

Asian Young People in New Zealand

A Ministry of Youth Development
Perspective

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Acknowledgments

- This presentation draws heavily on the recently published Report from the Youth 2000 Survey series: Youth 07: The Health and Wellbeing of Secondary School Students in New Zealand: Results for Chinese, Indian and other Asian Students”.
- Its authors are: Parackal, S. Ameratunga, S. Tin Tin, S. Wong, S. and Denny, S.
- The study was carried out by the Adolescent Health Research Group at the University of Auckland and is published by the University of Auckland.



Who is “Asian”?

- Youth 2000 Survey series uses the Stats NZ definition. Its “Asian” report describes students from diverse ethnicities:
 - Chinese (41%)
 - Indian (28%)
 - Korean (15%)
 - Japanese (7%)
 - Filipino (8%)
 - Cambodian (4%)
 - Other Asian (13%)



Limitations of “Asian” data

- It can disguise the differences that exist among a diverse group of young people
- Nonetheless, there is more common ground than we might expect



Asian youth strengths

- Culturally adept and adaptable
- Multi-lingual
- Very positive about school and education
- Healthy, with relatively low risk lifestyles
- Eat dinner regularly with their families
- Strong spiritual beliefs
- Nearly all have friends and have fun with them



Young Asians do better than non Asians on many measures . . .

- Half are **bilingual** and 19% speak three or more languages
- **Less likely to engage in risky** or antisocial behaviour e.g. drinking, smoking,
- They are **more positive about school**
- 68% report **eating meals with their families** compared with 51% of non Asians
- Indian students have the **most fun** with their families!
- Young Asians are **less likely to be overweight** than young non Asians



Some areas where non Asians do better

- On some measures of **family life**, non Asians were slightly more positive
- **Exercise**: non Asians are more likely to engage in recommended levels of physical activity
- **Safer sex**: non Asians are more likely to use contraception and condoms



What we know is important for young people's wellbeing

- Connection to family
- Engagement with school
- Having teachers who care
- Feeling safe
- Eating well and exercising
- Involvement in collective out-of-school activities



A healthy young person

- The four dimensions of health:
 - Emotional and mental health (*te taha hinengaro*)
 - Physical health (*te taha tinana*)
 - Cultural and spiritual health (*te taha wairua*)
 - Connection to family (*te taha whanau*)



A resilient young person

- Ken Ginsburg has identified the seven “Cs” that characterise resilient young people:
 - Competence
 - Confidence
 - Connection
 - Character
 - Contribution
 - Coping
 - Control
- Ginsburg, K. (2006). A Parent’s Guide to Building Resilience in Children and Teens . American Academy of Paediatrics



Areas for focus (1)

- **Time with parents:** most young people say they would like to spend more time with their parents
- **Parental involvement in school life:** finding ways to get more parents involved with school
- **Community connections:** creating more youth friendly places where young people can go for advice and support
- **Nutrition and exercise:** making it easier for young people to make better choices.



Areas for focus (2)

- **Mental health:** drawing attention to the relatively high prevalence (31%) of poor mental and emotional health among young Asian women
- **Sexual health:** fewer Asian students are sexually active than their non Asian counterparts, but encouraging those who are to regularly use condoms or contraception
- **Access to health care:** making health care more “youth friendly” and ensuring that Asian young people know how to access the system



Where responsibility for action lies

- Families
- Schools
- Communities
- Health service providers
- Government



Families

- Young people tell us that families are the most important thing in their lives.
- Families are the most important source of comfort, love and support for young people
- Young people tell us that they would like to spend more time with their mothers and fathers
- For families, this means finding a way to balance demands of the workplace with the needs of children and young people



Schools

- Schools have a vital part to play in developing resilient young people
- The evidence tell us that schools that produce resilient young people (and good academic outcomes) have
 - High expectations of all their students
 - Moderate classroom sizes
 - Teachers who treat students with warmth, positive regard and support



Communities

- The neighbourhood environment contributes to creating resilient young people, through
 - Involving young people in planning and shaping the community
 - Creating 'youth friendly' spaces and facilities
 - Encouraging neighbourliness, so young people can get to know and trust the people around them



Health services

- Health services can contribute by
 - reaching out to the young people in the community who may not be familiar with how NZ's health system works
 - ensuring that health care is youth-friendly, i.e. care that is empathetic, confidential, private, respectful and easily accessible



Government

- Ultimately, government agencies like ours - the Ministry of Youth Development – have the responsibility to ensure that the issues facing Asian young people are brought to the attention of politicians and our fellow policymakers.
- In this way, we can all be responsible for finding the solutions that will make this country a better place for all its citizens.



