

Impact of COVID-19 Lockdown on Pacific Churches (2020)

Purpose of the study

- To gather information on the Impact of Covid-19 on Pacific churches.
- To inform the Ministry on the role of churches in supporting Pacific communities during the March to June lockdown.
- To provide evidence to inform policy, practice and future research.

Kakala framework

The study was carried out using the Kakala research process



Data collected through a mixed methods approach

- Online and paper survey
- Case studies

Key findings



- The role of Pacific churches is pivotal in enhancing Pacific family wellbeing.
- Pacific church services going online was the most positive impact of the lockdown according to church leaders.
- Lockdown reconfirmed the importance of family vā (relationships) – the relationship with each other and the relationship to and faith in God.
- The impact of the lockdown on vulnerable groups such as the elderly, widows, single women, single parents, children, and youth was evident.



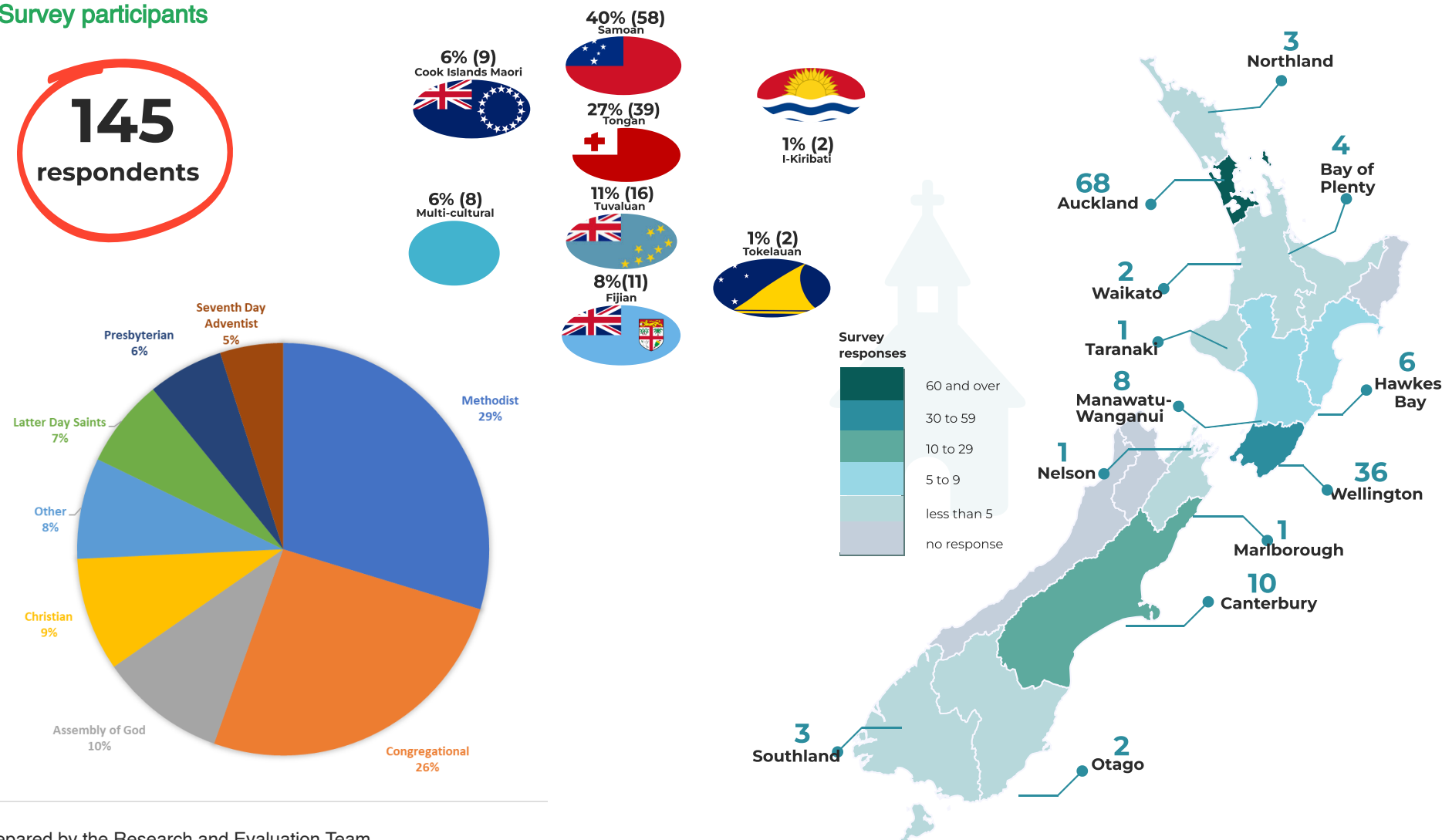
- Pacific churches were key to supporting families, and often used their own resources to do so.
- Active church leaders and committees were more effective in responding to needs.
- Young people provided key technological resources and support to the church.
- Pacific churches play an important role in accessing government support for Pacific communities.



- Lockdown provided for some churches the opportunity to transform how they did things to further support families.
- Churches with a long-term vision and preparedness responded better to the lockdown.
- Some Pacific churches adopted new cultural practices.
- Key components to the recovery process for Pacific church leaders involved supporting families and building faith.
- The adaptation of digital platforms for the delivery of services kept communities connected.

Survey participants

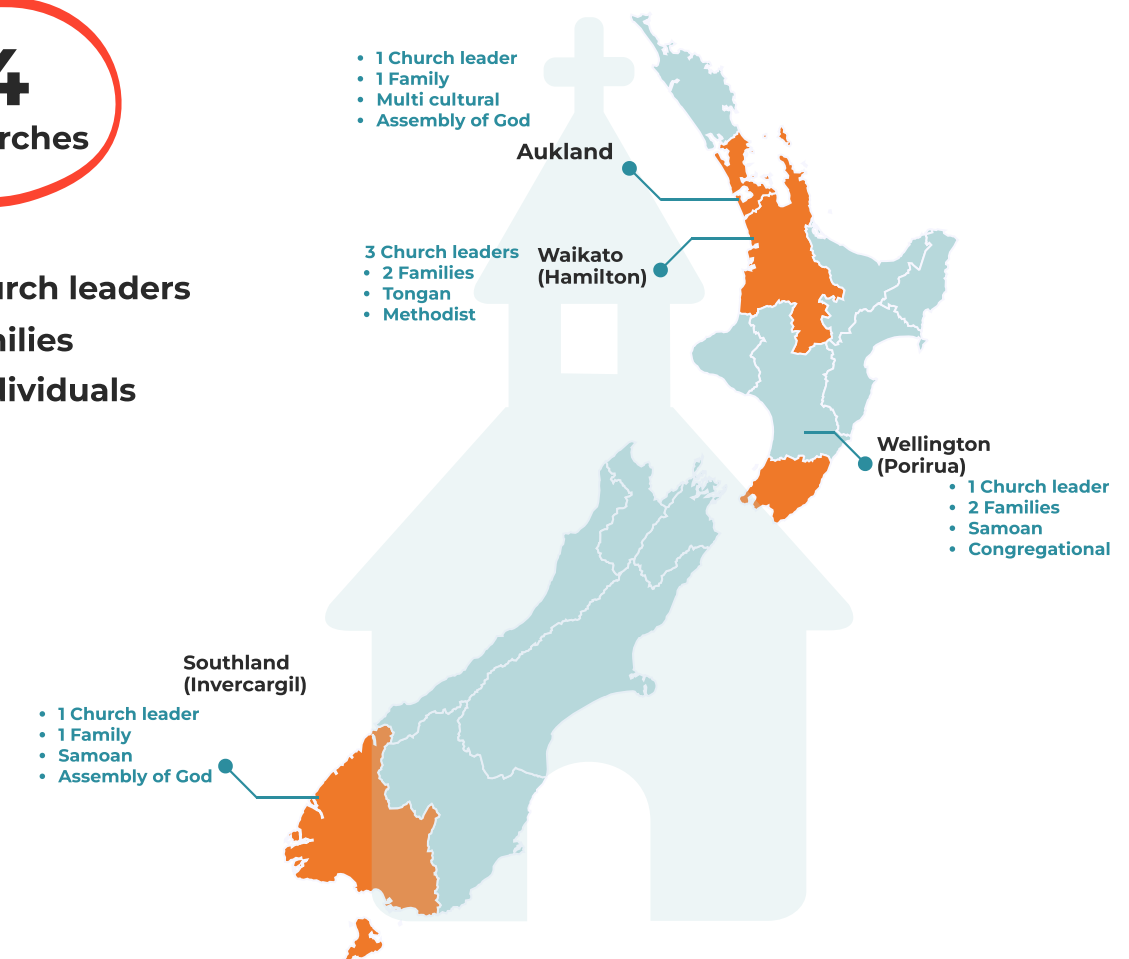
145 respondents



Case study participants

4 churches

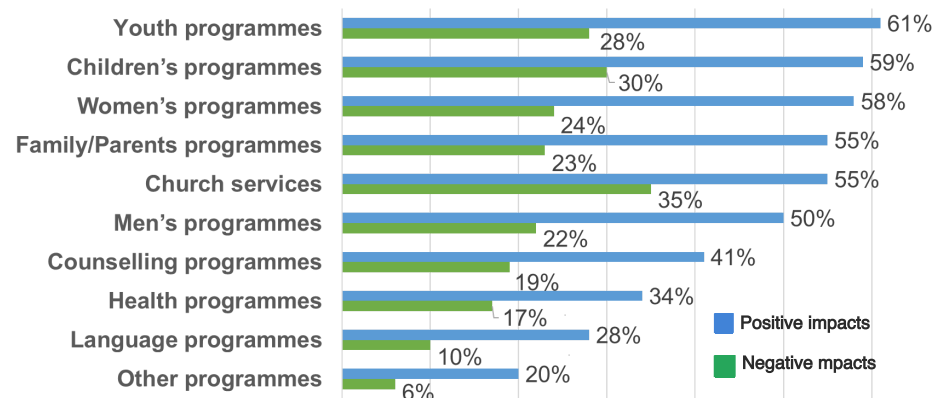
6 church leaders
6 families
15 individuals



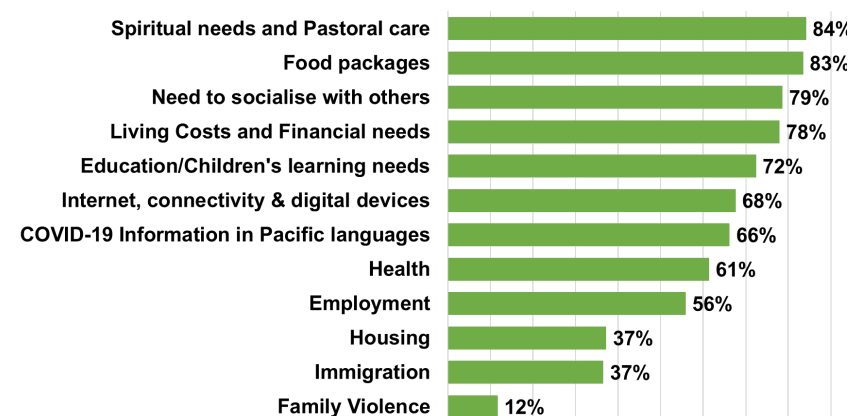
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Impacts on church programmes and families

Impact on church programmes during lockdown

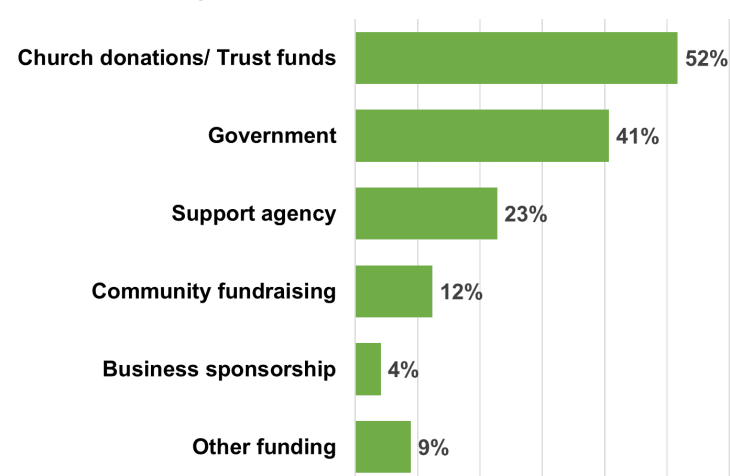


Needs of Pacific families during lockdown

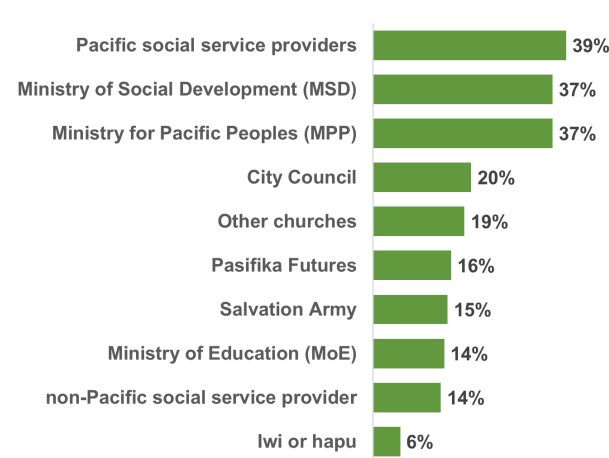


Church response to support families

Funding sources used to support families



Groups/agencies accessed to support families



Implications for



Pacific churches

- Pacific churches play a critical role in crisis management for Pacific communities.
- Pacific churches need to prioritise preparation for crisis situations.
- Young Pacific people have crucial roles for the Pacific church and community development.

Ministry for Pacific Peoples

- There is an opportunity to strengthen the role of the Ministry and other agencies to partnership with Pacific churches to recover and thrive.
- This study points towards faith and spirituality as significant key components for Pacific wellbeing.
- The findings demonstrate Pacific Church's ability to contribute to the Lalanga Fou goals, particularly goals 1-3, and indicate there is more potential to support goal 4.

Lalanga Fou Goals

1. Thriving Pacific languages, cultures & identities

Pacific churches switching to social media platforms to deliver programmes. This encouraged in-home fellowship at a greater level than before this event.

2. Prosperous Pacific communities

The Ministry realised Pacific churches are the link to prosperous Pacific communities in their response to family's needs.

3. Resilient and healthy Pacific Peoples

Pacific churches contributed to sustain resilient and healthy Pacific peoples by promoting a family-focused approach to worship.

4. Confident, thriving & resilient young people

The experience of those churches that utilised the skills of young people in their congregations were positive and appreciated.



Future research

- Careful consideration needs to be given to the combination of tools and methods used to inform the research, in particular, using a Pacific world-view lens. These findings will serve as the baseline for future research with Pacific churches.

Church approaches to recovery (case studies)



A well-prepared approach

Congregational Christian Church of Samoa Porirua

"This was not a response to COVID-19 it was building a community that would be ready for anything that comes their way. So COVID-19 was just something that came at its own time, but the community was ready for it. The work has been done a long time ago. Rather than reacting to an issue, we were ready."



A grassroots approach

The Dreamcentre, Auckland

"You know what had lockdown done? It took the church from its corporate focus to now down to a real grassroots which really is the foundation of our church which are the families..."



A family-based approach

Samoa AOG Invercargill

"Interruption meant that things could not continue. It has taken quite a bit of effort to get things going again."



A technology-based approach

Siasi Uesiliana Tau'ataina 'o Tonga, Te Rapa, Hamilton

"When we initiated the singing activity, we decided to practice a song and upload it on Facebook, and we nominated the Steward's family, and then they nominated the Tautaiolepo family. When they came on, they were all dressed up nicely. What I value from this activity was to see each of the families being happy to participate in the activity...it was very satisfying to set up a little dedicated space in my living from which we could share with other families and worship as a family."