



Truancy from school

Unjustified absence rates have not significantly changed since 2004 and remain substantially higher amongst Māori and Pasifika students.

Indicator Description

A percentage of students unjustifiably absent from school for more than half a day on an average day of the survey week (truancy rate or non-intermittent unjustified absence rate).

Why This Is Important

Students who truant or more precisely are unjustifiably absent from class have an increased risk of alienation from the education system. Sustained truancy affects educational achievement and can lead to significantly diminished opportunities later in life. A New Zealand study (Hughes, 1999) found student attendance during Year 11 to be one of the most significant variables influencing student achievement in senior secondary school. Furthermore, truants with lower reading achievement had the highest risks for adverse outcomes. Longitudinal studies of Christchurch and Dunedin children have found truancy to be a strong

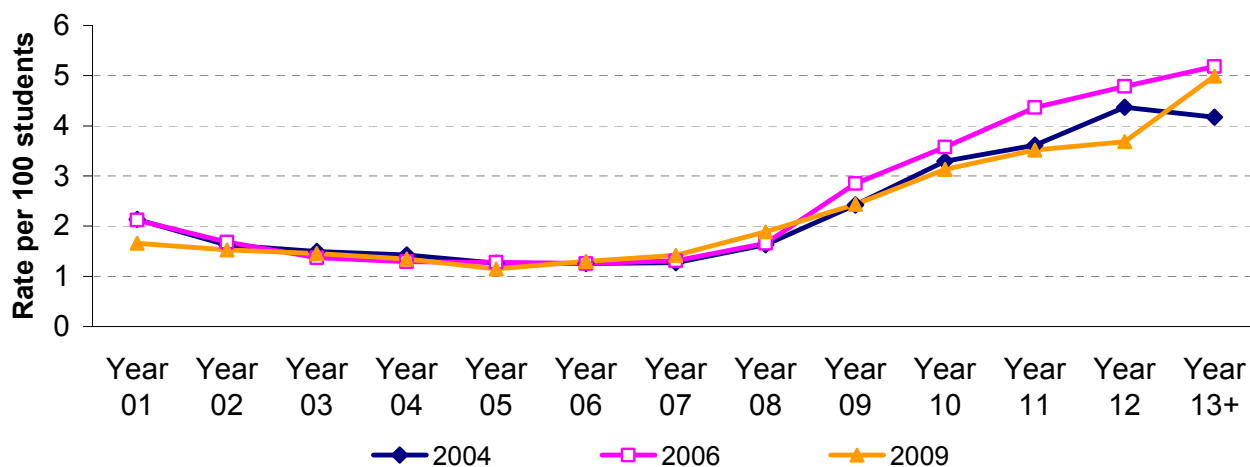
predictor of violence later in life, and predictive of delinquency, substance abuse, suicidal risk, unemployment and early parenting. Linkages between truancy and crime are of considerable concern.

A 2001 report from the UK Office of Standards in Education noted that a focus on truancy alone is insufficient to sustain changes in student attendance. It found that strategies that have effectively improved attendance and behaviour in English schools have been incorporated with efforts to raise achievement.

How We Are Going

The unjustified absence rate is the number of absences that cannot be explained or that are not explained to the satisfaction of the school per 100 students enrolled. Unjustified absences can be classified by length as either intermittent absences (up to half a day) or non-intermittent absences (more than half a day).

Unjustified non-intermittent absence rates, by Year Level (2004, 2006 and 2009)



Note:

1. This measure relates to the number of days that individuals had unjustified absences.

In this indicator we only consider non-intermittent absences.

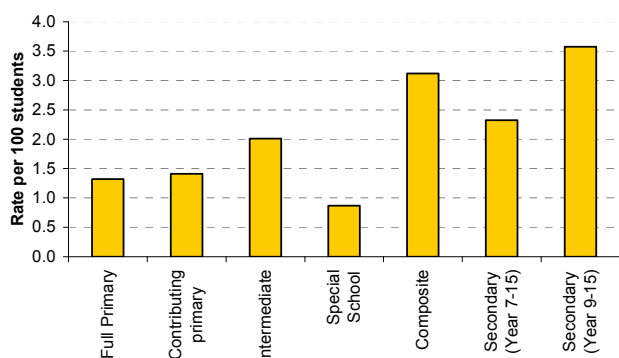
In 2009, the non-intermittent absence rate was 2.2 per 100 students. Absence rates are Year Level (or age) specific. This means students in higher Year Levels are more likely to be truant than students in lower Year Levels. Therefore when comparing absence rates between years we tend to use Year Level standardised rates. This removes any differences due to one year having a younger or older student population.

The 2009 rate of 2.2 was very similar to the Year Level standardised 2004 and 2006 rates per 100 students, 2.2 and 2.4 respectively.

Unjustified non-intermittent absence rates for primary and intermediate school-aged students (Year 1 to Year 8) are substantially lower than for secondary school-aged students. For secondary school-age students, the rate of unjustified absences increases with years at school.

Ethnicity is a significant factor with regard to unjustified absences from school. Māori (4.1 per 100 students) and Pasifika (3.9 per 100 students) unjustified non-intermittent rates are three times higher than for European/Pākehā (1.3 per 100 students). The rate is lowest among Asian (1.1 per 100 students).

Unjustified non-intermittent absence rates, by school type (2009)

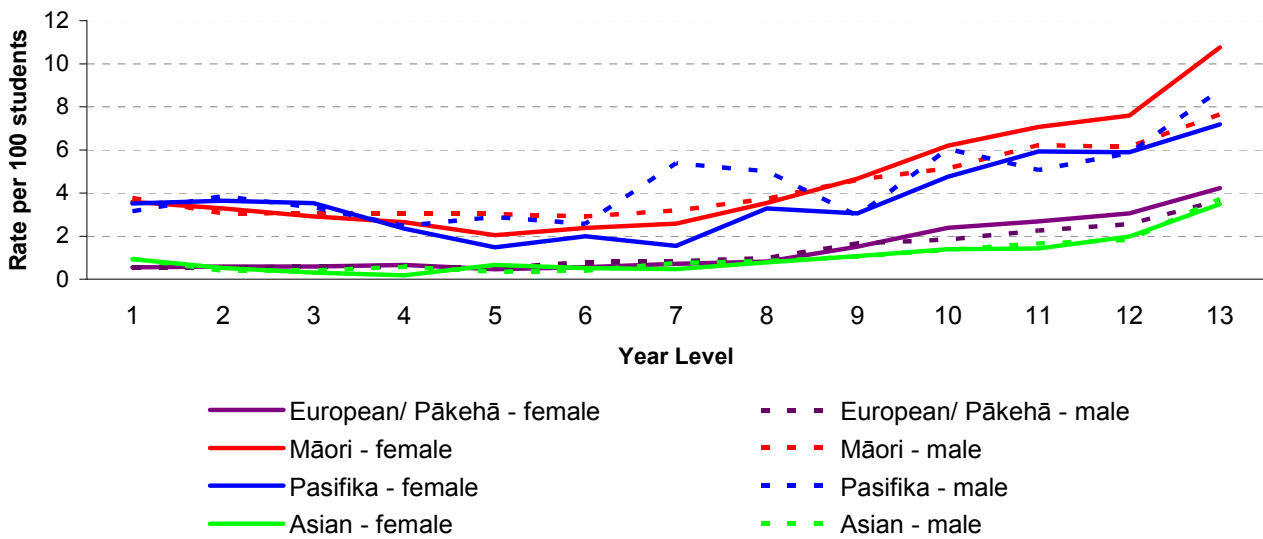


Note:

1. Full Primary includes Kura Teina.
2. Composite includes restricted composite.
3. Secondary (Year 9-15) includes TPU and Kura Teina.

There is a clear correlation between the socio-economic mix of the schools that students attend and the unjustified absence rates. Schools in the lowest quintile (deciles 1 and 2) draw their students from communities with the highest degree of socio-economic disadvantage. In 2009, the non-intermittent absence rate for students from these schools was more than 5 times higher than the rate for students in the highest quintile (deciles 9 and 10).

Unjustified non-intermittent absence rates, by ethnic group and gender (2009)



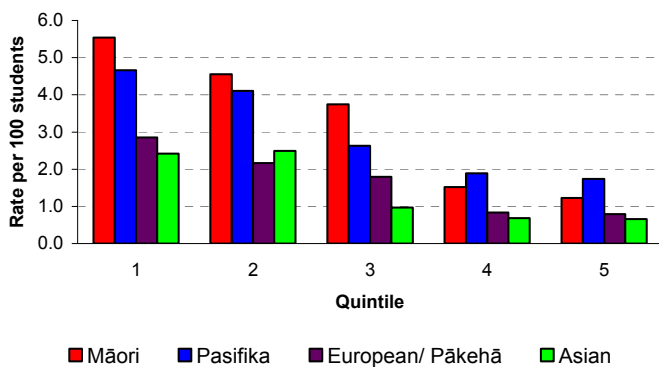
There was very little difference between male and female rates (2.3 and 2.2 per 100 students). In Year Level 1, both genders had a non-intermittent rate of 1.7 absences per 100 students, but the rates increase to 5.5 and 4.9 for female and male students in Year Level 13 respectively.

Where To Find Out More

To obtain information about other forms of student disengagement consider indicators:

- Stand-downs from school
- Suspensions from school
- Exclusions and expulsions from school
- Early leaving exemptions.

Unjustified non-intermittent absence rates, by quintile (2009)



The Ministry of Education has established an Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis Programme to systematically identify, evaluate, analyse, synthesise and make accessible, relevant evidence linked to a range of learner outcomes. Evidence about what works for this indicator can be found in:

- Quality Teaching for Diverse Students in Schooling: Best Evidence Synthesis
- The Complexity of Community and Family Influences on Children's Achievement in New Zealand: Best Evidence Synthesis.

References

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