

# ANNUAL REPORT 2025



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Front cover image (left to right):

Abdollah Jafari, Marzeya Hussaini, Chhunheang Kry and Xiuyu (Lisa) Wang at Waikato Centre

Photographer: Joylynn Qiu

# Contents

Foreword	1
Reflections from the Chief Executive	2
Our purpose and strategy	3
Our centres	5
Our impact in 2025	6
Key stats about learners	9
Teaching and learning	13
Engaging with communities around Aotearoa	17
Our people	19
Governance	23
Funding our work	25

# Foreword

Tēnā koutou katoa,

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I am pleased to present the English Language Partners Annual Report for 2025.

It was another year of strong performance against the delivery targets set by the Tertiary Education Commission.

One of our strategic goals is to develop clear progression pathways for learners. So, it was great to see a notable increase in enrolments for the New Zealand Certificate in English Language.

AI continues to shape change in the education sector. In 2025, English Language Partners started a new AI training programme for teaching staff so they are well placed to support learners with the fast pace of technological change.

Despite a challenging economic environment in 2025, English Language Partners strengthened its financial position. Although the financial statements show a year-end deficit, this reflects planned investments to support the delivery of Strategy 2030.

I would like to thank all staff, volunteers and trustees for their expertise and hard work. Rachel and her team have translated the goals in Strategy 2030 into concrete actions that benefit learners and communities, and the work by the Board and its committees has strengthened governance.

In particular, I would like to thank Dr Sherrie Lee who stepped down as trustee after completing a three-year term, and welcome Dr Karen Webster, who brings diverse experience to the Board including a background in education as well as not for profit governance.

Your collective efforts working towards the goals in Strategy 2030 ensure English Language Partners remains a place where learners can reach their potential and communities across Aotearoa continue to thrive.



Nāku noa, nā

**Karun Shenoy**

**Chair**

**Board of Trustees | Poari Kaitiaki**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karun Shenoy', with a horizontal line underneath.

# Reflections from the Chief Executive

Kia ora koutou,

In 2025, we supported 7,913 learners to achieve their learning goals. Behind every number in this report is the story of a learner who has learnt English for everyday life, work or study.

In total, we delivered over 620,000 hours of English language tuition and received consistently positive feedback from learners. English for Employees, English for Job Seekers and other programmes that build confidence using English in the workplace were popular.

With global uncertainty and increasing conflicts around the world, our work felt more important than ever in 2025. We are proud to help people to settle successfully in Aotearoa and contribute to building a cohesive society.

2025 was a milestone for English Language Partners because it was the first year operating under our new strategic framework – Strategy 2030. The team has worked hard to understand emerging needs in the community and how we can position ourselves best to meet these ever-changing needs.

One of the most significant shifts we are responding to is how people learn. It was an exciting development to see our work on AI competency take shape. We developed training for teachers on how to use AI safely, ethically and confidently. AI will help us support learners to succeed and help us improve productivity.

In 2025, it was encouraging to see increasing numbers of people volunteering to tutor English. Over 1,000 learners received support through our volunteer home tutor programme and we trained 380 new tutors. This reflects community need for support and shows the incredible generosity of people who volunteer their time.

Finally, a heartfelt thank you to the entire English Language Partners team – the Board of Trustees and Ethnic Advisory Group (who all volunteer their time), over 800 volunteer home tutors and our wonderful staff. It is your dedication, care and commitment that makes such a difference in the community possible.



Ngā mihi nui,

**Rachel Elsy**

Chief Executive | Tumu Whakarae

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. Elsy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

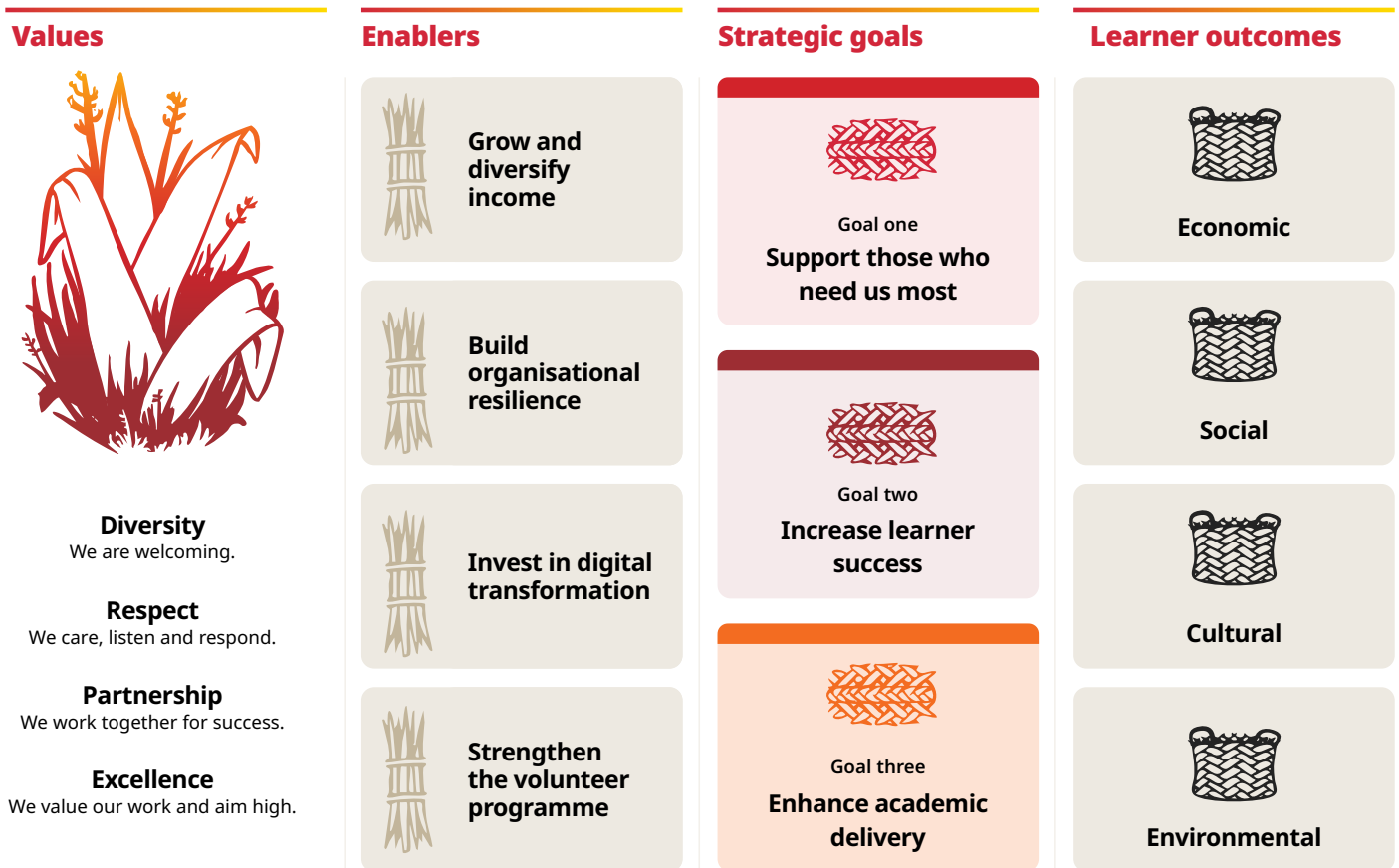
# Our purpose and strategy

We are a registered charity and teach English to migrants and people with a refugee background in 21 centres and over 100 community venues, as well as online.

Our vision is a society where learners settle confidently, achieve their goals, and fully participate in life in Aotearoa New Zealand.

In 2025, we published a five-year strategy. Strategy 2030 guides us to achieve our vision through three goals: supporting those who need us most, increasing learner success, and enhancing our academic delivery. These goals will be enabled by growing and diversifying our income, investing in digital transformation, strengthening our volunteer programme, and building organisational resilience.

Delivering our strategic goals by 2030 includes promoting cross-cultural competency through Te Ara Ahurea – Our Cultural Pathway. Launched in December 2024, it aims to create a bicultural and multicultural environment where everyone's mana is respected and te Tiriti o Waitangi is upheld, reflecting our commitment to supporting our diverse learners, staff, and volunteers.



Many cultures use harakeke kete (flax baskets) to store everyday items like food. In te ao Māori, a kete also symbolises a container of knowledge and wisdom. To make a kete, harvest and prepare harakeke, weave a strong braid for the backbone, then continue to weave the rest of the kete.



# Our centres



# Our impact

## 2025 in numbers

**7,913** adult learners studied with English Language Partners.

Learners came from **119** different countries and spoke **125** different first languages.

Learners attended **620,436** hours of English classes.

Learners achieved **17,002** outcomes relating to social participation, work and study.

Learners in workplace English programmes worked for **597** different employers across **18** different industries.

We taught English online and in **21** centres and over **100** community venues around the country.

**890** volunteers supported learners as home tutors and in-class volunteers.

Volunteers collectively contributed over **17,776** hours of home tutoring time.

We trained **380** new home tutor volunteers.

## Learner success stories

Behind every number is a personal story of progress and possibility. In 2025, 7,913 learners studied English with English Language Partners as part of their journey to build a new life in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Learning English for life in Aotearoa New Zealand can be transformative. It enables people from migrant and refugee backgrounds to participate and contribute to all aspects of daily life - from shopping and talking to neighbours, to volunteering in their communities, finding work and enrolling in further study.

We invite learners to share how learning English has helped them move closer to their goals. In 2025, we recorded 17,002 learner outcomes across three areas: social participation, work, and study. Each outcome represents a meaningful step forward, highlighting the real impact that learning English can have for someone building their future in Aotearoa.

### English for everyday life

When Iryna arrived in New Zealand from Ukraine in 2022, she had only basic English and found everyday tasks overwhelming. She joined English Language Partners the day after she landed, starting with a Walk and Talk class that helped her learn practical English while exploring Christchurch. Through consistent study, her confidence grew, and she began navigating daily life with greater ease. She settled into part-time work at Weft Knitting Company, began volunteering with community organisations, and took on a public-facing role with Bike Bridge, where she gives presentations in English to promote their programme helping women learn to ride a bicycle.

Volunteering in the community is one of 14,251 social participation outcomes achieved by learners in 2025.

*Iryna mending garments in her part-time job at Weft Knitting Company in Christchurch.*



Clara, working at Farmers New Plymouth.



## English for work

When Clara moved from Venezuela to New Zealand in 2018, she knew learning English would be essential for finding work. She joined a beginner class at English Language Partners while building a public Instagram page to share her passion for makeup.

A local employer discovered her work online and invited her to apply for a customer-facing role. Realising she needed stronger English skills, Clara kept studying hard. After an interview, her English still wasn't at the level required, but she didn't give up. She was eventually successful, and today she is the Revlon Counter Manager at Farmers store New Plymouth.

Finding a job is one of 2,152 work-related outcomes achieved by learners in 2025.

## English for further study

Hamida arrived in New Zealand from Afghanistan in 2021 and started learning English at our Dunedin centre in 2022. There, she improved her language skills and found a supportive community. Over three years, teachers helped Hamida build the confidence and academic skills she needed to take the next step: enrolling at Otago Polytechnic. In 2025, Hamida completed the New Zealand Certificate in English Language (General) (Level 3) and in 2026 she plans to study towards the New Zealand Certificate in English Language (Academic) (Level 3). Her goal is to communicate confidently with people from different cultures and backgrounds.

Studying towards a certificate is one of 599 study-related outcomes achieved by learners in 2025.

Hamida in Dunedin, now pursuing further study.



# Key stats about learners

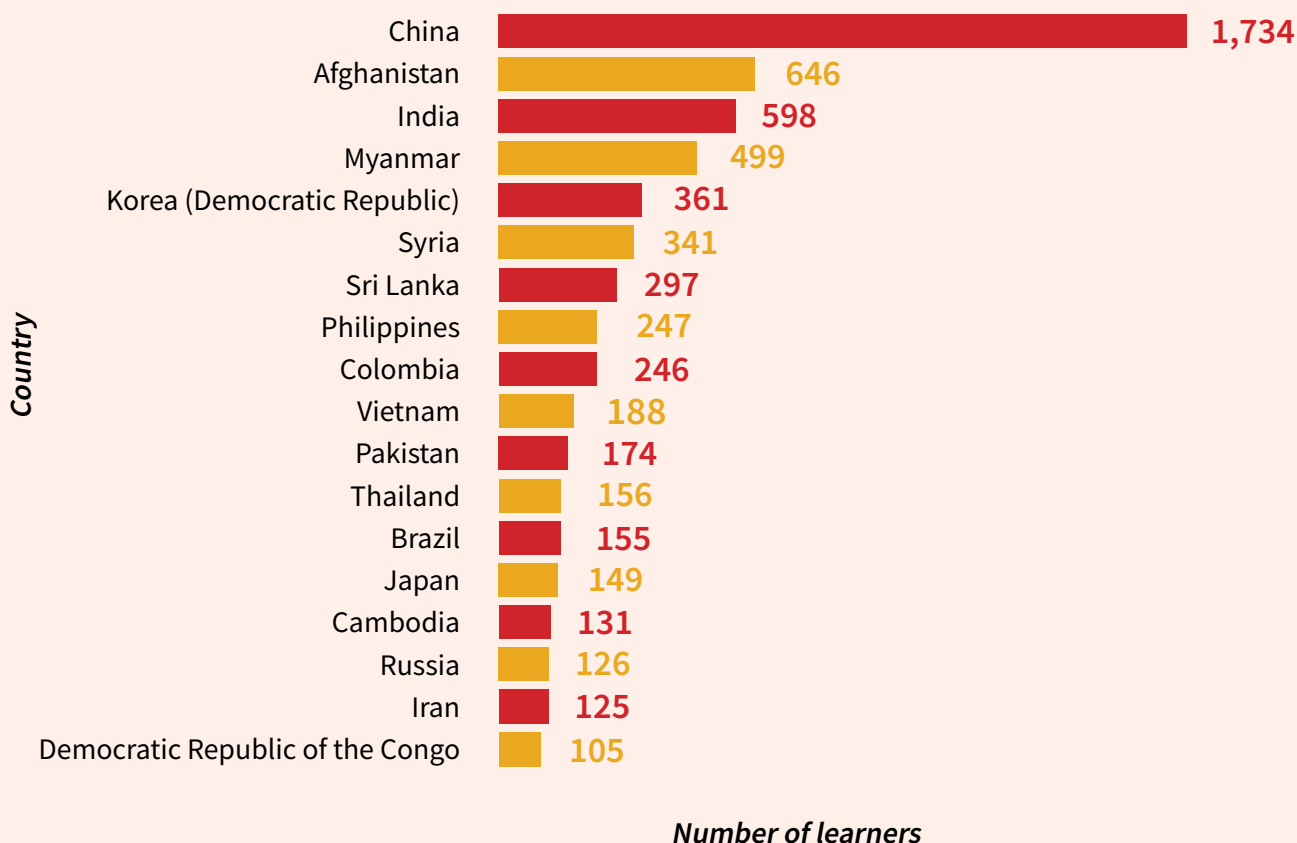
In 2025, 7,913 learners participated in our English language programmes to support their settlement in Aotearoa New Zealand. Learners come from an exceptionally wide range of cultural, linguistic, geographic, and ethnic backgrounds, each bringing unique experiences, perspectives, and aspirations. We are committed to designing programmes that respond to the diverse needs and goals of learners, creating a welcoming and inclusive environment where everyone can thrive and achieve their personal and professional objectives.

In 2025, 99% of learners reported being satisfied or very satisfied with our service, and 98% said their English had improved.

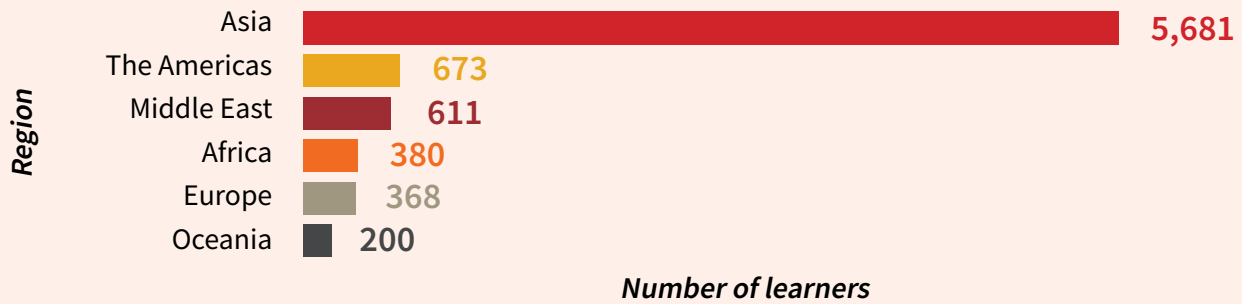
## Diverse cultural backgrounds

Learners in 2025 came from 119 different countries, spanning every continent except Antarctica. While the overall learner population is highly diverse, close to 80% came from just 18 countries. The top three remained the same as in 2024: China with 1,734 learners (22%), followed by Afghanistan (646 learners) and India (598 learners).

### Country of origin: Close to 80% of learners were from 18 countries



## Region of origin: 7,913 learners

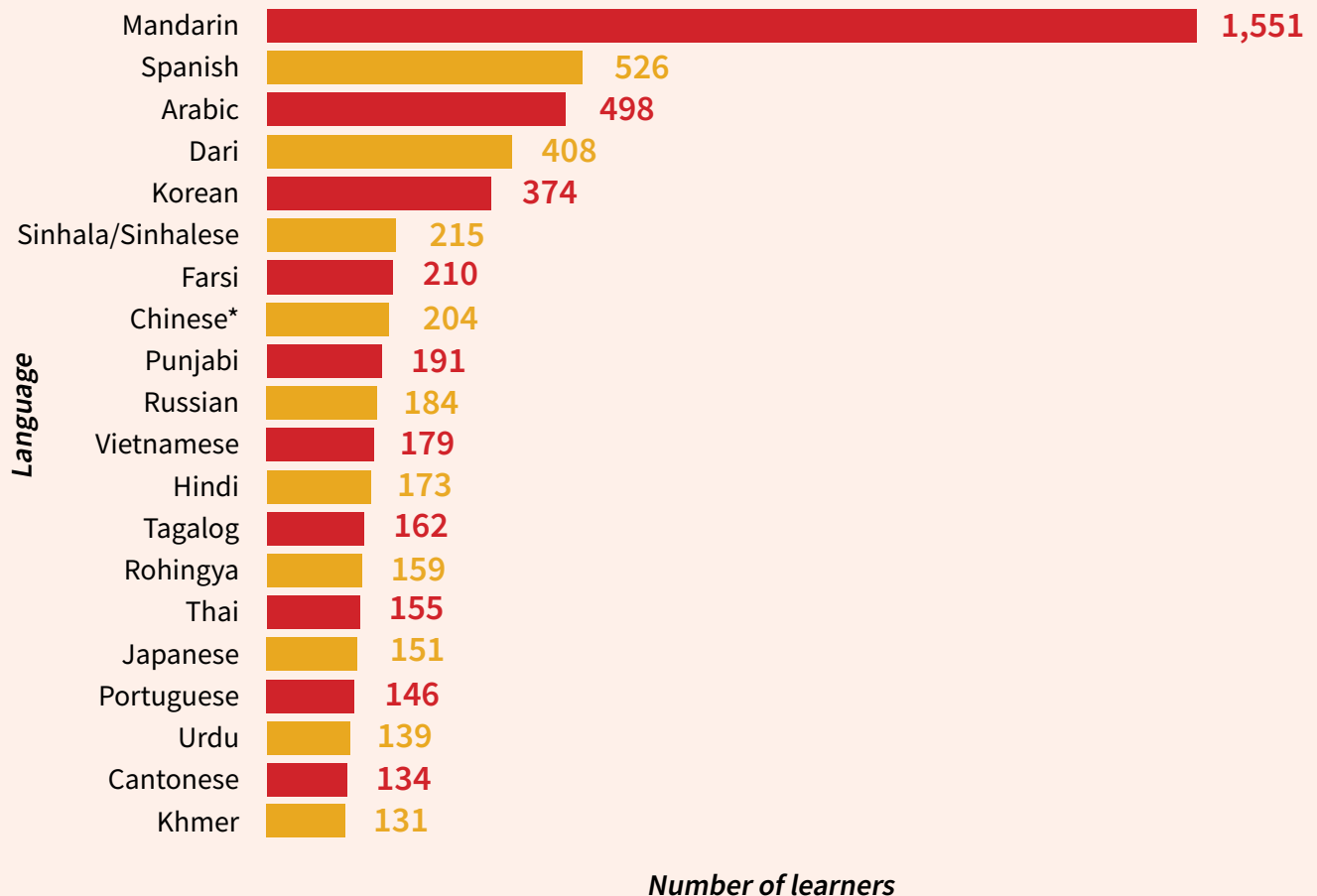


## First languages

We record each learner's first language (mother tongue), which highlights the remarkable linguistic diversity of learners. Many are multilingual, and for some, English is their third or even fourth language.

Overall, 74% of learners spoke one the top 20 first languages. The remaining 26% spoke 105 different languages. Mandarin was the most common first language (20%), followed by Spanish (7%) and Arabic (6%).

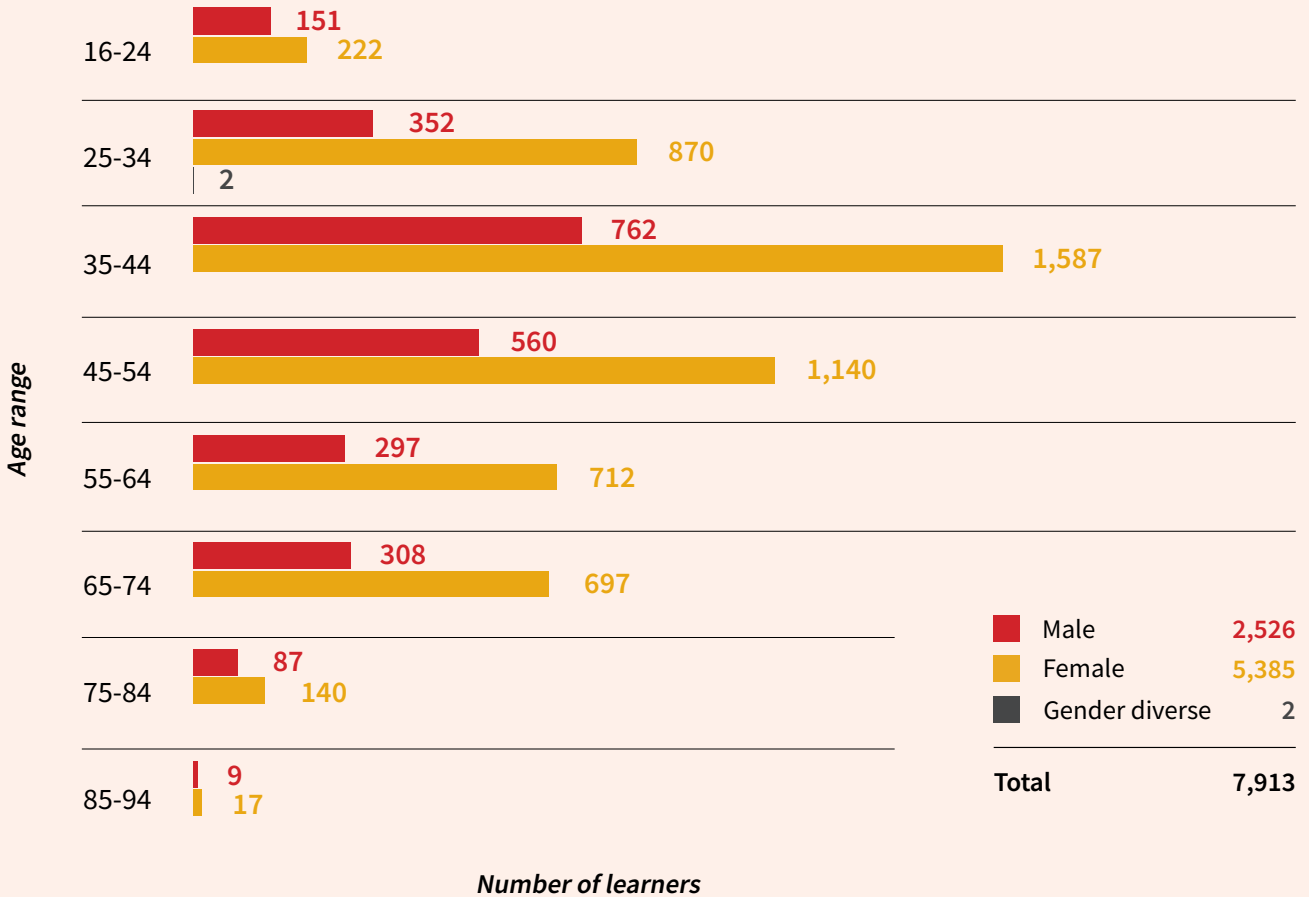
### Top 20 first languages



\*Chinese languages including Mandarin and Cantonese

## Age and gender of learners

68% of learners are female and 32% are male. This learner profile reflects patterns commonly seen in community-based English language programmes.



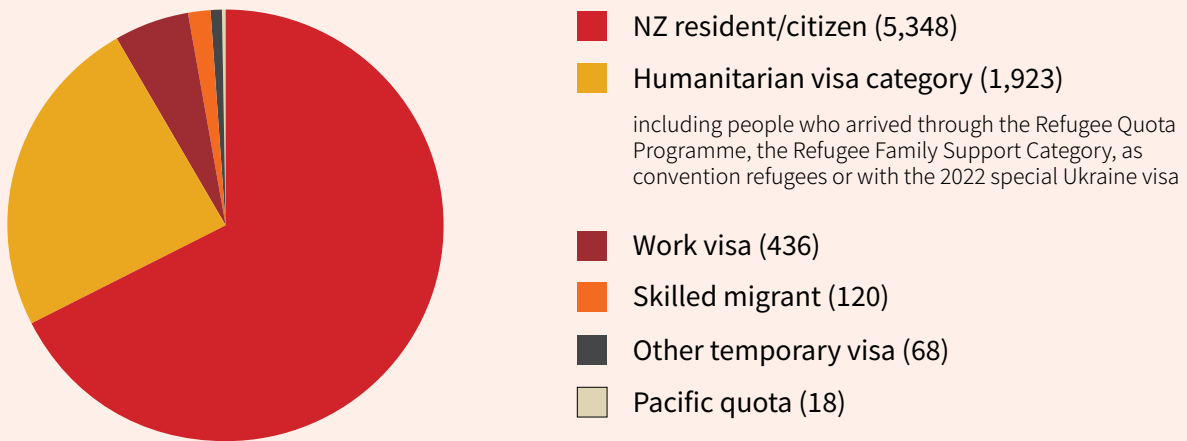
Learners in class at the Auckland Central & West Centre.



# Immigration status

Learners arrive in Aotearoa New Zealand through a range of immigration pathways. In 2025, 24% entered through the humanitarian visa category, and 68% were residents or citizens. Regardless of immigration status, developing English language skills plays a key role in successful settlement.

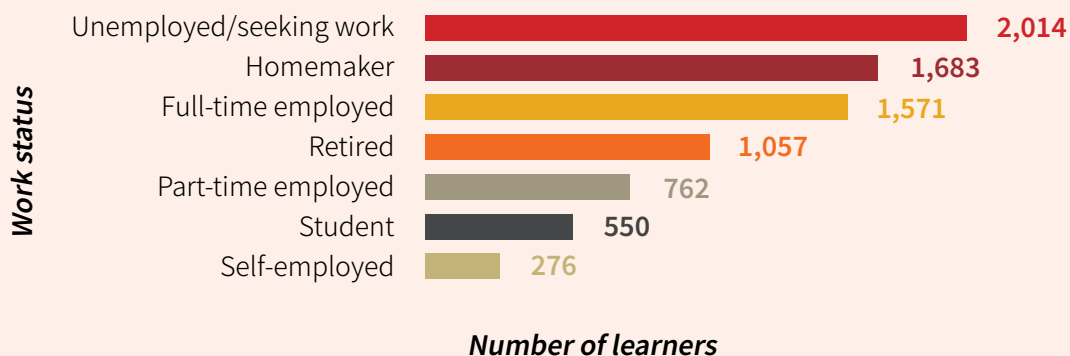
## Immigration status of learners



# Work status

For many learners, improving English is closely linked to employment opportunities: finding work, advancing their career or communicating with colleagues. In 2025, 33% of learners were employed, 25% were unemployed or seeking work, and the remaining 42% were students, retirees, or homemakers.

## Work status of learners



# Teaching and learning

Our programmes are designed to meet the needs of learners who have a wide range of learning goals. In 2025, our teaching and learning initiatives focused on flexible delivery, culturally responsive resources, and innovative tools such as AI to enhance teaching. These approaches helped learners gain confidence and practical skills, while enabling teachers to develop professional capability, integrate tikanga Māori and te reo Māori into lessons, and respond effectively to the varied needs of learners.

## Strengthening professional practice

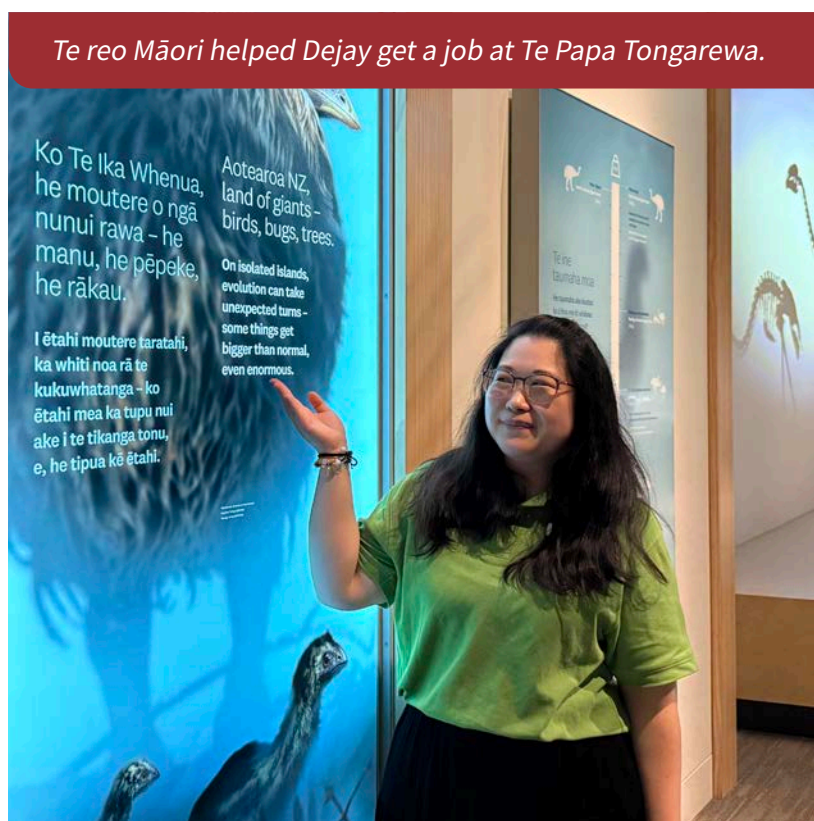
### Te Ara Ahurea – Building cultural capacity

*Te Ara Ahurea - Our Cultural Pathway* continues to guide our strategic direction.

In 2025, our Kaiwaihanga Rauemi Ako (Programme Materials Developer) developed resources for staff, learners and volunteers that are practical and culturally rich. This included lesson plans, activity guides, audio visual resources and training. She visited centres around Aotearoa to support teachers and make the resources relevant and easy to use. Teachers warmly welcomed this hands-on support to integrate tikanga Māori and everyday te reo Māori.

Dejay (pictured) learnt English in a uniquely New Zealand context, which meant also learning te reo Māori words and phrases for life in Aotearoa.

*Te reo Māori helped Dejay get a job at Te Papa Tongarewa.*



## Exploring AI to enhance learning

In 2025, our AI for Enhanced Teaching Project advanced the digital transformation goals of Strategy 2030, guiding teachers to use AI safely, ethically, and effectively in classrooms. The project began with a teacher survey and working group, which shaped hands-on workshops delivered across New Zealand. Sixty-five teachers explored ways AI can assist with lesson planning, materials creation, and meeting diverse learner needs. Feedback was positive, with one teacher saying: “The workshops gave me the confidence to use AI in ways that truly benefit my learners.” The project laid the foundation for a national AI capability programme in 2026.

## Flexible delivery to meet community demand

Community demand led to the New Zealand Certificate in English Language programme being delivered in a flexible and intensive format in 2025 and contributed to a notable increase in enrolments. The certificate was offered full-time as a 60-credit programme in Masterton, allowing a cohort of learners to complete the programme within six months and progress more quickly to further study. This example reflects the programme's flexibility, its expansion into new regions, and our ongoing commitment to widening access to English language learning for communities across Aotearoa.

## Inclusive and high-quality learning

### Bringing the Disability Action Plan to life

Work on our Disability Action Plan continued in 2025, with a focus on providing practical support for learners. We worked with students in the Master of User Experience Design programme at Victoria University of Wellington, who developed posters and classroom resources to help learners share their support needs with our staff.

### Ensuring excellence - ESOL Literacy Programme review

Maintaining high-quality, learner-focused programmes is central to our work, and the annual Quality Standards Review (QSR) is a key part of this. In 2025, the ESOL Literacy Programme was reviewed across 13 centres, including eight centre visits, with input from centre managers, coordinators, cultural and language assistants, and teachers. The review showed strong assessment gains, high learner satisfaction, and increased confidence in speaking, reading, and writing. Teachers also reported effective integration of tikanga Māori and te reo Māori. The QSR helps ensure our programmes are always improving.

Learners harvesting lettuce at Victory Community Centre, Nelson.



# English language programmes

Our flexible English language programmes, available at over 100 locations and online, are tailored to each learner's needs, offering classes from 2 to 20 hours per week and a variety of levels to support everyday English.

## English for everyday life

- English Language Groups
- ESOL Literacy
- ESOL Intensive
- ESOL Road Code
- ESOL Home Tutoring
- English for Migrants

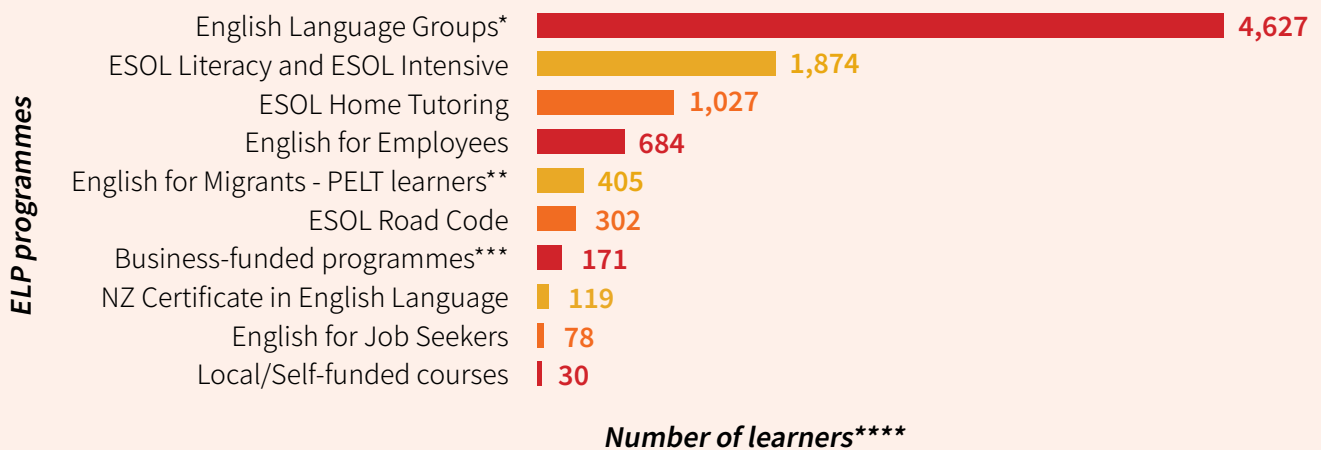
## English for work

- English for Employees
- English for Job Seekers
- Job Mentoring Service
- Workplace training

## English for study

- New Zealand Certificate in English Language (Level 1 and Level 2)

### 2025 programmes



\*Over half of the enrolments were in our programme called “English Language Groups”. The focus of this programme is English for everyday life. The classes are taught online and in classrooms.

\*\*Most PELT (Pre-purchased English Language Tuition) learners study one-to-one but there are some PELT learners in our English Language Groups and ESOL Intensive programmes.

\*\*\*Learners in business-funded programmes are studying English at work, in a programme tailored to their workplace and paid for by their employer.

\*\*\*\*Learners can enrol in more than one programme so the total of 9,317 learners in 2025 programmes is more than the total of 7,913 learners.

*Chafe ready to ride home after class in Hamilton.*



# Engaging with communities around Aotearoa

Building strong connections with communities across Aotearoa New Zealand is central to our vision of a cohesive society where learners feel a sense of belonging. Our teams work closely with ethnic community groups, faith-based organisations, refugee resettlement agencies, local councils, central government, and other education providers to understand community needs and design programmes that respond to them.

We frequently celebrate culture and community in our centres. Staff also encourage learners to take part in social and cultural events, helping them participate in all aspects of life in their new surroundings.

We also partner with employers and local businesses to support workplace learning. Through free English for Employees classes and tailored training, learners gain the skills and confidence they need to succeed. In 2025, participants in workplace programmes worked for 597 employers across 18 different industries, demonstrating the depth of connection with employers.

## The Ethnic Advisory Group

The members of the Ethnic Advisory Group provide expert advice on issues affecting their communities, bringing the perspectives of former refugees and migrants to help English Language Partners stay focused on learners' needs. Members are appointed by the Chief Executive and volunteer their time.

### 2025 members

*The year of first appointment is shown in brackets.*

Raihana Attaee (2023)

Nada Haroura (2025)

Rizwaana Latiff (2023)

Shamsunnisa Pathan (2023)

Bishnu Pokhrel (2023)

Godel Sefu (2025)

Rula Talahma (2023)

Sofonias Tekele (2025)

## Needs of ethnic communities

English Language Partners is known and respected for engaging effectively with ethnic community networks across New Zealand. Our partnerships are responsive to local community needs. For example, by partnering with the Eritrean community to support Learning Hubs, the Auckland Central & West Centre provided them with a welcoming space for learning and celebration. Centre staff regularly engage with ethnic communities and with groups such as the Ethnic Leaders Network, The Asian Network, Belong Aotearoa and The Refugee Alliance.

## Connecting across agencies

By working locally with government agencies, NGOs, and volunteer groups, we can better serve and connect communities. For example, in Hawke's Bay in 2025, staff participated in local events like the Ministry for Ethnic Communities' forum in March, the Hawke's Bay Settlement Forum, and the Volunteering Hawke's Bay Big Shout Out celebration in June. These efforts help our people access local resources, build community ties, and link up with wider networks to help learners and volunteers thrive.

## Civic education in the classroom

As part of promoting civic education and local engagement, our centres regularly invite professionals to connect with learners. One example is Invercargill, where NZ Police officer Geoff visited an English for Job Seekers class, sharing stories about his work in Southland and offering advice to those considering a police career. Experiences like this give learners a better understanding of civic roles, help them connect with local networks, and show how key institutions operate in everyday life.

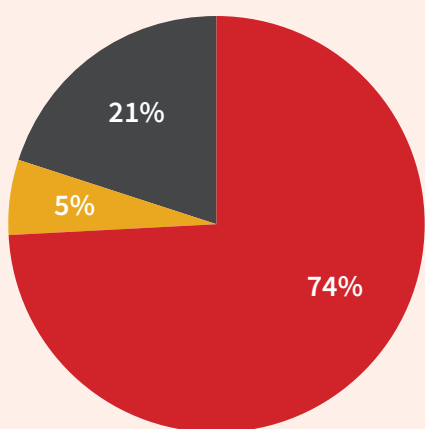
*Police officer Geoff visiting a class in Invercargill.*



# Our people

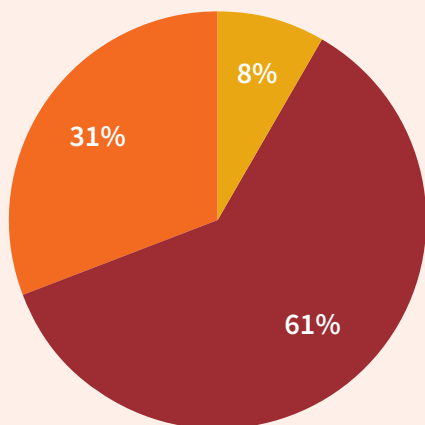
Our people are at the heart of English Language Partners, bringing learning to life every day in communities around Aotearoa New Zealand. Across 21 centres and our National Office, staff demonstrate care, professionalism, and commitment, guided by our values of excellence, diversity, partnership, and respect. This dedication creates welcoming, inclusive spaces where learners feel supported and staff continue to grow. In 2025, our professional development programme engaged 201 staff, strengthening capability and enhancing the quality of learning support we provide nationwide.

## Staff composition by role



<span style="color: red;">■</span> <b>Teaching</b>	<b>316</b>
includes teachers, cultural and language assistants and parent-child assistants	
<span style="color: gold;">■</span> <b>Leadership</b>	<b>22</b>
includes centre managers and the senior leadership team	
<span style="color: grey;">■</span> <b>Support</b>	<b>92</b>
includes a wide range of professional and support roles including finance, marketing and communications, programme and course development, quality assurance, pastoral care and support for learners, volunteer support, IT services and operations support in centres	
<b>Total</b>	<b>430</b>

## Staff composition by employment type



<span style="color: gold;">■</span> <b>Permanent full-time</b>	<b>36</b>
includes any permanent staff members working 37.5 hours	
<span style="color: maroon;">■</span> <b>Permanent part-time</b>	<b>262</b>
<span style="color: orange;">■</span> <b>Casual and other contracts</b>	<b>132</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>430</b>

Data accurate at 30 September 2025. Most teachers are part-time and their hours vary depending on demand. Most permanent full-time staff are employed in our National Office or as centre managers.

## Systems that support our people

In 2025, we strengthened the systems that support our staff so they can focus on what matters most: helping learners settle, grow, and succeed. We undertook a proactive review of our payroll processes to meet our obligations under the Holidays Act 2003, demonstrating transparency and accountability. We also introduced a new integrated HR system that brings recruitment, onboarding, contracts, and staff information together in one connected platform. This new system enhances efficiency, reduces administrative burden, and ensures staff have the tools they need to thrive in their roles.

## Health, safety and wellbeing

2025 was a year of consolidation for our health, safety, and wellbeing programme. Building on the foundation from previous years, we completed all critical risk controls and carried out four audits to ensure our safety systems remain robust and reliable. Hazard reporting increased across our centres, reflecting a growing awareness of potential risks, and teams across Aotearoa responded with resilience to challenges, including a major storm in October.

Our approach extended beyond staff to learners and volunteers. Learners participated in emergency preparedness activities and practised key emergency vocabulary to respond confidently in real-life situations. Volunteer home tutors also completed critical risks training, equipping them to volunteer safely and confidently.

## Celebrating our staff

In 2025, several staff milestones highlighted the care and continuity our people bring to English Language Partners. We celebrated Yuka Kobayashi, who marked 20 years as a centre manager in Taranaki, and Bay of Plenty centre manager Philippa Cairns, recognising her 30 years of leadership and impact. Over three decades, the Bay of Plenty centre has supported 14,500 learners in their settlement journeys and trained 700 volunteers, a legacy acknowledged at their Pearl Party in November. Similarly, the Christchurch centre hosted a special event for Durafshan Atayee, celebrating 20 years as a cultural and language assistant supporting Afghan learners.

We also acknowledged staff members who retired after many years of service and whose dedication has left a lasting impact on learners and communities.



# The volunteer programme

Volunteers are vital to our vision and to Strategy 2030. Their dedication enables us to reach learners who need English language support but are unable to attend regular classes. Through one-on-one tuition, our home tutors help learners develop the skills they need to settle successfully in Aotearoa New Zealand. In 2025, 890 volunteers contributed 17,776 hours, providing invaluable support to learners in homes and classrooms across the country.

Our volunteers come from all walks of life. Some are New Zealand-born, others from migrant or refugee backgrounds, and some were once learners themselves. As Dhana, a former learner from Sri Lanka who completed Home Tutor training in 2025, says: “The free English classes and my tutor have helped me a lot. Now I want to share what I learnt.”

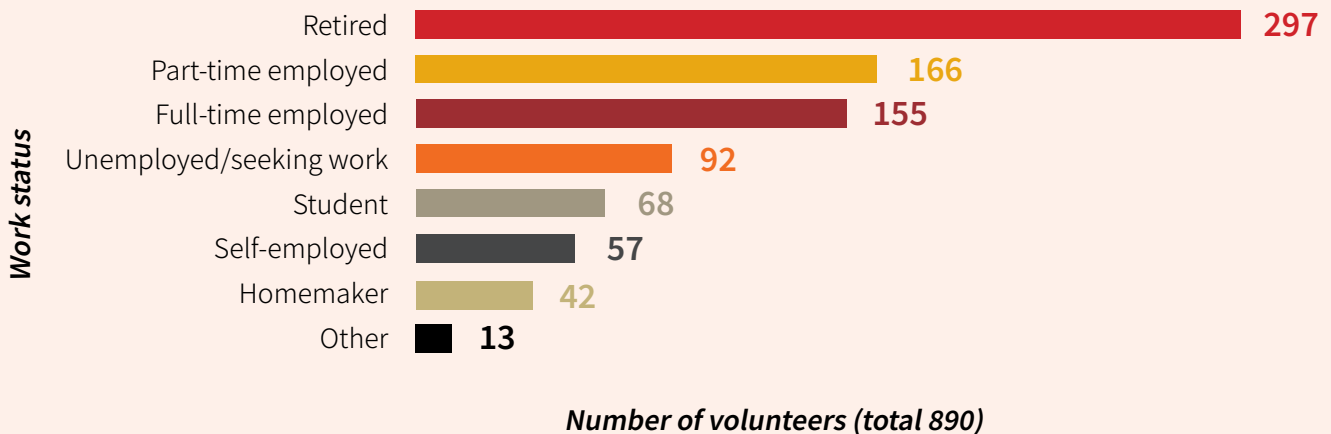
We value our volunteers and help them thrive with high-quality NZQA -approved training, teaching resources, professional development workshops and support from our staff. We also offer an online collaboration channel for volunteers called Circle which had 766 members by the end of 2025.

Centres also organised well-attended events for National Volunteer Week and International Volunteer Day, ensuring volunteers feel recognised and valued. This commitment is reflected in high satisfaction rates: in the 2025 survey, volunteers rated their experience 4.5 out of 5. Feedback highlighted the value of cross-cultural connections, seeing learners make progress, and the personal growth gained through volunteering.

## Age and gender of volunteers



## Work status of volunteers



## Tutoring for real-life success

Our volunteers go beyond language, helping learners apply practical skills to real-life goals. Liyang, originally from China, became a home tutor shortly after arriving in Wellington in 2023, eager to put her Master of TESOL into practice.

Paired with a Chinese migrant who runs a family-owned restaurant, they focused on English used in hospitality operations, from customer communication to managing delivery orders. A major milestone in their year together was preparing for the Licence Controller Qualification (LCQ), an essential step for her learner to become a duty manager and a rewarding end to their time together.

Volunteer Liyang (right) providing one-to-one tutoring in Wellington.



# Governance

## Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees sets our strategic direction and appoints the Chief Executive. Members of the Board are appointed for a three-year term, and for a maximum of three terms. They bring a wide range of expertise and experience to English Language Partners. In 2025, the Board welcomed new trustee Karen Webster and Board intern Aklilu Habteghiorghis.

### Board membership in 2025

*The year of first appointment is shown in brackets.*

- Karun Shenoy, Chair (2018)
- Jane von Dadelszen, Deputy Chair (2018)
- Rachel Baxter (2023)
- Jigs Bellosillo (2023)
- Mark Bryan (2020)
- Aklilu Habteghiorghis, Board Intern (2025)
- Ruth Payne (2023)
- Kara Scally-Irvine (2017)
- Susan Warren (2020)
- Karen Webster (2025)

### Committee membership in 2025

- Finance & Audit
- Academic
- People, Culture & Wellbeing
- Finance & Audit
- People, Culture & Wellbeing
- People, Culture & Wellbeing
- People, Culture & Wellbeing
- Finance & Audit, Academic
- Academic
- Academic

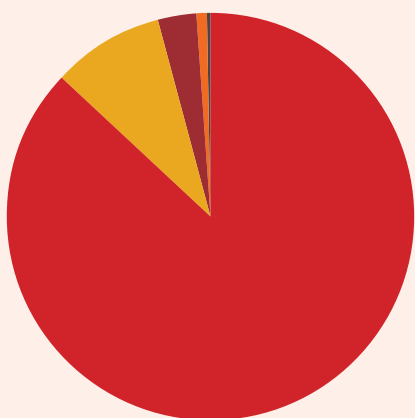


# Funding our work

English Language Partners is a not-for-profit registered charity. Our core funding comes from the Tertiary Education Commission, complemented by grants from public and private sector organisations. We are grateful for their support as this funding allows our teachers, classrooms, and volunteers to reach nearly 8,000 learners nationwide. In 2025, securing grants was more challenging than ever because of the tightening economic climate and increased competition for limited funds.

The 2025, financial results reflect a planned deficit arising from strategic investment aligned with our new strategy. This investment was Board-approved and undertaken through a controlled approach to strengthen future capability and impact.

## Where our funds came from

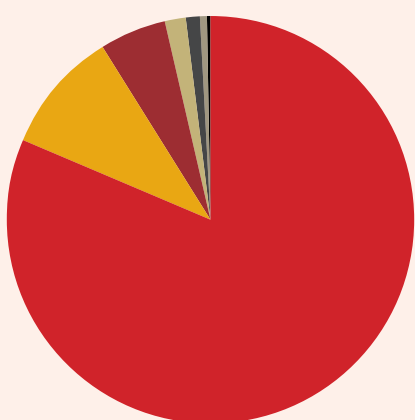


Tertiary Education Commission .....	12,814,258
Other operating revenue.....	1,348,600
Grant revenue* .....	417,209
Lottery Grants Board .....	150,000
Donations, fundraising and bequests .....	7,776

**Total Income** **\$ 14,737,843**

\*excluding grant revenue from the Lottery Grants Board

## How we used our funds in 2025



Employee-related costs .....	12,245,153
Other operational expenses (including rent and rates) .....	1,482,899
Programme design, resources and support .....	772,990
Depreciation, amortisation and revaluations.....	152,290
Strategic projects .....	257,759
Communication and marketing .....	75,882
Governance.....	35,809

**Total Expenditure** **\$ 15,022,782**

The full audited financial statements are available in our full Performance Report at [www.englishlanguage.org.nz/annual-report](http://www.englishlanguage.org.nz/annual-report).

# Our funders



**Tertiary Education Commission**  
Te Amorangi Mātauranga Matua



Back cover image (left to right): Learners Frishta, Madina and Siyamoi during Eid celebrations in Auckland South.

