

Ngā Tau Tuangahuru

PACIFIC YOUTH TALK ABOUT CULTURE:
Findings from Ngā Tau Tuangahuru |
Exploring Māori and Pacific 'Success'

THE STUDY

Ngā Tau Tuangahuru ('looking beyond for ten more years'), is a longitudinal study of Māori and Pacific educational and family success. Funded by Foundation North, the study was developed with five educational institutions that were part of its 2009-2014 Māori and Pacific Educational Initiative (MPEI). Sixty-nine Māori and Pacific families were interviewed in the first round of study in 2017. Most of these families were interviewed again in 2018/19, plus 78 students from Years 1 to 13. Whānau and students were asked what success looks like for them and what supports and hinders that success. They also responded to questions about culture, family life, schooling and their future.

For most Pacific youth, cultural connectedness is an integral part of their identity.

Here we explore cultural connectedness with Pacific youth and the importance of staying connected to culture(s).

Participants

In 2019, as part of the larger study, we conducted interviews with forty-two Auckland-based Pacific students from intermediate and high school (Years 7-13):

42 Students 29 Male 13 Female



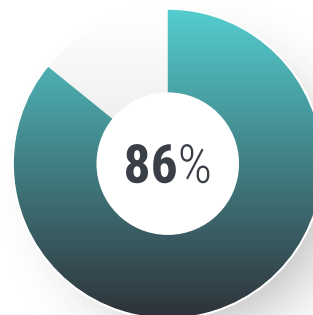
Ethnicity/ies 38 Pacific 4 Both Māori & Pacific



Strength of connection to culture(s)

Students were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the statement **'I feel strongly connected to my culture.'** Nearly all (86%) agreed or strongly agreed that they feel strongly connected to their culture(s).

Agreed or strongly agreed



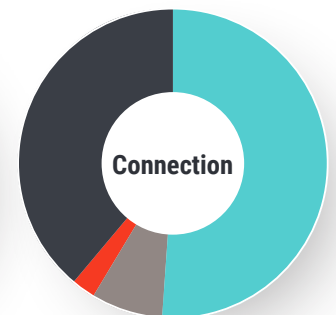
Strongly Agree 16

"Mum always encourages us to speak Samoan at home. Going to church makes me feel strong in my culture. The stories and information grandparents give makes culture strong to me."

Neither agree nor disagree 3

"Because I don't go to Tongan related stuff, like funerals, church."

Opinions of Pacific youth on the strength of their connection to their culture(s)



Agree 21

"More so my Tongan than Samoan. I am always proud of my Dad's family which is Tongan. The values of respect are strongly shown through them and everything we say and do."

Disagree 1

"I don't know many relatives on my Mum's side. I don't speak the language or know the Samoan culture therefore I disagree that I feel strongly connected to my culture."

NB: One student did not give a response.

Language was the most common reason students' felt connected to their culture(s) (49%). Students spoke of the effect their ability to speak or understand their indigenous language has on their sense of cultural connectedness. "I can speak and understand a little Samoan as we use it at home, therefore I feel more connected to my Samoan side." Family members are often pivotal in students speaking or understanding their indigenous language.

Family is a key source of connection to culture for over two thirds of the students interviewed (70%).

Church and community are key sources of connection for nearly a quarter of the students (23%). Community connection includes being in cultural groups, attending cultural events or connection through school.

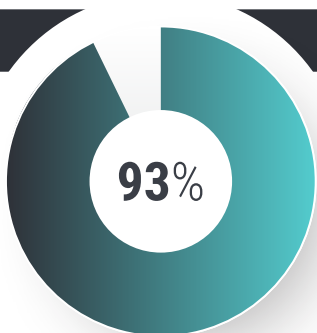
Other themes were **connection to home country** (being born in or visiting their cultural home); cultural knowledge, engaging in **cultural practices** and **living**

by cultural values.

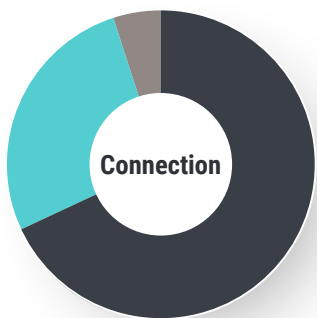
Some students talked about being more connected to one aspect of their culture than another (19%), or feeling little or no connection with their culture(s) (14%). A small number wanted to know more and be more connected to their culture(s) (5%), and often this had to do with language:

"Not as strongly connected as [I] would like to be. Connected to the culture but not the language. Would like to be able to communicate."

Importance of connection to culture(s)



Agreed or strongly agreed that having a strong connection to their culture(s) is important to them.



Opinions of Pacific youth on the importance of having a strong connection to their culture(s).

Students were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the statement **'Having a strong connection to my culture(s) is important to me.'** Nearly all the students (93%) agreed or strongly agreed that having a strong connection to their culture(s) is important to them.

Whakapapa or ancestral connection was the main reason students gave for the importance of a strong connection to their culture(s) (42%) – knowing where they came from helped them to connect to their ancestors and understand and treasure their family history.

This was closely connected with **identity** (28%). Students spoke of culture as the foundation of their identity and as being a source of confidence, pride and success.

Communicating and maintaining a connection with **family** was a reason for maintaining strong cultural connections for just under a quarter of the students (23%). Cultural values and language were passed down to students by their family, and most students spoke their indigenous language at home with their family.

Strongly Agree	28	Agree	11	Neither agree nor disagree	2
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"It gives you a sense of identity, knowing who you are and who your people are gives you confidence and pride."

"It is my identity, it is who I am, where I belong, where my family comes from. It is my roots. I am Samoan and I am proud of it."

"I know that my culture should be important to me, and I am proud to be both Fijian and Samoan. I don't really have an opinion because I don't personally feel that connected, or know as much as I should know about both cultures."

NB: One student did not give a response.

The importance of cultural connectedness for Pacific youth

Family

Family helps Pacific youth to keep connected to their culture, and family is a major reason they want to stay strongly connected to their culture(s).

Cultural knowledge, practices and values

Knowing their traditions and practices connect Pacific youth to their culture. Living by values such as respect and faith are an important part of this.

Language

Pacific youth often measure how connected they are to their culture(s) by how well they can speak and understand their indigenous language/s.

Church and Community

Church and community groups can support Pacific youth to feel connected to their culture/s. School also has a role to play in helping them maintain a strong connection to culture, such as joining school cultural groups.

Effective initiatives for Pacific young people support and reinforce cultural legitimacy and identity. Our research indicates that:

- **Culture is an important part of identity**, linking Pacific young people to their roots. Positive engagement with culture can promote positive self-identity and pride.
- **Home is where culture is most commonly expressed**, and **family** are often the biggest connector to culture.
- **Church / faith** are an important conduit of culture for many Pacific students – along with **school** and other community organisations.
- **Having cultural knowledge and engaging in cultural traditions and practices** are an indicator of cultural connection for youth. Living by cultural values such as respect and service are of importance to students and their families. Students do better where there is a values alignment between school and home.
- **Language** is the most common indicator of whether a young person does or does not feel strongly connected to their culture(s).