Va’aifetu

**Data, Literature, Practice Environment**

**

**Part I**

The young artists who gifted the artwork overleaf were residents at the Tokomaru unit of Te Au Rere a te Tonga, Oranga Tamariki facility.

**Artwork**

When young people at the Tokomaru unit were told that Va’aifetu was developed to better meet the needs of Pacific children, young people and their families, a robust discussion took place around how this can happen when there are so many cultures that make up the Pacific. The young people came to an agreement that any symbol created would have to be one that has significance across many Pacific nations. Members of the Te Au Rere a te Tonga Pacific Island Network helped the young people brainstorm ideas and talked about concepts that were important to Pacific peoples. The young people selected the themes of honour, responsibility, patience, faith, and the preservation of the environment. They then chose the symbol of the turtle to represent these themes.

“The turtle is a symbol of leadership, it tells me to be patient, be respectful and stay connected to my family” (Artist)

The turtle holds a special place in many Pacific cultures and can be found throughout the Pacific. It represents honour, strength, responsibility and connection. The artists believed that this best represents what Va’aifetu is aiming to achieve.

“I like the colours, they make me feel happy and make me think about my little sister.” (Artist)

In the middle of the turtle’s shell is a palm tree (birds-eye view). This represents the importance of preserving the natural environment because it is a life source for an island. Lastly there are two spirals surrounding the turtle, one which consists of fish like symbols. The fish behind the turtle represent the many generations that preceded us. The fish ahead of the turtle represents the generations that are still to come. This serves as a reminder to preserve what we have and always honour and respect the traditions of our ancestors. The second spiral represents God’s influence as an all-encompassing power. It reminds us that God was with our ancestors in the beginning, is with us now, and will be with our children and grandchildren when we pass.

The young people believed that with honour, leadership, patience, and the guidance of those who have passed, preservation for those to come, and the support of God, great outcomes can be achieved.

*“I’m going to work hard no matter how tough the conditions” (Artist)*

**

**Foreword**

Bula Vinaka, Fakaalofa lahi atu, Fakatalafa atu, Halo ola keta, Kia orana, Malo e lelei, Malo ni, Mauri, Namaste, Talofa lava, Warm greetings.

I am very pleased to introduce Va’aifetu – an important resource to guide our work with Pacific children and their families.

Va’aifetu has been developed in response to calls from Pacific communities for us to do better for Pacific children and families that come to the notice of our service. In setting us this challenge, community leaders, elders, Pacific academics, and professionals in the non-government sector walked alongside our Pacific practitioners to ensure this package of knowledge represented important Pacific values, realities and worldviews in a meaningful way.

Pacific children in our care gifted art for *Va’aifetu*. You’ll see this spread throughout the document in a way that ensures the voices of our children are visible. These pieces tell of values, relationships and connections that our children identify with and consider most important. They also signal the spiritual and emotional resilience that children hold onto through the challenges they face.

Oranga Tamariki has been gifted expertise that is brought together in *Va’aifetu* and merges Pacific cultural values which serve to protect and support children, families and communities, validate uniqueness, protect dignity, family unity, responsibility, and inspire hope.

This will assist us in our work with others to better understand the lives of our children, walk beside them and their families as they pursue their hopes and aspirations whilst working to connect them with people who will treasure them and keep them safely cared for.

*Va’aifetu* provides cultural knowledge and insight to help us work more effectively with Pacific children and youth who commit offences, to put things right for those that have been harmed and to assist young people to make positive life choices, free from offending.

*Va’aifetu* is a gift and Oranga Tamariki will treasure this knowledge. We will use it with respect and professionalism to pursue, protect and support our most valuable children, young people and their families.



Chief Social Worker/Director of Professional Practice

Oranga Tamariki, Ministry for Children

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# Introduction

Va’aifetu is a practice tool that has been developed to provide a Pacific lens to the application of duties and powers in accordance with the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 (Act 1989), Vulnerable Children Act 2014 (VCA 2014), Adoption Act 1955, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC). Va’aifetu supports the work of Oranga Tamariki–Ministry for Children (Oranga Tamariki) to significantly improve outcomes for vulnerable children and young people. This second edition of Va’aifetu incorporates learning from the pilot and integration into practice prior to and since the establishment of Oranga Tamariki (the Ministry).

Va’aifetu has been specifically developed in service of Pacific cultural groups that are non-indigenous to Aotearoa (see Table 3). Māori, as the indigenous people of Aotearoa, are not included here as there are existing practice frameworks that more appropriately serve the need of their tamariki, rangatahi (children and young people) and whānau (family), in addition to specific protections, status and rights under Te Tiriti o Waitangi 1840[[1]](#footnote-1).

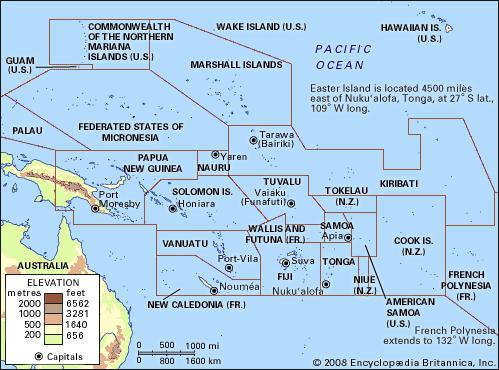
Va’aifetu is a Samoan metaphorical term that is derived from the words ‘*va’ai*’ which means to take care of, look, see, observe, consider; and ‘*fetu*’ which means star or stars. V*a’ai* is the role of families, communities, practitioners and organisations. Va’aifetu is about the guardianship of people - their light, intelligence, wisdom, aspirations, strengths and potential. The stars are the children, families, and practitioners.

The name Va’aifetu was inspired by the history of Pacific ancestors who explored and successfully navigated the Pacific Ocean and settled its islands. This ocean covers about a third of the globe. Archaeological evidence shows that these navigators travelled the Pacific Ocean by interpreting the positions of stars/*fetu*, the sun, the movement of the sea, weather patterns, and wildlife to guide them through long journeys[[2]](#footnote-2). Various theories have been proposed to what drove the migration of Pacific peoples across the seas; from trade, search for new land, marriage, exploration, overcrowding, exile, overpopulation, to accidental landings[[3]](#footnote-3). Most of the Pacific had already been settled for hundreds of years by the time European explorers sailed into the Pacific Ocean in the 16th century.

The metaphorical significance of stars as guides is transferred in Va’aifetu to symbolise the importance of children, families and those who work alongside them in times of great difficulty and challenge. The surrounding elements are often out of the control of the stars but are meaningless without them. The navigator’s practice of watching the stars to stay the course and not get lost encapsulates the foundational belief of Va’aifetu that practice must be guided by the people who are the experts in their experiences, aspirations, and most importantly the voice of our children.

The Pacific diaspora has led to significant populations in urban centres of Aotearoa, Australia, California and Hawaii[[4]](#footnote-4). Polynesians are the most mobile, followed by Micronesians, then Melanesians. Aotearoa now holds the largest Polynesian population in the world, excluding tangata whenua[[5]](#footnote-5) who are also of the Polynesian family.

The original homelands of Ngā Tangata o te Moana Nui a Kiwa, or Pacific peoples of Oceania (excluding Māori and indigenous peoples of Australia) is shown below[[6]](#footnote-6).

[](https://www.google.co.nz/url?sa=i&source=imgres&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CAgQjRxqFQoTCOjVh8_pnckCFWYhpgodi2INZg&url=http://www.britannica.com/place/Pacific-Islands&psig=AFQjCNGLfSNdnb5WHsjq3C1heQvoRrKGVQ&ust=1448068486147608)

The term Pacific peoples is often used instead of Pacific people to describe the collective of unique cultures, languages, histories, aspirations, governance structures and sovereign status; who share the Pacific and the ocean as their home. Polynesia includes the Cooks Islands, Easter Island (Rapa Nui), Hawai’i, Niue, Samoa, Tonga, Tokelau, Tuvalu, Wallis and Futuna, American Samoa, and French Polynesia (Tahiti and the other Society Islands). Micronesia includes Palau, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, and Kiribati. Melanesia includes Fiji, Papua New Guinea, West Papua, Vanuatu, New Caledonia and the Solomon Islands.

There are over 1000 Pacific languages in the Pacific[[7]](#footnote-7). The nations and territories vary in population size from about 1,200 (Tokelau) to 7.7 million (Papua New Guinea)[[8]](#footnote-8). European colonisation resulted in the formation of political entities, states and geographical boundaries among groups that were previously autonomous. Accordingly, one must be aware of diversity as well as commonalities. The return of sovereignty from colonial rule in the region began with Samoa in 1962, followed later by others; but large parts remain ruled by colonial powers or in association arrangements with them[[9]](#footnote-9).

Va’aifetu does not attempt to provide a comprehensive review of the vast diversity presented by the cultures of Oceania, including the diaspora. Instead, it illustrates some of the differences and similarities between the larger groups in Aotearoa, and for the purposes of statutory social work intervention.

|  |
| --- |
| Practice Policy |

## Voice of the Child

In all actions by practitioners, the *paramount*interestof the child is the primary consideration in accordance with sections 6, 11 and 13 of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 (Act 1989), Article 3 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC), and the Oranga Tamariki (National Care Standards and Related Matters) Regulations 2018.

Accordingly:

* Every Pacific child must be engaged in a manner, language, context, and timeframe that will enable her or him to engage meaningfully in return.
* The Pacific child’s dignity will be respected at all times, and their best interest upheld.
* Caregivers, family and collectives of significance to and for the Pacific child, will be engaged with respect and in shared purpose to achieve the child’s best interest.

## Working Together

We know that when children come to the notice of the state, their needs and situations are often complex, and require the combined commitment of different parties to help them heal, build resilience, take opportunities, and have improved quality of life.

The Vulnerable Children Act 2014 (VCA 2014) requires the Ministries of Education, Health, Justice, Social Development and Police to work collectively to achieve the Government’s priorities for vulnerable children. The domino expectations upon services contracted and funded by the state create opportunities for community stakeholders to take part in the ownership and development of solutions for children. The spirit of the VCA 2014 resonates with Pacific peoples’ beliefs and traditions about collective responsibility for ensuring and securing the best interests of their children.

## Culturally Responsive Practice

Every person is born with an identity, spirituality, dignity and significance - within all, culture is a core element. Culture is a core consideration in the pursuit of children’s wellbeing and outcomes under New Zealand law:

* Section 5(g) of the Act 1989 states that decisions affecting a child should take into consideration, without limitation, the child's age, identity, cultural connections, education, and health.
* Section 6 of the VCA 2014 specifies child well-being to be inclusive of their physical, emotional, education, cultural, social and economic state. Va’aifetuoffers a tool for interagency partners to develop standards of social work practice with Pacific children and families.

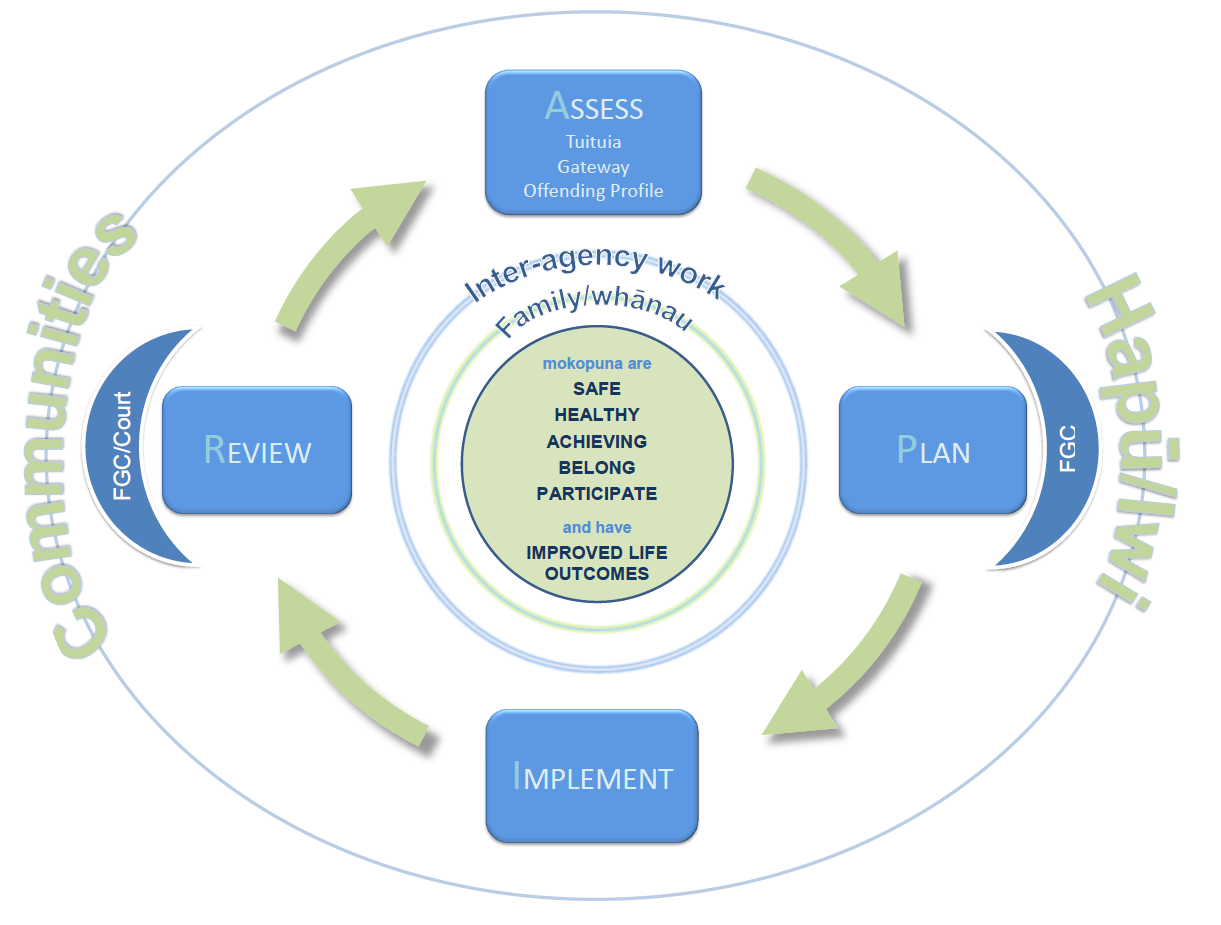
Va’aifetu will support cultural responsiveness in the application of duties and powers in accordance with the Act 1989, VCA 2014 and the Adoption Act 1955.

Va’aifetu will help grow practitioners understanding of Pacific cultures, and develop cultural competency to meet professional registration and accreditation requirements.

## Practice Policy

* Va’aifetu mustbe used when working with Pacific families alongside existing practice tools as part of best practice.
* The application of Va’aifetu must be reflected in case records.
* Application is to be weaved through the Assess-Plan-Implement-Review (APIR) cycle.

**A – Assess, P – Plan, I – Implement and R – Review**

****

Associated with core outcomes of safe, healthy, achieving, belong, participate and improved life outcomes, are priority measures for Pacific children and young people.

# Purpose of Va’aifetu

Va’aifetu consists of two bodies of work. Part 1 (Data, Literature, Practice Environment) is a reference source. This provides core issues and trends in relation to Pacific children in Aotearoa. Part 2 (Principles, Cultural Frameworks, Practice Guidance) is a practical guide on how to integrate culture into practice in pursuit of best outcomes for children. Readers are advised to review the two complementary parts of Va’aifetu to guide application.

The information is based on Ministry data, research, practitioners’ anecdotal experiences and other sources to ensure context and cultural relevance. The practitioner input was essential to ensuring Va’aifeturelevance to the children concerned, cultural communities of interest, policy environment, and practice realities.

*Primary Audience:*

* Social workers, youth workers, co-ordinators, support workers.
* Supervisors, team leaders, clinical leaders, administration support.
* Practice advisors, practice leaders, training advisors.

*Secondary Audience:*

* Non social work staff roles that have face to face contact with Pacific children, young people and families; e.g. receptionists, transporters, access supervisors.
* All others whose work is likely to have impact on social work practice with Pacific children and families; e.g. managers, policy, researchers, human resources.

*Commonly used terms:*

* *Aotearoa* is used interchangeably with ‘New Zealand’ to refer to the country.
* *Child, children* – refer to children under 18 years-of-age unless otherwise specified. In the Pacific world, anyone in this age group is a child.
* *Family* - refers to the wide network of kin and significant others, inclusive of the nuclear family of the child. The word collective is also used to refer to the same.
* *NZ-born* – a person born in New Zealand/Aotearoa.
* *Pacific* – a person or group that identify with a Pacific ethnicity. The term Pacific is used in this document as opposed to ‘Pasifika’, ‘Pacifica’, ‘Pasefika’ and other terms which are linguistically specific, but describe the same collective of peoples. There is an emphasis in Va’aifetu on Polynesian cultures due to population size in Aotearoa (refer to Table 3) including the Fijian culture.[[10]](#footnote-10)A focus on Melanesian (including Indigenous Australians) and Micronesian populations will be expanded in future publications as the need arises.
* *Practitioners –* primarily refers to social work practitioners, but can be applied to other roles who work directly with children and families.
* *State custody* – means in the formal custody of the Chief Executive of Oranga Tamariki–Ministry for Children.
* *Youth, young people* - refer specifically to the 14–16 year group as defined in the Act 1989 (upper age to lift to under 18 years in 2019).

# Pacific Population in Aotearoa

## Children and Young People

In 2013, Pacific people had the highest proportion of children aged 0–14 years (35.7%) among all ethnic groups, in comparison to 20.6% for Asian, 19.6% for European, 33.8% for Māori, and 25.5% for Middle Eastern/Latin American/African (MELAA)[[11]](#footnote-11).

While Pacific people made up 7.4% (295,941 people) of the total population in 2013, Pacific children made up 11.7% of the 0-19 years age group[[12]](#footnote-12). This is important when considering the prevalence of rates of abuse, youth offending, and children in state custody.

**Table 1: Children 0-19 years by Ethnicity and Age, Census 2013**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ethnicity** | **0-4 years** | **5-9 years** | **10-14 years** | **15-19 years** | **All 0-19 years** |
| **ALL Ethnicities** | 292,041 | 286,758 | 286,830 | 295,758 | 1,161,837 |
| **Pacific** | 37,851 | 34,536 | 33,129 | 30,963 | 136,479 |
| **European** | 196,311 | 194,469 | 192,372 | 192,855 | 776,007 |
| **Māori** | 71,070 | 67,146 | 64,098 | 58,620 | 260,934 |
| **Asian** | 35,898 | 30,834 | 30,468 | 37,020 | 134,220 |
| **MELAA** | 4,659 | 3,861 | 3,462 | 3,747 | 15,729 |
| **Other NZ** | 4,392 | 4,623 | 3,705 | 2,802 | 15,522 |
| **Pacific % of Total by Age group** | 13.0% | 12.0% | 11.6% | 10.5% | 11.7% |

Ethnic diversity within Aotearoa is illustrated by the ethnicity of children. Almost half of Pacific children are of mixed ethnic heritage, changing perceptions of cultural identity[[13]](#footnote-13).

**Table 2: Pacific Ethnicity of Children 0-19 years, Census 2013**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ethnicity** | **0-4 years** | **5-9 years** | **10-14 years** | **15-19 years** |
| **Sole Pacific** | 18,705 (51%) | 18,408 | 9,879 | 9,636 (47%) |
| **Pacific/European** | 6,249 (17%) | 5,652 | 4,923 | 4,467 (22%) |
| **Pacific/Māori** | 4,854 (13%) | 4,134 | 3,648 | 2,955 (14%) |
| **Pacific/Asian** | 657 (2%) | 552 | 471 | 555 (3%) |
| **Pacific/MELAA** | 96 (<1%) | 66 | 42 | 24 (<1%) |
| **Pacific/Other NZ** | 48 (<1%) | 60 | 42 | 36 (<1%) |
| **Pacific/European/Māori** | 6,084 (17%) | 4,764 | 3,909 | 2,910 (14%) |

## General Pacific Population

Most Pacific people in Aotearoa come from the Polynesian group, followed by Melanesian and Micronesians.

**Table 3: Pacific Population by Island Nation Heritage, Census 2013**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Pacific** | **Usual Resident Population, Census 2013** |
| **Samoan** | 144,138 |
| **Cook Islands Māori (CIM) not further defined** | 61,077 |
| **Tongan** | 60,336 |
| **Niuean** | 23,883 |
| **Tokelauan** | 7,173 |
| **Fijian[[14]](#footnote-14)** | 14,445 |
| (52,755 Born in Fiji) |
| **Tuvalu** | 3,537 |
| **Kiribati** | 2,115 |
| **Tahitian** | 1,407 |
| **Rest of the Pacific Group[[15]](#footnote-15)** | 5,889 |

The Pacific population continues to grow, increasing from 6.9% (265,974) in 2006 to 7.4% (295,941) in 2013[[16]](#footnote-16).

Overall, around 37% (109,800) were born overseas, although this varies among groups (Census 2013). There are now more Cook Islanders, Niueans and Tokelauans in Aotearoa than in those nations (see Va’aifetu Part 2 for specific cultural profiles). This is an important consideration due to the influence of cultural, political, social and economic context on peoples’ values, beliefs, identity, worldviews, and behaviour. These factors will be further discussed in this document and in Va’aifetu Part 2.

The Pacific median age in 2013 was 22 years compared to 38 years for the general population. Around half (46.1%) were under 20 years old compared to 27.4% for the general population.

Pacific people are concentrated in the North Island (92.9%) with only 7.1% in the South Island. Large concentrations are in Auckland 65.9% (194,958), Wellington 12.2% (36,105), Waikato 5.0% (14,700), and Canterbury 4.3% (12,723)**[[17]](#footnote-17)**. Most island groups are concentrated in Auckland, aside from the Tokelauans who are more populous in the Wellington region. These patterns have implications for social services and workforce development.

# Historical Trends for Pacific Children

This section provides a commentary on historical trends concerning Pacific children and young people that come to the notice of Oranga Tamariki.

## Ethnicity and Identity

The analysis of ethnicity data is problematic. The following Oranga Tamariki figures are based on the ‘primary’ ethnicity entered by staff into a child’s records in CYRAS, the casework recording database. Staff discretion is important here. It is highly common for a Pacific child to be of two different ethnicities, but he or she may not have Pacific recorded as the ‘primary’ ethnicity. A Tongan/Māori child may well be captured in the Māori statistics if that is the primary ethnicity selected; similarly a Samoan/Pākehā[[18]](#footnote-18) child may be counted as Pākehā. This has implications for demographic profiling and may under represent the number of Pacific children engaged with Oranga Tamariki, including those in the custody of the Chief Executive of Oranga Tamariki–Ministry for Children (care of the state).

Additionally, the limited number of Pacific ethnicities in CYRAS focusses on bigger populations so there is no category for I-Kiribati for example, who may be categorised under ‘Other Pacific’ or ‘Pacific Not Defined’ (nfd) if the social worker is unclear. A Fijian-Indian child may be recorded as Fijian or Indian according to the social workers understanding of the child. There is also no provision in CYRAS for island-specific identities such as for Cook Islanders such as Rarotonga or Penrhyn, where the importance of that aspect of identity is similar to iwi[[19]](#footnote-19) for Māori. These sub-categories indicate genealogy, spiritual and cultural connections that are important to case work planning. A strong understanding of the link between identity and outcomes will help ensure that such information is collected and purposely utilised.

## Further Action Required

A report of concern that is considered to meet the criteria for Oranga Tamariki intervention is referred to as a ‘FAR’ – Further Action Required. The national trend for FARs concerning Pacific children from F2011 to F2014[[20]](#footnote-20) is shown below.

**Table 4: Pacific People, Further Action Response F2009 to F2014, by Primary Ethnicity[[21]](#footnote-21)**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Primary Ethnicity** | **F2011** | **F2012** | **F2013** | **F2014** |
| Samoa | 2,748 | 2,613 | 2,835 | 2,341 |
| Cook Island Māori | 1,311 | 1,133 | 1,375 | 1,150 |
| Tonga | 1,381 | 1,299 | 1,396 | 1,142 |
| Niue | 233 | 275 | 314 | 221 |
| Fiji | 220 | 223 | 273 | 199 |
| Other Pacific Is Groups | 157 | 224 | 179 | 102 |
| Tokelau | 127 | 142 | 134 | 99 |
| Pacific People (not further defined) | 446 | 526 | 496 | 379 |
| **Pacific People FAR Total** | 6,623 | 6,435 | 7,002 | 5,633 |
| **% of FARs concerning Pacific children and young people** | 12% | 11% | 11% | 10% |

The dramatic drop in FARs in F2014 compared to the previous years is positive, but the reasons for it are not known.

Other analysis of trends between F2011 and F2013 show:

* In F2013, 75% of FARs concerning Pacific children and young people were in the Auckland region.
* At 30 June 2013, around 26% of FARs for the whole Auckland region and 13.5% for greater Wellington were for Pacific children and young people.

## Substantiated Abuse

**Table 5: Number of Distinct Pacific Children and Young People with a Substantiated Abuse Finding from F2011 to F2014[[22]](#footnote-22)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **FINDING TYPE** | **ETHNICITY** | **F2011** | **F2012** | **F2013** | **F2014** |
| **Emotional** | Cook Island Māori | 295 | 264 | 308 | 288 |
|  | Fijian | 65 | 54 | 73 | 47 |
| Niuean | 56 | 67 | 90 | 44 |
| Other Pacific Is Groups | 59 | 51 | 52 | \* |
| Pacific People nfd | 127 | 174 | 104 | 107 |
| Samoan | 625 | 595 | 700 | 381 |
| Tokelauan | 40 | 30 | 23 | \* |
| Tonga | 309 | 282 | 292 | 233 |
| **Total** | **1,576** | **1,517** | **1,642** | **1,129** |
| **Physical** | Cook Island Māori | 84 | 89 | 77 | 114 |
|  | Fijian | 15 | 19 | 25 | 24 |
| Niuean | 25 | 27 | 23 | 11 |
| Other Pacific Is Groups | 15 | 14 | 15 | 11 |
| Pacific People nfd | 26 | 25 | 21 | 42 |
| Samoan | 296 | 268 | 325 | 258 |
| Tokelauan | 16 | 14 | 13 | 10 |
| Tongan | 112 | 132 | 123 | 86 |
| **Total** | **589** | **588** | **622** | **556** |
| **Sexual** | Cook Island Māori | 26 | 27 | 30 | 26 |
|  | Fijian | \* | \* | \* | \* |
| Niuean | 11 | 8 | \* | 6 |
| Other Pacific Is Groups | 6 | 8 | 6 | \* |
| Pacific People nfd | \* | 10 | 8 | 8 |
| Samoan | 67 | 71 | 51 | 48 |
| Tokelauan | 0 | \* | \* | \* |
| Tongan | 33 | 30 | 21 | 17 |
| **Total** | **151** | **162** | **126** | **111** |
| **Neglect** | Cook Island Māori | 135 | 124 | 150 | 95 |
|  | Fijian | 14 | \* | 21 | 17 |
| Niuean | 25 | 11 | 34 | \* |
| Other Pacific Is Groups | 16 | \* | 7 | \* |
| Pacific People nfd | 17 | 26 | 46 | 29 |
| Samoan | 198 | 166 | 246 | 173 |
| Tokelauan | 7 | 36 | 23 | 21 |
| Tongan | 115 | 126 | 125 | 87 |
| **Total** | **527** | **501** | **652** | **443** |
| **Summary** |  | **2,843** | **2,768** | **3,042** | **2,239** |

The ‘Pacific People nfd’ group is important to analyse further as the numbers are significant, particularly for emotional abuse and neglect.

The overall trend for 2014 for the Pacific groups by abuse type shows:

* 50.4% for emotional abuse
* 24.8% for physical abuse
* 19.8% for neglect
* 5.0% for sexual abuse.

The prominence of emotional abuse among Pacific victims is often a result of children found affected by exposure to family violence (see Substantiated Abuse table). Family violence has led also to child deaths in Pacific families. The Family Violence Death Review Report 2014 showed that between 2009 and 2012, there were 19 Child Abuse and Neglect (CAN) deaths. Three of the 19 CAN victims were of Pacific descent[[23]](#footnote-23). This number does not reflect the number of times the deceased child may have been harmed previously by the perpetrator, or the number of other child victims (siblings, step-siblings, friends, associates) who may have been subjected to the perpetrators violence at different times or may have witnessed the fatal event upon the deceased[[24]](#footnote-24).

Physical abuse is found to be particularly prevalent among the Pacific group in comparison to Māori, Pākehā and Asian. In 2010/2011 Pacific made up around 19% of all substantiated physical abuse; in 2011/2012 it was around 18%. The prevalence rate is very high when compared to the Pacific proportion of the 0-19 population (Table 1).

## Child Victims by Age and Geographical Spread - Snapshot

Population and notification trends can signal workforce and training needs. While the majority of the population is based in the Auckland region, the table below shows significant numbers of Pacific in the Bay of Plenty, greater Wellington and Canterbury.

**Table 6: Number of Distinct Pacific Children and Young People with a Substantiated Abuse Finding by Operational Area, and by Age at F2013**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Region** | **Operational Area** | **Age Group[[25]](#footnote-25)** | | | | **Total Region** |
| **0-5** | **6-9** | **10-14** | **15-17** |
| **Te Tai Tokerau** | Tai Tokerau | 11 | 8 | \* | \* | **22** |
| **Auckland** | Waitemata | 227 | 135 | 171 | 52 | **2,014** |
| Counties Manukau | 635 | 327 | 346 | 121 |
| **Midlands** | Waikato | 21 | \* | \* | \* | **115** |
| Bay of Plenty | 45 | 12 | 21 | \* |
| **Central** | Western | \* | \* | \* | \* | **268** |
| Eastern | 13 | 9 | 18 | \* |
| Lower North | 12 | 9 | 8 | \* |
| Greater Wellington | 75 | 44 | 47 | 14 |
| **Southern** | Upper South | \* | \* | \* | \* | **119** |
| Canterbury | 36 | 16 | 27 | 8 |
| Otago/ Southland | 10 | \* | \* | \* |
| **Total Pacific children and young people with a finding of abuse [[26]](#footnote-26)** | | **1,089** | **574** | **657** | **214** | **2,538** |
| **43%** | **23%** | **26%** | **8%** | **100%** |

Anecdotal experience shows that growing pockets of Pacific communities in some rural areas may be due to seasonal employment opportunities[[27]](#footnote-27) on farms and orchards. Population data show significant jumps in Pacific population between 2006 and 2013 in Waikato (25%), Manawatu-Whanganui (25%) and Marlborough (51%). Pacific families in these areas may have very limited family and cultural supports; and local Oranga Tamariki sites often have few, if any, Pacific staff to advise on practice. Increasing population requires Oranga Tamariki to constantly review its cultural capital in terms of workforce and effectiveness in terms of practice.

## In-State Custody – Care and Protection

Every Pacific child in state care represents at least one household that is considered unsafe or unable to care for him or her. The total number of all children and young people in state custody (S.78, S.101, S.102, S.1102a, S.139, S.140, and S1102b of Act 1989) between F2011 - F2013 fell slightly, but the number of Pacific children and young people increased slightly.

**Table 7: Pacific Children in the Custody of the Chief Executive Between F2011 and F2013**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Primary Ethnicity** | **F2011** | **F2012** | **F2013** | **As at 31 Dec 2013** |
| Samoan | 123 | 115 | 135 | 123 (39%) |
| Cook Island Māori | 74 | 76 | 69 | 94 (30%) |
| Tongan | 38 | 42 | 43 | 49 (15.5%) |
| Tokelauan | 7 | 11 | 12 | 19 (6%) |
| Fijian | 11 | 5 | 5 | 13 (4%) |
| Niuean | 15 | 15 | 9 | 11 (3.5%) |
| Other Pacific Is Group | 1 | 3 | 4 | 5 (1.5%) |
| Pacific ‘nfd’ | 8 | 7 | 5 | 3 (0.5%) |
| **Subtotal Pacific** | **277** | **274** | **282** | **317** |
| Māori | 1,901 | 2,029 | 2,121 | 2,152 |
| New Zealand Pākehā | 1,587 | 1,489 | 1,335 | 1,329 |
| Asian | 41 | 37 | 45 | 50 |
| Other European | 24 | 31 | 27 | 37 |
| Other and No primary ethnicity identified[[28]](#footnote-28) | 55 | 24 | 34 | 67 |
| **Total children and young people in out–of-home placements** | **3,885** | **3,884** | **3,844** | **3,952** |
| **Distinct Pacific children and young people as a percentage of total** | **7%** | **7%** | **7%** | **8%** |

The Samoan number remains consistently high but comparable to their proportion of the Pacific population. The Cook Island Māori group is however over represented.

**Table 8: Number of Pacific Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Placements by Age as on 30 June 2011 to 30 June 2013, and as at 31 December 2013**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Age group** | **2011** | **2012** | **2013** | **As at 31Dec 2013** |
| 0-4 years | 75 | 66 | 75 | 90 (28.5%) |
| 5-9 years | 80 | 86 | 80 | 87 (27.5%) |
| 10-13 years | 69 | 72 | 80 | 83 (26%) |
| 14-16 years | 47 | 47 | 46 | 57 (18%) |
| 17 + years | 6 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| **Total** | **277** | **274** | **282** | **317** |

At 31 December 2013, Pacific children made up 8% (317) of all children in out-of-home placements (state holds custodial status). Of these children:

* 39% identified as Samoan
* 30% identified as Cook Island Māori
* 15.5% identified as Tongan
* 6% identified as Tokelauan
* 4% identified as Fijian
* 3.5% identified as Niuean
* 2% identified with other Pacific Islands or Pacific not further defined.

A five-year trend for Care and Protection out-of-home placements showed that over F2009 – F2013, the overall number reduced by 13%, but the Pacific rate increased by 7% (from 264 to 282). This upward trend may suggest that traditions, social buffers and support networks that may have previously protected children from harm inside their families may be weakening in some communities.

Of the 317 Pacific children and young people in out-of-home placements at 31 December 2013, most (147 or 46%) had been in care for less than six months, 67 (21%) had been in out-of-home placements for 6-12 months, 63 (20%) for 13 months to two years and 40 (13%) had been in out-of-home care for more than two years. The number of children in out-of-home care for longer than six months suggests the importance of equipping practitioners with the relevant cultural knowledge to complement existing skills and competencies, to ensure that children’s situations are settled as soon as possible and to minimise uncertainty for them.

Most Pacific children who have been in state custody long-term successfully transition into permanent Home for Life placements with kin. Data indicates that kin placements are much more likely for Pacific children than non-Pacific.

**Table 9: Number of Children and Young People Who Achieved Home for Life by Caregiver Type and Ethnicity (F2011 to F2013)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Home for Life Caregiver Type** | **Distinct children and young people** | | |
| **Pacific** | **Non-Pacific** | **Total** |
| Family/whānau | 22 (88%) | 272 (67%) | 294 |
| Non-family/ whānau | 2 | 98 | 100 |
| Unknown | 1 | 35 | 36 |
| **Total children and young people F2011** | **25** | **405** | **430** |
| Family/whānau | 13 (93%) | 324 (68%) | 337 |
| Non-family/whānau | 1 | 151 | 152 |
| **Total children and young people F2012** | **14** | **475** | **489** |
| Family/whānau | 30 (79%) | 249 (62%) | 279 |
| Non-family/whānau | 8 | 153 | 161 |
| **Total children and young people F2013** | **38** | **402** | **440** |
| **Grand Total distinct children and young people** | **77** | **1,282** | **1,359** |

The high likelihood of a Pacific child exiting state custody into the custody of kin, reinforces the importance of investing in nurturing and rebuilding relationships for children who have been disconnected from their families, when that is in their best interest.

**Youth Justice**

Youth Justice Family Group Conference numbers are a good indicator of the number of Pacific young people that are referred to Oranga Tamariki.

**Table 10: Pacific Youth Involved in Youth Justice Conferences by Primary Ethnicity (F2011 to F2014)**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Primary Ethnicity** | **F2011** | **F2012** | **F2013** | **F2014** |
| Cook Island Māori | 106 | 106 | 106 | 91 |
| Samoan | 114 | 121 | 99 | 76 |
| Tongan | 80 | 91 | 79 | 58 |
| Niuean | 26 | 33 | 23 | 22 |
| Pacific ‘nfd’ | 29 | 30 | 19 | 20 |
| Other Pacific Is Groups | 23 | 21 | 14 | 11 |
| Fijian | 13 | 11 | 11 | 7 |
| Tokelauan | 8 | 4 | 3 | 6 |
| **Total Distinct Pacific Youth Justice FGC Clients** | **399** | **417** | **354** | **291** |

The downward trend (see table below) is positive for all Pacific groups except Cook Islanders who are also over represented among Pacific.

One of the key goals of the Youth Crime Action Plan (YCAP) 2013 – 2023 is to reduce the number of young people appearing before the Youth Court by 25% by 2017. The application of alternative measures to work with young people who get into trouble, as opposed to a routine referral to Oranga Tamariki, has led to a dramatic decrease in the number of referrals since the YCAP strategy was implemented. Alternative measures include engaging young people in meaningful activities such as training and employment programmes[[29]](#footnote-29).

The YCAP strategy also stresses the need for finding alternatives to remanding young people in residential facilities, such as supported bail, electronic monitoring, and other community based options without compromising public safety[[30]](#footnote-30).

**Table 11: Number of Young People on Youth Justice Supervision with Activity and Supervision with Residence Orders (F2011 - F2014)[[31]](#footnote-31)**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Fiscal Years** | **Pacific** | **Non-Pacific** | **Primary Ethnicity Not Identified** | **Grand Total** |
| Supervision with Activity | 20 | 155 | 4 | 179 |
| Supervision with Residence | 23 | 170 | 5 | 198 |
| **2011** | **43** | **325** | **9** | **377** |
| Supervision with Activity | 17 | 123 | 3 | 143 |
| Supervision with Residence | 20 | 142 | 2 | 164 |
| **2012** | **37** | **265** | **5** | **307** |
| Supervision with Activity | 13 | 94 | 1 | 108 |
| Supervision with Residence | 16 | 118 | 2 | 136 |
| **2013** | **29** | **212** | **3** | **244** |
| Supervision with Activity | 9 | 104 | 0 | 113 |
| Supervision with Residence | 14 | 126 | 0 | 140 |
| **2014** | **23** | **230** | **0** | **253** |

The number of Pacific young people sentenced to the high tariff ‘Supervision with Residence’ (SwR) orders in the Youth Court has fluctuated between around 10% and 12%. Similarly for Pacific young people sentenced to ‘Supervision with Activity (SwA) orders the numbers fluctuate between 8% and 12%. It would be useful to look more closely in future to these offenders, considering their low numbers, to determine how many are recidivists and how many are new, and what type of intervention is more effective for which type of offender. Placing youth offenders in contexts where they are exposed to other offenders does not always result in positive changes in behaviour and attitude[[32]](#footnote-32). Outcomes are however influenced by the quality and relevance of interventions provided to the young person before entering residence, during, and once back out in the community.

## Adoptions

The Adoption Service in Oranga Tamariki is involved in adoptions of children from the Pacific that are processed through the New Zealand Family Court. Of all the independent Pacific Island nations, only Fiji is a signatory of the Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, 1993. However adoptions from non-Hague Pacific nations by New Zealand citizens can occur where there is adoption legislation in that country which is compatible with Section 17 of the New Zealand Adoption Act 1955. For such adoptions, the Oranga Tamariki Adoption Service is not involved as these cases are finalised in an overseas Court and a subsequent application is made for New Zealand citizenship to the Department of Internal Affairs.

Although only Fiji is a contracting State to The Hague Convention, the Oranga Tamariki Adoption Service applies the principles and regulations of the Convention to all international adoptions of children from the Pacific that Oranga Tamariki is involved with. One of the key requirements of the Convention is a protective one to ensure that the adoption across borders is in the best interest of the child. Adherence to this principle is informed by reports from the child’s country of origin about the child’s circumstances, background and their need for an intercountry adoption. An assessment is also required on the suitability of the adoptive applicants.

Many Pacific children adopted in Aotearoa are already living in the country with the people who apply to adopt them. Anecdotally we know that adoption of Pacific children often takes place for citizenship-related purposes to enable access to services like better education, improved employment opportunities or to prevent the return of a child to the islands.

|  |
| --- |
| Pacific Child – Identity, belonging |

*O Au o matua fanau* – children are our treasures[[33]](#footnote-33)

## Identity



A Pacific youth perspective of his cultural identity depicted in artwork; he was a care experienced young person.

Cultural identity is important to and for Pacific children. Their perception of place and belonging is rooted in Aotearoa not in the islands like their elders, and is multi-ethnic (refer to Table 2). It is not unusual for a youth to declare themself firstly as an *afakasi* (Samoan term for mixed race), or NZ-born, or from Otara, Southside or Canterbury, before specifying their Pacific-ness. Common expressions of identity are heard in songs, poems, artistic presentations and daily conversations among Pacific youth. It is important to listen to the child’s expression and definition of their identity.

In 2013, the NZ-born rate for Pacific people was 62.3%; an increase from 58.2% in 2001. Amongst the larger groups, the NZ-born rates are highest for Niuean (78.9%), Cook Island Māori (77.4%) and Tokelauan (73.9%). Samoan and Tongan rates are lower but still significant at 62.7% and 59.8% respectively[[34]](#footnote-34). The NZ-born rates indicate the proportion of Pacific children and generations who were not raised in the traditional cultural environments and settings of their elders. There are differences in worldviews between island born, NZ-born, within generations, and across mixed ethnic identities.

Identity shifts often cause anxiety for family members who fear that children will lose traditional values, community connection, and be distanced from protections that traditional cultures bring[[35]](#footnote-35). Children are also exposed to assumptions and prejudice from others about who they are or should be.

*I Am - A Samoan but not a Samoan*

*To my āiga in Samoa, I am a palagi*

*I am - A New Zealander, but not a New Zealander*

*To New Zealanders, I am a “bloody coconut” at worst,*

*A “Pacific Islander” at best,*

*I am - To my Samoan parents, their child (Melani Anae)*[[36]](#footnote-36)

Belonging to the Pacific family is very important for Pacific citizens who are not indigenous to the islands, as the following poem illustrates:

*During an afternoon nap in Puketapapa Mt Roskill*

*I dreamt that draped in my six metres colourful sari with a hibiscus flower stuck behind my ears carrying a bowl of spices infused with the sweet fragrances of frangipanis, hibiscus and coconut*

*Singing melodious tune of “Isa Lei” I rode the big waves*

*of Oceania on a coconut frond*

*Following the route taken by my ancestors to cultivate green gold*

*in Fiji for their colonial masters*

*Guided by the steady hands of my ancestors*

*I rode the waves of Oceania navigating the space of my identity*

*A proud Pacific Indian with links to India the ancestral homeland*

*Fiji the beloved country of my birth, resting place of my ancestors*

*Living in Aotearoa the land of the long white cloud*

*my adopted new homeland where the “kiwi” birds live*

*and pohutukawa trees blossom in summer (Janifa Khan Janif)*[[37]](#footnote-37)

## Belonging and Attachment

The child is a gift from God to a Pacific family[[38]](#footnote-38), a source of joy and pride, the realisation and embodiment of the next generation. The child is immediately associated with the identities and legacies of her parents, ancestors, people, lands and cultures. The child traditionally belongs to a collective and vice versa. By birth right, a child is entitled to her/his kin and vice versa.

In some Pacific cultures the words for son, daughter, sister, and brother are applied liberally to kin members who may be cousins, aunts and uncles, and distant relatives. The words for father and mother are also applied liberally to anyone in a caregiving role for a child but who may not hold legal custody or guardianship status for them. It is not uncommon for a child to refer to grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins as ‘mothers’, ‘fathers’, ‘sisters’ and ‘brothers’ depending on the roles people occupy in their life. It is therefore important to understand from the child who she/he feels a sense of belonging with, which may change over time.

The word ‘collective’ is commonly used to refer to the wide network of people that are connected to a Pacific child. This is usually made up of kin but can also include island associations as for the Cook Islands community. The active *collective* represents parents, step parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins and so forth - usually those connected through blood.

The process of naming a child is one way a family ‘claims’ the child. Some cultures, e.g. Fijian, have naming ceremonies. It is not uncommon in Tongan families for a paternal aunt to have naming rights for her brother’s children. Family names are passed on to children purposely in some families, at times, involving consultation with elders or the holder of the name. Family names are so important that sometimes permission is needed before a name can be passed on. Sounding the child’s name correctly can help maintain memories and feelings of belonging for a child when she/he is apart from significant others and places.

The collective may also involve those related through caregiver partnerships depending on the intimacy of the relationship, especially in a context like Aotearoa. Typical of migrant populations, some collective members live overseas; some may still hold traditional values about caring for children of kin but others may not. Practitioners within Oranga Tamariki often find relatives from overseas engaged in cases whether or not they have met the child concerned.

The nature and role of the collective often differs between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples of the Pacific, such as Fijian-Indian. As for migrant populations, the roots of family unity for non-indigenous people are held together differently; they are not automatic inheritors of customary assets like land, customary rights, entitlements and responsibilities for people and resources, as indigenous people are. Perhaps because of the absence of a traditional base for sustaining and empowerment, there is a stronger emphasis among these groups on wealth creation and investment in the nuclear family. Collectives for the children of these families are more global as is the case for Pacific children of mixed ethnicities in countries beyond the Pacific.

The extent of collective attachment varies between families and cultures. Intertwining threads between the child and their collectives form an environment that nurtures, protects, mentors and develops the child. Severing these ties in cases where children are placed in care and experience repeated placement shifts, could cause spiritual and emotional harm, which could seriously disable the collective from fulfilling its responsibilities for the child and weaken the sense of belonging and attachment with kin. The child’s perception of who they belong with may differ from that of adults, so it is important to scope the network.

## Pacific Languages

Pacific children have a right to their cultural identity, including their indigenous languages.

Language nurtures one’s sense of belonging to collectives beyond the nuclear family, the preservation of cultural history and sense of community, particularly when one’s community is a minority as Pacific people are in Aotearoa. For Pacific, as for migrant settler groups globally, integration into a new society has positive and negative impacts. On the negative, the gradual loss of indigenous languages takes with it words, phrases and terms used as part of rituals of respect and engagement, stories that transfer history, unique allusive language of proverbs and riddles such as those used in parenting and the uniqueness of a people. On the positive, Pacific people have their lands of origin to return to for rejuvenation of language and culture.

The majority of Pacific children and NZ-born generations no longer speak their indigenous Pacific language fluently, if at all. This is a loss because language conveys messages in concepts, proverbs and symbolic expressions that carry history and convey cultural and spiritual identity[[39]](#footnote-39). It is important to ensure that when children are present in meetings conducted in Pacific languages, they are purposely engaged, understand the decisions being made, know how their hopes and aspirations fit in to plans, understand their role, and who will be doing what to help them.

Like other settler groups globally, acculturation and integration of Pacific people into a new society requires adaptations which result in positive and negative impacts on identity. On the negative, is the gradual loss of indigenous languages among the younger generations which is further depleted by the time the second, third and fourth generations arrive. There was a dominant belief among new settlers that learning and speaking English even in homes was the best way to ensure their children’s success in the Pākehā world, particularly in education[[40]](#footnote-40). Some adopted English names or English equivalents of their Pacific names.

The belief in the superior value of the English language was based on the need to engage, adapt and succeed in western contexts – socially, economically and politically. In education, English was the primary language of exchange and parents saw Pacific languages, cultural identity and ways of learning as having limited value to their children’s educational success[[41]](#footnote-41). Many parents assumed their indigenous languages would always be used in homes, churches, extended family and island networks. They underestimated the speed of language loss and overestimated their ability to compete with wider social influences, particularly the education sector. The tide is turning against this traditional view, but the social and cultural losses have been significant.

For many years, a movement made up of Pacific communities, schools, churches and academia has lobbied school boards and the Ministry of Education (MOE) to provide bilingual education using English and Pacific languages[[42]](#footnote-42). The Auckland Bilingual Education Cluster is a group of public schools that provides bilingual education. There is growing evidence of positive impact of the integration of Pacific languages and cultures on literacy and numeracy levels of Pacific students[[43]](#footnote-43). There are also social-cultural gains for students, and wider community benefits due to strengthened relationships between schools and local communities.

In 2017, 43 schools offered Pacific medium education: 30 primary, 12 secondary and 1 composite school. The majority (32) of these schools were in Auckland. Eight schools offered the curriculum in two or more Pacific languages. Also in 2017, another 62 schools had students enrolled in a Pacific language as a separate subject; 23 primary schools, 37 secondary schools, and 2 composite schools. Twenty-four out of the 62 schools were in Auckland, and 18 schools were in the Wellington region. Seventeen of the 62 schools offered two or more different Pacific languages[[44]](#footnote-44).

The loss of language or the absence of ability to speak one’s indigenous language can cause insecurity for generations raised in Aotearoa about their cultural identity[[45]](#footnote-45).

*My Tongan*

*cultural advisor*

*tells me not to worry about them.*

*They are “very purist.”*

*I am the face of the future*

*language is only a skill set.*

*To be truly Tongan*

*genealogy determines everything.*

*Blood*

*reigns supreme. (Karlo Mila)*

## Customary Care Arrangements

Children and customary care arrangements are traditionally common, and treated as private matters by families, not a matter for the State because children belong with their families. Collective responsibility for the child is sometimes exercised through informal customary arrangements, often referred to as ‘customary adoption’. Family and belonging are fluid concepts in the Pacific world, because nurture, not just nature, creates kinship. A person who cares for the child may become the most significant person to her/him, whether or not that caregiver is a blood relative. *‘I become….part of whoever has fed me, as they become part of me’*[[46]](#footnote-46)(Lindstrom, 2013, p.176).

Customary child care arrangements are culturally significant. They hold status and expectations of those involved. The customary care arrangements are often marked by customary ceremonies so that the child and the ‘agreement’ between families is recognised and acknowledged. The point at which the State becomes involved is when the arrangement is formally registered, or when formal adoption procedures are initiated, perhaps to enable the new parents to take the child out of the country. Across the Pacific, a child’s birth may not be registered with the State for some time, if at all, and many children are born outside State medical facilities. UNICEF estimates that birth registration across the Pacific (excluding Australia and Aotearoa) varies between 20% in the Solomon Islands to more than 90% in Kiribati and Fiji[[47]](#footnote-47). This is considered a barrier to the realisation of a child’s legal citizenship status, rights, entitlements and visibility in a nation. However this does not necessarily mean the absence of a child’s entitlements, rights and protections according to custom, or the absence of understood responsibilities and obligations of those responsible for the child under custom.

A customary care and guardianship arrangement is one where the child is gifted to another person to parent, usually kin, usually permanently. This may occur for a variety of reasons, the most common being when there is a shared belief that the new caregiver/parent has the means to provide a better life for the child, the receiving family member has no children, there are customs that the shifting of a child’s care with other kin fulfils, or it can be due to the position of the child in the extended family such as being the first grandchild.

Arrangements can occur while the child is in utero, immediately after birth, or later for older children who lose their primary caregiver or parent to illness, death or other factors. These are deeply emotional arrangements. In mixed ethnic partnerships some cultural traditions may not be followed. The arrangements are often not confidential, or in any case the family grapevine ensures there is no privacy. The child grows up knowing who her birth mother is (if not both parents), and the mother may well live with the child or have open access to her/him. The legalised form of such care arrangements between kin is known as ‘relative adoption’[[48]](#footnote-48).

*Example: Vaetama* (a Samoan customary care arrangement) is a common practice in the Samoan culture, where the grandparents or other family member take the child of another relative into their primary care. The child may be the eldest grandchild to grandparents and the child has the additional protection through the *mana* (dignity, respect, status, privilege) of the grandparents. The child can also be perceived to need care and protection beyond what their parent is able or willing to provide. The caregivers are referred to as *mātua tausi* (caregiver/caring parent).

A child raised by elders in the Samoan culture is privileged due to the status of elders, and their safety and stability is guaranteed. A child raised this way may later be given legal entitlements to assets of her/his *mātua tausi* including being heir to customary lands and titles. The practice of *vaetama* is still carried out by some families outside Samoa, such as in Aotearoa, but may not be accompanied by formal adoption or custody; but rather an agreement sealed by verbal agreement and respected by those involved[[49]](#footnote-49). The collective family supports the new caregiver(s) to ensure the care and wellbeing of the child.

*Confidentiality* and *privacy*are relative concepts in customary arrangements. The birth family usually reserves the customary right to contact the child and may even visit the child, take food and voluntarily provide other supports as needed. Some Pacific nations are so small the news generally gets around, but collectives (giving and receiving) do respect each other’s relative privacy in such contexts.

Importantly, customary arrangements between kin are often made with the expectation that these are permanent not interim arrangements. However, the wider collective continues to hold responsibility if there are any risks to the child. Other relatives may be given the duty of care for the child by the caregivers or grandparents due to severe illness or significant change in circumstances. Increasingly, the gifting of a child to new parents can involve non-kin, particularly in Melanesia. The previous network of support may not be accessible in this case, and the child becomes the sole responsibility of the new parents.

For the practitioner who is not familiar with the traditional uses of customary adoption, the sensitivities around formal adoptions in Aotearoa can make one feel somewhat torn between the mother’s privacy and the child’s best interest. Gifting a child is emotionally and spiritually painful even if it is to another family member – it is a process that involves grief and celebration at the same time - and the long term goal is for the best interest of the child. This is similar to when a permanent home is deliberated for a Pacific child who has been in care for some time. Every effort should be made to find permanency with kin, and lastly with non-kin. The child is not a possession being passed around and she/he may not want to live with a caregiver, but her/his best interest must be at the centre of decisions.

*Returning the Child* ***-*** The recipient family often provides assurances of open communication and access to the child, to the original family. It is not unusual for children who have changed carers through customary arrangement to continue to have strong connections with their birth families as they develop. Some children eventually return to their birth families of their own accord, or it can be done through ‘formal’ customary agreement between the families involved as circumstances change, especially if a child is victimised. The anecdotal experience of statutory social workers is that the openness of customary arrangements enables members of the child’s original family to step back in to protect and resume responsibility for a child in cases of abuse and neglect. Such reclaiming occurs informally between families, but becomes more visible in cases where there is State intervention.

## Values and Expectations

*Respect* - In relation to one’s family and collective, the value of respect between a child and parents, older siblings, elders and those in authority, is fundamental to Pacific cultures. It is common across Pacific culture for there to be a hierarchy due to birth order, which may or may not be gender biased, where the eldest child has responsibility for supporting the family and caring for and protecting younger siblings. Conversely the younger siblings are expected to respect the authority of the older sibling/s. The ways in which a child is expected to show respect are obedience, the withholding of objection or disagreement with the wishes of older siblings or adults, to speak appropriately and act respectfully. The ability to demonstrate these is considered good manners, is associated with good parenting and reflects on the child’s family.

Respect is often associated with obedience, courtesy, and children withholding challenge towards an adult, older sibling, person of authority, or someone else of higher status. A child who shows disrespect is likely to be reprimanded verbally, physically, by the removal of privileges, or other means. The risk of such obedience is that it can be manipulated by others, making it difficult for a child to question things that may not feel right, or in times when questioning is part of development as in a classroom setting.

*Responsibility* - The development of responsibility, self-control, and accountability for self and others is nurtured early on in the Pacific child’s life. Responsibility involves activity and an understanding of purpose and place in the family. The child often has caregiving responsibilities for siblings, helping out in the home, family reputation, and roles in church and cultural community activities. In some cultures the child’s place in the birth order brings other roles but also privileges. The sense of belonging, identity, purpose and accountability that develop with responsibility, is strength for Pacific children.

The sense of responsibility for family can remain strong for children in disadvantaged households. A study on resilience in sole parent families in Aotearoa found that Pacific children were able to put aside their own needs in the interests of their mothers and were aware of their mother’s load as parent and provider. The children perceived that their efforts in study or work would ultimately benefit their family. Several of the children held a forgiving attitude towards their absent parent, usually the father, and had a positive relationship with the absent parent regardless of infrequency of contact.

*“The children’s attitudes to material circumstances were realistic, and they mostly regarded themselves as having enough, showing awareness and appreciation of their parents’ wish to provide for them”* (Waldergrave, C. King, P., Tamasese, T.K., Maniapoto, M, Parsons T L., Sullivan, G & Waldergrave, C. 2012, p. 29)[[50]](#footnote-50).

Family violence, illness, drug and alcohol abuse in the home can add to a child’s load of responsibilities. Social workers are familiar with scenarios of a child missing school because she/he had to care for a family member.

*Achievement* - The child is the family’s future; her/his success in life is anticipated to support their family. Regardless of, and especially because of, a family’s struggles and social-economic disadvantage, the child is expected to succeed in whatever endeavour she/he engages in. Disadvantage is no dampener to parental hope, pride and aspiration for their children.

A Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs (MPIA) study on the aspirations of 918 Pacific secondary school students enrolled across 27 schools in the Auckland region, found that mothers and female guardians were more likely than fathers and male guardians to talk with their children about tertiary education, career planning, help with homework, and participate in school activities. Over a third of the young people reported that their fathers never participated in school activities[[51]](#footnote-51). Employment may have been a factor in this absence but not necessarily so, because while 56.4% of fathers or male guardians were in full-time employment, so too were 44.9% of mothers or female guardians[[52]](#footnote-52).

The majority of young people in the MPIA study reported that their parents had high expectations of them to go to either a university (74.8%) or into employment (77.5%) after secondary school. Despite high expectations of educational success, caregiver priorities can take priority over an individual child’s educational aspirations. It is not unusual for a young person to drop out of school to enter employment to supplement the household income, particularly if the primary purpose of schooling is employment.

Parental approval is very important to Pacific children. Unrealistic expectations can however become overwhelming, and has been linked to suicide among Pacific youth[[53]](#footnote-53). It can also result in children rebelling against rules and parental authority, and spending more time away from home. Parents may not always recognise that their expectations are unrealistic, especially if the child is also expected to care for family members, participate in extended family gatherings and church/community activities.

*Public Etiquette* – Etiquette in social relationships outside the home is important to Pacific families, it reflects the type of parenting a child has had. The child is not to do anything to bring the family’s status or reputation into disrepute. Other families in the community are expected to raise their children with similar values.

## Voice

The legal and political context of the work of Oranga Tamariki with Pacific children requires mindfulness of the difference between power over and representation of, children. The typical Pacific child is like most children in having no voting or economic power compared with adults. In traditional Pacific households, the child does not speak in decision making gatherings unless given permission to; in some cultures the girl has less right than the boy[[54]](#footnote-54). The adults in the family are expected to be mature, capable, resourceful, and motivated to represent the child’s needs and interests.

The impact of Oranga Tamariki involvement on a child’s perception of self could affect their ongoing sense of rights, entitlements, connection to family and security. Giving the Pacific child a voice in forums with people who she/he is used to regarding as of higher rank to them is usually uncomfortable. The opportunity to speak doesn’t equate to ability or willingness to do so. Family members may also perceive this as the State overriding their traditional responsibility and duty to be the child’s advocate.

The emotional and political impact of affirming the child’s voice, on surrounding adults who may not respect that, needs to be considered to ensure the child’s ongoing safety. This will involve the securing of adult allies around the child that are immediately accessible and reliable.

The child’s need for meaningful connection, to belong and to matter to others is very important to emotional and spiritual wellbeing. In a workshop conducted by Child, Youth and Family with children in state custody in 2014, some of whom were of Pacific ethnicity, the children communicated this need repeatedly. The children cannot be identified here for confidential reasons, but their statements are as follows:

*“I want to keep in touch with my family especially my siblings.”*

*“Get along with my family and don’t put them down.”*

*“Don’t make time with my family conditional.”*

*“Give me a social worker who cares about me, understands me, and has my back.”*

The children talked of disappointment, feeling second best, and disconnection:

*“…placement with family may not work out well.”*

*“…related or not kids should be treated equally.”*

*“…the bad thing was that I had to move homes 27 times.”*

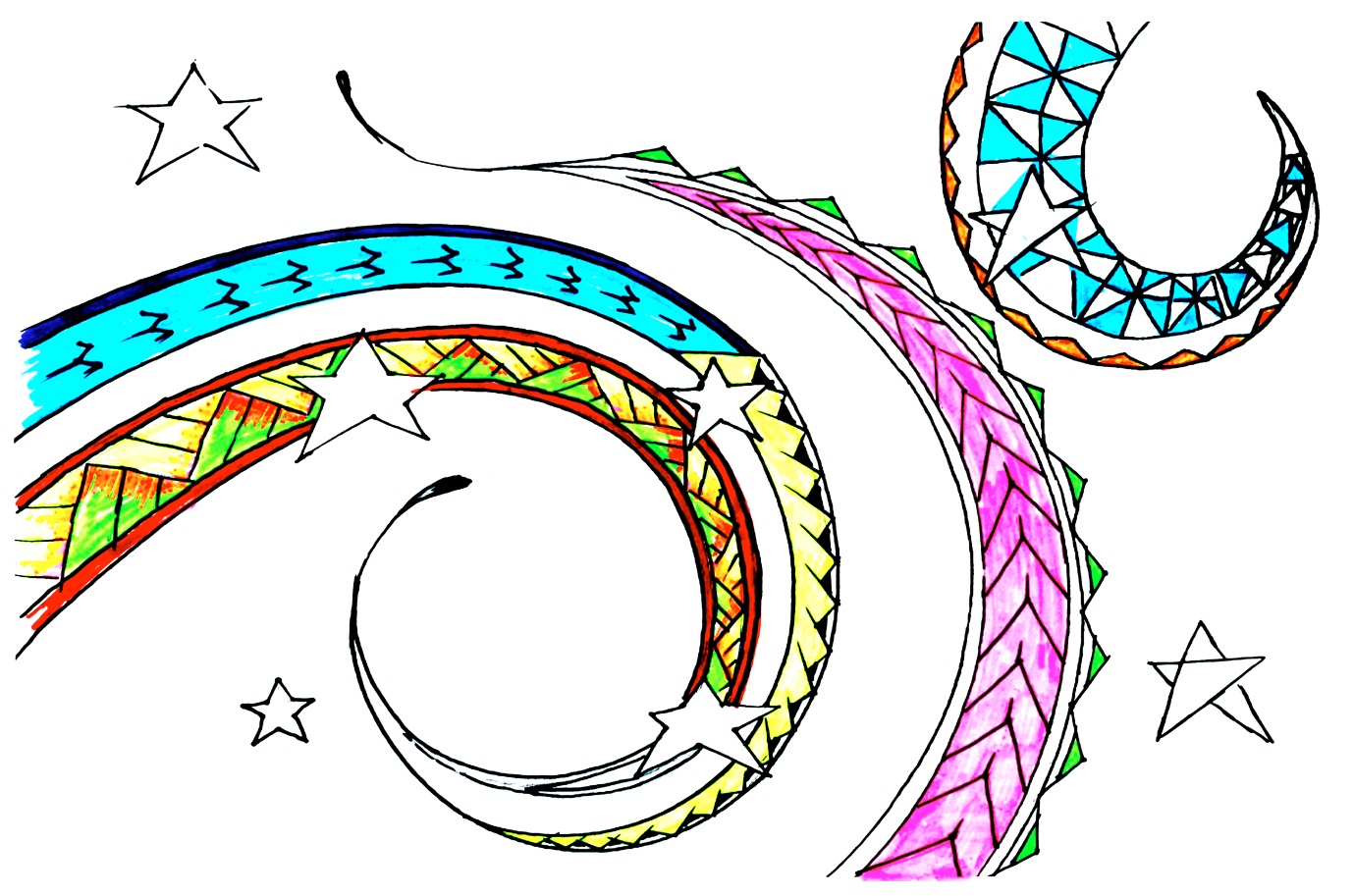
Children in State care want to be cared for in a genuine way by people they can rely on:

*“I want you to put me in a safe kind and stable placement.”*

*“I want you to prepare me for a successful future and independence.”*

## Connections and Resilience

The importance of connections to children is conveyed in art by a care experienced Pacific young person.



*“The stars are hope; they spoke to my ancestors as they speak to me now. They tell me to keep going, keep working, keep trying, because they are always there just like hope.”* (Artist)

The youth further explained that the design consists of three parts: the physical world represented by the smaller spiral shape; the spiritual world represented by the bigger spiral shape; and the path through the middle which represents the Milky Way as a connection between the physical and spiritual worlds. The stars have further significance as these were used by Pacific island cultures to determine planting seasons and for navigation.

*“I want to ride the wave to get to the end even if I fall off”*

*“This is the start and I’m going to grow bigger”*

The strength portrayed in the artwork reflects the type of resilience found among at-risk Pacific youth in a study by Massey University (New Zealand). The study explored resilience in relation to individual resources (such as personal skills, availability of peer support and social skills); relationships with caregivers (including physical care and psychological care); and contextual resources (cultural and social belonging, sense of identity, connection to education, spirituality/religion)[[55]](#footnote-55). Pacific youth were found to have significantly higher resilience scores than Māori and Pākehā. While Pākehā youth in general faced lower risks than Māori and Pacific youth, they appeared to have less access to community and cultural supports than the others which therefore lowered their resilience.

The Massey study found that while Pacific and Māori showed similar scores for community and cultural connections, the spirituality/religion factor stood out as a strong contributor to resilience for Pacific. The study showed the importance of culturally embedded relationships and values as strengths. The study’s findings align with what Pacific families and communities have always believed, which is that cultural identity, values and spirituality are protective factors for their children and young people.

## The New-born

Nearing the time of the baby’s birth, Pacific families like others often gather around to pray, encourage and offer support to the mother and the father for the baby’s safe birth. Often the women would be present with the mother during the birth. Samoans call this process *tapua’i*. In Aotearoa the church minister will often be invited to bless the new-born and the family, to give thanks to God (or gods) for the gift of the child and to ask for guidance and protection for the child throughout her/his life.

A planned new-born child brings joy to everyone. The child enters a place of physical, emotional and spiritual belonging, and a kin network that awaited them since news of their conception. After the birth, the mother rests for up to a month while the extended family begin their role in the child’s life by helping care for them and the recovering mother. Part of this care is the imposition of a period of abstention from sexual activity between the parents, to enable the mother’s body to heal and for her to focus on the new-born’s needs. Often the umbilical cord and/or the placenta of the child are ceremoniously buried accordingly to the wishes and aspirations of the family for the child. Traditionally these hopes are often in relation to the wellbeing of the family, community and the church. The new-born already has a role, responsibilities and purpose before they are old enough to know or comment[[56]](#footnote-56).

A child conceived in marriage or accepted partnership is usually a protected one; whereas the position of a child who is not wanted, or conceived outside of an accepted relationship can be precarious. Harm can come through family violence. Situations of teenage pregnancy or unmarried mothers often result in stigma against the pregnant female because some families still hold virginity before marriage as a sign of honour and dignity for a girl. The girl is responsible for protecting her honour which translates to that of her parents and wider family. An unplanned pregnancy may lead a pregnant young woman to conceal the new-born to avoid alienation and punishment. The perceived downfall in status and pride for the girl and her family is worse if the pregnancy is the result of abuse by a family member, or someone highly respected by the family. Despite this background, the arrival of the new life often has the effect of melting away damaged pride and shame. It is not uncommon for members of extended families to rally around to support and protect the new parent (often the mother) and child.

The Pacific Islands Family (PIF) longitudinal study that began in Aotearoa in 2000 tracked a group of new-born children to follow their development. The study looked at nurturing and disciplining practices of 1224 mothers within the first year of birth, and found a link between ethnicity and nurturing. Nurturing measures included playing with the child, taking the child to a playground, reading to the child, planning surprises for the child and the child spending time with relatives. Samoan mothers showed higher nurturance scores (23.8%) than Tongans (10%), Niueans (8.8%) and other groups[[57]](#footnote-57).

The PIF nurturance scores were significantly higher for mothers who had a partner and those who reported being more aligned to ‘both’ Pacific and European traditions. There was some association between high nurturance and post-school qualification. Lower nurturance practice scores were associated with mothers who had issues with alcohol, smoking, gambling or postnatal depression. Drug use was not included in the analysis as the number of self-reported users was apparently too small. The study found no significant association between nurturance practices, household income, being employed, whether the mother was NZ-born or Pacific born, the length of time the mother had lived in Aotearoa, and family structure (nuclear or extended)[[58]](#footnote-58).

## Gender

Gender identity is not the same as sexual identity, and includes identities that do not fit into the traditional perceptions or expectation of ‘male’ and ‘female’ genders. Term like trans, queer, and gender diverse describe other gender identities, and the fact that a person’s gender identification may change over their life[[59]](#footnote-59). An intersex child will define their own gender in ways that may be the same or different to male and/or female.

‘Third gender’ or ‘gender diverse’ are umbrella terms that have been used to include *fa’afāfine* (Samoan term for males who identify more with the female gender characteristics; a *fa’afāfine* who may be homosexual), *fa’afātama* (Samoan for lesbian, woman who identifies more with male gender characteristics), transgender, (including someone transitioning from one sex to another), and others[[60]](#footnote-60). The equivalent to *fa’afāfine* in other Pacific societies is *fakaleiti* (Tonga), *akava’ine* (Cook Islands), *vaka sa lewa lewa* (Fiji), *fafafine* (Niue), *pinapinaaine* (Tuvalu), *mahu* (Tahitian, Hawaiian), and other terms. The absence of a statistical count for these children in Oranga Tamariki impacts their visibility and unique needs.

Community acceptance and respect of third gender in Pacific families varies as it does in non-Pacific families. Children and young people may be more accepting of non-heterosexual gender identity than parents and significant adults in the wider collective. These are not new issues. There are certain allowances however for these children in some families. For example, dialogue about sexual matters between young people of the same gender is a usual activity, but it is taboo between boys and girls whether siblings or friends in many Pacific cultures. An exception is however made for gender diverse children. In Samoan and Tongan communities it is not uncommon to find *fa’afāfine/fakaleiti* among a group of girls without scorn from elders, whereas it would not be acceptable for a ‘boy’ to do the same. Treating a third gender child in ways that deny her/his identity risks the violation of dignity, expose her/him sexually (in the child’s mind), and could emotional harm an already vulnerable child.

Gender has traditionally influenced assigned household tasks, place in family hierarchy, sibling relationships, access to knowledge, ‘acceptable’ circles of association, leadership position, succession, rights to family land, and even sleeping arrangements. The male child may be advantaged over the female child in homes where religious and patriarchal traditions dominate. Perceptions and beliefs around gender are also influenced by friendships, school cultures, religion, sports, media, music and other influences.

The practice of male circumcision among Pacific cultures is associated with Christian Biblical beliefs and supporting the sexual health of boys. In some cultures there is a ceremony surrounding the circumcision and the healing. It is not uncommon for a group of boys to undergo the procedure together. It is important to ensure that the child understands and consents to the procedure.

Adherence to gender determined roles and responsibilities vary hugely among Pacific families in contexts where alternative worldviews and values are dominant and supported by legislation. For example, parents who were raised in island contexts may have different views to the second and third generation NZ-born parents.

## Sexual Orientation

Non-heterosexual orientation is a matter of some sensitivity in Pacific communities, something that appears to have a strong link to Christian religious beliefs. The diversity of views among Pacific people towards non-heterosexuals was seen in Aotearoa during the lead up to the passing of the Marriage Amendment Act 2013 that allowed same sex marriage. This issue divided communities with much opposition attributed to Christianity.

Life can be difficult for a Pacific non-heterosexual child, particularly in the teenage years if there is no support at home and bullying or prejudice occurs among their peer group. The need for affirmation and belonging may lead the child to seek this elsewhere, which could lead to engagement in risk-taking activities such as alcohol and substance abuse, and unsafe sex[[61]](#footnote-61). It is important to note at this point that a child’s gender definition or outward presentation may not always signal their sexual preference, and some children may be victimised as a result of people’s assumptions.

Practitioners need to be alert to the prejudices that non-heterosexual children and/or non-heterosexual parents may be exposed to, overtly or covertly. Non-heterosexual practitioners may also be subject to homophobic behaviours from Pacific audiences which may occur subtly or blatantly. Supporting children with non-heterosexual identities requires knowledge, sensitivity and patience because shifting harmful attitudes may not be possible within the timeframe of Oranga Tamariki involvement. It is still important to do this though because it affirms to the child her/his sense of dignity.

In families and Pacific communities where respect and value for the non-heterosexual child exists, it may be quite normal to observe her/him ‘hanging out’ with children and youth of her preferred gender. It may not be unusual for girls to change clothes and talk ‘girly’ things with *fa'afāfine and fakaleiti.* Often such association would be permitted but otherwise would not be allowed for boys. As the *fa'afāfine/fakalieti* grows up and dresses as a female, many families grow to accept this, and will indeed defend her identity in the face of any threat from outsiders.

## Sex

Sexual activity is part of teenage development, but sex before marriage is still frowned upon in many Pacific families. Virginity is associated with self-respect, family honour, and is a type of social currency in preparation for marriage[[62]](#footnote-62). For families with such values, teenage pregnancy can cause shame and perceived loss of face for the teenager, and parents in the eyes of the extended family, church, island or community of importance. It is not uncommon to read media reports of babies being abandoned or neglected as a result of teenage pregnancies[[63]](#footnote-63). Fear of repercussions and disappointment from family may prevent teenagers from seeking information about safe sex from appropriate agencies and professionals, or from seeking help in the event of pregnancy or contracting a sexually transmitted disease[[64]](#footnote-64).

Despite the traditional taboos, sexual activity appears to be occurring earlier in the teen years[[65]](#footnote-65). An analysis of teenage pregnancy data between 2002 and 2010 by Taufa, Lennon Craig and Anae (2013) found that amongst the biggest Pacific groups in Aotearoa, pregnancy rates were highest for sole Cook Islanders at around 84 per 1000 births, followed by sole Niueans at 72, Tokelauans at 55, and Tongans at 43[[66]](#footnote-66); all were higher than the rate for Samoan at 33 per 1000 despite having the largest population.

In 2003 the abortion rate for Pacific teenagers (15 – 19 years of age) was 26 per 1000 pregnancies, second to Māori at 30 per 1,000, but higher than for European teenagers at 21 per 1,000[[67]](#footnote-67). Termination of pregnancy rates for all ethnic groups dropped between 2004 and 2014; Pacific reduced from 2060 to 1564. However the abortion rate for Pacific was higher in proportion to its population[[68]](#footnote-68).

## Disability and Mental Health

A Pacific family’s life with a child who is disabled or has mental health issues is affected by their acceptance and understanding of their child’s diagnosis or needs. Practitioners report that there is a tendency in some Pacific families to expect the same of a disabled child as that of a non-disabled child. A family without insight into their child’s particular needs (or background) may not recognise signs of emotional and psychological trauma, or foetal alcohol spectrum disorder (diagnosed or undiagnosed), shown by a child and try to cope with behaviours in ways that may harm the child.

Pacific parents of disabled children are less likely to attend Individual Education Plan meetings at schools, and are less likely to attend health clinic appointments than parents of other ethnicities. Some Pacific families still do not know how or where to access available services and supports and try to cope on their own. Consequently, fewer Pacific children get diagnosed properly to be assigned appropriate intervention[[69]](#footnote-69).

Disability and mental health issues can cause challenges and grief over dreams and aspirations that may not be realised or have become significantly reduced for the child. In some Pacific families, there is still shame and transference of old beliefs that disability is punishment for past sins of family members. Such beliefs can lead to stigmatisation and discrimination against the child or the whole family[[70]](#footnote-70), and can also prevent families from seeking appropriate supports.

Ministry practitioners have spoken on the diversity of responses in Pacific families towards a disabled child or one with mental health issues. Responses vary from overly protective, lowering (at times unnecessarily) of expectations of their child’s potential; to abuse and neglect. Increased vulnerability of children with disability (physical, developmental) and mental unwellness to abuse is consistent with international research[[71]](#footnote-71)’ although to what degree is not yet known.

|  |
| --- |
| Pacific Child – External Influences and Situational Factors |

## Education

Participation in early childhood education (ECE) provides an important start for all children in preparation for school. The participation rate for Pacific children historically lagged behind those of other ethnic groups, but in June 2018 it (93.4%) was comparable with Europeans (98.1%), Asian (98.2%) and Māori (95.5%)[[72]](#footnote-72).

At schooling level, the following table shows that the bulk of Pacific children attend schools in the lower decile brackets. The lower the decile the more economically disadvantaged the school community is and so on. Within communities however, there are households on either side of that average measure, so not all Pacific families in low decile areas will be socio-economically disadvantaged, similarly, not all Pacific families in high decile areas would consider themselves advantaged.

**Table 12: Roll by Decile & Ethnic Group - 1 July 2017**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Decile** | **European** | **Māori** | **Pacific** | **Asian** | **MELAA** | **Other** |
| **D 1 -3** | 7.5% | 43.8% | 60.7% | 15.5% | 16.3% | 12.1% |
| **D 4 – 6** | 28.5% | 30.7% | 19.1% | 23.5% | 27.9% | 21.3% |
| **D 7 - 10** | 62.7% | 24.2% | 19.3% | 59.6% | 54.8% | 62.6% |
| **N/A** | 1.2% | 1.4% | 1.0% | 1.4% | 1.0% | 4.1% |
| **Total Students** | 401,217 | 192,430 | 78,198 | 94,557 | 16,602 | 5,195 |

Excludes International fee-paying students [[73]](#footnote-73) . Rounded percentages.

Student achievement has been linked to school decile levels. Students in higher decile schools generally achieve better than those in lower decile schools[[74]](#footnote-74). An exception to this trend has been shown by a low decile faith-based school with a roll of predominantly Pacific students[[75]](#footnote-75).

Compulsory school attainment levels for Pacific has improved over the years, but still lags behind the other main ethnic groups apart from Māori[[76]](#footnote-76).

**Table 13: NCEA Achievement by Ethnic Group 2017**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ethnicity** | **NCEA** | | |
| **Level 1** | **Level 2** | **Level 3** |
| **Māori** | 80.9% | 67.9% | 35.6% |
| **Pacific** | 86.3% | 75.9% | 46.4% |
| **Asian** | 95.8% | 91.7% | 77.8% |
| **MELAA** | 90.0% | 82.2% | 59.5% |
| **Other** | 87.9% | 80.7% | 56.9% |
| **European/Pākehā** | 92.2% | 83.8% | 57.2% |
| **All Leavers** | 89.6% | 80.7% | 54.4% |

On a practical level, it is important to consider this when developing written communication and when engaging with Pacific children and their families.

## Criminal Offending

Pacific youth offenders tend to commit more violent offences as a first offence compared to their Māori and Pākehā population cohorts[[77]](#footnote-77). The average age for Pacific youth committing a first violent offence was 17, the average age for a Pacific recidivist offender was 16 years, and the re-offending rates were high for both Pacific female (60%) and males (67%)[[78]](#footnote-78). The later offending age means a higher probability that Pacific youth offenders would miss earlier opportunities for therapeutic intervention including cultural supports, that could prevent them committing further offences that would take them into the adult criminal arena. The Ministry is likely to see an increase in the number of Pacific youth offenders when the youth offender age is raised to under 18 years.

Disengagement from education has been associated with gang association[[79]](#footnote-79). Today, some Pacific youth who offend readily flaunt their criminal identities and intentions particularly through clothing, social media, music, and conduct in public places[[80]](#footnote-80). Alcohol and mental health issues are often associated with violent and serious offences committed by Pacific youth according to police[[81]](#footnote-81); a connection that has been well recognised with youth offending generally[[82]](#footnote-82).

Recidivist offending is costly. The YCAP strategy estimates that 80% of young people who offend commit only 20% of offences, and a small group of between 5-15% commit serious and/or repeat offences. The ‘early on-set’ offenders (those that often have come to the notice of the system before reaching the age of 14 years) commit an estimate of between 40-60% of all youth offences.[[83]](#footnote-83). Effective early intervention with children and young people who offend is crucial to reducing recidivist offending.

The youth offender may have his/her own justification for offences committed, particularly if the benefits outweigh the consequences to their peers. Misguided pride in one’s collective chosen identity has also been associated with youth offending as they use violence to defend their pride, enforce ideals of status, authority and identity. When pride and status are combined with external factors such as alcohol, substance abuse or undiagnosed cognitive or mental health challenges, the risks of violence can increase, along with the harmful effects on those around, especially children.

There is an associated loss of face for families when their child has committed a serious crime because the child is an extension of them. Pacific families often fear that their young person’s crimes will be interpreted by others as a reflection of parental neglect, whether or not this is true. Sexual crimes and others that cause death or serious impairment to another person bring extreme shame to families of young offenders. In response to crimes that violate *tapu* and are accompanied by a ‘no care’ attitude by the young person, the offender may be punished by their families for incurring negative public perception of the family and for simply harming another person.

Families may feel a traditional responsibility to put things right or restore justice culturally, in addition to any sanctions through the Oranga Tamariki youth justice intervention or the justice system. When families and caregivers are in turmoil it is important for practitioners to ensure the youth’s safety (in all aspects), dignity and other interests. Pacific practitioners who come from a similar value base to the family will need to remain objective, professional and safe when engaging with the young offender.

Working with recidivist youth offenders is particularly complex because previous attempts to address roots of offending have failed. The families involved may also hold limited hope for change for their young person or exacerbate the situation somehow. Anecdotal comments from frontline Oranga Tamariki staff and Police suggest that a significant number of young Pacific people who offend and their families are no longer actively engaged with their extended families, churches, or Pacific cultural networks. These youths and families are thus relatively disconnected from potential supports, including positive role models particularly for boys[[84]](#footnote-84). A cultural and gendered approach to working with Pacific youth offenders brings possibilities to capitalise on the positive role modelling as opposed to reinforcement of negative stereotypes and destructive behaviours that some young men consider ‘manly’.

A pattern seen with recidivist youth offenders generally is that many have burnt bridges with kin and close networks, especially if their victims were part of those networks as is often the case with sexual offences[[85]](#footnote-85). Reconnecting these youth with safe role models within the family is complex and requires realistic goals. Currently, the Ministry’s youth justice residences are in limited locations. This poses challenges to ensuring meaningful connection between relocated youth and their families, people and communities of significance. Costs and opportunity for families to frequently visit from afar are also challenging factors, especially for families with low incomes, and/or where there are multiple siblings who may be important to the young person. For some Pacific youth, meaningful re-engagement with faith-based supports and associated youth programmes may aid their transition from institution back to the community.

Families that do have strong links to traditional support networks also struggle to cope, are grieving for their child and are often exhausted. Individual members reach a point where they feel helpless and withdraw from attending meetings. In cases of recidivist and violent offenders, some families come to accept that perhaps placement at a residential facility is the safest option for their child/young person, themselves and the community. If families have experienced system failure during this journey, Oranga Tamariki efforts to support them may be rejected. The re-engagement approach will need to first repair the damage and rebuild relationships with families.

## Drugs and Alcohol

Young people’s hopes and aspirations can be seriously derailed and lost when experimentation with alcohol and drugs turns into habitual harmful use. There is a well-established link between illegal drug and alcohol use and Pacific youth offending[[86]](#footnote-86).

The 2003 Alcohol Advisory Council (ALAC) survey found that Pacific youth (46%) were less likely to start ‘really drinking’ under the age of 15 years compared to Māori (69%), and youth of ‘Other’ ethnic groups (58%). The survey found that binge drinking was a concern for Pacific youth, where 29% of Pacific 14-17 year-old drinkers reported having 10 or more glasses on the last drinking occasion compared to 10% for youth of “other” ethnic groups, and 21% for Māori youth[[87]](#footnote-87).

Parental allowance of underage drinking is a contributor to youth alcohol consumption. The 2003 ALAC survey found that Pacific drinkers were less likely than other ethnic groups to have reported that their parents had supplied them with alcohol (18% among Pacific, compared to 32% of Māori and 37% of “other” ethnic groups).

The 2012 ALAC survey among a sample of year 10 students found that fewer Pacific children (31%) consumed alcohol compared to Māori (50%) and NZ Europeans/Others (43%), but higher than Asians (16%)[[88]](#footnote-88). Pacific were less likely to have ever engaged in risky drinking (29%) compared to Māori (51%), though more so than NZ Europeans/Others (27%), and Asians (7%)[[89]](#footnote-89).

The 2012 survey found that of the year 10s who had ever consumed alcohol, Pacific (70%) were most likely to have hidden their alcohol use from parent and caregivers compared to Māori (67%), NZ Europeans/Others (57%) and Asians (41%)[[90]](#footnote-90).

## Youth Gangs

There is no reliable count of how many Pacific children are involved with gangs in Aotearoa, but Police have noted increasing visibility in particular suburbs of south Auckland. While the majority of those involved are boys, there are also girls running their own gangs or in groups associated with male gangs. While numbers cannot be defined, youth gangs are informal associations that can often be identified by unique features such as names, symbols, codes of dress and speech, and the geographical areas each predominantly occupy. The level of sophistication of a gang could also be associated with the type of activity the young people are engaged in when apprehended by Police.

Research on gangs internationally indicates that gangs tend to form in areas of social and economic deprivation. This is reflected in research on youth gangs in parts of south Auckland that found common factors associated with gang association[[91]](#footnote-91)included heavily indebted families, parental-youth emotional disengagement (usually because the parent is busy working to sustain the family), lack of or poor parenting and role models, weakening family unit, bored youth and youth disengagement from education.

There is a view among Pacific people that joining a gang is a choice by the individual, regardless of economic disadvantage as suggested by research. Pacific people are the most economically disadvantaged ethnic group in Aotearoa but the majority of their children do not join gangs. Some in Pacific communities have offered an alternative view to why children join gangs, which is the degradation of parental authority by state legislation that criminalised corporal punishment[[92]](#footnote-92).

Recruitment of Pacific children/youth into gangs is targeted, including the use of social media and images of famous rappers and artists who openly promote gang cultures and symbols. The nature of social media means that recruitment messages are readily accessible and visible to young people. Incentives include alcohol, money, drugs, reputation, and for some – sex using young girls to lure in boys[[93]](#footnote-93).

*“Pacific kids can easily be enticed just by pumping up their ego as big guys who can fight or intimidate others. Youth who are marginalised at school like new migrant youth who struggle with English or the education system can easily be caught up in the gang culture as they try to fit in somewhere. Free alcohol plays a big part in getting them hooked.” (*Maea, 2014)

The types of crimes committed by Pacific youth affiliated with gangs include bag snatching, aggravated robbery, burglaries and vehicle thefts. A new organised activity particularly in Auckland is window wiping on the roads which is not illegal but potentially dangerous; aside from gangs a few are also now organised by families. Violent assaults are said to earn a perpetrator a reputation on the streets; this is a crime particularly prominent with Pacific youth wanting to be somebody according to Maea.

Pacific families are clearly anxious about their children’s wellbeing and safety in association with young gangs[[94]](#footnote-94), and the destructive values such associations instil such as the abuse of females and acceptance of family violence. These behaviours have been witnessed by Oranga Tamariki practitioners who work with Pacific youth gangsters.

Some youth offenders have a family history with the Police due to offending by other family members. The youth or the whole family unit (brothers, sisters, uncles and cousins) may be involved with criminal gang activity[[95]](#footnote-95). A study involving Pacific youth gangs in Counties Manukau found that the association of additional family members in the same gang strengthened the young person’s commitment to the gang and even helped to lessen violence between rival gangs if it was known that family members were in the rival gang[[96]](#footnote-96).

Not all Pacific people however, regard all gang associations as harmful. Depending on their perceptions of gangs and youth, some see young gangsters in somewhat humorous ways - *‘they become little gang members and do things’*[[97]](#footnote-97). Research in South Auckland found that the majority of youth gangs in that area fell into a ‘wannabe’ group. The ‘wannabes’ generally have an informal loosely affiliated membership; there may also be some involvement in petty crimes based on individual choice but not necessarily to benefit the gang. At the other end of the scale is an affiliated criminal youth gang that has a formal structure, hierarchy and is heavily involved in organised crime[[98]](#footnote-98).

Contrary to Pacific families’ anxieties about losing control and influence over their youth, there is evidence that the majority of Pacific youth in gangs value their blood family above their gang family and have no wish to disconnect with their blood families. The disconnection with family occurs where family ties were weak before the youth became involved with gangs and where the family disapproves of the association[[99]](#footnote-99).

Leaving a gang is not necessarily easy, particularly for youth affiliated with the more established gangs. Some gangs have rules about such things. The cost for permission to leave may include harassment, a beating from members, harm or threat to those important to the youth such as a family member, or a requirement to commit a serious offence[[100]](#footnote-100).

## Child Trafficking and Exploitation

New Zealand law prohibits the sexual exploitation, removal of body parts, or engagement in forced labour of people under 18, in section 98A of the Crimes Act 1961. Exploitation of Pacific children in this was has been known for some time.

New Zealand Police and support agencies are well aware of child prostitution, and the reality that some street children are sent out to solicit by their own families and gangs. Police have found prostitutes as young as 11 years of age, charging more than the older teenagers. Some of the known hot spots for child prostitution are in areas with high numbers of Pacific and Māori populations[[101]](#footnote-101).

A 2014 US Department of State report states:

*“A small number of girls and boys, often of Māori or Pacific Islander descent, are subjected to street prostitution, and some are victims of gang-controlled trafficking rings. Some children are recruited by other girls or compelled by family members into child prostitution”* (US Department of State, 2014, p.291)[[102]](#footnote-102).

In 2018 a Fijian-Indian mother in New Zealand was convicted for selling her daughter as a prostitute from when the girl was 15 years old[[103]](#footnote-103).

In the Pacific, the practice of Pacific families sending children elsewhere to be cared for by people including kin, has placed some children at risk of trafficking. A US report identified Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Tonga as nations where internal trafficking of children was a concern.

“*Family members, taxi drivers, foreign tourists, businessmen, and crew on foreign fishing vessels have been alleged to participate in the prostitution of Fijian children. Some Fijian children are at risk of human trafficking as families follow a traditional practice of sending them to live with relatives or families in larger cities; these children may be subjected to domestic servitude or coerced to engage in sexual activity in exchange for food, clothing, shelter, or school fees”* (US Department of State, 2014, p.174)[[104]](#footnote-104)*.*

Pacific nations are aware of the trafficking issue and some are working to counter local and sophisticated international trafficking practices.

The avenue for Aotearoa and Oranga Tamariki to counter cross-border child trafficking, abduction and sale of children is through intercountry adoption processes using the 1993 Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-Operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption. A key principle of the Convention is the notion that a child will not be adopted outside their nation of birth unless adoption is in their best interests and serves fundamental rights. At the time of writing, Fiji was the only independent Pacific island nation that was a contracting state to the Hague Convention. While non-contracting states are not obligated to conform to the principles and processes of the Convention, New Zealand applies the principles of the Convention when engaging with them for the purposes of intercountry adoption.

## Suicide and Self-harm

Suicide results in the physical, emotional and spiritual loss of a Pacific child, their hopes, dreams and aspirations. Aotearoa is known to have very high levels of suicide for male and females aged 15-19 in comparison among Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) nations[[105]](#footnote-105). The suicide rate for Pacific young people is significantly higher than other main ethnic groups in Aotearoa apart from Māori.

**Table 14: Number of suicide deaths and suicide rates by ethnic group, sex and life-stage group, for the period 2011–2015**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ethnicity** | **Age** | **Number (Rate)** | **Male** | **Female** |
| **Pacific** | 15–24 | 57 (21.1) | 40 | 17 |
| **Māori** | 15–24 | 230 (35.7) | 139 | 91 |
| **Asian** | 15–24 | 27 (5.8) | 22 | 5 |
| **All Others** | 15–24 | 277 (15.5) | 213 | 64 |

Rates are for the five-year period 2011-2015, expressed per 100,000 population. Rates for 'All ages' are age-standardised to the WHO World Standard Population. Rates are not calculated where a category has fewer than 20 suicide deaths (< 5 per year). Calculating rates of suicide from fewer than five suicide deaths per year produces unstable rates[[106]](#footnote-106).

Pacific has a lower hospitalisation rate for intentional self-harm compared to the overall population, however the vulnerability for Pacific females is much more obvious than in the suicide data[[107]](#footnote-107).

**Table 15:Number and rates of intentional self-harm hospitalisation by ethnicity, five-year age group, and by sex, 2013**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Age (years)** | **Māori** | **Asian** | **European & Other** | **All**  **(rate)** | **Pacific**  **(rate)** | **Pacific**  **Male** | **Pacific**  **Female** |
| **0-4** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **5-9** | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 (0.3) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **10-14** | 127 | 15 | 258 | 424 (142.9) | 19 (66.5) | 4 | 15 |
| **15-19** | 366 | 67 | 1228 | 1749 (559.4) | 77 (272.5) | 25 | 52 |
| **20-24** | 242 | 72 | 719 | 1117 (353.6) | 75 (290.7) | 33 | 42 |

Age-specific rates measure the frequency of suicides per 100,000 population relative to particular population age groups. Total rates are expressed per 100,000 population and age standardised to the WHO world standard population. Data includes short-stay ED events. The ethnicity of 66 hospitalisations was unknown.

Suicide prevention strategies for Pacific people in Aotearoa such as Waka Hourua are fairly new[[108]](#footnote-108). The strategy identifies open dialogue about suicide, strengthening family connections, capitalising on cultural strengths, and spirituality as key factors to the development of effective intervention.

Pacific suicide prevention strategies are valuable and should be incorporated into statutory child protection work with Pacific children and young people at risk of suicide. The strategies suggest that meaningful consideration of the Pacific family/collective and spiritual faith are clearly important.

## Grief

Grief can be experienced by children as a result of many events, not only due to death of a significant person. Prolonged disconnection from siblings, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, close friends and other people who are emotionally significant to the child can lead to grief. Adults in violent relationships may underestimate or simply dismiss the harm to children that results from witnessing and feeling the violence perpetrated around them. The violation of loved ones, protectors and destruction of objects (e.g. photos) they have symbolic value to the child can have emotional and spiritual impact. Adults in violent relationships may continue to associate without recognising the depths of the effects of the emotional, cognitive, psychological and spiritual development and wellbeing of a child in their care.

The anecdotal experience of social workers is that children who are involved with the State often have numerous state agents and agencies involved. Grief can be experienced by the child due to a change of social worker, caregiver, teacher, mentor, or someone else who the child felt a connection with. The death of a significant person is however the ultimate loss, whether or not the child was prepared for it. There is a gap in research knowledge on death of a Pacific child from abuse on associated children and families, but each culture has its own rituals and customs to deal with loss[[109]](#footnote-109). Social media is also an avenue that children and young people are using to connect with others for support[[110]](#footnote-110).

|  |
| --- |
| Pacific Family |

*“Ko e masiva oku ongo taha, a e hala ha kainga -To have no kin is to be in extreme poverty”* Honourable Tariana Turia[[111]](#footnote-111)

## Perception of Child Rights

Pacific peoples’ perception of child rights is connected to their expectations of children and their spiritual, emotional, political value (see Child section on Values and Expectations).

All Pacific nations have ratified the UNCROC. Independent of UNCROC however, all Pacific cultures understand the sacredness of a child, hence the existence of ancient and current protocols for their protection. The notion that a child has independent and equal rights as an adult goes against norms, political and social practises and traditions that are about collective identity, and responsibility of adults for children. In saying this, many OECD nations continue to struggle to truly achieve for children, outcomes rooted in the principles of the convention[[112]](#footnote-112). The struggle of families and Aotearoa society in general are reflected in annual reports of child abuse, neglect and family violence to Oranga Tamariki.

Some Pacific nations have begun to develop legislation and infrastructure to integrate the principles of UNCROC into local laws. Challenges arise when the principles of the convention counters traditional beliefs of natural order whereby privileges and disadvantages are accorded by age, gender, class, birth order, cultural hierarchy, sexual identity, ethnicity and so forth. The lower political, social, economic and cultural status of children in traditional contexts means that the application of laws may not have always been consistent or resulted in favour of the child.

A Pacific caregiver’s pursuit of their child’s rights and entitlements can be limited if there is little awareness of relevant services and legal provisions to support parenting, education and health provision. This is not only a barrier to the wellbeing of children of recent migrants to Aotearoa, but is a challenge for families generally who are not ‘literate’ in the relevant languages, jargon and ways to utilise systems of support.

## Family Status

Social standing is very important to Pacific families and cultures with roots in collective societies. Positive status reflects on parents, ancestors, reputation, family strength, traditions of self-responsibility; appearing vulnerable implies weakness. Family members are expected to protect, if not enhance, family status. As family status tends to be more about worrying how others see you, it can be threatened by exposure of violations such as child abuse, family violence, teenage pregnancy (as previously discussed), criminal acts by family members, and pregnancy outside marriage.

For families in Aotearoa, economic and educational success signals their ability to significantly improve quality of life of children, and prosperity of its members here and overseas. Many Pacific families outside their lands of origin support families ‘back home’ through remittances. Remittances often go to meet family needs, maintain assets, and serve communal responsibilities in the island communities. Children grow up aware of this responsibility and some become contributors. The practice of remitting varies between groups. In 2012, Samoa was in the top five recipient countries in the world in terms of proportion of remittances to GDP, at 23%[[113]](#footnote-113); Tonga’s was at 13% of GDP[[114]](#footnote-114).

## Guardianship of Children

The customary notion of guardianship in many Pacific cultures is primarily a moral responsibility with spiritual genealogical roots. It is a relationship based on belonging, responsibilities, obligations, and status. Those in positions of guardianship go beyond the parent or primary caregiver to include kin generally. In many Pacific languages there is no translation for ‘aunt’, ‘uncle’ or ‘cousin’, but many iterations of ‘mother’, ‘father’, ‘sister’ and ‘brother' to refer to anyone perceived to be in a position of guardianship over a child. One must be sure to check what a child means when they identify a person as their ‘sister’, ‘brother’, ‘father’, ‘Papa’ or ‘Mama’; the child may be speaking about a guardianship relationship and not a biological or legal one, and similarly for an adult.

Unlike Court ordered guardianship, one based on customs is not exclusive and may well extend to non kin from the same village, island, nation and others of shared ethnicity.

It is not uncommon for a Pacific practitioner or social service provider to claim a Pacific client as ’my people’ or ‘our people’ and ‘my kin’ and ‘our kin’. A Pacific person or family may well take on the guardianship of a child with the full expectation that the child’s wider collective may one day resurface to claim that child. Should family surface, the caregiver may consider it appropriate to release that child to her/his kin if the child so choses and if the situation is considered in the child’s best interest as previously discussed in the section on customary care arrangements.

Because customary guardianship is tied to kinship status and responsibilities, there is an indignity associated with a family that turns its back on a child, and rejection may also be perceived as neglect of duty for the child gifted by God/gods. However families may not always have the material resources, including suitable housing, to provide for the child or help out relatives - some are just getting by themselves. Some will take on the care of a child in the absence of skills to appropriately manage challenging behaviours which may well place others in the household at risk. Grandparents are becoming the primary if not back-up caregivers for children despite their limitations – financial, health or otherwise – to support the children’s parents who may need to work or who are unable or unwilling to care for their children. Many hold the belief that love/*alofa/’ofa/aroha* and faith in God will make things alright. This faith sustains their determination among the shortage of resources and skills when caring for children.

There are more specific traditions in many Pacific cultures (Samoan, Tokelauan, Tongan, Tuvaluan, Fijian) where the brother and sister have responsibilities to support each other; an expectation that then extends to care for each other’s children. These traditions may no longer be practiced in Aotearoa by some, but the underlying principle of mutual responsibility remains. On a practical level, this means that aunties and uncles play important roles in decision-making about a child, alongside grandparents. Consequently, in a family meeting for a child, the aunt may be an important speaker and provider of protection for her brother’s child; similarly for an uncle whose role is to provide this support to the children of his sister. Traditionally, the spouses of the aunties and uncles to the child do not have decision-making rights in such matters, though in the Aotearoa context, spouses and partners have become more active in family decision-making, especially if they are the provider of supports.

The importance of guardianship traditions is reflected in the Home for Life numbers (see section 5) where the vast majority of Pacific children who have been in Oranga Tamariki care for over six months, leave to live permanently with kin. This raises an opportunity to pay closer attention to cultural elements of a case, including establishing meaningful relationships with kin and intensified preparation of subsequent family placements to ensure the arrangements are safe, sustainable and permanent.

Without setting unrealistic expectations, Pacific families can be professionally supported to exercise their guardianship roles towards these children. Caregiver training may be made more effective if it could be delivered where appropriate, in the first language of the family and their supporters, to maximise the chance of long-term stability for the child and the family unit. Such arrangements need extra caution for children placed with kin in the Pacific islands as they lack the State resources and services for children and young offenders that Aotearoa has if things go wrong or new needs arise.

## Perceptions of Discipline, Abuse and Neglect

Wilful acts of neglect, exploitation and abuse are choices by an individual, not a collective code of behaviour for people of the same culture. Caregiver perceptions of discipline and abuse are influenced by many things including parental history, surrounding norms, religion, status of children, what constitutes harm and what is criminal. A Pacific parent who believes in tough talk as a less harmful way to motivate or discipline their child compared to hitting, may inflict deep grief and harm with hurtful words and put downs and may struggle to see it as abusive.

Physical abuse has already been signalled as a significant issue for the Pacific group (refer to Table 6), whether or not that was the intent of the perpetrator’s action. The use of physical punishment to get a child to obey, show respect, or to reduce risk to their safety (e.g. from running across the road), remains acceptable in some Pacific families[[115]](#footnote-115). The Pacific Island Family Study (PIF) found that smacking was a common practice among Pacific men. It found that 25% of men used smacking on children who were 1 year old, 82% used it on children at 2 years, and 14% of men hit a child at 2 years of age with an object. Fathers who had been subjected to high levels of paternal physical abuse were more likely to use physical discipline than those who had not[[116]](#footnote-116).

The PIF study also measured discipline practices of Pacific mothers within the first year of their child’s birth. Disciplinary methods that were measured were hitting/smacking the child with or without an object, threats to punish, and telling the child she/he is bad. The study found no significant association between mother’s age and discipline method, although mothers aged below 20 scored substantially lower on the use of these methods than older ones, which was positive. Tongan mothers scored the highest, meaning they were more likely to hit/smack, threaten to punish or tell the child she/he is bad. Samoan mothers scored significantly lower than all other ethnicities[[117]](#footnote-117). One explanation proposed for the disparity between the Samoan and Tongan discipline scores was that Tongan mothers were the primary disciplinarians as opposed to fathers, while this was not the case in Samoan culture. Another reason was the fact that Samoans had been in Aotearoa longer than Tongans so were possibly more acculturated to alternative methods of child management and discipline, and the surrounding statutory environment[[118]](#footnote-118).

The PIF study found no significant association between discipline and mother’s education level, household income, marital status, where respondents were born, the number of years lived in Aotearoa, religious affiliation, employment or family structure. There was however a significant association between discipline and acculturation[[119]](#footnote-119). Mothers who reported being more aligned with Pacific parenting traditions were more likely to hit/smack, threaten to punish or tell the child she/he is bad, than those more aligned to both Pacific and European traditions.

The PIF study with Pacific mothers did find higher discipline scores for mothers that gambled and who had experienced post natal depression than those without these challenges. Smoking and alcohol use were not found to be significant to discipline practices. Drug use was excluded from analysis because the number of mothers that reported using them was too low[[120]](#footnote-120).

The anecdotal experience of Oranga Tamariki practitioners is that some caregivers feel at a loss when told that hitting a child is a criminal offence. Stopping is also difficult when hitting is perceived to be condoned by religious and cultural beliefs around parental duty and authority[[121]](#footnote-121).

Family violence is the main cause of abuse of Pacific children, but it is a cause that may not be readily recognised or considered serious by family members and significant others (e.g. teachers, religious leaders, neighbours, community workers, other professionals). The accumulative emotional harm and psychological impact on children is commonly minimised as it is not as visible as a physical injury, and Pacific people may not see the relevance of Oranga Tamariki involvement as a result. Men who hit their partners but not their children may well feel that they have not harmed their children, and their battered partner may also hold the same view.

Different forms of neglect may not be recognised as abuse by Pacific caregivers if they only understand abuse as physical or sexual offences against children. Important medical appointments that are not kept, or treatment that is not administered because of alternative beliefs or other priorities, independent of financial and access limitations, may not be perceived as neglect by a caregiver. Many Pacific people in Aotearoa continue to seek out traditional healers, some of whom may suggest complementary or alternative therapies to those proposed by mainstream medical professionals. Pacific born mothers, especially Samoan and Tongan, as well as religious mothers were more likely to do this, compared to the long established groups like Niuean and Cook Islanders[[122]](#footnote-122). A choice between embarking on treatment such as chemotherapy that may or may not guarantee wellness versus a traditional alternative is difficult regardless. A family that chooses traditional non-western treatment in search of healing and hope understand that choice as based on love, not an act of medical neglect.

Supervisory neglect is a common problem. Assuming a community or street is safe may contribute to caregivers letting children roam unsupervised and they may not see why this is a problem. Children being left at home with provisions and back up contacts while the caregiver goes to work may have been acceptable in previous homelands or not considered neglectful. Early training in responsibility may have resulted in young children being perceived by their caregivers as being capable of being alone for periods of time; or of older siblings being left frequently in charge of a number of younger children. The impact of this type of neglect may not be perceived as a concern by caregivers.

Sexual abuse is often seen as a risk to girls from males and there is ample research in this area. This however neglects the vulnerability of boys to sexual abuse. Sexual violation and rape are severe abuses in any Pacific culture, and have widespread impact on associated relationships, especially if committed within the family. Sexual offences that do not involve penetration however may be seen as less serious. A young man’s sexual offending may be regarded as youthful exploration by some adults, with minimal consideration for the victim.

Most people, including Pacific, are not aware that the majority of offenders of sexual abuse are from within the family group or close networks. Section 130 of the New Zealand Crimes Act 1961 defines ‘incest’ as involving ‘people whose relationship is that of parent and child, siblings, half-siblings, or grandparent and grandchild’[[123]](#footnote-123). Customary interpretations of terms (and therefore relationships) ‘siblings’, ‘half-siblings’, ‘grandparent’ and ‘grandchild’ are far more inclusive, hence abuse by a distant relative who may be seen by the child in those roles is still considered ‘incest’ by the family, but may not be seen so under the legal definition.

The death of a child as a result of intentional actions or inaction of a parent or caregiver is a tragedy for any family. Case studies from the Pacific show that such deaths can result in a spread of consequences across the perpetrator, families and surrounding communities. A 2002 case from Samoa of a seven-year-old girl who died as a result of physical abuse by her stepfather, resulted in further punishment based on local custom. In addition to the stepfather being incarcerated, his nuclear family was exiled from their village by the village authority. This customary practice recognised the severity of the violation of the child’s life, and the sacredness of life. It also followed customs that hold collectives responsible for the actions of their individual members[[124]](#footnote-124).

Practitioners working with Pacific families therefore require an understanding of the family’s position on the particular abuse or neglect, education and awareness building about these issues, the role of State services, associated legislation and capitalisation of family and other community supports to enable families to help themselves. Assessment may therefore need to occur over more than a single visit and should be an ongoing process. Referring the family to an agency without assessment of their understanding of the reason for and expectation of change may be pointless. Referred families may choose not to engage with agencies if they do not see a problem. Providing written resources in English to people that struggle with English may have also been pointless.

## Perceptions of Justice

Legal pluralism exists in many parts of the Pacific to different degrees; this is where State legislation works alongside custom. In some places there are clear demarcations about when State legislation or custom holds higher authority as in disputes over customary land[[125]](#footnote-125). In very recent times, family violence which has been traditionally dealt with locally has become a violation for the State to handle (see Family Violence section). The mix of values, assumptions, rules and perceptions about justice and its meaning are not always in alignment because customs that deliver justice as a matter of collective interest clash with State law which is supposed to uphold individual interest under human rights laws. For example, consequences from traditional processes include exile of perpetrators from villages, destruction of property, and monetary fines – all in addition to or in spite of consequences through the statutory process such as a conviction[[126]](#footnote-126). Also, while traditional restorative justice processes seem to work well for settling disputes between different collectives, they are not known to serve the needs of the individuals (victim and perpetrator) directly affected, nor are they readily used to address offences committed in-house such as incest and family violence.

Traditional restorative justice approaches hold collectives responsible and accountable for offences committed by individuals. These have a strong focus on restoring dignity, and harmony. In the Samoan culture the process of *ifoga*[[127]](#footnote-127) is important to the journey of restoration of dignity and harmony between affected parties. The admission of guilt is voluntary, and following demonstration of humility by a public apology the perpetrator and associated collective begin the process of restoration and redress. Moral power is on the side of the victimised party. Unless the victim accepts the apology and materials of redress from the perpetrator, there is no beginning to redress or a resolution. The perpetrator must return repeatedly and conduct the public apology until acceptance and forgiveness has been gifted by the victimised party.

One law for all and one that is controlled by the State can be a major adjustment for some Pacific people in western contexts. A letter of apology from an offender for having stolen one’s car or for breaking into one’s home or harming a family member may not be seen as ‘just’ redress. The absence of collective responsibility for the actions of a member of the collective may be seen as a weakness in the western system. The lack of display of genuine remorse may further inflame a victim’s sense of injustice. When justice in the eyes of the State has little meaning to Pacific victims, Pacific offenders, and their relative associates, feelings of injustice, grief and distrust of the system may affect ongoing engagements with the State and its agents.

Fortunately in Aotearoa, the principles of the Act 1989 and Section 10 of the Sentencing Act 2002 indicate the windows of opportunity for practitioners to create an environment that can incorporate Pacific notions of collective involvement in offender accountability, responsibility, support to victims and offenders, and involvement in the development of meaningful solutions they can own. Care is needed in forums where family or sexual violence is the concern. These can re expose children, young people and other victims to subtle intimidation or threats from perpetrators and their supporters, before, during or after meetings. Victim participation in these settings must not be manipulated to primarily benefit the offender[[128]](#footnote-128).

## Leadership

It is important to understand what style of leadership exists within the family. Leadership is a collective responsibility in most Pacific cultures. Leaders are not always ‘at the front’ in Pacific families, or male. Collective agency is a strength and matter of pride. Guardianship of family members, assets and interests is spread among members of the family.

Some cultures are strongly patriarchal such as Fijian, Fijian-Indian, Niue and Tonga; while in others leadership is spread between male and female roles as in the Cook Islands, Samoa and Tokelau. Among the Melanesian and Micronesian peoples there is a combination of both patrilineal and matrilineal practices. Western religion promotes the notion of male authority which is now the norm despite cultural traditions.

Traditional notions of leadership are also linked to chiefly titles such as *ariki* (Cook Islands), *matai* (Samoan), *matapule* (Tongan), *aliki* (Tuvalu). Others come via class, age (*toeaina, fatupaepae* (Tokelau), and roles in faith-based communities. Some titles are therefore inherited, others passed on via gender centric traditions; or bestowed in recognition of service to collectives. In the Tongan culture although a female is always considered higher in rank than a male the primogeniture rule usually is enforced whereby the inheritance of land and titles goes through the male/ paternal line. The paternal side is very dominant, and the eldest male on the paternal side of the family - the *‘ulumotu’a*, is the decision maker. In many cultures, elders have decision making authority regardless of chiefly status or resources; they may not even be in the country. The emphasis on class and rank authority for the Tongans or caste hierarchy for Fijian-Indians are specific to those groups.

In western society as in the Pacific, some Pacific families live independent of the cultural leadership hierarchy and umbrella but are certainly cognisant of it.

## Decision Making

*Talanoa* and *fono* are common mechanisms of engagement and decision making in the Pacific world. These are words from Polynesia but other parts of the Pacific will have their own words to describe similar processes. These are decision making mechanisms that build on relationships, are inclusive, encourage ownership, and facilitate the exercise of collective agency. For Fijians and Tongans, *talanoa* signals a more formal, culturally structured discussion with associated protocols, rituals and other terms of engagement. For Niueans, *talanoa* can be a free narrative type of conversation; while casual these are important to establishing rapport and maintaining connections. For Samoans, *fono* is the more formal deliberation (*talanoaga*) of important matters.

As with any formal meeting, criteria for participation is guided by protocols. For example, different decisions are designated for different participants; heads of families, mothers, young people, faith based communities and professional associations each have interests and forums. It is traditionally unusual to have children present in a formal decision making forum as this is a responsibility considered that of adults and elders.

There is an initial emphasis on process rather than outcomes because relationships are important[[129]](#footnote-129). Spirituality plays a significant role in both traditional and non-traditional forums, depending on the participants and the matter. Cultural protocols and rituals operate depending on the nature of the gathering and participants. For Fijians and Samoans, formal traditional meetings start with a ceremony where gifts are presented and the drinking of kava/‘ava (traditional drink). This process is part of mutual acknowledgement (genealogy, titles, roles), reflection, and sets the tone for the relationship and deliberation. Because of the focus on process and relationships it may take several meetings before parties reach agreement; the discussion may be more liberal than the agenda. Time is not the most important factor.

*Speaking Rights*

People are present at meetings for different reasons. Being present does not equate to having an equal say or obligate one to speak. The allocation of speaker/s is associated with the role of representation; it does not mean the speaker has authority over those represented such as a child or a victim of family violence. In traditional Samoan culture, the orator chief (*tulāfale*) is advised on what to say on behalf of the collective, but there are those of higher cultural or important rank (elder, sister, child) whose view may hold weight on the final decision. Meeting facilitators who are not familiar with the nuances of relational spaces need to make the time to understand them (refer to Va’aifetu Part 2 for culture specific frameworks). For ethnically mixed families, the forum must be respectful of that diversity.

In non-traditional families or in less familiar contexts, there may be a more liberal style of participation in formal meetings. There is also a responsibility for the forum convenor to ensure the voice of women and children are given space, place and significance. There is also a responsibility to ensure that there is no repercussion due to exercising that right, post forum. It is prudent to consult with the family as to how they wish to engage, and to identify the right people to meet with.

*Etiquette*

Notions of inclusion, respect, flexibility, reconciliation and positions are considerations for etiquette[[130]](#footnote-130). Respect is shown in the way speakers refrain from talking over each other, let the silences fall, apologise or pave the way before verbalising a matter or word that may cause offence, and seek permission from others to speak on their behalf. As Matai’a (2006) describes, there is etiquette in the way Pacific people discuss sensitive matters that upholds dignity and rebuilds without having to describe the details of violations[[131]](#footnote-131).

There is a perceived lack of class and dignity in a speaker who speaks directly so it is common to hear them using metaphoric speech, often using knowledge of the past, legends, stories of ancestors and biblical scriptures. Humour is often used to convey important messages or to put each other at ease. It is generally considered undignified for a speaker to ‘tell’ the other side what to do as this portrays an assumption of superiority, and goes against Pacific principles of humility and respect. Humour is not to be confused with mocking or trivialising issues which would violate the central etiquette of respect. Violations of a sexual nature are so sensitive in some cultures and families that it may be necessary to talk to the females separately from the males, to children separately from youth and adults. Pacific people are comfortable with silences and pauses which are actually part of the conversation; silences in action are also noted.

*Confidentiality and Privacy*

As Pacific cultures are traditionally collective, strict adherence to official policies of confidentiality and privacy could hinder collective inclusion and affect outcomes. Family representatives will be expected by the rest of the family to share the information, especially with those in direct positions of customary guardianship over a child, some of whom may not live the country. The sharing of information enables collectives to make informed decisions to support a child or family.

## Pacific Languages

There are over 1000 languages in the Pacific. The most linguistically diverse are the larger Melanesian countries; Bougainville has 28, Solomon Islands 63, Vanuatu 112, and Papua New Guinea 728 languages (not including West Papua). Micronesia has between 11 and 17 languages, and Polynesia has approximately 15 languages.

Pacific people are multi-lingual with 43.3% of the population in New Zealand able to speak two languages or more. However, there is a decline in usage of Polynesian languages among Pacific youth and NZ-born generations in Aotearoa, especially Cook Islander, Niuean and Tokelauan languages[[132]](#footnote-132). The languages of small ethnic groups may not survive the 21st Century as elders die and younger generations speak other dominant languages in new environments[[133]](#footnote-133).

**Table 16: Proportion (%) of Pacific People Who Can Speak a Pacific Language by Census Year**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ethnicity** | **Census Year** | | |
| **2001** | **2006** | **2013** |
| **Cook Islands Māori** | 17.% | 16.2% | 13.0% |
| **Fijian** | 27.1% | 27.6% | 27.6% |
| **Niuean** | 26.1% | 23.7% | 18.7% |
| **Samoan** | 64.0% | 60.7% | 55.6% |
| **Tongan** | 56.7% | 58.2% | 53.2% |
| **Tokelauan** | 41.3% | 38.1% | 31.9% |

Hindi, Gana Tuvalu and Kiribati are spoken by significant numbers of Pacific people in Aotearoa from Fiji, Tuvalu and Kiribati.

## Spirituality and Religion

The influence of religion on Pacific cultures and families is strong. The majority (82.5%) of Pacific people in Aotearoa noted a religious affiliation in the 2013 Census compared to European (53.1%), Māori (53.7%), Asian (69.7%) and Middle Eastern/Latin American/African (83%). Polynesians were predominantly in Christian religions[[134]](#footnote-134). Muslim and Hindu are particularly significant for Fijian-Indians.

Churches are communities with spiritual, economic, cultural and political significance to many (but not all) Pacific families. For some cultural groups, churches are pseudo villages where their languages, worldviews, values and rituals are lived and passed on to younger generations. Religious beliefs continue to promote a natural order of patriarchal control and authority in home and communities; this is so embedded that established norms remain applicable in households that are not particularly religious. Religion and biblical teachings are thus undeniably influential in many households, at times more so than State law.

The commitment of Pacific households to churches is spiritual, emotional, social, political and economic. Community-based programmes to maintain cultural identity, indigenous language and provide other supports and services were begun initially by religious associations, many of them based on church properties. Legal ownership of churches and related assets is important to community esteem, place and purpose in the new homeland, and collective dignity. Families service debt for buildings, land, gifts to other churches, social services associated with the church such as early childhood centres, and any other programme the community wishes the church to finance. The negative element of family and community investment in faith based communities is that it can divert limited resources away from the needs of the child[[135]](#footnote-135).

Western religion is so intertwined with Pacific cultures now that people often forget it was introduced to their societies. Unlike the ownership of introduced religion by Pacific communities, there has been resistance in Pacific communities in Aotearoa and abroad to legislation about child rights and gender equity due to a perception that they are introduced threats to the natural order[[136]](#footnote-136). Oranga Tamariki practitioners frequently encounter the use of biblical quotes by Pacific families to either justify or reject the abusive treatment of children and women. Practitioners who recognise the significance of religion to a Pacific family’s value base know that this can be a counter to abuse and violation; *‘e fofō e le alamea le alamea’* – the fish (*alamea*) of thorns heals itself.

It is important to note that there are Pacific communities that gather according to island identity rather than religious affiliation, such as Cook Islanders. Some Fijians and others gather primarily according to village, island or even professional affiliation. NZ-born generations do not always worship in communities where Pacific languages are spoken.

## Gender

Pacific people often look at gender from the perspective of equity rather than equality, and in terms of complementary responsibilities. It is common for Pacific people to talk of the protected and privileged position of women in their cultures, particularly through the brother-sister relationship. There are different terms for this brother–sister relationship, for Samoans it is *feagaiga,* Tuvaluans call it *taatina*, Tokelauans talk of the *va o te tuagane ma te tuafafine,* Tongans talk about concept of *vae tapui* and concepts of *fahu* and *mehikitanga* (sister holds role of superior advisor to her brother),and Fijians talk of *vakarokoroko* (respect) between brother and sister[[137]](#footnote-137).

Despite the public face of homophobia among Pacific communities, family members who are non-heterosexual have always been important in Pacific families and communities[[138]](#footnote-138). In households where there is respect and value placed on all family members, these members (male and female) are often found to be parents, or in primary caregiver roles to adopted children, children of other kin, and elders. Many help family members out financially as part of their responsibility for the next generation. They hold knowledge of genealogy and are active in keeping family members connected.

Traditionally, Pacific women have held strategic status in many Polynesian, Micronesian and Melanesian cultures such as women holding *ariki* (paramount chief) titles in the Cook Islands, *fatupaepae* forTokelauan, and *matai* for Samoans. Women continue to hold hereditary roles over customary lands, especially in matriarchal communities in Melanesia and Micronesia[[139]](#footnote-139). Women have also been the creators of traditional forms of wealth, such as *koloa* (tapa and crafts in Tonga) and *tivaevae* (Cook Islands quilts). In the Pacific islands, around 80% of market vendors are women, contributing to family and national wealth[[140]](#footnote-140). The esteemed status of women has unfortunately slipped even in matrilineal societies of the Pacific, fuelled by the increasing monetisation of wealth[[141]](#footnote-141), religion, and patriarchal colonial influences[[142]](#footnote-142). Women’s unpaid work in homes, churches, communities remain unrecognised as valuable.

Social, political and economic realities outside the Pacific islands inevitably results in a reconsideration and reshuffling of roles and responsibilities previously assigned by gender, such as child rearing, income provision and leadership. A key factor that influenced the assignment of traditional roles was the subsistence life that many Pacific people live in the islands, where men work the land while women took care of family members. Traditional roles may now have little relevance to some families in western contexts as households redistribute responsibility to adapt to different realities. Perceptions and expectations around gender are also influenced by partnerships and associations with non-Pacific people, class, education, age, birth order, sexuality, and treatment by the law.

In tertiary education in Aotearoa, Pacific women are doing better than Pacific males in participation at all qualification levels, as well as qualification completion[[143]](#footnote-143).

**Table 17: Pacific Domestic students completing qualifications by gender and qualification type/level 2017**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Gender** | **Year** | **Cert**  **1-3** | **Cert**  **Level 4** | **Dip**  **Level 5-7** | **Bachelors** | **Grad Cert** | **Honours & Postgrad** | **Masters**  **PhD** |
| **Female** | **2017** | 3,065 | 2,105 | 780 | 519 | 105 | 350 | 155 |
| **Male** | **2017** | 2,050 | 1,000 | 440 | 273 | 50 | 140 | 65 |

[[144]](#footnote-144) Pacific Domestic Students Only. See Additional notes

Success in education for girls and women greatly lifts their confidence, aspirations and income earning potential. Women are providers and leaders, especially in single parent families. This is positive for gender equity and advances the safety and wellbeing of Pacific children, women, men, and over time their associated communities.

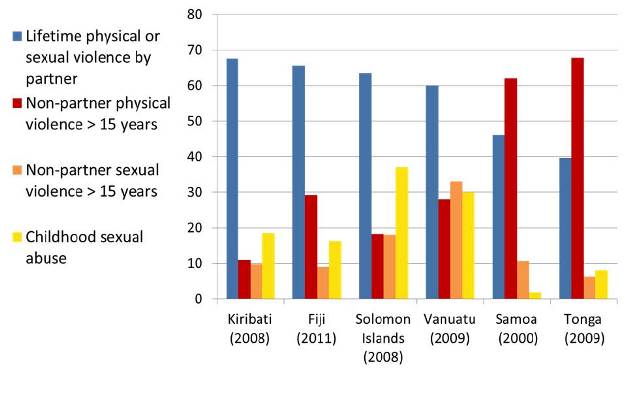
## Family Violence

Family violence is the intentional abuse of sacredness (*tapu*), respect, physical strength, trust, power and authority, and violation of wellbeing[[145]](#footnote-145). Gender based violence is committed primarily by men upon women, but also includes male violence towards *fa'afāfine*[[146]](#footnote-146). Violence is a problem in Pacific nations[[147]](#footnote-147); it is committed by choice and cannot be blamed on culture, religion, alcohol, drugs, or anything else.

The sacredness of women as sisters, mothers and elders appears to diminish in violent partnerships where they are wives or partners; perhaps because while there are cultural protocols that uphold the status of sisters, mothers and elders, there is relatively less regarding spouses aside from religious/biblical hierarchy. The female who lives with her partner’s family is particularly vulnerable to family violence, not only from her partner. The wife/partner enters a context where her partner’s sisters and mother hold higher status than herself and they are likely to support the husband in a dispute. A Samoa FV study conducted in 2000 found that women who lived with their partner’s family were more likely to be abused than those who lived with their own family. Male perpetrators justified their violence as punishment for disrespectful behaviour by their partner towards their family members[[148]](#footnote-148). Similar situations exist in other cultures, and risks increase in arranged marriages[[149]](#footnote-149).

Studies show differences in types of violence and perpetrator type between the different Pacific nations[[150]](#footnote-150):

**Graph 1: Prevalence (%) and Patterns of Violence Against Women (15-49) in Pacific Island Countries**



The ‘Non-partner’ category includes fathers, teachers, church ministers, relatives and others such as teachers who hit as a form of discipline in schools (even when corporal punishment is outlawed)[[151]](#footnote-151).

Most Pacific nations have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In 2015, Tonga signalled its intention to ratify CEDAW but did not proceed due to strong local opposition[[152]](#footnote-152). Palau is the only other Pacific island territory yet to ratify CEDAW[[153]](#footnote-153). While compliance with the convention is a work in progress across the Pacific region, the development of legislation against family violence among the independent nations indicates positive progress.

The elimination of violence against women in Pacific nations and territories is a key priority because it is a major impediment to social and economic development[[154]](#footnote-154), especially if one takes into consideration that between 75% and 90% of vendors in marketplaces in the Pacific are women[[155]](#footnote-155). This has resulted in significant international aid into the region to reduce gender based/family violence.

In the Pacific, family violence can be dealt with by traditional non-statutory authorities who commonly emphasise reconciliation and forgiveness[[156]](#footnote-156). Many women have become dissatisfied with these authorities who are usually presided over by men, as they do not always address the best interest of individual victims or of women[[157]](#footnote-157). The other option for victims is the law. Pacific nations, driven by internal advocates and with donor support have begun developing and reviewing existing legislation to address family/partner violence. Those with laws are Fiji (Family Protection Act 2003, Domestic Violence Decree 2009), Vanuatu (Family Safety Act 2008), Samoa (Family Safety Act 2013), Tonga (Family Protection Act 2014), Solomon Islands (Family Protection Act 2014), and Kiribati (Te Rau N Te Mweenga Act - Family Peace Act for Domestic Violence) 2014). The Cook Islands and PNG are also developing legislation[[158]](#footnote-158).

The incorporation of gender equality and equity into laws in Pacific nations is developing in environments of legal pluralism. Tonga’s new Family Protection Act 2014 enables Police to remove a male perpetrator temporarily from his land in favour of victims. The Fiji Family Law Act 2003 enables unmarried spouses to claim relationship property[[159]](#footnote-159) which could not be done previously.

## Socio-economic Position

Pacific people are overrepresented in sectors that were hardest hit in the global financial crisis such as manufacturing, wholesale and retail, transport and warehousing. Upskilling and retraining in alternative occupations is required to help affected workers and families to move forward[[160]](#footnote-160). Over 60% of employed Pacific people work in mid-range skill level occupations such as carers, cleaners, retail jobs, factory process workers and forestry workers. This rate compares to half of those of European background working in highly skilled occupations (managerial and professional roles)[[161]](#footnote-161). A continued upward trend in education attainment will be needed to lessen the gap between Pacific and other groups going forward.

The unemployment rate for Pacific was 16% at 30 June 2013, three times higher than for NZ Europeans. Pacific youth unemployment was at 30% (22% male and 38% female). The proportion of Pacific youth not in employment, education or training was 19% (12.9% Pacific males and 26% Pacific females), twice that of Europeans[[162]](#footnote-162).

Individual income trends show that while the median personal annual income rose for other ethnic groups between 2006 and 2013, only Pacific dropped, falling from $20,500 to $19,700[[163]](#footnote-163).

The following is the comparison by ethnicity:

$37,100 for 'Other ethnicity' (includes 'New Zealander')

$30,900 for European

$22,500 for Māori

$20,100 for Asian

$19,800 for Middle Eastern/Latin American/African (MELAA)

$19,700 for Pacific people.

Household resilience is influenced by resources. There is no current estimate of household income by ethnicity due to difficulties determining the ethnicity of a household[[164]](#footnote-164). The low median income for Pacific is possibly affected by the high youth rate. Income directly impacts a family’s ability to provide basic care for children.

*“Poverty rates (after housing costs) for Māori and Pasifika children are around double those of Pākehā/ European children. Further, Māori and Pasifika children are approximately twice as likely as Pākehā/European children to be living in severe poverty and are also at a higher risk of persistent poverty….about half of all children living in poverty are Pākehā/European”* (Office of the Children’s Commissioner, p.7, 2012)[[165]](#footnote-165)*.*

The Office of the Children’s Commissioner report estimates the economic costs of child poverty to be in the range of $6-8 billion per year. It saw the failure to alleviate child poverty as undermining the reduction of child abuse and improvements in educational attainment and skill level[[166]](#footnote-166).

## Housing

Pacific people have the lowest level of home ownership compared to all other ethnic groups[[167]](#footnote-167).

**Table 18: Tenure Type by Ethnicity, Census 2013**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Tenure Type** | **Pacific** | **Māori** | **Asian** | **European** | **MELAA** |
| Own/Part Own usual residence | 18.5% | 28.2% | 34.8% | 56.8% | 21.9% |
| Do not own usual residence | 81.5% | 71.8% | 65.2% | 43.2% | 78.1% |

The vast majority of the original migrants for the Pacific arrived and settled in Auckland, some then migrated to settle in other parts of the country. Post the global financial crisis, the cost of housing (renting and owning) in Auckland rapidly increased. Pacific people more than any other group (by percentage) live in substandard and overcrowded homes.

The limited number of available and affordable homes in Auckland and Christchurch and the corresponding high rents due to competition for homes has led to a number of Pacific families living in overcrowded homes. Some become transient, moving between relatives and others who are able to provide short term relief, some live in cars providing for their children as best they can. Such precarious living conditions directly affect children’s safety, health, education and emotional development, if not their aspirations. Agencies that work with these families become important advocates of hope.

*“Events like unemployment, fundamental changes in economic expectations, housing stress, substantial reductions in state provided income and/or services can be extremely depressing on-going experiences that may eventually lead parents and children into states of stress that open them up to physical and mental illnesses and dysfunctional social relationships”* (Tamasese, T. K & Waldergrave, C. 2012)[[168]](#footnote-168)*.*

The ripple effects of low income and poor living environment include Pacific children having the highest rates of admission for infectious diseases such as cellulitis, rheumatic fever, gastroenteritis, bronchiolitis and pneumonia among all ethnic groups in Aotearoa[[169]](#footnote-169). Living in overcrowded homes disadvantages educational development and can place children at greater risk of abuse and family violence[[170]](#footnote-170). Children of recent arrivals may be more vulnerable because their primary caregivers are yet to find stable employment to decrease reliance on others. New migrants also earn around 20% less than NZ-born residents with otherwise similar skills and characteristics[[171]](#footnote-171).

Considering the general financial circumstances of Pacific people, it is not surprising that many are in financial debt, often borrowing for basic needs. Debt is a vicious cycle that is particularly overwhelming for new arrivals who may see credit as free money, until confronted with additional costs they are unable to meet[[172]](#footnote-172). Surviving through debt has led some families to crisis, especially to finance companies that charge exorbitant interests rates and penalties[[173]](#footnote-173). Legislation and financial literacy programmes that target Pacific consumers have since been developed to address exploitation, but does not change the reality of limited means.

## Alcohol

Ethnic specific patterns of use are useful to know when working with families of a specific ethnicity or ethnic mix. The Diabetes Heart and Health Study (DHAHS) conducted in Aotearoa in 2002-2003 (Fijian-Indian excluded) found that non-drinking was more common among Pacific than Europeans, at 51.3% compared to 6.2%. The non-drinking rates among the most populous Pacific groups were 32.9% for Niueans, 49.2% for Cook Islanders, 50.6% for Samoans, and 58.9% for Tongans. Pacific women had high non-drinking rates led by Samoan (92%), then Tongan (78%), Cook Islanders (75%) and Niuean (65%), in comparison to European women (27%). There was a similar pattern for men but at lower rates. Pacific middle aged and older adults were less likely to consume than their Europeans counterparts who showed the reverse pattern[[174]](#footnote-174).

The study found that Niuean men had the highest rate (74%) of alcohol consumption, followed by Samoan (59%), Cook Islanders (46%), and Tongans (30%)[[175]](#footnote-175). While Pacific users drank less frequently than their European counterparts, they consumed significantly higher amounts, particularly Samoan, Cook Islander and Niuean men[[176]](#footnote-176).

The Pacific tendency to drink until intoxicated contrasts significantly with the notion of ‘social drinker’ in the European sense[[177]](#footnote-177). Pacific drinkers were estimated to be five times more likely to stop drinking compared to Europeans. Religious - based beliefs and negative stigma surrounding alcohol consumption and abuse among Pacific communities were suggested as key contributors to the lower rates of alcohol use by Pacific people, and a motivator for users to cease completely[[178]](#footnote-178).

## Mental Health and Substance Use

The Te Rau Hinengaro: The New Zealand Mental Health Survey conducted over 2003 and 2004, purposely oversampled the Pacific cohort in order to seek reliable results[[179]](#footnote-179). A total of 2,374 Pacific people were interviewed in the survey: 49.2% were Samoan; 20.7% were Cook Island Māori; 16.5% were Tongan; and 17.5% were Other Pacific peoples. The ‘Other’ group included Niuean, Tokelauan and Tuvaluan participants[[180]](#footnote-180). The study was able to describe mental health status, but not the situational factors such as why people suffer from certain conditions, or why some did not access support services. While the study is dated, it provides valuable cultural insights to consider for practice.

While some trends were similar to those for the general population, there were differences. A significant finding was that Pacific people had a higher prevalence of experiencing mental health disorders[[181]](#footnote-181) than the general population. This countered a previously held perception that Pacific people had relatively low levels of mental illness. The high prevalence was influenced by the younger age structure for Pacific compared to other ethnic groups, as young people are more likely to experience a mental health disorder compared with older people generally. Another difference found was that neither educational qualifications nor household income was found to have any significant impact on the prevalence or severity of mental health disorders, suicidal ideation or suicide attempt for Pacific. This contrasts with overseas studies that showed poorer groups in society experienced higher prevalence of mental illness. The survey saw some indication that the 12-month prevalence rates of suicidal ideation and suicide attempts was higher among Pacific people living in areas of low deprivation compared with Pacific people living in areas of high deprivation.

Other findings that are important when working with Pacific families affected by mental illness or drug and alcohol use are:

*Prevalence*

* A 12-month prevalence by disorder for different Pacific island groups showed that Cook Island Māori had the highest rate (29.3%) of any mental health disorder, followed by Other Pacific people (25.5%), Samoans (24.5%) and Tongans (19.6%). The pattern was consistent throughout different disorder categories including alcohol, drugs, mood and anxiety.
* More Pacific females (26.7%) were *classified* as meeting criteria for disorder in the past 12 months compared with Pacific males (22.0%).
* Age at the time of migration to Aotearoa was significantly related to the prevalence of serious disorder: 6.7% of NZ-born Pacific people compared with 3.7% of Pacific people who migrated at age 18 and over, had a *serious* mental health disorder.
* Of NZ-born Pacific people, 31.4% had a 12-month prevalence of *any* mental health disorder, compared with 15.0% of Pacific who migrated after the age of 18.

*Onset of Mood, Anxiety, and Substance Disorders*

* About 6.4% of Pacific people experienced a *mood* disorder by age 20; 15.2% by age 40; and 22.3% by age 60.
* The onset of *anxiety* disorders in Pacific people often occurred earlier than mood disorders, sometime between ages 5 and 15.
* For substance use disorders, a very marked period of onset exists between 15 and 25 years, with almost no further onset after age 40.
* Pacific people with chronic physical (e.g. diabetes, cardiovascular, respiratory, chronic pain, cancer, high blood pressure) conditions experience higher rates of mental health disorders, particularly anxiety and mood, than people without.

*Comorbidity* *with Alcohol and/or Drug Use Disorder*

* Of Pacific people who experienced a mood disorder, 34.9% also experienced an anxiety disorder, and 16.8% a substance use disorder.
* Of Pacific people who had a substance use disorder, 27.6% also had a mood disorder and 41.8% an anxiety disorder.
* Pacific females had higher anxiety and mood disorders than males, and Pacific males had higher substance use disorders than females.
* Some 34.3% of those experiencing alcohol dependence also reported drug abuse symptoms in the past 12 months, and 28.6% met criteria for drug dependence compared with 28.1% of the total Aotearoa population. For those with drug use disorders, even greater proportions had alcohol use comorbidity.
* Pacific people who had anxiety and mood disorders experienced *lower* rates of comorbid substance abuse than the total Aotearoa population.

*Suicide*

* The prevalence of suicidal ideation for Pacific people was 16.9%, compared with an overall population rate of 15.7%. Pacific females had higher rates of suicidal ideation than Pacific males (19.3% compared with 14.3%). The difference between the sexes was consistent with findings for the total Aotearoa population.
* Of Pacific people aged 16–24 years and 25–44 years, 21.1% and 20.4% respectively reported suicidal ideation over their lifetime. The highest rate of suicidal ideation was observed in the group aged 16–24 years which had more than twice the rate of any other Pacific age group.
* Within the Pacific group, Cook Island Māori had the highest rate of suicidal ideation of 6.6%, followed by Samoans (4.4%), Other Pacific peoples (4.1%) and Tongans (1.9%).
* Pacific reported significantly higher prevalence than Other (non-Māori) of ideation, plan and attempt. While Māori had a significantly higher prevalence of suicidal ideation than Pacific participants, Pacific had a significantly higher prevalence of plans and attempts in comparison[[182]](#footnote-182).

*Accessing Services*

* Pacific people with a serious mental health illness visited support services much less than the general population. Within the past 12 months, only 25.0% of Pacific people with a serious disorder had a mental health visit in the healthcare sector, compared to the general population who visited about twice as often (58.0%). The reasons for the difference were not explored in the study.
* Pacific people were generally less likely than the total population to use alcohol or other drug services, except those aged 15−19 who appeared to use these services as much as those in the general population aged 15−19.
* Of NZ-born Pacific people, 13.4% had visited a mental health service in the previous 12 months compared with 1.6% of Pacific people who had migrated to Aotearoa when aged under 12 years.

The differences found between NZ-born Pacific and Pacific migrants in terms of prevalence of mental health disorders and suicide were not explored in the study, but are important to note because the majority of Pacific children that come to the notice of the State are NZ-born. At an ethnic specific level, Cook Island Māori appear to be particularly vulnerable due to their higher rate of mental health disorders and suicide ideation compared to other groups.

## Experience of State Intervention

The legacy of colonial rule in the Pacific affects peoples’ perceptions of government agencies, agents and laws in western contexts. The controversial random raids on homes of suspected overstayers in the early 70s in Aotearoa have not been forgotten.

“*A 1985-86 study showed that Pacific people comprised only a third of overstayers, but 86 per cent of all prosecutions for overstaying. People from the United States and Britain who also made up almost a third of those overstaying represented just 5 per cent of prosecutions”* (Misa, 2010)[[183]](#footnote-183).

Pacific people have a perception of Oranga Tamariki as the agency that removes children, rightly or wrongly in their eyes.

Legal literacy is an issue for any person who is unfamiliar with the law and ways to engage with State authorities, but this is exacerbated when the English language is a barrier. Practitioners need to make allowance for multiple engagements with Pacific families to explain legal provisions to check that processes, official documents such as FGC plans, and court orders are understood. Beyond that, people need to be encouraged to enquire and know where and how to find resources to pose challenges; understanding is of limited use if people do not have the confidence and resources to use it.

|  |
| --- |
| Pacific Providers and Groups |

This section provides an overall perspective of support for vulnerable Pacific children and their families with a cultural lens.

## Pacific Providers

Pacific social service agencies are generally perceived to be independent providers. They are often reliant on State funding. Many are funded by a range of government and private sources and have multiple accountability arrangements. Pacific providers have been defined as services that are governed by Pacific people that primarily target Pacific people[[184]](#footnote-184); commonly referred to as Pacific for Pacific (PfP). The recognition of the value of culturally responsive approaches to client outcomes by funders has supported the development of PfP services. Police, Oranga Tamariki, schools, other State agencies and non-government bodies readily refer clients to Pacific providers where quality, cultural competence, access and affordability are present.

Many PfPs started as: family initiatives; small operators; had a largely voluntary workforce; operated from homes providing single or a limited range of services, with mostly unqualified personnel in relation to the service/s they provided[[185]](#footnote-185). Due to a refocusing of government appropriation within the social service sector and a ring-fenced pool of funding, the Pacific Provider Development Fund that was specifically created for Pacific providers ended. Ongoing challenges with feasibility, service quality and the funding changes eventually led to many PfP providers closing, while some merged[[186]](#footnote-186) and a few grew. A much reduced number of PfP providers exist now compared to the previous era. Most of the existing Pacific for Pacific provision is based in Auckland due to the high Pacific population. Within Auckland however, the providers are concentrated in the south meaning significant gaps in provision for the other parts of the city. A few of the larger PfPs have branches but only in limited locations.

Particular to PfPs is a service-approach based on engagement and service delivery based on Pacific values and ways of being. Their work is informed by a number of cultural approaches and frameworks such as Nga Vaka o Kāinga Tapu, talanoa, and Real Skills Seitapu[[187]](#footnote-187). Some providers have developed their own ways of servicing Pacific[[188]](#footnote-188). Often the services are pan-Pacific (providing services to any Pacific client). Some provide specific programmes for particular communities, e.g. programmes for at-risk Cook Island youth, or budgeting for the Tuvalu community[[189]](#footnote-189). Many PfPs have staff that can speak different Pacific languages which is an asset for serving the needs of diverse communities. The existing providers work hard to recruit, support (e.g. clinical supervision, professional development) and hold on to qualified, experienced, and culturally competent staff. Collegial respect and support exist between providers.

The types of services provided by PfPs include parenting, family support, advocacy, family violence prevention, counselling, youth mentoring, anti-bullying, and suicide prevention. While PfPs continue to grow and expand their services, there are gaps in certain areas such as residential services for Pacific children and youth that come into state custody.

Pacific providers often talk about catering to much higher numbers of clients than their funding contract pays for. They feel they cannot turn a Pacific person in need away, especially if mainstream providers have already done so. Working with large families/collectives is common which comes with additional resource needs. Providers talk of difficult but frequent compromises they make between contractual limits, staff workload, and ‘love’ for the people.

There are strong signals that the PfP group is strengthening in service quality, governance, qualified workforce and evidence based practice. They are also experienced in collaborating with other agencies and sectors, connecting politically and diversifying the types of services they provide. These factors combine to potentially place some PfPs in competition with large non-Pacific providers for funds and services to communities other than Pacific in the future.

## Non-Pacific Providers

Non-Pacific providers are very important where there is no appropriate PfP, or where the services needed are only provided by Non-Pacific services. These providers fill a need in the area of placements for children who are unable to remain with their birth families and stay in ‘out of kin’ care until they reach an age of independence. Vulnerable Pacific clients may also go to Non-Pacific providers as a first option for acute needs such as housing, food and refuge from violence.

Large and established mainstream organisations are often better resourced, have good management and governance practices, have strong information management systems, are politically connected, and able to deliver a diverse range of services to communities. Some have research capacity to inform their work and political advocacy for Pacific people. A number have either established Pacific teams, processes for working with a Pacific person, cultural frameworks to guide their work, or collaborations with their Pacific provides where there is one to partner with[[190]](#footnote-190).

While many Non-Pacific providers also rely on volunteers to work alongside paid staff, they can be seen to offer more professional and development opportunities to a Pacific recruit than the smaller Pacific agencies. The competition for Pacific talent exists across the provider sector.

## Churches and Other Groups

Community owned and controlled support services are faith based, village and island specific associations. In addition there are professional groups, sports clubs and informal groups (e.g. kava clubs, *kolose* (Tuvalu croquet groups) who are also influential in the establishment of new traditions, new communities, and norms in western contexts.

The role of faith based collectives is arguably more pronounced outside island homelands due to the absence of traditional structures that unify Pacific communities, crossing language, generation, ethnic, family, village, and island borders. Pacific people have invested in land and buildings to establish these communities, a pseudo village and a centre for collective identity and empowerment. In terms of linking a family with a community, some churches run services in specific languages but many worship and provide services (e.g. ECE programmes, elder support) using the English language.

Access to community elders and religious leaders may not be as simple as it seems. It is common practice in Pacific communities to show respect to people who help in time of need, particularly religious leaders, through the gifting of goods, money, service, or other forms of exchange. These are informal expressions of respect and courtesy. Such traditions can have implications on a family that is in need but cannot ‘afford’ these hidden costs. For a child or young person to self-refer the task may simply be too daunting. It is therefore important to ensure that all costs to the engagement of a support service or person are understood and considered.

Time and knowledge are limited. Engagement with Pacific groups, providers and associations must therefore be planned, purposeful, timely, professional and respectful. Community groups and leaders are often already busy catering to people and communities locally and overseas. Effective collaboration requires a good match between the child/young person, family, and the Pacific provider/s or entity engaged. Before referring a child/young person or family to a community group, it is prudent to gain an understanding of the identity, history and scope of the group, costs (customary based exchanges and financial) and what it can provide for a child/young person or family.

Good preparation for all support people including church ministers, traditional healers, lay advocates, cultural advocates, translators and youth leaders to ensure they have the skills and resilience to deal with issues involving sexual violations, self-harm, family violence, and suicide. It is also important to ensure that those called upon respect the status and dignity of the child independent of the family and can navigate the spaces of privacy and confidentiality for those involved.

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| --- |
| Pacific Practitioner |

This section discusses key factors identified by Pacific practitioners that influence their practice.

## Community Expectations and Cultural Challenges

Pacific staff instinctively feel a sense of guardianship over Pacific children, families and other Pacific colleagues; instincts that are rooted in traditional upbringing. Pacific practitioners come from the same diverse traditions, values and cultural base as Pacific children and families. This affects the way Pacific staff perceive and engage with the children and families they work with whether it be Pacific, Māori or others. While Oranga Tamariki Pacific staff are agents of the State they are often perceived by Pacific families as ‘their’ people, whether or not there is a kin or cultural connection. As previously mentioned, Pacific communities are relatively small, and members of different families may have substantive knowledge about other families. The connections multiply with mixed ethnicity households. Families expect Pacific officials to understand their ways whether or not the staff member agrees with them or speaks their language.

Many Pacific staff members have cultural backgrounds where hierarchy, relational protocols, roles and expectations between adults and children are understood and respected. Young workers particularly, may come from households where decisions are made by others yet find themselves in decision making roles for someone else’s child and family in their professional capacity. Staff understand these dynamics and are accustomed to walking the challenging terrain, at times with blurred lines between differing worldviews (including relational expectations, leadership practices, cultural protocols, bureaucratic contest) and working in confined environments of residence work.

Some individuals find the reality of abuse, family violence and the general nature of statutory social work emotionally and spiritually challenging. Sexual offences and inappropriate conduct between male and females are violations that one is exposed to on a daily basis. Some struggle with the reality of children and young people who commit violent and violating offences, or assaults on staff. Some may be unaccustomed to families acting in ways that counter their expectations of family, gender relationships, respect and responsibility. In such circumstances, staff resilience could be assisted through assistance that includes spiritual and cultural components.

## Working with mokopuna Māori and whānau

Māori and indigenous Pacific people share a spiritual bond that is intrinsic and linked to the migration journeys guided by the stars. Pacific staff often speak of feeling aroha/love and protective towards Māori mokopuna, whānau and colleagues. There is a common understanding of the spiritual, political, social, cultural and economic significance of land to life, self-empowerment, language, unity, and resilience of a people. Pacific people were not party to the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi but support the status of Māori as tangata whenua, and often look to Māori as whanaunga in the widest sense.

A significant portion of Pacific children in Aotearoa are of mixed cultural and ethnic identity with Māori (see Table 2), and practitioners need to work out how to engage effectively with these whānau. Skill and confidence will improve as Te Toka Tumoana[[191]](#footnote-191) becomes fully integrated into the Oranga Tamariki infrastructure of policy, research, strategic planning and practice to enable best outcomes to be achieved for mokopuna and their whānau from statutory social work. Practitioners also source from Māori models such as Te Whare Tapa Whā[[192]](#footnote-192) to engage meaningfully with Pacific/Māori whānau.

## Working with Children, Families and Colleagues of Non-Pacific Cultures

Pacific staff need training and support to work effectively within culturally diverse environments of clients, colleagues, communities and agencies. This includes learning about Pacific cultures different to one’s own ethnic roots, refugee communities and new migrants.

The bureaucratic and complex nature of the public service and large social service providers requires Pacific staff to be able to converse with colleagues using research and statistics to advocate convincingly and effectively to achieve outcomes for children.

## Cultural Supervision and Cultural Consultation

Cultural supervision and consultation are formal processes that affect outcomes for children and build cultural competence. They should be made available to and utilised by ALL practitioners who work with Pacific children, families and colleagues. Not all practitioners welcome it based on a belief that they already know how to work in a culturally responsive manner with other cultures[[193]](#footnote-193).

*Cultural* *supervision* is a term with many global interpretations. The purpose of Va’aifetu is ultimately to grow the cultural expertise and knowledge of practitioners in order to improve outcomes for Pacific children and their families. Quality cultural supervision is underpinned by cultural awareness, safe practice, sensitivity, professional safety, evaluation, and monitoring[[194]](#footnote-194).

Quality cultural supervision for practitioners who are working with Pacific cases assumes a high level of cultural competence among supervisors, but often this is not the case because the majority of supervisors are non-Pacific.

Trust is very important to the integration of cultural expertise into social work practice. Pacific staff felt that being supervised by a person (Pacific or non-Pacific) who made them feel valued, respected and trusted to apply cultural skills and knowledge was crucial to professional safety, confidence, and casework success. Where trust was absent, morale, practice and case outcomes were impacted.

*Cultural* *consultation* is associated with tasks to assist case management, facilitate access to families and to obtain culturally specific information *‘when the skills, knowledge or networks of the social worker or agency do not reach sufficiently far enough across the divide of cultural difference to facilitate meaningful connections. Cultural consultation…is more about the practice than it is about the practitioner’*[[195]](#footnote-195). These mechanisms can also support appropriate research and policy development.

It is not uncommon for Pacific staff in a site to be called upon for translation duties and/or cultural advice on Pacific families regardless of whether they are of the same culture as the family concerned. Cultural programmes will help non-Pacific staff understand the differences between Pacific cultures, and the potential risks to a child or family from using the wrong cultural expertise. NZ-born staff can feel extra pressure too if they lack cultural competency, language, or means to recruit this expertise to work effectively.

## English as a Second Language

Written and oral communication challenges exist particularly for staff for which English is a second language. Common challenges include the ability to ‘find the words’ to describe situations, convince, professionally articulate reflections, assessments and judgements. Traditional ways of communicating involve the recapping of stories and the use of concepts to convey messages. Tight time restrictions and multiple participants in a case consultation, supervision or other case discussion, may result in a Pacific staff member disclosing a partial story or being misunderstood. Misunderstanding can multiply when others involved come from cultures that are very different to Pacific. These challenges could be alleviated with writing and oral communication programmes.

## Interpreting Support

Effective communication is essential to any relationship that is based on genuine respect and expectation of success, especially when working with populations to whom English is not their first language. Interpretation is a professional skill and is treated so in the New Zealand Courts and public hospitals. Pacific staff are frequently called upon to interpret, mediate communication, and translate official documents, in meetings, family group conferences, etc. in the course of their work be they practitioners, administration staff or in other roles, but do so on top of their own workloads. Staff respond to ensure best outcomes for children and young people, and to help other colleagues build good relationships with families. Staff must therefore be appropriately trained to interpret and be formally recognised for their skill sets because quality interpretation/translation facilitates accurate assessments, informed choices, clarity, and constructive relationships for the best interests of children and young people.

External translators are important resources in the absence of internal capacity and costs need to be factored in. In some instances, external interpreters have not always delivered the quality needed, or necessarily understood the legal context and terminology that required interpreting, nor screened appropriately to ensure respect for human rights and the voices of children. It is important therefore that all interpreters are appropriately prepared when contracted in, keeping in mind the importance of confidentiality and privacy in Pacific communities that are often small.

**Working with Grief**

The death of a child affects family members but also professionals involved with the child. Some staff may blame themselves for not having done enough, whether or not that is the case. This sense of personal responsibility may be rooted in genealogical, cultural or community connection with the child or the family; the degree of separation within a minority community is often not wide. It is important to have appropriate cultural, spiritual and clinical support for affected staff during times of grief.

## Pacific Staff Networks

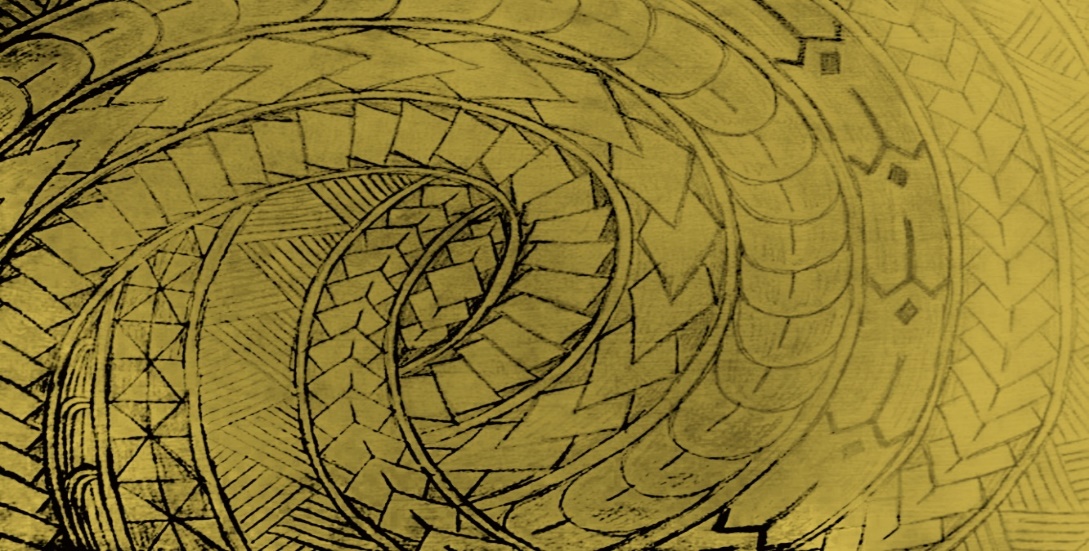
These networks are primarily support forums, but are also pools of cultural and institutional knowledge, expertise and professional capital. The networks have advocated, initiated and advanced initiatives to support the work of the Oranga Tamariki Pacific workforce, including the development of Va’aifetu. At the time of writing there were four operating Pacific staff networks in the Ministry.

The nature and purpose of each network is decided by its participants. Regional management engage with and support the networks at their discretion. Matters discussed often concern quality practice, workforce needs, celebration of staff success, and strategies to progress Pacific staff with the strategic influence of Pacific staff to meet organisational priorities. The forums are where staff engage in indigenous languages and cultural rituals that are unique to their cultures. Relief and rejuvenation are experienced through being understood, collective visibility, laughter, and working through issues collectively.

Sites including those in Auckland have engaged with tertiary training institutions in attempts to attract Pacific staff. It is important however to ensure there is a system of support such as cultural supervision and ethnic centred networks on site, within the region, or accessible nationally to support new recruits. These supports help nurture cultural competence, build knowledge about other Pacific cultures, and broaden networks particularly for those working in sites with limited Pacific cultural expertise.

## Residences

A significant proportion of Pacific field staff in Oranga Tamariki work in residential facilities, with many in youth worker roles. Supports for Pacific staff in residences include Pacific staff forums, cultural supervision, leadership development, and time to attend Pacific regional collegial meetings. A management ethos that recognises the value of Pacific cultures to the achievement of outcomes for children and young people in residences is a key factor. This support then enables the incorporation of culture into programmes that could benefit all children in residences. Va’aifetuis a resource that can add support to culturally responsive interventions that already exist in residences.



Art by care experienced Pacific young people (2014).

# Appendix

**Te Toka Tumoana – Child, Youth and Family Indigenous and Bi-cultural Principled Framework (strategic/practice) for working with Māori (released in 2014)**

**Guiding Principles**

Indigenous and Bi-cultural Principled Framework (strategic/practice) for working with Māori

***Explain clearly and describe in-depth ‘ngā kupu Māori’ used in each principle***

**The principle of Te Reo Māori** – this principle simply infers that central to engaging with Māori is the ability to be able to increase the use of the Māori language appropriately and respectfully throughout all our engagements with mokopuna and whānau Māori. It also highlights the importance of socialising commonly used Māori words, names, concepts, thoughts, song, descriptions and phrases that reinforce effective communication of phenomenon that strengthens the care, protection, safety and support of our mokopuna. It has been articulated on many occasions that the window to a culture is through their language. Our practitioners need to at least be able to understand and have a working knowledge of commonly used kupu Māori. The more skilled in this terrain increases the ability to effectively understand and comprehend not only negative phenomenon impacting on mokopuna and whānau Māori, but also the strategies to effect real change for their growth, wellbeing, development and betterment.

**The principle of Whakamanawa** – to fully understand this principle it needs to be broken down into three inter-linked concepts: ‘Whaka’ means to cause something to happen- to change and effect change. When joined with ‘Mana’ it is about fully understanding the true potential of a person by encouraging the ‘strengthening of their own prestige, authority, control, power, influence, status, self-esteem, spiritual power, and charisma’. Together with ‘Wa’, the challenge is that these changes can be done in time, in season or in other words, in a definite space. The synergy of these concepts joined together is where we articulate the view that this is truly about supporting in our responsiveness to mokopuna and whānau Māori, in their journey from states of oppression (all forms of abuse) to emancipation. Subsequently, ‘Whakamanawa’ highlights words like, encouragement, inspiring and instilling confidence to achieve and freedom. This bears great significance in dealing with mokopuna Māori and should be paramount in our consideration of mokopuna ora and whānau ora.

**The principle of Whakapapa** – within this principle there are two concepts that need to be viewed to fully understand its essence. Again ‘Whaka’ generates a sense of causing something to happen (action orientated). ‘Papa’ means to, lie flat, lay flat but is also short for Papa-tū-ā-nuku – mother earth and that aligns to the creation pukorero/narrative, where everything originated from the joining of Papa-tū-ā-nuku with Rangi-nui – father sky. When woven together, there is a direct challenge that this principle is acknowledging Māori world views where everything living and non-living are connected to and with, each other. Often people translate this term to mean genealogy. But reflected in these two joined concepts ‘whakapapa’ for our work, challenges our workers to really look at the way that people connect to people, to places, to events, to activities, to significant values, ideologies and beliefs. Our mokopuna and whānau Māori can be viewed as the ‘lesser other’, but whakapapa shifts that deficit view into relational connections, and introduces the underpinning concepts of ‘Muka tāngata’. Muka – weaving, tāngata – people to people.

**The principle of Kaitiakitanga** – As one unravels this principle of three interlinked key concepts, strategic depth is manifested. When ‘Kai’ is used in front of an action (verb), it reflects a significant human role or in other words, an agent to an identified activity. ‘Tiaki’ is the identified activity or action (verb) and reflects, caring for, looking after, protecting, making safe, supporting and developing. ‘Tanga’ reflects the collectivity/some have also referred to this as our indigeneity. In unison, the joining of these three concepts ‘Kai-tiaki-tanga’, highlights the roles people take on board to enact guardianship, stewardship and trusteeship on things entrusted into their care. Our focus as statutory social workers is about understanding fully the importance of ‘trust’ in such a role. The Act highlights that our kai-tiaki-tanga role is built on being caretakers of, protectors of, sentinels of best indigenous and bicultural practice and engagement with mokopuna and whānau Māori.

**The principle of Manaakitanga** – This principle is built on the back of ‘mana’, that has been well explained in ‘Whakamanawa’. However, the emphasis is on understanding that as you display acts of support, care, hospitality and protection to others, reciprocity comes in the form of collaborative mutually beneficial human interactive engagements. The concept, ‘aki’ is used to emphasize action that urges people on, encourages and induces them to manifest actions/acts of kindness and hospitality. As mentioned previously, ‘Tanga’ reflects the collectivity/some have also referred to this as our indigeneity. In essence, when attached to Mana-aki, it provides acknowledgement that these acts of kindness and hospitality are deeply engrained in our psyche. When involved in huge debates, conflict, difficulty, trauma, it is this conceptual principle of manaakitanga that can help assist in moving through the associated tapu of an issue or situation to noa and vice a versa. Our social work practitioners need to be supported with resources and policies to enact real manaakitanga with mokopuna and whānau Māori as aspects of mokopuna safety and healing are advanced.

**The principle of Tikanga** – Tikanga is made up of two concepts: ‘Tika’ and ‘nga’. In this context ‘Tika’ can be defined as a verb ‘be correct true, upright, right, just fair, accurate, appropriate, lawful and proper. As a noun it highlights truth, correctness, directness, justice, fairness, righteousness, and right. The concept of ‘nga’ in this context refers to plural or multiple (more than one) ways of practicing protocols. When brought together in unison, there are all these ways of engaging or doing that can be described as ‘customs, habits, methods and practices that are part of the acceptable conventional ways of engaging with each other. These acts of accepted and expected human engagements and protocol also need to be viewed in light of the correlating principle of Te Ahureitanga. Ahurei has been defined as ‘prominent and unique’. Within this setting, Te Ahureitanga, views Māori perspectives of the world as valid, legitimate, distinct and numerous. Subsequently, our statutory social workers when working with mokopuna and whānau Māori should not be dismissive of differing tikanga from iwi (Tangata Whenua Nations), Hapū (subtribes) and whānau (extended family) Māori. Our practitioners need the skills set to be able to negotiate and navigate respectfully, and astutely the activities that have been central to harbouring effective means of responsiveness to the diverse realities of Māori as mokopuna ora outcomes are advocated for.

**The principle of Rangatiratanga** – As a composition word, this principle also combines three other concepts: ‘Ranga’, ‘Tira’ and ‘Tanga’; and it is important to understand the contribution of each separately before globalizing its essence. ‘Ranga’ is defined as raising something up, or setting something in motion. ‘Ranga’ also infers sites of engagement and investigation. Furthermore, ‘Tira’ can mean ray or beam of light. Together the word ‘Rangatira’ gathers both definitions to provide insight around those who are esteemed noble, well off or revered by others. Tangata whenua leadership styles and approaches are also signaled here. Rangatira (both male and female) were viewed in chiefly state with qualities ranging from integrity, negotiation abilities, prosperity, to other skillfully acquired expertise, knowledge and wisdom deemed of high value by whānau, hapū, and iw Māori. From another perspective, in wananga mode, we were taught that ‘ranga’, prominent in flax weaving reflected people and ‘tira’, representing leadership for inspired healthy outcomes. When adding ‘tanga’ to Rangatira, the expectations of leadership become grounded in collective knowledge, wisdom, understanding and manifested actions of service to others. Rangatiratanga as a noun includes descriptive words and definitions such as, sovereignty, chieftainship, the right to exercise authority, advance chiefly autonomy, and selfless service that reinvigorates whānau, hapū, iwi rights to self-determination and self-management. In addition, ‘tino rangatiratanga’ has also been referred to in modern times as advancing the attribute of ‘absolute integrity’ within ones sphere of influence as a leader of substance. For our practitioners in the statutory environment, it would be essential that they are aware and respectful of various levels and variety of leadership from the highest spheres (iwi leadership) to those inherent in whānau and hapū. By variety, there are times where leadership is evidenced by being at the front, leading from behind, working with others collaboratively or being a figurehead, to name a few. Part of the process of identifying who are the leaders within a whānau often involves understanding the influence they have in evolving wellbeing of mokopuna and whānau Māori.

**The principle of Wairuatanga** – Of all the principles identified, this one has huge ramifications for practitioners and more significantly for our organization tasked with caring for, protecting and making safe those most vulnerable mokopuna Māori who have come to our attention. Often the level of understanding surrounding wairuatanga leaves people thinking about spiritual matters only, however upon further in-depth scrutiny what opens up for the inquisitive inquirer is a more complicated appreciation of how this principle weaves all aspects of Māori critical analyses in circumnavigating ‘ora’ (wellbeing) strategies and activities for Māori. Like the previous principles, ‘Wairuatanga’, is made up of three interrelated concepts. ‘Wai’ – water or life source is simple to explain. Water gives sustenance and much needed nourishment to all life forms, inclusive of people. ‘Rua’, translates numerically to the number 2 or second. Subsequently, a direct translation of wairua is the second water or second source of life. Often this second water source is referred to as our spiritual source or spirit. ‘Tanga’, magnifies the collective consciousness of being, feeling, thinking and acting Māori. When these concepts are combined into ‘Wairuatanga’, the definition encompasses Māori ideologies, Māori philosophies, Māori values and beliefs, Māori paradigms, Māori worldviews, Māori perspectives, Māori theoretical conceptualisations, Māori theories, frameworks and models of practice. In this light, wairuatanga provides a cultural critique of Māori ways of viewing and making sense of the world we live in.

1. Te Tiriti o Waitangi - The Treaty of Waitangi, is the written agreement that was signed in 1840 between the British Crown and more than 500 Māori chiefs. New Zealand thereafter became a colony of Britain, and Māori became British subjects. Not all Māori chiefs signed this treaty. Retrieved 1/11/2015 from http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/treaty-of-waitangi [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Sharp, A. (1964). *Ancient voyagers in Polynesia.* Berkeley: University of California Press. 774 – 775. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand. (n.d). *Pacific migrations.* Retrieved 5/3/2015 from http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/pacific-migrations/page-1 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Connell, J., Rapaport, M. (2013). Mobility and Migration. In Rapaport, M. (Ed.). *The Pacific Islands: Environment and society.* Honolulu, USA. University of Hawaii Press. 281:275 - 286 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Tangata whenua – ‘people of the land’, the indigenous people of Aotearoa [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Encyclopaedia Britannica. Retrieved 20/11/2015 from http://www.britannica.com/place/Pacific-Islands [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Pawley, A. (2013). Language. In Rapaport, M. (Ed.). *The Pacific Islands: Environment and society.* Honolulu, USA. University of Hawaii Press. 160:150-171. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Secretariat of the Pacific Community. Retrieved 6/11/2015 from <http://www.spc.int/nmdi/population> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Wesley-Smith, T. (2013). Changing patterns of power. I. Rapaport, M. (Ed.). *The Pacific Islands: Environment and society*. Honolulu, USA. University of Hawaii Press. 147-156. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Indigenous Fijian people are ethnically classified as Melanesian however their social and political organisation is more closely aligned to the Polynesian cultures. Encyclopaedia Britannica. Retrieved 27/12/2018 from <https://www.britannica.com/place/Fiji-republic-Pacific-Ocean/People#ref513672> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Statistics New Zealand. (2014). *2013 Quick Stats about culture and identity*. Wellington, New Zealand. P.15-16. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Statistics New Zealand. ‘*Ethnic group (total responses) by age group and sex, for the census usually resident population count, 2001, 2006, and 2013 Censuses (RC, TA)’*. Retrieved via http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/quickstats-culture-identity.aspx [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Statistics New Zealand. *‘Ethnic group (detailed single and combination) by age group and sex, for the census usually resident population count, 2013 (RC, TA)’*. Retrieved via http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/quickstats-culture-identity.aspx [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. The Fiji Constitution 2013 recognises the indigenous people (iTaukei), the indigenous people of Rotuma, the descendants of the indentured labourers from British India and the Pacific Islands, and the descendants of the settlers and immigrants to Fiji as citizens of Fiji. The Fiji Constitution is written in the iTaukei, Hindi and English languages. Constitution of the Republic of Fiji. Retrieved from http://www.paclii.org/fj/Fiji-Constitution-English-2013.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Data is randomly rounded to protect confidentiality. Individual figures may not add up to totals, and values for the same data may vary in different tables. Retrieved via http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/quickstats-culture-identity.aspx [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Numbers in Statistics New Zealand tables vary between tables according to definitions and rounding estimates. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Iwi –tribe of related clans or descent groups (hapū) in Māori culture. Retrieved 9/3/2015 from http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/tribal-organisation/page-1 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. F(year) – Fiscal year ending 30 June [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Note that an individual child may have been counted more than once if they were referred in multiple FARs during the financial year. Primary Ethnicity count does not show any other ethnicities the child may also identity with e.g. Tongan/Maori, Samoan/Irish, Fijian/Chinese. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. ‘Distinct’ indicates that a child is counted once in the year regardless of the number of new referrals to Oranga Tamariki. Boxes with \* have low numbers so have been supressed for confidentiality purposes. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Family Violence Death Committee. (2014). *Fourth Annual Report. January 2013 – December 2013.* Health Quality and Safety Commission. Wellington. New Zealand. P.53 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Ibid. P.92 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Age of the child or young person at the time of the first finding in the reporting period. A child or young person may subsequently have had another finding within the year and/ or had a birthday since the first finding. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. A child can have more than one finding within the time period hence the total number of findings exceeds the number of people. \* Indicates low numbers that have been supressed to protect confidentiality [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Nadkarni, D. (16/7/2014). *Time to add value to seasonal labour scheme.* Island Business. Retrieved 28/2/2015 from http://www.islandsbusiness.com/2014/7/views-from-auckland/new-zealand-to-add-value-to-res-for-pacific-labour/ [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. “Other” refers to ethnic groups which are not one of the ethnic groups reported in the table above. The remaining in this row did not identify a primary ethnicity. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Minutes from Child, Youth and Family and Police Pacific Advisors meeting, Auckland, 26/9/2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Ministry of Justice. (2013). *Youth Crime Action Plan 2013 - 2023.* *Full Report*. Ministry of Justice. Wellington, New Zealand. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. The data is based on status at the start of thefiscal year. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. The Youth Court of New Zealand. (30 July 2007). *Principal Youth Court Judge's newsletter* Issue 30. Retrieved 1/10/2015 from http://www.justice.govt.nz/courts/youth/publications-and-media/principal-youth-court-newsletter/issue-30 [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
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37. *Who am I: The KaiIndia’s Search for Identity in Aotearoa New Zealand.* Used with permission of Janifa Khan Janif. Personal communication 6/11/2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
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39. Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs. (31/10/2012). *Pacific Languages Framework*. Retrieved 26/9/2015 from

    http://www.mpia.govt.nz/pacific-languages-framework [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Pākehā – Māori word for white inhabitants of New Zealand. Retrieved 25/3/2015 from http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/1966/maori-pakeha-pakeha-maori/page-2 [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
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