

TE TAURA WHIRI  
I TE REO MĀORI

MĀORI LANGUAGE COMMISSION



# State of Te Reo Māori Report 2025





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# Executive Summary

This report presents a comprehensive overview of the state of te reo Māori in Aotearoa from 2000 to 2024, drawing on data from a variety of sources. It explores four key themes: Status, Acquisition, Proficiency, and Use.

## ► Key Themes and Insights

### THEME 1 Status

Public support for te reo Māori is growing, especially among Māori, Pacific peoples, and younger generations. However, many people who support te reo Māori are not actively learning or using the language themselves.

### THEME 2 Acquisition

An increasing number of students are learning te reo Māori at school, in both primary and secondary settings. However, there are concerns about retention in the Māori medium education pathway. While 4.9% of children in early childhood education are enrolled in Māori medium education, this drops to just 1.7% of secondary students<sup>1</sup>.

### THEME 3 Proficiency

Te reo Māori speaker numbers have reached their highest ever (213,849 in 2023<sup>2</sup>). This growth is led by young people, women, and rural Māori communities. However, the proportion of te reo Māori speakers in the Māori population has been declining.

### THEME 4 Use

Te reo Māori is being used more in public and by younger people; but home use is declining. This is a concern, particularly when considering the important role of intergenerational transmission in the revitalisation of te reo.

1. 2023 Education Counts data

2. 2023 Census data



## ► Overall Outlook

Te reo Māori is gaining momentum across Aotearoa. Public support is growing, enrolments in education settings are increasing (apart from early childhood), and the number of speakers is higher than ever before. Young people in particular are leading the way in both language acquisition and use.

However, the data also reveal areas of concern. While many people support te reo Māori in principle, fewer are actively learning or speaking it. This gap between support and participation is especially important to address if te reo Māori is to thrive.

Use of te reo Māori in the home, one of the most important spaces for intergenerational transmission, is declining. Moreover, proficiency levels among Māori appear to be dropping across the four language skills (i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing).

To ensure the continued revitalisation of te reo Māori, efforts must focus not just on growing numbers, but on deepening engagement in te reo Māori by whānau, communities, workplaces, and through the uptake of other learning opportunities. It is important to focus on supporting the next generation of speakers, while also creating environments where the language is used, heard, and celebrated every day.

Based on the trends and gaps identified in this report, the following areas are recommended for future research.

- › Transforming support for te reo Māori into actively using and learning it.
- › Understanding the demand for Māori medium education.
- › Factors contributing to the decline in both Māori-medium ECE centres and enrolments, as well as the potential impacts this may have on the broader Māori-medium education pipeline.
- › Demographics of te reo Māori speakers and declines in the percentage of te reo speakers in the Māori population.



# Introduction

The purpose of this report is to analyse and share te reo Māori insights and trends over time. This report summarises and presents data from a range of different sources produced between 2000–2024.

Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori (Te Taura Whiri) has collated te reo Māori data from multiple sources to develop a data dashboard. The dashboard, currently for internal use, provides reliable and up-to-date information on te reo Māori. This report builds on the dashboard by adding insights and commentary about the data. Te Taura Whiri is working on a project to make this dashboard public in the near future.

The data presented in this report explores te reo Māori through four key themes: Status, Acquisition, Proficiency, and Use. These themes collectively give a comprehensive overview of te reo Māori over multiple years in Aotearoa. The themes are adapted from the five elements of language planning: status, use, critical awareness, corpus, and acquisition<sup>3</sup>. Due to the current insufficient measures for corpus and critical awareness, no data for these two themes are presented. Proficiency has been added as a theme, however, given the extensive availability of proficiency data.

The four themes are defined as follows:

- › **Status** – Language status in the Aotearoa New Zealand context is defined as Aotearoa whānui understanding the value of te reo Māori and accepting that it is a part of our national identity.
- › **Acquisition** – Language acquisition may be through formal education or through informal family and community engagement. In this report we only explore data on language acquisition through enrolments in te reo Māori education.
- › **Proficiency** – Language proficiency refers to the ability of an individual in the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.
- › **Use** – Language use refers to the use of the language to undertake communicative tasks, using one or more of the four language skills listed above.

This report aims to share the collation of data in an easy-to-understand format that is accessible to everyone. By synthesising data from diverse sources, the report aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the state of te reo Māori, contributing to ongoing discussions and efforts to ensure its vitality for future generations. Data earlier than 2000<sup>4</sup>, and a literature review about the health and vitality of te reo Māori, are out of the scope of this report.

3. For more information on the language planning elements, please see the Taura Whiri website: <https://en.tetaurawhiri.govt.nz/language-planning>.

4. Te reo Māori data insights earlier than 2000 are available in [The Health of the Māori Language in 2006](#) report, published by Te Puni Kōkiri.

## ► Data Sources

The data in this report is drawn from eight key sources:

1. **New Zealand Census**<sup>5</sup>. The New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings is the official count of the people and dwellings in New Zealand, conducted every 5 years by Tatauranga Aotearoa (Stats NZ). This report includes data from the 2001, 2006, 2013, 2018, and 2023 Censuses.
2. **General Social Survey**<sup>6</sup> (GSS). The GSS is a biennial nationwide wellbeing survey of New Zealanders aged 15 years and over, conducted by Tatauranga Aotearoa (Stats NZ). It targets approximately 12,000 individuals per collection. The 2020 survey was delayed until 2021 (due to COVID-19 restrictions) and had a reduced sample of 3,484 participants. This report includes data from the GSS in 2016, 2018, 2021, and 2023.
3. **Survey of attitudes, values and beliefs towards Māori language**<sup>7</sup>. This government commissioned survey was conducted over a span of six years, to measure attitudes towards the Māori language. Each survey had a sample of 1,500 people and interviews took place on the telephone. This report includes data from the three surveys in 2000, 2003, and 2006.
4. **Te Taunaki Public Service Census**<sup>8</sup>. Te Taunaki Public Service Census is a survey of New Zealand public servants working in departments and departmental agencies. It is facilitated by Te Kawa Mataaho (Public Service Commission) and was first run in 2021, with 40,000 responses. This report includes data from that 2021 census. Although there was a second census in 2025, the timing of the results meant it was beyond the scope of this report.
5. **Te Wiki o te Reo Māori Survey**<sup>9</sup>. An annual survey for Te Wiki o Te Reo Māori is commissioned by Te Taura Whiri to:
  - i. measure the reach and impact of Te Wiki o Te Reo Māori; and
  - ii. capture data from New Zealanders aged 18 years and over regarding their attitudes towards, proficiency in, and use of te reo Māori.

The survey targets approximately 1,200 individuals per collection. This report includes data from the 2022, 2023, and 2024 collections.

6. **Education Counts Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga (Ministry of Education)**<sup>10</sup>. Education Counts is a website run by Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga (Ministry of Education). It contains a wide range of education administration data. In this report, we present data from 2000–2024 about early childhood, primary, secondary, and tertiary enrolments in te reo Māori education

5. [Census | Stats NZ](#)

6. [About the General Social Survey | Stats NZ](#)

7. [Attitudes Toward the Māori Language](#)

8. [Te Taunaki Public Service Census – Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission](#)

9. Te Wiki o te reo Māori Survey has run since 2018. In 2022 the methodology changed to ask all the questions to all participants rather than only those that were aware of Te Wiki o te Reo Māori. Due to this difference in methodology with earlier surveys, we only consider the data from 2022 onwards.

10. [Education Counts Home | Education Counts](#)

7. **Te Kupenga**<sup>11</sup>. Te Kupenga is a post-census survey of the social, cultural, and economic wellbeing of Māori people in Aotearoa. Conducted by Tatauranga Aotearoa (Stats NZ), it surveys approximately 8,500 individuals of Māori ethnicity and/or descent, aged 15 and over. In this report we include data from Te Kupenga 2013 and 2018.
8. **He Ara Poutama mō te reo Māori**. He Ara Poutama mō te reo Māori is a statistical modelling tool that forecasts the number of fluent and conversational te reo Māori speakers in Aotearoa. He Ara Poutama was built to support the joint vision of the Maihi Māori and Maihi Karauna strategies as a collaborative project between Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, Te Mātāwai and the Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga (Ministry of Education). The tool was created by Nicholson Consulting and Kōtātā Insight. It currently forecasts out to the year 2040. Results from the following three reports are presented in this document.
  - › 2021 He Ara Poutama mō te reo Māori<sup>12</sup>
  - › 2023 Te Rāngai Tūmatanui: Te Reo Māori Insights from the New Zealand Public Service<sup>13</sup>
  - › 2023 Maihi Karauna: Monitoring Report<sup>14</sup>

Except for Te Wiki o te Reo Māori Survey, these surveys and data are all developed, collected and managed by organisations other than Te Taura Whiri.

## ► Data Quality and Limitations

The data in this report form a substantial subset of the te reo Māori data in Aotearoa, but there are some datasets that are not included here. For example, data from the 'Growing Up in New Zealand' longitudinal survey, Te Māngai Pāho Māori audience data, Te Whakaata Māori viewership data, and iwi level data from Te Whata<sup>15</sup> are not included in this report. Te Taura Whiri will continue to update its data dashboard and produce future te reo Māori data insight reports with new data collections as they become available.

The eight data sources in this report serve different purposes. As a result, the questions and answers therein do not always align, which makes data comparison challenging. For example, different surveys may measure te reo proficiency in varying ways, leading to discrepancies in the reported number of proficient speakers.

Some of the datasets are specifically designed to monitor and understand te reo Māori. However, these tend to be smaller in scale. Others, like the Census or Education Counts, are larger in scale, but have a broader focus and are not specifically intended to assess the status of te reo Māori. However, these datasets still include certain questions related to te reo Māori, and this report draws on that data to better understand the state of te reo Māori in Aotearoa.

11. [Te Kupenga: 2018 \(final\) – English | Stats NZ](#)

12. [He Ara Poutama mō te Reo Māori – Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori](#)

13. [He Ara Poutama mō te reo Māori. Te Rāngai Tūmatanui: He Tirohanga ki te Āhua o te Reo Māori i te Rāngai Tūmatanui o Aotearoa. – Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori](#)

14. [He Ara Poutama mō te reo Māori. Maihi Karauna: Monitoring Report. – Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori](#)

15. [He whata kai, he whata kōrero, inā he māramatanga | Iwi Data | Te Whata | Te Whata](#). Te Whata is a data platform that houses iwi data. Te reo Māori data from NZ Census and Te Kupenga by iwi are available.







## THEME 1

# Te reo Māori status

This section of the report focuses on the status of te reo Māori – as measured through various surveys that present statements about the value of te reo Māori.

Te reo Māori status forms the basis of one of the three key outcomes of the Maihi Karauna strategy<sup>16</sup> – Aotearoa/Nationhood. That is, te reo Māori is valued by Aotearoa whānui as a central part of national identity. This vision is reflected in the first audacious goal of the Maihi Karauna, which aspires to at least 85% of New Zealanders valuing te reo Māori as a key element of national identity, by the year 2040.

Data presented in this section are from the New Zealand General Survey (2016, 2018, 2021, and 2023); Te Wiki o te Reo Māori Survey (2022, 2023, 2024); Survey of Attitudes, Values and Beliefs Towards the Māori Language (2000, 2003, 2006); and Te Taunaki Public Service Census (2021).

### ► New Zealand General Social Survey (2016–2023)

This section draws on data from the New Zealand General Social Survey (GSS) for the years 2016, 2018, 2021, and 2023. The 2020 survey was postponed until 2021 due to the COVID-19 outbreak. That same year, the survey was interrupted again by another outbreak, leading to a significantly reduced sample size of 3,484 participants, compared to the usual 12,000. Because of this, Tatauranga Aotearoa (Stats NZ) has warned that results from 2021 should be interpreted with caution when comparing across years.

The GSS includes four statements to measure public attitudes towards te reo Māori. Respondents are asked to indicate (on a 5-point scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree') their level of agreement with each of the following statements:

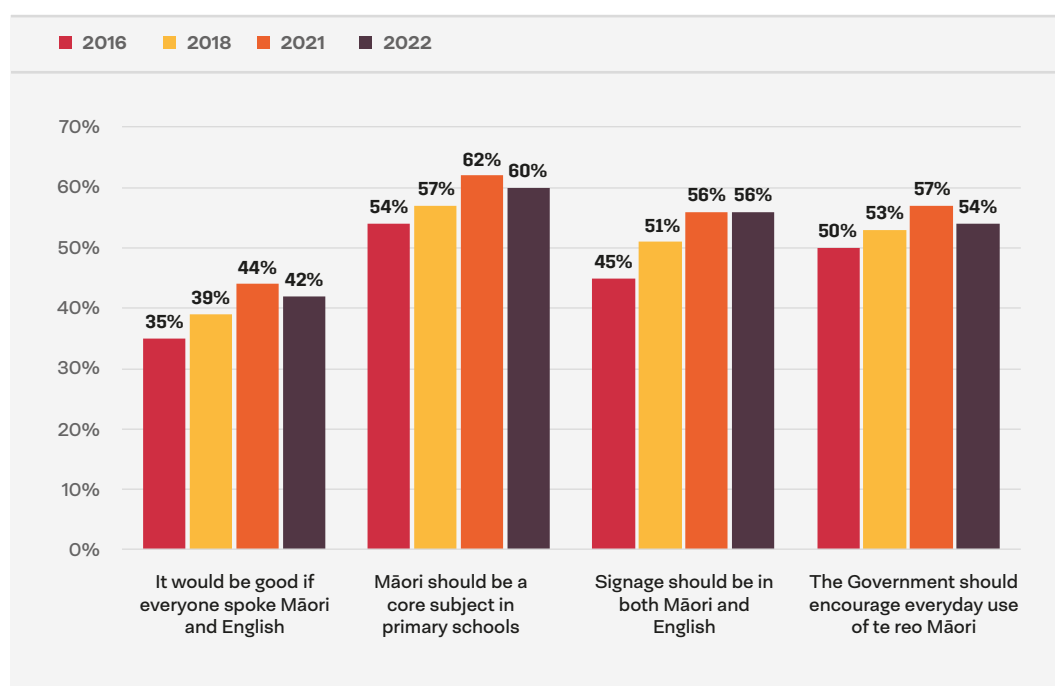
1. It would be good if everyone spoke Māori and English
2. Māori should be a core subject in primary schools
3. Signage should be in both Māori and English
4. The Government should encourage everyday use of te reo Māori.

The data in Figure 1 indicates that:

- › Agreement (or strong agreement) with all four statements has increased overall from 2016 to 2023, showing growing support for the language.
- › There is a data spike in 2021, but this is likely due to the reduced sample size caused by COVID-19 disruptions (and should therefore be interpreted cautiously).

16. The [Maihi Karauna](#) is the Crown's strategy for Māori language revitalisation.

**Figure 1: Percentage of responses agreeing with each General Social Survey te reo Māori value statement (strongly agree or agree responses)**



Source: General Social Survey 2016–2023, Tatauranga Aotearoa (Stats NZ).

Further analysis of the 2023 data (in Table 1) reveals variations in terms of agreement with all four value statements based on age, ethnicity, and gender; namely:

- › Younger people are more likely to agree with all four statements, while the oldest age groups have the lowest level of agreement with all four statements. The differences are large. For example, agreement with the statement “*The government should encourage everyday use of te reo Māori*” differs by 32 percentage points between the 20–24 age group and the 65 plus age group.
- › Māori and Pacific peoples show the highest levels of support across the four statements.
- › Females show a higher level of agreement than males for all four statements.

	It would be good if everyone spoke Māori and English	Māori should be a core subject in primary schools	Signage should be in both Māori and English	The Government should encourage everyday use of te reo Māori
<b>Age</b>				
15–19	45%	62%	61%	64%
20–24	52%	69%	70%	68%
25–29	50%	71%	68%	63%
30–34	50%	70%	64%	65%
35–39	49%	66%	61%	61%
40–44	46%	63%	61%	58%
45–49	41%	61%	54%	56%
50–54	40%	55%	51%	53%
55–59	41%	56%	51%	51%
60–64	36%	52%	50%	43%
65 and over	28%	46%	42%	36%
<b>Ethnicity</b>				
Māori	60%	79%	73%	80%
Pacific	61%	76%	70%	72%
Asian	48%	61%	60%	51%
Other	43%	54%	58%	46%
<b>Gender</b>				
Female	43%	63%	62%	58%
Male	41%	56%	50%	49%

Table 1: Percentage of responses agreeing with each te reo Māori value statement in 2023, by demographic group.  
Source: General Social Survey 2023, Tatauranga Aotearoa (Stats NZ).

## ► Te Wiki o te Reo Māori Survey (2022–2024)

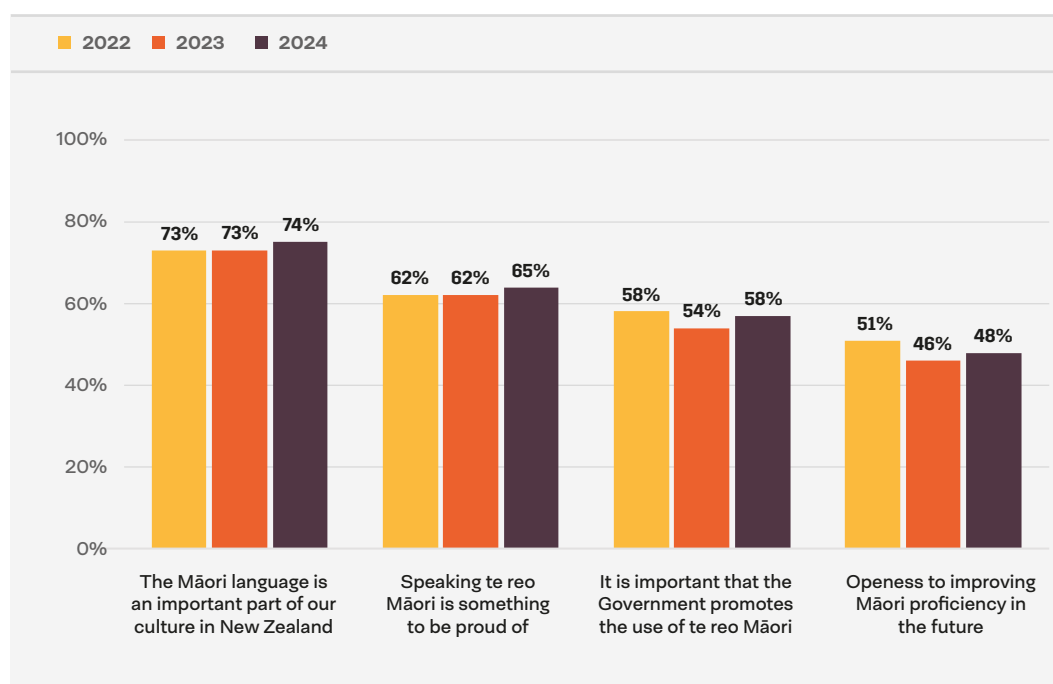
This section examines data from the past three *Te Wiki o te Reo Māori* surveys. Each survey includes four statements that gauge public attitudes toward the status and value of te reo Māori. Respondents are asked to indicate (on a 5-point scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree') their level of agreement with each of the following statements:

1. The Māori language is an important part of our culture in New Zealand
2. Speaking te reo Māori is something to be proud of
3. It is important that the Government promotes the use of te reo Māori
4. I am open to improving my Māori language proficiency in the future.

Overall, responses remain stable across the three years, 2022–2024 (see Figure 2); as follows:

- › Of the four statements, support for te reo Māori as a part of New Zealand's culture is consistently the highest across all years.
- › While there is some fluctuation around pride in speaking te reo, support for government promotion, and openness to improving proficiency, these attitudes remain steady over time.
- › Openness to improving Māori language proficiency in the future is the lowest of the four statements. It is concerning to see a consistently large gap between valuing the language and being willing to learn it.

**Figure 2: Percentage of responses agreeing with each Te Wiki o te Reo Māori value statement (strongly agree or agree responses)**



Source : Te Wiki o Te Reo Māori Survey 2022–2024, Te Taura Whiri.

Further analysis of the 2024 responses by age, ethnicity, and gender provides more insight into who is most likely to support each statement (as shown in Table 2):

- › Younger age groups, Māori respondents, and female respondents show the strongest support across all four measures.
- › The differences in agreement by demographic groups is lower for the statement “*The Māori language is an important part of our culture in New Zealand*” compared to the statement “*I am open to improving my Māori language proficiency in the future*”.
- › There is a clear recognition of the importance of te reo Māori, but a gap remains between valuing the language and being willing to learn it.

	The Māori language is an important part of our culture in New Zealand	Speaking te reo Māori is something to be proud of	It is important that the Government promotes the use of te reo Māori	I am open to improving my Māori language proficiency in the future
<b>Age</b>				
18–25	77%	68%	63%	52%
26–29	75%	72%	67%	65%
30–39	77%	69%	64%	55%
40–49	73%	61%	58%	53%
50–59	78%	63%	56%	47%
60+	70%	62%	49%	34%
<b>Ethnicity</b>				
Māori	87%	85%	78%	74%
Non-Māori	74%	65%	55%	47%
<b>Gender</b>				
Female	78%	68%	59%	52%
Male	71%	62%	55%	43%

Table 2: Percentage of response agreeing with each statement in 2024, by demographic group.

Source: Te Wiki o Te Reo Māori Survey 2024, Te Taura Whiri.

### ► Attitudes, Values and Beliefs Towards the Māori Language Survey (2000–2006)

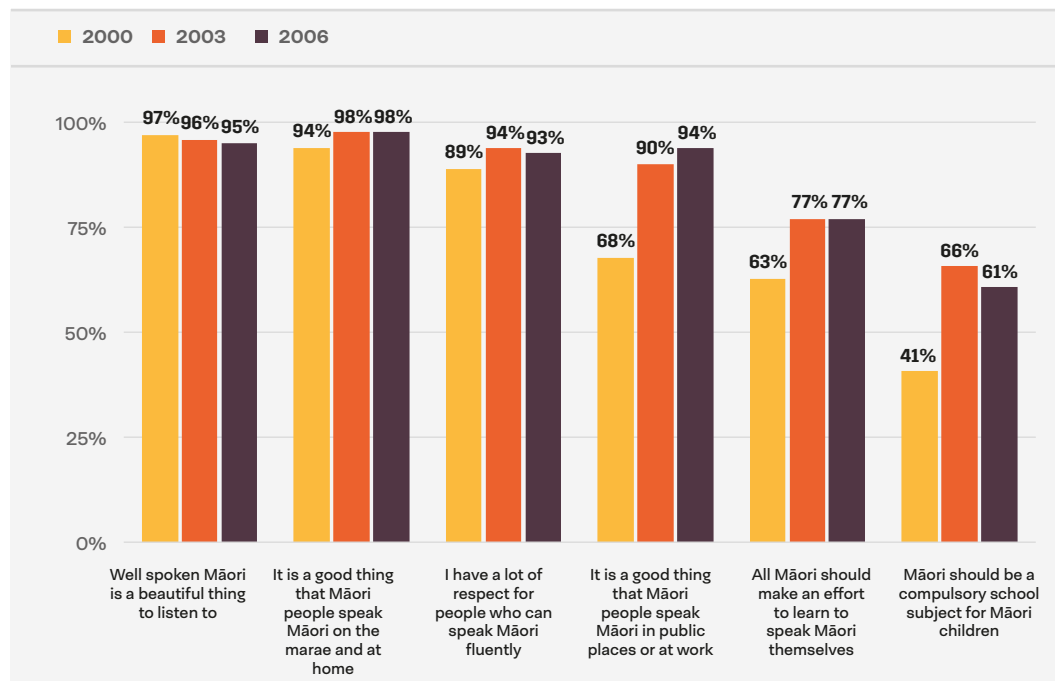
This survey was repeated over six years to measure attitudes towards the Māori language. Surveys were undertaken in 2000, 2003 and 2006 – with each survey having a sample of 1,500 people. While the data is nearly 20 years old, the unique focus of the survey questions on attitudes is the reason for its inclusion in this report.

The first half of the survey asked respondents how much they agreed (on a 5-point scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree') with each of the following attitudinal statements about Māori language:

1. Well-spoken Māori is a beautiful thing to listen to
2. It is a good thing that Māori people speak Māori on the marae and at home
3. I have a lot of respect for people who can speak Māori fluently
4. It is a good thing that Māori people speak Māori in public places and work
5. All Māori should make an effort to learn to speak Māori themselves
6. Māori should be a compulsory school subject for Māori children.

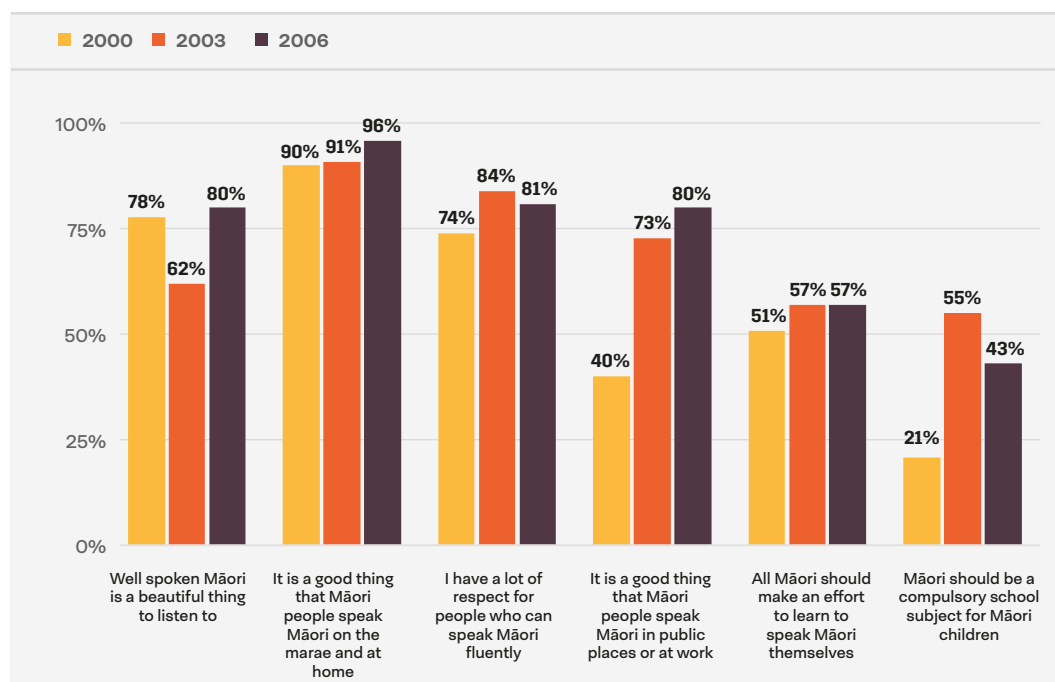
Responses were collected from both Māori and non-Māori participants. The comparative results are presented below in Figures 3 and 4.

**Figure 3: Percentage of Māori responses that agree with each attitudinal statement**



Source: Attitudes, values and beliefs towards the Māori language, Te Puni Kōkiri 2000, 2003, 2006.

**Figure 4: Percentage of non-Māori responses that agree with each attitudinal statement**



Source: Attitudes, values and beliefs towards the Māori language, Te Puni Kōkiri 2000, 2003, 2006.

The results indicate that:

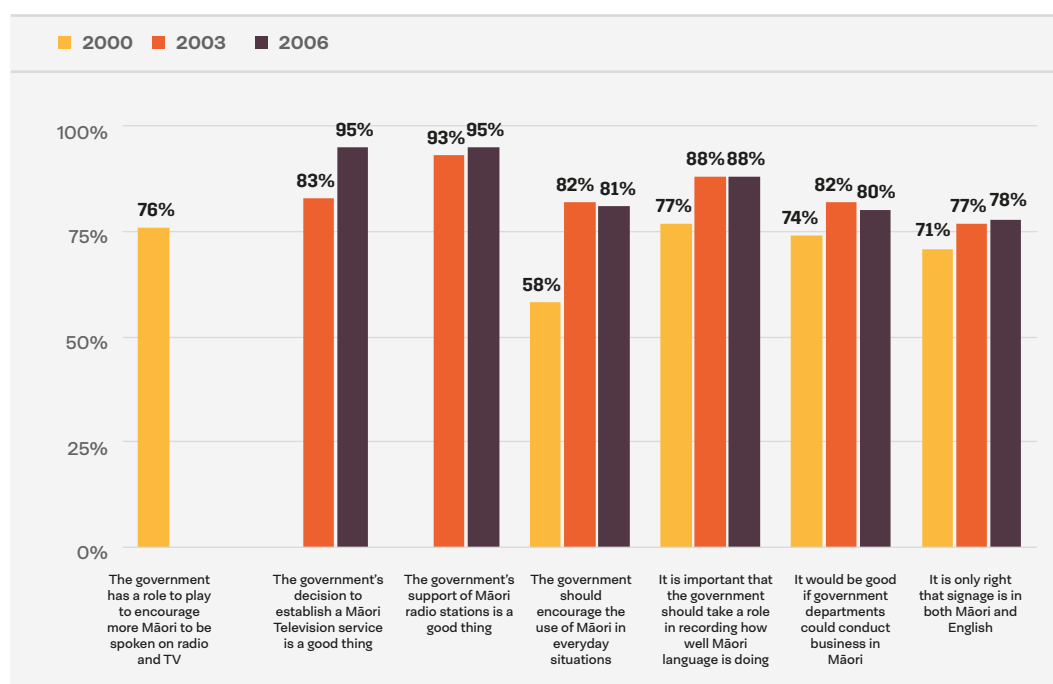
- › Māori respondents show strong agreement across all six cultural and language statements, which reflects a deep connection to te reo Māori.
- › Non-Māori support for te reo Māori has grown over time, especially in:
  - › Respect for fluent speakers
  - › Appreciation of the beauty of te reo Māori
  - › Acceptance of its use in public and workplace settings.
- › The shift in non-Māori attitudes shows increasing societal recognition of te reo Māori over time.

The second half of the survey focused on attitudes towards the government's involvement in the te reo Māori space. The survey asked how much respondents agreed (on a 5-point scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree') with each statement below.

1. The government has a role to play to encourage more Māori to be spoken on radio and TV
2. The government's decision to establish a Māori Television service is a good thing
3. The government's support of Māori radio stations is a good thing
4. The government should encourage the use of Māori in everyday situations
5. It is important that the government should take a role in recording how well Māori language is doing
6. It would be good if government departments could conduct business in Māori
7. It is only right that signage is in both Māori and English.

The comparative results between Māori and non-Māori respondents can be seen below in Figures 5 and 6.

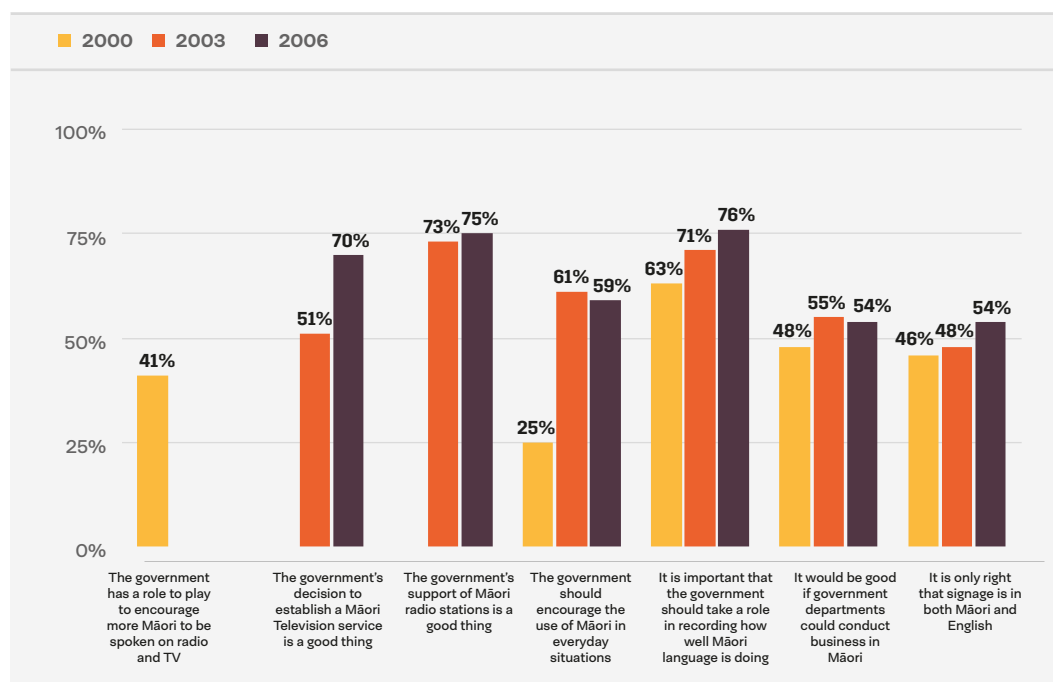
**Figure 5: Percentage of Māori responses that agree with each statement about the government's involvement in the te reo Māori space**



Source: Attitudes, values and beliefs towards the Māori language, Te Puni Kōkiri 2000, 2003, 2006.



**Figure 6: Percentage of non-Māori responses that agree with each statement about the government's involvement in the te reo Māori space**



Source: Attitudes, values and beliefs towards the Māori language, Te Puni Kōkiri 2000, 2003, 2006.

The above data indicates that:

- › Māori respondents strongly support government action to promote te reo Māori through:
  - › Media (radio and television)
  - › Public signage
  - › Public service use of the language
  - › Monitoring language health and vitality.
- › Non-Māori support has grown but remains more moderate, with a gradual increase in support for institutional involvement in te reo Māori promotion.

### ► Te Taunaki Public Service Census (2021)

Te Taunaki Public Service Census (Te Taunaki) is a survey conducted by Te Kawa Mataaho (Public Service Commission). Respondents are public servants working in departments and departmental agencies. Te Taunaki was first run in 2021, when approximately 40,000 public servants responded. The survey was repeated in 2025. However, those results were not available at the time of writing this report.

Te Taunaki asked respondents to express their agreement (on a 5-point scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree') with four statements relating to te reo Māori in the workplace. These were:

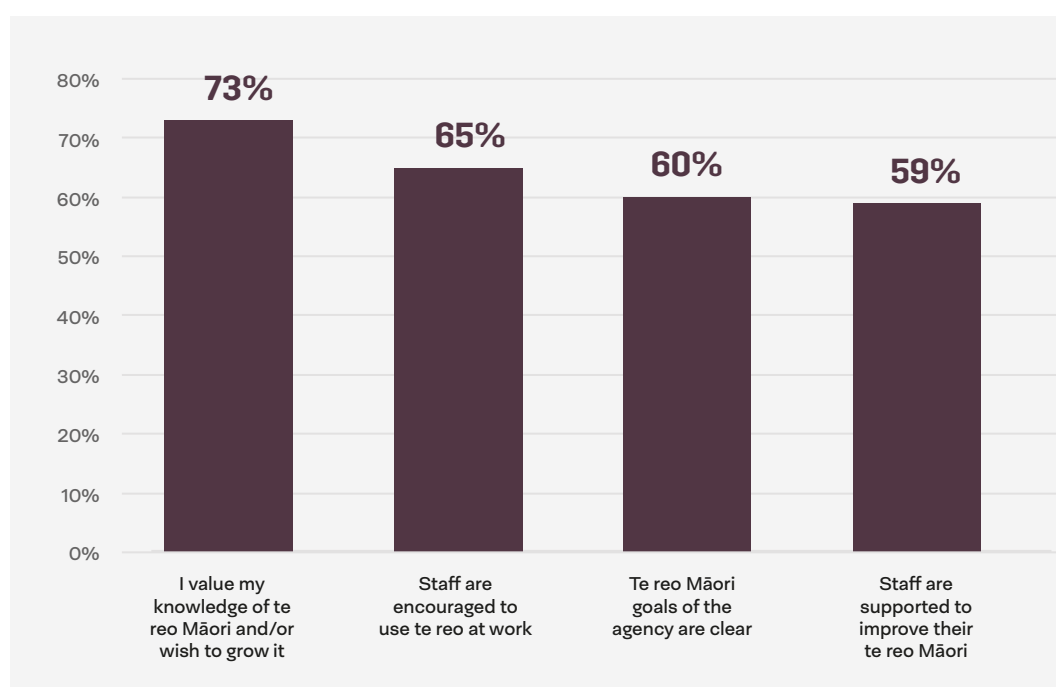
1. I value my knowledge of te reo Māori and/or wish to grow it
2. Staff are encouraged to use te reo Māori at work
3. Staff are supported to improve their te reo Māori
4. Te reo Māori goals of the agency are clear.

Overall, responses were positive (as illustrated in Figure 7):

- › At least 59% of participants agreed with each statement, indicating good support for te reo Māori across the public service.
- › The highest level of agreement was in staff valuing their knowledge of te reo and a desire to grow it (73%).
- › The lowest level of agreement was in staff being supported to improve their te reo Māori (59%).

These findings highlight the gap between staff values and aspirations for te reo, and support from the workplace to improve on those.

**Figure 7: Percentage of responses agreeing with each Te Taunaki te reo Māori value statement in 2021 (strongly agree or agree responses)**



Source: Te Taunaki Public Service Census 2021, Te Kawa Mataaho (Public Service Commission).

Further analysis of the 2021 data by age, ethnicity, and gender offers important insights into how different groups perceive and experience support for te reo Māori in the workplace (as seen in Table 3):

- › Younger, Māori, and Pacific employees expressed the highest personal investment in te reo Māori.
- › However, those same groups reported feeling *less supported* in the workplace to use or grow their reo.
- › Older and non-Māori staff reported higher levels of clarity and support for te reo Māori initiatives, despite having lower personal investment.
- › Female employees had a higher personal investment in te reo Māori than male employees. However, there is minimal to zero difference by gender for the other questions.

	I value my knowledge of te reo Māori and/or wish to grow it	Staff are encouraged to use te reo Māori at work	Te reo Māori goals of the agency are clear	Staff are supported to improve their te reo Māori
<b>Age</b>				
Under 25 years	81%	59%	57%	53%
25 to 34 years	79%	63%	55%	54%
35 to 44 years	76%	66%	58%	58%
45 to 54 years	72%	67%	61%	60%
55 to 64 years	65%	66%	65%	62%
65 years or over	61%	67%	71%	69%
<b>Ethnicity</b>				
Māori	81%	58%	50%	52%
Pacific	77%	55%	56%	53%
Asian	73%	62%	64%	59%
European	73%	68%	61%	60%
<b>Gender</b>				
Female	77%	67%	60%	59%
Male	67%	63%	60%	59%

Table 3: Percentage of responses agreeing with each statement in 2021, by demographic group.  
Source: Te Taunaki Public Service Census 2021, Te Kawa Mataaho (Public Service Commission).

The results from Te Taunaki Public Service census (2021) are supported by the report 'Te Rāngai Tūmatanui: Te Reo Māori Insights from the New Zealand Public Service' (2003), which notes that public service employees have more positive responses to questions on te reo Māori status than the general population.

### ► Te reo Māori status summary

The data from across the aforementioned surveys highlights the evolving attitudes towards te reo Māori in Aotearoa, showing increased support while at the same time highlighting ongoing challenges. Across different datasets, there is a clear generational and ethnic divide, with younger respondents, Māori, and Pacific peoples showing the highest levels of agreement on the value and importance of te reo Māori. Overall, while support for te reo Māori continues to strengthen, particularly among younger generations, there is still a need to focus on addressing gaps in active participation, workplace support, and broader societal engagement to encourage both older generations and non-Māori to support te reo Māori more.



## THEME 2

# Acquisition of te reo Māori in education settings

This section of the report explores the acquisition of te reo Māori through the education system. All data is sourced from Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga (Ministry of Education) 'Education Counts' website, covering enrolments from early childhood (ECE) to tertiary education.

ECE data is available to 2023. Primary, secondary, and tertiary data is available to 2024. Key areas of focus include:

1. The number of Māori-medium learning centres
2. Student enrolment numbers
3. The percentage of students learning te reo Māori at different levels.

In primary and secondary settings, te reo Māori use is measured through a level-based system that indicates the extent to which the language is used for instruction:

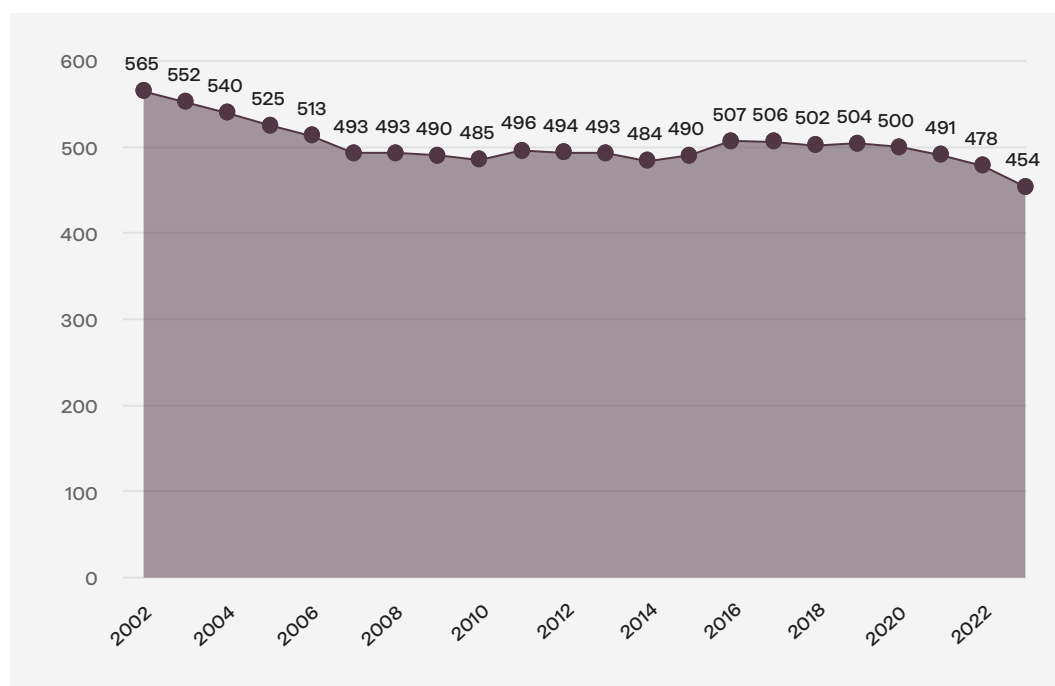
- › **Level 1 (81–100%):** Curriculum taught in te reo Māori for more than 20, and up to 25, hours per week
- › **Level 2 (51–80%):** 12.5 to 20 hours per week
- › **Level 3 (31–50%):** 7.5 to 12.5 hours per week
- › **Level 4(a) (12–30%):** 3 to 7.5 hours per week
- › **Level 4(b) (At least 3 hours):** Te reo Māori taught as a separate subject for at least 3 hours per week
- › **Level 5 (Less than 5 hours):** Te reo Māori taught as a subject for less than 3 hours per week
- › **Level 6 (Taha Māori):** Basic exposure—songs, greetings, simple words
- › **No Māori Language Education:** No recorded Māori language learning.

Levels 1 and 2 are considered to be Māori Medium education.

### ► Māori Medium early childhood education

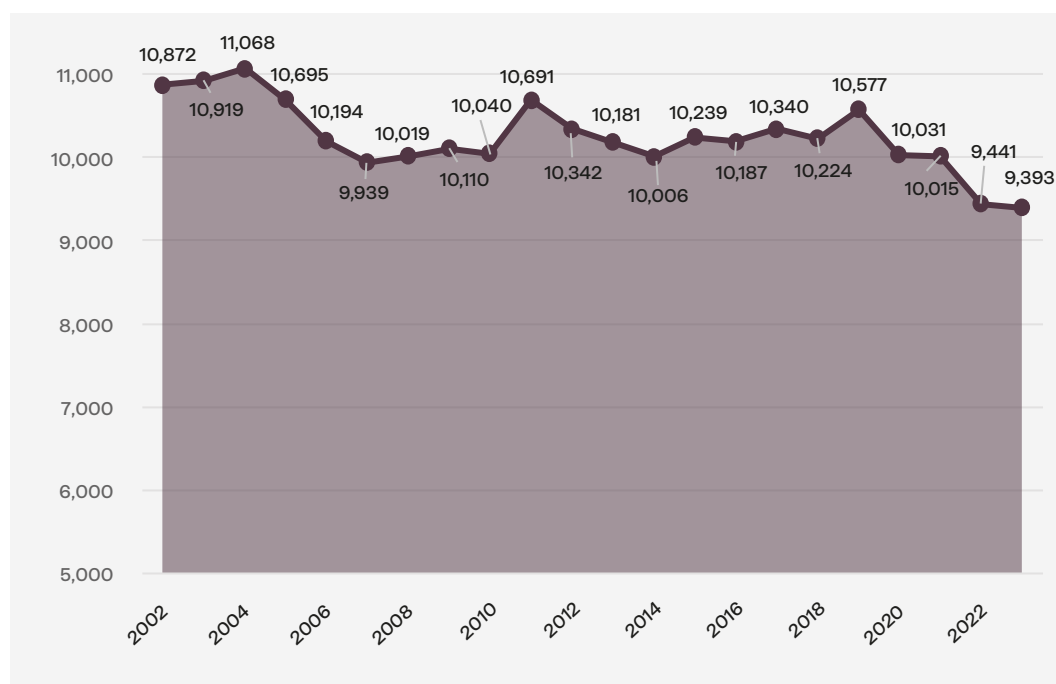
Early childhood education plays a pivotal role in promoting language learning and development from an early age. Māori Medium ECE (such as Kōhanga Reo, Puna Reo, and other kaupapa Māori focused ECE centres) play a particularly vital role in introducing te reo Māori as an everyday language.

**Figure 8: Total number of Māori Medium ECE centres 2002–2023**



Source: Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga (Ministry of Education).

As can be seen in Figure 8, the number of Māori-medium early childhood education centres has decreased by almost 20%; from 565 in 2002 to 454 in 2023. Enrolment numbers in Figure 9 reflect a similar trend, dropping from 10,872 in 2002 to 9,393 in 2023 – a reduction by almost 14%.

**Figure 9: Total number of Māori Medium ECE enrolments 2002–2023**

Source: Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga (Ministry of Education).

### ► Te reo Māori in primary schools

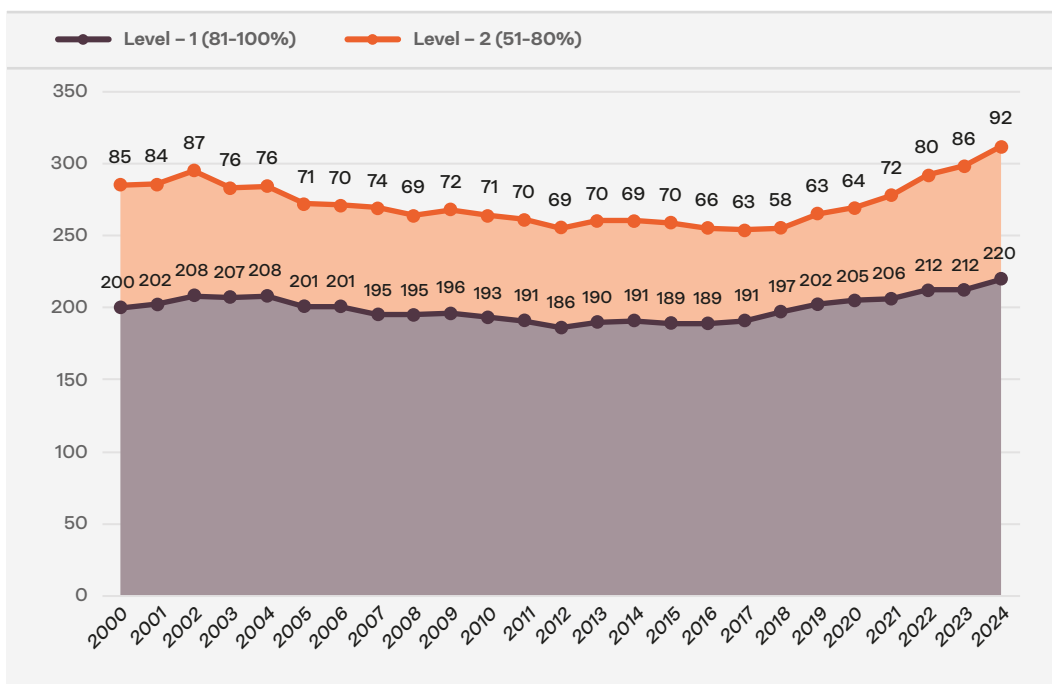
Using the level system above (re the extent of Māori language instruction), the data shows both the number of students at each level and the number of schools offering instruction in te reo Māori. The number of primary schools includes composite schools<sup>17</sup>.

Between 2000 and 2024:

- › The number of primary schools delivering more than 50% of their curriculum in te reo Māori (Levels 1 and 2) increased from 285 in the year 2000, to 312 in 2024 (a 9.5% increase) – as shown in Figure 10.
- › Enrolments in these schools rose from 14,890 in 2000 to 21,548 in 2024 (a 44.7% increase) – as shown in Figure 11.

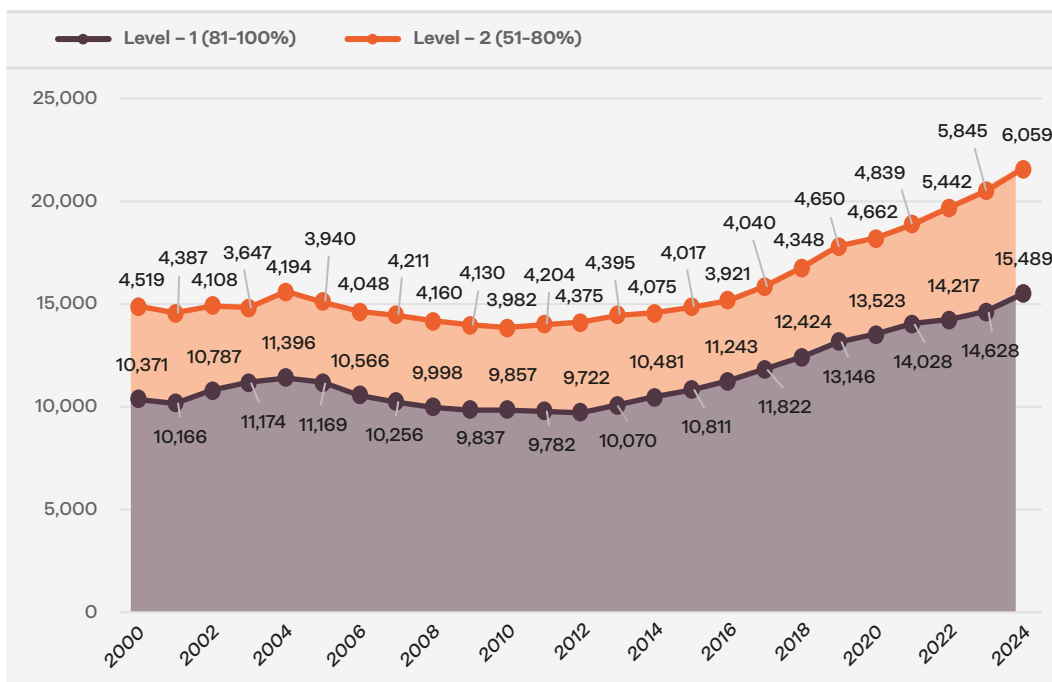
17. A composite school combines different year levels within a single school, often encompassing primary and secondary levels.

**Figure 10: Total number of primary schools that deliver curriculum in te reo Māori 50% of the time or more 2000–2024**



Source: Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga (Ministry of Education).

**Figure 11: Total number of student enrolments in primary schools that deliver curriculum in te reo Māori 50% of the time or more 2000–2024**



Source: Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga (Ministry of Education).

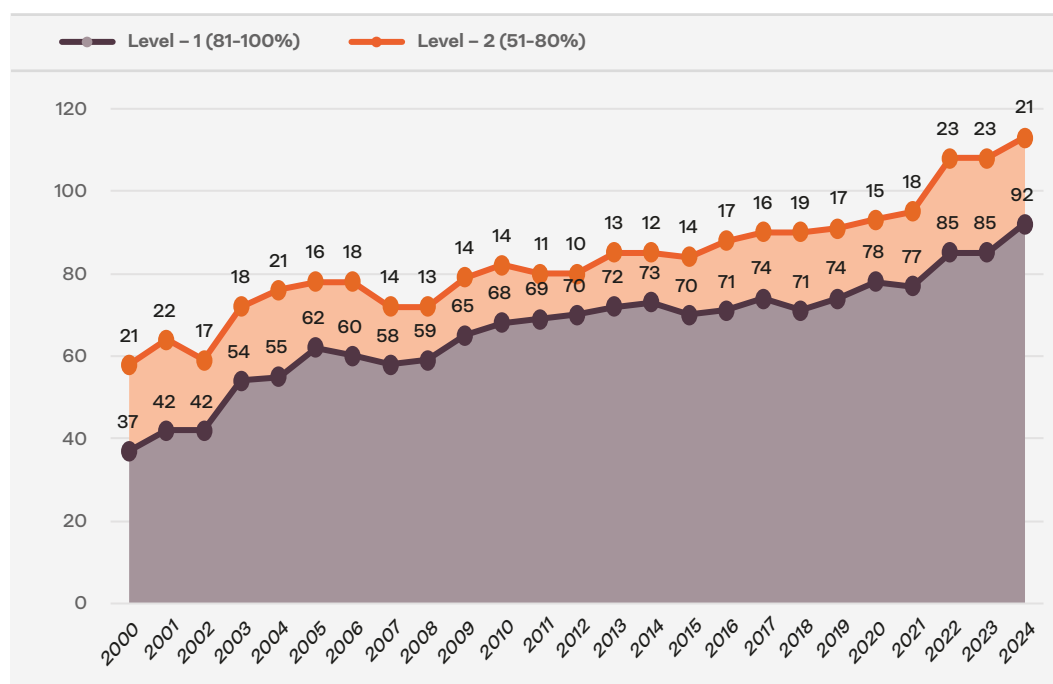
## ► Te reo Māori in secondary schools

Like primary schools, secondary school data tracks both enrolments and the number of schools by level of te reo instruction. There is also data available on the number of enrolments in te reo Māori as a subject, by year level. The number of secondary schools includes composite schools.

Between 2000 and 2024:

- › The number of secondary schools delivering more than 50% of their curriculum in te reo Māori grew from 58 to 113 (an increase of 94.8%) – as shown in Figure 12.
- › Student enrolments (in secondary schools delivering the curriculum in te reo Māori 50% of the time or more) rose from 1,634 to 5,577 (a 241% increase) – as shown in Figure 13.
- › Enrolments in te reo Māori as a subject have been rising. In 2024 a total of 39,413 students were enrolled in te reo Māori as a subject. This is a 50% increase from 26,339 enrolments in 2008 – as shown in Figure 14.

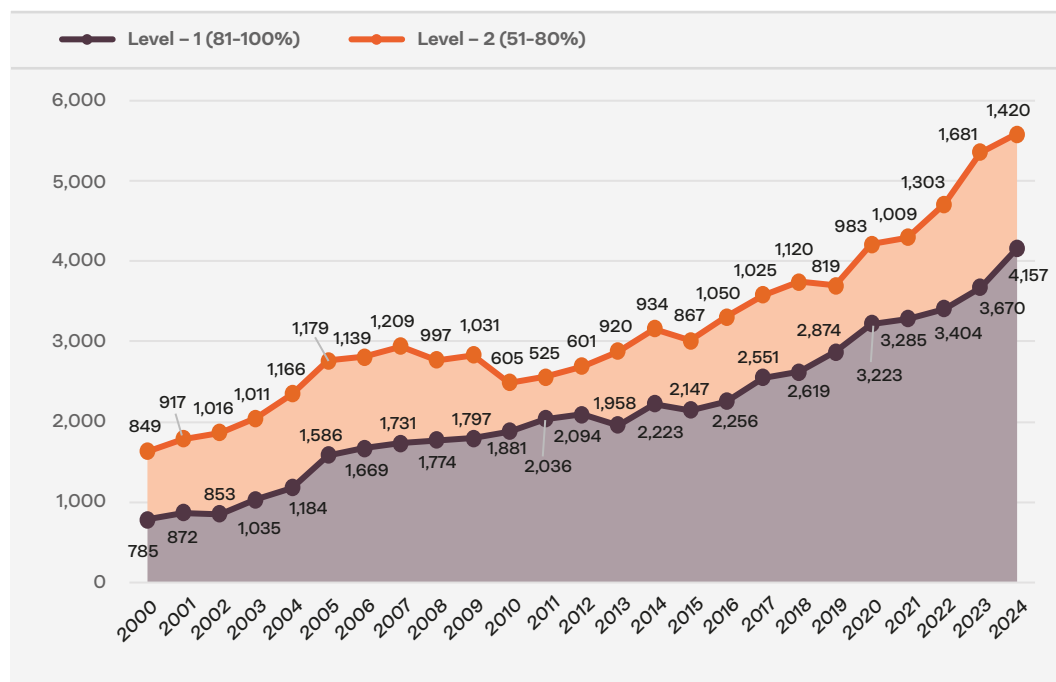
**Figure 12: Total number of secondary schools that deliver curriculum in te reo Māori 50% of the time or more 2000–2024**



Source: Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga (Ministry of Education).

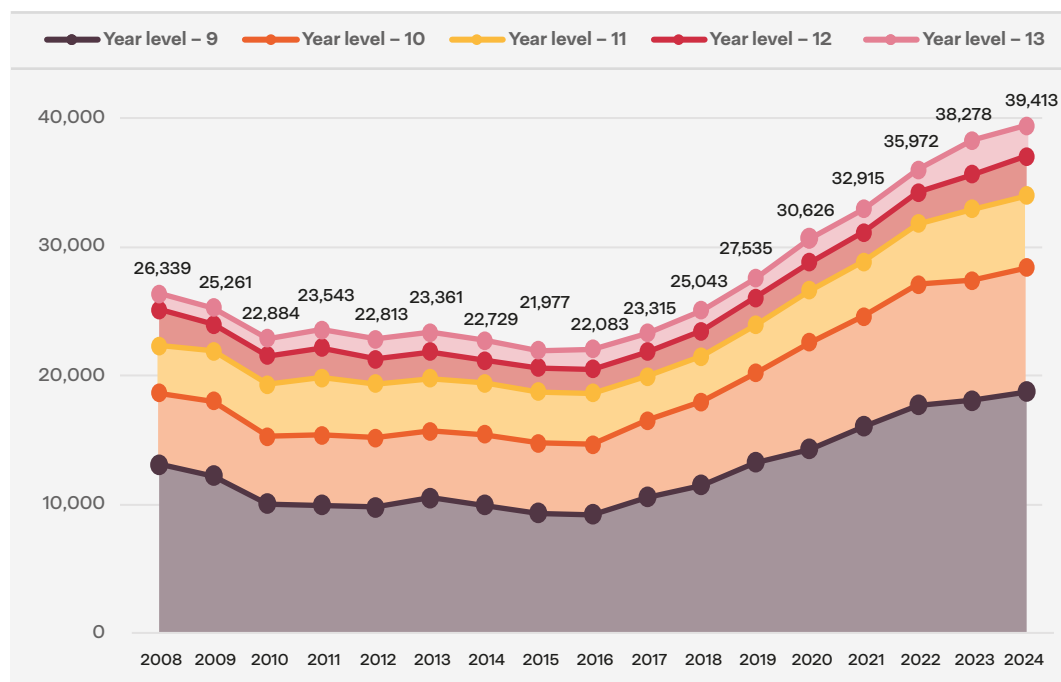


**Figure 13: Total number of student enrolments in secondary schools that deliver curriculum in te reo Māori 50% of the time or more 2000–2024**



Source: Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga (Ministry of Education).

**Figure 14: Enrolments in te reo Māori as a subject, by year group 2008–2024**



Source: Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga (Ministry of Education).

### ► Percentage of enrolments in Māori Medium education<sup>18</sup>

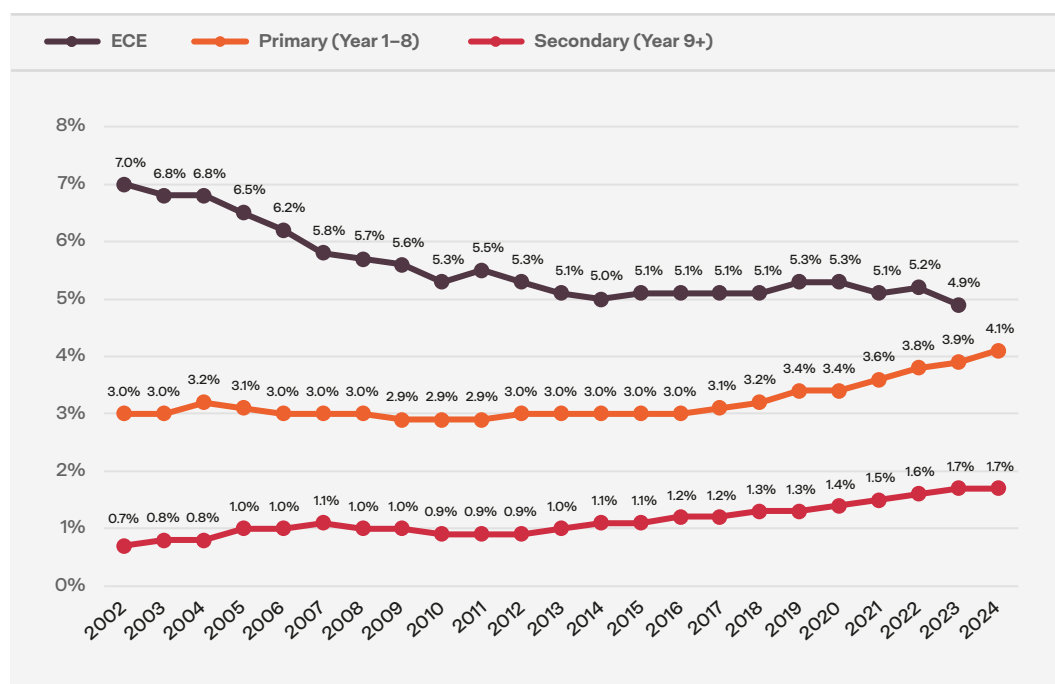
The majority of students enrolled in Māori Medium education are Māori. As they progress through the education system, the percentage of students enrolled in these settings reduces (as can be seen in Figure 15).

In 2023, 4.9% of students enrolled in ECE settings were enrolled with Māori Medium centres. This percentage had fallen from 7% of ECE students in 2002.

At primary school, in 2024, 4.1% of students attended a Māori Medium education school. This is an increase from the longstanding proportion of students hovering around 3% in previous years.

At secondary school, the percentage of students enrolled in Māori Medium education in 2024 was 1.7% of students. This percentage of secondary students is significantly lower than that for ECE and primary school students. However, it is an improvement compared with the early 2000s, when the secondary school percentage of Māori medium students was below 1%.

**Figure 15: Percentage of enrolments in Māori Medium education, by education level 2002–2024**



Source: Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga (Ministry of Education).

18. The count of students in Māori Medium education by school level has a different pattern due to there being a different number of years captured by each school level (9,393 students in ECE in 2023; 21,548 primary students in 2024; and 5577 secondary students in 2024).

Table 4 shows the percentage of Māori students enrolled in Māori medium education across the education system. While publicly available data on ECE enrolments is limited, the overall pattern mirrors that of the general population: the proportion of students in Māori medium education tends to decline as they move through the education system. Due to insufficient data, no clear trend can be identified for ECE enrolments. However, at the primary and secondary school levels, there have been increases in the percentage of Māori students enrolled in Māori medium education between 2014 and 2024.

Percentage of Māori children enrolled in Māori medium education			
Year	ECE	Primary	Secondary
2014	22%	11.9%	5.2%
2015		11.8%	4.9%
2016		11.7%	5.4%
2017		11.9%	5.7%
2018		12.3%	5.9%
2019		12.8%	5.8%
2020		13.1%	6.3%
2021	20%	13.3%	6.2%
2022		14.0%	6.7%
2023		14.6%	7.3%
2024		15.2%	7.3%

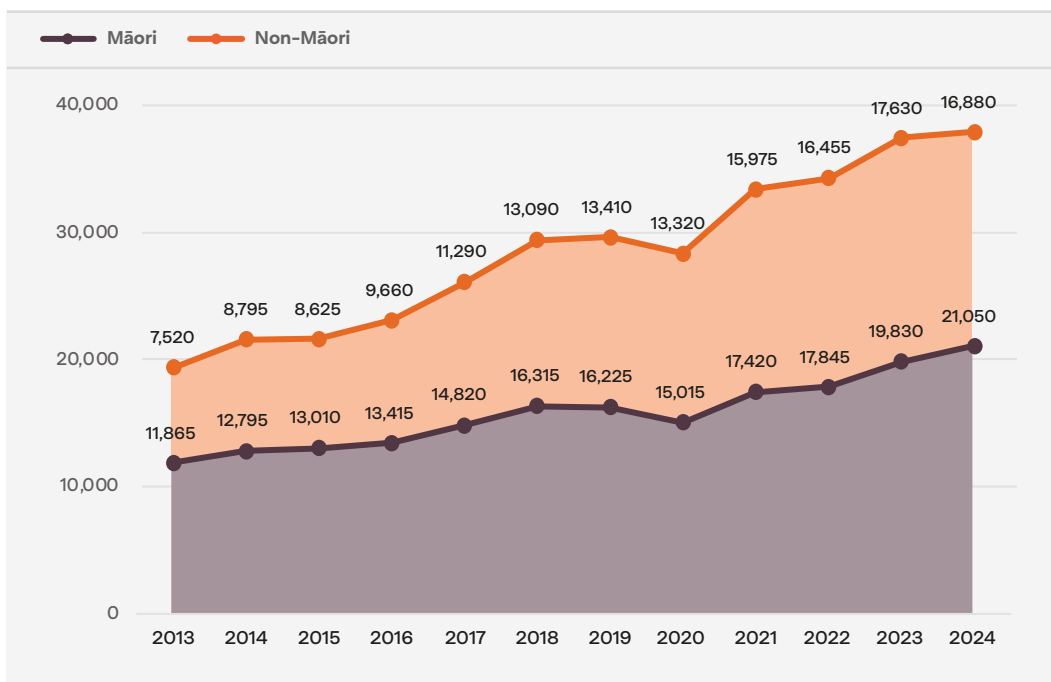
Table 4: Percentage of Māori tamariki enrolments in Māori medium education, by education level and year.  
Source: Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga (Ministry of Education).

### ► Te reo Māori in tertiary education

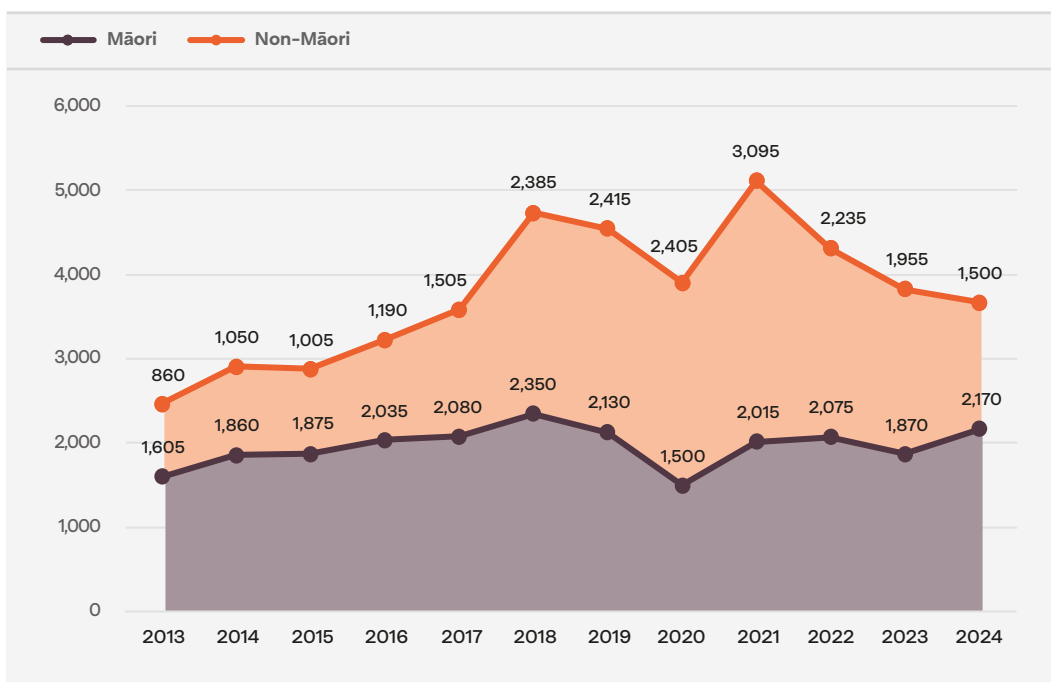
Tertiary data includes enrolments in both formal and non-formal te reo Māori courses:

- › **Formal courses:** Certificates, diplomas, bachelor's degrees, and postgraduate qualifications
- › **Non-formal courses:** Community education, personal interest certificates, and contract-taught programmes.

Figures 16 and 17 show that, between 2013 and 2024, total enrolments in tertiary te reo courses (formal and non-formal) increased from 21,850 to 41,600. Notably, non-Māori enrolments grew significantly – from 8,380 in 2013 to 18,380 in 2024 (a 119% increase). Most of this growth was from increased enrolments in formal te reo Māori courses.

**Figure 16: Tertiary enrolments in formal te reo Māori courses 2013–2024**

Source: Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga (Ministry of Education).

**Figure 17: Tertiary enrolments in non-formal te reo Māori courses 2013–2024**

Source: Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga (Ministry of Education).

### ► Te reo Māori acquisition summary

ECE centres such as Kōhanga Reo and Puna Reo play a crucial role in supporting early language acquisition and are foundational to the revitalisation of te reo Māori. It is concerning to see a decline in numbers for both centres and enrolments in the early childhood sector.

In the primary sector, between 2000 and 2024, there has been a relatively small increase (+27) in the number of schools delivering the curriculum in te reo Māori 50% of the time or more (see Figure 10). These schools are supporting a much larger growth in enrolments (+6,658) – as shown in Figure 11. This suggests increasing demand and potential pressure on capacity.

Figure 12 shows significant long-term growth (2000–2024) in the number of secondary schools delivering the curriculum in te reo Māori 50% of the time or more (an increase of 94.8%). Similarly, Figure 13 shows that secondary student enrolments have seen an increase of 241%. There has also been a 50% increase in enrolments in te reo Māori as a subject (see Figure 14). This indicates stronger uptake at secondary level.

However, retention rates in Māori Medium education show a clear decline through the education pathway, from ECE to primary to secondary – as evidenced in the following data from 2023:

- › 4.9% of all children in ECE attend Māori-medium centres
- › 3.9% of all primary students are in Māori-medium education
- › 1.7% of all secondary students remain in Māori-medium settings.

Notwithstanding, there has been significant long-term growth in tertiary education, particularly in formal courses (see Figure 16).

Data on unmet demand for Māori medium education and te reo Māori courses are not available to include in this report.

Future research should explore the factors contributing to the decline in both Māori-medium ECE centres and enrolments, as well as the potential impacts this may have on the broader Māori-medium education pipeline.



## THEME 3

# Te reo Māori proficiency

This section focuses on te reo Māori proficiency across Aotearoa. Speaking proficiency is a regularly measured aspect of the health of the Māori language, resulting in the wide range of data presented in this section. Limited data is also presented on listening, reading, and writing proficiency.

There are two questions that are primarily used to capture te reo Māori speaking proficiency in Aotearoa. These are:

- › *In which language(s) could you have a conversation about a lot of everyday things?*  
Te reo Māori is an option respondents may select.
- › *How well are you able to speak te reo Māori in day-to-day conversation?*  
The responses are typically:
  - › Not more than a few words or phrases
  - › Not very well
  - › Fairly well
  - › Well
  - › Very Well

Te reo Māori proficiency is the focus of audacious goal two of the Maihi Karauna. This goal aims for one million New Zealanders (or more) having the ability and confidence to talk about at least basic things in te reo Māori, by 2040.

In this section we explore data from the New Zealand Census (2001, 2006, 2013, 2018, and 2023); General Social Survey (2016, 2018, 2021, 2023); Te Wiki o Te Reo Māori Survey (2022, 2023, 2024); Te Kupenga (2013, 2018); and Te Taunaki (2021). In addition to the survey data, we also present forecast data on conversational and fluent speakers, from He Ara Poutama mō Te Reo Māori.

### ► Census (2001–2023)

The New Zealand Census is the only survey that captures data from the entire population, making it a key tool for understanding nationwide trends. The Census question that is used to measure language proficiency is: *“In which language(s) could you have a conversation about a lot of everyday things?”*

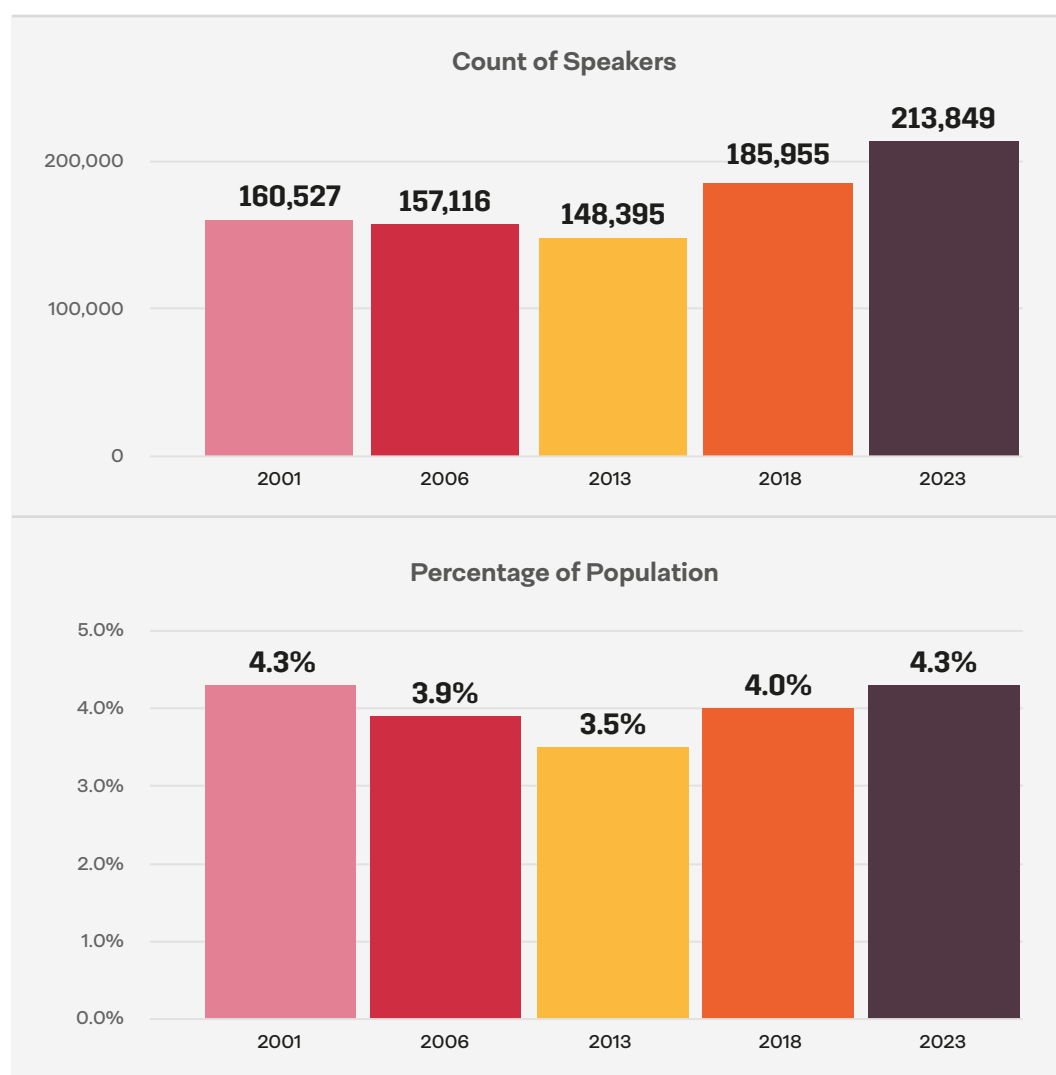
The following analysis covers those who selected “te reo Māori” in the last five Census years: 2001, 2006, 2013, 2018, and 2023. The results are presented by counts and percentages of the population (see Figure 18).

Key findings from census data show that the number of te reo Māori speakers in Aotearoa is growing again, after a decline in the early 2000s. The number of te reo Māori speakers has increased to 213,849 in 2023, following an initial decline from 160,527 in 2001 to 148,395 in 2013.

When viewed as a percentage of the population, 4.3% of the population can now speak te reo Māori (in 2023). This is the same as it was in 2001, despite a dip to 3.5% in 2013; and a gradual rise to 4.0% in 2018.

Population growth has moderated the visible impact of increased speaker numbers, keeping proportional gains relatively steady.

**Figure 18: Te Reo Māori speaker counts and as a percentage of the population by census year**



Source: NZ Census 2001–2023.

As shown in Table 5, younger age groups show higher proportions of te reo Māori speakers in 2023, as follows:

- › Under 15 years – 5.3%
- › 15–29 years – 5.2%
- › 30–64 years – 4.1%
- › 65+ years – 2.5%

Māori make up the majority of te reo speakers (85% in 2023).

In 2023, 1 in 5 Māori reported being able to have a conversation in te reo Māori about a lot of everyday things, which is down from 1 in 4 in 2001.

As evident in Table 5, women are more likely than men to report being able to speak te reo Māori.

The 2023 Census was the first to include an “another gender” option. While the number of speakers in this gender category is small (1,236), it has the highest proportion of speakers (6.1%).

	Count of speakers					Percentage of population				
	2001	2006	2013	2018	2023	2001	2006	2013	2018	2023
<b>Age</b>										
Under 15	44,943	39,354	36,513	44,430	49,617	5.3%	4.5%	4.2%	4.8%	5.3%
15–29	40,428	38,457	34,407	44,421	50,535	5.4%	4.7%	4.1%	4.6%	5.2%
30–64	63,918	66,222	62,430	78,969	93,408	3.8%	3.6%	3.2%	3.8%	4.1%
65+	11,232	13,083	15,048	18,138	20,292	2.5%	2.6%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%
<b>Ethnicity</b>										
Māori	130,485	131,613	125,352	159,645	182,001	24.8%	23.3%	20.9%	20.6%	20.5%
Pacific	13,062	10,323	11,484	16,863	22,236	5.6%	3.9%	3.9%	4.4%	5.0%
Asian	1,872	1,857	2,292	3,345	4,725	0.8%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.6%
Other	50,442	51,594	50,607	64,125	80,838	1.7%	1.6%	1.5%	1.9%	2.3%
<b>Gender</b>										
Another gender					1,236					6.1%
Female	83,520	82,659	80,196	100,386	116,088	4.4%	4.0%	3.7%	4.2%	4.6%
Male	77,007	74,457	68,202	85,572	96,525	4.2%	3.8%	3.3%	3.7%	

Table 5: New Zealand Census counts and percentages of te reo Māori speakers, by demographic groups and year.  
Source: New Zealand Census 2001–2023.

Table 6 shows that, in 2023, the highest percentage of te reo Māori speakers per capita continued to be in rural regions with a higher Māori population; namely:

- › Gisborne – 16.9%
- › Northland – 10.1%
- › Bay of Plenty – 9.0%



Region	Count of speakers					Percentage of population				
	2001	2006	2013	2018	2023	2001	2006	2013	2018	2023
Northland	13,308	13,458	12,612	17,763	19,680	9.5%	9.1%	8.3%	9.9%	10.1%
Auckland	34,977	33,243	30,921	38,118	43,563	3.0%	2.5%	2.2%	2.4%	2.6%
Waikato	22,758	22,125	21,306	26,880	31,497	6.4%	5.8%	5.3%	5.9%	6.3%
Bay of Plenty	22,014	22,920	21,090	26,601	30,111	9.2%	8.9%	7.9%	8.6%	9.0%
Gisborne	7,077	6,738	6,243	7,902	8,625	16.1%	15.1%	14.3%	16.6%	16.9%
Taranaki	4,299	3,936	3,852	4,992	5,655	4.2%	3.8%	3.5%	4.2%	4.5%
Hawke's Bay	9,849	9,681	9,342	11,361	12,669	6.9%	6.6%	6.2%	6.8%	7.2%
Manawatū-Whanganui	11,778	11,817	10,422	12,735	15,000	5.4%	5.3%	4.7%	5.3%	6.0%
Wellington	16,173	15,699	15,618	17,886	20,478	3.8%	3.5%	3.3%	3.5%	3.9%
Marlborough	876	897	888	1,113	1,371	2.2%	2.1%	2.0%	2.4%	2.8%
Nelson	915	933	1020	1,284	1,551	2.2%	2.2%	2.2%	2.5%	3.0%
Tasman	750	714	669	954	1,176	1.8%	1.6%	1.4%	1.8%	2.0%
West Coast	615	600	531	567	768	2.0%	1.9%	1.7%	1.8%	2.3%
Canterbury	8,832	8,697	8,646	11,193	13,905	1.8%	1.7%	1.6%	1.9%	2.1%
Otago	3,537	3,258	2,991	3,957	4,620	1.9%	1.7%	1.5%	1.8%	1.9%
Southland	2,706	2,304	2,202	2,559	3,117	3.0%	2.5%	2.4%	2.6%	3.1%

Table 6: New Zealand Census counts and percentages of te reo Māori speakers, by region and year.

Source: New Zealand Census 2001–2023.

### ► General Social Survey (2016, 2018, 2021, 2023)

The GSS asks respondents about their ability to speak te reo Māori in a day-to-day conversation. There are five response options<sup>19</sup>. These were stated at the start of this section (under 'Theme 3').

As discussed earlier (under 'Data Sources'), the 2021 GSS had a reduced sample size due to impacts from the COVID-19 restrictions. Therefore, the 2021 results should be interpreted with caution when comparing across years.

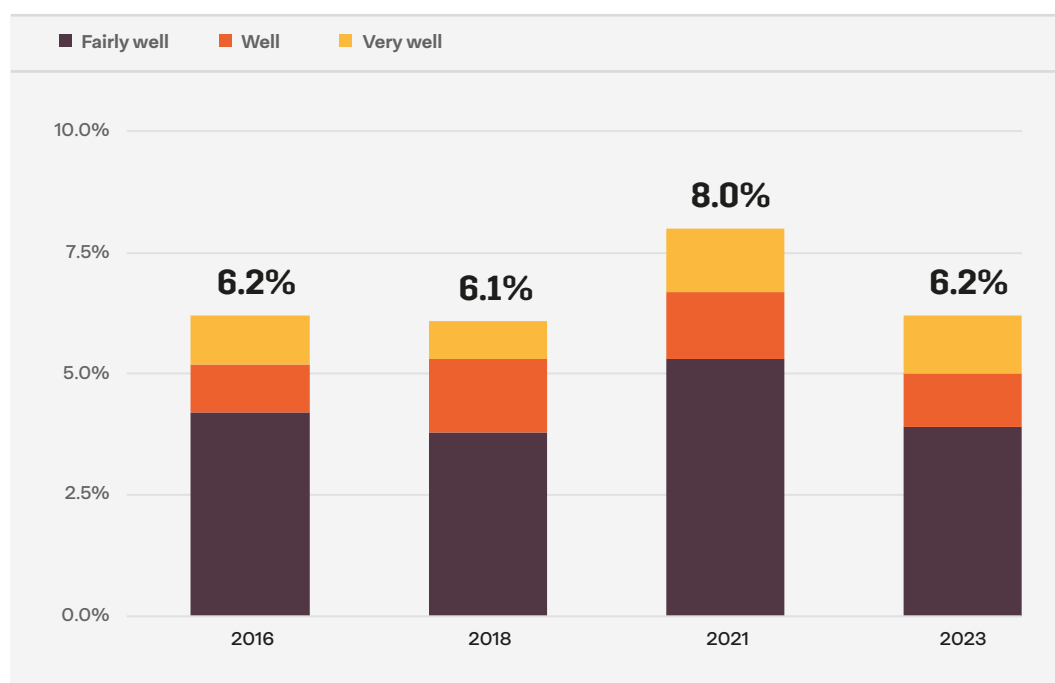
The data in Figure 19 shows that, overall, the percentage of people who can speak te reo Māori at least 'fairly well' has remained around 6% across the years of the survey, with the exception of the spike in 2021 (associated with COVID-19).

19. The 2023 General Social Survey changed the response options for low proficiency from "Not more than a few words or phrases" to two options; "Just a few words or phrases", or "Cannot speak any".

Table 7 shows that:

- › Younger age groups have the highest levels of te reo Māori proficiency, with the 20–29 age group being the strongest in 2023.
- › In 2023, just over 1 in 4 Māori could speak te reo Māori at least ‘fairly well’.
- › Māori have the highest level of speakers, but there has been a downward trend in the percentage of Māori that can speak te reo Māori at least ‘fairly well’ (with the exception of the aforementioned 2021 spike).
- › Females have a higher level of proficiency in te reo Māori than males.

**Figure 19: Overall ability to speak te reo Māori at least ‘fairly well’ – General Social Survey**



Source: General Social Survey 2016–2023.

	2016	2018	2021	2023
<b>Age</b>				
15–19	12%	10%	12%	9%
20–24	8%	7%	10%	11%
25–29	9%	6%	10%	10%
30–34	7%	6%	16%	8%
35–39	6%	7%	7%	6%
40–44	8%	8%	8%	6%
45–49	5%	5%	10%	6%
50–54	4%	5%	6%	7%
55–59	5%	6%	5%	6%
60–64	4%	5%	3%	3%
65 and over	3%	4%	4%	3%
<b>Ethnicity</b>				
Māori	30%	29%	34%	26%
Pacific	7%	8%	13%	7%
Asian	1%	0%	3%	1%
Other	4%	4%	6%	2%
<b>Gender</b>				
Female	7%	8%	9%	8%
Male	5%	4%	7%	5%

Table 7: Ability to speak te reo Māori at least 'fairly well', by year and demographic group.  
Source: General Social Survey 2016–2023.

### ► Te Wiki o Te Reo Māori Survey (2022, 2023, 2024)

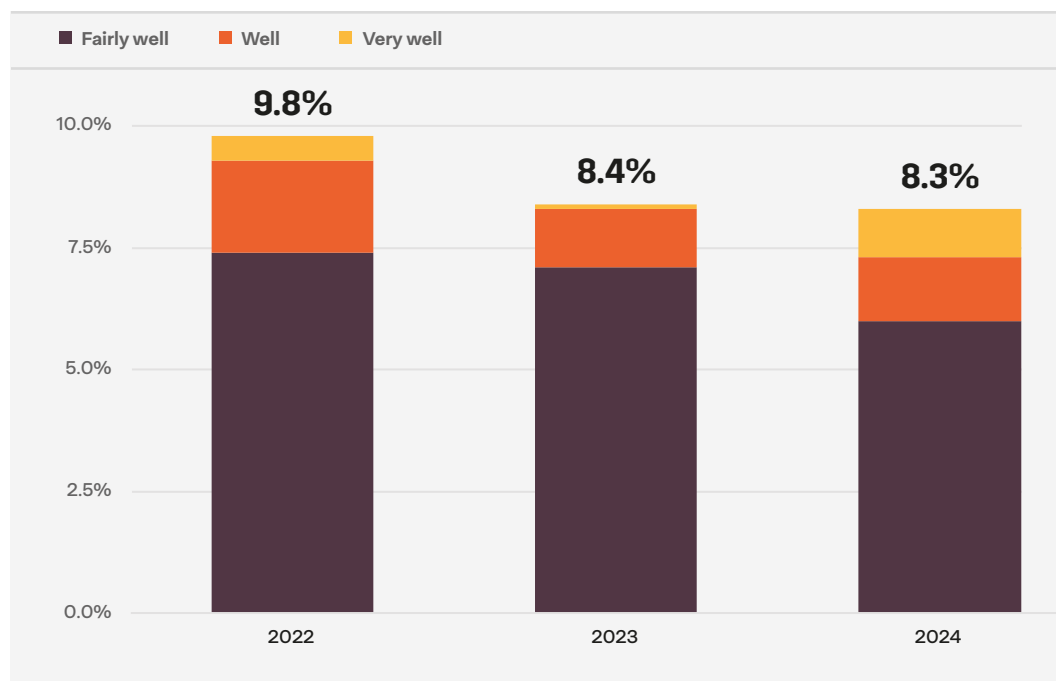
Like the GSS, Te Wiki o Te Reo Māori Survey asks respondents about their ability to speak te reo Māori in a day-to-day conversation. This survey is only for those 18 years old and over, whereas GSS is for 15 years old and over. Therefore, the overall results are not directly comparable.

The data in Figure 20 shows that, overall, the percentage of respondents who report they can speak te reo Māori at least 'fairly well' in day-to-day conversation has had a downward trend from 2022 to 2024 (9.8% in 2022 to 8.3% in 2024).

Table 8 data illustrates that:

- › Younger age groups and Māori report the highest level of ability to speak te reo Māori in day-to-day conversations.
- › There has been a reduction in the percentage of Māori respondents who can speak te reo Māori at least 'fairly well' – from 33.2% in 2022 to 26.2% in 2024.
- › Males report a higher proficiency level than females. This is a trend that has been consistent across the past three Te Wiki o Te Reo Māori surveys.

**Figure 20: Overall ability to speak te reo Māori at least 'fairly well' – Te Wiki o Te Reo Māori Survey**



Source: Te Wiki o te Reo Māori Survey 2022–2024.

	2022	2023	2024
<b>Age</b>			
18–25	12.1%	13.6%	16.4%
26–29	24.1%	16.3%	17.8%
30–39	14.8%	12.3%	6.3%
40–49	8.3%	6.4%	6.7%
50–59	7.5%	7.2%	6.4%
60+	4.0%	2.7%	5.7%
<b>Ethnicity</b>			
Māori	33.2%	28.8%	26.2%
Non-Māori	7.3%	6.1%	5.1%
<b>Gender</b>			
Female	9.4%	6.6%	6.7%
Male	10.3%	10.0%	10.1%

**Table 8: Ability to speak te reo Māori at least 'fairly well', by year and demographic group.**

Source: Te Wiki o te Reo Māori Survey 2022–2024.

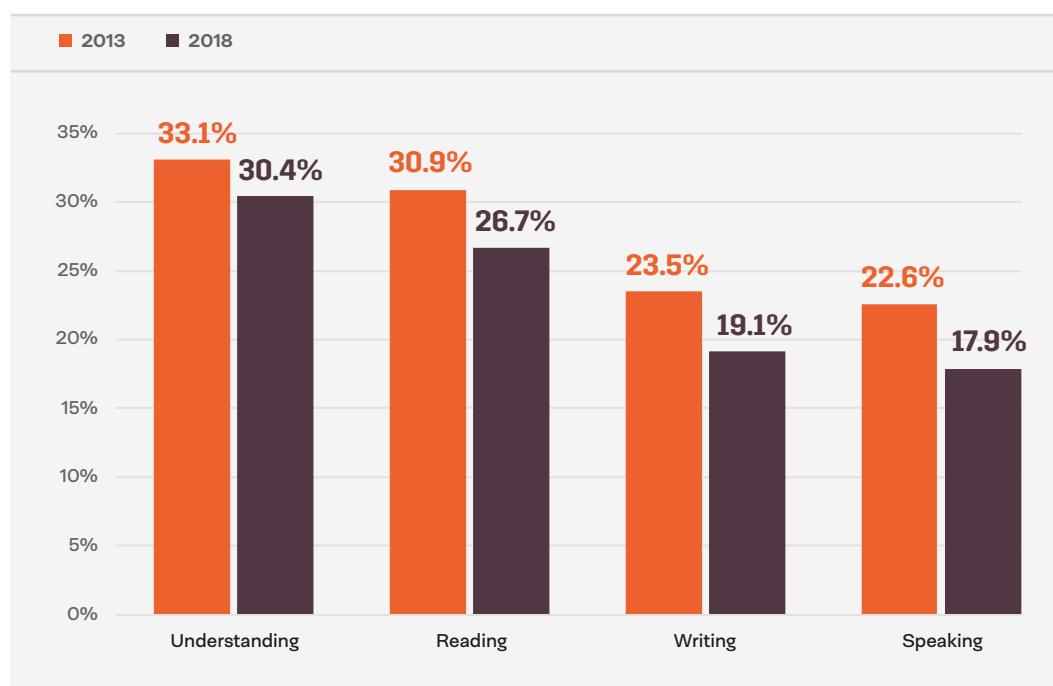
## ► Te Kupenga

Te Kupenga is a survey focused specifically on the Māori population. It provides insights into how well Māori people can understand, read, write and speak te reo Māori. Participants are asked to rate their ability in each skill. The data below in Figure 21 reflects the percentage of respondents who answered, “Very well,” “Well,” or “Fairly well” in the 2013 and 2018 Te Kupenga surveys.

Between 2013 and 2018, there was an overall decline in respondents’ self-reported ability across all four skill areas. Demographic insights (in Table 9) show that:

- › The declining trend was observed across both males and females, indicating a consistent pattern by gender.
- › A slight increase in proficiency was observed across all four skills in participants aged 20–24, indicating growing engagement with te reo Māori among younger Māori.
- › The most significant decline was seen in the over 60 years age group.

**Figure 21: Overall ability to understand, read, write, and speak te reo Māori**  
Responses that answered “fairly well,” “well,” or “very well”



Source: Te Kupenga 2013, 2018.

	Understand		Read		Write		Speak	
	2013	2018	2013	2018	2013	2018	2013	2018
<b>Age</b>								
15–19	27%	32%	28%	27%	20%	22%	21%	19%
20–24	26%	28%	25%	29%	19%	21%	18%	20%
25–29	34%	29%	30%	26%	26%	17%	25%	17%
30–34	32%	33%	31%	29%	21%	20%	22%	19%
35–39	32%	35%	31%	30%	21%	19%	21%	19%
40–44	30%	30%	29%	27%	20%	17%	19%	16%
45–49	26%	32%	21%	26%	18%	19%	17%	17%
50–54	26%	24%	26%	21%	19%	15%	17%	12%
55–59	32%	30%	24%	25%	21%	19%	20%	19%
60–64	37%	30%	27%	25%	22%	17%	20%	17%
65 and over	41%	31%	38%	27%	29%	21%	29%	20%
<b>Gender</b>								
Female	34%	34%	31%	31%	24%	22%	23%	20%
Male	27%	27%	25%	22%	19%	16%	18%	15%

Table 9: Ability of the Māori population to understand, read, write, and speak te reo Māori, by demographic group and year.

Source: Te Kupenga 2013, 2018.

## ► Te Taunaki Public Service Census (2021)

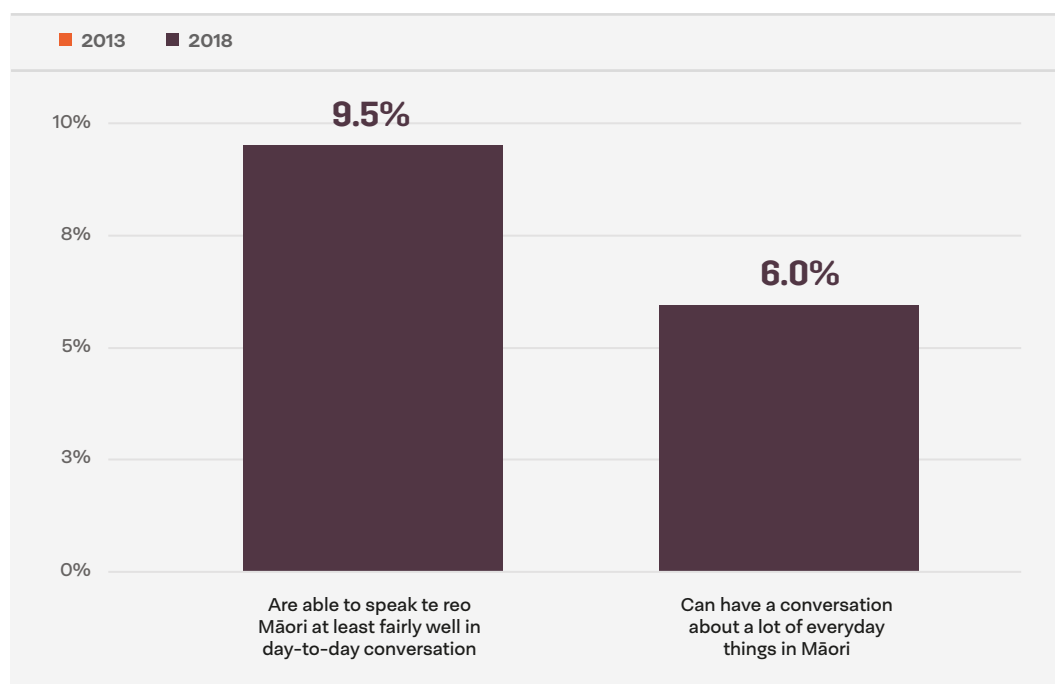
Te Taunaki Public Service Census asks participants (public servants) two proficiency questions; namely:

1. *In which language(s) could you have a conversation about a lot of everyday things?*
2. *How well are you able to speak te reo Māori in day-to-day conversation?*

Figure 22 shows the results for those who answered “te reo Māori” to question one; and “fairly well”, “well”, or “very well” to question two.

More participants reported they were able to speak te reo Māori at least ‘fairly well’ in day-to-day conversation (9.5%) than those who reported they could have a conversation about a lot of everyday things in te reo Māori (6.0%). This suggests that these two common proficiency questions may be interpreted differently by respondents.

**Figure 22:** Overall ability to speak te reo Māori at least ‘fairly well’ and to have a conversation about a lot of everyday things in te reo Māori – Te Taunaki Public Service Census



Source: Te Taunaki Public Service Census 2021.

Demographic breakdowns of the data in Table 10 show that:

- › The youngest age group (under 25) and oldest age group (65+) report the highest rates of being able to speak te reo Māori at least ‘fairly well’ in a day-to-day conversation. However, there are minimal differences by age group for responses associated with being able to have a conversation about a lot of everyday things in te reo Māori.
- › Māori have the highest level of te reo proficiency, with 1 in 3 reporting they are able to speak te reo Māori at least ‘fairly well’ in a day-to-day conversation; and 1 in 4 reporting they can have a conversation about a lot of everyday things in te reo Māori.
- › Females report higher proficiency in both questions.

	Are able to speak te reo Māori at least fairly well in day-to-day conversation	Can have a conversation about a lot of everyday things in Māori
<b>Age</b>		
Under 25	12.1%	6.3%
25-34	9.5%	5.2%
35-44	9.8%	6.5%
45 to 54	9.2%	6.0%
55 to 64	8.6%	5.8%
65+	10.7%	7.6%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Māori	33.0%	25.8%
Pacific	12.8%	7.1%
Asian	2.9%	1.4%
European	7.0%	3.7%
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	9.9%	6.2%
Male	8.8%	5.5%

Table 10: Ability to speak te reo Māori at least 'fairly well' and to have a conversation about a lot of everyday things in te reo Māori, by demographic group.

Source: Te Taunaki Public Service Census 2021.

## ► He Ara Poutama mō Te Reo Māori forecasts

He Ara Poutama mō te reo Māori (He Ara Poutama) forecasts the number of conversational and fluent te reo Māori speakers to 2040. Results from the model have been presented in various reports, as follows:

- › The initial 2021 report presents the forecast of conversational and fluent speakers to 2040 by ethnicity, age group, and region. The forecast for 2040 is 260,000 conversational speakers and 102,000 fluent speakers. This would equate to 4.8% of the total population being conversational speakers and 1.9% being fluent speakers.
- › The 2023 Rāngai Tūmatanui report uses He Ara Poutama to understand te reo Māori attitudes and capability within the public service. The results show that, compared to the general public, public servants have higher te reo Māori proficiency.
- › The 2023 Maihi Karauna monitoring report uses He Ara Poutama to forecast progress towards the Maihi Karauna audacious goals to be achieved by 2040. In terms of proficiency, the forecast indicates that we will be close to achieving the audacious goal of one million (or more) New Zealanders having the ability and confidence to speak about at least basic things in te reo Māori.



### ► Proficiency summary

There are a wide range of data sources that capture information on te reo proficiency in New Zealand, with a particular emphasis on speaking proficiency. This is the only theme with data across the entire population from Censuses.

The number of te reo Māori speakers is growing, with Census 2023 showing the highest total to date. The percentage of te reo Māori speakers in the population has had a small increase in the most recent census data, but results from the GSS and from Te Wiki o te Reo Māori surveys show no change, or a slight decline, in the percentage of the population that can speak te reo Māori.

The Māori population makes up the majority of te reo Māori speakers in Aotearoa New Zealand. Data shows that 20.5% of Māori are able to have a conversation about a lot of everyday things in te reo Māori, compared to 4.3% of the total population (Census 2023). However, this percentage has declined since the 2001 Census (24.8%). Proficiency results from Te Kupenga, GSS, and Te Wiki o Te Reo Māori surveys also show declines in proficiency in the Māori population. This highlights a need for stronger support to promote and sustain language acquisition and use.



## THEME 4

### Te reo Māori use

This section focuses on the use of te reo Māori, specifically where and how often it is spoken and heard, with a particular emphasis on its use within the home.

Understanding where te reo Māori is used provides important contextual information for language revitalisation, as regular exposure in places such as the home plays a crucial role in strengthening language retention and intergenerational transmission.

Te reo Māori use is captured in the third audacious goal of the Maihi Karauna. This goal aims for 150, 000 Māori aged 15 and over to use te reo Māori as much as English by 2040.

Data presented in this section are from the New Zealand General Social Survey (2016, 2021, 2023); Te Taunaki Public Service Census (2021); Te Kupenga (2013, 2018); Te Wiki o te Reo Māori surveys (2022, 2023, 2024); and He Ara Poutama mō Te Reo Māori Maihi Karauna monitoring report (2023).

#### ► General Social Survey (2016, 2021, 2023)

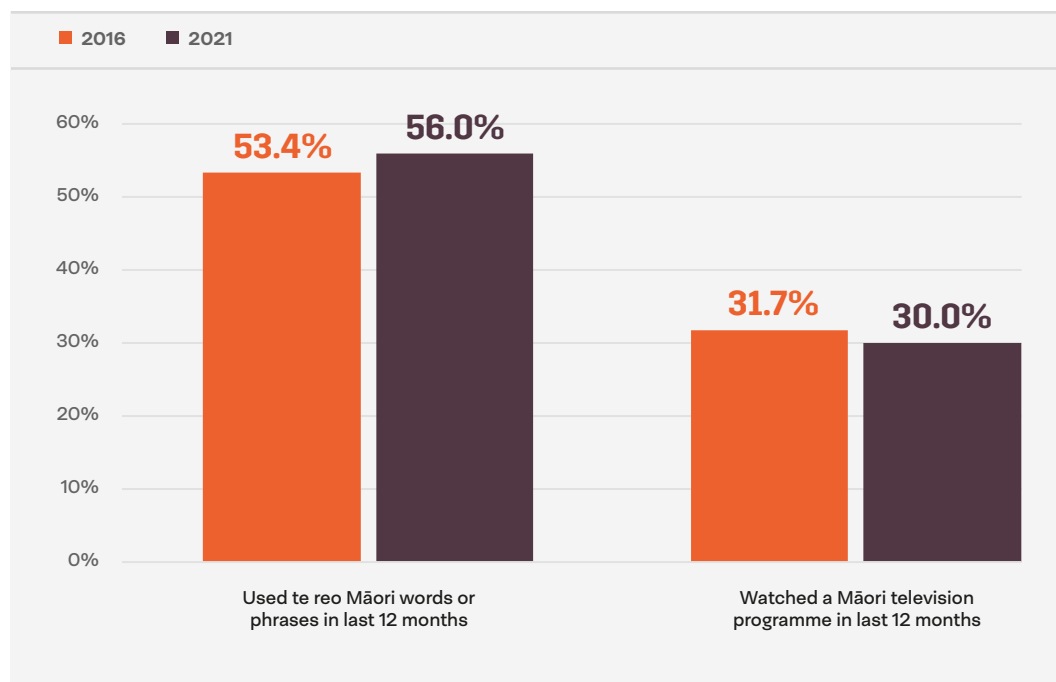
This section presents data from the GSS for 2016, 2021, and 2023. (The 2018 GSS did not ask specific questions about te reo Māori use). In 2016 and 2021, the following two questions were asked about te reo Māori use:

1. *Have you used te reo Māori words or phrases in the last 12 months?*
2. *Have you watched a Māori television programme in the last 12 months?*

The results below (in Figure 23) are for 'Some te reo Māori' or above. The GSS data for 2016 and 2021 show that:

- › Overall usage of te reo Māori words and phrases increased from 2016 to 2021.
- › Engagement with Māori television programmes declined over the same period.

**Figure 23: Use and engagement with te reo Māori**



Source: General Social Survey 2016, 2021.

Demographic data for 2016 and 2021 (in Table 11) shows that:

- › Māori respondents continued to use te reo Māori and engage with Māori media more than any other ethnic group. However, their usage declined slightly.
- › The 20–34 age group showed the largest increase in language use.
- › Watching Māori programming decreased across most age groups, with the youngest age group (15–19) having the largest decrease of 7%.

	Used te reo Māori words or phrases in last 12 months		Watched a Māori television programme in last 12 months	
	2016	2021	2016	2021
<b>Age</b>				
15–19	64%	62%	25%	18%
20–24	55%	69%	20%	20%
25–29	59%	63%	28%	23%
30–34	59%	68%	27%	35%
35–39	61%	56%	31%	25%
40–44	64%	65%	36%	32%
45–49	57%	64%	34%	32%
50–54	50%	54%	33%	32%
55–59	56%	56%	40%	34%
60–64	49%	50%	37%	39%
65 and over	36%	35%	36%	35%
<b>Ethnicity</b>				
Māori	90%	85%	71%	62%
Pacific	48%	58%	32%	36%
Asian	32%	31%	15%	16%
Other	54%	58%	30%	28%
<b>Gender</b>				
Female	54%	57%	33%	29%
Male	53%	55%	30%	31%

Table 11: Percentage of responses agreeing with each te reo Māori use statement in 2016 and 2021, by demographic group.

Source: General Social Survey 2016, 2021, Stats NZ.

In 2023, the GSS questions changed. There was a focus on te reo Māori use within the home, so the following two questions were asked:

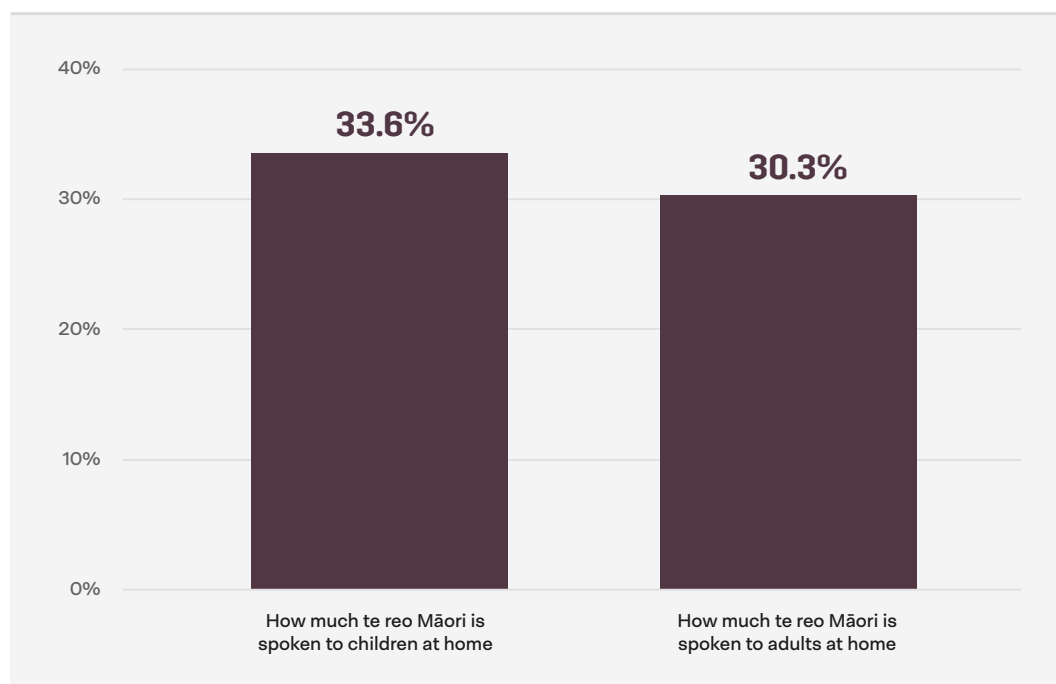
1. *How much te reo Māori do you speak to children in your home?*
2. *How much te reo Māori do you speak to adults in your home?*

The response options were: *No te reo Māori; Some te reo Māori; Te reo Māori equally with English (or another language); or Mostly/all te reo Māori.*

The data for 2023 (as seen in Figure 24) shows that one third of households (33.6%) speak at least 'some te reo Māori' to children at home. And slightly fewer households (30.3%) speak at least 'some te reo Māori' to adults at home. That is, children are more likely to be spoken to in te reo Māori at home, than adults are.

### Figure 24: Te reo Māori spoken in the home

Responses that answered “Some te reo Māori”, “Te reo Māori equally with English (or another language)”, or “Mostly/all te reo Māori”



Source: General Social Survey 2023.

Further analysis of the GSS data in 2023 reveals variations in the degree of te reo Māori spoken at home by age, ethnicity and gender (as shown in Table 12):

- › The younger generations (particularly 25–44 year olds) are more likely to speak some te reo Māori at home to children. However, the variation in te reo Māori spoken at home, by age, is likely influenced by the household composition. For example, older age groups will be less likely to have children living at home.
- › Māori households are the most likely to speak at least some te reo Māori at home to both adults and children. This is expected as Māori have the highest rates of te reo Māori proficiency.
- › There is minimal difference in te reo Māori spoken at home by gender

	How much te reo Māori is spoken to children at home			How much te reo Māori is spoken to adults at home		
	Some te reo Māori	Te reo Māori equally with English	Mostly/all te reo Māori	Some te reo Māori	Te reo Māori equally with English	Mostly/all te reo Māori
<b>Age</b>						
15–24	17.6%	1.9%	1.4%	30.5%	1.7%	
25–34	36.9%	1.9%	1.9%	33.0%	1.3%	1.0%
35–44	45.3%	1.6%		30.2%	0.8%	
45–54	30.3%	2.1%	0.8%	24.7%	1.5%	0.7%
55–64	27.6%	1.9%		28.4%	1.0%	
65–74	29.0%	1.2%	1.2%	24.9%	1.5%	
75+	15.3%			13.8%	2.0%	
<b>Ethnicity</b>						
Māori	50.0%	6.8%	4.0%	45.7%	5.4%	2.0%
Pacific	26.8%	2.2%	3.2%	28.2%	2.7%	
Asian	17.6%			12.9%		
European	29.7%	0.6%	0.6%	27.9%	0.5%	0.3%
<b>Gender</b>						
Female	33.6%	2.4%	1.3%	29.3%	1.6%	0.5%
Male	27.4%	0.9%	1.0%	27.4%	1.1%	0.6%

Table 12: Te reo Māori spoken in the home to children and adults.  
Source: General Social Survey 2023.

### ► Te Kupenga survey (2013, 2018)

Te Kupenga asks Māori participants about where and how often they use te reo Māori, with a focus on language use in the home and everyday activities.

The results presented here are for the following three questions:

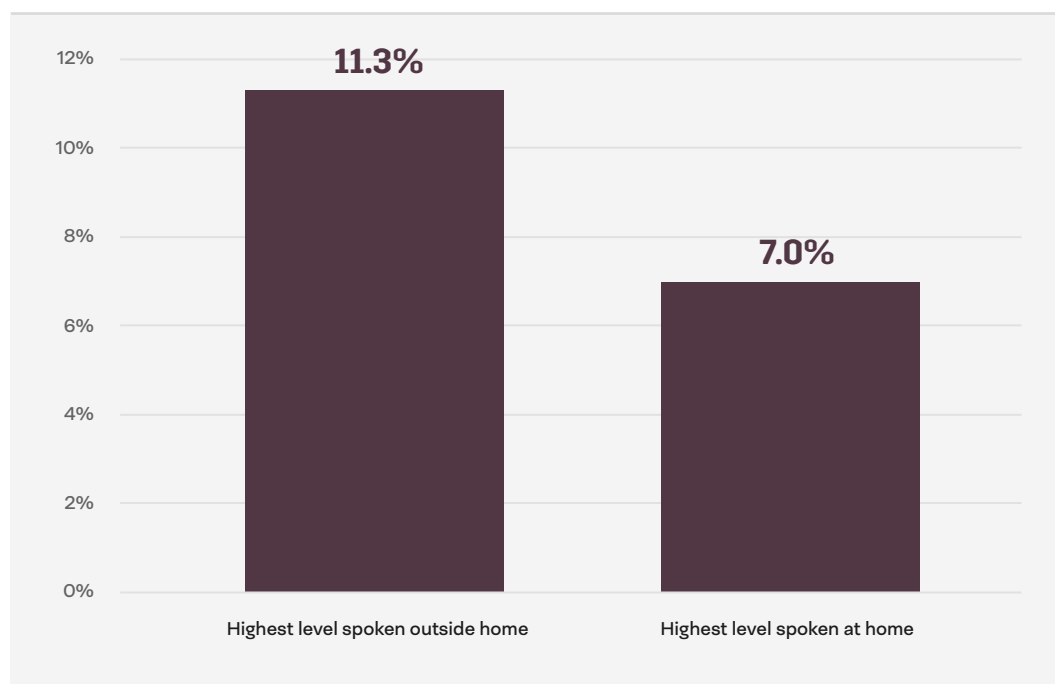
1. *When you are at home, how much Māori do you speak to other household members?*  
Response options were: *No te reo Māori; Some te reo Māori; Te reo Māori equally with English (or another language); or Mostly/all te reo Māori.*
2. *How much Māori did you yourself speak the last time you were doing an activity outside of your house?* The response options were the same as in the above question.
3. *What is the main language spoken at your home?*

Figure 25 shows that, in 2013, 11.3% of respondents reported using 'all/mostly te reo Māori' or 'te reo Māori equally with another language' outside the home. This compared to 7% use at home. That is, it was more common for te reo Māori to be spoken outside the home than inside.

Table 13 illustrates that, from 2013 to 2018, there was a decline in the amount of te reo Māori spoken in and outside the home, by most age groups and both genders.

**Figure 25: Te reo Māori spoken at home and outside home**

Responses that answered “all/mostly te reo spoken” or “equally with other language”



Source: Te Kupenga 2013.

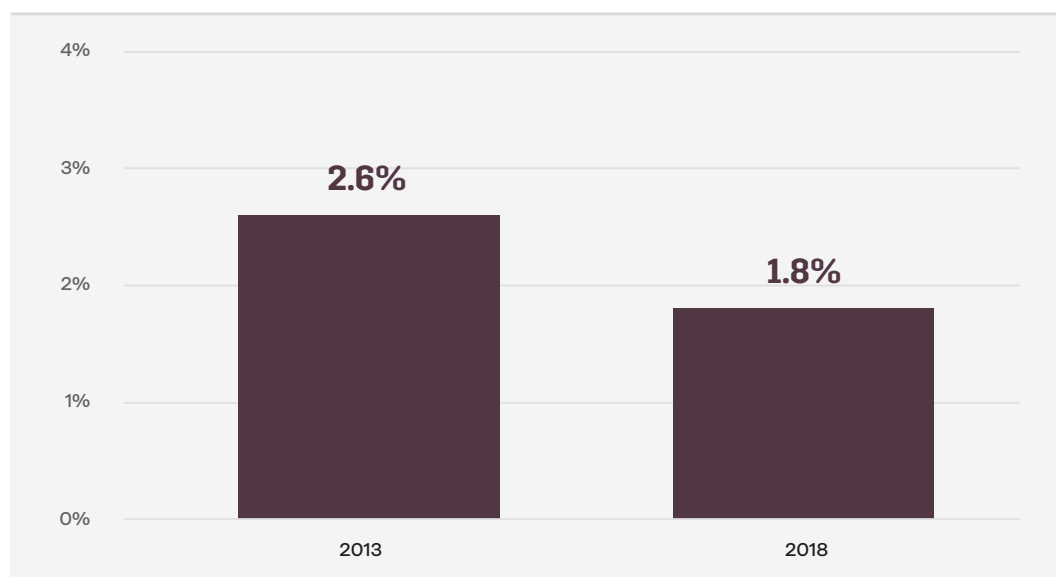
	Te reo Māori spoken at home		Te reo Māori spoken outside of home	
	2013	2018	2013	2018
<b>Age</b>				
15-19	6.6%	5.5%	9.3%	11.1%
20-24	7.4%	6.3%	10.0%	8.0%
25-29	9.6%	5.7%	12.0%	8.4%
30-34	8.2%	6.2%	10.0%	10.9%
35-39	9.2%	7.0%	12.7%	7.3%
40-44	7.4%	6.4%	10.5%	8.7%
45-49	5.5%	5.4%	9.4%	9.8%
50-54	4.8%	2.5%	10.4%	6.8%
55-59	5.6%	4.9%	15.3%	9.6%
60-64	3.0%	2.2%	12.0%	8.7%
65 and over	6.7%	4.7%	16.3%	11.6%
<b>Gender</b>				
Female	8.4%	6.6%	13.7%	10.8%
Male	5.6%	4.2%	8.6%	7.7%

Table 13: Highest level of te reo Māori spoken at home and outside home for “all/mostly te reo spoken” and “equally with another language” responses, by year and demographic group.

Source: Te Kupenga 2013, 2018.

The data in Figure 26 shows that the percentage of respondents who reported te reo Māori as the main language spoken at home dropped between 2013 and 2018 (2.6% to 1.8%). Table 14 indicates that this drop was seen across all age groups (with sufficient data) and genders.

**Figure 26: Percentage of Māori who say te reo Māori is the main language spoken at home**



Source: Te Kupenga 2013, 2018.

	2013	2018
<b>Age</b>		
15–19	1.3%	
20–24	1.9%	0.9%
25–29	2.6%	1.4%
30–34	3.3%	2.2%
35–39	3.8%	1.0%
40–44	2.4%	2.3%
45–49	2.4%	1.5%
50–54	1.8%	
55–59	3.4%	2.6%
60–64		1.9%
65 and over	5.7%	3.9%
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	3.0%	1.9%
Male	2.1%	1.6%

Table 14: Te reo Māori is main language spoken at home.

Source: Te Kupenga 2013, 2018. Some data is suppressed due to small sample sizes.

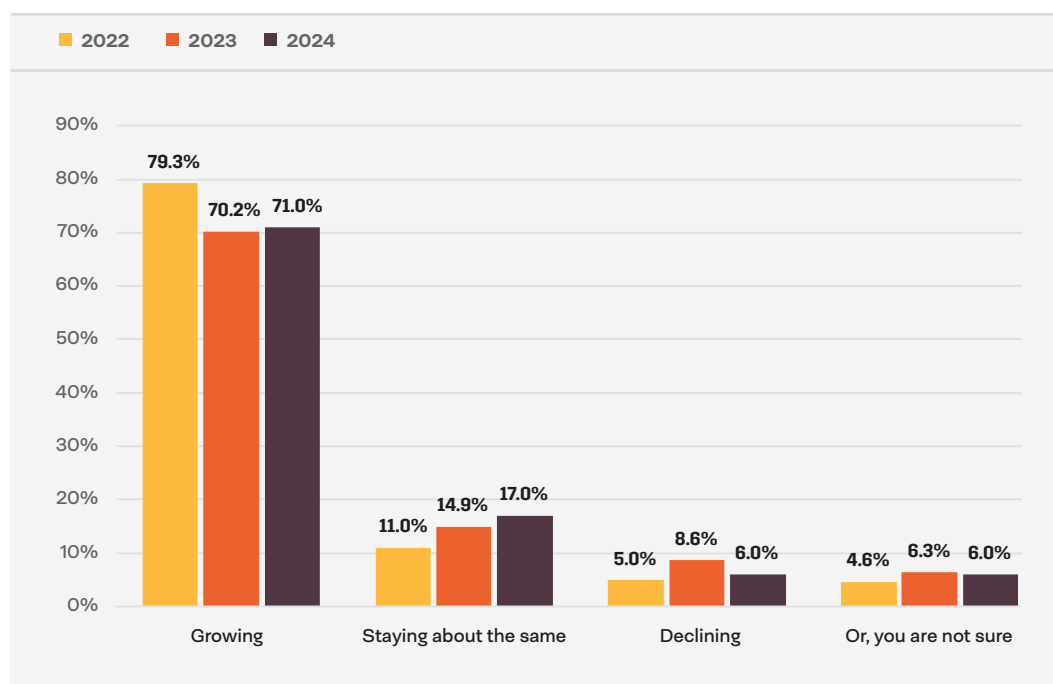


## ► Te Wiki o te Reo Māori Survey (2022–2024)

The survey for Te Wiki o te Reo Māori measures public perceptions of language use by asking: *Do you believe the use of te reo Māori is growing, declining, or staying about the same in Aotearoa?* While this is not a question about respondents' use of te reo Māori, it provides insight into the beliefs about the prevalence of te reo Māori use throughout Aotearoa. Hence its inclusion in this section of the report.

As shown in Figure 27, the overwhelming majority of respondents believe that te reo Māori use is growing. However, there was more support for this statement in 2022 (at 79%) than in 2024 (at 71%).

**Figure 27: Views on the use of te reo Māori over time in Aotearoa**



Source: Te Wiki o Te Reo Māori Survey 2022–2024

	2022	2023	2024
<b>Age</b>			
18–25	67.4%	63.8%	60.0%
26–29	70.2%	72.7%	58.0%
30–39	76.5%	62.7%	69.0%
40–49	80.5%	70.6%	70.0%
50–59	83.1%	74.2%	76.0%
60+	86.8%	74.6%	77.0%
<b>Ethnicity</b>			
Māori	86.7%	75.2%	81.0%
Non-Māori	78.6%	69.8%	77.0%
<b>Gender</b>			
Female	84.9%	74.9%	76.0%
Male	73.7%	65.2%	66.0%

Table 15: Respondents' views about te reo Māori use growing in Aotearoa, by year and demographic groups.

Source: Te Wiki o Te Reo Māori survey 2022–2024.

Demographic data in Table 15 shows that:

- › Older age groups are more likely to believe that the use of te reo Māori is increasing.
- › Māori are slightly more optimistic than non-Māori, though the difference is relatively small.
- › Women are more likely than men to believe that Māori language use is growing.

### ► Te Taunaki Public Services Census (2021)

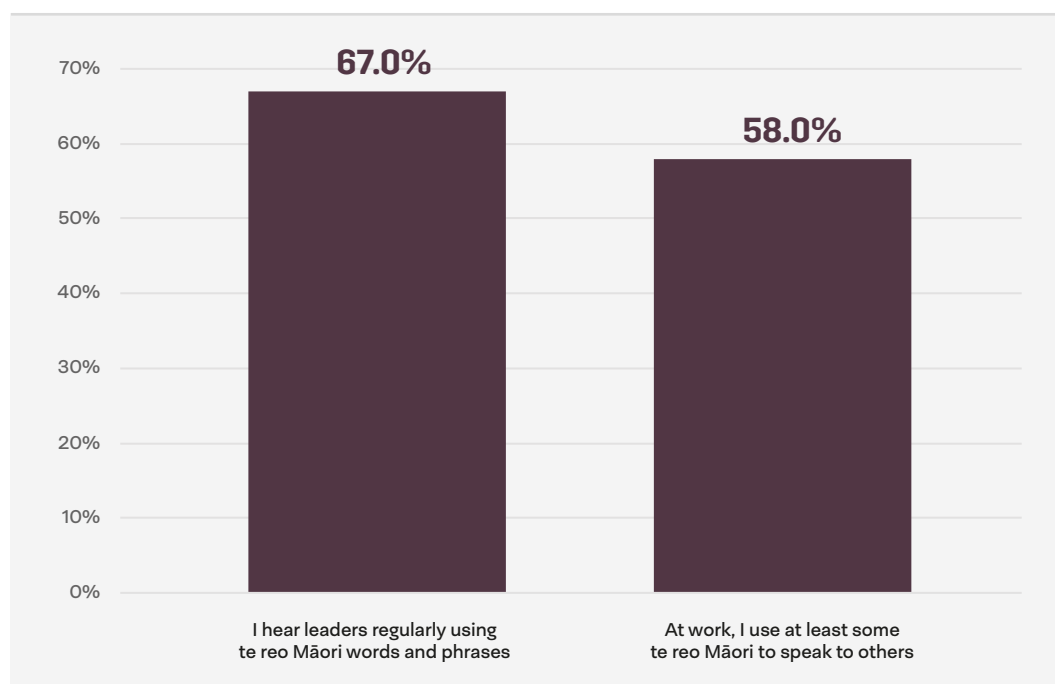
Te Taunaki Public Services Census (2021) probed te reo Māori use in the workplace.

Respondents had to rate their level of agreement (on a 7-point scale) with the question: *When you are at work, how much te reo Māori do you speak to others?* They were also asked to rate their level of agreement (on a 7-point scale) with the statement: *I hear leaders regularly using te reo Māori words and phrases.*

Figure 28 shows that:

- › Across all respondents, more than half reported that they used 'some te reo Māori' at work (58%). Included in that percentage were 2% who indicated they could use 'te reo Māori equally with English'.
- › Two thirds of the respondents agreed (or strongly agreed) with the statement that leaders regularly use te reo Māori words or phrases.

**Figure 28: Te reo Māori use in the public service**



Source: Te Taunaki 2021.

Further analysis of the data (as shown in Table 16) reveals variations by age, gender and ethnicity – as follows:

- › Older age groups are more likely to agree that leaders regularly use te reo Māori words and phrases, but they are less likely to use te reo Māori themselves at work.
- › Māori are most likely to use te reo Māori at work, but have the lowest agreement rate that leaders regularly use te reo Māori words and phrases.
- › Females are more likely to use te reo Māori at work, but there is minimal difference by gender with the statement about leaders regularly using te reo Māori words and phrases.

	I hear leaders regularly using te reo Māori words and phrases	Speak at least some te reo Māori to others at work
<b>Age</b>		
Under 25	60%	56%
25-34	64%	56%
35-44	69%	59%
45-54	70%	60%
55-64	69%	56%
65+	72%	53%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Māori	55%	80%
Pacific	57%	62%
Asian	66%	44%
European	70%	58%
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	67%	61%
Male	69%	52%

Table 16: Te reo Māori use in the public service.  
Source: Te Taunaki Public Service Census 2021.

## ► He Ara Poutama mō Te Reo Māori

The 2023 He Ara Poutama Maihi Karauna Monitoring Report explores methods to forecast progress towards the third Maihi Karauna audacious goal – that 150,000 *Māori aged 15 and over will use te reo Māori as much as English by 2040*.

The report assumes that, in order to use te reo Māori as much as English, you need to be fluent in te reo Māori; and you need multiple spaces where you can speak te reo Māori. There is no direct data to measure this goal, so a proxy is used. The proxy for Māori speakers using te reo Māori as much as English is fluent Māori speakers living in areas with at least 30% fluent speakers. With this proxy, it is forecast that audacious goal three will not be achieved by 2040. Rather, there will be fewer than 69,000 fluent Māori speakers that use te reo Māori as much as English. This highlights the need to foster domains where the Māori community can use te reo Māori.

### ► Te reo Māori use summary

Te reo Māori usage data highlight some conflicting results:

- › The GSS suggests that te reo Māori use is increasing overall, particularly among younger age groups.
- › However, Te Kupenga showed that the use of te reo both in and outside the home decreased between 2013 to 2018. It is worth noting that this data is 7 years old, and more recent data suggests an increase in te reo Māori use. Also, Te Kupenga is set to run again in 2028, which will give more up to date data on te reo Māori use over the last 10 years.
- › Te Wiki o te Reo Māori Survey data shows that the majority of people still believe the use of te reo is growing.
- › However, that statement is not as strongly supported as it has been in the past.

Te Taunaki Public Service Census data shows that te reo Māori is being regularly used within the public service.

He Ara Poutama forecast data shows that, without an increased focus on domains where Māori speakers of te reo Māori can speak their language, there is a high risk of not achieving audacious goal three of the Maihi Karauna.



## Conclusion

This report has presented data on te reo Māori status, acquisition, proficiency, and use across a wide range of sources between 2000–2024.

As stated in the introduction, each data source is designed with different purposes and research questions. As a result, cross-analysis is limited, and is exacerbated by some inconsistencies and gaps in the data collection (including the regularity thereof). Despite these limitations, the data still offers valuable high-level insights into te reo Māori trends over the past 20+ years. The high volume of data in this report from repeated cross-sectional surveys (e.g. Te Kupenga, General Social Survey) highlights the importance of these types of surveys in monitoring trends in te reo Māori. Considering the recent announcements on the future of the Census, there is going to be a greater need to prioritise te reo Māori related questions in these types of surveys.

Not all te reo Māori data is presented in this report. 'Growing Up in New Zealand' data; Te Māngai Pāho Māori audience data; Te Whakaata Māori viewership data; and iwi level data from Te Whata are absent. A future project for Te Taura Whiri will be to expand the collection of te reo Māori data, and make its internal data dashboard public-facing.

The categorisation of data into four themes (status, acquisition, proficiency, and use) highlights the imbalance of information across these themes. Also highlighted is the fact that the other two themes of language planning (corpus and critical awareness) were not included due to insufficient data. Future work should address data gaps within these themes, to help inform evidence-based policy on te reo Māori.

This report shows that te reo Māori is gaining strength across Aotearoa – with growing public support, increasing numbers of speakers, and greater participation in education (except for ECE), especially among younger generations.

However, challenges remain. Proficiency and home use are declining in some areas, and not everyone who supports the language is actively using or learning it. To maintain momentum, te reo Māori needs to become a normal part of everyday life in homes, schools, workplaces, and communities.

Continued progress will depend on collective efforts to support learners, strengthen intergenerational transmission, and ensure that te reo Māori can thrive now and into the future as a taonga for everyone in Aotearoa.



## ► Recommended areas for future research

We conclude with a list of recommended areas for future research, based on trends and gaps identified in this report.

- › Transforming support for te reo Māori into actively using and learning it.
- › Understanding the demand for Māori medium education.
- › Factors contributing to the decline in both Māori-medium ECE centres and enrolments, as well as the potential impacts this may have on the broader Māori-medium education pipeline.
- › Demographics of te reo Māori speakers and declines in the percentage of te reo speakers in the Māori population.

**TE TAURA WHIRI  
I TE REO MĀORI**

MĀORI LANGUAGE COMMISSION

