TE TIRATU

Hauora
Putāruru

2026

E ai ki a Ngāti Raukawa, he tangata a Ruru.

For Raukawa, Ruru is a person.

E kīia ana, ‘Ka puta a Ruru’ arā ka puta ia i tana wāhi huna, ka haere tonu kia tuku whakatūpato ki a Whāita mō te hingatanga o Koroukore.

‘Ka putā a Ruru’ he came out of his hiding place and emerged to carry on in his journey to warn Whāita of the fate of Koroukore.

Ko ‘Te Puta a Ruru’ - koia tērā te wāhi i puta ai i a Ruru. He whakamau mahara ki tana manawanui, ki tana toa, ki tana whakaora i a ia.

“Te Puta a Ruru — the place of emergence. A reminder that resilience, courage, and renewal are woven into the story of .”

Acknowledgements

Ko Ranginui te tuanui, ko Papatūānuku te papa. Ko te Poutūārongo kei Pikitū. Ko te Poutokomanawa kei Ngātira. Ko te poutāhu kei Tārukenga. Kei Te Ngākau ōna maihi, taka mai ki te wairere ki Horohoro.

This report has been prepared by Te Tiratū Iwi Māori Partnership Board. The Board has a statutory role to represent the hauora priorities, needs, and aspirations of Māori communities in te rohe o Waikato.

We would like to acknowledge the many whānau, health, social service and community stakeholders that provided insights. Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou katoa.

Ngā Ihirangi | Contents

Whakarāpopototanga
| Executive Summary

This report is a reflection of the health and wellbeing of Māori in the community. It brings together the voices, experiences, and aspirations of whānau, community leaders, and local providers, weaving them into a collective vision for a healthier future.

At its core, the report calls us to listen deeply to the needs and aspirations of the community. The urgency for change is clear, and the solutions lie in embracing indigenous and locally grounded models of care. There are many success stories where locals effectively deliver services. These stories are often funded locally and run by volunteers. Imagine what could be achieved if more public health funding was directed to community initiatives. With the right support, they have the power to transform the health landscape for generations to come.

The insights shared here are shaped by a wide range of contributors: iwi, health and social service providers, Pasifika, and faith-based groups, tāngata whaikaha, aged-care, pharmacy, and primary health organizations. Their stories and data, gathered from interviews, surveys, and local statistics, highlight both the strengths and the challenges we face. The report shines a light on the gaps in service, the barriers to access, and the opportunities for equity and improvement.

A recurring theme is the importance of care that is close to home, delivered by people who truly understand the community. Whānau have spoken clearly. They want culturally safe, locally responsive services, and more Māori health professionals. The feedback is a powerful reminder that lasting change comes from empowering those who know their communities best.

Locally led health initiatives are essential for meaningful, lasting change in rural areas. When whānau, iwi, and local leaders are resourced and trusted, they draw on deep knowledge and cultural strengths to design solutions that fit real needs. This approach builds trust, improves equity, and fosters resilience. Our region is a tapestry of diverse communities, rich in history and connection, but also facing higher levels of social deprivation than many other parts of the country.

This report is both a celebration of what our communities achieve every day and a call to action for sustainable investment, partnership, and respect for indigenous knowledge. Together, we can create a future where every whānau has the opportunity to thrive.

This report is a call to action: to listen, invest and empower whanau in Putāruru to thrive.

He Karanga kia te tū
| Call to Action

Putāruru is a town with heart, facing health and wellbeing challenges. Lasting change comes from solutions designed by and for our community. Whānau, iwi, and local providers agree that empowering rural communities is key to healthy futures for all.

Ko nga kaupapa whaitake ki ngā whānau
- What matters most for whānau

Bring care closer to home

Expand outreach and mobile clinics for those with transport challenges or in isolated areas. This reduces missed appointments and improves everyday wellbeing.

Grow and support our workforce

Train and retain local health professionals, especially Māori and Pasifika practitioners. Offer housing and professional development incentives to attract and keep skilled staff.

Tackle health inequities

Prioritise Māori and high-deprivation whānau with proactive outreach, screening, and follow-up. Monitor outcomes to ensure fair access to care.

Strengthen community partnerships

Fund navigator roles and integrated service hubs so whānau can access health, social, and education support in one place. Collaboration eases access to help.

Focus on youth and mental health

Invest in youth-friendly mental health support and school -based programmes. Early, culturally safe intervention helps rangatahi thrive.

Secure long-term investment

Advocate for stable, multi-year funding, infrastructure upgrades, and strategic investment. Work with iwi and local providers to align with their Strategic Plans and meet future needs.

The strength of Putāruru is its people

Neighbours who care, volunteers who step up, leaders who listen. By investing in local solutions and empowering our community, we can create a health and social system that is welcoming, resilient, and future-ready. Every whānau deserves the chance to live well and thrive here.

The cost of inaction

Without action, health gaps will widen. Māori and high-deprivation whānau will face higher rates of chronic illness, avoidable hospitalisations, and premature death. Long waits, workforce shortages, and barriers to care will persist, forcing families to navigate a fragmented system alone. Inaction means many will struggle unnecessarily, and the promise of equity and thriving futures will remain out of reach.

Iwi

Raukawa is a people with a deep and enduring connection to the land and to each other. Over 500 years ago, the people of Raukawa established our traditional homeland in the central North Island, which includes the towns of Tokoroa, Putāruru , Tīrau, Matamata, Mangakino, and Te Awamutu. Our iwi is named after the ancestor Raukawa who was born about 20 generations ago. Raukawa grew up at Rangiātea near Ōtorohanga and was named after the fragrance of the Raukawa oil worn by his mother Māhinaarangi. Today, there are almost 30,000 iwi members who trace their ancestral roots to their ancestor Raukawa.

The Raukawa Iwi organisation is made up of many moving parts that have different functions and roles; as a whole, they collectively form the Raukawa Group. Led by elected governors, the Raukawa Settlement Trust, which represents 16 Raukawa marae and provides the overall direction for the group. The subsidiary, the Raukawa Charitable Trust, works to deliver social development aspirations, while the commercial and economic aspirations are furthered by the subsidiary company, Raukawa Iwi Development Ltd.

Today, Raukawa maintain strong cultural, social, and environmental stewardship, including co-management of rivers and forests, and continue to uphold their identity through marae, language revitalisation, and governance structures across the Raukawa Group.

$260m
grown wealth from $50m in 2012 to over $260m today

2,500
wāhi tapu (sites of significance) in Raukawa database

16
mandated Raukawa marae across the rohe

530,000
hectares of land that makes up the rohe

100
kaimahi who work across the takiwā, advancing the collective asprations of its people

4
offices throughout the rohe – Tokoroa, Te Awamutu, Putāruru and Matamata

Te Whakamahinga o ngā Raraunga
– Use of Data within this Report.

Data inconsistencies and gaps influence how need is understood, how resources are allocated, and how whānau realities are represented in decision-making.

Opportunities to strengthen the data system across agencies include:

- Acknowledging data as a taonga
- Ensuring Iwi are involved in creation, collection, access, analysis, interpretation, management, dissemination and control of their data
- Improving consistency in data definitions and classifications
- Increasing transparency in data handling and assumptions
- Complementing quantitative data with qualitative and whānau-led insight
- Establishing shared standards that uphold data as a taonga and ensure iwi leadership across data design, collection, interpretation, and use - strengthening trust, comparability, and accountability across the system

A coordinated approach across data custodians (i.e., PHOs/Te Whatu Ora) will ensure that future reporting supports informed, equitable, and evidence-based decisions.

Better data is not an end in itself; it is a prerequisite for better outcomes, stronger systems, and services that reflect the realities of whānau.

Tirohanga whānui o te taupori | Population

Overview

Putāruru is a rural service town in the South Waikato District, known for its strong dairy, forestry, and manufacturing base. It sits strategically on SH1 between Tokoroa and Tirau, with close connections to Hamilton, Rotorua, and Tauranga. The town has experienced renewed interest in recent years due to housing affordability pressures elsewhere and local economic development initiatives.

Kāhua Taupori - Population Profile

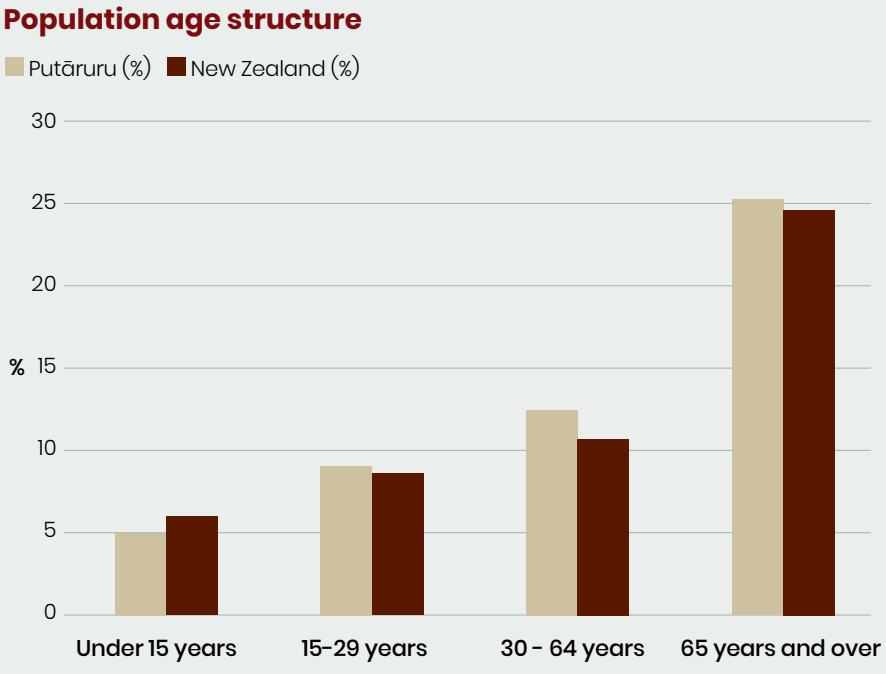


Fig 1. Population age structure, and New Zealand (2023 Census)

Total population

Approx.

4,600 residents

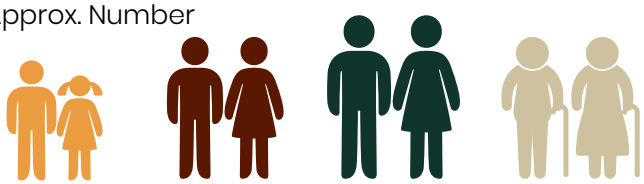
(2023 estimate)

Slow but steady long-term population stability, with signs of recent growth.

Age Structure

Stats NZ shows has a **higher median age** than the national average (38.2 years vs NZ's ~37).

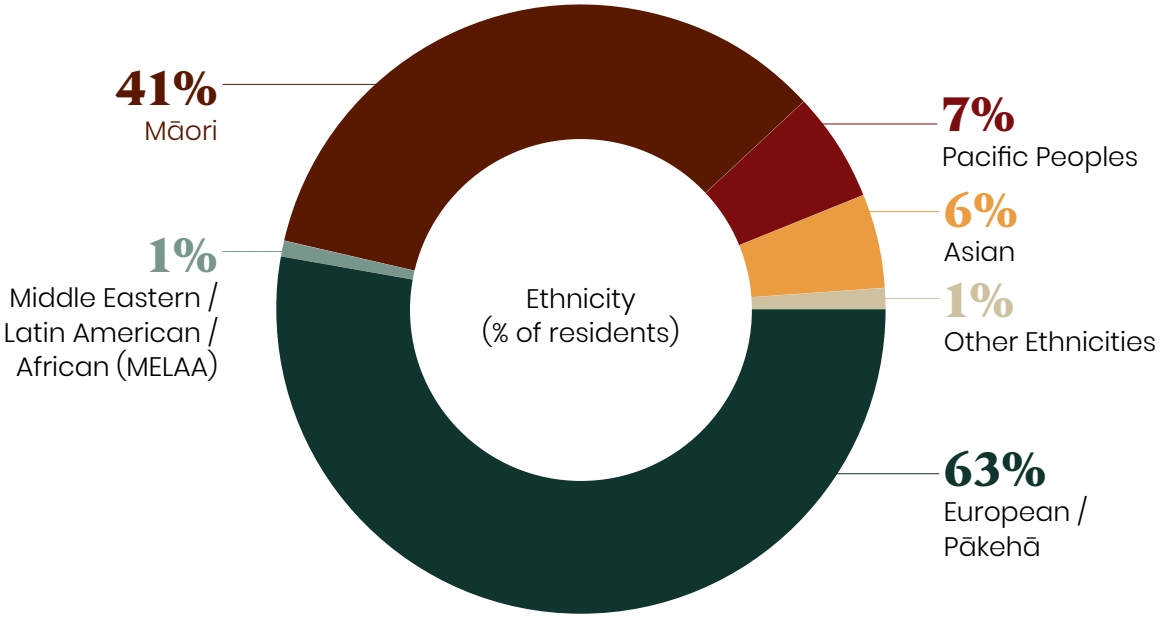
Approx. Number



0–14	15–39	40–64	65+
~1,080	~1,100	~1,200	~850
Strong cohort of children	Smaller young adult population	Largest working-age group	Ageing population trend

Ethnic Breakdown

(2023 Census)



People may identify with more than one ethnicity, so totals exceed 100%.

Source: Stats NZ – Place and Ethnic Group Summaries (Percentages rounded to the nearest whole number.)

Maori Population

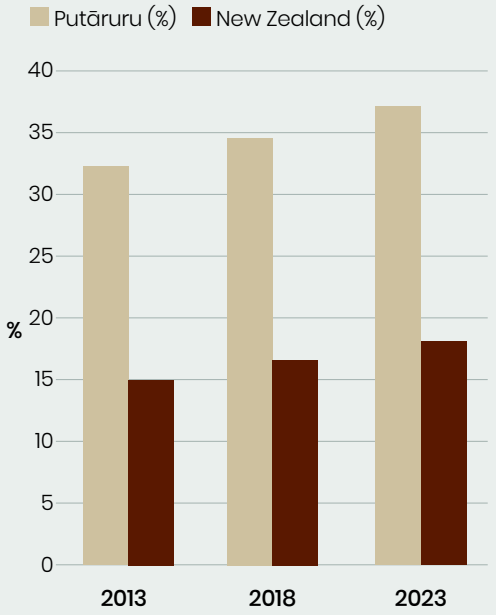


Fig 2. Māori population as a proportion of total population, and New Zealand (2013–2023 Censuses)

Ko Ngā Putanga - What This Means for:

- The town has a **strong Māori population**, particularly Raukawa and related hapū, shaping local identity, community life, and service needs.
- The **European/Pākehā community remains the largest group**, but the town is more ethnically diverse than many rural centres.
- **Pacific and Asian communities**, while smaller, are growing and increasingly visible in schools, workplaces, and community services.
- The multi-ethnic profile reinforces the importance of **culturally responsive health, education, and social services**.

Housing

Themes emerging from council growth planning and community feedback:

- **Housing shortage:** Local real estate signals indicate limited supply and rising demand.
- **Affordability pressures:** Property values increased significantly (35% rise noted in earlier council reports).
- **Need for diverse housing types:** Smaller homes, retirement units, and affordable rentals.
- **Growth planning underway:** South Waikato District Council has identified areas for future residential expansion.

Median Household Income

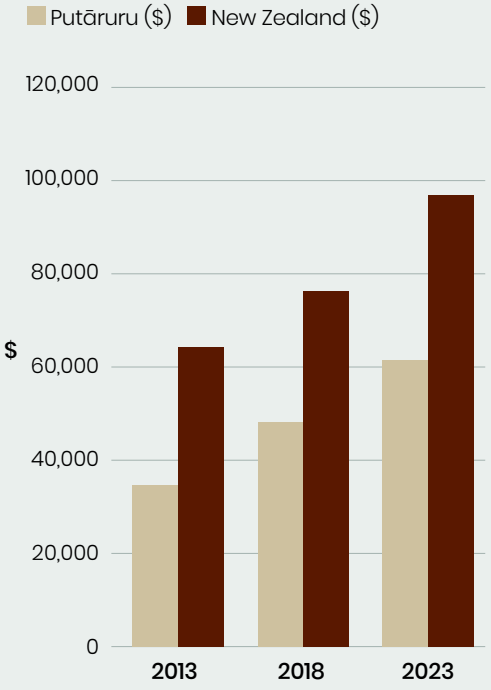


Fig 3. Median household income, and New Zealand (2013–2023 Censuses)

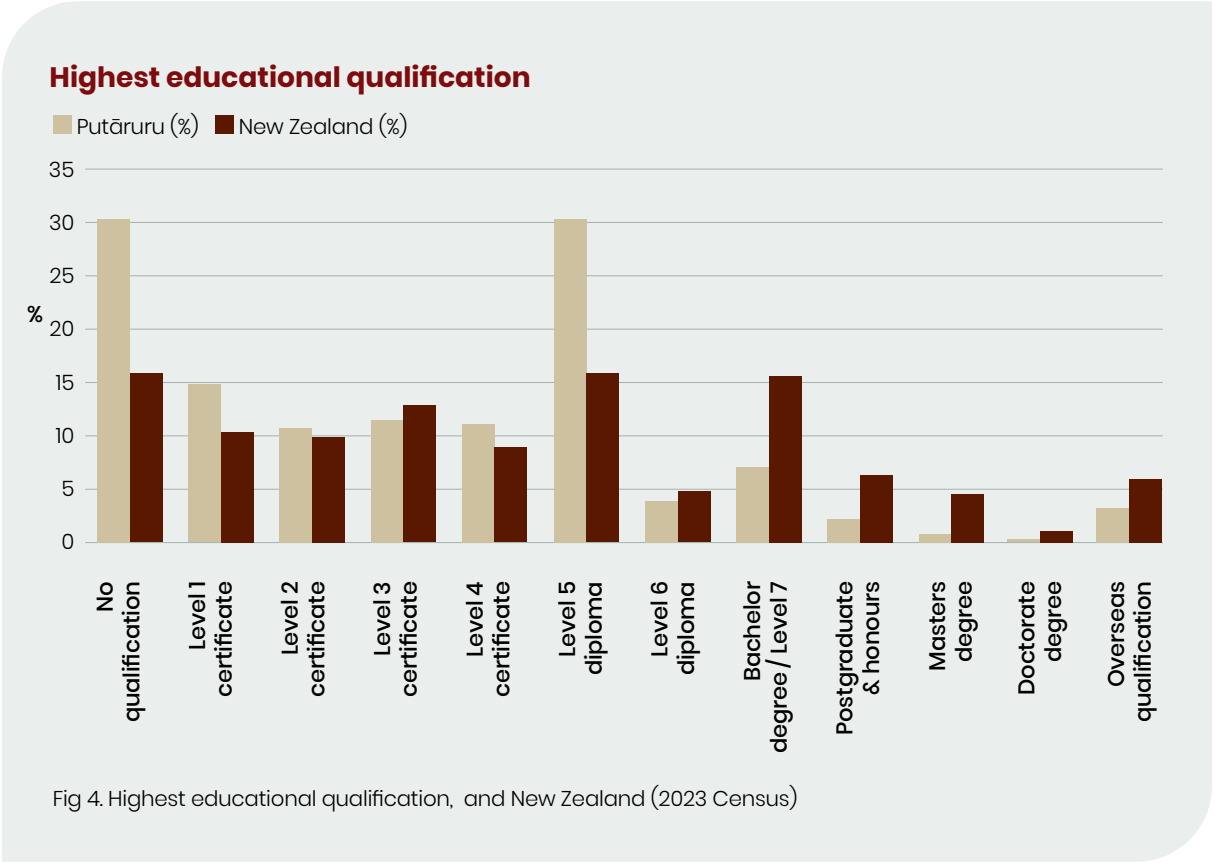


Fig 4. Highest educational qualification, and New Zealand (2023 Census)

Education

- has several primary schools as well as **Te Wharekura o Te Kaokaoroa o Pātetere** (Years 1-13) and **College** (Years 7–13).
- Key themes:
  - **Lower-than-average educational attainment** compared with national levels (South Waikato trend).
  - **Strong Māori and Pacific learner presence**, requiring culturally responsive approaches.
  - **Youth transitions:** Need for stronger pathways into trades, forestry, dairy, and manufacturing.

Employment & Economy

Major employment sectors:

- Forestry and wood processing
- Dairy farming and agri-services
- Manufacturing
- Retail and local services

Employment challenges:

- Lower median incomes than national levels
- Skills shortages in trades and technical roles
- Limited local tertiary training options

Opportunities:

- Growth in agri-tech, logistics, and value-added wood processing
- Tourism potential linked to Te Waihou Walkway and Blue Spring

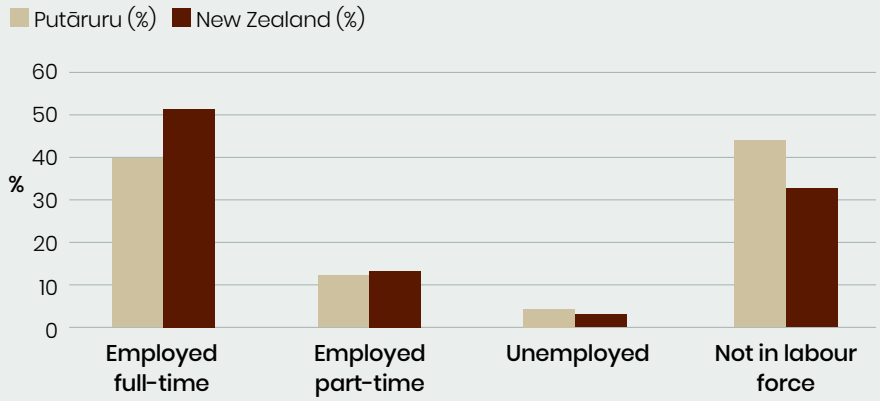


Fig 5. Labour force status of population aged 15 years and over, and New Zealand (2023 Census)

Ko Ngā Kaupapa Pāpori
- Key Social Themes

Theme	What's Emerging
Housing	Shortage, rising prices, need for diverse and affordable options.
Education	Lower attainment, strong Māori learner base, need for pathways into local industries.
Health	Ageing population, higher health needs, pressure on mental health services.
Employment	Lower incomes, skills shortages, reliance on primary industries.

Tiaki Mātāmua me te Tiaki Tuarua - Primary & Secondary Care in Putāruru

Living in Putāruru means being part of a tight-knit rural community where people look out for one another, but it also means navigating a health system that is not always close to home. For many residents, getting the care they need involves a mix of local services, regional providers, and a fair amount of travel.

Primary Care: The Everyday Front Door to Health

For most people in Putāruru, primary care is their first and most familiar point of contact. The local general practice teams work hard to meet a wide range of needs from long-term conditions to childhood illnesses to routine check-ups. But like many rural towns, faces challenges:

- **High demand and limited capacity** mean appointments can book out quickly.
- **An ageing population** brings more complex health needs.
- **Transport barriers** make it harder for some whānau to get to the clinic, especially those without reliable vehicles.
- **Cost pressures** can influence how often people seek care, particularly for those on low or fixed incomes.

Despite these challenges, primary care providers often become trusted anchors for whānau, people who know their history, their whānau, and the realities of rural life.

Within this wider provider landscape, Raukawa role in Putāruru adds a critical layer of iwi-led insight and service delivery. Raukawa through Tīwai Hauora provides a long-established, locally based service presence in Putāruru and across the wider South Waikato. As part of the Raukawa Group, Tīwai Hauora delivers integrated kaupapa Māori, wrap around whānau-centred services spanning maternal and child health, mental health and addiction support, Whānau Ora navigation, and kaumātua wellbeing. Their Putāruru premises operate as a dedicated clinical and pēpi hub, bringing together Kahu Taurima, Well Child Tamariki Ora, Family Start, and nurse-led clinical services within a coordinated, culturally grounded framework.

In Putāruru, Raukawa operates as a consistent and reliable service presence, working alongside primary care, iwi, marae, schools, and community providers to deliver early intervention, wraparound support, and culturally grounded care. This co-location and integrated approach enable early intervention, shared care planning, and seamless pathways across pregnancy, infancy, early childhood, and kaumātua support, while reducing transport barriers, reducing fragmentation, and strengthening pathways for whānau requiring support across multiple domains. This iwi-led, place-based model directly aligns with the community's call for care closer to home and complements the wider network of primary care, community, and social service providers who collectively support whānau wellbeing.

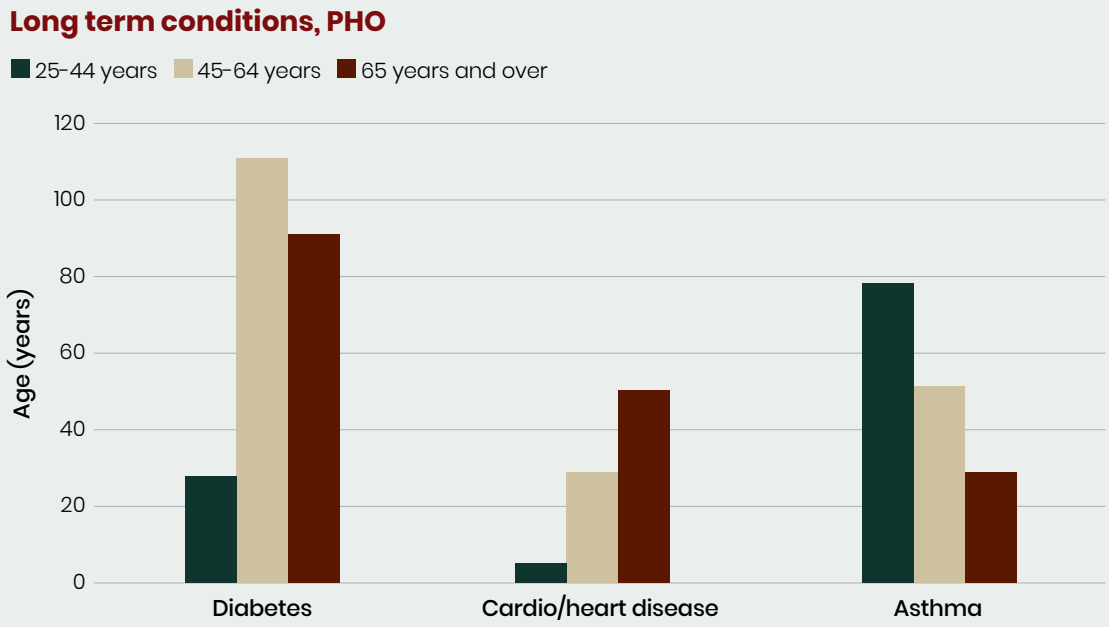


Fig 6. Selected long-term condition counts among enrolled Māori, PHO

Te uru ki Ngā Tiakitanga Tuaura: Te haerenga atu i te hōhipera i Tokoroa ki Waikato - Accessing Secondary Care: The Tokoroa–Waikato Hospital Journey

When someone in Putāruru needs specialist care, diagnostics, or hospital treatment, the journey becomes more complicated.

Tokoroa Hospital

Tokoroa is the closest secondary care hub about 20 minutes down the road. For many residents, this is where they go for:

- Emergency care
- Maternity services
- Some specialist clinics
- Short-stay treatment

The experience is usually manageable, but transport can still be a barrier for those without a car or who rely on others for rides. For older adults or people with chronic conditions, even a short trip can feel like a big undertaking.

Waikato Hospital

For more complex care, residents travel to Hamilton—around an hour away. This can mean:

- Early morning departures for specialist appointments
- Long days waiting between tests
- Navigating a large, busy hospital environment
- Additional costs for petrol, parking, and time off work

For many whānau, these trips are stressful and tiring. They often rely on extended family, neighbours, or community transport services to make it work.

Ko te whaitake o ngā Ratonga Hauora me ngā Ratonga Pāpori - The Role of Health & Social Services: A Lifeline for Many

Because of the town's socioeconomic profile and rural setting, Putāruru leans heavily on a network of health and social services to keep people well and connected. These services play a crucial role in:

- **Supporting whānau with housing challenges**, including overcrowding or unstable accommodation
- **Helping people navigate benefits, employment, and financial stress**
- **Providing mental health and addiction support**, especially for rangatahi
- **Offering community-based programmes** that reduce isolation and build resilience
- **Bridging gaps in transport, food security, and social connection**

For many residents, these services are not "nice to have" they are essential. They help people stay well enough to avoid hospital, manage long-term conditions, and maintain dignity and independence.

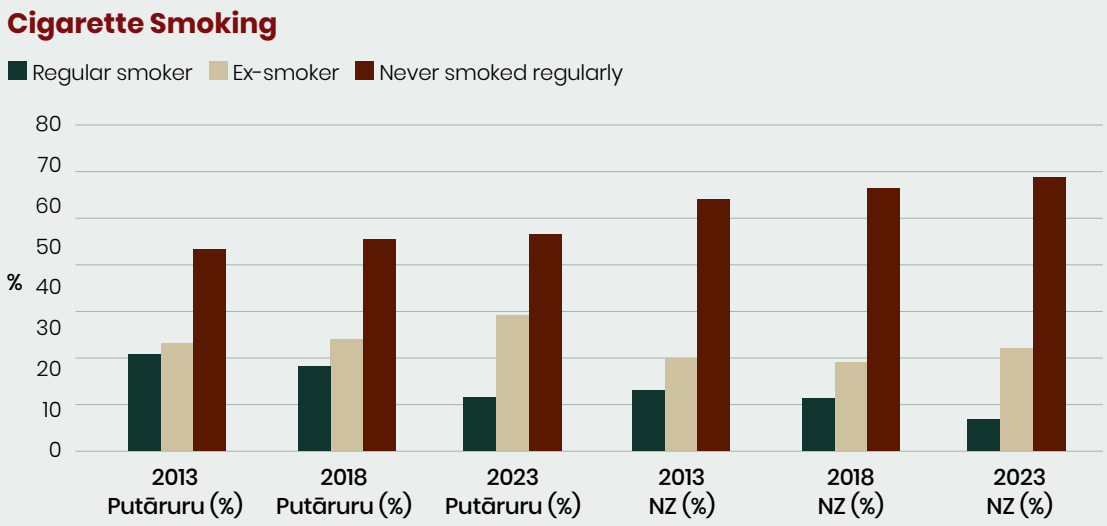


Fig 7. Cigarette smoking behaviour, and New Zealand (2013–2023 Censuses)

He Hapori Aroha ki te tāngata, hāunga te whātorotoro o te Pūnaha - A Community That Cares, Even When the System Is Stretched

What stands out most in Putāruru is the strength of its people. Despite the pressures on primary and secondary care, the community continues to show resilience, creativity, and a willingness to support one another. But the reality remains: access to healthcare is shaped by distance, transport, cost, and capacity. The more the system can wrap around bringing services closer, strengthening local providers, and supporting social wellbeing, the better the outcomes will be for everyone.

Ngā Ratonga | Services

Te Tiaki Hauora Mātāmua – Primary Health Care

- **Raukawa - Tiwai Hauora**
  Raukawa's clinical and pēpi hub, which provides maternal and early years services, kaumātua programmes, nurse-led care, mental health and addiction support, and Whānau Ora navigation from a culturally grounded, iwi-led base.
- **Tirau Family Doctors**
  Full general practice services, diabetes nurse educator, ear nurse, heart nurse, counselling, and more. Open to new enrolments. After-hours virtual GP appointments available.
- **Rongoā Tuku Iho**
  Provides traditional Māori healing, rehabilitation and holistic wellbeing services using modalities such as mirimiri, romiromi, karakia and indigenous therapeutic practices to support physical, emotional and spiritual health.

> "Rongoā is becoming the norm for people in our community, GPs are referring more and we are connected with our local physiotherapists and chiropractors. Increased funding into growing our workforce, will allow us to meet the growing demand. Money would be good, but that is not the focus of our mahi. If people need us, we are here."
>
> Rongoā Tuku Iho Kaimahi 2025

- **Unichem Pharmacy**
  Dispensing, vaccination support, medicines advice, Warfarin blood testing, Aseptic dispensing.

Ngā Ratonga Hōhipera ā-Tūmatanui, ā-Mātanga hoki - Public & Specialist Hospital Services

- **Tokoroa Hospital (nearest public hospital for)**
  Emergency, maternity, mental health, radiology, and more.
- **Waikato Hospital**
  Specialist and acute care, accessible via community transport.

Hauora Hapori me ngā Ratonga Pāpori - he tirohanga – Community Health & Social Services – a glimpse into some of the services

- **Transform Aotearoa**
  Free, locally delivered programmes: Building Awesome Whānau (parenting), Teenage Toolbox, men's and women's support groups, driver licensing, youth leadership, and more.
- **South Waikato Pacific Islands Community Services Trust (SWPICS)**
  Monthly outreach clinics at The Plaza, Free immunisation, advocacy, Well Child, sexual health, family services, Whānau Ora, and Pacific health support.
- **Overdale Community Centre**
  Community space for a wide range of services coordination, local programmes, and events.
- **Helping Hands Clothing Hub**
  Free clothing, bedding, and household items for families. Community-driven, stigma-free, and volunteer-supported.
- **Tokoroa Council of Social Services**
  School based services, family support and whānau resilience, older persons support, community information and events, family harm support.

Hauora Hinengaro me te Ratonga Warawara - Mental Health & Addiction Services

- **Raukawa Charitable Trust**
  Mental health and addiction services, drug and alcohol support, wellness programmes, family violence prevention, budgeting, whānau support, Well Child, and more.
- **Waikato DHB Rural South Community Mental Health & Addictions**
  Crisis, addiction, and community mental health support.
- **Ballymena Home**
  Residential mental health care in.

Ratonga Taiohi - Youth Services

- **Transform Aotearoa Youth Programmes**
  Life skills, leadership, career guidance, delivered by youth facilitators and volunteers.
- **Waikato Youth INtact (Odyssey, CareNZ)**
  Alcohol and drug support for rangatahi (12–19), outreach and school-based services.
- **Youth Centre**
  Community centre for youth activities and support.
- **Scouts**
  Youth development, outdoor education, leadership.

Whare Tiaki Kaumātua - Aged Residential Care

- **Rangiura Home**
  Residential aged care, respite, and support for older adults.

Ko ngā Kaupapa ā-Iwi, ā-Hapū, ā-Marae - Iwi, Hapū, and Marae-Led Initiatives

- **Whakaaratamaiti Marae**
  Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Ahuru, Ngāti Mahana. Cultural anchor, whānau ora navigation, hui, kapa haka, community events, partnerships with schools and health providers.
- **Pikitu Marae (Ngāti Huri)**
  Hapū sanctuary, cultural and economic development, supported by Raukawa Settlement Trust.
- **Raukawa Charitable Trust**
  Whānau Ora, rangatahi development, housing, cultural wellbeing, mental health, and addiction services.

Ratonga Tūnuku - Transport Services

- **South Waikato Community Health Transport**
  Door-to-door transport for medical appointments, koha-based, volunteer-led.

Ngā Tautoko o ngā Kapa Hapori - Community Groups & Support

- **Pride in**
  Community-focused organisation, events, business directory, support for local wellbeing.
- **Community Garden**
  Volunteer-run, provides produce for donation, horticulture education.
- **Overdale Community Centre**
  Community hub for services and events.
- **Parents Centre, Toy Library, Sports Clubs, Marae, Churches, and other local groups.**

> **"It is paramount that whānau are provided with the services and support needed to walk their unique pathways to wellbeing and flourishing. Thus, we strongly advocate for continued funding of health services that align with the overarching focus on empowering whānau to take control of their health and wellbeing journey."**
>
> Raukawa Whānau Voice Report 2024

Mahere Hauora me Ngā Rautaki - Hauora Plans & Strategies

In 2025, Te Tiratū launched its Community Health Plan and Hauora Priorities Report.

These documents are used by Te Tiratū as key tools to advocate to Health NZ and any relevant government agencies. They provide solutions and outline the health inequities and barriers for Māori in the Waikato.

Te Reo o Ngā Whānau o Raukawa - Ngā Kaupapa - Raukawa Whānau Voice – Key Themes

Whānau Realities & Social Determinants

Whānau consistently describe the same pressures shaping their wellbeing:

- **Housing stress:** overcrowding, unaffordable rentals, poor-quality homes.
- **Cost of living pressures** affecting access to kai, transport, and healthcare.
- **Transport barriers**, especially for rural whānau needing to reach Tokoroa or Waikato Hospital.
- **Lower incomes and fewer local employment opportunities**, contributing to long-term stress.

These social determinants are identified as major drivers of inequity and a core area where whānau wants system change.

Ngā Ratonga Hauora e angitū ana - When Health Services Work Well

Whānau say services work best when they are:

- **Delivered by Māori, for Māori**
- **Culturally grounded**, with staff who understand whakapapa, whanaungatanga, and local context
- **Accessible and welcoming**, with flexible hours and low/no cost
- **Relationship-based**, where whānau feel seen, heard, and respected

These strengths are most often found in **kaupapa Māori providers** and community-based services.

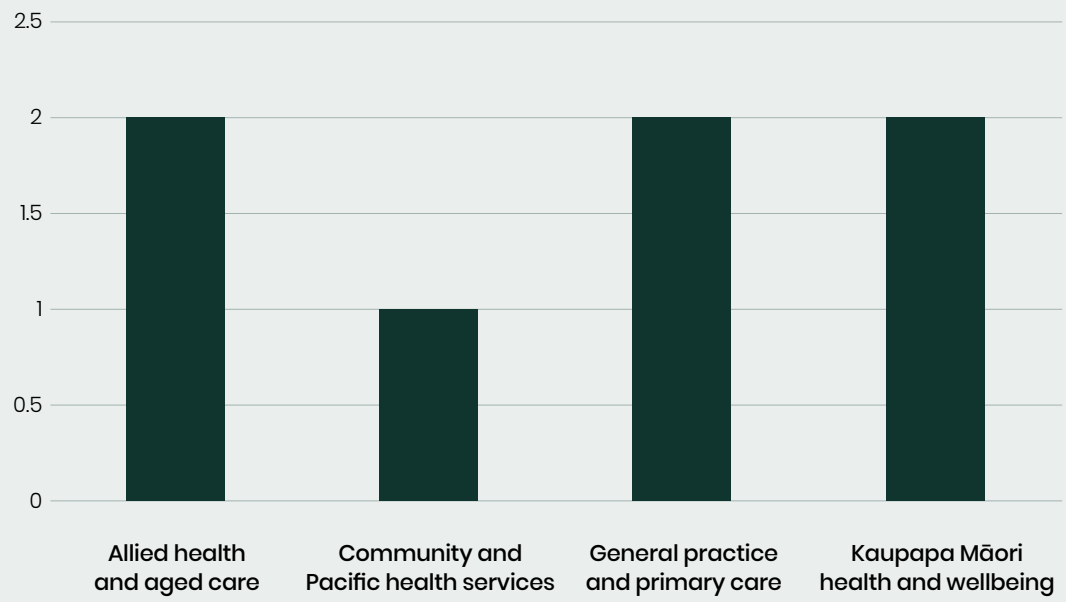


Fig 8. Distribution of health and wellbeing services by type, (Whaitua service listings)

Ngā Ratonga Hauora kāore e angitu ana - When Health Services Do *Not* Work Well

Whānau describe consistent barriers across the system:

- **Long waits** for primary and specialist care
- **High costs**, especially for GP visits, dental care, and prescriptions
- **Poor communication** between services, leaving whānau to navigate the system alone
- **Lack of cultural safety** in mainstream services
- **Fragmented care**, especially for long-term conditions and mental health

These issues contribute to **avoidable hospitalisations and avoidable deaths**, which whānau identifies as priority areas for change.

Ngā Whāinga ā-Whānau - Whānau Aspirations

Whānau express clear aspirations for their hauora:

- **More Māori-led services** across the whole system
- **Care closer to home**, especially for rural communities
- **Holistic, whānau-centred models** rather than siloed services
- **Stronger prevention and early intervention**, especially for tamariki and rangatahi
- **A system that honours Te Tiriti**, upholds mana, and supports cultural identity

Te Tirohanga a Ngā Kaiwhakarato - Provider Perspectives

Providers across the rohe echo whānau concerns:

- Workforce shortages, especially Māori workforce
- Funding models that do not support holistic or kaupapa Māori approaches
- Difficulty meeting demand with current resources
- System complexity that creates barriers for both providers and whānau

Ngā Whakaarotau ā-Pūnaha i kitea e Te Tiratū - System-Level Priorities Identified by Te Tiratū

Public & Population Health

- Prevention, early intervention, immunisation, screening
- Addressing social determinants
- Strengthening Māori-led public health approaches

Primary & Community Care

- Access to affordable, culturally safe primary care
- Strengthening kaupapa Māori providers
- Better coordination and navigation support

Hospital & Specialist Services

- Reducing avoidable hospitalisations
- Improving access to specialist care
- Ensuring cultural safety in hospital settings

"Whānau want connection — to culture, to trusted people, to services that understand their realities. They want Māori-led solutions, care closer to home, and a system that honours their mana."

Bowel Screening Participation — Māori Putāruru (2022-2025)

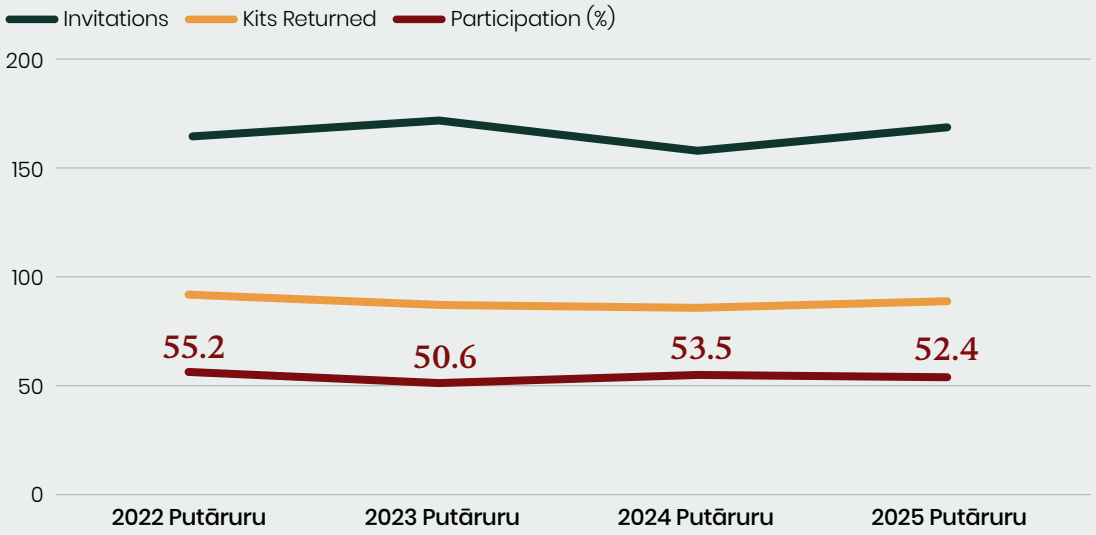


Fig 9 Source Health NZ

Breast Screening Coverage — Māori Putāruru (2022-2025)

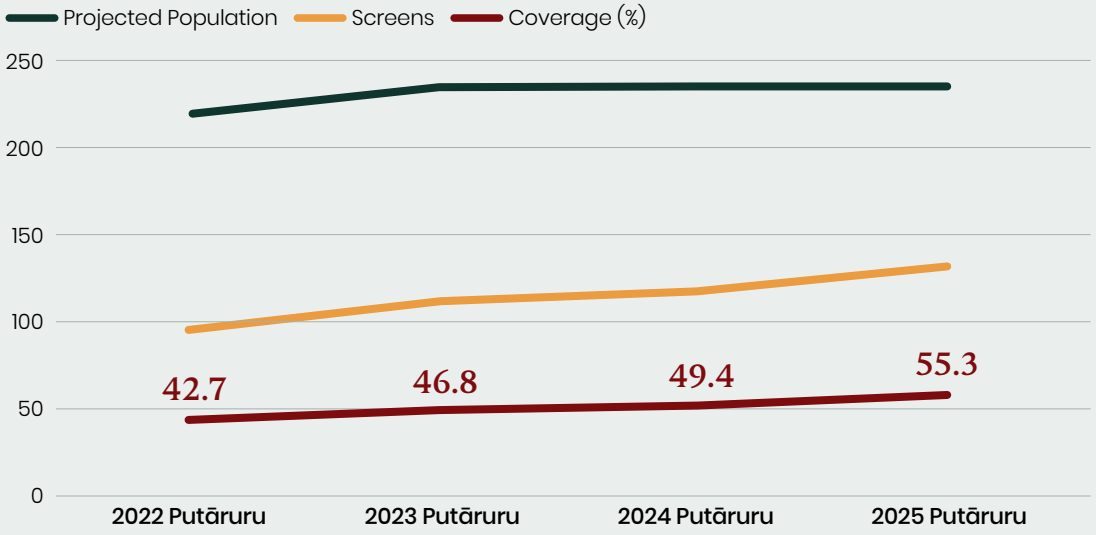


Fig 10 Source Health NZ

Cervical Screening Coverage — Māori Putāruru (2022-2025)

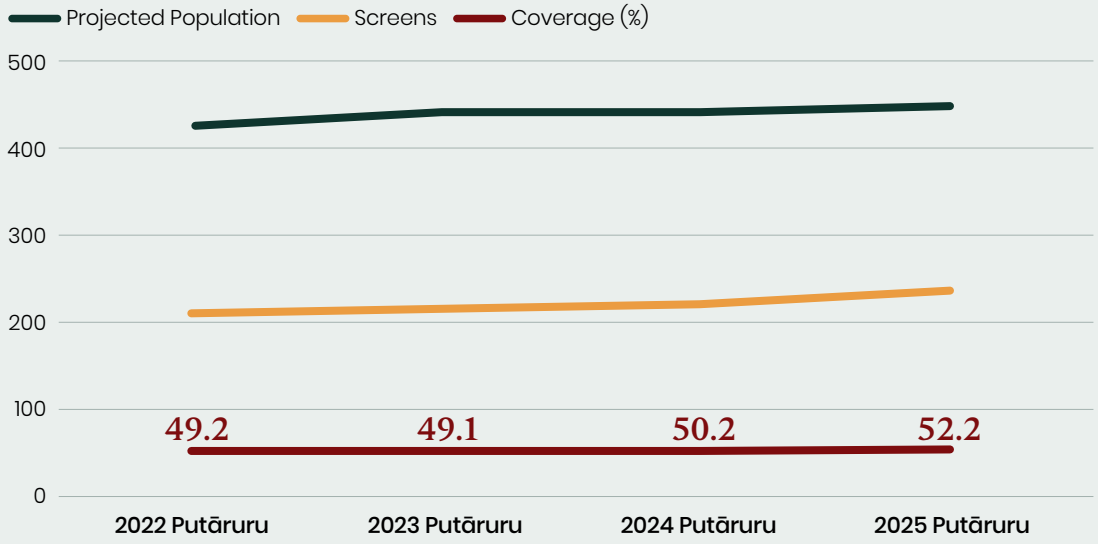


Fig 11 Source Health NZ

Source: National Cervical Screening Programme Data Warehouse, Health NZ; Stats NZ population projections. Extracted 10 February 2026. Ethnicity prioritised Māori. Coverage calculated as screens divided by projected eligible population based on HPV test date. *2025 data preliminary due to 6-month kit return window.*

Ko Ngā Wāhi e Muramura ana - Bright Spots: Inspiring Health & Social Service Achievements

Putāruru is home to a remarkable range of community-led initiatives and services making a real difference for whānau. Here are some of the most uplifting recent success stories:

Transform Aotearoa

This grassroots organisation has reached over half the local community with programmes like Building Awesome Whānau, Teenage Toolbox, daily men's support groups, and youth leadership. Their men's programme is now being piloted in other towns, showing how a small-town idea can become a regional model.

Helping Hands Clothing Hub

Founded locally, Helping Hands has supported more than 1,200 families with free clothing and essentials. Entirely community-driven and stigma-free, it's been recognised as a Kiwibank Local Hero medallist for its impact on dignity and mental wellbeing.

South Waikato Community Health Transport

This volunteer-led, koha-based service provides door-to-door transport for medical appointments, breaking down barriers for people with limited mobility and ensuring equitable access to care.

SWPICS — Outreach

The South Waikato Pacific Islands Community Services Trust now runs monthly clinics at The Plaza, offering free immunisation, advocacy, Well Child, sexual health, family services, and Whānau Ora. This brings essential services directly to the community, supporting equity for Pacific and wider whānau.

Rongoā Tuku Iho — Business Awards Finalist

A kaupapa Māori health provider, Rongoā Tuku Iho offers culturally based healing and recovery services in Putāruru. Their recent recognition as a finalist in the 2025 Pride in Business & Community Awards highlights the growing value of indigenous health services in the community.

Raukawa Charitable Trust — Focused Successes

Raukawa clinical and pēpi hub underpins several of the town's most impactful kaupapa Māori initiatives, providing a stable base for early years support, mental health services, kaumātua wellbeing, and whānau-centred programmes.

- **Family Start Programme:** Home visiting support for children's growth, health, and family wellbeing.
- **Mental Health & Addiction Services:** Culturally safe, confidential support for mental health, addiction, and harm reduction.
- **Waka Taua Wellness Programme:** Marae-based support for young men with alcohol and drug dependencies, grounded in tikanga Māori.
- **Kai Ora, Māra Kai Programme:** Partnership with the Community Garden to provide fresh kai to over 180 whānau.
- **Well Child Tamariki Ora Service:** Free health visits and support for children under five.
- **Koroua & Kui Service:** Support for kaumātua, addressing health and social isolation for elders.

Ngā Kitenga Matua
- Key Findings

Ngā Whakapātaritari - Challenges

Putāruru is a close-knit rural town with a strong sense of community, but residents face several health and social challenges that shape everyday life. The population is around 4,600, with about a third identifying as Māori, and the town has an ageing demographic, which brings unique pressures for health services, housing, and workforce planning.

Health Inequities:

Māori in Putāruru experience higher rates of chronic conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and respiratory illnesses. The avoidable death rate for Māori is significantly higher than for non-Māori, and Māori account for a disproportionate share of emergency department visits. Access to culturally appropriate care and indigenous models of healing remains limited, despite growing demand.

Barriers to Access:

Getting to specialist appointments often means long journeys, sometimes up to six hours round trip for hospital care. Transport is a major barrier, especially for older adults and those without reliable vehicles. GP appointments can have long wait times, and cost pressures sometimes prevent people from seeking care when they need it.

Workforce Shortages:

Faces critical shortages of doctors, nurses, mental health workers, and other health professionals. Recruitment and retention are difficult due to rural location and limited housing options. Existing staff often work extra shifts, and burnout is common. There is a lack of investment in growing Māori and Pasifika practitioners, and few formal pathways for local youth to enter health careers.

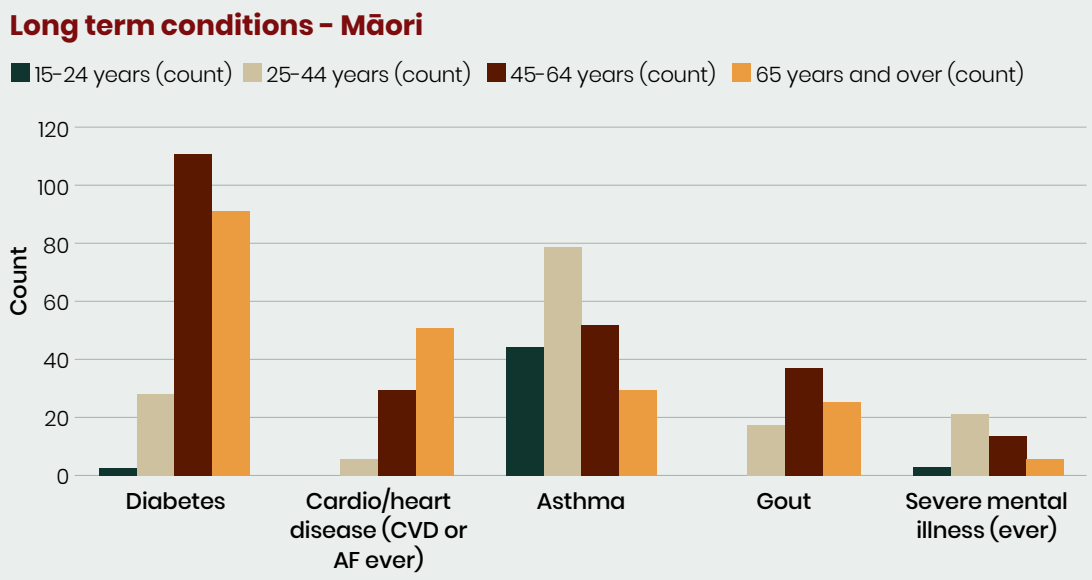


Fig 12. Selected long-term condition prevalence among enrolled Māori, PHO (counts by age group)

Digital Divide:

Online consultations and digital health services are not accessible or culturally appropriate for many older residents and low-income families. Data collection is challenging, making it harder to track health outcomes and plan improvements.

Access to communications

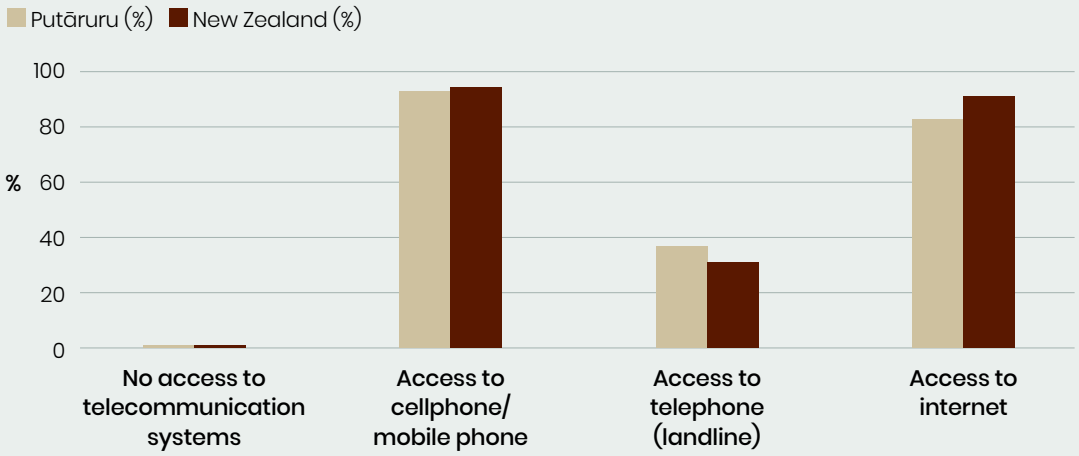


Fig 13. Household access to telecommunication systems, and New Zealand (2023 Census)

Social Deprivation & Rurality:

Like much of South Waikato, faces high levels of social deprivation. Many families struggle with housing affordability, food security, and limited employment opportunities. The deprivation index for the district is among the highest in New Zealand, with 75% of the population at level nine or ten.

Deprivation

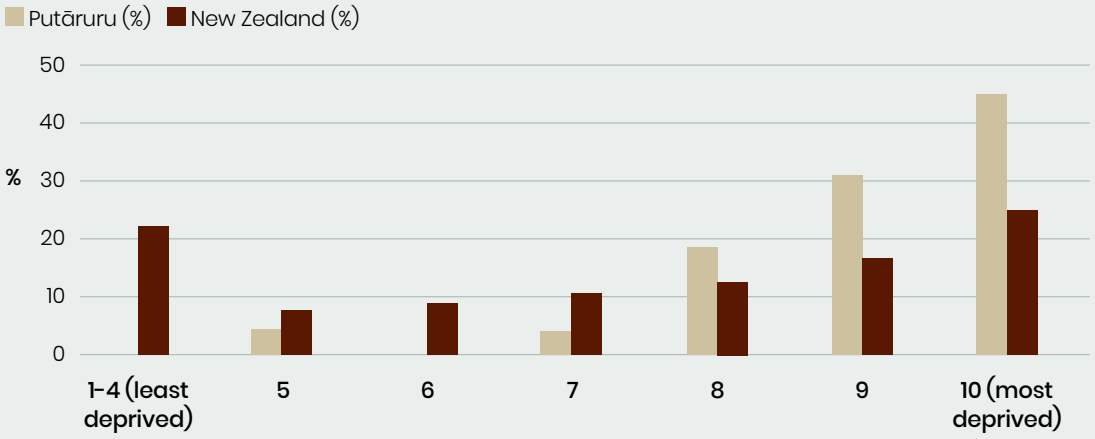


Fig 14. Population distribution by socioeconomic deprivation (NZDep), and New Zealand

Mental Health & Youth Services:

Mental health support for youth and adults is stretched thin, with long wait times and limited crisis response. Community organizations do their best but face funding insecurity and lack integrated services tailored to local needs.

Funding Instability:

Short-term contracts and siloed funding streams make it hard for providers to plan and deliver consistent care. Many whānau present with complex needs, but providers often work outside contract specifications without adequate resourcing.

Despite these challenges, the community spirit in Putāruru shines through. Local providers, volunteers, and whānau work together to support one another, but there is a clear need for more sustainable investment, better transport solutions, and culturally responsive care. Addressing these issues will help ensure that everyone in Putāruru has the opportunity to live well and thrive.

> **"The South Waikato District is one of the most deprived communities in New Zealand. The deprivation index scale, from Environment Health Intelligence New Zealand (EHINZ), categorises the most deprivation at level 10 with the least deprivation at level 1.75% of the South Waikato District population has a deprivation index level of nine or ten."**

Ngā Mārohirohi - Strengths

People are the greatest asset in . This is a town where neighbours look out for each other, and community groups, iwi, and local providers work together to support whānau through life's ups and downs. **"Born from the courage of Ruru, carries a legacy of protection, truth, and the wellbeing of its people."**

Collaboration and Leadership

Local organisations do not work in silos, they join forces to make sure no one is left behind. Whether it is health, social support, or education, providers regularly collaborate, sharing resources and ideas to deliver care that fits the needs of Putāruru. Community leaders, both long-standing and new, are active in local councils, marae, and interest groups, helping to shape the direction of services and advocate for the town's needs.

Iwi-led providers such as Raukawa demonstrate the impact of culturally grounded, relationship-based care that is trusted by whānau and embedded in the local community.

Midland Community Pharmacy Group works alongside Raukawa Tiwai Hauora, South Waikato Pacific Island Community Trust and local pharmacies to conduct medicine use reviews, medicine therapy assessments, medicine reconciliation and many other pharmacy related matters. MCPG is a key partner in the integrated system of care in the South Waikato. The mobility of the service contributes to the local and collaboration model in .

Whānau Voice

Service design in Putāruru is guided by feedback from whānau. People here know what good care looks like. They want

services that are culturally safe, locally responsive, and delivered by people who truly understand their community. There is a strong call for more Māori health professionals and for care that is closer to home.

Culturally Grounded Care

Putāruru is home to kaupapa Māori and Pasifika providers who deliver care that respects cultural traditions and values. Services are often provided in familiar settings: homes, marae, churches, and community halls making them more accessible and welcoming. Rongoā Māori approaches are increasingly valued, with general practice referrals into Māori healing traditions becoming more common.

> **"I was privileged to be in the care of my kaimahi, who treated me with compassion, respect and dignity. I struggle with anxiety and PTSD and I was put at ease. You have no idea how much this treatment has impacted my life."**
>
> whanau Rongoā Māori Tuku Iho

Youth and Community Engagement

Rangatahi are represented in community leadership and service design. Schools and youth programmes support mental health and resilience, helping rangatahi to thrive. Clubs and recreational groups offer opportunities for connection, movement, and nutrition education, supporting self-management and wellbeing.

Volunteerism and Holistic Support

Volunteers play a vital role in , providing outreach, transport, and peer support. Faith-based and non-profit organisations contribute to holistic care, and local champions help bridge gaps in services. These efforts create a sense of belonging and ensure that support is available for all ages from tamariki to kaumatua.

Innovation and Integrated Services

Is known for its innovative, community-driven initiatives. Programmes like Hauora Days, school-based health events, and integrated service hubs bring together health, social, and education providers to deliver care in new and effective ways. These collaborations strengthen trust and make it easier for whānau to access the support they need.

Te Reo o Ngā Whānau - Whānau Voice

Hei Ārahi i te Koke Whakamua me te Āta Whakarongo - Guiding Our Steps and Listening to What Matters the Most

Te Pūrongo o Ngā Reo O Ngā Whānau o Raukawa 2024 - Raukawa Whānau Voice Report August 2024 - Summary

1. **Hāpū māmā and pēpē, and Kahu Taurima:**
   - (a) provide equitable and continued funding for Kahu Taurima
   - (b) support comprehensive, culturally responsive care models that integrate Te Ao Māori and Western practices, ensuring māmā and pēpē receive holistic support
   - (c) expand access to these services so that whānau receive the care they need during critical periods, reducing disparities in maternal and child health outcomes
2. **Te oranga hinengaro and Whakapakiri ai ngā Rangatahi:**
   - (a) provide equitable and continued funding for Whakapakiri ai ngā Rangatahi
   - (b) increase the availability of community-based te oranga hinengaro services tailored to the cultural needs of the Raukawa rohe population
   - (c) design services to support the individuals and their whānau
   - (d) support early intervention initiatives that focus on preventing mental health issues before they escalate, particularly for tāne
   - (e) integrate trauma-informed care into services to address the historical injustices and cultural dislocation
3. **High need areas:**
   - a) People living with chronic health conditions:
     - (i) support community-based and easily accessible services
     - (ii) offer localised management of chronic conditions
     - (iii) enhance secondary prevention efforts
     - (iv) empower whānau to take an active role in managing and improving their health
   - b) Rangatahi and kaumātua:
     - (i) provide early intervention, mental health support, and behavioural services tailored to rangatahi
     - (ii) support kaumātua that address both physical health and social isolation
   - c) Service integration and workforce shortages:
     - (i) support growing stable and effective workforce capable of delivering high quality care
     - (ii) whānau with complex health needs experience seamless care

He Whakarāpopoto o te Pūrongo nā Te Tiratū i takea mai i ngā Reo o Ngā Whānau April 2025 - Te Tiratū April 2025 Whānau Voice Report – Summary

Whānau across Tokoroa & Putāruru and the wider rohe shared clear and consistent experiences of a health system that is difficult to access and slow to respond, particularly for those living with long-term conditions, financial pressure, and rural isolation.

Access and waiting

- Long waits for GP appointments, referrals, specialist care, and surgery were commonly reported.
- Delays were described as having a direct impact on health, wellbeing, and the ability to work or care for whānau.
- When primary care is unavailable or unaffordable, whānau often turn to hospital services for non-urgent care as a last resort.

Cost pressures

- The cost of healthcare was identified as a major and ongoing barrier.
- Whānau described having to balance appointments, prescriptions, and travel costs against essentials such as kai, power, and housing.
- Some reported delaying care, rationing medication, or waiting until conditions worsened before seeking help.
- These pressures were described as affecting dignity and stability, not just finances.

Transport, distance, and rurality

- Travel time and distance to services were significant barriers, particularly for specialist and hospital care.
- Whānau described long, exhausting days involving transport coordination and extended waiting times.
- These challenges were especially difficult for kaumātua, māmā, pēpi, and whānau with complex or multiple health needs.

Cultural safety and connection

- Whānau consistently reported more positive experiences when care was delivered by Māori health workers or kaupapa Māori services.
- Feeling understood, respected, and treated with mana was seen as central to healing and trust.
- Some experiences highlighted care that felt impersonal or lacking compassion, reinforcing the need for culturally grounded, relational models of care.

What whānau say would make a difference?

- More local doctors, appointments, and reduced waiting times.
- Lower costs and fewer financial barriers to care.
- Better transport options and services closer to home.
- Stronger coordination and communication between services.
- Whānau-centred, holistic approaches that recognise the links between health, housing, income, education, and cultural identity.

Overall, the Whānau Voice sends a clear message: challenges stack, pressure begins early, and solutions must be local, integrated, and community-led. Whānau know what good care looks like and are calling for a system that listens, responds, and works alongside them to support their pathways to wellbeing.

"It is not just one thing—it is everything. Whānau know what good care looks like. The system just needs to catch up. These stories are not isolated—they are consistent, urgent, and reflect the reality that for many whānau, the health system is not delivering what it promised."

Te Tiratū Whānau Voice Report May 2024

Ngā Whakaaro Whakamutunga - Final Reflections

Putāruru is not a place defined by statistics alone. It is defined by its people, by whānau who show up for one another, by kaumātua who carry deep wisdom, by rangatahi who hold the promise of what comes next, and by community leaders and providers who continue the mahi even when the system is stretched thin.

This report has made one thing unmistakably clear. **Whānau know what good care looks like**. They have spoken with clarity and consistency about what supports wellbeing, care that is culturally grounded, close to home, relationship-based, and delivered by people who understand the realities of rural life. These are not abstract aspirations. They are practical, proven, and already working in, often driven by volunteers and under-resourced kaupapa Māori and community providers.

The challenges outlined in this report: health inequities, workforce shortages, transport barriers, housing stress, and funding instability are serious. Left unaddressed, they will continue to widen the gaps in health outcomes, particularly for Māori and high-deprivation whānau. But this report is not a story of deficit. It is a story of **potential**, of **what becomes possible when communities are trusted, resourced, and empowered to lead their own solutions**.

Already holds the seeds of a stronger, fairer health and wellbeing system. The bright spots featured in this report show what happens when care is designed with whānau, not for them; when services wrap around people instead of expecting people to navigate complexity alone; and when Indigenous knowledge, cultural identity, and community connection are recognised as strengths not add-ons.

The path forward is clear. Equity will not be achieved through short-term fixes or distant decision-making. It will be achieved by long-term investment in local solutions, by growing and supporting a workforce that reflects the community it serves, by bringing services closer to home, and by honouring Te Tiriti through genuine partnership with iwi and kaupapa Māori providers.

Does not need to be “saved.” It needs to be **backed**.

If we listen to the voices in this report and act with courage, we have the opportunity to build a system that is not only more effective, but more humane, one that upholds mana, strengthens whānau, and ensures that every person has the opportunity to live well and flourish.

The kōrero has been shared.

The evidence is clear.

The responsibility now sits with all of us.

Whakakōpani : Ruru tangata, Ruru manawanui, Ruru Whakora i ngā uri kia puta ki te whai ao, ki te ao marama haumi e, hui e, taiki e.

He Pukatara, He Kuputoro | References/Hyperlinks

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Te Whakamahinga me te Aroā o Ngā Raraunga - Use and Interpretation of Data

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He Tūtohi Raraunga me ngā Puna Kōrero - Data Tables and Sources

Selected datasets were sourced from Stats NZ, Whaitua, PHO enrolment and condition prevalence, and other relevant sources. The tables within this report provide the quantitative foundation for the trends and signals discussed in the main sections.

The main report focuses on interpretation and implications rather than reproducing full datasets.

Ngā Tepenga Raraunga me Te Whakamāoritanga - Data Limitations and Interpretation

The data referenced in this report comes from multiple sources, including PHO datasets, national surveys, and regional indicators. These sources are not always aligned in definitions, classifications, or reporting practices. Apparent differences between datasets may therefore reflect methodological variation rather than actual differences in service delivery or population need.

In some cases, small numbers and aggregation methods limit the reliability of conclusions, particularly at the local or sub-population level. Certain datasets also lack sufficient transparency to allow full interrogation of assumptions or data handling processes. Where town-level data is unavailable or suppressed for privacy reasons, regional data has been used for context only.

Accordingly, while the data provides useful directional insights, it should not be relied upon in isolation for definitive decision-making. Interpretation requires caution, contextual knowledge, and triangulation with qualitative evidence, including Whānau Voice.

Te Take me te Whakamahinga o Ngā Raraunga - Purpose and Use of Data

This report brings together Whānau Voice and a selection of health system data to understand access and system pressures in Taumarunui. The information presented is intended to support shared understanding and informed discussion, not to judge individuals, assess provider performance, or claim precise local prevalence.

- **Contextual data:** Some data in this report is regional rather than town-specific. It is included to provide context where local data is limited or suppressed, and to support understanding of system patterns.
- **Integrated perspective:** By combining local service data, regional indicators, and Whānau Voice, the report aims to illuminate pressures and access patterns without attributing causality or assessing individual behaviour.
- **Kaupapa-aligned approach:** Whānau Voice is central to understanding system pressures. Data is used to support learning and shared understanding, not to define communities, measure individual behaviour, or evaluate service effort.

Ngā Tepenga - Limitations

This report has the following limitations:

- Reliance on secondary data sources
- Limited Māori-specific town-level data for some health indicators
- Absence of service-level performance analysis
- Absence of cost, funding, or workforce modelling

These limitations are consistent with the purpose of the report, which is to support system sense-making rather than programme evaluation.

The information within this report is subject to what was sourced at the time of drafting it noting that services change.

Ngā uiui e pā ana ki ngā raraunga, tukua ki: - Enquiries about data can be made here: Whakapā mai | Contact us - Te Tiratū Iwi Māori Partnership Board

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