

Attendance in New Zealand Schools 2013

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Executive summary

- In 2013, all state and state integrated schools were invited to participate in the attendance survey. The response rate was 80% (compared to 88% in 2012, 88% in 2011, 85% in 2009, 91% in 2006 and 87% in 2004).
- The estimated national absence rate in 2013 was 10.1%. This was similar to previous surveys but higher than in 2012 (9.6% in 2012, 10.2% in 2011, 11.6% in 2009, 11.5% in 2006 and 10.9% in 2004).
- The total unjustified absence rate, or truancy rate, was 3.9%. This compares to 3.8% in 2012, 4.0% in 2011, 4.2% in 2009, 4.1% in 2006 and 3.4% in 2004.
- The national frequent truant rate (students who were unjustifiably absent for three or more days in the survey week) was 1.0%, this rate is unchanged from 2012 and 2011. Frequent truancy was highest for students in year 13 (1.8%) and for Māori students (1.9%).

Introduction

Participating in education is fundamental to student achievement. The Education Act 1989 requires that parents enrol their children at school and ensure they attend school whenever it is open for instruction unless there is a good reason for them to be absent.

Every day a student is not at school is a day they are not learning. Over time, patterns of non-attendance can place students at risk of poor achievement and early drop-out, thus compromising outcomes in life across a range of social and economic measures.

Aims and Methodology

The 2013 attendance survey used student attendance data from the week of 10-14 June 2013. The research investigates the relationships between absence and school level factors (e.g. school type, region, or decile) or student factors (e.g. gender, ethnicity, and year level of the student).

In 2013, 2012, 2011, 2006, 2004, 2002 and 1998, all state and state integrated schools in New Zealand were invited to participate in the attendance survey. In 2009, a representative sample of 768 schools was invited to participate.

Since 2009, two forms of data collection have been used. Schools that use a module in their Student Management Systems (SMS) to enter their attendance records electronically were asked to provide an extract from the electronic Attendance Register (eAR). Schools that do not use eAR were invited to take part in the paper version of the survey. Before 2009 all surveys used paper form data only.

The electronic files supplied by schools contain detailed attendance records. Each record was converted to a single daily attendance code. Schools recording absences on the paper form were required to make their own judgement as to whether a student was absent for all or part of a day, and whether that absence was justified based on the definitions and instructions supplied.

Definitions of Absence and Attendance

Absence and attendance were collected for each student for each day of the week. The year level, gender and ethnicity of the student were also collected. The rate for each absence type given below was calculated based on the total school rolls for the participating schools and related to an average (mean) daily absence for the week per 100 students. It should be noted that this does not tell us whether it was the same students that were absent for a number of days, or whether different students were absent each day.

Absences were classified into three main absence types; justified absences (J), unjustified absences (U), and intermittent unjustified absences (I).

Justified absences: Absences recorded in the register, and marked as having being satisfactorily explained. A school principal has to make a judgement as to which explanations they will accept. The basis for such judgements is a matter of school policy, and as such the balance of justified and unjustified absence may vary slightly from school to school. For the schools with eAR data, students who had attended less than 240 minutes of classes in a day but had NO unjustified absences were counted as a justified absence.

Unjustified absences: Absences which are not explained, or not explained to the satisfaction of the school. For the schools with eAR data, students who attended less than 120 minutes of their classes and had at least one unjustified absence were counted as unjustified absence.

Intermittent unjustified absences: The student is absent for part of a morning (or afternoon) or part of a period without justification. For example, a student who arrives 15 minutes late to school without a reason, or with a reason that is not acceptable to the principal, would be recorded as an intermittent unjustified absence. For the schools with eAR data, students who attended classes for 120 minutes or more and had 2 or more unjustified absences were counted as an intermittent unjustified absence.

The three absences were then summarised into total unjustified absence (the sum of U and I), and overall absence (the sum of J, U and I).

The rate of **frequent truants** was also estimated. A student was classified as a frequent truant if they had three or more unjustified absences (U) during the survey week. The rate of frequent truants provides the proportion of students who are truant (or who are unjustifiably absent from school) at least three times in the survey week.

Response Rates

Of the 2,448 schools invited to participate in the survey, completed returns were received from 1,950 schools, a response rate of 80% (88% in 2012). In total, the responding schools used in the survey had approximately 611,500 students on their rolls, equating to 84% of the student population in all state and state integrated schools on 1 July 2013.

National Absence Rates

The estimate of the total absence rate in 2013 was 10.1%. This is similar to the rate in previous surveys, but slightly higher than in 2012 (9.6% in 2012, 10.2% in 2011, 11.6% in 2009, 11.5% in 2006, and 10.9% in 2004).

The total unjustified absence rate, or truancy rate was 3.9% (compared to 3.8% in 2012 and 4.0% in 2011). This is made up of 2.4% unjustified absences, and 1.5% intermittent unjustified absences. The justified absence rate is also similar to in previous years, at 6.2%. See Table 1.

From the 2013 survey, we estimate that each day 73,500 students from state and state integrated schools were absent from school for all or part of a day during the survey week (compared to 73,000 students in 2012). Of these, 17,500 students were unjustifiably absent from school for 120 minutes or more in 2013 (compared to 17,500 students in 2012).

Table 1: National Absence Rates (2004, 2006, 2009, 2011, 2012 and 2013)

Year*	Unjustified Absence Rate (%)	Intermittent Unjustified Absence Rate (%)	Justified Absence Rate (%)	Frequent Truant Rate** (%)	Total Absence Rate (%)	Total Unjustified Absence Rate (%)
2004	2.1	1.3	7.5	-	10.9	3.4
2006	2.3	1.8	7.4	-	11.5	4.1
2009	2.2	2.0	7.4	-	11.6	4.2
2011	2.3	1.7	6.2	1.0	10.2	4.0
2012	2.3	1.5	5.9	1.0	9.6	3.8
2013	2.4	1.5	6.2	1.0	10.1	3.9

* In 2004 and 2006 data was collected using paper forms only. The use of electronic data and paper forms started in 2009. In this year only a representative sample of schools were invited to do the survey, and their absences were weighted to estimate absence rates at the national level. In 2011, 2012 and 2013 all state and state integrated schools were invited to participate.

** The frequent truant rate was calculated at a national level from 2011. Prior to 2011 it was only calculated for year 9 and 10 students.

The national rate of frequent truants in 2013 was 1.0%. This is the same as rates in 2012 and 2011 (both 1.0%).

Analysis of Absences on Different Days of the Week

Table 2 shows the absence rates by each day of the week. As in previous years, the total absence rate was highest for days on either side of the weekend with 10.9% of students absent on Monday and 11.8% absent on Friday. The total unjustified absence rate was highest on Friday at 5.0%.

Table 2: Absence for Each Day of the Week (2009, 2011, 2012 and 2013)

Year	Day of the week	Roll	Unjustified Absence Rate (%)	Intermittent Unjustified Absence Rate (%)	Justified Absence Rate (%)	Total Absence Rate (%)	Total Unjustified Absence Rate (%)
2009	Monday	-	2.3	1.8	7.5	11.5	4.1
	Tuesday		1.8	2.0	7.3	11.1	3.8
	Wednesday		1.9	2.1	7.0	11.0	4.0
	Thursday		2.1	2.0	7.4	11.5	4.1
	Friday		2.8	2.2	7.7	12.8	5.0
2011	Monday	623,924	2.4	1.6	6.6	10.6	4.0
	Tuesday		1.7	1.5	5.8	9.0	3.2
	Wednesday		1.9	1.8	5.9	9.6	3.7
	Thursday		2.1	1.7	5.8	9.6	3.8
	Friday		3.1	1.9	7.0	12.0	5.0
2012	Monday	642,294	2.4	1.2	6.4	10.0	3.6
	Tuesday		1.8	1.3	5.5	8.6	3.1
	Wednesday		2.0	1.5	5.3	8.8	3.5
	Thursday		2.1	1.6	5.5	9.2	3.7
	Friday		3.1	1.7	6.5	11.3	4.8
2012	Monday	611,553	2.6	1.4	6.9	10.9	4.0
	Tuesday		1.9	1.3	5.8	9.0	3.2
	Wednesday		2.0	1.5	5.6	9.1	3.5
	Thursday		2.1	1.4	5.6	9.1	3.5
	Friday		3.2	1.8	6.8	11.8	5.0

Analysis of School Factors

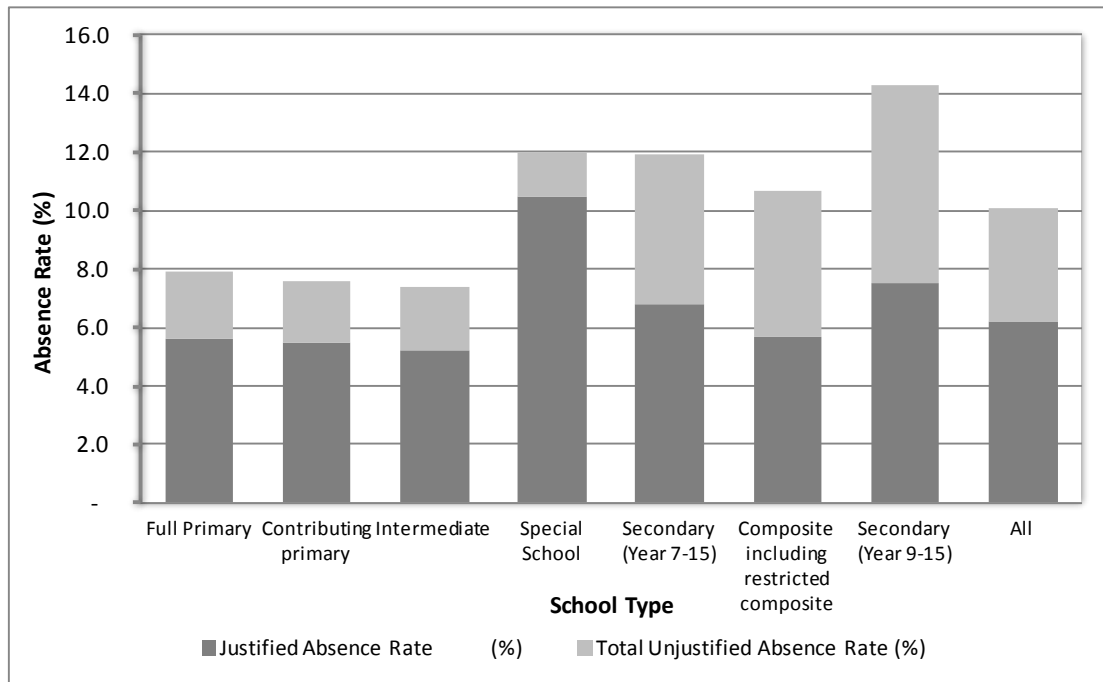
Absence and Type of School

The total absence rates for primary, contributing and intermediate schools were similar at 7.9%, 7.6% and 7.4% respectively (Figure 1). In secondary schools, the total absence rate was higher, at 11.8% for year 7-15 secondary schools and 14.2% for year 9-15 secondary schools. This shows a similar pattern to previous years.

The total unjustified absence rate was also higher in secondary schools (5.1% for year 7-15 secondary schools and 6.8% for year 9-15 secondary schools). This compares to 2.3%, 2.1% and 2.2% respectively for primary, contributing and intermediate schools.

Special schools had the lowest total unjustified rate of all school types at 1.5%. However, the justified absence rate at special schools was the highest at 10.5%.

Figure 1: Absences and School Type

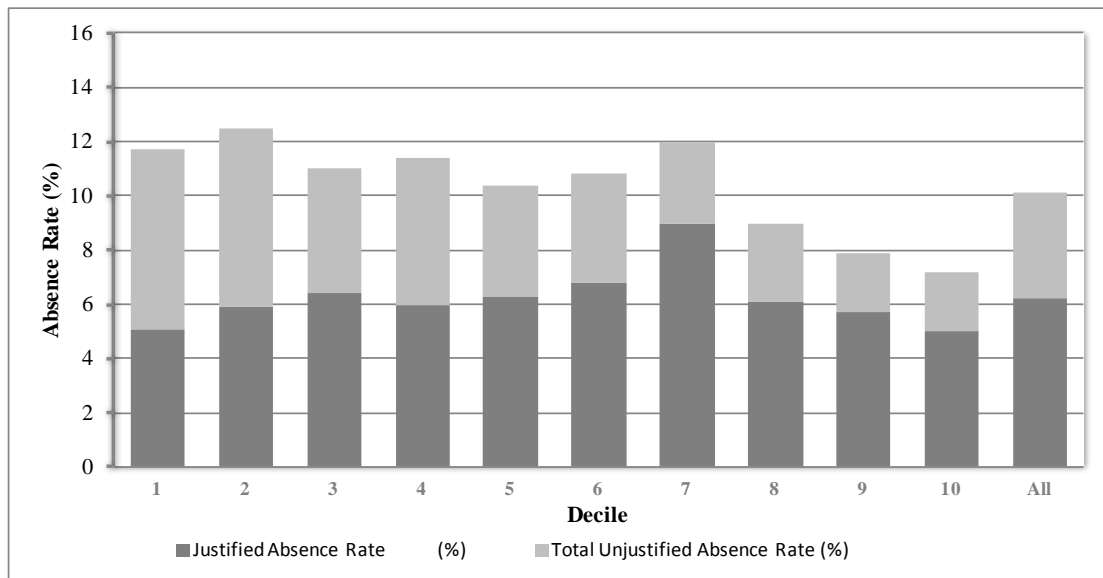


The rate of frequent truants also differs by school type. Secondary schools had a higher rate of frequent truants (students who were unjustifiably absent at least three times during the survey week) when compared to schools who cater for younger students (1.4% for year 9-15 secondary schools, 1.0% for year 7-15 secondary schools, 0.9% for primary schools, 0.7% for contributing primary schools and 0.8% for intermediate schools).

Absence and School Decile

Justified absences were similar across all deciles, except for decile 7 which had a higher rate of 9%. High decile schools had lower unjustified absence rates. In decile 1 and 2 schools, total unjustified absence rates were both 6.6%. This compared to 2.2% in decile 9 and 10 schools (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Absence Type by School Decile



Low decile schools had higher rates of frequent truants when compared to high decile schools: 2.4% for decile 1 schools and 1.9% for decile 2 schools compared to 0.5% for decile 9 schools and 0.6% for decile 10 schools.

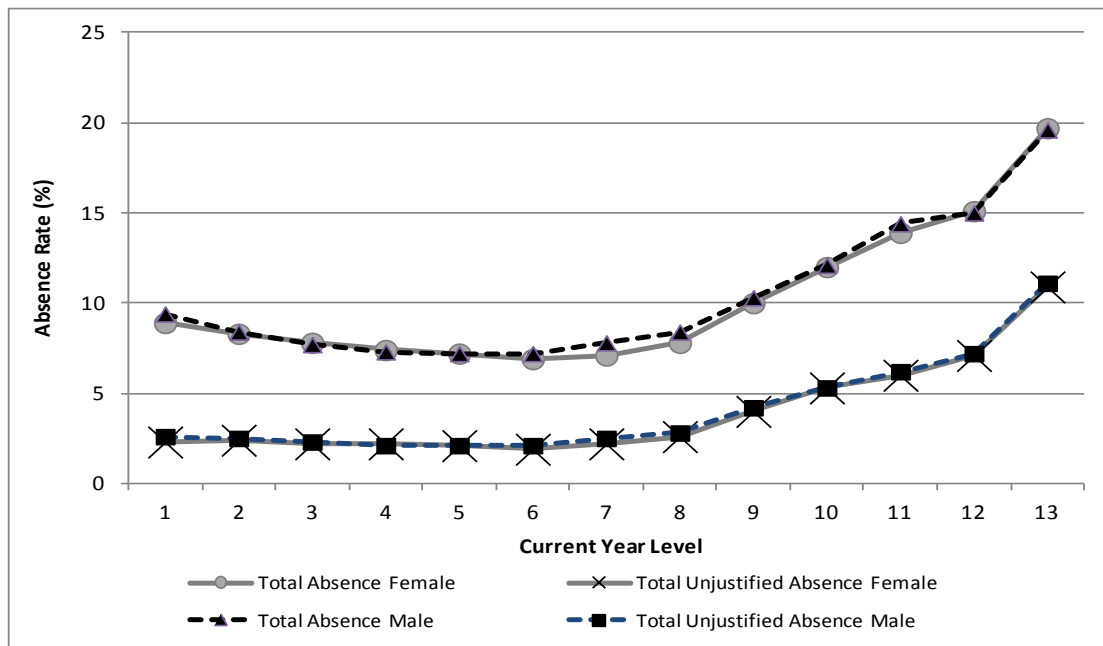
Analysis of Student Factors

Absence and Gender of Student and Current Year Level

Absence rates for male and female students were similar. In 2013, 10.0% of females and 10.2% of males were absent for all or part of the day during the survey week.

Absence increases rapidly from year 8 to year 13¹ (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Absence Rates by Gender and Current Year Level



Students in higher year levels have a higher frequent truant rate, 1.8% for year 13 female and male students, compared to 0.9% for year 1 female and male students.

¹ Note: Year 13 includes students in years 13, 14 and 15.

Absence and Ethnicity

Table 3 shows the absence rates for students by ethnicity. Between 2012 and 2013, the total absence rates for students from all ethnic groups increased, except for Other. In 2013, Māori and Pasifika students had more than twice the rate of unjustified absence compared with Asian and European/Pākehā students.

Table 3: Absence and Ethnicity 2013

Year	Ethnic Group	Unjustified Absence Rate (%)	Intermittent Unjustified Absence Rate (%)	Total Unjustified Absence Rate (%)	Justified Absence Rate (%)	Total Absence Rate (%)	Frequent Truant Rate (%)
2009	European/Pakeha	1.3	1.7	3.0	7.2	10.3	-
	Maori	4.1	2.4	6.5	8.4	14.9	-
	Pasifika	3.9	2.7	6.6	7.2	13.8	-
	Asian	1.1	1.8	2.9	4.4	7.4	-
	MELAA	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Other*	2.3	2.8	5.1	12.8	17.9	-
	All	2.2	2.0	4.2	7.4	11.6	-
2011	European/Pakeha	1.5	1.4	2.9	6.2	9.2	0.6
	Maori	4.0	2.5	6.5	6.9	13.4	1.8
	Pasifika	3.4	2.2	5.5	5.8	11.4	1.4
	Asian	1.2	1.4	2.5	4.3	6.8	0.5
	MELAA	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Other*	2.2	2.0	4.2	8.7	12.9	0.8
	All	2.3	1.7	4.0	6.2	10.2	1.0
2012	European/Pakeha	1.6	1.2	2.8	5.9	8.6	0.6
	Maori	4.0	2.0	6.0	6.6	12.6	1.8
	Pasifika	3.4	1.9	5.4	6.0	11.4	1.4
	Asian	1.3	1.2	2.5	4.1	6.6	0.5
	MELAA	2.1	1.7	3.8	5.2	9.0	0.7
	Other*	2.8	1.3	4.1	11.1	15.2	1.3
	All	2.3	1.5	3.8	5.9	9.6	1.0
2013	European/Pakeha	1.6	1.2	2.8	6.4	9.1	0.6
	Maori	4.2	2.0	6.2	6.9	13.0	1.9
	Pasifika	3.7	2.0	5.7	5.8	11.5	1.5
	Asian	1.3	1.2	2.6	4.5	7.0	0.6
	MELAA	2.4	1.8	4.1	5.9	10.0	1.1
	Other*	2.0	1.1	3.1	8.5	11.6	1.0
	All	2.4	1.5	3.9	6.2	10.1	1.0

* MELAA was a new category in this survey for 2012. It stands for Middle Eastern, Latin American and African which were previously included in 'Other'.

The frequent truant rate was highest for Māori (1.9%) and Pasifika (1.5%) students compared to European/Pākehā (0.6%) and Asian (0.6%) students.

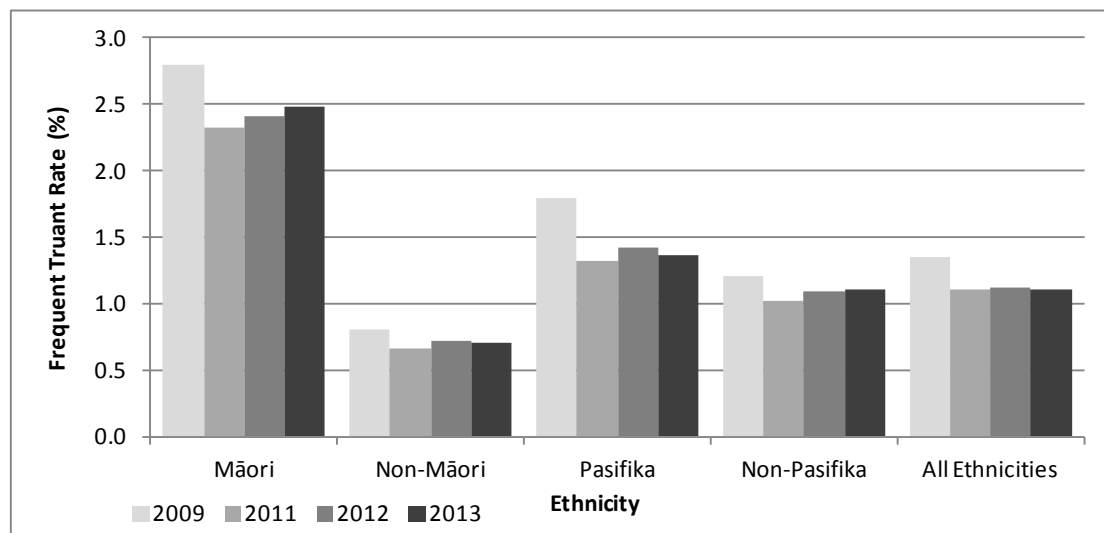
Improving attendance plays an important part in ensuring ongoing engagement in learning and achievement. One of the Ministry of Education's Statement of Intent performance targets is to reduce the frequent truant rate of students in years 9 and 10.

In 2013 the frequent truant rate for year 9 and 10 Māori students was 2.5%. This rate is lower than in 2009 but is 0.1% higher than in 2012 and 0.2% higher than in 2011 (see Figure 4).

The 2013 frequent truant rate for year 9 and 10 Pasifika students remained the same as in 2012 at 1.4%, and 0.1% higher than in 2011.

The rates for Māori and Pasifika students were higher than the rates for non-Māori and non-Pasifika students (0.7% and 1.1% respectively).

Figure 4: Frequent Truant Rates by Ethnicity for Years 9 and 10 Students



Absence Across Different Regions

Regional Council

Table 4 shows absence rates by regional council². In 2013, the total absence rate varied from 8.3% in Canterbury to 14.8% in Northland.

The total unjustified absence rate also varied between regions, ranging from 2.4% in Canterbury to 6.7% in the Northland region. Northland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Gisborne and Tasman regions had a total unjustified absence rate above the 2013 national average.

² Please note that these figures are not age standardised. Therefore, some of the differences between regions may be due to the different age distribution between regions (i.e. one region may have an older student population than another).

Table 4: Absence by Regional Council

Region	Total Absence Rate (%)				Total Unjustified Absence Rate (%)				Frequent Truant Rate (%)			
	2009	2011	2012	2013	2009	2011	2012	2013	2009	2011	2012	2013
Northland	13.0	13.1	11.4	14.8	4.8	5.9	5.1	6.7	-	1.9	1.9	2.1
Auckland	11.4	9.3	8.9	9.8	4.4	3.7	3.5	3.8	-	0.9	1.0	1.0
Waikato	13.6	11.6	11.5	11.4	4.9	4.9	4.6	4.4	-	1.1	1.1	1.1
Bay of Plenty	13.6	11.8	10.6	10.5	4.3	5.5	4.4	4.4	-	1.1	1.1	1.2
Gisborne	14.9	13.1	12.7	12.4	7.9	7.5	7.3	6.4	-	3.8	2.1	1.8
Hawkes Bay	12.0	9.9	10.4	9.8	4.2	3.9	4.7	3.3	-	0.8	1.0	1.0
Taranaki	10.6	9.9	10.1	9.5	4.4	4.2	4.2	3.7	-	1.1	1.4	1.1
Manawatu-Wanganui	10.3	10.2	9.2	8.5	2.3	3.2	2.9	2.8	-	0.8	0.7	0.8
Wellington	12.8	10.8	9.6	8.8	5.7	4.0	3.7	3.3	-	0.7	0.8	0.8
Tasman	9.4	7.3	8.3	9.6	2.6	2.2	2.4	4.9	-	0.5	1.0	1.7
Nelson		9.1	9.7	10.3		3.1	3.6	3.9	-	0.6	0.5	0.8
Marlborough		10.6	10.8	11.0		2.8	3.0	3.3	-	0.8	1.0	0.9
West Coast		9.8	10.3	9.2		3.9	4.3	3.1	-	0.9	1.3	0.8
Canterbury	10.1	9.7	9.4	8.3	3.3	3.3	3.5	2.4	-	0.7	1.0	0.9
Otago	8.3	8.6	8.3	9.8	2.7	2.2	2.5	3.8	-	0.6	0.7	0.7
Southland	9.3	10.3	8.8	8.9	2.9	3.7	3.1	2.6	-	1.0	0.8	0.9
National Average	11.6	10.2	9.6	10.1	4.2	4.0	3.8	3.9	-	1.0	1.0	1.0

* Due to the nature of the sample used in 2009, results for Tasman, Nelson, Marlborough and West Coast were not able to be provided separately.

** Due to the earthquakes in 2011, figures for Canterbury may not represent 'typical' rates for the region. Please refer to the Data Considerations section for more information.

Ministry of Education Regional Offices

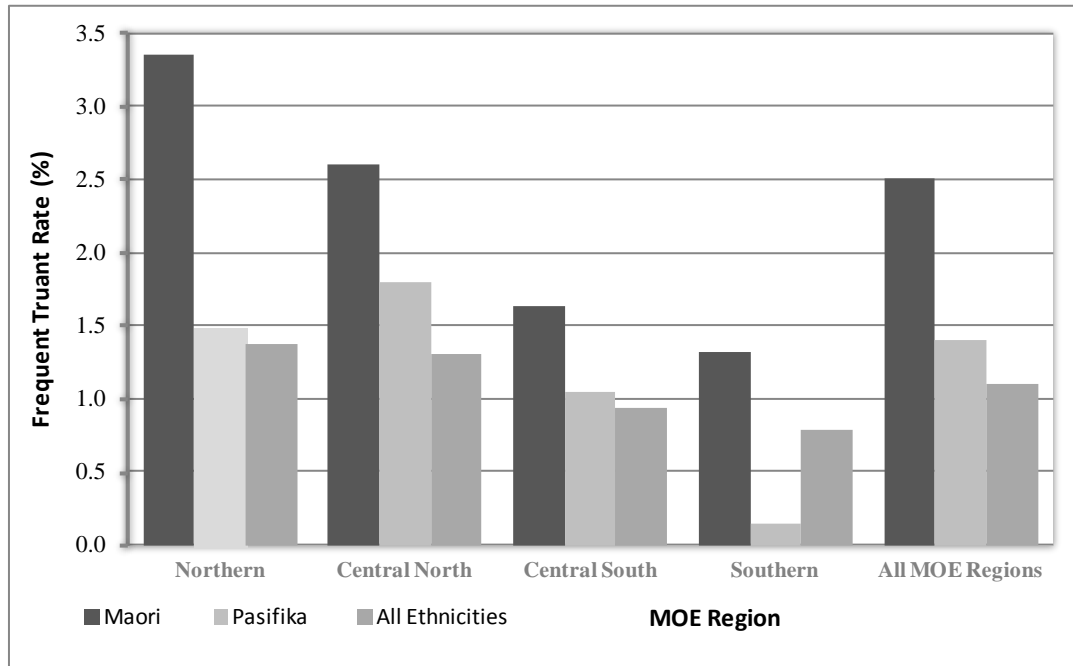
In 2013, all four Ministry regions had similar levels of absence, with Central North having the highest total absence rate and Central South having the lowest. Central North also had the highest unjustified absence rate. The frequent truant rates were lower for Central South and Southern regions, compared to the Northern and Central North regions.

Table 5: Absence Rates by Ministry Regional Office

Year	MoE Education Region	Unjustified Absence Rate (%)	Intermittent Unjustified Absence Rate (%)	Justified Absence Rate (%)	Frequent Truant Rate (%)	Total Absence Rate (%)	Total Unjustified Absence Rate (%)
2013	Northern	2.6	1.5	6.2	1.1	10.3	4.1
	Central North	3.0	1.3	6.6	1.1	10.9	4.3
	Central South	1.9	1.4	5.6	0.8	8.8	3.2
	Southern	1.7	1.8	6.5	0.8	10.0	3.6
	All	2.4	1.5	6.2	1.0	10.1	3.9

Figure 5 shows frequent truant rates for year 9 and 10 students. In 2013, the Northern region had the highest rate (1.4%), with the lowest in the Southern region (0.8%).

Figure 5: Frequent Truant Rate of Students in Years 9 and 10, by Ministry of Education Region and Ethnicity 2013



By ethnicity, year 9 and 10 Māori students had the highest frequent truant rates in all Ministry regions. In the Northern region, the year 9 and 10 frequent truant rate for Māori students has increased since both 2011 and 2012 from 2.8% to 3.3%. In the Southern region, it has decreased to 1.3% from 1.4% in 2011 and 1.7% in 2012.

For Pasifika year 9 and 10 students, Central North had the highest rate of frequent truants (1.8%) and the Southern region the lowest (0.1%).

Data Considerations

Time frame

The survey was carried out in the week of 10-14 June 2013, close to the middle of the second school term. This week was the same week of term as the 2009, 2011 and 2012 surveys. By analysing data from a similar time of year, factors such as winter illness would have been at similar levels.

Some schools and local area activities resulted in school closures during the 2013 survey week. For schools that were closed or had data missing on days during the survey week, the missing data was replaced with alternative day/s from an adjacent week. Schools participating using paper forms were advised to use alternative day(s) from 17-21 June. For schools that submitted electronic data, the corresponding day(s) from either the previous week or the week after were chosen at random.

Effect of the Christchurch Earthquake

On 13 June 2011, Christchurch experienced a large earthquake which struck on the first day of the national attendance survey. Because of this, schools that participated in the 2011 attendance survey may have absences that were not typical for their school.

Comparisons with Previous Surveys

This section outlines some of the known issues with making comparisons between this survey and previous surveys of attendance in New Zealand state and state Integrated schools.

Prior to 2009, surveys were carried out in mid-August and early-September. Due to feedback from schools, starting 2009, surveys were carried out in mid-June, when absences due to winter illnesses were expected to be lower.

The 2009, 2011, 2012 and 2013 surveys used the same instructions as the 2004 and 2006 surveys. However, in 2004 and 2006, data were collected using paper forms only. The use of electronic data and paper survey started in 2009 where only a representative sample of schools were invited to do the survey and absences were weighted to estimate absence rates at a national level. Due to the nature of the sample and the number of responses from schools, some comparisons against 2009 are not possible.

In 2012 and 2013, Teen Parent Units were not included in the computation of national absence rates. Instead, they were put together in a separate data set and made available for reporting, if required.