

A photograph of two young children, a boy and a girl, smiling at the camera. The boy is on the left, wearing a blue baseball cap with the Under Armour (UA) logo and a light blue t-shirt. The girl is on the right, wearing a pink bucket hat and a teal t-shirt. They are standing outdoors on a grassy area with other people in the background. A semi-transparent red rectangular box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the text "Our Voices. Our Rights." in white.

**Our Voices.
Our Rights.**

Forward

Save the Children New Zealand and UNICEF New Zealand are globally ambitious in our goals for children and young people.

We know that meaningful change only comes from having everyone around the table, most importantly children and young people themselves. That is why this report is so important – written and produced by Aotearoa New Zealand young people; it reflects their hopes, concerns and ideas, and we are proud to stand behind their powerful words.

The United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, summed it up well when he described young people as the torch bearers – the people who will carry our aspirations into the future. But it is not just this responsibility that demands their place at the table, it is because their experiences, insights and ideas enrich the conversation. And this report tells us there is much to talk about.

The report highlights serious issues, but also acts as a beacon, clearly showing the steps we can take to improve the lives of children and young people in Aotearoa New Zealand. We call on Government and all parts of society to take the time to read and understand the messages of this report. We urge you, in whatever capacity you have, to talk about the issues and act on the recommendations in the report.

As work progresses on the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in Aotearoa New Zealand, we believe that young people must be involved in the process with their thoughts and ideas helping to lead the way. Our children and young people are not just future members of society, they are part of the now, and like all of us want to help build a better future. They have a right to take part, in fact we need them to.

Heather Hayden

Chief Executive
Save the Children NZ

Vivien Maidaborn

Executive Director
UNICEF NZ



The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Children are afforded and protected by the same human rights as adults. However, children are also protected by the United Nations Convention the Rights of the Child (CRC).¹

The CRC has been ratified by almost every country in the world, stipulates the legal obligations of states to realise children's rights to, inter alia, education, health, and protection. The CRC contains 54 articles and has three optional protocols². It has four core principles: non-discrimination; ensuring the best interests of the child; ensuring the right to life, survival and development, and respect for the views of the child.

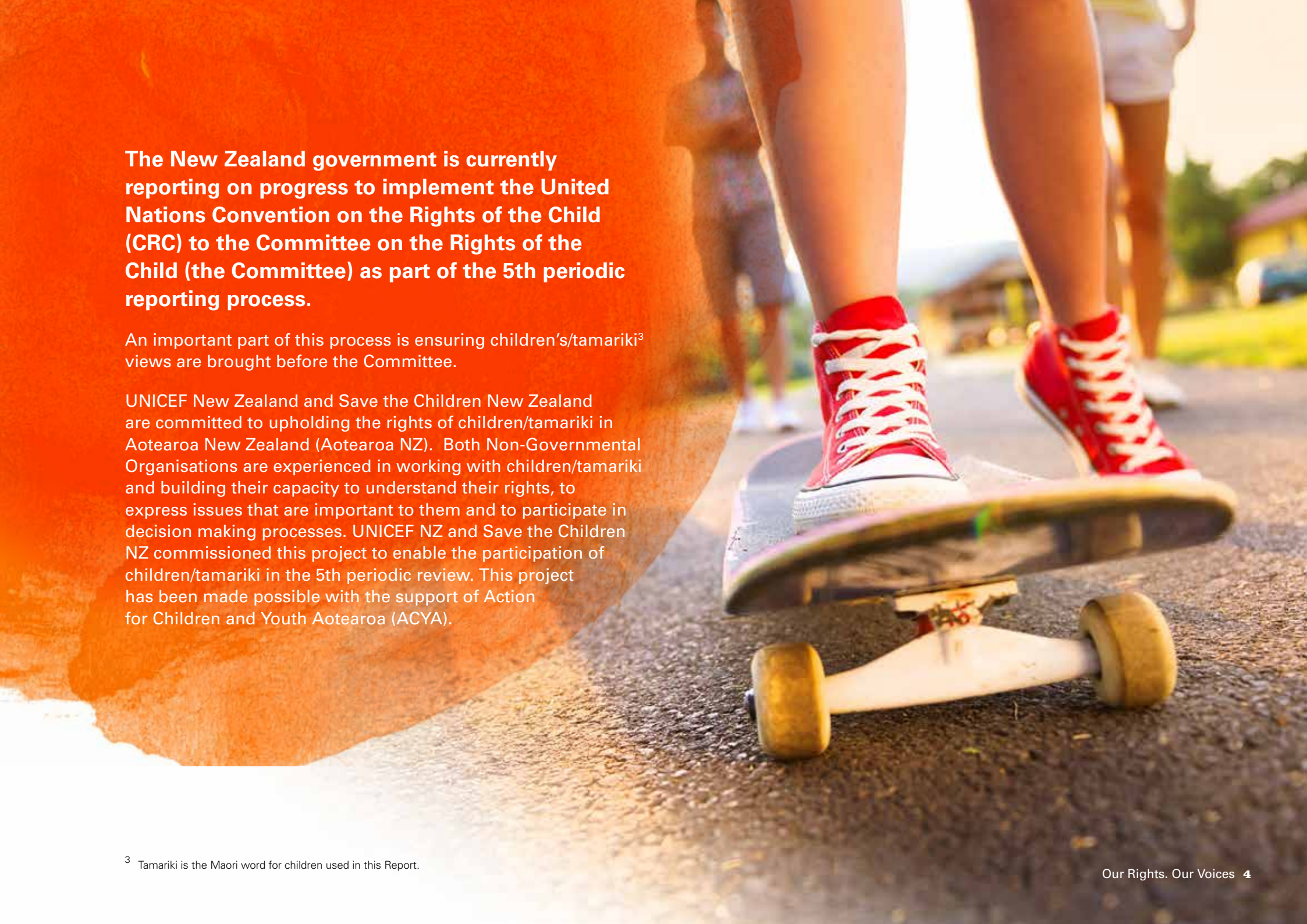
Article 4 of the CRC mandates states to 'undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognised in the present Convention. With regard to economic, social and cultural rights, State Parties shall undertake such measures to the maximum extent of their available resources and, where needed, within the framework of international co-operation'.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was ratified by the New Zealand Government in March 1993.



¹ Explanation of the CRC taken from 'Every Last Child', Save the Children 2016, p2. http://www.savethechildren.org/atf/cf/%7B9def2ebe-10ae-432c-9bd0-df91d2eba74a%7D/EVERY_LAST_CHILD_.PDF

² CRC Optional Protocols: The NZ Government is yet to ratify the 3 Optional Protocols: Optional Protocol on the involvement of Children in Armed Conflict; Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography; Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure. <https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/monitoring/uncroc/optional-protocols.html>



The New Zealand government is currently reporting on progress to implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Committee) as part of the 5th periodic reporting process.

An important part of this process is ensuring children's/tamariki³ views are brought before the Committee.

UNICEF New Zealand and Save the Children New Zealand are committed to upholding the rights of children/tamariki in Aotearoa New Zealand (Aotearoa NZ). Both Non-Governmental Organisations are experienced in working with children/tamariki and building their capacity to understand their rights, to express issues that are important to them and to participate in decision making processes. UNICEF NZ and Save the Children NZ commissioned this project to enable the participation of children/tamariki in the 5th periodic review. This project has been made possible with the support of Action for Children and Youth Aotearoa (ACYA).

³ Tamariki is the Maori word for children used in this Report.

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Introduction

Despite Aotearoa NZ having ratified the CRC for 23 years, children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ continue to have limited knowledge of their rights. Furthermore, children/tamariki have few opportunities to participate in government processes, even when these processes directly affect them, such as the periodic review.

This report is a window into the lives and wishes of a generation of New Zealanders; sharing the real thoughts, experiences and opinions of children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ. It is our intention that this report will bring to light issues of importance communicated by children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ, so the wider community and policy makers become more aware of these issues and the impact they have on the lives of children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ. Furthermore, it informs us of their knowledge of their rights as rights holders under the CRC. It is intended this report will help to educate children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ of their rights, and will provide an insight to the Committee on the status of knowledge held by children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ of their rights.

w



What did we find?

Overall the children/tamariki that we spoke to want to have their voices heard by their schools, parents, whānau, youth groups and government.

They want to have input on issues that matter to them and be able to make decisions where appropriate. This report clearly shows that children/tamariki are capable of active citizenship where they can identify issues affecting children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ and provide insightful and practical solutions to ensure that all children/tamariki can live healthy, fulfilling lives.

Children/tamariki across Aotearoa NZ have clear views on what is important to them.

Across all questions asked in this consultation children/tamariki have told us they value:

- Relationships with their family and friends. Children/tamariki rely on these relationships for their happiness and also for support in times of difficulty.
- Experiences and time spent with their family, sport and recreation, and hobbies.
- Access to, and security of, basic needs; good food, water, quality shelter, warmth and warm clothing.
- Education; the value of education in the immediate future and the long term value for future success.
- Health; free access to healthcare for children under 18 years old.

Children/tamariki are most concerned about:

- Child poverty and the effects this is having on children/tamariki; their well-being, mental and physical health, and lack of opportunity and support.
- Education; ensuring children/tamariki who need it are supported to achieve and have the same opportunities as children/tamariki in wealthier schools.
- Health; access to healthcare. There is particular concern about the state of mental health amongst Aotearoa NZ children/tamariki and a lack of access to support.
- Ending bullying; whether it be in schools, online or digital, or any other place it may be happening.
- Safety and protection; ending all violence against children/tamariki, including within their homes.
- Tolerance and acceptance of all diversity across Aotearoa NZ.

All of the issues outlined above are rights issues.

These findings provide insight into ways to improve children's/tamariki wellbeing and how they should be treated. It is of particular concern that children/tamariki are not well informed about their rights, and teaching children/tamariki and adults about child rights is not universal. Immediate action must be taken to ensure all children/tamariki are fully informed about their rights and these rights are upheld for all children/tamariki everywhere in Aotearoa NZ. The New Zealand government must fulfil their responsibilities and take the lead on this.

Government Recommendations

1a) Children/tamariki must have the opportunity to learn about their rights. We are calling on the government to build child rights education into schools. This will enable children/tamariki to respect the rights of others, leading to less bullying, and helping to build a nation that better understands and upholds human rights.

1b) We also recommend that:

- Government provide more leadership to build awareness of children's rights across government, in communities and in the workforce for children/tamariki, to inform the way children/tamariki are treated in Aotearoa NZ.
- The CRC is discussed more openly so it becomes a part of Aotearoa NZ culture and guides the way children/tamariki are treated in Aotearoa NZ.
- Government ensures accurate messaging about the CRC is shared widely with, and through, media.
- All families are taught about child rights practices as this supports positive parenting, and children/tamariki being heard.
- Government makes it easier for families to be informed and access government services needed to support their children/tamariki.

2a) Provide a better environment for families by putting more resources into supporting parenting, such as providing more flexible working conditions, and or financial support for families that need it.

2b) Local government provide children/tamariki with positive recreational experiences in their communities; particularly those that are free.

3a) Urgently improve the availability, affordability, and quality of housing in Aotearoa NZ; particularly for children/tamariki living in poverty. A lack of quality housing breaches children's rights to security and to obtaining the highest attainable standard of health. Introduce a comprehensive housing Warrant of Fitness to make sure all children/tamariki live in a safe and warm home.

3b) Expand current food in schools programmes to increase the availability of breakfast and lunch for children/tamariki who need it. All schools should be equipped with the resources to provide a breakfast or lunch programme for their students. Providing healthy food in schools will improve the health and educational achievement of children/tamariki.

4a) Allocate resources and prioritise programmes that will ensure the improved treatment of all children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ; especially children/tamariki who are in state care.

- 4b)** Schools need to ensure that all children/tamariki are treated well. This is very important in schools as children/tamariki are sensitive to this and teachers are influential role models.
- 4c)** Children/tamariki with disabilities must be treated with respect and dignity. They must receive the care and support they need to live full inclusive lives as valued members of our families, schools, and community.
- 5a)** Children/tamariki and adults should be educated on the power that welcoming and including different languages and cultures can have on a person's self-image and well-being.
- 5b)** Schools need to be supported to provide opportunities for children/tamariki to practice their culture and beliefs, and develop their individuality.
- 5c)** Provide more training and tools for teachers to enable them to create classroom environments that will support diversity and overcome unconscious bias.
- 6a)** Improve the state of housing in Aotearoa NZ, particularly for children/tamariki living in poverty. Living in a cold, damp house is not acceptable and affects the health and development of children/ tamariki. A housing Warrant of Fitness should be implemented to make sure all children/tamariki, living in rental homes, live in a safe and warm home.
- 6b)** Education must be a priority for the government. Many children/tamariki saw education as a way to help children/

tamariki with the issues they face, and as being important to ensuring their future success. Funding must be made available to improve education and to assist achievement for children/tamariki who need this.

- 6c)** Provide free healthcare for all children/tamariki up to 18 years of age, with specialised child and youth mental health services for all children/tamariki who need them.
- 6d)** More must be done to protect children/ tamariki from all violence wherever it may take place. Allocate resources and prioritise programmes to improve the treatment of vulnerable children/tamariki, especially children/tamariki who are in state care.
- 6e)** Fulfil their responsibility to listen to, and take into account, the voices of children/tamariki in policy processes as required by article 12 of the CRC.
- 6f)** Build consensus about the importance of children/tamariki and the outcomes we expect for children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ. To achieve those outcomes the government needs to monitor and evaluate the impact of policies and practice on children/ tamariki.

These recommendations are also relevant to government efforts to meet the objectives of the new Sustainable Development Goals, #1, #3, #4, #10 and #11, ending poverty, improved health, quality education, reducing inequalities, and sustainable, safe and inclusive communities for all children/tamariki.

Methodology

The combined youth teams of UNICEF NZ and Save the Children NZ, have participated in all key parts of this project:

- Designing and developing the questions used in consultation with children/tamariki.
- Consulting with children/tamariki in face to face group interviews.
- Analysing data collated from the consultations.
- Developing and writing the report based on qualitative and quantitative data analysis.
- Developing a set of recommendations for government and wider society based on findings from the consultation.

The youth teams⁴ ranging in ages from 15 – 20 years participated in workshops to learn about the CRC reporting cycle, and acquired the skills needed to help them run consultative workshops. As part of the workshops the youth teams worked together to develop a set of questions that would give children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ the opportunity to share their knowledge of child rights, how they learned about their rights, and voice their opinions on issues affecting children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ that are important to them. The youth teams strongly believed it was important to give children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ a genuine opportunity to share their voices, and to have those voices heard by the New Zealand government and the Committee, to bring about positive change for children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ. The questions were specifically developed to encourage children/tamariki to share their experiences and opinions freely.

The youth teams worked together to consult with a total of **1198** New Zealanders up to 18 years old across Aotearoa NZ.

We request the government provides real opportunities for children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ to be heard, and have their voices taken into account, when policies or decisions concerning them are created.

⁴ More information on the Save the Children NZ and UNICEF NZ youth teams can be found in the Acknowledgements of this report, page 37

Writing the Report

A smaller group⁵, from within the wider team of UNICEF NZ and Save the Children NZ youth ambassadors, volunteered as writers to develop the written report based on the findings from the youth led consultations. The draft writing team came together in a workshop to co-design how the report should look and features the report should include such as; sharing information in the format of the questions as they were asked to the children/tamariki, images, quotes, and recommendations. The team analysed and discussed the collated data gathered from the children/tamariki who participated in the consultations. Members of the team developed the written analysis for each question that forms much of the body of the report.



⁵ More information on the Save the Children NZ and UNICEF NZ youth teams can be found in the Acknowledgements of this report, page 37

Our Voices, Our Rights Authors

It is important to note that the combined youth teams of Save the Children NZ and UNICEF NZ have taken lead roles in the development of the 'Our Voices, Our Rights' project, consultations with children/tamariki and written development of this report.

- The introduction and methodology section of Our Voices, Our Rights has been written by UNICEF NZ and Save the Children NZ staff with input from our youth teams.
- All the Questions sections have been written by members of our youth teams.
- The recommendations for government and for the wider community have been developed and written by our youth teams.
- Our Voices, Our Rights has been edited by members of our youth teams and staff members from Save the Children NZ and UNICEF NZ.
- The format for the design of Our Voices, Our Rights has been developed by our youth teams. The design concept has been implemented by the UNICEF NZ design team.
- See Acknowledgements, page 37 for more detailed information on youth teams and staff contributors.

In our consultation we asked the following questions:

- List all of the child rights you know from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- State where and how you have learned about child rights.
- What makes you happy?
- What would you do to help children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ if you could?
- Do you ever feel like some children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ are treated differently by others? Why or why not? (Please note: 'Others' can mean other children/tamariki, other adults or both)
- Is your individuality, beliefs or culture supported and respected? If not why, if so, in what ways are they supported?
- In what areas (i.e. health, education, safety, etc.) should stronger attention be given by the government to help children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ?

This report has been structured to provide information about the answers provided by the children/tamariki, including some direct quotes, with recommendations that would give effect to issues children/tamariki have discussed as part of the consultation.



How did we come up with the questions that make up the consultation?



Knowledge of the CRC

Prior to being part of our NGO youth representative groups, members of our youth teams had little to no knowledge of child rights, and minimal knowledge of how their rights are protected through the government and NGO reporting on the CRC and NGO monitoring process. As such, our teams were of the feeling children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ have limited knowledge of child rights and the CRC, it was important to them to investigate whether this was the case through the consultation project.

Happiness

Exploring what makes children/tamariki happy in Aotearoa NZ is important in helping to determine what factors contribute to a child's/tamariki happiness and their wider well-being. By exploring happiness we can identify positive influences on children/tamariki, and consider ways children are treated that lead to happiness.

Helping Other Children/tamariki

Under the CRC children/tamariki are accorded rights and are individual citizens in their own right. Children/tamariki are active citizens and are capable of bringing about positive change, however they are often seen by adults as needing to 'grow up' to be able to make valuable contributions. The youth teams felt it was important to give children/tamariki the opportunity to show their capabilities in supporting other children/tamariki, and to provide insights into issues children/tamariki are facing and what help is required to overcome these issues.

Are children/tamariki treated differently?

Through their own experiences, the youth teams felt children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ are treated differently and do not have equal opportunities. It was important for them to understand whether this is the case more widely and what we can do to make positive changes in the way children/tamariki are treated.

Beliefs, Culture and Individuality

Culture, beliefs and individuality are key in making up our identity. The youth ambassadors leading the consultation see Aotearoa NZ as incredibly diverse, and culture as being fundamental to our national identity. It was felt the consultation provided a valuable opportunity to explore how well children/tamariki are supported in their beliefs, culture and identity, or not. We can learn from the positives as well as the negative experiences to bring about positive change for our children/tamariki.

Government

The youth teams felt that children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ are seen to be disinterested in government and low voter turnout is seen to be evidence of this. They wanted to explore whether this was the case as they believe children/tamariki are interested in government and the impact government has on our society, yet they are not given the opportunity to share their voices on issues that are important to them.

Who participated in our consultation?

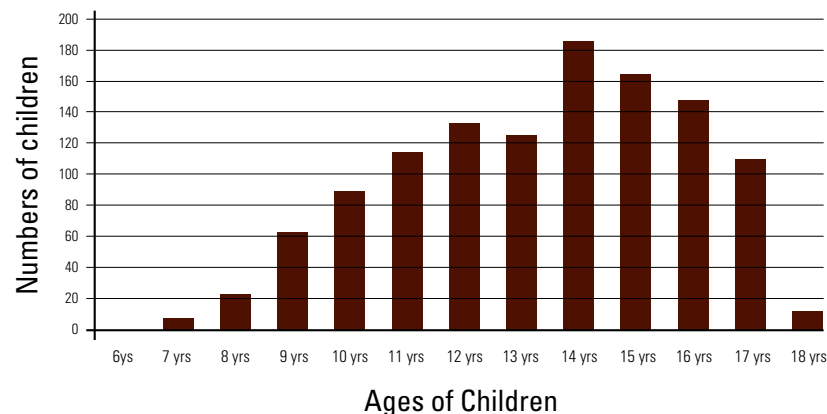
1198 children/tamariki took part in the consultation. Their ages ranged from 6 years to 18 years old.

Online submissions; **707 (59%)**

Face to Face Interviews; **491 (41%)**

In this report we define children/tamariki as children up to 18 years of age. The views of **13** participants aged 18 years of age have been included in this report.

Numbers of Participants by age



**Snapshot of ethnicities
taking part**

Geographic Locations

Children/tamariki from across New Zealand participated in this consultation.

School Decile Range

Our consultation included students from schools across the decile ranges 1 to 10.⁷

⁷ In New Zealand a school's decile ranking gives a broad indication of the socio-economic position of the school's student community relative to other schools throughout the country. Decile information sourced from the website portal Education.govt.nz maintained by the Ministry of Education, <http://www.education.govt.nz/school/running-a-school/resourcing/operational-funding/school-decile-ratings/>

Locations of contributors



A young man with dark hair, wearing a light blue school shirt and a dark tie, is seated at a desk. He is looking down intently at a calculator and some papers. His hands are positioned over the calculator. On the desk, there are several papers, including a purple one, and a red pencil. In the background, another student in a dark uniform is partially visible, also working at a desk. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a classroom environment.

QUESTION

1



EVERY CHILD under the age of 18 has rights.



EVERY CHILD HAS RIGHTS, no matter their race, religion, ability, family type, wealth or the things they think and say.



GOVERNMENTS must help children realise their rights.



The Government is responsible for making the **CONVENTION KNOWN** to all adults and children so that children can access their rights.

What rights do you know, and where did you learn about rights?

Of 1198 children /tamariki consulted, 745 (62%) knew at least some rights; although their knowledge of rights was limited and mostly related to human rights. 453 (38%) were unable to answer or did not know any rights of the child. In some cases their knowledge was inaccurate.

Rights most commonly identified by children/tamariki included, the right to:

- education **410 (34%)**
- healthcare, clean water, nutritious food and a clean environment **236 (20%)**
- a decent standard of living **157 (13%)**
- a quality education **133 (11%)**
- a say on issues that are important to them **124 (10%)**

A number of children/tamariki were able to articulate rights they know. Yet knowledge of specific rights was reasonably low, and knowledge of many rights across the UN Convention was extremely low. The answers predominantly shared by children/tamariki include the rights to education, shelter, a healthy environment, water and the right to be heard.

It was clear that children/tamariki who had a strong grasp of rights, were supported by learning about rights in their school. **413 (34%)** children/tamariki stated they gained their knowledge of rights from their school. This is around one third of all children/tamariki surveyed, showing learning about child rights is far from universal. Other places or resources supporting the learning of rights were; parents, the Internet and Non-Government Organisations. Some children/tamariki said they learned about their rights through their personal experience of family court. The media has an impact on the rights children/tamariki know, however it was not always reliable or accurate. 'The right to silence', was stated by several children/tamariki which is reflective of watching television rather than being a right of the CRC.

It is disappointing that **453 (38%)** had no knowledge or were unable to answer what rights they knew; particularly as the New Zealand government ratified the CRC in 1993. Children/tamariki have very limited knowledge of rights the government has the responsibility to uphold. Only **4** children/tamariki were able to state that it was their right to learn about their rights and that the government was responsible for this. **2** children/tamariki were aware they have the right to reliable information.

Our Conclusion:

Children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ have greater knowledge of their basic human rights than all other rights. There are significant gaps in their knowledge about the CRC and the responsibilities that the government has to uphold these rights for children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ.

It is clearly advantageous for children/tamariki to have the opportunity to learn about their rights at school. When children/tamariki know their rights they are more able to voice their opinions freely and have safe spaces to voice their needs.

Parents can support children/tamariki to learn about their rights and can help to uphold children's/tamariki rights at home and in the community.

Knowledge of child rights is an added layer of protection as children/tamariki have the ability to discern whether their rights are being violated and get help, rather than being powerless due to this lack of awareness.

We Recommend:

- a) Children/tamariki must have the opportunity to learn about their rights. We are calling on the government to build child rights education into schools. This will enable children/tamariki to respect the rights of others, leading to less bullying, and helping to build a nation that better understands and upholds human rights.
- b) We also recommend that:
 - Government provide more leadership to build awareness of children's rights across government, in communities and in the workforce for children/tamariki, to inform the way children/tamariki, are treated in Aotearoa NZ.
 - The CRC is discussed more openly so it becomes a part of Aotearoa NZ culture and guides the way children/tamariki are treated in Aotearoa NZ.
 - Government ensures accurate messaging about the CRC is shared widely with, and through, media.
 - All families are taught about child rights practices as this supports positive parenting, and children/tamariki being heard.
 - Government makes it easier for families to be informed and access government services needed to support their children/tamariki.

QUESTION

2



What makes you happy?



Every child has the right to a caring **FAMILY**.



Every child has the right to join groups and make **FRIENDS** of their own choosing.



Every child has the right to good **HEALTH CARE** and all they need to stay healthy.

- **Family and friends 1061 (89%)**
- **Experiences 770 (64%)**
- **Food and Water 269 (22%)**
- **Education 135 (11%)**

Children/tamariki gave a wide range of answers to the question about what makes them happy. The answers given were mostly focused on basic physical and emotional needs rather than material possessions or acquisitions.

Out of the **1198** participants **1061 (88%)** identified family and friend relationships as being the most important to their happiness. **770 (64%)** responses stated hobbies, recreation, animals, playing sport and exercise as contributing to their happiness, and a further **269 (22%)** responses noted the importance of food and water.

A number of children/tamariki acknowledged the positive impact material goods had on their happiness. **75 (6%)** participants said that using their phones, Wifi (or accessing the net) and watching television made them happy. **49 (4%)** answers reflected the importance of holidays and traveling. However, these did not rate as highly as education at **135 (11%)** submissions, and sit well below **1061 (89%)** participants who gave answers identifying friends and family as making them happy.

Although the majority of the answers related more to the immediate needs of the children/tamariki, there were other interesting responses given by the children/tamariki. For example, of **1198** participants **4** participants said 'Having opportunities makes them happy', **2** said, 'Knowing that I have rights', **1** child stated 'world peace', and another participant said, 'achieving my goals makes me happy'. Due to the fact Aotearoa NZ is a peaceful society, it is not surprising that world peace is not as high a priority, as war and conflict is outside of the experience of most Aotearoa NZ children/tamariki. It is positive that some children/tamariki can see a relationship between having their rights realised and the importance of personal achievement to their happiness. We believe these would rate more highly if more children/tamariki were aware of their rights and the direct impact rights have on their wellbeing and happiness.

These results bust the popular myth that children/tamariki see having a high level of material possessions as being most important in making them happy. Where in fact having a family and friends, playing sport, participating in hobbies, and good food to eat is what really makes them happy.

Parents, family, community and national and local government all have important roles to play in ensuring the happiness of children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ. All must consider the ways in which they can support and take concrete action to ensure positive relationships and experiences that support the physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing of our children/tamariki.



#28

Every child has the right to a free and quality **EDUCATION**.



#29

EDUCATION should develop every child's talents to the full and to respect others.



#31

Every child has the right to **PLAY** and **REST**.

“

My mum and my sister Hannah make me feel happy.

ASHLEE, 10

Basketball, my family, my school, my friends, my achievements.

IZAIAH, 16

My son Kane, chocolate, watching my son grow up, watching him learn new things, seeing him communicate with his 2 year old cousin in their own “baby language”.

NIKKI, 16

Food, sports, sleeping, hockey, technology, reading, dogs, maths.

NORASH, 10

The 3 “F’s” Food Family Friends.

GRACE, 17

”

Our Conclusion:

Government has an important role in creating an environment that supports families. Children/tamariki have told us they want parents to prioritise relationships with them and time spent together. This is more important than providing things (material goods).

Children/tamariki ask that parents and families listen to them. They value their families, including the support and advice they receive to enable their happiness and well-being. Friends play a very important role in their happiness. Time spent supporting and or teaching children/tamariki how to be positive friends is time well spent. Children/tamariki need support from their families, schools and youth programmes to pursue their interests and develop their talents.

We Recommend:

- Provide a better environment for families by putting put more resources into supporting parenting, such as providing more flexible working conditions.
- Local government provide children/tamariki with positive recreational experiences in their communities; particularly those that are free.

QUESTION

3



What would you do to help other children/tamariki in New Zealand if you could?



LAWS must protect children/tamariki from all violence, abuse and harm.



Every child has the right to good **HEALTH CARE** and all they need to stay healthy.



Governments should provide extra **MONEY** for the families of children/tamariki in need.

88% of participants were concerned about serious issues affecting children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ; education, adequate shelter, food, stopping violence and providing money and support for charities that help children/tamariki.

The most popular answers included:

- Basic needs of food, warm clothing, safe, secure and warm shelter **552 (46%)**
- Education **223 (19%)**
- Money to support educational achievement **143 (12%)**
- Donating money **124 (11%)** and or time **69 (6%)** through charities
- Free breakfast or lunches at school **65 (5%)**
- Eradicating bullying **41 (3%)**

There were a number of responses dealing with taking preventative measures, such as access to free health care, teaching parents key parenting skills, providing someone to talk to, and safe places for children/tamariki to go such as youth centres.

These answers also represent the most basic and necessary human rights accorded to children/tamariki under the CRC. This shows that most of the children/tamariki surveyed are aware of, and empathetic toward, the challenges their fellow, less privileged peers may be facing. Many respondents also felt the government is responsible for making sure that all children/tamariki have access to these basic rights. Out of **1198** participants only **21 (2%)** participants stated they didn't know what they would do or didn't answer the question.

Some interesting suggestions to help children/tamariki included; empowering others, introducing religion to children/tamariki, promoting equality and human rights, understanding cultures and support for refugee children/tamariki (**45** collectively). These suggestions recognise the need to develop a culture and education around the importance and value of diversity. This is critical in ensuring that all children/tamariki are treated equally and have their rights, culture, beliefs and religion respected. We must continue to learn about, and put into practice, social development and acceptance of others to ensure that children/tamariki have their rights upheld to feel secure, respected, and included in all social environments.

Given the largest demographic that answered the survey were aged between 11 to 14 years, this level of introspection and maturity was unexpected. This clearly shows that children/tamariki are capable of active citizenship where they can identify issues affecting children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ and provide insightful



Every child has the right to a decent standard of **BASIC NEEDS** met, to ensure their full development. The Government must support those in need.



Every child has the right to a free and quality **EDUCATION**.



EDUCATION should develop every child's talents to the full and to respect others.

and practical solutions to ensure that all children/tamariki can live healthy, fulfilling lives.

Our Conclusion:

- Children/tamariki in New Zealand are aware of inequality in society and want to see active steps taken to ensure equal access and higher living standards; particularly for our most vulnerable children/tamariki.
- The government has a central role in ensuring that families have a standard of living that enables parents to provide opportunities and basic necessities such as food for their children/tamariki.

“**Food, safety, shelter, medical care give them a home, food, medical care, love, safety.**

JESSICA,¹²

Make it so the conditions they grow up in don't define their future and who they are.

NATHAN,¹⁶

Fix climate change, support those in poverty.

ANYA,¹⁵

We Recommend:

- Urgently improve the availability, affordability, and quality of housing in Aotearoa NZ; particularly for children/tamariki living in poverty. A lack of quality housing breaches children's rights to security and to obtaining the highest attainable standard of health. Introduce a comprehensive housing Warrant of Fitness to make sure all children/tamariki live in a safe and warm home.
- Expand current food in schools⁸ programmes to increase the availability of breakfast and lunch for children/tamariki who need it. All schools should be equipped with the resources to provide a breakfast or lunch programme for their students. Providing healthy food in schools will improve the health and educational achievement of children/tamariki.

“**If I could, I would remove the wealth gap and make sure all schools (facilities, teachers, environment) were of a high standard, eliminate prejudice, make streets safer so children could walk to and from school and support parent relationships so they never have to be raised in broken homes. If I could.**

DUNCAN,¹⁶

⁸ Food in schools programmes have been recommended to the government as a way to raise the achievement of children/tamariki (<http://www.treasury.govt.nz/publications/informationreleases/education/foodinschools/pdfs/oia-20140038.pdf>)

QUESTION

4



Do you ever feel like some children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ are treated differently by others?



#14

Every child has a right to their **BELIEFS** and practise their **RELIGION**.



#16

Every child has the right to **PRIVACY** and protection of their name.



#23

If a child lives with **DISABILITY**, they need care and support to live a full life.

In this consultation most children/tamariki strongly believe some children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ are treated differently by both adults and children/tamariki.

Of **1198** children/tamariki participating in the consultation only **253 (21%)** felt children/tamariki were not treated differently and **30 (2%)** 'Didn't know'. Some stated simply 'yes', or 'yes, but not sure how'. A number of reasons were given for positive or negative treatment.

The most common reasons were:

- **Ethnicity 427 (36%)**
- **Socio-economic status 280 (23%)**
- **Bullying 132 (11%)**
- **Religion 109 (9%)**

Being of a different ethnicity was the most common reason given for children/tamariki being treated differently in a negative sense. This ranged from a lack of understanding to blatant racism.

Many children/tamariki felt strongly that children/tamariki were treated differently due to their socio-economic status. Children/tamariki felt if a child had a higher socio-economic status they were more likely to have preferential treatment, have higher

expectations and better opportunities. In contrast children/tamariki from a lower socio-economic status felt they were stigmatised, expected to fail, and treated more harshly for wrongdoings than their wealthier peers.

Some children/tamariki noted it was OK for children/tamariki to be treated differently because we are all different and have different situations or needs. However, it is important that if children/tamariki were treated differently it was not in a cruel or disrespectful way,

Bullying was seen as a significant issue and example of children/tamariki being treated differently in a negative sense. Some children/tamariki are very popular, whereas others are completely excluded and have no friends. It was noted that children/tamariki could be bullied due to their appearance, socio-economic status, gender, sexuality, perceived intelligence, disabilities and other factors. This treatment could be carried out by children/tamariki but also by adults such as teachers. Children/tamariki felt it was important that children/tamariki with disabilities were to be treated more kindly and respectfully.

Another serious concern was that some children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ are abused, neglected and treated violently by their families, or adults, that are supposed to be looking after them. The role of family is crucial in supporting children/tamariki and has a significant impact on children's/tamariki health, safety and wellbeing.



#27

Every child has the right to a decent standard of **BASIC NEEDS** met, to ensure their full development. The Government must support those in need.



#30

Every child has the right to speak their **LANGUAGE** and practice their culture, even if these are not the majority.

Our Conclusion:

In this consultation most children/tamariki strongly believe some children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ are treated differently by both adults and children/tamariki. Children/tamariki want adults and children/tamariki to be aware that intolerance of diversity, including disabilities, is leading to negative treatment. Children have a knowledge of inclusion and exclusion and understand what this feels and looks like.

Adults need to be responsible role models and take care not to treat children/ tamariki differently in negative ways.

We Recommend:

- Allocate resources and prioritise programmes that will ensure the improved treatment of all children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ; especially children/tamariki who are in state care.
- Schools need to ensure that all children/tamariki are treated well. This is very important in schools as children/tamariki are sensitive to this and teachers are influential role models.
- Children/tamariki with disabilities must be treated with respect and dignity. They must receive the care and support they need to live full inclusive lives as valued members of our families, schools, and community.

“

Yes, lots of people are judged on their race and looked down on. Some are also judged depending on how much money they have or what phone they have.

ANONYMOUS, 13, FEMALE

I think people with disabilities, learning difficulties, have a hard time in schools from people who aren't so accepting. I also think that people who migrate to New Zealand have a harder time in school. I know I treated them differently when I was young as everyone else did and sadly I joined in.

JULIE, 17

Yes, racism is pretty bad and you can be treated differently for it. Poor children do not get as many good opportunities. If you have a bad background you are expected to be like that.

”

ANONYMOUS, 12, FEMALE



“

People often look down onto poor children and don't think that they're going far in life and as a result they get less opportunities and that cycle of poverty keeps going because they are treated differently because of that socio-economic circumstance.

KARAN, 15

Children in general do not need attention to the same degree that specifically disadvantaged children do. I have grown up in New Zealand and have never felt my health, education or safety an issue, but I have grown up in one of the least disadvantaged percentages of NZ children.

DUNCAN, 16

”

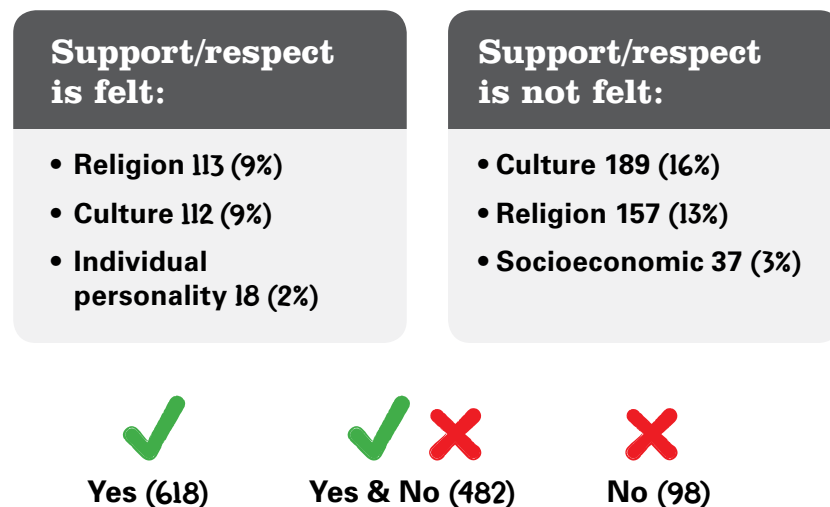
QUESTION

5



Is your individuality, beliefs or culture supported and respected? If not why, if so, in what ways are they supported?

Of the 1198 children/tamariki consulted with, 618 (52%) felt their individuality, beliefs and cultures are supported and respected, however a number of children/tamariki also identified as not feeling supported in these same areas. These areas include culture, religion and their socio-economic status within society. Many children/tamariki had mixed feelings on whether they were supported and respected.



Some children said they are well supported. Yet a number of children in the consultation felt that their individuality beliefs and culture are respected as they identified with fairly mainstream beliefs/cultures. Many children/tamariki identified their families, friends and schools as being a key part of feeling safe to express their beliefs.

Families play the largest role in supporting the individuality, beliefs and cultures of the children/tamariki consulted. **163 (14%)** children said they feel supported by friends and family. This support comes from being able to speak openly with their family and also feeling that they are supported in their choices and beliefs.

Schools and education play a fundamental role in supporting the individuality, culture and beliefs of their students. Schools have a role in enabling respect and support for individuality, culture and beliefs through celebrating cultural/religious festivals, having a range of learning and sporting options that allows students to express and develop their individuality.

There were mixed responses from children/tamariki on whether schools provide enough support.

A number of children/tamariki were negatively affected through cultural discrimination, religious intolerance or racism.

189 (16%) felt their culture was not respected or supported.

57 (5%) felt unsupported in their religious beliefs, while **29 (2%)** had experienced racism.

Children/tamariki said other areas where they experience discrimination include; disabilities, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.

Children/tamariki shared very clear messages that they want people in the community to be inclusive and support all types of diversity.



Our Conclusion:

As a country we must continue to develop our acceptance and support of all types of diversity. We must also be aware of the discrimination some children/tamariki are facing and take immediate action to stop this from continuing. Government, families and community all have an important role to play in accepting diversity.

Families and friends should be made aware of the positive impact and the important role they have in respecting and supporting the individuality, culture and beliefs of children/tamariki.

Schools play a positive role in providing support and opportunities for children/tamariki to practice their culture and beliefs and develop their individuality; this needs to be continued. There are valuable opportunities to celebrate and acknowledge cultural and religious festivals even if they are not recognised by the mainstream population.

We Recommend:

- a) Children/tamariki and adults should be educated on the power that welcoming and including different languages and cultures can have on a person's self-image and well-being.
- b) Schools need to be supported to provide opportunities for children/tamariki to practice their culture and beliefs, and develop their individuality.
- c) Provide more training and tools for teachers to enable them to create classroom environments that will support diversity and overcome unconscious bias.⁹

⁹ **Unconscious bias** is where people unconsciously form social stereotypes about certain groups of people. Everyone holds unconscious beliefs about various social and identity groups as the human brain prefers to categorise everything it can to make its job easier.

“

Teenagers/children harass students because of their ethnicity. Asians and Africans are highly harassed because of their colour, language and where they are from.

TEFIN, 15

Yes, my culture is supported. I have a different culture than lots around me but I think New Zealand is a very diverse country.

REBECCA, 10

Yes because my family and friends respect and support me with what I choose to do and who I am.

JESSICA, 14

Yes, Makoura College has kapa haka every Friday and Te Reo Maori.

TIARE, 13

”

“

When I do something wrong, my friends and family point me in the right direction. It makes me feel that they care and want me to make the right choices in what I do and how to improve who I am.

ANONYMOUS, 15

Sometimes it feels like people are not really accepting who you are and it feels terrible.

TAYLOR, 12

I believe in a lot of religion and some people mock me for it and say I am stupid.

JAJON, 14

Sadly, the phrase I hear most often with regards to this is “I’m sure that’s just a phase” or “What is that?” For all that the LGBT movement is gaining traction, prominence and media attention, asexuality is pretty much unknown.

HEBE, 16

”

QUESTION

6





#4

GOVERNMENTS

must help children/
tamariki realise their rights.



#5

FAMILIES have
rights and responsibilities
to guide their children/
tamariki, with support
from the Government.



#6

Every child has the
right to good **HEALTH**
that will ensure their
development.



#12

Every child has the right
to a **VOICE** and for it
to be heard.



#19

LAWS must protect
children/tamariki from all
violence, abuse and harm.

What areas should be given more attention, by the government, to help children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ?

Children/tamariki have clearly identified a number of inequalities affecting children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ and believe the government must do more to improve the lives of children/tamariki. They identified the following four areas as needing more attention by the government:

- **Education and educational achievement 561 (47%)**
- **Healthcare 422 (35%)**
- **Safety on the streets and at home 219 (18%)**
- **Improved housing 199 (17%)**

Children/tamariki said that education and educational achievement was the area they were most concerned about. **561 (47%)** tamariki interviewed felt the government should do more for education and the educational achievement of children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ. Children/tamariki believed the government should help with improving achievement, address bullying, help more children/tamariki go to university, make education cheaper or free, and provide breakfast or lunch in schools.

Healthcare was the second biggest issue, with **422 (35%)** respondents saying healthcare should be given more attention by the government. Children/tamariki believe that children, particularly teens, need access to free healthcare. Children/tamariki were also concerned about mental health services and felt those with mental health issues were not well supported.

219 (18%) children/tamariki were concerned about safety of children/tamariki on the streets and at home, and felt that the government could do more to make children/tamariki safer. Participants felt that violence and abuse could happen to children/tamariki anywhere, whether on the streets or at home, and children/tamariki must be protected from all violence wherever it happens. Another **38 (3%)** children/tamariki believed the government must take action to improve the way children/tamariki are treated in care, such as foster homes, and ending violent treatment was part of what was needed.

Improvements to housing was another important area children/tamariki believe the government should do more to help children/tamariki; with **199 (17%)** ranking it as a priority. Many of the children/tamariki participating in the consultation understood the relationship between affordability and the quality of housing.

Children/tamariki interviewed said there is a need for the government to provide more affordable, warm, safer housing, and more housing in Auckland.

Children/tamariki believe it is the government's responsibility to provide better support for children/tamariki. A large number felt very strongly money would be better spent to solve important issues such as education, health, safety and housing, rather than spending millions to change the flag. In their opinion a new flag should not be a priority when there are these serious issues to be addressed.



#24 A

Every child has the right to good **HEALTH CARE** and all they need to stay healthy.



#26

Governments should provide extra **MONEY** for the families of children in need.



#27

Every child has the right to a decent standard of **BASIC NEEDS** met, to ensure their full development. The Government must support those in need.



#28

Every child has the right to a free and quality **EDUCATION**.



#29

EDUCATION should develop every child's talents to the full and to respect others.

Our Conclusion:

This report clearly shows that children/tamariki are capable of active citizenship where they can identify issues affecting children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ and provide insightful and practical solutions to ensure that all children/tamariki can live healthy, fulfilling lives.

Children/tamariki have identified key areas where inequalities are affecting children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ and where they believe the government must do more to improve the lives of children/tamariki.

“**My brain structure is part of who I am, so why is my disability invisible? You wouldn't tell a kid with cancer to “toughen up”, why would you say that to me? Why would you take advantage of the fact that I have panic attacks when people start shouting? Why would you deny me my support tools in class? Why am I ashamed?**”

CAITLIN, 18

We Recommend:

- Improve the state of housing in Aotearoa NZ, particularly for children/tamariki living in poverty. Living in a cold, damp house is not acceptable and affects the health and development of children/ tamariki. A housing Warrant of Fitness should be implemented to make sure all children/tamariki, living in rental homes, live in a safe and warm home.
- Education must be a priority for the government. Many children/tamariki saw education as a way to help children/tamariki with the issues they face, and as being important to ensuring their future success. Funding must be made available to improve education and to assist achievement for children/tamariki who need this.
- Provide free healthcare for all children/tamariki up to 18 years of age, with specialised child and youth mental health services for all children/tamariki who need them.
- More must be done to protect children/ tamariki from all violence wherever it may take place. Allocate resources and prioritise programmes to improve the treatment of vulnerable children/tamariki, especially children/tamariki who are in state care.
- Fulfil their responsibility to listen to, and take into account, the voices of children/tamariki in policy processes as required by article 12 of the CRC.
- Build consensus about the importance of children/tamariki and the outcomes we expect for children/tamariki in Aotearoa NZ. To achieve those outcomes the government needs to monitor and evaluate the impact of policies and practice on children/tamariki.

“

Poverty (as an issue to address), because children are going to school and they can't learn if they haven't had breakfast or lunch.

MAX, 12

The government should do more for children in areas of safety from violence, abuse, discrimination and bullying.

ASHMITA, 16

I think they should give kids free breakfast in lower decile schools.

ALLIE, 13

I think the government should work on giving free education.

ADITYA, 12



“

We (teens) need to be able to have regular health check-ups and access a GP when we need one for free.

HAIGHLEIGH, 13

I think they should focus more on having less poverty in New Zealand.

ABBEY, 12

I think they should spend [sic] focusing money on better stuff not like changing the flag.

ZACHARY, 11

”

Acknowledgements

Save the Children New Zealand and UNICEF New Zealand youth ambassadors are very grateful for the interest shown by children/tamariki, youth, schools and community groups who contributed their time and efforts into sharing their knowledge and voices to create this report.

We would like to thank all of the children/tamariki around Aotearoa NZ who participated in this consultation.

A special thanks to Save the Children New Zealand, UNICEF New Zealand and Action for Children and Youth Aotearoa (ACYA) for making this project possible. We would also like to thank the team at Save the Children NZ and UNICEF NZ for their contribution in compiling the report, and for the work that has gone into designing the report. Special thanks to Jacqui Southey and Sarah Jane Grant-Wang of UNICEF NZ and Mercy Chipso Jumo of Save the Children NZ for leading this project and seeing it through to completion. We would also like to acknowledge the valuable contributions of Deborah Morris-Travers, UNICEF NZ, Shelley Knowles, UNICEF NZ Sarah Te One, ACYA¹⁰, and Lisa Woods, Every Child Counts.

Thank you to the following schools and groups for their contribution; Alfriston College, Beachlands School, Chilton St James, Craighead Diocesan School for Girls, Fairfield College, Glenbrae School, Glendowie College, Hamilton Boys High School,

Harewood School, Hastings Girls High School, He Huarahi Tamariki, Howick College, Iona College, John Paul College, Kapiti College, Karamu High School, Kelston Girls College, Kirkwood Intermediate, Makoura College, Mana College, Mangatawhiri School, Marlborough Girls College, Manurewa High School, Matamata College, Mount Hutt College, Mount Roskill Primary School, Newbury School, New Brighton School, Orewa School, Otago Girls High School, Palmerston North Girls High School, Paraparaumu College, Paraparaumu School, Randwick Park School, Rangitoto College, Raroa Normal Intermediate School, Remarkables Primary School, Rosehill College, Sacred Heart College (Lower Hutt), St Mark's Church School, St Pius X Melville, Scots College, Spotswood College, Taita College, Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu, Te Aro School, Te Kuiti High School, Tiaho Primary School, Upper Hutt College, Waikato Diocesan School for Girls, Wakatipu High School, Wanganui City College, Wanganui Intermediate School, Wellington East Girls College, Wellington Girls College, Westlake Girls High School, Christchurch Youth Council, Festival for the Future participants, Girl Guiding New Zealand Wadestown Guides, Horowhenua Youth Voice, Kelburn Guides and Paheko Rangers, Rainbow Youth, Rotorua Youth Council, Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, Whakatane District Council, UNICEF Youth Congress participants, Vibe.

¹⁰ ACYA: Action for Children and Youth Aotearoa, www.acya.org.nz

In many cases schools acknowledged formally participated in the consultation, however some children may have participated as individuals, while listing their school, have participated outside of school's official permission.

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Disclaimer: The views expressed in this publication are those of the children/tamariki consulted with, and the young people who wrote the report. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the facilitation organisations.

Photos kindly supplied for use in this report by Beth Walters, Member for Child and Youth Friendly Christchurch Youth Advisory Group (pgs 1, 22, 25, 33). Remaining photographs supplied by UNICEF NZ and Save the Children NZ.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child



EVERY CHILD under the age of 18 has rights.



EVERY CHILD HAS RIGHTS, no matter their race, religion, ability, family type, wealth or the things they think and say.



Everyone must work toward what is **BEST FOR EACH CHILD**.



GOVERNMENTS must help children realise their rights.



FAMILIES have rights and responsibilities to guide their children, with support from the Government.



Every child has the right to good **HEALTH** that will ensure their development.



Every child has the right to an **IDENTITY** and official record of it.



Every child has the right to a **NAME** and **NATIONALITY** and family ties.



Every child has the right to a caring **FAMILY**.



Every child has the right to be with their **FAMILY ALL TOGETHER**.



No one can take a child **ILLEGALLY**.



Every child has the right to a **VOICE** and for it to be heard.



Every child has the right to get and share **INFORMATION**, as long as it causes no harm.



Every child has a right to their **BELIEFS** and practise their **RELIGION**.



Every child has the right to join groups and make **FRIENDS** of their own choosing.



Every child has the right to **PRIVACY** and protection of their name.



The **MASS MEDIA** has a responsibility to provide reliable information children understand and protect them from information harmful.



PARENTS must share the responsibility of raising their children and be supported by society to do so.



LAWS must protect children from all violence, abuse and harm.



Respect for a child's **HERITAGE** must be considered if they can't be cared for by their family.



If **ADOPTED** by another family, the child's best interests are the primary consideration.



If a **REFUGEE**, a child should be protected by its host country and have the same rights as other children.



If a child lives with **DISABILITY**, they need care and support to live a full and independent life.



Every child has the right to good **HEALTH CARE** and all they need to stay healthy.



Every child has the right to clean **WATER**.



Every child has the right to nutritious **FOOD**.



Every child has the right to a clean and healthy **ENVIRONMENT**.



Children in **STATE CARE** must have their situation regularly reviewed.



Governments should provide extra **MONEY** for the families of children in need.



Every child has the right to a decent standard of **BASIC NEEDS** met, to ensure their full development. The Government must support those in need.



Every child has the right to a free and quality **EDUCATION**.



EDUCATION should develop every child's talents to the full and to respect others.



Every child has the right to speak their **LANGUAGE** and practice their culture, even if these are not the majority.



Every child has the right to **PLAY** and **REST**.



Every child must be **SAFE FROM WORK** that harms them, threatens their education or their childhood.



Every child must be kept safe from dangerous **DRUGS**.



Every child should be **SAFE** from **SEXUAL ABUSE**.



Every child should be **SAFE** from being **ABDUCTED** or **SOLD**.



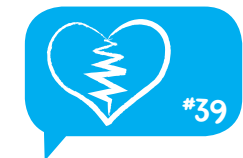
Every child should be **SAFE** from **EXPLOITATION** or anything that may harm them.



Every child must be **SAFE** from being cruelly **PUNISHED**, nor put in prison with adults.



Every child should be protected from **WAR**. Those 15 years and younger must not serve in armed forces.



Every child who has been hurt, neglected or badly treated needs special **CARE** and **HELP**, to overcome the hurt.



Every child who breaks the law must be given **FAIR TREATMENT** and jailed only as a last resort for the most serious of offences.



If a **COUNTRY'S LAWS** better protect a child's rights, they should take precedence to the Convention.



The Government is responsible for making the **CONVENTION KNOWN** to all adults and children so that children can access their rights.



These articles set out how **SOCIETY** works to protect children's rights

Child Friendly version of the CRC developed by UNICEF NZ

CRC Colour Key



GENERAL



LAW,
EDUCATION
AND RELIGION



FAMILIES



HEALTH



ANGER & CRIME



This report has been made possible by:

