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TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKAU RAU

COVID-19 and perceptions of national scheduled childhood vaccines among Māori and Pacific caregivers and healthcare professionals in Aotearoa New Zealand

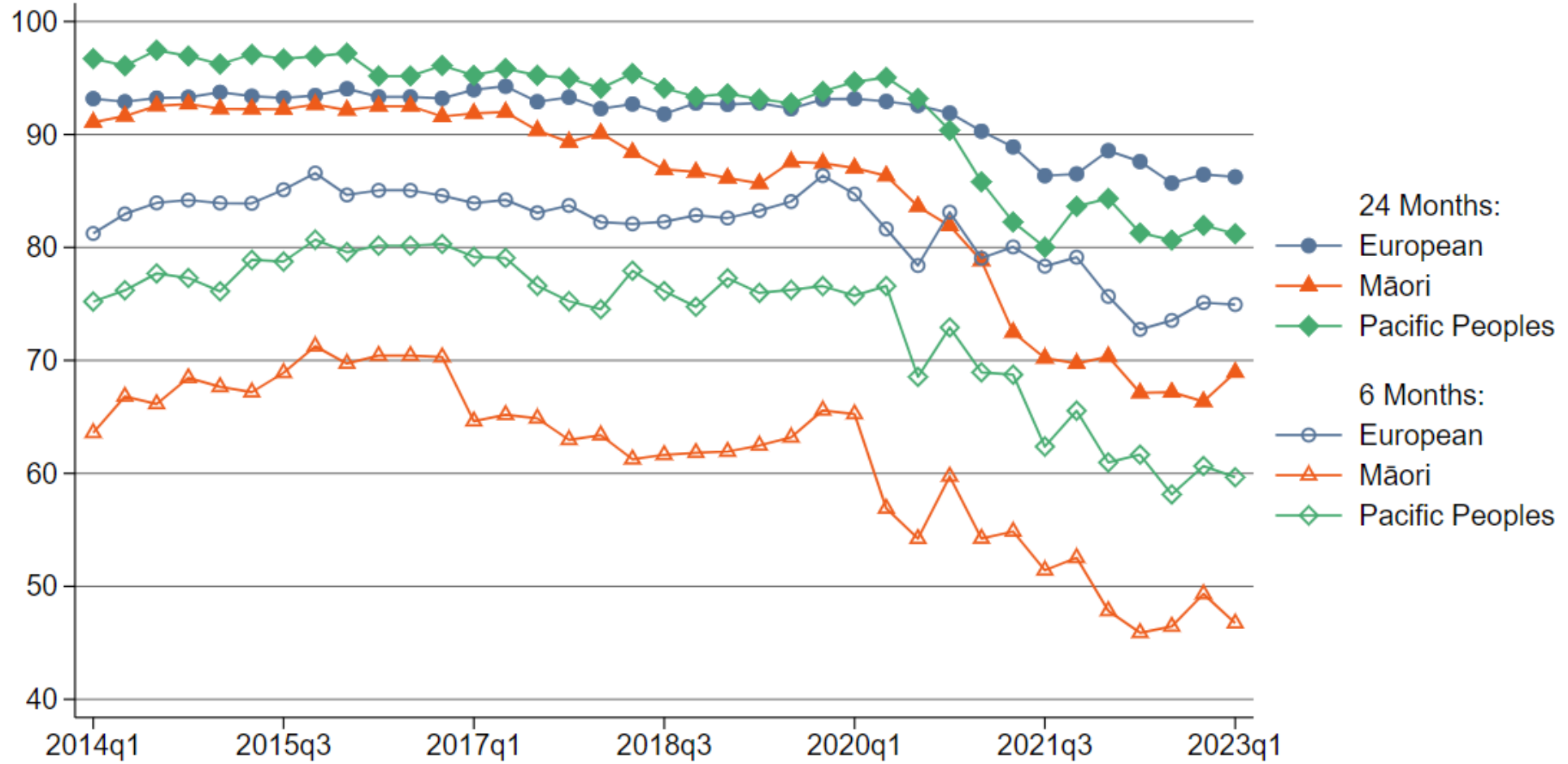
Presented by: Daysha Tonumaipe'a

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Aotearoa Immunisation Conference

16-17th November 2023

Figure 1 Quarterly immunisation coverage (%) at 6 and 24 months, by ethnicity [1]



Context

To explore the perceptions of Māori and Pacific caregivers and healthcare professionals about routine childhood vaccines throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and their suggestions for equitable immunisation service delivery as we move beyond the pandemic.

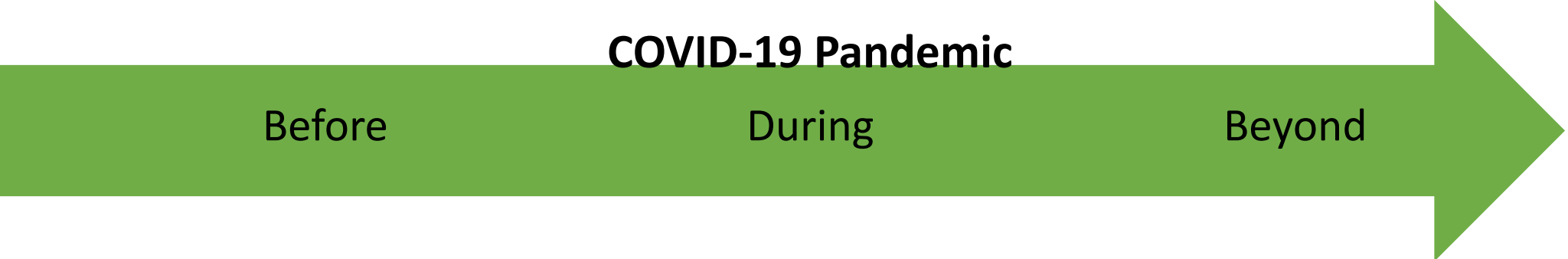


Study Aim

Methodology & Methods

- Māori and Pacific research practices employing an interpretive descriptive methodology [2-5]
 - Researchers' positionalities
- Ethical approval
 - Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (22/266)
- Participants
 - Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland), Hauraki and the Waikato districts
 - Caregivers and whānau (n = 24; 12 Māori whānau and 12 Pacific whānau)
 - Healthcare professionals (n = 13)
 - November 2022 – May 2023
- Data generation
 - In-person or online semi-structured interviews, wānanga, and Talanoa [6-7]
 - Highly interactive
- Data analysis
 - Reflexive thematic analysis [8]

Findings



“We go with the norm”

- Social norms, health personnel and institutions promoted (and sometimes coerced) participants' acceptance of routine vaccines before the pandemic.
- For many, vaccines were seen as mandatory, guiding participants to vaccinate their children.
- Among some Māori whānau, the pressure to vaccinate reflected undertones of colonisation and systemic racism.
- Among Pacific whānau, trust in healthcare professionals and respect for health experts, prevailed reflecting Pacific cultural values.

“I just followed, really, just because I just thought it was normal. It wasn't until you dive deeper into studying and then you understand a little bit more. But it just feels like it's this pressure on us to do it. And then it feels like there's always not a backlash but a consequence that we face if we don't. And then it just feels that you are excluded from things, which I definitely know that you are not.”

(Māori whānau, male)



“Everything became difficult”

- Pandemic added challenges to the daily struggles
- National and international information influenced thoughts about diseases and vaccines
- Information from the government and health sector created confusion among whānau about whether immunisation services were open (considered essential) during the pandemic
- Whānau may intend to vaccinate their child(ren) but delay because of logistical constraints and unclear communications

“It needed to have an ethnic-specific approach”

- Inappropriateness of Western-centric strategies
 - Did not meet the needs of Māori and Pacific communities
- Led to a loss of trust which also negatively affected thoughts about vaccines among some whānau
- Participants advocated for immunisation services that are more whānau-centric and reflect Māori and Pacific values

“Now, there's a lot of learnings with all of that help supporting COVID vaccination in the community. And one of the learnings that stood out is that it is challenging working in a Westernised system when, right at the beginning, we're trying to say Māori and Pacific need to be a priority. And we know there needs to be a system. However, the Westernised system and priorities are different to us.”
(Pacific healthcare professional, female)

“People are now finding their voice”

“People are now finding their voice and they're going against the norms and the government recommendations and stuff. And now because they were forced to get COVID, they don't want to get any immunisations done.”
(Māori whānau, female)

- Renewed agency and tino rangatiratanga (self-determination) among whānau
- Whānau are learning more about vaccines to decide what was best
 - Does not necessarily involve information from healthcare professionals
- Some whānau remained firm in their vaccination decisions, others were more hesitant
- Healthcare professionals understood the importance of patients' mana (authority, control) about vaccine decisions.



Implications & Recommendations

- Embed Māori and Pacific-led vaccination strategies in immunisation service delivery
 - Early engagement of Māori and Pacific leaders and healthcare professionals
 - Create space for more autonomy and ownership
- The pandemic created an opportune time to support informed parental vaccine decision-making
 - Need for credible and unbiased information about vaccines and for vaccines to be easier to get, especially for working whānau
 - Health sector needs to regain its status as a credible source of unbiased/uncoercive health information
 - Mechanisms to support healthcare professionals to engage in mana-enhancing vaccine discussions with whānau (e.g., longer consultation times)

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Thank you!

If you have any questions, please
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