

Student poverty study reveals disparities

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Almost one in five secondary school students and nearly half of all Pacific young people in New Zealand, live in poverty, according to a new study from the University of Auckland.

Results showed that 20 percent of New Zealand young people are living in households experiencing socio-economic hardship or poverty.

The significant ethnic disparities also showed that among Maori secondary [school students](#), almost one third live in households experiencing poverty.

The study, just published in the International Journal for Equity in Health, investigated the association between socio-economic deprivation and secondary school students' health.

Researchers examined indicators of socio-economic deprivation, using data from the Youth 2012 study of 8500 [secondary school](#) students. They also studied the links between household poverty, neighbourhood deprivation and health indicators.

"The 20 percent finding is a similar result to other methods of estimating poverty such as those used by the Ministry of Social Development and the Child Poverty Action Group," says researcher Associate Professor Simon Denny, from the University's Adolescent Health Research Group.

The study grouped students by household poverty based on nine

indicators of deprivation, including no car, no phone, no computer, parental worry about not having enough money for food, more than two people sharing a bedroom, no holiday with their families, moving home more than twice that year, garages or living rooms used as bedrooms, and no parent at home with employment.

Students needed to report two or more indicators before they were classified as experiencing poverty.

"There were two groups of young people living in poverty," says Dr Denny. "Fifteen percent reported the effects of unaffordable housing and moderate levels of being unable to afford basic necessities."

"A further five percent experienced unaffordable housing and very high levels of material hardship, such as being unable to pay for basic necessities like a car, a phone, or food."

Researchers also examined the interaction between household deprivation with depressive symptoms, cigarette smoking, and obesity.

Students living in poverty experienced more depressive symptoms and higher rates of cigarette smoking, which were two to three times higher in the poverty groups compared to those students not experiencing poverty.

There were also higher rates of overweight and obesity among students experiencing poverty.

"One of the findings was that young people from households experiencing socioeconomic hardship and living in affluent neighbourhoods, had worse health than [young people](#) from households experiencing socioeconomic hardship and living in poor neighbourhoods," says Dr Denny.

"This was probably from being unable to participate in these communities due to being unable to afford it," he says. "But it could also reflect better social safety nets in lower socioeconomic communities."

"Policies are needed that address household [poverty](#) alongside efforts to reduce socio-economic inequalities in neighbourhoods," says Dr Denny.

More information: Simon Denny et al. The association between socioeconomic deprivation and secondary school students' health: findings from a latent class analysis of a national adolescent health survey, *International Journal for Equity in Health* (2016). [DOI: 10.1186/s12939-016-0398-5](#)

Provided by University of Auckland

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