One parent can stop work entirely and the family still qualifies for the in-work tax credit (IWTC). A parent on their own however must work all the minimum hours themselves to qualify. The real effect of this is that the policy imposes a higher minimum work hour requirement upon some parents simply because they are parenting alone” (2018, p.35).

Child Action Poverty Group have made calls for Working for Families to abolish the requirements for fixed hours of work, abolish the IWTC and add the payment of \$72.50 to the first child Family Tax Credit.

Across all focus groups carried out by Project Gender, a consistent theme for single parents was the unfairness of Working for Families. For example:

There's the Working for Families threshold where a family can earn about \$130,000 a year and still be eligible for WFF and I lost it at \$75K and my house cost me nearly \$500 a week and it's the same costs! It doesn't cost an extra \$75K a year to feed one more adult you know. Because my power bill is the same as my friends who have \$200k in their bank account. Our costs are the same as every other family, why do they think we should be raising our children on less. (Focus group participant, August 10th 2022]

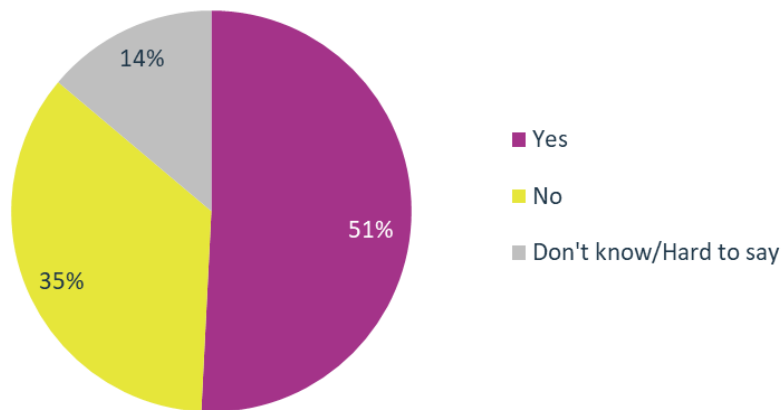
Relationship status policy

An additional theme across the Project Gender focus groups was the unfairness of the Relationship Status policy which prevents single parents from dating or forming a romantic attachment with another person. For example:

It's almost impossible and terrifying to date someone while I'm on a benefit, they're suddenly expected to start financially supporting you and your child if they start sleeping over, people use dobbing you into WINZ as threats! Being investigated by WINZ is an absolutely terrifying prospect, it's not worth it so you stay single. (Focus group participant,)

51% of low-income single mothers said they avoid dating and/or entering a relationship, including living with someone, because of their benefit payments (see Figure 26). This percentage is even higher for low-income disabled single mothers - 57% avoid dating and/or entering a relationship compared to 42% of non-disabled low-income single mothers.

Figure 26: “Do the benefit payments you receive mean that you ever avoid dating and/or entering a relationship, including living with someone?” (low-income single mothers currently receiving a benefit payment, n=1,376)



Source: Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 Online Survey

Key action area #6: Support single parents to receive the protection that financial services offer

Summary of solutions for Key Action Area #6

Ensure the government systems supports single parent families, specifically by:

Inland Revenue Department

- Removing secondary tax for beneficiaries.
- Updating the KiwiSaver criteria to remove the need for both parents/caregivers to sign children up for KiwiSaver.
- Updating tax policies to ensure childcare can be claimed as expenses for tax purposes (this will benefit all parents).
- Scoping the inclusion of a KiwiSaver contribution as part of the Single Parent benefit
- WINZ to scope funding single parent insurance -and /or providing interest free payment options
- Scoping the opportunity for WINZ to include funding for home and contents insurance as outlined in [this report](#) from CPAG.
- Promoting the MSD financial mentoring system to Single Parents.
- Acknowledging that gender-based violence and harassment disproportionately affects women and girls, and recognise that an inclusive, integrated and gender-responsive approach, which tackles underlying causes and risk factors, including gender stereotypes, multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, and unequal gender-based power relations, is essential to ending violence and harassment in our society and enabling single parent whānau to thrive.
- Noting that violence and harassment is incompatible with the promotion of sustainable healthy families and impacts negatively on the ability for single parents to be well.

Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Affairs

- Granting the Financial Markets Authority (FMA) statutory authority to monitor and address lenders' financial inclusion policies and practices, including single parent borrowers.

Ensure businesses systems support single families, specifically by:

Financial institutions

- Banks considering child support payments as income when single parents apply for mortgage loans.
- Investigating insurance for Single Parents especially 3rd party and contents insurance.
- Improving access to affordable car insurance.
- Providing financial wellness tools for single parents. Financial support should be less focused on budgeting – single parents know how to budget in many cases – financial support needs to be concentrated in other areas with a special focus on Māori. E.g. [The Table](#)
- Continuing to advocate for single parents' rights by broadening the definition of 'family' to reflect modern whānau and incorporate single parent families.

Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 research results relating to Key Action Area #6

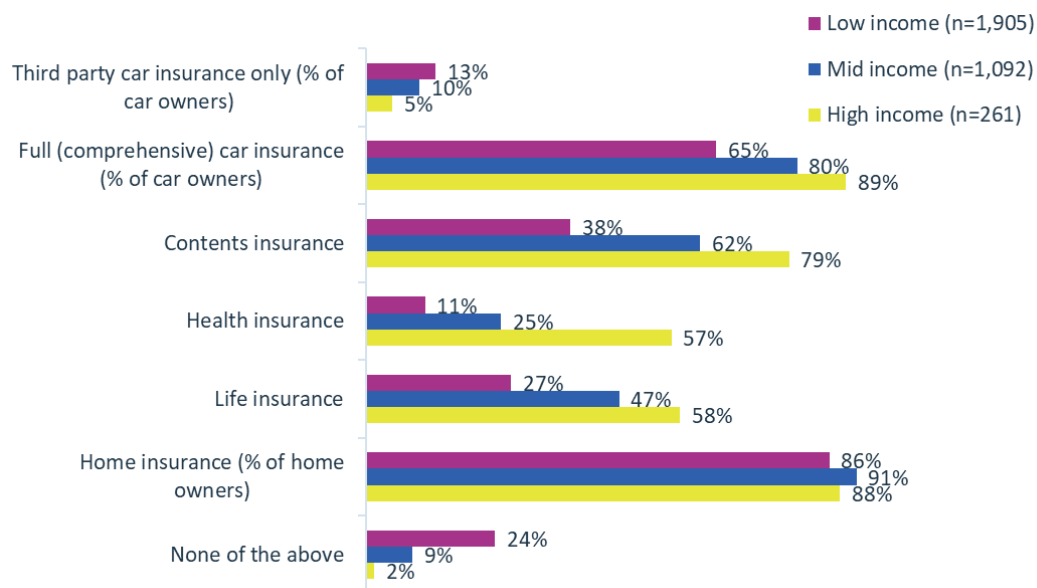
Insurance

Respondents to the Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 online survey were asked whether they have the following types of insurance: third party car, full (comprehensive) car, contents, health, life, and home. Low-income single mothers currently have lower levels of financial security in terms of insurance compared to those in the high-income bracket. Just 2% of high-income single mothers said they had no insurance, compared to almost a quarter (24%) of those in

the low-income bracket (see Figure 27). The biggest disparity is seen in health insurance, with those in the high-income bracket being more than five times more likely than those in the low-income bracket to have this cover. Those on a high income are also more than twice as likely to have contents and life insurance compared to those in on a low income. More than 85% of homeowners in all income brackets have home insurance.

89% of high-income and 80% of mid-income single mothers have full (comprehensive) car insurance, and a further 5% of high-income and 10% of mid-income have third party car insurance only, compared to 65% of those on a low income having full, and 13% third party car insurance (see Figure 27). This means that 21% of low-income, 10% of mid-income and 6% of high-income single parents own a car without any insurance.

Figure 27: Share of single mothers having insurance, by income level



Source: Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 Online Survey

35% of low-income wāhine Māori single mothers said they had no insurance, 23% have life insurance, 21% contents insurance, 7% health insurance and 81% of homeowners have home insurance. 55% of low-income wāhine Māori single mothers that own a car have full (comprehensive) car insurance, and a further 11% have third-party car insurance meaning a third (33%) of those owning a car do not have car insurance.

38% of low-income Pasifika single mothers said they had no insurance, 27% have life insurance, 14% contents insurance, 6% health insurance and 88% of homeowners have home insurance. 52% of low-income Pasifika single mothers that own a car have full (comprehensive) car insurance, and a further 10% have third-party car insurance meaning 38% of those owning a car do not have car insurance.

27% of low-income disabled single mothers said they had no insurance, compared to 20% of those without a disability. 23% have life insurance, 38% have contents insurance, 9% have health insurance and 85% of homeowners have home insurance, compared to 31%, 38%, 13% and 89% of those without a disability for each insurance type respectively. 64% of low-income disabled single mothers that own a car have full (comprehensive) car insurance, and a further 14% have third party car insurance meaning 23% of those owning a car do not have car insurance (compared to 19% of non-disabled low-income single mothers).

Results from our small sample (51) of low-income single fathers show lower levels of insurance cover than for single mothers. For example 40% of low-income single fathers have full (comprehensive) car insurance, 22% contents insurance and 64% home insurance.

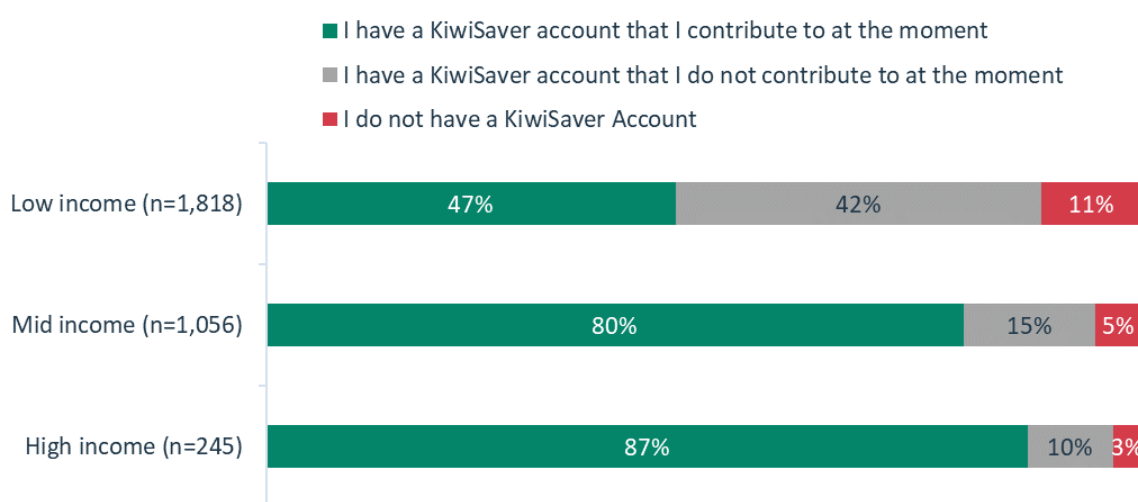
Given the importance of a reliable vehicle for access to basic needs and paid hours of work (see Key action areas 3 and 4 earlier in this report), low levels of car insurance in low-income single parents could have further negative impacts.

KiwiSaver

Low-income single mothers are less likely than those on higher incomes to have a KiwiSaver account that they are currently contributing to (47% compared to 80% of mid-income and 87% of high-income single mothers – see Figure 28). 42% of low, 15% of mid and 10% of high-income single mothers have KiwiSaver accounts that they do not currently contribute to.

Just a quarter (25%) of all single mothers have a KiwiSaver account for one or more of their children, and these levels are relatively low across all income brackets – 21% for low, 32% for mid and 32% for high-income single mothers.

Figure 28: KiwiSaver status for single mothers, by income level



Source: Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 Online Survey

43% of low-income wāhine Māori single mothers have a KiwiSaver account that they currently contribute to, and a further 44% a KiwiSaver account that they do not currently contribute to. 18% have a KiwiSaver account for one or more of their children.

51% of low-income Pasifika single mothers have a KiwiSaver account that they currently contribute to, and a further 32% have a KiwiSaver account that they do not currently contribute to. 11% have a KiwiSaver account for one or more of their children.

41% of low-income disabled single mothers have a KiwiSaver account that they currently contribute to (compared to 54% of those without a disability), and a further 48% have a KiwiSaver account that they do not currently contribute to (compared to 48% of those without a disability). 20% have a KiwiSaver account for one or more of their children (and 22% of those without a disability).

Results from our small sample (51) of low-income single fathers show even lower KiwiSaver participation – just 20% having a KiwiSaver account that they currently contribute to, and a further 43% an account that they do not currently contribute to.

Those that have been a single parent for longer are more likely to have set up KiwiSaver accounts for their child/children – 33% of those that have been a single parent for 9 or more years compared to just 15% of those that

have been a single parent for less than 3 years. Although this may in part be explained by parents being delayed in setting up these accounts (i.e. not at birth), we must also consider the impact of the government removing their \$1,000 contribution for each child in 2015 making it far less appealing to parents to start their child's investment journey with KiwiSaver.

Given the link between KiwiSaver status and homeownership, this appears to be a critical area to focus on to increase equity for low-income single parent whānau in Aotearoa. Stats NZ (Housing in Aotearoa report, 2020) connected the stabilisation of homeownership rates seen in recent years with the increased number of people accessing KiwiSaver funds to buy their first home over the past decade (this capability was introduced in 2011, and in 41,819 New Zealanders used their KiwiSaver to purchase their first home in YE June 2020).

Key action area #7: Support to manage home and family life

Summary of solutions for Key Action Area #7

Ensure the government systems supports single parent families, specifically by:

- Redefining Sole Parent Support from a weekly payment that helps single parents find part-time work or get ready for future work to a weekly payment that supports Single Parents to parent their children.
- Recognising that children are now a more 'precious commodity' i.e., we have lower rates of childbirth nowadays and ensuring policies are reflective of valuing children.
- Acknowledging that gender-based violence and harassment disproportionately affects women and girls, and recognise that an inclusive, integrated and gender-responsive approach, which tackles underlying causes and risk factors, including gender stereotypes, multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, and unequal gender-based power relations, is essential to ending violence and harassment in our society and enabling single parent whānau to thrive.

Ensure businesses systems support single parent families, specifically by:

- Subscribing to and implementing the PSA Gender Pay Principles.
- Providing senior leadership roles on part-time/job-share basis.
- Ensuring that the hourly part-time pay rate is the equivalent of full-time hourly pay rate.
- Creating single parent's networks that operate similar to LGBTQI+ networks, within businesses.
- Working with schools to improve after-school childcare schemes, including travel to and from school.
- Ensuring products and promotional materials reflect single parent families.
- Providing financial wellness tools for single parents. Financial support should be less focused on budgeting – single parents know how to budget in many cases – financial support needs to be concentrated in other areas with a special focus on Māori. E.g. [The Table](#)

Ensure communities support single parent families by:

- Partnering with intergenerational organisations to provide skills and knowledge trades, e.g., older people connecting with single parents to provide home maintenance support.
- Encouraging Sport NZ to fund after school sports with a focus on ensuring they are affordable for single parents.

Some of these recommended solutions are supported by previous research including:

Waldegrave et al (2016, p.686) recommend "Investment in organisations that promote the well-being of children through educational opportunities, cultural and sporting participation, and holidays or experiences beyond their own home can be expected to lift their life opportunities and reduce future welfare costs. This type of investment should be widely available and easy to access."

Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 research results relating to Key Action Area #7

Across all focus groups carried out by Project Gender, a consistent theme for single parents was that they often feel overwhelmed with the responsibility of caring for and managing their children's lives, connecting as a whānau, and running their households and overall family life. For example:

Help with home maintenance would be amazing, my house has rotted away on one side and i have no way to possibly get it fixed and it's just getting worse. (Focus group participant, August 10th 2022)

It would be great to have support groups that can meet regularly, particularly during the teenage years which are honestly the hardest and most emotionally draining years of parenthood. (Focus group participant, July 27th 2022)

It's lonely. I wish I had more family support. I also don't have much support from friends either – everyone's so busy. (Focus group participant, July 27th 2022)

One in nine reported having felt lonely most or all the time (see Walker 2021; Loneliness New Zealand 2020).

Waldegrave et al (2016: 685) noted that single parents often carry alone considerable responsibilities for their households that are usually shared in other household types.

Key action area #8: Work to protect, rather than investigate, single parents who reach out for help

Summary of solutions for Key Action Area #8

Ensure the government systems supports single parent families, specifically by:

- Reframing state responsibilities for single parents towards **protection not investigation** and ensuring an intersectional lens is applied across all agencies.
- Improving interagency coordination, collaboration and communication by identifying barriers to interagency coordination, collaboration and communication at all levels; and continuing to establish and/or promote protocols, guidelines and systems between relevant agencies and service providers nationally, regionally and locally for information sharing and coordination of services.
- Providing training to support policy makers and government to ensure policies and legislation move towards strength-based opportunities for single parent whānau to thrive.
- On-going support and guidance be available to staff to help implement the learnings from the training.
- Creation of a 'Navigators Portal' an integrated portal for Single Parents to engage with all government agencies similar to the functionality exhibited in Smart Start.
- Acknowledging that gender-based violence and harassment disproportionately affects women and girls, and recognise that an inclusive, integrated and gender-responsive approach, which tackles underlying causes and risk factors, including gender stereotypes, multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, and unequal gender-based power relations, is essential to ending violence and harassment in our society and enabling single parent whānau to thrive.
- Noting that violence and harassment is incompatible with the promotion of sustainable healthy families and impacts negatively on the ability for single parents to be well.
- MBIE to ratify the [IPO convention clause 190 Violence and Work](#) which outlines recognizing the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment.
- Work in partnership with Māori and uphold the Te Tiriti O Waitangi

Ministry of Justice

- Ensuring that single parents have easy access to legal aid and information, and are provided child care if they need to appear in court.

Ministry of Social Development (MSD) and Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE)

- Introducing KPIs for frontline workers based on whether Single Parent clients are receiving all the relevant information they are entitled to in an easy-to-understand manner.
- Enabling Single Parents to attend WINZ interviews with their children.
- Ensuring the training of public servants (WINZ) towards protecting not investigating single parents and following the Domestic violence training as outlined in <https://tepunaaonui.govt.nz/national-strategy/shift-3/>.

Media

- Promoting positive narratives of single parent families within the media and community.
- Sharing stories of for single parents by broadening the definition of 'family' to reflect modern whānau and incorporate single parent families.
- Sharing stories of the untapped potential of single parents- especially about underemployment and the untapped potential for businesses and government.

Mako Mama – Mangopare 2022 research results relating to Key Action Area #8

Ngāti Kahungunu’s insights strongly support this action area. Summarising key kōrero from their roopu, particularly with their wāhine purotu, Ngāti Kahungunu shared:

“Protection NOT Investigation – our wāhine purotu were very clear that when they reached out for help to protect themselves and their tamariki they became the focus of investigation”.

Supporting quotes from Ngāti Kahungunu’s kōrero include: “OT, I asked for help with protection, but due to past history was turned on to me”, “Re victimize and re traumatize”, “OT uplifted my daughter without notice”.

The theme of either being investigated by WINZ or IRD, or the threat of it, was common across all of the Project Gender focus groups. For example:

I took a male friend in with me to WINZ to act as my support, but they thought we were in a relationship, which we were not. We both ended up being investigated for benefit fraud. (Focus group participant, July 27th 2022).

I was interrogated by IRD. It was horrible, and I actually made a formal complaint to the IRD about it, because I got off the phone to the IRD and I said to my boss was that even the IRD? And they said to me, you cannot tell your lawyer, you cannot tell your accountant. You can't tell anybody that we've been asked to do this review, but our lawyers will interview you. And then I was interrogated like I was a criminal, that's how I felt. Afterwards, I got off the phone. I just thought has he [ex-husband] set me up? Was that actually the IRD? Who in today's day and age says I can't contact my lawyer or my accountant or tell anyone about something I've been interrogated by a lawyer from. So I made a formal complaint in the IRD. Their response was, that's actually our standard practice. And everyone goes through that. And I said to them, do you realise that my husband is abusive and just used your system to abuse me further and put further stress on me? Do you realise that manipulation happens with the system? Oh, yes, we realise it and we understand that. And we understand it may have been your experience, but that's the process and that's the system. (Focus group participant, June 29th 2022)

**Full set of stakeholder
opportunities & solutions**

Based on the insights gathered via Project Gender’s online survey, focus groups and Ngāti Kahungunu’s mahi on the needs of single parents, and the insights from sector stakeholders gathered via hui on their appetite and capacity to collaborate for systems change, we have presented eight key action areas in this report.

These insights have been drawn on to generate over 50 recommended opportunities and solutions, with [three top impact areas](#) identified for urgent action.

Please see Table 1 below for the full set of recommendations categorised into one of three areas for change: systemic, policy or immediate action, and grouped by the relevant stakeholders.

Table 1: Full set of recommendations presented as an easy-to-use guide for government, businesses and community groups to identify and action the recommendations that pertain to them.

Government

<p>Systemic Changes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reframe state responsibilities for single parents towards protection not investigation and ensuring an intersectional lens is applied across all agencies. • Reframe childcare from being a private profit-making venture to a public good. • Improve interagency coordination, collaboration and communication by identifying barriers to interagency coordination, collaboration and communication at all levels; and continuing to establish and/or promote protocols, guidelines and systems between relevant agencies and service providers nationally, regionally and locally for information sharing and coordination of services. • Redefine Sole Parent Support from a weekly payment that helps single parents find part-time work or get ready for future work to a weekly payment that supports Single Parents to parent their children. • Recognise that children are now a more ‘precious commodity’ i.e., we have lower rates of childbirth and ensuring policies are reflective of valuing children. • Acknowledge that gender-based violence and harassment disproportionately affects women and girls, and recognise that an inclusive, integrated and gender-responsive approach, which tackles underlying causes and risk factors, including gender stereotypes, multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, and unequal gender-based power relations, is essential to ending violence and harassment in our society and enabling single parent whānau to thrive. <p><i>Ministry of Justice</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a more whānau centred family court approach as outlined in recommendation by The Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG).
--------------------------------	---

	<p><i>Treasury</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applying an intersectional gender lens across all government budgets — this needs to be actioned as a matter of urgency. <p><i>Commerce Commission</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging the Commerce Commission to investigate single parent discrimination in renting.
<p>Policy Changes</p>	<p><i>Inland Revenue Department</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removing secondary tax on the Single Parent benefit • Updating the KiwiSaver criteria to remove the need for both parents/caregivers to sign children up for KiwiSaver. • Updating tax policies to ensure childcare can be claimed as expenses for tax purposes (this will benefit all parents). • Scoping the inclusion of a KiwiSaver contribution as part of the Single Parent benefit. <p><i>Ministry of Social Development</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing all recommendations to Working for Families as outlined by The Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) • Changing relationship status policy on Single Parent benefit eligibility to be less restrictive, punitive and patriarchal. • Changing abatements by allowing a longer period of time before removing entitlements to benefits and related subsidies. This will enable Single Parents to build up capital and support. • Adding child care subsidies to Single Parent benefits. Ensuring policies prioritise the ability for parents to actively parent their children. • WINZ to scope funding single parent insurance -and /or providing interest free payment options • Scoping the opportunity for WINZ to include funding for home and contents insurance as outlined in this report from CPAG. <p><i>Ministry of Justice</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that single parents have easy access to legal aid and information, and are provided child care if they need to appear in court.
<p>Immediate Changes</p>	<p><i>Ministry of Social Development (MSD) and Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MBIE to ratify the IPO convention clause 190 Violence and Work which outlines recognizing the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment. • Ensuring the training of public servants (WINZ) towards protecting not investigating single parents and following the Domestic violence training as outlined in https://tepunaaonui.govt.nz/national-strategy/shift-3/

- Introducing KPIs for frontline workers based on whether Single parent clients are receiving all the relevant information they are entitled to in an easy- to -understand manner.
- Enabling Single Parents to attend WINZ interviews with their children.
- Creation of a 'Navigators Portal' an integrated portal for Single Parents to engage with all government agencies similar to the functionality exhibited in Smart Start and the development of a nationwide single parent network to deliver it.
- Creating Single Parent's networks that operate similar to LGBTQI+ networks, within government agencies.
- Changing the Green eftpos card provided by WINZ to be less stigmatising.
- Promoting the MSD financial mentoring system to Single Parents.
- Training and ongoing support for policy makers, frontline staff, government officials and communities towards ensure Single Parent whānau are protected and have equal opportunities to thrive.

Ministries for Women, MBIE, and Education

- Aligning policy and action plans with the goals of the Women Employment Action Plan to include Single Parents.
- Ensuring enrolment forms, and other resources, for schools include single parent whānau.

Ministry of Justice

- Family Court to provide financial support acknowledging the psychological, technically time-consuming work, and childcare requirements for single parents' involvement in legal proceedings

Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Affairs

- Granting the Financial Markets Authority (FMA) statutory authority to monitor and address lenders' financial inclusion policies and practices, including single parent borrowers.

Businesses

Systemic Changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrating flexible working policies by default. • Ensuring a gender lens is applied to all workplace policies. • Encourage employers to enact single parent inclusive HR policies • Reporting and monitoring gender and ethnic pay gaps. • Subscribing to and implementing the PSA Gender Pay Principles.
Policy Changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating flexible employment and providing or subsidising affordable childcare for single parents. • Developing employer benefit schemes that provide flexible, cost-effective childcare is available for single parent families. • Allowing employees to work during school hours and consider a ‘no meetings after 3pm rule’ • Allowing single parents to use sick leave to care for their children. • Making it mandatory for employers to publish flexible working options for all roles. • Implementing the Fair Pay legislation recommendations. • Prioritise ‘Social’ in Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) reporting. <p><i>Finance industry</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Banks to consider child support payments as income when single parents apply for mortgage loans. • Investigating insurance options for Single Parents especially 3rd party, health and contents insurance. <p><i>Media industry</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting positive narratives of single parent families within the media and community. • Sharing stories of for single parents by broadening the definition of ‘family’ to reflect modern whānau and incorporate single parent families. • Sharing stories of the untapped potential of single parents- especially about underemployment and the untapped potential for businesses and government.
Immediate changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registering their gender pay gap on Mind The Gap • Encouraging rental agencies to eradicate single parent discrimination. • Registering their paid parental leave policies on The New Zealand Parental Leave Register • Ensuring that the hourly part-time pay rate is the equivalent of full-time hourly pay rate. • Providing senior leadership roles on part-time/job-share basis

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating single parent’s networks that operate similar to LGBTQI+ networks, within businesses. • Providing financial wellness tools for single parents. Financial support should be less focused on budgeting – single parents know how to budget in many cases – financial support needs to be concentrated in other areas with a special focus on Māori. E.g. The Table • Ensuring products and promotional materials reflect single parent families. • Subscribing to and implementing the PSA Gender Pay Principles.
--	---

Community groups

Systemic Changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to advocate for single parents' rights by addressing the prejudice and stigma towards single parent families by broadening the definition of 'family' to reflect modern whānau and incorporate single parent families.
Immediate Changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively supporting and championing single parents. • Supporting a strengths-based campaign to celebrate the contribution of Single Parents to our society. • Holding fathers to account for childcare responsibilities – while recognising a small proportion of single parents are fathers who also require support. • Working with schools to improve after-school childcare schemes, and travel to and from school. • Offering single parent family tickets for products, services and fees e.g., public pools, campgrounds. • Ensuring products and promotional materials reflect single parent families. • Encouraging SportNZ to fund after school sports with a focus on ensuring they are affordable for single parents. • Partnering with intergenerational organisations to provide skills and knowledge trades, e.g. older people connect with single parents to provide home maintenance support.

Appendix 1

Appendix 1: “What things should be in place so that single parents and their tamariki enjoy a great life?”, open text examples of coded themes

Theme	Examples of comments
<p>Stop stigma and discrimination/Value single parents</p>	<p><i>I think the MOST IMPORTANT THING is repeated and ongoing, widespread, national campaigns to drop the STIGMA and normalize single mums as important, valued, incredible members of society. I'm sorry to say it but single dads do not get the same level of discrimination. I experienced this house hunting. I witnessed a man come in alone with his toddler, the agent asked if the house was for him and his partner, he said he's a single dad. The agent literally said "wow, impressive". Single mums are one of the most hard working groups of people, and are treated like the opposite. The lady from Project Gender talking on the Breakfast Show this morning is the FIRST TIME in all of my parenting I've heard anyone place a fair, just and relevant perspective of single parenting in the media.</i></p> <p><i>Tv campaign to reduce stigma.</i></p> <p><i>I felt a lot of stigma when my children were younger. Most places like the zoo or gondola etc have family deals for 2 adults and 2 children. But not sole parents. Sole working parents are disadvantaged with attending school productions and similar things. Having sole parent households feature more in public messaging would help normalise the situation.</i></p> <p><i>Recognition that being a sole or independent parent is not a failing, it's a strength. Sole parents have to juggle much more and often have less respite time than coupled parents.</i></p> <p><i>Stop beating us down with the solo mum stick and give us help to be like everyone else</i></p> <p><i>Respect, representation & support from schools, government organisations...more single parent figures in advertisements and resources. Normalise families not always looking like a father and a mother - looking like a whole village or sometimes 1 person only.</i></p> <p><i>A society that is empathetic, where sole parents are visible and respected. A society where children are visible and respected.</i></p>
<p>Advocacy/Navigator to advise on entitlements</p>	<p><i>Support around getting back on your feet as a single parent Having information readily available to what you are eligible for and how to go about receiving those. Even someone to help take you through it all. Someone to help fill in IRD and Winz papers 3rd party between mātua and winz office. They are ridiculously difficult esp when someone is not having a good day. I ended up just not bothering and just struggled - people are already fighting to hold themselves up at this difficult time and to seek help and talk with someone who doesnt understand nor walked in our shoes was hard! Hard and hoha!</i></p> <p><i>Transparency and progression from agencies like WINZ and IRD. They give conflicting statements of what you are/are not entitled to and make a positive step in the right direction a complete nightmare!!!!</i></p> <p><i>Education and clarity around what we are entitled to in terms of support, whether that be monetary or social support. It is incredibly hard to find this</i></p>

	<p><i>out on your own and the agencies are not forthcoming. Most of the information I found was from other mothers in online social groups which is disappointing when we have professional agencies that are supposed to be there to support struggling families!</i></p> <p><i>Having accessible information in one place about what support is available and what systems and benefits people can apply for would be great.</i></p> <p><i>Also someone to talk to about piecing it all together- WINZ, IRD, family court, figuring out work hours, it can be so overwhelming navigating it all.</i></p> <p><i>WINZ call centre operators need to be open and forthcoming about what payments you are entitled to (not actively trying to avoid telling you).</i></p> <p><i>I think some of the financial support that is provided currently is good but accessing it can be difficult when you need help or not knowing what you are entitled to can mean you go without essentials.</i></p>
<p>Affordable/free exercise/cultural activities for whole whānau</p>	<p><i>More opportunities for parents and kids to exercise alongside each other (not just us watching on sidelines)</i></p> <p><i>Night classes for kids/adults. learning teaching and sharing. funded options for teens/tweens to help keep them away from trouble</i></p> <p><i>Single parent discounts at places like the zoo, places like that. I know I'm dreaming but it would be great to have some or all of these things !</i></p> <p><i>I'd really love to see places like Staglands, Zoo, and even council run community venues like pools have a "family package" ticket option for 1 parent families. We need it!</i></p>
<p>Better access to healthcare</p>	<p><i>We need mental health support, healthcare providers that take our concerns seriously</i></p> <p><i>More easier access to healthcare when the whole family is sick. Most times when my kids get sick I get sick to and it gets hard to go doctors.</i></p> <p><i>Cheaper things like dental, I struggle in pain because I can't ever afford to attend a dentist</i></p> <p><i>More funding to healthcare sector including mental health services.</i></p> <p><i>We need counselling services, healthcare/community services card threshold should be looked at.</i></p>
<p>Affordable childcare</p>	<p><i>Better financial support for ECE childcare. Starting funding at age 3 is ridiculous- no single parent unless they're extremely wealthy can wait three years to return to work. It's an utterly ridiculous policy. Supporting single parents back into work by making early child care funded from 6 months on would be ideal.</i></p> <p><i>Better help with child care and funding, availability not just between the hours of mon-fri 9-5pm, as many jobs single parents can do is at night or weekends etc</i></p>

	<p><i>The fact it does not make sense financially for me to work because childcare fees will take the entire increase, is a joke. MORE ASSISTANCE WITH CHILDCARE.</i></p> <p><i>More than 20 free hours of ECE for children over 3 OR no part-time work obligations for sole parent beneficiaries until the youngest child is school-aged.</i></p> <p><i>Free and subsidised childcare needs to pay their carers/teachers better and train them better so the kids enjoy their time in after school care. More schools need after school care on site like SKIDS. Or if schools can make their spaces available for parents that want to up skill or study after school that the kids can stay on too.</i></p> <p><i>Free or heavily subsidised after-school and school holiday programmes for children of working single parents (we work and pay our taxes!)</i></p> <p><i>Also truly affordable/ heavily discounted child care should be available for low income / solo parent families.</i></p> <p><i>Childcare services that extend past Monday to Friday.</i></p>
<p>Access to housing</p>	<p><i>Housing support (Kiwibuild, Kainga Ora, KiwiSaver First Home grants, winter payments, etc) across the board for single parents with no or higher income caps. We are simply doing it tough! Special mortgage rates for single parents at the time of drawing the loans.</i></p> <p><i>Schemes where I could buy my own house or easily access social housing and rent to buy</i></p> <p><i>Accommodation support (monetary) so we do not have to be forced to share homes with strangers to try & pay the rent.</i></p> <p><i>More secure housing - where it's acknowledged that it's a home not a house and that moving dislocates people from community.</i></p> <p><i>Rent controlled options. My rent is going up to \$600 next month from \$530... I can afford it now but winz have told me I will get an extra \$29 so I have to make up the rest which means less food or no gas at all in my car. I can't afford to move because I can't afford to save the required bond, moving costs and rent in advance. Its so stressful having to pay so much on rent.</i></p>
<p>Opportunities for community connection and support</p>	<p><i>To help feel less isolated, easier to link into community. I'm not religious but sometimes feel envious of what church communities offer. A non-religious version of that would be great, especially for those of us without family around.</i></p> <p><i>Maybe more community groups for single parents. Being a single parent is difficult, especially to teens. Having other people to bounce ideas off. It's quite lonely.</i></p> <p><i>More support for kids between 12-15. I looked into big brother type organisations but my son was too old. I looked into other organisations and he's too young. There just seems to be a gap where single parents are on there own at a time when their kids need more support from people of the</i></p>

	<p>same sex, i.e. I know my son would benefit from a male influence but have nobody to provide it</p> <p>Support village. Like literally we need extended family. Like the uncle that teaches them how to fish. The auntie that teaches them how to pick fruit. The cousins that play with them. Grandparents that love and support them. As a single parent as well as an immigrant with no family support, everything falls to me. Passing on culture/history, life lessons, life skills etc... Support for the lonely parents - I'm not sure whether that's either connecting us with retired people or other ethnic groups.. but yeah.. support. I feel adrift and alone most of the time.</p> <p>Weekly support to check in on solo parents to see how they are doing if needing any Kai or clothes any help with fixing cars. As a solo mama I would love to go around checking in other mamas to see if I can help in someway.</p> <p>Build single parent communities where sharing of resources, services and experiences can help each other get through things.</p> <p>Kids of single parents need real people who are constant and available. I haven't really seen that happen outside of Marae or churches. The things that have made a difference to me and my kids are actual people being available and ready to help (after separation my kids would refuse to go out anywhere. A family from church invited us over every week for a meal and for a year it was the only place they felt safe to go to. They invited us to their holiday home, and holidays when we couldn't afford it or repay them in any way. Having people who are willing to be real support made a huge difference as the wait times and feeling of connecting with agencies is sooooo hard.</p>
<p>Workplace policy reform, including flexible working, quality PT work, doubled sick leave</p>	<p>In a two parent family, if they both work they have two sets of sick leave/dependent leave that they can use. They can share the load between them. A single person has to use their sick leave allowance for themselves and their multiple children. I've had to use annual leave sometimes. Should sick leave be doubled for single parents.</p> <p>The same sick leave and annual leave entitlement as two working parents have.</p> <p>That employers understood your situation and could support you. Many employers assume you have a partner/govt supporting you and that your income is secondary/not as important.</p> <p>Employers that are happy to take on parents and have a kind heart when parents have to ring in and explain their child is sick and can't come in. Pay enough (hourly) but flexible hours towards parents.</p> <p>I'm very lucky I have a great job which is flexible about being able to work from home I earn a good wage and good benefits. I realise though this isn't possible for some single parents but maybe a payment that can help when children are sick and parents can't work from home so have to take leave to watch their child.</p>

	<p>Needing employers who understand the challenges single parent households face. I've had to take double the sick leave a 2 parent household would otherwise take due to being the only parent to look after my children.</p> <p>More sick leave for single parents (for when their kids get sick).</p>
<p>Subsidised swimming/music lessons/school camps/holiday programmes</p>	<p>Access to groups, clubs, lessons for children that are normally available to families who have the financial means to pay for the lessons and resources required to attend and maybe practice. There are so many kids out there who don't have access to opportunities or experiences where they could find something they love, or build confidence, find friends or positive adult role models within. But without an even playing field in childhood the same patterns a likely to play out, kids won't know what they could have done or been.</p> <p>Extra curricular activities should be made available for kids at reduced, subsidized rate, and made to feel part of the group</p> <p>Grant or subsidy towards sports and extra curricular activities for children. Or swimming lessons, dance, team sports etc.</p> <p>Cheaper sport options \$350 for my two children to play rugby I cannot afford that any sports is too much for us to even think of doing my children really want to just things for kids really</p> <p>Free or cheap activities that are ongoing such as dance classes that your kids can come to and cost max \$5 per week. Help with paying for kids extra curricular activities such as sports, Swimming, arts, music.</p>
<p>Increase in benefit and/or income</p>	<p>Single parent should be paid living wage not minimum wage</p> <p>More support, benefits, subsidies to take the pressure off having to pay the full amount of bills/rent/mortgage ourselves, a basic living wage,</p> <p>Financial support ro allow them to have quality time with their children so they don't burn out trying to survive.</p> <p>Support for solo full time parents And 70k isn't that much in this day in age. They say it's a living wage. But I'm struggling And no I don't smoke or drink so money goes on bills, food, daycare, gas Not much left after that. I feel like my wage is taxed so much, it's unfair</p> <p>Support their ideas to generate more income, tax free. So they become independent and live a full life. A higher level of financial support so that they meet a living wage so they can bring their kids up like other families do.</p>
<p>Support with house maintenance, child transport, respite</p>	<p>I have earned pretty good money at times but still struggle to maintain my house...Support for basic things like fixing letterbox, cracked concrete - I think often men know how to do this and do it. I don't. Support to get kids places- I can't drive them to sports etc because I need to work.</p> <p>The biggest thing for me is i get bloody tired! It's only me no one else I cook, clean, taxi, I'm the supporter on the sidelines at every game I'm the nurse the protector the teacher the best friend I'm the one saying no because</p>

	<p>we can't afford it the bill-payer the coin master, I'm the organiser the gardener and on top of all of that I'm the full time worker! And I love every single minute of it but I'm tired. I am human too don't i deserve time for me? Where's my 5 minutes? This world we live in is built for a family that consists of 2 parents if you don't fit the mold your invisible.</p> <p>Volunteers willing to help out single parents (eg. a time bank type thing), either with childcare, or handyman type work, for example.</p> <p>I'm blessed with whānau support. I feel more services are needed for those who don't have this. Would be great to see if there was people that could be "support whānau" on call for when single parents need a break</p>
<p>Remove secondary tax on income earned by beneficiaries, childcare tax deductible</p>	<p>Tax system that is fair to women by treating childcare as a deductible business expense. It helps me work as much as any golf club subscription helps a bloke work.</p> <p>Less penalties for working eg benefits deduction or secondary tax on pt income</p> <p>Change the secondary tax rules around earning. Currently working and receiving supplemental benefits means you have to apply secondary tax to your wages. They say the benefit is the main income, even if it is only \$100 while wages are \$400. The system around financial supports need an overhaul. If those systems made working easier rather than harder, there could be more single parents getting ahead in life.</p> <p>Lower secondary tax when you are trying to earn extra money to enable your child to "keep up" with double income families.</p>
<p>Child support policy reform</p>	<p>If it's difficult to get child support payments from the other parent, could this be a situation where the government steps in and says, hey, we've got your back even if the other parent doesn't!?</p> <p>Child support should be paid by the government and then reimbursed by collecting from paying parents. It is the children who suffer when child support is not paid. It should not be optional to pay or not and IRD should take a much harder line on assessing income (e.g. from self employed etc).</p> <p>Ird needs to pay child support to the paying parent to allow them to budget and live knowing what they can afford. Then if the paying parent doesn't pay then they owe the ird so can chase it. How it is means the paying parent has control over the receiving parent and can withhold money if they want to.</p> <p>An evaluation of how the child support system works - when the separated parents don't have a good relationship, the expected split cost of other expenses doesn't actually happen, however being the primary caregiver means that these costs often fall to me. Meaning that I am forever the one making more of a financial outlay for our children</p>
<p>Raise abatement threshold for beneficiaries</p>	<p>There's a really big gap between the amount you can earn before your benefit is massively reduced and how much you need to earn to be able to go off the benefit altogether. I think if the gap was narrower sole parents</p>

	<p>were able to gradually increase their working hours, being able to get off the benefit altogether would be more achievable.</p> <p>There's a really big gap between the amount you can earn before your benefit is massively reduced and how much you need to earn to be able to go off the benefit altogether. I think if the gap was narrower, sole parents were able to gradually increase their working hours, being able to get off the benefit altogether would be more achievable.</p> <p>You're condemned for not working in order to raise your babies but then when you do begin to work IRD punish you, WINZ cast you off without a 2nd look and there's no Support or advice for the transition.</p> <p>Higher tax credits with lower earning thresholds for single parent earners. Everytime I receive a pay rise I lose money on my family tax credit so they pay rise is not really worth it.</p> <p>Encouragement and support to earn more and not be penalised for getting a pay increase due to further education, or service commitment to a company, or just working more hours etc. Every time I try to earn more money , I lose The same amount from accomodation supplement or FTC - I can see why single parents choose not to work harder. Or work at all</p>
<p>Better support from WINZ staff</p>	<p>Empathetic staff at MSD because people like me are polite, educated, friendly and have been victimised and don't deserve to be made to feel like scum for asking for help when we've been financially exploited and can't afford housing/groceries/gas.</p> <p>Some WINZ staff make you feel like you're taking from their personal pocket, look down on you, speak down to you, hold back knowledge of entitlements knowing it would make life more positive but "they're not obliged to tell you" The whole system needs a lesson in human dignity and respect. I didn't ask to be a sole parent, was so ashamed my relationship failed and when I sought help, I was made to feel even more ashamed for my situation It's a heartbreaking feeling and one I don't wish upon anyone</p> <p>People that don't judge and show empathy. I have dealt with all sorts of horrible people at WINZ mostly as a new and young Mum, I look back now and think of how horrible that was and has only added to my mental health issues now. It seems to have changed somewhat in recent years but the employees need efficient training in how they treat people that have no other choice but to go there.</p> <p>More help and acceptance for solo dads. I find it extremely difficult to get taken seriously when trying to access parental services and more often than not will have to provide proof of custody ect.</p>
<p>Financial advice</p>	<p>Accessible financial advice</p> <p>Access to good budget advice services</p> <p>Budgeting and how to feed children nutritional meals on a budget.</p>

Family violence response improved, including Family Court and education in schools

Education on family violence and being a single parent for teachers and in the workplace, including the effects of family violence on mental health.

And the government needs to do a campaign regarding the effects of emotional abuse because at the moment only physical violence is prioritised. I feel this might help with the social stigma single mother beneficiaries experience.

Help to actually get out of a relationship and house first as winz will not help until your out which I find hard for a lot of woman out there.

Education in schools about toxic relationships is vital there are some great programs that our school accesses but they need to be mandatory and prioritised

It would be great if schools could invoice each parent separately it would be good for more support for parents that were in abusive relationships - support people for meetings, a service where someone could be there for drop offs and pick ups, Also an advocate, it was all up to me to organise the parenting agreement and i had to do it whilst still in the grips of controlling lying husband so my kids didn't get what was best for them

Schools to be very aware of children's home status. Asking in a way that doesn't place shame on families. Not asking for legal custody documents in front of the children. Not sending school reports home for the missing parent who has no guardianship rights. Making Father's Day cards for my kids was traumatic. And kept happening no matter how often at the beginning of each school year I tried quietly explaining that it was not something my children could manage.

Working for Families reform

As a single full time working mother, I earn the same as two minimum wage workers but am not eligible for any of the benefits or first home grants. My neighbours who earn more than me, collectively, are bringing in hundreds of dollars a week in extra support that I am not eligible for simply because I am single and chose to kick my loser partner out.

Whānau who have 2 parents one can stay home and claim WFTC yet i cant and have to work to provide for my daughter.

It's a shame when we get a promotion and earn more money that things like working for families disappears.. making the pay rise not even worth it. Not a good incentive

Remove bias in govt service design, eg working for families assumes you have one parent at home doing the childcare. Your subsidy is calculated based on your entire income, but it should be your income minus any childcare costs you have, because obviously you need to pay for childcare so you can work. If the point of wff is to encourage parents back to work it needs to take into account the cost of childcare. At the moment it seems to assume you have one parent at home to mind the kids.

Financial support from the government based on household income, not one person. Eg. Couples cap is around \$130k, single person is \$72k, but the cost to run a house is the same

	<p><i>It frustrates me that a friend who is at home with 2 children is entitled to hundreds of dollars per week and I'm breaking myself in two to juggle everything. I don't begrudge her the money, it just doesn't seem fair.</i></p> <p><i>The recent Payment of \$350 the government made did not come to me, I earn \$2k too much. \$72k is my HOUSEHOLD income. However it went to my bosses wife. He earns circa \$170k, she earns \$69k. Their HOUSEHOLD income is \$239k. It is so hard.</i></p>
<p>Relationship status policy reform</p>	<p><i>It has hindered the freedom to find a new partner, as there is a fear there that you'll be cut off financially. The rules around relationship status are outdated and need to change.</i></p> <p><i>Being allowed a companion/ dating relationship while on a benefit as long as they aren't contributing finances. Surely we are allowed that emotional support?</i></p> <p><i>When dating someone seriously (to the point of discussing moving in together) I've had to consider whether the benefits of a secure loving relationship were worth the financial cost of losing or having reduced benefit payments, along with the resulting reduced independence/having to rely on someone else.</i></p> <p><i>The system expects men to financially support their partners. My ex didn't even do this when we were married. It is too complicated to try and enter a relationship and risk losing any of what I get.</i></p> <p><i>Relying on winz brings with it some shame that I accept as part of my situation, and it does feel like, should I consider a relationship, a live in relationship, with someone, it would be humiliating that I need to disclose this to winz. And that, winz sees another relationship as purely a source of money for me, rather than an essential and life affirming support, that would be good for me and my kids. It feels so imbalanced that I'm expected to show and share extremely personal details with a case manager who really doesn't actually care about me or my kids, and they have so much power. I don't know how much cash they have in the bank! I don't know if they're in a relationship! And I don't care, I hope they're ok and happy. I feel like, should I be in a wonderful fulfilling relationship, I need to keep it secret and not risk any sanctions. I feel some ongoing anxiety, like what if my case manager ever sees me with a man? In town? How awful for the person I might be dating! I feel very much like a number they need to move along. The actual amount of money on the benefit feels so out of proportion to what I have to do / and the information I am expected to disclose.</i></p> <p><i>I'm terrified that if my ex found out i was dating he'd tell WINZ and I'd have to prove I wasn't doing something wrong it would be more stress. I haven't dated anyone since the marriage ended (10+ years ago). I dont want someone else to be burdened by taking on financial responsibility for the 4 of us at the same time as finding feet in a new relationship, woek g out if they are safe, if i want to introduce them to my kids. That's a big ask right out for the gate for anyone. It's depressing, I feel so lonely, unwanted and undervalued.</i></p> <p><i>Being allowed to explore a new relationship without being punished</i></p>

Not being cut financially if you enter into a relationship if the other person earns a decent wage, when the actual other parent gets away with not having to pay much. There's no incentive to move forward in your life and be happy with someone if they are then expected to pay/ provide for your children that are not their own.

Being allowed to have support in some kind of relationship even if not fully committed so that there is support. Life is very lonely and isolating. without being penalised. respect that many of us arent here because we choose and until you try being a solo parent for a long length of time judgement shouldnt be made. It is exhausting, isolating, many of us have given up careers and once the kids are grown we are left with nothing-no capital, career and low self esteem. we have lived without love for so long to survive for our kids that we have neglected ourselves and what the law says.

References

- Auckland City Mission. 2020. *Whakarongo ki te kōrero whānau katoa o te raNgātiratanga: Listening to Our People*. Auckland: Auckland City Mission. Accessed from <https://www.aucklandcitymission.org.nz/what-we-do/research/>
- Baker, Maureen and David Tippin. 2002. "‘When flexibility meets rigidity’: sole mothers' experiences in the transition from welfare to work". In *Journal of Sociology* 38 (1): 345-360.
- Barber, Paul. 2021. *Tugging away at the web of injustice*. Available at <https://www.salvationarmy.org.nz/article/tugging-away-web-injustice>. Last accessed 24 May 2022.
- Breheny M. and C. Stephens. 2007a. 'Individual responsibility and social constraint: The construction of adolescent motherhood in social scientific research'. In *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 9(4): 333–346.
- Breheny M. and C. Stephens. 2007b. 'Irreconcilable differences: Health professionals' constructions of adolescence and motherhood'. In *Social Science & Medicine* 64:112–124.
- Breheny M. and C. Stephens. 2010. 'Youth or disadvantage? The construction of teenage mothers in medical journals'. In *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 12: 307–322.
- Centre for Social Research and Evaluation/Te Pokapū Rangahau Arotake Hapori. 2010. *Understanding subgroups of sole parents receiving main benefits*. Wellington: Centre for Social Research and Evaluation/Te Pokapū Rangahau Arotake Hapori.
- Cram, Fiona, Anna Adcock, Michael O'Brien and Beverley Lawton. 2021. 'E Hine: Young Māori mothers talk about welfare benefits'. In *Social Policy and Administration* 55: 543– 558.
- Collings, Sunny, Gabrielle Jenkin, Kristie Carter and Louise Signal. 2014. 'Gender differences in the mental health of single parents: New Zealand evidence from a household panel survey'. In *Soc Psychiatry Psychiatr Epidemiol* 49(5):811-21.
- Crowley, Tom, Danielle Wood, and [Esther Suckling](#). 2021. '[Already badly off, single parents went dramatically backwards during COVID. They are raising our future adults](#)'. *The Conversation*, 29 March 2021. Available at <https://theconversation.com/already-badly-off-single-parents-went-dramatically-backwards-during-covid-they-are-raising-our-future-adults-157767>
- Dale, Virginia. 2013. *Myths and Facts: Sole Parents and the DPB*. Auckland: Child Poverty Action Group. Accessed from <https://www.cpag.org.nz/resources/publications/>
- Berentson-Shaw, J. 2018. *Telling a new story about “child poverty” in New Zealand*. Auckland: The Workshop and The Policy Observatory. Available at <https://thepolicyobservatory.aut.ac.nz/>
- Elliot, Marianne and Jess Berentson-Shaw. 2019. *Talking about Poverty and Welfare Reform in Aotearoa: A Short Guide*. Wellington: The Workshop.
- Families Commission. 2010. *Economic Wellbeing of Sole-Parent Families*. Wellington: Families Commission.
- Families Commission. 2005. *Focus on Families: Reinforcing the importance of family*. Wellington: Families Commission.
- Galicki, C. 2020. *Impact of the Covid-19 crisis on financial wellbeing in New Zealand: Preliminary data from an international study*. Commission for Financial Capability. Available at <https://cffc-assets-prod.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/public/Uploads/Research-2020%2B/COVID-19/CFFC-COVID-19-research-slides-detailed.pdf>
- Garden, Emily, Angela Caldin, Diane Robertson, Julie Timmins, Tom Wilson and Tim Wood. 2014. *Speaking for Ourselves: The truth about what keeps people in poverty from those who live it – a summary report from the Auckland*

City Mission Family 100 Research Project. Auckland: Auckland City Mission. Available at <https://www.aucklandcitymission.org.nz/what-we-do/research/>

Gender Equal NZ. 2019a. *Sole Parents need a Living Wage*. Wellington: National Council of Women. Available at <https://genderequal.nz/datastories/sole-parents-living-wage/>

Gender Equal NZ. 2019b. *Childcare costs shouldn't be a barrier*. Accessed from <https://genderequal.nz/datastories/childcare-costs-barrier/>

Gray, C., and Y. Crichton-Hill. 2019. "You look a little bit dark for my liking": Māori and Pasifika women's experiences of welfare receipt in Aotearoa New Zealand'. In *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work*, 31(1), 5–16.

Healey, Olivia and Jennifer Curtin. 2019. *Relationship status' and the welfare system in Aotearoa New Zealand. A report prepared for the Peter McKenzie project'*. Auckland: Child Poverty Action Group.

Humpage, Louise and Charlotte Moore. 2021. *Income Support in the wake of COVID-19: Interviews*. Child Poverty Action Group. Available at <https://www.cpag.org.nz/resources/>.

King, Delta. 2017. *How Māori whānau navigate social services: A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Master of Arts in Psychology at Massey University, New Zealand*. Available at <http://hdl.handle.net/10179/12974>

[Krassoi Peach, E. and J. Cording. 2018. *Multiple Disadvantage Among Sole Parents in New Zealand*. Wellington: Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit.](#)

[Lee, Jane. 2019. *Single-mother led families with disabled children in Aotearoa New Zealand*](#). A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a [Masters of Social Work at Massey University, New Zealand](#).

Loneliness New Zealand. 2020. *Prolonged Loneliness in New Zealand before, during, and after lockdown*. Wellington: Loneliness New Zealand. Available at <https://swa.govt.nz/publications/reports/#HaBiSA>.

Marks E J, M. Somerville-Ryan, C. Walker, M. Devlin, R. Chen, P.E. Atatoa Carr, S. Berry, A. Smith and S.M.B. Morton. 2021. *Housing-related experiences of families with young children in contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand. How do these experiences differ for families living in rental or social housing and/or on low incomes?* Wellington: Ministry of Social Development. Available at <https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/research/housing-related-experiences/index.html> (Growing up in NZ study)

Masselot, A. 2015. 'Gender Implications of the Right to Request Flexible Working Arrangements: Raising Pigs and Children in New Zealand'. In *New Zealand Journal of Employment Relations* 39(3): 59-71.

Martin, A. 2020. *Welfare and single Māori mothers in the media: symbolic power and the case of Metiria Turei*. Doctoral dissertation. Auckland: Massey University.

McAllister, Janet, Caitlin Neuwelt-Kearns, Leah Bain, Nicola Turner and Donna Wynd. 2021. *The first year of Covid-19: Initial outcomes of our collective care for low-income children in Aotearoa New Zealand*. Auckland: Child Poverty Action Group.

Meese, H., T. Baker and A. Sisson. 2020. #WeAreBeneficiaries: Contesting Poverty Stigma Through Social Media. In *Antipode*, 52: 1152-1174.

Ministry for Women. 2018a. *Something's Got to Change: Insights from Mothers*. Wellington: Ministry for Women. Available at <https://women.govt.nz/documents/somethings-got-change-%E2%80%93-mothers-and-their-babies>

Ministry for Women. 2018b. *Literature review: Mothers and their babies – Women’s Experiences*. Ministry for Women. Available at <https://women.govt.nz/documents/somethings-got-change-%E2%80%93-mothers-and-their-babies>

[Ministry of Social Development. 2021. WHAT’S HAPPENING TO THE NUMBER OF SOLE PARENTS ON BENEFIT?: Fact sheet](#). Wellington: MSD. Available at <https://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/covid-19/what-s-happening-to-the-number-of-sole-parents-on-benefit.pdf>

Moeata, Keil and Vivienne Elizabeth. 2022. ‘It’s not like I ever use the money for me to go out and live the café lifestyle’: Pacific mothers talk about child support money’. In *Journal of Family Studies*, 28:1, 184-198.

Tobias, M., J. Kokaua, Sarah Gerritsen and R. Templeton. 2010. ‘The health of children in sole-parent families in New Zealand’. In *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 34(3):274-280

Noble, Kimberly G., Katherine Magnuson, Lisa A. Gennetian, Greg J. Duncan, Hirokazu Yoshikawa, Nathan A. Fox and Sarah Halpern-Meekin. 2021. ‘Baby’s first years: Design of a randomized controlled trial of poverty reduction in the United States’. In *Pediatrics* 148(4).

Prickett, K., M. Fletcher, S. Chapple, N. Doan and C. Smith. 2020. *Life in lockdown: The economic and social effect of lockdown during Alert Level 4 in New Zealand*. Wellington: Victoria University of Wellington. Available at https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1865512/WP-20-03-covid-19-life-in-lockdown.pdf

Scott, K. and A. Masselot. 2018. ‘Skivers, strivers and thrivers: The shift from welfare to wellbeing in New Zealand and the United Kingdom’. In *The Politics of Wellbeing*, eds I. Bache and K. Scott. Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan.

Statistics New Zealand. 2020. *Wellbeing outcomes worse for sole parents*. Available at <https://www.stats.govt.nz/news/wellbeing-outcomes-worse-for-sole-parents>.

Statistics New Zealand. 2018. *Childcare challenge for 1 in 6 working parents*. Available at <https://www.stats.govt.nz/news/childcare-a-challenge-for-1-in-6-working-parents>

Strickett, E. and H. Moewaka-Barnes. 2012. *Marginalising Māori adolescent parents: Literature review*. Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga. Available at <http://www.maramatanga.co.nz/sites/default/files/12-IN-0%20Web%20ready%20%283%29.Pdf>

Superu. 2015. *Families and Whānau Status Report 2015*. Wellington: Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit.

Superu. 2018. *Families and Whānau Status Report 2018*. Wellington: Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit.

ThinkPlace. 2014. *Demonstrating the Complexities of Being Poor – An Empathy Tool*. Auckland: Auckland City Mission. Accessed from <https://www.aucklandcitymission.org.nz/what-we-do/research/>

Waldegrave, Charles, Peter King, Maria Maniapoto, Taimalieutu Kiwi Tamasese, Tafaoimalo Loudeen Parsons and Ginny Sullivan. 2016. ‘Relational resilience in Māori, Pacific, and European sole parent families: From theory and research to social policy’. In *Family process* 55(4): 673-688.

Waldfoegel, Jane and Wendy Sigle-Rushton. 2007. ‘The incomes of families with children: a cross-national comparison’. In *Journal of European Social Policy* 17(4).

Ware, F., M. Breheny and M. Forster. 2017a. ‘The politics of government ‘support’ in Aotearoa/New Zealand: Reinforcing and reproducing the poor citizenship of young Māori parents’. In *Critical Social Policy*, 37(4): 499-519.

Ware, F., M. Breheny and M. Forster. 2017b. 'Reproducing the precarious position of young Māori mothers in Aotearoa New Zealand'. In *Precarity - Uncertain, insecure and unequal lives in Aotearoa New Zealand*, eds S. Groot, C. Van Ommen, B. Masters-Awatere and N. Tassell-Matamua. Auckland: Massey University Press.

Ware, F., M. Breheny and M. Forster. 2018. 'MANA MĀTUA: Being Young Māori Parents'. In *MAI Journal* 7(1): 18-30.

Welfare Expert Advisory Group. 2019. *Whakamana tāngata: Restoring dignity to social security in New Zealand*. Wellington: Welfare Expert Advisory Group. Available at <http://www.weag.govt.nz/weag-report/whakamana-tangata/>

