Stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions from school

Student attendance and engagement are fundamental foundations for student achievement. The levels of stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions help provide indications of where engagement in productive learning may be absent and behavioural issues may be present.

In 2012 age-standardised stand-down rates fell for the sixth consecutive year, and age-standardised stand-down, suspension, exclusion and expulsion rates are now at their lowest in 13 years of recorded data.

Schools continue to stand-down, suspend, and exclude more Māori learners than any other ethnic group. In 2012, Māori learners were also expelled more than any other group for the first time since 2000. Male students are more than twice as likely to receive a stand-down, suspension or exclusion, and five times more likely to be expelled than their female counterparts.

Indicator Description

This indicator uses age-standardised rates. These are expressed as the number of stand-downs, suspensions and exclusions per 1,000 students enrolled. Most stand-downs, suspensions and exclusions occur at ages 13-15, and age-standardisation allows a fair comparison between different cohorts. In any given year the schooling population will have a different age distribution. By standardising for age we can compare across years.

Expulsions occur only for 16 year-olds and above, so an expulsion rate refers to a number of expulsions per 1,000 standardised for students aged 16 or over. Likewise, exclusions only occur for students aged 15 and below, so exclusion rate refers to number of exclusions per 1,000 standardised for students aged 15 or under. All mention of schools in this indicator refers to state and state integrated schools only.
Stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions are not measures of student behaviour but measures of a school’s reaction to such behaviours. What one school may choose to suspend for, another may not.

**Why This Data Is Important**

A state or state integrated school principal may consider the formal removal of a student through a **stand-down** from school for a period of up to 5 school days. A stand-down, for any student, can total no more than 5 school days in a term, or 10 days in a school year. Students return automatically to school following a stand-down.

While stand-downs impact on actual opportunity to learn they are also a response to a wide range of concerning behaviours including drug and alcohol abuse and violence that could disrupt the learning of the individuals concerned, and could be disruptive and unsafe for peers and adults in the school community. Stand-downs can offer an opportunity to reduce tension and reflect on the action which led to the stand-down. As such, if used in appropriate circumstances, a stand-down can be a positive mechanism for preventing escalation. However, its use should be part of a pro-active approach and should be kept to a minimum due to its inherent disruption.

A **suspension** is a formal removal of a student from a school until a school Board of Trustees decides the outcome at a suspension meeting. Following a suspension, the Board of Trustees decides how to address the student’s misbehaviour. The Board can either lift the suspension (with or without conditions), extend the suspension (with conditions), or terminate the student’s enrolment at the school.

**Exclusions** and **expulsions** are subsets of suspension where an enrolment is terminated. If the student is aged under 16, the Board may decide to **exclude** the student from the school, with the requirement that the student enrols elsewhere. This decision should be arrived at only in the most serious cases. If the student is aged 16 or over, the board may decide to **expel** him or her from the school, and the student may or may not enrol at another school. Again, this decision should be arrived at only in the most serious cases. Excluded or expelled students may face difficulties in enrolling in other schools. This may result in students:

- accessing correspondence schooling through Te Aho o te Kura Pounamu,
- entering Alternative Education provision (for excluded students),
- dropping out of the education system,
- entering tertiary study or employment.

In 2012, Board of Trustees’ decided to lift 45% of all suspensions. Around 9 out of 10 of these were lifted with conditions placed on the student. The decision to extend the suspension, exclude or expel was made in 18%, 33% and 4% of cases respectively.

Research emphasises the importance of pro-active partnerships with parents and a strategy focused on both achievement and behaviour. Approaches that are focused only on disciplinary or pastoral responses have been found to be ineffective for positive outcomes. Positive Behaviour for Learning, released in 2009, is a major shift in the management of disruptive behaviour in the education system. It provides proactive support for parents, teachers and schools that benefit everyone. The result will be better learning environments for all learners and staff, improved teacher ability to support children’s behaviour and emotional needs, improved engagement in learning, a lift in achievement for learners and an increase in teacher confidence and satisfaction.

To boost skills and employment, the Government has set a target that 85% of 18-year-olds will have achieved NCEA Level 2 or an equivalent qualification in 2017. Student engagement is an important contributing factor in reaching this target. If students are being more actively engaged in their schooling, they should have a better chance of achieving to the levels required to meet the target. If student disengagement continues to drop, we expect to see a continued rise in achievement.
The Ministry of Education’s (2009) publication *Ka Hikitia - Managing for Success: The Māori Education Strategy 2008 – 2012*, emphasised that productive partnerships between teachers and Māori students and their parents and whānau are at the heart of learner engagement and achievement and that the system has been inequitable for Māori learners.

*Ka Hikitia – Managing for Success* has been updated for the next 5 years from 2013-2017. It will be called *Ka Hikitia – Accelerating Success 2013-2017*. *Ka Hikitia – Accelerating Success* builds on the vision and principles of *Ka Hikitia – Managing for Success* and places greater focus on effective implementation achieved through stronger collaboration between those within the education system and parents, whānau, hapu, iwi, communities and businesses. It will be available from August 2013.
How We Are Going

Stand-downs

Age-standardised stand-down rates continued the decreasing trend in 2012. The age-standardised stand-down rate increased from 25.6 stand-downs per 1,000 in 2000 to 30.0 stand-downs per 1,000 in 2006, but has subsequently decreased to 23.4 stand-downs per 1,000 in 2012.

There were 16,712 stand-down cases in 2012, which were received by 13,040 different students. This equates to 1.8% of the student population in state and state integrated schools receiving stand-downs. Of those students stood-down, 78.9% were stood-down only once during 2012.

In 2012, 69.0% of stand-downs took place in secondary schools. Only 8.0% of secondary schools did not use stand-downs compared to 60.0% of primary schools.

Schools are standing-down more Māori students than any other ethnic group. In 2012, the age-standardised stand-down rate for Māori (42.8 stand-downs per 1,000) was 1.5 times higher than Pasifika (27.7 stand-downs per 1,000), and 2.4 times as high as European/Pākehā (17.5 stand-downs per 1,000). The stand-down rate for Asian students is the lowest of all ethnic groups (6.0 per 1,000). Pasifika and Māori had the biggest drops in stand-down rate between 2011 and 2012. The Pasifika age-standardised rate dropped 7.4%, and the Māori rate dropped 6.6%. The European/Pākehā rate decreased almost 0.9% from 2011.

Over time, male students have consistently received stand-downs far more frequently than female students. In 2012, the age-standardised stand-down rate for males was 2.4 times higher than the female rate.
In 2012, physical assault on other students was the main reason for stand-downs, accounting for 26.0% of occurrences with an age-standardised rate of 6.1 per 1,000 students. This rate has dropped from a peak of 7.5 per 1,000 students in 2006, towards the 2000 rate of 5.9 students per 1000. Continual disobedience was second most prevalent, accounting for 22.7% of stand-downs with an age-standardised rate of 5.3 per 1,000 students. Along with verbal assault on staff (13.6%), these three behaviours made up almost two-thirds of all stand-downs. “Other” behaviours included sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, weapons and other harmful and dangerous behaviours.

The majority of stand-downs occurred for students aged 13 to 15, accounting for 58.6% of all stand-downs. The rate was the highest for age 14 (66.9 stand-downs per 1,000 students). This substantial variation is why cohort analysis is undertaken using age-standardised data. Year to year the spread of ages in the school system can shift, and age-standardising makes the data more comparable.
Suspensions

The incidence of suspensions has decreased by 39.7% over the last 13 years, from an age-standardised rate of 7.8 suspensions per 1,000 students in 2000, to 4.7 suspensions per 1,000 in 2012. This is the lowest suspension rate in the 13 years of recorded data.

There were 3,357 suspension cases in 2012 which were received by 3,061 different students. This equates to 0.4% of the total student population receiving suspensions. Of those students suspended during 2012, 90.9% were suspended only once.

In 2012, 17.3% of all secondary schools did not use suspensions as a part of a behaviour management programme, compared to 85.3% of all primary schools.

Schools are suspending more Māori students than any other ethnic group. In 2012, the age-standardised suspension rate for Māori students (10.5 suspensions per 1,000) was over twice as high as for Pasifika students (4.4 suspensions per 1,000) and 3.5 times as high as for European/Pākehā (3.0 suspensions per 1,000). However, the suspension rates for Māori are decreasing (from 19.0 per 1000 in 2000, to 10.5 in 2012). The suspension rate for Asian students remains the lowest in New Zealand.

Age-standardised suspension rates by ethnic group (2000 to 2012)

There is a clear correlation between the socio-economic mix of the school the student attended and age-standardised suspension rates. Students from schools in the lowest quintile (deciles 1 and 2) are 5.3 times more likely to be suspended from school than students in the highest quintile (deciles 9 and 10).

When considering age-standardised suspension rates by quintile the general pattern for the different ethnic groups largely remains. Age-standardised suspension rates are highest for Māori and Pasifika in each quintile, except in quintile 1 schools where the European/Pākehā rate is higher than that of Pasifika.

Proportionally more Māori and Pasifika students attend schools in the lower quintiles than schools in the higher quintiles.

Age-standardised suspension rates by ethnic group and school quintile (2012)

Males receive suspensions more frequently than females. In 2012, the male age-standardised suspension rate was 2.5 times that of females. This is similar to the relationship seen for stand-downs.
In 2012, continual disobedience was the main reason for suspensions (24.9%), with an age-standardised rate of 1.2 per 1000 students. The second main reason was drugs (including substance abuse) at 1.1 per 1000 students (23.7% of total). Along with physical assault on other students (0.8 per 1000 students or 17.6%), these three behaviours made up two-thirds of all suspensions. "Other" behaviours included sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, weapons and other harmful and dangerous behaviours.

The majority of suspensions occurred for students aged 13 to 15, accounting for 67.4% of all suspensions. The rate was the highest for students aged 14 (16.7 suspensions per 1,000 in 2012). This substantial variation is why cohort analysis is undertaken using age-standardised data. Year to year the spread of ages in the school system can shift, and age-standardising makes the data more comparable.
Exclusions

The age-standardised exclusion rates have remained relatively constant over the last 13 years but 2012 saw the lowest exclusion rate in those years. The age-standardised exclusion rate was 1.8 exclusions per 1,000 students. This is the first year that the age-standardised rate has dropped below 2 per 1000 students. Age-standardisation for exclusions only standardises against those in the population who can be expelled i.e. students aged 15 and under.

There were 1,117 exclusion cases in 2012 which were received by 1,101 different students. This equates to 0.2% of the total student population under 16-years-old receiving exclusions. Of those students excluded during 2012, 98.5% were excluded only once.

Schools are excluding Māori students more than any other ethnic group. In 2012, the age-standardised exclusion rate for Māori (4.1 exclusions per 1,000) was 2.1 times higher than for Pasifika (1.9 exclusions per 1,000), and 3.7 times as high as for European/Pākehā (1.1 exclusions per 1,000). The age-standardised exclusion rate for Asian students is the lowest of all ethnic groups (0.2 per 1,000).

Because of the small numbers that are excluded in some of the ethnic groups, small variations can cause quite large changes in age-standardised rates.

Schools exclude more male students than female students. In 2012, the age-standardised exclusion rate was 2.6 times higher for males than for females.

There is still a clear correlation between the socio-economic mix of the school the student attended and age-standardised exclusion rates. Students from the lowest quintile schools are 5.1 times more likely to be excluded than students in the highest quintile (deciles 9 and 10).

When considering age-standardised exclusion rates by quintile, rates were highest for Māori in each quintile. Rates were second highest for European/Pākehā in quintile 1 and second highest for Pasifika in all other quintiles.

Proportionally more Māori and Pasifika students attend schools in the lower quintiles than schools in the higher quintiles.

Age-standardised exclusion rates by ethnic group and school quintile (2012)

In 2012, continual disobedience was the main reason for exclusions, accounting for 33.6% of all exclusions with an age-standardised rate of 0.6 per 1000 students. Physical assault on other students (17.4%) was second most prevalent with an age-standardised rate of 0.3 per 1000 students. The third most prevalent reason was drugs (including substance abuse) with an age-standardised rate of 0.3 per 1000 students.
### Age-standardised rate per 1,000 students of exclusions, by behaviour (2000-2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Continual Disobedience</th>
<th>Drugs (Including Substance Abuse)</th>
<th>Physical Assault on Other Students</th>
<th>Physical Assault on Staff</th>
<th>Verbal Assault on Other Students</th>
<th>Verbal Assault on Staff</th>
<th>Smoking or Vandalism or Arson</th>
<th>Theft, Alcohol</th>
<th>Other</th>
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<tr>
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</tr>
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<td>0.1</td>
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</table>
Expulsions

There were 137 expulsion cases in 2012, received by 137 students. This equates to 0.1% of students aged 16 and over. Expulsions can only be received by learners aged 16 and over. Once a student turns 16, there is no requirement that they stay in the schooling system. Age-standardisation for expulsions only standardises against those in the population who can be expelled i.e. students aged 16 and over. The overall age-standardised rate of expulsions has dropped from 1.6 expulsions per 1,000 in 2011 to 1.4 expulsions per 1,000 in 2012. This is the lowest rate in the last 13 years.

Schools are expelling more Māori students than any other group for the first time since 2000, mainly due to a decline in rate of Pasifika expelled in 2012. Pasifika were the group with the highest expulsion rate from 2001 to 2011. The age-standardised expulsion rate for Māori (2.9 expulsions per 1,000) was closest to the Pasifika rate (2.2 expulsions per 1,000), while the European/Pākehā rate was 0.9 expulsions per 1,000. Asians had the lowest expulsion rate of all ethnic groups (0.4 per 1,000).

Because of the small numbers that are expelled in some of the ethnic groups, small variations can cause quite large changes in age-standardised rates.

Schools expel more male students than female students. In 2012, the age-standardised expulsion rate was 5.1 times higher for males than females.

Age-standardised expulsion rates by ethnic group (2000 to 2012)

Drugs (including substance abuse) were the main reason for expulsions in 2012, accounting for 25.5% of expulsions. The second most prevalent reason for expulsion was physical assault on other students (24.8%). The third most prevalent reason was continual disobedience at 16.8%. These reasons had age-standardised rates of 0.4, 0.3 and 0.2 per 1,000 students respectively.

The relationship between school quintile and age-standardised expulsion rates is quite similar to that for exclusions; however the differences are not so pronounced. Students from quintile 1 schools were 2.6 times more likely to be expelled from school than students in the highest quintile schools.

When considering age-standardised expulsion rates by quintile, rates were highest for Māori in quintiles 1, 2 and 5 and Pasifika in quintiles 3 and 4. Proportionally more Māori and Pasifika students attend schools in the lower quintiles than schools in the higher quintiles.

The rates reported in this ethnic group by quintile analysis of expulsion can be subject to great fluctuation when the raw numbers involved are actually very small, so care should be taken not too infer too much from the graph below (e.g. the high rate of Pasifika expelled in quintile 4).

Age-standardised expulsion rates by ethnic group and school quintile (2012)
Where To Find Out More

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

- Truancy from school
- Non-enrolled students
- Early leaving exemptions.

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 on the following website http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/themes/BES. The following Best Evidence Syntheses are relevant to this indicator:

- 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.
- Teacher Professional Learning and Development

Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) helps schools, teachers and parents across New Zealand promote positive behaviour. For information on Positive Behaviour for Learning see http://pb4l.tki.org.nz/.

References