

CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM

NOV-2025



**Building Inclusion, Belonging
and Social Cohesion Across
Aotearoa New Zealand**

Celebrating Diversity

Building Inclusion, Belonging and Social Cohesion Across Aotearoa New Zealand

The Cultural Exchange Program brought together refugees, migrants, newcomers, seniors, families, and members of more than 20 ethnic communities, creating opportunities for cultural exchange, friendship, and community connection. Participants represented a diverse range of cultural backgrounds, contributing to a vibrant celebration of multiculturalism and social inclusion across Aotearoa New Zealand.



Impact of the Programme



The Cultural Exchange Program successfully created an inclusive and welcoming environment where refugees, migrants, newcomers, seniors, and members of diverse ethnic communities could come together, connect, and participate in meaningful social and cultural activities. The event reduced social isolation by providing opportunities for community engagement, friendship building, and participation in shared experiences.

Through cultural performances, traditional food, games, storytelling, and interactive activities, participants strengthened their confidence, developed new relationships, and gained a greater sense of belonging within their local communities. Transport assistance ensured that elderly participants, newcomers, and vulnerable community members could attend and fully participate.

The programme also strengthened relationships between Māori and ethnic communities, creating opportunities for cultural learning, mutual respect, and whakawhanaungatanga. Participants reported feeling welcomed, valued, connected, and supported.



Key Outcomes Achieved



Social Inclusion and Belonging



- Increased participation from refugees, migrants, newcomers, seniors, and ethnic communities.
- Reduced social isolation through community engagement and shared activities.
- Strengthened sense of belonging and community connectedness.

Mental Health and Wellbeing



- Improved emotional wellbeing through positive social interaction and cultural celebration.
- Increased confidence and participation among community members.
- Created safe spaces that supported happiness, connection, and wellbeing.

Cultural Understanding



- Enhanced intercultural understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures.
- Strengthened Māori and community connections through cultural exchange and engagement.
- Promoted respect, inclusion, and social cohesion across communities.

Community Connections



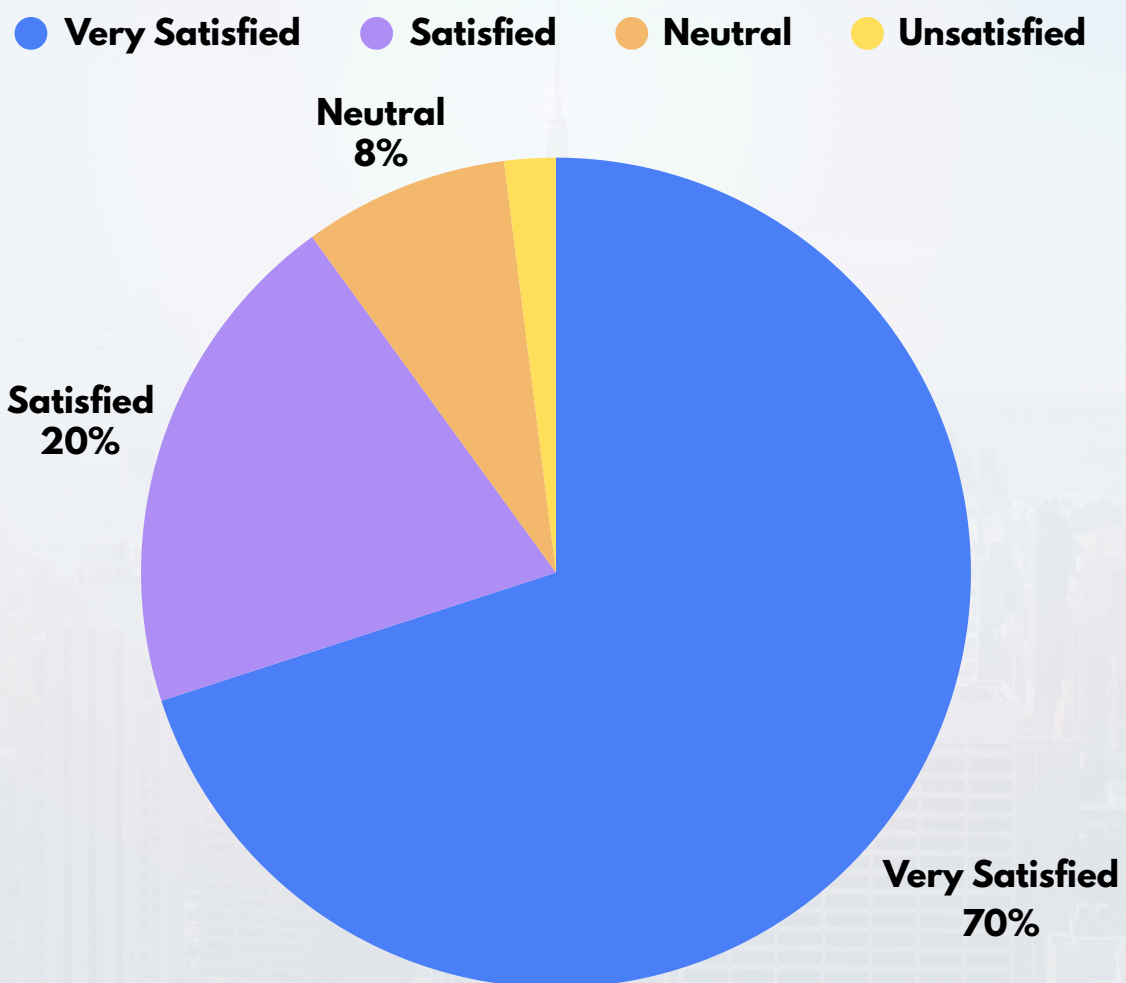
- New friendships and support networks were established.
- Participants developed stronger relationships with community organisations and local support services.
- Increased collaboration between ethnic, migrant, refugee, Māori, and wider community groups.

Event Statistics



Ethnic Diversity of Participants at the Cultural Exchange Program

- Total Participants: 140+
- Ethnicities Represented: 20+
- Cultural Performances: Multiple international and community performances
- Transport Support Provided: Yes
- Community Groups Engaged: Refugee, Migrant, Māori, Pasifika, Ethnic and Local Communities
- Participant Satisfaction: 90% Positive Feedback
- New Friendships and Connections: Significant increase reported by participants



Participant Feedback



The programme successfully engaged participants from more than 20 ethnic communities, strengthening social cohesion, reducing isolation, and promoting wellbeing through cultural celebration, shared experiences, and meaningful community participation. Participants reported increased confidence, stronger social connections, greater cultural understanding, and an enhanced sense of belonging within their local communities. The programme also strengthened relationships between Māori, refugee, migrant, and ethnic communities, contributing to a more connected and inclusive society.

Participant Voices

"I felt welcomed and included from the moment I arrived."

"The cultural performances and food helped us learn about other cultures in a fun and respectful way."



"It was wonderful to meet people from different backgrounds and make new friends."

"The Māori welcome and cultural connections made the event very special."

"Events like this help reduce loneliness and bring communities together."

Conclusion



The Cultural Exchange Program demonstrated the positive impact of community-led cultural engagement in strengthening wellbeing, reducing isolation, and fostering inclusion. By bringing together people from diverse backgrounds in a welcoming and culturally safe environment, the programme contributed to stronger social connections, improved mental wellbeing, and a greater sense of belonging for participants across Aotearoa New Zealand.

