



Briefing Note: Release of 2021 Term 2 Attendance Data

To:	Hon. Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education		
Cc:	Hon. Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education Hon. Kelvin Davis, Associate Minister of Education Hon. Aupito William Sio, Associate Minister of Education		
Date:	8 December 2021	Priority:	High
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Messaging seen by Communications team:	Yes	Round Robin:	No

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper is for you to:

- Note** that student regular attendance as measured in the Term 2 attendance collection was 59.7% in 2021, which is lower than Term 2, 2020 (64.2%) but slightly higher than Term 2, 2019 (57.7%).
- Note** that student chronic absence was 7.7% in Term 2, 2021 (8.7% in Term 2, 2020 and 7.3% in Term 2, 2019).
- Note** the results of the 2021 Term 2 attendance collection are scheduled to be released on Education Counts. We will liaise with your office on the release date.
- Note** that a set of Q&A accompanies the briefing. We will liaise with your office ahead of the release.

Summary

- This briefing provides you with information on the 2021 Term 2 attendance results.
- The Term 2 attendance data and report are being published as part of an ongoing series the Ministry publishes every year in November/December. It focuses on 'regular attendance' which measures the percentage of students who have attended more than 90% of Term 2.
- The main comparisons this year are between 2021 and 2019 as Term 2 in both these years have the same length and neither were impacted by COVID-19 lockdowns. Due to the national COVID-19 lockdown in 2020, there were fewer on-site school days in Term 2, 2020 (7 weeks) than there were for Term 2 in previous years (10 weeks).
- Across Term 2, 2021, 59.7% of students met the criteria for regular attendance. The regular attendance rate peaked in 2015 (69.5%), decreasing to a low in 2019 (57.7%).
- There was a 2.0 percentage point increase in regular attendance between Term 2, 2019 and Term 2, 2021.
- There was little change to regular attendance for Māori students between 2019 and 2021, with an increase of 0.6 percentage points, and no change to regular attendance for Pacific students. Students of other ethnicities saw increases in regular attendance of up to 3.5 percentage points.
- Compared with Term 2, 2019, Māori students in Māori Medium Education had a larger increase in regular attendance than Māori students in English Medium Education (1.4 percentage points compared to 0.5 percentage points). However, Māori students in English Medium Education (45.4%) had a higher regular attendance rate than that of Māori students in Māori Medium Education (41.7%) across Term 2, 2021.
- Across Term 2, 2021, the percentage of students with chronic absence (attending 70% or less of the time) increased slightly from 7.3% in Term 2, 2019 to 7.7% in 2021.
- In support of the response to COVID-19, since mid-2020 the Ministry has provided daily attendance figures for students attending school in person each week. The general patterns observed in the Term 2, 2021 attendance report are consistent with what has been observed in the weekly attendance reports.
- The Ministry has seen a continuing demand for attendance data and analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on attendance from media and others. To facilitate direct access to this information, these reports are available on Education Counts.

Proactive Release

Agree that the Ministry of Education release this briefing in full once it has been considered by you.

☒ Agree ☐ Disagree



Sean Teddy

Hautū | Deputy Secretary

Te Pae Aronui | Operations and Integration

8 / 12 / 2021



Hon Jan Tinetti

Associate Minister of Education

12 / 12 / 2021

Background

Term 2 attendance reporting

1. The annual Term 2 attendance report provides a picture of student attendance in New Zealand schools to help government, schools, Communities of Learning | Kāhui Ako and sector representatives understand patterns of attendance.
2. The Term 2 attendance data is being published as part of an ongoing series the Ministry publishes every year around November/December. It measures student attendance, where time is measured in half-days¹.
3. We report on four categories of student attendance:
 - i. Regular attendance, where students have attended school for more than 90% of available half-days.
 - ii. Irregular absence, where students have attended more than 80% and up to 90% of available half-days.
 - iii. Moderate absence, where students have attended more than 70% and up to 80% of available half-days, and;
 - iv. Chronic absence, where students have attended school 70%, or less, of available half-days.
4. This Term 2, 2021 attendance report looks at data generated by the attendance collection taken over the 10 weeks of term, from the beginning of May to the beginning of July. It is a voluntary collection from primary and secondary schools that use electronic Student Management Systems (SMS).
5. In Term 2, 2021, 786,979 student attendance records were reported and processed from 2,237 schools (92.5% of all state and state-integrated schools/kura). This represents 95.6% of the student population in all state and state-integrated schools/kura on 1 July 2021.

Other attendance reporting

Terms 1, 3 and 4 attendance data table and information summary

6. Since 2020, the Ministry has been collecting attendance data for every term. The attendance results and a brief summary of changes between the current term and the same term last year are made publicly available via Education Counts before the end of the following term.

Weekly attendance reporting

7. In contrast to the Term 2 attendance reporting, which combines attendance in half-days to measure regular attendance across the term, the weekly attendance reporting measures **on-site attendance** at schools and early learning services. In the weekly attendance reporting, any child or student who attended a school or an early learning service (ELS) in person at any time on each day of the week is counted as being present for that day. This means that students who are learning at home, particularly during Alert Levels 3 or 4, are not counted as “present on-site” in these summaries.
8. Weekly reports are made publicly available via the Ministry’s Education Counts website.

¹ A half-day of attendance is a minimum of two hours present. It is different from the COVID-19 weekly attendance report which measures student head count and not how long they spend at school on any one day.

Challenges Due to COVID-19

9. Research by the Education Review Office has found that there have been a number of additional challenges due to COVID-19 around student/ākonga re-engagement in school and participation during 2020 and 2021, which may have impacted attendance rates, particularly for students in Auckland and those in more disadvantaged circumstances.

Specifically, some students/ākonga experienced:

- Challenges to meeting their basic needs around access to attend and engage at learning environments, including securing food, transport to and from learning settings and uniform provision.
- Inconsistent access to appropriate learning opportunities throughout Alert Levels 2 to 4 and experiences of digital exclusion that have limited learners effectively engaging in distance learning.
- Concerns around achieving New Zealand's National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA), particularly for Auckland learners, due to disrupted learning and lack of consistent access to learning and teaching.
- Difficulty re-engaging with on-site learning as positive learning experiences and relationships were negatively affected.
- Changing and stressful home and family situations, leading to mental health challenges.

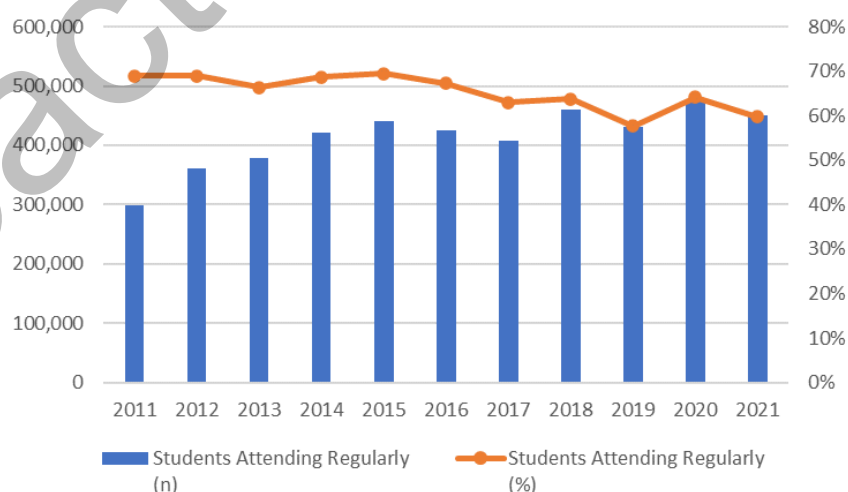
Key findings

National Regular Attendance and Chronic Absence

10. Both regular attendance and chronic absence have increased in Term 2, 2021 compared with the pre-COVID baseline in 2019:

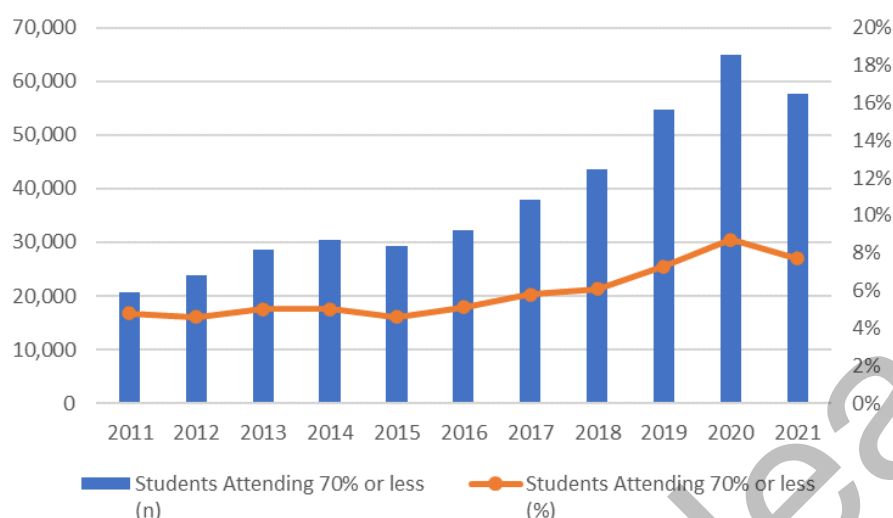
- Across Term 2, 2021, regular attendance across the country increased by 2.0 percentage points to 59.7% from 57.7% in Term 2, 2019 (in Term 2, 2020 regular attendance was 64.2%).

Figure 1: Regular attendance increased in Term 2, 2021 compared with the pre-COVID baseline in 2019



- However, the percentage of students in the chronic absence category increased slightly from 7.3% for Term 2, 2019 to 7.7% for Term 2, 2021 (8.7% for Term 2, 2020).

Figure 2: Chronic absence increased in Term 2, 2021 compared with the pre-COVID baselined in 2019



Māori and Pacific Regular Attendance and Chronic Absence rates

11. Attendance rates have changed differentially for sub-groups of students, with smaller increases in regular attendance between Term 2, 2019 and Term 2, 2021 for Māori and Pacific students, students in decile 1 and 2 schools, and Māori students attending English Medium Education.
 - Between Term 2, 2019 and 2021, Māori students experienced a 0.6 percentage point increase in regular attendance while Pacific students saw no change. European/Pākehā and Asian students saw 2.4 and 3.6 percentage point increases respectively.
 - The small change in regular attendance for Māori students overall, and the increase in chronic absence is predominantly driven by the experience of Māori students in English Medium Education (EME). Māori students in EME experienced a 0.5 percentage point increase in regular attendance to from 44.9% to 45.4%. In contrast, Māori students in Māori Medium Education (MME) ² experienced an increase in regular attendance by 1.4 percentage points from 40.3% to 41.7%.
 - Māori students in EME experienced an increase in chronic absence of 1.5 percentage points from 12.8% to 14.3% between Term 2, 2019 and Term 2, 2021. Over the same period, Māori students in MME experienced a smaller 0.4 percentage point increase in chronic absence from 12.0% to 12.4%.
 - Students at decile 1 and 2 schools had a 0.7 percentage point increase in regular attendance, whereas students in decile 9 to 10 schools had a 2.9 percentage point increase in regular attendance between Term 2, 2019 and Term 2, 2021.

² Due to lower response rate from MME schools (71.2%), the changes in the attendance rates across MME schools may be less reliable.

Ethnicity by Decile Regular attendance and Chronic Absence

12. It is important to also examine ethnicity and decile together.

- Māori students in lower decile schools had both smaller increases in regular attendance and larger increases in chronic absence between Term 2, 2019 and Term 2, 2021. In Term 2 2021, regular attendance for Māori students in decile 1 and 2 schools was 37.3% (a 0.3 percentage point increase from 2019), while the chronic absence rate was 19.1% in 2021 (a 1.6 percentage point increase from 2019).
- 16% of Pacific students at decile 1 and 2 schools were categorised as having chronic absence. This rate was also the largest increase (2.1 percentage points) in chronic absence compared with Pacific students in other decile groups.
- The trend in chronic absence was particularly evident in the Auckland region, likely due to the impacts of more COVID-19 lockdowns since 2020. Specifically, the largest increase in students who were chronically absent was for students in the Auckland region, particularly those of Pacific or Māori ethnicities and/or who were attending lower decile schools. One quarter (26%) of Decile 1 and 2 schools are in the Auckland Region.

Primary and Senior Secondary Attendance and Chronic Absence rates

13. Regular attendance for senior secondary school students decreased while regular attendance for primary students increased.

- Across Term 2, 2021, senior secondary students (Year 11 -13) saw a 0.9 percentage point decrease in regular attendance compared to Term 2, 2019, from 50.5% to 49.6%, whereas primary school students (Year 1-8) saw a 3.5 percentage point increase, from 60.1% to 63.6%.
- Senior secondary students (Year 11 -13) saw a 1.8 percentage point increase in chronic absence compared to Term 2, 2019, from 12.0% to 13.8%, whereas primary school students (Year 1-8) saw a 0.4 percentage point decrease, from 5.6% to 5.2% (see Figure 4).
- Of senior secondary students, Māori students experienced the highest level of chronic absence (25.5% across Term 2, 2021). Pacific students experienced the largest increase in chronic absence of 3.7 percentage points to 24.1% for Term 2, 2021 compared with Term 2, 2019 (see Figure 4).

Recorded reasons for absence in Term 2, 2021

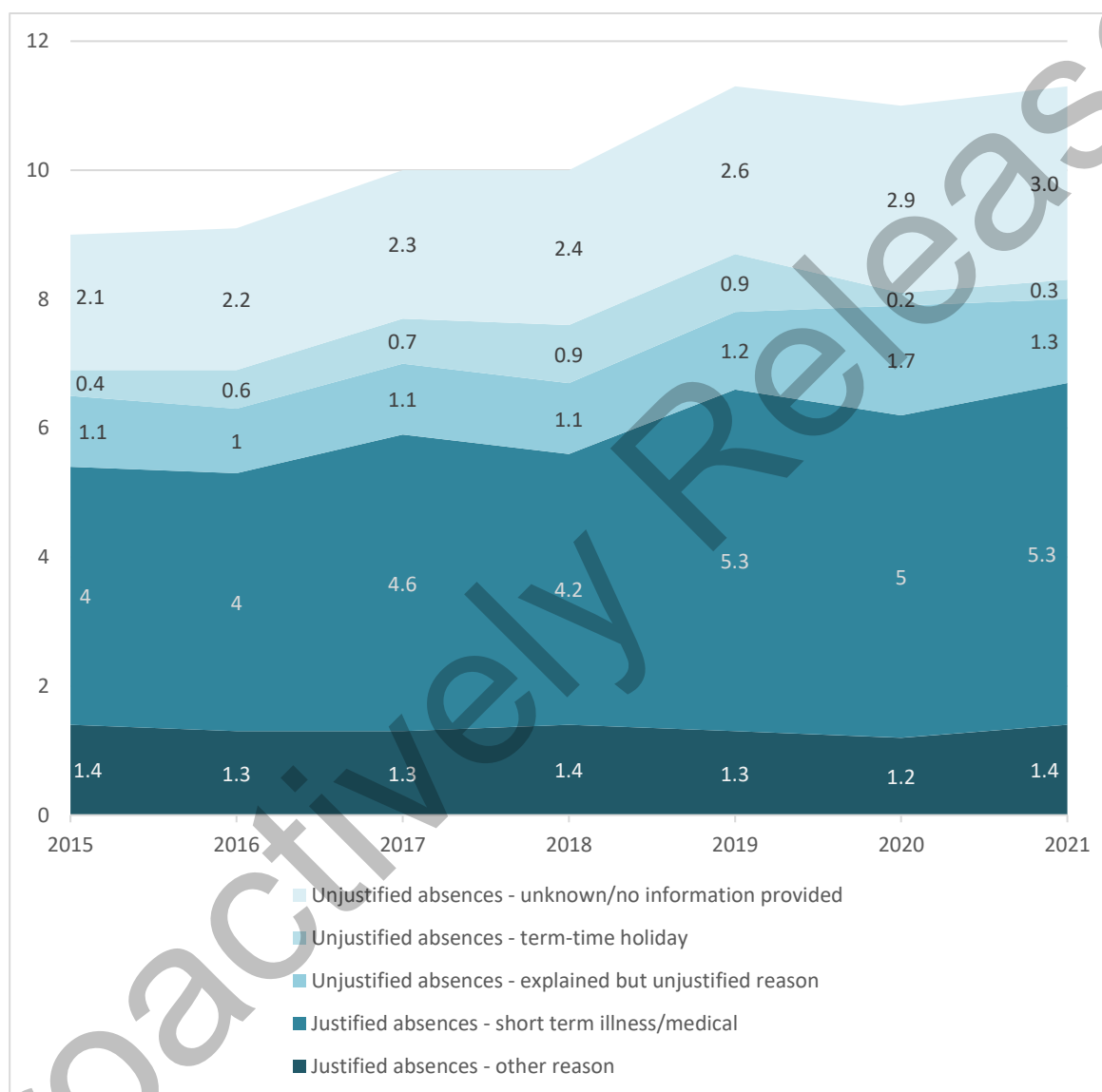
14. Students may be absent for justified and unjustified reasons – see figure 3 overleaf.

- In Term 2, 2021, 5.3% of time was recorded as justified absence due to 'short-term illness/medical reasons', no change compared to 2019. This is the main reason for student absence.
- However, the percentage of absent time recorded as truant has increased to 2.6% continuing a pattern that began in 2016. The percentage of absent time due to holidays during term time has decreased compared with Term 2, 2019 to 0.3%.
- The percentage of time recorded as truant had a larger increase among secondary students (senior secondary students in particular) compared with that among other

primary students. Truancy is the main component of unjustified absence for senior secondary students.

- All senior secondary students who were at lower decile schools had a higher percentage of time recorded as truant in 2021 as compared to 2019. Specifically, the data show that students of Māori and Pacific ethnicities in decile 1 schools had 16.7% and 13.8% of their school time recorded as truant respectively.

Figure 3: Reasons for Absence (% time) Term 2 Attendance Data 2015 - 21



Communications Approach

15. These reports may attract media attention. A set of Q&A accompanies the briefing (refer Annex 1) to help respond to queries should they arise. We will liaise with your office ahead of their release.

Next Steps

16. The Term 2 Attendance Data will be released on Education Counts website. We will consult with your office as to the release date.

Proactive Release

17. We recommend that this Briefing is proactively released as per your expectation that information be released as soon as possible. Any information which may need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

Annex 1: Frequently Asked Questions Sheet

Proactively Released