

Research shows impact on young Māori of widening inequalities

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Associate Professor Joanna Kidman from Victoria's Te Kura Māori (School of Education), says her research team found that rising levels of poverty had left Māori youth with fewer resources to prepare for the future.

"Some young people report high levels of anxiety about the years ahead and this affects the long-term decisions they make for themselves and their families. We want all young people to think about the future with resilience and hope but instead we are seeing too many young Māori falling between the cracks."

Funded by Ngā Pae o te Maramatanga, the study enabled Associate Professor Kidman and a team of researchers to talk to more than 100 Māori young people in several locations around Aotearoa New Zealand about their hopes and fears for the future. The research included using a technique known as the walk-along interview, where researchers walk with young people through their neighbourhoods to talk about how these communities might change and prosper in the years ahead.

They found that Māori youth living in poor neighbourhoods are more fearful about their futures especially in areas where tribal and community networks are limited and there are few public facilities or places for young people to gather.

These young people frequently do not know how to locate information, resources and support vital to their wellbeing and are often pessimistic

about their long-term prospects, Associate Professor Kidman said. "They are very isolated. Most of their energy goes into getting through each day."

As well as being able to meet basic needs for food, shelter and clothing, Associate Professor Kidman found that access to affordable public transport or living in walkable cities and suburbs where young people can easily get around has a positive impact on how connected they are to their surroundings.

"Māori youth are more optimistic about the future when they have access to recreational spaces where they can safely gather and where they can also call on advice from responsible adults and community leaders. In these environments, the provision of structured support and welcoming spaces for groups of youth allow young Māori to think in new ways about future possibilities for their families and communities," she says.

"When we began the project we thought we would find a range of views about the future amongst young Māori but we did not expect to find such high levels of fear. Long-term economic uncertainty means that some Māori young people have trouble imagining a positive and inclusive future for themselves or their families and this is a great loss for New Zealand society as a whole."

She said the next phase of the research would bring together groups of young people to workshop possible strategies for addressing the problems that have been identified. The [young people](#) would then have access to relevant experts, such as climate scientists or social scientists, to take their ideas further.

Provided by Victoria University

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