

# Analysis of the decrease in Reports of Concern

Anyone who is worried about a child or young person can make a report to Oranga Tamariki. These become Reports of Concern when the information is assessed to meet the definition under Section 15 of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989.

Between F2018 and F2022, Reports of Concern have decreased by 28% from a peak of 92,351 in F2018 to 66,487 in F2022. The most significant decrease (15%) occurred during F2022.

We have observed a small increase over F2023, suggesting the number may now be stabilising or recovering from its lowest point.

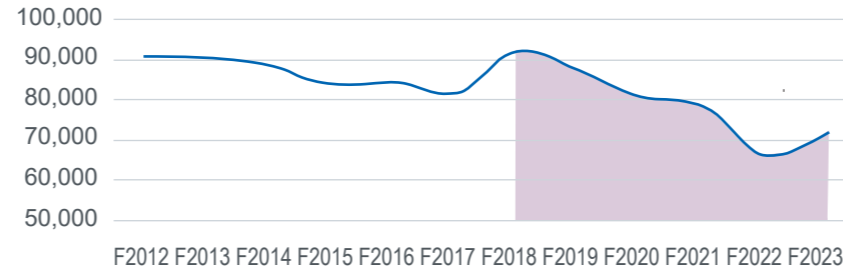


Figure 1: Total Reports of Concern by financial year

Three overarching factors have been found to have contributed to the decrease:

- Barriers to reporting and previous experience
- Practice changes
- External factors, such as COVID-19

## Overview of key trends

**Incoming contact**  
Incoming contact about potential Reports of Concern appear to have decreased since F2017.

**Region**  
Auckland and East Coast saw the greatest reductions (over 40% each) in Reports of Concern, while there was only a 14% reduction in Canterbury.

**Futher Action Required (FAR) Rates**  
The proportion of Reports of Concern that required further action increased from 44% to 52% between F2018 and F2022.

**Ethnicity**  
While the largest decrease in Reports of Concern was for tamariki Māori (-13,075), as a proportion Pacific tamariki experienced the largest drop in Reports of Concern (-44%).

**Age**  
The number of Reports of Concern decreased by more than 30% for unborn babies and tamariki younger than age 10 but less than 20% for tamariki aged 10 and older.

**Notifier Group**  
The decrease in Reports of Concern mainly resulted from reports from Professional/ Government notifiers. Roughly 60% of all Reports of Concern are still made by Police, Education, and Health, but the volume has decreased more than 30%.

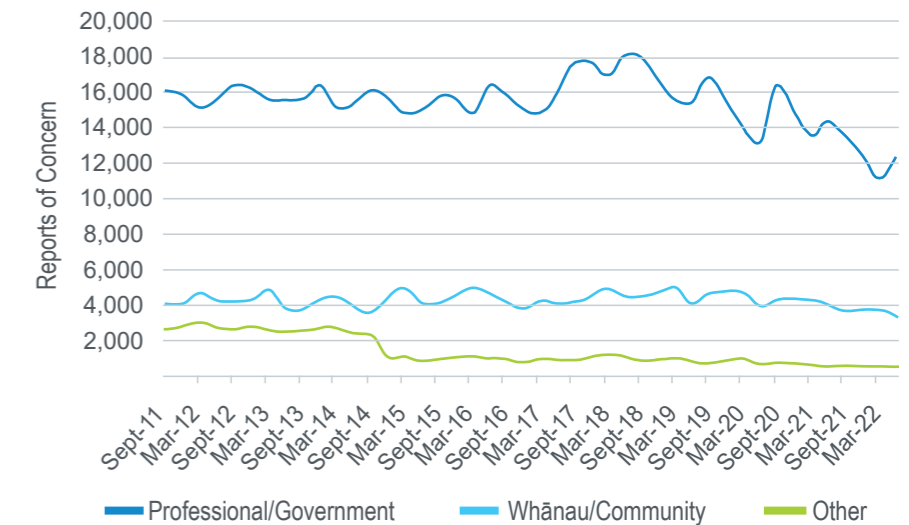


Figure 2: Total Reports of Concern per quarter, by notifier type

## 1 Barriers to reporting and previous experience

**Increasing call wait times and continuously high call abandonment rates may have affected willingness to report**

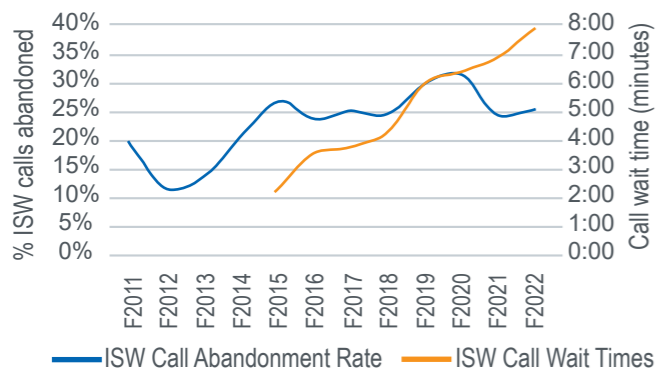


Figure 3: Call abandonment rates and call wait times to speak to an Intake Social Worker (ISW).

**Oranga Tamariki has attracted a high level of media and public scrutiny over the last few years**

Since F2018, numerous external reviews and inquiries received extensive media coverage, raising concerns about public trust and confidence. The Public Sector Reputation Index indicates a steady decline in the reputation score of Oranga Tamariki from 2018 to 2021 (ranking 69 out of 150, the lowest among 58 agencies).

**Previous reporting experience suggests growing frustration in the reporting system, which may impact reporting behaviours**

The Public Sector Reputation Index 2021 found the proportion of people having a positive experience with Oranga Tamariki has steadily declined from 2019 to 2021. While we currently cannot quantify the potential impact of negative experience on reporting behaviour, there is anecdotal evidence suggesting professionals, partners and whānau do not trust their concerns will be addressed properly and in a timely manner through reporting.

**Potential lack of consensus between community reporters and Oranga Tamariki on what should be reported and the process that follows**

A shift in focus from Oranga Tamariki towards community-led prevention and early support led to an adjusted threshold for concerns, only progressing reports for children requiring statutory intervention. However, the lack of clarity on this threshold has led to frustration with outcomes and actions, resulting in reduced willingness to make reports.

## 2 Practice changes

Oranga Tamariki has been gradually introducing a new Intake and Early Assessment process since F2019. This approach has two variations. One is for sites to undertake the Initial Assessment (Site-led), and the other is for the National Contact Centre (NCC) to undertake the Initial Assessment (NCC-led) before they determine it is a Report of Concern and refer to sites. While the reduction in Reports of Concern and the rate of any renotification at NCC-led sites started from F2018, 60% of the current NCC-led sites only adopted the NCC-led approach in F2021, suggesting there are other factors contributing to the reduction before F2021.

Between F2018 and F2022, most of the decrease in Reports of Concern came from NCC-led sites

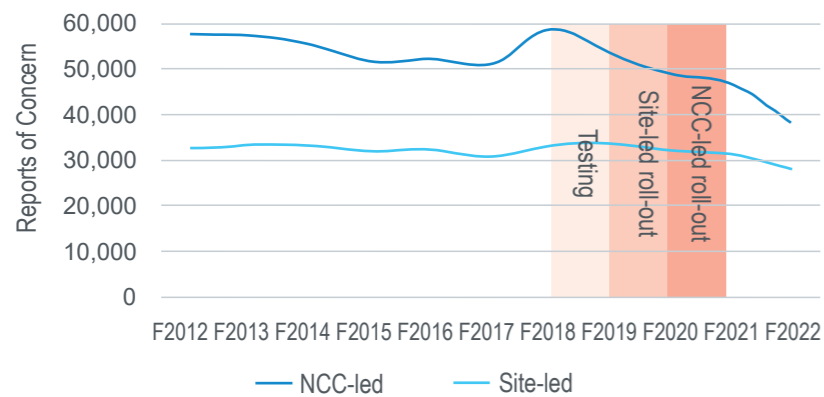


Figure 4: Total Reports of Concern per financial year, by NCC-led and Site-led approach

More advice is being offered on alternative support, including referrals to community services

At NCC-led sites, the National Contact Centre (NCC) offers advice before a potential concern becomes a formal Report of Concern while Site-led sites provide advice only after a Report of Concern is filed, gradually educating notifiers on what requires Oranga Tamariki involvement.

Reports of Concern received by NCC-led sites were less likely to be renotified following a No Further Action (NFA) decision

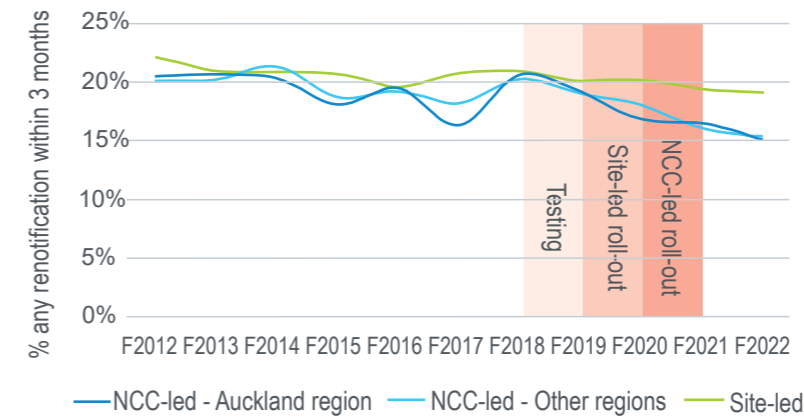


Figure 5: % any renotification within 3 months per financial year, by NCC-led Auckland/other regions and Site-led. Auckland is reported separately due to the expected impact of the COVID-19 lockdowns

The NCC-led approach may have been more accurately capturing and resolving initial concerns requiring Oranga Tamariki involvement. Conversely, it could have had a higher criterion for a Report of Concern, disincentivising notifiers from reporting to Oranga Tamariki.

## 3 External factors

COVID-19 has contributed to short- and long-term decreases in Reports of Concern

- The closure of educational facilities and disruptions in school attendance during lockdowns could have notably reduced visibility of tamariki, leading to fewer Reports of Concern from the education sector.
- COVID-19 has accelerated flexible work arrangements, allowing carers to have more time with their tamariki at home, reducing their visibility to others.
- This may also have resulted in organisations and the public both losing awareness of suspected harm and being out of practice of reporting it.

COVID-19 restriction on movements during the first national lockdown immediately reduced visibility of tamariki.

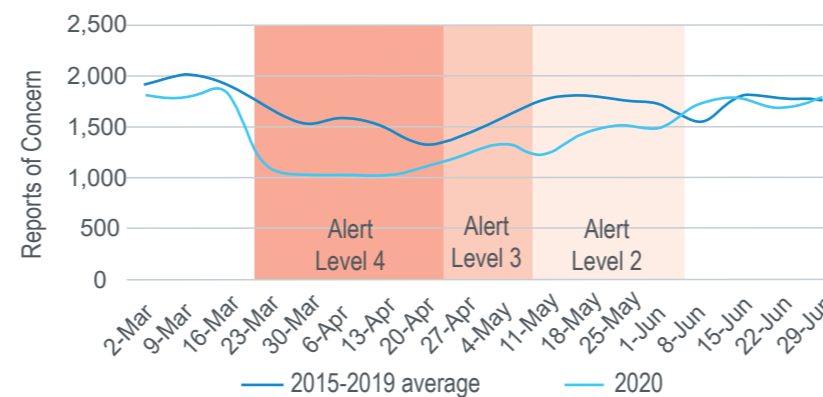


Figure 6: Total Reports of Concern per week

A more coordinated response to Family Violence incidents has affected the report volume in several ways:

- Fewer duplicate Reports of Concern from different agencies for the same family
- Reduced family violence reports from the Police
- Increased family violence reports from other reporters

A reduction in child poverty rates may have improved wellbeing of tamariki and contributed to the reduction in Reports of Concern

The decrease in Reports of Concern did not happen because there are fewer children in New Zealand as there is a general increase in the children's population