MARTIN JENKINS

COVID-19 AND AUCKLAND'S YOUTH WORKFORCE

Final Report

July 2021

CONTENTS

APPENDICES

TABLES

FIGURES

PREFACE

This report has been prepared for Auckland Unlimited by Ben Craven, EeMun Chen, and Sharyn Jones from MartinJenkins (Martin, Jenkins & Associates Limited). Patrick McVeigh from MartinJenkins oversaw the project and provided quality assurance.

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SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The overall impact of COVID-19 on Auckland's youth

COVID-19 and the accompanying implementation of an Alert Level system to restrict activity touched all of New Zealand's communities and businesses in some way. People and businesses in Auckland have been disproportionately affected, experiencing a greater number of Alert Level changes than other areas, with several Level 3 lockdowns in Auckland between August 2020 and March 2021.

COVID-19 may have contributed to greater disengagement among youth

COVID-19 may have increased levels of disengagement for young people overall. In March 2021, the annual youth NEET rate in Auckland was at its highest since 2010, with the largest annual increase being between 2020 and 2021. Increases in the youth NEET rate have been observed across many areas in Auckland, including in wards in North and Central Auckland, and the NEET rate in south Auckland has returned through the pandemic to previously high levels.[1]

While the youth NEET rates for most ethnic groups had returned to pre-GFC levels, the rate for Māori rangatahi increased by one percentage point above the GFC rate. The NEET rate for young women aged 20-24 increased from 14.9% in March 2020 to 19.0% in March 2021, likely reflecting increased pressure to undertake caregiving responsibilities.

These trends are consistent with the main trends from COVID-19: the lockdowns and their employment effects have exacerbated the impact of existing vulnerabilities and disadvantages.

Young people in Auckland and nationally are over-represented among new unemployment beneficiaries

Young New Zealanders, and young people in Auckland in particular, are over-represented among the increased numbers of people receiving an unemployment benefit after COVID-19 arrived. The number of 18–24 year-olds in Auckland on the JobSeeker (Work Ready) benefit in March 2021 was 68% above the level in March 2020 (compared to 39% for non-youth in Auckland, 42% for youth nationally, and 30% for non-youth nationally). While there are early indications that this number has begun to drop, and at a faster level than for other ages, the rate of decline for youth in Auckland appears to be lower than that of youth nationally.

COVID-19 had a negative effect on overall wellbeing

42% of the young people responding to our survey reported that COVID-19 had had a detrimental impact on their mental wellbeing. We found that there were no differences in mental wellbeing effects between youth and the older cohort.

Youth in our focus groups and survey discussed gaining weight over the lockdowns, as well as feeling stress, anxiety, and pressure, and having general mental health concerns. Our interviews with Auckland's universities found increased demand for medical and mental health services. Ongoing financial hardship, food insecurity and challenging home environments also contributed to negative effects on physical and mental health.

[1] Sub-regional NEET rate are subject to small sub-sample sizes and have varying error margins. Sub-regional estimates should be used with caution.

The impact on education and training

Learners generally felt well supported, but many reported facing difficulties

Education providers quickly transitioned to online learning, and most learners reported to us that they felt well supported by their provider. However, learners also consistently reported difficulties with participating and learning in online learning. Many said they preferred learning in-person and on-site.

In our survey, many of those in education or training reported that they learned less as a result of COVID-19. Some are expecting it will take longer for them to get their qualifications and stop studying, and some are expecting to fail.

Auckland high-school attendance seems to have been disproportionately affected

Analysis by the Ministry of Education shows that Auckland was disproportionately affected in secondary school attendance rates, particularly for Māori and Pacific youth and in lower-decile schools. This is concerning, as groups who were already vulnerable prior to the pandemic may be leaving school early, hindering opportunities to gain the required knowledge and skills for more employment options and higher salaries in the future.

Tertiary course completions appear to have been impacted, especially for lower-level courses and for Māori learners

There are early indications that course completion was affected by COVID-19 – particularly for Māori and lower-level courses. The effects appear to have been amplified by existing inequities, such as when young people have inadequate access to digital devices and connectivity, or face challenging home environments.

Tertiary enrolments are up in 2021 – with an emphasis on courses with an employment connection

Tertiary providers have seen a significant increase in enrolment levels in 2021, with some reporting increases of more than 30% overall.

Providers are reporting that learners appear to be choosing fields with better employment prospects and job security (for example, teaching, nursing, and trades) and choosing options that connect to work-integrated learning such as internships and apprenticeships.

The impact on youth employment

Available job numbers rebounded strongly in Auckland

The total number of jobs available in Auckland fell dramatically in response to the immediate Level 4 lockdown in 2020, but the figure has rebounded strongly. Total job openings reported by 'JobsOnline' in May 2021 rapidly surpassed the number of jobs advertised before COVID-19 and before the global financial crisis (GFC).

COVID-19 may have increased the casualisation of employment for young workers in particular

Early indications are that youth employment has experienced a 'double whammy' of higher unemployment and increased casualisation. There appears to have been a reduction in the number of permanent jobs in Auckland, with a commensurate increase the number of casual and fixed-term jobs. This trend is much more pronounced for the youth cohort than for other age groups.

This was consistent with what we heard from employers, stakeholders, and youth. Because of uncertainty about when lockdowns might happen, about whether and when customer-facing roles would be able to return to 'normal', and about demand for goods and services generally, some employers are turning to contractors, agency workforces, and casual contracts to manage cashflow. The youth workforce tends to bear the brunt of these business decisions.

Sectors in which youth are over-represented have been particularly hard hit

The effects of COVID-19 and the lockdowns in 2020 and early 2021 have been particularly severe for bricks-and-mortar retailers, the accommodation sector, food services, and tourism-related industries – and these are all sectors in which young workers are over-represented.

Young workers' hours and income were disproportionately affected by lockdowns

In our survey, youth were much more likely to have had their hours reduced, to have lost their job, or to have stopped working, compared with those aged 25–34. This is probably related to the industries youth tend to work in, and to the particular vulnerabilities of youth employment during economic shocks.

Youth were also more likely to have experienced decreases in income or their hourly rate, compared to those aged 25–34. Youth were also less likely to report 'No change' in income.

Overall, youth were more likely to report that their employment status had been affected

The youth cohort were more likely than the 25–34 cohort to report that their employment status had been affected by the pandemic and the lockdowns. Going back into studying or training or getting a job to help out their family were the most common consequences. The impact that showed the largest difference between the younger and older cohorts was inability to find a job – 11% of employed youth indicated this, compared to only 4% of the older employed cohort.

Looking ahead: labour market opportunities

Strong job growth has been forecast

In June 2021, Infometrics was projecting relatively strong job growth over the coming years, including in those sectors where young people are typically over-represented.

Employers are mostly still looking for the same skills – but also focusing on resilience and attitude

There does not seem to have been a significant shift in the specific skills that employers are seeking. However, for many employers the experience of COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of attitude and resilience, including an ability to self-manage through further lockdowns.

With significant immediate labour shortages, youth may have more options

In the immediate term, employers are reporting significant labour shortages – in contrast to what was expected in mid-2020. This means that young people have more options and can be more selective about the roles they take, especially in the entry-level or lower-skilled roles.

Employers are under greater pressure to improve pay and conditions, and some employers reported specifically that they have had to increase wages.

But graduates were concerned there are fewer opportunities for them because of COVID-19

However, this sense of opportunity is not shared by all potential job-seekers. Many of those who had recently graduated or were nearing graduation raised concerns about increased competition for graduate-level or more skilled roles, with competition coming both from other graduates and from displaced workers. In combination with the reduced ability to work or study internationally, some young people are feeling there are fewer opportunities for them as a result of COVID-19.

What support might be needed

Potential areas for improving employment prospects for young Aucklanders

Through our research, which included feedback from system stakeholders, employers, and young people, we identified some activities or initiatives that might improve employment prospects for young people in Auckland:

- Monitoring the impact on those most at risk of disengagement, through further analysis of data as it becomes available and by working with service providers who have their 'ears to the ground'. If the pandemic has resulted in enduring disengagement for some groups, targeted and intensive support may be required.
- Continuing the current efforts to improve connections between young people and employers, and considering how these could be strengthened or expanded, including looking at how digital tools might help increase engagement between the two sides, as well as;
- Exploring how to rebuild the employment brand and profile of sectors most disrupted by COVID-19, including how employers in these sectors attract, retain, and develop young workers.
- Improving employers' capability as employers of young people – in particular, helping employers understand the different factors influencing a young person's 'attachment' to employment, but also understanding how to support young workers through the uncertainty that COVID-19 has created.
- Working better as a system – taking advantage of the current changes across the youth employment system in Auckland to look at how to better ensure that services and interventions are coordinated and targeted.

Many of these were areas of focus before COVID-19. This reflects that COVID-19's impact does not appear to have altered to type of support or focus required from a youth employment perspective. Instead, how the issues are approached within each of these areas may need refinement.

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Purpose of this research

Auckland Unlimited commissioned this report in April 2021 to explore the impact of COVID-19 on the education and employment prospects of young people in Auckland, with a focus on identifying the opportunities and the challenges for young people entering the workforce, and areas of potential focus.

Scope and research questions

Three main research questions

Auckland Unlimited identified three main research questions:

- **What have been the main implications of the impact of COVID-19 on Auckland's youth workforce?**
- **How did New Zealand's education system fare in supporting young people through COVID-19?**
  - Did COVID-19 have an observable impact on completion and achievement rates, or disrupt transition into employment?
  - Are young people staying in education longer, or are young people leaving education and entering the workforce for less pay?
- **Have the labour market opportunities for young people changed as a result of COVID-19?**
  - Are there trends we can see in which young people are moving away from certain sectors (such as tourism, hospitality, or retail)? Are there 'new areas' that require investment from a youth employment perspective?

The structure of this report

After this introduction, this report is divided into the following sections:

1. The overall impact on youth: impacts on engagement and wellbeing
2. The impact on education and training
3. The impact on youth employment
4. Looking ahead: Labour market opportunities
5. What support might be needed.

Our approach to the research

This research, carried out in May and June 2021, was time limited and followed a mixed-methods approach. It brings together information from various sources to identify key themes. Further detail on method is in Appendix 1.

The principal sources were the following:

- **Immediately available data and statistics**, which we collated and analysed to get an understanding of youth trends in Auckland. This included:
  - Infometrics data held by Auckland Unlimited on Auckland's overall economic and labour market performance
  - statistics from the Household Labour Force Survey on labour market performance (including NEET rates and employment rates)
  - published administrative data and reports from the Ministry of Social Development and Ministry of Education.
- An **online survey** of young people aged 15–24 (387 responses), and a comparator older cohort 25–34 (536 responses).
- **Four focus groups with young people**, including:
  - one in South Auckland, hosted by CadetMax, with 10 participants of the CadetMax programme, which targets NEETs
  - one in West Auckland, attended by 14 participants who were recruited online and by word of mouth
  - two online focus groups, with 8 and 3 participants respectively, recruited online and by word of mouth.

  Participants received koha in the form of a $30 supermarket voucher to acknowledge their participation and contribution.
- **21 semi-structured interviews** with employers (8), education providers (4), and system stakeholders (9).
- **A targeted review** of existing reports and literature, predominantly focused on the immediate impacts of COVID-19.

Limitations

The time available for this research, done in May and June 2021, meant that analysis was largely limited to data that was readily and publicly available. This included existing customised data from StatsNZ held by Auckland Council, and limited additional custom data from Stats NZ.

This report provides an early indication of what may be happening in the labour market. However, it is too early to fully understand the drivers behind emerging trends, and whether the these trends are established or temporary. The insights in this report therefore should be seen as identifying areas of interest, and those that should continue to be monitored as more data becomes available.

The Impact of COVID-19

The impact of COVID-19 on the wider Auckland workforce

The arrival of COVID-19 and implementation of an ‘Alert Level’ system had a significant impact on New Zealanders’ ability to participate in education and work. Education providers had to transition to online learning, and employers could only continue operating if they did so remotely or complied with strict rules under the Alert Level system.

Table 1: Indicative summary of Alert Level implications for workplaces and education facilities

Level	Workplaces	Education
Alert Level 4 - Lockdown	Businesses close except for essential services (e.g. supermarkets, pharmacies, clinics, petrol stations and their supply chains) and lifeline utilities.	Educational facilities close.
Alert Level 3 - Restrict	Businesses cannot have customers on site, unless it is a supermarket, bank, primary produce retailer, pharmacy, petrol station or hardware store providing goods to trade customers, or it is an emergency or critical situation. Other businesses can operate but customers cannot enter.	Secondary schools are open for young people in Years 9 and 10 who may not be able to stay home by themselves. All young people in Years 11–13 learn from home. Tertiary education facilities open for limited activities involving small groups (up to 10 people), and with distance learning provision for others.
Alert Level 2 – Reduce	Businesses can open to the public if following public health guidance, such as physical distancing and record keeping. Alternative ways of working encouraged where possible. Hospitality groups must be kept separate and no more than 100 people within a defined space.	Schools are all physically open, including Years 11–13. Distance learning is available for those unable to attend school (for example, when people are self-isolating). Tertiary education facilities are open, and will maintain the core capability to deliver comprehensive distance learning to students.
Level 1: Prepare	Businesses must operate safely and fulfil all their usual health and safety obligations.	All early learning services, schools, kura and tertiary education facilities are open.

Source: Adapted from COVID-19 Alert Level system tables, available at https://covid19.govt.nz/alert-levels-and-updates/legislation-and-key-documents/#key-documents. This table is an indicative summary for the purposes of providing context for this research.

Over 2020, and in early 2021, Auckland experienced several Alert Level changes. This included an initial national wide Level 4 lockdown in March/April 2020, and its eventual graduated reduction. Auckland experienced subsequent moves back into Alert Level 3 in August 2020, February 2021 and February/March 2021. For simplicity, these are referred to as ‘lockdowns’ throughout this report.

Wage subsidies to support labour market attachment

The implementation of a wage subsidy scheme supporting nearly 1.8 million jobs showed that the Government recognised the potential economic impact of the lockdowns. The subsidy was paid to employers to enable them to continue employing their staff during periods of reduced economic activity.

Three wage subsidies were available across 2020:

- **Wage Subsidy**, from 17 March 2020 – for employers whose revenue declined at least 30% over a month because of COVID-19. It provided eligible employers a lumpsum payment for each employee, to help pay and retain the employees for 12 weeks.
- **Wage Subsidy Extension**, from 10 June 2020 – for employers whose revenue declined at least 40% over a month because of COVID-19. It provided eligible employers with a lumpsum payment for each employee, to help pay and retain the employees for 8 weeks.
- **Resurgence Wage Subsidy**, from 21 August 2020 – for employers whose revenue declined at least 40% over 2 weeks because of COVID-19. It provided eligible employers with a lumpsum payment for each employee, to help pay and retain the employees for 2 weeks.

Take-up of the 2020 wage subsidies in Auckland

Data from the Ministry of Social Development shows that jobs in Auckland were more likely to be supported by a jobs subsidy, and significantly more likely to be supported by multiple jobs subsidies.

Two-thirds (68%) of jobs in Auckland were supported by at least one wage subsidy compared to 62% nationally. Of these, one-sixth (16%) were supported by three job subsidies – which is more than half (55%) of all the jobs that were supported by three jobs subsidies nationally.

59% of Auckland jobs receiving a wage subsidy received one subsidy	**25%** of Auckland jobs receiving a wage subsidy received two subsidies	**16%** of Auckland jobs receiving a wage subsidy received three subsidies
33% of NZ jobs that were supported by only 1 job subsidy were in Auckland	**45%** of NZ jobs that were supported by 2 job subsidies were in Auckland	**55%** of NZ jobs that were supported by 3 job subsidies were in Auckland.

Source: Ministry of Social Development Data File 'Wage Subsidies proportion of unique jobs supported', September 2020.

Why consider the impact on Auckland's youth workforce

Young people are particularly vulnerable during economic shocks

It is well established that young people are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of economic shocks on labour markets.[2]

[2] See for example (Ayllón & Ramos, 2019; Bergin et al., 2015; Dal Bianco et al., 2015; Rafferty et al., 2013; Usher et al., 2009).

Young people are typically going through a transition: leaving school and moving on to higher education or training or into employment. This transition time can be challenging for young people, and economic shocks can compound the challenges.

This period can involve multiple transitions or moves, including between education providers, across employment arrangements and industries (as people move from part-time work alongside study into full-time work), and across different home environments (as young people may leave their parents' home and move into more independent living arrangements).

There are a range of reasons that young people are at greater risk during economic shocks

Some of the key factors identified in the literature that place young people at greater risk when finding and competing for jobs include:

- Young people typically enter the labour market in bulk at specific times of the year. If that transition coincides with a recession and reduced demand for labour, school-leavers and recent graduates have to compete with a wider pool of jobseekers for fewer vacancies (Dal Bianco et al., 2015).
- Young people are more likely to be in casual or short-term employment, or to be employed in cyclically sensitive areas like manufacturing and construction (for males) and retail trade and accommodation and food services (for females).
- Younger workers may be more likely to lose their jobs under a 'last in, first out' approach as firms respond to a need to reduce workers (Junankar, 2014).
- In a recession, firms also become more cautious about hiring new workers. Because many young workers are first-time entrants into the labour market, they can find it harder to find work – especially when competing against larger numbers of workers with experience (Junankar, 2014).

2. THE OVERALL IMPACT ON YOUTH: ENGAGEMENT AND WELLBEING

Summary of findings

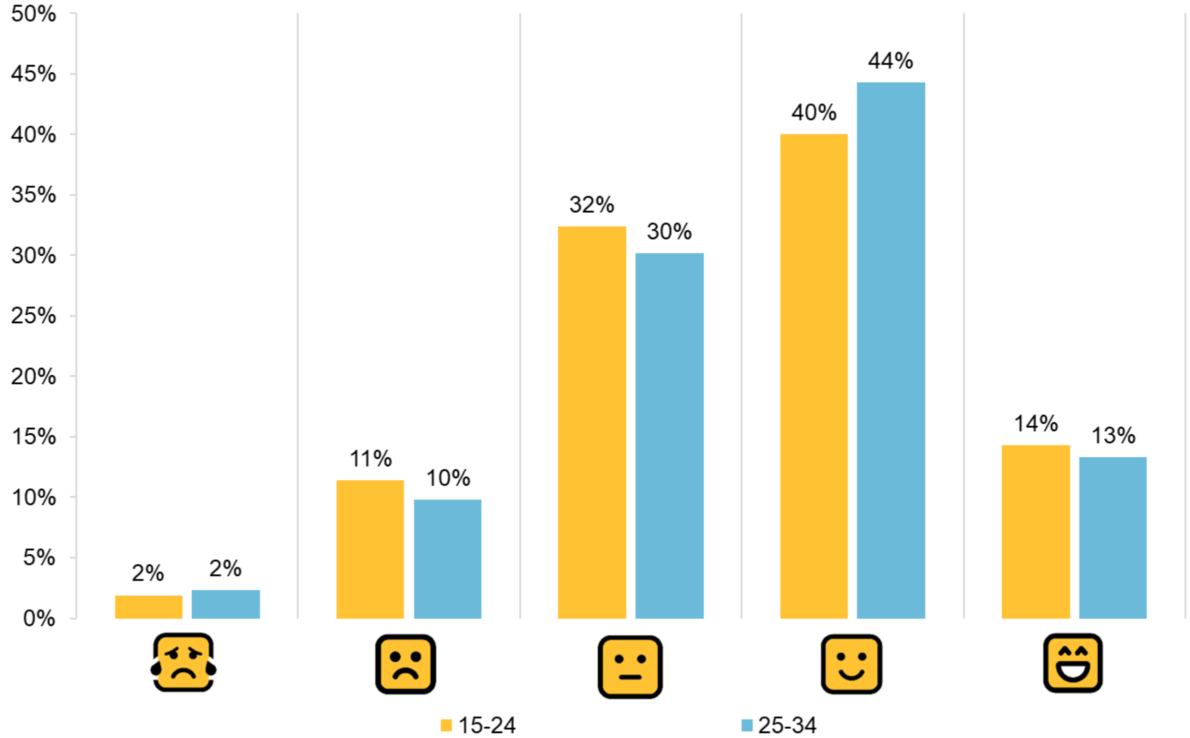
- COVID-19 and the accompanying Level 3 and 4 lockdowns up to March 2021 touched all New Zealand's communities and businesses in some way. However, Auckland has been disproportionately affected, with a greater number of Alert Level changes than other areas.
- Although many young people handled the impacts of the lockdowns well, COVID-19 does appear to have had a negative effect on youth overall.
- COVID-19 may have increased levels of disengagement for young people overall. In March 2021, the youth NEET rate in Auckland was at its highest since 2010, with the largest annual increase being between 2020 and 2021. Increases in the youth NEET rate have been observed across many areas in Auckland, including in wards in North and Central Auckland, while the NEET rate in south Auckland has returned through the pandemic to previously high levels.
- While the youth NEET rates for most ethnic groups had returned to pre-GFC levels, the rate for Māori rangatahi increased by one percentage point above the GFC rate. The NEET rate for young women aged 20-24 increased from 14.9% in March 2020 to 19.0% in March 2021, likely reflecting increased pressure to undertake caregiving responsibilities. These trends are consistent with the main trends from COVID-19: the lockdowns and their employment effects have exacerbated the impact of existing vulnerabilities and disadvantages.
- Young New Zealanders, and young people in Auckland in particular, are over-represented among the increased numbers of people receiving an unemployment benefit after COVID-19 arrived. The number of 18–24 year-olds in Auckland on the JobSeeker (Work Ready) benefit in March 2021 was 68% above the level in March 2020 (compared to 39% for non-youth in Auckland, 42% for youth nationally, and 30% for non-youth nationally). While there are early indications that this number has begun to drop, and at a faster level than for other ages, the rate of decline for youth in Auckland appears to be lower than that of youth nationally.
- 42% of the young people responding to our survey reported that COVID-19 had had a detrimental impact on their mental wellbeing. We found that there were no differences in mental wellbeing effects between youth and the older cohort.
- Youth in our focus groups and survey discussed gaining weight over the lockdowns, as well as feeling stress, anxiety, and pressure, and having general mental health concerns, and Auckland's universities have reported increased demand for medical and mental health services. Ongoing financial hardship, food insecurity and challenging home environments also contributed to negative effects on physical and mental health.

How young people fared

The arrival of COVID-19 and the accompanying periods of at different Alert Levels and their restrictions through to March 2021 had a significant impact on New Zealanders' education and work. Education providers had to transition to online learning, and employers could only continue operating if they did so remotely or complied with strict rules under the Alert Level system.

In our June 2021 survey of 15–34 year olds in Auckland, we asked how they felt then compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 1). The responses from young people (aged 15–24) were broadly similar to those from the 25–34 year olds.

Figure 1: How do you feel about your education, employment and/or training now, compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic?



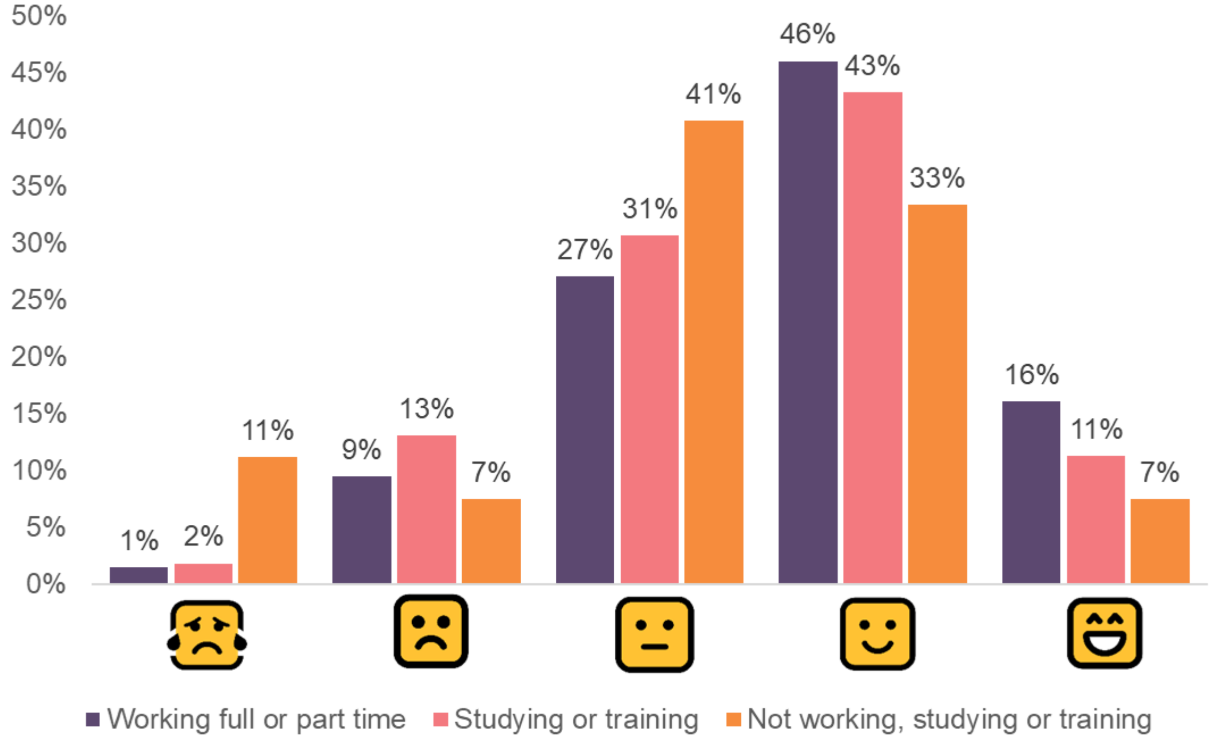
Source: MartinJenkins youth and COVID-19 survey

Auckland youth responses by employment status

The young people's responses varied by employment status (Figure 2). Those who were employed at the start of the pandemic were more likely to respond positively (62%) than those who were studying or training (54%) or NEET (40%). NEET respondents were more likely to give a negative response, with 11% selecting the most negative option compared to only 1% for those employed and 2% for those studying or training.

The progression of ‘very sad’ to ‘sad’ for NEETs is the only response that does not conform to the expected pattern. This is likely due to a) the small number of NEETs and b) the understandable tendency for those who are NEET to view their situation as particularly negative.

Figure 2: How do you feel about your education, employment and/or training now, compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic? By status, 15–24 year olds



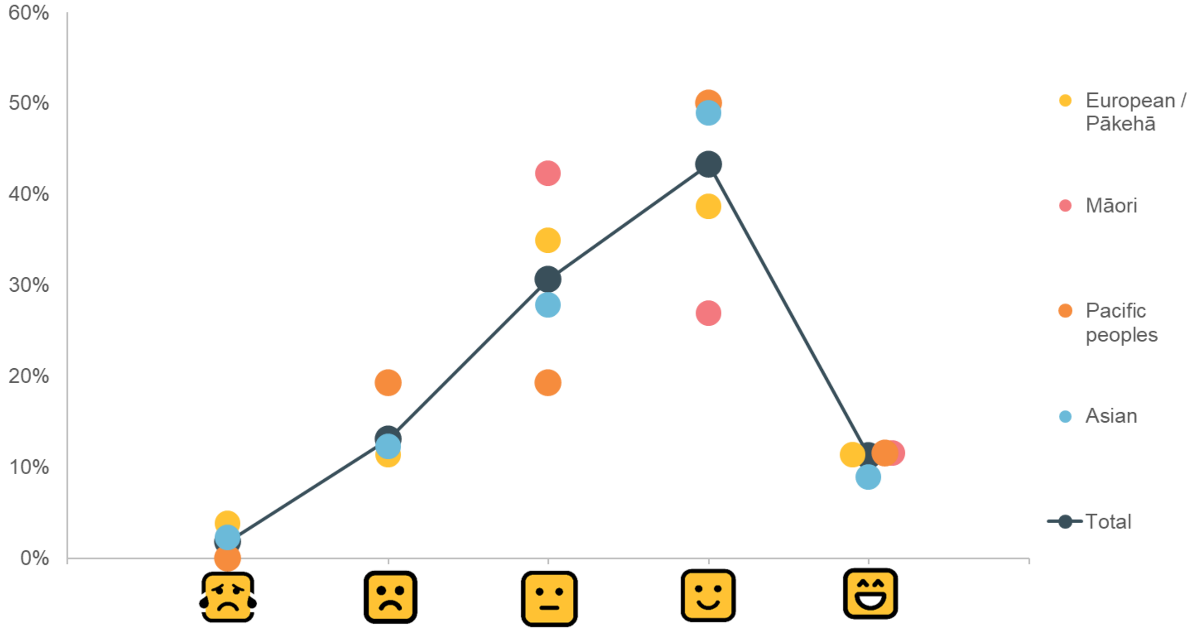
Source: MartinJenkins youth and COVID-19 survey

Auckland youth responses by ethnicity

Looking at the difference by ethnicity (Figure 3), responses continued to broadly map to the overall trend, but:

- European/Pākehā were less likely than the average for all ethnicities to report a positive response, and more likely to report a neutral response.
- Māori were less likely than the average to report a positive response, and more likely to report a neutral response, with these differentials from the average being even greater than for Pākehā.
- Pacific peoples were less likely than the average to be neutral, and more likely to be either positive (smiley face) or negative (sad face).

Figure 3: How do you feel about your education, employment and/or training now, compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic? 15–24, by ethnicity, *n*(European) = 106; *n*(Māori) = 26; *n*(Pacific) = 26; *n*(Asian) = 90



Source: MartinJenkins youth and COVID-19 survey

A disproportionate impact on youth participation in education and employment

"How did COVID-19 impact youth? Profoundly. It's had more impact in the last 20 years than anything else I've seen, including the GFC."

– System stakeholder

Youth transitions are an important measure of ongoing youth engagement

How well a young person makes the transition from school to further education, training, or employment, can be a leading indicator for their ongoing 'labour market attachment' or their likelihood to continue to participate in the labour market.

While it is common for a young person to be not in employment, education, or training (NEET) at some point during this transition, research has shown that young people who experience a NEET spell of six months or more during this time are also more likely to be inactive or on a benefit two years later (Samoilenko & Carter, 2015).

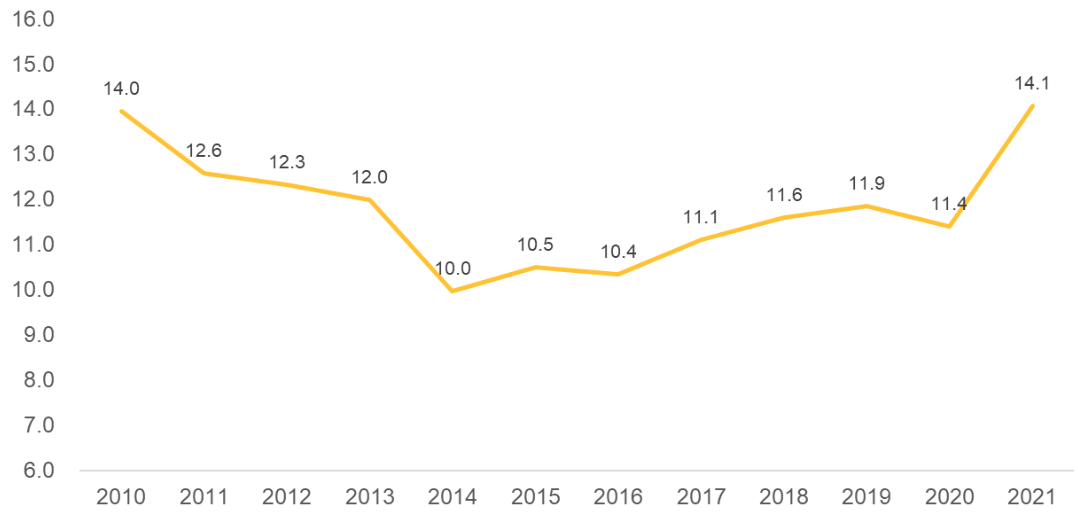
A New Zealand study (Pacheco & Dye, 2013) has estimated the per-capita cost of each youth NEET at $26,840. The cost for Auckland NEETs is expected to be higher, due largely to higher foregone wages. In addition, the costs of NEET in Auckland who are Māori and Pacific peoples are expected to be even higher, due to a higher likelihood to:

- disengage from the education system earlier
- withdraw from the work force due to caregiving responsibilities at a younger age
- experience longer durations of unemployment than their NZ European counterparts (Pacheco & Dye, 2013).

The pandemic may have increased labour market disengagement for youth

The March 2021 youth NEET rate in Auckland is at its highest since 2010, with the largest annual increase since then being between 2020 and 2021 (Figure 4). The youth NEET rate masks variations by age (Figure 5), ethnicity (Figure 6), and gender (Figure 7). Youth NEET has risen most for the youngest age bracket (15–19), for Māori, and for females.

Figure 4: Auckland youth NEET rate, year ending March

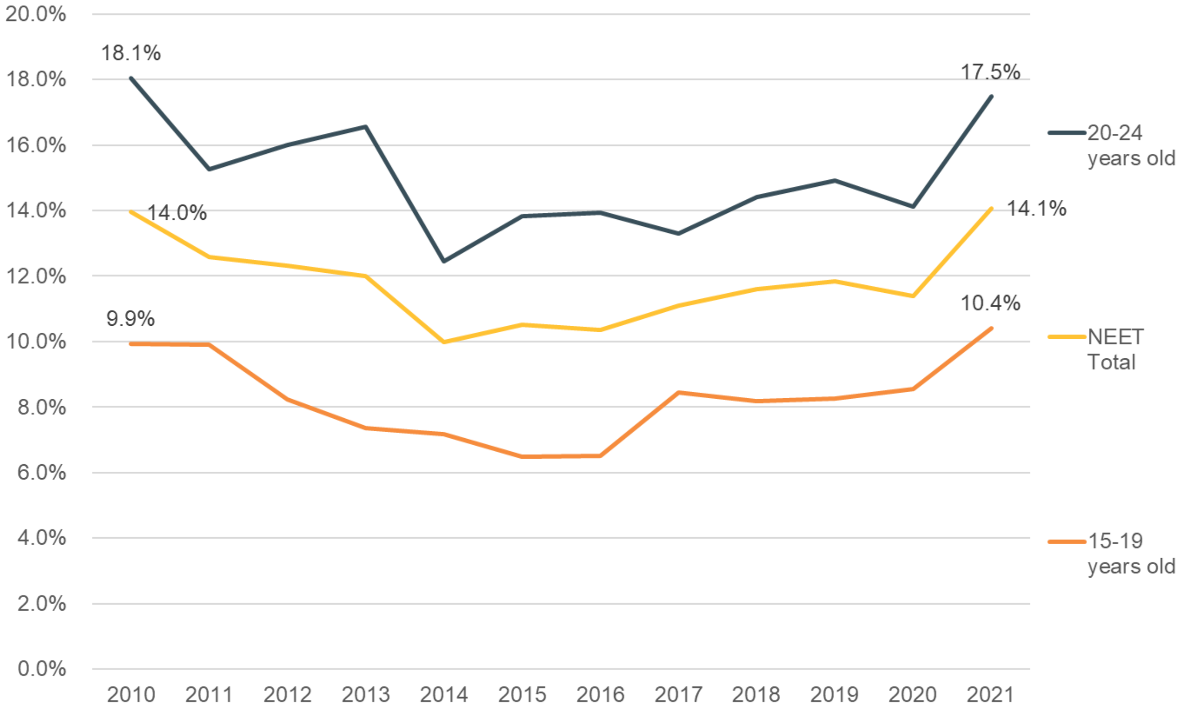


Source: StatsNZ Household labour force survey, customised data from Auckland Council

Ethnicity

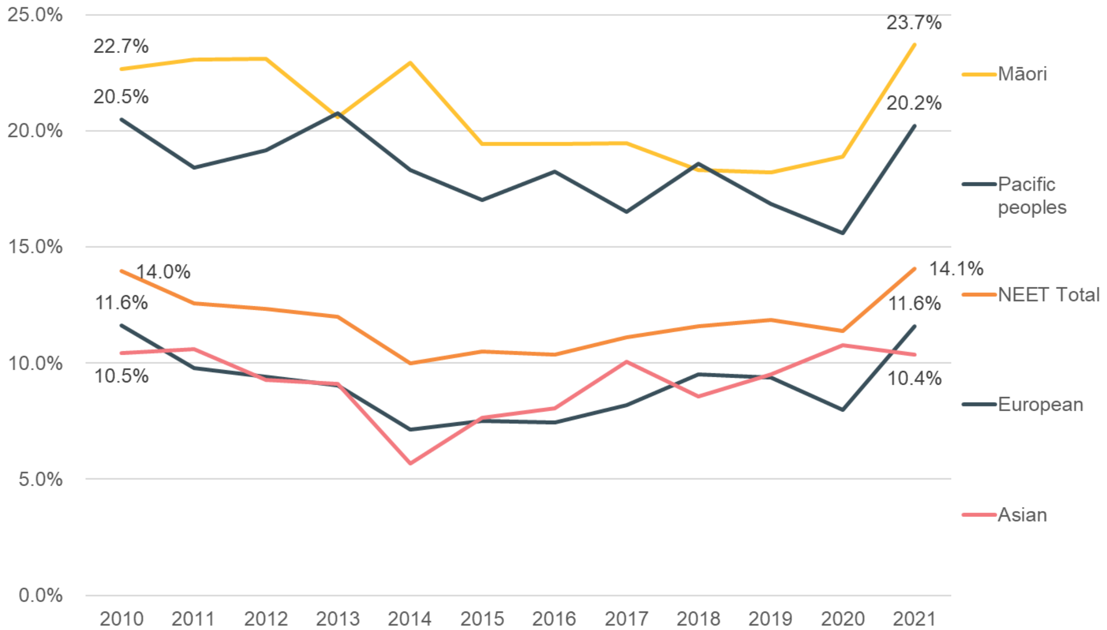
While the youth NEET rates for most ethnic groups have returned to pre-GFC levels, the rate for Māori rangatahi has increased by one percentage point above the rate in 2010. The NEET rate for both Māori and Pacific young people increased significantly in 2021 compared to 2020, in contrast to a long term trend of overall decline since 2010. This is consistent with the main trends from COVID-19: the lockdowns and their employment effects have exacerbated the impact of existing vulnerabilities and disadvantages.

Figure 5: Auckland youth NEET rate, annual average for year ending March, by age



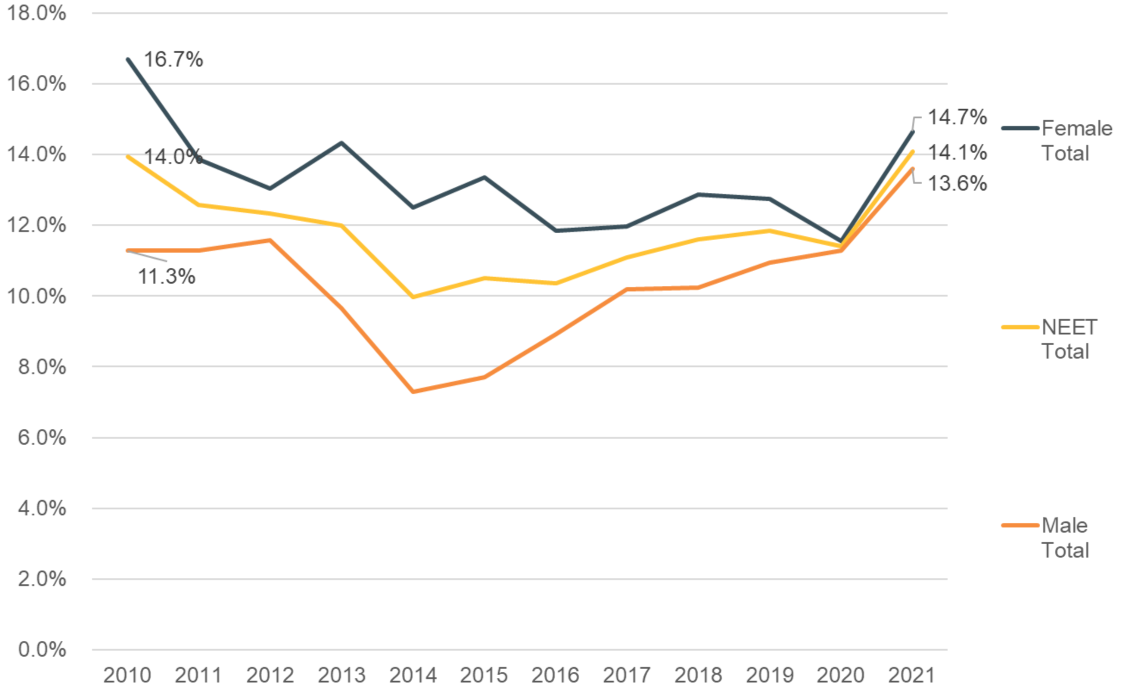
Source: StatsNZ Household labour force survey, customised data from Auckland Council

Figure 6: Auckland youth NEET rate, annual average for year ending March, by ethnic group



Source: StatsNZ Household labour force survey, customised data from Auckland Council

Figure 7: Auckland youth NEET rate, annual average for year ending March 2021, by gender



Source: StatsNZ Household labour force survey, customised data from Auckland Council

Figure 8: Auckland female NEET by age

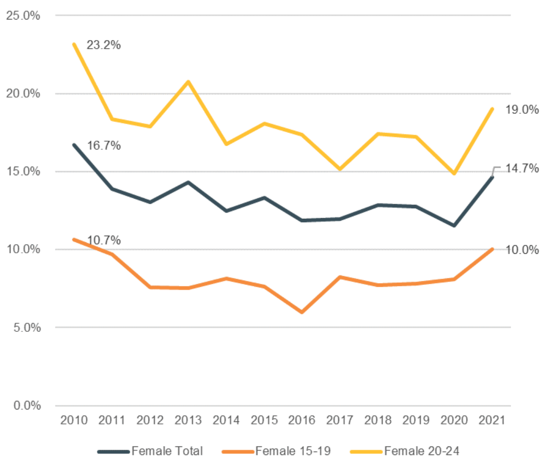
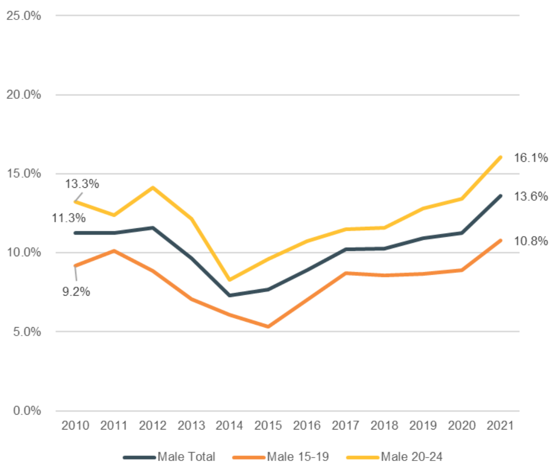


Figure 9: Auckland male NEET by age



Source: StatsNZ Household labour force survey, customised data from Auckland Council

The NEET rate has increased more for females, with increased caregiving responsibilities

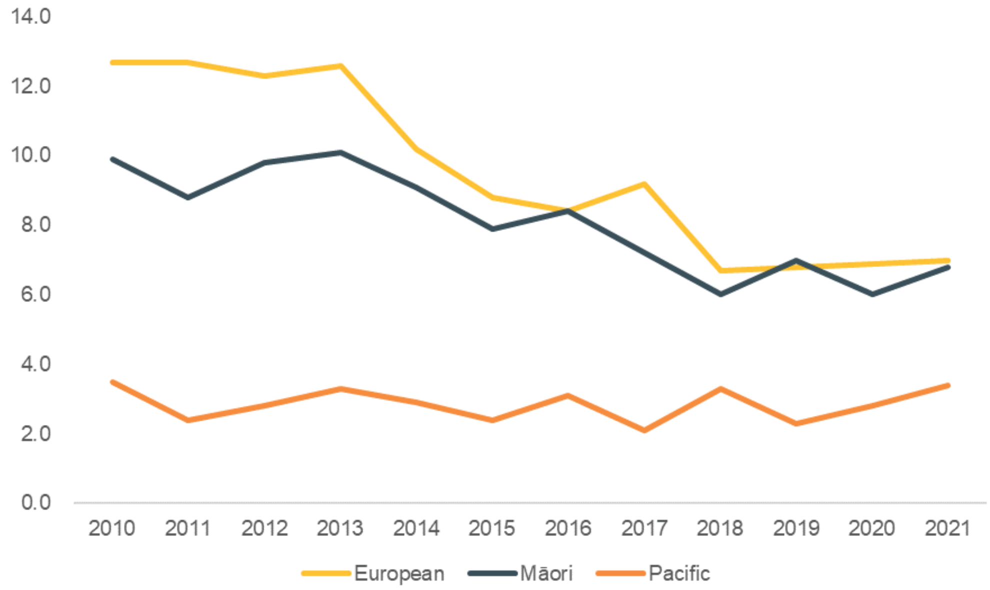
The NEET rate for females has increased from 11.6% in March 2020 to 14.7% in March 2021. The increase has been particularly stark for females aged 20–24, increasing from 14.9% in March 2020 to 19.0% in March 2021 (Figure 8).

This is consistent with feedback that we heard from education providers and employers that young women experienced greater pressures to increase the role they played at home to support affected family members, including taking on a greater role in family caregiving.

Globally, women carry out an average of three times as much unpaid care work as men (Bhatia, 2020). This is likely to be exacerbated during lockdowns and school closures with women having to balance, in addition to their paid work, childcare, home-schooling, elder care, and housework. Female-headed households are particularly vulnerable (Vaughan-Whitehead, 2011).

Looking at national data, the number of NEET who are caregiving has been reducing since 2010, particularly for European and Māori people. While well below the numbers that were present following the GFC, the number of young people who are not in the labour force or in education due to caregiving reasons has increased between March 2020 and March 2021, by 1% for European, 13% for Māori, and 21% for Pacific people (Figure 10).

Figure 10: NEET caregiving numbers by ethnicity, NZ, March years



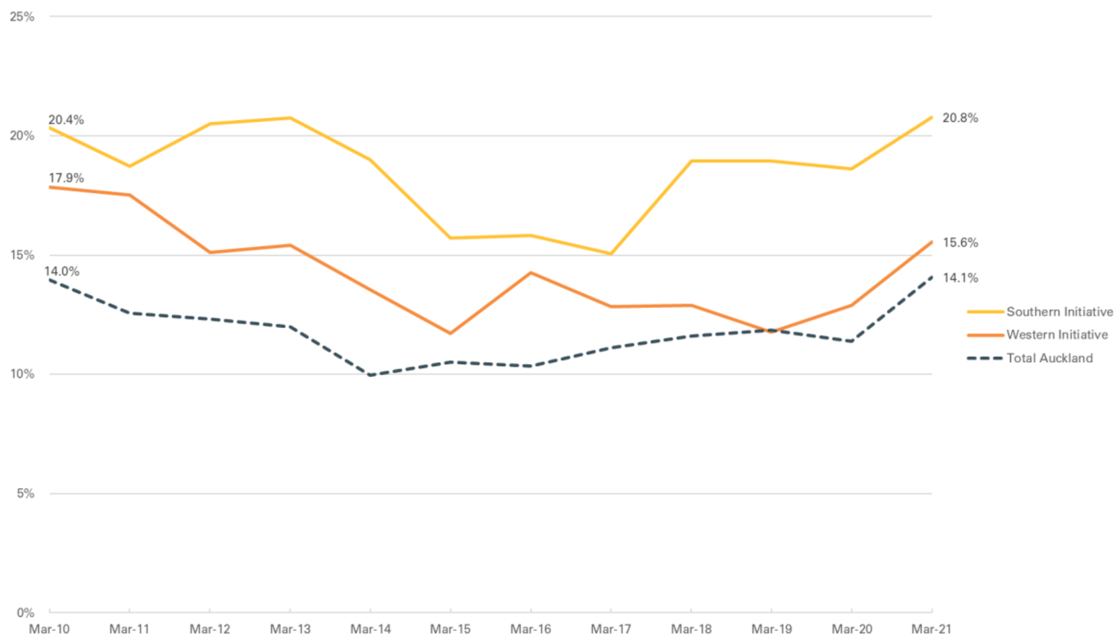
Source: Stats NZ HLFS March annual averages. Note: numbers are the total number, not the rate. Data for all of NZ.

The NEET rate is particularly high in south Auckland

Youth NEET rates in southern wards and the Southern Initiative area have returned through the pandemic to previously high levels. The NEET rate in the Southern Initiative is now 20.8%, compared to 18.6% in March 2020. This is the highest point it has been over the past ten years - similar to rates in 2010 (20.4%) and in 2013 (20.8%). The Western Initiative area has also increased substantially, now at 15.6%, compared to 12.9% in March 2020 (Figure 11).[3]

Specific data for smaller sub-regional areas is variable in availability due to small sample sizes and should be treated with caution. For those wards with available data, the NEET rate appears to have increased for all over the previous two years, including for in north Auckland and central Auckland (Figure 12).

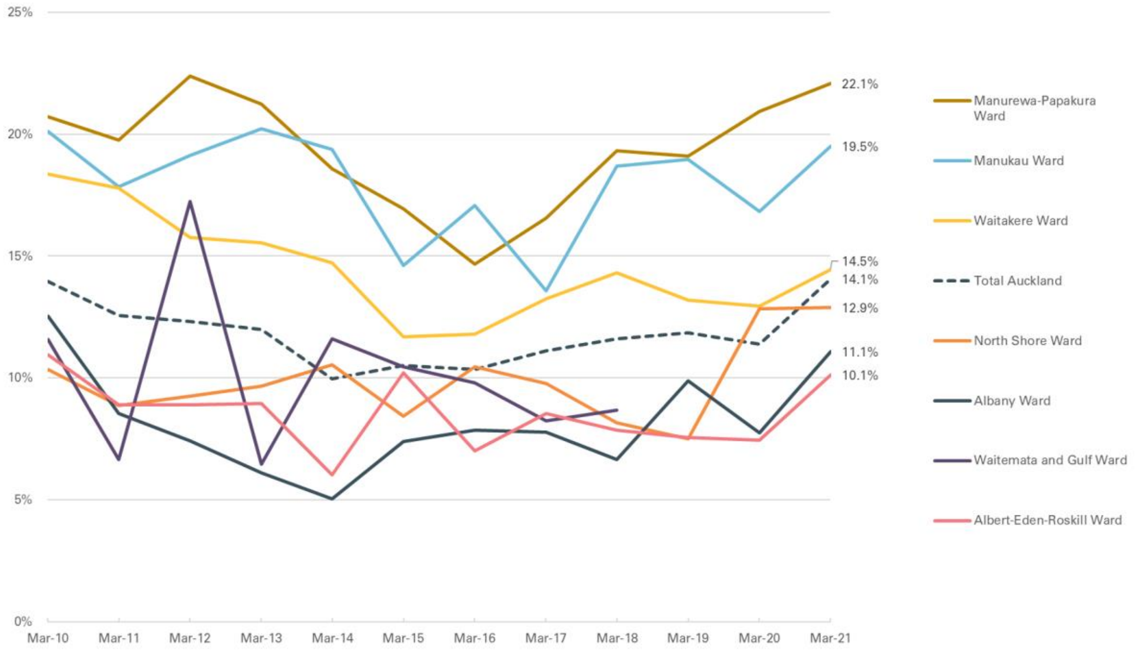
Figure 11: Youth NEET rate, year ending March, Auckland and TSI and TWI areas



Source: StatsNZ Household labour force survey, customised data from Auckland Council

3 Sub-regional NEET rate are subject to small sub-sample sizes and have varying error margins. Sub-regional estimates should be used with caution.

Figure 12: Youth NEET rate, year ending March, by Auckland selected sub-regional areas



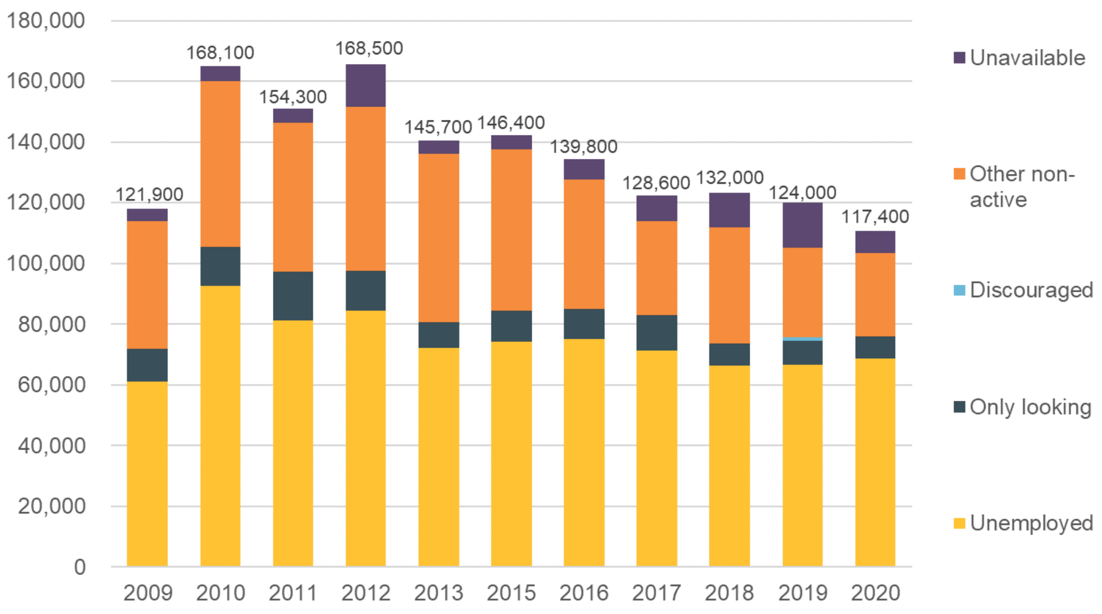
Source: StatsNZ Household labour force survey, customised data from Auckland Council

A stark increase in Jobless status for young people

Those who are 'Jobless' consist of those who are 'Unemployed', 'Only looking', 'Discouraged', 'Other non-active', and 'Unavailable' (Figure 13). By calendar year, the number of jobless youth has been steadily falling since a high of 168,500 in 2012.

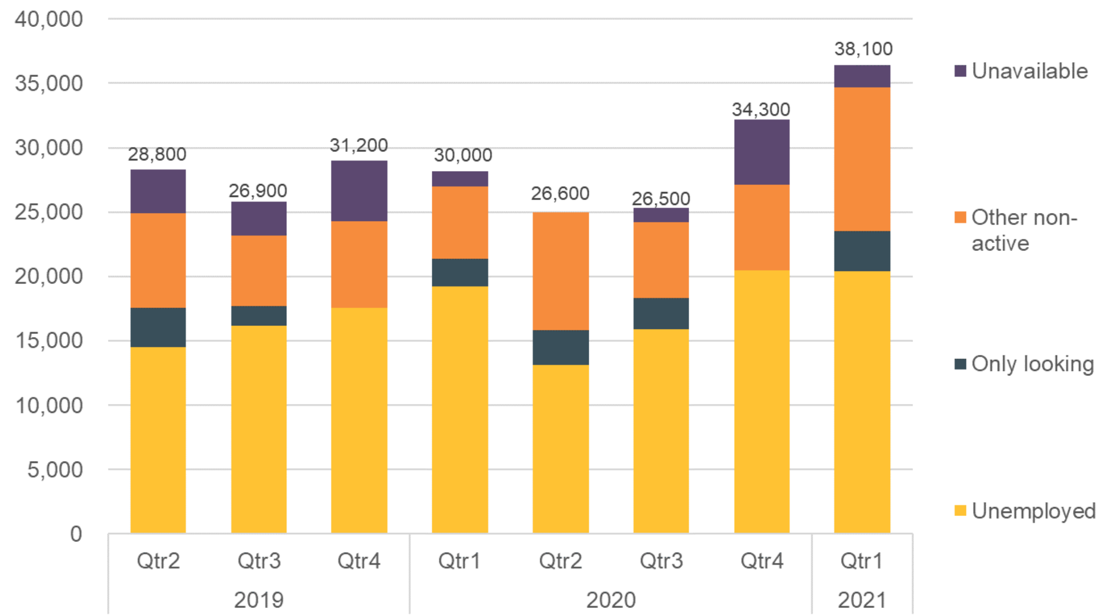
However, if this is broken down by quarter, and the January–March 2021 quarter is included, the numbers are stark. Those who are 'Only looking' and 'Other non-active' increased, indicating that youth are looking for work but are unsuccessful, and so potentially making other choices in the absence of available work (Figure 14). 'Other non-active' includes those who are not actively seeking work because they are retired, or because they have personal or family responsibilities such as unpaid housework and childcare, or because they are permanently unavailable for work due to physical or mental disabilities. The rise in 'Other non-active' is likely those who have left work or education, in order to undertake childcare, so that others in their household can continue to work. This is consistent with the increase in NEET caregiving numbers as discussed on the previous page.

Figure 13: Jobless status, Auckland, age 15–24, by year



Source: StatsNZ Household labour force survey, customised data

Figure 14: Jobless status, Auckland, aged 15–24, by quarter



Source: StatsNZ Household labour force survey, customised data

Young people are over-represented in the increase in numbers on the main unemployment benefit

Benefit uptake figures suggest that youth were disproportionately affected by COVID-19 – and youth in Auckland even more so.

While the different jobs subsidies supported many businesses and workers, COVID-19 and the associated lockdowns still resulted in many people losing their jobs. MSD has found that strict Alert Level 4 restrictions and significant reductions in global demand led to a rate of change in benefit numbers in April 2020 that is unprecedented in modern history (MSD, 2020).

In Auckland, the number receiving the main unemployment benefit (JobSeeker Support Work Ready – JSWR) increased by 29% between March 2020 and June 2020. Young people featured disproportionately in that increase, with numbers among 18–24 year-olds increasing by 55% between the two quarters, compared with 23% among 25–64 year-olds (Figure 15). These proportional increases are substantially more than those experienced across New Zealand as a whole (Figure 16).

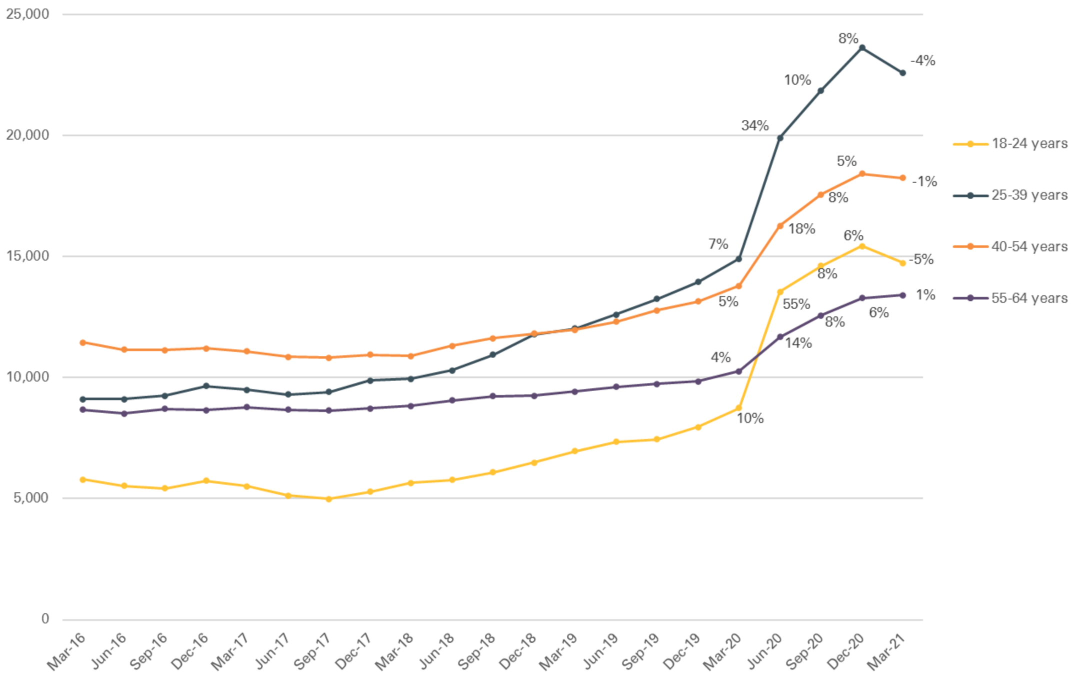
Numbers for JSWR continued to increase over 2020 for all age groups, but began to decrease in March 2021. While the decrease for youth appears to be occurring at a faster rate than for other age groups, the number of youth JSWR recipients in Auckland decreased by a smaller proportion than the corresponding nationwide figure, with 18–24 year-olds receiving JSWR decreasing by 5% in Auckland in March 2021, compared to 10% nationwide.

In March 2021, JSWR recipient rates for 18–24 year-olds in Auckland were still 68% higher than in March 2020, compared with 39% higher for 25–64 year-olds in Auckland. The rate is also higher than for youth across New Zealand (42%), and for 25–64 year-olds across New Zealand (30%).

68% is the increase in 18–24 year-olds in Auckland receiving JSWR in March 2021, compared to March 2020	**39%** is the increase in 25–64 year-olds in Auckland receiving the JSWR in March 2021, compared to March 2020
42% is the increase in 18–24 year-olds across New Zealand receiving the JSWR in March 2021, compared to March 2020	**30%** is the increase in 25–64 year-olds across New Zealand receiving the JSWR in March 2021, compared to March 2020

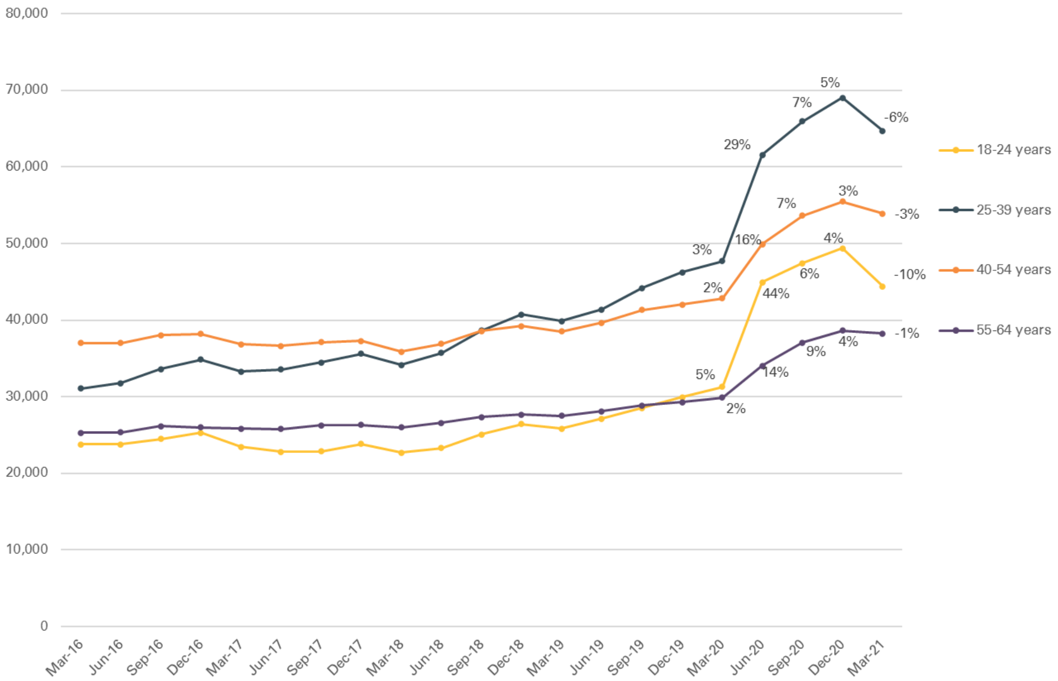
Source: MSD Quarterly Benefit Factsheets, March 2021

Figure 15: Change in Jobseeker (Work Ready) numbers in Auckland, by age



Source: MSD Quarterly Benefit Factsheets, March 2021

Figure 16: Change in numbers on Jobseeker Support Work Ready in NZ, by age



Source: MSD Quarterly Benefit Factsheets, March 2021

The impact on youth wellbeing

Research shows that social connections are vital to wellbeing and to being able to cope with difficult situations (see Sibley et al., 2020 for examples). With the lockdowns limiting physical and social connections there have been fears that there will be both immediate and long-lasting physical and psychological harm.

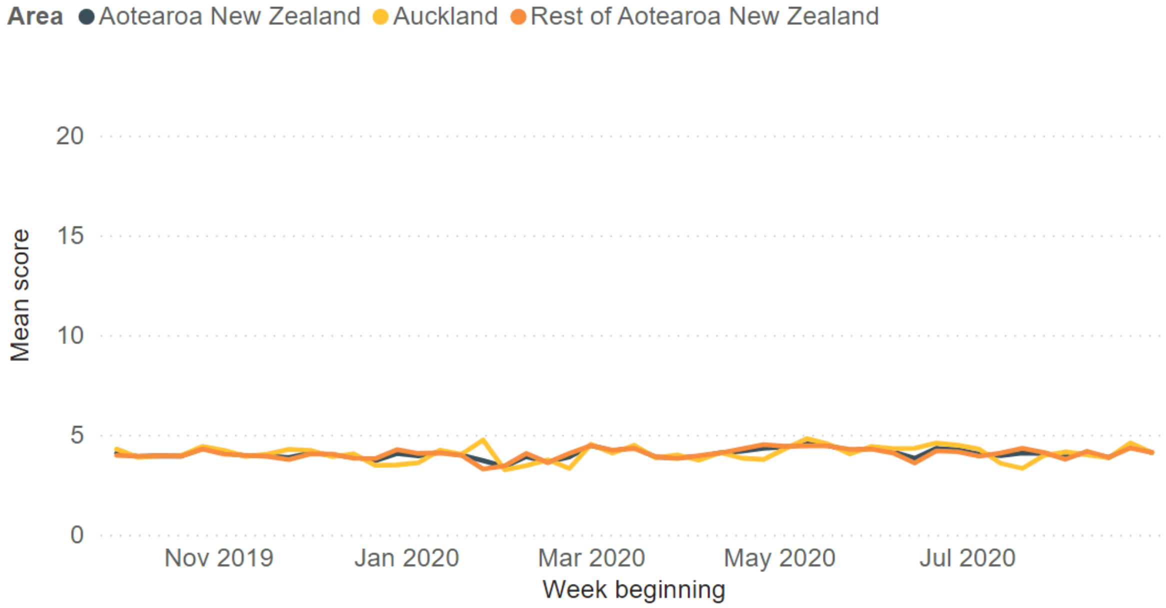
Promisingly, however, analysis of the New Zealand Attitudes and Value survey between September 2019 and August 2020 found no significant differences over time for felt belongingness, perceived social support, reported satisfaction with life, standard of living, future security, personal relationships, and health (Sibley, C G et al., 2020).

Mental health and psychological distress

Nationally, some measures of psychological distress and loneliness seem to have increased slightly during the early public health response but then have recovered quickly (Sibley, C G et al., 2020). Nationally, psychological distress measures hovered around 4 between September 2019 and August 2020, indicating low psychological distress – and there was little difference between Auckland and the rest of New Zealand (Figure 17).

There were some indications that there are differences within groups. For example, 16% in the pre-pandemic group reported moderate mental distress, and this increased to 21% after August 2020. While the researchers indicate that this should be treated with caution as the results were not statistically significant, the risk for mental health issues may have increased. Greater mental distress during and after a crisis is consistent with earlier research (Sibley, C G et al., 2020).

Figure 17: Psychological distress scores of New Zealanders, Sep 2019 – Aug 2020

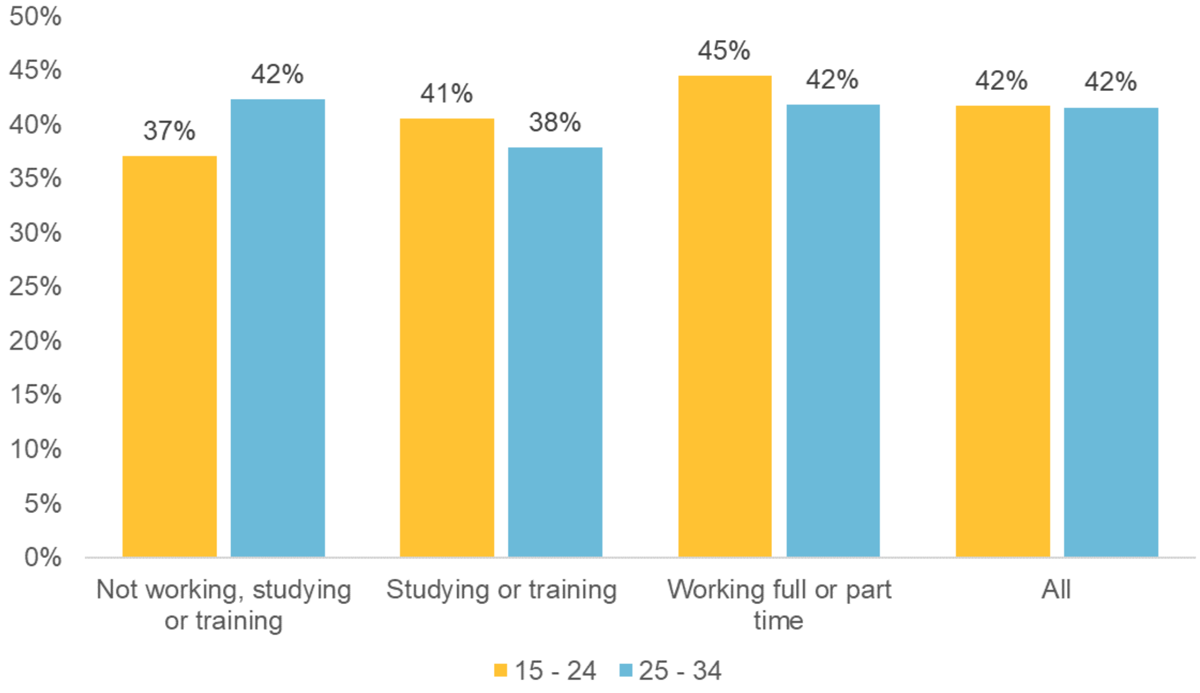


Source: National New Zealand Attitudes and Values Survey scores (Sibley, C G et al., 2020). Measured using the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K6). A score of 0 is no psychological distress, 1–5 is low, 6-10 is moderate, and 11-24 is high.

The findings probably reflect, in part, the strong levels of resilience in many communities, as well as the early and effective public health response. However, as discussed previously, COVID-19 has also highlighted significant disparities existing before the pandemic, and there is the risk that events like this will compound existing disparities.

Surprisingly, we found that there were no differences in mental wellbeing effects between youth and the older cohort (Figure 18). This is inconsistent with results reported previously by other organisations. For example, Youthline (2020) found that of 975 respondents, 73% indicated that COVID-19 and Lockdowns had an impact on their mental health. Young people under 25 were more likely to agree with this statement than older age groups. The difference may be due to the time period during which the survey ran – over April 2020. This was during the first Level 4 lockdown when respondents would be experiencing lockdowns for the first time. Our participants would have had significant time to reflect on their experiences. Additionally, our participants were sampled to ensure they were just Auckland-based and representative of the Auckland population, by gender and ethnicity.

Figure 18: 'Due to the COVID-19 pandemic my mental wellbeing has declined'



Source: MartinJenkins youth and COVID-19 survey

There were some differences by employment and education status, but the differences are probably not significant. However, it is concerning that 42% of the working age population aged 15–34 indicated declines in mental wellbeing. Youth working full- or part-time were most likely to respond that their mental wellbeing had declined.

Education providers drew our attention to the mental health impacts on their students. AUT noted that more students presented with anxiety because of changes to teaching and learning delivery and because of being away from family during the initial nationwide lockdown. Students who were already diagnosed as mentally unwell reported that they felt stable and safe during the initial lockdown; however, as alert levels continued beyond three weeks, they reported feeling more anxious, depressed, and worried about their future studies and wellbeing.

In the first half of 2020, students were generally reluctant to use online mental health support. As online support became the norm, students started engaging with it in higher numbers. AUT saw a 6% increase in counselling appointments compared to the same period last year. Both medical and mental health services have seen increased demand (Figure 19 and Figure 20).

Education providers commented that there were immediate mental health effects of the lockdowns, but they fear there will also be long-term implications, much like the earthquakes in Canterbury.

Figure 19: AUT Counselling appointments, 2020 and 2021

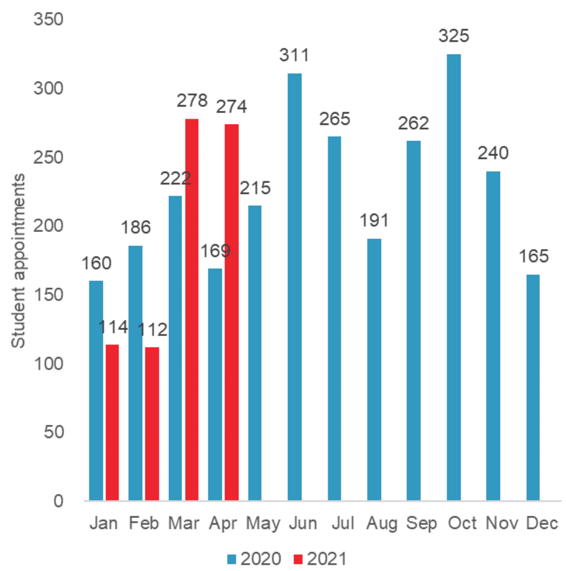
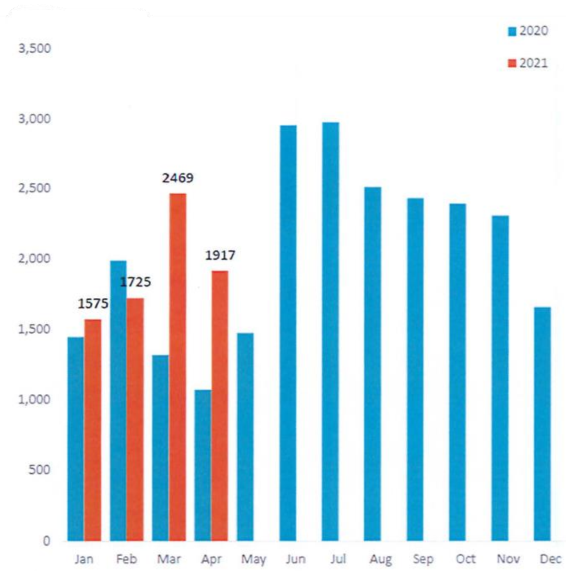


Figure 20: AUT Medical centre appointments, 2020 and 2021



Source: AUT

Mental health and the need to improve support for mental health were key themes across the focus groups and the free-text comments in the survey (Table 2). Social isolation contributed to a lot of discussion in relation to physical health and mental health. Gaining weight over the lockdowns was a strong theme of the focus group discussions, as well as feeling stress, anxiety, and pressure, and having general mental health concerns. Several employers also discussed needing to provide additional pastoral care and support for workers through the lockdowns.

Table 2: Selection of mental health and wellbeing comments from the focus groups and survey

Focus groups	Online survey
• Put on weight and lost social skills. • Stress around grades, and the future. I noticed that a lot of people around me were becoming more depressed. • Social pressure to drink more … If not at uni or have a job can do from home – nothing else to do. • I ate a lot of junk, and it was very bad. Just stuffing my face with food. • Mental health will have repercussions for a long time following these lockdowns, especially given how inaccessible it is through the public system. • Lack of exercise and fresh air made everyone agitated constantly. • Nervous about getting COVID. • In almost every aspect that young people need for life – it looks like everything is against us. • I wish I could have sorted my life out before COVID-19 happened. • A lack of hope for young people.	• Deeply depressed and could not go to school after the lockdown. • Changed a lot of things for me besides work and education life. Mental well-being declined dramatically but no other worries apart from that. • I found it hard to know what to do and to focus at home. • I gave up on sports like swimming and basketball which I never felt like re-joining. My eyesight went down due to long hours of indoors in front of screen. • My lifestyle got worse, and I've got depressed. I am still suffering with the depression and almost quitting the school. • My mental health has declined to the point where I have been unable to work and study well or at all sometimes. • Going to a counsellor made my well-being better but just overall being in lockdown itself was tough. Having to be away from friends and family was harder than I expected. • Stressed. • More mental health support. The biggest change has been working from home and knowing I am able to work/study from home therefore struggling with motivation to get out of bed and go to my institution

Social connections

Young people really missed the face-to-face social connections with their peers and others. Many mentioned that they felt like their skills in this area had declined over the lockdowns to the point that they found it hard getting back into it again. Many also mentioned they had lost friends as a result of COVID-19.

Lost all bonds with friends.

Lack of seeing friends was quite difficult for me.

I missed my friends...didn't expect to not see them for so long.

Awkward seeing my friends after a long time.

This is consistent with findings from the Ministry of Youth Development, through a large survey of young people nationwide. The Ministry commented that:

> "the **significance of social interaction must not be underestimated**, with access to organised social and cultural events a highly ranked support, and many rangatahi feeling disconnected from friends and whānau during lockdown."
>
> *- Ministry of Youth Development (2020)*

Financial hardship and the home environment

AUT noted that COVID-19 required them to provide financial assistance at levels they had never seen before. Over 2020, AUT distributed $1.45 million to 2,405 students. Of that, $555,000 was distributed to Māori and Pacific students, and $396,000 to Asian international students.

Historically, AUT's financial support for students has been for short-term financial issues, but see COVID-19 impacts playing out more on a longer-term basis.

The University of Auckland also noted that food insecurity has become a real issue for their students. Students unable to attain employment are experiencing financial hardship, meaning that they are unable to afford food. The university is currently studying the extent of food insecurity and the impacts of COVID-19, through an online survey and interviews (Uzoigwe, 2021). The research targets undergraduate and honours students who:

- Sometimes worry about the source of their next meal.
- Has ever had to skip a meal because they did not have enough money or resources for food.
- Often eat only a few kinds of foods because of a lack of money or other resources.
- Have struggled to feed themselves appropriately since the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is difficult to isolate the extent to which food insecurity affects youth in Auckland. Food insecurity is usually reported and discussed at the family and individual level, and usually not by age. However, the Child Poverty Action Group (Neuwelt-Kearns, 2020) has stated that:

> Covid-19 has exacerbated already-high levels of food insecurity in Aotearoa.
>
> *- Caitlin Neuwelt-Kearns, Child Poverty Action Group*

Importantly, the Child Poverty Action Group's report states that 'food insecurity is about more than food, it is about insufficient income' (Neuwelt-Kearns, 2020, p. 4). Continuity of income has been affected and there is greater reliance on welfare payments. Social service providers are finding that benefit levels and the minimum wage are insufficient to meet basic needs of food, clothing and housing.

> *The cost of living is high and the payrate doesn't match e.g. average rental on a 1 bedroom unit is 390 and food/gas and public activities is only rising ....average job man takes home around 600 -700 a week if they are lucky 390 of that is rent and 130 for gas weekly and the rest is monthly bills like power water, WiFi if you can and food. So it doesn't leave much unless you survive on 3 sandwiches spread over for lunch and morning tea and maybe a chicken pie for dinner*
>
> *- 32 year old Māori male, MartinJenkins youth and COVID-19 survey*

Some stakeholders and education providers we interviewed observed cases of households increasing in size so that people could make ends meet, and cases of students leaving school either to go to work to support their whānau or to look after younger siblings.

The longer-term impacts of these decisions mean that many of those taking on caregiving roles or entering the workforce will not come back to formal education. Education providers have noted that many did not return after the last round of lockdowns, and that the types of jobs students took up were at lower skill and pay levels than they what they would have expected had they finished their studies.

Many of these school-leavers also became the sole provider for their household, so there was pressure to keep working rather than going into training or study.

Some providers have been able to work with whānau to achieve good outcomes for all – for example, supporting parents into jobs so that the young person can stay in school.

Family ties, the practice of collectivism and a strong service culture has meant that Māori and Pacific youth, and lower-income whānau, were most affected in this way.

“In one school 200 students left and never came back. And that is one school!”

- Stakeholder interviewee

For students in vulnerable and violent home lives, education providers commented that the lockdowns made their situations worse. Providers worked with these students to help them access scholarships and student accommodation so that they could live away from home during lockdowns.

Youth in the focus groups and the survey also raised the issue of financial sustainability, with some reporting having to work in order to provide for their extended family.

> *I was working every day to provide for my family so I wasn’t able to save money for myself.*
>
> *Stressed! Was worried about work/wages and how we are going to get by.*
>
> *My salary has been reduced.*
>
> *Needed WINZ assistance Needed free course to improve skill No student loan repayment.*
>
> *The biggest change would be the ever increasing living costs, despite my wage staying the same (as I am only small amount over minimum wage).*

3. THE IMPACT ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Auckland Unlimited's main questions:

How did the education system fare in supporting young people through COVID-19?

Did COVID-19 have an observable impact on completion and achievement rates, or disrupt transition into employment?

Are young people staying in education longer, or leaving education?

Summary of findings

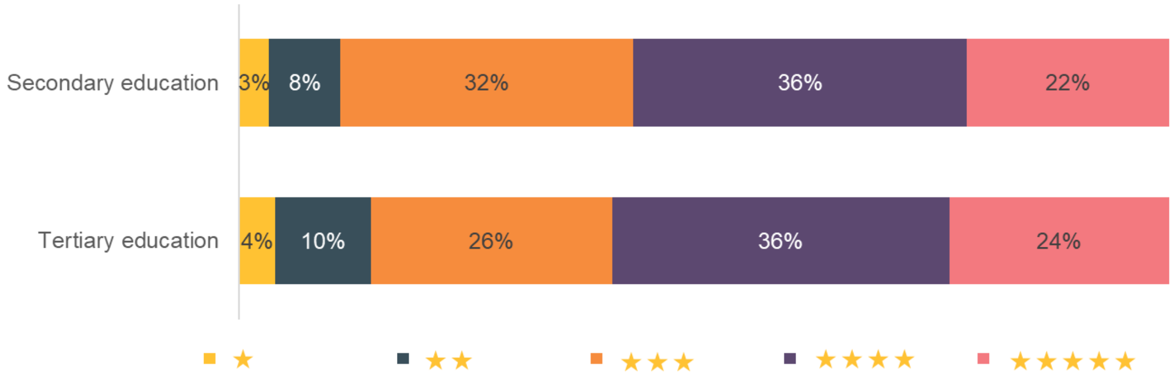
- The qualitative research we did explored how well high schools, universities and other training institutions handled the lockdowns. The research showed that the impacts varied for different cohorts.
- Most education providers quickly transitioned to online learning, but in our research learners consistently reported difficulties with participating and learning. Many said they preferred learning in-person and on-site.
- Many of those in education or training reported that they learned less as a result of COVID-19. For some this means it will probably take longer to get their qualifications, and some are expecting to fail.
- Information on rates of attendance, completion and achievement is generally not yet available, but there are indications that in these areas all learners were affected to varying degrees by COVID-19. The effects appear to have been amplified by existing inequities, such as when young people have inadequate access to digital devices and connectivity, or face challenging home environments.
- There is evidence that Auckland was disproportionately affected in secondary school attendance rates, particularly for Māori and Pacific youth and in lower-decile schools.
- Tertiary providers have seen a significant increase in enrolment levels in 2021, with some reporting increases of more than 30% overall. Providers are reporting that learners appear to be choosing fields with better employment prospects and job security (for example, teaching, nursing, and trades) and choosing options that connect to work-integrated learning such as internships and apprenticeships.

Most learners thought their education providers supported them well through the lockdown

The response to COVID-19 resulted in schools closing and the locking down of the vast majority of the population nationally (including further Alert Level 3 lockdowns in Auckland from August 2020 to March 2021), with only essential workers being allowed to travel outside their local area. All education providers shifted to online relatively quickly after lockdowns were announced – a significant logistical undertaking for many of them.

Overall, survey respondents were positive about the support they received from their education provider throughout the lockdowns. Only 11% of secondary school students, and 14% of tertiary education students, gave their provider 2 stars or less, while 58% of secondary students and 60% of tertiary students rated their provider as 4 or 5 stars (Figure 21).

Figure 21: 'How well did your education provider support you through the lockdown?'



Source: MartinJenkins youth and COVID-19 survey

Learners who rated their provider poorly (Figure 22) had concerns about: the overall responsiveness of teachers and the learner's ability to access learning support when they needed it; how effectively classes were organised; how capable teachers were at using the online learning technologies and perceived effectiveness of the various online learning systems.

Learners who rated their provider positively (Figure 23) emphasised: the general sense of support and empathy they felt from teachers; the importance of good and regular communication, both from institutions and from individual teachers; and the organisation of learning and assessment, including through online learning resources. Several also commented on the importance of being provided with devices and connectivity, or receiving non-education related support such as hardship grants.

Figure 22: Main themes for 1 or 2 stars

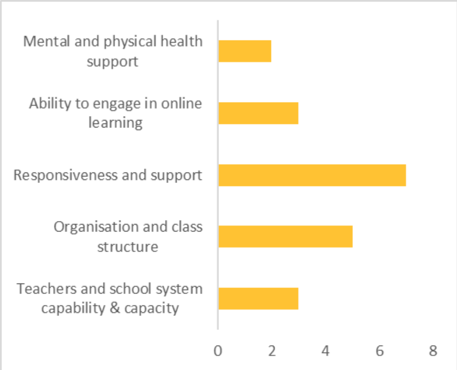
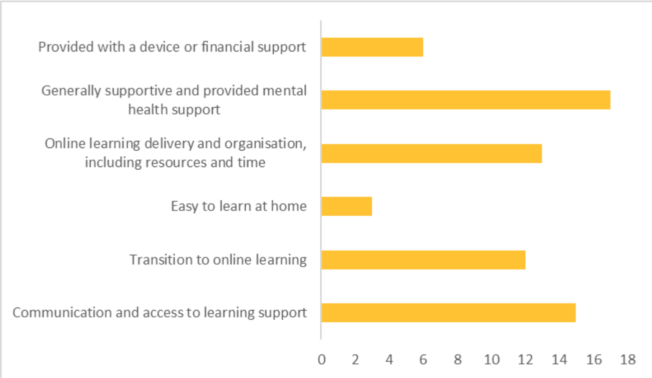


Figure 23: Main themes for 4 or 5 stars[4]



Source: MartinJenkins youth and COVID-19 survey

“Our school was well prepared for lockdown, we would have regular classes following our normal timetable and teachers would check in on us”

In the focus groups, some participants praised universities for focusing on wellbeing and mental health:

> *I was impressed at how alert they were about everyone.*
>
> *Zoom classes & sending out emails about wellbeing etc.*
>
> *Did really well but people only really notice the bad.*

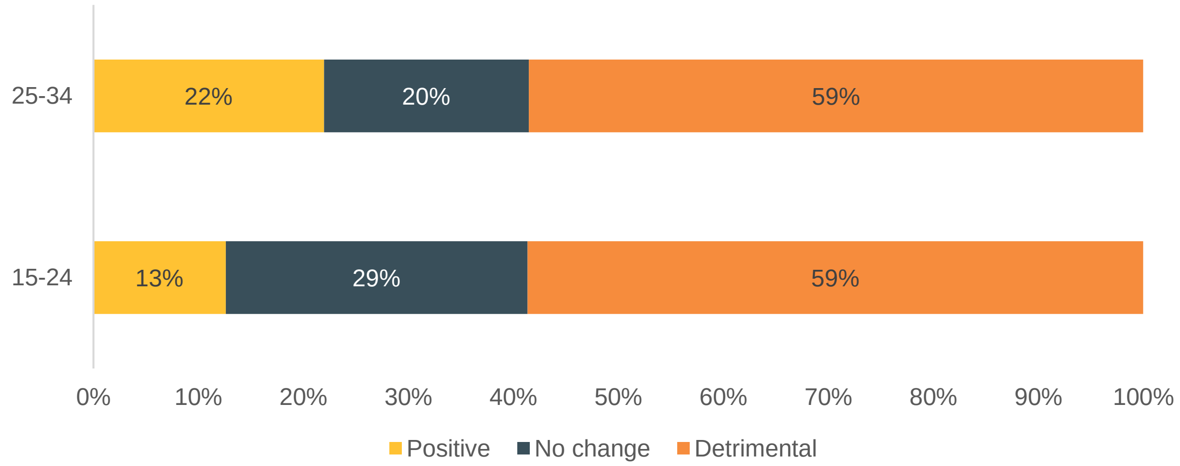
However, some were critical of delays in communication, which created confusion and frustration among students.

Many students’ learning was disrupted

COVID-19 disrupted the learning for many learners, as shown in Figure 24. Of learners aged 15–34, 59% of them thought COVID-19 had had a detrimental impact on their education or training.

[4] NB: Unspecified, general, or non-relevant responses have been excluded.

Figure 24: Overall expected impact on education outcomes

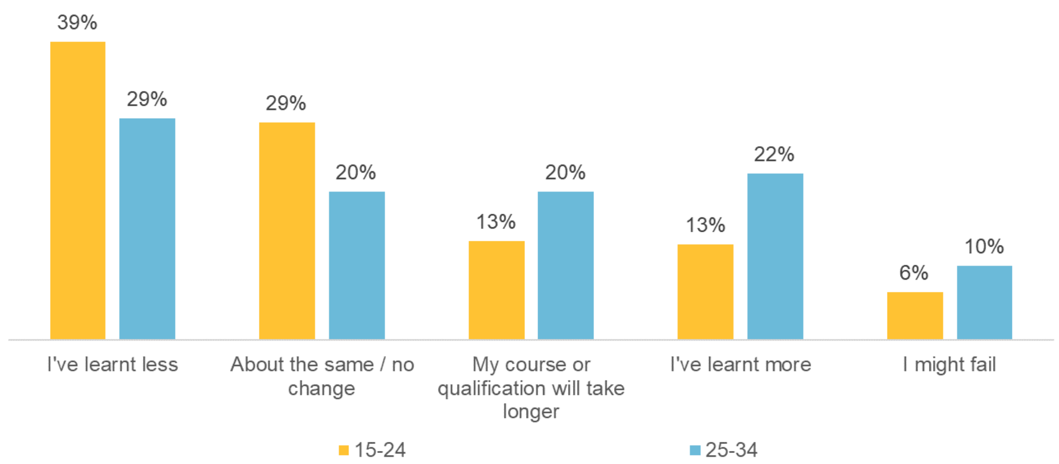


Source: MartinJenkins youth and COVID-19 survey

Impacts on education can do long-term harm for individual outcomes, with the OECD estimating that one lost school year is equivalent to a life-time loss of income of between 7% and 10% (OECD, 2020).

Comparing the survey responses of the 15–24 group with those 25–34, the most frequent response for both groups was that they had learnt less (39% for 15–24, and 29% for 25–34). However, the older cohort was more likely to respond that COVID-19 had enabled them to learn more (22%, compared to 13% for the 15-24 cohort). But conversely the older cohort was also more concerned that it would take them longer to gain their qualifications, or that they might fail.

Figure 25: Detailed impact of COVID-19 on education



Source: MartinJenkins youth and COVID-19 survey

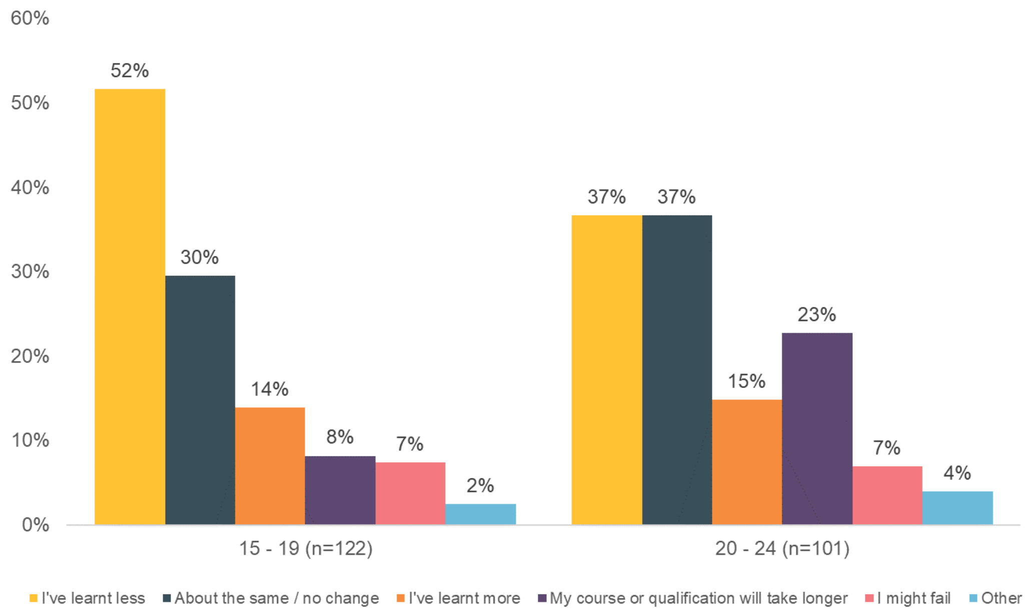
More than half of survey respondents aged 15–19 thought they had learned less because of COVID-19.

The impact on learning within the youth cohort is different by age (Figure 26). Similar proportions of 15–19 and 20–24-year-olds surveyed thought they had learned more because of COVID-19 (14% for 15–19, 15% for 20–24). However, more than half of learners aged 15–19 said they had learnt less due to COVID-19, compared to 37% for the 20–24 cohort. By contrast, only 8% of the younger cohort expected their course or qualification to take longer than planned, compared to 23% of the 20–24 cohort. For both cohorts, 7% were concerned they might fail as a result.

This suggests that those completing high school or starting their university study are less likely to expect that the pandemic will prolong getting a qualification than those university students who were nearer to completion.

Nearly a quarter of survey respondents aged 20–24 expect it will take longer to get their qualification because of COVID-19.

Figure 26: Impact of COVID-19 on learning, by age



Source: MartinJenkins youth and COVID-19 survey

Our focus group participants preferred learning face-to-face

On the whole, learners did not prefer online learning to face-to-face learning. As the main downsides of online learning, learners reported a lack of motivation, teachers with low capability in digital technologies, and less interaction with peers.

School students found that teachers and schools made allowances for the online learning – such as passing everyone, reducing the requirements, or postponing internal exams until after the lockdown. But this often had unintended consequences, with students being overloaded with work once they were back in class, or feeling they had not used their 'spare' time productively:

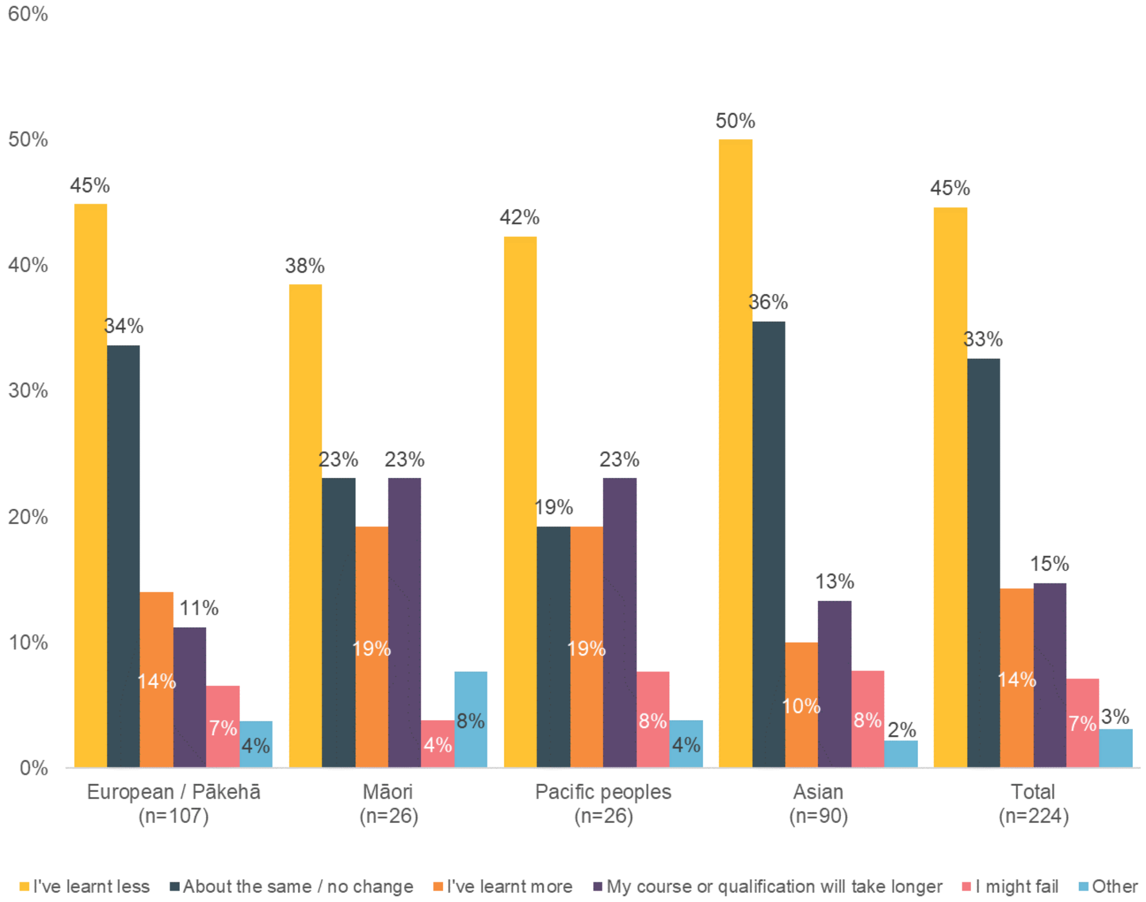
> *Online school started; however I don't think it was as effective as they hoped it'd be as everyone has their own things going on at home.*
>
> *A lot of classmates faced "Zoom fatigue".*
>
> *Days felt longer, and at times wasn't as productive as would've been at school.*
>
> *Lazy and uninspired when doing schoolwork.*
>
> *Younger people (high school) – a lot got away with doing very minimal for the 2-month lock down.*
>
> *Not Great. [NCEA] Internals just began to pile up and the second we were out of lockdown, we were hit with the entire term's work in the span of 3 weeks.*
>
> *Given almost no work at school. Could do it in 5 mins, would have 45 mins left in the period.*
>
> *My gaming hours during lockdown skyrocketed, do the work for the next day in 10 mins.*

Tertiary students reported challenges similar to those raised by secondary students. For tertiary students online learning was certainly not the preferred option, although it had some positives, such as less travel time, and for some it suited their individual learning style. Tertiary students reported challenges in engaging with content and classes, and also that the teaching was not always well organised.

> *Pretty trash, I did not learn anything.*
>
> *It was not good, I just scraped through the year.*
>
> *Didn't like learning online.*
>
> *Extremely unorganised with scheduling lessons/lectures – Mostly had to self-learn a topic to answer questions on it.*
>
> *Hard to stay productive with no motivation – No consequence when skipping classes so most students didn't turn up.*

Responses also varied by ethnicity. Asian learners were more likely than the average to report that 'I've learnt less' because of COVID-19, and Māori and Pasifika learners were less likely than the average to report 'I've learnt less' because of COVID-19. However, the Māori and Pacific cohorts were also more likely to report that their qualification or course would take them longer to complete, putting them at greater risk of longer-term impacts (Figure 27)

Figure 27: Impact of COVID-19 on learning, by ethnicity



Source: MartinJenkins youth and COVID-19 survey

Attendance and completion rates seem to have been affected

When we did this research, data on the pandemic's impact on attendance and completion rates and on rates for obtaining qualifications was not generally available. This section therefore draws mainly on pre-existing research and analysis, and on qualitative feedback from our targeted interviews with education providers in Auckland.

From this targeted review, the indications are that COVID-19 did affect attendance, participation, and completion rates throughout 2020. This may therefore have longer-term impacts on engagement in education and transitions into employment.

Ministry of Education analysis shows the lockdowns disproportionately affected school attendance rates in Auckland

The Ministry of Education analysed school attendance rates throughout 2020 and found that while at a national level the end of the national lockdown appears to have resulted in higher levels of attendance than in 2019, COVID-19 appears to be making existing inequities in school attendance significantly worse, particularly in Auckland (Webber, 2020a).

The Ministry found that:

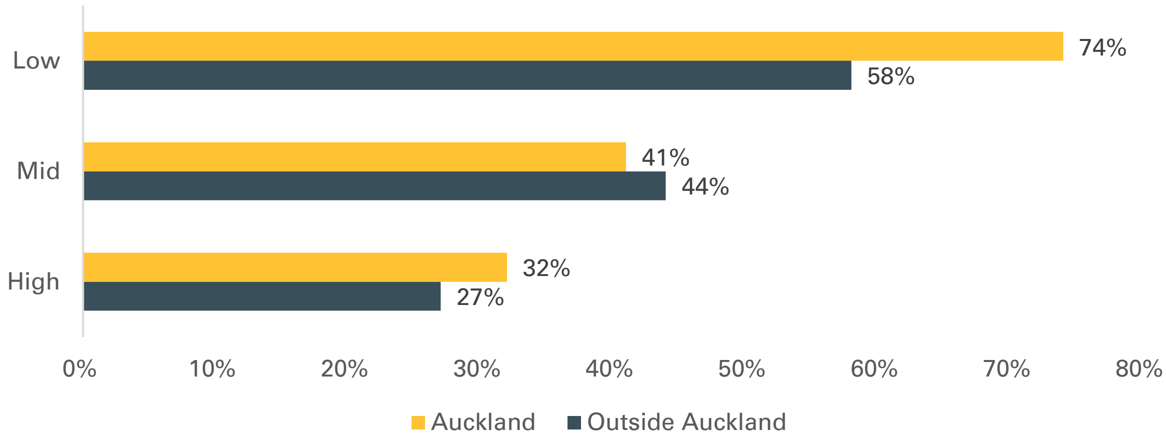
- attendance rates following Auckland's Level 3 lockdown were initially about eight percentage points below the same time in 2019 levels, and did not get back up to 2019 levels for four weeks.
- attendance rates were most affected in decile one and two schools
- attendance rates for Pacific and Māori students in Auckland were particularly affected, especially following the August Level 3 lockdown. The proportion of students with chronic absence in the month following the August Level 3 lockdown increased from 18% in 2019 to 31% in 2020 for Pacific students, and from 19% to 27% for Māori students
- non-attendance was higher for primary school students, likely reflecting the concerns of parents, while more senior students may have felt pressure to catch up on learning lost during lockdown.

> "Students are most likely to have reduced their attendance in response to COVID-19 if they attend a low decile school, are in earlier year levels, are Pacific or Māori, or participate in Māori medium education."
>
> *- (Webber, 2020a)*

This is consistent with findings by the Education Review Office that three-quarters (74%) of principals in Auckland's low-decile schools thought that students in their school had fallen behind in their learning during the lockdowns, compared to 58% of principals in low-decile schools outside Auckland.

Within Auckland, concern about students' progress was much greater among low-decile principals than for principals of mid- and high-decile schools (ERO, 2020).

Figure 28: Percentage of principals who reported that a quarter or more of their students had fallen behind in their learning, by decile (ERO survey)



Source: Recreated from Education Review Office (2020)

The Ministry of Education also explored the rate of students leaving school, and found that during 2020 the proportion of learners leaving school reduced by 1.3% in Auckland, and 0.8% outside of Auckland, a clear deviation from previous trends. In particular, the rate of students formally leaving school and listing employment as a destination decreased substantially (Table 3), and especially for Māori and Pacific students in Auckland.

This suggests that overall COVID-19 and its associated effects encouraged students to stay enrolled in school. However, this is in contrast to examples of pressures on school students to leave school to find employment and support affected family members. It should be noted the data faces limitations, however, including that a student picking up work during lockdown and reducing their school attendance may not be formally classified as a 'school leaver' if they remain enrolled in school.

Table 3: Change in rate of destination of school leavers, 2019-2020

	Pacific		Māori		All students	
	NZ	Akl	NZ	AKL	NZ	Akl
Gone overseas	-75%	-79%	-70%	-78%	-55%	-55%
Further education	-56%	-63%	-28%	-57%	-33%	-44%
Employment	-28%	-33%	-15%	-23%	-19%	-32%
Employment and education	-37%	-50%	-6%	-4%	-17%	-31%
Not recorded	-39%	-41%	-23%	-27%	-27%	-36%

Source: Ministry of Education; *Is COVID-19 making students leave school?* (Webber, 2020b)

Māori tertiary students were particularly affected

In 2016, NZIER calculated that there was a 20% gap in the average income of Māori in Auckland compared to the rest of the population (NZIER, 2016). Around a third of the gap was due to Māori being younger than non-Māori, and income rises with age and work experience. Other than age, education attainment explained most of this gap. Incomes are lower due to being employed in lower-earning jobs, as a result of lower educational attainment.

NZIER (2016) concluded that the transition to tertiary education (or work) after school needed the most attention. Better quality and more comprehensive course and career advice are needed. The concept of life-time earning power also needs to be introduced.

> *Increasing educational attainment will give Māori greater occupational choice, lead to higher incomes, and increase resilience to change. But the subjects Māori students take and the institutions they attend matter. Where young people come from communities where success is usually built on the foundation of a vocational qualification, contemplating a degree-based pathway to a higher income can involve large leaps of faith.*

Data on COVID-19 impacts on tertiary attainment and completions was not generally available due to the lags in available data, but the tertiary education providers that we interviewed indicated a range of impacts. Some institutions did better than they expected across the year.

> *Our completion rates only decreased by 0.8% on the previous year. We did a pretty good job at staying engaged with them and they did a good job or sticking with it. One might have expected a far higher drop in completion rates, but that's not what happened.*
>
> *There was a course completion rate of 89.9%, which was a slight improvement on the various year.*

However, providers generally indicated that attendance or completion rates for Māori were more likely to have been affected. The two providers quoted above both noted that Māori completion rates were down (by 4.7% and 2.5%), which suggests that Māori students experienced greater barriers to participation during the year.

While Pacific youth have generally been disproportionately affected by the impacts of COVID-19, the tertiary education providers we spoke to have reported that Pacific tertiary students seem to have done fairly well, particularly in completion and attainment rates in 2020. One provider reported that completion rates decreased 0.7%, compared to 0.8% overall, and another that attainment was high for Pacific learners over the year, but dropped for Māori.

This feedback aligns with completion data at a national level (Table 4), which shows that:

- course completion rates in lower-level qualifications (non-degree) fell across the board, but especially for Māori students
- degree-level course completion rates were improved slightly, especially for Pacific learners.

Table 4: Course completion rates, 2015-2020

	L1-L3			L4-L7 (non-degree)			L7 degree			Total		
	Māori	Pasifika	Non M&P	Māori	Pasifika	Non M&P	Māori	Pasifika	Non M&P	Māori	Pasifika	Non M&P
2015	71%	72%	80%	74%	72%	85%	81%	74%	88%	75%	73%	86%
2016	67%	69%	79%	73%	71%	85%	81%	75%	88%	73%	72%	86%
2017	68%	67%	79%	71%	63%	84%	81%	74%	89%	73%	69%	86%
2018	68%	69%	79%	70%	71%	83%	81%	74%	88%	73%	72%	86%
2019	69%	70%	79%	71%	69%	83%	81%	74%	89%	74%	72%	86%
2020	64%	67%	76%	67%	69%	81%	82%	76%	90%	72%	72%	86%
Change from 2019	(6%)	(3%)	(4%)	(4%)	(1%)	(2%)	1%	2%	2%	(3%)	1%	0%

Source: Ngā Kete (Tertiary Education Commission) – provided by Auckland Unlimited. National data, all ages.

Education providers noted that face-to-face support – both that formally offered by tertiary education institutes, and informal support from other students on the course – was particularly important for Māori and Pacific learners. The loss of this in-person support network and the disruption to the usual learning methods during lockdowns was a particularly significant barrier for Māori and Pacific learners continuing to engage in learning:

> *The types of face-to-face support that we provide on campus matters more to Māori and Pacific learners.*
>
> *The impact was exacerbated for Māori learners – the community of learning is one of the reasons they engage.*
>
> *Learning happened all times of the day – in groups, individual, by phone, drive by and stick in the letterbox. Some weren't resilient enough in that method of learning to hang in there and withdrew, predominantly Māori.*

One private training establishment (PTE) saw a reduction of around 300 students, or 40% of their learners in Auckland – the majority of whom were Māori. For those who remained in their course, however, the completion results were higher than normal.

The provider attributed those higher completion results to the range of support available to learners. It credited the way in which various government services combined to give wrap-around support for at-risk learners.

> *If they stayed engaged, their performance results were really high. We reckon it's because of all the wrap around services that came to support the learners – hardship grants, devices and, data, grocery, vouchers. While there was scrutiny it was also rather open to support learner needs.*

Some students worried that grades and qualifications from COVID-19 years would not be valued as highly

Focus group participants emphasised that most universities, but not all, increased grades to make allowances for disrupted learning. Similarly, NZQA provided additional credits for NCEA to help school students through the challenging year.

Students told us they appreciated this, but tertiary students were also concerned that employers might think that graduate qualifications obtained in COVID-19 years were worth less:

> *My uni did not introduce grade bumps but we were allowed to remove certain courses out of GPA calculations.*
>
> *[Grade bumps] Decreased anxiety a lot – no longer had to worry about how pandemic would affect future GPA and academic achievement.*
>
> *If I study at this time, is an employer going to look and say it doesn't count as could have cheated.*

The potential for cheating in exams was mentioned by many as a particular challenge that universities had to address:

> *Needed to do research in the middle of the exam.*
>
> *Felt the exam was written to be more challenging.*
>
> *Exams online, cheating.*
>
> *Easier to cheat.*

Allegations of widespread cheating during university exams have become common in recent months (Franks, 2021).

The digital divide and difficult home environments increased some of the challenges

International research has shown the importance of the home learning environment in supporting ongoing learning when schools are closed due to lockdowns. Being able to access the relevant tools and resources becomes increasingly important, and unequal access to digital connectivity can amplify existing inequalities among young people. The OECD has shown how students from less well-off families are less likely to have access to digital learning resources, and also less likely to have parental support for home learning (OECD, 2020).

Those who did not have easy access to devices, internet connectivity, or quiet places to learn during the New Zealand lockdowns were at a disadvantage. Previous research has identified significant pre-existing inequalities in the ability to access and engage in online resources – particularly among Māori, Pacific peoples, people in social housing, those unemployed or not seeking work, older people, and people with disabilities (Grimes & White, 2019).

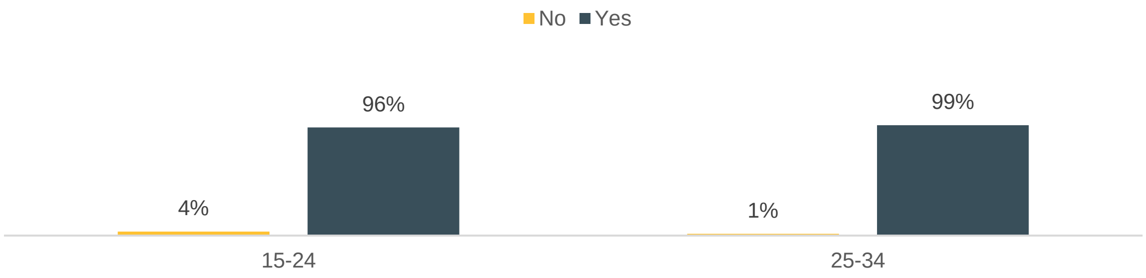
2018 Census data shows the rate of household access to the internet by local board. Access is lowest in the south Auckland local boards of Mangere-Otahuhu (79.1%), Otara-Papatoetoe (81.2%), and Manurewa (83.5%) – these three local boards are home to nearly half of Auckland's Pacific Peoples and more than a quarter of Auckland's Māori population. The average across all other local boards in Auckland (excluding Great Barrier) was 90.6%.

COVID-19 highlighted these inequalities. The Ministry of Education found that there are between 60,000 and 80,000 unconnected households with school-aged children (Ministry of Education, 2021b).

Research by Ngāti Whātua found that of 668 rangatahi from this iwi aged 12 to 17, more than half had only an internet-enabled phone in the household to use for remote learning (Hunia et al., 2020).

The Ministry of Education made a substantial effort to supply devices to schools and learners.[5] Although the roll-out was affected by stock shortages and supply chain challenges, the Ministry supplied more than 16,000 school-owned devices to students and more than 25,000 new laptops, Chromebooks, and iPads to students by November 2020. These devices were prioritised for senior students (years 11–13, or aligned with NCEA levels 1–3) and for low-decile schools. The Tertiary Education Commission provided funding through the Technology Access for Learners fund to help tertiary education organisations to support learners to continue to access tertiary learning.

Figure 29: Access to the internet at home in the initial national lockdown



Source: MartinJenkins youth and COVID-19 survey

Of our survey respondents, the vast majority already had access to the internet at home when Auckland went into the initial Level 4 national lockdown – although the younger cohort was slightly more likely to not have access.

14 survey respondents indicated that they did not have internet access at home:

- three (21%) were European/Pākehā
- five (36%) were Māori, and
- three (21%) were Pacific.

While ten of the respondents indicated that they had since gained internet access at home (three with support from their school, employer, or government), four indicated that they still did not have access.

These low response rates hide the significant impact that not having access can have on young people. Our focus groups reported that access to data, wifi and devices remained a problem for some students, with many schools having to supply these resources in order for students to learn at home.

> *We moved to online work and our school supported us a lot, providing students with devices and our teachers were very understanding and lenient when we couldn't hand in work & were behind, but they made sure to keep our learning going.*
>
> *First Zoom I was the only one online as no one had wifi.*

5 Ministry of Education undertook a significant effort to get devices to schools and to school students, providing access to devices and internet connections as part of a $50m support package to help students learn remotely during the lockdowns.

In our survey of young people, 5% of 15–24 year-olds indicated that they needed to use a device provided by their school, education or workplace, compared to 25% in the older cohort (Figure 30). The older cohort probably includes a larger number of people using devices provided by their employer.

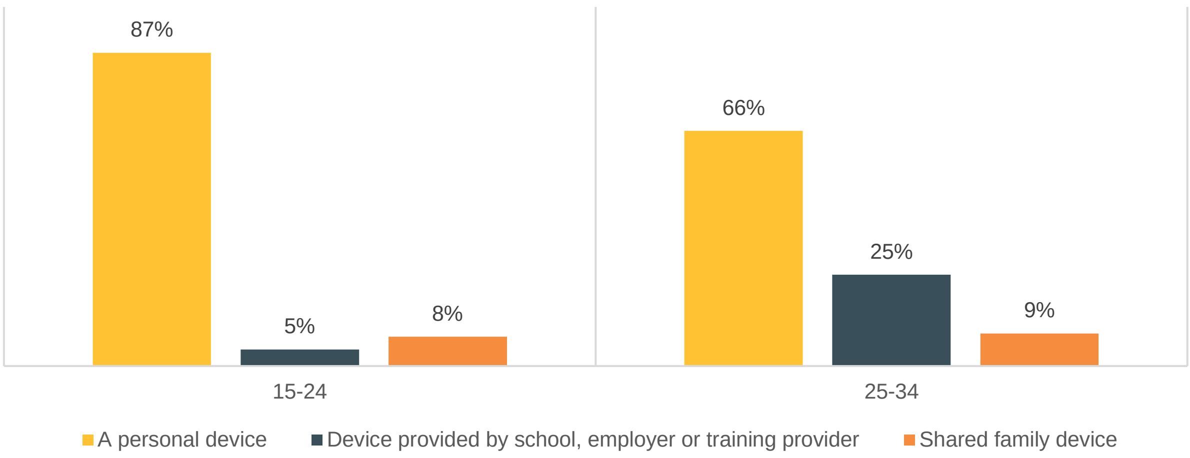
Tertiary education providers also needed to undertake significant efforts. Providers emphasised to us the challenge of getting devices into students' hands – an exercise on a much larger scale than they had ever had to do before.

> *We had to do laptop distribution and internet packages for some people. Hardship grants and scholarships. The internet packages we were able to do via TEC funding.*
>
> *We shipped $1.5 million in devices and data. It's still an issue. Some people still need assistance.*
>
> *TAFL fund incredibly important as enabled people to stay engaged. People want to be engaged, didn't have the means for doing it. Phones only get you so far.*

Some providers surveyed their learner cohorts to get an understanding of the extent of the challenge – looking both at the availability of devices, but also the likely amount of uninterrupted hours of access to that device.

"We rolled out a mobile phone survey to find out what devices, data, and uninterrupted hours per day students would be able to get with devices and internet. Lots had it – but once they shared it… just having the device is not the full story."

Figure 30: Type of device that survey respondents had access to



Source: MartinJenkins youth and COVID-19 survey

Across both cohorts in our survey, nearly one in 10 respondents reported that their online access was through a shared device (Figure 30). This issue has been explored in more depth in the research by Ngāti Whātua, who identified examples where one or two devices would be shared between parents and multiple siblings, with the result that some learners were not able to participate effectively.

The broader home environment plays an important role

Alongside access to devices and connectivity, the home environment was important for both secondary and tertiary students in being able to connect and participate in education. For our focus group participants, the home and living environment during the lockdowns contributed to both positive and negative effects. For many, it was a chance to reconnect and spend time with family, while for others this created further friction:

> *We were all together & more bonding.*
>
> *Came closer together as a family.*
>
> *I was low-key happy knowing I'd spend more time with my family.*
>
> *I didn't wanna be with my family (thought we would fight).*
>
> *Opposite: not the best home situation, threw [myself] into busying for distraction.*

Youth in student accommodation or flatting spoke about some negative experiences – including not getting on with flatmates so that the flat disbanded as a result, and/or not being in a nice living environment.

Availability of places to focus and study

The lack of a quiet space to focus and study could make it challenging for young people to engage in learning. Education providers noticed the impact that home environments had on their learners:

> *It is not always computers – it can be about a space to study. That is the group that lost most.*
>
> *Mums sitting in bathroom at 7pm at night trying to get the work done.*

Similarly, focus group participants identified the challenges involved with learning from home:

> *Harder to focus at home.*
>
> *No privacy.*
>
> *Work better at uni than at home. Hard to get into gear.*

Supporting family and whānau

Education providers all noted the pressures of broader family obligations on their students. Many gave examples of students needing to either drop out or cut back to part-time study to support their family:

> *Many Māori and Pacific students had to support family – hospitality and cleaning jobs that were lost. Mostly lower decile. In one school 200 students left and never came back. And that is one school*
>
> *It was the older sisters who took on the responsibility of getting the household as steady as possible – they found keeping up with their studies as well very difficult.*
>
> *Some leaving tertiary study because they have had to get jobs to support their family where parents have lost jobs. They usually end up in low skilled work. It's hard for them to come back after that happens. Especially if they are sole provider.*

It is difficult to estimate how typical these examples are, but they are consistent with examples reported in the media, including of secondary school students who needed to get a job to support their family after the main earner had been made redundant.[6] One stakeholder reported on the pressures facing whānau in South Auckland, and noted that these examples are not just about COVID-19 – rather, the pandemic highlighted the pressures that already exist for many South Auckland whānau.

> *Young people leaving school to support whānau is not a COVID thing. Money and concerns about money is something people in South Auckland live with from a much younger age than the rest of the population.*

Other young people left town to return to their family homes to help reduce costs during the national lockdown. Some were able to continue participating through online learning, though others were not able to.

> *We know a lot of young people left town – like Northland, young people from Auckland went back to Northland then struggled with housing up there. Went to reduce expense of living in Auckland, went back to papakāinga.*

Providers also mentioned that whānau and aiga could play a key role in influencing the engagement of young people, with a noticeable impact to engagement following the COVID-19 outbreak around a local church. Providers noted that churches are seen as key 'safe' places, so an outbreak centred on a church could lead to some family members encouraging their younger family members to stay home from training to avoid the risk of coming into contact with the virus, regardless of Alert Level settings.

6 See for example Manurewa high school, with reports that between 10 and 20% of its year 12 and 13 students had got jobs during lockdown and may not return to school. https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/education/121633328/coronavirus-fears-teens-working-to-support-families-wont-return-to-school

Some have come back, but not all

For some, the challenges for learning were temporary, and they have re-engaged with education as the situation has begun to return to normal. Some providers have reported that learners have re-enrolled this year, and they want to encourage this as much as possible:

> *Māori and Pasifika enrolments way up. We know that a lot of those are people coming back and returning to study.*
>
> *Didn't drop out forever. Deal with the situation and now they are back.*

Providers also talked about the need to recognise individuals' circumstances, and the importance of supporting people and not penalising them for situations beyond their control:

> *Recognition that if people withdraw, don't think of that as a failure, because if we've looked after them, they will be back as soon as circumstances permit.*
>
> *When talking about a crowded household, kids – it's not just a money solution. Recognising that's what people need to do with their time at that point.*

But others have disappeared from the system. Some providers thought that the frequent Alert Level changes have increased disengagement for some, and that others may have taken jobs because returning to study would have been financially difficult:

> *Learners that disengaged haven't reengaged. We've gone to search them out. They haven't reengaged. We know where some of them are, but good majority no. That's the thing about this population.*
>
> *Students are coming back, but not all back yet. Some have taken any job, just need the money.*
>
> *Full at the moment. Haven't seen a lag other than that group that disengaged last year.*

The pressures surrounding COVID-19 may have led to some learners disengaging completely from education, and some of those people may struggle to re-engage either in education or employment.

COVID-19 is affecting the choices that people in education and training are making, and these choices vary by ethnicity and gender

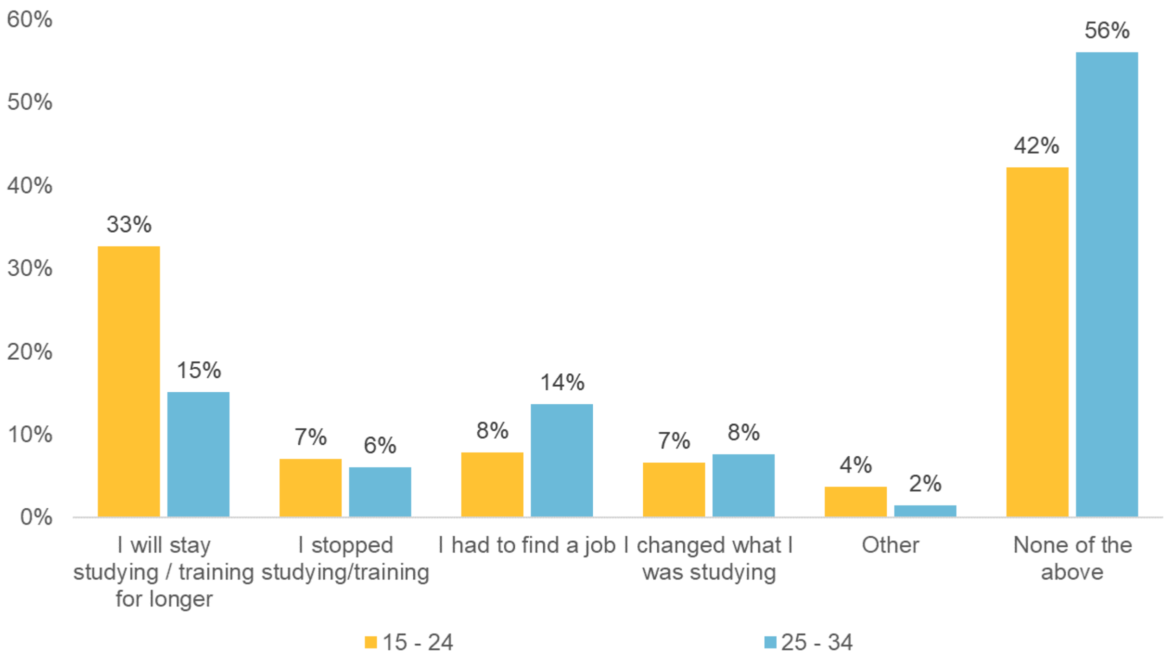
Participation in tertiary education is typically counter-cyclical, increasing during a recession when there are fewer job opportunities, and decreasing when the labour market is tight. The economic and labour market impacts of COVID-19, both actual and expected, have influenced the choices that learners have been making for their studies.

As shown in Figure 31, of those survey respondents aged 15–24 and currently in education or training, a third expect to continue studying or training for longer – more than double that of the older cohort (15%).

This is in contrast to Figure 25: Detailed impact of COVID-19 on education, which shows that the older cohort were more likely to expect a delay in getting their qualifications. This may indicate that young people are expecting to choose longer study options rather than expecting their qualifications currently underway to be delayed. Similar proportions of the younger and older cohorts reported that COVID-19 meant that they stopped training (7% for the 15–24 cohort, compared to 6% for 25–34) or changed what they were studying (7% for 15–24, compared to 8% for 25–34).

8% of survey respondents aged 15-24 in education or training indicated that due to the COVID-19 pandemic they had to find a job.

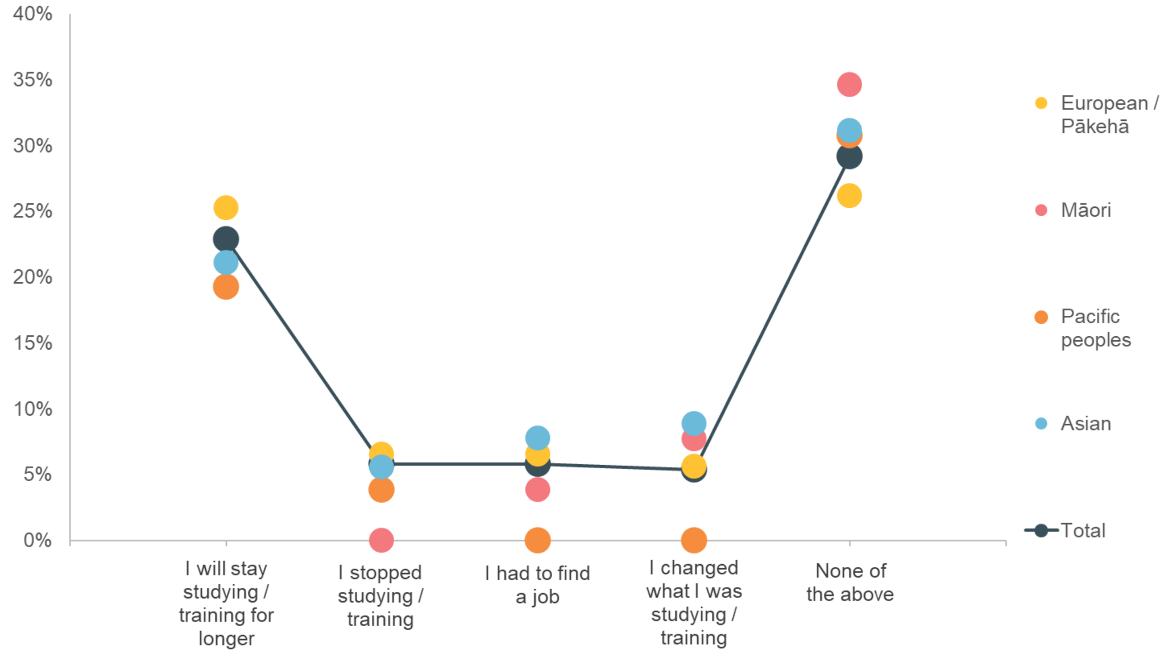
Figure 31: Impacts on those studying or training due to COVID-19 (multiple choice), by age



Source: MartinJenkins youth and COVID-19 survey

The older cohort were much more likely to respond that they needed to find a job while studying (14%, compared to 8% for the younger cohort) – this probably reflects the fact that the younger cohort had access to broader family support. Responses for the 15–24 cohort by ethnicity (Figure 32) broadly followed the trend, with minor variations for Māori and Pacific peoples – although these probably reflect low numbers of responses.

Figure 32: Impacts on those studying or training due to COVID-19 (multiple choice), 15–24 by ethnicity, *n*(European/Pākehā) = 106; *n*(Māori) = 26; *n*(Pacific people) = 26; *n*(Asian) = 90



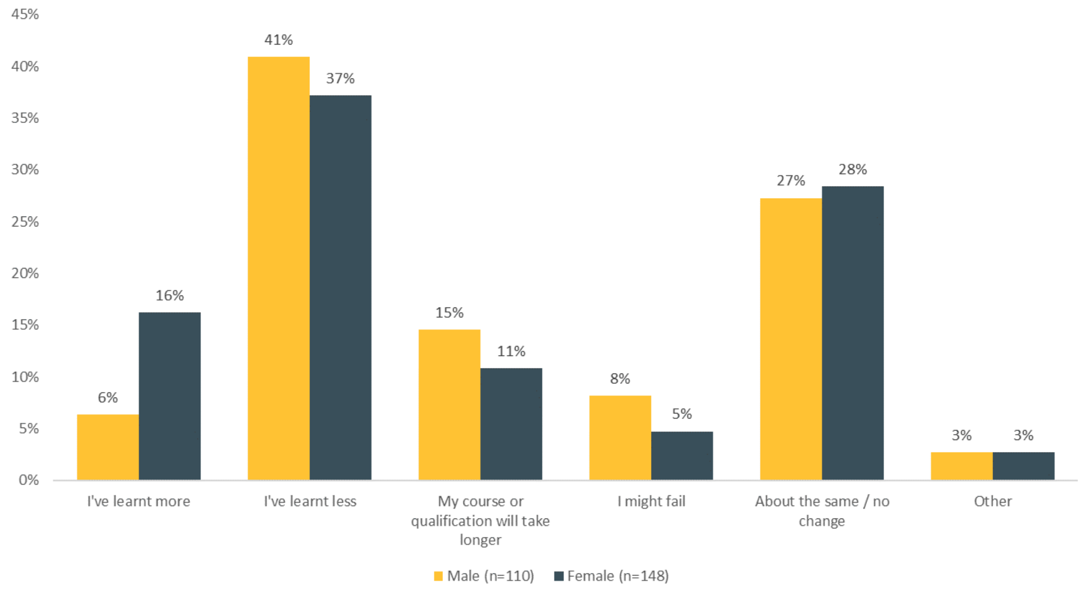
Source: MartinJenkins youth and COVID-19 survey

Female survey respondents appeared to do better through COVID-19 in 2020 and early 2021

Female survey respondents aged 15-24 were much more likely to report that they had learnt more due to COVID-19 (16%, compared to 6% for males), and less likely to report negative impacts including that they had learnt less (37%, compared to 41% for males), that their course of qualification would take longer (11% compared to 15% for males) or that they might fail (5% compared to 8% males) (Figure 33).

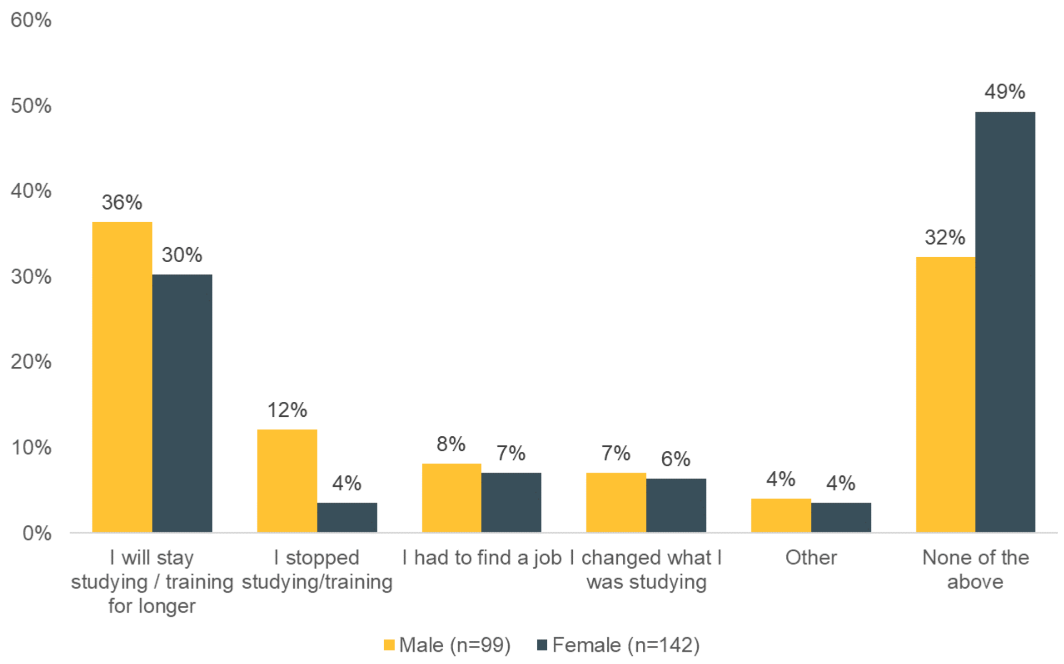
Looking at the overall impacts (Figure 34), females in education or training were also less likely to indicate that they would stay studying longer (30%, compared to 36% for males), or that they had stopped studying (4% compared to 12% for males) – which is in contrast to broader findings suggesting that females would have greater pressure to cease studying for family care reasons. This point may warrant further dedicated research, especially as more data on completions and attainment becomes available.

Figure 33: Expected impact on education outcomes, 15-24, by gender



Source: MartinJenkins youth and COVID-19 survey

Figure 34: Impacts on those studying or training (multiple choice), 15–24 by gender



Source: MartinJenkins youth and COVID-19 survey

Tertiary enrolments are up significantly in 2021, with learners prioritising job security and connections with employers

Data on Auckland tertiary enrolments was not publicly available when this research was being done, but the Ministry of Education has shared a high-level analysis of national trends (Ministry of Education, 2021a). This shows that enrolments of domestic students in 2021 are significantly higher than in previous years.

In particular:

- The number of domestic students increased by 12% in 2021, compared with 0.7% in 2020, 0.3% in 2019, and 0.6% in 2018.
- The number of students under 25 increased by around 8%, while the 25–39 group increased by 20% and the 40-plus group by 14%.
- The number of students in each ethnic group increased, but the rate of increase for Māori (7.7%) was lower than for Europeans (13%), Pacific peoples (14%), and Asians (17%).
- The highest rate of growth in domestic students in 2021 was seen in Te Pūkenga (23%), followed by private training establishments (15%), universities (8.8%), and wānanga (0.8%).

15% of survey respondents aged 15–24 and currently employed reported that they went back to studying or training because of the COVID-19 pandemic

Compared to 4% of people aged 25–34

These trends are confirmed by Auckland-based tertiary education providers. All that we spoke to reported that demand was high and that enrolments were substantially up on the same time last year:

> *Enrolments are up – huge numbers of school leavers coming from secondary schools. It's a record year. Secondary schools are bursting at the seams.*
>
> *Applications have gone up substantially but not all converting – speculative with people thinking they need to apply, but economy has bounced back a little.*
>
> *Already significantly ahead of last years enrolments… around a 30% increase.*
>
> *We've had to go back to TEC for more funding.*

The higher demand appears to have been driven by concerns about a recession that did not eventuate. This is demonstrated by an even greater proportionate increase in total applications (that is, including those that did not result in an enrolment).

> *People lost jobs decided to enrol, then withdrew. It was like panic enrolment – found themselves with no job, no prospects. The economy bounced back quicker than anticipated and a lot of those enrolments did not eventuate.*

Learners appear to be prioritising job security and connections with employers

Education providers report that from enrolment figures they can see that new learners are prioritising job availability and security, with strong demand for teaching, nursing, mental health and trades. There has been less interest in courses related to hospitality and tourism, as well as in general business courses:

> *More people studying to become teachers, post graduate in whatever discipline. Job security and jobs in that area.*
>
> *Over-represented in the areas would expect – trades, electro-engineering, carpentry, health, counselling and nursing … Hospo and tourism has crashed. Business took a bit of a dive.*
>
> *Lots of teach jobs out there. Job security. Don't see shifts in science and engineering.*

Providers are also observing that learners seem to be more interested in courses that connect them directly with employers:

> *Students studying programmes which have work experience/internship component. To enable them to be better for the job market. Funding/resource to manage those programmes required.*
>
> *Have seen increases in new graduates and 'transition Masters' which have an internship component.*

This appears to be driven at least partly by desire from learners to align with where they think the jobs will be, but also as a means to differentiate themselves from the increased competition among those aiming to enter the job market:

> *We're looking more at employability. Students are anxious about what they can do. Their transferable skills, soft skills – especially those who were geared toward tourism or hospitality. Less so for other sectors – IT is booming. Worried if their qualification is still current.*

This is consistent with feedback from youth focus groups – participants said they saw increased competition for jobs and felt a need to demonstrate a point of difference:

> *Fear about graduate jobs, it's already competitive as it is, so the possibility of less opportunities was stressful.*
>
> *People graduated last year or this year trying to find jobs.*
>
> *Trying to upskill myself and learn skills that would be useful in the future like learning Te Reo.*

Demand has also increased in areas supported by government subsidies

The government Targeted Training and Apprenticeship Fund (TTAF) covers the fees for selected vocational education and training between 1 July 2020 and 31 December 2022. This fund (which is also known as ‘free trades training’) targets skills needs where demand from employers is expected to be strong or to grow during the recovery period.

This subsidy appears to have promoted greater uptake in the fields it covers. For example, one provider reported that enrolments in fields supported by the TTAF were up 113%, and ‘double across pretty much all’.

Education providers are reporting that high demand for trades-related training is placing strain on the training facilities’ capacity, and that they have needed to limit how many additional learners they take on. These constraints are not simply about staff numbers, but also the need for significant capital investment for additional training facilities. Providers, along with the wider education system, may need to rethink and redesign how training facilities are used and how training is delivered.

4. THE IMPACT ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Auckland Unlimited's main questions:

How did COVID-19 affect young people's employment?

Has it affected their hours, their income, or their access to jobs?

Summary of findings

- The number of jobs available in Auckland fell dramatically over 2020, but rebounded strongly, rapidly surpassing the levels before COVID-19 and before the global financial crisis (GFC).
- Early indications are that youth employment has experienced a 'double whammy' of higher unemployment and increased casualisation. There appears to have been a reduction in the number of permanent jobs in Auckland, with a commensurate increase the number of casual and fixed-term jobs. This trend is much more pronounced for the youth cohort than for other age groups.
- This was consistent with what we heard from employers, stakeholders, and youth. Due to uncertainty about when lockdowns might happen, about whether and when customer-facing roles would be able to return to 'normal', and about demand for goods and services generally, some employers are turning to contractors, agency workforces, and casual contracts to manage cashflow. The youth workforce tends to bear the brunt of these business decisions.
- The effects of COVID-19 and the lockdowns in 2020 and early 2021 have been particularly severe for bricks-and-mortar retailers, the accommodation sector, food services, and tourism-related industries – and these are all sectors in which young workers are over-represented.
- Young workers' hours of work were affected more than the older cohort during the lockdowns. In our survey, youth were much more likely to have had their hours reduced, to have lost their job, or to have stopped working, compared with those aged 25–34. This is probably related to the industries youth tend to work in, and to the vulnerabilities of youth employment during economic shocks.
- Youth were also more likely to have experienced decreases in income or their hourly rate, compared to those aged 25–34. Youth were also less likely to report 'No change' in income.
- The youth cohort were more likely than the 25–34 cohort to report that their employment status had been affected by the pandemic and the lockdowns. Going back into studying or training or getting a job to help out their family were the most common consequences. The impact that showed the largest difference between the younger and older cohorts was inability to find a job – 11% of employed youth indicated this, compared to only 4% of the older employed cohort.

Many jobs were lost over the initial nationwide lockdown, but numbers have since rebounded strongly, surpassing pre-pandemic levels

For this research we used jobs advertised online as a measure of employment prospects and business confidence. Although online job-advertising nationally is yet to return to pre-COVID levels, there has been a very strong bounce back in Auckland, with growth rapidly surpassing the levels seen before COVID-19 and before the GFC (Figure 35).

Figure 35: Jobs advertised online, by month and year, Auckland

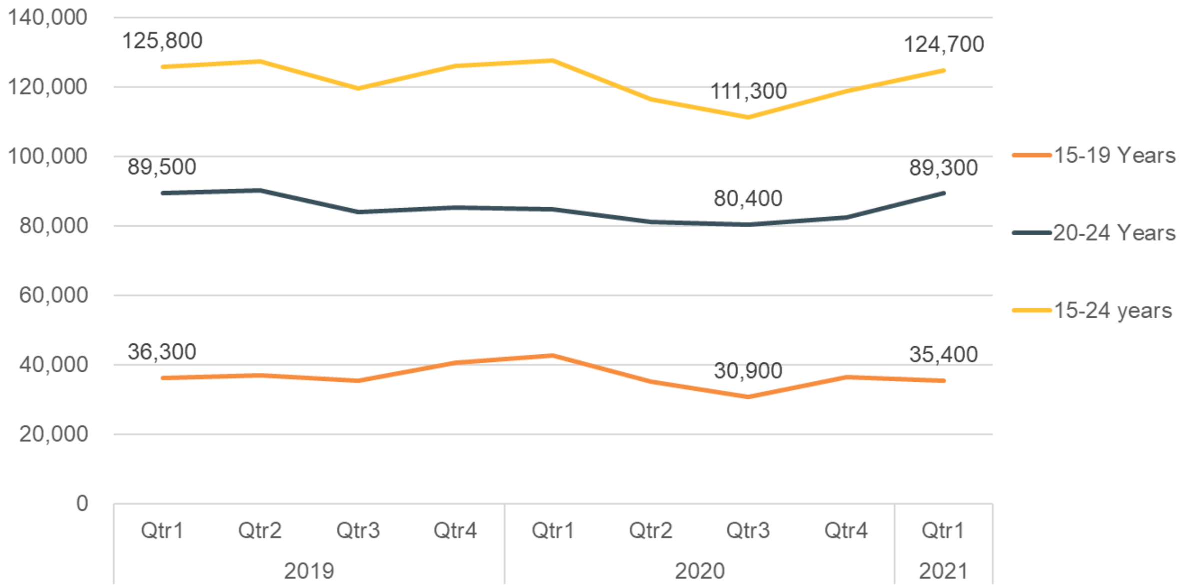
Source: MBIE JobsOnline, a regular data series that measures changes in online job advertisements from four internet job boards — Seek, TradeMe Jobs, Education Gazette and Kiwi Health Jobs.

Note: This is indexed data and May 2007 is base 100.

Across Auckland, youth employment fell by 1,100 jobs between early 2019 and early 2021 (Figure 36). While employment for young people aged 20–24 has almost returned to pre-pandemic levels, employment for the youngest age bracket, 15–19, has not.

14,500 jobs were lost between 2019 and Quarter 3 2020

Figure 36: Youth employment, Quarter 1 2019 – Quarter 1 2021



Source: Stats NZ Household labour force survey.

There are fewer permanent jobs, and more casual and fixed-term jobs

Early indications suggest that youth employment has experienced a 'double whammy' of higher unemployment and increased casualisation. Figure 37 shows that the number of Auckland youth with permanent jobs has fallen by 2,900 (3%) between Quarter 1 of 2018 and Quarter 1 of 2021, while the number of Auckland youth in casual employment has risen by 2,000 (11%). Fixed-term employee numbers have also increased, by 1,700 (43%) over the same period.

This trend is quite different for employment across Auckland for all age groups – over the same period, permanent employment fell by 7,700 (1%) casual employment fell by 4,300 (12%) and fixed-term employment fell by 900 (6%).

This was consistent with what we heard from employers, stakeholders, and youth. Because of uncertainty about when lockdowns might happen and about whether and when customer-facing roles would be able to return to 'normal', plus uncertain demand for goods and services generally, employers are turning to contractors, agency workforces, and casual contracts to manage cashflow. The youth workforce tends to bear the brunt of these business decisions.

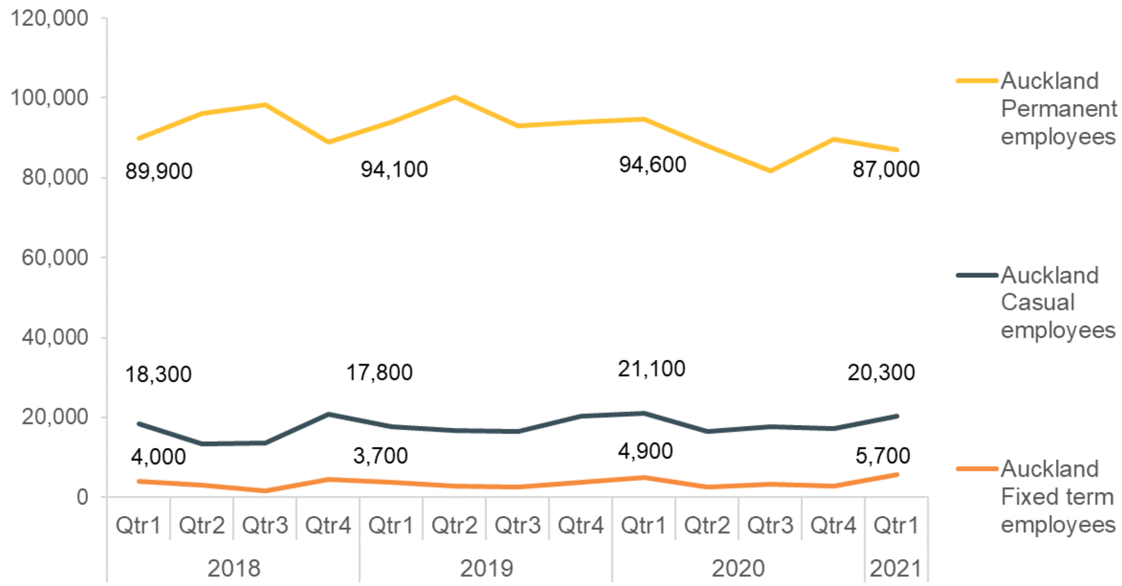
There are not enough jobs, and everyone is seeking people with multiple years of experience for entry level jobs.

Have stopped study at the moment due to financial hardship and am having to work.

I finished studying during COVID lockdowns. I am now mostly unemployed (I have a part time job in an unrelated field) and struggling to find a job.

The constant uncertainty. Hours have been cut back. Education is majority online which means loss of contact hours with valuable help.

Figure 37: Youth employment in Auckland, by quarter, by employment type, 2018–2021



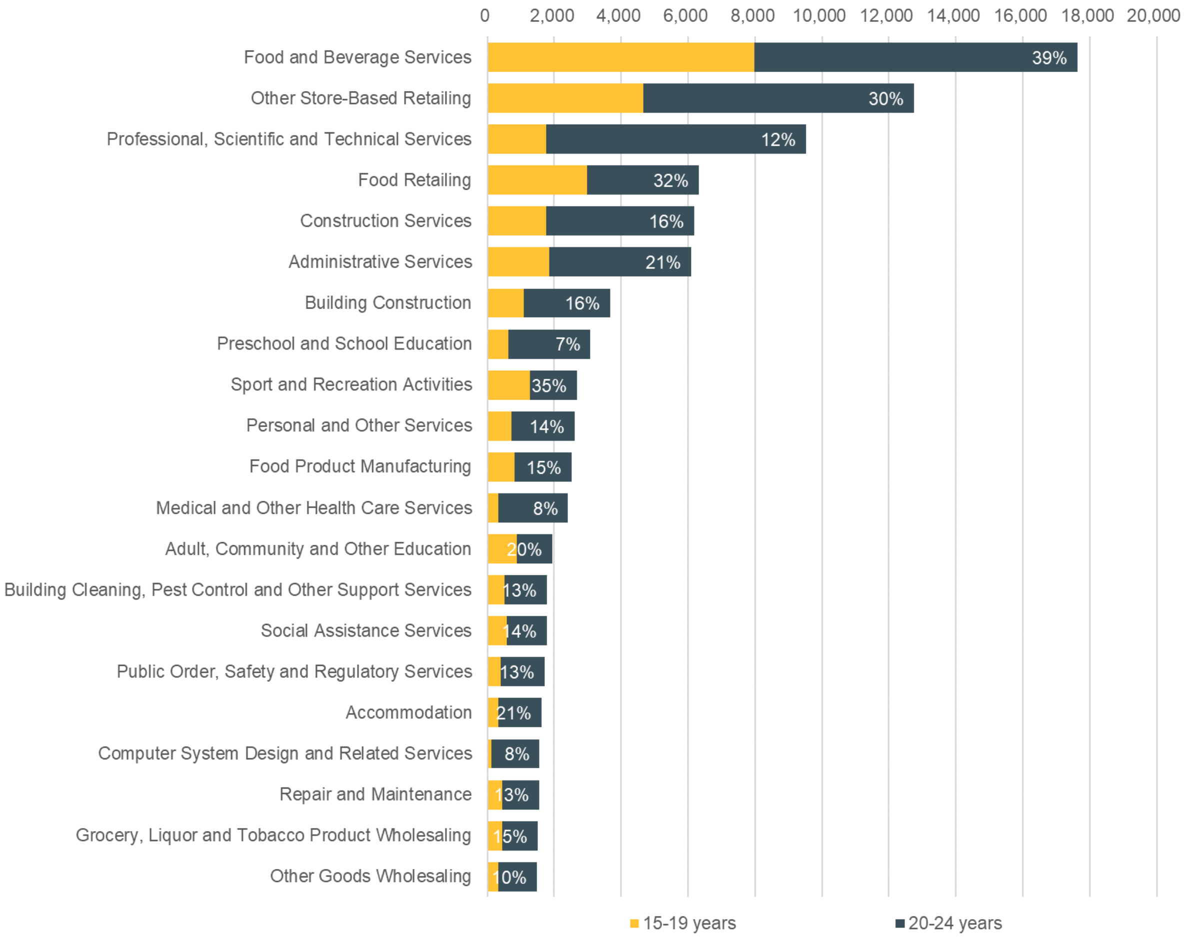
Source: Customised data from StatsNZ

Reflecting their life stage, young people are more likely to work in retail or hospitality and to work in more casual or temporary jobs.

Youth employment is concentrated in food and beverage services (hotels, bars, restaurants, cafes, and so on) and in retail (Figure 38). Youth make up 39% of Auckland's total workforce in food and beverage services. Construction and administration services are other key employment sectors for young people. Professional, scientific, and technical services are other high youth employment areas, but make up only 18% of the industry workforce as of 2018.

The effects of COVID-19 and the lockdowns in 2020 and early 2021 have been particularly severe for bricks-and-mortar retailers, the accommodation sector, food services, and tourism-related industries – and these are all sectors in which young workers are over-represented.

Figure 38: Youth employment in Auckland, top 20 industry sectors, 2018, number and proportion of total workforce



Source: StatsNZ, Census of population and dwellings

Summary youth employment statistics are in Appendix 1. They all show that key labour market indicators for youth were much more volatile than for the general labour force (Figure 39, Figure 40, Figure 41, and Figure 42).

Figure 39: Percentage change in employment, Auckland, youth and all ages

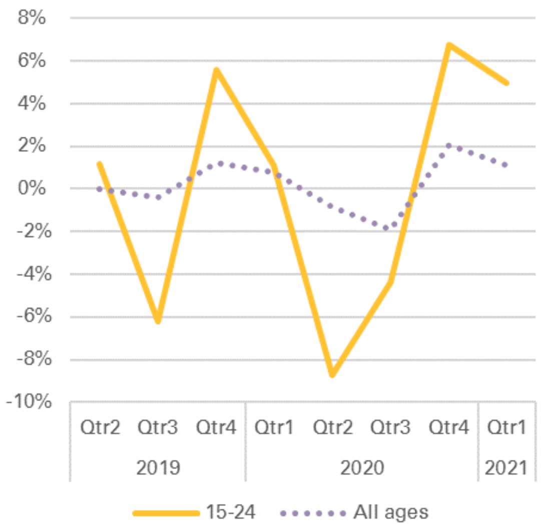


Figure 40: Percentage change in unemployment, Auckland, youth and all ages

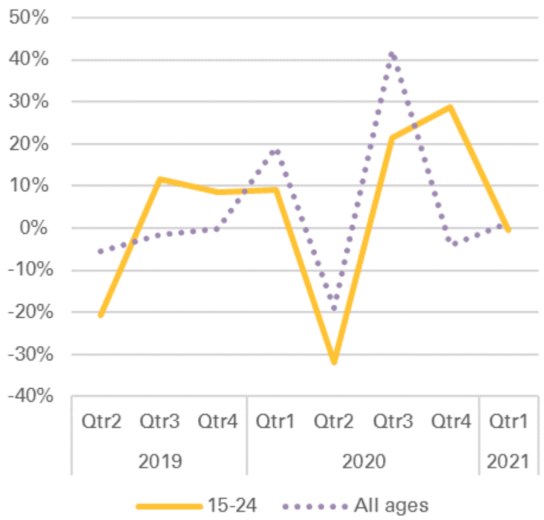


Figure 41: Percentage change in the labour force, Auckland, youth and all ages

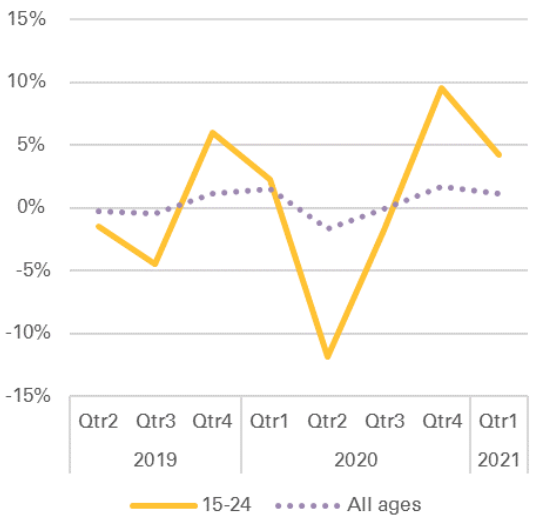
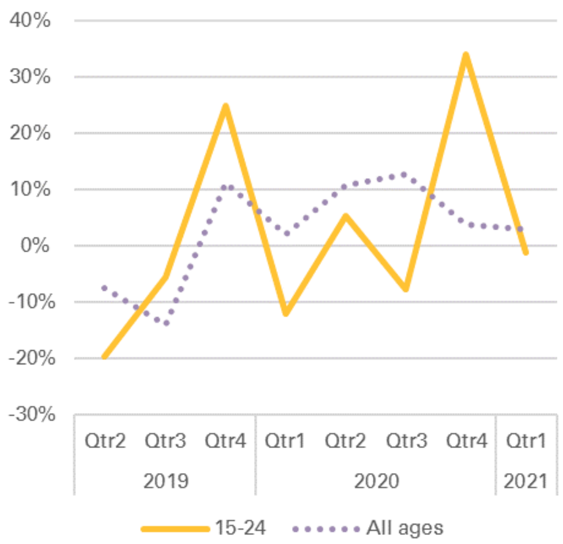


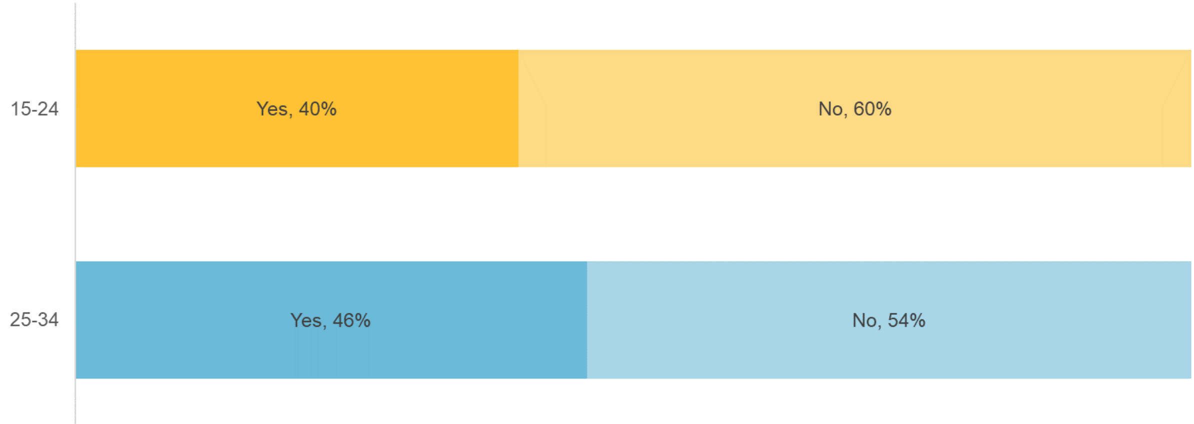
Figure 42: Percentage changes in underutilisation, Auckland, youth and all ages



Work-from-home options were generally unavailable to youth because of the types of jobs they tend to be employed in

In our survey, youth were less likely to be part of the Essential Services workforce compared with older workers aged 25–34 (Figure 43).

Figure 43: Were you part of the Essential Services workforce during any of the lockdowns?



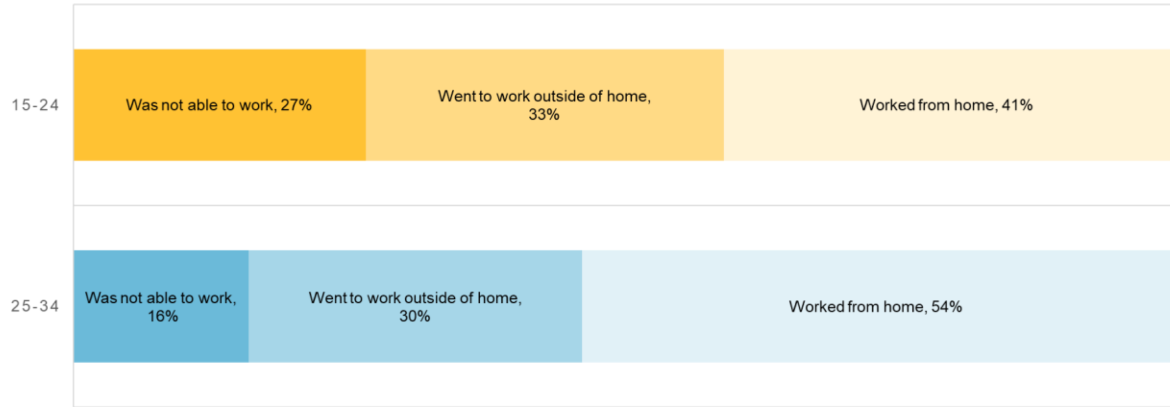
Source: MartinJenkins youth and COVID-19 survey

The lockdowns affected young people disproportionately, with a higher proportion of youth indicating that they were not able to work (Figure 44). Work-from-home options were limited, probably because industries that employ high numbers of youth include many public-facing roles.

Of the young people in our survey sample who responded that their main status was 'employed', retail was the largest employing sector (23%), followed by manufacturing (10%) (Figure 45). Employing sectors for the older cohort were much more dispersed, with other services (10%), healthcare and social services (9%), and education and training (9%) the largest employing sectors.

This was consistent with working from home data released by StatsNZ. Overall, more than 40% of those employed did at least some of their work from home during April and early May 2020 (StatsNZ, 2020). Data from the Household Labour Force Survey showed that white-collar occupations and service industries were more suited to remote working, and as a result, those that worked from home were more likely to be women, people aged from their mid-30s and people of European ethnicity (StatsNZ, 2020). Figure 46 shows that across New Zealand, youth were least likely to work from home compared to all other age groups.

Figure 44: 'What were your work arrangements like during the lockdowns?'

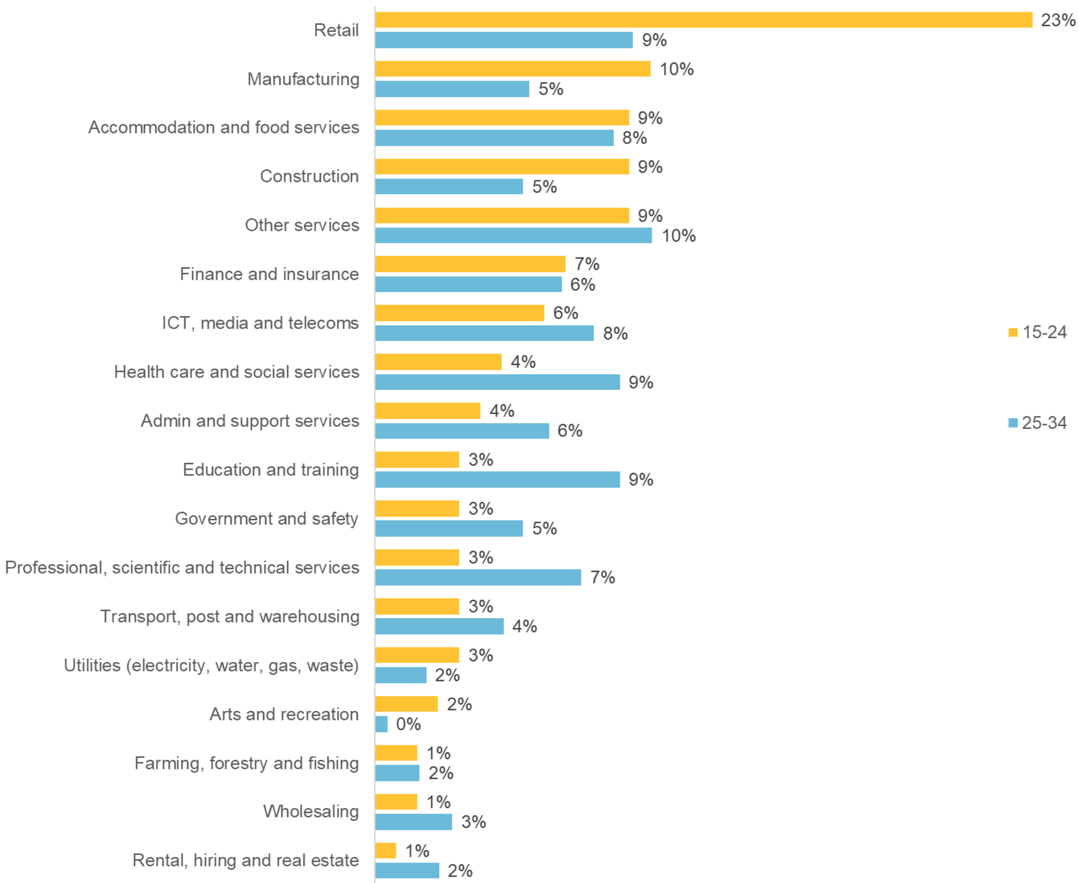


Source: MartinJenkins youth and COVID-19 survey

Feedback from the focus groups indicated that the experience of work tended to be similar between youth and the older cohort – they both included social distancing, PPE, and work-from-home measures. There did not seem to be any experiences, either positive or negative, that were particular to youth:

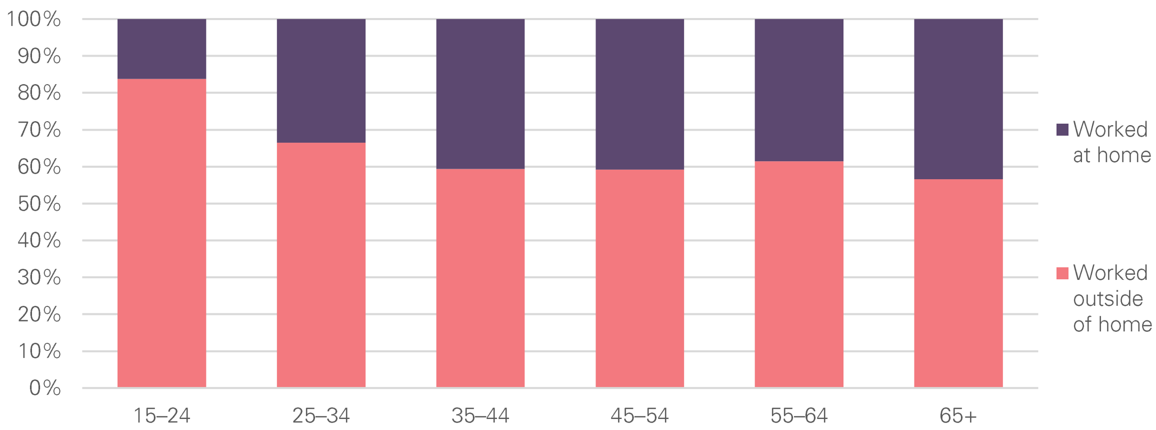
> *A lot of social distancing made sure everyone is wearing a mask.*
>
> *More health and safety rules were set in place e.g. social distancing.*
>
> *Temperature checks every day.*
>
> *Work transitioned to online platforms; Zoom, Teams, shared Canva.*
>
> *We were essential workers so were able to continue working.*
>
> *At work they made us wear coats, masks, glasses, gloves and tried to keep us at a 2m distance from each other. Could not really breath while I was working because of the mask.*
>
> *Work slowed down, was hard to find clients to work for. I worked for a contractor.*

Figure 45: ‘What sector were you working in?’



Source: MartinJenkins youth and COVID-19 survey

Figure 46: Work location of main job, June 2020 quarter, New Zealand, by age group



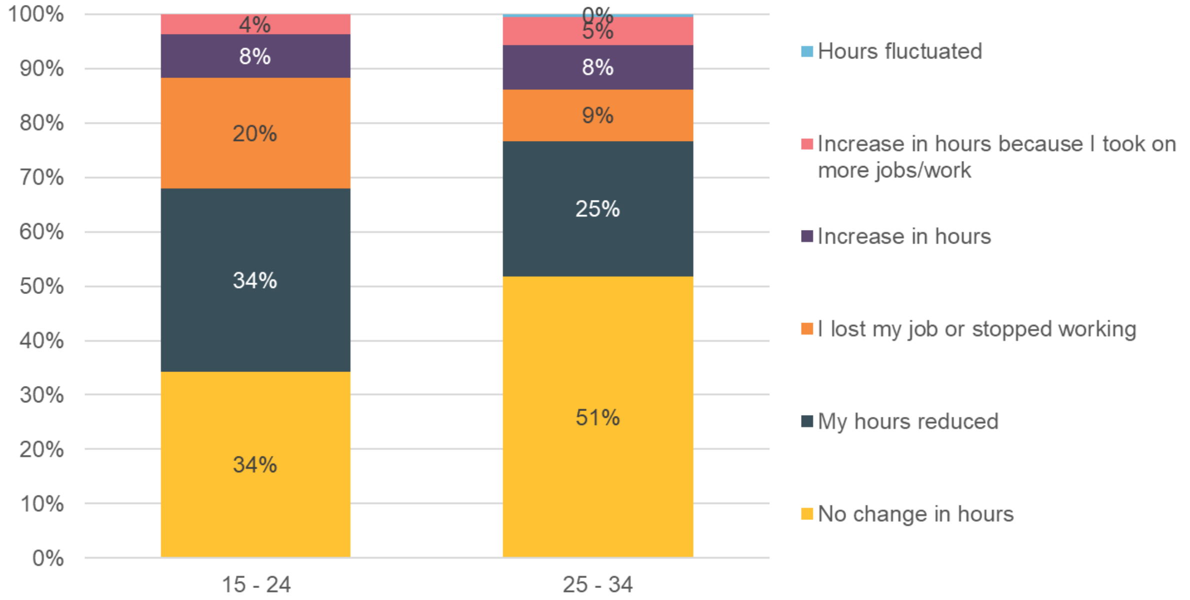
Source: StatsNZ, Household labour force survey: June 2020 quarter – supplementary tables

Youth were more likely to have lost their job or had their hours reduced because of the pandemic

The impact on young people's hours of work during the lockdowns was different from the impact for the older cohort. Youth were much more likely than the older 25–34 cohort to have had their hours cut, or to have lost their job, or to have stopped working altogether (Figure 47). This is probably related to the types of industries youth tend to work in, and to the vulnerabilities of youth employment during economic shocks.

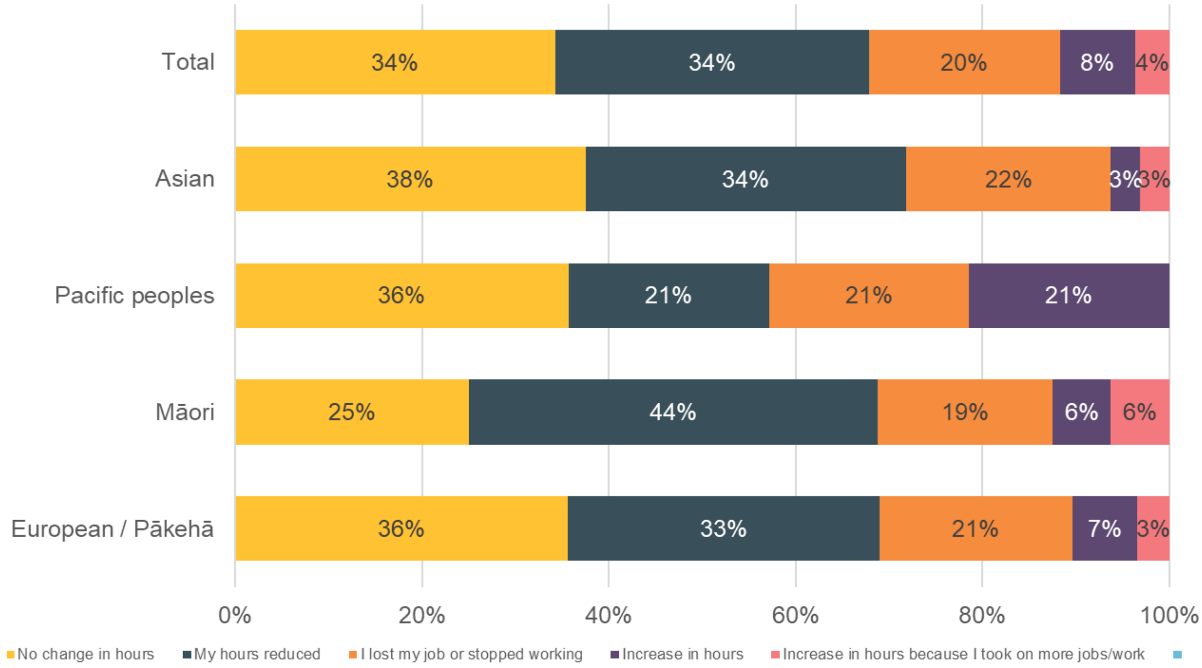
The impacts by ethnicity are even more pronounced (Figure 48). Young Māori were more likely to have had their hours reduced, while Pacific youth were more likely to have had their hours increased. This may be related to the different industries that Māori and Pacific youth are employed in, in particular to the ability of those industries to operate under lockdowns and to whether they include many Essential Service workers, who saw a large ramping up in their hours.

Figure 47: 'How were your work hours affected by COVID-19?'



Source: MartinJenkins youth and COVID-19 survey

Figure 48: ‘How were your work hours affected by COVID-19?’ – by ethnic group



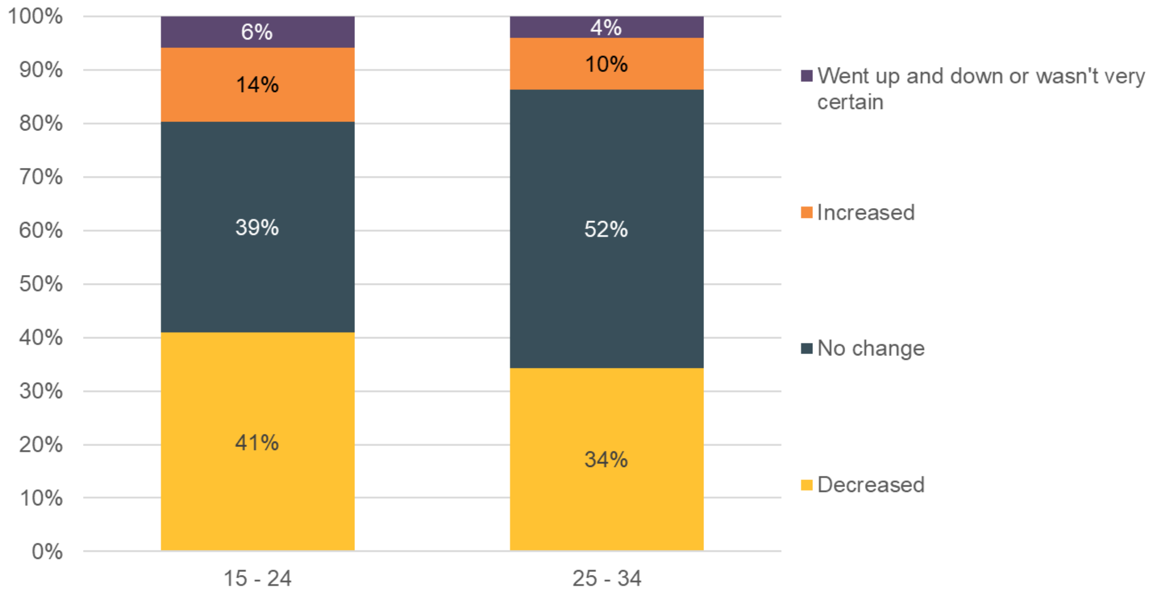
Source: MartinJenkins youth and COVID-19 survey
Notes: Participants who identify with multiple ethnic groups will appear twice in this chart.

“I work in the hospitality sector. I am a casual worker so before the pandemic I had a lot of work and then during/after there is/was little to no work because of COVID, the whole hospitality sector pretty much just crashed.”

Accordingly, income and hourly rates for youth tended to decrease

Young people were more likely to have experienced decreases in their income or their hourly rate compared to those aged 25–34 (Figure 49). They were also less likely to report ‘No change’ in income.

Figure 49: Overall, during the lockdowns, how was your income or hourly rate affected?



Source: MartinJenkins youth and COVID-19 survey

Youth are returning to study and training to bolster their career and job prospects

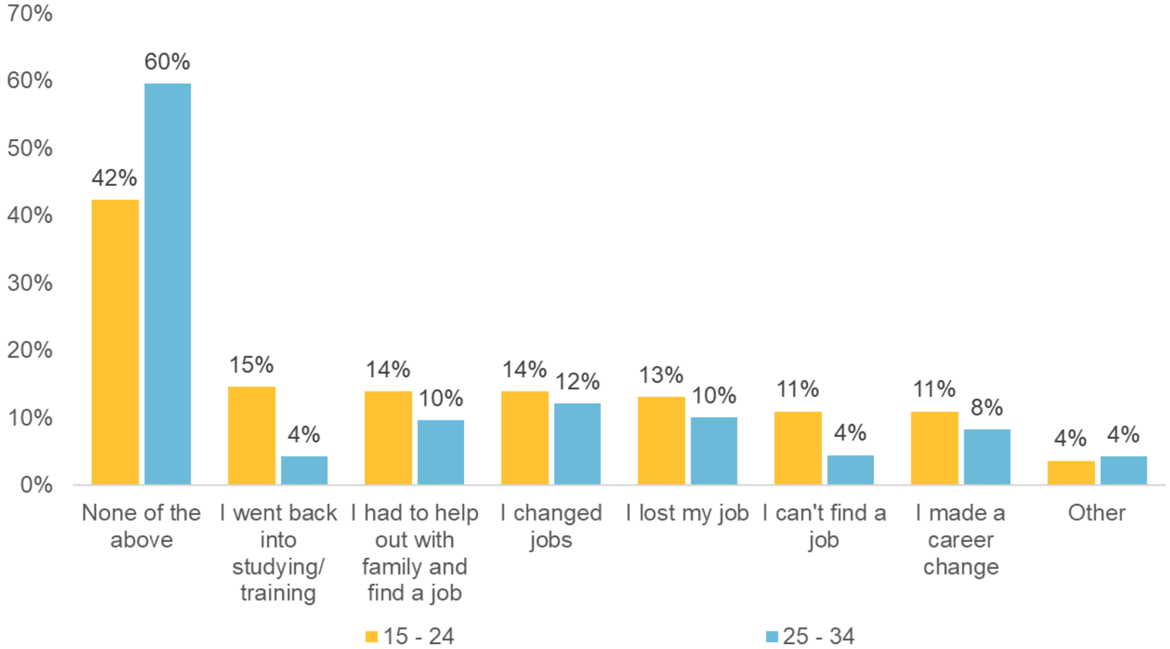
In relation to the pandemic overall, youth were less likely to indicate there were no employment impacts for them: 42% of youth compared to 60% of those aged 25–24 (Figure 50). Going back into studying or training, or getting a job to help out family, were the most common consequences (15% and 14%, respectively, of youth indicated these outcomes as a result of the pandemic).

Those young people who indicated ‘Other’ reported either losing overseas employment opportunities, or starting their own business, or becoming working parents.

The largest difference between the two age cohorts (15–24 and 25–34) was for the response ‘I can’t find a job’: 11% of youth indicated this, compared to 4% of the older group. This was consistent with what we heard in the focus groups, where a few said they were trying to find a job and found it particularly difficult. The reasons they cited included limited job openings, lack of motivation, and difficulty accessing various pre-requisites to employment (like licences and equipment) during lockdowns:

> *I was trying to find a job.*
>
> *Lost job opportunities.*
>
> *Could not get a job easily.*
>
> *I could not find any motivation to find a job.*
>
> *No one hiring.*

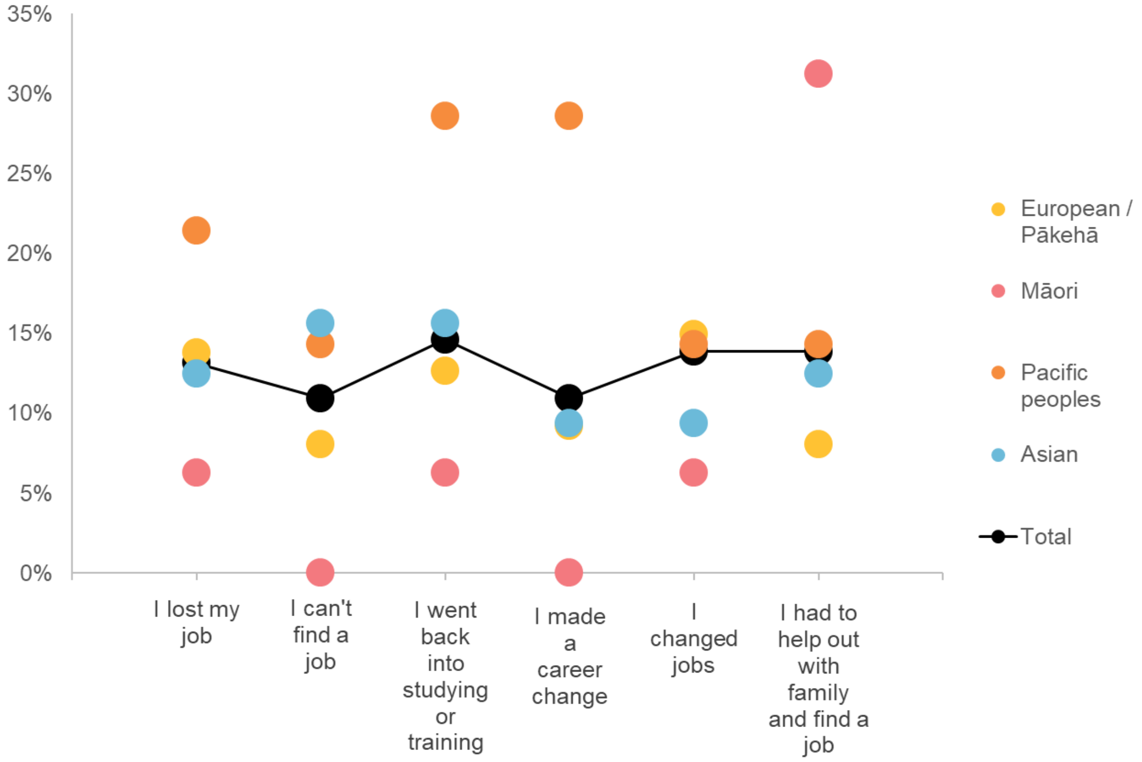
Figure 50: Which of these statements do you agree with? (select all that apply to you): 'Due to the COVID-19 pandemic ...'



Source: MartinJenkins youth and COVID-19 survey

However, among youth there were also some key differences in impacts by ethnicity. Figure 51 shows the differences by ethnicity for a small group of youth in the survey who were in employment but indicated a significant change in their employment status due to the pandemic. The black markers and line show the average experience. While the responses broadly map to the trend, Pacific youth were much more likely to have made a career change, to have gone back into studying or training, or to have lost their job. Māori were much more likely to have had to help out with family and find a job. The numbers are very small for this group, so the trends are more important than the absolute numbers or percentages.

Figure 51. Employment impacts of the pandemic, by ethnic group, *n*(European/Pākehā) = 18; n(Māori) = 8; *n*(Pacific peoples) = 4; *n*(Asian) = 6



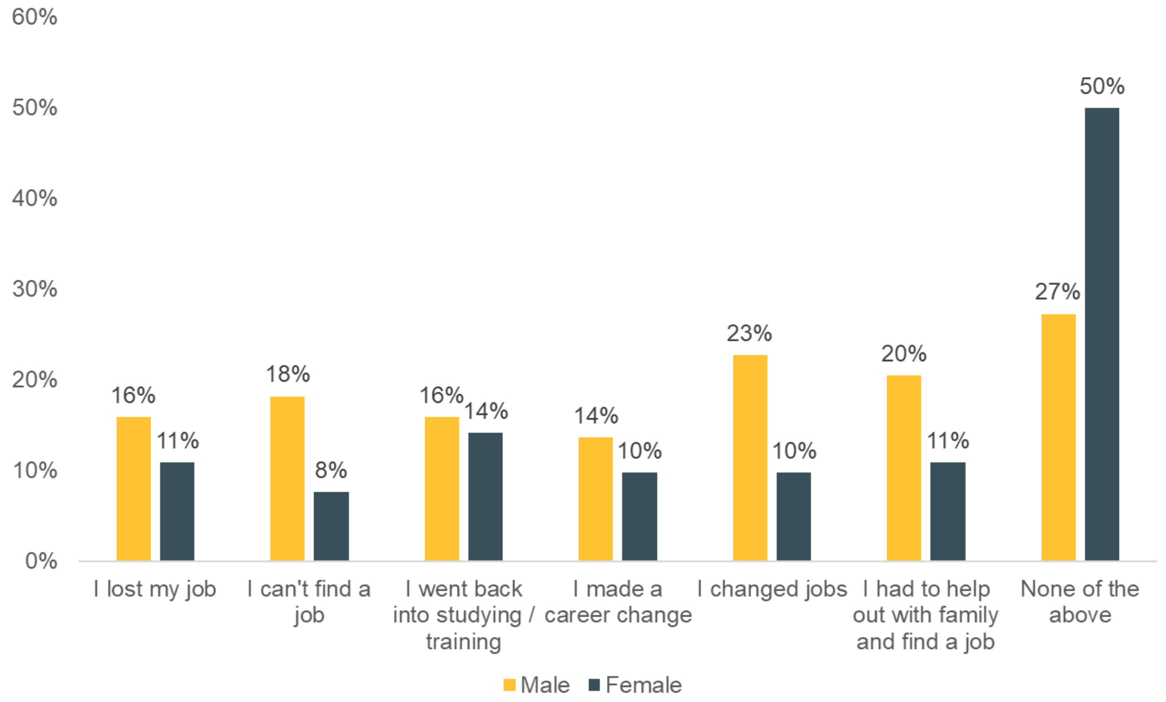
Source: MartinJenkins youth and COVID-19 survey

Notes: MELAA and other have been removed from this chart due to small numbers

In past recessions, men have tended to lose their jobs at a slightly higher rate than women. A key reason is that men are overrepresented in cyclical sectors such as construction, agriculture and manufacturing, which tend to be more severely affected by an economic downturn (Bergin et al., 2015; Hogarth et al., 2009; Toossi & Morisi, 2017). The impacts of a recession on women tend to be less immediate, but no less severe.

Our survey supports a finding that young males tend to be impacted at higher rates. In our sample, females were much more likely to report no employment impacts (50%), compared to males (27%) (Figure 52). Across all the other indicators, more young males indicated that they experienced employment impacts, such as losing their job or changing their job.

Figure 52. Employment impacts of the pandemic, by gender



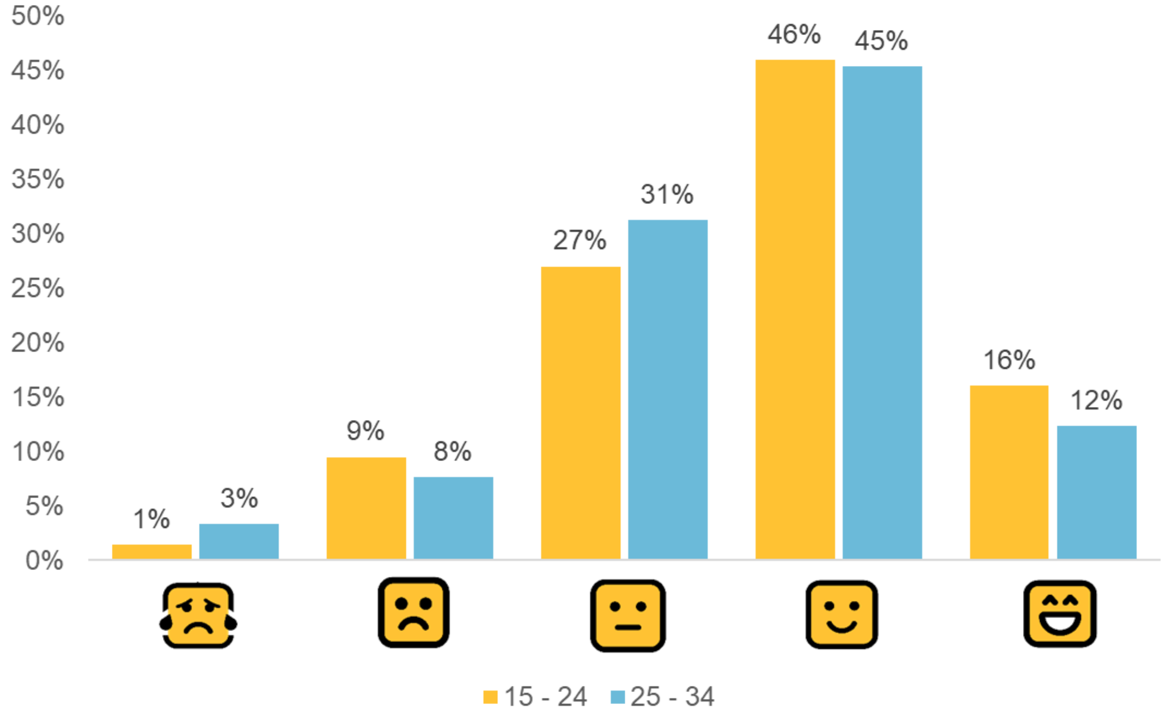
Notes: Other genders have been removed from this chart due to small numbers.

Official, national, statistics suggest that while males have lost jobs at a higher rate, they also recover them at a much higher rate. Further research may be required to understand why this is so, and to what extent it is true at the regional level, and in different age cohorts.

"I work in post-production for reality TV, so we shut down completely and I did not have work for a considerable amount of time. I had to move back with my parents in Tauranga and take in a job at a supermarket in order to help pay my rent still at my flat in Auckland."

In general, in June 2020 workers in Auckland – both youth and in the older cohort – were feeling relatively happy in relation to employment, compared to before COVID-19 (Figure 53). There were some differences by age, but likely not significant.

Figure 53: In employment (full or part-time): 'How do you feel about your education, employment and/or training now, compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic?'



Source: MartinJenkins youth and COVID-19 survey

While there has been a casualisation of job opportunities for youth, for those working and studying the job pool seems to have gotten smaller

Students working part-time tended to be in industries that were most affected by lockdowns, like retail and hospitality. As a result, young people either lost shifts or lost their jobs:

> *Had to do online university, lost my part-time job.*
>
> *Took a few months for the education industry to recover so I didn't have a job [in that industry] for a few months.*
>
> *My uni moved online. Shifts got cancelled.*
>
> *Don't have a job anymore. … Casual, but worked for every Saturday for four years.*
>
> *I work in a bar - first lockdown a mess as couldn't go to work.*
>
> *Hours all over the place. Most friends as well. A lot of people didn't have shifts - on call to go to work. So uncertain- don't want to be at work if no customers.*
>
> *All round - a bit of a mess. lots of people lost jobs, lost hours.*
>
> *Very difficult, work in hospo. People usually working 50/60 hours now working around 10.*

Employers, education providers and unions noted that the types of casual and part-time employment that suit those studying are in short supply. As a result, students' financial situations have become more precarious, particularly those whose employers did not take on, or pass on, the wage subsidy:

> *My first thought was saving money.*
>
> *Most people were not accessing subsidies – how employers chose to treat them [badly]*
>
> *[W]ork took the COVID subsidy. it took like 10 calls + 10 emails over 6 weeks to get it paid to me.*
>
> *Second COVID [lockdown], whole company decided not to do the subsidy – too hard?*
>
> *Not fairly distributed for most people who were entitled to it.*

Compared to the older cohort, youth were less likely to be unemployed because of childcare, family, or personal obligations

Using the official definition of youth NEET, of those surveyed, youth were more likely to be NEET than the older cohort.

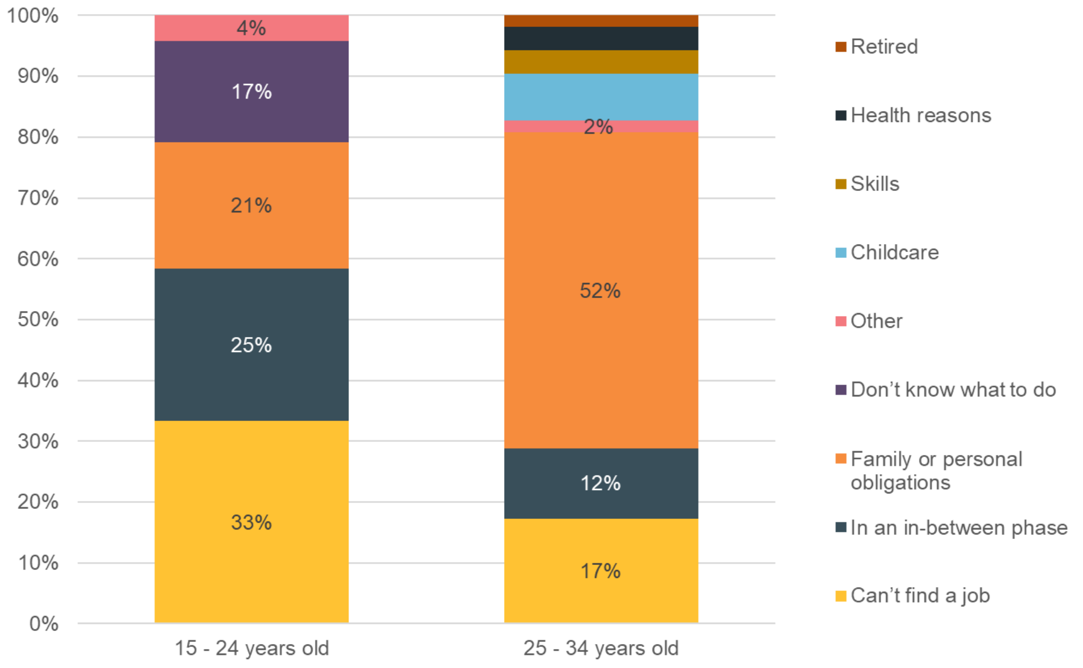
7% of those aged 15–24 in our survey sample indicated that they were NEET, and 10% of those aged 25–35 indicated the same. While our survey found a higher percentage of the older cohort indicating they were NEET, the older cohort were more likely than the younger to cite 'Family or personal obligations' or 'Childcare' as reasons for not being in education or employment (Figure 54). These status categories are typically excluded from NEET definitions.

Youth were much more likely than the older cohort to indicate that they 'can't find a job', or that they were 'in an in-between phase', or that they 'don't know what to do'. Notably, no-one selected 'Transport' as the main reason, and only youth indicated that they didn't know what to do.

Our survey also asked whether participants' ability to get work or training was affected by COVID-19 and the lockdowns. Youth and the older cohort had remarkably similar responses: more than half in each group indicated that things were 'About the same', and 35% in each group indicated that it was 'Harder' to get work or training (Figure 55). For those who selected 'Harder', the reasons offered were similar for the two groups: there was a lot of competition for a smaller pool of jobs (Table 5).

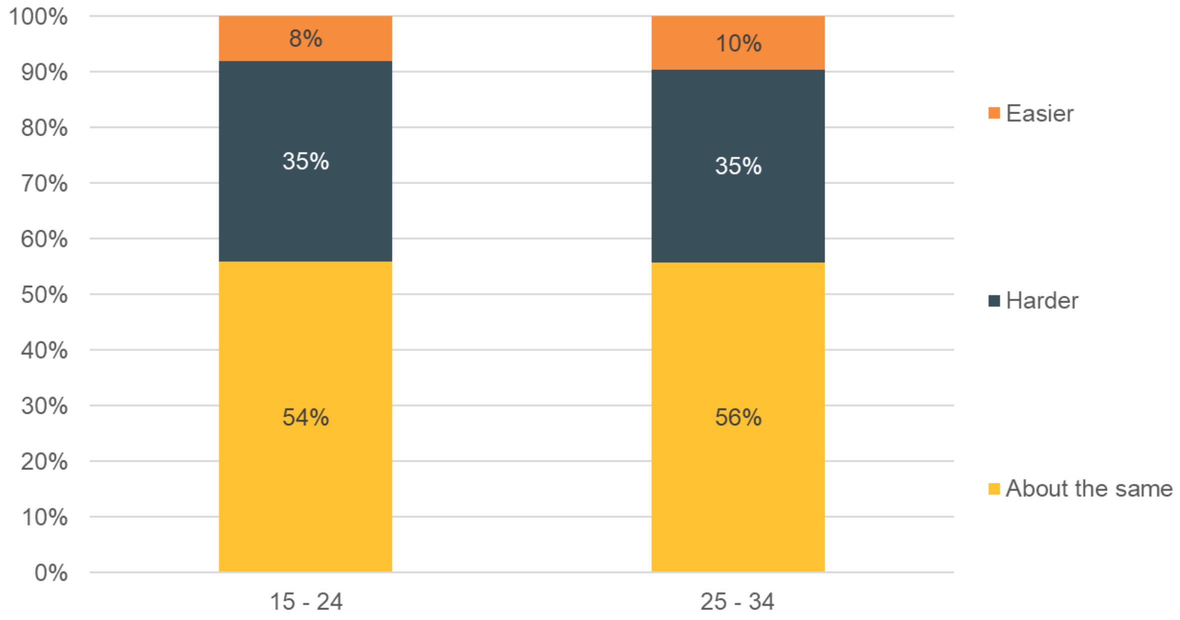
However, for young people the challenges appeared to be magnified by the types of industries they were qualified for, as well as the fact that as graduates they needed training and development that employers may not be prepared to invest in given the economic uncertainties. One survey participant also commented that many students left school to support their wider families, which increased the labour force and the competition.

Figure 54: 'What is the main reason that you were not working or studying during lockdown?'



Source: MartinJenkins youth and COVID-19 survey

Figure 55: 'How has COVID-19 and the lockdowns affected your ability to get work or training?'



Source: MartinJenkins youth and COVID-19 survey

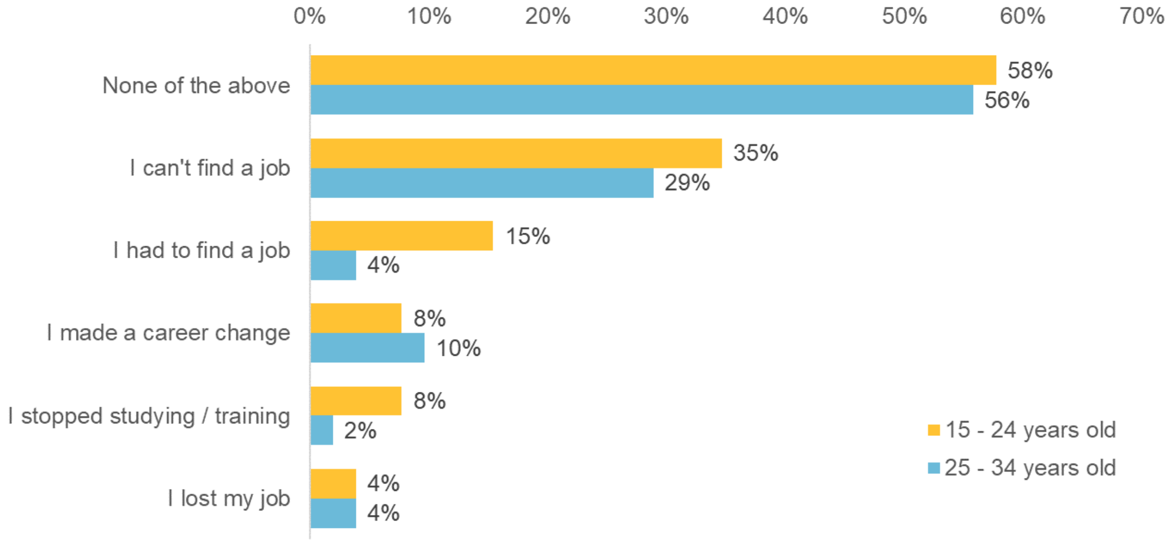
Table 5: Please explain why you selected ‘Harder’

19–24 years old	25–34 years old
• With the lockdowns forcing many to leave school in the middle of 2020 to support their lower-income families, many positions that would otherwise be open. This is on top of some smaller businesses closing as a result of the pandemic. Whenever I got a job interview, it was always right before a lockdown. The first lockdown thankfully just pushed it back. The second lockdown and February 2021 lockdown spooked my prospective employers enough to cancel the interview entirely. • More people applying jobs as cost living higher. • It was really hard for me and my family because it was such a bad lock down of COVID19. • Everything is harder. • The number of jobs posted decreased drastically and many companies decided not to hire due to COVID-19. • Not enough jobs and money around. • I graduated from university in December 2019. Just a few months before the pandemic. I believe that it was harder to find a job is because I am a recent graduate and no company wanted to invest in my development because there was so much uncertainty around income and changes when the pandemic was so new. • Event management qualified- event industry heavily impacted. • Was not able to register in my profession as I hadn't officially graduated and then there were delays in getting my graduation certificate from my Australian university. Once registered, there were no jobs for new graduates available.	• Not a lot out there. • less job opportunities. • I find it difficult to work as it is due to my health, I am high risk so finding a job that I can still be safe at is almost impossible. • It’s hard to find a job now, employers expect more in less hours and less money. • More people list their jobs and therefore more people are applying for the same job. • difficult to find a job. • because more competition and lower salaries • It really hard to find a job. • A lot of businesses have shut down or down sized. • Has less working opportunities. • There are more people out of work who have more experience than me, so they get the jobs before I do. • Just everything. • I spent a long time looking for a job during and after the first lockdown. But it has recovered since then and I found a job in June. • More applicants for jobs • Not as many vacancies little selection. • Had to wear mask but had no access to a mask as sold out.

Source: MartinJenkins youth and COVID-19 survey
Note: Spelling mistakes have been corrected

Young people were more likely than the older cohort to say that, because of COVID-19, ‘I can’t find a job’, or ‘I had to find a job’, or ‘I stopped studying / training’ (Figure 56).

Figure 56: Which of these statements do you agree with? (select all that apply to you): 'Due to the COVID-19 pandemic …'



Source: MartinJenkins youth and COVID-19 survey

5. LOOKING AHEAD: LABOUR MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

Auckland Unlimited's main questions:

Have the labour market opportunities for young people changed as a result of COVID-19?

Are there trends we can see in which young people are moving away from certain sectors?

Summary of findings

- As of June 2021, Infometrics was projecting relatively strong job growth over the coming years, including in those sectors where young people are typically over-represented.
- There does not appear to have been a significant shift in the specific skills that employers are seeking. However, for many employers the experience of COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of attitude and resilience.
- In the immediate term, employers are reporting significant labour shortages – in contrast to what was expected in mid-2020. This means that young people have more options and can be more selective about the roles they take, especially in the entry-level or lower-skilled roles. Employers are under greater pressure to improve pay and conditions, and some employers reported specifically that they have had to increase wages.
- However, this sense of opportunity is not shared by all potential job-seekers. Many of those who had recently graduated or were nearing graduation raised concerns about increased competition for graduate-level or more skilled roles, with competition coming both from other graduates and from displaced workers. In combination with the reduced ability to work or study internationally, some young people are feeling there are fewer opportunities for them as a result of COVID-19.

Infometrics is projecting job growth across industries

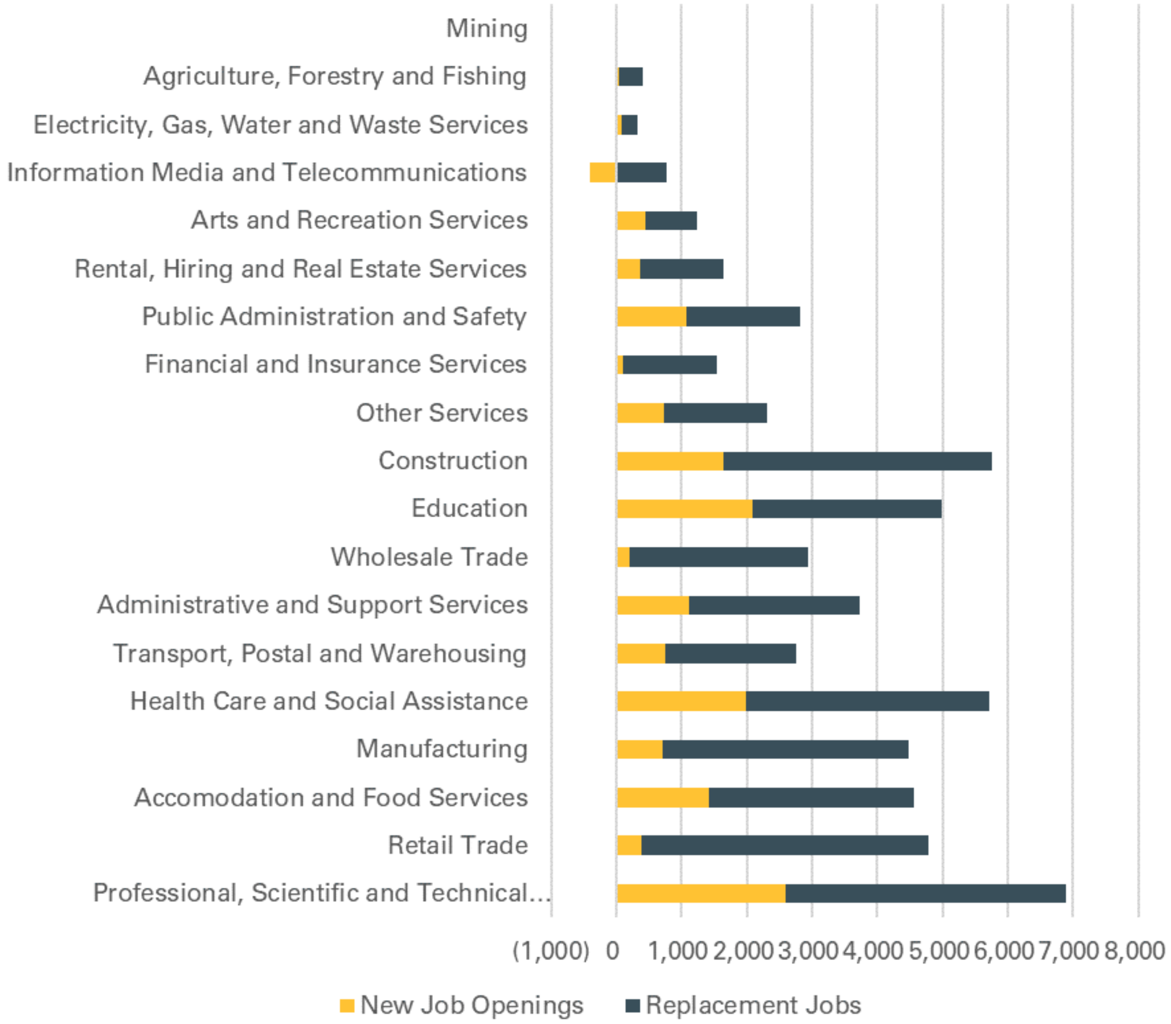
Early projections of a significant recession and fewer job openings in many industries (particularly in accommodation and food services, and transport and warehousing) had not eventuated to the extent expected in June 2021. For example, in April 2020 the Treasury released an economic scenarios paper forecasting that unemployment would peak at around 13% in a best-case scenario, to nearly 26% in the worst case (Riches & Gardiner, 2020). Instead, the unemployment rate peaked at 5.1% (or 5.6% in Auckland) in September 2020, much lower than the expectations of the most optimistic forecasts.

As of June 2021, Infometrics was projecting job growth across most industries over the next five years, with an additional 15,000 jobs in Auckland in 2026 (Figure 57).

As well as new jobs, some positions will need to be filled to replace staff who leave their job (people who are, for example, retiring, changing careers, migrating, or caring for children). Infometrics estimates that this accounts for nearly 42,000 jobs over the period to 2026 – leading to combined projected job openings over that period of 57,000.

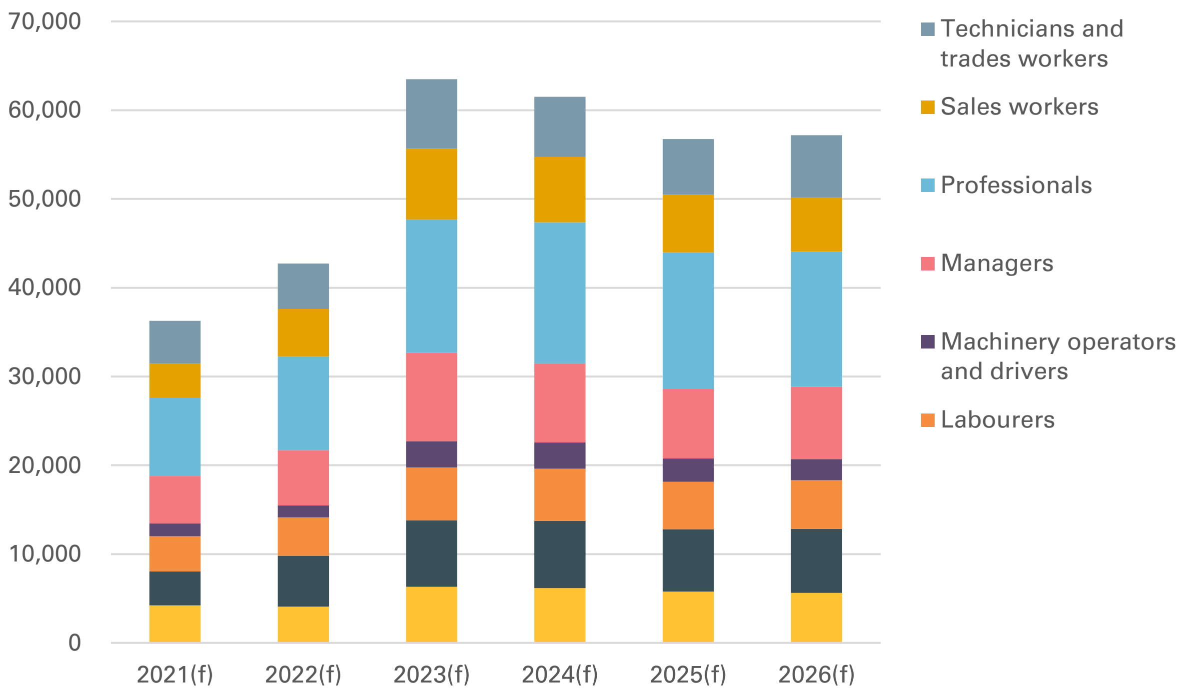
Growth is strongest in Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (12% or 6,900 jobs), and Health Care and Social Assistance (10%, or 5,700 jobs), and Construction (10%, or 5,800 jobs). Strong growth in job opportunities is also expected in retail trade (8%, or 4,800 jobs) and hospitality (8%, or 4,600 jobs), both of which are areas in which young people are typically over-represented.

Figure 57: Projected new job openings and replacement Jobs, by industry in Auckland, 2026



Source: Infometrics sector forecasts

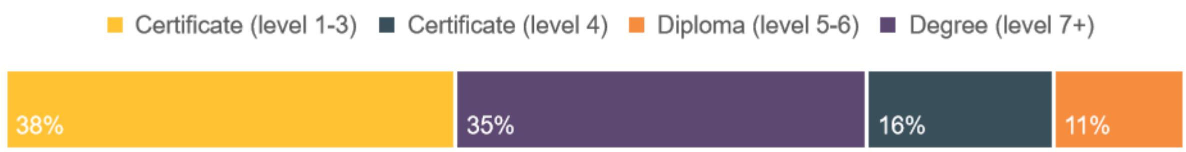
Figure 58: Projected job openings by major occupation, 2021–2026



Source: Infometrics sector forecasts

Job openings are expected to increase over 2021 and 2022, and then to increase significantly in 2023, before reducing slightly in overall volume in 2025 and 2026. More than a quarter of the projected job openings to 2026 are expected to be for professionals (27%), followed by a reasonably evenly distributed demand for managers (14%), technicians and trades workers (12%), community and personal service workers (13%), sales workers (11%), clerical and administrative workers (10%) and labourers (10%). More limited demand is expected for machinery operators over the next five years, representing just 4% of job openings.

Figure 59: Projected job openings by qualification level 2026, Auckland



Source: Infometrics sector forecasts

The key qualification levels that are expected to best meet this demand are certificate Level 1–3 qualifications (relevant for 38% of job openings over 2021–2026) and degrees (relevant for 35% of job openings over 2021–2026).

Employers are reporting labour shortages

Many of the behavioural responses to COVID-19 are in line with what would be expected under a contracting economy and labour market – similar to forecasts a year ago. However, the labour market in June 2021 is much stronger than expected – combined with closed borders reducing access to migrant workers, and strong domestic enrolment in tertiary education, this means that many employers are reporting difficulties finding the workers they need.

The employers we spoke to almost all noted the difficulties in finding people to fill roles:

> *We are receiving half the number of applications for in-store roles than usual.*
>
> *If you want a job… not having one is impossible. People will snap you up if you show up on time. We [hospitality provider] are having enough money spent but not enough people serving food and drinks. In more skilled roles people are almost impossible to find.*
>
> *Mostly yes, able to fill roles – but more challenging in the last year than it used to be.*

Young people may have more options and can be more selective about where they work

Employer representatives said their members are looking for workers 'everywhere, every location, every industry', and shortages of labour are putting pressure on entry-level wages. This suggests that, at an entry or lower-skilled level, young workers are likely to have more opportunities.

"The labour market is not depressed and is incredibly buoyant across the board. Everywhere, every location, every industry."

Workers have more choices for jobs, meaning that employers are under increased pressure to improve pay and conditions. Some employers reported specifically that they have had to increase wages:

> *We put the hourly rates up to the living wage, higher than minimum wage.*
>
> *It is a candidate's market.*
>
> *It is an applicant's labour market – applicants have a lot of choice of jobs.*
>
> *We are picking up people more quickly. Multiple opportunities. Conversion rates for youth in particular not as high as would have expected. People have lots of opportunities.*

Some sectors are concerned that they have become less attractive to young people

The sectors disproportionately affected by COVID-19 are concerned about how attractive they are, both to candidates, and to others who might refer candidates, such as schools or parents.

For example, a hospitality employer noted:

> *There is zero interest in hospitality from people [because they] can work somewhere else. They are a lot more picky – because they know they can move somewhere else.*
>
> *schools that came in for group interviews – people pulled out at last minute, or parents pull the kids out. The industry heavily was affected by COVID, people don't want to be part of it.*

This echoed concerns from an employer in the tourism sector. Although they were not yet planning on recruiting, because of an ongoing downturn in demand, they had begun to consider the longer-term impact on their ability to access the workers they need:

"Tourism now got a stigma. Gone from first to now off the radar. Can we get the same calibre or same number wanting to join? Could be tough, not got there yet. Lack of wanting to engage."

By contrast, another employer referred to strong consumer demand in the retail sector, and to workers preferring jobs in the retail sector because of how it seemed to have weathered the COVID-19 lockdowns:

> *Last year we still hired the same amount of people at Christmas, if not a little more. Because **retail kept going**, we didn't see a negative impact on employment. Online is huge compared to where it was.*
>
> *they go into retail, working from home for retailers … people don't want to be in customer-facing hospitality.*
>
> *Online component of online shopping increased – changed hiring patterns.*

Young people are less certain about the opportunities available

Young people are concerned about competition from displaced workers with higher skills, and from other youth

Despite concerns from employers about difficulty recruiting, we heard different concerns in our focus groups from graduates and those who nearly had finished their qualifications. Their comments included that:

- the graduate employment market seemed harder to navigate than usual and there was increased competition from their peers or others in the labour market
- they, and/or their peers, would stay in tertiary education longer, to make themselves more competitive in the job market
- they were taking on community and other voluntary work to improve their employment prospects.

Competition	Stay in study	Gain other experience
Fear about graduate jobs, it's already competitive as it is, so the possibility of less opportunities was stressful	*Lots of people deciding to do honours and masters and keep studying*	*Friends took up jobs in community development and NGO voluntaring*
Had to rely on social capital to get employment - Graduate		*Trying to get a part time casual job - too hard, so started volunteering myself*
More competitive now		
Most talented can't go overseas so competing for same jobs domestically		
One friend applied for all big four, done every online assessment, events, mtg with directors - then opportunity gone away		
People graduated last year or this year trying to find jobs		

Employers also acknowledged the increased competition among jobseekers for some roles, and more limited roles for youth:

> *COVID could present an opportunity for young people, as basically nobody is coming into NZ on a Work Visa. But there is also a lot of competition for roles from other young people, and those that have lost their jobs.*
>
> *We have fewer roles – have lots of roles, but fewer for young people. Still doing some stuff for young people but not as much as we were. It's seen as a nice to have.*
>
> *Youth recruitment paused – grad programme, connect programme, switch up… not really picked up again yet.*
>
> *Haven't gone to market for crew since COVID hit. Any hiring since then: bring young people that already had back into the workforce. Back up. Prioritise previous crew.*

These challenges are compounded by a reduction in the usual opportunities for young people due to COVID-19, including the ability to study abroad for a year or a semester, or to obtain work experience overseas:

> *Trying to go overseas but have to wait.*
>
> *No travelling.*
>
> *Positive for the future but doubt I'm travelling any time soon.*

These reduced opportunities were also mentioned by employers and education providers:

> *One of the key perks of working for [us] is the chance to work in branches around the world – but that perk is off the table, while borders remain closed.*
>
> *A number of key Auckland high schools actively encouraged recruiters from Australian and other universities. With that not an option – school leavers are going to university.*

Young people said they were keen to travel or go overseas when borders re-opened. This could present a risk to Auckland's access to a youth workforce once borders re-open, if young people go overseas in large numbers to pursue opportunities.

Young people and employers both commented on ongoing uncertainty and an inability to plan

These perceptions of increased competition are compounded by a sense from both employers and young people of ongoing uncertainty around what might happen in the future, and whether there might be further lockdowns. This uncertainty meant that some employers may think twice about permanent employment arrangements, or young people might not think that it's worth trying to find jobs.

> *People feel there is a lockdown looming and that they should not be too organised.*
>
> *clients are hedging bets a little – so not sure what will happen in terms of market, so may go temp as opposed to perm hire direct – still doing through a long-term view. If things stay the way they are – consider temp [to start with] then look at [a permanent] transition once have confidence.*
>
> *Easier to ramp up than ramp down. Err on the side of caution. Quite frivolous before COVID as had the flexibility.*

Employers are typically looking for the same sorts of skills as before

The employers we spoke to did not indicate any substantial shift in the types of skills or competencies they were looking for in young people. The specific skills they referred to were largely similar to what they were seeking before COVID-19, and included a combination of the technical skills specific to the particular role, and 'soft' or employability skills.

Employers are emphasising attitude and resilience

However, many employers said that the experience of COVID-19 had emphasised the importance of attitude and resilience.

Attitude goes both ways

Several employers noted the importance of 'attitude' in the youth workforce:

> *The focus is more on attitude and why that is important.*
>
> *Attitude is key, do not worry about skills and competency, we'll train on job and invest. We want to bring people in who will stay and are trainable. Two distinct camps.*

The role of attitude in labour market matching has already been well explored, most notably through the Auckland Co-design Lab's intensive research into the 'Attitude Gap' (Auckland Co-design Lab, 2016). This found that employers often saw attitude as a requirement when hiring young people. The research also concluded that 'attitude' was hard to define and articulate, and often specific to individual employers, especially when an employer's cultural background is different from that of the young people they were looking to hire.

"Anecdotally, employers say they struggle to find local candidates with the 'right attitude'. On the other hand, young people report that the experience of applying for jobs and encountering workplace culture is like entering a foreign country, with unfamiliar and invisible practices, language and rules."

– Attitude Gap report

The Attitude Gap sought to reframe this argument to recognise that the 'right attitude' was not simply about the young person, but about the relationship between the young person and the employer. In other words, the employer also has a role to play here.

How they responded to the COVID-19 experience is often a testament to a young person's resilience

While many young people are concerned about the impact COVID-19 has had on their education or employment, the pandemic has also given young job-seekers an opportunity to demonstrate their resilience in the face of this experience, or to show what they learnt from it. Employers noted the importance of this resilience in continuing through the uncertainty of COVID-19 and the risk of future lockdowns, and that today's youth were particularly well placed to demonstrate it.

> *Resilience – competency that is above all the key thing. If people aren't resilient, we had one girl that was a grad and she couldn't hack the changes. Also there is a lot of pressure – you are either rolling with it or you aren't coping – handling the curve balls, think on your feet and problem solving.*
>
> *One of the key things we look for in our youth workforce is resilience – and this shone through in COVID.*
>
> *Resilience makes candidates stand out more, come to the fore with COVID. Still looking for same core skills. Comes out through interview situations, and as they tell their stories (eg circumstances or challenges that they've faced, and how they responded, how it's impacted them, and what they'd do differently next time).*

Similarly, an education provider noted that employers were now particularly interested in graduates' ability to weather Alert Level changes, including an ability to work unsupervised if required to work from home.

> *Can we trust you to work at home? It's never been a question before … now lots of employers, will you be resilient enough, can you work unsupervised?*

6. WHAT SUPPORT MIGHT BE NEEDED

Auckland Unlimited's main question:

Are there 'new areas' that require investment from a youth employment perspective?

Summary of findings

Through our research we identified some activities or initiatives that might improve employment prospects for young people in Auckland:

- Monitoring the impact on those most at risk of disengagement, through further analysis of data as it becomes available and by working with service providers who have their 'ears to the ground'.
- Continuing the current efforts to improve connections between young people and employers, including looking at how digital tools might help increase engagement between the two sides.
- Exploring how to rebuild the employment brand and profile of sectors most disrupted by COVID-19, including how employers in these sectors attract, retain, and develop young workers.
- Improving employers' capability as employers of young people – in particular, helping employers understand the different factors influencing a young person's 'attachment' to employment and how to support young people through COVID-19.
- Working better as a system – taking advantage of the current changes across the youth employment system to look at how to better ensure that services and interventions are coordinated and targeted.

Many of these were areas of focus before COVID-19, which suggests that the impact of the pandemic has not changed the types of support needed, rather than how issues are approached and targeted within each of these areas may need to be refined.

Introduction and context

Through our research, which included feedback from system stakeholders, employers, and young people, we identified some activities or initiatives that might improve youth employment in Auckland

Many of these were areas of focus before COVID-19. The pandemic does not seem to have altered the type of support needed, but rather exacerbated existing challenges or disadvantages. Much of the focus now is therefore likely to be on refining how issues are approached and targeted within each of these areas.

How young people are feeling about the future

Overall the first half of 2021 saw a sense of a return to normality

Overall, students were positive in their assessment of how they feel now. Many said that the experience has given them greater confidence, through overcoming and staying resilient in the face of adversity, and there was a sense that things are now 'back to normal':

> *Stuff back to normal.*
>
> *Back to normal now, full stress, foot on the pedal, grinding.*
>
> *Happy that everything is slowly but surely going back to normal.*
>
> *Over the last year my confidence has risen. Since I've had lots of time to myself there has been a little bit of change. I think I have become less determined and am kind of nervous about getting a job I have more trust and dependence in myself and I didn't think I would pass NCEA L1 but I did and that has made my confidence grow.*
>
> *COVID has changed so much not only within my family and school but also personally. I definitely feel a lot more motivated and am grateful above all.*

But young people are still concerned about the future

In general, young people in our focus groups felt that New Zealand had done well in its COVID-19 related systems and processes, and felt like they now had more certainty about the recovery trajectory. But they were also less positive about the future due to a wide range of issues.

The concerns they raised were about the availability and cost of housing, mental health support, future employment opportunities, the ability to travel, and financial sustainability – particularly in the Auckland context:

> *I'm fine. Don't think New Zealand is.*
>
> *Feeling like NZ will recover well from COVID and there will be job opportunities here.*
>
> *NZ did really well, hopefully will have continued recovery.*
>
> *I feel like I have more certainty around the situation.*
>
> *Overall fine, just accepting how things are. Tough spot where living in Auckland only manageable if staying with parents and splitting costs with them, however also general cost of living too high.*
>
> *Feel like accessing opportunities outside of NZ is really hard.*
>
> *Feel like the rising house and rent prices will mean that it'll be challenging being a young worker in Auckland.*
>
> *Aukl super expensive, why stay here, houses, low wages.*
>
> *Feel like the rising housing prices in Auckland made life in New Zealand after we graduate really difficult.*

This group was also able to access the support they needed when they needed it, but they acknowledged it can be difficult to ask for support:

> *I lost my job during the first lock down so I applied for benefits through WINZ.*
>
> *Some family had to stop working because they weren't essential workers and they had to rely on the subsidy to get their income but my family weren't financially unstable.*
>
> *Felt hard to ask for support/help.*

Monitoring impacts and addressing barriers for the most disengaged

Feedback from stakeholders and employers and analysis of HLFS data suggests that COVID-19 has increased the level of disengagement for some young people. This also came through in our survey of young people, where 5% of respondents aged 15-24 (n=12) reported, unprompted, that COVID-19 meant that they had lost motivation with either study or work generally. This theme was not seen in responses from the older cohort.

It is not yet clear if this greater disengagement will return to normal or persist. Lessons from the GFC suggest it can take a long time for the NEET rate to return to pre-crisis levels.

There are also fears that the initial recovery from COVID-19 in late 2020 and early 2021, and the subsequent increase in job openings, may mask ongoing disparities among those most at risk.

> *Aside from the data, we have seen enough attitudinal shifts for there to be concern. How long do we let that tail off?*
>
> *Can go out and say placed x number of people. Huge – but a result of a buoyant labour market. Not engaging and moving high risk cohort.*
>
> *Majority of those who left to do caregiving not come back into the workforce – quite transient anyway. We have turnover – nature of the game. High majority did not return to us.*

The impacts of COVID-19 on this cohort should continue to be monitored as more data becomes available – along with ongoing feedback from services that work directly with young people. This cohort may need some targeted investment to support them to re-engage. This may include an ongoing need to address digital inequity which may continue to act as a barrier those most as risk from participating in education and employment through future lockdowns.

Connecting young people and employers

Both employers and young people suggested it would be helpful if there were more support available to connect the two sides of the job market.

Helping young people access employers and jobs

Young people wanted support to help them find jobs and understand opportunities and pathways, and they also wanted more financial support:

> *Hire me back and raise my wage.*
>
> *More job opportunities.*
>
> *Motivation to find a job.*
>
> *More support for those who lost their jobs re: COVID.*
>
> *Aligning family expectations with future career but not sure what that is. Pressure.*

Helping employers connect with young workers

Employers found it difficult to access young people, as currently they need to work across a range of stakeholders and schools. They wanted more opportunities to facilitate connections between young people and employers. They also talked about the importance of exploring how new digital approaches could make connections easier, and how to help young people to navigate the job market:

> *Did video interviews this year – it is very different, there is a lot more of that happening rather than assessment centres, young people are not meeting anyone from the company, in person.*
>
> *I think it is changed the way that people approach looking for work – it's a lot more digital than it ever was before. Historically in the student space it was career fairs etc, now that's way down the list in terms of how we would engage with potential talent.*
>
> *JobFest but a bit more savvy … An online channel that we can see candidate's data and they can reach out to us, focused on youth … create pipelines of people accessible by employers in youth sector.*
>
> *Accessing the hard to gets - those who have been significantly impacted, NEETs and 18–24-year-olds, hard to access through a channel.*
>
> *Have workshops where young people can go and get a crash course in how to get a job, it's not that hard, they just need the right skills to know how to do that.*

How to help employers and youth connect in the new COVID context

The need to connect employers and young people is not a new issue, and has been the focus of youth transition interventions for many years. Decision-makers will need to consider what is different following COVID-19. This may include considering:

- how to help employers and young people understand the impact of COVID-19 and to articulate the skills and attributes (such as resilience) gained by weathering COVID-19 – rather than focusing on the disruptions the pandemic has caused
- the role of digital connections – but also the risk of creating additional platforms and inadvertently excluding those most at risk

- the potential to support cohorts that are not typically the focus of youth transition support. Interventions are often (rightly) focused on school leavers or NEETs who face risks or barriers to entering the labour market. There may be a case following COVID-19 for exploring whether there is a gap in the connections between more skilled graduates and graduate employers.

Rebuilding brand and profile for affected sectors

Some sectors are concerned that they may find it difficult to attract workers, especially given the impacts of COVID-19 on people's immediate interest in the sector, as well as longer term impacts on choices young people are making on what they will study.

Employers and sector groups may need to consider how they articulate and promote the employment and progression opportunities they offer – and the education and training pathways that help lead to them.

This could include wider consideration of 'job quality' indicators – for example pay rates, pastoral care, on in-work training to support progression; or new approaches to attracting and recruiting young people.

> *it's tricky, hospitality is the industry that is affected the most. How to show people that it's a stable, reliable income. People knowing they aren't going to be left stranded or redundant.*
>
> *Low wages, unsociable hours - many kiwis unwilling.*

Improving employers' capability as employers of youth

Similarly, several stakeholders highlighted the need for support for employers when it came to employing young people, and help employers understand the different factors influencing a young person's attachment to employment and the labour market.

> *Youth already a challenge to keep attached to the labour market … employers don't have an infrastructure or framework to keep young people attached. Something like the Accessibility Tick – a framework that informs policy, environment, for people with disabilities to access a workplace. Need something similar for employers?*
>
> *Young person – young Māori, young European. Auckland is a melting pot – how do we support the employer market to be able to embrace young people.*
>
> *Need a 'Drivers License for Employers.' If you want to hire employees, have to sit this course – to prove that you know what basic employment rights are, basics that you have to provide – have to be signed off to hire young people. / anybody.*
>
> *Employers will have to change mindset. Review how they approach management, retention, hiring, succession planning, skills.*

> *Working with employers … more than just a marketing exercise. Sign up to a journey rather than come and be a cadet for a year. … Decent role, followed for a few years. Follow through, finish and complete.*

Although these issues have been discussed for some time (including through the work on the Attitude Gap), some stakeholders noted that the unique circumstances of the current labour market, with borders largely closed to migrant workers, mean that employers may now have particularly strong incentives to start thinking differently about employment arrangements.

This could include a focus on understanding how to support young workers through the uncertainty that COVID-19 has created, sharing best practice on how to support young workers' wellbeing, and how to navigate the available support – such as accessing the wage subsidy.

Working better as a system

Several stakeholders highlighted the complexity of the 'youth employment system'. It consists of a broad range of services and providers across Auckland – from schools, tertiary education institutions, and targeted training providers, to pre-employment training and work brokerage services, and to a range of central and local government agencies.

The system is currently changing through the Reform of Vocational Education, with the creation of Te Pūkenga, Regional Skills Leadership Groups, and Workforce Development Councils.

There is an opportunity now to consider how different organisations are working together, and where the overlaps and the gaps are, in order to better align their efforts on shared priority areas – including how different services engage with schools and with employers.

> *A lot of organisations have funding to train and support young people into work – need to work smarter to collect etc. Motivation and momentum can be lost.*
>
> *Need an environmental scan – who is doing what, what are you doing. All in same sandpit, targeting same cohorts.*
>
> *Ongoing engagement with industry. It's hard work. We need funding and resource for that. We had someone part time to manage the IT one. It's not a good use of academic time.*
>
> *Need to work with universities, business and council. An AC grad manager to get students to work on Council projects.*

This new system provides opportunities to consider and address reported capacity constraints with education provision at a wider system level, as well as to consider how to connect employers and to provide pathways and connections through to employment.

Refinement, rather than wholesale change

Many of these were areas of focus before COVID-19, reflecting that COVID-19's impact does not appear to have altered to type of support or focus required, but rather exacerbated existing challenges or disadvantages. Much of the focus is likely to be in how issues are approached and targeted within each of these areas.

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APPENDIX 1: METHOD

This study incorporated a number of methods:

- targeted literature review
- data access, collation and analysis
- interviews with stakeholders
- online survey of Aucklanders aged 15 – 24 years old and 25 – 34 years old
- focus groups with youth in Auckland.

Targeted literature review

We undertook a short, targeted literature review focusing on insights on youth employment and education in Auckland, and the impacts of COVID-19. We also reviewed literature from international and national perspectives, as well as reports on general employment and education trends related to COVID-19 and other economic shocks.

Data access, collation and analysis

We relied on a number of databases and surveys:

- Stats NZ Household Labour Force Survey (HLFS), including youth NEET and employment rates
- Stats NZ Linked employer-employee data (LEED)
- Stats NZ Monthly employment indicators (MEI)
- Infometrics data held by Auckland Unlimited on Auckland's overall economic and labour market performance. This includes forecasts prepared by Infometrics in 2020 on likely job openings 2021–2026
- Data from Ministry of Education's EducationCounts website
- Ngā Kete: Tertiary Education Commission's secure portal which enables the sharing of information with tertiary providers, government agencies, high schools, iwi and, shortly, the public.
- Ministry of Social Development's COVID-19 reporting, including data on benefits.

We also requested customised data from Stats NZ to enable us to examine differences at the regional and sub-regional level, as well as age and ethnic groups in more detail.

Interviews with stakeholders

We interviewed 22 individuals representing employers, education providers and system stakeholders (Table 6). Interviews occurred between 24 May 2021 and 10 June 2021. They were conducted either in person, on the phone or via MS Teams. Interviews were between thirty minutes and an hour in length.

Interviews were conducted with a structured interview schedule designed to elicit:

- what their observations have been of the impact of COVID-19 and lockdowns on youth in Auckland, and access to data to support their observations
- how their organisation has supported youth over that period
- how labour market opportunities for youth have changed
- what sorts of interventions have worked, and how have traditional interventions changed
- expectations for the future.

Table 6: Interviewees by type

Type	Number
Employers	7
Education providers	5
Unions and industry associations	4
Central government	4
Local government	2
TOTAL	**22**

Online survey of Aucklanders aged 15-24 years old and 25-34 years old

We conducted an online survey of Aucklanders to understand to what extent employment and education impacts for youth differed from other age groups.

We worked with Dynata to roll out the survey. Dynata, and their partners, targeted the survey to participants who met our criteria:

- Based in Auckland.
- Representative of the Auckland population in terms of ethnic groups and gender.
- Enable comparison between 15-24 year olds and 25-34 years old.

The survey was in the field 11 June 2021 to 22 June 2021. After data cleaning and removing responses that did not qualify or were of low quality, 923 responses to the online survey were used for analysis:

- 387 were aged 15-24
- 536 were aged 25-34

See Appendix 3 for details on the profile of survey respondents.

Focus groups with youth in Auckland

Four focus groups were held during June 2021:

- one in South Auckland, hosted by CadetMax, with 10 participants from the CadetMax programme, which targets youth NEET
- one in West Auckland, attended by 14 participants who were recruited via Auckland Unlimited social media, Auckland Unlimited networks and by word of mouth
- two online, with 8 and 3 participants respectively, recruited via Auckland Unlimited social media, Auckland Unlimited networks and by word of mouth. The online sessions were supported by Zoom and Mural.

Each focus group explored the following questions:

- What happened when the first lockdown was announced? What were you thinking and feeling?
- How did your school, job, uni, tech and/or course handle the lockdowns? What were you thinking and feeling?
- What happened to you over the last year? What did you see happen to your friends, family and younger people around you? How did you feel?
- What needs to happen?
  - How do you feel now?
  - How do you feel about the future?

Participants received koha in the form of a $30 supermarket voucher to acknowledge their participation and contribution.

APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY AUCKLAND YOUTH EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS

All youth, 15 – 24 years old

	2019				2020				2021
	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1
Employed	125,800	127,300	119,400	126,100	127,500	116,400	111,300	118,800	124,700
Labour force	144,100	141,900	135,600	143,700	146,900	129,500	127,200	139,300	145,200
Not in employment, education and training (NEET)	32,600	21,100	22,100	26,600	38,700	29,500	30,300	32,200	39,200
Not in labour force	90,600	95,500	102,200	97,500	89,300	106,100	103,300	92,300	88,500
Underemployed	8,100	7,600	7,400	11,600	7,500	13,000	10,000	14,500	10,200
Underutilised	45,200	36,300	34,300	42,800	37,600	39,600	36,500	48,900	48,300
Unemployed	18,300	14,500	16,200	17,600	19,200	13,100	15,900	20,500	20,400
Working age population	234,700	237,400	237,800	241,200	236,100	235,500	230,500	231,600	233,700
Employment rate (%)	52%	53%	50%	52%	54%	49%	47%	50%	52%
Labour force participation rate (%)	60%	59%	57%	60%	62%	54%	54%	59%	61%
NEET rate (%)	14%	9%	9%	11%	16%	12%	13%	14%	17%
Underemployment rate (%)	9%	8%	8%	11%	7%	13%	12%	14%	9%
Underutilisation rate (%)	32%	27%	27%	30%	26%	31%	31%	35%	33%
Unemployment rate (%)	15%	12%	13%	14%	14%	11%	14%	16%	16%

All youth, 15 – 24 years old, percentage changes

	2019			2020				2021
	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1
Employed	1%	-6%	6%	1%	-9%	-4%	7%	5%
Labour force	-2%	-4%	6%	2%	-12%	-2%	10%	4%
NEET	-35%	5%	20%	45%	-24%	3%	6%	22%
Not in labour force	5%	7%	-5%	-8%	19%	-3%	-11%	-4%
Underemployed	-6%	-3%	57%	-35%	73%	-23%	45%	-30%
Underutilised	-20%	-6%	25%	-12%	5%	-8%	34%	-1%
Unemployed	-21%	12%	9%	9%	-32%	21%	29%	-0%
Working age population	1%	0%	1%	-2%	-0%	-2%	0%	1%
Employment rate	0%	-3%	3%	1%	-5%	-1%	3%	2%
Labour force participation rate	-1%	-2%	3%	2%	-8%	0%	5%	2%
NEET rate	-5%	1%	2%	5%	-4%	1%	1%	3%
Underemployment rate	-1%	1%	3%	-4%	6%	-1%	2%	-5%
Underutilisation rate	-5%	-0%	4%	-4%	4%	0%	4%	-2%
Unemployment rate	-3%	1%	0%	0%	-3%	3%	2%	-0%

Youth, 15 – 19 years old

	2019				2020				2021
	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1
Employed	36,300	37,000	35,400	40,700	42,800	35,300	30,900	36,400	35,400
Labour force	46,100	44,200	42,800	49,400	51,500	40,800	37,500	46,100	44,700
Not in employment, education and training (NEET)	11,100	6,300	6,500	10,100	16,900	9,100	9,900	10,300	16,500
Not in labour force	63,300	67,600	72,900	71,600	64,000	72,700	72,900	62,600	64,700
Underemployed	5,300	4,100	4,400	6,900	4,600	6,400	5,700	6,900	3,800
Underutilised	26,400	20,400	17,600	24,600	20,300	18,100	18,500	25,200	24,300
Unemployed	9,800	7,200	7,300	8,700	8,600	5,500	6,600	9,700	9,300
Working age population	109,400	111,800	115,700	121,000	115,500	113,400	110,400	108,700	109,400
Employment rate (%)	33%	33%	31%	34%	37%	31%	28%	34%	32%
Labour force participation rate (%)	42%	40%	37%	41%	45%	36%	34%	42%	41%
NEET rate (%)	10%	6%	6%	8%	15%	8%	9%	10%	15%
Underemployment rate (%)	15%	11%	13%	17%	11%	18%	18%	19%	11%
Underutilisation rate (%)	46%	38%	36%	42%	35%	39%	42%	46%	44%
Unemployment rate (%)	21%	16%	17%	18%	17%	14%	18%	21%	21%

Percentage changes, youth, 15 – 19 years old

	2019			2020				2021
	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1
Employed	1.9%	-4.3%	15.0%	5.2%	-17.5%	-12.5%	17.8%	-2.7%
Labour force	-4.1%	-3.2%	15.4%	4.3%	-20.8%	-8.1%	22.9%	-3.0%
NEET	-43.2%	3.2%	55.4%	67.3%	-46.2%	8.8%	4.0%	60.2%
Not in labour force	6.8%	7.8%	-1.8%	-10.6%	13.6%	0.3%	-14.1%	3.4%
Underemployed	-22.6%	7.3%	56.8%	-33.3%	39.1%	-10.9%	21.1%	-44.9%
Underutilised	-22.7%	-13.7%	39.8%	-17.5%	-10.8%	2.2%	36.2%	-3.6%
Unemployed	-26.5%	1.4%	19.2%	-1.1%	-36.0%	20.0%	47.0%	-4.1%
Working age population	2.2%	3.5%	4.6%	-4.5%	-1.8%	-2.6%	-1.5%	0.6%
Employment rate	0.0%	-2.5%	3.1%	3.4%	-6.0%	-3.1%	5.5%	-1.1%
Labour force participation rate	-2.5%	-2.6%	3.8%	3.8%	-8.7%	-2.0%	8.5%	-1.5%
NEET rate	-4.6%	0.1%	2.6%	6.3%	-6.6%	1.0%	0.5%	5.6%
Underemployment rate	-3.4%	1.4%	4.4%	-6.0%	7.2%	0.3%	0.7%	-8.3%
Underutilisation rate	-7.6%	-2.0%	5.8%	-7.4%	3.9%	3.7%	3.8%	-2.6%
Unemployment rate	-5.0%	0.8%	0.5%	-0.8%	-3.3%	4.0%	3.5%	-0.2%

Youth, 20 – 24 years old

	2019				2020				2021
	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1
Employed	89,500	90,300	84,000	85,400	84,700	81,100	80,400	82,400	89,300
Labour force	98,000	97,700	92,800	94,300	95,400	88,700	89,700	93,200	100,500
Not in employment, education and training (NEET)	21,500	14,800	15,600	16,500	21,800	20,400	20,400	21,900	22,700
Not in labour force	27,300	27,900	29,300	25,900	25,300	33,400	30,400	29,700	23,800
Underemployed	2,800	3,500	3,000	4,700	2,900	6,600	4,300	7,600	6,400
Underutilised	18,800	15,900	16,700	18,200	17,300	21,500	18,000	23,700	24,000
Unemployed	8,500	7,300	8,900	8,900	10,600	7,600	9,300	10,800	11,100
Working age population	125,300	125,600	122,100	120,200	120,600	122,100	120,100	122,900	124,300
Employment rate (%)	71%	72%	69%	71%	70%	67%	67%	67%	72%
Labour force participation rate (%)	78%	78%	76%	79%	79%	73%	75%	76%	81%
NEET rate (%)	17%	12%	13%	14%	18%	17%	17%	18%	18%
Underemployment rate (%)	3%	4%	4%	6%	3%	8%	5%	9%	7%
Underutilisation rate (%)	18%	16%	17%	18%	17%	22%	19%	24%	22%
Unemployment rate (%)	9%	8%	10%	10%	11%	9%	10%	12%	11%

Percentage changes, youth, 20 – 24 years old

	2019			2020				2021
	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1
Employed	0.9%	-7.0%	1.7%	-0.8%	-4.3%	-0.9%	2.5%	8.4%
Labour force	-0.3%	-5.0%	1.6%	1.2%	-7.0%	1.1%	3.9%	7.8%
NEET	-31.2%	5.4%	5.8%	32.1%	-6.4%	0.0%	7.4%	3.7%
Not in labour force	2.2%	5.0%	-11.6%	-2.3%	32.0%	-9.0%	-2.3%	-19.9%
Underemployed	25.0%	-14.3%	56.7%	-38.3%	127.6%	-34.8%	76.7%	-15.8%
Underutilised	-15.4%	5.0%	9.0%	-4.9%	24.3%	-16.3%	31.7%	1.3%
Unemployed	-14.1%	21.9%	0.0%	19.1%	-28.3%	22.4%	16.1%	2.8%
Working age population	0.2%	-2.8%	-1.6%	0.3%	1.2%	-1.6%	2.3%	1.1%
Employment rate	0.5%	-3.1%	2.3%	-0.9%	-3.7%	0.4%	0.1%	4.9%
Labour force participation rate	-0.4%	-1.8%	2.5%	0.6%	-6.4%	2.0%	1.2%	4.9%
NEET rate	-5.4%	1.0%	1.0%	4.3%	-1.3%	0.2%	0.8%	0.5%
Underemployment rate	0.8%	-0.3%	1.9%	-2.1%	4.8%	-2.9%	3.9%	-2.1%
Underutilisation rate	-2.3%	1.6%	1.3%	-1.0%	5.0%	-3.3%	5.0%	-1.7%
Unemployment rate	-1.2%	2.0%	0.0%	1.7%	-2.7%	1.9%	1.2%	-0.5%

APPENDIX 3: PROFILE OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

923 people responded to the online survey, all from Auckland.

- 387 were aged 15-24
- 536 were aged 25-34

Respondents were more likely to be female in both age groups.

The older cohort was more likely to be in employment, while the younger cohort more likely to be studying or training.

Given the similarity of the demographic profile of the survey participants and the profile of Auckland youth, we consider that results from the survey are broadly generalisable to the population of Auckland youth.

Figure 60: Survey respondents by age

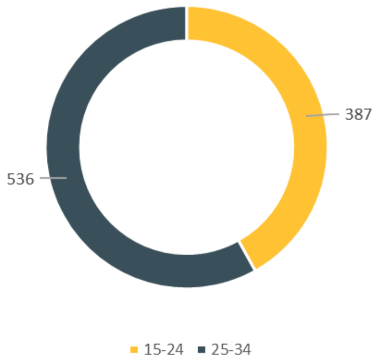


Figure 61: Survey respondents by age and gender

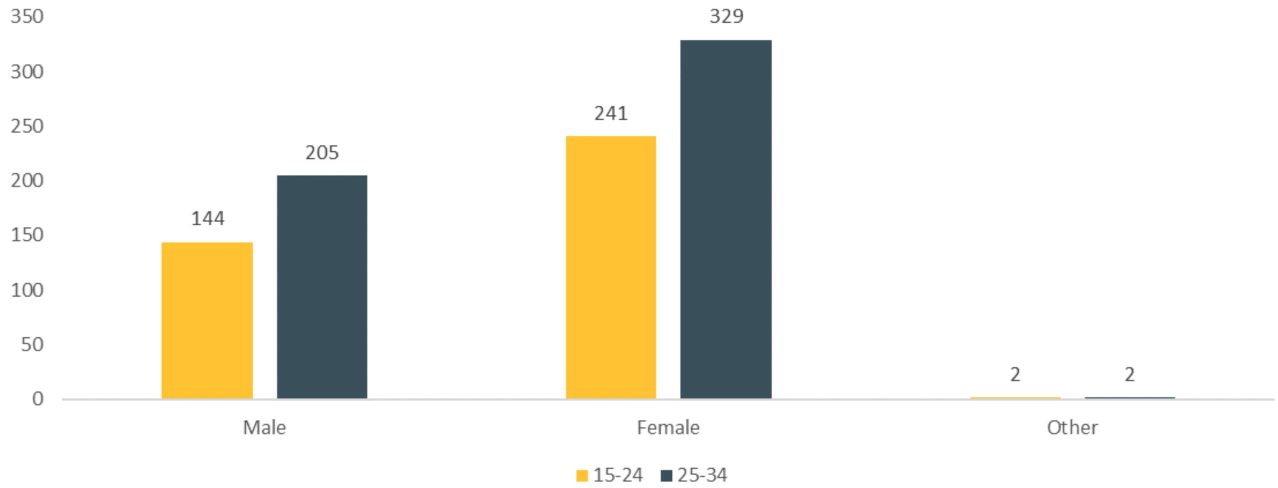
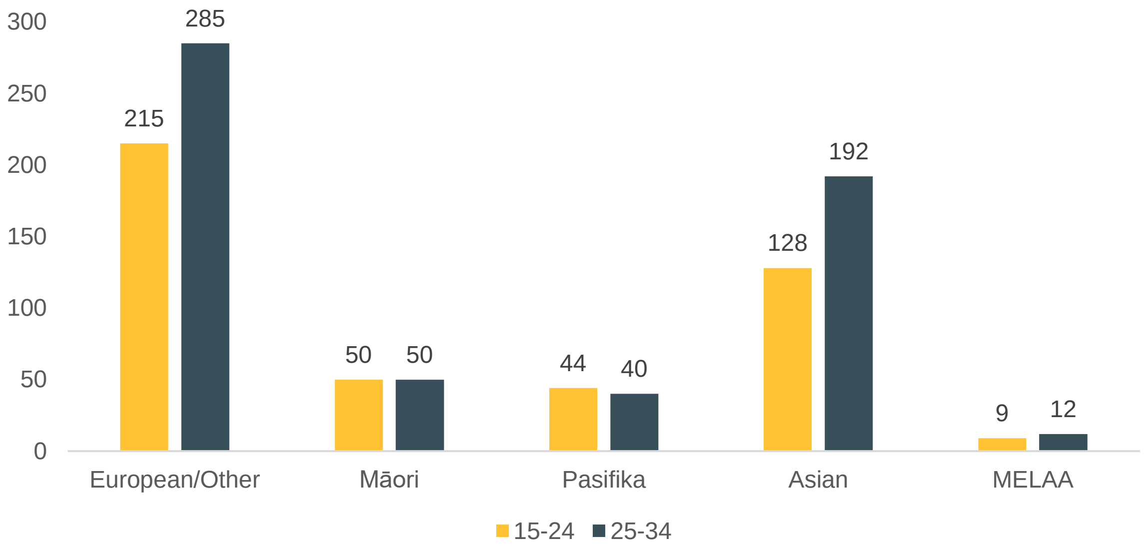
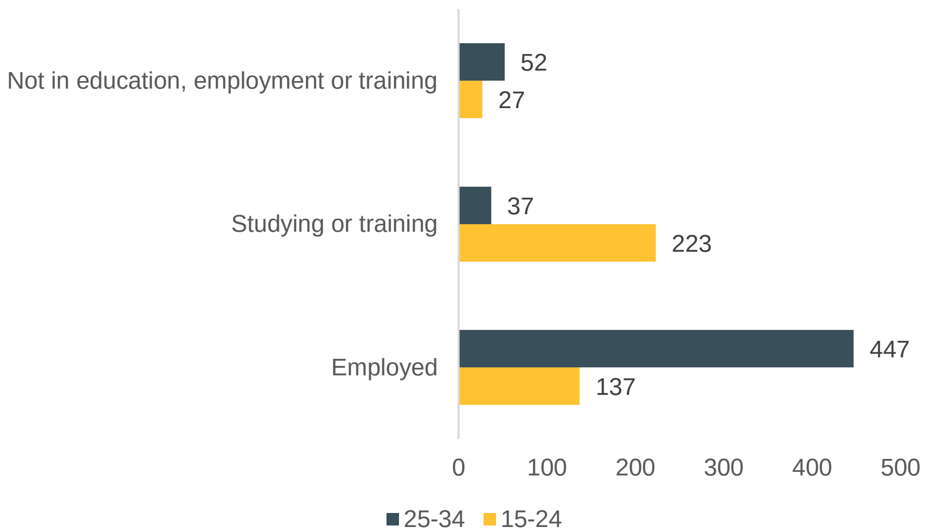


Figure 62: Survey respondents by ethnicity



Note: Respondents could select multiple ethnic groups

Figure 63: Survey respondents by status



Note: The older cohort who selected ''not in education, employment or training'' would typically be classified as unemployed or not in the labour force.