

Covid-19

Learning in Lockdown

June 2020



Ko te Tamaiti te Pūtake o te Kaupapa
The Child – the Heart of the Matter

www.ero.govt.nz

Covid-19: Learning in Lockdown

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Contents

Background	2
Methodology	3
Findings	4
Section 1: Student and teacher wellbeing	4
Section 2: Ability to learn from home	9
Section 3: Engagement in learning.....	17
Discussion	20
Next Steps	21
Appendix 1: Student survey questions	22
Agree-Disagree Questions.....	22
Yes-No Questions.....	22
Multi-Choice Questions	23
Appendix 2: Teacher survey questions	24
Agree-Disagree Questions.....	24
Multi-Choice Questions	24
Open-Response Questions	25
Yes-No Questions.....	25



Background

At 11:59pm on Wednesday 25 March 2020 all schools in New Zealand had to close their doors and move teaching and learning from the classrooms to the bedrooms, dining room tables, and living rooms across the country. New Zealand entered Alert Level 4 (lockdown) in response to community transmission of the Covid-19 virus. All non-essential personal movement was restricted, and all schools and other educational facilities were closed. Term 2 began on 15 April, with schools still physically closed, but open for distance learning. New Zealand moved to Alert Level 3 at 11:59pm on Monday 27 April, which eased some restrictions, and allowed schools to reopen for children of essential workers. However, the majority of students were still learning at home during Level 3. Teaching and learning from home continued until 18 May, when schools fully reopened as the country moved into Alert Level 2.

Students and teachers spent five weeks, or half a school term, learning and teaching from home. This situation created unique challenges for students, whānau, teachers and school leaders across the country. The Ministry of Education supported home learning by:

- providing online resources across three websites
- working with schools to ensure that all students had internet access or printed learning resources where this was not possible
- broadcasting two television channels – Home Learning TV | Papa Kāinga TV, in English; and Mauri Reo Mauri Ora in te reo Māori.

The lockdown has been an unprecedented shift, impacting on both student and teacher wellbeing and the continuity of learning. Furthermore, at this stage we cannot rule out a future return to learning and teaching from home. Getting a sense of what worked well, and what further support may be needed, will help to address any ongoing impact of the disruption to learning and prepare for any future disruption.

ERO is undertaking a programme of work to learn the lessons from the lockdown and to support the education system, schools and early childhood centres to respond to the disruption to education caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. As a first stage of this work, ERO surveyed a sample of students and teachers in primary and secondary schools. This report sets out what we found about their wellbeing and experiences of learning and teaching during the lockdown.¹

¹ Defined as Alert Levels 3 and 4 where the expectation was that people would spend most of their time at home.

Methodology

ERO recruited a nationally representative sample of 67 primary and secondary schools. Teachers and students from these schools were invited to answer a short survey online about their wellbeing and experience of learning and teaching during the lockdown. The sample was designed to ensure a mix of schools from different school sizes and decile groups. Data was collected for three weeks from 23 April to 13 May, covering the tail end of Alert Level 4 and the beginning of Alert Level 3, when most students were learning from home. We received 10,106 responses to the student survey and 694 responses to the teacher survey.

A full list of the survey questions we asked can be found in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 at the end of this report. ERO accessed aggregated survey results, without being able to identify individual schools' responses. Schools were given access to their own survey data to help with their own evaluation and planning. The results from the student and teacher surveys were grouped together to keep individual responses confidential.



Findings

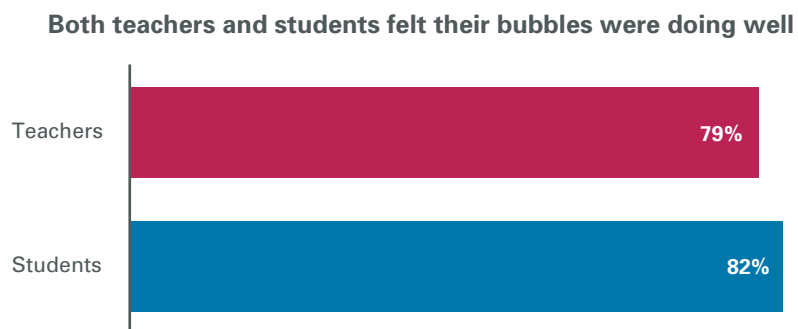
Section 1: Student and teacher wellbeing

In general, both teachers and students reported high levels of wellbeing, and that they and their bubble were safe and well during the lockdown.

Their bubbles²

Eighty-four percent of students agreed or strongly agreed that they felt safe from Covid-19 while learning at home, and 82 percent of students agreed or strongly agreed that their bubble was doing well. Similarly, 79 percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that their bubble was doing well, and 81 percent agreed or strongly agreed that they were confident in being able to support the people in their lives.

Figure 1: Percentage of teachers and students who agreed or strongly agreed that their bubble was doing well



Secondary students were slightly less likely than primary students to agree or strongly agree that their bubble was doing well. For primary students, 86 percent agreed or strongly agreed that their bubble was doing well, compared to 79 percent of secondary students. There was no significant difference among male and female students and students who identified as Māori, Pacific or New Zealand European.

² Under Alert Level 4 a bubble included those in a household who were isolating together whenever a person was not at work, grocery shopping or exercising. At Alert Level 3 bubbles could be expanded to reconnect with close family and whānau, or bring in caregivers, or support isolated people.

Only 2 percent of students disagreed or strongly disagreed that their bubble was doing well during the lockdown. For these students and their whānau it was a difficult time:

“Not being able to do anything fun, I’m stuck at home with nothing to do and I don’t feel like I’m learning as well as I would if I was at school. Also, it’s hard to even get enough food for our family.”

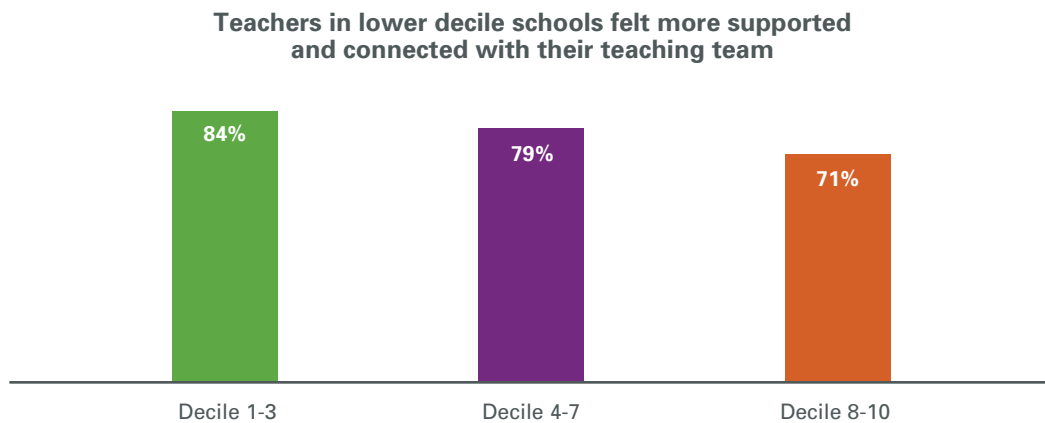
Intermediate student

Staying connected

Teachers reported good levels of support from their school leaders and colleagues. Seventy-seven percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they felt supported and connected to their teaching team and 75 percent felt their school had been helpful in resolving any challenges. Less than 2 percent of teachers in the survey disagreed or strongly disagreed with these statements.

The gender, age and experience of a teacher did not make any difference to their feeling of being supported and connected with their teaching team. However, teachers in decile 1-3 schools were more likely to agree or strongly agree that they were supported and connected to their teaching team, compared to teachers in decile 8-10 schools.

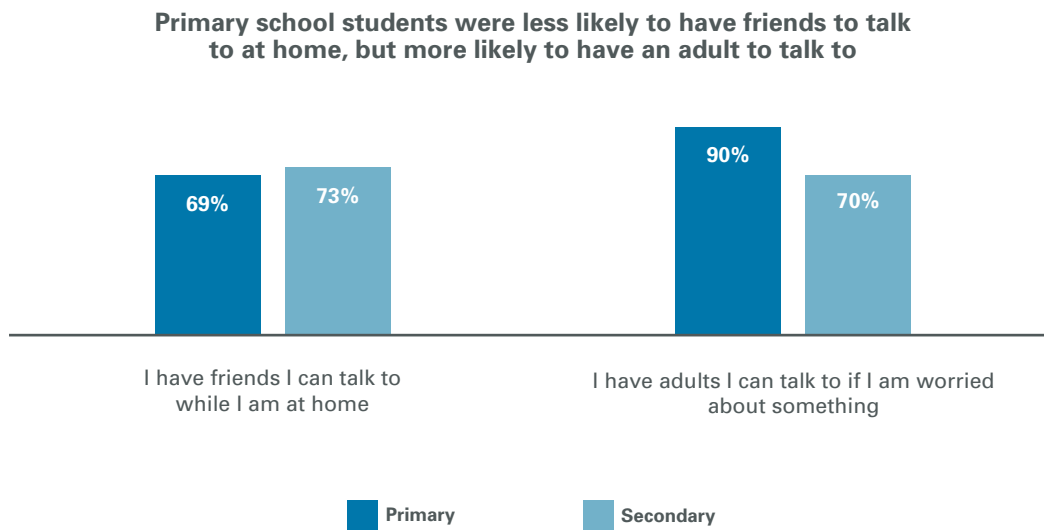
Figure 2: Percentage of teachers who agreed or strongly agreed that they felt supported and connected with their teaching team



Students were also positive about being supported and keeping in contact with friends during the lockdown. Eighty percent of students agreed or strongly agreed that they had adults they could talk to if they were worried about something. Keeping connected with friends presented a bit more of a challenge, but 71 percent of students agreed or strongly agreed that they had friends they were able to talk to while at home.

Secondary school students were less likely to agree that they had an adult they could talk to if they were worried during the lockdown. Just under three-quarters (70 percent) of secondary students agreed or strongly agreed that they had an adult they could talk to if they were worried about something, compared to 90 percent of primary students. Around 70 percent of primary and secondary students said they had friends they could talk to during the lockdown.

Figure 3: Percentage of primary and secondary students who agreed or strongly agreed that they had friends or adults to talk to while at home

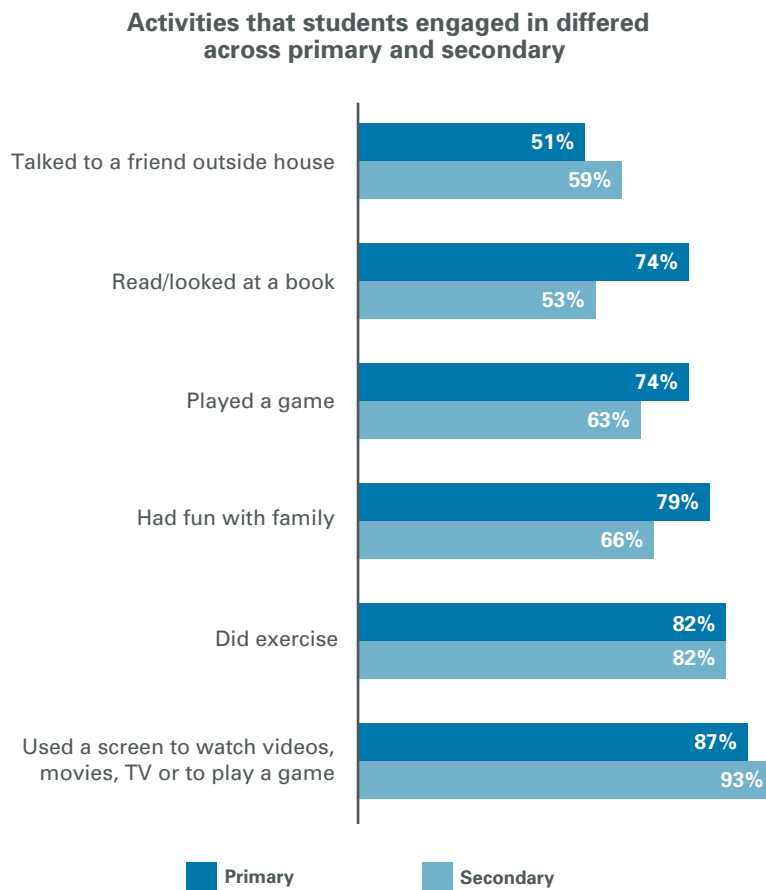


The survey found that students, from different ethnicities and from different school deciles, had similar levels of access to friends and adults to talk to during the lockdown.

Activity

Students reported that they were able to take part in a range of activities to help support their wellbeing during the lockdown. Eighty-two percent of students reported having done some physical exercise in the last week, just over 70 percent reported having fun with their family, and over half of students said they had read a book or played a board game or something similar. The range of student activities were very similar across students of different genders, ethnicities and school decile. Secondary students were more likely to have talked to a friend outside their bubble and primary school students spent more time reading, playing games and having fun with their family. Eighty-two percent of primary and secondary students managed to do some exercise during the lockdown.

Figure 4: Percentage of students who engaged in different activities during the lockdown

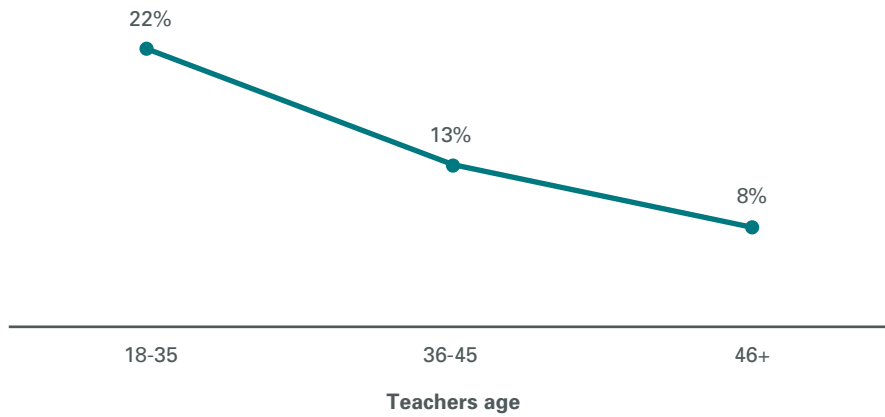


Mental health

While these wellbeing results are encouraging overall, some teachers were not doing as well. Thirteen percent of teachers reported that their own mental health was their biggest concern during the lockdown, which increased to 22 percent for those aged 35 years or younger.

Figure 5: Percentage of teachers who said their mental wellbeing was their biggest concern during the lockdown

Teachers' concern for their own mental wellbeing decreased with age



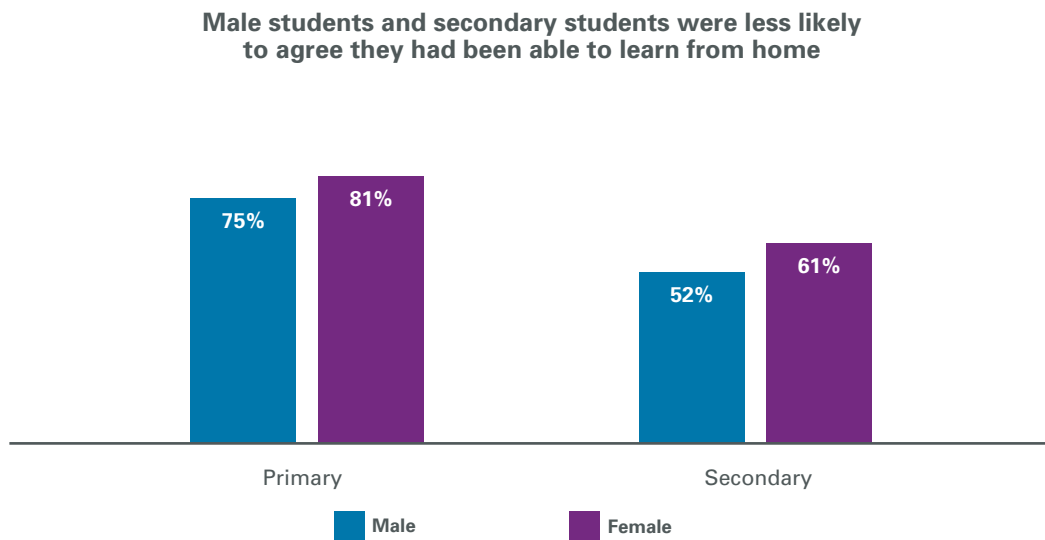
Section 2: Ability to learn from home

Not all students were able to learn from home. Secondary school students, boys and those without access to devices faced challenges. Teachers also faced challenges teaching remotely.

Overall

Just over half of secondary students (58 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that they had been able to learn from home, compared to 78 percent of primary students. Male primary and secondary students were less likely to agree or strongly agree that they were able to learn from home, compared to female primary and secondary students.

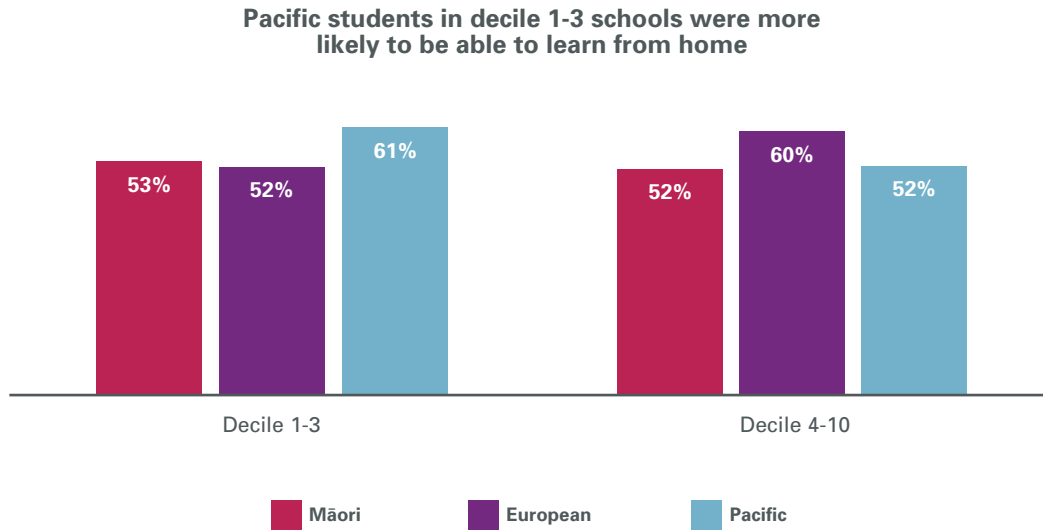
Figure 6: Percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed that they were able to learn from home



Pacific secondary students in decile 1-3 schools were more positive about being able to learn from home, compared to Māori and New Zealand European secondary students in decile 1-3 schools. Sixty-one percent of Pacific secondary students in decile 1-3 schools agreed or strongly agreed that they were able to work from home during the lockdown, compared to 52 percent of New Zealand European secondary students and 53 percent of Māori secondary students.

The experience of secondary Māori and Pacific students was less positive in decile 4-10 schools. Fifty-two percent of Pacific and Māori secondary students in decile 4-10 schools agreed or strongly agreed they were able to learn from home, compared with 60 percent of New Zealand European students.

Figure 7: Percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed that they were able to work from home



Secondary Pacific students in decile 1-3 schools may have found it easier to study from home because they were able to get support with their learning from people in their household. Sixty-nine percent of Pacific secondary students in decile 1-3 schools agreed or strongly agreed that they had someone in their household who could help them with their learning, compared to 49 percent of New Zealand European secondary students and 54 percent of Māori secondary students. Distractions at home were a common reason cited by students about why it was hard to learn from home:

“Having to do school work with my little sister annoying me.”

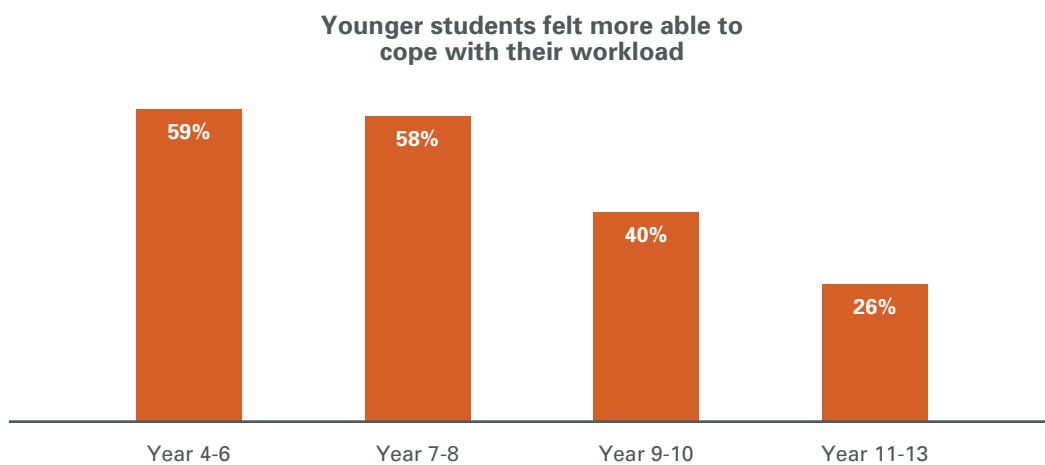
Primary student



Ability to manage workloads

Difficulty learning from home increased with the school year level. Only 26 percent of senior secondary students (Years 11 – 13) agreed or strongly agreed they were coping well with their schoolwork while learning at home. Whereas, nearly a third (28 percent) of senior secondary students (Years 11 – 13) disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were coping well with their schoolwork while learning at home. These students were less likely to report having someone at home who could help with their schoolwork. Students cited workload and timely access to support from teachers as particular challenges.

Figure 8: Percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed they were coping with their schoolwork while working from home



Students from different genders, ethnicities and school deciles reported a similar ability to cope with workloads. Students talked about the challenges of balancing schoolwork with home life and working at home by themselves:

“Huge workload set by teachers.... It is more than what I’d get in school and I find it hard to balance school and life at home. I find it follows me around and it is difficult to switch in ‘relax mode’ when I’m at home. Sometimes is hard to sleep even when I know I have tried my best.”

Senior secondary student

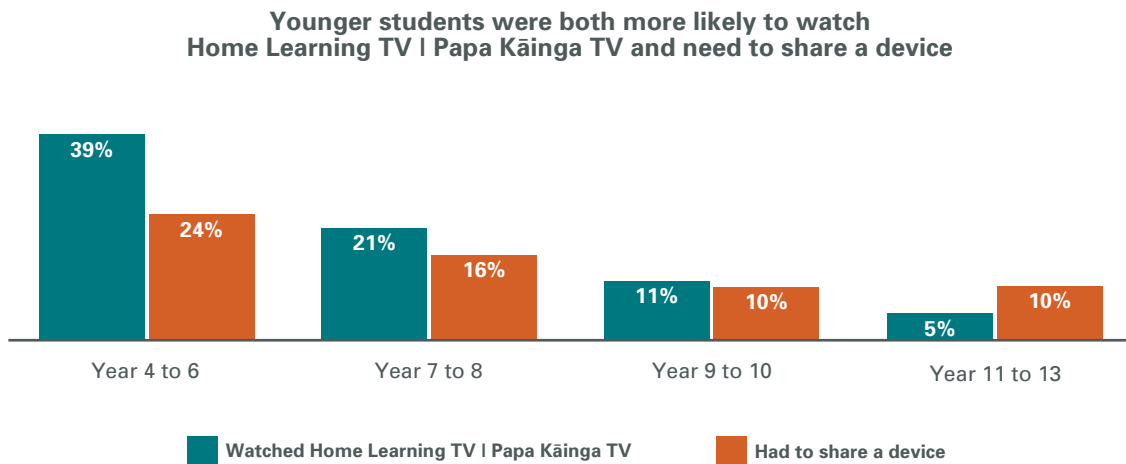
“It’s really stressful because my work is so hard and it’s not like I can constantly ask my teacher 100 questions and I don’t have the same support that I would at school.”

Senior secondary student

Access to devices

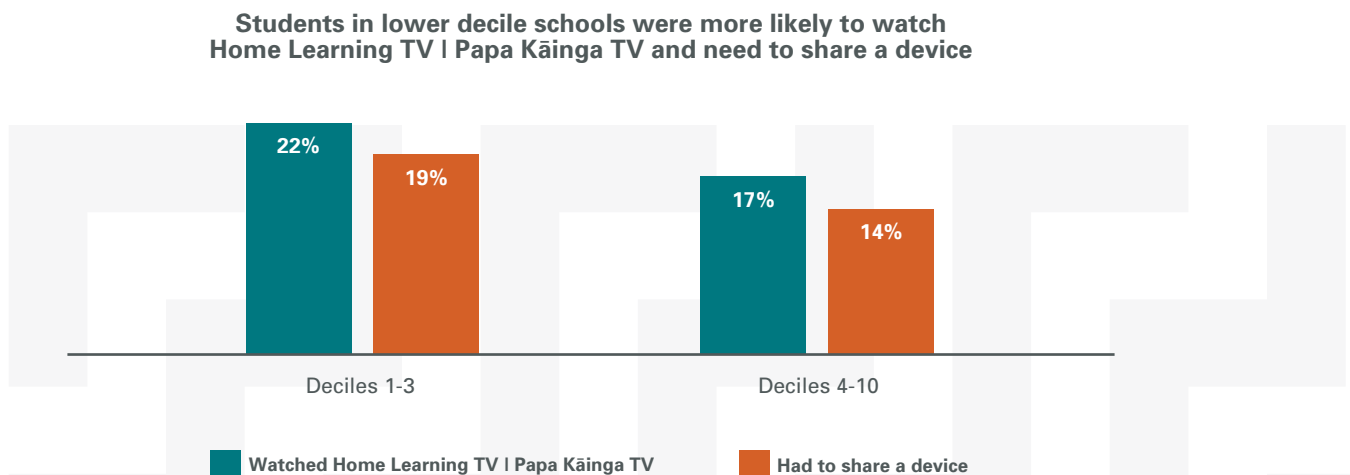
Younger students across all deciles were more likely to have to share a device than older students. They were also more likely to have watched something on Home Learning TV | Papa Kāinga TV, with 30 percent of primary students reporting that they had done so in the last week, compared to 7 percent of secondary students.

Figure 9: Percentage of students by school year who said they had to share a device and who watched Home Learning TV | Papa Kāinga TV during the lockdown



Students in low decile schools were also more likely to have had to share a device and to have watched Home Learning TV | Papa Kāinga TV across all year groups. In decile 1-3 schools, 19 percent of students had to share a device and 22 percent of students watched Home Learning TV | Papa Kāinga TV. In decile 4-10 schools only 14 percent of students had to share a device and 17 percent of students watched Home Learning TV | Papa Kāinga TV. This suggests that Home Learning TV | Papa Kāinga TV provided an additional resource for students to learn from home when they could not access a device. There was not a difference in the rates of male and female students saying they watched Home Learning TV | Papa Kāinga TV.

Figure 10: Percentage of students from different school deciles who said they had watched Home Learning TV | Papa Kāinga TV and had to share a device during the lockdown



It was clear for some students that having to share a device made their learning more difficult:

“Not having access to the Internet and having to share my mum’s laptop”

Intermediate student

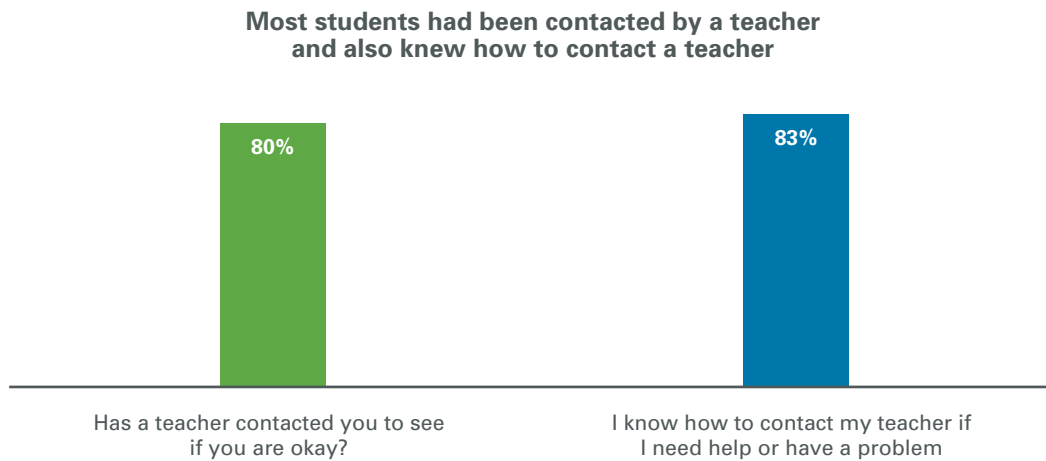
“Having to hand over the computer when I haven’t finished my work”

Intermediate student

Contact with students

Students reported that they could easily get in touch with their teachers and that their teachers had been in touch with them. Eighty-three percent of students agreed or strongly agreed that they knew how to contact their teacher if they needed help or had a problem. Eighty percent of students reported that they had been contacted by a teacher to check on their wellbeing. Female and male students and students from different ethnicities and school deciles were similarly positive about being able to contact their teacher and having a teacher check-in with them.

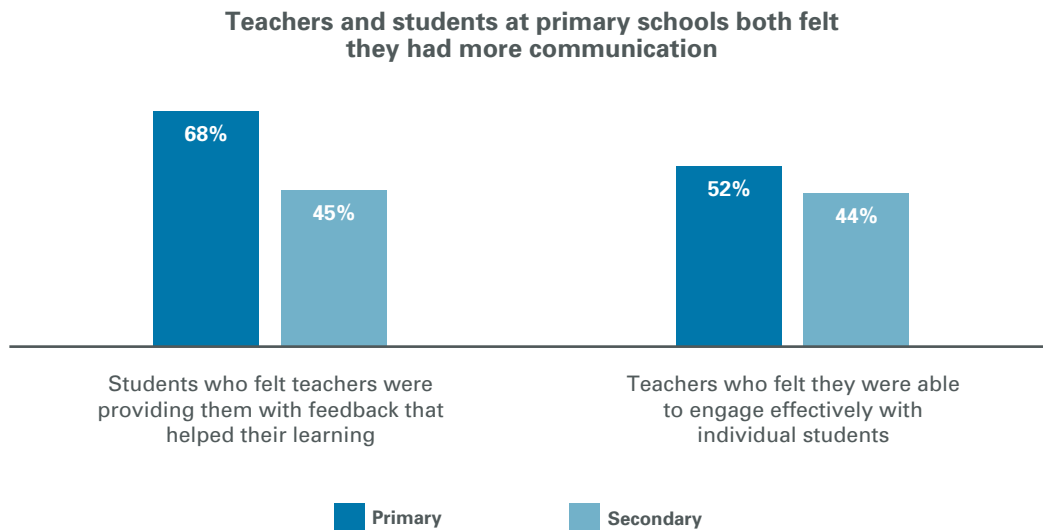
Figure 11: Percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed that they knew how to contact a teacher and the percentage of students who reported having been contacted by a teacher from their school



Feedback to support learning

While around 80 percent of students were positive about being contacted by their teachers to check they were okay, only half of all students agreed or strongly agreed that their teachers were providing feedback that helped their learning. Secondary students were more negative about the helpfulness of the feedback they received, with less than half (45 percent) agreeing or strongly agreeing their teachers provided feedback that helped their learning, compared with primary students (68 percent). This finding was mirrored to some extent in the teacher survey. Secondary teachers were less likely to agree or strongly agree (44 percent) that they were able to engage effectively with individual students, compared to primary teachers (52 percent).

Figure 12: Percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed that teachers were providing helpful feedback and the percentage of teachers who agreed or strongly agreed that they were able to effectively engage with their students



Many students talked about the challenge of not being in the classroom with their teacher:

“I am finding it hard to do my school work without a little guidance from my teacher. I can email, but it was easier to talk face to face with my teacher about what I don’t understand.”

Intermediate student

“Not being able to ask the teacher quick questions as it can take them a little while to reply to their emails (understandably) because they are getting emails from so many other students too.”

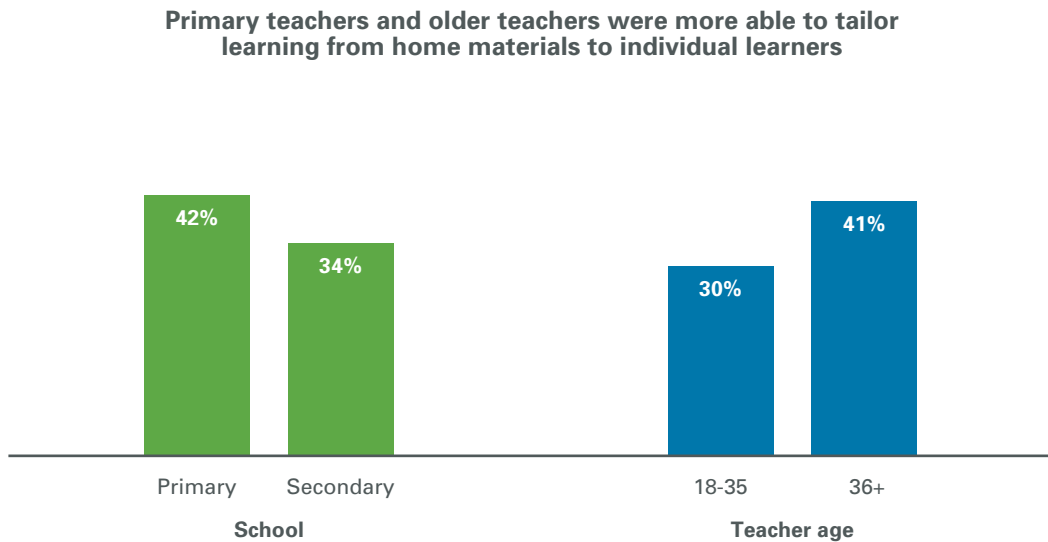
Secondary student

Tailoring for individual students

Just over a half of all teachers (57 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that they had the tools and resources they needed to teach remotely. A further third (31 percent) said they somewhat agreed they had the tools and resources they needed. However, 74 percent of teachers were confident using the tools and resources provided by their school.

Being able to tailor their learning materials for individual learners was more of a challenge. Only a third of teachers (36 percent) agreed or strongly agreed they were able to tailor their learning materials. Younger teachers, and teachers of secondary students were less likely to agree that they had been able to tailor materials for individual students.

Figure 13: Percentage of teachers who agreed or strongly agreed that they were able to tailor learning materials to individual learners



Students talked about the impact of not having learning materials tailored to their individual learning needs:

“I am a little bored and I don’t feel like I am learning anything useful. It is not customised to my level, e.g. Maths is too easy and I am bored because I already know how to do it.”

Primary student

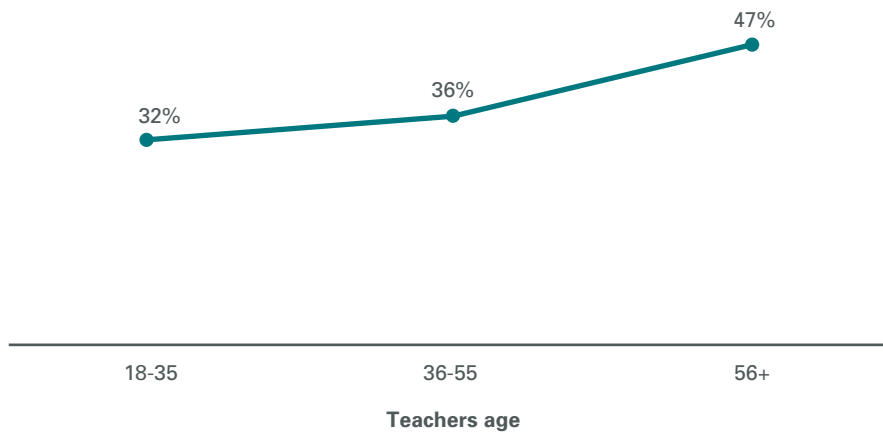


Monitoring student progress

Teachers were not very positive about being able to monitor student progress during the lockdown (37 percent agreeing or strongly agreeing). Older and more experienced teachers reported greater success in monitoring student progress, however, across all teacher age groups more than half of teachers did not agree or strongly agree that they were able to monitor the progress of their students.

Figure 14: Percentage of teachers who agreed or strongly agreed that they had been able to monitor their students' progress while they were learning from home

Older teachers found it easier to monitor students' progress



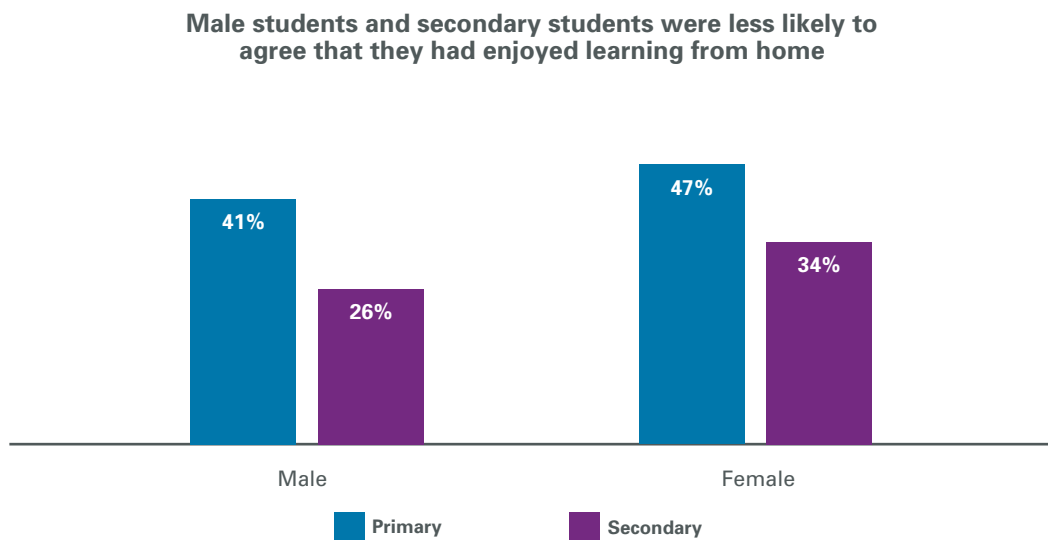
Section 3: Engagement in learning

Engagement in learning was mixed. Primary school students appear to have engaged more than secondary.

Enjoyment of learning from home

Students were more positive about being able to learn from home than they were about enjoying the process. Again, male students and secondary students were less likely to agree that they had enjoyed learning at home.

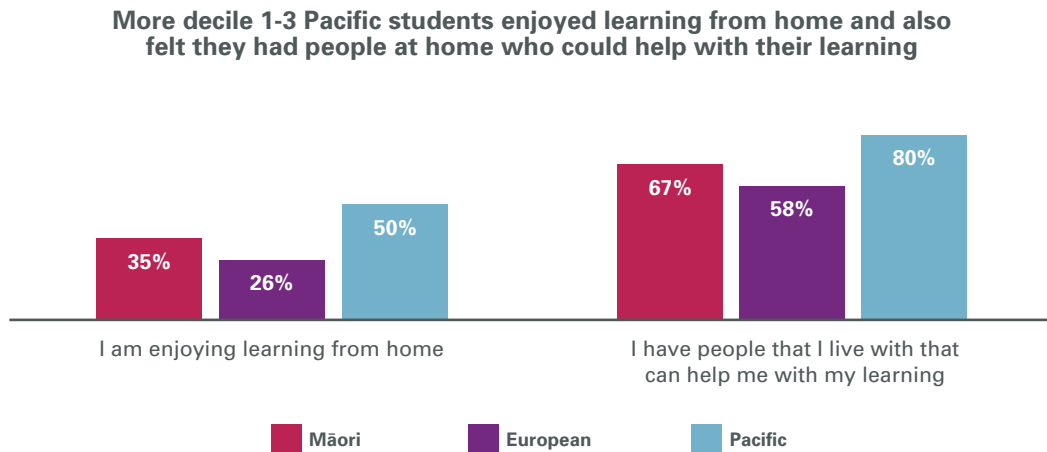
Figure 15: Percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoyed learning from home



Half of all Pacific students who responded in decile 1-3 schools agreed or strongly agreed that they have enjoyed learning from home, compared with Māori (35 percent) and New Zealand European students (26 percent) in decile 1-3 schools. Having someone at home who could help with a student’s learning may help explain why they enjoyed learning from home. Eighty percent of Pacific students in decile 1-3 schools agreed or strongly agreed that they had people at home to help with their learning. Fewer Māori (67 percent) and New Zealand European (58 percent) students in decile 1-3 schools said they had someone at home who could help them.



Figure 16: Percentage of students in decile 1-3 schools who agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoyed learning from home



Students talked about finding it easier to learn at school, compared to studying at home:

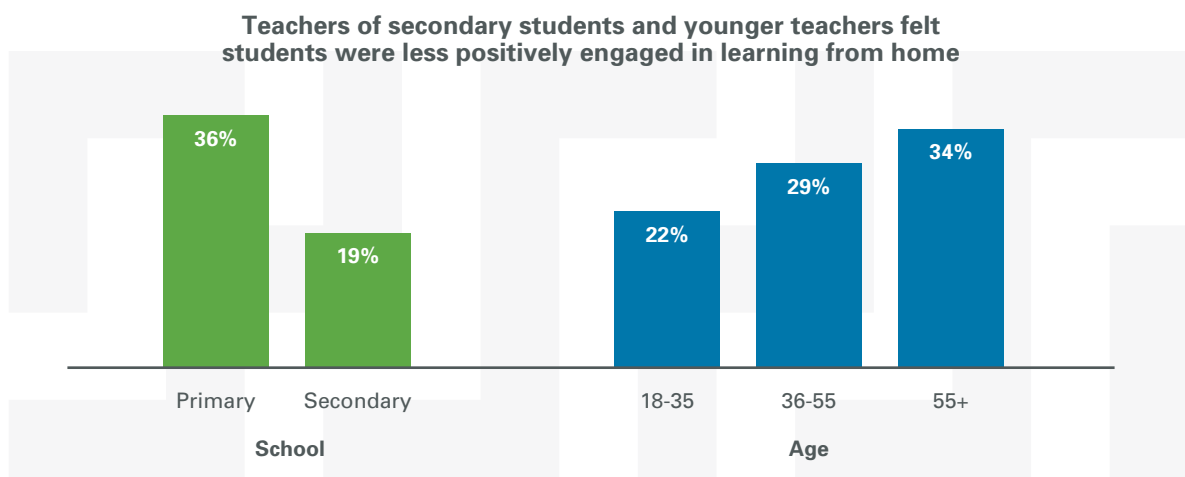
“I find it difficult to find interest or concentrate on the learning subject at home, even if I remove all distractions. I also feel like this is consuming too much time and energy than a normal school-day would.”

Secondary student

Student engagement – teachers’ perspective

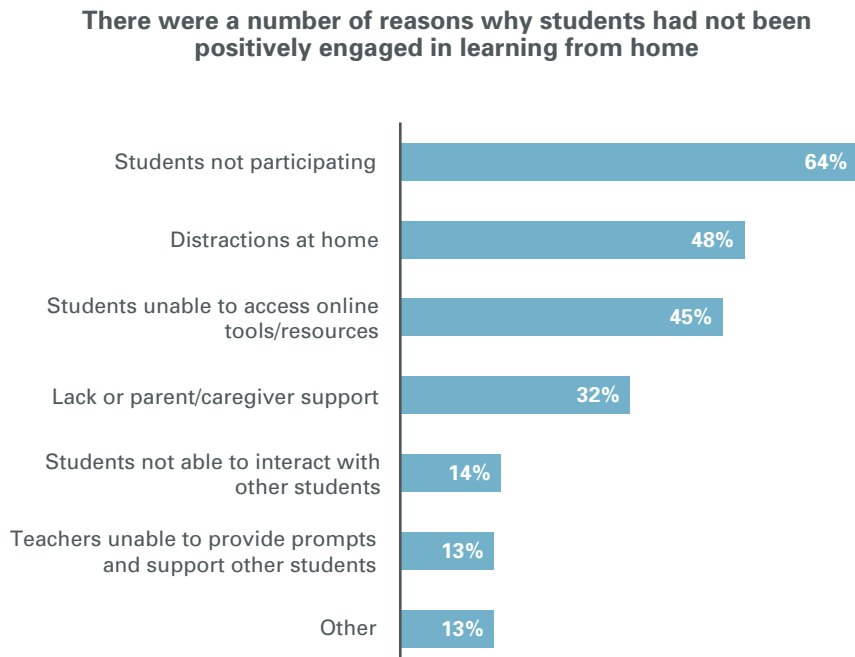
Student engagement was of concern to teachers who responded to the survey. Only 27 percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that their students had been positively engaged in learning from home over the past week. A similar proportion at least somewhat disagreed with this statement, with around half of teachers responding that they ‘somewhat’ agreed. In general, younger teachers with fewer years of experience and teachers of older students were less likely to agree that their students had been positively engaged.

Figure 17: Percentage of teachers who agreed or strongly agreed that their students were positively engaged in learning from home



The main reasons teachers saw for students not engaging were: students not participating (64 percent), distractions at home (48 percent), lack of student access to online tools and resources (45 percent), and a lack of support from parents and caregivers (32 percent).

Figure 18: Percentage of teachers who provided a particular reason for why students had not been positively engaged in learning from home



Keeping a student engaged in one class may have been challenging for secondary students because of competing workload and assessments from other classes:

I have had students contact me with apologies for not doing work as they have siblings to look after and can't get their head around work, others have apologised for not doing my subject because they have been given internals to do by other subjects. Others have tried but 'just don't get it'

Secondary School Teacher



Discussion

This survey captured the experience of a large number of students and teachers in lockdown.

Whilst it does not reflect the experience of every student in New Zealand some common experiences have emerged. The findings indicate a mostly good experience for students and teachers teaching and learning during the lockdown. However, there is a real risk that the lockdown experience may have ongoing impacts because:

- Key groups of students were unable to cope with the workload whilst learning at home
- Many students didn't receive the feedback they need to support their learning during the lockdown
- Many teachers were unable to monitor student progress remotely

- Not all students were able to access the technology they needed – and this may have impacted their learning even with other modes of learning available
- Some students didn't engage with learning – particularly male students and secondary students
- Some teachers' and students' mental health was affected (although we don't know how much was prevalent before or how much was caused by the lockdown experience).

Understanding the impacts and how schools can best support students as they return to normal is important to prevent lasting educational affects. We also need to learn any lessons in order to be ready for any future lockdowns.



Next Steps

These survey findings present an initial glance at the experiences of students and teachers during the lockdown. ERO is undertaking a programme of work to better understand the effect of lockdown on students and teachers, how schools have responded, and how we can be prepared for future lockdowns. A further report on the findings will be published later in 2020.



Appendix 1: Student survey questions

Agree-Disagree Questions

For these questions, respondents could select from: Strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, disagree, strongly disagree, don't know.

1. I have people that I live with who can help me with my learning at home
2. I have adults I can talk to if I am worried about something
3. I feel safe from coronavirus (Covid-19) while I am learning from home
4. I know about the coronavirus (Covid-19) and what to do if I feel unwell
5. My bubble is doing well
6. I know how to contact my teacher if I need help or have a problem
7. I have been able to learn at home
8. The learning materials and resources that my school have given me are useful and easy to use
9. My teachers are providing me with feedback that helps my learning
10. I get to keep learning my favourite subjects while at home
11. I'm coping well with my schoolwork while learning at home
12. I have friends I can talk to while I am at home
13. I am enjoying learning at home

Yes-No Questions

For these questions, respondents could select from: Yes, no. Questions 4 and 5 had comment boxes for students to elaborate on their answers.

1. Has a teacher from your school contacted you to see if you are ok?
2. Have you watched a programme on Home Learning TV | Papa Kāinga TV?
3. Do you have to share a device with others who are also learning from home?
4. Would you like to be part of a follow-up survey? If yes, please ask a parent/caregiver. If they agree, please enter your email address.
5. Is there anything else your school could do to help you while you are learning from home? If yes, please explain.

Multi-Choice Questions

1. What type of device do you use most to access the internet?
 - a. Laptop, Chromebook or computer
 - b. Tablet (e.g. iPad)
 - c. Phone
 - d. I don't have a device I can use

2. Which of these have you been doing at home this week? Choose any number.
 - a. Used a screen to watch videos, movies, TV or to play a game
 - b. Did some exercise
 - c. Had fun with my family
 - d. Played a game
 - e. Read/looked at a book
 - f. Talked to a friend outside my house
 - g. Did something else (please describe)

3. Which one of these types of learning do you do most of?
 - a. Online
 - b. Activities from school
 - c. With my parents / caregivers
 - d. Home Learning TV | Papa Kāinga TV
 - e. Something else (please describe)

Appendix 2: Teacher survey questions

Agree-Disagree Questions

1. For these questions, respondents could select from: Strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, disagree, strongly disagree, don't know.
2. I am confident that I can support the people in my life (children, other family members, friends, loved ones)
3. My bubble and I are doing well under the circumstances
4. I am confident that I can support my students while they are learning from home
5. My school leaders have been helpful in resolving challenges related to students learning from home
6. I have the resources and tools I need to teach students learning from home
7. I am confident using the resources and tools my school has provided to support 'learning from home'
8. I have been able to tailor my 'learning from home' materials to individual learners
9. Students have been able to work independently and learn from home without help from their parents or caregivers
10. I have been able to monitor my students' progress while they are learning from home
11. I have interacted frequently with my colleagues through phone calls, email, social media, video meeting, etc.
12. I feel supported and connected with my teaching team

13. I have been able to engage effectively with individual students when required
14. In the past week, my students have been positively engaged in 'learning from home'
15. I have been able to engage effectively with parents and caregivers when required

Multi-Choice Questions

1. What is your biggest concern right now?
 - a. Supporting my students' learning
 - b. My mental wellbeing
 - c. The wellbeing of others in my bubble
 - d. Lack of social interaction
 - e. My physical health
 - f. My financial situation
 - g. Other (please describe)
2. What is your biggest barrier to working effectively from home?
 - a. Childcare
 - b. Lack of quiet workspace
 - c. Lack of technology
 - d. Lack of internet
 - e. Caring for sick family members
 - f. N/A
 - g. Other (please describe)
3. Last week, did you spend most of your time teaching from a home-based setting or going into the classroom?
 - a. Home-based setting
 - b. Teaching in the classroom
 - c. Equal
 - d. N/A

4. When you have been teaching students 'learning from home', have you introduced new content or focused on enhancing their existing knowledge?
 - a. Existing content only
 - b. New content only
 - c. A mix of both
 - d. N/A
5. Have you used existing tools to monitor student progress in a home learning setting or have you developed new tools? If new, please provide an example of a new tool you have created
 - a. Existing tools only
 - b. New tools only
 - c. A mix of both
 - d. Neither
 - e. N/A
6. What are the main ways you have delivered content to your students 'learning from home'?
 - a. Online tools (e.g. Google Classroom)
 - b. Video conferencing (e.g. Zoom, Skype)
 - c. Online resources (e.g. school website)
 - d. Emailing lessons
 - e. Your school's learning packs sent to students
 - f. MoE learning packs sent to students
 - g. Complementing Home Learning TV | Papa Kāinga TV channel content
 - h. N/A
 - i. Other (please describe)
7. In the past week, what proportion of your students have been learning from home?
 - a. All
 - b. More than 75%
 - c. Between 50-75%
 - d. Between 25-50%
 - e. Less than 25%
 - f. None
 - g. N/A
8. What are the main reasons why students have not been positively engaged in 'learning from home'?
 - a. Students not participating
 - b. Distractions at home
 - c. Students unable to access online tools/resources
 - d. Lack of parent/caregiver support
 - e. Students not able to interact with other students
 - f. Teachers unable to provide prompts and support to students
 - g. N/A
 - h. Other (please describe)

Open-Response Questions

1. What is the most effective 'learning from home' instruction strategy that you would recommend to other teachers?
2. Are there any new ways of teaching you are using that you might continue to use once schools fully reopen?

Yes-No Questions

1. If ERO wanted to ask teachers for more information on particular topics in the future, would you like to be part of that process? If 'yes' please provide your email address.

