

A Report to Schools on New Zealand Student Engagement 2007

Kia ora koutou katoa

This is the eighth annual report on student engagement, provides information on how New Zealand students are engaged in their learning using the key indicators of stand-downs, suspensions, expulsions, exclusions and early leaving exemptions that identify the levels of disengagement occurring in our schools.

The report shows that both the total number and the rate of stand-downs and suspensions have decreased over the 2007 school year compared to 2006. This indicates the importance schools are clearly placing on addressing student engagement. Schools, using a wide range of resources available to them, have been successful in improving student engagement and hence reducing levels of unacceptable student behaviour.

Stand-downs occurred in 52% of schools with only 28% of schools suspending any students. Schools have continued to look at other ways of helping improve student behaviour enabling students to better appreciate the value of education for their future and make a positive use of their time at school.

The Ministry of Education continues to work alongside schools to develop strategies and programmes to assist them in the engagement process. The recently announced '*Schools Plus*' initiative is designed to assist schools in helping students to more fully participate in schooling or workplace training. The Ministry has been given the task of providing resources necessary to help young people realise their potential. This is an exciting programme that will assist schools in ensuring all students are fully engaged in the learning process.

Kathy Phillips
Group Manager
National Operations

Glossary

Student Engagement Indicators

Data collected on the numbers of stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions, expulsions, early leaving exemptions and truancy (the latter not included in this report) can be used as indicators of the level of student engagement across the school system.

Stand-down

As a consequence of a serious breach of school rules a school principal can order a student to stand-down from school for a period of up to five school days. A stand-down, for any student, can total no more than five school days in any term, or 10 days in a school year. Students return automatically to school following a stand-down.

Suspension

For very serious breaches of school rules a principal may suspend a student from attending school until the school board of trustees decides on the consequence for the student. The board may decide to lift the suspension with or without conditions, to extend the suspension, or in the most serious cases, to either exclude or expel the student.

Exclusion and Expulsion

Exclusion and expulsion are both used for behaviour judged to be 'gross misconduct'. When using an **exclusion**, a board may not allow a student to return to the school and the student must enrol in another school. Only students under the age of 16 (the legal leaving age) can be excluded. Students aged 16 and over can be **expelled** and are not required to re-enrol in another school, but may choose to do so.

Early Leaving Exemption

The Ministry may grant a student aged 15 an exemption from schooling if it is judged to be in the best interests of the student given their behaviour and learning issues.

School Levels

Contributing	Year 1-6
Full Primary	Year 1 -8
Intermediate	Year 7-8
Restricted Composite	Year 7-10
Full Composite/Area	Year 1-13
Secondary	Year 9-13 or 7-13

About this report

Schools are required to report to the Ministry of Education on any disciplinary action taken that as a consequence, denies a student access to school. The statistics in this report are from that data reported by state or state-integrated schools during the 2007 calendar year.

Schools provide a wide range of responses to breaches of school rules and only those that result in a student being denied access to school are reported here. This report therefore is on school actions and not on the prevalence of any form of student behaviour.

Stand-downs are a form of timeout actively managed by the principal to ensure behavioural issues are addressed with minimum disruption to a student's learning. It is preferable that schools use stand-downs instead of suspensions to manage challenging behaviour by students.

Suspension, which is managed by the board, is for the most serious of issues, and has a broader range of consequences. A suspension can have significant impact on a student's learning and should be avoided if at all possible.

Stand-downs and suspensions are reported separately and are not combined for reporting purposes as they are separate processes with significantly different consequences.

Schools should use the information in this report as a basis for reviewing their own levels of student engagement.

The report is focussed on the number of stand-down and suspension events, rather than the number of students involved.

The report uses 'rate per 1,000 students' to present or discuss changes over time. The rate per 1,000 is calculated by dividing the number of events by the total number of students enrolled and then multiplying by 1,000. Rate per 1,000 provides a consistent measure and allows for comparisons over time.

For stand-down and suspensions figures, NZAID students (foreign students sponsored by the New Zealand Agency for International Development - a branch of MFAT), foreign fee-paying students, correspondence school students, adult students (age>19), and private students are excluded.

Early Leaving Exemptions also exclude NZAID students and foreign fee paying students, but include correspondence school students and private school students. Only students who are 15 years of age are included in the Early Leaving Exemption rate.

For both measures, ethnicity is prioritised in the order of Māori, Pasifika, Asian, other groups except European/Pākehā, and European/Pākehā. European/Pākehā refers to people who affiliate as New Zealand European, Other European or European (not further defined). For example, this includes and is not limited to people who consider themselves as Australian (excluding Australian Aborigines), British and Irish, American, Spanish, and Ukrainian. Note that 'Other' ethnic group is not shown on graphs in this report that break down by ethnicity due to the small number of students involved. However, students of 'Other' ethnicity are included in all totals.

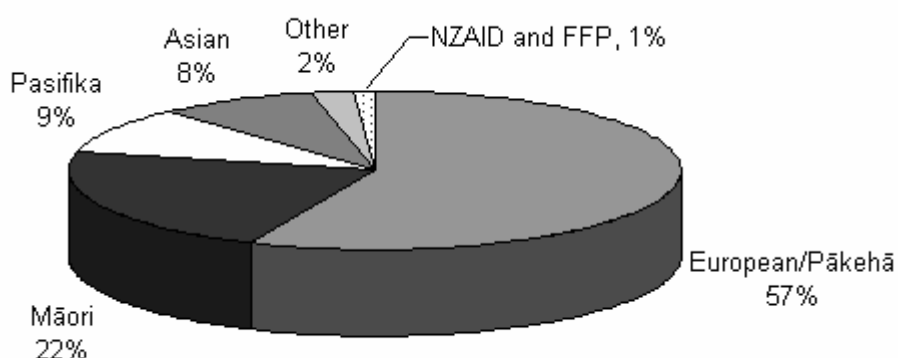
Suspension and stand-down rates are also age standardised. As shown in Figure 2 and Figure 6 in this report, the rates of stand-downs and suspensions are highest for ages 13 to 15. Stand-down or suspension rates will therefore vary from group to group depending on the distribution of the ages of their students, i.e. the more 14 year-olds a particular group has, the higher their stand-down or suspension rate is likely to be. Age standardisation allows for more accurate comparisons between groups with

varying age distributions by modifying the rates of groups to reflect what the rates would be if the age distribution of the groups matched the national age distribution.

Engagement and the student population

In 2007 there were 729,168 students enrolled in New Zealand state and state-integrated schools with a further 30,738 students at private schools. The total number of students at school peaked in 2004. The number of 14 year olds (the age at which students are most commonly suspended or stood down) peaked in 2005. During the period 2000-2007 the number of Māori, Pasifika, Asian and Other ethnicity students increased by 12%, 24%, 47% and 87% respectively, while the number of European/Pākehā students decreased by 8%.

Percentage of students at state and state integrated schools by ethnicity, as at 1st July 2007



2007 – Quick Facts

Stand-downs

Both the number and the rate of stand-down cases have decreased compared to 2006.

This decrease was seen in Māori, European/Pākehā, Asian and Pasifika students.

48% of schools did not use stand-downs.

There were 20,910 stand-down cases in 2007. This is about three stand-downs for every hundred students.

The most common reasons for a stand-down were continual disobedience, physical assault of other students, or verbal abuse of teachers.

For most students who were stood-down, this was a once-only event for the year.

Stand-downs were most likely to occur in secondary schools.

Over twice as many male students were stood-down than female students.

The proportion of Māori students stood-down was higher than the proportion of students of any other ethnicity.

Suspensions

Overall, suspension numbers and rates have fallen and are the lowest they have ever been in the last eight years.

The suspension rate for Pasifika students fell the most dramatically – 17% over the last year.

About 72% of all schools did not use suspensions.

There were 4,679 suspension cases in 2007. This is a rate of less than one suspension for every hundred students.

Suspensions related to drug abuse have fallen 39% since 2000.

For vast majority of students who were suspended, this was a once-only event during the year.

Suspensions were most likely to occur in secondary schools.

Over twice as many male students were suspended than female students.

The proportion of Māori students suspended was higher than the proportion of students of any other ethnicity.

Analysis of Stand-down Cases

Stand-down numbers and rates have decreased across all main ethnic groups

Both the number of stand-down cases, and the age-standardised rate, increased steadily from 2000 to 2006. However, 2007 saw a decrease in the overall number and rate of stand-downs compared to 2006. This decrease was seen for Māori, Pasifika, Asian and European/Pākehā students. Pasifika students in particular had a pronounced reduction in their stand-down rate which fell 16% from 2006 to 2007.

Māori students have the highest stand-down rate, 2.6 times greater than the rate for European/Pākehā students. This difference has remained relatively constant over the years.

Although there were 20,910 stand-down cases in 2007, fewer than 3% of the total student population were involved with an age standardised rate of 29 per 1000 students. 80% of all stand-down cases were single instances, that is, students who were only stood down once in that year.

In most cases, less formal options will have been tried before the imposition of a stand-down. These may include contacting parents, counselling, discussion and mediation, apologies and restorative practices, or detentions.

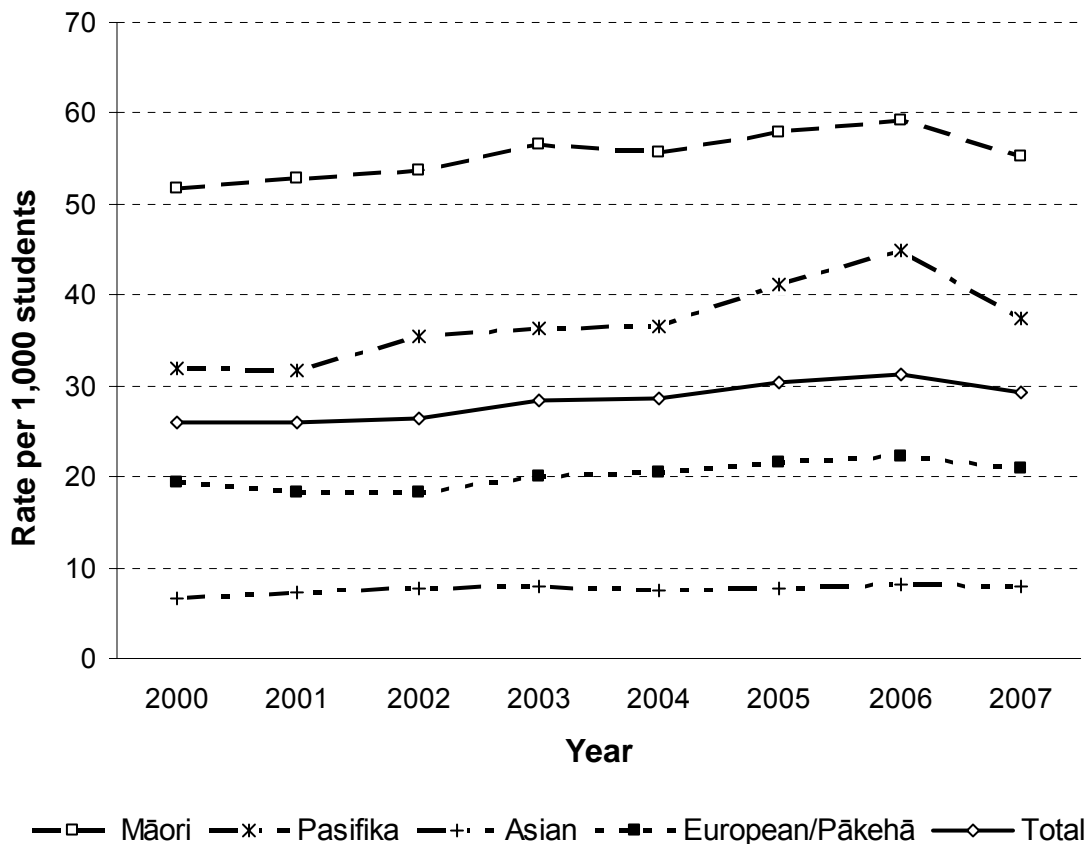


Figure 1: Age-standardised stand-down rates by ethnic group (2000 to 2007)

Age

The rate of stand-down varies dramatically with the age of the student. The highest rate is with 14 year-olds who have a stand-down rate of 88 per 1000 students. Students aged 13 to 15 years account for nearly two thirds of all stand-down cases.

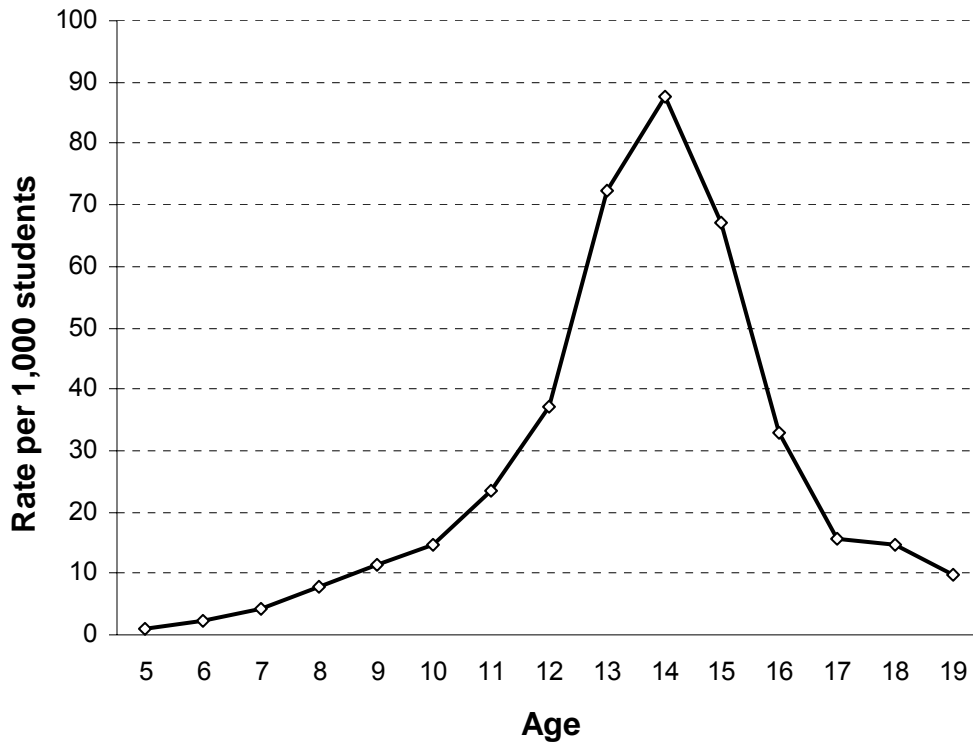


Figure 2: Stand-down rates by age (2007)

Gender

72% of stand-downs that occurred in 2007 were from male students, resulting in male students having an age-standardised stand-down rate 2.4 times that of female students. This difference between the genders has remained relatively constant over the last eight years.

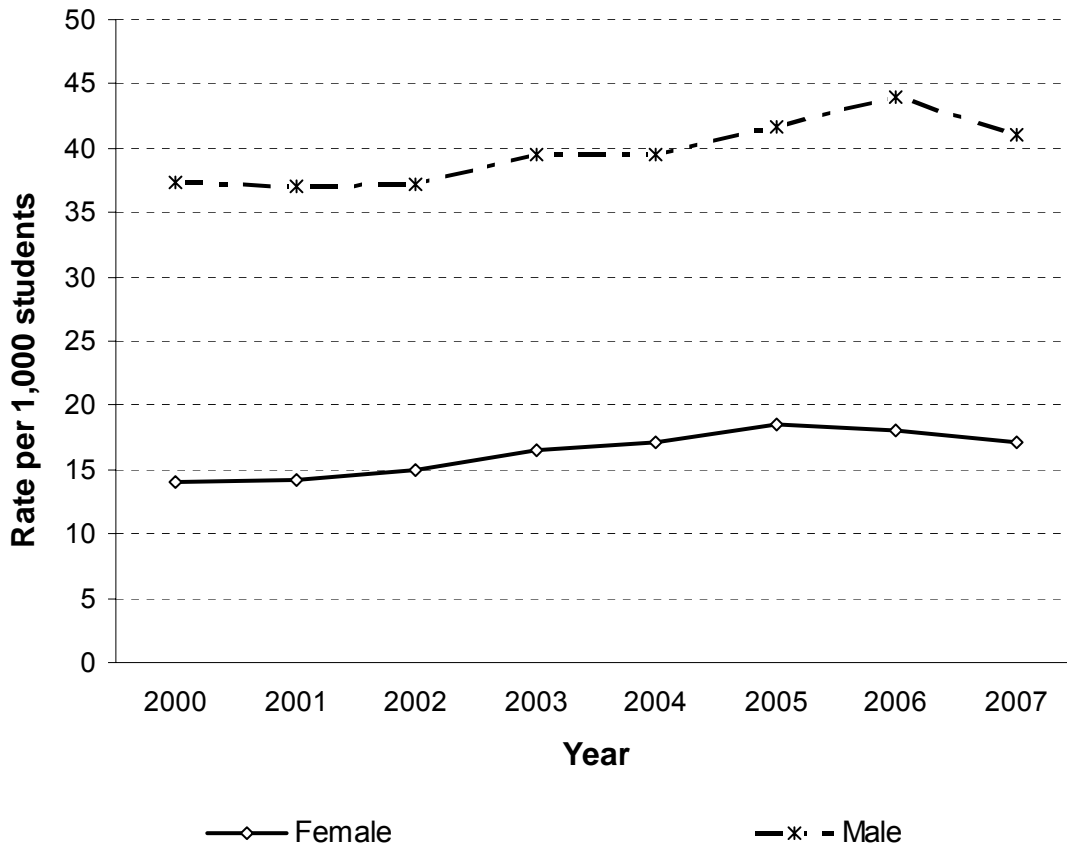


Figure 3: Age-standardised stand-down rates by gender (2000 to 2007)

School Type

The use of stand-downs varies from school to school, with a large number of schools not using stand-downs at all. 55% of primary schools (Contributing, Full Primary, Intermediate), 34% of Composite schools (Full Composite and Restricted Composite), and 2% of Secondary schools did not stand-down any students. Stand-downs are also much more likely to occur in secondary schools with 69% of stand-down cases occurring at these schools.

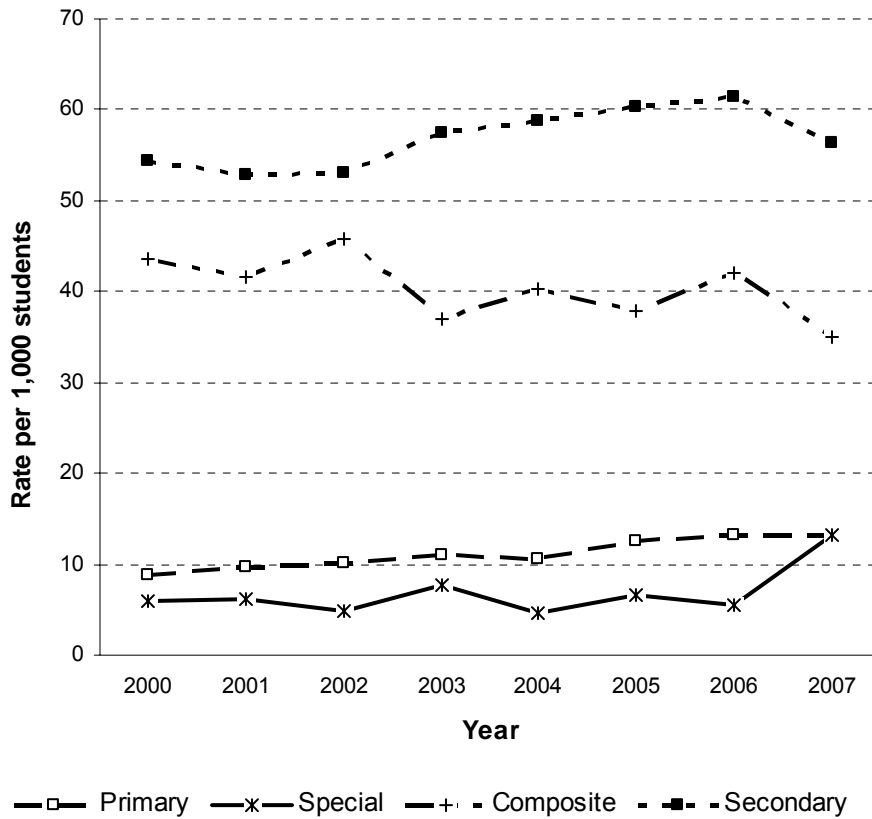


Figure 4: Age-standardised stand-down rates by school type (2000 to 2007)

Reasons for stand-down

The most common reported behaviours that lead to a stand-down in 2007 were: continual disobedience (26%), physical assault of other students (25%), and verbal abuse of teachers (14%). From 2000 to 2007, these three reasons have remained at similar percentages and accounted for around 65% of all stand-down cases.

Analysis of Suspension Cases

Suspension rates and numbers continue to decrease

A suspension is a more serious consequence than a stand-down. In most cases, the same sorts of student management processes will have been used by a school before suspending a student, as would have been used before imposing a stand down. While a stand-down may have occurred prior to a suspension, a suspension is often the consequence of more severe single instance.

There were 4,679 suspension cases in 2007, at an age standardised rate of 6.6 per 1000 students. Of these, 91% were single instances, that is, students who were only suspended once in that year.

The age-standardised suspension rate has decreased by 17% since 2000 (7.9 per 1,000 students in 2000 compared with 6.6 per 1,000 students in 2007), including a 6.1% reduction from 2006 to 2007. This decrease from 2006 to 2007 is seen with Māori, Pasifika, European/Pākehā and Asian students. The Pasifika age-standardised suspension rate had the largest decrease falling 17% from the 2006 rate, which is particularly pertinent as Pasifika suspension figures had been tracking upwards from 2003 to 2006.

Māori students are still disproportionately represented in suspension statistics, with 14 per 1000 Māori students compared to 4.4 per 1000 European/Pākehā students being suspended in 2007.

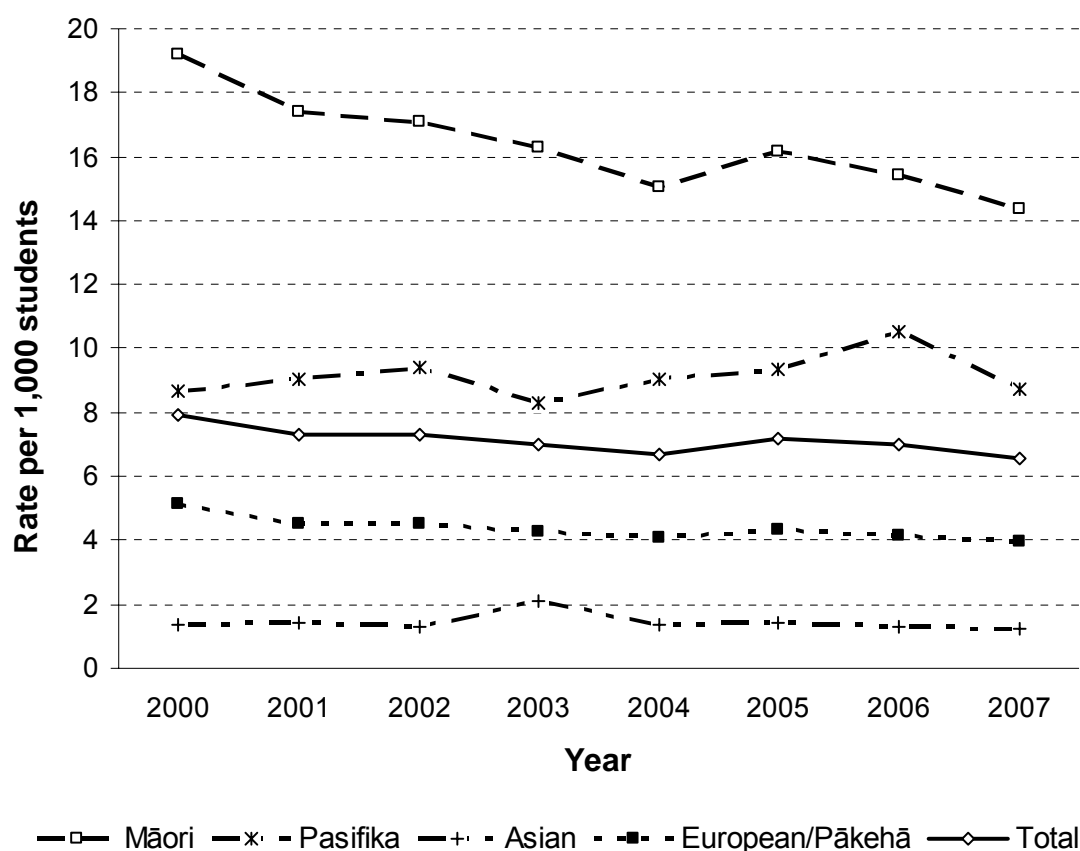


Figure 5: Age-standardised suspension rates by ethnic group (2000 to 2007)

Age

As with stand-downs, 14 year-olds have the highest suspension rate at 23 per 1000 students, with students aged 13 to 15 accounting for 68% of all suspension cases.

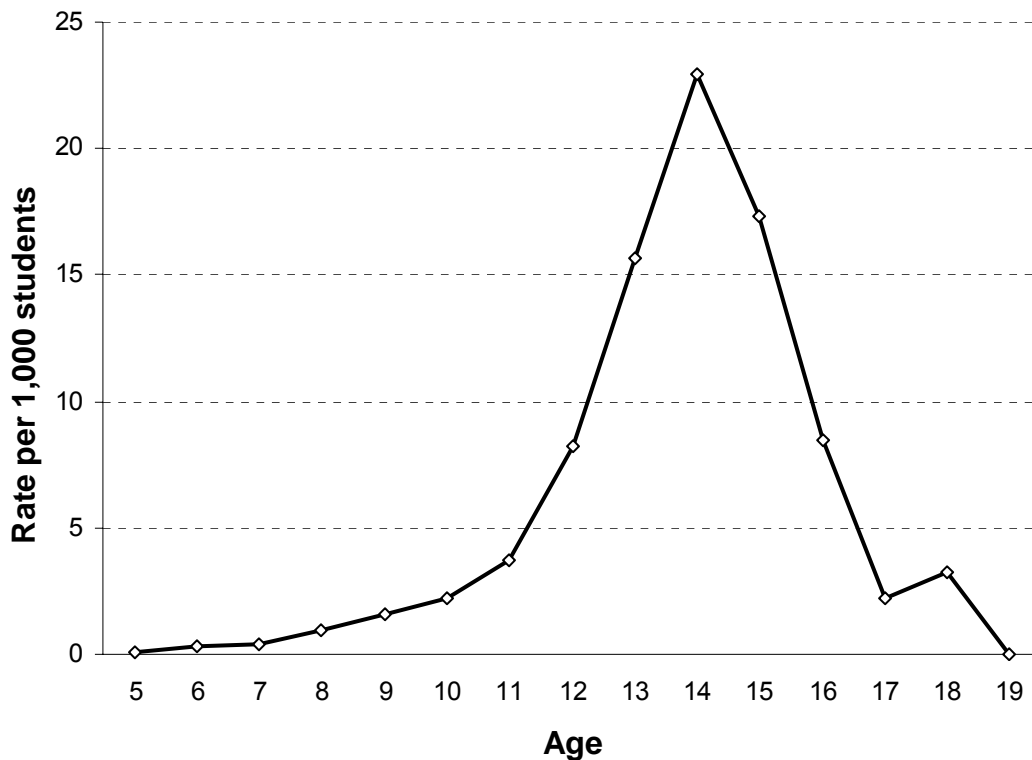


Figure 6: Suspension rates by age (2007)

Gender

Male students have an age-standardised suspension rate 2.6 times that of female students. This difference between the genders has remained relatively constant over the last eight years, although it did have a slight dip in 2004. Male students accounted for 73% of stand-downs.

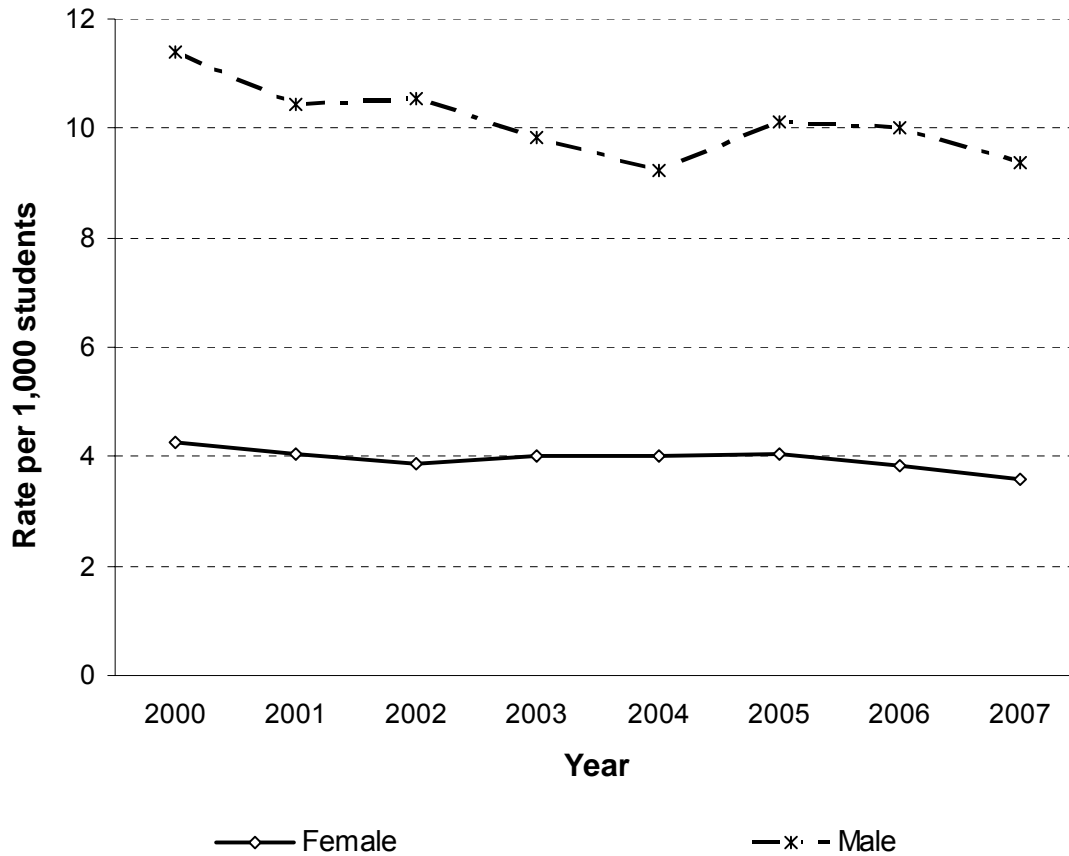


Figure 7: Age-standardised suspension rates by gender (2000 to 2007)

School Type

The majority of stand-downs (74%) occurred at secondary schools that have an age-standardised suspension rate of 14 per 1000 students. This rate has fallen by 25% from an age-standardised rate of 18 per 1000 students in 2000. Thirteen percent of Secondary schools did not suspend any students in 2007, along with 48% of Composite schools (Full Composite and Restricted Composite), and 83% of Primary schools (Contributing, Full Primary, Intermediate).

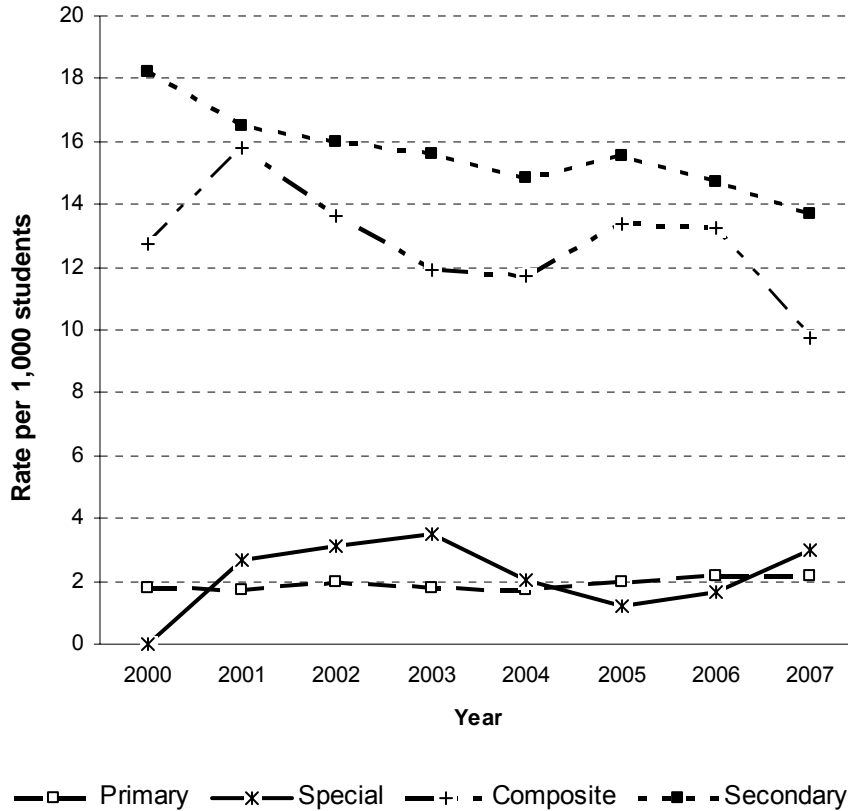


Figure 8: Age-standardised suspension rates by school type (2000 to 2007)

Reasons for suspension

The most common reasons for suspension were continual disobedience (27%), misuse of drugs (20%) and physical assault of other students (19%). These reasons account for an average of 67% of all suspension cases. Of these three reasons, the number of suspensions cases for drugs has fallen 39% from 2000 to 2007, whereas the numbers of suspensions for continual disobedience and physical assault on other students have actually risen slightly over this time period (6% and 11% respectively). The decrease that has been seen in suspensions since 2000 has therefore been primarily driven by a decrease in the suspension for drugs.

The reduction in suspensions for drugs may be due to some schools viewing student drug use as a health issue rather than primarily a behaviour issue. As a result, some schools are exploring ways of working with students and their families to keep students engaged in education while also seeking additional support to address any drugs issues students may have.

Analysis of Exclusions and Expulsions

Exclusions

Only students under the age of 16 can be excluded. In 2007 there was a drop in both the number and rate of exclusions from 2006. There were 1,433 exclusions in 2007, with an age-standardised rate of 2.3 exclusions per 1,000 students under 16. The rate of exclusions has remained relatively constant since 2001, although there has been a slight downwards trend over the last three years.

Māori students have the largest rate of exclusions. In 2007, the age-standardised exclusion rate for Māori students (5.0 per 1,000 students under 16) was 47% higher than the rate for Pasifika (3.4 per 1,000 students under 16), and 4 times as high as that for European/Pākehā (1.0 per 1,000 students under 16). The Māori and Pasifika age-standardised rates both saw reductions from 2006 to 2007 – the Māori rate falling 10% and the Pasifika rate 17%.

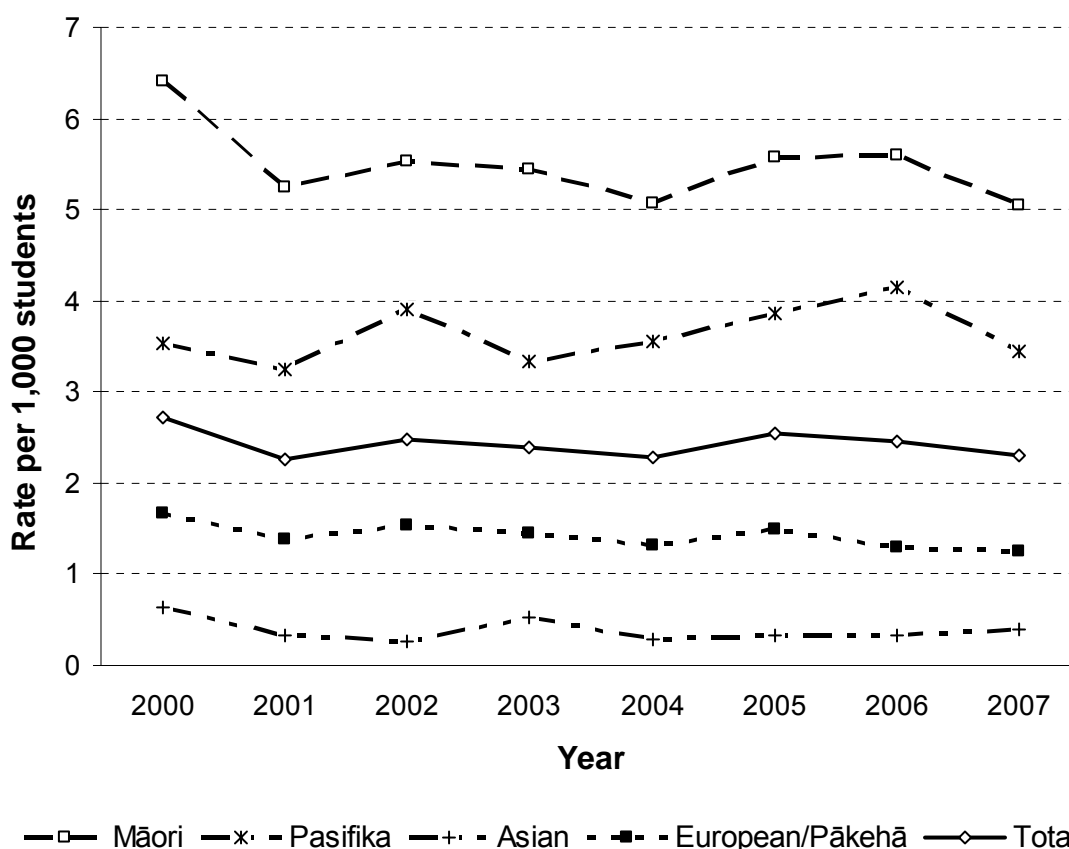


Figure 10: Age-standardised exclusion rates by ethnic group (2000 to 2007)

Reasons for Exclusions

The majority of exclusion cases (69%) related to: continual disobedience (37%), the physical assault of other students (18%), and the misuse of drugs (14%). The percentage of exclusions for the misuse of drugs, in particular, has seen a significant drop from 2000 when drug misuse comprised 24% of all exclusions.

Exclusion Outcome

Of the closed exclusion cases that occurred in 2007, 89% ended up in a legal learning situation (Correspondence School, gained an Early Leaving Exemption, enrolled at a new school, being homeschooled, or returned to the original suspending school).

Expulsions

Only students aged 16 and over can be expelled. Expelled students do not have to return to schooling, unlike students who are excluded. There were only 178 expulsions in 2007. The vast majority of these (nearly 90%) did not return to school.

The Student Engagement Initiative (SEI)

The Ministry of Education's SEI initiative works in schools with high suspension rates, high numbers of early leaving exemptions, or high rates of truancy. The SEI started in 2001 and initially involved working with 65 secondary schools with historically high suspension rates for Māori. An additional 78 schools became part of the SEI from 2002 to 2007, including some composite and primary schools, while schools that successfully reduced and maintained a low suspension rate have moved out of the initiative. In 2007 there were 91 schools that were active in the SEI.

The SEI has been successful in reducing suspension rates among the original schools that joined in 2001. The age-standardised rate for these schools dropped from 35 per 1,000 students in 2000 to 18 per 1,000 students in 2007, a reduction of 48%. This compares with a slight increase in the overall age-standardised suspension rate for secondary schools that have never been part of the SEI over the same period.

Schools that have joined the SEI in later years have also shown a decrease in their suspension rates, although as shown by Figure 9, it can take a few years for significant gains to be made. As those schools that have been a part of the SEI have seen a decrease in their suspension rate and those schools that have never been a part of the SEI have had a slight increase, this indicates that the overall decrease in suspension rates as shown in Figure 5 has been driven by the SEI.

For Māori and European/Pākehā students in the original SEI schools that joined in 2001, the overall age-standardised suspension rates have decreased by 59% and 50% respectively since 2000.

As a result of their rising suspension rate, Pasifika students have been a focus of the SEI since July 2006. The evidence suggests that this approach has so far been very successful, with the age-standardised suspension rate for Pasifika students in all schools that have been in the SEI declining by 29% from 2006 to 2007, contributing to a 17% decrease in the age-standardised suspension rate for all Pasifika students. The strategy may have also led to the 16% reduction in the age-standardised stand-down rate seen for all Pasifika students from 2006 to 2007.



Figure 9: Age-standardised suspension rates for Secondary schools, by Student Engagement Initiative (SEI) status (2000 to 2007).

Analysis of Early Leaving Exemptions

Under exceptional circumstances the parents/caregivers of 15 year-old students can apply for an exemption from attending school for their child (referred to as an Early Leaving Exemption, or ELX), providing students enter further training or full-time employment.

Both the rates of early leaving exemption applications received, and those approved, rose over the first few years of the decade. Between 2002 and 2006 there was only small changes in both the application and approval rates of early leaving exemptions. In 2006, 70 per 1,000 15 year-old students applied for an early leaving exemption, with 65 per 1,000 15 year old students being granted an early leaving exemption.

In May 2007, the Ministry of Education strengthened its early-leaving application and approval process in order to reduce the number of early leaving exemptions, and the associated social and economic disadvantages that face those students who leave school early. The process involved:

- imposing a stricter adherence of the early-leaving legislative criteria, which sets a very high threshold for early-leaving eligibility
- ensuring direct contact between parents and Ministry staff at the first stage in the early-leaving process, to actively dissuade early-leaving and to support parents to find ways of keeping their children engaged in learning, and
- encouraging alternatives to early-leaving, such as a combination of school- and work-based learning.

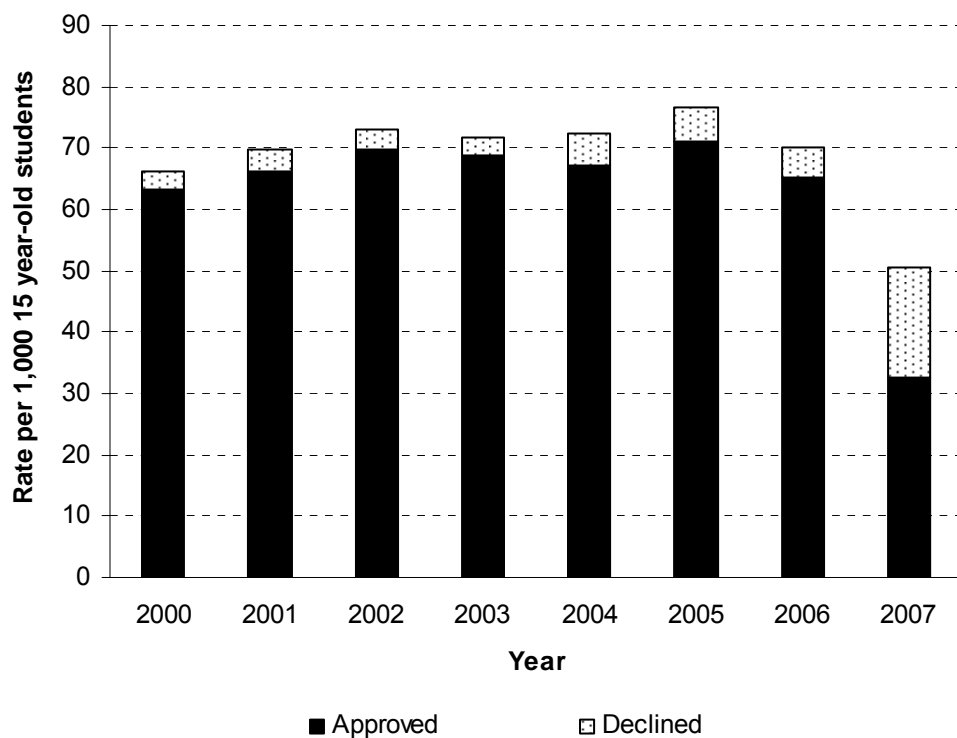


Figure 11: Early leaving exemption application approval and decline rates (2000 to 2007)

The evidence so far suggests that these approaches have been highly successful. The rate of demand for early leaving exemptions declined by 28% from 2006 to 2007, while the percentage of applications that were declined by the Ministry of Education increased from 6.6% in 2006 to 36% in 2007. The net effect is that there was a 50% reduction from 2006 in the rate of early leaving exemptions, with 32 per 1,000 15 year-olds being granted an early leaving exemption in 2007.

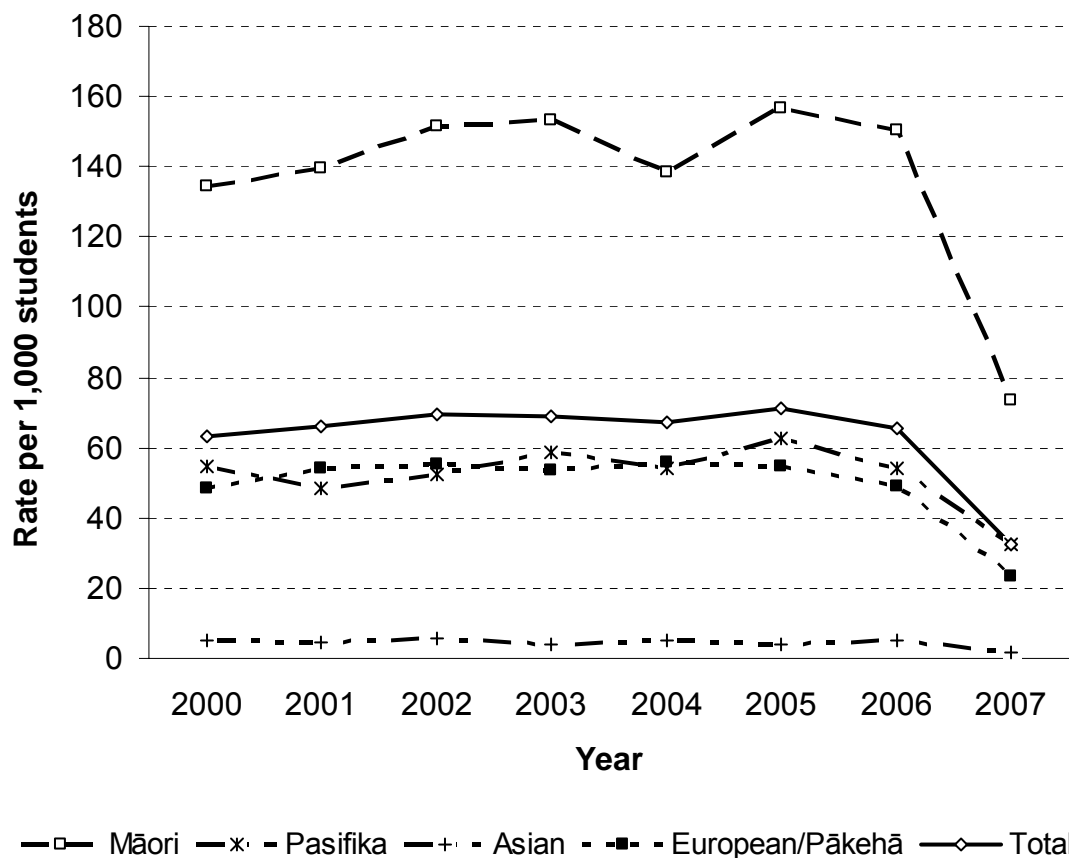


Figure 12: Early leaving exemption rates by ethnic group (2000 to 2007)

The decline in the rates of early leaving exemptions between 2006 and 2007 was similar for Māori and European/Pākehā, with 51% and 52% decreases respectively. The reduction in the early leaving exemption rate for Pasifika was less marked with a 40% decrease.

However, Māori students still have disproportionately high rates of early leaving exemptions compared with other ethnic groups. In 2007, the early leaving exemption rate for Māori students (73 per 1,000 15 year-old students) was 2.2 times higher than the rate for Pasifika (33 per 1,000 15 year-old students), and 3.2 times as high as that for European/Pākehā (23 per 1,000 15 year-old students). In contrast, there were almost no Asian students getting early leaving exemptions with a rate of only 1 per 1,000 15 year-old students.

Two-thirds of all early leaving exemptions were for males in 2007, with a rate of 42 per 1,000 students. This compares with the female rate of 22 per 1,000 students.

A Training Provider course was the most popular destination for a 15-year old who received an early leaving exemption, with 76% of all early leavers going there. A further 18% of all early leavers went into full time employment, with the remainder going into a Polytechnic course, a University course or another destination. This pattern has been fairly consistent since 2000.

Additional data and information can be requested from the Ministry of Education or found online at:

http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/indicators/student_participation

This report is available online at:

<http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2303/>

If you require more information, or assistance, please contact the Student Support staff of your local Ministry of Education office. They are happy to help!