

# Results from our biculturalism survey

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biculturalism survey](#)

Anonymous  
(not verified)

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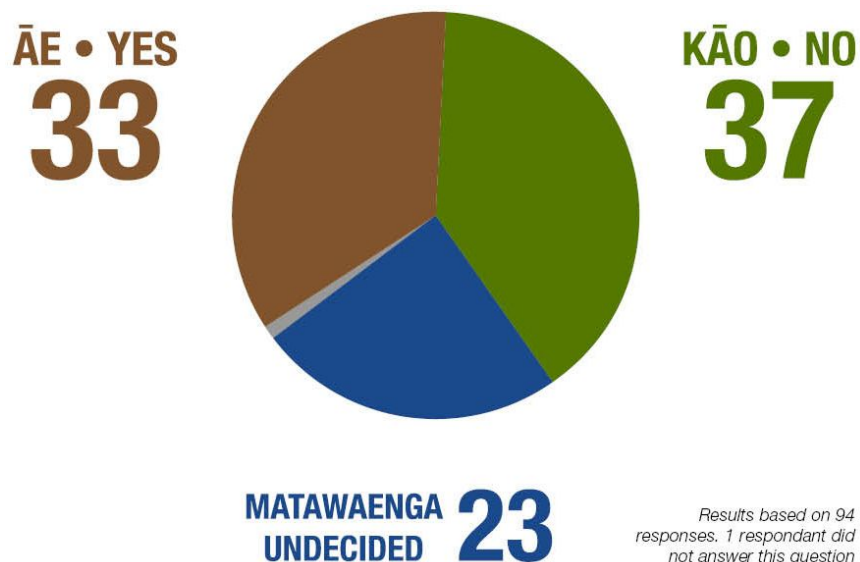
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turalism-survey

In October 2014, many people took the time to respond to the LIANZA biculturalism survey. There were a wide range of opinions and responses around the issues relating to biculturalism in New Zealand libraries.

In August we asked the short question: *Are we a bicultural industry?* (where 'industry' is taken to mean the library and information sector in Aotearoa New Zealand). Respondents could choose from three options - Āe/Yes, Kāo/No, or Matawaenga/Undecided; and a comment box was available for those who had more to say.



The responses were prompted further by the related questions:

Are our libraries bicultural? Do we operate biculturally as library and information workers? What does it mean to do so? Should biculturalism go beyond having bilingual signage in our buildings? How should we be demonstrating a commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi in the way that we work?

*The responses have generally been left unedited -- although in some cases we have removed names or reworded passages to ensure anonymity.*

## Are we a bicultural industry?

Does anyone know what biculturalism really means? Most library staff don't even know how being bicultural 'fits' with their roles. Sad really!

We made good steps towards biculturalism in the 90s, but most of the industry hasn't moved on since then. If it's not well supported in the parent organisation and by senior management, it's hard to make progress.

Biculturalism is far more than signage, but that's a start. In many instances, it feels like tokenism - lip service - because we \*have\* to, rather than something that comes from the heart

No, we are a MULTI-cultural industry!

I believe we've made some significant progress toward embedding a bicultural philosophy in our industry, with some variation across the sectors. I also believe we have a really long way yet to go and must continue to give our attention and energy to developing this facet of our work. Let's acknowledge and grandstand the achievements so far, the examples of good practice, so that others may be encouraged and inspired.

We are in that we make a conscious effort to try to be so.

We certainly try to be in my experience

We have made small steps towards biculturalism but I think our buildings let us down. They are very Eurocentric and sometimes sterile.

In our programmes we have done better. Regular meetings in the children's network librarians [sic] has seen more te reo Māori being used as the norm in storytelling. Has definitely given people more confidence to use te reo Māori.

Christchurch City Libraries Kaiāwhina group help to raise awareness of kaupapa Māori. It can be a hard slog for one person to fight for the recognition of kaupapa Māori but as a group we have more influence and lighten the load.

We offer Māori collections but in my experience they are small and not well promoted.

Marginally

multicultural

What do our users want, anyway?

I believe biculturalism is important but still feel that it is not always genuinely embraced at all levels of an organisation. Libraries and schools are doing better than others but often still it is mere lip service and at token level.

I think we all have displays of biculturalism, in signage, and perhaps a NZ or Māori collection, etc, but so many public and tertiary libraries serve a multicultural population, and therefore try to be all things to all customers, without blatantly favouring the two predominant cultures in Aotearoa.

We are working toward it, not sure how we will know when we get there but I don't think we have achieved it yet.

We have pockets of productive bi-culturalism but not nearly fulfilling the potential and momentum / commitment to change has slowed in recent years.

When public libraries are removing Māori Services Librarians e.g. Kapiti and lumping it in with a heritage role (with Pākehā staff) then our industry is not particularly bicultural.

While we have made some significant headway towards bicultural awareness, I believe we have a long way to go before we could ever comfortably claim to be a bicultural industry across the board. In many ways though, my response does also reflect NZ society - while we could claim to be a bicultural country in that we have legislation in place, te Reo Māori is recognised as one of our official languages, and government departments & some workplaces have bilingual signage, for me this doesn't mean we can categorically state that we are a bicultural country or a bicultural society.

Some of us yes very much so from what I have seen and experienced but others have certainly made the start and are on the way but just need to carry on the initial energy that started the ball rolling and build on it. We need to really embrace it.

We do better than a lot of other industries but I don't think we are bi-cultural yet.

As a worker in a Tertiary Library, our patrons show's us this everyday. Mixture of nationalities studying, cooperating and communicating with one another aiming for the same goal. Shows me it is alive and well.

At best I'd say working towards being bicultural, but not there yet!

We would like to be - but what would it look like in practice? How do we know if we are?

I think that the library sector aims to be bicultural. Some individuals may not have this intent, but overall as a profession, I think we embrace biculturalism and are committed to bicultural practice in our work.

We are multicultural :)

I think being bicultural means more than signage and more than assuming the 'brown face' knows what they are doing in a bicultural world. The bicultural way in which the information sector has improved in the last 10 years has the Māori people, students and general population using and understanding the services that the information sector offers. Yet the Māori population is still one of the most underrepresented in the workforce in the information sector. I believe Māori people have lost the fear of using the information sector, but is 'being bi cultural' an extension of the growth of our country or the growth of the information sector?

Is the new growth the multicultural information sector?

I think we've aspired to being bi-cultural as a profession and worked hard at it but power structures and distribution of resources have limited the extent to which this is enabled in libraries.

I think there is a desire to be by many, but biculturalism is not always fully embedded into the development and delivery of services and the way libraries run.

We pretend, do the very easy things. Real engagement is too hard and too expensive apparently.

No, Māori is seen as a culture, but the TOW exclude everyone outside of the Crown; non Māori using the TOW aside can't use it in a court of law. Claims of our biculturalism seem only to reside in use of our language as the coloniser and colonised.

Kao! We're miles off being 'bicultural'. Signage, token displays, a few books... "what does it mean to be bicultural?" We have to think (live, breathe, believe) the talk before we will walk it with credibility. Miles to go but a journey we've committed to.

kaore ano! Not yet!

I would have answered "partly" if there had been that category. The public library that I work in is taking small steps: Māori subject headings, bilingual signs, more Māori staff, more activities of relevance to tangata whenua during Matariki. BUT I don't see an anecdotal increase in general library use by Māori so I guess that means our local library services as a whole aren't improving for them. Our industry revolves so much around language. All workers need to be bilingual before we can be bicultural. Partnership at all levels is the key to committing to te Tiriti.

\*Are our libraries bicultural? Yes

\*Do we operate biculturally as library and information workers? Not everyone

\*What does it mean to do so? Believe in the purpose

\*Should biculturalism go beyond having bilingual signage in our buildings? Yes

\*How should we be demonstrating a commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi in the way that we work? by placing it our policies and making it visible on the Māori web page.

ka nui ngā mihi

Getting there but not fully committed. Factors involved - not enough staff with confidence & facility in using Te Reo both Māori & Pākehā. Knowledge of Māori kaupapa uneven across library sector. Cannot bring our customers with us if we don't walk the talk.

We're on our way, but we're not there yet.

I think biculturalism should certainly go beyond bilingual signage and be ingrained in everything we do. Every decision we make, from recruitment, to writing policy, to answering enquiries, to designing buildings should be considered from a bicultural viewpoint. To do this we must recruit and develop culturally competent staff and

have meaningful relationships with local iwi that allow for real input into our services.

I am not convinced that the gulf between what Māori library users want and what other library users want is very significant

I do actually think libraries are a leader in biculturalism, however, like anything, there is always room for improvement.

I have noticed that some of those not born in NZ (particularly Europeans and British) have a harder time with it so perhaps we should think about how to be more inclusive with our initiatives for these people. On the other hand, other groups of non-born NZers are more accepting of these ideas e.g. Indians or PI's.

I also believe that many NZers are ready to start treating Waitangi Day as a celebration and National Day of recognition and not just a vehicle for political redress and guilt history trip. Perhaps we could start focusing on that aspect of things. The same goes for Matariki which I feel is on track anyway. It's natural for people to want a celebration in the middle of winter and this is perfect for this country.

I answer as an unqualified library assistant. I received no induction or in-house training to inform me about local iwi, information needs, or issues affecting our Māori communities. It would have been helpful to have some training around these, what resources the library has that are important for Māori, and being able to improve my pronunciation of common Māori terms and local place names. Training tailored to the local environment would be the most helpful.

As an industry we like to think we are, but we have a long way to go. There are individual institutions that achieve true biculturalism but for most it is mainly window dressing - my own included!

I think we were trying to consciously be more bicultural as a Library and a University a while back but it has fallen away lately. [There have been some factors which] would indicate a lack of centrality for Te Reo.

I studied Te Reo using my [professional development] money and time. A bout of bad health...meant I didn't continue but then when I was going to resume it felt like there were obstacles to taking the time and others at the time felt it as well. A

number of staff did take Te Reo classes but I think the Library could have been more encouraging.

The fact that I am Pākehā and not a Te Reo speaker would indicate that libraries are not attracting Māori staff but you wouldn't want every Māori staff member to be channelled into this type of role either. Buying two [copies] of every title by Māori or related to Māori has helped the collection but it is easier to select/buy overseas texts than it is to get the local material and the academic authority of works is more blurred. Although I've always favoured an integrated collection, now that there are so many ebooks having separate collections for print materials could be a good idea and attract people into the Library. It is something many Māori users have said they would like.

Finally, I'd say that I went to quite a few Bicultural seminars (the best was the first by Moana Jackson) and maybe many of my generation did the same so naturally it would fall away. Does another generation need a new approach?