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Education in Curaçao: From Attendance to Completion

Insights from the Enkuesta Sosial 2025

This publication presents data on the highest levels of education attended and completed by the population of Curaçao, as reported by respondents of the Enkuesta Sosial 2025.



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Foreword

Education plays an essential role in the social and economic development of Curaçao. It contributes to individual opportunities, supports the development of a skilled workforce and provides an important foundation for the future of our society. Understanding how people participate in education and the extent to which they complete their studies is therefore important.

This publication presents an overview of educational participation and attainment in Curaçao, based on data from the Enkuesta Sosial 2025. It examines the highest levels of education attended and completed, differences across age groups and between women and men, and developments in educational attainment compared with previous data.

The findings provide valuable insight into the educational experiences and achievements of the population. They also highlight differences between generations and educational levels, helping us better understand the current educational landscape of Curaçao.

Reliable and up-to-date statistics are essential for informed decision-making. By making these findings accessible, the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) aims to contribute to a better understanding of education in Curaçao and to support policymakers, researchers, educational institutions and the wider community in their work and discussions.

We extend our appreciation to the CBS team involved in preparing this publication, particularly statistical researcher Ms. Chartysse Simon, whose work in analyzing and interpreting the data was instrumental in its completion. We also wants to thank all households and individuals who participated in the Enkuesta Sosial 2025. Their willingness to share information makes it possible for CBS to produce statistics that serve the public interest.

We invite you to explore this publication and use its findings to gain a deeper understanding of education in Curaçao.

The director
Sean de Boer

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Executive Summary

This report presents a descriptive overview of educational participation and attainment in Curaçao, based on data from the Enkuesta Sosial 2025. It examines the highest levels of education attended and completed, patterns of completion, and differences in educational attainment across age groups and between women and men. The 2025 results are also compared with the 2023 Census and with selected international and regional education statistics.

Highest levels of education attended

The distribution of the highest attended education levels among the population, including individuals who had not yet completed their education at the time of the survey, is concentrated mainly in primary, vocational, and intermediate education. Primary school (FO), LBO, Mavo/VMBO/VSBO/G.E.D., and MBO/SBO levels 2–4 account for the largest shares of the population's highest attended education. At the same time, 17.9 percent had reached HBO/WO bachelor level or higher.

Educational attainment

The educational attainment profile shows a similar concentration in primary, vocational, and intermediate education. Among the population aged 15 and older, 18.1 percent had completed tertiary education, consisting of a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree. Compared with the 2023 Census, the overall distribution of educational attainment (attainment profile) is broadly similar, although differences are observed at individual education levels. In particular, the share in the combined preparatory secondary vocational category (VSBO) was 36.1 percent in 2023 and 33.5 percent in 2025, while MBO/SBO levels 2–4 increased from 15.0 percent to 16.3 percent. Tertiary attainment remained broadly stable, with a slightly lower share completing a master's degree in 2025.

Completion of the highest level attended

Most individuals (81.0%) had completed their highest attended level of education. The correspondence between attended and completed education was particularly high among those whose highest attended level was MBO/SBO levels 2–4 (84.7%) or tertiary education (PhD 100%, master's 88.0%, bachelor's 86.0%). Larger differences between highest attended and completed education were observed at primary (79.9%) and some secondary levels (MBO/SBO 1 78.0%, Mavo, VMBO, VSBO, G.E.D. 77.7%, HAVO/ VWO 61.3%). Among

individuals who had not completed their highest attended level, some were still in education, while others were working, unemployed, or economically inactive.

Differences in educational attainment by age and gender

Educational attainment differs across age groups and gender. Adults aged 25–44 show higher representation at intermediate and tertiary education levels, while older adults are more concentrated at lower education levels. The relatively high share of primary education among 15–24-year-olds may partly reflect that some individuals in this age group are still completing their education.

Gender differences are also evident. Men are more strongly represented in vocational education, while women have higher representation in tertiary education, particularly among those aged 25–44. Similar gender differences were already evident in the 2023 Census, indicating that this is an established pattern rather than a recent development.

International and regional context

The educational profile of Curaçao shows several patterns that are consistent with broader international developments. Younger generations have higher levels of tertiary attainment than older generations, and women have higher tertiary attainment than men. These patterns are also observed across OECD countries, the Netherlands, and the Caribbean Netherlands. However, Curaçao remains more concentrated in primary, vocational, and intermediate education than the OECD average, and tertiary attainment among young adults remains lower than in the Netherlands and OECD countries. Compared with the Caribbean Netherlands, Curaçao has a higher share in the primary, VMBO, and MBO-1 category, while its tertiary attainment falls between that of Bonaire and Saba.

Overall, the 2023 and 2025 data provide a broadly consistent picture of educational attainment in Curaçao, while also showing differences at specific education levels. The results demonstrate clear differences across generations and between women and men, with higher tertiary attainment among younger and middle-aged adults and among women. At the same time, Curaçao's educational profile remains strongly concentrated in primary, vocational, and intermediate education. These findings provide a descriptive basis for understanding the current educational profile of Curaçao and for further research into educational progression and attainment.

Introduction

Within the Enkuesta Sosial 2025, data were collected on various social and demographic themes, including education. Education plays an important role in shaping individual opportunities and long-term socio-economic outcomes (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2024). Higher levels of education are generally associated with better employment opportunities, higher incomes, and greater economic security (OECD, 2024). Education also contributes to individual earning potential, economic growth, and societal well-being, while educational attainment provides an indication of the knowledge, skills, and competencies associated with completing different levels of education (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2025).

In this publication, we examine both the highest level of education attended and the highest level completed among the population of Curaçao, providing greater insight into their educational pathways and outcomes. The highest attended level indicates the furthest level of education an individual has reached, including education that may still be ongoing, while the highest completed level indicates the highest level successfully completed. Comparing these measures provides insight into the extent to which individuals complete the highest level they have attended, while recognising that differences may partly reflect individuals who were still progressing through education at the time of the survey.

Moreover, education levels are classified according to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), which provides a common framework for comparing education levels across countries (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012). A full overview of education levels and ISCED classifications can be found on the CBS website in the education tab under “Classifications” [click here].

The publication also examines differences in educational attainment across age groups and gender, as international evidence shows that educational attainment varies across age groups and that gender differences persist, particularly at higher levels of education (OECD, 2025). By examining these patterns alongside the overall distribution of education levels, we provide a more detailed picture of the educational profile of Curaçao and enable comparisons with international patterns. This report aims to describe levels of education attended and completed, differences between the two, and variations in educational attainment across age groups and between men and women, while placing the findings within an international context.

Research Goal

The main objective of this report is to provide a descriptive overview of the educational profile of Curaçao, focusing on the levels of education reached and completed, differences

by age and gender, and how Curaçao's education profile compares with relevant international and regional statistics.

To provide this overview, the report describes:

1. **Highest level of education attended:** The highest levels of education reached by the population of Curaçao, including those who are still in education.
2. **Highest level of education completed:** The highest level of education completed among the population of Curaçao.
3. **Completion of the highest level attended:** The extent to which individuals complete the highest level of education they have attended, including the situations of those who have not completed that level at the time of the survey.
4. **Educational attainment differences by age and gender:** Differences in the highest level of education completed by age and gender respectively.
5. **International and regional comparisons:** Curaçao's educational attainment is compared with relevant statistics from OECD country average, the Netherlands, and the Caribbean Netherlands to place the findings in a broader context.

The report provides a descriptive basis for understanding the educational profile of Curaçao and differences in educational attainment across population groups. The comparisons with data from the 2023 Census and with international and regional statistics further provide context for interpreting the current educational profile of the island.

Report Structure

This report is structured as follows. **Chapter 2** describes the data source, study population, and methodology used in the analysis. **Chapter 3** presents the highest levels of education attended and completed by the population of Curaçao. **Chapter 4** examines the extent to which individuals complete the highest level of education they attend. **Chapter 5** examines differences in educational outcomes across population groups. **Chapter 6** places Curaçao's educational profile in an international context by comparing key indicators with those of other countries. Finally, the conclusion summarises the main findings and highlights key implications.

Methodology

Survey Design and Sampling Frame

This research is based on data from the 2025 Enkuesta Sosial (Social Survey). The Enkuesta Sosial 2025 (ES 2025) is a household-based sample survey conducted by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) Curaçao. In total, 1,695 households participated in the survey, corresponding to 91.1 percent of the targeted response (1,860 households). The final dataset after cleaning contains information on 4,051 individuals.

The ES 2025 uses a sampling frame composed of the Social Insurance Bank (Sociale Verzekeringsbank Curaçao [SVB]) register and the CBS building points register of occupied dwellings. The total population at the time of the survey was 156,115 (per January 1st, 2025). Households were selected using a simple random sample without replacement, ensuring equal selection probabilities.

The sample size for the ES 2025 was determined based on a target precision (margin of error) of ±2.0% at the 95% confidence level. The design also accounted for an expected non-response rate of 40 percent. To ensure that a representative sample of the target population would still be achieved under this assumption, oversampling was applied at the design stage, resulting in a total of 3,100 households being drawn for participation.
The sample for the ES 2025 consists of persons residing in private, non-institutional households in Curaçao who were living or indicated an intent to live on the island for at least three months. Short-term residents and tourists were excluded. The survey does not apply age-based exclusions and therefore includes individuals of all ages. For respondents aged 15 years and younger, proxy interviews were conducted.

Research Material

Within this study, data were collected through the Enkuesta Sosial 2025 survey. The survey included 17 education-related questions. This report focuses on 2 education questions namely, the highest levels of education attended and completed. Additionally, the report examines the differences noted between these two measures. Further findings related to the rest of the education questions will be addressed in follow-up research.

Weighting and Representativity

To ensure representativity, survey data were weighted to align with the population structure of Curaçao. Weights adjust for differences in age and sex distribution, such that each respondent represents a defined number of individuals within the same demographic category in the non-institutional population.

Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistical analyses were conducted using data from the 2025 Enkuesta Sosial to provide an overview of educational participation and attainment in Curaçao.

The analysis of educational attainment is restricted to persons aged 15 and older to maintain comparability with the *Educational Attainment and Outcome in Curaçao* report (Central Bureau of Statistics Curaçao, 2025). This age restriction also excludes younger persons who are generally still subject to compulsory education and may not yet have completed an education level.

Frequencies and percentages were calculated to describe the highest levels of education attended and completed by the population of Curaçao. The highest attended and highest completed education levels were also compared to describe the extent to which individuals complete the highest level of education they attend. Finally, educational participation and attainment were examined across age groups and between women and men to describe differences in educational outcomes across population groups. The results were also compared with international education statistics to place Curaçao's educational profile in a broader context.

Guide to Reading the Results

Unless otherwise stated, the charts and tables show percentages that have been adjusted (weighted) to better represent the population being studied. Because percentages are rounded to 1 decimal point, they may not add up to exactly 100%.

Reliability and Limitations

The reliability of the findings is supported by data from the Enkuesta Sosial 2025, which was collected using standardised survey questions and data collection procedures. Education

levels are classified according to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), supporting consistent classification and international comparability. Frequencies and percentages are used to provide a clear representation of educational outcomes. Several limitations should nevertheless be considered. First, the data provide a picture of people's educational status at the time of the survey rather than following individuals over time. Differences between the highest level attended and the highest level completed therefore do not show when or why a person did not complete a level.
For example, a person may still have been enrolled in education when the survey was conducted, may have interrupted their education, or may not yet have completed the level they attended. Second, the analysis is descriptive and identifies patterns and differences but does not establish causal relationships.

Definitions

Compulsory education (Leerplicht)
The legal obligation for children to attend school between the ages of 4 and 18, or until an education level of VSBO TKL or PKL, HAVO/VWO, or an equivalent level designated by the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport is attained.

Daytime education
Educational programmes and courses that take place during standard working hours.

Evening education
Educational programmes and courses that take place in the evening, often catering to working adults or part-time students.

Full-time online education
Educational programmes delivered entirely through digital platforms without in-person attendance requirements.

HBO/WO Bachelor
A bachelor's degree obtained from a university of applied sciences (Hoger Beroepsonderwijs [HBO]) or a research university (Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs [WO]).

HBO/WO Master
A master's degree obtained from a university of applied sciences (Hoger Beroepsonderwijs [HBO]) or a research university (Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs [WO]).

Highest completed degree / Educational attainment
The highest educational qualification that an individual has successfully obtained.

Institutional household/population
All people residing in institutions where they receive long-term care or accommodation, such as hospitals, nursing homes, prisons, boarding schools, and other institutional living arrangements.

Non-institutional household/population
All people who are part of private households not residing in institutions such as hospitals, nursing homes, prisons, boarding schools, and other institutional living arrangements.

PhD (Doctor of Philosophy, Doctorate)
The highest academic degree, awarded for an original research contribution to a specific field of study.

Primary school / primary education
The first stage of compulsory education, typically for children aged 4 to 12 years.

Proxy interview
An interview in which a respondent provides answers on behalf of another person.

Respondent
A person who participates in a survey and provides answers to questions.

Sample
A selection of part of the population that is studied to draw conclusions about the population.

Secondary education
Education following primary education and preceding tertiary education. It includes general and vocational education at lower and upper secondary levels. In this report, secondary education includes LBO, Mavo/VMBO/VSBO, HAVO/VWO, and MBO/SBO.

Tertiary education
Education provided after secondary education, generally including bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programmes. In this report, tertiary education includes HBO/WO bachelor's degrees, HBO/WO master's degrees, and PhD programmes.

Vocational education
Education that focuses on developing practical, occupational, and technical knowledge and skills for specific professions or fields of work. In this report, vocational education includes LBO and MBO/SBO programmes.

Vocational and intermediate education
Education between primary and tertiary education that combines general secondary, vocational, and post-secondary vocational pathways. In this report, this refers to LBO, Mavo/VMBO/VSBO, HAVO/VWO, and MBO/SBO levels 1–4.

Abbreviations

CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
ES	Enkuesta Sosial (Social Survey)
FO	Funderend Onderwijs (Foundational Education / Primary Education)
G.E.D.	General Educational Development
HAVO	Hoger Algemeen Voortgezet Onderwijs (Higher General Secondary Education)
HBO	Hoger Beroepsonderwijs (Higher Professional Education / University of Applied Sciences)
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
LBO	Lager Beroepsonderwijs (Lower Vocational Education)
MAVO	Middelbaar Algemeen Voortgezet Onderwijs (Lower/Intermediate General Secondary Education)
MBO	Middelbaar Beroepsonderwijs (Secondary Vocational Education)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PKL	Praktisch Basis Leerweg (Practical Basic Learning Pathway)
SBO	Secundair Beroepsonderwijs (Secondary Vocational Education)
SVB	Sociale Verzekeringsbank (Social Insurance Bank Curaçao)
TKL	Theoretisch Kader Leerweg (Theoretical Learning Pathway)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VMBO	Voorbereidend Middelbaar Beroepsonderwijs (Preparatory Secondary Vocational Education)
VSBO	Voorbereidend Secundair Beroepsonderwijs (Preparatory Secondary Vocational Education)
VWO	Voorbereidend Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs (Pre-university Education)
WO	Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs (Research University Education)

Education categories

ISCED level	Broad ISCED category	Category used in this report	Education level name in this report	Education levels included in the classification
1	Primary education	Primary education	Primary school (FO)	Primary school / FO; FO groups 3–8; Elementary; special education including SO LOM, SO MLK, SO ZMLK, SO Mytyl, SO Tyltyl, SO S/D/EH, SO MOK, SO ZMOK and SO VBL
2	Lower secondary education	Secondary education	HAVO/ VWO	HAVO/VWO basic formation; HAVO profile preparation (3rd year); VWO profile preparation (3rd year); Middle School; Junior High
		Vocational education	Lower vocational education (LBO)	LBO; LTS; VMBO basic vocational pathway; VMBO framework vocational pathway; TVET1; Huishoudschool; ETAO; lower agricultural school; practical education; Ambachtschool
3	Upper secondary education	Intermediate education	Mavo, VMBO, VSBO, G.E.D.	(CMC) MAVO; MULO; VMBO/VSBO theoretical learning pathway (TL); VMBO/VSBO mixed learning pathway (TKL); ETAO/ETO; G.E.D., VSBO basic formation; VSBO TKL; VSBO PKL; VSBO PBL; VSBO AGO
			HAVO/VWO	HAVO upper years; VWO upper years; Gymnasium; HBS; MMS; Highschool
		Vocational and intermediate education	MBO/SBO 1	MBO/SBO level 1
			MBO/SBO 2,3 & 4	MBO/SBO level 2; MBO/SBO level 3; MBO/SBO level 4; MBO/SBO old structure (until 1998); MTS; Feffik
6	Bachelor's or equivalent	Tertiary education	HBO / WO Bachelor	HBO Bachelor; University / WO Bachelor; Hogere Hotelschool (HTS)
7	Master's or equivalent		HBO / WO Master	HBO Master; WO Master
8	Doctoral or equivalent		PhD	PhD / postdoctoral education
		Other	Other	Online course; Company training course (Bedrijfscursus); police academy, etc
		No education	No education	No formal education

Note: Where an education programme spans more than one ISCED level, the classification depends on whether the education level is currently being attended or has been completed. For individuals currently attending a programme, the education is classified according to the ISCED level corresponding to the stage they are attending. For individuals who have completed the programme, the education is classified according to the highest ISCED level attained within that programme. For example, HAVO and VWO include stages classified as lower secondary education (ISCED 2), but completion of the upper years results in an upper secondary qualification (ISCED 3). Thus, a person currently attending HAVO/VWO at an ISCED 2 stage is classified at ISCED 2, whereas a person who has completed HAVO or VWO is classified at ISCED 3.

The terms “vocational education”, “intermediate education”, and “tertiary education” are grouping terms used in this report and are not themselves ISCED levels.

A full overview of all education levels and abbreviations is available on the CBS website in the education tab under “Classifications” [click here].

1. Highest Education Levels Attended and Completed in Curaçao

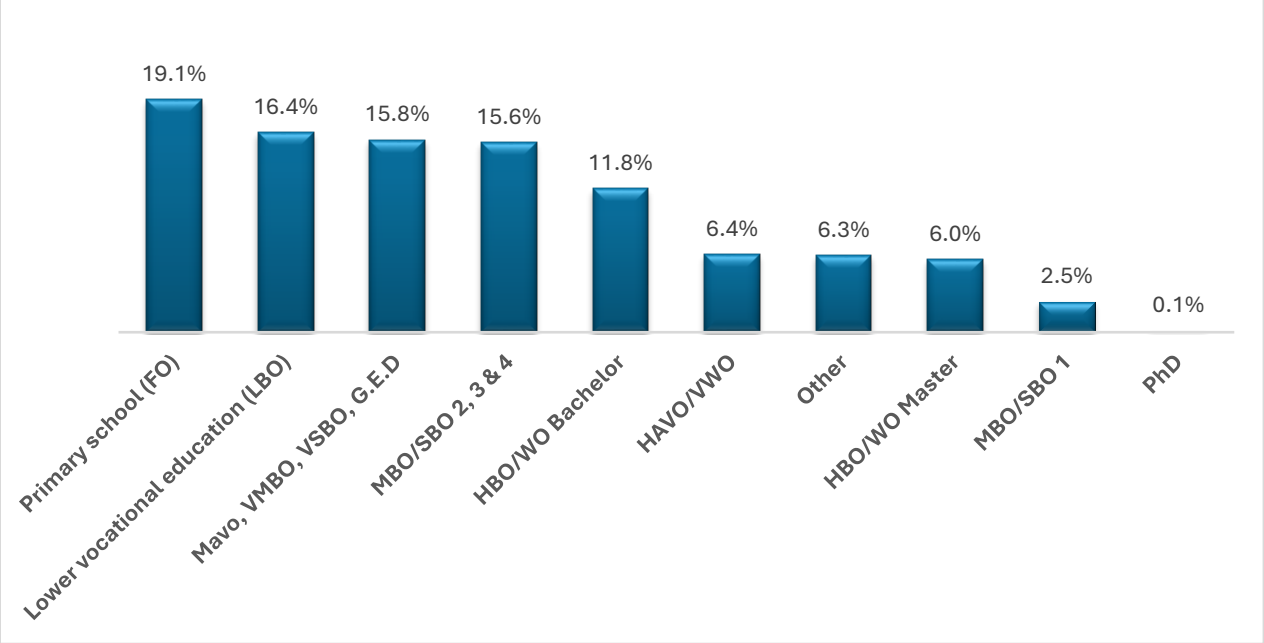
This chapter examines the highest levels of education attended and completed by the population of Curaçao, providing insight into patterns of educational participation and attainment.

1.1 Highest attended education level

The highest attended education profile of the population of Curaçao, including individuals still in education, shows that the population is primarily concentrated at primary, vocational, and intermediate education levels (see Figure 1). The largest share of the population reports primary school (FO) as their highest attended level of education (19.1%), followed by lower vocational education (LBO) (16.4%), Mavo/VMBO/VSBO or equivalent secondary education (15.8%), and MBO/SBO levels 2–4 (15.6%).

At tertiary education levels, 11.8 percent of the population report an HBO/WO bachelor's degree as their highest attended level, while 6.0 percent attended an HBO/WO master's programme and 0.1 percent attended a PhD programme. Smaller shares report HAVO/VWO (6.4%) and MBO/SBO level 1 (2.5%) as their highest attended level, while 6.3 percent report other education levels.

Figure 1. Highest attended education level among Curaçao's population, 2025



Source: Enkuesta Sosial 2025, Central Bureau of Statistics Curaçao

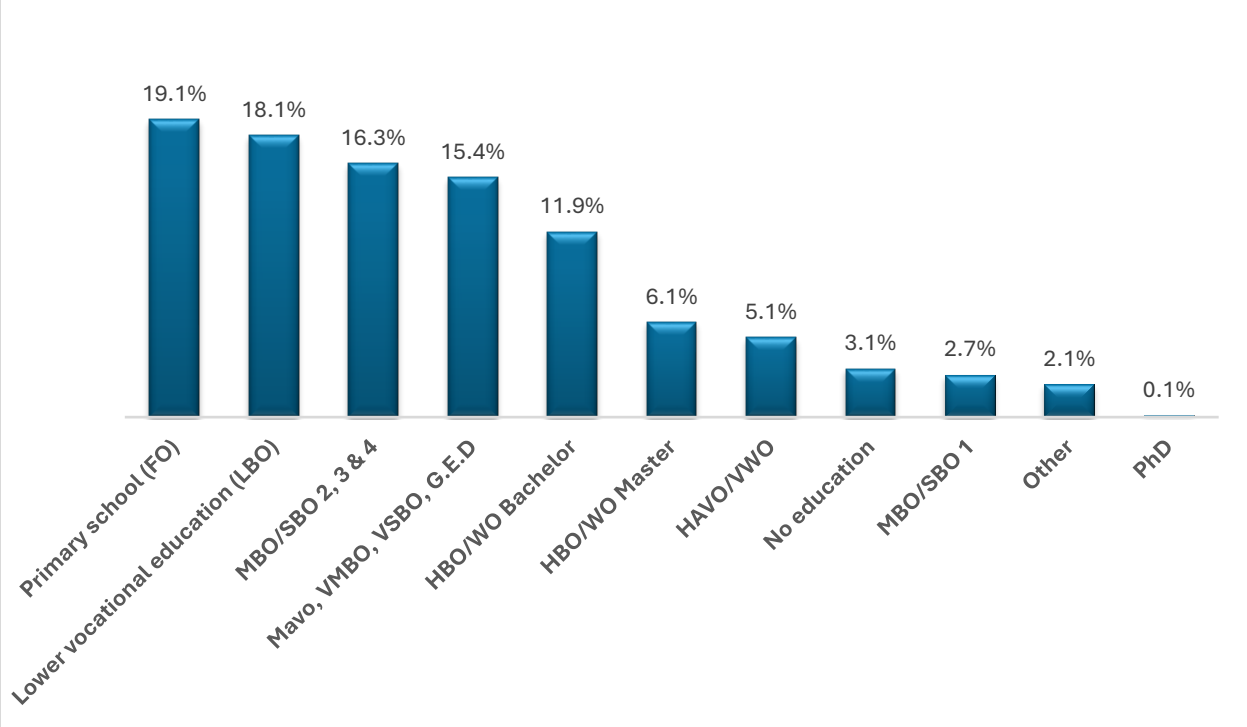
Note. Percentages refer to the entire dataset, including all age groups and individuals still in education.

Overall, the distribution of highest attended education levels shows that the population of Curaçao is mainly concentrated in primary, vocational, and intermediate education. At the same time, a substantial share of the population has attended tertiary education, with 17.9 percent reaching HBO/WO bachelor level or higher. This distribution provides an overview of the highest levels of education reached by the population, including those who had not yet completed their education at the time of the survey.

1.2 Highest completed education level

The distribution of the highest completed education level among the population of Curaçao aged 15 and older shows that individuals are primarily concentrated at primary, vocational, and intermediate education levels (see Figure 2). The largest shares of the population have completed primary school (FO) (19.1%) or lower vocational education (LBO) (18.1%). This is followed by MBO/SBO levels 2–4 (16.3%) and Mavo/VMBO/VSBO or equivalent secondary education (15.4%).

Figure 2. Highest completed education level among Curaçao's population (15+), 2025



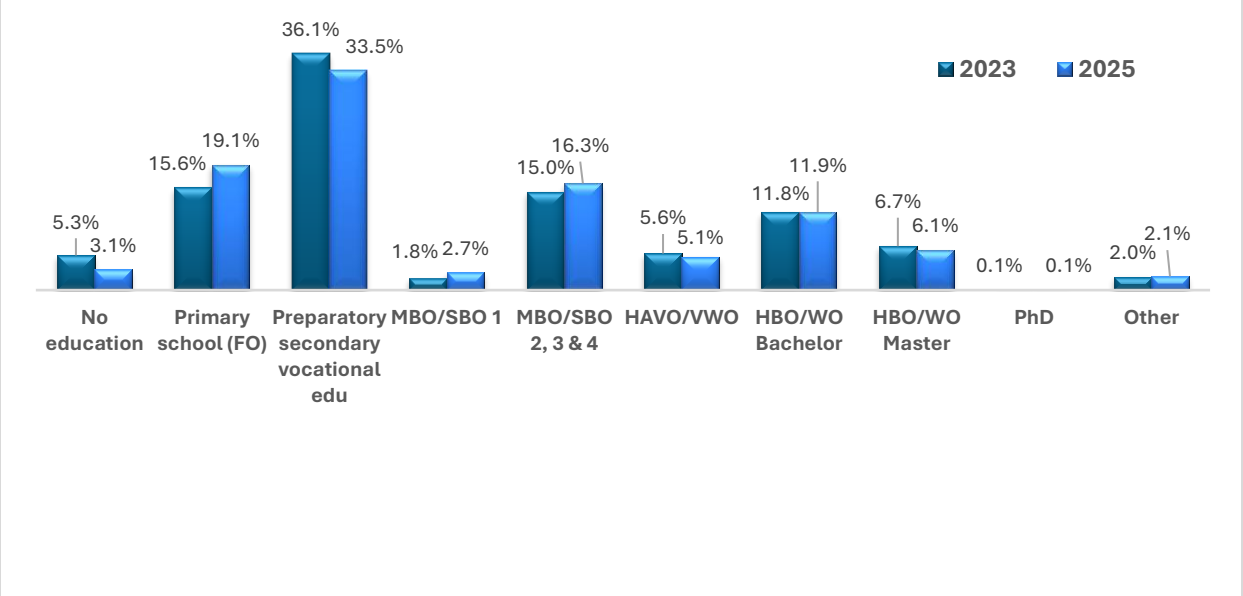
Source: Enkuesta Sosial 2025, Central Bureau of Statistics Curaçao

Note. Percentages refer to the population aged 15 and older, including individuals who are still in education.

At higher education levels, the proportions are smaller. Individuals with an HBO/WO bachelor's degree as their highest completed level account for 11.9 percent of the population, while 6.1 percent have completed an HBO/WO master's degree and 0.1 percent have completed a PhD. HAVO/VWO accounts for 5.1 percent of the population, while 2.7 percent have completed MBO/SBO level 1. In addition, 3.1 percent of the population reports no completed education, while 2.1 percent fall into the "Other" category.

The attainment profile is broadly consistent with the 2023 Census in showing that the largest share of the population has attained preparatory secondary vocational education (VSBO)[1] as their highest level of education, followed by MBO/SBO levels 2–4 and primary education (see Figure 3). In 2025, 33.5 percent of the population aged 15 and older had attained VSBO, compared with 36.1 percent in 2023, while 16.3 percent had attained MBO/SBO levels 2–4, compared with 15.0 percent in 2023. Tertiary attainment accounted for 18.1 percent of the population in 2025, comprising 11.9 percent with an HBO/WO bachelor's degree, 6.1 percent with a master's degree, and 0.1 percent with a PhD. In 2023, the corresponding shares were 11.8 percent, 6.7 percent, and 0.1 percent, respectively.

Figure 3. Comparison of educational attainment on Curaçao between 2023 and 2025



Source: Enkuesta Sosial 2025 & Census 2023, Central Bureau of Statistics Curaçao
Note. Percentages refer to the population aged 15 and older, including individuals who are still in education.

[1] This education level combines Lower vocational education (LBO) and Mavo, VMBO, VSBO, and G.E.D. into a single category corresponding to ISCED level 2, to ensure comparability with the 2023 Census.

2. Patterns in Education Completion

This chapter examines the relationship between the highest level of education attended and the highest level completed among individuals aged 15 and older. The analysis shows, for each highest attended education level, the proportion of individuals who completed that level and the proportion whose highest completed level was lower (see Table 1).

Among individuals whose highest attended level was primary school (FO), 79.9 percent had primary school as their highest completed level. A further 19.8 percent reported no completed education, while 0.3 percent reported falling into the "Other" category.

Differences between the highest level attended and completed are also observed among individuals whose highest attended level was lower vocational education (LBO). While 85.3 percent had LBO as their highest completed level, 14.0 percent had primary school as their highest completed level, indicating that they had attended LBO without having completed that level the time of the survey. Smaller shares had completed another unspecified education (0.7%).

Table 1. Education completion percentages (15+), 2025

	Highest Attended Education Level										
Highest completed level	**Primary school**	**LBO**	**Mavo VSBO**	**MBO/SBO 1**	**HAVO/ VWO**	**MBO/SBO 2, 3 & 4**	**Bachelor**	**Master**	**PhD**	**Other**	**No education**
Primary school (FO)	79.9	14.0	18.9	5.8	25.1	1.8	0.1	0.7	0	6.0	0
Lower vocational education (LBO)	0	85.3	2.4	6.3	3.6	5.5	0.6	0	0	0	0
Mavo, VMBO, VSBO, G.E.D.	0	0	77.7	9.9	10.0	6.8	1.1	1.4	0	0	0
MBO/SBO 1	0	0	1.0	78.0	0	0.8	1.0	0.9	0	0	0
HAVO/VWO	0	0	0	0	61.3	0.3	4.7	4.3	0	1.3	0
MBO/SBO 2, 3 & 4	0	0	0	0	0	84.7	6.1	1.8	0	3.6	0
HBO/WO Bachelor	0	0	0	0	0	0	86.0	2.9	0	0	0
HBO/WO Master	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	88.0	0	0	0
PhD	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	0	0
Other	0.3	0.7	0	0	0	0.1	0.4	0	0	77.0	0
No education	19.8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12.1	100

Source: Enkuesta Sosial 2025, Central Bureau of Statistics Curaçao

Note. Percentages are calculated by highest attended education level (within columns).

Among individuals whose highest attended level was Mavo/VMBO/VSBO/G.E.D., 77.7 percent had completed that same level. A further 18.9 percent had primary school as their highest completed level, while 2.4 percent had completed LBO and 1.0 percent had completed MBO/SBO level 1.

For those whose highest attended level was MBO/SBO level 1, 78.0 percent had also completed MBO/SBO level 1. The remaining respondents were mainly concentrated at lower levels, with 9.9 percent having Mavo/VMBO/VSBO/G.E.D., 6.3 percent having an LBO and 5.8 percent having primary school as their highest completed level.

Among individuals whose highest attended level was HAVO/VWO, 61.3 percent had completed HAVO/VWO. However, 25.1 percent had primary school as their highest completed level, 10.0 percent had Mavo/VMBO/VSBO/G.E.D. and 3.6 percent had completed LBO.

Among individuals whose highest attended level was MBO/SBO levels 2–4, 84.7 percent had completed the same level. Smaller shares had Mavo/VMBO/VSBO/G.E.D. (6.8%), LBO (5.5%), primary school (1.8%), MBO/SBO level 1 (0.8%), Havo/VWO (0.3%) ad another unspecified education level (0.1 %) as their highest completed education.

At the tertiary education levels, the distributions are more concentrated. Among individuals whose highest attended level was an HBO/WO bachelor's degree, 86.0 percent had completed a bachelor's degree. A further 6.1 percent completed MBO/SBO levels 2-4. while smaller shares had completed HAVO/VWO (4.7%) or another lower education level. Similarly, among individuals whose highest attended level was an HBO/WO master's degree, 88.0 percent had completed a master's degree. The remaining respondents primarily reported HAVO/VWO (4.3%) and bachelors (2.9%) as their highest completed level.

Overall, the cross-tabulation shows a strong correspondence between the highest level attended and the highest level completed, particularly at the upper levels of education. The largest differences between attended and completed education are observed at primary school, LBO, Mavo/VMBO/VSBO/G.E.D., MBO/SBO level 1, and HAVO/VWO.

In general, most respondents aged 15 and older had completed their highest attended education level and were no longer in education (81.0%), while 19.0 percent had not completed their highest attended level. This 19.0 percent was distributed as follows: 6.7

percent were economically inactive, 6.5 percent were still in education at their highest attended level, 5.4 percent were working, and 0.4 percent were unemployed. Thus, differences between the highest attended and completed levels reflect different situations, including individuals still progressing through education and those no longer studying who were either participating in the labour market or economically inactive.

3. Educational Differences by Age and Gender

Educational attainment varies across age groups and between men and women. Examining both the highest level attended and the highest level completed provides insight into differences in educational pathways across generations and by gender.

3.1 Educational Attainment Differences by Age

The distribution of highest completed education among those aged 15 and older shows clear differences across age groups (see Table 2). Among individuals aged 15–24, primary school (33.8%) was the most common highest completed level, followed by Mavo/VMBO/VSBO/G.E.D. (20.0%) and LBO (17.1%). MBO/SBO levels 2–4 accounted for 13.7 percent, while 7.7 percent had completed HAVO/VWO. The relatively high share with primary school as their highest completed level may partly reflect that some individuals in this age group are still progressing through education.

Among adults aged 25–44, MBO/SBO levels 2–4 were the most common completed level, accounting for 30.9 percent among those aged 25–34 and 28.2 percent among those aged 35–44. HBO/WO bachelor completion was also more common in these age groups, at 14.0 percent and 18.0 percent, respectively, while master's completion reached 6.7 percent and 9.9 percent.

Table 2. Highest completed education level by age group (in %), 2025

Educational attainment	15 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	65 +
Primary school (FO)	33.8	6.1	8.6	15.6	14.3	28.1
Lower vocational education (LBO)	17.1	15.8	14.0	14.9	24.5	19.0
Mavo, VMBO, VSBO, G.E.D.	20.0	13.8	8.9	13.4	17.2	16.9
MBO/SBO 1	2.0	5.3	3.5	3.3	2.8	1.3
HAVO/VWO	7.7	4.1	4.2	6.8	5.4	3.8
MBO/SBO 2, 3 & 4	13.7	30.9	28.2	14.6	13.5	8.9
HBO/WO Bachelor	3.7	14.0	18.0	16.6	10.3	10.0
HBO/WO Master	0.5	6.7	9.9	11.0	6.6	3.5
PhD	0	0	0	0.3	0.1	0.1
Other	0.9	2.5	2.7	1.7	2.2	2.4
No education	0.6	0.8	2.0	1.8	3.1	6.0

Source: Enkuesta Sosial 2025, Central Bureau of Statistics Curaçao

Note. Percentages are calculated by age groups (within columns).



Among individuals aged 45–54, attainment was more evenly distributed across several education levels. MBO/SBO levels 2–4 (14.6%), LBO (14.9%), and Mavo/VMBO/VSBO/G.E.D. (13.4%) each accounted for a comparable share, while HBO/WO bachelor's (16.6%), Primary school (15.6%) and master's degrees (11.0%) also represented substantial shares. This indicates that higher levels of education remained relatively common among this age group, although MBO/SBO levels 2–4 accounted for a smaller share than among those aged 25–44.

Among those aged 55–64, LBO was the most common completed level (24.5%), followed by Mavo/VMBO/VSBO/G.E.D. (17.2%) and primary school (14.3%). Among individuals aged 65 and older, primary school (28.1%) was the most common completed level, followed by LBO (19.0%) and Mavo/VMBO/VSBO/G.E.D. (16.9%). This group also had the highest share reporting no completed education (6.0%).

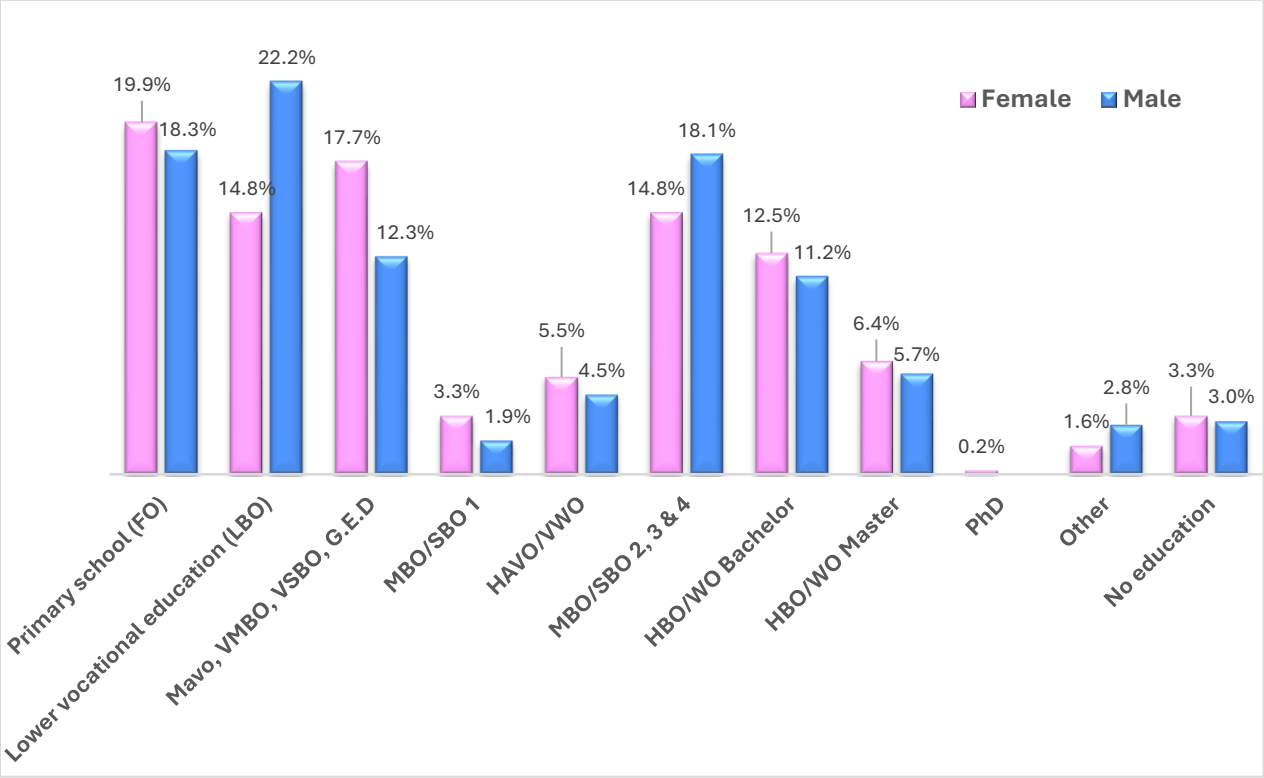
Overall, the age distribution suggests a shift in completed education across generations. Adults aged 25–44 are particularly concentrated in intermediate and tertiary education, with MBO/SBO levels 2–4 representing the largest share and relatively substantial proportions holding HBO/WO bachelor's and master's degrees. Among those aged 45–54, educational attainment is more evenly distributed across intermediate and higher education levels, while MBO/SBO levels 2–4 account for a smaller share than among younger adults. Older adults, particularly those aged 55 and over, are more concentrated in primary and lower vocational education. The relatively high share reporting primary school as their highest completed level among the youngest group may partly reflect ongoing educational progression.

3.2 Educational Attainment Differences by Gender

Differences between women and men aged 15 and older are also visible in highest completed education (see Figure 4). Among women, 19.9 percent have completed primary school (FO), compared with 18.3 percent of men. The largest gender difference is observed at the lower vocational level: 14.8 percent of women and 22.2 percent of men have LBO as their highest completed education. Men also have a higher share completing MBO/SBO levels 2–4, at 18.1 percent compared with 14.8 percent among women.

Women have higher shares than men at Mavo/VMBO/VSBO or equivalent education (17.7% versus 12.3%), MBO/SBO level 1 (3.3% versus 1.9%), HAVO/VWO (5.5% versus 4.5%), and HBO/WO bachelor level (12.5% versus 11.2%). A smaller difference is observed at the master's level, with 6.4 percent of women and 5.7 percent of men having completed an HBO/WO master's degree. The shares reporting no completed education are similar, at 3.3 percent among women and 3.1 percent among men.

Figure 4. Highest completed education level by gender (ages 15+), 2025



Source: Enkuesta Sosial 2025, Central Bureau of Statistics Curaçao

Overall, the gender distribution indicates that men are more strongly represented in vocational education, particularly LBO and MBO/SBO levels 2–4, while women have higher representation in general secondary and tertiary education.

3.3 Gender Differences in education completion across age groups

Gender differences in educational attainment vary across age groups (see Table 3). Among those aged 15–24, men are more strongly represented in LBO (20.7% versus 13.2%), while women have higher shares at HAVO/VWO (9.5% versus 5.9%). The distributions at Mavo/VMBO/VSBO or equivalent and MBO/SBO levels 2–4 are relatively similar.

Among adults aged 25–44, gender differences are most pronounced at vocational and tertiary levels. Women have higher shares of bachelor's and master's attainment, particularly among those aged 35–44, while men have substantially higher shares at LBO. For example, among those aged 25–34, 17.3 percent of women and 10.4 percent of men had

completed a bachelor's degree, while LBO accounted for 11.1 percent of women and 20.9 percent of men. A similar pattern is observed among those aged 35–44.

Table 3. Highest completed education level by age x gender (in %), 2025

	15 - 24		25 - 34		35 - 44		45 - 54		55 - 64		65 +	
Educational attainment	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
Primary school (FO)	36.5	31.3	4.2	8.2	6.5	11.3	16.2	14.7	13.2	15.8	31.4	23.4
Lower vocational education (LBO)	13.2	20.7	11.1	20.9	9.7	19.4	13.8	16.2	19.4	31.0	16.7	22.3
Mavo, VMBO, VSBO, G.E.D.	19.9	20.2	14.2	13.4	9.7	7.9	15.6	10.6	23.9	8.7	19.3	13.6
MBO/SBO 1	2.8	1.2	6.0	4.5	3.3	3.6	4.5	1.7	3.9	1.3	1.7	0.8
HAVO/VWO	9.5	5.9	4.0	4.2	4.2	4.2	6.8	6.7	6.5	4.0	4.0	3.5
MBO/SBO 2, 3 & 4	12.9	14.5	30.9	30.9	28.6	27.8	12.9	16.9	13.1	14.0	6.1	12.9
HBO/WO Bachelor	3.7	3.8	17.3	10.4	19.8	15.6	16.7	16.5	10.2	10.5	9.7	10.5
HBO/WO Master	1.0	0.0	8.3	5.0	13.4	5.5	10.9	11.1	6.0	7.3	2.5	4.8
PhD	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.6	0	0.2	0	0.1	0.1
Other	0.5	1.3	3.5	1.3	2.4	3.0	1.0	2.6	1.4	3.3	1.4	3.7
No education	0.0	1.1	0.5	1.2	2.4	1.7	1.0	3.0	2.2	4.1	7.1	4.4

Source: Enkuesta Sosial 2025, Central Bureau of Statistics Curaçao

Within older groups, men remain more strongly represented in vocational education, particularly LBO. This difference is largest among those aged 55–64, where 31.0 percent of men and 19.4 percent of women had completed LBO. Women, in contrast, have higher shares at Mavo/VMBO/VSBO or equivalent education. Tertiary attainment is relatively similar between women and men among those aged 45 and older.

The age-specific patterns observed in 2025 are broadly consistent with the 2023 Census. In both datasets, women aged 25–44 have higher bachelor's and master's attainment than men. Among those aged 25–34, for example, women's bachelor's attainment was 17.3 percent in 2025 compared with 14.8 percent in 2023, while men's was 10.4 percent compared with 8.7 percent. The corresponding master's shares were 8.3 percent (in 2025) and 8.9 (in 2023) percent for women and 5.0 percent (in 2025) and 4.9 percent (in 2023) for men. Similar patterns are observed among those aged 35–44.

Overall, the results indicate that gender differences are most pronounced among younger and middle-aged adults, with women more strongly represented in tertiary education and men more strongly represented in vocational education. The consistency with the 2023 Census suggests that these differences form an established pattern in Curaçao rather than a recent development.

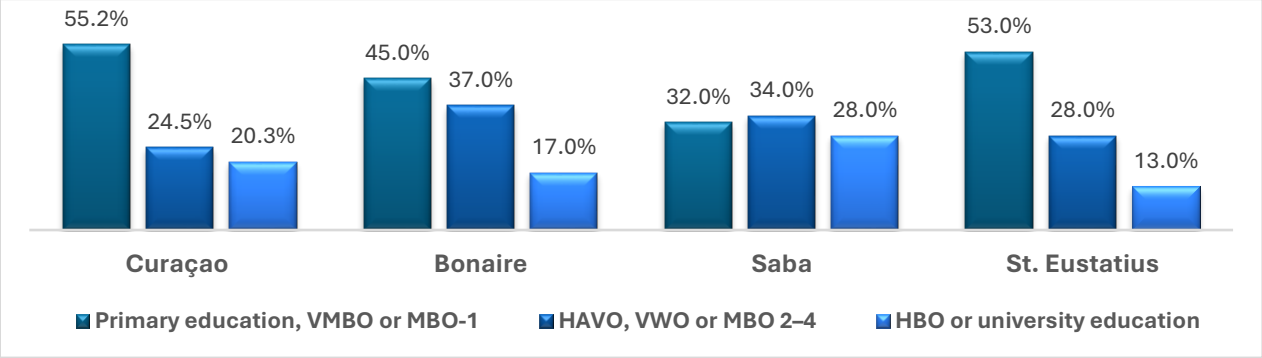
4. Curaçao's Education Profile in Context

4.1 Comparison with the Caribbean Netherlands

The educational attainment profile of Curaçao can also be considered in relation to the Caribbean Netherlands, comprising Bonaire, St Eustatius, and Saba. Statistics Netherlands (CBS) (2025) reports attainment for these islands using three broad categories: primary education, VMBO or MBO-1; HAVO, VWO or MBO levels 2–4; and HBO or university education. The figures refer to residents aged 15–74. To enable comparison, the same categories and age range were applied to the Curaçao data.

In 2024[2], the share of residents in the primary, VMBO, or MBO-1 category was 45.0 percent on Bonaire, 32.0 percent on Saba, and 53.0 percent on St Eustatius, compared with 55.2 percent in Curaçao in 2025 (see Figure 5). For HAVO, VWO, or MBO levels 2–4, the shares were 37.0 percent, 34.0 percent, and 28.0 percent, respectively, compared with 24.5 percent in Curaçao. At the tertiary level, 17.0 percent on Bonaire, 28.0 percent on Saba, and 13.0 percent on St Eustatius had completed an HBO or university degree, compared with 20.3 percent in Curaçao. Saba had the highest tertiary attainment and the lowest share in the primary, VMBO, and MBO-1 category, while St Eustatius showed the opposite pattern. Curaçao had the highest share in the primary education category and a tertiary attainment level between those of Bonaire and Saba (CBS Netherlands, 2025).

Figure 5. Educational attainment Comparisons between Curacao (2025) and the Caribbean Netherlands (2024)

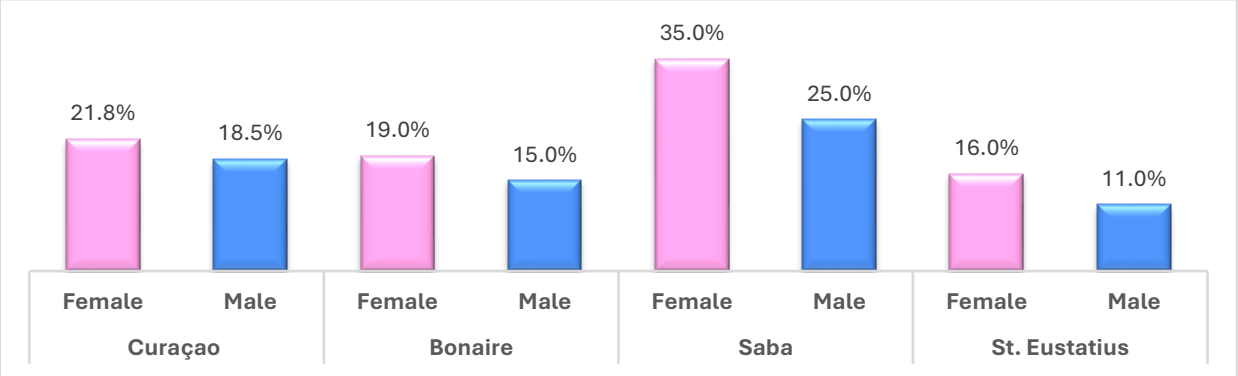


Source: Enkuesta Sosial 2025, Central Bureau of Statistics Curaçao; Statistics Netherlands (2025) for Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba

[2] Data is from 2024 but was published by Statistics Netherland's "*Monitor of well-being Caribbean Netherlands" in* 2025

The gender pattern in the Caribbean Netherlands is also consistent with the results observed in Curaçao (see Figure 6). On all three islands, women were more likely than men to have attained a tertiary education degree: 19.0 percent of women compared with 15.0 percent of men on Bonaire, 35.0 percent compared with 25.0 percent on Saba, and 16.0 percent compared with 11.0 percent on St Eustatius. A similar pattern was observed in the European Netherlands, although the gender difference was larger in the Caribbean Netherlands, particularly on St Eustatius and Saba (CBS Netherlands, 2025). In Curaçao, women likewise had higher levels of bachelor's and master's attainment than men, particularly among those aged 25–44.

Figure 6. Tertiary Educational Attainment by Gender: Curaçao (2025) and Caribbean Netherlands (2024)



Source: Enkuesta Sosial 2025, Central Bureau of Statistics Curaçao; Statistics Netherlands (2025) for Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba

Overall, the comparison shows that educational attainment varies considerably across the Dutch Caribbean. While Curaçao, Bonaire, St Eustatius, and Saba all have substantial shares of their populations concentrated in lower and intermediate education, the share with tertiary education is notably higher on Saba. The higher tertiary attainment among women observed in Curaçao is also consistent with the pattern found across the Caribbean Netherlands and the European Netherlands.

4.2 Comparison with the Netherlands

The educational attainment profile of Curaçao can also be compared with that of the Netherlands using data from the OECD's 'Education at a Glance 2025' (OECD, 2025). To maintain comparability with the Curaçao results, this comparison focuses on the highest completed level of education among young adults aged 25–64.

For the total population aged 25–64, 14.5 percent of the population in Curaçao had completed an HBO/WO bachelor's degree, 8.5 percent had completed an HBO/WO master's degree, and 0.1 percent had completed a PhD in 2025. In comparison, in the Netherlands, 24.1 percent had attained a bachelor's degree, 18.3 percent had attained a master's degree, and 1.4 percent had attained a PhD in 2025. These figures show that tertiary educational attainment was more common in the Netherlands than in Curaçao across all three levels, with the differences being most pronounced at the bachelor's and master's levels.

In Curaçao, 14.0 percent of 25–34-year-olds had completed an HBO/WO bachelor's degree, while 6.7 percent had completed an HBO/WO master's degree (Table 2). In the Netherlands, 29.9 percent of 25–34-year-olds had attained a bachelor's, or equivalent degree and 23.6 percent had attained a master's or equivalent degree in 2025. The Netherlands therefore has a substantially larger share of young adults with completed tertiary education, particularly at the master's level.

The gender pattern is also comparable between the two populations, although the overall level of tertiary attainment differs (see Table 4). In Curaçao, women aged 25–34 had higher shares of bachelor's and master's attainment than men, at 17.3 percent and 8.3 percent, respectively, compared with 10.4 percent and 5.0 percent among men. The Netherlands shows the same overall pattern, with 31.6 percent of women aged 25–34 attaining a bachelor's degree and 26.3 percent a master's degree, compared with 28.2 percent and 21.0 percent of men, respectively, in 2025.

Table 4. Educational Attainment: Netherlands vs. Curaçao, 2025

Netherlands 2025 (via OECD)		25 - 34		35 - 44		45 - 54		55 - 64	
Educational attainment	Total	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
HBO/WO Bachelor	24.1	31.6	28.2	28.2	26.8	24.0	22.1	15.9	17.1
HBO/WO Master	18.3	26.3	21.0	22.8	18.8	17.9	16.0	11.1	13.2
PhD	1.4	1.2	1.2	1.8	1.9	1.3	1.5	0.7	1.3
Curacao 2025									
HBO/WO Bachelor	14.5	17.3	10.4	19.8	15.6	16.7	16.5	10.2	10.5
HBO/WO Master	8.5	8.3	5.0	13.4	5.5	10.9	11.1	6.0	7.3
PhD	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.2	0.0

Source: Enkuesta Sosial 2025, Central Bureau of Statistics Curaçao and OECD 2025

Overall, the comparison indicates that tertiary educational attainment among young adults is considerably more common in the Netherlands than in Curaçao. Nevertheless, the higher tertiary attainment among women than men observed in Curaçao is consistent with the pattern found in the Netherlands and more broadly across OECD countries.

4.3 Comparison with the OECD Average

The educational profile of Curaçao shows several similarities with broader international trends. The OECD reports that tertiary[3] attainment among young adults has continued to increase across most OECD countries[4], with the average share of 25–34-year-olds attaining tertiary education rising from 45 percent in 2019 to 48 percent in 2025 (OECD, 2025). In Curaçao, the share of 25–34-year-olds with tertiary attainment was 18.6 percent in 2023 and 20.7 percent in 2025. At the same time, the OECD notes that this growth has slowed in recent years. The higher representation of tertiary education among Curaçao's younger and middle-aged adults is consistent with this broader trend towards higher educational attainment among younger generations.

The overall distribution of tertiary educational attainment also shows differences between Curaçao and the OECD average (see Table 5). In 2025, 14.5 percent of the population aged 25–64 in Curaçao had completed a bachelor's degree, compared with 20.3 percent across the OECD average. For master's degrees, the corresponding shares were 8.5 percent in Curaçao and 15.4 percent across the OECD average. Doctoral attainment was also less common in Curaçao, at 0.1 percent, compared with 1.3 percent across the OECD average. These figures show differences in the distribution of tertiary attainment between the two populations, particularly at the bachelor's and master's levels.

The gender differences observed in Curaçao also follows an international pattern. Across OECD countries, women aged 25–34 were more likely than men to have attained tertiary education in 2025, with 55 percent of women compared with 42 percent of men (OECD, 2025). In Curaçao, women aged 25–34 similarly were more likely than men to have attained tertiary education in 2025, with 25.6 percent of women against 15.4 percent of men. This suggests that the higher representation of women in tertiary education observed in Curaçao is part of a wider international development rather than a pattern unique to the island.

[3] Tertiary education is defined in the OECD 2025 report as the codes 5/6/7/8 of the ISCED 2011 classification.
[4] OECD countries include 38 countries worldwide. For a full overview of all OECD countries click [Here]

The OECD also highlights that the most common tertiary qualification among 25–34-year-olds is a bachelor's degree, held by 29.7 percent of women and 22.6 percent of men. This is followed by a master's degree, held by 19.5 percent of women and 14.0 percent of men, while only 1.0 percent of 25–34-year-olds have completed a doctorate, with no difference between women and men (OECD, 2025). A similar pattern is observed in Curaçao, where bachelor's degrees account for a larger share of educational attainment than master's and doctoral degrees. Among 25–34-year-olds, 17.3 percent of women and 10.4 percent of men had attained a bachelor's degree, while 8.3 percent of women and 5.0 percent of men had attained a master's degree. No respondents in this age group had attained a doctorate.

Table 5. Educational Attainment: OECD Average vs. Curaçao, 2025

OECD average		25 - 34		35 - 44		45 - 54		55 - 64	
Educational attainment	Total	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
HBO/WO Bachelor	20.3	29.7	22.7	25.7	20.7	20.2	16.5	14.2	12.7
HBO/WO Master	15.4	19.2	13.9	21.0	15.5	17.2	13.9	11.6	11.0
PhD	1.3	0.7	0.7	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.0	1.5
Curacao 2025									
HBO/WO Bachelor	14.5	17.3	10.4	19.8	15.6	16.7	16.5	10.2	10.5
HBO/WO Master	8.5	8.3	5.0	13.4	5.5	10.9	11.1	6.0	7.3
PhD	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.2	0.0

Source: Enkuesta Sosial 2025, Central Bureau of Statistics Curaçao and OECD 2025

Overall, the Curaçao results show patterns that are broadly aligned with international developments: educational attainment is higher among younger generations, and women have higher tertiary attainment than men. At the same time, Curaçao's profile remains strongly concentrated in primary, vocational, and intermediate education, highlighting differences in the overall structure and level of educational attainment compared with OECD countries.

Conclusion

This study examined the extent to which the population of Curaçao reaches and completes different levels of education, and how educational participation and attainment vary across age groups and between women and men. Overall, educational attainment in Curaçao remains concentrated in primary, vocational, and intermediate education, while a smaller but substantial share of the population reaches tertiary education. Compared with the 2023 Census, the 2025 attainment profile is broadly similar, particularly at tertiary level, although some differences are observed at individual education levels.

The comparison between highest level attended and highest level completed shows that completion is generally more consistent among those reaching higher levels of education, particularly MBO/SBO and tertiary education. Larger differences between attendance and completion occur at primary and secondary levels. These differences should be interpreted with caution, as the cross-sectional data cannot distinguish between ongoing education, interrupted pathways, and non-completion.

Educational attainment differs substantially across generations. Younger and middle-aged adults are more strongly represented in intermediate and tertiary education, while older adults are more concentrated at primary and lower vocational levels. The same broad generational pattern is evident when compared with the 2023 Census and is consistent with the longer-term expansion of educational attainment observed internationally.

Gender differences also persist across educational pathways. Men are more strongly represented in vocational education, particularly LBO and MBO/SBO, while women have higher representation in general secondary and tertiary education. The higher representation of women at tertiary level was already evident in the 2023 Census and remains visible in 2025, indicating an established pattern rather than a recent development. This pattern is also observed in the Netherlands, the Caribbean Netherlands, and across OECD countries. Women aged 25–34 have higher tertiary attainment than men in Curaçao and the comparison populations, although the overall levels of attainment differ substantially.

Taken together, the 2023 and 2025 data provide a broadly consistent picture of educational attainment in Curaçao, while the age and gender patterns highlight continuing differences in educational pathways. Curaçao shares the broader international pattern of increasing educational attainment across generations and higher tertiary attainment among women but remains distinct in the overall level and distribution of attainment. These findings provide a basis for further research into the factors underlying differences in educational progression and attainment.

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