



Suspensions from school

The incidence of suspensions has decreased by 22% over the last nine years. Actions such as the Student Engagement Initiative have been successful in reducing suspension rates in secondary schools. Schools continue to suspend more Māori students than any other ethnic group.

Indicator Description

Age-standardised proportion of students enrolled who are suspended from school.

Why This Is Important

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.

In 2008, Board of Trustees' decided to lift 44% the suspensions handed out. Nine out of ten of these were lifted with conditions placed on the student. The decision was made to extend the suspension, or hand down an

exclusion or expulsion, 21%, 31% and 4% of the time, respectively.

Quantity of instruction or potential 'opportunity to learn' strongly influences student outcomes. The New Zealand Smithfield study found student attendance during Year 11 to be one of the most significant variables influencing student achievement in senior secondary school. Hattie (1999) reported instructional quantity to have the fourth highest effect size (0.84) of any instructional variable. The practice of suspensions cuts short, or interrupts, potential opportunities to learn at school.

While suspensions impact on actual opportunity to learn they are also associated with a wide range of concerning youth behaviours including drug and alcohol abuse and

violence that are disruptive to the learning of the individuals concerned and disruptive and unsafe for peers in the school community. Suspensions may lead to these students:

- accessing Correspondence Schooling, where there may be fewer direct learning supports
- entering Alternative Education provisions, where there may not be access to highly trained teaching staff
- dropping out of the education system.

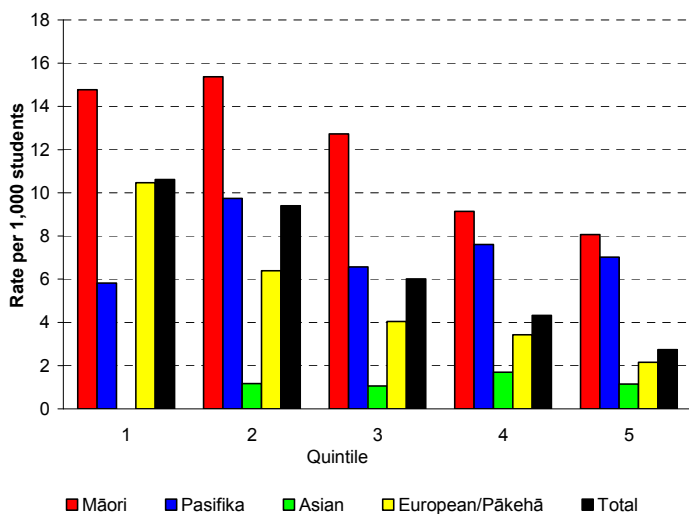
International research emphasises the importance of proactive partnerships with parents and a strategy focused on both achievement and behaviour. Approaches that are focused only on disciplinary or pastoral responses have been found to be ineffective for positive outcomes for the students involved in U.K. and Australian research.

How We Are Going

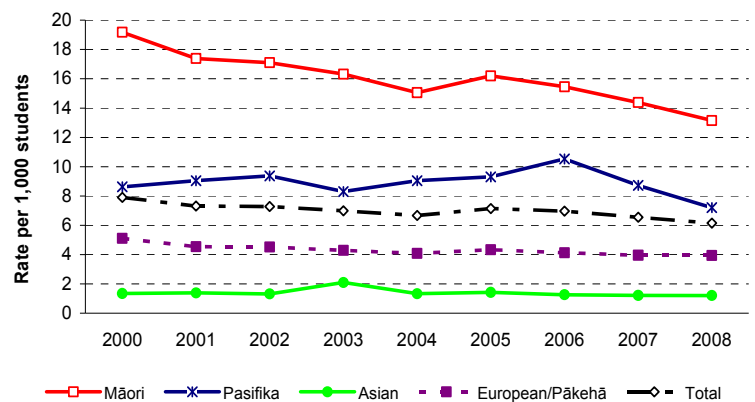
The incidence of suspensions has decreased by 22% over the last nine years, from an age-standardised rate of 7.9 students per 1,000 in 2000, to 6.1 students per 1,000 in 2008. This includes a 12% reduction from 2006 to 2008.

There were 4,374 suspension cases in 2008, which were received by 3,988 different students. Statistically this equates to 0.6% of the student population receiving suspensions and 91.2% of suspensions being single instances.

Age-standardised suspension rates, by ethnic group and school quintile (2008)



Age-standardised suspension rates, by ethnic group (2000 to 2008)



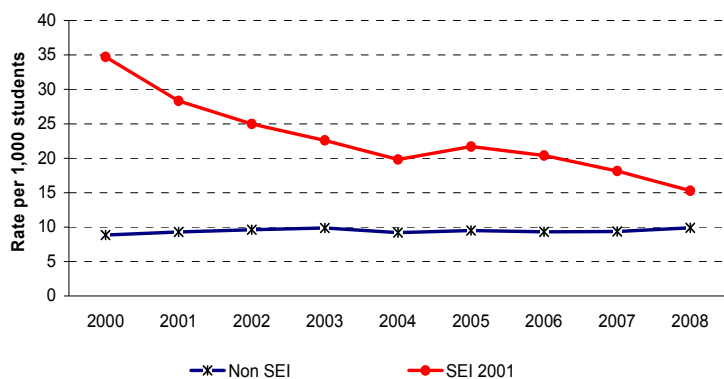
In 2008, 72.4% of all state and state integrated schools did not hand out any suspensions. When looking at just secondary schools, the peak age for suspensions, only 13.6% of all secondary schools did not hand out any suspensions.

Schools are suspending more Māori students than any other ethnic group. In 2008, the age-standardised suspension rate for Māori students (13.1 students per 1,000) was 83% higher than Pasifika (7.2 students per 1,000) and 3.3 times as high as European/Pākehā (3.9 students per 1,000). The suspension rate for Asian students is the lowest in New Zealand.

There is a clear correlation between the socio-economic mix of the school the student attended and age-standardised suspension rates. Schools in the lowest quintile (deciles 1 and 2) draw their students from communities with the highest degree of socio-economic disadvantage. Students from these schools are 3.9 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.

Age-standardised suspension rates for schools, by Student Engagement Initiative (SEI) status (2000 to 2008)



In an effort to counter the disproportionately high number of Māori suspensions, the Suspension Reduction Initiative was established in 2001. This initiative has since been integrated into the Student Engagement Initiative (SEI), a programme designed to reduce truancy and early leaving exemptions, as well as suspensions. The SEI initially involved working with 65 secondary schools with historically high suspension rates for Māori. An additional 87 schools became part of the SEI from 2002 to 2008, including some composite and primary schools, while some of the original schools have now left the initiative.

The SEI has been successful in reducing suspension rates among the original cohort of SEI schools, with the age-standardised rate for these schools dropping from 34.7 students per 1,000 in 2000 to 15.3 students per 1,000 in 2008, a reduction of 56%. This compares with a slight increase over the same period in the overall age-standardised suspension rate for secondary schools which have never been part of the SEI.

For Māori and European/Pākehā students in the original cohort of SEI schools, the overall age-standardised suspension rates have decreased by 66% and 56% respectively since 2000. This has helped contribute to 31% and 23% respective reductions in the age-standardised rates of suspensions for all Māori and European/Pākehā students since 2000.

As a result of their rising suspension rate, Pasifika students have been a focus of the SEI since July 2006. The same approach that was used to reduce Māori suspensions has been used to reduce Pasifika suspensions, with schools with high Pasifika suspension rates being able to work with the Ministry of Education to implement strategies to reduce their suspension rates. The evidence suggests that this approach has so far been very successful, with the age-standardised suspension rate for Pasifika students in SEI Schools having declined by 45% from 2006 to 2008, compared to a 25% decrease for Pasifika students in other schools.

Continual disobedience and physical assault on other students were the main reasons for suspensions accounting for 29.7% and 19.6% of suspensions respectively in 2008. The proportion of suspensions relating to drugs (including substance abuse) has dropped markedly, from a peak of 32.4% in 2001 to 18.6% in 2008. These three behaviours made up two-thirds of all suspensions given in 2008. The proportion of suspensions for physical assault on staff has increased gradually since 2000, with stand-downs increasing from 2.1% to 2.8% and suspensions increasing from 2.5% to 5.0% between 2000 and 2008.

Percentage of suspensions, by behaviour (2000-2008)

Measure	Year	Behaviour								
		Continual Disobedience	Drugs (Including Substance Abuse)	Physical Assault on Other Students	Physical Assault on Staff	Verbal Assault on Other Students	Verbal Assault on Staff	Smoking or Alcohol	Theft, Vandalism or Arson	Other
Suspensions	2000	23.8	30.4	15.7	2.5	1.3	5.8	4.7	8.3	7.5
	2001	23.5	32.4	14.3	3.1	1.2	5.1	5.1	8.2	7.1
	2002	24.9	29.8	15.4	2.9	1.1	5.7	4.3	7.5	8.4
	2003	23.6	26.8	14.7	3.8	0.8	6.8	4.5	9.3	9.7
	2004	25.5	25.8	17.8	3.2	1.2	5.8	4.0	7.8	8.9
	2005	25.9	25.7	18.3	3.8	0.8	5.6	3.3	7.4	9.4
	2006	27.2	20.1	18.4	4.3	1.3	5.1	5.0	8.7	10.0
	2007	27.5	20.1	18.9	4.9	0.8	5.1	4.5	7.4	10.9
	2008	29.7	18.6	19.6	5.0	0.7	4.9	3.6	7.5	10.5

Male students receive suspensions far more frequently than female students. In 2008, the male age-standardised suspension rate was 2.4 times that of females.

The majority of suspensions occurred for students aged 13 to 15, accounting for 67% of all suspensions. The peak age was 14 years, which had a suspension rate of 20.9 students per 1,000 in 2008. Hence, analysis is undertaken using age-standardised rates.

Where To Find Out More

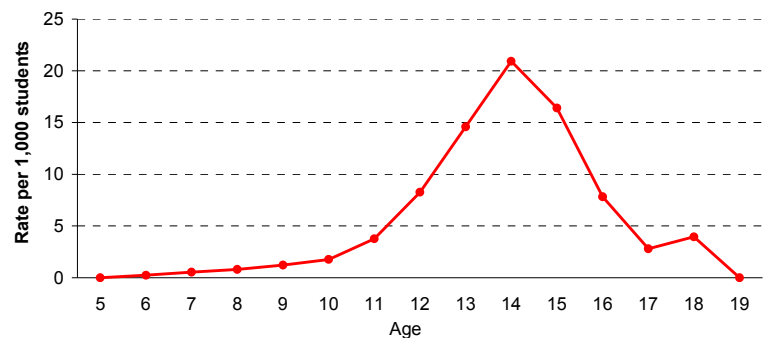
To obtain information about other forms of student disengagement consider indicators:

- Stand-downs from school
- Exclusions and expulsions from school
- Truancy from school
- 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 in:

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

Suspensions, by age (2008)



References

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