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Ko ngā wā kāinga hei
whakamāhorahora

Awhi mai, awhi atu: Giving and receiving support during the 2020 COVID-19 lockdown

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Every effort has been made to ensure the soundness and accuracy of the opinions and information expressed in this report. While we consider statements in the report are correct, no liability is accepted for any incorrect statement or information.

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Glossary

iwi .... tribe
kāinga rua .... second home
kāinga tahi .... first home
karakia .... prayer
mana whenua .... local
manaaki .... care for others
moko, mokopuna .... grandchildren, great-grandchildren
pepeha .... tribal saying
tupuna .... ancestor(s)
tūrangawaewae ..... a place to stand, to belong
whakapapa .... genealogy, lineage, descent
whānau .... extended family, family group
whanaungatanga ... kinship, sense of family connection
whenua .... land

Source. Te Aka Māori-English English-Māori Dictionary online (www.maoridictionary.co.nz)

Abstract

In the first half of 2020 the importance of home was heightened as Aotearoa New Zealand moved to eliminate the community spread of COVID-19 and a pandemic-related lockdown confined most people to their household 'bubbles'. Fifty-four people in Hawke's Bay were interviewed about their lockdown experience: who was in their bubble, what their accommodation was like, what their lockdown concerns were, and what support they received from and provided to others. While most participants stayed in their own home over the lockdown, some left to help out other family members and a few left because they were asked to go. Participants reported challenges over the lockdown with mortgage/ rent payments, utility payments, household tensions and food security. Just over half of the participants were in rented accommodation and most had some contact with their landlord/property manager, with some rent relief being offered. Overall, most participants coped with challenges as they arose; however, lockdown exacerbated mental health concerns for participants who had existing mental health issues. Receiving food as well as giving food to others increased over the lockdown, while childcare declined. The continuation of giving and receiving different types of support by participants during the lockdown was potentially a form of resistance to being confined to a household bubble and/or an expression of belongingness to a community beyond their bubble.

1   Introduction

At the beginning of 2020 Aotearoa New Zealand, like many countries around the world, was impacted by community transmissions of COVID-19 and under threat from widespread coronavirus-related illness and death (King, Cormack, McLeod, Harris, & Gurney, 2020). In response, a country-wide lockdown was implemented from 11:59pm on 25 March 2020. This level 4 lockdown, which saw people largely confined to their household 'bubbles' unless they were essential workers, lasted until 11:59pm, 27 April 2020 and was followed by a slightly less restrictive level 3 lockdown until 11:59pm, 13 May (Kearns, et al., 2021). During this time the difficulties of lockdown (e.g., loss of employment, confinement to home) were eased somewhat by the responsiveness of government and non-government organisations, including several initiatives by Māori tribal and community organisations, while those confined to their homes added to and strengthened a distributed network of support via social media platforms (Cram, 2020b).

When we added these things together – confinement and support – we wanted to find out more about what people's household bubbles looked like, how the lockdown affected the support people received from and provided to others, and what difficulties arose for people during the lockdown and afterwards. We also wanted to know if being in rented or owner-occupied accommodation made a difference to people's experiences. The survey findings described in this paper help shine a light on this inquiry. To set the scene for this research we examine what makes a house a home, and what about a place and community adds to people's feelings of being at home.

A House that is a Home

When Māori key informants were asked what made a house a home for whānau Māori, they often drew on their own experience of home when they were growing up. They then prioritised the social environment inside their home rather than the physical environment or condition of the house, describing people as the main contributor to the feeling of having a home (Cram, 2020a). As a result, Cram (2020a) concluded that ontological security for Māori – that is, the "feeling of security that is based on a trust in the constancy of surroundings" (Dupuis, 2012, p. 156) – is sourced from the people and relationships that are nurtured by those residing in a house as well as those visiting. The opposite may then play out; namely, that an absence of the constancy of whanaungatanga or good relationships can challenge and potentially undermine occupants' security and sense of identity.

Socioeconomic constraints can also disrupt the "sense of reliability of persons" for those growing up in a household (Giddons, 1991, in Hiscock, Kearns, Macintyre, & Ellaway, 2001, p. 51). As Tilly Reedy (1979) has passionately argued, being Māori requires economic stability. For example, physical accommodation constraints or financial pressures may limit whānau capacity for manaaki / hospitality, limiting their ability to have friends and families to stay (Hohepa, 1998). This is particularly challenging in the current context of increasing housing costs that have also seen a decline in Māori home ownership alongside a sharp increase in those in precarious housing (e.g., emergency housing, living in their cars, couch surfing). Many whānau living with high rental costs or in precarious housing situations cannot always count on their accommodation being a place of comfort or safety from adversity (Barwick, 1991; FEANTSA & Abbé Pierre Foundation, 2021), let alone a base from which they might reach out and engage fully with their relations and community.

When we were confined to our household bubbles during the 2020 level 4 lockdown, many of these things that help make a house a home were brought into sharp relief. If a home is a site where people can go about day-to-day activities and actively construct their identity (Dupuis & Thorns, 1998), then what did this look like when everyone was at home 24/7? Many whānau took to social media to share their hints and tips about how to cope during the lockdown, and provided encouragement, guidance and spiritual support (e.g., karakia / prayer) to others around the country and probably around the world. Just as in the Canterbury earthquakes and other times of disaster, Māori stepped up and created a distributed whanaungatanga (relational) network that sought to wrap around, protect and uplift whānau (Cram, 2021). At the same time, essential workers stepped up to deliver care and support to the doorsteps of many whānau, helping to alleviate hunger, anxiety, stress and loneliness. These networks of support, including roadblocks that sought to kept Māori communities safe from those breaking lockdown rules, demonstrated that people's sense of 'home' often extends beyond their own physical accommodation to take account of their connectedness to place – be that their neighbourhood, their community, their tribal rohe (area) or their town/city.

A Home is in a Place

It should not be unexpected that whānau also derive a sense of home from the place(s) they live and/or the place(s) their tupuna (ancestors) resided. While for some these are not separate places, others may live at a distance from their kāinga tahi (first home) because they stay in their kāinga rua (second home) for love, work, education, whānau obligations, etc. Regardless of where we stay, our kāinga tahi are often embodied in our pepeha (tribal sayings) like a cultural positioning system that links us through time, space and whakapapa (genealogy) to our home places (Paipa, Kennedy, & Pipi, 2009). This is also a relational-environmental connection as we are linked through whakapapa to the whenua (land) and the wider environment (Kennedy, et al., 2015). As Dignan (2017, p. 177) writes, "I have a keen sense of *place* that is fundamental to my sense of identity… Tūrangawaewae [a place to belong and to stand] is a necessary condition of wellbeing."

This sense of having a home place is also embodied by many non-Māori in Aotearoa who, while not having the same genealogical connection as Māori, may have accumulated memories of being on the whenua as they have sought out familiar landscapes and campsites. A love of the land as a source of nourishment and wellness is possibly a fundamental connection that unites us as a people. Those who have journeyed to Aotearoa from other countries may also be able to describe a special place that nurtures them when they visit there or hold it close in their memories. Thus, a home place that is an ūkaipō – a source of sustenance or a real home – is something many people can relate to. Others who are more distanced from their home place, through generations in urban environments or from not having good memories of that place, can still have strong links with their kāinga rua and the surrounding environment. In 2018 Te Kupenga, the Māori social survey, asked questions about kaitiakitanga (guardianship) that included recycling and restoration projects in recognition that these are ways the natural environment inhabits the day-to-day lives of urban Māori (StatsNZ, 2020). This also recognises kāinga rua as places that nurture and provide a sense of home, even when we are living away from our kāinga tahi in another Iwi's rohe. Similarly, non-Māori should be aware that they too are away from their kāinga tahi and are being hosted by local Māori, as there is nowhere in Aotearoa they can live that is absent of mana whenua, the traditional owners and guardians of the land.

For many people, being at home – whether that home is a kāinga tahi or kāinga rua – is also about the connections they have with others (e.g., whānau, neighbours, community groups). These connections can be expressed through memberships (e.g., of church, of marae) as well as through the exchange of goods and services. Help received and help given – awhi mai, awhi atu – are what Cook, Cheshire, Rice and Nakagawa (2013, p. 61) describe as "micro-level processes of exchange" that constitute the social structures we live our lives in. While the enormous body of social exchange theory cannot be done justice here, recent work on the theory of reciprocity in exchange relations links behavioural commitment with affective or emotional commitment. In other words, uncertainty about what will be returned in reciprocal exchanges of goods or services leads those involved in such exchanges to develop trust relationships[1]. In this way, the exchange of goods and services by those in a neighbourhood, for example, can build networks of trust relationships and strengthen feelings of community that support peoples' wellbeing and sense of belonging in a place.

Such feelings of trust and belonging may well be the glue that holds communities together in times of crisis or disaster and enables people to pull through together. While the COVID-19 lockdown in Aotearoa New Zealand was such a crisis, the confinement of people to household bubbles also forced people to find innovative ways to connect with and support other beyond their own accommodation boundaries (Cram, 2021).

The Present Research

The present research involved a survey of 60 people living in the Hawke's Bay region, asking where they had spent the five weeks of the COVID-19 Level 4 lockdown in March-April 2020, and what help they had received and provided to others other the lockdown. The survey also inquired about their housing and any difficulties that arose during and after the lockdown. This gave a snapshot of issues people faced, exploring in particular any potential links between housing tenure and support networks.

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[1] This resonates with Henry and Pene's (2001, p. 235) description of the relationships among pre-European Māori as underpinned by an 'economy of affection', with reciprocity and gift-exchange being imbued with wairua (spirituality). They base this on French sociologist Marcel Mauss' (1990[1925]) classic *The Gift*, in which he talks about gifts being exchanged without any guarantee of reciprocation. Mauss, in turn, based his work on letters exchanged between Tamati Ranapani and Elsdon Best, where Best was learning many things from Ranapani, including about the Māori concept of 'hau' (Stewart, 2017). Stewart (2017, p. 1) describes Mauss' inclusion of the 'hau' of the gift in the introduction of his book as "Eurocentric appropriation of Indigenous knowledge" that read too much into the concept of 'hau' when Ranapani was describing the obligation a fowler had to Tane, the forest, when hunting birds. "Hence the need for the ceremony of 'whāngai hau' to nurture the hau of the forest, by repaying Tane for his gifts to humans" (Stewart, 2017, p. 7).

2   Method

A convenience sample of 54 people (13 men, 35 women, 6 undeclared) in the Hawke's Bay region was interviewed in the six months following the end of the first COVID-19 lockdown. People in the interviewers' community networks were invited to participate and those agreeing were interviewed at a place of their choosing (e.g., their home, a café). As the researchers were all Māori, Māori cultural practices infused both participant recruitment and interviewing. After greetings and touching base, the interviewer went through an information sheet with each participant and answered any questions they had. Participants were then asked to consent to their involvement in the research.

The interviews took 30-45 minutes, with interviewers asking a series of open and closed questions (see below). The researchers took care to validate participants' views and emotions and affirming follow-up questions were asked when needed, to encourage participants to fully describe their experiences. Participants' responses were recorded by the interviewers (i.e., hand-written, typed on a laptop and/or audio-recorded and typed up afterwards). At the completion of the survey participants were each offered a $50 koha as a thank you. Participants were also able to request a copy of the research findings.

The Interview Schedule

The interview was in four sections, consisting of open- and closed-questions.

Accommodation. Participants were asked to describe the place they stayed during the lockdown and also their usual accommodation, if they had stayed somewhere different during the lockdown.

Where you stayed for the lockdown. Participants were asked where they stayed during the Level 4 lockdown and who was in their household 'bubble', including whether anyone had moved into this bubble for the lockdown or anyone normally resident in the household had moved out for the lockdown. If the place they stayed during the lockdown was rented accommodation, they were asked about their relationship with the landlord/property manager over the lockdown. All participants were then asked about difficulties with their accommodation over the lockdown (e.g., paying the rent, excessive noise) and afterwards.

Help and support. Participants were asked about the help and support they usually provided or received before the lockdown, and what help and support they provided and received during the lockdown.

Background details. Demographic information was collected from participants, including their age, ethnicity, workforce participation, and household income.

Analysis

Interview responses were entered into an excel database for analysis. Themes from open-ended responses were coded, and frequency tables were constructed.

3   Results

The Participants

The average age of participants was 41.6 years (s.d.=14.6 years). Thirty-two of the participants identified as Māori, twenty-three identified as NZ European, five identified as Samoan and one as Indian (see Figure 1).

Over half of the participants (*n*=35) were in either full-time or part-time employment. Three were retired and six were not employed but were looking for work. Ten described themselves as 'other' (e.g., childcare duties, sickness benefit). There were four essential workers – three caregivers and one health care worker. Thirty-seven participants said they received income from wages, with others receiving superannuation or government benefits (and five participants who said they received income from both wages and benefits).
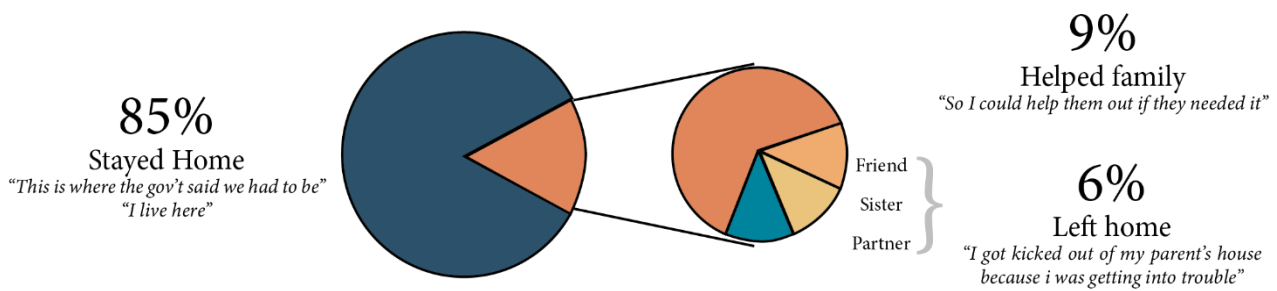
Figure 1. Participant demographics
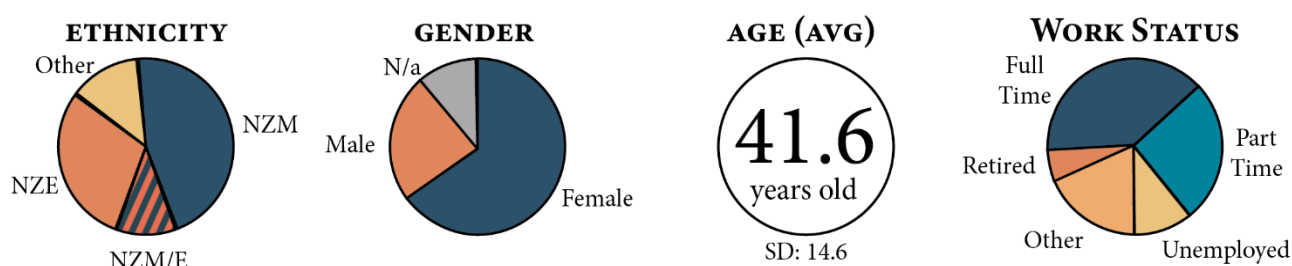
Lockdown Bubble

The number of residents in participants' household bubble during lockdown ranged from one (just them) to six or more (mean=3.7, s.d.=1.6). Participants came from a range of household bubbles. Twenty-one participants lived as two parent families; that is, with their partner and children during lockdown. Of the other 11 participants with a partner and child/ren in their bubble, three had another family living in their household, three were in three generation households, two had tenants, and three had other circumstances. Five participants lived by themselves, and six with just them and their partner. Another five participants were sole parents and three were grandparents looking after mokopuna (grandchild/ren). One participant lived with flatmates.

Whereabouts During Lockdown

Most participants (*n*=46) stayed in their usual accommodation during the lockdown saying, for example, "I live here" and "This is where the government said we had to be" (Figure 2). Five participants stayed with other family members to help out, saying for example, "Stayed with my parents to help them out and to save costs of petrol." Three participants stayed elsewhere due to a dispute with someone at their usual accommodation. As explained by a participant, "I got kicked out of my parent's house because I was getting into trouble."

Figure 2. Where participants stayed during the Level 4 lockdown

85%
Stayed Home
"This is where the gov't said we had to be"
"I live here"

9%
Helped family
"So I could help them out if they needed it"

Friend
Sister
Partner

6%
Left home
"I got kicked out of my parent's house because i was getting into trouble"

Fourteen participants said that someone normally resident at their lockdown home was somewhere else during the lockdown. The main reason was people going to stay with other family members for the lockdown.

> *He would normally live with my parents but due to the long lockdown he went and stayed with his partner and children.*

> *Stayed with my parents to help them out and to save costs of petrol.*

Seven participants said that someone who was not usually resident at their lockdown house stayed with them during lockdown. This may have been because of circumstances at their usual residence (e.g., drama, crowding), because they lost their job during lockdown, or because they were asked to come home over the lockdown.

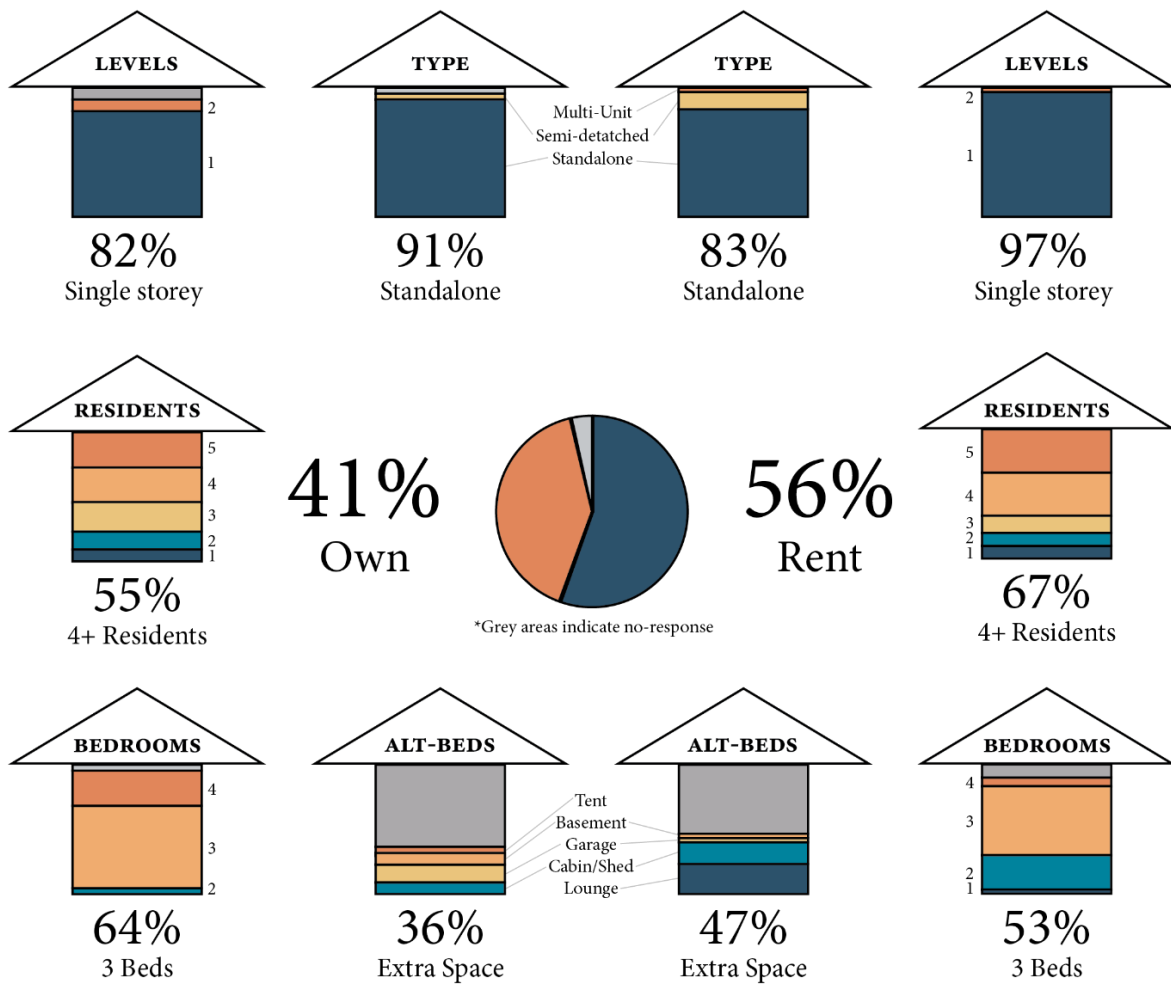> *Stayed with me during lock down as their mum has 4 other children to look after.*

> *She had to move back home a few weeks into covid as she lost her job and couldn't afford to live where she was.*

> *I asked them to come home so I would know they were safe; they both were living in areas of outbreak.*

Lockdown Accommodation and Dwellings

During the lockdown most participants stayed in a detached house. Five stayed in a semi-detached house and two in a multiunit. Most accommodation was single level, with the number of bedrooms ranging from one to four or more. Two-thirds of participants (*n*=39) had three or more bedrooms. While on average, renters had fewer bedrooms than homeowners (means=2.7 vs. 3.2 bedrooms) in their lockdown accommodation, half of those renting said they had extra space they used for sleeping (e.g., lounge, basement, garage) compared to just over a third of homeowners. Renters used these extra spaces when their family stayed (*n*=8), or as sleeping spaces for children (*n*=4) or family members (*n*=3). Only six participants spent lockdown in rental accommodation that could be described as crowded (i.e., in need of additional bedrooms) (Goodyear, Fabian, & Hay, 2019).

Figure 3. Participant's housing situation, owner-occupiers and renters

LEVELS	TYPE	TYPE	LEVELS
82% Single storey	**91%** Standalone	**83%** Standalone	**97%** Single storey

Multi-Unit
Semi-detatched
Standalone

41% Own

56% Rent

*Grey areas indicate no-response

RESIDENTS		RESIDENTS
55% 4+ Residents		**67%** 4+ Residents

BEDROOMS	ALT-BEDS	ALT-BEDS	BEDROOMS
64% 3 Beds	**36%** Extra Space	**47%** Extra Space	**53%** 3 Beds

Tent
Basement
Garage
Cabin/Shed
Lounge

Renting During Lockdown

Most of those renting did so from a private landlord. They were evenly split as to whether they dealt directly with their landlord or with an agent. Nearly two-thirds had some communication with their landlord/agent during the lockdown, with these discussions being about rent relief for 13 participants. For seven, this was only a discussion. Six participants were offered rent relief and four accepted (Figure 4).

> *Yes, we were kept up to date and on the 3rd week I think it was, our landlord got in contact with us to let us know that we did not have to pay rent for the rest of the lockdown, we said no but he insisted, and we were very thankful.*

> *We got offered the rent reduction but said no.*

Some communications with landlords/agents were about the lockdown, with this information often emailed to participants. A small number of participants had been contacted by their landlord to see how they were doing. A participant commented that they were due for a house inspection during the lockdown and also wanted some minor repairs done but both were put off.

Twenty-three of the 30 participants who rented said they had no concerns about being able to stay on at the property, while three said they had been concerned about their tenancy, one had worried their sister was going to kick them out, and one had been concerned about paying their rent.

Figure 4. Renters' experience of lockdown
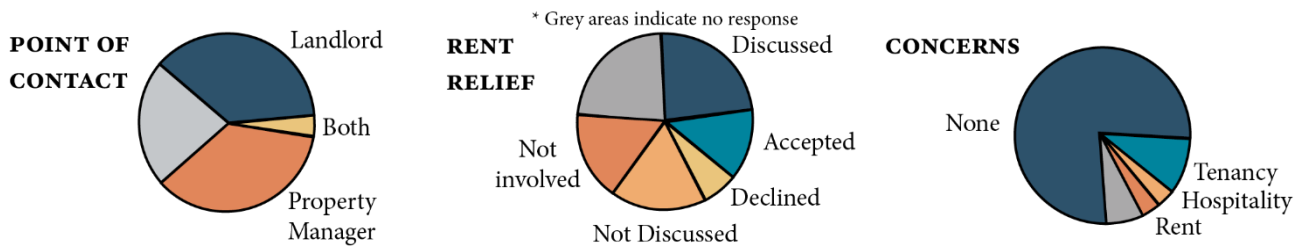
Challenges During Lockdown

Ten participants reported experiencing a miscellany of health issues (see Figure 5). Eight people who selected mental/physical problems both during and post the lockdown cited ongoing mental health issues (n=3), ongoing physical health issues (n=3), a death in their family (n=2), and/or being laid-off and having financial struggles (n=1). Two people selected mental/physical problems just during the lockdown, saying the mental health struggles of their children were exacerbated by the lockdown. While most health concerns were pre-existing and worsened during lockdown, one participant reported a lockdown improvement in addiction issues,
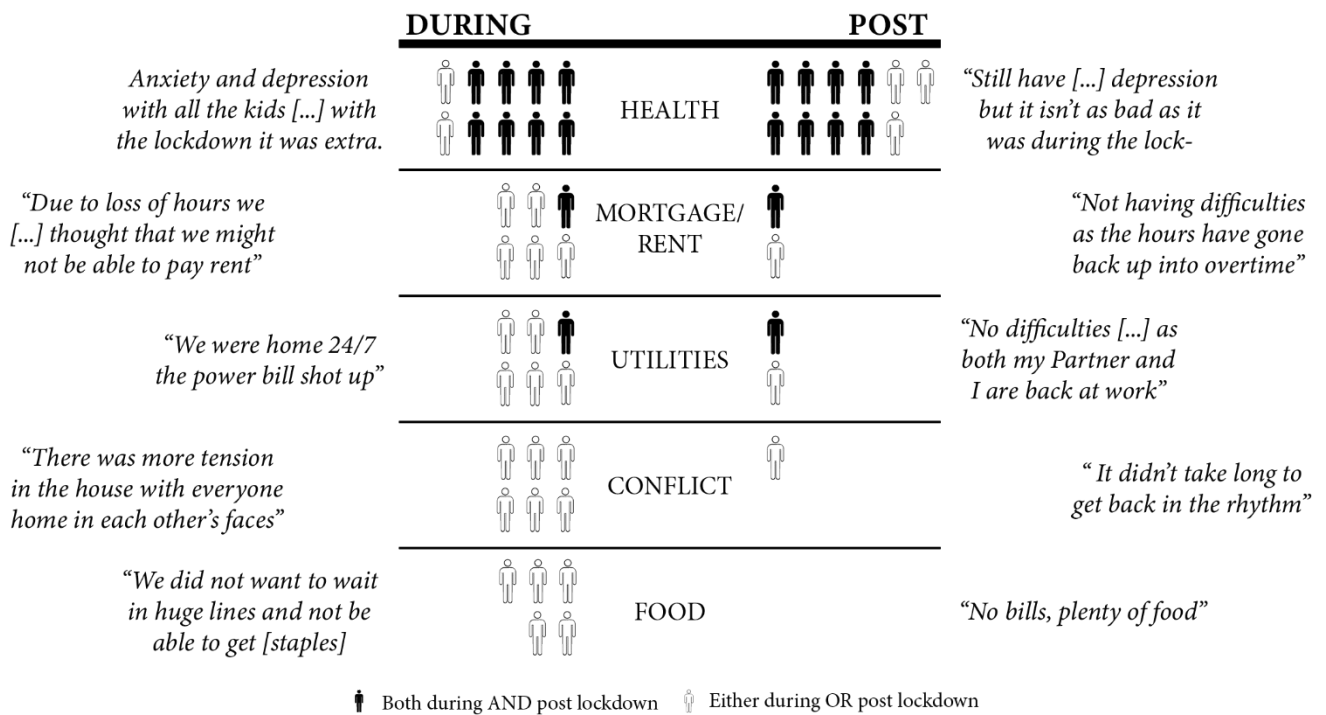
> *Still have depression and we are both now clean thanks to the lockdown because we went cold turkey.*

The other issues participants encountered in their lockdown accommodation were mostly to do with simply having more people at home than usual. Issues included having to entertain children, using more food or power, or having to be in each other's spaces.

> *Being quite independent of each other from time spending so much time together caused a few moments but after a while we adjusted to our new environment set a few ground rules are started to enjoy the second half of the lockdown. We needed to remember that this was a new thing for us. Also having the kids around us constantly took some time to adjust as well.*

> *My partner found it extremely difficult living with other people in the house for a long time. He was okay for the first two weeks and then struggled with his mental health. This caused tension and arguments.*

Figure 5. Participants' concerns during and after the lockdown

Anxiety and depression with all the kids [...] with the lockdown it was extra. — HEALTH — *"Still have [...] depression but it isn't as bad as it was during the lock-*

"Due to loss of hours we [...] thought that we might not be able to pay rent" — MORTGAGE/ RENT — *"Not having difficulties as the hours have gone back up into overtime"*

"We were home 24/7 the power bill shot up" — UTILITIES — *"No difficulties [...] as both my Partner and I are back at work"*

"There was more tension in the house with everyone home in each other's faces" — CONFLICT — *" It didn't take long to get back in the rhythm"*

"We did not want to wait in huge lines and not be able to get [staples]" — FOOD — *"No bills, plenty of food"*

Both during AND post lockdown   Either during OR post lockdown

Challenges After Lockdown

Two-thirds of participants (*n*=41) had no issues with their accommodation once the lockdown lifted.

> *No, it didn't take long to get back in the rhythm tamariki back to Kura and Kohanga and both [my partner] and I back to work. Money is flowing again, and routines are reset.*

> *Nothing has really changed as things are still the same, but we haven't had to get any food grants as the kids are back at school and not eating me out of house and home.*

Others remained physically unwell or had mental health challenges (*n*=9), and/or were feeling the financial strains of lost employment (*n*=4).

> *Mental health issues because I have lost my job and we are just getting by with bills and I am going to have to go on a benefit or something to help my partner so he's not paying for everything, and it is causing a lot of arguments between us.*

> *It can still be challenging because we are still dealing with the financial strain of trying to survive without him working.*

Giving and Receiving Help and Support

Most participants (*n*=47) said they supported others (e.g., whānau, friends, neighbours) before the COVID lockdown. This was most commonly general support of those who needed it (e.g., mowing lawns, cleaning), childcare (e.g., babysitting, looking after grandchildren) and volunteering (e.g., "I helped out at the local op shops every week") (Figure 6). Compared to the help they usually provided to other people participants' provision of social support and help with food increased over lockdown

while their volunteering and childcare activities decreased as they were confined to their own homes and bubbles. Financial and general support remained at around the same level.

Half of the participants said they did not receive any support from others before the lockdown. However, it is noticeable in their survey responses that participants tended to describe more of the little things they did for others than the little things others did for them. For example, participants said things such as, "Would ring and make sure they were ok" but did not often say, "When I needed to let some steam off, I would ring family or friends to let it all out." Which may explain the discrepancy in "general support" given and received.

Childcare, and general support were the most common forms of support for those who did receive support. Compared to the help they usually received from other people, participants – including seven who did not receive support before the lockdown – reported receiving more support overall, including increased food and social support. Unsurprisingly childcare support declined, as families were at home to do this themselves. Lockdown therefore saw participants both giving and receiving more social support than usual, as they were there for one another to chat or video conference between household bubbles. More participants than pre-lockdown also gave and/or received food.

Figure 6. Support given and received before and during the lockdown
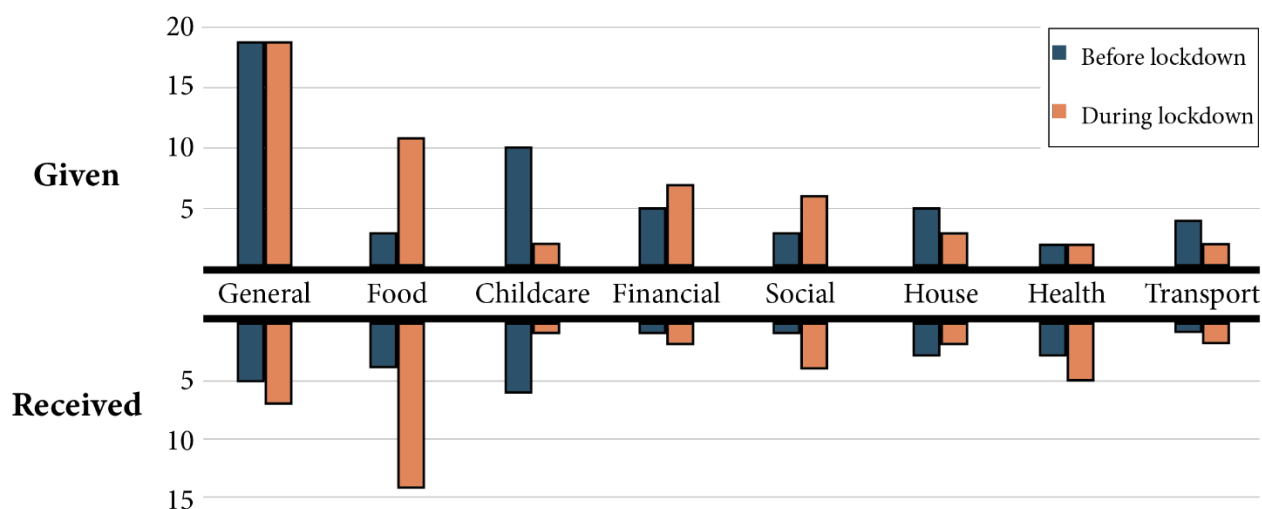
4   Discussion

In this research, a diverse group of 54 Hawke's Bay participants talked about their experiences of the first COVID-19 lockdown in 2020. They described in-depth their household 'bubbles', their lockdown housing, the challenges of the lockdown and the kinds of support they received from and provided to others. Their responses shine a light on what the COVID-19 lockdown was like for them and those in their 'bubble'.

The concept of a 'bubble' was originally created for disabled people by Dr Tristram Ingham, who promoted its use during the COVID-19 lockdown as a way of "empowering individuals and whānau

to have control over their own life and situations for self-preservation" (NZ Herald, 2020, p. 1). It then got associated with ideas of people building their bubble and not popping their bubble as ways of keeping themselves and their household safe and healthy (Kearns, et al., 2021). At 3.7, the average number of people participants reported having in their bubble was slightly higher than the 3.6 people reported by Kearns and colleagues (2021) from their survey of New Zealanders during the lockdown.

Changes in some participants' usual household composition for the lockdown highlighted their consideration of who should (or should not) be in their bubble as well as who should move to another bubble to provide support. While not explicitly using the 'bubble' language often, these participants demonstrated its intent by consciously thinking through the people they needed to be with. For other participants, changing the composition of their household bubble for the lockdown seemed an odd thing to do. The messaging for the lockdown was about staying at home in their household bubble and the lockdown may well have happened too swiftly for them to contemplate revising their pre-existing bubble. Their views may have changed— especially for those without affordable, secure, quality housing—if the lockdown had extended over many months, rather than weeks, as it has done in some countries (FEANTSA & Abbé Pierre Foundation, 2021).

Participants in rental properties had fewer bedrooms on average than those in owner-occupied homes, but they had more extra space. This was just as well, as renters had more people in their bubbles and therefore more potential to suffer from crowding issues if they just had the number of bedrooms in their accommodation for people to spread out into. People's ability to distribute themselves around a property may also have reduced tensions for some participants because of difficulties they had paying their rent or utility bills. A small number of those renting also received rent relief, with this presumably having to be repaid to landlords later, while some were offered rent relief but declined. In addition, a slight change in financial support provided by participants to others may have been in response to the financial difficulty being experienced by whānau in other households, including those having difficulties paying their rent.

The relative brevity of our lockdown may have played a role in the dissipation, post-lockdown, of many of the challenges of household tensions and conflict that participants experienced in their lockdown bubbles. After the lockdown lifted two out of three participants said things got back to normal reasonably quickly for them, with the financial strains of lockdown only continuing for those who had lost their jobs. This suggests that being co-located with others 24/7 can cause tensions that are reversible when that co-location stops. The exception was participants with mental health issues, for whom the lockdown proved to be a particular challenge – intensifying their issues that the release from lockdown helped de-escalate but not resolve. Access to mental health support remains a priority for these participants, including support specifically to help them recover from any trauma associated with being in lockdown (Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand, 2020). As described by Spinnewijn and Robert (FEANTSA & Abbé Pierre Foundation, 2021, p. 4), "while for some housing represents the first line of defence against the pandemic by enabling self-isolation and social distancing, for others it represents a danger when it is unfit, unsuitable and overcrowded." For some participants, this lack of suitability related to the impact of lockdown on their mental health.

Generally, the giving and receiving of many forms of support changed little from pre-lockdown to lockdown, childcare support declined (due to people not being able to leave their household bubble to give or receive this support) and food support increased. While financial support may be hard to share due to a household's own financial constraints, sometimes people can rustle up some food to share from their own pantries or gardens or can welcome food shared by others. These others include support organisations distributing food packs while businesses shared free fruit, honey, milk, etc. with communities (Cram, 2021). The sharing of food can strengthen bonds within a community as one of those goods that is exchanged where reciprocity / repayment is not expected and its form, if and when it happens, can be surprising (Cook, Cheshire, Rice, & Nakagawa, 2013). This may also apply to the distributed network of support people established across social media, from their lockdown bubbles.

The COVID-19 lockdown may have confined people to their household bubble, but it did not prevent them from retaining some sense of having a home within a community place. Potential issues from crowding 24-7, even with the ones you love, were eased by making the most of their home base and reshaping the help they provided to and received from others. In this way, most were able to meet the challenges of lockdown and provide comfort and sustenance to other. Even so, we need to be mindful of the effect and ongoing impact of the lockdown on those with mental health challenges and provide them with the support they need to recover their equilibrium.

Limitations

The sample of participants interviewed was small but diverse, with a good representation of Māori and also of people in owner-occupied and rented accommodation. There was, however, an under-representation of those in emergency or transitional accommodation during the COVID-19 lockdown.

5   Conclusion

Findings from interviews with 54 people in Hawke's Bay provide some insight into their experiences of constructing and living within a household bubble over the first COVID-19 lockdown in early 2020. Many made conscious decisions based on support needs and then tailored the support they provided to others, and received themselves, to take into account the constraints of the lockdown. Overall, participants fared very well regardless of whether they were in rented or owner-occupied housing, with the small number of participants who had mental health conditions perhaps facing the biggest challenges during lockdown.

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