



# Thriving at home & with family: Pacific youth perspectives. A Youth19 Brief

## Introduction

The latest Youth2000 survey, Youth19, asked young people about their home life and what would help them thrive. Specifically, we asked:

*“If you could change one thing to make your home or family life better, what would it be?”*

Young people could type in responses in their own words. In this brief, we present responses from the 408 Pacific students (117 males and 291 females) who did so.

The Youth 2000 surveys are large scale health and wellbeing surveys of young people in Aotearoa. In 2019, we surveyed 7,721 year 9-13 students in 45 randomly selected Auckland, Northland and Waikato schools and four kura kaupapa Māori.<sup>1-3</sup> A total of 1130 Pacific youth took part. You can see more about the survey on page 2 and on our website: [www.youth19.ac.nz](http://www.youth19.ac.nz). We analysed open text responses for this brief using a general inductive approach.<sup>4</sup>

## Summary

Pacific students shared important insights in response to the survey question:

*‘If you could change one thing to make your home or family life better, what would it be?’*

There were four key themes:

**I wouldn’t change a thing**

**Family time, trust and understanding**

**A house to fit the family, enough money for the basics**

**Service and contributing.**

Many Pacific students said that they would not change a thing, they were happy with how things are in their families. Other expressed the wish for more family time together and or increased trust and understanding between parents and young people. Many students identified the need for appropriate housing and income for basic needs, including adequate space in their homes, sufficient money for food, transport and housing, and better paying jobs for their parents. Pacific students also expressed their wishes to contribute, serve and support their families, particularly in gaining employment once they finished their education.

## More about Youth19

The Youth19 Rangatahi Smart Survey ('Youth19') was led by Associate Professor Terry Fleming, Te Herenga Waka | Victoria University of Wellington, and Professor Terryann Clark, University of Auckland, with researchers from the University of Auckland, University of Otago, AUT, and Victoria University of Wellington. Ethics approval was obtained from the University of Auckland Human Subjects Ethics Committee. The survey was carried out in the Auckland, Northland, and Waikato education regions in 2019. This area includes 46% of New Zealand secondary school students. Schools were randomly selected, and students were randomly selected from the rolls. A total of 7,721 year 9-13 students took part. In addition, 92 alternative education students, and 78 young people not in education, training, or employment took part. Young people completed the survey on handheld internet tablets in English or Te Reo Māori with optional voiceover. The survey was anonymous and covered many areas of wellbeing. All participants were offered help options and could have these emailed or texted to them as part of the survey. You can see more about the survey as well as other reports and papers on our website [www.youth19.ac.nz](http://www.youth19.ac.nz)

For this brief, we analysed responses from Pacific students to our first open text question, *If you could change one thing to make your home or family life better, what would it be?* Participants could type in responses in their own words or skip to the next question. We used a general inductive approach<sup>4</sup> to analyse responses. Findings are summarized with quotes from Pacific school or kura students in the survey.

We created this brief to share their words. We have endeavoured to represent their voices fairly, using quality research processes, to acknowledge the many strengths reported by Pacific youth as well as their aspirations.

## 1. I wouldn't change a thing

Many Pacific students stated that they would not change anything; that things are good at home and going well in their families:

*"Actually, I wouldn't change a single thing because the way it is right now is really good"*  
Female, aged 13 or under

*"Everything is all good"*  
Male, age 15

*"I just like my home/family how it is now."*  
Female, age 13 or under

*"I wouldn't change anything..."*  
Male, age 16

Some specifically noted their appreciation for their family:

*"Nothing, I appreciate what my family has done for me"*  
Female, aged 13 or under

*"Nothing to change about my family because even though we fight and go through the hardest times we always come up with a good solution to get us into the next day"*  
Male, age 16

## 2. Family time, trust and understanding

### More family time

Pacific young people expressed strong wishes for quality time together as family, without other distractions and responsibilities getting in the way of being together. This was one of the most common responses. Sometimes this was explicitly because of parents' work:

*"I wish my parents were home more often. They both work 12+ hours every day, and in some cases seven days a week."*

Female, age 16

*"The only thing I would do is decrease the amount of time my parents work, in order for us to have more time together"*

Female, aged 13 or under

*"Spending more time together, everyone is so busy doing well their own thing that we don't hang out and bond much"*

Male, age 17 or over

*"Spending more time together as a family"*

Female, age 16

*"If we could go our more and spend more time as a family, it would be fun for all the family"*

Male, age 15

*"Have more family time"*

Male, age 14

### Trust and understanding

In another common response, students expressed the desire for greater trust and understanding from parents so they can be who they are, grow as adults and make their own decisions at times. There were many of these responses from female students:

*"Communication and trust, build a good relationship between parents and children."*

Female, age 17 or over

*"It would be to accept that not I'm not perfect and I have emotions and I would like the option to choose whether or not I would like to do something to have freedom"*

Female, age 13 or under

*"For my parents to stop being so over-protective"*

Male, age 13 or under



### 3. A house to fit the family, enough money for the basics

The need for adequate housing was key for Pacific students. In particular, a house that could fit the whole family, was affordable and was in a safe neighbourhood. Often they expressed a desire for their own room or space for all.

Many commented on struggles with housing costs and how this negatively impacted their ability to spend time together as a family.

*“To be able to find a house that could fit my whole family.”*

Female, age 14

*“Another room so the boys don’t argue”*

Female, age 15

*“Bigger house, my brothers have a bed each but not a bedroom. I have a bed but I live in the study”*

Female, aged 13 or under

*“A bigger house, in a quieter area. I would feel more comfortable and safe.”*

Female, age 14

*“To have a safe big house where everyone can fit and have no problems”*

Female, age 14

Financial hardship and material deprivation were significant for many Pacific students. Many were concerned about the lack of money for everyday expenses or wanting to have enough money so their families would not have to struggle.

Many highlighted their concerns with low wages, increased rent and housing costs.

***“Struggle and money and happiness.***

*Because I see my family struggle through the pain and trying to pay all the bills. Mostly my mum, she try’s so hard to make us live in a happy environment she will always come home and trying to put food in front of us every time...all my family members are working so we try to help to pay the bills.”*

Female, age 15

*“Having more money to pay bills and food and gas”*

Male, age 14

*“Cheaper rent”*

Male, aged 13 or under

*“Constant work and income for my dad.*

*A car and home”*

Male, age 16

*“Have more money so we could take better care of my grandpa like move him in”*

Female, age 17 or over

*“Better support for disabled parents...and better job opportunities for the disabled”*

Female, age 15



## 4. Service and contributing

In many Pacific families, young people are taught from an early age the importance of service, serving others such as older family members, relatives and local communities. Many Pacific students expressed their wishes to contribute and to support their families, especially though helping with costs, including by finding good jobs so that they could help support the family.

*“Help my family to work hard and find a good job to earn money.”*  
Female, age 14

*“Helping my parents out with paying bills and making sure that the place i live in is safe for me and my family”*  
Female, aged 17 or over

*“I will try hard to finish school and get a good job so i can help my family out”*  
Female, age 17

*“Work hard for the family.”*  
Male, 17 or over

*“Me having a job to help pay for things like food and bills”*  
Male, age 16



## What do these findings mean?

These findings highlight that many Pacific youth are happy with their family and home contexts. More than half did not respond to the question about what they would change in their home or family lives, and among those who did, many reported that they would change nothing, they are happy as it is. These findings, as well as the theme of wanting more time together, highlight the strengths of families and communities. Other findings highlight opportunities for strengthening understanding and trust between parents and young people.

However, Pacific youth wellbeing was highly affected by inadequate housing and poverty. It is critical to address these inequities for mental health and wellbeing gains.

Pacific young people want to be part of solutions, making contributions and supporting others. They have important insights to share. We hope that this brief will support their contributions.



## References

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Fala image by Gerard Muller ([majella.muller@gmail.com](mailto:majella.muller@gmail.com)) *“Fala, mats woven from trees. With all meetings traditionally held amongst Pasifika is sat on and held on fala. Flags of nations woven by the Pacific can now bring their voices forward. Here.”* Gerard Muller 2023. Illustrations by Yasmine El Orfi. Design by Bo Moore.

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