

# Executive Summary for young people

## Asian Sexual Violence Survivors' Experiences and Expectations of Support Within Schools in New Zealand

### What's this study about?

This research, funded by the Lottery Grant Board, aims to study how schools can better support young Asian survivors of sexual violence in New Zealand. We used creative and culturally responsive methods to explore young Asian people's experiences and what they expect from support services.

### Why does this matter?

Asian communities make up 17.3% of New Zealand's population (2023 Census), but we don't know enough about the challenges young Asian survivors face when asking for help. The goal of this study is to better understand their challenges and expectations and provide insights for improving support systems.

### Whose voices did we hear?

Between June and December 2023, we interviewed: 7 young Asian people affected by sexual violence, 6 educators/counsellors and 1 caregiver. They come from some of the largest Asian ethnic groups in New Zealand, including Indian, Chinese, Korean, Filipino, and Pakistani.

### Poetic Summary: What have we learned?

#### Untimely Support, Silent Cry

Help arrived too short, too late, too slow.  
Pain grew, but did anyone know?  
Friendships strained, school felt far,  
In the waiting, young people bear the scar.

#### Support That Harmed

When they reached out, trust in hand,  
Some found support they couldn't stand.  
Words and actions cold and rough,  
Left them feeling they'd had enough.

#### Caregivers Lost

Parents tried to do their best,  
But were trapped in shame, fear, and stress.  
Worried about the family name,  
They held back, burdened blame.

#### Cultural Walls

Family honour, gender roles,  
Stopped survivors from reaching goals.  
Model minority, silence and the pressure to  
move on,  
Made asking for help feel wrong.

#### Peers Who Press

Friends, who should uplift and cheer,  
Sometimes deepened growing fear.  
In dating or friendship, harm can hide,  
The pressure to fit left no place to confide.

#### Cultural Disconnect

Teachers, staff, though they cared,  
Missed the cultures survivors shared.  
Without that knowledge and training, they  
couldn't see,  
What young survivors truly need.

#### The Call for Empowerment

Survivors asked for their own voice,  
The chance to lead, to make their choice.  
To choose their path, with caregivers near,  
Support that brings hope, not fear.

#### Art Heals, Art Reveals

Through colours and metaphors, or  
symbols and song,  
Creative expression helps them belong.  
Poetic words, and creative sight,  
Restored their power, sparked their light.

## What can we do to make support better?

From what we've learned, here's how we can help young Asian survivors of sexual violence get the support they deserve.

**Train the Helpers to Understand Us:** Let's make sure school staff and support services know how to help young Asian survivors by learning about our cultures and traditions. This means they get better at understanding where we come from and what we need.

**Support That Actually Fits:** We need school-based support designed with young Asian people in mind—support that gets our struggles and helps build trust. We should feel comfortable talking with our parents and knowing what help is out there for us.

**Teach Caregivers:** Parents often don't know how to deal with this. They need support to learn how to challenge cultural taboos about sexual violence and mental health, so they can support us better and guide us through what's available.

**Team Up with the Community:** Working with community leaders can break down the walls of stigma and make it easier for young people to access help. This creates a support system that understands and respects who we are.

**Let Us Lead Our Own Healing:** We need support that empowers us, that gives us control over our own healing journey. Young people want to be involved in decisions about their care, with support that puts us at the centre.

**Peer Power—Let's Help Each Other:** Friends can make all the difference. Schools need better peer support programmes where young people are trained to listen and help in ways that understand cultural differences. We need spaces to have healthy conversations about preventing sexual violence.

**Make Help Easy to Find:** Getting help shouldn't be so hard! We need smoother, faster ways to access support when we need it most—without all the barriers and waiting.

**A Whole Team Approach:** Let's connect the dots between schools, health services, and the legal system so we get more effective, all-around support. When everyone works together, the help we need gets to us faster and more effectively.

**Speak Up for Change:** Policies in schools should focus on making sure young Asian people feel included and safe. We need to push for better sexuality education and easier access to culturally relevant support.

**Art for Healing:** Art has the power to heal. Using creative ways like art, music, or storytelling can help us feel safe and express things we find hard to say. These spaces can give a voice to the experiences often hidden.

**Keep the Research Going:** We're not done yet—there's still so much to learn about how to support young Asian survivors. Future research needs to dig deeper into equity and cultural sensitivity to make sure we're creating real change.

To be referenced as: Wang, Y., & O'Connor, P. (2024). *Asian sexual violence survivors' experiences and expectations of support within schools in New Zealand: Project report*. Centre for Arts and Social Transformation, University of Auckland.

Research website: <https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/education/research/research-centres-and-units/centre-for-arts-and-social-transformation-/research-projects/asvs.html>

