

Ngā Whakakitenga a Te Kura Roa: Whaihua

**Te Reo Māori  
me te Tuakiri Ā-Motu  
Pūrongo 6**

Rawinia Higgins, Poia Rewi and Vincent Olsen-Reeder

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**This report is part of a series**

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Pūrongo 3: Te Reo Māori me te Whānau

Pūrongo 4: Te Reo Māori me te Hapori

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Pūrongo 6: Te Reo Māori me te Tuakiri ā-Motu

Pūrongo 7: Te Reo Māori me ōna Ratonga



## He Karanga

Tēnei ka noho, ka whakaaro ake ki ngā mumu reo.  
 Nā rātou i pupuri ngā akoranga rangatira  
 o Te Kōhanga Reo, o Te Ataarangi.  
 I kapohia ngā tikanga tapu a ngā tīpuna.  
 Ka whiua ki te ao, ka whiua ki te rangi,  
 ka whakatipuria rā hei oranga mō te iwi Māori,  
 hei manawataki mō taku reo e tōiriiri atu rā:  
 ‘Mā wai au e kawe ki ōku whenua haumako?’  
 E hika mā, mā Te Kōhanga tonu, mā Te Ataarangi tonu:  
 He marangai ki te whenua e!

Te Kōhanga Reo, Te Ataarangi, nei rā ō koutou whakaaro, ā koutou kōrero mai i te kaupapa rangahau o ‘Whaihua’ i tīmata i te tau 2010. Nā Ngā Pae o Te Māramatanga tēnei rangahau i tautoko kia kite mai ai he aha te hua o te reo Māori. He wāhanga a Whaihua nō Te Kura Roa, he kaupapa rangahau i te hua o te reo Māori ki te motu. Ko tōna whāinga nui, ko te rapu i te hua o te reo Māori ki waenganui i ngā whānau o Te Kōhanga Reo, o Te Ataarangi.

Kei ngā pūrongo nei ngā kitenga o te rangahau, e whitu katoa. Ko te tuatahi tēnei, e hāngai ana ki te hua o Te Kōhanga Reo, o Te Ataarangi. Mā koutou ēnei pūrongo e wānanga, ā, me he kōrero, he pātai rānei, tēnā, tukuna mai ki Te Kura Roa: [tekuraroa@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:tekuraroa@vuw.ac.nz).

E mihi ana mātou ki a koutou katoa, ngā whānau, ngā purapura, ngā rohe, ngā poari, ngā whenua haumako o te reo Māori i takahia ai e mātou me tēnei kaupapa rangahau mō te reo Māori te take.

Nā mātou, iti nei, nā,

## Te Kura Roa

Rawinia Higgins, Poia Rewi and Vincent Olsen-Reeder

**Here I sit in reflection of silenced voices,  
 Custodians of the vital lessons  
 Of Te Kōhanga Reo, of Te Ataarangi  
 Who grasped the sacred knowledge of the ancestors  
 And cast it to the earth, charged it to the heavens,  
 nurtured it as fruit for Māori people,  
 a heartbeat for the echoes of my language:  
 ‘Who will carry me to my fertile lands?’  
 Who else but Te Kōhanga Reo, and Te Ataarangi:  
 A land awash, anew!**

Te Kōhanga Reo, Te Ataarangi, we present to you the findings from ‘Whaihua’ a research project initiated in 2010. This research project was commissioned by Ngā Pae o Te Māramatanga to gain insight into the value of the Māori language. Whaihua is a part of a wider investigation into the national value of the Māori language, called Te Kura Roa. The main objective is to investigate the community value of the Māori language among the whānau of Te Kōhanga Reo and Te Ataarangi.

These reports contain the results of the project. There are seven in total. This is the first, reporting on the value of Te Kōhanga Reo and Te Ataarangi. These are for you to share and discuss. If you have any queries please contact Te Kura Roa: [tekuraroa@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:tekuraroa@vuw.ac.nz).

We humbly thank you all, the whānau, the purapura, the communities and boards, vibrant locales through whom we were able to carry out this Māori language project.

## He Mihi

Te Kura Roa: Whaihua acknowledges the whānau members and staff of Te Kōhanga Reo, Te Ataarangi, Te Kōhanga National Trust Board and Te Rūnanga o Te Ataarangi for their support with this project, from completing the survey to administering, collecting and advertising the kaupapa.

We are also grateful to the advisory panel who guided the project:

Dame Kāterina Te Heikōkō Mataira	Dame Iritana Tāwhiwhirangi
Professor Emeritus Bernard Spolsky	Professor Michael O'Reilly
Professor Paul Tapsell	Dr Te Wharehuia Milroy
Dr Timoti Karetu	Te Ripowai Higgins
Professor Piri Sciascia	

Te Kura Roa: Whaihua also acknowledges Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga, without whom this project would not have been possible.

We are also grateful for the support given by Dr Arapera Royal-Tangaere, Andrea Hall and Maureen Muller – who have always been part of the Te Kura Roa project.

Te Kura Roa: Whaihua thanks the staff and students of Te Kawa a Māui, Victoria University and more specifically the students for their commitment to the project as summer interns. Their efforts in analysing the data are seen in these reports. They are:

Paul Edwards	Ani Eparaima
Hinemihia Lardelli	Mikaia Leach
Anton O'Carroll	Meremoana Potiki
Te Wehi Wright	Jamie Yeates

To anyone we have inadvertently missed, we are most humbly grateful for your support.



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## Whānau Members: A Snap Shot

The following table shows some key information about the whānau members that filled out the survey:

	Whānau members (n)	Percentage of total
Total	775	
Gender:		
Males	128	16.5%
Females	634	81.8%
Missing	13	1.7%
Māori language initiatives: (Multiple response selection)		
Te Ataarangi	369	47.6%
Te Kōhanga Reo	516	66.6%
Kura Kaupapa Māori	187	24.1%
Wānanga	268	34.6%
Another initiative	87	11.2%
Missing	1	0.1%
Education:		
Tertiary – Degree	190	24.5%
Tertiary – Certificate / Diploma	262	33.8%
Te Tohu Whakapakari	64	8.3%
Secondary	202	26.1%
Primary	14	1.8%
Missing	43	5.5%
Proficiency:		
Native speakers	116	15%
High proficiency L2ers <sup>1</sup>	155	20%
Good proficiency L2ers	225	29%
Basic proficiency L2ers	185	23.9%
Beginners	54	7%
Missing	40	5.2%

<sup>1</sup> L2ers is a linguistic term for second language speakers. An L1er would be a native speaker.

Whānau members are predominantly women. This reflects a trend observed within Māori language revitalisation generally. Most respondents noted participation in Te Kōhanga Reo and Te Ataarangi, though this is not surprising given that data collection actively took place within these groups. Over half of the participating whānau members have a tertiary qualification – either a certificate, diploma, degree or Tohu Whakapakari certification.

They also have a good command of the language. Over half have an intermediate proficiency. 35% are either highly proficient speakers, or native speakers. This high proficiency is testament to the successes of both initiatives.

## Te Reo Māori and Identity

The following section outlines survey responses from questions pertaining to the relationship of te reo Māori and national identity. Questions covered here include:

- *How important te reo Māori is to national identity*
- *How whānau members support others to appreciate te reo Māori as part of national identity*
- *Support for te reo as a compulsory language*
- *Benefits of the Māori language for New Zealand, and*
- *Benefits of the Māori language for for the world.*

Key findings include:

- *Te reo is crucial to national identity*
- *Whānau believe te reo Māori should be compulsory, in all sectors*
- *There are overwhelming benefits of te reo Māori to New Zealand*
- *There are overwhelming benefits of te reo Māori to the world, and*
- *A most noted benefit is in defining New Zealand's global identity.*

Each question is analysed, many including responses from actual whānau members. Where responses were given in Māori, a translation is given in brackets. Single words are translated in brackets the first time they appear. Any attempts to change the responses given are minimal. Where possible, references are provided to add scholarly weight to the report.

## Importance of Te Reo Māori To National Identity

Te reo Māori (with the possible exception of Cook Island Māori, depending on one's definition) is only spoken in Aotearoa. The linguistic diversity of the globe is dwindling, with many languages falling victim to a few with wider geographical coverage. How the language impacts on national identity is important in framing its current health and future potential, given its unique place in New Zealand. How speakers feel about this topic then, is crucial in our success in maintaining the status of te reo Māori in this country.

Whānau members were asked how important the language is to national identity:

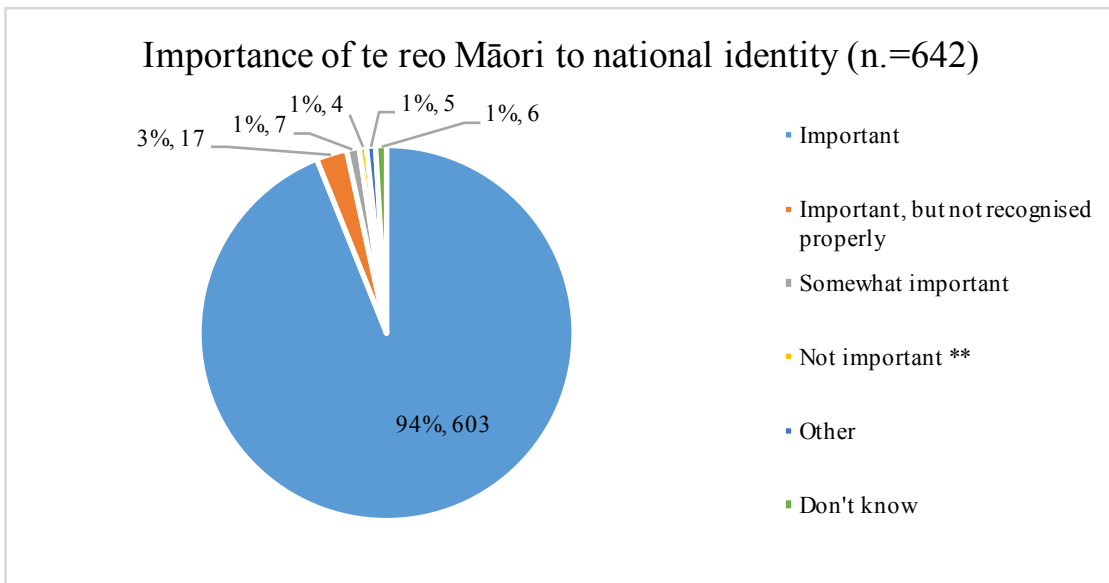


Figure 1. Importance of te reo Māori to national identity.

Overwhelmingly, 94% of our whānau members agree that the language is important to national identity (Figure 1). Others (3%) note it is important, but not recognised properly. A few also suggest it is somewhat important or not important at all (1% each). The use of the asterisk indicates here that it is difficult to tell whether whānau mean te reo is not important to national identity, or whether the nation perceives it to be unimportant. Still, it can be said then that for our whānau members te reo Māori is crucial to the national identity of New Zealand.

### Participant Support Of Others To Appreciate Te Reo As Part Of A National Identity

In recognition of the importance of te reo Māori to national identity, whānau spend much of their time supporting others to appreciate te reo (Figure 2, below):



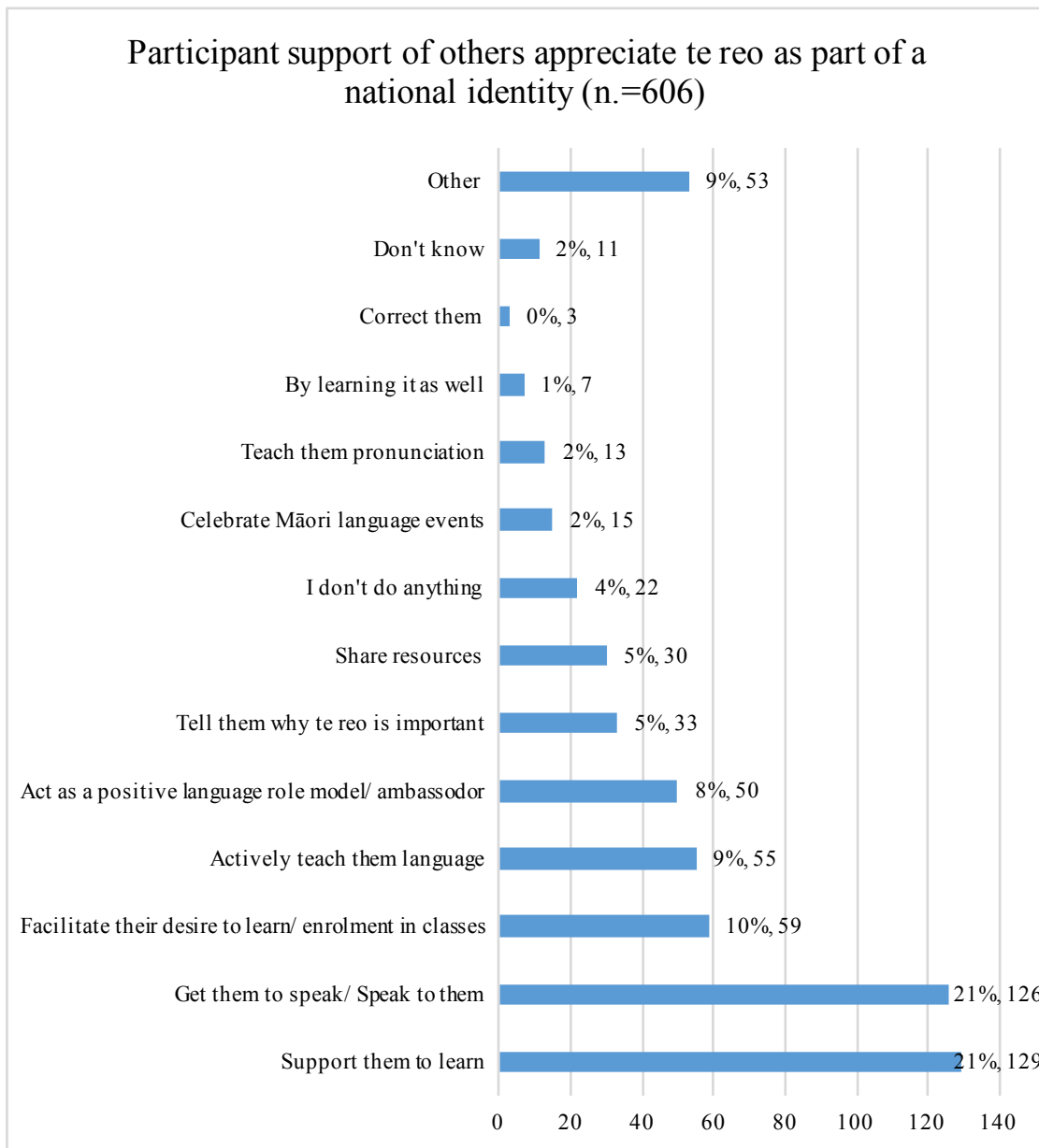


Figure 2. Participant support of others appreciate te reo as part of a national identity.

On the whole, Whānau members support others to learn more Māori, or encourage them to use the language that they do have (21% in both cases). They also facilitate the desire of others to learn, by helping them to enrol in formal language classes (10%). They also act as teachers, often establishing classes (9%). They also see themselves as language exemplars, ambassadors and the like (8%). In these ways, our whānau help to show others that the responsibility of te reo belongs to everyone, not just to Māori, or active Māori speakers.

### **Support For Te Reo As A Compulsory Language**

The compulsion of Māori has long been a contentious issue for politicians, iwi and language groups, particularly with regard to compulsion in schools. In general though, there has long been support for its compulsion of some nature, from Māori and non-Māori.<sup>2</sup> Our Whānau members were also supportive of language compulsion in all sectors, with most agreeing that it should be compulsory (Figure 3, next page):

<sup>2</sup> Te Puni Kōkiri, 2010.

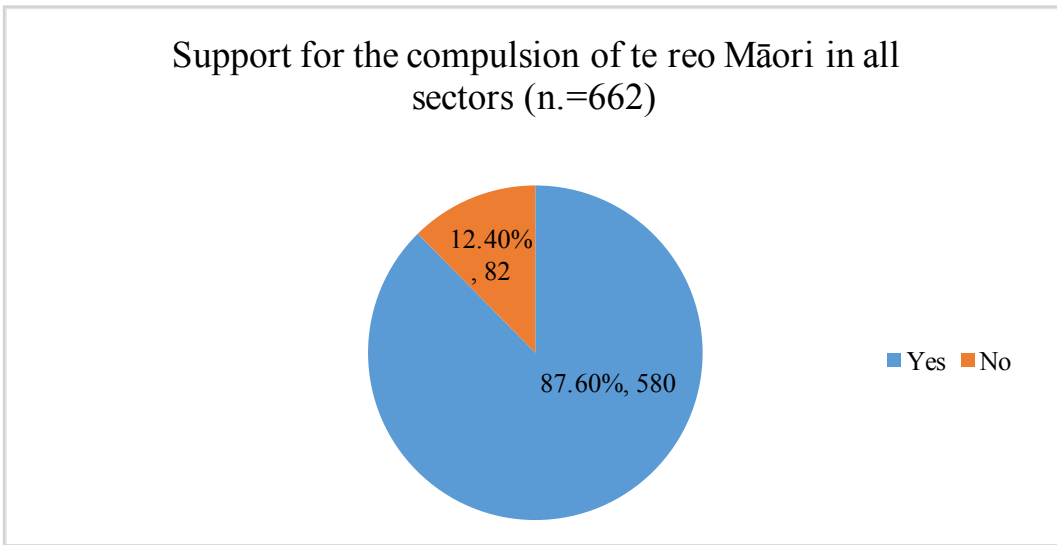


Figure 3. Support for the compulsion of te reo Māori in all sectors.

87.6% of our whānau members agree te reo should be compulsory in all sectors. Only a select few (12.4%) do not. This means that on the whole, speakers are in support of the idea.

Furthermore, whānau members were asked how compulsion of te reo might impact on national identity. There were possible and negative answers given. These are separated in the analysis below:

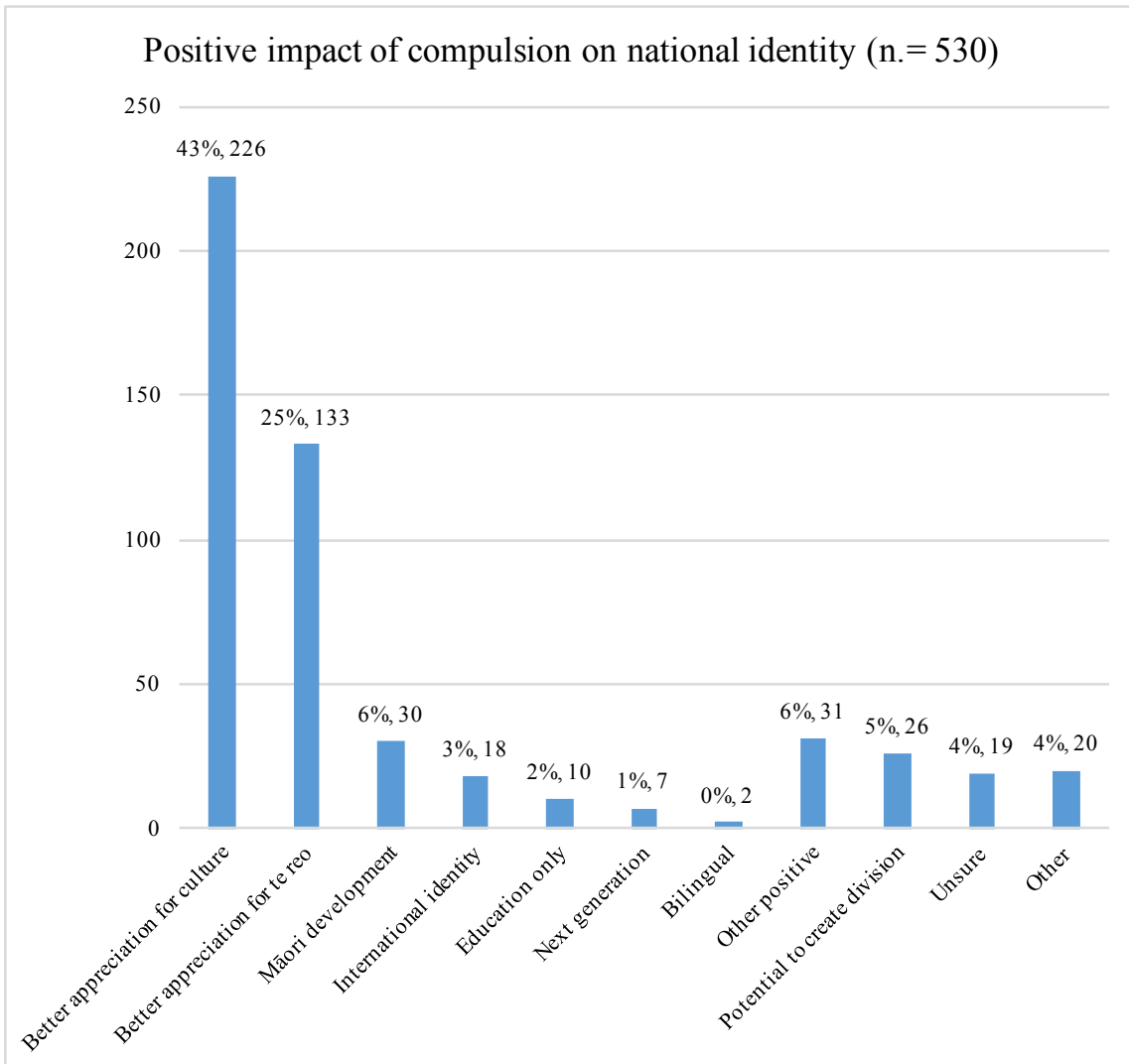


Figure 4. Positive impact of compulsion on national identity.

Figure 4 (above) shows that for 43% (of all positive statements), compulsion would offer a better appreciation of the Māori culture. 25% said compulsion would give better appreciation for te reo Māori. A range of other positive effects were also given by Whānau members, such as better Māori development and enhancement of a national identity. Although 6% felt it was a positive thing, they still noted it had the potential to create division.

On the other hand, 22% of all negative responses said that compulsion would force the language on people and that should be avoided (Figure 5, below). 11% said compulsion was divisive. 8% supported compulsion for Māori only, and another 8% said that compulsion would take away the tapu nature of te reo. A range of other negative effects were also given by whānau members.

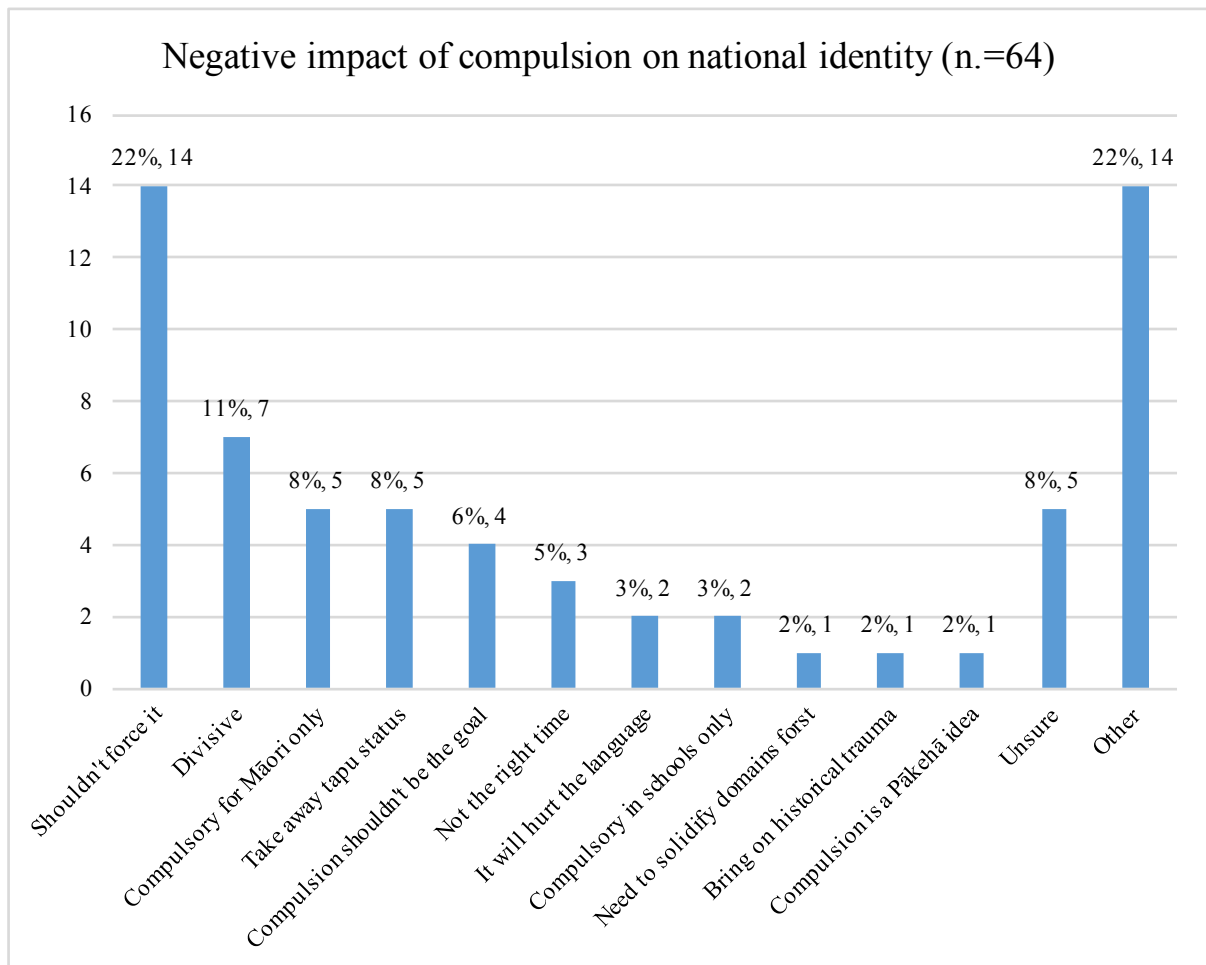


Figure 5. Negative impact of compulsion on national identity.

Although still important data, the population of whānau members who believed compulsion would be a negative thing is very small (n.= 64). In total then, support for compulsion is still very high.

## Māori Language Benefits For New Zealand As A Nation?

Whānau members agree that there are benefits for New Zealand pertaining to the Māori language. Figure 6 (below) shows that 97.70% believe there are benefits of this kind. Just 2.3% say there are no benefits of the Māori language for New Zealand. Just 2.3% say there are no benefits of the Māori language for New Zealand. Clearly then, te reo Māori is of benefit to the country.

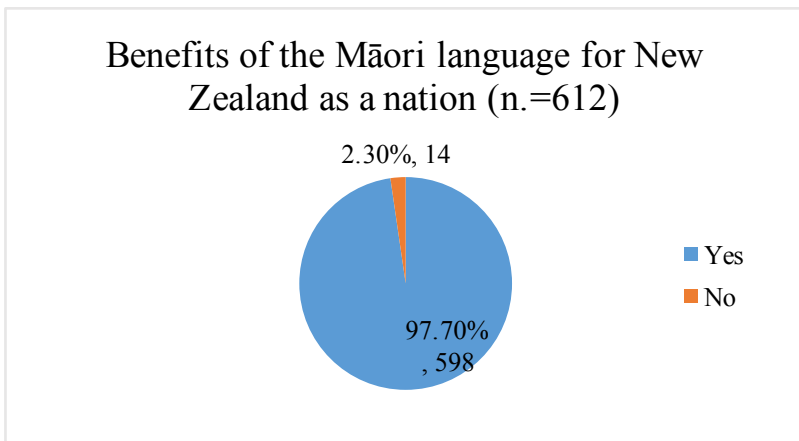


Figure 6. Benefits of the Māori language for New Zealand as a nation.

Those who said that there were benefits of the language to New Zealand nationhood were asked what those benefits are. Figure 7 (below) shows that of those who state there are benefits for the nation, 24% believe that it supports identity for both Māori and non-Māori, 21% state it provides some recognition of the important Indigenous language status of Māori, and 17% say it provides the country with a better insight into Māori culture. A range of other benefits were also given by whānau members:

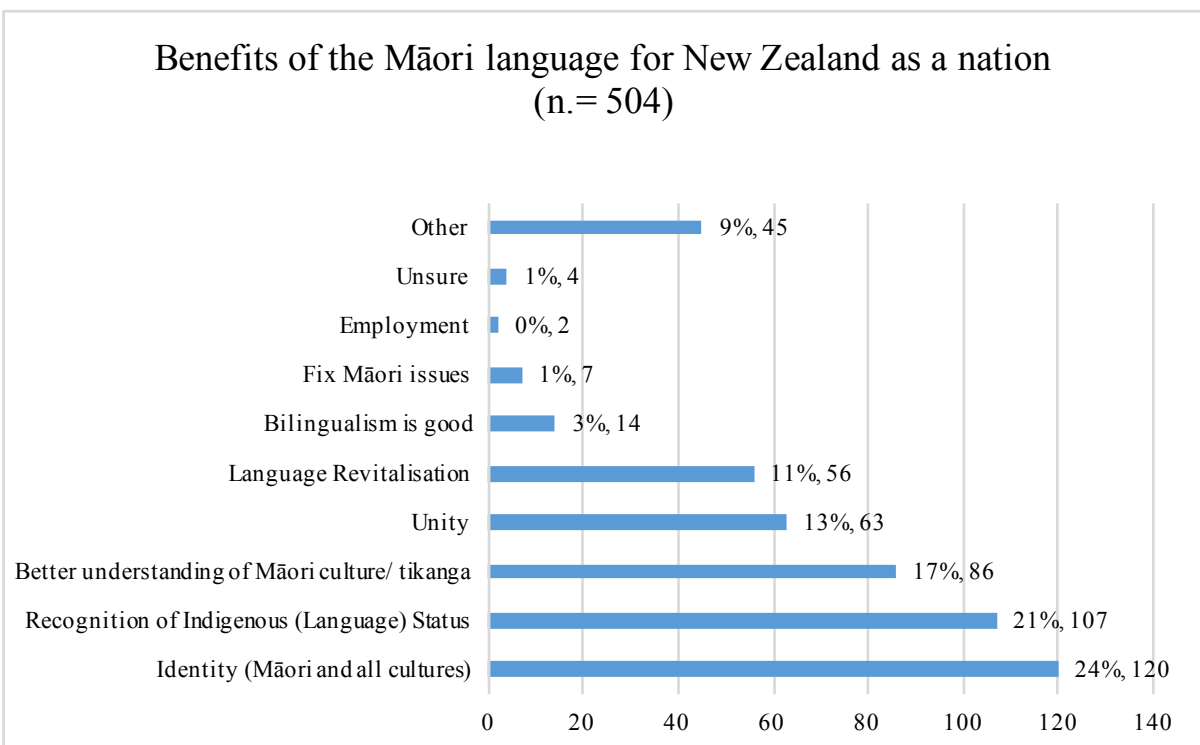


Figure 7. Benefits of the Māori language for New Zealand as a nation.

These benefits for both Māori and non-Māori are discussed by Rewi et. al. In this study, the inherent presence of te reo Māori was a given, so much so that “...all participants said it was an indicator of New Zealand’s uniqueness and identity as a nation.”<sup>3</sup> Non-Māori in particular felt they could “identify with the Māori language as an expression of their national identity.”<sup>4</sup> With this in mind, it is clear just how much New Zealand society gains from the Māori language.

## Māori Language Benefits For The World

Whānau members also agree that there are global benefits to be seen from te reo Māori. Figure 8 (below) shows that 88.6% of whānau members believe there are such benefits:

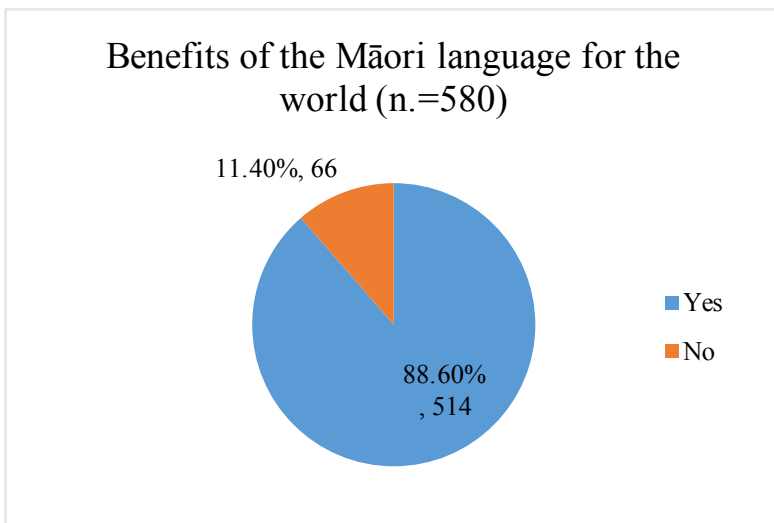


Figure 8. Benefits of the Māori language for the world.

Just 11.4% said there were no such benefits for the world, signalling the desire of our active speakers to see te reo Māori as part of an important global linguistic diversity.

<sup>3</sup> Rewi et. al., 2015, p. 346.

<sup>4</sup> Rewi et. al., 2015, p. 346.

Further to this, of those who agreed there were global benefits of this kind, almost half (43%) thought that it helped to define New Zealand in a global context (Figure 9, below):

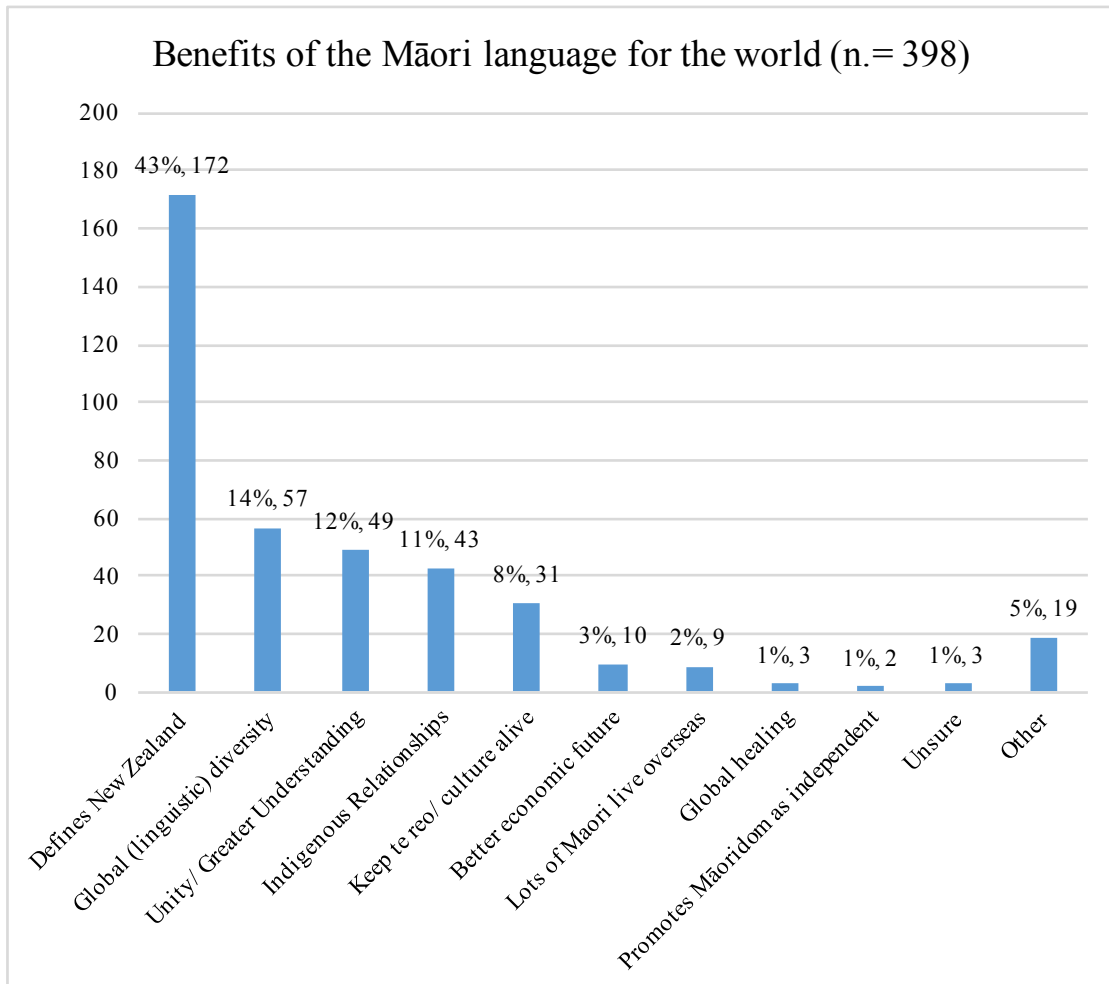


Figure 9. Benefits of the Māori language for the world.

14% suggested it added to global diversity (and global linguistic diversity). 12% thought the presence of Māori contributes to unity and 11% thought it allowed for greater partnership with other Indigenous nations. A range of other benefits were also noted. For the most part though, our active speakers maintain that it defines New Zealand. This point is also supported by Rewi et. al., who note that their participants were unanimous in saying that te reo Māori “was an indicator of New Zealand’s uniqueness and identity as a nation”.<sup>5</sup> Clearly then, there is a great benefit in being able to assert the unique identity of a country when in the presence of other nations, and that English pales in its ability to do this adequately. This speaks to the power of te reo Māori as an international language, and is a powerful rebuttal to comments that te reo has no use in the international arena.

<sup>5</sup> Rewi et. al., 2015, 346.

## Conclusion

This short report has outlined the responses whānau members gave to questions relating to te reo Māori and its national identity. Key findings illustrate that:

- *Te reo is crucial to national identity*
- *Whānau believe te reo Māori should be compulsory, in all sectors*
- *There are overwhelming benefits of te reo Māori to New Zealand*
- *There are overwhelming benefits of te reo Māori to the world, and*
- *A most noted benefit is in defining New Zealand's global identity.*

This report has also observed that while our whānau members might be key proponents of supporting the presence of te reo Māori in a national and global context, there is room for everyone to play a part in doing so, that te reo is the responsibility of all New Zealanders.

## References

Rewi, Poia, Delyn Day, Jacob Myhre, Raphael Richter-Gravier, Tawini White & Te Hau White, 2015. *Te Kura Roa – Waiaro* Research Report. Unpublished Report to Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga.

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