

Ethnic inequalities in children and young people's access to disability-related support



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What is this short briefing about?

This analysis has arisen because Māori and Pasifika as well as other ethnic minorities do not appear to have equitable access to disability-related support. It is vital that disability-related support is available equally to all disabled people and their whānau with as few barriers as possible. Disability-related support should be reducing not exacerbating ethnic inequalities.

To examine these concerns, this briefing has investigated the ethnic profile of two forms of support for disabled children and young people. The two supports are the Ministry of Health's Disability Support Services (DSS) and the Ministry of Education's Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS). Comparing the ethnic profile of these two different types of disability support is difficult because the ethnicity data for each may be collected and coded differently. In addition, ethnicity data for both DSS and ORS have problems with inaccurate and non-reported ethnicity.

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Challenges and CCS Disability Action

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◀ This briefing uses Statistics New Zealand’s source ranked ethnicity data from the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI). These data are from a range of sources ranked according to quality and recorded in a total response format. Therefore an individual can have one or more ethnic groups recorded. The highest ranked source is used for each person. This gives more accurate and comparable ethnicity data than the ethnicity data collected by each source of support.

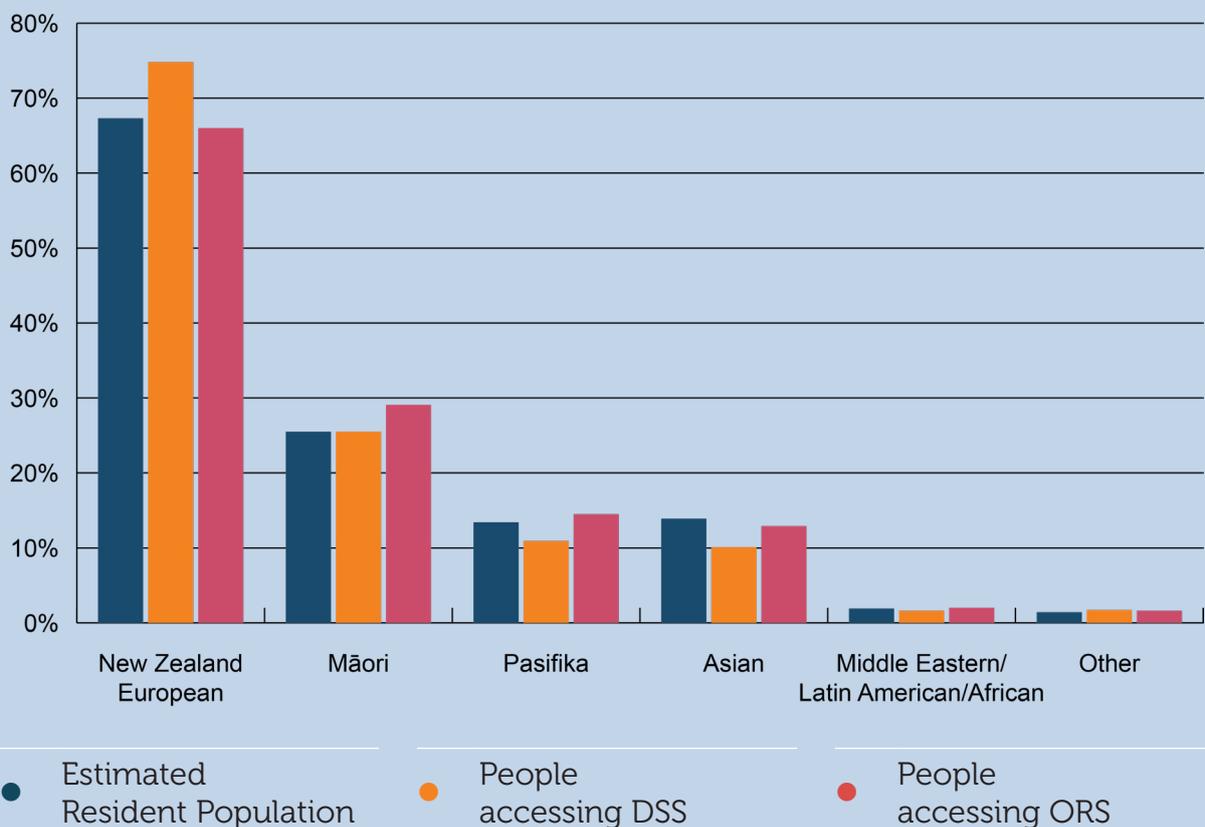
This briefing looks at children and young people aged 6 to 18 who accessed either DSS or ORS funding. We also compared each group to all children and young people aged 6 to 18 using Statistics New Zealand’s IDI estimated resident population (ERP). The ERP is Statistics New Zealand’s estimate of all people alive and living in New Zealand at the end of each fiscal year. This briefing uses data for the 2016/17 fiscal year (1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017).

What did we find?

We found evidence of unequal access to DSS compared to ORS. Compared with the latter, children and young people accessing DSS were more likely to be New Zealand European and less likely to be

Māori, Pasifika, Asian, and Middle Eastern/Latin American/African. Figure 1 shows the ethnic profile of the NZ ERP alongside the ethnic profiles for those accessing DSS or ORS support.

Figure 1 The ethnicity of children and young people aged 6 to 18 years, 2016/17

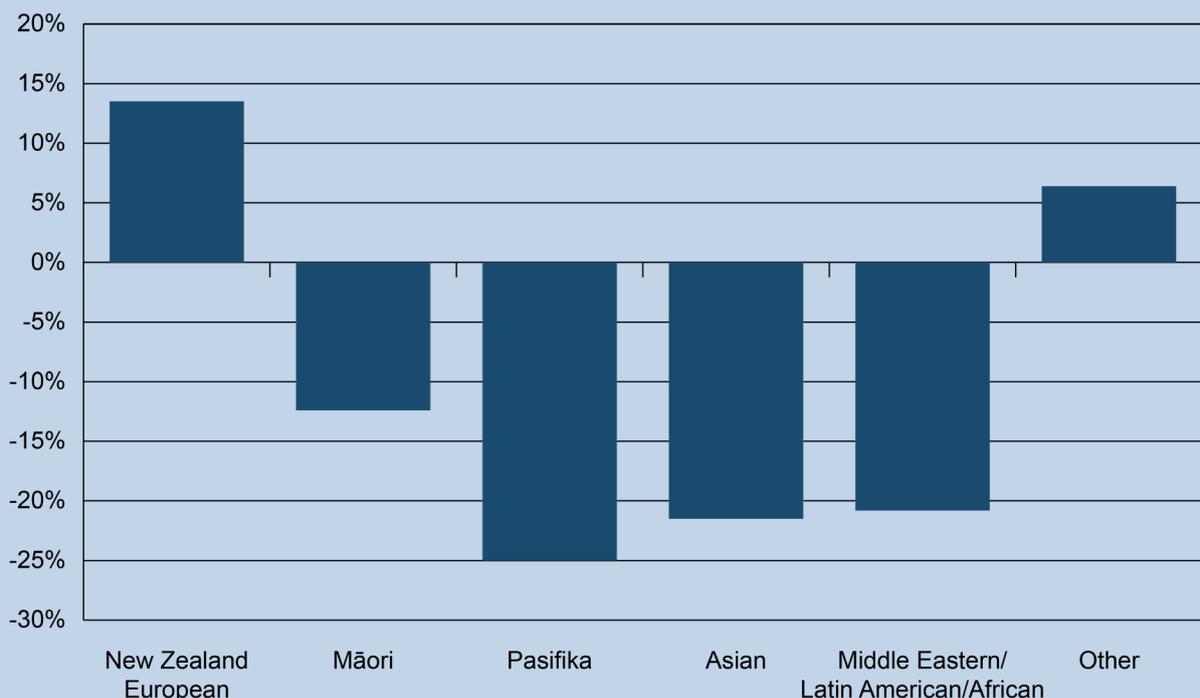


Three quarters (75%) of children and young people accessing DSS were New Zealand Europeans, higher than the ERP percentage of 67%. By comparison, only 66% of children and young people accessing ORS were New Zealand Europeans. In contrast, Pasifika and the Middle Eastern/Latin America/African group were over-represented in ORS compared to the ERP. Conversely, the same groups were under-represented in DSS. 15% of children and young people who accessed ORS and 11% who accessed DSS were Pasifika compared to 13% for the ERP. 29% of children and young people who accessed ORS were Māori. This was higher than either the ERP or DSS, where Maori comprised 26%. It is worth noting that the 2013 Disability Survey found a higher disability rate for Māori children than for other groups. Asian children and young people were under-represented across both forms of supports. They make up 14% of children and young people in the ERP but only 10% of children and young people accessing DSS and 13% of those accessing ORS.

Ethnic differences between the two funding schemes are shown clearly in Figure 2. This graph directly compares the percentage of each ethnic group who accessed DSS to those who accessed ORS. A positive percentage means a higher percentage of people from that ethnic group accessed DSS compared to ORS. A negative percentage means a lower percentage of people from that ethnic group accessed DSS compared to ORS. In principle, DSS and ORS should serve similar cohorts of disabled children and young people, yet there are significant differences in the ethnic profiles of each.

The greatest differential was for Pasifika; the percentage of Pasifika children and young people who accessed DSS was 25% lower compared to ORS. Thus, Pasifika children were 25% less likely to access DSS than ORS. Asian and Middle Eastern/Latin America/African were close behind and were 22% and 21% less likely to access DSS than ORS, respectively. Māori were 12% less likely to access DSS while New Zealand European were 14% more likely to do so.

Figure 2 The relative differences in ethnic distributions of DSS and ORS, 2016/17



Note: all differences are statistically significant at p-value<0.001

Why do the ethnic profiles differ between DSS and ORS?

These data cannot answer the question of why the ethnic profiles differ. DSS and ORS have, however, significantly different application processes with different levels of assistance available. The differences in the two application processes, if not the reason, are likely to have exacerbated any ethnic inequalities.

ORS funding provides support to students with a disability for participating in the compulsory schooling system. All students should come into contact with the compulsory schooling system. In addition, educational professionals often assist or even lead application processes for ORS. As schools benefit directly from ORS resourcing there is an incentive for them to assist in the application, if they think the student needs support.

By comparison, DSS is provided through a network of Need Assessment and Service Coordination (NASC) agencies. These agencies often differ in name and approach. Children and their families will

not necessarily come into contact with these agencies, unless they search for them or are told about them. The NASCs themselves are often under pressure to contain costs.

The net results for ethnic communities is that ORS is more likely to be representative of the disability community. DSS places extra demands on families through the application process. This favours those who are most familiar with the systems in place. Thus, without any intent, DSS favours NZ European families.

It should be noted that there are still concerns about the ORS application process and criteria, especially its use of a deficit model and the low number of students approved¹. This comparison demonstrates that ORS has a more representative ethnic profile than DSS, not that ORS is without flaws.

¹ For example, see Giovanni, Tiso, and Hilary Stace. "Education is for everyone unless you are special." *Policy Quarterly*. 2015. 42-48.

There should be ongoing monitoring of ethnic inequality

There is a lack of data on ethnicity and disability, especially on disabled children and young people. The last reliable source of data on ethnicity and disability was the 2013 Disability Survey. We believe there is insight to be gained from administrative data, especially using the IDI to generate more reliable and comparable ethnicity information.

Government departments should regularly compare the ethnic profiles of different types of disability support. This enables the possible identification of equity of access

issues and the tracking of measures to reduce ethnic inequality. This briefing revealed evidence of ethnic inequalities in access to DSS. These inequalities need to be addressed through initiatives to improve access for underserved groups. It is crucial that the provision of disability support is based on need, without distortions caused by ethnic inequality.

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