

Tertiary education of New Zealanders: a census analysis

This fact sheet provides information on the level of tertiary education qualifications across the New Zealand usually resident population aged 15 years or over, using data from Statistics New Zealand's Census of Population and Dwellings 2006. It also compares the level of tertiary qualifications in 2006 with that in 1996 to illustrate trends in attainment over time.

The tertiary qualifications include non-degree tertiary qualifications (level 1 to 4 certificates and level 5 to 6 diplomas), bachelors degrees (including level 7 diplomas) and postgraduate qualifications (postgraduate certificates and diplomas, honours, masters and doctorates).

This analysis does not consider invalid responses such as 'not stated', 'refused to answer' or 'not elsewhere included' when calculating the percentage figures. Hence, the proportions stated in this fact sheet may not match with the proportions published by Statistics New Zealand.

New Zealanders have higher qualifications

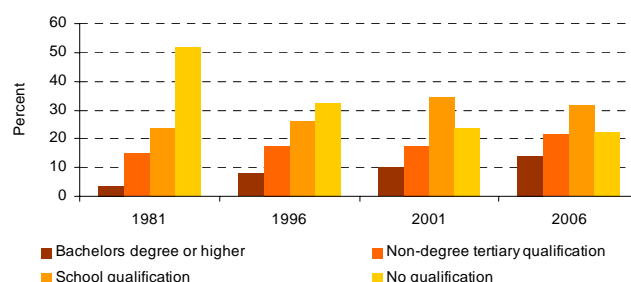
The data from the 2006 Census shows that more people in the population in New Zealand hold higher qualifications, but significant differences in educational attainment remain in terms of age, gender and ethnicity. However, the educational attainment of young adults (the 25-34 year age group), which provides a view of the country's future, indicates gradual improvements by groups who have historically been less well educated.

In 2006, 36 percent of all adults 15 years or older reported they had a tertiary qualification and 14 percent reported a highest qualification of a bachelors degree or higher, an all time high. This compares with 26 percent and 8.0 percent in 1996, respectively. The percentage of people without any qualification decreased from 32 percent in 1996 to 22 percent in 2006.

The greatest increase in the attainment of tertiary qualifications was among those with a highest qualification at the bachelors level, up from 5.4 percent of the population in 1996 to 10 percent in 2006. There was also a moderate increase in the proportion of the population with a highest qualification at the non-degree tertiary level - up from 18 percent in 1996 to 22 percent

in 2006. The proportion of the New Zealand population who reported a highest qualification at the postgraduate level increased from 2.7 percent in 1996 to 4.2 percent in 2006.

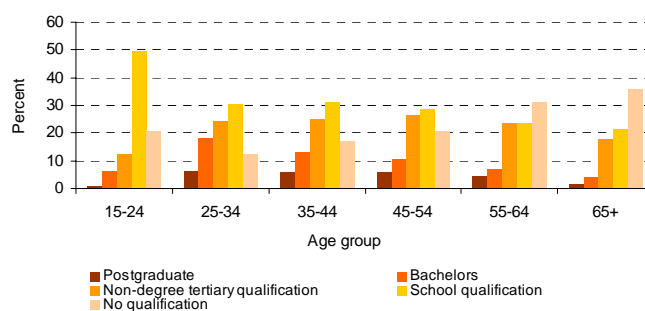
Distribution of the population by highest qualification between 1981 and 2006



Younger population is more highly qualified

The proportion of the population in the 25-34 years age group with a bachelors degree or higher qualification increased from 12 percent in 1996 to 24 percent in 2006 (see the figure below). This compares with an increase in the proportion of people in the 35-44 years age group with bachelors or higher qualifications from 11 percent in 1996 to 19 percent in 2006. The figures for the 55-64 years age group were 5.3 percent and 11 percent, respectively.

Distribution of the population by highest qualification and age group

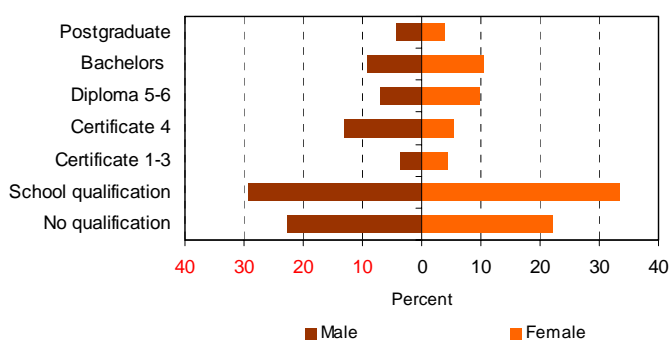


Women overtake men in gaining bachelors degrees

Women have made gains in the attainment of tertiary qualifications. In 2006, about 11 percent of women reported a highest qualification at the bachelors level, (4.8 percent in 1996) compared with 9.3 percent for men (6.0 percent in 1996).

Around 10 percent of women reported a highest qualification of a level 5 to 6 diploma, compared with 7.0 percent for men. The proportion of women and men holding level 5 to 6 diplomas in 2006 has not changed from 1996.

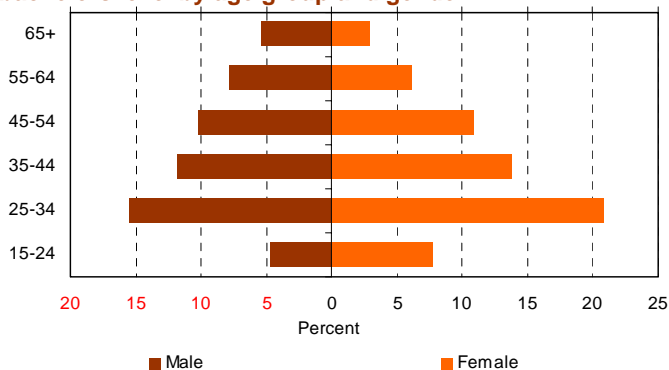
Distribution of the population by highest qualification and gender



A significant increase in younger women with bachelors and higher qualifications

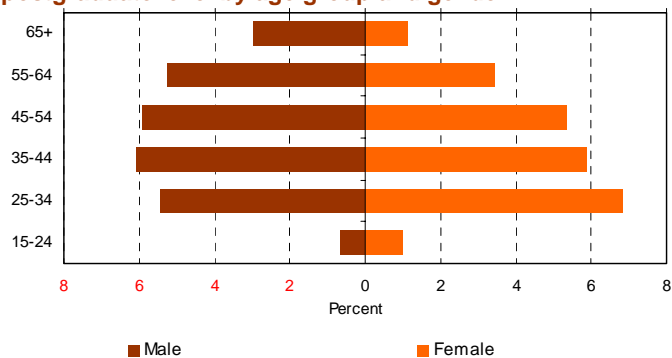
Over the last decade, the attainment of higher tertiary qualifications has increased for both men and women, but women appear to be making greater strides, especially in younger age groups. The proportion of women in the 25-34 years age group with a highest qualification at the bachelors level increased significantly from 8.3 percent in 1996 to 21 percent in 2006. The increase for men in this age group was from 8.9 percent to 16 percent.

Proportion of the population with a highest qualification at bachelors level by age group and gender



The proportion of the female population aged 25-34 years with a highest qualification at the postgraduate level increased from 3.1 percent in 1996 to 6.8 percent in 2006. This compares with an increase of 3.6 percent and 5.4 percent for men holding a similar qualification.

Proportion of the population with a highest qualification at postgraduate level by age group and gender

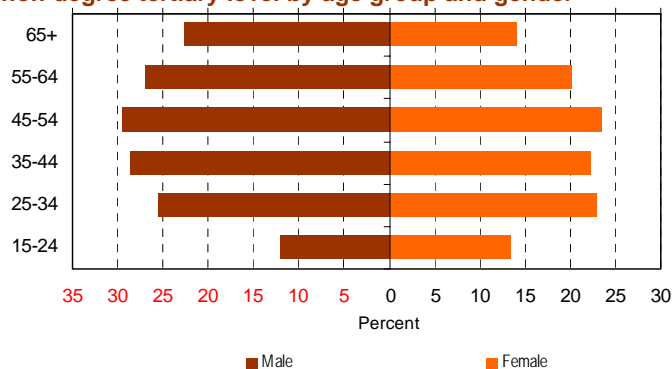


Men are more likely to have non-degree level qualification

Men are more likely than women to have a non-degree tertiary qualification as their highest qualification. In all age groups between 25 and 65 years, the percentage of men with a highest qualification at the non-degree tertiary level was noticeably higher than that of women. The proportion of men with a highest qualification at the non-degree tertiary level was in the range of 20 to 30 percent in most age groups, with the highest proportion of 30 percent being exhibited by the 45-54 year age group.

The proportion of women with a highest qualification at the non-degree tertiary level ranged from 13 percent for women aged 15-24 years to 24 percent for women aged 45-54 years.

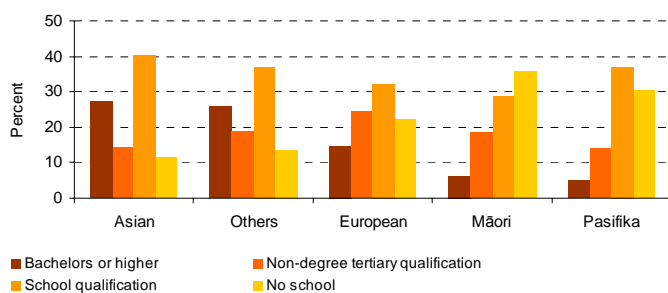
Proportion of the population with highest qualification at non-degree tertiary level by age group and gender



Attainment of tertiary qualifications varies by ethnic group

In 2006, the proportion of Māori and Pasifika with a tertiary qualification reached 25 percent and 19 percent, respectively. This compares with 14 percent and 10 percent in 1996, respectively. The proportion of Europeans with a tertiary qualification reached 39 percent in 2006, compared with 29 percent in 1996. The 'Other' ethnic group and Asians had the highest proportions with tertiary qualifications in 2006 – 45 and 42 percent respectively.

Distribution of the population by highest qualification and ethnic group

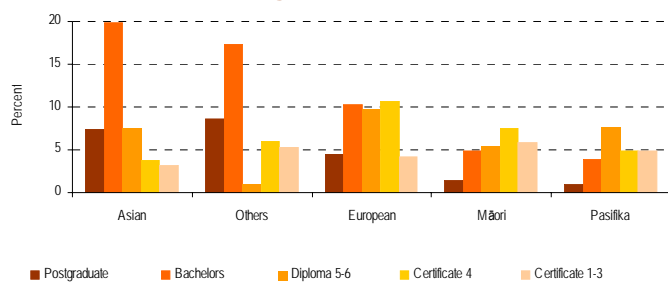


In 2006, the proportion of Europeans with a highest qualification at the non-degree tertiary level was 25 percent, followed by Māori (19 percent) and Pasifika (14 percent).

In 2006, the Asian and Other ethnic groups had the greatest proportion of people with a highest qualification at the bachelors level - 20 and 17 percent, respectively. This compares with 10 percent for Europeans, 4.9 percent for Māori and 3.9 percent for Pasifika.

The highest proportion of people reporting a qualification at the postgraduate level in 2006 was the 'Other' ethnic group (8.6 percent), followed by Asians (7.4 percent), Europeans (4.4 percent), Māori (1.4 percent) and Pasifika (1 percent).

The distribution of the population by highest tertiary qualification and ethnic group

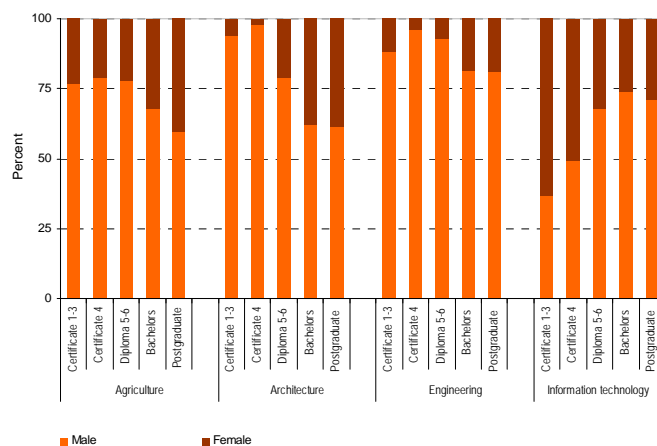


Field of study varies by gender

Some fields of study were dominated by men and others by women. For instance, 'engineering and related technologies', 'architecture and building', 'information

technology' and 'agriculture, environmental and related studies', were male-dominated fields. In 2006, more than 80 percent of those who held a tertiary qualification in 'engineering and related technologies' were men (see the figure below). Also, more than 90 percent of those with a highest qualification of a level 1 to 4 certificate in the area of 'architecture and building' were men.

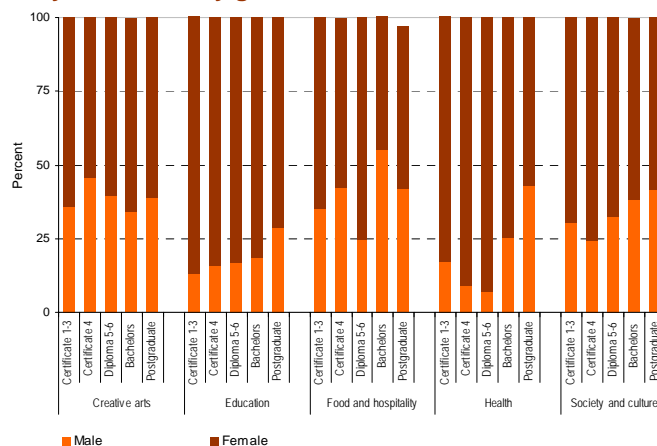
Tertiary qualification holders by most common fields of study for men by gender



On the other hand, in 'information technology', around 63 percent of those with a highest qualification of a level 1 to 3 certificate and around 50 percent of those with a highest qualification of a level 4 certificate, were women.

In 2006, 'education' and 'health' were the fields most dominated by women. Within 'education' the proportion of students that were women ranged from 88 percent for those with a highest qualification of a level 1 to 3 certificate to 71 percent for those with a highest qualification at postgraduate level. Over 90 percent of those with a highest qualification of a level 5 to 6 diploma in 'health' were women.

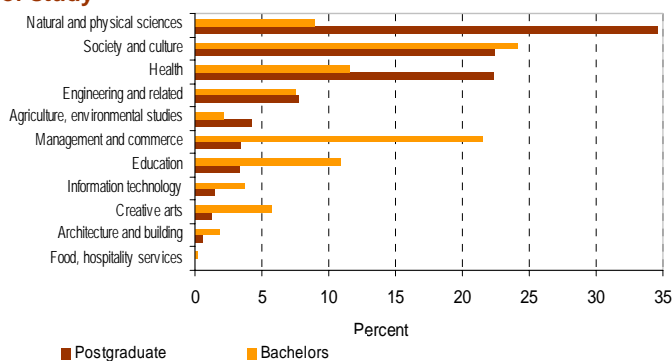
Tertiary qualification holders by most common fields of study for women by gender



Natural and physical sciences was the most common field of study at postgraduate level

In 2006, the most common field of study for those with a highest qualification at the postgraduate level was 'natural and physical sciences' at 35 percent, followed by 'society and culture' and 'health' studies at 22 percent.

Bachelors and postgraduate qualification holders by fields of study

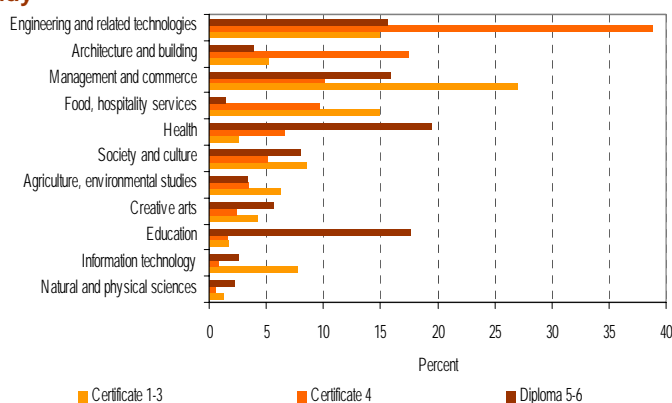


For those with a highest qualification at the bachelors level, the most common field of study was 'society and culture' - around 24 percent of people at this level studied in this field, followed by 'management and commerce' with 21 percent.

Vocational subjects were most common at non-degree tertiary level

'Health' studies, 'education', 'management and commerce', and 'engineering and related technologies' were the most common fields of study for people with a highest qualification of a level 5 to 6 diploma. On the other hand, level 4 certificate holders had taken 'engineering and related technologies', and 'architecture and building' as the most common field of study. For level 1 to 3 certificate holders, the most popular subjects were 'management and commerce', 'food and hospitality', and 'engineering and related technologies'.

Non-degree certificate and diploma holders by fields of study



Tertiary Sector Performance Analysis & Reporting,
Strategy and System Performance,
Ministry of Education.

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