



**NEW ZEALAND
WORK RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

The expression, experience and transcendence of low skills in Aotearoa, New Zealand

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2020 NZ Vocational Education and Training Research Forum



Research Programme

- Funded via the MBIE Endeavour programme
- 2019 – 2024
- Team of quantitative and qualitative researchers spanning a range of disciplines, and institutions.
 - AUT; University of Waikato; Portland State University and the OECD
- Advisory group across policy makers and practitioners
- Aim: To deliver an empirical base for improved public policy delivery, interventions and wellbeing outcomes for adults living with low literacy and/or numeracy skills in NZ

Need

- Substantial fraction of NZ's adult working-age population has low L/N skills
- Negative effects felt at individual; family/whanau; national level
- The World Literacy Foundation estimates the economic and social cost of low literacy is \$3billion per year
- Prevalence of low L/N is higher for Māori and Pasifika

Key research goals

RQ1: What are the approaches to conceptualizing and defining low L/N? What is the portrait of the low L/N population in NZ?

RQ2: Analyse the resilience and socio-economic consequences of economic shocks for low L/N adults

RQ3: What are the life-course trajectories (and precursors) for adults living with low L/N skills? What are the relevant social and cultural contextual stories?

RQ4: What are the impacts of interventions?

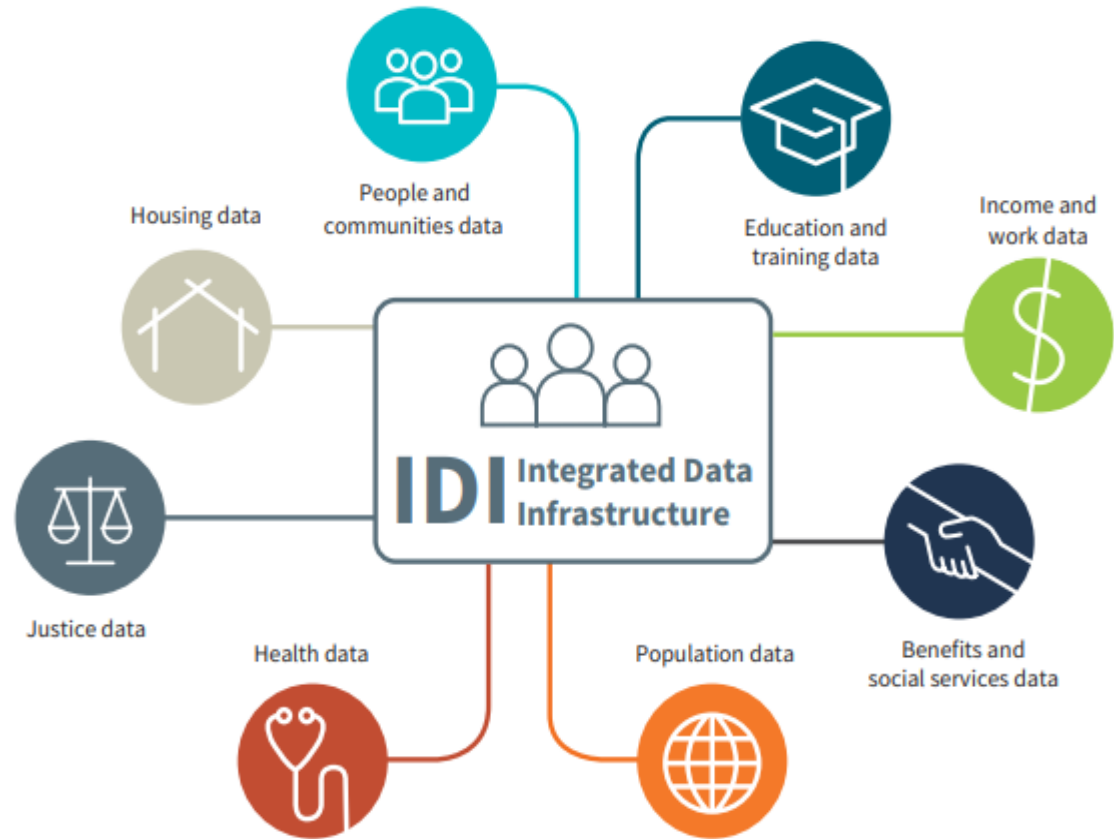
RQ5: What are the projected future national levels of low L/N?

Tools

- PIAAC (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competences) data

Tools

➤ Stats NZ's Integrated Data Infrastructure



Tools

- Qualitative research – with Māori and Pasifika communities

Update – end of Year 1

- Literature review - discussion of context, conceptual issues and existing evidence
- Portrait of the low L/N adult population in NZ
- Returns to L/N skills in NZ
- Reading components, reading engagement and literacy proficiency

See www.workresearch.aut.ac.nz/low-skills

Looking ahead – Years 2 & 3

- Complete returns to skills analysis for NZ
- What is the role of skills and tasks in NZ's ethnicity and gender wage gaps
- The literacy and numeracy interventions landscape in NZ
- What are the impacts of Covid-19 and associated lockdown across the L/N skill distribution in NZ?

Looking ahead – Years 2 & 3

- Cohort analysis of life-course factors associated with low L/N
 - quantitative and qualitative
- Do L/N interventions improve skills and subsequent education and training outcomes?
- Do L/N interventions improve labour market, health and justice outcomes?
- What are the barriers and enablers that build resilience to risk and enable pathways to transcend low skills

Looking even further ahead – Years 4 & 5

- Completion of intervention analysis and qualitative analysis
- Ensuring knowledge exchange across components of research and that quantitative work informs qualitative, and vice versa
- Projections – forecasting L/N distribution for NZ
- Dissemination – working closely with advisory group via both policy and practitioner pathways



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Thank You

Questions?

Email: gail.pacheco@aut.ac.nz

More info at www.workresearch.aut.ac.nz/low-skills

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