



YOUTH2000 SURVEY SERIES

Youth19 Rangatahi Smart Survey Initial Findings

The Health and Wellbeing of Youth
who are Not in Education, Employ-
ment or Training (Y-NEETs)

www.youth19.ac.nz



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YOUTH19
A Youth2000 survey

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Further Youth19 publications are available at www.youth19.ac.nz

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Executive Summary

Youth who are not in education, employment or training (Y-NEETs) have enormous strengths and potential. These young people have fundamental rights to belong, to contribute and to develop positive futures for themselves and their children. Y-NEETs have usually faced multiple injustices and disadvantages from their early years. They are often viewed as problems and through a deficit lens by many agencies and services. While there are significant challenges, there is also great potential. In this report we seek to raise the visibility of young people not engaged in employment, education or training, recognise their challenges, and explore their potential to live good lives.

There is very limited information about the health and wellbeing of Y-NEETs in Aotearoa New Zealand, with many youth workers and health providers highlighting the desperate need for research to inform their programmes, services and policies. In an attempt to address this gap, our study surveyed 84 young people aged 16-22 years who are not in education, employment or training. Young people were recruited from the Waikato, Auckland and Northland regions as part of the Youth19 Rangatahi Smart Survey (Youth19; www.youth19.ac.nz). Youth19 is part of the Youth2000 survey series, which, over the past 20 years, has surveyed over 36,000 young people from secondary schools, alternative education, teen parent units, and now, for the first time, a sample of Y-NEETs. The survey asks about a wide range of factors that influence the lives of young people, including some open text content where they could highlight specific issues.

Our study found that most young people who are not in education, employment or training have been exposed to difficult family and social environments, and many have experienced significant childhood hardships and trauma. Many have been exposed to high levels of poverty, family violence, sexual violence and ethnic discrimination. We found:

- **Extremely high rates of poverty and deprivation** – Y-NEETs in this study reported high levels of any kind of housing deprivation (70%), food insecurity (35%), period poverty (42%), electricity insecurity (19%) and transportation worries (38%)
- **High levels of exposure to violence and ethnic discrimination** – 17% felt unsafe in their current home, 47% had experienced sexual violence and harm, 49% had been physically hit or harmed in the last year, and 30% had experienced ethnic discrimination by police.

“Not enough support, from their families, schools, and the government. Leaving a lot of young people to figure life out on their own. Leading us to go down the wrong path.”

(19-year-old Māori male survey participant, in response to open-text question)

Given the overwhelming evidence that childhood exposure to difficult environments is associated with poor health, social and employment opportunities (Petruccelli et al, 2019), it is not surprising there are extremely high levels of risk, harm and disengagement from education and employment among Y-NEETs.

Y-NEETs report:

- **Very poor mental and emotional health** – 70% reported significant depressive symptoms in the last 12 months, 66% have signs of anxiety (PHQ-4), 44% reported self-harm in the last 12 months, and 29% had made a suicide attempt in the past year
- **Physical health concerns** – 36% were unhappy with their weight, 22% met the daily exercise recommendations, and 14% have a long-term condition or disability
- **Poor sexual and reproductive healthcare access** – 33% had been pregnant or got someone pregnant (some Y-NEETs want children and they should not be stigmatised for this), with inconsistent condom (82%) and contraception use (72%) among those who have had sex
- **Lack of prevention, treatment and support for substance use** – 40% smoke cigarettes weekly or more often, 72% have ever vaped or used e-cigarettes, 55% reported binge drinking alcohol in the past month, 41% used cannabis weekly or more often, and a third had tried 'other drugs'
- **Risky driving practices** – 33% reported that they don't consistently use a seatbelt, 53% had ridden in a car driven by someone who had been drinking or was high or driving dangerously in the last month, and 34% had driven dangerously or after drinking alcohol or getting high in the last month.

“More support systems and that its okay to reach out to those.”

(Male, NZ European ethnicity, 18 year old survey participant, in response to open-text question)

Despite the fact that Y-NEETs have considerable health and social needs, many had difficulty accessing support and sometimes when they did access care, their experiences of services were discriminatory and judgmental.

Contrary to public perceptions, most Y-NEETs have some **family support**. Y-NEETs reported:

- Their **parents (one or both) care a lot about them** (81%)
- They have a **close bond** with someone in their family (84%), and
- They have someone in their family they **can talk about things that worry them** (61%).

Similarly, most Y-NEETs who were engaged with NEET providers and youth workers felt supported by their efforts. NEETs providers provided mentoring and facilitated access to attending driver licensing courses, financial literacy, teen parent groups etc. These young people wanted to improve their financial situations, get a better life and not be bored.

- 89% reported that they **felt part of their NEET programme** that they were attending (e.g. mentoring, drivers licensing)
- 85% reported that their **tutors/mentors cared about them**
- 64% had applied for a job.

Finally, many Y-NEETs were strongly connected to their community and land:

- More than half **belonged to one or more groups outside school** (52%) and **volunteered to help others** (53%)
- 69% said that they can talk to someone outside their family about things that are worrying them
- 65% said there is somewhere safe they can go and stay, other than with their family/whānau
- 74% were enrolled or planned to enrol to vote in New Zealand elections
- 87% felt that it is important to protect the environment for future generations.

When we compare Y-NEETs with New Zealand secondary school students, **Y-NEETs are almost universally at much greater risk of most negative health and social outcomes**. For example, they are more likely to experience housing deprivation than their peers in secondary schools, and are more likely to experience self-harm, depressive symptoms or a suicide attempt. This is clear evidence that Y-NEETs need additional help, support and resources.

Youth voice

Survey participants were also asked open-text questions about the issues young people face and what should be changed to better support young people in New Zealand. Through thematic analysis, we identified three major themes among answers given by Y-NEETs.

The first theme, **Wicked problems: Inheriting multiple unfair systems, poverty and colonisation** speaks to the multiple and intersecting systems that have made life hard for Y-NEETs. Many faced challenges, injustice and inequity on a big picture 'macro' level, for example with government and education agencies, and challenges on a more immediate 'micro' level, with their families, school and community. They also faced consequent personal challenges, such as with mental health or substance use. These mutually reinforcing 'wicked problems' involved interactions with governmental agencies and systems that often reinforced or perpetuated their difficult situations.

The second theme, **Lack of support and opportunities**, spoke to the lack of useful and non-judgemental, non-discriminatory support that considered their unique and complicated situations. The lack of opportunities for Y-NEETs was often related to a lack of money. Some attributed this to social injustices and unfair systems, while others highlighted family circumstances such as parents' drug problems.

The third was **Implications of 'wicked problems' and lack of support: Mental health and suicidality**. This final theme overlapped with 'wicked problems' and 'lack of support' and highlighted the impact of these factors on mental health. Participants reported that a lack of emotional and financial support, alongside feelings of hopelessness and abandonment by previous generations, strongly impacted their emotional and mental health and made dealing with problems even more overwhelming or challenging.

Recommendations

First, we have to address the fundamental human rights of Y-NEETs:

- Ensure that young people are **connected to whānau and other people who care** about them. Y-NEETs may not have reliable family/whānau back-up when things go wrong, or times get tough. They need extra support, pastoral care and mentorship to deal with life's ups and downs.
- Provide **safe, warm and affordable housing solutions** for young people, so they have somewhere secure to be able to build a future for themselves.
- Ensure they have **adequate income** to buy healthy food, pay for period products, transport, have their own bed and pay their power bills so they can start dreaming of a future, rather than living in survival mode.
- Ensure that all young people are **included and safe in New Zealand society**. All young people, including Y-NEETs, must feel that they have a future, are wanted and belong. They need to be safe and not subject to discrimination and racism.

Second, Y-NEETs will need support to get the services they need:

- Provision of **free primary/sexual health care, culturally competent health care and culturally safe services** – 50% of Y-NEETs report being unable to access healthcare when they needed it. In addition, there were high levels of ethnic discrimination experienced in healthcare by Y-NEETS. Access to sexual and reproductive health services is required for those needing it. There were low proportions consistently using condoms and contraception.
- There are alarming rates of symptoms of anxiety (PHQ-4) (66%), significant depressive symptoms (RADS-SF) in the last 12 months (77% females and 54% males), self-harm (48%) and suicide attempts (29%) among Y-NEETs. **Urgent investment in the promotion of mental health, and accessible primary and secondary mental health services** are required for this population to live good and satisfying lives. This must include mental health supports from those who are close to, trusted by, and accepted by Y-NEETs; for example, youth workers and providers with whom they have relationships. The key aspects for promoting mental health are the same as for promoting positive youth development: people who care, safety, and protection from abuse and other harms, including discrimination.
- For young people, substance use can be used to hide pain, anxiety, and boredom, and make them feel better (Schuckit, 2006). There were high rates of substance use among Y-NEETs youth. Any educational and employment programmes wishing to address substance use, must **eliminate the stigma associated with getting help for substance use and not use punitive methods to enforce these behaviours**. We also need to provide young people with real opportunities to thrive, connect and make a good life for themselves.
- Experiences of violence were common for Y-NEETs. Around 30% had witnessed family violence in the past year, almost half had been hit on purpose by another person in the past year, and 47% had at some time experienced sexual abuse, rape or sexual coercion. **Violence prevention strategies that support the safeguarding of young people in their families, relationships and communities are required.**

Third, engage and celebrate the strengths of Y-NEETs rather than focus on their weaknesses:

- Many Y-NEETs have family members that are supportive, caring and accept them for who they are, however about half say that they do not get enough time with their families. They want more time with their families and to have good relationships. **Support young people to negotiate quality family relationships as they become young adults.**
- Y-NEETs do not want to be unemployed or socially isolated: they are bored (53%), want more money to support themselves, and many have tried applying for jobs (64%). Of those young people who were engaged with Y-NEETs providers, 85% said that their tutors cared about them. **Help them engage with skilled providers to develop their skills, talents and passions** so that they are able to see a positive future for themselves.
- Y-NEETs are contributing to our society. About half belonged to sports or cultural groups and volunteered in their communities. They have strong spiritual connections to people and care deeply about protecting the environment for future generations. Encourage and **value the unpaid and unseen work that Y-NEETs do in communities and utilise these skills to help them grow a future for themselves and their families.**

Conclusions

This study highlights the significant and paralysing impact of early hardships and trauma on young people's ability to dream about a positive future. They want good lives, but they need help. Addressing the fundamental needs of young people who are not in education, employment or training will require a whole of Government approach to poverty reduction, accessible housing, family violence prevention, and anti-racism/discrimination in agencies and systems. Y-NEETs need to be connected to caring adults, youth workers, mentors, health and social services, and to be treated with respect when they do seek help. Without addressing these fundamental needs, helping young people into education, employment and training is unlikely to occur, and another generation of young people will fall through the gaps. This is a call for action.

Introduction

Young people who are not in education, employment or training (Y-NEETs) have enormous strengths and potential. These young people have fundamental rights to be included in our society, to belong, to contribute and to develop positive futures for themselves and their children. Y-NEETs have usually faced multiple injustices and disadvantage from their early years. They are often viewed as problems, with a deficit lens by many agencies and services. While there are significant challenges, there is also great potential. In this report we seek to raise the visibility of Y-NEETs, recognise their challenges, and explore their potential and their rights to live good lives.

What is Y-NEETs?

In New Zealand (NZ) and internationally, the term “Youth Not in Education, Employment or Training” (Y-NEET) refers to someone who does not have a paid job or is not in education or studying towards a qualification. This includes people who are unemployed and searching for work, and discouraged job seekers who have given up searching for work. It also includes people who are not working or looking for work for other reasons, such as being ill or disabled, having children or other family members to look after, being on holiday or devoting their time to unpaid activities. There are short-term Y-NEET spells, lasting between one week and less than 26 weeks, and long-term spells, lasting 6 months or more. These definitions are consistent with the most commonly used international definition (Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, 2013).

However, we think the term Y-NEETs is problematic, as it defines young people by what they are **not** doing. The Y-NEETs literature is deficits-focused and stigmatising, and highlights how much young people cost the nation in welfare, justice and other social programmes - rather than focusing on their strengths and highlighting the systems that have failed them and their families. It also does not consider that some young people are parents, are caregivers, have chronic conditions or disabilities preventing them from working, and simply may not be in the position for further education and employment. Y-NEET data does not take into account that many of these young people are discriminated against in the job market. We believe disaggregation of Y-NEET data is required to really understand the situations of young people not engaged in education, employment or training. Y-NEETs are some of the most stigmatised groups in our society, and they need the most support, yet many do not get it.

For the purposes of this report, Y-NEETs participants are defined as those young people aged 16-22 years who are not in education, training or employment. Some participants might be engaged in short-term NEETs courses (i.e. drivers licensing or curriculum development) and some are parents attending teen parent schools. Some of the Y-NEETs participants have a disability that makes it difficult for them to engage in work or education. While we acknowledge that socially ascribed connotations are negative, we use the Y-NEETs term in the report, not in a pejorative manner but as a descriptive term that recognises their potential.

How many young people are considered Y-NEETs in NZ?

In New Zealand, depending on the definitions and source of data, the proportion of youth experiencing a long-term Y-NEET spell ranges from 3-12% (Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, 2013; Pacheco et al, 2016; Tuatagaloa et al, 2018). MBIE data found approximately 3% at 16 years, rising to 7% at 19 years and then remaining constant over the 20–24-year age range (Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, 2013). In 2015, using data from the Household Labour Force Survey it was estimated that 12% of youth aged 16-24 years in New Zealand were NEET (Pacheco et al, 2016; Tuatagaloa et al, 2018). Of these young people who are Y-NEETs, 65% reside in either Auckland, Wellington, Waikato or Canterbury local government regions. Y-NEETs were more likely to be aged 20-24 years, relative to being 16–19-year-olds (accounting for 73% of all Y-NEETs). Females have consistently made up a larger proportion of the Y-NEETs population, mainly due to caregiving responsibilities (37% of females caregiving, 4% of males caregiving). In terms of ethnic makeup, NZ European and Māori accounted for the largest proportion of Y-NEETs (Pacheco et al, 2016).

What do we currently know about the health and social wellbeing of Y-NEETs?

Currently, there is very limited information about the health and wellbeing of Y-NEETs. Without quality information, it is not possible to develop interventions, services or policies for rangatahi – hence they remain invisible or the object of negative narratives about ‘unemployed youth.’

What is Youth2000 and why is a Y-NEETs survey needed?

The Youth2000 survey series are health and wellbeing surveys of New Zealand’s young people. Surveys of New Zealand’s secondary schools were undertaken in 2001, 2007, 2012 and 2019. Surveys of Alternative Education students were undertaken in 2000, 2009 and 2019. Prior to 2019, there had never been a survey of Y-NEETs students. For the first time in 2019, we surveyed Y-NEETs to address this gap.

Youth19 survey

The Youth19 survey asked 285 questions across 11 key areas in young people’s lives: ethnicity and culture; home life; identity; school; health; emotions; injury and violence; sport, work and online time; sex and sexuality; addictive behaviours; and neighbourhood and spirituality (the questionnaire can be found on our website, www.youth19.ac.nz). The survey used a branching design so young people only saw questions that were relevant to them. It was anonymous, so it allowed young people to be honest without feeling exposed or judged. For more details about the survey, please see the [Youth19 Rangatahi Smart Survey, Initial Findings: Introduction and Methods report](#) (Fleming et al, 2020), which explains how the survey was conducted, who was included and how to interpret the results.

How did we find (sample) Y-NEETs for this survey?

To recruit Y-NEETs, we utilised a convenience sample of young people aged 15-22 years. They were recruited via community youth provider networks and youth partners in the Northland, Auckland and Waikato regions. Young people who agreed to participate met with a skilled youth worker/researcher who talked through consent and arranged a convenient place and time to meet with them to do the survey. Koha, kai, and babysitters

(if they were parents) were arranged to ensure that young people were comfortable and appropriately acknowledged for their participation. We were careful to purposely select diverse participants from the Y-NEETs population (i.e. disability, rainbow, parents etc.) to ensure that there was a diversity of young people's experiences reflected in the report. The youth worker/researcher stayed with participants afterward to talk with them about the survey and process any issues they had, and link them to services or support systems that they may need.

The Youth19 survey was based on well established procedures used to build the previous Youth2000 series surveys. Ethical approval for this study was granted by The University of Auckland Human Subjects Ethics Committee (application #022244).

How findings are reported

In this report, we organised the presentation of the findings within the following sections: Demographics, Socioeconomic Environments, Home and Family/Whānau, their Settings, their Health and Wellbeing and their Communities. The Health and Wellbeing section includes the following subsections: Overall health and access to health services; physical health; emotional health; sexual health; and substance use. The community section includes involvement with communities and violence, risky car use, and interactions with the police.

We have also reported the open-text responses from the survey on the issues that young people face and on what should be changed to better support young people in New Zealand.

How we did the analyses and technical details

When describing the indicators of the Y-NEETs across all the sections listed above, we reported unweighted counts and proportions as this was a convenience sample. To calculate the proportions presented, we considered only valid cases, which means that young people with missing information for the indicators were excluded from the denominators (i.e. Y-NEETs participants could skip questions they did not want to answer or were not relevant to them). We have also used unweighted counts for comparing the differences in the indicators of Y-NEETs by sex (boys/males versus girls/females) under the section "Health and Wellbeing". To test for differences in the proportions between boys/males and girls/females we performed Pearson chi-square and Fisher chi-square tests. As the number of young people who identified themselves as transgender or non-binary was small (<5), these individuals were excluded from the analyses comparing differences in indicators according to sex.

For most indicators presented in this report, we have also compared how Y-NEETs were doing in relation to the students attending secondary schools. To do this, we used unweighted counts for the Y-NEETs sample and the survey sampling weighted counts for the secondary school students.

Comparisons were made using logistic regressions, having the indicator (in 2 categories, for example, yes and no) as the dependent variable and the young people grouping (Y-NEET *versus* secondary school students-category of reference) as the independent variable. The logistic regressions were adjusted for sex, age and ethnicity to account for differences in the constitution of both samples (Y-NEETs and secondary school students). Thus, in this report, we described differences in indicators of Y-NEETs and secondary school students independently of their sex, ethnicity or age (adjusted odds

ratios). We have also performed sex-specific comparisons (girls/females and boys/males) of indicators of emotional health between the Y-NEETs and the students from secondary schools, as previous findings reported relevant gender differences for these indicators among the New Zealand students from secondary schools (Fleming et al 2020; Miranda-Mendizabal et al, 2019; Salk et al 2017). In this report, we have indicated when there were statistically significant differences between the indicators of the Y-NEETs and the secondary school students. However, when the differences were not significant, we did not present values of adjusted odds ratio and their 95% confidence intervals and p-values.

Analysis of open text responses

For the first time in a Youth2000 survey, Youth19 included open text questions Y-NEETs could express their views about the issues they face. They could skip the question or respond in open text boxes, in their own words. We used general inductive approach (Thomas, 2005); aiming to summarize youth feedback to each question, rather than seeking to develop a discourse analysis or build new theory. This was relevant to the survey purpose.

For each question, two researchers (TGC and TF) read all the responses to the questions and then they gathered 'like with like', clustering responses into groups. Together they reviewed and refined these groupings and drafted the unifying ideas or themes. Next, they independently searched for quotes which encapsulated the key ideas for each cluster or theme, they met again to review themes for clarity and accuracy and then finalised the text with review from a third author and content expert (TC). Thus, in this analysis we described the most common topics, concerns and solutions Y-NEETs mentioned when asked about the issues the young people face in New Zealand and what should be changed to better support young people in New Zealand.

How to interpret odds ratio,

confidence intervals and statistics

Findings in this report were interpreted based on estimates of odds ratios and confidence intervals of estimates. Odds ratio measures the odds that an outcome will occur given a particular exposure (or characteristic) compared to the odds of the outcome occurring in the absence of the exposure. However, it is important to highlight that there are uncertainties in the estimates presented in this report, indicated by the 95% confidence intervals of the estimate. Confidence intervals indicate the range within which we can be 95% sure that the true value of each estimate lies. The wider the confidence intervals, the more uncertain the estimates are (Fleming et al, 2020). When comparing estimates between Y-NEETs and the students from secondary schools, apart from reporting the confidence intervals, we also reported the p-values. P-values indicate whether a study result is statistically significant, however, it does not provide any information on practical and clinical importance of findings as p-values and confidence intervals are influenced by sample size. Thus, the larger the sample, the more likely the p-values are to be significant and, if sample sizes are small, the less likely the p-values are to be statistically significant (Berben et al, 2012). As a general rule, if the confidence intervals around two estimates do not overlap, then the differences between Y-NEETs and the secondary school students are more likely to be important.

We have adjusted the comparisons of indicators between Y-NEETs and the secondary school students by sample differences in age, ethnic composition and sex, however, these comparisons were not adjusted by other relevant differences between the samples, such as level of deprivation or poverty. This aspect represents another limitation that needs to be considered when interpreting these findings.

Dealing with small numbers

We followed the Statistics NZ guidelines for reporting findings where less than five people responded to a particular question, or small cell sizes (Statistics New Zealand, 2020). In this study, we have not reported any questions where there were less than five people, to protect the anonymity of participants. There is one exception where in the demographics table we described the number of transgender or non-binary Y-NEETs (<5) students. For all other response options with less than 5 individuals, cells were aggregated/collapsed or are not reported (suppressed). We have provided annotation in the tables to highlight where this has occurred.

Limitations of the study

This is the first survey of the Youth2000 surveys to describe the health and wellbeing of the Y-NEETs and it is of considerable importance for communities, schools and policy makers for the purposes of planning and programme development. However, caution needs to be taken when generalising the findings of this study to all New Zealand Y-NEETs as we interviewed a convenience sample from the regions of Northland, Auckland and Waikato. The young people who made themselves available to participate in this survey, may represent a more connected/healthy group of Y-NEETs as they were recruited via youth workers and agencies. Y-NEETs not engaged with any agencies are likely to be more at risk. It should also be noted that the survey data relates to one specific point-in-time (cross-sectional observation) and, thus, the relationships (associations) presented in this report cannot be interpreted as cause and effect. As previously mentioned, some confidence intervals are wide, so the precision of the responses is limited.

About half of Y-NEETs participants chose to give us their home addresses. Participants were asked for their home address to get the Meshblock code for their neighbourhood

(to allow us to identify deprivation neighbourhood data) and then their address was deleted to maintain anonymity of their survey file. The reluctance of some Y-NEETs to provide their home address might reflect their suspicion that it could make them identifiable; however, it could also be partly due to some Y-NEETs not having a home address (housing insecurity) at the time of the survey.

It is important to note, that recruitment of Y-NEETs participants via community youth providers, may have had an impact on these results. Further, youth involved with a NEETs provider may be more likely to seek help, when compared to other Y-NEETs who are not in contact with any service. This is likely to present a slightly healthier, less risky picture of Y-NEETs.

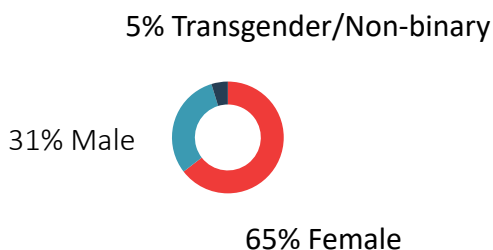
More detailed methodology for the Y-NEETs survey will be available in future academic publications. See our website to sign up for updates on Youth19 findings, www.youth19.ac.nz

Findings

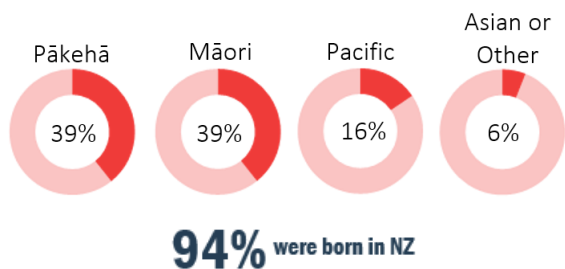
Demographics

In total, 84 young people who were not in education, employment or training (referred to from here as Y-NEETs) took part in this survey.

- There were more girls/females (65%) than boys/males.



- Most participants were aged 17-19 years (56%).
- The most common ethnic groups were Pākehā/NZ European (39%) and Māori (39%)
- Three in 10 Y-NEETs identified with two or more ethnic groups, and the majority (94%) were born in NZ (**Table 1**).



Demographic characteristics of Y-NEETs compared to secondary school students

There were no statistically significant differences between the proportions of secondary school students and the Y-NEETs for:

- Having two or more ethnicities
- Being born overseas
- (independent of age, sex and ethnicity)

Table 1: Y-NEETs: Demographic characteristics, 2019

	All	
	n	%
Sex		
Female	54	65.2
Male	26	31.0
Transgender/Non-binary	4	4.8
Age		
15-16	13	15.5
17-19	47	56.0
19+ years	24	28.6
Ethnicity		
NZ European/Pākehā	33	39.3
Māori	33	39.3
Pacific	13	15.5
Asian or Others [^]	5	6.0
Number of ethnicities identified with		
1	57	70.3
2	17	21.0
3 or more	7	8.7
Country of Birth		
NZ	75	93.8
Overseas	5	6.3

N=84.

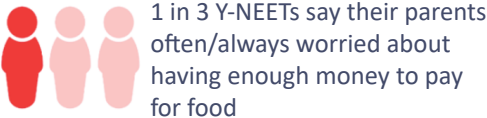
* Ethnicity was categorised using the NZ census ethnicity prioritisation method (Statistics New Zealand, 2015).

[^]The categories Asian and Others were aggregated. In "Others" is included MELAA (Middle Eastern, Latin American and African), Other ethnicity, and ethnicity unknown.

Socioeconomic Environments

The socioeconomic environments for Y-NEETs were extremely challenging, with high levels of family and individual hardship, period poverty, food insecurity and housing deprivation (**Table 2**):

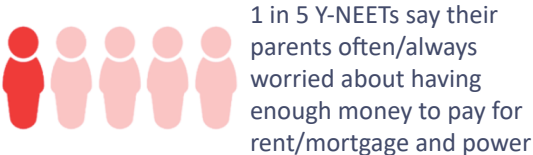
- Over 70% of the Y-NEETs reported that their parents worried at least occasionally about not having enough money to buy food, and more than one in three (35%) worried often or all of the time about not having enough money to buy food.



- 19% said their parents worried often or all of the time about the power or electricity being cut off.
- 38% of Y-NEETs' parents were worried often or all of the time about affording the costs of transport to important places like school or work.



- 22% of Y-NEETs' parents were often or always worried about not being able to afford to pay for housing costs (rent or mortgage), often or all of the time.



- Six out of 10 (61%) had one or both parents who were unemployed.
- Among those who have had their period, four in 10 (42%) experienced period poverty because of the cost of menstrual items.



- 71%* were living in the most deprived neighbourhoods (deciles 8-10 of the New Zealand Deprivation Index 2018- Atkinson et al, 2019) and the majority (90%) were living in urban settings (data not shown in table).
- Housing deprivation was experienced by 70% of Y-NEETs (a combination of 5 housing indicators) (Clark et al, 2021).
- Four out of 10 (40%) Y-NEETs reported not having their own bed to sleep at least once in the last 12 months because they or their family could not to afford or get a home or because there was not enough space.
- One in three (33%) families had to split up because their home was not big enough to accommodate everyone.
- Housing mobility was high, with more than 60% of Y-NEETs moving homes two or more times in the last 12 months.

*Only 45% of Y-NEETs provided information on household location.

Table 2. Y-NEETs: Socioeconomic environments, 2019.

	All	
	n	%
Parental employment status*		
Mother and father unemployed	16	21.6
Mother or father unemployed	29	39.2
Mother and father working (part-time or full-time)	29	39.2
Overcrowding in home (yes)**	8	10.1
In the last 12 months, have you had to sleep somewhere other than your own bed because it was hard for your family to afford or get a home, or there was not enough space? (yes, at least once)	33	40.2
Moved homes ≥ 2 times in the last 12 months (yes)	53	63.1
Family had to split up because of housing problems	55	32.9
Housing deprivation (yes)***	59	70.2
Experienced period poverty (yes)****	22	42.3
Parents (or others acting as parents) worry about not having enough money to buy food:		
Never	17	21.8
Occasionally/sometimes	30	38.6
Often/all the time	27	34.6
Parents (or others acting as parents) worry about power being cut-off:		
Never	37	50.0
Occasionally/sometimes	23	31.1
Often/all the time	14	18.9
Parents (or others acting as parents) worry about paying rent/ mortgage:		
Never	35	47.9
Occasionally/sometimes	22	30.2
Often/all the time	16	21.9
Parents (or others acting as parents) worry about paying for petrol or transport to get to important places like work or school:		
Never	16	22.2
Occasionally/sometimes	29	40.3
Often/all the time	27	37.5

N=84. S denotes numbers are too low to report. Missing (n): Parental employment status (10); Overcrowding in home (5); Had to sleep elsewhere (5); Family had to split up because of housing problems (5); Period poverty (5); Parents worry about: not having enough money to buy food (10); power being cut-off (10); paying rent/mortgages (11); paying for petrol or transport (12).

*Includes other people who act as mother/father for the young person NEET.

**Defined as more than 2 people/bedroom (Statistics New Zealand, 2018).

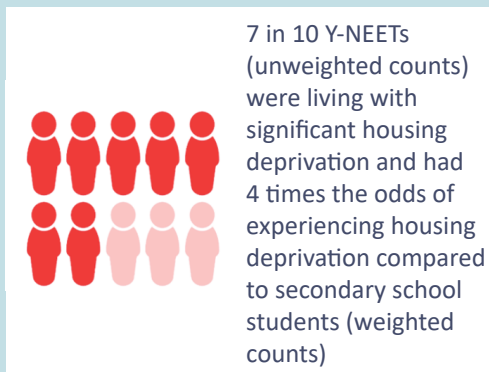
***Defined as lacking access to minimally adequate housing and it takes into consideration the following indicators: living in inadequate housing (such as sleeping in cars, floor, emergency accommodation, couch surfing, etc); serious housing deprivation (living in emergency houses, hostels, cars etc); housing financial stress (parents often/always worry about paying for housing costs); families splitting up because they do not have enough space for everyone and; moving frequently in the past 12 months (Clark et al, 2021).

****Defined when someone cannot access menstrual items for their period, because of cost (only asked of those who have had their first period).

Socioeconomic environments of Y-NEETs compared to secondary school students

When comparing the socioeconomic environments of Y-NEETs to students attending secondary schools in New Zealand, **Y-NEETs were more likely to have:**

- Experienced housing deprivation;



- One or both parents unemployed at the time of the survey;
 - Parents that worry about not having enough money to pay for petrol or transport to get to important places;
 - Parents that parents worry about not having enough money to pay for cost with mortgage/rent;
 - Parents worry about power being cut because they cannot afford to pay for it and;
 - Parents who report food insecurity (parents worrying about not having enough money to pay for food).
- Had their families split up because there was not enough space in their house to accommodate everyone;
 - Moved home twice or more often in the previous 12 months;
 - Needed to sleep somewhere else other than their own bed in the last 12 months because they or their family could not to afford or get a home or because there was not enough space;

Menstruating Y-NEETs were more likely to experience period poverty in comparison to secondary school students (reported by 42% Y-NEETs who have had their period and by 13% of students attending secondary schools; AOR=3.5; 95%CI: 2.0-6.1; $p<0.001$).

There were no statistically significant differences between the proportions of secondary school students and Y-NEETs for:

- Experiencing crowding in their home.

(Figures 1a and 1b)

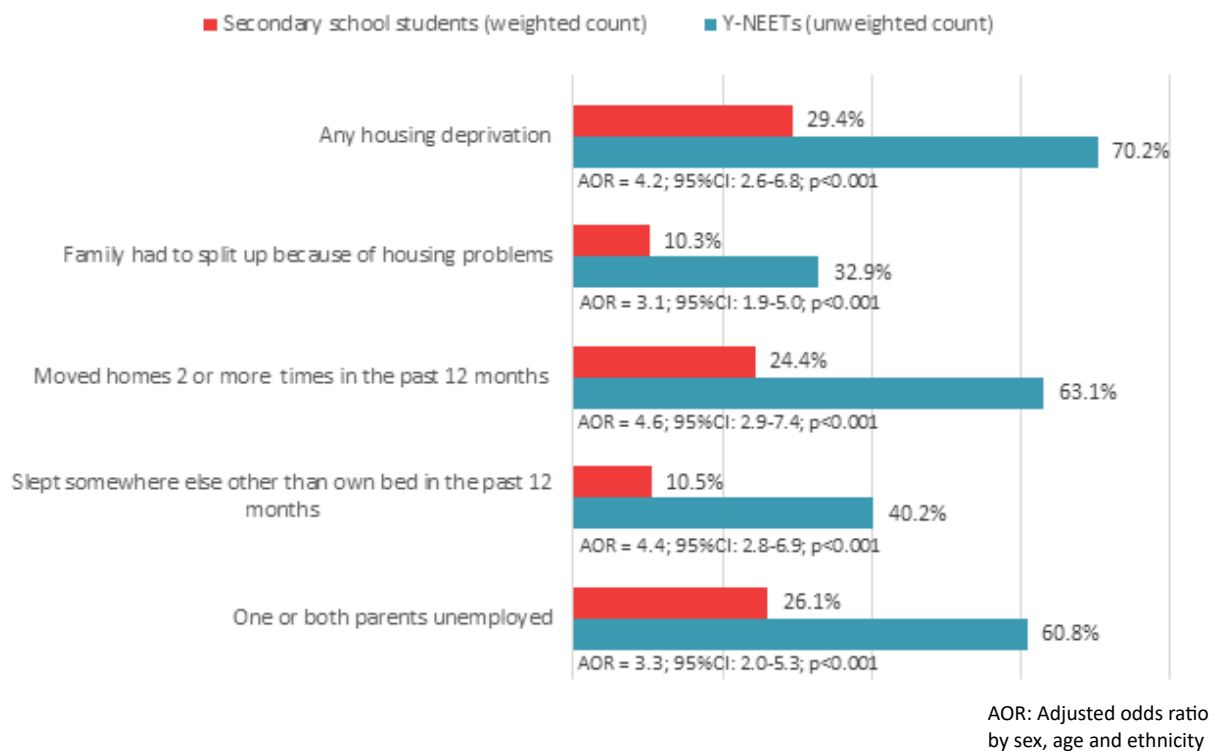


Figure 1a. Socioeconomic environments: Comparisons between Y-NEETs and secondary school students, 2019.

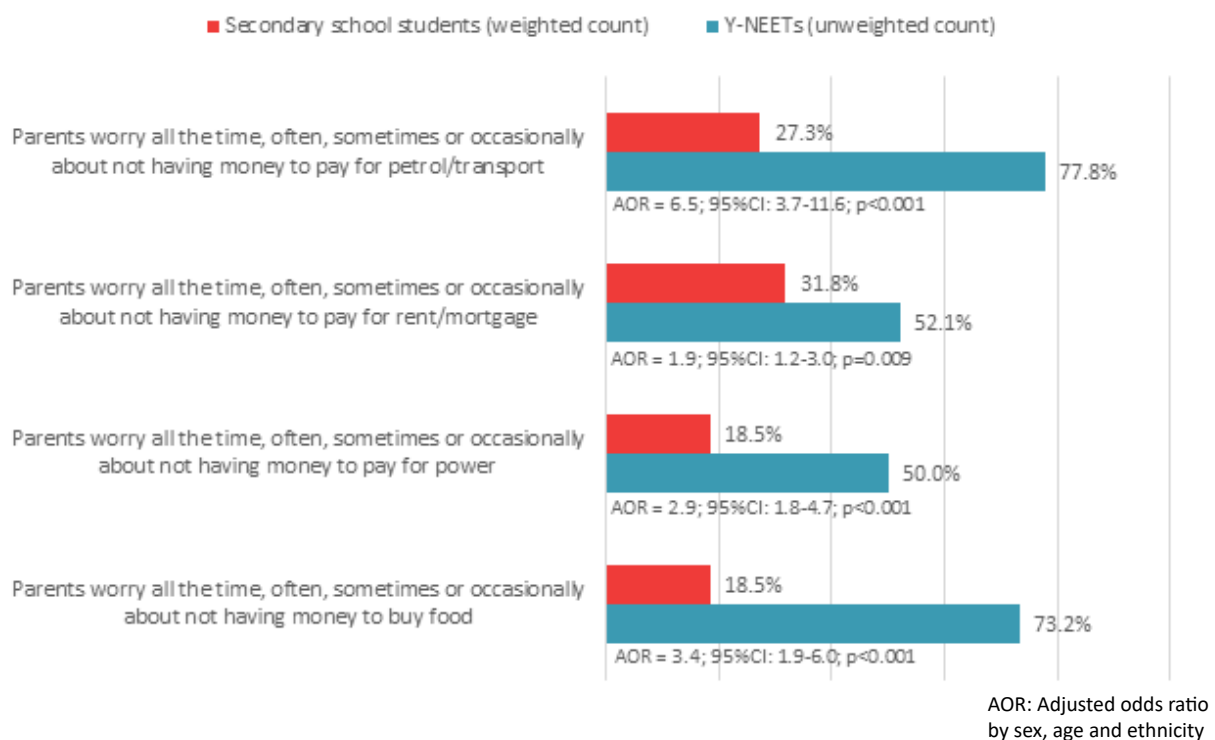


Figure 1b. Socioeconomic environments: Comparisons between Y-NEETs and secondary school students, 2019.

Home and Family/Whānau

Family/whānau background and circumstances

Y-NEETs faced challenging home circumstances:

- Half of Y-NEETs were living with at least one parent (50%), 17% were living with family members other than parents; 22% were not living, boarding or flatting with any family members and, 11% were living by themselves (**Table 3**). In contrast, for secondary school students, most (93%) were living with at least one of their parents (*data not shown in table or figure*).

- Approximately one in three (33%) have been involved with Oranga Tamariki or Child, Youth and Family Services (which pre-dates Oranga Tamariki).
- 17% did not feel safe at home all the time.

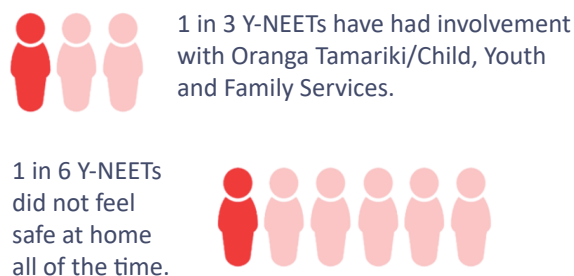


Table 3. Y-NEETs: Background and circumstances of families/whānau, 2019.

	All	
	n	%
Y-NEETs:		
I live with two parents/live with one parent mostly or move between parents/live with parent and step-parent	41	50.0
I live with family members other than parents	14	17.0
I do not live/board/flat with any family member	18	22.0
I live by myself	9	11.0
I do not feel safe at home - all the time	14	16.9
I have ever been involved with Oranga Tamariki/Child, Youth and Family Services (yes)	27	33.3

N=84. S denotes numbers are too low to report (information was primary suppressed). Missing (n): People living with (S); feeling safe at home (S); have been involved with Oranga Tamariki/Child, Youth and Family Services (S).

Family/whānau background and circumstances of Y-NEETs compared to secondary school students

In comparison to the secondary school students, **Y-NEETs were more likely to:**

- Have ever been involved with Oranga Tamariki /Child, Youth and Family Services;
- Not feel safe at home, at least some of the time

(Figure 2)

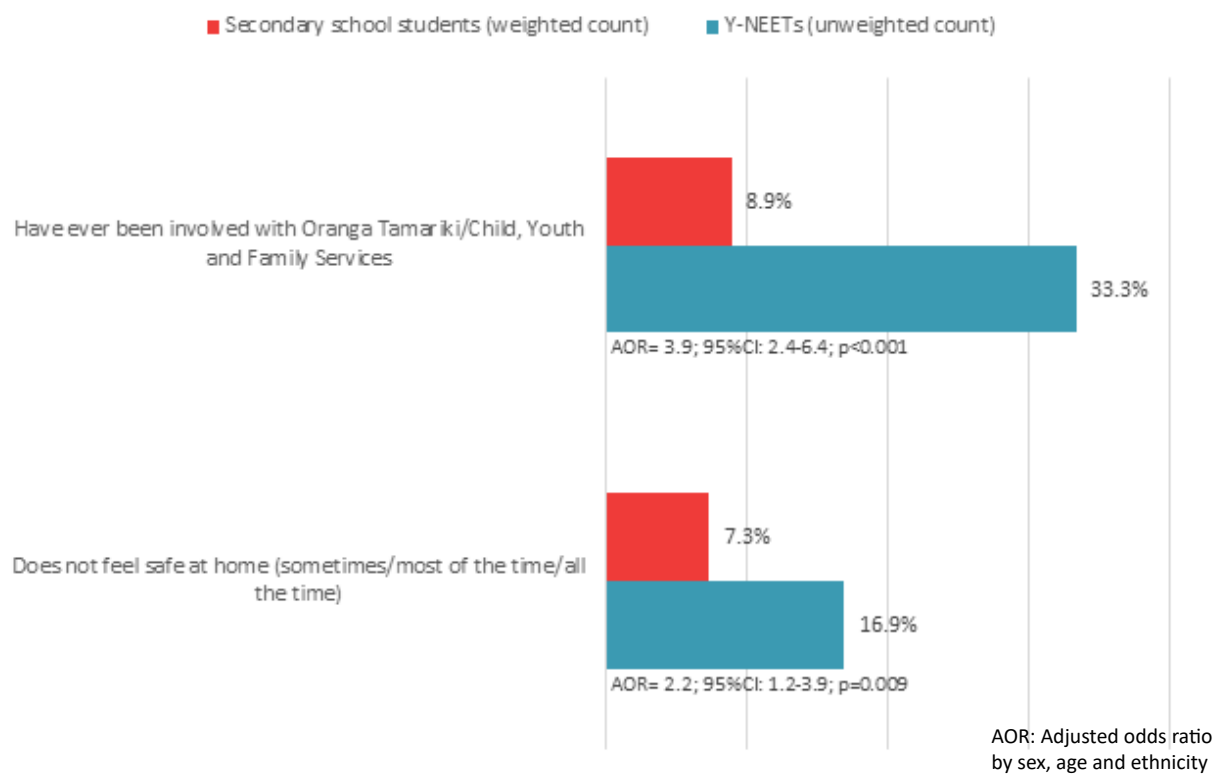


Figure 2. Family background and circumstances: Comparisons between Y-NEETs and secondary school students, 2019.

Family/whānau relationships

Many Y-NEETs reported (strongly agree or agree) that they have family support (Table 4), however many reported not having adequate family time (Table 4).

Most Y-NEETs reported having someone in their family who:

- They trust to share their feelings with (71%);
- They can talk about things that worry them (61%);
- Respects what is important to them (69%);
- Accepts them for who they are (83%);
- They have a close bond with (84%);
- Will stick up for them (83%);
- They can have fun with and who makes them laugh (88%) and,
- Is proud of them participating in cultural, sporting and academic activities (71%).

- Most of Y-NEETs also reported that:
- Their parents care a lot about them (81%);

4 in 5 Y-NEETs reported their parents care a lot about them



- Their families always/usually want to know where they were, and who they were with (67%).
- However, less than half of Y-NEETs reported that they get enough quality time with family/whānau (49%).

49% reported they get enough quality time with family/whānau



9 in 10 Y-NEETs reported there was someone in their family/whānau they can have fun with and who makes them laugh

Table 4. Y-NEETs: Family/whānau relationships, 2019.

	All	
	n	%
Strongly agree or agree that there is someone in my family/ whānau who:	58	70.7
I can trust to share my feelings with	50	61.0
I can talk with about things that are worrying me	56	69.1
Respects what is important to me	66	82.5
Accepts me for who I am	66	82.5
I have a close bond with	70	87.5
Will stick up for me and has “got my back”	57	71.3
I can have fun with, who makes me laugh		
Is proud of me participating in cultural, sporting and academic activities		
Strongly agree or agree that I get enough quality time with the family/ whānau	40	49.4
Family always/usually want to know where I was and who I was with	54	66.7
I feel that my parents (one or both) care a lot about me	65	81.3

N=84. S denotes numbers are too low to report (information was primary suppressed). Missing (n): Strongly agree/agree there is someone in family who: can share feelings with (S); can talk about things that are worrying me (S); respects what is important to me (S); accepts me for who I am (S); I have close bond with (S); stick up for me (S); makes me laugh (S); is proud of me (S); Feels like gets enough quality time with family (S); family want to know where you were(S); feel parents/other family members care a lot about them (S).

Family/whānau relationships of Y-NEETs compared to secondary school students

In comparison to secondary school students Y-NEETs **were less likely to:**

- Feel that one or both parents or other family members care a lot about them;
- Have families who always/usually want to know where they were and who they were with and;
- Have someone in their family who they can talk about things that are worrying them.

In comparison to secondary school students Y-NEETs **were more likely to** get enough quality time with their family/whānau*.

There were no statistically significant differences between the proportions of secondary school students and Y-NEETs reporting that there is someone in their family who:

- Accepts them for who they are;
- They have close bond with.

(Figure 3)

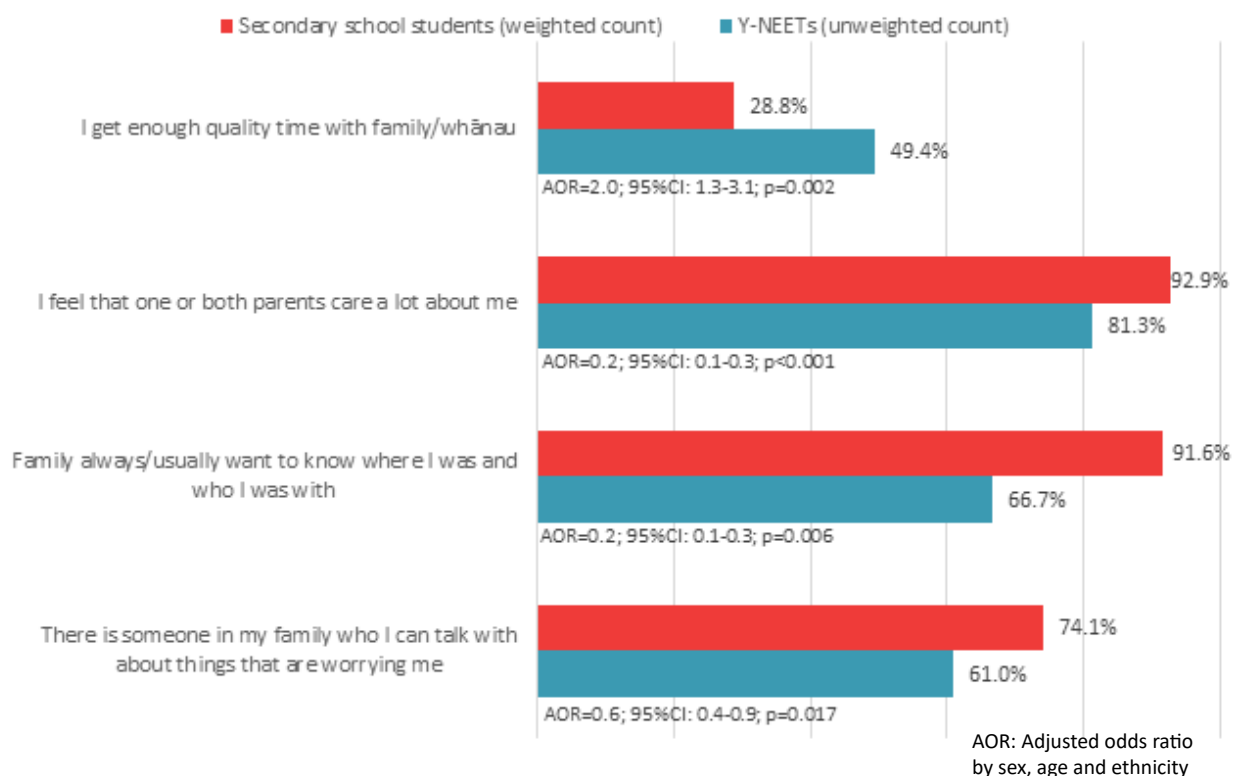


Figure 3. Family/whānau relationships: Comparisons between Y-NEETs and secondary school students, 2019.

* Note, however, that only about a half of Y-NEETs and a third of secondary school students reported getting enough quality time with their families (data not shown in table).

Not Being in Education, Employment or Training

At the time of the survey, Y-NEETs were in a range of situations. They were all considered Y-NEETs, yet some were attending NEETs focused courses (such as driver's licence courses, CV courses) and some were attending a teen parenting programme.

Overall, in the last 12 months:

- 64% of the Y-NEETs applied for a job.

Among those attending short-term training courses* (driver's licensing, CV preparation):

- 89% reported they felt part of the training course.



9 in 10 Y-NEETs reported to feel part of the short-term training course

**These are only short-term courses. Young people attending these courses were still considered Y-NEETs.*

- 85% reported that their tutors care about them (*data not shown in table*).



4 in 5 Y-NEETs reported that they feel that their tutors care about them.

Y-NEETs reported multiple challenges about not being at school, in a course or job, with boredom and lack of money being reported by over 50% and loneliness also featuring highly (**Table 5**).

Some Y-NEETs had applied to jobs/placements but were unsuccessful. The reasons they believe they didn't get the job were lack of experience (38%) and competition for jobs (35%). However, most commonly, they didn't know why they didn't get the job (41%) (**Table 5**).

Table 5. Y-NEETs: The challenges of not being in education, employment or training, 2019.

	All	
	n	%
Among Y-NEETs not going to school, a course or having a job: What is hard about not going to school, a course or having a job? (more than one option could be chosen/indicated)*		
Nothing to do, boredom	25	53.2
I can't afford to pay for rent or board	16	34.0
No money to do anything	25	53.2
It is lonely	15	31.9
I don't have enough money for food	17	36.2
No one will give me a chance to prove myself in a job	8	17.0
There are no courses or education courses that I want to do	12	25.5
My family give me a hard time about not going to school, training or work	12	25.5
WINZ, education and other agencies give me a hard time about not going to school, training or work	10	21.3
There is not enough help for me to get a job	8	17.0
People don't respect me	9	19.1
Other	97	14.5
Among Y-NEETs who applied for jobs and did not get them: What are some of the reasons that you didn't get the job(s)? (more than one option could be indicated)**		
I didn't have the right qualifications	8	27.6
I did not have any experience	11	37.9
I was too shy	6	20.7
I felt like they didn't want a person my age or my ethnic group	7	24.1
Too many other people applied for the job	10	34.5
I don't know why I didn't get the job	12	41.4
Other	6	20.7

*N=47; N=39**

Participants could choose more than one response

Health and Wellbeing

Overall health and access to health services

Table 6 presents the indicators of health and access to health services for Y-NEETs.

- Overall, Y-NEETs reported good, very good or excellent health (71%).
- Most had been to a health care provider in the last 12 months (83%), most commonly with a GP with 72% of Y-NEETs visiting a GP in the last 12 months.
- 14% reported having a long-term disability.



7 in 10 Y-NEETs reported good, very good or excellent health and had been to a health care provider in the year previous to the survey



Y-NEETs reported challenges in the access of health care services:

- 50% were unable to see a health care provider when they wanted to in the last year;
- 28% reported ethnic discrimination by a health care provider and;
- 12% Y-NEETs had not gone for health care for more than two years.

Table 6. Y-NEETs: Overall health and access to health services, 2019.

	All	
	n	%
In general, how would you say your health is?		
Excellent, very good or good	60	71.4
Fair or poor	24	28.6
Do you have any long-term disability (lasting 6 months or more) (e.g. sensory impaired hearing, visual impairment, in a wheelchair, learning difficulties)? (Yes)		
	11	14.3
When was the last time you went for health care (excluding looking online)?		
0-12 months ago	68	82.9
13-24 months ago	S	SS
More than 24 months ago	10	12.2
Services that were used in the last 12 months (More than one option could be indicated):		
GP	58	71.6
School health clinic	6	7.4
Accident & Emergency	24	29.6
Hospital ED	19	23.5
After hours or 24-hour accident and medical centre	10	12.3
Youth health centre	12	14.8
Family planning or sexual health clinic/other health provider	10	12.4
In the last 12 months, has there been any time when you wanted or needed to see a doctor or nurse (or other health care worker) about your health, but you weren't able to? (Yes)		
	41	50.0
Have you ever been treated unfairly (e.g. treated differently, kept waiting) by a health professional (e.g. doctor, nurse, dentist etc.) because of your ethnicity or ethnic group? (Yes)		
	23	28.4

N=84. S denotes numbers are too low to report (information was primary suppressed). Missing (n): Long-term disability (7); Last time went for health care (S); Has been any time when you needed a doctor/nurse but you are not able to? (S). Used in the last 12 months: GP (S); School health clinic (S); Accident and Emergency (S); Hospital ED (S); After hours (S); Youth health centre (S); Family planning or sexual health clinic (S); Other health provider (S); Have you ever been treated unfairly by health professionals (S).

Overall health and access to health services of Y-NEETs compared to secondary school students

Compared to secondary school students, **Y-NEETs were more likely to:**

- Be treated unfairly by health professionals because of ethnic background;
- Not access health care when needed it and
- Report their general health as fair/poor.

There were no statistically significant differences between the proportions of secondary school students and Y-NEETs who reported having a long-term disability.

(Figure 4)

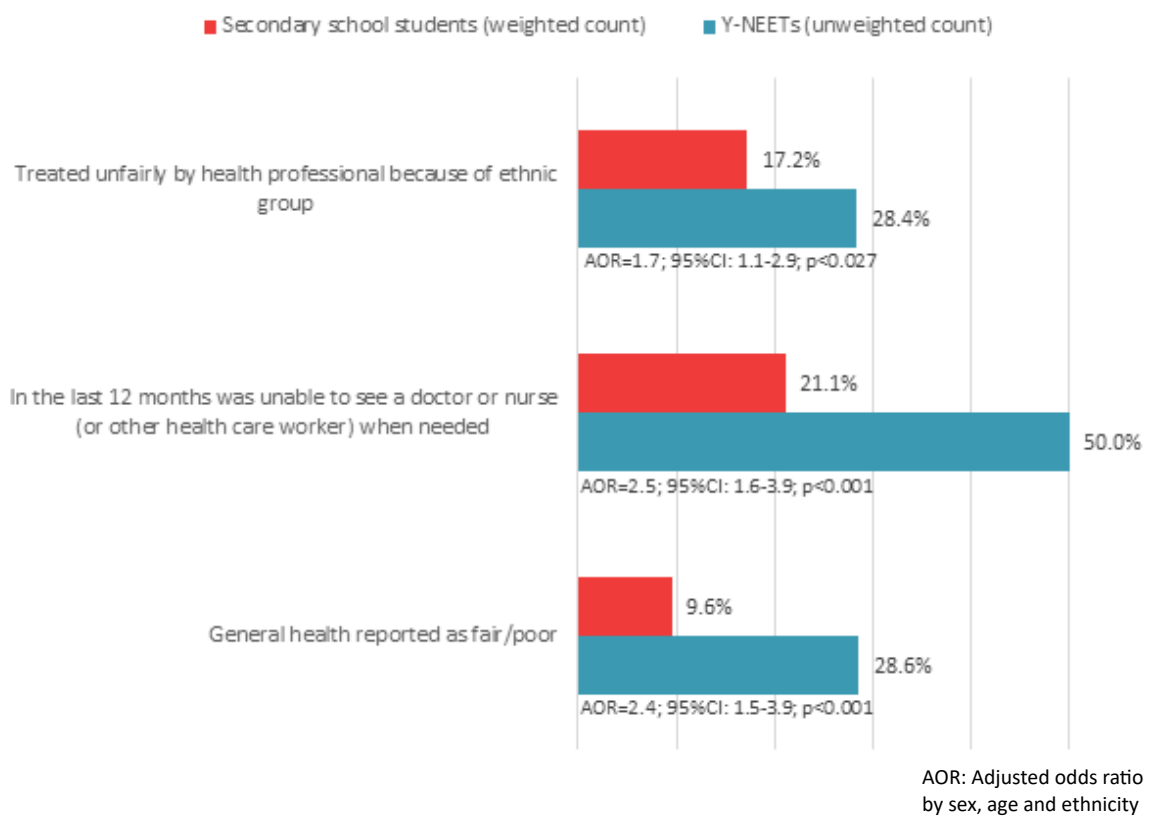


Figure 4. Overall health and access to health services: Comparisons between Y-NEETs and secondary school students, 2019.

Physical health

Table 7 presents the indicators of physical health of Y-NEETs.

- Most were okay, happy or very happy with their weight (64%);
- 82% were having the recommended hours of sleep.

However, it is concerning that most Y-NEETs were not exercising according to the recommended guidelines for their age (78%). Males (males - 36% versus females- 15%; $p=0.026$) were significantly more likely to do the recommended level of vigorous physical

activity (more than 20 minutes when last exercised and at least 4 times in the last 7 days).

There were no statistically significant differences between males and females for the other indicators of physical health (*data not shown in table*).

Eating family meals together is an important time to maintain family relationships and whanaungatanga. 62% of Y-NEETs had at least three meals with their family a week.

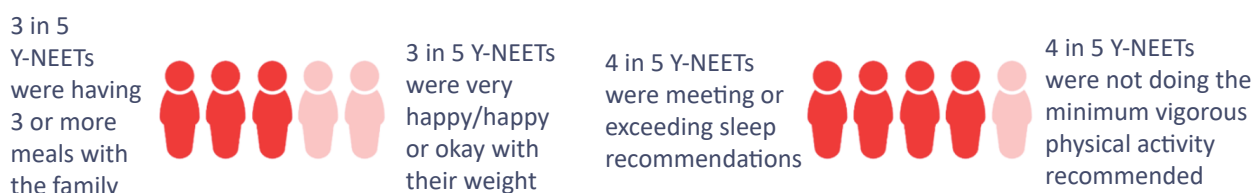


Table 7. Y-NEETs: Physical health, 2019.

	All	
	n	%
Did you do more than 20 minutes of vigorous physical activity (VPA) during their last exercise, and did VPA at least four times in the last 7 days?		
Yes	16	21.6
No	58	78.4
At this time how happy are you with your weight?		
Very happy/happy	24	30.0
Okay	27	33.8
Unhappy/very unhappy	29	36.2
Sleep patterns during weekdays (estimation of total hours*):		
Below recommendations	11	18.3
Equal or above recommendations	49	81.7
During the last 7 days, how many times did all, or most, of your family living in your house eat a meal together?		
Never	11	14.1
1-2 times	19	24.4
3 or more times	48	61.5

N= 84. S denotes numbers are too low to report (information was primary suppressed). Missing: VPA in the last 7 days (10); How happy you are with you weight? (5); Sleep patterns (24); Eating meals with family (6).

*National Sleep Foundation's sleep time duration recommendations (Hirshkowitz et al, 2015): 6-13 years of age:9-10 hours of sleep; 14-17 years of age: 8-10 hours of sleep; 18 or more years of age: 7-9 hours of sleep.

Physical health of Y-NEETs compared to secondary school students

There were no statistically significant differences in the proportions of secondary school students and Y-NEETs for any of the indicators of physical health shown in **Table 7**.

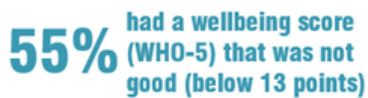
Emotional health

Y-NEETs reported alarming rates of emotional distress and suicidal thoughts, which indicates overall urgent need to investment to improve their life circumstances and to promote mental health (**Table 8**):

- Four in ten (43%) reported clinically significant depressive symptoms (measured by the RADS-SF score);



- More than half (55%) reported poor wellbeing (WHO-5);



- Two thirds (66%) reported signs of anxiety (measured by the PHQ4 score).

- Seven in ten (70%) reported significant depression symptoms (RADS-SF) in the last 12 months, with statistically significant differences by sex (reported by 77% females and 54% males);
- Almost half (48%) reported self-harm in the last 12 months and 44% had considered suicide;

48% reported self-harm in the last 12-months

- More than one in four (29%) reported a suicide attempt in the in the last 12 months.

More than 1 in 4 Y-NEETs had attempted suicide



The top three sources of advice Y-NEETs seek when feeling bad or having a hard time were: a friend or young person they know (n=50, 63%); a parent or other adult in their family (n=29; 36%) and; someone else (n=18; 23%), *data not shown in table*.

Table 8. Y-NEETs: Emotional health, 2019.

	All		Females		Males		p-value X2*
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Symptoms of depression-Reynolds Adolescent Depression Scale (RADS-SF) Yes (>28 points)	35	43.2	23	44.2	9	36.0	0.790
Well-being score (WHO-5) Not good (<13 points)	43	55.1	31	60.8	8	34.8	0.078
Signs of anxiety (PHQ-4) Yes	50	65.8	36	68.6	12	57.1	0.107
Significant depression symptoms in the last 12 months Yes	53	69.7	40	76.9	13	54.2	0.045
Self-harm in the last 12 months Yes	38	47.5	26	50.0	9	37.5	0.310
Considered suicide in the last 12 months Yes	35	44.3	24	46.2	7	30.4	0.202
Attempted suicide in the last 12 months Yes	23	28.7	16	30.8	5	20.8	0.368

N= 84. S denotes numbers are too low to report (information was primary suppressed). Missing (n-all sexes i.e. there were 4 young people who identified as transgender/non-binary): RADS-SF (5); WHO-5 (6); PHQ-4 (8); Depression symptoms (8); Self-harm (5); Considered suicide (5); Attempted suicide (5).

*Chi-square test. Comparisons between sexes, excluded the transgender or gender diverse Y-NEETs.

Emotional health of Y-NEETs compared to secondary school students

In relation to the secondary school students, Y-NEETs had significantly worse indicators of emotional health (Figures 5a and 5b). Compared to secondary school students, **Y-NEETs more likely to have:**

- Signs of anxiety (measured by the PHQ-4);
- Poor wellbeing (measured by the WHO-5 score);
- Symptoms of depression (measured by the RADS-SF score);
- Reported self-harm in the last 12 months and suicide thoughts and
- Attempted suicide in the last 12 months

(Figures 5a and 5b)

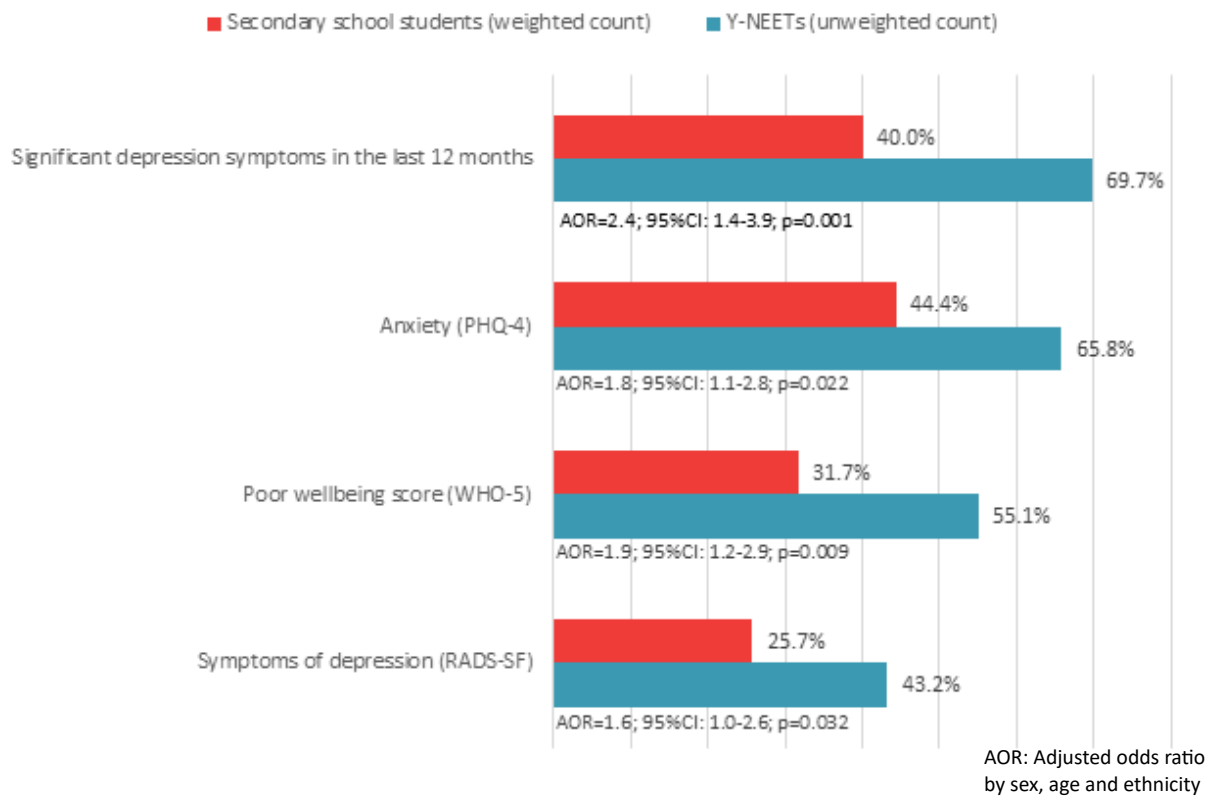


Figure 5a. Emotional health indicators: Comparisons between Y-NEETs and secondary school students, 2019.

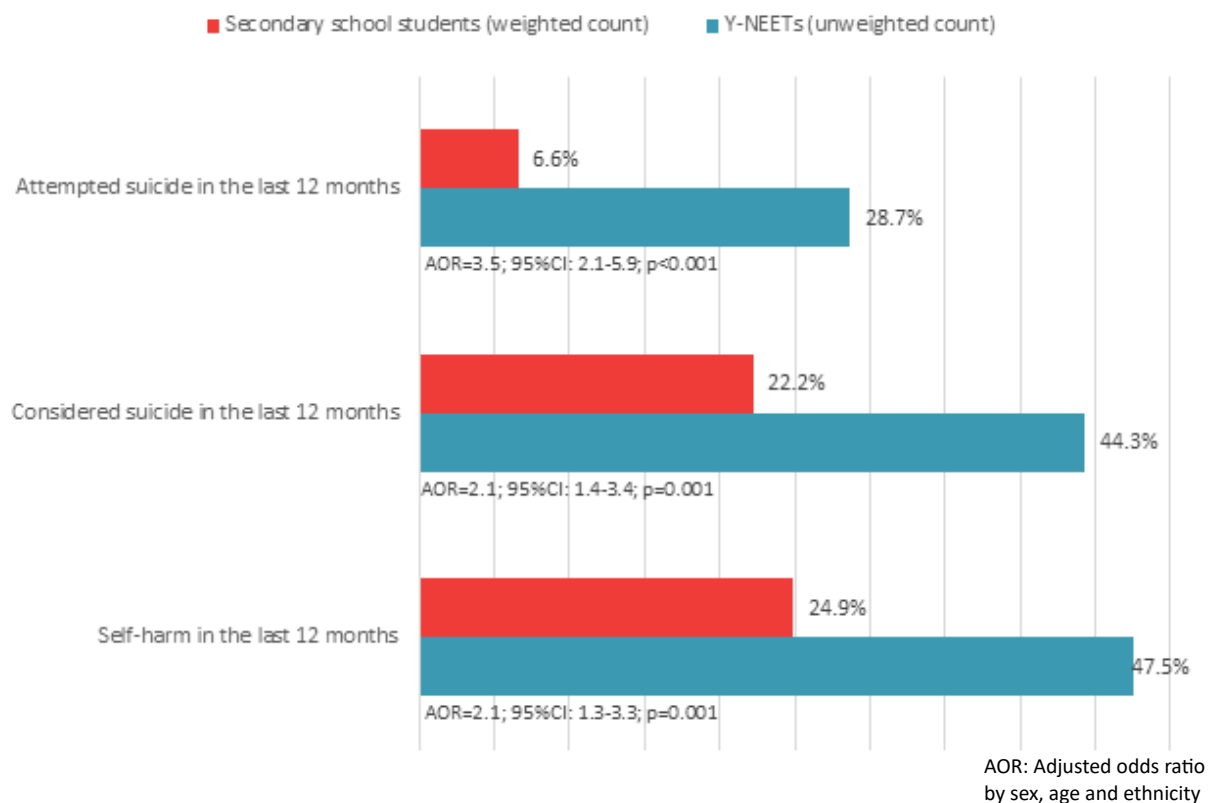


Figure 5b. Emotional health indicators: Comparisons between Y-NEETs and secondary school students, 2019.

Sexual health

Table 9 presents the indicators of sexual health of Y-NEETs.

- Most Y-NEETs (82%) have had sex.
- One in three (33%) had been / were pregnant or had got someone pregnant. It should be noted that some participants wanted to have a baby.



1 in 3 Y-NEETs were pregnant, had been pregnant or had got someone pregnant

- Of Y-NEETs who have had sex, low proportions always use contraception methods to prevent pregnancy (28%) or condoms to protect against STIs (18%).

More than 1 in 4 Y-NEETs always used contraception to protect against pregnancy



There were no statistically significant differences between males and females for the indicators of sexual health (data not shown).

Table 9. Y-NEETs: Sexual health, 2019.

	All	
	n	%
Have you ever had sex? (by this we mean sexual intercourse). Only include sex that you wanted or consented to - this does not include sexual abuse or rape.		
Yes	64	82.1
No	14	17.9
Have you ever been pregnant or got someone pregnant (including miscarriage, abortion or termination)?		
Yes	26	33.3
No	52	66.7
How often do you, or your partner(s) use contraception (by this, we mean protection against pregnancy)?		
Always	18	28.1
Most of the times/Sometimes/ Not often/Never	46	71.8
How often you or your partner use condoms as protection against sexually transmitted infections?		
Always	11	17.7
Most of the times/Sometimes/ Not often/Never/ I am a female and current partner also, condoms are not used.	51	82.3

N= 84. Missing (n): Ever had sex (6); Ever been pregnant or got someone pregnant (6); Frequency of contraception use (missing= 6; never had sex=14); Frequency use of condoms (missing= 8; never had sex=14).

Sexual health/sexuality of Y-NEETs compared to secondary school students

Compared to secondary school students, **Y-NEETs were more likely to:**

- Have had sex and;
- Had been or were pregnant or had got someone else pregnant.

Compared to secondary school students, **Y-NEETs were less likely to:**

- Always use contraception methods and;
- Always use condoms.

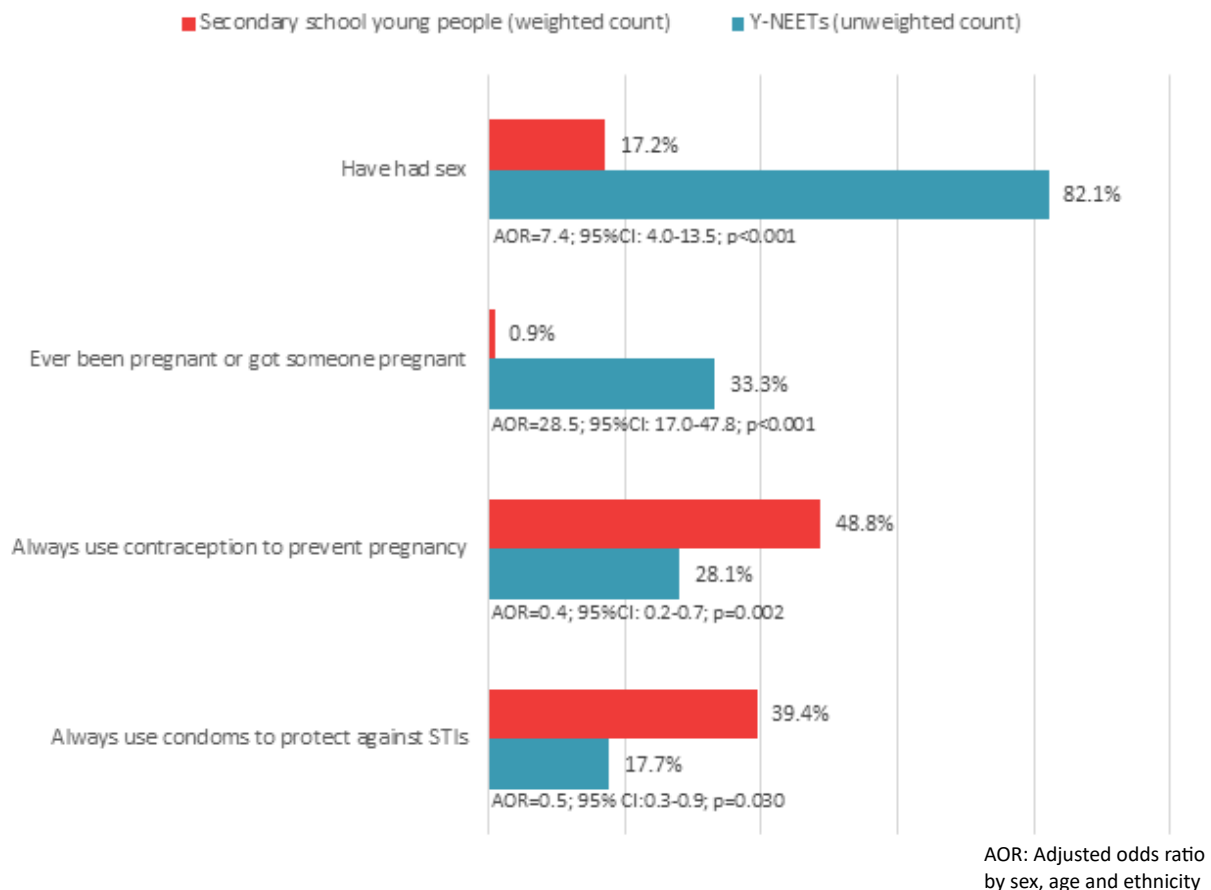


Figure 6. Sexual health/sexuality indicators: Comparisons between Y-NEETs and secondary school students, 2019.

Substance use

The findings about substance use among Y-NEETs are concerning (**Table 10**):

- Approximately seven in ten (72%) have ever vaped;
- Four in ten (40%) were smoking cigarettes weekly or more often;
- More than half (55%) of them reported binge drinking in the past 4 weeks;
- Marijuana was ever tried by eight in ten (81%) Y-NEETs with four in ten (41%) currently using marijuana weekly or more often;
- Three in ten (29%) Y-NEETs have reported to have tried other drugs such as P, huffing and synthetics.

There were no statistically significant differences between males and females for the indicators of substance use (data not shown).



2 in 5 Y-NEETs were smoking cigarettes or using marijuana weekly or more often



Table 10. Y-NEETs: Substance use, 2019.

	All	
	n	%
How often do you smoke cigarettes now?		
Less than weekly (including never)	45	60.0
Weekly or more often	30	40.0
Ever vaped or used e-cigarettes?		
Yes	54	72.0
No	21	28.0
In the past 4 weeks, how many times did you have 5 or more alcoholic drinks in one session - within 4 hours?		
None at all	35	45.5
Once/Two or three times/Every week/Several times a week	42	54.5
Have you ever used or smoked marijuana?		
Yes	62	80.5
No	15	19.5
In the last 4 weeks, about how often did you use marijuana?		
Less than weekly (including never)	44	58.7
Weekly or more often	31	41.3
Have you ever tried any other drugs such as P, huffing, synthetics?		
Yes	22	29.3
No	53	70.7

N= 84. Missing (n): Current smoking frequency (9); Ever vaped (9); Binge drinking in the last 4 weeks (7); Ever used marijuana (7); Frequency of marijuana use in the last 4 weeks (9); Ever tried any other drugs (9).

Substance use among Y-NEETs compared to secondary school students

Compared to secondary school students, **Y-NEETs were more likely to:**

- Smoke cigarettes weekly or more often;
- Binge drink alcohol in the last four weeks;
- Ever try marijuana;
- Use marijuana weekly or more often and;
- Ever try other drugs such as P, huffing, synthetics.

There were no statistically significant differences in the proportions of secondary school students and Y-NEETs who have ever vaped.

(Figure 7)

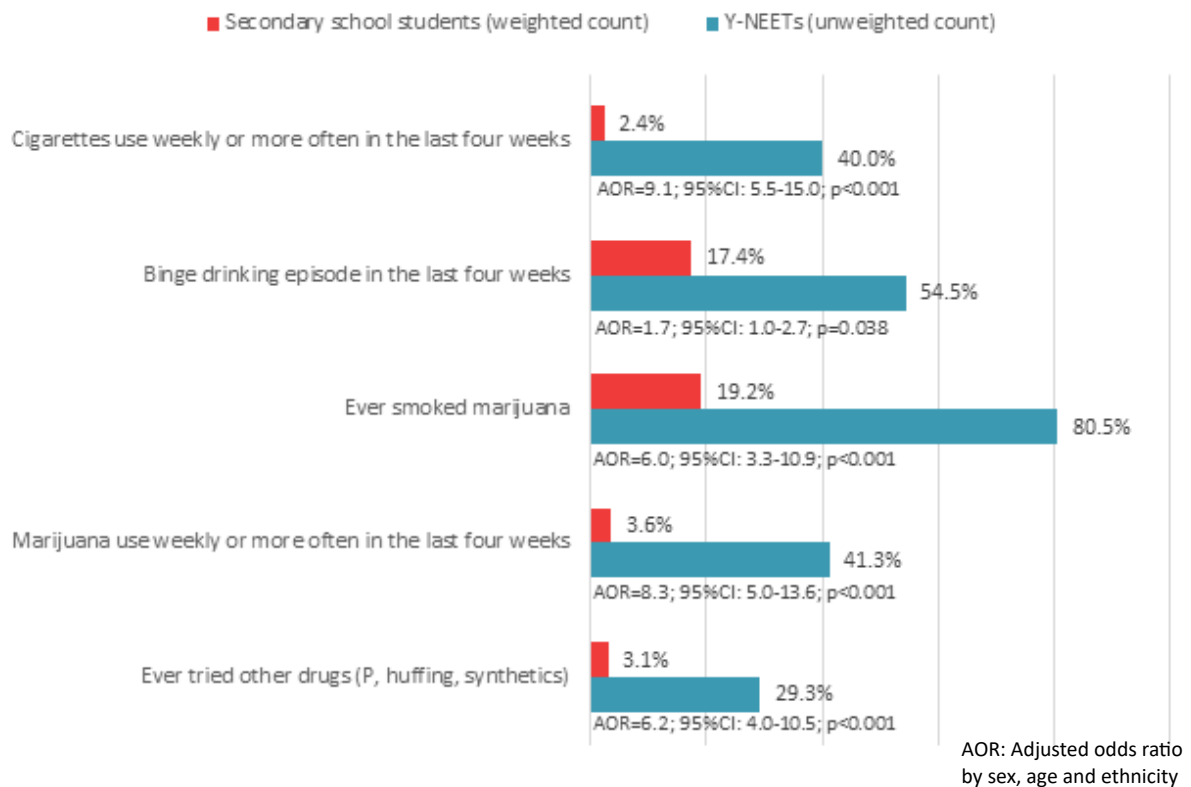


Figure 7. Substance use indicators: Comparisons between Y-NEETs and secondary school students, 2019.

Community

Involvement with communities

Table 11 shows good involvement of Y-NEETs with their communities:

- More than half belonged to one or more groups outside school (52%) and volunteered to help others (53%);

53% volunteered to help others

52% belonged to one or more groups outside school

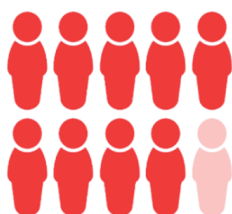
- 74% were enrolled or planned to enrol to vote in New Zealand elections.



3 in 4 Y-NEETs were enrolled or planned to enrol to vote in NZ elections

Approximately two in three Y-NEETs strongly agreed/agreed that there is an adult outside the family that:

- They can trust to share my feelings with (67%);



9 in 10 Y-NEETs strongly agreed or agreed that it was important to protect the environment for future generations

- They can talk with about things that are worrying them (69%);
- Understands what is important to them (65%);
- They have a close bond with (67%).

Approximately three in four Y-NEETs strongly agreed/agreed that there is an adult outside the family that:

- Accepts them for who they are (75%);
- Will stick up for them (75%).
- The majority of Y-NEETs also strongly agreed/agreed that:
 - There is somewhere safe they can go and stay, other than with their family/whānau (65%);
 - There is a place where they can go where they feel they belong with people who support them (57%);
- It is important to protect our environment for future generations (87%);



2 in 3 Y-NEETs strongly agreed/agreed that there is an adult outside the family who they can trust to share their feelings with

- They have a strong spiritual connection to certain places and (65%);
- They often feel a spiritual connection to people (63%).

3 in 5 Y-NEETs had a strong spiritual connection to certain places and a strong spiritual connection to people



Table 11. Y-NEETs: Involvement with their communities, 2019.

	All	
	n	%
Belongs to one or more groups outside school such as sports group cultural group, diversity group, music, drama, etc.		
Yes	39	52.0
No	36	48.0
Do you give your time to help others in your school or community (e.g. as a peer supporter at school, help out on the Marae or church, help coach a team or belong to a volunteer organisation)?		
Yes	39	53.4
No	34	46.6
Are you enrolled to vote in New Zealand elections?		
18 years or more (Yes)	34	45.9
18 years or more (No, but planning to enrol to vote)	10	13.0
18 years or more (No and not planning to enrol to vote)	9	12.2
Less than 18 years of age (plans to enrol to vote)	11	14.9
Less than 18 years of age (no plans to enrol to vote)	10	13.5
Strongly agree or agree that there is an adult outside family/ whānau who:		
I can trust to share my feelings with	49	67.1
I can talk with about things that are worrying me	50	68.5
Understands what is important to me	46	64.8
Accepts me for who I am	53	74.6
I have a close bond with	47	67.1
Will stick up for me and who has 'got my back'	50	74.6
I have fun with, and who makes me laugh	50	72.5
Strongly agree or agree that there is somewhere safe I can go and stay, other than with my family/whānau (e.g., a friend's home, church members home, coaches home etc.) (Yes)	44	64.7
Strongly agree or agree that there is a place where I can go where I feel I belong with people who support me (e.g., community groups, kapa haka, clubs, church, rainbow diversity groups, activism groups) (Yes)	39	57.4
Strongly agree or agree that it is important to protect our environment for future generations (e.g. land, rivers and sea) (Yes)	64	86.5
Strongly agree or agree that I have a strong spiritual connection to certain places (e.g. my church/mosque/shrine, or places such as mountains, the bush, the sea etc (Yes)	46	64.8
Strongly agree or agree that I often feel a spiritual connection to people (e.g. friends, family, church members) (Yes)	45	62.5

N=84. Missing (n): Belonging to groups outside school (9); Helping school or community (11); Enrolled to vote in NZ elections (10); Strongly agree/agree there is an adults outside family/whānau who: I can trust (11); I can talk (11); Understands what is important to me (13); Accepts me (13); I have close bond with (14); Will stick up for me (17); I have fun with (15); Somewhere safe (16); Place where I can go (16); Important to protect our environment (10); Strong spiritual connection to certain places (13); Spiritual connection to people (12).

Involvement of Y-NEETs with their communities compared to secondary school students

Compared to secondary school students, **Y-NEETs were more likely to:**

- Strongly agree or agree that they have a strong spiritual connection to certain places.

Compared to secondary school students, **Y-NEETs were less likely to:**

- Belong to one or more groups outside school.

There were no statistically significant differences in the proportions of secondary school students and Y-NEETs who volunteered or strongly agreed or agreed that:

- There is somewhere safe they can go and stay, other than with family/whānau.
- There is a place where they can go where feel belong with people who support them.
- It is important to protect our environment for future generations.
- They often feel a spiritual connection to people.

(Figure 8)

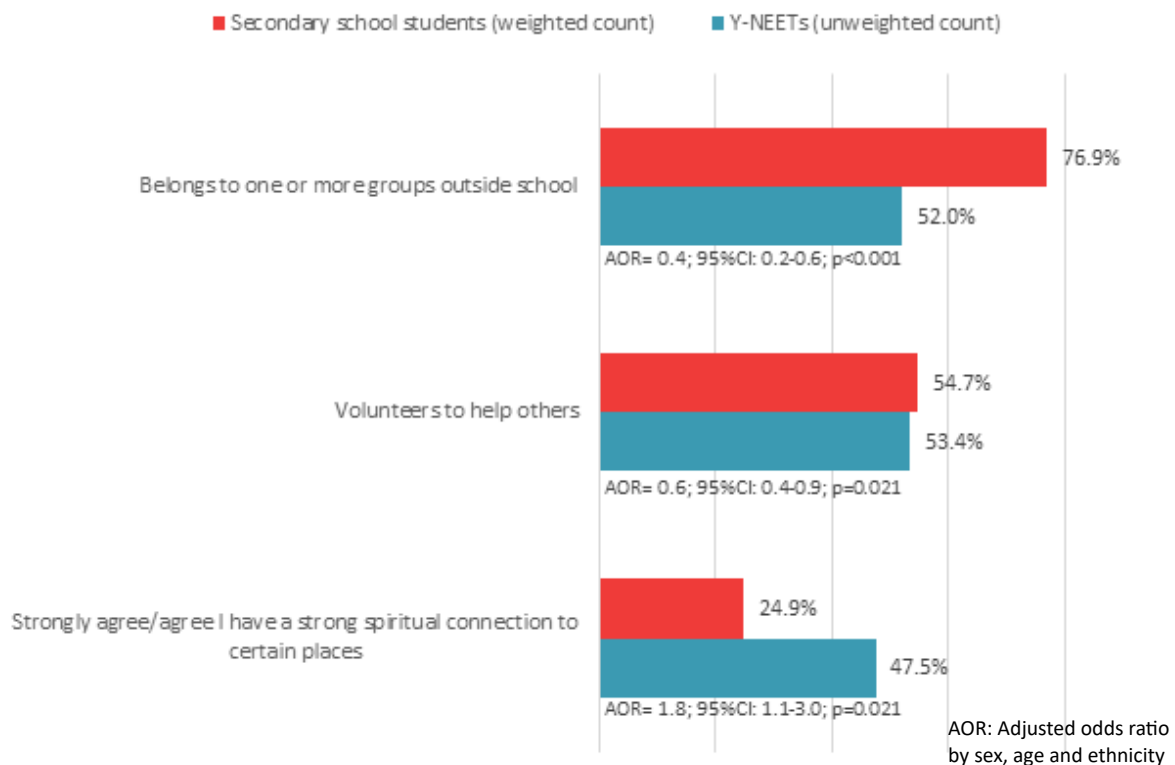


Figure 8. Community involvement indicators: Comparisons between Y-NEETs and secondary school students, 2019.

Violence, risky car use and interactions with the police

There are concerning proportions of Y-NEETs experiencing violence / family violence, taking risks in cars and having interactions with the police (**Table 12**).

- Two in three (67%) Y-NEETs reported always using a seatbelt when driving or being driven;
- More than half (53%) reported riding in cars driven by someone who had been drinking, was high or driving dangerously in the last month;

53% were in a car driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol, or were high or had been taking drugs or were driving dangerously in the last month

- One in three (34%) reported driving a car when they have been drinking or were high or driving dangerously in the last month.

1 in 3 Y-NEETs drove a car when they had been drinking alcohol, or were high or had been taking drugs, or driving dangerously in the last month



- One in four (27%) Y-NEETs reported that they have been in trouble with the police in the last 12 months;



1 in 4 Y-NEETs reported that they have been in trouble with the police in the last 12 months

- One in three (30%) reported that they have at some time been treated unfairly by the police because of their ethnic group;

1 in 3 Y-NEETs reported that they have been treated unfairly by the police because of their ethnic group (ever)



- Almost half (46%) reported to never, not often, or only sometimes feel safe in their neighbourhood.

Experiences of violence was common (**Table 12**):

- One in three (30%) Y-NEETs reported that adults in their home had hit or physically hurt a child, hit or physically hurt the young person, or hit or physically hurt each other in the last 12 months;
- Almost half (49%) reported that in the last 12 months they have been hit or physically harmed on purpose by a boyfriend or girlfriend, sibling(s), other young person, parent, or other adult;

49% have been hit or harmed on purpose by a family member, boyfriend/girlfriend, or other adult or young person in the last 12 months

- Almost half (47%) reported that at some time they have been touched in a sexual way or made to do sexual things that they didn't want to do (sexual violence).

47% have experienced sexual violence (ever)

There were no statistically significant differences in the indicators of injuries, violence, and risk-taking behaviours between males and females (*data not shown in table*).

Table 12. Y-NEETs: Violence, risky car use and interactions with the police, 2019.

	All	
	n	%
When driving or been driven in a car how often do you wear a seatbelt?		
Not always	26	33.3
Always	52	66.7
During the last month, did you ride in a car driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol or was high or had been taking drugs or who was driving dangerously (speeding, racing, burnouts)?		
Yes	39	52.7
No	35	47.3
During the last month, did you drive a car when you had been drinking alcohol or you were high or had been taking drugs or were driving dangerously (speeding, racing, burn outs)?		
Yes	17	34.0
No	33	66.0
In the last 12 months have adults in your home hit or physically hurt a child (other than yourself), hit or physically hurt you, hit or physically hurt each other?		
Yes	23	30.3
No	53	69.7
During the last 12 months how many times have you been hit or physically harmed on purpose by a boyfriend or girlfriend, sibling (s), other young person, parent, other adult?		
Never/Not in the last 12 months	33	50.7
Yes	34	49.3
In the last 12 months, have you been in trouble with the police?		
Never/Not in the last 12 months	54	73.0
Once or more	20	27.0
Have you ever been treated unfairly (picked on, hassled, etc.) by the police because of your ethnic group?		
Yes	22	29.7
No	52	70.3
Do you feel safe in your neighbourhood?		
Sometimes/Not often/Never	35	46.1
All the time	41	53.9
Have you ever been touched in a sexual way or made to do sexual things that you didn't want to do? (including sexual abuse or rape)		
Yes	34	46.6
Not sure	7	9.6
No	32	43.8

N= 84. Missing (n-all): Frequency of seat belt use (6); Risk-taking as a car passenger (10); Risk-taking as a car driver (34); adults at home hit you or other person (8); frequency of times you have been hit or physically harmed (17); Have you been in trouble with the police (10); Have you been treated unfairly by the police (10); Do you feel safe in your neighbourhood (8); Have you been touched in a sexual way (11).

Violence, risky car use and interactions with the police of Y-NEETs compared to secondary school students

Compared to students in secondary schools, **Y-NEETs were more likely to:**

- Ride in cars driven by someone who had been drinking, was high or was driving dangerously in the last month;
- Drive cars when they have been drinking or were high or driving dangerously in the last month;
- See adults in their home hit or physically hurt a child, hit or physically hurt the Y-NEET, or hit or physically hurt each other that in the last 12 months;
- Be in trouble with the police in the last 12 months;
- Ever be treated unfairly by the police because of their ethnic group and
- Have ever been sexually abused.

(Figure 9)

There were no statistically significant differences between secondary school students and Y-NEETs for:

- Using a seatbelt when driving or being driven;
- Being hit or physically harmed on purpose by a boyfriend or girlfriend, sibling(s), other young person, parent, or other adult in the last 12 months and
- Feeling safe in their neighbourhood.

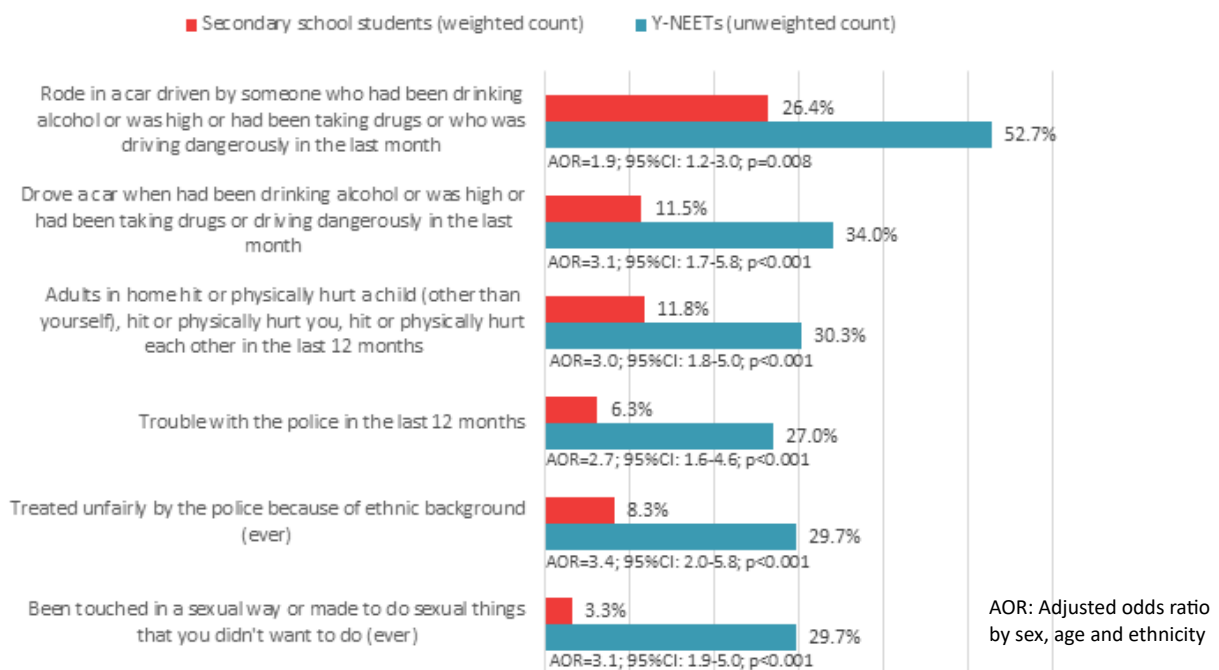


Figure 9. Injuries, violence and risk-taking indicators: Comparisons between Y-NEETs and secondary school students, 2019.

Youth Voice

For the first time in a Youth2000 survey, Youth19 included open text questions so that Y-NEETs could express their views about the issues they face. They could skip the question or respond in open text boxes, in their own words.

The participants were asked the following open text questions:

“What do you think are the biggest problems for young people today?”

and

“What do you think should be changed to support young people in New Zealand better?”

In total, 36 (42.9%) Y-NEETs answered the first question and 31 (36.9%) answered the second question. Most answered with a few words or a sentence.

We analysed responses to these questions using a general inductive approach (Thomas, 2006), which aimed to summarise the Y-NEETs feedback to each question, rather than seeking to develop a discourse analysis or build new theory. This was relevant to the survey purpose.

For each question, two researchers (TGC and TF) read all of the responses to the question and then they gathered ‘like with like’, clustering responses into groups. Together they reviewed and refined these groupings and drafted the unifying ideas or themes. Next, they independently searched for quotes which encapsulated the key ideas for each cluster or theme. Then they reviewed themes for clarity and accuracy, and drafted text, which was reviewed by a third author and content expert (TC). *They reviewed the original data to ensure that they remained true to the youth voices, and collectively finalised the text.*

1: “What do you think are the biggest problems for young people today?”

Wicked problems: Inheriting multiple unfair systems, poverty and colonisation

Young people described unfair systems, poverty and colonisation that influencing their lives, suggesting a theme of ‘wicked problems.’ Young people faced **multiple and interacting challenges in their lives** - involving their family, school, community and other societal factors. These issues meant that they were in contact with many agencies and systems, which might reinforce or perpetuate their situations.

Many Y-NEETs described large scale problems and/or problems at multiple levels. These included both family and society level problems, and injustices that affected them. For example:

‘Families, schools, people. The world itself’
(Female, Māori ethnicity, 19 years old)

and

‘Family violence, poverty, crime, abuse, racism & depression’
(Male, Māori ethnicity, 17 years old)

For some this suggested ‘wicked problems’ (Australian Public Service Commission 2007). This term refers to problems that are difficult to solve because of interacting, contradictory or changing elements. For example, a Y-NEET reported that the biggest problem facing young people in New Zealand was:

‘The economic crisis caused by previous generations, as well as the misinformation given to us as we developed into adults. Our parent's generation were neglected and grew to emotionally and psychologically abandon the generations of young adults today.’

(Female, European ethnicity, over 19 years of age)

And another reported:

‘Not enough support, from their families, schools, and the government. Leaving a lot of young people to figure life out on their own. Leading us to go down the wrong path. Especially with Islanders and Māori. Location makes a massive difference on how we are raised and brought up. We are the product of our environment. And that needs to be recognised at the very least.’

(Male, Māori ethnicity, 19 years old)

Others attributed large scale system problems and injustices linked to intergenerational trauma, colonisation and racism.

Examples:

‘The system and the Europeans who think they own our country. They shouldn’t think that, and they shouldn’t have cut the lines of our ancestors to own the place you know.’

(Female, Māori ethnicity, 17 years old)

Lack of support and opportunities

Relatedly, many Y-NEET participants highlighted a lack of support and lack of opportunities.

For example, one participant said:

'Lack of access to support and opportunities, lack of ability to influence the wider future.'

(Rainbow gender, European ethnicity, over 19 years of age)

For many, this lack of support or opportunities was specifically a **lack of money**. Some attributed this to social injustices and unfair systems, while others highlighted family circumstances such as parents' drug problems.

Examples:

'Parents who do drugs and don't care about their young children, the home they are living in isn't the greatest... they don't have money... they have no clothes or nothing'

(Female, Māori ethnicity, 18 years old)

'Lack of access to mental health services, no money'

(Rainbow gender, European ethnicity, over 19 years of age)

Implications of 'wicked problems' and lack of support: Mental health and suicidality

The final theme overlapped with 'wicked problems' and 'lack of support' and highlighted the impact of these factors on mental health. Participants reported that a lack of emotional and financial support, alongside feelings of hopelessness and abandonment by previous generations strongly impacted on their emotional and mental health.

'The economic crisis caused by previous generations, as well as the misinformation given to us as we developed into adults. Our parent's generation were neglected and grew to emotionally and psychologically abandon the generations of young adults today.'

(Female, European ethnicity, over 19 years of age)

Others highlighted a lack of access to mental health services as part of the problem. For example:

'Lack of access to mental health services, no money'

(Rainbow gender, European ethnicity, over 19 years of age)

Finally, many identified mental or emotional problems or lack of hope for the future as central:

'Is that not being okay, is okay but why does it not feel like it'

(Female, Māori ethnicity, 16 years old)

'Young people taking their own life. Having relationship problems.'

(Female, European ethnicity, 15 years old)

'Suicide'

(Female, Māori ethnicity, 16 years old)

'They don't see the bigger picture. They only see what's within arm's reach and (don't) know the possibilities of a bigger and brighter future'

(Male, Māori ethnicity, over 19 years of age)

2. “What do you think should be changed to support young people in New Zealand better?”

Y-NEETs had diverse and important ideas about what would support young people better. The two key themes were **more support** and **fairer systems**. Overwhelmingly, the need for more support was highlighted as a big issue. Y-NEETs highlighted that negotiating systems and agencies are difficult, and **do not cater for young people with complex and interacting issues**.

Examples:

‘BETTER SUPPORT! NOT MAKING IT HARD TO LIVE!’

(Female, Māori ethnicity, 19 years old)

‘More job options for people with no experience’

(Female, Māori ethnicity, 17 years old)

‘More jobs, better pay and easier access to their needs’

(Male, MELAA/others ethnicity, 19 years old)

‘More support systems and that its okay to reach out to those’

(Male, European ethnicity, 18 years old)

Other participants specifically commented on the need for **schooling to be updated to meet their needs**. A Y-NEET highlighted the lack of ability to shape educational curriculum to meet their unique needs and the reality of their lives.

For example:

‘I think that the entire curriculum should be re-evaluated in order to oppose indoctrination and increase individuality and creativity. I also feel that young people should have more of an authority in all aspects of society because regardless of (our) experience, we will be inheriting the economy left behind by previous generations ... our society lacks integrity.’

(Male, MELAA/others ethnicity, 16 years old)

Finally, the importance of **youth voice** was highlighted. Y-NEETs felt they were invisible and lacked the ability to determine their own futures.

‘Give young people more of a voice as they are essentially the future. Don’t focus on what the older generation want but more so what young people need!’

(Female, Māori, over 19 years of age)

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

These findings paint a picture of young people who have experienced significant childhood hardships and trauma. They have been exposed to high levels of poverty, family, interpersonal and sexual violence, and a third of NEETs youth have had Oranga Tamariki/ CYFS involvement. Given the overwhelming evidence that childhood exposure to such environments impacts poorly on health, social and employment opportunities (Petruccelli et al 2019), it is not surprising that young people who are considered NEETs, have such poor outcomes. If we are genuinely committed to improving outcomes for young people who are not in education, employment or training, the following actions are required.



First, we have to address the rights and fundamental human needs of Y-NEETs:

- Ensure that young people are **connected to whānau and other people who care** about them. Y-NEETs may not have reliable family/whānau back-up when things go wrong or times get tough. They need extra support, pastoral care and mentorship to deal with life's ups and downs.
- Provide **safe, warm and affordable housing solutions** for young people, so they have somewhere secure to be able to build a future for themselves.
- Ensure they have **adequate income** to buy healthy food, pay for period products, transport, have their own bed and pay their power bills so they can start dreaming of a future, rather than living in survival mode.

Second, they will need support to get the services they need:

- Ensure that there are **quality, non-judgemental and non-discriminating services and agencies willing to help** young people starting out in life, rather than blame them for their situation. Many young people lack trust because they have been failed by agencies in the past (Police, Oranga Tamariki, Schools, Health Services).
- Provision of **free primary/sexual health care with culturally competent healthcare** is required – 50% of Y-NEETs report not being able to access healthcare when they needed it. Access to sexual and reproductive health services is required – among Y-NEETs, low proportions report consistent condom and contraception use. A concerning 28% of youth reported ethnic discrimination by their healthcare provider.
- There are alarming rates of symptoms of anxiety (PHQ-4) (66%), significant depressive symptoms in the last 12 months (77% females and 54% males), and high levels of self-harm (48%) and suicide attempts (29%) among Y-NEETs in the last 12 months. **Urgent investment in the promotion of mental health, and accessible primary and secondary mental health services** are required for this population to live good and satisfying lives. The key aspects for promoting mental health are the same as for promoting positive youth development: people who care, safety, and protection from abuse and other harms, including discrimination.
- For young people, substance use can be used to hide pain, anxiety, and boredom, and make them feel better (Schuckit, 2006). Any educational and employment programmes wishing to address substance use, must **eliminate the stigma associated with getting help for substance use and not use punitive methods to enforce these behaviours**. We also need to provide young people with real opportunities to thrive, connect and make a good life for themselves.
- Experiences of violence were common for Y-NEETs – around 30% had witnessed or experienced family violence in the past year, almost half had been hit on purpose by another person in the past year, and 47% had experienced sexual abuse, rape or sexual coercion at some time. **Violence prevention strategies that support the safeguarding of young people in their families, relationships and communities are required**.

Third, engage and celebrate the strengths of Y-NEETs, rather than focus on their weaknesses:

- Many Y-NEETs have family members that are supportive, caring and accept them for who they are, however about half say that they do not get enough time with their families. They want more time with their families and to have good relationships. **Support young people to negotiate quality family relationships as they become young adults.**
- Y-NEETs do not want to be unemployed or socially isolated: they are bored (53%), want more money to support themselves, and many have tried applying for jobs (64%). Of those young people who were engaged with NEETs providers, 85% said that their tutors cared about them. **Help them engage with skilled providers to develop their skills, talents and passions** so that they are able to see a positive future for themselves.
- Y-NEETs are contributing to our society. About half belonged to sports or cultural groups and volunteered in their communities. They have strong spiritual connections to the land and people, and care deeply about protecting the environment for future generations. Encourage and **value the unpaid and unseen work that Y-NEETs do in communities and utilise these skills to help them grow a future for themselves and their families.**

Conclusions

Much of the literature around Y-NEETs has focused on getting them off benefits and into paid employment or education. However, this study highlights the significant and paralysing impact of early hardships and trauma on young people's ability to dream about a future. They want good lives, but they need help. Addressing the fundamental needs of Y-NEETs will require a whole of Government approach to poverty reduction, accessible housing, family violence prevention, and anti-racism/discrimination in agencies and systems. Y-NEETs need to be connected to caring adults, youth workers, mentors, health and social services, and to be treated with respect when they do seek help. Without addressing these fundamental needs, helping young people into education, employment and training is unlikely to occur, and another generation of young people will fall through the gaps. This is a call for action.

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