

# SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL RETENTION AND TERTIARY PARTICIPATION

## Introduction

Participation is a key factor associated with academic achievement at secondary school. To achieve, students need to be at school, experience a sense of belonging, and stay interested and engaged in learning. There is a strong correlation between early school leavers and unemployment and/or lower incomes. School attendance is legally required in New Zealand until the child is aged 16 years. However parents of students aged 15 years are able to apply to the Ministry of Education for an exemption on the basis of educational problems, conduct, or the unlikelihood that a student will obtain benefit from attending school. Since the Ministry of Education strengthened its early leaving application and approval process in 2007, the number of applications for early leaving exemptions has dropped sevenfold from around 70 applications per 1,000 15-year-old students in 2006 to around 10 applications per 1,000 15-year-old students in 2013. There was a slight increase in the number of exemptions granted between 2012 and 2013 (from 313 to 422 exemptions) due, in part, to the Youth Guarantee initiative which provides opportunity to achieve NCEA Level 2 or equivalent outside of school. The majority (79%) of 15-year-old students who received an early leaving exemption (exempt school leavers) were leaving to attend a Training Provider course, with 12% exempt school leavers planning to enrol in a Polytechnic course and 9% of exempt school leavers entering full-time employment [74].

The scope of the tertiary education sector ranges from informal non-assessed community courses through to undergraduate degrees and advanced, research-based postgraduate degrees. Changes in participation and achievement in tertiary education are indicators of the extent to which New Zealanders are developing the skills needed for a modern knowledge economy. The New Zealand participation rate in tertiary education has declined from a peak of 13.7% in 2005 to 10.6% in 2012. This decline was due mainly to decreased participation in non-degree courses such as levels 1–4 Certificates and Diplomas. From 2005–2012 there have been very slight increases in the proportion of the population undertaking study for bachelor degrees, honours and post-graduate certificates and diplomas, and doctoral degrees, and a slight decrease in the participation rates for masters degrees. Females participate in tertiary study at a higher rate than males (12.2% vs. 8.9%) and this gender disparity has been increasing for several years. After adjusting for differences in age distributions, 14.6% of Māori aged 15 and over participated in tertiary education in 2012. The Māori participation rate was higher than other ethnic groups Asian (9.6%), European/Pākehā (9.7%), and Pasifika (11.4%). When broken down by level of study, Māori currently have substantially higher rates at non-degree level, while non-Māori participation rates are highest at degree level and above [75].

The following section uses Ministry of Education data to review the proportion of senior secondary school students staying on at school until at least seventeen years of age and tertiary participation rates.

### Data Source and Methods

#### Indicators

1. *The proportion of secondary school students staying on at school until at least 17 years of age*

Numerator: ENROL: The number of school leavers aged 17 years or above in a given year

Denominator: ENROL: The total number of school leavers in a given year

2. *Age-standardised participation rates in tertiary education*

Numerator: The total number of students aged 15 years and over who were enrolled in a qualification, in either a public tertiary institution or publicly funded private tertiary institution, at some time during a particular year

Denominator: The 2013 New Zealand population age distribution

#### Data Source

Ministry of Education



## Notes on Interpretation

### Retention

Note 1: From 2009 a new way of categorising school leavers has been used that more accurately records school leaver numbers. Thus the data presented in this section are not comparable with previous years.

Note 2: DHB area is based on the school that students attended rather than their residential address.

Note 3: NZAID students (foreign students sponsored by the NZ Agency for International Development), and foreign fee paying students have been excluded.

Note 4: Ethnicity is total response and thus individual students may appear in more than one ethnic group.

Further detail is available from: <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/indicators/definition/student-engagement-participation/3945>

### Age standardised participation rates

Note 5: The age-standardised participation rate is one where all subgroups being compared are artificially given the same age distribution, with the tertiary participation rates presented here being standardised to Statistics New Zealand's 2013 national population estimates. As participation is highest in the 18–24 age group, standardising for age removes any differences arising from one group having a different age structure to another. As such, the standardised rate is an artificial measure, but it does provide an estimate of how groups might more fairly compare if they had the same age distribution.

Note 6: Data relate to domestic students enrolled at any time during the year with a tertiary education provider in formal qualifications of greater than 0.03 EFTS. Students who were enrolled at more than one qualification level have been counted in each level, but only once in the Total.

Note 7: Data exclude all non-formal learning and on-job industry training.

## New Zealand Distribution and Trends

### Senior Secondary School Retention

#### Distribution by Ethnicity

In New Zealand during 2009–2013, a higher proportion of Asian > European and Pacific > Māori students stayed at school to 17 years of age. During 2013, 93.9% of Asian students stayed at school to age 17 years, as compared to 85.1% of European, 81.3% of Pacific, and 67.9% of Māori students (**Figure 1**).

### Participation in Tertiary Education

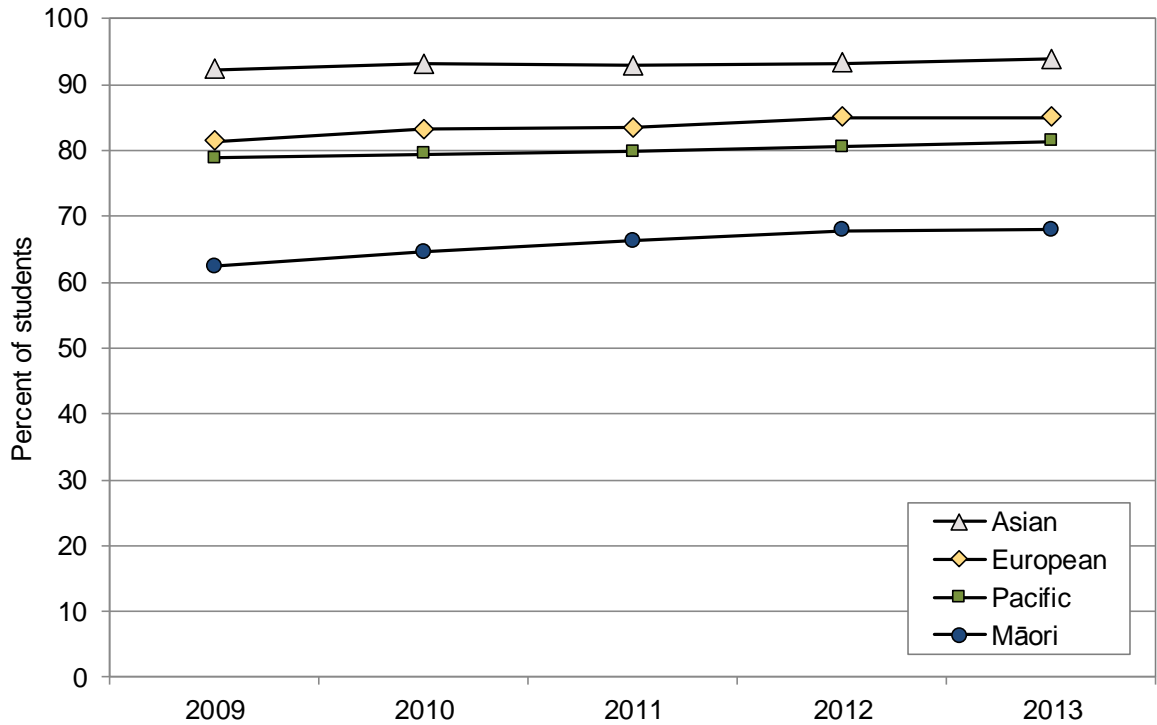
#### Distribution by Ethnicity

Ethnic differences in school retention rates at 17 years need to be viewed in the context of the alternative educational opportunities available to students. During 2006–2013, a large number of students participated in tertiary education, with Māori students having the highest participation rates (**Figure 2**). Māori students have high participation rates in Certificates and Diplomas, however, have low rates in Bachelors (**Figure 3**). Tertiary participation rates include those 25+ years and such figures suggest that for many, participation in formal education does not cease at school leaving. The income premiums achieved for completing various types of study need to be taken into consideration when assessing the longer term impacts educational participation has on economic security.

**Note:** Information on regional tertiary participation rates is not provided due to the large shifts in the New Zealand youth population that occur when young people around 17 years of age move from regional areas to large urban centres to take advantage of tertiary study opportunities. Regional participation rates are likely to reflect the number and type of tertiary institutions available in a region rather than the participation rates of young people who have grown up in a region, and/or who return to that region during their study breaks or vacations.

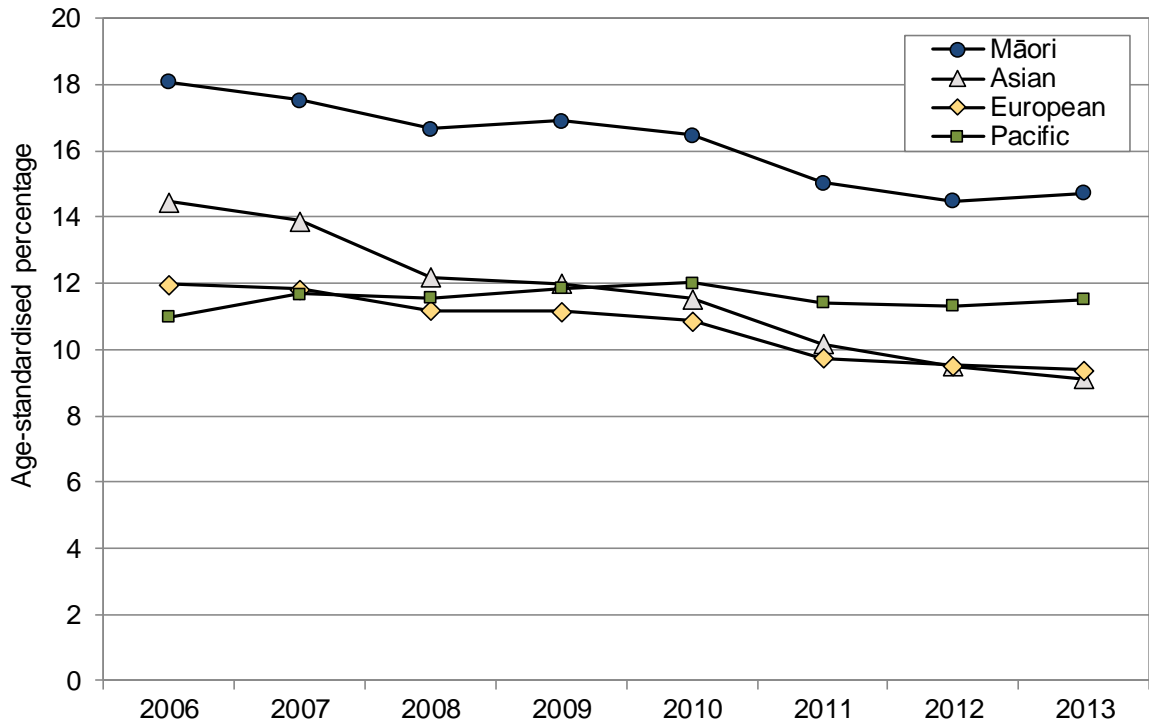


Figure 1. Percentage of secondary school students staying on at school to age 17 years by ethnicity, New Zealand 2009–2013



Source: Ministry of Education ENROL; Note: Ethnicity is total response and thus individual students may appear in more than one ethnic group

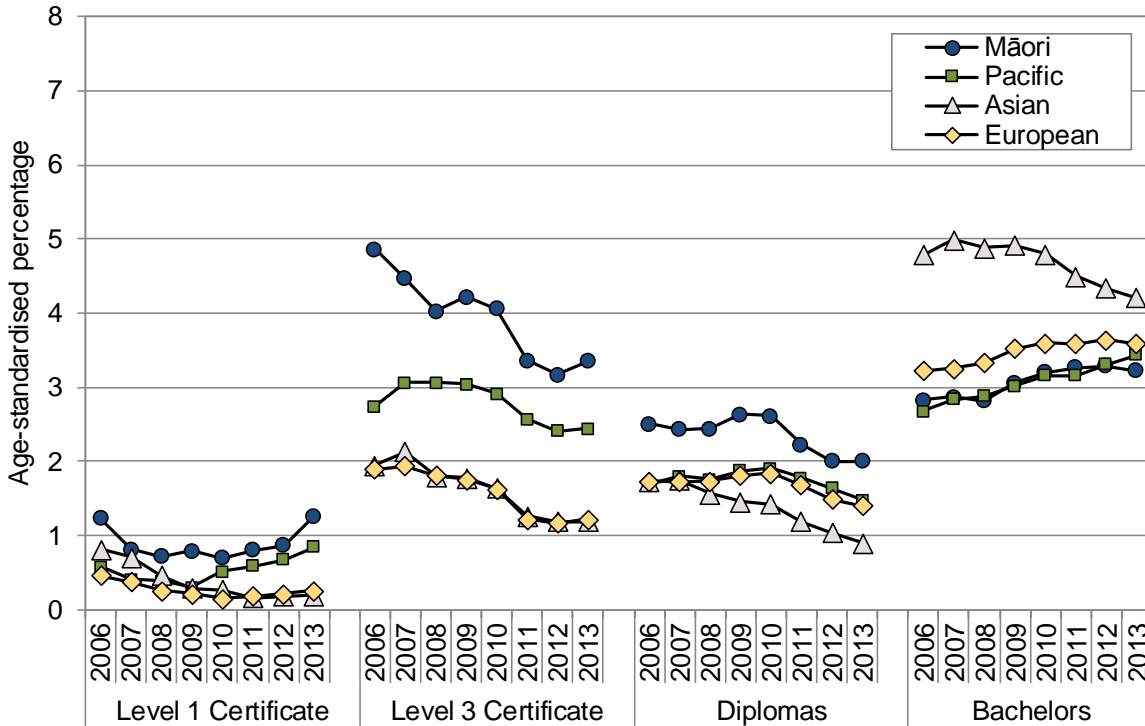
Figure 2. Age-standardised participation rates in tertiary education for domestic students by ethnicity, New Zealand 2006–2013



Source: Ministry of Education; Note: Total includes Level 1–4 Certificates, Diplomas, Bachelors, Level 7 Graduate Certificates/Diplomas, Level 8 Honours/Postgraduate Certificates/Diplomas, Masters, and Doctorates

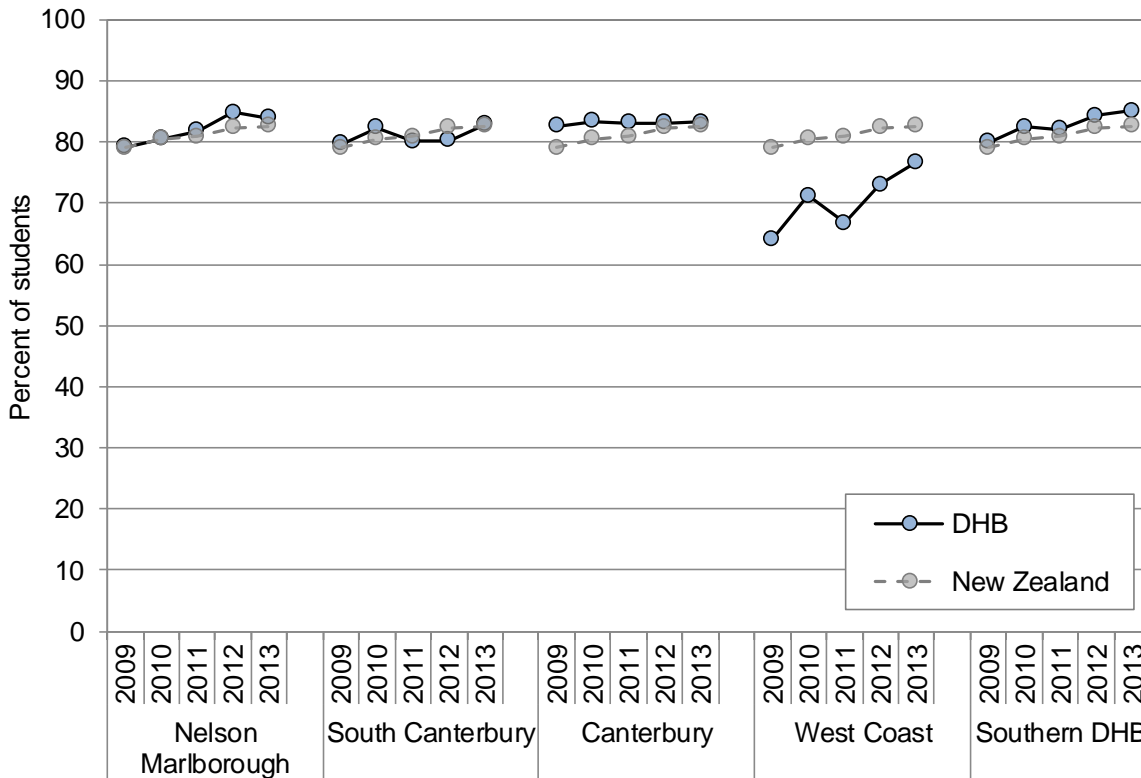


Figure 3. Age-standardised participation rates in tertiary education for domestic students by ethnicity and selected qualification, New Zealand 2006–2013



Source: Ministry of Education; Note: Ethnicity is total response and thus individual students may appear in more than one ethnic group; students enrolled in multiple qualification levels have been counted in each level

Figure 4. Percent of secondary school students staying on at school to 17 years of age, South Island DHBs vs. New Zealand 2009–2013



Source: Ministry of Education ENROL



## **South Island DHBs Distribution and Trends**

### **South Island DHBs vs. New Zealand**

In West Coast during 2009–2013, the proportion of students staying on at school to 17 years of age was lower than the New Zealand rate, while in the remaining South Island DHBs, the proportion of students staying at school to 17 years was similar to the New Zealand rate (**Figure 4**).

### **Distribution by Ethnicity**

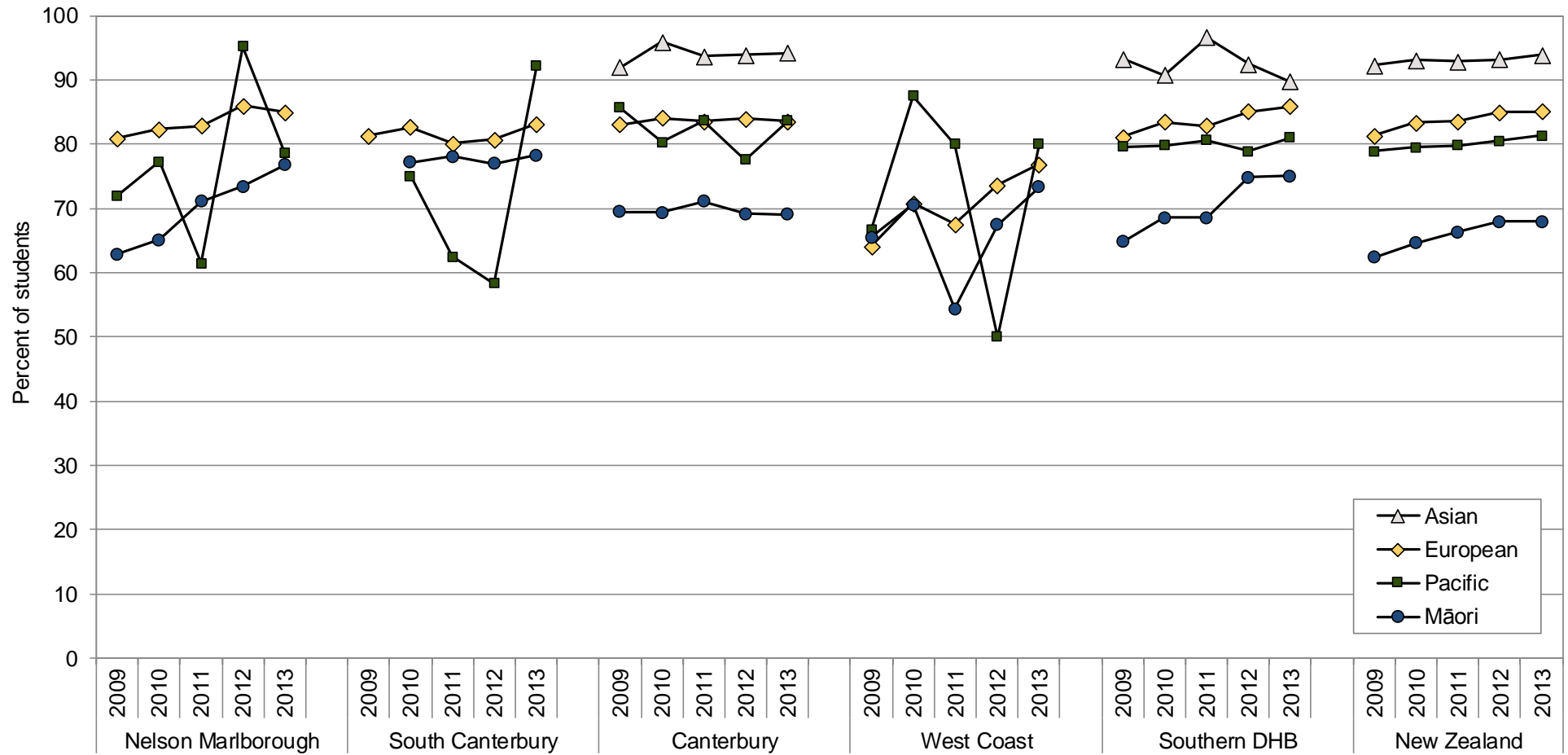
In Canterbury during 2009–2013, a higher proportion of Asian > European and Pacific > Māori students stayed on at school to 17 years of age, while in the remaining South Island DHBs retention rates to 17 years were higher for European than for Māori students (**Figure 5**).

## **Local Policy Documents and Evidence Based Reviews Relevant to Educational Participation in Young People**

There is considerable interaction between and overlap among education-related indicators, and the tables in other education sections provide links to local policy documents and evidence-based reviews that are also relevant to senior secondary school retention and tertiary participation. Please refer to relevant sections in early childhood education; initiatives to improve the educational participation and attainment of Māori students; for the prevention of stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions; reviews of publications relevant to truancy and unjustified absences and publications that consider strategies to improve student's educational attainment.



Figure 5. Percent of secondary school students staying on at school to 17 years of age by ethnicity, South Island DHBs vs. New Zealand 2009–2013



Source: Ministry of Education ENROL; Note: Ethnicity is total response and thus individual students may appear in more than one ethnic group