

© Healthwise, Incorporated

Assessing the Vitality of NZSL

Rachel McKee & David McKee
TILSR 12, Melbourne, Jan 5th 2016

Language Vitality

A language with strong vitality (*survival prospects*) is used

- by **many people**
- in **the home** and in **many other domains**
- to talk about **most**, if not all, **topics**
- by **all generations** (children!)



Structural Factors in Ethnolinguistic Vitality

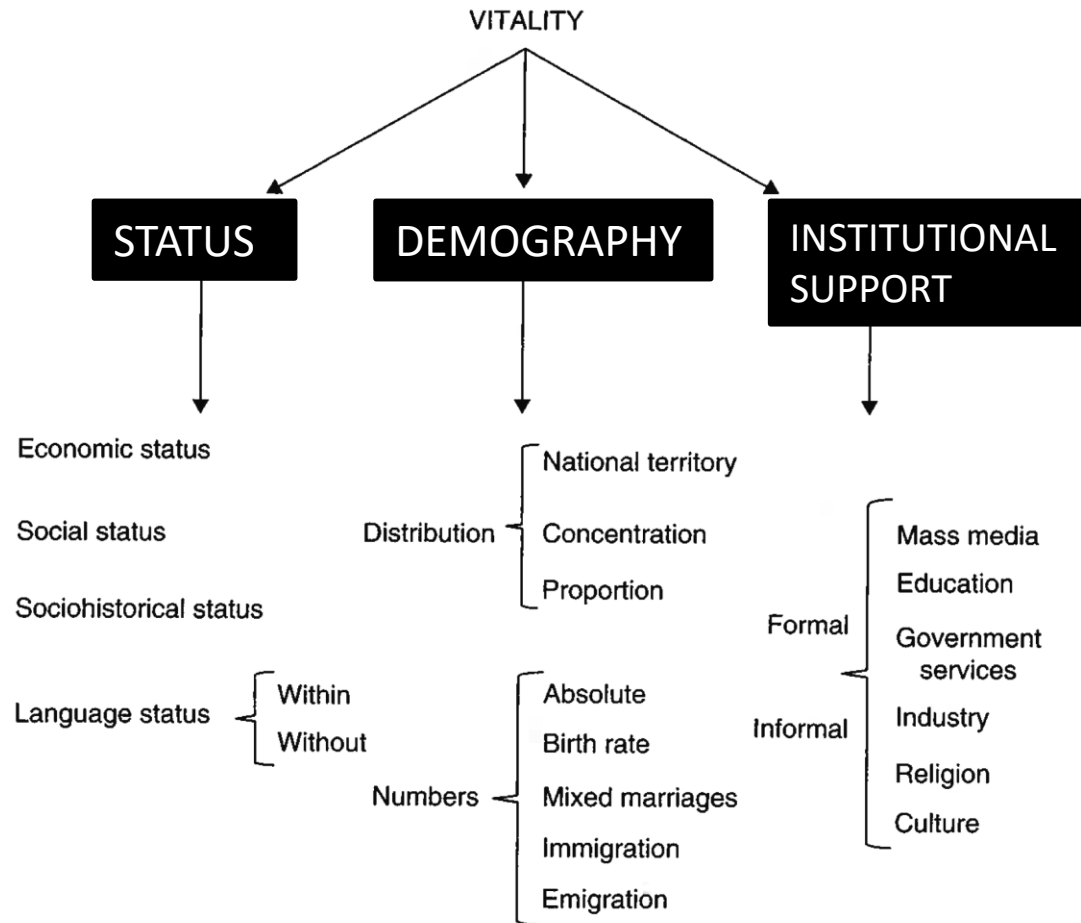
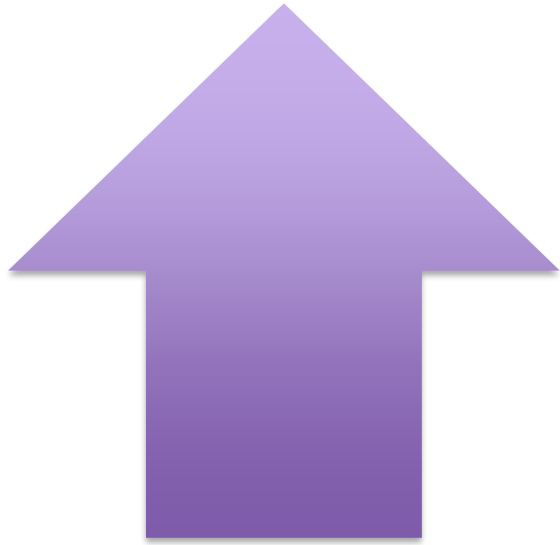


Figure 2.1 A taxonomy of the structural variables affecting ethnolinguistic vitality
Source: Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (1977: 309)



Subjective vitality

Attitude to using own language

Perceived strength of lang identity

Relations with majority group



Objective Vitality

Number of speakers &
distribution

Institutional support

The death of sign language?

By ANDREA O'NEIL

The rise of cochlear implants has plummeted in census, with its signers

New Zealand had 24,090

The Wellington

Only five of the signers since the 1990s, Hastings by 12, Dunedin by 21, and Ashburton by 21.

Christchurch and Auckland are New Zealand's only cities with full immersion deaf schools, yet Christchurch has lost 366 signers and Auckland 1524 since 2006.

As parents of deaf children embraced cochlear implants, there had grown a bitter rift between implant proponents and the sign language community, Khandallah

“The reality is, it’s probably not really a living language”

iner said.

ests had been known and feelings ran

said.

around the

really a

ool-aged

children.

ya, 7, was born

ad a double implant

was determined to raise

as a hearing child and believed learning

sign language would detract from her English uptake, Gardiner said.

“We have no desire for my daughter to particularly identify with the deaf community.

“Our desire is that she’s completely mainstreamed and she’s just like any normal kid.

“The biggest and most robust studies show that there is a negative correlation between learning a visual language and your uptake of oral language.”

Wellington’s increase in signers could be attributed to Victoria University’s deaf studies department and public servants learning the language, rather than to deaf signers increasing in number, he said.

Deaf studies senior lecturer Rachel McKee said that although cochlear technology was improving, there was a risk implants could fail, and they were not worn while swimming, showering or in bed.

The quality of sound was not the same as natural hearing.

“For a lot of children, it’s really good to have sign language as an auxiliary. Although a child has a cochlear implant, their life experience is still not the same as someone who is hearing.”

Bilingualism gave deaf people significant cognitive advantages, just as it did to those who learned more than one spoken language. McKee



Hearing vital: Sym Gardiner with his daughter Katya, who has cochlear implants. Photo: FAIRF

with cochlear implants could feel isolated.

“They end up feeling quite marginal to both hearing groups and deaf people.”

But Gardiner praised the implants, say-

“It’s being able to hear cars on the road, birds sing, the cheering of a crowd when you whack a six.

“Parents should be informed a

The Wellingtonian

Manager/Advertising Director:

Cheryl Kortink
cheryl.kortink@fairfaxmedia.co.nz
DDI: 04 474 0243
M: 027 248 5051

Editor:

Joseph Romanos
joseph.romanos@thewellingtonian.co.nz
DDI: 04 474 0191
Twitter: @josephromanos

2014 - a father's response to census stats on NZSL, & why his family doesn't sign

DDI: 04 474 0149
M: 027 446 3885

Distribution/Delivery:

two !critical! factors

Community size (number & distribution of speakers)



Inter-generational transmission (children using the language)



UNESCO levels of endangerment - factor 1: inter-generational transmission

Degree of Endangerment	Grade	Speaker Population
<i>safe</i>	5	The language is used by all ages, from children up.
<i>unsafe</i>	4	The language is used by some children in all domains; it is used by all children in limited domains.
<i>definitively endangered</i>	3	The language is used mostly by the parental generation and up.
<i>severely endangered</i>	2	The language is used mostly by the grandparental generation and up.
<i>critically endangered</i>	1	The language is used by very few speakers, mostly of great-grandparental generation.
<i>extinct</i>	0	There are no speakers.

Source: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001836/183699E.pdf>

UNESCO factor 3: proportion of reference population who use the language

Degree of Endangerment	Grade	Proportion of Speakers Within the Total Reference Population
<i>safe</i>	5	All speak the language.
<i>unsafe</i>	4	Nearly all speak the language.
<i>definitively endangered</i>	3	A majority speak the language.
<i>severely endangered</i>	2	A minority speak the language.
<i>critically endangered</i>	1	Very few speak the language.
<i>extinct</i>	0	None speak the language.

Linguistic Vitality & Diversity of Sign Languages (UNESCO survey) 2011 -14

- Urban & Village SLs face threats, but SLs were not included in UNESCO endangerment data
- International Institute for Sign Languages & Deaf Studies, UCL (Ulrike Zeshan) collaborated with WFD expert committee on SL, & researchers to:
 - adapt UNESCO LVE survey for assessing SLs
 - “map & monitor” vitality of SLs worldwide
 - raise awareness among communities and policy makers about protecting SL diversity

(Safar & Webster 2014; iSLanDS)

UNESCO LVE survey adapted for SLs at iSLanDS, UCL, 2011: *Example results*

Level of endangerment		Examples
Safe	5	<i>(None)</i>
Vulnerable/Unsafe	4	Austria, Brazil, Denmark
Definitely endangered	3	Kata Kolok, EthiopianSL
Severely endangered	2	Fin-SSL, ChicanSL(Mexico)
Critically endangered	1	Mardin (Turkey), InuitSL
Extinct	0	

(reported in Safar & Webster 2014)

Language Endangerment entails

- **Language Shift** (to a majority language)
- **Loss of language complexity** – simplification of grammar (morphology), loss of vocabulary
- **Social impacts:** weakening of
 - **cultural capital/knowledge** encoded in that language
 - **identity** and **cohesion** of community
 - **political rights** based on minority language status

(See Austin & Sallabank 2011)

Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS) - adapted for SLs by Bickford, Lewis & Simons 2014

4	Educational	Literacy in The language is being transmitted through a system of public <u>in vigorous use, with standardization and literature being sustained through a widespread system of institutionally supported education.</u>
5	<u>Written Developing</u>	The language is used orally by all generations and is effectively used in written form in parts of the community <u>in vigorous use with literature in a standardized form being used by some though this is not yet widespread or sustainable.</u>
6a	Vigorous	The language is used orally for face-to-face communication by all generations and is being learned by children as their first language <u>the situation is sustainable.</u>
6b	Threatened	The language is used orally for face-to-face communication by <u>within all generations, but only some of the child-bearing generation are transmitting it to their children</u> <u>it is losing users.</u>
7	Shifting	The child-bearing generation knows the language well enough to <u>can use it the language among themselves but none are transmitting it</u> <u>is not being transmitted to their children.</u>
8a	Moribund	The only remaining active speakers <u>users</u> of the language are members of the grandparent generation and older.

Seeking evidence about NZSL vitality



Data sources

- **Statistics** (objective)
 - Census data
 - Schools: child NZSL users
 - Deaf org membership
- Govt agency websites
- Human Rights Commission report on NZSL
- **Surveys** (subjective)
 - NZSL community (*online, F2F*)
 - Parents of deaf children (*online*)
- **Interviews** (subj)
 - Parents of deaf children
 - Deaf youth
 - Hearing NZSL learners

What is the Reference Population?

“all people who may be expected to use a particular language according to their ethnicity, heritage, culture, history, geography”

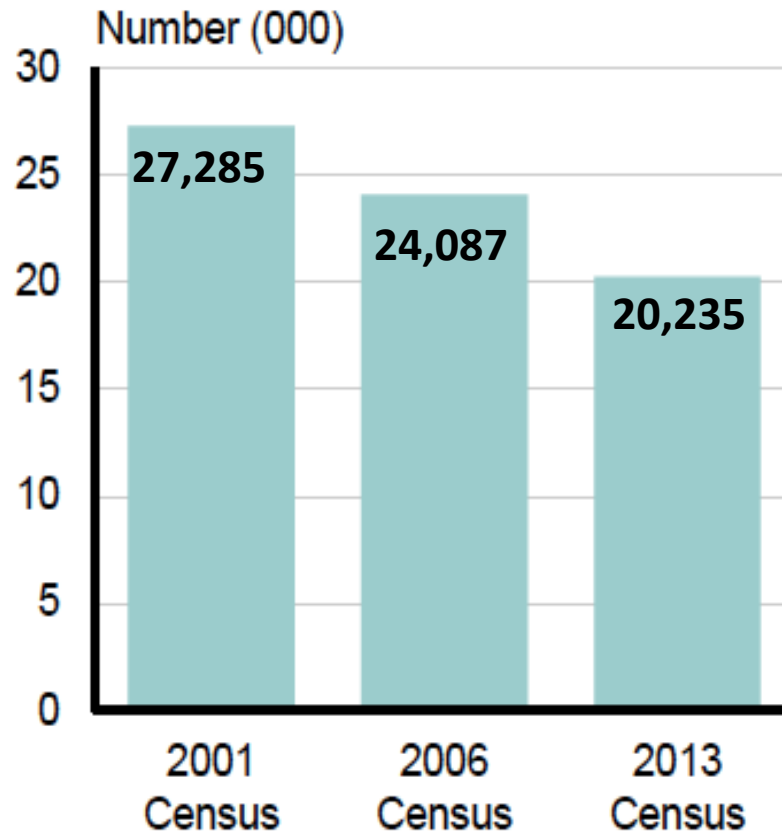
For a SL, the Reference Population includes:

1. All deaf people, of all ages (*not late deafened*)
2. Hearing family members – as culturally relevant
3. Hearing signers who use SL regularly – professionals, friends, associates of deaf



(iSLanDS adapted UNESCO Survey)

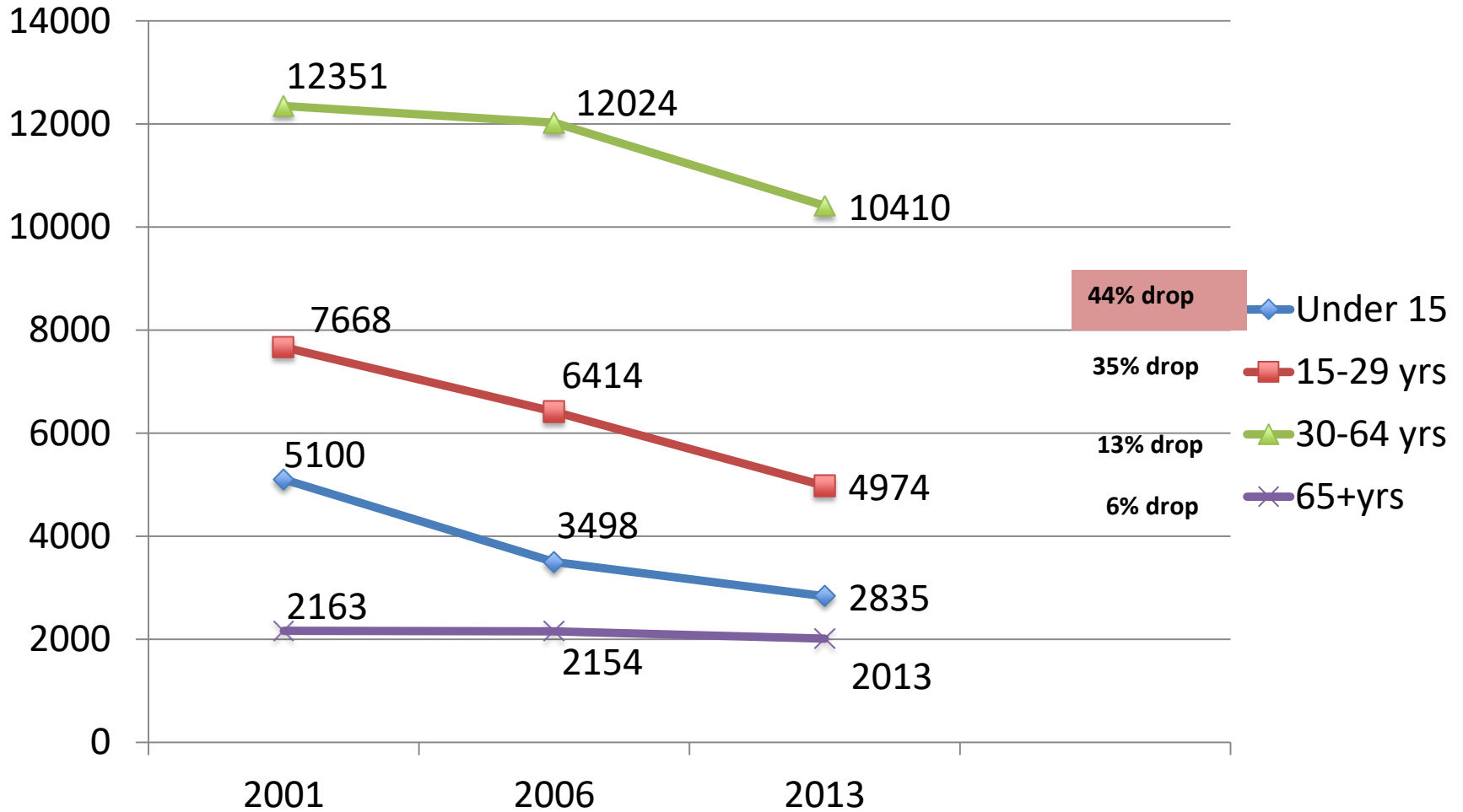
People who can use New Zealand Sign Language 2001, 2006, and 2013 Censuses



25% drop
2001 – 2013

Source: Statistics New Zealand

Census: NZSL use by Age Group



Deaf organisation numbers

10 local Deaf Clubs – total membership	843 (some hearing) <i>most clubs decreasing</i>
National interpreting service - registered Deaf users	1400
Deaf Aotearoa NZ (Association)	2000 (mailing list)
NZ Deaf Sports Federation	155 (cf. 300 in 1999)

These numbers represent a portion of NZSL community, but even if one-third > still indicate a very small number compared to census stats.

Perception vs. Records

Deaf Club
Presidents said:

*“about **200 Deaf club members**, but we think the actual number of Deaf in Christchurch is **around 700**”*

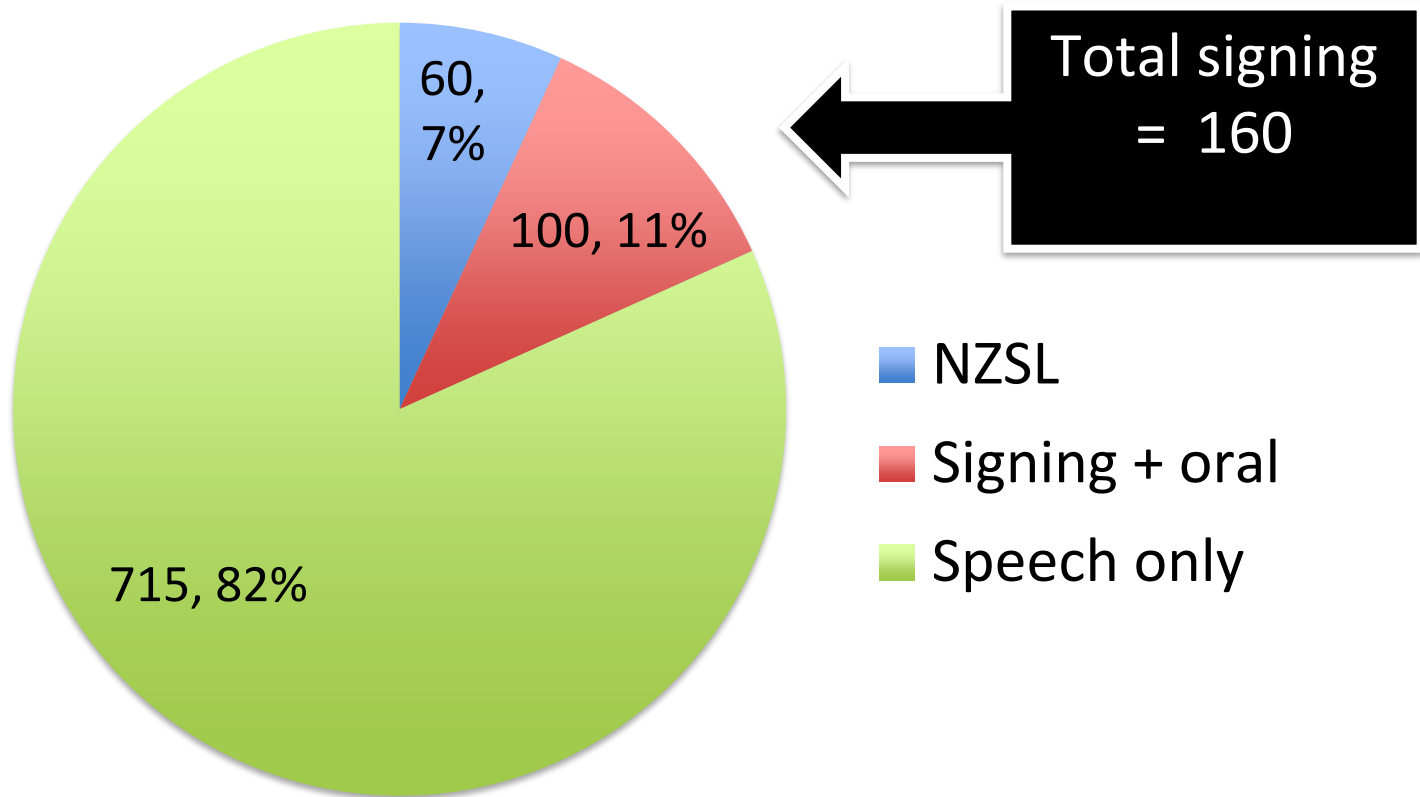
“the **400** members are only about **one-fifth** of the Deaf people in the larger Auckland area”

Deaf organisation membership numbers represent a portion of NZSL community, but even if multiplied, indicate a small number compared to census stats.

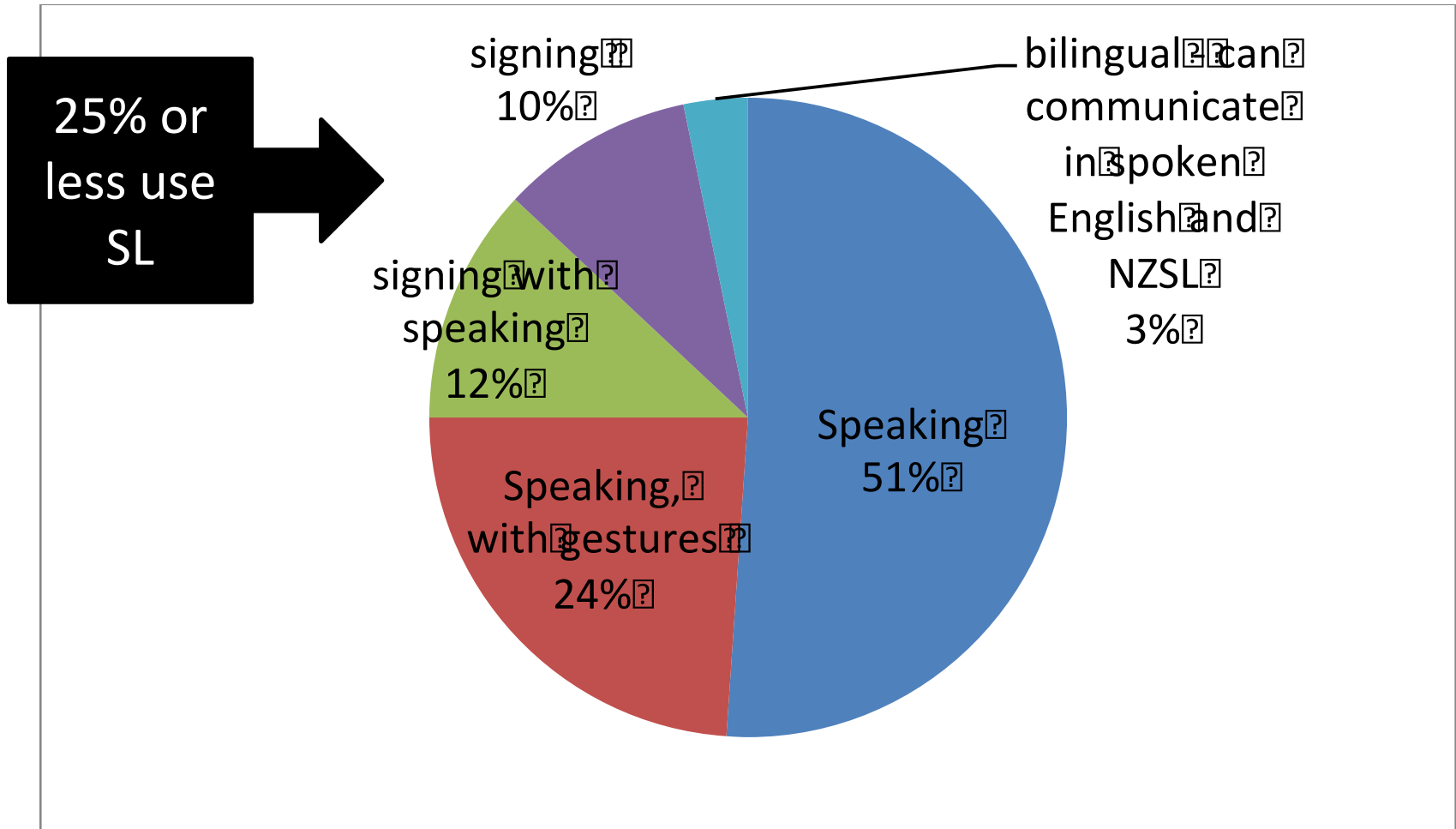


USE OF NZSL BY CHILDREN

Deaf NZSL users in mainstream schools: *difficult to get data!*



Deaf children's communication modes (Parent survey, n = 112)

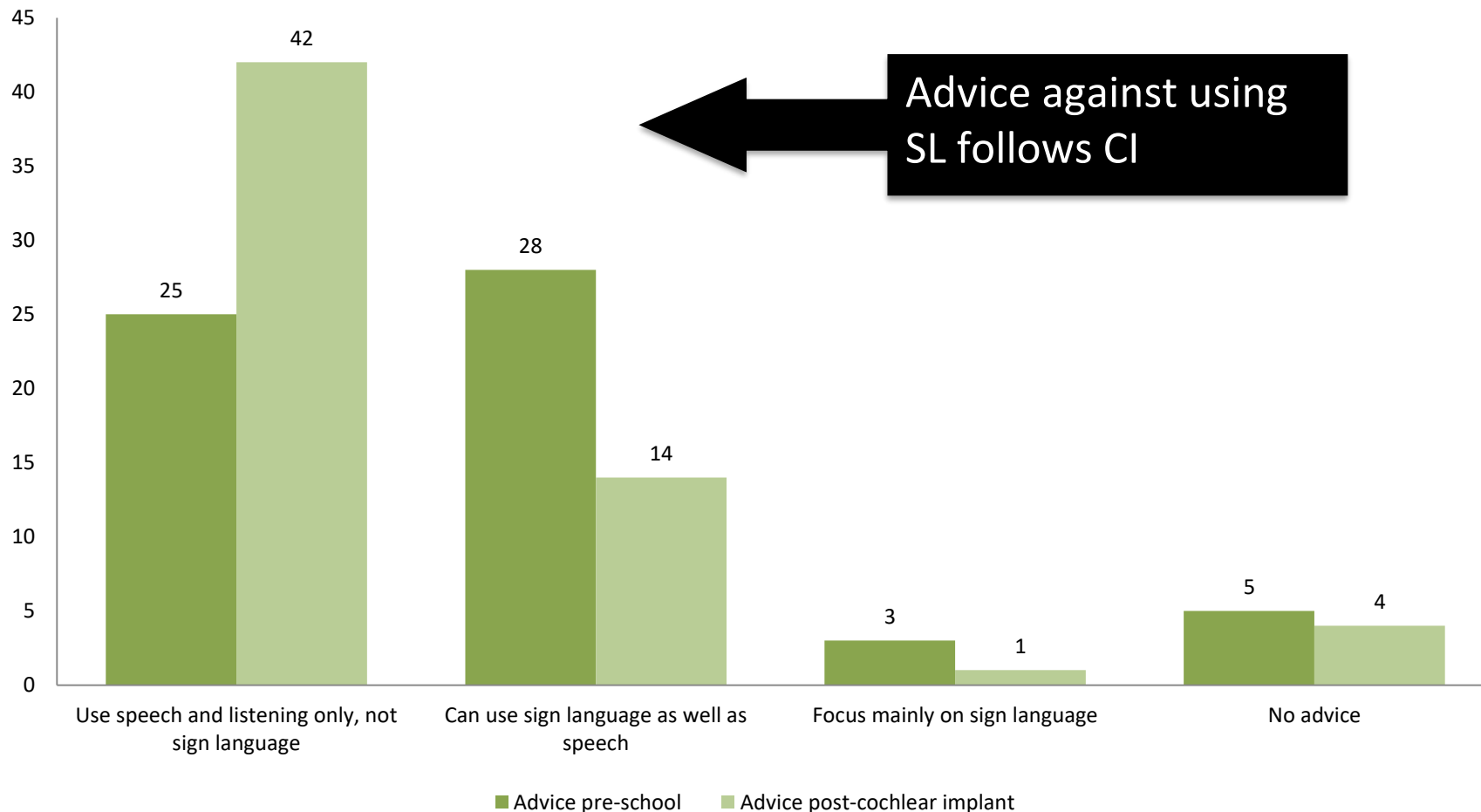


“there’s not much support for parents like us ... **it’s difficult to get resources and support.** It’s just an **ongoing battle for us to try and learn a language** that we don’t know, to teach our child a language.”



Hearing mother of deaf 2 year old, 2013

Language shift: Communication advice to parents before and after CI surgery



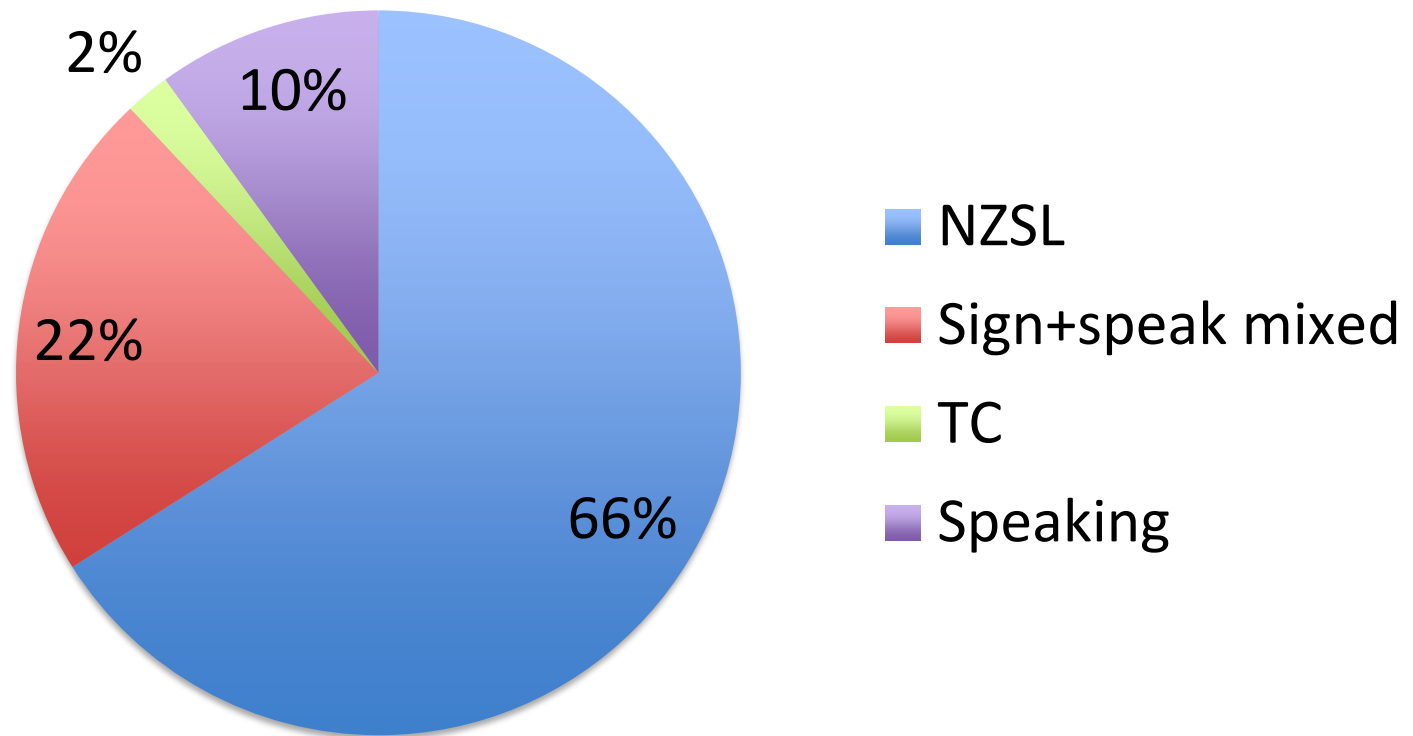


SUBJECTIVE VITALITY:
DEAF COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS





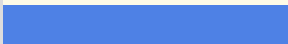

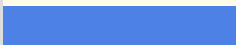

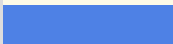


Survey of Deaf Community

n = 254 (12 % non-deaf)



Language use: *I express myself best in*



Where do you use NZSL in your daily life? (with or without interpreter)




Answer		%
At Deaf club and Deaf community events		86%
Visiting people		64%
At home		60%
At work		53%
At a service place (e.g. hospital, doctor, WINZ interview, legal)		41%
VRS - phone relay calls		37%
At School / university / study		34%
Sports - playing, or watching		28%
To communicate with staff in shops, bars, restaurants etc.		24%
In church / religious activities		21%
At the marae		10%

Do you use NZSL for online video chat?

Answer		Response	%
Yes		166	69%
No		76	31%
Total		242	100%

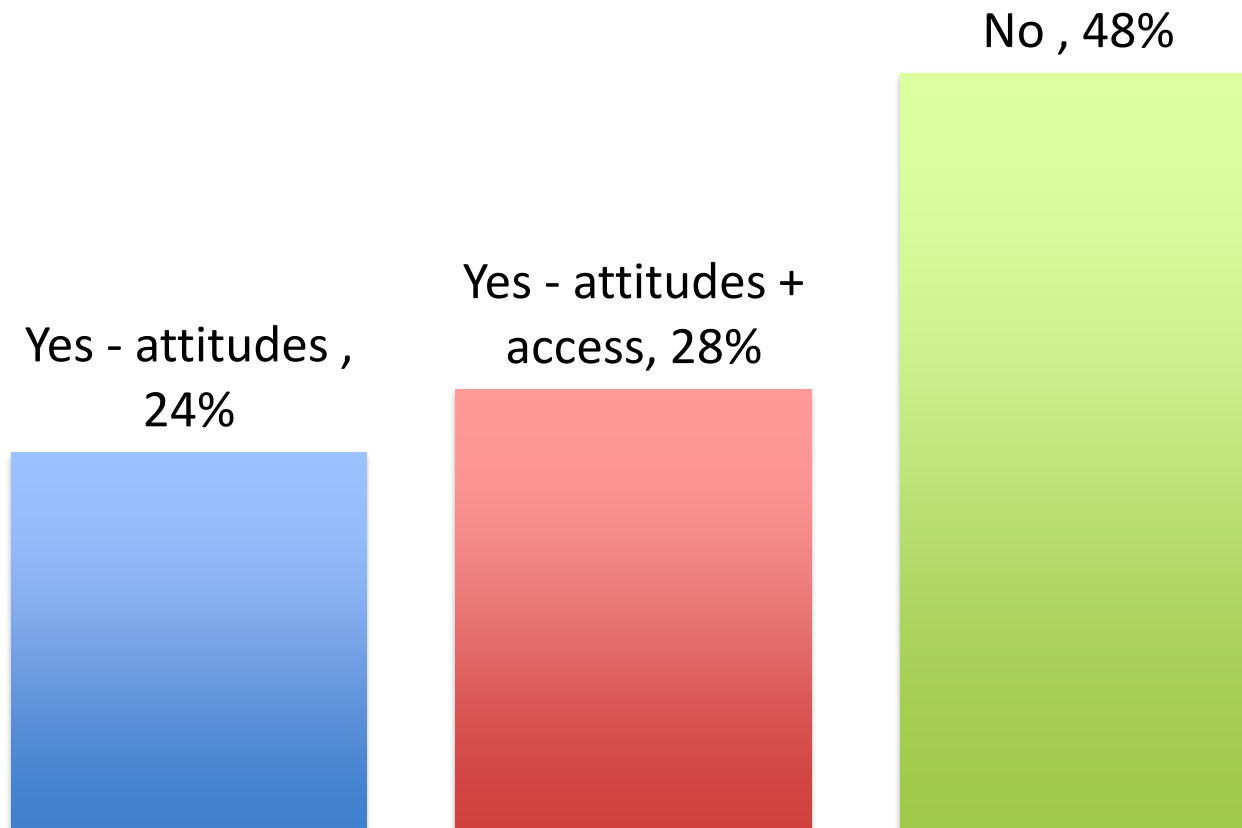
(Higher use by younger age groups)

Have you seen information in NZSL on public websites?

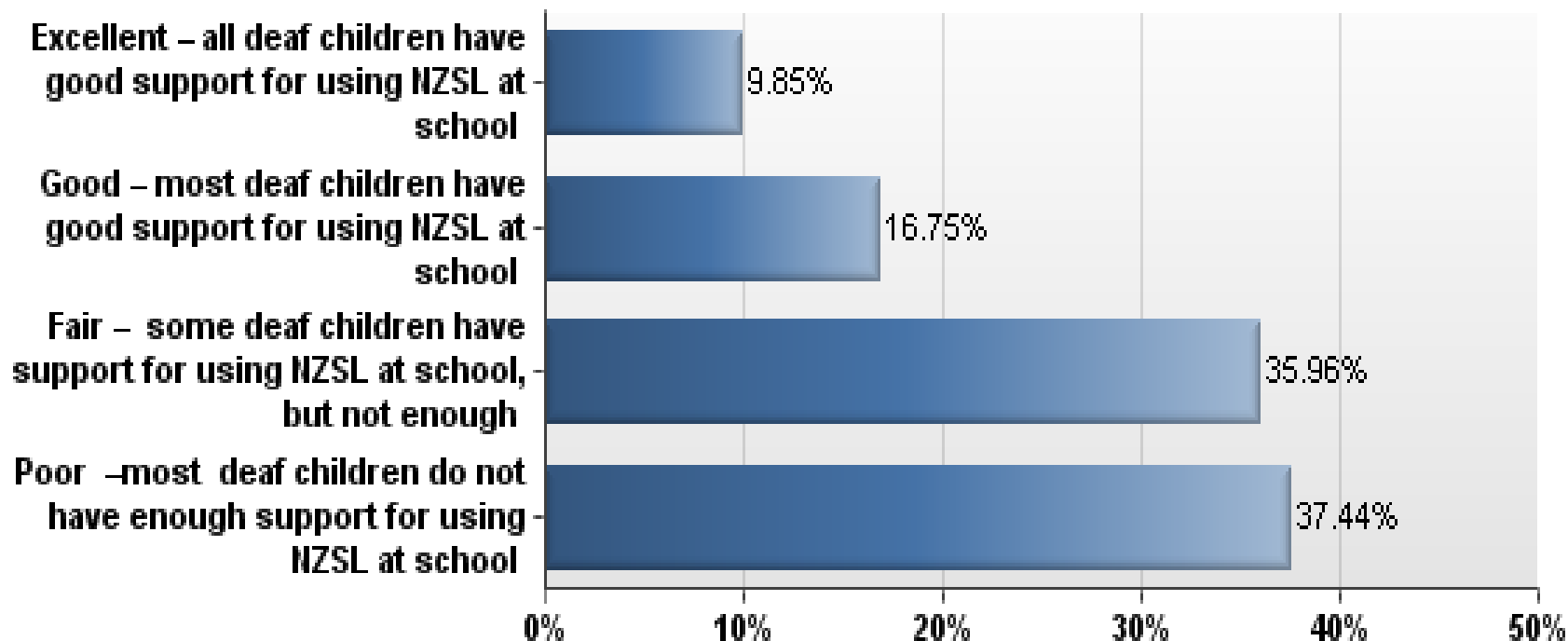
Answer		Response	%
Yes		145	59%
No		71	29%
Not sure		30	12%
Total		246	100%

Has the NZSL Act made any difference to you?

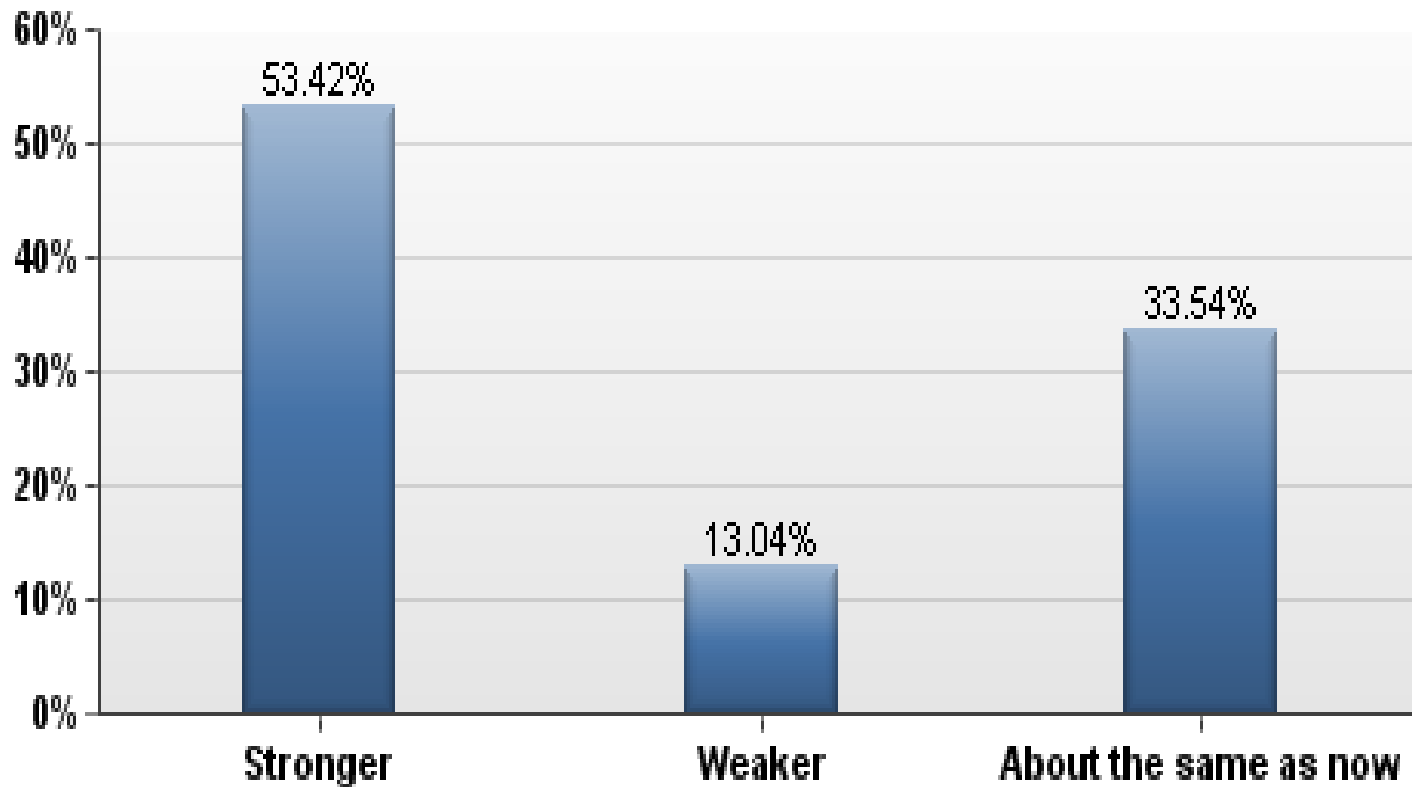
■ Yes - attitudes ■ Yes - attitudes + access ■ No



“How good is deaf children's access to NZSL in mainstream schools - for learning and social communication?”



“In 30 years, the NZSL community will be...”



“Future threats & issues for NZSL?”

Attitudes

- Lack of NZSL awareness in society
- Power of medical model in decisions

Resources & access

- Lack of resources, infrastructure to promote NZSL
- Not enough provision of interpreters, info in NZSL

Education system

- Mainstreaming – poor NZSL access, no deaf peers
- Low quality of bilingual educ; low attainment
- Hearing control of policy & practice

Cochlear implants

- Linked with oralism – no SL, late SL, SSE
- Gap btwn families & D. community, & btwn deaf

Social networks

- Deaf organisations – shrinking, ageing, leadership
- Technology - less face-to-face SL interaction



Subjective
vitality



Objective
vitality

EGIDS level 6b **Threatened**: “ The language is used for-face-to-face communication within all generations but it is losing users”

Good news section



EVIDENCE OF RESILIENCE IN NZSL COMMUNITY

Institutional support

NZSL Board members

Office for
Disability issues

Te Tari Mō Ngā Take Hauātanga
Administered by the Ministry of Social Development

NZSL BOARD
MEMBERS OF THE BOARD





- “**First Signs** provides families with deaf and hard of hearing children with real opportunities to include NZSL as an additional language in their home
- ... eligibility is not based on an audiogram, use of assistive listening devices or home language. Our service is about connecting families to a language that is accessible to all children”

(Government funded, Deaf-run

See: <http://www.deaf.org.nz/services/first-signs>)

Bottom-up language promotion & community development



TeachSign [Sign In](#) [Join](#)

Search

[NZSL Teacher](#) [Teach](#) [Resources](#) [Tips](#)

Teacher

Becoming and being an NZSL teacher.

A Hub for New Zealand Sign Language Teachers

Welcome to TeachSign, your information and resource hub for everything to do with teaching NZSL. Here you will find a variety of information and resources about being an NZSL teacher and for use in your NZSL class. With an account, you can:

- get information about becoming an NZSL teacher
- find out about teaching NZSL in community education centres
- access and download free resources to teach NZSL
- share your NZSL teaching resources and ideas with others
- get regular teaching tips
- watch examples of NZSL lessons on video
- connect with others and discuss NZSL teaching on Facebook
- receive announcements to see what's new on **TeachSign**

Home - Welcome 

Updates

TeachSign Tutor Trainings

28/09/2015
New Zealand Sign Language Teachers Association successfully got a grant from the NZSL Board to provide NZSL tutor trainings nationwide....

New Updates

28/09/2015
Many thanks to tutors who've given us feedback on TeachSign....

9-15
MAY 2016
NEW ZEALAND
Sign
LANGUAGE WEEK
TE WIKI O TE REO TURI



Learn 7 signs in 7 days to WIN

[MORE INFO](#)



Outreach to diverse
& younger deaf
identities. *Sport
maintains NZSL
community.*



25TH/26TH MARCH 2016
**Deaf/Hearing
Impaired/Cochlear Netball
is back!**

We are hosting 25th New Zealand Deaf Rugby Union next year during Easter weekend on the 25th – 27th March 2016, conjunction with the National Deaf Rugby Championships in Auckland. We would like to support the Deaf Netball. This will be an exciting weekend of Deaf netball and rugby.



If interested to play – please contact your local host

MORE INFORMATION WILL COME AT LATER DATE!

Support by Lyneen Allen

**25th/26th
March 2016**

There will be a
netball match on the
Friday and Saturday
night

Come on
Northern, Central,
& Southern
its fun social game!

Get together and play
netball.

GO GO GO
WOMEN!

HOST'S

Northern
SAPPHIRE UALESI
Email: sappten8@live.com

Central
CHANTELL DE CLEENE
Text no 021 070 9927

Southern
LISL AGNEW
Text no 021 619 201



DEAF SHORT FILM FESTIVAL

HOME ABOUT COMPETITION TICKETS AND MERCHANDISE THE SCREENING ROOM GALLERY CONTACT

COMPETITION

→ JUDGES

→ 2015 NZ SHORT FILM ENTRIES

2015 NZ SHORT FILM ENTRIES

Here is a list of the eight film entries we received for the NZ Deaf Short Film Festival Competition. These will all be shown at the screenings - come and watch them!

NEW ZEALAND DEAF SHORT FILM FESTIVAL — SHORT FILM ENTRIES 2015

AOTEAROA *Joanne Klaver*

In New Zealand (1760 – 1780), lived a Maori whanau, with a Deaf boy. In 1770, an English man, and his Deaf wife arrive. Initially, communication is good, however time passes, and war starts. By 1778, the boy's mother tells her son and his girlfriend to run and escape the war.



BRIDGE OF REVENGE *Zoe Ferguson*

Selena is the only Deaf student at her school and has been the target for bullies. While out with a friend they come across two of the bullies from school. In a snap decision Selena grabs the opportunity to get revenge.



LITTLE BUTTERFLY GONE TOO SOON *Danielle MacKay*

A following family traditional way for Hayley's anniversary of her Death and her Birthday



RAILWAY CROSSING *Oliver Ferguson*

John try go to Counsellor for break his fear cross the railway crossing. Counsellor to support with John he have autism but try to break through.



References

- Austin, P. & J. Sallabank. 2011. *Cambridge Handbook of Endangered Languages*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bickford, J.A., M.P. Lewis & G. F. Simons. 2014. Rating the Vitality of Sign Languages. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, (pre-print) 1-15.
- Bourhis, R., H. Giles & D. Rosenthal. 1981. Notes on the construction of a 'Subjective vitality questionnaire' for ethnolinguistic groups. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 2, 145-155
- iSLanDS website (www.uclan.ac.uk/islands) and the iSLanDS blog (<http://islandscentre.wordpress.com>).
- Safar, J. & J. Webster. 2014. Cataloguing Endangered Sign Languages at iSLanDS. Unpublished report. Retrieved Dec 1 2015 at: https://islandscentre.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/report-endangered-sls_070814.pdf
- UNESCO: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001836/183699E.pdf>

Further info on project

McKee, R. & V. Manning. 2015. Evaluating Effects of Language Recognition on Language Rights and the Vitality of New Zealand Sign Language. *Sign Language Studies*, 15(4):473-497.

McKee, R. & M. Vale. 2014. The Vitality of New Zealand Sign Language project: **Report on a survey of the Deaf Community**. Accessible online, in English and in NZSL at: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/centres-and-institutes/dsru>

Go straight to NZSL summary at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vjAplzIA2wc>

McKee, R. & M. Vale. 2014. The Vitality of New Zealand Sign Language project. **Parents of Deaf and Hearing Impaired children: Survey Report**. Accessible online in English at: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/centres-and-institutes/dsru>

Contact: rachel.mckee@vuw.ac.nz