



FACE TO FACE WITH DIGITAL EXCLUSION

Citizens Advice Bureau New Zealand
Ngā Pou Whakawhirinaki o Aotearoa

ABOUT CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU

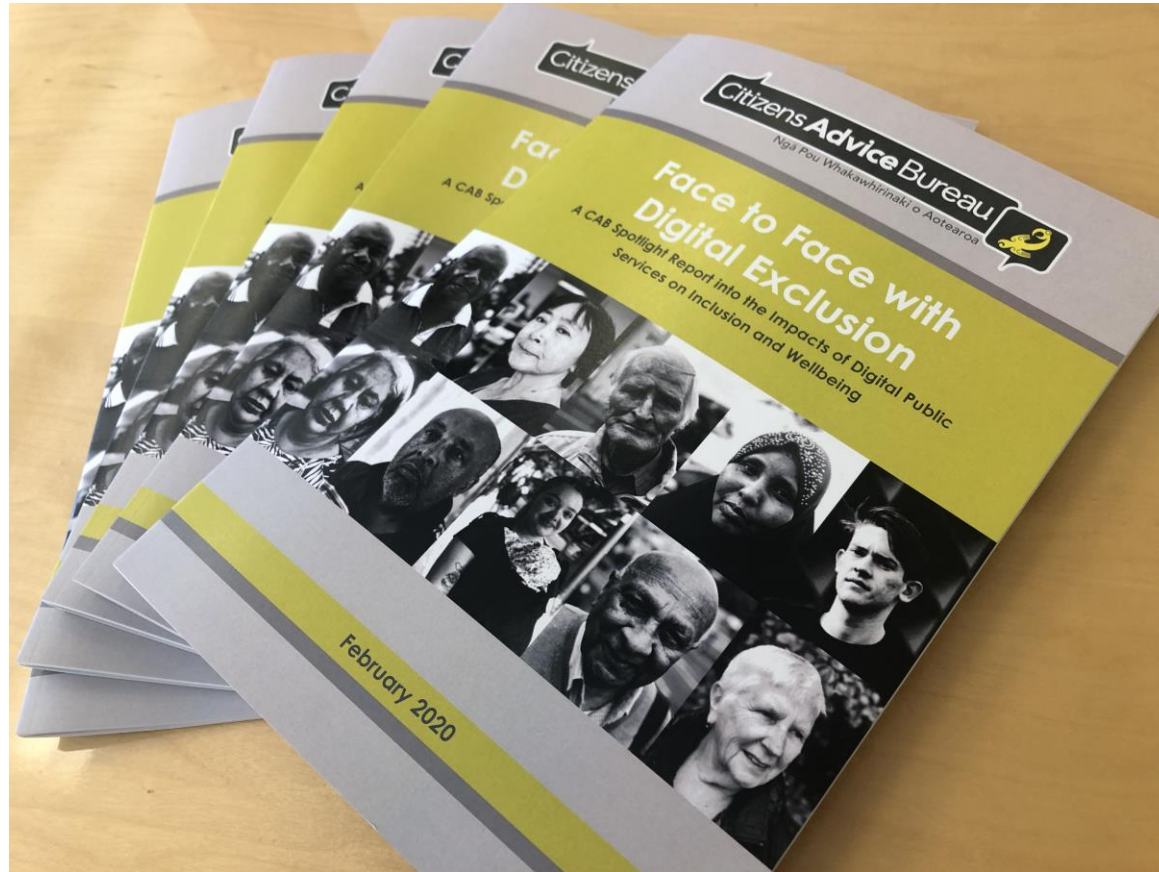
“CAB’s accessible, accurate, confidential and independent advice empowers people to solve problems, understand their rights, access services, and enhance their personal and community well-being”

PWC review of CAB service

GROWING CONCERN

- CAB volunteers identify that people are increasingly struggling to access public services because of shift to digital service provision.
- New question added to interview process to identify digital exclusion.
- Over a three-month period, **4,379** CAB clients are identified as digitally excluded.

SPOTLIGHT REPORT



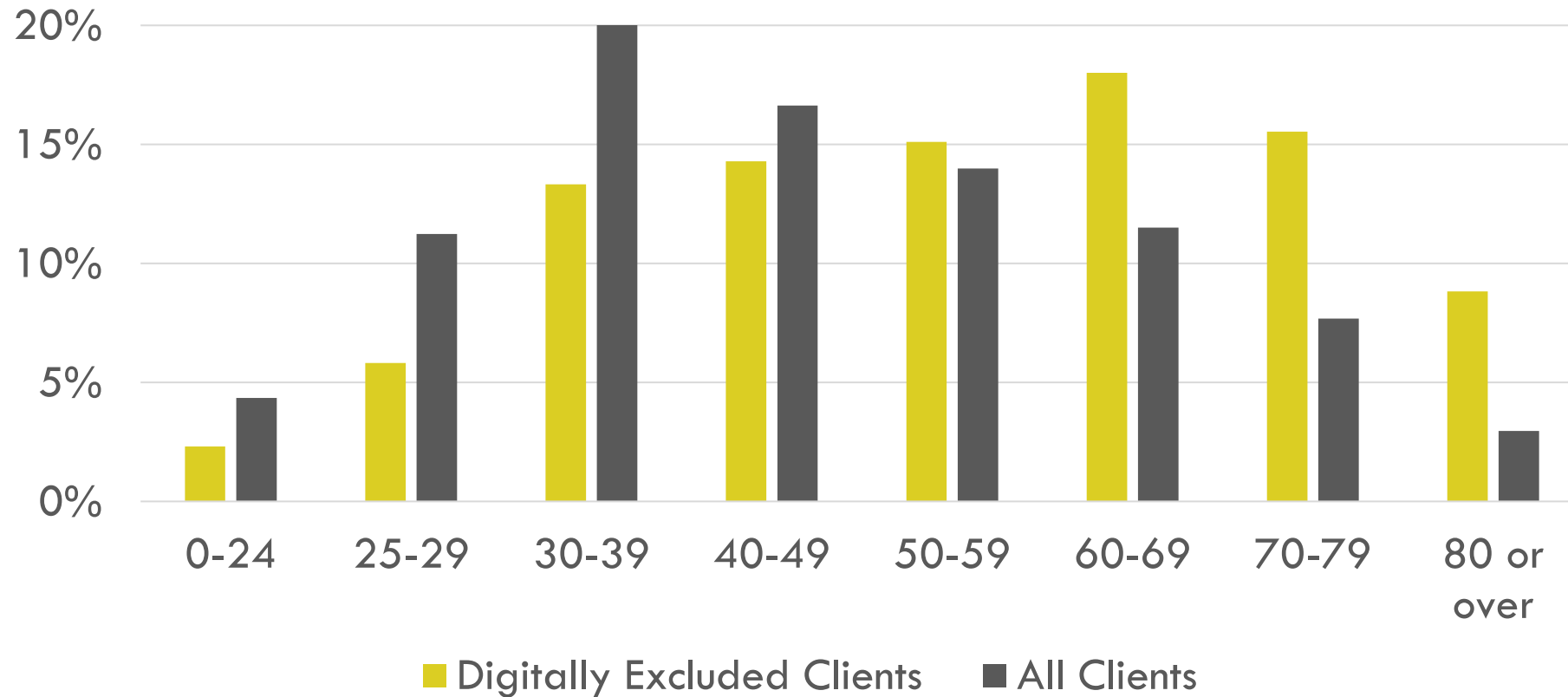
[https://www.cab.org.nz/
what-we-do/digital-
exclusion-campaign/](https://www.cab.org.nz/what-we-do/digital-exclusion-campaign/)

WHAT IS DIGITAL EXCLUSION?

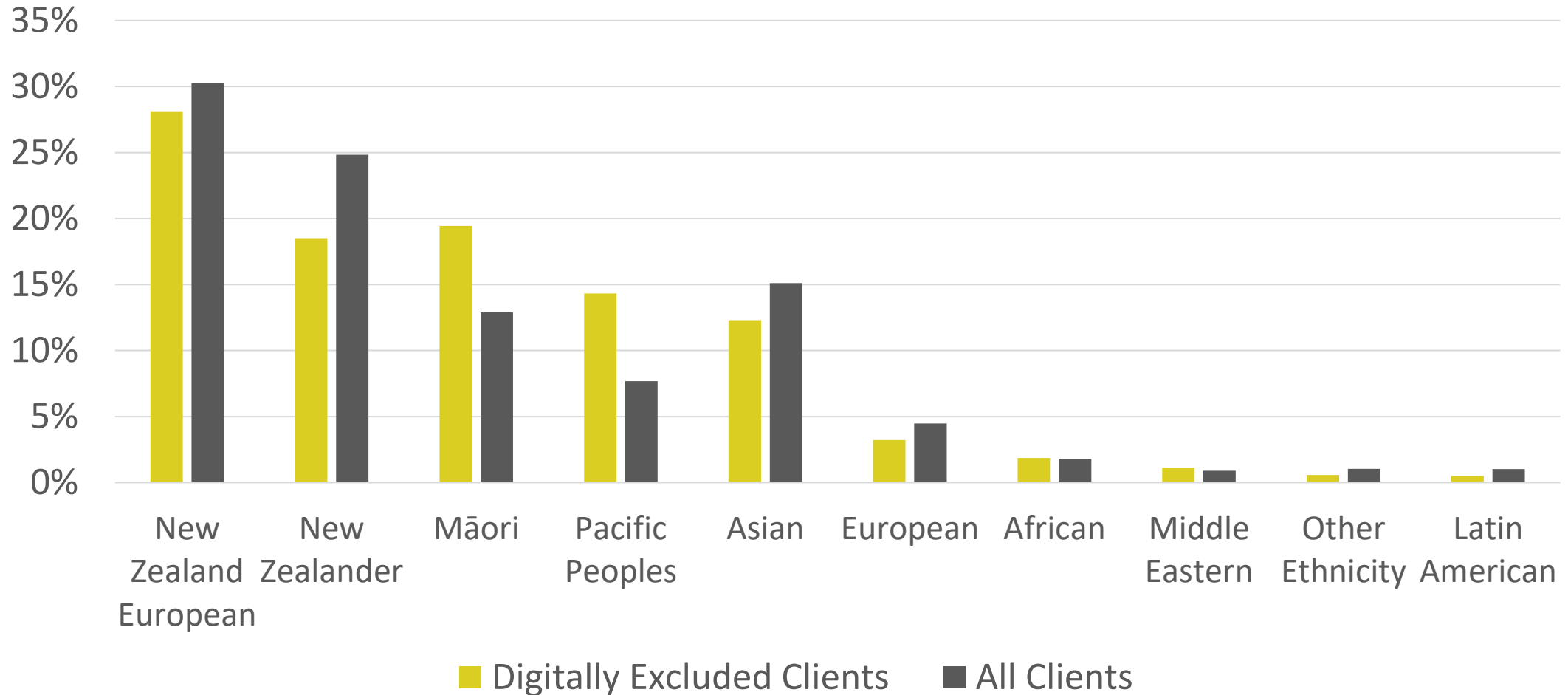
“Situations where people face barriers to participating fully in society because of information and services being online.”

- Difficulties accessing information and services
- Barriers to acting on rights and meeting obligations
- Existing inequities amplified
- Exclusion, isolation, powerlessness, limited opportunities
- Negative impacts on person’s sense of dignity, independence, and overall wellbeing

PEOPLE ACROSS ALL AGE DEMOGRAPHICS ARE DIGITALLY EXCLUDED



MĀORI AND PACIFIC PEOPLES ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY DISADVANTAGED



BARRIERS TO ACCESSING SERVICES

- Lack of access to computer and internet
- Limited digital literacy
- Financial barriers
- General literacy difficulties
- Language barriers
- Disability
- Lack of desire to be online



WHAT WE HEARD ABOUT PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCE OF PUBLIC SERVICES

- Not about choice
- Not simple and straightforward
- Not 'people first'



GINA'S STORY

Gina is a landlord. She was referred to the CAB so we could help her complete an application to the Tenancy Tribunal. She had been told she could complete the application online at home, but she is not confident with her writing and also finds it difficult to use the internet. Gina had a big pile of paperwork to support the application.

JAMES' STORY

James wanted to update his bank details with Inland Revenue so a refund can be paid out. He doesn't have a computer or MyIR account.

He tried calling, but found the phone system hard to navigate and then it just cut out. He knew there was an option of changing his details by keying everything in, but felt anxious about doing this.



CHENG'S STORY

Cheng's wife's visitor's visa was going to expire soon. He was having difficulty with the process of extending her visa. He decided to go to the Immigration NZ office to get some help. This was a 4-hour drive from his home.

When he arrived, he discovered there was no longer a public office. He came to the CAB for help working out what visa forms he should fill in to allow his wife to stay and also to get a residence visa.

LAILA'S STORY

Laila received an email saying she has a message on her MyMSD. Laila struggles with reading in English and also doesn't use a computer.

We phoned Work and Income and waited on hold for half an hour. When we got through, we were told the message was to tell Laila her benefit will be stopped after this week unless she reapplies.



WHAT PEOPLE HAVE TOLD US

“Not having a computer is difficult, I only have a cell phone. When I do access services online, I am confused by the language and find the sequence and format very confusing. I rely on others to help me.

“People that are most in need of the services that have been transferred online are often the people most likely to be digitally excluded.

“I am becoming an outsider in my own life. I feel more and more isolated from being in charge of my own affairs. I fear I am being left behind. I fear the government doesn't care.

CAMPAIGN TO ADDRESS DIGITAL EXCLUSION



LEAVE NO-ONE BEHIND

CAMPAIGN TO ADDRESS DIGITAL EXCLUSION

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SIGN THE PETITION at <https://our.actionstation.org.nz/p/digitalexclusion>

OUR CONCERNS

1. Access to public services is a human right, and yet people in New Zealand are struggling to access public services and are experiencing exclusion.
2. Government is prioritising a digital-first approach without a public mandate for doing so.
3. Community services are being left to fill the gaps.

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN

1. Ensure public services are accessible to all - an integrated, equitable, people-centred, omni-channel (choice of channels) approach.
2. Develop an integrated strategy to address barriers to inclusion, 'digital barriers' but also wider issues of poverty, literacy, disability, language and systemic inequality.
3. Provide increased resourcing for intermediary organisations.

A SPIRIT OF SERVICE

“The fundamental characteristic of the public service is acting with a spirit of service to the community.”

Public Service Act 2020

A CHALLENGE

We have confused the goal of inclusion with how it might be achieved. Digital inclusion is one part of a bigger picture. We need to reframe and focus on ‘social inclusion’ so that public services are designed and delivered with people’s needs at the centre.

What does acting in a “**spirit of service to the community**” look like for you?