

He Whakaaro

EDUCATION INSIGHTS

What do we know about discrimination in schools?

Summary

This report presents a summary of current knowledge regarding discrimination of students in New Zealand schools. It combines previously published research with new analysis undertaken using data from the Youth2000 series of surveys of secondary school students. We find evidence that students are discriminated against on the basis of ethnicity, migrant status, religion, sexual or gender identity, disability or health status, and weight. We quantify the extent to which these different groups are subject to negative experiences on the basis of their identity, from both other students and from adults.

Key findings

The report finds:

- » Māori, Samoan and other Pacific students are far more likely to report discrimination on the basis of their ethnicity from adults than from their peers, with unfair teacher behaviour the most frequently reported issue.
- » Indian, Chinese and other Asian students report low rates of bullying overall, but are far more likely than other ethnicities to report bullying motivated by ethnicity.
- » The most common discrimination faced by migrants and religious students is related to their ethnicity.
- » About half of all LGBTQIA+ students report having ever been bullied, and about one in five transgender students report being bullied on a weekly basis.
- » LGBTQIA+ students are less likely to agree that teachers are fair to students most of the time – two-thirds of transgender students report that teachers are ‘hardly ever’ or only ‘sometimes’ fair.
- » Disabled students and students with health conditions make up more than a quarter of all students, and experience substantially worse bullying outcomes than their peers (for a range of discriminatory reasons).
- » Both under- and overweight students report being targeted for bullying because of their weight, although neither group reports higher rates of bullying than other students overall.
- » Both data collection and policy are more likely to be effective if they recognise that bullying and discrimination are related but distinct concepts; discrimination often occurs through adult, rather than peer, behaviour; and different student groups experience discrimination in different ways.

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In this report, we use a broad working definition of discrimination: actions, behaviours, policies or systems which mistreat or disadvantage individuals or groups based upon a prejudiced opinion, value or attitude of others.

What is this paper about?

The government's new Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy aims to make New Zealand the 'best place in the world for children' (DPMC, 2018). One of the initial focus areas of the strategy is that children should live free from racism, discrimination and stigma. This paper synthesises what we know about discrimination experienced by children and young people, and where possible, attempts to quantify the number of people affected by discrimination. These estimates can be used not only to guide future policy action, but also as a baseline to measure success against.

The bulk of data in this report comes from the 2012 wave of the Youth2000 survey series, a health and wellbeing survey that measures a representative sample of secondary school students.¹ Using data from this survey, we have identified a number of dimensions of identity that may be targets of discrimination from other students or adults: ethnicity, migrant status, religion, disability and health condition, sexual orientation and gender identity, and weight. The specific groups we identified on each of these dimensions (as well as the proportion of the secondary school population in each group) are described in *Table A1* in the appendix of this paper.

How we are measuring discrimination

In this report, we use a broad working definition of discrimination: actions, behaviours, policies or systems which mistreat or disadvantage individuals or groups based upon a prejudiced opinion, value or attitude of others. This includes racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, and xenophobia. We construct two measures of discrimination:

- » Students report that they were targeted by a negative behaviour because of a perceived characteristic or because of a group they belong to (requiring that the responding student perceives the discriminatory behaviour).
- » The extent to which students in a particular group are more likely to report a general negative outcome, like being bullied, or their teachers being unfair (does not require that the student responding to the survey perceives that the negative behaviour was discriminatory). If some groups are more likely to report these experiences, this could be an indication of this group being discriminated against.

For each measure, we compare outcomes for each group to the outcomes reported by the largest group in the same category.² This means we are comparing, for example, Māori students to Pākehā/European students; Christian students to non-religious students; or students with BMIs in the 'overweight' category with those in the 'normal' category. We conduct statistical tests to determine whether the difference between each group is statistically significant.³

What do we know about discrimination already?

Much of this report is based on new analysis of data relating to discrimination. However, we don't need this data to know that discrimination exists in the education system. The need for New Zealand schools to be more responsive to students in order to combat racism and other discrimination has been repeatedly argued in the academic literature (see Macfarlane, Glynn, Cavanagh & Bateman, 2007 for one review). Students and whānau who are affected by this discrimination have been telling us for much longer.

¹ For more information on Youth2000, see <https://www.fmhs.auckland.ac.nz/en/faculty/adolescent-health-research-group/publications-and-reports.html>

² In all cases, percentages reported in this paper are weighted to be nationally representative and take into account the multi-stage selection of schools and then students into the survey.

³ Statistical significance is a concept relating to how confident we are that there is actually a difference across the whole population, rather than being a quirk of the Youth2000 sample. In this report, when referring to whether a difference is 'significant', we use the 95% confidence level.

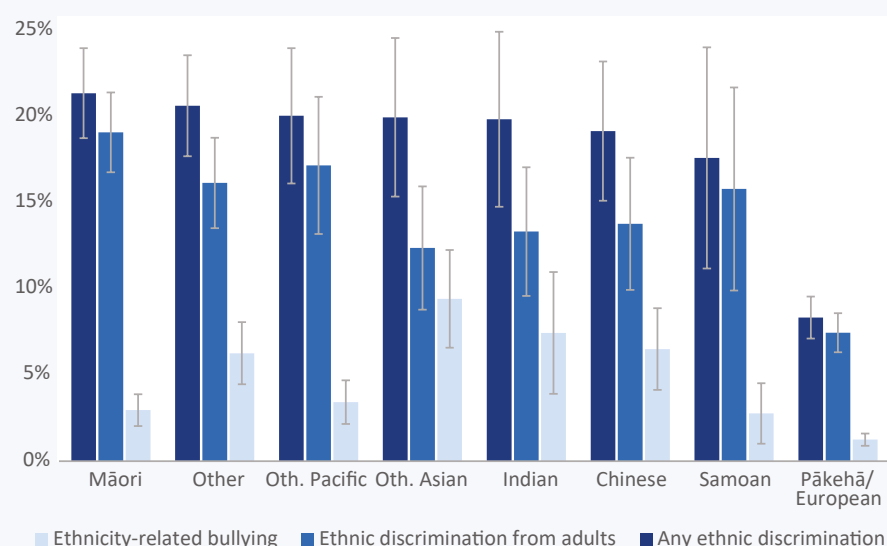
That discrimination continues to exist in schools was underscored by the responses of many participants of the Kōrero Mātauranga, a recent series of public engagements that asked students and whānau what could be improved in the education system. This also includes the voices and experiences of people engaged with through the Māori education wānanga; Pacific education fono; engagement with children and young people, parents and whānau, and others in the disability and education sector; and engagement with people throughout the education system to help develop a draft statement of National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP). Voices and experiences raised through these engagements highlighted experiences of racism and other discrimination in the education system that negatively impacted the hauora of students and whānau.⁴ The intention of this report is to present data that quantifies the extent of some of these issues, rather than testing their existence.

Discrimination based on ethnicity

Discrimination based on ethnicity is the most common form of discrimination asked in surveys. Youth2000 asks students whether teachers, police, or healthcare providers have been unfair to them because of their ethnicity, and also asks whether they have been bullied by other students because of their ethnicity. The proportion of students in each ethnic group reporting these experiences in the past year are summarised in *Figure 1*.

About one in five students of non-European ethnicities report one of these discriminatory experiences due to their ethnicity in the past year, compared to 8% of Pākehā/European students.⁵ However, the source of this discrimination differed depending on the ethnic group. For Indian, Chinese, and other Asian students, 12-14% reported discrimination from adults, and 7-9% reported ethnicity-related bullying. Compared to Asian students, students of non-Asian ethnicities reported more discrimination from adults (between 16% and 19%), but only 3% of Māori and Pacific students, and 6% of students from other ethnicities, reported being bullied by other students due to their ethnicity.

Figure 1. Students reporting ethnic discrimination in past 12 months, by ethnicity



Source: Ministry of Education analysis of Youth2000, 2012 wave.

Note: Error bars represent the 95% confidence interval. All differences from Pākehā/European students are statistically significant. See Table A1 in the appendix for information on how ethnic groups have been defined.

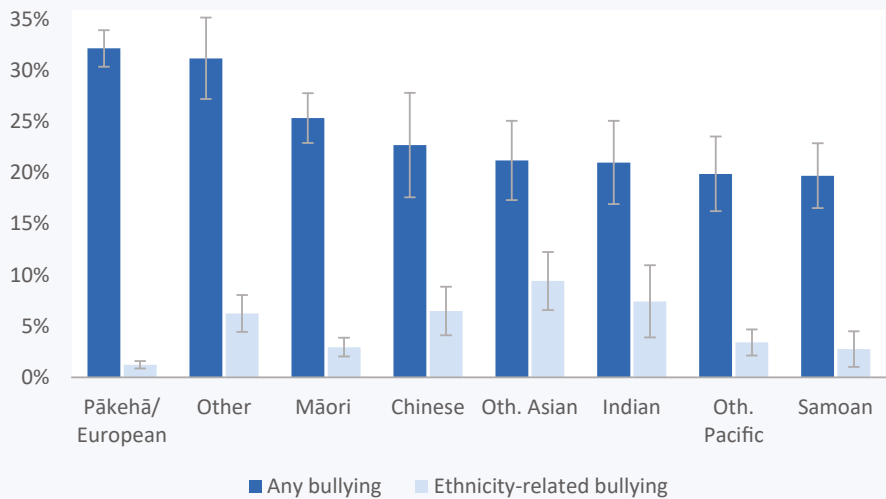
⁴ Summaries of these engagements, including the voices and experiences shared in the regional Māori education wānanga and Pacific education fono, are available on the Kōrero Mātauranga website: <https://conversation.education.govt.nz>.

⁵ Unless otherwise noted, in this report Pākehā/European is defined as students who reported a NZ European or other European ethnicity and no non-European ethnicity. Students could report multiple ethnicities, and have been grouped into each appropriate ethnic group in our analysis. See Table A1 in the appendix for more information on how each of the ethnic groups have been defined.

Effective responses to bullying in schools are likely to look somewhat different to effective responses to discrimination.

A closer look at the data on bullying confirms that there is a complex relationship between bullying and discrimination. *Figure 2* shows the proportion of students from each ethnic group reporting experiencing any sort of bullying in the past year, as well as the percentage reporting bullying motivated by ethnicity. There are three key features to this graph. The first is that Pākehā/European students report the highest rate of bullying, with around one in three Pākehā students reporting being bullied in the past 12 months. Secondly, most bullying is not motivated by ethnicity. Finally, the ethnicities reporting the greatest incidence of ethnicity-related bullying – Chinese, Indian and other Asian students – also report some of the lowest rates of bullying in general (about 22% of Asian students report being bullied in the past year, compared to 32% of Pākehā students). These features indicate that effective responses to bullying in schools are likely to look somewhat different to effective responses to discrimination. A previous study (Crengle, Robinson, Ameratunga, Clark & Raphael, 2012) looked at bullying using the 2007 wave of Youth2000. It found similar rates of ethnicity-related bullying, indicating that results shown in *Figure 2* do not appear to be substantially changing over time.

Figure 2. Students reporting ethnic discrimination in past 12 months, by ethnicity



Source: Ministry of Education analysis of Youth2000, 2012 wave.
Note: Error bars represent the 95% confidence interval. All differences from Pākehā/European students are statistically significant. See Table A2 in the appendix for detailed statistics on bullying rates.

According to Youth2000, however, the majority of racism and ethnic discrimination comes not from bullying by peers, but from unfair behaviours of adults such as teachers, healthcare providers, and the police (*Table 1*). Of these, the most frequently reported is unfair behaviours from teachers, with between 10% and 15% of students with non-European ethnicities reporting being unfairly treated by teachers due to their ethnicity in the past year. This is consistent with other studies suggesting that New Zealand teachers have systematically higher subjective judgements of Pākehā students than students of other ethnicities (Meissel, Meyer, Yao & Rubie-Davies, 2017). That teachers were the group of adults most commonly reported to be discriminatory may be at least partially due to the frequency of contact that students have with each of these professions,⁶ but also highlights the changes in behaviours required from a variety of sectors to eliminate racism and discrimination against children and young people.

6 The rates of reported unfair behaviours from healthcare providers and police in the 2012 wave of Youth2000 do appear to be significantly lower for many ethnic groups than those in the 2007 wave, as reported by Crengle et al. (2012). Youth2000 did not ask about teacher unfairness in the 2007 wave, so rates for teachers cannot be compared over time.

This highlights the changes in behaviours required from a variety of sectors to eliminate racism and discrimination against children and young people.

There are similar differences between ethnicities in responses to a more general question about teacher fairness. About 44% of Māori, Samoan and other Pacific students report that teachers at their school treat students fairly 'most of the time', compared to 57% of Pākehā students (see *Table A3* in appendix). This is also consistent with qualitative research on the experiences of Māori students within the education system, which have highlighted feelings of exclusion and the burden of negative stereotypes placed on them by teachers (see Bishop & Berryman, 2006, or more recently Office of Children's Commissioner, 2018).

Table 1: Percentage of students reporting adults were unfair to them due to their ethnicity

	Teacher	Healthcare provider	Police	Any of these
Experiencing unfairness due to ethnicity in past 12 months				
Pākehā/European	5.7% –	1.8% –	1.0% –	7.4% –
Māori	14.6% ***	4.0% ***	4.0% ***	19.1% ***
Samoan	12.0% ***	2.8%	2.7% ***	15.8% ***
Other Pacific	11.9% ***	3.7% ***	3.7% ***	17.2% ***
Chinese	10.0% **	3.3%	2.1% *	13.8% ***
Indian	10.8% **	2.8%	1.5%	13.3% **
Other Asian	10.2% **	1.8%	1.3%	12.4% **
Other ethnicity	12.1% ***	3.9% ***	3.9% ***	16.1% ***
Experiencing unfairness due to ethnicity ever				
Pākehā/European	8.6% –	2.5% –	1.5%	10.9%
Māori	21.5% ***	5.6% ***	6.5% ***	27.1% ***
Samoan	18.3% ***	5.3% ***	4.4% ***	23.9% ***
Other Pacific	19.7% ***	6.1% ***	6.0% ***	26.7% ***
Chinese	17.8% ***	4.8% **	3.3% *	22.6% ***
Indian	18.9% ***	4.6% *	2.4%	22.1% ***
Other Asian	18.0% ***	3.5%	2.7% *	21.3% ***
Other ethnicity	19.9% ***	5.7% ***	5.5% ***	35.7% ***

Source: Ministry of Education analysis of Youth2000, 2012 wave.

Note: Asterisks indicate whether the difference from Pākehā/European is statistically significant. *, **, and *** denote statistical significance at 10%, 5% and 1%, respectively.

Discrimination based on migrant status/religion

Migrants and religious students also experience discrimination, although the data suggests this is predominantly due to overlaps between these groups and ethnicities. *Table 2* shows that students who were not born in New Zealand are significantly more likely to report being bullied due to their ethnic group or culture. However, they are significantly less likely to report being bullied because they are gay (or others think they are gay) or because of their size or body shape, and, in this data, they do not report significantly different experiences with teachers or other adults than New Zealand-born students.

The longer migrant students have been in New Zealand, the more likely they are to report being bullied in general, but the less likely they are to report being bullied due to their ethnicity.

Youth2000 asks students not born in New Zealand how old they were when they first entered the country. Breaking the migrant group down by age categories reveals a consistent pattern: the longer migrant students have been living in New Zealand, the more likely they are to report being bullied in general, but the less likely they are to report being bullied due to their ethnicity. Of students who first entered New Zealand before primary school, 28% reported being bullied in the past year, and 3.7% reported being bullied due to their ethnicity (neither is significantly different from New Zealand born students). Of students who first entered New Zealand at secondary school age, however, 17% reported being bullied overall, and 7.4% report ethnicity-related bullying, again highlighting the important distinction between overall bullying and the discriminatory targeted bullying some groups are more exposed to.

Table 2: Percentage of students reporting selected reasons for bullying in past 12 months, by migrant status and religion

	Ethnic group/ culture		Religion		Gay		Size/Body shape		Any of these	
Migrant status										
NZ born	2.2%	–	1.4%	–	2.4%	–	8.6%	–	11.5%	–
All immigrants	5.8%	***	1.9%		1.2%	***	5.6%	***	10.4%	
Moved to NZ < age 5	3.7%		1.5%		1.2%	**	7.4%		10.6%	
Moved to NZ age 5-12	6.5%	***	2.2%		1.5%	**	5.3%	***	10.2%	
Moved to NZ age 13-18	7.4%	***	1.8%		0.3%	***	3.3%	***	10.7%	
Religion										
Non-religious	2.0%	–	0.4%	–	2.0%	–	8.5%	–	10.8%	–
Christian (non-Catholic)	3.0%	**	2.3%	***	1.7%		7.6%		11.1%	
Catholic	3.9%	**	0.7%		1.8%		5.9%	**	9.4%	
Non-Christian	6.0%	***	3.0%	**	0.9%	***	5.6%	**	10.3%	
My own	2.6%		1.9%	**	6.1%	***	12.6%	**	17.7%	**
Other	6.8%	***	5.3%	***	7.5%	***	10.6%		20.3%	***

Source: Ministry of Education analysis of Youth2000, 2012 wave.

Note: Asterisks indicate whether the difference from NZ born or non-religious students is statistically significant. **, and *** denote statistical significance at 10%, 5% and 1%, respectively.

See *Table A1* in the appendix for how the migrant and religion groups have been defined.

Religious students are more likely than non-religious students to report being bullied due to their religion, but a larger percentage of each religion reported being bullied due to their ethnicity rather than their religion (*Table 2*). For example, 3% of religious non-Christian students⁷ reported being bullied due to their religion, but twice as many reported being bullied due to their ethnic group or culture. All religious students other than Christians and Catholics were also significantly more likely to report unfair teacher behaviour due to their ethnicity. This was most pronounced for Muslim students, where 18% of students reported teachers were unfair to them in the past year due to their ethnicity – higher than each of the ethnic groups in *Table 2*.⁸ These results may indicate that although religious students are vulnerable to discrimination, their religion is not necessarily the main target of the discrimination (although in many cases, it may be difficult to distinguish between one's religion and one's culture).

⁷ The largest religions in this group are Buddhist (2% of students), Hindu (2%), and Islam/Muslim (1%).

⁸ Some caution is necessary here, due to the extremely small size of the Muslim group (1% of students), which makes the estimates less precise. This is why Muslim has been combined with other non-Christian religions in most of our reporting. Nevertheless, even taking into account the reduced accuracy for this group, the estimate for Muslim students was significantly higher than that of all ethnic groups reported in *Table 2*, with the exception of Māori students.

There were two major exceptions to religious students being mainly targeted for bullying due to their ethnicity. Students reporting a religion other than the 19 listed in the survey were significantly more likely than non-religious students to report being bullied because of their ethnic group or culture, their religion, or because they were thought to be gay. Students reporting their religion was 'my own' were significantly more likely than non-religious students to report being bullied because of their religion, because they were thought to be gay, or because of their size or body shape. These students also reported significantly more bullying overall (37% being bullied in the past year, compared to 28% of non-religious students). These are relatively small groups (making up 3% and 4% of students, respectively), but the negative outcomes shown here potentially warrant more detailed investigation of their experiences.

Discrimination based on sexual orientation/ gender identity

Transgender students report particularly high rates of discrimination, bullying, and violence.

It is possible to identify some LGBTQIA+⁹ students using the Youth2000 survey. The first relevant question asks about what gender the student is attracted to, and the second asks whether the student thinks they are transgender. We have grouped together students who report being attracted to the same or both sexes (or neither), students who reported that they are transgender, and students who responded 'not sure' to either question.¹⁰ The responses of these students were compared to the responses of students who reported being attracted to the opposite sex and who did not think they were transgender (cisgender¹¹/heterosexual students).

Figure 3 shows the percentage of students from each sexual and gender identity group reporting various experiences with bullying. LGBTQIA+ students are significantly more likely than cisgender/heterosexual students to report ever being bullied (50% compared to 41%), being bullied in the past year (37% compared to 26%), and being bullied on a weekly basis (12% compared to 5%). Previously published analysis of all three waves of the Youth2000 survey found that the rate of same/both-sex attracted students reporting weekly bullying was not significantly different between the 2001 and the 2012 waves of the survey (Lucassen, Clark, Moselen & Robinson, 2014). The same analysis also found that while feelings of safety at school among same/both-sex attracted students had increased significantly since 2001, the gap in feelings of safety between these students and opposite-sex attracted students had not changed.¹²

Transgender students report particularly high rates of discrimination, bullying, and violence. From Figure 3, more than half (53%) of students identifying as trans have been bullied, and almost one in five (18%) are bullied on a weekly basis. This is consistent with findings from Clark et al. (2014), which also used data from the 2012 wave of Youth2000. This study also found that, compared to other students, transgender students are significantly:

- » more likely to experience physical violence;
- » more likely to be afraid others at school would hurt or bother them;
- » less likely to feel safe in their neighbourhood;
- » less likely to like school; and
- » less likely to think their friends care a lot about them.

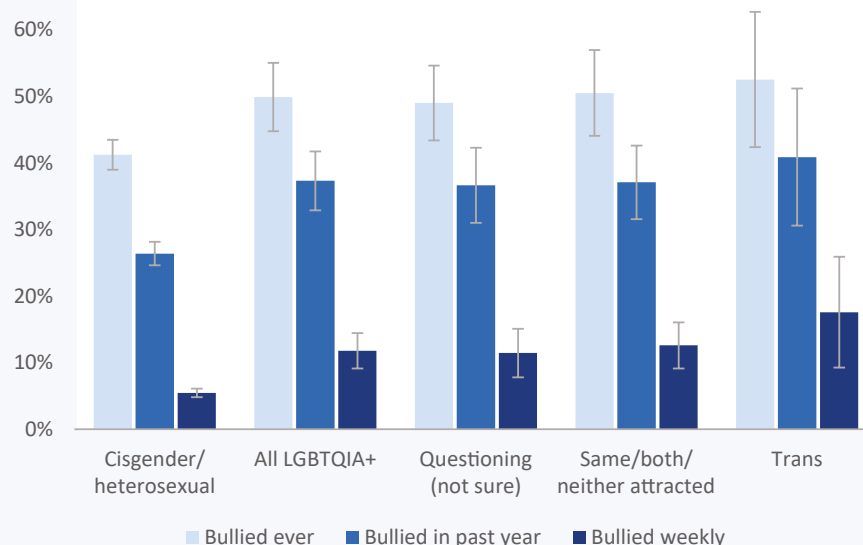
⁹ This is an umbrella term referring to all students who identify as sex, gender or sexuality diverse.

¹⁰ We included students answering 'not sure' in the umbrella group to incorporate questioning students (the 'Q' in LGBTQIA+). While the questions also included a separate 'I don't understand' response option, it is possible that some students selected 'not sure' due to a lack of understanding, rather than a questioning identity. For this reason, the 'same/both/neither attracted' group and the 'trans' group do not include students who responded 'not sure', and we have reported these students separately as 'questioning'.

¹¹ Cisgender means a person whose gender identity is the same as their birth sex.

¹² In the Lucassen et al. (2014) analysis, students answering 'not sure' or 'neither' to the attraction question were not included in either comparison group. Transgender students were included in whichever group corresponded to their attraction.

¹³ However, due to the small size of this group, these estimates are not very accurate. Differences between trans students and cisgender/heterosexual students are statistically significant, but differences between trans students and other LGBTQIA+ students identified here are not.

Figure 3. Experiences with bullying, by sexual/gender identity

Source: Ministry of Education analysis of Youth2000, 2012 wave.

Note: Error bars represent the 95% confidence interval. All differences from cisgender/heterosexual students are statistically significant. See *Table A1* in the appendix for how these groups have been defined, and *Table A2* in the appendix for detailed statistics on bullying rates.

Exploring students' perceived reasons for why they are bullied can also give us an indication of the extent to which they feel discriminated against. *Table 3* shows about 9% of all LGBTQIA+ students (and 14% of same/both/neither attracted students) reported being bullied because they were thought to be gay, compared to 1.3% of cisgender/heterosexual students. However, LGBTQIA+ students are also significantly more likely than cisgender/heterosexual students to report being bullied because of their ethnic group or culture (5%), because of their religion (2.8%), or because of their size or body shape (14.5%). These students were more likely to report being bullied because of their size or body shape than because others thought they were gay.

The increased exposure to bullying across each of these motivations could be an indication that LGBTQIA+ students are particularly likely to be bullied because of multiple aspects of their identity. It could also be partially due to a reporting issue – many LGBTQIA+ students who don't identify as being gay might select that they were bullied due to their culture, or their body shape. These trends are particularly pronounced for trans students, which could be because only 40% of trans students report they are same/both/neither attracted.

Table 3: Percentage of students reporting selected reasons for bullying in past 12 months, by migrant status and religion

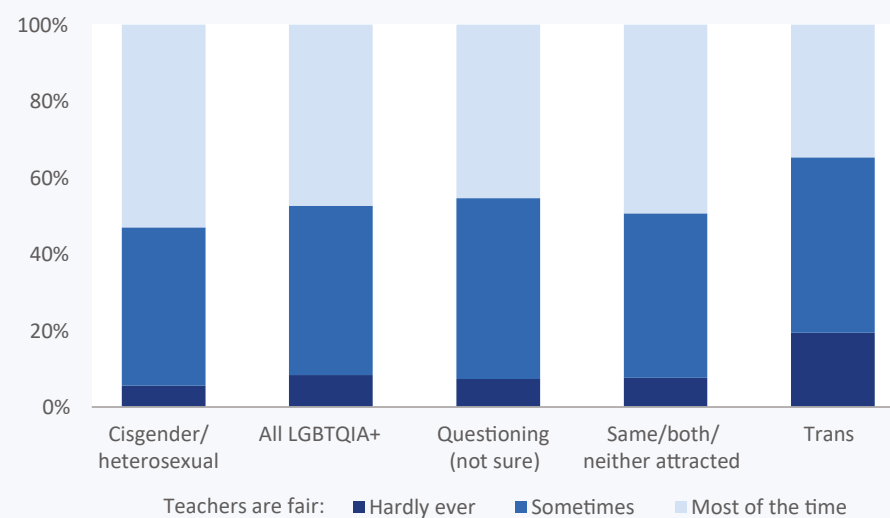
	Ethnic group/culture	Religion	Gay	Size/Body shape	Any of these
Sexual/gender identity					
Cisgender/heterosexual	2.6%	1.3%	1.3%	7.2%	10.1%
All LGBTQIA+	5.0% ***	2.8% **	9.3% ***	14.5% ***	21.7% ***
Questioning (not sure)	5.5% ***	3.6% *	6.0% ***	10.8% **	18.6% ***
Same/both/neither attracted	3.9%	2.4%	13.8% ***	15.9% ***	23.7% ***
Trans	8.5% **	2.1%	9.5% **	21.8% ***	28.2% ***

Source: Ministry of Education analysis of Youth2000, 2012 wave.

Note: Asterisks indicate whether the difference from cisgender/heterosexual students is statistically significant. *, **, and *** denote statistical significance at 10%, 5% and 1%, respectively.

LGBTQIA+ students also appear to experience unfair behaviour from teachers at particularly high rates. Although Youth2000 does not ask a targeted question about whether teachers have been unfair to students on the basis of their sexual or gender identity, it does ask a general question about how often teachers are fair to students (Figure 4). LGBTQIA+ students are significantly less likely than cisgender/heterosexual students to report that teachers are fair 'most of the time' (47% compared to 53%), and significantly more likely to report that teachers are 'hardly ever' fair (8% compared to 6%). The differences in responses for trans students are particularly stark – just over one-third (35%) of trans students agree that teachers are fair most of the time, and almost one in five (19%) report that teachers are hardly ever fair. This does not necessarily mean teachers are systematically discriminating against trans and other LGBTQIA+ students, but it does indicate that these students have far more negative perceptions of their interactions with teachers.

Figure 4. Teacher fairness by sexual/gender identity



Source: Ministry of Education analysis of Youth2000, 2012 wave.

Note: All differences from cisgender/heterosexual students are statistically significant.

See Table A3 in the appendix for detailed statistics on perceived teacher fairness.

Discrimination based on disability or health conditions

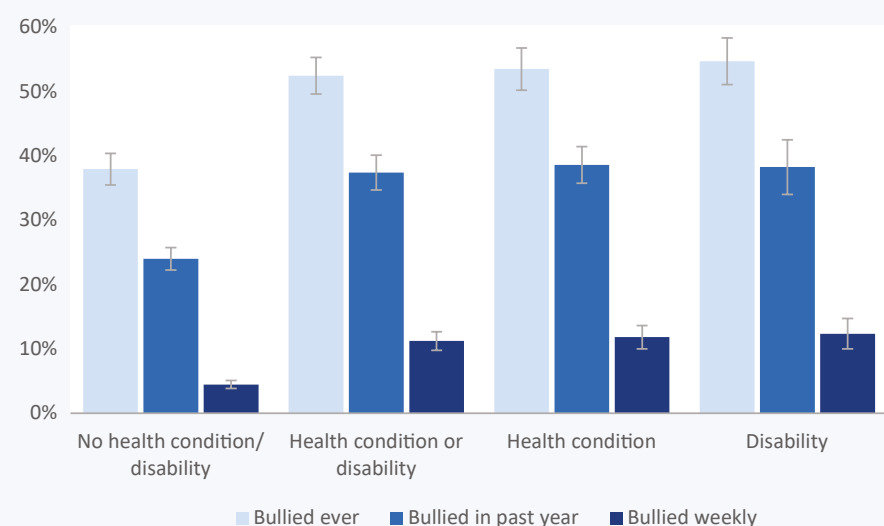
Relative to discrimination based on ethnicity or sexual/gender identity, there is much less previously published quantitative data on the degree to which disabled students are discriminated against. However, there is qualitative evidence that these students experience highly discriminatory behaviours. Drawing on data gathered by YouthLaw Aotearoa, Starr and Janah (2016) document a number of barriers faced by disabled students in the education system. These include:

- » Not being allowed to enrol at their local school
- » Being excluded from extra-curricular activities
- » Only being allowed to attend school for part of the day
- » Teachers or teacher aides not being adequately trained
- » Bullying or poor conduct from teachers or other students
- » Procedures not being followed correctly
- » Not receiving enough support in the classroom
- » Being suspended or excluded from school from reasons relating to their disability
- » Being asked to move to another school

The quantitative data from Youth2000 appears to bear this previous research out. Youth2000 asks students separate questions about whether they have a long-term disability, or a long-term health problem or condition, lasting six months or more.

Disabled students and students with health conditions are significantly more likely to report being exposed to bullying (Figure 5). Over half (52%) of these students have ever been bullied, compared to 38% of non-disabled students without health conditions. More than one in three (37% of) disabled students and students with health conditions reported being bullied in the past year, compared to less than one in four (24%) other students. Disabled students and students with health conditions were 2.5 times more likely to report being bullied weekly (11% compared to 4% of non-disabled students).

Figure 5. Experiences with bullying, by disability/health condition



Source: Ministry of Education analysis of Youth2000, 2012 wave.

Note: Error bars represent the 95% confidence interval. All differences from students with no health condition or disability are statistically significant. See Table A1 in the appendix for how these groups have been defined, and Table A2 in the appendix for detailed statistics on bullying rates.

These differences are particularly important given the large size of these groups – 20% of students reported having a long-term health problem or condition, and 9% reported having a long-term disability. Given that ‘health conditions’ include mental health-related issues, it is possible that students have developed long-term health conditions such as depression or anxiety as a result of bullying. This may mean that the large differences we see in the data could be because bullying is causing health conditions, rather than health conditions causing bullying. However, the direction of causality does not change the importance of improving experiences for this large group.

Table 4: Percentage of students reporting selected reasons for bullying in past 12 months, by disability/health condition

	Ethnic group/culture		Religion		Gay		Size/Body shape	Any of these
Disability/health								
No health condition/disability	2.6%		1.1%		1.4%		6.0%	9.1%
Health condition or disability	4.0%	***	2.7%	***	4.2%	***	13.3%	17.5% ***
Health condition	3.9%	***	2.9%	***	4.8%	***	14.3%	18.8% ***
Disability	4.8%	**	2.4%	*	4.3%	***	13.5%	17.8% ***

Source: Ministry of Education analysis of Youth2000, 2012 wave.

Note: Asterisks indicate whether the difference from students with no health condition or disability is statistically significant. *, **, and *** denote statistical significance at 10%, 5% and 1%, respectively.

Underweight and overweight students are about twice as likely to report being bullied due to their size or body shape.

Discrimination based on weight

Unlike most student surveys, Youth2000 included measurements of height and weight taken of all respondents. This makes it possible to identify negative experiences for students who fall outside of the 'normal' range of the body mass index (BMI).¹⁴ Relative to students with BMIs in the normal range, underweight, overweight and obese students do not report significantly different overall rates of bullying (around one in four students from each group reports being bullied in the past year). However, the reasons for that bullying differ substantially (*Table 5*). Underweight and overweight students are about twice as likely (9.7%) to report being bullied due to their size or body shape than students in the normal BMI range (4.8%). Obese students were 3.7 times more likely to be bullied due to size or body shape (17.7%, compared to 4.8% for normal BMI students).

Table 5: Percentage of students reporting selected reasons for bullying in past 12 months, by weight

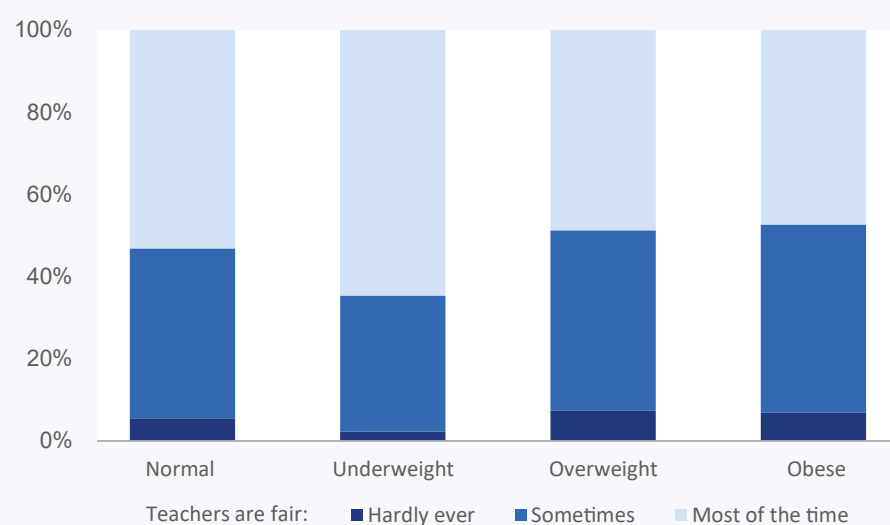
	Ethnic group/culture	Religion	Gay	Size/Body shape	Any of these
Weight					
Normal BMI	3.0%	1.5%	2.0%	4.8%	8.9%
Underweight	2.4%	1.2%	1.5%	9.7% **	12.7% *
Overweight	2.6%	1.5%	2.0%	9.7% ***	12.0% ***
Obese	3.3%	1.4%	3.1% *	17.7% ***	19.6% ***

Source: Ministry of Education analysis of Youth2000, 2012 wave.

Note: Asterisks indicate whether the difference from students with no health condition or disability is statistically significant. *, **, and *** denote statistical significance at 10%, 5% and 1%, respectively.

There are also significant relationships between BMI and perceived teacher fairness (*Figure 6*). Underweight students are significantly more likely to report that teachers treat students fairly most of the time (65%, compared to 53% of normal BMI students). In contrast, overweight (49%) and obese (47%) students are significantly less likely to report teachers being fair most of the time.

Figure 6. Teacher fairness by student weight



Source: Ministry of Education analysis of Youth2000, 2012 wave.

Note: See Table A3 in the appendix for detailed statistics on perceived teacher fairness.

¹⁴ BMI is a proxy measure that cannot measure body fat with high precision (Okorodudu et al., 2010), particularly in non-European populations (Flegal et al., 2010). Asking students to self-report their weight tends to result in substantial underestimates, relative to measured weight (Elgar, Roberts, Tudor-Smith & Moore, 2005).

The picture that emerges from the data is complex in that the form that discrimination takes can look different for different groups.

Research on structural discrimination

The research discussed so far in this report focuses primarily on interpersonal discrimination, which is more easily quantified through surveys. However, students can also be harmed by structural discrimination, where the way systems or institutions are set up and run disadvantages or negatively impacts certain groups.

One manifestation of structural discrimination is institutionalised racism, where societal structures (such as the education system) work to entrench racial privilege. To illustrate some of these mechanisms, MacDonald and Reynolds (2017) argue that the schooling system is racially biased, being responsive to the needs of Pākehā students without taking into account cultural differences between students. They also discuss how the current curriculum and education system is colour-blind and assumes opportunities are available to all and that students learn in the same way, contributing to the silencing of students who may observe their ethnicity, culture and ways of learning are not valued or recognised by the system. This results in devaluing and rejecting of many forms of knowledge, including Mātauranga Māori and te reo Māori. This paper argues that greater cultural responsiveness should be a feature throughout the education system.

Many of these, and similar, ideas have been raised by the Curriculum Progress and Achievement Ministerial Advisory Group (2018). The group's recommendations for change centre on the idea of a learning system which is culturally responsive and adaptive to the needs of students, reflecting greater emphasis on diversity, inclusion and wellbeing. The group stresses the need to make sure there are rich opportunities available to all students which recognise unique cultures, identities and locations, and puts particular emphasis on enabling Māori (as partners of Te Tiriti o Waitangi) to achieve success as Māori. To do this also requires supporting teachers to ensure a deep cultural capability. The recently drafted vision for the education workforce (Education Workforce Strategy Group, 2019) repeatedly refers to the need to reduce racism and discrimination, to foster Māori and Pacific language, identity and culture, and for students and whānau from all cultures to feel like they belong in school.

With respect to disabled students, MacArthur (2013) touches on structural issues which impact upon a student's ability to form relationships with other students. Students talked about how the school environment isolated them physically from other students with facilities which were not accessible, meaning they were unable to participate in some activities and were separated from their peers. Disabled students also spoke of the role of teachers and support staff which impaired students' ability to form and maintain relationships, including overly close teacher aide support, ability groupings and withdrawal for specialist teaching. Students felt that these practices stigmatised and isolated them from their peers, and generally expressed a wish to be active and included participants in their classes.

What are the implications for policy and practice?

This report has reviewed available research relating to different forms of discrimination faced by New Zealand school students. The published data have implications for further data collection, and implications for a policy response aiming to minimise discrimination.

With respect to collecting further data, this report confirms the need to collect more targeted data relating to discrimination. Almost all of the data published to date focuses on bullying behaviours between peers, and uses ethnicity as the main vector of discrimination. If we are to design, implement and evaluate effective policy solutions, we also need detailed data on the degree to which different adults discriminate against students, and the ways in which discrimination can occur to groups such as LGBTQIA+, disabled students, and students with health conditions or of different weight. This would ideally be collected in a form where the responses could be linked to other wellbeing and educational outcomes.

The picture that emerges from the data is complex in that the form that discrimination takes can look different for different groups. For example, a small proportion (less than 5%) of Māori and Pacific students report being bullied by peers on the basis of their ethnicity. However, Māori students report more frequent experiences with bullying in general, and both Māori and Pacific students report more exposure to discrimination from adults than students of other ethnicities. Asian students report lower levels of general bullying than Pākehā students, and less discrimination from adults than Māori and Pacific students, but are the ethnic group most likely to report being bullied because of their ethnicity.

This has implications both for the collection of data and for the design of policy. It means that measuring discrimination in different ways (asking students explicitly about discrimination, as well as more generally about unfair or negative experiences) is likely to result in a more nuanced and accurate view. The fact that students can belong to multiple groups also has implications for how we should report on these experiences.

Finally, to achieve a goal where children and young people are free from racism and discrimination, as identified in the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy, the policy response will need to take into account the issues that are faced by each of these groups. For many groups, there is a clear need for effective anti-bullying strategies that support students to value each others' identities, languages and cultures. This report is also consistent with existing evidence in showing a strong need to be more inclusive of Maori, Pacific, disabled, and LGBTQIA+ students, both in terms of interpersonal behaviour from school staff, as well as more structural factors. To eliminate discrimination in New Zealand schools is likely to require substantial changes from every part of the system.



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Table A1: Definitions of identity groups used in this report

Ethnicity*		Definition	%
Pākehā/European		Student selected that they were at least one of New Zealand European (65%), English (17%), Australian (3%), Dutch (3%), or Other European (5%), and did not also select any other ethnicity	47%
Māori		Student selected Māori	20%
Samoan		Student selected Samoan	8%
Other Pacific		Student selected Cook Island Māori (4%), Tongan (4%), Fijian (2%), Niuean (1%), Tokelauan (0.6%), or Other Pacific Peoples (1%)	11%
Chinese		Student selected Chinese	5%
Indian		Student selected Indian	4%
Other Asian		Student selected Filipino (2%), Korean (2%), Japanese (1%), Cambodian (0.4%), or Other Asian (2%)	7%
Other ethnicity		Student selected African (2%), Middle Eastern (0.8%), Latin American (0.6%), or Other (7%)	10%
Migrant status			
NZ born		Student selected New Zealand as their country of birth	78%
All immigrants		Student selected a different country as their country of birth	22%
Moved to NZ < age 5		Student reported they weren't born in New Zealand and in a separate question selected that they first came to New Zealand aged 1-4 years.	7%
Moved to NZ age 5-12		Student reported they weren't born in New Zealand and in a separate question selected that they first came to New Zealand aged 5-12 years.	11%
Moved to NZ age 13-18		Student reported they weren't born in New Zealand and in a separate question selected that they first came to New Zealand aged 13-18 years.	4%
Religion			
Non-religious		Student selected 'none' when asked what faith or religion they were	41%
Christian (non-Catholic)		Student selected Christian (27%), Anglican (3%), Latter Day Saints/Mormon (2%), Presbyterian (1%), Methodist (0.8%), Seventh Day Adventist (0.6%), Baptist (0.5%), Assemblies of God (0.3%), Ekalesia Faalapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (0.3%), Salvation Army (0.2%), Pentecostal (0.2%), or Brethren (0.1%)	37%
Catholic		Student selected Catholic	9%
Non-Christian		Student selected Buddhist (2%), Hindu (2%), Islam/Muslim (1%), Rātana (0.6%), or Ringatū (0.2%),	6%
My own		Student selected 'I have my own' when asked what faith or religion they were	4%
Other		Student selected Other	3%
Health status			
No health problem/disability		Student selected that they do not have a long-term disability or long-term health problem or condition.	74%
Health problem or disability		Student selected that they have a long-term disability or health condition.	26%
Health problem		Student selected that they have a long-term health problem or condition lasting 6 months or more (eg. asthma, diabetes, depression).	20%
Disability		Student selected that they have a long-term disability lasting 6 months or more (eg. sensory impaired hearing, visual impairment, in a wheelchair, learning difficulties)	9%
Sexual orientation/gender			
Cisgender/heterosexual		Student selected 'the opposite sex' when asked who they were sexually attracted to, and selected 'no' to a different question asking whether they think they are transgender	89%
All LGBTQIA+		Student selected 'the same sex', 'both sexes', 'neither', or 'not sure' when asked who they were sexually attracted to, or selected 'yes' or 'not sure' when asked whether they think they are transgender	11%
Questioning ('not sure')		Student selected 'not sure' when asked who they were attracted to (2.2%), or 'not sure' when asked when they think they are transgender (2.5%)	5%
Same/both/neither attracted		Student selected 'the same sex' (0.7%), 'both sexes' (3.0%), or 'neither' (2.0%) when asked who they were sexually attracted to	6%
Trans		Student selected 'yes' when asked whether they think they are transgender	1%
Weight			
Normal		The student's BMI (as measured by staff administering the survey) is in the 'normal' category according to the 2012 International Obesity Task Force guidelines.	60%
Underweight		The student's BMI is in the 'underweight' category	3%
Overweight		The student's BMI is in the 'overweight' category	24%
Obese		The student's BMI is in the 'obese' category	13%

Note: * Students could select multiple ethnicities – all students have been coded in each ethnicity they belong to. This means that percentages for ethnicities do not add up to 100%.

Table A2: Percentage of students reporting being bullied, by identity group

Ethnicity	Ever bullied		Bullied in past 12 months		Bullied weekly	
Pākehā/European	49.2%	–	32.1%	–	7.7%	–
Māori	37.3%	***	25.3%	***	5.5%	***
Samoan	28.3%	***	19.7%	***	3.8%	**
Other Pacific	28.4%	***	19.9%	***	3.9%	***
Chinese	34.5%	***	22.7%	***	3.7%	***
Indian	35.3%	***	21.0%	***	5.0%	
Other Asian	33.9%	***	21.2%	***	2.7%	***
Other ethnicity	45.1%	*	31.2%		9.1%	
Migrant status						
NZ born	43.7%	–	28.9%	–	6.8%	–
All immigrants	34.4%	***	22.3%	***	4.4%	***
Moved to NZ < age 5	39.6%	*	27.7%		7.0%	
Moved to NZ age 5-12	34.0%	***	20.9%	***	3.5%	***
Moved to NZ age 13-18	26.2%	***	17.1%	***	2.2%	***
Religion						
Non-religious	43.6%	–	27.7%	–	6.2%	–
Christian (non-Catholic)	40.1%	*	27.0%		5.9%	
Catholic	39.8%		27.3%		5.2%	
Non-Christian	32.7%	***	20.0%	***	2.4%	***
My own	55.6%	***	36.6%	***	10.6%	**
Other	46.2%		32.6%		9.9%	**
Health status						
No health problem/disability	37.9%	–	24.0%	–	4.5%	–
Health problem or disability	52.4%	***	37.4%	***	11.2%	***
Health problem	53.5%	***	38.6%	***	11.8%	***
Disability	54.7%	***	38.2%	***	12.4%	***
Sexual orientation/gender						
Cisgender/heterosexual	41.3%	–	26.4%	–	5.5%	–
All LGBTQIA+	49.9%	***	37.3%	***	11.8%	***
Questioning ('not sure')	49.0%	***	36.6%	***	11.4%	***
Same/both/neither attracted	50.5%	***	37.1%	***	12.6%	***
Trans	52.5%	**	40.9%	***	17.6%	***
Weight						
Normal	42.1%	–	27.2%	–	5.7%	–
Underweight	42.8%		25.1%		3.1%	**
Overweight	41.7%		28.2%		7.0%	**
Obese	38.2%		26.7%		7.5%	

Note: Asterisks indicate whether the difference between the first group (eg. Pākehā/European for ethnicity) is statistically significant. *, **, and *** denote statistical significance at 10%, 5% and 1%, respectively.

Table A3: Responses to how frequently teachers are fair to students, by identity group

Ethnicity	Hardly ever		Sometimes		Most of the time	
Pākehā/European	5.5%	–	37.7%	–	56.9%	–
Māori	8.6%	***	48.6%	***	42.8%	***
Samoan	6.1%		50.3%	***	43.6%	***
Other Pacific	6.6%		49.2%	***	44.3%	***
Chinese	4.9%		42.2%		52.9%	
Indian	4.7%		36.2%		59.1%	
Other Asian	7.0%		43.2%	***	49.8%	***
Other ethnicity	8.7%	***	47.7%	***	43.6%	***
Migrant status						
NZ born	6.3%	–	42.6%	–	51.1%	–
All immigrants	5.5%		40.9%		53.6%	*
Moved to NZ < age 5	5.4%		39.5%		55.1%	
Moved to NZ age 5-12	5.3%		40.3%		54.4%	
Moved to NZ age 13-18	6.3%		44.9%		48.8%	
Religion						
Non-religious	6.2%	–	41.5%	–	52.3%	–
Christian (non-Catholic)	4.9%	**	42.5%		52.6%	
Catholic	4.8%		39.7%		55.5%	
Non-Christian	5.7%		40.5%		53.8%	
My own	9.5%	*	39.9%		50.6%	
Other	7.8%		45.4%		46.8%	
Health status						
No health problem/disability	5.5%		42.0%		52.5%	
Health problem or disability	7.6%	***	42.5%		49.9%	**
Health problem	7.8%	***	42.6%		49.6%	*
Disability	7.9%	**	41.5%		50.6%	
Sexual orientation/gender						
Cisgender/heterosexual	5.5%		41.4%		53.1%	
All LGBTQIA+	8.3%	***	44.3%	*	47.4%	***
Questioning ('not sure')	7.3%		47.2%	**	45.4%	***
Same/both/neither attracted	7.6%		43.0%		49.4%	
Trans	19.4%	***	45.9%		34.7%	***
Weight						
Normal	5.5%		41.3%		53.2%	
Underweight	2.3%	***	33.1%	***	64.6%	***
Overweight	7.5%	***	43.8%	*	48.7%	***
Obese	6.9%		45.8%	***	47.3%	***

Note: Asterisks indicate whether the difference between the first group (eg. Pākehā/European for ethnicity) is statistically significant. *, **, and *** denote statistical significance at 10%, 5% and 1%, respectively. The other potential response to this question was "always"