Youth Health & Wellbeing

A comprehensive youth survey in 2025

Technical Report

December 2025

Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Executive Summary

The Youth Health and Wellbeing Survey (YHWS) 2025, surveying 9,414 young people and rangatahi aged 13–19 in Aotearoa New Zealand, continues a 25-year research legacy. Commissioned by the Ministry of Social Development and conducted by Ipsos, this survey merges the Youth2000 and What About Me? (WAM) series. For the past 25 years, youth survey data has influenced policies across Aotearoa New Zealand and provides a single evidence base for tracking trends, shaping policy, and reducing research demands on schools and kura.

The survey employed a rigorous two-stage stratified sampling design to achieve a nationally representative sample of young people and rangatahi attending secondary schools and kura. Work started in September 2024 and was executed in three stages: ethics and setup, testing (cognitive and pilot), and main study. The ethics and setup phase was conducted from September 2024 to February 2025. The pilot phase, involving 567 participants, was conducted from 10 to 31 March 2025. The main study data collection took place between 28 April and 19 September 2025.

Participant safety and wellbeing were prioritised; safeguards included 10 hours of mandatory training for field staff, youth support workers at every session, and thorough safety planning with each school and kura. Consent processes assumed 13–19-year-olds' competency, incorporating opt-out choices for parents and caregivers of participants under the age of 16 and active parental consent for a small percentage of students identified by schools and kura as unable to provide their own informed consent. These processes were reviewed and approved by the Health Disability Ethics Committee (HDEC).

Key outcomes

A total of 9,414 young people and rangatahi participated across 98 schools and kura, just short of the 10,000 goal despite withdrawal of 14 schools and kura due to industrial strike action. School and student response rates were 45% and 66%, respectively. Kura participation rose from two in 2021 to eight in 2025, aided by a culturally grounded strategy prioritising kanohi ki te kanohi (face-to-face) interactions. The selection effectively oversampled Māori and Pacific students, enabling detailed subgroup analysis, with 29% identifying as Māori and 23% as Pacific. For the first time, 33% of participants aged 16+ consented to link their data to the Integrated Data Infrastructure.

Feedback and learnings

Feedback from students and schools was highly positive, with over 70% of young people and rangatahi enjoying the survey and feeling comfortable with their responses. Moreover, 95% of participating schools expressed willingness to participate again, praising the field team's professionalism and communication. Constructive feedback highlighted that survey length, timing, and administrative burden are key areas for future improvement.

Introduction

The Youth Health and Wellbeing Survey (YHWS)

Before 1999, there was a lack of current, comprehensive, and nationally representative data on youth health and wellbeing. This led to the development of the Youth2000 survey series by a group of academics, which established a foundational evidence base that has since informed governmental policies and programmes affecting young people and rangatahi across Aotearoa New Zealand. The YHWS 2025 represents the merging and continuation of the Youth2000 and What About Me? questionnaires and survey streams, producing a single survey that enables the tracking of youth health and wellbeing trends from this 25-year legacy onward. Commissioned by MSD and undertaken by Ipsos, the YHWS 2025 aimed to capture the diverse voices of up to 10,000 young people and rangatahi nationwide.

The YHWS includes questions from the Ministry of Health (MoH) and the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) to aid in reporting on youth mental health and child/youth victimisation. By combining previously separate surveys, the YHWS 2025 simplifies data collection and reduces school research burdens, whilst creating a comprehensive dataset for future trend analysis, building on two decades of existing data.

Rationale for YHWS 2025

The survey uniquely captures self-report data directly from young people and rangatahi themselves, rather than relying on parent and caregiver responses. It also alleviates the burden on schools and kura by consolidating data collection for multiple government agencies. As a government-led initiative, the survey's main findings, reports, and anonymised, aggregated weighted data are made publicly available, maximising transparency and the whole-of-society benefit of this essential research that informs youth policy, services, and programmes across both public and private sectors.[1] De-identified microdata will also be made available in the Statistics New Zealand's (Stats NZ) DataLab and Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) to approved researchers, undertaking in-depth research into youth trajectories.

The YHWS 2025 was designed to meet the following key objectives:

- Update the evidence base on youth health and wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand, enabling the tracking of long-term trends
- Inform government policy and strategy, including providing data for the outcome indicators in the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy

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[1] https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/consultations/youth-health-and-wellbeing-survey-results/index.html

- Achieve a nationally representative sample of Aotearoa New Zealand's diverse youth population, with robust data for priority groups including Māori and Pacific young people and rangatahi
- Maintain high standards of methodological rigour and ethics, prioritising participant safety and wellbeing throughout all survey processes

This report

This technical report sets out the work carried out on the YHWS 2025 in the following sections:

- **Section 1:** Ethics and Materials
- **Section 2:** Sampling and Recruitment
- **Section 3:** Fieldwork
- **Section 4:** Data Processing
- **Section 5:** Fieldwork Outcomes

Random rounding and suppression

To protect the privacy and anonymity of survey participants, this report applies confidentiality rules aligned with the Stats NZ Microdata output guide.[2] Whilst the technical report primarily documents operational aspects of survey delivery, these suppression rules are applied to participant-level data for consistency with future descriptive reports.

Participant-level data

Particularly, the following rules were applied to all participant responses to protect participant confidentiality:

- **Suppression threshold:** Counts of 6 or fewer participants have been suppressed through either cell aggregation with other categories or omission from tables and charts in a way that does not allow the omission to be unwound by reverse calculating off other data contained in the published version.
- **Random rounding:** All remaining counts have been randomly rounded to the nearest multiple of 3.

Due to random rounding, row and column totals may not sum to the expected totals or to 9,414 participants.

School and kura–level data

Different rules apply to the 98 participating schools and kura. To preserve the operational value of this technical report whilst respecting the confidentiality of schools and kura that participated, counts are presented only where at least three schools and kura contributed, with smaller counts suppressed through aggregation or omission.

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[2] Stats NZ: Microdata output guide. https://www.stats.govt.nz/assets/Methods/Microdata-Output-Guide-2020-v5-Sept22update.pdf

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School and kura counts have *not* been randomly rounded, as this would distort response rates beyond meaningful interpretation for future survey planning. There is no publicly available list of participating schools and kura. Ipsos alone has a record of these as outlined in the HDEC application and approvals. The information held by Ipsos pertains only to school and kura locations and whether or not a school or kura took part, not to any of the responses from young people and rangatahi within schools and kura.

These differentiated approaches balance the dual objectives of protecting participant, school, and kura privacy whilst maintaining the technical report's utility for understanding how school and kura characteristics influenced participation rates and informing future iterations of the YHWS.

Acknowledgements

Young people and rangatahi

Developing a survey that works with young people and rangatahi to enhance their outcomes was fundamental to the YHWS 2025 design. Their voices shaped the survey from initial design through to final implementation.

Youth Advisory Group involvement

MSD's Youth Advisory Group provided critical input throughout the survey development process. Its contributions included:

- **Survey design and methodology:** Reviewed and provided feedback on survey methods, recruitment approaches, and engagement strategies.

- **Questionnaire development:** Assessed question wording, flow, and relevance to ensure the survey addressed issues important to young people and rangatahi.

- **Communication materials:** Shaped the YHWS 2025 branding pack and reviewed all participant-facing materials.

- **Video development:** Co-created an engaging promotional video and an information video that presented participants with survey information in an accessible format, addressing concerns that lengthy written documents might overwhelm potential participants.[3] All videos included subtitles in both English and te reo Māori and were shown at the start of each survey session to support informed consent processes.

Young people's and rangatahi feedback was systematically collected and incorporated at each stage:

- **Cognitive testing phase:** 42 young people and rangatahi provided detailed feedback on question comprehension and relevance.

- **Pilot phase:** 567 young people and rangatahi evaluated their survey experience, identifying areas for improvement in both content and delivery.

- **Main study:** All 8,880 participants were invited to share their views to inform future iterations of the YHWS.

This iterative approach ensured the survey remained responsive to young people's and rangatahi needs and perspectives throughout its development and implementation.

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[3] Promotional video can be viewed on MSD website: https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/consultations/youth-health-and-wellbeing-survey-results/index.html

Public sector agencies and their partners

MSD led the planning, design, and overall approach for YHWS 2025. This encompassed survey design and sampling review and introducing a new delivery method divided into three components: survey planning and design, fieldwork (data collection), and analysis and reporting. MSD led survey planning, analysis, and reporting, whilst contracting Ipsos for the fieldwork. MSD would like to acknowledge those who supported the survey planning and design, such as questionnaire review, sampling review, and grounding the YHWS work programme in culturally diverse and youth-oriented perspectives:

- Ministry of Social Development
- Ministry of Health
- Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora
- Ministry of Youth Development
- Oranga Tamariki
- Child Poverty Reduction Group (part of MSD, previously part of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet)
- Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People
- Ministry for Ethnic Communities
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission
- Ministry for Women
- Ministry of Justice
- Ministry of Business, Innovation, and Employment

MSD would like to acknowledge the Adolescent Health Research Group for its support on survey items.

MSD would also like to acknowledge the contributions of Statistical Research Associates for its support on sampling methodologies.

Ipsos and its partners

MSD engaged Ipsos as the contractor responsible for the fieldwork component of the YHWS 2025. Ipsos undertook the key role of designing and implementing the fieldwork with a commitment to placing young people and rangatahi at the centre of all processes.

To ensure that the fieldwork considered the needs of all survey participants and hosting schools and kura, and to maximise responses from the community cohort, Ipsos collaborated with several specialist organisations to provide advisory services at key stages in the project: Mana Mokopuna (Children & Young People's Commission), Ara Taiohi (Youth Worker Advisory), New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER), and Kōtātā Insight.

Section 1: Ethics and Materials

ISO compliance

The YHWS 2025 was conducted under Ipsos's ISO 20252 Market Opinion and Social Research certification. ISO (International Organisation for Standardisation) 20252 ensures adherence to strict quality processes throughout research studies, with all quality assurance procedures subject to independent annual audit requirements.

As a member of both the Research Association of New Zealand and the European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research, Ipsos complied with their respective codes of conduct throughout the survey implementation. The study was conducted in full compliance with NZ laws and regulations, including the Privacy Act 2020, ensuring appropriate data protection and participant privacy standards were maintained.

Ethics

The YHWS 2025 received ethical approval from HDEC on 20 January 2025, Reference: 2024 FULL 21441. The ethics application underwent comprehensive review by HDEC, covering all aspects of the fieldwork – questionnaire wording, participant safety, cognitive testing, pilot, and main study implementation. The Committee reviewed the project protocol, the survey questions, and the various information sheets and consent forms for participants, whānau, and schools and kura.

Informed consent

The informed consent process for the YHWS 2025 followed a three-step approach consistent with previous iterations of the survey. This approach presumed competency of young people and rangatahi aged 13–19 whilst incorporating safeguards for potentially vulnerable participants.[4] Maintaining consistency with previous surveys was essential for replicability and trend tracking, whilst avoiding additional consent requirements that could have excluded marginalised young people and rangatahi from participation.

Consent step 1. School and kura principals' and tumuaki approval for school and kura to take part

The initial consent step involved securing approval from school and kura principals and tumuaki for the YHWS 2025 to be carried out at their school or kura. Information sheets and consent forms were sent to principals and tumuaki (see *Appendix F*). Further detail of this process can be found in the *Main study recruitment* section.

Consent step 2. School and kura assessment of competency

School and kura staff familiar with each student assessed whether selected participants were capable of providing their own informed consent. For each student, staff were

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[4] As set out by the Code of Health and Disability Consumer Rights 1996.

asked to assess their competency by agreeing or disagreeing with this statement: *"I certify that this child is well known to me and that I consider it safe and appropriate for them to participate in the Youth Health and Wellbeing Survey 2025. I believe that they have the competence necessary to answer the questions contained therein."*

Schools and kura determined that more than 99% of selected students were able to provide their own consent, whilst less than 1% required parental consent due to factors such as learning difficulties that might diminish their capacity to offer informed consent.

Consent step 3. Parental consent

The consent process varied based on the school's and kura competency assessment and the year level/age of the student.

For students deemed competent (more than 99% of participants):

- Years 9–11:[5] Parental consent was not required. However, parents and caregivers could opt their child out of participation through an online form, up to 24 hours before the survey session. Information sheets were distributed to all parents and caregivers explaining this process. Parents and caregivers could also request for their child's data to be withdrawn after participating by contacting Ipsos.

- Years 12–13: Students were considered capable of making their own participation decision. Even if parents and caregivers attempted to opt them out, the final decision remained with the student.

For students identified as requiring parental consent (less than 1% of participants):

- Regardless of year level or age, these were students identified as requiring active parental or caregiver consent to participate. This could be provided via either:
  - An online consent form completed at least 24 hours before the survey session
  - A signed hard-copy consent form brought to the survey session
- A total of 231 parental consent forms were received, and of these students with parental consent, 42 took part in the survey (18% of those with parental consent).

Consent to link to the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI)

The IDI is a large research database maintained by Stats NZ containing de-identified information about people and households. For the first time in the YHWS series, the 2025 wave offered participants aged 16+ the opportunity to link their survey responses to the IDI. Linking YHWS data enables long-term outcome tracking for young people and rangatahi related to their health, education, and overall wellbeing.

This can inform policies and programmes that directly affect youth services and opportunities, potentially leading to more tailored and effective support systems designed with their needs in mind. This approach optimises the value of participants'

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[5] Years 9–11 were selected as a more pragmatic way of establishing age thresholds (those who are under the age of 16) within each school or kura.

contributions by reducing the need for repeated data collection whilst providing richer insights into youth wellbeing trajectories.

Participants aged 16+ were asked at the end of the survey: *"Are you willing for your survey results to be linked with other information routinely collected by government agencies?"* This question was deliberately positioned after survey completion to ensure participants fully understood the responses they would be submitting for linkage. Those who consented provided their name, date of birth, and address in a separate form not linked to their survey responses. This information was used solely for matching purposes before being deleted.

Participants retained control over their decision, with the option to withdraw consent by contacting Ipsos by 31 October 2025 – more than one month after fieldwork ended. In the main study 33% of those eligible, consented to IDI linking and provided their details for the purposes of IDI linkage – an increase on the 26% achieved in the pilot.

Safety of young people and rangatahi

Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of young people and rangatahi participating in the YHWS 2025 was paramount throughout all aspects of survey design and application. Table 1 provides an overview of the safety plan implemented in the main study. These comprehensive safety measures ensured participants could engage with potentially sensitive survey content in a supportive environment, with immediate access to appropriate help if needed.

Table 1: Components of the YHWS 2025 safety plan

Safety measures	Details
Team training	All survey administrators and youth support workers completed 10 hours of mandatory training covering child protection, distress response, cultural sensitivity, and crisis management. Safety checks and staff vetting were conducted.
Youth support workers	Each session had a youth support worker to ease participants, monitor distress, and assist as needed, allowing survey administrators to focus on logistics.
School/kura safety planning	Schools/kura completed safety plans detailing escalation processes, support needs identification, referral contacts, and immediate support contacts (*Appendix A*).
Kura cultural safety	Cultural safety was a priority in kura engagement to enhance whanaungatanga. All survey staff in kura were fluent in te reo Māori and familiar to the kura community. Rangatahi chose to complete the survey in English or te reo Māori. Refer to the *Kura engagement* section for more details.
Information and consent	Comprehensive information, in multiple languages, was provided to participants and whānau via sheets, newsletters, and videos, ensuring rights awareness and consent (*Appendices B, C,* and *D*).
Information of whānau	Whānau were notified of the survey through newsletters, emails, and information sheets, encouraging discussions with their tamariki. Parents/caregivers of Years 9–11 students could opt out through an online form.
Ensuring safety during the sessions	
Pre-survey briefing	Pre-survey briefings emphasised voluntary participation and freedom to stop or skip questions, and introduced youth support workers and additional help cards ('Keen to talk to someone?').

Safety measures	Details
Participation	Youth workers managed distress and escalated care as needed.
Post-survey support	
'Keen to talk to someone?' cards	Post-survey, participants received support cards with service contacts in multiple languages (see *Appendix E*).
Confidentiality with exceptions	As set out in the HDEC application and in keeping with the Privacy Act 2020, clear protocols were established for when breaking confidentiality was appropriate – specifically if participants disclosed an immediate risk of serious harm to themselves or others.[6]
Screening responses	Survey responses were systematically reviewed for indications of suicide and self-harm risk.[7] There were two main outcomes: 1 If past suicidality was indicated but did not meet the threshold for immediate harm, schools/kura were notified about potential support needs. *Outcome:* 88 of 89 (or 99%) of schools/kura appreciated this, with larger institutions generally aware and smaller ones benefiting from the feedback. 2 If responses indicated immediate risk, Ipsos consulted with MSD, maintaining student and school anonymity, to determine actions. These included informing schools/kura for continuing care and involving youth support workers if required. *Outcome:* In total, there were 10 instances where enhanced school/kura action was implemented to ensure safety and provide wrap-around care.

Safety of the delivery team

The YHWS 2025 prioritised participant and field staff safety by applying comprehensive measures for handling sensitive content and disclosures. Operational protocols included:

- Paired work teams (1–2 survey administrators and a youth support worker) for school and kura sessions, ensuring no staff worked alone
- Global Positioning System (GPS) safety alert devices for immediate assistance requests
- Regular debriefings with coordinators to address concerns
- Regional operations minimised travel risks, keeping staff in familiar areas
- Access to an employee assistance programme provided professional counselling and therapy for staff

No safety incidents occurred during fieldwork. Further detail of the delivery team training and requirements can be found in the *Delivery team* section.

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[6] https://www.privacy.org.nz/responsibilities/privacy-breaches/

[7] Where any students responded that in the last 12 months they had *"seriously thought about killing yourself (attempting suicide)"* or *"made a plan about how you would kill yourself (attempt suicide)"*, the school or kura was made aware that *'at least one student'* had been struggling with suicidality.

Cultural safety

Kura engagement

Whilst the YHWS 2025 takes a bi-cultural approach and works to uphold the rights of tangata whenua under Te Tiriti, it is acknowledged that this research is grounded in Western, European, and scientific research methods and epistemology. The survey lacks the centring of Māori leadership, epistemology, and outcomes that would be necessary for it to be defined as kaupapa Māori research. However, within these methodological constraints, the engagement with kura was grounded in whanaungatanga – the building and maintaining of relationships that form the foundation of successful collaboration with Māori communities.

All three kura coordinators and the kura youth support workers were fluent te reo Māori speakers who understood that engagement with kura required a distinctly different approach from mainstream schools, one that prioritised relationship-building before any discussion of research participation, even whilst operating within a Western research framework.

Establishing whanaungatanga

Wherever possible, selected kura received in-person visits (kanohi ki te kanohi) from kura coordinators as the essential first step of engagement. These initial visits focused on establishing relationships and connections rather than immediately requesting participation. Coordinators, often already known within the kura community through existing networks, took time to understand the unique context of each kura and their priorities and concerns. Only after these foundational relationships were established did coordinators return to discuss the YHWS 2025, ensuring the request to participate came from a place of genuine connection and mutual understanding.

However, the condensed project timelines meant kura coordinators were often pushed to progress relationship-building faster than ideal. Whilst coordinators worked diligently to honour tikanga and establish meaningful connections, the time constraints of the fieldwork schedule did not always allow for the extended relationship-building period that would have been optimal for genuine whanaungatanga. For future YHWS iterations, it is recommended that earlier engagement with local iwi and kura governing bodies be undertaken – ideally beginning 6–12 months before fieldwork – to gain their support and input into survey design. This extended timeline would allow for proper consultation processes and ensure that kura communities have meaningful influence over how the research is conducted within their spaces.

Cultural protocols during survey delivery

The delivery of surveys in kura settings required significantly more time and cultural investment than mainstream school sessions. Survey days often began with pōwhiri to formally welcome the survey team onto the kura grounds and establish the appropriate cultural framework for the day's activities. The sharing of kai before survey sessions served multiple purposes – it demonstrated respect for tikanga, created a relaxed

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atmosphere for rangatahi, and reinforced the principle of *manaakitanga* (caring for the wellbeing of participants).

In line with cultural best practice and the principle of reciprocity, kai was provided to all rangatahi participating in the survey, not merely as refreshment but as an essential element of hosting them appropriately. This approach recognised that in Te Ao Māori, the sharing of food is integral to building trust and showing respect for those who are sharing their knowledge and experiences.

Reciprocity and giving back

Understanding the principle of *utu* (balanced exchange), the survey team recognised the importance of not simply extracting data from kura communities. The commitment to reciprocity is demonstrated through the production of kura-specific infographics, carefully tailored to different kura teaching models (kura kaupapa Māori and kura ā iwi) which will be sent to kura within 6 months of finishing fieldwork. These translated resources will provide meaningful, actionable information that kura can use to support their rangatahi, ensuring that the time and knowledge shared by kura communities directly benefit their own development and decision-making. For an example of the kura-specific infographics, see *Appendix K*.

Despite the timeline constraints, the culturally grounded approach – prioritising whanaungatanga and tikanga throughout the engagement process – resulted in strong kura participation. The YHWS 2025 achieved participation from eight kura in the pilot and the main study, compared to two kura in the 2021 survey.

Study materials

Like its predecessors, the YHWS 2025 was a digital survey delivered via tablets with headphones through which participants received audio cues.

Information sheets

Information sheets meeting HDEC requirements were provided to all participants and whānau. These comprehensive materials included:

- The purpose and importance of the YHWS 2025
- How and where the survey would be undertaken
- Anonymity and confidentiality protocols
- Potential risks of participation and available support services
- Emphasis on voluntary participation with the right to pause or stop at any time
- The YHWS website URL for additional information
- Multiple contact options (freephone, text, email) to reach the research team with questions

Information sheets for both participants and whānau were available in English, te reo Māori, Samoan, and Tongan (see *Appendices B* and *C*).

Information sheet distribution

Selected students and their whānau received comprehensive information about the survey as detailed in the *Information sheets* section above.

Information sheets were provided in both electronic and hard-copy formats, allowing schools and kura to choose the most suitable distribution method. All schools and kura opted for electronic distribution through established parent/caregiver and student communication channels, carried out about a week before survey sessions. This ensured students had time to discuss participation with their whānau, parents and caregivers of Years 9–11 students could opt out if desired, and whānau could request support or accommodations. Hard copies in English, te reo Māori, Samoan, and Tongan were also available at survey sessions, with information reiterated verbally and through video at the session's start.

Partway through fieldwork (from 12 August onwards), participating schools and kura also received visual reminder graphics to distribute to students the week before survey sessions. This multi-layered approach ensured students and whānau had multiple opportunities to access information, ask questions, and make informed decisions about participation, whilst respecting schools' and kura existing communication practices and minimising administrative burden.

Questionnaire

As noted in the introduction, the YHWS 2025 questionnaire is the result of merging questionnaires from the preceding Youth2000 and WAM surveys. The final set of questions used in the YHWS 2025 are available on the MSD website.[8] Further detail of how the Youth2000 and WAM questionnaires were merged, can be found in *Appendix L*.

Validated tools and added measures

Both the Youth2000 questionnaire and WAM contained validated psychometric tools.

Youth2000 carried RADS-10-SF, the Generalised Anxiety Disorder 2 adapted, and WHO-5 (Fleming et al., 2022; Plummer et al., 2016; Topp et al., 2015; Walker et al., 2005).

WAM carried WHO-5, the Kessler Screening Scale for Psychological Distress (K6), and the Washington Group Short Set on Functioning (WGSS) (Groce & Mont, 2017; Malatest International, 2022; Prochaska et al., 2012; Topp & et al., 2015).

After merging, the YHWS 2025 carried WHO-5, K6, and the WGSS, plus CES-DC-10 (Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale for Children). Further detail of the validated tools used can be found in *Appendix M*.

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[8] https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/consultations/youth-health-and-wellbeing-survey-results/index.html

Questionnaire translation

Ipsos contracted the Department of Internal Affairs to provide professional translation services for all survey materials. Supporting documents, including information sheets, consent forms, and 'Keen to talk to someone?' cards, were translated into te reo Māori, Samoan, and Tongan to ensure accessibility for diverse whānau and communities.

The survey questionnaire itself was translated into te reo Māori only, and participants were able to choose to complete the survey in either English or te reo Māori.

All kura coordinators, administrators, and youth support workers who attended kura sessions were fluent te reo Māori speakers. The survey teams working in mainstream schools were able to communicate with students in other languages, e.g., te reo Māori (five administrators), Samoan (two administrators) Tongan (one administrator), Hindi (one administrator), Afrikaans (one administrator), and Arabic (one administrator).

Software

Askia – Survey scripting

The survey was scripted in Ipsos's Askia survey platform which provided the versatility required for the self-complete tablet-based survey format.

To protect participant privacy, the survey was scripted as three separate surveys that maintained data in three separate datafiles, to ensure identifying information was never linked to participant survey responses. However, participants experienced this as one single survey. The platform's advanced scripting capabilities and complex logic structures accommodated the questionnaire's routing requirements. Askia's multi-lingual functionality enabled delivery in both English and te reo Māori whilst preserving data security and compliance with industry standards to ensure the protection of participant information.

iReach – School and kura coordination

Survey administrators used Ipsos's iReach platform to record and view all interactions with schools and kura. The system captured essential details such as primary contacts, health and safety requirements, and student selection information. The platform stored consenting participant lists with their corresponding consent forms.

Both the Askia survey platform and iReach system were hosted in Ipsos's data centre in Aotearoa New Zealand, ensuring all survey data and sample information remained onshore throughout the project. This onshore hosting approach maintained data sovereignty and provided additional security assurance for participant information.

Hardware

Tablets

For the YHWS 2025, Ipsos procured new 420 Samsung Galaxy Tab A9+ 11" LTE tablets with mobile data connections. These ran the Android OS with Headwind mobile device

management (MDM) software installed, and were used by participants to complete the questionnaire.[9] The devices' built-in data connections provided several advantages:

- Quicker setup time for survey administrators without needing to connect to hotspots or school and kura networks
- Remote monitoring and management through MDM software, including GPS tracking and the ability to disable and wipe lost or stolen devices
- Reduced burden on schools and kura to provide Wi-Fi access or support

During the school and kura onboarding stage, Wi-Fi availability was confirmed as a fallback option for sites with poor cellular coverage, though this was rarely necessary.

Surveys were completed via a live web link, ensuring no response data was stored locally on the devices. This approach, combined with the MDM security protocols, meant there were no privacy or data security issues during fieldwork. Furthermore, no devices were lost or stolen throughout the data collection period, demonstrating the effectiveness of the operational procedures and device management systems.

To minimise hardware requirements, fieldwork was staged and equipment was moved between regions. This approach balanced operational efficiency with cost management whilst maintaining contingency capacity.

At the conclusion of the study, Ipsos ran a process to distribute tablets used in the survey that could not be reused or on-sold. In particular, Ipsos elected to give used tablets to 10 randomly selected schools and kura, after they were securely wiped to protect participant confidentiality. Because security and software standards change between survey cycles, the tablets are retired after each round. Donating them allows the equipment to keep providing educational value rather than being discarded.

Ear buds

For the YHWS 2025, Ipsos provided ear buds. These were used by participants to complete the questionnaire with auditory assistance. As these could not be reused for hygiene reasons, participants were allowed to keep them.

Resourcing survey fieldwork

Delivery team

The main study delivery team was strategically located across Aotearoa New Zealand, comprising: three school coordinators who recruited schools, developed safety plans, and managed logistics, including the random sampling of students; three kura coordinators, fluent in te reo Māori, who recruited kura and facilitated survey sessions; 23 survey administrators who conducted sessions at regional schools; and 13 youth support workers who ensured participant welfare, remaining regionally based to

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[9] MDM software is a type of software deployed by organisations to remotely monitor, manage, and secure mobile devices like smartphones, tablets, and laptops. Since our tablets will have a mobile data connection, the MDM software will help ensure that the data collected is secure and the device is properly managed even when it is not in the office.

support local connections. For kura sessions, these youth support workers were also fluent in te reo Māori, even if not always locally based.

All survey administrators and youth support workers completed 10 hours of mandatory training before certification consisting of three core components:

- **Self-complete e-learning module:** Covered fundamental knowledge such as the project's background and significance, child protection policies, cultural safety and sensitivity, identifying and responding to signs of distress, escalation processes and crisis management, school or kura etiquette, quality standards, and data management procedures.

- **Online workshop sessions:** Provided interactive learning opportunities, e.g., role-playing demonstrations, practical fieldwork procedures, and system walk-throughs. Sessions allowed structured interaction between trainers and field staff, with opportunities to practice check-in procedures and troubleshoot potential challenges.

- **In-person training:** In line with the principle of *kanohi ki te kanohi* (face to face), kura coordinators were provided the option for in-person training. Two of the three kura coordinators opted for in-person training.

- **Certification session:** Each team member's knowledge and skills were formally assessed before they were signed off to work in field. This included demonstrating competency in survey administration, participant safety protocols, and emergency procedures. No field staff were permitted to conduct survey sessions without successful certification.

Section 2: Sampling and Recruitment

This section sets out the sampling and recruitment processes used in the YHWS 2025 and sets out the reasons for any modifications to these processes across the different phases of the study.

Sampling design

Target population

The target population for the YHWS 2025 main study was young people and rangatahi aged 13–19 years enrolled at secondary schools and kura in Aotearoa New Zealand. This represents the NZ 'usually resident' population of this age group attending educational institutions.[10] A two-stage stratified sampling design was used to achieve a nationally representative sample of Aotearoa New Zealand's youth population in secondary schools and kura. More detail is found in *Appendix N*.

Sampling frame exclusions

Contributing schools were excluded because they do not have any students in scope of the study. Full primary and intermediate schools were excluded, as their inclusion would have required sampling a large number of schools to reach a very small proportion of the target population (young people and rangatahi aged 13+). Specialist schools, online schools (including Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu), regional health schools, Oranga Tamariki schools, and teen parent units were excluded due to logistical constraints and the specialised needs of their student populations.[11] The MoE school directory does not identify online schools outside Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu – The Correspondence School. Other online schools were identified via online search engine. All schools found to have the majority of their students learning through distance education were excluded from the frame. Young people and rangatahi not enrolled in school and kura were not included in the sampling frame. Further explanation is provided in the *Piloting recruitment* section of this report.

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[10] Originally, the pilot phase had aimed to capture a broader target population – all non-institutionalised 'usually resident' 13–19-year-olds in Aotearoa New Zealand, including both those in school or kura and those in the community (employed; in tertiary education; or not in education, employment, or training[NEET]). However, following the pilot, MSD decided to drop the community cohort for this wave, resulting in the main study's exclusive focus on the school and kura population. Details can be found in the *Piloting recruitment* section of this report.

[11] Students learning in a regional health school or teen parent unit are also enrolled in a mainstream school and if circumstances are appropriate, they would be included in the frame via their mainstream school.

Sampling frame inclusions

The school and kura sampling frame captured students enrolled in Years 9–13 at secondary schools, kura kaupapa Māori, and composite schools.[12] The schools and kura in scope were identified from the school directory published by MoE. The types of schools included in the frame were:

- Composite (Years 1–15)
- Restricted composite (Years 7–10)
- Secondary (Years 7–15)
- Secondary (Years 9–15)

Stage 1: School and kura selection

Schools and kura were selected via stratified random sampling with a Kish allocation approach (85% weighted towards proportional allocation). The sampling frame comprised all NZ schools and kura covering Years 9–13, as listed in the MoE school directory. Stratification was by:

- Regional council (10 regions)
- Equity index (EQI) quartile (with private schools forming separate strata)[13]

Schools and kura were divided into four equal-sized groups (quartiles) based on their equity index, which measures deprivation. The first quartile represents schools and kura with the lowest deprivation, and the fourth quartile represents those with the highest. This differs from the three groupings created by MoE to add a higher level of specificity. Private schools do not receive equity funding from MoE and thus do not have an equity index calculated; as such, they form a different stratum.

To ensure adequate representation of Māori and Pacific young people and rangatahi, strata with high proportions of these populations were oversampled. Specifically, all EQI quartile 3 and 4 strata in Auckland and quartile 4 in Wellington were sampled at triple the standard rate and the remaining quartile 4 at twice the standard rate.

Sampling simulations, adjusted for pilot results, indicated that 247 schools and kura would need to be selected to achieve the sample goal of 10,000 participants, assuming a 41% school and kura–level response rate and 63% student-level response rate. These assumptions were guided by the results of the pilot.

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[12] Whilst the sampling frame included students enrolled in Years 9–13, as the age target was 13–19, a small number of Year 8 students may have been captured in the sampling frame.

[13] The schooling equity index (EQI) is a statistical model that estimates the extent to which students face socioeconomic barriers to achievement at school. The information that this model provides allows MoE to better target resourcing to mitigate the impact of socioeconomic barriers. Schools are assigned an EQI number from 344 to 569. A higher EQI number indicates that a school has students facing more socioeconomic barriers on average, and a lower EQI number indicates that a school has students facing fewer socioeconomic barriers on average. Schools in the sampling frame were classified into four equally sized groups based on their EQI scores, ranging from low to high.

Stage 2: Student selection within schools and kura

Within participating schools and kura, students were selected from the entire school or kura roll. This approach meant that at designated survey times, chosen students from multiple classrooms would converge on the survey space. Whilst logistically more challenging than classroom-based sampling, this methodology provided superior statistical representativeness.

The student selection process followed these steps:

1 **School and kura roll collection:** Once a school or kura was onboarded, they received a pre-formatted Excel template to input their complete roll, including each student's school ID, year level, age, and gender. However, schools and kura were accommodated to provide their roll in the format that best suited their systems and preferences. This flexible approach meant that not all requested variables were consistently available across schools and kura – notably, gender and age information was not always provided, which affected the ability to stratify or monitor participation by this characteristic at the selection stage.

2 **Secure transfer:** Schools and kura returned the completed roll to survey administrators via secure file transfer protocols.

3 **Random selection:** Administrators used random selection functions within Excel to choose approximately 200 students per school or kura (40 per year level from Years 9–13 split by 20 females and 20 males where appropriate). The sample was stratified by year level as a proxy for age. Initial consultation with schools and kura revealed that stratifying by age would not be feasible due to limitations in their enrolment data systems. Consequently, random selection was conducted within year levels to achieve an approximate age distribution whilst working within practical constraints of school or kura administration. For schools and kura with total rolls of fewer than 267 students, all eligible students were invited to participate.

4 **Consent and communication:** The selected sample list was returned to schools and kura, who then initiated the consent process following the approach outlined in the *Informed consent* section. Concurrently, schools and kura distributed information sheets to selected students and their whānau, explaining the survey and their selection to participate.

This systematic approach to student selection ensured both statistical rigour and practical feasibility, whilst maintaining appropriate ethical safeguards throughout the recruitment process.

Recruitment

Cognitive testing recruitment

Cognitive testing was conducted to ensure new survey questions were appropriately understood and interpreted by the target population. A total of 42 face-to-face cognitive surveys were undertaken with young people and rangatahi aged 13–19 years from 18 to

27 February 2025 in Auckland, Rotorua, and Wellington. A youth support worker was present to provide support if required.

Piloting recruitment

Piloting was conducted to ensure that all survey materials and processes were running well, and any problems had been troubleshooted and fixed before the main study. It involved delivering the YHWS 2025 with a smaller group of young people and rangatahi.

School and kura pilot cohort

Out of the 26 schools and kura invited (including three special schools), nine took part, achieving a 39% response rate. At student level, 543 of 852 invited students participated (64% response rate), slightly below the expected 69%–80%. Response rates were consistent across gender and relatively even across year levels, with slightly higher participation among senior students (Years 11–13: 59%) compared to junior students (Years 9–10: 51%). The pilot revealed no consistent patterns linking school or kura characteristics (size, location, EQI) to participation rates, though recruitment proved particularly challenging in the Bay of Plenty region (11% response rate).

Key barriers identified through follow-up with declining schools and kura included:

- Timing conflicts with the start of the academic year
- Existing survey commitments or health initiatives
- Concerns about lost learning time (1.5-hour sessions spanning two periods)
- Logistical constraints and limited resources

Community pilot cohort

The community sample aimed to recruit 13–19-year-olds not regularly attending school or kura through door-knocking to address under-coverage by the school and kura sample. This 'gold standard' approach, recommended by Statistics Research Associates, sought to create a representative sample that could be combined with the school and kura cohort. Eligible young people and rangatahi were invited to complete the survey at community venues such as marae and sports clubs during 4-hour weekend sessions. The pilot tested this method across 1,809 households, identifying 105 eligible young people and rangatahi at 69 households, with a household incidence rate of 4%. Although 72 young people and rangatahi were successfully recruited, only 30 attended the sessions, resulting in a 61% attrition rate and a 3% overall response rate, lower than the 4%–5% projected. Key barriers to participation included schedule conflicts, transportation challenges, withdrawal of lead household participants, communication failures, and anxiety about unfamiliar venues.

Testing different koha values ($50 Prezzy card vs $75 Prezzy card) showed no impact on participation rates, with both participants and recruiters indicating substantially higher amounts would be needed to influence motivation.

Decision to focus on school and kura cohort in the main study

Based on these results, the decision was made to focus solely on the school and kura cohort for the YHWS 2025, reallocating resources to enhance school and kura engagement through improved communication and increased koha. Whilst this approach enables larger sample sizes and robust subgroup analysis, it limits representativeness by excluding young people and rangatahi not in school or kura settings and prevents testing of alternative engagement strategies for these harder-to-reach populations. See *Appendix Q* for recommendations for future community cohorts.

Main study recruitment

Based on the feedback provided by declining schools and kura, several strategies were implemented to enhance participation rates for the main study, as described in Table 2, which included extended timeframes, enhanced koha, and proactive engagement. Three school coordinators and three kura coordinators led recruitment efforts across their assigned regions, with each institution typically requiring 2–3 weeks from initial contact to participation decision.

Table 2: School and kura recruitment strategies implemented for main study

Strategy	Changes implemented
Extended recruitment timeframe	Minimum 6 weeks allocated for recruitment and onboarding.
Koha	Provision of koha to study participants is both standard and essential ethical best-practice when conducting research, surveys or studies with human participants.[14] The purpose of providing koha or adequate compensation is to ensure that human research is a common, non-exploitative practice.
	The koha offered to both schools/kura and students was enhanced following pilot findings. Students received a $25 digital Prezzy card. Schools/kura received a $300 digital Prezzy card koha. This acknowledges their role in facilitating and hosting the survey, as well as recognising the time and effort their staff contributed to the survey's coordination.
Streamlined communication with schools/kura	Developed infographics to clearly demonstrate the ask of schools/kura on one page and simplified email templates.
Proactive engagement	Building on pilot findings that face-to-face visits proved particularly effective in securing participation, the main study prioritised kanohi ki te kanohi engagement wherever feasible. Brownies were sent to all schools/kura as a warm introduction before formal contact. This proactive approach was crucial given the condensed timeframes for onboarding schools/kura before the end of Term 3. Fostering relationships by direct engagement, especially with kura, ensured the achievement of enhanced school/kura involvement, leading to higher student-level response rates and improved survey efficiency.
Increased sample size	Student invitations increased from 120 to 200 per school/kura (where schools/kura were large enough to accommodate this).

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[14] 11. Research conduct | National Ethics Advisory Committee – see section 11.20.

Strategy	Changes implemented
Additional coordinators	Appointed 3 school and 3 kura coordinators to ensure proactive and responsive school/kura engagement.
Regional prioritisation	Early engagement with schools/kura in regions that were difficult to recruit in for the pilot.
Exclusion of special schools	Feedback from the 3 special schools asked to take part in the pilot proved that the ask on these students was too much. As a result, special schools were removed from the sampling frame for the main study.

Main study recruitment timeline and approach

A total of 247 schools and kura were selected via the sampling design described earlier in this report. These schools and kura were randomly allocated into five tranches, which maintained the representativeness of the sample whilst allowing flexibility to halt recruitment early if participation goals were met ahead of schedule.

In the main study, 198 schools and kura were invited in the first three tranches to take part. Schools and kura were not contacted in tranches 4 and 5.

- Tranche 1: contacted from 1 May 2025
- Tranche 2: contacted from 27 May 2025
- Tranche 3: contacted from 5 August 2025

Recruitment process

The main study recruitment process followed the engagement strategy detailed in the HDEC application, incorporating enhancements identified during the pilot stage.

Initial contact

The recruitment process for the YHWS 2025 began with the delivery of a box of brownies with the YHWS logo and a note of appreciation for the school's or kura work with young people and rangatahi. This served as a warm introduction before formal contact, and was designed as a way to get the attention of school or kura staff. Coordinators reached out by phone within a week to identify key decision-makers, e.g., deputy principals, hauora coordinators, or principals' assistants.

Whilst the study prioritised kanohi ki te kanohi interactions to build personal connections, it was not practical to visit all schools and kura in person due to logistical constraints. In such cases, the delivery of brownies provided a personal touch and served as a conduit for face-to-face connection. This gesture was crucial for fostering relationships within the constrained timeframe for onboarding schools and kura by the conclusion of Term 3.

Information provision

After first contact, coordinators sent a comprehensive information package including:

- Principal's information sheet and consent form (see *Appendix F*)
- School and kura coordination infographic clearly demonstrating requirements of the school or kura (see *Appendix G*)
- Detailed email outlining survey logistics and next steps
- Letter of support from the Minister for Youth (this was added part-way through main study recruitment)

Follow-up and decision

Schools typically required 5–6 contact attempts (phone, email, in-person) before providing a participation decision, though this ranged from a single contact to 15–20 interactions. The median decision timeframe was 2–3 weeks from initial contact.

Where initial engagement proved challenging, coordinators or local youth support workers conducted in-person visits. These face-to-face meetings proved particularly effective, with several schools signing consent forms and booking survey dates during these visits. Schools requesting to review the questionnaire received watermarked copies with explanations of the rigorous testing processes ensuring question appropriateness.

Kura recruitment

The kura recruitment process employed a culturally nuanced approach similar to the mainstream school recruitment strategy yet with the addition of culturally safe practices articulated in the *Cultural safety* section. By initiating relationship-building kanohi ki te kanohi meetings rooted in whanaungatanga, the process ensured genuine engagement through familiar cultural protocols such as pōwhiri and sharing of kai. This approach mirrored mainstream strategies, whilst embedding cultural practices, leading to a notable increase in kura participation in the YHWS 2025 survey.

Student-level recruitment

Within participating schools and kura, approximately 200 students were randomly selected, stratified by year level as detailed in the *Sampling design* chapter. The consent process followed the approach outlined in the *Informed consent* section, with schools and kura identifying less than 1% of the selected students as requiring additional support or parental consent, based on their capability to provide informed consent.

Section 3: Fieldwork

This section sets out how each component of the survey fieldwork was executed.

Cognitive testing fieldwork

Cognitive testing ensured that new survey questions were understood by the target population. This process ran in February 2025 with 42 young people and rangatahi in Auckland. A support worked was present to provide support if it was required.

The cognitive testing employed the 'think aloud' technique, examining how participants understood the questions, recalled relevant information, and formulated their answers.

The testing focused on 19 new questions that had not been included in previous iterations of youth health and wellbeing surveys, comprising 35 individual items when including carousel-style questions with multiple response options. These new questions covered social emotional skills, mental health experiences, body image, menstrual health, and substance use.

Table 3 summarises the key findings from the cognitive testing and the corresponding changes made to improve question clarity and cultural appropriateness:

Table 3: Key findings from cognitive testing findings and changes to questionnaire

Key finding	Changes implemented
Participants frequently skipped introductory text, tooltips, and text in brackets	Integrated essential context directly into question wording rather than relying on introductory text
Technical and formal terminology was not well understood (e.g., *'menstruation'*, *'typical session'*, *'mental health conditions'*)	Replaced technical terms with age-appropriate vocabulary throughout the questionnaire (e.g., *'periods'* instead of *'menstruation'*)
Questions about hearing voices or seeing things were taken literally (e.g., participants said *'yes'* because they hear God at church or see spirits of relatives, which is normal in their culture)	Revised questions to be clear these are about experiences that seem real but are not, whilst respecting cultural beliefs
Cultural considerations critical for questions about spiritual experiences and perceptual phenomena	Incorporated culturally appropriate framing and examples, particularly for questions that could be interpreted through spiritual or cultural lenses
Response options insufficient for variable experiences (e.g., social media use varies by day, eating worries depend on mood, body image importance changes)	Expanded response options where participants indicated missing categories, particularly for social media and mental health questions
The term *'neutral'* in response scales not understood by younger participants	Replaced with age-appropriate language (e.g., *'in the middle'* or *'sometimes'*) or provided tooltips to explain scale points
Unclear timeframes for questions about experiences and behaviours (e.g., *"Do you get periods?"* – currently? ever? what if on contraception that stops them?)	Specified reference periods (e.g., *'in the last 12 months'*, *'in a typical week'*) for all relevant questions

These changes ensured question validity and cultural appropriateness, contributing to the overall quality and reliability of the YHWS 2025 data collection instrument.

Piloting fieldwork

The YHWS 2025 pilot was conducted during 10–31 March 2025 to test recruitment strategies, survey delivery methods, and operational procedures. A total of 567 young people and rangatahi from nine schools and kura and six community regions took part.

The pilot tested both school/kura and community cohorts. The community cohort achieved lower-than-anticipated yield rates, which led to its exclusion from the main study. Door-knocking at 1,809 households resulted in 30 survey completions. As this fell below the 4%–5% threshold required for viability, it was decided to focus resources on the school and kura cohort for the 2025 main study.

Pilot survey sessions followed consistent protocols across all settings to ensure standardised data collection. All participants experienced the same core process: watching the information video, providing consent, and completing the questionnaire on tablets. The key difference was the session atmosphere – community venues accommodated up to 10 participants arriving flexibly within 4-hour windows, enabling individualised check-in, whilst school and kura sessions involved up to 50 participants arriving simultaneously for scheduled sessions.

Session duration and participant experience

Survey sessions averaged 1.5 hours in total, with the questionnaire itself taking approximately 38 minutes to complete. Younger (13–15 years) participants took slightly longer (mean: 39:26) than older (16+ years) participants (mean: 36:54).

Participant feedback was largely positive:

- 60% enjoyed the survey and felt comfortable providing honest answers.
- 70% found the information easy to understand and tablets simple to use.
- 54% rated the survey length as acceptable – identifying this as an area for improvement.

Operational improvements

Manual entry of participant ID numbers emerged as the pilot's most critical operational weakness, consuming 10–30 minutes per session and causing data errors that excluded four surveys from analysis. Implementing automated QR code check-in for the main study eliminated these errors whilst shortening check-in to under 5 minutes.

Table 4: Operational improvements implemented for main study survey sessions

Strategy	Changes implemented
Automated QR code check-in	Eliminated data entry errors and reduced check-in time
Additional survey administrator at survey sessions	Improved logistics management for sessions with 40+ participants
Streamlined introduction by survey administrators	Reduced repetition with introductory video content, saving 5–10 minutes per session
Individual mini-breaks	Replaced group breaks for flexible session flow

Strategy	Changes implemented
Meshblock question repositioned	Moved to survey beginning, improving response rate from 29% in pilot to 74% in main study
Hard-copy questionnaires available	Available in all English and te reo Māori for reference

Safety and training outcomes

The safety plan proved highly effective, with few participants requiring youth support worker assistance. All delivery team members (100%) reported feeling prepared to address participant needs, validating both the safety protocols and the 10-hour training programme. The provision of dedicated youth support workers successfully protected school and kura pastoral care resources whilst ensuring immediate support availability.

These pilot findings enabled targeted improvements to recruitment, operations, and support materials, positioning the main study for enhanced efficiency whilst preserving the YHWS 2025's high safety and quality standards.

Changes to the questionnaire

After the pilot, several changes were made to the YHWS 2025 questionnaire to improve data quality and reduce participant burden for the main study. To address survey length concerns, 10 questions with non-response rates exceeding 50% were removed. These included questions on open-ended topics where participants frequently selected *'not sure'* or *'prefer not to say'*, indicating either question sensitivity or lack of clarity.

Additional refinements based on pilot feedback included:

* **3 questions** with wording changes to response codes to improve clarity
* **2 questions** with routing changes to ensure appropriate skip logic
* **2 questions** with modified main question wording whilst maintaining response options
* **1 question** with restructured response options requiring separate variable treatment
* **1 new question** added to capture additional data that was incidentally left out of the pilot survey

Table 4 in *Appendix O* details these changes and how the results were integrated into the final dataset.

Main study fieldwork

The YHWS 2025 successfully achieved 9,414 completed surveys from young people and rangatahi aged 13–19 years during March–September 2025, combining 8,880 responses from the main study with 534 responses from the pilot phase. This constitutes a significant contribution to the field of youth health and wellbeing data in Aotearoa New Zealand. This section describes the recruitment efforts that yielded 8,880 responses in the main study.

The final sample is nationally representative of 13–19-year-olds attending secondary schools and kura across Aotearoa New Zealand. Its falling slightly short of the 10,000 response goal is primarily attributable to the industrial strike action in August–September 2025, which led to 14 schools' and kura withdrawal from participation, representing an estimated loss of 1,400 student responses, alongside widespread disruption to survey operations during the critical final weeks of data collection.

Survey sessions

The main study survey sessions built upon the standardised protocols successfully tested during the pilot phase and detailed in the project protocol. Sessions typically lasted up to 90 minutes including check-in and introduction, with the questionnaire itself taking just less than 40 minutes on average to complete.

Session setup and check-in

Survey administrators and youth support workers arrived at schools and kura to set up the designated venue (typically the school hall, gymnasium, or library), arranging tablet stations to maximise privacy and establishing a separate 'safe space' for confidential support conversations.

Participants arriving at the venue were welcomed by the youth support worker and guided to the check-in desk. Participants provided their name to survey administrators who looked up each of them in the iReach system. A unique QR check-in card was issued to each participant after being scanned into iReach. Participants then scanned their assigned QR code with the tablet camera to access the survey.

The automated QR code process enabled efficient processing of participants, with check-in often completed in under 10 minutes even for groups of 40+. For larger sessions, an additional survey administrator was allocated and both administrators simultaneously checked in participants.

Survey completion

Once checked in, participants received a set of ear buds and were asked to wait for instruction at their tablet station (i.e., not to log in straightaway). Next, survey administrators provided a verbal introduction before participants watched the information video outlining key details about anonymity, voluntary participation, the right to skip questions or withdraw, and available support services. Participants then provided consent on their tablets before commencing the survey.

During survey completion, youth support workers actively monitored participants for signs of distress, walking through the room and remaining visibly available for support. Participants were encouraged to take individual mini-breaks as needed, enabling flexible session flow. Hard copies of the questionnaire in English and te reo Māori as well as a 'Here to help' resource sheet (see *Appendix I*), were available for reference.

For kura sessions, these protocols were extended to incorporate cultural elements including pōwhiri or whakatau to formally welcome the survey team and establish the

appropriate cultural framework. Additional time was allocated for whanaungatanga, and kai was shared before survey sessions, demonstrating respect for tikanga and creating a relaxed atmosphere for rangatahi.

Survey duration in main study

The survey team generally observed that entire survey sessions lasted up to 90 minutes from participant entry to exit.

- The survey took an average of 39 minutes, though some took over 1 hour to complete.
- The activities outside the survey (checking in the participants, introductions, and wrap-ups) took 20–30 minutes.

Figure 1: Survey duration
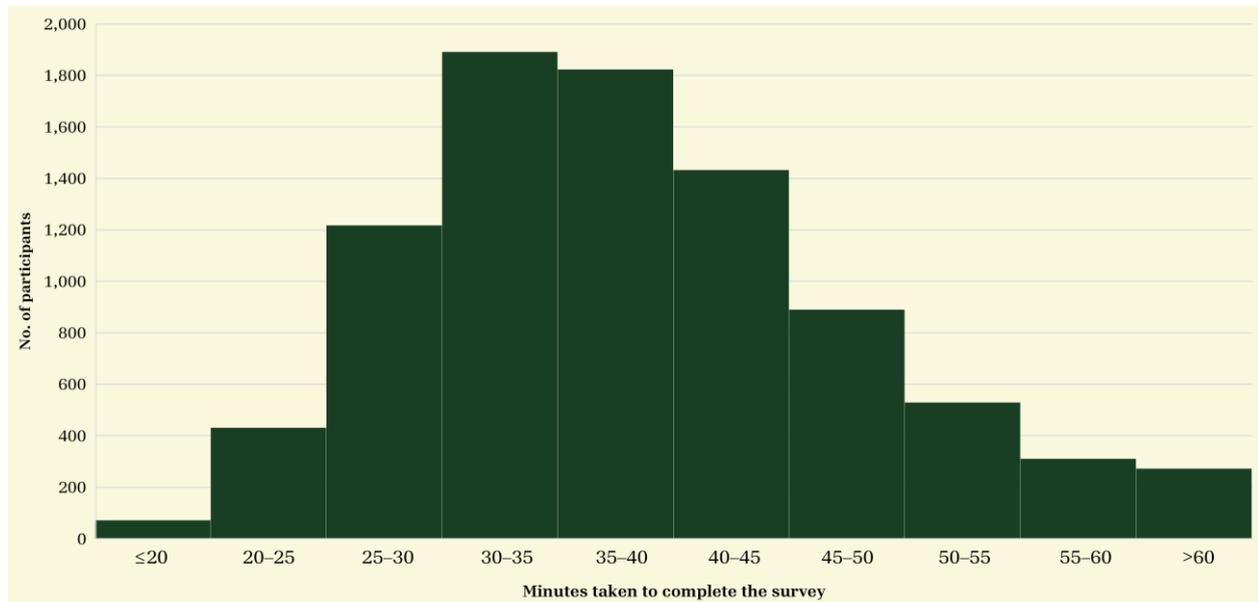
(Base: n=8,880 main study participants)

On average, younger participants (aged 13–15 years) took about 2 and half minutes (2:31 minutes) longer to complete the survey than older participants (aged 16–19 years).

Table 5: Survey duration by age in main study

Participants	Number	Mean	Median	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Total	**8,880**	**38:30**	**37:14**	**10:02**	**13:03**	**1:41:47**
13–15 years	5,406	39:29	38:14	10:06	13:03	1:33:44
16+ years	3,471	36:58	35:23	09:44	15:51	1:41:47

Table 6 summarises the duration of completion of each survey section. *Home* and *Emotional wellbeing and mental health* were the most extensive, with participants taking about 5 minutes on average to complete them. Sections denoted with *(R)* involve question logic, indicating that not all participants responded to every question, which could result in a broader variability in completion times across these sections.

Table 6: Survey duration by section in main study

Main study section	Mean	Median	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Introduction/screener	00:05:29	00:04:52	00:02:29	00:01:07	00:31:02
About you	00:01:26	00:01:16	00:00:42	00:00:19	00:09:13
Ethnicity & culture (R)[1]	00:02:15	00:01:53	00:01:18	00:00:23	00:28:03
Home	00:05:14	00:04:51	00:01:57	00:01:06	00:22:45
Gender & sexuality	00:01:10	00:01:02	00:00:34	00:00:11	00:08:49
School & learning (R)	00:02:18	00:02:07	00:00:55	00:00:17	00:16:59
Bullying (R)	00:00:24	00:00:10	00:00:32	00:00:02	00:10:17
Substance use & harm (R)	00:02:52	00:02:36	00:01:25	00:00:10	00:14:16
Health (R)	00:03:00	00:02:44	00:01:22	00:00:19	00:17:53
Sexual health (R)	00:01:48	00:01:36	00:00:53	00:00:13	00:15:25
Emotional wellbeing & mental health (R)	00:04:56	00:04:39	00:01:49	00:00:37	00:24:04
Activities (R)	00:01:53	00:01:46	00:00:48	00:00:10	00:13:13
Community & beliefs	00:03:06	00:02:51	00:01:34	00:00:20	00:43:40
Survey experience	00:01:44	00:01:32	00:01:01	00:00:01	00:27:14
IDI consent	00:00:53	00:00:31	00:00:47	00:00:05	00:05:20
Total	**00:38:53**	**00:37:32**	**00:10:05**	**00:13:03**	**01:44:14**

[1]*R = Routing or question logic in this section, so we would expect a wider range of completion times.*

Session conclusion

Upon completion, participants returned their tablets and received the 'Keen to talk to someone?' cards available in English, te reo Māori, Samoan, and Tongan, containing support service contacts and QR codes linking to additional resources. Survey administrators provided a brief wrap-up, thanking participants for their contribution and reminding them that the youth support worker would remain available for anyone wanting to talk privately.

These standardised protocols ensured consistent, safe, and efficient data collection across all schools and kura, whilst maintaining the participant-centred approach fundamental to the YHWS 2025.

School and kura infographics

To establish reciprocity for their contribution, and with respect to the confidentiality of contributions from each participating individual, each school and kura were given the opportunity to receive their specific insights at the conclusion of the study. Each school and kura who 'opted in' to receive their "insights from their school" were sent an infographic (see *Appendices J* and *K*) which offered a high-level overview of their students' responses. This infographic covered various topics such as connecting and contributing, family and home life, health, harms, and aspirations.

For schools and kura with small sample sizes, the information on their infographic was merged with other similar schools and kura to protect the anonymity of their students. This was the case for all nine participating kura. As suggested by the kura coordinators and in recognition of the different tikanga-based schooling models, separate infographics were prepared for Kura Kaupapa Māori and Kura ā Iwi. This approach acknowledges that, although both fall under the umbrella of Te Ao Māori, they each have distinct practices, rules, and traditions. By presenting the survey results tailored to each kura model, Ipsos aims to respect and acknowledge these differences, ensuring the information is both applicable and valuable to each kura and its respective community.

To design the kura infographic, kura coordinators consulted the surveyed kura to understand what information from the survey was of interest to them and appropriate to report back. Based on this consultation, kura infographics included slightly different information than mainstream schools' ones (see *Appendix K*).

Participants

During the survey, participants indicated whether they would like to be notified when results were published. More than two thirds (68%) stated they would like to be notified and will be emailed a link to the MSD website once the initial findings are published.

Section 4: Data Processing

This chapter describes the data processing procedures applied to the YHWS 2025 dataset, from initial extraction through to final delivery to MSD. It details the data cleaning and quality assurance protocols, validation checks, merging of pilot and main study datasets, and secure transfer methods employed to ensure data integrity whilst maintaining participant confidentiality.

Note on data presentation

As detailed in the *Random rounding and suppression* section at the beginning of this report, all participant counts in the following tables and figures have been randomly rounded to the nearest multiple of 3 to protect participant privacy. As a result:

- Percentages may not sum to exactly 100%.
- Marginal totals may differ from overall totals (for example, year level totals of 8,862 differ from the overall main study total of 8,880).
- Row and column totals may not precisely match expected sums.

These variations are intentional outcomes of the confidentiality protections and do not indicate errors in the data. The identities of participating schools and kura are confidentially held by Ipsos and have not been shared, with no reports generated for fewer than three schools or kura to ensure privacy. Additionally, school and kura–level counts have not been randomly rounded so as to preserve their operational value for future survey planning.

Data cleaning and quality assurance checks

Survey data was extracted from the Askia survey platform into SQL tables, with 'extract, transform, load' code written in R to clean and format the data. Prior to transfer to MSD, the data underwent the following processes to ensure compatibility and accuracy:

- Verification that every response contained a unique STUDY_ID value and SURVEY_DATE – STUDY_ID uniquely identifies each response in the dataset, whilst SURVEY_DATE records the date when the participant completed the survey
- Confirmation that variable names matched the data dictionary
- Validation that variables contained only values as described in the data dictionary
- Checks that verbatim *'other'* responses were not empty when the corresponding closed response variable indicated their presence
- Verification that derived variables were calculated correctly
- Removal of special characters (commas and quotation marks) from open-text responses to ensure CSV compatibility
- Removal of macrons from column headers, represented instead by double vowels, to facilitate data ingestion

For details on the validation results, see *Appendix P.*

Response quality checks

Whilst the in-person survey methodology ensured no responses were from automated bots, the data underwent standard quality assurance checks to identify potentially inaccurate or low-effort responses. Based on international best practice guidelines, 9,447 responses were screened for three types of problematic response patterns, and all 'speeders' and those who met any two of the three criteria listed below were removed:

- **Speeders:** 12 participants (<1%) completed the survey in less than one third of the median completion time (12 minutes), indicating they likely did not read questions thoroughly.

- **Skippers:** 42 participants (<1%) selected *'prefer not to say'* or *'not sure'* for at least two thirds of their responses, suggesting disengagement from the survey.

- **Flatliners:** 117 participants (<2%) demonstrated repetitive response patterns in at least two thirds of questions, such as:
  - Selecting the same response option throughout (e.g., all 5s or all 3s)
  - Following obvious patterns (e.g., alternating between two response options)
  - Providing contradictory answers across related questions

Additionally, 27 participants (<1%) met two of the three criteria above, primarily being both flatliners and speeders. Open-text responses were also examined for gibberish, off-topic content, or copy-pasted text that would indicate lack of genuine engagement.

The responses removed included all speeders and those who met two of the three criteria listed above.

Outcomes and data exclusions

The main study data collection resulted in 8,991 participants' checking in to begin the survey. Of these, 8,910 completed the survey through to at least Question 19 (Q19_Dem25, a demographic question early in the questionnaire), with 81 participants (<1%) dropping off before this point and subsequently being excluded from the dataset.

The 8,910 main study responses comprised:

- 8,769 fully completed surveys (98%)
- 93 mostly completed surveys (1%)
- 48 partially completed surveys (<1%)

Following quality assurance checks, an additional 33 responses were removed:

- 27 participants who met at least two quality check criteria (speeders, skippers, or flatliners)
- 6 participants who completed the survey in less than 12 minutes

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This resulted in the retention of 8,880 main study responses. Combined with 534 pilot responses (which underwent the same quality checks), the final dataset contained 9,414 responses ready for weighting and analysis.

The inclusion of partial and mostly complete responses maximises the available data whilst maintaining quality standards. These responses provide valuable information for the questions completed, with item-level non-response handled appropriately in the analysis phase. The data dictionary documents two mechanisms for understanding item-level non-response:

1. The SURVEY_COMPLETION variable indicates how much of the survey was completed by each participant.

2. The *'Question Logic'* column indicates for each variable if the question was asked conditionally.

Merging pilot and main study datasets

To maximise the statistical power of the YHWS 2025 dataset, the 534 pilot responses were merged with the 8,880 main study responses after comprehensive compatibility checks and data harmonisation procedures. The merging process required careful consideration of questionnaire changes implemented between the pilot and main study phases based on pilot learnings.

The harmonisation process addressed 19 questions that differed between pilot and main study implementation:

- **3 questions** required response code harmonisation through simple recoding.

- **1 question** underwent substantial restructuring requiring separate variable treatment.

- **2 questions** had routing logic applied retrospectively to pilot data.

- **3 questions** had minor wording refinements that did not affect comparability.

- **10 questions** were dropped from main study fieldwork and returned to the YHWS question library (five questions were dropped due to non-response rates exceeding 50% in the pilot).

- **1 new question** was added in the main study.

For details on each affected question and the harmonisation approach applied, see Table 5 in *Appendix P*. All harmonisation decisions were approved by MSD and documented in the data dictionary to ensure transparency for researchers using the merged dataset. The successful integration of pilot and main study data resulted in a robust dataset of 9,414 responses.

Transfer of data

Secure encrypted channels were used to transfer data between Ipsos and MSD. Prior to the transfer, data went through extensive cleaning and quality assurance processes. The dataset delivered to MSD did not include any direct identifiers.

Item non-response

Table 7 highlights questions where more than 30% of participants responded with *'not sure'* (NS) or *'prefer not to say'* (PNTS). High non-response rates may indicate questions that were unclear, too sensitive, or not relevant to participants, suggesting these items should be reviewed and potentially revised or removed in future YHWS waves.

Table 7: Questions with >30% non-response scores

Variable	Text	# Prefer not to say & not sure	# asked this question	% NS: Not sure	% PNTS: Prefer not to say	Total % Not sure & Prefer not to say of those asked
Gamb_Fx	**In the last 4 weeks, how often have you gambled for money or bet on precious things?** *(E.g. scratchies, lotto, pokies, TAB, betting on sports games or races, cards, online casinos/ poker, bets with friends or whānau/family)* 1. Once or twice in the last 4 weeks 2. About once a week 3. About twice a week 4. About every second day 5. About every day 98. Not sure 99. Prefer not to say	1,881	3,762	43%	7%	**50%**
Subst_Quit_ Gamb	**Have you ever tried to cut down or give up on ...? Gambling** 1. Yes 2. No – but I want to 3. No – I don't plan on stopping 98. Not sure 99. Prefer not to say	1,542	3,762	34%	7%	**41%**
HealthCare_ UnableWhy	**Why could you not see a doctor, nurse or other healthcare worker?** [Open-text box] 98. Not sure	609	1,506	21%	20%	**40%**

Variable	Text	# Prefer not to say & not sure	# asked this question	% NS: Not sure	% PNTS: Prefer not to say	Total % Not sure & Prefer not to say of those asked
	99. Prefer not to say					
OT_Involve-ment	**Have you or anyone in your whānau family ever been involved with Oranga Tamariki (OT) or Child Youth & Family Services (CYFS)?** 1. Yes 2. No 98. Not sure 99. Prefer not to say	3,288	9,414	32%	3%	**35%**

Linking responses to the IDI

The IDI is a large research database maintained by Stats NZ containing de-identified information about people and households, linking data from government agencies to support research and policy development. For the first time in the YHWS series, participants aged 16+ were offered the opportunity to link their survey responses to the IDI. In the main study, 33% of eligible participants (aged 16+) consented to this linkage and provided details to enable the linking – an improvement on the pilot's 26%.

This section examines whether systematic differences exist between participants who chose to link their responses and those who did not. Understanding these differences is important for interpreting future analyses using the linked dataset and identifying potential biases.

Pearson's Chi-squared tests were carried out for statistically significant differences at the 95% confidence level by equity index, ethnicity, regional area, and gender. Significant differences emerged for equity index (a proxy for socioeconomic status) and ethnicity, but not for regional area or gender.

Equity index
The schooling equity index (EQI) is a statistical model that estimates the extent to which students face socioeconomic barriers to achievement at school. See the *Sampling design* chapter for more information on the EQI.

Table 8 shows that the percentage of eligible participants who agreed for their data to be linked to the IDI was significantly lower for students from schools and kura with more socioeconomic barriers (p<0.01). Of the eligible population from EQI quartiles 3 and 4 schools, which had more socioeconomic barriers, only 26% and 27% respectively agreed for their data to be linked to the IDI. This was much lower than EQI quartiles 1

and 2 schools and kura with fewer socioeconomic barriers, of which 35% and 38% respectively agreed to linking their data to the IDI.

Some 23% of eligible participants were from schools and kura with the most socioeconomic barriers (EQI quartile 4). However, since a significantly lower proportion of this group agreed for their data to be linked in the IDI, these schools and kura make up only 19% of the sample in the IDI. This is similar for schools and kura in EQI quartile 3, who made up 26% of the eligible sample but only 22% of the sample who agreed to link their data to the IDI.

Table 8: Linking responses to the IDI by equity index

Equity index (EQI)	% of all eligible participants in each EQI quartile	% of eligible participants from each EQI quartile who agreed to be linked to the IDI
EQI: 1 *Fewer socioeconomic barriers*	28%	35%
EQI: 2	23%	38%
EQI: 3	26%	27%
EQI: 4 *More socioeconomic barriers*	23%	26%

Ethnic group

The percentage of eligible participants who consented to IDI linkage differed significantly by ethnicity ($p<0.01$). Māori and Pacific participants were significantly less likely to agree to IDI linkage ($p<0.01$) – they accounted for 26% and 22%, respectively, of those eligible to provide consent, but just 28% and 25%, respectively, agreed to IDI linkage. Since a significantly lower proportion of Māori and Pacific participants agreed for their data to be linked to the IDI, Māori and Pacific ethnicities make up 23% and 17% of the sample in the IDI.

Conversely, European participants showed higher consent rates ($p<0.001$). Europeans accounted for 61% of those eligible to provide consent and 35% of these participants did consent to their data's linkage. This means that European participants make up 68% of the sample in the IDI. There are no statistically significant differences within the Asian and Other ethnic groups in terms of deciding to link to the IDI.

Table 9: Linking responses to the IDI by ethnicity

Ethnicity	% of all eligible participants in each ethnic group	% of eligible participants from each ethnic group who agreed to be linked to the IDI
Māori	26%	28%
Pacific	22%	25%
Asian	17%	35%
European	61%	35%
Other	2%	35%

Regional area and gender

Tables Table 10 and Table 11 show no statistically significant differences by regional area (*p*=0.05) or gender (*p*>.05) in participants' decisions to link their responses.

Table 10: Linking responses to the IDI by regional area

Regional area	% of all eligible participants in each regional area	% of eligible participants from each regional area who agreed to be linked to the IDI
Auckland	34%	29%
Rest of North Island	51%	33%
South Island	15%	34%

Table 11: Linking responses to the IDI by gender

Gender	% of all eligible participants in each gender	% of eligible participants from each gender who agreed to be linked to the IDI
Female	53%	31%
Male	45%	33%
Another gender/PNTS/Unknown	2%	25%

Differences by survey responses

The checks aimed to determine whether consent to IDI linkage was influenced by responses to specific survey questions. Due to the extensive number of questions, it was not feasible to examine each one; as such, questions were selected based on their personal nature, robustness of measurement, or alignment with national surveys. It is important to note that there could be some bias introduced, as some participants might consent to IDI linkage whilst avoiding more personal questions.

Statistically significant differences (*p*<0.05) were found for:

- Self-rated health – general health rating from *poor* to *excellent*. Participants were asked, *"In general, how would you say your health is?"* Of eligible participants, those who stated they were *'not sure'* or that they would *'prefer not to say'* how their health is were significantly less likely to link to the IDI compared to those who provided a score from *poor* through to *excellent*. Further analysis revealed no significant differences between those who provided a *poor* through to *excellent* response.

- Damp housing – agreement with *"I live somewhere that is damp"*. Of eligible participants, a smaller proportion of participants who *strongly agreed* (26%) with the statement opted to link to the IDI compared to those who *agreed* (33%), *were neutral* (34%), *disagreed* (32%), or *strongly disagreed* (34%).

No significant differences were found for:

- Kessler 6 (K6) – psychological distress screening scale
- WGSS disability score – self-reported disability measure
- Physical punishment – adults hitting or physically hurting the participant or others

- Sexual intercourse – whether a participant had ever had sex

Detailed response tables are provided in *Appendix R*.

Weighting and calibration

Generating weights in a sample survey is essential to ensure that results accurately represent the target population. Weighting compensates for potential biases arising from unequal selection probabilities, non-response, and discrepancies between the sample and known population characteristics.

Due to the stratified sample design and oversampling used in this survey, participants did not have equal probabilities of selection. To avoid biased results, all survey estimates should be calculated with weights. These weights also ensure that the weighted sample proportions align with known population distributions.

Initial personal selection weights were calculated for all participants as the inverse of their probability of selection, accounting for both stratification and oversampling. The probability of a student's being selected was defined as the product of:

- the probability that their school or kura was selected and
- the probability that the student was selected within that school or kura

These initial weights were then calibrated through post-stratification, so that weighted estimates matched known characteristics of the target population. The calibration used June 2024 student roll data from MoE, limited to schools and kura meeting the eligibility criteria for inclusion in the sampling frame.[15] The demographic targets used in this process were:

- Regional area (Auckland, rest of the North Island, and the South Island)
- Gender (male, female)
- Ethnicity (Māori, Pacific, Asian, and European)
- EQI quartile (with private schools grouped into the first quartile)

In addition to personal weights, 30 replicate weights were calculated to estimate the variance (or uncertainty) of survey estimates. These replicate weights allow for more accurate standard errors and significance testing. They were generated via the delete-a-group jackknife method, which accounts for both the stratification and clustering of students within schools and kura. The decision to use 30 replicate weights was informed by the limited number of primary sampling units (PSUs), in this case, the schools and kura, which number fewer than 100. This quantity is standard in scenarios where we do not have thousands of PSUs, such as in large-scale household surveys where 100 replicate weights might be utilised.

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[15] The student roll data was obtained from the *Education Counts* website.

Limitations and biases

Several factors may have influenced the representativeness and completeness of the YHWS 2025 dataset.

Industrial strike action impact

The teacher strikes in August–September 2025 led to 14 schools' and kura withdrawal from taking part, resulting in an estimated loss of 1,400 student responses. This affected mostly schools and kura scheduled for the final weeks of fieldwork, potentially under-representing certain regions or school and kura types in the final sample.

School and kura–only sample

Following pilot findings, the community cohort was excluded from the main study, meaning young people and rangatahi not attending school or kura (including those in employment, tertiary education, or NEET) were not represented in the dataset. This exclusion may particularly affect the representation of older participants (17–19 years) and those experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage.

School and kura–level response bias

Urban schools and kura had lower participation rates (41%) compared to rural ones (74%), potentially over-representing rural youth perspectives relative to their population proportion. Similarly, large schools and kura showed lower participation rates (27%) than small and medium ones, which may affect the representativeness of students from larger educational settings.

Participant-level response bias

Whilst students were randomly selected within participating schools and kura, individual decisions to take part may have introduced bias. Survey participation may generally attract more motivated or engaged students. However, the survey timing coincided with mock examinations for Years 11–13 in many institutions, which may have led to under-representation of academically focused students who prioritised study over participation.

Some of these limitations are addressed through the weighting procedures described above, though some biases may not be fully correctable through statistical adjustment.

Section 5: Fieldwork Outcomes

Random rounding and suppressions noted at the start of this report and in the previous section, also apply to this section.

The YHWS 2025 achieved 9,414 survey responses. Surveys were delivered at 98 schools and kura (90 schools delivered in English and eight kura delivered in te reo Māori). The 9,414 surveys are made up of:

- 8,880 surveys from main study
- 534 surveys from pilot study

The sample included a good demographic mix of young people and rangatahi by region, gender, age, year level, and ethnic group.

Out of 14,175 invited students, 66% completed the survey. The final sample comprised 8,880 participants from the main study and 534 from the pilot phase, integrated after compatibility verification described in *Data Processing*. This chapter explores:

- Sample comparisons – Assessing how closely the final sample met the original goals regarding school/kura and student characteristics
- Participant demographics – Examining participation by region, gender, age, year level, and ethnicity to evaluate the sample's representativeness
- IDI linkage patterns – Analysing how participants chose to link survey responses to government data and identifying any systematic differences
- Results dissemination – Detailing how findings are shared with schools and kura, young people and rangatahi, and the wider community

Expected vs achieved samples: pilot vs main study

This section compares the expected and achieved numbers of school/kura and student responses, broken down by main study and pilot contributions.

The expected response figures shown are based on the original sampling plan to contact 247 schools and kura across five tranches. In practice, recruitment was limited to tranches 1–3 (198 schools and kura), as sufficient responses were obtained without the need for tranches 4–5. Note that pilot participant numbers refer to students only and exclude the community cohort responses.

Table 12 shows that the achieved school and kura profile aligned reasonably well with expectations, though with some notable variations. The survey obtained higher-than-expected participation from:

- Rural schools and kura (19 versus 13 expected)
- Small- and medium-sized schools and kura (78 versus 69 expected)
- Schools and kura in EQI quartile 4 (see the *Sampling design* chapter), serving

students facing more socioeconomic barriers (28 versus 24 expected)

Conversely, participation was lower than expected from:

- Urban schools and kura (79 versus 89 expected)

- Kura (8 versus 13 expected) – although achieving eight kura within the condensed fieldwork timeframe represents a significant achievement and a fourfold increase from the previous survey wave

- Large schools and kura (20 versus 32 expected)

- Schools and kura with fewer socioeconomic barriers (EQI 1: 26 versus 34 expected)

These variations reflect both the recruitment challenges discussed earlier and the strategic decisions made during fieldwork to maximise participation within available timeframes.

Table 12: Expected vs achieved number of schools and kura

School/kura variable		# expected[1]	# achieved
Urban vs rural[3]	Urban	89	79
	Rural	13	19
School type	Mainstream	89	90
	Kura	13	8
Size	Small <140	13	15
	Medium 140–900	56	63
	Large >901	32	20
Equity index[4]	EQI 1: Fewer barriers	34	26
	EQI 2	22	21
	EQI 3	21	23
	EQI 4: More barriers	24	28
Total	Avg # students per school/kura	99	96
	# schools/kura	101	98

[1] *Calculated on the assumption that 247 schools and kura were contacted, when only 198 were.*

[2] *Student responses achieved in pilot. Excludes community cohort responses.*

[3] *'Urban' includes: Major, large, medium, and small urban areas. 'Rural' includes: Rural settlement and rural other.*

[4] *EQI scale: 1 = fewer socioeconomic barriers (includes private schools and kura) – 4 = more socioeconomic barriers.*

Table 13 presents student participation numbers by school and kura characteristics. As expected, response distribution mirrors the patterns observed at school and kura level.

The survey exceeded expectations for students from:

- Rural schools and kura (828 versus 672 expected)

- Small- and medium-sized schools and kura (7,008 versus 5,992 expected)

- Schools and kura in EQI quartile 4 (2,670 versus 1,766 expected)

Student participation was below expectations from:

- Urban schools and kura (8,586 versus 9,346 expected)
- Kura (162 versus 395 expected)
- Large schools and kura (2,412 versus 4,025 expected)
- Schools and kura with fewer socioeconomic barriers (2,271 versus 3,598 expected)

Despite lower kura participation, the overall sampling strategy successfully achieved strong representation of Māori students, with 29% of participants identifying as Māori – well above the 18% in the general 13–19-year-old population. These variations in achieved versus expected numbers are addressed through the weighting procedures described in the *Data Processing* chapter.

Table 13: Expected vs achieved number of students by school and kura variables

# students by school/kura variables		# expected[1]	# total achieved
Urban vs rural[2]	Urban	9,346	8,586
	Rural	672	828
School type	Mainstream	9,263	9,252
	Kura	395	162
Size	Small <140	302	438
	Medium 140–900	5,690	6,570
	Large >901	4,025	2,412
Equity index[3]	EQI 1: Fewer barriers	3,598	2,271
	EQI 2	2,422	2,148
	EQI 3	2,231	2,322
	EQI 4: More barriers	1,766	2,670
Total[4]		**10,018**	**9,414**

[1] *Calculated on the assumption that 247 schools and kura were contacted, when only 198 were.*

[2] *'Urban' includes: Major, large, medium, and small urban areas. 'Rural' includes: Rural settlement and rural other.*

[3] *EQI scale: 1 = fewer socioeconomic barriers (includes private schools and kura) – 4 = more socioeconomic barriers.*

[4] *Due to random rounding, the marginal totals do not always equal the sum of the variable, e.g., 8,586+828≠9,414.*

Table 14 compares expected and achieved participant numbers by self-reported demographic characteristics, showing strong alignment across most key variables.

Gender distribution was relatively balanced, with 4,806 female and 4,401 male participants, matching expectations.

Year-level participation showed higher response rates among junior students (Years 9–10) compared to senior students (Years 11–13), despite equal numbers being invited from each year level through stratified sampling.

Ethnicity results generally mirrored expected yields whilst demonstrating the success of the purposeful oversampling strategy. Pacific participation exceeded expectations (2,163 versus 1,664 expected), and Māori participation remained close to target (2,700

versus 2,867 expected), so that both priority populations achieved representation well above their proportion in the general 13–19-year-old population**.**

Table 14: Expected vs achieved number of students by individual demographics

Student variables		# expected[1]	# total achieved	# achieved in main study	# achieved in pilot[2]
Gender	Female	5,020	4,806	4,578	228
	Male	4,997	4,401	4,110	288
	Another gender/PNTS	-	207	189	15
Year level	Year 9	2,004	2,160	2,058	99
	Year 10	2,004	2,082	1,989	93
	Year 11	2,004	1,995	1,893	102
	Year 12	2,004	1,644	1,554	90
	Year 13	2,004	1,404	1,320	87
	PNTS/Other/Unknown[3]	-	*129*	*66*	*63*
Ethnicity[4]	NZ European	5,608	5,433	5,043	393
	Māori	2,867	2,700	2,580	120
	Pacific	1,664	2,163	2,124	42
	Asian	1,401	1,431	1,350	81
	Other[5]	462	879	840	39
	Prefer not to say	-	156	132	27
Total[6]		**10,018**	**9,414**	**8,880**	**534**

[1] *Calculated on the assumption that 247 schools and kura were contacted, when only 198 were.*

[2] *Student responses achieved in pilot. Excludes community cohort responses.*

[3] *129 students either selected* 'prefer not to say'*, entered another year level, (e.g., Year 14), or missed this question due to partial completion.*

[4] *'Ethnicity': Participants could select one or more ethnic group.*

[5] *'Other ethnicity': Includes those who selected* European*,* MELAA (Middle Eastern, Latin American, African)*, and* 'Other'*.*

[6] *Due to random rounding, the marginal totals do not always equal the sum of the variable, e.g., 4,578+4,110+189 ≠8,880.*

Recruitment outcomes in schools and kura[16]

Out of the 198 schools and kura invited, 89 participated in the main study, achieving a 45% response rate, which was slightly higher than the 39% in the pilot. Industrial strike action affected participation, with 14 schools and kura withdrawing late, thus reducing the potential response rate from 52% to 45%. Tranche 3 was opened late in the fieldwork to compensate, lowering the response rate but increasing overall responses.

Analysis revealed trends in participation, though not statistically significant at the 95% level. Rural schools and kura had a 74% participation rate versus 41% for urban ones; the former valued the opportunity to get involved, whilst the later faced research

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[16] School and kura counts have *not* been randomly rounded, please refer to *Random rounding and suppression* section for more information.

request saturation. Mainstream schools' participation rate was 47% versus 29% for kura. Small and medium schools and kura had higher participation rates (66% and 50%) compared to large ones (27%). Schools and kura with fewer socioeconomic barriers participated less (EQI 1: 39%) than those with more barriers (EQI 3: 50%, EQI 4: 51%). Feedback from schools and kura that may explain some of these differences can be found in the *School feedback* and *Kura feedback* sections of this report.

Table 15: Impact of school and kura characteristics on response rates

School/kura variable		# invited	# participated	Response rate
Urban vs rural[1]	Urban	175	72	41%
	Rural	23	17	74%
School type	Mainstream	174	82	47%
	Kura	24	7	29%
Size	Small <140	21	14	66%
	Medium 140–900	118	59	50%
	Large >901	59	16	27%
Equity index[3]	EQI 1: Fewer barriers	66	26	39%
	EQI 2	47	20	43%
	EQI 3	38	19	50%
	EQI 4: More barriers	47	24	51%
Total (if no industrial strike action)		198	103[2]	52%
Total		**198**	**89**	**45%**

[1] *'Urban' includes: Major, large, medium, and small urban areas. 'Rural' includes: Rural settlement and rural other.*[17]

[2] *Includes the additional 14 schools and kura that withdrew because of industrial strike action.*

[3]*EQI scale: 1 = fewer socioeconomic barriers (includes private schools and kura) – 4 = more socioeconomic barriers.*[18]

School and kura outcomes by region

Table 16 highlights regional engagement in the YHWS 2025, with a moderate response rate of 45%–55%. Canterbury stood out with a lower rate of 18%, attributed to a preference for in-person recruitment and logistical issues, compounded by one school's withdrawal due to industrial strike action. Conversely, the Nelson/Marlborough/Tasman /West Coast region achieved the highest response rate at 71%.

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[17] https://datafinder.stats.govt.nz/layer/111198-urban-rural-2023-generalised/

[18] https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/data-services/code-sets-and-classifications/the-equity-index

Table 16: School and kura responses by region

Region	# invited	# participated	Response rate
Northland	9	4	44%
Auckland	65	26	40%
Waikato	19	10	53%
Bay of Plenty	14	7	50%
Gisborne/Hawke's Bay	11	7	64%
Taranaki/Manawatū-Whanganui	15	8	53%
Wellington	18	8	44%
Nelson/Marlborough/Tasman/West Coast	7	5	71%
Canterbury	22	4	18%
Otago/Southland	18	10	56%
Total	**198**	**89**	**45%**

Reasons for non-participation

Schools and kura cited several key reasons for non-participation. This included time constraints and academic pressures, including busy calendars and exams in Term 3, especially affecting Years 12–13 preparing for NCEA. Many expressed willingness to participate with more notice or smaller samples. Survey fatigue was an issue due to existing commitments, such as existing wellbeing surveys, internal assessments, and initiatives the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment), ASH (Action for Smokefree 2025), and NZCER surveys. Logistical challenges included limited venues, renovation disruptions, insufficient administrative capacity, and the burden of coordinating student movements. Data governance concerns were notable, particularly among smaller communities, due to apprehensions about government data use and potential misinterpretation that could overlook unique contexts and student strengths.

Timeline constraints

The YHWS 2025 encountered considerable timeline challenges that affected recruitment and onboarding. The short gap between the pilot's completion (31 March 2025) and the start of the main study restricted the time available for strategic decision-making, such as reallocating resources from the community cohort to enhance the school and kura sample. MSD approved the methods for the main study during the Easter holidays, which enabled Ipsos to begin contacting schools and kura at the start of Term 2 on 28 April 2025. This compressed timeline provided schools and kura with minimal advance notice, as the sampling frame could not be finalised until these strategic decisions were confirmed. Feedback from schools and kura in relation to these timeline challenges can be found in the *School feedback* and *Kura feedback* sections of this report.

Mitigation strategies

Coordinators responded to each decline with tailored solutions:

- Offering smaller session sizes across multiple days
- Providing flexibility in year levels surveyed
- Adjusting session timing to minimise classroom disruption
- Emphasising the survey's importance for youth policy development
- Including the Minister for Youth's endorsement letter in follow-up communications

Before the release of tranche 3, a strategic reassessment aimed to re-engage schools and kura with 'soft declines' using alternative approaches was completed, though this added only one more participating school.

Main study outcomes

The main study achieved 8,880 student responses from 89 participating schools and kura. Fieldwork was conducted from 28 April to 19 September 2025, spanning Term 2 through to the end of Term 3, with a 2-week school holiday period (30 June–13 July).

Figure 2 illustrates the progression of data collection throughout the fieldwork period. The green bars represent the number of schools and kura completing their survey sessions each month, and the red line indicates the corresponding number of student responses achieved. The data demonstrates an acceleration in both school and kura participation and student responses towards the conclusion of the fieldwork period.

Figure 2: School and kura completes and student responses during main study fieldwork period
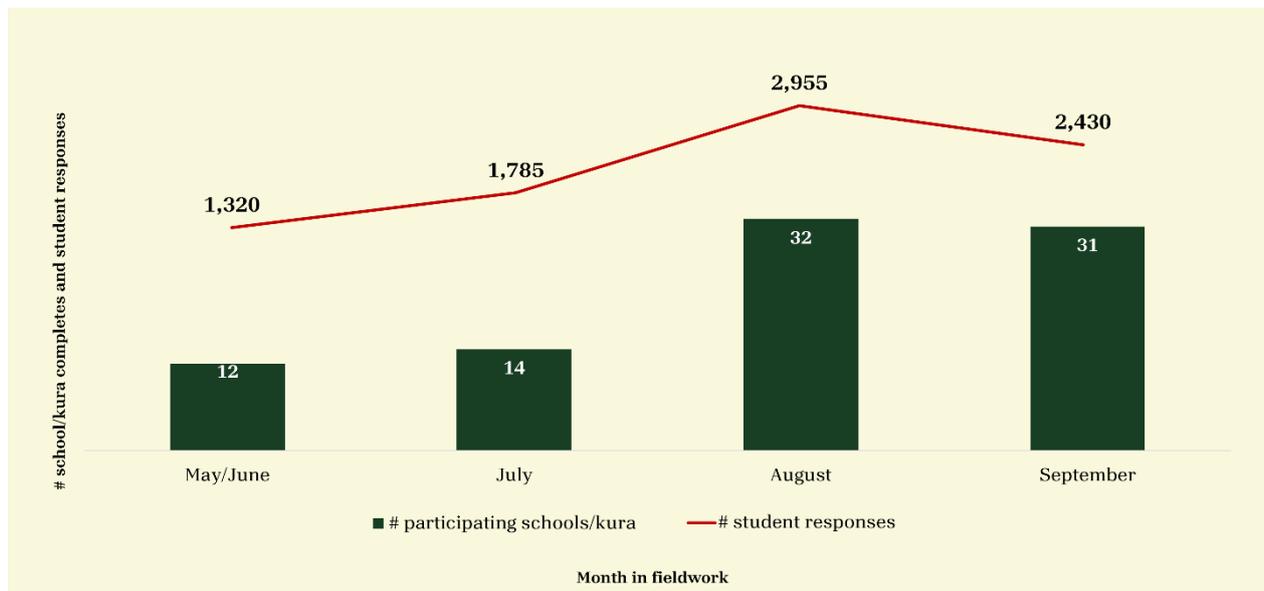
(Base: n=89 schools and kura, 8,880 main study participants)

Demographic profile

The following section examines the demographic composition of the 9,414 participants across key characteristics. Overall, the sample achieved strong national representation, with purposeful oversampling successfully ensuring robust participation from priority populations such as Māori and Pacific young people and rangatahi.

Responses by region

Table 17 illustrates that YHWS 2025 successfully captured the perspectives of young people and rangatahi from all regions of Aotearoa New Zealand. The participant distribution largely aligned with the Census 2023 population data, with most regions represented within 3 percentage points of their share of the 13–19-year-old population nationally.

Canterbury was an exception, with only 4% of participants compared to 13% of the national youth population residing there. As detailed in the *Recruitment outcomes in schools and kura* section, Canterbury's lower school response rates impacted survey participation in this region.

Despite this, the survey achieved broad nationwide coverage, with contributions from all regions offering diverse geographic insights into youth health and wellbeing.

Table 17: School/kura and participant responses by region (n=98, pilot data included)

Region	# schools/ kura	# partici- pants	% sample	% NZ 13–19- year-olds[1]
Northland	5	468	5%	4%
Auckland	29	2,916	31%	34%
Waikato	10	873	9%	10%
Bay of Plenty	8	900	10%	7%
Gisborne/Hawke's Bay	7	690	7%	5%
Taranaki/Manawatū-Whanganui	8	729	8%	8%
Wellington	9	1,107	12%	10%
Nelson/Marlborough/Tasman/West Coast	7	471	5%	3%
Canterbury	4	363	4%	13%
Otago/Southland	11	897	10%	7%
Total[1]	**98**	**9,414**	**100%**	**100%**

[1] Stats NZ (2023). *Ethnicity (grouped total responses level 1), age, and gender for the census usually resident population count, (RC, TALB, SA2), 2013, 2018, and 2023 Censuses. Retrieved from* www.stats.govt.nz.

[2] *Due to random rounding, the marginal totals do not always equal the sum of the variable and percentages may not sum to exactly 100%.*

Gender

To determine gender, participants were asked *"What is your gender?"* and could self-select their response regardless of how they were recorded on school or kura roll. The sample showed a relatively balanced gender distribution, with slightly more females

(51%) than males (47%) participating. A small proportion (2%) selected *'another gender'* or *'prefer not to say'*.

Table 18: School and kura sample by gender

Gender	Total	% sample
Female	4,806	51%
Male	4,401	47%
Another gender/PNTS	207	2%
Total[1]	9,414	100%

[1] Due to random rounding, the marginal totals do not always equal the sum of the variable and percentages may not sum to exactly 100%.

Response rates showed minimal variation by gender. Among those invited in the main study, 69% of students recorded as female on school and kura rolls participated, compared to 66% of those recorded as male. It should be noted that these response rates are based on school and kura records, whilst the gender distribution in Table 18 reflects participants' self-reported gender identities. This distinction between administrative records and self-identification may account for some variation in the response rate calculations.

Age and year level

Younger students comprised a larger proportion of the YHWS 2025 sample, with 61% of participants aged 13–15 years compared to 39% aged 16–19 years. This distribution aligns with feedback from schools and kura about survey timing clashing with mock examinations for senior students. Individual response data suggests older students were more likely to decline participation when selected, likely prioritising classroom learning time during this critical academic period.

Table 19: Achieved sample by age

Age	Total	% sample
13–15 years	**5,748**	**61%**
13	1,497	16%
14	2,163	23%
15	2,088	22%
16–19 years	**3,663**	**39%**
16	1,773	19%
17	1,461	16%
18	405	4%
19	24	<1%
Total[1]	9,414	100%

[1] Due to random rounding, the marginal totals do not always equal the sum of the variable and percentages may not sum to exactly 100%.

Gender differences in participation varied by age group. Among older students (16–19 years), females showed higher participation, comprising 41% of all female participants compared to males at 37%. This pattern reversed among younger students (13–15 years), where males showed higher participation at 63% compared to females at 59%. Approximately 2% of participants in both age groups identified as another gender or selected *'prefer not to say'* (not shown in Table 20).

Table 20: Participation by age and gender

Age group	Females		Males	
	# females	% females in age group	% males	% males in age group
13–15 years	2,841	59%	2,787	63%
16–19 years	1,965	41%	1,614	37%
Total[1]	**4,806**		**4,401**	

[1] *Due to random rounding, the marginal totals do not always equal the sum of the variable and percentages may not sum to exactly 100%.*

Year-level distribution

The YHWS 2025 sampling design aimed to invite approximately equal numbers of students from each year level (n=40) to address a limitation from previous survey waves. Earlier YHWS iterations that sampled by classroom had inadvertently underrepresented senior students due to their typically smaller class sizes. By inviting similar numbers across Years 9–13, the current design intended to ensure adequate representation of older students.

However, as shown in Table 21, the distribution of actual participants showed a clear decline from junior to senior years. Years 9 and 10 each contributed 23% and 22% of participants respectively, whilst Year 13 comprised only 15% of the sample.

Table 21: Participation by year level

Year level	# participated	% of sample
Year 9	2,160	23%
Year 10	2,082	22%
Year 11	1,995	21%
Year 12	1,644	18%
Year 13	1,404	15%
PNTS/Other/Unknown[1]	*129*	*1%*
Total[2]	**9,414**	**100**

[1] *129 students either selected* 'prefer not to say'*, entered another year level (e.g., Year 14), or missed this question due to partial completion.*

[2] *Due to random rounding, the marginal totals do not always equal the sum of the variable and percentages may not sum to exactly 100%.*

This pattern was driven primarily by lower individual response rates among older students, as shown in Table 22. Response rates decreased progressively from Year 9 (75%) to Year 13 (59%), demonstrating that older students were consistently less likely to

participate when invited. This 16-percentage-point difference may highlight senior students' competing academic priorities, particularly as the survey period coincided with mock examinations and NCEA preparation. It might also be reflective of lower attendance rates among senior students who may have more study periods than junior ones and may not be physically present at school or kura as often as the latter.

It is worth noting that slightly more junior students were invited overall, as three schools and kura restricted participation to only their Years 9–10 students, citing academic pressures and survey timing as the reason for restricting access to senior students.

Table 22: Response rates by year level

Year level	# invited	# participated	Response rate
Year 9	2,877	2,160	75%
Year 10	2,898	2,082	72%
Year 11	2,925	1,995	68%
Year 12	2,625	1,644	63%
Year 13	2,385	1,404	59%
PNTS/Other/Unknown[1]	489	129	26%
Total[2]	**14,175**	**9,414**	**67%**

[1] *129 students either selected* 'prefer not to say'*, entered another year level (e.g., Year 14), or missed this question due to partial completion.*

[2] *Due to random rounding, the marginal totals do not always equal the sum of the variable and percentages may not sum to exactly 100%.*

Ethnicity

Participants were asked *"Which ethnic group(s) do you belong to?"* and could select multiple options. The sample design deliberately over-sampled Māori and Pacific young people and rangatahi to enable meaningful subgroup analysis. This targeted approach successfully achieved strong representation of priority populations:

- Māori: 29% of the sample (compared to 18% in the 2023 census)
- Pacific: 23% of the sample (compared to 9% in the 2023 census)
- Asian: 15% of the sample (comparable to 17% in the 2023 census)
- NZ European: 58% of the sample (compared to 69% in the 2023 census)

The apparent under-representation of NZ European participants is partially explained by the 9% who selected *'other'* ethnicity. Analysis of *'other'* responses (selected from a list of Census Ethnic05 V2.1 2023 ethnicity names) revealed that many of these participants specified European ethnicities such as Scottish, English, or Welsh. These participants may identify as both NZ European and their specific heritage (e.g., Welsh). However, where they did not indicate NZ European directly, they were not counted as NZ European for the purposes of this report. These responses have been retained in the *'other'* ethnic group category, which includes all other ethnicities not listed in the closed responses, e.g., MELAA ethnicities, South African, and others.

Table 23: Achieved total sample by total ethnicity[1]

Ethnic group	Total	% sample	% NZ 13–19-year-olds[2]
NZ European	5,433	58%	69%
Māori	2,700	29%	18%
Pacific	2,163	23%	9%
Samoan	1,161	12%	
Cook Island Māori	477	5%	
Tongan	651	7%	
Niuean	210	2%	
Asian	1,431	15%	17%
Chinese	408	4%	
Indian	354	4%	
Other[3]	879	9%	2%
Prefer not to say	156	2%	

[1] 'Total ethnicity'*: Participants could select one or more ethnic group. This is a method of counting ethnicity is called* 'total ethnicity' *and is common across government survey work in New Zealand. This table shows the number of times each ethnic group was selected.*

[2.] *Data from Stats NZ reflects the proportion of 13–19-year-olds based on 2023 census data:* *https://explore.data.stats.govt.nz/vis?tm=ethnic%20age%202023&pg=0&hc[Census%20year]=2023&snb=78&df[ds]=ds-nsiws-disseminate&df[id]=CEN23_POP_004&df[ag]=STATSNZ&df[vs]=1.0&dq=2023.999999.777%2B69%2B61%2B5%2B4%2B3%2B2%2B1.013%2B014%2B015%2B017%2B016%2B018%2B019%2B99.99&ly[cl]=CEN23_ETH_002%2CCEN23_AGE_001&to[TIME]=false&utm_medium=chat&utm_campaign=link-shared-in-chat&utm_source=livechat.com&utm_content=www.stats.govt.nz&vw=tb*

[3] 'Other ethnicity'*: Includes those who selected* European*,* MELAA (Middle Eastern, Latin American, African)*, and* 'Other'.

Geographic location via meshblock data

The YHWS 2025 continued the Youth2000 approach of attributing a geographic location to each participant via meshblock data.

Participants' addresses were entered via Google API autofill to ensure anonymity by storing only the unique ID and address separately from survey responses.[19] When participants did not provide their address, their school or kura address was used as a proxy. Meshblock identifiers were subsequently derived and merged into the final dataset based on these unique location IDs, allowing reliable geographic analysis for 75% of participants.

One key change that likely helped collect more data was moving the address question to the start of the survey, which increased response rates from 29% in the pilot to 74% in the main study. Although this is a significant improvement, it is important to consider other factors that might have influenced this positive outcome.

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[19] Questions relating to meshblock collection are labelled as Data 3 and Data 4 in the questionnaire which is available on the MSD website: https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/consultations/youth-health-and-wellbeing-survey-results/index.html
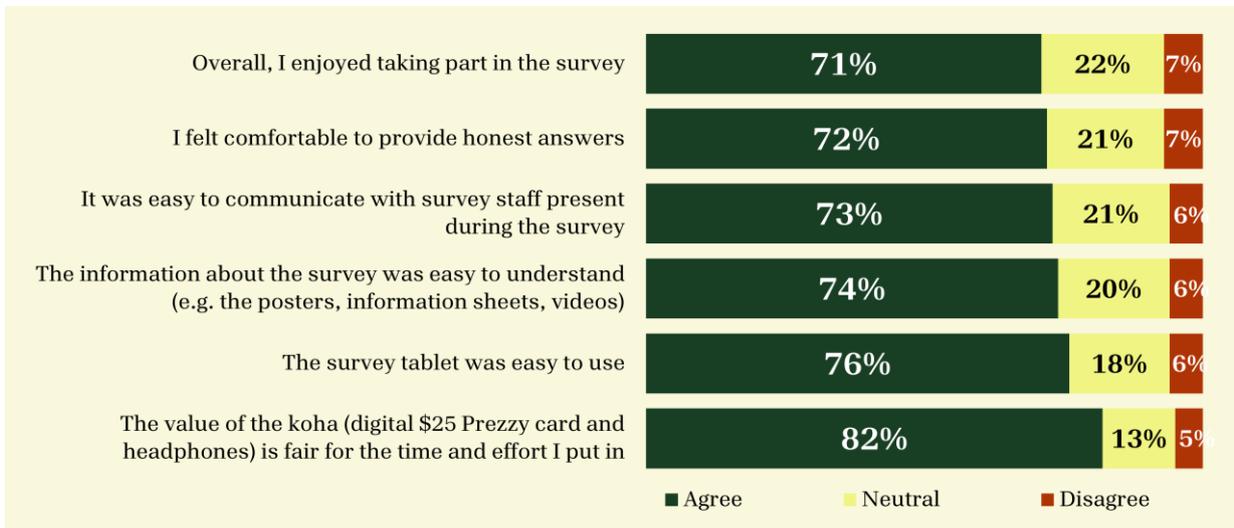
Feedback

This section shares the feedback received from participants, schools and kura, and the delivery team on what it was like to be involved in the main study of the YHWS 2025.

Participant experience feedback

Participants were asked to rate how much they agreed or disagreed with a list of statements about their survey experience on a scale ranging from *1* (*strongly disagree*) to *5* (*strongly agree*).

As seen in Figure 3, most participants in the main study had a positive experience of the survey, with more than 70% providing a positive score for each of the questions asked.

Figure 3: Participants' experience with the survey

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Overall, I enjoyed taking part in the survey	71%	22%	7%
I felt comfortable to provide honest answers	72%	21%	7%
It was easy to communicate with survey staff present during the survey	73%	21%	6%
The information about the survey was easy to understand (e.g. the posters, information sheets, videos)	74%	20%	6%
The survey tablet was easy to use	76%	18%	6%
The value of the koha (digital $25 Prezzy card and headphones) is fair for the time and effort I put in	82%	13%	5%

(Base: Range of 8,734–8,736 main study participants across each question)

Motivations for survey participation

Participants were asked why they decided to take part in the YHWS 2025 through an open-end question. The majority of main study participants responded, and these answers were analysed to understand key motivators for participation.

The top motivating factors included the $25 Prezzy card koha (40%) though koha was not provided as motivation, having their voice heard (35%), and practical benefits (27%) – including getting out of class and having a break from routine. Many participated simply because they were selected (30%), with a small proportion believing participation was mandatory despite clear information about its voluntary nature.

Participants had mixed motivations, balancing external factors like koha and missing class, with intrinsic values such as wanting to help others and being heard. The survey's anonymity was especially appreciated for discussing sensitive topics. Although some participants felt compelled to join, most were satisfied with their experience. When surveyed about future participation, 89% were willing to take part again. Among the 11% who were not, the primary reasons were the survey's length (5%), its number of questions (4%), and loss of interest (3%).

Feedback on the digital questionnaire

Participants were also invited to provide feedback on the survey and specifically on the questions asked. As shown in Figure 4, around three quarters had a positive experience of completing the survey, with 74% rating their overall experience as *acceptable*. A lower proportion (66%) thought the complexity of the questions was *acceptable*.

Participants viewed the survey length, intrusiveness of questions, and the number of questions asked less favourably, with just over half (59%) rating these statements as *acceptable*. They were most critical about the number of questions in the survey, with 13% rating this as *not acceptable.*

Figure 4: Main study participant views on the survey
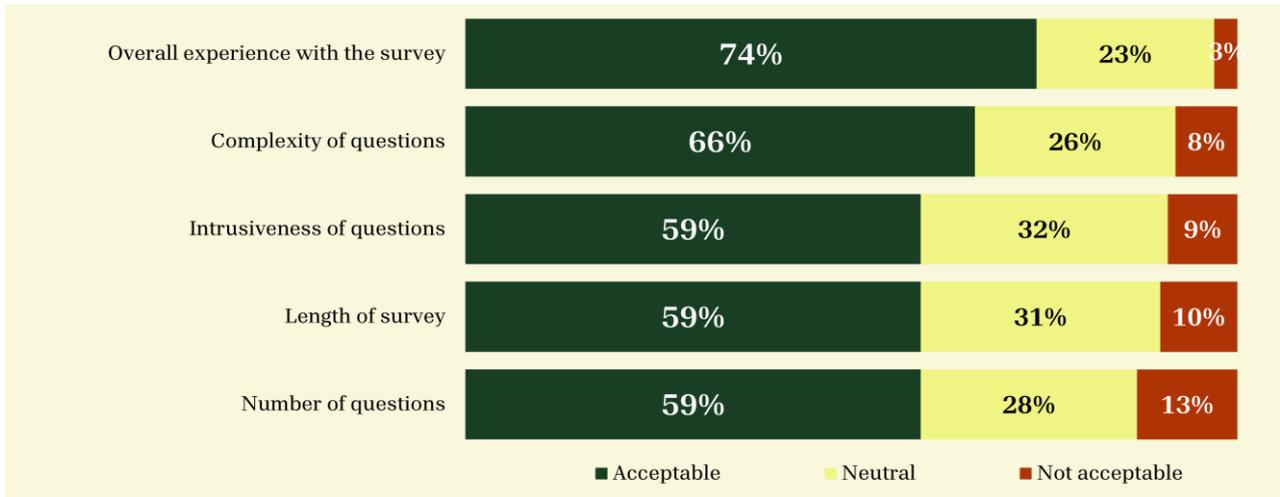
(Base: Range of 8,739-8,745 main study participants across each question)

School feedback

After the survey, feedback was collected from the key contacts at each of the 82 participating mainstream schools, with 69 (84%) completing a feedback form. Schools rated the entire coordination process very positively, with scores averaging between 4.7 and 4.8 out of 5 for factors such as overall experience, support materials, working with Ipsos, and participant safety. However, slightly lower scores (4.2+) were given to issues such as staff involvement, disruption to school activities, and the survey's length.

Figure 5: Mainstream school views on taking part

(Base: n=69 schools)
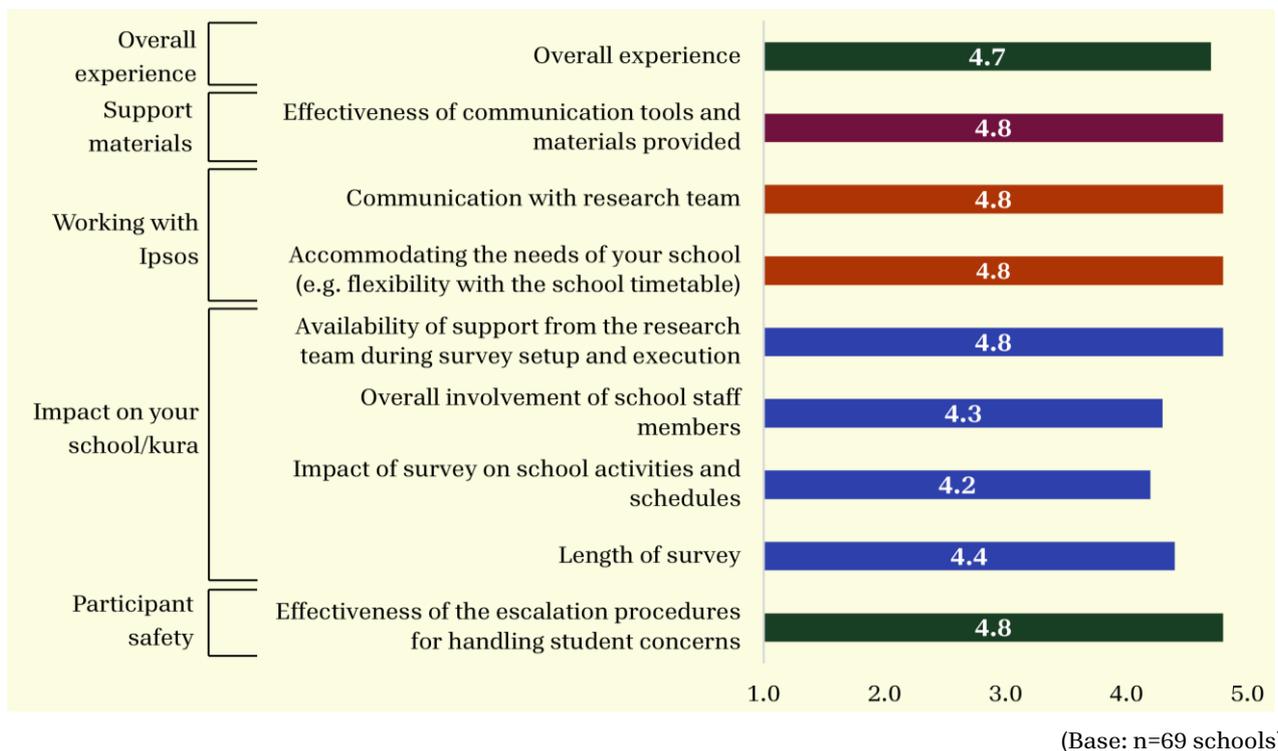
Acceptability scores saw improvement across all items from the pilot to the main study, with the overall experience score rising from 4.0 to 4.7, indicating that the operational changes effectively enhanced the school experience. From the 69 mainstream schools surveyed, 36% had no suggestions for improvement, whilst 64% provided feedback on refinements for future surveys, including a preference for Term 1 or 2 timing and streamlined administration. Not all recommendations were feasible due to ethical concerns, e.g., the sharing of student names. Schools also highlighted what worked well, emphasising themes such as clear communication and the professionalism of the field team. Proactive communication by coordinators was key in building trusted partnerships beyond generic emails, and the field team's professionalism was noted for fostering a positive student atmosphere without requiring additional staff support.

Motivations for school participation
Schools were asked why they decided to take part in the YHWS 2025 through an open-end question. An analysis of 69 school responses revealed three primary motivations: empowering student voice (73%), contributing to national wellbeing (60%), and gaining valuable school-specific data to understand student wellbeing (33%).

Participating in the future
Schools were asked whether they would take part in the survey again. The vast majority of mainstream schools (95%, n=64) stated they would. Three schools (5%) indicated they would not participate in future cycles, and the main reason given was the time burden on staff to set up the survey session.

Kura feedback

The YHWS 2025 successfully hosted survey sessions in eight kura – a major increase from the two kura in the 2021 wave. As described earlier, a grounded engagement approach was used, focusing on face-to-face interactions (kanohi ki te kanohi) and embedding Te Ao Māori principles. Kura response rates were 31%, below the 45% overall rate for schools and kura. Kōrero with kura provided valuable insights into participation factors, revealing administrative burdens and exam period conflicts as challenges, along with specific feedback on improving engagement.

Engagement and relationships

- **Partnership approach:** Some kura felt they were being *"researched on, not with"*, due to a perceived lack of authority in the survey's design, leading to one decline of participation. For future surveys, a co-design approach involving Te Rūnanga Nui o Ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori, Ngā Kura ā Iwi o Aotearoa, Māori researchers, rangatahi, and education experts is suggested to enhance cultural authenticity and ensure Māori partners are visible throughout the survey process.

- **Communication preferences and lead time:** Additionally, both kura and mainstream schools stressed the need for longer engagement lead times, with kura advocating for kanohi ki te kanohi (face-to-face) interactions to build trust, especially to involve local iwi. Planning should begin the year prior to fieldwork, with national wānanga offering an opportunity to secure dates early.

- **Time requirements and tikanga:** Kura also noted that survey sessions require more than 90 minutes due to tikanga practices, turning these sessions into half-day commitments. Like mainstream schools, Term 3 is particularly challenging for kura due to assessments. Future plans should ensure sufficient time is allocated for these cultural practices and engage kura early to align with their annual schedules.

Research design

- **Te reo Māori accessibility:** Despite professional translation, some rangatahi and kaiako (teachers) found the te reo version *"English-influenced, academic, and unnatural"*, leading many to complete the survey in English. Future iterations should consider commissioning Māori language experts and kura practitioners to co-create the survey in everyday conversational reo suitable for 13–19-year-olds.

- **Koha:** Some identified the word *koha*, describing the $25 Prezzy card and intended as fair compensation for their contribution, as a misuse of a culturally significant concept, undermining survey credibility.

Consent and data sovereignty

- **Whānau involvement:** Some parents and caregivers of young people and rangatahi aged under 16 felt that the opt-out consent process undermined their rangatiratanga, especially since information sheets did not explicitly outline sensitive topics to be covered. Future versions could provide comprehensive information sheets listing

specific question topics, including sensitive areas like mental health, sexual health, and substance use. Additionally, offering opt-in consent choices for those aged under 16 could better honour whānau decision-making.

- **Data privacy preferences:** Several kura were uncomfortable with the request to share full class rolls, with one kura withdrawing due to this requirement. The Ipsos team was accommodating, but the initial request was still seen as high risk by some kura. Future surveys might explore QR or token-based check-in systems that do not require identifying information from schools and kura.

- **IDI linkage and Māori data sovereignty:** Some tumuaki expressed concern about data linkage with the IDI due to Māori data sovereignty issues, citing a lack of information on data handling and protection. Future surveys should offer clear, bilingual explanations regarding data collection, storage, Māori-led analysis pathways, and retention. Additionally, explicit opt-out options for IDI linkage at both kura and whānau levels, along with transparent documentation of Māori data sovereignty commitments and analysis authority, should be provided.

Cultural safety

- **Consistent experiences:** Some kaimahi observed that rangatahi Māori in mainstream schools experienced more *"sterile/noa"* environments compared to culturally appropriate kura settings. Future iterations should ensure visible tikanga and manaakitanga across all settings to provide equitable experiences for all rangatahi.

- **Spiritual safety practices:** Several kura emphasised the value of karakia or whakawātea for creating safety when discussing sensitive topics. Future surveys could incorporate these practices across both kura and mainstream settings.
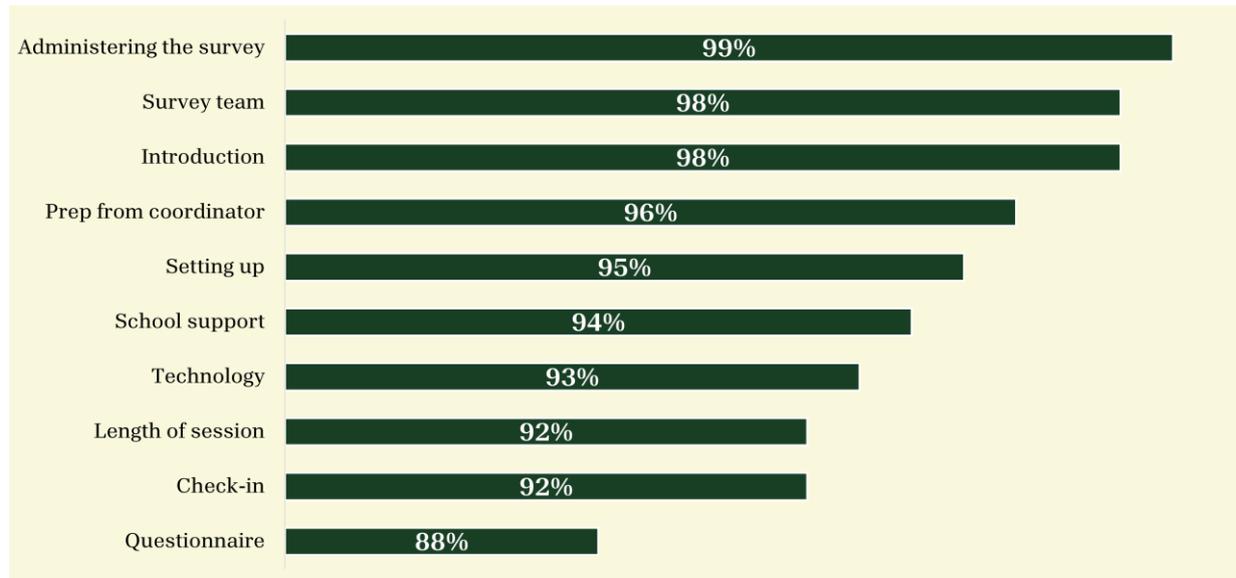
Summary of kura insights

Future YHWS iterations may consider strengthening partnerships with kura, to enhance cultural responsiveness and address data sovereignty concerns whilst maintaining research integrity. Early and genuine engagement with kura communities will be essential to improving participation and ensuring the survey serves rangatahi effectively.

Fieldwork team feedback

Survey team members provided overwhelmingly positive feedback on their experience after each survey day, with ratings ranging from 92% to 99% marked as *good* or *very good*. The highest praise was attributed to core delivery activities (e.g., survey administration and team interactions), robust support systems (e.g., Ipsos coordinator preparation and session setups), and reliable technology and processes (e.g., tablets and QR code check-ins).

**Youth Health
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Figure 6: Survey team's good or very good ratings[20]

Administering the survey	99%
Survey team	98%
Introduction	98%
Prep from coordinator	96%
Setting up	95%
School support	94%
Technology	93%
Length of session	92%
Check-in	92%
Questionnaire	88%

(Base: n=234 responses)

Identified themes

The analysis of open-text responses from survey administrators highlighted key themes, with nearly 100% of responses noting effective team collaboration, mutual support, and coordinated efforts, often described as *"well-oiled machines"*. Additionally, 75% of responses indicated strong school and kura engagement, emphasising supportive school and kura staff and excellent organisation. Operational procedures received a 60% approval rating, with QR code efficiency and team-adopted improvements being notable. These themes reflect the effectiveness of the training programme and operational enhancements introduced after the pilot, with team collaboration and school and kura support being crucial to regional success.

Looking ahead

The YHWS 2025 has established a solid foundation for future waves of youth wellbeing research in Aotearoa New Zealand. Its success reflects the collective efforts of MSD, Ipsos, partner agencies, schools and kura, and thousands of young people and rangatahi who shared their voices. By applying the lessons and recommendations outlined here, future iterations can further strengthen the reach, inclusiveness, and analytical power of the YHWS series – ensuring that the voices of young people and rangatahi continue to guide decisions that shape their health, wellbeing, and futures.

Learnings for future iterations

- **Longer lead-in period:** Commissioning YHWS 2028 in late 2026 would allow earlier school and kura engagement, alignment with academic calendars, and adequate time

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[20] The survey was self-completed. However, the survey team was positioned to provide assistance with question comprehension when needed, which enabled them to offer valuable feedback on the questionnaire's wording, comprehension, and length. Additionally, by observing participants throughout the session, the team could assess signs of survey fatigue and evaluate whether the survey length was appropriate.

for ethics review and preparation. Conducting fieldwork in Terms 1–2 of 2028 would further reduce clashes with senior assessments and improve participation rates.

- **Community co-design:** Building on 25 years of extensive co-design, earlier and more visible involvement of Māori, Pacific, and youth stakeholders in the design and engagement phases is recommended. This approach seeks to enhance cultural responsiveness, trust, and participation, particularly among hard-to-reach groups. We recognise that the ability to modify the survey is limited due to its role as a repeated measures tool; however, ensuring opportunities for these communities to voice their insights before participation remains a key objective.

- **Refined community sample:** Building on pilot learnings, future waves should revisit the community cohort with a dual approach that allows both in-home and community-venue participation, supported by improved transport options, iwi partnerships, and communication strategies. The inclusion of a community cohort will allow future waves to achieve a representative sample of *all* young people and rangatahi in Aotearoa New Zealand, not just those attending school or kura.

- **Reduced administrative burden on schools and kura:** Feedback indicates a need to further streamline school and kura onboarding and consent processes to minimise workload and maximise participation.

- **Optimised survey experience:** Maintaining high data quality whilst reducing survey duration will continue to be important to sustain engagement and prevent participant fatigue.

Conclusion

The YHWS 2025 is *for the young people and rangatahi of Aotearoa New Zealand*. Every aspect of this mahi (work) – from design and testing through to fieldwork and data processing – was directed toward improving understanding, informing decisions, and enhancing outcomes for young people and rangatahi across Aotearoa New Zealand. The survey employed rigorous, ethical, and culturally grounded methods to produce a robust, nationally representative dataset that strengthens the evidence base for youth wellbeing policy and practice. The survey's commitment to safety, inclusion, and quality exemplifies best practice in large-scale social research with young people and rangatahi.

Key achievements

- **Strong student engagement:** Achieved a 66% student-level participation rate across 98 schools and kura, demonstrating high levels of trust and willingness among rangatahi to share their experiences.

- **Enhanced representation:** Oversampling successfully resulted in Māori and Pacific participants' comprising 29% and 23% of the total sample respectively, addressing historic underrepresentation and enabling robust subgroup analyses.

- **Kura participation:** Culturally grounded approaches founded on whanaungatanga and kanohi ki te kanohi engagement achieved participation from eight kura – a fourfold increase from 2021.

- **Safety and wellbeing leadership:** A comprehensive participant-safety framework, including 10 hours of mandatory training for all field staff and the presence of dedicated youth support workers at every session, ensured participant and staff wellbeing. No safety incidents were recorded throughout fieldwork.

- **Operational excellence:** Innovations such as automated QR-code check-in, improved meshblock question placement, and integration of on-shore data systems (Askia + iReach) enhanced efficiency, data quality, and confidentiality compliance.

- **High satisfaction:** In the main study, more than 70% of young people and rangatahi enjoyed taking part and felt comfortable answering honestly, whilst 95% of participating schools indicated they would take part again.

- **IDI linkage established:** For the first time, participants aged 16+ could consent to link their data to the IDI. One third (33%) of participants in the main study agreed, enabling future longitudinal analyses of youth wellbeing.

- **Continuous improvement:** Pilot learnings were systematically applied to the main study – including refined routing, reduced survey length, and enhanced consent materials – demonstrating a responsive and evidence-driven design process.