

Teacher perspectives from NZCER's 2023 national survey of area schools

Data report

Mohamed Alansari and Mengnan Li



Rangahau Mātauranga o Aotearoa | New Zealand Council for Educational Research
Te Pakokori
Level 4, 10 Brandon St
Wellington
New Zealand

www.nzcer.org.nz

<https://doi.org/10.18296/rep.0037>

© New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 2023

Teacher perspectives from NZCER's 2023 national survey of area schools

Data report

Mohamed Alansari and Mengnan Li

November 2023

Contents

1. Introduction	1
About the survey	1
About teacher respondents	1
About this report	2
Key messages	2
2. Survey findings	4
Views on the year ahead	4
Support for Māori students	5
Support for Pacific students	7
Student wellbeing	9
Teachers' working experiences, career plans, and support	11
Professional learning and development (PLD).	16
Appendix	19
Teacher demographics and school characteristics	19
Tables	
Table A1 Teachers' curriculum learning areas	19
Table A2 Student year level(s) taught	20
Table A3 Years of teaching experience	20
Table A4 Teachers' role	21
Table A5 Teachers' gender	22
Table A6 Teachers' ethnicity	22
Table A7 Breakdown of teacher respondents by area (urban/rural)	22
Table A8 Breakdown of teacher respondents by region	23
Table A9 Breakdown of teacher respondents by school's co-ed status	23
Figures	
Figure 1 Teachers' views of the year ahead	4
Figure 2 Whether teachers have Māori students in classes	5
Figure 3 Teachers' views about supporting Māori students	5
Figure 4 Teachers' views about Māori language teaching and learning	6
Figure 5 Teachers' views about their relationships with local hapū and/or iwi	6
Figure 6 Whether teachers have Pacific students in classes	7
Figure 7 Teachers' views about teaching practices to promote Pacific student wellbeing	7
Figure 8 Teachers' views about supporting Pacific students	8
Figure 9 Teachers' views about supporting student wellbeing	9
Figure 10 Teachers' views about teaching practices to promote student wellbeing	10
Figure 11 Teachers' career plans for the next 5 years	11
Figure 12 Teachers' views of their leadership career progression	12
Figure 13 Teachers' views of their workload and morale	12

Figure 14	Teachers' views of their morale as an area school teacher	13
Figure 15	Whether teachers have extra responsibilities above and beyond their daily teaching responsibilities (e.g., sport coaching, cultural activities, extracurricular involvement)	13
Figure 16	Whether teachers get allowances for the extra responsibilities above and beyond their daily teaching responsibilities	14
Figure 17	Hours a week that teachers spend on their work or required meetings outside the times when students are required to be on site	14
Figure 18	The main things that teachers would change about their work as a teacher in an area school	15
Figure 19	Teachers' views about the experience of professional learning and development (PLD) over the past 3 years	16
Figure 20	Teachers' views about the areas in which they received practical help provided by their professional learning in the last 3 years	17
Figure 21	Whether the school has a Māori language plan for teaching and learning te reo Māori	18

1. Introduction

The long-running National Survey of Schools project¹ is part of NZCER's Te Pae Tawhiti programme of research, funded through the Ministry of Education.

Together with the New Zealand Area Schools Association (NZASA), NZCER undertook a survey of area school teachers between 15 June and 21 July 2023. This data report provides a summary of teacher responses to the survey, providing an aggregate picture of teachers' experiences of working in area schools.

About the survey

NZCER sent 102² school principals an email invitation and two reminder emails with a link to the online survey. Principals were asked to forward the survey to all their staff. NZASA also emailed their members an invitation and the online survey link. A total of 652 teachers, across 64 area schools, completed the survey, and provided their views in six key areas:

- Views on the year ahead
- Support for Māori students
- Support for Pacific students
- Student wellbeing
- Teachers' working experiences, career plans, and support
- Professional learning and development (PLD).

About teacher respondents

We received 652 teacher responses (69% female, 30% male, and 1% another gender) from 64 area schools. Among these respondents, 39% were from schools in main urban area, 36% in rural area, 17% in minor urban area, and 7% in secondary urban area. Over one third participating teachers were teaching in Canterbury region (33%), followed by Auckland region (11%), Waikato region (10%), and Northland region (10%). Nearly all responses were from co-educational schools (98%).

Among teacher participants, most of them self-identified as NZ European / Pākehā (78%) and 12% as Māori. Teachers reported that they were teaching in different curriculum learning areas: around a third taught across the curriculum (30%), Mathematics (29%), and English (27%). About 42–47% of teachers were teaching Years 9–13.

Around one third teachers reported had 16–25 years of teaching experiences (29%), followed by 26–40 years (21%), whereas only 3% were first-year teachers and 4% were teachers in their second year.

Full information about participating teachers' demographics (curriculum learning areas and year levels they taught, years of teaching experiences, roles in the school, gender, and ethnicity) and school characteristics (school area, region, co-ed status, and type) are included in the Appendix.

¹ <https://www.nzcer.org.nz/research/national-survey-schools>

² We relied on the school directory within the Education Counts website (<https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/home>) to identify area schools (also known as Composite schools, Years 1–15). We identified 102 area schools across the country, and used the email addresses available to invite them to complete the online survey.

About this report

This report presents the results of the teacher survey. Of interest to the NZASA was whether teacher responses would vary with respect to school locations (determined here by the isolation index³) and year levels. Where statistically significant associations were found, we note these relations under the figures. However, it is worth noting that the strength of the statistically significant associations were weak-to-moderate.⁴

This report does not seek to interpret or explain the findings, nor does it compare the data from area schools with other NZCER national survey findings. Future studies, including qualitative studies, could be used to explore themes of interest arising from these findings in more depth

Key messages

Some key messages from the data that stood out to us were:

1. Many area school teachers (78%) felt supported by staff who are committed to making a positive difference to all their students and their communities. Around 60% felt confident and optimistic about the year ahead. However, only 43% had a clear idea of upcoming policy initiatives or changes affecting their work.
2. Many teachers reported that their schools actively explore how to honour te Tiriti o Waitangi in their work (73%). They also reported engaging in a range of positive practices to support Māori learners (62–73%), supported by useful PLD over the past three years (57–64%). Fewer teachers reported that their students have regular access to positive Māori role models (48%), or that they involve whānau in their Māori language planning (34%).
3. Fewer teachers reported practices for supporting Pacific students (13–35%), and less than half of teachers reported receiving useful PLD to improve outcomes for Pacific students (38–43%).
4. Student wellbeing is both a focus and a concern for most area school teachers (85–88%). This was also found in our 2021 secondary teacher survey, where teachers indicated similar views and experiences.
5. Many teachers plan to stay in the profession and/or seek further learning and development opportunities. But 13% felt unclear on career plans and progression, and further 7% felt unsupported with their career aspirations.
6. Area school teachers enjoy their jobs (82%). In terms of workloads, 42% reported that their workload was fair. However, high workloads were reported by just under a third of teachers (30%), with a similar proportion indicating that the level of work-related stress is not manageable. It is likely that these act as a barrier to positive working experiences.
7. The main things teachers would change about their jobs include working conditions (e.g., improving pay and status), learning and development (e.g., more time for reading and reflection and PLD, and non-contact time with other teachers), and workload (e.g., reduce admin/paperwork, number of initiatives at once, and more support staff).

³ <https://www.education.govt.nz/our-work/changes-in-education/equity-index/faq-isolation-index-changes/>

⁴ We only undertook significant testing (e.g., chi-square tests of association) where sample size permits and following meeting assumptions for conducting these tests.

Additionally, we found statistically significant (albeit small-to-moderate) associations between teacher responses, school locations and year levels. Overall:

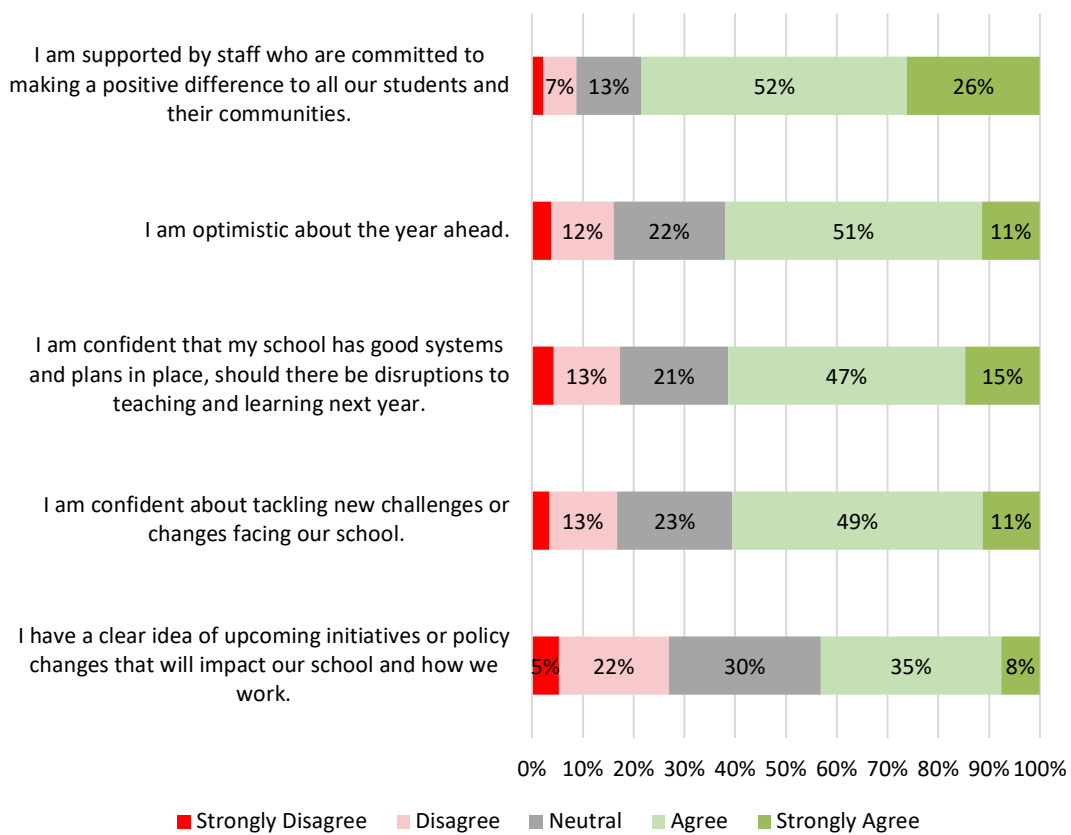
- Primary school teachers were more likely to report feeling optimistic and confident of the year ahead, and in promoting student wellbeing.
- Teachers in schools with higher isolation index were less likely to engage in positive practices for supporting Pacific students.
- Teachers in schools with higher isolation index were more likely to report having manageable workload.

2. Survey findings

This section presents teachers' responses to survey questions in the six key areas of focus.

Views on the year ahead

FIGURE 1 Teachers' views of the year ahead (n = 551)



A statistically significant association was found between isolation index and the last item “I have a clear idea of upcoming initiatives or policy changes that will impact our school and how we work.” Teachers in schools with a higher isolation index were more likely to agree with this statement.

Statistically significant associations were found between year levels and all items in Figure 1 except for “I’m confident that my school has good systems and plans in place, should there be disruptions to teaching and learning next year.” Primary school teachers were more likely to agree with these statements.

Support for Māori students

FIGURE 2 Whether teachers have Māori students in classes (n = 523)

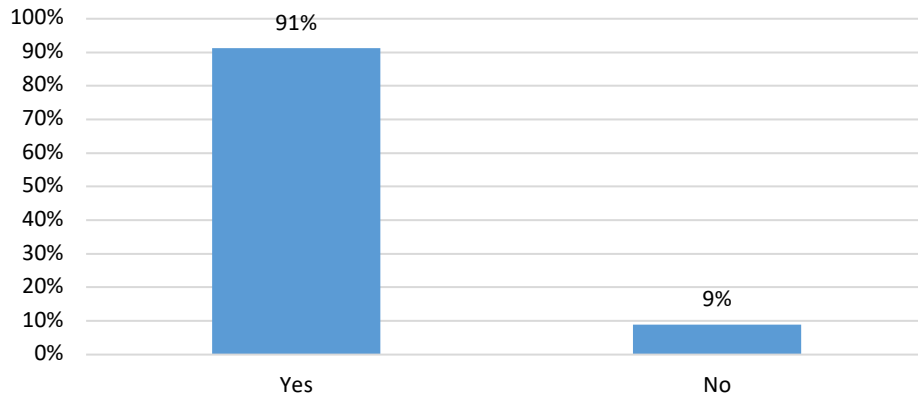
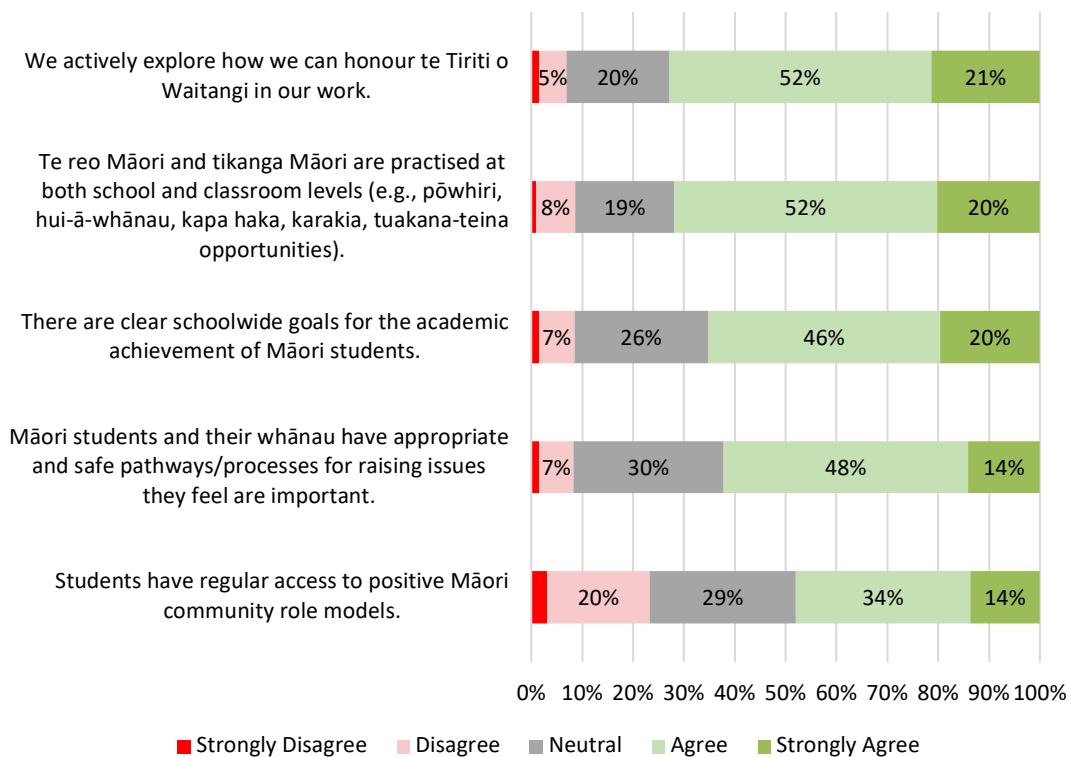


FIGURE 3 Teachers' views about supporting Māori students (n = 520)



Statistically significant associations were found between year levels and two items below. Primary school teachers were more likely to agree with these statements.

1. “Te reo Māori and tikanga Māori are practised at both school and classroom levels (e.g., pōwhiri, hui-ā-whānau, kapa haka, karakia, tuakana-teina opportunities)”.
2. “We actively explore how we can honour te Tiriti o Waitangi in our work”.

FIGURE 4 Teachers' views about Māori language teaching and learning (n = 521)

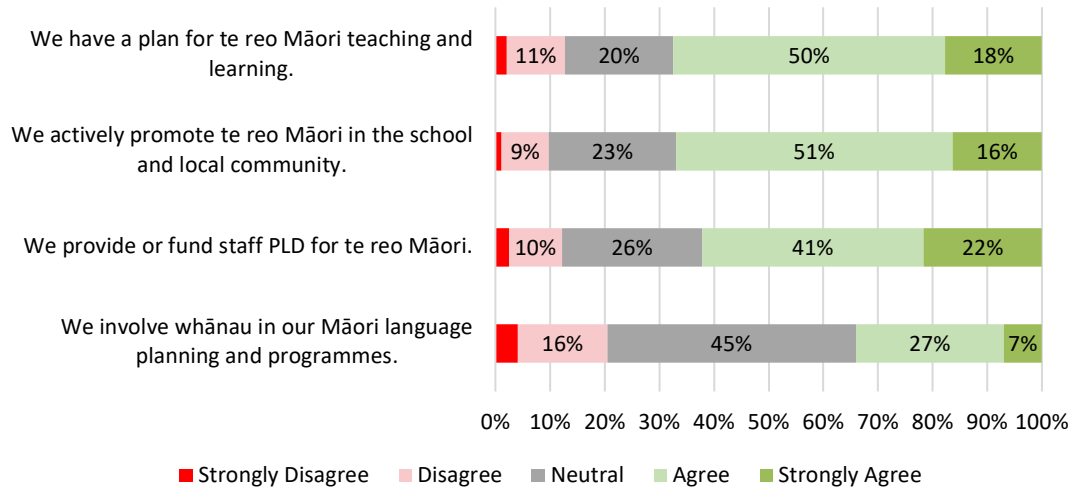
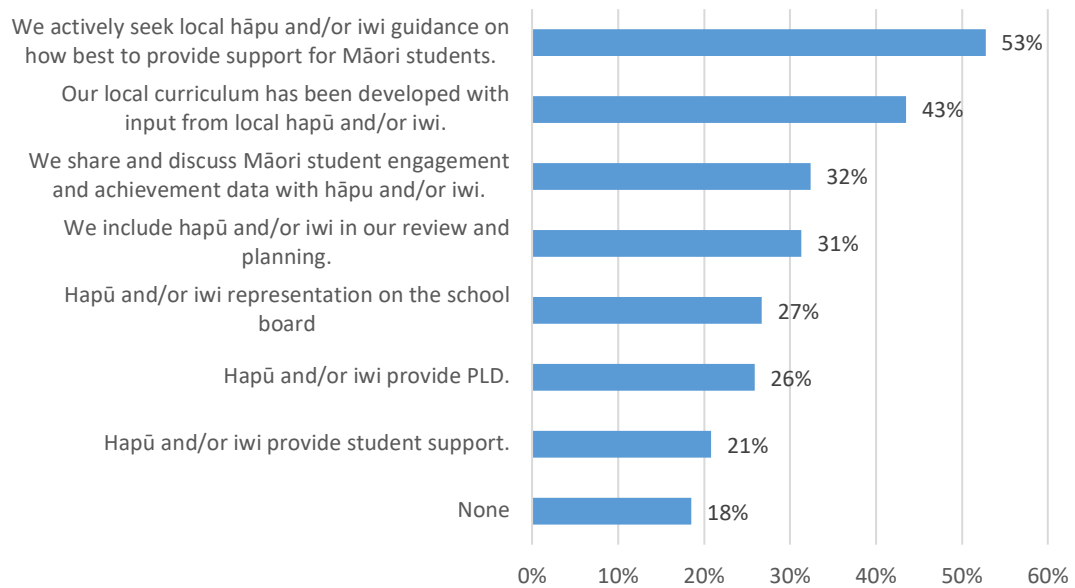


FIGURE 5 Teachers' views about their relationships with local hapū and/or iwi (n = 476)



Note: Teachers could give multiple responses.

Support for Pacific students

FIGURE 6 Whether teachers have Pacific students in classes (n = 524)

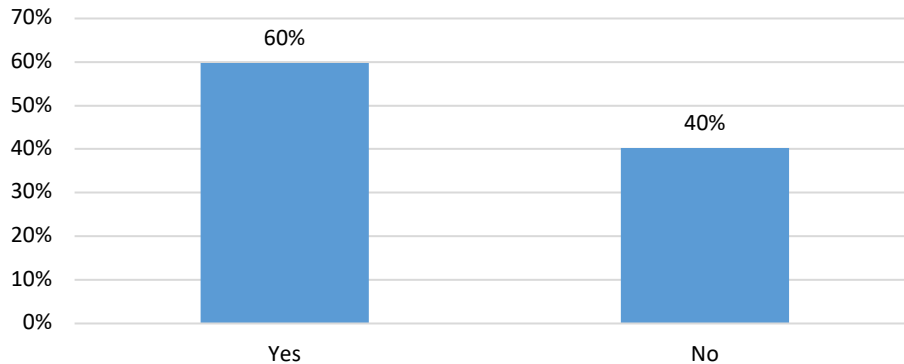
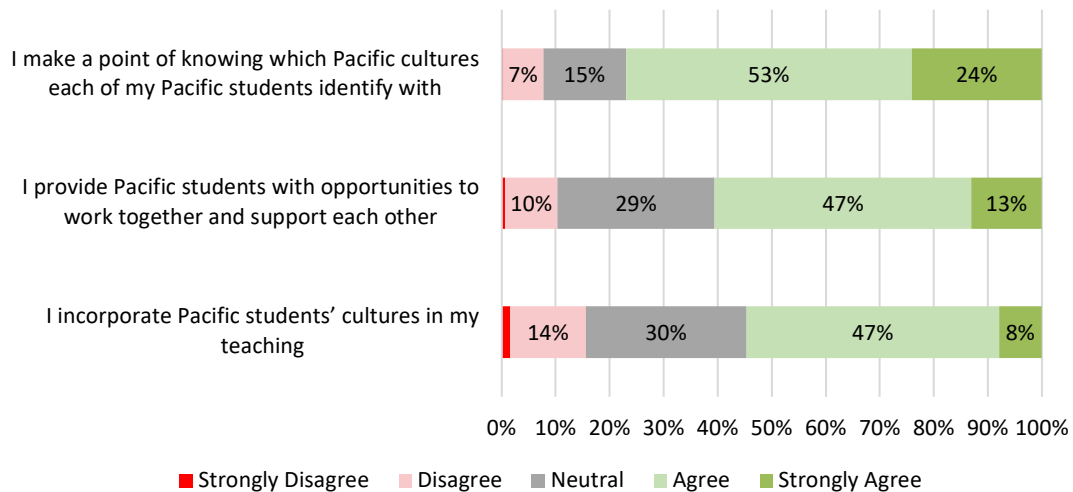


FIGURE 7 Teachers' views about teaching practices to promote Pacific student wellbeing (n = 302)



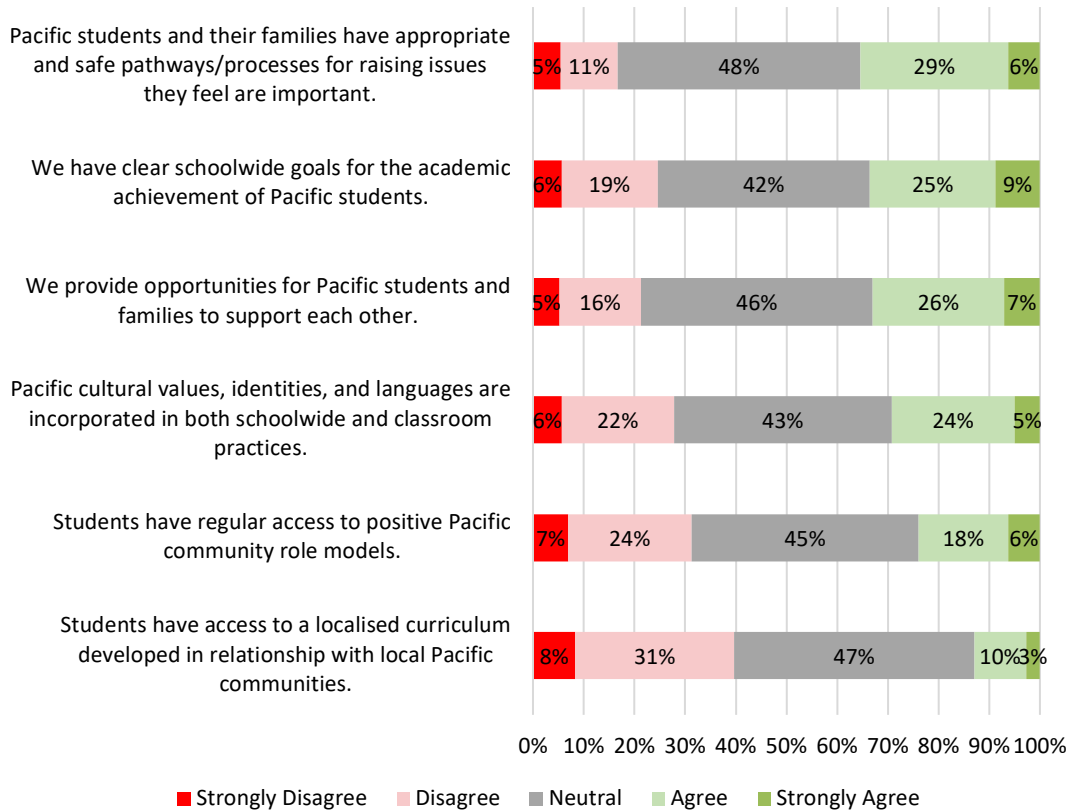
Note: This question was only asked for teachers who have Pacific students in their classes.

Statistically significant associations were found between isolation index and the two items below. Teachers in schools with a higher isolation index were less likely to agree with these.

1. "I incorporate Pacific students' cultures in my teaching"
2. "I provide Pacific students with opportunities to work together and support each other".

A statistically significant association was found between year levels and teacher responses to the item "I make a point of knowing which Pacific cultures each of my Pacific students identify with". Primary school teachers were more likely to agree with this statement.

FIGURE 8 Teachers' views about supporting Pacific students (n = 482)

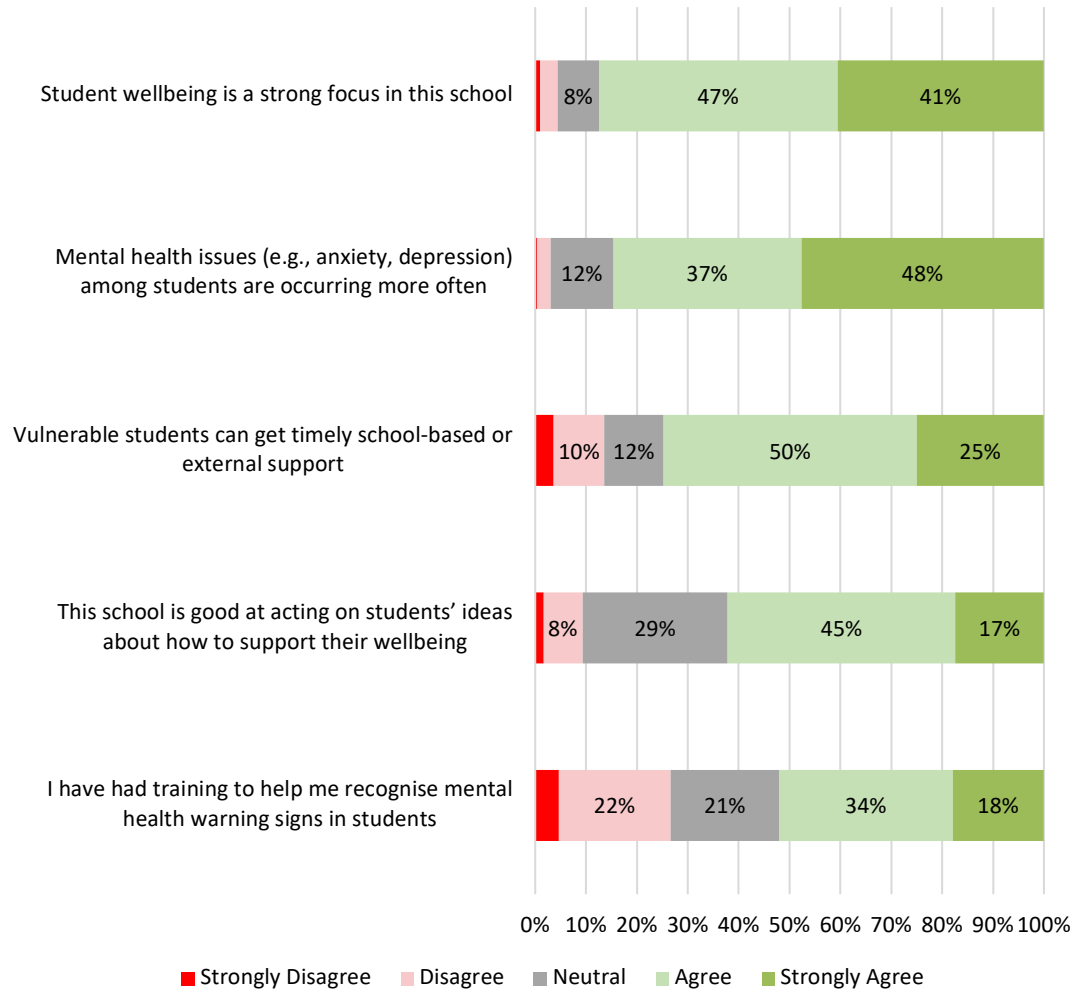


Statistically significant associations were found between isolation index and all items in Figure 8. Teachers in schools with higher isolation index were less likely to agree with these statements.

A statistically significant association was found between year levels and the item “Pacific cultural values, identities, and languages are incorporated in both schoolwide and classroom practices”. Primary school teachers were more likely to agree with this statement.

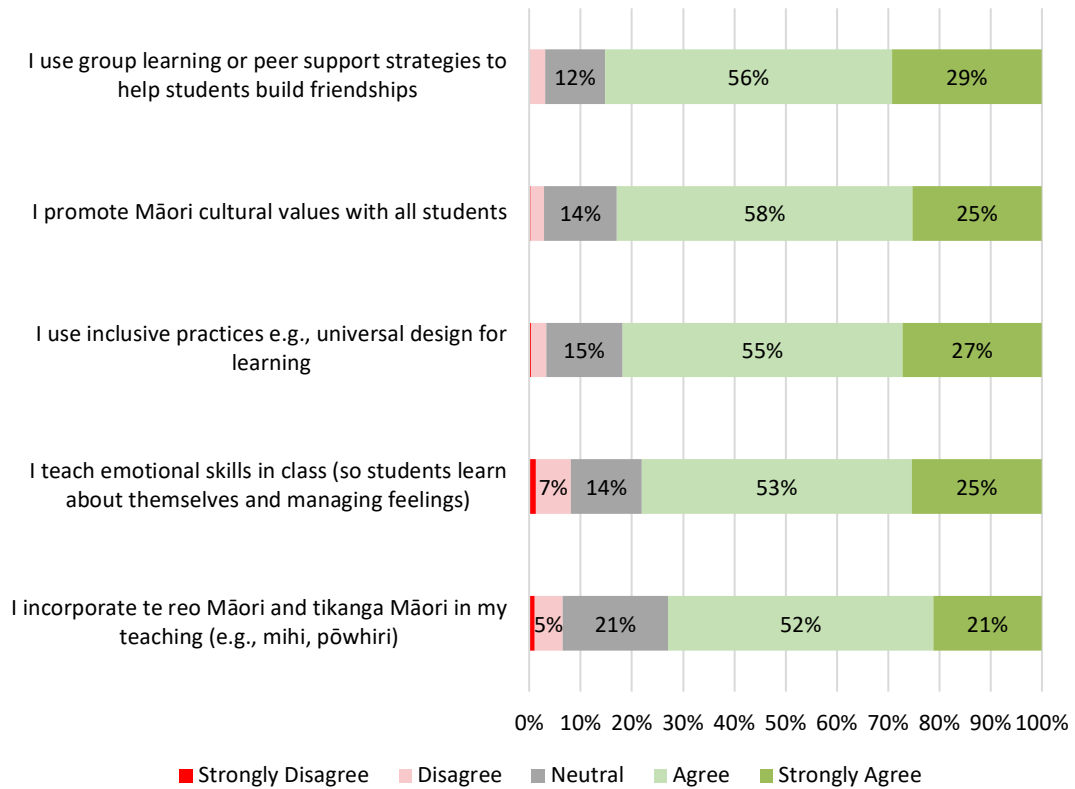
Student wellbeing

FIGURE 9 Teachers' views about supporting student wellbeing (n = 496)



A statistically significant association was found between isolation index and the item “Vulnerable students can get timely school-based or external support”. Teachers in schools with higher isolation index were less likely to agree with this statement.

FIGURE 10 Teachers' views about teaching practices to promote student wellbeing (n = 492)

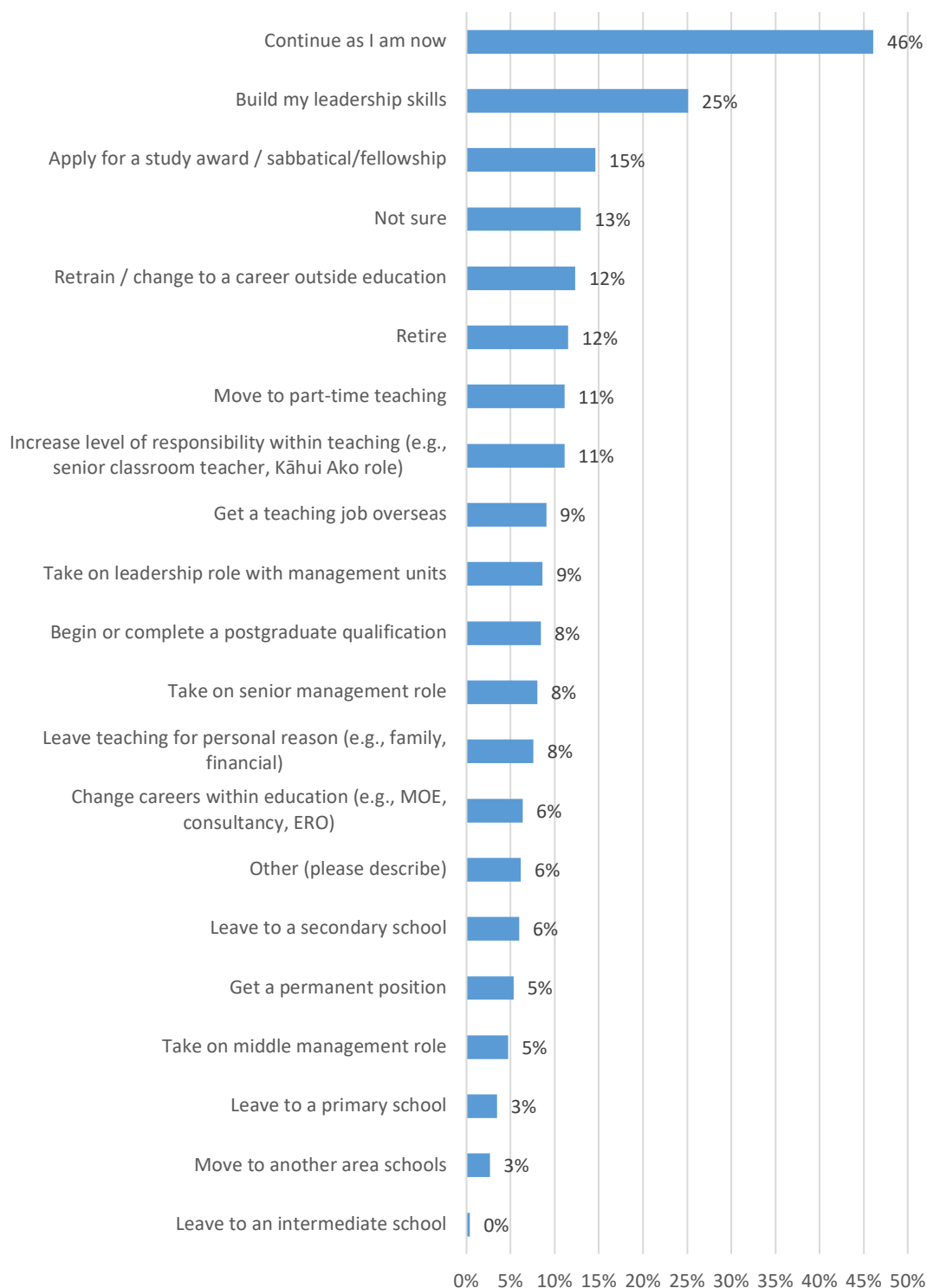


A statistically significant association was found between isolation index and the item “I use group learning or peer support strategies to help students build friendships”. Teachers in schools with higher isolation index were less likely to agree with this statement.

Statistically significant associations were found between year levels and all items in Figure 10 except for “I use inclusive practices e.g., universal design for learning”. Primary school teachers were more likely to agree with these statements.

Teachers' working experiences, career plans, and support

FIGURE 11 Teachers' career plans for the next 5 years (n = 486)



Note: Teachers could give multiple responses.

FIGURE 12 Teachers' views of their leadership career progression (n = 484)

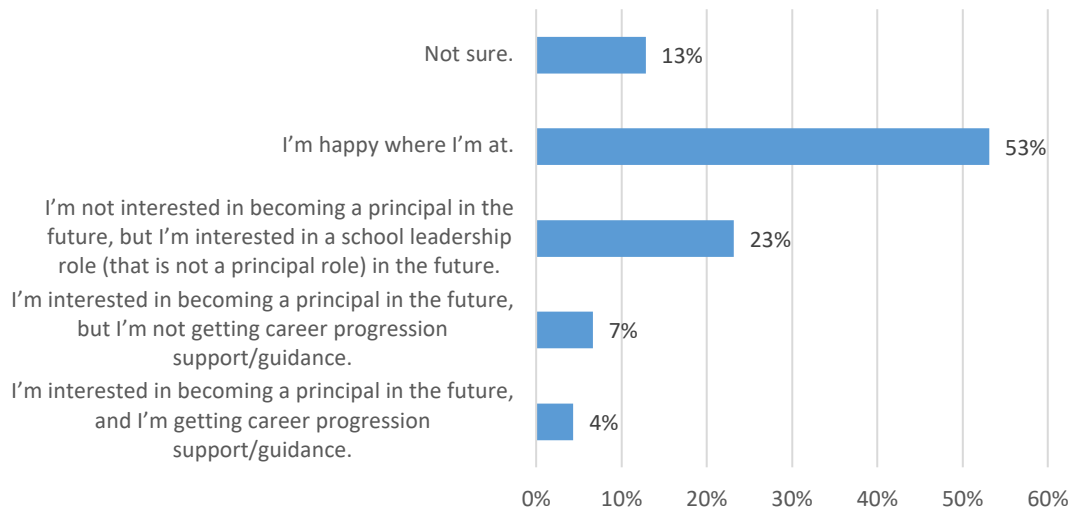
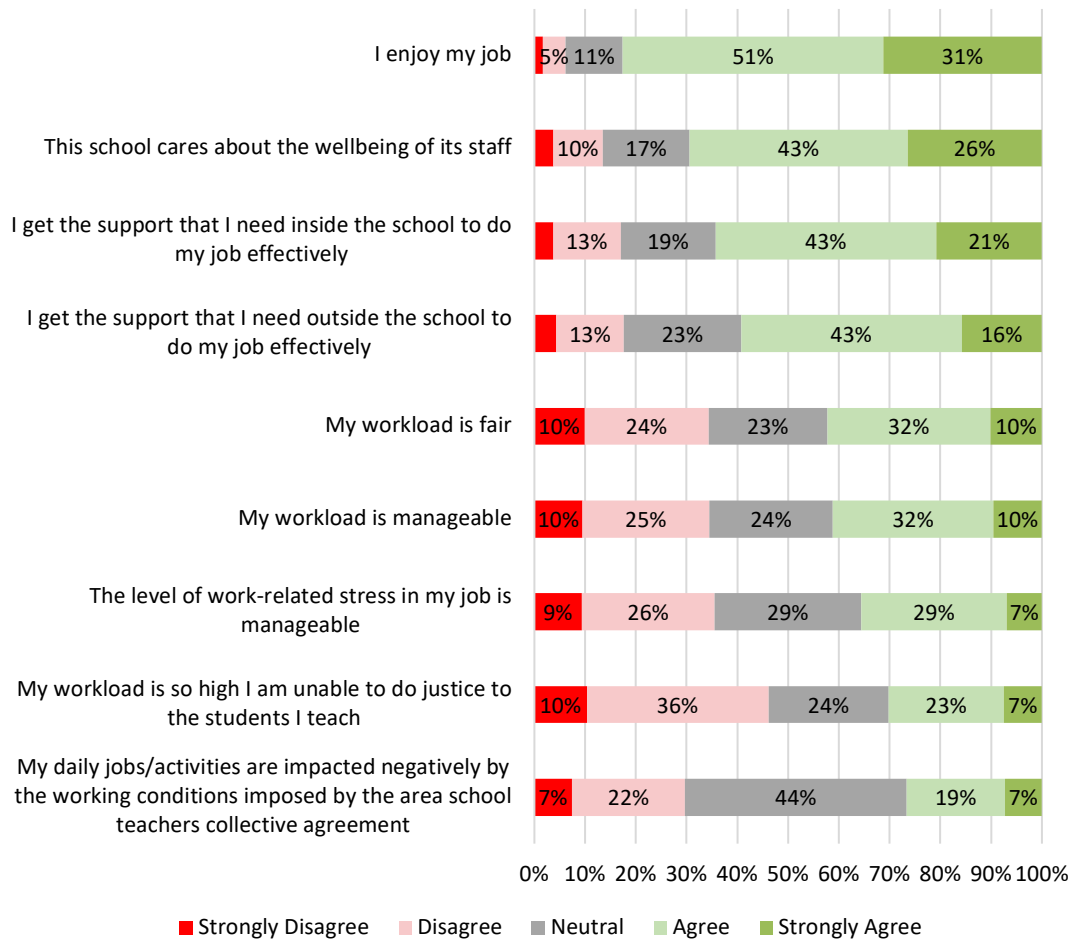


FIGURE 13 Teachers' views of their workload and morale (n = 483)

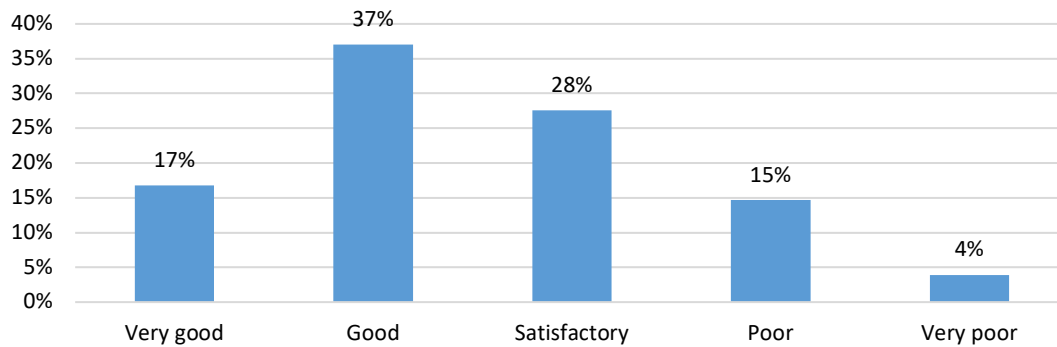


2. Survey findings

Statistically significant associations were found between isolation index and four items below. Teachers in schools with higher isolation index were more likely to agree with these statements.

1. "This school cares about the wellbeing of its staff".
2. "My workload is fair".
3. "My workload is manageable".
4. "The level of work-related stress in my job is manageable".

FIGURE 14 Teachers' views of their morale as an area school teacher ($n = 483$)



Statistically significant association was found between isolation index and teachers' morale. Teachers in schools with higher isolation index were more likely to have higher level of morale.

FIGURE 15 Whether teachers have extra responsibilities above and beyond their daily teaching responsibilities (e.g., sport coaching, cultural activities, extracurricular involvement) ($n = 484$)

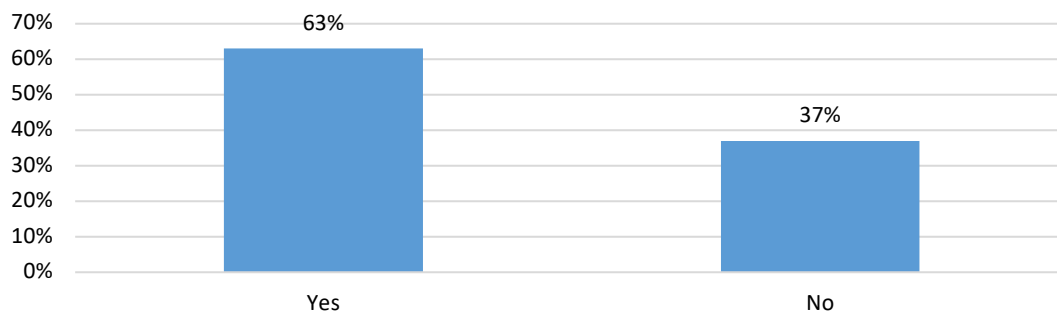
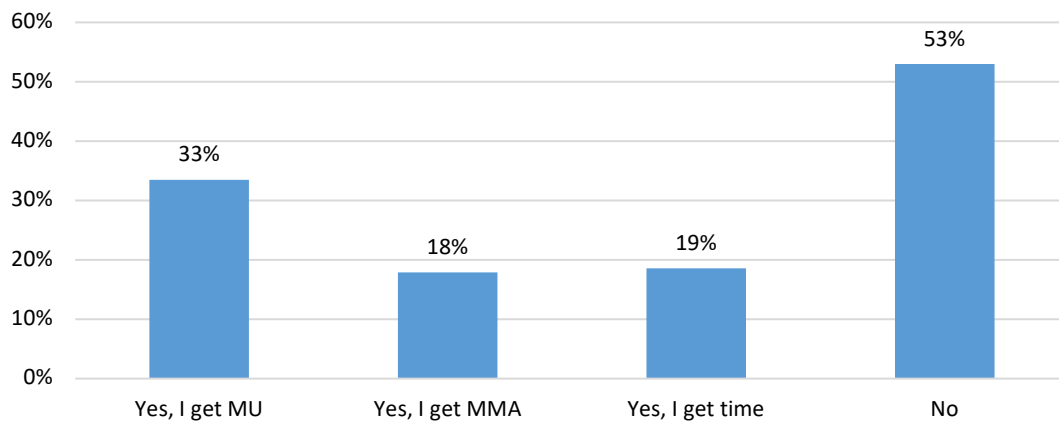
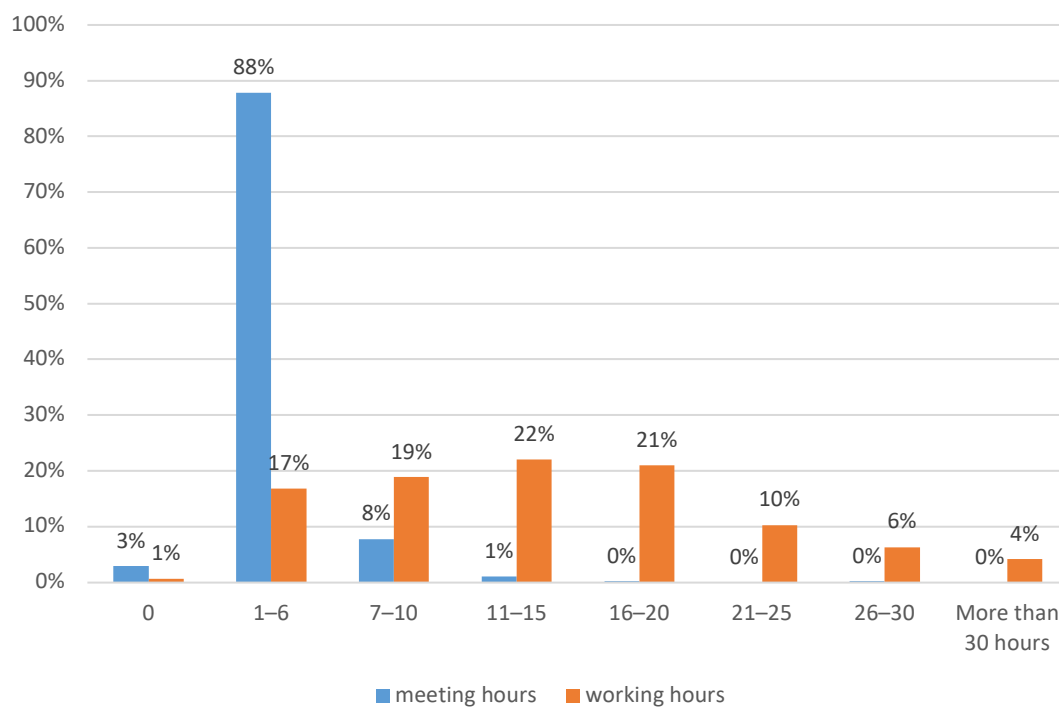


FIGURE 16 Whether teachers get allowances for the extra responsibilities above and beyond their daily teaching responsibilities (n = 302)



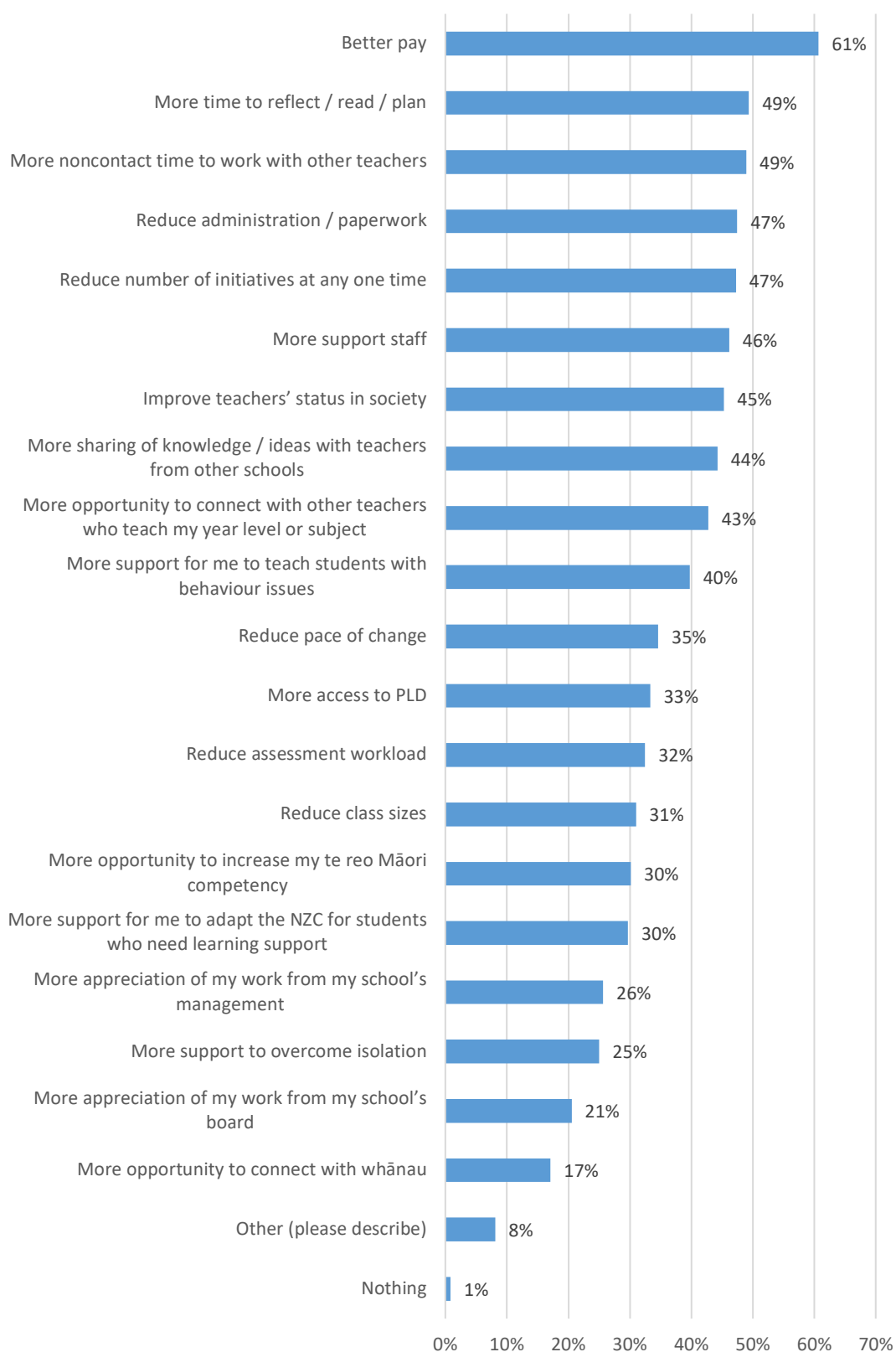
Note: Teachers could give multiple responses. This question was only asked for teachers who have extra responsibilities above and beyond their daily teaching responsibilities.

FIGURE 17 Hours a week that teachers spend on their work or required meetings outside the times when students are required to be on site (n = 477)



2. Survey findings

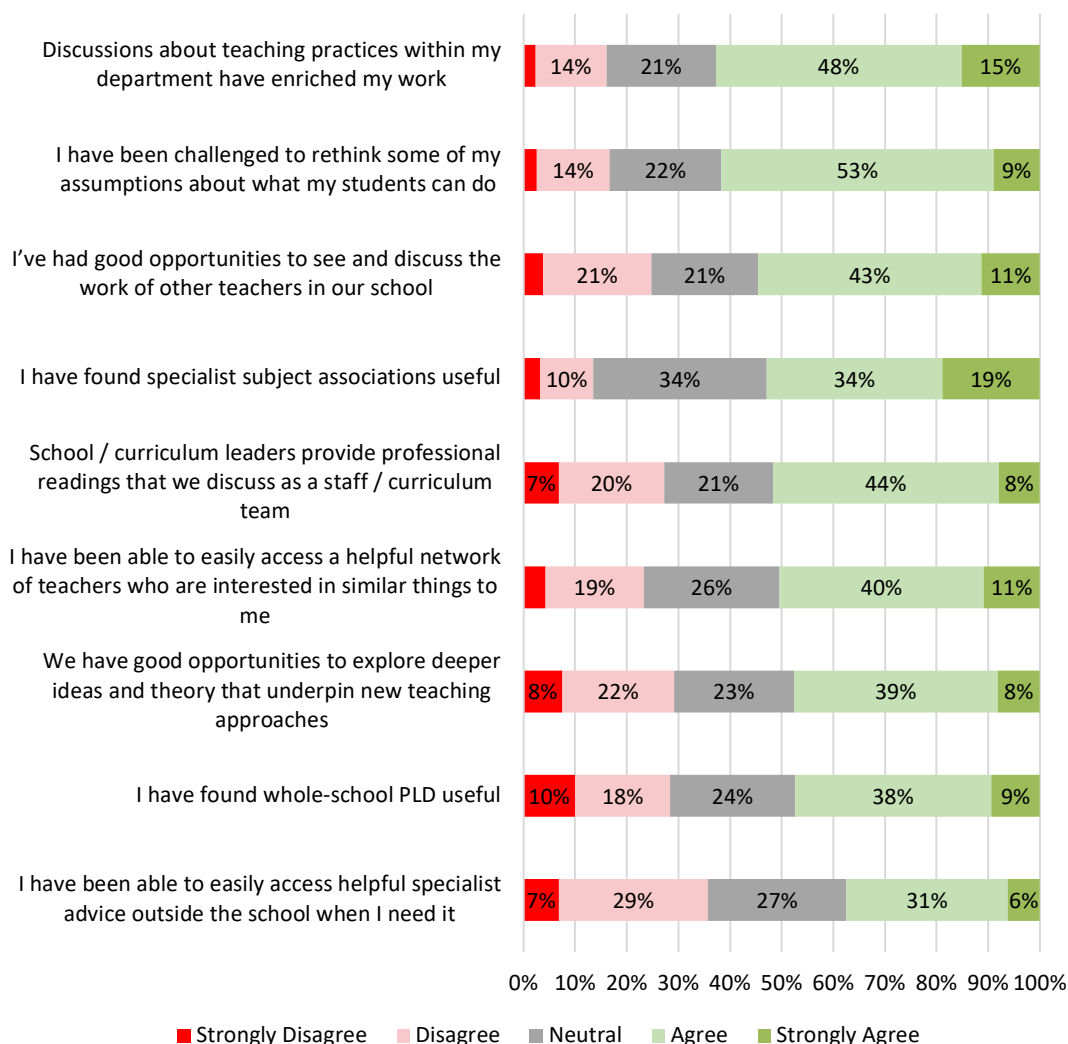
FIGURE 18 The main things that teachers would change about their work as a teacher in an area school (n = 468)



Note: Teachers could give multiple responses.

Professional learning and development (PLD)

FIGURE 19 Teachers' views about the experience of professional learning and development (PLD) over the past 3 years (n = 469)



Statistically significant associations were found between isolation index and two items below. Teachers in schools with higher isolation index were more likely to agree with these two statements.

1. "I've had good opportunities to see and discuss the work of other teachers in our school".
2. "We have good opportunities to explore deeper ideas and theory that underpin new teaching approaches".

Statistically significant associations were found between year levels and six items below. Specifically, primary school teachers were more likely to agree with the following four items.

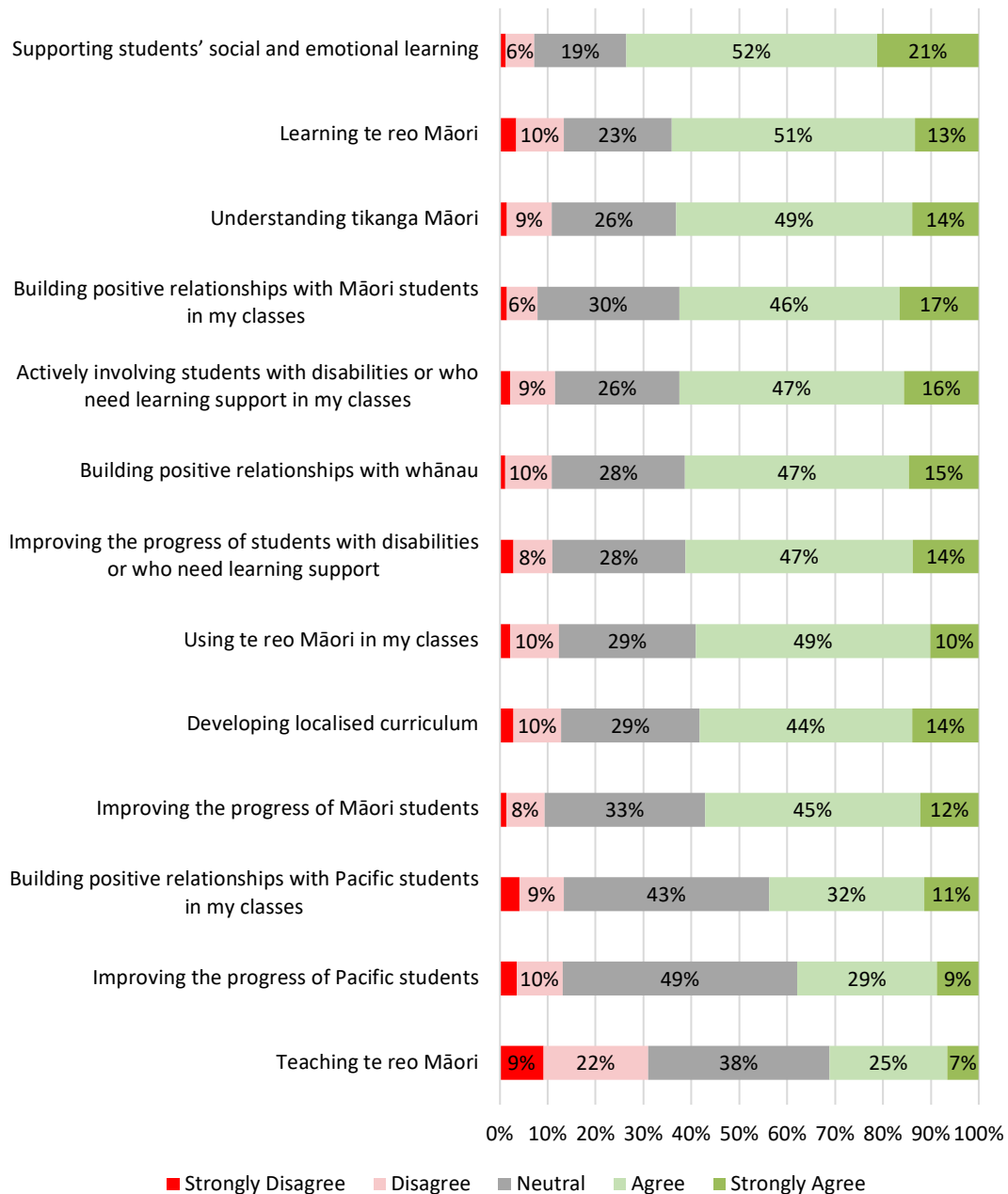
1. "Discussions about teaching practices within my department have enriched my work".
2. "We have good opportunities to explore deeper ideas and theory that underpin new teaching approaches".
3. "I have been challenged to rethink some of my assumptions about what my students can do".
4. "I have found whole-school PLD useful".

2. Survey findings

However, primary school teachers were less likely to agree with the other two items.

1. "I have been able to easily access a helpful network of teachers who are interested in similar things to me".
2. "I have found specialist subject associations useful".

FIGURE 20 Teachers' views about the areas in which they received practical help provided by their professional learning in the last 3 years (n = 465)



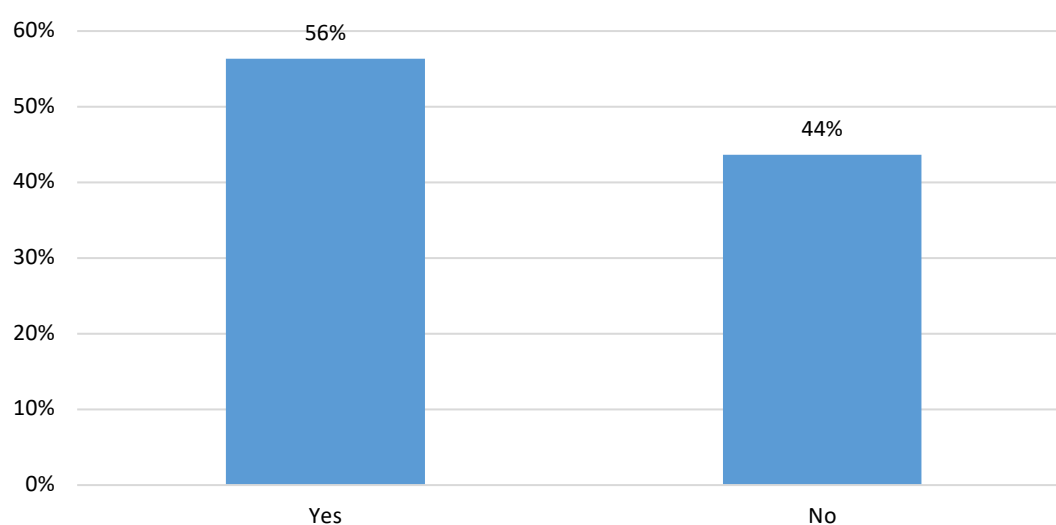
Statistically significant associations were found between isolation index and two items below. Teachers in schools with higher isolation index were more likely to agree that they received practical help in the last 3 years provided by their professional learning in these two areas:

1. Improving the progress of Māori students.
2. Developing localised curriculum.

Statistically significant associations were found between year levels and two items below. Primary school teachers were more likely to agree that they received practical help in the last 3 years provided by professional learning in these two areas:

1. Using te reo Māori in my classes.
2. Teaching te reo Māori.

FIGURE 21 Whether the school has a Māori language plan for teaching and learning te reo Māori (n = 440)



Appendix

Teacher demographics and school characteristics

TABLE A1 Teachers' curriculum learning areas (*n* = 575)

Curriculum learning area(s)	n	%
Across the curriculum	170	30
Mathematics	164	29
English	158	27
Science	146	25
Social science	142	25
The Arts	125	22
Physical education / health	115	20
Technology	111	19
Other (please describe)	107	19
Te reo Māori	68	12
Languages	26	5
Gateway	14	2
None	11	2

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% as some teachers teach more than one curriculum learning area.

TABLE A2 Student year level(s) taught (*n* = 571)

Year level(s) taught	n	%
Year 1	75	13
Year 2	80	14
Year 3	70	12
Year 4	69	12
Year 5	80	14
Year 6	82	14
Year 7	174	30
Year 8	189	33
Year 9	261	46
Year 10	260	46
Year 11	264	46
Year 12	268	47
Year 13	238	42
Year 14	8	1
Year 15	3	1
Other (please describe)	36	6

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% as many teachers teach several year levels.

TABLE A3 Years of teaching experience (*n* = 466)

Years of teaching experience	n	%
I'm in my first year	12	3
I'm in my second year	20	4
3–5 years	40	9
6–10 years	65	14
11–15 years	69	15
16–25 years	137	29
26–40 years	100	21
More than 40 years	23	5

TABLE A4 Teachers' role (n = 569)

Role	n	%
Class / subject teacher	484	85
Holder of management unit(s)	243	43
Form teacher / tutor teacher / academic mentor	203	36
HoD / HOLA / faculty leader / teacher in charge	159	28
Other (please list)	121	21
Holder of MMA	103	18
Dean	51	9
Specialist classroom teacher	51	9
Deputy Principal	43	8
Associate teacher for student teachers on practicum	22	4
Kāhui Ako within-school teacher	21	4
SENCO	20	4
Staff rep on the school board	20	4
Assistant Principal	18	3
Careers advisor / transition teacher	16	3
Guidance / counsellor	12	2
Kāhui Ako across-school teacher	8	1
Learning Support Coordinator (within-school)	5	1
Full immersion / Rumaki	4	1
Learning Support Coordinator (across-schools)	1	0

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% due to multiple selection.

TABLE A5 Teachers' gender (*n* = 464)

Gender	n	%
Female	320	69
Male	141	30
Another gender	3	1

TABLE A6 Teachers' ethnicity (*n* = 465)

Ethnicity	n	%
NZ European/Pākehā	364	78
Māori	55	12
Samoan	6	1
Tongan	2	0
Cook Island Māori	0	0
Niuean	1	0
Chinese	4	1
Indian	16	3
Other (please describe)	64	14

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% due to multiple selection.

TABLE A7 Breakdown of teacher respondents by area (urban/rural) (*n* = 652)

Area (urban/rural)	n	%
Main Urban Area	257	39
Minor Urban Area	113	17
Rural Area	237	36
Secondary Urban Area	45	7

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

TABLE A8 Breakdown of teacher respondents by region (*n* = 652)

Regional Council	n	%
Auckland Region	74	11
Wellington Region	30	5
Canterbury Region	213	33
Waikato Region	68	10
Bay of Plenty Region	27	4
Manawatu-Wanganui Region	22	3
Northland Region	66	10
Otago Region	36	6
Hawke's Bay Region	0	0
Taranaki region	5	1
Southland region	10	2
Nelson region	0	0
Gisborne Region	26	4
Marlborough Region	13	2
Tasman Region	41	6
West Coast Region	21	3


TABLE A9 Breakdown of teacher respondents by school's co-ed status (*n* = 652)

Co-ed status	n	%
co-educational	637	98
Single Sex (Girls School)	1	0
Single Sex (Boys School)	0	0
Primary Co-ed; Secondary Girls	14	2




Rangahau Mātauranga o Aotearoa |
New Zealand Council for Educational Research

 www.nzcer.org.nz

 facebook.com/nzcer

 @NZCER

 www.linkedin.com/company/new-zealand-council-for-educational-research