

# Northland

## Youth Voices Consultation Report



**MINISTRY OF  
YOUTH DEVELOPMENT**  
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO TAIOHI

*Administered by the Ministry of Social Development*

**October 2011**

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# 1. Introduction

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The “Northland Youth Voices” project was commissioned by the Northland Intersectoral Forum (NIF) to provide information that would help it deliver on its strategic priority of realising youth potential. NIF gave the Ministry of Youth Development (MYD) the responsibility to develop the survey focus and questions. The survey design reflected what the MYD members on NIF knew to be important to the Forum. The NIF comprises local and central government agencies working in a collaborative way to make a positive difference to the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Northlanders.

There were 401 young people who participated in this “Northland Youth Voices” consultation. The consultation used a survey delivered by face to face consultations across the region. The survey was also available online. The survey’s questions were clustered around the themes of youth issues, knowledge of decision makers, awareness and use of local government and youth voices. This report presents analysis of the consultation results. At the time of the survey Northland did not have formal youth voice mechanism feeding into local and regional decision making, i.e. youth councils or regional youth advisory youth groups. So a specific goal of the consultation was identifying the views of young people on youth voice mechanisms.

It is important to have an understanding of the Northland context before moving further. In 2006 there were just over 25,000 young people (12-24 years) in Northland. They comprised 16.8 per cent of the regions population which stood at 148,470. Northland has three territorial authority areas from north to south: Far North with a population of 55,845; Whangarei with a population of 74,463; and Kaipara with a population of 18,132 (2006 Census). In 2006 Māori were 31.7 per cent of the regions population (more than double the national average, and second only to the East Coast). Whangarei is the largest centre, with a population of 51,900 (June 2010 estimates). Eight other centres have populations of over 1000: Russell, Dargaville, Kaikohe, Paihia, Kerikeri, Taipa-Mangonui and Kawakawa. Northland’s main industry and employment sectors are agriculture, forestry and fishing, tourism and hospitality, manufacturing, building, retail and distribution and the marine industry.

The first section of this report explains the consultation tools and process. This is followed by a profile of the participants. Then the responses about youth issues, local government and youth engagement are explored.

This report will be used by the members of the NIF to inform their work to realise the potential of the regions young people. The views of young people in the report affirm that the work NIF is already doing to build youth potential is addressing many of the same priorities identified by participants. Participants highlighted the opportunity for NIF members, especially councils, to give them more of a voice in decision making. This is something members will need to respond to

## 2. Key findings

The key issues are based on responses from 401 young people who participated in the Northland Youth Voices consultation. They highlight the priority areas for action in order to realise the potential of young people, address their concerns, and make young people proud about being Northlanders. Focusing on families is the leading priority based on participant feedback. Education and employment were very important issues for participants. Drugs, violence and being heard were also significant issues as highlighted in Table 1.

**Table 1. Key issues and opportunities**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Opportunity</b>
<b>Family</b>	
The most important thing in participant's lives right now was family/whanau. Family was also the leading course of worry for participants.	Recognise the key role families play in the lives of young people and work closely with families to support them to model positive behaviour and encourage educational achievement.
<b>Education</b>	
Education was second only to family as an important issue. Passing NCEA or exams was also the third was significant source of worry. Educational achievement in Northland is well below national averages. There were comments about the pressure to succeed and the impact on those who drop out.	Make the education system more attractive for young people to stay in school longer.
<b>Employment</b>	
Concern about getting work/unemployment was a theme that was clear across all four youth issues questions and creating jobs was the most mentioned thing that participants would do to make New Zealand a better place to live if they were Prime Minister. The proportion of participants who said they would create jobs was 13.2 per cent in Northland compared with 7.7 per cent in a national survey that asked the same question of 1,000 young people in 2010.	A key action would be improving the employment situation and work related training available to young people.
<b>Drugs</b>	
Drugs were a much bigger issue in Northland with 41 per cent of participants saying drugs were a 'big issue' compared with 14 per cent in a national sample. Alcohol was also a bigger concern in Northland with mentions as a 'big issue' by 36.3 per cent of participants compared with 27.5 per cent nationally in a 2010 survey.	To act on participant's desire for action on drugs and alcohol issues. Actions should be evidenced based.

**Key findings continued**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Opportunity</b>
<p><b>Violence and gangs</b></p> <p>Violence and gangs were much bigger issues for Northland participants than those in a national survey asked the same questions. For example 13.9 per cent of the Northland participants said violence and bullying was a 'big issue' compared with 3.5 per cent nationally in a 2010 survey. Participants wanted to feel safer.</p>	<p>To work with young people and others to address concerns about violence and gangs. Also enhancing perceptions of safety in across Northland's communities.</p>
<p><b>Decision makers</b></p> <p>More than three quarters (77 per cent) of participants said decision makers were very poor or poor at hearing their voice. Over three quarters of respondents (77 per cent) said their district council was very poor or poor at listening to young people. Only 1.3 per cent of participants said their council did very well at engaging young people.</p>	<p>The challenge is for decision makers to show young people their perspectives are important. It is also important for decision makers to ensure that processes of engagement are accessible and relevant to young people.</p>

## 3. Methodology

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### 3.1 Design

This consultation contained 22 questions, 17 of which focused on youth perspectives and five provided demographic information. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix 1. There were 12 closed questions and six open questions in the main part of the survey. Questions were clustered around five themes:

- Youth issues
- Issues of importance for Northlanders
- Youth voices
- Council services
- Councils and young people

The four youth issues questions were replicated from earlier nationwide research. This allowed comparison between the two sets of results. The issues of importance to Northlanders were based on findings from previous MYD consultations. The youth voice questions identified participants' involvement in decision making processes and their perspective on how well decision makers engage young people. The questions about council services identified what services young people use and those they want to have a say about. The section about councils and young people focused on what youth councils might look like as this was part of the project brief.

### 3.2 Completion rate

There were 401 participants who provided demographic details and answered at least one question in the main part of the survey. The demographic questions were answered by all participants with responses to questions in the body of the survey ranging from a high of 94 per cent, for the question, *“Did you know the following publicly elected groups make decisions affecting Northland?”*, to a low of 69 per cent was to the question, *“Can you think of anything that causes you to worry or be anxious? What is it?”* The number of respondents to each question is included in the analysis.

### 3.3 Participant recruitment

This consultation was based on participants opting to participate online or in person at consultations. The online survey used the Survey Monkey platform. Young leaders, information technology students and others, at a co-education school in Whangarei District participated in class time and were selected by teachers to participate in the survey. Because students at this school comprised 29 per cent of all participants and it would be possible to link their comments back to the school it was decided to keep the identity of the school anonymous.

This consultation is not based on a random sample of young people in Northland, rather it is based on participants reached through MYD networks and by a team of MYD staff who spent four days in May running face to face consultations from Whangarei to Kaitiāia. Community networks continued to promote the survey after the face to face consultations by encouraging people to complete it online and circulating hard copies.

**Table 2. Source of participants**

<b>Source (Name and additional details)</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Proportion of participants %</b>
Whangarei District Co-education secondary school (school time)	116	28.9
Online	85	21.2
Kaipara (schools and community)	67	16.7
Kaitaia (community)	52	13.0
People Potential (on youth education programme)	31	7.7
Kaikohe (community)	17	4.2
He Matariki (teen parent group)	14	3.5
Whangaroa College (lunch time)	11	2.7
Other	8	2.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>401</b>	<b>100*</b>

*\* due to rounding does not add to 100 per cent*

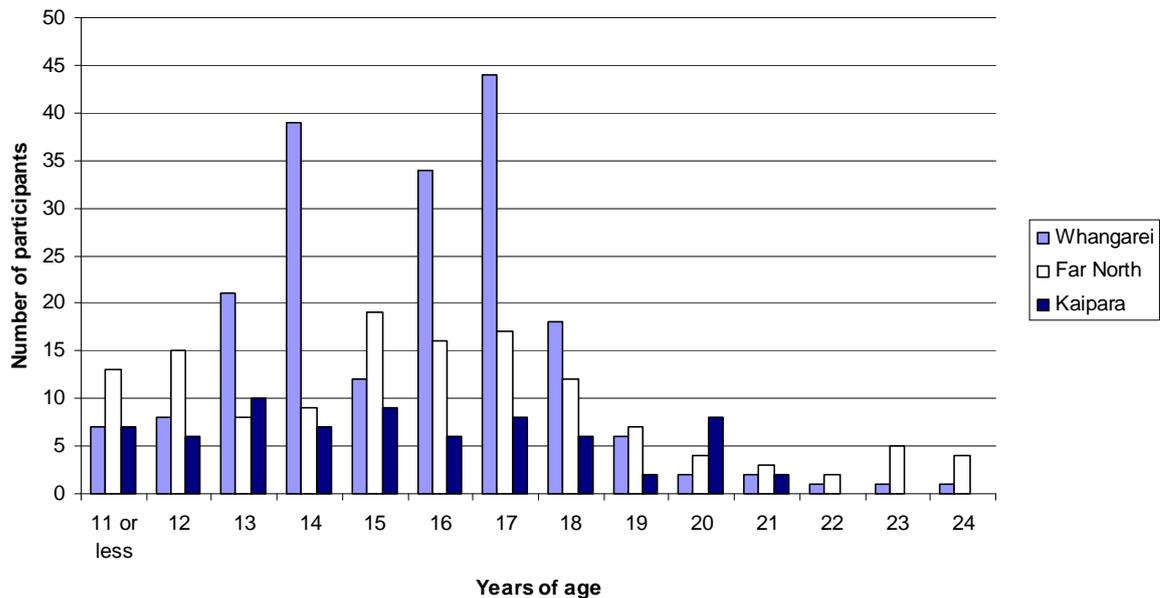
At the Whangarei secondary school and for the portion of the consultations held at Far North REAP participants completed the survey online. These face to face, but online consultations are excluded from the online total in Table 2 as they involved in person contact. Using online approaches where possible reduced the data entry work load required. Hard copy survey responses were entered into Survey Monkey to create one database for ease of analysis.

## 4. Participant profile

### 4.1 Age and gender

The 401 participants were 56.4 per cent female and 43.6 per cent male. The median age of participants was 16 years, with Kaipara the only council with a lower median age of 15 years. Of the 401 participants 374 were aged 12-24 years which is the Ministry of Youth Developments definition of youth. A further 27 participants (6.7 per cent of the total) were aged 11 years or under. This age group has been included in analysis as requested by NIF representatives. Figure 1 shows the sample is concentrated in the 13-18 year group and significantly under represents those aged 19 or over.

**Figure1. Age spread of participants by council**



Half of participants (50 per cent) were age 15-19 compared with 42 per cent of the youth population at the time of the 2006 census, as shown in Table 3. Just 12.5 per cent of participants were aged 20-24 years compared with 26.4 per cent in the census. The 12-14 age group in the survey sample closely reflected the 2006 census proportion. This comparison does not include the 27 participants who were 11 year of age or less.

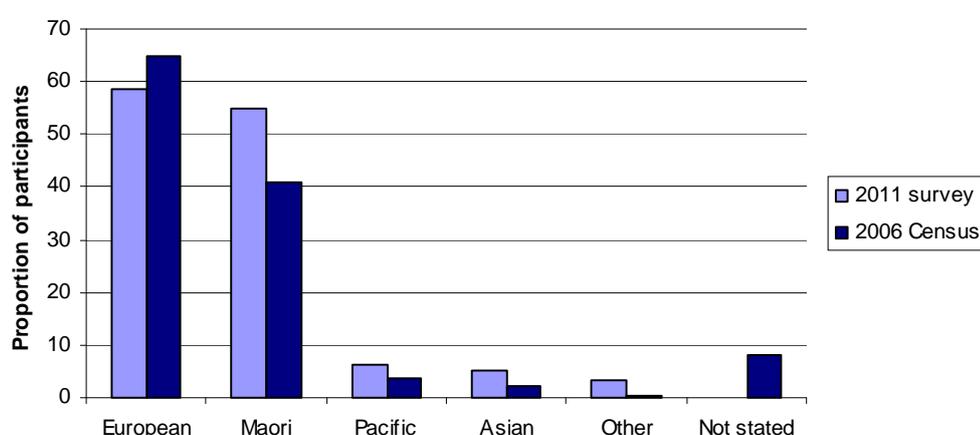
**Table 3. Age spread 12-24 years**

Age	2011 sample N=374 %	2006 Census N = 25,032 %
12-14 years	32.9	31.5
15-19 years	50.1	42.2
20-24 years	12.5	26.4

## 4.2 Ethnicity

The ethnic profile of the participants in this consultation differs in some important ways from the 2006 Census profile of young people in Northland. Three times as many Asians (6.2 per cent sample, 2.1 per cent Census) participated compared with the 2006 census size of the Asian population aged 12-24 years. Māori were 55 per cent of the sample compared with 41 per cent of Northland's youth population in 2006. Europeans are under represented. It is important to note that this survey and the census allow people to select all ethnicities that apply to them. Later in the report the two largest ethnic groups European and Māori will be analysed. There were 68 participants who said they were both European and Māori. This is close to a third of the two groups with 232 participants aged 12-24 years identifying as European and 220 as Māori.

**Figure 2. Ethnicity of those 12-24 years**



**Table 4. Ethnicity of those 12-24 years**

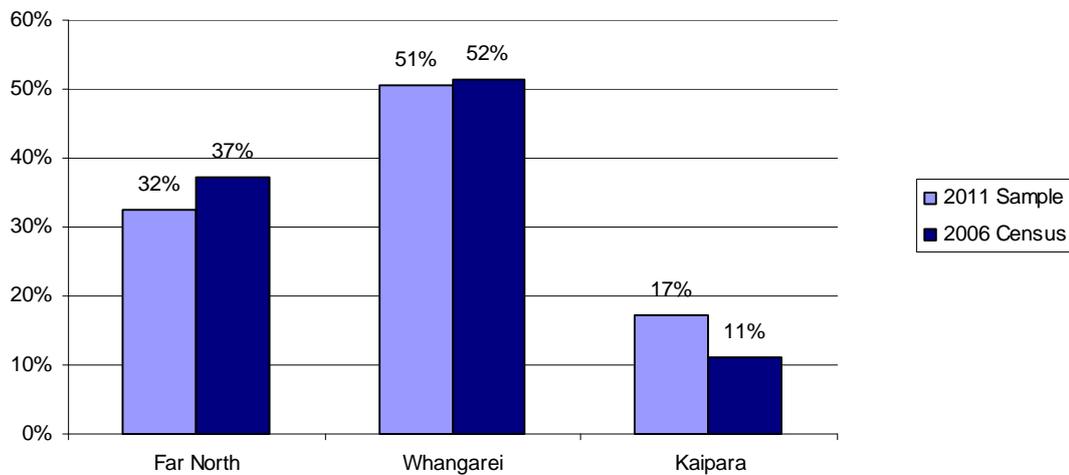
Ethnicity	Sample 2011 (n= 372) %	Northland 2006 Census (n= 25,038) %
European	59.9	65.0
Māori	54.8	41.0
Asian	6.5	2.1
Pacific	5.9	3.8
Other	3.5	0.3
Not stated	0	8.2

If the 27 people aged 11 years and under are included the per cent of the sample who are Māori increases from 54.8 to 58.8 per cent. The 27 people 11 years and under were Māori (14), European (12) and Pacific (1). None had multi ethnicities. There are no other significant changes in terms of ethnicity by including this age group.

### 4.3 Regional composition

The sample in the Northland Youth Voices consultation over represents Kaipara and slightly under represents the Far North and Whangarei, as shown in Table 4. It was a deliberate decision to aim for a slightly larger than proportional response from Kaipara so that the sample size from this council will provide meaningful results. The 11 years and older group was split with 13 in Whangarei and seven each in the Far North and Kaipara. When district comparisons are made it is important to remember the small sample size for Kaipara means there is a high margin of error.

**Figure 3. Sample regional composition compared to 2006 census for 12-24 age group**



**Table 5. District council spread of sample compared with the 2006 census for the 12-24 age group**

District	Northland 2011 %	2006 Census %
Far North	32.4	37.2
Whangarei	50.5	51.5
Kaipara	17.1	11.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

#### 4.4 Education or work status

More than three quarters (77 per cent) of the respondents were participating in school. Participants could select all the settings they were participating in and ten people ticked more than one option that is they were in training, or school, and had a job. The high concentration of participants at school reflects the fact the sample is comprised largely of school aged young people, and nearly a third (31.7 per cent) of participants were drawn from school based consultations. School council membership was reported by 26 per cent of participants currently at school. Because school council members participated so well their non member peers are under represented in the participant profile.

**Table 6. What young people are doing**

<b>Engaged in</b>	<b>No. N=395</b>	<b>Proportion %</b>
School	303	76.7
Training	68	17.2
Work	36	9.1
Unemployed	5	1.3

## 5. Youth issues

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### 5.1 Findings

#### 5.1.1 What is most important in your life right now?

Participants were asked, “*What is most important in your life right now?*” Family was the most important thing for the Northland sample and a New Zealand wide sample of 1,000 young people. Family was mentioned by 59 per cent of the Northland participants compared with 45 per cent nationally. The greater proportion of young participants in the Northland sample is likely to be a factor in this difference. The high proportion of Maori in the Northland sample 54.8 per cent, compared with 19.5 percent national in the 2006 Census and the fact that Maori and New Zealand European concepts of family can differ could also be a factor. The Māori concept of concept of whānau is “an extended family group spanning three to four generations” (Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand).

**Table 7. The top ten things that are important to Northland and New Zealand young people**

What is important?	Northland 2011 % N= 321	New Zealand 2010 % N=1000
My family	58.8	45.3
Education	40.5	42.2
My friends	34.1	28.9
Sport	9.0	8.7
Getting a job	8.1	7.9
My social life and having fun	6.8	4.6
Money	4.2	4.3
My own child/children	4.0	3.2
My boy/girl friend/partner	3.9	3.2*
My job	3.9	9.4
My interests	3.5	3.6

\* This includes my parent

Education was important to Northlanders at a similar rate to those in the national sample. Half (50.1 per cent) of European participants said education was important, compared with a third of Māori (37.5 per cent). Females (43.8 per cent) mentioned education more often than males (36.6 per cent). Participants in the Far North (35.6 per cent) mentioned education at a lower rate than those in Whangarei (42.9 per cent) or Kaipara (48.9).

Only 3.9 per cent of Northland participants said my job was important, compared to 9.4 per cent of the national sample. The Northland figure is likely to underreport this issue due to the small number of people 20-24 years of age in the Northland sample. In the national survey it was the 20-34 year age group that was much more likely to report find a job was an issue. For

the 31 participants aged 20-24 years 12.9 per cent said their work was important compared to 16.2 per cent of this age group nationally. The importance of getting a job was similar in both samples, 8.1 per cent in Northland and 7.9 per cent nationally. For the 31 Northlanders aged 20-24 16.1 per cent said getting a job was important compared with 14.1 per cent in the national sample.

Getting a job was mentioned as an issue by 8.1 per cent of the Northland sample and rated similar to the 7.9 per cent in the national sample. Those aged 20-24 years were most likely to be concerned about unemployment or getting a job at the end of their training in the national sample. This age group was only 12.5 per cent of the Northland sample compared with 36.1 per cent of the national sample. As a result the age related issue of unemployment is likely to be under reported in the Northland sample.

### 5.1.2 Causes of worry and anxiety

Four out of five participants (79 per cent) reported they worried about something. This was similar to the national rate. The leading source of worry for Northland participants was 'my family' mentioned by 9.2 per cent of participants. Māori (16.3 per cent) were three times more likely to worry about their family than Europeans (5.2 per cent). Violence was mentioned almost five times more often as a source of worry for Northland participants (9.2 per cent) than their national peers (1.9 per cent). Female participants (11 per cent) worried about violence much more than males (6.7 per cent). Violence was a bigger issue for the Kaipara participants (17.6 per cent) than in Whangarei (10.8 per cent) and Far North (5.3 per cent).

**Table 8. The top ten things that cause worry or anxiety in Northland and New Zealand young people**

Worries	Northland 2011	New Zealand 2010
	% N=272	% N=1000
Nothing	21.0	22.0
My family	9.2	8.0
Violence	9.2	1.9
Passing exams/ NCEA	8.8	18.2
Personal issues	7.7	7.0
Education (other than passing exams/NCEA)	6.3	5.5
Getting a job	5.5	5.5
My friends	5.5	3.9
Lack of money/food	4.4	12.9
Drugs	4.4	0

Passing exams/NCEA was the leading source of worry for the national sample (18.2 per cent) but of a much lower importance for Northland participants (8.8 per cent). Far more Northland students, than the national average, leave in the early stages of NCEA so fewer Northland young people are at school to worry about passing NCEA or exams. For example only 28.9 per cent of Northland students left school in 2009 with a university entrance level qualification compared with 43.5 per cent nationally.

### 5.1.3 Big issues

Drugs were the leading issue for Northland participants with mentions by 41.3 per cent of participants compared with 14.1 per cent nationally. Alcohol was also a bigger issue in Northland (36.3 per cent) than nationally (27.5 per cent). Participants from the Far North (38.0 per cent) and Kaipara (37.5 per cent) were much more likely to say drugs was an issue than those from Whangarei (20.1 per cent). When it came to alcohol the rate of mentions was consistent across the three districts. Māori participants were more concerned about drugs (50.0 per cent) and alcohol (45.9 per cent) than their European peers (drugs 37.4 per cent, alcohol 29.3 per cent). Females (43.9 per cent) were much more likely to say alcohol was an issue than males (27.0 per cent). Concern about drugs was higher for females (43.9) than males (38.1).

**Table 9. The top ten 'big issues' for Northland and New Zealand young people**

Issue	Northland 2011	New Zealand 2010
	% N=281	% N=1,000
Drugs	41.3	14.1
Alcohol	36.3	27.5
Gangs	14.6	-
Violence and bullying	13.9	3.5
Education	13.2	10.7
Unemployment/ getting a job	12.1	13.6
Pregnancy and sex	11.0	2.1
Smoking	5.0	3.8
Money	3.9	6.4
Peer pressure	2.8	9.0

Gangs were an important issue for Northland participants with 14.6 per cent mentioning gangs while this was not an issue at the national level. Violence was a much more significant issue in Northland (13.9 per cent) than nationally (3.5 per cent). Females (16.1 per cent) were more concerned about violence than males (11.1 per cent). There was very little difference in mentions of violence for Māori (15.1 per cent) and Europeans (14.3 per cent) or across the districts. Concern about gangs showed a significant ethnic divergence with mentions by 17.4 per cent of Māori participants compared with 9.5 per cent of Europeans. Gender did not make a difference in the gang rate mentions.

Pregnancy and sex were mentioned much more frequently in the Northland sample (11 per cent) compared with 2.1 per cent nationally. The fact the Northland sample included students at one teen parent unit could be considered to have influenced these figures. However, only

four of the 31 mentions of pregnancy and sex came from the 15 participants at the teen parent unit. Females (14.2 per cent) were much more likely to mention pregnancy and sex than males (7.1 per cent). Peer pressure was less likely to be a 'big issue' for the Northland sample than nationally.

#### 5.1.4 Making New Zealand better

Participants were asked, "If you were Prime Minister, what is the one thing you would do to make living in New Zealand better than it is now"? The most mentioned issue by Northland participants was creating more jobs (13.2 per cent). Their mention rate was much higher than that nationally of 7.7 per cent. For the 31 Northland participants aged 20-24 years 36 per cent mentioned creating more jobs compared with 10.8 per cent of this age group nationally. Māori participants (15.8 per cent) mentioned creating jobs at almost twice the rate of Europeans (8.1 per cent). Females (16.7 per cent) were more concerned about creating jobs than males (8.9 per cent). Jobs were a bigger concern for participants from Kaipara (23 per cent) than those from the Far North (9.3 per cent) and Whangarei (5.3 per cent).

The cost of living was raised by 11.2 per cent of Northland participants but did not feature in the mentions of the national sample. Females (15.2 per cent) mentioned the cost of living much more than males (6.3 per cent). Māori and European mentions about the cost of living were almost identical. The cost of living was rated similarly across the three districts.

Activities and facilities for young people were mentioned nearly four times as often in Northland (10.8 per cent) as in New Zealand (2.9 per cent). Gender was the only variable to show a difference in ratings of activities and facilities with female participants mentions 13.0 per cent compared to 8.0 per cent for males. Youth voice was mentioned by 5.6 per cent of Northland participants but did not feature nationally. These two issues could have arisen because they were in participants minds because of the other questions in this survey. In the national survey only the four issues questions in this section were asked.

**Table 10. The top ten things that would make New Zealand a better place to live according to Northland and New Zealand young people**

Issue	Northland 2011	New Zealand 2010
	% N=250	% N=1,000
Create more jobs	13.2	7.7
Address the cost of living	11.2	-
Provide activities and facilities for young people	10.8	2.9
Address issues related to alcohol abuse	6.4	7.3
Improve the education system	6.8	7.0
Cut taxes	6.8	6.8
Support low income families	6.0	5.4
Increase wages	6.0	4.6
Greater youth voice in decision making	5.6	-
Protect the environment	4.8	4.3

### 5.1.5 Ranking social issues

As well as asking the four youth issues questions the survey asked participants to rank on a four point scale 21 social issues most of which had been identified in a previous youth consultation by the Ministry of Youth Development. Additional issues relevant to the Northland context were added such as, “My iwi” and “coastal lifestyle”. The top ranked issue for participants was having friends and a social life. This was also the issue that had the highest number of very important rankings at 55.0 per cent. The issue that topped ranking when participants were asked to rank their number one concern was Alcohol and other drugs which was ranked the top issue by 21.9 per cent of participants. Safety was the second top issue in terms of rankings of issues by importance, but was ranked as the top issue by only 2.9 per cent of participants.

**Table 11. Average ranking of social issues by Northland participants**

<b>Social issues</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Proportion who ranked as number one issue %</b>
Having friends and a social life	3.37	9.7
Safety in your community	3.18	2.9
School	3.16	5.8
Training (tertiary and other post school)	3.16	1.9
Parenting and family relationships	3.15	8.7
Unemployment / getting a job	3.12	3.9
Community leaders listening to young people	3.00	0
Public transport or lack of public transport eg buses	2.95	0.3
Community	2.87	3.9
Recreation facilities eg parks, movies	2.87	0.6
Coastal lifestyle	2.85	2.3
My iwi (if applicable)	2.81	3.5
Work eg. keeping my job or issues in my workplace	2.78	1.9
Violence	2.74	7.7
Alcohol and other drugs	2.72	21.9
Crime	2.69	9.4
Housing eg crowding, cost, quality	2.66	1.0
Low incomes eg struggle to pay the bills	2.64	1.9
Teen pregnancy and teen parents	2.60	4.2
Racism	2.54	2.9
Gangs	2.41	0

It is interesting how the rankings in this section differed from those in the open questions. For example gangs received the lowest average rating here but were mentioned as the third most frequent ‘big issue’. This could mean that gangs are a big concern for a significant number of participants and were not seen as an issue for those who have not had experience of gangs. In the case of gangs 25 per cent of participants rated them a very high concern while 32 per cent rated them very low. This highlighted a polarised view about how big a social issue gangs

were. For the "my iwi" option the response rated climbs from 32.4 per cent as very important across all ethnicities to 42.6 per cent for those who were Māori.

## **5.2 Discussion of youth issues in Northland**

### **5.2.1 General**

This section explores the top issues raised in response to the four youth issues questions and the questions where young people were asked to rank a list of issues and explain their rankings. The findings discussed below should not come as a surprise to anyone with a good understand of the Northland community. For example Northland currently (June 2011) has the highest unemployment rate in the country and getting a job or being unemployed are significant worries for Northland's young people. While this section explores issues and opportunities in isolation from each other it is important to remember that they are often inter connected. As one participant said, "No jobs leads to violence and or other abuse, no recreation centre leads to bored teenagers wanting to explore of other aspects like sex leading to teen pregnancy, all of the above putting strain on families" (Female, 23, Māori , Far North).

### **5.2.2 Jobs and unemployment**

This issue of getting jobs was raised in response to all for questions. Creating more jobs was the action most frequently mentioned, in response to the question, "*If you were Prime Minister, what is the one thing you would do to make living in New Zealand better than it is now?*" Getting a job was mentioned by 13.2 per cent of Northland participants compared with 7.7 per cent nationally. Getting a job was the most important thing right now for 9.2 per cent of participants. Getting a job was a source of worry for 5.5 per cent of participants. Being unemployed or concerned about getting a job was a 'big issue' for 12.1 per cent of participants. When asked to rank 21 issues unemployment/getting a job was ranked very important by 43 per cent of participants, second only to having friends and a social life. The lack of employment opportunities for young people is a well know issue in Northland. For example the Kaipara District Community Report 2010 stated, "Of particular concern to the community is the lack of employment opportunities for young people" (Family and Community services 2010: 7). Other rural and isolated parts of New Zealand, such as the East Coast of the Northland, also face youth employment challenges. A number of strategies are in place to address this issue in Northland.

There was a strong correlation between age and concerns about getting work or being unemployed. Those who were older were more concerned about jobs than younger participants. In the June 2011 quarter Household Labour Force Survey Northland's unemployment rate was the highest in the country at 7.3 per cent compared with 6.5 per cent nationally. At the end of June 2011 there were 770 young people (aged 18-24 years) in Northland on the unemployment benefit. The unemployment rate for youth (15-24 years) nationally was 17.3 per cent in the year to June 2011 and for those 15-19 years was 27.6 per cent. For Māori the national youth unemployment rate was 24.8 per cent. Given these two rates the youth unemployment rate in Northland is likely to be well over the general rate of 7.3 per cent. There were many comments about the challenges of finding work in Northland with one person saying it was impossible. Another participant said people had to leave Northland to find work. A connection between unemployment and crime was made by a few participants. The importance of having a job in terms of identity was commented on.

At the time of the 2006 Census 19.9 per cent of Northland young people aged 15-24 were not in education employment or training (NEET) 60 per cent higher than the national rate of 12.5 per cent. The NEET rate is an indicator of youth disengagement. In the year to June 2011 10.7 per cent of New Zealand males aged 15-24 years and 8.8 per cent of females were NEET. The NEET rate for Māori in this age groups was, 18.6 per cent of males and 14.6 per cent of females. Given the large Māori population in Northland the NEET rate will still be significantly higher than the country as a whole. The initiatives outlined below aim to reduce the Northland NEET rate.

#### **Box 1. Examples of current Northland youth employment and training initiatives**

- *My Start* gives young Northlanders aged 16-17 years the chance to learn about Youth Guarantee programmes. The Youth Guarantee is a government initiative targeted at 16 and 17 year olds and provides an opportunity to participate in a range of vocational courses free of charge. In early 2011 introduction days were held in Whangarei, and Rawene in the Hokianga so young people in the target group could assess whether or not vocational training or learning a trade fitted with their career aspirations.
- *Youth Transition Services* that support young people aged 15-17 years transitioning from schooling to positive opportunities, with a special focus on disengaged youth are based in Kawakawa and Whangarei.
- *Tai Tokerau Trades Academy* commenced operation in 2010 and in 2011 will reach 125 students across six secondary school and three other sites. Trades academies focus on delivering trades and technology programmes to secondary students based on partnerships between schools, tertiary institutions, industry training organisations and employers.
- There has been a focused effort to improve career services in five Northland secondary schools and career awareness workshops for Māori students. *Careers New Zealand*, provides free advice and support to help New Zealanders make well-informed decisions about their careers. They have offices in Kaitiaki and Whangarei from which they service the region and their website is a key source of careers information.
- Northland's Economic Development Agency *Enterprise Northland* developed the *Education 4 Enterprise (E4E)* programme to try and stem the flow of young people leaving the Northland Region. The programme aims to achieve this by lifting the attitudes and aspirations of young people and by showcasing the possibilities for enterprise that exist within the Northland Region. E4E is now coordinated by the Northland Youth Development Trust.
- *Work and Income* case management to reduce youth unemployment by linking young people to training and employment opportunities.
- The *Northland Local Government Cadet Scheme* is a joint project involving Northland councils, the Ministry of Social Development and Tertiary Education Commission that trains unemployed young people for local government careers. The Cadetship scheme arose from a regional initiative supported by the Mayoral Forum and the Northland Intersectoral Forum.

## **Selected comments on jobs and unemployment**

### **Finding work**

"I want a job to provide for my family". (Male, 20, Māori, Whangarei)

"Unless you know the boss of somewhere it is literally IMPOSSIBLE to get a job". (Male, 17, European, Whangarei)

Worry – "Getting interviewed for jobs and not getting it". (Female, 16, Māori, Far North)

### **Importance of working**

"Employment is important to keeping your community together, a lot of people leave because there isn't enough work for them in Northland". (Female, 23, NZ European, Whangarei)

"Provide more jobs for people so they can always be employed and stay out of trouble". (Female, 15, Māori, Kaipara)

"I believe that being unemployed is unhealthy, as it diminishes independence and can encourage turning to crime in order to earn money". (Male, 21, NZ European, Whangarei)

"I can't go anywhere, or leave home, or generally pay my way in society without a job". (Male, 17, NZ European, Whangarei)

### **Unemployment**

"I think unemployment is a real issue because, me and my family just moved to Whangarei, my parents quit their jobs and it took them ages to get a job". (Female, 14, NZ European, Whangarei)

"Unemployment is an issue as a lot of people need a job to produce an income to feed themselves/family, and it's getting harder and harder now days to get a job". (Male, 18, NZ European, Whangarei)

Big Issue - "Amount of unemployed youth in Whangarei. Amount of jobs available for people from the ages of 18-24 and training opportunities, especially for Māori". (Female, 24, European/Māori, Whangarei)

"Get people off the dole and into jobs, this country is going down hill! (Female, 14, NZ European, Whangarei)

## **5.2.3 Education**

Education was raised across all four youth issues questions. It was second only to family as an important issue. Passing exams and other educational issues occupied fourth and sixth place in the top ten sources of worry or anxiety. Education was number five in the top ten 'big issues' for participants and improving the education system was also the fifth most mentioned thing people would do to make living in New Zealand better.

Passing exams/NCEA was the leading source of worry for the national sample (18.2 per cent) but of a much lower importance for Northland participants (8.8 per cent). This could be related to lower expectations of educational achievement in Northland. For example only 34.0 per cent of Northland students left school in 2009 with a university entrance level qualification compared with 43.5 per cent nationally. Data for 2009 is the most current available, but there is an expectation achievement will be increasing given the focus on boasting achievement as highlighted in Box 1. Students in the Far North have the lowest educational achievement of the region with only 28.9 per cent leaving with a university entrance standard compared with 36.2 and 37.4 per cent respectively in Whangarei and Kaipara as shown in Table 12. Also participants from the Far North mentioned education as important at a lower rate than those

from the rest of the region, 35.6 per cent in the Far North compared with 42.9 per cent in Whangarei and 48.9 per cent in Kaipara.

Truancy is a significant issue in Northland and is related to educational achievement. In 2009 the Far North was the territorial authority with the second highest rate of non-enrolment at 16.2 per 1,000 students in the country. This compares with a national average rate of 5.1 per 1,000. In Whangarei and Kaipara the rates were 8.8 and 8.9 per 1,000 respectively. Northland also had the second highest rate of non-intermittent absences from school in the country at 3.2 per 100 students in 2009 compared with 2.2 nationally.

**Table 12. The educational qualification of secondary school leavers in 2009**

	Far North	Whangarei	Kaipara	Northland region	New Zealand
	%	%	%	%	%
<b>Less than level 1</b>	23.0	20.8	17.2	22.3	17.1
<b>Level 1</b>	16.9	15.6	13.8	15.9	13.1
<b>Level 2</b>	31.2	27.4	31.6	28.8	26.3
<b>University entrance standard</b>	28.9	36.2	37.4	34.0	43.5

Source: Educations Counts NCEA achievement data

**Selected comments on succeeding and failing educationally**

“Young people are dropping out of school early”. (Female, 16, Māori, Far North)  
 Big Issue – “Getting qualified to get a steady good paying job, finishing schooling”. (Female, 16, European, Whangarei)  
 Worry – “Not passing NCEA, not having enough credits” (Female, 16, Māori, Far North)  
 “The amount of effort I put into school will determine if I get into training and this will determine what I do and train in. (Female, 16, NZ European /Asian, Kaipara)  
 “School is important to get further in life”. (Female, 15, Māori, Far North)  
 “Not getting good education”. (Male, 16, European, Whangarei)  
 “Schooling, getting a good education to qualify for uni and have a better life later on”. (Female, 16, European, Whangarei)  
 “I think doing well in school is really important because it affects people for the rest of their lives”. (Female, 17 European, Whangarei)

The *Whangarei District Community Report* (FACS 2008) identified the wellbeing of young people as a priority area for action. The top risk factor identified for young people was truancy. “Many service providers believe truancy and intermittent schooling are major factors in youth offending. The perception of the community is that young people not attending school get bored, and crime becomes an appealing way to stave off boredom. In the absence of the structure and discipline associated with attending school, opportunities are created for offending” (FACS 2008:14).

In the national survey the leading approach to making New Zealand a better place to live was providing free education. This was not even in the top ten responses for Northlanders. There are several possible explanations for this. There are few tertiary level training options in Northland so students in this age group who want to study at higher levels often leave Northland. This meant they were not present to participant in this consultation. The Northland

sample had few participants aged 20-24 years and it is this age group that were most likely in the national sample to raise free education as an issue. Also significantly fewer Northland students achieve the level of school qualification needed to enter university as shown by the rate of students leaving school with a university entrance standard as shown in Table 12.

Comments highlighted the different issues that arise for young people related to education. There was concern about the pressure to succeed and for some participants this was linked to the volume of homework. There was concern about those who drop out of school. The challenge of participating in tertiary education within Northland was raised by one participant.

#### **Selected education comments**

##### **Home work**

“To much homework and all the teachers saying if u don’t do it you will fail NCEA and be a loser”. (Female, 14, European, Whangarei)

“Because the schooling systems are unfair and very unorganised”. (Male, 18, European, Whangarei)

“I get worried over my big work load and not getting the grades that I want”. (Female, 17, NZ European, Far North)

“Too much homework/ assignments. I feel overwhelmed”. (Female, 17, European, Whangarei)

##### **Improving the education system**

“School, the system is flawed, it needs serious reworking, just so many bad things about this school, drugs, violence, bad teachers, flawed rules, inequality, - just overall horrible. FIX IT”. (Male, 18, European, Whangarei)

“Make education more fun and easier so that young people want to stay in school and learn”. (Male, 20, European, Kaipara)

##### **Post school education**

“Tertiary training is important - all people wanting to go to a university must head south, ensuring that there is an annual exodus of some of the most promising youth. Expanding the University of Auckland's Whangarei campus would probably be the easiest way to offer youth more options. All that is required is to have lecturers in Auckland travel up to Whangarei once each week”. (Male, 21, European, Whangarei)

“Training being available in Northland that I would be proud of is important, .... that’s why they leave Northland to get educated and do not often return”. (Female, 18, European, Kaipara)

Create a new government agency ... that pays for students' fees at universities and polytechs (for certain courses), provided that the students stay and work in New Zealand for two and a half years after completing their studies. (Male, 18, European, Whangarei)

“Student lone system, don't make us pay interest!!! And the allowance is all up the creek as well”. (Female, 18, NZ European, Whangarei)

## **Box 2. Examples of current Northland youth education initiatives**

### **Schools**

The *Tai Tokerau Trades Academy* was established in 2010 and is reaching 125 young people in 2011. It is an initiative that bridges the transition between education and employment. Trades academies focus on delivering trades and technology programmes to secondary students based on partnerships between schools, tertiary institutions, industry training organisations and employers. Schools clustered around Kaikohe including Northland College and Kaikohe Intermediate have been working together to raise student mathematics achievement with support from the University of Auckland.

### **Māori students**

*Engaging Taitamariki in learning* (ETL) is a collaborative approach between government agencies, iwi, schools and community groups to improve the educational achievement of Māori students in Northland schools. An initial evaluation (Northland Intersectoral Forum 2009) supports the view that ETL, with appropriate support and resourcing, will achieve the goal of a 75 per cent pass rate for NCEA Level 2 for Taitamariki students in Year 12 in all Northland schools by 2013. More than 3,500 Māori students, in 15 Northland schools, are benefiting from a commitment to help improve Māori students' educational achievement rates.

The *Te Kotahitanga* programme is operating in nine Northland secondary schools. Te Kotahitanga supports teachers to improve Māori students' learning and achievement. Over 40 per cent of Māori leave school without formal qualifications so lifting their achievement will make a big difference to overall educational achievement in Northland. Three schools were selected to participate in the He Kakano programme focused on growing culturally responsive school leadership.

### **Tertiary training**

*NorthTec* is the region's largest provider of tertiary education, with campuses Whangarei and Kerikeri in the Bay of Islands, and Learning Centres in Rawene, Kaikohe and Kaitaia. *NorthTec* acknowledges that the region's high schools require active, practical and informed relationships with the polytechnic if tertiary study opportunities for high school leavers in Northland are to be nurtured for those people who wish to remain in Northland for tertiary study. *NorthTec* offers a range of programmes in health, science, business, technology, tourism, education, Māori studies and the arts. These programmes cater for student learning from the New Zealand Qualification Framework at Levels 1 to 7. The 2010 Tertiary Education Commission Northland Regional briefing showed there were four private training enterprises operating in 2009.

### **Northland Youth Development Trust**

*The Northland Youth Development Trust* (the Trust) is focused on improving outcomes for Northland youth by working with schools to develop enterprising young people. The Trust was formed in 2010 to tackling the critical issue of student engagement and builds on earlier work. The Trust's key initiatives include community partnerships to enhance delivery of the school curriculum; the Northland student forum an annual gathering where senior students have input into decision-making and policy development; the young enterprise scheme and other financial literacy work; lastly providing young people with leadership opportunities and mentoring.

## 5.2.4 Alcohol and other drugs

Drugs were the 'biggest issue' for Northland participants with mentions by 41.3 per cent compared with 14.1 per cent nationally (as mentioned in 5.1.3). The combined category of alcohol and other drugs was most frequently ranked the number one social issue, while having friends and a social life which was a distant second at 9.7 per cent. However alcohol and other drugs on average ranked 15<sup>th</sup> of the 21 social issues. This suggests alcohol is a major social issue for a significant minority and was not considered that important by many others. Drugs were mentioned by 4.4 per cent of participants as a source of worry by young Northlanders, but did not rate at all in the national sample. Comments about drugs emphasised the easy availability of drugs for young people and others in Northland. For most participants comments about drugs were combined with those about alcohol. There were accounts of the harm participants had seen in their family and friends due to drugs and alcohol use.

The Youth 2007 survey of secondary students found that 25 per cent of Northland secondary students used marijuana compared with 15 per cent of students in the rest of New Zealand. Weekly use of marijuana was also higher in Northland compared to the rest of New Zealand. Use of other drugs was low and no different in Northland to that in the rest of New Zealand. So these figures show marijuana is the key drug. Another measure of the presence of drugs in Northland is that there were 93.1 drug offences per 1,000 people in the Northland Police District in 2010 compared with 48.3 nationally.

Alcohol was second only to drugs as a 'big issue' for Northland participants with mentions by 36.3 per cent of participants compared with 27.5 per cent nationally. Addressing issues related to alcohol also featured as an action to make New Zealand a better place to live. The Youth 2007 survey showed that Northland participants drink more frequently and more heavily than participants in the rest of New Zealand as shown in Table 13. For example those who had engaged in binge drinking in the last four weeks were 45 per cent of Northland students compared with 34 per cent nationally. Comments about alcohol focused on the social problems it is linked to such as violence and the harm that can occur to young people when they are drunk. For example 30 per cent of Northland participants said they had been driven by some who had consumed alcohol compared with 23 per cent New Zealand wide in 2007.

**Table 13. Alcohol and drug use in Northland and the rest New Zealand in 2007**

<b>Substance</b>	<b>Northland %</b>	<b>Rest of New Zealand %</b>
<b>Alcohol</b>		
Currently drink alcohol	69	60
Engaged in binge drinking in the last four weeks (ie 5 or more drinks within 4 hours)	45	34
<b>Marijuana</b>		
Currently use marijuana	25	15
Use marijuana weekly or more often	7	5
<b>Other drugs</b>		
Ever used other drugs	12	12

Source: Adolescent Health Research Group (2011) *Youth '07 report*

Participants under the alcohol purchase age of 18 years said it was easy to access alcohol. A controlled purchase operation in the Far North in late 2010 found that of 41 off-license premises (bottle stores, supermarkets and superettes) visited, seven were found to be selling to customers under the age of 18 with no questions asked (Northland Age 21/12/2010). Given the current debate about the alcohol purchase age one participant commented that legal changes would not stop young people drinking, but had the potential to criminalise their drinking practices.

#### **Selected comments on Alcohol and drugs**

##### **Alcohol**

“Alcohol leads to most of the problems listed, mostly domestic violence and rape/teen pregnancy”. (Male, 16, NZ European, Far North)

I've seen what alcohol can do to people and it is not good, especially when the cases I've seen involves my friends”. (Female, 18, European, Far North)

“Alcohol, there's too much being distributed and abuse via young people in Northland”. (Male, 16, NZ European, Far North)

“Probably the very young teenagers 12-14 years going out to parties and getting drunk and some getting their selves into danger”. (Female, 16, Māori, Whangarei)

##### **Drugs**

“A lot of people use drugs” (Female, 15, Māori, Whangarei)

##### **Drugs and alcohol**

“Since I've had people close to me affected by drugs and alcohol, I think education and support for quitting is really important - families need consistent support when they don't know how to deal with a member's drinking/partying”. (Female, 23, NZ European, Whangarei)

“Drug and alcohol use. It's such a common thing in Whangarei and I really think it should be zero tolerance on the roads, not just teenagers but for everyone”. (Female, 16, NZ European, Whangarei)

“Drug use & alcohol addiction problems are wrecking people home lives, family & friends etc”. (Female, 16, NZ European, Whangarei)

“Alcohol and drug use is a big problem in Northland”. (Female, 18 NZ European/Asian, Whangarei)

“Alcohol and other drug use because it is killing young people (Male, 15, NZ European/ Māori /Pacific/Asian, Whangarei)

“Alcohol and drug use is important as I have had my own family involved. I've seen what it does to people and I hate it”. (Female, 16, NZ European, Whangarei)

Big issue – “How easy it is to get alcohol and drugs”. (Female, 14, NZ European, Whangarei)

“Alcohol and drugs. The laws that are being made for us that are affecting us, such as lifting the drinking age and the driving age. I do not think these are a good idea as it is not preventing the problem it is just going to make people do more illegal stuff, and send them down a the path of bad stuff earlier”.(Female, 17, European, Whangarei)

In the *Whangarei District Community Report* (FACS 2008) the 'wellbeing of young people' is a priority area for action. One of the three risk factors identified for young people was, "Anti-social behaviour: Examples include tagging and increased alcohol and drug-related problems". This focus shows that the concerns participants in Whangarei showed about alcohol and drugs are recognised in the wider community.

Alcohol and drug use is a society wide issue. Young people are affected when others in their family abuse alcohol and drugs. For every person with a drug use problem an average of three others are directly affected; financially, socially, and with impacts on physical and psychological health (Madill Parker Research & Consulting 2008). A quarter of New Zealanders live in the same house as a heavy drinker (National Committee for Addiction Treatment 2011). Psychiatrists know children who grow up with an alcoholic caregiver are at greater risk for having emotional problems than children whose parents are not alcoholics (American Academy of Childhood and Adolescent Psychology 2002).

### **Box 3. Examples of current Northland youth alcohol and drug initiatives**

#### **Community Action on Youth and Drugs**

*Community Action Youth and Drugs* (CAYAD) is a primary prevention approach that aims to reduce harm to young people and families/whanau from illicit drugs. There are three CAYAD providers in Northland. Ngatiwi that covers the east coast of Northland, Ngati Hine Health Trust that focus on Whangarei and Te Runanga o Te Rarawa in Kaitaia.

One initiative in that was highlighted in a CAYAD success stories publication (SHORE 2009) involved working with the Kaitaia League Club, parents and caregivers to develop a 'Not in Front of our Children' campaign that included banning alcohol consumption and drug smoking/dealing in the park where youth sports were being run. After initial resistance this project created a safe environment for the kids and created the opportunity for young people to run their own club. This Drug and Alcohol Free Club inspired the Far North Māori Rugby League team to promote the kaupapa at senior tournaments by having 'Drug Free, Alcohol Free' emblems on their training shirts. "As a result of this project there has been a change in people's whakaaro (thinking, ideas) towards responsible drinking and creating safer environments for youth" (Shore 2009:10).

#### **Te Roopu Kimiora**

*Te Roopu Kimiora*, the Northland DHB's Child & Adolescent Mental Health and Addiction Service, holds clinics in Whangarei, Dargaville, Kaikohe, Kerikeri and Kaitaia. Their services include "Free for Life", an alcohol and drug programme which tackles young offenders' addiction and substance use issues. Many offenders have been involved with alcohol and drugs and by addressing their substance abuse the risk of reoffending is often reduced.

#### **Far North Co-location Project**

Within the Far North area, significant steps have been taken since 2007 to provide a coordinated and collaborative approach to reducing alcohol-related harm and increasing compliance by licensed premises with the Sale of Liquor Act. As part of this approach, it was recognised that opportunities existed for even closer collaboration between agencies and that this could be facilitated through the co-location of the core statutory agencies of the Ministry of Health, the District Licensing Agency (DLA) and Police. As a result the Far North Co-location Project was established to enhance working relationships, provide for more efficient and effective information-sharing and better enable collaborative intervention across the strands of prevention, enforcement and education.

## 5.2.5 Violence, gangs and safety

Violence including bullying was a 'big issue' for 13.9 per cent of the Northland participants, compared with 3.5 per cent nationally. Violence was also the top equal source of worry for participants with mentions by 9.2 per cent of Northland participants compared with only 1.9 per cent nationally. Comments from participants highlighted the fear they held about being the victims of violent activities on daily, not just an occasional basis. The link between violence and gangs was explained by several participants as making them feeling unsafe. Violence, especially in the form of bullying and intimidation at school was highlighted by some participants. School linked violence is not a Northland specific issue, but the significance of gangs stood out as much more of an issue for Northland participants than those nationally.

Rates of hospital admissions for young people (15-24 years) due to assault were higher in Northland than New Zealand for the period 1990-2008. In the 2004-8 period the rate was over 350 admissions for assault per 100,000 people 15-24 compared with a national rate below 200.

### Selected comments on bullying violence and safety

#### Bullying and violence

Big issue - "It is the bullying that goes on in the schools I don't think enough is being done about it". (Male, 20, NZ European, Kaipara)

Concern - "That I will get beaten up on my way home from school". (Male, 17, Asian, Whangarei)

"Violence (big issue) because too much people get beaten up". (Male, 15, Māori, Far North)

"Violence. In the past I have seen a lot of violence within the family and around my neighbourhoods, I think council should be stronger on violence because it really is an issue, you have no idea how safe I would feel if some of the people I knew were in jail". (Female, 14, NZ European, Whangarei)

Worry - "getting jumped in the streets". (Male, 15, Māori, Far North)

#### Safety

"So unsafe for me to even walk home at night after netball training". (Female, 18, NZ European, Whangarei)

Make NZ Better - "Safety because I want a safe community". (Male, 11 or less, European, Far North)

"See a lot of teens in gangs an doing drugs and I really think it will be awesome trying to make the community a safe place" (Female, 16, NZ European/Māori/Asian, Whangarei)

Gangs were the third most mentioned 'big issue' for Northland participants (14.6 per cent) and were not mentioned in the national sample. Concern about gangs centred on them making participants feel unsafe. There are also links to the availability of alcohol and drugs which were the 'biggest issues' in Northland for participants. In the *Whangarei District Community Report* (FACS 2008) the influence of gangs on young people was a focus in terms of young people's wellbeing. The report stated, "It is perceived that gangs are recruiting young people, including those dropping out of school. As a result, teenagers are getting into criminal behaviour at an earlier age" (FACS 2008:14). Participants made comments about feeling unsafe because of the presence of gangs. They said gangs gave Northland a bad reputation.

One response to this was the Connecting Young People project (CYP). This project contributes to NIF's vision *to achieve positive futures for young people in Northland*, by aiming to reduce the transition of young people into a gang lifestyle. Connecting Young People began as a result of NIF initiated research that identified the potential for young people to transition

into a gang lifestyle. The research showed that quick action could prevent the youth gangs in Whangarei from becoming a significant problem for the community. An action plan was developed in 2008 and this is now in its second phase. In 2010 a direct referral team was set up in Whangarei as part of the Connecting Young People project. The work of this team is highlighted in box 4.

In the Youth 2007 survey of secondary students 20 per cent of Northland students reported witnessing adults hitting or physically hurting a child in their home in the last twelve months compared with 17 per cent nationally. Being hit or physically harmed by another person in the last 12 months was reported by 41 per cent of Northlanders in Youth 2007, which was the same as the national rate. The rate of witnessing adults hitting or physically hurting each other in their home was slightly higher in Northland at 11 per cent compared with 10 per cent nationally.

#### **Selected comments on gangs**

"Lots of gang related activity within Whangarei and within school. A lot of fights around the Whangarei area, especially in school". (Male 17, European/Māori, Whangarei)

"In Northland we are known for having a large amount of gang related crimes and it doesn't make our community safe". (Female, 15, NZ European/Pacific, Whangarei)

Big issue - "Gangs and aggressive youths on the streets making it impossible to go out at night". (Male, 17, NZ European, Whangarei)

Gangs because they offer a quick way into crime and out of home early which is not the best thing for the community. (Male, 20, European, Kaipara)

Big issue - "Young people caring more about the colours other people wear e.g. blue, red and yellow". (Female, 18, Māori, Far North)

"Gangs, because they are taking over our communities and are leading most of there members astray and towards criminal acts". (Female, 16, Māori, Whangarei)

"Gangs because they bring violence and crime into our communities" (Male, 15, European/Māori /Pacific/Asian, Whangarei)

Worry - "The whole gang thing, cause like um people are scary". (Female, 15, Asian, Far North)

Big Issue - "Gangs that are trying to recruit young people". (Female, 16, Māori, Whangarei)

"Violence and gangs, enough said. Intimidating and creating fear". (Female, 18, European, Kaipara)

Related to concerns about violence and gangs is safety. Safety received the second highest ranking out of 21 social issues for participants with an average of 3.18 out of a possible four, only having friends and a social life rated higher. Concerns about safety were much more significant for female participants. For example all five mentions of safety as a source of worry were made by females.

#### **Box 4. Examples of current Northland violence gang and safe initiatives**

The examples in this section are largely youth specific. It is important to remember the behaviour of adults can also make young people feel unsafe.

##### **Gangs**

In 2010 a direct referral team was set up in Whangarei as part of the *Connecting Young People* project. This team identifies young people (aged 10-20 years) at risk of moving towards a youth gang and whose behaviour is causing concern, those currently involved in a youth gang, right through to high end offenders. Its solutions range from low-level support and encouragement through to intensive case management and supervision. The team assesses a young person's needs and refers them to agencies and service providers that will best suit them. The team also manages the monitoring and follow-up of each young person.

##### **Youth offenders**

*Te Ora Hou* has recently branched into working directly with Northland youth offenders through a community work programme and the community youth development service. The Ministry of Social Development has partnered with *Te Ora Hou* to work with recidivist young offenders that has resulted in some significant behaviour changes among these young people. Child, Youth and Family has three youth justice staff based at the Pulse youth hub in Whangarei and staff in other Northland towns.

##### **Safety**

Whangarei's Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP) for 2009-2019 has, as its Community Outcome Number 2 "A District which is safe and crime free." This focuses on enhancing the social wellbeing of the community including people of all ages feel safe in the district. There is a city safe programme focused on the CBD and a Community safety officer. One of the Kaipara District Council's community outcomes is that, "Kaipara District is a safe place to live and raise a family, where people enjoy a good quality of life". Far North District Council's mission includes, "To build trust within stronger and safer communities".

### **5.2.6 The cost of living and income**

Address the cost of living, especially making food and petrol more affordable, was second only to creating jobs as the thing that participants would do to make New Zealand a better place to live. The focus on the cost of living is interesting given that lack of money and food was only mentioned as a source of worry by 4.4 per cent of the Northland participants compared with 12.9 per cent nationally. One reason for the lower rate in Northland could be the small number of those aged 20-24 years in the Northland sample as it was this age group that worried most about money in the national sample 26.9 per cent, compared with an average of 4.3 per cent. For the Northlanders aged 20-24 years lack of money was a worry for 11.1 per cent, but they were only 31 of the 401 participants (12.5 per cent).

Northland is the region with the lowest median and average incomes in New Zealand. In the June 2009 quarter the median weekly income for all people from all sources per person was \$421 a week in Northland, the lowest for any region in the country and only 80 per cent of the national median of \$529 according to the New Zealand Income Survey (Statistics New Zealand 2010). For Northland Māori the median income was \$375 a week compared with

\$421 for all ethnicities. The median house hold income in Northland was also the lowest in the country at \$1,007 compared with \$1236 nationally. Only 12 per cent of working-age New Zealanders are on benefits, but in Northland it is 21 per cent, for Northlanders aged 18 to 24 it is 29 per cent, and for Northland Māori it is 48 per cent (Collins 2011).

The comments about the cost of living and the challenges of living on low incomes included participants who identified their own family's struggle to make ends meet. For several participants the desire for higher wages was linked to the cost of living. Also mentions related to tax cuts centred on taking GST off food. There are few public transport options in Northland so recent increases in the cost of petrol have had a significant impact on Northlanders already living on tight budgets.

Addressing educational achievement and employment opportunities are key to raising the standard of living of Northlanders and thus addressing issues related to the cost of living. Also there is a link between higher educational achievement and incomes. Northland currently has the lowest median incomes and the highest unemployment rate in New Zealand. Initiatives to help those on low incomes include encouraging more people to grow their own food. Community and marae gardens, such as at Pehiaweri Marae in Glenbervie Whangarei and Maara Kai in Kaitaia, are supporting people to grow more food, with the additional benefit of bringing the community together. Whangarei Anglican Care Trust runs "Cooking on a budget with a list" classes to educate families on how shopping with a list is more economical than running into supermarkets and buying whatever they takes their eye.

#### **Selected comments**

"It's not fine that you raise the prices for everything when people can't pay for it/them". (Female, 16, Māori, Whangarei)

"Low incomes, people struggle to feed there families (sic)". (Female, 14, NZ European, Far North)

"Low incomes, because most of my family is on a benefit, with at least 4 children, they hardly get enough money to support their family, and it's sad to watch my 22 year old cousin struggling, and it's not her fault". (Female, 14, European, Whangarei)

Worry – "Payments for everything...school, car, etc". (Female, 17, Māori, Far North)

Worry – "Parents money troubles, not that much work. Costs increases, it is getting too expensive to live". (Female, 13, NZ European/Māori, Whangarei)

Worry - "That there are not enough people willing to help less fortunate in our community". (Female, 18, European, Whangarei)

"Bring down prices of food bills, gas and put up prices of smokes and alcohol" (Male, 14, European/Māori /Pacific, Whangarei)

"Make wages more, to make living easy or living costs less". (Female, 20, European/Māori, Kaipara)

"Lower prices on important things like food, rent, gas! Lower living costs". (Female, 16, NZ European, Whangarei)

"Bring the minimum wage up for adults because it's hard to pay for living costs when on the minimum wage and some parents rely on their children to help out". (Female, 17, NZ European, Whangarei)

### **5.2.7 Pregnancy and sex**

Pregnancy and sex were a 'big issue' for 11 per cent of Northland participants, compared with 2.1 of those in the national sample. During the 1990-2007 period teenage birth rates were considerably higher in Northland than the national average (Craig et al 2008). For example in

2006-7 there were well over 50 births per 1,000 teenage women in Northland compared to approximately 33 per 1,000 nationally. The comments from participants focused on how common teenage pregnancy seemed in Northland. In 2009 there were 251 births to mothers under the age of 20 in Northland. There is an opportunity to reduce the rate of teen pregnancy in Northland.

The Youth 2007 survey of secondary students showed that Northland participants were more sexually active than those nationally for example 30 per cent of the 192 Northlanders reported they had had sexual intercourse in the last three months compared with 25 per cent nationally. Condom use was lower among the Northland participants at 68 per cent compared with 72 per cent nationally, but the rate of reported contraception use was identical at 81 per cent. This means 19 per cent of sexually active Northlanders are not using contraception.

The domestic purposes benefit (DPB) exists to support sole parents with one or more dependent children. The single largest group of young beneficiaries in Northland is those on the DPB. In 2009, 36.3 per cent (1,076) of the 2968 beneficiaries aged 16-24 years in Northland were on the DPB. This rate is almost identical to the national average of 36.1 per cent. This suggests that while there are more births to teenage mothers in Northland than average, that combined with those aged 20-24 the proportion of those going on to the DPB is no different to that nationally.

**Table 14. Sexual activity in Northland and New Zealand in 2007**

	Northland %	New Zealand %
<b>Of all students</b>		
Ever had sexual intercourse	42	36
Had sexual intercourse in the last three months	30	25
<b>Of all sexually active students</b>		
Used contraception most or all of the time	81	81
Use condoms most or all of the time as protection against sexually transmitted infections	68	72

Source: Adolescent Health Research Group (2011 & 2008) *Youth '07 reports*

In terms of sexual health chlamydia, gonorrhoea, genital warts and genital herpes has increased significantly amongst the Northland youth population. In 2007 there were 413 notifications for these four sexual transmitted infections for young people aged under 25 years of age by sexual health, Family Planning and student health services in Northland. In 2001 there were less than 150 notifications. The upward trend is of concern, as STIs can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease, ectopic pregnancy and infertility, as well as facilitating the transmission of HIV.

**Selected comments on pregnancy and sex**

“Especially the teen pregnancy (no I'm not a mum) but most my friends are, they say it's because they wanted attention and love from friends/family”. (Female, 15, Asian, Far North)

“A lot of teenagers are getting pregnant before they end school and have to go into the big world raising another human being when they have not yet got the knowledge to look after themselves, let alone a baby as well”. (Female, 16, Māori, Whangarei)

“I know so many teens who are pregnant or have had their babies or are pregnant with a second”. (Female, 17, European, Whangarei)

“Before 7th form finished last year more than ten people in my form were pregnant or had babies in the last 3 years”. (Female, 18, European, Kaipara)

Sexuality education in families and schools has an important role to play in reducing Northland high teenage pregnancy rate. Sexuality education is part of the secondary school health curriculum. A national review of sexuality education in 100 schools in 2006 (Education Review Office 2007) concluded that effective sexuality education programmes give children and young people important information about their development, and opportunities to discuss and explore issues related to their sexuality and sexual health. However the evaluation found that the majority of sexuality education programmes were not meeting students' learning needs effectively. Two areas of particular weakness were assessing learning in sexuality education and meeting the needs of diverse groups of students. ERO found that the majority of schools needed to improve one or more aspects of the design and implementation of their sexuality education programmes and that many schools did not give their teachers the support required to deliver high quality sexuality education programmes.

In the evaluation 30 per cent of schools said they used their own staff to delivery sexuality education followed by Family Planning at 18 per cent. Family Planning has a base in Whangarei and their services include health promotion related to sexuality education. Family Planning secondary school sessions look at sexuality and relationships education including: relationship skills, anatomy and physiology, conception and birth, safer sex, contraception and sexually transmissible infections.

#### **Box 5. Examples of current young parent and sexual health related services**

There are several services for teenage mothers and their families. *He Mataariki* School for Teen Parents in Whangarei is a school that teenagers attend to further their education if they cannot attend a mainstream school because of parental responsibilities. Whangarei Hospital runs special teen pregnancy classes. In 2011 Te Ora Hou opened a residential home in Whangarei for pregnant teens and or teen mothers with baby. The home is run by house parents and is based around supported living, with the aim of preparing teen mums for independent living.

Sexual health services are provided by local doctors, *Family Planning* and the district health board. For example the District Health Board run sexual health services in Whangarei five days a week and in Kaitaia, Kaikohe, Dargaville provides services 2.5-3.5 hours a week. There are also school based health services in parts of the region and all schools have access to regional health nurses.

### **5.2.8 Activities and places**

Providing activities and places for young people was the third common response to the question, "If you were Prime Minister, what is the one thing you would do to make living in New Zealand better than it is now"? There were mentions by 10.8 per cent of participants in Northland compared with 2.9 per cent nationally. The lack of activities and facilities was linked by some participants to boredom and when young people were bored they were more likely to commit crime. The desire among young people for facilities is not a new issue with the 2006-2016 Far North Long Term Community Plan/ Far North Future Plan stating, "Youth consider their major issue to be a lack of youth space (spaces to drift, hang out and structured activity space such as youth centres/recreation spaces)".

Whangarei is Northland's only large urban centre. This means there are fewer commercial providers of services that young people can use such as fast food chains. Research by the Ministry of Youth Development in other communities shows young people want facilities like McDonalds as they provide a safe place to hang out and meet friends at night and on

weekends when other facilities are closed. Affordability is another issue that is more significant in Northland.

One example of the provision of activities for young people in Northland is an innovative programme called 'Taitamariki Tuu Ora'. The 'Taitamariki Tuu Ora' programme engages the young people in dance (hip hop and other contemporary and cultural styles) and Nga Mahi Tuu Taua (Ancient Māori Weaponry). Young people played a central role in developing 'Taitamariki Tuu Ora', which means the programme meets their needs and goals. The effectiveness of the 'Taitamariki Tuu Ora' dance intensive programmes led to the formation of the Northland Secondary Schools Hip Hop Competition. The Nga Mahi Tuu Taua (Ancient Māori Weaponry) programme focuses on the development of skills associated with traditional Māori weapons. This programme is supported by SPARC and Sport Northland. With 34 per cent of Northland secondary students overweight<sup>1</sup> in 2007 (Adolescent Health Research Group 2011) , compared with 24 per cent in the rest of New Zealand (Adolescent Health Research Group 2008), and another 10 per cent of both groups being obese getting more young people in Northland involved in physical activity is important.

The 'Taitamariki Tuu Ora' example shows how initiatives that engage young people in positive activities can be delivered from a range of existing facilities. In the Northland context the emphasis is likely to be on using existing facilities to provide places and activities for young people rather than the development of lots of youth centres. "A youth centre is an open access, or universal service, for all young people as opposed to a targeted service/ programme for a few young people. At a minimum a youth centre will have a physical space in a fixed geographic location that youth can use" (MYD, 2010) Using this definition there are three youth centres in Northland known to MYD: NuFlo, Kawakawa; Dargaville Life Trust Youth Centre, Dargaville; and Pou Moemoea, Moerewa Youth Centre which is run by the Moerewa Christian Fellowship. These centres are usually open after school every day or a few set days and more in holidays. There are facilities that are not youth centres, but can be used for pre booked youth activities, such as the new Te Ahu centre in Kaitaia and The Church Youth Centre in Whangarei that is used for programmes rather than drop in.

A Ministry of Youth Development (2010) study of youth centres found that youth centres with their open access nature, have difficulty demonstrating value for money when compared to specific programmes that enrol a finite number of people and track the programme outcomes. Youth centres can play an important preventative role, because for some young people in difficult personal or domestic circumstances, the centre is the one place where they can meet safely and obtain the support they need. Youth centres can also use casual activities to facilitate developing relationships with young people than then lead them to participating in structured programmes. The key in any initiatives and activities and places for young people is being relevant, engaging and offering quality services.

There are many other youth service providers across the region that use a range of service delivery approaches. An analysis of the Family and Community Services online directory of youth services in Northland shows that are at least 25 providers that provide youth specific services and there are many other services open to young people. In Whangarei there is the Pulse - Whangarei One Stop Shop where 13 services can be accessed from the one site.

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<sup>1</sup> Overweight was defined as over 25 kg/m<sup>2</sup> and stopping when obese began at 30 kg/m<sup>2</sup>. These are internationally accepted measures.

### **Selected comments on facilities and activities**

“Crime prevention is not very efficient, it's not for lack of trying its just youth don't have a lot of options on activities which lead to boredom”. (Female, 21, Māori, Far North)

“Not having a place in our community, other than the library, where youth can come together and hang after school or during the weekends”. (Female, 18, European/Māori, Far North)

“There are no youth events or places for youth to go”. (Male, 19, Māori, Far North)

Big Issue – “Not having somewhere safe to be after school or somewhere to go, like a recreation centre, with sports and other activities”. (Female, 23, Māori, Far North)

“There aren't enough places for kids to go and chill during the weekend”. (Male 17, European, Whangarei)

“Having somewhere to go and something to do during the holidays, and possibly on weekends”. (Female, 17, Māori, Whangarei)

“Have more things for youth to do so they don't get in trouble”. (Female, 20, Māori, Far North)

“I would create youth hubs in all of New Zealand, widely across that can be accessed by those troubled etc and can be a place where you can hang and do fun filled activities or chill. This would keep kids of the streets and less likely to cause crime etc”. (Female, 17, NZ European/Māori, Kaipara)

“Organise some youth programme to keep young people busy so they won't turn to gangs or committing crimes etc”. (Female, 16, Māori, Far North)

## 6. Youth and local government

### 6.1 Council services

There were three questions in the survey about participants awareness of what local government does and what aspects of local government young people would like to have a say about. The service with the highest awareness rate among the participants was parks, open spaces and play grounds at 88.5 per cent. Sports facilities and liquor licensing occupied the lowest awareness slots at 62.0 and 65.6 respectively. Awareness that rates are the main source of income was reported by 69.1 per cent of participants.

**Table 15. Knowledge of services provided by District Councils**

Service	Yes %	No %
Parks, open spaces and play grounds	88.5	11.4
Public toilets	88.0	12.0
Building, planning and development	86.6	13.4
Rubbish and recycling	84.9	15.1
Civil defence eg. flooding or earthquakes	83.1	16.9
Roads (except for State Highways) and footpaths	82.6	17.4
Waste water (sewage) and storm water	78.5	21.5
Libraries	75.5	24.5
Public swimming pools	74.6	25.4
Community halls and facilities	73.4	26.6
Animal control eg. dogs	70.4	29.6
Liquor licensing	65.6	34.4
Sports facilities	62.0	38.0

N=353

Participants reported that rubbish and recycling was the main council service they used, with a 67.4 per cent usage reported. Libraries followed a close second with more than two thirds (66.9 per cent) of participants reporting use. Civil defence was reported as the least used service. Surprisingly only 63.7 per cent of participants said they used roads and footpaths. This could suggest underreporting as it is likely most, if not all, participants make regular use of roads and footpaths.

There was a cluster of services on which 10-11 per cent of participants wanted to have a say. These included sports facilities, parks, public toilets, roads and footpaths, and animal control. The fact no more than 11 per cent of participants wanted to have a say about council services may appear low, but compares well when the 2011/12 Whangarei District Council Annual Plan attracted 109 submissions for all age groups.

**Table 16. Council services used by young people in Northland**

Service	Proportion who reported use	Proportion who want to have a say about this service
	%	%
Rubbish and recycling	67.4	9.1
Libraries	66.9	6.4
Public swimming pools	66.6	9.3
Parks, open space and play grounds	66.5	10.1
Public toilets	64.2	10.3
Roads and foot paths	63.7	10.8
Sports facilities	62.1	10.9
Community halls and facilities	44.1	7.3
Waste water (inc sewerage)	34.3	6.1
Animal control	21.7	9.9
Liquor Licensing	16.1	8.5
Building planning and Development	15.9	5.7
Rates	15.2	5.8
Civil defence	12.8	4.7

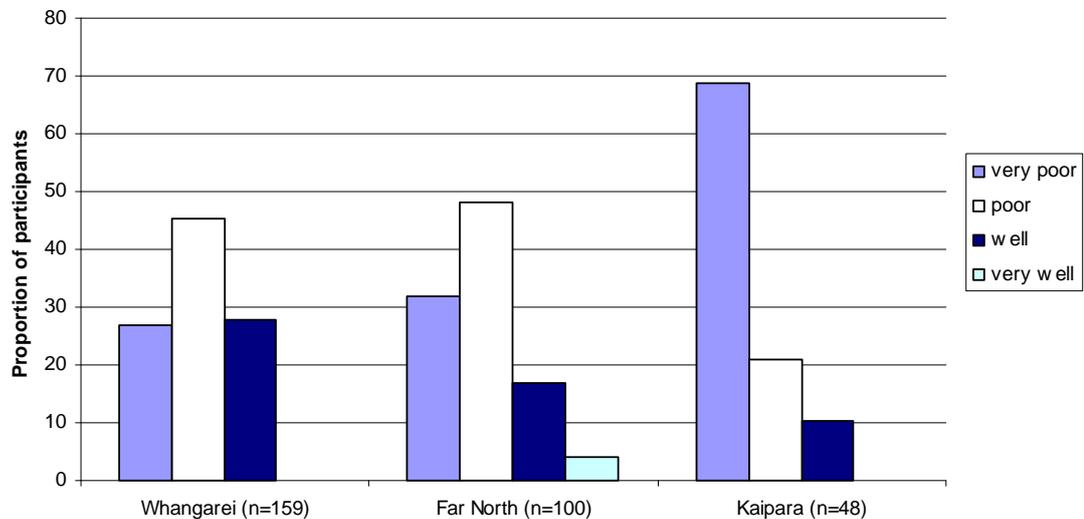
n=342-367 depending on service

## **6.2 Council engagement with young people**

Participants were asked, “How well do you think your district council involves and consults young people in decisions that affect them?” Over three quarters of respondents (77.2 per cent) said very poor or poor, as shown in Figure 4. Only 1.3 per cent of participants said their council did very well at engaging young people. These results are very similar to that when participants were asked about decision makers in general. This shows youth engagement is not just an issue for local government, however the feedback provides local government with an opportunity to build on engaging young people.

Participants from the Whangarei District gave the highest average rating of 2.01 for council engagement. The lowest rating came from Kaipara District at 1.42. In Kaipara more than two thirds of participants (68.8 per cent) gave a very poor rating. The Far North District Council was the only one to attract any very well ratings (4 per cent). The *2006-2016 Far North Long Term Community Plan/ Far North Future Plan* states, “Council recognises that participation by Māori and Youth in both planning and decision making processes is significant.” It is important to remember that the findings for council youth engagement in Northland are likely to be similar for other councils across New Zealand with similar attributes and no formal youth engagement mechanisms.

**Figure 4. How does your council involve and consult young people on decision that affect them?**



## 6.3 Youth councils

### 6.3.1 Should your council have a youth council?

A youth council is primarily an advisory group of young people, who meet regularly to provide advice and guidance to local councils. They may also organise a variety of youth-identified projects and events in their community. More than nine out of ten participants (91.6 per cent) said they thought their council should have a youth council. The strong desire for youth councils was consistent across the three districts as shown in Figure 5.

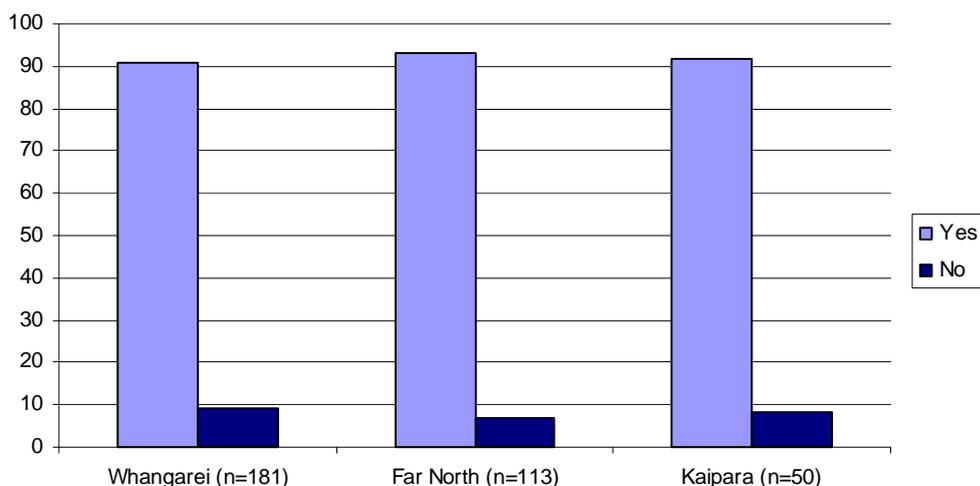
#### Selected comments about youth voice

“The community leaders listening to young people is by far the most important as it is through this outlet that we are able to affect change in our communities, and control and do something to change the community we are living in. In my community the four things I listed below (education, safety, racism, parenting) are issues I see a lot of, and that I hate, but it is through the youth voices in our councils, and our government that we can do something about it. (Female, 17, European, Whangarei)

What is important - “Making sure that everyone’s voice is heard and that no one is just ‘dragged’ along for the ride in their community. Stand up and be heard. (Male 17, NZ European/Māori, Whangarei)

“That the youth of our generation are beginning to think that no one is truly listening to them, making them feel like they are on their own”. (Male 17, European/Māori, Whangarei)

**Figure 5. Should your council have a youth council?**



### 6.3.2 What should a youth council do?

Participants were given a list of 11 functions and asked to rate them on a four point scale. The top ranked function was “plan and run youth events”, with an average rating of 3.14, as shown in Table 17. Participants across all three councils consistently rated “plan and run youth events” an important focus, number one in Whangarei and Kaipara, and second in the Far North.

**Table 17. What should a youth council do?**

What	Rating
Youth events	3.14
Make youth grants	3.04
Survey young people and act on issues important to them	2.99
Be consulted on specific council services used by young people eg. pools / libraries	2.99
Have its own funding and run projects	2.98
Train young people in local decision making	2.97
Run awareness campaigns	2.91
Address youth stereotypes, highlight positives	2.86
Hold district youth summits and forums	2.75
Hold youth awards	2.65

N= 326

There were a further four issues clustered around an average ranking of three. These in order were: making youth grants, surveying young people and acting on the results, being consulted on council services used by young people and training young people to participate in local decision making. Participants from the Far North rated surveying young people and acting on the results as the top activity for a youth council to do with an average rating of 3.6, compared

with 2.9 in the other two districts. The Hutt Valley highlight box shows how valuable one council finds surveying its young residents.

**Youth survey asks the Hutt's 12 - 24 year olds 'how it is'**

In 2006 Upper Hutt City Council started holding an annual youth survey. In 2010 the Youth Survey was conducted with Hutt City to get a Hutt Valley wide response on how young people like to spend their time. The survey was for 12 to 24 year olds living, studying or working in the Hutt Valley. Questions focused on safety, health, education, work and where young people like to spend their time.

Upper Hutt Council's website says, "The information is used to make cool stuff happen for young people in the Upper Hutt community. Previous youth surveys have led to a number of youth events and gigs, the Future Dragons project, Youth Ambassadors and more".

Find out more: <http://www.upperhuttcity.com/search.boss?q=youth+survey>

### 6.3.3 Youth council membership

Participants were asked how youth council members should be selected. Two options were equally preferred by participants, one involved any young person being able to stand and selection by a representative group including young people, youth workers and council. The other involved secondary students voting for 1-2 representatives per school.

**Table 18. Selecting youth council members**

Method	Average rating
Anyone can stand and provide a profile, then a group of youth workers, young people and council staff select the representatives to ensure a good mix of people	2.87
One or two representatives per secondary school (students vote for representatives)	2.87
Anyone can stand and provide a profile, then online or text voting by young people to elected representatives	2.73
One or two representatives per secondary school (school selects representatives)	2.71
Councillors select the representatives	2.40

#### **Perspectives on membership of youth councils and advisory groups**

"We provide advice to the Council on how to do things better for young people here. We represent young people's voices to the Council so they don't get missed out." (Youth Council member, 16 years)

"I used to think that the council was just not interested in young people – that they were about old people and people that own houses but now I think it was just that they didn't know how to talk to young people not that they didn't want to." (Youth Advisory Group Member, District Council)

"We take action for youth in our community." (Youth Advisory Group member, 17 years)

"The council are willing to listen and take our ideas onboard. They come to us and ask for help when something is happening which is about young people." (Youth Council Member, 16 years)

### 6.3.4 Discussion

The feedback from participants on youth councils was very strong and positive. Local government impacts young people's lives in many different ways. Many councils engage young people in helping to make decisions on council business from libraries to employment initiatives, from town planning to recreation and community spaces. Ongoing youth advisory groups or youth councils offer local government one way of undertaking good practice youth participation in communities. Youth councils can improve a council's reputation with young people by providing young people with a voice to promote their needs, priorities and experiences to council decision-makers. Youth councils can also help councils to develop and implement good consultation processes with the wider youth community. It is important not to relying solely on youth councils as the only form of youth consultation for a council as it risks excluding the views of young people who are not comfortable or interested in participating in youth council-type groups.

**Table 19. Examples of youth voice groups in Northland or with a Northland presence**

<b>Group</b>	<b>About</b>
<b>Northland based</b>	
Te Hiku Community Board Youth Council – Far North	Research is being undertaken to establish a youth council linked to this community board that covers Kaitaia to Cape Reinga.
Kaikohe Youth Council	An independent youth advisory group with seven young people. The group is focused on improving Kaikohe for youth through providing activities and recreation opportunities. The group is supported by Hauora O Kaikohe.
Northland Regional Council Youth Summit	This day-long workshop is organised annually by Northland Regional Council and brings together Year Seven and Eight students nominated by schools from throughout Northland. The forum focuses on a different issue each year.  In 2011 REGeneration in partnership with the Northland Regional Council ran Northland Youth Jam. This was an opportunity to pilot a new concept - helping young people connect with council policy development through film making.
Northland Student Forum	This forum brings together senior secondary students from across the region who act as a student voice for Northland. It has been held since 2008 and gives students an opportunity to have input into decision-making and policy. The Northland Student Forum is one of four key initiatives of the Northland Youth Development Trust.
Public Health Youth Advisory group – Northland District Health Board	Contributing and strengthen youth input into public and population health programs is the focus of this group. They help initiatives be more streetwise. Members receive training to support them in their work and it is hoped some will go into public health careers. There are currently 10 members.
Whangarei Youth Forum and Whangarei Youth Council	An independent youth advisory group with 20 Year 12 and 13 student members. Whangarei Council recently received funding from the Ministry of Youth Development for a youth council

National with Northland members	
Aotearoa Youth Voices Network	The Aotearoa Youth Voices is a national network managed by the Ministry of Youth Development that connects young people, government and community decision-makers to talk about issues important to youth. There were 116 Northland members at the time of the consultation for this report in May 2011.
Maori Youth Council	Provides the Minister of Māori Affairs with practical advice and feedback on public policy and initiatives that have a significant impact on rangatahi Māori. Of the 15 members two are from Northland.
Student Councils in schools	Student councils help students' share ideas, interests, and concerns with teachers and school principals. They often raise funds for school-wide activities and community projects. The Student representative on the school's Board of Trustees is usually a member.
Youth Parliament	Youth Parliament is an opportunity for young New Zealanders to learn about New Zealand's democracy and influence public decision-making It has been every three years since 1994. In Youth Parliament 2010 five of the 121 were from Northland reflecting the number of MPs in Northland.

Some youth councils are involved in organising events for young people in their community. While this is likely to involve decision-making aspects, it is limited to those regarding the project or event. There are youth councils who have a key purpose to provide a youth voice and input to council and community decision-making. These youth councils also undertake events in their community, but this is secondary to youth participation in decision-making focus. Other youth councils sit in the middle and at different positions on the continuum and many move back and forth along it. There are currently three area focused youth voice groups in Northland and at least four other types of groups.

To work well for the long-term youth engagement processes need to be well thought out including what forms they should take and how they would operate in a regional with a very spread population. A traditional model of a youth council meeting monthly might work in more urban Whangarei but would be much more difficult in the Far North and Kaipara where travel times between towns can be considerable. In these more sparsely populated and geographically spread areas one option would be to use the school holidays as a time for district wide gatherings that have a focus on district level decision making and policy issues. Including working age youth would also be important. The participants at district level gatherings could be drawn from groups based in towns that meet more regularly and focus on local opportunities and activities.

It is intended that the next phase of this youth voice project will explore in more detail what youth and local government engagement could look like. This consultation provides a platform to built youth engagement with local government in Northland including what participants think the focus of council youth engagement should be.

### **Box 6. Examples of youth councils**

#### **Clutha Youth Council – An example of a formal youth council**

The Youth Council is a standing committee of council. Youth council members are either elected by their peers or nominated by a community organisation or themselves. The youth council can and does make formal recommendations to council on items under consultation and items of particular relevance to young people in the district. The Mayor and the Chief Executive always try to attend youth council meetings. A formal agenda is prepared for each youth council meeting and is circulated around all service centres in the district, to all councillors and any interested parties who ask to go on the mailing list. Youth councillors are encouraged to make face to face submissions to council as well. Different departments of council prepare the background information for youth council agenda items and attend youth council meetings to give presentations, information, advice and support.

#### **Porirua's Youth Advisory Group: An example of a more informal youth council**

Porirua City's youth advisory group (YAG) provides youth advice and expertise to the council on topics that impact young people. They also inform the youth community about council topics relevant to young people. The YAG is made up of 15 young people between 15 and 24 years old who are in education, work or doing some other activity.

#### **Gisborne's Tairawhiti Youth Voice– An example of an independent youth council**

Tairawhiti Youth Voice (TYV) was set up to function as an independent youth council with three groups of young people passionate about youth voices being heard in the isolated Tairawhiti region. The group's key focus is working with other young people, listening to their views and advocating for decisions that consider the needs of young people. For some time, TYV had no formal recognition. But they lobbied the Gisborne District Council to increase youth participation in decision-making through their organisation. Early in 2010 the Council formally appointed TYV to be their youth council. TYV now operates as a consultative body providing a youth perspective on any issues that come before council.

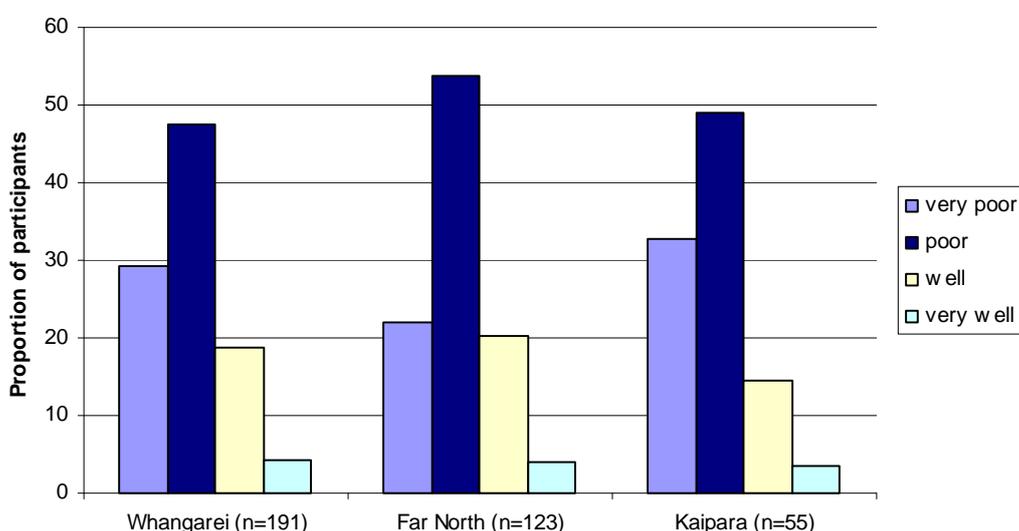
"We're a group of young people in Tairawhiti that have come to a decision that we as youth play a big role in our society, but do our opinions and ideas help shape our community that we live in? For many years our opinions haven't mattered therefore the adults have made decisions for us. It's time for us as youth in Tairawhiti to voice our ideas and have them heard." (From the Tairawhiti Youth Voice website)

## 7. Youth participation and awareness of decision makers

### 7.1 Decision makers

Participants were asked, “What has been your experience of getting your voice heard by decision makers such as the groups in the table above”? This question followed a list of 13 settings, from sports clubs and churches, to schools council, and councils which participants were asked to say if they had participated in. More than three quarters (77 per cent) said decision makers were very poor or poor at hearing their voice. Only 4.1 per cent of participants said decision makers did very well at listening to them. Participants from the Far North reported better experiences of being heard by decision makers than those from Whangarei or Kaipara.

**Figure 6. What has been your experience of getting your voice heard by decision makers?**



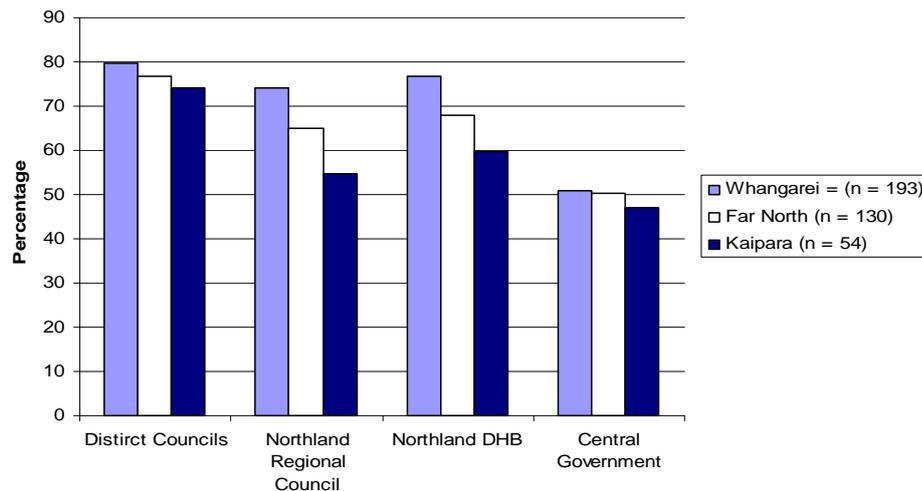
**Table 20. How well do decision makers listen to young people?**

	very poor %	poor %	well %	very well %	Average rating
Whangarei (n=191)	29.3	47.6	18.8	4.2	1.98
Far North (n=123)	22.0	53.7	20.3	4.1	2.39
Kaipara (n=55)	32.7	49.1	14.5	3.6	1.89
<i>Northland average</i>	<i>27.4</i>	<i>49.9</i>	<i>18.7</i>	<i>4.1</i>	<i>1.99</i>

N=369

Participants were asked, “Did you know the following publicly elected groups (District Council, Regional Council, District Health Board and Central Government) make decisions affecting Northland”? Awareness of district councils rated highest at 77.9 per cent compared with central government which was lowest at 50.1 per cent. The low rating for central government could reflect in part a lack of familiarity with this term.

**Figure 7. Awareness rates of elected groups that can affect Northland**



Participants from Whangarei consistently gave higher rating to understanding all levels of government and those from Kaipara consistently gave the lowest ratings. The lower rating from Kaipara could reflect the lower average age of participants from this council as there was a strong relationship between age and awareness of the four level of government, except for central government. This anomaly of central government awareness not showing an age related trend could be due to the use of the term central government in the survey. The term central government is not widely used in everyday circles in New Zealand.

## 7.2 Youth Participation

Participants were asked if they had engaged in youth participation activities in the last 12 months, for example participating in a sport club committee rather than a sports team. The most frequently nominated activity open to all age groups was participation in a church or religious committee which was indicated by 32.7 per cent of participants. Nearly half (49.6 per cent) of those at school said they participated in other school participation activities followed by school councils at 29.0 per cent. For Māori the level of involvement in marae committees was 30.0 per cent, much higher than the 16.8 per cent when marae committee participation is spread across all ethnicities.

**Table 21. Youth participation activities**

<b>Youth participation activities open to all youth 12-24 years</b>		<b>% n=373</b>
Church or other religious committee		32.7
Sports club committee		31.8
Marae committee		16.2
Cultural club committee		15.8
Youth advisory group / forum / council in your community		10.9
Enviroschools or ReGeneration		10.6
Ministry of Youth Development Aotearoa Youth Voices Network		6.9
A District or Regional council meeting or consultation		4.8
<b>Youth participation activities only open to school students*</b>		<b>% n=284</b>
Other school participation activity		49.6
School Student Council		29.0
Young Enterprise Scheme		11.4
Education 4 Enterprise Student Forum		9.9
Northland Regional Council Youth Summit		5.1

\*Results are based only on those who said they were at school

## 8. Conclusion

The 401 young people who participated in this research shared powerful insights about living in Northland and what was important to them. A major concern was getting work and avoiding unemployment. This reflects the reality that Northland currently (June 2011 quarter) has the country's highest unemployment rate. The fact many of Northland's young people do not achieve well academically is linked to participants' employment concerns. Low skilled young people struggle to find work and when they do it is likely to be low paid. This is a factor in Northland having the lowest median incomes in the country. To address educational concerns in Northland there is a co-ordinated focus on improving student achievement, especially engaging with Māori students and whanau.

For 41 per cent of participants drugs were a 'big issue'. There was a strong emphasis by participants on taking action on alcohol and other drug use. Some participants made a connection between the large number of people out of work in Northland and the rate of alcohol and other drug use. Action on alcohol and drug issues can begin at whanau, community, district and regional level. For example Northland's adults could do more to model responsible use of alcohol and those who use drugs could be supported to stop. Violence and gangs were also identified as prominent issues in this consultation. Most participants want to feel safer. Alcohol and drug use is one factor in young people feeling unsafe.

Participants felt their voice was seldom heard by decision makers in general and by local government specifically. The participants want councils to listen to them and give them meaningful opportunities to have their voice heard. There was over 90 per cent support for establishing youth councils. This is a strong indication of what participants want. The regions councils have the opportunity to show young people they value their views. For example Whangarei Council is in the process of setting up a youth council.

The next step is for the members of the Northland Intersectoral Forum to consider the messages given by these young people and take steps to act on their concerns and hopes. As the Northland Regional Council Regional Community Outcomes Report states, Northland has cohesive communities when, "All people feel valued and have a sense of belonging and equality within the community" (AC Nielsen 2005). Most participants did not feel valued and a sense of equality when it came to decisions makers listening to them.

One of the keys to a positive and thriving future for Northland is to engage effectively with young people now. Many young people are developing the skills that Northland needs. With more support even more of them can realise their potential and thus the potential of the entire region. "Realising youth potential" is one of the strategic goals of NIF. Through NIF there are projects underway to address most of the issues identified by the Northland participants. The findings from this report will inform further work to realise youth potential in Northland.

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## Appendix 1. Northland Youth Voices Survey

# Northland Youth Voices Survey

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### **What is happening?**

The Ministry of Youth Development wants to find out what you know about services in your area. We also want to hear your views on how decision makers in Northland are listening to young people.

We would be grateful if you could take the time to complete this survey. It is easy to fill in and should take 5-10 minutes to complete.

*There are no right or wrong answers – we are just interested in what you think.*

*All your answers will be confidential.*

*There will be no name on your survey.*

It is very important that you take the time to answer the questions honestly. Responses will inform decisions about youth voices in Northland.

### **Informed consent**

**I consent to take part in this survey**

**I do not consent to take part in the survey**

**You can contact the research team on**  
0508 FOR MYD (367 693) | [mydinfo@myd.govt.nz](mailto:mydinfo@myd.govt.nz)

Thank you for your time.

## About you

---

Age (years): \_\_\_\_\_

**Gender**

Female       Male

**Ethnicity (Please tick all that apply to you)**

New Zealand European

Niuean

Māori

Chinese

Samoan

Indian  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Cook Island Māori

\_\_\_\_\_

Tongan

—

**Are you in:**

School     Training (eg Uni or tech)     Work     Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**I live in:**

(Choose one council area. See [map on next page](#) if you need to check)

Whangarei District (Whangarei and outlying areas including Hikurangi and Ruakaka)

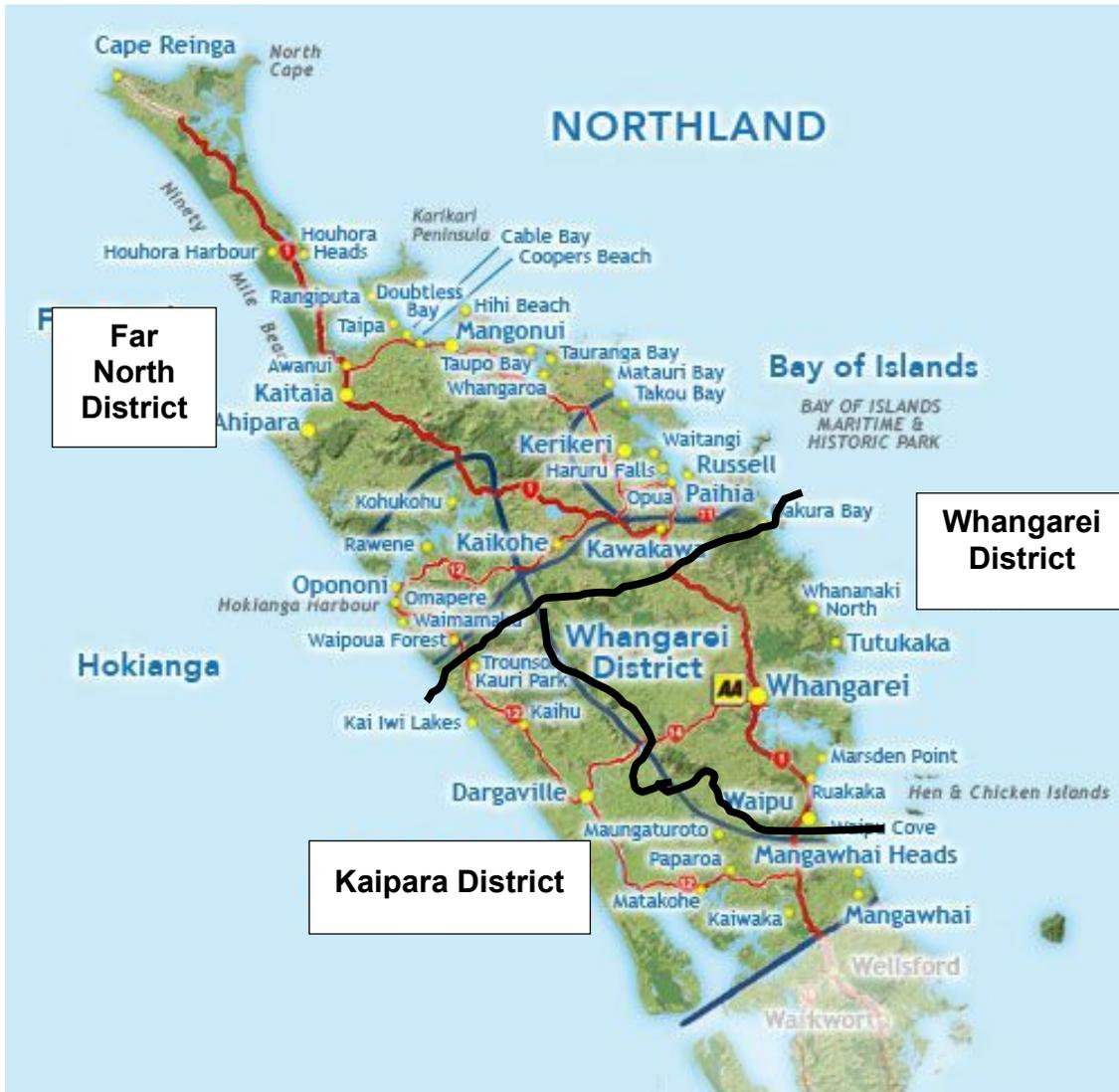
Far North District (includes Kaikohe, Kerikeri, Kawakawa and Paihia)

Kaipara District (Dargaville and surrounding areas including Kaiwaka, Mangawhai, Maungaturoto and Matakohē)

**Did you know the following publicly elected groups make decisions affecting Northland?**

Groups	Yes	No
District Councils - Whangarei, Far North and Kaipara (focused on local services including parks, roads and rubbish)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Northland Regional Council? (responsible for environmental management and promoting economic, social and cultural wellbeing).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Northland District Health Board? (funds and runs health services and hospitals)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Central Government (Politicians at the national level and government departments and services)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Map. Northland Council Districts



This map shows approximate council boundaries

## Youth voices

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**In the last 12 months have you participated in the following?**

<b>What</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
church or other religious committee	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
cultural club committee	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
a District or Regional council meeting or consultation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education 4 Enterprise Student Forum	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enviroschools or ReGeneration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
marae committee	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ministry of Youth Development Aotearoa Youth Voices Network	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Northland Regional Council Youth Summit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
school student council	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
other school student participation activity details: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
sport club committee	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Young Enterprise Scheme (YES)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
youth advisory group/forum/council in your community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other groups (please name them):

**What has been your experience of getting your voice heard by decision makers such as the groups in the table above?**

**My voice on decisions is listened to:**

Never

A bit

A lot

All the time

## What is important for you living in Northland?

How important to you are the following issues?

What	Very low	Low	High	Very high
alcohol and other drug use (including cigarettes)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
maintaining a coastal lifestyle (eg clean coastline)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
community leaders listening to young people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
crime	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
having friends and a social life	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
gangs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
housing (eg crowding, cost, quality)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
my Iwi (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
low incomes (eg struggle to pay bills)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
parenting and family relationships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
public transport, or lack of public transport eg buses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
racism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
recreation facilities (eg parks, movies)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
safety in your community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
teen pregnancy and teen parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
training (tertiary and other post school)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
unemployment / getting a job	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
violence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
work (eg keeping my job or issues in my workplace)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Are there any other issues you would add? Why?

Rank your top five things from the list above

1 (Top issue)	
2	
3	
4	
5	

**Please explain why the issues you rated high are important?**

## About Councils

---

**Did you know that district councils are responsible for:**

(tick yes if you already knew and no if you didn't know)

Service	Yes	No
animal control (eg dogs)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
building, planning and development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
civil defence (eg flooding or earthquakes)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
community halls and facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
libraries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
liquor licensing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
parks, open spaces and play grounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
public swimming pools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
public toilets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
rates (a charge on properties that is the main source of income for councils)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
roads (except state high ways) and foot paths	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
rubbish and recycling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
sports facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
waste water (sewerage) and storm water	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**What council services do you use and which do you want to have a say about?**  
(tick all that apply)

Service	Do you use this service		Tick if you want to have a say about this service
	Yes	No	
animal control (eg dogs)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
building, planning and development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
civil defence (eg flooding or earthquakes)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
community halls and facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
liquor licensing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
libraries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
parks, open spaces and play grounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
public swimming pools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
public toilets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
roads (except state high ways) and foot paths	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
rubbish and recycling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
sports facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
waste water (sewerage) and storm water	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Council and young people

**How well do you think your district council involves and consults young people in decisions that affect them?**

Very poorly

Poorly

Well

Very well

### About youth councils and advisory groups

A youth council or youth advisory group provides young people with a forum to voice their needs and gives them an opportunity to make a difference in their community. A youth council or advisory group is primarily a group of young people who meet regularly to provide advice to council and in many cases to undertake projects.

**What do you think a youth council or advisory group should do?**  
(tick all that you agree with)

Options	Importance			
	Very low	Low	High	Very high
hold youth awards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
run awareness campaigns	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
survey young people - then use this information to work with council on the issues important to young people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
be consulted on specific council services used by young people eg pools/libraries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
plan and put on youth events	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
projects that highlight the positives about young and challenge negative stereotypes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
train young people in local decision making	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
have its own funding and run projects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
grant money to other youth projects and young people for 'things to do and places to go'	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
hold district youth summits and forums	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Other**

**Should your council have a youth council or youth advisory group?**

Yes       No

**How should youth council members be chosen?** (rate each the following options)

Options	Very poor	Poor	Good	Very good
Anyone can stand and provide a profile, then online or text voting by young people to elected representatives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any one can stand and provide a profile, then a group of youth workers, young people and council staff select the representatives to ensure a good mix of people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Councillors select the representatives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
One or two representatives per secondary school – school selects reps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
One or two representatives per secondary school – students vote for reps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Other**

**What tools do you think would be useful for communicating with young people?**  
(Please select a rating for each issue. The higher the rating, the more useful a tool is.)

Options	Very poor	Poor	Good	Very good
ads in the paper or magazines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
forums with youth workers and organisation representing young people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
forums with young people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
go to schools and talk with young people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
mail outs to your letter box	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
online consultation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
social media (eg facebook or twitter)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
surveys of young people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
talk with young people attending training courses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
research on youth specific issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
use a texting system	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
visit techs and universities and talk with young people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Other**

## **Youth issues**

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**What is most important to you in your life right now?**

**Can you think of anything that causes you to worry or be anxious? What is it?**

**What do you think is the big issue for young people in New Zealand at present?**

**If you were Prime Minister, what is the one thing you would do to make living in New Zealand better than it is now?**