

# PACIFIC DISABILITY

## DISABILITY AMONG PACIFIC PEOPLES IN NEW ZEALAND

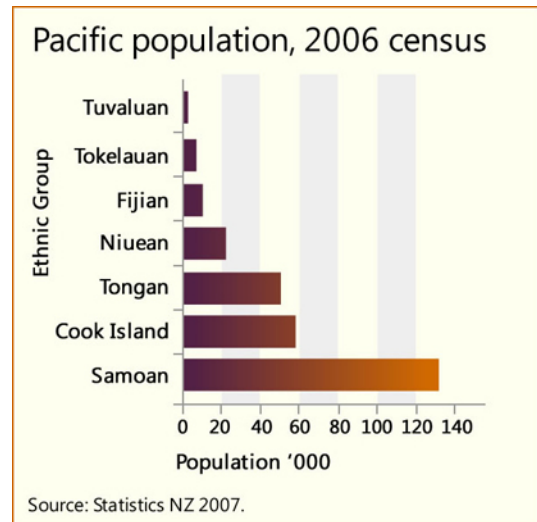
The rate of disability among Pacific peoples is about 11 per cent and most Pacific people with disability live in the community. It is estimated two in three Pacific people with disability live in Auckland and mainly in the lowest socioeconomic areas. Over two-thirds of Pacific people with a disability have a physical disability. A National Pasifika Disability Action Plan is currently being developed. There is a need to build the capacity and capability of the Pacific disability workforce. There is considerable interest among support workers and providers in workforce training. There is also a need to improve access to information about services for Pacific people and to reduce delays in Pacific people seeking support. Increased cultural competency, appropriate assessment and better communication would contribute to improved services for Pacific peoples.

## PACIFIC POPULATION

One in seven people in New Zealand identified as belonging to a Pacific peoples ethnic group in the [2006 Census](#). The Pacific population is relatively young with over one-third of Pacific peoples aged under 15 years. Based on population size, the main Pacific ethnic groups are Samoan, Cook Island Māori, Tongan and Niuean. At least two in three Pacific peoples live in the Auckland region.

## DISABILITY

Disability in New Zealand was examined in the [2006 Disability Survey](#). Two brief screening questions were used in the 2006 Census to identify children and adults with disability. One in six children and adults living in households in the general population and adults in residential facilities self-reported difficulties in performing certain day-to-day activities. The rate of disability is slightly lower than that found in the 2001 and 1996 disability surveys (20 per cent).<sup>1</sup>



### Disability survey definition

Any limitation in activity resulting from a long-term condition or health problem that lasted or was expected to last for six months or more. People were not considered as having a disability if an assistive device (such as glasses) completely eliminated their limitation.

Source: 2006 Disability Survey, 2007.

<sup>1</sup> The next disability survey will be undertaken in 2011.

## PACIFIC DISABILITY

The rate of disability among Pacific peoples was estimated to be 11 per cent in the [2006 Disability Survey](#). This is about 24,800 people, of which nearly one-quarter are children (6,100 children and 18,700 adults).

Disability among Pacific peoples may be underestimated. Rates are influenced by questions used to assess disability and individual responses. The reporting of disability among Pacific peoples depends in part on cultural factors including language, the meaning of disability, perceived need, and health beliefs.

Nearly all Pacific peoples with a disability live in the community (2 per cent in residential facilities). Estimates suggest two-thirds of Pacific peoples with disability live in the Auckland region, 13 per cent in the Wellington region, and four per cent in the Waikato and Canterbury regions.<sup>2</sup> Pacific peoples with a disability are most likely to receive support from informal carers.

Rates of disability among Pacific people are lower than for Māori (17 per cent) and European people (18 per cent). Nearly one-quarter of Pacific adults with disability however have high support needs (compared with 16 per cent of total adults). In line with this, 23 per cent of Pacific peoples receiving support from Needs Assessment and Coordination Services have complex support needs.<sup>3</sup>

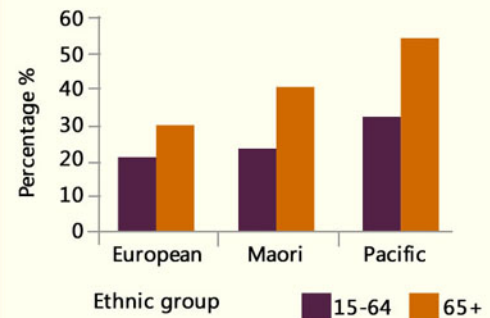
Disability is more common among younger Pacific people. A greater proportion of Pacific (57 per cent) and Maori (63 per cent) people with a disability are aged less than 44 years compared to European people (27 per cent).

Nearly two-thirds of Pacific adults with a disability have a physical disability. Difficulties in speaking, learning, remembering and doing everyday activities are also common (41 per cent of Pacific adults). About one-third of Pacific adults with disability experience sensory disabilities such as hearing or seeing.

The 2004 [Living with Disability in New Zealand](#) report found:

- over half of Pacific people with a disability had more than one disability
- Pacific boys were more likely to experience disability than Pacific girls
- nearly three-quarters of Pacific adults with disability live in lower socioeconomic areas
- more than half of Pacific adults with disability were not in the labour force
- Pacific adults with disability were less likely to have obtained post-school educational qualifications (similar to non-Pacific adults).

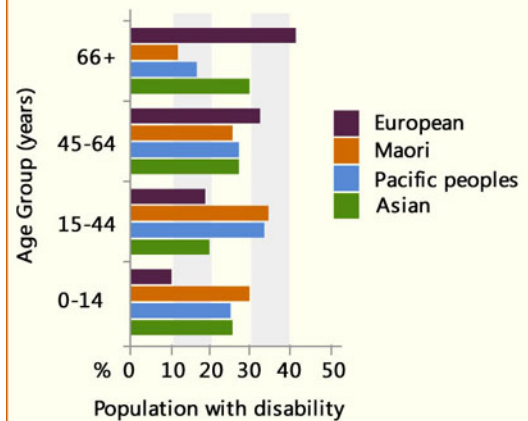
### Disabled adults receiving support from informal carers\*



Note: \* with one or more personal care, meal preparation, shopping, everyday housework, heavy work and personal finances.

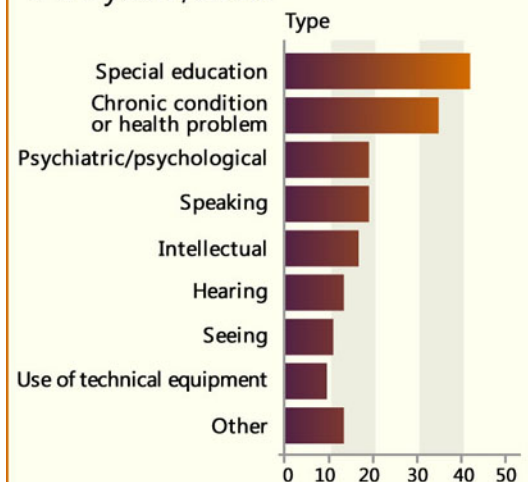
Source: Disability and informal care in NZ, 2009.

### Disability Rate, 2006



Source: 2006 Disability Survey.

### Disability among children aged 0-14 years, 2006



Note: People may have more than one type of disability.

Source: 2006 Disability Survey.

<sup>2</sup> Based on the proportion of Pacific people living in each region and the prevalence of disability among Pacific people.

<sup>3</sup> *Auckland Pacific Disability Research Report*, 2005.

## POLICY

A [National Pasifika Disability Action Plan 2009-2013](#) is currently being developed. This is informed by the Auckland regional interagency plan or [Lu'i Ola Strategic Framework for Action 2009-2013](#).

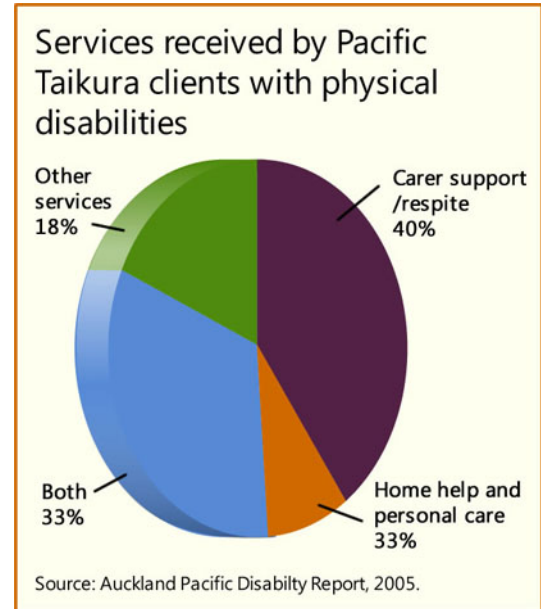
Priority areas in the Lu'i Ola plan include developing leadership within the Pacific disability sector, supporting community-based initiatives and events, and ongoing Pacific disability research.

## DISABILITY SERVICES

The main types of disability services include residential and home-based services. Pacific peoples are more likely to use services in the home. Only a very small proportion of Pacific people with disability use residential services.<sup>4</sup>

Disability services for people aged 65 years and over are provided by district health boards (DHBs). Less than two per cent of DHB service users were identified as Pacific in the [Disability Support Services Service User Survey](#).

For people aged under 65 years in Auckland, Taikura Trust and Access Ability are Needs Assessment and Coordination Services. Pacific peoples comprise 15 per cent of clients of these services, which is slightly higher than the Pacific peoples population living in Auckland (13 per cent).<sup>5</sup> The Ministry of Health website provides a full list of [Needs Assessment and Service Coordination Services](#).



The [Auckland Pacific Disability Research Report](#) found Pacific peoples are more likely to receive personal assistance with everyday activities. Pacific peoples are less likely however to receive assistive devices to help improve their disability.

## DISABILITY WORKFORCE

The [Disability Support Services Workforce Survey](#) examined the profile of disability support workers. Overall, support workers were mostly female, aged between 40 and 60 years, and employed part-time.

Pacific disability support workers are underrepresented compared to the level of population need for services. Just over three per cent of support workers identified as Cook Island Māori, Samoan, Tongan or Niuean. Pacific and Māori workers mainly worked in family/whanau services.

A number of areas that would improve the capacity and capability of the disability workforce in supporting Pacific peoples with disabilities were identified in the [Auckland Pacific Disability Research Report](#). Areas included investment in workforce development, increased cultural competency, availability of culturally appropriate measures, and improved assessment. There is considerable interest in workforce training among support workers and service providers.

### Recommendations from Pacific and Māori support workers for training:

- that was ongoing
- government subsidised or heavily funded
- appropriate to Pacific people
- reimbursement allowances
- available for school leavers to attract them to the sector
- available in the evening
- information distributed through appropriate channels
- incentives such as scholarships.

Source: *Disability Support Services Workforce Survey*.

<sup>4</sup> Only two per cent of Pacific people in the 2006 Disability Survey.

<sup>5</sup> *Auckland Pacific Disability Research Report, 2005*.

## SERVICE USE

Health care use among Pacific peoples with disability was examined in the [Living with Disability in New Zealand](#) report in 2004. The survey found:

- primary health care use over the last 12 months is similar for Pacific and non-Pacific adults with disability
- Pacific adults were less likely to have seen health professionals such as nurses, dentists, opticians and medical specialists
- Pacific adults were more likely to have consulted a traditional healer or Pacific (or Māori) health worker.

Research suggests Pacific peoples seek support for disabilities at a later stage with greater needs. While Pacific service users tended to be satisfied with services in the [Disability Support Services Service User Survey](#), some potential barriers to service use have been identified.

### Potential barriers to disability care among Pacific peoples

- Limited access to information on services distributed by culturally appropriate means.
- Language and communication barriers.
- Limited Pacific and culturally competent service providers.
- Difficulties in managing competing demands and associated costs.
- Perceived need for services compared with others.

Source: *Disability Support Services Workforce Survey, 2004, Auckland Pacific Disability Report, 2005, Living with Disability in New Zealand, 2004.*

## IMPLICATIONS

Rates of disability among Pacific peoples and the youthful Pacific demographic pose a number of implications for policy and services, research and workforce development. Recommendations made in Pacific disability reports, including the [Auckland Pacific Disability Research Report](#) and [Disability Support Services Surveys](#), are included below.

### POLICY

There is a need for effective, culturally responsive and appropriate services for Pacific peoples. Demand for disability services from Pacific peoples will be greatest in the larger urban cities such as Auckland, especially in lower socioeconomic areas. Nearly half of current Pacific Needs Assessment and Service Coordination clients for example live in Manukau. Pacific peoples are most likely to need assistance with daily activities in their home.

Information on disability services available to Pacific peoples should be improved and distributed using means that will reach Pacific peoples. Appropriate channels may include radio, churches and community meetings. Information provided should use appropriate language and be easily understood by Pacific peoples. Better information on services and support available may reduce delays and some barriers to seeking support.

The prevalence of disability among Pacific peoples may be underestimated in national surveys. Cultural factors including language, the meaning of disability, perceived need and health beliefs may influence the reporting of disability by Pacific peoples. The need for disability support by Pacific peoples in the population may be higher than currently estimated.

### Disability beliefs among Pacific peoples

*Pacific participants indicated a strong belief in a spiritual causation of disability... as an outward manifestation of disharmony between the individual, family, community and/or spiritual realm...*

*There are often strong associations between a person's disability or impairment and the belief that they have been cursed, breached, tapu or sinned...*

Source: *Auckland Pacific Disability Report, 2005.*

## SERVICES

Disability support for Pacific peoples needs to be culturally appropriate, responsive and effective. Cultural competency and effective communication are important to achieving this.

There is a risk of misinterpretation and misunderstandings in the assessment of Pacific peoples with disabilities. It may be difficult for some Pacific peoples to ask for assistance when they perceive other people's needs to be greater. Language barriers may make it difficult for Pacific peoples to convey issues and the challenges they face. The perceived cause of disability among Pacific peoples may also be influenced by cultural beliefs. The [Auckland Pacific Disability Research Report](#) identified the need for more time in undertaking assessments with Pacific peoples. This will contribute to a better understanding of the needs and circumstances of Pacific clients and their families.

Contacting Pacific peoples with disabilities by telephone may not be the most effective means of communication. Pacific peoples may not necessarily have access to a telephone and/or English may be a second language for many. Face to face contact is still the most effective means of communication.

An increase in the number of Pacific disability support workers will contribute to more responsive and effective services for Pacific peoples.

## RESEARCH

The development of quality and effective disability services for Pacific peoples requires better information and assessment tools. There is a need for further research to investigate the needs and requirements of Pacific peoples, assess the effectiveness of services, and to develop culturally appropriate assessment tools. The [Health Research Council](#) has also identified priority areas for health disability research including research which promotes the participation of Pacific peoples with disability.

## WORKFORCE

Greater investment in workforce development has been called for. There is interest among support workers and organisations in disability training.

- The type of training required may vary for different services.
- Training needs to be appropriate based on the skills and competencies of the current workforce.
- Flexible training arrangements, training incentives and scholarships may be required.
- Training needs to increase the understanding of cultural issues and use of appropriate assessment methods.
- Training needs to contribute to building Pacific leadership capacity and capability in disability services.

The provision and development of appropriate and adequate training, career pathways and advancement opportunities may contribute to improving staff retention and attracting new people to the health and disability sector.

## DISABILITY INFORMATION

A number of organisations provide information on disability and support services for Pacific peoples, their aiga or families, and caregivers.

**Weka** Provides information on disability for people with disabilities and their families.  
[www.weka.net.nz](http://www.weka.net.nz)  
Freephone 0800 171 981

**Vaka Tautua** For general enquiries and information about Pacific mental health, disability or older people services.  
[www.vakatautua.co.nz](http://www.vakatautua.co.nz)  
Freephone 0800 825 282

**TOA Pacific Inc.** Advocacy, support and networking for Pacific aiga carers.  
[www.toapacific.org.nz](http://www.toapacific.org.nz)  
Phone 09 276 4596

**Ministry of Health** Information on the role of Disability Support Services within the Ministry of Health, disability support services funded by the Ministry of Health, current projects and programmes.  
[www.moh.govt.nz/disability](http://www.moh.govt.nz/disability) Full list of [Needs Assessment and Service Coordination Services](#).  
Freephone 0800 373 664

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Robert Muller, project development  
Le Va, Pasifika within Te Pou  
PO Box 108-244, Symonds Street, Auckland 1150  
Telephone +64 9 373 2125  
Email: [robert.muller@leva.co.nz](mailto:robert.muller@leva.co.nz)  
Website: [www.leva.co.nz](http://www.leva.co.nz)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This factsheet was prepared by Angela Jury (PhD), researcher, Te Pou.

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