School leavers destinations

*In 2016 there were 60,630 domestic school leavers. Of these, 61.5% (37,312 students) had enrolled in tertiary education at all levels by the end of 2017.*

**Indicator Description**

Destination of school leavers after leaving secondary school.

**Why This Is Important**

Each year, around 60,000 students are leaving the schooling system and moving on to further education, work place training or employment. This indicator follows the pathways of domestic school leavers into tertiary education.

The tertiary education sector is a diverse sector. Its scope ranges from informal non-assessed community courses in schools through to formal undergraduate degrees and advanced research-based postgraduate degrees. It provides pathways for a diverse range of learners, from school leavers to workers, the unemployed to students from overseas, and to those pursuing an interest, hobby or more social interaction.

Enrolments in tertiary education are indicators of the extent to which New Zealanders are developing the skills needed for a modern knowledge economy. To achieve this goal, clear pathways to assist young people making the direct transition from school to tertiary level study must be developed and maintained.
How We Are Going

Of the 60,630 students who left school in 2016, 61.5% were enrolled in a tertiary level course at some point before the end of 2017. This continues a slight downward trend in the proportion of school leavers progressing directly to tertiary education that started with the 2014 leaver cohort. A similar trend can be seen with school leavers progressing directly into level four and above qualifications. The 2016 school leaver pathways show that 46.6% enrolled in level four and above qualifications the following year. This is down from the 2014 school leaver cohort in which 48.1% of leavers enrolled in level four and above qualifications the following year.

Figure 1: School leavers by tertiary education level\textsuperscript{1} one year after leaving school (2012-2017)

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure1.png}
\caption{School leavers by tertiary education level\textsuperscript{1} one year after leaving school (2012-2017)}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{1} Tertiary education level is the highest level of enrolment over the given year
The tertiary education sector is diverse and encompasses formal qualifications to modern apprenticeships. Formal qualifications are by the most popular destination of school leavers within one year of leaving. However, the proportion of school leavers enrolling in these qualifications has declined since the 2013 leaver cohort from 51.1% to 48.1% of the 2016 leaver cohort. Targeted Training, which includes Youth Guarantee, has also seen a decrease in popularity from 7.9% of 2013 leavers to 6.9% of leavers in 2016.

Modern Apprenticeships and Industry Training has seen the largest increase as a destination for school leavers, with an increase of school leaver enrolments from 6.2% of the 2013 leaver cohort to 6.5% of the 2016 leaver cohort.

Figure 2: School leavers by tertiary activity one year after leaving school (2012-2017)
Students may decide to take a year or more off before enrolling in tertiary education. The following text examines these pathways for leaver cohorts where three years of tertiary enrolment data is available. For the 2014 leaver cohort, 65.0% progressed directly, 9.2% took a year off, 3.5% took a two year break and 22.2% had no enrolment in a tertiary course within three years of leaving. In comparing leaver cohorts from 2010-2014, there has been a trending increase in the proportion of students progressing directly to tertiary education (1.9 percentage points).

In parallel with the positive increase in the proportion of students progressing directly to tertiary education, fewer students are taking a break between finishing schooling and entering tertiary education. Between 2010 and 2014 there has been a 1.5 percentage point drop in the proportion of leavers enrolling in tertiary education after a one or two year break from 14.3% to 12.8% respectively.

Figure 3: Proportion of school leaver cohorts entering tertiary education by years after leaving (2010-2014)
Gender

Females are more likely to progress directly into tertiary education than their male counterparts. In 2017, 64.1% of females from the 2016 leaver cohort enrolled in tertiary education at all levels. Males were less than this at 59.1%. These pathways are lower than the 2015 leaver cohort where 66.3% and 62.0%, of female and male school leavers respectively, progressed directly into tertiary education.

Females are more likely to enrol in level four and above qualification with 50.4% doing so in 2017 compared with 42.9% of males.

*Figure 4: Proportion in tertiary education one year after leaving school by year, tertiary level and gender (2012-2017)*
Males are more likely to enrol in apprenticeships, industry training and targeted training than females. Based on the 2016 leaver cohort, 17.3% of males enrolled in apprenticeships, industry training and targeted training by the end of 2017. This is higher than the female rate of 9.4%. These rates are similar to that for the previous three years (see Figure 5).

*Figure 5: Proportion of school leavers by type of tertiary study and gender (2015-2017)*

Targeted training includes training opportunities, skill enhancement, youth training and youth guarantee.

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\(2\) Targeted training includes training opportunities, skill enhancement, youth training and youth guarantee.
Ethnicity

Total response ethnicity collection involves counting people who identify with more than one ethnic group in each of these ethnic groups. However for the New Zealand total, individuals are counted only once.

Based on the 2016 leaver cohort, Asian students had the highest proportion of school leavers progressing directly to tertiary education (77.9%). This is 15.0 percentage points higher than European/Pākehā (62.9%). Pacific (53.2%) and Māori (50.1%) had the lowest direct progression rates.

Figure 6: Proportion in tertiary education one year after leaving school by year, and ethnicity (2012-2017)
Māori and Pacific are more likely to be enrolled in foundation courses, certificates and diplomas than any other ethnic group. Based on the 2016 leaver cohort, 37.1% of Māori and 34.1% of Pacific enrolled in tertiary education levels one to seven (non-degree) by the end of 2017.

**Figure 7: Proportion of leavers in tertiary education by ethnicity and tertiary level (2017)**
There is a positive correlation between the socio-economic mix of the school the student attended and the proportion of school leavers enrolling in tertiary. Pathways of the 2016 leaver cohort show 71.2% of leavers from schools in the highest quintile (Decile 9 and 10) progressed directly to tertiary education. This compares with 52.4% of leavers from schools in the lowest quintile (Decile 1 and 2).

*Figure 8: Proportion of school leavers progressing directly to tertiary education by quintile (2012-2017)*
Students from lower decile schools are more likely to enrol in foundation courses, certificates and diplomas than students from higher deciles. Based on the 2016 leaver cohort, 37.1% of leavers from schools in the lowest quintile that progressed directly to tertiary education were enrolled in levels one to seven (non-degree) by the end of 2017. In comparison, 16.8% of school leavers from the highest quintile enrolled in levels one to seven (non-degree) by the end of 2017.

**Figure 9: Proportion of school leavers progressing directly to tertiary education by school quintile and tertiary level (2017)**
Highest school qualification

Students who left school in 2016 with NCEA level 3 or above were most likely to progress directly to tertiary education (74.1% enrolled by end of 2017). This is 37.1 percentage points higher than for school leavers with less than a NCEA level 1 qualification (37.0%) from the same cohort.

Since 2011, the proportion of school leavers with at most NCEA level 2 progressing directly to tertiary education has decreased from 57.3% by the end of 2012 to 50.1% by the end of 2017.

The proportion of students not progressing directly to tertiary study is increasing for leavers with NCEA Level 2 and 3. Based on the 2016 leaver cohort, 25.9% of students with NCEA Level 3 or above and 49.9% with NCEA Level 2 were not in tertiary study within one year of leaving school.

Figure 10: Proportion of school leavers progressing directly to tertiary education by highest school qualification (2012-2017)
The main activity of the 2016 leaver cohort within one year of leaving school with NCEA level 3 or above was enrolment in a formal qualification (69.3%) with the remainder in targeted training/modern apprenticeships (4.8%) or not in education (25.9%). Students leaving school with less than a NCEA level 1 qualification are still transitioning into tertiary education with 37.0% enrolling at all levels in 2017.

**Figure 11: Proportion of school leavers progressing directly to tertiary education by highest school qualification and institution type (2017)**

- Other (Not in education)
- Modern Apprenticeships/Industry Training
- Targeted Training (including Youth Guarantee)
- Enrolled in a formal qualification (excluding Youth Guarantee)
Where to Find Out More

To obtain other information about school leavers consider indicators:

- School leavers with NCEA Level 3 or above
- School leavers with NCEA Level 2 or above
- School leavers with NCEA Level 1 or above

To obtain a more complete understanding of participation in tertiary education, and their related effects, consider indicators:

- Participation rates in tertiary education
- Education expectancy

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

References