

Leo Moana o Aotearoa

# Te 'Gana Tuvalu report



Ministry for  
Pacific Peoples

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

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and community researchers who recruited participants  
and completed other important work to ensure the online  
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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 tagata Tuvalu (people of Tuvalu 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 Tuvalu community as captured through talanoa with its members across New Zealand. As part of these talanoa, Tuvalu community members answered questions about their attitudes towards te 'gana Tuvalu (the Tuvalu language), language competency, and language use across multiple domains including the home, church, education, workplace, media and broadcasting, with the community, and in wider society.

## High-level findings are as follows:

### Language proficiency

Proficiency in te 'gana Tuvalu was moderately high, with most participants reporting they were proficient in receptive language skills and could understand (86%) and read (84%) the language. Proficiency in productive language skills was lower, however, with 70% reporting they could speak and 75% write in te 'gana Tuvalu. This gap was more pronounced among younger participants, highlighting the need to strengthen speaking and writing skills through intergenerational transmission.

### Te 'gana Tuvalu in the home and with family

The home remains a crucial domain for te 'gana Tuvalu, with large proportions of participants reporting they use it always or as often as English with elders (94%), aunts/uncles (81%), and grandparents (72%) in particular. Reported use with school-aged children was lower (38%) further reflecting the need to strengthen intergenerational transmission.

### Te 'gana Tuvalu in church

Church remains a stronghold of language use and transmission for tagata Tuvalu, with over two-thirds (67%) of participants who attended weekly services reporting that they are held in te 'gana Tuvalu. However, patterns of language use differed between age groups, with children being more likely to never use te 'gana Tuvalu with one another in Church settings (33%) compared with adults (12%). This suggests that churches could play a greater role in engaging youth and supporting language revitalisation.

### Te 'gana Tuvalu in education settings

Formal opportunities to learn te 'gana Tuvalu are limited, with less than one quarter (24%) of participants having accessed Pacific language education in the past. This is in stark contrast to the demand for Pacific language education reported by participants, with a large proportion (89%) expressing they would enrol their child(ren) in early childhood education (ECE), primary, and secondary schools where they could be taught in te 'gana Tuvalu if such options were available.

### **Te 'gana Tuvalu in the workplace**

Te 'gana Tuvalu is increasingly visible in workplaces, with over three-quarters (78%) of participants using the language with colleagues, and many providing cultural (61%) or language (53%) support as well. English remains dominant, however, and is perceived by many as the language of professional success (84%). This can discourage use of te 'gana Tuvalu, especially among younger generations, and highlights the need for workplace policies that value Pacific languages as assets, rather than barriers, to success.

### **Te 'gana Tuvalu in and with Pacific communities**

Community was identified as an important domain for te 'gana Tuvalu, with the vast majority of participants (97%) reporting they use the language at least sometimes when taking part in community events.

### **Te 'gana Tuvalu in media and broadcasting**

Digital technology, media, and the internet were identified as emerging domains where tagata Tuvalu can connect and converse in te 'gana Tuvalu. Music and social media were highlighted as being the most popular domains for engaging with the language. There were mixed perspectives around the potential for these domains to support te 'gana Tuvalu – almost all (92%) of participants agreed that digital technology, media, and the internet help them connect with the language, while under half (44%) viewed them as a threat, reflecting concerns around language loss.

### **Te 'gana Tuvalu in the New Zealand context**

Te 'gana Tuvalu is seen as integral to New Zealand's national identity, with strong support for bilingualism. However, use in public services and government settings remains low, pointing to systemic barriers and the need for greater institutional support.

# Introduction

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*“Tou ‘gana ko tou iloga. Ka sei sou ‘gana,  
koe pela fua me se putu lakau te la e tapea i te galoto o te moana.”*

*“Your language is your identity. Without your language,  
you are but a piece of driftwood floating in the middle of the ocean.”*

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## Te ‘gana Tuvalu

Te ‘gana Tuvalu is classified as endangered by the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)<sup>1</sup>. This means the language is typically spoken only by parents, grandparents, and/or young children. In fact, most of its speakers are found in the diaspora, particularly in New Zealand.

Many tagata Tuvalu are New Zealand-born, which correlates with language decline across many Pacific groups. While both English and te ‘gana Tuvalu are offered in schools in Tuvalu, English is the main language of instruction from Year 4 onwards. The growing use of English in education, business, and government, combined with limited targeted support for te ‘gana Tuvalu in New Zealand, contributes to the language’s decline.

Climate change is one of the most significant threats to the safety, security, and wellbeing of Pacific peoples. Its impacts extend beyond the environment, affecting heritage, cultures, languages, and ancestral connections to land. For low-lying atolls like Tuvalu, the risk of uninhabitability is imminent if global efforts fail to arrest climate change. This poses a direct threat to the survival of te ‘gana Tuvalu, especially as displacement shifts the centre of the language’s vitality to the diaspora.

## Purpose and objectives

The Leo Moana o Aotearoa project aims to investigate the use of, and attitudes towards, Pacific languages in New Zealand. This report provides contemporary insights into the vitality of te ‘gana Tuvalu among tagata Tuvalu residing in New Zealand.

Complementing the initial [Leo Moana o Aotearoa Survey Report](#), this document focusses specifically on te ‘gana Tuvalu and the experiences of tagata Tuvalu and Tuvalu communities across New Zealand. It presents the perspectives of survey and talanoa participants (n = 152), exploring their use of and attitudes towards the language across various domains.

The findings aim to inform current and future efforts to strengthen te ‘gana Tuvalu and enhance the wellbeing of tagata Tuvalu in New Zealand. This report also serves as a reference for communities, researchers, and agencies developing responsive policies and practices to better meet the needs of tagata Tuvalu.

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<sup>1</sup> [UNESCO World Atlas of Languages](#)

## Sample

The target population for the survey and talanoa is a representative sample of the tagata Tuvalu population, according to data from the 2018 Census (see Appendix 2 for the Tuvalu 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.

Considering 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 tagata Tuvalu can learn and use te 'gana Tuvalu. Combining these helped ensure a level of representation of Pacific voices that more generic random sampling methodologies cannot produce.

## Data collection

Data for Leo Moana o Aotearoa was collected through an online survey and targeted talanoa with Tuvalu community members across New Zealand. The survey questionnaire<sup>2</sup> was available primarily through a confidential link online. Participants were also able to seek support in completing the survey via telephone or video calling services facilitated by Tuvalu community-based researchers.

This report presents findings from both the survey and talanoa components specific to the Tuvalu 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 tagata Tuvalu component.

## Data analysis

### Overall response rate

A total of 3,039 people completed the Leo Moana o Aotearoa Survey, 152 of whom were tagata Tuvalu. 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 adjust for 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 sampling frame is included as Appendix 2.

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<sup>2</sup> The full list of survey questions is provided in the [Leo Moana o Aotearoa Survey Report](#) (pp. 92-103).

The results for the tagata Tuvalu participant survey (n = 152) have been weighted against the total tagata Tuvalu population in New Zealand as at the 2018 Census. They are therefore representative of the total domestic tagata Tuvalu population. These are different from the total Leo Moana participant survey (n = 3,039) as mentioned above, which applies ethnicity prioritisation to weight nine of the Pacific ethnic groups within the overall Pacific population as at the 2018 Census.

### Survey analyses

While most of this report focusses on descriptive statistics (providing percentages and counts), additional analyses have been run to examine differences within the tagata Tuvalu participant cohort. 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 (tagata Tuvalu only vs. Multi-Pacific vs. Multi-ethnic<sup>3</sup>)
- Region (Wellington vs. Auckland vs. Elsewhere)
- Birthplace (New Zealand-born vs. Overseas-born)

Only significant differences within the tagata Tuvalu 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 Tuvalu 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. Tagata Tuvalu 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.

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<sup>3</sup> 'Multi-Pacific' refers to when a participant has selected Tuvalu and any other Pacific ethnicit(ies) e.g., Samoan and Tongan.

'Multi-Ethnic' refers to when a participant has selected Tuvalu and any non-Pacific ethnicit(ies) e.g., Tuvalu and New Zealand European.

# Demography

This section provides a demographic overview of the tagata Tuvalu participants in the Leo Moana o Aotearoa survey. Understanding age, gender, birthplace, and ethnic identity helps contextualise the findings and ensures the voices represented reflect the diversity within the Tuvalu community.

## Who took part in the survey?

A total of 152 tagata Tuvalu participants took part in the Leo Moana o Aotearoa survey. According to the 2023 Census, there were 6,585 tangata Tuvalu residing in New Zealand, including 4,230 aged 15 years and over. This represents 4% of the total population aged 15 years and over.

Figure 1 – Tagata Tuvalu participant summary

## 152 Tuvaluan participants

Youth (15–24) made up the largest age group, representing 33% of participants, while 16% were aged 55+

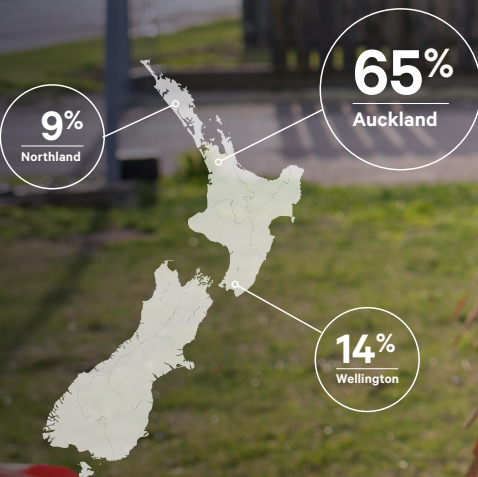
**48%**  
New Zealand born

**61%**  
Multiple ethnicities

Identified as:

**50%**  
Female

**50%**  
Male



## Age and gender

One-third (33%) of tagata Tuvalu participants were 15-24 years old, while 51% were 25-54 years old. The remaining participants (16%) were 55 years old or older. Gender was evenly distributed, with 50% of participants identifying as female, and 50% identifying as male.

## Birthplace and region

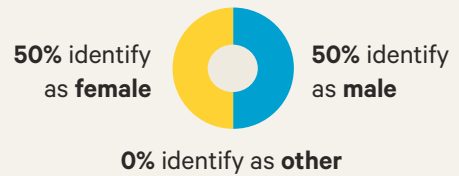
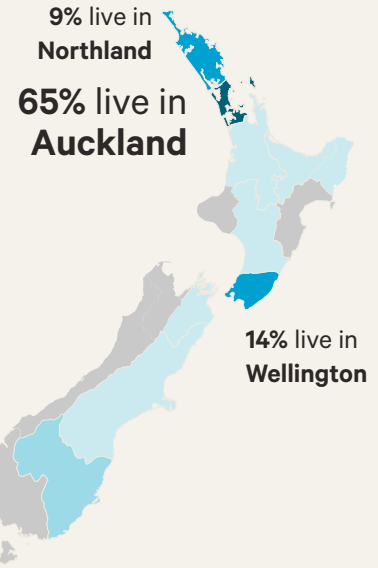
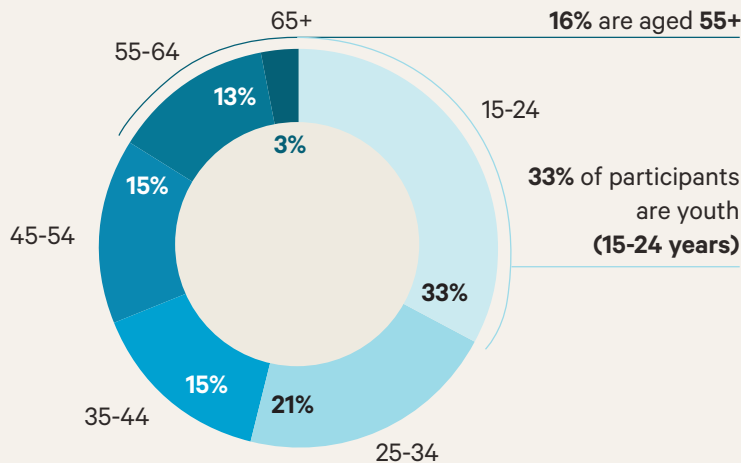
Nearly two-thirds (65%) of participants reported residing in Auckland and 14% lived in Wellington. A further 14% reported living elsewhere in the North Island, and 9% lived in the South Island. Under half (48%) reported being New Zealand-born and the remaining 52% were born overseas.

## Ethnic identity

Over one-third (39%) of participants identified solely as tagata Tuvalu, while the remaining proportion (61%) identified as having at least one other ethnicity. The most common additional ethnicities of participants were Tokelauan (34%), Samoan (26%), and i-Kiribati (17%).

# Survey overview

152 Tuvaluans took part in the Leo Moana o Aotearoa survey



**48%** were born in New Zealand

**61%** are multi-ethnic

## Overview of Pacific language use in Aotearoa New Zealand

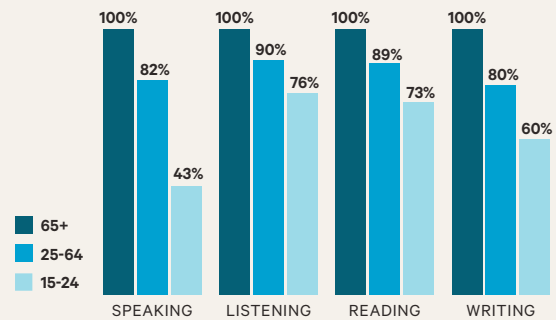
**73%** report being **proficient in at least one Pacific language.**

**56%** learned Te Gana Tuvalu as a **first language**

**100%** say using Te Gana Tuvalu is **important to their wellbeing**

**84%** are concerned Te Gana Tuvalu is **in danger of being lost in Aotearoa**

**47%** are concerned Te Gana Tuvalu is **in danger of being lost in Tuvalu**



**Younger generations rate their proficiency in Te Gana Tuvalu as lower than participants aged 25+.**

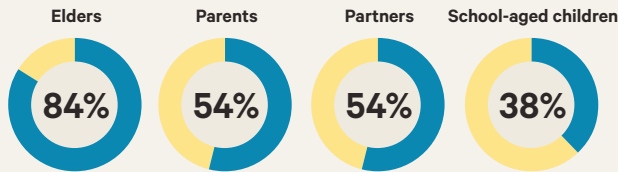
**100%** believe it is **important for our children and future generations** to speak our Pacific languages

**64%** **speak to children** in their households using **Pacific languages**

# Te Gana Tuvalu use in Aotearoa New Zealand, in depth

## Home & Family

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



**39%** live in **multigenerational households**

**65%** discuss **Pacific genealogy and family histories** at home

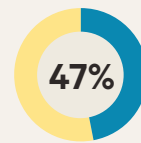
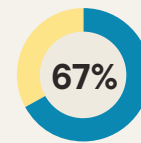
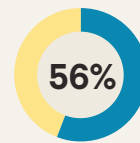
**91%** agree that Pacific languages are safe as long as they are **spoken in the home**

## Religion

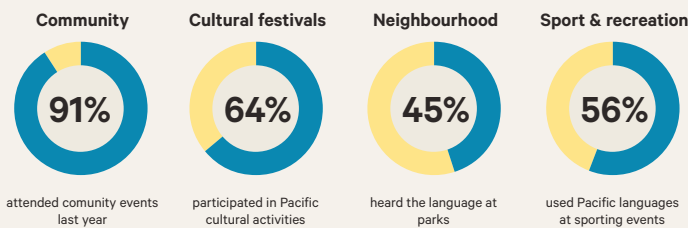
Top religious affiliations

**61%** Christian (no specific denomination)  
**22%** Presbyterian, Congregational, Reformed

**5%** Methodist



## Communities



**36%** have never visited Tuvalu

**90%** have hosted Tuvaluans in NZ

## Media

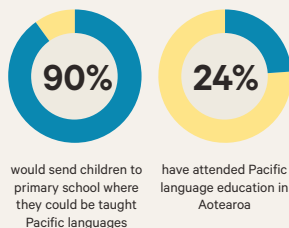
**92%** digital technology, media and the Internet **help connect** to Pacific languages

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

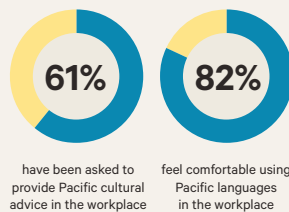
**84%** **listen to music in Pacific languages** every week

**46%** have used Te Gana Tuvalu while **playing video games**

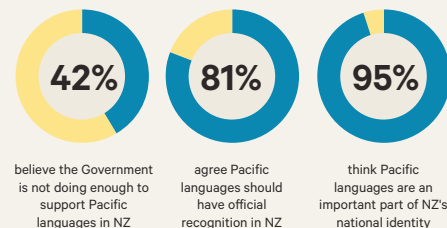
## School



## Work



## Government



**Enablers** What activities are most helpful for Tuvaluans to engage with Te Gana Tuvalu?

**88%** listening and speaking with family & friends

**58%** listening to music in Pacific languages

**53%** listening & speaking to others in the community (at local parks, libraries, shops, with neighbours)

**51%** engaging with Pacific language weeks

**Barriers** What gets in the way of engaging with Te Gana Tuvalu?

**46%** not having consistent funding or resources to provide Pacific language programmes

**40%** not being able to visit Tuvalu

**40%** not feeling connected to your Pacific culture or identity

**38%** living in a household with people who do not speak the language

# Te ‘gana Tuvalu

*“My Pacific language means the world to me. It is my identity. It reinforces and supports a sense of belonging and worthiness through genealogy and land. It transcends the mana of my ancestors through my soul so that I am able to face the challenges of today. It enables me to engage in meaningful work through translation and achieve better social outcomes for our people.”*

This section explores participants’ proficiency in te ‘gana Tuvalu, their experiences with language acquisition, and the role of language in shaping identity and culture. It also highlights concerns around language loss and the importance of intergenerational transmission

Figure 2 - Te ‘gana Tuvalu summary

**100** %  
believe Pacific languages are important for future generations

**100** %  
say using their heritage language is important to their wellbeing

Older generations are more likely to report being highly proficient

**73** %  
report being proficient in at least one Pacific language

**64** %  
use Pacific languages when speaking to children at home

**56** %  
learned Te Gana Tuvalu ta as a first language

**84** %  
fear Te Gana Tuvalu is at risk in Aotearoa

**47** %  
fear Te Gana Tuvalu is at risk in Tuvalu

## Proficiency in te gana Tuvalu

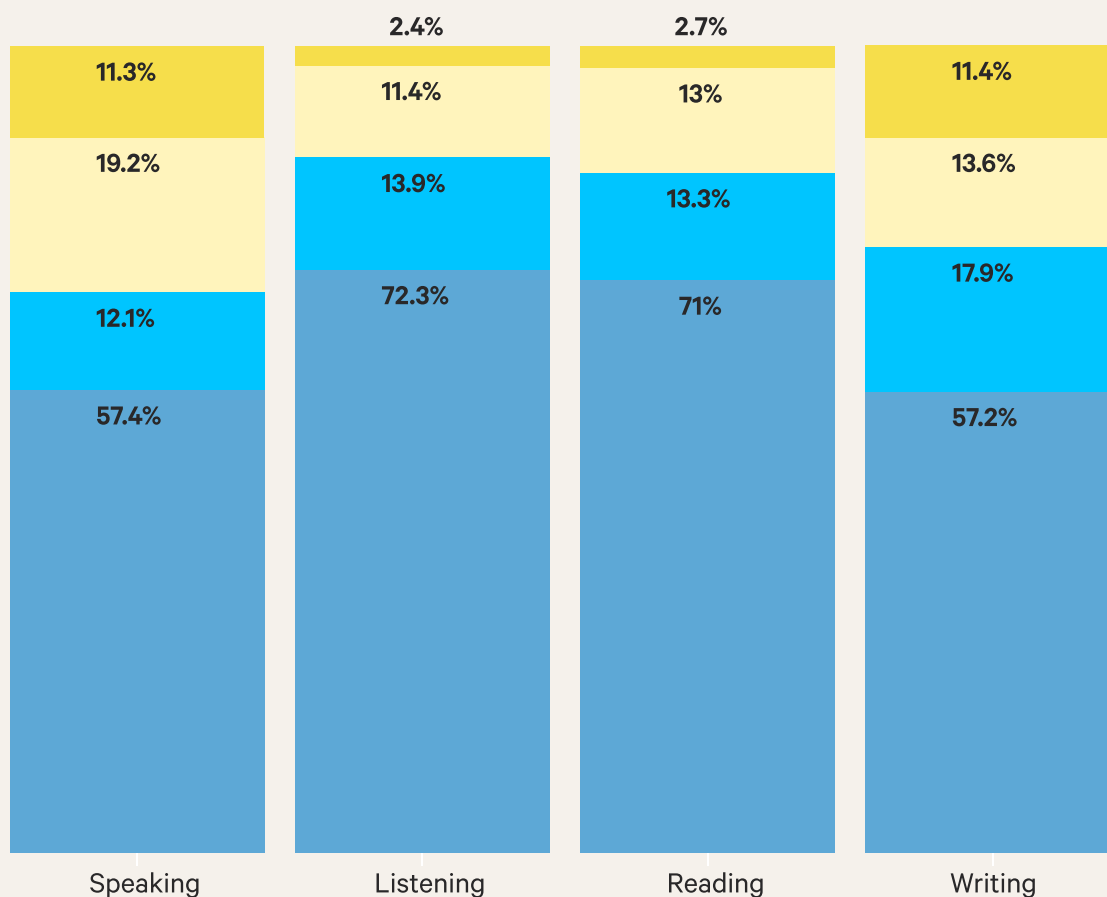
To capture language proficiency, participants were asked to self-rate their ability to speak, listen, read, and write in te 'gana Tuvalu. A scale of 'very well', 'well', 'fairly well', 'not so well', and 'only a few words or phrases' was used, and participants who selected 'very well', 'well', or 'fairly well' were considered proficient for the purposes of the analysis in this report.

Over two-thirds (70%) of participants reported being able to speak te 'gana Tuvalu proficiently, of which 57% could do so well or very well. A higher proportion (86%) reported being able to understand te 'gana Tuvalu when spoken to them. Most (84%) reported being able to read the language, and 75% of said they could write at least fairly well. In fact, 17% of participants even chose to take the entire survey in te 'gana Tuvalu!

**Figure 3 – Proficiency in te 'gana Tuvalu**

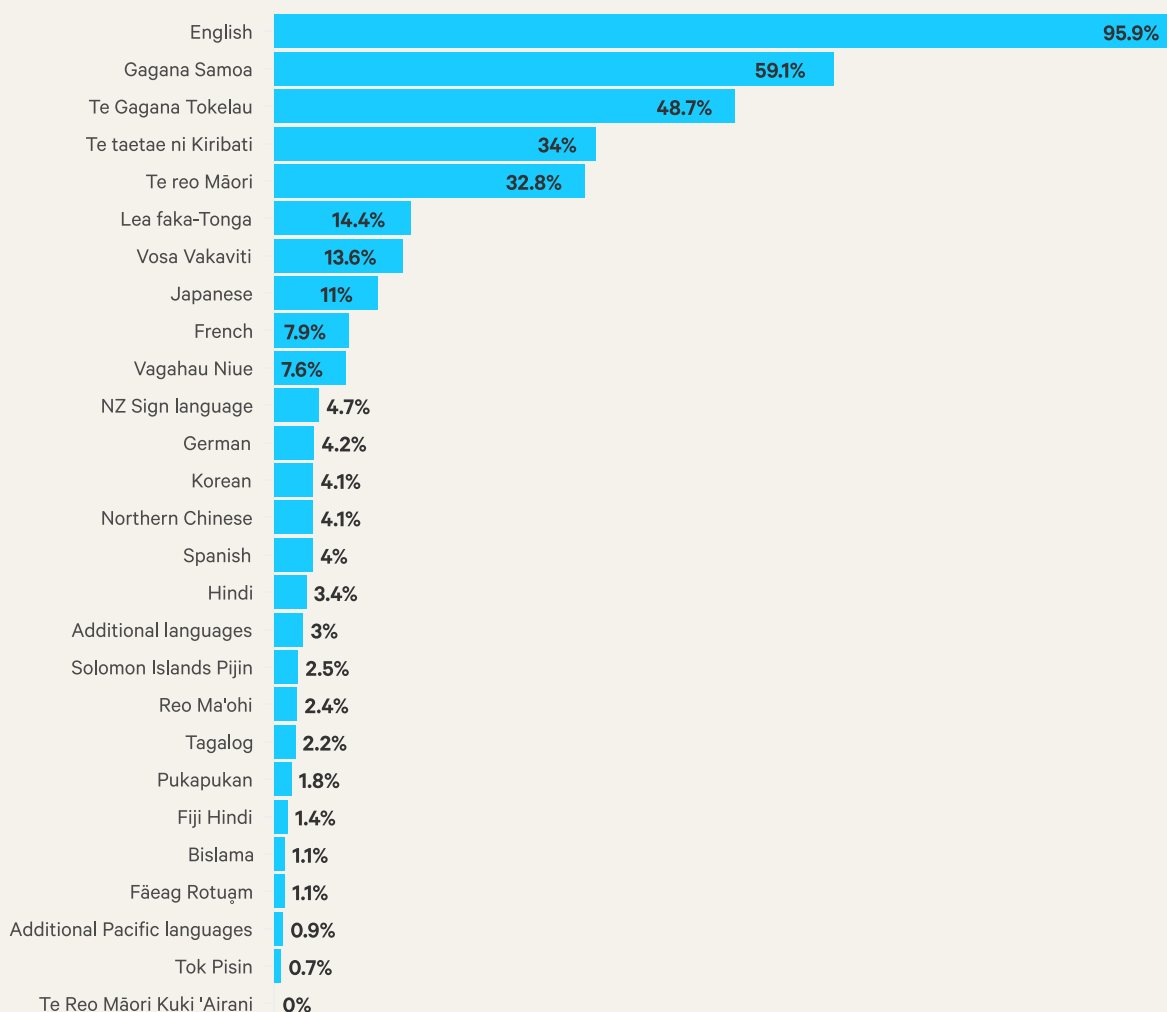
### Te Gana Tuvalu Proficiency:

● Very well/well ● Fairly well ● Not so well ● Only a few words or phrases



## Proficiency in other languages

Survey responses indicated high levels of multilingualism among tagata Tuvalu participants. One-third (33%) reported being familiar with te reo Māori, and 5% said the same for New Zealand Sign Language. The Pacific languages participants most reported being familiar with other than te 'gana Tuvalu were gagana Sāmoa (59%), te gagana Tokelau (49%), and te taetae ni Kiribati (34%).

**Figure 4 – Multilingualism among tagata Tuvalu**

## Language acquisition

More than half (56%) of tagata Tuvalu participants reported learning te 'gana Tuvalu as a first language, while another 17% did so before starting school.

## Language, identity, and culture

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*“Learning and speaking my language brings me a sense of belonging – something that can be easily forgotten or overlooked being born in New Zealand and of mixed ethnicity. This has been challenging – you feel like you aren’t enough of one culture to fully belong, learning to speak a Pacific language is a step towards feeling confident that you belong.”*

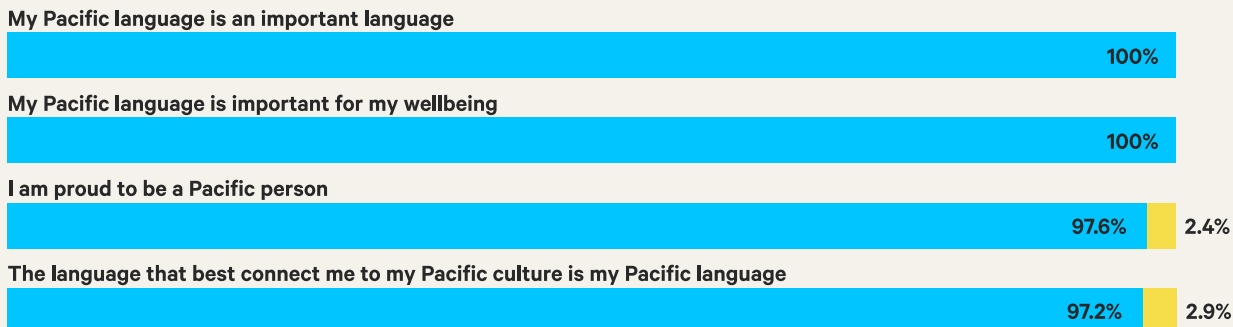
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Te 'gana Tuvalu was viewed extremely positively by survey participants, and widely considered to be a significant part of Tuvalu identity and culture. All agreed that te 'gana Tuvalu is an important language (100%), and that the language is important for their wellbeing (100%). Similar proportions reported they are proud to be Pacific (98%) and that the language that best connects them to their culture is te 'gana Tuvalu (97%).

**Figure 5 – Attitudes towards language, identity, and culture**

Attitudes to Pacific heritage identity:

● Agree ● Not agree



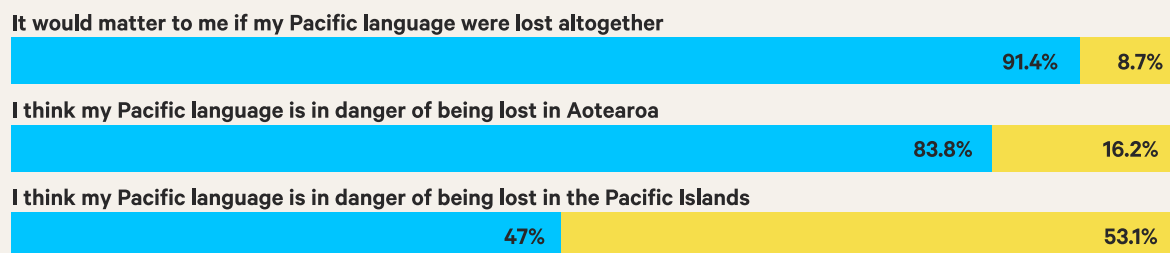
### Language loss

Participants demonstrated a deep understanding and critical awareness of the endangerment of te 'gana Tuvalu in both Tuvalu and the New Zealand diaspora. Nearly all participants (91%) agreed it would matter to them if te 'gana Tuvalu were lost altogether. Over three-quarters (84%) believed te 'gana Tuvalu is in danger of being lost in New Zealand, and 47% felt the same in relation to Tuvalu.

**Figure 6 – Attitudes towards language loss Intergenerational transmission**

Attitudes to heritage language loss:

● Agree ● Not agree



## Intergenerational transmission

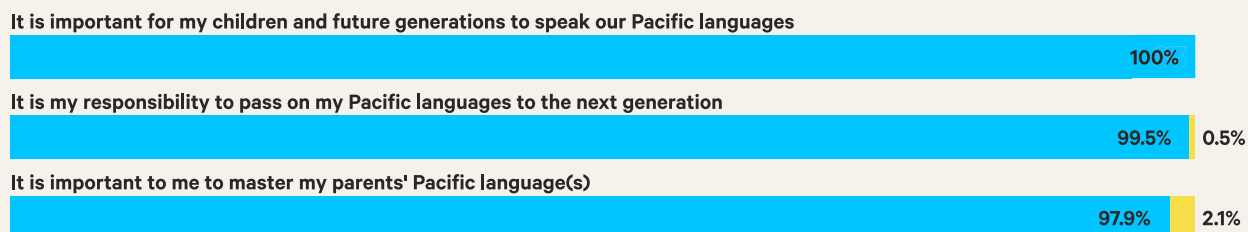
*“My language is my identity – it signals my place in the world, my culture, and the foundation of my upbringing. It connects me to my genealogy. All Pacific people should be able to speak their mother tongues. By using your own language you respect your culture and your elders that have been working hard to maintain te ‘gana Tuvalu. I am proud to be Tuvaluan and will always be. I will do my best to ensure the next generation speaks the gana Tuvalu in Aotearoa.”*

All participants (100%) agreed it is important for their children and future generations to speak te ‘gana Tuvalu, and that it is their responsibility to pass on the language on to the next generation. A slightly smaller proportion (98%) agreed it is important to master their parents’ Pacific language(s).

**Figure 7 – Attitudes towards language maintenance and transmission**

Attitudes to heritage language maintenance:

● Agree ● Not agree





## Te 'gana Tuvalu in the home and with family

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*“It helps me feel a stronger connection to my family and my culture which are a huge part of my identity. I am not able to speak my language very well and I often feel devastated that I can’t because I feel like without my family and my culture, I wouldn’t know who I am.”*

---

The home is a foundational space for language transmission and cultural identity. This section explores how te 'gana Tuvalu is used within households, how patterns have changed over time, and the role of family in maintaining the language.

### Childhood household composition and language use

When asked about their childhood home, 64% of tagata Tuvalu participants reported growing up in a household with people of solely Tuvalu heritage. Of the remaining proportion, 27% reported growing up in a multi-Pacific household, and 9% did so in a multi-ethnic household.

Most (88%) participants reported that their childhood home was traditionally Pacific, and 83% said that as children they were mostly spoken to in te 'gana Tuvalu growing up. Just over half (54%) reported that their household had a rule where only te 'gana Tuvalu could be spoken.

### Contemporary household composition and language use

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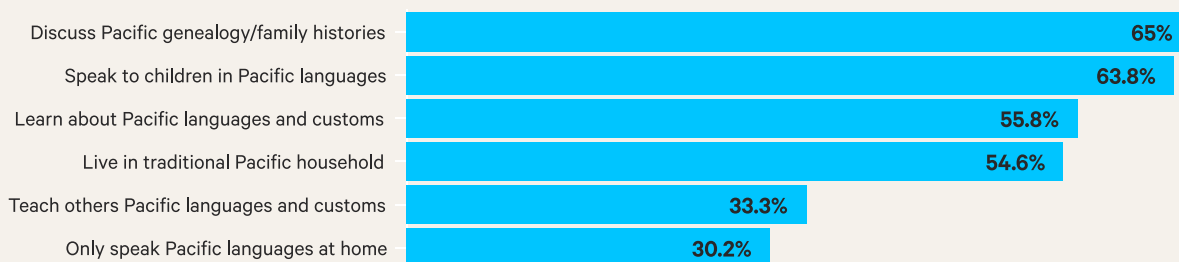
*“Moving to Aotearoa as a baby would probably be the best thing my parents did for us kids, but it never made us forget how important our language is, and te 'gana Tuvalu has had a huge impact on my life. I’ve proved that I can live in another country and still know my roots and what I stand for. I represent Tuvalu here in New Zealand by learning and speaking the language.”*

---

In the current day, over one-third (39%) of participants reported living in a multigenerational household. The most common household size was 2-4 other people (36%), followed by 5-6 other people (29%).

Nearly two-thirds (64%) of participants reported that speaking to children in te 'gana Tuvalu is common in their household, and a similar proportion (65%) reported they had spent time discussing Pacific genealogies and/or family histories in the past year.

**Figure 8 – Language activities in the home and with family**

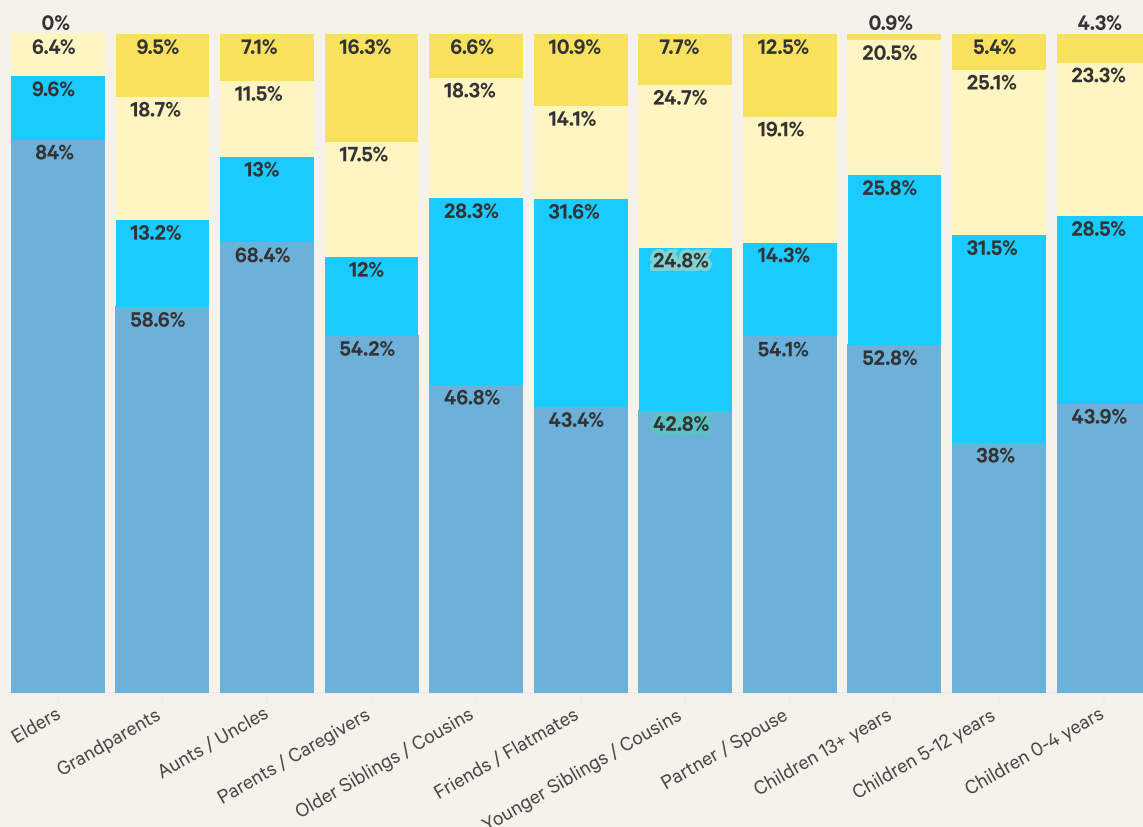


When asked how much of their communication in the home was conducted in their Pacific language(s) compared with English, all participants reported using te ‘gana Tuvalu at least sometimes with elders (100%). Smaller proportions did so as at least as frequently with grandparents (91%), aunts/uncles (93%), and older siblings/cousins (93%). Participants were most likely to report *never* using te ‘gana Tuvalu with their parents/caregivers (16%) and partner/spouse (13%).

**Figure 9 – Language use in the home and with family**

**Household Pacific language use compared to English:**

● Always/Mostly ● Equally ● Sometimes ● Never



### **Cultural activities supporting language use**

Regular family activities such as evening devotions, storytelling, and singing were highlighted as effective ways to transmit te 'gana Tuvalu at home, making language learning and use more natural and enjoyable.

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*“During devotion time, for example, you could only speak te 'gana Tuvalu – it is the best time to communicate with your children. After the prayers, you can ask them, ‘How did your day go? What did you do at school?’ If we talk properly to our children, they will share with us and speak in the language... Children will feel heard in Tuvaluan and when they feel heard, they speak it more.”*

---

### **Reduced consistency of language transmission to school-aged children**

Notably, reported use of te 'gana Tuvalu with children remains relatively high. “Never” use is reported by just 4.3% of households with children aged 0–4 and 5.4% with children aged 5–12. At the same time, 43.9% of households report always or mostly using Tuvaluan with children aged 0–4, compared with 38.0% for children aged 5–12. This is notable given wider concerns about language shift and decline.

While te 'gana Tuvalu continues to be used with children, Figure 9 shows that its use is less consistent than with elders and other adults. Children—particularly those aged 5–12—are less likely to experience Tuvaluan as the dominant home language and more likely to use it alongside English. This mixed pattern reflects a common interactional dynamic in which elders speak te 'gana Tuvalu while children increasingly respond in English, signalling a gradual shift associated with English-dominant schooling and broader societal influences.

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*“Our older generation values the language a lot. We speak it to our children, but the problem is they answer us in remix. This is the reality. It is the reality of life here where we are dominated by the English language.”*

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Fear of making mistakes and embarrassment can discourage children and youth from speaking te 'gana Tuvalu, especially if past errors have been met with laughter or criticism.

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*“Yeah, it’s that. Being embarrassed of pronouncing the word wrong. Like in our culture or in my generation, its common to laugh when someone makes a mistake. It’s something funny, something that holds me back is being embarrassed.”*

---

## Attitudes towards te 'gana Tuvalu in the home

*“Growing up, te 'gana Tuvalu was free and taught at home so speaking a lot of languages was the norm... I didn't have to try hard – I was comfortable and knew exactly who I was.”*

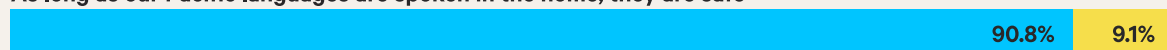
When asked about the condition of te 'gana Tuvalu, 91% agreed the language is safe as long as it is spoken in the home. Only a small proportion (11%) believed te 'gana Tuvalu is only important in the home.

**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**



## Parental attitudes towards language transmission

Parental attitudes play a critical role in language use at home. While some parents actively encourage te 'gana Tuvalu, many prioritise English for the social, educational, and/or economic benefits they perceive it will provide their child(ren). One participant highlighted their experience of this dynamic.

*“The other thing is our own attitudes. I'll touch a little on the family, because that is where the attitude came in that English is better than the Tuvaluan language. Because of this, my parents speak in English.”*

## Barriers to language use

Another participant highlighted how social and emotional barriers, such as a lack of safe spaces for learning and fear of judgment, can inhibit language transmission within families.

*“I hope Pacific people would stop discriminating against those who are not able to understand or speak their Pacific language. Many children of Pacific background are hesitant to learn or speak them because of this... I also hope that, in the future, Pacific parents create safe environments for their children speak and share the language in.”*



## Te 'gana Tuvalu in church

*“My Pacific language means a lot to me.  
It is a God given gift to who I am.”*

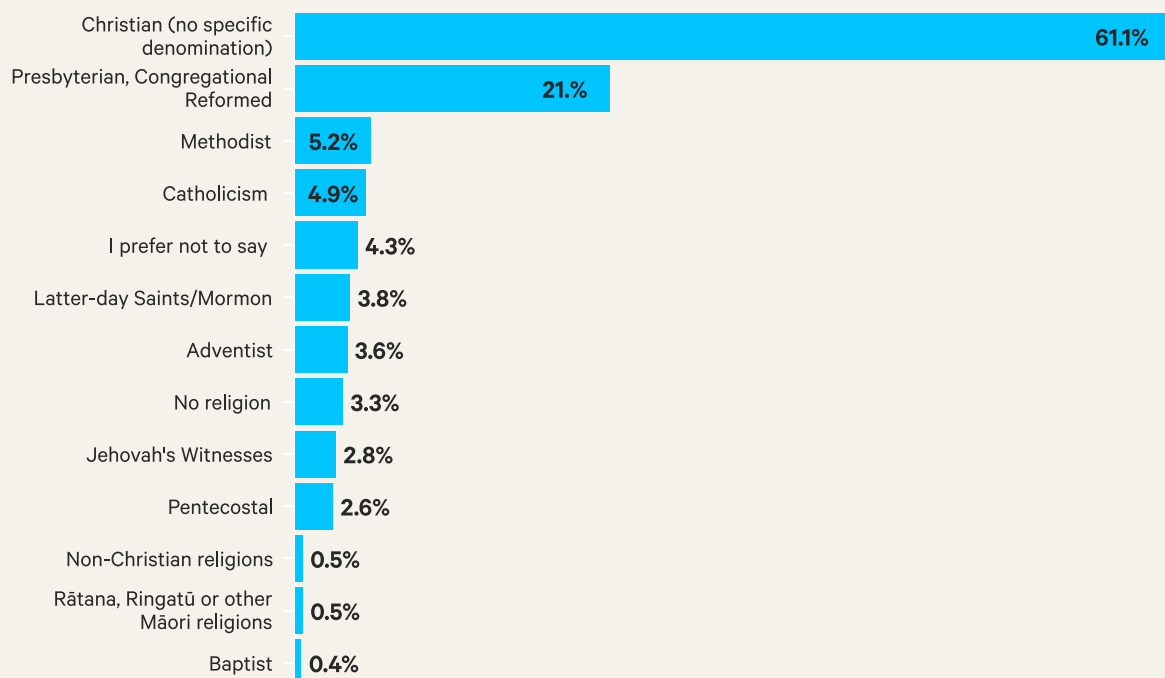
Churches play a central role in the lives of many tagata Tuvalu and are key spaces for language use and transmission. This section examines how te 'gana Tuvalu is used in religious settings and the attitudes of participants towards its spiritual significance.

### 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. Under two-thirds (61%) identified as Christian, with 22% specifying Presbyterian, Congregational, and/or Reformed denominations. Smaller proportions identified as Methodist (5%) and Catholic (5%).

Most participants (92%) said they had at least one religious affiliation, while only 3% reported no religion. A large proportion (87%) reported they attend church at least occasionally, while 56% do so on a weekly basis.

**Figure 11 – Religious affiliations among tagata Tuvalu**



## Pacific language use in church

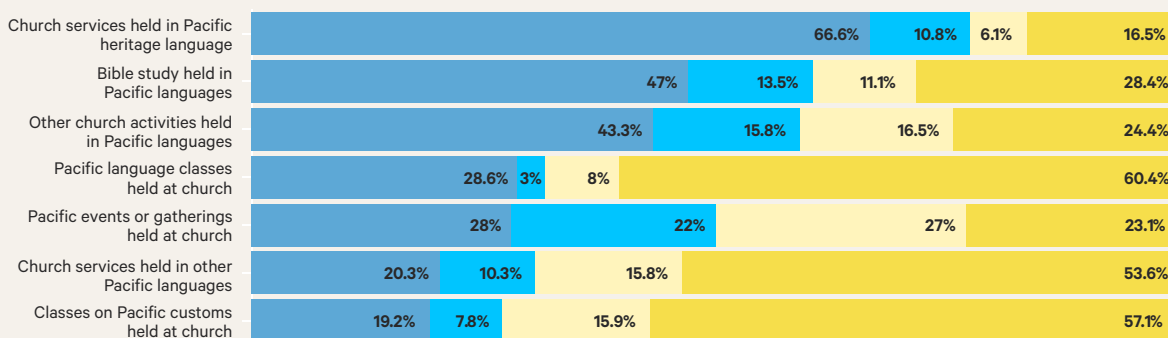
*“Like in Nanumaga, or Nanumea, we speak Tuvaluan there. At church, the service is done in Tuvaluan. English is hardly used, its mostly Tuvaluan.”*

Among participants who attended church weekly, around two-thirds (67%) reported that services were conducted in te 'gana Tuvalu. By contrast, fewer than half indicated that Bible study (47%) and other church activities (43%) were held in the language as frequently. Despite this, over three-quarters of respondents (77%) said their churches hosted Pacific events or gatherings at least occasionally.

**Figure 12 – Pacific language use during church services and activities**

**Church Pacific Language Connection:**

● Weekly ● Monthly ● Occasionally ● Never



Church activities such as Sunday school, Bible readings, hymns, and devotions were seen as important for passing on language and cultural values to children and youth.

*“The other thing we can strengthen our language with is our Sunday schools. From the age of 2 onwards, Tuvaluan is taught at these settings. We use our Tuvalu Bible for it. The exams are set up in Tuvaluan. This is a good place to support our language.”*

Some churches have introduced bilingual services to help younger members better understand and participate in proceedings.

*“I am encouraged to do bilingual services because, when the service is delivered in te ‘gana Tuvalu, the young ones do not understand. It’s fine as it is for their benefit.”*

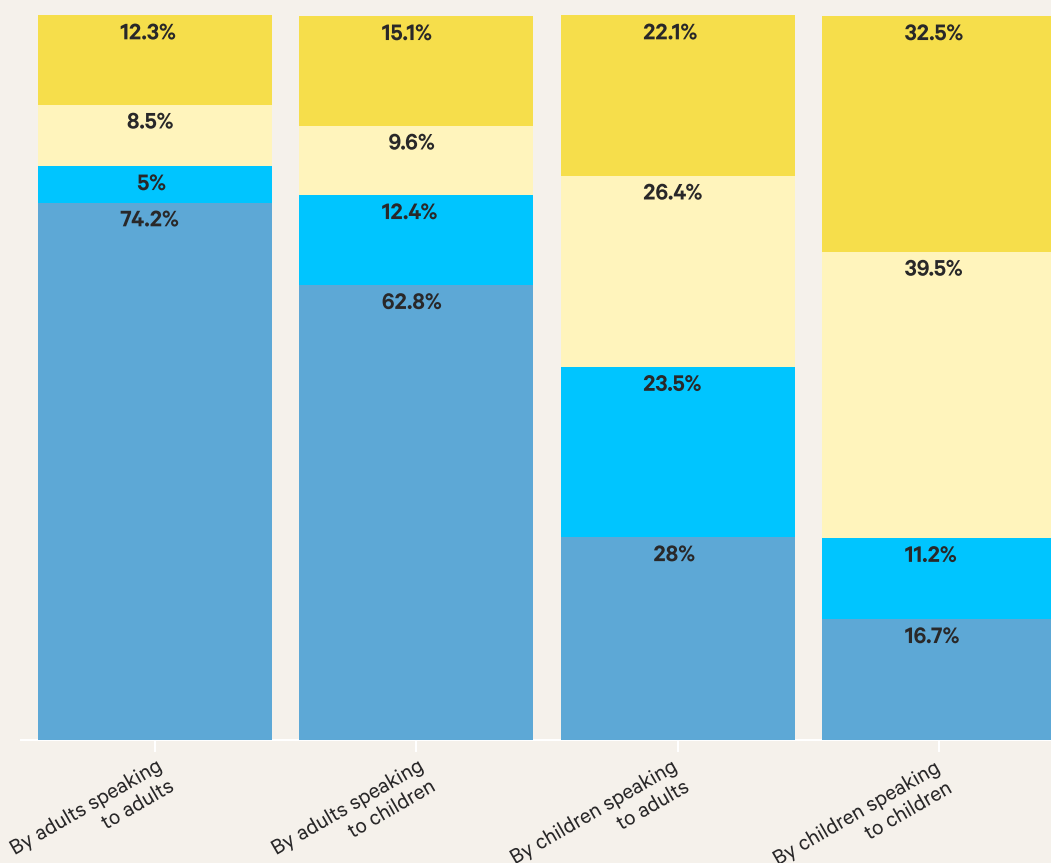
**Intergenerational language use at church**

There were significant differences between how people communicated with adults compared to children at church. Nearly three-quarters (74%) of participants reported hearing adults use te ‘gana Tuvalu with other adults always or mostly, while only 28% reported hearing children do the same with adults. Over half (63%) reported hearing adults use te ‘gana Tuvalu with children most of the time, while only 17% reported hearing children use it 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



*“Church is a good setting for our Tuvalu language. We speak Tuvaluan, nothing else, we do our speeches in Tuvaluan, everything in Tuvaluan. We often send the children to go out and play while we have our speeches, though.”*

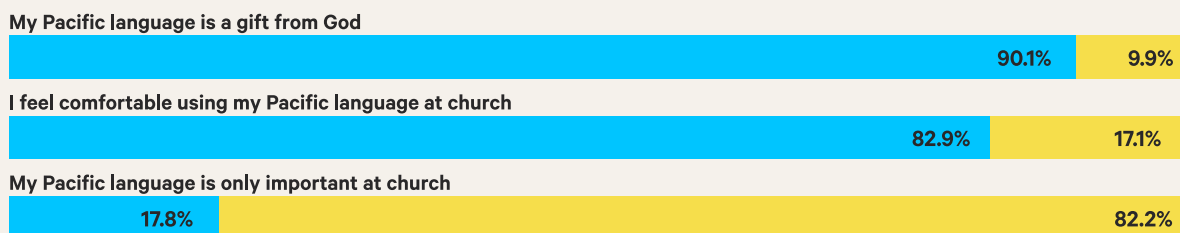
## Attitudes towards Pacific languages in church

Most participants (90%) agreed that te 'gana Tuvalu is a gift from God. A slightly smaller proportion (83%) reported feeling comfortable using the language at church, and less than one-fifth (18%) agreed te 'gana Tuvalu is only important in that setting.

Figure 14 – Attitudes towards Pacific languages in church

### Attitudes to Pacific languages at church:

● Agree ● Not agree



## Identity and belonging

Church is one of the few domains where te 'gana Tuvalu is consistently used and valued, and participation in church life fosters a strong sense of identity and belonging.

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*“Church helps because the service is done in Tuvaluan. someone gets up to do an announcement or share, it’s always in Tuvaluan. Even when I had a role in the church, I was speaking Tuvaluan. Every person in the worship team try to pray in Tuvaluan.”*

---

## Church as a platform for language revitalisation

There was a strong belief that church can and should play a leading role in language maintenance and revitalisation through programmes, resources, and encouraging everyday use of te 'gana Tuvalu.

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*“Church helps because the service is done in Tuvaluan. When someone gets up to do an announcement or share, it’s always in Tuvaluan. Even when I had a role in the church, I was speaking Tuvaluan. Every person in the worship team try to pray in Tuvaluan.”*

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## Te 'gana Tuvalu in education settings

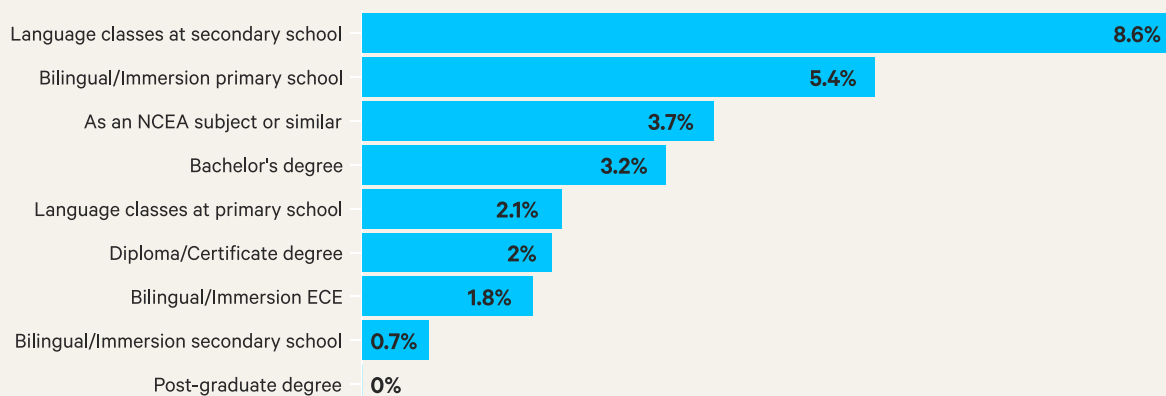
*“It [would be] great if all Pacific languages are taught in Aotearoa schools for the sake of the future generations in New Zealand and saving our Pacific languages.”*

Education is critical to language learning and use. This section explores participants' experiences with Pacific language education, their attitudes towards bilingual schooling, and the perceived importance of English in academic success.

### Pacific language education experiences

Just under a quarter (24%) of tagata Tuvalu participants reported having engaged in some form of Pacific language education in New Zealand. Of this proportion, the most common forms were language classes at secondary school (9%) and bilingual or immersion primary school (5%).

**Figure 15 – Tagata Tuvalu participation in Pacific language education**



Te 'gana Tuvalu is not currently taught as a subject in New Zealand schools, unlike other Pacific languages such as gagana Samoa, lea faka-Tonga, vagahau Niue, and gagana Tokelau. As a result, some young tagata Tuvalu have opted to learn gagana Samoa due to its linguistic similarities to te 'gana Tuvalu.

*“The language taught at school is Samoan, but it would be good if we had our Tuvalu language taught as well – that would be good for our Tuvaluan students.”*

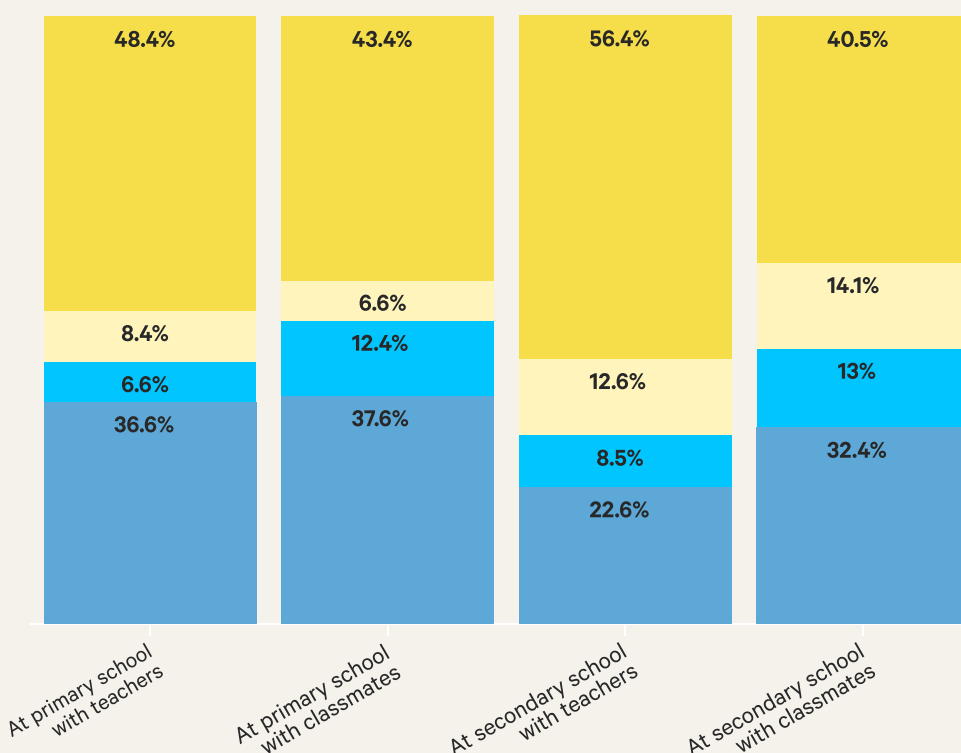
## Pacific language use in schools

Participants’ use of te ‘gana Tuvalu in education was moderate compared to other settings. When asked how often conversations were conducted in te ‘gana Tuvalu at primary school, over half reported they used the language at least sometimes with teachers (52%) and classmates (57%). The results were more varied at secondary school, with a smaller proportion of participants reporting using the language at least sometimes with teachers (44%) compared to classmates (60%).

**Figure 16 – Pacific language use at primary and secondary schools**

**Pacific language use at NZ schools compared to English:**

● Always/Mostly ● Equally ● Sometimes ● Never



## Attitudes towards Pacific languages in education

*“It would be good if our teachers had opportunities to teach te ‘gana Tuvalu alongside other Pacific languages in schools.”*

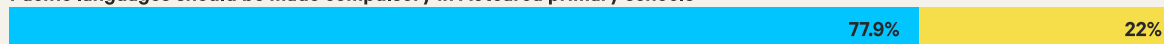
Over three-quarters (78%) of participants agreed that Pacific languages should be made compulsory in New Zealand primary schools, and 58% felt comfortable using their language(s) in school. Only 5% agreed with the statement ‘in Aotearoa, you don’t need to learn your Pacific languages: English is enough’.

**Figure 17 – Attitudes towards Pacific languages in schools**

Attitudes to Pacific languages in NZ schools:

● Agree ● Not agree

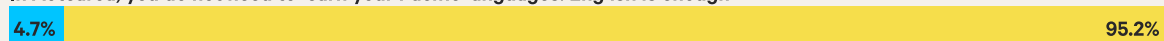
Pacific languages should be made compulsory in Aotearoa primary schools



I felt comfortable using my Pacific language(s) in school



In Aotearoa, you do not need to learn your Pacific languages: English is enough



High proportions of participants reported they would send their child(ren) to ECE (86%), primary (90%), and secondary schools (90%) where they could be taught in te 'gana Tuvalu if given the opportunity.

---

*“To me it is the preschools. If we have them in our community, it is one way of revitalising our language. I remember the Samanako preschool we used to have. That was good. It will be good if the Tuvalu community starts one again.”*

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**Figure 18 – Attitudes towards Pacific language schooling opportunities**

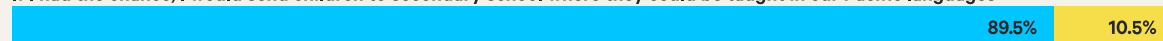
Attitudes to Pacific languages in NZ schools:

● Agree ● Not agree

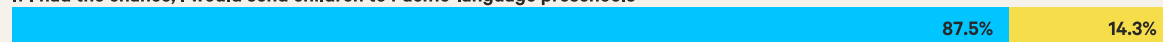
If I had the chance, I would send children to primary school where they could be taught in our Pacific languages



If I had the chance, I would send children to secondary school where they could be taught in our Pacific languages



If I had the chance, I would send children to Pacific-language preschools



### Barriers to te 'gana Tuvalu learning and maintenance

Mainstream schooling was identified as a major barrier to the maintenance and transmission of te 'gana Tuvalu. Participants observed that language shift often begins when children enter school, as it is at that point English becomes the dominant language of communication, instruction, and interaction.

---

*“The other thing is the school, the school system. That is another huge barrier. As soon as a child enters kindergarten, it is English, English, English all the way from then to the workplace.”*

---

## **Prioritisation of English**

Participants reflected on the societal and familial prioritisation of English, often at the expense of te 'gana Tuvalu. This was especially evident among newer migrants who view English as the only pathway to success in New Zealand.

---

*“To them you are smart if you speak the English language. That is their attitude. I do not like the attitudes of Tuvaluans who come from Tuvalu wanting their children to quickly learn English because Tuvaluan does not get you anywhere in school. I see this attitude especially in those who have just arrived from Tuvalu.”*

---



## Te 'gana Tuvalu in the workplace

*“I think that the government value our Tuvaluan language. About 6 years ago, I saw some posters in our workplace during Tuvalu Language Week – I saw the government pushing the importance of the Tuvalu language, and respecting the languages of others. That shows respect of our Tuvalu language.”*

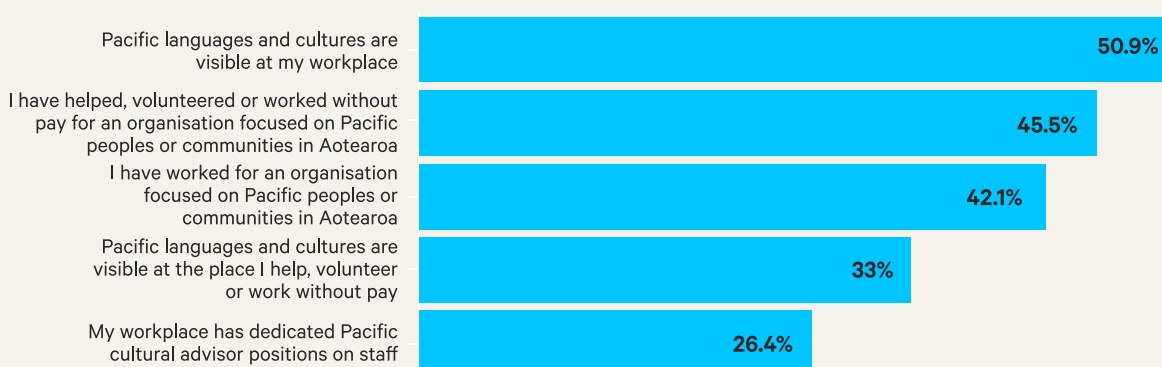
Workplaces are increasingly diverse, and language use within them reflects broader societal attitudes. This section explores how te 'gana Tuvalu is used in professional settings as well as its barriers to and opportunities for inclusion.

### Workplace experiences

When asked about their status in the labour market, three-quarters (75%) of tagata Tuvalu participants reported they were currently engaged in paid work, while 20% were involved in some form of unpaid work. Notably, 21% reported they had experienced ethnicity-based discrimination in the workplace.

Over half (51%) of participants reported Pacific languages and cultures are visible at their workplace, and a slightly smaller proportion (45%) reported they have helped, volunteered, or worked *without pay* for an organisation focussed on Pacific peoples or communities in the past. Less than one-third (26%) reported having a dedicated Pacific cultural advisor(s) on staff, highlighting a gap in formal cultural support available in workplaces.

**Figure 19 – Pacific language workplace experiences**



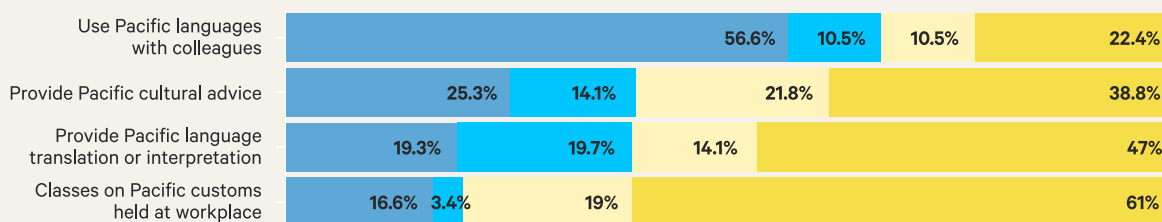
### Pacific language use in the workplace

Over half (57%) of participants reported using te 'gana Tuvalu with colleagues in the workplace weekly, while 88% reported doing so at least occasionally.

A moderate proportion (61%) of participants reported they have provided Pacific cultural advice in the workplace previously (even if not part of their job description), and a similar proportion (53%) reported they have specifically provided Pacific translation and/or interpretation support.

**Figure 20 – Work-based Pacific language activities****Workplace Pacific Language Connection:**

● Weekly ● Monthly ● Occasionally ● Never



In the workplace, tagata Tuvalu use their language to communicate, foster connection, and reinforce cultural identity.

---

*“At work, there are many of us Tuvaluans at work, as well as Tongans and Pakeha. When we are on our own, we speak Tuvaluan.”*

---

Te 'gana Tuvalu is often used informally among colleagues, but English remains standard for formal communication. Respect for others and workplace norms can influence language choice.

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*“At work, I speak English. Except sometimes when my Tuvaluan colleague comes, then I speak Tuvaluan. But most of the time, speak English. When she is there, but we have our other colleagues with us, we speak English out of respect.”*

---

### Attitudes towards Pacific languages in the workplace

Over three-quarters (84%) of participants agreed with the statement ‘knowing English is more important for getting a job in Aotearoa than knowing Pacific languages’, and a slightly smaller proportion (82%) reported they feel comfortable using te 'gana Tuvalu in the workplace.

Despite this high level of reported comfort, many participants viewed English as essential for career advancement, and consequently avoided using te 'gana Tuvalu in professional settings.

---

*“Career-wise, the attitude is you don’t need the Tuvalu language to get a job. Like, why would you need to speak it if you’re going to work somewhere that does not use the language.”*

---



## Te 'gana Tuvalu in and with Pacific communities

*“The home, church, and community are important pillars for our language that ensure children are proud of their culture and traditions. These do not exist without the language.”*

Community events and gatherings are vibrant spaces for cultural expression and language use. This section looks at participants' language patterns in community settings, as well as the importance of maintaining connections to Tuvalu.

### Connection to Tuvalu

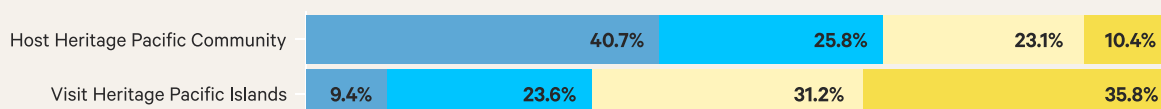
Participants were asked to indicate how frequently they visited Tuvalu and/or hosted community members from Tuvalu prior to COVID-19. The vast majority (90%) reported they had hosted community members at least once before, and 41% reported doing so at least once a year. Only 10% reported never having hosted community members from Tuvalu before.

Proportions of participants that visited Tuvalu were much lower, with only 10% reporting they visited at least once a year, and 24% reporting they visited every 2-3 years. The remaining proportion (67%) had visited one or twice (in total) or not at all.

**Figure 21 – Visiting and hosting community members from Tuvalu**

**Heritage Pacific Islands Connection:**

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



### Language use in Tuvalu

Three-quarters (75%) of participants indicated they always or mostly use te 'gana Tuvalu when visiting and talking to people in Tuvalu. Only a very small proportion (6%) reported they never use the language in these contexts.

Participants expressed concerns about the future of their language in the face of climate change, while also emphasising the importance of intergenerational transmission within this context.

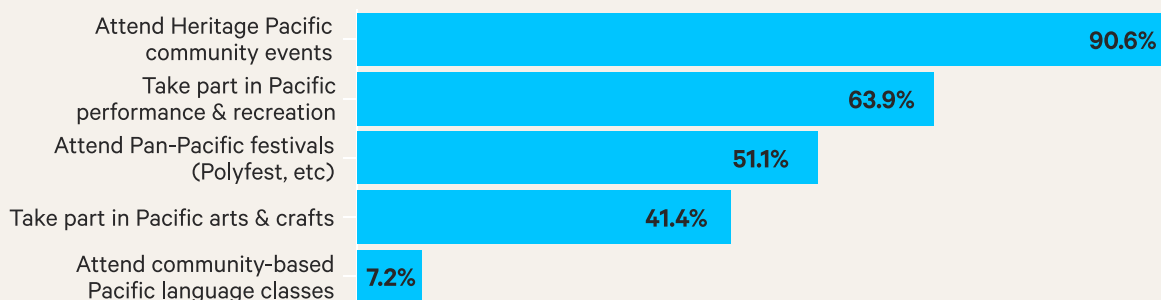
*“Especially with climate change, if our islands are lost to the sea, our languages will too be if they are not taught and spoken in our everyday lives.”*

## Language use in community settings

Community gatherings were identified as crucial for maintaining te 'gana Tuvalu.

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 Tuvalu community gatherings (91%), Pacific performance and recreation activities (64%), and Polyfest/ other pan-Pacific events (51%). A smaller proportion (41%) reported taking part in arts and crafts activities, and only 7% attended community-based language classes.

**Figure 22 – Engagement in community events, initiatives, and activities**



Activities supported by the Ministry for Pacific Peoples, including workshops, cultural projects, and Pacific Language Week initiatives, were viewed by participants as effective ways to revitalise and maintain te 'gana Tuvalu within the community.

---

*“We need a set of workshops to create a strategic plan for the long-term maintenance of our language... We need funding from the Ministry to hold these workshops so we can show at the end, ‘This is our plan for our Tuvalu language for the next 20 to 30 years’.”*

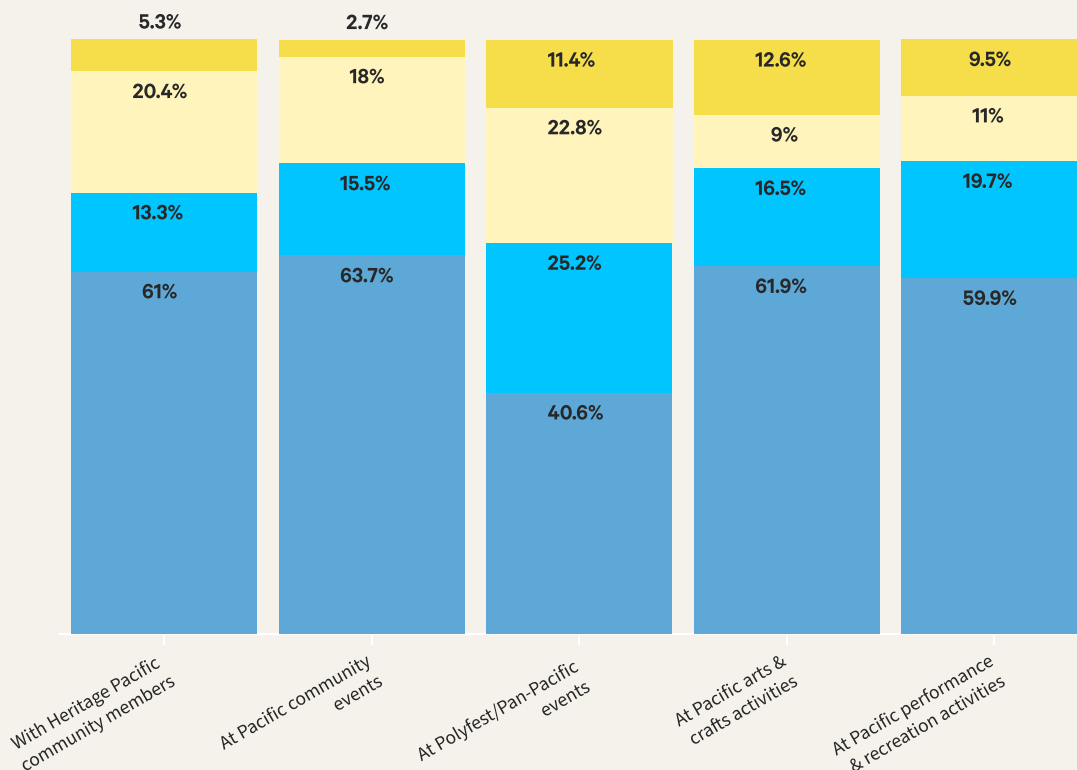
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Nearly all participants reported using te 'gana Tuvalu at least sometimes when taking part in Pacific community events (97%), performance and recreation activities (91%), arts and crafts activities (87%), and Polyfest/other pan-Pacific events (86%). The vast majority (95%) also reported using the language in conversation with Tuvalu community members more broadly.

**Figure 23 – Pacific language use in community settings**

**Pacific community language use compared to English:**

● Always/Mostly ● Equally ● Sometimes ● Never



Participants shared how, while elders and adults often use te ‘gana Tuvalu at community events, youth and children are more likely to use English. This highlights a gap in intergenerational transmission and potential language decline among younger generations.

---

*“The community needs to do things in Tuvaluan... Youth activities need to be more encouraged. They are doing their activities, games, teams in their gatherings, but they can’t stay away from speaking English. How can we fix this? We need to push our children not to use English in these settings.”*

---



## Te 'gana Tuvalu in media and broadcasting

*“I want Pacific languages to become normalised in Aotearoa, embedded in the fabric of society, thrive in public and private domains, in schools and community groups, in churches and on digital platforms.”*

Digital platforms and media are powerful tools for language engagement, especially among younger generations. This section explores te 'gana Tuvalu in music, social media, broadcasting, and creative arts.

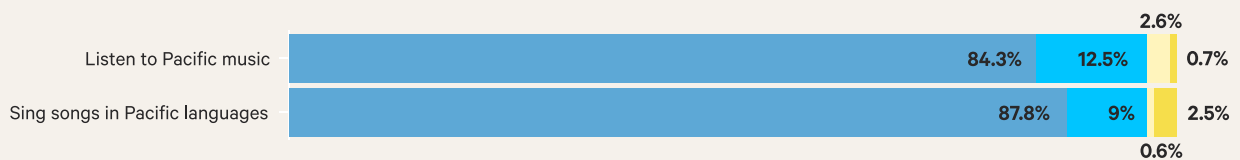
### Music

Music is one of the most prominent forms of media that supports Pacific language use. Nearly all participants reported listening to Pacific music (97%) and singing songs in Pacific languages (97%) on at least a monthly basis.

**Figure 24 – Engagement in Pacific music**

#### Media Pacific Language Connection:

● Weekly ● Monthly ● Occasionally ● Never



Participants shared how te 'gana Tuvalu music, shared online, is a popular and effective way for families and young people to engage with the language.

*“We had [Tuvalu] CDs and cassettes when they were young, and we always play them when we travel [in the car]... That is one of the things that ensured our kids speak Tuvaluan, the songs.”*

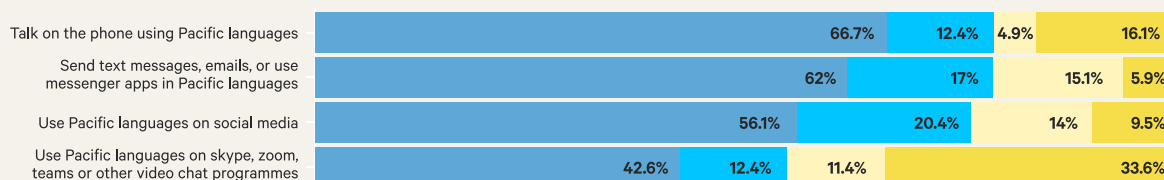
## Social media and telecommunications

Large proportions of participants reported using te 'gana Tuvalu at least occasionally while on the phone (84%), sending texts, emails, or messages (94%), or using social media (91%). Smaller proportions reported using it at least weekly in the same contexts.

**Figure 25 – Pacific language use over social media and telecommunications**

### Media Pacific Language Connection:

● Weekly ● Monthly ● Occasionally ● Never



Social media and other online platforms are widely used by tagata Tuvalu, especially youth, keeping the te 'gana Tuvalu visible and relevant in daily life.

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*“Lately, there have been many songs released on YouTube, some are old Tuvalu songs. Its good. That was one other place where they sing the songs, and they know they are Tuvaluans.”*

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## Broadcast and print media

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*“Our radio is not doing well; too much English is being used on it. When I was listening to the Kiribati and Fijian radio, no language other than English was used at all. We should have our radio all in te 'gana Tuvalu, with songs.”*

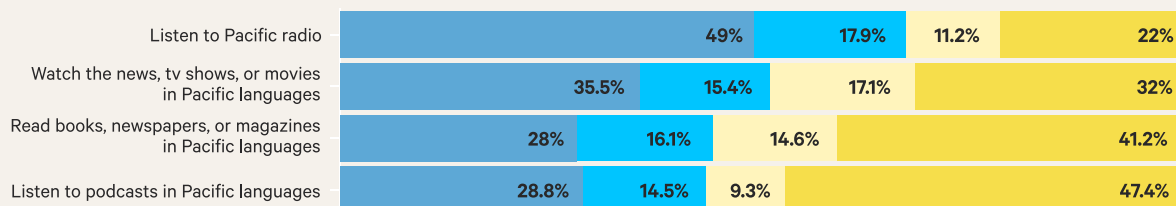
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Radio was the most popular form of broadcast media for participants and remains a vital medium for language use, especially for older generations, with over three-quarters (78%) listening to content in te 'gana Tuvalu at least occasionally. This was followed by: watching the news, TV shows, or movies (68%); reading books, newspapers, or magazines (59%); and listening to podcasts (53%).

**Figure 26 – Engagement in broadcast and print media**

**Media Pacific Language Connection:**

● Weekly ● Monthly ● Occasionally ● Never



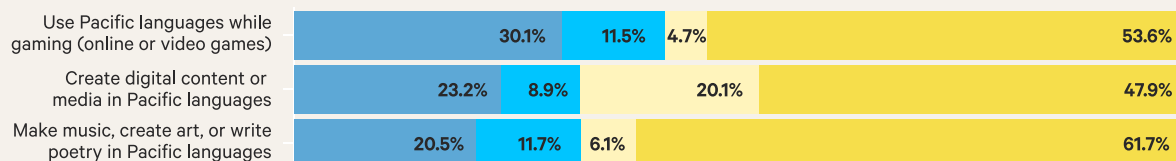
**Creative arts**

Participants reported low rates of engagement with creative arts compared to other forms of media. Just over half (52%) of participants reported creating digital content or media in te ‘gana Tuvalu at least occasionally, while 46% reported using the language while gaming, and 38% made music, created art, or wrote poetry as frequently.

**Figure 27 – Engagement in creative arts**

**Media Pacific Language Connection:**

● Weekly ● Monthly ● Occasionally ● Never



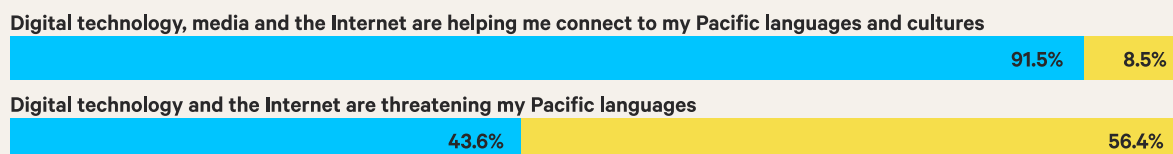
**Attitudes towards Pacific language media**

Most participants (92%) agreed that digital technology, media, and the internet help them connect to their language(s) and culture(s). Under half (44%) thought that digital technology and the internet are threatening te ‘gana Tuvalu.

**Figure 28 – Attitudes towards Pacific language media**

**Attitudes to Pacific languages and media:**

● Agree ● Not agree



While many participants viewed media and technology as important tools for language maintenance and revitalisation, some worried that the prevalence of English content is endangering te 'gana Tuvalu.

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*“Te 'gana Tuvalu is not that prominent in New Zealand, but it's good recordings are posted on Facebook. We, the young ones, are mostly on social media and we see these Tuvalu recordings there.”*

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# Te 'gana Tuvalu in the New Zealand context

*“In Tuvalu, our children answer us in Tuvaluan because the environment there is dominated by the Tuvalu language. Wherever you go, it’s the Tuvaluan language being spoken. Over here, Tuvaluan is only spoken at home or when we meet with other Tuvaluans.”*

This section considers how te 'gana Tuvalu is perceived and used in broader New Zealand society, including in relation to public spaces, service provision, and government engagement. It also reflects on the role of bilingualism and cultural identity.

## Wider society

Nearly all participants agreed that bilingualism is beneficial in New Zealand (95%) and that Pacific languages are an important part of New Zealand’s national identity (95%). Most (90%) reported feeling comfortable using te 'gana Tuvalu around non-Pacific people, and almost three-quarters (72%) believe it is important to learn foreign languages beyond English, demonstrating the value placed on multilingualism by tagata Tuvalu in New Zealand.

**Figure 29 – Attitudes towards Pacific languages in wider society**

Attitudes to Pacific languages and NZ society:

● Agree ● Not agree



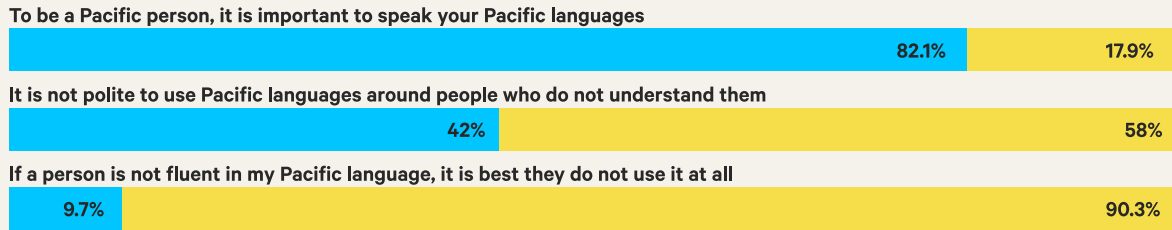
## Language, identity, and politeness dynamics

Most participants (82%) agreed it is important to speak your Pacific language(s) as a Pacific person. Under half (42%) felt it is impolite to use Pacific languages around people who do not understand them, while only 10% thought that if a person is not fluent in their Pacific language(s) they should not speak it at all.

**Figure 30 – Pacific language use in recreational settings**

**Attitudes to Pacific language use:**

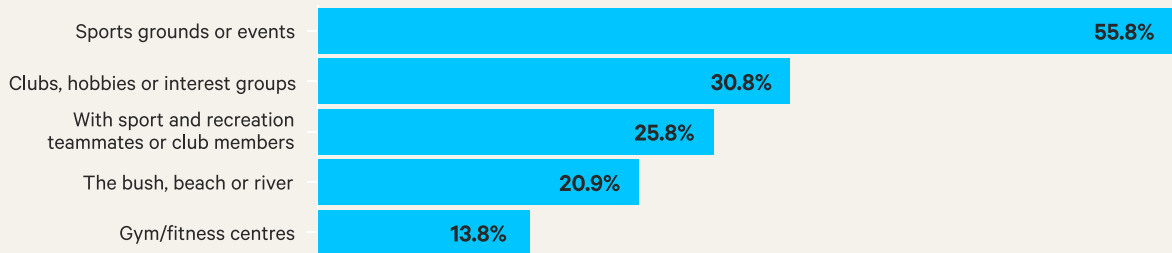
● Agree ● Not agree



### Language use in recreational settings

When asked where they had used te ‘gana Tuvalu in the past 12 months, many participants highlighted recreational settings. Over half (56%) reported using the language at sporting events, while 31% reported using the language in clubs, hobbies, or interest groups.

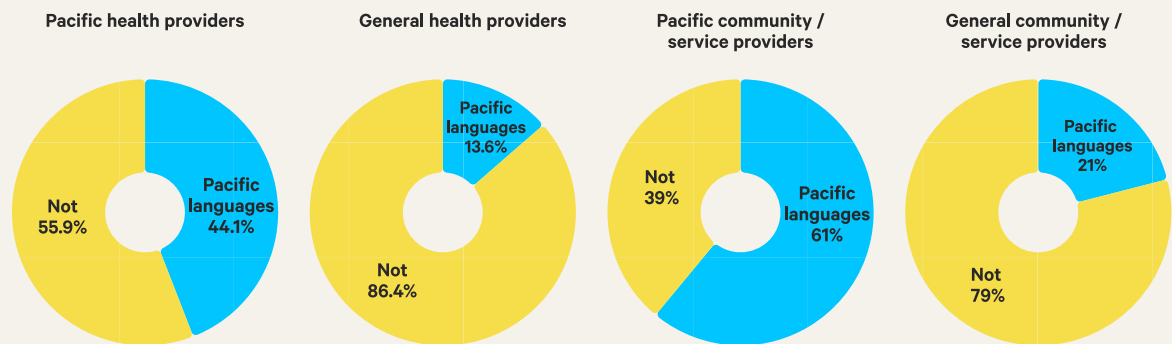
**Figure 31 – Pacific language use in recreational settings**



### Language use with service providers

Tagata Tuvalu were asked whether they had used te ‘gana Tuvalu 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 (44%) than general health providers (14%). Similarly, more participants reported they had used it with Pacific community services providers (61%) compared to general community service providers (21%).

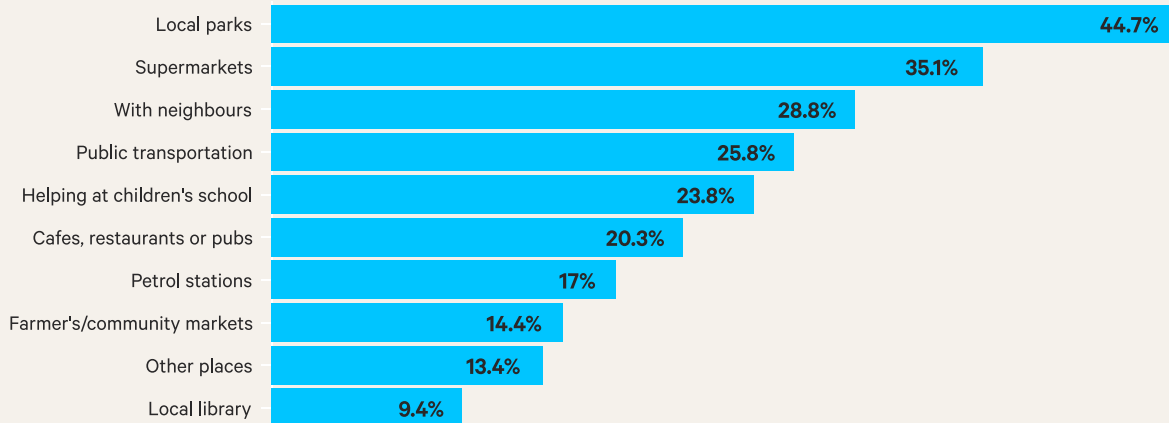
**Figure 32 – Pacific language use with health and community service providers**



## Language use in public settings

Reported use of te 'gana Tuvalu in public settings was most common in local parks (45%), followed by supermarkets (35%). Fewer participants reported use with neighbours (29%) or on public transportation (26%), with the lowest levels reported in community markets (14%) and local libraries (9%).

**Figure 33 – Pacific language use in public settings**



While many participants said they speak te 'gana Tuvalu in public settings, they observed that this is often contingent on the presence of other tagata Tuvalu.

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*“I do go around most of the time, I just go to the shops, but I speak Tuvaluan all the time.”*

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## New Zealand Government

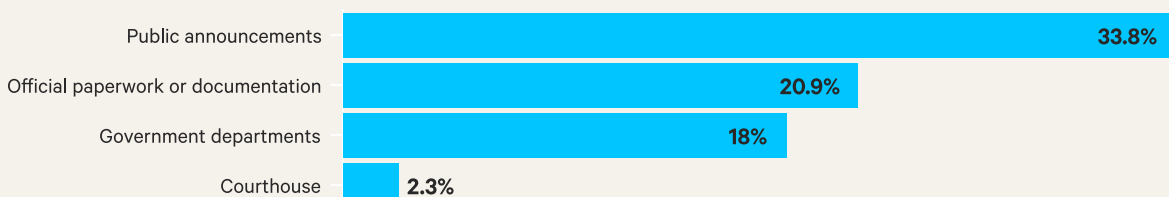
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*“We need to act now to strengthen our Pacific languages, and the Government needs to support this too.”*

---

Over one-third (34%) of participants reported having heard te 'gana Tuvalu used in public communications and/or announcements. Smaller proportions reported using the language when completing official paperwork or documentation (21%) and while engaging with the New Zealand Government (18%).

**Figure 34– Pacific language use in official and/or government settings**



## Attitudes towards Government support of Pacific languages

*“Government should continue to support and fund Pacific language programmes and initiatives.”*

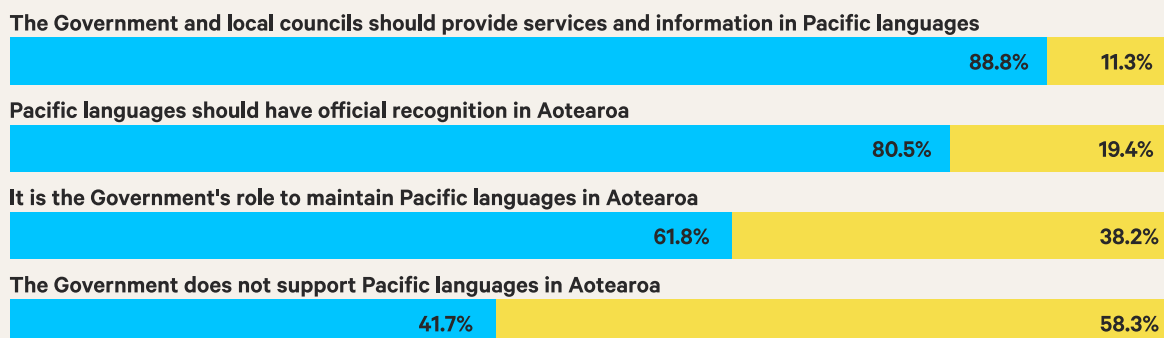
Participants were largely aligned in their attitudes towards the role Government plays in promoting Pacific language planning, maintenance, and revitalisation, with many calling for increased support, including funding for education and resources, and official recognition of te 'gana Tuvalu.

A large proportion (89%) felt that Government and local councils should provide services and information in Pacific languages, and 81% agreed that Pacific languages should have official recognition in New Zealand. Nearly two-thirds (62%) agreed it is the Government's role to maintain Pacific languages, while 42% thought the Government *does not* support them.

**Figure 35 – Attitudes towards Government support of Pacific languages**

Attitudes to Pacific languages and NZ Government:

● Agree ● Not agree



*“I hope that, one day [language learning] it is encouraged among all New Zealanders and that those of Pacific descent who are fluent support those who are trying to learn – much like with te reo Māori. I hope that, one day, Pacific languages become an everyday thing in New Zealand.”*

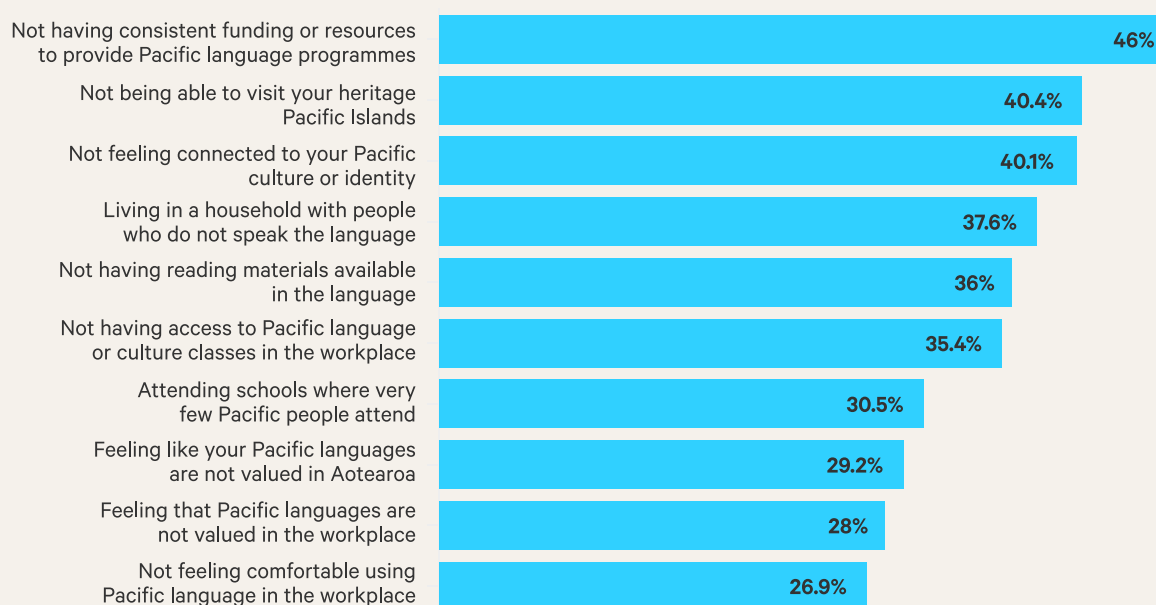
## Barriers and enablers

Understanding what helps or hinders the use of te 'gana Tuvalu is critical to effective language planning, maintenance, and revitalisation. This section presents the key barriers to and enablers of using, learning, and maintaining te 'gana Tuvalu identified by tagata Tuvalu participants, offering insights into the lived realities that influence language trends in New Zealand. These findings can inform targeted interventions and community-led strategies to strengthen te 'gana Tuvalu across generations.

### Barriers to using, learning, and maintaining te 'gana Tuvalu

Tagata Tuvalu participants were asked to identify what they considered to be the main barriers to using, learning, and/or maintaining te 'gana Tuvalu. Figure 36 highlights the ten most commonly reported barriers to language use and maintenance among tagata Tuvalu participants.

**Figure 36 – Reported barriers to using, learning, and maintaining te 'gana Tuvalu**



The most common barriers reported were inconsistent funding and resourcing to provide Pacific language programmes (46%), not being able to visit Tuvalu (40%) and not feeling connected to their Pacific culture and identity (40%). Similar proportions of participants reported other barriers such as: living in a household with people who do not speak te 'gana Tuvalu (38%) and not having reading materials available in the language (36%).

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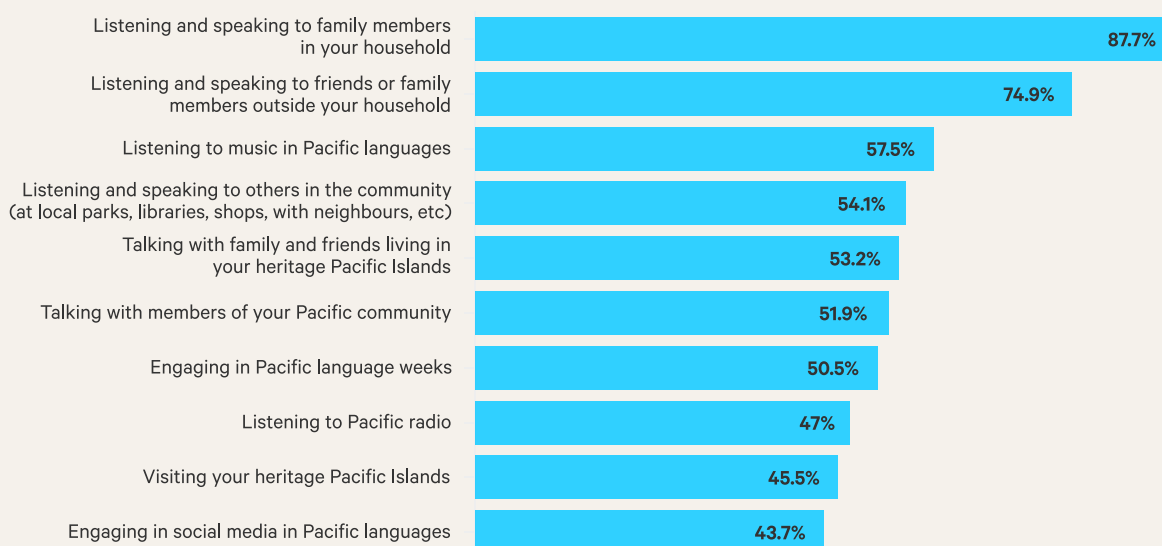
*“I see the value and importance of children and adults being able to speak and communicate in their Pacific languages. It is never too late to learn. I am thankful to the New Zealand government for providing funding for Pacific languages that are in decline. I am also grateful to those working hard to create opportunities for people to connect with their Pacific identities with cultural events and learning.”*

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## Enablers of using, learning, and maintaining te ‘gana Tuvalu

Participants were also asked to identify what they considered to be the main enablers of using, learning, and/or maintaining te ‘gana Tuvalu. Figure 37 highlights the ten most commonly reported enablers of language use and maintenance among tagata Tuvalu participants.

**Figure 37 – Reported enablers of using, learning, and maintaining te ‘gana Tuvalu**




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*“Your Pacific language forms the foundations of understanding yourself and your heritage. As a New Zealand-born Pacific Islander, I feel a gap in my being as my Pacific language skills are not strong. However, in the past few years, my Pacific language knowledge and skills have increased – mainly through the regular use and encouragement.”*

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The most common enabler reported was participants listening and speaking te 'gana Tuvalu with family members in their household (88%). Other notable enablers were: listening to and speaking te 'gana Tuvalu with friends or family members *outside* the household (75%); listening to music in the language (58%); listening and speaking the language in the community (54%); and talking with family and friends living in Tuvalu (53%).

The barriers and enablers identified by tagata Tuvalu participants reflect a complex interplay between personal, cultural, and systemic factors. While challenges such as limited resources, institutional neglect, and cultural disconnection persist – family, community, and cultural identity offer a powerful foundation for revitalisation. The voices in this report remind us that language is not only a means of communication – it is a vessel of identity, belonging, and resilience. By amplifying the enablers and addressing the barriers, we can work towards ensuring that te 'gana Tuvalu thrives across generations.

# Conclusion

Te 'gana Tuvalu, alongside other Pacific languages in New Zealand, is at a critical juncture. The legacy of migration, assimilation pressures, and limited formal support has contributed to a decline in everyday use, particularly among younger generations, which in turn has endangered the language. Survival and revitalisation depend on the collective efforts of communities, institutions, and government to ensure the language is valued, spoken, and passed on to future generations.

It is within this context that the Leo Moana o Aotearoa Te 'Gana Tuvalu report was developed. Alongside the overarching [Leo Moana o Aotearoa Report](#), it provides a snapshot of the current state te 'gana Tuvalu, as seen through participants' use of and attitudes toward the language in New Zealand. It highlights the deep emotional and cultural significance of te 'gana Tuvalu, and the urgent need for its maintenance and revitalisation.

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 tagata Tuvalu 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 'gana Tuvalu and tagata Tuvalu. 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 and community

Though the home remains the most important domain for intergenerational transmission, use of te 'gana Tuvalu within it, especially with children, is declining.

#### Recommendations:

- Promote family-based language plans and home immersion strategies.
- Support intergenerational programmes (e.g., storytelling, cooking, crafts).
- Encourage parents to speak te 'gana Tuvalu daily, not just during Tuvalu Language Week.

### Expand education pathways and resources

There is strong demand for te 'gana Tuvalu education across all levels, but current offerings are limited. Without continuous pathways, language learning is fragmented and less effective.

#### Recommendations:

- Develop a language and culture curriculum with tiered levels (introductory to fluent).
- Establish te 'gana Tuvalu ECE centres, playgroups, and after-school classes.
- Provide scholarships and training for te 'gana Tuvalu language teachers.
- Create bilingual resources (books, posters, apps, dictionaries).

## Support community-led initiatives and events

Community events are vibrant spaces that foster language use and cultural pride. Regular activities and initiatives help normalise te 'gana Tuvalu and build confidence among learners.

### Recommendations:

- Fund community-led workshops, festivals, and cultural days.
- Create targeted events for youth and young adults (e.g., dances, debates, cooking events).
- Recognise and support local leaders and knowledge holders.

## Leverage digital platforms and media

Digital tools offer scalable and engaging ways to promote te 'gana Tuvalu, especially among youth.

### Recommendations:

- Develop te 'gana Tuvalu online learning platforms and language apps.
- Create culturally-grounded media content (music, animations, podcasts).
- Partner with broadcasters to produce te 'gana Tuvalu programming for children.
- Support digital storytelling and creative arts in te 'gana Tuvalu.

## 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 tagata Tuvalu can learn and use te 'gana Tuvalu:

**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 are 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 in this report prior to the release of the complete results for 2023 Census.

### Target Tuvalu survey sample

This table reflects the target Tuvalu sample for the Leo Moana o Aotearoa survey.

<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	
<b>Northern Regions</b>		
<b>NZ-BORN</b>	<b>MALE (#)</b>	<b>FEMALE (#)</b>
15-24 years	7	6
25-44 years	8	8
45-64 years	5	5
65+ years	1	1
<b>OVERSEAS-BORN</b>	<b>MALE (#)</b>	<b>FEMALE (#)</b>
15-24 years	6	6
25-44 years	7	6
45-64 years	4	4
65+ years	1	1
<b>Central Regions</b>		
<b>NZ-BORN</b>	<b>MALE (#)</b>	<b>FEMALE (#)</b>
15-24 years	2	2
25-44 years	2	2
45-64 years	1	1
65+ years	0	0
<b>OVERSEAS-BORN</b>	<b>MALE (#)</b>	<b>FEMALE (#)</b>
15-24 years	1	1
25-44 years	2	2
45-64 years	1	1
65+ years	0	0
<b>Southern Regions</b>		
<b>NZ-BORN</b>	<b>MALE (#)</b>	<b>FEMALE (#)</b>
15-24 years	1	1
25-44 years	1	0
45-64 years	0	0
65+ years	0	0
<b>OVERSEAS-BORN</b>	<b>MALE (#)</b>	<b>FEMALE (#)</b>
15-24 years	1	0
25-44 years	1	1
45-64 years	0	0
65+ years	0	0

### Final Tuvalu survey sample

The following table reflects the final survey sample.

<b>Total</b>	<b>152</b>		
	<b>MALE (#)</b>	<b>FEMALE (#)</b>	<b>ANOTHER GENDER (#)</b>
	<b>76</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>NZ-BORN</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	
<b>OVERSEAS-BORN</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>37</b>	
15-24 years	27	23	
25-44 years	26	29	
45-64 years	23	20	
65+ years	0	4	
<b>Northern Regions</b>	53	59	
<b>Central Regions</b>	16	14	
<b>Southern Regions</b>	7	3	



Ministry for  
**Pacific Peoples**

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

