

A Youth19 Brief: Young People with Disabilities

What is Youth19?

Youth19 is the latest in the Aotearoa New Zealand Youth2000 series of health and wellbeing surveys. These large-scale, high-quality surveys began in 2001 and have involved a total of over 36,000 students. Youth19 is led by Dr Terryann Clark (University of Auckland) and Dr Terry Fleming (Victoria University of Wellington), with collaborators from around New Zealand and beyond.¹

7,721 adolescents from 49 Auckland, Northland and Waikato schools and kura kaupapa Māori took part in Youth19. They completed the anonymous survey in English or Te Reo Māori on internet tablets with optional voice over.

Here, we report key data about the wellbeing of 646 Youth19 participants who have a disability. For more detailed information, including how we did the survey, young people's comments, and information about other areas of health and wellbeing, see www.youth19.ac.nz.



Young people with disabilities

In this brief, 'young people with disabilities' refers to Youth19 participants who have a long-term disability.* The question used to identify this group was: **"Do you have a long-term disability (lasting 6 months or more) (e.g. sensory impairment, visual impairment, in a wheelchair, learning difficulties)?"**

In total, there were 646 Youth19 participants with a disability, with slightly more males than females. Māori, NZ European/Pākehā and Other ethnic groups more frequently reported a disability than Asian and Pacific youth. Students with disabilities live across all socio-economic bands, school deciles, and locations (see page 2).

* Note, in previous publications we have presented results for young people with 'disabling conditions', including those with disabilities, long-term health conditions and chronic pain that impacts their life.²⁻⁵ This brief reports findings for young people who have a disability exclusively.

Summary

Most young people with disabilities reported positive family and school environments, high rates of volunteering, and moderate or good health. However, members of this group also reported major inequities compared to others, including increased concerns about housing, poor healthcare access, and ethnic discrimination by healthcare providers. They reported inequities in feeling safe at school, and very high levels of mental health concerns. Overall, they reported more challenges than their peers without disabilities. We can improve the wellbeing of young people with disabilities by ensuring that they and their whānau are free from discrimination and have the support, housing, income and resources they need to fully participate in society. We also need to ensure that young people feel safe and welcome in all settings, their voices are heard and acted upon, their health needs are met, and they have futures they can look forward to.

Young People with Disabilities: Demographics

In total, close to 9% of Youth19 participants (646 students) had disabilities, as shown below.

	Young people with disabilities		Young people without disabilities	
	n(N)	%	n(N)	%
Total				
Total	646 (7,493)	8.6	6,847 (7,493)	91.4
Sex				
Female	310 (4,119)	7.4	3,809 (4,119)	92.6
Male	336 (3,374)	10.2	3,038 (3,374)	89.8
Age				
13 and under	98 (1,349)	7.4	1,251 (1,349)	92.6
14	130 (1,684)	8.1	1,554 (1,684)	91.9
15	139 (1,647)	7.8	1,508 (1,647)	92.2
16	155 (1,438)	10.4	1,283 (1,438)	89.6
17 and over	124 (1,375)	9.4	1,251 (1,375)	90.6
Ethnicity (prioritised)*				
Māori	144 (1,446)	10.1	1,302 (1,446)	89.9
Pacific	53 (885)	5.6	832 (885)	94.4
Asian	91 (1,753)	5.3	1,662 (1,753)	94.7
Other**	35 (370)	8.9	335 (370)	91.1
Pākehā & other European	320 (3,027)	11.0	2,707 (3,027)	89.0
School Decile				
1 & 2 – Most deprived	80 (961)	7.2	881 (961)	92.8
3 & 4	108 (1,204)	9.2	1,096 (1,204)	90.8
5 & 6	88 (872)	10.2	784 (872)	89.8
7 & 8	160 (1,715)	9.9	1,555 (1,715)	90.1
9 & 10 – Least deprived	207 (2,699)	7.5	2,492 (2,699)	92.5
Neighbourhood Deprivation^				
1 – Least deprived	120 (1,411)	9.0	1,291 (1,411)	91.0
2	120 (1,382)	7.9	1,262 (1,382)	92.1
3	127 (1,439)	8.8	1,312 (1,439)	91.2
4	96 (1,159)	9.2	1,063 (1,159)	90.8
5 – Most deprived	104 (1,335)	7.6	1,231 (1,335)	92.4
Locale#				
Urban	408 (5,102)	8.1	4,694 (5,102)	91.9
Small Town	49 (543)	8.8	494 (543)	91.2
Rural	110 (1,082)	10.8	972 (1,082)	89.2

* Ethnicity categorised using the NZ census ethnicity prioritisation method.

** 'Other' ethnicity includes Middle Eastern, Latin American, African and other ethnicities and ethnicity unknown.

^ Neighbourhood deprivation measured using NZ Deprivation Index 2018.

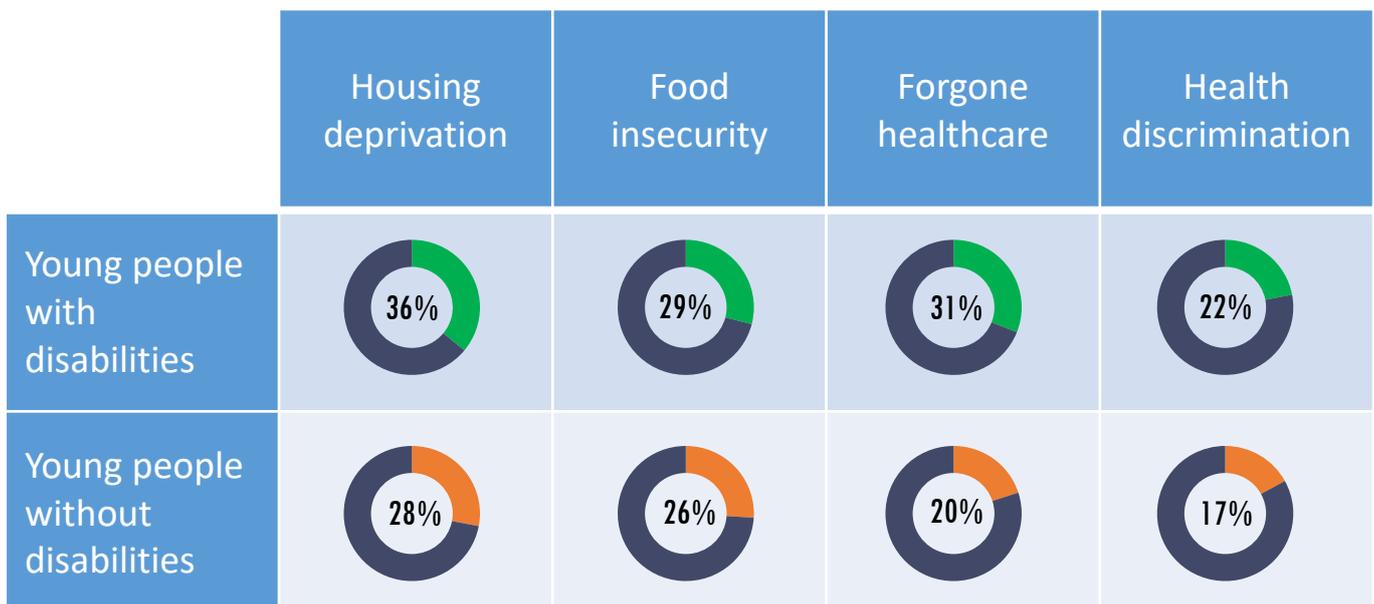
Urban (population of 10,000 or more), small town (population between 1,000 and 9,999), rural (population fewer than 1,000).

For more info about how demographics were measured, see our *Introduction and Methods Report*.¹

Housing, Food and Healthcare

On this page and the following pages, we show how young people with disabilities are doing on key indicators. The last two pages of this brief detail how we measured each indicator and give extra info.

As shown in the figure and table below, we found 36% of those with disabilities face housing deprivation (needing to sleep or live in challenging conditions due to housing costs), compared to 28% among those without disabilities. Young people with disabilities also faced difficulties accessing healthcare, with 31% saying that they did not get the healthcare they needed in the previous year, compared to 20% of those without disabilities. Young people with disabilities were also more likely to experience ethnic discrimination when accessing healthcare (22%) compared to 17% of young people without disabilities. There was no statistical difference for food security between young people with disabilities and those without disabilities.



This infographic shows the estimated percentage of each indicator for each group, adjusted for age, sex, ethnicity and effects of complex surveys.

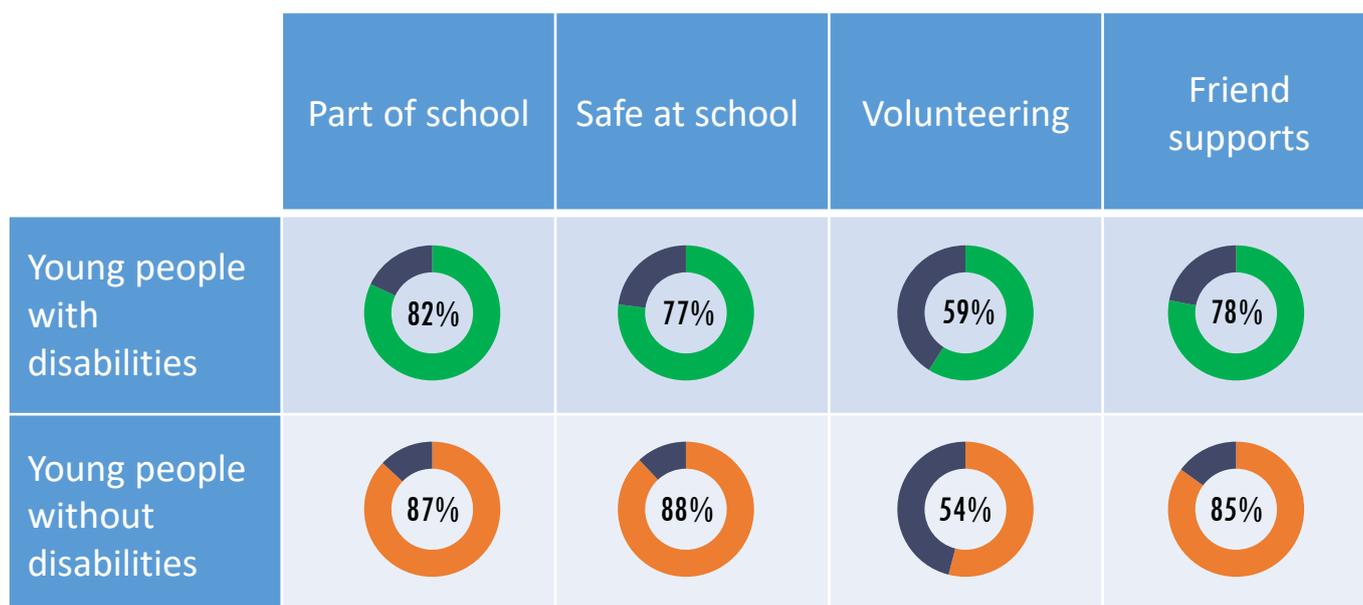
	Young people with disabilities % (95% CI)	Young people without disabilities % (95% CI)
Housing deprivation (any)	36.3 (31.4 - 41.2)	28.4 (25.0 - 31.8)
Food insecurity	29.4 (24.1 - 34.8)	25.7 (21.4 - 30.1)
Forgone healthcare	31.2 (25.8 - 36.6)	20.1 (18.6 - 21.7)
Health discrimination	22.1 (18.5 - 25.8)	16.6 (14.8 - 18.4)

This table provides the estimated percentages and 95% confidence intervals. The 95% confidence interval indicates the range within which the true percentage can be assumed to exist, 95% of the time.

School, Friendships and Volunteering

Most young people with disabilities report positive school environments. More than 80% feel part of their school and more than 3 in every 4 feel safe at school all or part of the time. Almost 60% volunteer to support others in their communities and more than 75% have at least one friend who supports them.

At the same time, members of this group face significant inequities when compared to their peers without a disability. For example, rangatahi with disabilities are less likely to feel safe at school and less likely to have friends they can turn to for support, than those without a disability.



This infographic shows the estimated percentage of each indicator for each group, adjusted for age, sex, ethnicity and effects of complex surveys.

	Young people with disabilities % (95% CI)	Young people without disabilities % (95% CI)
Part of school	81.8 (78.4 - 85.1)	87.0 (85.1 - 88.8)
Safe at school	76.5 (71.9 - 81.0)	87.9 (86.0 - 89.7)
Volunteering	58.8 (53.8 - 63.8)	54.3 (51.8 - 56.7)
Friend supports	78.0 (73.5 - 82.4)	85.0 (84.1 - 85.9)

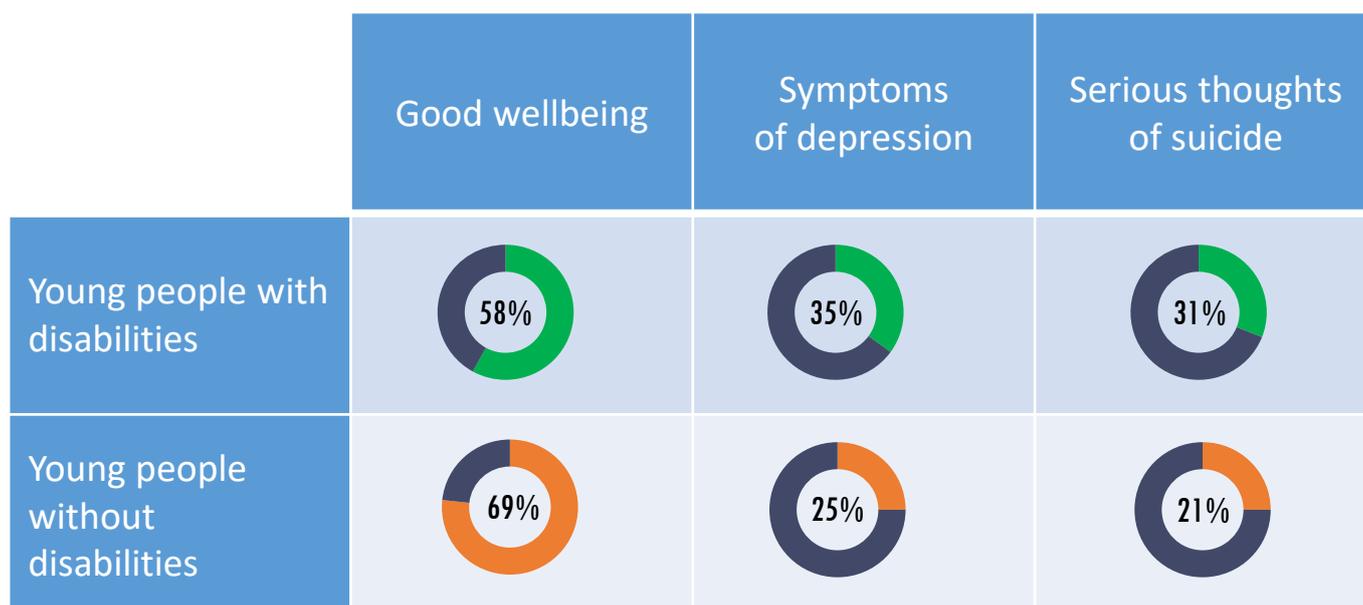
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Wellbeing and Mental Health

Young people with disabilities face major inequities and challenges in the area of wellbeing and mental health.

- Fewer than 60% of rangatahi in this group reported good wellbeing
- More than one in three reported symptoms of depression
- Close to one in three reported serious thoughts of suicide in the last year.

These challenges were more prevalent among young people with disabilities than among those without disabilities.



This infographic shows the estimated percentage of each indicator for each group, adjusted for age, sex, ethnicity and effects of complex surveys.

	Young people with disabilities % (95% CI)	Young people without disabilities % (95% CI)
Good wellbeing	58.2 (53.6 - 62.8)	69.4 (67.2 - 71.7)
Symptoms of depression	35.3 (28.0 - 42.6)	24.8 (22.4 - 27.2)
Serious thoughts of suicide	30.8 (25.1 - 36.5)	21.4 (19.3 - 23.5)

This table provides the estimated percentages and 95% confidence intervals. The 95% confidence interval indicates the range within which the true percentage can be assumed to exist, 95% of the time.

Youth Voice: Making home, family and school life better

Youth19 includes brief comments from participants about the biggest challenges facing young people and what could be changed to make a difference. About three quarters (76%) of young people with a disability made at least one comment.

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

Young people with disabilities described a range of factors that would improve their home life – better family relationships, less parental discord, more time with family, and not having to worry about money, housing and parental employment concerns. In general, they were concerned about their families and the pressures they were under.



- *“I would want my parents to be a bit more understanding”* (Asian, 14-year-old female)
- *“My parents working less so we could see them more often”* (Pākehā, 14-year-old female)
- *“Not having stressed parents all the time”* (Māori, 17-year-old male)
- *“Less fighting and worrying, but more focusing on what's important for us kids and what would make us happy”* (Other ethnic group, 17-year-old female)
- *“My parents getting paid more so that it makes it easier to live”* (Māori, 15-year-old male)
- *“To keep my whole family together, not everyone in different places”* (Pacific, 15-year-old female)
- *“To have a bigger house for my family and not to worry about bills all the time”* (Māori, 15-year-old female)

“If you could change one thing about your school/course to make it better, what would it be?”

Young people with disabilities suggested a range of things that could be changed in schools – better teaching practices, subject matter more relevant to their lives, less focus on uniforms, the school day starting later and being shorter, better future opportunities, safety from discrimination, racism, bullying, and a focus on wellbeing.

- *“I would fire all the teachers and hire ones that actually respect students and are kind to them”* (Ethnicity not stated, 14-year-old female)
- *“Mandatory education on important life skills - dealing with depression, how to study correctly, things like bills taxes find work that are not taught in schools”* (Māori, 15-year-old male)
- *“For there to be more opportunities for people.. or for there to be more ways to help the people that need it”* (Pākehā, 14-year-old female)
- *“Not be racist towards our friends and don't think we are just stupid”* (Māori, 16-year-old female)
- *“Less focused on statistics and looking good with their results and more focused on student well being”* (Pākehā, 17-year-old female)
- *“I guess better understanding of autism and neurodiversity”* (Pākehā, 14-year-old female)
- *“There are too many things I would change but most importantly there needs to be more support for people with disabilities”* (Pākehā, 16-year-old male)

Youth Voice: Biggest Problems and Opportunities

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

Young people with disabilities described a range of issues – mental health, stress, social media, high expectations, global unrest and conflict, religious beliefs and pressures, bullying, lack of understanding by adults, global warming, lack of acceptance, judgment, poverty, inequity and concerns for the future.

- *“Climate change, social media, terrorism and depression”* (Pākehā, 17-year-old female)
- *“We're in a transition period where people are just starting to accept differences in sexuality and religion and culture, so teenagers could be struggling with dealing with their identity with parents”* (Asian, 14-year-old female)
- *“The future? Generations before us haven't really thought about the future so we have been left to pick up the pieces”* (Pākehā, 16-year-old female)
- *“Mental illness. Too much work and pressure at school and not enough help from school”* (Māori, 16-year-old female)
- *“The fact that we live in a collapsing economy, education and political system that doesn't prioritise skill or talent and puts people in crippling debt for the future”* (Pākehā, 18-year-old male)
- *“Judgement. Money. Expectations”* (Pacific, 16-year-old female)
- *“That we are treated unfairly by others causing depression”* (Māori, 13-year-old male)

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

Young people are seeking a fairer, more accepting future that ensure that everyone has what they need to survive and thrive.

- *“Support networks and life support with family, friends and communities”* (Pacific, 17-year-old female)
- *“Less time on phones and everyone coming together”* (Māori, 14-year-old female)
- *“Ensure that kids are exposed of different cultures, religions etc from an early age so that they learn to respect and accept everyone in their communities. Also by placing an equal value on all cultures present in New Zealand, because I feel as if certain cultures are treated as if they are inferior to the mainstream ones”* (Asian, 17-year-old female)
- *“Make basic necessities affordable, systems that don't take advantage of their helplessness and inability to afford housing. Systems that don't make it so that young people of New Zealand are getting into more and more debt and tough living situations”* (Asian, 16-year-old female)
- *“Better mental health care system”* (Māori, 17-year-old female)
- *“Being able to express ourselves, our beliefs and our values freely without facing judgement from our parents or other adults”* (Pākehā, 16-year-old female)
- *“The politics should focus on the next generation”* (Māori, 14-year-old male)
- *“Less abuse and hate, more love and kindness”* (Māori, 13-year-old female)
- *“Allow people to be ok with their identity and feel loved”* (Pākehā, 16-year-old male)

Youth19 Questions and Definitions

All questions in the Youth19 survey were self-reported. This means that young people answered the questions themselves, almost always by selecting a particular response option on the tablet screen. A key strength of Youth19 was the large, representative sample, which gave us an overview of a broad range of important areas for diverse groups of young people. The downside is that the survey only included students who were at the invited schools or kura on the day of the survey, and that the responses are not in-depth. For each question there are limitations and things it would be good to know more about. Other kinds of research can help to enrich our understandings alongside this big picture overview. For more information about the survey, see www.youth19.ac.nz.

For this brief, **'Young people with disabilities'** includes Youth19 participants who responded YES to the question: "Do you have any long-term disability (lasting 6 months or more) (e.g. sensory impaired hearing, visual impairment, in a wheelchair, learning difficulties)?"

Housing deprivation. The Youth19 survey included questions about five housing deprivation indicators:

- 1) Inadequate housing, e.g. sleeping in a car, in a garage, on the floor, or in emergency accommodation; couch-surfing; or sharing a bed due to lack of adequate places to sleep/live.
- 2) Serious housing deprivation, a subset of inadequate housing, e.g. living in emergency housing, a hostel, a car etc.
- 3) Housing financial stress, i.e. parents or caregivers worry about paying for housing costs, often or all the time.
- 4) Families splitting up because they do not have a house with enough space for everyone.
- 5) Moving house frequently, i.e. moving house 2 or more times in the past 12 months.

For further details of housing deprivation indicators and the survey questions used, see the *Youth19 Housing Deprivation Brief* at www.youth19.ac.nz

Food insecurity was indicated by a "sometimes," "often" or "all the time" response to the question: "Do your parents, or the people who act as your parents, ever worry about not having enough money to buy food?"

Forgone healthcare was indicated by a "yes" response to the question: "In the last 12 months, has there been any time when you wanted or needed to see a doctor or nurse (or other healthcare worker) about your health, but you weren't able to?"

Healthcare discrimination was indicated by a "yes" response to the question: "Have you ever been treated unfairly (e.g. treated differently, kept waiting) by a health professional (e.g. doctor, nurse, dentist etc.) because of your ethnicity or ethnic group?"

Part of school was indicated by a "yes" response to the question: "Do you feel like you are part of your school, alternative education or course?"

Safe at school was indicated by a "yes always" or "yes most of the time" response to the question: "Do you feel safe in your school/course?"

Volunteering was indicated by a "yes" response to the question: "Do you give your time to help others in your school or community (e.g. as a peer supporter at school, help out on the marae or church, help coach a team or belong to a volunteer organisation)?"

Friend supports was indicated by a "yes" response to the question: "I have at least one friend who will stick up for me and who has 'got my back'."

Good wellbeing was indicated by a score of 13 or more on the WHO-5 Well-being Index. This is a widely used scale that was developed by the World Health Organization. It asks questions about feeling cheerful, calm and relaxed, active and vigorous, waking up feeling refreshed and life being full of interest. You can find out more about this and other mental health measures used in Youth19 in our *Hauora Hinengaro / Emotional and Mental Health* report at www.youth19.ac.nz.

Depressive symptoms were indicated by scoring over the clinical cut-off for significant symptoms of depression on the Reynolds Adolescent Depression Scale: Short Form (RADS-SF). This is an internationally validated scale that includes questions about experiences such as feeling lonely, worthless, sad and tired. Students who score over the cut-off on this measure may have depression, and their experiences are likely to be affecting their day-to-day home and school life.

Serious thoughts of suicide were indicated by a "yes" response to the question: "During the last 12 months have you seriously thought about killing yourself (attempting suicide)?"

More Information

This brief describes young people with disabilities. For more information about young people with 'disabling conditions' (including disabilities, long-term health conditions, chronic conditions, and chronic pain that affects their everyday activities) please see our report, *Negotiating Multiple Identities: Intersecting identities among Māori, Pacific, Rainbow and Disabled young people*, and associated briefs.²⁻⁵



These publications, along with a webinar about young people with disabilities and chronic conditions, are available at www.youth19.ac.nz



What about other reports, webinars and briefs about young people's wellbeing?

Youth19 includes many questions about things that affect young people's wellbeing. For example we have findings about youth mental health (and a webinar), housing deprivation, sexual health, and substance use. Papers and reports about other health issues and diverse groups of young people are in progress and will be available through www.youth19.ac.nz

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3. Clark, T.C., Sutcliffe, K., Greaves, L., Roy, R., DaRocha, M., & Fleming, T. (2021). *A Youth19 Brief: Rangatahi Māori with a disability or chronic condition*. The Youth19 Research Group, Victoria University of Wellington and the University of Auckland, New Zealand. This brief is based on the *Negotiating Multiple Identities* report.
4. Fleming, T., Sutcliffe, K., Greaves, L., Peiris-John, R., Roy, R., Fenaughty, J., & Clark, T.C. (2021). *A Youth19 Brief: Rainbow young people with a disability or chronic condition*. The Youth19 Research Group, Victoria University of Wellington and the University of Auckland, New Zealand. This brief is based on the *Negotiating Multiple Identities* report.
5. Tiatia-Seath, J., Fleming, T., Peiris-John, R., Roy, R., Chinn, V., & Clark, T.C. (2021). *A Youth19 Brief: Pacific young people with a disability or chronic condition*. The Youth19 Research Group, Victoria University of Wellington and the University of Auckland, New Zealand. This brief is based on the *Negotiating Multiple Identities* report.

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Find out more at www.youth19.ac.nz Contact us: youth19@auckland.ac.nz