

Measuring wellbeing in tourism-dependent Pacific Islands during COVID-19 before and after borders re-open

Background

- COVID-19 travel bans isolated the Pacific Islands from the rest of the world, cutting off international tourism and associated income
- Pacific Islands were assumed to be struggling during this time
- We developed a survey and employed local research assistants in 4 Pacific Islands to measure the wellbeing of Pacific peoples during the pandemic
- We found that people were returning to the vanua, utilising natural resources, and flourishing in many areas
- Now, we have returned to these same tourism-dependent communities post-pandemic to assess and compare how each dimension of wellbeing has changed with the return of tourists

What we did

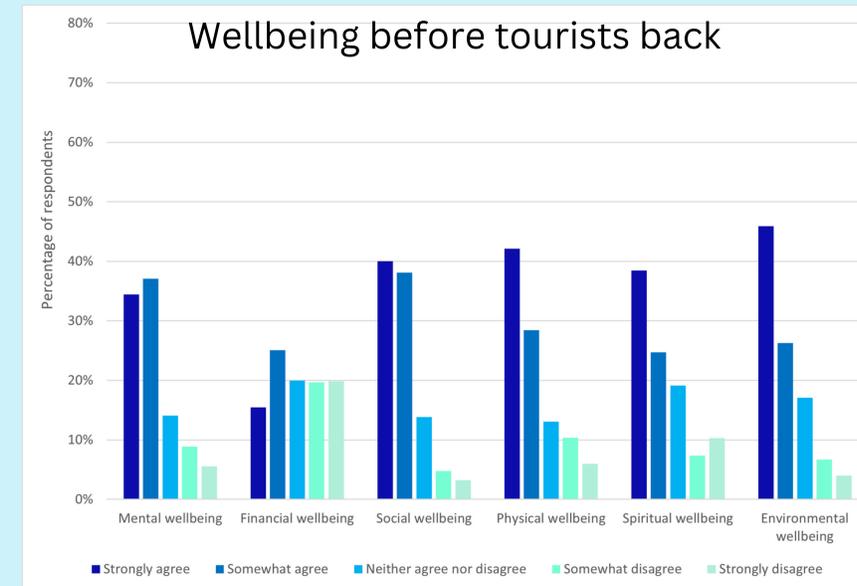
PHASE 1: During COVID-19, before the return of tourists

- Utilising the Frangipani Framework, we designed a survey to measure wellbeing in the Pacific
- Administered the survey to **50 people** from each of **4 tourism dependent countries** in the Pacific (Samoa, Fiji, Vanuatu, Cook Islands)

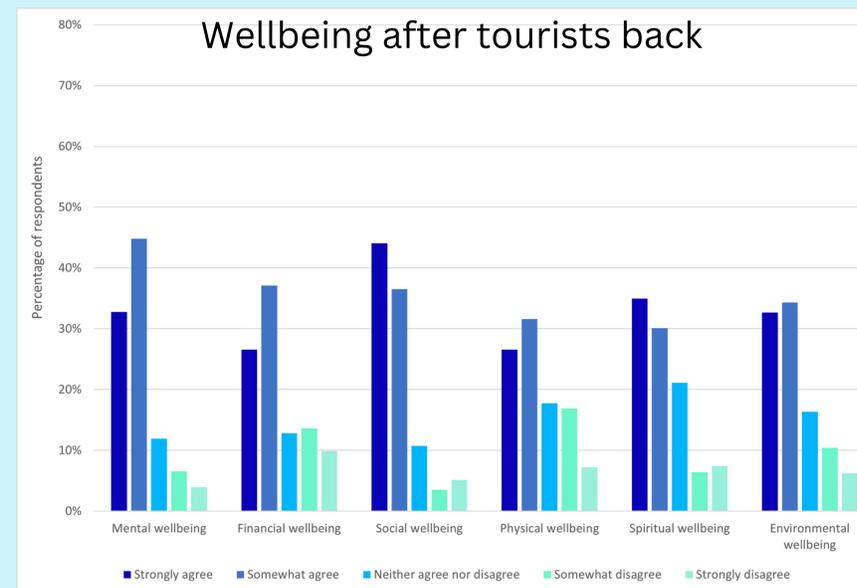
PHASE 2: Late 2021 onwards, after the return of tourists

- Ongoing...
- Administering the survey to **50 people** from each of **4 tourism dependent countries** in the Pacific (Samoa, Fiji, Vanuatu, Cook Islands) **6 months after** tourists return
- *Only have data from Fiji and the Cook Islands thus far*

Results from Fiji and Cook Islands...



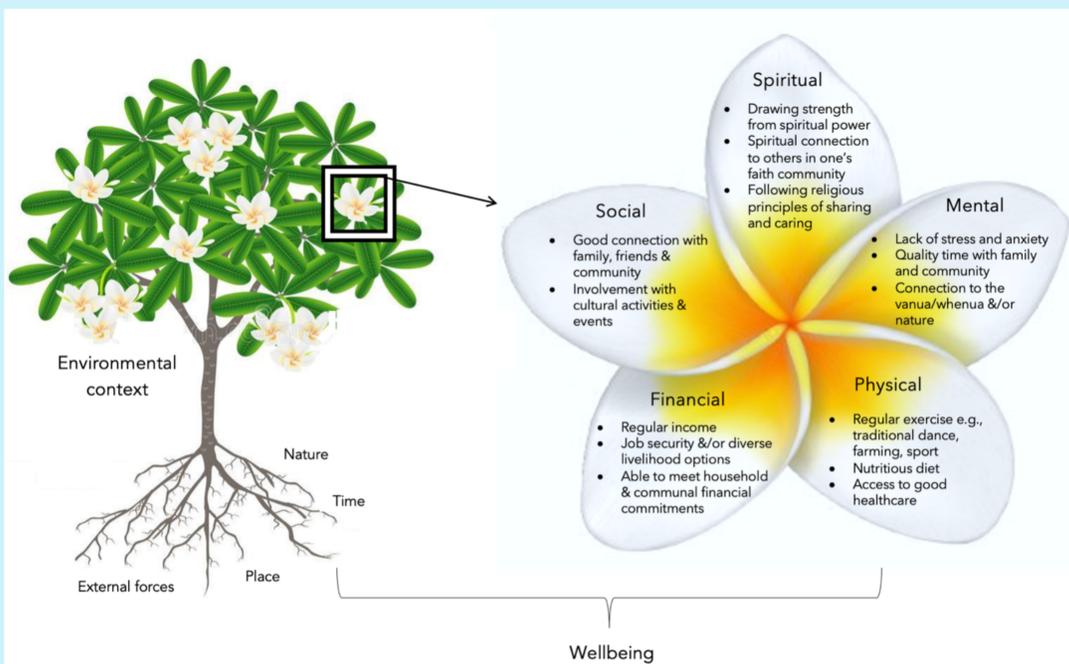
PHASE 1: Responses of people living in tourism-dependent communities in Fiji and Cook Islands on whether their wellbeing had improved during the period of COVID-19.



PHASE 2: Responses of people living in tourism-dependent communities in Fiji and Cook Islands on whether their wellbeing had improved 6 months after the return of international tourists.

- **Financial wellbeing** increased with the return of international tourism
- **Environmental wellbeing** was higher before tourists returned as people were out in nature
- **Physical wellbeing** was higher before tourists returned as people grew/harvested more food from the land and sea, and exercised more
- **Mental and social wellbeing** stayed relatively stable with/without tourists
- **Spiritual wellbeing** stayed relatively stable, though more people strongly agreed that their spiritual wellbeing was good before tourists returned

The Frangipani Framework of Wellbeing



"My diet was better during COVID, I was eating healthy food and working in the plantation regularly"
(Male, Fiji)

"More tourists, more money and blessings"
(Female, Cook Isl)

"I meet heaps of tourists but I have less time to connect with those who are really important to me"
(Female, Cook Isl)

"I like feeling busy again. It feels more purposeful, having work to do"
(Female, Cook Isl)

"People are not so concerned with the environment now as they focus on tourism. Land is left idle"
(Male, Fiji)

"I am starting to miss my quiet time. With tourists, we are constantly moving, place to place"
(Male, Fiji)

Learn more about this research:

