

# Retention of students in senior secondary schools

**84% of students remained at school to their 17th birthday. Retention rates have been gradually increasing since 2008. However, differences remain between girls and boys, and Māori and non-Māori.**

## Indicator Description

Percentage of students staying on at school to age 17.

## Why This Is Important

Completion of upper secondary education is associated with a range of economic and social benefits both in New Zealand and across the OECD. Retention to senior secondary schooling is linked to higher levels of skills and knowledge required for participation in our increasingly knowledge-based society and the wider global community (OECD, 2010). OECD education ministers have

emphasized "Quality education for all" (OECD, 2001) and with improving standards and average achievements, it is likely to be a moving target over the next generations (Hutmacher, 2001).

The positive effect of each additional year of schooling on incomes has been estimated to range from 5 to 10% (Norton *et al.* 2000). According to Norton (2000), the risk of unemployment for those with no school qualifications or only Year 11 qualifications is higher than for those with Year 12 or Year 13 qualifications.

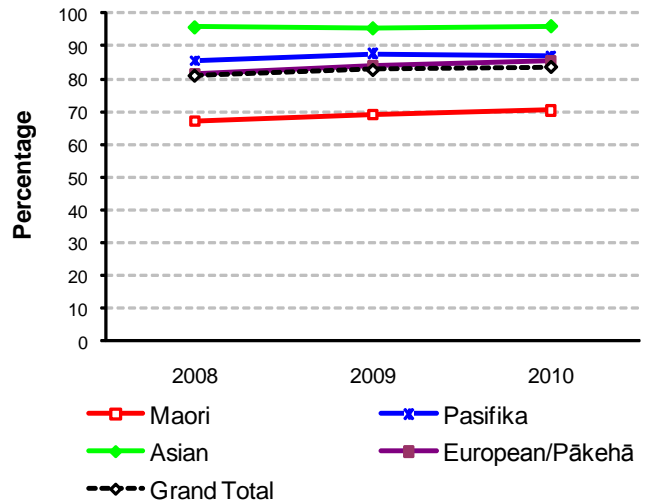
Lashlie (2005) found that one of the factors important for successful school leaving for boys was merely staying at school until the end of the Year 13. This is because it takes boys longer to achieve a high level of maturity and self-management than girls, and that boys' schools in particular can 'hold boys steady while the chaos of adolescence sorts itself.' Simply keeping boys at school (by making school relevant) until they have decided what they want their next step in life to be, can reduce the chances of a boy 'arriving at a prison gate'.

### How We Are Going

In 2006/07 a new data collection method (ENROL) was rolled out in schools. The newly collected data have enabled us to identify the number of school leavers including students' dates of birth. Therefore, since 2008, we calculate retention rate as the number of school leavers staying at school till their 17<sup>th</sup> birthday.

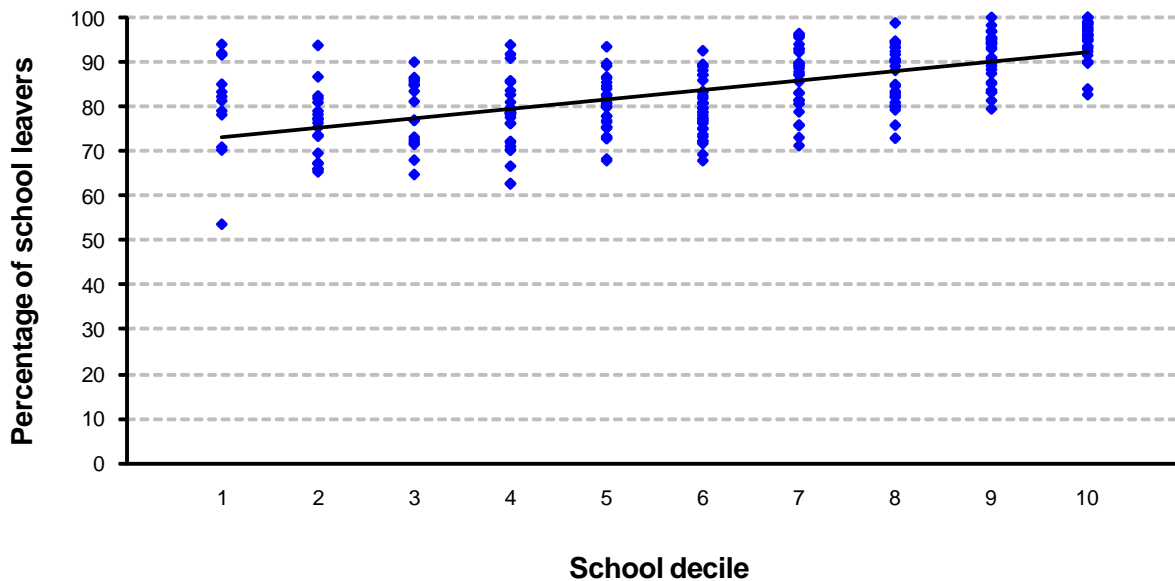
In 2010, 83.7% of students stayed at school to the age of 17. This is an increase from 81.0% in 2008 and 82.8 in 2009.

Retention rate - percentage of school leavers aged 17 or above (2008 to 2010)



In 2010, Māori students had the lowest proportion of students remaining at school to age 17 (70.3%). This compares with a retention rate of 87.0% for Pasifika and 85.3% for European/Pākehā. Asian students had the highest retention rate (96.1%).

Percentage of students who were retained at school to the age of 17, by school decile (2010)



◆ Individual schools with 75 or more school leavers      — Trend Line

The gap between Māori and non-Māori in the rate of 17 year-old students remaining at school has not shown any signs of closing in the last 3 years. Conversely, Pasifika students have relatively high retentions rates. This is most probably a reflection of the importance that Pasifika families and communities place on their children staying in education.

Girls are more likely to stay at school till 17 than boys, (86.1% compared to 81.4%). This difference has changed little over the last 3 years.

There is a clear correlation between decile (the socio-economic mix of the school the student attended) and the percentage of school leavers aged 17 or above. Schools in the highest quintile (deciles 9 and 10) draw their students from communities with the lowest degree of socio-economic disadvantage. Students from these schools are 1.2 times more likely to remain at school till the age of 17 than students from the lowest quintile (deciles 1 and 2).

There is a large variation in the percentage of 17 year-old students remaining at school amongst schools within each decile.

## Where To Find Out More

To obtain information about school leavers consider indicators:

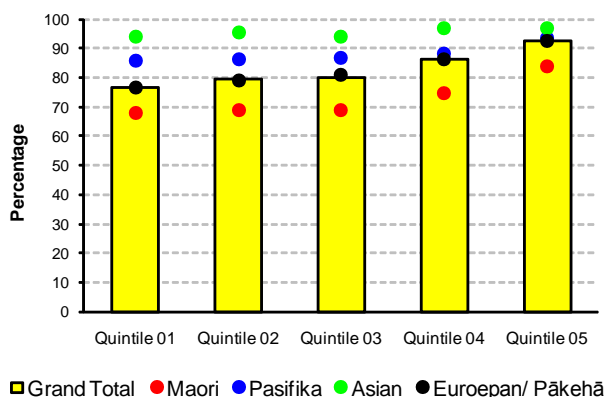
- School leavers with NCEA Level 1 or above
- School leavers with NCEA Level 2 or above
- School leavers with a university entrance standard.

To explore student disengagement consider indicators:

- Truancy from school
- Early leaving exemptions
- Stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions from school

The Ministry of Education has established an Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis Programme to systematically

Retention rate - percentage of school leavers aged 17 or above, by school quintile (2010)



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.

## References

- Alton-Lee, A. (2003). *Quality Teaching for Diverse Students in Schooling: Best Evidence Synthesis*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Hutmacher, W. (2001). Introduction. In W. Hutmacher, D. Cochrane, N. Bottani (Eds). *In Pursuit of Equity in Education: Using International Indicators to Compare Equity Policies*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Lashlie, C. (2005). *He'll Be OK: Growing Gorgeous Boys Into Good Men*. Auckland: HarperCollins.
- Norton, P., Sanderson, K., Booth, T., & Stroombergen, A. (2000). *A literature review of the effect of school resourcing on educational outcomes. Report to the Ministry of Education*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- OECD (2001). *Schooling for tomorrow: What skills for the future?* Paris: OECD.
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