Social and emotional wellbeing of the New Zealand child population

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

New Zealand Health Survey
2012/13, 2014/15 and 2015/16

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Contact details and related publications

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Questionnaire:

Report:
SDQ – social & emotional wellbeing (Prof Robert Goodman 1997)

• Screening measure for social, emotional and behavioural problems in children (2-14 years)
• Widely used internationally
• Parents rate their child on 25 statements
• Covers 5 aspects of children’s development: emotions, peer relationships, hyperactivity, conduct and prosocial behaviour.

- Emotional symptoms
- Peer problems
- Hyperactivity
- Conduct problems

Total difficulties score

Borderline Concerning

Referral for further assessment
New Zealand Health Survey

- Surveys around 4,600 parents annually about their child (0-14 years)
- Core and module questions
- SDQ in child developmental health and wellbeing module in 2012/13, 2014/15 and 2015/16
- Total SDQ sample included 10,457 children aged 3-14 years
- Representative of the NZ child population
About 8% of children experienced difficulties

- **57,000** children 3-14 years had a total difficulties score indicating concern (8%)
- **50,000** children 3-14 years had a borderline total difficulties score (7%)

- Boys 9.4% (1.5 times more likely)
- Girls 6.6%

- Quintile 1 3.7% (Most deprived 3 times more likely)
- Quintile 5 12.4%

- Māori 12.0% (1.8 times more likely)
- Non-Māori 6.7%
Prevalence of difficulties increases with age
Sex difference in concerning scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>3–4 years</th>
<th>5–9 years</th>
<th>10–14 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional symptoms</td>
<td>No statistically significant difference</td>
<td>No statistically significant difference</td>
<td><strong>Girls 1.6 x more likely</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer problems</td>
<td><strong>Boys 1.6 x more likely</strong></td>
<td>No statistically significant difference</td>
<td><strong>Boys 1.2 x more likely</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hyperactivity</td>
<td><strong>Boys 1.9 x more likely</strong></td>
<td><strong>Boys 2.1 x more likely</strong></td>
<td><strong>Boys 2.2 x more likely</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct problems</td>
<td>No statistically significant difference</td>
<td><strong>Boys 1.5 x more likely</strong></td>
<td><strong>Boys 1.3 x more likely</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total difficulties</td>
<td>No statistically significant difference</td>
<td><strong>Boys 1.4 x more likely</strong></td>
<td><strong>Boys 1.6 x more likely</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The distribution of scores is important

- Prevalence of ‘concerning’ scores for hyperactivity goes up with age
- Mean score for hyperactivity subscale highest for 3-4 year olds
- Are those with a mid-range score on a path to more severe difficulties?
There is a lot of overlap between difficulties

27.9% experienced difficulties in one or more areas
Rates & areas of concern differed by ethnicity

Children aged 3-14

Thresholds to categorise scores as ‘concerning’ or ‘borderline’ were defined based on a population-based UK survey, such that 10% fell in each group (Goodman, 1997)
Rates & areas of concern differed by deprivation

4% of children living in areas of low deprivation (quintile 1) had a ‘concerning’ total SDQ score

12% of children living in areas of high deprivation (quintile 5) had a ‘concerning’ total SDQ score

Prevalence of ‘concerning’ scores by deprivation quintile, age 3-14