

## Briefing Note: Release of 2019 Student Engagement Data

<b>To:</b>	Hon. Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
<b>Copy:</b>	Hon. Tracey Martin, Associate Minister of Education		
<b>Date:</b>	30 June 2020	<b>Priority:</b>	Medium
<b>Security Level:</b>	In Confidence	<b>METIS No:</b>	1232785
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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** the results of the 2019 student engagement data which we propose to release on the Education Counts website during the week ending Friday 17 July.

**Note** the draft communications comprising key messages and questions/answers attached (Annex 3).

**Note** that we will liaise with your office on the proposed timing and communications.

**Agree** that this Briefing Note is proactively released.

☒ **Agree** ☐ **Disagree**

### Summary

- This briefing informs you of results of the 2019 student engagement data. It covers data on stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions; early leaving exemptions; and transient students.
- In 2019 the rates of age-standardised<sup>1</sup> stand-downs, suspensions and expulsions per 1,000 students increased from 2018; the stand-down rate increased 3.2 per 1,000 students (to 29.0 per 1,000 students) while suspensions and expulsions rates increased only 0.2 per 1,000 students. The exclusion rate did not change.
- The stand-down rate has been steadily increasing since a low in 2015 when there were 19.5 stand-downs per 1,000 students, and in 2019 it was 9.5 per 1,000 students higher than in 2015.

<sup>1</sup> All rates represent the prevalence per 1,000 students. In the Stand-downs, Suspensions, Exclusions and Expulsions report rates are age standardised, which accounts for the increased prevalence of these actions for the 12-15 age groups.

- The early leaving exemptions rate increased slightly in 2019, but numbers have remained low over the last ten years.
- The transient student rate reduced slightly in 2019 and has generally remained stable over the past 5 years.
- We propose to publish this data on the Education Counts website during the week ending Friday 10 July and will liaise with your office on timing and communications.



Damian Edwards  
**Deputy Secretary**  
**Evidence Data and Knowledge**

30/06/2020



Hon Chris Hipkins  
**Minister of Education**

12/07/2020

I'd like an extra briefing note please on what happened in 2005/6 that resulted in a decade long trend down for these stats, and then what changed in 2015 that sent it back in the other direction? What can we learn here? How will we reverse this concerning trend now? CH

## Background

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1. This report summarises the 2019 results for the Ministry of Education's student engagement release, which covers three data collections (stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions; early leaving exemptions; and transient students). Refer to Annex Two for definitions of the collections.
2. The Ministry releases this data annually on the Education Counts website. Along with data tables, we release three education sector indicator reports which summarise the results and reports on trends in the indicators for the three data collections.

## Student Engagement Data

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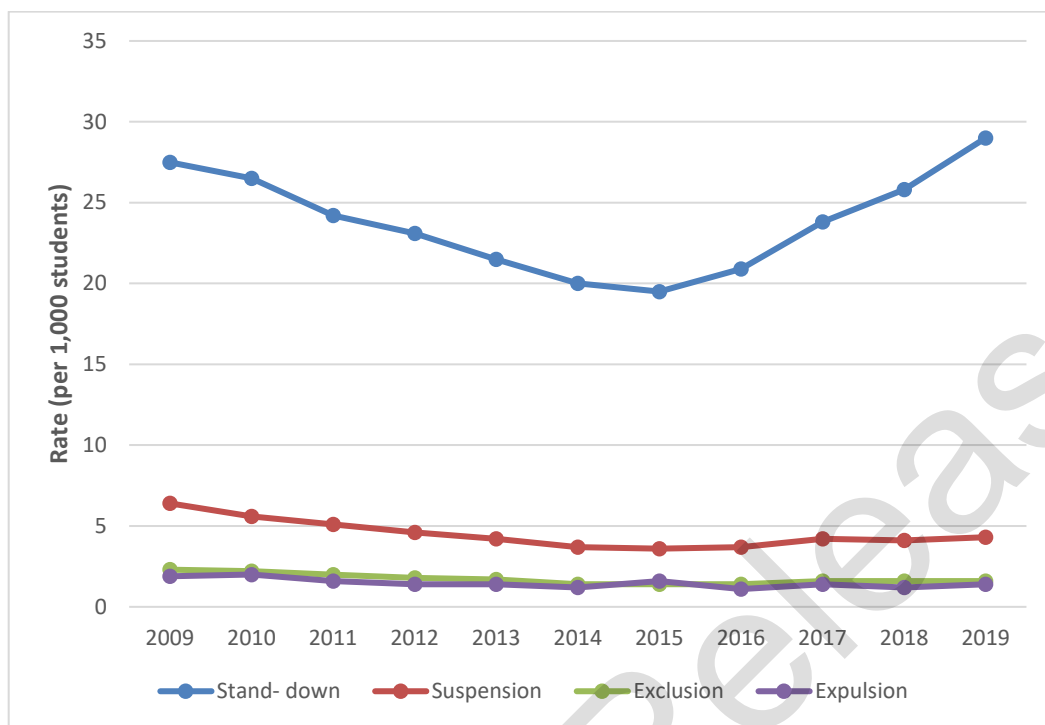
3. Schools have a keen interest in engagement data. Student engagement indicators have been developed to help decision-makers understand the engagement context and develop strategies to improve student engagement.
4. An upward trend may reflect more incidents of challenging behaviour being recorded but, it may also be that schools are changing their approach to behaviour management in some way.

## Key results

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5. In 2019 there were 778,396 students attending 2,442 state and state-integrated schools. Their student engagement results and trends for each indicator (stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions, expulsions; early leaving exemptions, and transient students) are described in Annex One.
6. The 2019 student engagement results (Figure 1 below) show that:
  - a. Compared to 2018, the stand-down rate increased 3.2 per 1,000 students (to 29.0 per 1,000 students) while suspensions and expulsions rates increased only 0.2 per 1,000 students. The exclusion rate did not change.
  - b. The stand-down rate has been steadily increasing since a low in 2015. In 2019 there were 29.0 stand-downs per 1,000 students which is 9.5 per 1,000 students higher than in 2015 (when there were 19.5 per 1,000 students).
  - c. Rates for suspensions, expulsions and exclusions in 2019 have only changed slightly since 2015 and are all down from their peaks around 2009.

**Figure 1: Student Engagement Rate Movement, 2009-2019**



7. Schools are standing-down, suspending and excluding Māori students at a higher rate than other students (age-standardised rates). Pacific students are the most affected by expulsions, with Māori students the next highest group.
8. Schools continue to stand-down, suspend, exclude, and expel more male students than female students. Female students are on average 65% less likely to be stood-down, suspended, excluded or expelled.
9. The majority (58%) of stand-downs and suspensions were received by students in the early secondary (12 to 15 years-old).
10. The most common reasons for stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions, were physical assault on other students and continual disobedience. For example, in 2019 physical assault on other students accounted for around 30% of stand-down and expulsion cases and around 25% of suspension and exclusion cases. In 2019 drugs (including substance abuse) was another common reason for suspension.
11. The number of approved early leaving exemptions increased in 2019 but numbers remain low compared to previous years. There were 848 early leaving exemptions in 2019, compared to 673 in 2018.
12. The transient student rate decreased slightly in 2019. Compared to 2018 the rate decreased 0.5 per 1,000 students; it has generally remained stable over the past 5 years.
13. Across the regions there is no overall distinct pattern of change in these indicators. Smaller regions tend to have slightly larger changes between years. For stand-downs, as an example:

- a. The Waikato region had the highest rate (37.6 per 1,000 students). It also had the largest rate of increase in stand-downs in 2019, with an increase of 6.2 per 1,000 students since 2018 (31.4 per 1,000 students).
- b. Otago/Southland had the second highest rate in 2019 (35.5 per 1,000 students). This region had the highest stand-down rate in 2018 (33.1 per 1,000 students).

### Relationship between rates of stand-downs and rates of suspensions, exclusions, and expulsions

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14. The rise in the rate of stand-downs alongside the more stable rate of suspensions, exclusions and expulsions raises a question about the relationship between them and how it changes.
15. Our previous analysis on this topic showed that on average the schools that had increased the rate of stand-downs were slightly more likely to have also increased rates of more formal disciplinary responses (i.e. suspensions, exclusions and expulsions). This relationship still holds between 2018 and 2019.
16. Further analysis shows that it appears to be the case that the rate at which stand-downs progress to the more formal disciplinary responses is indeed decreasing. This indicates that schools may be less likely to proceed with more formal disciplinary action in 2019 than they were in the past. Or put another way, schools may be increasing their thresholds about the seriousness of behaviour that requires a suspension, expulsion or exclusion in response. One notable exception to this (shown in the data analysis) is an increase in the likelihood of stand-downs in relation to sexual harassment progressing to more formal responses.

### Next Steps

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17. We propose to publish the student engagement data and indicator reports on the Education Counts website during the week ending Friday 10 July.
18. Key messages and questions/answers are attached (Annex 3) and we will liaise with your office on the timing and communications.

### Proactive Release

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19. 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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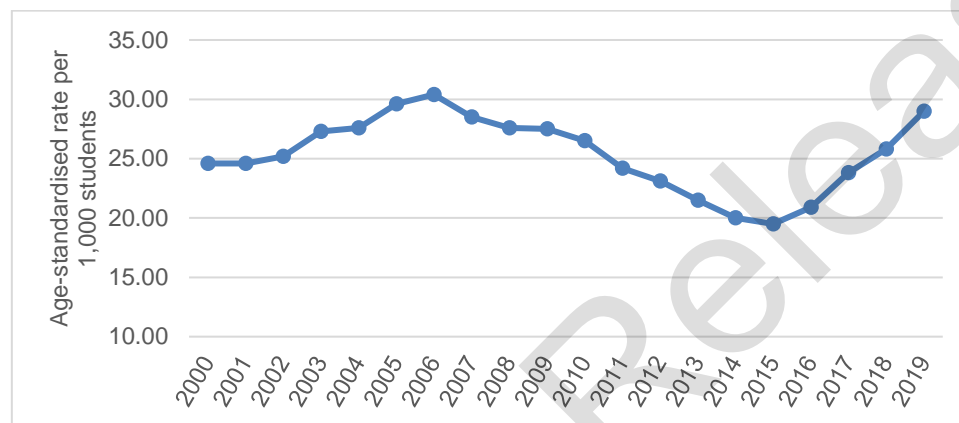
- Annex 1: 2019 Student Engagement Data Trends by Indicator
- Annex 2: Education Sector Indicator Definitions
- Annex 3: Student engagement data 2019: Communications Approach

Proactively Released

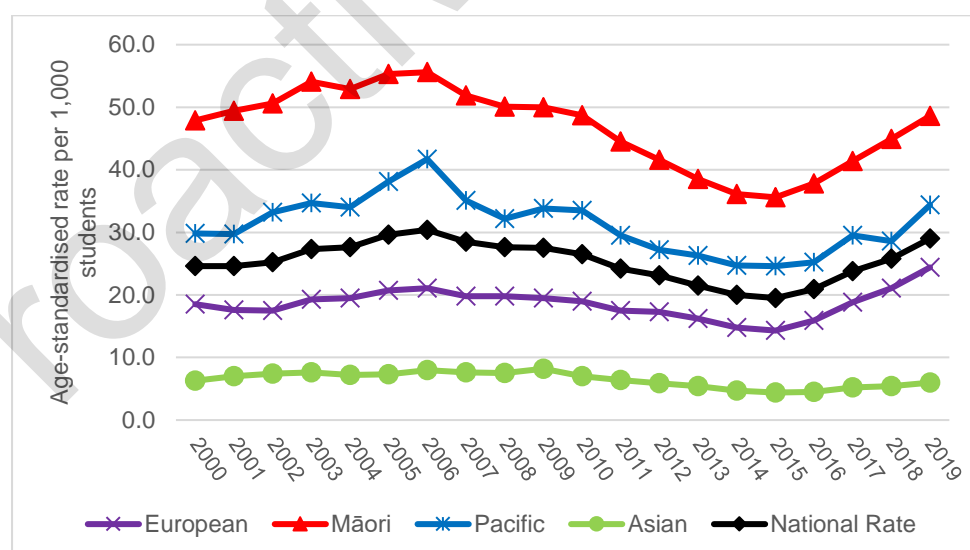
## Annex one: 2019 Student Engagement Data Trends by Indicator

**Stand-downs**, on the rise after a period of decline

1. The latest stand-down rate is the highest since 2006 (see Figure 1). There were 22,285 stand-down cases in 2019, which were received by 16,486 students. This equates to 29.0 stand-downs per 1,000 students, up from 25.8 per 1,000 students in 2018. Since 2015 the stand-down rate has been increasing steadily.

**Figure 1: Age-standardised stand-down rates (2000 to 2019)**

2. Stand-down rates for all ethnic groups increased in 2019 (see Figure 2). Schools stood down Māori students at a higher rate than other ethnic groups, and the rate increased by 8%. Stand-downs of Pacific students by schools had the biggest rate increase between 2018 and 2019, growing by 20%. The rate at which European/Pākehā students were stood down increased by 16%.

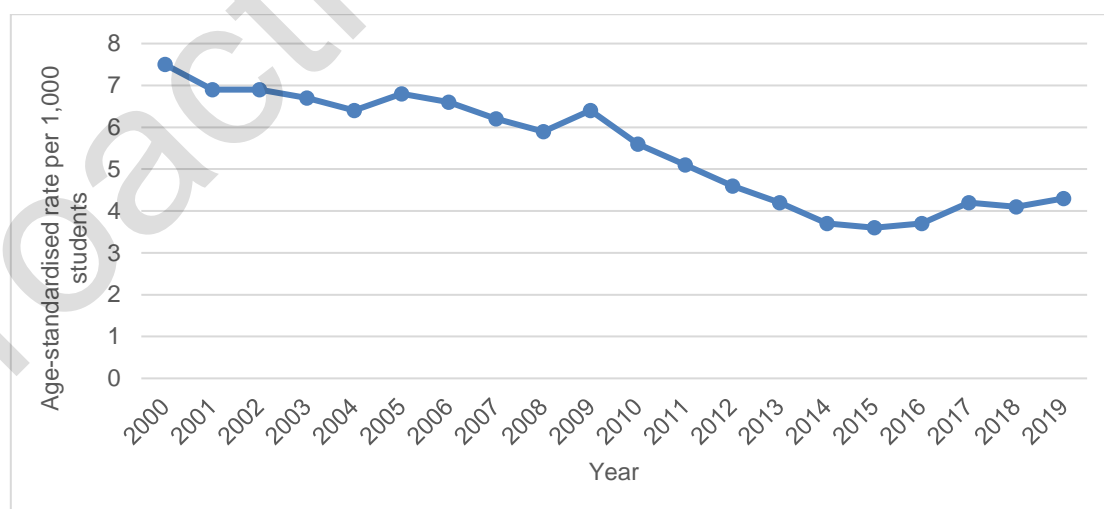
**Figure 2: Age-standardised stand-down rates by ethnic group (2000 to 2019)**

3. Students from schools in the lowest quintile (deciles 1 and 2) were nearly four times more likely to be stood-down by schools than students in the highest quintile (deciles 9 and 10). Stand-down rates were highest for Māori students across all quintiles, except quintile 1 where European/Pākehā students had the highest rate.
4. More than half of all stand-downs occur at ages 12-15. In 2019, this age range accounted for 56% of cases.
5. Male students were more than twice as likely to receive a stand-down as female students. In 2019, the stand-down rate for male students was 41.7 per 1,000, while for female students it was 15.7 per 1,000.
6. Physical assault on other students continued to be the most common reason for stand-downs in 2019, accounting for 32% of cases. Of every 1,000 students, 9.2 were stood-down for this reason, up from 8.3 in 2018. Continual disobedience was the second most prevalent reason, accounting for a further 18% of stand-downs with a rate of 5.3 per 1,000 students.
7. The Waikato region had the highest stand-down rate (37.6 per 1,000 students), and the largest rate of increase in stand-downs in 2019 with an increase of 6.2 per 1,000 students since 2018 (31.4 per 1,000 students).
8. Otago/Southland had the second highest stand-down rate in 2019 (35.5 per 1,000 students). This region had the highest stand-down rate in 2018 (33.1 per 1,000 students).

### **Suspensions were slightly up after a decrease in 2018**

1. In 2019 the suspension rate increased slightly (see Figure 3). In 2019, 2,988 students received 3,283 suspension cases. This equates to a suspension rate of 4.3 per 1,000 students, an increase from the rate in 2018 (4.1 per 1,000). However the suspension rate was well below rates seen prior to 2009.

**Figure 3: Age-standardised suspension rates (2000 to 2019)**



2. Suspension rates were higher in low-quintile schools and were highest for Māori students across all quintiles.

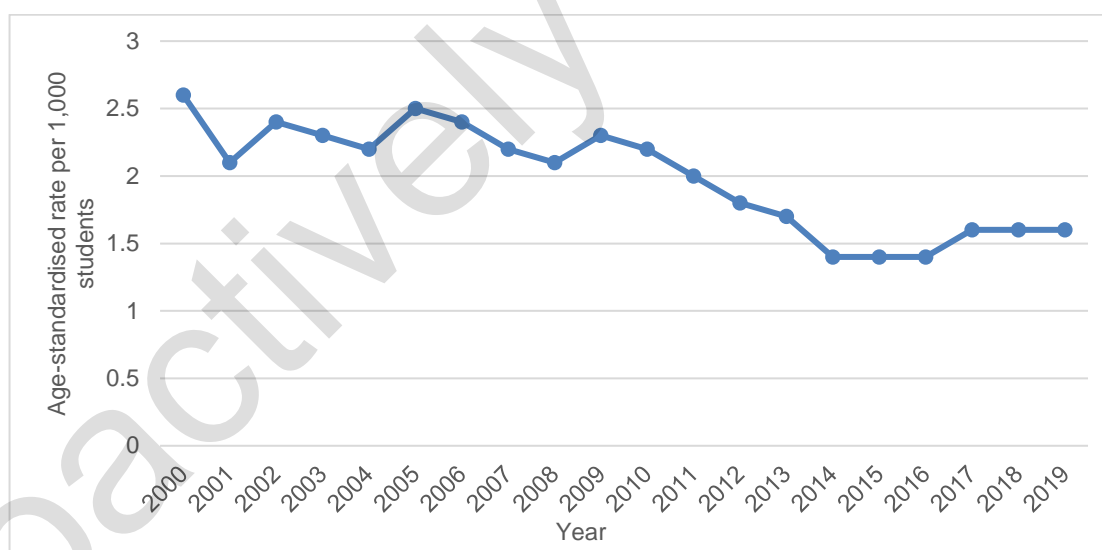


3. 59% of suspension cases occurred within the 13-15 age range, with 14 year olds having the highest suspension rate (14.0 per 1,000 students). This was three times higher than the average rate (4.3 per 1,000).
4. Male students receive more suspensions than female students (5.9 per 1,000 suspensions for male students and 2.5 per 1000 for female students.).
5. Physical assault on other students was the most common reason for suspensions (1.0 per 1,000 students) making up 24% of cases. The next most common reasons were drugs (including substance abuse) and continual disobedience, accounting for 24% and 20% of suspensions, respectively.
6. Hawke's Bay/Tairāwhiti had the highest suspension rate (6.6 per 1,000 students) and largest increase in suspension rate (up 1.4 per 1,000 students) in 2019.
7. The suspension rate in the Waikato region all increased 1.4 per 1,000 students from 2018. This region had the second highest suspension rate (6.5 per 1,000 students).

### **Exclusion rates were stable, after a short period of increases**

1. In 2019, the exclusion rate was 1.6 per 1,000 students, no change since 2017 (see Figure 4). There has been a general reduction in the rate since 2009, which has seen the rate decrease by 30%. In 2019 there were 1,069 exclusion cases received by 1,052 students.

**Figure 4: Age-standardised exclusion rates (2000 to 2019)**



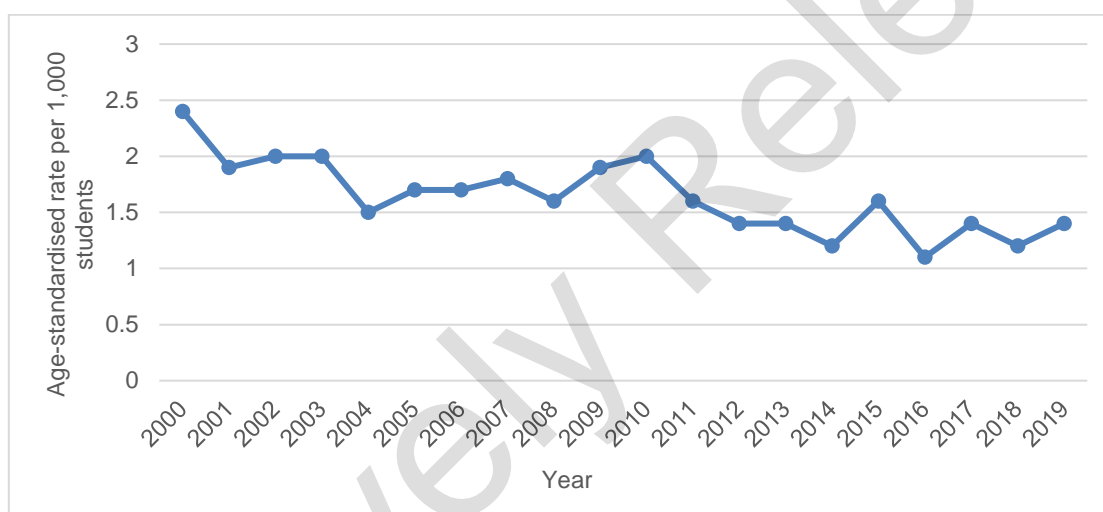
2. Schools continue to exclude Māori students at a greater rate (3.2 per 1,000) than other ethnic groups.
3. Male students were twice more likely to be excluded (2.3 per 1,000) by schools than female students (0.9 per 1,000).
4. Physical assault on other students and continual disobedience continued to be the primary reasons for exclusions. They accounted for 53% of all exclusions (0.4 per 1,000 students for each).

5. Taranaki/Whanganui/Manawatu reported the highest exclusion rate in 2019 (2.5 per 1,000 students), closely followed by Tai Tokerau (2.2 per 1,000 students) and Hawke's Bay/Tairāwhiti (2.2 per 1,000 students).
6. Otago/Southland had the largest change in exclusion rate with a reduction of 0.5 per 1,000 students to a rate of 1.9 per 1,000 students.

### **Expulsions** were slightly up, but generally decreasing

1. The expulsion rate among students aged 16 and over was 1.4 per 1,000 students in 2019, an increase from 1.2 per 1,000 in 2018. Expulsion rates have generally decreased over time, but vary from year to year due to the small number of expulsions (137 students were expelled in 2019, compared to 118 in 2018) (See Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Age-standardised expulsion rates (2000 to 2019)**

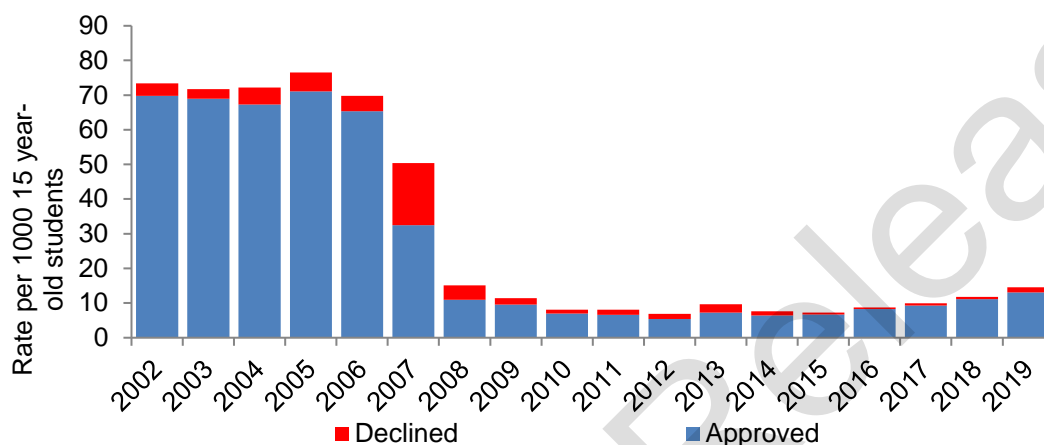


2. Male students (2.3 per 1,000) were nearly five times more likely to be expelled than female students (0.5 per 1,000 students).
3. Physical assault on other students was the most common reason for expulsions, accounting for 30% of expulsions. Drugs (including substance abuse) accounted for 25% of expulsions and continual disobedience accounted for a further 18%.
4. Tai Tokerau region continued to have the largest decrease in the expulsion rate: 1.2 per 1,000 students in 2019, down from 2.7 expulsions per 1,000 students in 2018 and 4.8 expulsions per 1,000 students in 2017.
5. Auckland reported the highest expulsion rate in 2019 (2.3 per 1,000 students), followed by Taranaki/Whanganui/Manawatu (2.1 per 1,000 students).

## Early leaving exemptions were on the rise but remain at low levels

1. The number of approved early leaving exemptions increased in 2019 (from 636 in 2018 to 764 in 2019) but numbers have remained low over the last 10 years. In 2019 the approvals of early leaving exemption rate was 13.1 per 1,000 students (See Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Early leaving exemption application, approval and decline rates (2002 to 2018)**

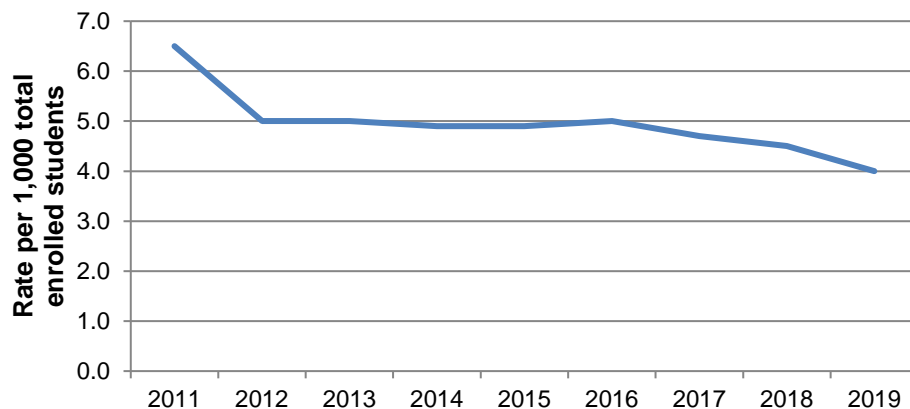


2. Training provider courses were the most common destination for students (85%), 8% went into polytechnics and 7% went into full time employment.
3. In 2019, Māori students had the highest early leaving exemptions rate at 27.5 per 1,000 students. This is followed by European/Pākehā students (10.6 per 1,000), Pacific students (9.4 per 1,000) and Asian students (0.4 per 1,000).
4. Male students account for 63% of early leaving exemptions in 2019. The male rate was 16.2 per 1,000 students and the female rate was 9.9 per 1,000 students.
5. In 2019, students in quintile 1 schools were over six times more likely to be granted an early leaving exemption (deciles 1 and 2; 23.1 per 1,000 students), than students in quintile 5 schools (deciles 9 and 10; 3.5 per 1,000 students).
6. Tai Tokerau (34.2 per 1,000) and Bay of Plenty (21.8 per 1,000) continued to be the regions with the highest Early Leaving Exemption rates. In Tai Tokerau the rate has more than tripled in the last two years from 10.1 per 1,000 in 2017 to 34.2 per 1,000 in 2019.

## Student transience rate was down

1. In 2019, 3,262 students were identified as transferring school twice or more between 1st March and 1st November. These students are considered transient. Of these transient students, 88% transferred school twice, 10% transferred three times, and 2% transferred four times or more.
2. The transience rate was 4.0 students per 1,000 for 2019, decreasing by 0.5 when compared to 2018 (see Figure 7). The spike in transience in 2011 was due to the impact of families relocating after the Christchurch earthquake, the rate was 6.5 per 1,000 for that year.

**Figure 7: Transients per 1,000 enrolled students (2011-2019)**



3. Māori students have the highest transience rate compared to other groups (9.4 per 1,000 students). This is about twice as high as all other groups.
4. Female students are slightly more likely to be transient than male students. In 2019 the rates were 4.1 per 1,000 for females and 4.0 per 1,000 for males. However the gender difference has been reduced. In 2011 the rate for female students was 10% higher than that of males and in 2019 that difference has decreased to 2%.
5. The regions with the highest transience rates were Northland (14.9 per 1,000), West Coast (12.5 per 1,000) and Gisborne (11.3 per 1,000), but by far the largest rate is of students who attended Te Kura, the correspondence school, with a rate of 48.9 per 1,000 students. Auckland continues to have the highest number of transient students compared with these smaller regions.
6. Looking at 2014 Year 9 cohort students, the proportion of those who have moved school twice or more across Year 9 to Year 11 achieve NCEA Level 2 or above by the time they leave school (49%) was lower than that of those who have not moved school (87%).

## Annex Two: Education Sector Indicator Definitions

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### Stand-down

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1. A stand-down results when a principal formally decides to remove a learner from school for a period of up to five school days. A stand-down for any learner can total no more than five school days in any term, or ten school days in a year. Learners return automatically to school following a stand-down.

### Suspension

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2. A suspension is the formal removal of a learner from a state or integrated school/kura until the school Board of Trustees (the Board) decides the outcome at a suspension meeting. Following a suspension, the Board must meet within seven school days and make one of the following possible decisions:
  - a. lift the suspension without conditions
  - b. lift the suspension with conditions
  - c. extend the suspension with conditions
  - d. exclude (if the learner is under 16)
  - e. expel (if the learner is over 16).

### Exclusion and Expulsion

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3. Following a suspension meeting, a Board may decide to permanently remove a learner from attending its school. If the learner is:
  - a. under the age of 16 it is called exclusion
  - b. over the age of 16 it is called expulsion.

### Age-Standardisation

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4. Stand-downs, suspensions and exclusions peak for ages 13 to 15, and expulsions are highest at age 16. We standardise for age so that fairer comparisons can be made between different groups. That is, age-standardisation removes any differences due to one group having a younger or older population than other groups, or if the overall age distribution has changed from year to year.

An age-standardised rate is one where all subgroups, for all years compared, are artificially given the same age distribution, so that different years and different areas can be more accurately compared.

The age distributions of learners in each subgroup and year have been standardised to (or weighted by) the set of 2019 age-specific rates for all New Zealand.

Expulsions occur only for students 16 years old and above, so the expulsion rate refers to the number of expulsions per 1,000 standardised for students aged 16 or over. Likewise, exclusions only occur for students aged 15 or under, so the exclusion rate

refers to the number of exclusions per 1,000 standardised for students aged 15 or under.

### Early Leaving Exemptions

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5. Enrolment in school is compulsory for all students aged between 6 and 16 years old. However, parents of 15 year old students may apply to the Ministry of Education for an exemption from schooling on the basis of educational problems, conduct, or the unlikelihood of the student benefiting from attending available schools. Parents are required to give details about training programmes or employment that the student would move on to in the event of an early leaving exemption being granted.

### Transient Students

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6. A student is considered transient if they move school twice or more over the period from the 1st of March to the 1st of November in the same year.