

Experiences of Education for Children in Care

Part 2: Review of New Zealand Government Data

July 2019



VOICES
of Children

EVIDENCE CENTRE
TE POKAPŪ TAUNAKITANGA



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TAMARIKI**
Ministry for Children

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The Voices of Children and Young People team at Oranga Tamariki supports the organisation to understand children and young people's experiences, needs and aspirations. The team helps to ensure children and young people's voices are heard throughout Oranga Tamariki. It also assists Oranga Tamariki to engage effectively and safely with children and young people of different ages, stages, communication abilities and cultures.

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Some of the results in this report are not official statistics, they have been created for research purposes from the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) managed by Statistics New Zealand.

Access to the anonymised data used in this study was provided by Statistics NZ in accordance with security and confidentiality provisions of the Statistics Act 1975. Only people authorised by the Statistics Act 1975 are allowed to see data about a particular person, household, business or organisation and the results in this report have been confidentialised to protect these groups from identification.

Careful consideration has been given to the privacy, security and confidentiality issues associated with using administrative and survey data in the IDI. Further detail can be found in the Privacy impact assessment for the Integrated Data Infrastructure available from www.stats.govt.nz.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The Expert Advisory Panel (2015) reported that children and young people who came into contact with Child Youth and Family had high rates of educational disengagement and under achievement. The Voices of Children and Young People team further explored these experiences and outcomes through an evidence scan of national and international research, a qualitative study of children and young people's experiences and the following data review.

Purpose

This report summarises data on the educational engagement and achievements of children with care experience, and how these achievements relate to longer term outcomes.

Method

The Oranga Tamariki–Ministry for Children (Oranga Tamariki) Analytics and Insights, and Actuarial teams analysed data from the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) on the educational experiences, achievements, and longer term outcomes of children and young people in New Zealand. We compare the data of those with and without care experience, and look at the effects of ethnicity, gender and age. As the sample sizes of these groups are large, they are likely to be representative of the wider population.

Results

1. Children and young people with care experience appear to have higher rates of educational disengagement (stand-downs, exclusions, truancy and in alternative education) and lower levels of National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) than children and young people with no care experience.
2. Differences in educational engagement for children and young people with care experience appear relatively small at younger ages but larger among older age groups.
3. Children and young people with care experience appear more likely than those with no care experience to have high numbers of school changes, and these differences increase with age.
4. Ethnic disparities in educational achievement are less evident in those with care experience than among those with no care experience.
5. Young people who achieve NCEA level 2 are more likely (than young people who do not achieve level 2) to be in future education, employment or training. This benefit of achieving NCEA level 2 is more significant for young people with care experience compared to those with no care experience.

Conclusion

Early intervention with children and young people in care can be beneficial to their educational outcomes. Whilst children and young with care experience have higher rates of educational disengagement and lower rates of educational achievement compared to their peers with no care experience, these differences are less evident in younger age groups and appear to become more evident with age.

INTRODUCTION

This report summarises recent data on educational engagement and achievement among care experienced children and young people in New Zealand, and how those educational achievements relate to outcomes later in life. This information will help Oranga Tamariki to understand how it and other government agencies can support positive outcomes for children and young people in care.

The following questions guided our data review:

1. How engaged are care experienced children and young people in school, and how does their engagement compare to children and young people without care experience?
2. What do children and young people with care experience achieve in school, and how does this compare to children without care experience?
3. What impact(s) do educational experiences have on later outcomes for those with care experience, and how does this compare to those without care experience?

METHOD

The Oranga Tamariki Analytics and Insights, and Actuarial teams analysed data from the IDI to gain insight into the relationships between care experience and educational engagement and achievement, as well as how educational achievement might relate to longer term life outcomes.

Populations of interest

The **educational engagement** analyses looked at children and young people who were aged between 5 and 17 years as at 30 June 2017. Comparisons were made between children and young people recorded in the IDI as having:

1. a current out-of-home¹ care placement (N = 3,057)
2. spent over two years altogether in out-of-home care placements in their lifetime (N = 5,493)
3. no care experience in their lifetime (N = 799,278).

The **achievement** analyses focused on the secondary school achievement of young people who were aged between 18 and 19 years as at 30 June 2017. Comparisons were made between those recorded in the IDI as having:

1. an out-of-home care placement at any point in their lives (N = 3,243)
2. spent over two years altogether in out-of-home care placements in their lifetime (N = 1,149)
3. no care experience in their lifetime (N = 117,882).

¹Excluding those in youth justice and in-home care where the child or young person is still in the custody of the Chief Executive of Oranga Tamariki but has returned or remains in their original placement (ie with parent(s)/whānau).

The **longer term outcomes** looked at the population of children and young people who were aged 16 years and under as at 30 June 2017. Using a forecasting model developed by the Oranga Tamariki Actuarial team (referred to as 'the Wellbeing Model'), comparisons were made between those who had, or were likely to have in the future:

4. an out-of-home care placement at some point in their lives
5. no care experience in their lifetime.

Analysis approach

This report presents descriptive statistics for engagement, achievement, and long-term outcome indicators for each population of interest. The overall results are described, along with the results separated by age, gender, and ethnicity.

Ethnicity was prioritised in the order of Māori, Pacific, European/Other, except that if a young person was recorded in the IDI as both Māori and Pacific, they were categorised as a separate 'Māori and Pacific' group. Sources of self-reported ethnicity in the IDI were used.

Note that formal significance testing was not completed, and only numerical differences and trends are described. When the numerical differences are large (>10%), they are referred to as being higher/lower than the comparison group. Smaller differences are described where there are relatively consistent patterns across the data, and are referred to as 'slightly' higher/lower. However, the sample sizes of the groups are large and likely to be representative of the populations of interest.

Integrated Data Infrastructure disclaimer

It is important to note that the results in this document are not official statistics. They have been created for research purposes from the IDI, managed by Statistics New Zealand. The opinions, findings, recommendations, and conclusions expressed in this document are those of the author(s), not Statistics New Zealand. Note that while the analyses were conducted by the Oranga Tamariki Analytics & Insights and Actuarial teams, staff from the Oranga Tamariki Voices of Children and Young People team wrote the report content.

Access to the anonymised data used in this study was provided by Statistics NZ in accordance with security and confidentiality provisions of the Statistics Act 1975. Only people authorised by the Statistics Act 1975 are allowed to see data about a particular person, household, business, or organisation, and the results in this document have been confidentialised to protect these groups from identification.

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RESULTS

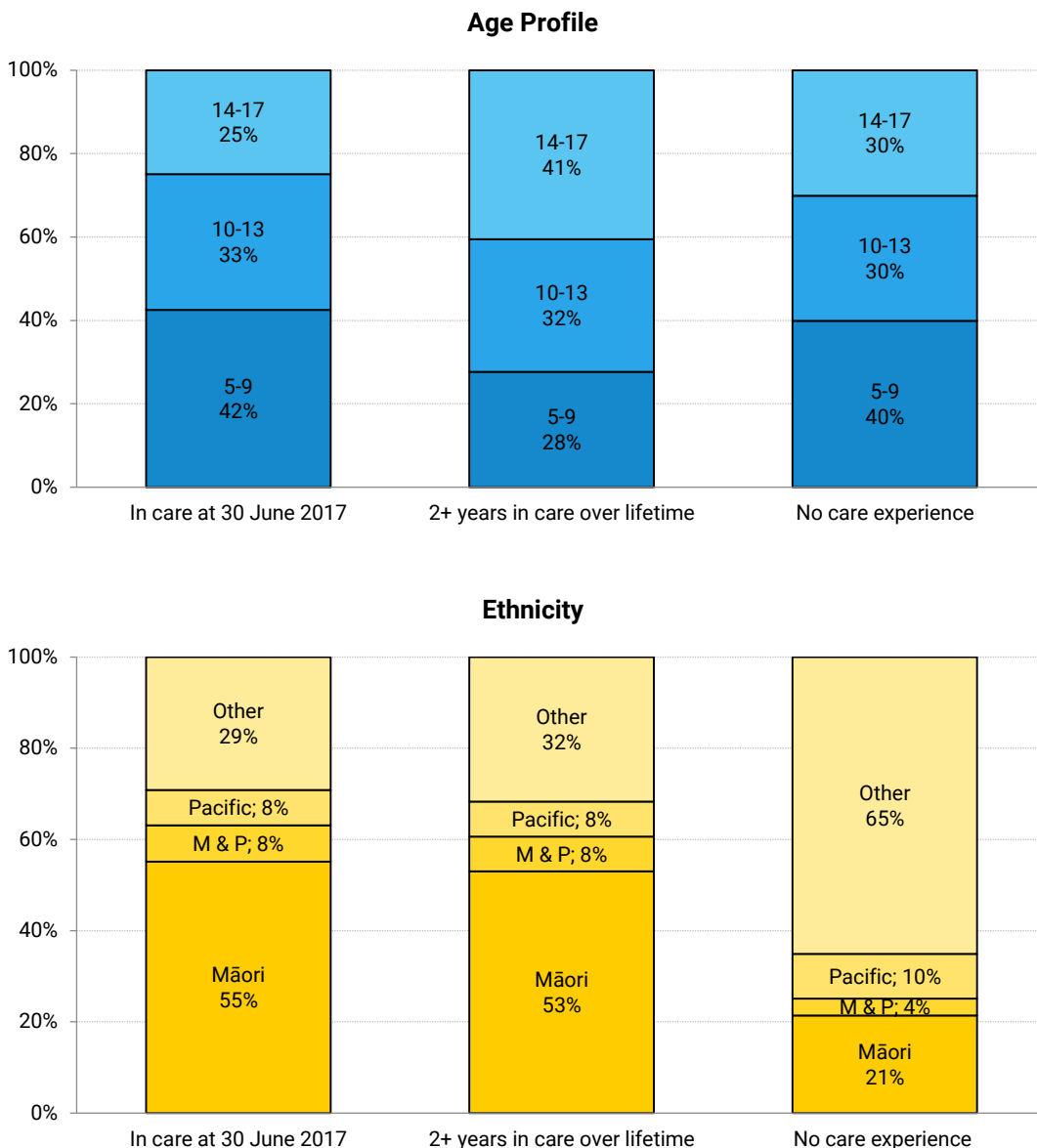
Previous research has shown that indicators of school disengagement (Luke & O’Higgins, 2018) and frequent school changes (New Zealand Treasury, 2016) are associated with poor educational outcomes. This section looks at how care experience relates to those indicators in IDI data.

Engagement in education

Figure 1 shows the age and ethnicity profiles of the children and young people in these analyses.

The **age** distribution was similar for those in care placements and those with no care experience. For **ethnicity**, the population of children in care included a higher proportion of Māori (55%) and Māori & Pacific (8%) children, compared to the population of children and young people without any care experience (Māori: 21%; Māori & Pacific: 4%).

Figure 1. Age and ethnicity profiles of the children and young people included in the educational engagement analyses



School disengagement

Five factors were used as indicators of school disengagement (see Table 1).

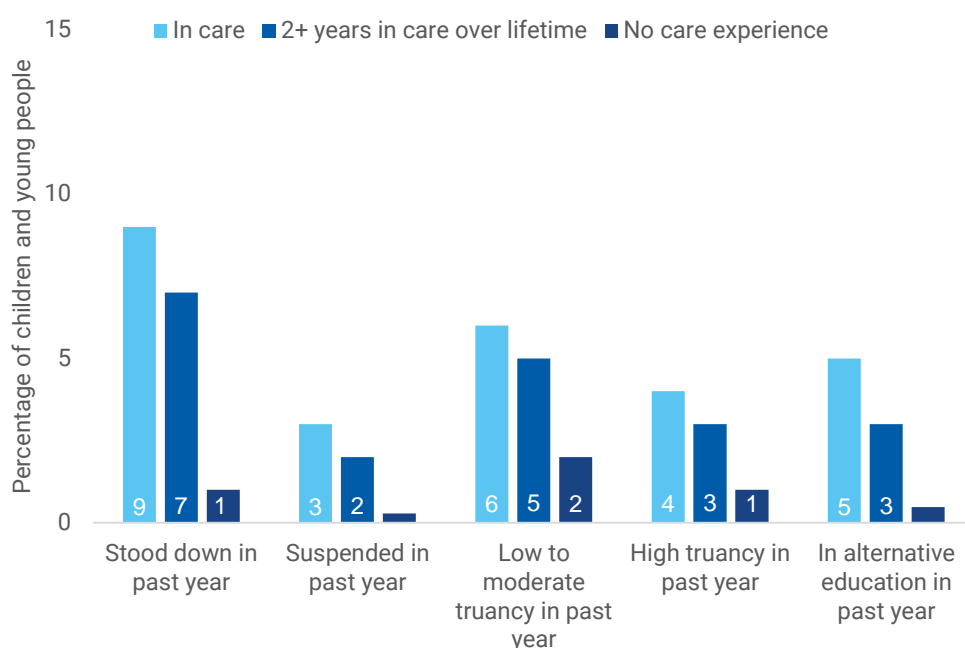
Table 1. Indicators of school disengagement used in this report

Indicator	Definition
Stand-downs in the past year ¹	In the past year, the child or young person was formally removed from school for a specified period.
Suspended in the past year ¹	In the past year, the child or young person was formally removed from school until the board of trustees decided the outcome at a suspension meeting.
Low to moderate truancy in the past year	The child or young person was truant from school between 1 and 83 days in the past year.
High truancy in the past year	The child or young person was truant from school 84 or more days in the past year.
In alternative education in the past year	In the past year, the child or young person was enrolled in alternative education (relevant only to 10 to 17-year-olds). The usual reason young people are enrolled in alternative education is because mainstream school does not meet their individual needs.

¹Data were also analysed for stand-downs and suspensions in the past 1-2 years, but are not shown in this report as the patterns were very similar to those for the past year.

Figure 2 shows the percentage of children in each group who displayed specific indicators of school disengagement. Compared with children and young people with no care experience, those in care placements appeared to have higher rates of school disengagement. For example, children in care appeared to be more likely to have been stood down in the past year (9% versus 1% of those with no care experience). These rates were improved for children and young people with over 2 years care experience but still elevated compared to the no care experience population.

Figure 2. Indicators of school disengagement, by care experience



Age differences in school disengagement

Among children and young people in care placements, school disengagement tended to increase with age. In contrast, among those with no care experience, rates of disengagement were relatively constant across age groups (see Table 2).

Table 2. School disengagement, by age and care experience

Educational disengagement indicators	In care at 30 June 2017			2+ years in care over lifetime			No care experience		
	5-9	10-13	14-17	5-9	10-13	14-17	5-9	10-13	14-17
Stood down in past year	4%	11%	12%	3%	9%	9%	< 1%	1%	3%
Suspended in past year	1%	4%	6%	< 1%	2%	3%	< 1%	< 1%	1%
Low to moderate truancy in past year	3%	6%	11%	1%	4%	9%	1%	2%	2%
High truancy in past year	1%	3%	11%	-	1%	7%	< 1%	< 1%	1%
In alternative education in past year	-	1%	10%	-	0.5%	7%	-	< 1%	1%

This shows that care-related differences in school disengagement appeared to be slightly smaller among 5 to 9-year-olds than those in older age groups. For example, the care-related difference in the rate of stand-downs among 5 to 9-year-olds was approximately 4% (4% for children in care versus <1% for those with no care experience), while among 10 to 13-year-olds it was 10% (see Figure 3). Similar patterns can be seen in the rates of enrolment in alternative education (see Figure 4). Children and young people with over 2 years care experience have slightly improved rates yet still reflect the same trends across age groups.

Figure 3. Stand-downs in past year, by age and care experience

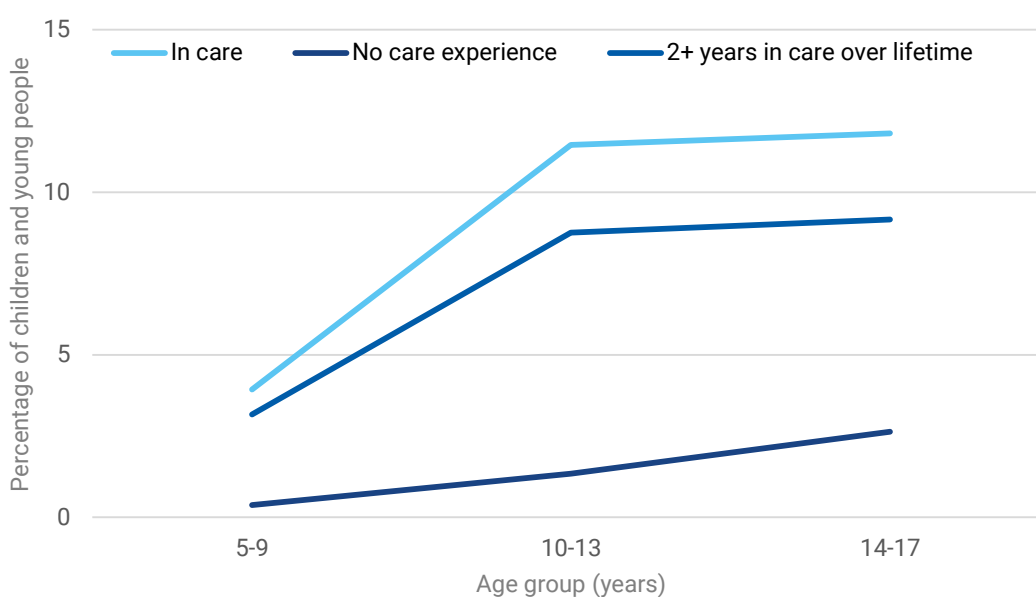
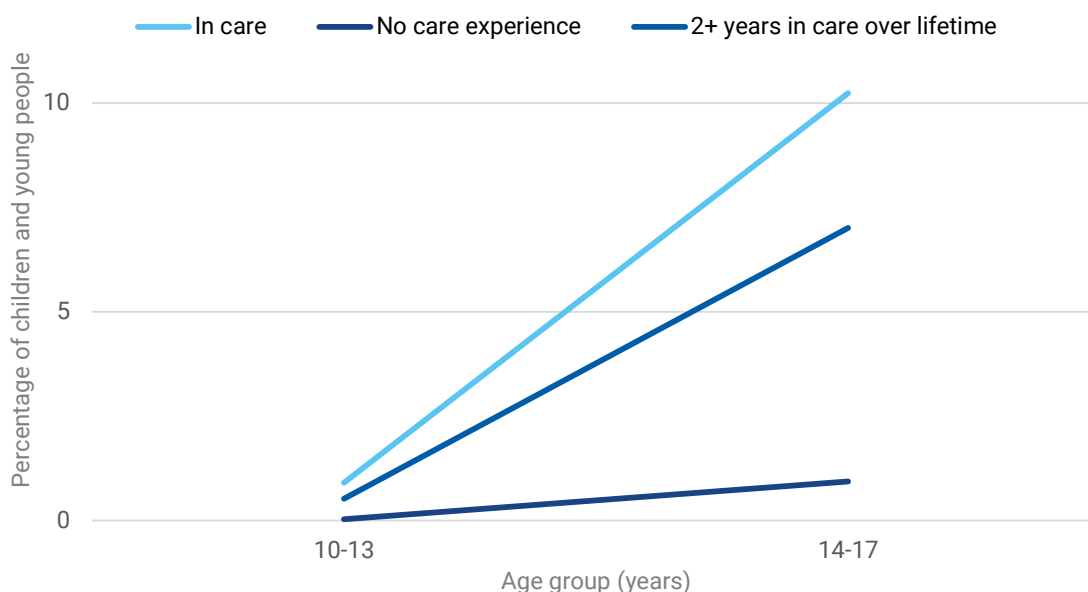


Figure 4. Enrolled in alternative education in past year by age and care experience



Gender differences in school disengagement

Among care experienced children and young people, males (compared with females) appeared to have slightly higher rates of school disengagement on some indicators (e.g., stand-downs; enrolment in alternative education). In contrast, among those with no care experience, there appeared to be little or no gender differences in school disengagement (see Table 3).

When considering gender and care status, care experienced males (compared with males with no care experience) appeared to have higher rates of educational disengagement on some indicators (e.g., stand-downs; enrolment in alternative education).

Table 3. School disengagement, by gender and care experience

Educational disengagement indicators	In care at 30 June 2017		2+ years in care over lifetime		No care experience	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Stood down in past year	5%	12%	5%	10%	1%	2%
Suspended in past year	1%	4%	1%	3%	<1%	<1%
Low to moderate truancy in past year	6%	6%	5%	5%	2%	2%
High truancy in past year	4%	4%	3%	4%	1%	1%
In alternative education in past year	3%	7%	3%	5%	<1%	1%

Ethnicity differences in school disengagement

There did not appear to be any distinct patterns of school disengagement by ethnicity for those with care experience, although there did appear to be some correlation among those with no care experience.

Table 4. School disengagement, by ethnicity and care experience

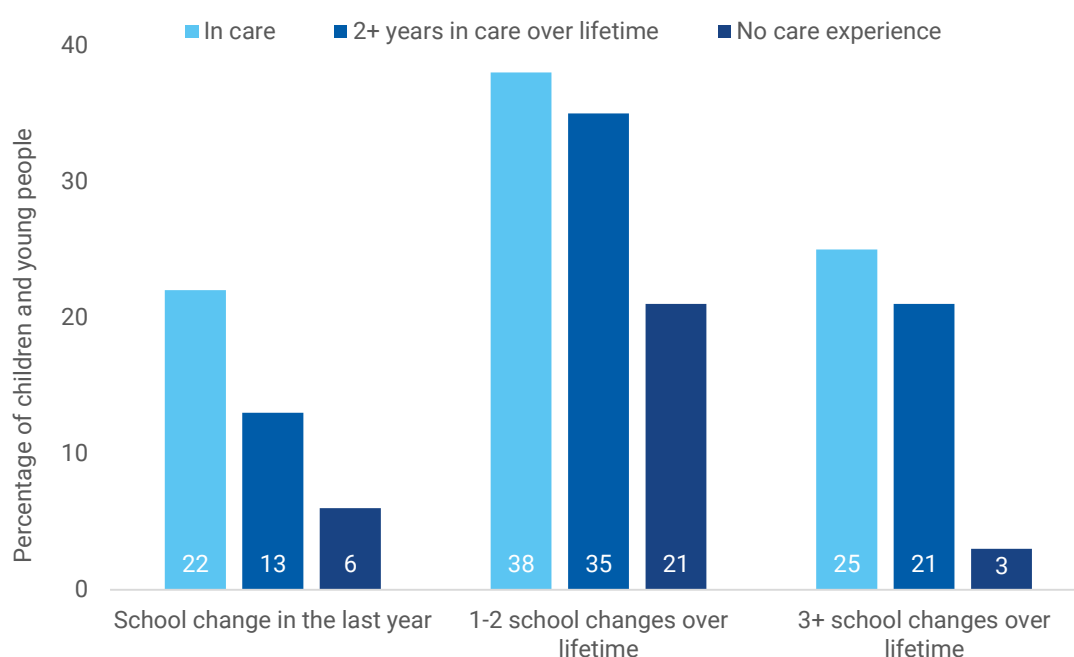
Educational disengagement indicators	In care at 30 June 2017				2+ years in care over lifetime				No care experience			
	Māori	Māori & Pacific	Pacific	Other	Māori	Māori & Pacific	Pacific	Other	Māori	Māori & Pacific	Pacific	Other
Stood down in past year	8%	9%	4%	10%	8%	8%	7%	7%	3%	2%	2%	1%
Suspended in past year	3%	4%	3%	2%	3%	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%	< 1%	< 1%
Low to moderate truancy in past year	6%	5%	5%	6%	5%	4%	9%	4%	3%	4%	4%	1%
High truancy in past year	5%	2%	5%	3%	4%	4%	3%	2%	2%	2%	1%	< 1%
In alternative education in past year	7%	-	-	4%	5%	4%	3%	3%	1%	1%	< 1%	< 1%

School changes

Figure 5 shows the proportion of children and young people who changed schools. Note that the number of school changes has been adjusted to exclude necessary changes between different school stages (e.g., moving from primary to intermediate).

Children with care experience appeared to have more school changes over their lifetime. For example, 25% of those who were in care had experienced at least three school changes over their lifetime, compared with 3% of those with no care experience (see Figure 5). Children and young people with over 2 years care experience have similar levels of lifetime school changes with 21% having at least three, although they have much lower levels of recent school changes compared to children in care.

Figure 5. School changes, by care experience



Age differences in school changes

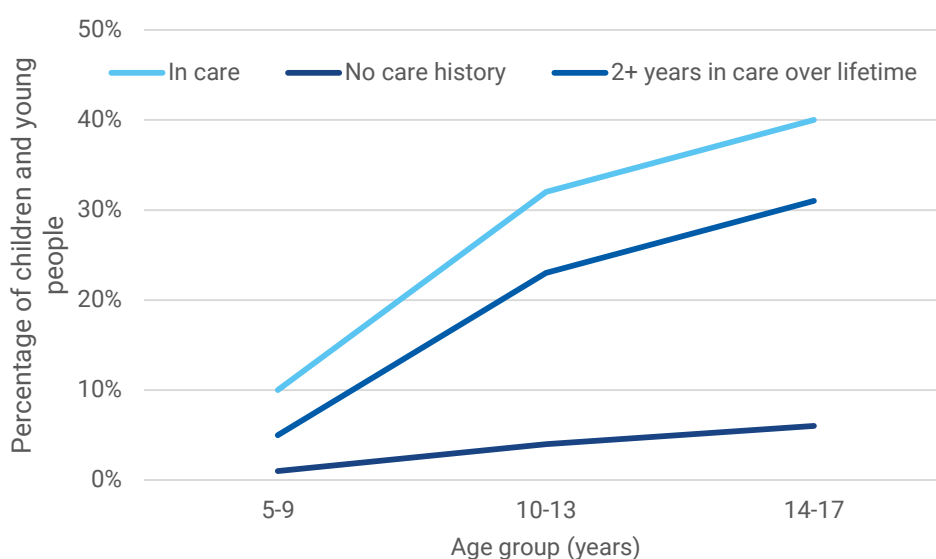
The proportion of children and young people who experienced a school change in the past year was relatively constant across age groups (see Table 5).

Table 5. School changes, by care experience and age

School changes	In care at 30 June 2017			2+ years in care over lifetime			No care experience		
	5-9	10-13	14-17	5-9	10-13	14-17	5-9	10-13	14-17
School change in the past year	24%	20%	21%	13%	14%	13%	7%	6%	5%
1-2 school changes over lifetime	32%	45%	37%	25%	41%	39%	13%	26%	28%
3+ school changes over lifetime	10%	32%	40%	5%	23%	31%	1%	4%	6%

However, the proportion of children and young people who experienced high numbers of school changes (at least three) appeared to increase with age, even after adjusting for the compulsory changes between school phases. This effect appeared to be greater among children in care placements, compared with those with no care experience. For example, the difference between children and young people in care placements and those with no care experience was relatively small in the 5 to 9-year-old age group (10% versus 1%), but larger among 14 to 17-year-olds (40% versus 6%); see Figure 6). The elevated level of school changes for children and young people with care experience also correlates with the elevated school disengagement indicators observed earlier suggesting a possible connection to schooling stability. Slight improvement in both school changes and disengagement for those with longer term care potentially supports this as well.

Figure 6. High numbers of school changes (3 or more), by age and care experience



Gender differences in school changes

Within all groups males and females appeared to experience similar rates of school changes (see Table 6).

Table 6. School changes, by care experience and gender

School changes	In care at 30 June 2017		2+ years in care over lifetime		No care experience	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
School change in the last year	23%	21%	13%	12%	6%	6%
1-2 school changes over lifetime	38%	37%	35%	36%	21%	21%
3+ school changes over lifetime	24%	25%	21%	22%	3%	3%

Ethnicity differences in school changes

There did not appear to be any significant differences in school changes by ethnicity. However, within the population of children and young people with care experience, those identifying as Pacific appeared to have slightly lower rates of school changes than those in the other ethnic groups (see Table 7).

Table 7. School changes, by care experience and ethnicity

School changes	In care at 30 June 2017				2+ years in care over lifetime				No care experience			
	Māori	Māori & Pacific	Pacific	Other	Māori	Māori & Pacific	Pacific	Other	Māori	Māori & Pacific	Pacific	Other
School change in the last year	23%	21%	18%	21%	14%	14%	14%	11%	9%	9%	6%	5%
1-2 school changes over lifetime	36%	40%	41%	40%	35%	33%	36%	36%	27%	26%	22%	19%
3+ school changes over lifetime	27%	25%	18%	23%	24%	21%	19%	18%	7%	6%	4%	2%

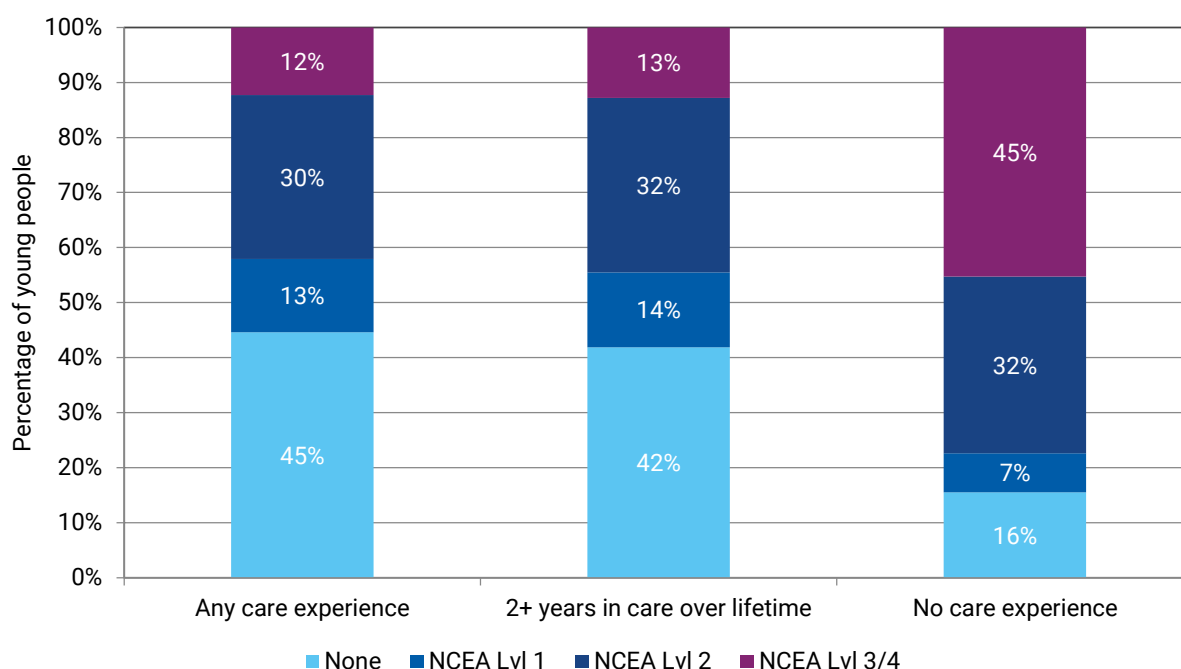
Achievements in education

This section looks at the secondary school achievement of young people aged between 18 and 19 years, as at 30 June 2017. We compare achievements among those who had care experience at any point in their lives to those without care experience.

Qualification achievement

Figure 7 shows that young people with care experience had lower achievement levels than young people with no care experience. For example, 45% of young people with care experience had no NCEA qualifications, compared with 16% of those with no care experience. Young people with over 2 years care experience had slightly higher levels of NCEA achievement but still much lower than those with no care experience.

Figure 7. Secondary school educational achievement among 18 to 19-year-olds, by care experience



Gender differences in achievement

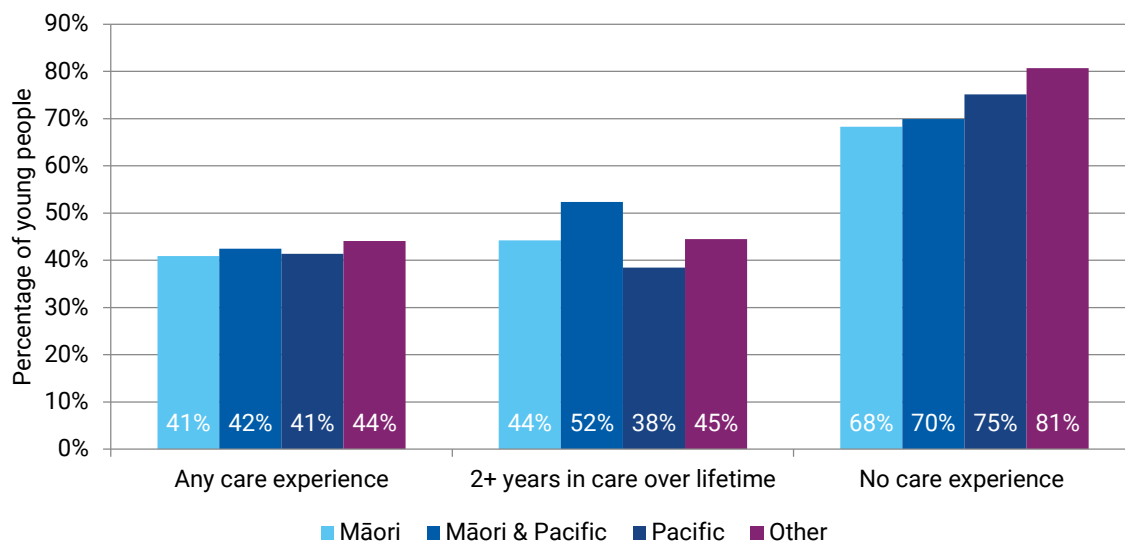
The gap between females and males who achieved NCEA Level 2 was wider for care experienced young people than those with no care experience. Females with care experience were 1.27 times more likely than males with care experience to achieve at least NCEA Level 2. For those with no care experience, females were 1.10 times more likely than males to achieve at least NCEA Level 2.

Ethnicity differences in achievement

For young people with care experience there were only small differences in achievement by ethnicity. For example 41% of Māori, 42% of Māori & Pacific, 41% of Pacific and 44% of European/Other achieved NCEA level 2. Young people with over 2 years care experience generally had slightly higher proportions achieving NCEA level 2 and also relatively small differences between ethnicities.

In contrast among young people with no care experience there appeared to be clear ethnic disparities in educational achievement. For example 81% of European/Other compared to 68% of Māori achieved NCEA Level 2 (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Proportion of 18 to 19-year-olds who achieved NCEA level 2, by ethnicity and care experience



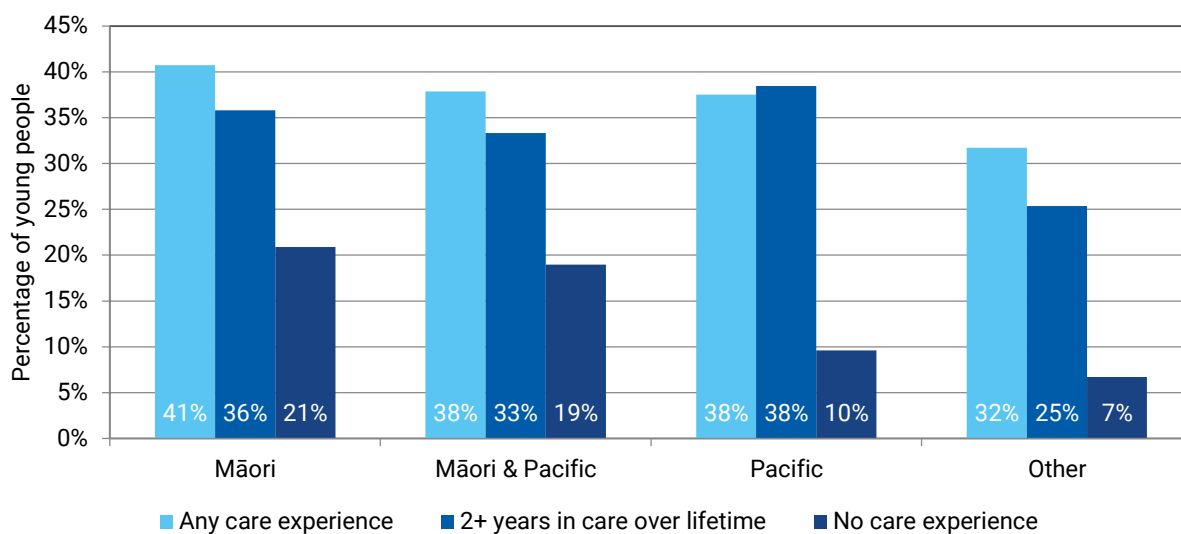
Leaving school early

Young people with care experience are four times (10% versus 37%) more likely to leave school early (at age 15 or 16) than young people with no care experience. Young people with over 2 years care experience had a slightly lower proportion of 32% leaving school early. Leaving school early may impact on the lower level of education achievement for young people with care experience.

Ethnicity differences in leaving school early

Similar to the effects for qualification achievement, ethnic disparities in the proportion of young people who left school early appeared to be minimal among those with care experience but more pronounced for those with no care experience (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Proportion of 18 to 19-year-olds who left school at age 15 or 16, by ethnicity and care experience



Relationships between educational achievement and life outcomes

This section looks at potential links between educational achievement and later life outcomes for children aged 16 and under as at 30 June 2017 with care experience, compared with those with no care experience. The Oranga Tamariki Actuarial team used the Wellbeing model to show likely future outcomes in relation to care experience and educational achievement.

Three life outcomes were modelled (see Table 8).

Table 8. Life outcomes used in this report

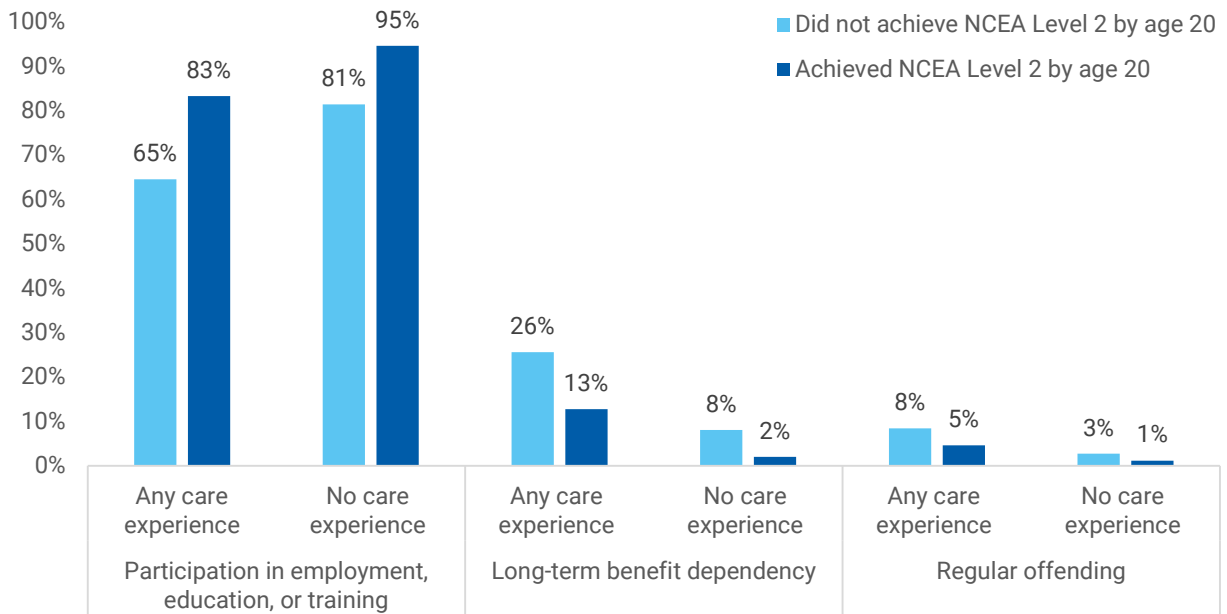
Outcome	Definition
Participation in employment, education, or training	At least one quarter (of the year) in employment, education or training at age 20
Long-term benefit dependency	More than 20 quarters on a benefit to age 25
Regular offending	More than 2 high seriousness offences, or more than 5 low seriousness offences after turning 21 years old ²

Figure 10 shows the proportion of children and young people who, according to the Wellbeing Model, are likely to have particular life outcomes according to their care experience and educational achievement. For all three life outcomes, children and young people with care experience are likely to have poorer life outcomes, compared with those with no care experience. However, for both groups, the Wellbeing Model also indicated that achieving NCEA Level 2 is likely to be associated with:

- greater levels of participation in employment, education, or training
- lower levels of long-term benefit dependency
- slightly lower levels of regular offending.

² Defined according to the Ministry of Justice Offending Model.

Figure 10. Association between achieving NCEA Level 2 and life outcomes, by care experience



CONCLUSION

Care-related differences in educational disengagement appear to be smaller among younger children, suggesting that early intervention to support the education of children with care experience may be beneficial.

The Wellbeing Model indicates that achieving NCEA Level 2 is likely to be associated with greater levels of participation in employment, education, or training and lower levels of long-term benefit dependency. This suggests that educational achievement may be an important mediator of positive life outcomes for children in care.

Children and young people with care experience have higher levels of school disengagement and higher numbers of school changes over their lifetime than those with no care experience. Together, these findings suggest that children and young people with care experience have higher rates of educational disruption, which in turn is associated with lower levels of educational achievement.

Children and young people with care experience have similarly low levels of educational achievement and high levels of leaving school early across ethnicities.

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