

Skills for Safety: An evaluation of  
the value, impact and outcomes of  
girls' and women's self defence in  
the community

Prepared by

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We hope this report will provide a useful resource for all government departments, non-governmental organisations, schools and community centres in clarifying the achievements of WSDN-WT and the significant contributions made to violence prevention and enhanced community well-being in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

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# Preface

## *A letter written from a WSDN-WT course participant to her self defence teacher*

Hello my ANGEL

First of all, I would like to THANK YOU SO VERY MUCH, you have CHANGED MY LIFE.

Since I was a little girl, at the age of 7 years old I was raped by my father and the abuse continued well into my teenage years, but by now my three brothers were also abusing me. I had three miscarriages to my family due to my family abuse. I was unable to have children when I got older and married.

All my life I have been abused by men, in every form of abuse you can name. I am now in my 50's and men still abuse me.

I have been seeing a man recently, as a friend. He has been abusing me because he wants more than just being friends and I don't.

This man came to see me the Sunday after the course and started nutting off at me because I mowed the lawns the WRONG WAY. I didn't know there was a right and wrong way to mow lawns, LOL.

I am sitting in my chair and listening to this man nutting off at me in my own home about the lawns, and then I felt an ANGEL on my shoulder and it was you.

I got up out of my chair, walked up to my bedroom, scared to bits, shaking. I felt so sick. Then I looked in my mirror and saw you.

You smiled at me and said to me DO IT, DO IT NOW. So I walked back into my lounge and jumped into the kick arse position. I stood the way you showed us. I had my hand in a fist position, and as I gently bounced up and down with my knees, I yelled at him:

**I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THIS. GET OUT OF MY HOME AND DON'T COME BACK.**

Well, believe it or not he just sat there, and I thought, oh shit, but I stood my ground and moved a bit closer with such an angry face and repeated what I had said before:

**GET OUT OF MY HOME AND DON'T COME BACK.**

He left this time. I was so scared I cried in fear that he would come back, and yes, he did come back the next day. And yes, he is still abusing me, up until last night when I felt that ANGEL again on my shoulder and I kicked him out, and told him I will call the police if he comes back.

I have not heard from him since, it's early days I know, but I'm hoping it has worked this time, and that you are my ANGEL on my shoulder, and I will be strong and keep him away.

THANK YOU so much, you will always be my ANGEL ON MY SHOULDER.

# Executive summary

This report presents findings from the 'Skills for Safety' project, an outcome evaluation of girls' and women's self defence courses run by the Women's Self Defence Network – Wāhine Toa (WSDN-WT).

WSDN-WT is a nationwide network of specialist trained accredited women teachers of self defence that has been in operation for 28 years. WSDN-WT has always been committed to evaluating the quality of their programmes and their ability to achieve their goals, with post course evaluation an integral part of the delivery of their courses. However, in the current climate of results based accountability, to ensure sustainable funding they recognised the importance of rigorous evaluation carried out by independent researchers. The 'Skills for Safety' research project has been completed by two independent researchers, Associate Professor Jan Jordan (Institute of Criminology, Victoria University of Wellington) and Dr Elaine Mossman (Adjunct Research Fellow, Victoria University of Wellington) and was made possible with funding provided by the Ministry of Social Development (MSD).

## Evaluation objectives

Violence against girls/women is a major New Zealand problem with serious, sometimes fatal, consequences. The overwhelming health, social and economic impacts of violence against women have prompted a recent emphasis on identifying effective prevention strategies. Internationally there is now a sizeable body of evidence pointing to the value of self defence as such a strategy, including randomised control trials demonstrating reduced sexual victimisation following participation. This research aims to develop a better understanding of the unique role and impact of a New Zealand girls' and women's self defence programme in responding to this problem.

The overarching objective of this evaluation is to understand and document the value and impact of self defence to the girls and women who participate in WSDN-WT self defence courses and to the communities they live in. More specifically, the research asks to what extent self defence courses can assist participants to:

- recognise sexual and family violence and abuse;
- understand that it is not okay (and not their fault);
- learn clear strategies for recognising, resisting and responding to specific violent/abusive events, disclosing abuse and seeking help, supporting other people who are victims of violence and abuse; and
- feel empowered and have their self-esteem enhanced.

A further aim of the project was to investigate the extent to which short term/intermediary outcomes, if achieved, can reduce vulnerabilities to child abuse, sexual and family violence and re-victimisation, and stranger danger.

## Methodological approach

An evaluation framework was developed by the independent researchers in collaboration with the WSDN-WT research team. A mixed method research design



was agreed upon to assess the value of self defence for the two key target groups of WSDN-WT: (1) school age girls; and (2) women in the community.

Quantitative data were collected from a substantial sample of girls (n=2731) and women (n=115) who participated in a self defence course run in the first half of 2015, using pre and post course evaluation forms. These forms assessed the outcomes and experiences of the participants and included a mix of validated (e.g. Rosenberg Self-esteem) and programme specific questions (closed and open-ended).

These quantitative data were combined with qualitative data collected from a series of interviews. Four separate groups were interviewed:

- key informants/stakeholders for the Girls' Self Defence Project courses (n=14);
- key informants/stakeholders for the Isolation to Empowerment women's courses (n=15);
- women's course participants (n=15); and
- WSDN-WT self defence teachers and chairperson (n=7).

Interviews were conducted in four case study areas selected to include a mix of rural/urban locations, and communities with different ethnic makeup (two South Island and two North Island).

### **Programme characteristics**

WSDN-WT has been delivering self defence courses to girls and women for nearly 28 years with highly positive feedback received by the schools and partner agencies where courses have been run. Priority has been given to reaching vulnerable girls and women including those most at risk from violence and abuse, and those with limited alternative access to learning self defence.

All courses have a core focus on teaching participants ways to keep themselves safe, their friends safe and ways to use their mind, bodies and voices to keep safe. This learning is delivered using a mixture of ice breakers and games, the teaching and practising of physical self defence skills, group discussions and role plays.

Some key characteristics of girls' courses for Years 3-4, 7-8 and 10-12 include:

- over 125,000 girls have participated in a course since 1996, for an average cost of less than \$50 per girl. Up to 10,000 girls participate around New Zealand each year with funding provided by the Ministry of Social Development;
- over the last five years 34% of all girls receiving self defence were Māori, and 51% of all courses were delivered to schools from the lowest 4 decile ratings;
- courses range from 5 to 8 hours. The content of each programme is tailored to the specific risks and needs of each age group. For example, Years 3-4 and 7-8 courses include recognising good and bad touching and the importance of talking to a safe adult if needed, whilst Years 10-12 courses include recognising sexual violence and understanding what constitutes a healthy relationship.

Some key characteristics of women's Isolation to Empowerment courses include:

- in the three years since WSDN-WT first received funding from the Ministry of Justice they have delivered 68 programmes to 747 women at an average cost of around \$120 per woman. This equates to around 250 women per year;
- courses are targeted at women whose vulnerability to sexual violence is at increased risk due to cultural (recently extended to including a culture of violence), geographical and/or disability-related isolation;
- courses are 6 to 8 hours long with the content tailored to suit the specific needs and abilities of participants but including:
  - awareness discussions related to sexual violence;
  - self-esteem and confidence building;
  - strategies to keep / get safe from sexual violence; and
  - physical self defence skills and strategies.

Characteristics of the WSDN-WT self defence teachers include:

- WSDN-WT have trained and accredited 64 self defence teachers since their first training in 1988. There are currently 26 accredited self defence teachers who are members of WSDN-WT (8 of whom are Māori, 1 is Pasifika and 17 are Pakeha);
- accreditation is based on successful evaluation following a rigorous process of selection, training and co-teaching. Training involves attending two week-long residential training camps followed by co-teaching with experienced teachers, prior to evaluation. The process from training to accreditation takes approximately 18 months;
- years of service for current WSDN-WT teachers range from 2 to 28 years, with an average length of service of 11 years.

## Programme outcomes

Evaluation of the girls' and women's self defence courses using both quantitative and qualitative methods revealed an impressive range of outcomes related to improvements in girls' and women's self defence knowledge, attitude and skills. Outcomes summarised below are those most relevant to evaluation objectives.

### ***Increased recognition of sexual and family violence and abuse***

All WSDN-WT self defence courses cover age or group specific education around inappropriate and abusive behaviour. Evidence from the evaluation suggested this education is effective, for example:

- girls from all three age groups had statistically significant improvements post course in relation to **understanding what inappropriate touching is** (Years 3-4 and 7-8) and **what constitutes a healthy relationship** (Years 10-12);
- this education and awareness raising was seen as a valuable part of the course by key stakeholders, and for several Years 3-4 and 7-8 girls was

described as the best / most valuable thing learnt on the course, as described by this Years 7-8 girl:

*The most important thing I learnt on this course was how to protect myself and know what's the wrong way people touch you.*

- women on the Isolation to Empowerment courses also had statistically significant improvements in self-reported **knowledge of sexual violence** post course and also their ability to **recognise the early signs of violence**. This increased understanding was described in very real terms by several interviewees, including the following women's refuge client:

*If I had learnt (earlier) what I had learnt in the last two years, I wouldn't have been a survivor of childhood abuse. ... If I had the knowledge I've got now when I went to school, I would have been able to stop my family from doing what they did to me as a child and what men have done to me since I've been an adult. But there were no such things back then. You just shut your mouth and put up with everything.* (Participant, women's course).

### ***Increased understanding that it is not okay (and not their fault)***

Self defence teachers explained to us that a key aim of their courses was to ensure participants understand that violence against girls and women is not okay but also very importantly that if it did, or had occurred, it was never their fault.

- after the self defence course, 89% of Years 3-4 girls and 96% of Years 7-8 girls agreed, **'If bad touching happens to a girl it is never her fault'**. Years 10-12 girls had statistically significant increases related to **"sexual assault is never the victim's fault"**. Again for some this was the most important thing learnt on the course, as described by this Years 10-12 girl:

*I learnt to be more confident in myself and that I can defend myself. Also that sexual assault or domestic violence if caused to hurt me is not my fault.*

- comparison of pre-course attitudes of those Years 10-12 girls who had previously done a Girls' Self Defence Project course to those who had not, suggested such positive attitudes were maintained to a statistically significantly enhanced level several years later; and
- women participants and key stakeholders were typically insistent about experiencing the course only in empowering ways and not experiencing any hint of victim blaming. A pragmatic approach to ensuring women's safety meant that, while recognising violence against women is not their fault, they considered it important to equip women with skills for safety. As one refuge manager expressed it:

*In an ideal world women wouldn't have to worry about keeping themselves safe or be learning things like self defence. However, we don't live in an ideal world, and part of my job is to support women to keep themselves as safe as possible and I think a self defence course is a way of doing that.* (Women's refuge manager, women's courses)

***Learnt clear strategies for recognising, resisting and responding to specific violent/abusive events, disclosing abuse and seeking help, supporting other people who are victims of violence and abuse***

The core components of all WSDN-WT courses are to teach girls and women ways to keep themselves and their friends safe and how to use their mind, body and voice to keep safe.

- post course evaluation of girls' and women's courses found statistically significant improvements in relation to:
  - **understanding the importance of help seeking for themselves and others**, and importantly also high proportions (95%) of girls and women reporting their intention to do this if required. This was supported by strong evidence from the qualitative analysis of girls and women learning to use their voice and speak up. This was a valued and often liberating experience. The following quote from a Years 3-4 girl is an example of the important learning that can occur following a self defence course:

*If someone touched me in a way that made me feel yucky or uncomfortable... I wouldn't keep it for a secret because it would make me feel yucky. I would tell somebody for them to get it sorted with.*

- **recognising potentially risky situations** for Years 7-8 and 10-12 girls, and women;
- **knowing ways to stay safe**, and importantly significant improvements in their **confidence to use these self defence** skills if required. Responses by all girls to an open ended question at the end of the course provided further evidence of high levels of understanding of how to put the self defence strategies they had learnt into practice. An example of the learnings taken away from the course is illustrated by this Years 7-8 girl who, when asked what she would do in a scenario requiring self defence, answered:

*If they were holding on my neck and trying to drag me into a car first I would turn around strongly then elbow them in the nose kick in groin [groin], then push them to the ground and punch them one more time, run a way tell parents and police.*

- comparison of pre-course ratings of those Years 10-12 girls who had previously done a Girls' Self Defence Project course to those who had not suggested the **increased knowledge of how to keep themselves safe** and how to be an **ethical bystander** was maintained to a statistically significantly higher level several years later; and
- qualitative analysis pointed to the importance of participants not only learning simple yet effective self defence skills and strategies, but also the opportunity to practise them. This appeared to be a valued aspect of the course that was seen by many interviewees as one that set it apart from other sexual violence prevention programmes that were limited in scope to imparting knowledge.

*It's actually practising being really loud verbally, and being assertive, and going through the different actions that they can do in those situations, and actually acting them out – rather than saying this is what you should do, actually allowing them to say “right do this, and now let's practise it”. I think that's what's been powerful about it. (School principal, Girls Years 3-4).*

### **Women and girls feel empowered and have their self-esteem enhanced**

The strongest finding to emerge from this research was the increases in confidence, self-esteem and empowerment post course. Key findings included:

- statistically significant **increases in self-esteem**, as measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale, for Years 7-8 and 10-12, and when the sample was broken down by ethnicity for all four ethnic groups: Māori, New Zealand European, Pasifika and Asian;
- for girls of all ages and women self-reported increases in **confidence and feeling strong**. This was supported by findings from the qualitative analysis that also revealed increases in overall self-confidence and, importantly, increased confidence post course that participants could and would defend themselves and, if necessary, seek help for themselves or others. This is reflected in the following comment from a woman course participant:

*It gave me a lot more confidence.... You know how you're brought up to always be polite? I think for the first time it gave me permission to fight back. (Participant, women's course)*

- qualitative analysis also identified increased empowerment of participants, in particular that girls and women realised they have the right to be safe from violence and to have control over what happens to their bodies. The following quote from a Years 7-8 girl is an example of the enhanced confidence and empowerment achieved:

*Well I enjoyed everything, but I loved learning that every girl is strong & can stand up for herself & not to be vonrable (vulnerable), I learnt to be powerful.*

### **Reduced vulnerabilities to child abuse, sexual and family violence and re-victimisation, and stranger danger**

The ultimate aim of WSDN-WT self defence courses is to provide the girls and women with the knowledge, skills and attitudes in order to reduce their likelihood of becoming victims of abuse or sexual violence. It is difficult to quantitatively assess the degree to which this happens, however, whilst conducting interviews, a surprising number of first and second hand stories emerged that suggested girls and women had retained their self defence skills, and when needed were able to put them into practice. Examples included:

- girls defending themselves against bullying;
- girls identifying and disclosing sexual abuse to a safe adult;
- girls and women identifying and avoiding potentially violent situations;

- girls and women fending off and escaping from violent sexual attacks

*When he was attacking me, I was panicking and everything. Like, I didn't know what to do until I remembered I did the self defence course.*

(Participant, teen parent unit)

- girls and women actively seeking help for friends, family members and strangers in trouble; and
- women standing up for themselves and leaving violent relationships.

*He wanted to isolate me and keep me away from everybody, and after that course, I went back and said to him, "No, this ain't healthy, you're trying to control me, and this is not part of what a healthy relationship is."*

(Participant, women's course)

### **Outcomes for Māori women and girls**

The higher rate of sexual and violent victimisation of Māori women and girls places increased significance on the availability and effectiveness of self defence for this group. Māori have always been a priority focus for WSDN-WT, as reflected in their constitution's aims and in the caucus-based structure and decision-making model of WSDN-WT. When results for Māori girls and women were extracted for analysis, all measures of self defence knowledge, attitude and skills assessed were found to increase significantly post course.

The action-based way the programme was delivered was viewed as an easier 'fit' for Māori girls than other courses that were exclusively talk-based. Encouraging Māori girls and women to use their voices to stay safe was seen to be a particularly valuable outcome of courses:

*Tell them I do not like what they are doing and then tell them to back off if they don't I would fight back. 2. I would yell there name and yell what they are doing! So others can hear. (Māori girl, Years 7-8)*

*Voice, body language techniques, what body part is open to attack/defend myself, body blocking, don't stop at 1 defensive move, continue until the offender is down. (Māori participant, women's course)*

Course effectiveness for women was seen to be enhanced by all-Māori groups, especially if taught by a Māori WSDN-WT teacher.

### **Programme processes**

Some of the programme processes that were seen to contribute to the positive outcomes achieved following WSDN-WT courses included:

- the length of the course – a short intensive block run over one or two days rather than classes spread over a number of weeks;
- limiting class sizes – enabling the self defence teachers to ensure all participants were learning the moves correctly, while also enabling them to monitor how the information presented was being received;

- course content – that includes physical skills and techniques that are accessible to all, gender awareness and challenges to stereotypical views of sexual assault, help-seeking and ethical bystander interventions;
- taught by self defence teachers with the skills to engage participants in the topic whilst delivering an enjoyable experience;
- delivered by someone external to the school with expert knowledge of self defence;
- well-trained, respectful and professional self defence teachers able to create a safe environment and equipped to deal with triggering and abuse disclosures if they occur;
- offering courses to vulnerable groups in close partnership with relevant support agencies to ensure overall participant safety;
- identifying and delivering self defence to those most at risk of sexual victimisation or re-victimisation and tailoring the courses to meet the specific needs of any such group, with special attention to being culturally appropriate; and
- recruitment of a diverse mix of self defence teachers providing a range of skills and expertise to draw on.

## Challenging issues and future developments

Whilst conducting the research a number of challenging issues emerged which could potentially be viewed as impacting on the delivery of self defence by WSDN-WT. These included:

- how to overcome inaccurate stereotypical views that self defence is like martial arts, that it might enhance fear levels, and that it could lead to victim blaming;
- how to ensure sufficient and consistent funding enabling professional development and forward planning; and
- addressing the ‘gap’ created for boys when delivering self defence to girls.

Exploring these issues with key stakeholders and course participants revealed unanimous support for the current WSDN-WT courses and a desire to see these better funded in future to guarantee course delivery. While the literature review raised the possibility of potentially negative outcomes such as victim blaming and fear enhancing effects, there was absolutely no support for such views evident in our research findings. What emerged instead were accounts indicating that the self defence teachers worked consciously to reduce fear and perceptions of self-vulnerability, and were careful to emphasise that being victimised was never the fault of the victim.

The following suggestions were made during our interviews about how the teachers, women, support workers and other key stakeholders would like to see the WSDN-WT courses develop in the future:

- extend the length of some courses;

- increase the number of courses in schools and in the community for women;
- offer mother and daughter courses;
- expand delivery to other vulnerable groups;
- have more explicit links to the school curriculum; and
- be better funded and resourced.

## Conclusions

The overall report presents a compelling range of data, both quantitative and qualitative, that demonstrate clearly the extremely positive regard with which the WSDN-WT courses are held. Both the content and delivery were very highly rated, and school teachers and community stakeholders alike consistently praised the self defence teachers for their knowledge, skills, interactive abilities, cultural awareness, and sensitivity to sexual abuse and violence issues.

These results provide strong evidence of the importance of a range of integrated elements being fundamental to this organisation's successful delivery of self defence. Others can and do teach self defence, others can and do teach rape prevention. However, course participants and stakeholders in this study with knowledge of other such programmes routinely expressed criticisms of these, including misgivings about teacher professionalism and skills, concerns about the limited nature of course content, and anxieties regarding the management of triggering and disclosures. The strong collective that is WSDN-WT serves as a safe container for the teachers and the commitment to on-going training and evaluations further promotes the safety these women provide for all course participants.

Such attributes have developed and been strengthened during the more than 28 years of course delivery they have provided to thousands of girls and women in New Zealand. This winning formula could not be easily replicated, given how many core components are linked to its success. It is self defence **and**, as many of those interviewed said, it is so much more than self defence. Our analysis suggests it is the empowerment strand running through the programme that increases so significantly its effectiveness. Accordingly we suggest a range of recommendations (set out on p. 144) to be considered in relation to the future development of such courses, and to ensure all girls and women are able to learn 'skills for safety'.



## Part I – Introduction and methods

*I'm sure there are lots of kids here in ( x ) that are going through the same things I went through when I was a child. I'd love to get into the schools and say, "Hey, look, I'm a survivor of sexual abuse. You don't have to wait until you're 50 to learn self defence". (Participant, women's course)*

*It's not all about the physical part.... it's not just about stranger danger. It's about your relationships and making sure you're safe in your own relationships and that you're aware of how to keep yourself safe in your own family and in your own relationships that you have with your partner, so to me that was the key part of it. And so I think that's not something we do very well in our schools. We don't prepare our young people for parenthood. (Criminal justice stakeholder, women's courses)*

# 1 Introduction

This report summarises key findings from the 'Skills for Safety' project, an outcome evaluation of girls' and women's self defence courses run by the Women's Self Defence Network – Wāhine Toa (WSDN-WT). This project was funded by the Ministry of Social Development and has been completed by two independent researchers, Associate Professor Jan Jordan (Institute of Criminology, Victoria University of Wellington) and Dr Elaine Mossman (Adjunct Research Fellow, Victoria University of Wellington).

## 1.1 Background

WSDN-WT is a nationwide network of specialist trained accredited women teachers of self defence that has been in operation for 28 years. Their work aims to prevent or ensure early intervention to stop violence and abuse against women and girls. WSDN-WT has always been committed to evaluating the quality of their programmes and their ability to achieve their goals, with post course evaluation an integral part of the delivery of their courses. However, in the current climate of results based accountability, to ensure sustainable funding they recognised the importance of rigorous evaluation carried out by independent researchers. The 'Skills for Safety' research project sought to achieve these evaluation goals and was made possible with funding provided by the Ministry of Social Development.

### 1.1.1 WSDN-WT

WSDN-WT was established initially by women based in Southland and Otago. At their first training in 1988 in Riverton, they trained 18 women from throughout New Zealand, mainly from the South Island, as self defence teachers. The network was formally constituted in 1990 and since then has been providing regular training programmes and delivering courses to girls and women across New Zealand. During the 1990s WSDN-WT worked with self defence networks in other parts of the country to develop national accreditation standards, and since then the networks have merged so that today WSDN-WT is the single national network. It functions as a legally constituted Incorporated Society, with Charitable Status with Charities Services and Donee Status from the Inland Revenue Department. WSDN-WT is accredited with NZ Government Social Sector Accreditation Standards (Level 2) and has a contract with Community Investment, Ministry of Social Development, for the delivery of self defence courses to girls in schools (Years 3-4, 7-8 and 10-12).

WSDN-WT's underpinning philosophy is that all women and girls have the right to live in safety from abuse and violence. Their self defence teachers teach not just what constitutes abuse and violence, but also the vital strategies for how to recognise, prevent, intervene, de-escalate, get to safety, disclose, and seek support. They facilitate analysis of victim / abuser dynamics and how to change these and address power inequalities. The focus of their work is to equip women and girls with options, strategies and skills to stay safe from violence and abuse. This includes building confidence and resilience as well as teaching physical and practical skills. As their vision statement expresses it:

*“Our vision is of a safe and respectful society where violence and abuse are not O.K.*

*We believe that women and girls having the attitudes and skills of self defence is a significant step towards such a society.”*

While the original focus of WSDN-WT’s work was with women, over the past 20 years the focus has shifted to school age girls (7-17 years) with currently almost 10,000 girls per year benefitting from their self defence courses. More recently funding from the Ministry of Justice has enabled a funded return to delivery of self defence to women in communities identified as being vulnerable to sexual violence and abuse due to geographic and/or cultural and/or disability-related isolation.

## **1.2 Literature review**

### **1.2.1 Prevalence of violence against women and girls**

Violence against women is not a new occurrence. Historical analysis shows men in different cultures have used a range of different practices to control and abuse women – rape, footbinding, witch hunts, genital mutilation, and all the many forms of abuse used by husbands to control ‘their’ property. Rape in marriage was not even legally recognised as a crime in New Zealand until 1986.

In New Zealand, it is estimated that one in four females and one in eight males are likely to experience sexual violence or abuse in their lifetimes, many before the age of 16 (Mayhew & Reilly, 2006; Fanslow & Robinson, 2004; Morris et al, 2003). As such, New Zealand ranks as one of the countries with the highest rates of sexual violence and child sexual abuse in the OECD.

In New Zealand in 2012, the police attended 87,622 family violence situations, translating to one incident every 6-8 minutes. These statistics become even more shocking when we realise that there is international agreement that the Police see only the tip of the iceberg (Brown, 2011; Daly & Bouhours, 2010). Most women do not report incidents of violence perpetrated by men they know, and most women know their attacker.

In a study of 2,855 women surveyed in one urban and one rural area, over one-third (N = 956) reported that they had experienced at least one act of physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime (Fanslow and Robinson, 2010). The risk was somewhat higher for women living in rural areas (39%), compared with 33% of women living in an urban area. Intimate partner violence within the previous 12 months was reported by approximately 5% of respondents in both locations. Of those who had experienced moderate or severe physical violence, 42.4% (n = 362) had also experienced sexual violence – an important overlap that is not always recognised. The majority of women (76.7%) had told at least one person about their partner’s violence, and were more likely to talk to family or friends than support agencies. Of the 12.8% who talked to police, nearly one-third said they were satisfied with the police response. In terms of help-seeking, half the women did not approach any formal services for help, with the most common reason being that they perceived the violence to be ‘normal’ or ‘not serious’ (Fanslow and Robinson, 2010).

The true extent of sexual violence is even more hidden. It is generally believed that rape and sexual assault are the least reported offences, with UK expert Liz Kelly noting that:

*“Sexual violence, and rape in particular, is considered the most dramatically under-reported crime.”* (Kelly, 2002, p.9)

This is also true in New Zealand where sexual offences have the lowest level of reporting to police, with many factors silencing women from speaking out and seeking help. These include victims' feelings of shame, self-blame, powerlessness, fear of the perpetrator, and lack of confidence in police and justice sector agencies. Accordingly, the 2009 New Zealand Crime and Safety Survey estimated only 7% of sexual offences were reported to police (Ministry of Justice, 2010). While media accounts typically depict stranger attacks, the fact that most sexual abuse and violence occurs within families and relationships continues to remain under-recognised and victims struggle for belief and support.

### 1.2.2 Development and role of self defence in New Zealand

While violence against women is not new, what is relatively new are women's successes in securing at least some state support to assist the victims and work towards prevention. It is against this backdrop that women's self defence has emerged, and with it growing recognition of the mental and attitudinal aspects central to women's safety (Jordan, 2008). While physical measures can be learned and deployed, of fundamental importance is the mental preparedness to respond in situations of immediate threat, and ultimately believe in one's own right to be safe and respected in relationships.

Historically, fighting and self defence were viewed as more masculine pursuits until the early twentieth century when perceptions of women's vulnerability to street assaults prompted classes in self defence techniques being offered in various nations, including New Zealand. These courses were often presented as an essential element within suffragist campaigns seeking women's equality:

*Just as the female body had long been subjected to violence and abuse, women now used their bodies as a tool to fight against that abuse and violence and secure for themselves a newfound sense of freedom.* (Rouse & Slutsky, 2014, p.499).

Popular at this time with young women was jiu-jitsu in particular. The 1910 publication, *Scouting for Girls*, included a picture demonstrating “that if a scoundrel tried to grab a young woman then this move would make him 'howl with pain' and, if carried out quickly, could break his wrist.” (Dollery, 2012).

Also around this time Flossie Le Mar toured New Zealand as the first woman to teach self defence. She was ahead of her time, performing a stage show with her husband, a champion wrestler, to show the audience how possible it was for “a maid to bash a ruffian”, and in 1913 published a book “The Life and Adventures of Miss Flossie Le Mar, Jiu-Jitsu Girl” (Dalley, 2013). Later judo became popular from the 1950s onwards, appealing so greatly as a means of self defence for women that some clubs rose to 50% female membership.

The women's liberation movement from the late 1960s onwards heralded a time when women again took to the streets protesting violence against women, and in the 1970s and 1980s there emerged a growing awareness of both the realities of violence against women and the merits of self defence (Dann, 1985). Articles on the importance of women learning self defence skills appeared in New Zealand's feminist magazine, *Broadsheet*, as early as 1974, when a piece carried tips advising any woman attacked to identify vulnerable parts of the assailant, including giving a sharp, upward thrust to his groin.

From 1979 Sue Lytollis, a feminist and champion kendo (Japanese fencing) practitioner, was employed to run women's self defence courses for the YWCA. As demand increased she trained other feminists with martial arts backgrounds to deliver these courses and brought out a book on self defence in 1983 that became a popular seller (Lytollis, 1983). In the 1980s four women's self defence networks operated, and in the 1990s there were moves towards establishing national standards and ensuring course availability was nationwide.

Today Women's Self Defence Network - Wāhine Toa is the national network and encompasses women from all the earlier networks. WSDN-WT works in pursuit of a society where violence and abuse against women and girls no longer occurs, envisioning a safe and respectful society for all. While such a positive vision for the future is empowering, awareness continues to grow of the high levels of violence against girls and women, particularly in the home, and the likelihood of the same individuals experiencing multiple forms of victimisation through the lifespan. In other words, victimisation in childhood and young adulthood will often precede adult victimisation, and can lead to a lifetime of repeat victimisation (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2012).

The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, 2011, stressed the importance of recognising and understanding the structural dynamics underpinning violence against women. Such recognition includes understanding that "violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between women and men, which have led to domination over, and discrimination against, women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women." (Extract from the Preamble to the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, 2011).

Parallel understanding also appears to be growing regarding the possible benefits resulting from increasing girls' and women's confidence and self-esteem through self defence training.

### **1.2.3 Aims of self defence programmes**

The goals of women's self defence programmes are typically oriented towards increasing the efficacy of participants to protect and defend themselves against potential future attackers. While the obvious emphasis is on the physical techniques learned, many studies of the impacts of participation in such courses demonstrate that the benefits also include psychological and behavioural changes. The psychological benefits listed include reductions in fear and anxiety, and increases in levels of assertiveness, confidence, and self-esteem. Behavioural changes noted

include the adoption of preventative behaviours and increased physical competencies.

Self defence programmes provide participants with opportunities to learn, observe and practise a range of skills through participation in discussions, role plays and simulation exercises. Cummings (1992) listed the primary goals as being:

- to identify the realities and myths regarding sexual assault and violence against women;
- to provide information that will support the basic attitudes and attributes of self defence, including assertiveness, awareness, self-reliance, confidence, and physical fitness;
- to establish ways for students to learn how to identify threatening and high-risk situations;
- to provide skill-building activities that incorporate mental, vocal, and physical self defence techniques;
- to provide strategies for specific situations; and
- to provide information about resources available to women who have been or may be abused or assaulted (p.185).

Orchowski et al. (2008) identified two extra aims of self defence programmes.

- to teach women how to utilise an increasingly more assertive hierarchy of verbal and physical resistance once a potential threat is detected; and
- to indirectly assist in the recovery process by decreasing self-blame in women who experience sexual victimisation. This is because some instances of sexual victimisation are unavoidable, and so developers of risk reduction programmes for women must ensure that programme content does not have the iatrogenic effect of increasing women's feelings of self-blame or guilt for experiences of sexual assault (Breitenbecher, 2000, cited in Orchowski et al., 2008).

There is growing recognition of the significant potential for self defence courses as an important component of sexual assault prevention initiatives, particularly when presented within a context emphasising rights and respect. Increasing girls' and women's knowledge and skills around a range of ways to respond to abuse or assaults increases their safety and survival options.

### **1.2.4 Objections, criticisms and resistance to self defence**

Misgivings about the value of self defence courses remain despite the growing recognition of positive benefits associated when programmes are delivered within an empowerment framework. Four major objections to the provision of self defence training for women that have been identified are:

- women are not physically strong enough;
- resistance is not effective;
- self defence training is victim blaming; and

- men should be solely responsible for rape prevention (Gidycz & Dardis, 2014).

These criticisms have been dismissed for reflecting traditional assumptions about gender socialisation rather than emanating from empirical research (ibid).

A considerable body of academic research now exists showing that self defence training has positive consequences for women, including improvements in self-esteem, self-efficacy, assertiveness, fighting skills, as well as reducing levels of fear (Brecklin, 2008; Brecklin & Ullman, 2005; Hollander, 2004, 2014).

Despite such evidence, there is still considerable debate surrounding the topic of self defence. A popular fear, sometimes reinforced by crime prevention advice, is that teaching women to resist an attacker will increase their risks of serious victimisation. Submitting to rape, it is argued, is preferable to the risk of possibly fatal injuries. Others have emphasised, however, that the consequences of being raped are so harmful that there is good reason to do whatever possible to avoid rape.

Studies on effective rape avoidance show that the combination of physical resistance (fighting or fleeing) and verbal resistance (e.g. yelling, sending clear messages) is not only associated with avoiding rape but brings with it no increased risk of physical injury (Brecklin & Ullman, 2005; Ullman, 1998, 2007).

*Women with training before their assaults were angrier and less scared during the incident than women without training, consistent with the teachings of self-defense training...[which] often teach women the importance of channeling their fear into anger during an assault. (Brecklin & Ullman, 2005, p.753)*

Resistance, it appears, is not dangerous for women – but may be for men. Equally evident is that not resisting and not fighting back make a completed rape more likely. Recent commentators have suggested specialised self defence training should be provided for victims of child sexual abuse to help reduce their risks of future revictimisation (Ullman, 2014), risks we know otherwise run high (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2012).

Feminist politics surrounding self defence is often a fraught affair. While some feminists stress the importance of teaching girls and women skills for safety, others are critical that this continues the historical pattern of victim-blaming, placing the responsibility for keeping themselves safe on potential victims. It is argued that prevention efforts should involve and target men, and be oriented towards reducing the incidence of violence against women. There are arguments in support of both positions, and forcing a choice between these options obscures the need for a range of prevention approaches to be adopted.

The analogy of child drowning accidents may be useful here. In a country surrounded by water, it makes good sense to teach children water safety and how to swim so that, in the event that they are engulfed by a rogue wave, they can fight to stay alive and not wait helplessly for a life guard to rescue them. Actually knowing how to swim may not be the most important outcome; acquired in the process will be a child's increased confidence in their own abilities and capacity to remain calm and act in self-preservation. In a similar vein, the learning of self defence has been recognised as transformative in its ability to change how women view and feel about themselves and their bodies (Hollander, 2004). There is also compelling evidence

demonstrating that when women are attacked, those who resist are much less likely to have the rape completed against them than non-resisting victims (Kleck and Sayles, 1990). The general consensus is that fighting back provides an opportunity to avoid being raped, without increasing the severity of the attack (Hollander, 2014; Thompson, 2014; Ullman, 1998). It is for reasons such as this, it is argued, that self defence training should be recognised and funded as an effective form of primary rape prevention.

### **1.2.5 Research on effectiveness of women and girls' self defence**

There is now a sizable body of research assessing the effects of self defence training on course participants, particularly within the United States where such programmes are regularly offered to college students. Brecklin (2008) undertook a review of twenty quantitative studies that aimed to assess the effects of self defence training on women participants. She found many of the studies showed improvements in all eight of the variables assessed:

- assertiveness;
- self-esteem;
- anxiety;
- perceived control;
- fear of sexual assault;
- self efficacy; and
- physical competence.

#### ***Reduced sexual victimisation***

More recent studies using rigorous designs have also produced convincing evidence of reduced sexual victimisation as a result of participation in self defence. A mixed methods study of a university-based feminist self defence course found, after a one-year follow up, that the women who participated in the course were less likely to experience sexual assault and more confident in their abilities to resist such assaults effectively than similar women who had not taken such a class (Hollander, 2014). The researcher concluded:

*Virtually every other prevention strategy has proved ineffective at reducing sexual victimisation. If self-defense training reduces women's subsequent risk of sexual assault, it would provide an effective and fairly simple way to reduce women's vulnerability to violence.* (Hollander, 2014, p. 264).

Similar positive findings also emerged from an internationally hailed research study involving nearly 900 women from three Canadian universities (Senn et al., 2015). Half of the women were randomly selected to undertake a 12-hour resistance and self defence programme, while the control group received only brochures offering prevention advice. The research found that, one year later, the incidence of reported rape among women who took the programme (5.2%) was just under half that of the women in the control group (9.8%), while the gap in incidents of attempted rape was even wider. These outcomes demonstrate that as well as improving confidence and



self esteem, a robust self defence programme can reduce rates of sexual victimisation.

While the majority of studies on self defence have been conducted in the United States with college age women, the topic has attracted attention in other parts of the world with reference to school age girls. For example, Sinclair et al. (2013) undertook one of the few studies conducted in deprived areas characterised by high rates of sexual assault. Their evaluation of a programme for adolescent girls in Kenya, taught with an empowerment focus, found no change in sexual violence rates for the control group while the self defence group had a 15% reduction. Over half of the self defence group reported using the strategies taught to prevent sexual victimisation, and also noted decreased levels of assaults committed by boyfriends and family members (Sinclair et al., 2013).

### ***Important elements associated with effectiveness***

Findings from international research studies indicate that the most effective self defence training is presented as a package of related mental concepts and physical techniques. Only teaching kicks and punches is insufficient, likewise only telling participants they have the right to be safe. It is the combination of practical skills taught by specially trained self defence teachers, accompanied by strong messages aimed at increasing self esteem and confidence, that together increase course effectiveness.

There are important implications from this finding. These include:

- recognising that martial arts courses will have limited impact compared with courses where physical self defence skills are taught within the context of a feminist empowerment model;
- realising that it is essential for those teaching such courses to be very carefully selected, trained and supervised – that this is a specialist role best provided by persons external to the daily school environment, operating within a nationally accredited programme;
- resisting the financial temptation of having a teacher already within a school offer this training – this would result in huge inconsistencies in course content and delivery, and leave it up to variable monitoring; and
- responding to the argument that ‘boys need it too’ by encouraging men prepared to take a stand against violence against women to develop and offer equivalent programmes for boys aimed at increasing their confidence, teaching non-violent methods of conflict resolution, and challenging dominant male norms of toughness and physical bravado.

United States self defence researcher Jocelyn Hollander argues that a particularly valuable feature of feminist self defence training is that it does not restrict women’s freedom, as do many other prevention strategies. Rather, she argues, “it empowers women and thus increases their freedom” (Hollander, 2014, p.265). It challenges depictions of female bodies as inherently vulnerable and rape-able, and has been acknowledged for the potential role it can play in the dismantling of rape culture (Cahill, 2009). Hollander’s (2014) analysis, based on female participants’ experiences of self defence courses taught at a college in the United States, also

indicated that women who participate in self defence training are less likely to experience attempted sexual assault than those who do not.

### 1.2.6 Self defence as part of a wider society response

Critics have observed that such programmes run the risk of helping individual women to avoid rape and violence, but are unable to fix the structural issues underlying violence against women (Bolger, 2015). In effect this may mean that while Self Defence Woman A manages to avoid rape, non-Self Defence Woman B is still raped. Researchers, however, have recognised this dilemma, responding that:

*“[The resistance class] gives women the knowledge and skills they need right now, but the long-term solution is to reduce their need to defend themselves.”*  
(Senn, quoted in Bolger, 2015).

Self defence training is now recognised by many as an essential element in rape prevention (Brecklin, 2008; Gidycz & Dardis, 2014; Hollander, 2009; Orchowski et al, 2008; Senn et al., 2015; Seith & Kelly, 2003; Thomson, 2014; Ullman, 2007), but only if presented from a perspective explicitly oriented towards women’s empowerment. As noted, the physical skills and moves on their own are insufficient to change women’s attitudes towards themselves and their bodies, and must be taught within a broader context that recognises the connections between violence against women and the legacy of patriarchy. There is no suggestion that self defence programmes on their own are a sufficient tool in anti-rape campaigns – instead they should form one element of a combined, co-ordinated effort aimed at reducing violence against women. No single programme can be ‘the answer’, when no single factor causes ‘the problem.’

A major research project undertaken within the European Union (EU) recommended that greater recognition was needed of the ways women’s self defence training contributes to the prevention, and eventual elimination, of gender-based violence (Seith & Kelly, 2003). The authors found clear indications supporting the need for the development of self defence training programmes to remain in the hands of the movement, citing the example of the Netherlands which experienced a dilution in quality standards following their mainstreaming of the profession (Seith & Kelly, 2003). The advantages of mainstreaming, such as sending a strong message of state support and ensuring better job security for self defence teachers, would be better met by increased, guaranteed state support that enabled proven existing providers to consolidate their current practices further.

Frequently emphasised is that the social need for the provision of self defence programmes will continue as long as violence against women remains a major social and health problem. The long-term goal is the elimination of such violence, but until such time as this is achieved all necessary steps must be taken to help to reduce existing levels of victimisation. Self defence training is not generally presented as a standalone solution but valued for the significant and positive role it can play as one of several key elements in rape prevention (Gavey & Senn, 2014). This is consistent also with findings from an extensive review of women’s self defence courses in Europe, which prompted international expert Professor Liz Kelly to conclude, with co-author Corinna Seith, that such courses should be viewed as “one element within a comprehensive prevention strategy.” (Seith, & Kelly, 2003).

Overall, the findings from this literature review demonstrate that the benefits resulting from women's self defence courses, when presented within an empowerment context, are significant across a range of fronts affecting individual, community, and national health and well-being. Also evident is the economic sense of such programmes, given the relative cheapness with which such courses can be offered compared with the extremely high costs associated with responding to the impacts of sexual violence.

### 1.3 Research objectives

Violence against girls/women is a major New Zealand problem with serious, sometimes fatal, consequences. The overwhelming health, social and economic impacts of violence against women have prompted a recent emphasis on identifying effective prevention strategies. This research aims to develop a better understanding of the unique role and impact of girls' and women's self defence in responding to this problem.

The overarching objective of this evaluation is to understand and document the value and impact of self defence to the girls and women who participate in WSDN-WT self defence courses and to the communities they live in. More specifically, the research asks to what extent self defence courses can assist participants to:

- recognise sexual and family violence and abuse;
- understand that it is not okay (and not their fault);
- learn clear strategies for recognising, resisting and responding to specific violent/abusive events, disclosing abuse and seeking help, supporting other people who are victims of violence and abuse; and
- feel empowered and have their self-esteem enhanced.

A further aim of the project was to investigate the extent to which short term/intermediary outcomes, if achieved, can reduce vulnerabilities to child abuse, sexual and family violence and re-victimisation, and stranger danger.

### 1.4 Structure of this report

This report is divided into four sections.

- **Part I – Introduction and methods.** This includes background information to the evaluation and details of the method used.
- **Part II – Programme characteristics.** This presents information on the extent of self defence delivered by WSDN-WT together with characteristics of the courses delivered and those who participate. This provides an important context for the research whilst also demonstrating the organisational capacity of WSDN-WT.
- **Part III – Programme outcomes.** This section presents the outcomes of WSDN-WT self defence courses based on both quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods. It concludes with a section that brings together findings that specifically relate to Māori girls and women.

- **Part IV – Programme processes and conclusions.** This section draws heavily on interview data and presents factors identified as contributing to the outcomes achieved by WSDN-WT. It also discusses some of the challenges and issues related to the delivery of self defence in schools and the community. The section ends with recommendations for future development and an overall conclusion.

## 2 Methods

An evaluation framework was developed by Associate Professor Jan Jordan and Dr Elaine Mossman in collaboration with WSDN-WT. The WSDN-WT research team consisted of the chairperson, administrator and five self defence teachers.<sup>1</sup>

### 2.1 Research design

A mixed method research design was agreed upon to assess the value of self defence for two key groups: (a) school age girls, and (b) women in the community. This comprised quantitative measures to reflect the views of a significant number of girls of varying ages, in combination with qualitative interviews to provide information and details regarding how WSDN-WT self defence courses were perceived and experienced.

The four case study areas where key informant interviews took place were selected to include a mix of rural/urban locations, and communities with different ethnic makeup (two South Island and two North Island).

Four separate groups were interviewed:

- key informants/stakeholders for the Girls' Self Defence Project courses;
- key informants/stakeholders for the Isolation to Empowerment women's courses;
- women's course participants; and
- WSDN-WT self defence teachers.

#### ***(a) The value of self defence for school age girls***

This first component consisted of the evaluation of a substantial sample (n=2731) of school age girls undertaking the WSDN-WT course, using pre and post course evaluation forms. The pre-post forms included a mix of validated (e.g. Rosenberg Self-esteem) and programme specific questions (closed and open-ended).

This quantitative data were supplemented by qualitative data. Views were obtained from 12 schools in total, four that offered courses to Years 3-4 girls, four that offered courses to Years 7-8 girls and four providing courses for Years 10-12 girls. (One of these schools offered courses to girls at both Years 3-4 and 7-8.) A total of 14 key informants/stakeholders contributed to the interviews, including principals and deputy principals, guidance counsellors and school teachers.

#### ***(b) The value of self defence for women***

This second component of the project consisted of focus groups (n=4) and individual interviews (n=2) with a total of 15 past participants (e.g. women who have been clients of Women's Refuge and women culturally or geographically isolated, with

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<sup>1</sup> WSDN-WT is Treaty and caucus-based with wāhine Māori self defence teachers and board members, several of whom were also core members of the research team.

particular effort to obtain the views of Māori women), together with pre-post course evaluation of programmes run in the first half of 2015 (n=115).

Interviews with key stakeholders (n=15) in the same case study areas as above provided an important community-based perspective on the value of these courses (e.g. Women's Refuge, Migrant Support, Rural Women, Rape Crisis, court workers and other community stakeholders). Twelve of these 15 key stakeholders had themselves participated in the WSDN-WT courses held in their area so could reflect on their own experiences of being a participant as well as their knowledge and observations of how the course impacted on others. In total, the views of 27 individual women who participated on these courses were obtained.

A further six interviews were conducted with self defence teachers in the case study areas, plus an interview with the chairperson of WSDN-WT, all of which provided additional useful information regarding programme content and delivery, selection and training of teachers, and the aims and philosophy informing the organisation.

### ***Interviewing***

All interviews followed a semi-structured approach and sought to facilitate respondents' ability to discuss and reflect on the issues they saw as pertinent to their context and experience. Not all interviewees, therefore, were asked identical questions, and some interviews were time-constrained by considerations such as school timetables. Interviews ranged in length from 45 minutes to two and a half hours. All interviews were digitally recorded with participants' permission and transcribed verbatim.

Aggregated and anonymised, past and current evaluation material collected by WSDN-WT was also made available to the researchers for review.

## **2.2 Procedures**

Ethical approval was granted by the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee.

### **2.2.1 Recruitment and informed consent**

**School age girls** - WSDN-WT courses are run at the request of schools, and all girls attending WSDN-WT courses taught by senior self defence teachers in the first half of 2015 were eligible to participate.

All eligible schools who were invited to participate in the research were initially contacted by letter (see appendix A) with details of the research explained and contact details of the VUW researchers provided to answer any questions. All schools approached agreed to participate.

The girls themselves were recruited using normal school/WSDN-WT course recruitment methods. Parents/caregivers gave informed consent for their child to participate using the school's standard procedures for gaining parental consent (typically a letter sent home to parents enabling them to elect for their child not to participate). Additional accompanying information was sent to parents in regards to the research, ensuring they were able to elect for their child not to participate in the

research, but making it clear this would not impact on their child's ability to participate in the self defence course itself (see appendix A).

**Women participants** - Every partner organisation involved with running a women's self defence course in the first half of 2015 was consulted in relation to the research project and potential involvement of the women participants associated with their organisation.

Women focus group participants and interviewees were approached in the first instance by the partner agency that collaborated in the delivery of the WSDN-WT course. They were provided with information on the research and asked for their permission for a researcher to contact them.

Written informed consent was collected from all focus group participants (see Appendix A). Informed consent from women attending self defence courses for completion of pre-post evaluation forms was implied through voluntary completion of these forms after reading a description at the beginning of the forms about the research, what it involves and what will happen to their responses.

**Key informants and stakeholders** were those identified by WSDN-WT and the researchers as having first-hand experience / knowledge of the WSDN-WT courses, content, and delivery. Written informed consent was collected from all key informants/stakeholders (see Appendix A).

## 2.3 Participants

### 2.3.1 School age girls

Pre-post evaluations of WSDN-WT girls' self defence courses were collected in the first half of 2015 for a total of 126 courses run by senior WSDN-WT self defence teachers. This represents a third of all courses run in the 12 months July 2014 to June 2015 (n=388). Courses were spread across New Zealand covering both North (67%) and South Island (33%) locations with a mix of metropolitan (33%), small urban (37%), rural town (24%) and rural (6%) schools. Courses were delivered in schools from the full range of decile ratings 1 through 10 and included one Teen Parent Unit.

A total of 2731 girls and young women participated in the pre-post evaluations of these courses, with just over two-thirds being in Years 7-8 (the primary target group for GSDP courses). This included:

- Years 3-4 (n=244, 9%);
- Years 7-8 (n=1851, 68%); and
- Years 10-12 (n=636, 23%).<sup>2</sup>

As will be seen in tables 2.1 to 2.3, there was a high proportion of girls identifying as Māori and Pasifika reflecting the purposeful targeting of WSDN-WT. Overall 29% of

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<sup>2</sup> The pre and post course evaluation data from the Teen Parent Unit were included with the Years 10-12 data.

## 2. Methods

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participants identified as Māori and 9% were Pasifika. A breakdown of other ethnicities identified 55% were NZ European, 5% were Asian, and 2% 'other'.<sup>3</sup>

For the Years 3-4 also evident is the targeting of lower decile ratings. For Years 7-8 and Years 10-12, courses are a mix of either more rural areas, lower decile ratings, or those with a high proportion of Māori. However, in some areas the intermediate and/or high schools service very large areas that include rural surroundings (e.g. Palmerston North). These schools can be of higher decile ratings and located in metropolitan areas, but meet WSDN-WT's criteria as they ensure self defence is delivered to girls who will not have access to it otherwise (e.g. girls living in rural areas who travel into town for school, or those from lower socio-economic suburbs who also attend these schools). There were also some higher decile schools for Years 7-8 from Canterbury that were included due to the stress of the earthquakes of 2010/11.

**Table 2.1 Characteristics of Years 3-4 (n=244) participants**

Variable	Frequency	Valid Percentage
<b>Region</b>		
North Island	33	14%
South Island	211	87%
<b>Population Density</b>		
Metropolitan	33	14%
Small Urban	211	87%
<b>Decile Ratings</b>		
1	33	14%
2	48	20%
3	25	10%
5	79	32%
9	59	24%
<b>Age</b>		
6 yrs	5	2%
7 yrs	101	42%
8 yrs	125	52%
9 yrs	11	5%
Unspecified	2	
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
NZ European	134	56%
Māori	87	36%
Pasifika	11	5%
Asian	6	3%
Other	1	0.4%
Unspecified	5	
<b>Total</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>100%</b>

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<sup>3</sup> There were n=190 girls where an ethnicity was not specified.



**Table 2.2 Characteristics of Years 7-8 (n=1851) participants**

Variable	Frequency	Valid Percentage
<b>Region</b>		
North Island	1197	65%
South Island	654	35%
<b>Population Density</b>		
Metropolitan	573	31%
Small Urban	504	27%
Rural Town	619	34%
Rural	140	8%
Unspecified	15	-
<b>Decile Ratings</b>		
1	105	6%
2	162	9%
3	169	9%
4	401	22%
5	164	9%
6	403	22%
7	81	4%
8	183	10%
9	80	4%
10	67	4%
Unspecified	36	-
<b>Age</b>		
9 yrs	5	0.3%
10 yrs	28	2%
11 yrs	404	23%
12 yrs	1243	70%
13 yrs	101	6%
14 yrs	2	0.1%
Unspecified	68	-
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
NZ European	935	53%
Māori	542	31%
Pasifika	182	10%
Asian	71	4%
Other	39	2%
Unspecified	82	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>1851</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 2.3 Characteristics of Years 10-12 (n=636) participants.**

Variable	Frequency	Valid Percentage
<b>Region</b>		
North Island	613	96%
South Island	23	4%
<b>Population Density</b>		
Metropolitan	289	45%
Small Urban	299	47%
Rural Town	25	4%
Rural	23	4%
<b>Decile Ratings</b>		
1	21	3%
2	25	4%
3	65	10%
7	225	35%
8	32	5%
9	268	42%
<b>Age</b>		
13 yrs	37	6%
14 yrs	453	76%
15 yrs	50	8%
16 yrs	36	6%
17 yrs	10	2%
18-20 yrs	8	1%
Unspecified	42	-
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
NZ European	337	63%
Māori	120	23%
Pasifika	31	6%
Asian	39	7%
Other	6	1%
Unspecified	103	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>636</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 2.3.2 Women participants

Interviews were conducted with participants from the following targeted groups: women's refuge and specialist sexual assault support agencies (n=6); Māori (n=3); women's centres (n=3); and teen parent units (n=3).

Pre-post evaluations were collected from the following WSDN-WT targeted courses:

- migrant and refugee (4 courses, n=68)
- rural Tau Iwi (2 courses, n=18);
- wāhine Māori (1 course, n=10); and

- disability - brain injury and hearing impaired (2 courses, n=19).

More details of the courses and characteristics of the participants appear in table 2.4. Note: the high percentage of Asian women (which included 11 different ethnic origins) reflects the four migrant/refugee courses.

**Table 2.4 Details of women participants (n=115)**

Variable	Frequency	Valid Percentage
<b>Type of course</b>		
Migrant/refugee (n=4)	68	59%
Rural (n=2)	18	16%
Māori (n=1)	12	9%
Disability (n=2)	19	17%
<b>Region</b>		
North Island	97	84%
South Island	181	16%
<b>Population Density</b>		
Metropolitan	79	69%
Small Urban	28	24%
Rural	8	7%
<b>Age group</b>		
17-29 yrs	22	21%
30-44 yrs	45	43%
45-59 yrs	30	29%
60+ yrs	7	7%
Unspecified	11	
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
NZ European	40	35%
Māori	12	10%
Pasifika	1	1%
Asian	48	42%
Other	1	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 2.3.3 Key informants/stakeholders and participants

Interviews were conducted with individuals from the following organisations:

- school teachers, a school guidance counsellor, deputy principals, and principals from primary schools (n=4) intermediate schools (n=4) and high schools (n=4);
- partner agencies including women's refuge and specialist sexual violence support services (n=8), women's centre (n=1), teen parent unit (n=1), migrant/refugee (n=1), rural women (n=1);

- other community stakeholders including a victim advisor (n=1), a crown prosecutor (n=1), a representative from Stopping Violence Services (n=1); and
- WSDN-WT self defence teachers and chairperson (n=7).

### **2.4 Analysis**

All qualitative interview data were analysed for emerging themes assisted by the NVivo software. Quantitative data (pre-post course evaluations) was analysed using appropriate repeated-measures statistical tests (e.g. t-tests) following data cleaning and evaluation of any violations of test assumptions.

### **2.5 Presentation**

The report is mostly presented in third person, however, in keeping with the standard convention for qualitative research, the qualitative results and analysis are presented in first person.

## Part II – Programme characteristics

*I thought it was brilliant, I mean to be strong and courageous, and that “I’m in charge of me”. It’s just such a powerful, positive message for anyone. (School teacher, Girls Years 3-4)*

## 3 Programme characteristics

This section outlines the extent of the self defence courses delivered by WSDN-WT together with the characteristics of course content and participants. This provides important context for the research whilst also demonstrating the organisational capacity of WSDN-WT.

### 3.1 Self defence for school age girls

WSDN-WT has been contracted by the Ministry of Social Development to deliver self defence to school girls through the Girls' Self Defence Project (GSDP) for nearly 20 years. In that time over 125,000 girls have participated in a course, for an average cost of less than \$50 per girl. This section presents a snap shot of the previous five years (July 2010 to June 2015), providing insights into the extent and focus of the Girls' Self Defence Project courses. The section begins by describing the funding of the girls' self defence courses and criteria for selecting which schools receive a course.

#### 3.1.1 Funding and selection process for Girls' Self Defence Project

WSDN-WT has always taken a nationwide view to its delivery of self defence to girls through the Girls' Self Defence Project and its plans and processes aim to provide potential access to these courses for girls regardless of where in New Zealand they live. Within this nationwide view, priority is given to reaching vulnerable girls including those most at risk from violence and abuse, and those with limited alternative access to learning self defence.

##### ***Target Courses: Kōtiro Māori***

Additionally, WSDN-WT has identified two target areas for the Girls' Self Defence Project – Te Tai Tokerau (Northland) and Te Tai Rawhiti (East Coast). Target courses are accorded the highest priority for funding approval by WSDN-WT. To qualify as a target course, the course must be in one of the two target areas, and must also reach the 70% minimum proportion of Māori girls in the course. This policy has been in place since 1999 and assigns a priority allocation of 30 target courses per annum, for these two specific areas.

##### ***Priorities of Non-Target courses***

Since 2001, WSDN-WT's policy has been that funding of the non-target courses be prioritised to:

- kōtiro Māori;
- low socio-economic communities; and
- geographically isolated locations.

While the application of these priorities is generally straightforward, they can sometimes, in practice, be conflicting. For example, rurally isolated schools are often higher decile, reflecting the farming communities surrounding them. However they

### 3. Programme characteristics

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are often the only school in the area, and have a catchment of all the families so will span the socioeconomic spectrum. As a result, some higher decile schools in rural areas and small towns will be funded because of their encompassing catchment of girls. In practice, the process of selecting courses for funding and delivery is as follows:

1. WSDN-WT has six-monthly 'approval rounds', where the courses nationwide for the next two school terms are considered for approval.
2. For each round, the WSDN-WT teachers submit proposals in conjunction with schools, specifying exactly which courses they are seeking funding for, including the number, age group and ethnicities of the girls; whether the course is a 'target course'; the school decile rating; the rurality or otherwise; travel and any accommodation costs required; and any special factors pertaining to the school (e.g. recent issues of abuse or sexual assault).
3. The proposed courses are costed, compared to the budget available, then courses are declined or approved to match the budget and reflect priorities and nationwide balance.
4. Self defence teachers and schools are advised of the decisions made in the approvals round. The self defence teachers can then finalise details with the school, and proceed with approved course delivery.

It is noted that at times multiple small rural schools will join together with one Girls' Self Defence Project course reaching all the same-age girls of all the schools involved. Sometimes this may involve two, three or four rural schools collaborating along with the WSDN-WT teacher involved. This enables WSDN-WT to reach girls from some of the smallest and most isolated rural schools in New Zealand.

It also noted that any schools who are in a position to fund self defence courses for their girls are welcome to make these arrangements directly with the self defence teacher. The above proposal/approval process only applies to courses which are seeking Girls' Self Defence Project funding.

#### **3.1.2 Characteristics of school age girls who received WSDN-WT self defence over last five years**

Over the last five years there have been over 2,220 Girls' Self Defence Project courses delivered, reaching nearly 50,000 girls. This equates to close to 10,000 girls per annum receiving self defence instruction. In total there were:

- 397 courses delivered to 7,663 girls from Years 3-4;
- 1,546 courses delivered to 34,719 girls from Years 7-8; and
- 285 courses delivered to 6,153 girls in Years 10-12.

The priority targeting of WSDN-WT is reflected in the characteristics of the girls and schools receiving self defence over the last five years (see tables 3.1 to 3.6). For example, the proportion of Māori girls ranges from 25% to 43% across the different age groupings with an overall proportion of 34%. Also, there tends to be a greater proportion of schools from the lowest 4 decile ratings (51%) than from the highest 4

### 3. Programme characteristics

(21% in deciles 7 to 10). This lower decile focus is a positive achievement considering the daily challenges facing some low decile schools.

**Table 3.1 Ethnicity of Years 3-4 girls (n=7663) over last five years**

Variable	Frequency	Valid Percentage
<b>Ethnicity<sup>1</sup></b>		
NZ European	2711	35%
Māori	3278	43%
Pasifika	666	9%
Asian	327	4%
Other	681	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>7663</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 3.2 Characteristics of Years 3-4 courses (n=397) delivered over last five years**

Variable	Frequency	Valid Percentage
<b>Region</b>		
North Island	332	84%
South Island	65	16%
<b>Population Density</b>		
Metropolitan	95	24%
Small urban	224	56%
Rural town	56	14%
Rural	22	6%
<b>Decile Ratings<sup>1</sup></b>		
1	348	7%
2	81	20%
3	45	11%
4	52	13%
5	58	14%
6	55	13%
7	38	9%
8	28	7%
9	11	3%
10	6	1%
Not specified	2	0%
<b>Age</b>		
Mixed 3-4	212	53%
Year 3	60	15%
Year 4	123	31%
Other	2	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>100%</b>



**Table 3.3 Ethnicity of Years 7-8 girls (n=34,719) over the last five years**

Variable	Frequency	Valid Percentage
<b>Ethnicity<sup>1</sup></b>		
NZ European	15,359	44%
Māori	9933	29%
Pasifika	4088	12%
Asian	2161	6%
Other	3178	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>34,719</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 3.4 Characteristics of Years 7-8 courses (n=1546) delivered over the last five years**

Variable	Frequency	Valid Percentage
<b>Region</b>		
North Island	1119	72%
South Island	427	28%
<b>Population Density</b>		
Metropolitan	671	43%
Small Urban	453	29%
Rural Town	3071	20%
Rural	110	7%
Not specified	5	-
<b>Decile Ratings<sup>1</sup></b>		
1	102	6%
2	183	11%
3	148	9%
4	242	15%
5	313	20%
6	257	16%
7	116	7%
8	158	10%
9	47	3%
10	36	2%
<b>Age</b>		
Mixed 7-8	506	33%
Year 7	135	9%
Year 8	899	58%
Other/missing	4	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1546</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 3.5 Ethnicity of Years 10-12 girls (n=6153) over the last five years**

Variable	Frequency	Valid Percentage
<b>Ethnicity<sup>1</sup></b>		
NZ European	3245	53%
Māori	1556	25%
Pasifika	689	11%
Asian	272	4%
Other	391	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6153</b>	<b>100%</b>

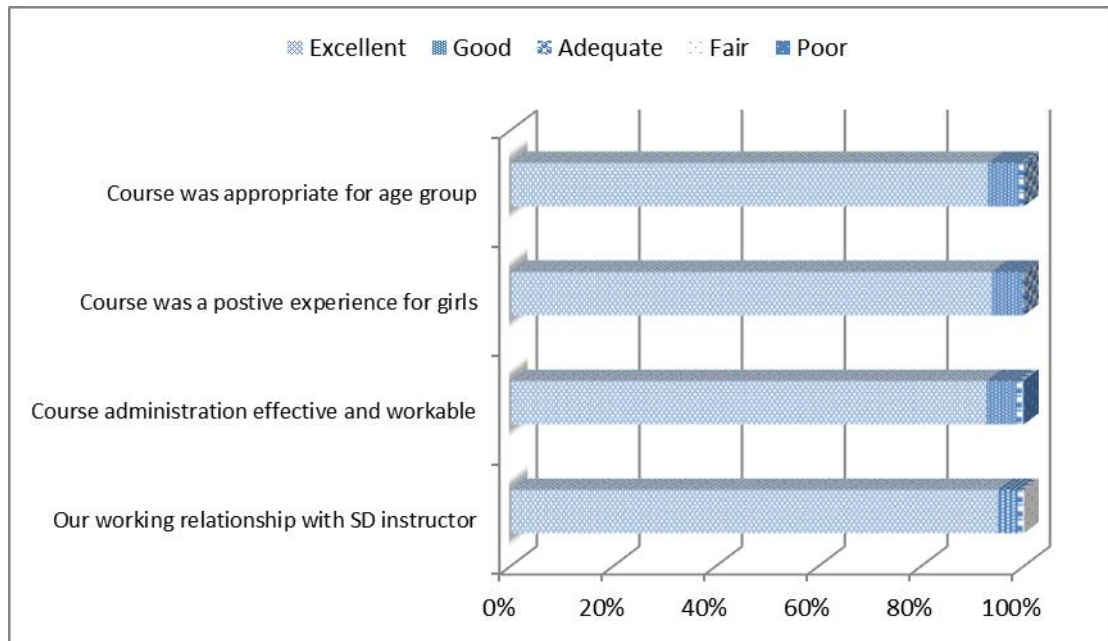
**Table 3.6 Characteristics of Years 10-12 courses (n=285) delivered over the last five years**

Variable	Frequency	Valid Percentage
<b>Region</b>		
North Island	248	87%
South Island	37	13%
<b>Population Density</b>		
Metropolitan	124	44%
Small Urban	121	42%
Rural Town	30	11%
Rural	10	4%
<b>Decile Ratings<sup>1</sup></b>		
1	34	12%
2	53	19%
3	13	5%
4	22	8%
5	42	15%
6	6	2%
7	54	19%
8	16	6%
9	35	12%
Not specified	7	2%
<b>Age</b>		
Mixed 10-12	44	15%
Year 10	180	63%
Year 11	9	3%
Year 12	50	18%
Other	2	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 3.1.3 School evaluations

All Girls' Self Defence Project courses are evaluated at the end by the participants and the schools. Figure 3.1 presents a summary of the school evaluations based on 2199 courses over the last five years.

**Figure 3.1 School evaluations of the Girls' Self Defence Project courses over five years (n=2199)**



As seen in figure 3.1, all aspects of the courses evaluated received very positive ratings.

- 95% of schools rated their relationship with the self defence teacher as excellent (with 4% rating it good, 1% adequate, 0.2% fair);
- 94% rated the course as a very positive experience for the girls (with 6% rating it good, 0.2% adequate);
- 93% rated the course content as very appropriate for the age of the girls (with 6% rating it good and 1% adequate); and
- 93% also gave a rating of excellent in relation to the course administration being effective and workable (with 6% rating it good; 1% adequate, 0.2% fair and 0.2% poor).<sup>4</sup>

In response to another question that asked whether the schools felt the **girls' self-confidence and ability to deal with personal safety issues** had increased as a result of completing the course – 98% of schools reported 'yes' with the remaining 2% reporting 'maybe'.

A final question asked if the schools are **interested in further courses** – 99% of schools responded with 'yes', 1% with 'maybe', and 0.01% 'no'. This latter figure corresponds to just two schools out of 2199 reporting that they would not be

<sup>4</sup> Percentages have been rounded and may not add up to 100%.

### 3. Programme characteristics

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interested in further courses. Comments associated with these responses revealed one was from a school in Christchurch that was closing after the earthquakes:

*: "...Our girls get right into it. They love it and [the SD teacher]. We are closing".*

The other may have been an incorrect rating as the school has since had a further 20 courses and the comment alongside was:

*"Students' personal safety awareness has increased".*

#### 3.1.4 Programme content/duration

Girls' Self Defence Project courses are designed for girls at primary (Years 3-4), intermediate (Years 7-8) and secondary school (Years 10-12) levels with the content of each course tailored to the specific risks and needs of each age group. The courses include a mixture of ice breakers and games, the teaching and practising of physical self defence skills, group discussions and role plays.

The duration of Girls' Self Defence Project courses is as follows:

- Years 3-4: 5 hour course;
- Years 7-8: 8 hour course; and
- Years 10-12: 5 hour course.

Courses are often taught as a block course over one or two days, especially for the Years 3-4 and Years 7-8 age groups. The Years 10-12 courses are often taught in a series of shorter sessions, due mainly to the constraints of secondary school timetabling. Duration of courses is determined by WSDN-WT but the details of timing are at the discretion of the self defence teacher and the school concerned.

#### **Content of courses**

For all age groups, the key learning outcome is that the girls learn to use their minds, bodies and voices to keep safe.

#### **All girls' core learning objectives:**

- ways to keep themselves safe;
- ways to keep their friends safe; and
- ways to use their minds, bodies and voices to keep safe.

The content for each year group is then tailored to the particular risk and need:

- Years 3-4 (7 to 9 years old) – responds to New Zealand research that has reported the median age of a victim at the time of first sexual abuse was 9 years old (Fanslow et al., 2007);
- Years 7-8 (11 to 13 years old) – addresses the increased risks accompanying the onset of puberty (Gluckman, 2011), when girls are becoming more

### 3. Programme characteristics

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independent, increasingly exposed to electronic media and social networking, whilst exploring their own gender identity and sexuality.

- Years 10-12 (15 to 17 years old) – aligns with New Zealand research that shows 15-24 year olds are the age group most at risk of sexual victimisation (Mayhew and Reilly, 2006). It is also a key age when relationships are forming, socialising involves alcohol, and the risks of 'dating' and relationship violence increase.

Hence, for girls in Years 3-4 and Years 7-8, additional contributing outcomes are that the girls learn the following:

#### **Additional learning objectives Years 3-4 and 7-8:**

- difference between good and bad touching;
- importance of talking to a safe adult if needed; and
- for Years 7-8 only – that girls are able to recognise potentially unsafe situations.

For Years 10-12 girls, the additional goals are that the girls:

#### **Additional learning objectives Years 10-12:**

- know how to seek support if needed;
- understand what a healthy relationship is; and
- are able to recognise potentially unsafe situations.

The Years 10-12 Girls' Self Defence Project course includes components addressing:

- relationship safety – knowing how to recognise healthy, unhealthy and abusive relationships;
- sexual violence – myths and facts;
- consent;
- bystander intervention; and
- cyber and on-line safety.

## **3.2 Self defence for women - Isolation to Empowerment**

Teaching women's self defence was the early focus of WSDN-WT and funding received from the Ministry of Justice since 2012 has enabled a funded return to teaching adult women. These programmes are referred to as the Isolation to Empowerment programmes as their target is to provide self defence to women whose vulnerability to sexual violence is increased due to cultural (recently extended to including a culture of violence), geographical and/or disability-related isolation.

### 3. Programme characteristics

These courses are always run in collaboration with partner agencies. The target groups and their partner agencies include the following:

- **migrant and refugee women** (Multicultural Councils, Women’s Centre, Shakti, English Language Partners, Chinese seniors, Nepalese Society, Pacific Islands Advisory & Cultural Trust, Migrant Women Newcomers);
- **rural wāhine Māori** (Nga Kete Matauranga, Tautoko Trust, Kaumatua Roopu, Women’s Refuges, Te Piki Oranga, Maataa Waka, Kool Kaumatua, Barnados);
- **rural Tau Iwi** (Dairy Women’s Network, Rural Women NZ, Rape Crisis, Age Concern, Women’s Refuges); and
- **women with disabilities** (Brain Injury Association, Deaf Aotearoa, Idea Services, Blind Foundation).

In the three years since WSDN-WT first received funding from the Ministry of Justice to deliver targeted courses to women, they have delivered 68 programmes to 747 women at an average cost of around \$120 per woman.

More specific details of these courses appear in table 3.7 below.

**Table 3.7 Details of women participants over three years (July 2012 to June 2015)**

Women’s self defence courses – Isolation to empowerment			
Type of course	No. of courses	No. of participants	Percentage
Migrant/refugee (n=30)	30	376	59%
Rural Wāhine Māori (n=17)	17	148	16%
Rural Tau Iwi (n=17)	17	186	9%
Disability (n=4)	4	37	17%
Ethnicity			
NZ European	-	233	31%
Māori	-	148	20%
Pasifika	-	36	5%
Other	-	309	41%
Not specified	-	22	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>747</b>	<b>100%</b>

Note: The ‘other’ category for ethnicity is high due to the 30 migrant and refugee courses. Exact frequencies were not easily available but self-described ethnicities included Afghani, African, American, Arabic, Asian, Austrian, Bhutan, Brazilian, Burmese, Chinese, Columbian, Czech Rep, Dutch, Egyptian, English, Ethiopian, Fijian-Indian, Filipino, German, Greek, Indo-Fijian, Indian, Iranian, Iraqi, Japanese, Jordanian, Korean, Latino American, Middle Eastern, Nepalese, Nigerian, Romanian, Russian, South American, Sri Lankan, Taiwanese, Thai, Zimbabwean.

#### 3.2.1 Isolation to Empowerment programme content/duration

The duration of the Isolation to Empowerment courses is six to eight hours.

Programme content is tailored to suit the specific needs, strengths and abilities of the programme participants but is built around four core components. Similar to the girls

### 3. Programme characteristics

courses, these include a mixture of activities including ice breakers and games to develop trust, the teaching and practising of physical self defence skills, reviewing facts arounds sexual violence, group discussions and role plays.

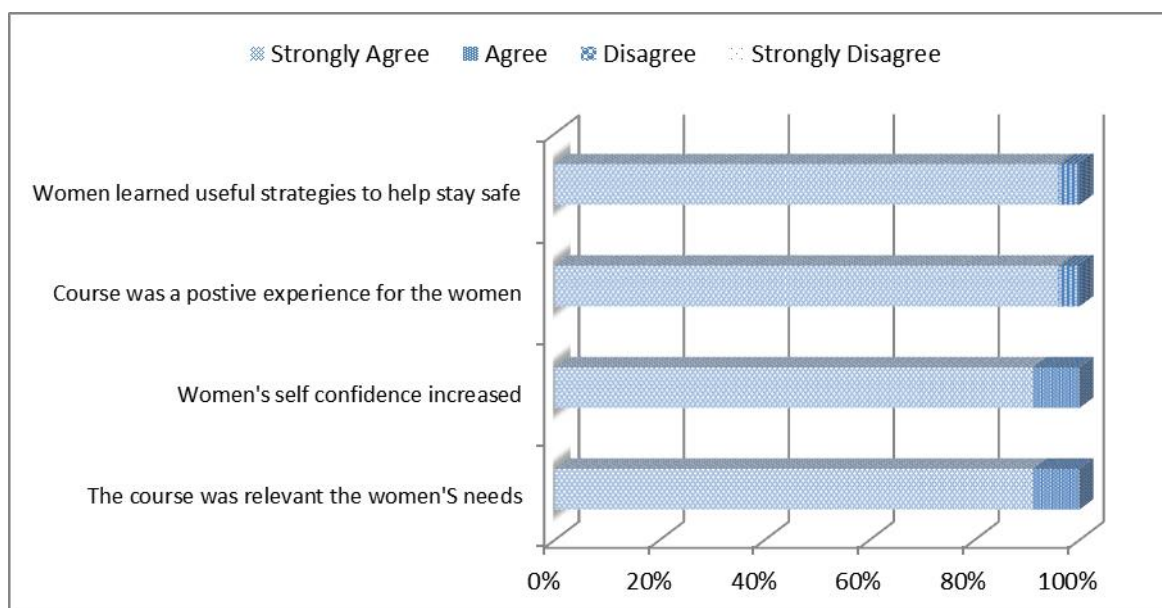
#### Core components of Isolation to Empowerment women's courses:

- **awareness discussions related to sexual violence:** e.g. 'victim' / 'attacker' dynamics, power and control issues, recognising and responding to early signs of potential violence;
- **self-esteem and confidence building:** building the belief in one's own abilities to deal effectively with situations of potential / actual risk of sexual violence;
- **strategies to keep / get safe:** from sexual violence, including cyber sexual violence (internet, text, etc); and
- **physical skills and strategies:** e.g. strong voice, learning vulnerable points, grab and strangle releases, defences from ground position, defences from weapon attacks etc.

### 3.2.2 Course evaluations

The Isolation to Empowerment women's courses are evaluated at the end by the participants and the partner organisations. Aggregated data of partner organisation evaluations were available for all courses run in 2015 (n=23) and are presented in figure 3.2.

**Figure 3.2 Partner organisation evaluations of Isolation to Empowerment women's courses run in 2015 (n=23)**



Again, these courses received very positive ratings with 100% indicating positive ratings of 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' in relation to all aspects of the course evaluated.<sup>5</sup>

All 23 agencies said they would be interested in another course in the future (21 a definite 'yes', and 2 'maybes').

## 3.3 Self defence teachers

### 3.3.1 Description of training / supervision

To be accredited as a WSDN-WT self defence teacher, women need to successfully graduate from a rigorous process of selection, training and evaluation. This includes:

- **selection procedures** including interviews and police and referee checks. Applicants are often nominated by current self defence teachers or recommended by supporting agencies;
- **training** for new self defence teachers involves attending two week-long residential intensive training camps, followed by co-teaching with experienced teachers, prior to evaluation. The process from training to evaluation takes approximately 18 months;
- **evaluation** involves being observed and assessed by two senior network representatives, while teaching a full self defence course. Evaluation criteria (which must all be met) include:
  - discussion and imparting knowledge, e.g. age appropriate discussions about sexual abuse and young peoples' rights, boundary setting etc;
  - class dynamics / the learning environment;
  - facilitation and teaching ability;
  - knowledge of all the physical self defence techniques;
  - personal qualities and professionalism; and
  - cultural safety knowledge.

To retain their 'Current Teacher Status', which is a prerequisite for teaching Girls' Self Defence Project and other contracted courses, WSDN-WT teachers must participate in a minimum of one two-day professional development hui within the past two years and receive on-going positive post course evaluations from participants and schools/partner agencies.

### 3.3.2 Characteristics of self defence teachers

WSDN-WT has trained and accredited 64 self defence teachers since their first training in 1988. There are currently 26 accredited self defence teachers that are members of WSDN-WT (8 of whom are Māori, 1 is Pasifika and 17 are Pakeha). Of

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<sup>5</sup> Course content was appropriate (91% strongly agreed, 9% agreed); women's self confidence increased ((91% strongly agreed, 9% agreed); course was a positive experience for women (96% strongly agreed, 4% agreed); and women learnt useful strategies to help stay safe (96% strongly agreed, 4 % agreed).



### 3. Programme characteristics

these, 24 are currently teaching self defence courses, of whom 20 teach the Ministry of Social Development or Ministry of Justice contracted courses.

Years of service for WSDN-WT current teachers range from 2 to 28 years, with an average length of service of 11 years.

There have been three training intakes for new self defence teachers run in the last ten years (see table 3.8). A total of 27 women participated in the initial training (around half of those who typically apply). Of these, 17 graduated to become accredited self defence teachers (63% pass rate). Other women either voluntarily dropped out (n=2), failed the final evaluation (n=4) or had their trainee status declined by WSDN-WT either during the training (n=2) or during the two years supervisory period that follows the training (n=2) because of not meeting WSDN-WT's evaluation criteria.

**Table 3.8 Training and accreditation**

Training in last 10 years	Number who participated	Outcome of training
2005 training intake	6	- 5 accredited teachers - 1 did not complete evaluation
2007 training intake	8	- 4 accredited teachers - 3 failed evaluation - 1 dropped out
2013 training intake	13	- 8 accredited teachers - 2 declined during training - 1 failed evaluation - 2 declined after training

### 3.4 Summary

WSDN-WT has been delivering self defence courses to girls and women for 28 years with highly positive feedback received by the schools and partner agencies where courses have been run. Funding priority has been given to reaching vulnerable girls and women including those most at risk from violence and abuse, and those with limited alternative access to learning self defence.

All courses have a core focus on teaching participants ways to keep themselves safe, their friends safe and ways to use their mind, bodies and voices to keep safe.

Some key characteristics of girls' courses include:

- over 125,000 girls have participated in a Girls' Self Defence Project course since 1998, for an average cost of less than \$50 per girl. Up to 10,000 girls participate around New Zealand each year with funding provided by the Ministry of Social Development;
- the priority targeting of WSDN-WT is reflected in the characteristics of the girls and schools receiving self defence. For example, over the last five years 34% of all girls receiving self defence were Māori, and a greater proportion of

### 3. Programme characteristics

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schools from the lowest 4 decile ratings received courses (51%) than from the highest 4 (21% in deciles 7 to 10);

- Girls' Self Defence Project is designed for girls at primary (Years 3-4), intermediate (Years 7-8) and secondary school (Years 10-12) levels, with the content of each programme tailored to the specific risks and needs of each age group. For example, Years 3-4 and 7-8 courses include recognising good and bad touching and the importance of talking to a safe adult if needed, whilst Years 10-12 courses include recognising sexual violence and understanding what constitutes a healthy relationship; and
- courses range from 5 to 8 hours and are often taught as a block course over one or two days, especially for the Years 3-4 and Years 7-8 age groups. The Years 10-12 courses are often taught in a series of shorter sessions, due mainly to the constraints of secondary school timetabling.

Some key characteristics of women's Isolation to Empowerment courses include:

- in the three years since WSDN-WT first received funding from the Ministry of Justice they have delivered 68 programmes to 747 women at an average cost of around \$120 per woman. This equates to around 250 women per year;
- courses are targeted at women whose vulnerability to sexual violence is at increased risk due to cultural (recently extended to including a culture of violence), geographical and/or disability-related isolation. This has included courses for:
  - migrant and refugee women;
  - rural wāhine Māori ;
  - rural Tau Iwi women; and
  - women with disabilities.
- courses are 6 to 8 hours long with the content tailored to suit the specific needs and abilities of participants but including:
  - **awareness discussions related to sexual violence:** e.g. 'victim' / 'attacker' dynamics, power and control issues, recognising and responding to early signs of potential violence;
  - **self-esteem and confidence building:** building the belief in one's own abilities to deal effectively with situations of potential / actual risk of sexual violence;
  - **strategies to keep / get safe: from sexual violence,** including cyber sexual violence (internet, text, etc); and
  - **physical self defence skills and strategies:** e.g. strong voice, learning vulnerable points, grab and strangle releases, defences from ground position, defences from weapon attacks etc.

Characteristics of the WSDN-WT self defence teachers include:

### 3. Programme characteristics

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- WSDN-WT has trained and accredited 64 self defence teachers since their first training in 1988. There are currently 26 accredited self defence teachers who are members of WSDN-WT (8 of whom are Māori, 1 is Pasifika and 17 are Pakeha);
- accreditation is based on successful evaluation following a rigorous process of selection, training and co-teaching. Training involves attending two week-long residential training camps followed by co-teaching with experienced teachers, prior to accreditation. The process from training to accreditation takes approximately 18 months; and
- years of service for current WSDN-WT teachers range from 2 to 28 years, with an average length of service of 11 years.

## Part III – Programme outcomes

*The best thing I learnt from this course is "I AM CLEVER, BRAVE, STRONG" AND "I have the right to defend myself". (Years 7-8 girl)*

*I think it gives "skills and confidence," like I think those would be the two biggies, and once you've got a bit of confidence then your self-esteem is going to rise and then you might not get in the situations that you might get into. (School guidance counsellor, Girls Years 10-12)*

## 4 Quantitative outcomes

In this section the outcomes according to pre-post evaluation forms are presented and, where appropriate, supported by qualitative data. Outcomes for school age girls who attended the Girls' Self Defence Project courses are presented first, followed by outcomes for women participants in the Isolation to Empowerment courses.

### 4.1 Outcomes for school age girls

All the Girls' Self Defence Project courses delivered to school age girls that were part of this research project were evaluated using pre and post course evaluation forms. This pre-post evaluation aimed to assess changes in a range of possible programme impacts including changes in self defence knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviour. More specifically, age appropriate questions sought to assess changes in:

- self defence knowledge (learning ways to keep self and friends safe);
- ability to recognise child abuse and unhealthy relationships;
- understanding the importance of disclosing abuse and seeking support;
- understanding that abuse is never the fault of a victim;
- confidence and self-esteem; and
- intention to use self defence skills.

The content and focus of the girls' self defence courses are adapted to be age appropriate. The evaluation forms were customised to reflect these variations and results are presented separately for each age group (see Appendix B).

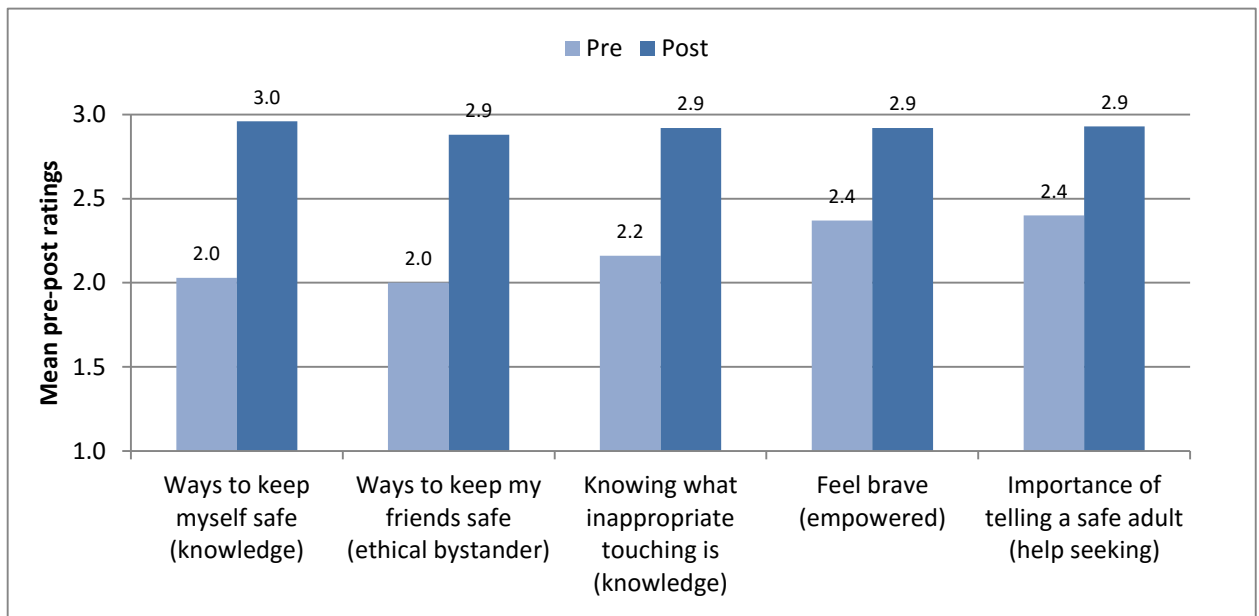
#### 4.1.1 Years 3-4

Girls in Years 3-4 evaluation courses were asked before and after their self defence course if they agreed with five statements aimed to assess changes in self defence knowledge, attitudes and skills. Response options were yes, no or maybe. A total of 244 girls participated in evaluation courses, of which 232 girls completed both the pre and post course evaluation enabling comparison.<sup>6</sup> Results for this group are presented in figure 4.1 and reveal positive shifts in response to all five questions.

All shifts were statistically significant improvements according to a series of paired sample t-tests ( $p < 0.01$ ).

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<sup>6</sup> Note numbers for each question can vary due to missing responses.

**Figure 4.1 Outcomes for Years 3-4 (n=232)**

Note: Before analysis responses were re-coded from the original survey so that higher scores reflected agreement with each question (3=Yes; 2=Maybe; 1=No).

### ***Intention to act and other changes in attitude***

Following the course the girls were also asked their level of agreement to three additional questions which assessed their likelihood of using self defence strategies and their understanding that if abuse happens, it is never the fault of the victim. Results were positive with very high proportions of girls agreeing with all three statements:

- **intention to use self defence skills** - 96% (n=226/236) girls reported 'yes' "I will use my mind, body and voice to keep myself safe";
- **intention to use instincts to stay safe** – 94% (n=223/237) girls responded 'yes' to "I will listen to my feelings/instincts to help keep myself safe"; and
- **non-victim blaming attitude** – 89% (n=209/235) girls agreed 'yes' "If bad touching happens to a girl it is never her fault".<sup>7</sup>

### **4.1.2 Years 7-8**

Girls in Years 7-8 were asked before and after their self defence course if they agreed with nine statements that similarly aimed to assess changes in self defence knowledge, attitudes and skills (see Appendix B). There were five response options from 0 to 4 where 0 = strongly disagree and 4 = strongly agree. A total of 1851 girls participated in the evaluation courses, of which 1684 girls completed both the pre and post course evaluation forms.<sup>8</sup>

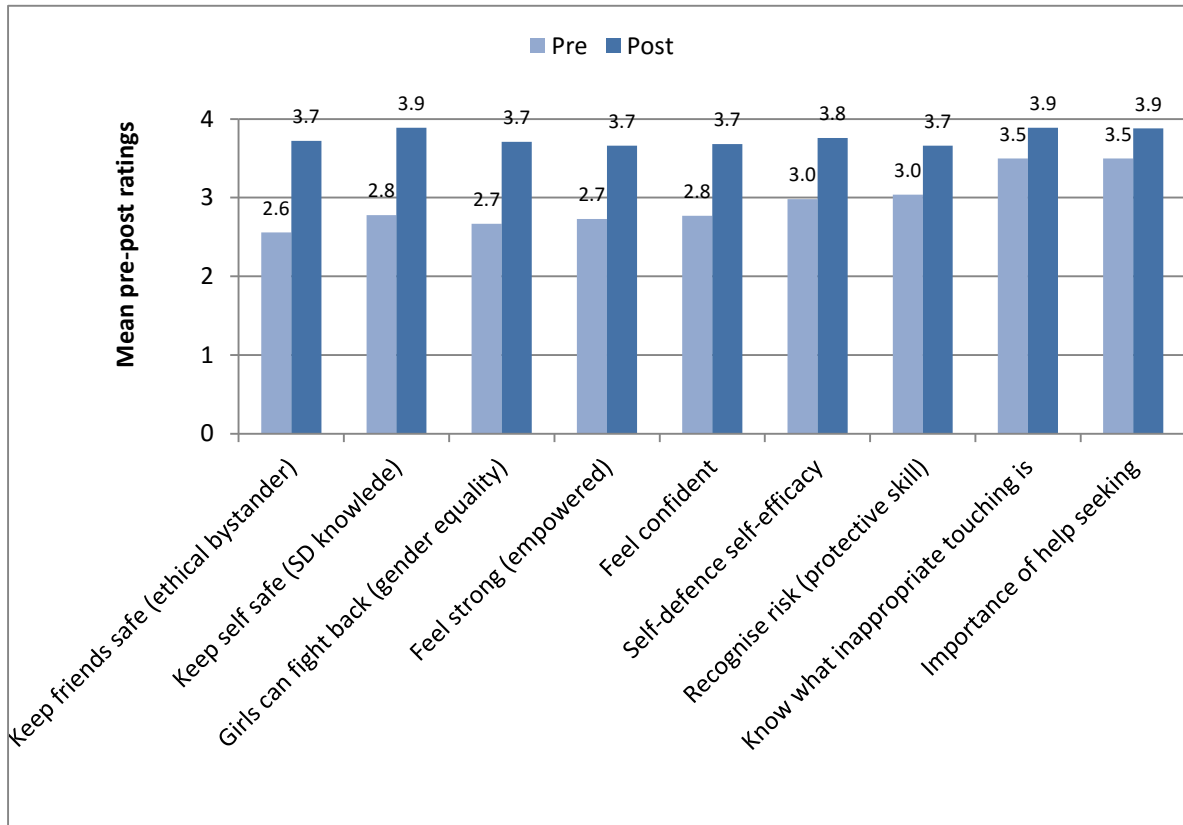
<sup>7</sup> There were 13 girls who responded maybe to this statement and another 13 girls who disagreed.

<sup>8</sup> Note numbers for each question can vary due to missing responses.

#### 4. Quantitative outcomes

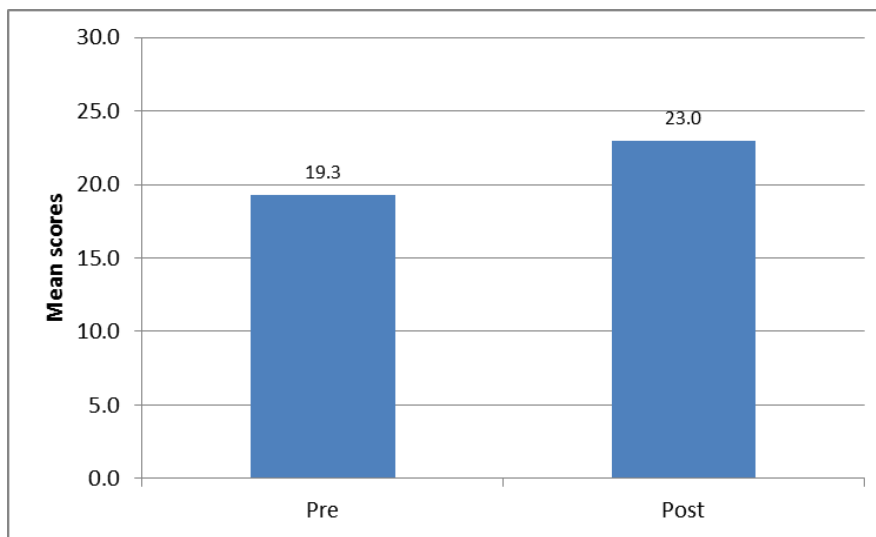
Results for the group are presented in figure 4.2 and again reveal positive shifts in response to all nine questions. The greatest differences in mean ratings appear at the left of figure 4.2 (knowledge of how to be an ethical bystander, and ways to keep themselves safe). All shifts were statistically significant improvements according to a series of paired sample t-tests ( $p < 0.01$ ).

**Figure 4.2 Outcomes for Years 7-8 (n=1684)**



#### **Rosenberg Self-esteem**

Years 7-8 girls were also given the Rosenberg self-esteem scale to complete pre and post course. This is an internationally recognised and validated scale of self-esteem. Not all self defence teachers elected to complete the Rosenberg instrument, resulting in a slightly reduced sample available for analysis (n=1133). Results presented in figure 4.3 show relatively high levels of pre-course self-esteem that following the self defence course were further enhanced. These improvements in self esteem were statistically significant ( $t=28.9$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

**Figure 4.3 Changes in self-esteem (Years 7-8)**

### ***Ethnicity***

When the research sample was broken down by ethnicity, all four ethnic groups were seen to achieve statistically significant improvements in self-esteem following the self defence course.

- NZ European (t=21.8, df=531, p<0.01);
- Māori (t=15.3, df=370, p<0.01);
- Pasifika (t=9.0, df=145, p<0.01); and
- Asian (t=4.2, df=42, p<0.01).

### ***Other changes in attitude and skills***

Following the course the girls were also asked their level of agreement to two additional questions which assessed their likelihood of using self defence strategies and their understanding that if abuse happens, it is never the fault of the victim.<sup>9</sup> Results were again positive with very high proportions of girls agreeing with these two statements:

- **use instincts to stay safe** – 98% (n=1717/1755) girls ‘strongly agreed’ (n=147) or ‘agreed’ (n=370) “I will listen to my feelings/instincts to help keep myself safe”; and
- **non-victim blaming attitude** - 96% (n=1683/1752) girls ‘strongly agreed’ (n=1454) /agreed (n=229) “If bad touching happens to a girl it is never her fault”.

### ***Intention to act***

Ideally a programme is assessed on changes in behaviour in addition to knowledge and attitude. When changes in actual behaviour are difficult to assess, participants’

<sup>9</sup> Total numbers are higher for this set of results as it only required a post course evaluation form to be completed.



## 4. Quantitative outcomes

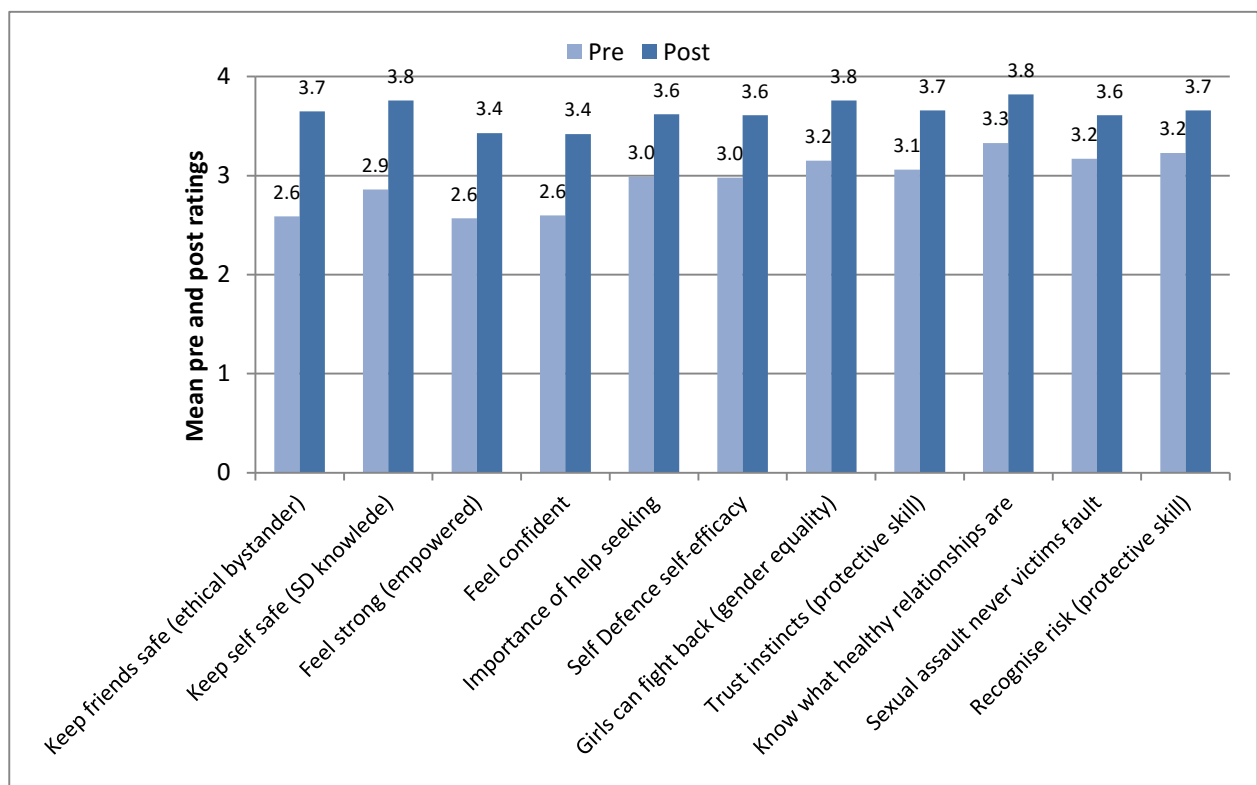
intention to act/engage in learned behaviours can be assessed as a proxy. The Years 7-8 girls were asked the likelihood of engaging in three key behaviours taught in the course, with very positive results achieved:

- **intention to seek help** – 95% (n=1652/1743) ‘Very likely (n=1120) /likely (n=532)’ – to seek help/support if felt unsafe;
- **intention to be an ethical bystander** – 97% (n=1686/1747) ‘Very likely (n=1212) /likely (n=474)’ – to seek help/support friends if they were unsafe; and
- **intention to use assertive body language** – 93% (n=1612/1727) ‘Very likely (n=1049) /likely (n=563)’ – to use assertive body language in the future.

### 4.1.3 Years 10-12

Girls and young women in Years 10-12 who participated in a self defence course were asked before and after the course if they agreed with 12 statements related to self defence knowledge, attitudes and skills. There were five response options from 0 to 4 where 0 = strongly disagree and 4 = strongly agree. A total of 636 girls participated in the evaluation courses, of which 493 girls completed both the pre and post course evaluation forms.<sup>10</sup> Results for the group are presented in figure 4.4 and reveal positive and statistically significant shifts in response to all nine questions.

**Figure 4.4 Outcomes for Years 10-12 (n=493)**



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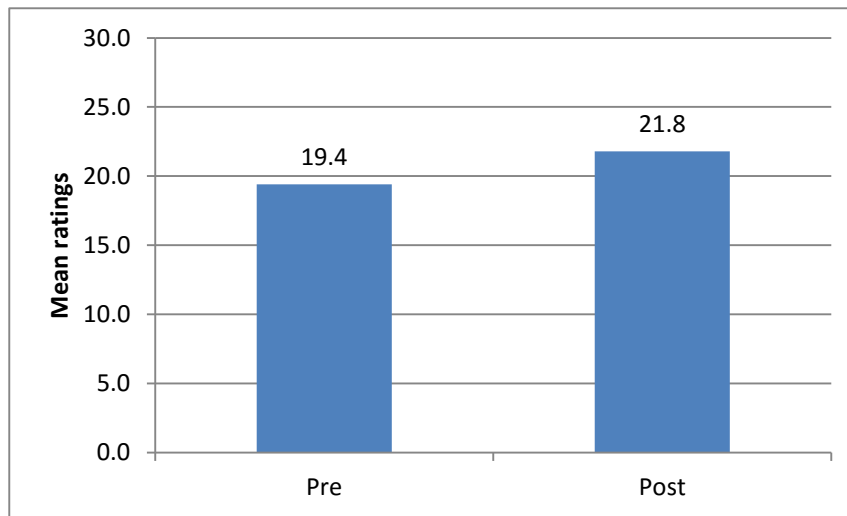
Note numbers for each question can vary due to missing responses.

The greatest differences in mean ratings appear to the left of figure 4.4 and were the same as those achieved by the Years 7-8 (knowledge of how to be an ethical bystander, and ways to keep themselves safe). All shifts were statistically significant improvements according to a series of paired sample t-tests ( $p < 0.01$ ).

### **Rosenberg Self-esteem**

Years 10-12 girls were also given the Rosenberg self-esteem scale to complete pre and post course. A total of  $n=496$  girls completed this scale pre and post. Results presented in figure 4.5 again show relatively high levels of pre-course self-esteem for these older girls that following the self defence course were further enhanced. These improvements in self esteem were statistically significant ( $t=14.6$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

**Figure 4.5 Changes in self-esteem (Years 10-12)**



### **Ethnicity**

When the research sample was broken down by ethnicity, similar to the Years 7-8, all four ethnic groups were seen to achieve statistically significant improvements in self-esteem following the self defence course.

- NZ European ( $t=11.5$ ,  $df=301$ ,  $p < 0.01$ );
- Māori ( $t=7.0$ ,  $df=95$ ,  $p < 0.01$ );
- Pasifika ( $t=2.6$ ,  $df=30$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ); and
- Asian ( $t=6.0$ ,  $df=35$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

### **Intention to act**

Years 10-12 girls were also asked the likelihood of engaging in three key behaviours taught in the course, with very positive results achieved:<sup>11</sup>

- **intention to seek help** – 95% ( $n=539/566$ ) ‘Very likely ( $n=328$ ) /likely ( $n=211$ )’ – to seek help/support if felt unsafe;

<sup>11</sup> Total numbers are higher for this set of results as it only required a post course evaluation form to be completed.

#### 4. Quantitative outcomes

- **intention to be an ethical bystander** – 97% (n=552/568) ‘Very likely (n=368) /likely (n=184)’ – to seek help/support friends if they were unsafe; and
- **intention to use assertive body language** – 95% (n=536/564) ‘Very likely (n=306) / likely (n=230)’ – to use assertive body language in the future.

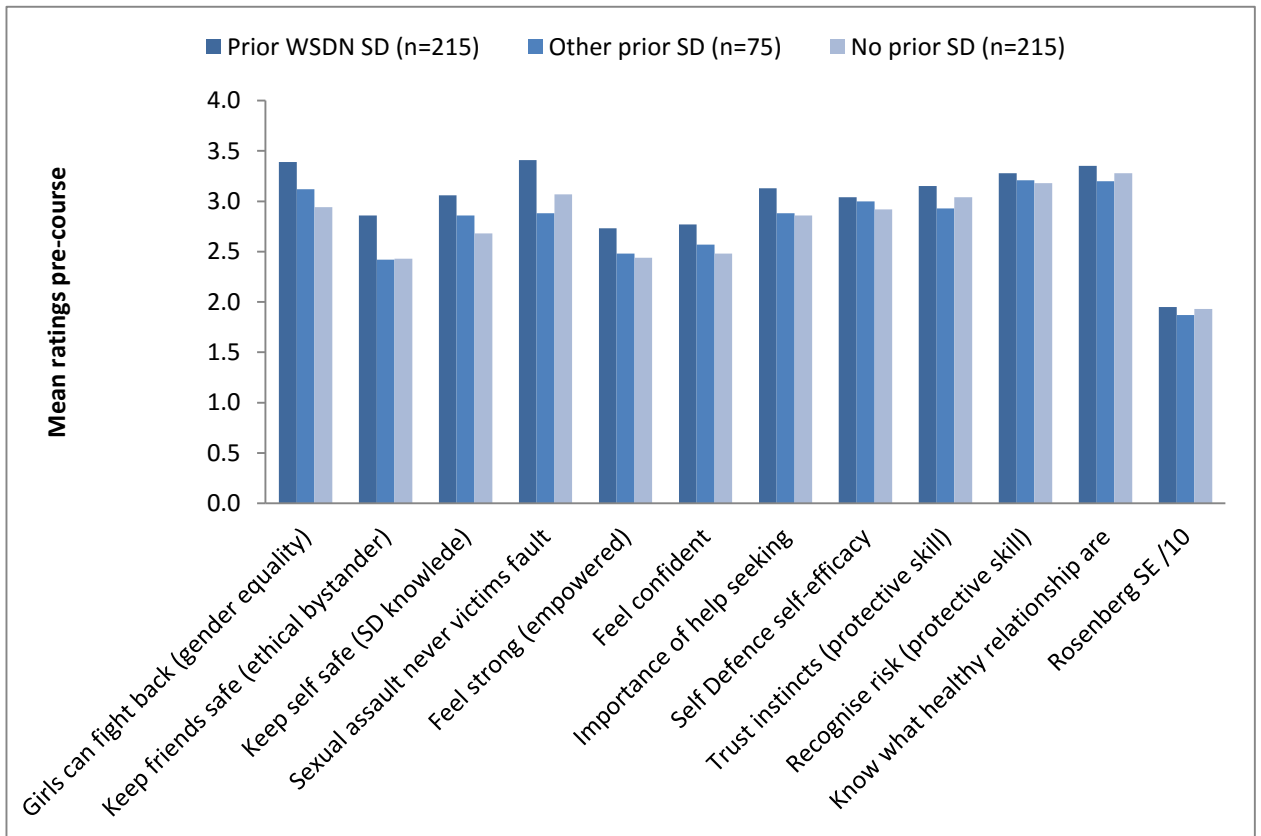
#### 4.1.4 Impact of prior self defence

Some of the girls in Years 10-12 will have completed a previous Girls’ Self Defence Project course either in Years 7-8 or Years 3-4, or possibly both. Assessing pre-programme levels of knowledge, attitude and skills of those who had previously done self defence provided an opportunity to investigate longer term impacts of self defence learning.

Around 46% (n=290) of the Years 10-12 girls reported that they had done some form of self defence previously. Of those who could clearly remember, 215 reported they had previously done a WSDN-WT Girls’ Self Defence Project course and a further 75 reported that it was some other form of self defence (e.g. martial arts or another self defence course). Most of those who had done a Girls’ Self Defence Project course had previously done it in Years 7-8 (n=185), just nine had done it in Years 3-4 and ten had done it in Years 10-12.

Figure 4.6 presents pre-programme levels of self-reported self defence knowledge, attitude and skills based on their prior exposure to self defence.

**Figure 4.6 Longer term impact of previous self defence**



Note: Rosenberg self-esteem scores have been divided by 10 to align with other ratings

In all variables those who had done the WSDN-WT course on average reported higher pre-programme levels of self defence knowledge and skills, together with positive attitudes towards gender equality, and personal levels of confidence and self-esteem. While differences were not always large, they were statistically significant for 7 out of the 12 variables, with particularly marked differences in knowing ways to keep their friends safe (being an ethical bystander) and keeping themselves safe, positive attitudes towards gender equality and understanding if a girl is sexually assaulted it is never her fault. Differences were not significant for knowledge of healthy relationships (which had not yet been covered in a Girls' Self Defence Project course) and being able to listen to feelings/instincts to help keep myself safe, recognising potentially unsafe situations, self-reported confidence in ability to use self defence skills and global self-esteem as measured by the Rosenberg scale.

The lack of significant difference in confidence to use self defence skills and to recognise unsafe situations was perhaps unexpected, however, as will be seen in section six, whilst there may be little differences in confidence, when placed in situations where they need to use their self defence skills it appears many girls do remember and are able to use them.

### 4.2 Post course comments

In addition to the pre-post evaluation questions, girls from all three age groups were also asked two open ended questions. The first aimed to assess what they had learnt from the course by asking them to report what they would do in a particular situation. The specific scenario varied according to the age and focus of the girls' course. The second question asked 'what was the best or most important thing they had learned from the course?' This is a valuable source of data as it enables us to include the girls' own voices in the evaluation.

#### 4.2.1 Self defence knowledge

As part of the post course evaluation, girls in Years 3-4 and Years 7-8 were asked to respond in writing to the following question:

Now you have finished the self defence course, if someone touched you in a way that made you feel yucky or uncomfortable – **what would you do?**

Girls in Years 10-12 were asked to respond to a different question related to an unwanted sexual advance:

Now you have finished the self defence course, if someone makes a sexual advance that makes you feel uncomfortable - **what would you do?**

Individual responses given by the girls were coded based on the type of self defence response referred to (e.g. verbal, physical, help-seeking).

Overall, all responses from all three age groups indicated a high level of learning from the course and understanding of how to put it in practice.

- Years 3-4 - a total of 237 (97%) girls out of the 245 who attended the course provided an answer. Of all these 237 responses, there was just one that

appeared inappropriate 'I would do it Back to them', although this girl may have been referring to fighting back, which other girls had also indicated they would do.

- Years 7-8 - there were 1854 girls who participated in the evaluation, and a random sample of 850 responses were analysed. Nearly all the girls provided a written response (95%; 804 out of 850). No responses were judged as inappropriate.
- Years 10-12 - a total of 563 girls out of the 636 who attended the course provided an answer (89%) and again all were appropriate responses.

#### **Range of responses**

The range of self defence strategies offered by the girls tended to increase with age.

- Years 3-4 - most girls (55%) gave just one response (e.g. seek help - tell a safe adult), but others referred to a range of responses (verbal – yell out, physical - kick and punch, and seek help - tell a safe adult). For example:<sup>12</sup>

*Say back off and kick them in the Nut's and Run back home and Tell my mum what happened. And I will Tell her to Ring the Police.*

- Years 7-8 - with this age group, girls more frequently gave a range of responses (70% describing more than one type of response to the scenario).

*I would use the techniques I have learnt: kick; punch; shout; and tell a trusted adult*

- Years 10-12 - with these older girls there was a further increase in the number of girls describing a range of responses to this scenario, with 80% giving two or more types of response.

#### **Graduated response**

What emerged with the two older age groups was recognition of the need to tailor the response to the level of action required.

- Years 7-8 - while many girls suggested their response would be to physically defend themselves, more evident with this age group was the emergence of a graduating response, with the girls describing an escalated level of action as required:

*I would give them a warning and if they wouldn't listen I would give them a clear message what my boundary is. If he still doesn't stop I would give him a sting. Shin kick.*

*I would use my big voice to say stop and if they didn't I would ballerina kick their nuts, hammer punch their face and run and tell a trusted adult.*

Other Years 7-8 girls suggested they would use their new skills and knowledge to hopefully avoid this happening in the first place.

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<sup>12</sup> Emphases and spelling are as written by girls. Percentages don't add up to 100 as multiple responses were often given.

#### 4. Quantitative outcomes

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*I would hopefully be able to prevent this from happening in the first place. If it did happen I would defend myself verbally and physically and seek help from others around me as well as myself.*

*Hopefully after this self defence course I never get into one of those situations. But if I do I will keep calm and think of a plan to get out safely.*

- Years 10-12 – the description of a graduated response became even more frequent with these older girls, with responses often listed in a tiered manner, again with the level of action escalating as required:

*I would: Try to talk my way out of it - tell them to stop; and if they persisted; use self defence skills; then call for help; and tell someone.*

*1. Tell them to stop, reason with them. 2. Attack them in vulnerable places i.e. eyes, nose, guts, nuts and yell at the same time, use of 4 techniques.*

*Make myself calm and talk them out of it, I would fight back if I needed to then call the police.*

There was also more evidence of these older girls being prepared to think through what the most appropriate self defence strategy would be (n=15).

*I would use my initiative and assess the situation. If they were using force I would use my self defence moves. If it was a touch I would ask them not to do it and try to reason with them.*

*Think: where can I hit this person? Where can I run to? How can I get them to back down?*

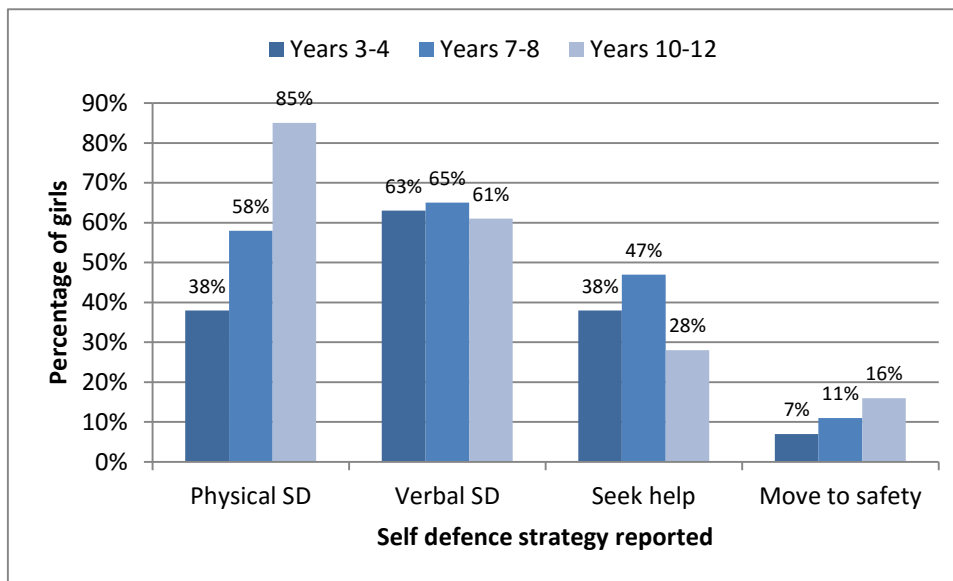
*Think about what self defence things I could use and keep myself safe.*

For several of the Years 10-12 girls this involved an intentional diversion tactic, suggesting they would try and stay in control of the situation.

*Talk and wait for your moment and think about physical techniques you can use and fight back.*

#### **Types of responses**

As noted above, the content of the individual responses given by the girls were coded based on the type of response referred to. These included a verbal self defence strategy (e.g. shouting, assertively telling someone to 'back-off'), physical self defence (e.g. blocks, kicks, punches), help-seeking (e.g. telling a safe adult) and getting to a place of safety (e.g. running away). Figure 4.7 shows the frequency these types of self defence were included in the girls' responses (noting that Years 10-12 girls were responding to a different scenario).

**Figure 4.7 Frequency of reported self defence strategies**

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% as often more than one type of response was referred to. The range of responses tended to increase with age, and hence so did the overall percentages.

Their responses are considered in more detail below across the different age groups.

### **Verbal self defence**

Some form of verbal self defence was referred to by around two-thirds of all girls, and was the most common response offered by the younger two age groups (Years 3-4 and 7-8).<sup>13</sup> This category was broken down into (i) assertive language, clearly communicating to the person they didn't like what they were doing to them, and that they should stop touching them in that way, and (ii) using their voice loudly as self defence strategy. This was either to shock the offender, attract attention (and help) or for some as a means to publicly identify the offender and name their behaviour.

**(i) Assertive language** – this was the most common verbal self defence strategy for both the Years 3-4 and Years 7-8. The use of the term 'Back-off' featured frequently. Some examples include:

- Years 3-4 (n=127, 54%):

*Tell them back off and NO!*

*Say "STOP Toching ME NOW"; "I DON'T LIKE IT".*

*Say get your hands of me right now and then tall a grown up try to get lost and run away.*

- Years 7-8 (n=383, 48%) - the assertive language was often accompanied by assertive body language (e.g. to look them in the eyes):

*I'd look them in the eye and say, "Stop that get your hands off me" If they didn't stop I'd shout and kick them in the shins.*

<sup>13</sup> Years 3-4 (n=149, 63%), Years 7-8 (n=551, 65%) and Years 10-12 (n=389, 61%).

#### 4. Quantitative outcomes

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*Say: get your hand off me in a strong loud voice and push hand off and Look them in the eyes.*

*I would say... "Back off buddy this is my body not yours".*

- Years 10-12 (n=251, 45%) - an assertive response was also very common and even more so included the use of assertive body language.

*First I would tell them to back off and use assertive body language. If they began to use violence on me, I would be able to defend myself with punches/kicks.*

*Stand strong, speak up and not be weak.*

*Tell them in a definite and strong voice to stop. Walk away. Cease contact with them if they didn't stop.*

Also featuring in the responses from the older girls was an understanding of their rights.

*Tell them to back off and get away, they have no right to do that.*

*I would use my voice and fight back scream for help or attention, be more confident and let them know I'm a human being as well.*

**(ii) Using voice loudly** - the other type of verbal self defence responses involved using the voice loudly to get attention.

- Years 3-4 (n= 35, 15%):

*Yell loudly "NO"; if they don't stop doing it kick them or punch them.*

*I would shout at them very very loudly (loudly) and say get your hand off me and look at them in the eyes.*

- Years 7-8 (n=258, 32%) - relatively more Years 7-8 girls described using their voice loudly as self defence strategy. This was either to shock the offender, attract attention (and help) and for this age group also as a means to publicly name the offender's behaviour.

*I Would Yell to Scary him away and gather Attention.*

*If someone touched me in a Bad way I will say "Don't touch me", or get your hand's off. So loud that people from the community can hear.*

- Years 10-12 (n=205, 36%) - using their voice loudly to get attention was common but for this age group often referred to the importance of retaining control and avoiding appearing frightened.

*Fight back and yell/scream to get attention, Not let them feel like they have power over me, making it very difficult for them.*

*Yell not scream.*

This age group also more commonly referred to using their voice to negotiate or talk themselves out of the situation (n=28), often as the first level of a graduated response.



*I would try to talk to them first and ask what they want from me or why they are doing this but if they don't listen I will have to start using self defence.*

*I would try to reason with them and harmonise the situation but if it wasn't working I'd punch them or hurt them to get them away from me.*

#### **Physical self defence moves**

The intended use of physical self defence moves as part of their self defence strategy increased with age.

- Years 3-4 (n=90, 38%) - the techniques the girls most commonly referred to included kicking, with the ballerina kick often referred to, and punching:

*Say Bake (back) off and kik them in Testikles.*

*Shin kick, yell Stop It or I'll Tell! Bite arm, ballarena kick.*

*Yell and try to pull or push there hand's away. Or kik, pull hair, yell, stomp foot, Bite, scratch, punch nose, stance (stand strong), walk strong, Defend, Show a friend.*

- Years 7-8 (n=493, 58%) - the use of physical moves was the second most commonly reported response. Again, this included blocks, punches, kicks but also the stance. For example, one girl described in detail how she would physically defend herself:

*If they were holding on my neck and trying to drag me into a car first I would turn around strongly then elbow them in the nose kick in groyn, then push them to the ground and punch them one more time, run away tell parents and police.*

- Years 10-12 (n=478, 85%) - the use of a physical self defence move was the most common type of self defence in response to the unwanted sexual advance. Whilst not explicit in the scenario, it appeared many of the girls interpreted this as an attempted rape. The impact of these physical techniques were often more vividly explained, and were aimed at disarming or inflicting harm on the offender, or using blocks to defend themselves.

*Kick them in the nuts and stand on their toes then punch them in the nose while yelling at them.*

*I would punch/kick them in the throat nose guts nuts to protect myself or others. I would get them off me in any way possible.*

*Punch; Kick; Yell; Elbow; Stomp; Break bones; Stay confident; Plan a way out.*

*Break their fingers, tell them to BACK OFF!*

#### **Help-seeking**

Encouraging girls to engage in help-seeking behaviour is an essential component of sexual violence prevention and featured in many of the girls' responses.

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- Years 3-4 (n=91, 38%) - help-seeking was equally as common as using physical moves. For this age group, telling a safe adult was commonly referred to as their likely response. Examples of help-seeking include:

*I wouldn't keep for a secret because it would make me feel yucky. I would tell somebody for them to get it sorted with.*

*I would go tell my mum and say someone touched me in a place I didn't want them to.*

*I wode walk away and tall a adtot (adult) aBout it.*

- Years 7-8 (n=401, 47%) - nearly half the Years 7-8 girls indicated they would seek help from a safe adult. For some this also included making sure they were heard and understanding the importance of not keeping a secret.

*I would let them know I am not happy with what they are doing and I would tell a adult I trust about what they did to me. I would make sure the adult is listening when I tell them what happened.*

*Say Stop it and stand up and if they say to keep a promise you say no and always tell your mum/dad or anyone you trust.*

*I would tell an adult and make sure they hear what I'm trying to say and make my statement clear. If that adult doesn't listen I would have a back up plan.*

- Years 10-12 (n=156, 28%) - also recognised the importance of help-seeking, which often included family, friends and also the Police.

*Punch them; hurt them; TELL SOMEONE.*

*Tell them to stop IMMEDIATELY leave and tell my parents or a very trusted adult.*

*I would get away and tell a trusted adult.*

*Tell someone trustworthy. Report them. Tell them it makes you feel uncomfortable. You always have the right to fight back if they attack. Believe in yourself.*

#### **Getting to safety/running away**

Another important message in the self defence classes is for girls, where possible, to get to safety. This often overlapped with other help-seeking actions.

- Years 3-4 (n=17, 7%) - running away/escaping from the situation was referred to by 17 girls as part of their strategy:

*Run away And tell an safe adult. Speak up for yourself.*

*Say hands off and run away stop and thik.*

- Years 7-8 (n=97, 11%) - physically removing themselves from the danger was mentioned as part of the response from one in ten of the girls, and again often in conjunction with telling a safe adult. Some also indicated they would make efforts to avoid them in the future.

## 4. Quantitative outcomes

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*Say no; fight them off; get to a safe place; tell someone.*

*I would tell them to back off and make an excuse to leave then tell a safe adult and go to a safe environment [environment].*

- Years 10-12 (n=88, 17%) - talked of escaping, including how to extricate themselves from the situation as well as to run to safety.

*Firstly I would need to plan an escape if they were to do such a thing. The first thing to escape from someone that is assaulting me in a way I would feel uncomfortable is to block their arms from touching me. After that I would quickly respond with another move, this being hurting the attacker and finish them off with 5 other moves.*

*I would try to get away and go tell the Police or my parents.*

*I would tell them to back off and make an excuse to leave then tell a safe adult and go to a safe environment.*

### **Other responses**

- Years 3-4 - other responses to the scenario presented included:
  - five girls suggested communicating and understanding that they were in charge of their bodies was important.

*This is my body hands off.*

*No targ (touch) me I am the Boos (Boss) of my Body.*

- three girls mentioned the use of a password/safe word, one girl suggested texting for help, and another suggested they would move schools.
- Years 7-8 - other responses included:
  - staying confident and calm (n=4);
  - trusting their gut feeling or instincts (n=3);
  - using a safe word or password (n=3); and
  - using their mind to make good choices (n=2);

*Use my brain to make a choice and defend myself when I need to.  
Tell a adult I feel safe around. Make noise.*

- Years 10-12 - the additional strategies of using their mind, including diversionary tactics, has already been mentioned at the beginning of this section. Other strategies included:
  - staying confident, calm and in control (n=11); and
  - collecting DNA to identify the offender (n=2).

### **4.2.2 Best / most important learning**

The final question all girls were asked was what was the best (Years 3-4) or most important (Years 7-8 and 10-12) thing they had learnt during their self defence class.

Responses from the different age groups reflected the specific content of their courses but generally included an appreciation of learning self defence skills, increasing their knowledge to stay safe, and particularly for the two older age groups, a positive change in how they felt about themselves. Much of what they had appreciated learning had featured in their responses to the earlier question that tested their learning.

#### ***Best thing Years 3-4 learnt***

Nearly all the girls responded to this question (92%, n=217 out of 236) and all gave a positive response. The variety of responses reflected the content of the course that included how to use their body, voice and mind to stay safe, the importance of help-seeking and identifying good and bad touching.

For one in five (n=39; 18%) the best thing for them was generally about **learning how to stay safe** or for many it was simply 'everything'.

*To Defend and Precept (protect) myself.*

*How to protect my self :- ) yay :-).*

*Everything! Kicks-punches, telling an adult, yell loud, fight back, I'm the boss of my body.*

Learning the **physical self defence techniques** was by far and away the most common thing the Years 3-4 appreciated learning (n=141, 64%). This included the punching and kicking with special reference to the ballerina kick, hammer punch and shin kick.

*Howe to punch proply and kicking. I really like the ballet punch.*

*Learning to Punch and kick correctly, now my mum may let me outdoors.*

Learning how to **use their voice** was the next most common aspect (n=29, 13%).

*To uses our yelling voice.*

*Use your big voice.*

Best things mentioned by other girls included:

- that the course was fun and the games (n=12);
- learning to listen and trust their instincts (n=11);
- learning about bad touching and body parts (n=6);

*The punching and the kciking technecks. And between the bad and good touches!*

*How you defend yourslef; How to fight; and that its Bad to touch Plpele (people) in Bad Spots; What to do thats Right.*

- feeling good about themselves (n=6);

*That you can sand strat (stand straight) and be strong!*

*Being strong brave and clever.*

#### 4. Quantitative outcomes

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*Making me more brav. Lorning how to defend my self.*

- that it is okay to fight back (n=4);

*That if you hert them, Them you don't get told off.*

- learning how to use their mind to make good choices (n=2);

*The shin kick and making good and bad choosis.*

- learning the importance of help-seeking (n=2); and

*That if you get a Bad touch it is inportant to tell an adult.*

- not to be a bully (n=1) and the video cyber bullying (n=1).

#### **Most important learnings for Years 7-8**

Most of the Years 7-8 girls responded to this question (93%, 786 out of the sample of 850), with just one girl from this large sample responding negatively by writing 'nothing really'.

It was more common for this age group to refer generally about learning how to defend themselves (n=311) or their friends (n=45):

*Knowing what to do if anything is wrong. Learning how to get out of a situation.*

*All of it. I learn't how to defend myself and others, how to avoid danger and what to do in a dangerous situation. I loved the whole course.*

Again, others just referred to 'everything' (n=80). Clearly many really enjoyed and appreciated the experience.

*Everything cause it can keep me safe and my friends.*

*Everything was really fun and helpful. I think everything was great.*

*EVERYTHING; I liked learning everything we have done for the past day and a half, thats the reason why I choose everything.*

As with the younger girls, **learning the physical self defence skills** was the single most commonly mentioned component (n=363; 46%).

*How to block strokes and how to Punch and kick harder.*

*I think the ballerena kick would be really useful in the future and its real easy to do and I wont forget the others though.*

In addition to learning the blocks, punches and kicks, there was also often an appreciation for knowing **how to escape from specific situations** (e.g. strangle holds, if someone was holding them down and/or how to defend themselves against someone using a knife).

*How to knock out a male raper in 6 seconds.*

*How to punch kick and relese myself from Strangleholds and defense techniches.*

*Ground fighting. If they lie on top of me I would push or lift them off me.*

#### 4. Quantitative outcomes

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*The best thing I Learn't was ways to defend yourself when someone has a weapon.*

Learning **how to use their voice** was also mentioned as important by some girls (n=45, 6%).

*The best thing I learnt was the moves and that my voice is a powerful weapon. I really enjoyed this.*

*I now am someone that is strong and can fight back not only with my body but with words!!!*

*To shout, you need everyone to know, don't be afraid.*

There is a strong emphasis in the course on practising to use one's own voice. For many girls this was a new and unusual experience, as reflected in the following comment:

*That I have a VOICE.*

For the Years 7-8 girls there was an emergence of an appreciation for some positive change in attitude that had occurred as a result of the course (n=161, 20%). They were often inter-mingled but included increased confidence and self-worth, a changed attitude towards gender equality and their ability (and right) to defend themselves. This likely reflects the feminist/empowerment approach used by WSDN-WT when teaching self defence that separates it from a martial arts approach.

- An increased confidence and sense of empowerment was noted by some girls (n=50)

*Every single thing! This coarse helped me so much and made me grow my confidence! I am so thankful and happy! Was great fun!*

*That girls can be confident and learn that girls are powerful.*

*The best thing I learnt was to be confident in my self and to not underestimate my personality and actions.*

*It has made me feel more confident about myself and made me feel really safe!!!*

- A different appreciation of gender equality and the ability (and right) for a girl to fight off a male was noted by 39 girls.

*First when I was doing the first answer sheet [the pre-course evaluation form] I thought it would be impossible to fight off an adult male and now I know even I can do it now.*

*Knowing the females around our age can defend themselves from grown men, and the kicks and punches.*

*That just because some men look big and strong, doesn't mean you cant fight back and win.*

*My self confidence has changed because I have learnt that kids can fight off males.*

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*How to protect myself. And you don't have to be a good fighter to put up a fight. Girls can fight!*

*To make me feel good, powerful, and useful; That girls have gifts that boys don't; That girls and boys are amazing; Ballerina kick.*

- Other examples of a positive change in attitude appear below:

*Push down fear, bring out anger. That you can talk in a way that the boy backs off, instead of using your limbs.*

*I learnt that its never a girls fault, I learnt to have self confidence and to matter what tell someone.*

*Well I enjoyed everything, but I loved learning that every girl is strong & can stand up for herself & not to be vonrable (vulnerable), I learnt to be powerful.*

*To be confident with my self and to know that Im no bodys victim and that I now know how strong I really am.*

*That I am strong, brave and clever and if I believe in myself I can do anything.*

*How to feel powerful & more comfortable in my skin.*

Other things the girls enjoyed or valued about the course included:

- the games and having fun (n=15);
- the importance of help-seeking and telling a safe adult (n=15);

*To know what to do if this happened to me. And now I know how important it is to talk to an auld or someone that would help you. And Protect your self if anything happeneds*
- identifying different types of abuse, body parts, and bad touching (n=14);

*To protect my self and know whats the wrong way people touch you.*

*The techniques and the different types of abuses.*

*What to do when you are sexually abused.*
- the stories told by the self defence teachers (n=11);

*To learn how to defend myself and hear storys of other girls who have done so.*
- to trust your instincts (n=8);

*To act on a gut feeling if you ever feel uncomfortable.*
- role plays (n=3); and
- the self defence song/chant (n=2).

### **Most important learnings for Years 10-12**

Again, most of the Years 10-12 girls made a response to this last question (88% n= 559 out of 637). Responses were similar to the Years 7-8 although now also included an appreciation in understanding about healthy relationships.

As with the other age groups, many of the girls referred generally to learning how to defend themselves (n=226) or their friends (n=41), or just referred to the value of the whole course:

*I dont have a best thing it was all awesome and helpful.*

*How to defend myself and others around me, and how to identify an unsafe situation.*

**Learning the physical self defence skills** was again the single most commonly mentioned component of the course (45%, n=253) and girls often described (with detail) how to escape from specific situations.

*What to do when someone grabes you from the throat. 1. Swing arms around. 2. On the way back hit them in the face with your fists. 3. Kick them in the groin (groin). 4. Poke them in the eyes. 5. Punch them in their chins.*

Learning **how to use their voice** effectively was singled out as important for a few girls (n=22, 4%), whether it was through making a lot of noise or being assertive.

*The techniques and also how yelling & shouting is EFFECTIVE.*

*I think the best thing I learnt was to talk calmly at first then when they stop I yell and scream to seek attention.*

*Being assertive with words works a lot more than I thought.*

As with the Years 7-8 girls, the Years 10-12 girls also often made strong reference to the impact of the course on their attitude, again including **increases in confidence, self-worth and understanding of gender equality** (n=69, 12%).

*That I am valuable enough to protect.*

*To not be afraid to protect yourself, you're always worth it to try.*

*That most women might not be as strong as men but they are POWERFUL!*

*That a teenage girl can fight off a grown man if she puts her mind to it and believes in herself.*

*How to be confident enough to stand up and protect myself and how no one has the right to make me feel unsafe in anyway and that I am allowed to fight back.*

*To be more confident in myself and that I can defend myself. Also that sexual assault or domestic violence if caused to hurt me is not my fault.*

Other aspects of the course the older girls rated as important included:

- learning about healthy relationships (n=12);



*The best thing I learnt was how to defend myself and how to know the signs of an unhealthy relationship.*

- facts and stories (n=14);

*All the statistics and stories from other people who saved themselves or others*

*The stories because they have told me that a young girl could beat off a big man.*

- how to make escape plans (n=6); and
- how to prevent a situation (n=3).

*How to stop the situation before it starts*

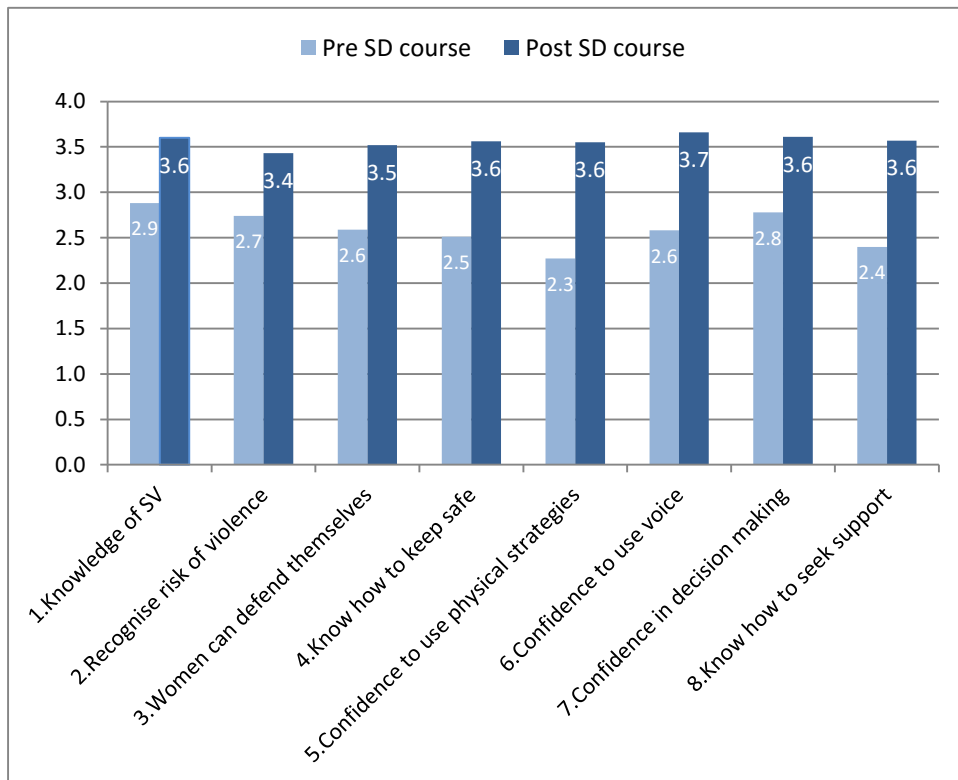
*How to use my words to try and stop things starting and to tell a trusted Adult. The most important thing is to save your self in the best way possible.*

### 4.2 Outcomes for women

Outcomes for the women's Isolation to Empowerment courses, funded by the Ministry of Justice, were evaluated by looking at changes in participants' ratings of their skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviour from the beginning to the end of the course. The women were asked the extent to which they agreed with eight statements that reflected the key objectives of the programme (see Appendix B). There were five response options from 0 to 4 where 0 = strongly disagree and 4 = strongly agree. Objectives included:

- knowledge around sexual violence;
- recognising early signs of violence;
- belief that women can defend themselves against men;
- knowing how to keep safe;
- confidence to use self defence strategies (physical, verbal, mental decision making); and
- knowing how to seek support for self and others if needed.

A total of 115 women attended nine courses in the first half of 2015 and participated in the evaluation. This included four migrant/refugee courses, two rural tau iwi, two disability related and one Māori focused course. Of the 115 women who attended the courses, 97 completed both the pre and post evaluation forms. Their group means for pre- and post- ratings are presented in Figure 4.8.

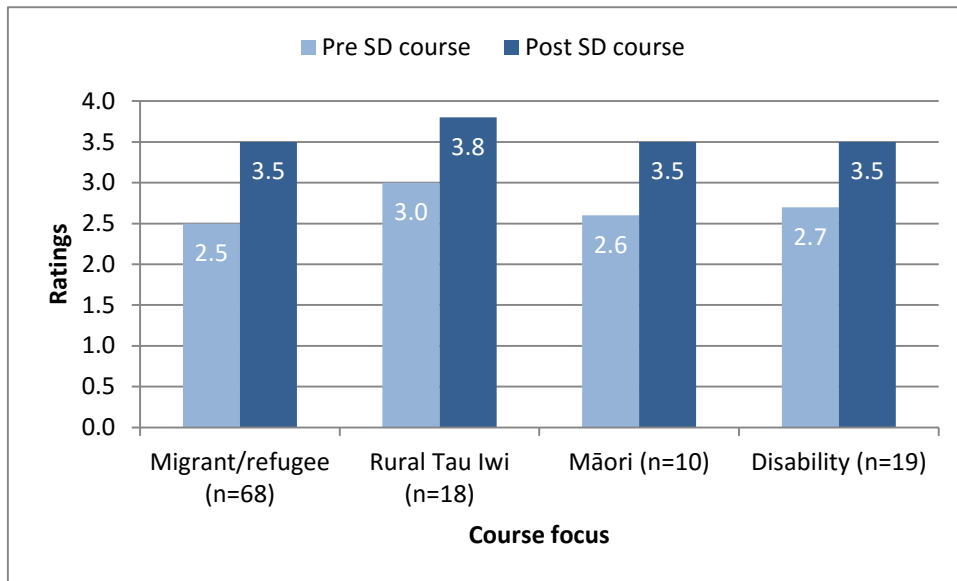
**Figure 4.8 Course outcomes for women's self defence courses**

What can be clearly seen from this graph is that, as a group, ratings on all course objectives increased following the programme. Shifts were greatest in relation to confidence to use physical strategies, and knowing how to seek support. All shifts were statistically significant improvements according to a series of paired sample t-tests ( $p < 0.01$ ).

### ***By type of course***

Ratings for all eight programme objectives were combined to create an overall score. The impact of the different types of women's courses on this overall score is presented in figure 4.9.

Positive outcomes appeared evident for each of the four types of course. These positive shifts were all highly statistically significant. Migrant/refugee courses showed the greatest shifts ( $t=13.1$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ), followed by rural women ( $t=6.1$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ), then those with disabilities ( $t=5.6$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ), and Māori women ( $t=4.9$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

**Figure 4.9 Course outcomes by type of women's course*****Intention to act***

Women participants were asked post course their likelihood of engaging in three key behaviours taught in the course, with very positive results achieved:

- **intention to seek help** – 95% (100/105) ‘Very likely/likely’ – to seek help/support if felt unsafe;
- **intention to be an ethical bystander** – 98% (103/105) ‘Very likely/likely’ – to seek help/support friends if they were unsafe; and
- **intention to use assertive body language** – 96% (101/105) ‘Very likely/likely’ – to use assertive body language in the future.

**4.3 Summary**

An impressive range of positive and statistically significant shifts were identified in the girls’ and women’s self defence knowledge, attitude and skills.

Key findings for school age girls include:

- All age groups showed statistically significant shifts in relation to age appropriate assessments of:
  - self defence knowledge (learning ways to keep self and friends safe);
  - ability to recognise child abuse (Years 3-4 and 7-8) and for Years 10-12 unhealthy relationships;
  - understanding the importance of disclosing abuse and seeking support;
  - understanding of gender equality and girls’ ability to defend themselves (Years 7-8 and 10-12); and
  - confidence and self-esteem.

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- Years 7-8 and 10-12 had statistically significant improvements in self-esteem as measured by the validated and internationally recognised Rosenberg Self Esteem scale. When the research sample was broken down by ethnicity, all four ethnic groups were seen to achieve statistically significant improvements in self-esteem following the self defence course.
- Between 93% and 98% of girls post course indicated they:
  - were likely to use their newly learned self defence skills to stay safe, including listening to instincts (and, for two older age groups, using assertive body language), and, when necessary, to seek help for themselves and others; and
  - reported they understood that abuse is never the fault of a victim.
- Responses to two open ended questions at the end of the course indicated the girls had found the course a positive and useful experience. Importantly, they also revealed high levels of understanding of how to put the self defence strategies they had learned into practice.
- Girls who had previously participated in a WSDN-WT self defence course, compared to their class mates who had not, reported higher pre-programme levels of self defence knowledge and skills, together with positive attitudes towards gender equality, and higher personal levels of confidence and self-esteem. These were statistically significant for 7 out of the 12 variables assessed.

Key findings for the 115 women participants included:

- Positive and statistically significant improvements following their self defence course in:
  - knowledge around sexual violence;
  - recognising early signs of violence;
  - believing women can defend themselves against men;
  - knowing how to keep safe;
  - confidence to use self defence strategies (physical, verbal, mental decision making); and
  - knowing how to seek support for self and others if needed.
- When ratings for individual programme objectives were combined to create an overall score, all four types of courses were found to have positive and statistically significant improvements. These positive shifts were greatest for the migrant/refugee women, followed by rural women, then those with disabilities and Māori women.

## 5 Qualitative outcomes

In this section of the report, we present material obtained in interviews with the key stakeholders of the Girls' Self Defence Project; from both stakeholders and participants in the Isolation to Empowerment courses for women; and from WSDN-WT teachers themselves. The quotations presented here have had the occasional redundant word or colloquialism edited out in order to facilitate ease of reading.

### 5.1 Increased confidence

The most consistently identified outcome across all of those interviewed was the increased confidence levels experienced by participants in the WSDN-WT self defence courses. In fact, every key informant and course participant interviewed identified increased confidence levels overall. This supports evaluations made over the years by schools (3.1.2) and partner organisations (3.2.2), and also the pre-post course ratings by girls (4.1 and 4.2) and women participants (4.3). Importantly, the increase in confidence noted by interviewees was also seen to increase the likelihood of girls and women to disclose to others and seek help if facing threat or danger.

School teachers and guidance counsellors all commented on how course participation improved the girls' confidence levels, something they considered to be acutely needed by many of the girls in their classes.

*I've probably talked for hours on that confidence thing, when you see girls that function without confidence, how it does affect a lot, and then when they do get the confidence, it's, "Yay." (School teacher, Girls Years 10-12)*

*I thought it was brilliant, I mean to be strong and courageous, and that "I'm in charge of me". It's just such a powerful, positive message for anyone. (School teacher, Girls Years 3-4)*

Some acknowledged this was a difficult outcome to measure, but said they had observed its impact afterwards in a range of different contexts both inside and outside the classroom.

*Some of the stuff that maybe comes out of here is hard to measure, like the confidence. Some of these younger ones who you can just see being walked all over, ... You would hope that this ....has given them maybe a wee kick start. "Well I didn't know how to stand up for myself before, but I've got a couple of ideas now." And that might just be in the school playground, against a bully. (School teacher, Girls Years 10-12)*

A head of department noted that while the school's core business was helping girls learn, confidence underpins all learning so programmes that enhance this are highly valued.

The impacts were often particularly obvious in the shyer, more timid girls, those more inclined to be physically weak and at risk of being bullied.

*I think it gives them a confidence; they gain some confidence from it, particularly little meek and mild girls who might find it difficult to stand up and*

## 5. Qualitative outcomes

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*punch something and [say] "NO". Because that's one of the things they do and they might start off just going "no". And throughout the day they become more confident. I think that anytime you become more confident, that's just a great personal boost. (School teacher, Girls Years 3-4)*

A student from a teen parent unit commented that she felt doing the course provided her with more options in the event that she ever encountered a situation of serious threat to her safety:

*I think I would be more confident to do something other than just stand there – because I am the type of person that freezes under shock, like, yeah, I just freeze and I can't do anything. So I think if I was in a real situation like that, I would be more confident. (Participant, Teen Parent Unit)*

Similar gains in confidence were reported by the adult women who did the self defence course. All of those who were participants said their confidence levels had increased as a result.

*It gave me a lot more confidence.... You know how you're brought up to always be polite? I think for the first time it gave me permission to fight back. Yeah, and I think especially in the professional role because I've been a social worker for a long time, you always want to present as being professional. The code of conduct for working for the Ministry of Social Development is that you maintain that conduct in your personal life as well, so I'd never even thought about gaining permission not to be polite. You know, if I was being attacked, I would have a totally different stance now to what I probably would have had back then. (Participant, women's course)*

Some spoke of how the attitude of the self defence teachers encouraged them to grow in confidence. One former course participant said:

*I think because of her confidence, it made me feel confident, because she was sort of radiating that. (She) was talking about when she was at a bar one night and a man came up behind her and was pressing very close to her and how she just brought her leg up and stomped on his toes. Like having the confidence to do that without worrying about offending somebody. (Participant, women's course)*

Another described how she now felt more confident in public spaces where previously, because of her own victimisation history, the very sight of men could be disempowering:

*If I saw a man mowing a lawn on the side of the road, I would cross over. Because to me, all those men have got power. If they're in a group, they're in power. Man's got a lawnmower? He could run you over, you know? Stupid things go through your mind when you've been abused. Now I don't do that. Now I just keep walking and if they don't want to split then I stand my ground. I don't move. And I used to move out of people's way all the time. Now I think, why should I? I've got as much right to be on the street as everyone else has. They can walk round me. (Participant, women's course)*

Women's refuge workers in a focus group all referred to the gains in confidence they witnessed in women referred to the course.

*Worker A: Have the confidence to say “no” and know that they can enforce their “no” if need be.*

*Worker B: Yeah, that they have the right to say “no” and that they actually were given the skill to be able to back up their “no”. (Focus group, women’s refuge workers, women’s course)*

Support workers from other centres spoke similarly about the changes they observed in clients who had attended the course:

*Standing taller, I suppose, head up. They were very excited when they finished. Excited about what they’d learnt. I’m sure there are more words than confident, but that’s the one that – more confidence than what they went in with, that’s for sure. (Women’s refuge manager, women’s course)*

### **Confidence to seek help**

One of the many aims of the WSDN-WT courses is to encourage those who are being threatened or victimised to tell someone. Breaking the silence and isolation is often the first step to safety, yet one of the most difficult steps many girls and women ever make.

*And of course having that courage to speak up and to see someone and letting them know “well if this is happening it’s not okay and you can tell someone.”... and if you tell someone and they don’t listen, you tell somebody else you trust and you don’t stop until someone listens. (School teacher, Girls Years 3-4)*

One specific tool several teachers commented on was how reassuring many of the girls found the suggestion to establish a code word they could use if they felt they were unsafe.

*It’s the word they use if they have an opportunity to ring home, if they feel uncomfortable in a situation, even if it is with peer groups, or perhaps at a friend’s house, that they’ve got a word that they can say without physically saying, “Mum, I’m really scared, I want to come home”. They thought that was great. So they’ve all come up with a word and they’ve spoken to their parents about that particular word and that if they were to text it or make a phone call home then that’s what they would use.... The thing I’ve liked about that is that they’re having that conversation at home with Mum or caregiver as well to say well this is what we’re doing at school and then we’ve got to think of something that we can put in place, which was really cool. (School teacher, Girls Years 7-8)*

Some women course participants spoke explicitly of how they felt more empowered not only to act in their own defence but to be ethical bystanders if they noticed other women in danger.

*I now know that if I went out on the street today and saw some guy smacking some woman that I could probably step in. Before I would think, “Oh shit, I’ve been there. I know how she feels.” But it’s sort of like, could I step in? Could I ask her if she’s okay? Ask her if she wants any help first? Before I wouldn’t do that. And if she says no, she doesn’t need any help, then just observe. And if she does need help then I would try and walk her away, because two women*

*are stronger than one. Before I wouldn't be able to do that, if I hadn't done these courses.* (Participant, women's course)

## 5.2 Empowerment

In addition to confidence, reference was often made to the closely related concept of empowerment, with at least half of all those interviewed specifically using this term to describe how they perceived the impact of the course on girls and women. Many indicated by their comments that they saw empowerment as a necessary step towards girls and women accepting they have a right to be safe from all forms of violence. When asked what she thought the most important learning to come from the course was, one teacher of Years 7-8 girls responded:

*If you asked the kids, they'd all say learning the moves! But I think it's a bigger understanding about what's OK and what's not OK.* (School principal, Girls Years 7-8)

One example she gave involved a 13 year old girl who thought she simply had to tolerate a 15 year old male friend of her brother's coming into the bathroom whenever she was in the shower. She said the WSDN-WT teacher was good at picking up on things such as that in class, asking how the girl felt and exploring with her why she felt she could not say anything and had to accept it was OK. Discussions such as these helped many girls come to a stronger sense of their own right to be safe and have control over what happened to their bodies.

Another teacher commented that she felt the girls all found the course "very empowering." She continued:

*From the girls' perspective I've got a parent of mine, she's a bit like a piece of litmus paper. She'll email me when things are going really well, she'll email me when things aren't going well..... It sums it up because her daughter is a middle class European girl, very bright. So, "Dear (teacher), thank you very much for the self defence course (daughter) has just completed. I have no doubt it could save someone's life. (She) has shown me lots of the moves and has been practising shouting "Get away from me" at the top of her voice and making the arm gestures at the same time. Thanks again for this very invaluable instruction for the girls at (school)." (School principal, Girls Years 7-8)*

Similar comments were made in relation to the Isolation to Empowerment courses for women. For example, women who had their own previous histories of victimisation often spoke of how positively they experienced the programme:

*What that course did for me was, it empowered me. It gave me faith in myself and confidence that I would be able to survive the situation. I may not. You know, you can still get very badly hurt or killed or whatever, but at least I'd have a chance.* (Participant, women's course)

*It does empower you. You did feel – stand strong and think you walk out of here and you're not going to touch my handbag, touch me, touch anything.* (Participant, women's course)



## 5. Qualitative outcomes

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Hearing other women share their stories was also frequently recognised as playing an important role in empowering others in the group. Support workers we ran a focus group with emphasised the importance of “group synergy”:

*Worker A: People sharing experiences and bouncing off each other and lifting and supporting.*

*Worker B: Supporting each other.*

*Worker A: Yeah. Sharing ideas and, you know, from their own experiences I think that's really powerful. (Focus group, Specialist sexual violence support workers, women's course)*

Changing the terms used to describe themselves, such as “victim”, was itself experienced as empowering by some participants:

*She (WSDN-WT teacher) changed it from victim to survivor, that's what made the difference, and that empowered you straight off from there. Well I'm not a victim, "Oh my god I am a survivor – you're right, and I can do this", and it was like taking control of yourself again. (Participant, women's course)*

Another major way a sense of empowerment was facilitated derived from WSDN-WT teachers' sharing of their own experiences of overcoming fear and acting in their own, and others, protection. Women participants expressed this clearly:

*She (WSDN-WT teacher) empowered you because she was so powerful. She had this persona of survivor, and .... I'm going to show you how to survive. (Participant, women's course)*

*She's been a victim and has turned into a survivor, that's what made the course stand out. She's not a woman who has heard about an experience, she's lived it. She knows what fear is, she knows how it feels to be completely useless and powerless and vulnerable, and she also knows how it feels when you take the power back. (Participant, women's course)*

*Well, I think that one aspect that makes it powerful is that the facilitator that we have is very engaging, very motivating, and very empowering and respectful to the participants, so I think that's one thing that makes it so powerful. (Specialist sexual violence support worker, women's course)*

A further empowering aspect identified was the very knowledge imparted by the self defence teachers. For some this was tied to their learning of the physical skills they use to protect themselves with:

*The knowledge. It was the knowledge that I then had. The skills that she imparted to us which we could then empower ourselves with, you know. She did that so well, didn't she? (Participant, women's course)*

One older woman, for example, commented:

*It was informative, in so much as we knew what is happening now to our young children with technology the way it is. So it wasn't just your physical-practical things that we learnt. It was very much factual information that was giving us knowledge to pass on to our grandchildren or whomever. So it was*

*empowerment from that perspective as well, I think. (Participant, women's course)*

Others spoke of how powerful and healing it was simply to experience feelings of empowerment after years of victimisation and low self-esteem.

*I think for me, it wasn't just the techniques, or the part we did on healthy and unhealthy relationships, or even the statistics – which were quite shocking, of the ages of vulnerability – but it was the empowerment, I felt, as women know who have been abused in many ways, that power is taken away from you, and it's really hard to get back, especially when it's ongoing. So to feel that empowered afterwards, it helped with the healing process. And you know that now that you've learnt these techniques, and they are easy – no one can ever take that power away from you again. And that was the most important thing I took away from it – was that sense that I had my power back, no one can hurt me. (Participant, women's course)*

### 5.3 Voice/using voice

The next most commonly identified outcome from doing the WSDN-WT self defence courses was the increased awareness participants had of the power of their own voice. Section 5.1 referred to an increased confidence to use the voice to seek help, and this section describes how the girls and women learnt and practised the physical skill of using their voice. More than three-quarters of the school teachers interviewed about the girls' programme, and all of the participants and support workers for the women's courses, referred to the increased use of voice in participants.

For some this began with the simple realisation of how much noise they could actually make.

*When you start, (WSDN-WT teacher) she actually gets us to make these statements, of course, and we're sort of quiet mice. It's very quiet when they start to talk, even me, and she just encourages it to become louder and louder and to be more free and actually vocalising and practising that, the practical application of that, is actually quite hard. And quite challenging. And very liberating once you can do it. (Participant, women's course)*

Teachers spoke of how reluctant girls were initially to use their voice, sometimes suggesting this was because they had never been taught how to use it most effectively.

*A lot of them said they would just screech, really loud, or they wouldn't say anything. In fact the majority of them said they wouldn't say anything, they wouldn't know what to do in that situation. But now that they have somebody who's told them what to do, they are more likely to use that technique. (School deputy principal, Girls Years 7-8)*

In a society where girls are still socialised to be quiet and polite, compliant and agreeable, learning to speak up is a potentially liberating act. One of the WSDN-WT teachers observed how hard it was in our society for girls and women to speak up, especially in their own interests.

## 5. Qualitative outcomes

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*In my experience, any women and girls that are ever portrayed as being able to speak their mind are portrayed as being a bit crazy, a bit mental, a bit dangerous.... I do remember a group of girls that said, "Well, that's not polite and my mum and dad wouldn't want me to do that. They wouldn't want me to speak, it's dad's friend so that would be rude." - when he comes around for barbecues and things and he might pat her on the bum or ask her to sit on his knee. So she was more worried about the offence that she would cause, and I think that's common. (WSDN-WT teacher)*

This teacher explained her approach when confronted by such a situation, and how she encouraged discussion with the girls about the different options they might use to speak up, such as practising first what they might say, or asking a friend to come with them while they told a parent. She continued:

*I'm always worried that hiding something is more acceptable than not with the girls, you know? Keeping it to themselves and they didn't realise the burden over years that that places on you and then suddenly, hello, I'm 30 and I still feel like I'm five or the 12-year-old girl who can't talk. So it's trying to break a little chain there. (WSDN-WT teacher)*

Her perspective was shared by the other self defence teachers but she may have been the clearest in terms of how she articulated the importance of voice:

*I think that was one of the most important parts of the course, the voice, because not all the girls were physical and some will never be, it's not their thing, and the thought of them punching someone is difficult. Everyone could have a voice and often that's all you need. Whether it's a loud one if a guy's coming towards you and you're shouting at them, or it's a quiet one when you're talking to your mum and dad or whoever, your mum's friend. So I think the voice, out of all the things, was the most important. (WSDN-WT teacher)*

Her view was reinforced by comments from school teachers who maintained that girls who did the course did gain a new appreciation of the power of their voice. For example, as an outcome of the course, one teacher said about the girls who did it:

*I think 99 percent of them would feel absolutely okay about using their voice and going for help and things. (School teacher, Girls Years 7-8)*

A young woman interviewed at a teen parent unit spoke excitedly of how good it felt to shout out loud, adding:

*It was fun to just scream and yell because if we were in that situation I think it would help to yell and scream rather than to just keep quiet and let the person come for you. (Participant, Teen Parent Unit)*

Voice emerged as a very significant factor for women course participants also. When asked what they had found most useful on the Isolation to Empowerment courses, many women referred to learning to use their voice, with one saying:

*I think the thing I got out of it the most and was like (WSDN-WT teacher) talking about taking control of your space, like being really comfortable and confident about your personal space and bubble and, you know, like she was also talking about how some people can get into your personal space and for a lot of women we don't go, "Don't do that, I don't like that", we just try and move away*

*or we think we're overreacting or something like that. (Participant, women's course)*

Some women expressed initial anxiety about being loud and shouting out. Said one:

*It was that voice thing, I mean, gosh, I needed to actually yell and I didn't know, and I'd never heard myself yell like that before in a room of people and hearing other people yell and then towards the end all I wanted to do was be yelling, "Whoa!" That's what I meant by find your voice. (Participant, women's course)*

Many also referred to the significance for girls and women of being encouraged to say "no" to behaviours they did not like. At a girls' course we witnessed one of the exercises used to develop the voice when each child in turn was asked to place her hand on the knee of the girl next to her, whereupon the latter was instructed to tell her to remove her hand, or say she did not like being touched that way. Some girls initially struggled with being able to look the other in the eye and say those words, even in such a controlled environment where the WSDN-WT teacher was encouraging them to do so, but with practice became visibly more accomplished. Support workers also referred to similar difficulties being faced by women asked to do something similar at the courses they attended.

*They had to put their hand on their knee and then the person who the hand was sitting on their knee, they had to turn to them and look them in the eye and say, "Get your hand off my knee". It was really difficult for some people but really, really good for other people so it's a mix, really. (Specialist sexual violence support worker, women's course)*

Even simply saying "No" to the self defence teacher was a massive struggle for some participants. One woman recalled her experience:

*She sits there and she gets us to yell out "no". And of course we all go, "no". She goes, "I didn't hear you", and she'll keep going until she thinks that you're all at that point. Then I think one part of it, individually, she went around the room and got you to yell out "NO" to her. That bit felt quite horrible because she was right in your face and you had to yell "no" at her. I don't really want to do that. The most empowering thing that she taught us that day was our voice.... It makes you 10 feet tall because even though "no" is a two-letter word, it is a very hard word to say. (Participant, women's course)*

Many positive comments were made by all those involved regarding the value of being encouraged to practise using their voice over and over.

*I've heard a lot from the women and from staff around actually having to use that voice and practise doing that because we can all say in a situation, "I'll scream and I'll do this," but we don't practise that, and I think that some of the women that come out of the self defence course had said that it was really awkward at the beginning saying "no", but towards the end of it, it was actually quite a good outlet for them to be able to do it. (Participant, women's course)*

Some spoke of how hard they struggled to overcome decades of silencing, and how much they appreciated and needed encouragement from WSDN-WT teachers in order to change their behaviour. One woman, for example, told us:

*I wouldn't say boo. Because that's what we were taught when we were kids being abused. You don't talk, you just shut your mouth. Don't say nothing. But old (WSDN-WT teacher), sometimes she'll go around behind you and she'll give you a wee gentle pat on the back. "Spit them words out, (name), spit them out."*

INT: And how was that? What was that like when she did that?

*She didn't – like, she told you what she was going to do. She'd say, "I'm just going to help you bring those words out", and she'd give you a wee pat on the back. And I'd go, "well, what do you want to me say?" And she'd go, "what do you think I want you to say? I'm a man and I'm hitting you on the back." And next minute I went, "NO!" (Participant, women's course)*

This was reinforced by a women's refuge manager who, when asked what were the greatest benefits she saw in her clients, replied:

*Probably the biggest gain would be, I'm thinking, to be vocal. To not be afraid to yell out, to call out, to scream, whatever it is they need to do. Because for the bulk of them, over the years they haven't had that voice, they've had to keep quiet. They haven't even been able to tell often friends, family or anyone what's been happening to them, let alone yell out or call out for help when things were happening to them. So to have that confidence to be able to call out, yell for help, and know that you can do it is huge. (Women's refuge manager, women's course)*

She referred to one woman in particular as an example of this shift:

*She's like 95 percent deaf.... I see her in particular walking out, you know, the facial expression and everything.... She'd been silenced basically all of her life and she said if she hadn't have done that course she would never have had the confidence to know that she can call out and it is okay to call out. (Women's refuge manager, women's course)*

Again, it was the ability of the WSDN-WT teachers to model that behaviour that inspired many of the women to step outside their comfort zone. For some, this was the most empowering outcome they experienced from the course. One said of her WSDN-WT teacher:

*That such a tiny little button can have such a big voice – inspiring, really inspiring. She's just – her voice. The first time when she yelled out "NO", I literally jumped off the seat. It was so strong and so powerful. When she said, "If you sit there and say 'no' – but if you say 'NO!'" Holy moly.*

*The key to what she teaches you, it's not all about the hands and the feet, they're just there as backup. The main thing she teaches you is your voice. Use your voice. A lot of women who have been beaten like I have, and abused, you lose your voice because you get frightened to use it. Well, she certainly empowers you to bring it out! (Participant, women's course)*

## 5.4 Self defence skills and techniques

Three quarters of the school teachers and guidance counsellors interviewed expressed confidence in how the WSDN-WT teachers taught physical self defence skills to the girls. (The remainder made no specific mention of this aspect). Indeed, a valued aspect of the course that set it apart from other interventions was that it went beyond imparting knowledge of self defence, to actually teaching and practising physical self defence strategies. Some made the point that it was important for girls to be encouraged to be physical and respond physically, given so many other messages reinforcing their passivity, politeness and submission.

It was widely recognised that these were particular skills requiring not only expert teaching of the actual moves involved but presented in tandem within a context promoting overall safety and well-being. Many teachers praised the ways in which the WSDN-WT self defence teachers emphasised that these skills were to be used only when necessary.

*It's a little bit of aggression, but it's a good aggression because it's to protect themselves. If they ever need it, and that's stressed, you know you would only do this if you needed to. You don't go out and kick someone in the nuts but if you needed to, that's what you might have to do. (School teacher, Girls Years 3-4)*

Quotes from girls post course (4.2.1) clearly suggested that they had learnt and appreciated the selection of the appropriate level of self defence response.

The emphasis on protection, not aggression, was also well-recognised by those involved with the Isolation to Empowerment courses for women. As one worker with migrants and refugees stated, the emphasis from the WSDN-WT self defence teachers is very explicit when teaching the physical moves:

*"This is to protect yourself when you are in a difficult situation. It's not for you to go start hitting everybody." (Migrant/refugee worker, women's course)*

Another woman reiterated this point as she reflected on the advantages of learning the WSDN-WT techniques:

*I would never have had the confidence to go for a man's testicles or anything like that. I just wouldn't have dreamt it. So I think it's about – you know how when men fight, they just get into a punch up? This is about disabling the attacker and then getting out. (Women's refuge manager, women's course)*

School teachers generally accepted that girls needed this training and it should not be viewed as an optional extra.

*I keep referring to the tools, because I think if they're not taught them, they don't know that they can use them. (School teacher, Girls Years 7-8)*

Key stakeholders in the community often expressed their belief that these courses should be available for all school pupils.

*WOMAN A: I'd love to see it in the schools all the time as part of the curriculum....Because it's so hard to break the cycle, educating these kids at a young age who a lot of them already live in that violent home and stuff, it's*

*normalised, it's what happens. So they get that extra education around how to protect themselves. I just think it's a really good learning tool for them at a young age. And they grow up knowing it, they don't have to be told, as a grown woman, you can have a voice, it's okay to say "no".*

*WOMAN B: Using it in the playground, using it on the street, so it's not just about violence within the home, it's actually about violence within the communities, in New Zealand.... The reality is, we can put as much work as we want in, but that work we put in isn't going to actually stop people from being violent, so it is that early intervention prevention work, teaching, young people and women, and children the skills. (Focus group, women's refuge workers, women's courses)*

Similarly, another community worker believed such courses should be compulsory in schools, arguing:

*People cannot steal that away from you. You use it to protect yourself in school, in social situations as you grow up, in your work, as you get into a relationship - in all those kind of things. It just goes on, it doesn't stop. (Migrant/refugee worker, women's course)*

A key factor in the success of this teaching was linked to the emphasis on all those participating having the time and encouragement to practise the moves themselves. While other violence prevention programmes might impart information and tell girls how to stay safe, this course actually ensured they all left knowing at least some specific moves that they could use if necessary. One school principal told us about asking the teacher who usually organised the girls' course to provide feedback that could be passed on to us:

*She said it's good that we do other programmes in school, around keeping ourselves safe, and those sorts of things, but this gives girls actual strategies to use, and actually gives them the chance to practise those strategies. It's actually practising being really loud verbally, and being assertive, and going through the different actions that they can do in those situations, and actually acting them out – rather than saying this is what you should do, actually allowing them to say, "Right, do this, and now let's practise it". I think that's what's been powerful about it. (School principal, Girls Years 3-4)*

Another expressed it this way:

*It's not so much always having the skills, it's also about **knowing** you've got the skills, isn't it, and the confidence that gives people. (School principal, Girls Years 3-4)*

Such a view was echoed by those witnessing course impacts on older girls also.:

*I think it's been – oh, obviously more specific skills and knowledge. It's all very well having the confidence, "Yeah, I'll stand up to you", or "I can say this", but, "How do I do it well?" and "What exactly can I do?" (School teacher, Girls Years 10-12)*

The skills on their own were limited, unless paired with a girl's own belief in her right to be safe and have her body treated with respect by others. This was the most important knowing the girls gained, along with having at least some confidence that

they knew a range of things they could do if confronted by a potentially dangerous situation.

With the women's courses, one notable finding was participants' genuine amazement at how skilled they could become so quickly when being taught the specific safety moves taught by the WSDN-WT self defence teachers. Somewhat tentatively, one woman said:

*I probably shouldn't have this on tape, but when I went home, I said to my partner, "Now I'm going to lie on the bed, pretend to rape me". "What?" And so he got on top and our little boy got on top of him. Well, I just did the manoeuvre that they said, next thing he flipped off – my partner did – and banged his head on the drawers next to the bed, and my little boy went flying. I was like, "Oh, that works". (Participant, women's course)*

Women in the focus groups we held often recounted a range of ways in which they felt they now knew how to look after themselves. The physical skills were but one of a range of components they identified, with many speaking of different measures they now took around their own safety and security. One woman, for example, said she made herself consciously notice more details about people she passed on the street or saw lurking in her area. Another spoke of ensuring that if she was the last one at work, she would now make sure the door was locked, and would also lock the door on her way out if she knew she was leaving her co-worker alone. A third simply said she walked taller with her handbag better secured and car keys at the ready. Such examples illustrate the range of safety measures the women were inspired to adopt as a result of doing the WSDN-WT course.

*Woman A: The fact we could do as much as we possibly could do to prevent something. It's not to say that it won't actually occur but, you know? You now have these tools where you can do as much as possible to hurt the sods.*

*Woman B: Even the things of keeping DNA. If you scratch or rip a coat or do anything, don't clean your fingernails, don't do anything. And sometimes people don't realise that anything at all that you can glean from an attacker, you put it in your pocket and you just go into the hospital, you end up saying, "Look, go through my pocket" or "Look under my nails" – it's so important. If you punch him and there's a bit of blood on you ... And it makes you then think there's nothing wrong with me punching or scratching and all of that. Sometimes women don't do that, whereas of course you can. (Focus group participants, women's course)*

The importance of always focussing on what could be done was further reinforced for us as interviewers when one of the WSDN-WT teachers described how she encourages and equips girls and women in every course to think about their options when confronted by an attacker. In discussing a case where a man abducted, injured and raped a woman, we asked her what, if anything, someone could do in that situation, imagining the answer in such an extreme context might be "nothing". Her response was that in even the most extreme situation the most important thing is to never give up:

*...yes, a huge amount of pain, huge amount of fear, huge amount of shock. Don't ever give up. Don't ever give up. What can she use on her body? Keep*



*yelling. Punch, eye poke, go for the vulnerable places, make it as time consuming as possible for him to get you in the car. It might be in a public place. There might be residential houses around. God, if it happens, don't ever give up. Don't ever give up. (WSDN-WT teacher)*

### 5.5 Summary

Interviewees described a range of outcomes they had observed or attributed to the self defence course. The most commonly identified outcomes were:

- **overall increases in self-confidence.** This included increased confidence to defend themselves and if necessary seek help for themselves or others;
- **empowering girls and women.** The impacts were often profound once they recognised and believed that they have the right to be safe from violence and to have control over what happens to their bodies;
- **the skills and confidence to use their voice effectively to stay safe.** In a society where girls are still socialised to be quiet and polite, compliant and agreeable, learning to use their voice to speak up was often experienced as a liberating act and seen by some as the greatest benefit of the course; and
- **learning and practising simple self defence skills and strategies.** This was a valued aspect of the course that was seen by many interviewees as one that set it apart from other violence prevention programmes that were limited in scope to imparting knowledge and engaging primarily the mind.

## 6 Specific incidents of using self defence

The ultimate aim of WSDN-WT self defence courses is to provide the girls and women with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to reduce their likelihood of becoming victims of violence. Whilst the pre-post evaluations indicated increased knowledge, confidence in their ability to use their mind, body and voice to stay safe, and a clear intention to use their newly learnt self defence skills in the future should the need arise, knowing if this is the case is inherently difficult to assess. However, whilst conducting our interviews we collected a surprising number of first and second hand stories where girls and women who had participated on the WSDN-WT courses subsequently had indeed used the skills they had learned to keep themselves and others safe. The examples that follow are mostly additional to examples presented in other sections of the report.

### 6.1 School age girls using their self defence skills

School teachers often told us about situations they had heard about, at the same time acknowledging they may not always be told about these. Those they recounted included:

- Older girls in the school often slept at each other's places, and one time a mother said she knew her daughter was staying elsewhere with her friends. However, the mother from the house where the girls were staying came home drunk and told them to get out, so they ended up sleeping in the lounge at someone else's house, without the parents being kept up with the play. One girl was "touched up" by a family member, and had no hesitation in speaking up, which the teacher attributed to the impact of the WSDN-WT course. The family member in question ended up in prison.
- A guidance counsellor described an example of a disclosure that occurred post course:

*Certainly with the clients that I work with, there's been some first-hand experience where, I've seen them talk about what they did which they wouldn't have done if they hadn't done the course, yeah. Some of it's very recent and very raw, so I don't really want to go into that because it's heading to court.... if they hadn't done that Year 10 programme it could have looked very different.*  
(Guidance counsellor, Girls Years 10-12)

- Teachers at a high school spoke of how, after doing the course, senior girls had effectively intervened in bullying situations and broken up fights within the school.
- At another high school a teacher spoke of an incident in the previous year in which a girl was followed by a man who, when he tried to grab her, used her bag to defend herself and ran off.
- An intermediate schoolgirl told her classroom teacher that some men approached her when she was down at a local park. She was unsure what to do until she recalled what the WSDN-WT teacher had taught her about how to position her body and use her voice, and she was able to run away.

- The principal of another intermediate school spoke of a situation where four girls who had done the course that year were later accosted by a group of youths in a nearby park.

*The girls responded using all of their self defence techniques. And the Police said to them, because of their response, they had minimised the problem, they'd actually saved themselves so to speak, so that was really good feedback from the Police as well. (School principal, Girls Years 7-8)*

- A student from a teen parent unit, when asked if doing the self defence course had made any difference to how she felt, responded calmly, "Yep." Further probing revealed the following experience she had just weeks after doing the course:

*I always go for my run in the morning and what I noticed there was this white van that kept following me and it was doing that for a whole week and it would do little U-turns, so I talked to the self defence lady and she said that he would do that until he tries to get me by myself.*

*So, apparently he went on to a corner of a street and he knew I was going to run there. So no one was there and he tried to attack me.*

*And lucky I knew what to do, which was the nose one and the elbow. And then this man came out and he found what he was doing to me and then they got the number plate and the Police found him and apparently he was a rapist. He's been raping a few girls.*

INT: When you got attacked, did stuff go through your mind from the course specifically?

Yes. *I was wondering, "I'm going to get killed today."*

INT: Oh, no.... So when that had happened, it did go through your mind, what (WSDN-WT teacher) had said?

Yep.

INT: Tell us a bit more a bit more about that.

*When he was attacking me, I was panicking and everything. Like, I didn't know what to do until I remembered I did the self defence course. And I just remembered, the way he was holding me, what she said to do if the guy's holding you that way.*

INT: So how was he holding you?

*So he had one hand over here and the other one was just holding me so I couldn't, like, move my hands or anything. But I did use my feet and everything until he let go of my upper body and then I was able to do the nose and elbow. (Participant, Teen Parent Unit)*

## 6.2 Incidents of women using their self defence skills

Women course participants and key stakeholders in the community provided us with many examples of different contexts where the skills learned on the WSDN-WT

## 6. Specific incidents of using self defence

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courses were used effectively, both in their own safety interests as well as in the safety of others.

- A woman working away from her home town returned to a motel one night and came across a couple by the entrance.

*When I pulled up, her eye was sticking out like this – I've never seen an eye like it. It was absolutely massive. I wound down the window and said, "Are you guys okay?" and she said, "No, he's just given me a hiding".*

*He had a can of booze and she was obviously really intoxicated. I said to her, "I'm really concerned about your eye. That looks really bad there. I think I'm going to ring an ambulance, just to get them to check you." I was ringing 111 asking for the police, but they didn't know that.*

*I would never have had the confidence to do that before. So I don't know where that came from. The motel owner, he came over to the room when the ambulance and the police and everyone arrived, and he said, "I was watching you out the window and I was keeping an eye on you." I thought, "Thanks, mate. Thanks for standing behind the window, behind the locked door, watching"....*

*I remember thinking, like when I was reflecting on it, there was no fear there. I just seemed to be level-headed and just did what needed to be done.... I attribute that to the course, yeah. It had a big impact on my life. (Participant, women's course)*

- Refugee workers in a focus group reflected on how doing the WSDN-WT course had marked an important turning-point in some of their clients' lives. One spoke of how powerful it was to see women "find their voice":

*We had one woman that had actually used the self defence between when the self defence course was and our next programme. She was so proud of herself, so when she walked in, she said, "I've got something to say, but I want to say it in the group and we'll wait until everybody's here." She said, "I found the self defence really good and I had to use it in the weekend and I actually said 'no' and I pushed him out the door and told him he had to leave and I'm so proud that this happened." And she shared that with the group and that's all she wanted to do when she came in, was share that with the group. (Women's refugee worker, women's course)*

- Another agency worker in a different town told us how, a long time after doing the course, a woman she'd referred to it told her she'd had to use what she'd learned. She was in a situation in a hostel where a man tried to rape her and remembered the power of her voice, so called loudly for help and that was enough - *She didn't need to use any moves.*
- An older woman in a rural area described the huge impact on her life from doing the WSDN-WT course after being referred by the local women's refuge. She spoke particularly about the inspiration she gained from the self defence teacher.

*I think (WSDN-WT teacher) herself, just the way she put it across and the way she could move her body, and also it was the way she just did her job. That made me feel like I was 20 feet tall and bulletproof. When I left the hall after*

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*watching her, and doing some of the movements and knowing that, hey, I can now look after myself a little bit better than what I did half an hour ago – amazing, absolutely amazing....*

The letter of gratitude she wrote to this teacher was so powerful and moving that, with her permission, we reproduced it in the preface to this report.

The same course participant also recounted a more recent incident that had occurred in her workplace at a local petrol station:

*I had this guy just about jump over the counter at me and my self defence came into place once again. This guy got really quite shirty with me and he was going to jump over the counter, and I just backed myself into a safe place against the smokes, had my finger pretty much on the panic button but I also had this hand ready. And I said to him, "Go on, make my day". Because I had my foot this way, because this is your kicking foot, and this one's your balance, and I kind of put myself into the drop-down mode that (WSDN-WT teacher) had shown us, but my hand was on the panic button for the Police, and I just had this hand sort of like, "Come on, make my day". And he left. But shivers, he put the pfff up me.*

*Police got him, because it's all on video.*

INT: Really?

*Yes, so the Police got him for threatening behaviour. All over smokes. Yep, drunk, smokes, you know?*

INT: So is that something you couldn't even imagine yourself having been able to do before you did the course?

*No, I probably would have stood there and piddled my pants in fear, sheer fear, but not any more. (Participant, women's course)*

- Another Isolation to Empowerment women's course participant, when asked during a focus group interview if doing the WSDN-WT course had made any impact on her life, replied:

*Oh, hell yeah. My daughter is actually currently with a very violent individual, and it's been ongoing for years. We used to feel a little bit scared when confronting him, but since that course, no. And there's been other instances where we've had to call the police since then but I've not felt scared. If he tries anything with me I can defend myself and yeah, it has helped in that way. (Participant, women's course)*

- Another woman in the same focus group was then prompted to share her own story. She recounted how the man she was living with had been trying for a long time to stop her going out, and being a social person she found this depressing. Doing the course helped her to recognise that she was not living in a healthy, mutually respectful relationship.

*He wanted to isolate me and keep me away from everybody, and after that course, I went back and said to him, "No, this ain't healthy, you're trying to control me, and this is not part of what a healthy relationship is." I clearly could*

*see what he was doing. And I made it aware to him that I knew what he was doing, and I also said to him, "if you want to get violent about it, that's fine because I now know Toa". "So you listen here, you not getting in my mind and you're not hurting me. This is my home and that's it.".... Yeah, he moved out. We're still together but he does not live with me. (Participant, women's course)*

### 6.3 Examples provided by WSDN-WT teachers

We also heard accounts from WSDN-WT teachers of other girls and women using what they had learned on the course to protect themselves or to intervene to help others.

- In one area a schoolgirl had been abducted and this understandably made many other girls fearful. The way in which the WSDN-WT teacher managed discussion of this incident was to focus on the help-seeking actions of those around her. This reframing turned it into an empowering account where the emphasis was not on what the attacker might have done, but on what another child did that helped to keep her safe.

- In another district a girl doing the WSDN-WT course had already experienced an abduction and rape, but:

*She told everyone in the class that she was a strong self defence girl because she'd managed to tell her mum.*

- When WSDN-WT funding was in jeopardy a few years ago, one of the Māori WSDN-WT teachers was asked by the chairperson if she'd be willing to get some girls and/or their parents along who had done the course to appear on television. One mother asked if she could bring her daughter along, who had done the course some years previously at her intermediate school. The WSDN-WT teacher agreed, having no idea why, and the girl turned up and confirmed she'd like to go on television.

*And then she said that her step-father had sexually assaulted her. Well, tried to, and she said, "I did the hold", which I think was going to the balls, basically grabbing them. And she said, "And he didn't ever do anything else to me." But she hadn't told anyone about it, she just sorted it out herself.*

Her younger sister hadn't learned self defence and was unable to stay safe from her stepfather. Eventually there was a court case and he went to prison, and the mother was filmed for television also, saying:

*"The self defence is so great, you've got to keep the funding because my daughter who did it, it saved her, and the one who hadn't, she didn't know what to do."*

- A woman recounted to one teacher how an incident with a colleague many years previously had left her traumatised and disempowered, and it wasn't until she did the WSDN-WT course that she felt enabled to move forward

*It was the self defence course that took the fear away.*

- A Māori WSDN-WT teacher in a different area was out cycling when two Māori girls came up and told her the course had helped them years later.

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*We had this guy come into our street and he was flashing. And he had a big coat on and he didn't have any clothes underneath and he was being stupid. I think he was a bit drunk. And we ran out there and we yelled and yelled and yelled at him, and we wanted to kick him in the balls but we didn't, we didn't need to."*

- A different Māori teacher recalled a course she took where one of the Māori women participants turned up *sporting a huge gash right across here where he had smashed the bottle*. She shared about her situation in the group, and how she'd had to pretend she was at a flower show or doing floral art in order to get out of the house to do the self defence course. The teacher encouraged her to participate fully, learning the moves and getting a sense of her own strength.

*The next day I went to (venue). It was really cold, it was obviously winter, it was sort of frosty there, and this woman was sitting on the steps, and I thought, "Gee, am I late?" and I thought, "No, no, I've plenty of time, it's a long time before it starts", because I was just going to set it up and get the place warm and everything. And she came running to me, she said, "Guess what, guess what?" And I said, "What happened?" She said, "It worked, it worked!"*

*She said that she went home and he'd been at the pub and he said to her, "Oh, go and do this", and she said, "No", and he said, "What?" And of course it was, "You f'ing this and rah-rah-rah", just the usual. He had had quite a bit of alcohol. But he was sitting there demanding and she said, "No", and he said, "You what?" Anyway, he came over and when he came, she just went – punch. She was all set and just whack and kick, and he went flying, banged into the wall and was down there saying, "Arrgh, okay, okay, get away, get away, don't you touch me", and she just suddenly thought, "Oh, my God, this guy has been bashing me up and I have finally hit back." And here he was pleading, "Don't you touch me." She said, "Don't you ever touch me again. I know how to defend myself."*

Other course participants, we heard, also felt empowered to leave controlling men whom they had stayed with for years, sometimes out of fear of violence to themselves and/or their children.

- Another WSDN-WT teacher saw a former course participant years later, and this young woman described being in a near rape situation when she said:

*"the whole course went through my mind", and she escaped.*

- Other examples also were given of how, when confronted by threat or danger, former course participants spoke of how, at that moment, the course went through their head and gave them options and the strength to respond. For example, one of the WSDN-WT teachers told us about a girl who had been abducted at knifepoint from her home, several years after she had done the course.

*She once again said that the words from the course went through her head and she did exactly what was taught and she managed to get away. She sustained some superficial cuts but was able to escape to a safe place.*

In recalling this story, the self defence teacher described how much emphasis she places on engaging your mind if confronted by a threatening person or situation, and why this can make such a big difference on the outcome:

*Through your mind you're thinking of all the places that you can hit them, your way of escaping and all that, and by getting into your head you're getting away from that fear. Because if you stay with that fear, it can become petrifying, literally, and that's not going to keep us safe.*

What we heard expressed many times was that those who did the WSDN-WT course often surprised themselves at how much they retained in the months and years following. As shown in some of the examples above, some described how, when suddenly confronted with potential danger, they experienced the whole course running through their heads. Others spoke in ways suggesting that the confidence they gained from doing the course was the most significant factor, enabling them to access a sense of their own power when attacked and not be paralysed by fear.

From our interviews and observations we considered it likely that the wide range of ways knowledge is imparted and skills practised during the course significantly contributes to the retention of information. The WSDN-WT self defence teachers present course participants with a well-planned and delivered mix of verbal and visual information, with the physical practising of self defence skills being an important component. The knowledge obtained is acquired using both mind and body, and the embodied nature of the learning provides an experience of empowerment not possible by conceptual learning alone. The findings suggest that being able to feel and directly experience the power of their voices and the strength of their bodies serves to embed the messages deep within course participants, able to be accessed when needed.

### 6.4 Summary

Whilst conducting these interviews we received many first and second hand stories that demonstrated examples of girls and women putting the skills learnt in their self defence courses into practice when the need arose. Examples included:

- girls defending themselves against bullying;
- girls identifying and disclosing sexual abuse to a safe adult;
- girls and women identifying and avoiding potentially violent situations;
- girls and women fending off and escaping from violent sexual attacks;
- girls and women actively seeking help for friends, family members and strangers in trouble; and
- women standing up for themselves and leaving violent relationships.

The findings show that there is considerable retention of course content over time, and this is probably attributable to the specific content and delivery of the WSDN-WT courses. Participants are presented not only with relevant knowledge and information but also taught accessible skills that they get to practise, giving many their first experience of the power and strength they possess. The clear messages



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received regarding their right to be free from all forms of abuse and violence impart an inner confidence so that, when confronted by an attacker, they are more able to transform fear into anger and access their safety skills.

## 7 Māori women and girls' outcomes and experiences of self defence

Violence against women and girls is widely recognised as one of the most serious public health and human rights issues confronting Aotearoa/New Zealand society. Its high prevalence has been linked to the continued dominance of gendered beliefs and attitudes that perpetuate notions of male sexual entitlement and female submission (Flood and Pease, 2009). Heterosexual relationships in particular are affected by structural gender inequalities that persist despite more than forty years of actions and programmes aiming to eradicate them.

Many countries with a colonial heritage have documented the higher prevalence of violence experienced within indigenous populations. Writing within the North American context, for example, Wahab and Olson observed that:

*“the treatment of Native Americans by colonizers, racism, exploitation of resources, seizure of land, introduction of alcohol, and disease... have profoundly negatively affected the values and lives of indigenous peoples”*  
(Wahab & Olson, 2004, p.355).

The relevancy of this article to the New Zealand context has been clearly noted, where Māori women emerge as significantly more likely than Pakeha women to be victims of serious physical and/or sexual violence (Fanslow, Robinson, Crengle & Perese, 2010). A comparative study of intimate partner violence found that in the 12 months prior to the survey, Māori (14.1%) followed by Pasifika (9.3%) women emerged as having the highest prevalence of physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence (Fanslow, Robinson, Crengle & Perese, 2010). These rates, the researchers noted, were more than twice as high as the prevalence rates reported by women of European/Other ethnic origin (3.9%) or Asian women (3.4%), a finding further confirmed by the 2006 New Zealand Crime and Safety Survey (Families Commission, 2009).

In terms of lifetime prevalence of physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence, the Māori rate, at 58%, was by far the highest of the ethnic groups included in the study and also at the high end of the prevalence estimates identified in the WHO Multicountry Study (Ellsberg et al, 2008).

The higher rate of sexual and violent victimisation of Māori women places increased significance on the availability and effectiveness of self defence for this group, hence this section brings together results that specifically relate to Māori girls and women.

Māori have always been a priority focus for WSDN-WT. The Women's Self Defence Network Wāhine Toa's constitution commences with “acknowledging the inherent right of wāhine Māori (as articulated in Te Tiriti o Waitangi), to express their tino Rangatiratanga.” This philosophical foundation is reflected in the caucus-based structure and decision-making model of WSDN-WT, and in the constitutional aim to “adopt and promote guidelines and practices which acknowledge the aspirations of tangata whenua.” WSDN-WT has a commitment to priority targeting of courses for

Māori girls and women. As described in section three, for Girls' Self Defence, there are two levels of priority:

- the first is through 'Girls' Self Defence Target Courses', which are courses in the geographical areas of Te Tai Tokerau and Te Tai Rawhiti which also meet a minimum proportion of 70% kotiro Māori in each course; and
- the second priority level is 'Non-Target Courses,' for which the priorities are: kotiro Māori, lower socio-economic, and geographical isolation. Therefore Māori girls are a high priority in both levels.

For Women's Self Defence, 'rural wāhine Māori' constitute a target group for the Isolation to Empowerment programmes.

To ensure WSDN-WT teachers are responsive to the needs of Māori and can deliver self defence effectively and with a positive impact for Māori, WSDN-WT's bi-cultural structure and ways of working include specific teacher training for working appropriately and effectively with Māori girls and women, cultural safety accreditation criteria, and carefully designed course content.

## 7.1 Māori girls

A third of all Girls Self Defence Project participants are Māori (see section 3.1.2) and 27% of those girls who participated in this evaluation identified as Māori (749 girls from the total sample of 2731).

Within this research sample, eight of the 126 courses were delivered as 'Girls' Self Defence Target' courses (see above for criteria). Table 7.1 below show the percentage of girls self-identifying as Māori in these courses (ranging from 68% to 82%).

**Table 7.1 Māori target courses in the research sample.**

Variable	Frequency	Valid Percentage
<b>Years 3-4 (1 course, n=33)</b>		
Māori	26	79%
Pasifika	6	18%
NZ European	1	3%
<b>Years 7-8 (6 courses, n=217)</b>		
Māori	180	82%
NZ European	17	8%
Pasifika	16	7%
Other	6	3%
<b>Years 10-12 (1 course, n=25)</b>		
Māori	17	68%
NZ European	8	32%
<b>Total</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>100%</b>

Note: For the purposes of this research if a girl identified as Māori and NZ European in this table they are recorded as Māori. If they identified as Māori and Pasifika they are recorded as Pasifika.

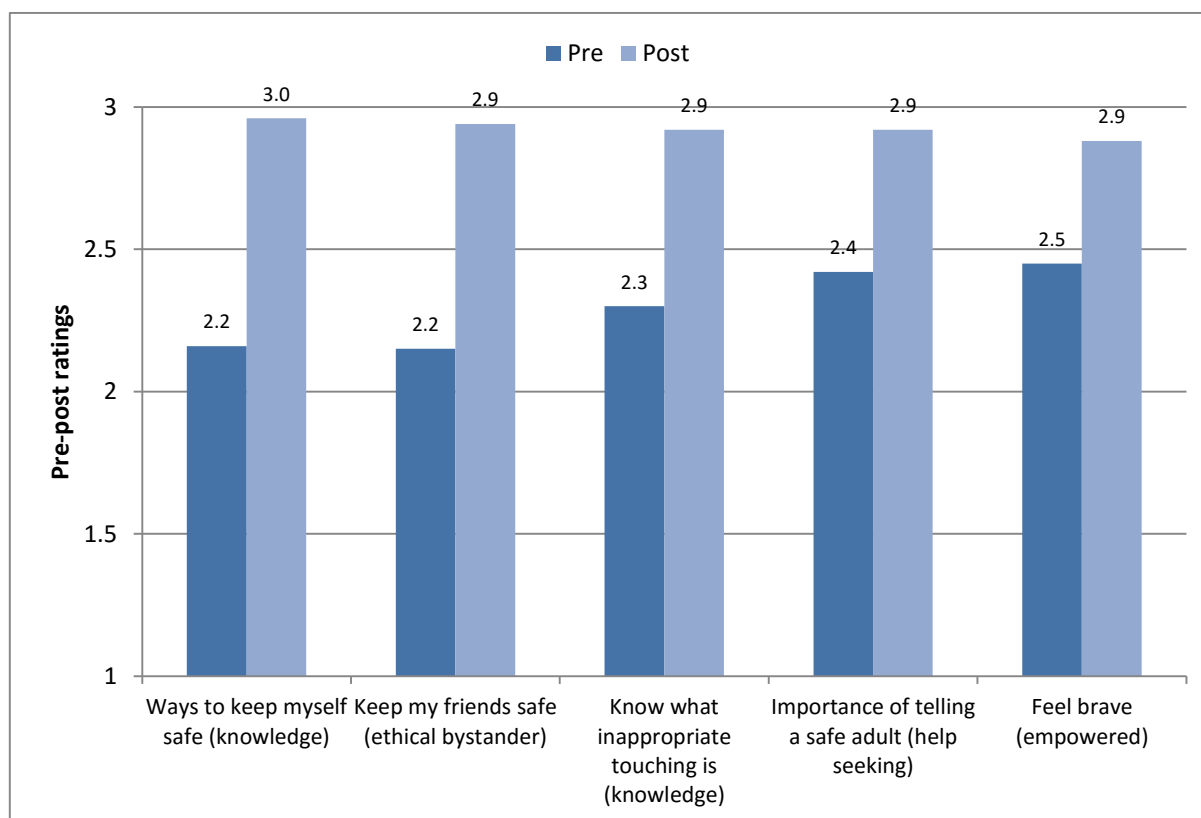
To highlight the impact of the self defence courses on Māori girls, the results from girls who self-identified were extracted from the research sample and are presented below.

Results presented in section 4.1 have already shown that across all three year groups the self-esteem of Māori girls was significantly improved post-course, as measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale. Results below provide a further breakdown of other pre-post course results related to changes in skills, attitudes and behaviour. Even with reduced sample sizes, paired sample t-tests showed statistically significant improvements in all self defence knowledge, attitudes and skills evaluated.

### 7.1.1 Outcomes for Years 3-4 Māori girls

Pre-post results were extracted for a total of n=82, Years 3-4 Māori girls (35% of research sample) - these results appear in figure 7.1.

**Figure 7.1 Outcomes for Years 3-4 Māori girls (n=82)**



All shifts were positive and statistically significant and the results were similar to the complete research sample with greatest increases in knowing ways to keep themselves and their friends safe.

Other results, related to changes in attitudes and the likelihood of engaging in key behaviours taught in the course, were also positive:

- **intention to use self defence skills** - 94% (n=79/84) girls reported 'yes' to "I will use my mind, body and voice to keep myself safe"

- **intention to use instincts to stay safe** – 95% (n=81/85) girls responded 'yes' to "I will listen to my feelings/instincts to help keep myself safe"; and
- **non-victim blaming attitude** – 82% (n=69/84) of Māori girls agreed 'yes' to "If bad touching happens to a girl it is never her fault."

Qualitative comments from Years 3-4 Māori girls who participated in a Girls' Self Defence Project Target course, in response to "if someone touched you in a way that make you feel yucky or uncomfortable, what would you do?" included:

*When You get Bulled (bullied) You Be brave and fight them back.*

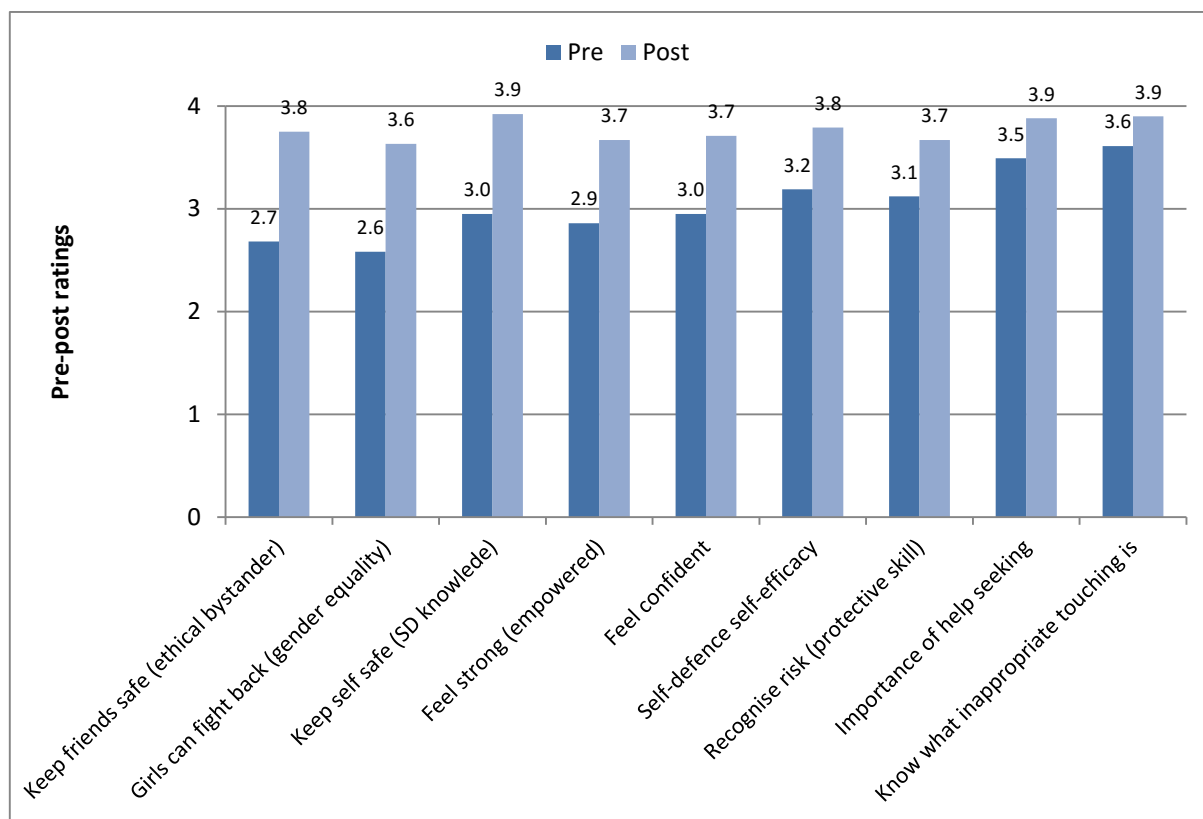
*Say No! I don't like it; punch; Tell a safe adult; I love it and it is cool and fun*

*Tell them Stop it*

### 7.1.2 Outcomes for Years 7-8 Māori girls

Pre-post results were extracted for a total of 507 Years 7-8 Māori girls (30% of research sample). Pre-post changes appear in figure 7.2.

**Figure 7.2 Outcomes for Years 7-8 Māori girls (n=507)**



Again, all shifts were positive and statistically significant, with the greatest increases in knowing ways to keep their friends safe.

Other results, related to changes in attitudes, skills and the likelihood of engaging in key behaviours taught in the course, were also positive:

- **use instincts to stay safe**– 97% (494 out of 508) girls 'strongly agreed'(n=399) or agreed (n=95)' - "I will listen to my feelings/instincts to help keep myself safe";
- **non-victim blaming attitude** - 95% (482 out of 507) girls 'strongly agreed (n=403) or agreed (n=79)' - "If bad touching happens to a girl it is never her fault";
- **intention to seek help** – 96% (485 out of 507) 'Very likely (n=331)/likely (n=154)' – to seek help/support if felt unsafe;
- **intention to be an ethical bystander** – 96% (487 out of 506) 'Very likely (n=359) /likely (n=128)' – to seek help/support friends if they were unsafe; and
- **intention to use assertive body language** – 94% (468 out of 500) 'Very likely (n=322) /likely (n=146)' – to use assertive body language in the future.

Qualitative comments from Years 7-8 Māori girls who participated in a Girls' Self Defence Project Target course, in response to "if someone touched you in a way that make you feel yucky or uncomfortable what would you do?" included:

*I would stand up tell them "I don't like it" tell them "to think about what their doing and if this continued where they would end up".*

*I would kick them; I tell a safe adult.*

*Tell them I do not like what they are doing and then tell them to back off if they don't I would fight back. 2. I would yell there name and yell what they are doing! So others can hear.*

*Use my brain to make a choice and defend myself when I need to. Tell a adult I feel safe around. Make noise.*

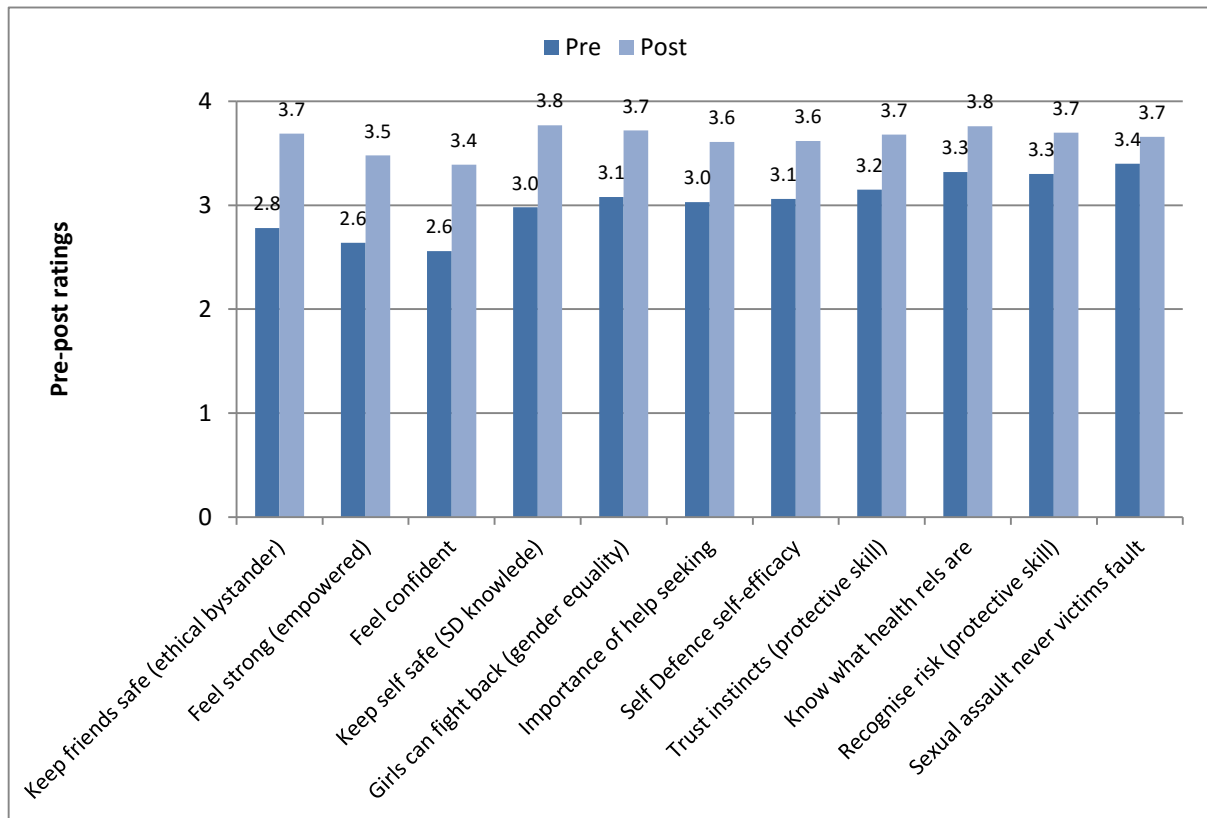
*Yell; Punch in the gronde (groin); Punch on the nose to leave a mark; Run, Tell a parent.*

### 7.1.3 Outcomes for Years 10-12 Māori girls

Pre-post results were extracted for a total of 96 Years 10-12 Māori girls (20% of research sample). Pre-post changes appear in figure 7.3 – again, all shifts were positive and statistically significant.

Other results related to the likelihood of engaging in three key behaviours taught in the course were also positive:

- **intention to seek help** – 96% (n=93 out of 97) 'Very likely (n=56) /likely (n=37)' – to seek help/support if felt unsafe;
- **intention to be an ethical bystander** – 98% (n=93 out of 95) 'Very likely (n=63) /likely (n=30)' – to seek help/support friends if they were unsafe; and
- **intention to use assertive body language** – 96% (n=90 out of 94) 'Very likely (n=55) /likely (n=35)' – to use assertive body language in the future.

**Figure 7.3 Outcomes for Years 10-12 Māori girls (n=96)**

Qualitative comments from Years 10-12 Māori girls who participated in a Girls' Self Defence Project Target course, in response to “now you have finished the self defence course, if someone makes a sexual advance that makes you feel uncomfortable - what would you do?” included:

*I would tell him/her to remove their hands from my body very loudly.*

*Tell them to get their hand off me and tell trustworthy adult (use self defence if needed).*

*Use my words and if they didn't help I would use my moves e.g kick punch.*

*Tell my mum; tell anyone; Get help; Safety.*

*Yell at them or for help, hit them somewhere where it would be painful.*

Interviews conducted with key personnel within schools offering WSDN-WT courses showed many recognised the positive benefits of these for Māori girls in particular. Comments were made suggesting that the way the programme was delivered made it an easier ‘fit’ than other courses that were exclusively talk-based. For example, one primary school principal, when asked if the course was able to speak across different cultural groups, replied:

*I think it does because of the nature of the programme, where it's quite hands-on, “I'll teach you something, you practise it”, and that sits really comfortably with both Māori and Pasifika culture, in terms of a mode of transmissional*

*learning, it's physical, they like the physical, but also that "I'll do it, then you do it" type, that actually suits those learners. (School principal, Years 3-4)*

One of the Māori WSDN-WT teachers reflected this view when she described how fully engaged Māori girls were when it came to practising the physical skills and techniques. She said:

*In Māori courses, particularly with all Māori girls, the physical is the most important for them, I found, because they will yell happily and they will spill their guts to you no problem, and they really liked to think that they were physically powerful enough to fight. So they were good with the techniques. (Māori WSDN-WT teacher)*

Comments from the Māori WSDN-WT self defence teachers suggested they saw benefits in having some courses offered as Māori-only. One advantage observed was that Māori girls felt more relaxed in such an environment and able to speak up more freely:

*So the Māori girls will tell you all their stories, openly often, and talk and talk and talk, and all the girls will participate in that conversation. The Māori girls will say, "You know, it was such and such uncle". "Oh yeah, I know him, he did that to me. And my sister." And then somebody would say, "Oh yeah, he's the guy that lives – " So different needs. Really different needs. (Māori WSDN-WT teacher)*

Some Māori girls, a WSDN-WT teacher observed, struggled more with using their voice than with being encouraged to fight back. It was hard at times to feel that these girls accepted they had a right to tell others if they were experiencing abuse, or saw it happening.

*I think the danger with the Māori girls is they would sort of try and fight their way out without that added bit about telling somebody, and that that is not okay. You do not have to spend your life fighting your way out. It's that person's issue. You don't have to keep doing this to yourself. It will stop, and it can be stopped in another way. (Māori WSDN-WT teacher)*

While there was mostly support for the option of separate courses being offered, an interesting comment from a Māori intermediate school teacher rejected the view that courses should be tailored more specifically for Māori girls.

*I think sometimes we just over-power with Māori and Pasifika. I think sometimes the girls just want to be known as girls. (School deputy principal, Girls Years 7-8)*

Māori self defence teachers, however, said they observed Māori girls often feeling more able to speak about their own experiences of violence when participating in an all-Māori group.

*If I'm with a group that is predominantly Māori, the girls come out with personal stories, "He tied me up, he – my uncle raped me. I was tied up to the bed." Just telling this in front of all the other girls... they're certainly a lot more open about some of the violence that they've been through. (Māori WSDN-WT teacher)*



This teacher said she believed it was important in every class to be able to read the body language and encourage girls to speak up, since it was likely the Māori girls would go quiet instead.

*You can see them, and you think, "I know something's going on there". And so being aware of that body language, it's a matter of really being careful what you say and making sure that you're reaching them, "If anything's happening to anybody, you make sure – come and see me after. Feel free, let me know".*  
(Māori WSDN-WT teacher)

In situations such as this, the teachers worked collaboratively with school guidance counsellors or social workers to ensure follow-up and safety if any initial disclosures resulted.

One difficulty raised surrounding Māori girls' participation in self defence courses derives from the low socio-economic status of many Māori. While the course itself may be funded, the logistics of getting the girls there and back could be difficult, especially in poorer, rural parts of the country. One of the self defence teachers felt there was a strong need for additional resourcing to enable courses to happen, and spoke of what she knew another Māori WSDN-WT teacher often had to do:

*People like (WSDN-WT teacher) would go to some of these rural areas, she would go to the houses, pick up the kids, in her car, go to the training – go to the course, drop them off. Sometimes she'll be heading in the opposite direction of where the course is going to be, go down, pick up. If she didn't do that in some of these rural areas, to make sure the numbers are right, you wouldn't have a class.* (Māori WSDN-WT teacher)

In ways like this the WSDN-WT teachers themselves, both Māori and Pakeha, currently need to subsidise courses by buying necessary equipment out of their own money. This organisational policy has been necessitated by the low levels of funding received and the desire to use it to offer as many courses as they can possibly can from this money. One teacher believed factors such as this meant there was a need for enhanced funding for courses for Māori who were more likely to be living in socio-economically deprived areas.

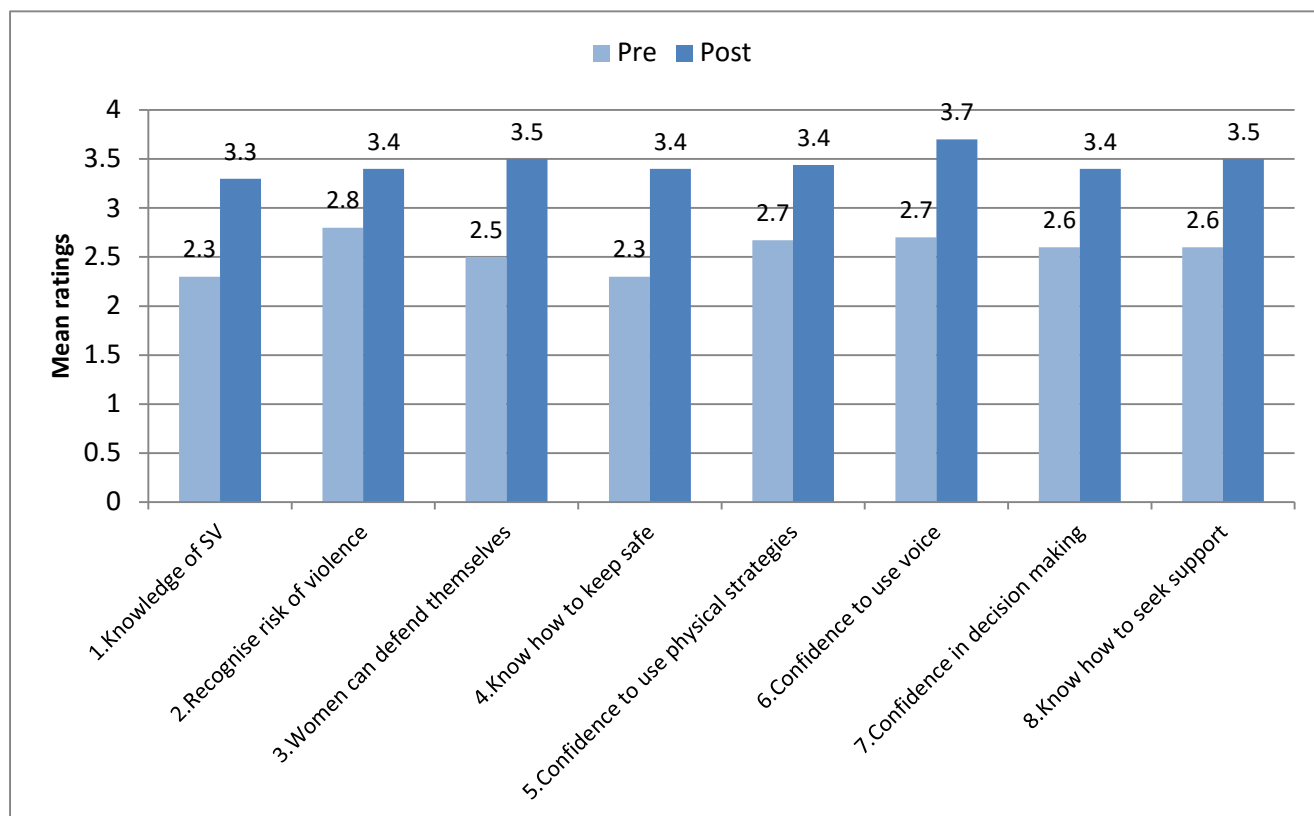
One further aspect discussed by some of the Māori WSDN-WT teachers related to the use of Te Reo and the drive to make the resources used bilingual for courses with high numbers of Māori participants. This would include the names used for body parts, and the stories presented. Developing more bilingual resources is a process that has begun and can be expanded as funding permits.

### 7.2 Māori women

WSDN-WT receives funding from the Ministry of Justice that enables them to deliver Isolation to Empowerment courses for groups identified as being vulnerable to sexual violence and abuse due to geographic and/or cultural and/or disability-related isolation. Wāhine Māori in rural communities are a specified target group within this criteria, and courses for Rural Wāhine Māori are run in collaboration with Māori partner agencies in the community. In the three years to June 2015, 17 such courses have been delivered targeted at Rural Wāhine Māori, and involving a total of 148 women participants, of whom 79% self-identified as Māori.

One such course was included as part of the quantitative pre-post evaluation of women's courses that was delivered to ten wāhine. Pre-post changes in key programme outcomes are presented in figure 7.4 below.

**Figure 7.4 Outcomes for Māori women's course (n=10)**



Despite the small numbers in the group (n=10), paired sample t-tests found all pre-post shifts to be statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). The greatest shifts appeared to be (4) knowing how to keep safe, followed by (1) knowledge of self defence, (3) that women can defend themselves (gender equality) and (6) confidence to use their voice.

These wāhine were also asked post course their likelihood of engaging in three key behaviours taught in the course, with very positive results achieved:

- **intention to seek help** – 8 out of 10 'Very likely/likely' – to seek help/support if felt unsafe;
- **intention to be an ethical bystander** – 10 out of 10 'Very likely/likely' – to seek help/support friends if they were unsafe; and
- **intention to use assertive body language** – 9 out of 10 'Very likely/likely' – to use assertive body language in the future.

Qualitative comments in response to 'most useful thing learnt on the course' included the following:

*To be able to walk round with my head held high and know that I won't be judged.*

*Voice, body language techniques, what body part is open to attack/defend myself, body blocking, don't stop at 1 defensive move, continue until the offender is down.*

*How to protect myself in unsafe situations. Being able to pass what I've learnt on to others, e.g. daughter, whanau.*

*What to do to keep myself safe. Confidence from practice.*

*The self defence moves, were a good self defence skill to have in my putea. Lots of useful skills to have especially as I work with violent clients at times and could be at risk a lot.*

*I can protect myself and well armed to do so.*

*I never realised how many ways I could try and protect myself from someone trying to harm me.*

*That body language and voice can be a deterrent without using violence.*

*I can defend myself from a bigger/heavier person. Living in a small community as a child, being friendly and welcoming to all, to know that before opening the door. Will talk to my son about keeping himself safe.*

*The movements.*

The Māori women we interviewed who had been course participants were unanimously positive in their evaluations of the programme. Two Māori women who had taken a course with a Māori teacher commented how much they appreciated the combination of learning styles on the course. They said they were especially appreciative of the efforts taken by the WSDN-WT teacher to ensure everyone understood what was being talked about.

Māori self defence teachers also spoke of how well they thought the course worked for Māori participants. This was not coincidental but rather the outcome of the bicultural design of the course, and reflected the level of direct Māori input. The Māori caucus within WSDN-WT meets regularly and are constantly reflecting as to how to make the material speak to Māori. While waiata and the use of Te Reo have long been encouraged, a current initiative involves translating other course resources into Māori.

Some of the Māori WSDN-WT teachers felt their being Māori often enabled Māori participants to disclose more of their own previous victimisation.

*When you have a Māori woman teaching, the Māori women in the group can relax and open up more honestly, sometimes in unexpected detail. It's like, "Oh yeah, well I got the bash here", and, "I got this and this happened", and bang-bang-bang. (Māori WSDN-WT teacher)*

One teacher expanded on this by saying how it often felt easier in Māori groups for women to join together and support each other if one or two were being triggered by the content or recalling their own victimisation experiences.

*I think particularly with Māori, being able to sense that and immediately just go and sit with someone, "Come on, let it out, let it out. Come on, yeah, I know what you're talking about." (Māori WSDN-WT teacher)*

Another stressed how critically important she felt it was for the courses to be available in Māori communities:

*It's just that out of all communities it has the highest incidence of sexual abuse.... And in my experience, the Māori women and girls respond really well to the course, to the nature of the course, how it's run. They just feel – they get very engaged. And whether it's because they're yelling or laughing about stories or getting an opportunity to work together as a separate cohort. So it works really. The course design works for them. (Māori WSDN-WT teacher).*

### 7.3 Summary

The higher rate of sexual victimisation of Māori women and girls places increased significance on the availability and effectiveness of self defence for this group. Māori have always been a priority focus for WSDN-WT, as reflected in their constitution's aims and in the caucus-based structure and decision-making model of WSDN-WT. Key findings from this evaluation include:

- a third of girls participating in WSDN-WT self defence courses self-identify as Māori;
- results from pre-post evaluations across all three year groups found the self-esteem of Māori girls was significantly improved post-course, as measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale;
- all measures of self defence knowledge, attitude and skills assessed were found to increase significantly post course for Māori girls of all age groups. Greatest increases related to knowing ways to keep themselves and their friends safe. Also high for Years 7-8 was an increased understanding that girls are able to defend themselves, whilst for Years 10-12 increases in empowerment and confidence were rated highly;
- the action-based way the programme was delivered was viewed as an easier 'fit' for Māori girls and women than other courses that were exclusively talk-based;
- encouraging Māori girls to use their voices to stay safe was seen to be a particularly valuable outcome of courses and possibly facilitated by all-Māori groups;
- Wāhine Māori in rural communities are a specified target group for Isolation to Empowerment courses, with 17 courses involving 148 Māori women delivered in the last three years;
- the small sample of Māori women who participated in the pre-post evaluation found positive and statistically significant shifts in all eight programme objectives assessed. Greatest shifts appeared to be (4) knowing how to keep safe, followed by (1) knowledge of self defence, (3) that women can defend themselves (gender equality) and (6) confidence to use their voice; and

## 7. Māori women and girls' outcomes

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- self defence courses were seen to be particularly effective when delivered by Māori self defence teachers and when course participants were predominantly, or exclusively, Māori.

## **Part IV – Programme processes, challenging issues, and future developments**

*It was a safe environment. It generated awareness of where they could get the information and tools if they wanted to go and where the help was. That was a thing that amazed me, thinking oh my gosh, I didn't know you could access all this! (Farming women's network, women's courses)*

## 8 Programme processes

In this section we address aspects of content and delivery as a means of understanding why the positive outcomes outlined in sections four to seven are so consistently reported across all WSDN-WT courses. The feedback received indicated that particularly appreciated was the careful design of the programme to ensure physical skills were being taught within a broad context addressing the realities of gender-based violence and emphasising the rights of girls and women to live in safety.

Factors such as course length and size are addressed before examining aspects related to the importance of having the material presented by specialist self defence teachers recruited and trained specifically for this role. Attention is also given to the ways in which the WSDN-WT courses seek to address and meet the needs of vulnerable populations and diverse cultural groups in particular (in addition to the needs of Māori women and girls addressed in section seven).

### 8.1 Length of course

It was widely agreed that the length of the courses offered in schools was about right, one day (five hours) for Years 3-4 and 10-12, and one-and-a-half days (eight hours) for Years 7-8. Teachers clearly considered it preferable to have the course taught as a short intensive rather than spread over a number of weeks.

*Kids love that total immersion into things, you know, they love to have that full engagement.... And I think too when they come back in for that next part, that next session that they have that goes to round about lunchtime, they've got everything on board.... I almost see it a bit like if they did a whole day of coaching of cricket or learning to bowl, at the start they might be shocking but by the end they'd be able to at least pull off maybe a spinner or a Yorker or something like that. (School teacher, Girls Years 3-4)*

The women's courses varied more in length and delivery. Some were offered over a full day or even two, others divided into several sessions over a number of weeks. Some support workers commented that they thought a two-day course was preferable to a one-day one since it allowed greater time for talking and reflection, with less emphasis on teaching the physical skills.

*There are some that we do as two hours of three sessions for three weeks, but I think the majority of them prefer to have the six hours in the weekend, a Saturday and Sunday. (Migrant/refugee worker, women's courses)*

Key stakeholders also commented that they considered the more intensive courses enabled fuller bonding and rapport to develop among participants, and that having down-time over a shared lunch also contributed to this process. A practical limitation affecting some women's attendance arose from difficulties arranging childcare to enable their involvement and full participation.

## 8.2 Size of class

There was general consensus that teaching material of this nature necessitated limiting class size. This is consistent with WSDN-WT policy which specifies for the Girls' Self Defence Project courses a minimum of 14 and a maximum of 26 girls (with discretion for 12 to 30 girls), and the Isolation to Empowerment women's courses which specify a minimum of 12 and a maximum of 25 women (while allowing for smaller groups for women isolated by disability or by a culture of violence).

Such limits to class size are important both to enable the self defence teachers to ensure all participants are learning the moves correctly, while also enabling them to monitor how the information presented is being received. Given the likelihood that some participants will have already experienced various forms of abuse and violence (as discussed later in this section), it was considered important for WSDN-WT teachers to be able to keep class sizes smaller and also to have teachers or agency support workers present to ensure the emotional safety of all participants.

## 8.3 Course content

There was widespread support for the content of the WSDN-WT courses, including the knowledge and information imparted as well as the skills taught. Many comments were made about the way the physical content was taught and how different it was from traditional martial arts-style self defence courses.

*It doesn't require you to be completely able bodied, like you can do – anybody could do it. Learning martial arts is like a real commitment over a long period of time to learn it, whereas the techniques and stuff they showed were quite physical to be able to do them but they weren't too difficult that you couldn't do them. (Criminal justice stakeholder, women's courses).*

The self defence teachers all believed they were providing something very different from a martial arts course. One observed:

*I think that girls can identify with it more if we take it away from the martial arts, because there are some girls who are into martial arts but very, very few of them. Maybe you'll get one or two in a class that say they've done martial arts, but they haven't continued with it, and their techniques certainly don't show it. Very few girls seem to be in to martial arts stuff, but all of the girls love self defence...*

*Within the first half hour of a course, in fact the first 10 minutes of a course, I'm doing gender stereotypes because it's a biggie. I get them to identify those gender stereotypes and then talk about it being very much New Zealand. And it is different in different cultures, and it's something we learn and on some level we will buy in to... Being polite, sweet and cute and believing that we're pathetic and weak is not going to keep us safe when somebody is being a bully to us. (WSDN-WT teacher)*

School teachers also commented positively about the awareness-raising elements of the course, including encouraging girls from an early age to become aware of dominant gender stereotypes. For example, the WSDN-WT teachers might ask the girls to “walk like a man”, “carry a baby like a man would”, “carry a baby like a woman



would". One class teacher said the role plays enacted showed girls were aware of these from a very young age:

*Do they know what gender stereotypes are, no.*

INT: But do they know that it's different for men from women.

*Yes, because you see that in what they'll show, they'll do big steps for a man – obviously big movements, a woman they'll show those more gentle movements. Isn't that terrible? Because men can be just as gentle but we perpetuate those stereotypes....they're so embedded. (School teacher, Girls Years 3-4)*

Stereotypical views of sexual assault were also challenged within the content of the courses, particularly the commonly held myth that the biggest danger for girls and women is likely to come from strangers. One manager of a teen parent unit expressed it this way:

*I think that's what was good. It wasn't just, you know, the stranger danger in the street; you're more likely to get attacked in your own home, and not that these girls are in that situation at all, but you never know. It could be a friend, somebody you work with, somebody in your own family, and I think it sort of covered all of those bases quite well. (Manager, Teen Parent Unit)*

This was reinforced by the self defence teachers themselves, who stressed that encouraging girls and women to speak up and seek help if they or their friends needed it was one of the most important aspects of the course. In ways such as these the course encourages ethical bystander interventions and a concern for the well-being of others.

A school guidance counsellor, when summing up the course, simply stated:

*It's a superb programme and secondly I think the skills that are offered in the programme are really, really essential for female students. (School guidance counsellor, Girls Years 10-13)*

### **8.4 Ability to engage class attention**

All of those interviewed, for both girls' and women's programmes, were effusive in their admiration for the ways in which the WSDN-WT teachers engaged class attention. Praise was given to the skilful ways in which they delivered what could easily be very heavy and serious information. With the girls this was achieved by utilising a range of different delivery practices – chants, talks, physical skills, and story-telling. What many school teachers observed was how fully the self defence teachers engaged the girls, in each age group. Some commented how unusual it was for some of their girls to stay focused and not be looking for ways to miss parts of the course or to dash off as soon as the bell rang.

A core ingredient identified was the level of fun and enjoyment incorporated into the learning experience. Teachers often observed that this fun approach was adopted from the very beginning of the course.

*She always starts off with them naming themselves too, like alliterations, so she's Almighty Ana, or Awesome Ana. And then the girls have to do that, so there's a fun factor there too. And they do a bit of group work, it's well mixed up, and a lot of physical stuff. And they get to yell and scream. Right up their alley.* (School teacher, Girls Years 10-12)

*I think overall, the kids just said it was heaps of fun. To me, when something's heaps of fun it means that they're enjoying what they're doing and they're able to have a laugh at the same time as being serious* (School teacher, Girls Years 7-8)

Comments on the Isolation to Empowerment women's courses echoed such sentiments:

*I wanted the day to go longer. I didn't want it to end, we all were, and I'm thinking "hey", you know, "let's just keep going, because we're having a good time!"* (Participant, women's course)

*[WSDN-WT teacher] uses humour very well, yes, and so it's great to have people laughing at such a serious topic, they're having light and shade in that and also that can reduce stress levels as well, we know that's an effective tool, so I think she's a very skilled facilitator.* (Focus group, Specialist sexual violence support worker, women's course)

Making the learning fun was intentional, said the self defence teachers interviewed. This arose from their recognition that such positive engagement is of fundamental importance to educational effectiveness, and maximises the learning benefits. Some commentators observed that this was one of a range of components that combined to accentuate learning outcomes.

*It is emotions, it is cognitive and it is in the body so it's got all the elements for success, we are simply there to change. It has got everything that we know neuroscience-wise so it's perfect, all the elements, and I think that's why it's so powerful.* (Specialist sexual violence support worker, women's course)

Building rapport and safety was recognised as an important first step to achieving an engaged group. The direct, no-nonsense approach adopted typically won high praise.

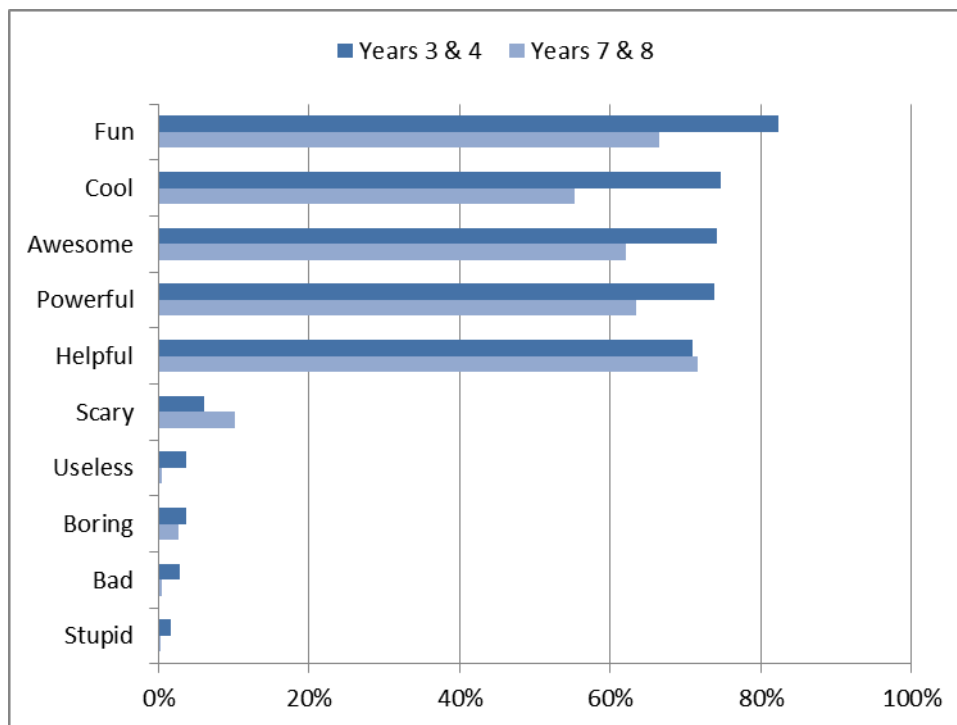
*She's (WSDN-WT teacher) great because she arrives – she doesn't know them, she hasn't seen them before and she very quickly establishes a good rapport and gains their trust. She does a lot of that through the games that she plays to begin with, like they're fun but there is a focus to them. Some of the games involve having to support a person. They get to be physical, they get to run around, they get to do things they haven't done before. She just talks to them, she's not too wordy, she just delivers, you know, "I'm here to deliver a message and this is what the message is and this is what you're going to get out of the day. We're going to do this, this and this – right, ready to get started? Let's go."* (School teacher, Girls Years 3-4)

The WSDN-WT teachers themselves spoke of how they sought to establish a positive environment right from the start. One teacher experienced with both girls' and women's groups described her approach:

*There are a lot of girls that when they walk in the room, it's like there's this complete reserve, like "I don't know what this is. I've just been told to come here". And the girls with their heads down, I do a line-up not far into the course, I do a line-up with them and I go: "Okay I'm going to walk down the line, I'll give you each a word, you need to remember this right through the course because I'll be using it". And I walk down, and I go "Brave, Strong, Brave, Strong", and what I'm doing is, I'm getting them into pairs so they can have an arm wrestle. And they're hearing these words and I'm looking them in the eye, and the girls that drop their eyes when I land up in front of them and they've got their head down and their eyes down, I'll wait, because they will always look up. And as soon as they look into my eyes, I'll go, "Strong", and then go on to the next one. And then I'll say to them "You know one of the things I notice about you as a group of girls? Each one of you looked me in the eye". So okay, I might have had to have paused in front of them – and I don't tell them that – but "you're already strong, you're already brave, you're already clever". So I'm sort of building on that "You're already this". And all I'm going to show you are a few little techniques that you can use if somebody tries to hurt you. (WSDN-WT teacher)*

The positive experience noted by interviewees was supported by evidence from the girls themselves, gathered as part of the pre-post evaluation. Girls in Years 3-4 and those in Years 7-8 were given ten words and asked to circle which ones described how they felt about the course. The words they circled in order of frequency for the two age groups are presented in figure 7.1.

**Figure 7.1 Course experience Years 3-4 and 7-8**



For the Years 3-4 girls, the most commonly used descriptor of the course was 'Fun', circled by 82%. For the Years 7-8 girls it was second highest ranking circled by 67% of the girls, whose highest ranked descriptor was 'helpful', circled by 72% of girls.

The engagement of the senior girls (Years 10-12) was reflected in their ratings of overall satisfaction with the content and delivery of the course, with 98% (n=523) reporting they were 'very satisfied' (n=385) or 'satisfied' (n=138).

### 8.5 Quality of the self defence teachers

As researchers we were impressed by the consistently positive endorsements given to the WSDN-WT courses. Fundamental to their success was the quality and professionalism of the teachers. When we went to the first district, and heard how phenomenal and universally respected the teacher was, we wondered if we had possibly started with the best. How wrong we were! For both the girls' and women's courses, those interviewed consistently emphasised how impressed they were by the quality of the self defence teachers. For example, five women in one focus group were unanimous in praising the authenticity of their teacher, appreciating her sharing with them her own story of leaving victimhood behind.

*She changed, and she showed us what we could be. So now it's given us the positivity of "Hey, actually things aren't always doom and gloom, and you can, when you stop playing the victim and you start to be a survivor, you can help other people to be survivors", and that's what it is, it was taking us out of the victim stage... That's what I mean, she really empowered the whole group, and made us feel like we were, wow! (Participant, women's course)*

*She was amazing. She was one of those women that you just had to sit there and listen to and watch. She was fascinating. You know, I love men, but she was fascinating. Beautiful woman. (Participant, women's course)*

The high quality of the WSDN-WT teachers was constantly stressed, with many key informants and participants stressing how inspiring they were. The following quote could have been made about any of the teachers:

*She's so good because she has a range of presentations. They love the real-life stories. They love that, and she tells a good story. And there are a lot of local stories unfortunately.... So she's got a scrapbook with all these in it and she updates them so they're quite current. So they love that. She does little warm-up games to get them warmed up and things, and then there are stories, and then there's all the things they do.... It's not boring because it's varied. I've got some of these evaluation forms that the girls filled out: "it was fun"; and "time flew by"; "I loved this course"; "I really enjoyed consolidating the techniques I'd learned at intermediate"; "it was great having another course". (School Head of Department, Girls Years 10-12)*

The WSDN-WT teachers were routinely described as able to "create a very safe environment", "well-organised", "clear", "articulate", "fair", and generally "awesome."

## 8.6 Advantages of using an outside teacher

A commonly made observation by teachers in schools at all age groups concerned the advantages of having an external WSDN-WT teacher providing the course. This was associated with two main factors. The first relates to the added status an outside teacher can bring to course delivery, inferring that this is something “special” and different.

*Having an outside person come in gives it kudos. (School guidance counsellor, Girls Years 10-12)*

*The kids respond in a different way to a different teacher or a different facilitator, so in my head I thought it was really great that it was led by somebody outside. (School teacher, Girls Years 7-8)*

*I think they leave feeling more confident – if they should get into situations. She gives them really good strategies, about body language and stuff like that, and because she’s an outside provider – you know, we couldn’t do it as well as she does. And they like to listen to somebody different. (School head of department, Girls Years 10-12)*

*Just the fact that it’s an outside tutor coming in, it changes the dynamics. (School deputy principal, Girls Years 7-8)*

Some teachers made it clear that respect for outside presenters was not guaranteed, but in this case reflected the high esteem with which the WSDN-WT teachers were perceived. Several teachers referred to other courses and presenters not being received nearly so favourably by the girls at their schools.

*I won’t say the organisation, but we have a speaker who is really keen to come back but she wasn’t – it was really boring and the kids were disengaged. We just felt the message wasn’t presented well and it was not – it was not good. We would have no hesitation to say that we can’t actually fit [her] into the programme this year. (School head of department, Girls Years 10-12)*

The second factor reflects the widely recognised need for such a course to be presented by specially trained professionals who could ensure the consistency of what was provided across different schools.

*A different teacher would teach it differently to different people and that’s probably one of the strengths, I think, of the course, is that (1) we know her, and (2) she teaches every lesson the same, or every class the same, so you still get that. (School deputy principal, Girls Years 7-8)*

This view was further reinforced by the principal of a school who concluded:

*That’s where I think it’s really critical also that you have a person who is an expert delivering the programme. It’s not a programme that I see that teachers should be delivering. I don’t think that that’s really where we’re at because we have enough difficulty doing our pubertal change unit and sticking to scripts. We’ve got to stick to a script. We have to remain safe, and so if we have the same instructor doing the self defence we know that we’ve got consistency across classes, consistency across schools, so I would be very reluctant to see a classroom teacher engage in that. (School principal, Girls Years 7-8)*

The consensus was that the sensitive nature of the course's content, and the likely background experiences of some of the girls taking it, underlined the critical importance of having it taught by specifically trained expert self defence teachers working in collaboration with appropriate support and referral agencies. None of those we interviewed expressed any reservations about the suitability of WSDN-WT teachers to undertake this role; conversely, every WSDN-WT self defence teacher earned positive acclaim for the respectful and knowledgeable manner with which they presented the material and interacted with the girls and women involved.

### **8.7 Working safely and effectively with previous victimisation histories**

In 2013 a new initiative was developed and run by WSDN-WT in collaboration with the National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges (NCIWR) to provide self defence courses targeted for young women clients of refuge. The piloting of the 'Violence Prevention Project' was made possible through a grant provided by the Vodafone Foundation's Capacity Development funding. The evaluation clearly showed course participants had been empowered and learnt new skills and strategies to keep safer from violence and abuse (Mossman & Jordan, 2013).

It was not surprising, then, that in this current study school teachers, women's refuge and other community based support workers all spoke of how effective they saw WSDN-WT self defence courses being with participants who had previous abuse histories. One teacher observed how valuable the course was in her area where she knew some girls lived with violence:

*I know for sure there's five or six families on this list where these Year 10 girls live in, you know, a pretty awful family situation where violence is an everyday occurrence – and violence in its broader sense of intimidation and psychological violence as well as physical. (School guidance counsellor, Years 10-12)*

Participants in one focus group talked about how they now recognised the importance of teaching self defence courses to school children.

*Using it in the playground, using it on the street, so it's not just about violence within the home, it's actually about violence within the communities, in New Zealand really, because the reality is, we can put as much work as we want in, but that work we put in isn't going to actually stop people from being violent, so it is that early intervention prevention work, it is that teaching, young people and women and children, the skills. (Participant, women's course)*

Women's centre and refuge workers all acknowledged the abusive and violent backgrounds of some course participants in their areas:

*So for two of them there had been serious physical domestic violence so I think for them it was also about learning how to protect themselves in a very personal way. (Women's centre manager, women's course)*

The value of the WSDN-WT courses for refuge clients was equally acknowledged, with some identifying the strong possibilities that such participants might be triggered

by the content and disclosures of previous abusive experiences that could occur. The next two sub-sections address these concerns.

### Triggers

Similarly to refuge and support centre workers, the WSDN-WT teachers all acknowledged that the high prevalence of abuse and violence in New Zealand is likely to result in their classes often including girls and women with their own personal histories of victimisation. The intensive training received regarding how to manage this, and the links with referral services within both schools and the wider community, did not always remove the WSDN-WT teachers' concerns in this area. One spoke of her anxieties when moving into providing courses for women.

*I was very confident in schools, it's just like being a school teacher with a different curriculum, but the women come with so many variables that I have got to be sensitive to that. I was a bit more afraid than anything.... I think I was worried that they had their own reasons for their barriers and I wouldn't be able to get to them in a sensitive way. So they would still get something, I wasn't worried about them getting nothing, I knew that everyone would get a little bit of learning, but it was more if I did trigger anything unwittingly that caused them to retreat even more. I felt that was a big responsibility as opposed to teaching girls in schools. There is still vulnerability but you can have a lot of fun with them and that relationship is completely different. (WSDN-WT teacher)*

It was evident from our interviews that all the self defence teachers viewed this as a particularly important responsibility. They were aware of the high possibility that the material presented could trigger reactions and traumatic memories in some course participants, and sought to be well equipped in each environment with what supports were available. When groups of women referred by refuges were doing the course, for example, several of the self defence teachers said how much they valued the presence of support workers undertaking the course alongside the women. If someone was triggered, one of the workers could take them aside while the teacher continued with the rest of the group. This was not viewed as a negative consequence, with one commenting, for example:

*It is fine if there's support, we can bring them back and it can be an empowering experience to go back and say, "Okay, I've got it under control now, I'm re-entering now". And then also making a decision and saying, "Okay, if this happens again I'm going out before I get to the place that I'm too triggered". (WSDN-WT teacher)*

The support workers interviewed often praised the awareness-raising components of the courses, noting how important it was for many of the women to gain a different perspective on violence, and not to continue to feel it was "normal" and "just something they had to put up with." One reflected:

*A lot of women, if they don't have any education around it, they just choose the same kind of partners because that's normal for them, it's what they expect, it's what they know, they know he will give her a hiding if she does something, and so there's no surprises, they know what they're getting and they feel*

*comfortable. It's not right, but that's just their normal.* (Women's refuge worker, women's course)

One of the most challenging messages for many of these women came with the realisation that the problem did not stem from them, and that it was neither normal nor their fault. A focus group of support workers reiterated the messages many of the women who were their clients had been given:

*"Don't make a big deal out of it, you just shut up, you're mental."*

*"It's your imagination."*

*"Nobody else would have you."*

*"You're crazy, you're a mental bitch."* (Focus group, women's refuge workers, women's course)

One of the most important messages the self defence course gave them was that such abuse was not normal and they had a right to feel safe in their relationships and to be treated with respect. For some women this was radical news, with one participant who had endured a lifetime of serious abuse saying:

*When I went to the course I was absolutely gobsmacked. I was so taken back. Emotionally and physically, it hit me like a tonne of bricks. Because I had never ever known anything like it, and if I had known how to do all that prior to my childhood, my childhood would have been a better life as well.* (Participant, women's course)

The support workers interviewed often expressed confidence in the abilities of the WSDN-WT teachers to recognise and validate previous victimisation experiences. One refuge support worker observed in relation to this process:

*I think it's done really well. I think it's done very respectfully, and I know that the woman who facilitates, runs the groups, is very respectful to what people may have been through and also has a really great knowledge.*

*She knows what she's doing, she knows what she's talking about, she knows the effects of the trauma, and if there are any disclosures or anything else, she knows how to deal with all of that, so it's with a lot of confidence that we can refer women and know that they will be looked after. And if they need anything more, then she'll let us know and we can follow up on that.* (Women's refuge manager, women's courses)

In one focus group of specialist sexual violence support workers there was some discussion regarding whether triggering women was a positive aspect of the process or not. One participant expressed concerns about this occurring and in particular the likelihood that encouraging some women to share their own stories might trigger others:

*We experienced varying levels of self-disclosure around their own stories and I think it partly was encouraged because the facilitator used self-disclosure and so that's an important thing to know. It gave permission to kind of create that space which was somewhat difficult to manage for some people whose stories were quite challenging for others to hear.....There was a lot of sharing stories*



*which, you know, on the one hand could have been really empowering for some of the participants and on the other hand some participants got really distressed....*

*Some were triggered, which I think is inevitable, but that is what happened. Luckily they were in counselling so they had good stabilising techniques, they knew what to do, you could sit with them and say, "Okay, feel your feet on the ground, can you feel them?" you know, "Come back to the present". So they had those, they were able to, they have got breathing techniques, they have got stabilising so it was in place but I think it would have been very difficult if it was not in place and we didn't know them. (Focus group, Specialist sexual violence support workers, women's courses)*

This reinforces the importance of the course being offered in collaboration with specialist sexual violence support services who can assist women to manage and positively use their experiences of being triggered.

### Disclosures

In addition to triggers, teaching this material could also give rise to disclosures, again underlining the necessity of high self defence teacher awareness and good support systems. Within the schools, for example, each WSDN-WT teacher was acquainted with the school's protocols in the event of disclosures of child sexual abuse and could use the referral mechanisms available. One school head of department said she was surprised at what some girls might confide during their self defence course. When asked about the kinds of things revealed, she replied:

*Sort of creepy things, I think, that are happening to them. She [WSDN-WT teacher] knows that the pathway then is to go and see the school counsellor so she wouldn't take it on board herself, but she knows the avenue. She does everything straight up, you know? She sometimes says, "I'm just worried about that one. She doesn't look at me in the eye and I don't know, she's not really engaging and I wonder if there's something else going on", or something like that. So she's really perceptive like that. (School head of department, Girls Years 10-12)*

Another teacher reiterated that, even though the follow-up process could be difficult, she felt it was positive when disclosures were forthcoming:

*We'd prefer to know, so it's a good thing for us, but it's a good thing that the child disclosed in that forum, because it was a safe place, they obviously felt it was a safe place. (School deputy principal, Girls Years 7-8)*

The WSDN-WT teachers had all experienced disclosures of various kinds, with some providing courses in areas of high vulnerability where school teachers or guidance counsellors might brief them in advance about girls whose histories they were already aware of:

*Every class I'll have someone that's vulnerable, or may have been through abuse. So they [teachers] communicate really well to me so I know. So I can ensure that I keep that child safe, or if they walk out, I know why, or you know, it's just ensuring the safety of each class. (WSDN-WT teacher)*

Occasionally a disclosure made during a self defence course might be the initial disclosure from a girl, and set in motion a long follow-up process that could eventuate in the WSDN-WT teacher having to testify during any subsequent court case. More frequently it might result in the self defence teacher passing on any information of concern to the school to follow up. One WSDN-WT teacher recounted an example from a recent course she had taken:

*A girl said that a guy follows her every day.... She opened up. And I said, "Have you told anyone?" She said, "No", and I said, "Right, well thank you for telling me, that's great, we need to know those things. And look you're all aware of this, so once again, you know, this is not for everyone to talk about, but we're here to look after you. But, you know, you've got a friend in this class, what about – how about you walk home with her." But I said, "Main thing is we've got to tell somebody. We can't leave this." I said, "I will be telling the DP (Deputy Principal)".... So I went back to the DP and said, "Look, I need to let you know that this is happening." (WSDN-WT teacher)*

Key stakeholders and participants alike also commented on the added value when the WSDN-WT teachers themselves disclosed aspects of their own victimisation histories.

*She told us about her own experience in her own home, about what she had to do to put herself in a safe environment for her and her children when she had an intruder, and that alone was inspiring because she's such a tiny wee button. You think, how on earth did she get this man out of her house? But she did, she dragged him out, out the door. So it shows that it can be done. (Participant, women's course)*

### **8.8 Addressing the needs of vulnerable populations**

In addition to those with previous histories of victimisation, a specific focus of the Isolation to Empowerment courses was for self defence to be taught to groups of women considered as particularly vulnerable to abuse and victimisation. Key groups included here were Māori women (on whom there is a specific section in this report), migrant / refugee women, rural women, and women with disabilities. We interviewed key stakeholders from partner agencies for each of these groups who had witnessed the impacts of WSDN-WT courses on those participating. All were unanimous in the positive evaluations they gave to the course in terms of content and delivery, with high praise given to the self defence teachers for the ways in which they adapted the presentation of the course to meet the needs of diverse groups.

#### **Migrant and refugee women**

Various courses had been offered to migrant/refugee women, with many tailored to specific ethnic groups such as Chinese, Tamil (Indian) and Nepali women. Often it was older women within these communities who attended the courses, aged 55-80 years. The organiser said she appreciated how much the WSDN-WT teacher adapted the course to suit the ages of the women and their capabilities, saying:

*“Even if they don’t have the strength to stand for the next hour or so, they can sit, we’ll give them a chair and they can just do it by sitting on the chair”.*  
(Migrant/refugee support worker, women’s courses)

She said the women all enjoyed the course although some regretted not having had the opportunity to undertake it earlier.

*One of the elderly women came up to me and told me, “I wish I had done this course two months ago,” because there was a home invasion and she was on a walking stick, she had a knee problem, and said, ‘I didn’t know how to protect myself. If only I had done this course or this course was brought to my attention, I would have protected myself’.* (Migrant/refugee support worker, women’s courses)

Others of the women attending brought their mothers and/or their daughters, so often it was a multi-generational group. Sometimes it was difficult for the women to leave their families to attend the course, with husbands often suspicious of what it might entail. Some women might intend coming then not turn up on the day.

*The last minute they will not turn up because the husband put a stop to it or the mother-in-law had put a stop to it. And she’s branded as a bad role model, you know, because she will fight and the men don’t like it. So it’s a cultural, a deep seated cultural behaviour there...* (Migrant/refugee support worker, women’s courses)

In order to ensure the women were allowed to attend, it was important to market it as a self defence course to protect women from street violence, even though it often addressed the very real issues of family violence and abuse that many of these women experienced. The organiser spoke of her very real fear that funding for these courses might be curtailed.

*It means I can’t do it any more, I have to put a stop to it. And in saying that, if it stops it means that the campaign to stop family violence is going to go five steps back.... I mean, you have women being murdered at home in Newlands, the Pakistani family in Auckland murdered.... the Chinese woman that was killed by the husband, and thrown into the drain. You know, if only she knows how to protect herself, that would not have happened.* (Migrant/refugee support worker, women’s courses)

A community support manager in a different area also said that her experience reinforced the importance of migrant and refugee women having access to courses such as this one. In a WSDN-WT course she attended, a young Chinese woman revealed her distress at being sexually harassed by a man who was the boss at her workplace and received support not only from the WSDN-WT teacher but from other group members as well:

*She started to disclose and was crying about how this man made her feel. It was comments that he made, you know, he would touch her back, pull her ponytail. And she felt like, because she was here on a visa, she felt like she couldn’t say anything..... and there was a woman sitting in the room....who had been sexually harassed at work and she had taken a complaint and she had won. And so she was able to share her story with this young woman, or shared*

*it with the whole group actually, so that was possibly cathartic. (Women's centre manager, women's courses)*

A criminal justice stakeholder also spoke of how significant she felt it was when there was a WSDN-WT course provided for new migrant women in her area.

*There's such a small community, and because the community is often isolated, and they're often off dairy farms, so they're even geographically isolated.... their social networks are gone. They left those behind when they left their countries.... When they get together it's just really quite interesting, because it's like, I don't know how to describe it really but anything is possible sort of thing. And you would think that some of them, if you go on a cultural basis, you would think some of them would be quite shy, but no. It was really interesting, you could see the shift, just with doing the shouting thing, doing that, it was quite freeing, I think, for some of them. (Criminal justice stakeholder, women's courses)*

Another worker spoke of her sadness at seeing how vulnerable to abuse many women from different cultural backgrounds were in their relationships.

*They don't have a right to say no. It's just part of their role as being the wife.... It's just part of life for them. Which is quite sad and quite gutting, which is why it's so beneficial to go to these courses so that they're learning and I'm always quite culturally respectful but I'm also mindful of saying, "Well, I'm sorry, that's not how it rolls in New Zealand." (Criminal justice stakeholder, women's courses)*

She said she found it useful to address the issue from a rights perspective:

*They seem to be more attuned to that rather than saying, "This is culturally different." It's like, "Okay, but actually this is about our rights and what we've fought for so that we're safe." (Criminal justice stakeholder, women's courses)*

One of the WSDN-WT teachers also spoke of how sensitive and aware the instructors had to be with migrant/refugee women and the activities they engaged in, given that many may have already experienced horrific levels of abuse.

*You have to be careful with that and make sure you're not jumping in with a "Defend yourself if this ever happens" and you suddenly realise, oh my God, it's already happened many times over.*

*So I would just hate for a woman to say, "Well, if you'd done this, that never would have happened". How ridiculous is that? So you have to – I think that in that way, and probably similar to Māori women as well, that they may have had a backstory that you don't know. So it's quite good just to tentatively bring that up a little bit, if they feel like it. And if they don't feel like it, then you know, that's okay, we just won't do those things because obviously there's something there. (WSDN-WT teacher)*

The overall consensus that emerged was the importance of ensuring women from all ethnic and cultural backgrounds were able to access such courses, and that the WSDN-WT programme was able to be adapted well to meet diverse needs and contexts.

### Rural women

We interviewed women in different areas of the country who had been involved with the delivery of WSDN-WT courses to rural women. There were, of course, often overlaps between different groups recognised as vulnerable, such as Māori rural women and migrant rural women. Again the self defence courses and teachers earned praise for the ways they were able to tailor the programme to be responsive to the diverse needs presented.

One woman who had been instrumental in courses being offered to women in the dairy industry spoke of her strong belief in the importance of this happening and what she hoped might eventuate:

*When I looked at it initially, I think there was a number of things. One was about self safety and about living in isolation, about potentially protecting yourself, just because of that isolation. And at the same time, it wasn't just that self defence, it was also you know all about the whole domestic violence thing as well. (Farming women's network, women's courses)*

She spoke of how difficult it often was for rural women to connect with other women, and how living on their workplace, the farm, could compound the isolation. However, she said she believed the women were prepared to talk about issues of abuse and violence, adding:

*They are, if you have the right facilitator there. And it's in the right secure, safe forum. And (WSDN-WT teacher's) forum, the way she does it, is spot on because it brings those things to the surface. (Farming women's network, women's courses)*

Other refuge and support centre workers in rural districts also emphasised the importance of approaching such issues with great care and sensitivity, and the important role WSDN-WT courses can play in helping to reduce feelings of isolation and disempowerment.

Mention was also made of the additional resourcing that may be needed to provide courses for women in rural areas, evident in an example noted in section 7.1 that referred to a Māori WSDN-WT teacher who regularly needed to provide transport for course participants in poorer, rural areas.

### Girls and women with disabilities

There is a common misperception that WSDN-WT self defence courses can be equated with martial arts (a point discussed later in this section). This assumption translates into even some able-bodied women hesitating to attend such courses, fearing shame and humiliation. As noted earlier in this report, in reality the courses are presented in ways that are accessible to girls and women of varying ages and abilities, and so it should have been no surprise to learn that this extended to girls and women with physical disabilities.

One school teacher, for example, spoke of having some anxiety about how a girl in her class who was in a wheelchair might manage the course. The teacher went in to see how the girl was doing, but she need not have worried:

*The girl that was in a wheelchair was completely involved for everything that she could possibly do. She loved it. She just thought it was awesome. She has very little movement of her legs but she was able to try and get a kick and she was also able to use her voice and that was really good as well. But she enjoyed listening to everything and knowing she had some other tools that she could use and her voice was going to be the most prominent one for her. And it was really good because (WSDN-WT teacher) spoke about that with the whole class as well, that even people with disabilities, vulnerable - no matter what they are we need to give them the right tools and so for her it was going to be her voice that would be the main one. (School teacher, Girls Years 7-8)*

Similar comments were made regarding how the self defence teachers included and adapted the course for women with disabilities attending the Isolation to Empowerment courses. The emphasis was not placed on what they could not do, but rather stressed what resources they did still have available – how to use their voice, their walking cane or frame, their wheelchair - anything with the potential to protect them from harm.

WSDN-WT recently developed and delivered a pilot self defence programme for girls with disabilities, with the aim of developing an effective response to empower girls with disability to reduce their vulnerability to sexual assault and other forms of abuse. The pilot programme included tailored programme design, targeting (initially) girls with visual impairments and girls with mobility impairments, and taught in specialist disability focus small group courses. The pilot courses were organised in partnership with disability support agencies in the community. The courses were challenging to organise, including trying to find sufficient numbers of similarly aged and disabled girls in the same geographical area. Through a lot of hard work and negotiation, eventually several courses were provided for girls with disabilities. One of the WSDN-WT teachers involved described her experience of it:

*We had a small group of four in (provincial city) and they all had vision impairment. One girl was almost completely blind, and three were just partially impaired – they could see us pretty much. They all had some physical disability too, such as caused by a stroke – where one side of them was a bit weaker than the other – and they all had some level, varying levels, of cognitive dysfunction. (WSDN-WT teacher)*

The challenges may have seemed immense, but the gains made by these girls sounded equally immense.

*I was pleasantly surprised to see they got the same things out of it as other girls, but perhaps amplified even. I think they came from a place of more vulnerability, so the feeling of power they got was kind of more intense! (WSDN-WT teacher)*

Despite lengthy planning sessions beforehand regarding how to adapt the courses, in practice the teachers discovered they needed to be able to change things constantly because the girls presented in very different ways.

*One of the things that was really important was that we had two teachers in each one of those classes, so that if one girl needed special attention, we could still work one-to-one with that person, and hopefully the others could work*

*together as a group. So the two teacher thing was absolutely imperative. We ended up flying by the seat of our pants sometimes, trying to think, "What's going to work here?" "What version of this is going to work?" "How are we going to do this so that they get it – they all get it?" (WSDN-WT teacher)*

One group of girls, all of whom had some limitation of cognitive function, proved particularly challenging and it felt to the teachers even more so when one girl with Down's Syndrome announced she wanted to put on a play:

*One of the smallest of those (girls) piped up in the middle of it that she thought that we should do some drama. "Can we do some plays?" And I said, "Would that have anything to do with self defence?" "Yes", she said.*

The teachers went with it, and the outcome sounded very special.

*The good thing was that she had the idea, and she directed it all herself, with little support, and she gave everybody roles, and she decided what the scenario should be.... where all the girls were having a picnic at the beach or something, and then some creepy guy comes along and tries to take one of the girls away, and they act to stay together – they won't let their friend get separated – and they tell the man quite clearly that he's not to touch her, and to go away, and then they go home together, and they tell their safe adult – their mum or whoever – and just all those really basic things that we've been talking about. And they did it themselves and they looked so proud of themselves. It was good. It was really good... and really, that tied it altogether in a way that they could understand. That was the most perfect thing. (WSDN-WT teacher)*

Providing courses such as these was recognised by the WSDN-WT teachers as incredibly important because of the extreme vulnerability such girls face to sexual abuse, but was challenging for the teachers also.

*In a way it was harder work. There was a lot more to think about. We were quite exhausted at the end of each day, and they were only one-day courses, so only five hours, but we were really, really tired. It was really satisfying because you saw such an enormous improvement in their confidence. (WSDN-WT teacher)*

Beforehand the teachers had been concerned about what level of participation might be possible for such girls, but their fears were not substantiated. One said:

*I suppose you were concerned that they might not be able to do much, and when you could see that they were not only participating, but they were giving it all they had, and - it was really impressive. They were really going for it. And there were some things that really worked for them like: (WSDN-WT teacher) had designed a chant and a rap that they really liked, and they were just hopping by the end of the course. When we did it one more time, there was one little girl who was up on her feet and she was bouncing beside (WSDN-WT teacher) while she was chanting, and just about punching her arms into the air, she was just so full of energy and confidence and joy – pure joy, it was just amazing. (WSDN-WT teacher)*

Other successful courses had been provided to girls with different kinds of disability, and sounded as if they were valuable not only for the girls but helpful and reassuring for their parents also.

*We had another course in (city), with two girls in wheelchairs – one who had some upper-body movement, and the other one was in an electric wheelchair and really could only use one finger and her head. And both their mums stayed for the whole day – it was just fantastic, because the mums could talk about their concerns for their girls, and discuss things together and things that might work for them. You could see that they would talk again when they got home about various things, maybe even practise a few things together, and that they had that on-going support. That would have been really good for them. (WSDN-WT teacher)*

Managing the parents' anxieties could sometimes be another part of the challenge, with some understandably protective of their daughters.

*I think that at least one of the mothers said something like, "Oh, I'm not sure whether she could do that", and I would say, "Well, why don't we give it a go and see if she can?" Sometimes you're restricted by the shape of the chair, and might not be able to do that kind of movement. Some of it was just experimentation. Can she get her elbow up? If someone was leaning over her and trying to grope her from behind, could she do that in that chair? And often they could. Often they could do more than any of us realised. (WSDN-WT teacher)*

What was often reinforced was how powerful anyone who still had a voice could be, even with other severe levels of impairment, echoing the comments reported earlier (section 5.3) about girls and women learning to trust the strength and power of their voice. One of the self defence teachers observed:

*I find that almost the most useful exercise, even if a person is almost completely paralysed, if they have a voice, they can still protect themselves. If they know that it's wrong, they can say so, and they can go and tell somebody later, then they have that really basic, "Yeah, your voice is incredibly powerful." (WSDN-WT teacher)*

She also noted, again reminiscent of earlier observations, how the ways in which we socialise girls can work against their own safety.

*Girls particularly are battling against all that stuff about being nice, and polite, and never be rude to people, so even more so when you're disabled and you actually need help from people for a lot of things. (WSDN-WT teacher)*

The WSDN-WT chairperson told us about a course with visually impaired girls where,

*doing the kicks, one of the girls was sort of vibrating with adrenaline, and just buzzing. And then straight after the kicks session, they had morning tea and she disclosed abuse. She tapped into her power and she just had the best day ever, that wee girl. (WSDN-WT chairperson)*

It was evident from the examples given that the WSDN-WT course could be offered safely and effectively to girls with a varied range of disabilities, and play an important role in enhancing their confidence as well as their safety. WSDN-WT has trained a



woman with her own significant visual impairment as a self defence teacher to help meet the need for such courses, and she was a vital contributor to the planning of the Girls' Self Defence Disability pilot and to the delivery of most of the courses described above.

We also heard various accounts where older women with concerns about their levels of physical ability felt empowered by what they heard and did on WSDN-WT courses. For example, in one focus group of women course participants, those present recalled with glee a story recounted later by one of the other attendees:

*It was a lovely story of the little old lady with her trolley walking through and there's three big blokes been intimidating her and she kept trot, trot, trotting out and yelled, "Get the fuck out of the way". And they got such a fright that this little old lady went and challenged them because it's just intimidation. They're not really going to do anything and they backed off and said, "Oh, oh". And off she went. (Participant, women's courses)*

### **Diverse cultural groups**

We asked every school if they felt the way in which the self defence course was delivered was culturally appropriate to diverse cultural groups. All agreed it was, often affirming the ways in which it engaged Māori girls in particular (section seven specifically reviews Māori experiences and perceptions of WSDN-WT courses).

Teachers often commented that their school populations were becoming increasingly multicultural, even in rural areas and regions previously considered as mostly Pakeha-dominated. Teachers at one school, for example, praised the ways in which the self defence teacher was quickly able to ascertain the diverse nationalities in any group and work with their specific needs and concerns.

*We have an Iraq group and that's a different kettle of fish but (WSDN-WT teacher's) really good with that as well, some Asians and Māori, Pākehā, Fijian, Pacific Islands, Pacific Islanders are another interesting group because of the way that they've been brought up and how they approach so and – so you've got to take all that into account as well while you're teaching them and that's why she's so superb, I think, because she's sort of – she's clued up enough to work out what she's got – she gets to know who she's got and then how she works with them after that. (School guidance counsellor, Girls Years 10-12)*

One principal of a primary school specifically commented that the active, "hands-on" nature of the programme spoke well to the ethnic mix of students in their school and their diverse learning styles (as quoted in section 7.1).

Another similarly reflected how well the self defence teachers were able to establish rapport with girls from a wide range of cultures.

*I've looked at the mix of ethnicities in the hall and we've got a little girl with her habib on, and scarf, and we've got such a range and they were all engaged, so for a female I think it's extremely empowering. (School principal, Girls Years 7-8).*

Recognition was given by some to the ways in which such cultural responsiveness could be enhanced by a significant number of the WSDN-WT teachers being Māori

or Pasifika themselves. However, it was also evident that the Pakeha teachers were regarded very positively in terms of their abilities to speak across different cultural backgrounds effectively and respectfully.

Similar views were expressed in relation to the courses for adult women, again reinforcing the importance of cultural appropriateness. Achieving this could be challenging at times given so many varied backgrounds.

*[WSDN-WT teacher] has done a really good job and initially I wasn't sure whether she would be able to relate to people of different cultures or not. Even in the Chinese seniors they call themselves multicultural because they come from different provinces, and with the Indian community also they come from different places, some of them are Fijians, some of them are Malaysians, some of them are Singaporean, some are from mainland India, you know. So they are different as well. But the way she carries herself I think [she] did a great job.... She doesn't go there and impose her values and... the way she thinks it should be done - she takes the cue from the audience. (Migrant/refugee worker, women's courses)*

A Pasifika self defence teacher referred to the silencing that still often exists around physical and sexual violence in those communities particularly, and how she believed her being from a similar cultural background was often helpful. She said:

*I have had disclosures in Pasifika women's courses, and I've actually supported them – I'm not a counsellor but I certainly have supported them after the course with other agencies, but also in their action of what they choose to do. And it could be a small thing like a pastor being really inappropriate with the mother and the daughters of a family, and they've kept silent for years and years, from the mother down to the daughters, and they're worried about their grandchildren. So, you know, how can we deal with that? (WSDN-WT teacher)*

She also stressed the advantages of having culturally specific courses sometimes, because *they'd stay silent if there was a group of many other cultures.... there's this belief of shame if you say anything.*

Others of the self defence teachers said they sometimes addressed directly the cultural reticence of some groups, encouraging speaking out in a safe place or suggesting women approach them privately with questions or concerns. Some also noted the importance of support workers already familiar to the women being present on such courses to help them to feel safe and assist their participation. This also facilitated on-going discussion and support with the women after the end of the course.

## 8.9 Summary

Factors seen to contribute to the positive outcomes of the WSDN-WT courses included:

- the length of the course – a short intensive block run over one or two days rather than classes spread over a number of weeks;
- limiting class sizes – enabling the self defence teachers to ensure all participants were learning the moves correctly, while also enabling them to monitor how the information presented was being received;
- course content – that includes physical skills and techniques that are accessible to all, gender awareness and challenges to stereotypical views of sexual assault, help-seeking and ethical bystander interventions;
- taught by self defence teachers with the skills to engage participants in the topic whilst delivering an enjoyable experience;
- delivered by someone external to the school with expert knowledge of self defence;
- well-trained, respectful and professional self defence teachers able to create a safe environment and equipped to deal with triggering and abuse disclosures if they occur;
- offering courses to vulnerable groups in close partnership with relevant support agencies to ensure overall participant safety;
- identifying and delivering self defence to those most at risk of sexual victimisation or re-victimisation and tailoring the courses to meet the specific needs of any such group, with special attention to being culturally appropriate; and
- recruitment of a diverse mix of self defence teachers providing a range of skills and expertise to draw on.

## 9 Challenging issues and future developments

As noted in the literature review (section 1.2), there has not always been universal endorsement for the notion of training girls and women in self defence. Reticence has been expressed over a range of related issues, some of which we explored in our interviews with stakeholders, participants, and self defence teachers. This next section of the report examines the following issues:

- Isn't it just the same as martial arts?
- Does it enhance fear levels?
- Is it victim blaming?
- What if the funding is cut?
- What about the boys?
- Complaints and criticisms

### 9.1 Isn't it just the same as martial arts?

Mention has already been made (section 8.3) of the confusion that often exists around how self defence programmes differ from martial arts courses. One Isolation to Empowerment course participant summarised this well, saying she had gone to the WSDN-WT course initially expecting *Fists and biting, yeah, that's the first thing you sort of learn to defend yourself with.* (Participant, course)

This is further accentuated by the fact that some courses advertising themselves as self defence for women are taught by, mostly, men with martial arts backgrounds who respond to, and can even exploit, women's fear levels.

In researching the WSDN-WT courses, we were impressed by the breadth and coverage of the programme and how the many elements involved were combined into an integrated package informed by a coherent aim and philosophy, which we interpret as being to challenge the gender stereotypes likely to perpetuate high levels of female victimisation, and to promote the safety of girls and women through empowerment.

In 1987, Searles and Berger observed that self defence courses based on a 'martial arts model' emphasised the learning of complex and highly stylised techniques, typically taught in co-educational classes by male, sometimes paternalistic, instructors. The latter, while well-meaning, can increase women's fear levels through their protective attitudes and displays of male strength and martial arts expertise. Such environments, it has been observed (Hollander, 2009), are conducive to high female dropout rates and the co-educational setting creates in many women self consciousness and the perpetuation of helpless passivity.

A clear strength of feminist models of self defence is that they are democratic in their accessibility to all, and oriented towards the learning of practical and skilful moves rather than requiring high levels of physical agility. This was clearly evident in the WSDN-WT approach, as evidenced by many of those we interviewed praising the ways in which the teachers ensured that all participants, irrespective of age, ability

and athletic prowess, were supported in learning strategies to ensure safety for themselves and others. A young woman course participant referred to in section 6.1 reinforced this perspective when she described how, despite having undertaken classes in both kick-boxing and karate, when she was confronted by an attacker it was techniques learned on the WSDN-WT course that she used to ensure her safety.

A central emphasis in the programme was on engaging the mind, not only the body, by giving all participants the skills to read a situation or likely offender and determine which of a range of options might be most effective. The emphasis on use of voice was valued by many, enabling them to get a sense of the power of their own voice as well as the confidence that this was something almost every girl or woman could access, including those who were elderly or in wheelchairs.

The care taken to teach these skills within an environment informed by current statistics and rich in reflection on gender stereotypes, socialisation processes, and commonly believed rape myths translates into the context being one of empowerment – empowering girls and women to know how to maximise their own safety while encouraging them also to be ethical bystanders if aware of others being threatened or in danger. The message we received loud and clear from those we interviewed was that this approach worked across the board for all the diverse population groups they represented. The programme's effectiveness was enhanced by the high level of training and supervision the WSDN-WT teachers receive, and their clear adherence to any safety protocols already in place. Highly respected also were the ways in which these self defence teachers conferred and collaborated with schools and partner agencies to deliver a programme appropriate to that specific context, as well as the preparedness of individual teachers to adapt every learning situation to suit best their particular participants.

Martial arts courses may teach good skills to a select group of girls and women, but self defence taught within the context of a women's empowerment model is able to reach out universally to impact positively on girls and women of every age, culture, and ability. Even if a woman was a black belt in karate, this knowledge would not necessarily protect her if she did not also have a core belief in her worth and value as a woman, and her right to be respected and live safe from violence.

### 9.2 Does it enhance fear levels?

Concern has been expressed at times, usually by outsiders, as to whether a course engaging girls and women in discussions about how to protect themselves from violence might inadvertently enhance fear levels. This was an issue we explored with as many teachers and community workers as we could, only to find none felt this was an outcome produced by the WSDN-WT courses. One teacher did wonder initially if maybe it might make girls more aware of their vulnerability but then decided not:

*That's a hard one, that's one thing you don't want the programme to do. You don't want them to create this fear of, "Ooh what, you mean someone could try to hurt me?" Really our kids should all be innocent but real-world they're not. And they watch programmes like Shortland Street, and they cover all these things in Shortland Street. Would it create a fear? Well, hopefully talking about*

## 9. Challenging issues and future developments

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*it dissipates some of that fear and normalises it a little.* (School teacher, Girls Years 3-4)

Most were emphatic that the course gave girls and women confidence rather than enhancing fear.

*I think we're just giving them more skills to deal with things.* (School head of department, Girls Years 10-12)

One teacher said sometimes parents expressed anxiety about the possible content and focus of the course but were relatively easily reassured by teachers, then completely won over by their daughters' enthusiasm for the course. One school principal had found parents responsive to the message that the whole class needed to do it so particular children or families did not feel targeted, and that it was not only about their child's safety but preparedness to help others in need of protection.

Women doing the Isolation to Empowerment funded courses also resisted any suggestion that they were left feeling more afraid and anxious. As one described it:

*It makes you more aware. Not fearful or more vulnerable, no. It just made us more aware.* (Participant, women's course)

Several women commented that they now paid greater attention to their surroundings and adopted increased security measures. When asked if this was because they felt more anxious, the following were typical of the responses:

*Woman A: No, I have just sort of thought "What could I be doing, what would benefit me in terms of keeping me more safe?" So that those are some simple things that I can do for myself.*

*Woman B: And that's kind of ditto for me as well, because I was a little bit free and easy..... Just being a little bit more aware of what is around me or if I am going home late like remembering to turn my security light on so it lights up when I go up the driveway and it was a result of it, not feeling more anxious, it was just about being a bit more aware.* (Focus group participants, women's course)

Their views were in tandem with how the WSDN-WT chairperson described course content:

*It's not an alarmist course. It's a practical, common sense, fun, participatory sort of course... and it's not based on fear, it's based on your right to be safe. It's a different thing.* (WSDN-WT chairperson)

In one area we visited we were told several times about how the murder of a local woman had prompted a women's centre to have WSDN-WT provide a course. The centre manager told us during a focus group:

*We had a very violent murder here and what came out of that was women walking in, talking to (staff), women ringing in and talking about how fearful they were. We also had two to three women actually come in and have counselling around their stress around that, that lived in the street. One of our clients actually lived next door to where it happened and her place was flashed up on*

*the TV, so they were really distressed. (Women's centre manager, women's course)*

A staff member at the same centre added that these were women who:

*...otherwise felt quite safe in the area but also it brought up quite a lot of stuff that maybe happened in their past as well. It was a trigger for quite a few. They often walked around that area at that time of night and had always felt quite safe and the community was saying that they were feeling unsafe in an otherwise safe environment. (Community support worker, women's course)*

She added:

*We thought, "What can we do as a way of making our women feel strong, feel supported?" And this [self defence course] is what we did as a response. (Community support worker, women's course)*

Both staff and course participants agreed regarding how useful the programme was in terms of reducing the women's fear.

### 9.3 Is it victim blaming?

A controversial issue that has been raised repeatedly since the 1970s women's movement is whether it is politically correct to be teaching girls and women how to defend themselves. This argument states that to focus attention on the girls can inadvertently convey the message that they are responsible for their own safety. Those persons whose behaviour should be targeted are the boys and men doing the victimising.

We often found this a difficult issue to explore with those we interviewed, largely because they struggled to understand the relevancy of the question. One high school teacher's immediate response to the question was to angrily retort:

*Who said that?! (Then added) Oh, I'm being taped! (School head of department, Girls Years 10-12)*

She went on to clarify her perspective:

*You have personal responsibility for your safety, first and foremost, so you try not to put yourself in the situations where you're going to be unsafe. Unfortunately sometimes you just end up in those situations. I think it's good to have some strategies to get yourself out of it. I don't think at any stage a student at this school would get the impression that they are responsible for their own safety. I think they are given some strategies to get themselves out of the situation and then go for help as quickly as absolutely possible. (School head of department, Girls Years 10-12)*

Another responded to the question as follows:

*Oh, wow, yeah, that's a very deep question, isn't it? I know what you're saying it's like, whoa. No, I don't think it is putting the responsibility on them whatsoever. The responsibility that's going on them is letting them know that they can actually look after themselves if they need to, and it's okay to be able*

*to go and say, "Hey this has happened", to someone that they trust. (School teacher, Girls Years 7-8)*

Others struggled to understand the question, or dismissed it as "rubbish". The two women we interviewed who worked in the courts and had been involved in many cases involving violence against women were both emphatic in their responses, one saying:

*No, no I totally disagree with that, I'm sorry, we need to empower people to protect themselves. That's the guts of it at the end of the day. If we lived in a perfect society, we wouldn't have to, but what are we better off to do? Run around and stick our head in the sand and go, "Let's not protect them and let's wait until they die," and then go, "Oh, shit, well maybe that wasn't a good idea?" (Criminal justice stakeholder, courses)*

In contrast, some teachers and community workers were emphatic that the way in which the WSDN-WT courses were taught would not give participants that message. The self defence teachers were all careful to ensure the message came through very clearly that they were not to blame for any attack or for failing to ward off any attack.

*I think being a victim of violence, for me, it sort of made sense. But it was also how the teacher delivered it (during initial WSDN-WT training). Made you feel quite safe that – cos I was thinking, "Gosh, I've been in that situation where I have been so terrified I froze", but I didn't feel like I should have done what she was trying to teach, if that makes sense. I wasn't blaming myself cos I thought the way she was teaching it made me understand it, and then I thought, "Now I know this, what a change - for the future ...." (WSDN-WT teacher)*

*I certainly don't want self-blame, so I do discuss that at the very beginning, because I want it to be as safe for them as possible, but I'd hate to think a woman was in there saying, "But I didn't use a clear message", or "I didn't kick him in the nuts." (WSDN-WT teacher)*

Also stressed was the emphasis on encouraging girls and women to look out for each other, a message clearly well-learned by the girl in the following example:

*There's one wee girl, I think it was last year, who (WSDN-WT teacher) spoke about. This kid came racing up to her at school, and this was a kid whom (she) had taught some time previously. And she was just full of it, "Guess what I did, guess what I did? I'm a self defence girl!" She'd been at the petrol station with her dad, and had seen someone in a car cruise up to a kid on the footpath and try and get the girl to go in the car. The self defence girl told her dad and they rang the Police and they watched this girl – they followed the car and got his number plate and everything. The car took off once he realised he'd been watched, but the Police identified him and said, "Yes, he was a known offender", and this kid was so proud of herself. According to her she'd saved this girl, and she could well be right. (WSDN-WT chairperson)*

Another WSDN-WT teacher struggled to comprehend how what she was presenting could be construed as potentially victim-blaming:

*You can say that it's victim blaming. It's never ever come up, so I don't know. I find it hard enough to get my head around it and I've been teaching for 23*



*years. So victim blaming - I need to answer it with a question, so what's the alternative? Obviously, anything that does social change needs to be multi-pronged. We need to work with men, we need to work with the law, we need to work with empowering women and changing families, and we need to work with the types of violence from strangers, and from people we know. That's always the best way. I'm just focusing on one little corner of that. One little prong of that, empowering girls. (WSDN-WT teacher)*

Only one of the women interviewed who had participated in and/or referred women to any of the Isolation to Empowerment courses believed the women were getting a message that made them feel responsible. This woman commented during a focus group of support workers that:

*I think one aspect of the course that could be quite concerning is that, you know, it's really around physically and verbally responding with a level of force and aggression whereas there's a whole range of ways that people respond to sexual violence and a whole range of strategies they can use to survive the offence that need to be honoured. And that includes keeping still, running away, you know, a whole range and I think some people struggle with a sense of self-blame or a sense of "Well, if only I knew this before" or "Now that I know this I am going to be able to use this to prevent further sexual offending against me," and I think that that can be a bit misleading and I think that a lot of people who were in the course at some stage felt self-doubt or self-blame around the way that they had personally responded to their own experiences. (Specialist sexual violence support worker, women's courses)*

Others in the group were not as concerned, with comments being made that it was how such information was delivered that was critical and could mitigate against any risk of self-blame. The latter was consistent with what we heard from others of those interviewed, and from the WSDN-WT teachers themselves when describing how they handled the issue.

School teachers also rejected the notion that it made girls responsible and blamed them:

*That's not how I would interpret the message at all - it's about strengthening the girls, not about them taking the blame. That's a different end of the continuum, isn't it? (School principal, Girls Years 3-4)*

*No, I think we're just giving them more skills to deal with things. (School head of department, Girls Years 10-12)*

Many agreed that there was an urgent need for programmes to be provided to men and boys, but felt that in the interim we had a responsibility as a society to help better equip girls and women with the skills to protect themselves.

*It's letting kids know, or letting particularly girls know, that they do have a voice and it will be heard and that they've got the tools to be able to know where to go or what to use or what to yell. (School teacher, Girls Years 7-8)*

*The more knowledge you can have the better. (School principal, Girls Years 3-4)*

*In a perfect world things would be different, but the stats are stacked against that, aren't they? (School principal, Girls Years 7-8)*

*In an ideal world women wouldn't have to worry about keeping themselves safe or be learning things like self defence. However, we don't live in an ideal world, and part of my job is to support women to keep themselves as safe as possible and I think a self defence course is a way of doing that. (Women's refuge manager, women's course)*

*We say similar stuff around family violence. You know, like we are safety planning with women, we are doing all the stuff with women and children and what about accountability for offenders. Well, in my view anyway, it's got to be a two-pronged approach. So definitely women should learn how to defend themselves and upskill themselves and be confident and all the rest of it and there is no doubt that those pricks out there should be being held accountable. I mean the problem is that they are usually not. (Community centre manager, women's course)*

This view was reiterated strongly by a court worker familiar also with the realities of family violence:

*Okay, it is all very well the feminists and the handwringers saying it is up to men. Well guess what? We have been trying that now and it does not work. I get so mad about it. If I put the emphasis on women as non-victims, I am somehow being anti-feminist? Crap. What I am saying is we can protect – the only person at the end of the day that is responsible for our safety, is us.*

*And men. Look, by all means do anti-violence courses. From what I can work out they are a complete waste of utter time. And what I am saying, is do not turn it around on me, cos I tell you what, I am many things, but I'm no anti-woman. I have spent my entire life fighting for women, but what we have to do is start taking control of our own lives. (Criminal justice stakeholder, women's courses)*

For these reasons many of those interviewed argued that they wanted to see the WSDN-WT course made available much more widely to girls and women in New Zealand.

*It was good, it was a really good course, I would recommend it to anybody. Anybody, every female should go on it. (Māori focus group participant, womens course)*

Also identified as important by some was the need to challenge the very use of the word "victim" which, by its very nature, can be disempowering and render invisible the strength and resilience of those who have survived family and sexual violence:

*Honest to god, you go to court there's about 150,000 people that are trying to help victims. Victims, victims, victims, but that's because everybody looks upon them as being victims. What I'm saying is, "Stop them being fekking victims". Wouldn't it be nice to get at the other end and look at why so many of our women are victims? See, I don't even like the word.*

*And a lot of these women – I get on to the rant bit – a lot of these women are actually, you know, you get a woman that's been raped and has managed to*

*get through her life without having a complete bloody nervous breakdown, following childhood abuse, has managed to hold down a job, not become a chronic alcoholic and then manage to get up and give evidence against the perpetrator, they're bloody heroes....*

*I just have this inherent belief in the strength of women and I just think that we've got more hope if we tap into that than rely upon men to change.*  
(Criminal justice stakeholder, women's courses)

Another WSDN-WT teacher summed up her view concisely:

*We need this now. We can't be waiting around for men to lift their game. This is immediate and it needs action now.* (WSDN-WT teacher)

### 9.4 What if the funding is cut?

To ascertain the value of the self defence course, a hypothetical issue raised with many we interviewed involved asking what their response would be if they heard that the funding for the WSDN-WT courses had been cut.

Some were not surprised at this question, knowing from previous experience that this group had faced major funding crises in the past:

*I remember when that happened once before and I was asked to write something, and I did. We would do all we could to support the organisation, to keep it going.* (School head of department, Girls Years 10-12)

Some were anxious that, being from Wellington, we knew something they didn't and the courses were in jeopardy – we hastened to assure them this was not so. The responses to our question all reflected sadness that one of the best programmes on offer might be axed, and that it filled a unique place in both schools and community centre programmes.

*We would object; we would make it clear to the funders that we need this course.* (School principal, Girls Years 7-8)

*It would be devastating. I think that you would be putting so many women at risk without even knowing that you're doing it. As I said, it's okay sitting there hammering this prevention but it's not enough and I'm not saying we have to teach all our girls to fight but we do need to teach them to protect themselves.*  
(Criminal justice stakeholder, women's courses)

Some found it hard to envisage the potential loss of a clearly prized programme:

*We would try to find other programmes but they wouldn't fit, like I said, they wouldn't fit us as well as what this one does.* (School deputy principal, Girls Years 7-8)

Another said they were already anxious that a rise in the decile rating of their school might result in their not being one of those selected to have the Ministry of Social Development funded course offered. Some teachers clearly hoped that the "what about the boys" refrain would not be used against their offering courses for girls, again stressing the need for a separate programme for boys to be developed.

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Teachers from schools with very low decile ratings expressed concern that the costs of the girls' courses might be transferred to families, whanau or caregivers. As one principal observed, their school is in an area so poor that they cannot ask the parents even for school fees, so trying to pass the cost on would be:

*...a joke...and if you go knocking on their door, it's just another humiliation.*  
(School principal, Girls Years 7-8)

Another principal briefly entertained the idea of the school paying because they considered it so important, then proposed a different strategy:

*I tend to be a person who lobbies, so like if something was removed, that we thought was worthwhile, I think rather than just saying, "Well, we'll pay for it", I'd actually go back and actually get some rationalisation as to, "Why are you withdrawing it?"* (School principal, Girls Years 3-4)

Concern was raised that in the current economic climate there might be a push to put a contract for such services out for contestable bidding, and anxiety that if this happened, would WSDN-WT lose out?

*From my experience – I don't know what the Ministry of Social Development is like, but if it's like the Ministry of Education – government departments often, it tends to be those with the lowest quote win. Not necessarily those with the best service win, so that would be a worry, in as much as like, I mean, I'm all for things to be contestable, don't get me wrong, as long as it is done on not just a cost basis but a quality basis.* (School principal, Girls Years 3-4)

Another teacher was worried that the decision to offer such courses might get left to individual teachers and some girls would miss out:

*There are lots of things that we have to do as teachers and it would be great to be able to fit this into our programme but if we didn't have to, many teachers probably wouldn't put it in. And then that would be a real shame because in my head it's about keeping our young people safe and empowering them with the right things that they need to have to be able to cope and handle with the craziness of life, and I think it would be a real shame not to have it in a school or not to give the kids a taste of something that can better them as a person and help them as a person.* (School teacher, Girls Years 7-8)

What was clearly appreciated was that the WSDN-WT teachers were currently able to contact the school to say they had the funding to teach x number of girls and would they be interested, thereby removing a large part of the organisational burden from the schools.

The funding uncertainty loomed large for the WSDN-WT teachers themselves. Those we interviewed all knew their funding position was not secure, and that funding levels were so low that all of them needed to subsidise the costs of providing the current courses, buying equipment, providing transport and other resources out of their own pockets. This was nothing new – the organisation, and indirectly the Government, depends on the passionate commitment and generosity of these women to maintain the programme. As noted by the chairperson:

*It's probably 30 years since we started getting funding, 27 years since we ran the first training camp. We got \$400 from the Community Health Initiatives*

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*Fund in about 1987 and it was like gold. It was \$400, it was just ridiculous. And no, we've not been secure. I think the most secure we were was when we got a three year contract at some point after we did the pilot, probably 2007. (WSDN-WT chairperson)*

In 2011 the funding for the programme was suddenly axed completely, but the level of protest from schools and community groups meant they successfully managed to get it reinstated.

*And then the next two years was the height of insecurity because there was no funding line at all, they just funded us out of the sweepings. They found left over bits and pieces of funding in this corner and that corner and gave it back to us.*

*And then we got a three year contract in 2013, but our funding had previously been \$377,000 plus GST, and then in 2011 they cancelled it. Then we got back the \$377,000 in sweepings, and then \$377,000 in sweepings again in 2012. In 2013 in May, they rang up and said, "Oh good news, you're going to get a three year contract at \$170,000 a year", which of course was a massive cut from \$377,000. (WSDN-WT chairperson)*

A week of protests and exposure via *Campbell Live* (on TV3) saw the funding increased to \$350,000, still less than previously.

*That funding pays for the Girls' Self Defence Project, and we reach about 8,000 girls a year from that funding. This includes paying for all the direct course costs such as self defence teacher payment and travel costs and associated course costs such as resources, printing of evaluation forms and reminder posters for the girls. It has to pay for professional development for the self defence teachers. It has to also cover the costs of administering the Project, including the administration staff's salary and office costs. \$350,000 annually doesn't actually meet all these costs so we have been chewing into our reserves. We can't continue to do this, so will have to cut the number of courses we can teach. We don't want to do that because that means reaching fewer girls. It also means risking losing our teachers as they can't keep going if they don't get enough paid work. (WSDN-WT chairperson)*

One possibility for extending the reach of the programme could come from making the course available on a user pays basis, an option plausibly resisted by those involved in WSDN-WT:

*If we make the course user pays, which is an option to having a funded course, then the kids from the lower socio economic families are the ones who are going to be the first to miss out.... It also gives the children from the families where they might not want those girls going to a self defence course an easy way to keep them out of it, the families where they want the secrets kept. We just don't want there to be any barriers to the girls who might most benefit from this, and you can't tell from the outside who those girls are. (WSDN-WT chairperson)*

While the Girls' Self Defence Project is funded from Ministry of Social Development, WSDN-WT receives Ministry of Justice money of \$30,000 per year to run the courses

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for women, and the limited and uncertain funding issue here was commented on by support workers in the field.

*If you try to save that few dollars by not wanting to fund these kinds of courses, the impact to the community, to the nation, to the families, to the young people, is extreme, it's got no comparison. (Migrant/refugee support worker, women's courses)*

This was a frequently expressed perspective, with another community worker pointing out the financial costs of family violence:

*We know how that works, women and children who are living with domestic violence, the cost that it is to our society. What are we talking, \$5.8 billion at the moment? Putting that money, to me, in a lot earlier and at that baseline is going to potentially save those billions up the line. (Women's refuge manager, courses)*

Others felt it would be ridiculous to not expand the funding for WSDN-WT when what they were delivering was of such high quality:

*You get an organisation, you get people trained, you get the knowledge there, you get the systems there and when they disappear, it takes so much effort to get them going again it almost becomes cheaper to keep them going than it is to keep reinventing them.*

*The cost to everybody of reinventing these things once they've been pulled apart is just huge and it's the people loss. Because once you have people who are trained and are committed and always do more work than they're ever paid for, you lose them. We lose them collectively and that's not a good thing. Because you want people who are experienced and committed and it has to be more than just a job. You don't do this work because of the money. You never do. (Criminal justice stakeholder, women's courses)*

One of the women who participated in a WSDN-WT course reflected on how her life may have gone down a different track had she been able to do such a course as a girl:

*I think if the government decided they were going to stop the funding for these courses, that would be a shame. I think it would be absolutely letting women down in New Zealand and the teenage girls in New Zealand right down, because we need them.*

*If I had learnt (earlier) what I had learnt in the last two years, I wouldn't have been a survivor of childhood abuse. I would have been able to learn. If I had the knowledge I've got now when I went to school, I would have been able to stop my family from doing what they did to me as a child and what men have done to me since I've been an adult. But there were no such things back then. You just shut your mouth and put up with everything. (Participant, women's course)*

This woman was in her fifties, and suffering a range of disabilities resulting from the abuse she had been subjected to, before she was finally referred to a WSDN-WT course. The impact was immediate and dramatic, resulting in her going home and standing up to her abuser, ultimately escaping his control.

The very fact that government funding for these courses might not be secure produced a cynical response from one commentator:

*I think it's an anti-feminist thing. I really do think there's almost a bias against the idea of women being strong. (Criminal justice stakeholder, women's courses)*

Another woman we interviewed asserted:

*I think the funders need to know that this is valued and it does make long lasting differences. I know it certainly has for my child and I believe that it would, in one way, it impacts everybody differently, but if they've walked away with one small, new piece of knowledge that they are going to have for ever, then that's long lasting. (Participant, women's course)*

A women's refuge manager familiar with the impacts of family violence and child abuse suggested:

*I'd like to see them (Government) looking not just at the next three years but actually at the next 20, 30, 50 years and the changes that we can make, the outcomes we can have during that time, instead of, "Okay, well, let's do this wee project and in three years' time that will make us look really good".*

*I mean, they only need to look at our statistics and our appalling rates compared to the rest of the world. You know, they need to put money in for the safety first of all for women and children but really safety for everyone in our society. Take a pay cut! (Women's refuge manager, women's course)*

This was not the only message we were asked to take back to Wellington with us – a common request is well-summarised in the words of one school guidance counsellor:

*Don't you dare cut the funding on this programme! (School guidance counsellor, Girls Years 10-12)*

### 9.5 What about the boys?

WSDN-WT is, as the name suggests, an organisation committed to advancing gender equality and preventing violence against women and girls. It is funded to provide courses exclusively for girls and women. Not surprisingly, in schools, one of the main questions raised about the girls receiving self defence training was, "what about the boys?" The WSDN-WT teachers had encountered some teachers, especially male, who objected to the girls-only approach. Often, we heard in the schools, it was the boys themselves raising this question with teachers and principals.

*Well, the boys complain bitterly that they should have a self defence course too.... Every year the boys come to me and say, "It's not fair (Principal). Why are the girls getting self defence and we aren't?" (School principal, Girls Years 7-8)*

Different schools managed this issue in varying ways. A few simply had the boys doing their usual coursework while the girls were away doing the WSDN-WT course, or took them out to play games.

Some schools tried to organise something a bit different for the boys.

*So in the past we've had a guy come in.... he's a New Zealand national representative at wrestling, and he's come in, and when the girls have been at self defence the boys have gone and done wrestling with him in the gym. (School teacher, Girls Years 7-8)*

Others felt there was no real problem, and were adamant that this marked a rare and important opportunity for the girls to have space on their own. It was also something for girls to look forward to when they reached a certain class, even though younger girls might complain:

*And of course the Year 3 girls, they're like: "Oh can't we do it too?" And I remember one year, I said to (WSDN-WT teacher)... Then I talked about it with our principal and we thought, "You know what – no, it's something for them to look forward to". It's something a bit special. There's certain things you get to do in certain years, and that's part of life. And if the boys have said it's not fair, well guess what? Life's not fair. You know, there's things you might do because they're a good thing for you and this is something for the girls. It's a good thing for them. (School teacher, Girls Years 3-4)*

In a few cases the teachers tried to set up something that was a bit "special", with some arranging for male role models to come in – one teacher said even getting a rugby or other sporting hero in to read stories could inspire boys to improve their literacy. One school with a high Māori population said they had introduced a taiaha-type programme for the boys to do at the same time. Another said:

*What we often do is we'll run something concurrently for our boys through our Police Education Officer. So he might do something with them about "what it is to be a strong boy", type of thing, not an official programme, or anything, yeah, just try and do something with them. (School principal, Girls Years 3-4)*

Every teacher or guidance counsellor we discussed this issue with, representing ten of the 12 schools surveyed, believed "something" parallel was needed for the boys. However, when asked if they thought the existing WSDN-WT course could or should be extended to include boys, most were emphatic in their opposition to this approach.

*The boys are more interested in saying, "Oh, why can't we do it?" but I think to be fair to the girls, this is about empowering girls in being assertive and collectively strong as a group. And I think once you put some boys in - boys tend to be a bit more verbally dominant anyway – I think what you'd find is that your quieter girls would shuffle right to the back, would say nothing, maybe wouldn't take part in the same way they would. Having something different for boys would be good, but I don't think with them. (School principal, Girls Years 3-4)*

Most teachers considered it would be counter-productive to have a combined class because of the nature of the material covered and the discussions held. Comments included:

*The boys will snigger and the girls will clam up. (School principal, Girls Years 3-4)*



*I think they're (girls) more likely to get more out of it when they're not intimidated by the presence of boys. And because our Year 4 girls are not all from one class, so they're from across different classes. So they come together in a special time. The games they do to begin with are quite bonding and it's about gaining trust. I think if you're dealing with something that's not nice, it's the best possible way to talk about it. It might turn a bit silly with boys. (School teacher, Girls Years 3-4)*

This perspective was shared by the WSDN-WT teachers also. For example, when asked if a combined approach might be possible, one spelt it out very clearly based on her years of teaching experience:

*It wouldn't work. It wouldn't work because the extremes of the gender stereotypes would play out in the class, and you're not going to get boys talking about any abuse issues or even thinking about abuse issues. You're going to get them playing the strong male and you're going to get girls playing pathetic. You're not going to get them kicking and punching hard. It's not going to work. (WSDN-WT teacher)*

Two teachers did suggest, with some caution, that maybe there might be parts of the course that could be done jointly, but were also emphatic that it would not work for the whole course.

*I don't think it would be an issue at all with perhaps the physical stuff. When it's the talking stuff though, I think you would probably want to stick with girls - they feel that sometimes they could say more and feel comfortable saying more. (School teacher, Girls Years 7-8)*

WSDN-WT teachers, however, along with many other school teachers, believed on the basis of their observations and experience that even the physical components of the course would be best taught separately. Having boys present was likely to reinforce gender stereotypes and increase girls' self-consciousness.

Some school teachers sought to find other ways of including the boys. In at least one school, for example, the teacher we spoke with said she involved the girls themselves in taking some of the information they had received back to the boys.

*If boys grow up in violent households then that's their default behaviour. When things get tough, they don't know other options. Hearing about what's OK and not OK from the girls in the class is more effective than hearing it from some white, middle class female teacher – which is what we mostly are! (School principal, Girls Years 3-4)*

Another also said she used the opportunity to raise the boys' awareness,

*For my class I said, "It's really important, boys, that girls at this age, they find it really hard to perhaps use their voice and to share how they're feeling about things and sometimes they're actually more vulnerable than perhaps you are as a male in a situation that is unsafe." So I had a quick chat about what could be an unsafe situation, such as if you're with a group of friends and somebody older comes along and things like that. So we had some good discussion around that. (School teacher, Girls Years 7-8)*

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The overwhelming consensus was that the WSDN-WT course, as currently offered, was ideal for the girls and should not be tampered with, other than to be extended to enable more girls to do it and/or have refresher courses for older pupils.

*Don't use that argument to cut making it available for the girls, consider whether there might be something equivalent for boys. (School guidance counsellor, Girls Years 10-12)*

The major change identified was for a parallel course for boys to be developed preferably led and taught by appropriate men who would model and promote good communication skills and challenge notions of male bravado and dominance, supporting some of the comments raised in section 9.3. This was considered to be especially important for Years 7-8 pupils in terms of their entering adolescence, starting to engage with their own gender identity, and so forth.

*Yeah, well at the end of the day the perpetrators of most of the violence towards women are men, so at some point we should be teaching our boys, how do we treat the ladies or the women in our lives, because somehow you've got to break that – it's good, this is good, but it's still ambulance-at-the-bottom-of-the-cliff stuff in as much as you're teaching girls how to defend themselves when they get into a situation where they're feeling threatened. If we could actually teach our boys not to put girls in threatening situations.... (School principal, Girls Years 3-4)*

Several teachers felt that some boys might benefit from self defence classes also, given bullying behaviours against smaller or different boys.

Community workers who addressed this issue also considered there to be a strong need for programmes targeting men and boys:

*My view is it should be men teaching men. Unfortunately the problem with that is there's not a lot of men doing that work at the moment and I think if they could do that, because that's also the same as family violence, it's really difficult to get men to work in the area. One, there's not a lot of money, two, there's not a lot of kudos in doing that work, so whereas ideally I'd like to see that men actually form a kind of a collaboration with Wāhine Toa so that they can do that work. (Criminal justice stakeholder, women's courses)*

Many of the self defence teachers welcomed the idea of a course designed specifically to meet boys' needs:

*Boys need an equivalent comprehensive course, preferably designed and taught by men for boys covering the issues that are specific to boys growing up in New Zealand society. That means a course that covers sensitive issues, emotions, gender stereotypes and the role they play in child safety, as well as kicks and punches. Boys' courses need to be equally funded by government. (WSDN-WT teacher)*

## 9.6 Complaints, criticisms and looking to the future

As independent researchers conducting this evaluation, we strove to provide all those we interviewed with space and encouragement to voice any complaints or criticisms they might have about the WSDN-WT courses. Accordingly, in every interview or focus group we asked, often more than once, if there had ever been any criticisms of the course or the self defence teachers, had parents ever complained to schools, or participants expressed dissatisfaction with any aspect of the course? Our respondents often ended up apologising that they could think of nothing negative to say.

In the schools we asked if any girls or parents or teachers had raised complaints, with the response typically being:

*No, never, from no-one at all.* (School principal, Girls Years 3-4)

Some teachers remarked how unusual it was since most other programmes always attracted at least some dissent or criticism. They had never had parents withdraw a child from this course; said one:

*You know, we haven't, and that's really interesting because I've been waiting for it. There's usually one or two that will not want their daughter talking about perhaps the sexual abuse or whatever. It surprises me, because we have kids taken out of health classes when sexual, you know, relationships and things, topics come up. They'll get pulled out because the parents won't give permission.* (School head of department, Girls Years 10-12)

The only complaint they had ever received, said some, was from teachers and pupils upset that they had missed out on going to the course, having heard how good it was!

One of the WSDN-WT teachers said she had experienced a parent complaining once, and it unfortunately led to all the girls at that school missing out:

*I've had a school stop running the courses because a parent decided they didn't like the content. There was too much sexual stuff. Yes, I mentioned rape, I always do, why would you not when you're speaking about sexual violence?* (WSDN-WT teacher)

In her more than eight years of teaching the course, this was the only complaint received:

*I've only had one school who has said, "The course needs to be shorter and only teaching them the kicks and punches", so they've stopped. This is the first year they haven't run a course in the time I've been teaching.... and it's actually in an area that's quite dangerous. Like the college is quite well known for fighting and girl-bullying and stuff like that, so those girls could do with that course.* (WSDN-WT teacher)

Similarly positive responses were received about the courses for women. For example, when we asked women if there was anything negative that they experienced on the course, or anything difficult, the typical response was as follows:

*No.*

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INT: No?

*No, nothing. Absolutely nothing. No. I can only ... I'm sorry but no.* (Focus group participants, women's course)

When we told other women that we wanted to talk about the positives and negatives associated with doing the course, participants quickly chimed in:

*I can only give positives.*

INT: You can only give positives?

*Positives, no negatives, no.* (Focus group participant, women's course)

Probing did elicit mention of two issues, surprisingly few given how many courses have been offered over so many years in so many areas of the country. The details below demonstrate that in both cases the schools were impressed by WSDN-WT's responses to the concerns raised.

The first arose in the context of two young girls being uncomfortable with the self defence teacher using real words for human body parts. The school teacher told us:

*I think it was a cultural misunderstanding when the specific words were used for body parts. That a couple of girls, and they were both from the same cultural background, who were obviously uncomfortable with it and they wrote on their little self-assessment sheet (that the girls do) that the teacher used "dirty words".* (School teacher, Girls Years 3-4)

The offending words were the terms 'penis' and 'vagina'. The WSDN-WT self defence teacher read the evaluations that night and let the girls' teacher know next day that there may be an issue, thereby allowing the school to decide whether and how to follow it up. The teacher concerned said:

*We didn't have the parents complain but we approached them just to make sure they understood that it was within an appropriate context.... Their response was fine, they were fine with that.* (School teacher, Girls Years 3-4)

The other complaint arose when a WSDN-WT teacher made culturally insensitive remarks to a class of girls she was teaching. While describing how well the self defence courses were now being provided, and how good the current WSDN-WT teacher was, the principal did refer to this incident which had drawn complaints from some teachers and students in the Māori immersion classes.

When asked if she was pleased with how this complaint was responded to. she said:

*Absolutely. We felt that we were listened to, we felt that it was dealt with really well, and furthermore we were more than happy that a replacement was put in.* (School principal, Girls Years 7-8)

She commended in particular the quick and respectful way the chairperson and the organisation responded, and their willingness to investigate the complaint and terminate that teacher's employment upon realising the allegations could be substantiated. Our subsequent interview with the WSDN-WT chairperson revealed that this was the single formal complaint received in twenty years of delivering Girls'

Self Defence Project courses to thousands of girls each year, an impressive statistic when you consider the sensitive nature of so much of the course.

In the absence of complaints and criticisms, we persisted by asking if there were any changes or improvements those interviewed would make to the existing courses and delivery. Again, apart from urging more funding to enable the courses to be expanded and offered more widely, relatively few such recommendations were made, those that were are discussed next.

The following suggestions were made during our interviews about how the teachers, women, support workers and other stakeholders would like to see the WSDN-WT courses develop in the future:

- extend the length of some courses;
- increase the number of courses in schools and in the community for women;
- offer mother and daughter courses;
- expand delivery to other vulnerable groups;
- have more explicit links to the school curriculum; and
- be better funded and resourced.

### **Extend the length of some courses**

Most of those interviewed, as noted earlier (see section 8.1) considered the current length of the WSDN-WT courses was sufficient and they worked well as presented. Also voiced, however, was a suggestion for extending course length for some of the Isolation to Empowerment courses for women. For example, one participant urged:

*Maybe a wee bit more in depth, because a lot of women still don't really understand why we have to do this for ourselves. (Participant, women's course)*

This comment endorses the existing course content while acknowledging the struggles many women face believing in their right to live free from violence.

### **Increase the number of courses**

The ways in which the WSDN-WT courses are provided to girls of different ages creates some possibility that individual girls may do the course in Years 3-4, for example, then again in Years 7-8 or Years 10-12. There was general consensus that such an eventuality could only be positive, with many teachers saying that one way to improve the programme would be to provide refresher courses for the girls. A high school teacher recounted how she had told her Year 12 class two researchers were wanting to know how they found the course and the immediate response from them was to ask if they could do it all over again - *they said what they really would like is follow up each year. (School head of department, Girls Years 10-12)*

Young women who did the WSDN-WT course at a teen parent unit also said they would do it again if they could, with one adding that she had already done it twice:

*If I was here next year, I would do it again.... I'd be able to remember more things, build up more confidence.* (Participant, women's course)

A principal from a primary school that went to Year 8 said she could see significant advantages when the girls who had done the course at Years 3-4 could receive it again, and was relieved they would have this opportunity. She observed:

*It's incredibly useful, since at each of the different ages they're vulnerable in different ways.* (School principal, Girls Years 7-8)

She was aware that the programme itself was adapted specifically for each group in order to address the different scenarios each age group might encounter, while reviewing the basics. A high school teacher also commented on the need for different courses at different ages, saying that the girls have changed considerably by the time they approach school leaving age:

*They have a different mentality. They've grown up a little bit. They've kind of probably interacted with different people and in some cases those people are less desirable. Because they're teenagers they're a bit more risky, I suppose, and so they're interacting with those types of people. And so they're seeing that, "Hmm, there are situations where I could be unsafe".* (School head of department, Girls Years 10-12)

Some of the women course participants we interviewed had done the course more than once and all felt they benefitted greatly from the opportunity to do so. One woman participant, for example, said:

*I went the year before and then I went again the following year because it was so good. I enjoyed it so I went back again.... when I first went the first time it sort of went in but it didn't stick, so the second time I knew what was coming up and really learnt from it, really, really learnt.* (Participant, women's course)

Women in a Māori focus group spoke of their desire to repeat the course, with one saying:

*I'm delighted to have done the course and I would go back and do another one, a refresher.* (Focus group participant, women's course)

Her friend in the same group added: *I'd go too, it would be my third time.* (Focus group participant, women's course)

Another woman in a different context expressed it this way:

*If another self defence came up, I'd probably go back and do it, because it's just so – each time you go – the first time is, like, "huh, I can't do any of this", and the second time you go it's like, "piece of cake". So the third time I go it will be a whole cake.* (Participant, women's course)

### **Offer mother and daughter courses**

Several times throughout this research the question of how to address intergenerational patterns of abuse was raised, with some commentators considering there may be advantages teaching mothers and daughters self defence together. In a study conducted recently of a self defence course offered jointly by WSDN-WT and

National Women's Refuge to Refuge clients, it emerged that sometimes two or even three generations of females from the same family had turned up to take the course (Mossman & Jordan, 2013). This constituted a powerful learning environment for the women, and was recognised as potentially beneficial by some of the teachers and community workers we interviewed also.

A court worker, for example, spoke of witnessing situations of inter-generational violence, saying:

*It's like the pot calling the kettle black. Mum saying, "You need to go do this self defence programme," and daughter going, "Well, hello?" and that's the only suggestion.... it would be good to have something like that, I said, because I'm noticing more and more girls coming through that are sexually assaulted and it's just the basics of self-esteem, confidence, positive female role models and knowing how to have the confidence to get themselves out of a tricky situation. (Criminal justice stakeholder, women's courses)*

Within the school context occasional mention was made of how educating the girls sometimes may have even enabled changes within the wider family. One principal commented:

*I think it might be a way of empowering women through their daughters, and it does happen sometimes. I know of an instance here, where some of the girls – there's a family of nine of them actually, two boys and seven girls - some of those girls will have been through the programme here, they're sort of secondary age now, but I know that Dad – they're a Pasifika family - and Dad was quite strong with Mum in physical terms and then Mum decided to make a stand and leave, and then she got cold-feet of course, and so decided to go back. But it was her daughters, they wouldn't let her go back, and they were of an age range between 12 and about 20, these five girls and they said, "You're not going back". And then she said "Well fair enough", and so she was able to do it, because she said, "I'll do it for my girls, if I'm not doing it for me". So once again, whether you can attribute that to probably three of those five girls have been through the programme, I mean it's anecdotal.... (School principal, Girls Years 3-4)*

A support worker experienced in working with families in the court context said she was a firm believer in mother and daughter courses, adding:

*...with a mother and daughter, the daughter often shows what the mother needs and the mother's shown what the daughter needs and they do, they do talk along those lines and it means that both of them are on the same page at the same time. (Criminal justice stakeholder, women's courses)*

She recounted an example where three girls who did the WSDN-WT course supported their mother in finally leaving her abusive partner. For seven years she tried to encourage positive change in this situation and encouraged the girls to go on the self defence course.

*My philosophy of sending the kids along there is, I honestly sat there and I thought, "Well, if Mum's not gonna stand up for them, at least we need to teach these girls to," because at the end of the day, he had situations where he had*

*their hands around their throat, he had situations that he swing them around by the hair, like, that's pretty intensive stuff.*

*I don't want these girls dead as a result. It's okay saying to them, "Run downstairs and get the phone and ring the police." Doesn't always happen when you go into that fight or flight mode and they just go into the flight and freeze and it's like, "Oh, that's it." So I thought at least if they could fight back, at least if they could get his hands off their throat, things like that, it gives them that chance.*

*Sometimes our safety plans are great. We teach them get out of the house, protect yourself, do all that kind of stuff, but it's about knowing that you have the confidence to protect yourself if it does go to the next level. (Criminal justice stakeholder, women's courses)*

Several participants on the women's courses commented that they too would have welcomed the opportunity to do such a course with their daughter.

*Personally I think that would be an amazing idea, not for all, obviously, but as a mum with a 17 year old daughter it's certainly something I'd definitely love to do with my daughter.... I think it would have been really cool for me, it would have been cool to have a letter to say, "Your daughter's going to be doing the six week self defence course with (School), this is for all year 10 and 12 students, and we're offering the same course to mums on a Saturday." (Participant, women's course)*

Another told us she had taken her eldest granddaughter with her on the course she did, after worrying about her safety working late at night in a video shop.

One of the WSDN-WT teachers spoke about a course she taught with women through the Māori Women's Refuge. She said it was fantastic sometimes seeing three generations come together, with the grandmothers often being accorded the mana and respect.

*They (grandmothers) were the stronger ones. They were the ones that were saying, "Come on, get up there", and, "Do this", and they were the ones that were encouraging them to, "Come on, harder, stronger." And I think it was more they just didn't want to see their, particularly the mokopuna, they did not want to see them being hurt and having to go through, yeah, the violence that the mother may have been through. They just wanted that all to stop. (WSDN-WT teacher)*

This was also observed in relation to the courses offered to migrant women, who would often want their teenage daughters to do the course too, believing:

*I have got a daughter, I have got to teach her how to protect herself and I also need to be able to protect her just in case something happens. (Migrant/refugee support worker, women's courses).*

### **Expand delivery to other vulnerable groups**

During interviews, reference was made to other vulnerable groups who might benefit from targeted courses:



- older women; and
- year 13 school students and first year university women.

### **Older women**

Several times during our interviews with key stakeholders in the community, mention was made of how the WSDN-WT courses had impacted very positively on older women participants. While statistically this group may not emerge as an at-risk group, observers reported very marked benefits for older women from all sectors, including Māori and migrant/refugee women.

*We hear a lot of migrant women are scared to go to an ATM, especially the senior citizens, because they are so scared that somebody will come from behind.... you might be walking along and somebody, one or two, will come and push you and you fall over and then they snatch your bag.*  
(Migrant/refugee support worker, women's courses)

An older women who participated in a WSDN-WT course recounted how useful it was for women of her age generally:

*Listening to a lot of the things that they suggested: How to protect yourself, going to the supermarket, getting into your car, walking through a group of people, was so valuable. And they made us think, because I hadn't thought about how to carry my keys or anything at all and so I was more vulnerable.*  
(Participant, women's course)

A refuge manager described how two staff members of very different ages both loved doing the course:

*The older one, she loved the learning to speak out, to yell, to do whatever. She hadn't actually experienced any domestic or sexual violence, so for her the physical maybe didn't have such an impact, but the calling out had a huge impact for her.*

*And the younger one just loved the whole lot. She really enjoyed it. She found it fantastic.* (Women's refuge manager, women's courses)

While there was agreement regarding the benefits for older women doing the course, not everyone had the same views as to whether these should be separate courses or not. Some definitely considered mixed age groups to be preferable:

*I don't like being segregated. I think mixed is better because you learn different things, you see different things. You get a group of 60 plus - they'll all sit down and muck around!* (Focus group participant, women's course)

Others spoke of the benefits for some older women of having a course tailored to their physical abilities, or where the WSDN-WT teacher had space to be adaptive, such as in the seniors' class for migrant and refugee women (already mentioned in section 8.8) where even those who needed to sit in a chair throughout were nevertheless encouraged to learn self defence moves they could use if necessary.

Comments were also made by WSDN-WT teachers about how impressed they had often been at the ways in which older women demonstrated their abilities to do and enjoy the course.

*There was an 82 year old - her fist, she was just so strong! But she didn't know she could do that either, until she did the course. (WSDN-WT teacher)*

### **Year 13 school students and first year university women**

Some school teachers and guidance counsellors suggested it would be useful to have a course for older girls available. The high schools typically have year 10 students undertake the course, but several teachers considered older girls would benefit from a course tailored to their age group. A guidance counsellor had asked pupils, in advance of our coming, for their views:

*One of their comments is, "Look, if only we could have a refresher or something slightly more upskilled for Year 12s and Year 13s" Things that possibly could include would be things like "date rape" and, there's a whole other chunk in there which could come under the broader umbrella of self defence, not just learning the moves. (School guidance counsellor, Girls Years 10-12)*

This suggestion reinforces findings from recent research that clearly shows how vulnerable young women starting university are, and the elevated risks they face of becoming victims of sexual violence (Keene, 2015). This risk can be further enhanced for those living in halls of residence, a factor some universities are now giving greater consideration to as part of their recognised responsibilities for ensuring student safety and well-being.

A refuge manager also emphasised the risks faced by young women of this age when commenting:

*I think young women entering the workforce are most at risk, just because of their lifestyle and their confidence.... They've got money and they go out partying... and that's most likely when men will be in a situation that they will do something like that. (Women's refuge manager, women's courses)*

### **Have more explicit links to the school curriculum**

The 2007 New Zealand Curriculum Framework is the foundation policy document for teaching and learning in New Zealand schools. It outlines a range of values to be encouraged in students, five key competencies and eight essential areas for learning. The focus of the different learning objectives varies according to school year and level of learning of the students. The importance of the framework was clearly evident amongst those we interviewed.

*So everything that we do in our school, we're constantly focusing in on these competencies. (School principal, Girls Years 3-4)*

Hence, it was perhaps no surprise that some teachers in schools felt it would be useful to have the WSDN-WT course linked more explicitly to learning outcomes and curriculum competencies. Teachers were adamant that the linkages were there with the self defence course frequently being related to at least three of the five competencies:

*So if we're doing the self defence what are the key competencies we're actually looking at here? So I think, thinking, managing self, and relating to others, those three things there are huge (School Principal, Girls Years 3-4)*

Other year-specific examples included:

*It's a natural link, isn't it? .... it fits in with our health and PE curriculum, and one aspect of that is about keeping yourself safe and making good choices and all that stuff. (School Principal, Girls Years 3-4)*

*Well I think it's very valuable. It's about keeping our kids safe really, it just adds onto this health programme. If you want to look at health it fits into a curriculum area, it fits nicely into health. And particularly at intermediate age it fits with just the stage of development the children are at. (School Principal, Girls Years 7-8)*

*It sort of dovetails quite nicely... In Year 9 in health we talk about bullying and we talk about assertiveness, and whatever we're teaching them in health it's all about themselves and keeping themselves and others safe, so it ties in with that, really... And then, you know, we do drugs and alcohol – well, we do alcohol in Year 9 and we do drugs in Year 10, and sex. So it's the same old thing, in consequences and things. (School teacher, Girls Years 10-12)*

WSDN-WT has been aware of the importance of linking learning outcomes from the self defence course to the curriculum framework, and have produced and provided schools with handouts. However, the individuals we spoke with were unaware of this document, instead stressing to us how useful it would be to have one available.

Some teachers spoke of it helping to justify the self defence course taking school time if the links were more obvious and how it could help them to reinforce the learnings later on.

*If it was woven into the New Zealand curriculum and the key competencies were threaded through it, it would be very helpful as justifying it under the educational umbrella. (School principal, Girls Years 7-8)*

*It's just integrated into what we're already doing and it enhances what we're doing rather than being just an add-on, or a one-off. Maybe people see it as a one-off. (School teacher, Girls Years 3-4)*

### **Be better funded and resourced**

The funding issue was raised earlier in this report (section 9.4), and is included here because some of those interviewed considered this to be a crucial issue for the future. Their concerns extended beyond anxieties that a lack of guaranteed future funding might limit girls' and women's access to the WSDN-WT courses to comments made regarding how the WSDN-WT teachers themselves were affected. For example, some course participants made comments indicating that the limited funding could be reflected in the quantity and condition of some of the equipment used.

The most obvious item noted was the mitts used in teaching the physical moves. The current policy is for the WSDN-WT teachers, as self-employed contractors, to pay for these themselves. In principle this sounds reasonable, but it became

increasingly clear to us as we conducted this study that the limited funding necessitates the work being significantly subsidised by all those involved. The fact that the self defence teachers were not adequately resourced became apparent to some course participants when they realised that the mitts they used were not indestructible. One remarked:

*Poor old (WSDN-WT'S) equipment could be, you know someone could think about funding her a bit of help because she chips out of her own pocket on that one. I said, "Oh, you poor bugger", because we destroyed them. True!*  
(Participant, women's course)

A participant on a different course commented in reference to the WSDN-WT teacher she had:

*Some of her equipment needs a wee bit of updating and she keeps apologising for that, but she can only do what she can do with the resources she's got.*  
(Participant, women's course)

One of the Māori WSDN-WT teachers pointed out that economic disparities often meant it was the Māori teachers in poorer areas in particular who might struggle with resourcing issues and equipment upkeep.

We were made aware of situations where, particularly in rural areas with high Māori populations, the self defence teachers would have to spend their own time and money collecting course participants since the latter were financially unable to arrange for their own transport – this was the only way some courses would proceed (see also section 8.8).

We should also note here that the WSDN-WT teachers themselves did not complain about this situation, although all admitted their work would be much easier should increased and especially guaranteed funding become available. Our own conclusion on this issue is a sense of bewilderment that a programme found to be operating so effectively over so many years should still be so under-funded.

### 9.7 Summary

Whilst conducting the research a number of challenging issues emerged which could be viewed as impacting on the delivery of self defence by WSDN-WT. These included:

- how to overcome inaccurate stereotypical views that self defence is like martial arts, that it might enhance fear levels, and that it could lead to victim blaming;
- how to ensure sufficient and consistent funding enabling professional development and forward planning; and
- addressing the 'gap' created for boys when delivering self defence to girls.

Exploring these issues with key stakeholders and course participants revealed unanimous support for the current WSDN-WT courses and a desire to see these better funded in future to guarantee course delivery. While the literature review raised the possibility of potentially negative outcomes such as victim blaming and fear enhancing effects, there was no support for such views evident in our research

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findings. What emerged instead were accounts indicating that the self defence teachers worked consciously to reduce fear and perceptions of self-vulnerability, and were careful to emphasise that being victimised was never the fault of the victim.

The following suggestions were made during our interviews about how the teachers, women, support workers and other key stakeholders would like to see the WSDN-WT courses develop in the future:

- extend the length of some courses;
- increase the number of courses in schools and in the community for women;
- offer mother and daughter courses;
- expand delivery to other vulnerable groups;
- have more explicit links to the school curriculum; and
- be better funded and resourced.

## 10 Concluding comments

The aim of this study was to provide an evaluation of the self defence courses provided by WSDN-WT through the Girls' Self Defence Project, funded by the Ministry of Social Development, and the Isolation to Empowerment women's courses funded by the Ministry of Justice. A mixed methods approach to data collection was adopted, providing a robust set of findings for analysis. The girls' courses offered in schools were evaluated through pre- and post-course surveys completed by the participants, as well as through interviews conducted with school teaching personnel. Feedback on the women's courses was obtained through a mix of surveys completed by participants, in combination with focus groups and interviews conducted with participants, self defence teachers, and key stakeholders in the community.

The overall report presents a compelling range of data, both quantitative and qualitative, that demonstrates clearly the extremely positive regard with which the WSDN-WT courses are held. Both the content and delivery were very highly rated, and school teachers and community stakeholders alike consistently praised the self defence teachers for their knowledge, skills, interactive abilities, cultural awareness, and sensitivity to sexual abuse and violence issues.

Moreover, the combined findings from the pre/post-questionnaires and the interviews consistently indicate the effectiveness of this programme in a range of critical areas related to violence prevention, public health, and community safety. These are difficult areas within which to make measurable differences, with the field of rape prevention, for example, yielding many good programme ideas but few that have been subjected to the rigorous analysis of this one. No single programme can stand alone, and rape prevention ideally would combine a linked set of initiatives that would be offered alongside appropriate courses targeting boys and men, as well as ethical bystander programmes.

Our experience as researchers was that this was an unusual evaluation experience in that the feedback we received was so consistently positive. It was difficult to find anyone with negative experiences of the WSDN-WT courses or teachers – all emerged as star players. So what are the reasons for this success?

We identified the following aspects as being of critical importance:

### **Organisational characteristics and capacity:**

- the incremental knowledge and wisdom arising from their historical involvement and willingness to learn from experience;
- bicultural structure to the organisation, with an important and active Māori caucus;
- a clearly articulated core philosophy shared by the teachers and uniting them in their understanding of gender violence and stereotypes and the importance of the preventive work they are engaged in;
- a democratic and collectivist approach to decision-making;
- respectful of diversity and development of a team of self defence teachers that provide a range of skills and experience to draw on;

- commitment to on-going evaluations of their courses and responsiveness to feedback from participants and stakeholders;
- willingness to incorporate new research and update materials used;
- close collaboration with partner agencies and networking with NGOs working with violence against women;
- the maintenance of strong networks within both NGO and government sectors; and
- the adherence of all involved in WSDN-WT to the self defence ethos: “*Never give up!*”

### **Recruitment and development of high quality self defence teachers through:**

- the rigorous selection process for teachers;
- the intensive training of teachers, with any not reaching their very high standards not being accredited;
- on-going training and supervision, including 6-monthly training hui;
- encouragement of self reflexivity and regular reviews and discussions regarding best practice; and
- attracting individuals with a passion and personal commitment that motivates those involved to give far more than they are recompensed for and subsidise the work.

### **Delivery of a quality self defence programme:**

- that reaches those most in need, with priority given to identifying and reaching girls and women most at risk from violence, abuse and re-victimisation, and those with limited alternative access to learning self defence;
- courses are tailored to meet the specific risks and needs of those attending
- where learning is delivered by an expert self defence teacher in a fun, engaging but effective manner that ensures self defence skills are accessible to all;
- delivered in a short intensive block using a mixture of activities and exercises both physical and verbal;
- self defence knowledge is presented within a feminist empowerment model; and
- courses are delivered in a safe environment by self defence teachers equipped to deal with triggering and disclosures if they occur.

These results provide strong evidence of the importance of a range of integrated elements being fundamental to this organisation’s success. Others can and do teach self defence, others can and do teach rape prevention. However, course participants and stakeholders in this study with knowledge of other such programmes routinely expressed criticisms of these, including misgivings about teacher professionalism and skills, concerns about the limited nature of course content, and anxieties regarding the management of triggering and disclosures. The strong collective that is WSDN-WT serves as a safe container for the teachers and the commitment to on-

going training and evaluations further promotes the safety these women provide for all course participants.

Such attributes have developed and been strengthened during the more than 28 years of course delivery they have provided to thousands of girls and women in New Zealand. This winning formula could not be easily replicated, given how many core components are linked to its success. It is self defence **and**, as many of those interviewed said, it is so much more than self defence. Our analysis suggests it is the empowerment strand running through the programme that increases so significantly its effectiveness. On that basis we would argue that strong consideration be given to the following:

- provide increased and guaranteed funding to expand further the reach and positive impacts of WSDN-WT courses for girls in schools so that both WSDN-WT and the schools can plan ahead certain of assured funding;
- provide sufficient funding to enable refresher courses to be offered;
- extend the vulnerable groups targeted for the Isolation to Empowerment women's courses to include older women generally, to assist with managing their fear of attack;
- extend the vulnerable groups also to include women university students, given increased understanding of the high prevalence of sexual assaults they experience;
- build on the collaborative partnership established with women's refuge to provide future courses specifically for women known to be living with violence;
- provide funding targeted specifically to support course provision for Māori women and girls, including translation of key resources into Māori and additional resourcing for Māori teachers in rural and low-income areas;
- pilot a specifically targeted course for mothers and daughters; and
- explore options for funding a parallel school programme for boys that would be of a matching calibre, provided by a separate group/organisation working in tandem with WSDN-WT. This course would ideally involve appropriately qualified men working with boys to address issues of bullying, gender stereotyping, negotiating consent and other prevention-related issues.

Providing skills to maximise the safety and security of all girls and women living in New Zealand should be a national priority if we are committed to creating a society characterised less by violence and more by gender equality. That is why courses teaching 'skills for safety' are currently so needed.

In reviewing the past and looking towards the future, WSDN-WT Chairperson, Alison Broad, raised the following question which we decided to reproduce here to end this report:

*Self defence has already become part of the fabric of New Zealand society, with an impact on the thousands of girls and women who have learned self defence, and also with a wider impact on attitudes, assumptions and expectations. Currently learning self defence is an opportunity available to many, but still not most, New Zealand girls, and only a relatively small*



## 10. Concluding comments

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*proportion of New Zealand women. What additional impact and transformative contribution could self defence have in preventing violence against girls and women if it became a majority experience? (WSDN-WT chairperson)*

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## **Appendix A: Information sheets and consent forms**

## Letter to principal

# Girls' Self Defence Project

Aotearoa / New Zealand



PO Box 1080  
INVERCARGILL 9840  
research@wsdn.org.nz

Dear Principal

We are delighted to advise that the Women's Self Defence Network-Wāhine Toa has received Government funding to enable a comprehensive evaluation of the value and impact of the Girls' Self Defence Project. We are privileged to be working with independent Victoria University Researchers, Associate Professor Jan Jordan and Dr Elaine Mossman. Your school has been selected for inclusion in this research to enable the evaluation information from your girls to be included in this significant research.

The research has been approved by Victoria University Human Ethics Committee and in accordance with Victoria University ethics processes it is important to advise the parents/caregivers of the purpose of the research and their daughters' involvement. Accordingly a letter for parents/caregivers is attached. We would ask that all the parents/caregivers of the girls participating receive this letter. The research will involve pre and post course evaluations in place of the usual Girls' Self Defence Project evaluation forms. There will be an opportunity for some schools to further contribute to the research through key informant interviews. This would be in addition to the regular school evaluation forms. Please advise the self defence teacher if your school would be keen to participate as a key informant.

All participation in the research is voluntary. All information from the girls will remain confidential and no school or girls will be identified in any research reports.

After the conclusion of the research a summary of the research findings will be emailed to your school for your information and for any interested parents of the girls participating.

We look forward to having the information from your school and its girls included in this research.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alison Broad', is written over a light purple background.

Alison Broad, Research Project Convenor  
On behalf of Women's Self Defence Network Wāhine Toa

### Researchers' Contact Details:

- Associate Professor Jan Jordan: (04) 463 5811; [jan.jordan@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:jan.jordan@vuw.ac.nz)
- Dr Elaine Mossman – (04) 478 5025; [Elaine.mossman@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Elaine.mossman@vuw.ac.nz)

## Letter to parents / caregivers

# Girls' Self Defence Project

Aotearoa / New Zealand



PO Box 1080  
INVERCARGILL 9840  
research@wsdn.org.nz

Dear Parents / Caregivers

Your daughter is invited to take part in a Girls' Self Defence Project course run by the Women's Self Defence Network-Wāhine Toa.

The self defence teacher is a qualified and experienced teacher of self defence to women and girls. She will help the girls learn ways of dealing with unsafe situations and threats to their safety.

This includes how to deal with acquaintance and stranger attacks including being followed, obscene phone calls, and safety issues relating to text and the internet. The course will also cover distinguishing between good and bad touching and strategies to deal with inappropriate touching. These skills will be reinforced through discussion and the development of verbal and physical skills to help the girls keep themselves and others (e.g. friends / siblings) safe.

This course offers each girl the opportunity to take a positive step to reinforce her ability to think confidently, speak strongly, and use her physical skills when necessary.

You can help by:

- encouraging her to talk about what she is learning
- encouraging her to talk about her own experiences
- helping her practice in order to build her confidence -remember this is not a competition - she is trying to learn some new skills.

The course will emphasise how she "thinks" her way out of a threatening situation, and how important it is to tell a safe adult if something happens.

The school supports the teaching of self defence to girls, however if you do not wish your daughter to participate in the course please contact the school.

### Evaluation

This year we are privileged to have independent researchers from Victoria University working with us to capture the value and impact of self defence for girls. This will involve

each girl completing a brief questionnaire at the start and completion of her course instead of our usual evaluation form. Participation in this is voluntary and will not affect your girl's ability to attend the self defence course (see slip at end of this letter). All information collected in the questionnaires will be confidential with no identification of individual girls in any resulting research report. The research report summary will, in due course, be available to you through the school. This research has been approved by the Victoria University Human Ethics Committee.

If you have any questions about the research please contact us or the researchers:

- Associate Professor Jan Jordan: (04) 463 5811; jan.jordan@vuw.ac.nz
- Dr Elaine Mossman – (04) 478 5025; Elaine.mossman@vuw.ac.nz

The self defence teacher will be available at the end of the course, should you have any questions or concerns.

Yours sincerely



Alison Broad, Research Project Convenor  
On behalf of Women's Self Defence Network Wāhine Toa

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### Option To Be Excluded From Programme Evaluation



I do NOT wish my daughter \_\_\_\_\_  
(name) to participate in this programme evaluation.

Parent/caregiver signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_





## **Information sheet - Key informant/stakeholder**

### **Skills for safety: research on the value and impact of girls' and women's self defence**

Women's Self Defence Network-Wāhine Toa (WSDN-WT) has been delivering self defence courses to girls and women around New Zealand for over 20 years. They have recently received Government funding to enable a comprehensive evaluation of their self defence courses. Researchers from Victoria University have been invited by WSDN-WT to lead this research. The research has been approved by the Victoria University Human Ethics Committee.

The purpose of this research is to understand and document the value and impact of self defence to the girls and women who participate in WSDN-WT self defence courses and to the communities they live in.

#### **Invitation**

You have been identified as someone who has first-hand experience and/or knowledge of the WSDN-WT courses and we would like to invite you to share your views on these courses with us.

#### **What's involved?**

Taking part will involve meeting with a researcher who will talk with you for 30-40 minutes on your experiences of these courses, their value and any impacts you are aware of on those who participate. We would like to record the interview but we will only do this with your permission. Once the research has been completed, we can send you a summary of the findings.

#### **Is this voluntary?**

Yes, participation is voluntary. You do not need to talk to us unless you want to. Also, you only have to answer the questions you feel comfortable about and you can end the interview at any time. You can withdraw any information provided before 31 August 2015 without having to give any reasons.

#### **Is it confidential?**

Yes, your responses will remain confidential to the research team with all findings aggregated to ensure responses remain anonymous. We may want to quote what you say to illustrate various points in research reports, however, your words will definitely not be attributed to you personally or in any way identify you, although, with your permission we may link the quote to your professional position (i.e. teacher, social worker, clinical supervisor, police officer).

#### **If you want to find out more?**

If you have any questions about the research, you can contact Associate Professor Jan Jordan 04 463 5811 [jan.jordan@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:jan.jordan@vuw.ac.nz) or Dr Elaine Mossman, 04 478 5025 [Elaine.mossman@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Elaine.mossman@vuw.ac.nz) . 5811 [jan.jordan@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:jan.jordan@vuw.ac.nz) or Dr Elaine Mossman, 04 478 5025 [Elaine.mossman@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Elaine.mossman@vuw.ac.nz) .



## **Information sheet - Focus group participants**

### **Skills for safety: research on the value and impact of girls' and women's self defence**

Women's Self Defence Network-Wāhine Toa (WSDN-WT) has been delivering self defence courses to girls and women around New Zealand for over 20 years. They have recently received Government funding to enable a comprehensive evaluation of their self defence courses. Researchers from Victoria University have been invited by WSDN-WT to lead this research. The research has been approved by the Victoria University Human Ethics Committee.

The purpose of this research is to understand and document the value and impact of self defence to the women who participate in WSDN-WT self defence courses and to the communities they live in.

#### **Invitation**

We would like to invite you to tell us about your experiences and views of the course. We have approached you because you have participated in one of these courses recently or in the past.

#### **What's involved?**

Taking part will involve joining a group discussion with the researchers and 4-5 other women who participated on this course with you. You will receive a \$30 koha as a token of appreciation for your time and sharing your views. Once the research has been completed, we can send you a summary of the findings.

#### **Is this voluntary?**

Yes, participation is voluntary. You do not need to talk to us unless you want to. Also, you only have to answer the questions you feel comfortable about and you can leave the focus group at any time.

#### **Is it confidential?**

Yes, your responses will remain confidential to the research team and the other members of the focus group (who will all agree to ground rules to keep information discussed confidential). We may want to quote what you say to illustrate various points in research reports, however, your words will definitely not be attributed to you personally or in any way identify you.

#### **If you want to find out more?**

If you have any questions about the research, you can contact Associate Professor Jan Jordan 04 463 5811 [jan.jordan@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:jan.jordan@vuw.ac.nz) or Dr Elaine Mossman, 04 478 5025 [Elaine.mossman@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Elaine.mossman@vuw.ac.nz).



**Skills for safety: research on the value and impact of girls’ and women’s self defence**

**Key informant/stakeholder: Consent form**

- The researcher has explained to me the purpose of the research.
- I know that I don’t have to take part in the research if I don’t want to and that I can choose which questions I want to answer and I can leave the discussion at any time and that I can withdraw any information I provided prior to 31 August 2015 without giving any reasons.
- I understand that all information will be kept confidential and will only be used for research purposes. What I say may be included in a research report, but not my name or anything that can identify me. However, with my agreement my views will be linked to the organisation that I represent (e.g., school teacher, Women’s Refuge, New Zealand Police). I understand that any tape recording of interviews will be wiped and any other data destroyed within 5 years.
- I understand that if the researchers thought that I, or someone else, was at risk of serious harm they may have to break confidentiality. Should they need to, they will discuss this with me first.

Yes

- I agree to be interviewed for this research study.
- I agree that the interview may be audio recorded.
- I agree for my views to be linked to the organisation that I represent
- I would like a summary of the research findings.

Name .....

Signed ..... Date .....



**Skills for safety: research on the value and impact of girls’ and women’s self defence**

**Focus Group Participant: Consent form**

- The researcher has explained to me the purpose of the research.
- I know that I don’t have to take part in the research if I don’t want to and that I can choose which questions I want to answer and I can leave the discussion at any time.
- I understand that all information will be kept confidential and will only be used for evaluation purposes. What I say may be included in a research report, but not my name or anything that can identify me. I understand that any tape recording of interviews will be wiped and any other data destroyed within 5 years.
- I agree to keep confidential the identity of other participants and any information shared during the focus group.
- I understand that if the researchers thought that I, or someone else, was at risk of serious harm they may have to break confidentiality. Should they need to, they will discuss this with me first.

Yes

- I agree to be interviewed for this research study.
- I agree that the interview may be audio recorded.
- I agree to keep information discussed by others confidential
- I would like a summary of the research findings.

Name .....

Signed ..... Date .....

## **Appendix B: Participant evaluation forms**



# Women's Self Defence Network Wāhine Toa

## Girls' Self Defence – Years 3 & 4 Course Evaluation

PRE Course ID\_\_\_\_\_




We would like to know what you think before you do the course. Please answer the following questions.

My first name is \_\_\_\_\_

I am \_\_\_\_\_ years old

My ethnicity is \_\_\_\_\_

Please draw a circle around the number to show if you agree with these sentences:

			
1. I know ways to keep myself safe	Yes	Maybe	No
2. I know ways to keep my friends safe	Yes	Maybe	No
3. I feel brave	Yes	Maybe	No
4. I know how important it is to talk to a safe adult	Yes	Maybe	No
5. I know the difference between good and bad touching	Yes	Maybe	No



# Women's Self Defence Network Wāhine Toa

## Girls' Self Defence– Years 3 & 4 Course Evaluation

POST Course ID\_\_\_\_\_

Well done for taking part in this course. We hope you have enjoyed it and found it helpful.

We would like to know what you think of the course. Please answer the following questions.

My first name is \_\_\_\_\_

Please draw a circle around the number to show if you agree with these sentences:

	😊	😐	☹️
1. I know ways to keep myself safe	Yes	Maybe	No
2. I know ways to keep my friends safe	Yes	Maybe	No
3. I feel brave	Yes	Maybe	No
4. I know how important it is to talk to a safe adult	Yes	Maybe	No
5. I know the difference between good and bad touching	Yes	Maybe	No
6. If bad touching happens to a girl my age it is never her fault	Yes	Maybe	No
7. I will listen to my feelings/instincts to help keep myself safe	Yes	Maybe	No
8. I will use my mind, body and voice to keep myself safe	Yes	Maybe	No

Circle the words that describe how you feel about this course:

Fun                  Boring                  Helpful                  Scary                  Cool  
Stupid              Powerful              Bad                  Useless              Awesome



## Women's Self Defence Network Wāhine Toa

Now you have finished the self defence course, if someone touched you in a way that made you feel yucky or uncomfortable – **What would you do?**

What was the best thing you learnt from this course?







# Women's Self Defence Network Wāhine Toa

## Girls' Self Defence – Years 7 & 8 Course Evaluation

PRE Course ID \_\_\_\_\_

We would like to know what you think before you do the course. Your participation is voluntary and any answers you give will be kept confidential.

My first name is \_\_\_\_\_

I am \_\_\_\_\_ years old

My ethnicity is \_\_\_\_\_

Please draw a circle around the number to show if you agree with these sentences:

	Strongly Agree	Agree		Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	😊😊	😊	😐	😞	😞😞
1. I know ways to keep myself safe	4	3	2	1	0
2. I know ways to keep my friends safe	4	3	2	1	0
3. It is physically possible for a girl to fight off an adult male	4	3	2	1	0
4. I feel confident	4	3	2	1	0
5. I know how important it is to talk to a safe adult	4	3	2	1	0
6. I know the difference between good and bad touching	4	3	2	1	0
7. I feel strong	4	3	2	1	0
8. I am able to recognise potentially unsafe situations	4	3	2	1	0
9. I am confident in my ability to use my mind, body and voice to keep myself safe	4	3	2	1	0



## Women's Self Defence Network Wāhine Toa

Please draw a circle around the number to show if you agree with these statements:

STATEMENT	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others	3	2	1	0
2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities	3	2	1	0
3. All in all, I am inclined to / quite often, feel that I am a failure	3	2	1	0
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people	3	2	1	0
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of	3	2	1	0
6. I take a positive attitude towards myself	3	2	1	0
7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself	3	2	1	0
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself	3	2	1	0
9. I certainly feel useless at times	3	2	1	0
10. At times I think I am no good at all	3	2	1	0



# Women's Self Defence Network Wāhine Toa

## Girls' Self Defence– Years 7 & 8 Course Evaluation

POST Course ID \_\_\_\_\_

Well done for taking part in this course. We hope you have enjoyed it and found it helpful.

My first name is \_\_\_\_\_

We would like to know what you think of the course. Your participation is voluntary and any answers you give will be kept confidential.

Please draw a circle around the number to show if you agree with these sentences:

	Strongly Agree	Agree		Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	😊😊	😊	😐	😞	😞😞
1. I know ways to keep myself safe	4	3	2	1	0
2. I know ways to keep my friends safe	4	3	2	1	0
3. It is physically possible for a girl to fight off an adult male	4	3	2	1	0
4. I feel confident	4	3	2	1	0
5. I know how important it is to talk to a safe adult	4	3	2	1	0
6. I know the difference between good and bad touching	4	3	2	1	0
7. If bad touching happens to a girl my age it is never her fault	4	3	2	1	0
8. I feel strong	4	3	2	1	0
9. I am able to recognise potentially unsafe situations	4	3	2	1	0
10. I am able to listen to my feelings/instincts to help keep myself safe	4	3	2	1	0
11. I am confident in my ability to use my mind, body and voice to keep myself safe	4	3	2	1	0



# Women's Self Defence Network Wāhine Toa

Please draw a circle around the number to answer these questions:

	Very likely	Likely		Not likely	Not at all likely
	😊😊	😊	😐	😞	😞😞
1. How likely are you to seek help /support if <u>you</u> felt unsafe?	4	3	2	1	0
2. How likely are you to seek help for your <u>friends</u> if they are unsafe?	4	3	2	1	0
3. How likely are you to use assertive body language in the future?	4	3	2	1	0

Circle the words that describe how you found this course:

Fun                  Boring                  Helpful                  Scary                  Cool  
 Stupid                  Powerful                  Bad                  Useless                  Awesome

Please draw a circle around the number to show if you agree with these statements:

STATEMENT	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others	3	2	1	0
2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities	3	2	1	0
3. All in all, I am inclined to / quite often, feel that I am a failure	3	2	1	0
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people	3	2	1	0
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of	3	2	1	0
6. I take a positive attitude towards myself	3	2	1	0
7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself	3	2	1	0
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself	3	2	1	0
9. I certainly feel useless at times	3	2	1	0
10. At times I think I am no good at all	3	2	1	0



## Women's Self Defence Network Wāhine Toa

Now you have finished the self defence course, if someone touched you in a way that made you feel yucky or uncomfortable - **What would you do?**

What was the most important thing you learned from this course?





# Women's Self Defence Network Wāhine Toa

## Girls' Self Defence – Years 10 to 12 Course Evaluation

PRE Course ID \_\_\_\_\_

Please write your initials and when your birthday is in this box:

My ethnicity is \_\_\_\_\_

We would like to know what you think before you do the course. Your participation is voluntary and any answers you give will be kept confidential.

Please draw a circle around the number to show if you agree with these sentences:

	Strongly Agree	Agree		Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	😊😊	😊	😐	😞	😞😞
1. I know ways to keep myself safe	4	3	2	1	0
2. I know ways to keep my friends safe	4	3	2	1	0
3. It is physically possible for a girl to fight off an adult male	4	3	2	1	0
4. I feel confident	4	3	2	1	0
5. I know how to seek good support if I need it	4	3	2	1	0
6. I understand what a healthy relationship is	4	3	2	1	0
7. I feel strong	4	3	2	1	0
8. If a girl my age is sexually assaulted it is never her fault	4	3	2	1	0
9. I am able to listen to my feelings/instincts to help keep myself safe	4	3	2	1	0
10. I am able to recognise potentially unsafe situations	4	3	2	1	0
11. I am confident in my ability to use my mind, body and voice to keep myself safe	4	3	2	1	0



## Women's Self Defence Network Wāhine Toa

Please draw a circle around the number to show if you agree with these statements:

STATEMENT	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others	3	2	1	0
2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities	3	2	1	0
3. All in all, I am inclined to / quite often, feel that I am a failure	3	2	1	0
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people	3	2	1	0
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of	3	2	1	0
6. I take a positive attitude towards myself	3	2	1	0
7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself	3	2	1	0
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself	3	2	1	0
9. I certainly feel useless at times	3	2	1	0
10. At times I think I am no good at all	3	2	1	0



## Prior Self defence experience

We are also interested in whether you have completed any other Girls Self defence Project courses as we'd like to assess the impact and value of girls doing two self defence courses at different ages. We would really appreciate your help in gathering the information we need.

Have you done a self defence course before?

Yes ( )      No ( )      Don't know ( )

Was this a Girls' Self Defence Project course?

Yes ( )      No ( )

Name of school you were at when you did the course:  
\_\_\_\_\_

What type of course was it?  
\_\_\_\_\_

What year were you in?  
Yr3/4   Yr7/8   Yr10/11  
( )   ( )   ( )





## Women's Self Defence Network Wāhine Toa

**Only girls who have done a Girls' Self Defence Project course before to answer next two questions.**

1. If you did a Girls' Self Defence Project course before, can you think of any examples of how have you used what you learned? (physical, verbal or attitudinal skills)

2. If you did a Girls' Self Defence Project course before, has it made any difference to how confident you feel?

Yes      (    )  
No        (    )

If yes, please describe the ways your confidence has been influenced:



# Women's Self Defence Network Wāhine Toa

## Girls' Self Defence– Years 10 to 12 Course Evaluation

POST Course ID \_\_\_\_\_

Well done for taking part in this course. We hope you have enjoyed it and found it helpful.

Please write your initials and when your birthday is in this box:

We would like to know what you think of the course. Your participation is voluntary and any answers you give will be kept confidential.

Please draw a circle around the number to show if you agree with these sentences:

	Strongly Agree	Agree		Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	😊😊	😊	😐	😞	😞😞
1. I know ways to keep myself safe	4	3	2	1	0
2. I know ways to keep my friends safe	4	3	2	1	0
3. It is physically possible for a girl to fight off an adult male	4	3	2	1	0
4. I feel confident	4	3	2	1	0
5. I know how to seek good support if I need it	4	3	2	1	0
6. I understand what a healthy relationship is	4	3	2	1	0
7. I feel strong	4	3	2	1	0
8. If a girl my age is sexually assaulted it is never her fault	4	3	2	1	0
9. I am able to listen to my feelings/instincts to help keep myself safe	4	3	2	1	0
10. I am able to recognise potentially unsafe situations	4	3	2	1	0
11. I am confident in my ability to use my mind, body and voice to keep myself safe	4	3	2	1	0



## Women's Self Defence Network Wāhine Toa

Please draw a circle around the number to answer these questions:

	Very likely	Likely		Not likely	Not at all likely
	😊😊	😊	😊	😞	😞😞
1. How likely are you to seek help /support if <u>you</u> felt unsafe?	4	3	2	1	0
2. How likely are you to seek help for your <u>friends</u> if they are unsafe?	4	3	2	1	0
3. How likely are you to use assertive body language in the future?	4	3	2	1	0

Please draw a circle around the number to show if you agree with these statements:

STATEMENT	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others	3	2	1	0
2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities	3	2	1	0
3. All in all, I am inclined to / quite often, feel that I am a failure	3	2	1	0
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people	3	2	1	0
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of	3	2	1	0
6. I take a positive attitude towards myself	3	2	1	0
7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself	3	2	1	0
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself	3	2	1	0
9. I certainly feel useless at times	3	2	1	0
10. At times I think I am no good at all	3	2	1	0



## Women's Self Defence Network Wāhine Toa

Now you have finished the self defence course, if someone makes a sexual advance that makes you feel uncomfortable - **what would you do?**

What was the most important thing you learned from this course?

Overall how satisfied were you with the content and delivery of the course?

- Very Satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Dissatisfied
- Very Dissatisfied



# **‘From Isolation to Empowerment’ Violence Prevention Project for Women**



## **Women’s Course Evaluation**

*Women's Self Defence Network-Wāhine Toa (WSDN-WT) has been delivering self defence courses to girls and women around New Zealand for over 20 years. They have recently received Government funding to enable a comprehensive evaluation of the impact and value of their self defence courses. Researchers from Victoria University are leading this research. The research has been approved by Victoria University Human Ethics Committee.*

*We would very much appreciate your help with this research by filling out a brief survey at the beginning and end of the course. This information will help us understand the impact of the course and collect your feedback on the course.*

*Please note, your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. Your responses will remain confidential to the research team with all findings aggregated to ensure responses remain anonymous. We may want to quote any extra feedback you provide to illustrate various points in research reports, however, your words will definitely not be attributed to you personally or in any way identify you.*

Please write your initials and your date of birth in this box: *PRE Course ID* \_\_\_\_\_

*Please circle around a number to show how much you agree with these statements*

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither Agree or Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1. I have a good understanding of sexual violence.	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
2. I am able to recognise early signs of potential violence.	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
3. It is physically possible for a female to fight off an adult male	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
4. I know how to keep myself safe	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
5. I am confident that I could use physical strategies to help stay safe	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
6. I am confident that I could use my voice to help stay safe.	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
7. I am confident I can make good choices to keep myself safe	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
8. I know how to seek support for other people I know who are experiencing violence / abuse.	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

**Age:**                      **18 – 29**                      **30 – 44**                      **45 – 59**                      **60 +**  
*Please tick ✓*                      [   ]                      [   ]                      [   ]                      [   ]

**Ethnicity:** \_\_\_\_\_

***Thank you!***

# 'From Isolation to Empowerment' Violence Prevention Project for Women



## Participant Evaluation

Congratulations on doing this self defence course!

We would like to know what you learned on this course. Please assist us by giving your answers to the following questions. Remember your participation is voluntary and responses will remain confidential to the research team.

Please write your initials and your date of birth in this box: *POST Course ID* \_\_\_\_\_

*Please circle around a number to show how much you agree with these statements*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I have a good understanding of sexual violence.	0	1	2	3	4
2. I am able to recognise early signs of potential violence.	0	1	2	3	4
3. It is physically possible for a female to fight off an adult male	0	1	2	3	4
4. I know how to keep myself safe.	0	1	2	3	4
5. I am confident that I could use physical strategies to help stay safe	0	1	2	3	4
6. I am confident that I could use my voice to help stay safe.	0	1	2	3	4
7. I am confident I can make good choices to keep myself safe	0	1	2	3	4
8. I know how to seek support for other people I know who are experiencing violence / abuse.	0	1	2	3	4

**P.T.O.** 

Please draw a circle around the number to answer these questions:

	<b>Not at all likely</b>	<b>Not likely</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Likely</b>	<b>Very likely</b>
1. How likely are you to seek help /support if <u>you</u> felt unsafe?	0	1	2	3	4
2. How likely are you to seek help for your <u>friends</u> if they are unsafe?	0	1	2	3	4
3. How likely are you to use assertive body language in the future?	0	1	2	3	4

4. What's the most useful thing you've learned at this course?

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5. Is there anyway the course could have been improved to have been more useful to you?

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6. Any other comments about this self defence course?

**Thank you!**