

Highest Qualification Gained

What this is about...

The level of qualifications in a population is related to employment take-up. An educated population adds to the vibrancy and creativity of the community and is needed to remain competitive in the global economy.

This indicator measures the highest qualification gained within the New Zealand population aged 15 years and over. It is useful as an indicator of the capability of a workforce to meet the labour demand.¹⁰⁷ Because this is a measure of the whole population it will reflect qualifications that were gained over the previous 40 to 50 years.

The level and quantity of study for a degree is now defined by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority and tertiary institutions. The difference between a 'degree' and 'vocational' qualification, is becoming less distinct as a much wider range of degree qualifications has developed, and many courses can now be recognised as part of a degree qualification.

What did we find ?

- Between 1991 and 1996 there was a significant drop in vocational qualifications and rise in degree qualifications. This may reflect changes in national qualification standards during that period.
- The percentage of the population who have no qualifications dropped but the shift is small over a five year period where the importance of a well-qualified workforce has been increasingly recognised.
- There are significant differences in achievement at the higher level between New Zealand's six largest cities. In particular, the percentage of the population with degree qualifications varies widely from 4% in Manukau to 18.9% in Wellington.
- The proportions of people with no qualifications in the six largest cities are lower than in the rest of New Zealand. Among the six cities however, Manukau, Waitakere, and Christchurch Cities have relatively high levels of people aged 15 years or over who have no qualifications.

PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION AGED 15 YEARS
AND OVER WHO HAVE GAINED QUALIFICATION, BY CITY (1991 AND 1996)¹⁰⁸

	Degree (%)		Vocational (%)		School (%)		None (%)	
	1991	1996	1991	1996	1991	1996	1991	1996
Auckland	8.9	12.3	23.8	18.6	20.9	24.2	21.0	18.4
Manukau	2.7	4.0	20.4	16.3	18.1	22.4	26.2	25.6
North Shore	6.3	8.8	27.6	21.7	24.7	27.7	18.1	17.8
Waitakere	3.2	4.4	23.5	18.4	20.9	24.0	24.2	23.6
Wellington	15.4	18.9	24.4	19.5	21.8	25.2	15.0	14.0
Christchurch	5.7	7.4	24.2	19.5	21.8	26.5	24.7	24.2
Rest of NZ	3.4	4.4	21.7	18.4	19.1	22.6	27.0	27.1

Data Source: Statistics New Zealand

It is difficult to draw conclusions on the linkages between educational participation and quality at progressive stages of the lifelong learning process. One reason for this is the difficulty of 'tracking' population groups as they become more mobile (for example, seeking university education in different parts of the country from the place of normal residence).

107 The categories of qualifications were updated between the 1991 and 1996 censuses. They have been grouped into similar qualification types to allow clearer reporting. The category "None" includes those aged 15 years and over who are still at school with no qualifications, although this group is not large (1.0 to 1.5% of the total population). 1996 categories are: Degree - Higher and Bachelor Degrees; School - Higher School, Sixth Form, School Certificate, Overseas School Qualifications; Vocational - Advanced Vocational, Intermediate Vocational, Skilled Vocational, Basic Vocational Qualifications; None - No Qualification.

108 Percentage calculated using 1991 and 1996 Census population counts.