



KINGDOM OF TONGA

Tonga's Youth:

Analysis of the situation of young people based on the 2016 Population and Housing Census



August 2019
Tonga Statistics Department

Preface

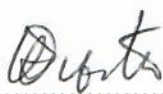
This youth monograph provides analysis of the characteristics of young people in Tonga, as captured through the 2016 Population and Housing Census. It examines the situation of young people compared to the total population, in particular, their transition to independence, education, health and wellbeing, and main activity. It is part of a series of census monographs on topics where statistics and information are in high demand, the other being on disability. This publication provides new information and analysis to complement these and the main report on the census published in 2018.

This monograph is an initiative of the Tonga Statistics Department (TDS). It is a priority for TDS to maximise the use of the data it collects and ensure its value is realised. The main target audiences for this report are planners, policy and decision makers within the Tonga government and in organizations working on youth and development issues, but the report should be of interest to anyone involved in Tonga's development. The findings and data can be used for policy and planning purposes, and the monitoring and evaluation of the Tonga Strategic Development Framework 2015-2025, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and other relevant national policies and programmes.

I would like to acknowledge the work of Tonga Statistics Department's staff – Sione Lolohea, Lupe Moala Tupou, Lusua Kaitapu, Samisoni Fotu, Vaimoana Soakimi, and Telekaki Latavao – and the support provided by Jessica Gardner, consultant, in the preparation of this report.

I also wish to acknowledge to the Government of Tonga for the financial assistance, without their support this publication would not have happened. The financial and technical support from our development partners for the 2016 Census is greatly appreciated: Tonga Health Promotion Foundation, the UNICEF and the Pacific Community (SPC).

Finally, I would like to extend my appreciation to the people of Tonga who participated in the census, for without them, this publication would not have been possible.



.....
Dr. Villiami Konifelenisi Fifita
Government Statistician,
Tonga Statistics Department,
August 2019.

Contents

Preface	1
Introduction	4
About this report	4
Summary of key findings	5
Youth in Tonga	7
Key policy issues	7
Young people in transition	10
Key findings	10
Health and wellbeing	15
Key findings	15
Risks to health	15
Disability	16
Education	17
Key findings	17
Education system in Tonga	17
Secondary school attendance	18
Technical and Vocational and Tertiary education	20
Highest level of education reached	23
Literacy	23
Youth not in employment, education or training	26
Key findings	26
Conclusions	29

List of Figures

Figure 1 Total and relative size of the youth population (age 15-24) in Tonga, 2006, 2011 and 2016	10
Figure 2 Population pyramid for Tonga, 2016 (total number of people by sex and age group)	11
Figure 3 Percentage of young people who have left school, by sex and age, Tonga 2016	11
Figure 4 Main activity of young men and women, by age, Tonga 2016	12
Figure 5 Living arrangements of young people, by sex and age group, Tonga 2016	13
Figure 6 Percentage of young people that have been married, by sex and age, Tonga 2016	13
Figure 7 Percentage of girls and women who have given birth, by age (accumulative amount), Tonga 2016	14
Figure 8 Percentage of young people who use tobacco, by sex and age group, Tonga 2016	16
Figure 9 Percentage of young people who drink alcohol, by sex and age group, Tonga 2016	16
Figure 10 Percentage of young people who drink kava, by sex and age group, Tonga 2016	16
Figure 11 Education status of youth population, by sex and age (years), Tonga 2016	18
Figure 12 Number of current tertiary students, by sex and age, Tonga 2016	20
Figure 13 Number on Tongan youth (age 14-35) currently studying at tertiary level, by level of qualification and sex, Tonga 2016	21

Tonga's Youth: Analysis of the situation of young people based on the 2016 Population and Housing Census

Figure 14 Highest level of education reached, by sex and age group, Tonga 2016.....	23
Figure 15 Percentage of Tongan youths (age 14-35) who are literate in both Tongan and English, by highest grade completed (Form 1-7 only) and sex, Tonga 2016	25
Figure 18 Percentage of Tongan youth (age 15-34) who are not in employment, education or training (NEET rate), by island group, sex and disability status, Tonga 2016	26
Figure 19 Percentage of youth (age 15-24) who are not in employment, education or training (NEET rate), by island group and sex, Tonga 2016	27

List of Tables

Table 1 Net and Gross Secondary School Attendance Ratios by sex and location, Tonga 2016	19
Table 2 Net and Gross Tertiary Attendance Ratios by sex and location, Tonga 2016	22
Table 3 Total youth and adult literacy rates, by district and sex, Tonga 2016	24
Table 4 Percentage of youth population not in employment, education, nor training (NEET rate), by district and sex, Tonga 2016	28

Introduction

Providing a quality education, basic life skills and appropriate opportunities for young people is central to development and the realization of human rights. Tonga's Strategic Development Framework 2015-2025 aims for a more progressive Tonga supporting a higher quality of life for all. Investing in young people as the future business and community leaders of tomorrow, is central to that vision.

This report demonstrates the value of the population and housing census for tracking progress towards development goals and international commitments related to young people. It provides evidence that can be used to develop policies and programs, so they address issues of highest priority. Many of the conclusions will be known but perhaps have not been easily quantified in the past. Some may even be a surprise. It is hoped that the results presented are of value and contribute to further research about young people in Tonga.

About this report

This report is for policymakers, decision-makers and practitioners working towards achievement of development goals. Particularly officers in the government ministries, representatives from civil society organizations working with young people, religious leaders, development partners, and young people themselves. It aims to raise awareness about the evidence available about youth to facilitate evidence-based policies, plans and programs. The process of developing this publication also helps to build capacity within the Tonga Statistics Department for data analysis and communication of statistics.

This report provides information in a way that can be easily understood by people with limited experience in using statistics. Technical explanations are avoided to make it engaging and interesting. Every attempt has been made to ensure the information is not misleading and is factually correct.

This report makes an important contribution to providing government officials with evidence for targeting public policies and programs. It is part of the national strategy to improve analysis, dissemination and use of population and development data as a factual basis for planning.

Summary of key findings

Youth in transition

- The Tongan definition of youth is people aged 15-34 of which there are almost 32,000 in Tonga – about one third of the total population
- Based on the international definition of youth (aged 15-24) there are almost 19,000 youth in Tonga (18.6% of the population)
- Boys are leaving school earlier than girls with the gender gap being largest at age 16 by when almost 22% of boys have left the education system compared to 12% of girls
- The population census reveals the main activity of each person aged 15 and above, whether that be in paid employment – the case for 37% of men aged 15-34 and 26% of women – or a full or part time student (29% of young men and 30% of young women)
- Analysis of the recent Labour Force Survey should provide more reliable estimates about youth and employment and a factsheet on this will be published in 2019
- Most young people are aged in their 30s before living independently from their parents or other relatives
- Young men are slightly more likely to remain living with parents or in-laws with 63% still in the family home by age 20-24 compared to 59% of young women
- Women marry earlier than men but by age 34 years, 80% of women and men are married
- By age 24 years just over two in every five (42.7%) women have given birth to at least one child. By age 34, three quarters (74.5%) of women will have become mothers.

Health and wellbeing

- around 40% of men aged 20-49 years smoke tobacco compared to 11% of women
- about 37% of men aged 20-49 drink alcohol compared to 9% of women
- kava consumption among men aged 20-49 is high at 49% but virtually non-existent among women (1%)
- 1.6% of young men aged 15-24 have some form of disability and 1.4% of young women

Education

- a small proportion of children and adults have never attended school – around 2%
- young people start to leave the school system around age 15
- by age 17 around a quarter of young people have already left school
- most adolescents (aged 15-19) and adults (aged 20 and older) have completed some secondary school as their highest level of education
- men aged 35 and older are more highly educated than women with 13.1% attaining a tertiary level education compared to 11.5% of women

Youth not in employment, education or training

- A relatively high proportion of women and men aged 15-34 are not in employment, or currently undergoing education or training – 44.5% of young women and 34.5% of men
- Those not in employment, education or training may be discouraged, unemployed, engaged in subsistence production, a homemaker, unable to work or study due to a disability, or for other reasons
- The NEET rate is highest in the Ongo Niua group and there it is men who are more likely to be outside of paid employment or education – 50.0% of men and 42.5% of women
- The NEET rate is much higher for youth with a disability than for those with no disability – 58.2% for disabled female youth and 53.8% for males compared to 44.2% and 34.1% for women and men without a disability.

Youth in Tonga

Young people make the transition from child to adult in their late teens and early 20s. The international definition of 'youth' is people aged between 15 and 24 years. Countries use their own definitions perhaps for legal reasons, to align with the education system or due to past practices. In Tonga, the local definition of youth is those aged 15 to 34 years. Both age ranges are used in this report to support national and international comparisons.

DEFINITION OF 'YOUTH'

The official definition of youth in Tonga is people aged 15-34 years.¹ International definitions concentrate on age 15-24 years.

Census data can be disaggregated by single ages and so any age grouping can be produced. This publication presents data for single ages or relevant age groups to show young people in transition from adolescence to adulthood. It caters to national needs, presenting information on the ages and age groups most relevant to understanding the situation of young people. In most cases this is from around age 15, through to their mid-30s, after which they tend to have established their independence.

Tonga had a National Youth Strategy in place for 2014-2019 and launched the new strategy on International Youth Day on 12 August 2019. This report brings baseline statistics together that can be used to support implementation and monitoring of that policy.

*"A strategy in which the basic needs of the people are satisfied,
and their dreams become true"*

Vision of the National Youth Strategy 2014-2019

Key policy issues

Tonga has a high fertility rate (4.1 children per woman²) and therefore a relatively large proportion of children and young people. Such a young population increases demand for basic services, such as education and health care. Adolescents and young adults also need adequate opportunities to work and study as they transition to adulthood and independence. Without these, they are at risk of becoming disaffected and engaging in anti-social behaviour such as delinquency, alcohol abuse, drugs or other crimes. Family and social institutions such as the Church plays a vital role in providing a health community environment for young people.

The Tonga Strategic Development Framework³ includes priorities related to young people:

1. encourage basic life skills and good values in the youth, including promoting sports, disaster risk management and youth development programmes

¹ Kingdom of Tonga. 2019. National Youth Policy.

² Kingdom of Tonga. 2012 Demographic and Health Survey.

³ Government of Tonga, Ministry of Finance and National Planning. 2015. Tonga Strategy Development Framework 2015-2025.

Tonga's Youth: Analysis of the situation of young people based on the 2016 Population and Housing Census

2. continue working in partnership with the churches and other groups for the provision of secondary education and tertiary education
3. strengthened national capacity to deliver high-quality health services including family planning and services to prevent HIV and STIs, for young people, sensitive to the different needs of women and men
4. outer island and rural development programmes in collaboration with local communities, taking note of the needs of different groups, including, women, men, youth, disabled, those in isolated areas, etc.

The youth policy emphasises **creation of employment, skills development, healthy living, community service, and participation in decision-making and advocacy** as the key issues for young people in Tonga.⁴ Updating the national youth policy is an important step in clarifying policy issues and setting priorities for providing young people with the opportunities they need to contribute meaningfully to Tonga's society, economy and sustainable development.

YOUTH AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS)

There are several targets and indicators in the SDG framework directly related to youth. The demand for data to be disaggregated by age wherever possible shows that most of the other goals will also be relevant to young people. Priority SDG indicators for youth focus on education, work, and climate change, as listed by goal below. Indicators in bold can be produced from the population and housing census.



4.3.1 Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex

4.4.1 Proportion of youth and adults with information and communications technology (ICT) skills, by type of skill

4.6.1 Proportion of population in a given age group achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional (a) literacy and (b) numeracy skills, by sex



8.5.2 Unemployment rate, by sex, age and persons with disabilities

8.6.1 Proportion of youth (aged 15–24 years) not in education, employment or training

8.b.1 Existence of a developed and operationalized national strategy for youth employment, as a distinct strategy or as part of a national employment strategy

⁴ Ministry of Internal Affairs. 2014. Tonga National Youth Strategy and Action Plan 2014-2019. Tonga's Youth: Analysis of the situation of young people based on the 2016 Population and Housing Census



13.b.1 Number of least developed countries and small island developing States that are receiving specialized support, and amount of support, including finance, technology and capacity-building, for mechanisms for raising capacities for effective climate change-related planning and management, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities

Indicators 8.5.2 (youth unemployment rate) and 8.6.1 can be easily produced from the population and housing census. The others must come partly or completely from other data sources.

Young people in transition

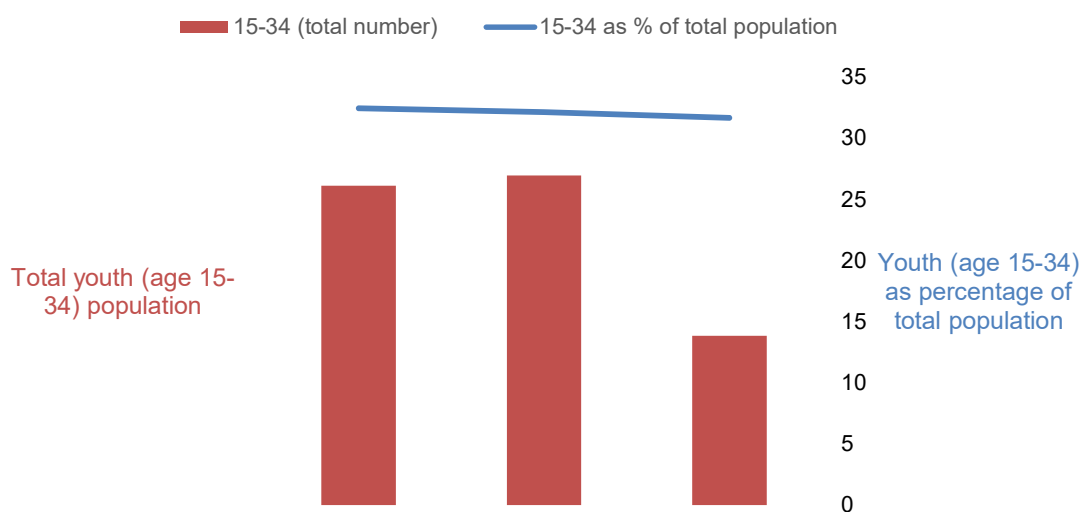
Key findings

- The Tongan definition of youth is people aged 15-34 of which there are almost 32,000 in Tonga – about one third of the total population
- Based on the international definition of youth (aged 15-24) there are almost 19,000 youth in Tonga (18.6% of the population)
- Boys are leaving school earlier than girls with the gender gap being largest at age 16 by when almost 22% of boys have left the education system compared to 12% of girls
- The population census reveals the main activity of each person aged 15 and above, whether that be in paid employment – the case for 37% of men aged 15-34 and 26% of women – or a full or part time student (29% of young men and 30% of young women)
- Most young people are aged in their 30s before living independently from their parents or other relatives
- Young men are slightly more likely to remain living with parents or in-laws with 63% still in the family home by age 20-24 compared to 59% of young women
- Women marry earlier than men but by age 34 years, 80% of women and men are married
- By age 24 years just over two in every five (42.7%) women have given birth to at least one child. By age 34, three quarters (74.5%) of women will have become mothers.

In 2016, there were almost 32,000 youth – people aged 15-34 – living in Tonga (19,000 using the international definition of age 15-24). Young people represent around one third of the total population and have been a similar, slightly shrinking proportion during the last ten years (Figure 1). Given there is a high fertility rate in Tonga, it is expected the youth pop

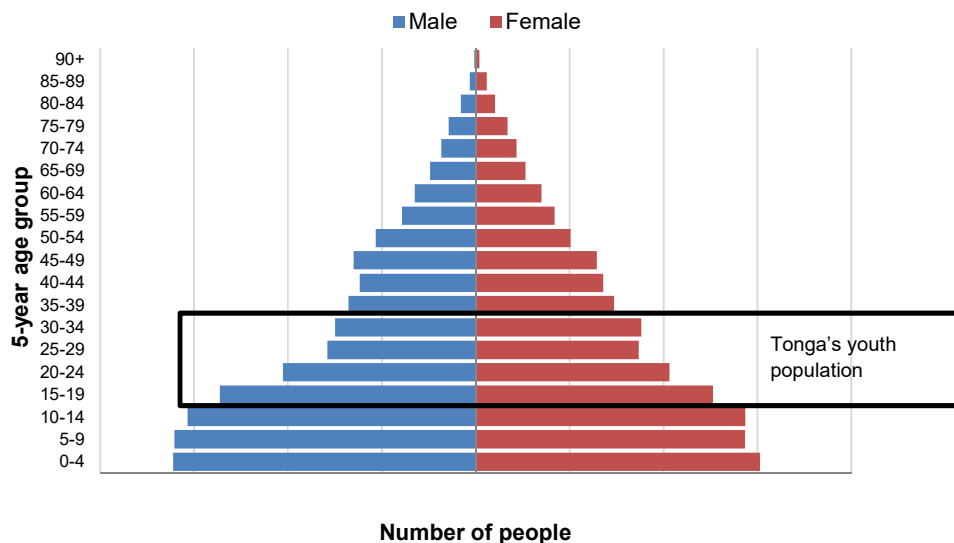
ulation would be a large and growing proportion of the population. Many young people leave the Kingdom to study or work abroad and this may account for the slight decline in the size of the youth population over time.

Figure 1: Total and relative size of the youth population (age 15-24) in Tonga, 2006, 2011 and 2016



Tonga's population pyramid shows the impact of a high fertility rate, with children making up a large part of the population (wide bars at the base of the pyramid). The decline in population numbers from age 20-24 years reflects the out-migration occurring as young people leave the country to seek opportunities in Australia, New Zealand and the United States, among other countries.

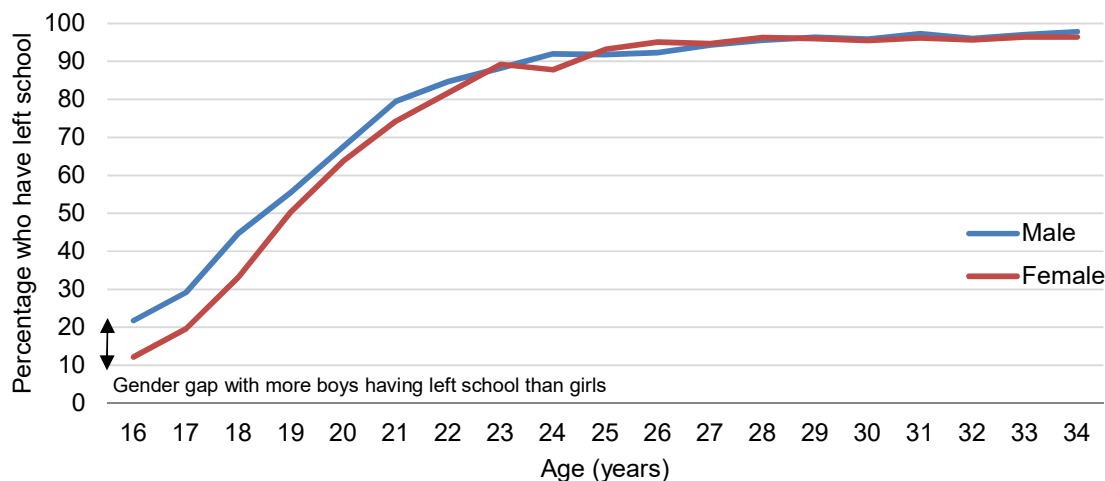
Figure 2 Population pyramid for Tonga, 2016 (total number of people by sex and age group)



It is compulsory for young people to remain in school until they have completed their secondary education or until age 18, whichever comes first. The 2016 population census data show that young people start to leave before then. Also, that many remain in education until age 20 years (Figure 3).

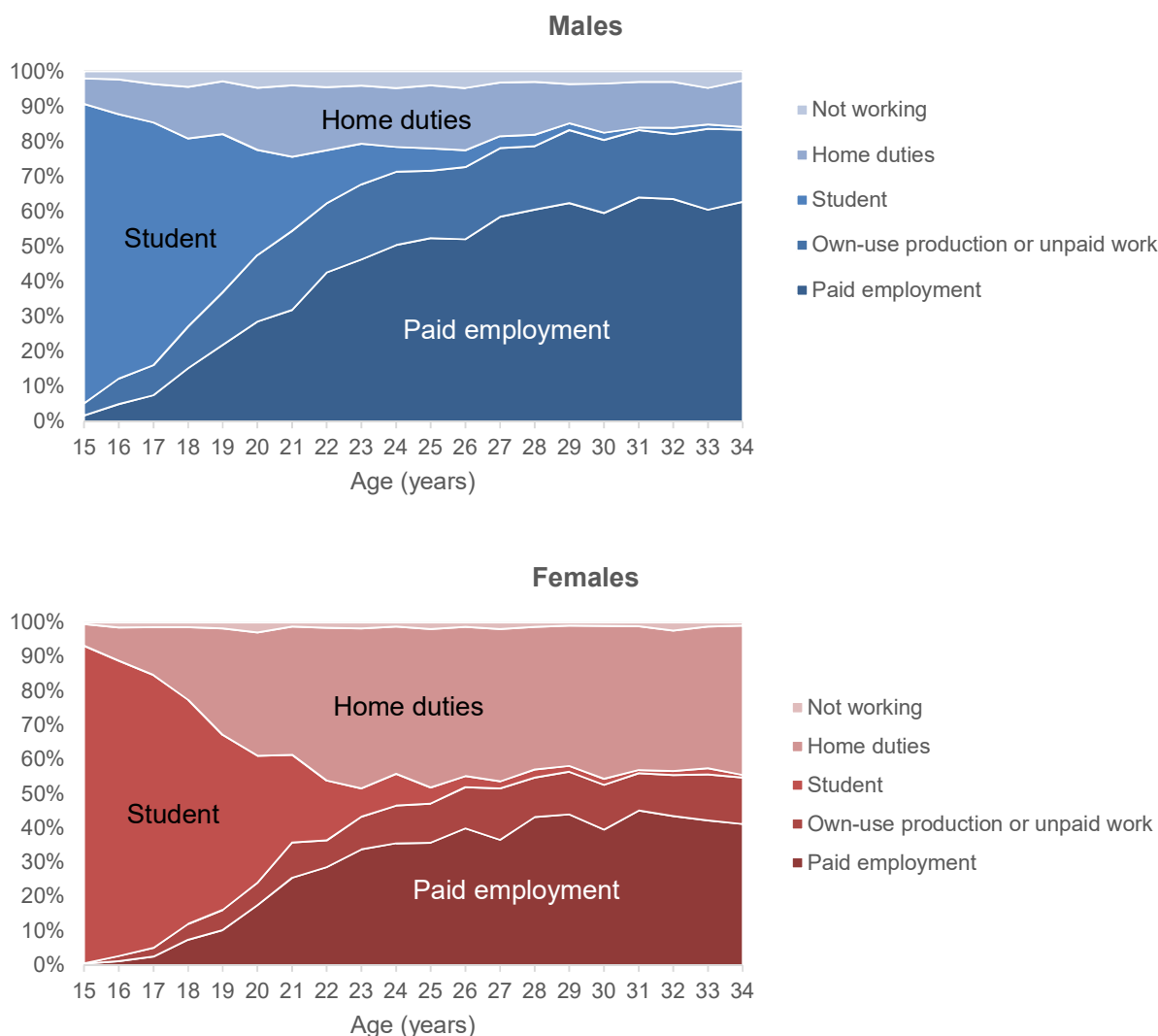
Boys are leaving school earlier than girls with the gender gap being largest at age 16 by when almost 22% of boys have left the education system compared to 12% of girls. This shows how important it is for policy interventions to keep young people in school to target boys even more so than girls. More on education is provided in the chapter on that below.

Figure 3 Percentage of young people who have left school, by sex and age, Tonga 2016



The population census reveals the main activity of each person aged 15 and above, whether that be in paid employment – the case for 37% of men aged 15-34 and 26% of women – or a full or part time student (29% of young men and 30% of young women). Figure 4 shows how this changes year by year and how it differs between men (shaded blue) and women (shaded red). Slightly more women remain as students into their early 20s than men. Many women move into home duties as their main activity from then on, whereas few men are engaged in this as their main activity and tend toward paid employment or other unpaid forms of work.

Figure 4 Main activity of young men and women, by age, Tonga 2016

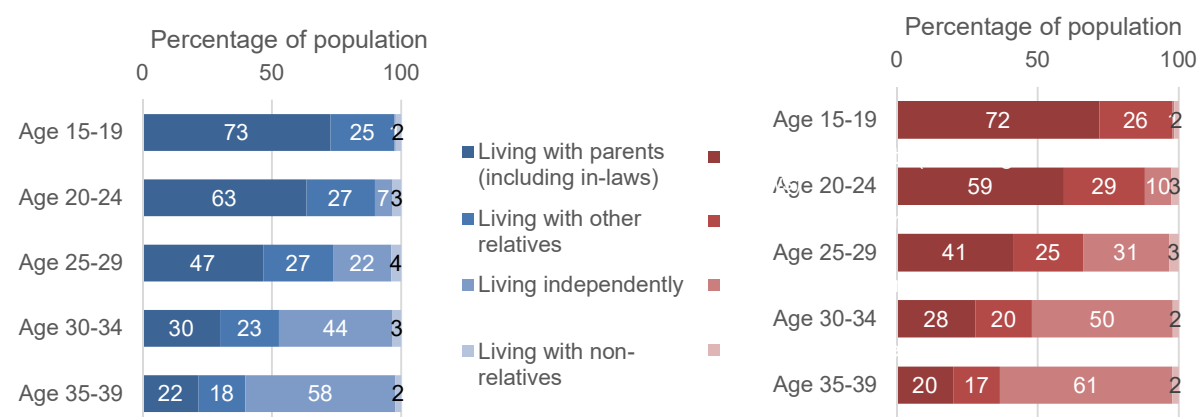


Note: Not working includes respondents who indicated they are retired, physically/mentally disabled, or not engaged in any kind of main activity for another reason.

Although the census gathers data on employment work, unemployment and the types of jobs women and men do, this report has not included that information. That is because in 2018 Tonga conducted its first Labour Force Survey which focuses specifically on these measures. As a dedicated survey on work, this is a more reliable source of data than the population census. Analysis of the LFS results from a youth and gender perspective will provide important data and evidence about the work situation of young women and men in Tonga.

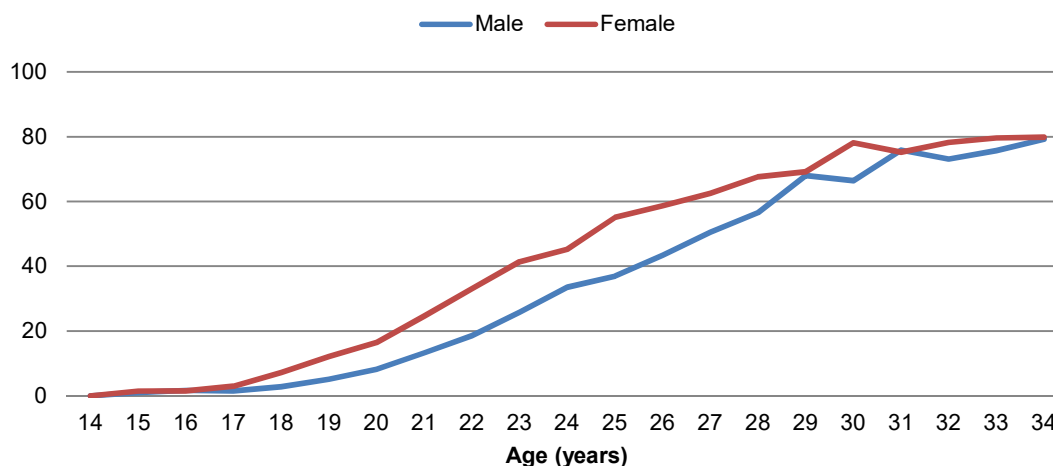
The population census reveals at what age young people tend to move out from the family home and begin to live independently. It is not until young people are aged in their 30s that the majority are living independently from their parents or other relatives. Young men (Figure 5 left) are slightly more likely to remain living with parents or in-laws with 63% still in the family home by age 20-24 compared to 59% of young women. This is likely to reflect the gap in age of first marriage with women tending to be married earlier than men.

Figure 5 Living arrangements of young people, by sex and age group, Tonga 2016



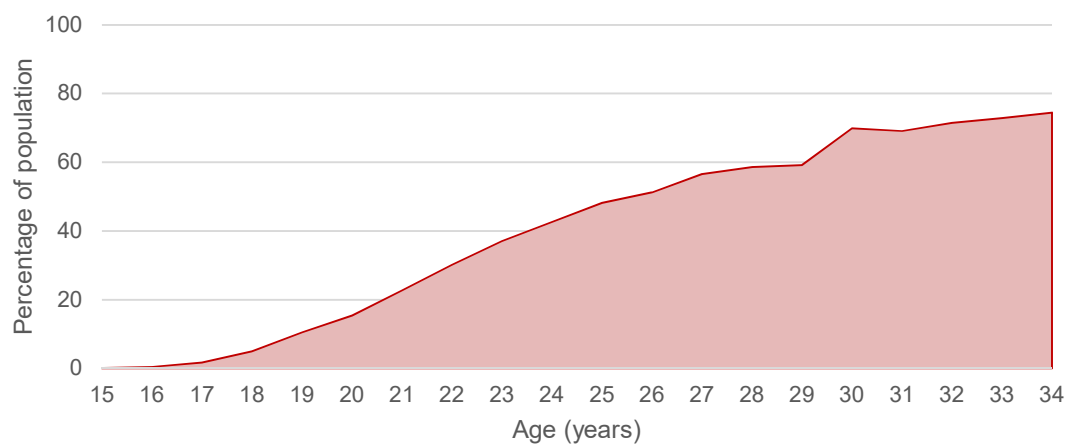
As shown in Figure 6, Tongan people start to marry from around age 20 years, with more women marrying earlier than men. By age 34 years, 80% of women and men are married. Few young people aged 15-34 were separated or divorced at the time of the census – 2.9% of young men and 3.1% of young women.

Figure 6 Percentage of young people that have been married, by sex and age, Tonga 2016



The arrival of the first child is a major event in the lives of young people. The census asks every woman aged 15 and above if they have ever given birth, so we know the situation for women, but not for men. By age 24 years just over two in every five (42.7%) women have given birth to at least one child. Ten years later, at age 34, three quarters (74.5%) of women will have become mothers.

Figure 7 Percentage of girls and women who have given birth, by age (accumulative amount), Tonga 2016



Spirituality is an important part of life in Tonga, with most of the population being religious. The main religions for young people are the Free Wesleyan Church (50% of people aged 15-34), the Latter-Day Saints (19%), Roman Catholic (14%), and the Free Church of Tonga (11%).

There is not much difference between the religious tendencies of young people compared to the older generations, with the exception of Latter Day Saints church being more popular among youth with more older people attending the Free Wesleyan Church.

Health and wellbeing

Key findings

- Around 40% of men aged 20-49 years smoke tobacco compared to 11% of women
- About 37% of men aged 20-49 drink alcohol compared to 9% of women
- Kava consumption among men aged 20-49 is high at 49% but virtually non-existent among women (1%)
- 1.6% of young men aged 15-24 have some form of disability and 1.4% of young women

The population and housing census is not a major source of data on health and wellbeing. Such data typically comes from Ministry of Health records and health-related surveys such as the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) last conducted in 2012, and the STEPS survey in 2017.

The census does, however, gather information to produce health indicators such as fertility rates (average number of children per woman), child and adult mortality (death) rates, and the prevalence of certain types of disabilities among the population aged five years and above. It also gathers data on risks to health such as tobacco, alcohol and kava consumption. However, questions may be answered on someone's behalf and so things like alcohol consumption may be underreported.

Fertility and mortality statistics are currently being produced from the census data and will be available later in 2019. These will give the latest estimates of important indicators related to teenage pregnancy beyond records kept by the Ministry of Health.

Risks to health

According to the census data, there are major differences between young men and women when it comes to smoking, alcohol and kava consumption. A much greater percentage of males partake in these risks to health than females. Around 40% of men aged 20-49 years smoke tobacco compared to around 11% of women. Consumption of alcohol is similar with about 37% of men aged 20-49 drinking it compared to 9% of women. Kava consumption among men aged 20-49 is high at 49% but virtually non-existent among women (1%).

While smoking (Figure 8) and drinking alcohol (Figure 9) begin to decline among the older age groups, the consumption of kava increases with age (Figure 10). More than half (56%) of men aged in their 40s drink kava compared to less than 1% of women.

Census data may not be the most accurate way to find out about risks to health. Gender roles may influence reporting, for example if young women drinking alcohol is perceived as inappropriate, it may be underreported by the women themselves or by family members answering questions on their behalf who may not be aware of their consumption.

Figure 8 Percentage of young people who use tobacco, by sex and age group, Tonga 2016

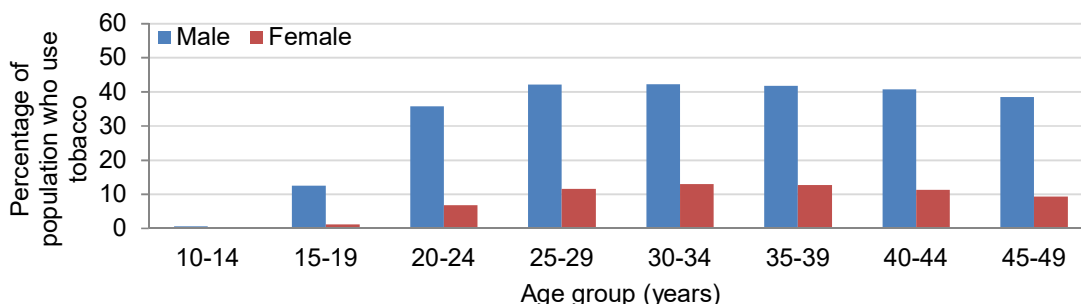


Figure 9 Percentage of young people who drink alcohol, by sex and age group, Tonga 2016

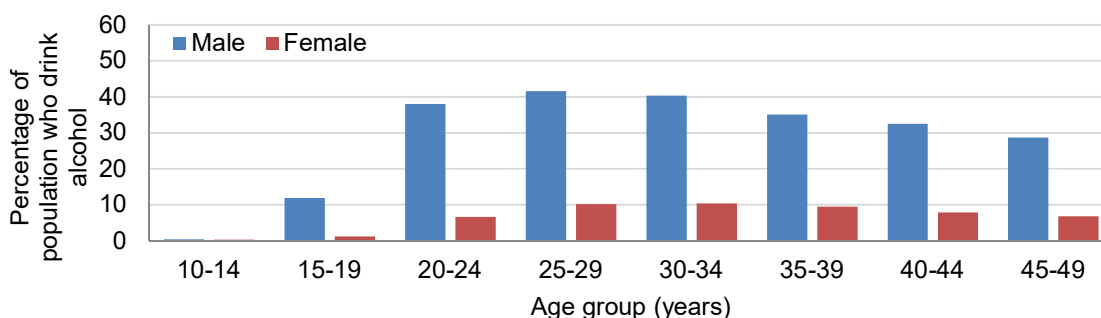
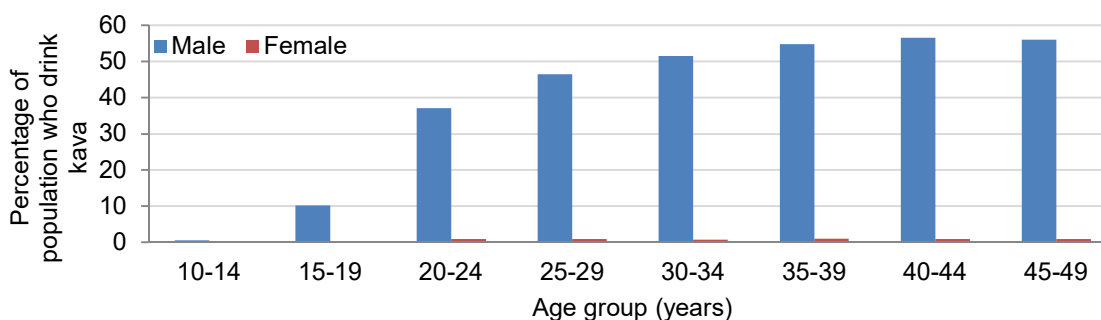


Figure 10 Percentage of young people who drink kava, by sex and age group, Tonga 2016



Disability

A short set of questions to tell if people (aged five years and older) have some form of disability were included in the 2016 Population and Housing Census.⁵ This found that 1.6% of young men aged 15-24 have some form of disability and 1.4% of young women. Overall, the 2016 census identified 4.6% of the population aged five and above. Disability is closely associated with aging and the percentage with a lot of difficulty in the six areas measured are more common among older people. Disability and age are explored further in another report in this series on *Disability in Tonga*.

⁵ Tonga used the international standard 'Washington Group' short set of questions which are designed to identify disability in the population aged five and above.

Education

Key findings

- A small proportion of children and adults have never attended school – around 2%
- Young people start to leave the school system around age 15
- By age 17 around a quarter of young people have already left school
- Most adolescents (aged 15-19) and adults (aged 20 and older) have completed some secondary school as their highest level of education
- Men aged 35 and older are more highly educated than women with 13.1% attaining a tertiary level education compared to 11.5% of women

Education system in Tonga

The Tongan education system is governed by the Education Act 2013. Basic education from age 4 to 18 years (inclusive) is compulsory or until the child has completed twelve years of schooling. The education system comprises the following tiers:

1. Early childhood education (ECE) from ages 3 to 5 years
2. Primary school (age 6 to 12)
3. Secondary school (age 13 to 18)
4. Tertiary education (age 19 to 24)
5. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) (ages 15 and above)
6. Non-formal education – other forms of education than the above.

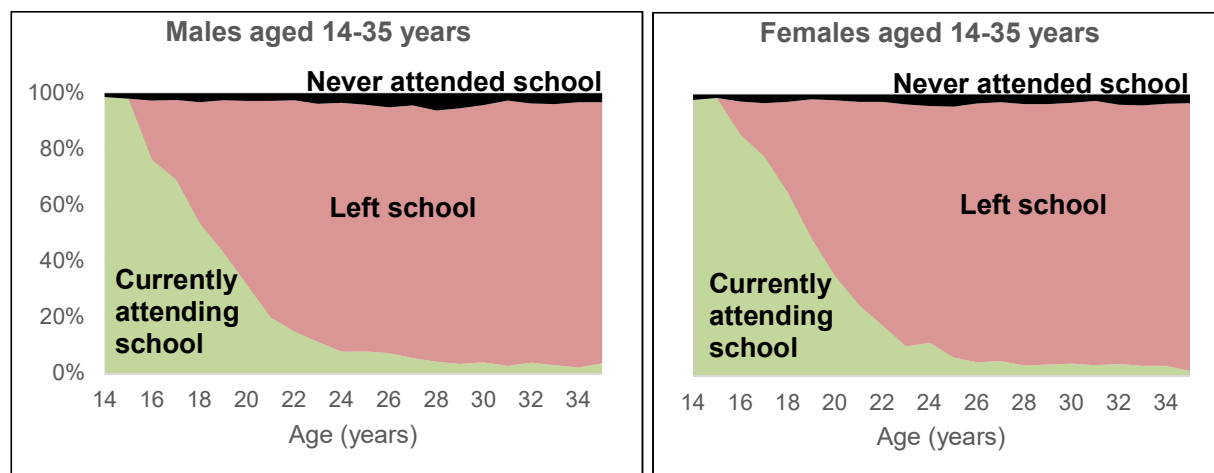
Although children can attend level of schooling outside of these age ranges (e.g. a six-year-old child could be in early childhood education), these are the standards needed to calculate net and gross enrolment and attendance rates.

The census is an important source of data to complement education statistics produced from school records through the Ministry of Education. Unlike data from the ministry, the census asks everyone in the population, aged three years and above, if they are currently attending school, have left school (attended in the past but not currently), or have never attended school.

There has been a lot of investment in the education system and school attendance is now almost universal (closet to 100%) in Tonga. A small proportion of Tonga's youth (aged 14-35) have never attended school (shown in black) – around 3%. Young people start to leave the school system around age 16 and by age 17 more than a quarter (28%) of young people have already left (or never attended).

Figure 11 shows the difference in education status between males (graph on left) and females (right). A similar percentage of males and females have never attended school (shaded black) – 3.2% of males compared to 2.8% of females aged 14-35. Young men leave school a lot earlier than young women. By age 16, only 76% of males are still attending school compared to 86% of females. The gap is greatest at age 18, by when only 54% of males are in school compared to 65% of females (11.5 percentage points difference).

Figure 11 Education status of youth population, by sex and age (years), Tonga 2016



As shown above in Figure 4, as young men leave school they tend to move into paid employment or unpaid forms of work, such as subsistence production or working in a family business. Young women also move into paid employment after school but are much more likely to be doing home duties as their main activity. Providing education and employment opportunities in rural and urban areas would encourage young women to continue their education and develop more work and life skills before they marry and start to have children. Delaying childbirth until they are slightly older has the advantage of increasing education levels, which has been shown to impact positively on child health and development. It also means they will have less children over their lifetime, decreasing the overall fertility rate and helping to achieve sustainable development goals faster.

Secondary school attendance

Age 13-18 is the official age range for secondary school and the basis for calculating net and gross attendance ratios shown in Table 1. The female net attendance ratio is 84.6 compared to 79.3 for males. This means that 84.6% of girls and 79.3% of boys aged 13-18 are in secondary school. Some may still be in education at different levels (e.g. primary or tertiary) with net attendance ratio showing the percentage of secondary school age children who are indeed in secondary school. Rates for girls are the same in urban and rural areas, but for males there is a difference between urban secondary school attendance (82.4) compared to rural (78.4).

Gross attendance ratios provide an indicator of how many children are attending secondary school over the official age 13-18-year population. As students may be older or younger than official age, the gross attendance ratio can exceed 100%. Overall the GAR for girls is 109.0% and for boys it is 100.9%. The gap between net attendance and gross attendance shows that a large proportion of secondary students are outside the official range. Most are younger (age 10-12 years) indicating they are ahead of their peers although some may be turning 13 during that first year. Around 5% of secondary school students are older (aged 19-21) suggesting they started late or have had to repeat a year.

By island group, net attendance ratios are lowest on Ongo Niua (72.0% for males and 75.7% for females) where populations are less than 50 children aged 13-18. Rates for girls are highest on 'Eua where 93.9% of girls aged 13-18 are attending secondary school. For boys, ratios are highest and above the national average on Vava'u at 82.9% and 'Eua (81.0%). The chapter on Youth at Risk explores what young people are doing if not in school and where the rates of inactivity (not in education, employment or training) are highest.

Tonga's Youth: Analysis of the situation of young people based on the 2016 Population and Housing Census

Table 1 Net and Gross Secondary School Attendance Ratios by sex and location, Tonga 2016

	Total population aged 13-18		Total population aged 13-18 attending secondary school		Total population attending secondary school (any age)		Net Attendance Ratio		Gross Attendance Ratio	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Tonga	6,936	6,421	5,499	5,435	7,000	6,998	79.3	84.6	100.9	109.0
Urban	1,554	1,397	1,280	1,185	1,592	543	82.4	84.8	102.4	38.9
Rural	5,382	5,024	4,219	4,250	5,408	6,455	78.4	84.6	100.5	128.5
Tongatapu	5,088	4,722	4,006	3,945	5,067	5,090	78.7	83.5	99.6	107.8
Kolofo'ou	1,163	1,104	943	904	1,184	1,199	81.1	81.9	101.8	108.6
Kolomotu'a	1,159	1,034	924	882	1,167	1,130	79.7	85.3	100.7	109.3
Vaini	919	863	712	704	885	892	77.5	81.6	96.3	103.4
Tatakamotonga	472	458	361	385	480	490	76.5	84.1	101.7	107.0
Lapaha	541	476	417	394	512	516	77.1	82.8	94.6	108.4
Nukunuku	555	520	432	445	560	572	77.8	85.6	100.9	110.0
Kolovai	279	267	217	231	279	291	77.8	86.5	100.0	109.0
Vava'u	1,004	913	832	792	1,102	1,034	82.9	86.7	109.8	113.3
Neiafu	430	343	381	299	484	389	88.6	87.2	112.6	113.4
Pangaimotu	77	89	67	78	103	114	87.0	87.6	133.8	128.1
Hahake	142	138	115	117	157	148	81.0	84.8	110.6	107.2
Leimatu'a	155	151	121	141	174	181	78.1	93.4	112.3	119.9
Hihifo	158	146	117	117	142	152	74.1	80.1	89.9	104.1
Motu	42	46	31	40	42	50	73.8	87.0	100.0	108.7
Ha'apai	393	365	304	316	397	401	77.4	86.6	101.0	109.9
Panai	168	165	141	153	186	189	83.9	92.7	110.7	114.5
Foa	96	82	69	68	88	88	71.9	82.9	91.7	107.3
Lulunga	34	26	21	17	30	25	61.8	65.4	88.2	96.2
Mu'omu'a	23	27	16	23	22	25	69.6	85.2	95.7	92.6
Ha'ano	30	28	28	25	33	36	93.3	89.3	110.0	128.6
'Uiha	42	37	29	30	38	38	69.0	81.1	90.5	102.7
'Eua	358	347	290	326	346	400	81.0	93.9	96.6	115.3
'Eua Motu'a	195	171	158	162	193	202	81.0	94.7	99.0	118.1
'Eua Fo'ou	163	176	132	164	153	198	81.0	93.2	93.9	112.5
Ongo Niua	93	74	67	56	88	73	72.0	75.7	94.6	98.6
Niutatoputapu	44	41	37	34	47	46	84.1	82.9	106.8	112.2
Niuafo'ou	49	33	30	22	41	27	61.2	66.7	83.7	81.8

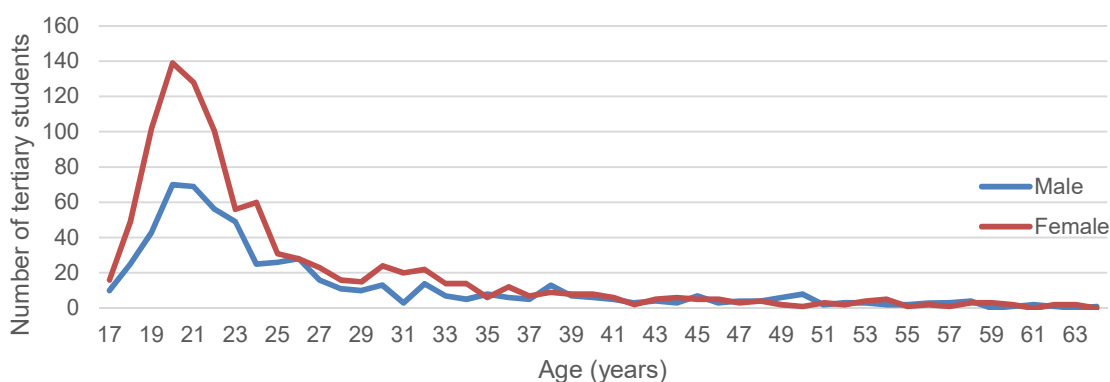
Technical and Vocational and Tertiary education

Offering a range of quality technical, vocational and tertiary education options is essential for building up the human capital of Tonga and investing in the future.

Just over 1,250 youth (aged 15-34) were undertaking technical and vocational education and training (TVET) at the time of the census – 770 men and 481 women. Information on what field of study they are in is not collected from the census but should be available from the records of TVET institutions.

Although TVET studies are male dominated, the reverse is true for tertiary studies. There were 1,575 students of any age currently attending tertiary education at the time of the 2016 census – 61% of them were women. They range in age from 17 to 64 years old with most (57%) being concentrated between the ages of 19 and 24 years old (Figure 12). Out of the total number of students (1,575) there were 1,337 (85%) Tongan youth (aged 15-35).

Figure 12 Number of current tertiary students, by sex and age, Tonga 2016



The UNESCO recommended official age range of 19-24 years was used to calculate tertiary attendance ratios shown in Table 2. These are disaggregated by district but that may not be useful given that tertiary institutions are concentrated in Tongatapu.

The net attendance ratios show that 6.2% of men aged 19-24 are currently attending university or some other tertiary level education compared to 11.7 percent of women. The rates for both are highest on Tongatapu at 7.3% and 12.7% respectively. Gross attendance ratios are almost double that of net ratios, another way of showing that around half of the students fall outside the official tertiary age range of 19-24 years, as discussed above. Gross attendance is 21.3% for women and 13.7% for men.

Of the 1,351 Tongan youth (aged 14-35) getting a tertiary education in 2016, most were attending a certificate or diploma level course and women at these levels outnumbered men significantly (Figure 13). There were 220 young women studying for their bachelor's degree and 146 young men. A small number were working towards their master's or higher.

Although more women are studying at tertiary level, this has not yet resulted in women having a higher level of education attainment. As explained below, men aged 35 and older are more highly educated with 13.1% attaining a tertiary level education compared to 11.5% of women.

The census data would be complemented by statistics on overseas scholarships – the number, sex and age of Tongan people who get these opportunities. As most domestic tertiary students are women, conclusions about equitable opportunities for men cannot be made without knowing how many are getting a chance to complete their studies abroad.

Figure 13 Number on Tongan youth (age 14-35) currently studying at tertiary level, by level of qualification and sex, Tonga 2016

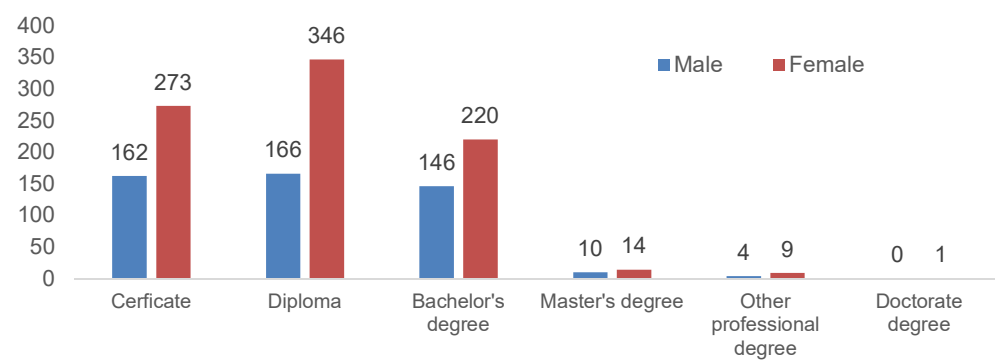


Table 2 Net and Gross Tertiary Attendance Ratios by sex and location, Tonga 2016

Age group	Total population aged 19-24		Total population aged 19-24 attending tertiary		Total population attending tertiary (regardless of age)		Net Attendance Ratio		Gross Attendance Ratio	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Tonga	5,046	5,006	312	585	606	983	6.2	11.7	12.0	19.6
Tongatapu	3,923	3,952	286	503	539	841	7.3	12.7	13.7	21.3
Kolofo'ou	997	1014	70	135	122	210	7.0	13.3	12.2	20.7
Kolomotu'a	922	893	112	157	213	267	12.1	17.6	23.1	29.9
Vaini	685	649	32	69	78	132	4.7	10.6	11.4	20.3
Tatakamotonga	360	357	26	29	35	43	7.2	8.1	9.7	12.0
Lapaha	364	380	17	38	32	65	4.7	10.0	8.8	17.1
Nukunuku	395	434	21	43	45	71	5.3	9.9	11.4	16.4
Kolovai	200	225	8	32	14	53	4.0	14.2	7.0	23.6
Vava'u	562	604	18	44	40	82	3.2	7.3	7.1	13.6
Neiafu	215	235	11	26	21	42	5.1	11.1	9.8	17.9
Pangaimotu	54	59	1	0	3	0	1.9	0.0	5.6	0.0
Hahake	80	84	2	6	9	18	2.5	7.1	11.3	21.4
Leimatu'a	98	95	2	6	5	12	2.0	6.3	5.1	12.6
Hihifo	89	101	2	3	2	6	2.2	3.0	2.2	5.9
Motu	26	30	0	3	0	4	0.0	10.0	0.0	13.3
Ha'apai	292	233	7	23	20	42	2.4	9.9	6.8	18.0
Panai	133	88	5	15	16	33	3.8	17.0	12.0	37.5
Foa	55	52	0	0	1	0	0.0	0.0	1.8	0.0
Lulunga	45	29	0	2	1	2	0.0	6.9	2.2	6.9
Mu'omu'a	8	7	0	0	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Ha'ano	23	27	1	3	1	3	4.3	11.1	4.3	11.1
Uiha	28	30	1	3	1	4	3.6	10.0	3.6	13.3
'Eua	211	184	1	13	7	16	0.5	7.1	3.3	8.7
'Eua Motu'a	121	95	1	12	6	15	0.8	12.6	5.0	15.8
'Eua Fo'ou	90	89	0	1	1	1	0.0	1.1	1.1	1.1
Ongo Niua	58	33	0	2	0	2	0.0	6.1	0.0	6.1
Niuaatoputapu	33	19	0	0	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Niuafo'ou	25	14	0	2	0	2	0.0	14.3	0.0	14.3

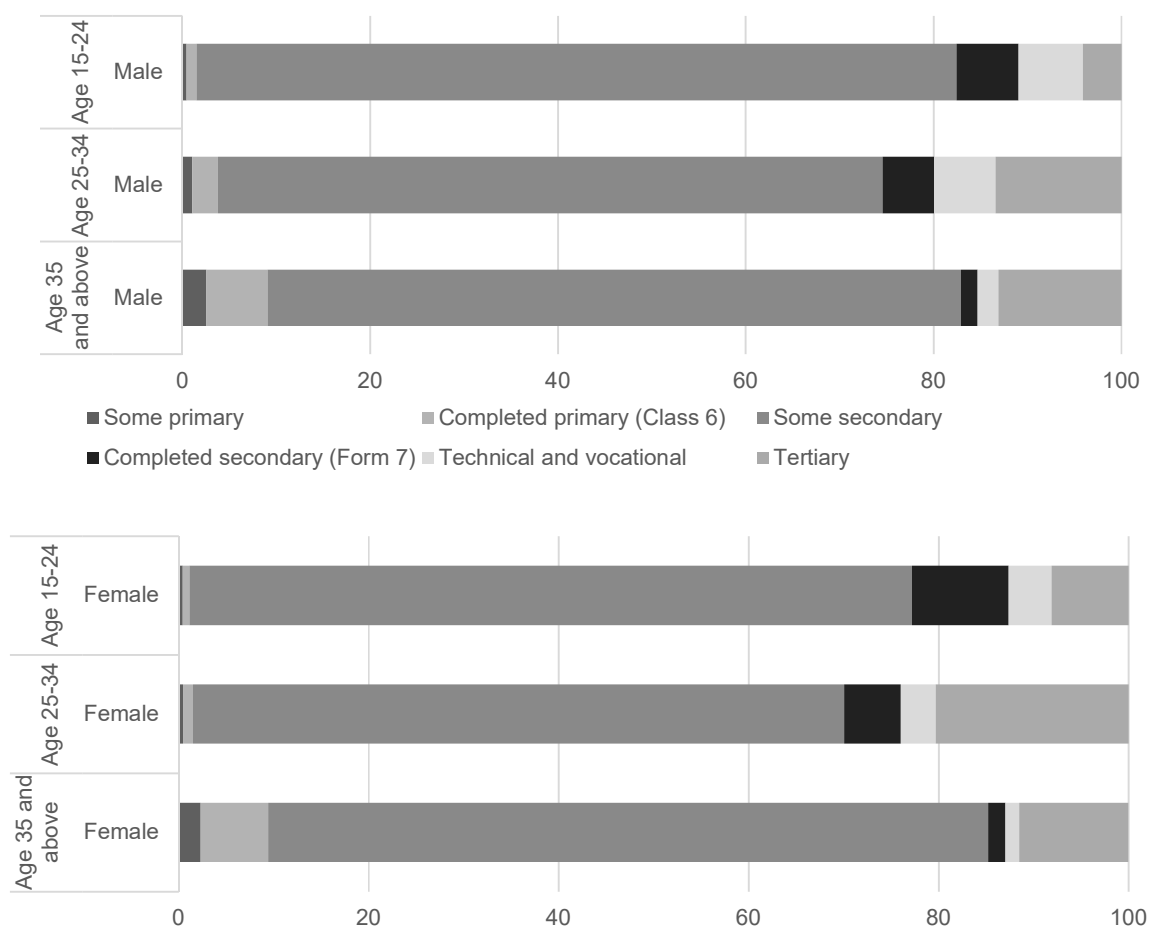
Tonga's Youth: Analysis of the situation of young people based on the 2016 Population and Housing Census

Highest level of education reached

The census asks every Tongan resident about the highest level of education reached, making it an important source of information on education-related goals. As shown in Figure 14, most adolescents and adults have completed some secondary school. The proportion is greater among those aged 15-24 years as many of these will still be at school and may go on to attain a higher level of education.

The education level of adults age 35 and above provides a good indication of the highest-level adults in Tonga reach. Men aged 35 and older are more highly educated than women with 13.1% attaining a tertiary level education compared to 11.5% of women. Men also have higher levels of education within that group. There are more than twice as many men aged 25 and above with a doctorate (PhD) (56) compared to women (30) and more men have a master's degree (285 compared to 249). More women than men have a diploma (1,782 women and 1,180 men) and more women than men aged 15 and above hold an bachelor's degree (738 women and 686 men).

Figure 14 Highest level of education reached, by sex and age group, Tonga 2016



Literacy

The population and housing census measures literacy by asking whether people aged five years and above can read and write in Tongan, English, or any other language. The literacy rate is high in Tonga and youth literacy is an important indicator of the current quality of the education system. Other, more detailed, measures of knowledge and school performance provide a more accurate

insight into functional literacy. These come from specialised surveys and/or results from tests administered by the Ministry of Education.

Literacy is high in Tonga with 96.1% of Tongan youth females and 93.9% of Tongan youth males being literate in one or more languages (Table 3). Slightly lower rates among the total population (87.4% for females and 84.8% for males) are an indication that literacy skills tend to be gained later than at five years old. The lower adult rate for ages 15 and above (93.1% for women and 91.7% for men) show the impact of an improving education system when in the past literacy was elusive to more people.

Youth literacy for ages 14-35 years ranges from 85.1% for male youths in Niuafu'ou to 99.0% for female youths in 'Eua Fo'ou. Youth literacy based on the international definition of ages 15-24 is considerably below the national average in Lulunga (83.3% for males; 89.1% for females) and Niuafu'ou (86.4% for males and 85.3% for females). Young women have higher literacy rates than young men in all districts except Mu'omu'a, where 96% of males are literate compared to 91% of females. The gender gap is biggest in Lulunga where 95% of young women are literate compared to only 83.3% of young men. In Motu, 'Eua Motu'a, Niuatoputapu, and Hahake, male youth literacy is slightly higher if not the same than female literacy.

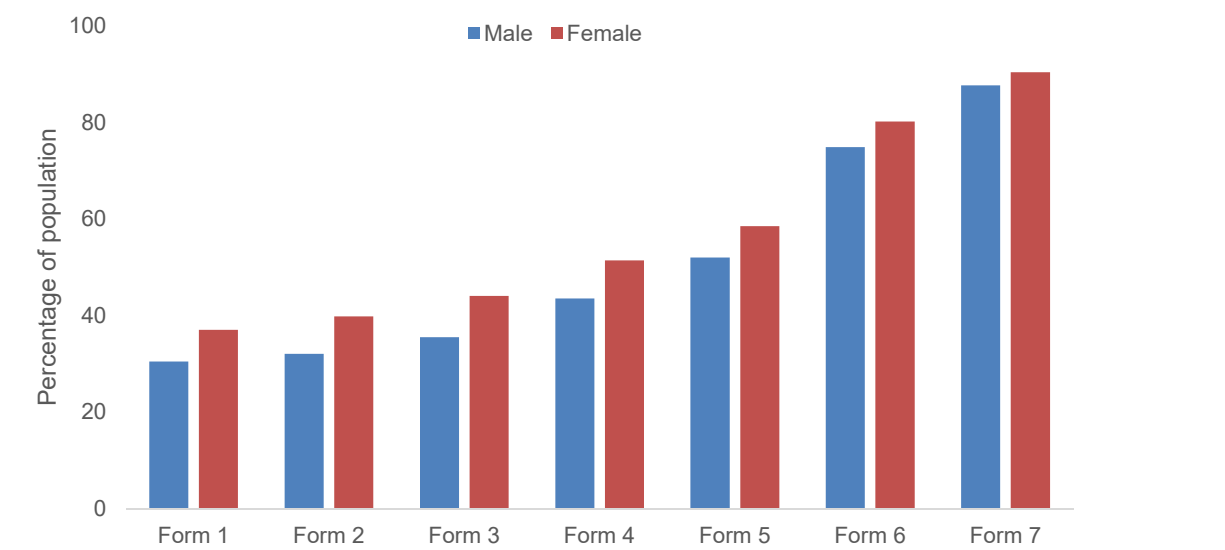
Table 3 Total, youth and adult literacy rates, by district and sex, Tonga 2016

	Total population literacy rate aged 5+		Tongan Youth literacy rate aged 14-35		Youth literacy rate aged 15-24		Adult literacy rate aged 15+	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Tonga	84.8	87.4	93.9	96.1	94.2	96.4	91.7	93.1
Kolofo'ou	85.2	88.8	93.5	96.4	94.5	96.5	91.2	93.9
Kolomotu'a	84.9	86.4	93.7	95.2	94.0	95.9	92.0	92.2
Vaini	85.3	87.2	93.6	95.6	92.9	95.8	92.6	94.0
Tatakamotonga	81.1	83.7	91.4	94.4	92.2	94.5	88.9	90.8
Lapaha	82.1	85.8	94.2	97.1	93.5	98.8	91.1	93.3
Nukunuku	85.5	88.7	95.3	96.8	95.7	96.9	92.5	94.2
Kolovai	84.7	85.4	94.9	96.7	96.1	97.0	92.8	92.2
Neiafu	84.0	87.8	95.2	96.4	96.7	97.4	91.6	92.9
Pangaimotu	86.4	87.1	95.1	97.4	94.9	96.4	92.2	91.5
Hahake	88.2	90.0	96.3	96.3	95.9	97.8	93.3	92.8
Leimatu'a	84.8	89.0	98.0	98.4	97.9	98.0	92.9	95.4
Hihifo	85.7	87.1	91.0	97.0	91.0	96.9	90.6	93.1
Motu	87.5	86.4	95.0	94.8	96.3	93.7	94.0	89.6
Pangai Hp	83.9	86.5	93.3	94.8	92.3	95.4	90.4	92.5
Foa	79.9	85.3	89.5	94.3	88.8	92.5	86.7	90.3
Lulunga	75.9	82.7	85.5	95.2	83.3	89.1	82.6	88.1
Mu'omu'a	80.4	81.2	95.9	90.6	90.5	100.0	87.6	84.8
Ha'ano	78.3	85.5	95.8	97.4	93.0	95.3	89.5	90.2
Uiha	74.5	79.2	88.5	92.1	91.7	94.3	84.8	85.1
'Eua Motu'a	96.7	96.2	99.5	98.9	99.2	99.5	98.9	98.7
'Eua Fo'ou	94.4	94.9	98.6	99.0	99.0	99.0	96.8	97.2
Niuatoputapu	87.1	89.1	96.3	96.0	94.8	97.9	91.1	91.9
Niuafu'ou	75.8	77.3	85.1	90.7	86.4	85.3	85.5	89.0

Almost two thirds of Tongan youths aged 14-35 are literate in both Tongan and English – 68.4% of females and 57.7% of males. Rates are well below this national average in Lulunga (33.9% females; 14.3% males) and Mu’oma’a (31.0% females; 23.4% males).

There is a clear relationship between level of secondary school education and literacy in both languages (Figure 15). Focusing on the population who have completed at least one year of secondary school as their highest grade, literacy in both languages is by far highest for those people who completed Form 7 (90.4% for young women and 87.7% for young men).

Figure 15 Percentage of Tongan youths (age 14-35) who are literate in both Tongan and English, by highest grade completed (Form 1-7 only) and sex, Tonga 2016



Youth not in employment, education or training

Key findings

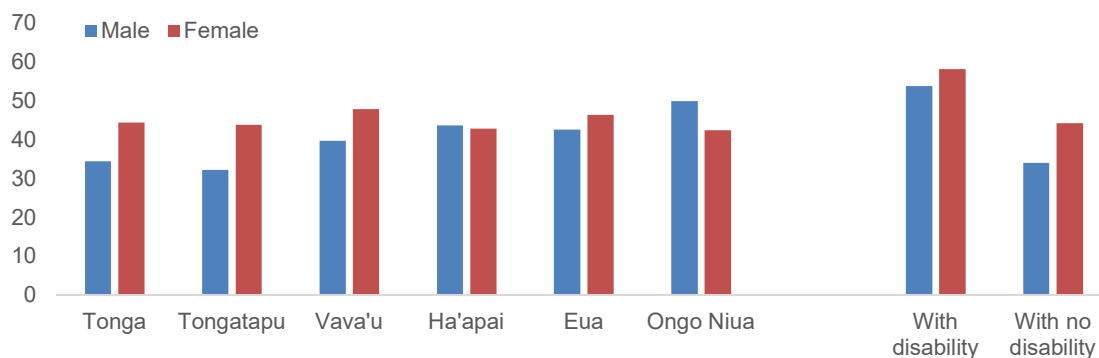
- A relatively high proportion of women and men aged 15-34 are not in employment, or currently undergoing education or training – 44.5% of young women and 34.5% of men
- Those not in employment, education or training may be discouraged, unemployed, engaged in subsistence production, a homemaker, unable to work or study due to a disability, or for other reasons
- The NEET rate is highest in the Ongo Niua group and there it is men who are more likely to be outside of paid employment or education – 50.0% of men and 42.5% of women
- The NEET rate is much higher for youth with a disability than for those with no disability – 58.2% for disabled female youth and 53.8% for males compared to 44.2% and 34.1% of women and men without a disability.

The main activity of young people varies from the overall population. Young people in their teens and early 20s are much more likely to be studying. People aged in their 30s and 40s are more likely have a family and either be working for pay or profit or engaged in caring for the family and home. Older people are more likely to be retired or unable to work due to some form of disability.

One of the global SDG indicators is the share of youth not in employment, education or training (youth NEET rate). This provides a measure of young people who are outside the educational system, not in training and not in employment. It reveals the potential youth who could enter the labour market or be engaged in education. It is important for Tonga's development as it shows where there might be high numbers of young people who are not fulfilling their potential.

The NEET rate for Tonga has been calculated for both the national definition of youth and the international one, providing locally important measures as well as data for regional and global comparison. Figure 16 shows NEET rate for age 15-34 is relatively high for both women (44.5%) and men (34.5%) due to high rates of subsistence production and unpaid work as the main activity. The NEET rate is higher for women, as they are more likely than men to work at running the family home and caring for children and other family members, and men are more likely to be in paid employment. The rate is highest in the Ongo Niua group and there it is men who are more likely to be outside of paid employment or education – 50.0% of men and 42.5% of women. This may be due to high levels of own-use production being the main source of livelihood in this island group.

Figure 16 Percentage of Tongan youth (age 15-34) who are not in employment, education or training (NEET rate), by island group, sex and disability status, Tonga 2016



The NEET rate is much higher for youth with a disability than for those with no disability – 58.2% of disabled female youth are not engaged in employment, education or training and 53.8% of disabled young males compared to 44.2% and 34.1% of women and men without a disability. Whether this is to do with their form or severity of disability is unknown. It may be due to discrimination or a lack of suitable opportunities.

The NEET rate includes discouraged youth who may have given up on their education or employment opportunities, as well as those who work in family business without pay, are engaged in subsistence production, or are outside the labour force due to disability and engagement in household chores, among other reasons. Figure 4 above shows the main activity of young people at each age between 15-34 years.

Except for in Ongo Niua and for disabled males, NEET rates are lower when using the internationally defined age group for youth (Figure 17). This is because people in this age bracket being more likely to be attending school or tertiary studies. The higher rates found when extending the age range to include up to 34 years old shows that a fair proportion of adults are engaged in home duties, unpaid work or subsistence production, which sees them included in the NEET rate calculation.

Figure 17 Percentage of youth (age 15-24) who are not in employment, education or training (NEET rate), by island group and sex, Tonga 2016

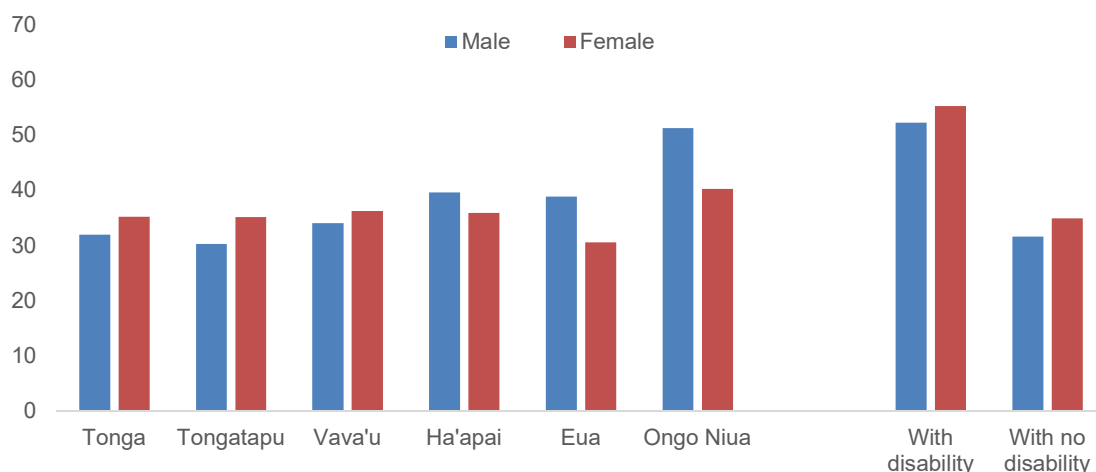


Table 4 Percentage of youth population not in employment, education, nor training (NEET rate), by district and sex, Tonga 2016

	Tongan youth (age 14-35)			International definition of youth (age 15-24)		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Tonga	39.5	34.5	44.5	33.6	32.0	35.2
Tongatapu	38.2	32.3	43.9	32.7	30.3	35.2
Kolofo'ou	35.2	29.5	40.8	30.5	27.9	33.1
Kolomotu'a	31.4	24.7	38.3	26.9	23.5	30.7
Vaini	41.4	36.5	46.3	35.3	33.9	36.7
Tatakamotonga	42.9	36.6	48.7	35.8	33.9	37.8
Lapaha	44.0	38.7	49.0	36.9	35.9	38.0
Nukunuku	43.0	36.1	49.5	37.5	34.7	40.1
Kolovai	43.3	40.4	45.9	36.3	33.7	38.8
Vava'u	44.1	39.8	48.0	35.1	34.0	36.3
Neiafu	37.3	31.0	42.9	28.0	24.1	32.0
Pangaimotu	44.3	40.6	47.7	38.4	39.4	37.5
Hahake	49.5	46.7	52.1	39.1	40.8	37.4
Leimatu'a	51.7	48.5	54.4	40.4	43.2	37.8
Hihifo	45.9	42.0	49.7	40.5	38.6	42.3
Motu	51.5	53.3	50.0	40.2	42.6	38.1
Ha'apai	43.3	43.8	42.9	38.0	39.7	36.0
Panai	34.3	34.9	33.5	28.8	33.2	23.4
Foa	50.6	48.8	52.4	45.7	46.4	44.9
Lulunga	61.7	66.1	57.1	62.5	60.6	65.2
Mu'omu'a	37.6	43.9	32.7	24.4	23.8	25.0
Ha'ano	41.2	38.1	44.1	37.2	30.2	44.2
Uiha	43.7	43.4	44.1	39.8	41.7	37.7
'Eua	44.5	42.6	46.4	35.0	38.9	30.6
'Eua Motu'a	42.1	42.0	42.1	32.1	37.6	25.6
'Eua Fo'ou	47.5	43.3	51.5	38.3	40.5	35.9
Ongo Niua	46.5	50.0	42.5	46.7	51.3	40.2
Niuafo'ou	40.5	48.5	31.8	41.5	50.0	31.3
Niuafo'ou	54.1	51.9	56.9	52.7	52.5	52.9
Disability						
One or more forms of disability	55.8	53.8	58.2	53.7	52.3	55.3
No form of disability	39.2	34.1	44.2	33.2	31.6	34.9

This publication has only limited analysis of youth at work and in employment. Although the census gathers data on this for everyone aged 15 years and older, Tonga has recently conducted a Labour Force Survey (LFS). The LFS is especially designed to gather data on employment and unemployment and is therefore usually a more reliable source of labour force data than a population census. It asks more detailed questions on participation in work and income-generating activities, giving a more accurate picture of the types of employment the population are engaged in, including young people.

After the main LFS results have been released, the Statistics Department plans to publish a factsheet on Youth and employment in Tonga. This will explore the type of work young people are engaged in and the characteristics of the unemployed and those outside the labour force (e.g. education level, location, age).

Conclusions

This report showcases key data from the 2016 population and housing census that show the situation of young people across the country. Combined with data from other sources, such as the Labour Force Survey and Disability Survey, both to be released in 2019, the census adds to the growing evidence base about youth in Tonga.

Adolescence and youth are important times in the lives of Tongan citizens. As young people transition from child to adult they face major milestones and need family and community support to navigate their way through early adult life. The data presented here show general trends about the lives of young people and point to some of the gaps in education, access to employment opportunities and health and wellbeing.

This analysis comes at a useful time, coinciding with the release of the new National Youth Policy. The data can contribute to setting a baseline for implementing that policy and the indicators used here can help to shape the monitoring and evaluation system needed to track progress.

The Statistics Department will continue to support analysis about youth as new data sources become available. Readers are encouraged to question the results and share their interpretation of the analysis so that data quality can continue to be improved. National statisticians are available to discuss and explain the data and to increase awareness of official statistics, their availability and usability.



Tonga Statistics Department
PO BOX 149
Nuku'alofa
Tonga

<https://tonga.prism.spc.int/>

Email: dept@stats.gov.to

Phone: +676 23300 or +676 23913

Fax: +676 23404