



**Whakarongo ki te kōrero**

**whānau katoa o te rangatiratanga**

Listening to the hopes and dreams of our people

Maarama\* is a writer from Waikato who moved to Auckland to care for their Nan. They are takataapui and find strength in their connection to whānau. They want to inspire other takataapui people to be creative and imagine better, safer worlds. Maarama can't work because Nan needs them at home. The government pays Maarama to care for Nan, but some weeks it barely even covers the power bill. There's just not enough money to pay for everything. Maarama sometimes needs help with food, but there's always enough aroha to go around.

\* This story is fictional. It is informed by our findings and reflects the pertinent themes of our research.



## Food security is

## Auckland City Mission's hope

## for all people of Aotearoa.

**At the Mission, we meet people experiencing food insecurity every day. Food security is about having access to enough good food. For many whānau, there simply is not enough food, or enough resources to access food on a weekly basis.**

The Mission has long believed that while our support providing nutritious food for those experiencing food insecurity is crucial, there is more we can do. There is more we must do.

Last year, we collaborated with the University of Auckland to highlight the impact of food insecurity in Tāmaki Makaurau through research titled 'Shining a Light on Food Insecurity in Aotearoa'. This year we are continuing this research partnership in our work with data previously not analysed, to understand the experience of being food insecure in the words of the people themselves.

By listening to the stories of those who are food insecure and especially what they aspire to, we can better understand and advocate for the changes that will enable all New Zealanders to have enough good food to achieve their dreams.

Our research findings lead us to name and celebrate the resilience, creativity and determination of people experiencing food insecurity, and allow us to see broad patterns emerge. Throughout this piece we have incorporated vignettes which tell the stories of these experiences on an individual scale. These vignettes are informed by our findings and reflect the pertinent themes of our research. They are fictionalised to protect the privacy of individual participants and represent the lived experience of food insecurity.

Prashaan\* moved to Aotearoa 12 years ago with his parents, wife, and three kids. Together they rent in the outer Eastern suburbs. Back home he was a vet nurse, but his training isn't recognised in Aotearoa so he works at his local supermarket. Prashaan takes a lot of pride in his work, but he earns a minimum wage and his rent is so high that they can't always make ends meet. It's hard, but he keeps his family safe and well fed no matter what. Prashaan is working toward his veterinarian qualification in Aotearoa and one day hopes to open his own vet clinic.

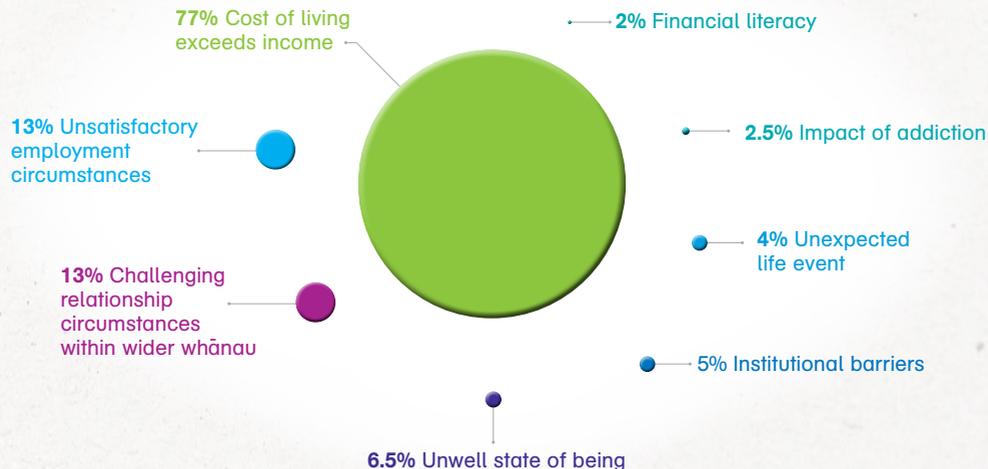
## Summary of research

This research highlights the experiences and aspirations of almost 650 people who participated in a study with the Mission in 2018. Using survey data from the Mission's 2018 food insecurity study, answers to the following questions were reviewed for this latest research.

### Realities

The Mission found that 77% of respondents said food insecurity was due to the cost of living exceeding income. That tells us that for a lot of people, there's just not enough money for food.

> What are the main reasons you do not have enough money for food?\*



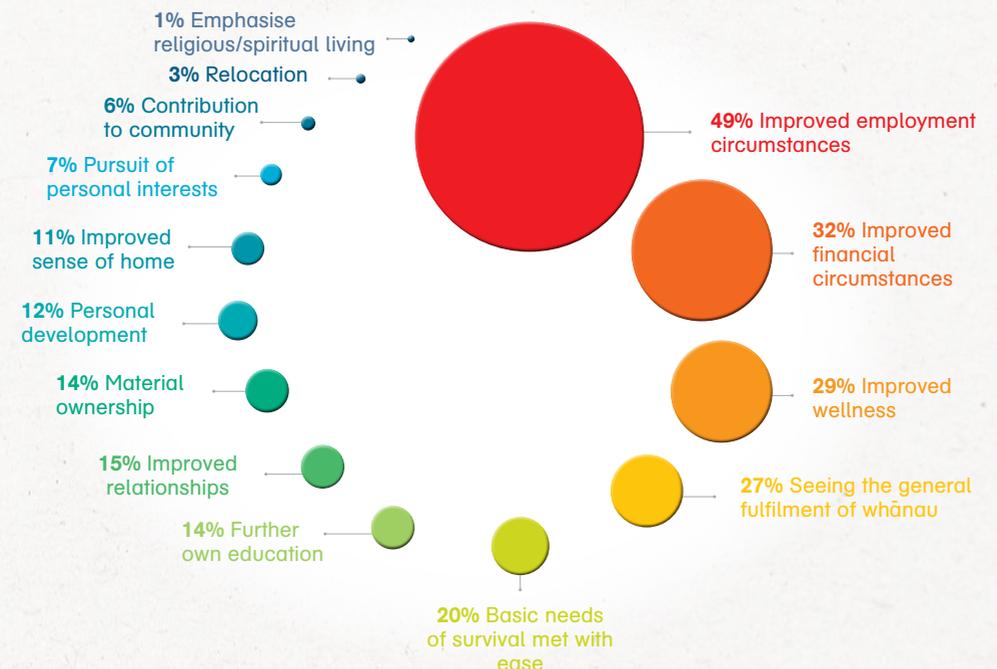
Richard\* is a solo dad who lives with his young daughter in an HNZ property. An accident at the yard has had him on ACC for two years now. Some days Richard finds it hard to get out of bed, but his daughter is his motivation. She wants to be an astronaut. Richard wants to do everything he can to help her, but school costs seem to get higher every year and Richard's income has plummeted. He wants to study architecture so that he can pay for Space Academy, and for now he gets food support so that his daughter can stay sharp at school. Together, he hopes they both achieve their dreams.

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### Goals and dreams

The Mission found a diversity of aspirations of people experiencing food insecurity. A desire for more suitable employment was the most recurring theme in the data. However, as is shown below, the spectrum of goals and dreams that our participants shared with us is broad and varied.

> In your own words, please list three goals or dreams you have for your life.\*



\* The reported percentages are based on the total number of people who provided a response to the question. Each person provided more than one reason, therefore the percentage total is greater than 100.

## Findings

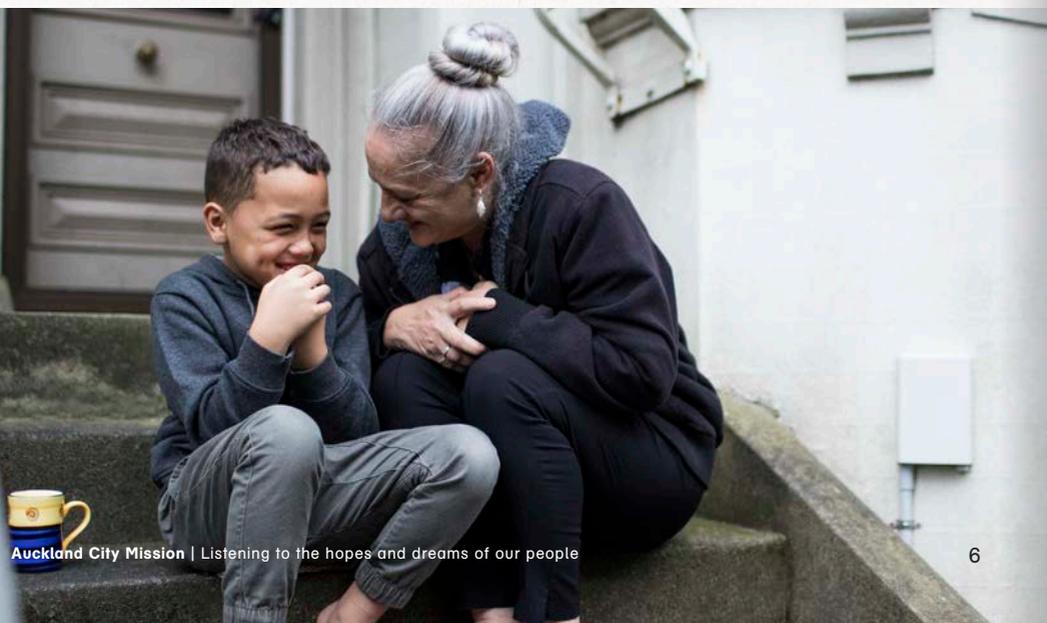
**The most significant finding of the study was that aspirations of people experiencing food insecurity align with the wider population's sociocultural ideals for wellness<sup>1</sup>.**

### The Mission's analysis found:

- > The most common goal or dream in our dataset is a longing for stable and fulfilling employment.
- > In line with the Mission's understanding that food insecurity is the result of inadequate income, we find that many people experiencing food insecurity simply aspire to have sufficient money so that they can meet their needs.
- > Personal and whānau wellbeing is a priority for people experiencing food insecurity.
- > 20% of responses detailed basic needs (food, housing, adequate health care) as an aspiration.

We were deeply saddened to see basic needs as a 'goal or dream.'

At the Mission we believe that food insecurity is an unacceptable and avoidable obstacle to people in our communities achieving their aspirations. We believe having access to basic needs for survival should be a reality for everyone.



Sela\* loves living in Auckland with her partner and seven kids. She volunteers at the local op-shop on days when she's not taking kids to school and sports and everything else. Her pride in them is limitless. Sela's partner works for the council. Sometimes their pay cuts into her benefit, and they are left with less money than if they hadn't worked at all. When this happens, there's no money for bills let alone food. But Sela's main focus is her kids. She wants them to achieve all their goals, so she gets food assistance to keep the ball rolling.

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## What comes next

These preliminary findings are currently being translated into an article for academic publication. Through such platforms, we call the attention of our country to the realities of those experiencing food insecurity.

Elevating the voices of those experiencing food insecurity can help to ensure these perspectives are centred in decision-making, enabling Aotearoa to make the right decisions for the right people.

## Call to action

**We have the opportunity to support the aspirations of our communities. To bring those aspirations to life, the Mission is rallying the support of all in our country. The Mission calls for:**

### Action

A living wage for all workers.

### Action

Increase benefit levels in line with the Welfare Expert Advisory Group (2019) recommendations.

### Action

Prioritise support for women and especially women raising children alone.

### Action

Prioritise resources for Māori and Pacific people's initiatives.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.treasury.govt.nz/information-and-services/nz-economy/higher-living-standards/our-living-standards-framework>

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