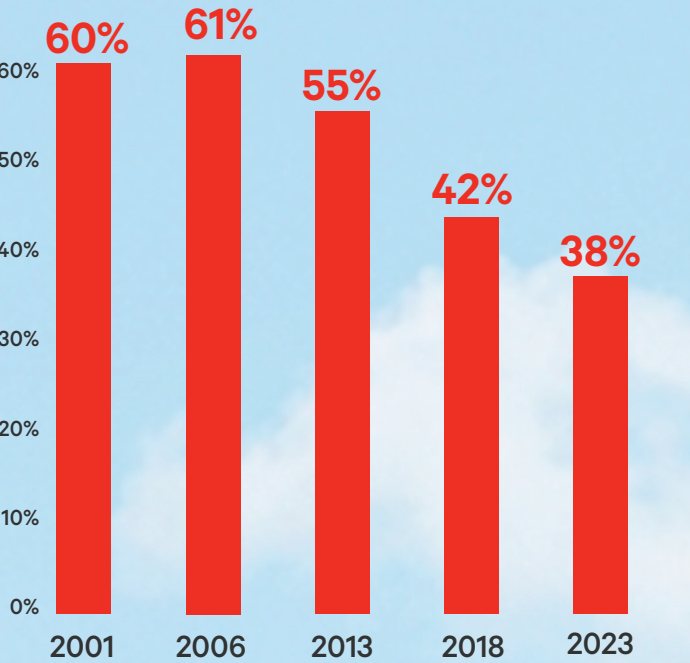


The proportion of lea faka-Tonga speakers is declining across the Tongan population.*



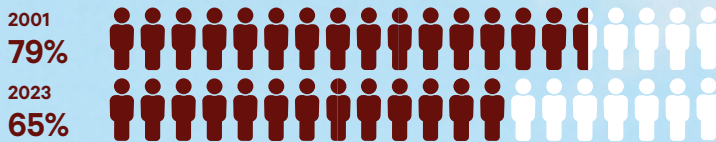
*excluding those who do not speak any language e.g. too young to talk.

The language is being maintained at higher rates among Tongans born overseas than those born in New Zealand.

Proportion of speakers among those born in New Zealand



Proportion of speakers among those born overseas



IDI Disclaimer: This infographic contains census data that has been created for research purposes from the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) which is carefully managed by Statistics New Zealand. These results are not official statistics. 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 data presented here is the work of the author, not Stats NZ or individual data suppliers.

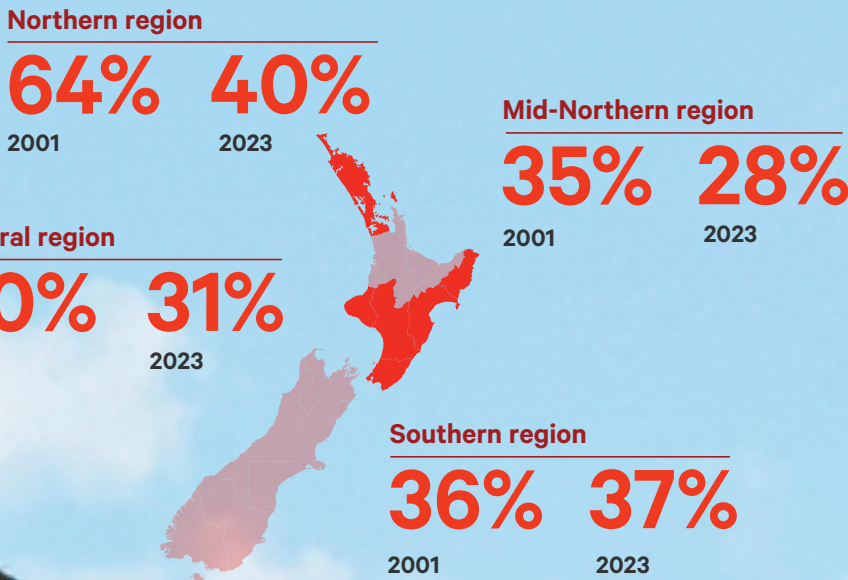
Note: The infographic refers to the proportion of ethnic language speakers. This compares the number of people from the ethnic group who speak the language associated with that group to the total ethnic population. It does not include people in the ethnic population who do not speak any languages (e.g. children too young to talk). Census data from 2001, 2006 and 2013 include missing responses, while data from 2018 and 2023 includes imputed responses for missing data. Therefore, caution is advised when making comparisons across time.

The biggest reduction is among those under 15. In 2001 around 1 in 2 children under 15 could speak the language but it was closer to 1 in 5 in 2023.

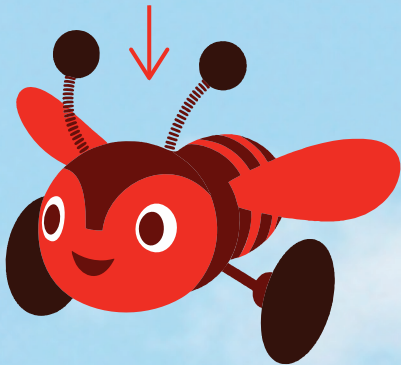
0-14 year olds



Since 2001, the proportion of Tongan people who speak lea faka-Tonga has increased in the Southern region but decreased in all other regions.



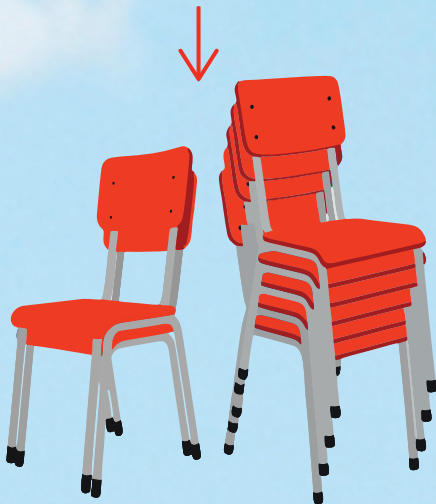
Lea faka-Tonga has seen the biggest growth of all Pacific languages in education...



In 2025 there were 39 bilingual or immersion early learning services, growing from 13 in 2004.



There are 13 bilingual and immersion units in schools across New Zealand in 2025, up from 1 in 2004...



And the number of students learning lea faka-Tonga as an additional language has grown from 69 in 2004 to 1,541 in 2025.

What does the data tell us about
LEA FAKA-TONGA
in New Zealand?