

“Mind the Gap”: unequal from the start

Evidence from *Growing Up in New Zealand*

Centre for Longitudinal Research – *He Ara ki Mua*
University of Auckland

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www.growingup.co.nz



Overview of today's talk

- Overview of findings from the first 2000 days of *Growing Up in New Zealand*
- Impact of adversity across first 1000 days
- Translation of evidence (community co-design)
- Engaging with the cohort directly at 8 yrs
- Working with partners to support parents and whānau in the first 1000 days



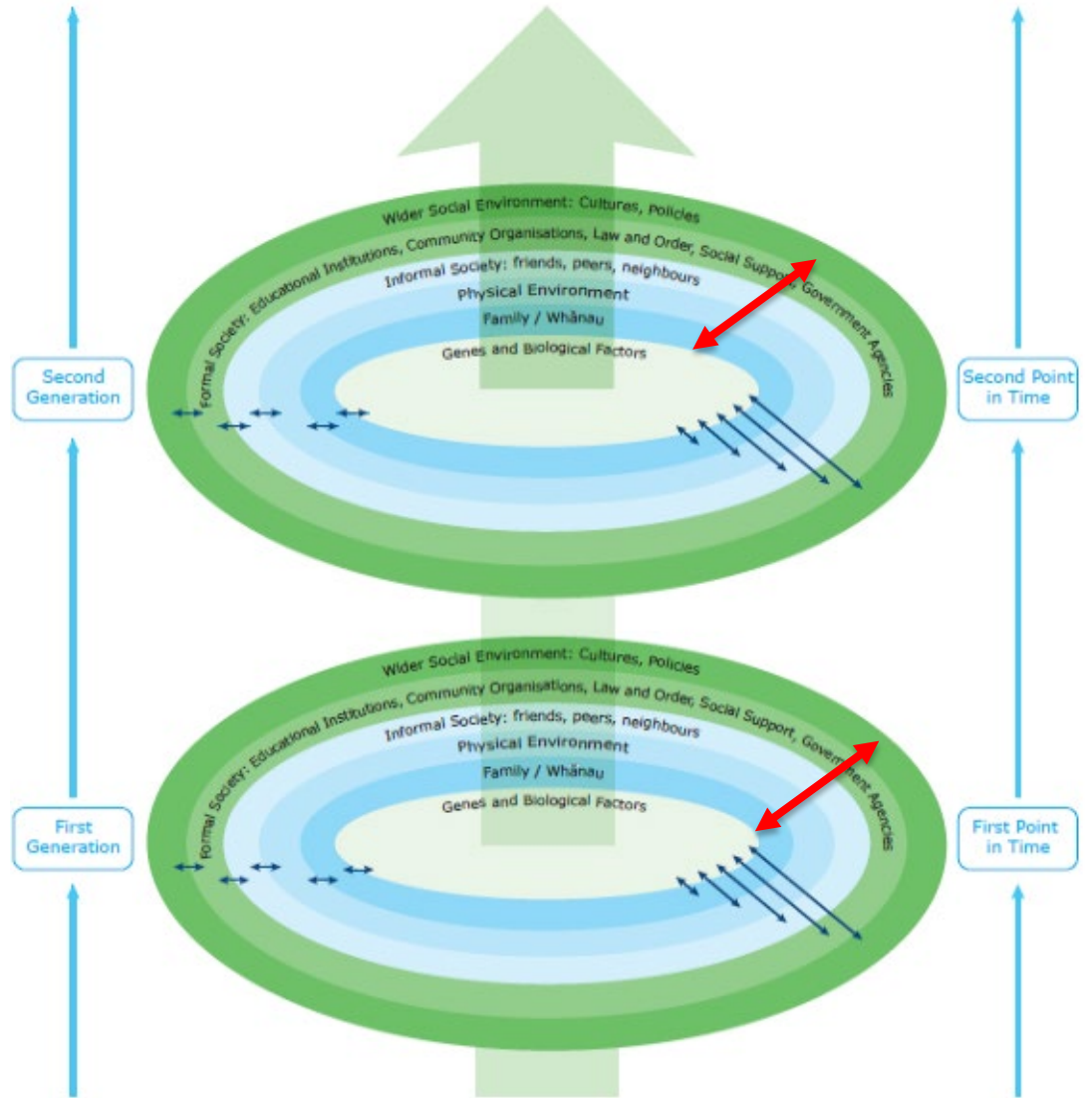
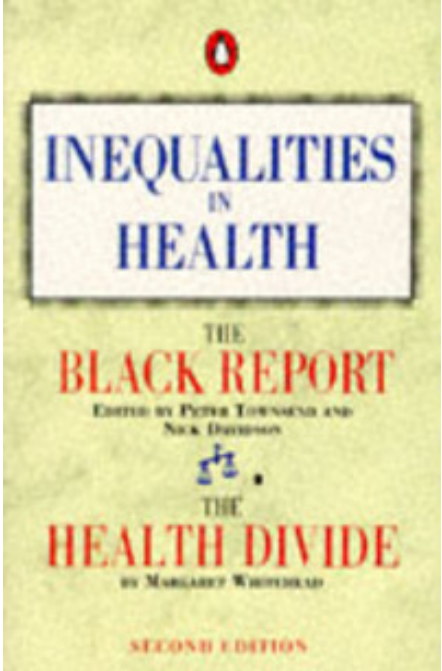
The *Growing Up in New Zealand* study

To provide contemporary population relevant evidence about developmental trajectories for 21st century New Zealand children in the context of their families and whānau.

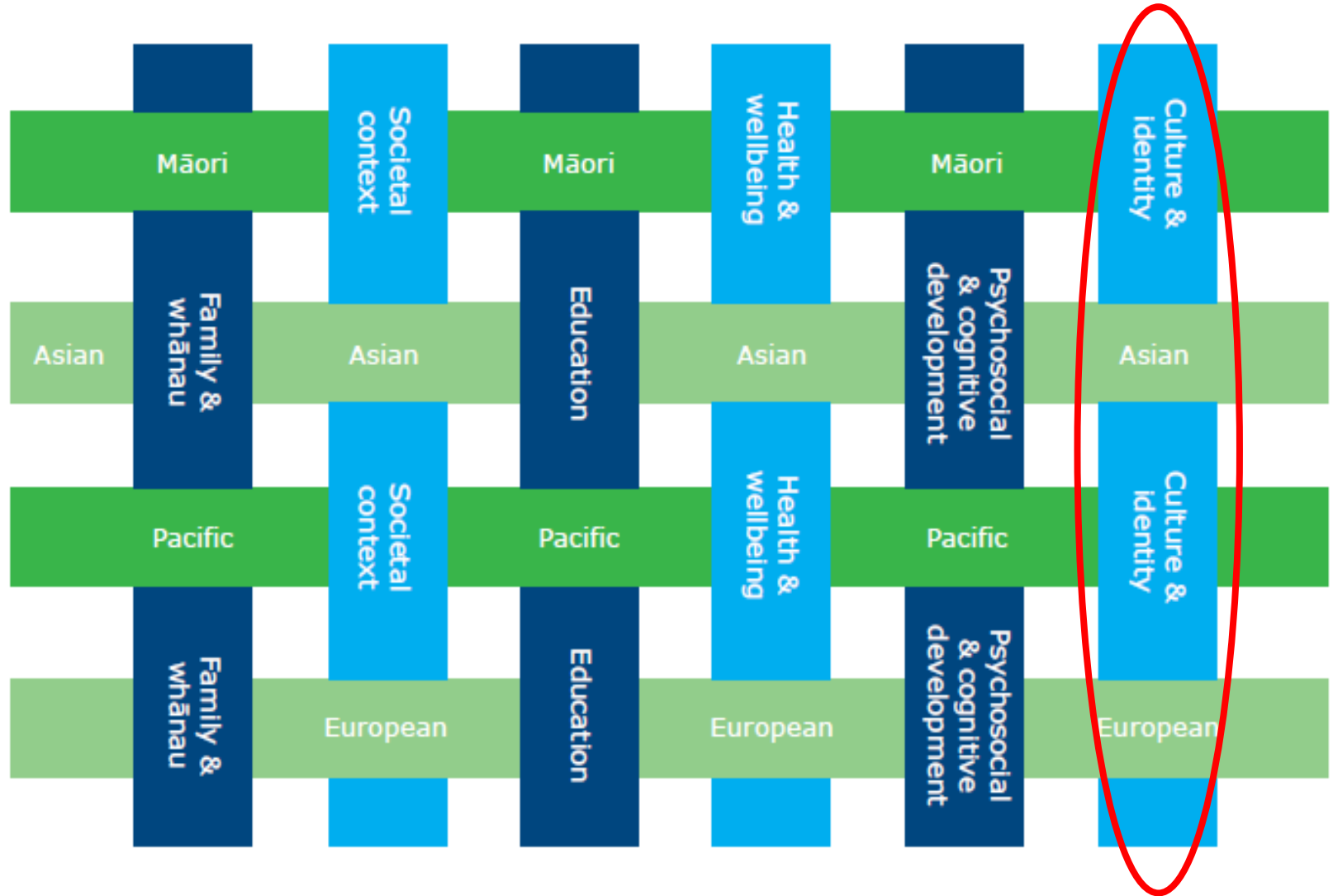
- **6853 children** recruited before their birth – via their pregnant mothers (6823) and fathers/partners
- Cohort recruited to ensure adequate explanatory power to consider trajectories for Māori (1 in 4), Pacific (1 in 5) and Asian (1 in 6) children, and multiple ethnic identities (changing over time)
- Cohort is broadly generalisable to current NZ pre-schoolers (diversity of ethnicity and family SES)
- Longitudinal follow up completed - **antenatal, birth, 9 months, 2 years, 4.5 years, 72 months, 8 & 12 years**
- Providing robust scientific evidence to inform cross-sectoral policy about “*what works*” for wellbeing



Broad social determinants of wellbeing framework



Information is child centered and multi-disciplinary



Measuring ethnicity and cultural identity



53%
identify
with one
(58% at 2 years)



32%
identify
with two



15%
identify with
three or more





- Ethnic identity (mother, partner, intended for child) and development over time
- Multiple levels of ethnicity collected – self-prioritised and able to be externally prioritised
- Cultural values, beliefs and expectations
- Cultural practices
- Cultural capital
- National identity
- Sense of self
- Influence of other cultures on the individual
- Attitudes about others
- Discrimination – perceived and context
- Religiosity/Spirituality
- Community capital



Parental and child wellbeing during the first 2000 days



Measuring “adversity” in the first 1000 days

Economic capital 	Labour force status Household income Sources of income Paid parental leave Economic hardship
Physical capital 	Housing tenure Residential mobility Household safety Health status Health service access
Social capital 	Parent-parent relationships Parent-child relationships Relationship status Household structure
Human capital 	Early childhood education Home educational environment Cultural identity and belonging Equity

Proximal Family Variables

- **Maternal depression (EPDS>12)**
- **Maternal physical wellbeing (poor/fair)**
- Maternal smoking in pregnancy (after first trimester)
- Maternal age (teenage pregnancy)

Distal Family Variables

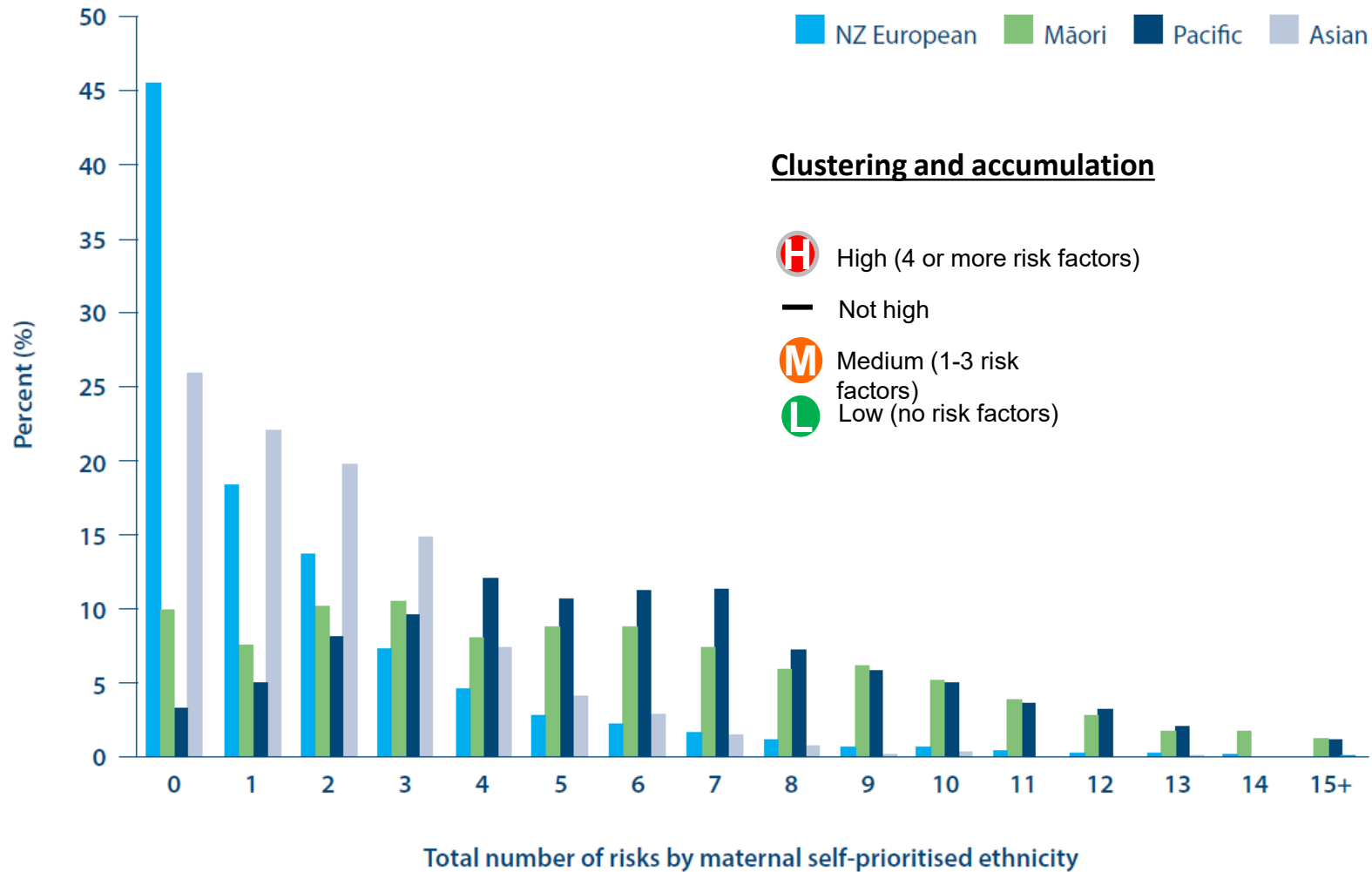
- Relationship status (no partner/single)
- Maternal education (no secondary school qualification)
- Financial stress (regular money worries)

Home environment

- Deprivation area (NZDep2006 decile 9 or 10)
- Unemployment (mother not in work or on parental leave)
- Tenure (public rental)
- Income tested benefit (yes/no)
- Overcrowding (≥ 2 per bedroom)

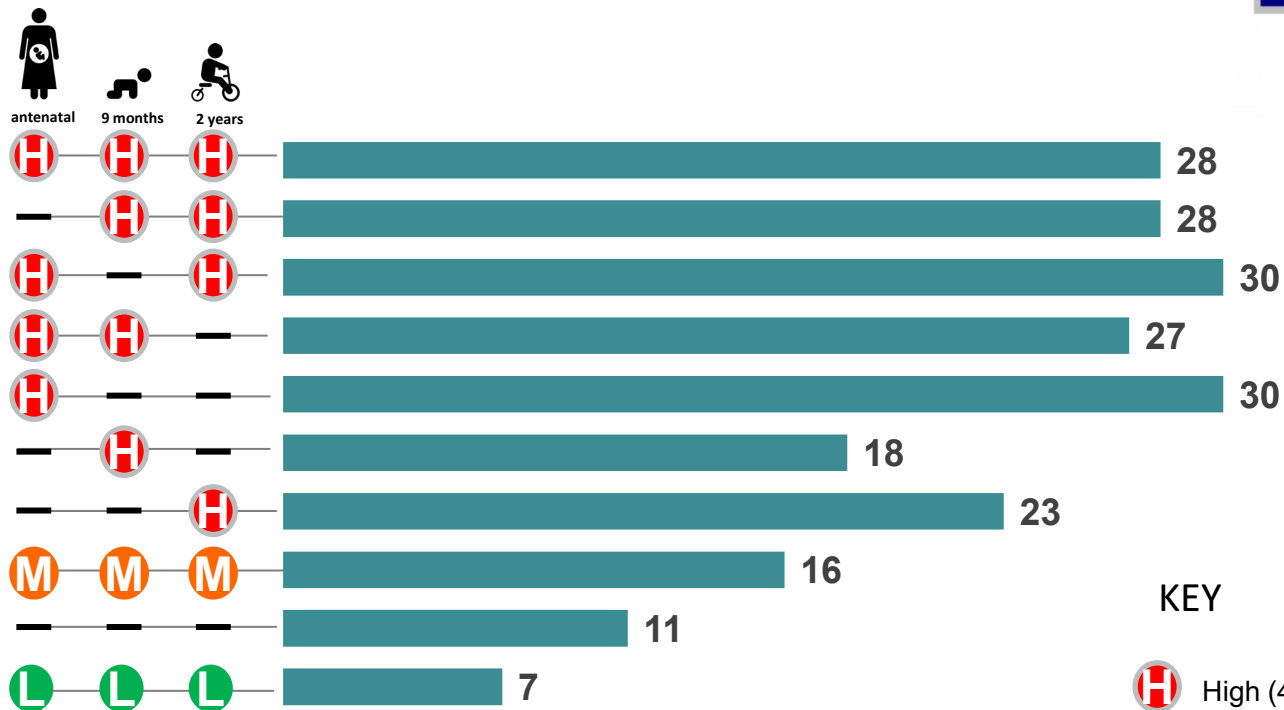


Exposure to early life adversity - unequally distributed



Persistent “adversity” in first 1000 days

Adversity and rates of obesity in pre-schoolers



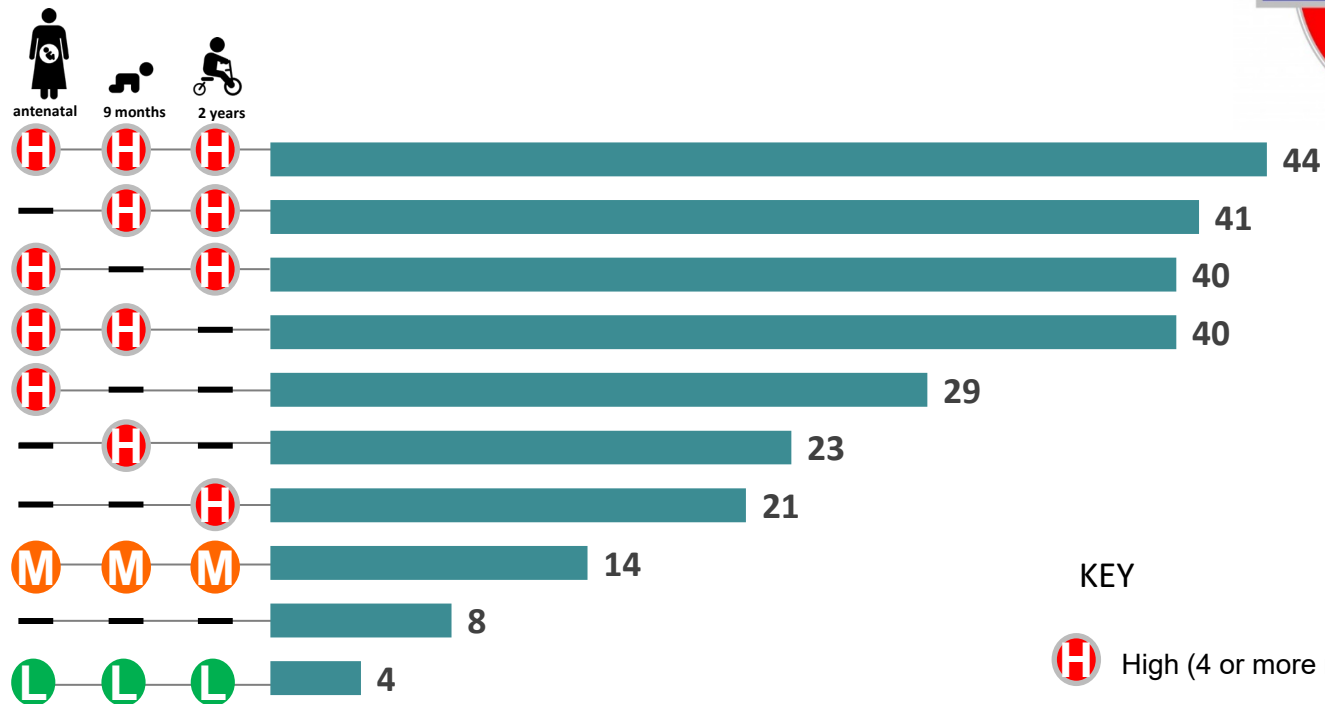
KEY

- High (4 or more risk factors)
- Not high
- Medium (1-3 risk factors)
- Low (no risk factors)



Persistent “adversity” impacts child *wellbeing*

Preschool child behaviour - SDQ score in Abnormal range (%)

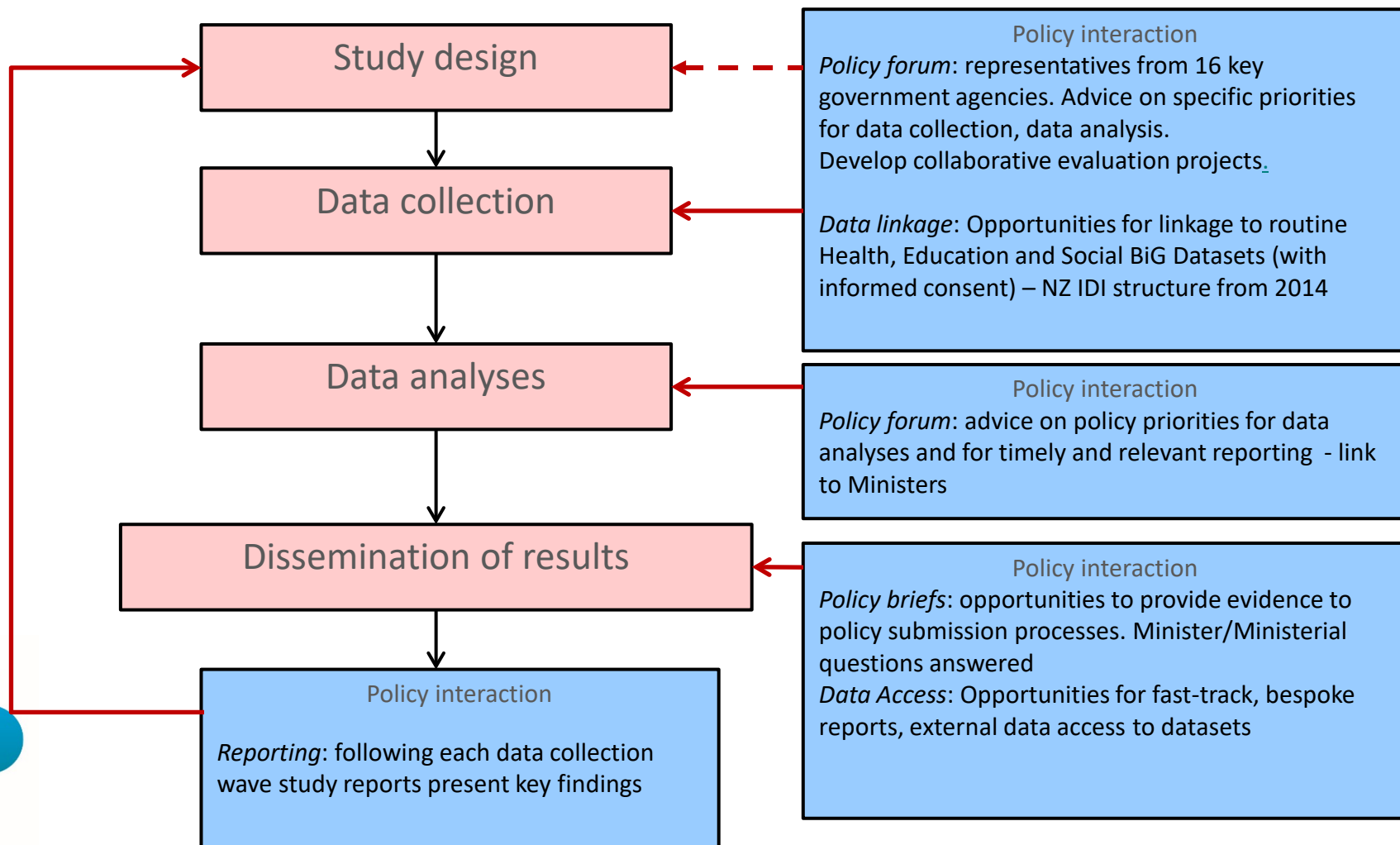


KEY

- High (4 or more risk factors)
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Creating partnerships to facilitate translation

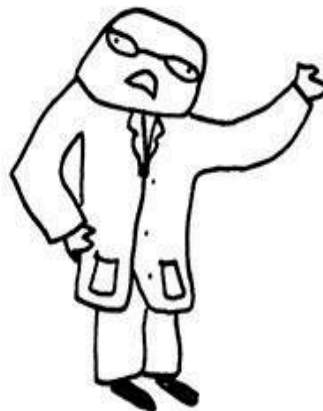


Challenges around translating to inform solutions

- Strong associations necessary but not sufficient (alone) to inform action
- Need to move beyond “risk factorology” (and better defining risks)
- Causation usually multifactorial, accumulating over time and interacting over time, acting at multiple levels of influence – and resulting in co-morbidities

SCIENCE vs. THE PEOPLE!

correlation is
not causation!



i dunno what
those are but
i disagree
and i vote!



Growing Up in South Auckland – co-designing solutions

Children growing up in South Auckland can be hidden in the NZ statistics, and the overall *Growing Up* analyses

GUINZ collaborated with TSI to look specifically at the **lived realities** of the 1252 children and their families “*Growing up*” in South Auckland

- 9% born to a **teenage mother** (4.8% *Growing Up*)
- 25% mothers **no formal school qualifications** (7% *GU*)
- 68% live in **most deprived** NZDep2006 quintile (27% *GU*)
- 60% in **rental accommodation** (45% *Growing Up*)
- 50% in a **crowded household** (21% *Growing Up*)

78% identify as Maori or Pasifika (45% *Growing Up*)

Overall **1 in 5 children in the South Auckland cohort experience high vulnerability** during their first 1000 days (compared to 1 in 10 of all *Growing Up* cohort)

Early Years Challenge

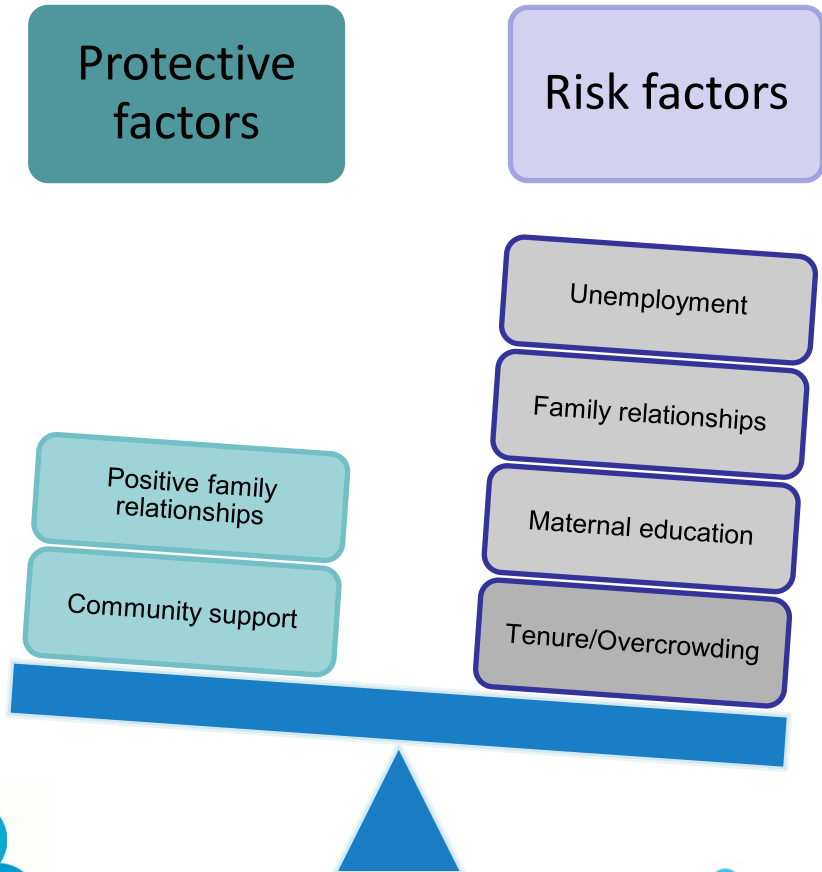
Supporting parents to give tamariki a great start in life

Summary report

October 2017



Protective factors – designing context relevant solutions



TOGETHER WE DISCOVER

Hearing the children's own voices at 8 years



"I'm unique, there's no one else in this world like me"

The form is titled "A day in the life of an 8 year old" and includes the Māori text "He rā nā te tamaiti, e waru tau te pakeke". It has three input fields: "Name:", "Age:", and "Birthday:". The form is decorated with a blue border containing various colorful icons representing different aspects of a child's life.

... are **LOVED, SAFE**
and **NURTURED**



... have **WHAT**
they **NEED**



... are **HAPPY**
and **HEALTHY**



... are **LEARNING** and
DEVELOPING

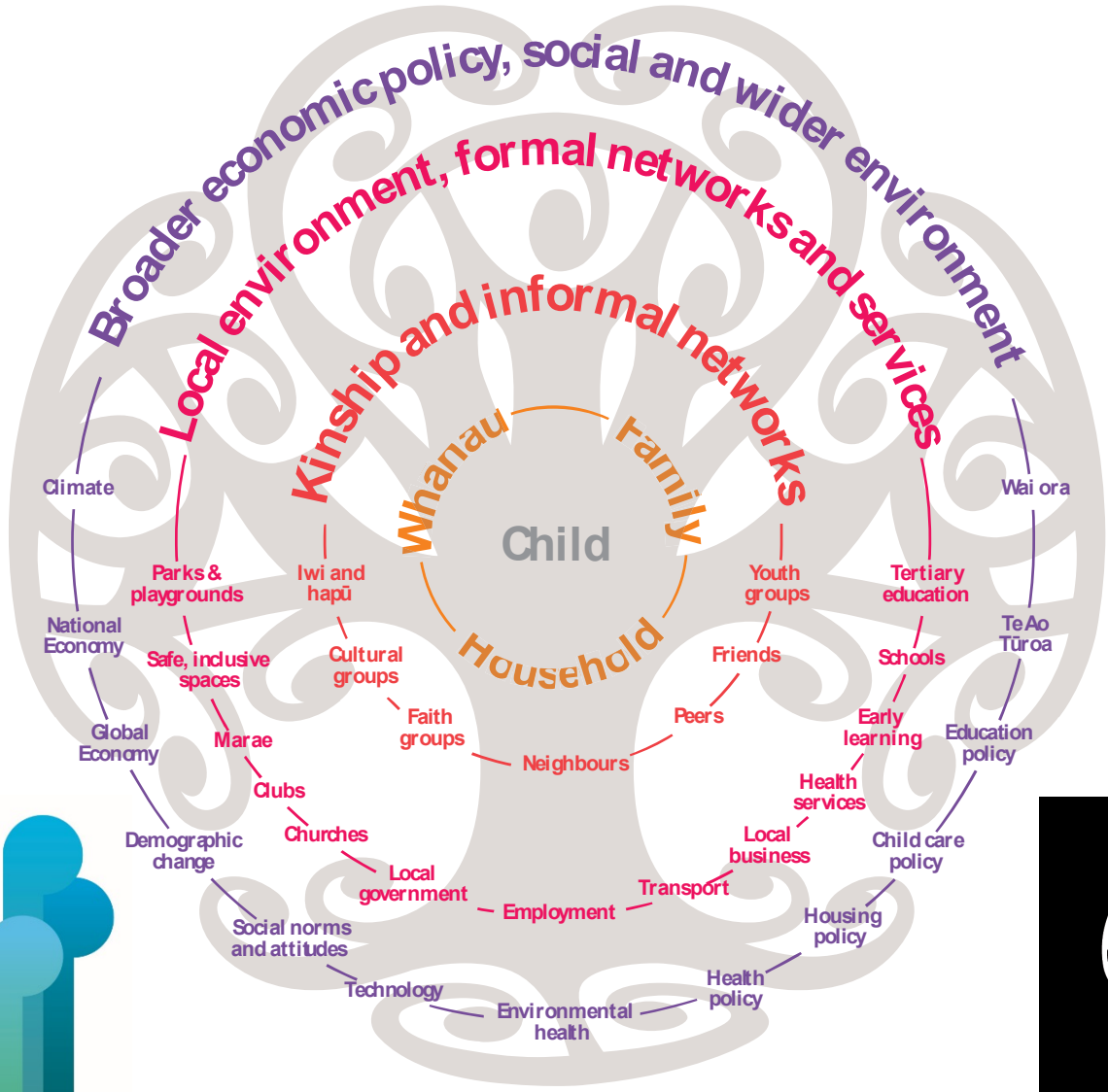


... are **ACCEPTED, RESPECTED**
and **CONNECTED**





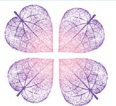



... are **INVOLVED** and
EMPOWERED

2019 Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework (NZ Govt)



Alignment to Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy

Children are...		Topics in the NWA8 report
	Accepted, respected and connected	Identity, talking with parents about culture, languages, discrimination, body image, self-worth
	Have what they need	Housing quality and mobility, housing costs, household debt, household income, material hardship, food security and nutrition
	Loved, safe and nurtured	Maternal affection, parenting, screen time and online safety, parent child interactions, parental wellbeing, autonomy
	Learning and developing	Engagement at school, changes of school, bullying, behaviour, self-regulation, academic skills, physical development
	Involved and empowered	Helping others when they are bullied, extracurricular activities, altruism
	Happy and healthy	Child depression and anxiety scores, body size, immunisation, infections, allergies, sleep, physical activity, health care Body size



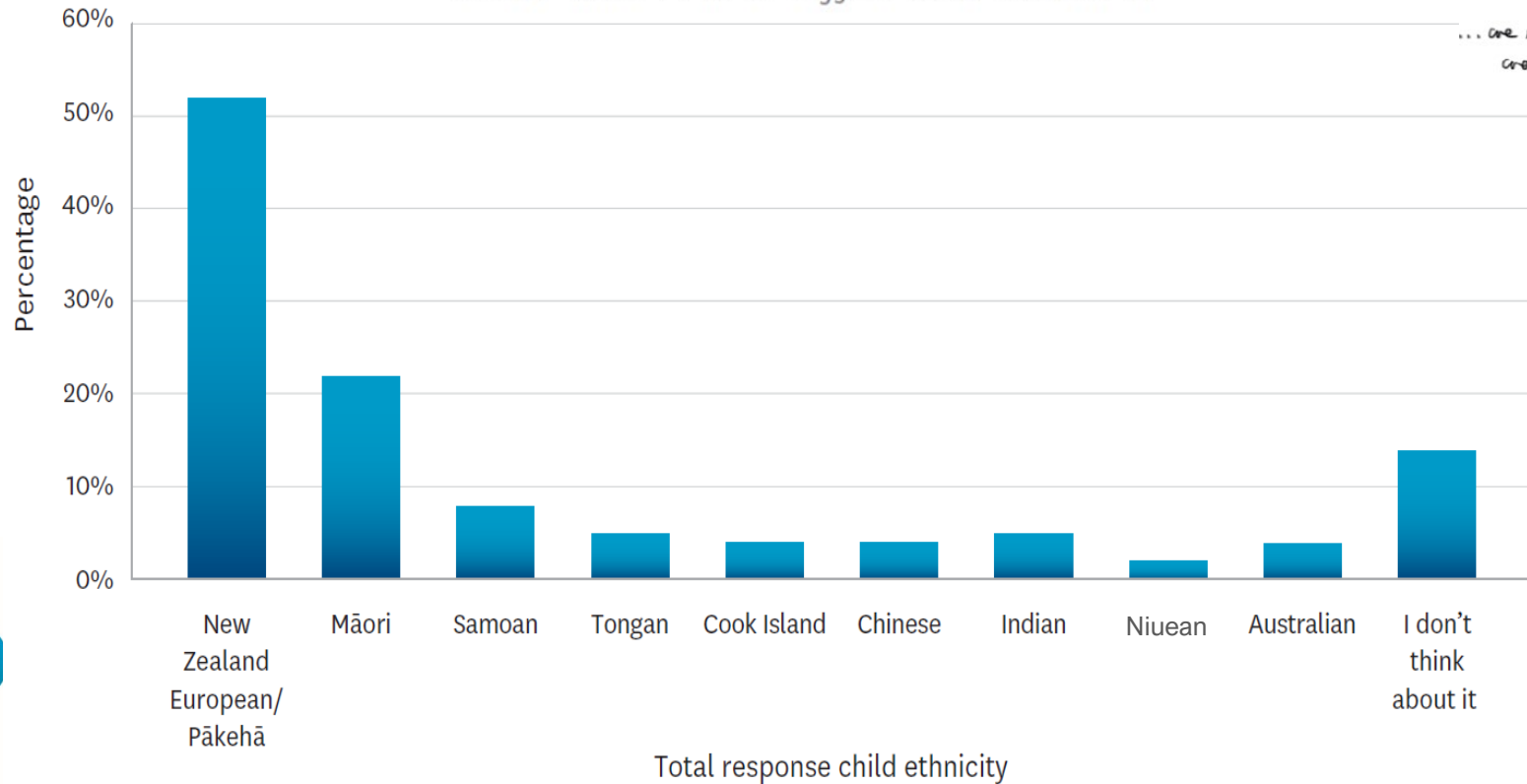
Children speak for themselves at 8yrs

“I have friends from different cultures.”

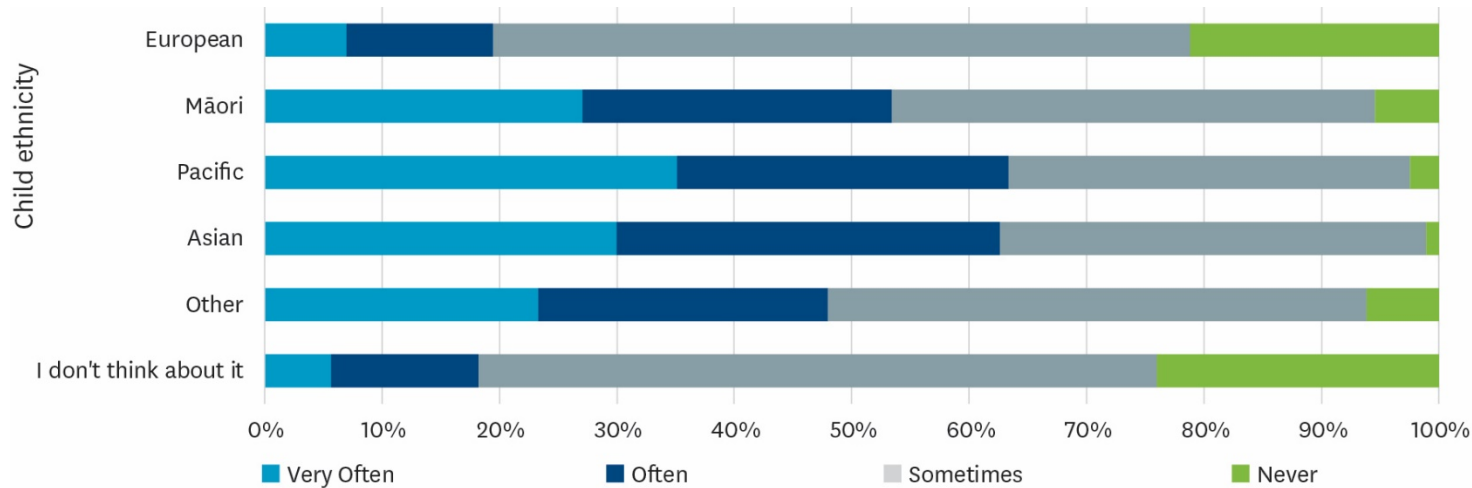
“I’m a different person from someone else, like I’m a different culture.”



... ~~one~~ ACCEPTED, RESPECTED
and CONNECTED



Identities emerge – connections important



... one ACCEPTED, RESPECTED and CONNECTED

Figure 11. How often mothers talked to their child about their ethnicity or culture by child ethnicity.

1.6% ♀

identified with a gender that did not align with their sex at birth

14% ♂

identified their gender as somewhere between a boy and a girl

“I get to be myself I don't have to act like somebody different.”

“There's nobody else like me in the world.”



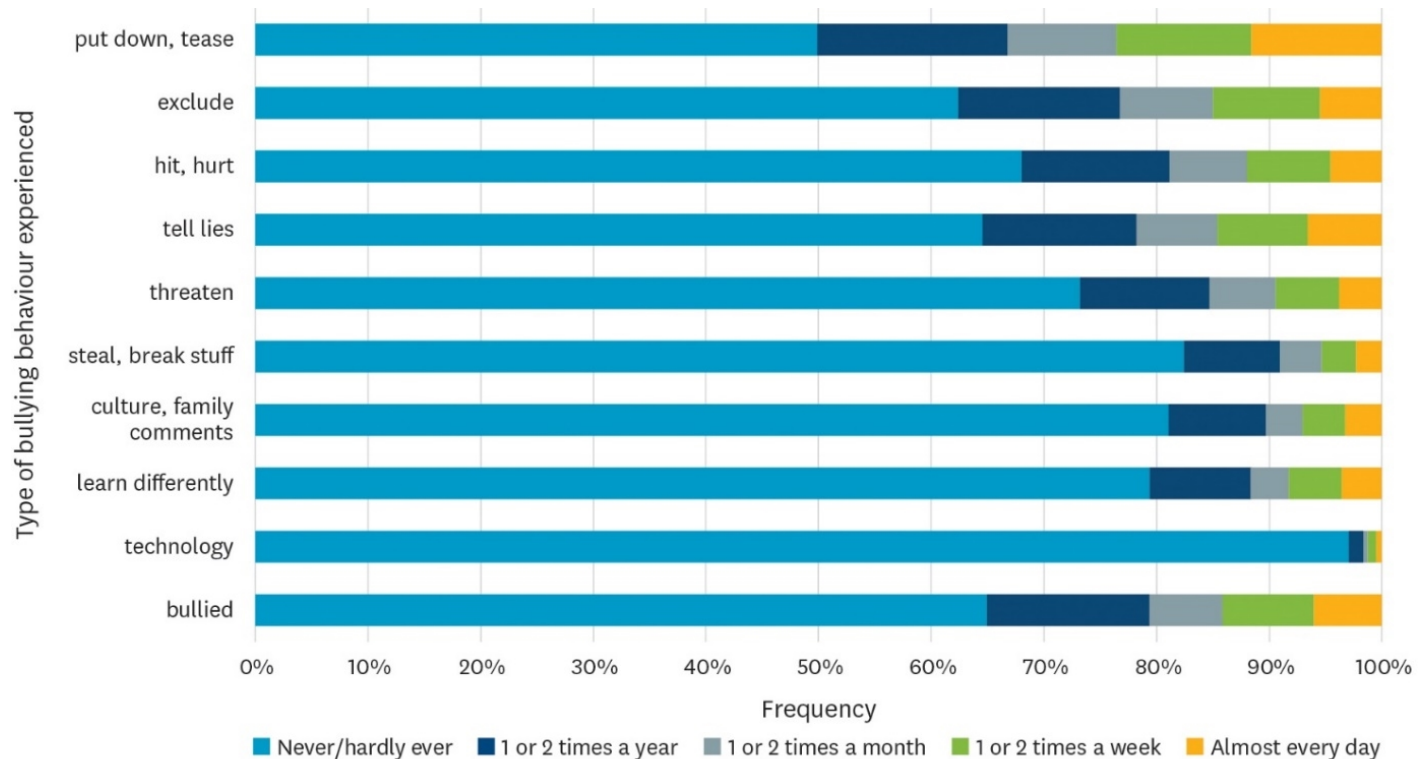
Bullying – a child's view

35% of children say they were bullied in the previous year

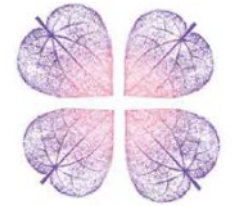
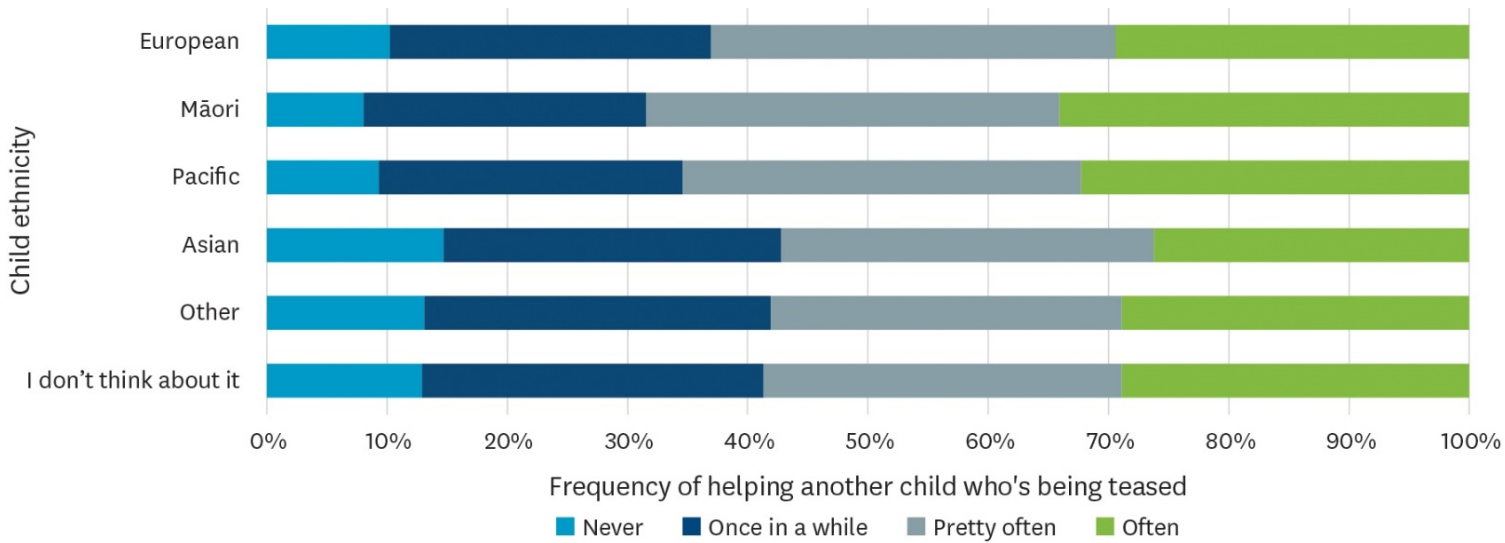
14% say they were bullied at least once a week.



... one ACCEPTED, RESPECTED
and CONNECTED



Connectedness - empathy



...are INVOLVED and EMPOWERED

“I’m really nice and a good friend.”

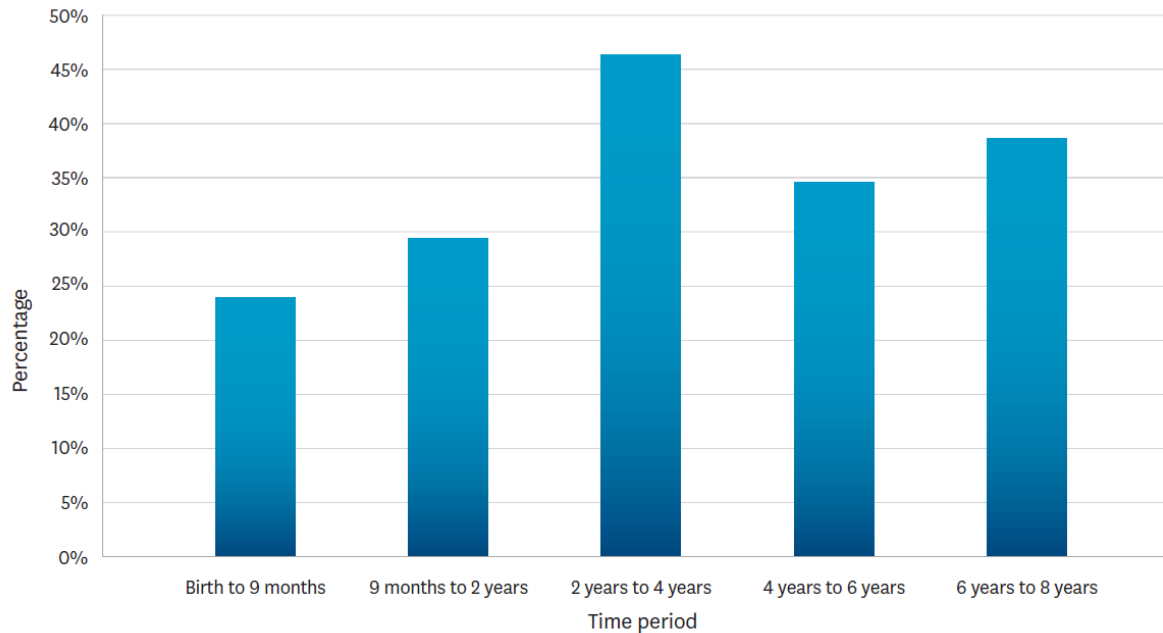


Home environments – stability and tenure

3/4 of children have moved at least once in their lives



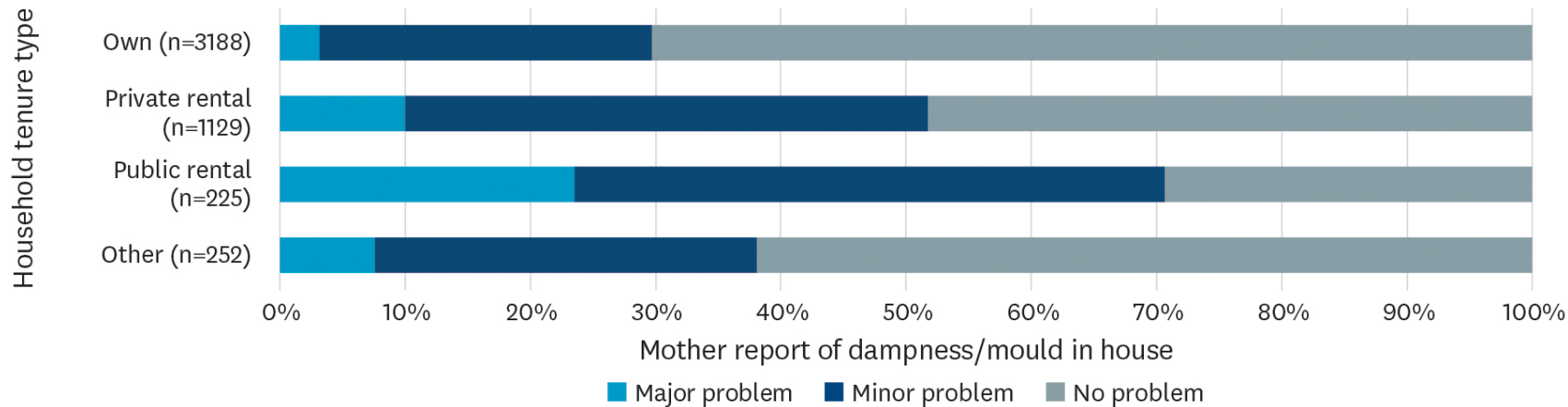
... have **WHAT** they **NEED**



- Residential mobility is most common for families in rental accommodation (usually to another rental) – approx. 40% of the cohort

NZ children experience cold and damp homes

37% of children lived in a damp or mouldy home



- Exposure to poor quality indoor environments is most common for those living in rental accommodation and experiencing poverty and material hardship

Measuring adversity in middle childhood: Material hardship (Dep17) – basic necessities

	Component	n	%
Enforced lack	Two pairs of shoes in a good condition that are suitable for your daily activities	251	5%
	Suitable clothes for important or special occasions	386	8%
	Home contents insurance	511	10%
	A meal with meat, fish or chicken (or vegetarian equivalent) at least each 2nd day	129	3%
	Give presents to family/friends on birthdays, Christmas or other special occasions	201	4%
Economising	Go without fresh fruit and vegetables	201	4%
	Buy cheaper cuts of meat or buy less meat (or vegetarian equivalent) than you would like	663	13%
	Put up with feeling cold	269	5%
	Do without or cut back on trips to the shops or other local places	560	11%
	Delay replacing or repairing broken or damaged appliances	530	11%
	Postpone or put off visits to the doctor	345	7%
	Postpone or put off visits to the dentist	1397	28%
Restrictions	When buying, or thinking about buying, clothes or shoes for yourself, how much do you usually feel limited by the money available?	794	16%
	If you had an unexpected and unavoidable expense of \$500 in the next week, could you pay it within a month without borrowing?	924	19%
Financial stress	You could not pay electricity, gas, rates or water bills on time	594	12%
	In the last 12 months, how many times have you been behind on payments of your car registration, WOF or insurance?	551	11%
	You borrowed money from family or friends to meet everyday living cost	594	12%



... have **WHAT**
they **NEED**

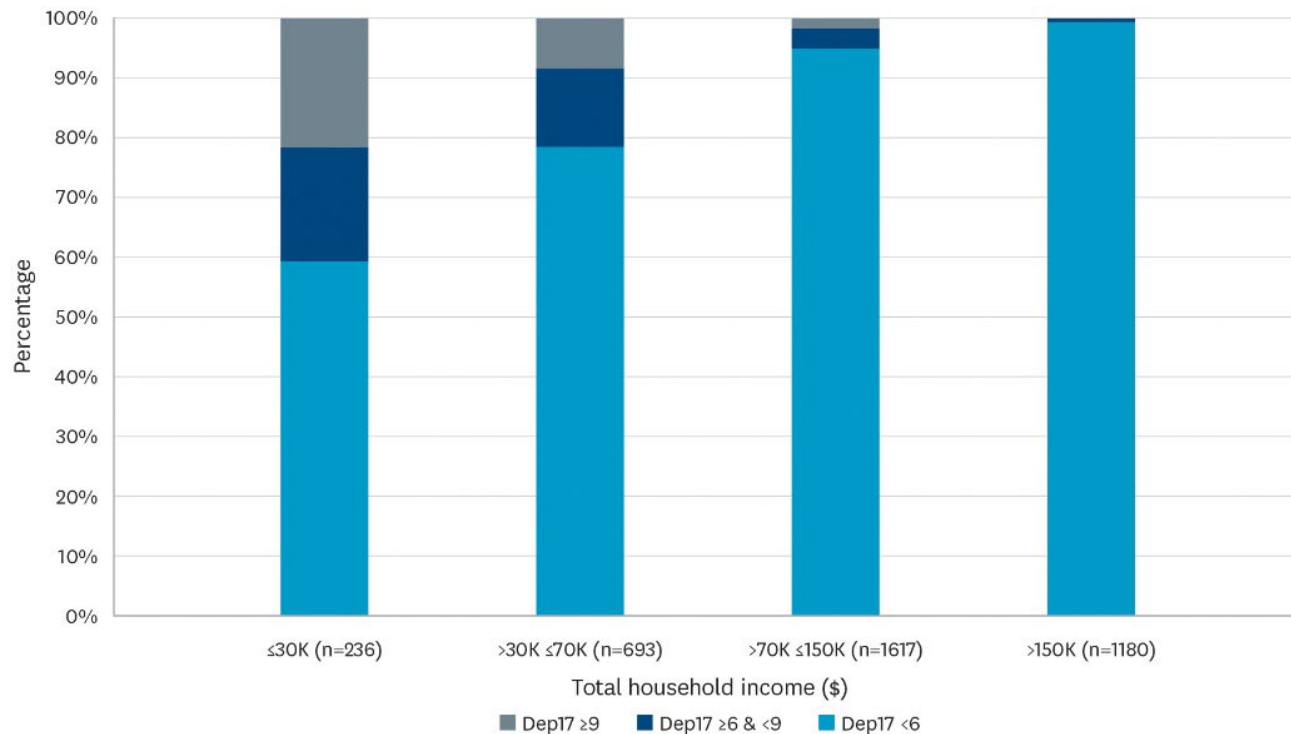


Material hardship experienced in middle childhood

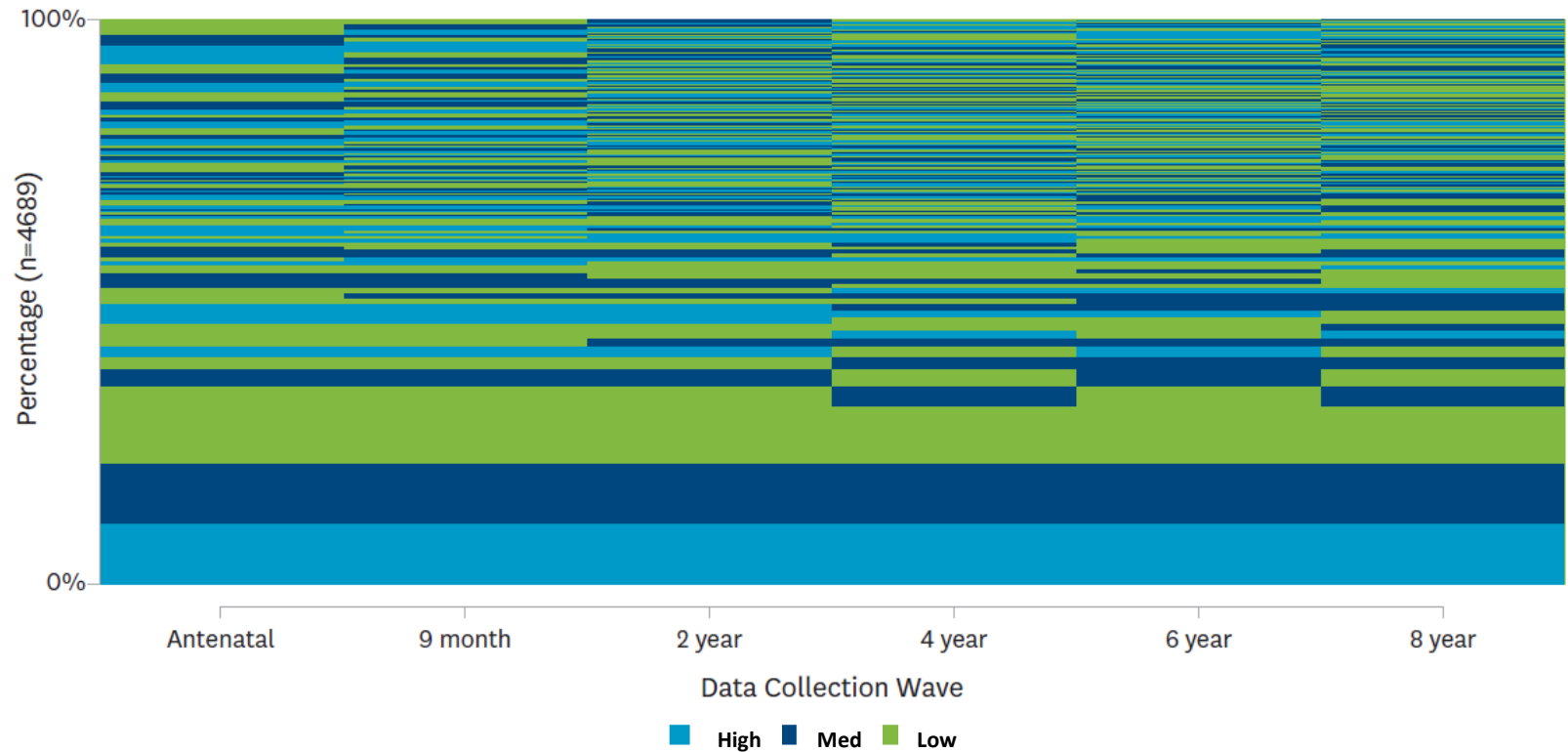
- 10% children experienced material hardship (going without 6 or more necessities from a list of 17 items)
- 4% experiencing severe hardship (without ≥ 9 items)
- BUT remains unequal - 1 in 5 Māori and 1 in 4 Pacific children



... have WHAT they NEED

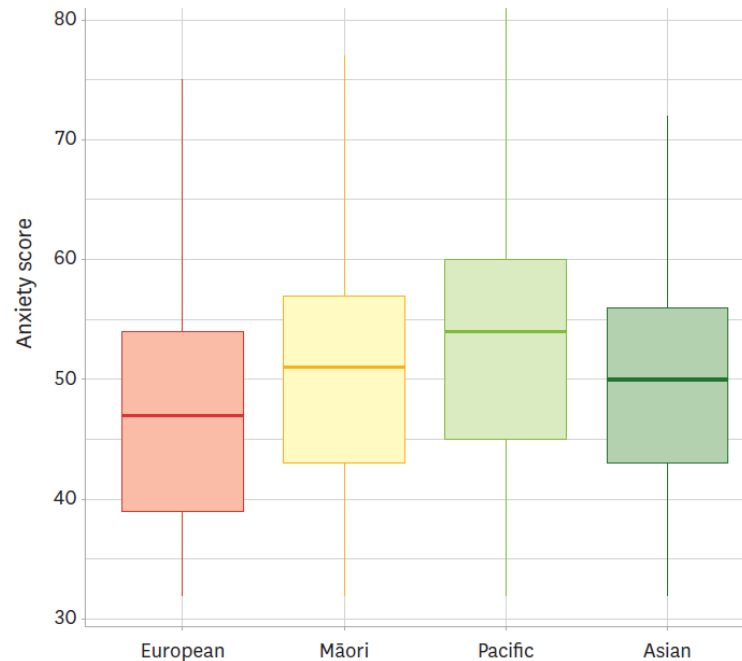
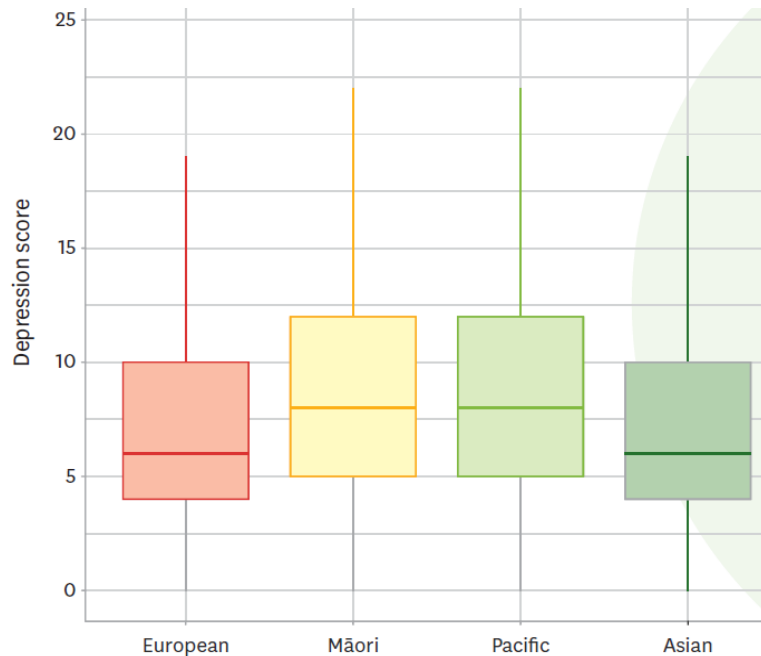


Patterns of exposure to adversity up to 8 years



- Exposure to disadvantaged environments changes over time and change is common throughout childhood
- Persistence and instability matters for child and family wellbeing

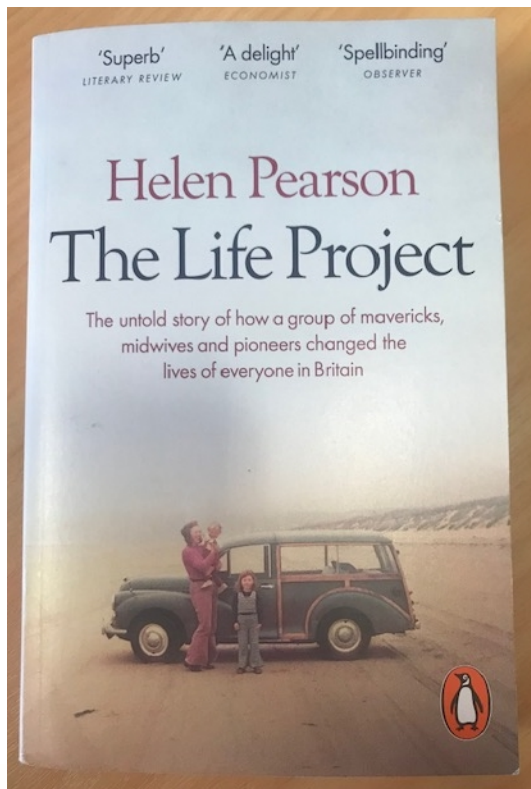
Persistent adversity matters for child mental wellbeing



...are HAPPY
and HEALTHY

- Children reported on their own wellbeing at eight years (as well as maternal reporting)
- Children who experienced the most persistent adversity throughout their early years had **higher depression and anxiety** scores compared to their peers at 8
- Greater residential mobility (instability) was also associated with **increased depression and anxiety scores for children at 8 years of age**

“Extraordinary things emerge from following ordinary lives”
Helen Pearson (Nature 2015)



We want our child to be happy and healthy, and to finish school. Education is extremely important – as long as she gets an education she can make her own decisions

CHURN

That they feel like that they are part of a ethnically diverse country and part of a community, e.g. school, neighbourhood, friends. Freedom to comfortably come and go as they please

CHOICE

Voice



Acknowledgements – *all children and families*

“Take care of our children.
Take care of what they hear,
take care of what they see,
take care of what they feel.
For how the children grow,
so will be the shape of
Aotearoa.”

Dame Whina Cooper

