

# Secondary teachers' perspectives from NZCER's 2021 National Survey of Secondary Schools

## Executive summary

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**The long-running National Survey of Schools project is part of the New Zealand Council for Educational Research's (NZCER's) Te Pae Tawhiti programme of research.**

NZCER has run a national survey of secondary schools every 3 years since 2003. For the 2021 National Survey of Secondary Schools, we surveyed a sample of 5,376 teachers, randomly chosen from a stratified sample of Years 9–13 and Years 7–13 secondary schools to ensure national representation of schools across all deciles. A total of 1,093 teachers responded to the survey over two data collection waves, giving a nationally representative picture in terms of school decile.

This report covers all the questions asked of teachers, reported in six sections:

- NCEA changes and integration of mātauranga Māori
- Teaching and learning
- Student wellbeing
- Supporting Māori teachers
- Supporting Pacific learners
- Teachers' work, the new Professional Growth Cycle, and PLD.

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Key highlights that stood out for us were:

- There was wide range of views about the NCEA changes, and whether they will improve outcomes for Māori students and Pacific students. There was also some apprehension about the implications of having fewer standards, as well as making Level 1 optional.
- About a quarter were teaching mātauranga Māori in their subject area, and a further 6% were supporting others to integrate it in their teaching. Many others were learning about mātauranga Māori and how it related to their teaching, or planning to integrate it. Comments show a varied understanding of the purpose and feasibility of integrating mātauranga Māori. There was desire for more PLD and exemplars.
- Digital technology use is now widespread in teaching and learning in secondary schools, with indications of good technical support, but concerns around equipment, internet access, and ongoing related PLD. Teachers expressed concern about the ongoing effects of COVID-19, particularly student access to digital technology at home.
- Teachers have mixed views about working in Innovative Learning Environments (ILEs). Many did not have useful professional learning focused on ILEs before they started teaching in one. Two-thirds thought some of their students find learning in an ILE overwhelming.
- Curriculum integration has increased, reported by 44% of teachers in 2021, up from 30% in 2018.
- Fewer opportunities for students to be involved in assessment practices to help them take responsibility for their own learning were reported compared with 2018.
- Teachers reported concerns about student wellbeing, and 19% often experienced seriously disruptive student behaviour. Some school-wide processes to support wellbeing are less evident than in 2018.
- Māori teachers have a greater emphasis on student wellbeing than non-Māori teachers. More Māori teachers have high workloads and stress that is hard to manage. They also show greater interest than non-Māori teachers in moving into leadership roles.
- Professional learning is variable. Only 36% of teachers found whole-school PLD useful. Most practical help from professional learning over the past 3 years was about building positive relationships with Māori students, whereas the least practical help was about developing localised curriculum and teaching te reo Māori.
- Many teachers noticed improvements following the change from annual appraisal to the Professional Growth Cycle, particularly around reducing workload (43%). However, for others, it made no real difference (41%).
- Work hours in 2021 were much the same as in 2018. Forty-three percent thought their workload was manageable, though views of workloads appear somewhat more positive than in 2018. However, teacher morale was lower than in 2018.