THRIVE Study

Participant Information Sheet

Tēnā koe,

We are a group of researchers interested in the relationship between food and mental wellbeing among young people. For this study, we are interested in understanding the connections between diet quality, eating behaviours, body image, social media use, food security, and mental wellbeing among young adults in Aotearoa.

You are receiving this information to help you decide if you want to take part in our research or not. If you don't want to take part, you don't have to give a reason. Choosing not to take part won't affect you in any way and won't have any impact on your future involvement in research or health services. If you want to take part now, but you change your mind, you can pull out of the study at any time before submitting your responses and have one month to change or remove responses after you have submitted.

Please take some time to read the following information to help you decide if you want to take part. It explains why we are conducting the study, what you will need to do if you choose to take part, the benefits and risks, and what happens after the study ends. Before you decide, you may want to talk about the study with other people, such as whānau, friends, or a healthcare provider.

Please make sure you have read and understood all of the pages before agreeing to take part. Our contact details are at the end of this document, and we are always available to talk about the study and answer any questions you have.

What is the purpose of the study?

Poor mental wellbeing is a major health concern for young people. There is growing research which shows us that food and mental wellbeing are linked. However, research tends to focus on nutrients and diet quality - we believe that there is more to the connection than just the nutrients in food or quality of diets. Our team's previous research has shown that eating behaviours, body image perceptions, social media engagement, and food (in)security can all affect the relationship between food and mental wellbeing among young people in Aotearoa. The purpose of this research is to better understand these wider connections between food and mental wellbeing for young adults in Aotearoa.

Who are the researchers?

This study has been designed by a team of research Dietitians and Psychologists at the University of Auckland and University of Sydney. Dr Nicola Gillies (Dietitian/lecturer) is the primary investigator on this study. Dr Marion Roberts (Clinical Psychologist/lecturer), Dr Rajshri Roy (Dietitian/lecturer – University of Sydney) Georgia Smith (Dietitian, Research Assistant) and Olivia Young (Dietitian, Research Assistant) are also researchers on this project and have contributed to the study design. As a group, we have experience in conducting research on dietary behaviours, mental wellbeing and working with young adults. Collectively, we hope to develop strategies that support young people to be well through food.

Who can take part in the study?

We are aiming to recruit 350 young adults from across Aotearoa.

To be eligible to participate you must:

- Be aged between 18-24 years
- Live in Aotearoa, New Zealand
- Be able to provide your own informed consent
- Not experience English reading or comprehension challenges

What will taking part in the survey involve?

All study processes will take place online, and can be completed from a smartphone, tablet, or computer connected to the internet. Here is a summary of the different phases of the research;

Screening and consent

If you are interested in taking part in this study, you will complete a brief screening form online to confirm that you are eligible to take part based on the criteria above. If you are eligible, you will then be asked to submit an electronic consent form. The consent form will ask you to confirm that you have read and understand the procedures before starting the survey. If you have any questions or would like some more information, please contact Georgia (gsmi352@aucklanduni.ac.nz) at any stage.

Thrive Study Questionnaires

After you have provided your consent to take part you will be asked to complete a series of questionnaires, which are check-box answers and will take you approximately **20 minutes** to complete. These questionnaires include:

- **Information about your background** – This questionnaire includes your gender, ethnicity, what part of the country you live in, the highest education you have completed and your medical history.
- **Your food and eating behaviours** – These questionnaires will explore your overall diet quality, your experience of food (in)security, and both intuitive and disordered eating behaviours.
- **Your mental wellbeing** – These questionnaires will explore symptoms of poor mental health (depression, anxiety, stress), flourishing, and both body acceptance and body appreciation.
- **Your social media usage** – These questionnaires will ask you about how often you use social media, what platforms you use and about your thoughts and behaviours in relation to appearance and social media.

We are using validated questionnaires to gather this information, but the survey will end with an opportunity for you to share any experiences important to you but not captured in the questionnaires through an open-text form.

The mental health and disordered eating questionnaires are not diagnostic for mental health conditions, but there are scoring criteria which indicate the possibility of a mental health condition which requires further investigation by a healthcare provider. If your questionnaire meets this scoring criteria, we will let you know in an email outlining the finding and who you may contact for help.

If you are experiencing persistent feelings of low mood or distress, or if you have thoughts if hurting yourself, please reach out for support. A list of community-based support services and helplines are listed at the end of this document. You can also free text or call to 1737 (https://1737.org.nz). If you, or someone else might be unsafe, call 111. If you need to talk

to someone right away, or feel you can't cope, there are people who can help you immediately.

What are the possible benefits or risks from taking part in this survey?

Research on the relationship between food and mental wellbeing is relatively new – taking part in this study is a way for your experience to shape this new research field. By taking part in this study, you are helping us to create research and initiatives that support young people to be well through food.

There are not many direct benefits from taking part in this study, but you will have the option to receive the results of this study and to go in the draw to win one of 15 x $100 vouchers.

This study is not expected to cause physical, emotional, social, or spiritual harm to you. We are gathering information about eating behaviours, food intake, and mental wellbeing – we recognise that this may cause discomfort for some people. If answering any of these questions causes any discomfort or emotional distress during the study (either related to the study or not), you can find a list of community-based support services at the end of this document and the survey itself. You can also leave the survey at any point if you find the questions uncomfortable to answer.

What are my rights as a participant if I take part?

Participation in this research is **entirely voluntary** – it is your choice to participate in this study, and you can pull out of the study at any time without giving a reason. Whether you take part in this study or not will not affect your relationship with the University of Auckland, your usual healthcare, or your opportunity to participate in future research studies in any way.

If you do choose to take part, as a participant you have the right to;

- Withdraw your participation in the study, without giving reason and with no consequences. You can do this by leaving the survey before submitting your response, in which case your answers will not be used in data analysis. You can also choose to withdraw your data up to one month after it was submitted, if you no longer wish for your data to be used in the study.
- Access and correct any information about yourself that we have collected as part of the research.
- Ask any questions about the study at any point in time during participation in the study.

- Receive a summary of findings from this research project.

How will my confidentiality be protected?

Our research team takes data storage and confidentiality very seriously. We are collecting some identifiable information, including your name and your email address, on the consent form. Once you are enrolled in the study, you will be given a unique study ID which will be used moving forward.

When the data is exported for analysis and storage, the researchers will de-identify (remove) all personal information provided by you, and there is no risk that you will be able to be identified by anyone other than the research team. All records and data collected during the study will be stored on password protected, secure research drives or cloud-based systems managed through the University of Auckland. All data storage will comply with local and international data security guidelines, including encryption and controlled access. While every effort will be made to protect your privacy, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

How will data be stored, retained and destroyed?

The study will be conducted on REDCap. REDCap is a secure online software which is password protected, requires two-factor authentication, is not accessible by third parties, and is managed by the University of Auckland. All data that you provide will be stored in REDCap for the duration of the study. After the study is complete, data will be exported into excel files and stored on secure research drives hosted by the University of Auckland. All data will be kept securely and then destroyed (deleted) after six years.

The researchers retain full ownership, control, and authority over the data collected. Only members of the research team will have access to the data collected, and data will not be provided to external researchers. Dr Gillies will be responsible for providing access to research data to members of the research team on a case-by-case basis.

What happens after the study?

We will complete data analysis using the de-identified data, and using group-level information so that individuals cannot be identified. Once complete, the results of this study will be published in a peer-reviewed journal publication, and may also be shared through a research thesis, reports, and scientific/professional conference presentations. You will not be identifiable in any of these outputs. You are also able to get a summary of the findings of this project once they are published, which we will share as an infographic/short report, and there is space on the Consent Form for you to say whether

you would like a copy. There may be a delay between the end of the study and you getting the final results. We appreciate your understanding on this.

Who do I contact for more information or if I have concerns?

If you have questions about the study or would like to participate, please contact the research team	**Principle investigator** Dr Nicola Gillies, n.gillies@auckland.ac.nz **Research Assistant** Georgia Smith, gsmi352@aucklanduni.ac.nz
For concerns of an ethical nature, you can contact the Chair of the Auckland Health Research Ethics Committee	ahrec@auckland.ac.nz, or at 373 7599 ext 83711, or Auckland Health Research Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland, 1142
For Māori cultural support	In the first instance, talk to your whānau. Alternatively, you may contact the administrator for He Kamaka Waiora (Māori Health Team) by phoning 09 486 8624 x 2324
If you wish to talk to someone who isn't involved with the study	**Head of Department (Nutrition & Dietetics)** Assoc Professor Andrea Braakhuis a.braakhuis@auckland.ac.nz

This research has been approved by the Auckland Health Research Ethics Committee on 08/10/2026 for three years. Reference Number AH32257.

Contact details for mental health support

The following websites or help numbers can be helpful you are experiencing poor mental health and need further support. They have skilled people you can contact to help:

- **Need to talk? Free text 1737** if you are feeling stressed, down, or overwhelmed and need someone to talk to. This service is available 24 hours a day, and you will talk to (or text with) a trained counsellor or peer support worker. Website: https://1737.org.nz/
- **Youthline Aotearoa Helpline** is staffed by qualified counsellors and trained volunteers who can provide support on a range of different issues, such as psychological and emotional distress, work issues, family problems, and experiences of abuse. The helpline is available 24/7. Freephone: Call 0800 376 633 or Free text to 234. Website: https://www.youthline.co.nz/
- **Smallsteps** is an Aotearoa New Zealand created suite of tools that you can pick and choose from depending on your needs. Website: https://www.smallsteps.org.nz/
- **Headspace App** is a meditation and mindfulness app to help with stress. Website: www.headspace.com.
- **SPARX** is designed by researchers in Aotearoa | New Zealand. It is created to be used on a mobile phone and a computer. It has been designed with Tamariki/Rangatahi in mind. It uses computer gaming approaches to help. https://www.sparx.org.nz/for-young-people
- **Calm website** provides techniques and information to help with managing stress, anxiety, depression and more. Website: www.calm.auckland.ac.nz
- **The Low Down** provides support for rangatahi for hauora, identity, culture, and mental health. Website: https://ww.thelowdown.co.nz
- **Outline** is a confidential, free, all-ages support-line for people who want to speak to a trained volunteer from the rainbow (LGBTIQ+) community. Freephone: Call 0200 5463 between 6pm-9pm. Website: https://outline.org.nz/
- **Eating Disorder Services** will help you find the right support services you may need e.g. public, private, general, specialist. Call 0800 233 269 or 09 5222 679. You can also visit their website: https://www.ed.org.nz/

- Further information and free support can be found at https://www.depression.org.nz/ and https://www.depression.org.nz/. This includes information for Māori, Pasifika, and LGBTQI+ groups.

If you are experiencing feelings of stress or anxiety that you think you need more help with you should **make an appointment to see your family doctor** and talk about these feelings with them so that they can discuss support options with you. **If you have a medical emergency and require urgent assistance please call 111.**