



Youth Wellbeing Study Longitudinal Survey Findings from Wave Two - Pacifica

About the Youth Wellbeing Study

The Youth Wellbeing Study is a research project about the wellbeing of adolescents or rangatahi in New Zealand, with a specific focus on Non-Suicidal Self-Injury (NSSI). Our goal is to investigate, over time, what leads some youth to hurt themselves on purpose, and to understand where they turn to for help, or what might stop them from seeking help. We want to support these youth and their families, whānau and communities (including schools and peers), by developing workshops and resources with them about recognising the signs of NSSI, how youth can seek help, and how others can help those who are self-injuring.

The research project uses a survey to measure youth wellbeing. The survey has been conducted in 16 different schools within the Wellington region under the supervision of the research team. It takes students around 30 minutes to complete it, either electronically or by pencil and paper. The survey is longitudinal; the same group of students complete it each year over three to four years as they progress through secondary school. Understanding their wellbeing at different time points allows us to look at the factors that place youth at risk of self-injuring, as well as the factors that protect them from self-injury.

From November 2013 to December 2014 we conducted Wave 2 (the second year) of our survey with Year 10 and 11 students in participating schools. This is a summary of the findings from Wave 2 of the survey for participants who self-identified as having Pacifica ethnicity.

Who are survey participants?

Nine hundred and twenty nine students took part in the survey at Wave 2. Students were able to indicate more than one ethnic heritage. Of these 929 students, 10% (89 students) indicated that their ethnic background included Pacifica heritage. The results in this summary are specific to these 89 Pacifica students. Sixty-two percent of Pacifica students indicated Samoan ethnicity, 25% Cook Islands Māori, 10% Tongan, 8% as Tokelauan, 6% as Fijian and 5% Niuean. Fifty-eight percent of Pacifica students identified as female, 40% as male and 1% as transgendered. The age range was between 13-16 years, with most (51%) being 14 years of age.

Sexuality

Ninety-seven percent of Pacifica students identified as completely or mostly heterosexual, 1% as bisexual and 1% asexual. Most (92%) of Pacific students reported they did not worry about their sexuality.

Ethnic Identity

When asked to choose just one ethnicity as their primary ethnicity, 47% of students with Pacifica heritage indicated a Pacifica ethnic group (for example, Samoan or Cook Island Māori) as their primary ethnicity. Twenty-five percent chose Pākeha, 11% Māori and 17% indicated that they could not choose just one ethnicity.

When asked to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement, “My ethnic group is an important part of how I think of myself”, 66% Pacifica students either agreed or strongly agreed, 21% were neutral, and 13% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Bullying

Twenty-six percent of Pacifica students reported having experienced bullying in the last 12 months. The proportion of students who have experienced bullying has decreased slightly since 2013. However, some students report experiencing much more frequent bullying than others (see Figure 1).

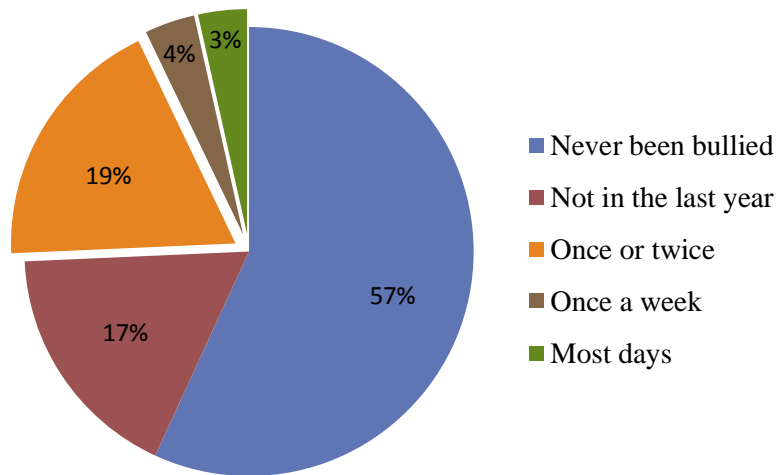


Figure 1. Student reports of the extent of bullying in the last 12 months

Pacifica students who had been bullied in the past two months were asked how bad the bullying was. Twenty-three percent of Pacifica students reported it was not bad, 41% reported it was a little bad, 32% reported it was pretty bad, 9% reported it was really bad, and 5% reported that it was terrible. Pacifica students reported experiencing a wide range of forms of bullying (see Figure 2), although the most common were being teased, called names, left out of things on purpose and via social media.

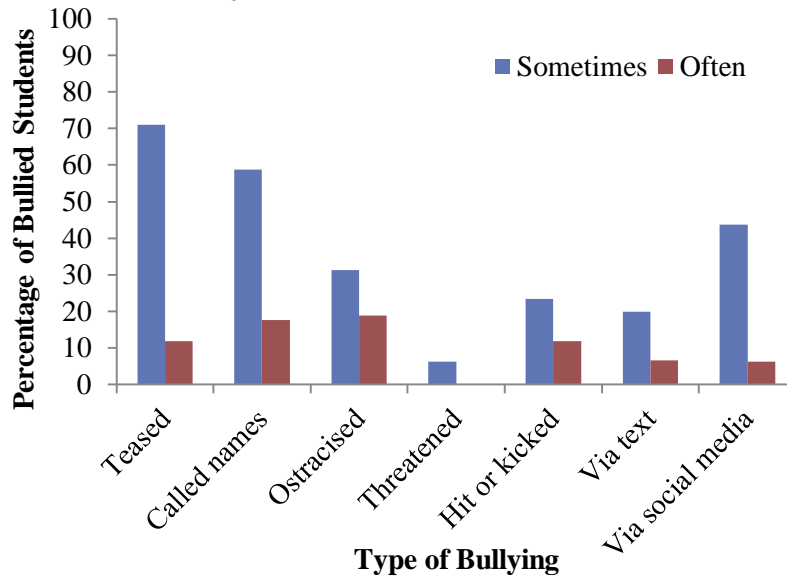


Figure 2. Types of bullying reported by Pacifica Students

The most common reasons Pacifica students gave for being bullied was because of their ethnic group or culture (41%) and their body size or shape (41%). However, a large proportion of Pacifica students (27%) also indicated that they did not know why they were bullied. Of the 22 students who had been bullied in the past two months, 14% had waggged school at least once in the past month because they were afraid of being bullied. Overall, 12% percent of all Pacifica students reported that other students almost always take action when they know a student is being bullied in school, and 40% thought that teachers almost always take action when they know a student is being bullied. The majority (76%) of Pacifica students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, ‘I feel safe at school’.

Suicidal thoughts and behaviours

When Pacifica students were asked if they had ever thought about committing suicide, 87% said they had either never thought about it or if they had, that it was just a passing thought. This is comparable to the proportion of Pacifica students who indicated no history of suicidal thoughts and behaviour in 2013 (Wave 1 of the YWS longitudinal survey).

The research project has a clear risk management process in place to alert the school guidance counsellor(s) of students at risk of suicidal behaviours. Dependant on how students answer particular questions around suicide, the researchers are able to gauge how at-risk they may be, using a scoring system (the students do not know the details of this system but are told that if the researchers identify them as at-risk youth, they will be followed up by the school guidance counsellor(s) and referred to relevant agencies if appropriate). The research team is also available for consultation regarding these students. This process was appreciated by schools, as it helped identify students at-risk who may otherwise have remained unidentified.

Non-Suicidal Self-Injury

Three quarters (75%) of Pacifica students reported that they knew someone who had hurt themselves on purpose, mostly friends (43% knew a friend who had self-injured), while 19% of students knew a family member who had self-injured, 3% had a boyfriend or girlfriend who self-injured, and 34% said they had an acquaintance who self-injured.

One in five (21%) Pacifica students indicated they had engaged in self-injury at some point and 11% had thought about it. The most common types of NSSI were cutting, scratching, putting sharp objects in skin, punching or banging themselves and preventing wounds from healing. These results are consistent with research undertaken in other countries with community adolescents.

Students who had indicated that they had thought about or engaged in self-injury were asked how many times they had hurt themselves since the last survey; 38% reported never, 13% once, 31% a few times and 19% many times. This indicates that, about half (51%) of Pacifica students who engage in self-injurious behaviour do so only rarely, and the other half self-injure with much higher frequency.

Alcohol and Drug Use

In the last 12 months, a third of Pacifica students reported drinking more than a few sips of alcohol, while 11% reported smoking cannabis, and 4% reported using another drug to get high. Figure 3 demonstrates that, although rates of drug use remain moderately low, the proportion of students who report drinking alcohol and using cannabis has increased since 2013. This is likely to be a developmental effect; whereby as students become older more are experimenting with alcohol, and there may be greater access to alcohol through older and same-age peers

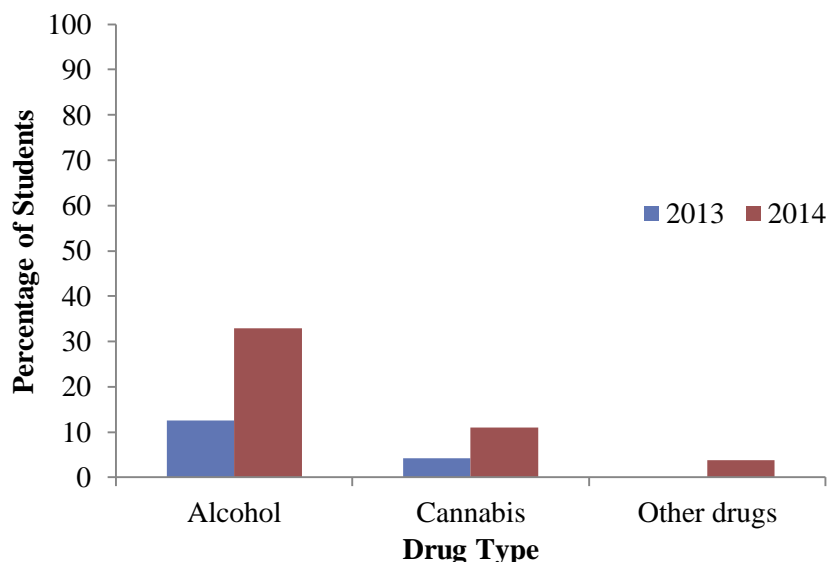


Figure 3. Reported alcohol and drug use over 2013 and 2014.

Positive wellbeing



Sixty-five percent of students indicated that they felt like could talk to their parents if they were having a serious problem; 27% their grandparents, 25% their extended family (many specified aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.), and 38% said they could talk to a family friend. Most students felt happy in their relationships with family. For example, 75% agreed or strongly agreed with the statements ‘I feel very close to my family’, and 87% to the statement ‘My parents accept me as I am’. Additionally, most students also reported good relationships with their peers; 90% would describe their friends as good friends, 69% that their friends listen to what they have to say and 83% said that their friends respected their feelings.

Many students felt school was an important part of their life. Sixty-six percent of Pacifica students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, ‘I feel like I’m a part of the school I go to’, 78% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, ‘My school is important to me’, and 47% of Pacifica students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, ‘I like school a lot’.

Taken together, Pacifica student’s reports of connectedness with family, friends and school appear to have remained stable since 2013.

Where to from here?

We will be coming back into the schools who participated in Wave 1 and 2 to run the survey again with the same group of students in 2015 and 2016. This is so we can get information on how students’ wellbeing changes over time, and what factors interconnect with each other. This study will help us further understand what factors make young New Zealanders vulnerable to particular difficulties, and what factors foster positive wellbeing.

Want more information about youth or rangatahi wellbeing?

At the end of this summary we provide a list of agencies, services and websites related to youth or rangatahi wellbeing and mental health. We also provide links to resources on our website: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/psyc/research/youth-and-wellbeing-study>

If you’d like to receive updates about the YWS, and information about events or resources relevant to youth mental health, you can request to receive our quarterly e-newsletter. Just email us using the email address below and we’d be happy to add you to our mailing list.

Comments or Questions?

If you have any comments or queries about the above summary please contact us via email (youth-wellbeing@vuw.ac.nz) or phone (04) 463 9657.

For information about Health and Disability advocacy please contact the Health and Disability Commission (advocacy services) on 0800 555 050 or email advocacy@hds.org.nz



Need some help?

Completing this survey may have made you feel a bit low, worried, or stressed about things that are happening in your life, or someone else's. If you'd like to text or talk to someone who can help, you can contact one of the following organisations below:

School Support: You can talk to one of your school Guidance Counsellors. They may be able to help you themselves or may support you to talk to someone else.

Youthline: Youthline offers a free, confidential, and non-judgemental telephone counselling service. Just ring 0800 376 633. Or you can text 234 for a free text service even if you have no credit on your phone. If you'd prefer to email, the address is talk@youthline.co.nz or you could check them out at www.youthline.co.nz

Evolve: Evolve is a youth service in central Wellington for young people aged 10-25. You can check them out at www.evolveyouth.org.nz, email them at reception@evolveyouth.org.nz, or give them a call on 473 6204.

Vibe: Vibe is a free health and support service for young people aged 10-24. They have offices in Lower Hutt and Upper Hutt. You can visit their website at www.vibe.org.nz.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS): This is a mental health service for young people and their families, run by your local District Health Board (DHB). CAMHS provides assessment and treatment for moderate to severe mental health difficulties. There are three DHB services in the wider Wellington region, each with their own CAMHS service.

CAMHS, Capital and Coast DHB: People in need of mental health support in Wellington can contact Te Haika (ph. 0800 745 477), to seek advice or referral options.

Other helpful websites:

- The Low Down is a website that helps young people understand and deal with depression. You can check them out at www.thelowdown.co.nz
- SPARX website (www.sparx.org.nz): SPARX offers an e-therapy program, includes a mood quiz to help young people identify depression, and has information on where to get help. The phone line 0508 4 SPARX is staffed by professional counsellors 12 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Embrace the Future is a website that helps to educate young people in strategies and skills which promote and sustain resiliency and positive mental health. You can check them out at <http://www.embracethefuture.org.au/>

For information about Health and Disability advocacy please contact the Health and Disability Commission (advocacy services) on 0800 555 050 or email advocacy@hdc.org.nz.