Determining Implementation Drivers in Resilience Education:
Secondary Schools Data Snapshot
In Determining Implementation Drivers in Resilience Education, we investigated the factors that influence the uptake, implementation and impact of the Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships (RRRR) program, a wellbeing and respectful relationships education program offered to primary and secondary schools in the state of Victoria.

The research was conducted by a team of researchers at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, led by Professor Helen Cahill. It was funded by an ARC Linkage grant, in partnership with the Department of Education and Training (DET), and the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth).

1,468 secondary students from Years 7-10 answered a wellbeing and resilience survey in 2017. 712 were girls, 733 were boys, and 23 identified as ‘other’.

81 students were interviewed in focus groups in 2017-2018.

About 2 in 3 students (64%) felt strongly connected to their school.

About 2 in 3 boys (58%) and girls (61%) indicated that they get along with their teachers well either ‘a lot’ or ‘totally’, compared to about 1 in 3 ‘other’ gendered students (38%).

Most students reported high levels of wellbeing. However, 1 in 4 (25%) reported signs of possible psychological distress.

Psychological distress increased across year levels and was significantly higher for girls (34%) and other gender students (43%), compared to boys (16%).

About 1 in 3 other gendered students (33%) felt lonely ‘most days’ or ‘everyday’.
Girls and other gender students (36%) were more likely to feel left out by peers than boys (21%).

95% of students agreed or strongly agreed that boys and girls should be treated equally.

However, about 1 in 3 (38%) believed girls and boys were not treated equally at school.

Students talked about the range of stressors that affected their wellbeing:

“There is the standard stuff that could come along with any school like friendship stresses, social… managing schoolwork and friendships, all of it together. Things outside carrying into school; a lot of it is online nowadays, like you a fight with someone, it carries along into school and that can go into classroom.” (Male Student)

Less than half of students (47%) felt happy about how their body looks.

Girls (62%) and other gender students (64%) were more likely to dislike the way their body looks than boys (ADD %)

About 2 in 3 students (61%) reported having been called mean names at least once during the week prior to the survey.

42% of ‘other gender’ students reported being called mean names 5 or more times during the past week, compared to 27% boys and 15% girls.

Being called gay was common. About 1 in 4 students reported they were called gay at least once in the past week.

60% of students agreed or strongly agreed that those who were ‘different’ were treated with respect at school. Half of other gendered students did not agree with this statement.

“There is some sort of divide between boys and girls. Like girls hang out together or whatever and then boys hang out together. If a boy joins a girl group, they are considered feminine or whatever. I just find that there is a divide for some reason.” (Male Student)
Students reported a number of benefits from participating in the Resilience Rights and Respectful Relationships program:

### Improved sense of empathy

“It [RRRR program] helped people because they had a chance in an environment where they knew they wouldn’t be judged to let out their worries and have people understand.”  
(Female student)

### Improved problem-solving capacities

“Problems are being solved civilly. It’s good.”  
(Male student)

### Improved capacity to deal with challenges

“The program has changed the way I think about them (challenges and stressors). It’s not only my problem, it’s a problem we all go through – it’s common. If you do go through it, you know that you’re not the only one and you can talk to others and you don’t have to hide it from others.”  
(Male student)

### Improved coping capacities

“It was helpful because when you are angry you sort of lash out. With the coping strategies you can sort of calm yourself down easily.”  
(Male student)

### Improved respect for ethnic and cultural diversity

“People were set in their ways, they forgot people take offense, they didn’t know what it meant. A lot of things have stopped, people are more aware of what they’re saying. Much more making sure they’re saying the right thing.”  
(Female student)

### Improved relationships across/between genders

“When you are first friends and stuff, they (boys in the class) don’t really show the inside, they’re more like trying to be tough men. Once we are in SEL they actually show that they have emotions and feelings… this helped to get to know them more, to know how they really are.”  
(Female student)

### Improved help-seeking

“It really has impacted me because it’s helped me find ways where I can find help, I can ask people for help, I know what I need help with, I was so grateful to be educated to see these kind of things.”  
(Female student)
Female teachers were more likely than male teachers to report that the program was ‘an extremely good fit’ with their own values.

Teachers more than 10 years from graduation were twice as likely as those with fewer years of experience to believe it was ‘extremely important’ to teach the program.

There were concerns about the more sensitive aspects of the program including anxieties about backlash to teaching about gender equity and gender diversity, and concerns about evoking distress among students and teachers:

“I think staff might be feeling a bit overwhelmed or stressed out or uncomfortable with the new units that are coming in around the gender. Units that are perhaps a little bit more sensitive. I think it’s not necessarily uncomfortable about themselves discussing it but then about presenting it to the students and the implications that we might do more damage that we are helping ... I think it’s more about what happens if I say this and a student does that. How am I going to react to that situation or how am I going to bring the class back?”

Support from colleagues and professional learning teams enabled teachers to overcome their anxieties about teaching the more sensitive aspects of the RRRR program:

“It’s the team; it’s the working together. It’s the collaborative stuff that we do together, and we have the discussions and we are respectful amongst the staff, you know. We understand that some people might find it [talking about gender-based violence] challenging. . . . so ‘how can we support those staff members?’ [. . .] It’s bouncing off each other. If something gets sticky, then another teacher can support you there. Just knowing you’ve got that other person and you’re just working together. Yeah, I find it much more comforting.”
Ten key factors improved teacher comfort and were associated with effective program implementation:

- **Strong Leadership**: Support from principal and staff champions
- **Previous History**: Of providing wellbeing education
- **Program Home**: Which permitted sufficient time for delivery
- **Teamed Teaching**: To support teachers who lacked confidence or experience
- **Specialised Professional Learning**: From experts who shared methods and rationale
- **In-House Professional Learning**: To build staff capacity with use of collaborative methods and topics addressing prevention of gender-based violence
- **Availability of High-Quality Teaching Resources**: In the form of the RRRR program manuals
- **Policy Mandate**: Supporting provision of respectful relationships education in schools
- **Disclosures Training**: To build teacher confidence about responding to anticipated disclosures about family violence and abuse
- **Wellbeing Staff**: Available to assist in follow up with affected students