



# ACE Sector Environmental Scan

## ACE Aotearoa November 2021

Insights into the scope, scale, impact, capability  
of Adult and Community Education provision in  
Aotearoa New Zealand.



## Preface



ACE Aotearoa is the lead organisation for the Adult and Community Education (ACE) sector. Our key roles are to support strategic leadership, capability building services and sector networking.

The first ACE environmental scan was undertaken in 2019. That report provided insights into the scope, scale, impact, capability and capacity of ACE provision in Aotearoa New Zealand.

This second report summarises the results of a 2021 scan of the ACE sector and the impacts of COVID-19 on ACE provision.

Both environmental scans used the same methodology – an online survey and three case studies.

Sincerest thanks to the ACE Sector Steering Group and the ACE sector organisations who took the time to contribute their experiences and perspectives. We sent the link out to our database of 1120. This includes ACE organisations, individual practitioners and other interested organisations. Managers in seventy-two ACE organisations completed the questionnaire. We were delighted to see that those participating represented a good spread of providers, both across the motu, in cities and rural areas, and in terms of the variety of ACE courses they provide.

I would like to acknowledge Talia Kiedrzynski, who served an internship with us, as part of her Honours Degree in Pacific Studies at Victoria University. Talia was responsible for developing the online survey and the case studies.

Finally I would like to thank the Tertiary Education Commission. This research would not have been possible without their support.

Nāku noa, nā  
Analiese Robertson  
Director, ACE Aotearoa

# Summary of findings

The most common types of course provided by respondents were: employment preparation, skills training and up-skilling courses (47%); followed by digital literacy, literacy and numeracy, culture and languages, and te reo and tikanga Māori.



Employment preparation, skills, training, up-skilling



Digital literacy



Literacy and numeracy



Culture and languages



Te reo Māori and tikanga

49%

of ACE learners have had a **negative prior learning experience**.



31%

of providers said that some of their courses result in **learners achieving unit standards**.

90%

of providers said that **improved confidence and self-belief** was an outcome. This was followed by improved societal interaction, participation and connectivity (83%), and improved health and wellbeing (76%).

56%

of providers said that the main trend over the last five years has been an **increased number of learners**.



**32%**

of providers said that their main source of funding was from the government.



**67%**

of tutors were paid.

Most providers selected tutors who have either a teaching qualification, subject matter knowledge or experience in teaching adult learners. However nearly a third of providers did not require teaching experience or qualifications.



**65%**

of providers said that their **biggest challenge was funding.**

Other key challenges were:

- sustainability (39%)
- recruiting quality teachers (35%)
- up-skilling and developing tutors (24%)
- measuring value (21%)
- capability (17%).

The main impact of Covid-19 has been that providers have had to use mixed delivery methods in order to continue offering programmes of learning.



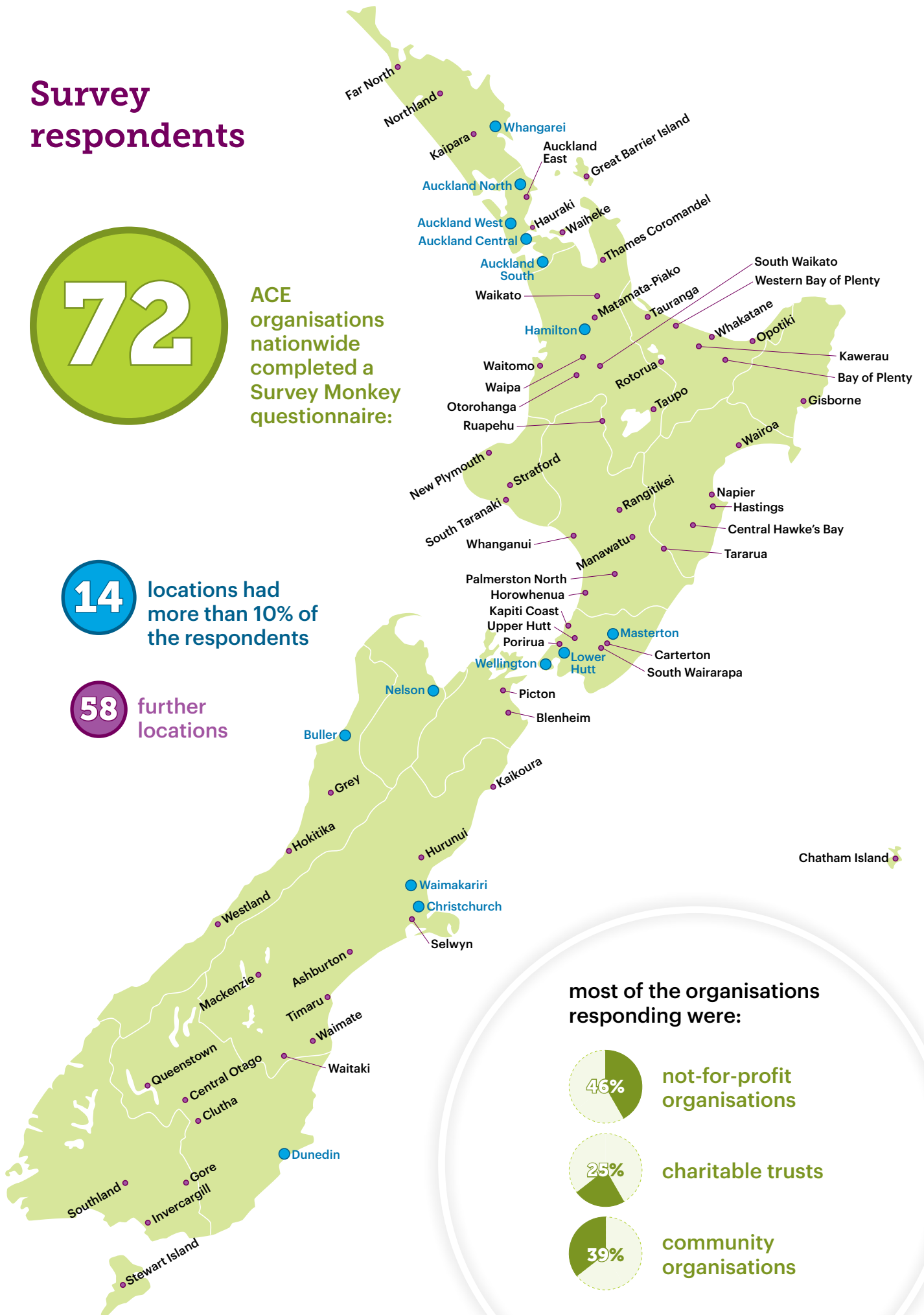
# Survey respondents

**72**

ACE organisations nationwide completed a Survey Monkey questionnaire:

**14** locations had more than 10% of the respondents

**58** further locations



most of the organisations responding were:

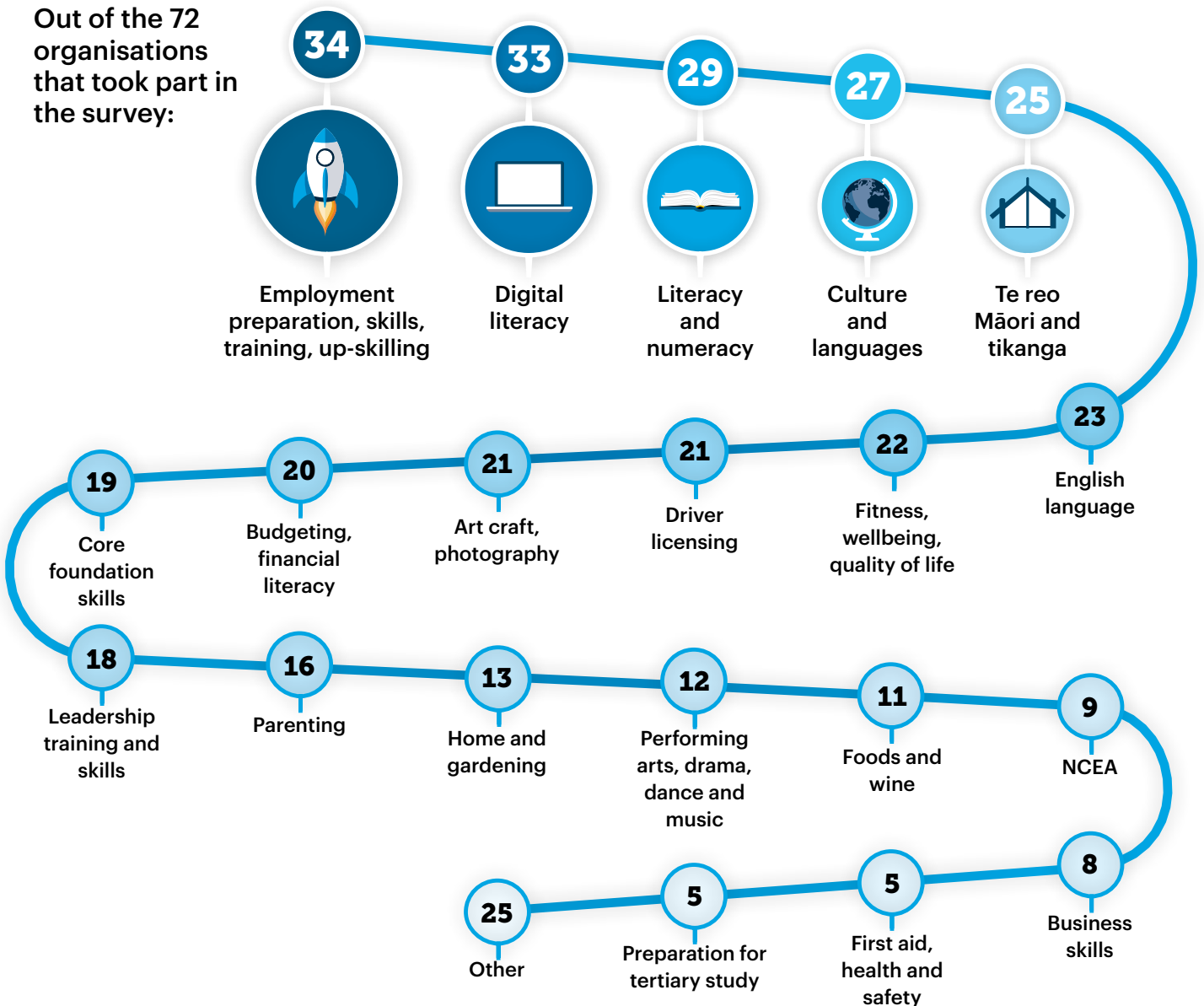




A wide range of ACE providers participated in the survey:



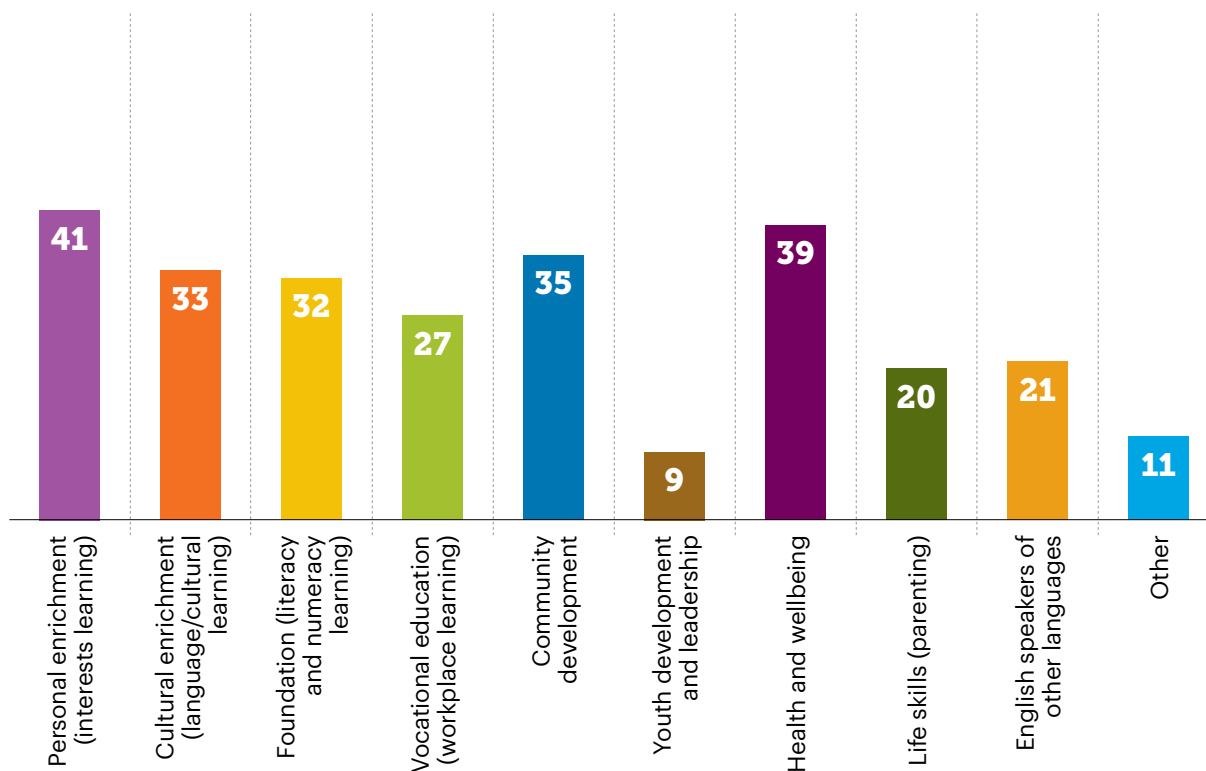
Out of the 72 organisations that took part in the survey:



## Types of services provided

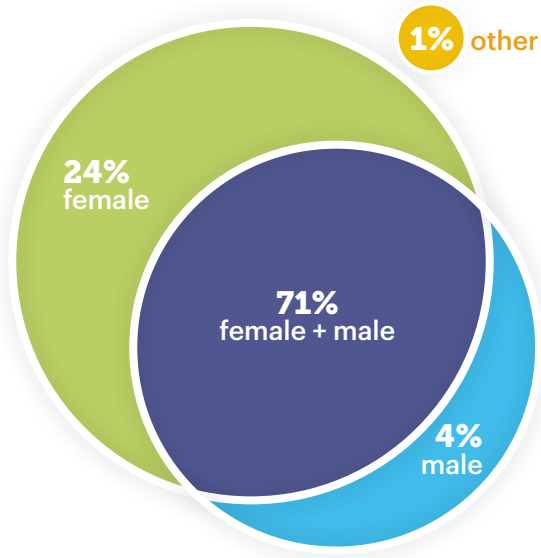
Respondents were asked what best summarises the types of services they provide – selecting all that apply from a list provided.

The top three were personal enrichment, health and wellbeing and community development. About a third provided cultural enrichment, and literacy and numeracy. Over a quarter provided vocational education.



**1/3** of ACE providers said that some or a small number of their ACE programmes resulted in learners achieving unit standards.

# Learner characteristics

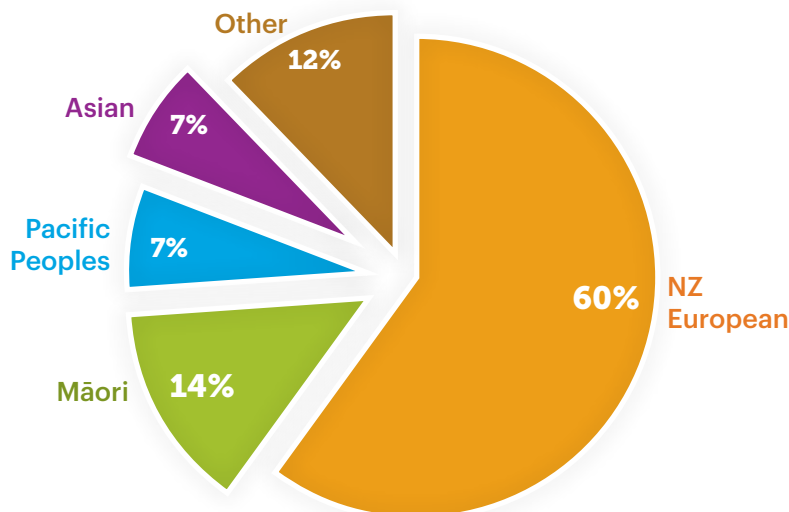
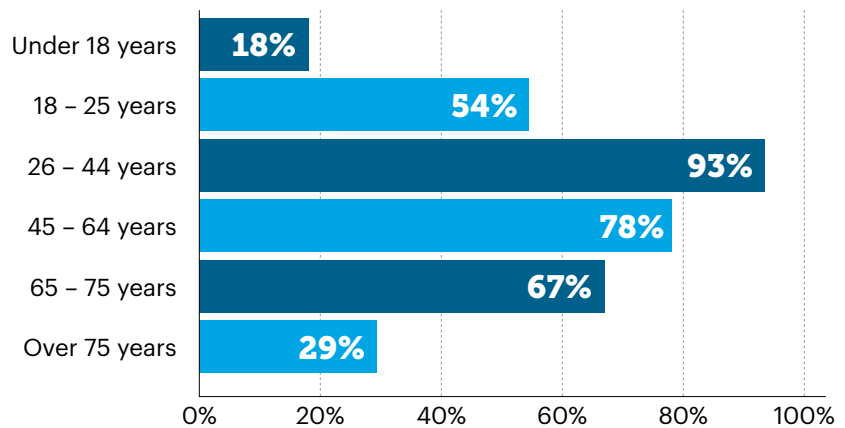


## GENDER

Most of the learners are female.

## AGE

Most organisations provide learning opportunities for a wide range of learners:



## ETHNICITY

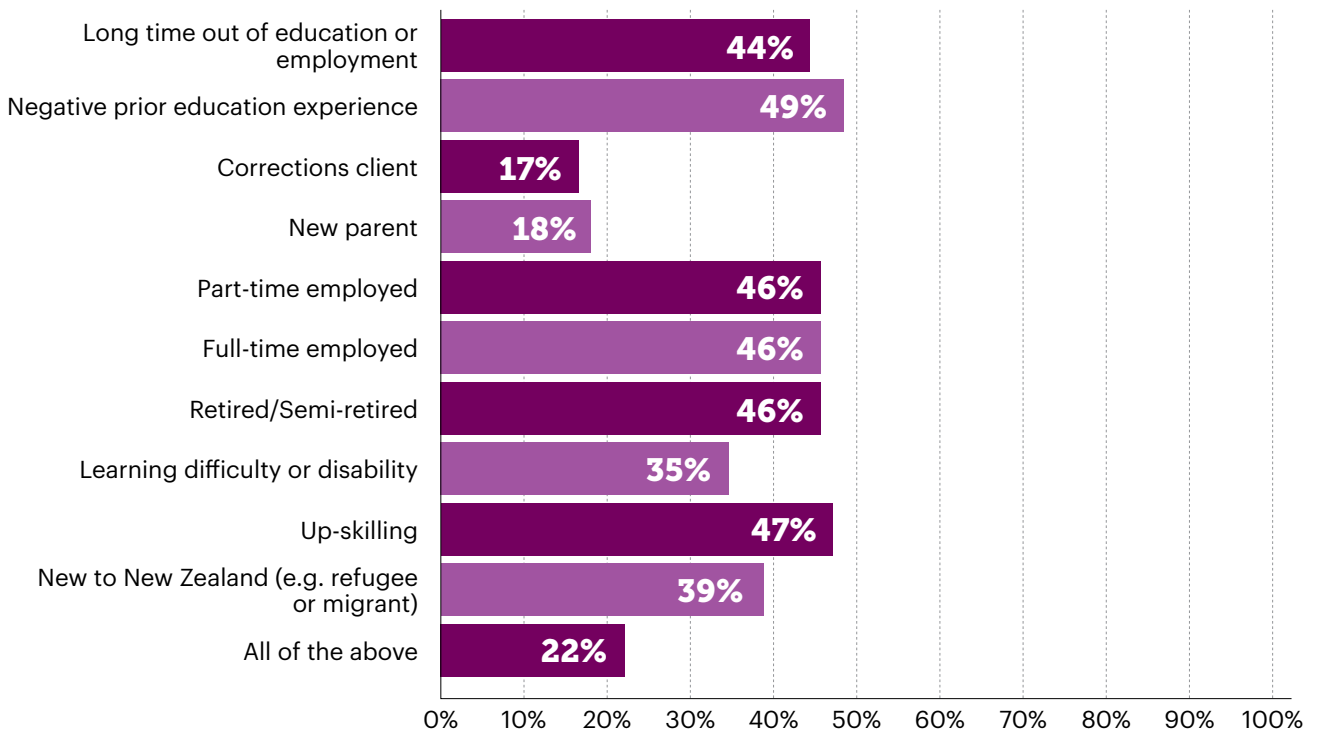
...and organisations provide learning opportunities for a cross section of the population.



## Learner circumstances

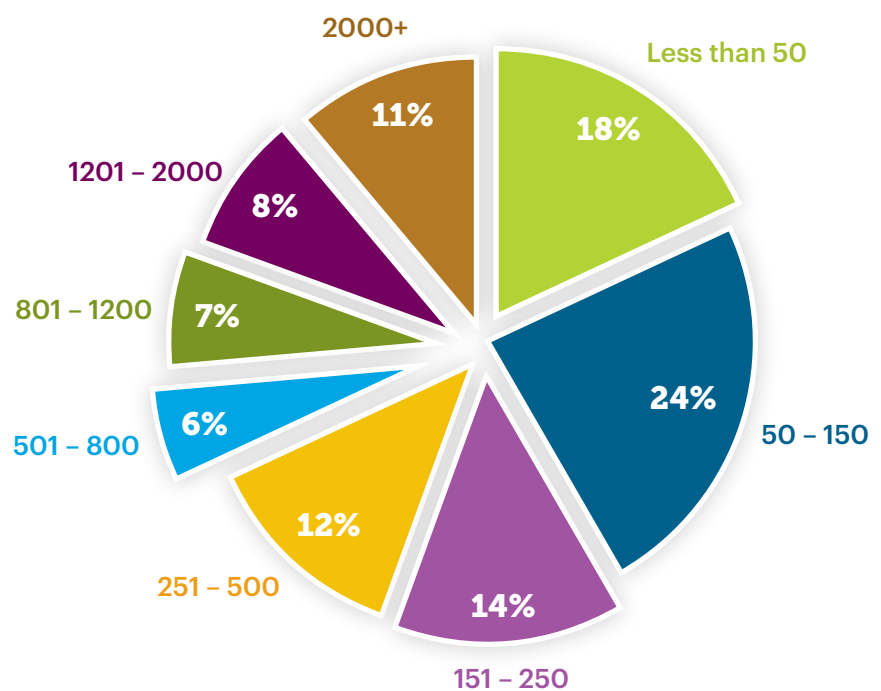
Learner circumstances reflected the ACE focus on the less advantaged. For example, having a negative experience of education, needing to up-skill, having a learning disability, being out of the workforce or being new to New Zealand.

Respondents were asked to select as many as apply.



## Number of learners

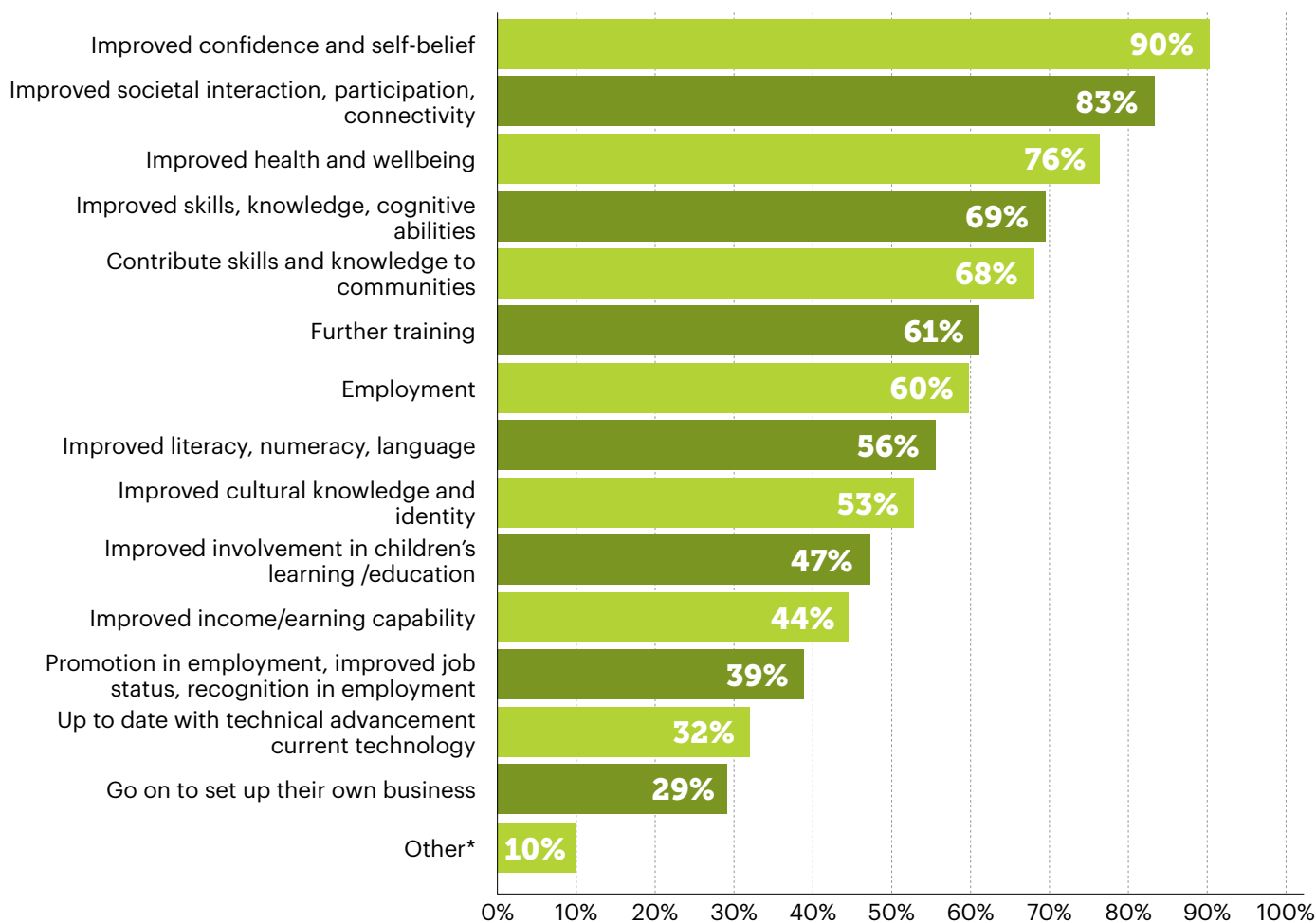
42% of providers typically enrol fewer than 150 learners. 19% enrol between 1201 and over 2000.



## Learner outcomes

Respondents were asked to select (as many as apply) from a list of learner outcomes.

**90% of providers said that improved confidence and self-belief was an outcome. This was followed by improved societal interaction, participation, connectivity (83%).**

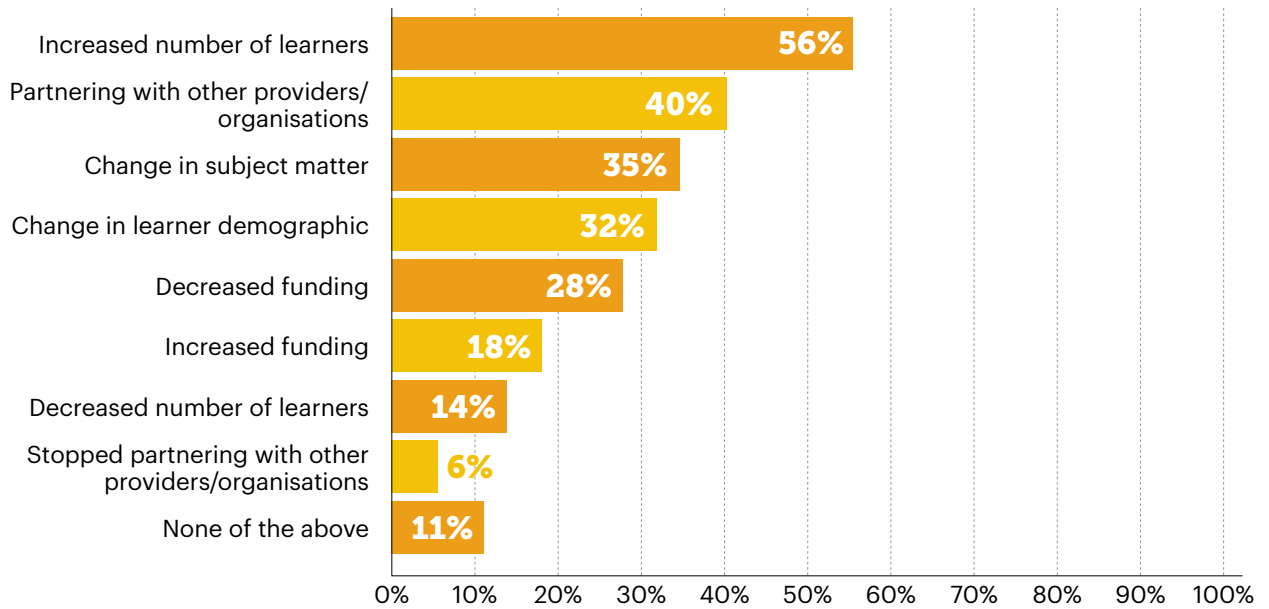


\*Other:

- Avoiding burnout, better communication skills, enhanced confidence in difficult situations, enhanced professional skills
- Supporting others in their natural forming communities, self-awareness and communication skills that can be used in a variety of settings, growing others and developing leadership qualities
- Making new friends
- The most common added-value is what participants take back to their organisations – skills of collective analysis, improved network, added knowledge content & skill sharing
- A reduced environmental impact from everyday choices
- People learn how to purchase a house. Some actually purchased a house
- An increase in cultural competency.

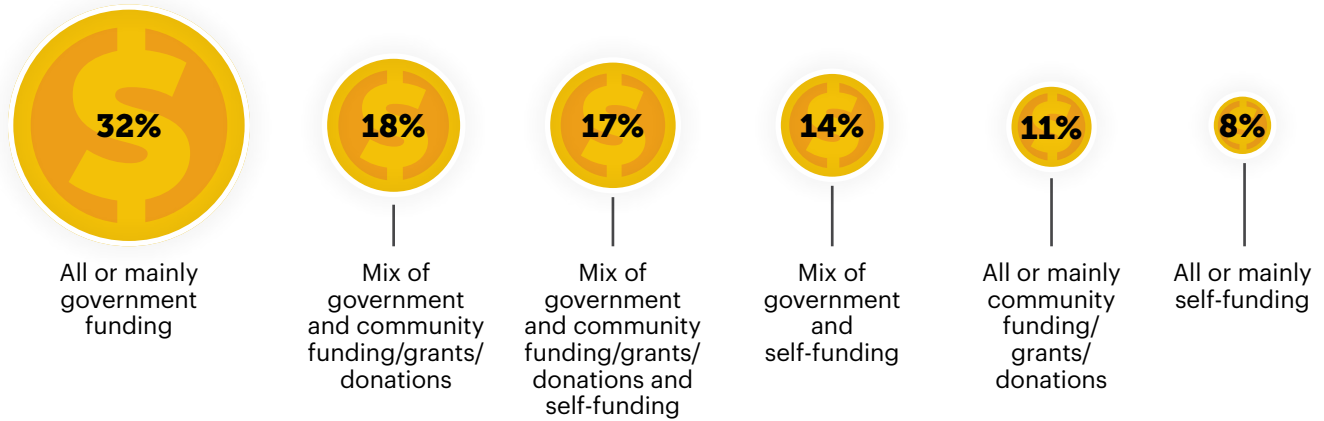
# Trends in service delivery

The trends in service delivery over the last five years are an increased number of learners and more partnerships between organisations.

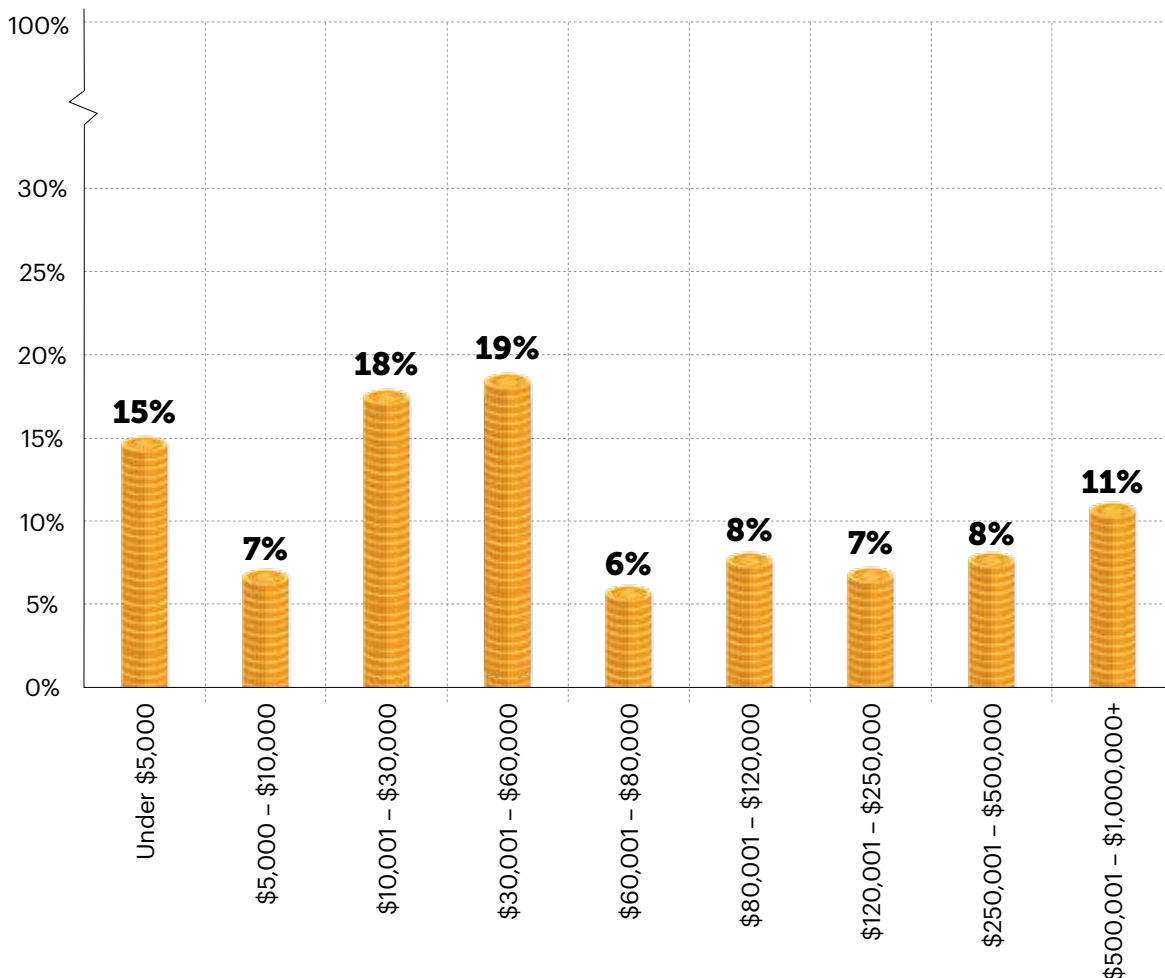


# Main source of ACE funding

A third of providers received all or mainly government funding.

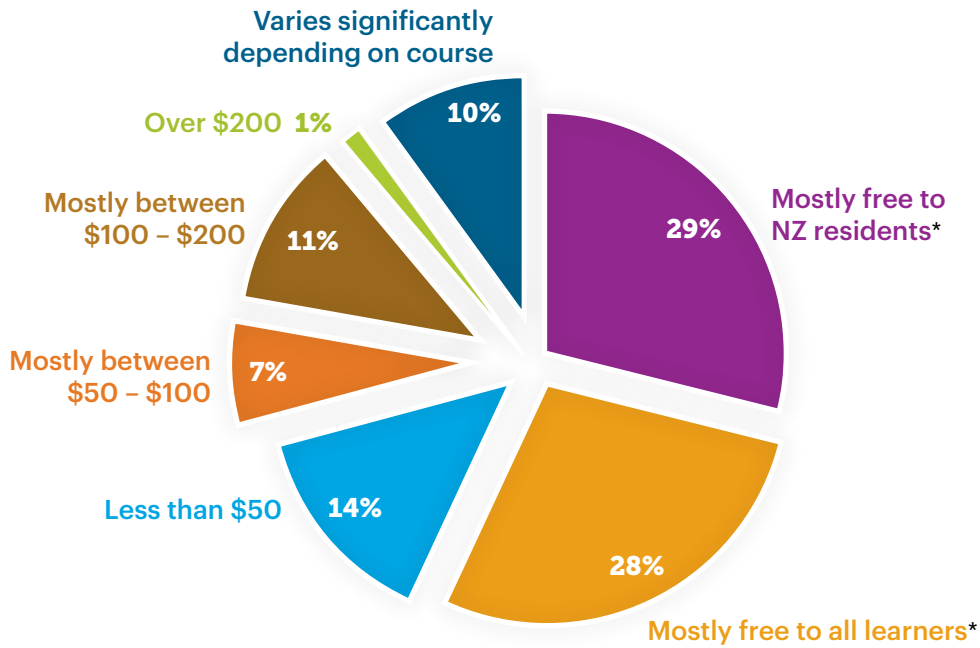


Over two thirds of respondents operated on an income of between \$10,000 – \$60,000 a year.



# Approximate cost to learners

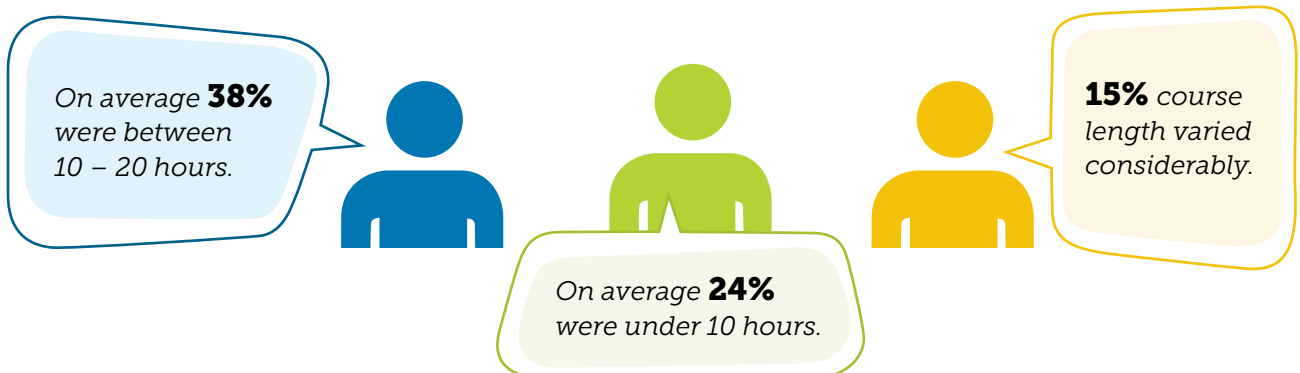
While 18% of respondents said that the cost to learners for user pays courses could be between \$50 – \$200, most courses were free to learners who are New Zealand residents.



\*funded by other means

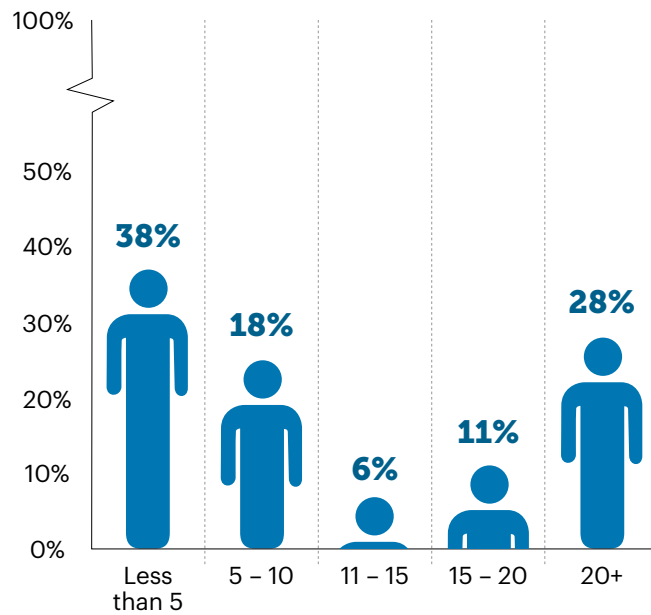
# Length of courses

Most courses were between 10 – 20 hours:

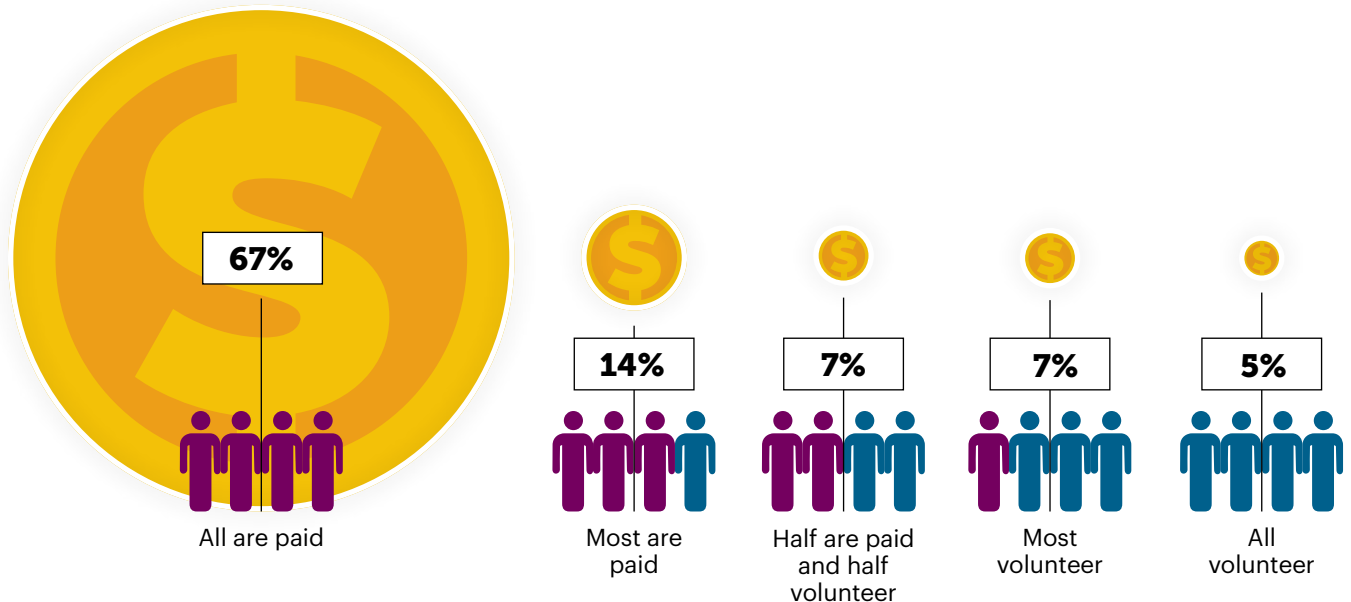


## Information about tutors

Most providers (38%) said they employ fewer than five tutors each year – but the next highest group (28%) employ more than 20.

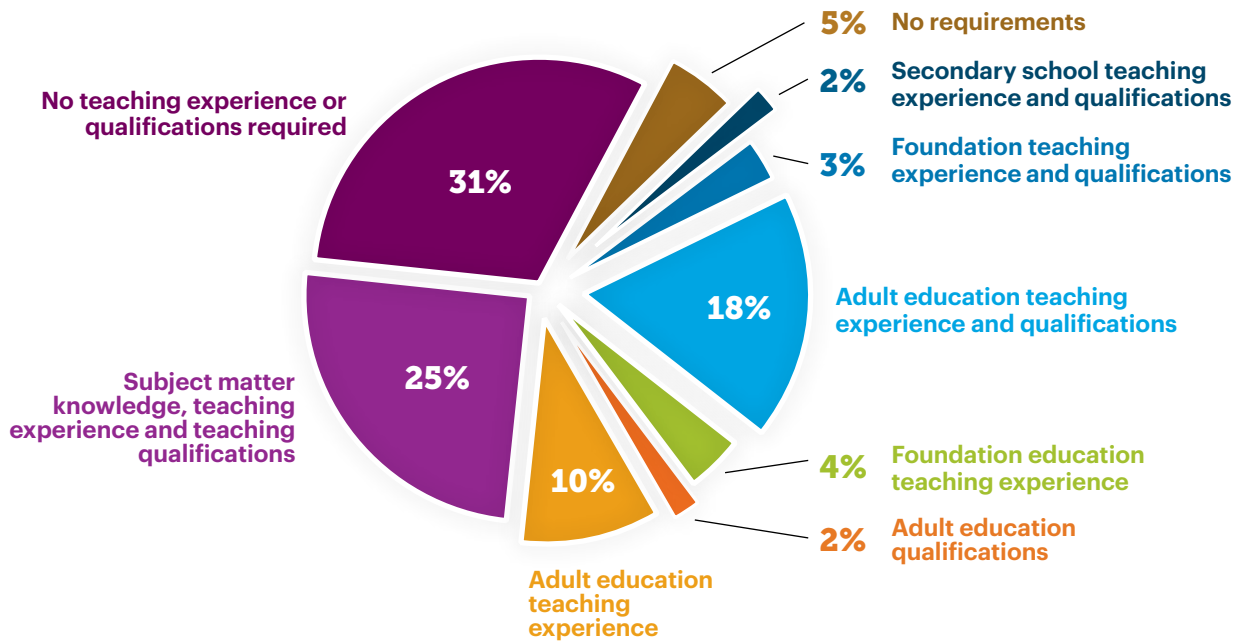


Over two thirds of respondents said that all their tutors are paid.



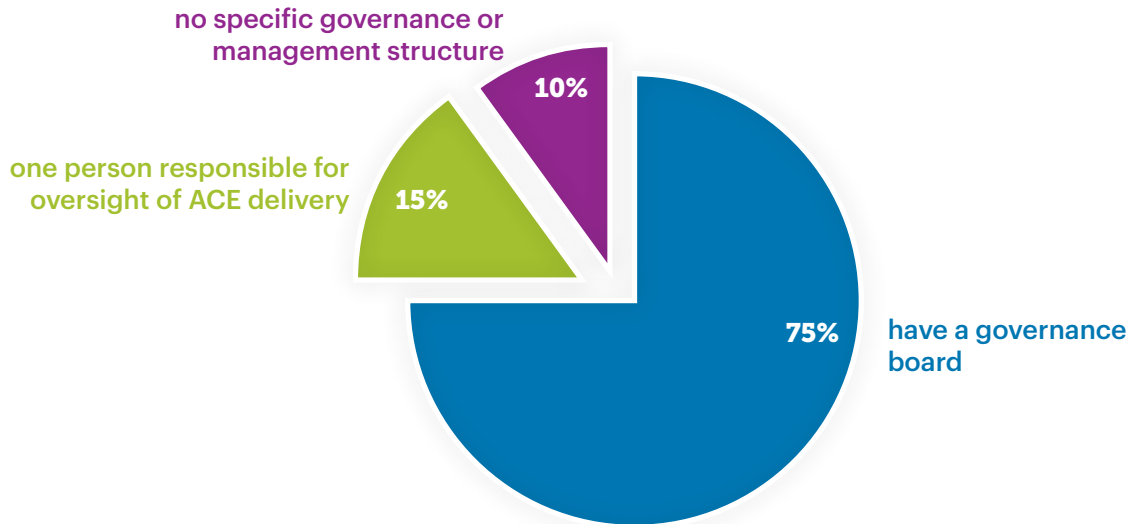


Most providers selected tutors who had either a teaching qualification, subject matter knowledge or experience in teaching adult learners. However nearly a third of providers did not require teaching experience or qualifications.



## Organisational structure

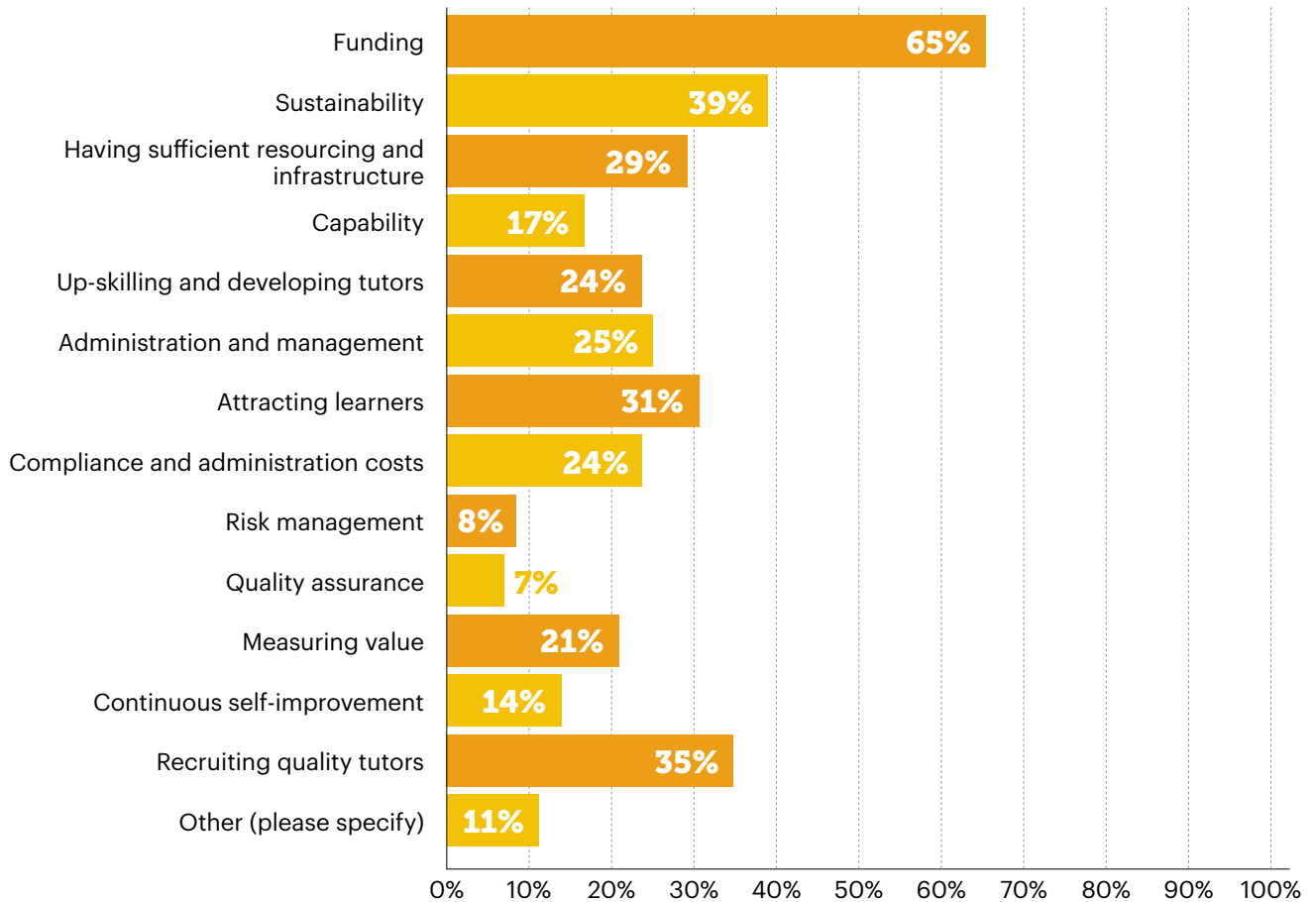
Respondents were asked about their organisational structure: 75% said that they had a governing body (e.g. a board or committee with a governance role) and a management structure that oversaw ACE delivery. Only 11 organisations said that there was just one person responsible for the oversight of ACE delivery. Seven organisations did not have a specific governance or management structure.



# Challenges

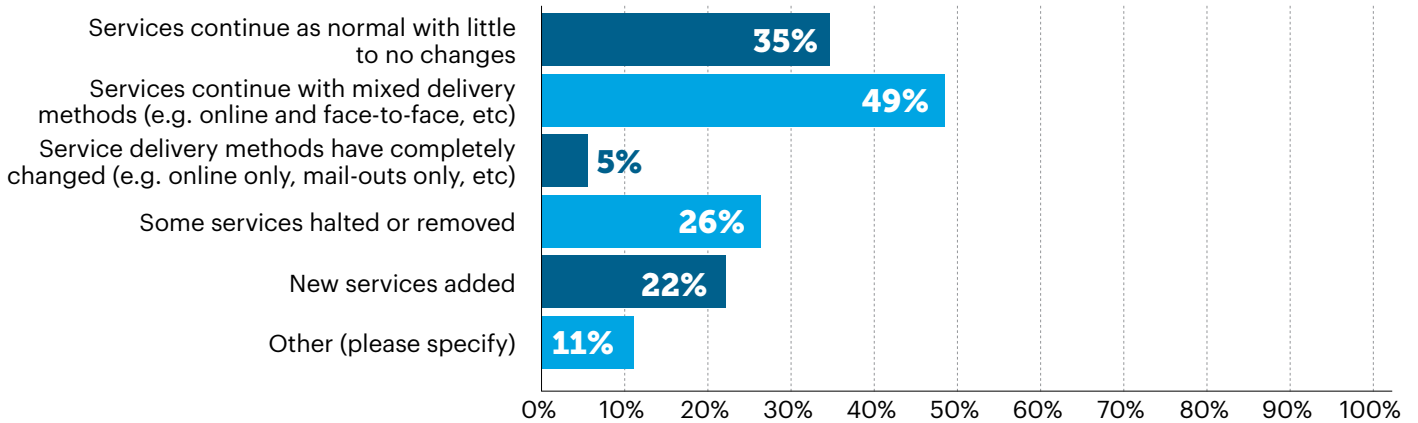
**Funding was a key challenge for over two thirds of providers.**

Other key challenges were sustainability (39%), recruiting quality teachers (35%), up-skilling and developing tutors (24%), measuring value (21%), and capability (17%).

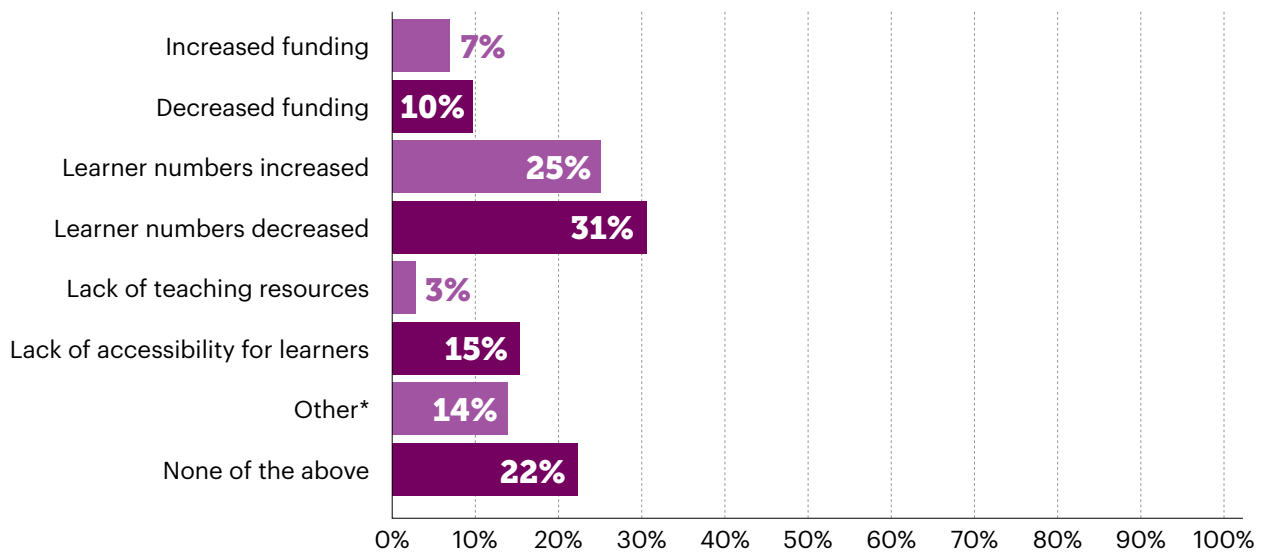


# Impact of Covid-19

The main impact of Covid-19 has been that providers have had to use mixed delivery methods in order to continue offering programmes of learning.



Covid-19 has had a mixed impact on providers' ability to deliver services.



\*Other:

- Face to face classes stopped during Alert Levels 3 and 4
- Using online methods before Covid-19. The percentage increased during lockdown
- Slow re-engagement of learners after lockdown
- Some programmes cancelled during peak lockdown periods
- We have had to change timing of programmes and taken a six month break to allow for other priorities
- Increased demand.

# Case study: Canterbury WEA



*"We try to be environmentally sound ourselves and to walk the talk."*

*"We also aim to promote responsible citizenship."*

## About the organisation

Canterbury Workers' Education Association (WEA) was established in 1915 and is one of seven organisations nationwide all underpinned by the same principle – education for social justice. Canterbury runs four terms a year with tutors providing a wide range of courses most of which run out of their building. These include single issue pop-up courses as well as long-term courses and repeat popular courses. The Book Discussion Scheme is also another organisation under the WEA based in Christchurch with 1300 book groups around New Zealand engaging around 13,000 people.

*"It's about mainly getting people thinking about the world and thinking about their part in it and doing so responsibly. We're striving to make that impression and to do it within our community and create communities of action."*

*"There's an element of camaraderie really amongst the people who are volunteers, workers, and tutors. It all works together nicely. We have to foster that by encouraging communal meals morning teas and occasions and recognitions."*

## What difference do you make to learners?

Canterbury WEA adds value to people's lives by running clubs and offering courses that create communities. Community is a key value to the WEA. We also aim to promote responsible citizenship. "It's got to be something that's good for people and good for the planet, it's about building a better future." There is a strong progressive political stance within the organisation – focusing on democracy and civics and environmentalism. "We try to get people thinking about the world and about their part in it and doing so responsibly. We're striving to make that impression – and to do it within our community as well as creating communities of action."

## What learning outcomes do you track to see how you've enabled the learner to reach their goal?

Each course includes a survey that students complete. The results are reported to the governance group which uses the information to adapt courses and make changes. Tutors are then able to use the account and improve their courses for their learners. Many of the students often attend multiple classes meaning that they know what standard to expect in different courses.

"We track things like what people were hoping to get out of the course and whether it met their expectations as well as how likely they would be to recommend the WEA to others."

## What makes an effective learning experience and what indicators do you use to see if the learning experience has been successful for the learner?

"An effective learning experience is one that enhances life and quality of life, the quality of society and the way society operates – and has given them new things to think about. All of that is part of the value of the learning experience. When people are delighted and surprised by what they've experienced and they're moved to take some action or increase their learning horizon. That's success."

Additionally, the warm and welcoming building owned by the Canterbury WEA makes the skilled staff approachable.



*“Every course has a survey that nearly all of the students complete and they’re all tracked.”*

## What factors enable you to successfully provide your services?

One of the key enabling factors is the discounted rate at which courses are provided compared to other commercial rates. This is because WEA owns the building (which is hired out in the evenings to other organisations with similar philosophy) – and because of legacies. This means that while funding is usually a challenge for most WEAs, Canterbury is able to pay tutors well for their hours.

Being well-established in the community also means that there has been intergenerational attendance and connections with other organisations around Christchurch. This has contributed to the pool of people attending courses. Partnerships with other organisations remain a vital part of WEA’s operation. Another important factor is the high calibre of the staff, tutors and learners.

## What types of challenges do you encounter with providing your services?

“Reaching new people – we know we offer great courses but marketing is very expensive and it is a challenge to get cut through. There are lots of great ‘free’ marketing options but these take lots of time.

“Maintaining our own building is costly and constant.

“Keeping up with new technologies. This takes considerable investment both in equipment and people’s skills.

“Providing Professional development for our tutors – this is something we are keen to do more of – it is loved by some but sometimes those that are most reluctant to take it up are the ones that would benefit most from it!

“Finding tutors and speakers – our community often comes up with fabulous ideas for talks and courses – finding tutors to deliver them can be a real challenge.”

# Case study: Failoa Famili



*"Many of our people don't know that they've got skills and values in them that can help them be self-sufficient. Sometimes they just need some of these workshops to help them transition and understand that they've actually got a lot of transferable skills that they can use in the real world."*

*"We're a small organisation with a big heart."*

*"You've got a range of age groups from 2 to 74. That doesn't faze our presenters because they're used to it."*

## About the organisation

Failoa Famili is a small adult community education organisation focused mainly on providing life skills programmes aimed at Pasifika families and young people – predominantly in Auckland and Wellington. They also offer a Pacific Women in Tech course and partner to provide the Puataunofu/Come Home Safely programme.

The name Failoa Famili comes from 'failoa' which is Samoan for 'just do it' – and 'famili' which is the Tongan word for family.

A small group of women who noticed how many Pasifika families are struggling, established the organisation:

*"We've had insights into what some of the issues are and we've seen how the system has meant that many of our people don't know that they've got skills and values that can help them be self-sufficient."*

*"Our mission is 'thriving, resilience, sustainable Pasifika peoples, families and communities'. We're guided by our values of 'the pathway to leadership is serving others' – a Samoan proverb. So we serve, that's what's important to us, we prioritise giving and service but in doing that we also see a role in leadership."*

## What difference do you make to learners?

Participants in the life skills workshops learn how to build coping strategies through building character, financial wellbeing, employment skills, workplace health and safety, nutrition and fitness.

“Financial wellbeing is definitely a massive one, and employment skills is another big one for our people because they’re still stuck in the traditional way of finding work – which is put together a 10-page cv, go door knocking and hand it in. That’s just wasting their time. What I say to our people is, use your networks because your family, your friends – they have a relationship with you so they’ll more than likely want to help you, rather than you getting knocked back 100s of times because there’s 1000s of people going for the same job.”

The result of life skills workshops is increased confidence and wellbeing.

In the collaborative Puataunofu/Come Home Safely, intergenerational learning is used, strengthening the bond between young and old.

During the 2020 lockdown Failoa Famili and some of their sponsors delivered welfare packs to support the mental health of young women. Mental health is a subject not often talked about in Pasifika communities.

*“When we’re lacking in funding we have to tap into our social capital.”*

*“We’re also promoting the empowerment leadership concept where our values are respect and reciprocity, shared responsibilities.”*

## What makes an effective learning experience and what indicators do you use to see if the learning experience has been successful for the learner?

Failoa Famili workshops are delivered in a ‘Pacific Way’ – using humour, talanoa, stories, and food. All the facilitators are Pasifika.

“We use a strengths-based model – ‘faith in God, family, community and working together’. It’s what I call our social capital. Where Pasifika lack in financial capital, we make up for in spades with our social capital. The result is that people really learn and make changes in their lives.

“We don’t like to overload our people with information obviously because there’s a lot happening in their headspace. So our facilitators try to focus on two to three takeaway points that will give them a chance to make those changes in their behaviour.”

## What factors enable you to successfully provide your services?

Social capital is a key enabling factor, especially when funding is lacking: “With our cohorts and networks we have a wider reach.”

## What types of challenges do you encounter with providing your services?

Funding, like many other adult community education organisations, is a key challenge for providing services. Failoa Famili continues to tap into multiple funding sources to provide workshops.

*“It’s shared responsibility and maximising our limited resources. That’s how we’ve been able to do it as a small organisation.”*



# Case study: Connecting Mid-Canterbury



*"We work with a lot of organisations, and they are basically delivering what they would anyway – but through our programme to get to a different audience. So our programme's very cost effective."*

## About the organisation

Connecting Mid-Canterbury was established in October 2017 when a group launched Timebank and Keep Learning (previously the Learning Exchange).

Keep Learning provides around 10 events each school term. They include a wide range of workshops – from crafts and cooking classes – to suicide prevention.

They also organise discussion panels – bringing people with different backgrounds together. For example they might include people with a disability, those from the Rainbow community and people from different religious backgrounds.

Many of those attending are members from the Timebank, but everyone is welcome.

The Timebank allows untapped resources from the community to be used.

Keep Learning has also held harakeke wānanga (flax weaving workshops) promoting cultural enrichment.

## What difference do you make to learners?

The feedback that participants provide shows that many enjoy being able to connect with others while in the process of learning. This directly ties in with the New Zealand Mental Health Foundation's 'Five Ways to Wellbeing.' These are: 'connect, be active, give, take notice, and keep learning.'

"The connecting is the main thing. People connecting with others but also people being able to give. They love the opportunity to give, especially older folks, retired folks. They feel useful, they feel valuable, and they might not have opportunities otherwise to have that experience.

"We have all kinds of people that have done flax weaving, but it's been very special in particular for some Māori women who've done that. This has given people the opportunity to connect with their culture and develop a passion for it with one woman also planting and looking after harakeke and becoming a leader in the community with flax weaving and helping others."

During the first lockdown, Connecting Mid-Canterbury managed to switch most offerings online, though this lowered attendance for some of the older demographic. This became an opportunity to hold workshops and discussion panels with facilitators from across the country and the world.

## What makes an effective learning experience and what indicators do you use to see if the learning experience has been successful for the learner?

Keep Learning uses short feedback forms after each class to assess how their events are performing.

"The main indicator is 'do you feel better off for having attended this class, are you better off?' That's our metric."

A similar metric is used for Timebank members. While each exchange has to be logged online, the annual survey asks members 'are you better off for being involved?' 99.6% say they're better off. Records are kept with any additional comments to maintain and improve the quality of learning exchanges within Connecting Mid-Canterbury.

## What factors enable you to successfully provide your services?

Willing volunteers is the key success factor for Keep Learning. Networking in the community as well as engagement with learners also allows them to constantly bring in new ideas for workshops and panels.

*"Some people come to heaps of our events they just love all of the different things that we do. I think that's because they love to be stretched and they like to learn and have this opportunity to hear about something new."*

*"So that's the main thing we're promoting – wellbeing and to keep learning. Anything is good for our wellbeing."*

*"Last year when lockdown first hit, we did manage to switch our offerings to online. A few workshops couldn't go ahead like the practical type ones but mostly we were able to rejig the programme and put events online."*

## What types of challenges do you encounter with providing your services?

Funding is a challenge for both Keep Learning and the Timebank.

Another challenge is being able to respond to all the learning interests and needs that are in the community.

Finding good facilitators is also a challenge. The best facilitators are 'come across' rather than engaged by actively seeking someone with particular knowledge and skills.

Connecting Mid-Canterbury aims to increase its engagement with the Pasifika population in Ashburton. There is diversity within the organisation with 30% of Timebank members being born in a different country. "That's a challenge I want to work on in the future is to cater for our whole community".

Keep Learning is also in the process of creating an online centre for learning events from different providers in the Mid-Canterbury area. This will be facilitated through a new website. In the near future, this may bring small challenges as the organisation works to focus on getting the word out to different providers – and advertising the website to the general public.

*"Last year because we were offering things on zoom, we had the ability to access facilitators from anywhere in the country or the world and then people anywhere in the world could join our zoom. So we did actually have quite few international people on."*