

Long-term Insights Briefing 2025:

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

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



Ministry for
Pacific Peoples

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

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“Being Māori and Pacific is a superpower—our culture is rich, whakapapa strong”

Secretary's foreword

The choices we make today will shape New Zealand's future success. One of our greatest strategic opportunities lies with Māori-Pacific peoples, a community defined by dual heritage, bringing together Māori and Pacific knowledge systems and values. They are among the youngest and fastest-growing communities in the country, with a median age of just 15 years. This is more than demographics; it is a signal of where our future lies.

Māori-Pacific peoples bring cultural intelligence that has guided navigation and innovation across Te Moana-nui-ā-Kiwa for generations. These values are cultural strengths and strategic assets. They align with the needs of a future economy that is sustainable, digitally connected, values-driven, and globally engaged.

This opportunity is grounded in a living relationship between tangata whenua and Pacific peoples. Māori have long welcomed Pacific communities as kin, and this enduring connection provides a shared foundation for collective leadership and prosperity and reflects the kaitiakitanga demonstrated across generations.

This briefing reflects what we heard: aspirations for enterprise built on shared values, digital futures guided by Indigenous knowledge, and cultural intelligence that drives innovation, resilience, and influence across the Pacific.

Investing in Māori-Pacific capability is not only about inclusion; it is about unlocking resilience and prosperity for all New Zealanders. By 2035, these strengths can help our nation lead in ethical technology, climate solutions, and Pacific partnerships.



Gerardine Clifford-Lidstone
Secretary for Pacific Peoples
Chief Executive, Ministry for Pacific Peoples

December, 2025

Acknowledgements

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We also thank the Ministry's LTIB Expert Advisors and Matua Group for their guidance, Te Amokura Consulting for their expertise, and the public servants who shared their insights. Your contributions reaffirm the strength and depth of Māori-Pacific relationships and the commitment to building a future where these connections continue to flourish.

Disclaimer

These results are not official statistics. They have been created for research purposes from the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) which is carefully managed by Stats NZ. For more information about the IDI please visit <https://www.stats.govt.nz/integrated-data/>.

Access to the data used in this study was provided by Stats NZ under conditions designed to give effect to the security and confidentiality provisions of the Data and Statistics Act 2022. The results presented in this study are the work of the author, not Stats NZ or individual data suppliers.

Executive summary

This briefing examines Māori-Pacific peoples, those who share both Māori and Pacific whakapapa, and the opportunities their growth and leadership present for New Zealand's future.

Māori-Pacific peoples represent one of New Zealand's youngest and fastest-growing communities, with a population of around 94,000 and a median age of 15 years. Māori-Pacific peoples' cultural knowledge and adaptability are likely to shape social, cultural, and economic trends and climate resilience strategies in the coming decades, as rising environmental pressures demand responses that uphold identity and wellbeing. However, this group remains underrepresented in research and policy. Improving visibility and understanding is essential for inclusive, future-focused decision-making.

Without improved visibility, there is a risk that policy settings may not respond effectively to the needs and strengths of a rapidly growing demographic.

Nationwide consultation with iwi, community leaders, and young people highlighted aspirations for a future where language and culture thrive, young people lead confidently, and technology and data systems uphold cultural integrity and equity. These insights informed three long-term opportunities for government:

1. **Economic opportunity grounded in shared Māori-Pacific values** – Supporting education, entrepreneurship, and leadership pathways that connect Māori and Pacific economies and drive innovation.
2. **Data and digital futures led by Māori-Pacific knowledge** – Embedding Māori and Pacific worldviews in data and technology systems to improve inclusion, representation, and equity in a digital society.
3. **Cultural intelligence as a national strength** – Investing in Māori-Pacific language, heritage, and cultural inclusion to strengthen cross-cultural capability and leadership across government, business and communities.

Recognising and investing in Māori-Pacific potential is a strategic opportunity for New Zealand. Their growth and capability can strengthen national cohesion, economic resilience, and innovation. Climate change is a critical external driver shaping these opportunities. Rising sea levels, extreme weather, and resource pressures will disproportionately affect Māori-Pacific communities, influencing cultural resilience, economic security, and digital inclusion. Embedding climate adaptation strategies that uphold cultural integrity is essential to ensure Māori-Pacific peoples can thrive and lead in a changing environment.

Chapter 1

A shared journey

Purpose statement

The Public Service Act 2020 requires government departments to develop and publish a long-term insights briefing (LTIB) at least once every three years. They are intended to be a think piece on the future, enhance public conversations about long-term issues and meaningfully contribute to future decision-making by governments.

The Ministry for Pacific Peoples (the Ministry) is the Crown's principal advisor on topics relating to Pacific communities and supports government to make informed decisions that create better outcomes. In this role, the Ministry has identified a growing need to understand the evolving experiences of an emerging demographic, Māori-Pacific peoples.

Māori-Pacific peoples are a small but fast-growing population whose realities are not yet well understood by government or discussed in research. This LTIB explores how this dual heritage shapes identity, belonging, and opportunity in New Zealand, and what this means for future wellbeing, leadership, and equity.

Our approach

This briefing is shaped by the current limitations of available data about Māori-Pacific peoples. Existing public datasets, including government administrative sources, often undercount or misrepresent multi-ethnic Pacific populations due to the way ethnicity data is collected, stored, and reported. This LTIB therefore follows a predominantly qualitative approach, drawing from community consultations, iwi engagement, and literature, supported by insights from the 2023 Census.

This approach aligns with Māori and Pacific research traditions that recognise relational, qualitative, and narrative forms of evidence as valid and rigorous. It is also consistent with the principles established by Te Mana Raraunga (2018) and the Pacific Data Sovereignty Network (2020), as well as foundational scholarship on Indigenous data methodologies (Kukutai & Taylor, 2016; Walter & Andersen, 2013). While quantitative forecasts are outside the scope of this LTIB, the Ministry conducted an IDI analysis of Māori-Pacific outcomes to understand the current context. Qualitative evidence provides meaningful foresight and clarity on the long-term opportunities and challenges ahead.

Aligned with the Ministry's ongoing focus on improving Pacific data equity and the Pacific Health Strategy Te Mana Ola (Ministry of Health, 2023), the analysis reflects Indigenous data sovereignty values of context, collective ownership, and community-driven meaning. This ensures the insights are grounded in both Pacific and Māori worldviews and contribute to a more accurate and culturally anchored understanding of wellbeing for Māori-Pacific peoples.

Pacific peoples' journey to New Zealand

Pacific peoples share deep ancestral ties with Māori through whakapapa and origins linked to Hawaiki. These connections are grounded in centuries of voyaging across Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa, where skilled navigators used stars, ocean currents, and oral knowledge passed through generations to settle New Zealand and other Pacific islands. These cultural, genealogical, and spiritual bonds remain strong today, affirming Pacific peoples as kin to tangata whenua. Within this relationship, Māori and Pacific peoples often acknowledge each other as *tuakana* and *teina*, older and younger siblings, reflecting a reciprocal bond that continues to shape identity and belonging (NZIER, 2020; Sin & Ormsby, 2018).

Migration from the Pacific to New Zealand has occurred in distinct waves. Early twentieth-century movement was influenced by colonial ties, missionary networks, and aspirations for education and employment. Migrants from Samoa, Tonga, and the Cook Islands often entered as students, workers, and church leaders, and were welcomed into Māori communities through shared whakapapa and values (Sin & Ormsby, 2018). Post-World War II labour shortages accelerated Pacific migration, with workers recruited into manufacturing, construction, and service industries. This led to concentrated settlement in regions such as Auckland and Wellington, where churches, marae, and cultural associations became anchors for community life.

The 1970s brought economic hardship and the trauma of the Dawn Raids, when Māori and Pacific communities were disproportionately targeted in immigration enforcement. Oral histories and iwi consultations recall how Māori stood alongside Pacific families during this period, offering advocacy and protection - actions that deepened intergenerational solidarity (Sin & Ormsby, 2018).

Over the past decade, Pacific migration has continued through family, education, and quota pathways (Pacific Access Category and Samoa Quota), alongside temporary work schemes such as the Recognised Seasonal Employer scheme and Accredited Employer Work Visa. Pacific peoples consistently account for around 11% of new residence approvals, and RSE participation shows strong retention, with more than 70% returning after their first season—providing stability for employers and economic benefits for Pacific communities (NZIER, 2020; Sin & Ormsby, 2018).

Migration laid the foundation for Pacific communities in New Zealand, but it is no longer the main driver of changes in the Pacific population. As of 2023, two-thirds of the Pacific population were born in New Zealand (Ministry of Health, 2025). Interestingly, 40% of Pacific peoples in New Zealand identify with multiple ethnicities, with just over 20% identifying as both Māori and Pacific.

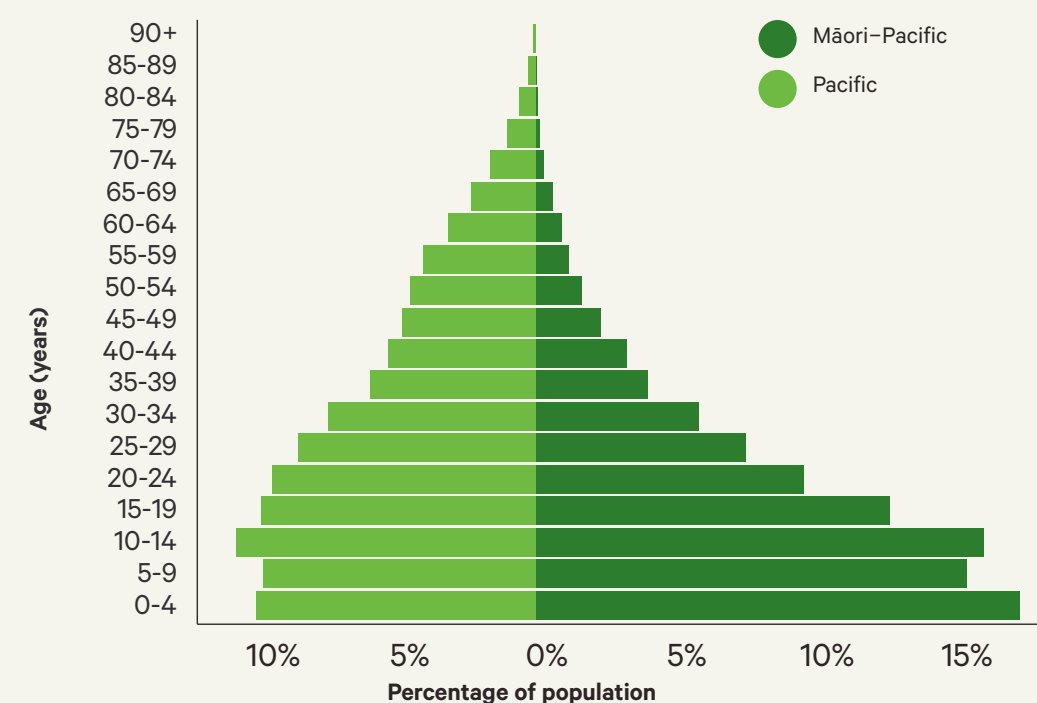
These recent developments indicate that Pacific communities are becoming increasingly interwoven with New Zealand and Māori. The emergence of the Māori-Pacific population is the clearest indicator of this and more should be done to understand this cohort.

Understanding Māori-Pacific peoples

Māori-Pacific peoples represent a small but rapidly growing population in New Zealand. According to the 2023 Census, 93,582 people identified as both Māori and Pacific, making up 1.9% of the total population. Although this cohort is numerically small, it offers significant leverage: it is young, fast-growing, urban, more likely to be multilingual, and positioned at the intersection of both the Māori and Pacific economies, creating strong conditions for future impact.

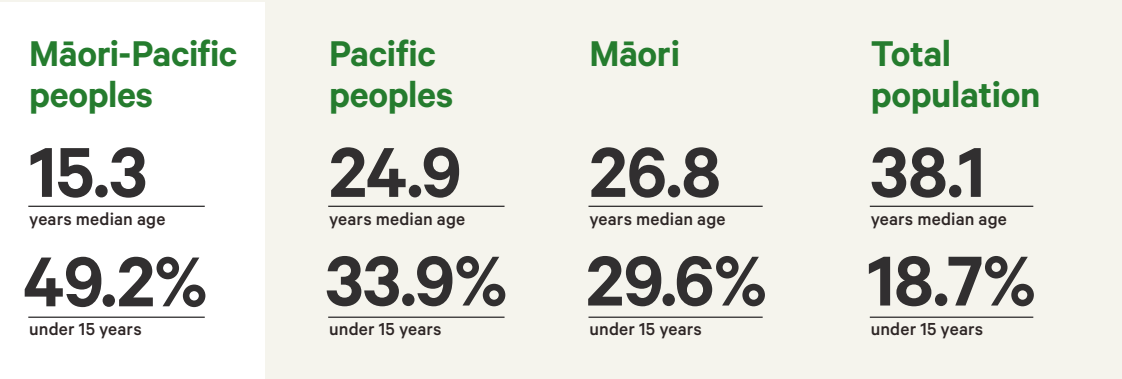
As more Pacific peoples and Māori-Pacific peoples are being born in New Zealand, both populations are relatively young when compared with other groups. This relatively youthful profile is highlighted in Figure 1, which shows the proportion of Pacific and Māori-Pacific populations across different age groups.

Figure 1: Age distribution of Pacific and Māori-Pacific peoples (percentage)



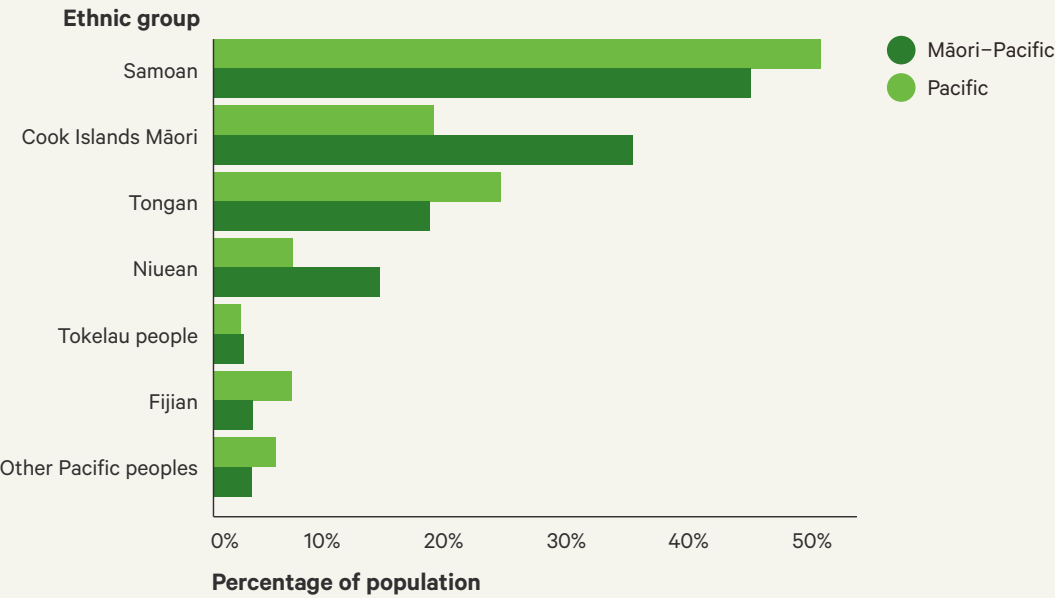
2023 Census Usually Resident Population. The Pacific peoples population includes the Māori-Pacific peoples population

Nearly half (49%) of Māori-Pacific peoples are aged under 15 years, with a median age of just 15.3 years, compared with 24.9 years for Pacific peoples, 26.8 years for Māori, and 38.1 years for the total population. This strikingly young age profile highlights a generation that will increasingly shape New Zealand’s future workforce, leadership, and cultural landscape.



Diversity is central to Māori-Pacific identity. The largest Pacific affiliations are Samoan, Cook Islands Māori, Tongan, and Niuean, with Māori-Pacific peoples more likely than other Pacific groups to identify as Cook Islands Māori or Niuean. Over half also identify with another ethnicity, most commonly European, underscoring the multi-layered and evolving nature of identity within this group.

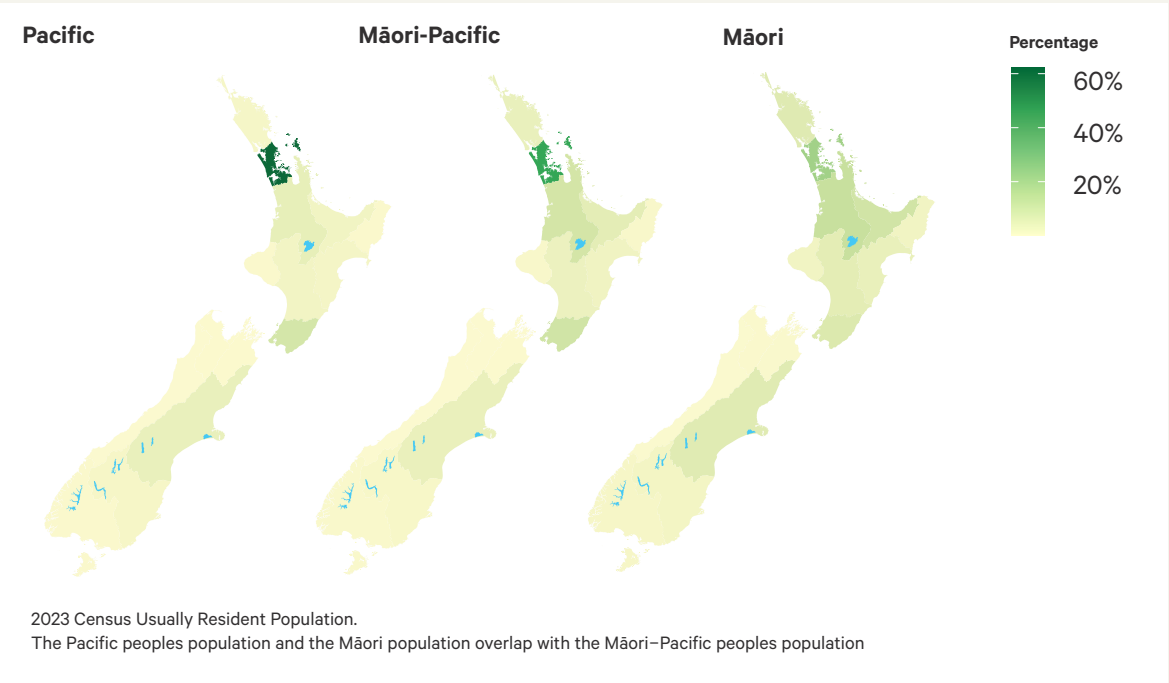
Figure 2: Proportion of non-Māori Pacific peoples peoples by sub-ethnicity compared with proportion of Māori-Pacific peoples by sub-ethnicity



2023 Census Usually Resident Population.
Stats NZ uses Ethnicity New Zealand classification 2005 V2.1.0 which categorises Tokelau people as Tokelauan

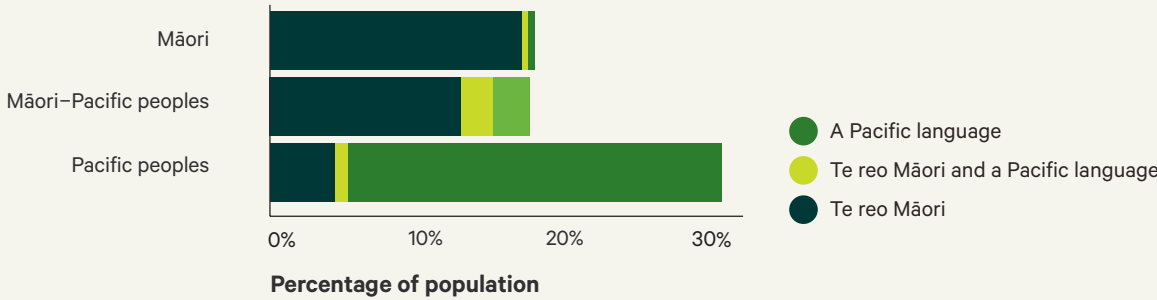
The vast majority of Māori-Pacific peoples were born in New Zealand (96%) and live in regions such as Auckland (46%), Wellington (12%), and Waikato (11%). These regions are also home to large Māori and Pacific populations, where Māori-Pacific whānau often serve as connectors between both communities, reflecting shared whakapapa, cultural continuity, and collective aspirations.

Figure 3: Regional distribution of Māori-Pacific peoples, 2023



Māori-Pacific peoples are around three times more likely to speak te reo Māori than a Pacific language. Among those aged 0–29 years, 16% can converse in te reo Māori compared to 5% in a Pacific language. This points to strong Māori language retention alongside shifting patterns of Pacific language use among younger generations.

Figure 4: Māori and Pacific languages spoken in 0–29-year-old Māori, Māori-Pacific, and Pacific peoples



2023 Census Usually Resident Population aged 0–29 years
Pacific languages includes Central–Eastern Malayo–Polynesian languages (excluding Māori), and includes Neo Melanesian, Papua Niugini Tok Pisin, Solomon Aelan Pijin, Vanuatu Bislama, and the Paupan languages grouping
The Pacific peoples population and the Māori population overlap with the Māori-Pacific peoples population
Languages are non-overlapping categories.

Stats NZ's *National Ethnic Population Projections* show that the Māori and Pacific peoples' populations will continue to grow, making up a greater proportion of New Zealand's ethnically diverse population and the youth population into the future. By 2043, Māori and Pacific peoples will make up significant proportions of the total and youth population (Stats NZ, 2025).

As this emerging Māori-Pacific population continues to grow and diversify, their unique perspectives and lived experiences offer valuable insights into the evolving cultural fabric of New Zealand. Understanding these dynamics will support future decision-makers to plan for a New Zealand workforce and society where dual heritage and cross-cultural capability are central.

Chapter 2

What we have learned

The consultation process

In late 2024, the Ministry began its first round of consultation to test the proposed topic of understanding Māori-Pacific identity in New Zealand. Through 12 in-person hui and nearly 400 public submissions, participants expressed strong support and shared valuable insights. Of the respondents, 18% identified as Māori-Pacific, while 66% identified as Pacific, and 13% identified as Māori. These findings shaped the direction of the Briefing, confirming the topic as *Shared Futures: Māori-Pacific identity in New Zealand*, and informed the development of a draft summary for further engagement.

From May to July 2025, the Ministry undertook a second round of consultation to deepen understanding and gather lived experiences. Regional engagement targeted Māori and Pacific communities, young people, iwi representatives, and intersectional groups, resulting in over 200 attendees and 244 online submissions. Notably, 66.5% of online respondents were Māori-Pacific. The Ministry also collaborated with government agencies, Pacific stakeholders, and subject matter experts. Quotes from community participants were anonymised and lightly edited for clarity, with informed consent obtained.

Consultation confirmed strong support for exploring Māori-Pacific identity and revealed rich and nuanced insights into lived experiences, aspirations, and challenges. This chapter distils what we heard into seven key themes. Each theme reflects both strength and challenge: the pride of dual heritage alongside systemic barriers; the dynamism of youth constrained by inequitable pathways; and the urgency to revitalise languages, redesign data systems, and bridge the digital divide.

Celebrating and strengthening dual heritage

What we heard

For Māori-Pacific peoples, identity is a source of strength and is a framework that shapes how they see and navigate the world. This dual heritage equips Māori-Pacific peoples with a unique perspective and the ability to bridge communities, grounded in values shared by both Māori and Pacific peoples such as respect, humility, and communal care. These values reflect the essence of the village or marae concept, which continues to sustain families even in challenging times, and are fostered in spaces where culture is celebrated through performance, worship, and community gatherings.

“Too Māori for my Polynesian peers, too Polynesian for my Māori peers... it can make me feel left out.”

This pride forms a strong foundation for navigating change, though it often sits alongside complex cultural tension and systemic constraint. Participants told us that navigating Māori-Pacific identity can feel like balancing between worlds, and systemic barriers often amplify this tension. Workplaces and schools frequently remain eurocentric, and processes that require individuals to choose a single ethnicity fragment identity.

“At university, I joined both Māori and Pacific associations. It gave me a place to be myself.”

Despite these challenges, generational change signals a more confident reclamation of dual identity. Younger Māori-Pacific peoples are reclaiming language and culture with confidence, adapting traditions while holding fast to their shared values. With the right support, these tensions can become catalysts for transformation.

Government research reinforces community perspectives, showing clear alignment between Māori and Pacific understandings of wellbeing. The Ministry of Health (2020) explains that Māori wellbeing is expressed through whānau ora, mauri ora and wai ora (strong families, flourishing individuals and healthy connections to land, water, air and housing). These values dictate that wellbeing is relational, where balance with the environment sustains the vitality of people and whānau. Likewise, The Treasury (2023) reported that Pacific understandings of wellbeing are inseparable from cultural identity and shaped by shared values such as family and community, spirituality, reciprocity and collective responsibility. The Fonofale model recognises the environment as a living context that influences identity and belonging, showing how Pacific peoples adapt while maintaining cultural norms (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001).

Within this context, Māori-Pacific identity, which embodies multiple worldviews, offers a unique opportunity to amplify cultural capital and translate it into greater social cohesion, economic potential, and wellbeing across New Zealand.

Māori-Pacific peoples carry a dual heritage that is both powerful and complex. This layered identity is increasingly common and offers a unique lens through which to understand belonging, leadership, and resilience in New Zealand. Rather than being a challenge, dual heritage is a strength; a superpower that enables connection across cultures and communities.

Empowering Māori-Pacific youth

What we heard

“Our kids will do greater things than we’ve ever done if they’re grounded in identity and faith.”

Māori-Pacific youth define success as a balance of cultural pride, language fluency, financial stability, and leadership opportunities. They aspire to strong, connected communities where identity is celebrated and intergenerational knowledge is valued and preserved. Education is central, not just as a pathway to qualifications but as a means of cultural empowerment and innovation.

“Sometimes, balancing study, family, and cultural responsibilities can be overwhelming.”

Young, Māori-Pacific people seek diverse learning opportunities that extend beyond traditional careers into entrepreneurship, creative industries, and technology, with digital platforms playing an important role in education and cultural expression. However, eurocentric education systems, financial hardship, housing insecurity, and fragmented community networks continue to limit access and opportunity. These barriers suggest that cultural identity, education, and wellbeing cannot be treated separately. Policy design must integrate them.

“Success looks like people learning languages without shame... healing shame across generations.”

Cultural disconnection, including language loss and shame in reclaiming identity, adds further complexity. These challenges present an opportunity to reimagine education as a system that embeds Māori and Pacific languages, revitalises culture, and supports pathways that enable Māori-Pacific youth to thrive in both cultural and professional spheres.

Insights from government research closely mirror what Māori-Pacific youth shared about their aspirations, education, and wellbeing. The New Zealand Council for Educational Research (Alansari et al., 2022) found that Māori and Pacific learners define success through learning experiences that are culturally embracing, aspirational, and future oriented. This highlights that motivation and self-belief are strengthened when education honours culture and identity. The study also emphasised the importance of strong networks of support and role models who embody success both within and beyond school, and the value of home-school partnerships built on mutual care, respect, and a shared vision for students and their communities.

Research from the Growing Up in New Zealand longitudinal study (Lai et al., 2023) echoes how housing stability underpins educational and social outcomes. The study found that housing and homelessness profoundly affect young people’s health, wellbeing, and development, with frequent moves disrupting stability, familiarity, and community connections that support learning. It also reported significant ethnic inequities, showing that Māori and Pacific youth are more likely to experience housing deprivation, insecure tenure, and poor living conditions; this is likely true for Māori-Pacific youth too.

Together, these findings reinforce that education and wellbeing are interconnected, and that equitable opportunities for Māori-Pacific youth require secure housing, culturally grounded education, and systems that strengthen family and community connections.

Removing Barriers to Economic Contribution

What we heard

“We need our people off the system and making their own tables, bringing their own money in.”

Māori-Pacific peoples aspire to economic self-determination grounded in shared cultural values. They aim for financial independence, successful businesses, and home ownership. Entrepreneurship is viewed as a key driver for sustainable futures, supported by culturally aligned business education and procurement models that honour Māori and Pacific ways of working.

“I’m always asked to do the karakia because I’m the only brown face in the room.”

There is strong interest in intergenerational housing solutions, community-led initiatives, and pathways into STEM and emerging industries, alongside scholarships and governance training. Yet, systemic barriers such as racism, underrepresentation, funding inequities, tokenism in workplaces, and exclusion from leadership spaces restrict progress and opportunity. Housing affordability and cost-of-living pressures remain urgent challenges.

“We are not problems to be fixed—we are partners in the solution.”

These lived experiences highlight the need for structural change that values Māori-Pacific knowledge and embeds cultural priorities into economic systems. Unlocking Māori-Pacific enterprise requires systems change that recognises cultural capital as economic capital.

Findings from government research strongly align with what our consultations revealed about Māori-Pacific economic aspirations. The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment and Te Puni Kōkiri (2023) affirm in He Kai Kei Aku Ringa: Māori-Crown Economic Growth Partnership that Māori identity in the economy is a key driver of success, with Mana Tuku Iho recognising the strength of Māori values, knowledge and innovation in shaping a prosperous future. Similarly, the joint Ministry for Pacific Peoples-Ministry of Social Development report *Pacific Prosperity through Social Enterprise* noted that Pacific entrepreneurship is deeply connected to self-determination and self-sufficiency, and that Pacific cultural capital plays a vital role in fostering innovation and enterprise. Together, these findings underscore that Māori-Pacific knowledge, values, and cultural identity are assets, providing powerful foundations for sustainable economic growth and contribution across New Zealand.

Māori-Pacific peoples have the capability to make significant economic contributions through entrepreneurship, innovation, and community leadership. Yet systemic barriers persist in housing, employment, and pay equity continue to block this potential. Addressing these barriers is critical to unlock inclusive growth and long-term economic resilience and prosperity for New Zealand.

Revitalising languages and cultures

What we heard

*“If we lose our language,
we lose the essence of what it means to be us,”*

*“Language unlocks culture. Concepts like vā or tūrangawaewae
can’t be fully explained in English.”*

Language is central to identity, belonging, and wellbeing for Māori-Pacific peoples, serving as a vital link to culture, whakapapa, and intergenerational resilience. Te Reo Māori and Pacific languages are seen as essential for transmitting values and concepts that cannot be fully expressed in English, and positive experiences often occur in immersion environments such as kōhanga reo, marae, churches, and cultural festivals, as well as through digital platforms that expand access to learning. This is especially important for younger generations and diaspora communities because it offers flexible, creative ways to engage with heritage languages.

*“It takes one generation to lose a culture
and three generations to bring it back.”*

Despite these strengths, many communities face the legacy of colonisation and policies that have led to language loss, shame, and uneven access to learning opportunities. Barriers include costly or short-term classes, limited availability for Pacific language lessons outside major centres, and cultural spaces that can exclude those lacking fluency.

*“I’ve felt that ‘I’m not Pacific enough’ in Niue spaces or ‘I’m not Māori
enough’ in Māori spaces because I’m not fluent in either language.”*

Participants saw a need for long-term, community-driven investment in language revitalisation. Suggestions included sustained funding, inclusive learning environments, and systemic change that embeds everyday visibility of Māori and Pacific languages across public life. For Māori-Pacific peoples, revitalising language is not only about cultural survival but also about healing, confidence, and future prosperity.

*“Climate change is not just an environmental issue, it’s a cultural, social,
and existential crisis for Māori and Pacific peoples. Our languages, our
lands, and our ways of life are at risk.”*

Communities also shared concerns that climate change could make language loss worse. As rising seas and extreme weather affect homes, lands, and cultural spaces, people fear it may become harder to keep language strong across generations. They told us that protecting languages must go hand-in-hand with protecting the places and relationships where language lives.

Government research echoes what communities have shared about the central role of language and culture in wellbeing and identity. The *Pacific Languages Strategy 2022–2032* sets a vision that “thriving Pacific languages build a prosperous Aotearoa,” recognising language as central to identity, belonging and intergenerational resilience. The strategy aims to increase both the number of speakers and the everyday use of Pacific languages while ensuring these languages are valued as integral to New Zealand’s national identity. It also identifies the need for long-term investment and community leadership to reverse language loss and support intergenerational learning, while highlighting the role of education systems and digital platforms in expanding access to learning and participation.

Similarly, Roskrug (2017) emphasises in *Measuring the Value of the Contribution of Māori Language* that *te reo Māori* is central to Māori identity, social cohesion and national wellbeing, describing it as a key part of New Zealand’s cultural capital that contributes to social, economic and environmental wellbeing when embedded across communities, workplaces and institutions. Research on immersion education further supports this view. Hill (2020) and Keegan (1996) found that Māori-medium and bilingual education strengthen both language proficiency and academic achievement, fostering confidence, cultural identity, and community participation. Immersion settings also enhance whānau engagement and intergenerational language transmission, contributing to broader cultural and social wellbeing (New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1996).

Recent research also reinforces these insights by highlighting emerging risks to language resilience. Brown and Middleton (2024) explain that climate change can force communities to relocate to places where their languages are not commonly spoken, which increases the risk of language shift and loss over time. This mirrors what participants told us about the need to protect both language and the communities and places that sustain it, particularly as environmental pressures intensify.

Language and culture are integral components of New Zealand’s social fabric. For Māori-Pacific peoples, language grants greater access to dual heritage, connects families and communities, shapes identity, fosters belonging, and fuels innovation. Revitalising and valuing both *te reo* Māori and Pacific languages strengthens the shared foundations of identity, confidence, and resilience that give Māori-Pacific peoples the tools to bridge cultures and shape New Zealand’s future.

Designing inclusive support for diverse realities

What we heard

*“Pacific identity is not one thing.
It is plural, fluid, fractured, and beautiful.”*

Consultation participants highlighted the richness and complexity of intersectional identities among Māori-Pacific peoples, where ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, and spirituality intersect to create unique perspectives and strengths. Participants described this diversity as a source of adaptability, enabling individuals to move between cultural spaces and bring valuable insights to leadership, education, and community roles.

*“I always end up being used for karakia,
waiata and the font of all things cultural.”*

Younger generations are leading the way in embracing fluid identities and cultural adaptation, signalling a shift toward greater inclusivity. However, systemic barriers persist, including official processes that force individuals to choose a single identity, tokenism, stereotyping, and exclusion from decision-making. Rainbow Māori-Pacific youth experience increased marginalisation, and those living with disabilities face accessibility challenges in cultural spaces.

*“Forms only let you tick one ethnicity.
What happens when your child has seven?”*

Consultation participants expressed the need for action that goes beyond symbolic gestures, including culturally safe spaces, inclusive language, competency across services, and policies that respond to the complexity of lived experiences.

Government research also highlights the depth and diversity within Māori-Pacific communities, recognising that intersecting identities shape both strength and struggle. Roy et al. (2020) found that young people with multiple minority identities, such as those who are Māori or Pacific and also Rainbow+ or living with disabilities, experience overlapping forms of stigma, exclusion and discrimination, which contribute to higher needs in health, wellbeing and access to services compared with youth who identify with a single group. At the same time, young people described their intersectional identities as sources of belonging and pride, finding empowerment through peer networks, self-respect and shared cultural connection.

Evidence shows that diversity creates real benefits when inclusion is genuine; when governments and employers support diverse workforces, and when leadership and teams are diverse, performance and productivity improves (OECD, 2020).

Systems can evolve to reflect the diverse realities of Māori-Pacific peoples, whose intersecting identities of culture, gender, sexuality, disability, and faith shape both strength and challenge. Recognising and valuing this diversity can foster more cohesive and productive communities, while supporting innovation and inclusion across society. Creating environments where Māori-Pacific youth can contribute and lead through their intersectional identities helps translate diversity into practical outcomes for social and economic wellbeing.

Improving data equity and visibility

What we heard

*“Support systems grounded in te ao Māori and Pacific values
don’t just benefit our people—they strengthen the whole
of New Zealand.”*

Māori-Pacific peoples envision data systems that uphold cultural integrity and reflect lived experiences. Participants called for governance and frameworks led by Māori and Pacific and grounded in Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Pacific values. Some expressed the need for disaggregated data that recognises dual and multi-heritage identities and incorporates qualitative insights to capture cultural context.

*“Using statistics from COVID to justify
bad truancy and literacy policies is disgraceful.”*

Current data collection practices were described as extractive and tokenistic, with aggregated statistics obscuring Māori-Pacific identities and contributing to policies that fail to meet community needs. Concerns were raised about deficit-based narratives and the misuse of data to justify harmful decisions, underscoring the need for transparent feedback loops and culturally grounded approaches.

“Statistics [should] reflect when individuals identify as bi-cultural Māori/Pacific or multi-cultural Māori/Pacific and not classifying individuals as one ‘main or dominant’ culture.”

Transforming data systems to prioritise equity, visibility, and accountability is seen as essential to ensure Māori-Pacific peoples are accurately represented and understood in government data, to shape solutions and investments that strengthen the wellbeing of all New Zealand.

Government research reinforces what communities have expressed about the need for data systems that uphold cultural integrity and reflect lived realities. *The Background to Te Wai Ora: Wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand 2022* report by the Ministry for Pacific Peoples and The Treasury (2022) identifies major data gaps in understanding Pacific wellbeing, particularly around intersectional and cultural dimensions.

The *Government Data Strategy and Roadmap 2021* identifies improving Māori data quality and governance as essential to building trust and upholding Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations. It highlights that iwi and Māori must have the data they need for decision-making, reinforcing that better, culturally grounded data is key to achieving equity and visibility in government systems (Stats NZ, 2021).

In Manukau, which has the highest concentration of Māori-Pacific peoples, the Manukau Urban Māori Authority observed that current data categories such as Māori data and Pacific data fail to reflect the lived realities of dual-heritage communities, underscoring the need for more integrated and inclusive data frameworks.

Visibility matters. Data systems must evolve to reflect the realities of Māori-Pacific peoples; without accurate representation, communities are overlooked and under-served. Improving data equity is essential for accountability, investment, and future planning.

Supporting digital inclusion for Māori-Pacific communities

What we heard

“Education should prepare us for the real world—teach coding, financial literacy, and digital skills alongside culture.”

Digital inclusion and technology were seen as powerful enablers for Māori-Pacific peoples, offering pathways to improved social, cultural, and economic wellbeing. Participants emphasised the need for culturally anchored digital spaces that support learning, community engagement, and access to essential services, alongside education that integrates coding, financial literacy, and digital skills with cultural knowledge.

“We need to look at opportunities that digital technology is creating and find innovative ideas that engage our communities from rangatahi up.”

Youth engagement through platforms like TikTok and Instagram was highlighted as a strength, reflecting optimism about blending innovation with tradition and using technology to amplify cultural pride. However, significant barriers remain, including connectivity gaps in rural and low-income areas, high costs, and inadequate infrastructure.

“AI will take over frontline jobs—how are we ensuring the future for our Māori and Pasifika families?”

“If our ancestors had access to 3D printing, they’d be making their taonga too... Our culture is fluid, we are water.”

Concerns about automation and artificial intelligence displacing frontline jobs add urgency to preparing communities for future disruptions. These insights underscore the need for systemic change that creates safe, mana-enhancing digital environments and strategies to equip Māori-Pacific peoples to thrive in a rapidly evolving technological landscape. Bridging the digital divide will determine whether Māori-Pacific peoples can participate fully in New Zealand’s future economy and digital democracy.

Research on digital inclusion reinforces these insights. The Department of Internal Affairs (2020) found that Pacific peoples in New Zealand face acute digital exclusion due to barriers such as limited computer experience, lack of device access and non-inclusive online platforms.

The Department of Internal Affairs (2019) also reported that Māori communities experience digital exclusion through unaffordable internet access, inadequate devices and a lack of trust in online systems, which restricts learning, cultural participation and economic opportunity. Based on this research and what we heard during consultations, these barriers are likely faced by Māori-Pacific peoples too.

As New Zealand and the world becomes increasingly digital, Māori-Pacific peoples remain disproportionately excluded from technological environments, limiting access to opportunity and innovation. Promoting digital inclusion for Māori-Pacific peoples addresses need and represents an investment in New Zealand’s knowledge capital, where Māori-Pacific leadership, cultural insight, and distinctive approaches to technology can shape a more connected, creative, and future-ready nation.

Chapter 3

Leading for 2035 – the Māori-Pacific bridge into New Zealand’s diverse and digital future

From the voices we heard during consultations, a clear picture emerged of Māori-Pacific peoples as a bridge between worlds, drawing on multiple knowledge systems that strengthen understanding and connection. Looking ahead, this capability positions Māori-Pacific peoples to lead innovation and cohesion, shaping a more prosperous and resilient future for New Zealand.

New Zealand’s competitiveness to 2035 will hinge on whether we can convert cultural intelligence into economic value, social cohesion, and regional and global influence. International evidence is clear: countries that systematically build cross-cultural capability outperform peers on innovation, trust, and productivity.

Māori-Pacific peoples embody this capability. As one of New Zealand’s youngest cohorts, they carry dual knowledge systems, multilingual potential, and lived experience bridging communities, a combination that can unlock inclusive growth, strengthen diplomacy, and futureproof our economy.

Scanning the horizon

The seven themes that emerged from consultations have been synthesised into three key insights to explore on the future of Māori-Pacific peoples in New Zealand:

- Economic opportunity grounded in shared Māori-Pacific values
- Digital futures led by Māori-Pacific knowledge
- Cultural intelligence as New Zealand’s point of difference.

These three insights are not just community priorities, they are national capabilities. Each reflects a pressing issue today and a pathway to resilience and innovation by 2035. They show where government investment can unlock inclusive growth, ethical technology, and cultural leadership.

External forces like climate change, demographic shifts, and rapid digital transformation, will amplify these opportunities and risks. Māori-Pacific peoples, as one of New Zealand’s youngest and fastest-growing populations, are positioned to lead this transition if systems recognise and invest in their strengths.



Insight 1

Economic opportunity grounded in shared Māori-Pacific values

Māori-Pacific peoples represent a fast-growing source of talent and cultural capability. Their approach to enterprise, grounded in collective resilience, stewardship, and shared prosperity, aligns strongly with future economic opportunities.

New Zealand has an opportunity to grow a more inclusive and resilient economy by recognising culture as a source of strength and investing in Māori-Pacific peoples who carry invaluable knowledge, values, and innovation as drivers of future prosperity. The Treasury’s *Background to Te Wai Ora: Wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand 2022* describes culture as a form of intangible capital that generates value by deepening trust, strengthening social cohesion, and inspiring innovation (The Treasury, 2022). In addition, through our consultations, we heard that Māori-Pacific peoples have the capability to help New Zealand achieve these gains through their dual cultural knowledge and flexibility.

Māori enterprise, grounded in whakapapa and stewardship, already contributes over \$32 billion annually to the national economy (Te Ōhanga Māori, 2023). Pacific enterprise in New Zealand is built on collective responsibility and community connection, and continues to expand through social enterprises, remittances, and networks of care that link New Zealand with the wider region (Ministry for Pacific Peoples, 2020). Together, these models show how value creation can be relational as well as financial.

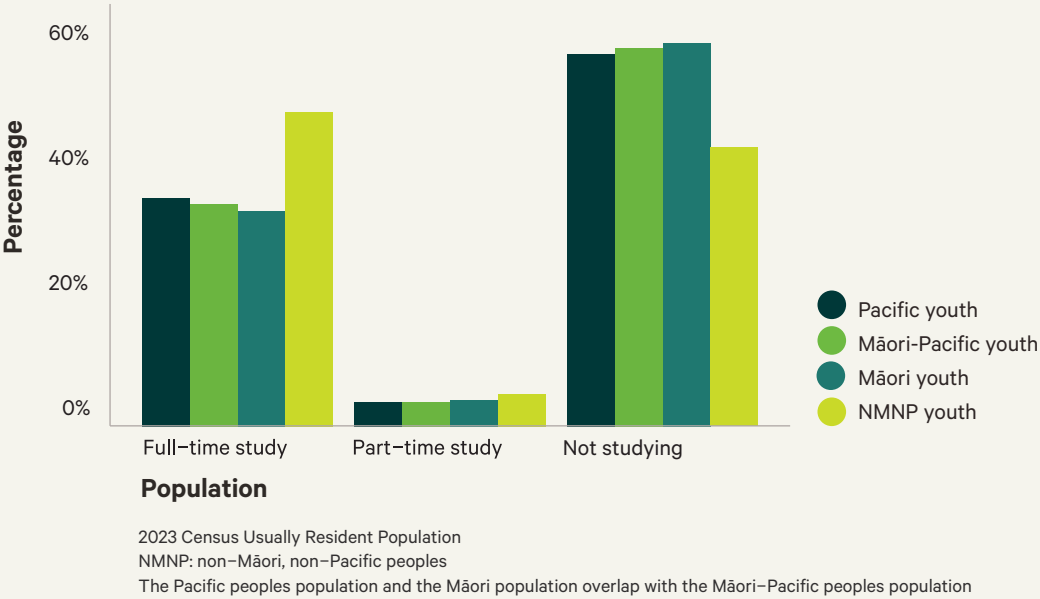
The Māori and Pacific economies are integral parts of New Zealand’s broader economy, and Māori-Pacific peoples can bring unique insight into how these systems can align more effectively and unlock further economic growth by leveraging shared values, thereby economically enriching the whole country. There is an opportunity for government to strengthen New Zealand’s economic resilience by investing in programmes that empower Māori-Pacific peoples to bridge enterprise, creating pathways that embed shared cultural values across education, business development, and regional growth strategies.

Implications for New Zealand

By 2035, Māori-Pacific entrepreneurs and leaders can be visible drivers of innovation, regional development, and Pacific-New Zealand economic ties. Backing their enterprise capability today builds a future economy that values both prosperity and purpose, strengthening New Zealand’s long-term resilience.

Failing to invest in Māori-Pacific education and career pathways could leave New Zealand with a less skilled, less inclusive, and less innovative economy that overlooks one of its greatest sources of future growth. Census data suggests, there is an opportunity to engage more Māori-Pacific youth in study and give them the tools to bring more unique innovations to New Zealand’s economy.

Figure 5: Engagement in full-time and part-time study for Pacific, Māori-Pacific, Māori, and non-Māori, non-Pacific youth

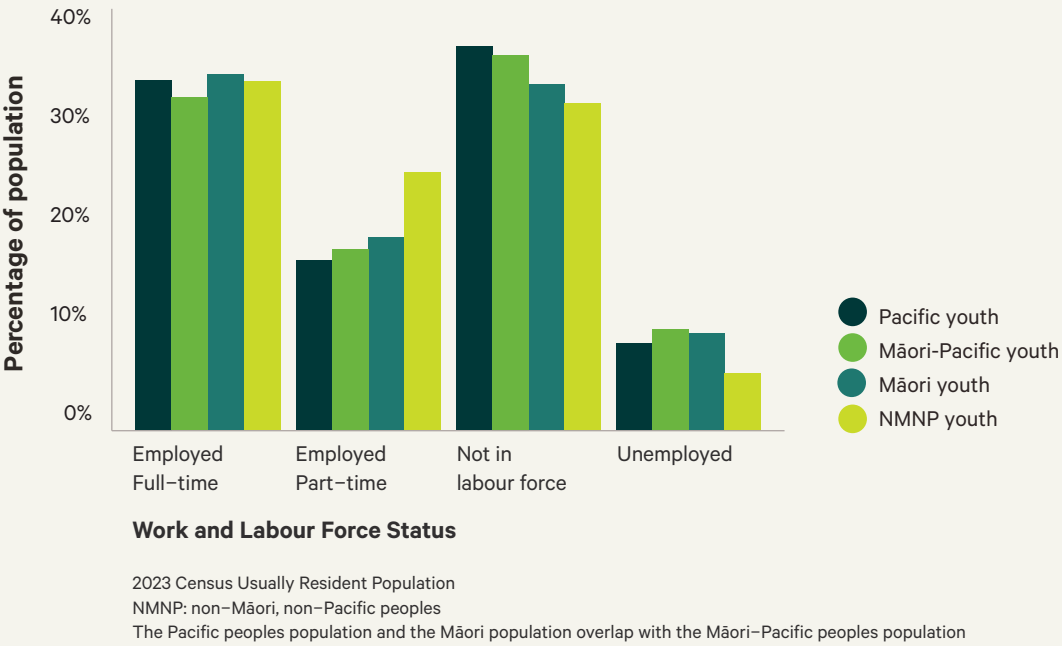


Government research and the Ministry’s consultation have revealed educational environments that can be culturally unresponsive, discriminatory, and disincentivise Māori-Pacific students from engaging. If no action is taken regarding this issue, Māori-Pacific youth could face undue barriers to education. New Zealand’s workforce could subsequently suffer from underutilisation of Māori-Pacific peoples and miss out on the invaluable cultural and business innovations they would bring.

Census 2023 revealed that Māori-Pacific youth may be underutilised in the economy, compared to other cohorts. While not a direct measure of underutilisation, the combined picture of rates of full-time employment, part-time employment, non-participation and unemployment underscores potential gaps in the effective participation of Māori-Pacific peoples in the labour market.

As we heard from consultations, Māori-Pacific youth are eager to participate and contribute more to the economy, but data suggests the pathways for them to do so are obstructed or not open at all. This potentially represents a significant economic loss in cultural capital for New Zealand, which would become more pronounced by 2035, if current trends continue. Failing to open Māori-Pacific education and career pathways could mean forfeiting the chance to build a more sustainable and resilient economy that reflects the full depth and breadth of New Zealand’s business potential. This may include missed opportunities for innovation in low-carbon industries, values-based business models, and regional growth.

Figure 6: Work and Labour force status of Pacific, Māori-Pacific, Māori, and non-Māori, non-Pacific youth



The opportunity

New Zealand has an opportunity to unlock significant long-term economic value by enabling Māori-Pacific youth to participate fully in the future workforce. Their dual cultural knowledge, adaptability, and collective approach to innovation position them to contribute to high-growth industries and strengthen national resilience. There is a particularly strong opportunity in the low-carbon transition. Māori-Pacific entrepreneurship is already grounded in stewardship and intergenerational wellbeing, which aligns strongly with the development of climate-resilient housing, circular economy practices, and green technology solutions. Supporting these pathways would reinforce New Zealand’s positioning as a clean and green nation, while creating prosperity that endures for future generations.

Expanding culturally aligned education, enterprise development, and early career pathways can help grow a future workforce that contributes cultural intelligence, relationship-based leadership, and values-driven innovation across regions and sectors. Procurement settings and investment approaches that recognise cultural capital can also help Māori-Pacific businesses gain early market access and scale, strengthening community wealth and resilience.

By 2035, sustained focus on these capabilities could grow a generation of Māori-Pacific entrepreneurs and innovators who lead confidently across Aotearoa and the Pacific. This represents an opportunity to build an economy that measures success not only through profit, but also through environmental stewardship, intergenerational wellbeing, and shared prosperity for communities.



Insight 2

Digital futures led by Māori-Pacific knowledge

Limitations of current data systems, including inconsistent standards, narrow framing, and limited use of culturally grounded approaches, reduce accuracy and usefulness of data (Ministry of Health, 2023). This contributes to persistent inequities for Māori and Pacific peoples, which are likely the same for Māori-Pacific peoples. Research shows that these inequities would be better addressed by improving the quality of ethnicity data. Based on expert opinions, ethnicity data can provide clearer insight into patterns of health outcomes, service access, and need in general (Loring et al., 2024). Addressing inequities experienced by Māori-Pacific peoples begins with addressing the quality of data available about them.

Upholding Indigenous sovereignty over data is essential to ensure Māori-Pacific peoples can define, control, and benefit from how their information is collected and used, aligning data systems with their values and aspirations (Kukutai & Taylor, 2016). For Māori-Pacific peoples, these patterns likely extend into the digital realm, where unequal access to digital education and infrastructure continues to limit participation in an increasingly data-driven world (Department of Internal Affairs, 2019; Department of Internal Affairs, 2020).

Strengthening inclusion and capability in these spaces will help Māori-Pacific peoples take an active role in shaping New Zealand's digital future. Research suggests that young people are not implicitly skilled in digital technologies; they need exposure to resources and tools that enable skill growth in this area (Livingstone, et al, 2021; Bennett, 2008). As a relatively young cohort, Māori-Pacific peoples have great potential to position themselves as culturally intelligent 'digital natives', but only if targeted programmes are delivered to ensure culturally responsive digital inclusion and education.

By building critical and creative digital capacities, Māori-Pacific communities could help steward data and digital systems that reflect integrity, accountability, and inclusion, contributing to more accurate data, stronger community wellbeing, and a more diverse and adaptable digital workforce for New Zealand. Improving how data is collected and making the digital transition more inclusive are ways to ensure Māori-Pacific peoples are visible, represented, and able to shape the systems that affect them.

Implications for New Zealand

If New Zealand does not invest in Māori-Pacific digital capability and leadership, it risks entrenching data systems and technologies that misrepresent or exclude Māori-Pacific peoples, undermining trust, equity, and the integrity of future public decision-making.

In current government data systems, Māori-Pacific peoples are often reported as either Māori or Pacific, which reduces visibility of their outcomes and limits understanding of their lived experiences. When data systems fail to capture the complexity of mixed ethnicity, classification errors distort the evidence base that informs policy, investment, and service design. This limits the ability of government to target interventions effectively and to evaluate whether outcomes are improving for those most affected by systemic inequities. Kukutai (2007) highlights that dual and multi-ethnic youth often feel discomfort when forced to choose a single ethnicity, revealing that current data systems oversimplify and erase the complexity and richness of multi-heritage. Kukutai argues for future data systems that allow for multidimensional and self-defined representation, ensuring all identities are seen and counted in ways that strengthen belonging and equity.

Similarly, without investment in Māori-Pacific digital capability, including coding, data science, and AI literacy, this young demographic risks being excluded from shaping the very technologies that will influence future public policy and service delivery (Kukutai & Taylor, 2016; Brown et al., 2024). Over time, this could widen social and economic divides and risk marginalising Māori-Pacific peoples from the digital transformation shaping New Zealand's future. As artificial intelligence and automated decision-making become increasingly embedded in public systems, these data limitations risk being amplified through bias in algorithms, where misclassification or under-representation of Māori-Pacific peoples could deepen inequitable outcomes across health, education, and social services (Brown et al., 2024).

If the status quo continues, the absence of Māori-Pacific perspectives in data and digital systems could perpetuate inequities, weaken the reliability of national evidence, and narrow the cultural and ethical foundations of technological development. Decisions could continue to be made using information that fails to capture the complexity of lived experiences, and opportunities to build trust, representation, and innovation will be lost. In this context, both the integrity of public data and the inclusiveness of New Zealand's digital transition are at risk, limiting New Zealand's ability to build data systems and a digital workforce that reflects and serves everyone.

The opportunity

Investing in Māori-Pacific digital capability and leadership creates an opportunity to design data and AI systems that embed values of accountability, collective benefit, and cultural intelligence at their foundation. Applying Māori and Pacific data sovereignty principles to emerging technologies can ensure that future systems recognise multidimensional identities, strengthening the visibility and belonging of Māori-Pacific peoples in national evidence and public decision-making.

Strengthening Māori-Pacific participation in data science, AI literacy, coding, and digital governance would support the next generation to become leaders in the technologies shaping New Zealand's future. As a youthful and rapidly growing group, Māori-Pacific peoples are well positioned to bridge cultural knowledge with technical innovation, ensuring digital tools are developed in ways that uphold mana, respect whakapapa relationships, and enable communities to define how their information is collected, interpreted, and used.

By elevating Māori-Pacific expertise in digital design, there is potential to create fairer and more adaptive systems where data reflects the complexity and richness of lived identities. Culturally grounded approaches to automated decision-making could help reduce bias, improve trust in public systems, and support more accurate and targeted policy responses across sectors such as health, housing, and education (Kukutai & Taylor, 2016; Brown et al., 2024). This would enhance both the integrity of government data and the ability to evaluate outcomes for those most impacted by inequities.

By 2035, sustained government investment in Māori-Pacific digital leadership and data stewardship could establish a new model for responsible technology in New Zealand. In this future, shared Māori and Pacific values guide how artificial intelligence and data systems are designed, governed, and used for collective benefit. Māori-Pacific peoples are not only represented in public data, but they are also active decision-makers in how technology evolves to serve and strengthen all New Zealanders.



Insight 3 Cultural intelligence as a national strength

By 2035, New Zealand will be more diverse, digitally connected, and globally interdependent. Success in this future will rely not only on technical skills, but on cultural intelligence; the ability to build trust across communities and groups, navigate different world views, and lead with shared purpose.

Research shows that cultural intelligence is both a social asset and an economic driver: when culture is understood as a form of capital that generates real social and economic value, it becomes a foundation for growth and innovation (Houkamau & Sibley, 2019; Bourdieu, 1986; Throsby, 2001). Building national capability in cross-cultural understanding strengthens trust, collaboration, and cohesion across communities and institutions (Ang, Van Dyne & Ng, 2015).

Māori leadership models grounded in whakapapa, shared purpose, and strong relationships show how values-based approaches to innovation can foster long-term thinking and collective resilience (Spiller, Barclay-Kerr & Panoho, 2019). These strengths reflect the central role of Te Ao Māori and te reo Māori in shaping New Zealand's national identity, as well as the country's ability to connect with and understand diverse partners globally.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Pacific Regional Plan 2024–27 extends this principle to Pacific cultures, recognising that New Zealand's Pacific communities bring vital cultural, linguistic, and spiritual knowledge to diplomacy and development, strengthening trust and cooperation across the region (MFAT, 2024). Together, this evidence suggests that Māori-Pacific cultural intelligence may become an increasingly important factor in shaping New Zealand's social and economic landscape going forward.

Through our consultations, we heard that Māori-Pacific peoples embody cultural intelligence. Their dual heritage equips them to move confidently across cultural, linguistic, and relational spaces, which is a strength that aligns with the country's future workforce, can strengthen geopolitical advantage particularly in the Pacific region, and supports New Zealand's evolving national identity. However, there are currently no programmes in place that recognise and foster the cultural intelligence of Māori-Pacific peoples and enable them to utilise it to their full potential.

Implications for New Zealand

If New Zealand does not recognise and invest in the cultural intelligence of Māori-Pacific peoples, the country may be less prepared for a future where cross-cultural capability is essential for economic participation, innovation, and diplomacy. Without support to activate this capability in cultural intelligence, New Zealand could miss key opportunities to build a resilient, future-ready workforce and ensure that all communities can contribute to shared prosperity.

Failing to strengthen cultural intelligence could limit New Zealand’s ability to express its unique identity both at home and across the Pacific. Our geopolitical position depends on trusted, values-based relationships. If Māori-Pacific peoples are not empowered in their role as cultural connectors and regional partners, New Zealand may struggle to uphold the depth of influence, cooperation, and cultural leadership required to navigate an increasingly interconnected and climate-affected global, and regional, context.

The opportunity

Increasing cultural intelligence will enhance New Zealand’s resilience and prosperity in a fast-changing world.

New Zealand’s relationships and influence in the Pacific rely on trust and shared values. Māori-Pacific peoples already uphold these through deep regional ties, lived experience across borders, and strong diaspora networks. Strengthening their cultural intelligence, including bilingual and bicultural capability, will bolster diplomacy, deepen regional partnerships, and reinforce New Zealand’s role as a connected Pacific nation that responds collaboratively to shared challenges.

Targeted investment in Māori-Pacific cultural leadership unlocks new opportunities for innovation, productivity, and enterprise. Relational capability and cross-cultural fluency help New Zealand businesses engage effectively with diverse markets, support more inclusive economic growth, and position cultural knowledge as a source of competitive value. Embedding these strengths in education and leadership pathways will enable Māori-Pacific peoples to thrive in a rapidly evolving workforce.

Māori-Pacific knowledge systems reflect generations of environmental stewardship and adaptation across the region. Māori-Pacific communities hold practical experience of climate impacts and are connected through strong transnational networks. Their leadership can shape responses that centre community resilience, support Māori, Pacific, and Māori-Pacific wellbeing, and enhance preparedness for all New Zealanders as climate effects intensify.

By 2035, enabling Māori-Pacific peoples to fully activate and apply their cultural intelligence will deepen regional connection, drive sustainable economic growth, and inform climate-resilient solutions. As the region continues to grow in geopolitical importance, these strengths will reinforce New Zealand’s credibility and influence as a Pacific partner of choice. They will help the nation navigate an increasingly interconnected and climate-affected world, building national resilience while elevating a proudly Pacific identity.

Bridging strengths to future systems

The three long-term insights show how cultural intelligence, shared values, and relational leadership could help prepare New Zealand for a more diverse and climate-affected future.

Table 1: Māori-Pacific strengths and system needs

Māori-Pacific strengths	Future NZ system needs	Strategic outcome	Relevant system features
Cultural intelligence and dual heritage	Leadership that values bilingualism and intercultural capability	Trust and cohesion; inclusive institutions	Recruitment and promotion pathways that recognise cultural and language capability. Bilingual and bicultural skills included in core workforce capability frameworks. Learning and development that builds intercultural leadership.
Collective stewardship and relational values	Governance that integrates reciprocity and shared responsibility	Stronger Pacific regional influence and cooperation	Māori-Pacific partnership roles in regional engagement. Relationship-based contracting and accountability models. Diplomatic workforce capability in Pacific languages and cultural knowledge.
Youth dynamism and innovation	Education and enterprise pathways linking culture, digital skills, and emerging industries	Economic growth; long-term workforce resilience	Culturally anchored digital skills programmes. Support for Māori-Pacific youth enterprise and innovation networks. Pathways into climate-resilient and technology sectors.
Language, identity, and cultural expression	Systemic language revitalisation and cultural visibility	National confidence and social cohesion	Long-term funding models for te reo Māori and Pacific languages. Language visibility in public services, signage, and media. Access to language-rich environments, including in climate-affected communities.
Enterprise ethics and intergenerational thinking	Sustainable economic models recognising cultural capital	Shared prosperity and community wellbeing	Procurement settings that increase participation of Māori-Pacific businesses. Support for cooperative and social enterprise structures. Culturally aligned financial capability and home ownership pathways.

Māori-Pacific peoples hold the capabilities that can shape New Zealand’s cultural, economic, and technological future. Their dual heritage, shared values, and innovative spirit are not just community assets but strategic strengths for national development.

This section brings these insights together, aligning Māori-Pacific strengths with the system shifts needed to embed them within New Zealand’s future direction. It shows how relational, values-based, and future-oriented approaches can translate cultural intelligence into tangible outcomes for cohesion, productivity, and trust.

Recognising and enabling Māori-Pacific capability supports long-term institutional resilience and shared outcomes, contributing to a thriving future for all New Zealanders.

Conclusion

This briefing has explored how Māori-Pacific peoples embody the living relationship between tangata whenua and Pacific communities, and how their shared heritage can help shape a more connected, resilient, and future-focused New Zealand. Their identities bring together two knowledge systems that have guided navigation, innovation, and community care across Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa for generations.

The next decade will be defined by rapid demographic change, digital transformation, and shifting global relationships. In that context, cultural intelligence, community-centred innovation, and values-based leadership are foundational to national resilience. Māori-Pacific peoples already demonstrate these strengths. Across every theme, Māori-Pacific peoples expressed aspirations grounded in belonging, opportunity, and cultural strength. They envisioned education systems that honour dual heritage, enterprises that reflect shared values, and digital futures guided by Indigenous knowledge and leadership. These insights show that when systems recognise Māori-Pacific peoples, they not only serve this group more effectively but strengthen national cohesion, innovation, and wellbeing for all.

Together, the three insights highlight a clear opportunity. By supporting enterprise and careers grounded in shared values, it can grow an economy that measures success through both prosperity and purpose. By investing in data and digital futures led by Māori and Pacific knowledge, it can create technology and information systems that reflect who we are and what we value. By building cultural intelligence as a national capability, New Zealand can lead with empathy and understanding across the Pacific.

The Ministry for Pacific Peoples will continue to work alongside Māori, Pacific, and Māori-Pacific communities to advance these conversations and inform long-term policy. In doing so, the Ministry honours its role as a bridge between government and communities, ensuring that decisions made today reflect the realities and aspirations of tomorrow.

Recognising Māori-Pacific peoples as leaders in shaping New Zealand’s future is both a responsibility and an opportunity. Supporting Māori-Pacific potential strengthens New Zealand’s identity, its economic and social opportunities, and its role in an increasingly diverse and interconnected world.

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