

Trends in Boys' Education in New Zealand

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New Zealand Trends Regarding Boys' Educational Achievement

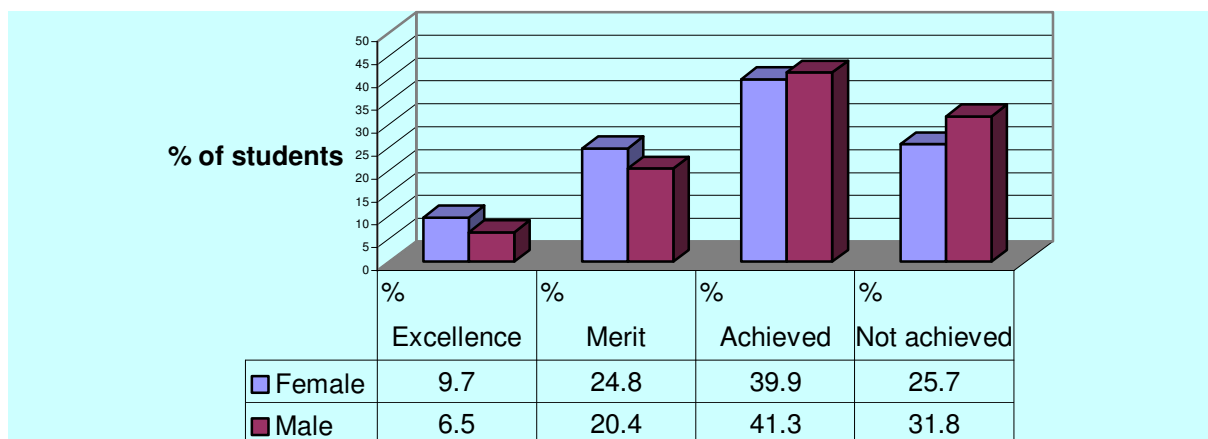
In New Zealand, a persistent disparity between boys' and girls' educational achievement has emerged over the last 20 years. This trend was examined by the Education Review Office, which highlighted the disparity between boys and girls in the ERO report of 1999. The report noted that, at primary school, boys were more likely than girls to have difficulties with written and oral language, handwriting and spelling, and overall school progress. It found that 65 % of reading recovery students were boys. The report also noted that, in 1996, 59 % of boys were successful in gaining Sixth Form Certificate compared to 67 % of girls. More girls than boys were likely to gain A or B Bursaries, and on average there was a 5.8 % difference in the School Certificate Pass rates between boys and girls. The report showed that at School Certificate Level, boys under achieved in all socio-economic strata of society, as measured by school deciles, with a range of 2.6 – 13.12 %. Boys underachieved in all schools, whether co-ed or single sex. (Education Review Office, 1999)

Independently, a longitudinal study of 1000 children conducted in Christchurch in 1997 by Fergusson and Harwood found that boys performed less well than girls throughout their school career, as measured by standardised tests, teachers ratings and school learning outcomes. The study concluded that:

The traditional educational disadvantage shown by females has largely disappeared and has been replaced by an emerging male disadvantage.

(Fergusson & Horwood, 1997)

Since these reports were published, these trends have continued. The NCEA results of 2002 shows a distribution curve of grades, whereby more girls obtain higher grades and more boys obtain the lower grades.

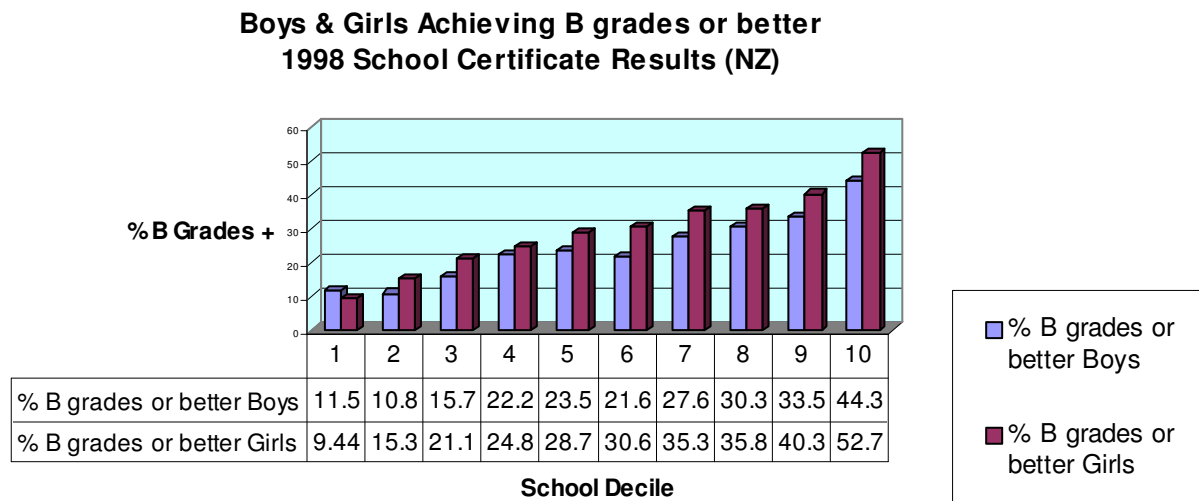


2002 NCEA Level 1 Grade Distribution by Gender

From NZQA (2003)

Boys' Educational Achievement and Socio-Economic Background

The Education Review Office Study "The Achievement of Boys" (1999) showed that boys' educational achievement is lower than that of girls in almost all socio economic backgrounds. The socio economic background of NZ schools is measured by the decile index, decile 1 being the lowest and decile 10 being the highest.



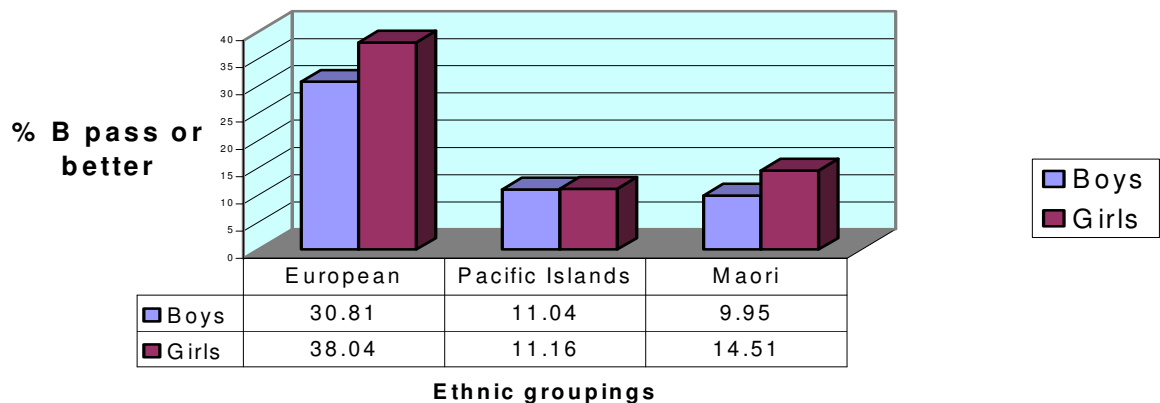
From Aitken (1999)

Comment: The fact that boys of all socioeconomic backgrounds are underachieving points to the importance of researching the barriers to learning which boys experience *as boys*.

Boys Educational Achievement and Ethnicity

The Education Review Office Report also indicated that Maori boys were the most underachieving group of all students

Boys & Girls Gaining B Grades or better 1998 School Certificate Results NZ

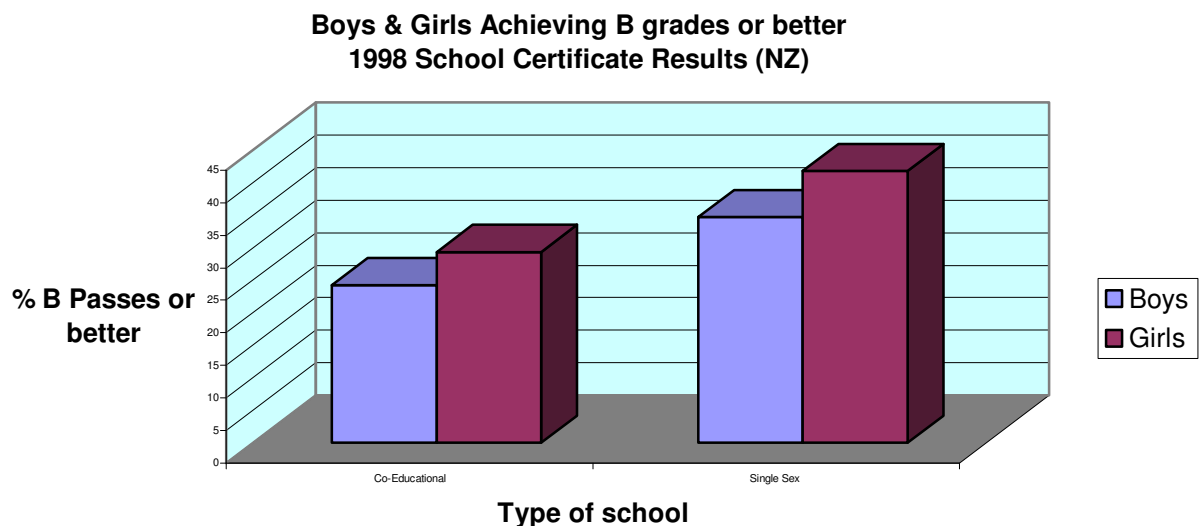


From Aitken (1999)

Comment: It is clear that in order to raise the achievement of Maori boys both ethnicity and gender needs to be taken into account.

Boys' Educational Achievement and Single Sex Schools

The Education Review Office Report also indicated that boys' educational achievement was higher in single sex schools.



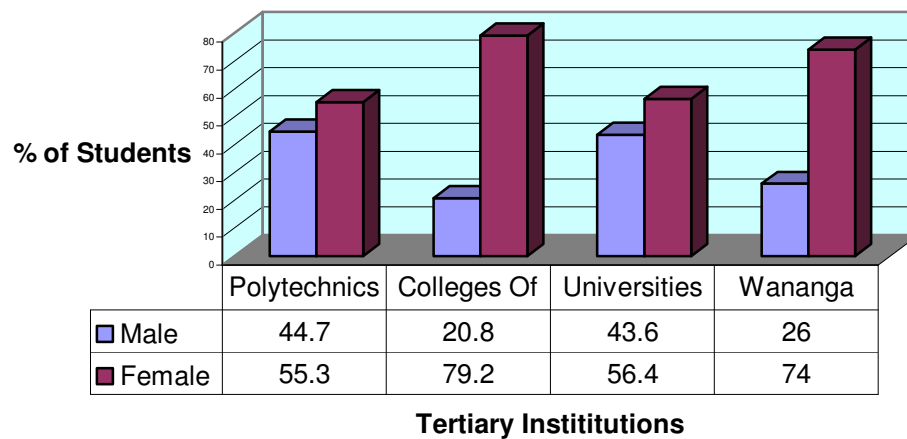
From Aitken (1999)

Comment: The success of single sex boys' schools points to the importance of researching the teaching and learning cultures of these schools, in order to understand what factors contribute to the higher success rates of these schools.

Boys' Educational Achievement and Tertiary Enrolments

The disparity in school achievement is flowing on into the Tertiary Education Sector, with more female than male undergraduate enrolments occurring. In 2002 the ratio of female to male undergraduate was approximately 59:41 % (Ministry of Education , 2003).

2002 Tertiary Enrolments by Gender



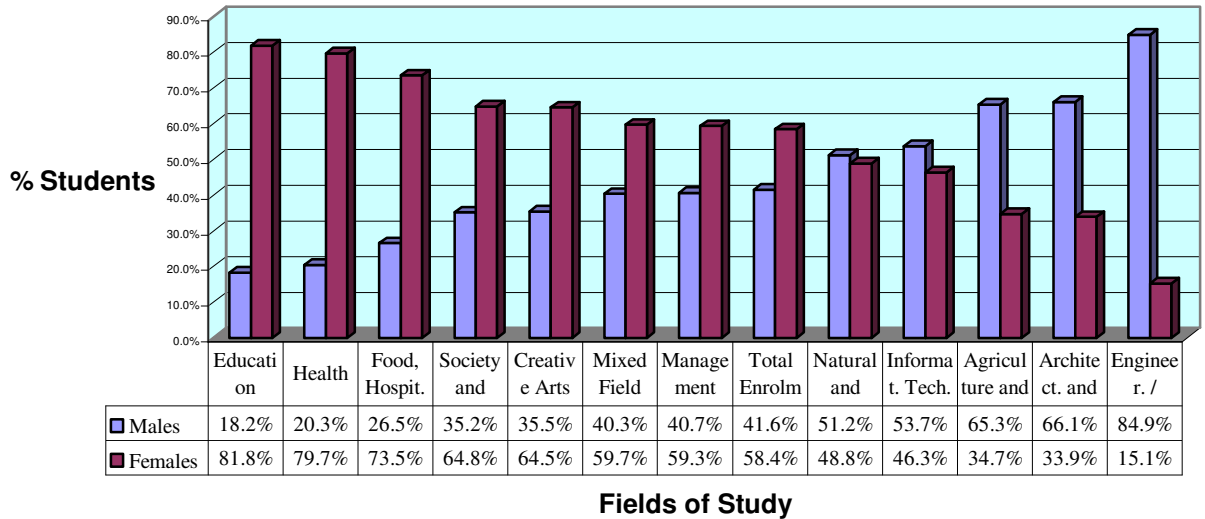
From: Ministry Of Education (2002)

Similarly, only 41.1% of undergraduates in 2004 were male (Ministry of Education, 2005, Table A.1).

Comment: The reduced enrolment rates for young men raises serious issues for society. The significant gender enrolment gap of the Wananga shows that the underachievement of Polynesian young men is being perpetuated by current educational policy settings.

These reduced enrolments by male students are also reflected in male undergraduate students comprising a low proportion of those studying in a number of professional areas:

2003 University Field of Study By Gender



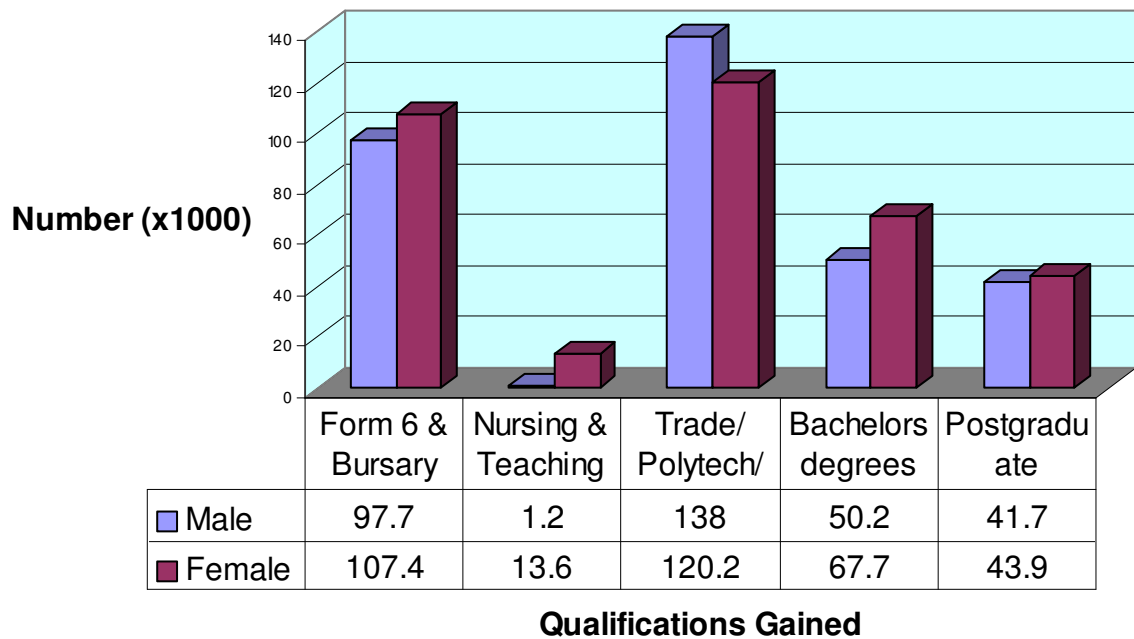
From Statistics New Zealand (2004)

Comment: The lack of gender balance in the enrolments in so many fields of study will have repercussions for society in the future. The lack of young men in these professions will further decrease the amount of role-modelling available for boys, and this will make it increasingly difficult to reverse these trends.

Boys' Educational Achievement and Tertiary Qualifications

Boys' lower educational achievements are reflected in the lower number of young men gaining tertiary qualifications. (Statistics New Zealand, 2004). The report shows that apart from trade and certificate related qualifications, young men gained a significantly lower number of qualifications than young women.

2004 Qualifications Gained By 15-35 Year Old Males and Females



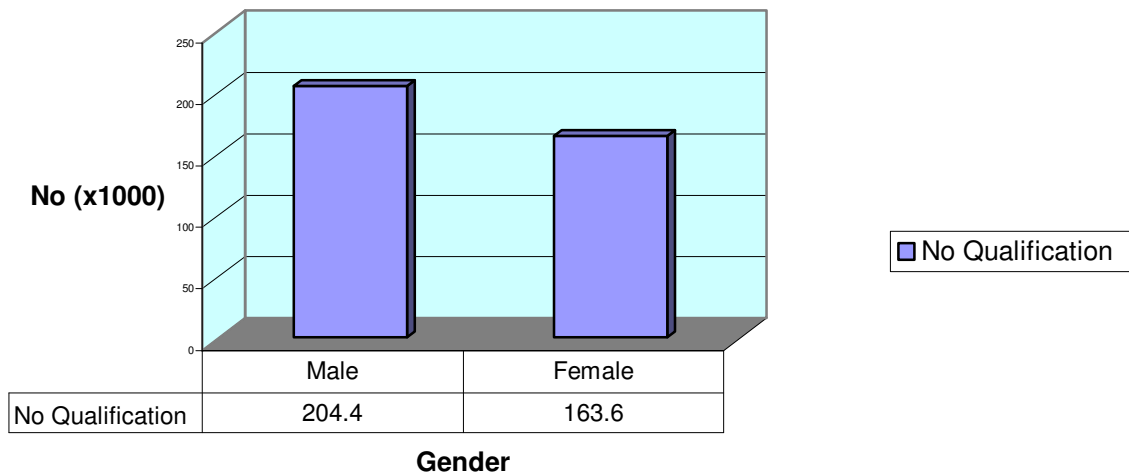
Statistics New Zealand (2004)

Comment: These figures show that young men are outnumbered in all qualifications, except trades and diplomas. If these trends continue over time, they point to an increasing narrowing of work and study options for young men.

Boys' Educational Achievement and the Labour Market

Because of the persistent lower educational achievement of young men there is a significant differential between the number of men and women participating in the labour market without any school qualifications.

2004 Labour Market Participants Without Qualifications



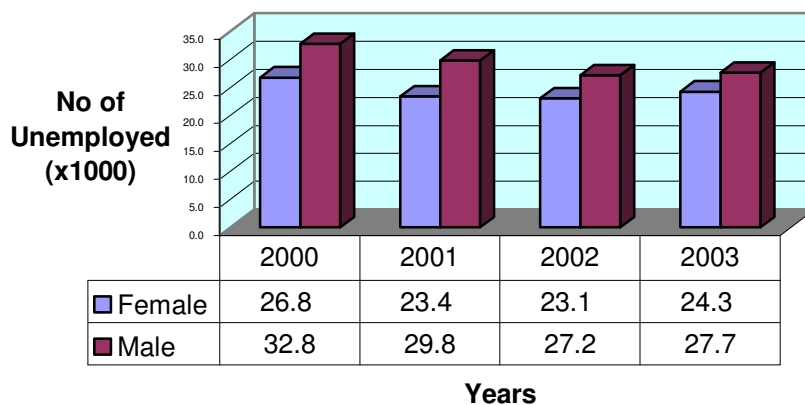
Statistics New Zealand (2004)

Comment: These figures show that young men will be more vulnerable in economic down turns since they will be less competitive in the market place. This will have significant social implications.

Boys' Educational Achievement and Youth Unemployment

Boys' lower educational achievement is reflected in their lowered participation in the labour market. The NZ Department of Statistics annual demographic report 2002 shows that in the year 2000-2003 there were significantly higher rates of youth unemployment amongst young men. (Statistics New Zealand, 2004)

2000 -2003 Unemployment amongst 15-29 year old males and females



Statistics New Zealand (2004)

Comment: The recent strong economic performance of the New Zealand economy hides an increasingly structural gender differential trend, which will become more apparent with the next economic downturn.

Summary

Boys' educational underachievement is having a significant impact on the participation of young men in the tertiary education sector and on their rates of unemployment. The continuation of these trends in the future must be a cause for concern for society as a whole, since they signify a gradual decline in participation of young men in the workforce generally, and the knowledge economy in particular.

This will have significant social repercussions not only for the young men involved, but also for New Zealand society as a whole.

References

Aitken, J. (1999) *"The Achievement of Boys"*. Wellington: Education Review Office

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