

MEASURING CONFIDENCE IN MĀORI CULTURAL COMPETENCY ACROSS  
AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND ORGANISATIONS – AN INSIGHTS PAPER

# Te ara ki tua – The pathway forward





The Te ara ki tua survey was developed by AskYourTeam, in partnership with Te Taura Whiri I te Te Reo Māori | Māori Language Commission, Te Puni Kōkiri | Ministry of Māori Development, Tatauranga Aotearoa | Statistics New Zealand, Te Huringa Hauora | Health Promotion Agency and Maurea Consulting.

The purpose of the Te ara ki tua survey is to measure the progress of an organisation's Māori cultural capability strategy/plan, rather than solely te reo Māori language proficiency.

Utilising the Māori Crown Relations Capability Framework, organisations can clearly identify core areas of high confidence or low confidence and use this information to either build a capability plan or to measure their journey from point A to point B.



The Māori Crown Relations Capability Framework core competencies:

- > Te ao Māori
- > Treaty understanding
- > Te reo Māori
- > Tikanga
- > Engagement with Māori
- > Understanding racial equity and institutional racism.

The Crown's strategy for Māori language revitalisation has three audacious goals to achieve by 2040:

- > 85% of New Zealanders (or more) will value te reo Māori as a key part of national identity.
- > 1 million New Zealanders (or more) will have the ability and confidence to talk about at least basic things in te reo Māori.
- > 150,000 Māori aged 15 and over will use te reo Māori as much as te reo English.



Waiho i te toipoto, kaua  
i te toiroa | Let us keep  
close together, not wide  
apart

## Method →

This insights paper combines data from the Te ara ki tua stand-alone survey module that, to date, has been deployed by 30 organisations across 2021 and 2022 with a total of 4,900 respondent's.

Respondents answer each of the 47 Te ara ki tua survey questions on the standard 6-point AskYourTeam agreement scale, with a respondent's individual scores then converted into the

AskYourTeam average. These are the figures referenced throughout this paper.

Figures referenced at a sub-group level (anything other than total) are based on questions that have been responded to by employees from at least 10 organisations.

## Key insights →

- > Across the board, there is a desire for employees to improve their Māori cultural capability.
- > Te reo Māori is top of the agenda for employees.
- > While there is a desire to improve Māori cultural capability, employees' current confidence levels are low.
- > These low confidence levels provide organisations with a baseline from which to build.
- > State sector organisations are slightly ahead of local government and private sector organisations in their existing levels of Māori cultural capability.
- > Employees with executive level roles display higher confidence levels, compared to those with non-executive level roles.
- > Executives are more likely to have been afforded the opportunity to engage with Māori.
- > Executives also display a stronger desire to improve their Māori cultural capability, especially within te ao Māori space.
- > Younger employees have a stronger desire to improve their Māori cultural capability.
- > Younger employees would also like to see their organisation do a better job at seeking feedback from Māori about how to engage with them.



# Recommendations

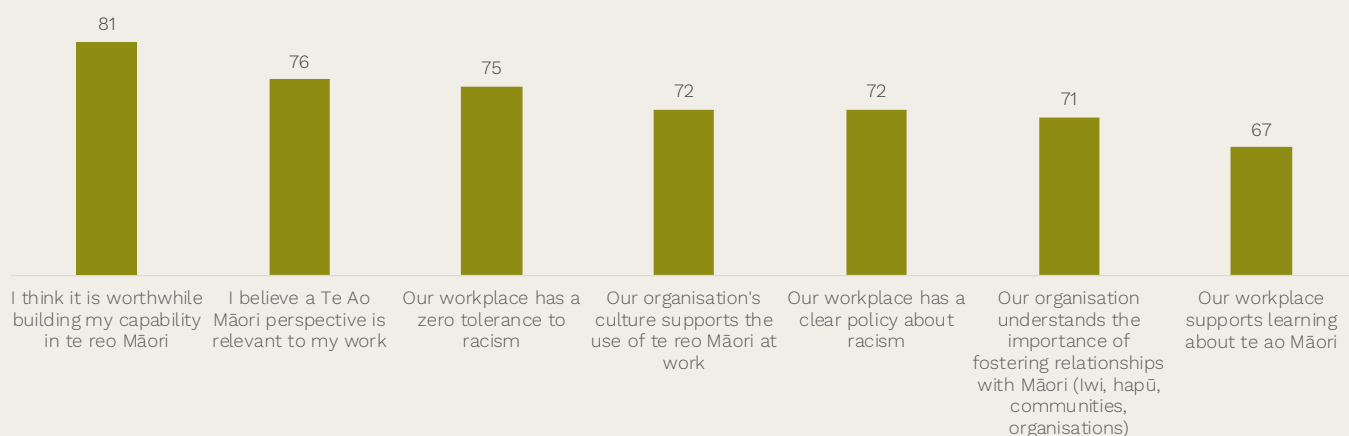
- > Overall, there are some key differences in desire and current capability levels across employee demographics. Therefore, understanding these differences and where efforts should be placed across the organisation is a valuable starting point.
- > Organisations should investigate ways for te reo Māori capability programmes to function as a gateway or springboard into te ao Māori and other areas of Māori bicultural capability.
- > Organisations should also consider developing strategies for providing employees with opportunities to engage with the Māori bicultural space, specifically seeking out opportunities to work in partnership with Māori groups.
- > Te reo Māori lessons, signage at work in both te reo Māori and te reo English as well as having a buddy system seem to be agreeable options for improving te reo Māori capability specifically.
- > Te Tiriti o Waitangi workshops are also seen to be a good option for improving awareness and understanding in this space.



# Where do we see strong performance?

## WHAT DOES MĀORI CULTURAL CAPABILITY LOOK LIKE ACROSS AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND ORGANISATIONS?

AskYourTeam average (%)



Employees across the board share a similar trait – a desire to improve their Māori cultural capability, be it te reo Māori, te ao Māori or gaining a better understanding of the Treaty of Waitangi.

Te reo Māori is top of the agenda, with employees believing that it is worthwhile building their capabilities in te reo Māori. Importantly, there is also a perception that their organisation's culture supports the use of te reo Māori at work.

Employees tend to see relevance of a te ao Māori perspective to their work, and like Te Reo Māori, there is a belief that organisations support learning about te ao Māori and in fact, they feel organisations actively value te ao Māori.

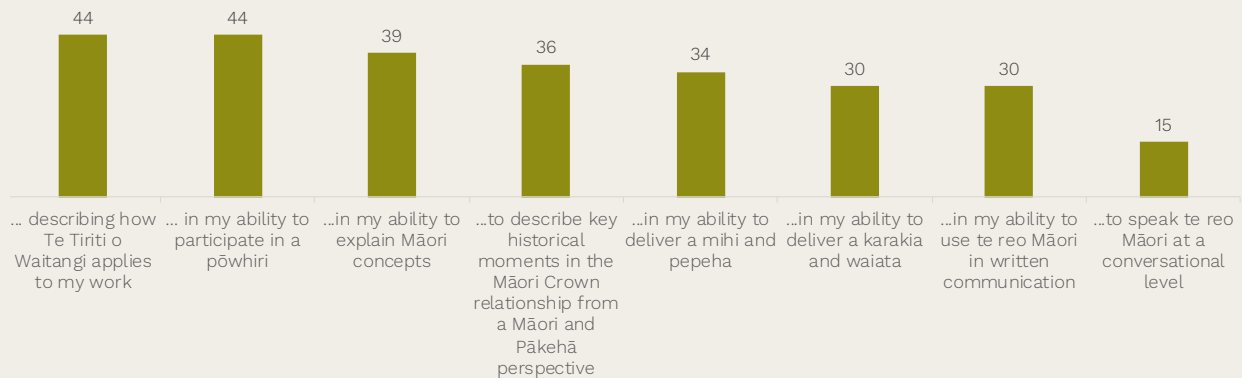
From a partnership perspective, employees also believe their organisation understands the importance of fostering relationships with Māori.

Another positive aspect is a clear understanding about racism, including a belief that organisations have a clear policy about, and zero tolerance to, racism.

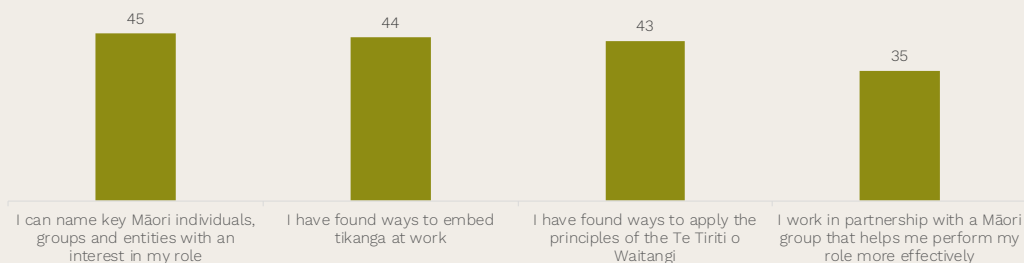
# Where do gaps currently exist?

"I feel confident..."

AskYourTeam average (%)



AskYourTeam average (%)



While a desire to improve Māori cultural capability is evident, current confidence levels are low, providing organisations with a baseline from which to build.

For te reo Māori specifically, employees have the lowest confidence in speaking te reo Māori at a conversational level, while the next three areas of lowest confidence are in the ability to deliver a mihi or pepeha, ability to deliver a karakia or waiata and using te reo Māori in written communication. Further to this, there is a lack of confidence in their ability to participate in a pōwhiri.

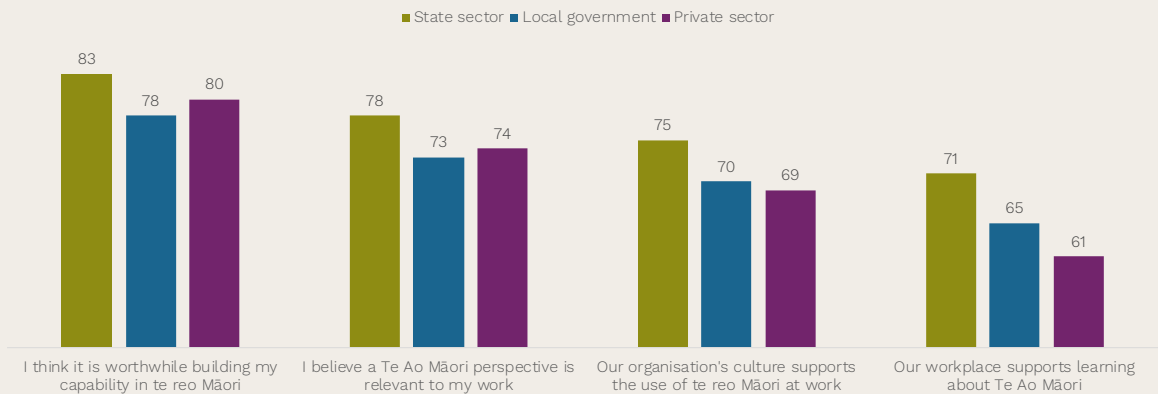
Outside of te reo Māori, there is also a general lack of confidence in employees' ability to explain Māori concepts, describe key historical moments in the Māori Crown relationship from a te ao Māori and te ao Pākehā world view and describe how te Tiriti o Waitangi would apply to their work.

The other prominent theme among the weaker areas is around a lack of opportunity. In general, employees do not feel they have found ways to embed tikanga at work or to apply the principles of te Tiriti o Waitangi.

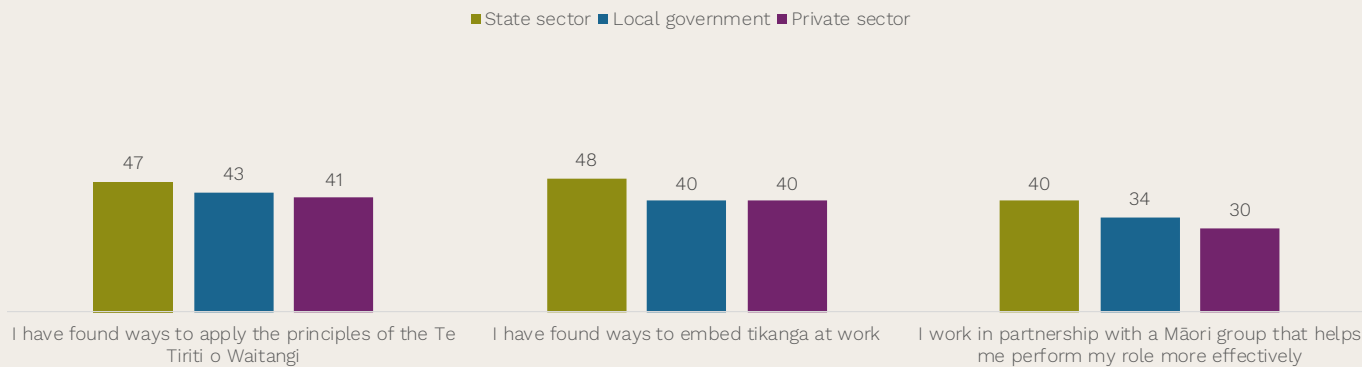
While there is a strong agreement that organisations understand the importance of fostering relationships with Māori, employees have not had the opportunity to work in partnership with Māori groups that help them perform their role more effectively and furthermore lack the knowledge of key Māori individuals, groups and entities with an interest in their role.

# Differences by sector

AskYourTeam average (%)



AskYourTeam average (%)



Understandably, due to the government's commitment to the Te Tiriti o Waitangi, state sector organisations are performing more strongly in the cultural competency stakes, with local government and private sector organisations in a similar position behind the state sector.

Employees from the state sector are more likely to agree that it is worthwhile building their capability in te reo Māori as well as believing that a te ao Māori perspective would be relevant to their work.

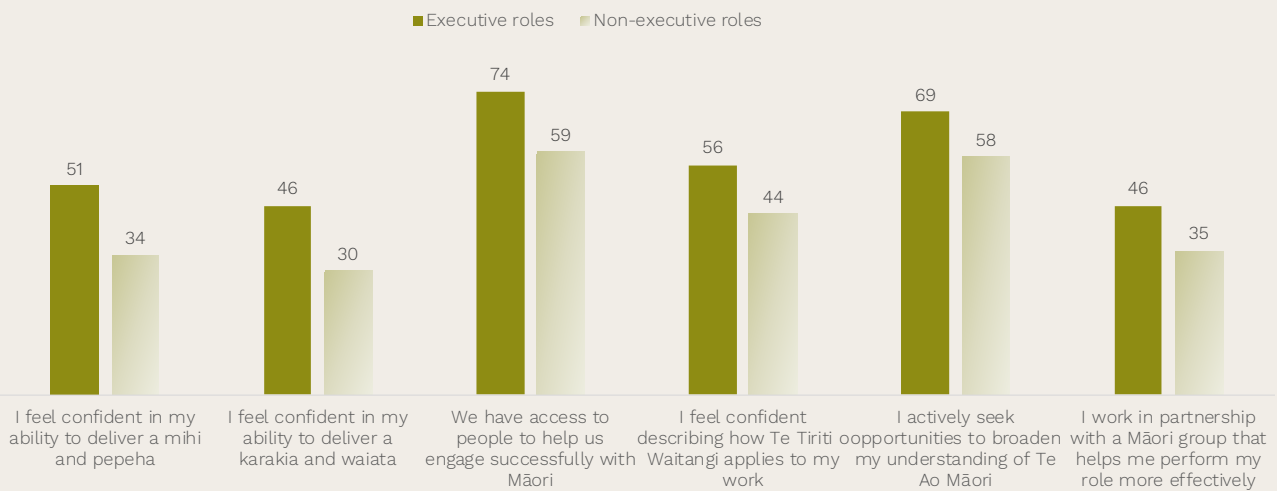
Further to this, state sector organisations are seen as supporting the use of te reo Māori as well as actively valuing te ao Māori more so than local government and private sector organisations.

When it comes to being confident about engaging with the Māori bicultural space, state sector employees are the most confident, followed closely by private sector employees and then local government employees.

One of the reasons for these differences in confidence is the opportunities that have been afforded to state sector employees, who are more likely to say they have found ways to apply the principles of the Te Tiriti o Waitangi, embed tikanga at work and work in partnership with a Māori group

# Differences by executive and non-executive level roles

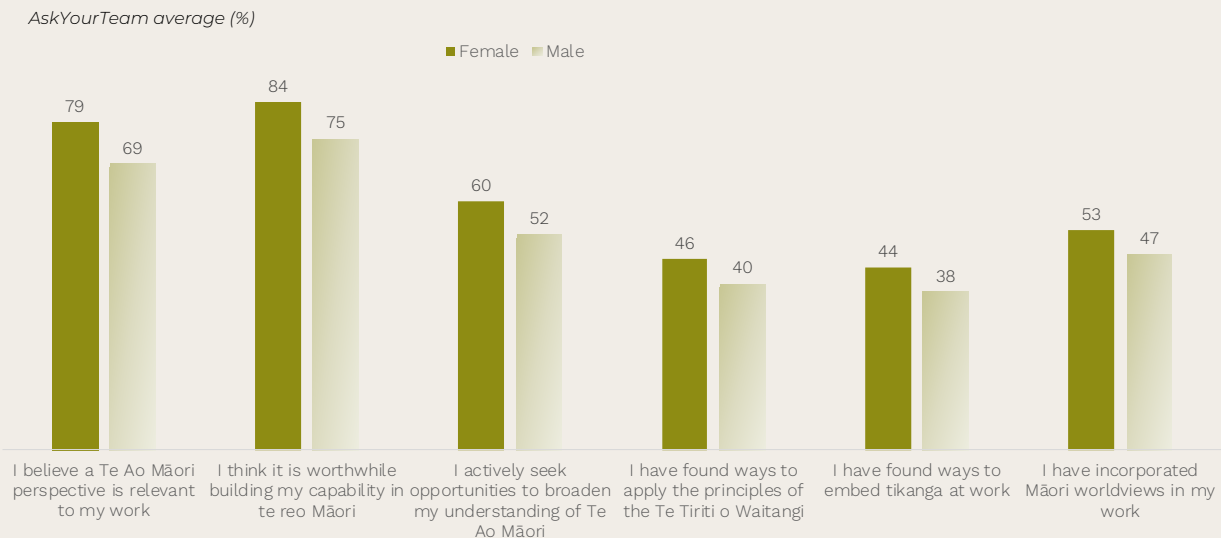
AskYourTeam average (%)



Of the organisations who have deployed the Te ara ki tua survey, executive level employees are more likely to have been afforded the opportunity to engage with Māori, and this comes through in the higher confidence levels seen for executives versus non-executives. There is also more intent shown by executives in actively seeking opportunities to broaden their understanding of te ao Māori, along with a stronger belief that a te ao Māori perspective is relevant to their work.



# Differences by gender of employee

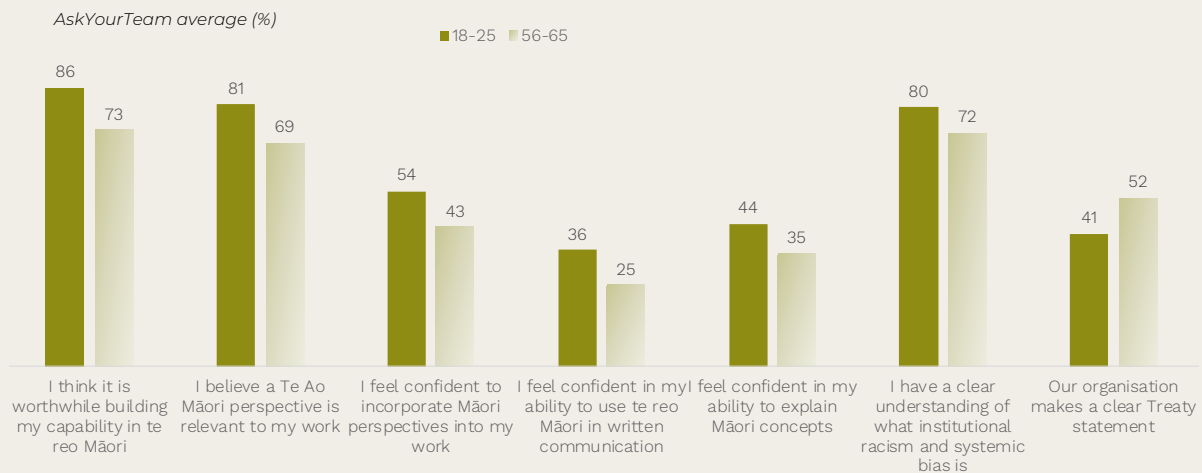


Consistent with gender differences we tend to see in sociolinguistics research, female employees display a strong intent to want to improve their cultural competency, with a 10-point difference (over males) on believing that a te ao Māori perspective is relevant to their work, a 9-point difference on thinking it is worthwhile to build their capability in te reo Māori and an 8-point difference in actively seeking opportunities to broaden their understanding of te ao Māori.

Females are also more likely than males to say they have found ways to apply the principles of te Tiriti o Waitangi, found ways to embed tikanga at work and incorporated Māori world views in their work.

Conversely, males are more likely than females to say their workplace has a clear policy about, and zero tolerance to, racism.

# Differences by age of employee



There are some clear differences in Māori cultural capability by age of employee. Younger employees, 18–25-year-olds, are more likely to have a clear understanding of what institutional racism and systemic bias is. This understanding falls amongst older employees, resulting in an 8-point difference between 18–25-year-olds and those aged 56–65.

Younger employees also display a stronger desire to want to improve their Māori cultural capability, with a 13-point gap between 18–25-year-olds and those aged 55–65 and a 12-point gap between 18–25-year-olds and those aged 55–65 for 'believing that a Te Ao Māori perspective is relevant to their work'.

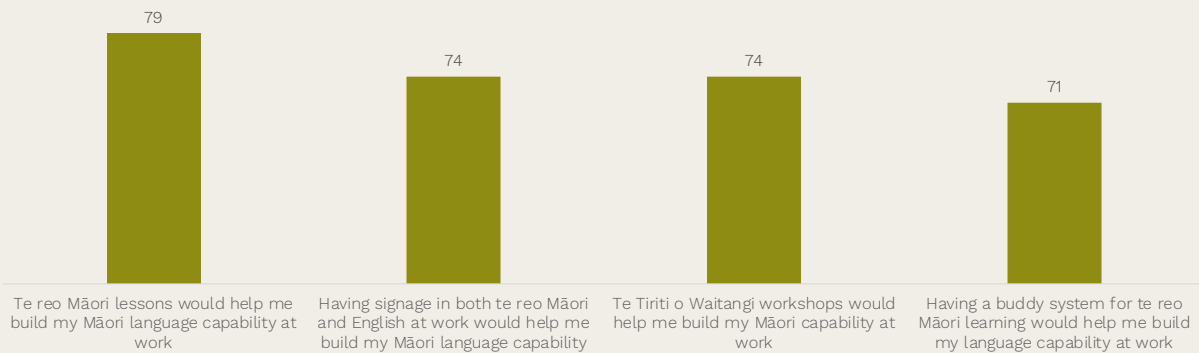
Younger employees are also more confident in incorporating Māori perspectives into their work, explaining Māori concepts and in their ability to use te reo Māori in written communication. There is a consistent decline across these three areas as we move into older age brackets.

Importantly, 18–35-year-old employees are less likely to say their organisation seeks feedback from Māori about how to engage with them, and they also believe that they have less access to people to help them engage successfully with Māori.

Younger employees are also afforded fewer opportunities to work in partnership with a Māori group and are less likely to believe their organisation makes a clear treaty statement.

# How to meet employees' desire to improve their cultural competency

AskYourTeam average (%)



A few ideas/initiatives to improve cultural competency were outlined within the survey, and the reaction to these was positive.

Employees were favourable towards the ideas of te reo Māori lessons, signage at work in both te reo Māori and te reo English as well as having a buddy system to help build te reo Māori capability.

In relation to the te Tiriti o Waitangi, employees were in general agreement that te Tiriti o Waitangi workshops would be of assistance in building their Māori capability at work.

Organisations should also consider how they can provide opportunities for employees to engage more closely with the Māori bicultural space, specific examples (from the survey) being how to embed tikanga at work as well as opportunities to work in partnership with Māori.





Want  
to know  
more?

We believe organisations can only achieve their true potential when their people feel valued and respected. Ensure all voices are heard and acted on by using our SaaS platform and consultancy services. Talk to us today.

**Contact us**

[askyourteam.com/contact-us](https://askyourteam.com/contact-us)

**NZ** 0800 001 335

**GLOBAL** +64 6 280 5305

