TE IHUWAKA | Education Evaluation Centre

Left Behind:

How do we get our chronically absent students back to school? – Techinical Report

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Chapter 1: Evaluation design

In Term 2 this year, over 80,000 students missed more than three weeks of school. These students who are chronically absent are often struggling, are at high risk of poor education outcomes, and have poor lifetime outcomes.

This technical report describes what we did to look at how good the system and supports are for chronic absence in Aotearoa New Zealand. It sets out how we explored the reasons for chronic student absence, and the outcomes for students who miss significant portions of their schooling.

This chapter discusses how we designed the evaluation, including:

1. what we looked at
2. who we worked with
3. how we decided what we would do
4. the overall approach
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7. report structure.

1. What we looked at

Purpose of the evaluation

The Associate Minister of Education commissioned this evaluation to better understand the students who are chronically absent (70 percent or less attendance in a term) and to assess the effectiveness of Attendance Services in bringing those students back to school.

Evaluation questions

This evaluation looks at the effectiveness and value for money of interventions aimed at getting chronically absent students back to school and keeping them there. We answer five key questions.

1. Who are the students who are chronically absent from school?
2. Why are they absent?
3. What are the outcomes for students who are chronically absent from school and what are the costs of those outcomes?
4. How effective are the supports and interventions for students who are chronically absent at getting students back into school and keeping them in school? Are different models more or less effective?
5. What needs to change so that the supports and interventions for students who are chronically absent from school achieve better results and are cost-effective?

> This report looks at students who are chronically absent, which means they miss three weeks or more a term (attending school for 70 percent of the time or less).

2. Who we worked with

The Education Review Office (ERO) worked with the Social Investment Agency (SIA) and the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) to produce this report. It looks at how well the education system identifies the students who are chronically absent or not enrolled, and how well it works with them and their parents and whānau to get them attending school regularly.

→ The **Education Review Office** is responsible for reviewing and reporting on the performance of early learning services, kura, and schools. As part of this role, ERO looks at how the education system supports young people's outcomes.

→ The **Social Investment Agency** is responsible for leading the implementation of social investment and providing cross-sector insights to decision makers.

→ The **Ministry of Education** is responsible for managing policy and performance for the education system, and delivering services and support locally, regionally, and nationally. It does this to 'shape an education system that delivers excellent and equitable outcomes.'[i]

We also worked closely with an Expert Advisory Group with a range of proficiencies, including academics, school leaders, Attendance Service staff, and staff from agencies that work to improve student attendance.

3. How we decided what we would do

We engaged an Expert Advisory Group to provide specialist expertise and evidence-based perspectives to inform, critique, and support this evaluation. We also drew on the experience of methodology experts at SIA and within ERO to determine which areas to focus our evaluation on.

This evaluation used a mixed-methods approach to ensure that our data is robust and that we are hearing the experiences of students, school leaders, Attendance Service staff, and parents and whānau.

4. The overall approach

Mixed-methods

ERO used a mixed-methods approach, drawing on a wide range of administrative data, site visits, surveys, and interviews. This report draws on the voices of students, school leaders, Attendance Services, parents and whānau, and experts to understand chronic absence and its implications on the students in the long term.

The Ministry provided data on attendance rates in schools, and attendance rates by different demographics and subgroups.

The SIA provided analysis on the outcomes of students who were chronically absent, and those who were referred to Attendance Services. The SIA also provided data on the monetary cost associated with chronically absent students.

Data that informed the evaluation

The table below describes the data we used to inform each question.

Key evaluation question	Data we used to answer this question
Who are the students who are chronically absent from school?	Ministry administrative data
	IDI
Why are they absent?	Surveys of students, parents and whānau, Attendance Service staff, and schools
	Interviews with students, parents and whānau, Attendance Service staff, and schools
What are the outcomes for students who are chronically absent from school and what are the costs of those outcomes?	IDI
How effective are the supports and interventions for students who are chronically absent at getting students back into school and keeping them there? Are different models more or less effective?	IDI
	Surveys of students, parents and whānau, Attendance Service staff, and schools
	Interviews with students, parents and whānau, Attendance Service staff, and schools
What needs to change so that the supports and interventions for students who are chronically absent from school achieve better results and are cost-effective?	Surveys of students, parents and whānau, Attendance Service staff, and schools
	Interviews with students, parents and whānau, Attendance Service staff, and schools

Ethics

All participants were informed of the purpose of the evaluation before they agreed to participate in an interview. Participants were informed that:

→ participation was voluntary and could be withdrawn at any time

→ their words may be included in reporting, but no identifying details would be shared

→ permission to use their information could be withdrawn at any time

→ interviews were not an evaluation of their school, and their school or provider would not be identified in the resulting national report

→ their information was confidential and would be kept securely subject to the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982, Privacy Act 1993, and the Public Records Act 2005 on the release and retention of information.

Interviewees consented to take part in an interview via email, or by submitting a written consent form to ERO. Their verbal consent was also sought to record their online interviews. Participants were given opportunities to query the evaluation team if they needed further information about the consent process.

Data collected from interviews, surveys, and administrative data will be stored digitally for a period of six months after the full completion of the evaluation. During this time, all data will be password-protected and have limited accessibility.

Quality assurance

The data in this report was subjected to a rigorous internal review process for both quantitative and qualitative data, which was carried out at multiple stages across the evaluation process. External data provided by the Ministry and SIA was reviewed by them.

5. The caveats for this report

Administrative attendance data

Administrative attendance records are comprehensive. They contain information on the attendance of students who are enrolled at schools in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The latest data on attendance used in this report is from Term 2, 2024.

Surveys

The surveys were focused on students who have been chronically absent and their parents and whānau. Responses are representative of chronically absent Māori and Pacific students, but are over representative of chronically absent Pākehā students (respondents were able to select multiple ethnicities). To ensure robustness, the survey results are complemented with administrative data, including Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) analysis, to draw conclusions.

Integrated Data Infrastructure

Data from the IDI is comprehensive. It contains information on attendance of students who are enrolled in Aotearoa New Zealand schools from 2011 onwards. However, the voices of young people who are not enrolled in school or do not attend school regularly are difficult to access. While we have captured some of their voices, the majority of students in our sample either attend school some of the time or have been successfully returned to education.

IDI data disclaimers

These results are not official statistics. They have been created for research purposes from the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) which is carefully managed by Stats NZ. For more information about the IDI please visit: https://www.stats.govt.nz/integrated-data/.

The results are based in part on tax data supplied by Inland Revenue to Stats NZ under the Tax Administration Act 1994 for statistical purposes. Any discussion of data limitations or weaknesses is in the context of using IDI for statistical purposes, and is not related to the data's ability to support Inland Revenue's core operational requirements.

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6. Terminology

What is chronic absence?

There are four different categories of attendance, depending on how many half-days a student attends in a school term. These are set out below.

→ **Regular attendance:** attend 90 percent or more of a term (missing up to five days of a 10-week term).

→ **Irregular absence:** attend 80 to 90 percent of a term (missing five to 10 days of a 10-week term).

→ **Moderate absence:** attend 70 to 80 percent of a term (missing 10 to 15 days of a 10-week term).

→ **Chronic absence:** attend less than 70 percent of a term (missing 15 days or more of a 10-week term). This report focuses on this group of students.

What counts as 'going to school'?

Students are present at school when they are in class. They are also considered present when they are:

→ late to class (but within school policy for lateness)

→ on the school site, doing things like:

    – unsupervised study

    – sitting an exam

    – having an appointment at school (e.g., with a dean, sports coach, or nurse)

    – waiting in the sickbay

    – in-school isolation (e.g., removed to a different class or in the administration corridor)

→ away from school, but doing a school-based activity, like:

    – a sports trip or cultural presentation

    – camp

→ learning somewhere else, as agreed with the school, like:

    – Alternative Education, Secondary Tertiary Programme (including Trades Academies), or Activity Centre

    – Teen Parent Unit, Health Camp, or Regional Health School

    – a course or work experience

→ at a medical or dental appointment, or attending to Justice Court proceedings.

Different types of absences

Table 1: Justified and unjustified absences

Justified absence	Unjustified absence

Students are marked as having a 'justified absence' if they are away from school for:
 	
• short-term illness (the length is decided by each school's policy)
 	
• a reason within the school's policy, like:
 	
  - representing at a local or national level in a sporting or cultural event
 	
  - bereavement
	Students are marked as having an 'unjustified absence' if they:
	
	• do not give a reason for their absence
	
	• are away from school and the reason is outside the school's policy
	
	• are on a holiday during term time.

> - unplanned absences like extreme weather
> - being stood down or suspended
> - unsupervised study.
>
> Students are marked as being 'overseas (justified)' if they are accompanying or visiting a family member on an overseas posting, for up to 15 weeks. If it is longer than 15 weeks, their absence becomes unjustified.

Abbreviations

→ **IDI**: The Integrated Data Infrastructure is a large research database maintained by Stats NZ. It holds de-identified microdata about people and households.[ii]

→ **ERO**: Education Review Office

→ **The Ministry**: Ministry of Education

→ **SIA**: Social Investment Agency

→ **UE**: Un-enrolled students

→ **UA**: Unjustified absence

→ **N**: Number of responses

7. Report structure

This report has 10 chapters.

→ **Chapter 1:** Evaluation design

→ **Chapter 2:** Analytical tools – Data and Methodology

→ **Chapter 3**: How well attendance is going in Aotearoa New Zealand

→ **Chapter 4:** What is driving chronic absence from school

→ **Chapter 5:** The outcomes for students who are chronically absent

→ **Chapter 6:** How effective the Aotearoa New Zealand model is against that evidence

→ **Chapter 7:** How effective Attendance Services are

→ **Chapter 8:** How effective schools are at addressing chronic absence

→ **Chapter 9:** Our key findings and the areas for action to drive improvement in student attendance

→ **Chapter 10:** Limitations of this research

Conclusion

ERO was commissioned to look at students who are chronically absent and the effectiveness of Attendance Services in bringing those students back to school. We used a mixed-methods approach, drawing on a wide range of administrative data, site visits, surveys, and interviews.

The next chapter describes the tools and analysis methods we used.

Chapter 2: Analytical tools – Data and methodology

This evaluation draws on a variety of data collected, using a mixed-methods approach to answer the evaluation questions. Sources of information include the Integrated Data Infrastructure, administrative data on attendance, analysis of chronically absent students, and survey responses from students, school leaders, Attendance Service staff, and parents and whānau.

This chapter sets out information about the tools used to collect this data, and how we brought together the multiple sources of information to assess the quality of the system that works to reduce chronic student absence in Aotearoa New Zealand schools.

This chapter describes our data collection methods, and the analytical techniques used in answering our evaluation questions presented in the previous chapter.

This chapter sets out our:

1. overview of the approach
2. data collection methods
3. analysis methods.

1. Overview of the approach

We used a mixed-methods approach to collect the data to draw our findings. To make sense of our findings and recommendations, we drew on the knowledge of subject matter experts.

a) Mixed-methods approach to data collection

ERO used a mixed-methods approach, drawing on a wide range of administrative data, site visits, surveys, and interviews. This report draws on the voices of students, school leaders, Attendance Services, parents and whānau, and experts to understand chronic absence and its implications on the students in long term.

Our mixed-methods approach integrated quantitative data (IDI, administrative data, and surveys) and qualitative data (surveys, focus groups, and interviews) - triangulating the evidence across these different data sources. We used the triangulation process to test and refine our findings statements, allowing the weight of this collective data to form the conclusions. The rigour of the data and validity of these findings were further tested through iterative sense-making sessions with key stakeholders.

To ensure **breadth** in providing judgement on the key evaluation questions we used:

Surveys of:	**Two-thirds** of Attendance Services	154
	Nearly **800 students** with a history of chronic absence	773, of which 256 were chronically absent in the last week

	Over 1000 parents and whānau of students with attendance issues	1131, of which 311 had children who were chronically absent in the last week
	Nearly 300 school leaders	276
Data from:	IDI analysis	
	Ministry data and statistics on attendance, and administrative data from Attendance Services	
	Findings from the Ministry's internal review of the management and support of the Attendance Service	
	ERO's evaluations of schools	
	International evidence on effective practice in addressing chronic absence, including models from other jurisdictions	

To ensure **depth** in understanding of what works and what needs to improve we used:

Interviews and focus groups with:	Attendance Service staff	77
	Students	21
	Parents and whānau	26
	School leaders	79
Site-visits at:	**One-quarter** of Attendance Services	19
	28 English-medium schools	28

b) Sense-making through expert group discussions

Following analysis of the administrative data, surveys, and interviews, we conducted sense-making discussions to test interpretation of the results, findings, and areas for action with:

→ ERO specialists in reviewing school practice

→ the project's Expert Advisory Group, made up of sector experts

→ the project's Steering Group, made up of ERO, the Ministry, and SIA representatives.

All three groups included Māori representation.

We then tested and refined the findings and lessons with the following groups to ensure they were useful and practical.

→ Representatives from the Ministry and Social Investment Agency

→ The project Steering Group

2. Data collection methods

We used data from existing and new data sources including:

→ IDI

→ surveys

→ administrative attendance data

→ interviews and focus groups

→ international literature.

a) Use of Integrated Data Infrastructure

We worked with the SIA on this report. The SIA used the data in IDI to analyse:

→ characteristics, predictors, and drivers of students who were chronically absent in 2019

→ longer-term outcomes of students who are referred to the Attendance Service, compared to a group of similar students

→ longer-term outcomes for a group of students with low attendance

→ longer-term costs to the Government of students with low attendance.

b) Surveys

For the evaluation of the Attendance Service system, we administered surveys of:

→ school leaders

→ Attendance Service staff

→ students who are chronically absent or have a history of chronic absence

→ parents and whānau of chronically absent students.

Survey links for school leaders, students, and parents and whānau, were sent via email to schools to distribute. Survey links for Attendance Service staff, students, and parents and whānau were sent via email to Attendance Service providers to distribute.

Surveys were in the field from mid-June to early August 2024. All surveys were carried out using SurveyMonkey. The parent and whānau survey (with minor adaptions) was also distributed through Dynata.

Full surveys can be found in the appendices (Appendix 2).

Table 2: Sample size

Surveys	Number of responses[1]	Time period
Student	773	16 June – 11 August

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[1] Number of usable, complete responses received and used in our analysis.

School leaders	276	16 June – 28 July
Parents and whānau	1,131	16 June – 22 July
Attendance Services staff	154	16 June – 28 July

[1] Number of usable, complete responses received and used in our analysis.

Student surveys

Participants were selected if they were chronically absent or had a history of chronic absence.

Links were sent in two tranches.

→ Tranche 1: sent to 500 state schools across all regions – 150 secondary and composite, and 350 primary and intermediate. Sent to all Attendance Services.

→ Tranche 2: sent to 300 additional schools to ensure there was good representation across characteristics (e.g., size, type, location etc.).

ERO also shared the survey links with the Ministry to share on their networks and through regional hubs, Te Aho o te Kura Pounamu (formerly The Correspondence School), alternative education providers, and other student support organisations. Participants who completed the parent and whānau survey were also invited to pass the survey link on to their children if they had not already completed one.

Attendance Services surveys

Participants for the Attendance Services survey are:

• staff who worked at Attendance Services (including advisors and officers)

• leaders/managers of Attendance Services.

School leader surveys

Participants were selected on the following criteria:

• school leaders and/or staff who dealt with attendance, in schools who had made at least one referral to their Attendance Service (Tranche 1)

• school leaders and/or staff in schools who dealt with attendance, who may or may not have referred students to their Attendance Service (Tranche 2).

We sent links to schools in two tranches.

• Tranche 1: sent to 500 state schools across all regions – 150 secondary and composite, and 350 primary and intermediate.

• Tranche 2: sent to 300 additional schools to ensure there was good representation across characteristics (e.g., size, type, location etc.).

ERO sent information and survey links to schools via email. After one week, ERO identified schools with no responses and re-engaged these schools via email.

Parent and whānau survey

Participants were selected if their child was currently chronically absent or had a history of chronic absence.

ERO sent links to 800 schools and all Attendance Services for them to share with parents and whānau of chronically absent students who they had been working with to increase their attendance.

c) Administrative attendance records data

The Ministry publishes data on student attendance on their website (Education Counts).[2] In this report, we used the latest available data from Term 2, 2024. We analysed attendance patterns and trends of chronic absence from 2011 to 2024. A snapshot of this data can be found in Appendix 1. More detail can be found on the Ministry's *Education Counts* website.

d) Site visits, interviews, and focus groups

The interviews and focus groups were conducted for students, school leaders, Attendance Service providers, and parents and whānau from April to May 2024. Most interviews were conducted during site visits. Some interviews were conducted online to better suit participants.

All interviews were carried out by members of the project team, which included evaluation partners who work directly with schools. Interviews were semi-structured, developed from domains and indicators developed from international and national literature, and refined through discussions with experts. Most interviews had two project team members. We conducted interviews with:

→ twenty-one chronically absent young people who were nominated by schools and Attendance Services

→ twenty-six parents and whānau who were nominated by schools and Attendance Services

→ seventy-seven Attendance Service staff.

Site visits

We visited 28 schools and 19 Attendance Services, most of whom were selected in partnership with the Ministry from a list of 20 Attendance Services and 84 schools who had made a referral to Attendance Services in each region.

We made clear in all communication that:

→ participation was voluntary

→ consent is sought and anonymity is assured

→ interviews and focus groups with students were undertaken with their agreement and parental consent (if under 16 years)

→ interviews/focus groups could happen either online, over the phone, or in person.

e) International literature

We drew on international evidence to understand if the increasing trend in chronic absence is a global phenomenon, after Covid-19. International evidence has also been key in accessing how different other countries address chronic absence in schools, interventions, practices, and systems they have in place to support schools and students to attain high level of attendance.

Key sources of information were from research centres focused on attendance (e.g., Attendance Works, United States of America), and Department of Education resources in New South Wales, Australia, and the United Kingdom.

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[2] https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/

We also used meta-analyses and reviews of attendance research (e.g., Education Endowment Fund) to develop an understanding of trends, effectiveness of approaches, interventions, and practices.

3. Analysis methods

This chapter sets out how we analysed the data from:

→ the IDI

→ surveys

→ administrative attendance data

→ interviews and focus groups

→ international literature.

a) Integrated Data Infrastructure Data analysis

We worked with the SIA to determine:

→ the characteristics, predictors, and drivers of students who were chronically absent in 2019

→ the longer-term outcomes of students who are referred to the Attendance Service, compared to a group of similar students

→ longer-term outcomes for a group of students with low attendance

→ longer-term costs to the Government of students with low attendance.

The characteristics, predictors, and the drivers of chronically absent students

The analysis looks at the characteristics of students who were chronically absent in Term 2, 2019. The sample included students who had attendance data in both Term 2 2018 and Term 2 2019, and were of compulsory school age (aged 5-15) in 2019.

Characteristics

The characteristics considered in the analysis include:

→ whether student had chronic absence in 2018

→ student has a record of recent offending of any crime in 2019

→ student has a record of being a victim of crime in 2019

→ mother/father (measured separately) having custodial or community sentences in 2019student living in social or emergency housing in 2019

→ student received mental health and addiction services in 2019

→ mother/father (measured separately) received mental health and addiction services in 2019

→ student had a diagnosis of Intellectual Disability, Autism Spectrum Disorder, or had evidence (not necessarily diagnosis) of functional impairment

→ mother's highest qualification as of 2019

→ student was admitted to the emergency department in 2019

→ student had a record of participating in early childhood education in the past

→ student was subject of an Oranga Tamariki investigation in 2019

→ equivalised income in the household of the student in 2019

→ size of the student's household in 2019

→ NZ Deprivation Index associated with the student's address in 2019.

→ The modelling also adjusted for demographic characteristics (gender, ethnicity and whether the student lived in Auckland).

Regression

Logistic regression analyses were used to statistically compare which characteristics are more likely for students with chronic absence, after adjusting for the effects of the other characteristics.

The snapshot of chronically absent students in 2019 in the sample is as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Number and percentage of students by attendance categories in 2019

Category	Number of students (n)	Percentage of students (%)
Regular	379,560	60%
Irregular	156,342	25%
Moderate	54,768	9%
Chronic	42,576	7%
All	633,246	100%

Note that students who did not have attendance records in 2018 and a small number of students who could not be matched to the IDI were not included in this analysis. This means these numbers will differ from the statistics officially reported by the Ministry of Education.

For all tests, results were treated as significant if the p-value was equal to or less than 0.05. All results presented in the report are unweighted.

The regression outputs are in Appendix 3.

The findings from this analysis can be found in Chapter 4.

The outcomes for students with chronic absence

SIA analysed IDI data to identify students with chronic absence in Term 2 2019, born between 1990 and 2015. All students with attendance rates of 70 percent or less, irrespective of their enrollment status, are classified as chronically absent in this analysis. The analysis looks at the outcomes of chronically absent students in 2022.

Longer-term outcomes of students who are referred to the Attendance Service

SIA looked at the population of people born between 1990 and 2015, and identified which of these people ever had a record of being referred to the Attendance Service (for chronic absence), and were aged 17 or older in 2022. These referred students were then paired with a comparison group (using Propensity Score Matching – more detail below) of otherwise similar students. Outcomes of both groups were then analysed, up to age 25.

The findings from this analysis can be found in Chapter 7.

Outcomes

In this report, the outcomes are reported by age. The following outcomes were included for each age:

→ education (highest school attainment)

→ employment (whether IR recorded wage or salary income for the person)

→ income (total income, including benefit income, recorded by IR)

→ Government benefits received (whether IR recorded government benefit income)

→ living in emergency housing (any spell during the year)

→ rates of offending (Police proceeding in year)

→ victims of a crime (reported victimisation to Police)

→ corrections outcomes (any community or custodial sentence served during the year).

The analysis compares outcomes for chronically absent students and the total population for 17- to 25-year-olds. For example, we compared the proportion of 20-year-olds who were chronically absent who attained University Entrance to the proportion of 20-year-olds in the total population who attained University Entrance in 2022. The attendance data was not collected prior to 2011, therefore SIA could only follow young adults with a history of chronic absence through to age 25.

Comparison group and matching process

To carry out a comparative outcome analysis of chronically absent students who are *not* referred to the Attendance Services, SIA identified a comparative group using propensity score matching. The comparative group had similar circumstances and characteristics as chronically absent young people, but have never been referred to Attendance Services (see Appendix 4).

In total, 98 variables were used for matching, including age, ethnicity, stand-downs and suspensions, interactions with Oranga Tamariki and Youth Justice, and prior attendance history (see Appendix 4 for the full list of matching variables). The matching method was 1:1 nearest neighbour matching with replacement, using calipers for the overall propensity score as well as for justified and unjustified absence history. Referred students were exact matched on birth year and age and year of referral.

The matching process resulted in some referred students (for whom there was not a suitable non-referred counterpart) being dropped from the sample. Of the 62,154 students in the sample that were referred to the Attendance Service for chronic absence, 47,769 were included in the analysis. SIA undertook statistical tests comparing outcomes between the groups. All differences discussed in the report were statistically significant at the 5% level of significance.

To ensure robustness in our conclusions, SIA also performed the same comparisons (between outcomes across the referred students and their matched comparison groups) for subsets of students of different genders, ethnicities, school deciles, referral ages, prior attendance, and of students attending different providers. There was no subset for which the Attendance Service group had detectably better outcomes than their matched comparison group (see figure 4C in Appendix 4).

There were a few unobserved factors which we could not control for in our analysis (e.g., bullying).

Longer-term outcomes for students with low attendance

For this analysis, SIA grouped the students who were referred to the Attendance Service due to chronic absence with the comparison group of students who were matched to these students. See the description

of the previous analysis for more information on the sample used. These two groups combined are likely to represent a subset of the students who are chronically absent in any particular year.

Outcomes for this combined group of students with low attendance were compared with outcomes for the whole student population (matched using birth year but otherwise not adjusted for any other characteristic). No statistical tests were performed in this analysis.

The outcomes described in this section are the same as the outcomes used in the Attendance Service analysis.

The findings from this analysis can be found in Chapter 4.

Costs to the Government for students with chronic absence

Using the same cohort as the previous analysis (the students who were referred to the Attendance Service due to chronic absence, combined with their counterparts in the matched comparison group), SIA examined the costs incurred through a subset of government services. Because cost data tends to be lagged in the IDI, this analysis tracked students from age 17 to age 23 (instead of age 25 as in the previous analysis).

The total Government expenditure includes expenditure on Ministry of Social Development benefits, costs associated with corrections (custodial and community sentences), public hospital admissions, pharmaceuticals costs, and disability support services expenses. The average Government expenditure was calculated for students with chronic absence by age, for 17- to 23-year-olds.

For comparison with the total population, average Government expenditure was calculated for all students by age 17 to 23 in 2022. The results from the analysis are discussed in Chapter 4: What are the outcomes for chronically absent students? in the section: What is the cost of these outcomes?. **b) Survey analysis**

Surveys were given to students who were currently chronically absent and who had a history of chronic absence. The student dataset was used to identify the key reasons why students who are chronically absent miss school. We also used it to understand how students worked with schools and attendance services. Open ended questions were reviewed to see if there were reasons for chronic absence not included in the short answer questions.

Students

From the surveys we identified students who were chronically absent the week before. We used the two groups of students – those who were chronically absent last week and those with a history of chronic absence to look at the key drivers of the students who are currently chronically absent. We reported on the reasons for absence for the students who are currently chronically absent. To ensure our findings reflected current, rather than historical issues.

Parents

Like the students, surveys were given to parents of students who were currently chronically absent and who had a history of chronic absence. The parents dataset was used to identify the key reasons why their child misses school. We also used it to understand how parents worked with schools and attendance services. Open ended questions were reviewed to see if there were reasons for chronic absence not included in the short answer questions.

From the surveys we identified parents of students who were chronically absent the week before. We reported on the reasons for absence for the parents whose students who are currently chronically absent to ensure our findings reflect current, rather than historic issues.

The survey questions were designed to understand:

→ why students are absent

→ how effective the supports and interventions are for chronically absent students at getting them back to school and keeping them in school

→ which model is more effective

→ what needs to change so that the supports and interventions for chronically absent students achieve better results while being cost-effective.

Three analytical techniques were employed to analyse survey data:

a. descriptive statistics

b. regression analysis

c. long answer analysis.

The quantitative data from surveys presented in this report is largely descriptive, but two regression analyses were run which assessed:

- what are the most likely reasons for the students to be chronically absent

- how different practices in schools impact levels of chronic absence.

Descriptive statistics

We completed quantitative survey data analysis to identify the key drivers/reasons for chronic absence from the viewpoint of students, school leaders, Attendance Service staff, and parents and whānau. We grouped main drivers into three categories: school factors, family factors, and student factors. We have reported on the proportion of respondents who have identified reasons in those categories as the key drivers for chronic absence.

Table 4: School factors

I can't get enough support for what I need, to be at school	I didn't want to do some school activities (e.g. sports, maths etc)	My schoolwork is too hard, or I can't catch up on work I have missed
I don't feel like I belong at school	My schoolwork is too easy	I am not interested in learning
I want to leave school	I want to learn somewhere else	I feel like adults at school don't like me
The school does not let me attend all the time (e.g. can only attend school with a support person)	The school won't let me (e.g. because I have been stood down or suspended)	I don't have friends at school
My friends skip school and want me to as well	I get bullied or picked on at school	I feel people at school behave in racist ways towards me

Table 5: Family factors

I move between family members or homes	It is hard to get up early in the morning when I have stayed up late (e.g., playing video games, watching a movie, or my house is too noisy)	I have a job I work at during school hours, or late at night
I have to look after whānau/family members at home	I had lots of whānau/family/cultural/special events during school time (e.g. funerals or tangihanga, weddings, overseas travel)	I can't get to school (no bus, car)
I don't have enough food for breakfast or lunch	I don't have the things I need for class (e.g. school uniform, books, device, bag)	Legal reasons (e.g. I have to go to court, or I'm trespassed from school)

Table 6: Student factors

My physical health (including long-term health issues or period pain)	Using drugs or alcohol gets in the way	My mental health, including anxiety

The findings from this analysis are discussed in Chapter 4: *What is driving chronic absence?*

Regression analysis

We ran two regression analyses looking at reasons chronically absent students do not attend school and effective approaches to reduce chronic absence.

Regression: Reasons for chronic absence

In the first regression analysis, we looked at the most likely reasons for chronically absent students not to attend school when we controlled for the impact of various demographic factors.

Sample

A logistic regression was run using survey data of 624 students.

The outcome variable of interest was the student who had been away from school more than two days in the last two weeks of Term 2.

There were 256 students who had been away for more than two days compared to 279 students who had been away for zero or one day. One hundred and fifty students were excluded from the regression analysis because they did not know or did not answer the question.

Variables

Predictor variables included in the model were:

→ demographics: gender, ethnicity, disability, and if they are in the care of Oranga Tamariki

→ school classification: whether they attended a primary or secondary school, the size of the school, Equity Index Score of schools, whether the school is in Auckland, the rest of the North Island, or the South Island, and the proportion of their school roll that has Māori or Pacific students

→ behaviour and attitudes related survey questions: what school supports the student feel helped them get to school, reasons why they have not gone to school this year, and how important they feel school is for their future

→ survey questions: the statements from the student survey on:

- Question 34: "what has helped you go to school more"

- Questions 24-29: "so far this year you did not go to school because…".

The regression output can be found in appendix 3A.

Regression: Effective practices to reduced chronic absence

In the second regression analysis we looked at the key frameworks/approaches schools use to address chronic absence and the likelihood of those approaches to be successful in reducing chronic absence when we control for the impact of various demographic and socio-economic factors.

Sample

A logistic regression was run on the survey data of 255 school leaders.

The outcome variable of interest was the schools with less than 5 percent of students chronically absent.

In our sample, 142 schools had more than 5 percent of chronic absence and the remaining 113 schools had less than 5 percent of students chronically absent.

Variables

A number of predictor variables were included in the model.

→ School classification: Primary or secondary school, the size of the school, Equity Index Score of schools, the proportion of their school roll that had Māori or Pacific students, and isolation index.

→ Behaviour and attitudes related questions: How schools work with Attendance Services staff, how schools work with others to address attendance issues, the actions schools take to manage absence, the experience of schools with Attendance Services.

→ Survey questions: From the school leader survey, the following questions:

- Question 17: "How do you work with Attendance Services staff"

- Question 32: "How much you agree with the statements, thinking about how you work with others to address attendance issues…."

- Question 33: "How often the school staff do the actions below…."

- Question 38: "How much do you agree with the questions, thinking about the attendance environment and the staff working in it…."

- Question 39: "How often the staff working to support attendance do the actions below….".

Detail on the regression can be found in appendix 3B.

Long answer questions

We used the open-ended responses from our surveys to understand the effectiveness of Attendance Services, and to find out which approaches are effective in successfully returning chronically absent students to school.

The open-ended questions used in our surveys are outlined below.

For students:

- What has helped you go to school more?

- What did teachers, school leaders and Attendance Service workers/officers do that got in the way of helping you attend school more? Why didn't it help?

- What would help you go to school more?

For parents and whānau:

- What has helped your child go to school more?

- What did not work well when working with school and Attendance Service staff to help your child go to school more?

- What would help your child go to school more?

For Attendance Service staff:

- In your experience, what does work to increase attendance? Why do you think this does work?

- In your experience, what does not work to increase attendance? Why do you think this does not work?

- Do you have any more comments about student attendance/lack of attendance in NZ schools?

For school leaders:

- What has helped students come to school more?

- In your experience, what does work to increase attendance? Why do you think this does work?

- In your experience, what does not work to increase attendance? Why do you think this does not work?

- Do you have any more comments about student attendance/lack of attendance in NZ schools?

c) Administrative attendance data analysis

The Ministry publishes data on attendance of students for each term (Education Counts). [3] In this report, the latest available data from Term 2, 2024 is used. We looked at attendance patterns and the trend of chronic absence from 2011. We used this data to analyse our evaluation question, "Who are the students who are chronically absent from school?".

We analysed demographic cuts like gender, ethnicities, region, year-level, and school type. We also used attendance data from the Ministry to look at the patterns of attendance by schools.

The quantitative data presented in this report, using administrative attendance records, is largely descriptive statistics.

d) Site visits, interviews, and focus groups analysis

The interviews were guided using semi-structured questions that were developed from domains and indicators on good practice in schools and Attendance Services. Based on analysis of key documents and interviews with key staff, the evaluation team assessed the quality of provision against the domains set out in Chapter 6. This assessment led to a description of how the Attendance Service and school was

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[3] https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/

performing on each domain and indicator. This helped the evaluation team identify examples of good practice and to understand what the key contributing factors were. Similarly, the team was able to identify examples of issues and challenges that Attendance Services and schools were facing and understand the main contributing factors.

Questions we asked:

For students:

– Do you think coming to school is important?

– What are some good things about coming to school?

– What are some of the reasons you might not come to school?

– What might help you attend school more often?

– Talk to us through what happened when you did not attend school

– What worked well? What did not?

For parents and whānau:

– Please tell me a bit about yourself.

– Do you think attending school is important?

– What are some of the reasons your child might not come to school?

– What could help your child attend school more often?

– Talk to us through how your child got support when they did not attend school

– What worked well?

For school leaders and staff with attendance responsibilities:

– Talk to us about what your role involves.

– Tell us about attendance patterns or issues at your school.

– How does your school deal with any attendance challenges?

– Considering the last year, what would you say is the percentage of students who:

o returned to school?

o increased their attendance?

o stayed at school?

– Have you accessed the Regional Response Fund (RRF)?

– What could make a difference in helping you to address chronic absence?

For Attendance Services managers/leaders:

– Talk to us about what your role involves .

– Are there any patterns or trends in attendance across the cluster?

– How do you work with students and their families? How do you work with schools?

– Have you been involved with a project resourced from the Regional Response Fund (RRF)?

- Considering the last year, what would you say is the percentage of students who:
  - o returned to school?
  - o increased their attendance?
  - o stayed at school?
- What could make a difference in helping you to address chronic absence?

Analysis

Data was analysed in two main ways.

a. A semi-inductive approach was initially taken, whereby the interviewer notation was coded into previously established themes, which were organised within the key evaluation questions. Cross-interview themes were established during workshops comprising the qualitative analysis team.

b. Following substantive analysis of both the qualitative and quantitative data, a deductive approach was taken to establish exemplars that illustrated those analyses with real-world experiences.

The research team held workshops to discuss the survey data and the interview results to identify cross-cutting themes. This also ensured that members of the research team were analysing and interpreting the data consistently, and additional investigation could be undertaken to address gaps or inconsistencies.

We used information from interviews and focus groups to answer our evaluation questions:

→ Why are students absent?

→ How effective are the supports and interventions for students who are chronically absent at getting students back into school and keeping them in school?

→ Are different models more or less effective?

→ What needs to change so that the supports and interventions for students who are chronically absent from school achieve better results and are cost-effective?

All quotes were gathered from verbatim records and open-ended survey responses.

Conclusion

This evaluation developed numerous data collection tools and methods of analysis to answer key evaluation questions about chronically absent students and the system of support available to them.

In the next chapter, we describe how we looked at the extent of the problem of chronic absence in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Chapter 3: How big is the problem of chronic absence in Aotearoa New Zealand?

Aotearoa New Zealand is experiencing a crisis of chronic absence. Chronic absence has doubled since 2015 and is now at 10 percent. This means one in 10 students are missing three weeks or more a term.

In this chapter, we set out how we analysed how many students are attending school, and how chronic absence varies for different students and schools.

What we did

We used administrative data to understand how big the problem of chronic absence is, and who the students who are chronically absent are.

In this chapter, we use the administrative attendance records of students available publicly on the Ministry's *Education Counts* website. This chapter reports on the prevalence of chronic attendance by different schools, using customised data provided by the Ministry. The latest statistics on attendance reported in this chapter are from Term 2, 2024.

Data sources used in this chapter

In this chapter, we use the administrative attendance records of students available publicly on Ministry's *Education Counts* website. This chapter reports on the prevalence of chronic absence by different schools, using customised data provided by MOE. The latest statistics on attendance reported in this chapter are from Term 2, 2024.

This chapter sets out what we found out about:

1. how many students are not attending school

2. how chronic absence is different for different students

3. how attendance varies by school.

What we found: an overview

Chronic absence has doubled since 2015.

One in 10 students (10 percent, N = 80,569 students) were chronically absent in Term 2, 2024. In Term 2 last year, over 80,000 students are attending school less than 70 percent of the term.

Senior secondary school students are most likely to be chronically absent.

Nearly one in five (15 percent, N = 23,712 students) senior secondary school students (Years 11-13) were chronically absent in Term 2, 2024.

Chronic absence rates are higher in low socio-economic areas.

Students from schools in low socio-economic areas are six times as likely to be chronically absent (18 percent compared to 3 percent, N = 10,072 compared to 4,885 students).

1. How many students are chronically absent from school?

Source: Ministry of Education, attendance data

Chronic absence is currently at 10 percent.

In Term 2 this year (2024), 80,569 students (10 percent of all students) were recorded as chronically absent, missing more than three weeks of a school term.

Figure 1: Percentage of students by the proportion of absence in Term 2 2024
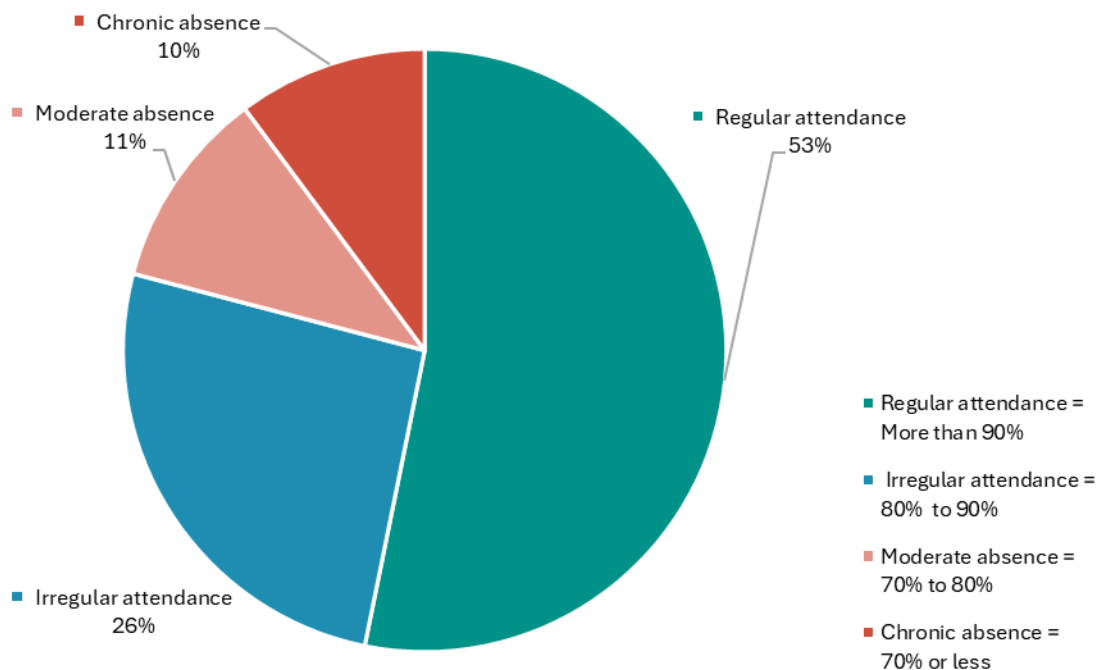
Data Source: Ministry of Education

Chronic absence is on the rise and has doubled since 2015.

Five percent of students (N = 29,355 students) were chronically absent in Term 2 in 2015. Chronic absence started to increase in 2016, and in Term 2 2024, 10 percent of students (N = 80,569 students) were chronically absent.

Figure 2: Percentage of chronic absence in 2015 and 2024 Term 2
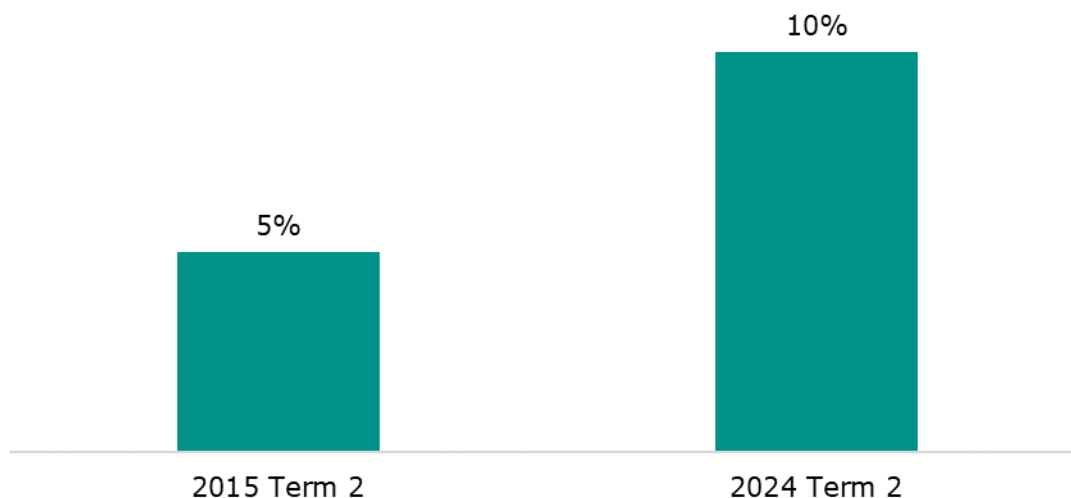
Data Source: Ministry of Education

2. How is chronic absence different for different students?

Source: Ministry of Education, attendance data

Most chronically absent students are away for three weeks in a term, but some miss a whole term.

In Term 2 of 2024, just under half of chronically absent students were away for four weeks. But there were over 1 percent of chronically absent students (N = 2,234 students) who missed the whole term (nine or more weeks).

Māori and Pacific students are more at risk of chronic absence.

In Term 2 of 2024, 18 percent of Māori students (N = 34,973 students) and 17 percent of Pacific students (N = 18,453 students) were chronically absent. This is compared to 8 percent of NZ European/Pākehā students (N = 36,272 students) and 6 percent of Asian students (N = 9,167 students).[4] Concerningly, the gap in the rate of chronic absence between NZ European/Pākehā students and Māori and Pacific students has increased from pre-Covid-19 levels. The gap for Māori students has increased from 8 percentage points in 2019 to 10 percentage points in 2024. Whereas for Pacific students, the gap has increased from 7 percentage points in 2019 to 9 percentage points in 2024. (In 2019: Māori 13 percent, Pacific 12 percent, and NZ European/Pākehā 5 percent. In 2024: Māori 18 percent, Pacific 17 percent, and NZ European/Pākehā 8 percent).

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[4] Data from Ministry of Education, Education Counts.

Figure 3: Percentage of chronically absent students by ethnicity in Term 2 2024
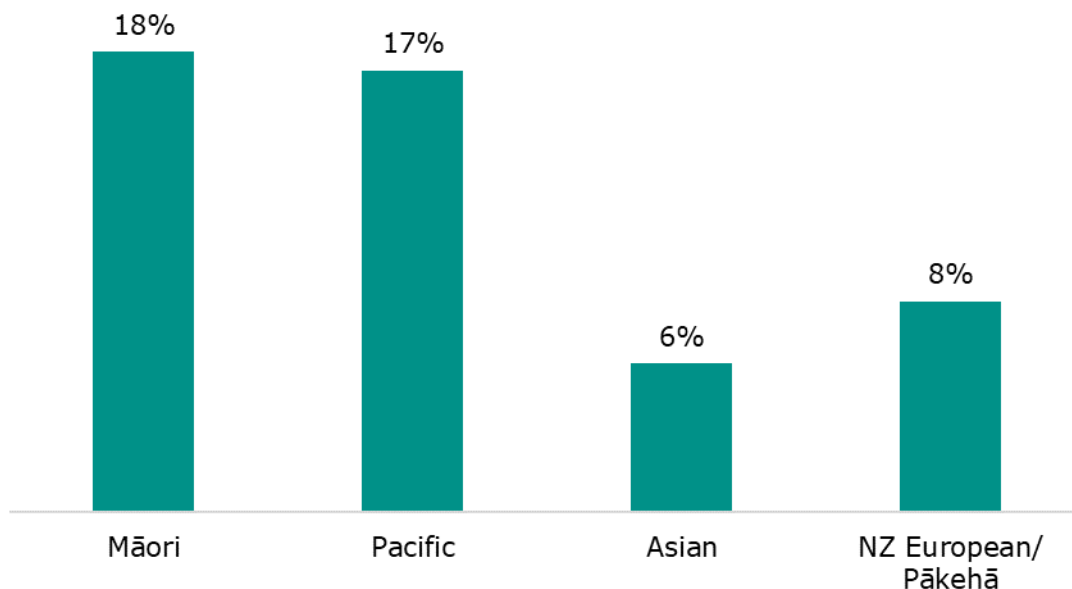
Data Source: Ministry of Education

There is no difference in chronic absence for gender.

Boys and girls are equally likely to be chronically absent. In Term 2 of 2024, 10 percent of both girls (N = 39,703 students) and boys (N = 40,682 students) had chronic absence.

Chronic absence rates are higher for older students.

Chronic absence is a problem in both primary and secondary school. Senior secondary school students have higher rates of chronic absence compared to primary school students. In primary school (Years 1-8) chronic absence is 10 percent (N = 40,297), in secondary school (Years 9-10) it is 13 percent (N = 16,538), and in senior secondary school (Years 11-13) it is 15 percent (N = 23,712).

Figure 4: Chronic absence rates across different year levels in Term 2 2024
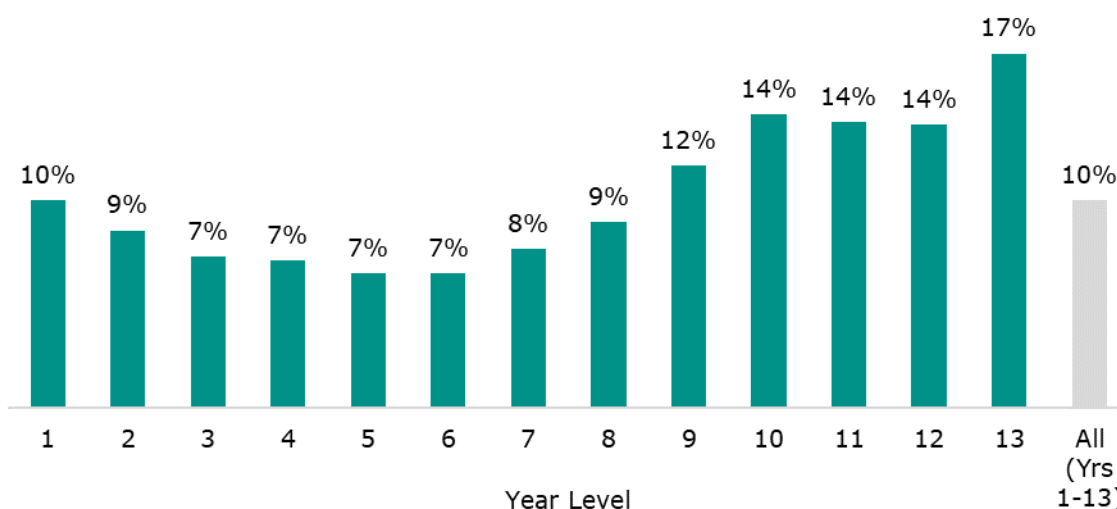
Data Source: Ministry of Education

3. How is chronic absence different for different schools?

Source: Ministry of Education, attendance data

More students are becoming chronically absent at younger ages.

Chronic absence rates have doubled in secondary schools and nearly tripled in primary schools since 2015. Rates of chronic absence in secondary schools started to increase in 2015. In primary schools, rates of chronic absence started to increase in 2016. Chronic absence rates have improved since the peak of the pandemic (2022), but they remain higher than before the pandemic.

Figure 5: Rates of chronic absence in primary and secondary schools
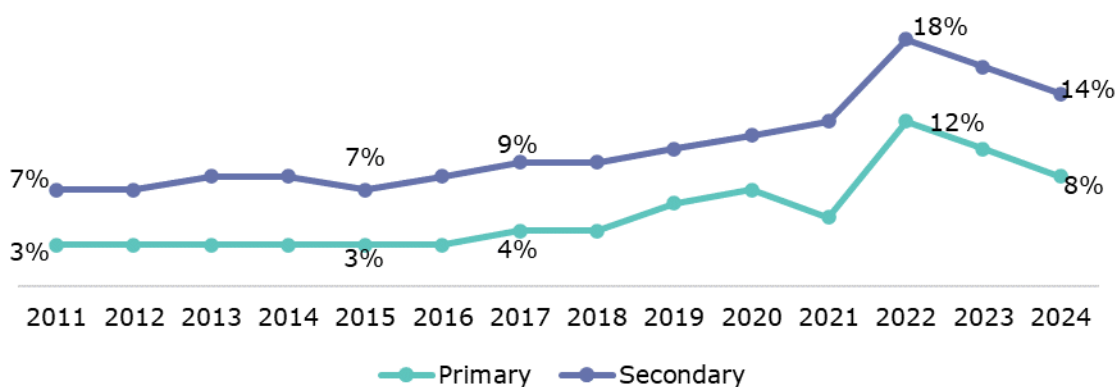
Data Source: Ministry of Education

Source: SIA, IDI data analysis - regression

Attendance in primary school matters. Students who do not have a history of regular attendance are more likely to continue being chronically absent.

We found from our analysis that, for students who have a history of regular attendance, their likelihood of attending school regularly increases by 221 percent. ERO's previous work also tells us that there is a greater impact on learning the more days of school students miss. Having healthy attendance patterns in primary school helps students maintain attendance habits in secondary school.[iii]

Source: Ministry of Education, attendance data

Chronic absence rates are higher in schools in low socio-economic communities, and in the Northland Te Tai Tokerau region.

Students from schools in low socio-economic communities[5] are six times as likely to be chronically absent from school (18 percent, N=10,072) than students in schools in high socio-economic communities (3 percent, N=4,885).

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[5] This comparison is derived from Education Counts EQI band data.

Figure 6: Percentage of chronic absence by schools in socio-economic areas in 2024 Term 2
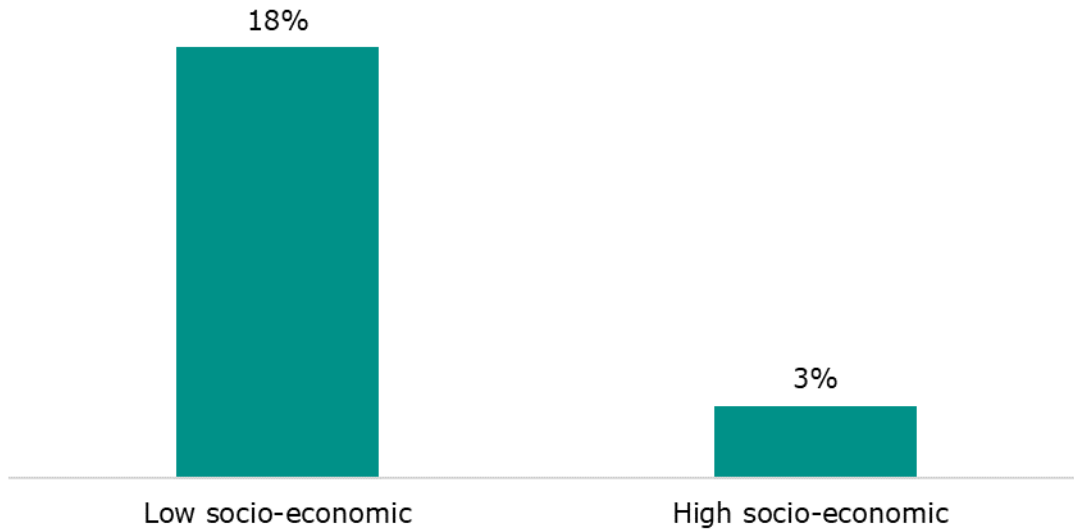
Data Source: Ministry of Education

Despite absence rates being higher in schools in low socio-economic areas, there are schools in low socio-economic communities that have low chronic absence rates and schools in high socio-economic communities that have high chronic absence rates (more about this can be found in Chapter 8).

Regionally, Northland | Te Tai Tokerau (15 percent, N=4,663) and Southwest Auckland | Tāmaki Herenga Waka South (15 percent, N=11,924) has the highest percentage of chronically absent students in Aotearoa New Zealand, followed by Hawkes Bay | Tairāwhiti (N=4,602), Waikato (N=8,620) and Bay of Plenty | Waiariki (N=7,286) (12 percent).

Figure 7: Percentage of chronic absence by regions in Term 2 2024

Region	Percentage
Northland, Te Tai Tokerau	15%
South and southwest Auckland, Tāmaki Herenga Waka	15%
Hawke's Bay, Tairāwhiti	12%
Waikato	12%
Bay of Plenty, Waiariki	12%
Wellington	10%
Taranaki, Whanganui, Manawatū	10%
Canterbury and Chatham Islands	9%
Nelson, Marlborough, West Coast	9%
North and West Auckland, Tāmaki Herenga Tāngata	8%
Otago, Southland	8%
Central and East Auckland, Tāmaki Herenga Manawa	8%

Data Source: Ministry of Education

Conclusion

Chronic absence in Aotearoa New Zealand has reached crisis levels, doubling since 2015. over 80,000 students (10 percent) were chronically absent in Term 2, 2024. This has serious impacts for students. Senior secondary school students, Māori students, Pacific students, and students in schools in low socio-economic areas are at a greater risk of chronic absence.

The next chapter looks at how we assessed drivers for students' absence from school, and the reasons for Aotearoa New Zealand's high rates of chronic absence.

Chapter 4: What is driving chronic absence?

Improving school attendance is crucial to raising educational outcomes for students across Aotearoa New Zealand. To address this, we first need to have a detailed understanding of the reasons behind chronic absence.

In this chapter, we set out how we analysed the risk factors for chronic absence, then explore students' reasons for chronic absence.

What we did

Understanding the reasons behind chronic absence can help us reduce it. We wanted to understand the role student, family, and school, factors play in chronic absence. To understand the biggest predictors of chronic absence we used statistical modelling to identify the risk factors for students being chronically absent.

Data sources used in this chapter

In this chapter we looked at two questions.

First, what the key predictive risk factors for chronic absence are. This was answered using IDI data from 2019. This time point was chosen as it was the latest available period unaffected by impacts of Covid-19 related lockdowns. The details on the analysis are discussed in chapter 2.

Second, what are the main reasons for chronic absence. To understand what is impacting students' attendance, we draw on:

- surveys of students who are chronically absent
- surveys of parents and whānau of students who are chronically absent
- surveys of school leaders and Attendance Service staff
- interviews with chronically absent students and their parents and whānau
- interviews with school leaders and Attendance Service staff.

We categorised the main reasons for chronic absence into three groups, school factors, family factors and student factors. To identify the most likely drivers for chronic absence we ran regression analysis explained in chapter 2.

This chapter sets out:

1. the key predictive risk factors for chronic absence
2. the main reasons for chronic absence.

What we found: an overview

There are a range of risk factors that make it more likely a student will be chronically absent. The most predictive factors are previous poor attendance, offending, and being in social or emergency housing.

Twenty-five percent of students who are chronically absent were chronically absent a year ago (N = 10,494). Four percent of students who are chronically absent have a recent history of offending (compared to less than 1 percent of all students). Just over one in 10 (12 percent, N = 5,532 students) of chronically absent students live in social housing, compared to 3 percent of all students (N = 12,123 students).

Students' attitudes to school and challenges they face are drivers of chronic absence. Wanting to leave school, physical health issues, finding it hard to get up in the morning, and mental health issues, are key drivers.

Nearly a quarter of students who are chronically absent report wanting to leave school as a reason for being chronically absent. Over half (55 percent, N = 142) identified mental health and a quarter (27 percent, N = 69) identified physical health as reasons for being chronically absent.

Our findings are set out in more detail below.

1. What are the predictive risk factors for chronic absence?

To investigate the key predictive socio-economic risk factors for chronic absence, SIA used data from IDI. They looked at the prevalence of low socio-economic factors in students with chronic absence and with regular absence, in 2019.

 The socio-economic factors considered are:

→ offending

→ social and emergency housing

→ mental health and addiction

→ emergency department admissions

→ attendance history

→ victim of crime

→ Oranga Tamariki investigation.

SIA also ran regression analysis to find out the likelihood of socio-economic factors in chronically absent students when we control for demographic factors like, ethnicity, gender, and region. This time-period was chosen as it was latest available period unaffected by impacts of Covid-19 related lockdowns. The details on the data and methodology is explained in chapter 2.

This chapter sets out what predictive risk factors are associated with chronic absence. We categorise these into:

→ community factors

→ family factors

→ student factors.

The predictive risk factors for chronic absence are set out in the table below.

Community	Family	Student
• Living in a low socio-economic community.	Family is struggling: • lower household income • parents have mental health and addiction issues • are in social housing, emergency housing • have had an Oranga Tamariki investigation.	Education: • previous attendance patterns. Health and disability: • have mental health and addiction issues • are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder • student has visited the emergency department Crime: • are offenders • are a victim of crime.

Community factors

Source: SIA, IDI data analysis

Students from lower socio-economic communities are more likely to be chronically absent.

We saw in Chapter 3 that students from schools in low socio-economic communities are six times more likely to be chronically absent than students from schools in high socio-economic communities. After controlling for family factors and student factors, students living in low socio-economic communities are still 1.8 times more likely to be chronically absent.

Factor	Increases likelihood of chronic absence by:
Going to school in lower socio-economic areas	1.8 times

Source: ERO site visits, interviews, and focus groups and surveys

Community factors that impact attendance are wide ranging and include geographic remoteness, access to transport, and community responsibilities. Parents of students who have a history of chronic absence told us that the availability of affordable transport was often a barrier to attendance.

We heard that getting children back to school was more difficult in areas hit by natural events such as flooding. Attendance Service providers told us about roads being washed out making getting to school difficult. Parents and students who have experienced trauma related to natural disasters are anxious about being able to contact or reach each other during an event and were reluctant to be separated in case this happened again.

Family factors

Source: SIA, IDI data analysis - regression

Students experiencing unstable housing and complex family lives are more likely to be chronically absent.

The family factors that are most predictive of chronic absence are living in social housing (1.4 times more likely to be chronically absent) and living in emergency housing (1.5 times more likely to be chronically absent). Other predictive family factors are linked to family dysfunction or conflict, including parental drug and alcohol addiction (1.1 times more likely to be chronically absent) and involvement of Oranga Tamariki (1.3 times more likely to be chronically absent).

Factor	Increases likelihood of chronic absence by (odd ratios):	Difference between chronic and regular attenders
Mother accessing mental health and addiction services	1.1 times	21%, compared to 14% (N = 8,604, compared to N = 52,125)
Father accessing mental health and addiction services	1.1 times[6]	16%, compared to 10% (N = 6,504, compared to N = 36,693)
Living in social housing	1.4 times	12%, compared to 3% (N = 5,532, compared to N = 12,123)
Living in emergency housing	1.5 times	4%, compared to 1% (N = 1,788, compared to N = 3,087)
Having/had an Oranga Tamariki investigation	1.3 times	8%, compared to 2% (N = 3,330, compared to N = 6,897)
Lower household income	1.1 times per 1% decrease in household income	Not available

Source: ERO site visits, interviews, focus groups and surveys

We heard how complex home lives, where families are struggling with drug and alcohol addiction or other mental health needs, means school attendance is not prioritised. Some parents discussed being victims of domestic violence, and how it made it difficult to prioritise their children going to school.

In many of these families there is an inter-generational disengagement from school – where parents did not go themselves, and their children do not go to school now.

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[6] This finding is only significant in secondary school age students.

"Non-attendance at school is a symptom of complex family challenges, often including significant trauma which may be long-term and inter-generational." (Attendance Service provider)

We also heard how financial hardship can cause chronic absence. Parents and students told us that students having to look after younger children while parents work and a lack of school supplies, including uniforms, contributed to chronic absence. Attendance Service staff and schools told us that transience and poor housing conditions both lead to increased absence from school.

Student factors

Source: SIA, IDI data analysis - regression

Students with histories of offending and a history of chronic absence are most likely to be chronically absent.

The student factors that are most predictive of chronic absence are being a recent offender (4.2 times more likely to be chronically absent) and having a recent history of chronic absence (five times more likely to be chronically absent). Accessing mental health services and hospital emergency admissions, which are indicators of mental health and physical health issues, are also predictive of chronic absence (1.8 and 1.5 times more likely to be chronically absent).

Factor	Increases likelihood of chronic absence by:	Difference between chronic and regular attenders
Chronic absence a year prior	5 times	25%, compared to 2% (N = 10,494, compared to N = 6,402)
Accessing mental health and addiction services	1.8 times	15%, compared to 5% (N = 6,255, compared to N = 18,264)
Diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder	1.4 times	2%, compared to 1% (N = 945, compared to N = 5,169)
Visiting the emergency department	1.5 times	20%, compared to 10% (N = 8,487, compared to N = 36,075)
Being a recent offender	4.2 times	4%, compared to 0% (N = 1,530, compared to N = 1,173)
Being a victim of crime	1.2 times	3%, compared to 0% (N = 1,344, compared to N = 3,372)

Source: ERO site visits, and interviews and focus groups

Building and maintaining a habit of attendance can protect against becoming chronically absent, but periods of chronic absence can lead to further chronic absence. We heard from our interviews that the more students miss school, the harder it is for them to return – creating a cycle of increased chronic absence.

Parents and students also told us that there were mental and physical health reasons for students not regularly attending, particularly anxiety and persistent winter illnesses.

2. What are the main reasons students report for current chronic absence?

Source: ERO site visits, interviews / focus groups and survey data analysis

We asked students, their parents and whānau, school leaders, and Attendance Services, about what kept students from attending school in the last year. This chapter sets out what the main drivers of chronic absence are from students' perspectives. We categorise these drivers into:

→ school factors – challenges with the school

→ family factors – challenges with the family circumstances, or parenting

→ student factors – challenges with individual health.

Together, these challenges can create real barriers to students going to school every day. Many students who are chronically absent are struggling with other issues in their lives.

Source: ERO student survey logistic regression analysis

To understand the main drivers / reasons of chronic absence we analysed our survey data. We analysed the proportions of responses mentioning school, family, and student related factors as a reason for the chronic absence. We ran logistic regression analysis to identify the most likely reason for students to be chronically absent after controlling for other demographic factors that has an association with the rate of attendance like gender and ethnicity. The detail on the regression can be found in chapter 2.

School factors

Source: ERO survey data analysis

Students who feel isolated or not supported by their school are more likely to be chronically absent.

The school factors most likely to be identified by chronically absent students are:

→ not getting enough support for what they need at school (42 percent of students, N = 108)

→ not feeling like they belong (35 percent of students, N = 89)

→ not wanting to do some school activities (34 percent of students, N = 86).

Source: ERO student survey logistic regression analysis

As per the logit regression run on data from student survey, students who want to leave school are 3.2 times more likely to have a recent history of chronic absence, compared to other chronically absent students.

Source: ERO survey data analysis

Parents also rated students not wanting to do some school activities as one of the top three reasons students were not likely to go to school (30 percent of parents, N = 93). Attendance Service staff and school leaders did not identify school factors in their top three reasons for chronic absence.

Figure 8: School factors that students report as reasons for chronic absence

Factor	Percentage
Not getting enough support for what they need to be…	42%
Not feeling like they belong	35%
Don't want to do some school activities	34%
Schoolwork is too hard, or they cannot catch up on…	27%
Wanting to leave school	27%
Not interested in learning	21%
Feel like adults do not like them	20%
Want to learn somewhere else	20%
Getting bullied or picked on at school	19%
Don't have friends at school	14%
School work is too easy	10%
Friends skip school and they want them to as well	8%
Experience racism at school	7%
School not letting them (e.g. because they have been…	4%
School not letting them attend all the time (e.g. can…	3%

Source: ERO site visits, interviews, focus groups and surveys

In our interviews students were most likely to identify schooling factors as a barrier to attendance. They reported:

→ feeling socially isolated and having a lack of friends or poor relationships with teachers

→ having learning needs that the school is unable to accommodate – for example, parents also report restricting attendance of neurodiverse students to manage their triggers

→ feeling physically unsafe due to schools not addressing bullying

→ schools not offering courses of study that are relevant to their career goals.

Parents also told us that bullying and poor relationships with teaching staff were factors in their child not attending school.

> "I was bullied and threatened at school the school didn't respond in a way to keep me safe so had no choice but leave school." (Student)

> "I couldn't keep up or understand what they wanted me to do… But turned out I have ADHD and find it hard to focus in class." (Student)

> "I'm unsettled when my friends or teacher aren't at school and I often come home during the day. I get bored. Sometimes I prefer to do what I like and am good at instead of what I don't like and struggle with." (Student)

> "[I want to learn] more life skills and stuff we need as adults and less irrelevant stuff." (Student)

Family factors

Source: ERO survey data analysis

Chronically absent students report a wide range of family factors that impacted on their attendance, staying up late was the most common issue.

Two out of five students (41 percent of students, N = N = 105) reported finding it hard to get up in the morning as a reason they do not attend, which make students 1.8 times (odds ratio from regression) more likely to be chronically absent. Attendance Service staff (90 percent, N =124) and school leaders (75 percent, N= 180) agreed, both rating finding it hard to get up in the morning after staying up late as one of the top three reasons why students are chronically absent from school. Attendance providers also identified moving between family homes in their top three (85 percent, N = 117).

Figure 9: Family factors that students report as reasons for chronic absence

Factor	Percentage
Finding it hard to get up early in the morning after…	41%
Family/cultural/special events during school time	10%
Moving between family homes	9%
Having a job during school hours, or late at night	8%
Not having enough food for breakfast or lunch	8%
Cannot get to school due to lack of transport	7%
Looking after whānau/family members at home	7%
Not having the things they need for class	6%
Legal reasons (e.g. going to court, trespassed from…	2%
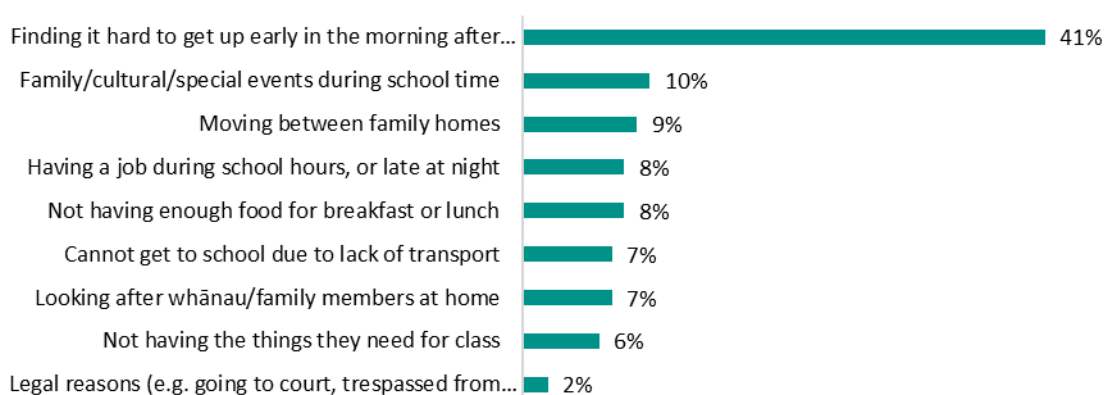
Source: ERO site visits, interviews, focus groups and surveys

We heard that students are late getting to school, or stay at home due to a:

→ lack of organisation in the household

→ lack of vigilance over bedtime routines which meant students engage in late night activities and don't have sufficient sleep.

In our interviews, students were most likely to tell us about financial barriers to school attendance, and particularly the cost of transport and uniforms. We heard that some students need to help out their family with caregiving when parents can't, or work at after-school jobs to contribute to family expenses, and are unable to attend school the next morning.

> "[I go to school more] when I don't have to help Mum look after the babies and Dad in the shearing shed." (Student)

> "Sometimes we run out of uniform because it costs a lot of money, and I break it or it is in the washing machine. [The school] is now changing the uniform and [making], it cost more and my Mum says I can only have one of each clothing." (Student)

Attendance Service providers and school leaders told us that family factors were often a driver of poor school attendance, including parental anxiety about sending their child to school and distrust of the education system.

"I watch my mum struggle every week to get us to school… I watch her have less… knowing it will come at an extra cost." (Student)

Student factors

Source: ERO survey data analysis and logistics regression analysis of student survey

Chronically absent students report their mental health as a key reason for their chronic absence.

Across all factors, mental health was the top reason students were chronically absent (55 percent of students, N = 142). Students who have physical or mental health barriers are 2.4 and 1.7 times more likely to have a recent history of chronic absence (odds ratio from regression). This is consistent with the finding from the IDI that students who access mental health and addiction services are 1.8 times more likely to be chronically absent.

Parents (33 percent, N = 103), Attendance Service staff (94 percent, N = 130), and school leaders (70 percent, N = 168) agreed - all report mental health in the top three reasons why students did not attend school.

Figure 10: Student factors that students report as reasons for chronic absence
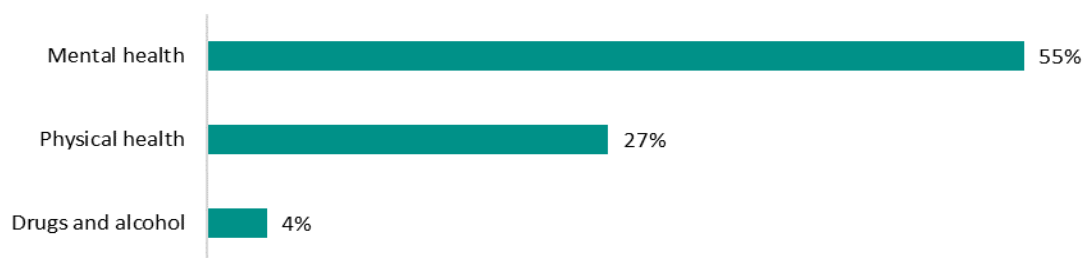
Source: ERO site visits, interviews, focus groups and surveys

In nearly all interviews, anxiety was discussed as a crucial driver for chronic absence. Students told us about being too anxious to leave their home to go to school.

"I found it overwhelming as I have social anxiety." (Student)

Students, and parents and whānau report that long-term health conditions, as well as winter illness, led to chronic absence. For students with chronic conditions, the students didn't have energy to sustain their attendance over a day or a week.

"When you have multiple physical and mental health issues, it's hard for people who haven't experienced those things to really understand." (Student)

Conclusion

School, parent and whānau, student, and community factors, all impact on students' likelihood to be chronically absent. The most predictive risk factors are having a recent history of chronic absence, having recently offended, or living in social or emergency housing. The largest drivers of recently having been chronically absent are wanting to leave school, physical health, finding it hard to get up in the morning, and mental health. Addressing these key factors can reduce chronic absence. In the next chapter, we explain how we analysed the impacts of chronic absence on student outcomes.

Chapter 5: What are the outcomes for chronically absent students?

Attendance is critical for life outcomes. Students with chronic absence have worse outcomes. They are significantly more likely to leave school without qualifications, be charged with an offence, or live in emergency housing. Chronically absent students also cost more to the Government due to increased spending on benefits, corrections, and health services.

This chapter describes how we analysed chronically absent young people's long-term outcomes, compared to the wider Aotearoa New Zealand population.

What we did

To understand what the outcomes are for students who were chronically absent, we draw on:

→ SIA's analysis of IDI data from 2019 onwards

→ interviews with chronically absent students, and their parents and whānau

→ interviews with school leaders and Attendance Service staff.

Data sources used in this chapter
To analyse the education, employment, social welfare, health, and justice outcomes for chronically absent students, we used data from IDI provided by SIA. In this chapter, we compare outcomes for chronically absent students and the total population in 2022 from ages 17 to 25. Details on the data and methodology are explained in the chapter 2.
In this chapter we have also reported on the cost of chronically absent students to the Government compared to the total population by age. The total Government expenditure includes expenditure on MSD benefits, cost associated with corrections (custodial and community sentences), public hospital admissions, pharmaceuticals costs, and support services expenses. SIA provided this analysis.

This chapter looks at the outcomes for students who have been chronically absent or not enrolled in any school.[7] It sets out:

1. what their education outcomes are

2. what their employment and income outcomes are

3. what their housing outcomes are

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[7] When SIA looked in the IDI, they counted a student as being chronically absent if they had been referred to the Attendance Service for chronic levels of absence. They also looked at a matched comparison group of students who had similar characteristics (including prior attendance). They counted a student as not enrolled if they had stopped attending school entirely. The cohort used was students born between 1990 and 2015. Most of the students will have been chronically absent when absence rates were still low. The characteristics of chronically absent students 10 years ago may be different to those now.

4.   what their justice outcomes are

5.   what the cost is of these outcomes.

The data does not control for other childhood and family factors which might be contributing to these poor outcomes.

What we found: an overview

Students who were chronically absent are significantly more likely to leave school without qualifications.

At age 20, over half (55 percent) have not achieved NCEA Level 2, and almost all (92 percent) have not achieved University Entrance. This leads to having significantly lower rates of employment and income. At age 25, nearly half are not earning any wages or salary (42 percent).

Young adults who were chronically absent are more likely to be charged with an offence or live in social or emergency housing. They are more likely to visit the emergency department.

Reflecting their lower incomes, at age 25, 12 percent of young adults who were chronically absent are in social housing, compared to 4 percent of the total population. In the year they turned 25, 6 percent of young adults who were chronically absent had been charged with an offence, compared to 3 percent of the total population. They have 1.3 times more emergency admissions.

Chronically absent young people cost the Government nearly three times as much.

At age 23, young adults who were chronically absent cost $4,000 more than other young people. They are particularly costly in corrections, hospital admissions, and receiving benefits.

Our findings are set out in more detail below.

1. What are their education outcomes?

Source: SIA, IDI data analysis

We looked at three education outcomes:

→   NCEA Level 2

→   University Entrance

→   enrolment in tertiary education.

At age 20, students who have been chronically absent are two times less likely to achieve NCEA Level 2 and five times less likely to achieve University Entrance than the general population.

Attendance matters for education. Students who are chronically absent have consistently worse education outcomes.

→   NCEA Level 2 is the minimum pre-requisite for higher education and training, and many entry level jobs. At age 20, over half of students who have been chronically absent do not achieve NCEA Level 2 (55 percent), compared to just under one in five of the total population (19 percent).

→ Students who have been chronically absent are more than five times more likely to leave school without University Entrance. At age 20, 8 percent of students who have been chronically absent have University Entrance, compared to just over two in five of the total population (42 percent).

→ At age 20, young people who were chronically absent are less likely to be attending tertiary education (20 percent of chronically absent young people, compared to 42 percent of young people in the total population).

Figure 11: Chronically absent young adults' education outcomes at age 20, compared to the total population
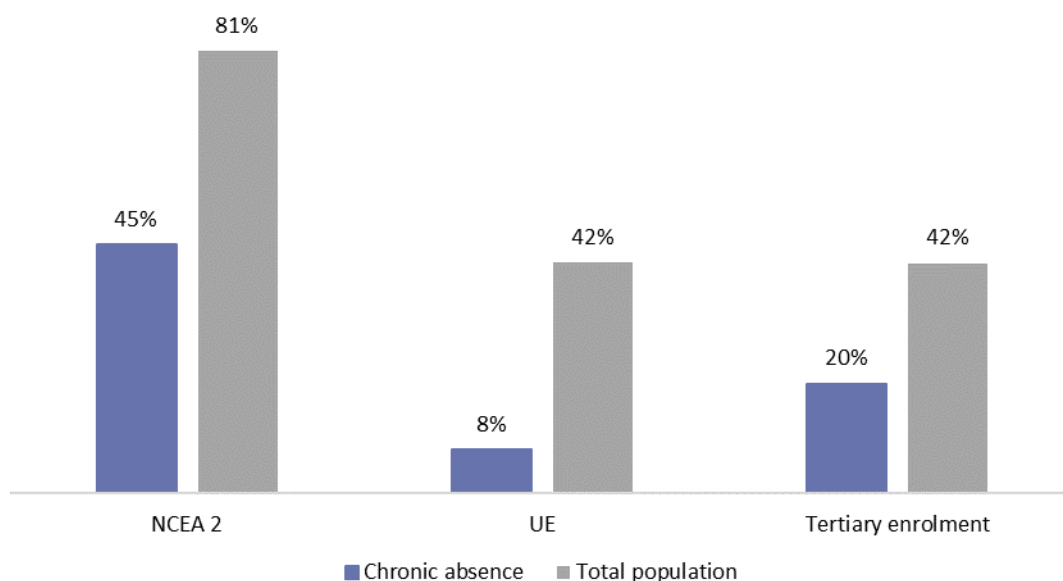
Data Source: Social Investment Agency

Concerningly, students who are chronically absent from school often experience cumulative effects on their learning. The longer the period away from school, the greater the effort required to re-engage them, which leads to increased impact on learning progress and achievement.

Source: ERO site visits, interviews, focus groups and surveys

We heard from students, parents and whānau, schools, and Attendance Services, that periods of absence impacted their ability to keep track of and understand their learning and make progress in their learning.

"They've had one or two days off and they feel like they can't catch up. They feel like they're behind already." (Attendance Service)

Students know that school is important for their future, but they do not always see the potential impact of their chronic absence. Students reported that what they learn will not help them for their future.

"I don't see the point in learning about things that I won't use." (Student)

"The curriculum is irrelevant and the ideology won't help me with my future and career." (Student)

2. What are their income outcomes?

Source: SIA, IDI data analysis

We looked at three employment and income outcomes:

→ total income

→ income from wages

→ benefit receipt.

At age 25, young adults who were chronically absent from school earn $40,000 less than what other 25-year-olds earn.

Chronically absent young adults earn the same as the total population at 17 years old. However, over time their income becomes significantly less than the total population. At age 25, young adults who were chronically absent from school earn $16,667 compared to $59,235 for other 25-year-olds.

Figure 12: Chronically absent young adults' wages, compared to the total population
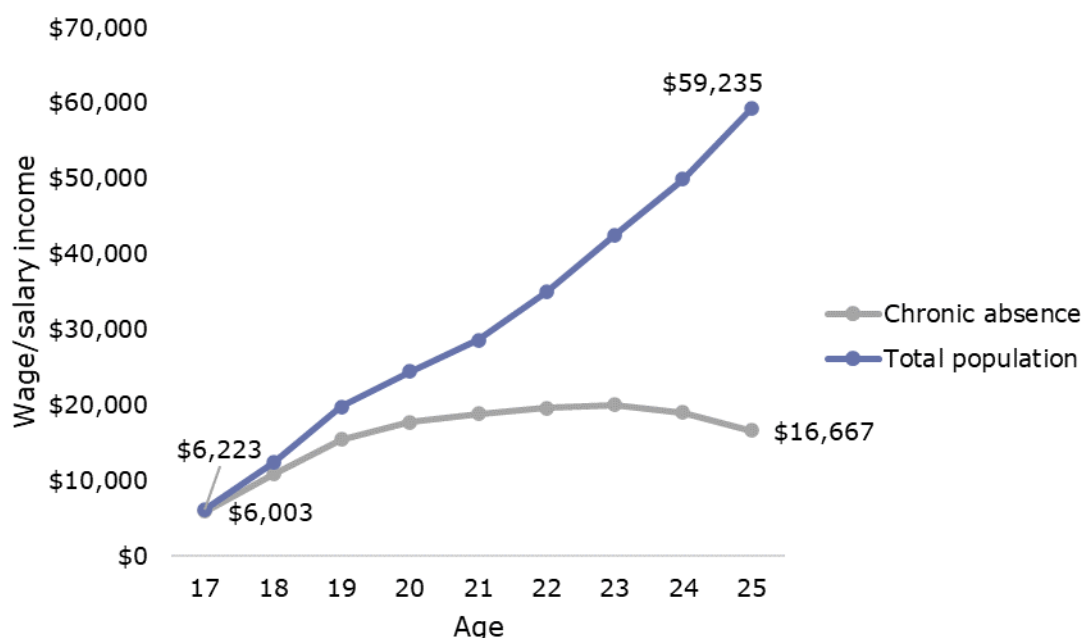
Data Source: Social Investment Agency

The lower income rates are because young people who were chronically absent are less likely to be earning wages and more likely to be receiving a benefit.

Leaving school with fewer qualifications means young adults who were chronically absent at school are less likely to be employed. At age 25, just under three in five young adults who have been chronically absent from school have a wage or salary income (58 percent), compared to more than two-thirds of the total population (69 percent).

Worryingly, from age 17 to 26, young adults who were chronically absent are more likely to be receiving a benefit. At age 25, almost half of young adults who were chronically absent are receiving a benefit (46 percent), compared to one in five of the total population (20 percent). From age 17 to 26, chronically

absent young adults earn more income from benefits compared to the total population. At age 25, they receive $1,500 more in benefit than the total population.

3. What are their housing outcomes?

Source: SIA, IDI data analysis

Young adults who have been chronically absent from school are three times more likely to live in social housing compared to the total population at age 25.

From age 17 to 26, young adults who were chronically absent are more likely to be in social and emergency housing. At age 25, 12 percent of young adults who were chronically absent are in social housing, compared to 4 percent of the total population. Two percent are in emergency housing, compared to 1 percent of the total population.

The higher rates of social housing and emergency housing of young adults who were chronically absent from school reflect housing affordability issues for people with lower incomes.

Figure 13: Chronically absent young adults in social housing across ages, compared to the total population
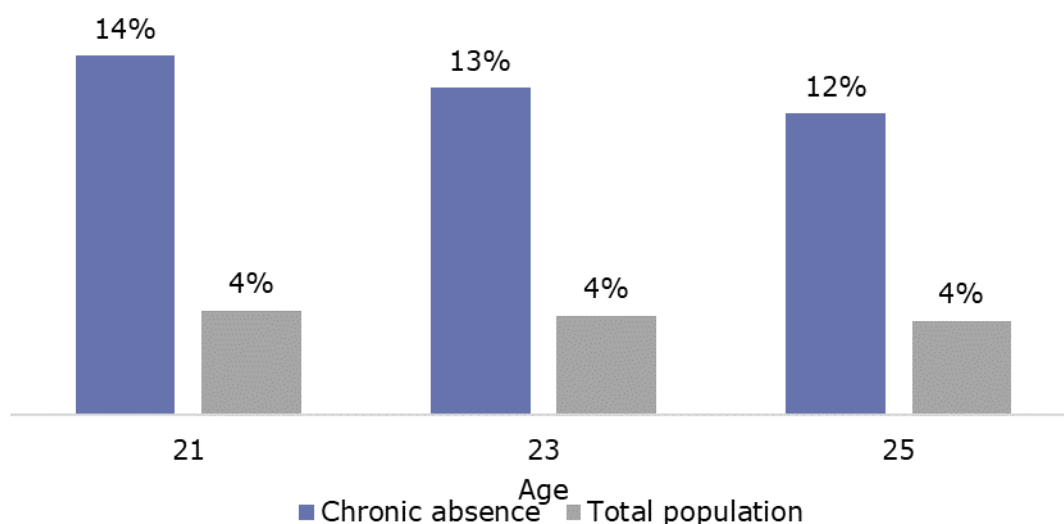
Data Source: Social Investment Agency

4. What are their health outcomes?

Source: SIA, IDI data analysis

We looked at three health outcomes:

→ enrolment with a GP

→ visits to a GP

→ emergency admissions to hospital.

Young adults who have been chronically absent from school are just as likely to visit a doctor but more likely to visit the emergency department

Encouragingly, young adults who are chronically absent are just as like to be enrolled at, and visit, a GP as the total population. At age 20:

→ eighty-eight percent of young adults who were chronically absent from school were enrolled in a GP compared to 83 percent of the total population

→ young adults who were chronically absent from school had 2.6 visits a year to their GP compared to 2.8 visits for the total population.

However, young adults who have been chronically absent from school have 1.3 times more emergency admissions. In the year that they turned 20, young people who were chronically absent had 0.4 emergency admissions compared to 0.3 for the total population.

5. What are their justice outcomes?

Source: SIA, IDI data analysis

We looked at three justice outcomes:

→ charged with an offence

→ custodial and community sentences

→ victim of an offence.

Young adults who have been chronically absent from school are two times more likely to be charged with any offence.

Young people who are chronically absent have consistently higher rates of offending, particularly violent offences. In the year they turned 25, just 6 percent of young adults who were chronically absent had been charged with an offence, compared to 3 percent of the total population. In the year they turned 25, 1 percent of young adults who were chronically absent had been charged with a violent offence, which occurs at double the rate in the total population (6 percent).

The higher rates of offending likely reflect the higher rates of offending while still in school. It also likely reflects the higher prevalence of family dysfunction when the young people were school aged.

Young adults who have been chronically absent from school are three times more likely to be in the corrections system.

The increased offending rates and increased violent offending rates mean that students with a history of chronic absence have higher rates of custodial and community sentences. Young adults who were chronically absent from school are significantly more likely to have:

→ served a community sentence - in the year they turned 25, 6 percent have served a community sentence, compared to 2 percent of the total population

→ served a custodial sentence - in the year they turned 25, 2 percent have served a custodial sentence, compared to 1 percent of the total population.

Figure 14: Chronically absent young adults in the corrections system at age 25, compared to the total population
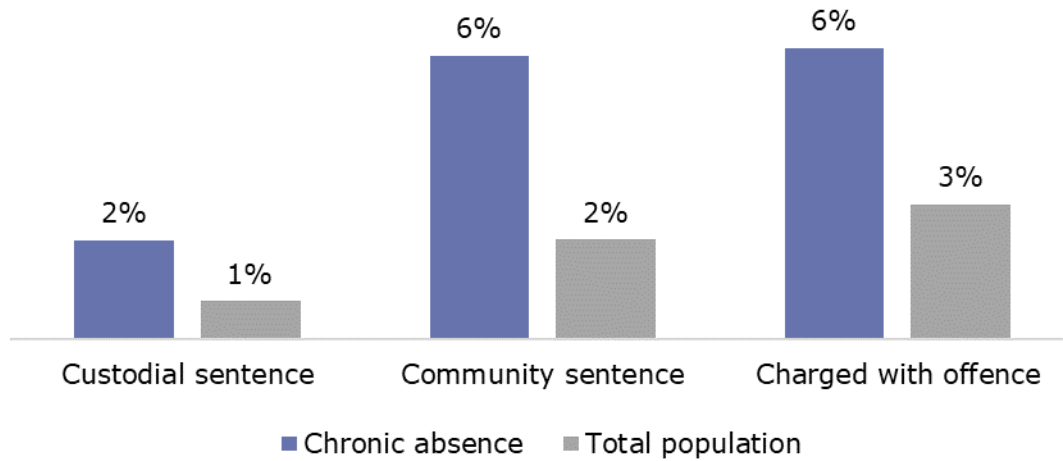
Data Source: Social Investment Agency

Young adults who have been chronically absent from school are nearly two times as likely to be a victim of any type of crime, and nearly three times more likely to be a victim of a violent crime.

Sadly, significantly more young people who are chronically absent have been a victim of a crime. At age 25, 6 percent of young people who were chronically absent had been a victim of any crime, compared to 4 percent of the total population.

Figure 15: Chronically absent young adults who have been victims of crime across ages, compared to the total population
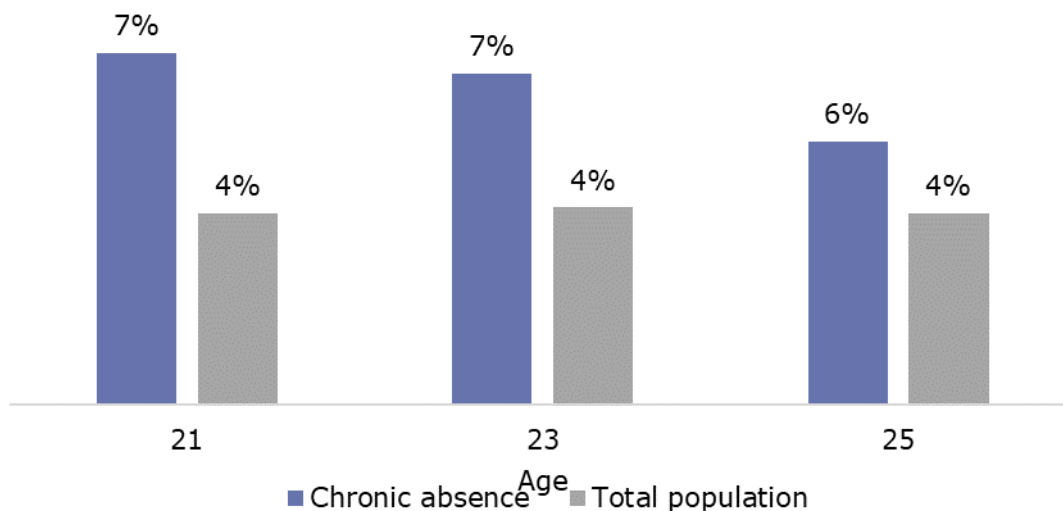
Data Source: Social Investment Agency

They are also significantly more likely to be victims of violent crimes. At age 25, 4 percent of young people who were chronically absent had been a victim of a violent crime, compared to 2 percent of the total population.

6. What is the cost of these outcomes?

Source: SIA, IDI data analysis

We know that being chronically absent has large individual costs in terms of income, health, and social outcomes. The poor social outcomes of young adults who were chronically absent from school also pose a sizeable cost to the Government.

At age 20, young adults who were chronically absent cost the Government nearly three times as much as other 20-year-olds.

The poor social outcomes of young adults who were chronically absent consistently cost more to the Government throughout their lives. At age 23, chronically absent young adults cost the Government $7,389 on average. This is about $4,000 more than other young people.

Costs to the Government are much higher for chronically absent young people in corrections, hospital admissions, and benefits.

Figure 16: Chronically absent young adults' total expenditure per person per year, compared to the total population
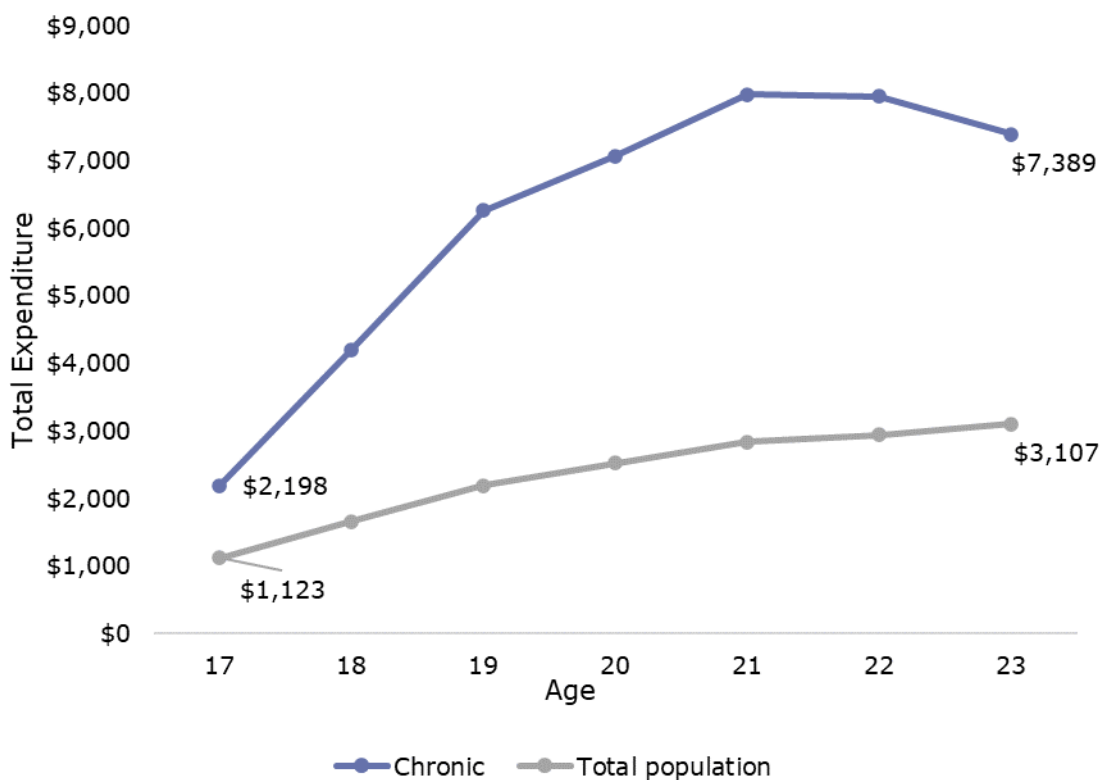
Data Source: Social Investment Agency

Table 7: Comparison of the cost to the Government related to benefits, corrections, and hospital admissions for chronically absent students (20-year-olds)

Factor	Difference from other 20-year-olds
Benefits	3.9 times as much
Corrections (custodial and community sentences)	3.0 times as much
Hospital admissions	1.8 times as much

Conclusion

The outcome of a lost education on students who have been chronically absent is clear. Students who were chronically absent have lower rates of educational attainment. This leads to lower incomes and higher rates of benefit receipt. Cycles of offending are not broken, and access to affordable housing is limited to what the state provides.

The cost to the Government and Aotearoa New Zealand taxpayers is also high, with young adults who have been chronically absent costing nearly three times as much as other 20-year-olds. They are particularly costly in corrections, hospital admissions, and benefits. It is critical we reverse the trend of increasing absence.

In the next chapter, we set out how we analysed how effective the Aotearoa New Zealand model is at supporting chronically absent students.

Chapter 6: How effective is the Aotearoa New Zealand model?

ERO's review has found weaknesses in each element of the education system intended to address chronic absence. Identification and action are too slow, and targeted support is not working well. Improvements are not sustained and funding for support is inadequate.

This chapter sets out how we analysed each of the components of an effective response to chronic absence and ERO's assessment of its effectiveness.

What we did

To understand how effective the model for attendance in Aotearoa New Zealand is, we compared the current practice against the indicators of effective practice.

Data sources used in this chapter
To understand the effectiveness of the Aotearoa New Zealand model and provisions for chronically absent students, we drew on: • on-site visits of schools and Attendance Services • interviews with experts • in-depth discussions with practitioners and experts • administrative data • surveys of students who are chronically absent • surveys of parents and whānau of students who are chronically absent • surveys of school leaders and Attendance Service staff • interviews with chronically absent students and their parents and whānau • interviews with school leaders and Attendance Service staff • statistical modelling.

This chapter sets out:

1. how effective the system is overall
2. how effective each of the components are within the system.

What we found: an overview

Schools are setting expectations for attendance, but parents and whānau do not understand the implications of non-attendance.

When students and parents and whānau do not understand the implications of absence, chronic absence rates increase from 7 percent to 9 percent.

Action is too slow, and students fall through the gaps.

Schools have tools in place to identify when students are chronically absent, but often wait too long to intervene. Only 43 percent (N = 132) of parents and whānau with a child who is chronically absent have met with school staff about their child's attendance. One in five school leaders (18 percent, N = 33) only refer students after more than 21 days consecutive days absent. Just over two-thirds of Attendance Service staff report schools never, or only sometimes, refer students at the right time (68 percent, N = 86). Approximately half of schools do not make referrals to Attendance Services.[8]

Finding students who are not attending is inefficient and time consuming.

There is inadequate information sharing between different agencies, schools, and Attendance Services. Attendance Services have to spend too much time trying to find students. Almost half of Attendance Services (52 percent, N = 65) report information is only sometimes, or never shared across agencies, schools, and Attendance Services.

Schools and Attendance Services are planning responses to attendance barriers, but are not always identifying the correct barriers.

Most school leaders and Attendance Service staff report they always plan how they work with students and parents and whānau using what they know about students and what works. However, there is a mismatch between what schools and Attendance Services identify, and what students and parents and whānau see as the barriers.

Schools and Attendance Services are not well set up to enforce attendance.

Just over half of school leaders (54 percent, N = 119) and just over three in five Attendance Service staff (62 percent, N = 67) do not think there are good options to enforce attendance and hold people accountable. Schools that have tried to prosecute have found the process complex and costly.

Students are not set up to succeed on return to school.

The quality of plans for returning students to school is variable, and students are not set up to succeed on return to school. While many schools welcome students back to school, there is not a sufficient focus on working with the students to help them 'catch up' and reintegrate.

Improvements in school attendance are often short-lived as barriers remain. The education offered often does not meet students' interests or needs, leading to them not sustaining attendance when they return to school.

Although nearly four in five chronically absent students (79 percent, N = 203) finding learning a barrier to attendance, under half (44 percent, N = 105) of school leaders report they have changed schoolwork to better suit learners on their return. Over half of school leaders (59 percent, N = 129) and Attendance Services (58 percent, N = 63) report there are not opportunities for young people to learn in other settings.

Accountability in the system is weak.

There is a lack of clarity around where roles and responsibilities begin and end, and the accountability in the system is weak. Just over one in five school leaders (21 percent, N = 45) and two in five Attendance Service providers (40 percent, N = 47) want more clarity about the roles and responsibilities.

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[8] Source: Ministry of Education's internal review of the management and support of the Attendance Services

Resourcing is inequitably distributed and does not match the level of need.

Funding has not increased to match the increase in demand. Caseloads for advisers in the Attendance Services that ERO visited vary from 30 to more than 500 cases. Funding does not reflect need. Contracts vary in size (from around $20,000 to $1.4m) and in how much funding is allocated per eligible student – from $61 to $1,160 per eligible student Our findings are set out in more detail below.

1. Overall, how effective is the system?

ERO's review found weakness in each element of the attendance system.

The Aotearoa New Zealand system is not effectively tackling chronic truancy. The table summarises the ratings of each element of effectiveness.

Table 8: Ratings of effectiveness for each element of the attendance systems

Colour	Description
🟥	Significant improvements required
🟧	Some improvements required Mixed/variable practice
🟩	Generally good practice
⬜	Insufficient evidence

		Rating
a.	**Expectations for attendance**	🟧
b.	**Identifying students**	🟧
c.	**Finding and engaging students with poor attendance and their parents and whānau**	🟧
d.	**Working with students, parents and whānau, and others to plan a response**	🟧
e.	**Removing barriers to attendance and enforcing compliance**	🟥
f.	**Returning students to school and/or increasing their attendance**	🟥
g.	**Sustaining good attendance and engagement in education**	🟥
h.	**Roles, accountability, and funding**	🟥

2. How effective are each of the elements of the system?

In this chapter, we describe each of the elements of the attendance system set out in Table 8 (above). For each, we look at what is and isn't working well.

a) Expectations for attendance

Setting expectations	Schools are prioritising attendance and are increasingly clear on expectations. Schools are focusing on whether an absence is justified or not, and less on whether the amount of absence is impacting students' education. Students and parents and whānau do not understand that reduced attendance is a key predictor of chronic non-attendance.	

What is working?

Source: ERO site visits, interviews / focus groups and survey data analysis

Schools are setting expectations for attendance.

Nearly all school leaders (98 percent, N = 237) agree their school has clear and high expectations for attendance. Schools, parents and whānau, and students, told us that students are expected to attend school regularly. Parents and whānau receive frequent reminders from the school about the importance of attending school regularly.

What doesn't work?

Source: ERO survey data analysis, site visits and interviews / focus groups

Students and parents and whānau do not understand that reduced attendance is a key predictor of chronic absence.

Rates of chronic absence are higher in schools where students and parents and whānau do not understand the implications of absence (7 percent in schools where students and parents and whānau do understand, 9 percent in schools where students and parents and whānau do not understand). Over one third of school leaders (33 percent, N = 80) report that parents do not understand the implications of not attending school.

> "[Parents] don't understand the long-term consequences for tamariki who do not attend school regularly, and how this can impact negatively on their job prospects, the type of jobs, high paying versus low paying." (Attendance Service staff)

Schools' time is spent with parents and whānau focusing on whether an absence is justified or not, and less on whether the amount of absence is impacting students' education.

Attendance related activity and discussions do not always focus on whether a student's absence is contributing to a pattern of chronic non-attendance and the impact that it is having on their education. Schools spoke to us about how much of their time is spent talking to parents and whānau about why an absence was classified as 'unjustified'.

Parents and whānau talked to us about confusion over their school's expectations for attendance or how to manage sickness, anxiety, or when there is limited teacher aide support for students with high needs. There is also a lack of clarity between schools and parents and whānau about whether students who work from home through digital portals are meeting attendance expectations.

b) Identifying students with poor attendance

Monitoring attendance against the expectations	Teachers and leaders have a clear focus on collecting and using data to monitor attendance against the expectations. The lack of clarity around which attendance codes to use under what circumstances means the quality of this data is inconsistent, and schools are not linking the codes to their responses to chronic absence.	
Identifying when absences are a problem	There is no nationally consistent policy for when to identify when absence is a problem so schools each have their own definition. Four out of five school leaders (81 percent, N = 193) report they know when to refer students to additional help for their attendance, however nearly seven in 10 (N =86) Attendance Services report schools do not consistently refer students at the right time. Schools find it hard to identify and act when students are not enrolled in a school.	
Acting early	Acting early is important, yet there is a lack of clear guidance about when the right time is to act. Schools do not consistently escalate their response to absence early enough. Attendance Services report schools refer students too late, and it makes it harder for them to get students back to school.	

What is working?

Source: ERO site visits, interviews / focus groups and survey data analysis

Schools do well at monitoring and analysing attendance, supported by a nominated person responsible for this.

Schools typically have a nominated person responsible for monitoring and analysing attendance, which helps them have oversight of what is happening.

Nearly all (97 percent, N = 235) school leaders agree that teachers and leaders use data to monitor attendance patterns. In the schools we visited there is a focus on gathering and monitoring attendance data for individuals in the system.

> ### Who monitors and analyses attendance in schools?
>
> Principal: 71 percent
>
> Deputy or Assistant Principal: 66 percent
>
> Senior Leader: 28 percent
>
> Teacher: 36 percent
>
> Administrative staff: 54 percent
>
> School-based attendance or whānau officer: 18 percent
>
> Learning support staff: 13 percent
>
> Teacher aide: 3 percent

Where effective, schools have differentiated roles regarding attendance. Teachers and leaders record and track attendance of individuals and groups of students. Senior leaders analyse and report patterns of attendance.

There are expectations for schools to record and report on attendance, and most schools do report to the Ministry on attendance.

Schools are expected to record and report all absences to the Ministry. Attendance is usually recorded with the use of codes through electronic attendance registers, which connect through schools' management systems. This data is published each term and trends are tracked over time.

Each school has their own policy to identify when a student is chronically absent.

Nearly all schools (97 percent, N = 230) have a policy or procedure that guides the schools' response to students' non-attendance. These typically contain expectations for regular attendance, why attendance is important, and how to report absence.

What doesn't work?

Source: ERO survey data analysis, site visits and interviews

The lack of clarity around which attendance codes to use under what circumstances means that quality of this data is inconsistent.

Schools told us that assigning attendance codes and monitoring attendance is time consuming. Schools are also not linking the codes to their responses to chronic absence. Attendance Officers in Attendance Services are funded to help schools with data analysis, but only 15 percent (N = 32) of school leaders receive help from Attendance Services to do this.

Assigning attendance codes

Schools are expected to record attendance daily, using a Ministry supplied system and 26 codes which identify the reason for absence (both Justified and Unjustified).[iv] Schools express their frustration with assigning codes, noting that it is time-consuming, complex and requires interpretation. They also talk about how they needed to spend time with parents and whānau to help them understand what these codes represent, and why an absence counts as 'Unjustified', even though an explanation had been given. Currently the Ministry is reviewing the use of the Attendance Codes to simplify their use to improve the consistency of data recording and reporting.

There is no nationally consistent policy for when absence is a problem.

Although there are guidelines for recording and expectations for how to classify attendance patterns, it is less clear about when to identify if absence is a problem. Schools are expected to develop their own attendance policies. Schools we visited have a range of practices for when and how to address chronic absence and there is variation in how they identify when attendance becomes a problem or when to escalate an issue.

There is no clear guidance on when schools should escalate cases. According to Attendance Service Application guidance, absence referrals from schools to Attendance Services should occur when a student is unjustifiably absent, and the school has been unable to return them. Most school leaders refer students after 11 to 20 days of unjustified absences (25 percent, N = 45), and 35 percent (N = 63) do so after less than 10 days. However, one in five school leaders (18 percent, N = 33) only refer students after more than 21 consecutive days absent.

Schools find it hard to identify and act when students are not enrolled in a school.

The processes to identify non-enrolled students are making it hard to act, for example:

→ the system for schools notifying non-enrolled students is not used consistently well

→ investigations are often stalled through a lack of information about location or status

→ there is no clear way to escalate cases for students who are missing or not responding to attendance support.

Schools do not escalate their response to absence early enough.

Patterns of absence may go unnoticed or are not investigated, and these patterns become normalised. Only 43 percent (N = 132) of parents and whānau with a child who is chronically absent have met with school staff about their child's attendance.

Students and parents and whānau report how schools did not approach them to find out why their attendance patterns had changed, when an earlier conversation would have helped them get to school.

Schools refer students too late, and it makes it harder for them to get students back to school.

The Attendance Services consistently report that schools refer students too late, making it difficult for them to fix the issue. Over two thirds of Attendance Service staff report schools never, or only sometimes, refer students at the right time (68 percent, N = 86).

c) Finding and engaging students with chronic absence and their parents and whānau

Information sharing	Finding students who are not attending is inefficient and time consuming. Schools, Attendance Services, and other agencies, do not work well together to share information about students and their families, including contact information.	
Positive initial engagement	Attendance staff develop good rapport and trust with families, as a foundation to understanding the underlying challenges with student attendance.	

What is working?

Source: ERO site visits, interviews / focus groups and survey data analysis

Attendance staff develop good rapport and trust with parents and whānau, as a foundation to understanding the underlying challenges with student attendance.

Staff in Attendance Services are usually passionate and care about the parents and whānau and students they work with. Staff focus on building trust with families to develop their confidence to share their struggles. This means they can better match them to the support needed to help get their child to school. Sixty-two percent (N = 72) of Attendance Service staff reported that they have safe and positive relationships with students all the time, and 38 percent (N = 44) most of the time.

What doesn't work?

Source: ERO survey data analysis, site visits and interviews

Finding students who are not attending is inefficient and time consuming and causes significant delays in engaging with them.

Over half (52 percent, N = 65) of Attendance Service staff report that information is only 'sometimes' or 'never' shared across agencies, schools, and Attendance Services. Only 17 percent (N = 21) report it happens 'all of the time'.

In Attendance Services ERO visited, we found that there is insufficient information from schools about attendance patterns and pastoral care for individual students, including barriers to attendance or strategies that had been used previously to encourage attendance. This can lead to Attendance Services trying forms of support that schools had already attempted.

Attendance Services also told us that there were government agencies, like Work and Income, who were in regular contact with the families but would not share contact information or help facilitate contact due to privacy concerns.

Attendance Services also reported that the Attendance Service Application used for referring students to Attendance Services is difficult to use and does not retain all the information needed reliably. Many Attendance Services run a supplementary data collection system.

Safety can be a significant barrier to initial engagement.

Many Attendance Service staff have to work in pairs when making initial engagements with students and their parents and whānau, as safety cannot always be guaranteed. Some staff discussed negative experiences, where they did not feel safe to enter properties and engage with parents or whānau.

d) Working with students, parents and whānau, and others to plan a response

Identifying the problem	While most school leaders and Attendance Services staff are confident identifying drivers of non-attendance, schools and Attendance Services identify different drivers to students and parents and whānau. Students most commonly report school factors, but school leaders most commonly report family factors as the reasons behind student absence.	
Planning a response	The quality of plans for returning students to school is variable. While most providers school leaders have plans to ensure students can maintain attendance, they also told us there was inadequate capacity or ability to plan.	
Ongoing communication	There is a lack of coordination between schools and Attendance Services. Approximately half of schools do not make referrals to Attendance Services and nearly one in five school leaders do not work with Attendance Service staff at all. Each Attendance Service we visited talked about a significant number of schools in their area who they were not working with or were not referring students	

What is working?

Source: ERO survey data analysis

Schools and Attendance Services are planning responses to address students' barriers to attendance.

Sixty-seven percent (N = 82) of Attendance Service staff plan how they work with students and parents and whānau using what they know about students and what works all of the time. Eighty-seven percent (N = 207) of school leaders do the same - in schools, support is planned and managed to ensure students can maintain attendance all (39 percent, N = 94), or most (47 percent, N = 113) of the time.

What doesn't work?

Source: ERO survey data analysis, site visits and interviews

Schools and Attendance Services identify different drivers to students and parents and whānau.

Fifty-six percent (N = 69) of Attendance Service staff report they always identify the causes of students missing school. School leaders also think they can identify drivers of absence. Ninety-three percent (N = 168) of school leaders are confident that their school knows students' current barriers to attendance.

However, there is a mismatch between what schools and Attendance Services identify, and what students and parents and whānau see as the barriers.

→ Students report school drivers as the main drivers of absence.

→ School leaders report family factors as the main drivers of absence.

→ Parents and whānau report student factors as the main drivers of absence.

→ Attendance Service staff report family, student and school factors equally.

This mismatch matters as it can mean support is not effective and improving attendance.

> "Behind every attendance issue lies a larger issue, so do a needs assessment about what the whole whānau need, to be able to get the end result of the young person returning back to regular schooling." (Attendance Service staff)

Whilst planning happens, Attendance Service staff and school leaders do not always have the ability to develop a good plan.

In Attendance Services, staff come from a variety of backgrounds, including youth or social work, but do not receive any specific training for their roles. This means plans and strategies are often based on individual personal experience, and rarely on evidence-based practice. There is a lack of guidance on what effective plans look like.

School leaders are not well supported to make effective plans. Less than half of school leaders receive help from Attendance Services to developing plans and strategies (39 percent, N = 85).

e) Removing barriers to attendance and enforcing compliance

Working together to remove barriers	While most Attendance Service staff have worked with a variety of agencies, school and Attendance Service staff often struggle to access the community and social supports needed to effectively remove barriers.	
Enforcing compliance	Attendance Services and schools find it difficult and are reluctant to use legislative levers for fear of damaging the relationship with students and parents and whānau.	

What doesn't work?

Source: ERO survey data analysis, site visits and interviews

School and Attendance Service staff often struggle to access the community and social supports needed to effectively remove barriers – especially when the young person is not currently enrolled in a school.

Community and social supports are not working effectively with schools or Attendance Services to remove barriers to student attendance – especially when the young person is not currently enrolled in a school. Nearly half of Attendance Services (52 percent, N = 59) and over half of schools (67 percent, N = 148) are only sometimes, or never able to access appropriate community supports in a timely way.

Often, Attendance Services found that other agencies and support organisations did not have school attendance as a priority, and were reluctant to promote this in their work, or assist Attendance Services. There is often a time lag and waitlist of available services and agency support. Access depends on established relationships.

Attendance Services and schools are reluctant to use legislative levers for fear of damaging their relationship with students and parents and whānau.

Sixty-two percent (N = 67) of Attendance Services and 54 percent (N = 119) of schools report that they do not have good options to enforce attendance, holding students, parents and whānau, schools and Attendance Services accountable.

There are some options for schools to enforce attendance expectations through messaging and excluding student privileges or detentions. Although there are options for fining parents, this is rarely used. We heard that some schools have tried to use legislation to prosecute parents and found the process overly complex and costly. Others talked about the lack of a positive outcome – it did not increase the student's attendance and the process damaged any positive relationships that had been built, meaning parents and whānau became more alienated and antagonistic towards schools and services.

f) Returning students to school and/or increasing their attendance

Clarity of roles	There is a lack of clarity around roles, responsibilities, and what is allowed or expected when returning students to school.	🟥
Coordinated handover	The quality of handover as students are returned to school and their attendance support is phased out is highly variable, leading to many students returning to their previous attendance patterns.	🟧
Welcoming students back	While most school leaders (67 percent) report they always welcome students back to school, students do not always feel welcome. There are challenges accessing the additional support some students need, or the student's history with the school is a barrier.	🟥

What doesn't work?

Source: ERO survey data analysis, site visits and interviews

There is a lack of clarity around roles, responsibilities, and what is allowed or expected when returning students to school.

It is not clear when Attendance Services stop having responsibility for a student who has returned to school, and what the role is of the schools in ensuring students' transition is positive and sets them up well

for ongoing improved attendance. While some Attendance Services collaborate regularly with schools and share information about the students they are working with, others do not. Two in five Attendance Service staff (40 percent, N = 47) identify clarity in roles and responsibilities as something that would help increase attendance in schools.

The quality of handover as students are returned to school and their attendance support is phased out, is highly variable.

Almost half of Attendance Services staff (48 percent, N = 60) report they do not always wait to close a case until a student is able to sustain attendance. Most Attendance Services have little engagement with students once their cases were closed, unless they were re-referred.

We heard that Attendance Service staff were not always confident that students were attending school regularly when they closed a case, and that sometimes they continued to check up on the progress of students on an informal basis. Other staff talked about the expectation that they close a case as soon as they could so that they could move on to other cases. Attendance Services are expected to meet KPIs that can lead to cases being closed before there is sufficient evidence of increased attendance and engagement. This means Attendance Services are not able to know if their interventions are effective in the longer term.

Source: ERO site visits, interviews / focus groups and surveysSource: ERO site visits, interviews, focus groups and surveys

School leaders reported that sometimes case closures are not discussed with the school, and some are closed by Attendance Services as soon as children come back to school.

> "High caseloads prevent us from being able to monitor ongoing attendance. In the case of non-enrolled students, once they are enrolled, case is closed straight away. There are more new cases to replace them." (Attendance Service staff)

Schools do not welcome all students back to school.

Two-thirds of schools (67 percent, N = 160) report absent students are welcomed back to school all of the time but Attendance Service staff talked to us about schools who did not welcome some students back who had been stood down before, or had behavioural incidents or a negative history at the school.

Students discussed the way in which teachers or senior leaders in the school did not make them feel welcome and they felt they didn't belong at the school. In some cases, their return to school made them feel more disconnected and isolated from others, and catching up was an impossible task.

Source: ERO site visits, interviews / focus groups and surveysSource: ERO site visits, interviews, focus groups and surveys

Schools cannot always access the additional support some students need on their return to school.

Schools report being unable to access enough or specialised support to help students reintegrate into school, especially for traumatised or high needs students. Not getting this support means students may be unable to navigate school systems, and they may feel confused and unable to connect with learning. Schools also talked about how they did not always have the capacity to spend a prolonged period of time with returning students to ensure they continued to improve their attendance.

> "If I could somehow find some other students like me and get the teachers to help me do this –
> I can't do it by myself." (Student)

> "In our area, we have a high number of students with anxiety and mental health and there aren't enough health providers to support. These students won't, or most likely won't, return to mainstream school and we need to be getting in earlier with these students to help the problem." (Attendance Service staff)

g) Sustaining good attendance and engagement in education

Preventing return of problem attendance	Schools are trying to support attendance, but more support is needed to prevent problem attendance returning.	
Suitable education offer	There are not enough options for students to learn things that matter to them, in ways that work for them. Students do not attend when they do not see the point in what they are learning as it is not relevant to their aspirations, or it is not at the right level for them. Most schools and Attendance Services report there are not opportunities for young people to learn in other settings.	

What is working?

Source: ERO site visits, and interviews, focus groups

Schools are trying different approaches to support students to sustain their attendance.

Schools are committed to improving attendance and trying approaches, including:

→ reward systems for attendance goals to help motivate some students and develop a sense of agency and belonging

→ adapting timetables in consultation with individual students to help them reintegrate successfully, and to fit around their learning interests or home circumstances

→ offering alternative programmes or courses within the school that interest the student, including connecting students to their local environment or their cultural identity.

In some cases, these programmes are helping to attract students to the school environment and bridge the gap in learning caused by their absence from school.

What doesn't work?

Source: ERO survey data analysis, site visits and interviews

More support is needed to prevent problem attendance reoccurring.

Seventy-six percent (N = 97) of Attendance Services report that support is not always put in place so students continue to attend once they have re-engaged.

Although nearly four in five students (79 percent, N = 203) identify learning at school as a driver for their attendance issues, under half (44 percent, N = 105) of school leaders report they have changed schoolwork to better suit learners on their return.

There are a lack of tailored, alternative, and vocational education offers that keep students engaged and motivated.

Students do not attend when they do not see the point in what they are learning as it is not relevant to their aspirations, or it is not at the right level for them. Seventy-nine percent (N = 203) of students identify their learning as a barrier to attendance.

We found that for many students, the courses offered did not fit their interests or learning abilities, which meant they were less interested in attending school. For some there was a mismatch in the level of learning offered (too easy or too hard) which meant they were reluctant to attend class.

There are not enough options for students to learn things that matter to them, in ways that work for them.

There are limited options available for re-engaging students in learning that fits them. Access to alternative pathways or vocational courses is limited through wait lists, and in some cases only accessible to students with a positive attendance record. Vocational courses are sometimes available through exemptions at 15.5 years old. Over half of schools (59 percent, N = 129) and Attendance Services (58 percent, N = 63) report there are not opportunities for young people to learn in other settings.

Source: ERO site visits, interviews, focus groups and surveys

Secondary school teachers told us about the frustration in trying to enroll students in Alternative Education or exempted courses due to isolation, travel costs, or wait lists.

> "[We need to] provide quality education options to students for whom mainstream school is not the best option, and different education options for neurodiverse and disabled learners where appropriate." (Attendance Service provider)

h) Roles, accountability and funding

Resourcing and caseloads	There is inequitable distribution of attendance caseloads, and resourcing does not match need. Schools are not able to access the attendance support they need, and many Attendance Services lack the capacity to respond effectively. There are services with a typical caseload of over 500 and others with a caseload of less than 40.	
Accountability and contract model	The recent change in requirements for monitoring and reporting attendance has led to an increased focus on attendance rates. There is, however, little or no accountability for improving these.	
Clarity of roles	It is not clear in the system who is responsible for what. There are different interpretations of roles, leading to variability in practice and understanding of responsibilities.	

What doesn't work?

Source: Ministry of Education

Resourcing does not match the level of need.

There is variation in the size of contracts and funding (from around $20,000 to $1.4m) and in how much funding is allocated per eligible student – from $61 to $1,160 per eligible student.

Funding allocation has not increased to match the increase in chronic absence, which has doubled since 2015.

Source: ERO survey data analysis

There is inequitable distribution of attendance caseloads. There are services we visited with a typical caseload of over 500 and others with a caseload of less than 40.

Most Attendance Services are facing high and increasing caseloads, and often do not have the capacity to work effectively to resolve attendance issues. Many Attendance Services work with a high number of schools. From our survey, Attendance Services work with an average of 37 schools, this ranges from two to more than 200.

Source: ERO site visits, interviews / focus groups and surveysSource: ERO site visits, interviews, focus groups and surveys

The volumes of cases managed by providers varies from four cases to 1,743 (providers supporting all types of referrals) and 4,397 cases for one provider supporting non-enrolled cases only.

> "My colleagues and I would be much more effective if our team was doubled or tripled – we usually know what would work, and have the skills to carry out successful interventions, but simply don't have enough time to provide effective help to everyone on our caseloads. We also know that there are many more students we could help, but schools don't refer them because they know we are already well over our capacity to respond." (Attendance Service staff)

Schools are not able to access the attendance support they need.

Over half of school leaders (60 percent, N = 134) report that there are not enough Attendance Services in their area.

Schools are finding it difficult to give sufficient time and resources to attendance matters – monitoring and analysing, engaging with families, planning and implementing strategies and support for students, and ensuring re-engagement is appropriately supported.

Who is responsible for what is unclear. School leaders and Attendance Services say they know their roles and what they are responsible for, but interpret their roles differently and make up their own roles and systems.

Most school leaders (86 percent, N = 190) and Attendance Service staff (84 percent, N = 92) say they know what their roles are when resolving attendance issues, but what they told us they were expected to do did not match. Two in five Attendance Service staff (40 percent, N = 47) and a fifth of school leaders (21 percent, N = 45) report the need for more clarity about the roles and responsibilities.

There is variation between schools on what they consider meets the legislatively required 'reasonable steps' they take to address barriers to attendance and get students to school. There is also variation in understanding when it was appropriate to refer a student to Attendance Services. We found there was confusion about the role and responsibilities of support services (such as Resource Teachers Learning and Behaviour, Social Workers in Schools, Learning Support Co-ordinators) to support attendance.

People are not sure who is supposed to do what if they are unable to get a chronically absent student back to school.

Both Attendance Services and schools were unsure what to do if they are unable to get students back to school. This was particularly so if they couldn't contact a family or access a property to investigate the causes of absence.

Schools and Attendance Services are both unsure about who took responsibility to work with students who become unenrolled or disappear from the system.

Accountability is weak.

Schools are legally responsible for making sure students attend school, and they must keep daily records and submit their attendance data to the Ministry each term. There is not an agreed operating model, how schools choose to improve attendance is up to them and while ERO can identify that schools need to improve attendance, there are limited mechanisms in place to hold schools to account if they fail to do so.

Attendance Services have contractual obligations to the Ministry, including reporting against key performance indicators (KPIs). The only levers to address non-performance are contractual.

3. What models and provisions do other countries have to manage attendance?

Source: International literature review

The expectations for enrolment and attendance in Aotearoa New Zealand are comparable to the expectations in England, New South Wales (NSW, Australia), and Singapore. However, the way these expectations are managed in those countries is different in several critical areas like:

→ what counts as 'chronic absence'

→ autonomy

→ guidance

→ accountability

→ escalation pathways.

What counts as 'chronic absence'?

Aotearoa New Zealand has a focus on chronic absence. Out of the countries we looked at, Aotearoa New Zealand is the only one with a distinct category to capture chronic absence (<70 percent attendance). England capture 'severe absence', but this is classified as under 50 percent attendance.

Aotearoa New Zealand has a high level of autonomy.

Aotearoa New Zealand was unique in the level of autonomy held at the school level. Expectations allow boards and Attendance Services to design their own solutions to poor attendance. This is different from Australia, where there is a tiered framework of support and intervention and tailored to the school community. It is also different from Singapore and England who have a more centralised education system.

Aotearoa New Zealand has limited guidance.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, there is limited guidance for schools on what reasonable steps they should take in practice to lift attendance before referrals to Attendance Services are made. This is different from England, where schools must follow detailed statutory guidance on improving attendance. There are also a range of additional guidance and resources available, including specific support for schools through 'attendance hubs'.

Aotearoa New Zealand has weaker accountability.

Aotearoa New Zealand schools face fewer ramifications for poor attendance than schools in England and New South Wales, Australia (NSW). ERO looks at school attendance at a system level, or when schools see it as a priority, but there are no clear ramifications for poor attendance in Aotearoa New Zealand schools. This is different from England, where attendance is considered as part of Ofsted inspections, and schools may face serious consequences if attendance is unacceptably low. In NSW, attendance rates are a performance indicator within the National Education Agreement and a key performance measure in the Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia.

Aotearoa New Zealand has weaker enforcement.

Escalation pathways in Aotearoa New Zealand are less clear and not as consistently applied as other countries. Parents can be fined, and schools or Attendance Services can request a Family Group Conference, but these are not regularly used in practice. In England, there are a variety of options and steps available. Fines are regularly issued, and councils can apply for an Education Supervision or School Attendance Order, before prosecuting parents as a last resort.

Conclusion

Effectively returning students to school and increasing their attendance requires a coherent approach with eight key components. We found most of these are not working effectively across the system for supporting attendance.

The system in Aotearoa New Zealand does not perform well across the components of good practice. In particular, the system does not perform well at removing barriers to attendance and enforcing compliance, returning students to school, and/or increasing their attendance, and planning for sustained attendance and sustaining good attendance. There are some enabling conditions that also require improvement.

The next chapter of this report looks at how we analysed the impact of the Attendance Services and other initiatives to support attendance.

Chapter 7: How effective are Attendance Services?

The current Attendance Service model is not delivering sustained improvements in attendance. Attendance Services are not set up to succeed. The outcomes for students referred to Attendance Services are worse than the outcomes for chronically absent students who were never referred.

This chapter describes how we analysed the effectiveness of Attendance Services, and how they impact the outcomes of the students they support.

What we did

Earlier chapters of this report have shown that the system for chronic absence is not working. To understand the effectiveness of Attendance Services, this chapter draws together information from previous sections and outlines the impact of Attendance Services on outcomes.

Earlier chapters of this report have shown that the system for chronic absence is not working. To understand the effectiveness of Attendance Services, this chapter draws together information from previous chapters and outlines the impact of Attendance Services on outcomes.

Data sources used in this chapter
We established indicators of good practice from our literature review and conversations with experts, and used it to analyse our conversations and responses from Attendance Service staff, school leaders, parents and whānau, and students who used these Attendance Services. The assessment and findings were sense checked with a group of experts and the Ministry.

To understand how effective Attendance Services are at returning students to sustained attendance at school, we drew on:

- IDI analysis of historic data from Attendance Services, and how it links to outcomes
- on-site visits of schools and Attendance Services
- surveys of school leaders and Attendance Service staff
- interviews with school leaders and Attendance Service staff.

SIA analysed the outcomes for students referred to Attendance Services in comparison to chronically absent students who were not referred to Attendance Services. SIA used IDI data for this comparative analysis. Details on this analysis are explained in chapter 2.

What we found: an overview

The model does not set up Attendance Services to succeed.

The contracting model leads to wide variation in the delivery of services. There is no agreed operating model or consistent guidance on effective practice. The funding is inadequate for the current level of need.

Attendance Service staff are exceptionally passionate and dedicated to improving student outcomes.

Despite inefficiencies in the system, Attendance Services ERO visited had dedicated themselves to improving student attendance and providing options to improve chronically absent students' life-time outcomes.

Attendance Services are not leading to sustained improvements in attendance in the long-term.

Attendance rates six months after receiving support from an Attendance Service (62 percent) are similar to rates from one month prior to referral (59 percent).

Attendance Services do not consistently have strong relationships with schools.

Nearly one in five schools do not work with Attendance Services at all (16 percent, N = 34). Only half of schools and Attendance Services meet regularly to share information about students (48 percent, N = 105). Only a third of Attendance Service staff report they always work effectively with schools as a team (34 percent, N = 43).

Attendance Services are not always able to act quickly with their initial engagement in a case.

Only half (50 percent, N = 60) always act quickly when they receive a referral. Once they do, they are not always confident at identifying barriers.

Despite being confident in their knowledge and skills, Attendance Service staff are not drawing from an evidence-base in order to remove barriers.

Most Attendance Services we visited relied on their experience with young people instead of an understanding of the evidence base.

Attendance Services work with a range of agencies, but they do not fully understand other's roles and get drawn into providing other support.

Nearly a third of Attendance Service staff (31 percent, N = 34) report that they do not understand each other's roles when resolving attendance issues, and over a third (38 percent, N = 51) report that there are not systems for collaboration.

Lifetime outcomes for students who are referred to Attendance Services are poor.

Students who are referred to Attendance Services have consistently worse life-time outcomes than students with the same characteristics who were never referred to an Attendance Service.

Our findings are set out in more detail below.

1. How effective are Attendance Services?

In Chapter 6, we showed how the system for supporting chronically absent students is inadequate. In this chapter, we review each of the following elements around Attendance Services. For each, we look at what is and isn't working well.

a. **Improving attendance**	
b. **Working with schools**	

c.	**Responding quickly**	🟧
d.	**Using evidence-based practice**	🟥
e.	**Working with other agencies**	🟧
f.	**Improving lifetime outcomes**	🟥

a) Improving attendance

Improving attendance	Attendance rates for chronically absent students increase slightly after referral to an Attendance Service. However, six months after referral, attendance rates remain below 70 percent, and are only slightly higher than attendance rates one month prior to referral.	🟥

What doesn't work?

Source: SIA, IDI data analysis

Attendance Services do not lead to sustained attendance.

After working with Attendance Service staff, only 41 percent (N = 24) of chronically absent students agreed that it helped them go to school more.

Students' attendance improves during the first month that Attendance Services work with them (to 63 percent), but six months after referral on average students are still chronically absent. This often reflects that school, student and family issues that were barriers to attendance still remain.

Figure 17: Attendance rates prior to, and post, Attendance Service referral
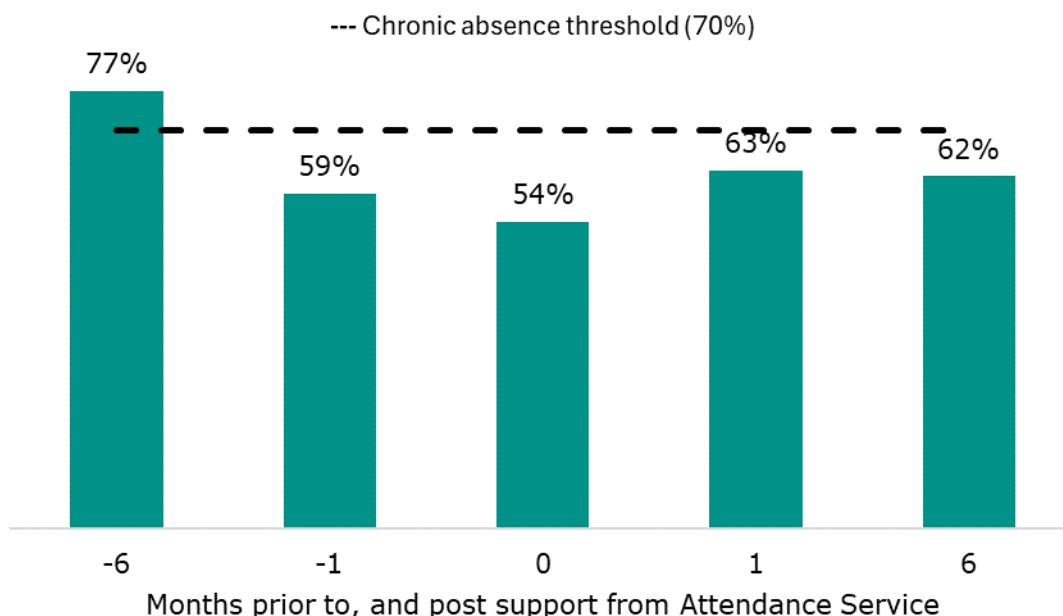
Data Source: Social Investment Agency

b) Working with schools

Working with schools	Attendance Services do not regularly collaborate with schools. Only a quarter of schools receive help from Attendance Services with referrals, and only just over a third receive help developing plans and strategies for students. Nearly three in 10 Attendance Service staff sometimes, or never, work effectively with schools to support young people.	

What doesn't work?

Source: ERO survey data analysis, site visits and interviews

Attendance Services do not have strong relationships with schools.

Nearly three in 10 Attendance Service staff (28 percent, N = 36) report that they do not always work effectively with schools to support young people, and 16 percent (N = 34) of schools do not work with Attendance Services at all. Less than half of school leaders are supported by their Attendance Service in the following ways:

→ meeting regularly to share information about students and families with poor attendance: 48 percent, N = 105

→ receiving help using attendance codes and making referrals: 25 percent, N = 54

→ receiving help analysing attendance data and patterns: 15 percent, N = 32

→ receiving help developing plans and strategies: 39 percent, N = 85

→ receiving help setting up or attending meetings with family: 49 percent, N = 107.

> "I find the schools and other providers often do not understand what our role is and often expect a lot more from us than we can realistically do. The whānau also have unrealistic expectations. Many of them believe we are trained professionals (have studied etc.) and that we will have a magic fix and/or will turn up every day to force their kid to go to school for them." (Attendance Service staff)

c) Responding quickly

Responding quickly	While some Attendance Services have developed clear systems in order to respond quickly, half of Attendance Service staff are not always acting quickly when responding to referrals.	

What works?

Source: ERO survey data analysis, site visits and interviews

Some Attendance Services have clear systems for responding quickly.

We heard from some Attendance Services that they have clear processes for responding to referrals. For example, some allocate the case, contact the school and the family all within three days.

What doesn't work?

Attendance Services are not always acting quickly or effectively when they receive a referral.

Attendance Service staff are not always confident identifying the causes of students missing school. Once they identify the cause of absence, only half of Attendance Service staff (50 percent, N = 60) report they always act quickly to support students. Referral volumes vary considerably according to school term times and seasonal patterns of absence, so an Attendance Service can receive many referrals in bulk and not have sufficient capacity to process all cases quickly.

d) Using evidence-based practice

Using evidence-based practice	Despite agreeing they have the knowledge and skills needed to do their job well, Attendance Service staff are reliant on their own experience with young people. This means that plans and support for chronically absent young people are often reliant on personal experience, instead of evidence-based insights.	

What works?

Source: ERO survey data analysis, site visits and interviews

Attendance Service staff are confident they have the knowledge and support needed to succeed.

Nearly all Attendance Service staff agree that they have the knowledge and skills needed to do their job well (95 percent, N = 126). Nearly nine in 10 report they are supported to do their work effectively (88 percent, N = 115).

Attendance Service staff are often passionate and dedicated to improving student attendance. They have a strong focus on bettering chronically absent students' life-time outcomes.

What doesn't work?

Few Attendance Services staff have good processes for knowing which strategies are effective in addressing barriers and increasing attendance.

Most of the Attendance Services we visited talked about a lack of professional development and information about effective strategies. Many relied on their experience with young people and whether or not they received re-referrals for a student. Few cases gathered comprehensive data about the work they undertook with students and parents and whānau, and were able to identify the types and frequency of barriers.

e) Working with other agencies

Working with other agencies	Most Attendance Services work with a variety of support agencies. However, there is not always a clear understanding of the role other agencies play, and systems in place do not allow for effective collaboration.	

What works?

Source: ERO survey data analysis

Attendance Service staff work with a range of agencies.

Most Attendance Services work with at least one other agency:

→ Health or mental health agencies: 70 percent, N = 80

→ NZ Police: 58 percent, N = 67

→ Oranga Tamariki: 69 percent, N = 79

→ marae or Iwi-based services: 57 percent, N = 65

→ Ministry of Social Development: 50 percent, N = 57

→ Kāinga Ora: 24 percent, N = 28

→ community-based support services: 70 percent, N = 81.

When Attendance Service staff are working with other support agency staff to resolve attendance issues, the majority are confident that everyone understands their roles (84 percent agree, N = 76).

What doesn't work?

Source: ERO site visits, survey data analysis and interviews

Attendance Service staff do not always understand the role other agencies play, and systems in place do not allow for effective collaboration.

Attendance Service staff are less confident that they understand the roles staff in other support agencies play. Nearly a third of Attendance Service staff (31 percent, N = 34) report that school, Attendance Service, and other support agency staff do not understand each other's roles when resolving attendance issues and do not use systems that work to collaborate with them (38 percent, N = 51).

Attendance Services are often drawn into supporting wider family/whānau needs, beyond student attendance.

Attendance Service staff spoke to us about how they need to first attend to immediate needs of the family or whānau to help to gain trust and build their relationship sufficiently to begin to understand any barriers to attendance. Many families are fatigued or unable to navigate support services to get the help they need. The Attendance Services ERO visited had helped parents and whānau:

→ get a job

→ access transport or a bus pass

→ write a CV

→ receive food parcels

→ clean out a house

→ access health services.

Attendance Services often worked directly with parents and whānau in order to later break down barriers to their child's attendance.

Whilst these are important actions to forge relationships and support families and whānau to function and engage, this can divert attention away from addressing attendance issues directly.

"We have access to the services, but capacity is limited... We have become people that [do] everything for everybody." (Attendance Service staff)

f) Improving lifetime outcomes

Chapter 7 sets out the lifetime outcomes of students' who are chronically absent. To understand the effectiveness of the Attendance Service model, we look here at the outcomes of students who are chronically absent and referred to an Attendance Service, compared to those are chronically absent but not referred to an Attendance Service.

The following analysis, completed by the SIA, shows life-time outcomes of students who were referred to Attendance Services, compared to a matched comparison group of students who were absent but not referred to an Attendance Service.

Source: SIA, IDI data analysis

To analyse the outcomes for students refereed to the Attendance Services, SIA used IDI data. The comparative analysis is done using two groups, first; chronically absent students who were referred to the Attendance Services. and second; chronically absent students who were not referred to the Attendance Services. To ensure outcomes are compared for two similar groups, SIA did propensity score matching to identify group of students in the non-referred group who are very similar in characteristics to the chronically absent students with referrals. The details on the data and methodology is explained in the chapter on analytical tools – data and methodology in the chapter 'Data analysis in Integrated Data Infrastructure'.

| Improving lifetime outcomes | Life outcomes for students who are referred to Attendance Services are poor. These young adults are less likely to achieve NCEA Level 2 and earn a wage. They are more likely to live in social or emergency housing, offend, and be a victim of crime. | |

Education

Students who are referred to Attendance Services are half as likely to achieve NCEA Level 2.

By age 20, just under three in 10 students who were referred to Attendance Services achieve NCEA Level 2 (29 percent), compared to just over three in five of the comparison group (62 percent), and 81 percent of the total population.

Figure 18: Education outcomes at age 20 for young adults who were referred to an Attendance Service, compared to the comparison group
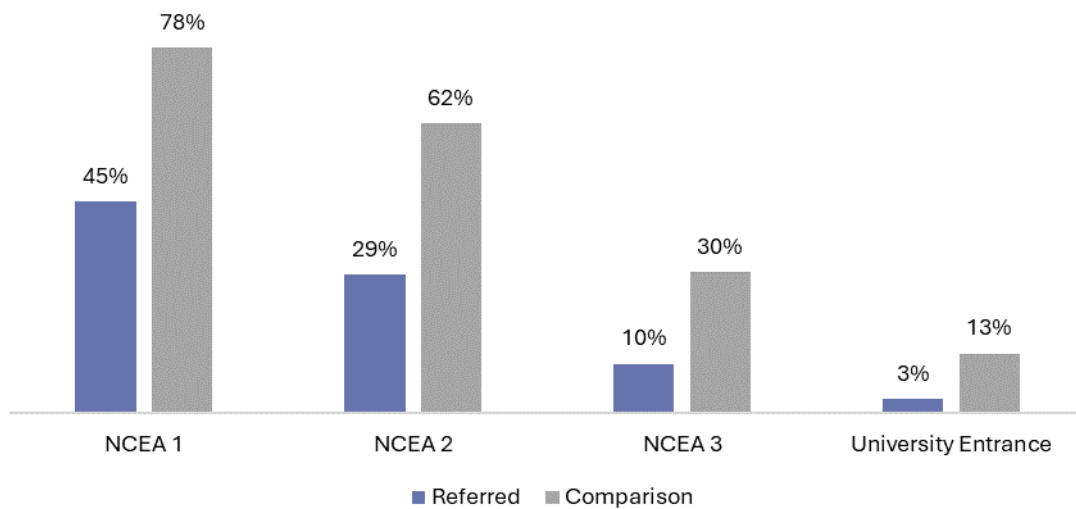
Data Source: Social Investment Agency

Employment and income

Students who are referred to Attendance Services are less likely to earn a wage, by age 25 they earn more than $5,000 less than a comparison group.

At age 20, two-thirds of young adults who were referred to an Attendance Service have a wage or salary income (64 percent), compared to just over three in four of the comparison group (76 percent), and 54 percent of the total population.

By the time they are 25, young adults who were referred to Attendance Services earn $15,464, compared to $22,263 in the comparison group.

At age 20, young adults who were referred to Attendance Services are nearly four times more likely to receive benefits, and by age 25, they draw $2,400 more a year from benefits than a comparison group.

At every age, young adults who were referred to Attendance Services are more likely to be on the benefit. By age 25, 53 percent of young adults who were referred to Attendance Services receive benefits, compared to 39 percent of the comparison group.

Young people who had been referred to Attendance Services also draw significantly more from the benefit; at age 25, young adults who were referred to Attendance Services earn $8,671 from the benefit, compared to $6,337 in the comparison group.

Housing

Young adults who were referred to Attendance Services are more likely to be in emergency housing.

At most ages, young adults who were referred to Attendance Services are also more likely to reside in social or emergency housing. At age 25, 13 percent of young adults who were referred to Attendance Services are in social housing, compared to 11 percent of the comparison group.

At most ages, young adults who were referred to Attendance Services are also more likely to reside in social or emergency housing. At age 25, 13 percent of young adults who were referred to Attendance Services are in social housing, compared to 11 percent of the comparison group.

Crime

Young adults who were referred to Attendance Services are almost twice as likely to be charged with an offence and are more likely to be charged with a violent offence.

From 17 to 24 young adults who were referred to Attendance Services have consistently higher rates of offending. In the year they turned 24[9], 8 percent of young adults who were referred to Attendance Services had been charged with an offence, compared to 5 percent of the comparison group.

Young adults who were referred to Attendance Services are more likely to be in the corrections system.

Young adults who were referred to Attendance Services are significantly more likely to have served a community sentence. In the year they turned 25, seven percent have served a community sentence compared five percent of the comparison group, and 2 percent of the total population. In the year they turned 20, 2 percent have served a custodial sentence compared to 1 percent of the comparison group.

At every age, young adults who were referred to Attendance Services are more likely to be a victim of any type of crime.

At age 25, 6 percent of young people who were referred to Attendance Services had been a victim of any crime, compared to 5 percent of the comparison group.

Conclusion

The Attendance Service model is not successfully improving attendance. They are not set up to succeed, and they receive inadequate funding. This leads to ineffective collaboration with schools, inefficient use of evidence, inconsistencies in initial engagement and closing of cases, and outcomes for students who are referred to Attendance Services remaining poor. Students who are referred to Attendance Services have worse education, housing and crime outcomes, compared to a matched comparison group.

Attendance Services are only part of the system (as set up in Chapter 6). The next chapter of the report sets out how we analysed how effective schools are at keeping students engaged and attending.

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[9] Differences in offending are not significant at age 25.

Chapter 8: How effective are schools in addressing chronic absence?

Schools play a significant role in keeping students engaged and attending. Secondary schools, and those in low socio-economic communities, have higher rates of chronic absence. However, not all schools with these characteristics have high rates of chronic absence. Schools who effectively involve Attendance Service staff, and make sure they and other agencies do what they are responsible for and are held accountable, have significantly lower rates of chronic absence. But not all schools do this.

In this chapter, we set out how we analysed which schools are doing better and what is their key to success.

What we did

Schools are an important part of the system for managing chronic absence. Schools play a vital role in the journey of a student, starting with the identification of their attendance patterns, to their re-engagement.

To evaluate the effectiveness of schools in addressing chronic absence, we drew on:

→ Ministry admin data

→ ERO's School Improvement Framework data

→ surveys of school leaders

→ statistical modelling of school leader responses.

This chapter sets out:

1. how schools are doing

2. what their keys to success in reducing chronic absence are.

What we found: an overview

Schools play a critical role and need to be supported to do more to prevent chronic absence, coordinate with Attendance Services, and then support students return to sustain attendance.

Some schools have exceptionally poor attendance.

There are five schools that have chronic absence rates of 50 percent or above. Only 22 schools make up 10 percent of total chronic absence nationally.

Schools in lower socio-economic areas and secondary schools have greater levels of chronic absence.

Students in schools in lower socio-economic areas are six times more likely to be chronically absent. Secondary schools' (Year 9 and above) chronic absence rate is 14 percent (40,250 students) compared to eight percent (13,987 students) of primary aged students.

Not all schools in low socio-economic communities have high rates of chronic absence.

There are 95 schools in low socio-economic communities with less than 10 percent rate of chronic absence.

Schools that are successful at reducing chronic absence do three key things.

They work in close coordination with Attendance Services, do what they are responsible for, and hold students, parents and whānau, and attendance staff, accountable.

When schools do not manage chronic absence well, there are key themes.

They do not; escalate early enough when students are showing signs of increased non-attendance, share information with Attendance Services, identify the same barriers to attendance that students themselves identify, or work with the Attendance Service providers to coordinate responses and stay connected.

Our findings are set out in more detail below.

1. Summary of how effectively schools are supporting chronically absent students

Source: ERO survey data analysis, site visits and interviews

In Chapter 6, we showed how the system for supporting chronically absent students is inadequate. In this chapter, we highlight the key findings for schools set out under the key areas of:

→ preventing

→ responding

→ returning.

Preventing

Schools are prioritising attendance and setting clear expectations around attendance and are also monitoring, analysing and reporting on patterns of attendance.

Students, and parents and whānau know students are expected to attend school and that they receive frequent reminders from their school about the importance of attendance. Eighty-six percent (N = 266) of parents and whānau with chronically absent children recognise that attending school is important. The rate of chronic absence is lower in schools where parents and whānau understand the implications of non-attendance (7 percent compared to 9 percent).

Schools are not responding quickly to prevent students from becoming chronically absent or acting quickly when a student becomes chronically absent.

Patterns of absence too often go unnoticed or are not investigated, and these patterns become normalised. Only 43 percent of parents and whānau with a child who is chronically absent have met with school staff about their child's attendance, and one in five school leaders (18 percent, N = 33) refer students after more

than 21 consecutive days absent. Seven in 10 Attendance Service staff (68 percent, N = 86) report schools never, or only sometimes, refer students at the right time.

Responding

Schools are not identifying the right barriers to attendance - what they identify does not reflect what students report.

Students who have attendance challenges most commonly report school factors as barriers to attendance, but school leaders most commonly report family factors as the reasons behind student absence. Parents and whānau and students told us that schools do not address school barriers to attendance adequately.

Returning

Source: ERO site visits and survey data analysis

Schools do not always work closely with the Attendance Services or stay connected to students who are chronically absent.

Only half (48 percent, N = 105) of school leaders meet regularly with the Attendance Service, and 16 percent (N = 34) do not work with Attendance Services at all. Information is not shared well with Attendance Services, and there is not always a good handover on return to school.

While many schools welcome students back to school, more needs to be done to help them 'catch up', reintegrate, and maintain attendance.

Just under four in five students (79 percent, N = 203) find learning at school a barrier to their attendance, but under half of school leaders (44 percent, N = 105) report they have changed schoolwork to better suit learners on their return. Seventy-six percent (N = 97) of Attendance Services report that support for students is not always put in place to ensure students continue to attend once they have re-engaged. Schools find it hard to access tailored programmes or alternative education offers. For example, 58 percent (N = 129) of school leaders report that there are not opportunities for young people to learn in other settings.

2. Which schools are doing better?

Source: ERO analysis of Ministry of Education, attendance data

There is variability in chronic absence across schools.

Chronically absent students are not evenly spread across schools. In Term 2 of 2024, there were:

→ forty-three schools who have chronic absence rates between 30 and 40 percent

→ fourteen schools who have chronic absence rates between 40 and 50 percent

→ five schools who have chronic absence rates of more than 50 percent.

Figure 19: Number of schools by the rates of chronic absence
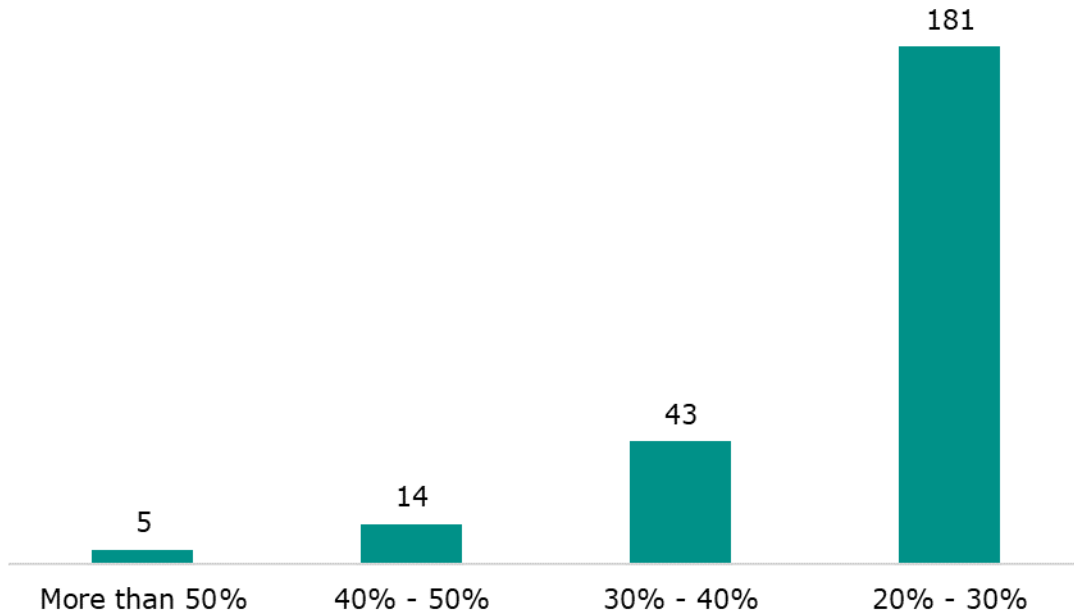
A large proportion of chronically absent students are concentrated in few schools - only 22 schools make up 10 percent of total chronic absence.

Figure 20: Cumulative count of students who are chronically absent (Term 2, 2024)
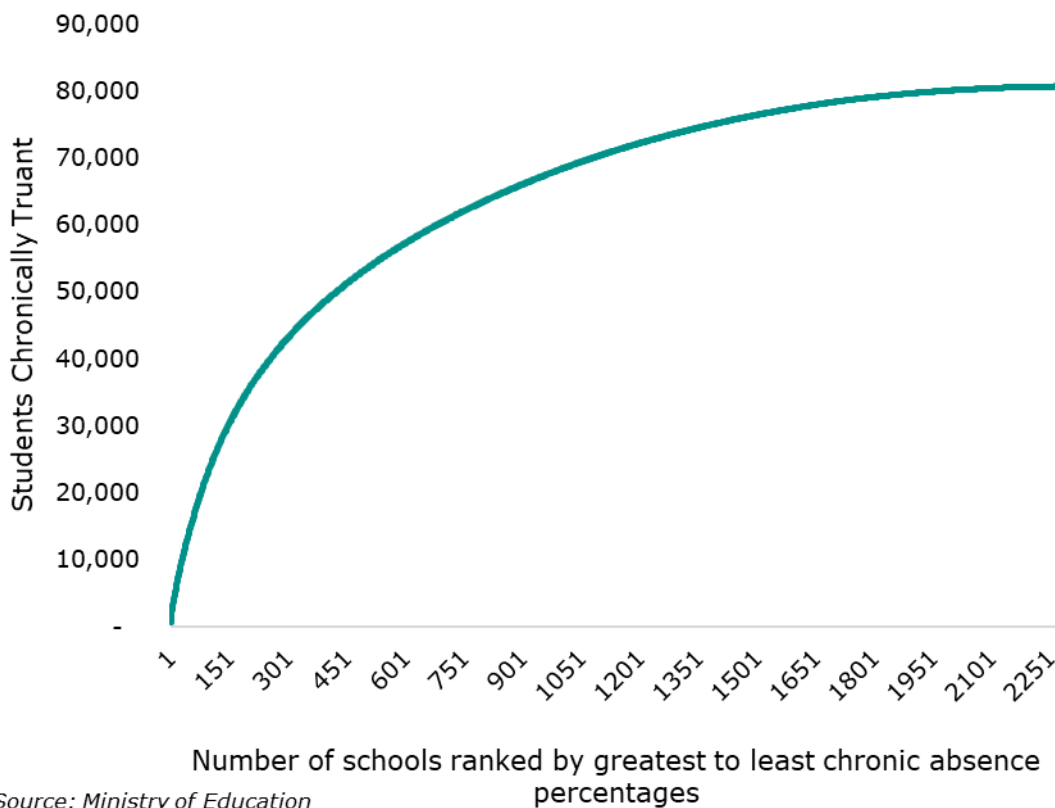
Source: Ministry of Education

Schools in lower socio-economic areas, and secondary schools have greater levels of chronic absence.

Students in schools in low socio-economic communities are six times more likely to be chronically absent. Chronic absence rates in low socio-economic communities' schools is 18 percent (10,072 students) compared to 3 percent (4,885 students) in high socio-economic communities' schools.

Figure 21: Percentage of chronic absence by schools in socio-economic areas in 2024 Term 2
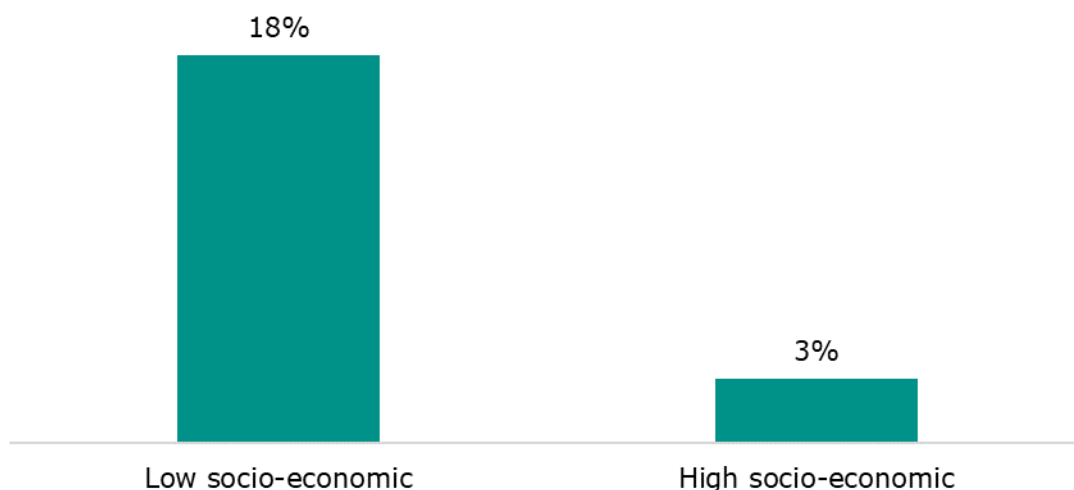
As discussed in Part 2, we found that secondary schools have high rates of chronic absence (14 percent, 40,250 students) compared to primary schools (8 percent, 40,297 students).

Schools in low socio-economic areas do not always have high rates of chronic absence.

There are 95 schools in low socio-economic areas that have a rate of chronic absence at less than 10 percent. Regardless of being faced with challenges arising from low socio-economic conditions, these schools are successful at keeping students engaged and attending.

Source: ERO site visits, surveys and interviews / focus groups

Schools that are successful in reducing chronic absence do three key things.

a. **Work in close coordination with Attendance Services.** They invite Attendance Service staff to their whole staff school meetings. These schools are nearly five times more likely to have low rates of chronic absence.

b. **Act on their responsibilities in managing chronic absence.** Schools that report they do what they are responsible for are nearly four times more likely to have low rates of chronic absence.

c. **Enforce attendance, and hold students, parents and whānau, and attendance staff accountable.** These schools are over three times more likely to have low rates of chronic absence.

Source: ERO site visits and student survey logistic regression analysis

Action	Impact
Attendance Service staff come to whole staff school meetings	Nearly five times more likely to have low chronic absence

School, attendance and other support agency staff do what they are responsible for	Nearly four times more likely to have low chronic absence
Good options to enforce attendance, and hold students, parents and whānau, and attendance staff accountable	Over three times more likely to have low chronic absence*

Source: ERO site visits, and interviews, focus groups

ERO's review of schools shows that the top three school factors that contribute to improved attendance are effective teaching, stewardship, and leadership.

1. **Effective teaching**. Effective teachers deliver student achievement in a way that engages students. They help leading by using proven teaching approaches, understanding of where students are at, and encourage them to success. Students attend because they can see they can succeed and feel welcome in the class.

2. **Stewardship**. Stewardship is the responsibilities, practices, and activities undertaken by a board to ensure there is effective and responsible management of the school that meets statutory responsibilities. When school boards do this well, they ensure accountability for school performance, including ensuring attendance.

3. **Leadership.** Effective leaders enhance teacher quality and student engagement and attendance. They use data, evaluation, and knowledge to understand student outcomes to inform future action, including promoting attendance and addressing chronic absence.

Schools who are not acting early enough, sharing relevant information, correctly identifying barriers, and collaborating with Attendance Service staff are ineffectively managing chronic absence.

Source: ERO site visits and survey data analysis

Schools who do not manage chronic absence well have certain key characteristics.

a. **Not escalating early enough when students are showing signs of an increase in non-attendance.** Just under one in five school leaders (18 percent, N = 33) wait until 21 consecutive days absent before referring students to an Attendance Service. For these schools, students barriers to attendance have become more entrenched and harder to fix.

b. **Not sharing information with Attendance Services to help find and support students.** Fifteen percent (N = 19) of Attendance Service staff report schools never include good information about students in referrals. For these schools, Attendance Services' lack of information can lead them to try strategies that schools have already tried and found ineffective.

c. **Not identifying the same barriers to attendance that students themselves identify**. Four in five students (82 percent, N = 209) identify school factors as what is keeping them from regular attendance, but school leaders focus more on family factors (91 percent, N=). = 218). For these schools, not understanding school barriers to attendance can mean they fail to make the changes needed to turn around attendance.

d. **Not working with the Attendance Service to coordinate responses to chronic absence.** Sixteen percent (N = 34) of school leaders do not work with Attendance Service staff at all. Connection with students is lost making the chances of successfully returning students to good attendance even more limited.

Conclusion

Schools play a significant role in keeping students engaged and attending. However, some schools, such as those in low socio-economic communities, have significantly greater challenges. Schools who effectively involve Attendance Service staff, and make sure they and other agencies do what they are responsible for and hold students and parents and whānau to account, have significantly lower rates of chronic absence. But too many schools struggle to do these things.

The next chapter of the report sets out the sources for our key findings, alongside our recommendations for change towards an improved system that effectively reduces chronic absence.

Chapter 9: Findings and areas for action

The five key questions we asked for in this evaluation have led to nine findings. Based on these findings, we have identified four areas for action, which together have the potential to reduce chronic absence, and improve education achievement and change students' lives. This chapter sets out our findings, areas for action, and our recommendations for improvement.

This evaluation has answered five key questions about students who are chronically absent.

1. Who are the students who are chronically absent from school?

2. Why are they absent?

3. What are the outcomes for students who are chronically absent from school and what are the costs of those outcomes?

4. How effective are the supports and interventions for students who are chronically absent, at getting students back into school and keeping them in school? Are different models more or less effective?

5. What needs to change so that the supports and interventions for students who are chronically absent from school achieve better results and are cost-effective?

Our evaluation led to nine key findings, across five areas.

→ Area 1: What has happened to chronic absence rates in Aotearoa New Zealand?

→ Area 2: Why do students become chronically absent?

→ Area 3: What happens to students who have been chronically absent?

→ Area 4: What works to address chronic absence?

→ Area 5: How good is the education system at addressing chronic absence?

Findings

What has happened to chronic absence rates in Aotearoa New Zealand?

Finding 1: Aotearoa New Zealand is experiencing a crisis of chronic absence. Chronic absence doubled from 2015 to 2023 and is now 10 percent.

Source: Ministry of Education, attendance data

One in 10 students (10 percent, 80,569 students) were chronically absent in Term 2, 2024. This is double the chronic absence in Term 2, 2015, where 5 percent of students (29,355 students) were chronically absent.

Why do students become chronically absent?

Finding 2: There are a range of risk factors that make it more likely a student will be chronically absent. The most predictive factors are previous poor attendance, offending, and being in social or emergency housing.

Source: SIA, IDI data analysis

Students who are chronically absent are:

→ five times more likely to be chronically absent if they were chronically absent in the previous year - 25 percent of students who are chronically absent were chronically absent a year ago (Source: SIA, IDI data analysis)

→ four times as likely to have a recent history of offending - 4 percent of students who are chronically absent have a recent history of offending (compared to less than 1 percent of all students) (Source: SIA, IDI data analysis – regression)

→ four times as likely to live in social housing - just over one in 10 (12 percent) of chronically absent students live in social housing, compared to 3 percent of all students. (Source: SIA, IDI data analysis)

Finding 3: Students' attitudes to school and challenges they face are drivers of chronic absence. Wanting to leave school, physical health issues, finding it hard to get up in the morning, and mental health issues are key drivers.

Source: ERO site visits and survey data analysis

Nearly a quarter of students who are chronically absent report wanting to leave school as a reason for being absent. Over half (55 percent, N=142) identified mental health and a quarter (27 percent, N=69) identified physical health as reasons for being chronically absent. (Source: ERO survey data analysis)

What happens to students who have been chronically absent?

Finding 4: Attendance matters. Students who were chronically absent are significantly more likely to leave school without qualifications and then, when they are adults, they are more likely to be charged with an offence, or live in social or emergency housing.

Source: SIA, IDI data analysis

Attendance is critical for life outcomes; students with chronic absence have worse outcomes. At age 20, over half (55 percent) have not achieved NCEA Level 2, and almost all (92 percent) have not achieved University Entrance. This leads to having significantly worse employment outcomes. At age 25, nearly half are not earning wages and almost half are receiving a benefit. (Source: SIA, IDI data analysis)

Finding 5: Chronically absent young people cost the Government nearly three times as much.

Source: SIA, IDI data analysis

We know that being chronically absent has large individual costs in terms of income, health, and social outcomes. The poor outcomes of young adults who were chronically absent from school also pose a sizeable cost to the Government. At age 23, young adults who were chronically absent cost $4,000 more than other young people. They are particularly costly in corrections, hospital admissions, and receiving benefits. (Source: SIA, IDI data analysis)

What works to address chronic absence?

Finding 6: Reducing chronic absence requires both good prevention and an effective system for addressing it.

Source: International and national literature

The evidence is clear about the key components of an effective system for addressing chronic absence.

- There are clear expectations for attendance, and everyone knows what these are.

- There is a clear definition of what 'poor attendance' is, students are identified as their attendance starts to decline, and action is taken early to address their attendance.

- Students who are persistently absent from school are found, and they and their parents are engaged.

- The student, parents, schools, and other services develop a plan to get the student to attend school regularly.

- The barriers to attendance are removed, and compliance with the plan by students, parents, schools, and other parties is enforced.

- The student is returned to regularly attending school, and additional supports are scaled back.

- Schools monitor attendance, any issues are immediately acted on, and students receive the education and support that meets their needs.

- There are clear roles and responsibilities for improving attendance. Accountability across the roles is clear, and the functions are adequately resourced.

How good is the education system at addressing chronic absence?

Finding 7: ERO's review has found weaknesses in each element of the system.

To understand how effective the model for attendance in Aotearoa New Zealand is, we compared the current practice with the key components of an effective system and found weaknesses in each element.

a) Schools are setting expectations for attendance, but parents do not understand the implications of non-attendance.

Source: ERO survey regression

When students, and parents and whānau do not understand the implications of absence, chronic absence rates increase from 7 percent to 9 percent.

b) Action is too slow, and students fall through the gaps.

Source: ERO surveys

Schools have tools in place to identify when students are chronically absent, but often wait too long to intervene. Only 43 percent (N = 132) of parents and whānau with a child who is chronically absent have met with school staff about their child's attendance. One in five school leaders (18 percent, N = 33) only refer students after more than 21 consecutive days absent. Just over two-thirds of Attendance Service staff report schools never, or only sometimes, refer students at the right time (68 percent, N = 86). Approximately half of schools do not make referrals to Attendance Services.

c) Finding students who are not attending is inefficient and time consuming.

Source: ERO site visits, interviews / focus groups and surveys

There is inadequate information sharing between different agencies, schools, and Attendance Services. Attendance Services have to spend too much time trying to find students. Half of Attendance Services (52 percent, N = 65) report information is only sometimes, or never shared across agencies, schools, and Attendance Services.

d) Schools and Attendance Services are not well set up to enforce attendance.

Source: ERO surveys

Just over half of school leaders (54 percent, N = 119) and just over three in five Attendance Service staff (62 percent, N = 67) do not think there are good options to enforce attendance and hold people accountable. Schools that have tried to prosecute have found the process complex and costly.

e) Students are not set up to succeed on return to school.

Source: ERO site visits, interviews / focus groups and surveys

The quality of plans for returning students to school is variable, and students are not set up to succeed on return to school. While many schools welcome students back to school, there is not a sufficient focus on working with the students to help them 'catch up' and reintegrate.

f) Improvements in school attendance are often short-lived as barriers remain. The education offer often does not meet students' needs, so attendance is not sustained.

Source: SIA, IDI data analysis, ERO site visits and survey data analysis, Ministry of Education, Internal Review of the management and support of the Attendance Service

Attendance rates improve over the two months after referral to the Attendance Service, but six months after referral students remain, on average, chronically absent (attending only 62 percent of the time).

Although nearly four in five students who are chronically absent (79 percent, N = 203) report issues related to school as a driver for their absence, under half (44 percent, N = 105) of school leaders report they have changed schoolwork to better suit learners on their return. Over half of school leaders (59 percent, N = 129) and Attendance Services (58 percent, N = 63) report there are not opportunities for young people to learn in other settings.

g) Accountability in the system is weak.

Source: ERO site visits, interviews / focus groups and surveys

There is a lack of clarity around where roles and responsibilities begin and end. Just over one in five school leaders (21 percent, N = 45) and two in five Attendance Service providers (40 percent, N = 47) want more clarity about the roles and responsibilities.

h) Resourcing is inequitably distributed and does not match the level of need.

Source: Ministry of Education

Funding has not increased to match the increase in demand. Caseloads for advisers in the Attendance Services that ERO visited vary from 30 to more than 500 cases. Funding does not reflect need. Contracts vary in size (from around $20,000 to $1.4m) and in how much funding is allocated per eligible student – from $61 to $1,160 per eligible student.

Finding 8: The model does not set up Attendance Services to succeed.

Source: SIA IDI data analysis, ERO site visits and survey data analysis

The contracting model leads to wide variation in the delivery of services. There is no agreed operating model or consistent guidance on effective practice and the funding is inadequate for the current level of need.

→ Attendance Service staff are exceptionally passionate and dedicated to improving student outcomes but this alone is not enough to achieve good outcomes.

→ Attendance Services are not leading to sustained improvements in attendance in the long-term. Only two in five students (41 percent, N = 24) who were supported by an Attendance Service agreed that Attendance Service staff helped them go to school more.

→ Attendance Services do not consistently have strong relationships with schools - only half of schools and Attendance Services meet regularly to share information about students (48 percent, N = 105).

→ Attendance Services are not always able to act quickly with their initial engagement in a case - only 50 percent (N = 60) always act quickly when they receive a referral.

→ Despite being confident in their knowledge and skills, Attendance Service staff are not consistently drawing from an evidence-base to remove barriers.

→ Attendance Services work with a range of agencies, but they do not fully understand other's roles and get drawn away from attendance into providing other support.

Lifetime outcomes for students who are referred to Attendance Services are poor. Students who are referred to Attendance Services have consistently worse life-time outcomes than students with the same characteristics who were never referred to an Attendance Service. This may be due to unobserved factors (e.g. attitudes to education or bullying), but it does show that Attendance Services are not overcoming these barriers.

Finding 9: Schools play a critical role and need to be supported to do more to prevent chronic absence, coordinate with Attendance Services, and then support students return to sustained attendance.

Source: Ministry of Education, attendance data

a) **Some schools have exceptionally poor attendance** - only 22 schools make up 10 percent of the total chronic absence nationally.

b) **Schools in lower socio-economic areas and secondary schools have greater challenges and higher levels of chronic absence.** Students in schools in lower socio-economic areas are six times more likely to be chronically absent.

c) **Not all schools in low socio-economic communities have high rates of chronic absence**. There are 95 schools in low socio-economic communities with less than a 10 percent rate of chronic absence.

Source: ERO site visits, surveys and interviews / focus groups

d) **Schools that are successful at reducing chronic absence do three key things.**

→ They work in close coordination with Attendance Services.

→ They do what they are responsible for.

→ They hold students, parents and whānau, and attendance staff accountable.

e) **When schools do not manage chronic absence well, there are key themes**.

→ They do not escalate early enough when students are showing signs of increased non-attendance and do not share information with Attendance Services.

→ They do not identify the same barriers to attendance that students themselves identify, or work with the Attendance Service providers to coordinate responses and stay connected.

Recommendations

To reduce chronic absence, we need an end-to-end effective system and supports. Our current system for addressing chronic absence does not deliver this. We need to transform the system by building stronger functions (what happens) and reforming the model (how it happens).

We are recommending action in four areas:

1. preventing students becoming chronically absent

2. putting in place effective supports to address chronic absence

3. retaining students on their return to school

4. putting in place a more efficient and effective model.

Area 1: Prevention

We need to strengthen how we prevent students becoming chronically absent

ERO has found that there are there are a range of risk factors that lead to chronic absence, including previous poor attendance, offending, and being in social or emergency housing. We have also found that physical health and mental health issues are key drivers. To prevent students becoming chronically absent will require social agencies to address the barriers to attendance that sit outside of the education sector.

Who	Action
Agencies	Government agencies prioritise education and school attendance and **take all possible action to address the largest risk factors for chronic absence,** which could include**:** 5. stabilising housing for the families of students at risk of chronic absence, including prioritising school attendance as part of social housing criteria 6. considering school attendance in any early intervention responses, like Whānau Ora 7. considering chronic absence as a care and protection issue.
Schools, and parents and whānau	Take all possible steps to support the **habit of regular attendance,** including acting early when attendance issues arise.
Schools and the Ministry	Schools have **planned responses** for different levels of non-attendance, with guidance provided by the Ministry on what is effective for returning students to regular attendance.
Schools	Find and act on **learning needs** quickly, so that students remain engaged. Address **bullying** and social isolation, so that students are safe and connected. Provide access to school-based counselling services to address **mental health needs**.

All	**Increase understanding** of the importance of attendance, providing focused messages for parents and whānau of students most at risk of chronic absence.
Schools and agencies	**Identify earlier** students with attendance issues, through higher quality recording of attendance, data sharing between agencies who come in contact with them/their parents and whānau, and **acting to prevent** chronic absence.

Area 2: Effective supports

We need to have effective targeted supports in place to address chronic absence

ERO has found that more effective targeted support is needed to turn around the increasing levels of chronic absence.

Who	Action
All	Put in place **clearer roles and responsibilities** for chronic absence (for schools, Attendance Services, parents and whānau, and other agencies).
The Ministry and ERO	Use their roles and powers to **identify, report, and intervene in schools** with high levels of chronic absence.
Schools, the Ministry, and agencies	**Increase use of enforcement measures** with parents and whānau, including more consistent prosecutions, wider agencies more actively using attendance obligations, and learning from other countries' models (including those who tie qualification attainment to minimum attendance).
Services	Ensure that there are expert, dedicated people working with the chronically absent students and their parents and whānau, **using the evidence-based key practices that work, including**: 8. regular engagement to build strong relationships a. identifying attendance barriers and keeping attendance as the main priority b. working with agencies and community organisations to remove attendance barriers c. working with schools to remove school-based barriers to attendance.
Schools	**Work with services** to address chronic absence, including: d. active involvement in referring students to services by providing information about the student, including what the school has already tried to address attendance e. maintaining contact with the students and their parents and whānau while the student is working with the service, to address barriers and to help plan the student's return to school.

Area 3: Retaining students

We need to increase the focus on retaining students on their return

Returning students to school is not enough. ERO has found that schools need to be supported to do more to support students to sustain attendance.

Who	Action
Schools	Put in place a **deliberate plan to support returning students** to reintegrate, be safe, and catch up.
Schools	**Actively monitor attendance** of students who have previously been chronically absent and act early if their attendance declines.
The Ministry and schools	Increase the availability of **high-quality vocational and alternative education** (either in schools or through secondary-tertiary pathways), building on effective examples of flexible learning and tailored programmes from here and abroad.

Area 4: The model

We need to put in place an efficient and effective model

The evidence is clear about what works to address chronic absence, but the current model areas setting schools and Attendance Services up to succeed.

Where	Action
Centralise	Centralise key functions that can be more effectively and efficiently provided nationally, including: f. **information sharing** agreements between agencies, and guidance on how information can be shared g. **prosecutions** of parents h. **interventions and support for schools** who have high levels of chronic absence • national data tracking and analysis, including **identifying students who are not enrolled** anywhere • brokering access to services to **address social barriers** • guidance on **evidence-based practice to address barriers** to chronic truancy.
Localise	Make sure schools have the resources and the support they need to carry out the functions that most effectively happen locally, including: • **prevention** of chronic absence through resolving education issues • **retention** of returned students through a good plan, monitoring, and ability to offer a tailored education. Consider giving schools/clusters of schools the responsibility, accountability, and funding for the delivery of the key function of **working with chronically**

	absent students and their families, to address education barriers, while drawing on the support of the centralised function to address broader social barriers.
Funding	**Increase funding** for those responsible for finding students and returning them to school, reflecting that chronic absence rates have doubled since 2015.
	Reform how **funding is allocated** to ensure it matches need.

Conclusion

Chronic absence has reached crisis levels and have impacts on these students that can last a lifetime. The current system is set up to address barriers and get them back to school is ineffective. If changes are not made, the cost to students and the Government will be high. ERO has made recommendations to fix the system and get students back to attending school. The next chapter of the report discusses the limitations of this study.

Chapter 10: Limitations of this research

This chapter discusses the limitations of this study.

Limitations

Scope

Out of scope of this research was:

→ Students:

- with moderate absence (81 – 89%)

- non-enrolled students who have short period of unenrolment or who are lost from the system

→ Type:

- early childhood education

- STAR, Gateway and tertiary provisions

- private schools

- Kura Kaupapa Māori, Kura a Iwi for school site visits

→ Quality of Provision

- judgements about individual schools or providers

- review of resources for schools

- evaluation of initiatives funded by the Regional Response Fund

- social marketing campaigns

→ Outcomes

- other outcomes from interventions accessed.

Data collection

→ We used schools and Attendance Service providers to distribute the surveys, which means we cannot be exactly sure of the methods used to distribute them. This could possibly lead to a skewed sample.[v]

→ The voices of young people who are not enrolled in school or do not attend school regularly are difficult to access through surveys. While we have captured some of their voices, the majority of students in our sample either attend school some of the time, or have been successfully returned to education (had a history of chronic absence). This means students who were chronically absent in the last two weeks or have a history of chronic absence are included in the analysis. IDI analysis in from 2019 is prior to a new model of Attendance Services delivery that was introduced in 2023.

→ The survey was focused on students who have been chronically absent. Responses are representative of chronically absent Māori and Pacific students but are over representative of chronically absent Pākehā students (Respondents were able to select multiple ethnicities). To ensure robustness, the survey results are complemented with administrative data, including IDI analysis, to draw conclusions.

Data analysis

→ The survey analysis is based on data collected through surveys which were voluntarily completed by respondents. Therefore, our survey respondents are not only chronically absent students, but also include students who attend school some of the time and students who have successfully returned to education. In our analysis, this might have toned down the severity of the issue, the causes of chronic absence, and the ineffectiveness of the interventions.

Appendix 1: Data tables

Table A1: Administrative attendance record data

Year	Term	Total Students (n)	Students Attending 70% or less (n)	Students Attending 70% or less (%)
2024	2	791,391	80,569	10.2
	1	770,035	58,794	7.6
2023	4	719,117	83,976	11.7
	3	780,823	95,620	12.2
	2	777,457	97,271	12.5
	1	758,715	63,113	8.3
2022	4	595,290	75,580	12.7
	3	750,737	96,498	12.9
	2	749,319	104,171	13.9
	1	724,448	103,641	14.3
2021	4	657,400	68,452	10.4
	3	661,358	58,408	8.8
	2	756,732	58,112	7.7
	1	746,919	44,057	5.9
2020	4	715,337	62,407	8.7
	3	745,256	62,487	8.4
	2	742,000	64,876	8.7
	1	700,759	50,891	7.3
2019	4	540,341	40,412	7.5
	3	624,328	45,932	7.4
	2	747,840	54,829	7.3
	1	584,727	23,369	4
2018	2	721,782	43,705	6.1
2017	2	648,167	37,904	5.8
2016	2	632,141	32,199	5.1
2015	2	635,282	29,355	4.6
2014	2	612,131	30,497	5

2013	2	571,201	28,640	5
2012	2	523,814	23,879	4.6
2011	2	433,334	20,620	4.8

Data source: Ministry of Education, Education Counts website
https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/attendance

Table A2: Administrative attendance record data by ethnicity (Term 2)

Year (Term 2)	Students Attending 70% or less (n) Chronic attendance (Numbers)					Students Attending 70% or less (%) Chronic attendance (%)				
	Māori	Pacific	Asian	European/ Pākehā	All	Māori	Pacific	Asian	European/ Pākehā	All
2011	8,383	2,817	1,421	7,654	20,620	9.1	7.0	2.9	3.2	4.8
2012	9,816	3,817	1,700	11,037	23,879	8.5	6.6	2.8	3.4	4.6
2013	11,788	4,877	2,005	13,412	28,640	9.1	7.4	3.0	3.7	5.0
2014	12,613	5,587	2,150	13,927	30,497	9.0	7.7	3.0	3.7	5.0
2015	12,698	5,678	2,216	12,708	29,355	8.5	7.2	2.9	3.3	4.6
2016	13,370	6,035	2,721	14,639	32,199	9.0	8.0	3.3	3.8	5.1
2017	16,393	7,591	3,140	16,755	37,904	10.5	9.5	3.5	4.2	5.8
2018	18,476	8,697	4,027	19,473	43,705	10.7	9.7	3.9	4.4	6.1
2019	23,729	11,479	4,991	23,950	54,829	13.1	12.2	4.4	5.3	7.3
2020	32,265	15,223	4,934	24,554	64,876	17.9	16.6	4.3	5.5	8.7
2021	27,437	13,820	4,237	24,600	58,112	14.5	13.9	3.5	5.5	7.7
2022	45,243	24,161	10,108	46,072	104,171	24.0	24.4	8.2	10.3	13.9
2023	41,284	23,720	11,019	41,803	97,271	21.1	22.5	7.9	9.2	12.5
2024	34,973	18,453	9,167	36,272	80,569	17.7	17.0	5.7	8.1	10.2

Data source: Ministry of Education, Education Counts website
https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/attendance

Table A3: Survey responses

Respondent	Population	Responses
Students	206,000	773
School leaders	2,394	276
Attendance Services staff	394	154
Parents and whānau	137,110	1131

Table A4: Student surveys

Demographics	Number of responses
Male	346
Female	383
Māori	259
Pacific students	91
Asians	60
Pakeha / NZ European	482

Region	Number of responses
Auckland	143
Bay of Plenty / Waiariki	84
Canterbury / Catham Islands	80
Hawke's Bay / Tairāwhiti	50
Nelson / Marlborough / Westcoast	31
Otago / Southland	42
Tai Tokerau	38
Taranaki / Whanganui / Manawatu	115
Waikato	28
Wellington	158

School Year Level	Number of responses
Primary	217
Secondary	376

Table A5: Attendance Services survey

Region	Number of responses
Auckland	25
Bay of Plenty / Waiariki	23
Canterbury / Catham Islands	5
Hawke's Bay / Tairāwhiti	21
Nelson / Marlborough / Westcoast	11
Otago / Southland	17
Tai Tokerau	8
Taranaki / Whanganui / Manawatu	17
Waikato	20
Wellington	7

Table A6: School leaders survey

Region	Number of responses
Auckland	47
Bay of Plenty / Waiariki	18
Canterbury / Catham Islands	29
Hawke's Bay / Tairāwhiti	12
Nelson / Marlborough / Westcoast	23
Otago / Southland	12
Tai Tokerau	14
Taranaki / Whanganui / Manawatu	49
Waikato	37
Wellington	35

Table A7: Parents and whanau survey

Region	Number of responses
Auckland	255
Bay of Plenty / Waiariki	83
Canterbury / Catham Islands	93
Hawke's Bay / Tairāwhiti	18
Nelson / Marlborough / Westcoast	17

Otago / Southland	49
Tai Tokerau	13
Taranaki / Whanganui / Manawatu	284
Waikato	109
Wellington	210

Appendix 2: Surveys

School leader

1. Which Region is your school in?

2-12. What school do you work in? This information is confidential and we won't report on individual schools. (*Region name*)

If your school does not show, please use the Other option and write the name of your school.

13. What is your role?

- Principal DP or AP
- Senior Leader Teacher
- Administrative staff
- School-based attendance or whānau officer
- Teacher Aide
- Learning support staff

14. Does your school host a school-based Attendance Service?

- Yes onsite
- Yes offsite
- No
- Don't know

15. Does your school work with Attendance Service providers?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

16. Which Attendance Service providers does your school work with at the moment? If you don't know, please answer I don't know.

17. Which Attendance Service providers does your school work with at the moment? If you don't know, please answer I don't know.

- leaders meet regularly to share information about students and families with poor attendance
- they help us with use of attendance codes and make referrals to Attendance Services
- They help us to analyse attendance data and patterns
- They come to whole staff meetings to talk about attendance issues and work
- they help us to develop plans and strategies for addressing non-attendance
- they help set up or attend meetings with families and students
- I don't work with Attendance Services staff

- Other (please specify)

18. Does your school work with attendance officers/ pou whirinaki/ re-engagement officers?

- Yes

- No

- Don't know

19. Who in your school is involved in monitoring and analysing attendance and working with chronic absence? Tick all that apply.

- Principal DP or AP

- Senior Leader Teacher

- Administrative staff

- School-based attendance or whānau officer

- Teacher Aide

- Learning support staff

20. Has your school referred any students to Attendance Services in the last year?

- Yes

- No

- Don't know

21. When do you need usually refer students to Attendance Services?

o Following 1-3 days of Unjustified Absence (UA)

o Within 4-5 days of UA

o Between 6-10 days of UA

o Between 11-20 days of UA

o More than 21 days of UA

o Other (please specify)

22. Why do you usually refer students to Attendance Services? Please tick all that apply.

o Student absent due to short-term illness/medical reasons

o No information provided about absence

o The reason is Explained, but Unjustified

o Holiday during term time.

o Students have patterns of attending school for part of a day or miss some classes

- Other (please specify)

23. Are there any reasons why you would not refer students to Attendance Services?

24. How confident are you that your school knows the current barriers to attendance at your school?

- Not confident

- Confident

- Very confident

25. Learning and curriculum

- Student don't want to do some school activities (e.g. sports, maths etc)

- School work is not engaging students as it is too hard or there is so much learning to catch up on

- School work is too easy for them

- Students are not interested in the learning offered

- Students want to leave school

- Students want to learn somewhere else

26. School organisation

- Students have high learning or behavioural needs which the school can't adequately cater for

- The school does not let them attend all the time (e.g. can only attend school with a support person)

- The school won't let them (e.g. because they have been stood down or suspended)

- Legal reasons (e.g. they have to go to court, or they are trespassed from school)

27. Relationships

- Students do not have friends at school

- Their friends skip school and want them to as well

- They get bullied or picked on at school

- People at school behave in racist ways towards them

- They feel like adults at school don't like them

- They don't feel like they belong at school

28. Family commitments or home practices

- Students move between family members or homes

- It is hard for them to get up in the morning when they have stayed up late (e.g. playing video games, watching a movie or noisy household

- They have a job they work at during school hours, or late at night

- They have to look after whānau/family members at home

- There are lots of whānau/family/cultural/special events during school time (e.g. funerals or tangihanga, weddings, overseas travel)

29. Student health reasons

- Their physical health (including long-term health issues or period pain)

- Using drugs or alcohol gets in the way

- Their mental health, including anxiety

30. Not having the things they need

- The students can't get to school (no bus, car)

- Students don't have enough food for breakfast or lunch

- Students don't have the things they need for class (e.g. school uniform, books, devices, bag)
- Other (please specify)

31. Does your school have an attendance policy or procedure that guides the school's response to students' non-attendance?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

32. Please choose the answer that best describes how much you agree with the questions below, thinking about how you work with others to address attendance issues.

The school has clear and high expectations for attendance

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Teachers and leaders use data to monitor the attendance of individual students and identify when there is a problem

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

School leaders use data to identify and monitor patterns and trends in student attendance

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Leaders and teachers have the skills and confidence to act early when they notice a problem with student attendance

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Leaders and teachers know **how** to refer a student to Attendance Services

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree

- Strongly agree

Leaders are clear about **when** to refer a student to Attendance Services

- Strongly disagree

- Disagree

- Agree

- Strongly agree

Students and parents/ whānau understand the implications for nonattendance

- Strongly disagree

- Disagree

- Agree

- Strongly agree

33. Please choose the answer that best describes how much you agree with the questions below, thinking about how you work with others to address attendance issues.

The school has clear and high expectations for attendance

- Strongly disagree

- Disagree

- Agree

- Strongly agree

Teachers and leaders use data to monitor the attendance of individual students and identify when there is a problem

- Strongly disagree

- Disagree

- Agree

- Strongly agree

School leaders use data to identify and monitor patterns and trends in student attendance

- Strongly disagree

- Disagree

- Agree

- Strongly agree

Leaders and teachers have the skills and confidence to act early when they notice a problem with student attendance

- Strongly disagree

- Disagree

- Agree

- Strongly agree

Leaders and teachers know how to refer a student to Attendance Services

- Strongly disagree

- Disagree

- Agree

- Strongly agree

Leaders are clear about when to refer a student to Attendance Services

- Strongly disagree

- Disagree

- Agree

- Strongly agree

Students and parents/ whānau understand the implications for non-attendance

- Strongly disagree

- Disagree

- Agree

- Strongly agree

34. Please choose the answer that best matches how often school staff do the actions below.

Absent students are welcomed back to school, and there is a shared expectation that the school support them

- Never

- Sometimes

- Most of the time

- All the time

Accurate, timely and relevant knowledge and information is shared across agencies, schools and support services to address attendance

- Never

- Sometimes

- Most of the time

- All the time

Support is planned and managed to ensure students and parents/ whānau are able to maintain attendance

- Never

- Sometimes

- Most of the time

- All the time

The school works with students and parents/ whānau to maintain student attendance

- Never

- Sometimes

- Most of the time

- All the time

The school assesses where students' learning is at and has a plan to get them back at school

- Never

- Sometimes

- Most of the time

- All the time

35. Which support agencies do you work with regularly (at least once a fortnight)? (Please check all that apply)

- Health or mental health agencies

- NZ Police

- Oranga Tamariki

- Marae or Iwi-based services

- Ministry of Social Development

- Kāinga Ora

- Community-based support services (Please describe in the box below)

- Other (please specify)

36. In your experience, what works well to increase attendance? Why do you think this works?

37. In your experience, what does not work to increase attendance? Why do you think think this does not work?

38. Please choose the answer that best describes how much you agree with the questions below, thinking about the attendance environment and the staff working in it.

School, Attendance Service and other support agency staff all know what their roles are when resolving attendance issues

- Strongly disagree

- Disagree

- Agree

- Strongly agree

School, Attendance Service and other support agency staff understand each other's roles when resolving attendance issues

- Strongly disagree

- Disagree

- Agree
- Strongly agree

School, Attendance Service and other support agency staff do what they are responsible for

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

There are good options to enforce attendance, holding students, parents/ whānau, schools and Attendance Services accountable

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

There are enough Attendance Service providers in my area to help students in a timely way

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

There are opportunities for young people to learn in other settings that work for them in my area (e.g. health schools, trades academies).

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

The way attendance support operates makes it easy to improve and maintain student attendance

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

The expectations and measures of our performance drive sustained improvement in school attendance

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

39. Please choose the answer that best matches how often the staff working to support attendance do the actions below.

Providers and schools can access appropriate community supports (e.g. health providers, housing, health food, etc) in a timely way

- Never

- Sometimes

- Most of the time

- All of the time

Attendance Service staff have the opportunity to learn and share expertise with other staff working in the attendance space

- Never

- Sometimes

- Most of the time

- All of the time

40. In your experience, what makes it difficult to increase student attendance? (You can choose more than one option)

- Lack of parents' engagement

- The complexity of student needs

- Lack of resourcing within Attendance Services

- Lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities in the attendance space

- Other (please specify)

41. What support and resource could help you and your school to increase attendance in NZ schools? (You can choose more than one option)

- More guidance around effective practice for attendance management

- More engagement from parents

- More support from other agencies (e.g. Oranga Tamariki, Ministry of Health) to address student barriers to attendance

- More resourcing within Attendance Services

- Other (please specify)

42. Has your school accessed the Regional Response Fund to support attendance?

- Yes

- No

43. If yes, Please tell us how you used this?

44. So far this year, how many students have you referred to Attendance Services? If you don't know, please answer I don't know.

45. How many of these students worked with Attendance Services? If you don't know, please answer I don't know.

46. How many of the students who worked with Attendance Services showed improved attendance? If you don't know, please answer I don't know.

47. How many students have maintained their improved attendance? If you don't know, please answer I don't know.

48. Do you have any more comments about student attendance/ lack of attendance in NZ schools?

Student survey

1. Please select one

- I am doing this survey by myself

- Someone is helping me to do this survey

2. I am:

- Female

- Male

- Another gender

- Prefer not to say

3. Do you identify as disabled?

- Yes

- No

4. Are you in the care of Oranga Tamariki?

- Yes

- No

- Prefer not to say

- None of the above

5. How old are you?

6. Which ethnic group(s) do you belong to? (You can choose more than one)

- New Zealand European/ Pākehā

- Māori

- Samoan

- Cook Island Māori

- Tongan

- Niuean

- Fijian

- Other Pacific Peoples

- Indian

- Other Asian

- Other European

- Latin American

- Southeast Asian

- I don't know

- I prefer not to say

7. What region do you live in?

8-18. What is the name of the school you attend (or you used to attend before you stopped attending school)? (*Region name*)

Select your school name. Choose 'Other' if you can't find your school.

Your school name will not be shared with anyone
Other (please specify)

19. What year are you in at school?

These questions will ask about what you think about school, and why you don't go to

school.

20. How often do you feel like going to school? (even if you end up not going to school)

- Never

- Rarely

- Sometimes

- Often

- Always

21. How many days have you been away from school in the last two weeks of Term 2?

- None

- One day

- Two days

- More than two days

- Don't know

22. When you go to school, you...

- go all day

- go part of the day

- go only some days each week

23. How important do you think school is for your future?

- Not at all important

- Not that important

- Somewhat important

- Important

- Very important

24. So far this year you did not go to school because... (You can choose more than one)

- Learning and curriculum
- I didn't want to do some school activities (e.g. sports, maths etc)
- My schoolwork is too hard or I can't catch up on work I have missed
- My school work is too easy
- I am not interested in learning
- I want to leave school
- I want to learn somewhere else

25. School organisation

- I can't get enough support for what I need, to be at school

- The school does not let me attend all the time (e.g. can only attend school with a support person)

- The school won't let me (e.g. because I have been stood down or suspended)

- Legal reasons (e.g. I have to go to court, or I'm trespassed from school)

26. Relationships

- I don't have friends at school

- My friends skip school and want me to as well

- I get bullied or picked on at school

- I feel people at school behave in racist ways towards me

- I feel like adults at school don't like me

- I don't feel like I belong at school

27. Family commitments or home practices

- I move between family members or homes

- It is hard to get up early in the morning when I have stayed up late (e.g playing video games, watching a movie, or my house is too noisy)

- I have a job I work at during school hours, or late at night

- I have to look after whānau/family members at home

- I had lots of whānau/family/cultural/special events during school time (e.g. funerals or tangihanga, weddings, overseas travel)

28. Student health reasons

- My physical health (including long-term health issues or period pain)

- Using drugs or alcohol gets in the way

- My mental health, including anxiety

29. Not having the things I need

- I can't get to school (no bus, car)

- I don't have enough food for breakfast or lunch

- I don't have the things I need for class (e.g. school uniform, books, device, bag)

- Other (please specify)

30. Have you met with school teachers or leaders about your attendance?

- Yes

- No

31. The teachers and school leaders helped me go to school more.

- Strongly disagree

- Disagree

- Agree

- Strongly agree

32. Have you met with Attendance Services staff about your attendance?

- Yes

- No

33. The Attendance Service staff helped me go to school more.

- Strongly disagree

- Disagree

- Agree

- Strongly agree

34. What has helped you go to school more? (You can choose more than one option)
enrolling in a school

- getting the things I need (e.g., clothing, transport, school stationary, food)

- understanding the importance of going to school every day
  my school work has been changed to suit me better

- help for getting along with students and adults at school

- Connecting with others to get support (e.g., for my health, housing, etc)

- Other (please specify)

35. What did teachers, school leaders and Attendance Service workers/officers do that got in the way of helping you attend school more? Why didn't it help?

36. What would help you go to school more?

37. Thank you so much for completing this survey! What you told us will be used to understand better:

- Why some students don't go to school very much

- How students are helped to go to school.

Parent and whānau survey

1. Are you responsible for any child who is aged between 6 and 16 years old?

- Yes

- No

2. What region do you and your family live in?

3-13. If you are responsible for more than one child, please answer this question and the following questions thinking about the child with lowest school attendance.
Which school do they attend? Choose 'Other' if you can't find your school. (*Region name).* This will not be shared and is for analysis reasons only.

Other (Please specify)

14. How old are they? (in years)

15 Are they:

- Female

- Male

- Gende diverse

- Prefer not to say

- Other

16. Does your child identify as disabled?

- Yes

- No

17. Which ethnic group(s) do they belong to? (You can choose more than one)

- New Zealand European / Pākehā

- African

- Māori

- Samoan

- Cook Island Māori

- Tongan

- Niuean

- Fijian

- Other Pacific Peoples

- Indian

- Other Asian

- Other European

- Latin American

- Southeast Asian

- I don't know
- I prefer not to say

18. What year are they in school?

19. How many days has your child been away from school in the last two weeks?

- None
- One day
- Two days
- More than two days
- Don't know

20. When your child goes to school, they

- Go all day
- Go part if the day
- Go for some days each week

21. How important do you think school is for your child's future?

- Not at all important
- Not that important
- Somewhat important
- Important
- Very important

22. So far this year, your child did not go to school because: (You can choose more than one option)

- Learning and curriculum
- My child didn't want to do some school activities (e.g. sports, maths etc)
- Their school work is too hard or they feel they can't catch up on work they have missed
- Their school work is too easy
- My child is not interested in the learning offered
- They want to leave school
- They want to learn somewhere else

23. School organisation

- My child has high learning or behavioural needs which the school does not adequately cater for
- The school won't let them (e.g. because they have been stood down or suspended)
- The school doesn't let them attend all the time (e.g. can only attend school with a support person)
- Legal reasons (e.g. they have to go to court, or they are trespassed from school)

24. Relationships

- My child doesn't have friends at school

- Their friends skip school and want them to as well

- They get bullied or picked on at school

- They feel people at school behave in racist ways towards them

- They feel like adults at school don't like them

- They don't feel like they belong at school

25. Family commitments or home practices

- My child moves between family members or homes

- It is hard for them to get up in the morning when they have stayed up late (e.g playing video games, watching a movie or noisy household)

- They have a job they work at during school hours, or late at night

- They have to look after whānau/family members at home

- There are lots of whānau/family/cultural/ special events during school time (e.g. funerals or tangihanga, weddings, overseas travel)

26. Student health reasons

- Their physical health (including long-term health issues or period pain)

- Using drugs or alcohol gets in the way

- Their mental health, including anxiety

27. Not having the things they need

- They can't get to school (no bus, car)

- We don't have enough food for breakfast or lunch

- They don't have the things they need for class (e.g. school uniform, books, device, bag)

28. Have you, your family or your child worked with school staff to help your child go to school more?

- Yes

- No

29. The teachers and school leaders helped my child go to school more.

- Strongly disagree

- Disagree

- Agree

- Strongly agree

30. Have you, your family or your child worked with Attendance Service staff (e.g. attendance officers or Attendance Service workers) to help your child go to school more?

- Yes

- No

31. The Attendance Service staff helped my child go to school more.

- Strongly disagree

- Disagree

- Agree

- Strongly agree

32. What has helped your child go to school more? (You can choose more than one option)

- help enrolling in a school

- help getting them the things they need (e.g. clothing, transport, school stationary, food)

- understanding the importance of going to school every day

- school work has been changed to suit them better

- help for getting along with students and adults at school

- connecting with others to get support (e.g. for health, housing, etc)

- Other (please specify)

33. What did not work well when working with school and Attendance Service staff to help your child go to school more?

34. Which ethnic group(s) do you belong to? (You can choose more than one)

- New Zealand European/ Pākehā

- African

- Māori

- Samoan

- Cook Island Māori

- Tongan

- Niuean

- Fijian

- Other Pacific Peoples

- Indian

- Other Asian

- Other European

- Latin American

- Southeast Asian

- I don't know

- I prefer not to say

35. What is your highest educational qualification?

- Left school without any qualification

- High school qualification

- Trades qualification

- University graduate

- University postgraduate

36. How many people live in your household (also including children)?

37. How much do you agree with the following statement: *There is enough income to meet everyday needs in our household*

- Strongly disagree

- Disagree

- Agree

- Strongly agree

38. What would help your child go to school more?

39. We would like to talk more about your child's experience of attending school. If you or your child would be happy to talk with us, please leave your phone or email here.

40. Thank you for answering these questions! What you told us will be used to understand better:

- why some students don't go to school very much

- how students are helped to go to school

Attendance Services staff Survey

1. Which region is your service in?

2. Which Attendance Service do you work in? This information is confidential and we won't report on individual Attendance Service Providers.

3. What is the name of your role?

- Attendance Advisor

- Attendance Coordinator

- Attendance Officer/ Pou Whirinaki/ Re-engagement Officer

- Attendance Service Provider Leader/ Manager

- Other (please specify

4. Would you say your role involves more...

- Engaging with students and their parents/whānau

- Engaging with schools about attendance

- Other (please specify)

5. How many schools does your service work with?

6. Approximately how many students have you worked with so far this year?

7. Learning and curriculum

- Students don't want to do some school activities (e.g. sports, maths etc)
- School work is not engaging students as it is too hard or there is so much learning to catch up on
- School work is too easy for them
- Students are not interested in the learning offered
- Students want to leave school
- Students want to learn somewhere else

8. School organisation

- Students have high learning or behavioural needs which the school does not adequately cater for
- The school does not let them attend all the time (e.g. can only attend school with a support person)
- The school won't let them (e.g. because they have been stood down or suspended)
- Legal reasons (e.g. they have to go to court, or they are trespassed from school)

9. Relationships

- Students do not have friends at school
- Their friends skip school and want them to as well
- They get bullied or picked on at school
- People at school behave in racist ways towards them
- They feel like adults at school don't like them
- They don't feel like they belong at school

10. Family commitments or home practices

- Students move between family members or homes
- It is hard for them to get up in the morning when they have stayed up late (e.g. playing video games, watching a movie or noisy household)
- They have a job they work at during school hours, or late at night
- They have to look after whānau/family members at home
- There are lots of whānau/family/cultural/special events during school time (e.g. funerals or tangihanga, weddings, overseas travel)

11. Student health reasons

- Their physical health (including long-term health issues or period pain)
- Using drugs or alcohol gets in the way
- Their mental health, including anxiety

12. Not having the things they need

- The students can't get to school (no bus, car)
- Students don't have enough food for breakfast or lunch
- Students don't have the things they need for class (e.g. school uniform, books, devices, bag)

- Other (please specify)

13. Please choose the answer that best matches how often you do the actions below.
Schools refer students at the right time to our Attendance Service

- Never

- Sometimes

- Most of the time

- All the time

Schools include good information about the student in referrals to our Attendance Services

- Never

- Sometimes

- Most of the time

- All the time

I act quickly to support students when I receive a referral

- Never

- Sometimes

- Most of the time

- All the time

I have safe and positive relationships with students

- Never

- Sometimes

- Most of the time

- All the time

Attendance Services and school staff work effectively as a team to support young people to return to school

- Never

- Sometimes

- Most of the time

- All the time

Attendance staff can get the support needed for young people who are not enrolled in schools

- Never

- Sometimes

- Most of the time

- All the time

Knowledge and information that matters is shared across agencies, schools and Attendance Services

- Never

- Sometimes
- Most of the time
- All the time

Support for students and parents/ whānau is put in place so students continue to attend school once they have reengaged

- Never
- Sometimes
- Most of the time
- All the time

A case is not closed until a student is able to sustain attendance

- Never
- Sometimes
- Most of the time
- All the time

I identify the causes of students missing school

- Never
- Sometimes
- Most of the time
- All the time

I plan how I work with students and families, using what I know about the student and what works

- Never
- Sometimes
- Most of the time
- All the time

I work effectively to remove the barriers to student attendance

- Never
- Sometimes
- Most of the time
- All the time

15. So far this year, what have you done to help students go to school more? (You can choose more than one option)

- Enrol them in a school
- Getting the things they need (e.g. clothing, transport, school stationary, food)
- Understanding the importance of going to school every day
- Asked the school to change their schoolwork to suit students better

- Help them get along with students and adults at school
- Connect them with others to get support (e.g. for health, housing, etc)
- Other (please specify)

16. Which support agencies do you work with regularly (at least once a fortnight)? (Please check all that apply)

- Health or mental health agencies
- NZ Police
- Oranga Tamariki
- Marae or Iwi-based services
- Ministry of Social Development
- Kāinga Ora
- Community-based support services (Please describe in the box below)
- Other (please specify)

17. In your experience, what works well to increase attendance? Why do you think this works?

18. In your experience, what does not work to increase attendance? Why do you think this does not work?

19. Please choose the answer that best matches how much you agree with the questions below, thinking about the attendance environment and the staff working in it.

School, Attendance Service and other support agency staff all know what their roles are when resolving attendance issues

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

School, Attendance Service and other support agency staff understand each other's roles when resolving attendance issues

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

School, Attendance Service and other support agency staff do what they are responsible for

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

There are good options to enforce attendance, holding students, parents/whānau, schools and Attendance Services accountable

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

There are enough Attendance Service providers in my area to help students in a timely way

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

There are opportunities for young people to learn in other settings that work for them in my area (e.g. health schools, trades academies).

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

The way attendance support operates makes it easy to improve and maintain student attendance

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

The expectations and measures of our performance drive sustained improvement in school attendance

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

20. Please choose the answer that best matches how often the staff working in the attendance environment do the actions below.

Providers and schools can access appropriate community supports

(e.g. health providers, housing, health food, etc) in a timely way

- Never
- Sometimes
- Most of the time
- All the time

Attendance Service staff have the opportunity to learn and share expertise with other staff working in the attendance space

- Never

- Sometimes

- Most of the time

- All the time

21. In your experience, what makes it difficult to increase student attendance? (You can

choose more than one option)

- Lack of parents' engagement

- The complexity of student needs

- Lack of resourcing within Attendance Services

- Lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities in the attendance space

- Other (please specify)

22. What support and resource could help you and your school to increase attendance in NZ schools? (You can choose more than one option)

- More guidance around effective practice for attendance management

- More engagement from parents

- More support from other agencies (e.g. Oranga Tamariki, Ministry of Health) to address student barriers to attendance

- More resourcing within Attendance Services

- More clarity in roles and responsibilities in the attendance space

23. So far this year, how many students have been referred by schools to your Attendance Service for unexplained absences? If you don't know, please answer I don't know.

24. So far this year, how many of these students (referred for unexplained absences) were supported by your Attendance Service? If you don't know, please answer I don't know.

25. So far this year, how many notifications of student non-enrolment has your service received? If you don't know, please answer I don't know.

26. So far this year, how many of these students (with non-enrolment notifications) were supported by your Attendance Service? If you don't know, please answer I don't know.

27. So far this year, how many referrals did your Attendance Service close?

28. Of all the students who were supported by your Attendance Service this year, what number... (If you don't know, please say I don't know)

- returned to school?

- enrolled at a different School?

- enrolled in another form of education (e.g. Te Kura, Alternative Education, Health School, tertiary training)?

- gained an early leaving exemption?

- turned 16?

- moved to a different region?

29. Has your Attendance Service used the Regional Response Fund?

- Yes

- No

30. If yes, please tell us how you used it:

31. Do you have any more comments about student attendance/lack of attendance in NZ schools?

Many thanks for participating in this survey! Findings from this research project will be used to understand better:

- the reasons for school non-attendance in NZ

- changes in patterns for school attendance in the last years

- how students are supported to attend school

Appendix 3: Regression Output

3A: Regression output from survey data

Classification Table

Absent days	Number of students
0 or 1 days	279
Two or more days missed in last two weeks	345
Total	624

Model Summary

Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
1	698.466[a]	.226	.302

a. Estimation terminated at iteration number 20 because maximum iterations has been reached. Final solution cannot be found.

Model Estimates

Variable in equation	B	S.E	Sig.	Odds ratio	Lower	Upper
Year level	-0.035	0.213	0.871	0.966	0.636	1.468
Disable student	0.302	0.321	0.346	1.353	0.722	2.537
European	-0.308	0.253	0.224	0.735	0.447	1.207
Asian	-0.18	0.384	0.64	0.835	0.393	1.775
MELAA	-0.951	0.681	0.162	0.386	0.102	1.467
Māori	0.06	0.232	0.795	1.062	0.674	1.673
Pacific	0.238	0.318	0.454	1.269	0.681	2.364
Other ethnicities	0.089	0.454	0.845	1.093	0.449	2.66
Proportion of Māori students	-0.051	0.087	0.555	0.95	0.801	1.126
Proportion of Pacific students	0.022	0.359	0.951	1.022	0.506	2.065
Region	0.324	0.192	0.091	1.383	0.949	2.015
Equity Index	-0.002	0.003	0.537	0.998	0.994	1.003
School size	-0.03	0.117	0.796	0.97	0.772	1.219
Care of Oranga Tamariki	0.761	0.924	0.41	2.14	0.35	13.081

Q1Genderq2v2			0.9			
Q1Genderq2v2(1)	0.002	0.205	0.991	1.002	0.671	1.498
Q1Genderq2v2(2)	-0.213	0.475	0.653	0.808	0.318	2.05
Q23: How important do you think school is for your future	-0.27	0.101	0.008	0.763	0.626	0.931
Q34: Enrolling in a school	-0.454	0.399	0.254	0.635	0.291	1.387
Q34: getting the things I need (e.g. clothing, transport, school stationary, food)	0.393	0.328	0.23	1.482	0.779	2.818
Q34: understanding the importance of going to school every day	-0.083	0.26	0.748	0.92	0.553	1.53
Q34: my school work has been changed to suit me better	-0.452	0.25	0.07	0.636	0.39	1.038
Q34: help for getting along with students and adults at school	-0.145	0.296	0.624	0.865	0.484	1.546
Q34: connecting with others to get support (e.g. for my health, housing, etc)	0.087	0.284	0.758	1.091	0.626	1.904
Q 24: I didn't want to do some school activities (e.g. sports, maths etc)	0.055	0.222	0.803	1.057	0.684	1.634
Q 24: My schoolwork is too hard or I can't catch up on work I have missed	0.254	0.265	0.339	1.289	0.766	2.169
Q24: My school work is too easy	0.215	0.347	0.536	1.239	0.628	2.448
Q24: I am not interested in learning	0.227	0.36	0.528	1.255	0.62	2.542
Q24: I want to leave school	1.158	0.343	<.001	3.184	1.627	6.232
Q24: I want to learn somewhere else	0.25	0.291	0.39	1.284	0.726	2.271
Q25: I can't get enough support for what I need, to be at school	0.445	0.266	0.094	1.56	0.926	2.628
Q25: The school does not let me attend all the time (e.g. can only attend school with a support person)	-1.07	0.687	0.119	0.343	0.089	1.318
Q25: The school won't let me (e.g. because I have been stood down or suspended)	0.082	0.587	0.889	1.086	0.343	3.431
Q25: Legal reasons (e.g. I have to go to court, or I'm trespassed from school)	19.721	16631.9	0.999	3.67E+08	0	.
Q26: I don't have friends at school	-0.004	0.366	0.99	0.996	0.486	2.039
Q26: My friends skip school and want me to as well	0.418	0.506	0.408	1.519	0.564	4.095

Q26: I get bullied or picked on at school	-0.22	0.29	0.448	0.802	0.455	1.416
Q26: I feel people at school behave in racist ways towards me	-0.622	0.451	0.168	0.537	0.222	1.301
Q26: I feel like adults at school don't like me	0.136	0.346	0.695	1.145	0.581	2.255
Q26: I don't feel like I belong at school	0.103	0.297	0.728	1.109	0.62	1.985
Q27: I move between family members or homes	-0.579	0.376	0.124	0.561	0.268	1.172
Q27: It is hard to get up early in the morning when I have stayed up late (e.g playing video games, watching a movie, or my house is too noisy)	0.608	0.241	0.012	1.837	1.146	2.945
Q27: I have a job I work at during school hours, or late at night	0.558	0.492	0.257	1.747	0.666	4.583
Q27: I have to look after whānau/family members at home	0.002	0.486	0.997	1.002	0.386	2.6
Q27: I had lots of whānau/family/cultural/special events during school time (e.g. funerals or tangihanga,weddings, overseas travel)	0.442	0.407	0.278	1.555	0.701	3.453
Q28: My physical health (including long-term health issues or period pain)	0.884	0.24	<.001	2.42	1.513	3.871
Q28: Using drugs or alcohol gets in the way	0.832	1.307	0.524	2.298	0.178	29.754
Q28: My mental health, including anxiety	0.523	0.252	0.038	1.687	1.03	2.762
Q29: I can't get to school (no bus, car)	-0.265	0.458	0.563	0.767	0.312	1.883
Q29: I don't have enough food for breakfast or lunch	0.184	0.559	0.742	1.202	0.402	3.597
Q29: I don't have the things I need for class (e.g. school uniform, books, device, bag)	-1.073	0.473	0.023	0.342	0.135	0.865
	0.236	0.908	0.795	1.267		

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	Lower	Upper
School size	0.640	0.166	14.819	1	0.000	**1.896**	1.369	2.627
Equity Index	-1.186	0.406	8.553	1	0.003	**0.305**	0.138	0.676
Secondary school	-1.398	0.444	9.904	1	0.002	**0.247**	0.103	0.590
Proportion of Māori students	-3.098	1.482	4.369	1	0.037	**0.045**	0.002	0.824

Proportion of Pacific students	-4.329	1.809	5.727	1	0.017	**0.013**	0.000	0.457
Isolation Index	0.121	0.247	0.240	1	0.624	1.128	0.696	1.830
Q17: How do you work with attendance services staff? They come to whole staff meetings to talk about the attendance issues and work	1.579	0.955	2.735	1	0.098	**4.851**	0.747	31.526
Q17: Other than work related to individual students: they help us with use of attendance codes and make referrals(1)	-0.952	0.565	2.839	1	0.092	**0.386**	0.127	1.168
Q17: How do you work with attendance services staff? : leaders meet regularly to share information about students and famalies with poor attendance	0.468	0.471	0.989	1	0.320	1.597	0.635	4.020
Q17 How do you work with attendance services staff? they help us to analyse attendance data and patterns	0.394	0.717	0.301	1	0.583	1.482	0.363	6.047
Q17: How do you work with attendance services staff?, they help us to develop plans and strategies for addressing non-attendance	-0.213	0.481	0.196	1	0.658	0.808	0.315	2.075
Q32: Leaders and teachers have the skills and confidence to act early when they notice a problem with student attendance	2.044	1.370	2.226	1	0.136	7.719	0.527	113.101
Q32:Teachers and leaders use data to monitor the attendance of individual students and identify when there is a problem	-3.606	2.009	3.222	1	0.073	**0.027**	0.001	1.393
Q32:Leaders and teachers know how to refer a student to attendance services	0.494	0.831	0.353	1	0.552	1.639	0.321	8.359
Q32: School leaders use data to identify and monitor patterns and trends in student attendance	0.692	1.708	0.164	1	0.685	1.997	0.070	56.792
Q32: Students and parents / whānau understand the implications for non-attendance	0.152	0.456	0.112	1	0.738	1.165	0.477	2.845
Q32:The school has clear and high expectations for attendance	0.371	2.336	0.025	1	0.874	1.449	0.015	141.084
Q32: Leaders and teachers are clear about when to refer a student to Attendance Services	-0.154	0.614	0.063	1	0.801	0.857	0.257	2.854
Q33:The school works with students and parents / whānau to maintain student attendance	1.537	1.159	1.758	1	0.185	4.653	0.479	45.150

Q33: Absent students are welcomed back to school, and there is a shared expectation that the school support them	0.398	1.258	0.100	1	0.752	1.489	0.126	17.536
Q33: Accurate, timely and relevant knowledge and information is shared across agencies, schools and support services to address attendance	-0.369	0.648	0.325	1	0.569	0.691	0.194	2.460
Q33: Support is planned and manged to ensure students and parents/whānau are able to maintain attendance	0.008	0.721	0.000	1	0.991	1.008	0.246	4.138
Q33:The school assesses where students' learning is at and has aplan to get them back at school	0.151	0.834	0.033	1	0.856	1.163	0.227	5.961
Q38: There are enough attendance Service providers in my area to help students in a timely way	0.251	0.474	0.282	1	0.595	1.286	0.508	3.254
Q38: There are opportunities for young people to learn in other settings that work for them in my area (e.g. health schools, trades academies)	-0.226	0.448	0.254	1	0.614	0.798	0.332	1.919
Q38: School, Attendance Service and other support agency staff do what they are responsible for	1.306	0.781	2.801	1	0.094	**3.693**	0.800	17.051
Q38: There are good options to enforce attendance, holding students, parents/whānau, schools and attendance services accountable	1.212	0.522	5.388	1	0.020	**3.361**	1.208	9.352
Q38: School, Attendance Service and other support agency staff understand each other's roles when resolving attendance issues	-1.547	1.069	2.096	1	0.148	0.213	0.026	1.729
Q38: School, attendance service and other support agency staff all know what their roles are when resolving attendance issues	-0.515	1.058	0.237	1	0.627	0.598	0.075	4.754
Q38: The expectations and measures of our performace drive sustained improvement in school attendance	0.121	0.480	0.063	1	0.802	1.128	0.440	2.891
Q38: The way attendance support operates makes it easy to improve and maintain student attendance	-0.081	0.484	0.028	1	0.868	0.923	0.357	2.383
Q39: Providers and schools can access aprropriate community supports (e.g. health	-0.008	0.556	0.000	1	0.989	0.992	0.334	2.952

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig	Exp(B)	Lower	Upper
providers, housing, health food, etc) in a timely way								
Q39: Attendance Service staff have the opportunity to learn and share expertise with other staff working in the attendance space	-0.157	0.529	0.088	1	0.766	0.855	0.303	2.408
Q14: Don't know if your school host a school-based attendance service	-0.352	0.501	0.493	1	0.483	0.703	0.264	1.877
Q15: Don't know if your school work with attendance service providers	0.182	0.611	0.089	1	0.766	1.200	0.362	3.977
Q31: Don't know if your school have an attendance policy or procedure that guides the school's response to students' attendance	0.158	1.161	0.018	1	0.892	1.171	0.120	11.389
Q18: Don't know if your school work with attendance officers/pou whirinaki/ re-engagement officers	0.025	0.501	0.002	1	0.961	1.025	0.384	2.738

Notes: S.E. = Standard error, B = Beta coefficient, Sig = P value, Lower = Lower confidence Interval, Upper = Upper confidence interval

3B: Regression output from survey data

Classification Table

Chronic absence in a school	Number of schools
More than 5 percent	142
Less than 5 percent	113
Total	255

Model Summary

Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
1	216.038[a]	0.417	0.556

a. Estimation terminated at iteration number 6 because parameter estimates changed by less than .001.

Model Estimates

Notes: S.E. = Standard error, B = Beta coefficient, Sig = P value, Lower = Lower confidence Interval (95%), Upper = Upper confidence interval (95%)

3C: Regression output from IDI data

Chronic absenteeism in 2019 for compulsory aged school (5–15)

regression variables	Odds ratio	Standard Error
Chronic absence in 2018	5.345**	0.173
Male	0.997	0.026
European	0.757**	0.023
Māori	1.522**	0.044
Pacific	1.190**	0.042
Asian	0.853**	0.046
MELAA	0.842	0.093
Auckland	1.024	0.033
has any functional disability in 2014-18	0.963	0.038
Diagnosed with IQ<70 points (intellectual disability)	1.104	0.099
Access to MH services, alcohol addiction and/or drug addiction	1.793**	0.073
Has interaction with police as offenders in 2019	4.206**	0.334
Has interaction with police as victims in 2019	1.174*	0.087
Has Early Childhood Education	0.720**	0.025
Access to Social Housing in 2019	1.413**	0.054
Access to Emergency Department in 2019	1.541**	0.049
Diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder	1.427**	0.129
Access to Emergency Housing in 2019	1.489**	0.081
Has Oranga Tamariki investigations in 2019	1.304**	0.057
Mother access to MH services, alcohol addiction and/or drug addiction	1.071*	0.034
Father access to MH services, alcohol addiction and/or drug addiction	1.067	0.037
Mother with current custodial sentence. Prison and remand in 2019	0.675**	0.080
Mother with community sentence. Sentences excluded prison, remand, aged out and alive in 2019	1.141*	0.067
Father with current custodial sentence. Prison and remand in 2019	1.004	0.055
Father with community sentence. Sentences excluded prison, remand, aged out and alive in 2019	1.207**	0.054
Mother highest qualification- school	0.985	0.041
Mother highest qualification- diploma	0.864**	0.040

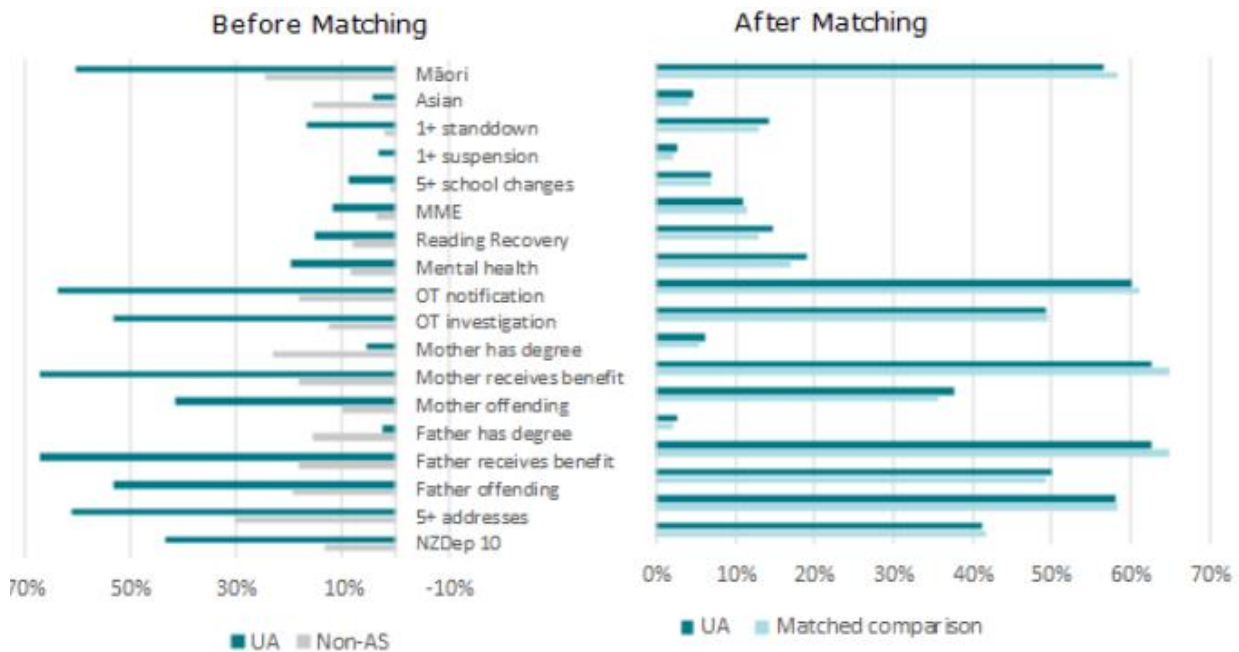|		
Mother highest qualification- degree	0.654**	0.037
Mother highest qualification- postgraduate	0.617**	0.048
Equivalised household income in log	0.909**	0.013
Anyone in household receives benefits in 2019	1.246**	0.047
Household size	1.005	0.005
NZ Deprivation 2018 index based on first address	1.065**	0.006
Constant	0.114**	0.020
Number of observations	87,519	

** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Appendix 4: Attendance Service effectiveness analysis

4A: Matching variables for chronic absence and comparable group: Matched on 98 variables

Demographics	• Male • Māori • Pacific • Asian • MELAA	• Other ethnicity • Born in NZ • Age (exact match) • Birth year (exact match)	**Health disability**	• Intellectual disability • ADHD • Autism Spectrum Disorder • Asthma (current)	• Asthma (ever) • Any evidence of mental health need
Education	• Decile of first school • Prior standdowns (1/2/3/4/5+) • Prior suspensions (1/2+) • Non-structural moves	• (1/2/3/4/5+) • Ever Māori medium schooling • Ever received ORS	**Parent 1 (mother)**	• Qual (school/diploma/degree/post-grad) • Total income in past 12 months (log) • Any income in past 12 months • Any benefit income in past 12 months • Any wage/salary income in past 12 months	• Ever served custodial sentence • Ever served community sentence • Any evidence of mental health need • No record of mother • Sole parent at birth • Teen parent

Oranga Tamariki	• Ever subject of notification • Ever subject of investigation • Care & protection family	• group conference • Youth justice family group conference • Ever placed in care	**Parent 2 (father)**	• Qual (school/diploma /degree/post-grad) • Total income in past 12 months (log) • Any income in past 12 months • Any benefit income in past 12 months	• Any wage/salary income in past 12 months • Ever served custodial sentence • Ever served community sentence • Any evidence of mental health need • No record of father
Addresses	• Number of previous addresses • NZ Dep of first address	• Region of first school (10 Ministry regions) • No record of an address			
Attendance	• Justified absence (%) in prev. term • Unjustified absence (%) in prev. term • Missing attendance in prev. term			• Justified absence (%) in Term 2 prev. year • Unjustified absence (%) in Term 2 prev. year • Missing attendance Term 2 prev. year	

4B: Quality of matching

4C: Longer-term outcomes of students by subgroups
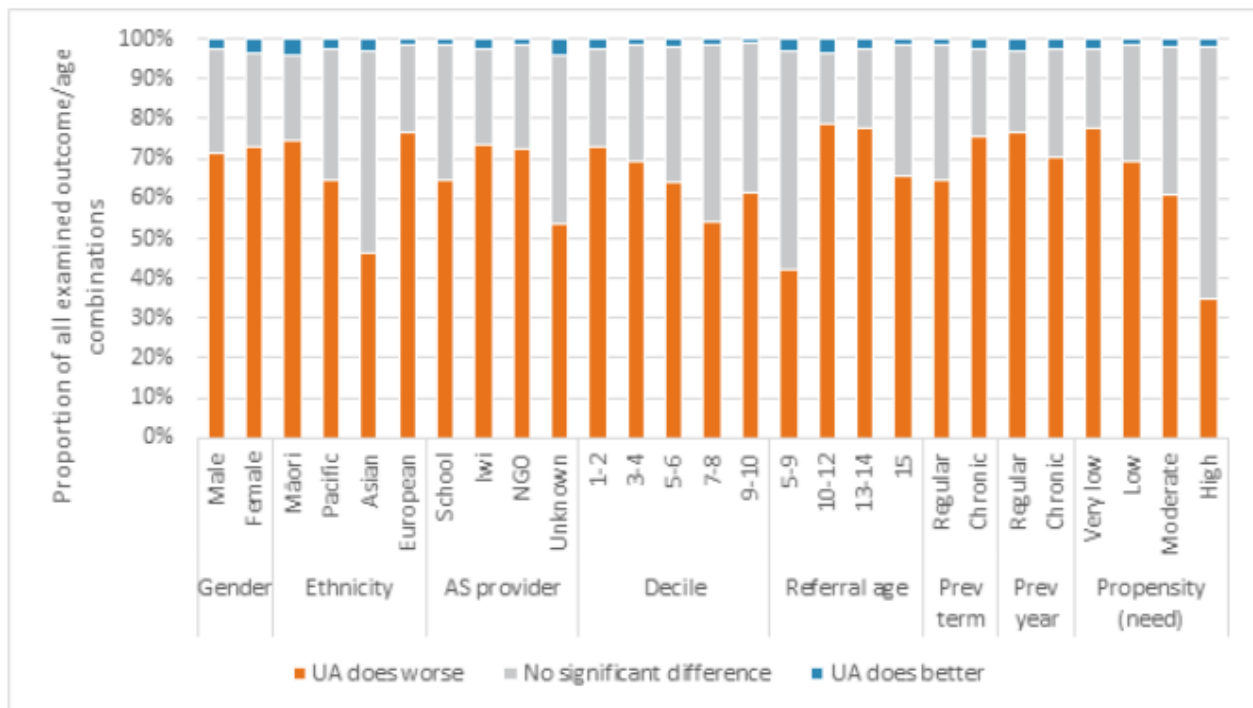
Appendix 5: Attendance Services key performance indicators

Reporting Measure Description	Objective (Target)
How well? **KPI 1:** Ākonga return to a legal learning environment following an unjustified attendance referral within 40 school days.	Up to 75%
KPI 2: No more than 10% of Unjustified Absence referrals are re-referred more than two times in one school year	< 10%
KPI 3: All Non-Enrolment Notifications (NEN) cases open linger than six months must have a plan in place to re-engage the ākonga back into school or a learning environment. The plan must include options that result in a case closure within the following two months. • Cases open longer than six months have a plan in place • These plans are executed, resulting in NEN case closure within 2 months	Up to 75%

Source: From Ministry of Education (2023) Attendance Service Provision Guidelines: Half-yearly and Final Reporting Template

Endnotes and references

[i] Ministry of Education. (n.d). The role of the Ministry of Education – Education in New Zealand. https://www.education.govt.nz/our-work/our-role-and-our-people/what-we-do/#:~:text=Crown%20entities-,Our%20purpose,he%20mana%20taurite%20%C5%8Dna%20huanga

[ii] *Integrated Data Infrastructure: STATS NZ*. Integrated Data Infrastructure | Stats NZ. https://www.stats.govt.nz/integrated-data/integrated-data-infrastructure/

[iii] Education Review Office (x). Missing out: why aren't our children going to school. https://evidence.ero.govt.nz/documents/missing-out-why-aren-t-our-children-going-to-school#read-online

[iv] Ministry of Education (n.d.). Attendance Code Tree. https://assets.education.govt.nz/public/Documents/School/Running-a-school/School-finances/Resourcing/Attendance-Code-Tree-with-hover-over-codes.pdf

[v] Lamprianou, I. (2021). Surveying through gatekeepers in social research: methodological problems and suggestions. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *25*(6), 783–795. https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2021.1940775