

Research Summary for Project Participants

“What main areas of concern do parents identify in raising their 12-18 year olds?”

This research project ran over four months from December 2005 to March 2006 and using both written and online surveys canvassed parents about challenges they faced in raising adolescents and concerns they had for their wellbeing. Of the hundred and fifty survey responses received, project time restraints allowed only the use of the first one hundred entries meeting research criteria. A summary of results is below.

This project has yielded some rich and interesting data. Thanks to all parents who participated in this survey over the busy December and January holiday period. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me.

- Helen Mann/Student

(School of Professional Development, Christchurch College of Education)

1. Gender of Participant	
18% fathers	
82% mothers/female caregivers	
2. Age of Participant	
20-30 years	- 1%
30-40 years	- 32%
40-50 years	- 60%
50-60 years	- 6%
60-70 years	- 1%
3. Ethnicity of Participant	
Māori	- 13%
New Zealand European	- 76%
Pasifika	- 3%
Other	- 8%
4. Household type	
Single parent	- 30%
Shared custody/access	- 11%
Two parent	- 61%
Whānau/extended family	- 5%
Defacto	- 2%
No data supplied	- 1%
5. Relationship to Teenager	
Parent	- 93%
Step-parent	- 2%
Adoptive parent	- 3%
Foster parent	- 0%
Grandparent	- 0%
Other	- 1%
No data given	- 1%
6. Where teenager is living	
At home	- 89%
Boarding	- 1%
Flatting	- 4%
With whānau/extended family	- 2%
Other	- 4%
7. Age of Teenager	
12 years	- 5%
13 years	- 10%
14 years	- 16%
15 years	- 10%
16 years	- 26%
17 years	- 15%
18 years	- 17%
No data given	- 1%

8. Gender of Teenager	
Girls	- 44%
Boys	- 56%
9. Occupation of Teenager	
School (Year 8-13)	- 66%
Alternative education	- 1%
Tertiary training	- 11%
Full time work	- 9%
School & work both p/time	- 6%
Home schooled	- 1%
Currently stood down	- 1%
Other	- 5%
8. Parents' Rating of Ease/Difficulty in Raising Teenager	
Easy	- 9%
OK but tough at times	- 68%
Tough most of the time	- 21%
Extremely difficult	- 2%
9. “What are the three issues you find most difficult in raising your teenager?” (Total 295 comments)	
Parents recorded challenges in eight areas. These are ranked below in order of the most to the least concern:	
(i) Home, including issues such as:	
- parent-teen communication	
- monitoring & managing behaviour	
- training, guiding and teaching	
- time and emotional pressures for parent	
- expectations, boundaries & limits	
- teenage ‘attitude’	
- financial pressures/costs of raising teens	
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(ii) Physical and emotional health including issues such as:	
- lack of motivation at home/school/in general	
- mood swings	
- anger and frustration	
- mental illness, especially depression/anxiety	
- sleeping habits	
Developmental issues such as ego-centrism, self-absorption and the need for instant gratification were also noted. 31% mentioned long term health issues. These ranged from hayfever and asthma to depression, self-harming and suicidal thoughts.	

- (iii) Relationships with peers
- (iv) School, learning and future
- (v) Alcohol and other drug use
(18% of parents said this was challenging, with 11% specifying alcohol alone)
- (vi) Culture, ethnicity & neighbourhood
- (vii) Risk-taking, injury and violence
- (viii) Spirituality

10. “What are the three things you believe parents in general find most challenging about raising teenagers in today’s world?” *(Total of 289 comments)*

Issues raised fell into nine broad categories, ranked below from the greatest number of responses to the least:

- (i) Managing the adolescent transition and the parent-teen relationship
- (ii) Sex, drugs & other ‘at-risk’ behaviour such as alcohol & driving
- (iii) Culture, media & technology
- (iv) Behaviour, limits & safety
- (v) Training, guiding & supporting
- (vi) Education, employment, choices and motivation
- (vii) Money and finances
- (viii) Physical and emotional health

Questions 13-20 focussed on parental concerns in six areas of teenage wellbeing. Responses are ranked below under the six headings from the areas of greatest concern to the least:

13. Physical / Taha tinana

- (i) Diet (69%)
- (ii) Not enough exercise (61%)
- (iii) Sleep habits (56%)
- (iv) Sexual behaviour (52%)
- (v) Other ‘at-risk’ behaviour (36%)
- (vi) Other drug & substance use (35%)
- (vii) Long-term health problems (31%)

Re ‘at-risk’ behaviour, driving/fast cars was of most concern. Other concerns were alcohol & other drugs, sex, STI’s, pregnancy and future fertility. Physical wellbeing was mother’s highest area of concern for teenage wellbeing.

14. Emotional /Taha hinegaro

- (i) Mood swings (73%)
- (ii) Anxiety or stress (66%)
- (iii) Lack of motivation (65%)
- (iv) ‘Shut down’/withdrawal (37%)
- (v) Obsession with appearance (37%)
- (vi) Mental illness (15%)
- (vii) Self-neglect (9%)
- (viii) Other concerns (8%)

Re mental illness or ‘other’ concerns, depression/anxiety were most common (15%)

10. Social – within family/oranga-a-whānau

- (i) Not doing chores (73%)
- (ii) Lack of self-responsibility (65%)
- (iii) Aggression toward siblings (47%)
- (iv) Withdrawal from family (44%)
- (v) Contempt for others (40%)
- (vi) Aggression toward parents/caregivers (37%)
- (vii) Dishonesty (35%)
- (viii) Victim of sexual, physical or psychological abuse (12%)

Wellbeing within the family was the area of most concern to fathers.

Social – outside family/oranga-a-iwi

- (i) Negative influence of friends (57%)
- (ii) Too much time on internet, TV or computer (56%)
- (iii) Impulsive behaviour (45%)
- (iv) Lack of hobbies & interests (43%)
- (v) Being bullied (17%)
- (vi) Victim of sexual, physical or psychological abuse (13%)
- (vii) Lack of connection with adults outside the family (13%)
- (viii) ‘Other’ issues (3%).
(These included concerns regarding mobile phones, texting and fast cars.)

11. Spiritual – Taha wairua

- (i) Lack of interest or commitment to family’s values or traditions (44%)
- (ii) Lack of school or community support for family’s values or traditions (34%)
- (iii) Teenager’s lack of belief in a higher power to anchor, guide & support (17%)

12. Education & Learning/matauanga-whakāro

- (i) Lack of motivation (66%)
- (ii) Uncertainty re future direction or career (56%)
- (iii) Relationship difficulties with teachers (31%)
- (iv) Non-attendance at classes (24%)
- (v) Learning difficulties (21%)
- (vi) Too much time spent earning money outside of school (11%)

With respect to “learning difficulties”, dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD and ‘being easily distracted’ were the most common. Other concerns were the need for better provision for less academic students at school & re employment options.