

#HerStory in 2017 Report



A report that listens to the voices of young women, to understand the needs of young women in Aotearoa, New Zealand today

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Aotearoa New Zealand



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1. Executive Summary

Research background and purpose

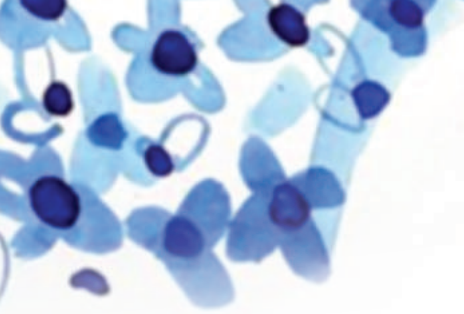
Our decision to conduct the #HerStory in 2017 research was driven by the need to understand the status of young women in Aotearoa New Zealand today by the Young Women's Christian Association of Aotearoa New Zealand (YWCA A/NZ). Under the Summer Research Scholarship Program, YWCA A/NZ partnered with Victoria University of Wellington to conduct this research over a four-month period from November 2016 to February 2017.

As many things have happened since 1995 when the last Status of Women report was produced by YWCA of Aotearoa New Zealand, we hope that the release of the #HerStory in 2017 (#HerStory 2017) report may serve as a much-needed space for young women to voice their lived experiences in Aotearoa today. We also hope that this report will help us and many other organisations in Aotearoa which work in the field of youth development and young women leadership, to evaluate the work that we have done, have further discussions on the important issues for young women today and to ultimately better meet the needs of young women in Aotearoa.

The findings from #HerStory 2017 report also responds to a gap in research in Aotearoa which often generalises the voices of young women between the age of 15 and 30. We believe that young women in different age groups face different challenges and opportunities. This report will present some of the nuances of the experiences of these young women based on the findings from our national online survey which was conducted in January 2017.

This report presents the survey findings in four main sections:

- 1** Overview of survey findings
- 2** Regions in focus: a highlight page that focuses on three regions with the highest number of respondents which are Wellington, Auckland and Canterbury
- 3** An analysis of the survey results based on the different age groups: 15-19, 20-25, and 26-30 years old
- 4** A conclusion which also includes recommendations on future initiatives for YWCA of Aotearoa New Zealand.



About the survey

Prior to conducting the online survey, we conducted a desk research which gathered a total of 100 programmes which included local, regional and national programmes for young women in Aotearoa. The aim of this desk research was to understand the different types of programmes that are currently available for young women across Aotearoa and to understand the needs of young women based on the information collected. Most of these programmes were discovered from networks of existing youth organizations, local council and community grants websites, and also via social media especially Facebook.

Of the 100 programs collected, our findings showed that 60% of the programs were mostly leadership and mentoring programs, followed by entrepreneurship/economic independence programs with 17%, safe space and LGBTQI related programs with 13% and sexuality and health with 10%. Most of these programs were also targeted for young women aged 15-25, with less than a quarter targeting women aged 25-30. However, due to the limitations of our approaches to the study, we understand that this did not necessarily reflect the status quo of all existing programs for young women in Aotearoa or explain the needs of young women of different age groups in Aotearoa today. The findings of this desk research therefore informed us to further our research on identifying the needs for young women in Aotearoa with an approach that engages directly with young women, hence the implementation of the national online survey.

The national online survey on identifying the needs of young women in Aotearoa New Zealand was conducted over a two-week period in January 2017. It was distributed to YWCA of Aotearoa New Zealand's network via social media. YWCA A/NZ refers to young women as women under the age of 30 and the core target group that we have focused on at strategic forums is young women between 15-30 years old. In accordance to this, we specifically targeted young people between the ages of 15-30 who identify as women and were living in Aotearoa New Zealand for this survey.

This survey gathered 435 completed responses from young women across Aotearoa (out of a total number of 732 responses; this represents a 59% completion rate). It is possible that the high enthusiasm towards this online survey was influenced by the current global political context that helped the women's movement to gain momentum following the U.S.A. presidential elections. This was evidenced by the Women's March on 21 January 2017, which also took place in Wellington and Auckland.

The online survey¹ consisted of 31 questions and was divided into five sections:

- 1** demographic profile of respondents!
- 2** challenges facing young women
- 3** opportunities for young women
- 4** activities specifically for young women
- 5** definitions and influences on young women leadership in Aotearoa New Zealand.

¹Please note that throughout this report the percentages in all tables, figures and text are rounded to zero decimal place therefore may not necessarily a total of 100%. Some of the questions were optional and required essay-style answers, and not all respondents answered these. The data presented for each question in this report are for those who responded.

Research findings

In general, the results from this survey provide valuable insights into the individual and collective challenges and opportunities facing young women in Aotearoa. Findings indicate differences based on age group in terms of knowledge of existing programmes available for young women in Aotearoa, the level of interest in the type of activities that are relevant to young women today; young women's understandings of what leadership really means to them, and the economic, social and cultural influences on the leadership development for young women in Aotearoa.

The findings of our survey of young women in Aotearoa revealed that:

For those between **15-19 years** old:

The biggest challenge based on their personal experiences is **body image and self-confidence**;

The opportunity that is perceived as available is **access to jobs**;

Access to health care is the opportunity most young women in this age group have accessed personally;

Young women listed three main activities currently available to them in their areas/regions: **leadership, sports/outdoor activities, and mentoring programmes**;

The three kinds of activities that they are most interested in are **leadership, body image/self-confidence and entrepreneurship/economic independence programmes**;

Being a good listener, empowering and motivator are the three most important qualities of leadership.

For those between **20-25 years** old:

The biggest perceived challenge is **body image and self-confidence**, however, based on their personal experiences it is both **body image and self-confidence** and also **cost of living**;

The opportunity that is perceived as available is **access to jobs**;

Young women identified **leadership, sexuality and safe space, sports/outdoor activities, and mentoring programmes** as activities currently available to them in their areas/regions;

The three kinds of new activities that are most interesting for those with prior experiences in such activities are **leadership, mentoring, self-knowledge and identity, and entrepreneurship/ economic independence programmes**;

Access to health care and getting support from family are the opportunities they have mostly had access to on a personal level;

The kinds of activities that are most interesting for those without prior knowledge of activities for young women are **body image and self-confidence, mentoring, leadership and financial literacy programmes**;

Being a good listener, empowering and motivator are the top three qualities of leadership for young women.

Conclusion and key recommendations

There are several key discussion points based on the survey findings:



- How can programmes for young women stay relevant in Aotearoa today in an age where we are constantly bombarded with images and ideas of the 'perfect body' on the media, particularly on social media?
- Cost of living was ranked highly as a main challenge faced by young women, particularly for those aged 20-30.
- How can we develop programmes that help young women gain entrepreneurial skills (part-time work from home, small online ventures, etc) or any other skills that might support them to ease their financial difficulties and at the same time have a better work-life/study-life balance?
- How do we further campaign for equal pay and opportunities especially for young women through our programmes?

For those between **26-30 years** old:

The biggest perceived challenge and also the challenge personally experienced is **cost of living**;

The opportunity that is perceived as available is **access to jobs**;

young women in this age group noted that not **only access to jobs but getting support from family, and access to health care** are the opportunities they have had access to on a personal level;

young women identified three kinds of activities currently available to them in their areas/ regions: **leadership, sports/outdoor activities, and mentoring programmes**;

Those with prior experiences of activities for young women are most interested in new activities that involve **mentoring, leadership, sport/outdoor, arts and music programmes**;

Those without prior knowledge of activities for young women are most interested in activities that involve **entrepreneurship/economic independence, leadership and mentoring programmes**;

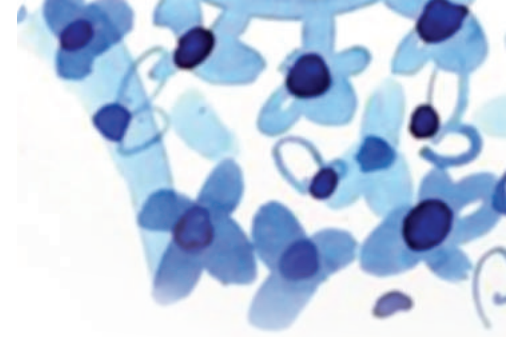
Empowering, motivator and being a good listener are the top three qualities of leadership for young women.

- How do we collaborate with other institutions to better deal with issues of mental health for young women, and how can we also better address the urgency of this matter through our body-image/self-confidence and leadership programmes?
- How do we address issues of diversity in future programmes and how can we maintain awareness that we are not perpetuating the structural barriers (stereo-types, subtle racism, exclusive societal norms, oppressive but latent hierarchical structures) to young women's leadership? How can we also highlight and learn from the opportunities of one's cultural background to the development of leadership?
- How do we empower, motivate, and listen to young women while also fostering those attributes in them?
- How do we, through our leadership and mentoring programmes, connect inspiring role models who embody these important qualities with young women today? What are the ways we could explore the different approaches to connecting role models?

This report concludes with several recommendations for YWCA of Aotearoa New Zealand:

- Conduct a focus group discussion (FGD) about the relevance of the research findings to current and past programmes of YWCA of A/NZ;
- Evaluate current programmes in relation to the findings of this research;
- Reflect on the contemporary issues for young women today based on this survey and also other current research and decide where YWCA of A/NZ as an organisations stands on these critical issues;
- Explore different approaches to developing and implementing leadership, mentoring or health programmes for different age groups, which are also inclusive of other cultural approaches to health;
- Conduct a more in depth, contextual, and participatory research programme which will investigate the lived experiences of young women and their challenges, for example using a participatory approach such as Photovoice. This research has highlighted the limitations of our understanding on the needs of young women especially as findings showed that the lived experiences of young women do not necessarily mirror the perceived challenges or opportunities. Any ongoing participatory research must also ensure its engagement with a diverse group of young women that is representative of the New Zealand society;
- Consider the development of a new communications plan which could involve, among other things; the refurbishment of the YWCA A/NZ website; a new social media strategy which reflects the stories from the field; uses contemporary platforms which have high levels of engagement of young women; the production of videos of inspiring young women from different areas across Aotearoa with regards to the broader branding story/new campaign; and the flexibility to move 'with the times';
- Formulate a unified and powerful mission statement that encompasses the core values of the YWCA A/NZ, and also reflects the work that is being done by all member associations.





2. Overview of survey results

This section presents an overview of the demographic profile of respondents. It also includes survey results regarding the challenges, opportunities, activities for young women; leadership definitions; and development for young women in Aotearoa. This section combines all age groups between 15-30 years old in all regions that were reached by this survey.

2.1 Profile of respondents

Age breakdown

Almost half (46%) of respondents were between the age of 15-19 years old. 20-25 year olds were the second highest respondents (37%), with significantly fewer (18%) 26-30 years old.

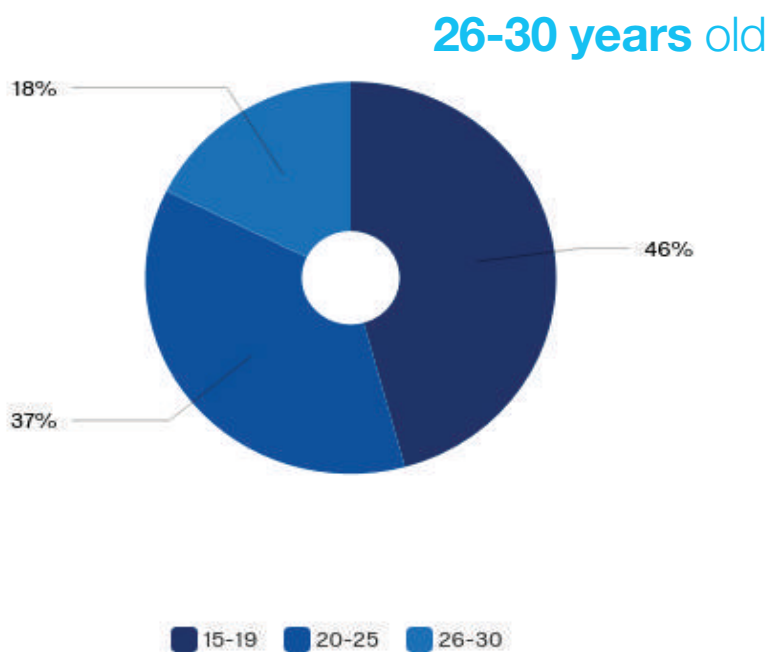


Figure 1.

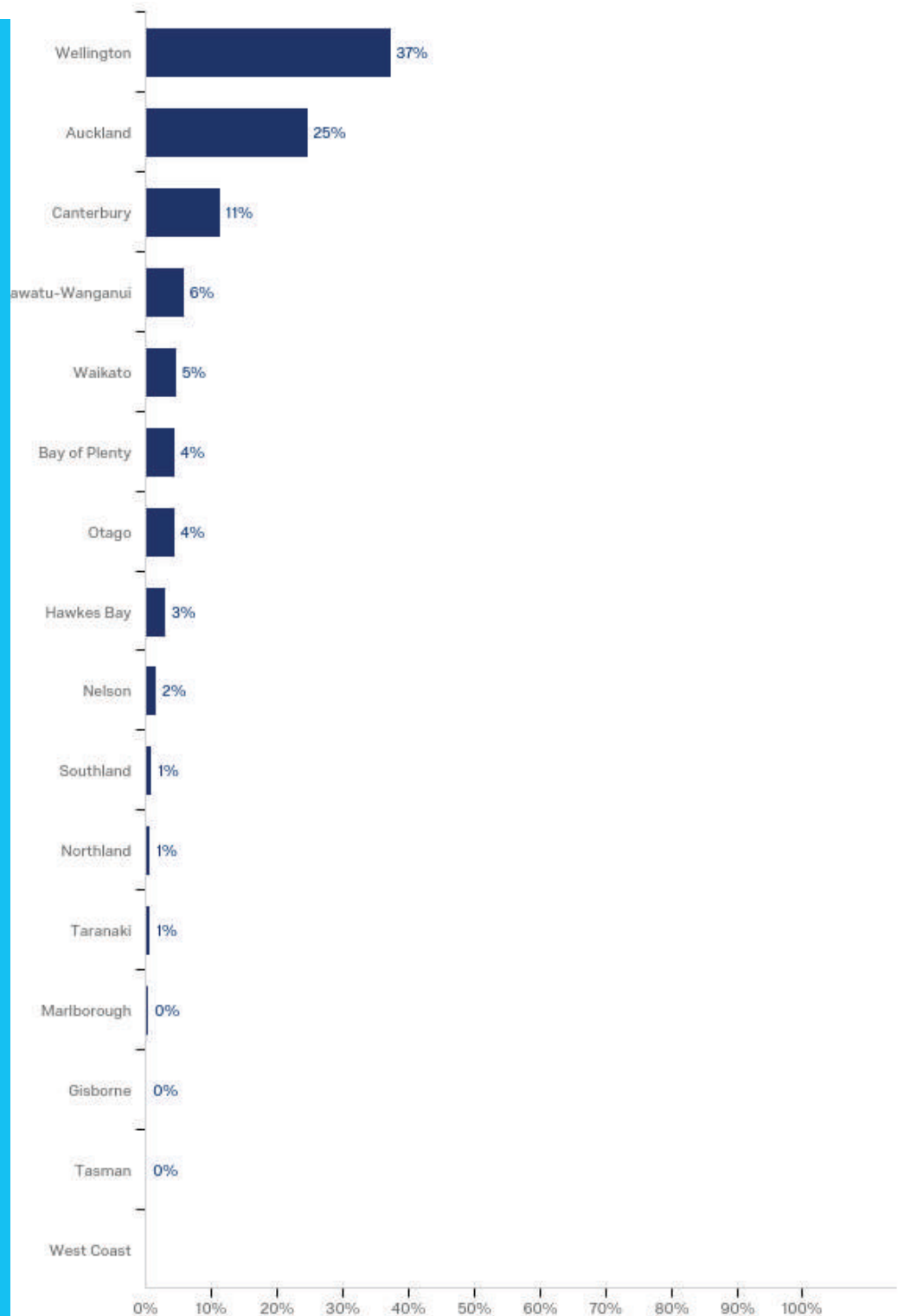
Age breakdown of all respondents

Region distribution

A total of 162 respondents (37%) were from Wellington, followed by Auckland with 107 respondents (25%) and 49 respondents (11%) from the Canterbury region. A full breakdown of the region distribution is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2.

Percentage of respondents by region



Ethnic background

The majority of the respondents of this survey (63%) described their ethnic background as New Zealand European/Pākehā, while 9% identified as British, another 9% as Other, and 8% as Māori. Of the respondents who selected Other, many described their ethnic background as Chinese, Vietnamese, Filipino, Canadian, Middle Eastern, Dutch, South African, and also “New Zealander”. It is important to note that in this particular question, respondents were allowed to select more than one option to best describe their ethnic background.

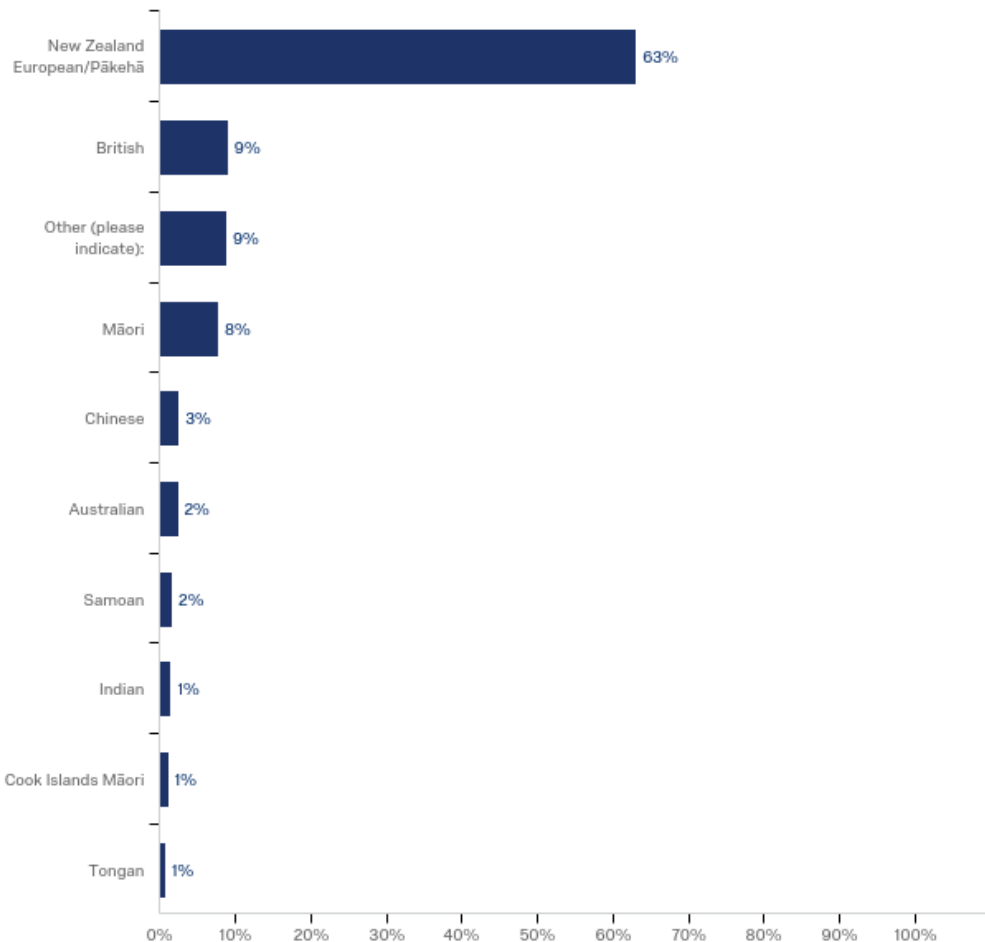


Figure 3.

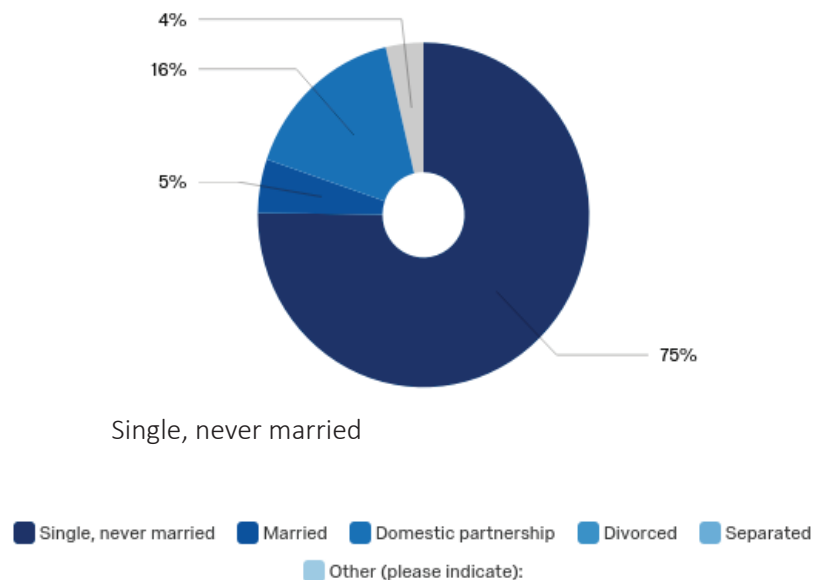
Percentage of respondents by ethnic background

Figure 4.

Marital status of respondents

Marital Status

The survey results also showed that the marital status of the majority of young women between the age of 15-30 (75%) was single, never married. While a total of 70 respondents noted that they were in a domestic partnership, 22 respondents were married and 10 respondents selected other to indicate that they were in relationship or engaged but were currently not living together with their partner.



Highest degree or level of schooling completed

High school NCEA Level 3 (26%), is the level of education with the most respondents in this survey. This is perhaps to be expected, given that 46% of respondents were in the 15-19 year age bracket. Other levels of education given were:



None of the survey respondents indicated that they had a trade/technical/vocational training or a Doctorate degree.

Profession

When asked about their current profession, almost half of the respondents answered that they were studying full-time and 258 respondents (59%) answered that they were both currently studying and working at the same time. Nearly a quarter answered part-time employment, 17% full-time employment, 5% studying part-time and 5% unemployed. The remaining 7% of the respondents were either part-time self-employed, full-time self-employed, unable to work, caregivers, or in other work situations such as seeking work, in a transition phase, or traveling.

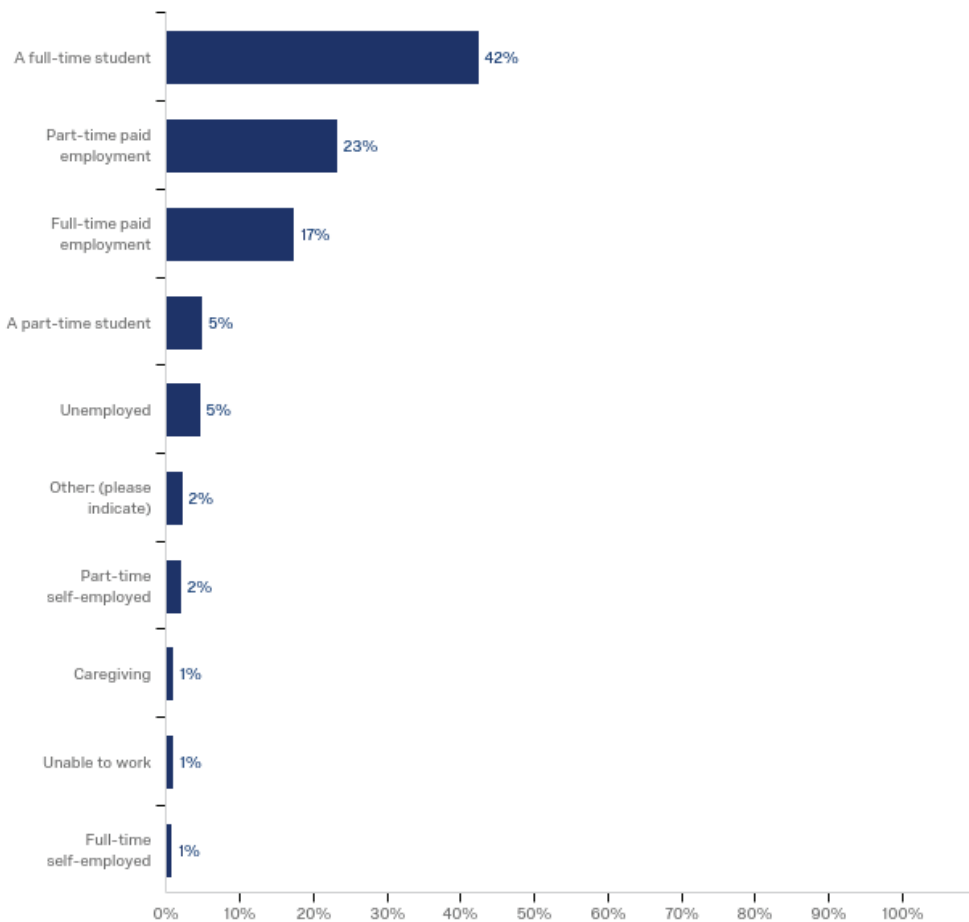


Figure 5.

Percentage of profession of respondents

Activities breakdown per week

Respondents were also asked how many hours they spend on certain activities. Although this question was optional, almost all of the respondents (97%) indicated how many hours they spent exercising, followed by socializing (95%), working (95%) and relaxing (94%). However, only 89% of the total respondents indicated how much time they spent studying. The average time spent per week is illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Average time spent on activities per week

Studying	Working	Socializing	Exercising	Relaxing
16 hours	18 hours	10 hours	6 hours	16 hours

Knowledge of the average time spent per week by young women on different activities is valuable when compared with the time that young women are willing to invest in participating in activities for young women, which averages 4-6 hours per week.

2.2 Challenges for young women in Aotearoa New Zealand today

In this question, respondents were asked to rank the challenges that they perceive young women in Aotearoa New Zealand are facing today. Table 2 below presents five challenges that respondents ranked as the highest challenge young women in Aotearoa New Zealand generally face.

Table 2. The top five perceived challenges for young women in Aotearoa New Zealand today

Rank	Perceived challenge for young women	Percentage of respondents	Number of responses
1	Body image and self-confidence	30%	129
2	Cost of living	18%	78
3	Sexual harassments and/or bullying	13%	58
4	Getting a job	9%	40
5	Equal pay and opportunities	9%	37

Challenges personally experienced by young women in Aotearoa New Zealand

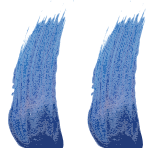
While the previous question focused on how respondents ranked perceived challenges faced by young women in Aotearoa, this question asked young women about challenges that they had personally experienced themselves. Like the perceived challenge, a total of 325 respondents (12%) selected body image and self-confidence as the biggest challenge they have personally experienced. Personal experiences then mostly differed from perceived challenges, as can be seen in Table 3 below, with respondents identifying maintaining a healthy lifestyle (10%), maintaining work-life/study-life balance (9%), cost of living (9%), and cost of education (8%) as issues they have faced.

Table 3. The top five challenges personally experienced by young women in Aotearoa New Zealand

No.	Challenge personally experienced by young women	Percentage of choice	Number of responses
1	Body image and self-confidence	12%	325
2	Maintaining a healthy lifestyle	10%	265
3	Maintaining work-life/study-life balance	9%	260
4	Cost of living	9%	254
5	Cost of education	8%	209

Although only 9% identified work-life balance as an issue they had experienced, some of the comments we received highlight the issues young women face in the workplace.

One respondent wrote:



“I am doing my PhD in the science industry which is traditionally at the top level in NZ very male dominated despite the fact more women are currently studying the sciences. I find the males to be unconsciously biasing decisions when it comes to choosing a male verse a female. I also find that they expect women to be more like men if we want to be given the same respect as men, but that completely disregards the purpose of hiring both males and females to maintain a diverse work environment.”

Another commented that:

“Work/life balance is a constant one for me, and I also freak out that I’ve spent more time or thought on who I am in terms of career than who I am as a human being.”

This comment illustrates the interconnectedness of all top 5 challenges:

“I find the cost of living difficult and stressful on the one wage from my partner. It appears that what is considered a healthy amount of wage in NZ doesn’t even cover the basic cost of living. There I struggle maintaining a healthy balanced diet for me and the children because we can only afford a small amount on food and although we only ever buy vegetables, fruit and meat by the end of each week, we are struggling to find things to feed our children. These stresses affect how I feel about myself as a mother and partner and projects onto my body image and failures.”



The difference between how young women ranked perceived challenges and the challenges they have personally experienced illustrates an interesting relationship between the individual and wider society.

It is important to highlight this finding in order to acknowledge how the 'lived challenges' of young women are not necessarily the same as the perceived challenges for young women in Aotearoa, perceptions that can be held by friends and family and perpetuated through various forms of media.

This finding, and the comments provided above, show that it is important to conduct further qualitative research using a participatory approach to understand the needs of young women across Aotearoa, to complement quantitative data such as online surveys.



2.3 Opportunities available to young women in Aotearoa New Zealand today

Similar to the previous question on perceived challenges, in this question, respondents were also asked to rank the opportunities that they perceive as being available to young women in Aotearoa New Zealand today. Almost a quarter of the respondents (23%) perceived young women have access to jobs. The opportunity to participate in volunteer/community work was ranked second and to participate in social movements/campaign third. This is then followed by getting support from family and gaining scholarships (Table 4).

Table 4. The top five perceived opportunities for young women in Aotearoa New Zealand today

Rank	Perceived opportunity for young women in Aotearoa New Zealand	Percentage of respondents per rank	Number of responses
1	Access to jobs	23%	102
2	Participating in volunteer/community work	17%	72
3	Participating in social movements/campaign	11%	47
4	Joining women's support groups	9%	40
5	Getting support from family	9%	37

Opportunities personally experienced by young women in Aotearoa New Zealand today

Respondents were asked: "What opportunities from the above have been available *to you*?" 325 respondents selected access to healthcare as the top opportunity available to them, and getting support from family came second with 321 respondents (11%). The breakdown of five top opportunities personally experienced by young women in Aotearoa is illustrated in Table 5 below. Please note that respondents were allowed to select all that applied for this question.

Table 5. The top five opportunities personally experienced by young women in Aotearoa New Zealand

No.	Opportunities personally experienced by young women	Percentage of choice	Number of responses
1	Access to healthcare	11%	325
2	Getting support from family	11%	321
3	Participating in volunteer/community work	10%	289
4	Access to jobs	9%	273
5	Access to sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and clinics (knowing about consent, abortion, etc)	7%	211