

GENDER AND EDUCATION

– FACTS AND IMPLICATIONS

Policy Brief 2

The Samoa Gender Monograph (SGM) 2020 is a detailed analysis of the differences that exist between females and males, based on national census data, administrative data and other existing available research and studies. This Policy Brief provides a snapshot of the key findings of the SGM highlighting the main differences between the lived experiences of men and women and the persistent gender inequalities. The brief can be used to inform evidence-based policy, programmes and further research.



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1. INTRODUCTION

Males and females have different roles, needs and interests based upon socially-ascribed norms, which inform gendered attitudes and behaviours. These can be measured in a variety of ways including by an analysis of census data.

In order to achieve gender equality, it is critical to both understand these gendered social norms and to develop laws and policies that address the power imbalances that some norms serve to sustain and enforce. Sustainable Development Goal 5: “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” recognizes that realizing gender equality is a foundation for sustainable and inclusive development.

The Government of Samoa acknowledges the existence of gender inequality in Samoa and that equality can support national development as evidenced by the Strategy for the Development of Samoa 2016-2020, Outcome 8.1, which stipulates that the *‘inclusion of vulnerable groups (women, youth, people with disabilities, children, elderly and disadvantaged people) in community planning and governance activities will be enhanced’*.

2. GENDER AND EDUCATION

The level of educational attainment of people is directly linked with development progress. Sustainable social, political and economic development depends upon a population equipped with the requisite skills and capacity across a broad spectrum of the labour force.

Samoa has four levels of education – i) Early Childhood Education, kindergarten or pre-school (3 to 5-years-old), ii) Primary school (Year 1 to Year 8), iii) Secondary school and college (Year 9 to Year 13), and iv) Tertiary (additional two to six years of post-secondary or higher education depending on qualifications). School education is compulsory under the Samoa Education Act 2009 where all children between the ages of 4 to 16 years are required to attend school. Samoa is also implementing inclusive development programmes in education to ensure access to education for all including persons with a disability.¹

Samoa’s population structure is young with 50 per cent of its total population below the age of 21 years and 42 per cent below the age of 17 years. This means that half of Samoa’s population are children, adolescents and emerging youth who should be in school, from primary up to tertiary level. This presents a real need to focus on youth demographics to address their development needs, including young women and girls, to ensure development progress and to tackle existing gender inequalities.

Non-completion of education, especially among adolescent females, has direct implications on teenage fertility rates and vice-versa. Studies have shown that declines in adolescent fertility are strongly associated with increased secondary school enrolment of girls; a causal relationship between more education for girls and delayed fertility.² Samoa’s teenage fertility rate is 31/1000 women ages 15 – 19 years (see Samoa Gender Monograph 2019 Policy Brief No.3: Gender and health in Samoa – current status and implications).

Access to adolescent and youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services and information is crucial to help girls avoid unintended pregnancies and empower them to achieve their educational goals.³ Similarly, greater



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educational attainment is associated with sexual and reproductive health practices that delay onset of childbearing amongst young women (including teenagers) and contribute to positive child health outcomes. In Samoa, evidence shows young females (15-34) that are married, divorced or separated have low secondary school completion rates compared to single young females.⁴ Similarly, secondary completion rates for female youth (15-24) were found to be higher for those that had not given birth compared to those that had given birth. Strategies to improve participation of young females in education and their educational attainment should therefore be multisectoral to leverage the bi-directional benefits of health on education and vice versa.

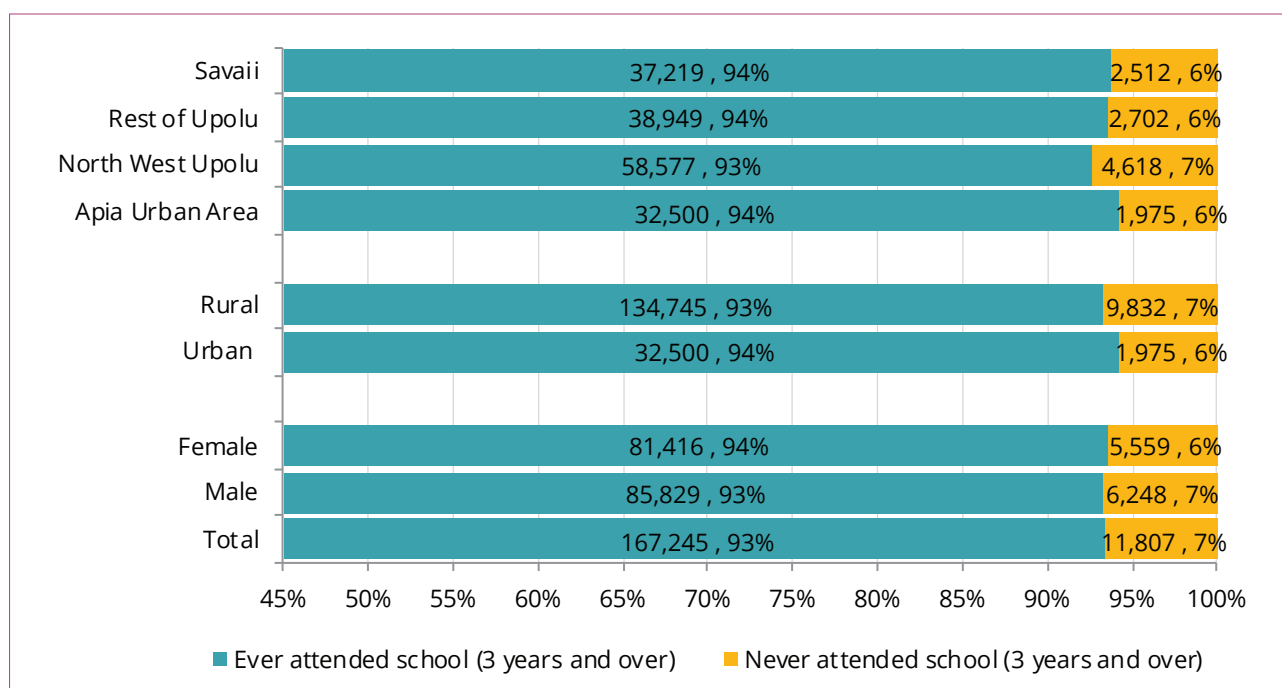
Using the 2016 Census data on school attendance, educational level of attainment and qualification and literacy, the following sections further analyse the educational characteristics of Samoa.

2.1 Education attendance – key differences

Population ever-attended school

Figure 1 shows that 93 per cent of males and 94 per cent of females have ever-attended school – the sex variation between the female and male populations is only 1 per cent.

Figure 1: Persons aged three years and above who ever- and never-attended school, 2016 Census

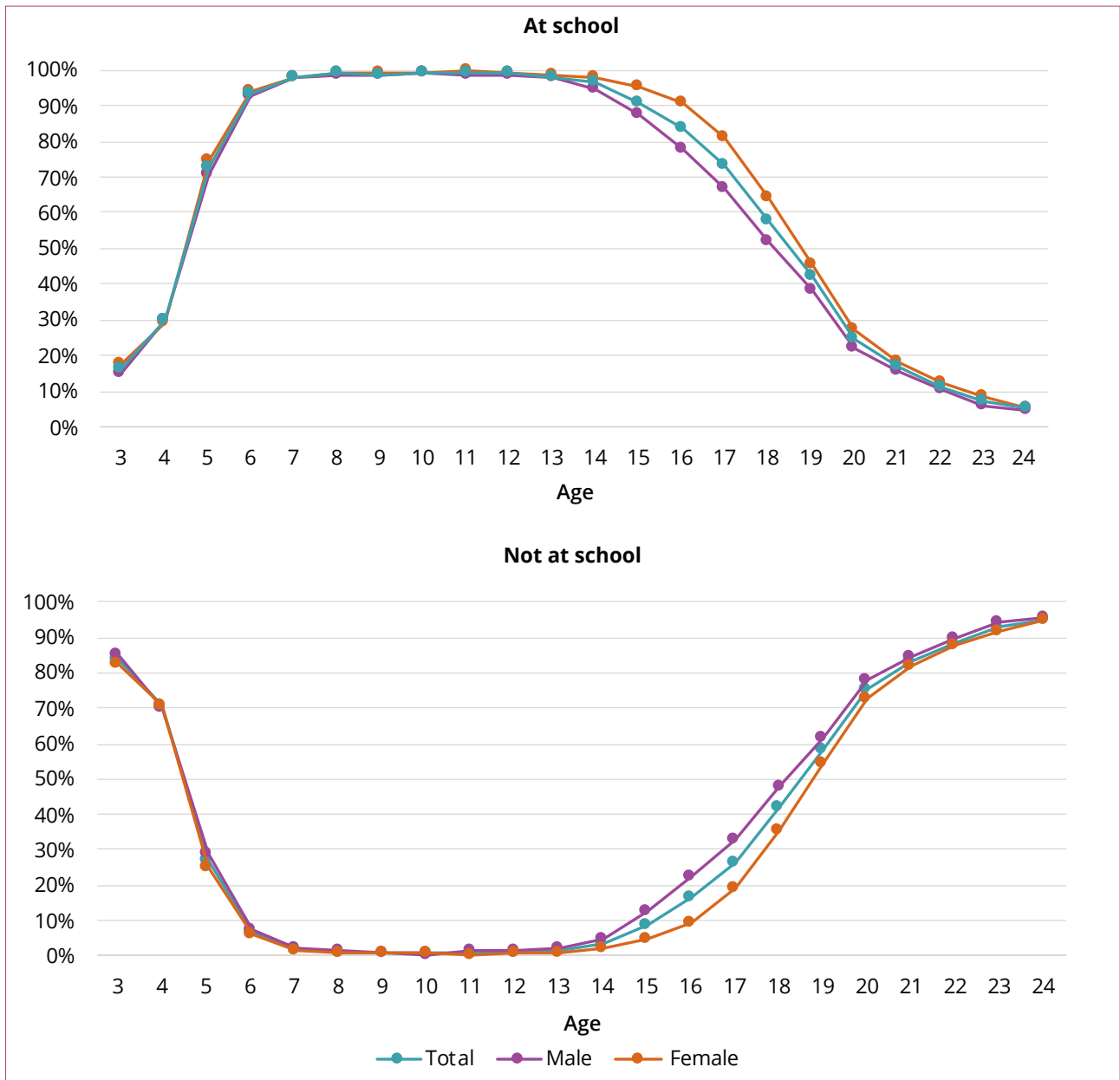


A total of 11,807 persons (or 7 per cent of the 179,052 population aged three years and above) have never-attended school – 7 per cent male and 6 per cent female. This means that more females attend school despite Samoa’s overall male-dominated population.⁵ There is a small variation (1 per cent) in school attendance between urban and rural areas. The North West Upolu region, the most populated region in Samoa (see SGM 2019 Policy Brief No. 1: Gender population dynamics – facts and implications), has a school attendance that is 1 per cent lower than the rest of the regions in Upolu and Savaii, and a corresponding higher number of persons who have never-attended school.

Population currently attending school

Figure 2 shows that of the total 62,252 persons attending school (or 67 per cent of the 92,704 population aged 3 to 24 years), 66 per cent are male and 69 per cent are female.

Figure 2: Population aged 3 to 24 years in and not in school, 2016 Census



Of the total population of 30,542 not attending school (or 33 per cent of the 92,704 population aged 3 to 24 years) 34 per cent are male and 31 per cent are female.

This means that the school attendance rate is higher for females than males, with peak attendance rates for both sexes of more than 90 per cent at the ages of 6 to 14 years. (see Figure 2).

School attendance rates start to decline slightly for both males and females between the ages of 15 to 24 years, with more females attending than males at this age. The highest school non-attendance rates are at the ages of 3 to 5 years and also increase for those aged 15 years and above. The school dropout rate also increases with age for both sexes but is higher for males with more females going onto higher education. The majority of a total of 902 children aged 6 to 14 years who were not attending school at the time of the census are males (62 per cent) compared to 38 per cent of females.

The urban-rural gap for persons not attending school has widened over the census period, with more than 80 per cent of school-aged children in rural areas not attending school compared to only 18 per cent and less in urban areas.

School-aged population currently attending school

The 2016 Census shows that a total of 9,140 persons, or 14 per cent of the population aged 6 to 20 years, were not in school at the time of the census; 16 per cent were male and 12 per cent were female. Some 21,016, or 58 per cent of the population aged 15 to 25, were not in school; 61 per cent male and 56 per cent female, with high levels of school dropouts at the ages of 16 to 20, particularly for males.

58 per cent of the population aged 15 to 25, were not in school

Whilst the overall population of males in Samoa is higher, the proportion of males not attending school is higher than females, across all ages, except those aged 51 years and over (see Figure 3). More females also tend to undertake part-time studies than males (see Figure 4), and more females than males continue studying at the ages of 16 to 25 years.

Figure 3: Population aged three years and above not attending school, 2016 Census

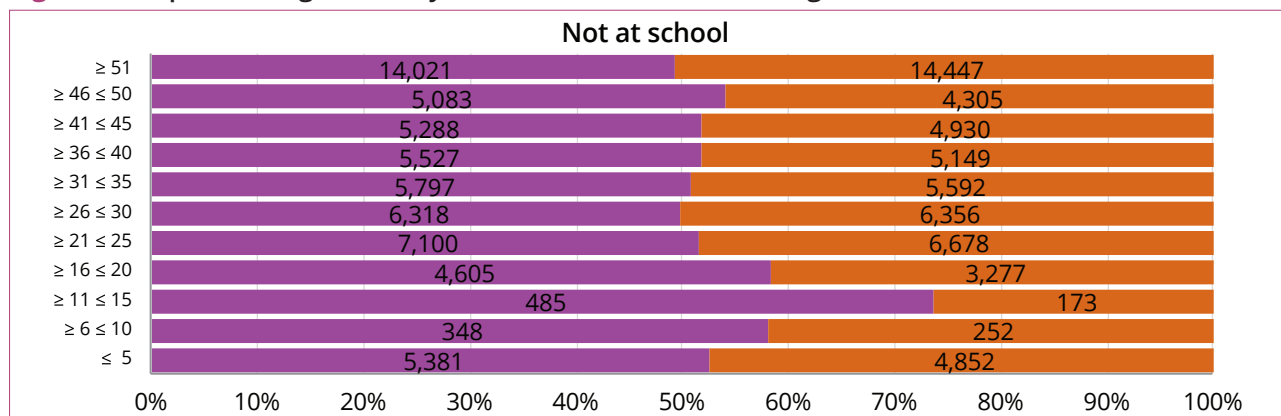
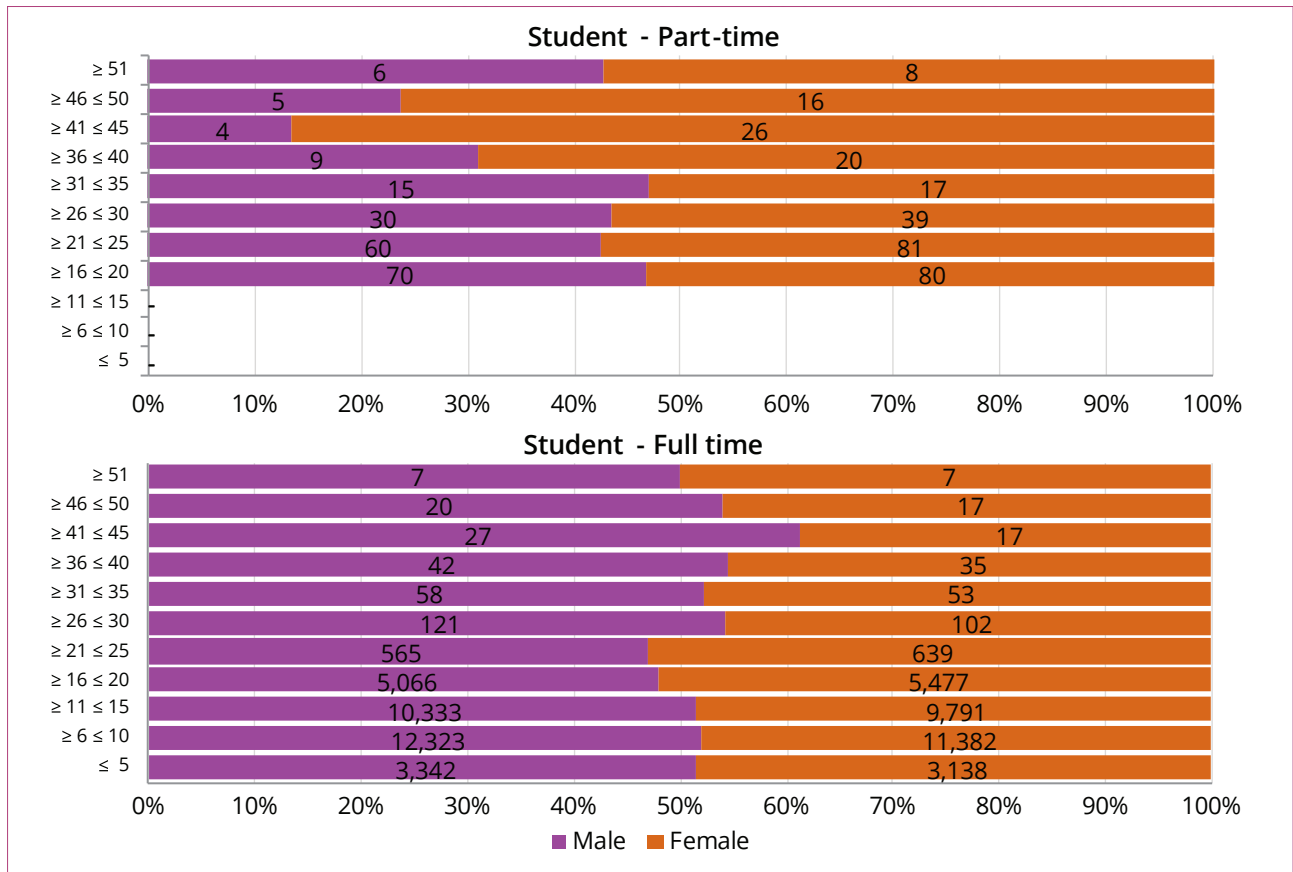


Figure 4: Population aged three years and above currently attending school, 2016 Census

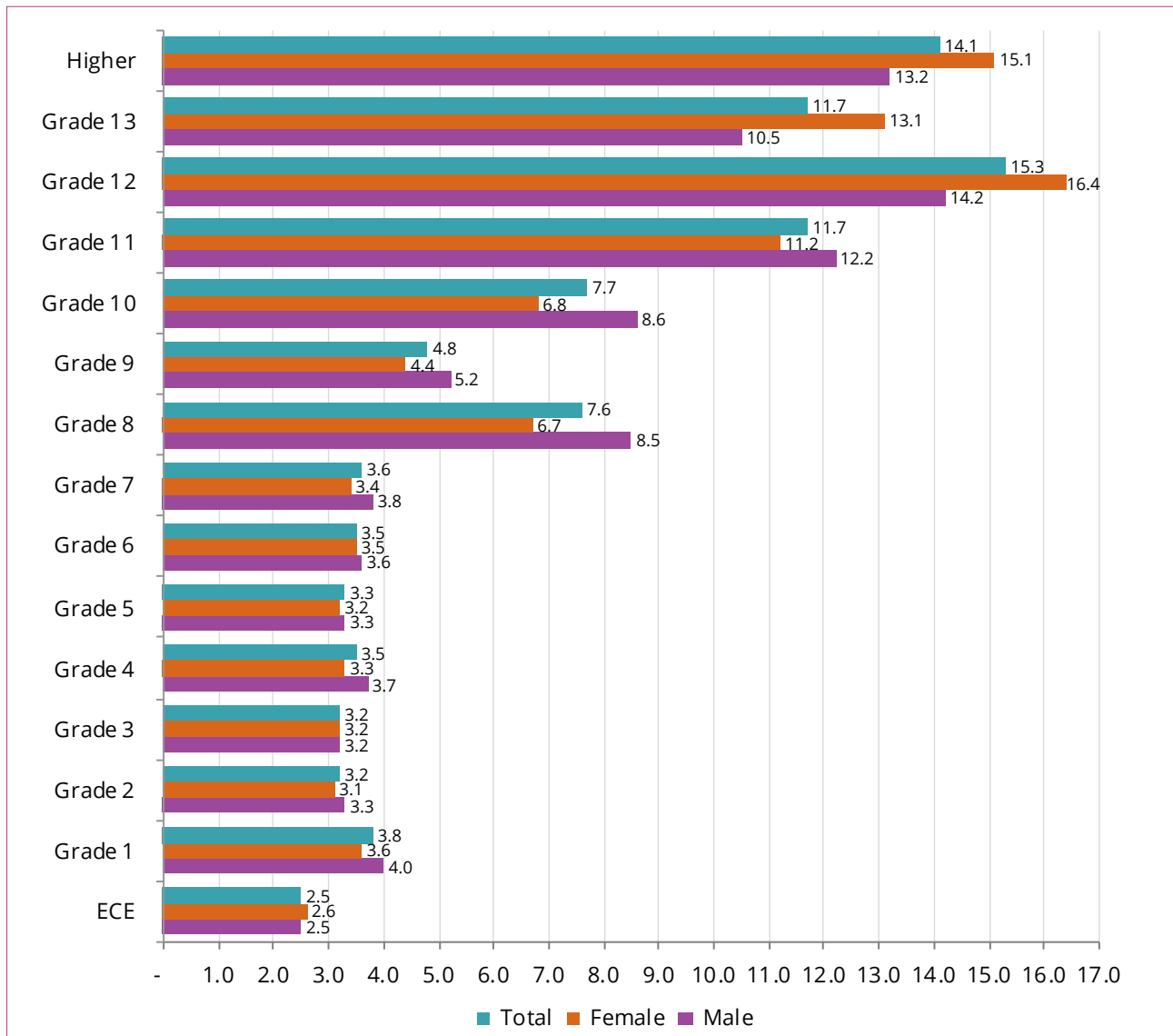


2.2 Educational attainment – key differences

Highest education level attained

Figure 5 shows that males slightly outnumber females in the percentage of persons completing Grade/Level 1 up to Grade/Level 11 (primary school up to secondary school Year 11) (see Figure 5). But females outnumber males for the completion and attainment of Grade/Level 12 up to higher educational levels, which reflects a higher school dropout for males at senior levels of secondary level and colleges.

Figure 5: Population aged three years and above by highest grade completed, 2016 Census



Completion and attainment for other grades/levels lower than Grade/Level 3 are slightly higher in North West Upolu, Rest of Upolu and Savaii than in Apia Urban Area, which can most likely be attributed to the higher population numbers (and hence school students) in North West Upolu, Rest of Upolu and Savaii, than in Apia Urban Area.

Educational qualifications

2016 Census data show that of the 51,233 (or 43 per cent) of the population aged 15 years and above with no qualification (i.e. did not complete school), there are more males (56 per cent) than females (44 per cent) (see Annex 1). Given Samoa's male dominant population, the 'none' qualification status is therefore higher among males than females and higher at the youth and middle-aged population levels.

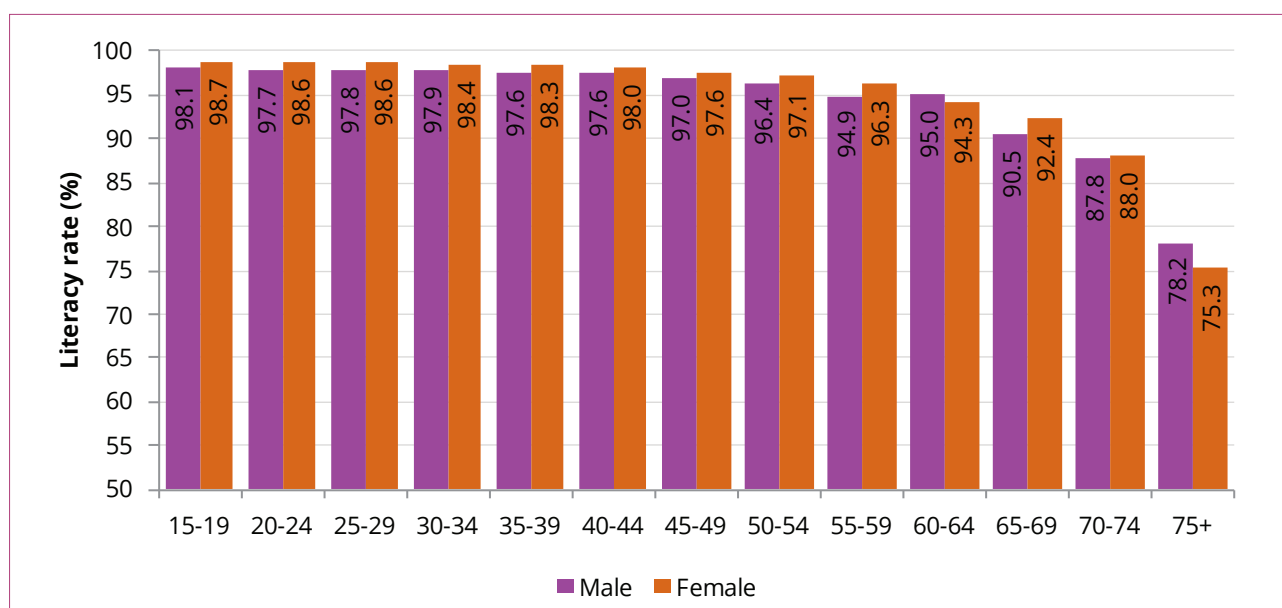
Females also exceed males in educational achievements at the School Certificate (SC or Year 12 or Form 5) or Lower (i.e. Year 8 and Year 11), Pacific Secondary School Certificate (PSSC)/Secondary School Leaving Certificate (SSLC or Year 13 or Form 6), University Preparatory Year (UPY or Foundation/Form 7), Diploma, and Degree (Bachelor) levels. This is across most age groups. While males exceed females in academic achievements at the Certificate (Undergraduate), Postgraduate, Master and PhD levels.

Given the higher proportion of females than males at the ages of 63 years and over, there are more females at older ages with no qualifications than males.

Literacy

Of the 121,129 population aged 15 years and over, 117,156 reported as literate, equating to a national literacy rate of 96.6 per cent; 96.5 per cent male and 96.8 per cent female – just 0.3 per cent higher for females. Literacy levels vary slightly by sex and age and start to decline as the population ages (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Literacy rate for population aged 15 years and above, 2016 Census



The literacy rate is higher in urban compared to rural areas by a difference of 2.3 per cent. Of the four regions in Samoa, Apia Urban Area has the highest literacy rate at 98.5 per cent while Savaii records the lowest at 94.6 per cent. The literacy rates for North West Upolu and Rest of Upolu are 97.1 per cent and 96.7 per cent respectively.

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3. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Disparities in school attendance

The above data illustrates that there are disparities in school attendance by sex and also by geographic location. Females outnumber males in school attendance, for continuing education beyond secondary school and in educational completion and attainment at secondary school up to undergraduate levels. It is notable that this difference reverses for tertiary education and post-graduate achievements. Males who do stay in school, despite the higher number of females, including at secondary school, are more likely to attend tertiary education and achieve graduate and post-graduate certificates, Masters and PhDs.

There remains a high number of persons in Samoa who are not attending school at younger ages, such as the 14 per cent of the school-going population aged 6 to 20 years; the 2 per cent aged 6 to 14 years; and the 58 per cent aged 15 to 25 years – all not in school at the time of the 2016 Census. Peak attendance rates for children aged between 6 to 14 years of age, however, highlight the effectiveness of Government laws and policy enforcing compulsory attendance.

The urban versus rural gap on persons not attending school is widening, with more non-attendance found in rural than areas. Literacy rates are also lower in rural areas demonstrating that the lack of participation in education is a key determinant of literacy. At the time of the census there were also more males than females not in school, including school dropouts, indicating men's earlier entrance into the labour force.

In order to close the gender parity gap and increase school attendance for all children and young persons of all ages it is recommended to:

- Create vocational training institutes to support school drop outs and enable access to training which will build the labour workforce.
- Determine reasons for decreased participation in education in rural areas, and design policies to overcome these barriers, for example transportation, school feeding policies, or programmes for parents who are not prioritizing their child's education.

Government and relevant authorities should provide incentives to support children's participation in school, particularly for vulnerable families, and encourage school participation and reduce dropout rates.

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3.2 Collaboration to support young people to realize their full education potential

Secondary completion rate is higher for females than males in Samoa, nevertheless, education participation for young married women and young women with children is lower compared to unmarried young females and those without children. In addition, while more females continue education beyond secondary school and university preparatory year as well as at undergraduate level, opportunities for continuing education beyond undergraduate level remain limited.

To address these disparities, it is recommended to:

- Harness investments in community engagement platforms (through various sectors – health, community, education sectors) to strengthen social and behavioural change communication. Cross-sectoral coordination of community messages on benefits of education on population health and development including AYSRH and vice versa should be prioritized.
- Ensure access to comprehensive adolescent and youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health (AYSRH) information and services for all young people. This will include strengthening delivery of family life education using school-based platforms and community-based platforms (for out of school young people).
- Consider affirmative measures within Samoa’s scholarship schemes, national school and university systems, employers’ human resource policy and programmes, development partners’ assistance, and other avenues to support more females to pursue higher studies.
- Support family-friendly policies, including childcare facilities, to enable women to continue into tertiary education.
- Consider the establishment of scholarships for women through public and private sector support to encourage females to complete post graduate studies.
- Support career pathways for females following the completion of tertiary studies, including mentoring schemes for females.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ See Ministry of Education, Sports & Culture 2014. *Samoa Inclusive Education for Students living with Disability*. Apia: Government of Samoa. The Government of Samoa aims to improve inclusive education (IE) in Samoa by increasing the number of students with disabilities enrolled in primary and secondary schools. This will be achieved through mainstreaming of IE in all schools; training teachers and teacher aids in IE principles; equipping them with skills to provide support programmes; introducing IE plans for students with disabilities; improved facility accessibility for students with disabilities, and consolidating and establishing new activities to help students with disabilities’ learning in classrooms. Samoa Education Sector Plan 2019-2024. <http://mesc.gov.ws/?s=inclusive+education>.
- ² World Bank 2019. Girls enrolled in school are less likely to become pregnant as teenagers. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/girls-enrolled-school-are-less-likely-become-pregnant-teenagers>
- ³ Family Planning High Impact Practices. Educating Girls: Creating a foundation for positive sexual and reproductive health behaviours. <https://www.fphighimpactpractices.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/EducatingGirls-EN.pdf>
- ⁴ See Samoa Youth Monograph report 2019.
- ⁵ See SGM Policy Brief 1. Fiji and Tonga show similar trends where school attendance is higher for females than males. See <https://www.statsfiji.gov.fj/> and <https://tonga.prism.spc.int/component/advlisting/?view=download&fileId=2478>.

ANNEX 1: POPULATION 15 YEARS AND OVER BY ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS, 2016 CENSUS

Males												
Ages (years)	Total	None	SC or Lower	PSSC/ SSLC	UPY	Cert	Dip	Degree	Postgrad	Master	PhD	Not stated
15-21	13,481	6,843	4,022	1,579	521	352	114	30	5	5	-	10
22-28	9,943	3,406	2,496	2,021	536	687	444	289	26	16	4	18
29-35	8,331	2,992	2,166	1,541	296	546	426	273	38	33	6	14
36-42	7,662	3,160	2,025	1,197	184	425	297	259	37	50	13	15
43-48	6,295	2,988	1,471	804	123	331	280	180	35	60	13	10
49-55	5,996	3,248	1,239	604	97	257	249	178	37	60	21	6
56-62	4,554	2,740	717	381	69	175	180	175	31	62	15	9
63-69	2,621	1,691	377	171	33	92	91	85	21	38	17	5
70-76	1,556	1,062	196	84	23	56	49	45	9	18	12	2
77+	956	722	105	42	10	34	14	18	1	4	3	3
Total	61,395	28,852	14,814	8,424	1,892	2,955	2,144	1,532	240	346	104	92
%	51%	56%	47%	46%	46%	52%	44%	48%	50%	56%	61%	50%
Females												
Ages (years)	Total	None	SC or Lower	PSSC/ SSLC	UPY	Cert	Dip	Degree	Postgrad	Master	PhD	Not stated
15-21	12,186	4,704	4,431	1,828	660	363	137	47	6	1	-	9
22-28	9,793	2,157	2,605	2,518	686	740	581	433	37	17	4	15
29-35	8,090	1,984	2,474	1,769	337	508	553	353	51	45	8	8
36-42	7,057	2,224	2,149	1,357	202	307	408	274	45	63	14	14
43-48	5,725	2,108	1,674	958	136	221	358	176	42	38	6	8
49-55	5,514	2,557	1,425	670	82	242	294	164	29	35	11	5
56-62	4,274	2,355	852	421	75	191	198	103	17	42	12	8
63-69	2,641	1,749	408	175	36	83	86	61	6	24	7	6
70-76	1,800	1,304	212	104	26	57	42	35	4	6	4	6
77+	1,607	1,239	185	68	19	41	28	10	1	3	-	13
Total	58,687	22,381	16,415	9,868	2,259	2,753	2,685	1,656	238	274	66	92
%	49%	44%	53%	54%	54%	48%	56%	52%	50%	44%	39%	50%
Grand total	120,082	51,233	31,229	18,292	4,151	5,708	4,829	3,188	478	620	170	184
%		43%	26%	15%	3%	5%	4%	3%	0%	1%	0%	0%

