

# Christmas From The Heart: 2021

APRIL 2022



**Visionwest**  
Waka Whakakitenga

building hope  
together

| *Kia Tūmanakotia*

## Introduction

Christmas From The Heart is a collaborative initiative run by Visionwest Community Trust in association with Glen Eden Baptist Church with partnering support from the Auckland City Mission. The Mission supports the event with goods and food as well providing a key part of the leadership delivering the event. This year is the third year of this collaboration and is centred around ending Christmas hardship in Tāmaki Makaurau.

People in the community who were doing it tough, including whānau already engaged with Visionwest services, were encouraged to phone our Christmas From The Heart call-centre and pre-register for Christmas Food and Gift boxes. Each box contained essential food items, special Christmas food and, where appropriate, gifts for children.

When contacting Visionwest, whānau were also asked if they wished to be assessed for a Special Needs Grant (SNG) from Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ).

Utilising the auditorium and carpark of Glen Eden Baptist Church, the entire event was run in strict accordance with current Covid-19 protocols which meant the wearing of masks and social distancing were observed at all times. This was achieved by assigning all staff and volunteers to separate bubbles ensuring the various teams packaging and processing boxes were kept apart. Food and Gift box pick-up was contactless, with whānau driving into the Visionwest carpark, popping their boot, and allowing Visionwest staff and volunteers to place the boxes inside.

Rather than pre-wrapping gifts, gift-wrapping paper was included in the parcel providing parents with the joy of wrapping their children's gifts themselves.

When people collected their boxes, they were asked two questions: "What are your plans for Christmas Day?" and "What would make your Christmas easier next year?"

This report provides an overview of the Christmas From The Heart event, high-level information about whānau who needed support at Christmas, and some of the reasons why that support was necessary.

The report also includes reflections about what needs to change in order for food security in Aotearoa New Zealand to improve so that events like Christmas From The Heart are no longer needed.




*Christmas From The Heart* ♥



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CHRISTMAS FOOD AND GIFT BOXES WERE COLLECTED BETWEEN TUESDAY 14 DECEMBER AND WEDNESDAY 22 DECEMBER, BENEFITING **6,179 PEOPLE**



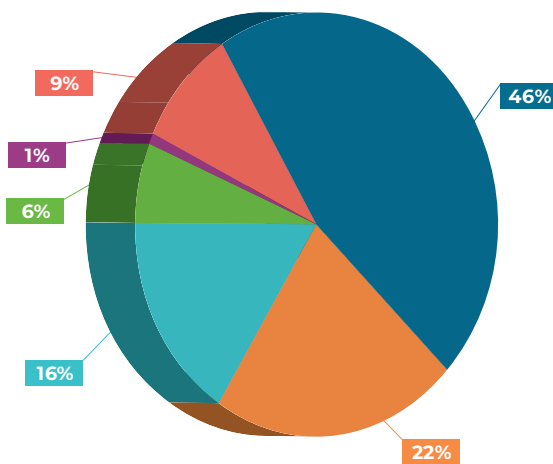
**2845**  
**ADULTS**

**78%** OF PEOPLE COLLECTING CHRISTMAS BOXES WERE **WOMEN**



**3334**  
**CHILDREN**

**ETHNICITY OF PEOPLE COLLECTING CHRISTMAS BOXES 2021**

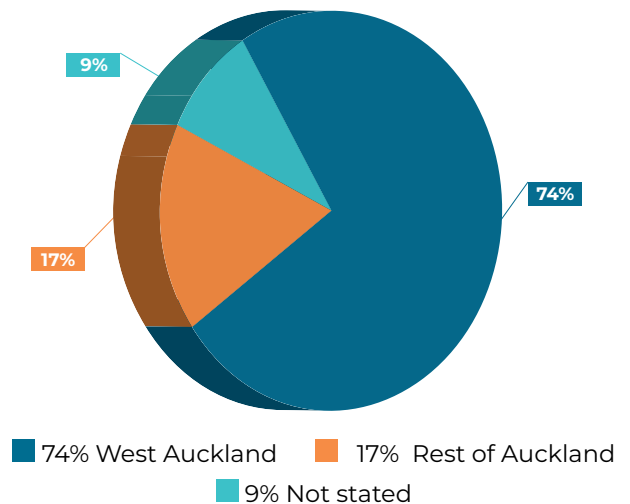


- 46% Māori
- 22% European
- 16% Pacific Peoples
- 6% Asian
- 1% Middle Eastern, Latin American or African
- 9% Not recorded

**Location**

Almost three-quarters of people who collected Food and Gift boxes live in West Auckland (74%). 17% of people live in other parts of the Auckland Region. Location information was not recorded for 9% of people.

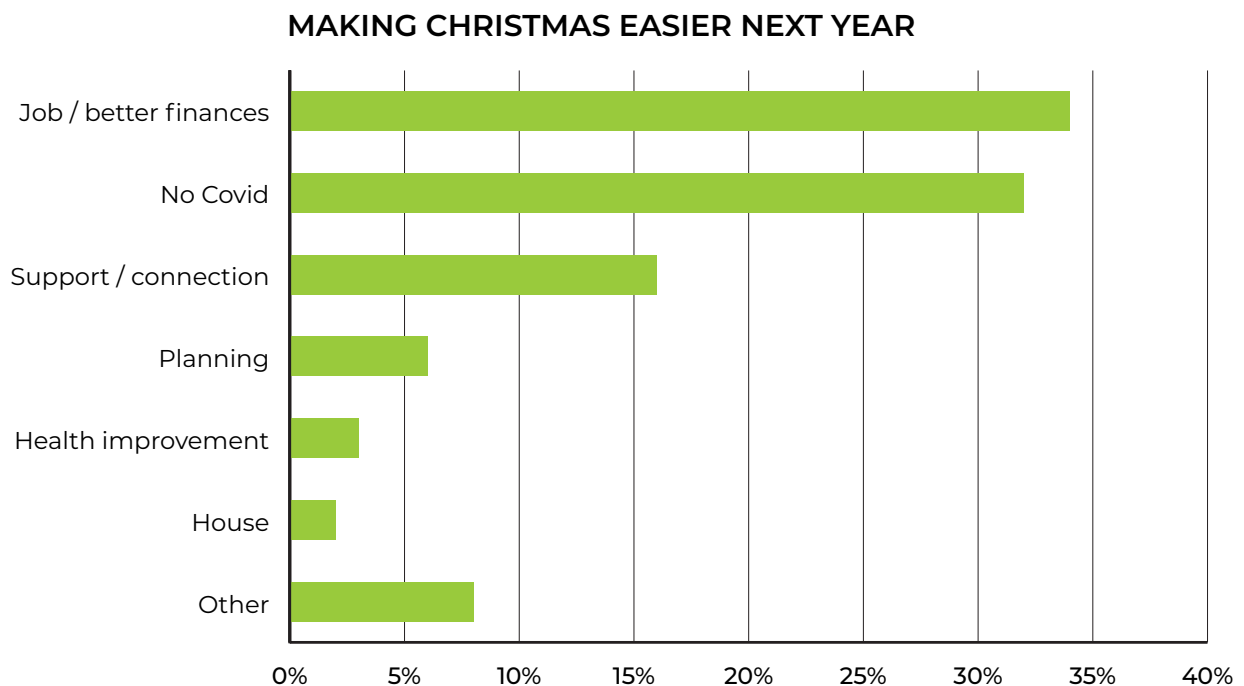
**LOCATION OF PEOPLE WHO COLLECTED CHRISTMAS BOXES 2021**



## What would make Christmas easier?

When people collected their Christmas Food and Gift boxes, they were asked “What would make Christmas a little easier for you next year?”

Approximately two-thirds of people (n=856) answered this question. As the graph below shows, for most respondents (66%), being in a better financial position or the absence of Covid-19 would make their Christmas easier next year.



Over a third of respondents (**34%**) shared that having a job or more money or being able to afford food and/or paying bills would make things easier for them.

*Being employed lost job due to Covid*

*If I could go back to work*

*Being able to pay for living expenses*

*Finances in a better position*

*More money*

Some commented that lower prices for food and higher paying jobs would be helpful.

*Better paying jobs*

*Lower food prices*

**32%** of people reported that having “no covid” and/or “no restrictions” would make their Christmas a little easier next year.

*No covid or restrictions (freedom)*

*Safety of community. No Covid*

For others, being more connected to whānau and friends or having more support would make their Christmas easier **(16%)**.

- To make at least two friends and a church service by Christmas 2022*
- Continue the mahi that Visionwest are doing*
- Be able to see daughter again*
- More support with children*
- More family at home*

Some felt that better planning would make their Christmas easier **(6%)**

- More stability would help me budget plan better*
- Planning ahead*
- Try to be prepared, small and easier steps earlier in the year to prepare. (Visionwest helps)*

Others reported that improved health **(3%)** or having a home to live in **(2%)** would make their Christmas easier.

- Dad to get off dialysis*
- Have a home, a stable home.*



# Insights

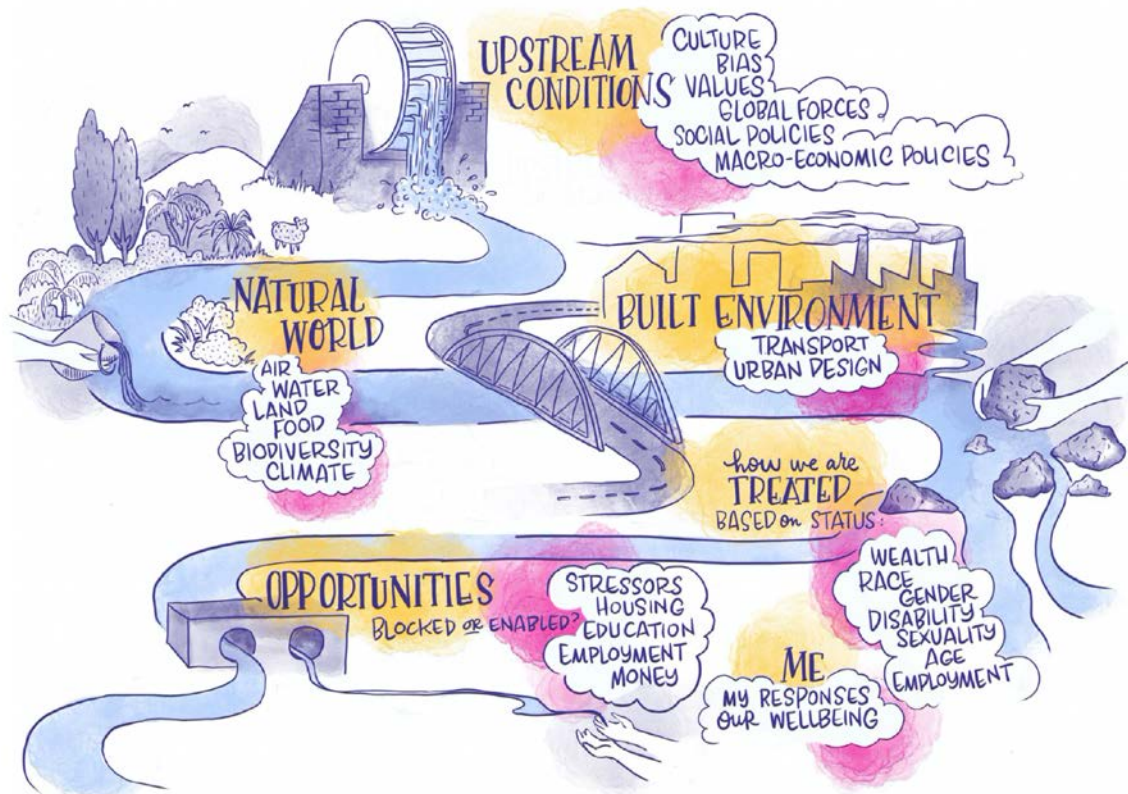
Christmas From The Heart feedback shows that the efforts of Visionwest, in partnership with many businesses, donors and community members, are addressing a huge need in the West Auckland community. Covid-19 meant that Christmas 2021 was especially difficult for some people. It must be noted, however, that for many people, life was already a struggle with Christmas typically being a difficult time of year, financially and in other ways.

Many people who come to Visionwest seeking support throughout the year are living in entrenched poverty and services like those provided by Visionwest can deliver support to address the effects and stress created by these long-term needs. However, to achieve transformative change, the focus needs to shift to the conditions or root causes of poverty that result in large numbers of people requiring support with food and gifts at Christmas time. It is simply unacceptable that there are people living in our community who cannot afford to feed themselves or their whānau at Christmas or any other time of the year.

The graphic below (Green et. al., 2021, p.13) uses the metaphor of an awa (river) to describe the upstream conditions and challenges that impact on a person's life.

Upstream are all the social, environmental, and cultural conditions that shape a person's life. Downstream are all the visible problems that people experience as a result of these upstream conditions.

Upstream conditions include, for example, the way in which public institutions treat individuals, the information environment, the way transport systems and cities are built, the policies a government puts in place (or doesn't), the rules of the economy, and cultural beliefs and values (ibid, 2021).



Extensive bodies of research show that the biggest improvements to a person's life, over the longest timeframe and for the least individual effort, can be made by changing upstream conditions.

As long as the upstream issues remain in place, many of the significant issues within the world will remain unsolvable at the downstream level. That is to say, it's irrational to ask an individual experiencing poor outcomes to change their behaviour when the upstream issues impacting those outcomes still exist. For example, insisting a person gets a better paying job when they have been denied access to an appropriate education system is illogical.

In the meantime, much work being done by people and organisations downstream is critical to support those experiencing poor outcomes. This is why initiatives like Christmas From The Heart are so important in our communities (ibid, 2021).

What is required is a redesign of the food system so that whānau who need support are at the centre. Enabling an effective redesign will require a hard look at all the upstream conditions that lead to food insecurity. This must ultimately drive effective interventions which focus on ways to increase the money available to households; the cost of healthy nutritious food; and the influences on food purchasing including the availability of fresh affordable fruit and vegetables (Signal et. al. 2012).

Visionwest is a member of the Kore Hiakai Collective which, quite rightly, states that:

*"[S]olving New Zealand's hunger requires a different approach – one that recognises food insecurity is a symptom generated by complex root causes like low wages, the cost of housing, and lengthy food supply chains.*

*If we want all our people to have dignified access to enough good food – we need an approach which recognises that food insecurity is experienced by people but driven by systems."*

*– (Kore Hiakai, 2022)*



# The Role of Visionwest Waka Whakakitenga

Visionwest is committed to working with others to address homelessness, reduce poverty, support the elderly, and ensure young people have hope for the future. A large part of this involves the food support provided by the Visionwest Pātaka Kai.

Visionwest's Pātaka Kai provides emergency food parcels for families and individuals who find themselves in need of food support. We recognise that many whānau find themselves financially stretched at times. During those times, emergency food support can make a big difference. The Pātaka Kai team of dedicated volunteers can provide individuals or families with an emergency food parcel that should last two or three days.

Visionwest also recognises the upstream issues that impinge on a whānau's ability to afford food. To this end, a suite of wraparound services is available for each person receiving food from the Pātaka Kai. They have the option of accessing support which includes budgeting advice, counselling, housing, education and job training, home healthcare, chaplaincy support and culturally relevant support from Huia Mai, our specifically Māori-based whānau services which are designed to meet the needs of whānau Māori and all other whānau who seek our support.

It is through this wraparound support that we journey with client whānau as they come to recognise and deal with the issues which are impacting their current life. At the same time Visionwest works with partners to influence policy and practice change to shift the upstream conditions that adversely impact on people's lives.

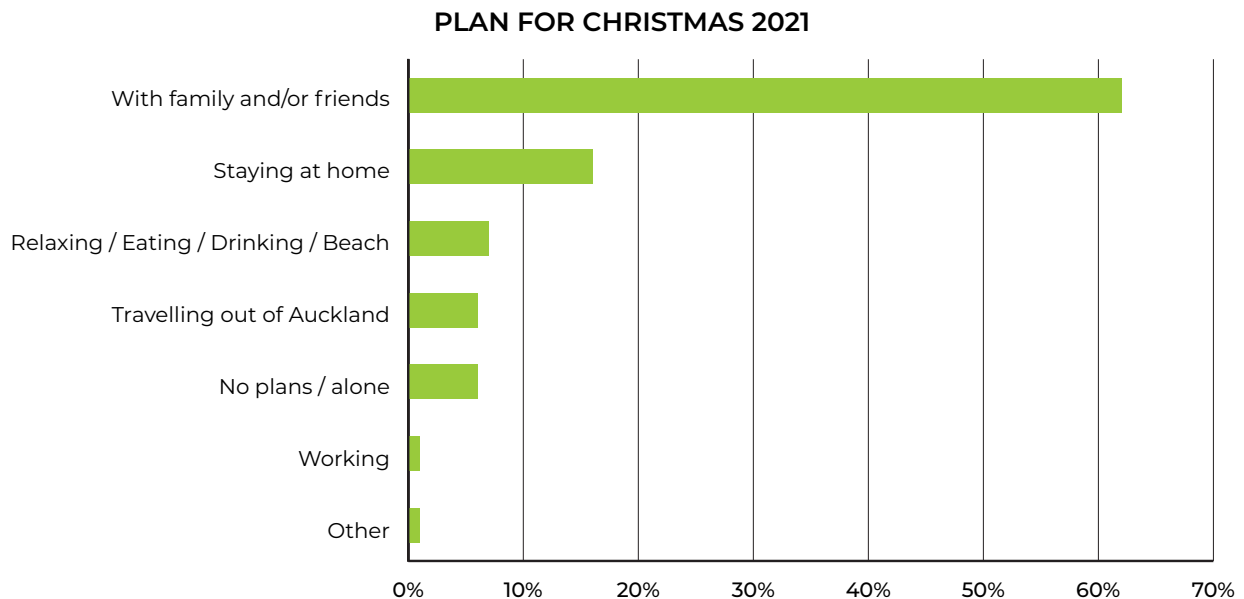




## Appendix One: Plans for Christmas Day

When people collected their Christmas Food and Gift boxes they were asked about their plans for Christmas Day, "In one sentence, tell us what you plan to do for Christmas?"

As the graph below shows, most people had a plan for Christmas day (94% n=807).



However, there was a small group who had no plans or were spending the day on their own (6%; n=56).

*No plan*

*Alone, watching Xmas movies*

*Spend on own in apartment*

Almost two-thirds of those responding mentioned that they would be with friends and family (62%; n=536).

*Spend time with family*

*Quiet family time*

Others said that they were staying at home (16%; n=138) or planning to eat, drink, relax and/or go to the beach (7%; n=64%).

*Chilling*

*Go to beach*

*Eat and eat more*

*Party, drink*

Others were planning to travel out of Auckland for Christmas (6%; n=52).

*Travel to Great Barrier*

*Go up North*

A small number of people were working (1%; n=10).

*Working on Christmas Day then a nice Christmas meal.*

## References

Green, J. Bell, S., Elliott, M. and Berentson-Shaw, J. (2021) Mapping the landscape: how to talk about systems change in Aotearoa, New Zealand. The Workshop. Retrieved from <https://www.theworkshop.org.nz/publications/mapping-the-landscape-how-to-talk-about-systems-change-in-aotearoa-new-zealand-2021>

Kore Hiakai (2022) <https://www.zerohunger.org.nz/problem> Accessed 11 January 2022.

Signal, L. N., Walton, M.D., Mhurchu, C. N., Maddison, R., Bowers, S. G., Carter, K. N., Gorton, D., Heta, C., Lanumata, T. S., McKerchar, C., O’Dea, D. and Pearce, J. (2012). Tackling ‘wicked’ health promotion problems: a New Zealand case study. *Health Promotion International*. 28(1). 84-94.

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