

Leo Moana o Aotearoa

Te Reo Māori Kūki 'Airani Report



Ministry for
Pacific Peoples

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

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Executive summary

This report presents the findings from the survey and talanoa components of the Leo Moana o Aotearoa Project from tangata Kūki 'Airani (people of Cook Islands heritage) in New Zealand. It is designed to be read with the [Leo Moana o Aotearoa Survey Report](#), which describes the Leo Moana o Aotearoa Project and explains how the Leo Moana o Aotearoa Survey was conducted, who was included, and how to interpret the results.

This report also features the voices of the Cook Islands communities as captured through talanoa with its members across New Zealand. As part of these talanoa, Cook Islands community members answered questions about their attitudes towards te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani, language competency, and language use across multiple domains including the home, church, education, workplace, media and broadcasting, with the community, and in wider society. This report also highlights the heterogeneity of experiences and diverse voices across the Cook Islands communities of New Zealand.

High-level findings are as follows:

Language proficiency

There is a steep generational decline in reported speaking proficiency of te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani, with fewer participants aged between 15-24 reporting proficiency than other age groups.

Te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani in the home and with family

The critical role of the home and family in maintaining te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani was highlighted. Reported use of the language with family members was high, particularly with elders, grandparents, and aunts/uncles.

Te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani in church

The church is not as significant a stronghold of language use as it once was, with less than half of participants who attended church on a weekly basis reporting services being conducted in te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani.

Te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani in education settings

The role of education was identified by participants as being crucial to the maintenance and revitalisation of te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani. Nearly all participants reported they would send their children to early childhood education, primary, and secondary schools where they could be taught in te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani if given the opportunity.

Te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani in the workplace

Pacific languages and cultures are becoming increasingly visible in workplaces with many participants reporting use of te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani with colleagues at least weekly. Ethnicity-based discrimination is a lived experience for many, however, and the perception that English is the language of professional success remains prevalent.

Te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani in and with Pacific communities

Community was identified as an important domain for language use, however, the notion of language purism, and resultant fear of being mocked for making mistakes, was identified as a significant barrier to language learning.

Te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani in media and broadcasting

Digital technology, media, and the internet were identified as emerging domains where tangata Kūki 'Airani can connect and converse in te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani. Music and social media were reported most often in relation to supporting use of these languages.

Te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani in the New Zealand context

Most participants believe that bilingualism is beneficial to New Zealand, and that te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani is an important part of the national identity. Many also believe it is important to learn foreign languages beyond English, demonstrating the high value placed on multilingualism by tangata Kūki 'Airani in New Zealand.

Introduction

*Toku manako tera, i te akarara anga au toku tupu mai anga.
Toku reo e apinga puapinga toku reo.*

“My language is very important, and I don’t want to lose it”.

Te reo Maori Kūki 'Airani

The Cook Islands is a self-governing nation that is part of the Realm of New Zealand. As such, Cook Islands citizens retain all the rights of New Zealand citizens, and te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani is considered indigenous to the Realm of New Zealand. The population of tangata Kūki 'Airani in New Zealand significantly outnumbers that in the Cook Islands. Specifically, nearly six times more tangata Kūki 'Airani live in the former (94,176) than the latter (16,800) based on the 2023 Census and Cook Islands Statistics Office estimates.

According to UNESCO, te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani is classified as critically endangered. Data on the number of speakers in the Cook Islands is limited, but what is available suggests the proportion of speakers is declining, albeit at a slower rate than within the tangata Kūki 'Airani population in New Zealand. Tourism rates between New Zealand and the Cook Islands are high, which makes use of English on the main island of Rarotonga in particular very common. Further, while the education system in the Cook Islands includes some level of te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani, a significant proportion of instruction is provided in English. Similarly, there are few opportunities to learn the language in the community or through formal education in New Zealand.

Purpose and objectives

The aim of the Leo Moana o Aotearoa project is to investigate the use of, and attitudes towards, Pacific languages in New Zealand. The overall goal of this report, therefore, is to provide contemporary information on the vitality of te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani among tangata Kūki 'Airani residing in New Zealand.

In conjunction with the initial [Leo Moana o Aotearoa Survey Report](#), this report focuses on te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani and the specific experiences of tangata Kūki 'Airani and Cook Islands communities across New Zealand. This report presents the views of the tangata Kūki 'Airani who took part in the Leo Moana o Aotearoa survey (n = 524) and talanoa (n = 36) and focuses on their use of and attitudes towards te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani across the different domains in which it is spoken.

It is intended that what is raised by respondents in this report will support current and future approaches to strengthening the vitality of te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani and the wellbeing of tangata Kūki 'Airani in New Zealand. We also hope the report will be a helpful reference document for communities, researchers, and agencies that will support the development of responsive policy and practice that better meet the needs of tangata Kūki 'Airani.

Sample

The target population for the survey and talanoa is a representative sample of the tangata Kūki 'Airani population, according to data from the 2018 Census (see Appendix 2 for the Cook Islands sampling frame).

Due to ongoing limitations with the quality of Pacific data from the 2018 Census, the Statistics New Zealand (StatsNZ) standard of a random sample approach using stratified, multi-stage area designs based on Primary Sampling Units (PSUs) was not considered appropriate for the Survey. Current quantitative sampling methods are often not conducive to creating equitable data for smaller or disadvantaged population groups.

In light of this, the Survey sample uses both Maximum Variation purposeful sampling and community-based participant-driven recruitment strategies to identify participants across five variables: age, gender, ethnicity, region, and birthplace (see Appendix 1 for further details). These variables are critical for measuring the extent to which tangata Kūki 'Airani can learn and use te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani. Combining these helped ensure a level of representation of Pacific voices that more generic random sampling methodologies cannot produce.

Data collection

This report presents findings from both the survey and talanoa components specific to the Cook Islands community. It is intended to be read alongside the Leo Moana o Aotearoa Survey Report, which outlines the full project methodology, including survey design, participant inclusion criteria, and guidance on interpreting results. This section focusses on methodological elements that are unique to the tangata Kūki 'Airani component.

Data analysis

Overall response rate

A total of 3,039 people completed the Leo Moana o Aotearoa Survey, 524 of whom were tangata Kūki 'Airani. Respondents were adults aged 15 years and older currently residing in New Zealand who identified as Pacific peoples.

Survey weighting

After the data was collected, a post-stratification weighting was applied to balance the response groups that were over-represented (e.g., women, smaller ethnic communities, adults aged 25-44) and under-represented in the sample (e.g., men, larger ethnic communities, youth 15-24). A sampling frame based on the relevant population proportions was used to achieve this weighting and ensure that the sample was optimally representative of the latest adult (15+) Pacific population statistics.

The results for the tangata Kūki 'Airani participant survey (n = 524) have been weighted against the total tangata Kūki 'Airani population in New Zealand as at the 2018 Census. They are therefore representative of the total domestic tangata Kūki 'Airani population. These are different from the total Leo Moana participant survey (n = 3,039) as mentioned above, which applies ethnicity prioritisation to weight the nine Pacific ethnic groups within the overall Pacific population as at the 2018 Census.

Survey analyses

While most of this report focuses on descriptive statistics (providing percentages and counts), additional analyses have been run to examine differences within the tangata Kūki 'Airani participant cohort (n = 524). These analyses included a chi-square test of significance to determine if there were statistically significant differences in survey responses based on the following variables:

- Age groups (15-24 years vs. 25-54 years vs. 55+ years)
- Gender (Male vs. Female)
- Ethnicity (tangata Kūki 'Airani only vs. Multi-Pacific vs. Multi-ethnic)
- Region (Wellington vs. Auckland vs. Elsewhere)
- Birthplace (New Zealand-born vs. Overseas-born)

Only significant differences within the tangata Kūki 'Airani population ($p < 0.05$) are presented in this report.

Pertinent insights from the talanoa component of Leo Moana o Aotearoa are also incorporated throughout the report.

Limitations

The survey findings must be interpreted with the following limitations in mind. Due to the small size of the Cook Islands community in New Zealand, employing a randomised sample design approach was not feasible. This means the results reflect community views constrained by researchers' outreach capacity and capability. Tangata Kūki 'Airani who are not as involved in Pacific community activities are therefore less likely to be represented in this sample.

Information from this survey is based on participant self-reporting. Consequently, over-reporting and under-reporting cannot be excluded.

Demography

A total of 524 tangata Kūki 'Airani participants took part in the Leo Moana o Aotearoa survey. As at the 2018 Census, there were 49,962 tangata Kūki 'Airani residing in New Zealand. This means that at that time, around 1% of the Cook Islands population aged 15+ participated in the survey.

Figure 1 – Tangata Kūki 'Airani participant summary



Nearly one-third of participants (31%) were 15-24 years old, while 52% were 25-54 years old. The remaining participants (17%) were aged 55 years or older. Gender was evenly distributed, with 52% of participants identifying as female and 48% identifying as male.

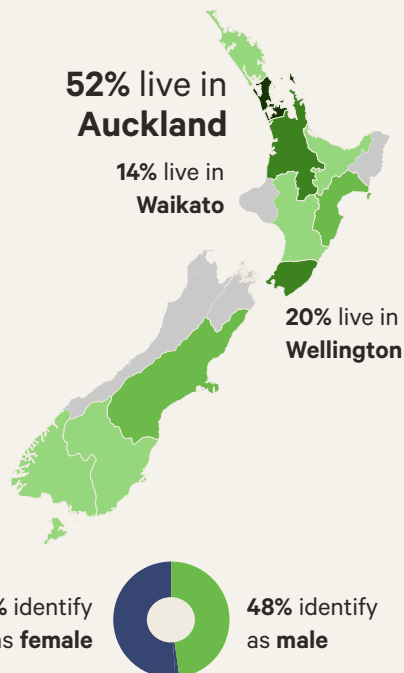
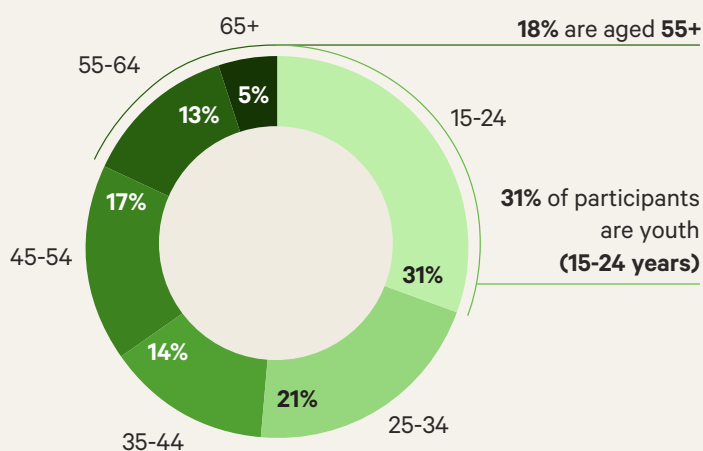
Over two-thirds (69%) of participants resided in Auckland, 20% lived in Wellington, 18% resided in either Northland or Waikato, and 11% lived in the South Island. Over two-thirds of participants (69%) reported being New Zealand-born, while 31% were born overseas.

Nearly two-thirds of participants (64%) identified solely as tangata Kūki 'Airani, while 36% identified as having at least one other ethnicity. The most common additional Pacific ethnicities reported were Tahitian (8%), Niuean (7%), Samoan (7%), and Tongan (5%). A small proportion (17%) reported having at least one non-Pacific ethnic identity (multi-ethnic).

Survey overview

“Our personal and cultural identity is in our language [...] Even for those who can’t speak, it provides a strong connection to who we are as Cook Islanders [...] When I hear it, when I hear other people speak it, I feel a strong connection, even if I don’t know them.”

524 Cook Islands Māori took part in the Leo Moana o Aotearoa survey



69% were born in New Zealand **36%** are multi-ethnic

Overview of Pacific language use in Aotearoa New Zealand

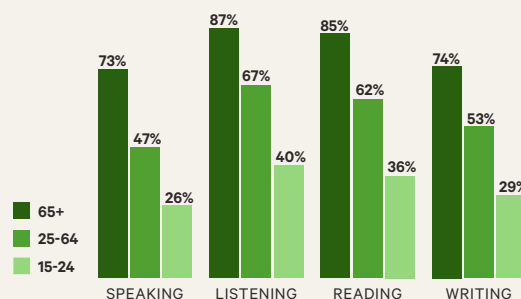
55% report being **proficient in at least one Pacific language.**

43% learned Te Reo Māori Kūki 'Airani as a **first language**

91% say using their heritage language is **important to their wellbeing**

82% are concerned Te Reo Māori Kūki 'Airani is **in danger of being lost in Aotearoa**

69% are concerned Te Reo Māori Kūki 'Airani is **in danger of being lost in the Cook Islands**



Older generations rate their proficiency in Te Reo Māori Kūki 'Airani as **better** than younger participants.

94% believe it is **important for our children and future generations** to speak our Pacific languages

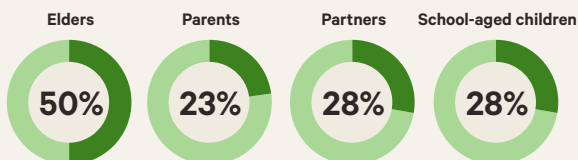
57% **speak to children** in their households using **Pacific languages**

Survey overview

Te Reo Māori Kūki 'Airani use in Aotearoa New Zealand, in depth

Home & Family

Participants reported always using heritage languages with elders more than with peers and children.



33% live in **multigenerational households**

52% maintain a **traditional Pacific household**

84% agree that Pacific languages are safe as long as they are **spoken in the home**

Religion

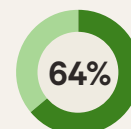
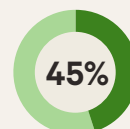
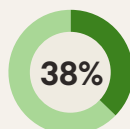
Top religious affiliations

31% Christian (no specific denomination)

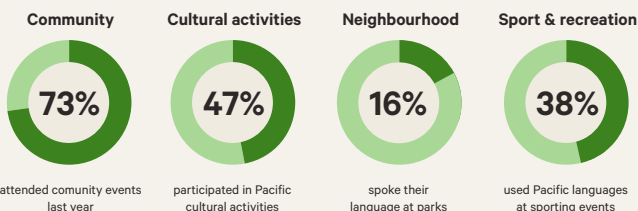
11% Pentecostal

21% Presbyterian, Congregational, Reformed

10% did not have any religious affiliation



Communities



16% have never visited the Cook Islands

89% have hosted Cook Islanders in NZ

Media

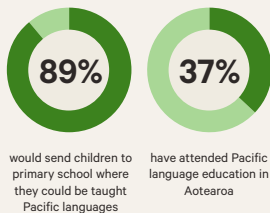
83% digital technology, media and the Internet **help connect** to Pacific languages

44% digital technology, media and the Internet **are threatening** Pacific languages

61% **listen to music in Pacific languages** every week

31% **Talk on the phone** using Pacific languages every week

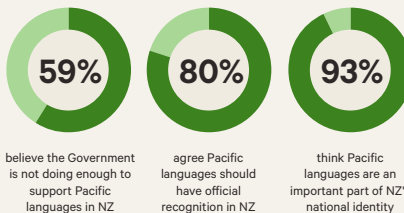
School



Work



Government



Enablers What activities are most helpful for Cook Islanders to engage with Te Reo Māori Kūki 'Airani?

67% listening and speaking with family & friends

44% listening to music in Pacific languages

44% visiting heritage Pacific islands

36% engaging with Pacific language weeks

Barriers What gets in the way of engaging with Te Reo Māori Kūki 'Airani?

42% not feeling connected to your Pacific culture or identity

32% not having consistent funding or resources to provide Pacific language programmes

29% living in a household with people who do not speak the language

26% not having reading materials

Te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani

“Our language is our identity. It shows others where we are from and who we are...I feel sad that the Cook Islanders who are born in New Zealand have to work harder to learn the language, whereas if you are born in Rarotonga it will develop naturally... Our language is our identity.”



Figure 2 – Te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani summary

94 % believe Pacific languages are important for future generations

91 % say using their heritage language is important to their wellbeing

Language proficiency is consistently higher among older adults (65+) across speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

55 % report being proficient in at least one Pacific language

57 % use Pacific languages when speaking to children at home

43 % learned Te Reo Māori Kūki 'Airani as a first language

82 % fear Te Reo Māori Kūki 'Airani is at risk in New Zealand

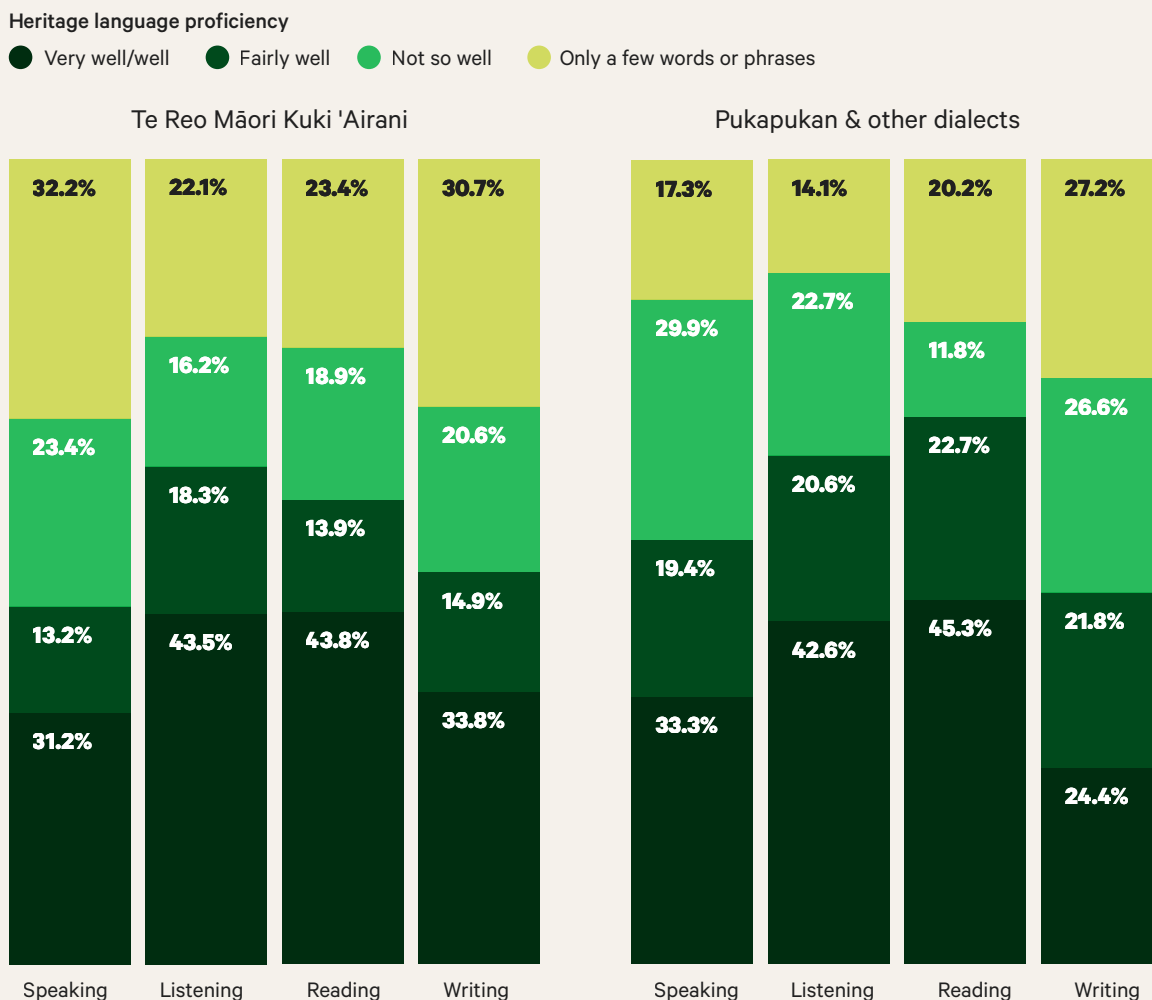
69 % fear Te Reo Māori Kūki 'Airani is at risk in the Cook Islands

This report acknowledges the linguistic diversity of the Cook Islands. It recognises that there are a range of dialects spoken across the Cook Islands including the Rarotonga dialect that serves as the common language of communication. In total, 501 participants reported te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani as their heritage Pacific language, while 32 specifically identified Pukapukan or another dialect.

Proficiency in te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani

To capture language proficiency, participants were asked to self-rate their abilities to speak, listen, read, and write in their heritage Pacific language(s), which for tangata Kūki 'Airani included te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani, Pukapukan, and other dialects of the Cook Islands. A scale of 'very well', 'well', 'fairly well', 'not so well', and 'only a few words or phrases' was used, and participants who selected 'very well', 'well', or 'fairly well' were considered proficient for the purposes of the analysis in this report.

Figure 3 – Proficiency in te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani, Pukapukan, and other dialects



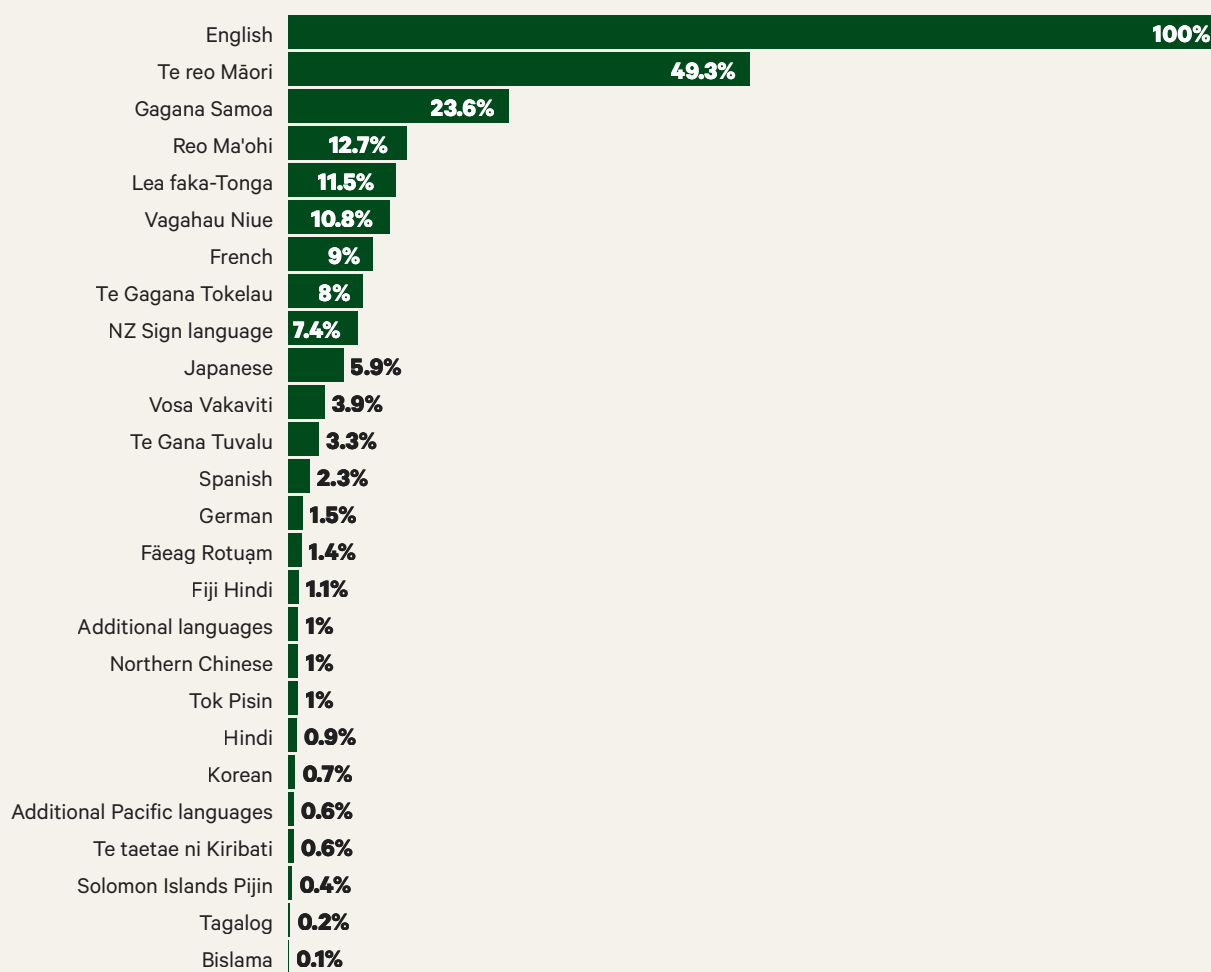
Nearly half (44%) of participants reported being able to speak te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani proficiently, though 31% could do so well or very well. A higher proportion (62%) reported being able to understand te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani when spoken to them. Over half (58%) reported being able to read the language, while a smaller proportion (49%) said they could write it at least fairly well.

For those who spoke another dialect, 53% reported being able to speak their dialect at least fairly well. A higher proportion (63%) reported being able to understand the language when spoken to them. Over two-thirds (68%) reported being able to read in it, and 46% reported being able to write it at least fairly well.

Proficiency in other Pacific languages

Survey responses indicated high levels of multilingualism in participants. Just under half (49%) reported being familiar with te reo Māori, and 7% percent reported the same for New Zealand Sign Language. The Pacific languages tangata Kūki 'Airani most reported being familiar with other than te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani and Pukapukan were gagana Samoa (24%), reo Ma'ohi (13%), lea faka-Tonga (12%), and vagahau Niue (11%).

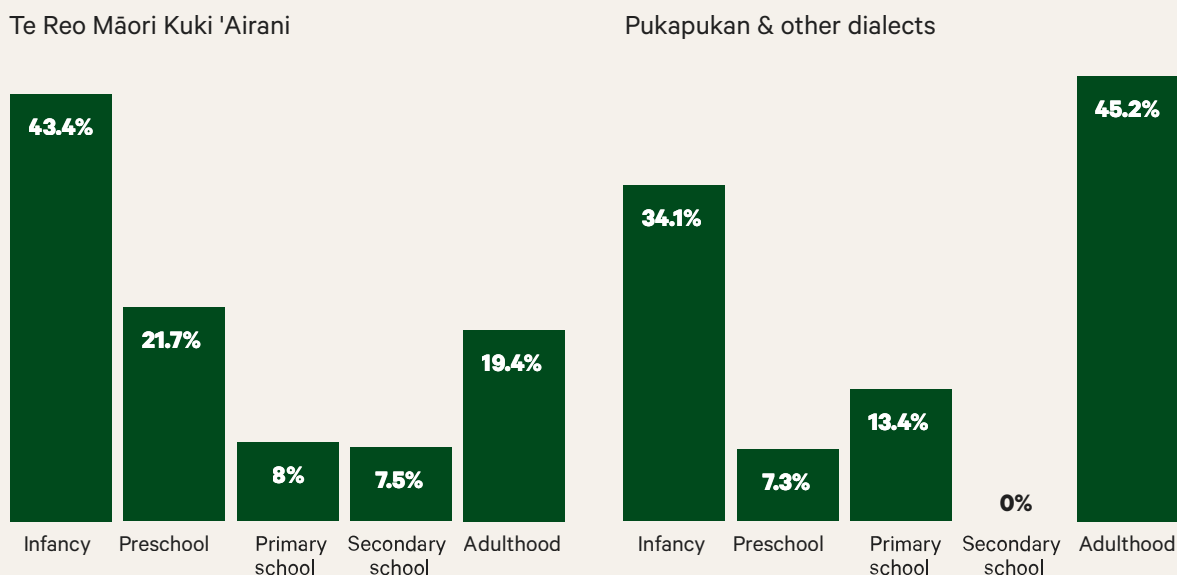
Figure 4 – Multilingualism among tangata Kūki 'Airani



Language acquisition

Almost half (43%) of participants reported first learning te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani in infancy, 22% did so before turning five years old. Over a third (34%) reported learning Pukapukan or another dialect in infancy, and 7% did so before starting school.

Figure 5 – Language acquisition among tangata Kūki 'Airani



Language, identity, and culture

“Our personal and cultural identity is in our language... Even for those who can’t speak, it provides a strong connection to who we are as Cook Islanders... When I hear it, when I hear other people speak it, I feel a strong connection, even if I don’t know them.”

Te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani was viewed extremely positively by participants, and widely considered to be a significant part of Cook Islands identity and culture. Nearly all agreed: they are proud to be Pacific (95%); their Pacific language(s) is an important language (95%); the language that best connects them to their culture is their Pacific language(s) (89%); and that their Pacific language(s) is important for their wellbeing (91%).

Language loss

The threat of language loss was highlighted by participants. Many expressed concern that the predominance of English in New Zealand comes at the expense of other languages, and that te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani is in danger because there are limited opportunities and support to learn it.

It's endangered in New Zealand, it's dying. Everything is in English, and other languages get pushed to the side. I feel disheartened that... it's rarely spoken. I would say 95% of the time we use English.

Nearly all participants agreed it would matter to them if their Pacific language(s) were lost altogether (87%). A similar proportion (82%) believed their languages are in danger of being lost in New Zealand, and 69% agreed they are in danger of being lost in the Pacific Islands.

Figure 6 – Attitudes towards language loss

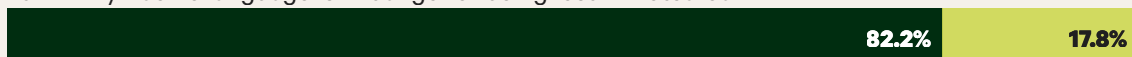
Attitudes to heritage language loss

● Agree ● Not agree

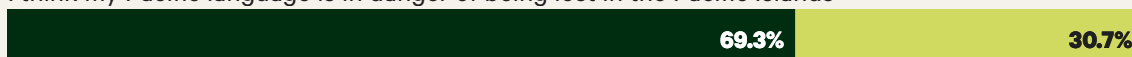
It would matter to me if my Pacific language were lost altogether



I think my Pacific language is in danger of being lost in Aotearoa



I think my Pacific language is in danger of being lost in the Pacific Islands



Intergenerational transmission

Nearly all participants (94%) agreed that it is important for their children and future generations to speak their Pacific language(s). A similar proportion (93%) agreed it is important to master their parents' Pacific language(s), and that it is their responsibility to pass their Pacific language(s) on to the next generation (91%).

Figure 7 – Attitudes towards language maintenance and transmission

Attitudes to heritage language maintenance

● Agree ● Not agree

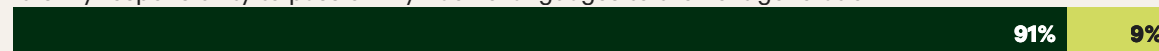
It is important for my children and future generations to speak our Pacific languages



It is important to me to master my parents' Pacific language(s)



It is my responsibility to pass on my Pacific languages to the next generation





Te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani in the home and with family

"[It] starts from the home. We need to teach our children the language in the home. If we are strong in the home, we are strong everywhere."

The home and family environment plays a vital role in the preservation and transmission of te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani. This section explores how the language is used within households, the dynamics of intergenerational communication, and the attitudes of tangata Kūki 'Airani towards language use in domestic settings. It highlights both the strengths and challenges faced by families in maintaining their linguistic heritage.

Childhood household composition and language use

Nearly three-quarters (71%) of participants reported they grew up in a household where everyone was tangata Kūki 'Airani. The remaining proportion (25%) reported they grew up in a household of mixed Pacific heritage (multi-Pacific) or Pacific and non-Pacific heritage (multi-ethnic).

Over two-thirds of participants (69%) reported their childhood homes felt like traditional Pacific households, and 66% reported that children were mostly spoken to in a Pacific language(s) growing up. Around two-fifths (42%) reported their household had a rule where only their Pacific language(s) could be spoken.

Contemporary household composition and language use

In the current day, most participants reported living in smaller households with 2-4 (44%) or 5-6 (36%) other people. One-third (33%) of participants reported living in a home with three or more generations.

Over half of participants (57%) reported that speaking to children in a Pacific language(s) is common in their household, and 51% reported they currently live in a traditional Pacific home. Just under half (46%) reported they had spent time learning about Pacific languages and customs and discussing Pacific genealogies and/or family histories in the past year.

Figure 8 – Language activities in the home and with family

Speak to children in Pacific languages

57.4%

Live in traditional Pacific household

51.5%

Learn about Pacific languages and customs

46.2%

Discuss Pacific genealogy/family histories

46.2%

Only speak Pacific languages at home

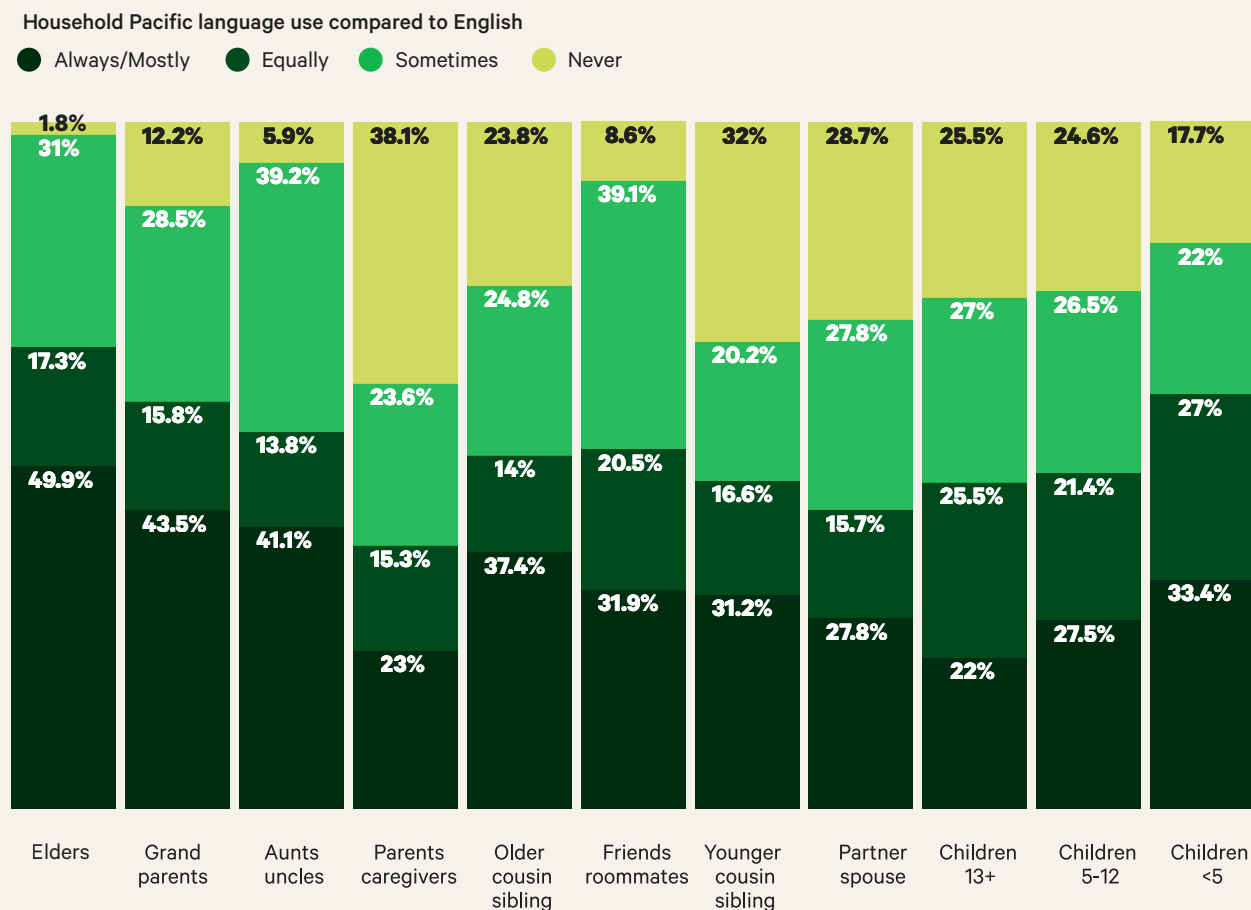
37.6%

Teach others Pacific languages and customs

26.2%

Participants were asked how much of their communication in the home was conducted in their Pacific language(s) compared with English. Almost all reported using their Pacific language(s) at least sometimes with elders (98%), grandparents (88%), and aunts/uncles (94%). Troublingly, however, participants were most likely to report never using their Pacific language(s) with parents/caregivers (38%), younger siblings/cousins (32%), partners/spouses (29%), and children aged 5 years and older (25%).

Figure 9 – Language use in the home and with family



Not having enough family time for language learning

Some participants expressed that learning their Pacific language(s) is difficult because knowledgeable household members, often parents/caregivers, are not always accessible due to employment commitments. In these circumstances, some participants shared, children would teach themselves the language(s) instead:

“When my baby brother was born, I’d learned how to sing our Manihiki anthem, and I would sing that to him to make him go to sleep [...] Now, he recognises the song and my whole family knows it as well because they’ve heard me sing it to him.”

Attitudes towards Pacific languages in the home

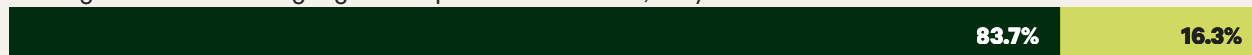
Many highlighted the domain of home and family as critical in relation to building confidence in speaking their language(s). Most participants (84%) agreed their Pacific language(s) is safe as long as it is spoken in the home. Almost half as many (44%) believed their Pacific language(s) is only important in the home.

Figure 10 – Attitudes towards Pacific languages in the home

Attitudes to Pacific languages at home

● Agree ● Not agree

As long as our Pacific languages are spoken in the home, they are safe



Pacific languages are only important at home





Te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani in church

“I am confident in public speaking because of my church. When I first came to New Zealand, it was hard for me to speak my language because I was very shy. It wasn’t until I came to church that I became confident in speaking my language again.”

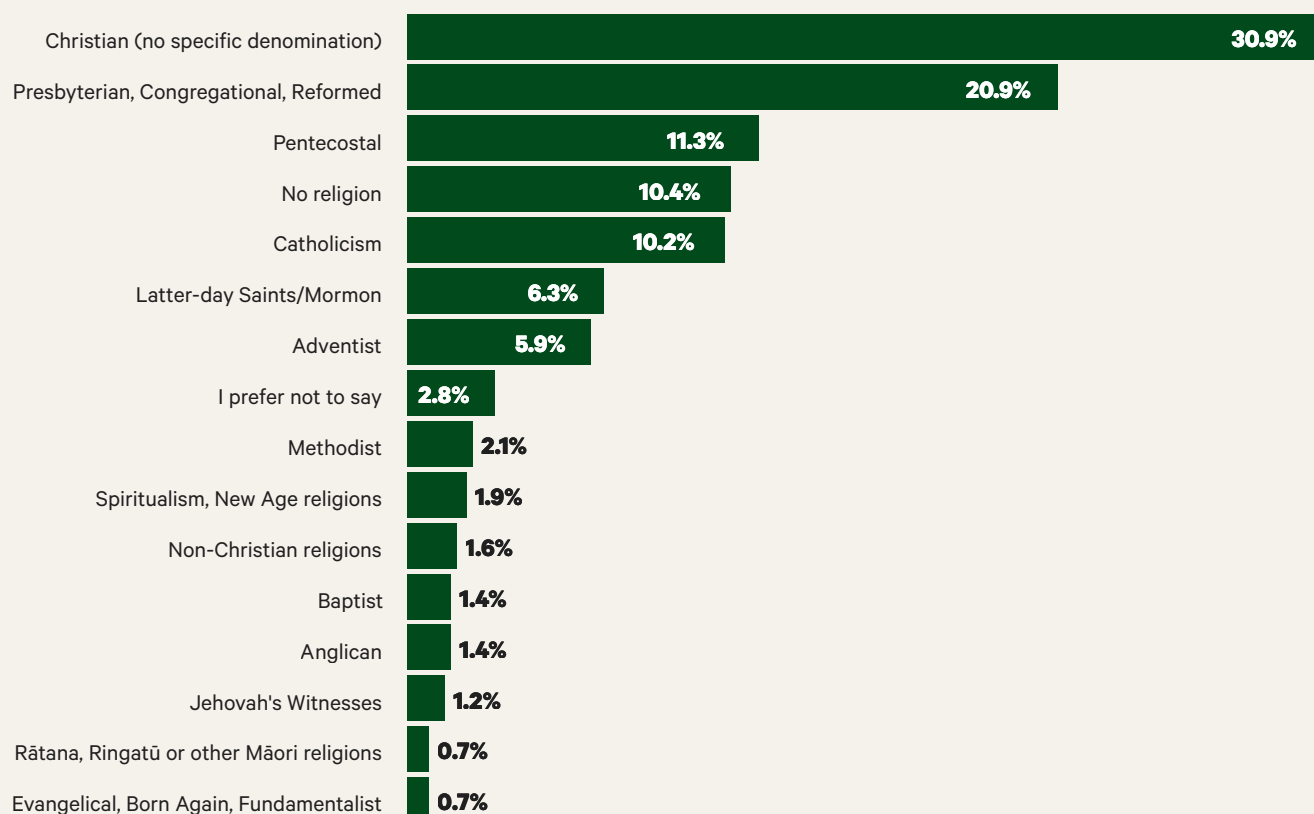
Churches have long served as cultural and spiritual hubs for Pacific communities, including tangata Kūki 'Airani in New Zealand. This section explores the role of churches in maintaining and revitalising te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani, examining religious affiliations, language use during services, intergenerational communication, and community attitudes toward language use in church settings.

Religious affiliations and church attendance

Participants were asked to report their religious affiliation(s) and could select as many options as were relevant to them. Just under one-third (31%) identified as Christian, and 21% specified the denomination of Presbyterian, Congregational, and/or Reformed. Smaller proportions identified as Catholic (10%), Mormon (6%), and Adventist (6%).

Most participants (87%) reported having at least one religious affiliation, while only 10% reported no religion. Nearly three-quarters (72%) reported they attended church at least occasionally. The remaining proportion (38%) reported they attended weekly.

Figure 11 – Religious affiliations among tangata Kūki 'Airani



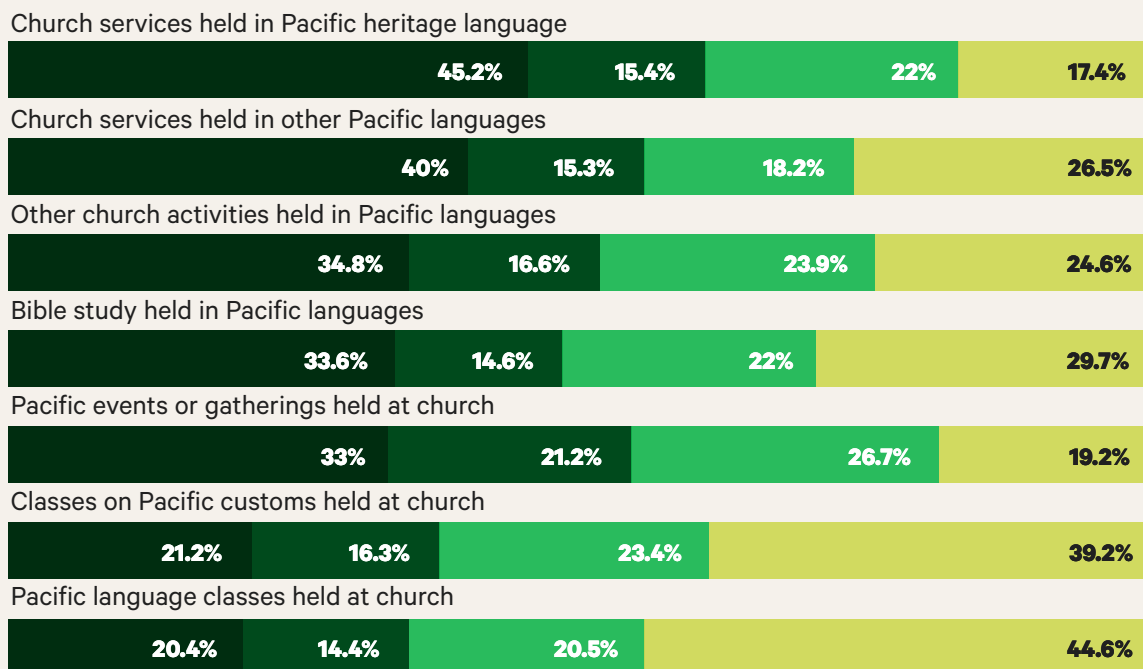
Pacific language use in church

Just under half (45%) of participants who attended church weekly reported that services were conducted in their Pacific language(s), and 40% reported they were conducted in another Pacific language. Over two-thirds (70%) reported that bible studies were held in their Pacific language(s) at least occasionally.

Figure 12 – Pacific language use during church services and activities

Church Pacific Language Connection

● Always/Mostly ● Equally ● Sometimes ● Never

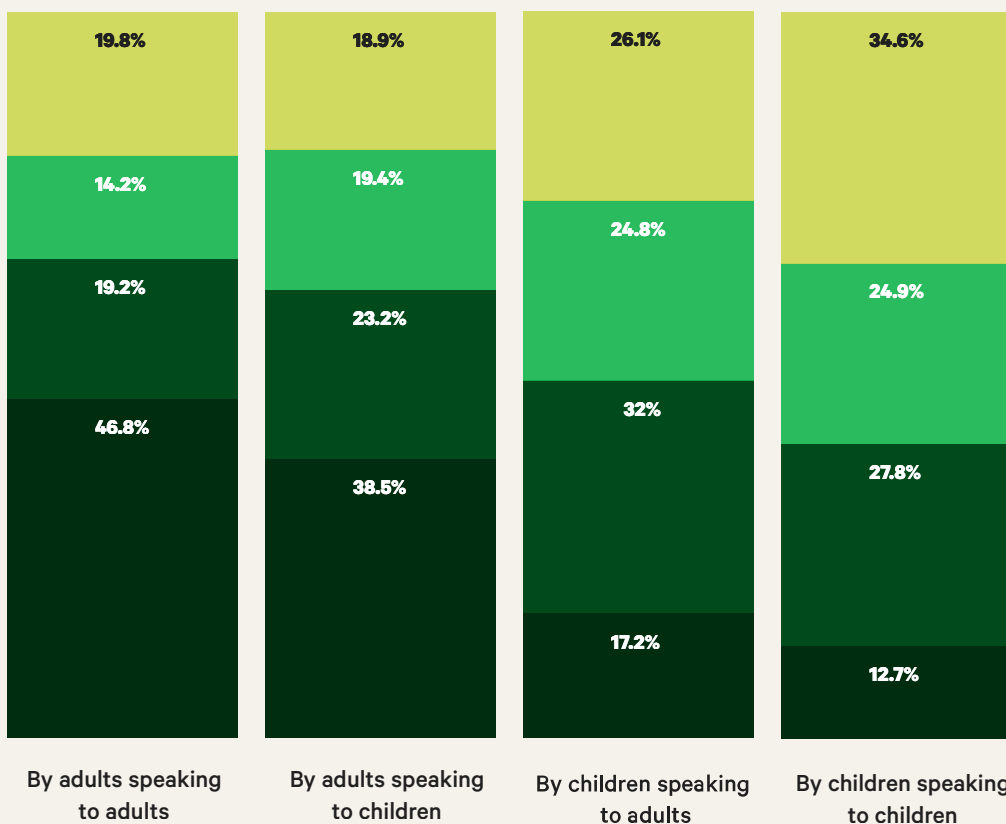


There were significant differences between how people communicated with adults compared to children at church. Around half of participants (47%) reported hearing adults use their Pacific language(s) with other adults most of the time. Less than one-fifth (17%) reported hearing children always use their Pacific language(s) with adults, and only 13% reported hearing children use their Pacific language(s) with each other as frequently.

Figure 13 – Pacific language use at church between adults and children

Church Pacific language use compared to English

● Always/Mostly ● Equally ● Sometimes ● Never



Attitudes towards Pacific languages in church

Most participants (73%) agreed that their Pacific language(s) is a gift from God, and 64% reported that their church is attended by many tangata Kūki 'Airani. Over half (58%) felt comfortable using their Pacific language(s) at church, while 31% agreed their Pacific language(s) is only important in that setting.

Figure 14 – Attitudes towards Pacific languages in church

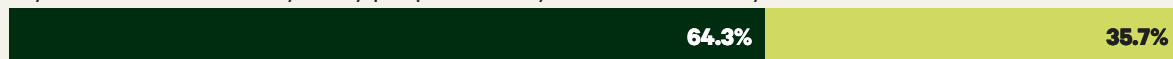
Attitudes to Pacific languages at church

● Agree ● Not agree

My Pacific language is a gift from God



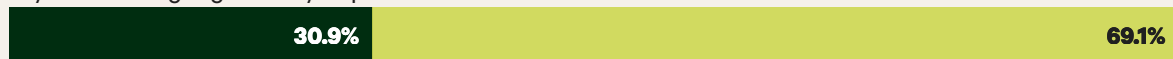
My church is attended by many people from my Pacific community



I feel comfortable using my Pacific language at church



My Pacific language is only important at church



Church as an enabler of Pacific language use

Participants shared how attending a church where their Pacific language(s) is used in services helped them reconnect with the language and build confidence in speaking it.

“I absolutely love going to our traditional churches I absolutely love it. I love it, just to hear the language... I don't understand what's going on, but I still love to hear the imene tuki. I go purely to hear the language because it's spoken from the start to the end. And purely to hear the language and the songs.”



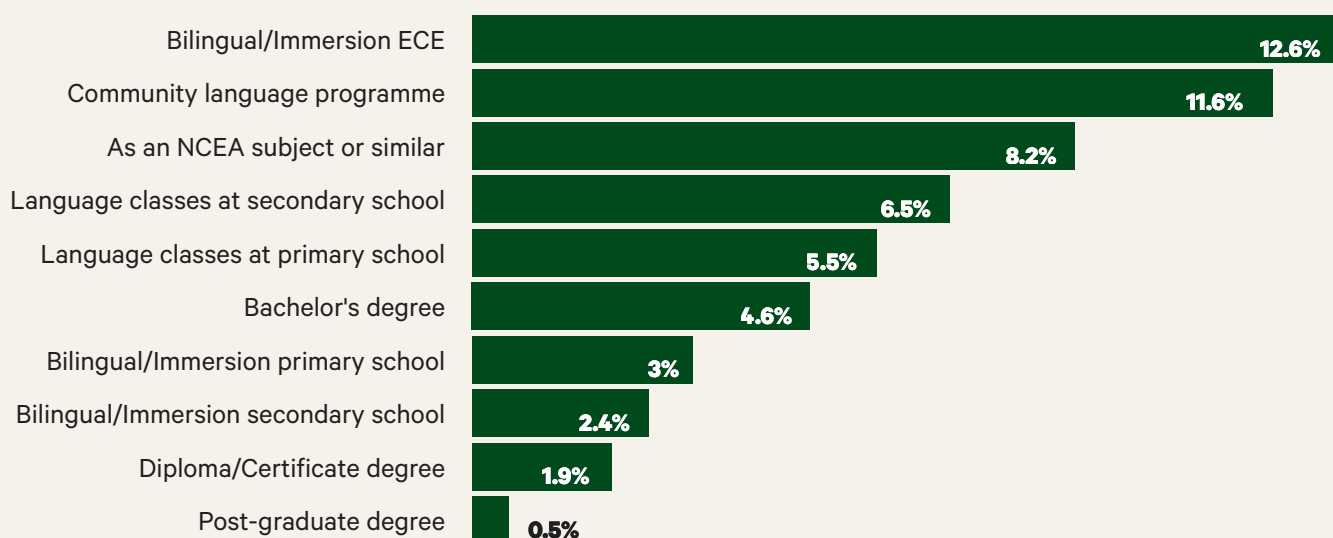
Te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani in education settings

Education plays a pivotal role in the preservation and revitalisation of te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani. This section examines the experiences of tangata Kūki 'Airani in educational settings, including their participation in Pacific language programmes, the frequency of language use in schools, and their attitudes toward language learning. It highlights both the opportunities and challenges faced by learners and educators in fostering linguistic heritage.

Pacific language education experiences

Just over half (60%) of participants reporting having engaged in some form of Pacific language education in New Zealand. Of this proportion, the most common form was bilingual or immersion early childhood education (13%), followed by community language programmes (12%), NCEA (8%), and language classes at secondary school (7%).

Figure 15 – Tangata Kūki 'Airani participation in Pacific language education

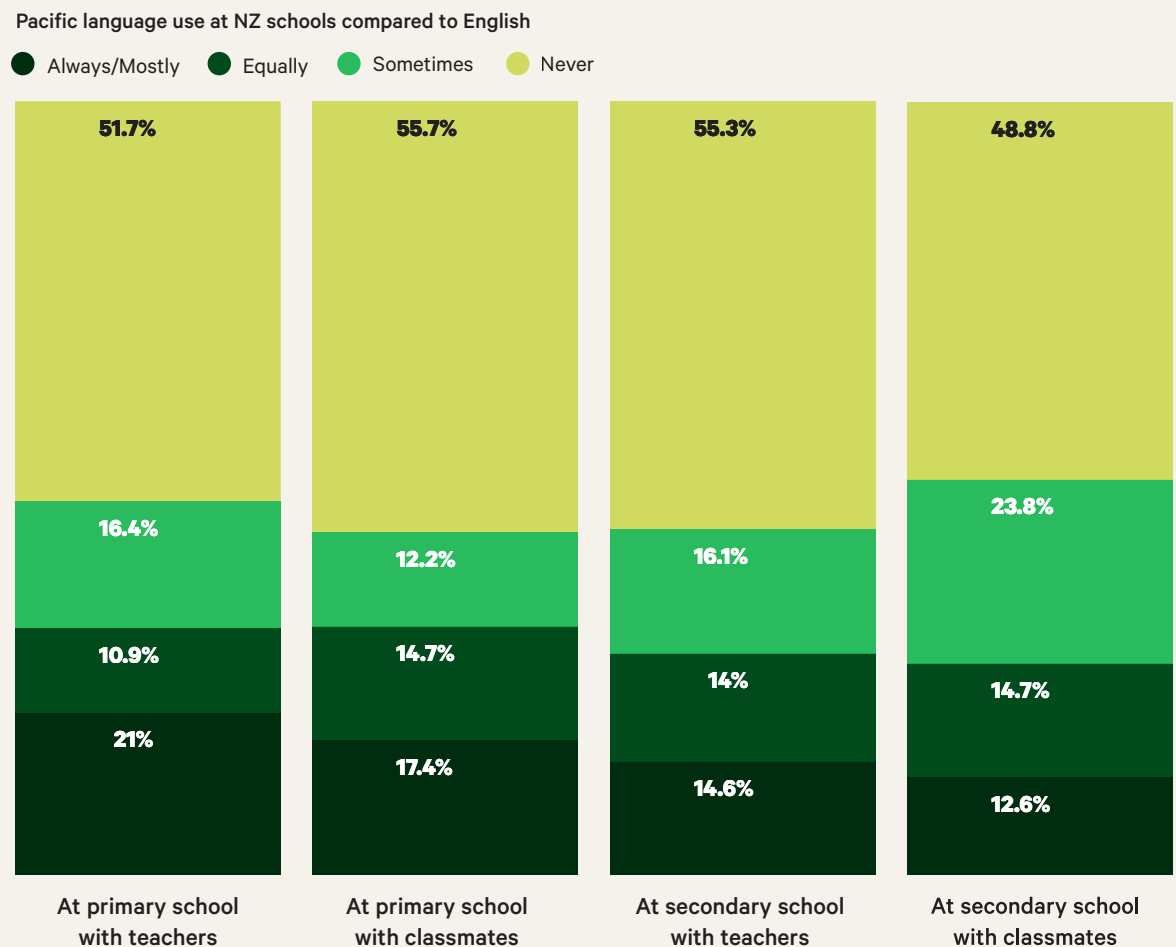


Pacific language use in schools

Participants' use of their Pacific language(s) in education was not very common compared to other settings. When asked how often conversations were conducted in their Pacific language(s) in primary school, over half of participants reporting never using them with teachers (52%) and other students (56%). The results were similar for secondary school.

“In some ways, because the children today are speaking English, it’s going to be hard to find ways to teach them [our language]. It has to start in schools.”

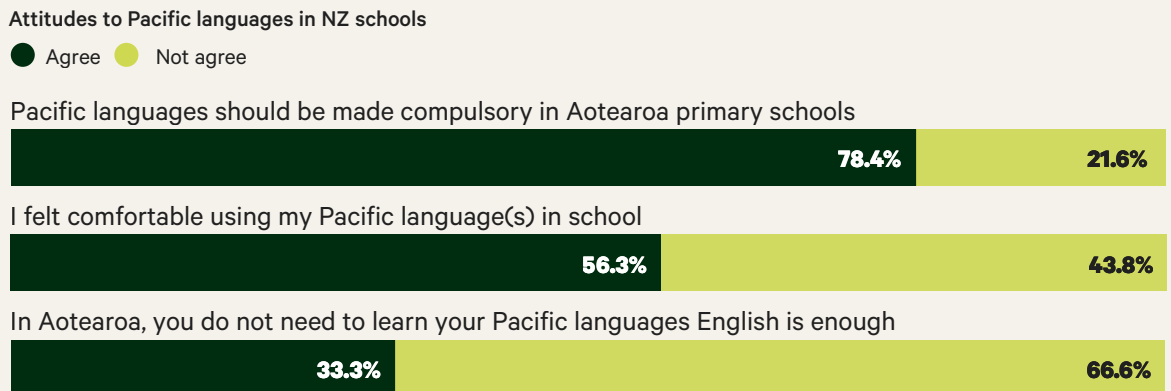
Figure 16 – Pacific language use at primary and secondary schools



Attitudes towards Pacific languages in education

Most participants (78%) agreed that Pacific languages should be made compulsory in New Zealand primary schools. Over half (56%) felt comfortable using their Pacific language(s) in school, and only 33% agreed with the statement ‘in Aotearoa, you don’t need to learn your Pacific languages: English is enough’. Many participants expressed that while they value their Pacific language(s), the perception that English is the sole path to success remains strong.

Figure 17 – Attitudes towards Pacific languages in schools



Nearly all participants (88%) reported they would send their child(ren) to ECE, primary, and secondary schools where they could be taught in their Pacific language(s) if given the opportunity.

Figure 18 – Attitudes towards Pacific language schooling opportunities

Attitudes to Pacific languages in NZ schools

● Agree ● Not agree

If I had the chance,

I would send children to primary school where they could be taught in our Pacific languages

88.6% **11.3%**

I would send children to Pacific-language preschools

87.8% **12.2%**

I would send children to secondary school where they could be taught in our Pacific languages

87.6% **12.3%**

Limited access to Pacific language learning opportunities

Participants highlighted the importance of early childhood education in enabling language use, especially for families with lower proficiency. However, many noted that growing up in New Zealand meant limited access to te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani compared to English and te reo Māori.

“New Zealand Māori was my first language alongside English, English was spoken more in our home, but because I was raised in Kōhanga Reo, I was raised around tikanga Māori so it was like my first language.”



Te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani in the workplace

“It’s a good thing I have a brother that speaks Cook Island Māori in our workplace. When we want to gossip about people, we switch into our reo. It strengthens the use of language in the workforce.”

The workplace is an increasingly important domain for the use and visibility of te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani. This section explores how the language is used in professional settings, the experiences of tangata Kūki 'Airani in the labour market, and their attitudes toward language use at work. It highlights both the opportunities for cultural expression and the challenges posed by discrimination and the dominance of English.

When asked about their status in the labour market, 70% of participants reported they were currently engaged in paid work, while 9% were involved in some form of unpaid work.

Pacific language workplace experiences

Just over a quarter of participants (26%) reported that their Pacific language(s) are visible at their workplace, and similarly, 25% said they currently or had previously helped, worked, or volunteered without pay for a Pacific-focused organisation(s). One-fifth of participants (21%) reported their workplace has dedicated Pacific cultural advisors on staff.

Figure 19 – Pacific language workplace experiences

Pacific languages and cultures are visible at my workplace

25.7%

I have helped, volunteered or worked without pay for an organisation focused on Pacific peoples or communities in organisation focused on Pacific peoples or communities in Aotearoa

25.3%

I have worked for an organisation focused on Pacific peoples or communities in Aotearoa

24%

My workplace has dedicated Pacific cultural advisor positions on staff

20.8%

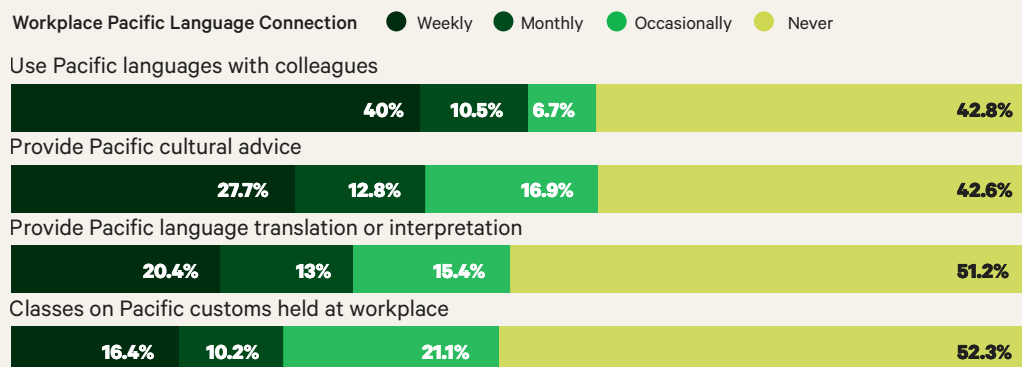
Pacific languages and cultures are visible at the place I help, volunteer or work without pay

16.9%

Pacific language use in the workplace

Many (40%) participants reported they use their Pacific language(s) with colleagues at least once a week, while 57% reported the same at least occasionally. The same proportion (57%) reported they have provided Pacific cultural advice in the workplace previously (even if not part of their job description), and 49% reported the same regarding Pacific language support.

Figure 20 – Work-based Pacific language activities



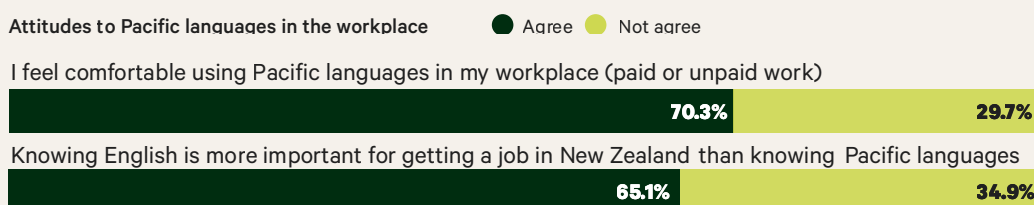
A slightly higher proportion (14%) reported they had conducted their work using their Pacific language(s) in the past. Some also shared how workplaces in New Zealand often miss crucial opportunities to value and promote the diverse cultures, languages, and identities of their employees:

“And yet, it’s company policy that you are not allowed to speak languages other than English.”

Attitudes towards Pacific languages in the workplace

Over two-thirds of participants (69%) reported feeling comfortable using their Pacific language(s) in their workplace. A lower proportion (65%) agreed that knowing English is more important for getting a job in New Zealand than knowing Pacific languages.

Figure 21 – Attitudes towards Pacific languages in the workplace



Promoting culture through Pacific Language Weeks

Many participants highlighted that celebrating Pacific Language Weeks in the workplace has created opportunities for staff to develop and deliver language activities, showcasing their culture and identity to the wider workplace:

“When it comes to Cook Islands Māori Language Week, everyone is always keen to jump in and learn the language.”



Te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani in and with Pacific communities

Community settings offer vital spaces for the use, transmission, and celebration of te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani. This section explores how tangata Kūki 'Airani engage with their language through community events, cultural activities, and connections with the Cook Islands homeland. It highlights both the opportunities for language revitalisation and the barriers that can inhibit learning and use, including perceptions of language purism and the influence of English.

Connection to the Cook Islands

Participants were asked to indicate how frequently they visited the Cook Islands and/or hosted community members from the Cook Islands prior to COVID-19. Most (89%) reported they had hosted community members at least once before, and 33% reported doing so at least once a year. Only a small proportion of participants (11%) reported never having hosted community members from the homeland. Trends in how often participants visited the Cook Islands were similar, with 24% having visited at least once a year and 30% reporting they visited every 2-3 years. The remaining proportion (45%) reported they had visited the Cook Islands once or twice or not at all.

Figure 22 – Visiting and hosting community members from the Cook Islands

Heritage Pacific Islands Connection

● Once a year ● Every 2-3 years ● Once or twice ● Never

Host Heritage Pacific Community



Visit Heritage Pacific Islands



Some participants also shared how visiting the Cook Islands had strengthened their connection to, and instilled within them a desire to learn and maintain, their Pacific language(s). Many expressed that, if more young people could experience being immersed in their culture back in the Cook Islands, it would go a long way towards reversing the decline of their language(s).

I cried when I landed there – this is the place where my ancestors came from, where generations of my family are, and it was a good place.

How can we get others to feel the sense of fulfilment I felt, after only two weeks? How can we create those opportunities for young people that have been born in New Zealand, Australia, so that they can experience that same feeling?

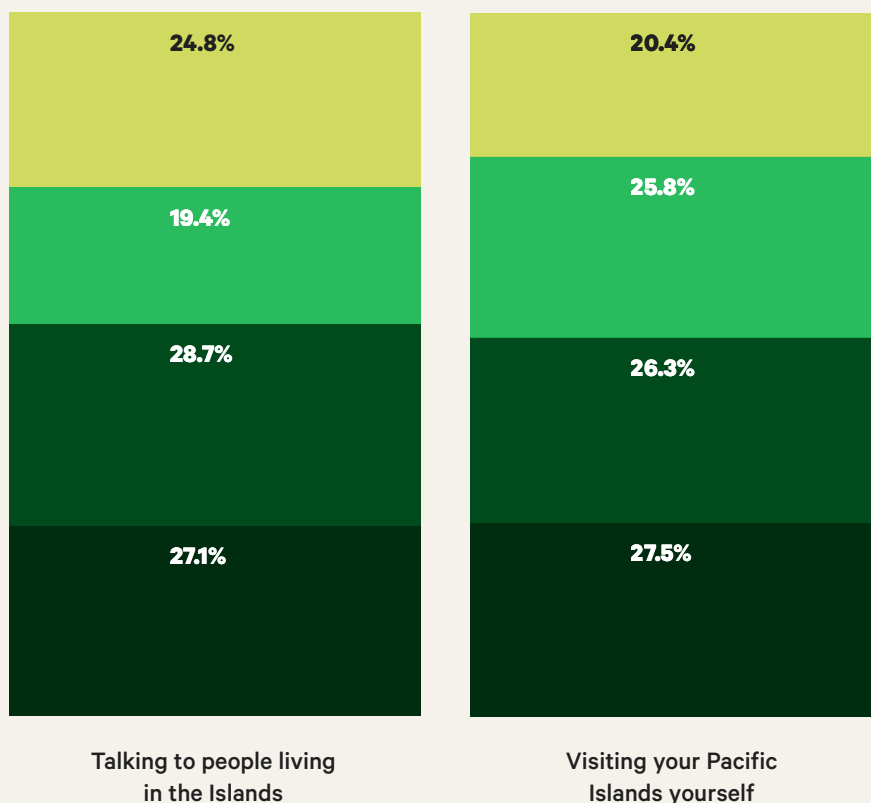
Language use in the Cook Islands

More than a quarter of participants (28%) indicated they always or mostly used their Pacific language(s) when visiting and talking to people in the Cook Islands. A smaller proportion (25%) reported they had never used their Pacific language(s) in these contexts.

Figure 23 – Pacific language use with communities in the Cook Islands

Heritage Pacific language use compared to English

● Always/Mostly ● Equally ● Sometimes ● Never



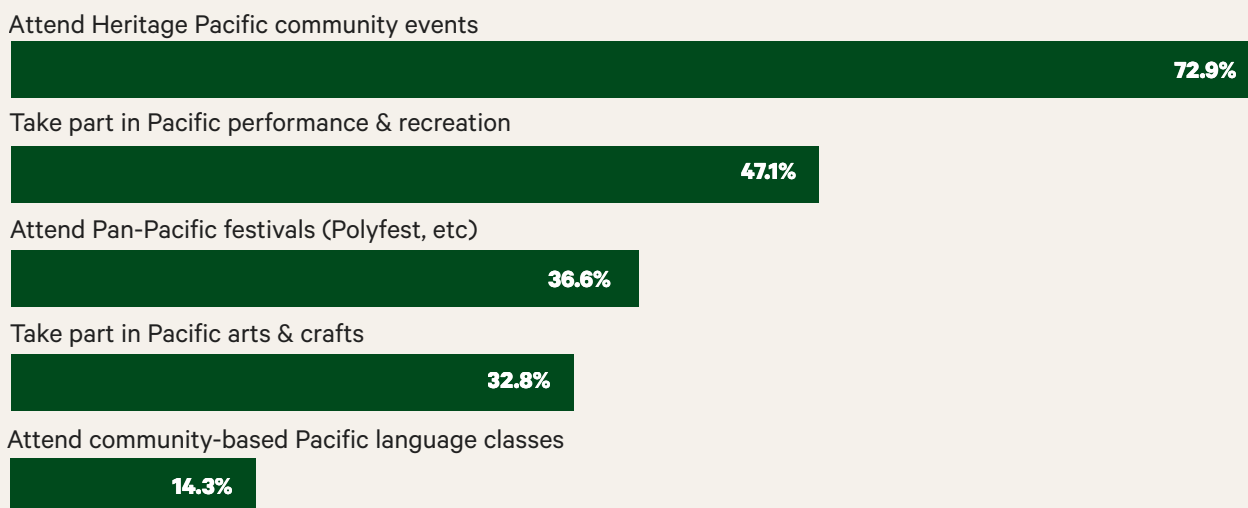
Participants expressed concern around the decline and potential loss of their Pacific language(s) being caused by the growing use and influence of English in the Cook Islands. Many identified this as a significant barrier to learning and using their Pacific language(s).

“Back home [the Cook Islands] is pretty much English. I thought that everyone would speak [te reo Māori Kūki ‘Airani], and you’d be a foreigner if you spoke English but it’s changed... I hear English more, even if with the occasional Cook Island slang dropped in. I try to surround myself with our mommas and poppas in the community so I can hear [te reo Māori Kūki ‘Airani] more.”

Language use in community settings

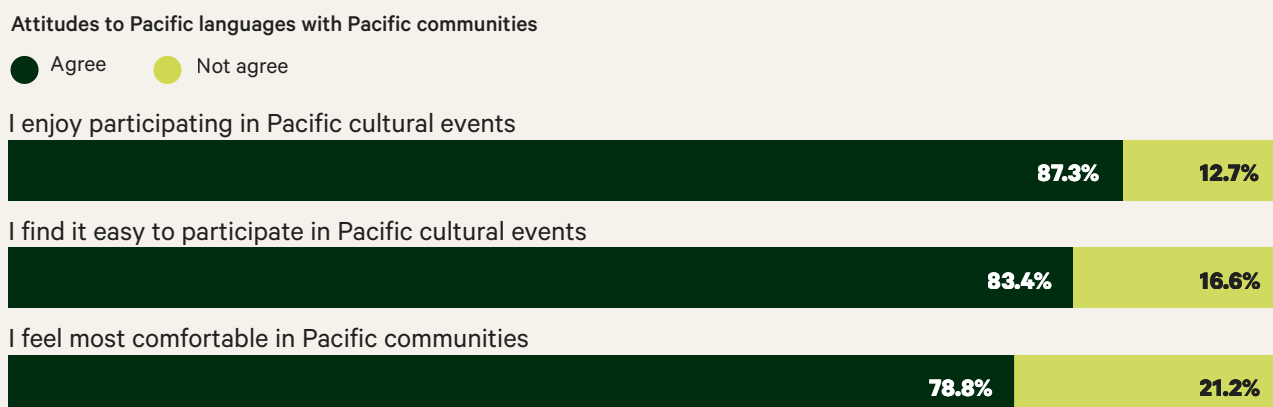
Participants were asked if they had engaged in any community events, initiatives, or activities in New Zealand in the past 12 months. The most common activities reported were Cook Islands community gatherings (73%) and Pacific performance or recreation activities (48%). Lower proportions reported engaging in Polyfest/other pan-Pacific events (37%), taking part in arts and crafts activities (33%), and attending community-based language classes (14%).

Figure 24 – Engagement in community events, initiatives, and activities



Participants were also asked about their attitudes towards Pacific cultural events. A large proportion said they find such events easy to access (83%), and even more (87%) reported they enjoyed participating in them. Over three-quarters (79%) reported they felt most comfortable in Pacific communities.

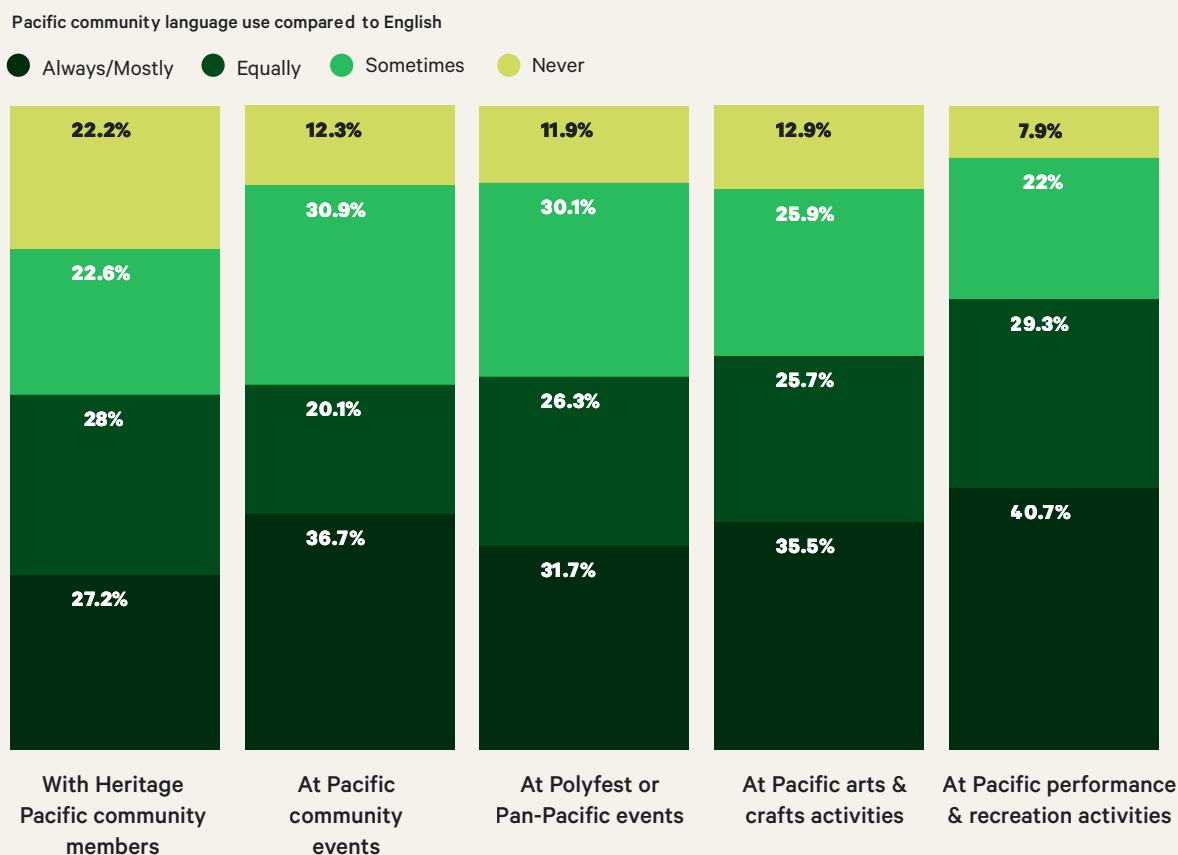
Figure 25 – Attitudes towards Pacific cultural events



“There are a lot of Pacific events nowadays, including taking a week every year to celebrate the Cook Islands language.”

In terms of the frequency at which participants used te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani in community settings, nearly all (92%) reported using their Pacific language(s) at least sometimes when engaging in Pacific performance or recreation activities, and lower proportions reported the same in relation to Polyfest/other pan-Pacific events (88%), Cook Islands community events (88%), and arts and crafts activities (87%). Over three-quarters (78%) reported using their Pacific language(s) in conversation with Cook Islands community members more broadly.

Figure 26 – Pacific language use in community settings



Participants identified the fear of making mistakes around other tangata Kūki 'Airani as a barrier to using their Pacific language(s), noting such errors could lead to being singled out and mocked by those with greater language proficiency. This dynamic, participants reflected, disincentivises people from learning their Pacific language(s), and consequently contributes to language decline.

“The way I speak is plastic... If I speak [te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani] to my age group, I get teased for making mistakes. It's not a place I feel comfortable because they will tease me. What they don't understand is it's creating a barrier for me.”



Te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani in media and broadcasting

“I really like the Cook Islands language Instagram page – the relaying of everyday information and making the language accessible. It’s really encouraging to see Cook Islanders using social media as an educational tool.”

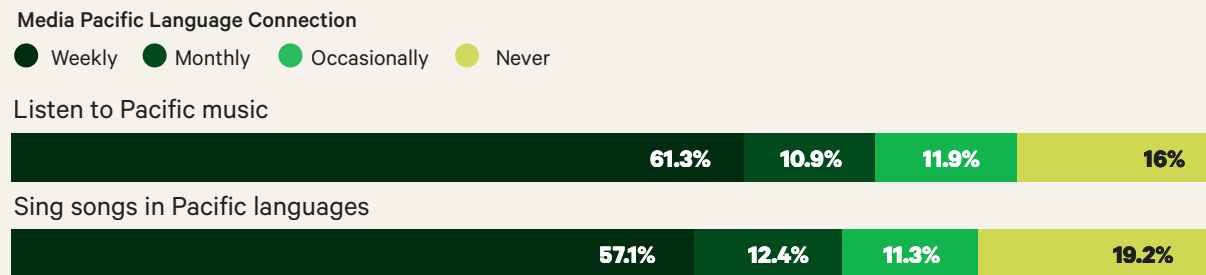
Media and broadcasting, including social media, have become an increasingly important domain of language use. Participants were specifically asked about media and broadcasting in Pacific languages, including which types of media they consumed and at what frequencies.

Music

Music was the type of media most often noted by participants in relation to Pacific language use, with nearly three-quarters (73%) reporting they listen to Pacific music, and a slightly smaller proportion (70%) reporting they sing songs in Pacific languages, at least occasionally.

I never used to listen to Cook Islands music that much, but now it’s on 24/7 in the car.

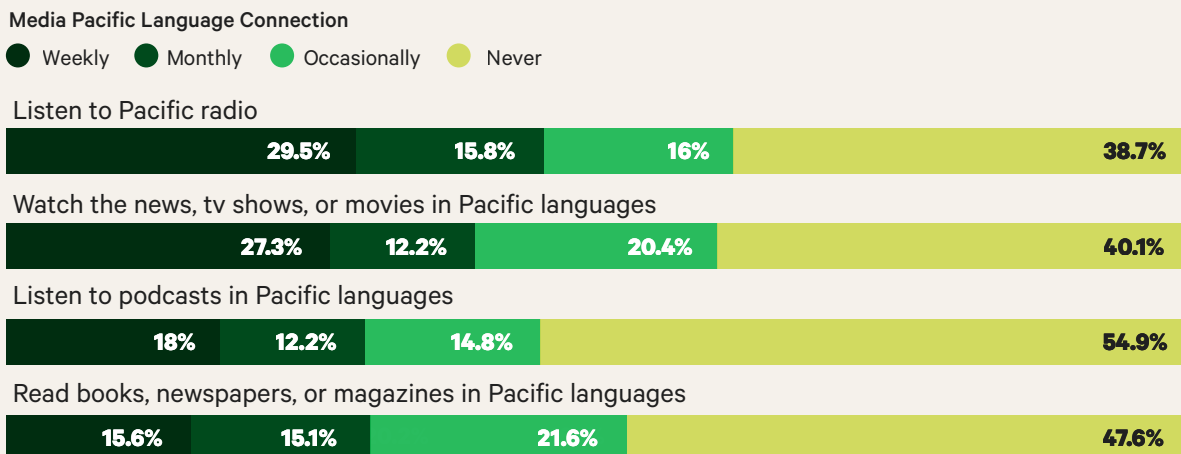
Figure 27 – Engagement in Pacific music



Social media and telecommunications

Over half of participants reported using their Pacific language(s) at least occasionally while on the phone (59%), social media (64%), or when sending texts, emails, or messages (60%). Smaller proportions reported using their Pacific language(s) at least weekly in the same contexts.

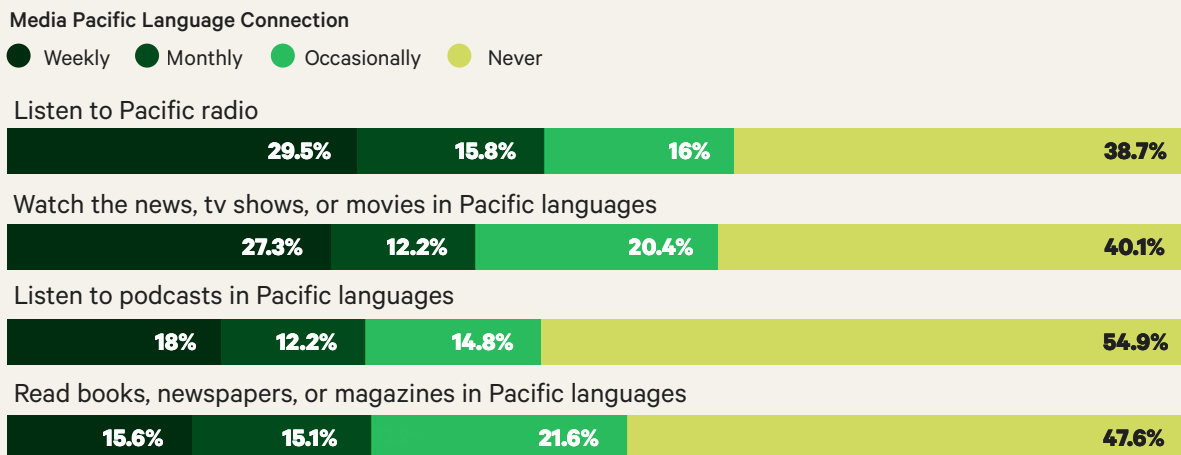
Figure 28 – Pacific language use over social media and telecommunications



Broadcast and print media

Nearly two-thirds of participants (61%) listened to Pacific radio at least occasionally, and 60% reported watching the news, television, or movies in their Pacific language(s) frequently. Over half (52%) reported reading books, newspapers, or magazines in their Pacific language(s), and 45% listened to podcasts in Te Reo Māori Kūki 'Airani.

Figure 29 – Engagement in broadcast and print media



Creative arts

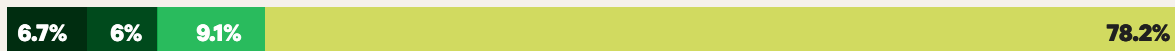
Just over one-third of participants overall (35%) reported creating digital content, media, music, art, or poetry in their Pacific language(s) at least occasionally, and 22% reported the same while playing video games.

Figure 30 – Engagement in creative arts

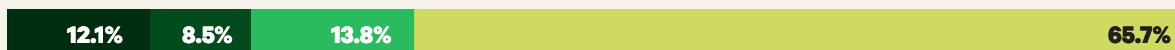
Media Pacific Language Connection

● Weekly ● Monthly ● Occasionally ● Never

Use Pacific languages while gaming (online or video games)



Create digital content or media in Pacific languages



Make music, create art, or write poetry in Pacific languages



Attitudes towards Pacific language media

Participants expressed strong support for Pacific language media. Most (83%) agreed that digital technology, media, and the internet help them connect to their language(s) and culture(s). However, 44% also felt that digital technology and the internet pose a threat to te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani.

Figure 31 – Attitudes towards Pacific language media

Attitudes to Pacific languages and media

● Agree ● Not agree

Digital technology, media and the Internet are helping me connect to my Pacific languages and cultures



Digital technology and the Internet are threatening my Pacific languages



A lack of relevant digital resources was identified as a major barrier to engaging with Pacific languages online. Participants called for more culturally grounded and accessible content to support everyday language use and learning.

“Most of the resources online are English. And if there are any [in te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani], I don't think there are translated by qualified or skilled people – it depends on the environment.”



Te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani in the New Zealand context

“Language is life, it’s my sense of belonging, it’s my passport, it takes me back home. To tatou reo, ko te akakite anga te reira kare koe e utu paunu, e toketoke enua koe. E toa koe te ngai i ano mai koe, kare oki koe e akama.”

“Our language tells people where we are from. It shows that you are someone from your place of origin, and you should never be ashamed of that.”

As tangata Kūki 'Airani navigate life in New Zealand, the wider societal context plays a significant role in shaping language use, visibility, and attitudes. This section explores how te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani is perceived and used across public, recreational, and official domains, including interactions with non-Pacific communities and government services. It highlights both the opportunities for cultural expression and the systemic barriers that impact language maintenance and revitalisation.

Wider society

Nearly all tangata Kūki 'Airani participants agreed that bilingualism was beneficial in New Zealand (88%) and that Pacific languages are an important part of New Zealand’s national identity (93%). Over three-quarters (77%) agreed they feel comfortable using their Pacific language(s) around non-Pacific people, and 65% believe it is important to learn foreign languages beyond English, demonstrating the value placed on multilingualism by the Cook Islands community in New Zealand.

Figure 32 – Attitudes towards Pacific languages in wider society

Attitudes to Pacific languages and NZ society

● Agree ● Not

Pacific languages are an important part of Aotearoa New Zealand's national identity

92.5% 7.5%

Being bilingual has many benefits in Aotearoa

88.1% 11.9%

I feel comfortable using my Pacific languages around non-Pacific people

77.2% 22.6%

It is important to master foreign languages other than English

64.9% 35.1%

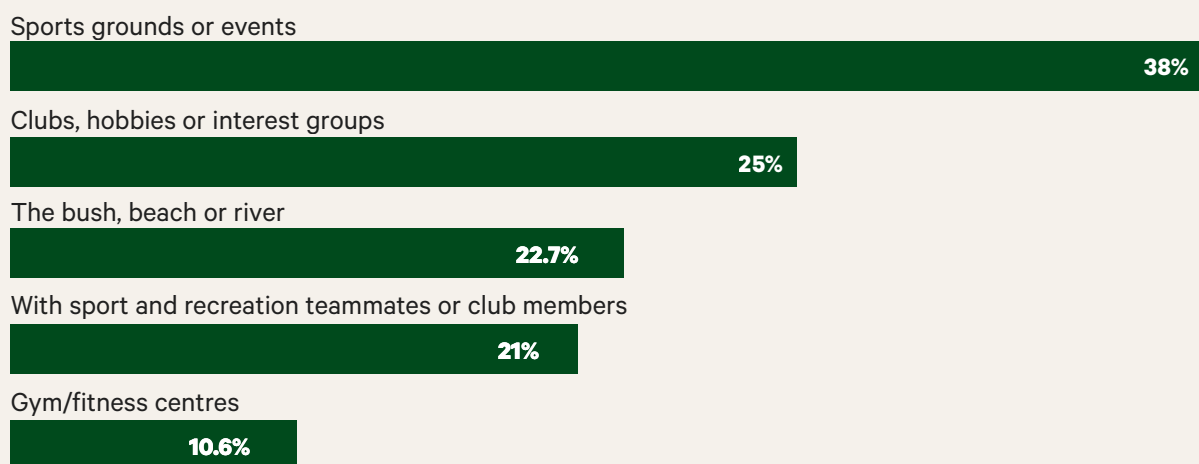
Language, identity, and politeness dynamics

Most participants (82%) agreed it is important to speak your Pacific language(s) as a Pacific person. Around half (49%) felt it is impolite to use Pacific languages around people who do not understand them, while 32% thought that if a person is not fluent in their Pacific language(s) they should not speak it at all.

Language use in recreational settings

Participants were asked where they had used their Pacific language(s) in the past 12 months, and many highlighted recreational settings. Specifically, 38% reported using their Pacific language(s) at sporting events, while 25% reported the same in relation to clubs, hobbies or interest groups.

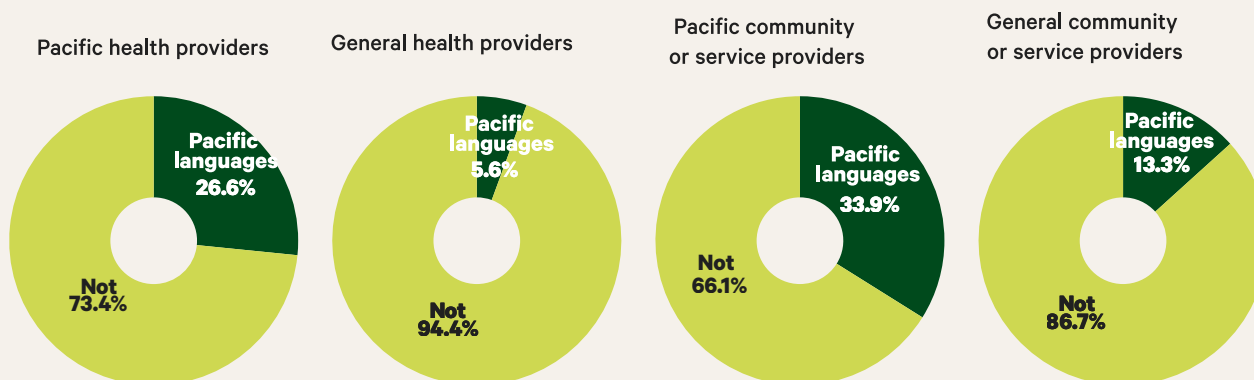
Figure 33 – Pacific language use in recreational settings



Language use with service providers

Tangata Kūki 'Airani were asked whether they had used their Pacific language(s) when engaging with health and community service providers in the last year. A greater proportion reported they had used the language when engaging with Pacific health providers (27%) than general health providers (6%). Similarly, more participants reported they had used it with Pacific community services providers (34%) compared to general community service providers (13%).

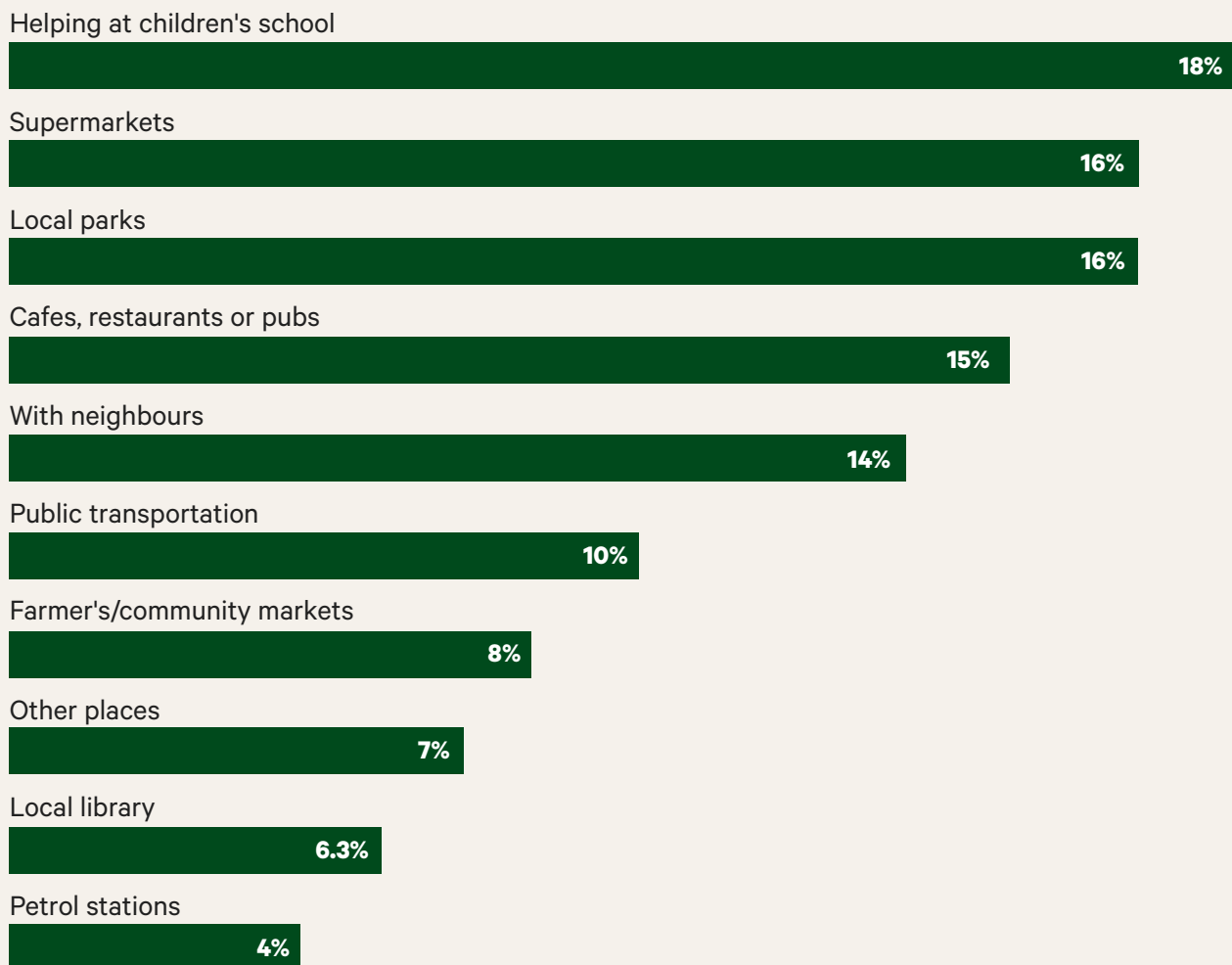
Figure 34 – Pacific language use with health and community service providers



Language use in public settings

In public settings, language use was less frequent. For instance, 30% used their Pacific language(s) at local parks, 26% at supermarkets, and smaller proportions at schools (22%), public transport (19%), and libraries (12%).

Figure 35 – Pacific language use in public settings



New Zealand Government

Participants were unlikely to use their Pacific language(s) while engaging with the New Zealand Government, with only 13% reporting doing so. An even smaller proportion (9%) reported using their Pacific language(s) when completing official paperwork or documentation, and 3% reported the same in courthouse settings.

Figure 36 – Pacific language use in official and/or government settings

Government departments

13.4%

Public announcements

9.7%

Official paperwork or documentation

8.5%

Courthouse

3.3%

Attitudes towards Government support of Pacific languages

Participants had mixed attitudes towards the role Government plays in promoting Pacific language planning, maintenance, and revitalisation across the motu.

A large proportion (86%) felt that Government and local councils should provide services and information in Pacific languages, 80% agreed that Pacific languages should have official recognition in New Zealand. Over two-thirds (69%) agreed it is the Government's role to maintain Pacific languages in New Zealand. A similar proportion (59%) reported this role is not being fulfilled, however, and that the Government does not support Pacific languages.

Figure 37 – Attitudes towards Government support of Pacific languages

Attitudes to Pacific languages and NZ Government

● Agree ● Not agree

The Government and local councils should provide services and information in Pacific languages

85.8%

14.3%

Pacific languages should have official recognition in Aotearoa

80.2%

19.8%

It is the Government's role to maintain Pacific languages in Aotearoa

68.5%

31.4%

The Government does not support Pacific languages in Aotearoa

58.6%

41.4%

Many participants highlighted how the dominance of English in New Zealand can devalue and discourage the use of Pacific languages, underscoring the need for systemic change to support linguistic diversity.

“Leaving the islands and coming to a place where everyone speaks just English and being told that you won’t make it anywhere with your language and that English is the language that’s going to put food on your table and a roof over your head because if you can’t speak English then you can’t live here.”

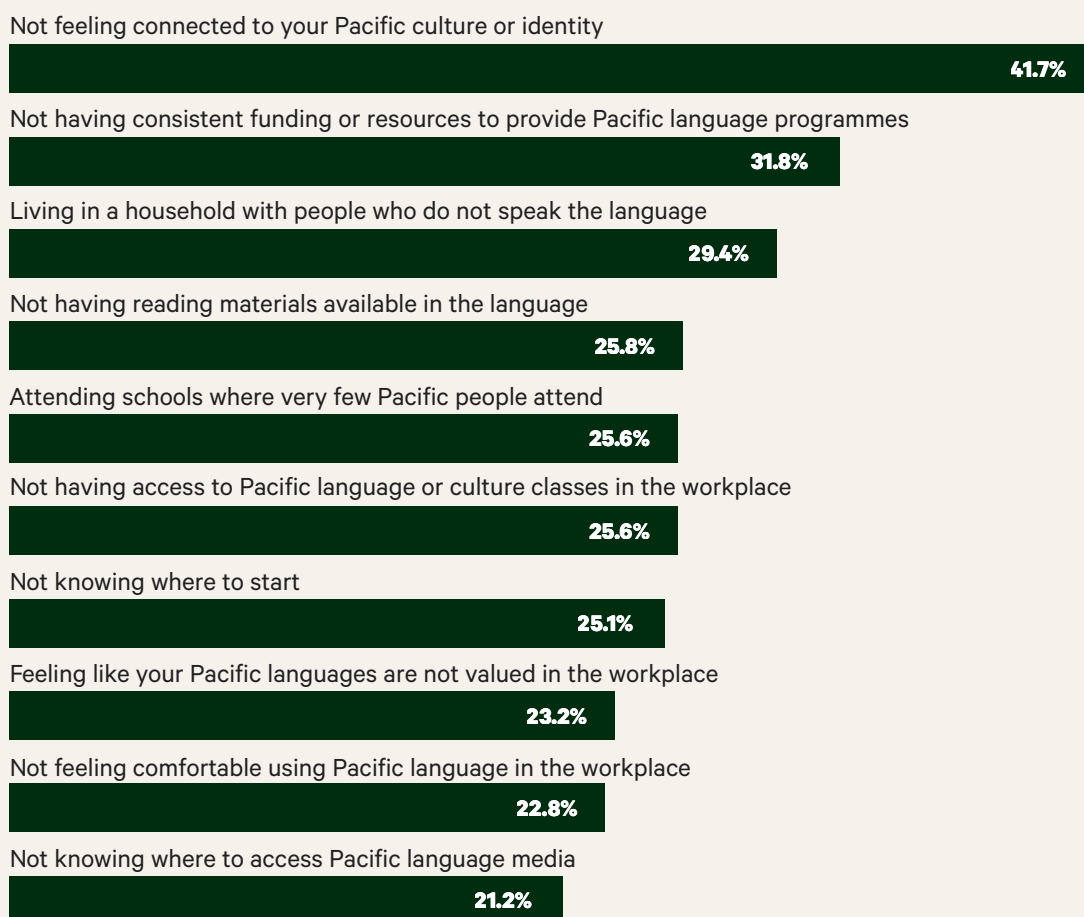
Barriers and Enablers

“A barrier for me was the trauma my parents experienced. They were punished for speaking te reo and didn’t want to pass that pain on. That’s why they didn’t teach us. Now we’re trying to learn, but it’s hard to break the cycle and make our language a safe space again.”

Barriers to using, learning, and maintaining te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani

Tangata Kūki 'Airani participants were asked to identify what they considered to be the main barriers to using, learning, and/or maintaining their Pacific language(s). Specifically, they were prompted with the question ‘What has made using, learning, or maintaining your Pacific language(s) in Aotearoa more difficult for you?’

Figure 38 – Reported barriers to using, learning, and maintaining te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani



The most common barriers reported were participants not feeling connected to their Pacific culture and identity (42%) and inconsistent funding and resourcing to provide Pacific language programmes (32%). Other reported barriers included: living in a household with people who do not speak their Pacific language (30%); not having reading materials available in their Pacific language (26%); and not having access to Pacific language or culture classes in the workplace (26%).

These barriers reflect both structural and interpersonal challenges. Participants highlighted how the dominance of English in New Zealand, combined with limited institutional support, has contributed to language loss and reduced opportunities for revitalisation. Others noted that intergenerational trauma, such as parents being punished for speaking their language, has led to reluctance in passing it on.

Enablers of using, learning, and maintaining te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani

Participants were also asked to identify what they considered to be the main enablers of using, learning, and/or maintaining their Pacific language(s). Specifically, they were prompted with the question 'What has been most helpful for you in using, learning, or maintaining your Pacific language(s) in Aotearoa?'

“Some of the youths here don't know how to speak Māori, but they wish they could. They envy those of us who can. I try to teach them when I can. They're stubborn, but they're curious. That's why I keep trying.”

Figure 39 – Reported enablers of using, learning, and maintaining te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani



The most reported enabler for tangata Kūki 'Airani was listening to and speaking their Pacific language(s) with family members in the household (67%). Other notable enablers were: listening to and speaking Pacific language(s) with friends or family members outside the household (55%); listening to music in Pacific languages (44%); visiting the Cook Islands (44%); and living in an area where lots of other Pacific people live (36%).

These enablers demonstrate the importance of everyday interactions, cultural immersion, and community support in sustaining language use. Participants emphasised that informal learning through music, conversation, and travel can be impactful.

Conclusion

“I hope the people of the Cook Islands will be more eager to learn their language. I hope to see more classes, programmes, and facilities available where we as Pacific people can go and learn to speak our language. Our language is becoming extinct, and it is our job to keep it alive to teach our children.”

Te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani has a unique place in New Zealand due to the strong cultural and historical ties between the Cook Islands and New Zealand. As an endangered language, te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani faces significant challenges. To respond to these, the Ministry for Pacific Peoples, in partnership with Pacific communities across the motu, developed the [Pacific Languages Strategy](#). Aligned with current research on language policy and planning, the Strategy identifies language use and critical awareness as key drivers of successful language revitalisation.

It is within this context that the Leo Moana o Aotearoa Te Reo Māori Kūki 'Airani Report was developed. Alongside the overarching [Leo Moana o Aotearoa Report](#), it provides a snapshot of the state of te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani, as seen through participants' use of and attitudes towards the language in New Zealand.

By exploring these critical dimensions of language vitality across a range of domains, the report offers an essential evidence base to inform responsive policy and practice that meets the needs of tangata Kūki 'Airani both now and into the future.

To support the practical application of the report's findings, a series of priority areas for action are outlined below. Some are relevant across all Pacific languages covered in the Leo Moana reports, while others are specific to te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani and tangata Kūki 'Airani. These priorities are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive; rather, a diverse mix of interventions will be required to meaningfully address language decline.

Priority areas for action

Strengthen language use in the home

The home is the foundation of language acquisition and intergenerational transmission. However, while 84% of participants believe their language is safe if it is spoken in the home, actual use with younger generations is in decline. Many report speaking their Pacific language(s) with elders (94%), but not their partners (29%) or children (25%), citing barriers such as time constraints, lack of confidence, and the prevalence of English. Revitalising home-based language use is essential to reversing this trend.

Recommendations:

- Develop and distribute practical language resources for families such as bilingual storybooks, songs, and games.
- Promote home immersion strategies and family language plans. Workshops for parents and caregivers, even those who are not fluent, can build the skills and confidence needed to use their Pacific language(s) frequently and proficiently, especially with children.
- Support intergenerational transmission through community-based mentorships that connect elders with youth through storytelling, games, and cultural activities.

Expand education pathways

Education is a powerful tool for language revitalisation. Participants were cognisant of this, with 88% reporting they would send their children to ECE, primary, and secondary schools where they could be taught in their Pacific language(s) if given the opportunity. Only 37% reported having engaged in such education themselves, however, highlighting a stark mismatch in the supply and demand of Pacific language provision stemming from limited resources, teachers, and institutional support. Strengthening Pacific language education across all levels of schooling would go a long way towards addressing this issue.

Recommendations:

- Expand bilingual and immersion programmes across all levels.
- Increase teacher training and resource development for Pacific language provision.
- Establish community language hubs and after-school programmes.

Support language use in churches

Churches remain important cultural spaces for tangata Kūki 'Airani, though their role in facilitating language transmission has diminished over time – only 45% of weekly churchgoers reported services being held in their Pacific language(s). Nevertheless, many credited church settings with building their knowledge of and confidence in their language(s) over time. Strengthening this domain would support both spiritual and linguistic wellbeing.

Recommendations:

- Partner with churches to deliver language programmes.
- Encourage youth participation in church-based language activities.
- Provide resources for scripture reading and religious education in te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani.

Expand community-based language initiatives

Community events play a vital role in fostering language use and cultural confidence, with 88% of participants speaking their Pacific language(s) in these settings. Such gatherings provide a relaxed environment in which individuals can practice and enhance their language skills, complementing more formal learning contexts.

Recommendations:

- Fund and support community language classes and cultural events.
- Facilitate intergenerational learning through community gatherings.
- Promote inclusive initiatives like arts-based language activities and youth-led events.
- Support community-led initiatives that connect families, schools, churches, and cultural groups.

Leverage media and digital platforms

Media is an increasingly significant domain of language use, with digital tools offering creative, accessible, and scalable ways for tangata Kūki 'Airani to engage with their languages daily. Many participants (73%) listen to music in their language(s), and 80% use it over social media. High-quality, culturally-grounded media content increases visibility and normalises the use of te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani, particularly for younger generations who are most active online.

Recommendations:

- Invest in te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani media and digital content (e.g., music, podcasts, videos etc).
- Support digital literacy in te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani.
- Collaborate with broadcasters to expand te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani programming.

Promote language use in the workplace

Under half (40%) of participants reported using their Pacific language(s) at least weekly with their colleagues, and many (53%) offered cultural and/or language support at work. English is still perceived as the language of success, however, and 12% of participants reported having experienced ethnicity-based discrimination. Promoting Pacific languages in professional settings affirms cultural identity, challenging these harmful norms.

Recommendations:

- Encourage employers to support Pacific language use.
- Develop workplace language champions and cultural advisors.
- Address ethnicity-based discrimination and promote multilingualism in the workplace.

Appendix 1 – Survey variables

The Leo Moana o Aotearoa Survey sample utilises both Maximum Variation purposeful sampling and community-based participant-driven recruitment strategies. This type of sampling used in tandem with a community-focussed research approach allows for a stratified method of identifying participants across the below variables which are key in terms of measuring the extent to which tangata Kūki 'Airani can learn and use te reo Māori Kūki 'Airani:

Pacific ethnicity – This variable relates to the ethnic group(s) a person identifies with or has a sense of belonging to. It measures cultural affiliation and enables analyses into language use by ethnicit(ies), which is a significant factor in language maintenance and/or attrition.

Age – Speakers are socialised to think and behave in certain ways and, consequently, language attitudes and use tend to vary based on age. When a language is learned also influences language use. This variable ensures questions can be asked around whether young people are acquiring Pacific languages and how proficient adult speakers are in them.

Gender – It is important to explore whether gender plays a role in terms of who is speaking Pacific languages, and if this influences intergenerational transmission. It is also important to explore whether there were attitudinal differences towards Pacific languages based on gender.

Region – Pacific communities are dispersed across New Zealand. Having opportunities to hear and speak their languages influences whether they can be maintained. It is therefore important to examine which people, in which regions, have access to and use their Pacific languages. Exploring language attitudes across the regions is also critical.

Birthplace – The domestic Pacific population is predominantly New Zealand-born, which undoubtedly influences Pacific language use and attitudes. This variable therefore enables the analysis of any differences between New Zealand-born and overseas-born Pacific populations' use of and attitudes towards Pacific languages.

Appendix 2 – Survey sampling frame

The sampling frame has been designed using data from the 2018 Census. While this was known to be under-representative of Pacific peoples in New Zealand, it nonetheless forms the necessary foundation of the research contained in this report until the release of the complete results for Census 2023.

Target Survey sample

This table reflects the target Cook Islands sample for the Leo Moana o Aotearoa Survey.

Total	340	
Northern Regions		
NZ-BORN	MALE (#)	FEMALE (#)
15-24 years	46	43w
25-44 years	53	54
45-64 years	34	35
65+ years	9	11
OVERSEAS-BORN	MALE (#)	FEMALE (#)
15-24 years	9	9
25-44 years	11	11
45-64 years	7	7
65+ years	2	2
Central Regions		
NZ-BORN	MALE (#)	FEMALE (#)
15-24 years	15	14
25-44 years	18	18
45-64 years	12	12
65+ years	3	4
OVERSEAS-BORN	MALE (#)	FEMALE (#)
15-24 years	3	3
25-44 years	4	4
45-64 years	2	2
65+ years	1	1
Southern Regions		
NZ-BORN	MALE (#)	FEMALE (#)
15-24 years	5	5
25-44 years	6	6
45-64 years	4	4
65+ years	1	1
OVERSEAS-BORN	MALE (#)	FEMALE (#)
15-24 years	1	1
25-44 years	1	1
45-64 years	1	1
65+ years	0	0

Final Survey sample

The following table reflects the final Survey sample.

Total	524	
	MALE (#)	FEMALE (#)
	202	191
NZ-BORN	136	145
OVERSEAS-BORN	54	58
15-24 years	57	60
25-44 years	67	69
45-64 years	46	62
65+ years	20	12
Northern regions	155	170
Central regions	18	23
Southern regions	17	9



Ministry for
Pacific Peoples

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

