



School leavers with NCEA Level 1 or above

Eighty-five percent of school leavers achieved at least NCEA Level 1 in 2008, a 26% increase from 2002 when NCEA was introduced.

Indicator Description

Percentage of school leavers with an NCEA Level 1 qualification or above.

Why This Is Important

A formal school qualification is a measure of the extent to which young adults have completed a basic prerequisite for higher education and training and many entry-level jobs. In 2002 the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Level 1 replaced School Certificate as the principal qualification to complete the first stage of upper-secondary education, and serves as a foundation for further study and/or employment. NCEA Level 1, as

with all levels of NCEA, encompasses a wide range of learning. Students can attain credits through internal and external assessment, and they can accumulate these credits both within and across years. Students are also able to undertake study at other NCEA levels to attain credits while studying for an NCEA Level 1 qualification.

The attainment of an upper secondary school qualification is linked to labour force status and incomes. In 2007 New Zealanders with no qualifications had an unemployment rate over 53% higher than those whose highest qualification was a school qualification (OECD 2009).

How We Are Going

In 2008, 84.5% of school leavers attained at least NCEA Level 1, a 26% increase from 2002 when NCEA was introduced.

Girls performed better than boys, with 87.3% attaining NCEA Level 1 or higher compared to 81.8% of boys. This gap between girls and boys had been progressively closing between 2002 and 2007, however, this gap increased slightly in 2008.

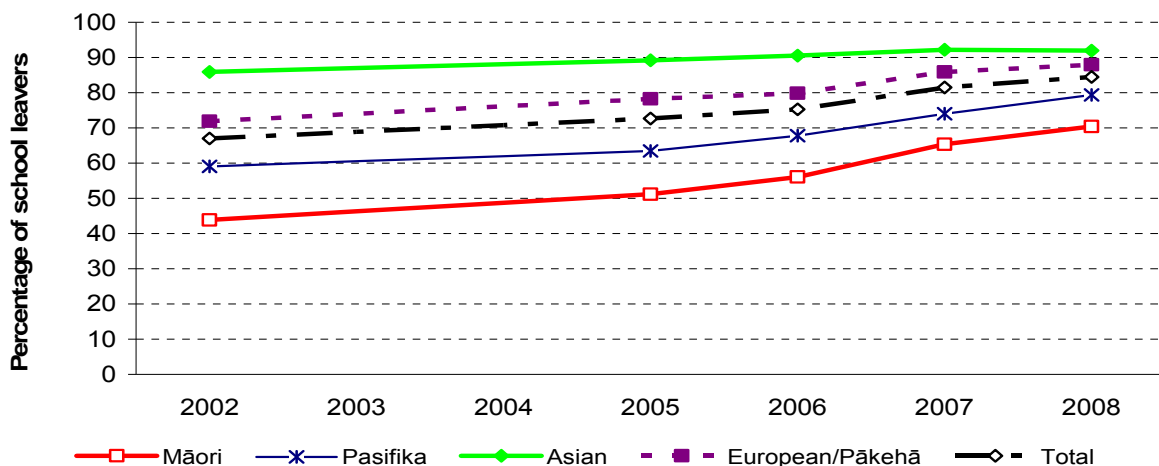
In 2008, Asian students had the highest proportion of school leavers attaining at least NCEA Level 1 (92.0%), with European/Pākehā leavers having the second highest proportion (87.9%). The proportion of Pasifika students who left school in 2008 with at least NCEA Level 1 was 79.4%. In comparison, Māori had the lowest percentage of school leavers attaining at least NCEA Level 1, with 70.4%. However, relatively higher rates of improvement for Māori and Pasifika since 2002 imply that the disparities between ethnic groups are reducing.

The gap between the proportion of Pasifika school leavers with NCEA Level 1 or above and non-Pasifika leavers is closing. In 2002, non-Pasifika school leavers were 14% more likely to obtain NCEA Level 1 or above than Pasifika leavers; compared to 7% more likely in 2008.

Similarly, the gap between the proportion of Māori school leavers with NCEA Level 1 or above and non-Māori leavers is also closing. In 2002, non-Māori school leavers were 64% more likely to obtain NCEA Level 1 or above than Māori school leavers compared; to 24% more likely in 2008.

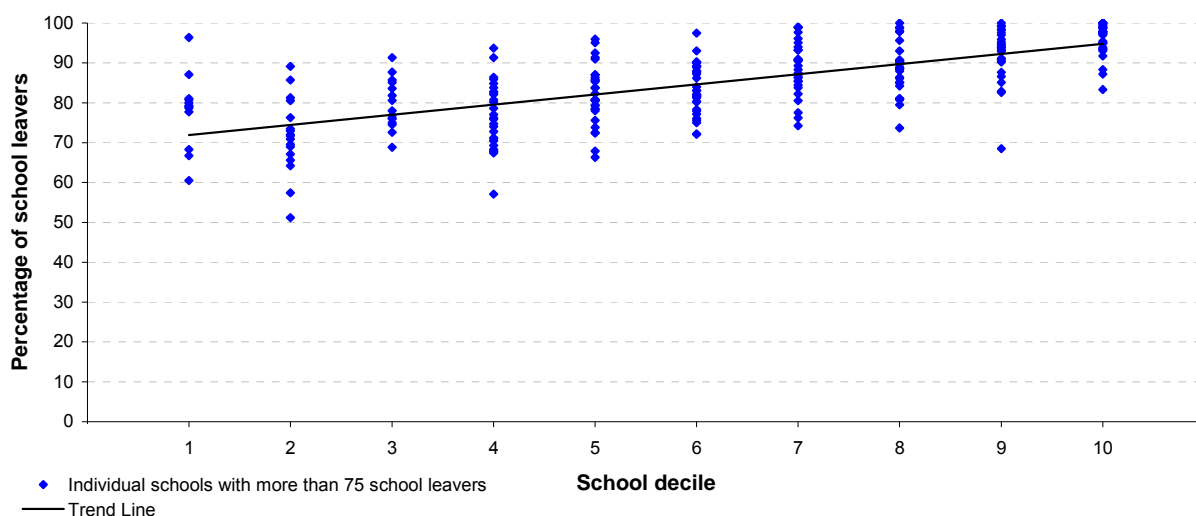
There is a positive correlation between the socio-economic mix of the school the student attended and the percentage of school leavers attaining at least an NCEA Level 1 qualification. Schools in the lowest deciles (deciles 1 and 2) draw their students from communities with the highest degree of socio-economic disadvantage.

Percentage of school leavers with an NCEA Level 1 qualification or above, by ethnic group (2002 to 2008)



1. Due to methodological changes in the allocation of attainment levels in 2003 and 2004, for leavers achieving a qualification between little or no formal attainment and UE standard, the percentages of leavers with at least NCEA Level 1 in both 2003 and 2004 are not comparable with other years, and have been omitted.

Percentage of school leavers with NCEA Level 1 and above, by school decile and school (2008)



Students from schools in the highest deciles (deciles 9 and 10) are 28% more likely to leave school with at least an NCEA Level 1 qualification, than students from schools in the lowest two deciles. However, this gap has closed markedly since 2002 when school leavers from the highest quintile schools were 76% more likely to leave school with NCEA Level 1 or higher, than students from the lowest decile schools.

There is a large variation in the percentage of school leavers attaining at least NCEA Level 1 amongst schools within each decile.

Where To Find Out More

To obtain other information about school leavers consider indicators:

- School leavers with NCEA Level 2 or above
- School leavers with a university entrance standard
- School leavers entering tertiary education.

The Ministry of Education has established an Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis Programme to systematically identify, evaluate, analyse, synthesise and make accessible, relevant evidence linked to a range of learner outcomes. Evidence about what works for this indicator can be found in:

- Quality Teaching for Diverse Students in Schooling: Best Evidence Synthesis
- Effective Pedagogy in Mathematics/Pangarau: Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration.

References

- Alton-Lee, A. (2003). *Quality Teaching for Diverse Students in Schooling: Best Evidence Synthesis*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Anthony, G., and Walshaw, M. (2007). *Effective Pedagogy in Mathematics/Pangarau: Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- OECD (2009). *Education at a Glance: OECD indicators 2009*. Paris: OECD.