



**TE TAURA WHIRI
I TE REO MĀORI**
MĀORI LANGUAGE COMMISSION



Te Puni Kōkiri
MINISTRY OF MĀORI DEVELOPMENT

Maihi Karauna Review of Evidence Report

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DISCLAIMER

This document was produced for the purpose of informing the Maihi Karauna refresh. It is intended to inform the policy development process and does not represent the official views or policy of the government. The information is provided on an ‘as is’ basis. Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori and Te Puni Kōkiri exclude all liability for any error, inadequacy, or deficiency in the information.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This review of evidence examines the current state of the Maihi Karauna strategy,¹ its progress to date, and areas requiring renewed focus as the strategy is refreshed. Drawing on monitoring and evaluation findings, survey data, demographic trends, and modelling tools, the review assesses whether the strategy's components remain current and relevant. This exercise will be used to guide decisions about what will be included in the refreshed Maihi Karauna.
2. The evidence shows that the Maihi Karauna has contributed to considerable system-level progress since 2019. Government agencies have strengthened their understanding of their role in supporting te reo Māori revitalisation, with growing collaboration in the public service,² stronger Māori language planning, and growing normalisation of te reo Māori across the public service and parts of wider society. Despite fiscal constraints and a sometimes-challenging environment, agencies' commitment to te reo Māori remains strong (Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, 2024). Many improvements have been achieved through dedicated staff and baselined activity, rather than large-scale new investment.
3. Persistent challenges remain. Te reo Māori data remains inconsistent and fragmented, making progress difficult to measure. Māori medium education faces teacher supply issues, in addition to declining early childhood provision and access. Engagement with the wider public sector³ – beyond the public service – is limited; and progress against Crown priorities has been uneven due to limited coordination amongst agencies, and funding constraints.
4. A refreshed Maihi Karauna is required to sustain momentum, strengthen system leadership, enable clearer priorities, focus efforts on where the biggest gains are to be made (or need to be made), and respond effectively to emerging issues.

PROGRESS TOWARDS THE AUDACIOUS GOALS

Audacious Goal 1 – 85% of New Zealanders (or more) will value te reo Māori as a key part of national identity, by 2040.

5. Public support for te reo Māori remains strong, with 73% of respondents in the 2025 Te Wiki o te Reo Māori survey agreeing that te reo is an important part of national culture (Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, 2025). Proxy indicators from the NZ General Social Survey (NZGSS) show long-term gains towards the 'valuing' goal, although recent small declines (2021–2023) suggest a plateau (Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, 2025). Younger people, Māori, Pacific peoples, and women show the highest levels of support. Audacious Goal One remains relevant and achievable but may require targeted approaches for groups who show lower levels of support.

¹ The Maihi Karauna is the Crown's strategy for the revitalisation of the Māori language.

² The *public service* refers to core government departments and agencies, listed under the Public Service Act 2020.

³ The *public sector* is a broad category comprising the *public service* (core government departments and agencies) – as well as Crown entities, state-owned enterprises, other government departments, and local government entities.

Audacious Goal 2 – One million New Zealanders (or more) will have the ability and confidence to talk about at least basic things in te reo Māori, by 2040.

6. The NZGSS indicates 17% of New Zealanders can talk about basic things in te reo Māori (Statistics NZ, 2024), although recent changes to survey questions limit comparability with previous years. Updated modelling from *He Ara Poutama mō te Reo Māori (He Ara Poutama)* forecasts 966,000 basic speakers by 2040, reaching one million by 2043, under current trends (Nicholson Consulting and Kōtātā Insight, 2025). Overall, progress is close to being on track; however, measurement limitations remain. Continued investment in data quality and modelling is essential.

Audacious Goal 3 – 150,000 Māori (15 years+) will use te reo Māori as much as English, by 2040

7. Current estimates indicate that approximately 27,000 Māori aged 15 and over, use te reo as much as English—well below the 2040 target (Nicholson Consulting and Kōtātā Insight, 2025). Modelling forecasts gradual growth, but not at a rate sufficient to reach 150,000 without significant intervention. Māori medium education remains a key driver of increased language use; however, enrolments have declined across the educational pipeline, and ECE provision has decreased over 20+ years (see Figure 4). More community-based immersion initiatives and increased language domains are likely to have a significant impact on this goal (Nicholson Consulting and Kōtātā Insight, 2025). Strategic shifts and expanded investment in immersion domains and initiatives, and in Māori medium pathways, are needed. It may also be timely to reconsider the focus on Māori aged 15 and over. The rationale for this is that it would allow interventions and measurement to target all Māori, regardless of age.

PRIORITY GROUPS

Tamariki and Rangatahi (Children and Youth)

8. Tamariki and rangatahi were selected as a priority group in the Maihi Karauna, as they were seen to be a group who were critical to meeting the proposed audacious goals (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2019). Youth continue to show the highest levels of support for te reo and steady growth in proficiency. However, a projected decline in fertility after 2044 means that future proficiency gains will need to come from better access to Māori medium education, as well as more domains and settings of language use. Ongoing teacher supply issues, and pressures within the Māori medium education pipeline, pose significant risks. Tamariki and rangatahi remain a relevant priority group.

Tāngata Matatau ki te Reo (Proficient Speakers)

9. Proficient speakers were selected as a priority group as they are the teachers of the next generation, leaders in organisations, language role models and holders of mātauranga Māori (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2019). Approximately 80,000 people can reportedly speak te reo

Māori ‘well’ or ‘very well’ (Nicholson Consulting and Kōtātā Insight, 2025).⁴ These proficient speakers are in high demand across communities, education, and the public service. Strengthening the Māori medium workforce pipeline is critical, alongside expanding reo-rich domains that support advanced language use. Retention of this priority group is recommended, as is increasing targeted activity and support for proficient speakers.

Rāngai Tūmatanui (Public Sector)

10. The public sector was selected as a priority group for the Maihi Karauna as it has far-reaching interactions with Māori and other New Zealanders (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2019). Proficiency amongst public servants is rising, notably so when compared with the general population (Te Kawa Mataaho, 2025). Te reo Māori is being increasingly normalised in the public service, supported by improved proficiency and agency language planning. However, the extent of progress across the *wider* public sector is unknown. There are mixed views about whether this group should remain a priority. Retaining this group but broadening the focus to targeted groups within the wider public sector (rather than just the public service, as has been the case to date), is worth consideration.

IMPLEMENTATION OF CROWN PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

11. Progress has been uneven across the Crown’s 11 priorities for action (see Appendix 1). Collaboration has been inconsistent, and agencies often work in silos. The absence of recent, clear implementation guidance has further hampered system-level progress. Monitoring has focused on agency-level reporting, with limited visibility of collective achievements.
12. A renewed and better coordinated approach will be required in the next phase of the Maihi Karauna, to strengthen system leadership and ensure more coherent delivery across agencies. Consideration will also be given to alignment with the Shared Outcomes Framework project that is currently underway, being led by Te Puni Kōkiri and Te Mātāwai.

OTHER EVIDENCE: DATA, WAITANGI TRIBUNAL REPORT, AND DEMOGRAPHICS

13. Additional evidence highlights several other important considerations for the Maihi Karauna refresh:
 - **Data issues** across key surveys significantly limit the ability to monitor te reo Māori trends with confidence. Inconsistencies in frequency, methodology, and indicators create gaps in long-term trend data and undermine the accuracy of measurement. A dedicated data-improvement workstream is recommended to ensure more consistent, reliable, and comparable data across agencies.

⁴ The 80,000 people who can speak te reo ‘well’ or ‘very well’ is a ‘proficiency’ measure – whereas the 27,000 Māori aged 15 years and over (mentioned above in relation to Audacious Goal 3), who speak as much te reo as English, is a ‘use’ measure.

- The **WAI 3327 report** (Waitangi Tribunal, 2025) recommendations include: reversing restrictions on reo use; mandating bilingual signage; and increasing bilingual capability across the public service. Consideration of 'if and how' these recommendations might be incorporated into the Maihi Karauna refresh is important.
- The **Specialist Advisory Group** (Te Puni Kōkiri and Te Mātāwai, 2025) recommends sharpening the strategy's focus on increasing fluent speakers and intergenerational transmission. Consideration about 'if and how' we sharpen this focus should form part of the Maihi Karauna refresh process.
- **Regional differences** in te reo Māori statistics suggest targeted regional actions could strengthen achievement of the desired Maihi Karauna outcomes; for example, the creation of more community language domains. This work would be in conjunction with Te Mātāwai. The Maihi Karauna does not currently target activities regionally.

BACKGROUND

1. Te Ture mō Te Reo Māori 2016 (Te Ture), the Māori Language Act, formalised a partnership for the revitalisation of te reo Māori. This partnership is between the Crown and iwi and Māori – with Te Mātāwai as a kaitiaki of iwi and Māori interests in te reo Māori. The two parties are required to work in active partnership to promote the knowledge and use of te reo Māori (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2019). The partnership is conceptualised as Te Whare o te Reo Mauriora – a house with two maihi, or bargeboards. The kōruru, or carved figure at the apex of the house, is the shared vision, *Kia mauriora te reo Māori*.
2. Te Ture requires that the Minister for Māori Development issue, on behalf of the Crown, a Maihi Karauna strategy that takes a ‘macro’ perspective, by focusing on creating the societal conditions for te reo Māori to thrive – and ensuring that government systems support this. According to Te Ture, the Maihi Karauna strategy should set out:
 - i. the Government’s objectives and policies, and related matters, relevant to the revitalisation of the Māori language; and
 - ii. the Government’s long-term strategic direction, as well as the current and medium-term priorities, to support that revitalisation.
3. The Minister may revoke and replace or amend a Maihi Karauna strategy but must first consult any person or organisation that the Minister considers ought to be consulted. This includes Te Mātāwai and Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori (Te Taura Whiri) [Sections 10(1) and 10(3) in Te Ture]. The Minister for Māori Development launched the first Maihi Karauna strategy in February 2019, which covered the period from 2019-2023. Te Taura Whiri and Te Puni Kōkiri are now working together to provide the Minister for Māori Development with a refreshed Maihi Karauna strategy by 30 June 2026.

SCOPE

4. This report presents a review of existing evidence relating to the Maihi Karauna and its various components, that will be used to guide decisions about what will be included in the refreshed Maihi Karauna.
5. The review of evidence focuses primarily on ensuring that the components of the Maihi Karauna are still current and relevant. The review will focus on the:
 - three audacious goals
 - priority groups
 - priorities (for Crown action), including the associated measures and indicators.
6. Comment will also be made on the remaining components of the Maihi Karauna, where relevant and possible, namely:
 - vision
 - role
 - outcomes
 - approaches.

7. To make the scope of this review manageable in a short timeframe, evidence focuses primarily on information that has been produced within the past ten years, although there may be exceptions to this. The review of evidence will feed into a separate report that will provide recommendations and a rationale for retaining, updating, or deleting components of the Maihi Karauna. An external contractor will write the recommendations report.

MAIHI KARAUNA – CURRENT STATE

8. Recent Maihi Karauna monitoring and evaluation reports give us insight into where agencies are currently at with implementing the Maihi Karauna.⁵ Despite fiscal constraint, a challenging political environment, and capability issues, agency appetite for te reo Māori remains strong. Agencies now have a good understanding of the Maihi Karauna and how they can contribute to it. Collaboration has improved, with agencies sharing more tools and resources. Furthermore, Te Taura Whiri is playing an important coordination and support role. Most agencies have adopted Māori language plans, and implementation is becoming more consistent across the system. Key forums continue to provide coordination and system-level leadership, although some improvements could be made.
9. The Maihi Karauna has also increased the visibility and everyday use of te reo Māori across the public service⁶ and pockets of wider society, with normalisation occurring in workplaces, media, and public communications. Much of this progress has occurred despite capacity constraints; and has been driven by committed staff working within existing baselines.
10. Although early implementation was challenging, the strategy has matured. A refreshed strategy is now needed to maintain system leadership, to focus efforts on areas that will provide the greatest impact, and to encourage new energy for te reo Māori revitalisation and normalisation.

WHAT PROGRESS HAVE WE MADE SINCE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MAIHI KARAUNA?

11. Question 1 of this review of evidence considers the progress we have made since the establishment of the Maihi Karauna in 2019. Firstly, we consider progress towards the three audacious goals, then an assessment of progress for the three priority groups, followed by a review of progress towards implementing the Crown priorities for action.

⁵ For example, the Summative Evaluation of the Maihi Karauna (Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, 2024) and the draft Maihi Karauna Annual Report 2024/25 (Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, 2026).

⁶ The *public service* refers to core government departments and agencies listed under the Public Service Act 2020.

WHAT PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE THREE AUDACIOUS GOALS IN THE MAIHI KARAUNA?

12. This section considers what progress has been made towards achieving the three audacious goals of the Maihi Karauna and presents some recommendations for consideration in the refresh of the strategy.

AOTEAROA TANGA: AUDACIOUS GOAL ONE – BY 2040, EIGHTY FIVE PERCENT OF NEW ZEALANDERS (OR MORE) WILL VALUE TE REO MĀORI AS A KEY PART OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

13. Audacious Goal One of the Maihi Karauna aims for 85% of New Zealanders (or more) valuing te reo Māori as a key part of national identity, by 2040. There is no single dataset that perfectly measures how New Zealanders ‘value’ te reo Māori, so proxy indicators are used from the NZGSS (New Zealand General Social Survey) and *Te Wiki o te Reo Māori* survey (Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, 2025). The latest results from these surveys are presented below. When reading this information, it is worth noting that the NZGSS has the larger sample size (7,800) compared to the *Te Wiki o te Reo Māori* survey (1,200).
14. The question asked in the *Te Wiki o te Reo Māori* survey (conducted annually by Te Taura Whiri for the past eight years) is closest to the wording of Audacious Goal One. Since 2024, the survey has asked people whether they agree that the Māori language is an important part of our culture in New Zealand. As of 2025, 73% of respondents either ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ that te reo Māori is an important part of our culture in New Zealand (Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, 2025).
15. When looking at the NZGSS, there is no exact indicator for measuring Audacious Goal One; therefore, in Table 1 below, we have presented the proxies we use when considering progress towards this goal.

Table 1: NZGSS statistics for all of New Zealand aged 15 and over

	GSS 2016	GSS 2018	GSS 2021	GSS 2023
Percentage of people aged 15+ that ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ that te reo Māori should be a core subject in primary schools	53.7%	56.2%	61.5%	59.0%
Percentage of people aged 15+ that ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ that the Government should encourage everyday use of te reo Māori	49.9%	53.0%	56.3%	53.4%
Percentage of people aged 15+ that ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ that signage should be in both Māori and English	45.0%	50.2%	56.0%	55.4%

Percentage of people aged 15+ that 'agree' or 'strongly agree' it would be good if everyone spoke Māori and English	35.2%	39.1%	44.1%	41.6%
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16. Table 1 shows that, from 2016 to 2021, all NZGSS te reo indicators showed an increase. However, from 2021 to 2023 all indicators showed a decrease. There were issues noted with the 2021 NZGSS, which was interrupted due to COVID. This likely had some impact on the data. The next NZGSS is scheduled to run in 2026. This will be an important data set to help us understand whether support for te reo (as measured through these indicators) increases, decreases or remains stable.
17. When looking across the demographic differences within the NZGSS (Statistics NZ, 2024), the following points can be made:
 - **Age:** Younger people are much more likely to support te reo Māori across all measures; support decreases with age.
 - **Ethnicity:** Māori and Pacific peoples show the highest levels of support.
 - **Gender:** Females show higher support than males, with statistically significant differences in some measures.

Future Areas of Focus for Audacious Goal One

18. According to the latest *He Ara Poutama* report (Kōtātā Insight and Nicholson Consulting, 2025), Audacious Goal One is achievable by 2040. However, the data suggests a slowdown or plateauing of the proportion of people in Aotearoa valuing te reo Māori. To achieve Audacious Goal One, looking at the difference in support from sub-groups of the population would be useful, as support for te reo Māori varies – with factors like age, gender and ethnicity having implications for levels of support. Younger people, females, Māori and Pacific peoples show the highest levels of support (Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, 2025). Targeting initiatives towards sub-groups who are less supportive of te reo would be one way to try and improve progress towards achieving Audacious Goal One. Alternatively, the decision could be made to focus our efforts on groups who are already supportive, to ensure that support is sustained.
19. Using multiple proxies rather than a single indicator of success for this goal is not ideal. We will continue to work with Statistics NZ to try and improve data collection for this and other important te reo Māori indicators.
20. The *State of Te Reo Māori Report* (Te Taura Whiri, 2025) notes that, while public support for te reo Māori is strong amongst some sub-groups, many people who support te reo Māori are not actively learning or using the language themselves. While not directly related to achieving Audacious Goal One, encouraging people to move from being supporters to active learners and users of te reo would be a valuable focus area to help achieve Audacious Goals Two and Three.

Audacious Goal One – Key Points for Consideration

21. Based on the above evidence, the following points have been identified as important to consider in the Maihi Karauna refresh:

- There is still progress to be made towards Audacious Goal One, particularly with certain sub-groups of the population (older people, males, non-Māori and non-Pacific).
- Consideration should be given to whether we focus on sub-groups who are currently less supportive of te reo, or we focus on maintaining the support of those who already value te reo.
- Audacious Goal One is difficult to measure using currently available data, and we need to continue to work with Statistics NZ and other agencies to improve on indicators for this goal.
- Encouraging people to move from being supporters of te reo to becoming active learners and users of the language is important; and will contribute to the achievement of Audacious Goals Two and Three.

MĀTAURANGA: AUDACIOUS GOAL TWO – BY 2040, ONE MILLION NEW ZEALANDERS (OR MORE) WILL HAVE THE ABILITY AND CONFIDENCE TO TALK ABOUT AT LEAST BASIC THINGS IN TE REO MĀORI

22. Measuring progress towards one million speakers is complex. As with Audacious Goal One, there is no single data set that provides us with a straightforward way to measure this goal. The Census asks respondents, ‘*In which language(s) could you have a conversation about a lot of everyday things?*’ Te reo Māori is an option that respondents can select. This indicator is beyond what we expect of a ‘basic speaker’. As such, it is not very relevant in measuring this goal.
23. One of the NZGSS questions asks people to rate their ability and confidence to talk about at least basic things in te reo Māori. The options available to respondents are:
 - i. cannot speak any te reo Māori⁷*
 - ii. no more than a few words or phrases*
 - iii. not very well (I can only talk about basic/simple things in te reo)*
 - iv. fairly well (I can talk about some things in te reo)*
 - v. well (I can talk about many things in te reo)*
 - vi. very well (I can talk about almost anything in te reo).*
24. Basic speakers are considered those who answered from (ii) to (iii) in the list above. The NZGSS indicator is more closely aligned with measuring one million speakers than the Census te reo indicator mentioned above.
25. According to the NZGSS, the percentage of New Zealanders able to talk about basic things in te reo in 2023 was 17.0% (Statistics NZ, 2024). As can be seen from Table 2 below, this looks like a drastic reduction from 2021. However, the disclaimer around changing the survey questions in 2023 (see footnote 12 below) is likely to have had an

⁷ This option was only introduced in the 2023 NZGSS. Before 2023, the lowest category was “no more than a few words or phrases”. The introduction of this new option likely affected how respondents interpreted the category corresponding to basic ability and led to drops in speakers between 2021 and 2023.

impact, as well as COVID disrupting the survey in 2021. For such reasons, we should be cautious about these results.

Table 2: Ability to talk about at least basic things in te reo Māori from the NZGSS, 2016 to 2023

YEAR	TOTAL NZ	TOTAL YOUTH	TOTAL MĀORI
2016	21.0%	27.4%	56.7%
2018	23.5%	33.8%	66.1%
2021	29.8%	41.2%	69.8%
2023	17.0%	23.4%	49.9%

26. *He Ara Poutama mō te Reo Māori* is a microsimulation modelling tool for te reo Māori. This tool was updated with the latest NZGSS and Census data in December 2025. The update has enabled us to forecast progress towards the one million speakers using a proxy indicator,⁸ out to 2050. According to the *He Ara Poutama* update (Nicholson Consulting and Kōtātā Insight, 2025), and using the ‘mean’ estimate presented in Table 3 below, we are on track to reach 966,000 basic speakers by 2040 – hitting one million speakers by 2043.

Table 3: He Ara Poutama forecast of basic speakers in 2040, using three estimated ratios

	Low estimate	Mean estimate	High estimate
Ratio	2.7 : 1.0	3.5 : 1.0	4.0 : 1.0
Basic speakers	745,200	966,000	1,104,000.00

27. While most of the increase in speakers comes from the Māori population each year, approximately 17% of the annual change in 2024 can be attributed to non-Māori. This percentage is forecasted to decline to approximately 12% by 2050. Declining fertility rates and slower population growth will drive the decrease in non-Māori speakers over the years.
28. Growth in the number of Māori speakers of te reo Māori, is driven both by increases in the proportion of Māori who speak te reo, and growth in the Māori population. Modelling within *He Ara Poutama* shows that, from 2025 to 2043, growth in the Māori population is the largest driver of an increase in the number of speakers. Current and future cohorts of tamariki and rangatahi have/will have higher average rates of proficiency than the middle-aged Māori population, who historically had lower exposure to Māori medium education. However, from 2044 onwards, Māori fertility

⁸ See (Nicholson Consulting and Kōtātā Insight, 2025) *He Ara Poutama Maihi Karauna Updated Monitoring Report* for an explanation of the technique used to produce this forecast.

rates are expected to decline. This will likely impact te reo Māori use (Nicholson Consulting and Kōtātā Insight, 2025).

Future Areas of Focus for Audacious Goal Two

29. Based on the evidence from *He Ara Poutama*, we are close to being on track to achieving one million basic speakers by 2040 – with the estimated date being 2043. However, measuring progress towards this goal continues to be problematic. Keeping *He Ara Poutama* projections regularly updated appears to be the most reliable method currently available, although these updates require ongoing investment.
30. A recommendation was made by Nicholson Consulting in the 2025 *He Ara Poutama Report* to consider how we might more reliably use the NZGSS to measure basic speakers. One option presented was to lower the target to 300,000 conversational speakers by 2050, an indicator which is considered more reliable for measuring this goal. However, this is a major change to the existing framing of the goal and does not seem justifiable within the scope of the current refresh.
31. There is little evidence to show that any major change in tactics is needed to reach the million basic speakers by 2040. Therefore, if we are to retain this goal, the focus should be on ensuring that current levels of support for learning te reo Māori are maintained, or slightly accelerated. In addition, a future focus should be on improving the data collection for this goal.

Audacious Goal Two – Key Points for Consideration

32. Based on the above evidence, the following points have been identified as important to consider in the Maihi Karauna refresh:
 - We are close to being on track in reaching Audacious Goal Two by 2040, if current levels of support for te reo Māori are maintained or slightly accelerated.
 - There is currently no data collection that exactly measures basic speakers.
 - *He Ara Poutama* has developed a ‘work around’ to measure basic speakers. This tool requires ongoing investment to keep it up to date.
 - It is important to prioritise working with Statistics NZ, other agencies, and Te Kāhui Raraunga (with its focus on Māori data governance) to improve te reo Māori data collection.

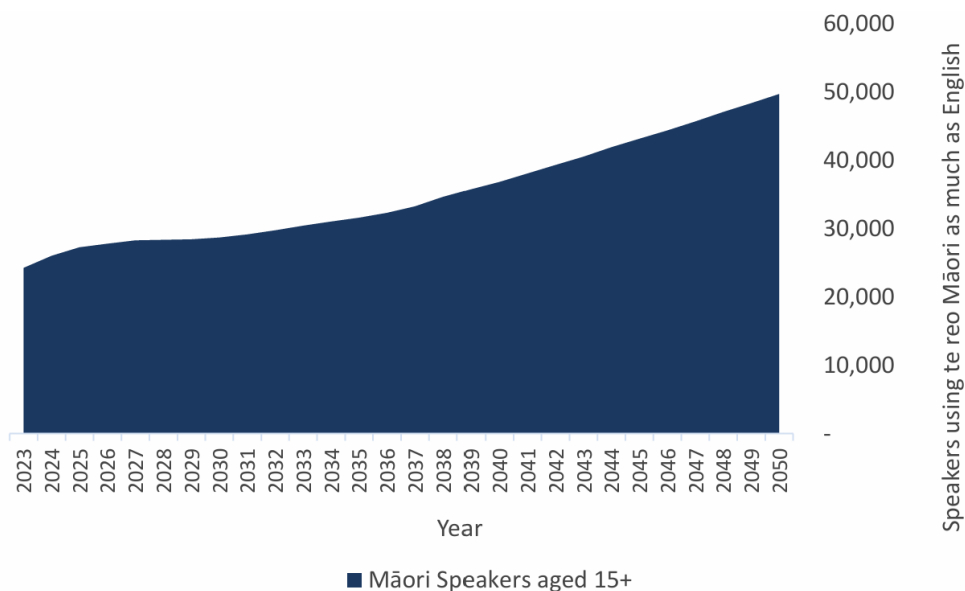
HONONGA: AUDACIOUS GOAL THREE – BY 2040, 150,000 MĀORI AGED 15 AND OVER WILL USE TE REO MĀORI AS MUCH AS ENGLISH

33. As with Audacious Goal One and Two, there is no specific data set that precisely measures Audacious Goal Three. However, there are two data sets that we primarily use when assessing progress towards this goal. Firstly, Ministry of Education Māori medium education data is readily available. This data tells us the number of Māori aged 15 to 18 (still in the education system) who are most likely using te reo Māori as much as English. Secondly, Te Kupenga is a survey conducted by Statistics NZ, focused on different aspects of wellbeing (including te reo Māori) within the Māori population. Te Kupenga asks survey participants about where and how often they use te reo Māori, with a focus on

language use in the home and everyday activities. The last Te Kupenga survey took place in 2018. There is no confirmed date for their next survey, but 2028 is being considered as a possibility.

34. *He Ara Poutama* (Nicholson Consulting and Kōtātā Insight, 2025) combines Te Kupenga data with Ministry of Education Māori medium education data to model progress towards Audacious Goal Three, between now and 2040. According to *He Ara Poutama*, the number of Māori speakers aged 15+ using te reo Māori as much as English was approximately 27,000 in 2025. This figure is projected to rise to 36,800 by 2040 – with a further increase to 49,800 speakers by 2050 (see Figure 3 below). About two thirds of this growth is associated with increasing numbers of fluent speakers, with one third reflecting increasing use of te reo Māori outside the home by less confident speakers.

Figure 3: *He Ara Poutama* forecasted number of Māori speakers aged 15+ using te reo Māori as much as English

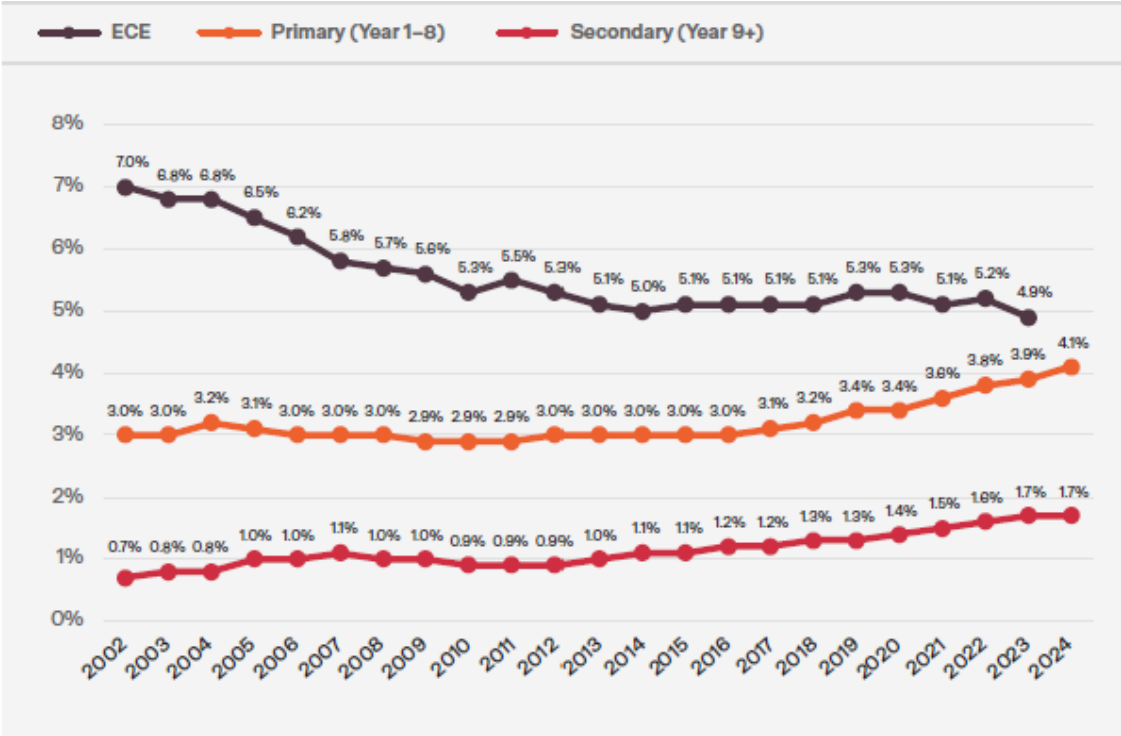


35. When trying to understand what the important contributors are to Audacious Goal Three, the original *He Ara Poutama* report (Nicholson Consulting and Kōtātā Insight, 2021) states that having:
 - i. 5,000 more whānau involved in community immersion initiatives (for example Te Ataarangi and kura reo) every year until 2040 would result in a further 46,000 fluent speakers (and 55,000 more conversational speakers).
 - ii. 7,500 more tamariki Māori in Māori medium education every year until 2040 would result in 30,400 more fluent speakers (and 45,600 more conversational speakers).
 - iii. 30,000 more tamariki learning te reo Māori in English medium education every year until 2040 would result in 1,100 more fluent speakers (and 14,800 more conversational speakers).
36. Having access to more Māori language domains (for example, sports clubs and public spaces), particularly within communities, has been noted as a further important factor in increasing the use of te reo Māori every day (Nicholson Consulting and Kōtātā Insight,

2025). Current settings relating to language domains are broadly effective in increasing basic speakers but are not likely to lead to significant changes in fluent speakers.

37. Figure 4 below highlights two issues with Māori medium education as a key obstacle to achieving Audacious Goal Three. Firstly, the percentage of enrolments in Māori medium early childhood education (ECE) has steadily decreased 2002 - 2023 (from 7.0% to 4.9%). A reduction in the availability of Māori medium ECE services over this time is also notable, from 552 services in 2003 to 454 services in 2023. Secondly, the proportion of Māori medium enrolments decreases as people move through the education pipeline, with only 1.7% of students in secondary Māori medium education (Ministry of Education, n.d.).

Figure 4: Percentage of enrolments in Māori medium education, by education level 2002-2024



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

38. When designing the original Maihi Karauna strategy, setting out a vision for te reo Māori in the future, the decision was made that we would only measure Audacious Goal Three for those Māori aged 15 years and over.⁹ The original rationale for this decision was to make the goal better aligned to the Maihi Māori goal,¹⁰ and to make it more ambitious (Office of Te Minita Whanaketanga Māori, 2018). Because the education system sits within the Maihi Karauna, and because Māori medium education has a vital role to play in supporting the reo Māori proficiency of under 15-year-olds, it is timely to reconsider

⁹ The pre-consultation version of the original Maihi Karauna had the goal as ‘150,000 Māori use te reo Māori as a primary language by 2040’ (Office of Te Minita Whanaketanga Māori, 2018, paragraph 43, page 8).

¹⁰ The relevant goal is ‘By 2040, te reo Māori will be the first language of 25% of all Māori children (aged 0-7 years)’.

this decision. Broadening the age group for this goal would encourage those agencies responsible for delivering the Maihi Karauna to consider how they can support all Māori to learn and use te reo, regardless of age.

39. Broadening the age bracket would also better align with ensuring all the Maihi Karauna priority groups can be a target for Audacious Goal Three, irrespective of age – in particular tamariki/rangatahi and tāngata matatau ki te reo Māori (proficient speakers). Widening the age range would also increase the number of people that could be counted as a contribution to reaching this goal.

Future areas of focus for Audacious Goal Three

40. Based on the evidence, we are a long way from hitting the target of 150,000 Māori over 15 years old speaking te reo as much as English by 2040. To increase our chances of making better progress towards the target, investing in the expansion of Māori language domains and community reo immersion initiatives has been cited as having the potential to make a significant difference (Nicholson Consulting and Kōtātā Insight, 2021) (Nicholson Consulting and Kōtātā Insight, 2025). If we were to pursue this option, further work would need to take place to scope what this would look like in the context of the Maihi Karauna working in conjunction with the Maihi Māori.
41. Having more Māori in immersion education will continue to be a key contributor to achieving Audacious Goal Three. The Ministry of Education has a key role to play in achieving this goal, and it will be critical to re-engage them early in the Maihi Karauna refresh process.
42. The decision, when designing the original Maihi Karauna, to target only those Māori over 15 years old for Audacious Goal Three should be reconsidered. This would allow for:
 - i. a better focus on more Māori speaking and learning te reo, regardless of age
 - ii. a focus on achieving Audacious Goal Three for all the Maihi Karauna priority groups, irrespective of age
 - iii. the inclusion of Māori aged under 15 years in the measurement of progress towards this goal.¹¹
43. Reliable measurement of progress towards Audacious Goal Three will only be possible if Te Kupenga continues, or another similar survey is conducted. Continuing to encourage Statistics NZ to collect quality te reo Māori data is as important for this goal as it is for the other two goals.

Audacious Goal Three – Key Points for Consideration

44. Based on the above evidence, the following points have been identified as important to consider in the Maihi Karauna refresh:

¹¹ As of 2025, there were approximately 24,528 students enrolled in Māori medium education at Year 10 or below (Ministry of Education, n.d.). If we were to change the age bracket for this goal, these students would be included in the count – using our current methodology.

- As of 2025, there are approximately 27,000 Māori people aged 15+ who can speak as much te reo Māori as English.
- On the current trajectory, we are a long way off reaching the Audacious Goal Three target of 150,000 Māori aged 15 years+ speaking as much te reo Māori as English.
- Increasing opportunities to be involved in community reo immersion initiatives and te reo Māori domains have been evidenced as the actions most likely to increase the number of Māori speaking te reo; followed by participation in Māori medium education (Nicholson Consulting and Kōtātā Insight, 2021 and 2025).
- We need to investigate how the Maihi Karauna might best contribute to community reo immersion initiatives and te reo speaking domains, in alignment with the Maihi Māori.
- In the action plan for the Maihi Karauna, consideration should be given to targeting Māori medium education, including understanding and addressing:
 - the reo Māori teacher supply issues,
 - falling enrolments and supply in Māori medium ECE, and
 - the decreasing cohort as students move through the Māori medium pipeline.
- We need to consider the merits of amending Audacious Goal Three to target all Māori rather than only those aged 15 years+, noting that this would add approximately 25,000 speakers to the current number, taking the total to 52,000.
- It is important to keep working with Statistics NZ to collect information that will enable us to better measure progress towards Audacious Goal Three.

WHAT PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE FOR THE MAIHI KARAUNA PRIORITY GROUPS?

45. The Maihi Karauna identifies three priority groups¹² as a way for the Crown to focus on people, rather than just institutions or ideas (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2019). These priority groups informed the setting of priorities for Crown action in the original Maihi Karauna. This is a process that should be replicated when re-setting the action plan for the current Maihi Karauna refresh.

TAMARIKI AND RANGATAHI | YOUNG PEOPLE

46. The tamariki and rangatahi priority group includes all New Zealanders under 25 years old. From the estimated resident population in New Zealand in 2023, the number of people under 25 was approximately 1.63 million, or 31.3% of the New Zealand population (Statistics NZ, 2024). The number of Māori under 25 years old in 2023 was approximately 430,000 – representing 26% of the total number of under 25-year-olds (Statistics NZ, 2024).
47. Support for te reo Māori is higher among youth than the general population in Aotearoa (Nicholson Consulting and Kōtātā Insight, 2025). Younger age groups, especially 20 to

¹² The three priority groups are: young people, proficient speakers, and public sector

29-year-olds, had the highest levels of te reo Māori proficiency in 2023. Moreover, 46.8% of those who could converse in te reo Māori on everyday topics were under 30 (Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, 2025).

48. Large cohorts of tamariki and rangatahi Māori are increasing the number of speakers. However, declining fertility rates mean that, from 2044 onwards, proficiency rates will become the key driver for growth in speaker numbers (Nicholson Consulting and Kōtātā Insight, 2025). Therefore, increasing proficiency among youth now is essential to maintain growth.
49. As of 2024, there were 21,548 school learners being taught through the medium of te reo Māori for at least 51% of the time. This is an increase of 1,486 learners from the previous year (Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, 2025). Retention rates in Māori medium education decline as students move through the education system (as shown in Figure 4). In 2023, 4.9% of ECE children, 3.9% of primary, and only 1.7% of secondary students enrolled in Māori-medium settings (Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, 2025). While there have been some year-on-year increases, the number of Māori-medium early childhood centres and enrolments has decreased over the past two decades overall (Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, 2025).
50. Enrolments in Māori medium education and te reo Māori as a subject have grown at both primary and secondary levels, with notable increases in secondary school participation and non-Māori enrolments in tertiary courses (Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, 2025). However, there are significant shortages of highly proficient te reo Māori teachers, despite annual growth in teacher numbers. The Ministry of Education is working on strategies to attract more te reo-speaking teachers, including kura-based training and scholarships, but it will take years to meet demand.

Focus areas for the tamariki and rangatahi priority group

51. People in this priority group make up nearly one third of the New Zealand population. Continuing to increase the number of tamariki and rangatahi valuing, learning, and using te reo Māori is a key desired outcome. This becomes particularly important when fertility rates decrease, and we can no longer rely on population growth to support te reo outcomes.
52. The issues identified that could potentially hinder te reo Māori outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi are:
 - i. the supply of te reo Māori teachers (English medium and Māori medium); and
 - ii. entry to (via Kōhanga Reo and Puna Reo), and retention in, the Māori medium education pathway. While not specifically discussed in the evidence relating to tamariki and rangatahi, but discussed in the section of this report focused on Audacious Goal Three, the creation of reo-speaking domains outside of the education system will also support te reo proficiency amongst this cohort.

Tamariki and Rangatahi Priority Group – Key Points for Consideration

53. Based on the above evidence, the following points have been identified as important to consider in the Maihi Karauna refresh:
 - The tamariki and rangatahi group (under 25 years) make up nearly one third of the New Zealand population.

- Support for te reo and proficiency rates are generally higher amongst tamariki and rangatahi; however, lower fertility rates in the future will have a flow-on impact on proficiency rates.
- An immediate focus on building proficiency amongst tamariki and rangatahi is important to ensure we have a future cohort of competent te reo speakers.
- There is a demand for Māori medium education pathways, as well as te reo Māori as a subject in English medium schools, but the full extent of demand is not well understood.
- Better understanding of the demand for Māori medium education would be a worthwhile research priority.
- There is a teacher supply issue for teachers of te reo Māori, and planning to address that issue should be incorporated into the Maihi Karauna refresh.
- There is potentially a pipeline issue for Māori medium education that needs to be better understood.
- Retaining the tamariki and rangatahi group as a priority for the Maihi Karauna refresh, and incorporating action planning for them as part of the Maihi Karauna refresh, is recommended.

TĀNGATA MATATAU KI TE REO | PROFICIENT SPEAKERS

54. A language requires a critical mass of proficient speakers across all age groups to remain sustainable (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2019). Tāngata matatau ki te reo are highly proficient speakers who serve as teachers, community leaders, and role models – preserving and transmitting mātauranga and reo Māori. For the purposes of the original Maihi Karauna, this group was defined as those people who are currently (or have the potential to become) highly proficient te reo Māori users (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2019).
55. Te Kupenga is one survey used to measure te reo Māori proficiency in people older than 15 years. In 2018, 7.5% of respondents said that they could speak te reo Māori ‘well’ or ‘very well’ (Statistics NZ, 2020). This was a decrease from the percentage recorded in the 2013 Te Kupenga survey, where 10.6% of respondents said they could speak te reo Māori ‘well’ or ‘very well’ (Statistics NZ, 2014).
56. The NZGSS asks respondents about their level of proficiency in te reo Māori, with ‘well’ and ‘very well’ being options for selection. In 2023, 1.2% percent of respondents said they could speak te reo Māori ‘very well’; and 1.1% said they could speak te reo ‘well’. *He Ara Poutama* models a combination of the NZGSS and Te Kupenga data, and estimates that, as of 2023, approximately 80,000 people can speak te reo Māori ‘well’ or ‘very well’ (Kōtātā Insight and Nicholson Consulting, 2025).¹³
57. Pathways for developing reo Māori proficiency are mainly through traditional institutions (wānanga, universities, kura kaupapa Māori) and targeted initiatives (kura

¹³This number is notably higher than the count of people who use English as much as te reo Māori in Audacious Goal Three. The reasons are unclear, but one possibility is that many people work in English-only domains; another is that non-Māori matatau speakers are not included in that count.

reo, Te Ataarangi). Programmes like Toi Reo Māori (translator/interpreter qualification) are also operating, increasing the number of licensed professionals annually. Strategies to engage rangatahi (youth) include using popular platforms (YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok) and launching initiatives like YouTube Māori Active, which focuses on sports content for proficient young speakers.

58. Whakaata Māori continues to be a critical partner in revitalising te reo Māori through the content it produces and curates, and the delivery platforms used to reach its audiences, including content directed at proficient speakers.
59. During the first five years of the implementation of the Maihi Karauna, events and initiatives targeted at proficient speakers included the following:
 - Te Taura Whiri hosted events like Waha Kōrero to showcase impromptu te reo Māori speakers, highlighting humour, intellect, and eloquence.
 - Strategies were implemented to attract more te reo-speaking teachers, including kura-based training and scholarships.
 - Targeted programmes such as Kura Reo Rāngai Tūmatanui were established to boost te reo Māori proficiency among public service workers.
 - Forums like ‘Manu e Kai ana i te Miro’¹⁴ provided relaxed environments for networking and learning across all proficiency levels.
 - Most government agencies offered te reo Māori classes, often using external providers.
60. Demand for highly proficient speakers is high, especially in whānau, community, public service and Māori medium education domains. This leads to competition for a limited pool of proficient speakers. The Māori medium workforce pipeline is crucial for increasing both the number and proficiency of speakers, with an emphasis on attracting teachers from within Māori communities.

Focus areas for tāngata matatau ki te reo Māori | proficient speakers priority group

61. Continuing to improve te reo Māori proficiency through a multi-pronged approach is recommended for this priority group. This will include traditional institutions, targeted programmes, content creation, and workplace normalisation – in addition to focusing on the Māori medium workforce pipeline. Increasing opportunities, by creating additional te reo domains and community initiatives aimed at tāngata matatau ki te reo, is also important, as these interventions are thought to make the most difference in enabling proficiency (Nicholson Consulting and Kōtātā Insight, 2025) (Nicholson Consulting and Kōtātā Insight, 2021). Focusing on this priority group aligns with Audacious Goal Three, where the focus is on use of te reo (as much as English) amongst the Māori population aged 15+.

Tāngata Matatau ki te reo Māori | Proficient Speakers Priority Group – Key Points for Consideration

62. Based on the above evidence, the following points have been identified as important to consider in the Maihi Karauna refresh:

¹⁴ The name of this forum has been changed to ‘He Kai He Kōrero’.

- In 2025 approximately 80,000 were considered to be proficient speakers of te reo.
- Proficient speakers of te reo are in high demand across multiple domains, and particularly as teachers of te reo Māori.
- There is a strong correlation between having more proficient speakers of te reo Māori and reaching Audacious Goal Three of the Maihi Karauna.
- Retaining the proficient group as a priority for the Maihi Karauna refresh and incorporating action planning for this group as part of that refresh, is recommended.

RĀNGAI TŪMATANUI | PUBLIC SECTOR¹⁵

63. The public sector interacts widely with all New Zealanders, including Māori. Services are delivered in person, online, and through broadcasting. The public sector consists of around 3,300 bodies, including central government organisations, school boards of trustees, and local government entities (Controller and Auditor-General, 2024). As of 2025, there were around 477,400 people employed in the public sector (Te Kawa Mataaho, 2025).
64. For the Crown to recognise the value of the Māori language, and to deliver quality services to Māori communities, it needs to ensure the public sector can ‘speak’ the language itself. By doing so, it will have both a direct and indirect impact on language revitalisation (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2019).
65. Te Kawa Mataaho (The Public Service Commission of New Zealand) conducted its second survey of the public service in 2025; namely, Te Taunaki. This survey found that approximately 66% of public service staff believed they were encouraged to use te reo Māori, and 64% felt supported to improve their skills through workplace learning (Te Kawa Mataaho, 2025). Proficiency amongst public servants is rising, with 11.8% of public servants reporting that they can speak te reo Māori at least ‘fairly well’. This is an increase from 9.5% in 2021. Furthermore, public servants compared well with the general population, only 6.2% of whom reportedly speak te reo Māori ‘fairly well’. The proportion of public servants who can reportedly speak te reo Māori ‘well’, or ‘very well’ (i.e. they can talk about many things, or almost anything) increased in 2025 to 3.4%. This is up from 2.3% in 2021. Notwithstanding, most people who responded to the survey could say no more than a few words or phrases (47.9%) or could only speak about basic things (40.2%).
66. Te Taura Whiri surveys the public service annually about their reo Māori activities. The findings are presented in the Maihi Karauna annual reports. Key findings from the 2025 report (Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, 2026) are presented below.
 - Maihi Karauna Annual Report survey participation among agencies has increased significantly, with 35 out of 40 agencies (88%) completing the Maihi Karauna survey in 2024/25, the highest response rate in five years.

¹⁵ The *public sector* is a broad category. It includes the *public service* (core government departments and agencies) – as well as Crown entities, state-owned enterprises, other government bodies, and local government.

- 33 of 37 agencies have registered their language plans with Te Taura Whiri, as of February 2026. Of the four agencies that have not registered a plan, three departments were established after the Cabinet deadline of 30 June 2021.
 - Agencies are developing tailored Māori language programmes for staff, including offering in-house or online te reo Māori classes.
 - Te Wiki o Te Reo Māori was widely celebrated across agencies with activities to raise the profile of te reo Māori (e.g. agency kapa haka, in-house games, quizzes, shared kai/hāngi and newsletters).
67. Māori language plans have become the norm across agencies now. Most agencies have language plans, and a small number have language plans for teams, units or regions. There are still many agencies actively pursuing their language plan goals. Some set targets and were able to report on the achievement against those targets for the year. The Public Service Act 2020 and the Māori language plans are key drivers, requiring agencies to build cultural capability and link language plans to accountability documents.
 68. Agencies faced several challenges in implementing the Maihi Karauna strategy during the 2024/25 period. Budget constraints were a significant issue, prompting many agencies to reduce or absorb dedicated te reo Māori roles into broader learning budgets. This resulted in fewer full-time equivalent positions specifically focused on Māori language development. Consequently, some agencies deferred, or reprioritised, Maihi Karauna activities to manage costs more effectively (Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, 2026).
 69. Despite the current Government's directions to prioritise English over te reo Māori in official government names, Maihi Karauna activity remains active and strong across most agencies. Activities include Māori language classes, reo use in communications (e.g. emails, corporate documents, titles), karakia, and waiata. There is growing acceptance and normalisation of te reo Māori in the public sector, with more bilingual signage, events, and leadership role-modelling.
 70. Most of the reporting about the implementation of the Maihi Karauna for the public sector priority group is focused on the smaller public service. There is very limited information about if, and how, the Maihi Karauna is being used in the wider public sector. Therefore, it is timely to consider whether the wider public sector remains the target group, and whether more concerted efforts should be put into supporting these entities to implement the Maihi Karauna. The alternative is to continue focusing primarily on the public service, potentially updating the target group to reflect this.
 71. Agreement is mixed on whether the public sector should remain a target group. Evaluation participants from the Maihi Karauna Summative Evaluation (Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, 2024) noted that the public sector should remain a focus area given its considerable size, reach and sphere of influence to effect change at a macro policy level. Conversely, the Specialist Advisory Group recommends removing the public sector as a priority group, to advance the shared ambitions of the Minister for Māori Development and Te Mātāwai (Te Puni Kōkiri and Te Mātāwai, 2025).
 72. Continuing to focus on the public sector will ensure that momentum is maintained. Evaluation participants also suggested other potential target groups, including the

health sector, local government and the business sector. Each of these groups has extensive reach into communities through the services and products that they offer.

73. Both the health sector and local government would fall into the sphere of the public sector. Therefore, more targeted Maihi Karauna support towards these entities would fall within the current public service priority group. In terms of the business sector, te reo Māori related partnerships between the public and private sectors are already in place – particularly within Te Taura Whiri. Encouraging additional public/private partnerships with other agencies could be a valuable addition to the Maihi Karauna.

Focus areas for the public sector priority group

74. Good progress has been made for the public service through the implementation of the Maihi Karauna. Language plans have been implemented as a means of ensuring staff within agencies are united in their approach to supporting te reo Māori. Moving beyond basic phrases and signage to foster better proficiency and everyday use in the workplace is the next step. Providing more advanced and immersive learning opportunities, including targeted programmes for different proficiency levels will also be important – as will continuing to hold senior leaders accountable for language goals.
75. The impact of the Maihi Karauna on the wider public sector is relatively unknown. Better understanding of the reo Māori needs and aspirations of the wider public sector could be a valuable focus going forward. Within the wider public sector, identifying smaller target groups seems sensible; for example, local government and/or the health sector.
76. Activities to date within the public service have been primarily internally facing. Further consideration could be given to how agencies better support reo Māori in externally facing functions; for example, in interactions with customers, online interactions, and bilingual signage in public buildings.

Rāngai Tūmatanui | Public Sector Priority Group – Key Points for Consideration

77. Based on the above evidence, the following points have been identified as important to consider in the Maihi Karauna refresh:
 - To date, implementation of the Maihi Karauna has been primarily focused on the public service, which is a smaller subset of the public sector.
 - The implementation of the Maihi Karauna within the public service has been relatively successful, and well guided by the requirement for agencies to have reo Māori language plans.
 - Moving beyond basic words and phrases to more conversational fluency is a good next step for the public service to focus on, as is providing more opportunities for proficient speakers.
 - The impact of the Maihi Karauna on the wider public sector is relatively unknown.
 - There is mixed agreement on whether the public sector should remain a priority group.
 - The focus areas going forward should be:
 - Better understanding and supporting the reo Māori needs and aspirations of the wider public sector.

- Potentially identifying smaller target groups within the wider public sector; for example, local government and/or the health sector.
- Considering how the public sector could better support tamariki/rangatahi and fluent speakers, by targeting their reo Māori activities.
- Considering how the public sector can better support reo Māori in externally facing functions; for example, in interactions with customers, online interactions, and bilingual signage in public buildings.

WHAT PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE IN IMPLEMENTING THE PRIORITIES FOR CROWN ACTION?

78. The priorities for Crown action outlined in the Maihi Karauna (2019–23) represented where the Crown intended to focus its attention and resources over the first five years of implementation, to achieve collective impact. Each priority had one or two convening agencies, who were tasked with bringing together a working group comprising a range of wider government agencies to develop deliberate actions for that priority.
79. There are 11 Crown priorities in total, with timeframes ranging from 0 to 2 years (current – from agency baselines) and 3 to 5 years (medium term – subject to future Budget process). The convening agencies are: Ministry for Culture and Heritage, Te Puni Kōkiri, Te Māngai Pāho, Ministry of Education, Department of Internal Affairs, Public Service Commission and Te Taura Whiri.
80. The Maihi Karauna strategy made several suggestions as to how lead agencies could approach and progress their respective priorities. However, the absence of any further clarity on how agencies should proceed may have contributed to progress being limited. To this end, the Summative Evaluation of the Maihi Karauna noted that:

Collaboration and co-ordination between agencies is not always consistent. Agencies tend to be insular, focusing on internal te reo Māori capacity and capability, with limited cross-agency collaboration occurring to maximise resources and experiences in pursuit of shared language outcomes. While there are some agencies collaborating on joint initiatives, this is more an exception than the rule (Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, 2024).
81. The work of the seven responsible agencies to convene, develop and test new initiatives (in addition to existing and modified initiatives), across the outcomes/priorities of the Maihi Karauna, appears to have been limited. Moreover, progressing the medium-term priorities was subject to agencies' ability to secure funding through the Budget process.
82. Maihi Karauna agencies are responsible for monitoring the outputs and outcomes of their own activities. They are required to report progress on the priorities and outcomes of the Maihi Karauna – as part of the annual reporting process, overseen by Te Taura Whiri (Maihi Karauna Annual Reporting).
83. The last Maihi Karauna implementation plan was produced in 2021/22, to cover the period up to the end of 2023, with the expectation that an updated Maihi Karauna strategy would be in place by 2024. Since then, visibility regarding the status and progress of agencies' work on their priorities (and any associated work), and the results

of inter-agency collaboration, has been limited. Moving forward, consideration should be given to ensuring that:

- i. agencies work together, as the strategy intended; and
 - ii. regular updates on this work are reported on at Maihi Karauna fora, and in annual reporting and future evaluations. In addition, these governance fora should be encouraging and driving strategic coordination.
84. The original timeframes for these priorities have now expired; therefore it is timely to reconsider what the priorities for action should be going forward. Appendix 1 of this report provides an update on the implementation of the priorities for Crown action, which will be useful when considering what the new priorities for action will be.

Priorities for Crown Action – Key Points for Consideration

85. Based on the above evidence, the following points have been identified as important to consider in the Maihi Karauna refresh:
- The priorities for Crown action in the original Maihi Karauna strategy had a 2–5-year lifespan.
 - There were issues associated with agencies working together to deliver on these priorities, as well as issues with implementation oversight and monitoring. As a result, many priorities were not achieved.
 - Consideration is needed as to how the priorities for Crown action (or something similar) might be more successfully implemented in the refreshed Maihi Karauna.
 - The priorities for Crown action (or something similar) should be considered as part of the action planning in Phase Two of the Maihi Karauna refresh, to begin in July 2026.

ARE THE OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE MAIHI KARAUNA FIT FOR PURPOSE IN TERMS OF CURRENCY AND RELEVANCY?

86. Based on the evidence gathered through answering questions one and two (regarding progress made), this section of the report will consider the extent to which the different components of the Maihi Karauna are fit for purpose in terms of currency and relevancy. Note that this section will only discuss those components not previously covered.

LONG-TERM JOINT VISION: KIA MAURIORA TE REO

87. The joint vision of both maihi under Te Whare o te Reo Mauriora is currently under consideration in a separate process being led by Te Mātāwai and Te Puni Kōkiri. It is therefore out of scope for this review of evidence. However, any updated thinking related to the joint vision should be incorporated into the refreshed Maihi Karauna strategy.

MAIHI KARAUNA VISION: KIA MĀHORAHORA TE REO – EVERY DAY, BY EVERYONE, EVERY WAY, EVERYWHERE

88. The current Maihi Karauna vision – Kia māhorahora te reo – is broad enough to remain relevant and current in the refreshed version of the Maihi Karauna. If we are to retain the vision, what should be updated is the text describing the vision in the strategy document, as some of the examples and context used in the original Maihi Karauna strategy are outdated.

MAIHI KARAUNA ROLE: CREATE THE CONDITIONS FOR TE REO MĀORI TO THRIVE AS A LIVING LANGUAGE

89. The role of the Maihi Karauna, to create the conditions for te reo Māori to thrive as a living language, is also broad enough to be considered relevant and current in the refreshed version of the Maihi Karauna. However, there is currently no text in the Maihi Karauna that further explains the role. If we are to retain the role, consideration should be given to adding some explanatory text in the refreshed version.

MAIHI KARAUNA OUTCOMES

90. The Maihi Karauna has three outcome statements, being:
- i. AOTEAROTANGA – NATIONHOOD: Te reo Māori is valued by Aotearoa whānui as a central part of national identity.
 - ii. MĀTAURANGA – KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS: Aotearoa whānui has increased levels of knowledge, skill and proficiency in te reo Māori.
 - iii. HONONGA – ENGAGEMENT: Aotearoa whānui is able to engage with te reo Māori.
91. In the Maihi Karauna Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2019), there are no separate indicators for the Maihi Karauna outcomes. Rather, the framework uses the audacious goals' indicators to measure progress towards these outcomes. Accordingly, the audacious goals' evidence (discussed previously in this report) indicates that the outcome statements should be retained, as they have not yet been fully achieved.
92. As with the previous components, if we are to retain the Maihi Karauna outcomes, what should change is the text describing the priorities within each of the outcomes. This is particularly true for the Hononga – Engagement outcome, where we need to identify new opportunities to better support this outcome.

MAIHI KARAUNA APPROACHES

93. The theory of change underlying the original Maihi Karauna strategy has three key approaches:
- i. WHAKANUI – te reo Māori is valued by Aotearoa whānui as a central part of national identity.
 - ii. WHAKAAKO – te reo Māori is learned by Aotearoa whānui.

- iii. WHAKAATU – te reo Māori is seen, read, heard and spoken by Aotearoa whānui.
- 94. The Crown priorities for action indicators in Appendix One serve as the measures for the Maihi Karauna approaches; and no separate indicators exist beyond these (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2019). When looking across these indicators, many still require significant progress; and some cannot be measured due to missing data.
- 95. As with the other components of the Maihi Karauna, if we are to retain approaches, updating the text describing each of the approaches would be valuable as a good way to signal the priorities within each.

MAIHI KARAUNA COMPONENTS – KEY POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 96. Based on the above evidence, the following points have been identified as important to consider in the Maihi Karauna refresh:
 - The joint vision for Te Whare o te Reo Mauriora is being considered under a separate process, and therefore is out of scope for the Maihi Karauna refresh.
 - If we are to retain the different components of the Maihi Karauna, the text descriptions within these components should be revisited in the refreshed version (where necessary), to signal updated priorities and focus areas.
 - We need to consider whether the current Maihi Karauna has too many layers and components, and whether the refresh is an opportunity to simplify both the strategy and its measurement.

OTHER RELEVANT EVIDENCE

- 97. The next section of this report discusses other relevant evidence worth considering when refreshing the Maihi Karauna, including:
 - i. te reo Māori data issues.
 - ii. WAI 3327 recommendations.
 - iii. recommendations from the Specialist Advisory Group report on te reo Māori entities.
 - iv. demographic information not already discussed in this report.

TE REO MĀORI DATA ISSUES

- 98. As highlighted in previous sections of this report, measuring progress of the Maihi Karauna is problematic. The issues identified through this review of evidence include the following:
 - Measuring progress is difficult because data collection is infrequent, inconsistent, and unstable across major surveys (including the Census, NZGSS, Te Kupenga, and Education Counts). These datasets use different methods and frequencies, which limits comparison and cross-analysis.

- Several critical measures have been removed or changed in Statistics NZ surveys, creating gaps in long-term trend data and limiting the ability to track changes in te reo Māori proficiency and use over time.
 - Survey questions and definitions are often not aligned, leading to discrepancies in reported proficiency, language use, and outcomes across agencies.
 - There are major gaps in thematic data, including corpus planning, critical awareness, and demand for Māori Medium education.
 - Instead of direct measures of fluency or language use, monitoring relies heavily on proxy measures – which reduces accuracy and insight.
 - Planned Census and NZGSS changes pose risks, including the shift to administrative data (which cannot measure conversational ability), and reduced sample sizes (which limit all-of-population, iwi-level and small-area analysis).
 - There is no shared measurement framework across Māori language entities, which results in inconsistent reporting and lack of system-wide alignment.
 - Limited investment in regular national-level surveys further weakens the ability to monitor long-term language revitalisation trends.
99. Work to address the above identified issues as part of the Maihi Karauna refresh should form a key workstream of the updated strategy. Without quality data, we are limited in our ability to measure progress towards what we are trying to achieve through the strategy. Data quality issues affect both the Maihi Karauna and the Maihi Māori. Therefore, it is important that we (Te Taura Whiri and Te Puni Kōkiri) work in collaboration with Te Mātāwai on this workstream.
100. The Terms of Reference for Te Rūnanga Reo were refreshed last year, adding the Statistics portfolio to the Ministerial membership. This should help with future work to address te reo Māori data issues.

WAI 3327 TAKU REO KURA

101. In 2025, the Waitangi Tribunal presented its findings on WAI 3327, the inquiry into claims concerning the Crown's policies, practices, actions and omissions regarding the use of te reo Māori in the public service (Waitangi Tribunal, 2025). The Tribunal found that the Crown has not upheld key Treaty principles — including tino rangatiratanga, partnership, active protection, good government, equity, and redress — which has contributed to the ongoing vulnerability of te reo Māori. Because of these past and ongoing breaches, the Tribunal stated that the Crown has a significant obligation to proactively support revitalisation. The Government has not yet provided a response to the report.
102. It is worthwhile considering if, and how, some of the recommendations of the WAI 3327 report might be incorporated into the Maihi Karauna refresh. The recommendations considered relevant in this context are presented below:

WAI 3327 Recommendations

103. Reverse recent actions limiting the use of te reo Māori

- i. change current Crown policies to ensure meaningful engagement with Māori about agency names and government communications, aligning with te Tiriti and Te Ture mō Te Reo Māori 2016.

104. Make bilingual signage guidelines compulsory

- i. convert existing guidelines into mandatory rules for all Crown agencies.
- ii. update rules to include agency names and websites.
- iii. establish monitoring, for correct application.

105. Increase bilingual capability in the public service

- i. expand te reo training for public servants.
- ii. ensure funding for public-sector initiatives does not reduce funding for community-based revitalisation.

106. Although the strategy cannot require agencies to act on these recommendations, signalling their importance may encourage them to do so – including having actions in the language plans that agencies are required to develop (Office of Te Minita Whanaketanga Māori, 2018). This work would also need to align with any Crown response to WAI 3327.

SPECIALIST ADVISORY GROUP REPORT

107. In June 2025, the Specialist Advisory Group released their report on the Māori Language Sector (Te Puni Kōkiri and Te Mātāwai, 2025). There were recommendations arising from that report that are relevant to the refresh of the Maihi Karauna; for example, in relation to dedicated investment in Te Rangakura to lead the measurement and monitoring of the impact of initiatives on the shared ambitions (Rec 7 of the Specialist Advisory Group report).

108. The Specialist Advisory Group also recommended removing the public sector as a priority group, to advance the shared ambitions of the current Minister for Māori Development and Te Mātāwai (Te Puni Kōkiri and Te Mātāwai, 2025).

109. The refresh could consider how the Maihi Karauna can best contribute to the shared ambitions of the Minister for Māori Development and Te Mātāwai; namely:

- i. more Māori whānau speaking Māori and increasing intergenerational transmission to achieve that goal
- ii. restoring Māori as a nurturing first language, with Māori homes and communities supported by positive broader societal attitudes and what effort is required to achieve that impact.

110. Increasing the focus on Audacious Goal Three (re 150,000 Māori aged 15+ using te reo as much as English, by 2040), as well as the proficient speakers' priority group, will go a long way towards contributing to these shared ambitions. Having an action plan focused

on this goal and this priority group, outlining what this contribution will look like for agencies, is important for clarity of role and accountability purposes.

FURTHER DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

111. The 2023 census (Statistics NZ, 2023) shows that te reo Māori speakers remain concentrated in rural regions, with the highest rates per capita found in:
- Gisborne: 16.9%
 - Northland: 10.1%
 - Bay of Plenty: 9.0%
112. The 2018 version of the Maihi Karauna does not purposely target any actions by region. When creating the action plan for the Maihi Karauna refresh, it would be worthwhile considering if we might gain more traction by specifically targeting certain regions for some of the activities.

OTHER RELEVANT EVIDENCE – KEY POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION

113. Based on the above evidence, the following points have been identified as important to consider in the Maihi Karauna refresh:
- The inclusion of a workstream focused on improving te reo Māori data, within the updated Maihi Karauna.
 - Consideration of if, and how, relevant recommendations from WAI3327 can be incorporated into the Maihi Karauna refresh.
 - Increasing the focus on Audacious Goal Three (more Māori aged 15+ speaking te reo as much as English) and on the proficient speaker priority group, which will align with the shared ambitions outlined in the Specialist Advisory Group's report.
 - Consideration of if, and how, we might target specific regions when creating the action plan for the Maihi Karauna, to gain traction towards reaching the audacious goals.

CONCLUSION

114. This review of evidence demonstrates that the Maihi Karauna has laid a solid foundation for revitalising te reo Māori across Aotearoa, with notable system-level progress since 2019. Public support for te reo Māori remains strong; and agencies increasingly understand their roles. Normalisation of the language continues to grow across parts of the public service and wider society. These gains reflect the commitment of dedicated staff, well-embedded agency language planning, and the maturing of the strategy over its first implementation period.
115. At the same time, the evidence highlights clear challenges to be addressed in the refresh. Issues around data quality and consistency significantly limit the ability to effectively monitor progress. In addition, Māori medium education faces teacher supply

pressures, declining enrolments, and problematic access to key parts of the pathway. The wider public sector's engagement with the Maihi Karauna strategy remains largely unknown. Progress towards the audacious goals is mixed. Goal 1 (valuing te reo Māori) and Goal 2 (one million basic speakers) are broadly on track. However, the target in Goal 3 (using te reo as much as English) is well off trajectory. It will require major shifts in investment and focus if it is to be achieved.

116. Across all components, the evidence signals the need to maintain momentum while strengthening the strategy's coherence, coordination, and accountability. Retaining the current vision, role, and goals remains appropriate, but clearer prioritisation (particularly around proficient speakers, and reo-rich domains and settings) is essential.
117. Ultimately, the refreshed Maihi Karauna should build on the progress to date while addressing barriers that constrain long-term impact. A sharper focus on improving data, strengthening immersion pathways, supporting proficient speakers, investing in Māori medium education, and leveraging partnerships across the public, private, and Māori sectors will be key to advancing te reo Māori as a thriving, everyday language for all. The next phase provides a critical opportunity to accelerate progress, support the intergenerational transmission efforts of Te Mātāwai, and ensure te reo Māori continues to flourish for future generations.

APPENDIX 1: PROGRESS AGAINST THE CROWN PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

1. The following information was sourced from the Maihi Karauna strategy (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2019) and the formative and summative evaluations of the Maihi Karauna (Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, 2023) (Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, 2024). Data on the indicators for each priority has been sourced from the Maihi Karauna indicators report (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2022) and other more recent sources where updated data is available.

Priority 1: More New Zealanders valuing te reo me ngā tikanga Māori as part of our national identity (0–2-year initiation)

Convening Agency: Ministry for Culture & Heritage

2. Progress has been significant in shifting public attitudes toward te reo Māori. Surveys show that 73% of New Zealanders now view the language as an important part of national culture, and agencies have embedded its use in everyday operations. Leadership has played a critical role, with senior managers modelling behaviours that normalise te reo Māori across the public sector.
3. Visibility has also increased through national events such as Te Wiki o te Reo Māori and Matariki; and mainstream media integration has further elevated the status of te reo Māori. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of te reo Māori in official briefings by the Prime Minister and health officials reinforced its relevance. However, challenges remain. Resistance persists in some parts of the public sector. Recent policy signals prioritising English names and communications have been perceived as undermining progress and creating cultural safety concerns for Māori staff.
4. Despite gains, negative attitudes toward te reo Māori persist among some groups, and resistance to normalisation remains a barrier. While awareness has grown, there is limited measurement of deeper cultural impact beyond survey data.

Indicators

- In 2023, 53.9% of adult New Zealanders ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ that the Government should encourage and support the use of Māori (language) in everyday situations, compared to 49.4% in 2016 (NZGSS).
- In 2023, 41.9% of adult New Zealanders ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ that it would be good if all people living in New Zealand spoke Māori and English, compared to 34.9% in 2016 (NZGSS).
- In 2023, 55.8% of adult New Zealanders ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ that that signage should be in both Māori and English, compared to 44.8% in 2016 (NZGSS).

Priority 2: More value gained from te reo me ngā tikanga Māori for economic and social development (0–2-year initiation)

Convening Agency: Te Puni Kōkiri

5. The private sector has embraced te reo Māori in meaningful ways, with companies such as Air New Zealand, BNZ, ANZ, Countdown, Whittaker's, and Z Energy incorporating bilingual signage, greetings, and cultural strategies into their operations. These efforts have improved workplace inclusion and customer engagement. Local government has also expanded bilingual signage and services, aligning with community identity.
6. Despite these gains, there is a risk of tokenism if initiatives are not sustained or adequately resourced. Many agencies rely on baseline funding and passionate champions, which limits scalability. Stronger partnerships between public and private sectors are needed to accelerate normalisation.

Indicators

- There are currently no measures or indicators for this priority, making it difficult to quantify progress.

Priority 3: More young people excited about te reo Māori (0–2-year initiation)

Convening Agencies: Te Puni Kōkiri / Te Māngai Pāho

7. Youth engagement has been a standout success. Rangatahi are participating actively in language initiatives through sports, social media, and targeted digital content such as Whakaata Māori youth platforms and YouTube Māori Active. Surveys show younger cohorts are more open to Māori and Treaty issues and are proud to use te reo Māori. However, language depth remains basic, such that proficiency outside formal settings is rare. Intergenerational transmission is not sufficiently prioritised. Additionally, reo Māori tutor shortages constrain progression beyond entry-level learning.

Indicators

- In 2018, 84% of youth respondents to a Te Māngai Pāho Audience survey¹⁶ were *open to improving their te reo Māori ability*, compared with 83% in 2019.
- In 2018, 59% of *Māori youth used the internet or social media to keep in touch with Māori culture*, compared with 56% in 2014 (Maihi Karauna strategy, page 25).

Priority 4: More people engaging with quality broadcast and online content in te reo Māori (Medium term 3–5 years)

Convening Agency: Te Māngai Pāho

8. The visibility of te reo Māori in media has grown substantially. Public broadcasters and mainstream outlets now integrate the language into news, entertainment, and sports

¹⁶ In 2019, Te Māngai Pāho changed its survey question to ask about music from Māori artists and accessing Māori TV on the internet. As such, data across surveys is not comparable (Maihi Karauna Indicators report 2022, page 9). In 2019, the Te Māngai Pāho Audience survey was replaced entirely by the Kopa Segmentation Model.

programming. Whakaata Māori dedicates significant content to fluent speakers; and the first fully te reo Māori sports documentary was produced with English subtitles, thus broadening the reach. The challenge is ensuring that media engagement translates into language capability rather than remaining a visibility-only outcome. Sustaining funding and content quality will be critical.

Indicators

- The indicators for this priority are reliant on Te Kupenga (outlined in the Maihi Karauna Monitoring and Evaluation framework), noting that questions from the now defunct Te Māngai Pāho Audience Survey were used as indicators for this priority, as presented in the Maihi Karauna strategy.

Priority 5: More children and young people learning te reo Māori (0–2-year initiation)

Convening Agency: Ministry of Education

9. The number of New Zealanders able to speak basic te reo Māori has grown from 770,000 in 2016 to 907,000 in 2018, reflecting increased learning opportunities. Public sector demand for in-house courses is strong, and schools are contributing to this momentum. However, COVID-19 disrupted early implementation and diverted resources. Furthermore, Māori language tutor capacity remains oversubscribed. Pipelines from schooling to workplace proficiency are still limited.

Indicators

- As of 1 July 2025, there were 27,162 Māori (up from 19,923 in 2018) and 1,220 non-Māori (up from 588 in 2018) students in Māori medium education (levels 1 and 2).
- As of 1 July, there were 84,131 Māori (up from 61,995 in 2018) and 182,068 non-Māori (up from 108,618 in 2018) students learning Māori language in English medium education (levels 3 to 5).¹⁷

Priority 6: More people progressing beyond basic knowledge of te reo Māori (0–2-year initiation)

Convening Agencies: Ministry of Education / Te Puni Kōkiri

10. Capability-building programmes such as Te Kura Reo Rāngai Tūmatanui¹⁸ have improved language quality among public servants; and translator/interpreter licensing numbers are rising. Agencies have introduced immersion spaces, marae-based wānanga, and regular practice sessions to support progression. However, despite these efforts, language use often plateaus at simple greetings and signage; and sustained conversational practice is uncommon. Capacity gaps in proficient tutors and mentors persist.

¹⁷ [Māori language in schooling | Education Counts](#)

¹⁸ A four-day immersive wānanga facilitated by Te Taura Whiri – specifically designed for proficient reo Māori speakers working in the public sector

Indicators

- In 2023, 4.3% of New Zealanders (214,739) could hold an everyday conversation in te reo Māori, compared to 4% in 2018.¹⁹
- In 2024, 37,885²⁰ people participated in learning te reo Māori at levels beyond basic knowledge (from early learning to tertiary education), down from 40,285 in 2017.²¹

The following indicators have not been updated due to the necessary data not being easily accessible or disaggregated from the original data sources:

- In 2018, there were 22,934 primary school students participating in Māori language learning in English-medium settings (MLIL 1-3).²²
- In 2018, there were 4,688 secondary school students participating in Māori language learning (MLIL 1-3).
- In 2017, there were 8,250 completions of te reo Māori qualifications at NZQF Level 2 or over.

Priority 7: More people highly proficient in te reo Māori (Medium term 3–5 years)

Convening Agency: Ministry of Education

11. Targeted programmes and curated media content support proficient cohorts. Moreover, networks of proficient speakers are forming within the public sector. The Toi Reo Māori qualification strengthens the translator and interpreter pipeline. In addition, Whakaata Māori directed 42% of its new content to proficient speakers in 2021/22. However, proficiency pathways remain narrow, and the supply of proficient speakers and teachers is insufficient. Audacious Goal 3 (i.e. Hononga, whereby 150,000 Māori aged 15+ will use te reo Māori at least as much as English) is not on track for 2040. It will not be reached without significant investment – and the expansion of everyday language domains.

Indicators

- In 2018²³, 12.8% of Māori could speak te reo Māori ‘well’ or ‘very well’, up from 10.6% in 2013²⁴.

The following indicators have not been updated due to the necessary data not being easily accessible or disaggregated from the original data sources:

- In 2017, there were 1,887 students who had been participating in Māori-medium education for at least six years.

¹⁹ New Zealand Census: [Māori, Place and ethnic group summaries | Stats NZ](#)

²⁰ [Q2 - Tertiary participation | Education Counts](#)

²¹ It is unclear if the 2017 figure included formal and non-formal students (which has a higher total enrolment number due to some students being double counted as they participated in both categories).

²² MLIL= Māori Language Immersion Level, a classification used by the Ministry of Education to categorise the amount of te reo Māori being used to deliver the curriculum in schools and early learning centres. Level 1 indicates that 81% -100% of teaching and learning is in te reo Māori. Level 2 indicates 51% - 80%. Level 3 indicates 31% - 50%.

²³ [Te Kupenga: 2018 \(final\) – English | Stats NZ](#)

²⁴ [Te Kupenga 2013 \(English\) | Stats NZ](#)

- In 2018, there were over 12,000 students who had been participating in Māori medium education for at least six years²⁵.
- In 2017, there were 315 completions of te reo Māori qualifications at NZQF Level 6.

Priority 8: More use of te reo Māori in the home, on the marae, and in communities (0–2-year initiation)

Convening Agency: Te Puni Kōkiri

12. Community initiatives such as ‘Kai Kōrero’, which has attracted over 3,000 participants, provide informal spaces for conversational te reo Māori. Agencies also support marae-based programmes and leadership development that embed Māori language practice in culturally-grounded settings. However, more everyday domains beyond workplaces are needed to achieve widespread revitalisation.

Indicators

- In 2018, 18.4% of Māori reported that te reo Māori is used regularly at home, compared with 20.5% in 2013 (Te Kupenga 2013 and 2018).

There are no further measures or indicators for this priority, as none were developed as intended.

Priority 9: Te reo Māori resources held by the Crown made more readily available (0–2-year initiation)

Convening Agency: Department of Internal Affairs

13. Practical tools such as bilingual signage guidelines, the *He Ara Poutama* forecasting model, and translators’ registers have been utilised, alongside monitoring frameworks that provide accountability. However, role clarity and inter-agency coordination are uneven; and collaboration with Maihi Māori has been siloed. Resource inequities were highlighted in the statutory review of Te Ture mō Te Reo Māori 2016 – as well as in subsequent Māori Affairs Select Committee hearings and reports into the matter.

Indicators

There are currently no measures or indicators for this priority, making it difficult to quantify progress.

Priority 10: More accessible public services in te reo Māori (0–2-year initiation)

Convening Agencies: Public Service Commission / Te Taura Whiri

14. Public services have normalised te reo Māori in greetings, karakia, and bilingual signage; and 65% of staff report being encouraged to use the language. Some bilingual service

²⁵ It is noted in the Maihi Karauna that this figure is an approximate figure based on the cumulative year 6 enrolments in Māori medium education from 2012 to 2018, representing those who would now be year 6 to year 12 and therefore still likely to be in compulsory schooling. It excludes those who might still be in the system at year 13 or higher.

aspects, such as traffic signs, are evident. However, many agencies lack dedicated FTE resourcing, relying instead on champions within baseline budgets. Recent directives that privilege English in naming and communications risk undermining progress.

Indicators

- In 2016, 59.7% of Public Service Association members felt *supported to learn te reo Māori in the workplace*; and 78.6% of PSA members felt supported to use te reo Māori in the workplace²⁶. The data source (survey) indicators were subsequently superseded by the Public Service Census (Te Taunaki) in 2021 and 2025.

Priority 11: More towns and cities embracing bilingualism (Medium term 3–5 years)

Convening Agency: Department of Internal Affairs

15. The Aotearoa Reorua programme is co-designing bilingual community strategies with councils and mana whenua, aiming for 40 centres by 2040. Local governments are increasing bilingual signage and traffic signs in partnership with Waka Kotahi (NZ Transport Agency) and Te Mātāwai. Scaling these efforts requires stronger cross-agency coordination and sustained community partnerships.
16. There is also a risk of symbolic bilingualism that fails to result in everyday use. Moreover, English-first policy signals may counter community ambitions. Uptake beyond early adopters has been slow, and local government capability and funding remain consistent barriers. Stronger incentives and clearer guidance may help to accelerate progress in this regard.

Indicators

- The number of local/regional councils that have formally announced their town/city as bilingual remains at one (Rotorua).²⁷

²⁶ Cantal, C., Plimmer, G., & Qumsey, T. (2016). *Support to learn and use Te Reo in New Zealand public services: A survey report*. Prepared for the Māori Language Commission Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, Victoria University of Wellington.

²⁷ This measure was not included in the Maihi Karauna as it was developed after the strategy was published.

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