



## Briefing Note: Release of 2022 Term 2 Attendance Data

<b>To:</b>	Hon. Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education		
<b>Cc:</b>	Hon. Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education Hon. Kelvin Davis, Associate Minister of Education Hon. Aupito William Sio, Associate Minister of Education		
<b>Date:</b>	4 November 2022	<b>Priority:</b>	High
<b>Security Level:</b>	In Confidence	<b>METIS No:</b>	1297274
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<b>Messaging seen by Communications team:</b>	Yes	<b>Round Robin:</b>	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 39.9% in 2022, which is lower than Term 2 2021 (59.7%). This is the lowest for Term 2 since 2011.
- Note** that student chronic absence (attending 70% or less of available half-days) was 13.8% in Term 2 2022 (7.7% in Term 2 2021). This is the highest since 2011.
- Note** that justified absences (including illness) made up 10.4% of time in Term 2 2022 (6.7% in Term 2 2021), and unjustified absences made up 5.9% of time in Term 2 2022 (4.6% in Term 2 2021).
- Note** that these results can be primarily attributed to high levels of incidence of COVID-19 in the community and winter illnesses.
- Note** the results of the 2022 Term 2 attendance collection are scheduled to be released via Education Counts on Thursday 10 November.
- Note** that your Office is being consulted on the communications planning around this release. Consideration is being given to how this data release might be synchronised with the release of the research report on attendance by the Education Review Office, and how the data can be used to support elements of the attendance strategy.

## Summary

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- This briefing provides you with information on the 2022 Term 2 attendance results.
- The Term 2 attendance data and report are being released 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.
- During Term 2 2022, all of New Zealand was in the COVID-19 Protection Framework, also known as the Traffic Light system. Under the Traffic Light system, all schools were open for on-site learning.
- The main driver of non-attendance was time absent due to short-term illness/medical reasons – 8.6% of all Term 2 2022 time, up from 5.3% of all Term 2 time in 2021. The proportion of time coded to "T – no explanation or a trivial explanation" has also risen to the highest level since 2011 at 3.2% of time in Term 2 2022, up from 2.6% of time in Term 2 2021.
- Across Term 2 2022, 39.9% of students met the criteria for regular attendance, a decrease of 19.8 percentage points compared to Term 2 in 2021 (59.7%), and the lowest rate since 2011. The regular attendance rate peaked in 2015 (69.5%).
- Regular attendance rates for all ethnicities have fallen between 2021 and 2022, with rates for Asian and European/Pākehā students (20.1 and 21.0 percentage points decrease respectively) falling slightly more than rates for Māori and Pacific students (17.4 and 18.4 percentage points decrease respectively).
- Across Term 2 2022, the percentage of ākonga Māori in English medium education attending school and/or kura regularly (28.1%) was higher than that for ākonga Māori in Māori medium education (22.4%) and Mixed medium education (22.8%).
- The percentage of students with chronic absence (attending 70% or less of the time) increased to 13.8% in Term 2 2022 from 7.7% in Term 2 2021, the highest level since 2011.
- Justified absences (including illness) made up 10.4% of time in Term 2 2022 (6.7% in Term 2 2021), and unjustified absences made up 5.9% of time in Term 2 2022 (4.6% in Term 2 2021).
- The Taranaki, Whanganui, Manawatu region experienced the largest decrease in students attending regularly, down 23.9 percentage points from 2021. The Hawke's Bay, Tairāwhiti region experienced the smallest decrease in students attending regularly, down 17.3 percentage points from 2021.

## Proactive Release

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

**Agree /** Disagree



Sean Teddy

**Hautū – Te Pae Aronui**

04/11/2022



Hon. Jan Tinetti,

**Associate Minister of Education**

04/11/2022

## Background

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### ***Term 2 attendance reporting***

1. The annual Term 2 attendance report provides a picture of student attendance in New Zealand schools and/or kura 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-days<sup>1</sup>.
3. We report on four categories of student attendance:
  - i. Regular attendance, where students have attended school and/or kura 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 and/or kura 70%, or less, of available half-days.
4. Note that absences include both justified and unjustified absence codes, as defined in the Ministry's advice to schools and kura regarding attendance coding. Of particular relevance is that short-term illness is considered to be a justified absence.
5. This Term 2 2022 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 schools and kura that use electronic Student Management Systems (SMS).
6. In Term 2 2022, 761,350 student attendance records were reported and processed from 2,270 schools (92.5% of all state and state-integrated schools and kura). This represents 97.2% of the student population in all state and state-integrated schools and kura on 1 July 2022.

### ***Challenges Due to COVID-19***

7. During Term 2 2022 all of New Zealand was in the COVID-19 Protection Framework, also known as the Traffic Light system. Under the Traffic Light system, all schools and kura were open for on-site learning.
8. This contrasts with the requirements that students learn at home during Alert Levels 3 and 4 of the COVID-19 Alert Level system which was in place during 2020 and 2021. While learning at home during Alert Levels 3 and 4 students were considered to be "present".
9. Following the rapid increase of COVID-19 cases from mid-March, incidence of COVID-19 in the community continued to be high throughout Term 2 2022<sup>2</sup>, resulting in high levels of absences for both students and staff. Schools and kura were also impacted by higher levels of typical winter illness, causing additional absences. This is in keeping with the advice from the Ministry of Health for people to stay home if unwell.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Health website <https://www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-data-and-statistics/covid-19-current-cases>

10. Some schools and kura reported finding Term 2 2022 much harder than previous terms as they adapted to the continued COVID-19 surge, having to undertake regular hybrid learning and re-structuring of the school timetable. Schools and kura undertook a range of approaches to manage the learning during this time. Some rostered students home, whilst others tried to keep their school or kura open for all students by combining classes, reducing subjects taught during each day, or utilising hybrid learning supervised at school.
11. Regional feedback indicates that, as well as the impacts of students staying home if they were close contacts or unwell, there may have been impacts on parents of COVID-19 fatigue and of attendance seeming less important. Additionally, some schools, kura and families have found getting students back into regular attendance challenging. Some regions reported their schools and kura coping better with attendance in light of COVID-19 and seasonal flu than others as a result of their communities' and schools' and kura consistent approach to mask wearing. Additionally, some schools and kura reported hybrid learning worked well for those students engaged in it.

### ***All in for Learning strategy to increase regular attendance***

12. In May, the Ministry of Education/govt released an attendance and engagement strategy called All in for Learning, which sets out 13 priority actions that aim to positively influence attendance and engagement. This strategy sets clear targets. By 2026, we want to increase the number of children attending regularly (i.e. attending more than 9 days a fortnight) to 75%. We want to lower the number of children who are moderately absent (i.e. attending more than 8 days a fortnight, but not attending regularly) to 4% and lower the number of children who are chronically absent (i.e. absent for 3 days or more a fortnight) to 3%.
13. The Ministry aims to achieve these targets by working with schools to:
  - i. set expectations on attendance with their communities, and notify parents when their children are absent and following up
  - ii. provide a welcoming environment for all children
  - iii. ensure there are strong relationships between schools, parents and their whānau
  - iv. acknowledge there are a number of societal and whānau factors that impact on the capability, opportunity and motivation to engage in school.
  - v. work across agencies to reduce the barriers to children attending
14. Following the launch of the strategy the Ministry launched a national communications campaign, targeted at parents, whānau and young people, to raise awareness of the importance of regular attendance. As part of this, we provided schools with resources that they could use to tailor communications with their communities. We are also supporting targeted regional actions that support improvements in irregular and chronic attendance.

### ***Other attendance reporting***

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

15. 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, usually before the end of the following term.

9(2)(g)(i), 9(2)(f)(iv)

17. Annex 2 of this briefing outlines the key tasks and timeframes to publication of the upcoming regular attendance data releases. Timelines include ensuring the quality of the data and encouraging high levels of data submission from schools, preparation and

checking of reports for Ministerial and public consumption, preparation and checking of data tables and other content for the Education Counts website. We recognise the interest in receiving this data as soon as possible and are continuing to work towards reducing the time taken to complete this work while maintaining the robustness of the data.

## Weekly attendance reporting

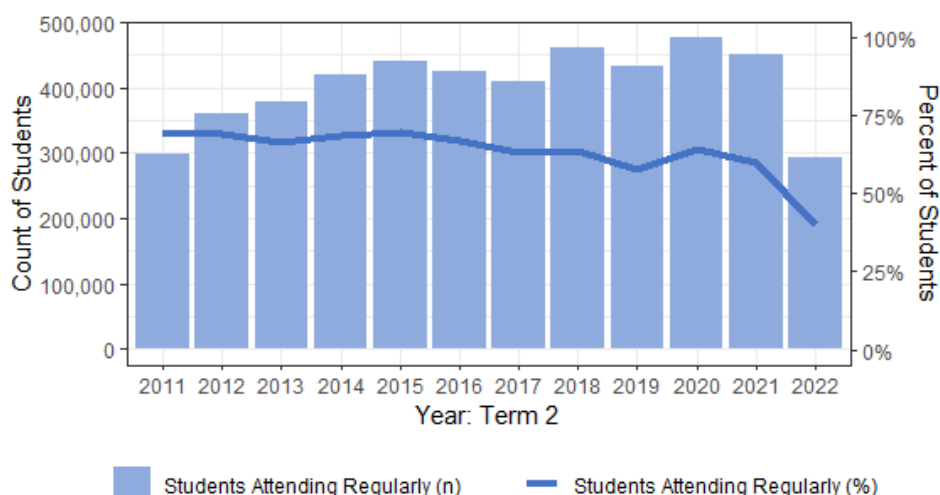
18. In contrast to the Term 2 attendance reporting, which combines attendance in half-days to measure regular attendance across the term, the weekly attendance reporting measures **on-site attendance** at schools, kura and early learning services. In the weekly attendance reporting, any child or student who attended a school, kura 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.
19. Weekly reports are made publicly available via the Ministry’s Education Counts website.

## Key findings

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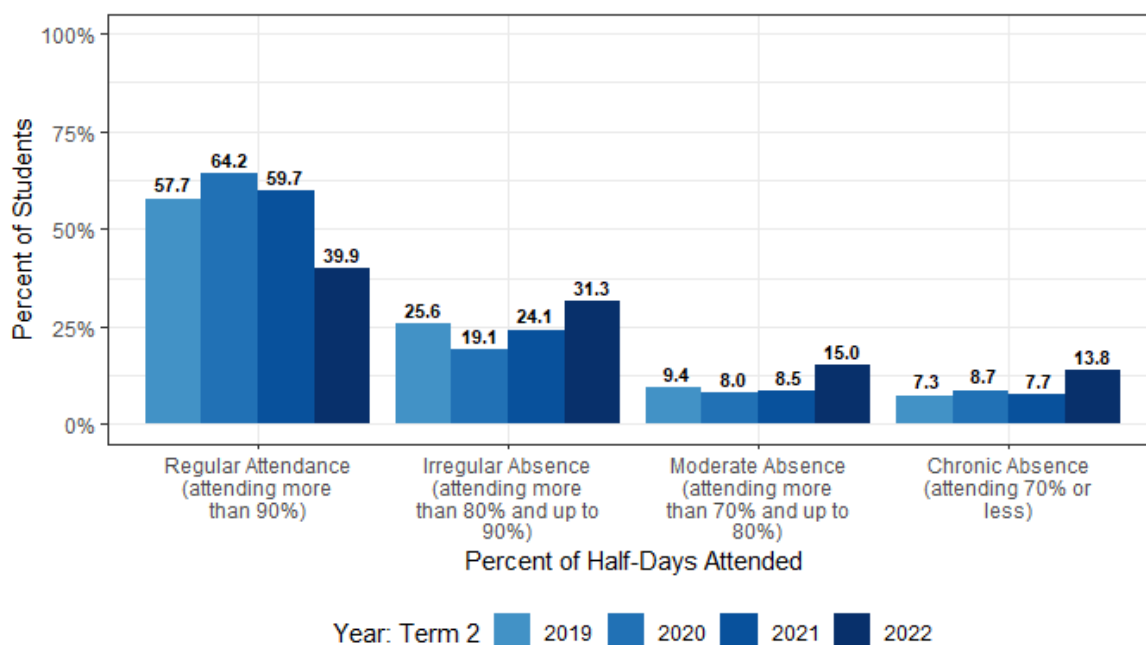
### National Regular Attendance and Chronic Absence

20. Regular attendance has decreased while all other attendance categories, including chronic absence, have increased in Term 2 2022 compared with pre-COVID 2019 and earlier years. Regular attendance for the whole country decreased to 39.9% in Term 2 2022 from 57.7% in Term 2 2019 (17.8 percentage points).
- 21.
22. *Figure 1: Regular attendance has decreased in Term 2 2022 compared with pre-COVID 2019 and earlier years*



23. Chronic absence (attending 70% or less of the term) increased to 13.8% in Term 2 2022 from 7.3% in Term 2 2019 (6.5 percentage points).

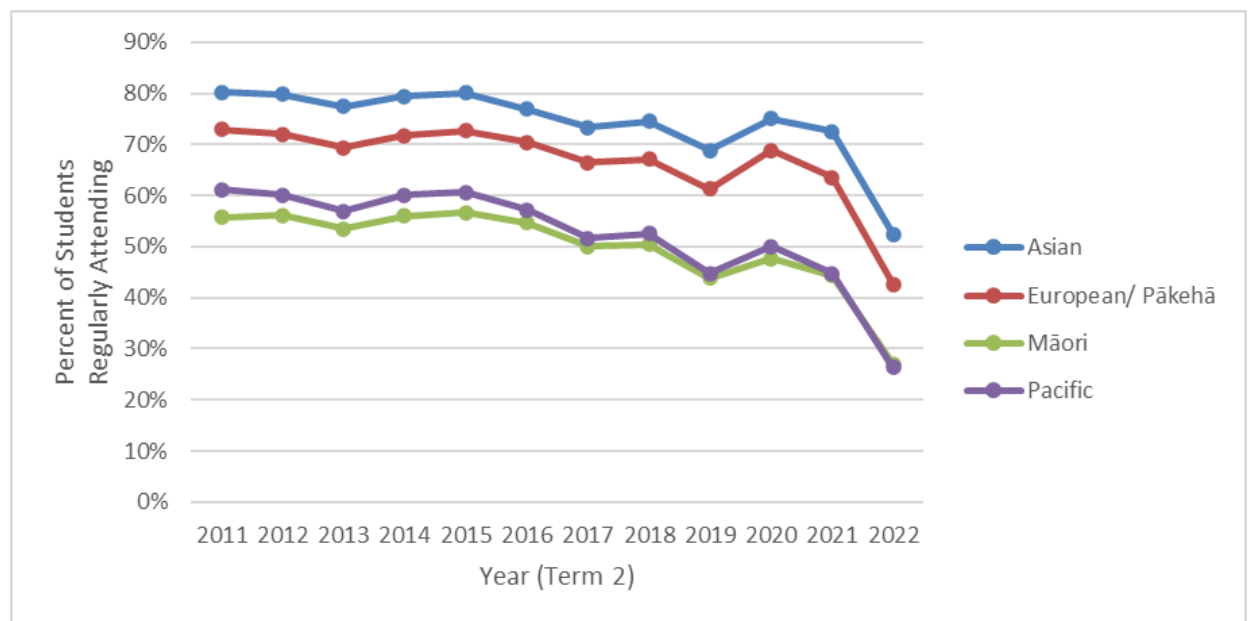
*Figure 2: All attendance categories other than regular attendance have increased in Term 2 2022*



### ***Māori and Pacific Regular Attendance and Chronic Absence rates***

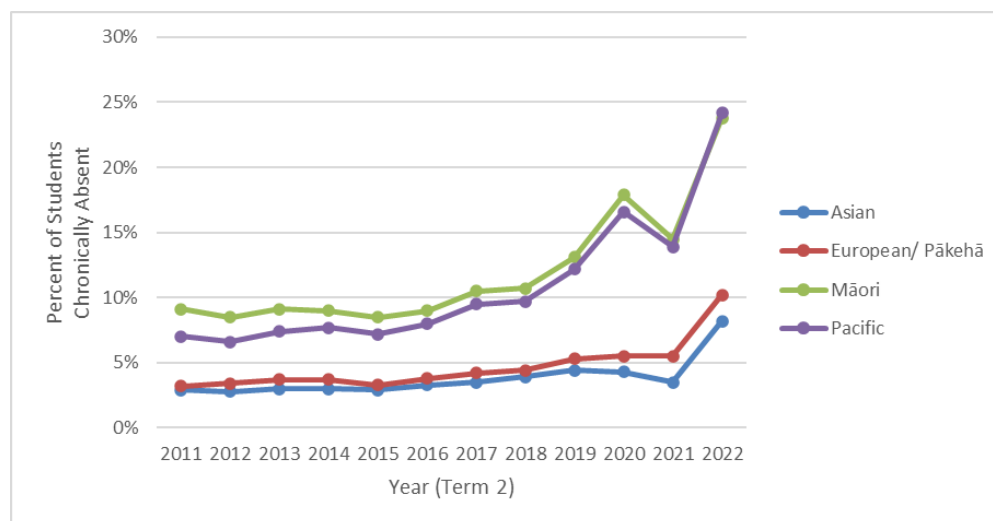
24. Regular attendance rates for all ethnicities have fallen from Term 2 2021 to 2022, with rates for Asian and European/Pākehā students (20.1 and 21.0 percentage point decreases respectively) falling more than Māori and Pacific students (17.4 and 18.4 percentage point decreases respectively).
25. Term 2 regular attendance has seen a steady decrease across all ethnicities from 2015, with students of Asian ethnicity having the highest regular attendance rates (52.4%), followed by European/Pākehā students (42.6%). Students of Māori (27.0%) or Pacific (26.4%) ethnicities continue to experience lower regular attendance rates.

Figure 3: Regular attendance has decreased across all ethnicities in Term 2 2022



26. Similarly, Term 2 chronic absence rates for all ethnicities have increased in 2022. Chronic absence rates reached 24.2% for Pacific students and 23.8% for Māori students.

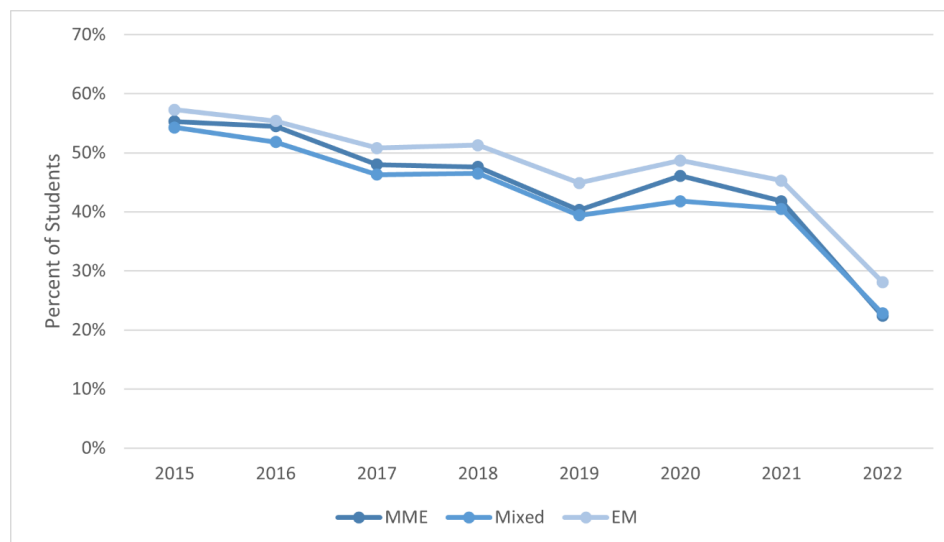
Figure 4: Chronic absence has increased across all ethnicities in Term 2 2022



27. From 2015 to 2022, ākonga Māori in English medium (EM) schools have consistently had higher regular attendance rates than those in Māori medium (MME) or Mixed medium schools. Across Term 2 2022, the percentage of ākonga Māori in EM schools attending school regularly (28.1%) was higher than that of ākonga Māori in MME (22.4%) and Mixed medium education (22.8%).
28. Many MME and Mixed medium schools are also low decile schools, which face additional barriers and challenges with achieving regular attendance compared to higher decile schools. 92% of Māori students in MME are in decile 1-3 schools, while 66% of Māori students in Mixed education are in decile 1-3 schools. Only 33% of Māori students in EM are in decile 1-3 schools.



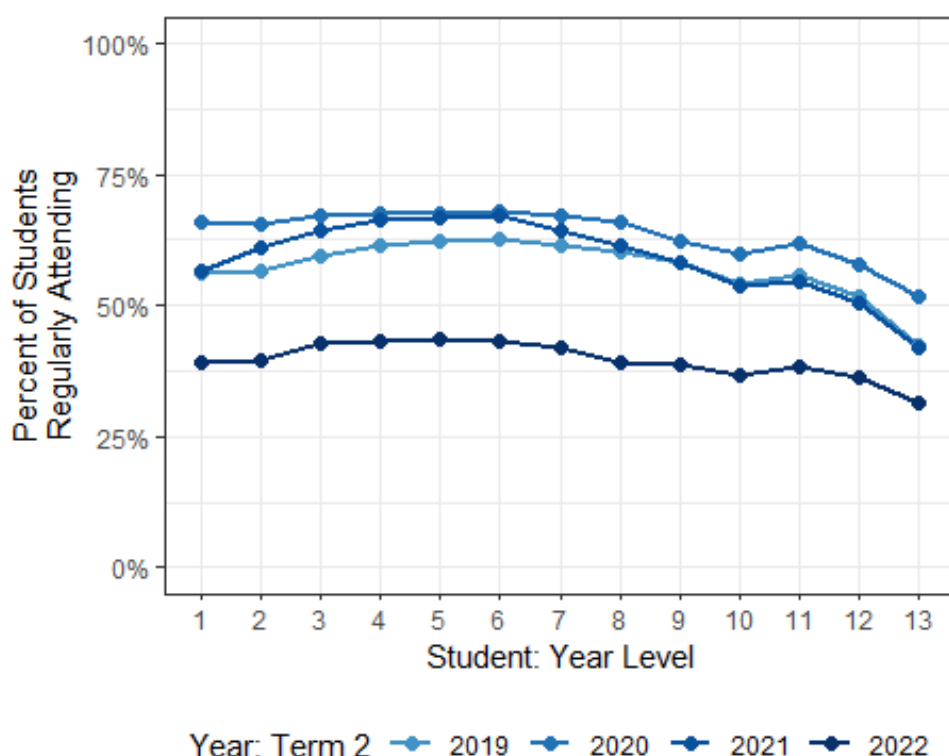
*Figure 5: Regular attendance for ākonga Māori has decreased in all mediums in Term 2 2022*



### **Primary and Senior Secondary Attendance**

29. Regular attendance has decreased for students of all year levels in 2022. The percentage of students meeting the criteria for regular attendance usually increases for students in Years 1 to 6 and then tends to fall through the intermediate and secondary years. However, in 2022 the difference in regular attendance between primary year students and secondary year students is lower than usual.
30. In 2022, the rate for primary students was 41.6% and for secondary students 36.6%, a difference of 5.0 percentage points. This difference is smaller than in 2021, when the regular attendance rate of primary students (year levels 1-8) was 63.6% while the rate of secondary students (year levels 9-13) was 52.5%, a difference of 11.1 percentage points.
31. In Term 2 2022 primary students had a larger decrease in regular attendance rates compared to 2021 than secondary students. Year 6 students had the largest difference in rate, from 67.1% in 2021 to 43.2% in 2022, a difference of 23.9 percentage points. Year 13 students had the smallest difference in rate, from 42.1% in 2021 to 31.3% in 2022, a difference of 10.8 percentage points.

Figure 6: Regular attendance has decreased across all year levels in Term 2 2022



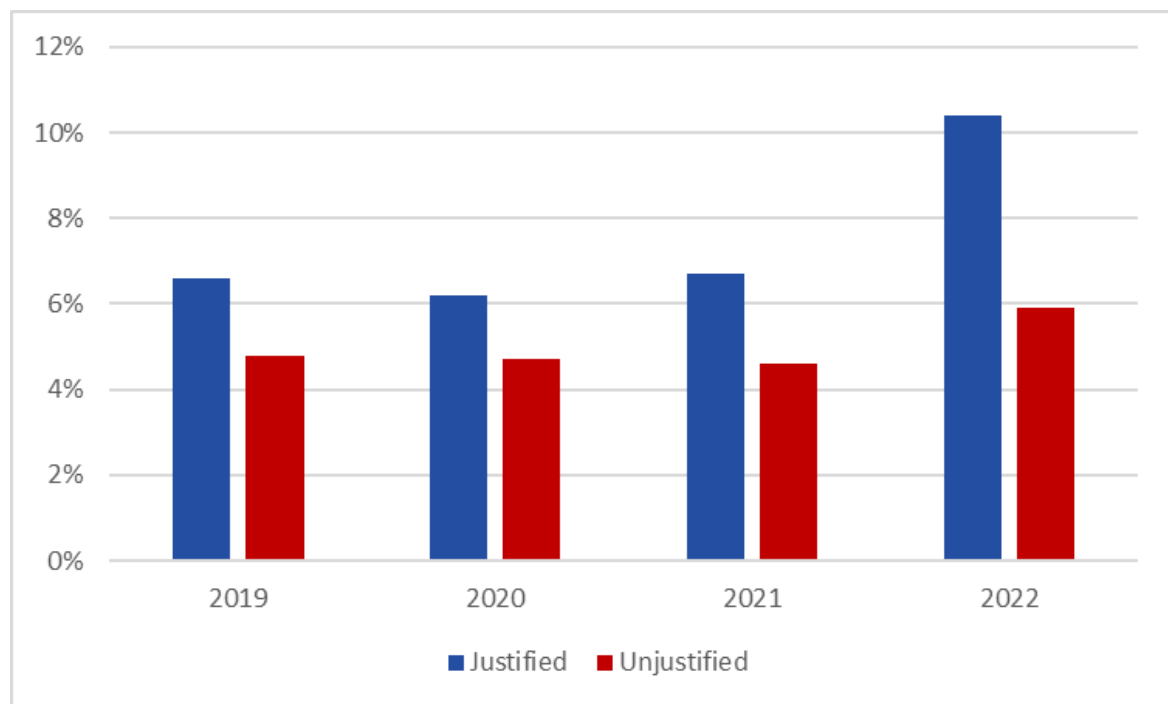
### Attendance by region

32. There was an overall decrease in regular attendance across all education regions between 2021 and 2022. The Otago, Southland region had the highest percentage of students attending regularly in 2022 (44.2%). The Tai Tokerau region had the lowest percentage of students attending regularly (28.1%).
33. The Taranaki, Whanganui, Manawatu region experienced the largest decrease in students attending regularly, down 23.9 percentage points from 2021. The Hawke's Bay, Tairāwhiti region experienced the smallest decrease in students attending regularly, down 17.3 percentage points from 2021.

### Recorded reasons for absence in Term 2 2022.

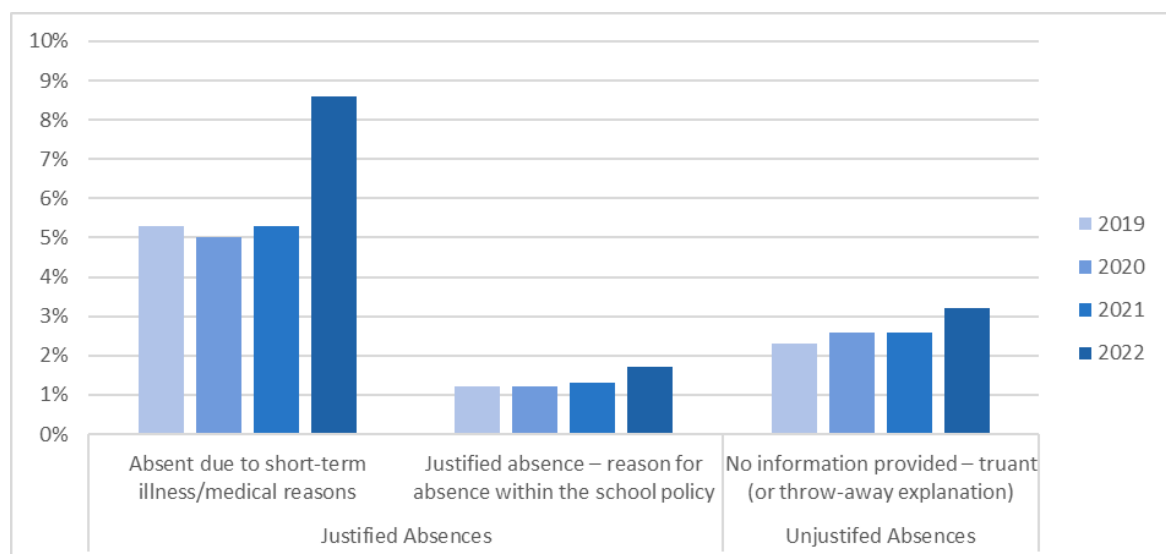
34. There has been a rise in both justified and unjustified absences in Term 2 2022 compared to recent years. The percent of term time recorded as justified absence in 2022 is 10.4%, up from 6.7% in 2021 (3.7 percentage points). The percent of term time recorded as unjustified absence is 5.9%, up from 4.6% in 2021 (1.3 percentage points)

Figure 7: The percent of time recorded as justified and unjustified absence has increased in 2022



35. The largest contributor to the rise in justified absence are absences due to short-term illness or medical reasons (Code M and in line with Ministry of Health advice for people to stay home if they are unwell), followed by absences with reasons within the school policy (Code J). Code M absences made up 8.6% of all term time in 2022, up from 5.3% in 2021 (3.3 percentage point difference). Code J absences made up 1.7% of all term time in 2022, up from 1.3% in 2021 (0.4 percentage point difference).
36. The largest contributor to the rise in unjustified absence is no information or a trivial reason provided (Code T). Code T absences made up 3.2% of all term time in 2022, up from 2.6% in 2021 (0.6 percentage point difference).

Figure 8: The largest contributor to all absence time spent in Term 2 2022 is “absences due to illness/medical reasons”



## Communications Approach

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37. These reports may attract significant media attention. A set of Q&A accompanies the briefing (refer Annex 1) to help respond to queries should they arise.
38. Your Office is being consulted on the communications planning around this data release. Consideration is being given as to how this might be synchronised with the release of the research report on attendance by the Education Review Office. A Briefing Note on the communications approach will be provided by Friday 4 November.
39. Separately, in connection with the *Every School Day Is A Big Day* campaign, the Ministry has been working on a comprehensive 'media briefing' that focuses on explaining the data we rely upon, and how we categorise attendance/absence. No date had been set for this activity, however, this briefing may now become a useful part of the communications activities associated with the Term 2 data release.
40. The Term 2 data release will also necessitate a rapid review/refresh of the campaign messaging being carried on the Ministry's online channels, to ensure it remains accurate in light of the changing data picture.

## Next Steps

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41. The Term 2 Attendance Data will be released on Thursday 10 November via the Education Counts website.

## Proactive Release

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42. 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.

## Annexes

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9(2)(g)(i)

