


**NZEI  
TE RIU ROA**

# KŌRIPORIPO

**Early  
Childhood  
Education  
Workforce  
Survey  
Report**

**2024**



An aerial photograph of a boat's wake in turquoise water. The wake is a long, narrow, light-colored path that starts from the bottom center and moves towards the top of the frame. The water is a deep, vibrant turquoise color with visible ripples and small waves. The wake is a lighter, almost white, color, creating a strong contrast with the surrounding water. The wake is slightly irregular, following the path of the boat. The overall composition is vertical, with the wake running from bottom to top.

**The wake of a  
vessel on the water,  
indicating where  
it has come from  
and that it is making  
forward progress.**


*nā Paetahi Park,  
Hereturikōkā 2023*



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# FOREWORD



This year's *Kōriporipo* report on the state of the early childhood education sector represents another landmark for our fast-changing early childhood system. The report is based on a robust dataset, clearly lays out the significant issues faced by the sector, and suggests evidence-based solutions to ensure we can provide the highest quality care and education for tamariki in Aotearoa. This year's report also adds the voice of parents for the first time, finding a strong connection between the interests of parents and those of educators.

As *Kōriporipo* goes to print this year, early childhood education is at a crossroads, with crucial decisions being made by Government about its priorities for the sector. Cuts to pay parity for relievers and those on fixed-term arrangements target qualified professionals doing essential work during a cost-of-living crisis. Such cuts are deplorable and underline whose interests are being served.

The work of teachers and support staff in our early childhood education centres is critical to our communities, supporting equitable workforce participation and lifelong positive outcomes for children. In Aotearoa, we have a proud history of being global leaders in some areas of early learning. *Te Whāriki*, our early childhood curriculum, is widely considered the international benchmark for equitable and culturally appropriate early learning, yet the funding and regulatory settings necessary to deliver this curriculum are lacking.

This report is hard-hitting. It can be shocking to read some of the quotes and statistics. However, they speak to the daily lived experience of the experts – the teachers and support staff who pour their lives into educating and caring for our youngest learners.

Let's take the lessons of the thousands of kaiako and kaimahi who contributed to this report and place children at the heart of policy making about early childhood education. Our teachers and support staff need an early childhood system that enables the passion and values that brought them to the sector to come alive. Our tamariki need a more equitable system with better funding and rules that keep them safe to enable the best learning at the start of their journey.

Let's not let them down.




Stephanie Mills  
Korimako Tangiata | National Secretary  
September 2024

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Kōriporipo* 2024 generated an outstanding response from the sector, with more than 2,700 people taking the time to complete the survey. This cements *Kōriporipo* as the largest workforce survey in early childhood education and a key indicator for issues in New Zealand's early childhood education system.





*Kōriporipo* was always intended to be an ongoing survey. This year's edition begins to consider how the sector is changing and the impacts this is having on early childhood education kaiako, kaimahi, and ākonga.

As we outline below, a lot has happened since we launched the inaugural *Kōriporipo* survey report in September 2023. Sadly, although perhaps unsurprisingly, things appear to have gotten worse. As with last year's survey, the results paint a grim picture of a sector in crisis. We have organised the findings into three broad categories that emerged from the analysis: new year, more pressures; a tale of two sectors; and regulatory risks.

## **New year, more pressures**

- Last year, we found that kaiako and kaimahi in the early childhood education sector faced unsustainable and growing workloads. This year's survey finds that the pressure appears to be mounting, with 92.9% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that increased workloads have caused teachers to be more stressed at work, up from 89.5% last year.
- As with last year, improving teacher-child ratios was still the top priority for respondents. 81.7% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement 'Current regulated minimum ratios are realistic', up slightly from 80% last year. There was also a notable increase in respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that 'Current regulated minimum ratios do not enable the best quality learning environment for tamariki', at 93.4%, up from 89.7% last year.
- Increasingly complex student learning needs remain the key factor putting pressure on the sector. In response to the statement 'In the last few years, children have needed more social, emotional and learning support', 92.1% agreed or strongly agreed, up from 89% last year.

## **A tale of two sectors**

- A clear difference between private and community-based providers emerged in the survey responses. In general, results from the private sector appeared to be worse. For example, when asked whether 'increased workload has caused educators to be more stressed at work', 65.8% of private sector respondents strongly agreed with this statement, while only 58.4% of community-based respondents strongly agreed.
- Private sector respondents appeared to be under more pressure than their community counterparts, were more stressed, and felt less valued. 36.4% of respondents from the private centres said they frequently thought about leaving the sector over the past six months, compared with 28.2% of community-based respondents.

## **Regulatory risks**

- A government focus on deregulation encouraged us to add new questions to ask respondents how they felt about it. 73.3% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I am worried about the health and safety implications of deregulation'.

- We also asked the following open-ended question: ‘If regulations related to safety checks such as sleep checks, sunscreen checks, nappy changes and other day-to-day requirements were removed, what concerns would you have?’ This question received an overwhelming response. The number of responses noting serious injury or death was alarming. This speaks to the massive risks associated with deregulation in the early childhood education sector.

Alongside *Kōriporipo 2024*, we ran a parent survey that showed a strong alignment between the interests of parents and those of early childhood education kaiako and kaimahi. The results of the parent survey are summarised further on in this report.

As with last year’s report, we conclude *Kōriporipo 2024* with a series of recommendations. These six recommendations have arisen from thousands of survey responses, alongside claims submitted and endorsed across all parts of the sector and workshopped by NZEI Te Riu Roa member leaders for Fair Pay Agreement negotiations. These are described in the final section of the report and are summarised here.

### **1. Make ratios fit for purpose**

We recommend ratios are immediately reviewed, with a new band for two-year-olds and improved ratios at every band (as per the table in the recommendations section), alongside an implementation timeline to grow the teaching workforce to accommodate this.

### **2. Value teachers**

We recommend an immediate move to a centralised pay system with full pay parity for all teachers, including relievers and those on fixed-term contracts, to address the teacher shortage, to properly respect and recognise teachers as the professionals they are, and to retain qualified staff. We also recommend the introduction of free training and paid placements to encourage more early childhood teachers into the profession.

### **3. Safety comes first**

We recommend that health and safety of children, and the workplace health and safety of staff, are non-negotiable bottom lines for the outcomes of any government process, including for regulatory and funding review processes. Government should be required to guarantee that any changes will not increase the risk of harm for a single child or staff member in licensed early childhood education services.

### **4. Make early childhood education free, accessible, and culturally appropriate**

We recommend that government work towards full public provision of early childhood education. This includes exploring the actual cost of services by consulting with the community-based, not-for-profit sector to deliver adequate funding for education and ensure the sustainability of the sector. Payroll for teachers and staff should be centralised and fees should be capped, with a fee cap modelled on the Canadian system (which provides for a cap of \$10 per day per child), progressing to fees-free provision over a period of five years.



We also recommend measures to ensure the diversity of services is sustained and expanded, to ensure culturally appropriate services for Māori and Pacific tamariki, and to ensure not-for-profit community provision is retained and expanded. Make early childhood centres community hubs, where wrap-around support can be provided, to ensure whānau and caregivers can access the support needed for their tamariki.

## **5. Learning support for all who need it**

Staffing and resourcing for the Early Intervention Service needs to be drastically increased in order to bring wait times and waitlists down; this should happen immediately. Ultimately, children should be waiting no longer than one month to receive the support they need. In the mid-term, a comprehensive and dedicated early childhood education learning support service should be built up and tasked with assessing and allocating learning support for early childhood education.

## **6. Value all kaimahi and support staff and the contribution they make to early childhood education**

We recommend that support staff, such as unqualified teachers, administrators, cooks, and cleaners, are paid no less than the Living Wage. They also need a pathway to both professional development and qualifications, receiving higher pay as their experience grows. This should be funded by government and ring-fenced in any operational funding.

Throughout the report we have woven some of the open-ended responses we received, including those from a new question asking early childhood kaiako and kaimahi what it is that they love about their work. While these quotes represent only a tiny fraction of what we received, participants should know that every open-ended response was read by our research team. We thank you for your contribution and for the important mahi you do.



# INTRODUCTION: A SECTOR AT A CROSSROADS

A year is a long time in early childhood education. Certainly, for the thousands of ākonga in centres around the motu, a single year forms a significant portion, if not the majority, of their lives so far. Likewise for the parents and whānau of these precious pēpē as they watch their little ones grow and develop in leaps and bounds, face and overcome challenges, and day by day continue their journey of becoming themselves; a year spans a myriad of magical moments. Early childhood education kaiako and kaimahi share in this process, supporting and facilitating an education in the fundamentals of life – one of the great joys and privileges of their mahi.



Education systems, on the other hand, tend to change at a pace that feels more glacial. Over time this change might be apparent, yet not perceptible in the day-to-day. It takes stepping back for a moment and taking stock to realise the scale of change and, importantly, its direction. Considering such system change and its impact on the work of early childhood kaiako, kaimahi, and ultimately ākonga, is a key reason NZEI Te Riu Roa decided to launch the annual *Kōriporipo* early childhood education workforce survey in September last year. It is, therefore, a pleasure to be back for the second year and to present *Kōriporipo* 2024.

It is no exaggeration to say it has been a huge year for the early childhood education sector.

When the last version of *Kōriporipo* was launched, it was less than two months before the 2023 General Election. The impacts of Covid-19 were still front of mind for many educators, as they certainly still are; however, the rhythms of the 'new normal' were beginning to find their groove. The years leading up to that point had seen record government investment in early childhood education – notably in the stepped roll-out of a pay parity scheme for early childhood education kaiako that finally, after decades of advocacy and campaigning by NZEI Te Riu Roa members, recognised their right to be paid at the same rates as their colleagues in primary and secondary schools. As of March 2024, 96% of early childhood education services had opted-in to some form of pay parity – a significant achievement.


Action on implementing *He taonga te tamaiti* | *Every child a taonga*, the early learning action plan for 2019–2029, however, had been slow. Critically, work toward the plan's recommended improvements to teacher-child ratios seemed to have stalled due to fiscal constraint and a lack of political will. Respondents to *Kōriporipo* 2023 told us that improving ratios was their top priority for the sector.

In November 2023, early childhood education teachers in the community sector covered by the Early Childhood Education Collective Agreement (ECECA) went on strike over funding for quality early childhood education. They took a collective stand against a funding model that was unfair and unsustainable for community-based, not-for-profit centres, arguing that funding was needed to support better teacher-child ratios and to support the employment of experienced and qualified kaiako. The unworkability of existing ratios – a key finding from last year's survey – was creatively expressed by teachers burdened by the weight of up to ten toy dolls on their arms, reflecting the unrealistic expectation of 1:10 minimum teacher-child ratios for over-twos that centres are funded for.





Throughout the year, early childhood education kaiako and kaimahi were loud and proud about the passion they have for their work and the tamariki they teach. In *Kōriporipo* this year, we asked respondents: 'What is it about early childhood education that you love and/or what values or experiences inspired you to do this work?' The response was inspiring in the care and love for tamariki it demonstrated. To recognise this, we have scattered a small selection of these quotes throughout the report.



***This is the sector where you can make the biggest positive difference to the lifelong outcomes of children. It is also the sector where you work the most in partnership with the whānau for the benefit of their tamariki, and I love that about early childhood education.***



***He tamariki, he tamariki, he tamariki. Children are amazing; it is an honour to work with them.***


The broken funding model for early childhood education is an ongoing issue and one that both employers and kaiako are desperate to see addressed. There is something fundamentally wrong with a funding system that financially discourages the employment of highly qualified teachers for the simple reason that they attract a higher wage. The evidence is incontrovertible that high-quality early childhood education is linked to experienced, qualified kaiako working collaboratively in small group settings.

The answer to such funding woes being put forward by some in (and outside) the sector – doing away with pay parity – is both unsustainable and short-sighted. Paying early childhood education kaiako less is only going to drive them away from the sector and exacerbate the ongoing staffing shortage. Early childhood education kaiako in Aotearoa are so highly valued overseas that the state of Victoria is offering \$50,000 relocation grants to lure them across the ditch, where they will be paid at rates above and beyond those available at home.<sup>1</sup>

As this report is being written, the early childhood education sector is undergoing a regulatory review by the newly established Ministry for Regulation. It is the first review of its kind for any sector of the economy, driving high levels of uncertainty among early childhood education kaiako and kaimahi. It also places substantial responsibility on an organisation with no prior early childhood education experience or expertise to get things right – a tall order indeed.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 News New Zealand, 'Mass exodus': What's drawing NZ's ECE teachers to Australia?', 14 March 2024. Accessed 19 August 2024: [1news.co.nz/2024/03/14/mass-exodus-whats-drawing-nzs-ece-teachers-to-australia](https://1news.co.nz/2024/03/14/mass-exodus-whats-drawing-nzs-ece-teachers-to-australia)



There is already cause for concern in the truncated review timeline, an overreliance on anecdote in the lead-up to the review, and over the dual roles being played by the Minister of Regulation and Associate Minister of Education with responsibility for early childhood education – who are the same person – meaning he will essentially be delivering the results of the review to himself. This Minister has clearly signalled his preference for market-based and for-profit solutions to early childhood education, despite a large and growing body of evidence that shows such approaches offer lower quality and more expensive early childhood education than community-based, non-profit approaches. Concerns for the potential implications of this work saw opposition parties – Labour, Greens, and Te Pāti Māori – join forces with NZEI Te Riu Roa members for a series of public hearings for kaiako and their communities to speak up about what matters to them in early childhood education in Aotearoa.<sup>2</sup>



**Staff are in ratio doing domestic jobs like cleaning, washing, etc, instead of actively supervising children, which causes lots of fighting between children due to lack of attention. Parents expect infants' needs to be met according to their individual routines, but we're not staffed to do it.**

Removing protections to teacher pay and safety regulations are not new ideas. They are failed ideas that enable unscrupulous employers to cut corners. Ultimately, it is tamariki and staff who suffer when providers have a mandate to put profit before providing quality care and education.

What is clear from this report is that for tamariki to thrive, their interests and needs must be at the heart of all decisions made about the sector. *Te Whāriki* is a world-leading curriculum. The first 1,000 days of a child's life are the most important in determining outcomes for the future. Kōhanga Reo, Puna Reo, Pacific Language Nests, and early childhood (kindergarten, private centre, and community-based centre) teachers are trained and qualified to make sure our youngest children get the best teaching and learning. The missing pieces in Aotearoa are adequate funding to create manageable workloads and fit-for-purpose ratios, which enable learning and help retain skilled, qualified teachers. We know this is what delivers high-quality early childhood education to our tamariki.

It seems clear that the early childhood education sector in Aotearoa is currently at a crossroads. One path leads towards a scenario where profit-making is the main driver for early childhood education provision, while the other path is one that celebrates quality, accessible early childhood education for all, and puts ākonga before profits. Despite appearances, which path we take will not be decided by politicians sitting in their Wellington offices, but by the loud and strong voices of kaiako, kaimahi, and whānau across the motu joining together to create a system that our pēpē, and generations of pēpē to come, deserve.

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<sup>2</sup> RNZ, 'Labour, Greens, Te Pāti Māori target ECE regulations review', 25 July 2024. Accessed 19 August 2024: [rnz.co.nz/news/political/523085/labour-greens-te-pati-maori-target-ece-regulations-review](https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/political/523085/labour-greens-te-pati-maori-target-ece-regulations-review)



# WHAT THE SURVEY TELLS US

*Kōriporipo* 2024 largely repeats the survey distributed last year. A few questions have been added and a few removed in response to the new terrain the sector finds itself in; however, the bulk of last year's questions were repeated. We look forward to continuing the survey into the future and tracking the impact of changes on the early childhood education workforce over time.

## New year, more pressures

While we were pleased with the strong response to the survey, as with last year, the results are concerning. Indeed, there were few improvements from 2023, and the responses we received indicate a worsening situation. Respondents are still dealing with high workloads, an increased complexity of needs among ākonga, and a strong sense that current regulated minimum ratios are not fit for purpose.

***Poor ratios combined with increased diverse learning/behavioural needs... means we are no longer about teaching and learning. Kaiako are often responding to children and 'putting out fires' related to children's social emotional challenges... We have almost forgotten about what intentional teaching is like. It's exhausting and sometimes demoralising!***

The pressure appears to be mounting, with 92.9% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that increased workloads have caused educators to be more stressed at work, up from 89.5% last year. 78.8% of respondents said their workloads had increased in the last few years, down marginally from the 80.5% of respondents last year who said their workloads had increased.

***We never get the 10-min breaks that are in our contracts – never.***

Respondents were also concerned that increased workloads have compromised the ability of educators to provide high-quality early learning, with 87.6% agreeing or strongly agreeing, up from 84.5% last year.

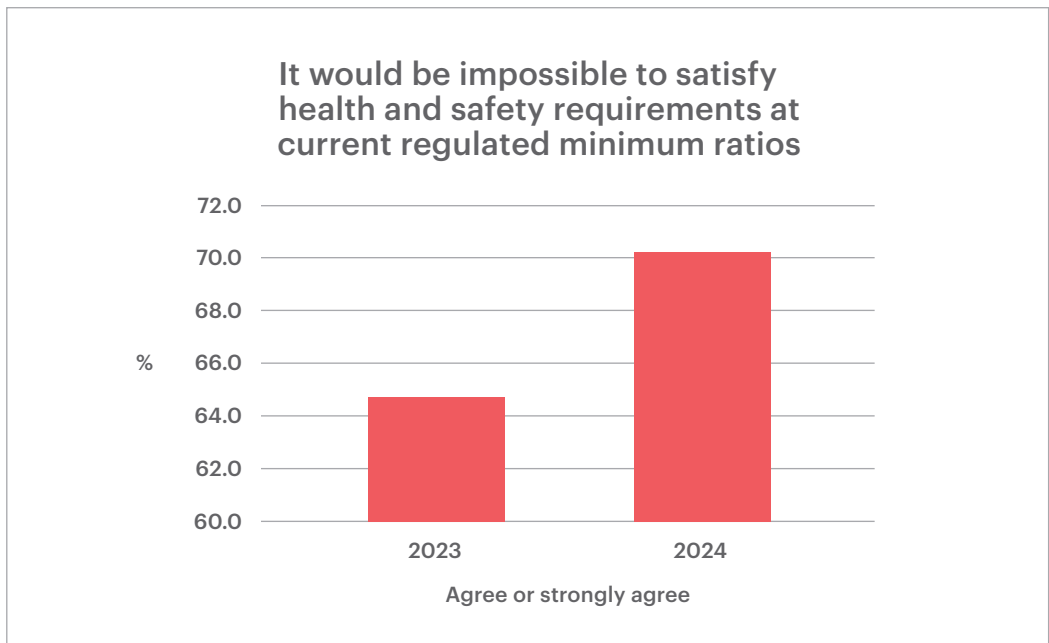
Alongside the high expectations of parents on kaiako (74.5% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed these have increased, up from 73.1% last year), increasingly complex student learning needs remain the key factor putting pressure on the sector. In response to the statement 'In the last few years, children have needed more social, emotional and learning support', 92.1% agreed or strongly agreed, up from 89.0% last year.



Data recently released to NZEI Te Riu Roa shows wait times for the Early Intervention Service increasing nearly 20% in the year to June, from an average of 105 to 126 calendar days. The data also showed significant discrepancies for wait times between regions, with some much higher than the national average. Tāmaki Herenga Tāngata (north and west Auckland), for example, had the highest wait time of 183 days – that is six months; far too long for children to be waiting to receive this vital service. These long wait times are being driven by the understaffing and under-resourcing of learning support services.

As with last year, improving teacher-child ratios was still the top priority for respondents. This is reflective of the above pressures. Every qualified and experienced kaiako on the floor makes a huge difference to the learning experience of ākonga and the ability for kaiako to meet their needs. 81.7% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement ‘Current regulated minimum ratios are realistic’, up slightly from 80% last year. There was also a notable increase in respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that ‘Current regulated minimum ratios do not enable the best quality learning environment for tamariki’, at 93.4%, up from 89.7% last year.

Ratios are also a key regulatory factor that impact how safe centres are for tamariki and kaiako. 70.2% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that ‘It would be impossible to satisfy health and safety requirements at current regulated minimum ratios’. This was up significantly from 64.7% last year.



It is important to give pause to this point, given the strong push for deregulation the sector is currently experiencing. No responsible person would argue that the answer to concerns around workload and ‘regulatory burden’ would be to reduce the level of health and safety in centres. The risks are simply too high and the pēpē too precious to play loose with health and safety requirements. However, improving the ratio of qualified teachers-children is an effective way to make centres safer places for tamariki.

**Children who are in need of more learning support are often overlooked as we are too busy working on 'crowd control'. As teachers, we are seeing more children who are in need of additional learning support. However, the wait for referral takes time, and we are unable to support these children as we are busy working on 'crowd control', making sure other children are safe and not hurting others or hurting themselves.**

**Children need support to learn social and emotional skills with a patient practitioner. When there are 60 children running around, there is no time to develop those vital skills and children are left fending for themselves, often in a state of stress. Some experience regular fight-or-flight responses to the chaotic environments we have created, permanently damaging their brain development and causing them lifelong issues.**

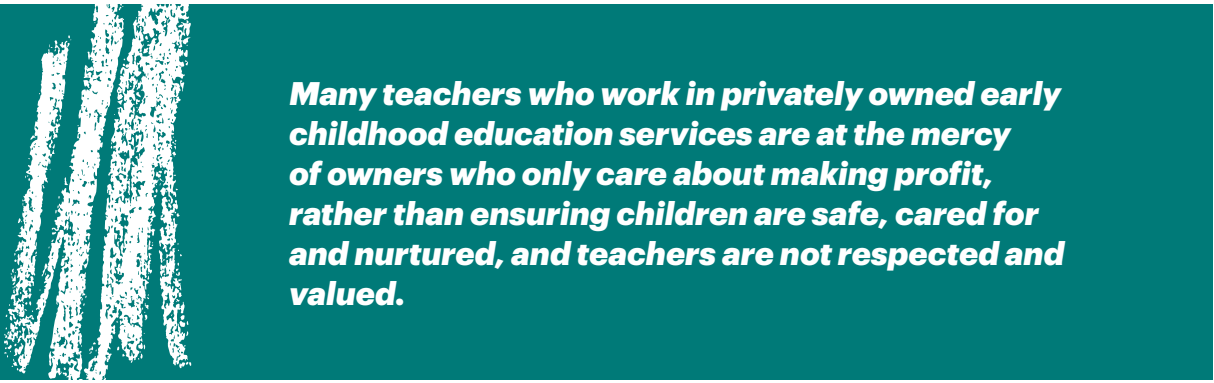


Given the importance of ratios to early childhood education kaiako and kaimahi, as well as the Government's focus on deregulation, we attempted to gather more nuance around the ratio question by asking respondents whether they agreed with the statement 'In-room ratios (as opposed to centre-wide ratios) would make a positive difference to my centre and children'. 63.1% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, suggesting that this could be an impactful regulatory change. It was revealing when isolating responses from the private and community sectors, with results being more pronounced for the private sector with 77.5% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing, against 54.2% for the community sector.

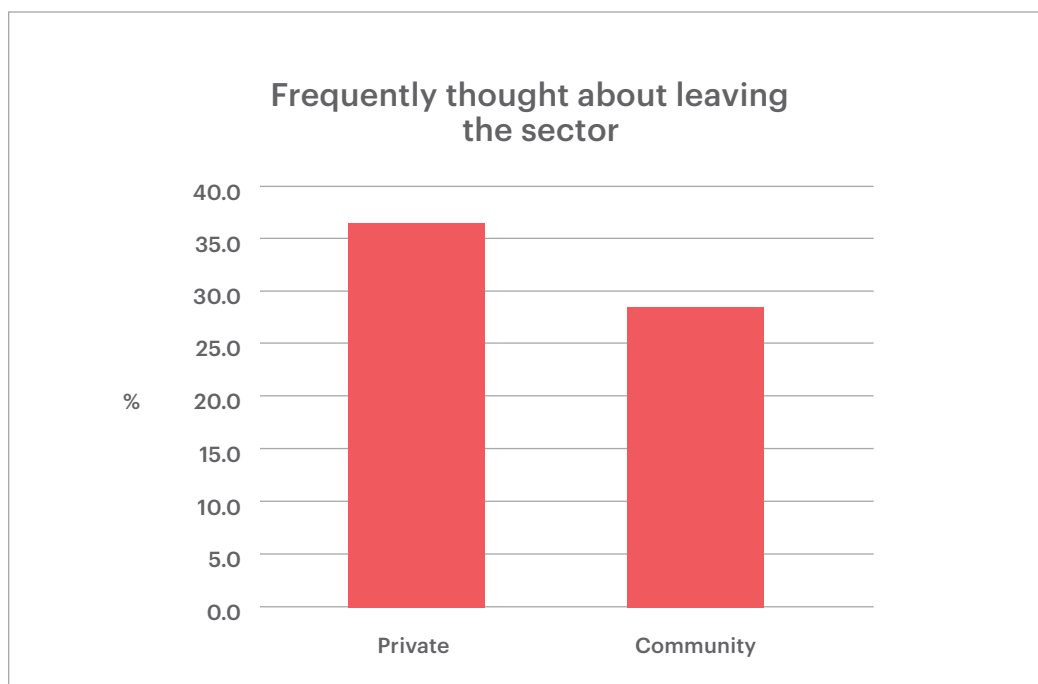
## A tale of two sectors

Differences between the private and community-based early childhood education providers were more apparent in this year's survey. A larger proportion of kindergarten kaiako in the sample (39.3%, up from 36.3% in 2023) and a corresponding decrease in the share of respondents from the private sector (35.6%, down from 40% in 2023) meant it was necessary to extend the analysis and compare private sector responses against those from community-based respondents. This was, in part, to see the effect this changed sample had on overall results. What we found were stark differences between these parts of the sector.

In general, results appeared to be worse from the private sector. Private sector respondents appeared to be under more pressure than their community counterparts, were more stressed, and felt less valued. For example, 36.4% of respondents from private centres said they frequently thought about leaving the sector over the past six months, compared with 28.2% of community-based respondents.



***Many teachers who work in privately owned early childhood education services are at the mercy of owners who only care about making profit, rather than ensuring children are safe, cared for and nurtured, and teachers are not respected and valued.***



***In the past six months, I have heard first-hand from at least a dozen teachers wanting to resign from the profession because of the stress they're under, due to workload and lack of support with children with additional needs, including behaviour.***

A clear difference between private and community-based providers was seen when respondents were asked whether 'increased workload has caused educators to be more stressed at work'. 65.8% of private sector respondents strongly agreed with this statement, while only 58.4% of community-based respondents strongly agreed.

57.3% of respondents from the private sector said that most days they felt like they didn't have enough time to complete everything required of their roles, compared with 50.6% from the community sector. Granted, these are both poor results, but they indicate higher levels of pressure on the private sector workforce.

When asked whether they agree with the statement 'Staff are increasingly subject to complex regulations that increase workload', 73% of private sector respondents agreed or strongly agreed, compared with 66.7% of community sector respondents.

Respondents from the community sector were more likely to agree with the statement 'My role is held in high esteem by my community', with 43.7% agreeing or strongly agreeing. Sadly, just 29.6% of respondents from the private sector agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

Community sector respondents were also more likely to agree with the statement 'When I wake up, I feel excited about going to work', with 34.7% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing, against 23.5% for the private sector.



***I am passionate about providing low-cost/free state-run education through kindergarten. I believe my role is to advocate for all tamariki and provide support to families. I love that I can make a meaningful difference to the lives of tamariki who may not otherwise receive quality education.***

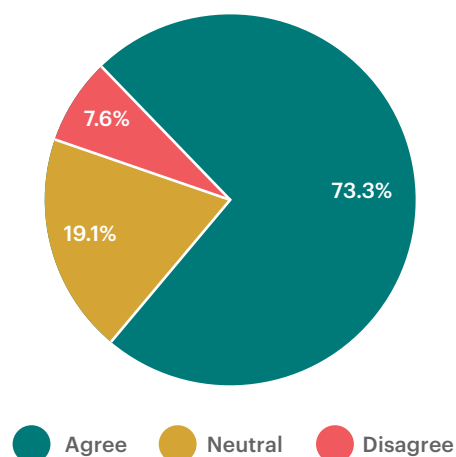
In some areas, the difference between the private and community sectors was less pronounced. For example, in responding to the question 'I often sacrifice my own wellbeing at work to ensure tamariki get what they need', 76.3% of community sector respondents agreed or strongly agreed, against 77.5% for the private sector. This demonstrates the steadfast dedication of early childhood kaiako and kaimahi to their mahi and to meeting the diverse needs of tamariki. It is, however, an unsustainable situation leading to burnout, and ultimately, people leaving the sector.

## Regulatory risks

Regulations are front and centre in 2024, with the early childhood education sector forming the target of the newly created Ministry for Regulation's first regulatory review. This comes with profound risks, given the potential impacts of regulatory failure on the health and safety of ākonga and noting the absence of early childhood education expertise within the Ministry for Regulation.

We asked respondents how they felt about the possibility of deregulation in the sector. 73.3% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I am worried about the health and safety implications of deregulation'.

**I am worried about the health and safety implications of deregulation**





***I hear lots of horror stories about private centres. But being community-based, we are of better quality. I think that needs to be promoted to ensure our survival. We are about education not profit, which is the way it should be.***

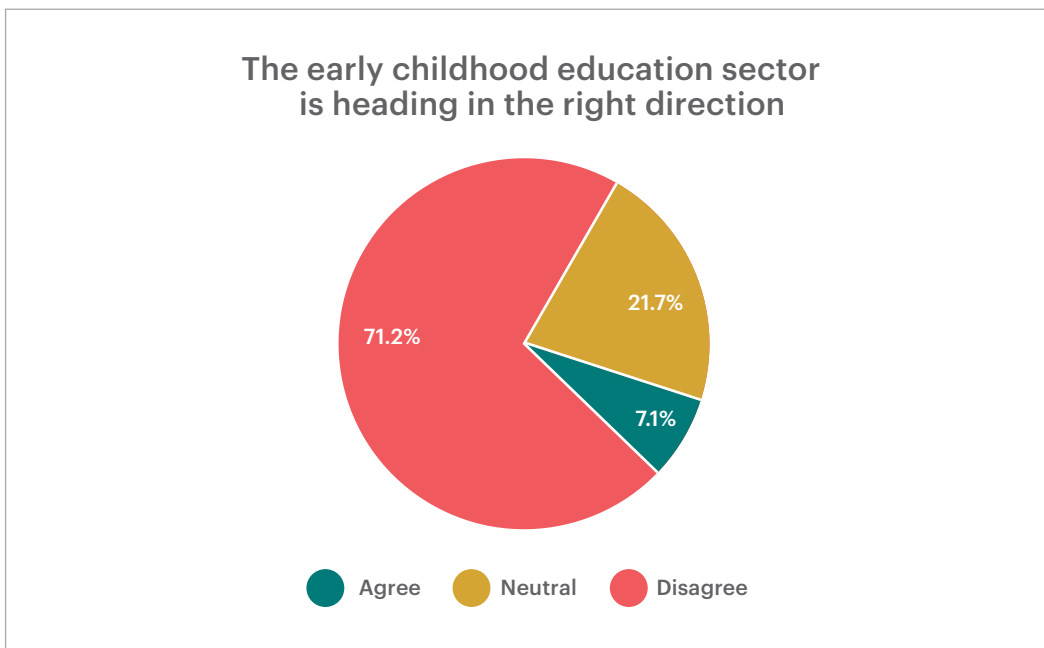
***I have, as an administrator, been increasingly asked to work to cover kaiako absences when relievers have not been able to be found. This impacts both my ability to do my own work and concerns me as I am untrained and do not usually work as a reliever, so am not always aware of the processes that need to be followed.***

This is a concerning figure, considering that it comes from those working at the 'chalkface' of early childhood education and for whom health and safety is a fundamental aspect of their job. People often refer to the 'leaky homes' crisis of the early 2000s as an example of the risks associated with regulatory failure. Billions of dollars of damage caused through poor regulatory management of the construction sector, however, pales in comparison to the potential cost of regulatory mismanagement in early childhood education. Just one pēpē harmed through regulatory mismanagement of the early childhood education sector is one too many.

In *Kōriporipo 2024*, we asked the following open-ended question: 'If regulations related to safety checks such as sleep checks, sunscreen checks, nappy changes and other day-to-day requirements were removed, what concerns would you have?'

This question received an overwhelming response that would warrant an in-depth analysis beyond the scope of the present report. The number of responses noting serious injury or death was alarming. This speaks to the massive risks associated with deregulation in the early childhood education sector.

It is perhaps then of little surprise that 71.2% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, 'The early childhood education sector is heading in the right direction'.



As with *Kōriporipo 2023*, at the end of this report, we make a series of recommendations. One of the recommendations for *Kōriporipo 2024* is that the Ministry for Regulation puts the safety of children as a non-negotiable bottom line for the regulatory review it has recently undertaken. Any recommendations for deregulation need to come with a guarantee that they will not harm a single child.



***Death. Whānau need to know these are accurate. We are talking about tamariki here, taonga, the future ... Every living thing deserves this respect.***

***That the environments wouldn't be safe and that we would more likely have children getting hurt, if not death, if these safety checks weren't in place.***

***Have we not learnt from the past?***



## The sample

The survey was distributed in July 2024 via local early childhood education networks and social media platforms. Over the five weeks it was open, it was completed by 2,774 early childhood education kaiako and kaimahi, 15.3% of whom whakapapa Māori.

Most respondents had been working in the sector for some time. 23.3% had been working in the sector between eight and 14 years. 20.9% had been working in the sector for between 14 and 20 years, while 31.2% had been working in the sector for more than 20 years – this was up 4.2% from last year.


The largest part of the sector represented in the sample was kindergarten (39.3%), followed by private education and care (35.6%), and community-based education and care (16.9%). Kōhanga Reo, Pacific Language Nests, church-based, and home-based represented under 1% each, while Puna Reo was just over 1%. Playcentre respondents represented about 2% of the sample.

Qualified and certificated teachers represented the largest percentage of respondents at 56.2%. Head teachers represented 15%, followed by 7% for centre managers. Dozens of other roles, from administrators to cooks, were represented in the sample.

Most respondents were in permanent full-time positions at 65.2%, down 2.6% from last year. At 23.7% of the sample, permanent part-time positions increased by 3.2% from last year. 6% of the sample were in some form of reliever position, down from 7.9% last year.



***Being able to make a difference in young tamariki. Ensuring our Pasifika and Māori learners' education is of high quality, and they grow up to be proud of who they are, their language, identity and culture. Inspiring other kaiako to be the best they can be and love learning and growing their cultural knowledge.***

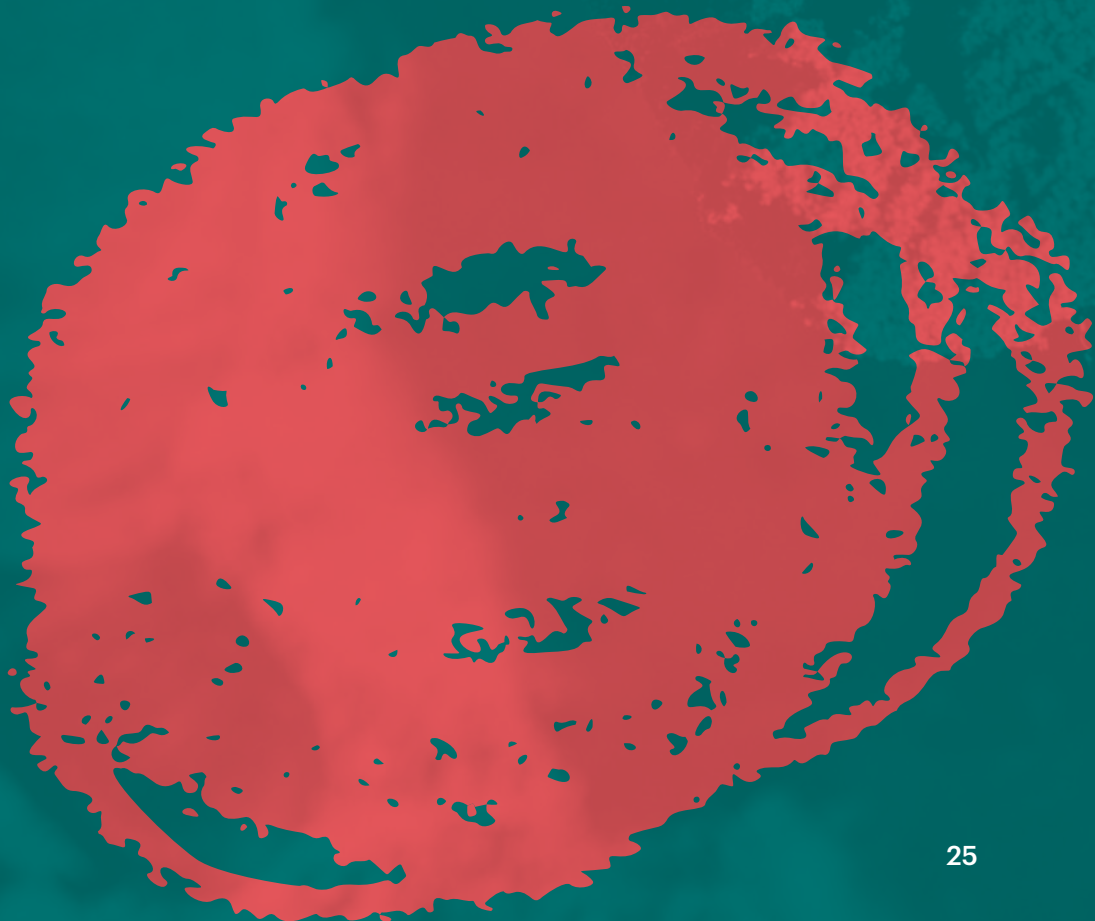


***It's about the relationships and connections we build with tamariki and their whānau, as well as the support we provide them within our community. Ngā tamariki are our greatest taonga, and I am deeply passionate about early childhood education because it lays down the foundation for a tamaiti of lifelong learning and development. The values that inspire me in this mahi are grounded in the principles of whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, and kaitiakitanga. By fostering a learning environment that emphasises these values, we create a space where tamariki can thrive, feel the aroha, and develop a sense of belonging in their world.***



# PARENT SURVEY

Alongside this year's *Kōriporipo* survey, we ran a small parent survey. 204 parents completed the survey. Most were parents with children in kindergarten (54%), followed by private education and care (22%), then community-based education and care (20%). Responses from parents with children in Kōhanga Reo, Puna Reo, and Pacific Language Nests were under 1% each. Most parents had children in the three- to-five-years age group (63%), with 21% for two-year-olds, 10% for one-year-olds, and 5% under one.







The parent survey found that the interests of parents are strongly aligned with kaiako and kaimahi working in the sector. Key findings were:

- 100% of parent respondents agreed that 'All children have a right to quality education and care'.
- 93.6% of parent respondents agreed that 'Early childhood teachers deserve to be paid at least the same as primary school teachers'.
- 83.3% of parent respondents agreed that 'It's a shame the Government decided to cancel the extension of 20 hours free early childhood education for two-year-olds'.
- 86.8% of parent respondents agreed that 'Regular safety checks (e.g. sleep checks, room temperature checks, nappy checks, food safety) are critical to the care of my child'.
- 92.2% of parent respondents agreed with the statement 'I would have concerns for my child's safety if the number of children to teachers was increased'.
- 82.3% of parent respondents agreed with the statement 'I would have concerns for my child's safety if the number of unqualified teachers relative to qualified increased'.

A young child with long, wavy hair is shown from the chest up, focused on shaping a ball of clay on a table. The child is wearing a light-colored, textured sweater. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with greenery. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter. At the bottom of the image, there is a thick, horizontal yellow brushstroke that spans across the width of the page.

# RECOMMENDATIONS: INVEST IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION NOW

It is important to get things right in early childhood education. This hinges on an improved funding system which genuinely puts the needs of tamariki at the centre. Children have a right not just to physical safety, but also to education which affirms their whakapapa and their role in society.



## 1. Make ratios fit for purpose

That ratios be reviewed immediately, with a new band for two-year-olds, improved ratios at every band as per the table below, and an implementation timeline to grow the teaching workforce to accommodate this. In addition, a move from centre-wide to in-room ratios and a buffer to ensure teachers can take breaks, with the aim of improving health and safety and education in centres. Clear guidelines need to be developed for ratio requirements, such as recognising room-based ratios as opposed to those counted at the centre level.

Age band	Existing ratio	Recommended ratio	Timeline
Under two-years-old	1:5	1:3	Move to 1:4 immediately and 1:3 by 2027
Two-years-old	1:10	1:5	Move to 1:7 immediately, reaching recommended ratio by 2027
Three-years-old and above	1:10	1:5	Reach 1:8 ratio by 2026, reaching recommended ratio by 2028

Ratios must always be sufficient to enable staff to take tea and meal breaks throughout the day, either outside the centre or in a space for staff, away from tamariki.

## 2. Value teachers

Move immediately to a centralised early childhood education pay system with full pay parity for all teachers, including relievers and those on fixed-term contracts, to address the teacher shortage, to properly respect and recognise teachers as the professionals they are, and to retain qualified staff. Introduce free training for early childhood teachers to encourage more teachers into the profession.

## 3. Safety comes first

That the safety of children, and the workplace health and safety of staff, is a non-negotiable bottom line for the outcomes of any government process, including for regulatory and funding review processes. Government should be required to guarantee that any changes will not increase the risk of harm for a single child or staff member in licensed early childhood education services.

#### **4. Make early childhood education free, accessible, and culturally appropriate**

We recommend that government work towards full public provision of early childhood education. This includes exploring the actual cost of services by consulting with the community-based, not-for-profit sector to deliver adequate funding for education and ensure the sustainability of the sector. Payroll for teachers and staff should be centralised and fees should be capped, with a fee cap modelled on the Canadian system (which provides for a cap of \$10 per day per child), progressing to fees-free provision over a period of five years. We also recommend measures to ensure the diversity of services is sustained and expanded, to ensure culturally appropriate services for Māori and Pacific tamariki, and to ensure not-for-profit community provision is retained and expanded. Make early childhood centres community hubs, where wrap-around support can be provided, to ensure whānau and caregivers can access the support needed for their tamariki.

#### **5. Learning support for all who need it**

Staffing and resourcing for the Early Intervention Service needs to be drastically increased in order to bring wait times and waitlists down; this should happen immediately. Ultimately, children should be waiting no longer than one month to receive the support they need. In the mid-term, a comprehensive and dedicated early childhood education learning support service should be built up and tasked with assessing and allocating learning support for early childhood education. Such support should begin in early childhood to ensure tamariki do not fall through the gaps and are supported to achieve their best in life. This service should be culturally responsive and encompass relevant assessment, as discussed above, in order to ensure adequate, additional support for tamariki, whānau, and kaiako. It should also include regular, comprehensive professional learning and development opportunities for early childhood kaiako that are local and accessible.

#### **6. Value all kaimahi and support staff and the contribution they make to early childhood education**

We recommend that support staff, such as unqualified teachers, administrators, cooks, and cleaners, are paid no less than the Living Wage. They also need a pathway to both professional development and qualifications, receiving higher pay as their experience grows. This should be funded by government and ring-fenced in any operational funding.

