



Ministry for
Pacific Peoples

Te Manatū mō ngā Iwi o te Moana-nui-ā-Kiwa

Ministry for Pacific Peoples Long-term Insights Briefing 2025:

*Shared futures: Deepening our
understanding of Māori-Pacific
identity in Aotearoa*

Long-term insights based on data and lived experiences of people identifying as both Māori and Pacific peoples in Aotearoa, to inform future thinking.

Briefing summary for consultation — May 2025

***He kākano ahau
i ruia mai i Rangiātea,
e kore au e ngaro***

*I was a seed propagated in Rangiātea therefore,
I will never forget, and I will never be lost¹*

¹ There are slight variations of this whakataukī and its translation. Rangiātea is another name for Hawaiki, the ancestral Pacific homelands.

Mālo nī, Fakaalofa lahi atu, Kia orāna tātou katoatoa, Mālō e lelei, Fakatalofa atu, Noa'ia 'e māuri, Ni sa bula vinaka, Kam na bane ni mauri, Halo olaketa, Halo olgeta, Halo, Malo lava le soifua manuia, Tēnā koutou katoa.

Chapter 1: The Ministry is working on its Long-term Insights Briefing

The Briefing is about people who identify as both Māori and Pacific

Long-term Insights Briefings are an opportunity for government agencies to examine a specific topic or issue in-depth, identifying trends and opportunities for the future². While each Long-term Insights Briefing is presented to a relevant Minister for consideration, they are not public policy – they are written independently by each agency and not influenced by the government of the day.

The Ministry for Pacific Peoples' (the Ministry) Long-term Insights Briefing (the Briefing) focuses on the growing population of Aotearoa New Zealand who identify their ethnicity as both Māori and Pacific peoples (Māori-Pacific peoples).

The Briefing aims to provide insights to the government, communities, and the wider public on the characteristics of the Māori-Pacific population. It explores lived experiences across various parts of life (including education, work, and home) and how language, culture, and community shape an individual and collective sense of identity. It seeks to understand the important contribution Māori and Pacific peoples make to the social and economic prosperity of Aotearoa now and in the future.

This document is an initial draft of the Briefing, which the Ministry is seeking views and feedback on as part of its second round of consultation. Feedback provided will inform the drafting of the final Briefing, which the Ministry will present to the Minister for Pacific Peoples in late 2025 then publish for the public.

The process so far

In November and December 2024, the Ministry ran the first round of consultation, seeking views on the proposed topic of Māori-Pacific identity. The Ministry held 12 in-person meetings in multiple regions across the country and received 397 submissions from the public about the topic (221 via an online survey and 176 hard copies from face-to-face engagement).

² You can read more about Long-term Insights Briefings on the DPMC website here: <https://www.dPMC.govt.nz/our-programmes/policy-project/long-term-insights-briefings>. You can also find the Ministry's inaugural Long-term Insights Briefing here: "Improving Pacific data equity: Opportunities to enhance the future of Pacific wellbeing", Ministry for Pacific Peoples, 2023. Ministry for Pacific Peoples — Long-term Insights Briefing 2023.

The outcomes of the first round of consultation

18% of those who engaged in the Ministry's first round of consultation identified their ethnicity as Māori-Pacific peoples, while 66% identified as Pacific peoples only, 13% identified as Māori only, and the remainder identified as other ethnic groups or did not specify their ethnicity.

That initial consultation found that there were high levels of support for exploring this topic. One respondent noted "I think it is absolutely necessary to understand Māori-Pacific peoples [sic] unique culture and connection to be able to support us adequately and ensure future generations are well supported too", while another respondent neatly summed up: "It's about time".

Next steps

The final Briefing will also incorporate qualitative data from the second round of consultation.

The purpose of the second round is to build on what has been heard so far, to explore the topic in greater depth, and to seek feedback on this draft Briefing.

For round two of consultation, the Ministry is engaging with iwi groups, Māori communities, Pacific communities, the wider public, government agencies and experts such as senior Māori and Pacific leaders and academics. In this round of consultation, the Ministry is particularly interested in hearing from those who have mixed Māori-Pacific whakapapa and from youth, as these people are critical to the Ministry's understanding of this population³.

It is important to recognise ancient whakapapa linkages and Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Te Tiriti o Waitangi provides a foundation through which Māori are formally acknowledged as tangata whenua, the indigenous first peoples of Aotearoa.

While the title of the Briefing focuses on 'shared futures', it is important to acknowledge that Māori and Pacific peoples have shared pasts, presents and futures.

Māori and Pacific peoples have shared pasts through ancient whakapapa linkages that have existed for millennia. The first Māori ancestors migrated from the ancestral homeland of Hawaiki/Rangiātea, across Te Moana-nui-ā-Kiwa/the Pacific Ocean to settle in Aotearoa. The whakatauki cited at the start of this document acknowledges this rich history.

Following ongoing migration of Pacific peoples to Aotearoa, particularly in the last seventy years, existing ancestral connections have become increasingly intertwined. Māori and Pacific communities in Aotearoa sometimes acknowledge their long but evolving relationship with reference to the concept of 'tuakana-teina' (older and younger siblings).

It is timely and important to learn more about Māori-Pacific peoples

With the face of Aotearoa changing and becoming increasingly more diverse, it is timely to better understand the impact of the Māori-Pacific population on the future prosperity of Aotearoa and how policy settings can unlock the potential of this rapidly growing and youthful demographic.

³ Unless otherwise specified, all quantitative data in this Briefing is based on the 2023 Census and uses ethnicity data (rather than descent or iwi affiliation data). Access to the 2023 Census data in the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) was provided by Stats NZ under conditions designed to give effect to the security and confidentiality provisions of the Data and Statistics Act 2022. The results presented in this document are the work of the author, not Stats NZ or individual data suppliers. These results are not official statistics. They have been created for research purposes from the IDI, which is carefully managed by Stats NZ. For more information about the IDI please visit <https://www.stats.govt.nz/integrated-data/>.

Historically, Māori and Pacific peoples have been underrepresented and not adequately captured in government census data. Māori and Pacific peoples have distinct population, ethnic, family, household, and individual characteristics. Improving the way that government captures and analyses ethnicity data is critical for informed decision making.

With the right policy settings, there is an opportunity to better foster a new generation of leaders and innovators. Social and cultural insights can help unlock the potential of this rapidly growing and youthful demographic, leading to positive outcomes such as higher workforce participation, increased entrepreneurship, and stronger community leadership.

Chapter 2: Understanding the Māori-Pacific population in Aotearoa

Multi-ethnic identity

A person's sense of identity can shape their wellbeing, how they engage with the world, the decisions they make, and the relationships they build. As one respondent noted in the first round of consultation: "Identity is important because it shapes the choices and actions of individuals and society. Identity affects how we vote, how we relate to and treat other people, how we treat the environment, how we look at the world and decide what it will be like for our grandchildren's children."

Identity is shaped by life experiences – at home, in school, at work, and in the community. It is important to reflect that identity can also be shaped by things that some mainstream systems may have considered harder to measure or quantify - such as cultural connections and knowledge, language, history, indigenous world views, spirituality, and arts and culture.

The 2023 Census showed that 54% of Māori and 43% of Pacific peoples identified with two or more ethnicities. Among Pacific peoples under 15 years, this rose to 62%, reflecting the increasingly multi-ethnic nature of younger generations.

In particular, 21% of Pacific peoples also identified as Māori, while 11% of Māori also identified as Pacific peoples.

This data underscores the fluid and overlapping nature of ethnic identity in Aotearoa. It reinforces the need for policies that recognise diverse identities rather than applying a one-size-fits-all model.

Population size and growth

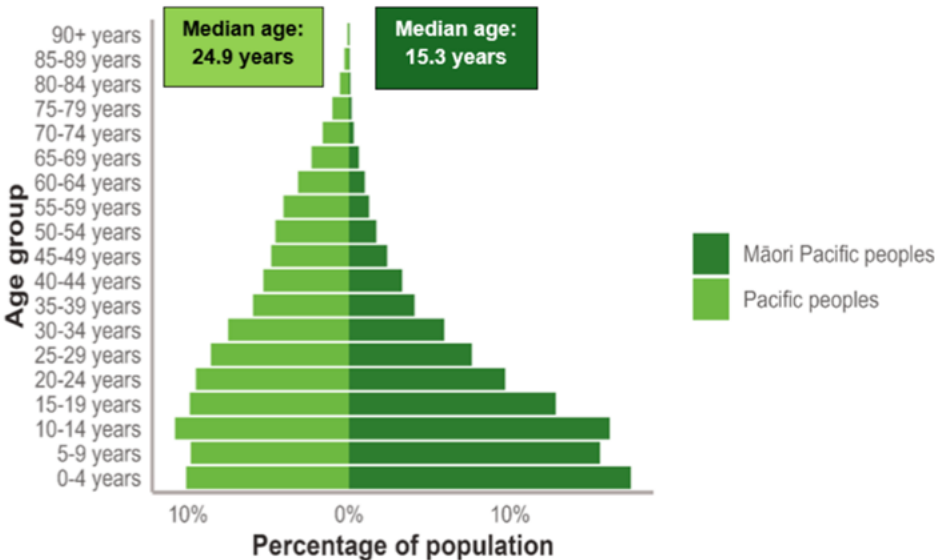
ETHNIC GROUP	POPULATION COUNT	% NEW ZEALAND POPULATION
Total New Zealand	4,993,923	100%
Māori	887,493	17.8%
Pacific peoples	442,632	8.9%
Māori-Pacific peoples	93,582	1.9%

Māori-Pacific peoples are a small but fast-growing group in Aotearoa. Nearly 5% of children under 15 identified as Māori-Pacific. This highlights the importance of tailored policy and service design for this population as their numbers grow.

Age profile

ETHNIC GROUP	UNDER 15 YEARS (%)	UNDER 25 YEARS (%)
Māori-Pacific peoples	49%	72%
European	18%	30%

Population age pyramid by percentage – Māori-Pacific peoples compared with all Pacific peoples:



With a median age of just 15.3 years, the Māori-Pacific population is significantly younger than all other major ethnic groups. This youthful profile presents a strategic opportunity for investment in future leadership, education, and workforce development.

Gender and sexual identity

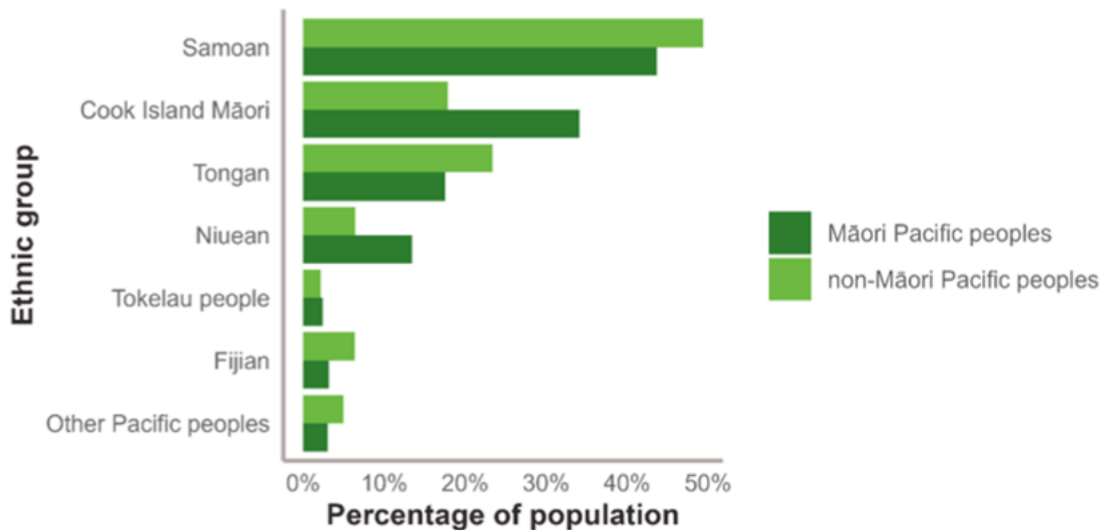
The gender breakdown of Māori-Pacific peoples closely mirrors national patterns: 49% identified as female, 50% as male, and 1% as another gender. In terms of sexual identity, 58% identified as heterosexual, 1% as homosexual, 3% as bisexual, and 1% in another way.

These findings suggest that Māori-Pacific peoples reflect broader gender and sexual diversity trends in Aotearoa. This reinforces the need for inclusive policy and service delivery that recognises diverse gender and sexual identities. It also highlights the importance of safe, affirming environments for youth navigating identity formation.

Other ethnicity classifications

Almost half of Māori-Pacific peoples (48%) identified as belonging to Māori and Pacific ethnic groups only. Of the remaining proportion of Māori-Pacific peoples, 47% also identified their ethnicity as European; 2% as Asian; and 0.2% as Middle Eastern, Latin American, and/or African⁴.

Percentage of population that identified with different Pacific ethnic groups:⁵



Among Māori-Pacific peoples, the largest number identified their Pacific ethnicity as Samoan (44%), followed by Cook Islands Māori (34%), Tongan (18%), and Niuean (13%).

Māori-Pacific peoples, compared with non-Māori Pacific peoples, were more likely to identify with Realm of New Zealand ethnicities - Cook Islands Māori, Niuean or Tokelauan. This is likely due to those Realm nations having closer constitutional arrangements with Aotearoa and mass migration patterns to Aotearoa. Research shows that people in Aotearoa who identified with those sub-ethnicities experienced higher rates of language and culture loss with wider impacts on identity.

This ethnic diversity within the Māori-Pacific population highlights the importance of acknowledging the unique histories and perspectives of different Māori-Pacific communities, whānau, and individuals.

Country of birth

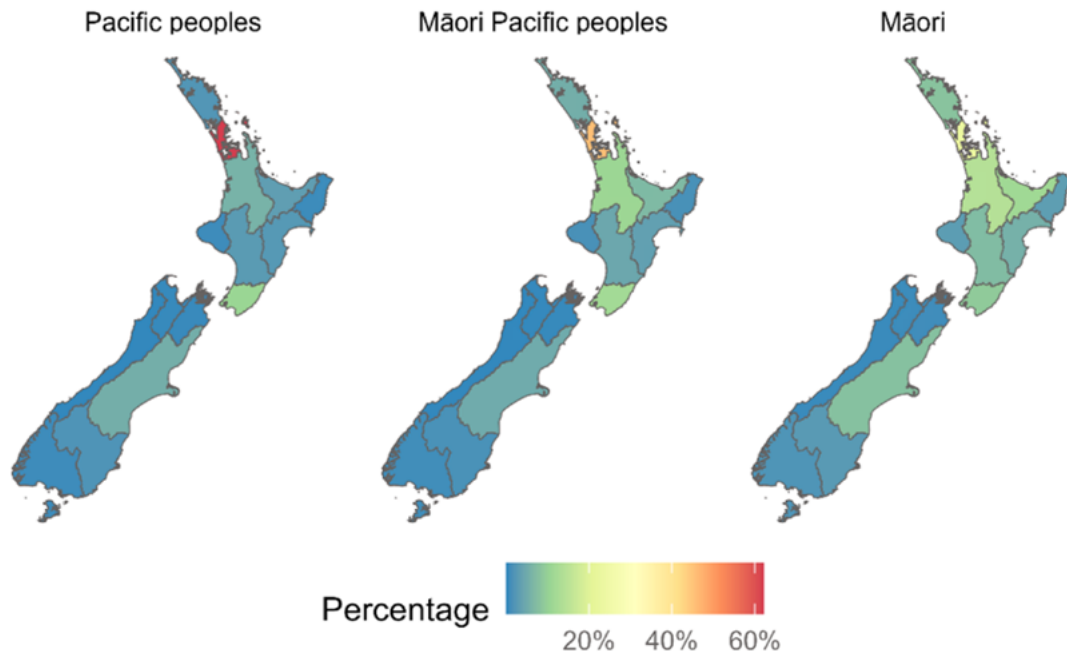
A significant 95% of Māori-Pacific peoples were born in Aotearoa, reflecting high levels of generational settlement. Only a small proportion were born overseas - 2% in Australia and 1% in Pacific nations.

This level of local birth indicates deep-rooted community ties and suggests that Māori-Pacific perspectives are shaped by local experiences, not recent migration. Future policy direction should recognise this distinction in cultural programming, citizenship initiatives, and social services.

4 Combination ethnicities of up to three ethnic groups are shown. Less than 1% of the total New Zealand Usually Resident Population reported identifying with 4 or more ethnic groups.
5 The 'non-Māori Pacific peoples' population is a subpopulation of Pacific peoples that does not overlap with the Māori-Pacific peoples population.

Regional distribution

Population distribution by regional council area:



Nearly half (46%) of Māori-Pacific peoples lived in the Auckland region, primarily in South Auckland. However, they were also distributed in other regions across New Zealand, including Wellington (12%), Waikato (11%), Bay of Plenty (7%), and Northland (5%). Smaller proportions lived in regions with fewer Pacific peoples, such as Tasman region (0.3%) and the West Coast (0.2%).

This distribution highlights the need for government planning and resources to reach Māori-Pacific peoples beyond main urban centres. Regional equity in education, health, housing, and cultural services is critical to supporting dispersed communities. Strategies should not only focus on population hubs but also consider the visibility and service access of smaller communities.

Chapter 3: What the Ministry has heard so far from Māori-Pacific peoples

Pride in dual heritage

In the first round of consultation, many Māori-Pacific respondents spoke proudly of their dual identity. One described it as “a beautiful privilege to belong to, and come from, both Pacific and Māori lineage... We are all connected.” Another valued the “double helpings of values such as family, respect, and leadership for the good of others.”

These responses reflect a strong sense of cultural pride and belonging among many Māori-Pacific peoples. A number highlighted that navigating two worldviews enriches their sense of self and strengthens their ability to contribute meaningfully in professional and community contexts. Dual heritage was often described as a source of resilience, adaptability, and connection, rather than confusion or conflict.

Navigating complexity within communities

Some respondents acknowledged challenges when navigating both worlds: “Having Māori-Pacific identity is complex... walking a tightrope between te ao Māori and fa’a Samoa.” Another stated, “I can walk in both shoes... but sometimes feel torn between which side I’m supposed to be on.”

These perspectives indicate that, while many Māori-Pacific peoples embrace both cultural identities, they often encounter tensions between Māori and Pacific spaces. There appears to be a call for greater mutual understanding and appreciation between Māori and Pacific communities, as some feel excluded or misunderstood within one or both cultures. This can result in identity fatigue and limit the ability of individuals to feel fully accepted or affirmed in either space.

Societal perceptions and external challenges

Respondents also described challenges outside their own communities. One stated, “Others determine your identity based on assumptions... leading to exclusion.” Another noted that institutional frameworks often required them to “choose a hat” for particular settings, limiting full recognition of dual identity.

This feedback underscores the broader systemic and institutional limitations in recognising and supporting dual or multi-ethnic identities. Māori-Pacific peoples often feel constrained by official classifications and the lack of flexibility within public systems, which fail to reflect the fluid and multifaceted nature of their identity. Geographic variation—particularly experiences of racism and lack of cultural understanding in the South Island—was also noted as compounding these challenges.

Identity, language and culture

Respondents widely acknowledged language as a foundation of cultural identity. One said: “Te reo Māori shapes my identity... I can walk confidently in te ao Māori, te ao Pacific and te ao Pākehā.” Another shared that their heritage language journey helped heal identity trauma and deepened cultural connection.

These reflections illustrate that language plays a pivotal role in cultural affirmation and wellbeing. For Māori-Pacific peoples, reconnecting with one or multiple heritage languages can restore confidence, heal intergenerational disconnection, and support a strong sense of cultural navigation. However, fluency remains low across both te reo Māori and Pacific languages among Māori-Pacific youth in particular, due in part to the young age structure and the historic impacts of colonisation and migration.

Some respondents expressed concern that an overemphasis on language proficiency could reinforce feelings of inadequacy or exclusion, particularly for those who are reconnecting or who were not raised with their heritage languages. They emphasised that identity should also be affirmed through values, whakapapa, and cultural participation.

Cultural connection and wellbeing

Respondents linked cultural grounding to wellbeing: “Being embraced by culture grounds me in purpose... with mental health benefits.” Another said: “Understanding both cultures helps me connect with other worldviews.”

These sentiments confirm that cultural connection is central to holistic wellbeing. For many Māori-Pacific peoples, being rooted in both Māori and Pacific values and worldviews enhances emotional resilience, relational depth, and community engagement. Cultural identity was described as a protective factor against discrimination and mental distress, particularly when reinforced by affirming environments and opportunities to lead and contribute. A strong cultural foundation also equips individuals to bridge across communities and foster cross-cultural understanding—an asset in increasingly diverse settings.

Chapter 4: Acknowledging and strengthening Māori-Pacific potential in Aotearoa

Māori-Pacific peoples in Aotearoa represent a young, vibrant, and growing population whose rich cultural heritage and dual whakapapa offer significant strengths to the nation's future. Respondents to the first round of consultation highlighted the pride and potential within Māori-Pacific identity, with one describing Māori-Pacific peoples as “funny, smart, loud, beautiful... [with] unrealised greatness.”

Progress and opportunities in education

Māori and Pacific learners are an increasing proportion of the education system, with Māori comprising 25% of all school students and Pacific peoples making up 9% of learners across all levels in 2023. An estimated 9% of learners are Māori-Pacific. Academic outcomes for Māori and Pacific students have improved over the last decade, particularly where cultural identity and language are embraced. Kaupapa Māori and Māori-medium education settings consistently support higher achievement. Respondents to the first round of consultation advocated for more inclusive teaching of Aotearoa, Māori and Pacific histories and heritage languages to normalise and celebrate identity across the system.

Uplifting Māori-Pacific learners and whānau

While gains are evident, inequitable experiences persist. Māori and Pacific students continue to encounter racism and limited cultural safety. Addressing these barriers through a system-wide commitment to culturally grounded education, more Māori and Pacific teachers, and inclusive environments can support success.

Care, justice and wellbeing

Māori-Pacific young people are overrepresented in state care and youth justice systems, reflecting systemic patterns. Addressing these issues requires sustained, culturally responsive approaches that support healing, belonging and intergenerational wellbeing.

Employment and economic equity

Despite growing skills and potential, Māori-Pacific peoples experience higher unemployment and lower full-time employment rates. Respondents to the first round of consultation called for fair pay, targeted investment, and leadership pathways—“for Māori, by Māori; for Pacific, by Pacific”—to enable economic participation and intergenerational uplift.

Housing and community resilience

Home ownership remains a key aspiration. However, Māori-Pacific peoples are more likely to experience rental insecurity, crowding, and poor housing conditions. At the same time, multi-generational living offers cultural strength and language continuity. Improving housing quality and access to stable housing arrangements will reinforce wellbeing at the whānau and community level.

Health equity and holistic support

While data on Māori-Pacific health outcomes remains limited, existing evidence shows that both groups face higher rates of mental distress and barriers to accessing care. Economic stress can amplify these challenges. Respondents also noted the need for more inclusive and accessible health and wellbeing services, particularly for disabled Māori-Pacific individuals.

Chapter 5: Unlocking the potential of Māori-Pacific peoples

Māori-Pacific peoples represent one of Aotearoa's most youthful, dynamic, and culturally rich population groups. Their dual heritage and lived experiences offer invaluable perspectives that can inform more inclusive and future-focused public policy. To realise this potential, government must move beyond mainstream assumptions and centre Māori-Pacific strengths, aspirations, and identities in decision-making.

With targeted investment, inclusive systems, and strengthened cultural recognition, government and others can help ensure that Māori-Pacific individuals and communities thrive. Addressing current barriers is not just an equity imperative, it is an opportunity to uplift a generation of leaders, innovators, and storytellers with dual heritage and shared vision.

Recognising diversity within identity

While Māori-Pacific peoples share a common cultural intersection, their experiences are shaped by a diverse range of ethnic, geographic, generational, and linguistic influences. Understanding this internal diversity is critical. Government must recognise differences not only between Māori and Pacific identities, but also within Pacific sub-groups and between urban and regional contexts. It is also important to ensure intersectional voices are heard, including those with disabilities and from the rainbow+ community.

This calls for data, engagement, and service design that is responsive to identity at the whānau, village, hapū, iwi, and sub-ethnic levels, rather than just individuals and household levels.

Improving data to reflect reality

Ethnicity data systems often do not capture the complexity of dual and multi-ethnic identities. Current practices—particularly the prioritised ethnicity frameworks—undermine visibility, especially in the health and education sectors. This limits the government's ability to understand need, design targeted interventions, or measure outcomes. Improving data quality for Māori-Pacific peoples is a critical enabler for equity and innovation and reflects broader shifts toward a more nuanced and accurate national identity.

Focusing on strengths

Māori-Pacific peoples bring a wealth of cultural knowledge, multilingualism, community networks, resilience, and intergenerational leadership. Yet government frameworks have too often focused on emphasising deficits rather than amplifying strengths. A reframed approach would invest in language revitalisation, cultural celebration, youth leadership, and collective wellbeing. This reframing supports a more cohesive society and unlocks the full potential of Māori-Pacific talent across all sectors of Aotearoa's future.

Enabling community-led innovation

Systemic change is most sustainable when led by communities. The government has made progress in engaging with Māori and Pacific groups, but more is needed to ensure that community leadership drives design, delivery, and accountability. This includes resourcing whānau-centred initiatives, supporting cultural institutions, and embedding Māori and Pacific worldviews in mainstream settings.

Investing in culture, language, and identity

Language and culture are not just symbols of identity—they are foundations of wellbeing, belonging, and educational success. Targeted investment in revitalisation efforts, including immersion education, cultural festivals, and intergenerational transmission of knowledge, can have profound individual and societal returns. These investments will strengthen national identity and support young Māori-Pacific peoples to thrive.

Conclusion and opportunities

Māori-Pacific peoples are central to the future prosperity of Aotearoa. Their youthfulness, cultural knowledge, adaptability, and leadership make them vital to shaping a more inclusive, innovative, and resilient nation. Future action by the government and others should embed this understanding across data systems, public policy, service design, and investment frameworks. By recognising and elevating Māori-Pacific identity as a strength, it uplifts not only a community—but the collective wellbeing of all New Zealanders.

