



# Educational Attainment and Outcome in Curaçao

Publication series Census 2023

# Colophon

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# Foreword

*We are pleased to present this publication, which summarizes the findings of the 2023 Census of Curaçao, with a special focus on education. This census offers valuable insights into the development of the island's education system and serves as an important resource for policymakers, researchers, and other stakeholders working toward Curaçao's future.*

*This comprehensive analysis of the 2023 Census data highlights significant trends in educational attainment, participation, and related socioeconomic outcomes across the population. It explores various dimensions of education—from early childhood through tertiary levels—providing essential insights into the development of human capital in our nation.*

*The insights captured in this publication are key to understanding the dynamics of our society and offer a solid foundation for future policy planning. It is vital that, as an island, we use this data to craft a sound strategy that not only addresses future challenges but also seizes the opportunities that lie ahead.*

*We hope this publication serves not only as a source of knowledge, but also as a call to reflect on the path we wish to take as a community. The trends in education outlined in the 2023 Census will undoubtedly play a pivotal role in shaping Curaçao's future. It is up to all of us to work together toward building a prosperous and sustainable island for generations to come.*

*On behalf of the entire team involved in producing this report, we thank you for your interest in the results of the 2023 Census and trust that this publication will be of value in your work and decision-making.*

**Drs. Sean de Boer**

Director CBS



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# 1. Executive summary

This comprehensive analysis of Curaçao's 2023 Census data reveals significant patterns in educational attainment, participation, and socioeconomic outcomes across the island's population. The study examines multiple dimensions of education, from early childhood through tertiary levels, providing crucial insights into human capital development in this Caribbean nation.

## Key Findings

### Educational Participation

Curaçao has a strong overall participation rate of 89.7% among school-age children (4-18 years), and excellent compulsory education compliance with 97.6% participation for ages 4-15, on par with regional and global averages. The census data has shown a remarkable improvement in early childhood education participation with participation rates among the 0- to 3-year-olds seeing a significant 36.4% increase, compared to 2011.

Although there is a small increase in secondary education participation between 2011 (39.2%) and 2023 (41%), tertiary education attendance has seen a slight decline, from 5% to 4.5%.

### Educational Attainment

Preparatory secondary vocational education (VSBO) dominates as the highest completed education, with 36.1% of the population having attained this education level.

There are significant generational differences in educational achievement, with younger cohorts showing higher attainment levels.

Tertiary education completion shows gender disparity favouring females (15.1% versus 13.4% for males); this follows a wider regional and global trend that is leaving males behind not only at the tertiary levels, but from the secondary educational level.

### Field Distribution

Financial Management and Administration leads at all education levels, and business-related fields in general are some of the most pursued fields, particularly in tertiary education.

Younger generations are departing from pursuing some of the key fields such as education and health, and there is a lack of representation in technology and digital fields at tertiary levels.

## Critical Trends

### Gender Patterns

Females demonstrate higher completion rates across most educational levels, with a notable gender gap in tertiary education completion (15.1% females versus 13.4% males). This female versus male discrepancy in tertiary education completion is more pronounced in the 25 – 44 age category; a pattern which aligns with broader Caribbean and global trends where females consistently outperform males.



**Educational Migration**

There is a significant outflow of graduating students to the Netherlands. Generally, these students leave to pursue a tertiary degree, although a small minority return upon completion thereof. This low return rate presents ongoing challenges for human capital development and can in turn impact the local workforce development and economic growth. If there is an underrepresentation of key fields being pursued by- and offered to those who remain on the island for their studies, this brain drain can have an impact on Curaçao's economy and development in the long run.



## 2. Introduction

### 2.1 Objective

This publication is based on the theme “Education”. This publication describes the current and highest completed education of the Census publication. The current education helps understanding of the educational supply and the extent to which they are being utilized. This in turn allows for economic understanding of future workforce and income levels. In essence, collecting data on current education during a census provides a crucial snapshot of a population's educational landscape, enabling informed decision-making that benefits communities and individuals.

The aim of this study is to provide a detailed picture of the current state of education in Curaçao using the Census 2023 data. Through in-depth analysis, the aim is to map the educational participation, performance and outcomes of the population, and identify trends and patterns that are important for the development of education policy.

### 2.2 Overview of chapters

The publication is structured as follows:

Chapter 3 describes the methodology behind the analysis including analysis of the education related questions. Chapter 4 lists all definitions used throughout the publication. Chapter 5 describes the overall findings on education in general. Chapter 6 describes education in relation to labour. Chapter 7 describes education in relation to migration and Chapter 8 has a conclusion summarizing all relevant findings.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Census methodology

The 2023 Curaçao Census took place between September 2, 2023, and February 4, 2024. During this period, efforts were made to collect information from all residents of Curaçao through a digitized personal questionnaire. The population counted in the census is the **resident population**, meaning individuals who, at the time of the census, have their place of residence in Curaçao or intend to reside there for at least one year. **Residential status** does not take into account citizenship or any form of legal rights, which means **undocumented individuals were also included** in the 2023 Curaçao Census.

The census began using the CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing) methodology, in which questionnaires were completed digitally on a tablet. The option for CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interviewing)—completing the questionnaire online—was made available toward the end of the fieldwork period.

The response rate among households was high. According to the address registry, **6.8% of addresses were not approached**. The census database was adjusted for this likely undercount. Through **imputation**, the household size of missed and unapproached addresses was added to the total. A further correction was made for presumed **underrepresentation** based on neighborhood distribution.

### 3.2 Education Methodology

The education questions were focused on current education and highest completed education. Courses and uncompleted education were not asked for and are thus not considered in the analysis. (Online) courses, not completed- or still-to-be completed majors are not considered, as only completed education was asked.

The analysis exclusively used data from the Census, focusing on private and collective households.

The main variables in this publication are the education questions, including:

- *Current education*
- *Highest completed education*

In addition to the income questions, the following variables were used:

- *Age*
- *Gender*
- *Country of Birth*
- *Employment status*



Due to rounding of decimals, percentages presented in tables and charts may not always add up to exactly 100%. The correction factor used gives each person a weight. Due to the fractional weight, totals can vary depending on the table factors.

Mandatory education starts from the age of 4 years and remains valid until the end of the school year in which the youngster turns 18 years old or until they obtain their diploma from VSBO (TKL or PKL), HAVO/VWO, or an equivalent and recognized study program, as indicated by the minister. However, for the purpose of this study, we have focused on the age group of 4 – 15 when looking at participation rate, as students attending VSBO, are able to leave school after completing their VSBO education and enter the workforce. Therefore, using the 4 – 18 age group for participation rate, will show a biased participation rate.

## 4. Definitions

**Highest completed degree**

The most advanced educational qualification that an individual has successfully obtained.

**Participation rate**

The percentage of individuals in a specific age group or population who are actively engaged in education or training.

**Leerplicht (compulsory education)**

The legal obligation for children to attend school between certain ages.

**Pre-school education**

Educational programs designed for children below the age of compulsory education, typically between 3-5 years old.

**Daytime education**

Educational programs and courses that take place during standard working hours.

**Evening education**

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

**Fulltime online education**

Educational programs delivered entirely through digital platforms, without in-person attendance requirements.

**Course**

A specific unit of study within an educational program, typically focused on a particular subject or skill.

**Primary school**

The first stage of compulsory education, typically for children aged 4-12 years old.

**Preparatory secondary vocational education**

An educational track in the Netherlands (VSBO) that prepares students for vocational education and training.

**Secondary vocational education level 1**

The first level of vocational education, providing basic vocational training. (SBO 1)



**Secondary vocational education level 2-4**

Advanced levels of vocational education, providing more specialized training and qualifications.  
(SBO 2-4)

**Senior general education**

A type of secondary education (HAVO/VWO in the Netherlands) that prepares students for higher professional education or university studies.

**HBO/WO Bachelor**

A bachelor's degree obtained from a university of applied sciences (HBO) or a research university (WO) in the Netherlands.

**HBO/WO Master**

A master's degree obtained from a university of applied sciences (HBO) or a research university (WO) in the Netherlands.

**PhD**

The highest academic degree, awarded for original research contribution to a specific field of study

## 5. Education in general

### 5.1 School participation rate

The school participation rate indicates the number of persons who are actively attending school. This indicator is used to measure the accessibility of education for all children and – in more general terms – human capital investment. The human capital investment of a country ensures that the more education children receive, the better their chances in performing well in the labour force at a later age. (Grant, 2017)

The participation rate in education is the percentage of children who are attending school from out of the total eligible population that should be attending based on the relevant age group.

$$\text{Education Participation Rate} = \left( \frac{\text{Number of children attending school}}{\text{Total eligible population}} \right) \times 100$$

## School Participation Analysis

The 2023 census reveals several key findings about education participation in Curaçao:

The overall school participation rate for children aged 4-18 stands at 89.7%, with 22,170 students attending daytime, evening, or online education out of 24,709 eligible children population (Table 1). Home schooling is classified as online education.

Without filtering for age, the number of students attending daytime, evening, or online education is 27,554.

**Table 1.** Population by age and gender, Curaçao, Census 2023

Age	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
0	393	423	816
1	577	589	1166
2	586	599	1185
3	635	671	1306
4	714	733	1447
5	746	685	1431
6	706	671	1377
7	711	722	1433
8	767	744	1511
9	827	804	1631
10	847	878	1725
11	861	869	1730
12	851	825	1676
13	952	834	1786
14	925	834	1759
15	895	951	1846
16	899	964	1863
17	898	847	1745
18	950	799	1749
19+	55,370	71,097	126,467
Total	70,162	85,596	155,826

\*Discrepancies in total are attributed to “not reported” not being included in the table

The educational path for children in Curaçao has a divided secondary education pathway. Depending on their test scores, children can attend different secondary educational levels after 8<sup>th</sup> grade, which marks the end of primary education (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade are pre-primary/ kindergarten, and 3<sup>rd</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> are primary). This means that there are children that finish school at 15 and are no longer part of the mandatory education age group, which in turn has an impact on the 4-18 participation rate. Therefore, it is prudent to consider the Core Education Period (Ages 4-15), for a more accurate international comparison. This age group falls under the ‘leerplicht’ law, meaning

mandatory education. The participation rate for the mandatory education age group (4-15 years) is 97.6%, which aligns closely with the international average of 98%. (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2023)

**Table 2.** Comparison of Participation rate by age and gender, Curaçao, Census 2023

	2011				2023			
Age	Male	Female	Total		Male	Female	Total	Difference
0	16.4	16.0	16.2		26.8	30	28.5	12.3
1	45.8	42.8	44.4		48.3	57.8	53.0	8.6
2	60.8	62.6	61.7		70.5	72.9	71.7	10.0
3	79.8	77.5	78.6		82.1	86.0	84.1	5.5
4	93.9	94.8	94.4		91.7	96.5	94.1	-0.3
5	99.1	99.0	99.0		96.7	98.1	97.4	-1.6
6	99.4	99.7	99.5		97.7	97.9	97.8	-1.7
7	99.9	99.4	99.6		97.3	97.3	97.3	-2.3
8	99.2	99.4	99.3		98.1	97.4	97.8	-1.5
9	99.4	99.7	99.5		97.7	97.6	97.7	-1.8
10	99.2	99.0	99.1		98.0	97.7	97.9	-1.2
11	99.2	99.5	99.3		97.5	98.2	97.9	-1.4
12	99.1	98.7	98.9		97.5	97.7	97.6	-1.3
13	99.3	99.6	99.4		98.4	97.5	98.0	-1.4
14	98.9	99.4	99.2		96.6	97.7	97.1	-2.1
15	97.8	98.5	98.2		95.9	95.3	95.6	-2.6
16	92.5	94.8	93.7		93.2	95.1	94.2	0.5
17	87.3	89.5	88.4		87.4	91.7	89.5	1.1
18	75.7	79.5	77.5		79.4	77.7	78.6	1.1
19	59.1	66.5	62.7		64.8	67.8	66.2	3.5

Table 2 reflects a comparison between the participation rate measured in the 2011 Census versus the participation rate in the 2023 Census. Despite being in line with the international average, it can be noted that participation has dropped slightly compared to 2011, with the most significant decrease being notable in the 15-year-old category.

However, it also shows an increase in 16- to 19-year-olds, which might be an indication that there is now a greater likelihood that students continue their education after basic vocational school. This suggested improved retention rate in secondary education aligns with global trends showing 66% secondary education attainment worldwide. (Galan, 2025)



The participation rate among the 0- to 3-year-olds, also saw a significant increase of 36.4%. We will go deeper into this in the next section. It is notable that this increase has also positively impacted the participation rate among 3- and 4-year-olds, that at 89.1% exceeds the OECD average. (NCES, 2023)

### Gender Disparities

The data also shows some interesting patterns that align with regional trends:

There is a higher female participation rate in Curaçao, with females over the age of 17 being more likely to continue attending school than their male counterparts. This mirrors broader Caribbean trends where females consistently show higher learning achievement across primary, secondary, and post-secondary levels. When looking at this trend in the region, studies show that the gender gap favouring females is more pronounced in the Caribbean (8.4 percentage points) compared to Latin America (5.2 percentage points). (Beuermann et al., 2024)

## 5.2 Current Education

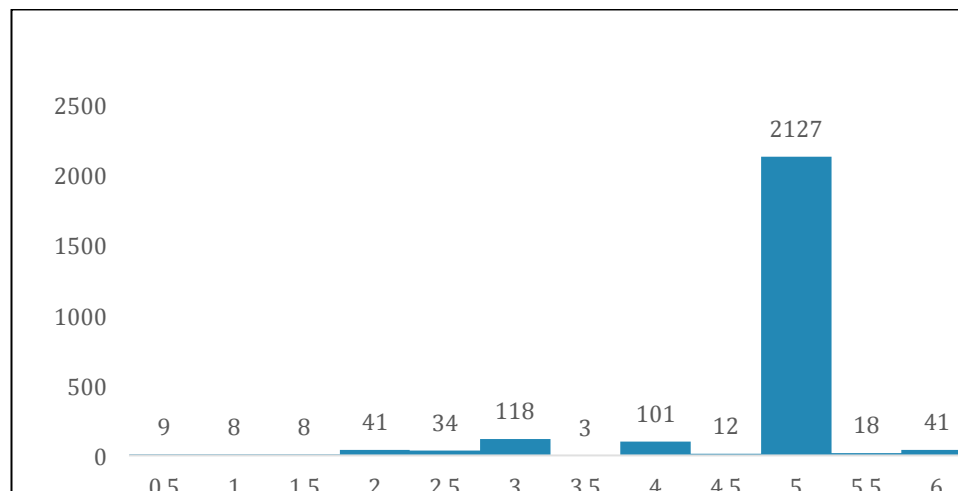
Formal education starts at age 4. Before going to group 1 (equivalent to the American Kindergarten and the British Early Stages), parents are given the choice to keep their children at home or send them to a “creche” (nursery) or a pre-school. The difference between the two is that pre-school starts teaching basic learning concepts such as letter and number recognition, shapes and colours. In 2023, the Census numbers revealed that 2,533 children were attending “creche” or pre-school (Table 3). “Creche” and pre-schools are plentiful on the island but are not regulated, which allows for unlicensed “creches”. During the Census more than 300 pre-school education institutions (including “creches”) have been recorded, although it is difficult to identify the ones which are licensed. It should be noted that the Census wouldn’t have been able to provide this information, as it was not a question that was included in the questionnaire.

**Table 3.** School attendance, Curaçao, Census 2023

	2023	Percentage of population
Pre-school education	2,533	1.6%
Daytime education	26,039	16.7%
Evening education	1,224	0.8%
Fulltime online education	291	0.2%
A course	2,117	1.4%
Remaining population	115,753	74.4%
Unspecified	7,023	4.5%
Refused	846	0.5%
	155,826	

Of those attending a “creche” or pre-school, attendance frequency ranged from 0.5 to 6 days per week, with the most common attendance pattern being 5 days (mode of 5 days). (Figure 1).

**Figure 1:** Number of days frequented by pre-schoolers, Curaçao, Census 2023



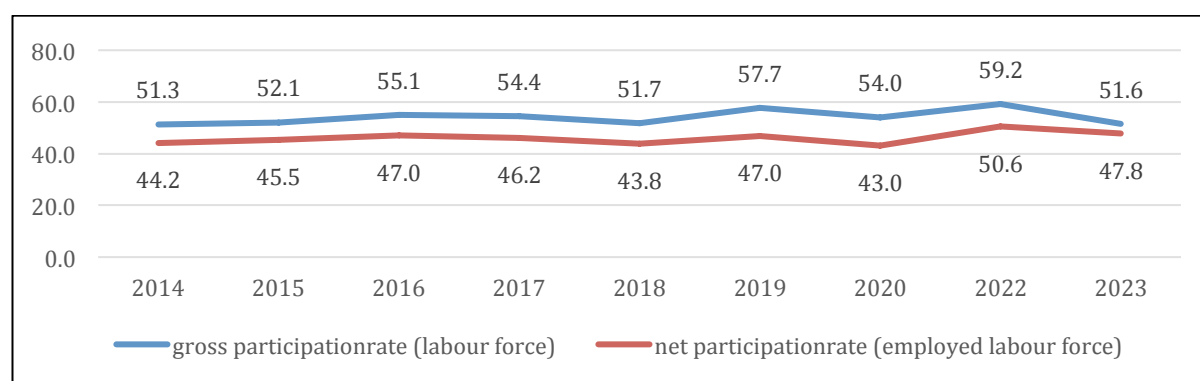
When looking at the age distribution of children attending education (table 2), there is an increase within the 0 – 3 age group in 2023, compared to 2011. As aforementioned, this group reflects a 36.4% overall increase as compared to 2011. Given the data reflected in graph 1, most of these children attend creche or pre-school 5 days a week. This aligns with global trends, where this upward trend mirrors the global focus on early childhood education.

(Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills [Ofsted], 2023)

As there has been an upward trend to female participation in the labour force over the past decade (see Figure 2), this could be a contributing factor in the increase in early education participation. This trend is supported by the gender disparities in tertiary education favouring females by 8.4 percentage points in the Caribbean region. (Beuermann et al., 2024)

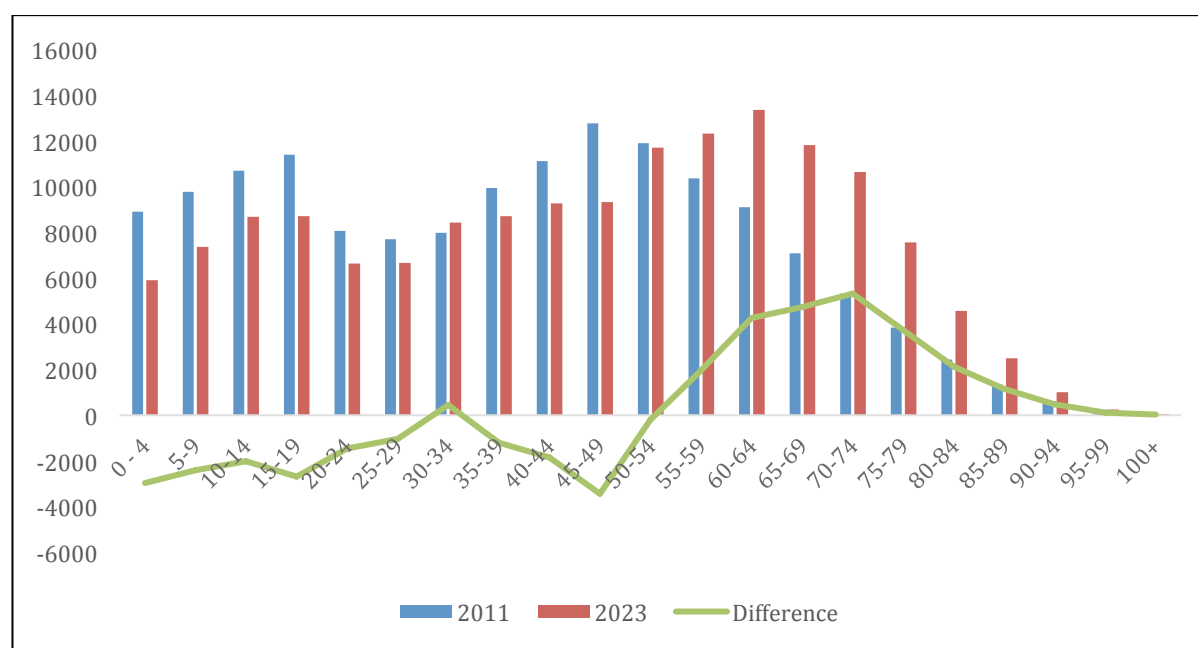
It can be deducted that if females are more likely to attend and achieve favourable results in tertiary educational institutions, the likelihood that they will participate in the labour force is also increased. This may in turn have an impact on early-years participation rates. (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2018)

**Figure 2:** Female participation in labour force 2014 to 2023



There are some notable shifts in educational participation between 2011 and 2023. Overall, there are less children attending foundation-based education, with absolute numbers showing a decrease of 5,355 children in primary education in 2023. When looking at the relative distribution, however, there is little difference between 2011 (35.5%) and 2023 (35.4%). This could be attributed to a demographic shift, leading to a lower number of children (see Figure 3 below). Curaçao has an aging population, meaning that the elder population is outgrowing the younger population.

**Figure 3:** Difference between population size 2011 vs 2023, Curaçao, Census 2023





On the other hand, there has been an increase in secondary education participation from 39.2% (2011) to 41% (2023), while tertiary education saw a slight decrease in participation from 5.0% (2011) to 4.5% (2023). However, given the fact that the 2011 Census did not go into detail on the various secondary levels of education (see Table 4), an inference cannot be made about the decrease in tertiary education participation rates.

**Table 4.** Population attending day school by level of education, Curaçao, Census 2023

		2023		2011	
Daycare	11,748	2,522	8.8%	3,922	9.9%
FBE 1-2		2,604	9.1%	4,069	10.3%
FBE 3-8		10,128	35.4%	14,018	35.5%
VSBO		5,116	17.9%	15,487	39.2%
HAVO/VWO	1,288	2,979	10.4%		
SBO 1		524	1.8%		
SBO 2-4		3,129	10.9%		
HBO/WO Bachelor	1,288	1,193	4.2%	1,988	5.0%
HBO/WO Master		95	0.3%		
PhD		10	0.0%		
Unspecified		291	1.0%		
Not reported		30	0.1%		
Total		28621		39484	

### 5.3 Highest completed education

“Educational attainment is frequently used as a measure of human capital and the level of an individual’s skills, in other words, a measure of the skills available in the population and the labour force.” (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2024)

When looking at educational attainment, the Census only observed the highest completed education for those 15 and older, as any person younger would still be bound to ‘mandatory education’ and hence would not fall under the category of having completed an education level. Overall, the majority of those surveyed have a preparatory secondary vocational education (VSBO) as their highest completed level. This percentage includes those 15 and over, who are still attending daytime or evening education.

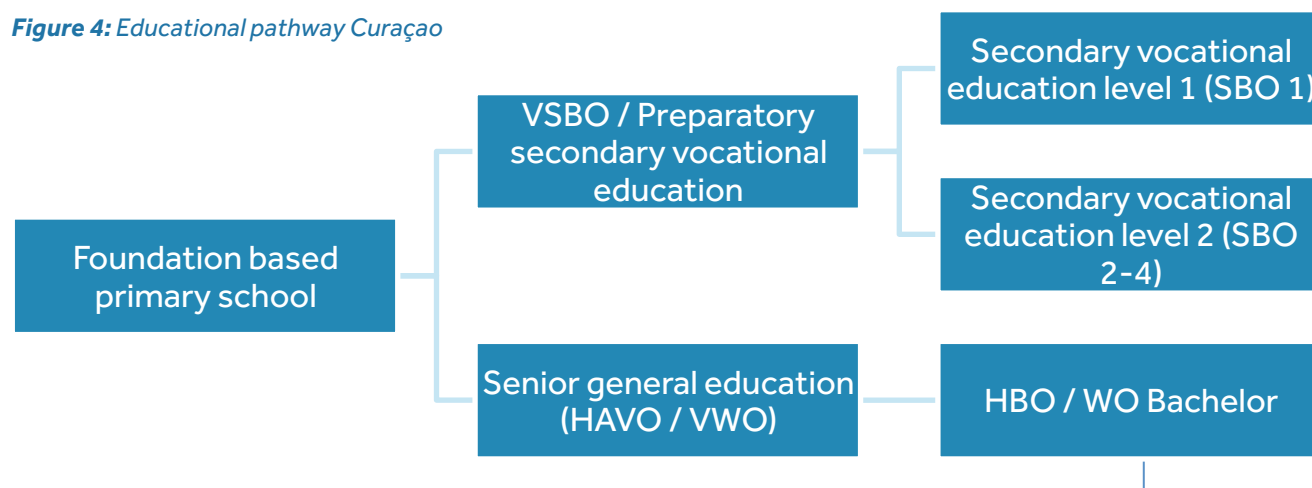
**Table 5.** *Highest completed education, Curaçao, Census 2023*

Highest completed education, Curaçao, Census 2023	2023	Percentage
None	6,862	5.3%
Primary school	20,037	15.6%
Preparatory secondary vocational education (VSBO)	46,437	36.1%
Secondary vocational education level 1 (SBO 1)	2,371	1.8%
Secondary vocational education level 2-4 (SBO 2-4)	19,294	15.0%
Senior general education (HAVO/VWO)	7,165	5.6%
HBO/WO Bachelor	15,203	11.8%
HBO/WO Master	8,616	6.7%
PhD	190	0.1%

Table 5 shows that over a third of those not currently following an education have finished preparatory secondary vocational education, which within the Curaçao educational system signifies that they have completed a VSBO education. Mandatory education stops after the completion of a secondary education. For those attending VSBO, this means that a 15-year-old can stop attending school once they complete their VSBO.

The basic current education system landscape looks like the following:

**Figure 4:** Educational pathway Curaçao



The system enables anyone, regardless of the education path they're on, to work their way up to a tertiary degree; whether this be by means of a direct path or a longer one.

When looking at the 15% who had the highest completed education level of primary, and breaking it down by age, it is evident that there is a large segment of the older population that falls under this group (see Figure 5 and Figure 6 below). This can be ascribed to the fact that for many of the older generation, the possibility to continue one's education past primary, was not a given. On the other hand, these graphs also show a worrying trend, with the highest segment only completing primary education being the 15 – 24 age bracket.

**Figure 5:** Highest completed education by age – male, Curaçao, Census 2023

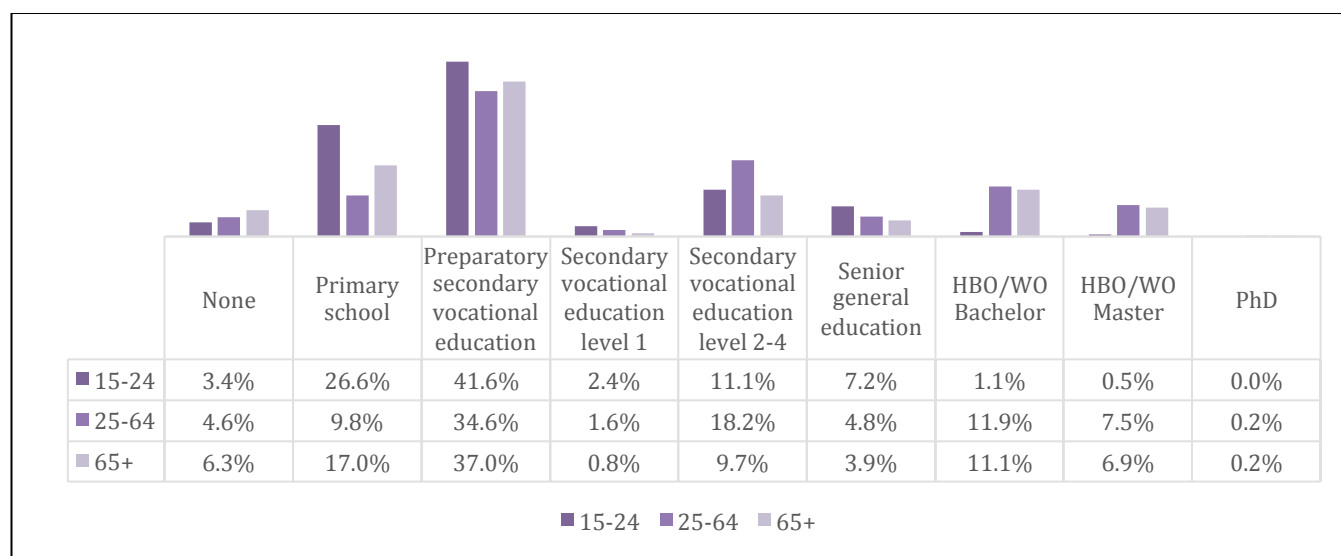
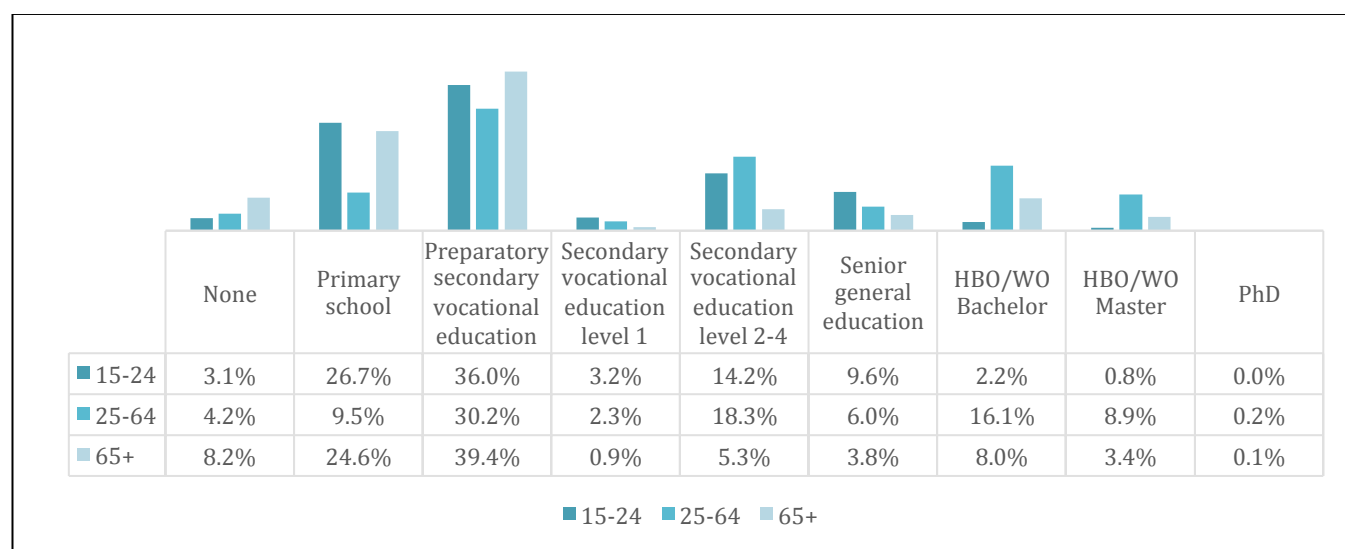


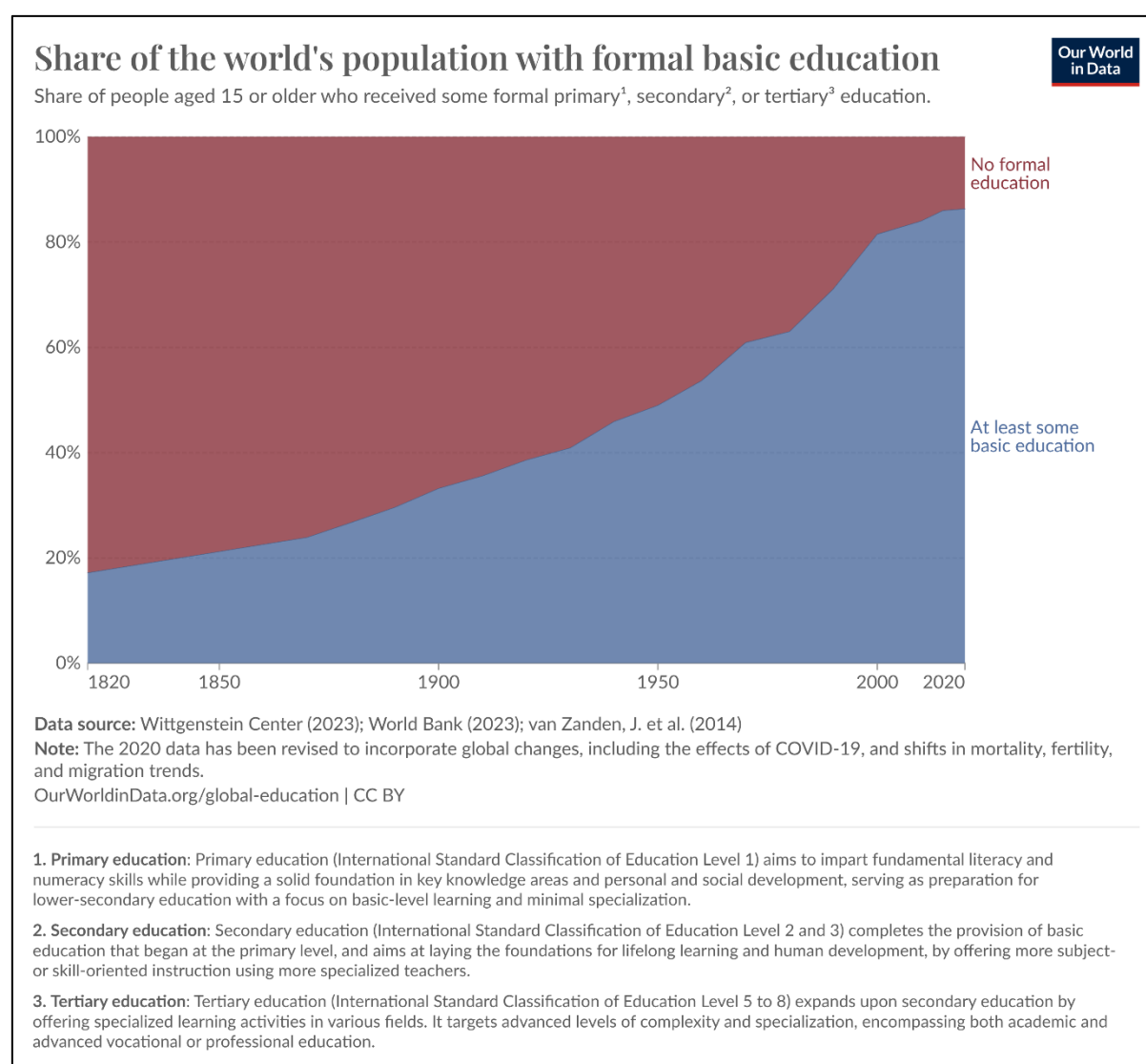
Figure 6 Highest completed education by age – female, Curaçao, Census 2023



The above figures (figure 5 and figure 6) reiterate what was observed prior, namely the fact that there is an upward trend in more females completing a tertiary degree as opposed to their male counterparts. Over 16% completed a bachelor's degree versus just under 12% of males, among those 25 – 64 years old. A master's degree was obtained by just under 9% of females, versus 7.5% of males. This was not the case in the 65+ age category, with 6.7% fewer females completing tertiary education compared to males, once again showing the clear shift taking place in younger generations.

In line with the aforementioned, the older population is more likely to have a basic education. This is a global phenomenon. The graph below (Figure 7) shows that centuries ago, basic education was a luxury and only for those privileged. (Ritchie et al., 2023) Historically, Curaçao has had a divide between privileged and less privileged parts of the population, as well as a migrant population which can influence education levels.

**Figure 7:** Share of the world's population with formal basic education



It should be mentioned that Figure 7 does not reflect data from the Census. The graph shows world data supporting the statement made above regarding older generations and their educational level. (Ritchie et al., 2023)

Diving deeper into the comparison of percentages for females completing tertiary education as opposed to their male counterparts, table 6 below shows that women are increasingly outpacing men in tertiary education completion, with the gender gap widening over recent decades. This is on par with findings by wider research studies, both regionally and globally. (Parker, 2021)

Whereas women in general outpaced men in completing a bachelor's, master's or doctorate education (15.1% of women versus 13.4% of men), the disparities are much more pronounced when looking at the 25 – 44 age demographic, and in particular those under 35. This follows a wider trend, with studies conducted in Europe noting that by 2018, 46% of women aged 30-34 had completed tertiary education compared to only 36% of men in the EU. (European Institute for Gender Equality [EIGE], 2020)

**Table 6. Education level by age and gender, Curaçao, Census 2023**

	Male							
Educational Level	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	Not reported	Total
None	1.1%	3.5%	4.1%	5.4%	5.3%	6.5%	7.7%	4.0%
Primary school	4.1%	7.8%	8.0%	11.3%	12.5%	18.0%	26.9%	9.7%
Preparatory secondary vocational education (VSBO)	15.8%	31.4%	29.5%	35.1%	40.2%	37.4%	19.2%	27.7%
Secondary vocational education level 1 (SBO 1)	1.4%	2.6%	1.8%	1.3%	0.9%	0.8%	0.0%	1.1%
Secondary vocational education level 2-4 (SBO 2-4)	7.6%	23.4%	21.1%	14.9%	12.6%	9.6%	1.9%	11.7%
Senior general education (HAVO/VWO)	0.0%	4.9%	5.4%	4.9%	3.7%	3.9%	0.0%	3.2%
HBO/WO Bachelor	0.5%	8.7%	13.2%	12.0%	10.7%	11.0%	3.8%	8.2%
HBO/WO Master	0.3%	4.9%	7.6%	7.7%	7.5%	6.8%	7.7%	5.1%
PhD	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.1%	0.3%	0.2%	0.0%	0.1%
Not reported	0.0%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%
Unspecified	0.0%	0.3%	0.4%	0.6%	0.5%	0.8%	7.7%	0.4%
Other	0.2%	0.8%	1.2%	1.1%	1.0%	1.1%	0.0%	0.8%
	Female							
Educational Level	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	Not reported	Total
None	0.8%	2.5%	3.2%	4.8%	5.2%	8.4%	3.5%	4.4%
Primary school	2.2%	4.7%	6.4%	10.2%	13.5%	25.4%	22.8%	11.8%
Preparatory secondary vocational education (VSBO)	10.0%	19.7%	19.1%	31.2%	40.5%	39.4%	29.8%	26.6%
Secondary vocational education level 1 (SBO 1)	1.9%	3.0%	2.4%	2.2%	1.5%	0.9%	0.0%	1.5%

Secondary vocational education level 2-4 (SBO 2-4)	8.4%	25.2%	23.0%	14.5%	9.5%	5.2%	14.0%	10.8%
Senior general education (HAVO/VWO)	3.1%	5.1%	4.6%	5.7%	6.2%	3.8%	1.8%	4.1%
HBO/WO Bachelor	1.3%	14.8%	19.5%	14.1%	11.8%	7.9%	1.8%	9.8%
HBO/WO Master	0.5%	8.9%	10.9%	8.5%	5.7%	3.3%	1.8%	5.2%
PhD	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%
Not reported	0.1%	0.5%	0.2%	0.3%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.2%
Unspecified	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.5%	0.7%	7.0%	0.4%
Other	0.0%	0.9%	1.5%	1.4%	1.4%	1.1%	0.0%	1.0%
	Total							
Educational Level	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	Not reported	Total
None	1.0%	3.0%	3.6%	5.1%	5.3%	7.6%	5.5%	4.2%
Primary school	3.1%	6.1%	7.1%	10.6%	13.0%	22.3%	24.8%	10.8%
Preparatory secondary vocational education (VSBO)	13.0%	25.1%	23.6%	32.9%	40.4%	38.6%	24.8%	27.1%
Secondary vocational education level 1 (SBO 1)	1.6%	2.8%	2.1%	1.8%	1.3%	0.9%	0.0%	1.3%
Secondary vocational education level 2-4 (SBO 2-4)	8.0%	24.4%	22.2%	14.7%	10.9%	7.0%	8.3%	11.2%
Senior general education (HAVO/VWO)	1.5%	5.0%	5.0%	5.4%	5.1%	3.8%	0.9%	3.7%
HBO/WO Bachelor	0.9%	11.9%	16.8%	13.2%	11.3%	9.2%	2.8%	9.1%
HBO/WO Master	0.4%	7.0%	9.5%	8.2%	6.5%	4.7%	4.6%	5.2%
PhD	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%
Not reported	0.1%	0.4%	0.3%	0.3%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%
Unspecified	0.1%	0.3%	0.4%	0.4%	0.5%	0.7%	7.3%	0.4%
Other	0.1%	0.8%	1.4%	1.3%	1.3%	1.1%	0.0%	0.9%

## 5.4 Top education fields

### Most popular fields by education level (top majors)

Considering the supply and demand side of the labour market, the supply of labour force to the market is directly dependent on the education that has been completed. Higher level educational attainment lends itself to fulfilling roles requiring higher skills, whereas lower-level educational attainment offers labour supply that is more geared towards the manual and practical jobs.

The table below is a depiction of the top majors by educational level.

Of those who completed Preparatory Secondary Vocational Education (VSBO), the majority (over a quarter of respondents) pursued a general field of study, rather than picking a specific field. The most popular field of study after this category was Financial Management and Administration (11.8%), followed by Construction (5.5%).

**Table 7.** Top majors in preparatory secondary vocational education (VSBO), Curaçao, Census 2023

Preparatory secondary vocational education (VSBO)	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Grand Total
General education	8.5%	6.2%	8.1%	15.3%	23.2%	22.8%	15.8%	27.6%
Financial management and administration	17.0%	8.0%	7.5%	15.7%	21.3%	19.9%	10.6%	11.8%
Construction	18.7%	11.3%	10.9%	15.8%	20.9%	16.5%	5.8%	5.5%

For a full table of the top 25 majors, please see Appendix B.

Those who have completed a Secondary vocational education level 1 (SBO 1 – table 8 below), were more likely to have specialized in the field of financial administration and education, with education coming in second. The field of finance management and administration was particularly popular among the 45 – 54 age bracket. Older generations were more inclined to have specialized in nursing and general administration, whereas the younger generation (in particular, those between the ages of 25 and 34) saw an increased interest in service-oriented fields for their degree, such as tourism and tourism-related fields (tourism and 'Horeca'). This group also saw an affination for working with those in challenging situations (the physically impaired and those with social challenges 39.3%) and a stark rise in interest in information technology (35%). This interest in information technology remains high among the up-and-coming generation, with 33.3% majoring in this field, although the majority is pursuing a career in health and wellness, followed by a high interest in culinary arts.



**Table 8.** Top majors secondary vocational education level 1 (SBO 1), Curaçao, Census 2023

Secondary vocational education level 1 (SBO 1)	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Grand Total
Financial management and administration	13.3%	19.4 %	17.2%	26.9%	10.0%	9.7%	3.3%	15.6%
Education	12.5%	20.7 %	11.1%	14.9%	12.0%	17.3%	11.5%	9.0%
Cooking	39.1%	21.7 %	19.6%	15.2%	3.3%	1.1%	0.0%	4.0%
Nursing	7.9%	20.2 %	15.7%	12.4%	16.9%	19.1%	7.9%	3.8%
Horeca General	25.4%	36.5 %	17.5%	15.9%	4.8%	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%
Care for the disabled, social-pedagogical work	16.4%	39.3 %	9.8%	11.5%	9.8%	9.8%	1.6%	2.6%
Information Technology in general	33.3%	35.0 %	18.3%	1.7%	10.0%	3.3%	0.0%	2.6%
General management, business administration	8.9%	17.8 %	17.8%	17.8%	28.9%	8.9%	0.0%	1.9%
General administration	14.6%	19.5 %	12.2%	7.3%	29.3%	19.5%	0.0%	1.8%
Well being	50.0%	15.0 %	17.5%	7.5%	10.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%
Tourism	23.7%	39.5 %	18.4%	18.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%

For a full table of the top 25 majors, please see Appendix B.

When it pertains to those completing a Secondary Vocational Education at a higher level (levels 2 – 4, table 9), Financial Management and Administration remains the most popular field of study, especially among those between 25 – 44.

**Table 9.** *Top majors secondary vocational education level 2 – 4 (SBO 2-4), Curaçao, Census 2023*

Secondary vocational education level 2-4 (SBO 2-4)	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Grand Total
Financial management and administration	11.7%	21.1%	25.7%	19.7%	13.7%	6.3%	1.7%	13.7%
Information Technology in general	22.0%	38.9%	27.4%	5.4%	5.1%	1.0%	0.0%	3.3%
Tourism	16.9%	42.4%	28.7%	8.3%	1.6%	1.9%	0.0%	2.0%
Horeca	11.8%	32.9%	31.7%	12.4%	9.3%	0.8%	1.1%	1.9%
Restaurant management	17.2%	39.8%	30.1%	9.7%	2.2%	1.6%	0.0%	1.0%

For a full table of the top 25 majors, please see Appendix B.

A growing affinity with Information Technology as seen in those who completed Secondary vocational education level 1, persists in the upper levels 2 – 4. This is most notable among the younger generation coming in as the number one field of study, with almost 40% of those between the ages of 25 – 34 opting for this specialization. It is also the number one chosen field among the up-and-coming generation (those between 15 – and 24). As aforementioned, this is no surprise, as the field continues to grow worldwide.

Whereas tourism-related fields are most popular among the 25 – 34 age group (namely tourism at 42.4%, 'horeca' (hotels, restaurants and cafes) at 32.9%, and 'restaurant management' at 39.8%), this drops significantly when it comes to the up-and-coming generation.

Note here that the table for the 'top majors HAVO/ VWO' is not included. The reason for this, is that the data collected in the Census with regards to 'top majors' does not really apply to those studying at this level. Although they do choose a direction, the reflection of this in the census data could be misleading.

**Table 10.** Top majors HBO / WO Bachelor, Curaçao, Census 2023

HBO / WO Bachelor	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Grand Total
Financial management and administration	2.5%	20.1%	24.4%	20.3%	19.3%	9.9%	3.5%	11.7%
Management General, business administration	2.8%	15.9%	27.4%	20.7%	21.8%	9.4%	2.1%	8.1%
Information technology in general	2.5%	13.7%	30.5%	22.2%	19.1%	11.2%	1.0%	3.5%
Dutch, general law, judiciary	4.7%	16.8%	19.9%	19.1%	24.2%	11.9%	3.7%	3.3%
Marketing, commercial Economics	3.0%	25.2%	31.5%	22.1%	10.4%	7.0%	0.7%	2.0%

*For a full table of the top 25 majors, please see Appendix B.*

The popularity of financial management and administration isn't limited to those who did not pursue tertiary education after completing secondary education but remains one of the most popular studies for those graduating with a bachelor's degree as well. Other business-related fields, including general management, business administration, and marketing, also fall under the most studied fields, across age brackets (25 – 34, 35 – 44, and 45 – 54). Given that the local universities offer a range of business-related majors, this might contribute to the large percentage having pursued business-related studies. This might also have contributed to the law being a favoured major (after business-related studies, education, and IT), as this is also taught at local tertiary institutions.

When looking at the field of Information Technology, a popular field of study for those at the secondary education levels, it is notable that the younger generations (namely those between 25 – 34, but especially those in the 15 – 24 age bracket) are not pursuing this field as much as those before them (one of the top fields of study among those 35 – 44) – a field that is projected to grow at a much higher rate than any other in the next decade.

(U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2023)

A possible explanation for this, is that there are actively students pursuing this field abroad currently, and they were thus not present during the census, or those (25 – 34) that have pursued this field in their studies abroad, have not (yet) returned to the island for employment. The phenomenon of "brain drain" would play a role here – a topic we will discuss more in-depth in the conclusion. This lack of students pursuing fields of study related to IT is a phenomenon that doesn't only affect Curaçao, but impacts regions globally. A 2024 study by the EU foresees the shortage of digital experts will remain critical, with only 5.1% of new entrance to tertiary institutions choosing ICT fields – with the rate being much lower for female students. (European Commission, 2024, Figure 27, Note 274)

**Table 11.** Top majors HBO / WO Master, Curaçao, Census 2023

HBO / WO Master	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Grand Total
Financial management and administration	1.8%	18.5%	28.2%	24.8%	16.6%	6.5%	3.4%	14.4%
Dutch, general law, judiciary	0.7%	10.5%	19.8%	19.1%	19.5%	20.2%	10.2 %	9.8%
Management general, business administration	1.0%	13.1%	23.7%	22.0%	24.3%	11.8%	3.9%	9.3%
General administration	1.0%	18.1%	18.1%	28.1%	13.3%	15.7%	5.2%	2.5%
Marketing, commercial economics	1.6%	34.9%	28.7%	11.6%	15.5%	7.8%	0.0%	1.6%
Business Economics	0.0%	11.3%	16.3%	37.5%	28.8%	0.0%	6.3%	1.0%

For a full table of the top 25 majors, please see Appendix B.

As was seen across the board, financial management was also the field most pursued at the master's level, with a law major coming in second (see Table 12). When looking at all business-related majors, this made up almost a third of the top 25 majors at 29.1%.

A master's in law was most prevalent in those over 35, while business degrees were popular among several age brackets, with marketing being the most popular graduate degree among those between 25 and 34.

**Table 12.** Top majors PhD, Curaçao, Census 2023

PhD	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Grand Total
(GP) doctor, specialist, medicine	0.0%	9.5%	4.8%	19.0%	42.9%	23.8%	0.0%	12.4%
Financial management and administration	0.0%	14.3%	38.1%	19.0%	14.3%	14.3%	0.0%	12.4%
Education	0.0%	0.0%	13.3%	20.0%	26.7%	20.0%	20.0%	8.9%
Business management General management	0.0%	0.0%	27.3%	18.2%	27.3%	9.1%	18.2%	6.5%

The top doctorate degrees pursued were a tie between medicine (specialist/ general practitioner) and financial management and administration (table 13). A doctorate in medicine was more prominent in those over 45, with a decreasing trend among younger generations, while financial administration saw a growth among those under 45. However, given the fact that it takes a certain amount of years to become a practicing physician and specialist, those who decide to do a PhD in Medicine (what is called in Dutch "promoveren"), would most likely do so at a later stage in their career, and thus a higher age. When considering business-related studies in general, adding general management and business

administration to those having majored in financial administration, business-related doctorates come in on top. A doctorate in education was more popular in those 45 and over.

## Countries

To give a better perspective where these majors were (are being) attained, the tables below show the top three countries where people have completed their education, namely Curaçao, Netherlands and Colombia. Table 14 shows the countries based on all levels of educational attainment.

*Table 13 Countries completed highest education by age category, Curaçao, Census 2023*

Countries by age Highest education	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
Colombia	130	353	754	1,132	962	517	138
Curaçao	13,267	10,420	10,232	11,336	15,829	14,989	10,660
Netherlands	201	1,378	2,896	3,042	3,085	2,353	1,343

*For a full table including all countries, please see Appendix B.*

To exclude primary and secondary education, the below tables show the countries by education level. Table 15 shows data for those who obtained a bachelor as their highest educational attainment, and table 16 shows those who obtained a masters degree.

*Table 14. Countries completed highest education (Bachelor) by age category, Curaçao, Census 2023*

Highest education by country (Bachelor)	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
Colombia	19	56	91	107	85	62	8
Curaçao	167	1,250	1,563	1,271	1,358	1,189	508
Netherlands	15	430	1,126	1,091	1,120	892	502

*For a full table including all countries, please see Appendix B.*

*Table 15. Countries completed highest education (Master) by age category, Curaçao, Census 2023*

Highest education by country (Master)	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
Colombia	3	40	87	114	58	18	6
Curaçao	66	504	653	511	534	441	148
Netherlands	7	356	696	704	710	551	320

*For a full table including all countries, please see Appendix B.*



## 6. Education and labour

### 6.1 Education by employment status

As is apparent in Table 14 below, higher education levels strongly correlate with higher employment rates. Those with a bachelor's degree or higher have the lowest unemployment rates. On the other hand, those with a primary school education have a higher unemployment rate, showing an inverse relationship between education levels and unemployment. This follows global trends, where data has shown that there is an evident relationship between educational attainment and employment rates.

(Central Statistics Office [CSO], 2022)

(National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2023)

**Table 16.** Education by employment status, Curaçao, Census 2023

Table 16 Education by employment status, Curaçao, Census 2023	Employment %	Unemployment %	Inactive %	Unemployment rate
None	32.6%	3.0%	64.5%	8.3%
Primary school	28.8%	3.7%	67.5%	11.5%
Preparatory secondary vocational education (VSBO)	46.7%	4.7%	48.6%	9.2%
Secondary vocational education level 1 (SBO 1)	63.2%	6.0%	30.8%	8.7%
Secondary vocational education level 2-4 (SBO 2-4)	71.2%	4.7%	24.2%	6.2%
Senior general education (HAVO/VWO)	57.3%	3.5%	39.2%	5.8%
HBO/WO Bachelor	69.5%	2.0%	28.5%	2.9%
HBO/WO Master	71.8%	2.0%	26.2%	2.6%
PhD	67.9%	2.6%	29.6%	3.6%

When looking at unemployment and highest education completed in relation to age (table 17 below), there is an interesting trend towards those 65+ falling in an increasingly higher 'unemployment' category versus an inactive one, as they actively pursue work. This is a global trend, also coined "The Great Unretirement", with participation in the workforce for those over 65 rising to 15.5% in 2021. (World Economic Forum [WEF], 2022)

**Table 17.** Education and employment status by age, Curaçao, Census 2023

	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
None	17.0%	12.0%	5.1%	8.3%	7.2%	10.3%
Primary education	21.7%	12.2%	11.5%	9.0%	9.4%	12.2%
Preparatory secondary vocational education	17.3%	11.2%	8.4%	8.4%	7.0%	6.4%
Secondary vocational education level 1	16.8%	10.8%	7.0%	6.3%	3.0%	3.8%
Secondary vocational education level 2-4	10.8%	7.4%	4.5%	4.5%	6.2%	6.8%
Senior general education	8.3%	8.4%	5.8%	3.7%	4.7%	5.6%
HBO/WO Bachelor	4.5%	4.0%	2.9%	2.4%	2.6%	1.8%
HBO/WO Master	7.7%	5.9%	2.3%	2.4%	1.5%	0.6%
PhD	-	0.0%	3.8%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%
Other	20.9%	5.8%	7.1%	2.9%	5.1%	6.3%

## 6.2 Education and Income

Table 18 below shows the average income of all those who are employed. It shows a clear positive correlation between education level and income: the higher the education, the higher the gross monthly income. Those without an education earn an average of ANG 2,523.89 gross per month, while those with a tertiary degree start at ANG 5,949,77 gross per month – 2.8 times higher than those with a primary education alone, and 1.5 times higher than the average income of those with the highest secondary education degree. This mirrors OECD findings where tertiary-educated workers earn on average almost twice as much as those with a 'below upper secondary' education. (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2023)

As the average gross monthly income is significantly higher for those with a master's or doctorate, the gap between the average income for those with the lowest education level and those with the highest education level is even more significant. As Table 16 below shows, those with a doctorate earn 3.4 times as much on average as those with a primary education only.

There is a gender pay gap that starts at those with no education, where females earn ANG 81.07 for every ANG 100 earned by their male counterparts and is consistent across all educational levels.

The largest gender income disparity is at the master's degree level, where females earn ANG 71.51 for every ANG 100 earned by males. This aligns with broader research findings and trends globally. In the US, college-educated women earn approximately 30% less than their non-Hispanic white male counterparts, even with similar educational qualifications. (Black et al., 2008)

Studies conducted in the US have questioned whether this inequality in pay is one of the reasons women are more likely to continue with their education, as "women need to earn at least an extra degree to receive the same earnings as men with less education".

(Jarosz et al., 2023)

This could be one of the factors at play in Curaçao as well.

**Table 18.** Highest completed education by gross average monthly income, Curaçao, Census 2023

	Male	Female	Total	Female earnings per Male ANG 100
<i>None</i>	2,795.21	2,266.07	2,523.89	81.07
<i>Primary school</i>	2,376.79	1,898.85	2,132.72	79.89
<i>Preparatory secondary vocational education</i>	2,910.14	2,493.31	2,709.14	85.68
<i>Secondary vocational education level 1</i>	3,707.14	2,825.00	3,168.30	76.20
<i>Secondary vocational education level 2-4</i>	4,242.91	3,384.87	3,765.24	79.78
<i>Senior general education</i>	4,570.78	3,517.94	3,936.40	76.97
<i>HBO/WO Bachelor</i>	6,748.89	5,456.49	5,949.77	80.85
<i>HBO/WO Master</i>	9,534.69	6,821.18	7,975.28	71.51
<i>PhD</i>	12,413.65	9,880.25	11,071.81	79.59



## 7. Education and migration

### 7.1 Education and Migration Patterns

The data reveals several key patterns in the relationship between education and migration in Curaçao. In our education system, a large percentage of those who finish their HAVO or VWO careers migrate to attend international universities. Most of them do not return to the island. "Another significant challenge in Curaçao according to UNDP is brain drain. Approximately 300 to 400 young people move to the Netherlands on an annual basis to pursue their studies and only 5% of them return to the island after obtaining their degrees." (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2023)

Although numbers announced recent years by Stichting Studiefinanciering Curaçao have shown a decline in students traveling to the Netherlands for their studies each year (numbers received from SSC show a total of 191 for 2024), this doesn't give enough data to state with certainty that total numbers have seen a decline from the 300 – 400 stated above. Students also travel with study loans from DUO, or for studies financed by their families.

As a matter of fact, a study conducted in 2021 saw a growing number of students from Curaçao enrolled in Dutch tertiary educational institutions between 2017 and 2020. (van Casteren et al., 2021, p. 20, Figure 2.3)

Brain drain is defined as "the departure of educated or professional people from one country, economic sector, or field for another usually for better pay or living conditions." (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

Not unique to Curaçao, brain drain significantly impacts the Caribbean region, with skilled professionals often emigrating for higher wages. This results in attracting foreign-born scholars for positions where higher/ tertiary degrees are needed. (Jaupart, 2023)

Table 19 below shows the distribution of completed education by nationality (local vs foreign-born). Based on the data, the percentages are skewed towards natives, up to master and PhD levels, where the distribution tilts to those who are foreign-born (masters) and actually surpasses natives (PhD). Natives are more inclined to have a primary and secondary education. It should be considered that immigration into the country is usually geared towards seeking employment on the island.

**Table 19.** Completed education by nationality, Curaçao, Census 2023

	Native	Foreign
None	60.9%	39.1%
Primary school	68.4%	31.6%
Preparatory secondary vocational education	81.4%	18.6%
Secondary vocational education level 1	78.3%	21.7%
Secondary vocational education level 2-4	81.2%	18.8%
Senior general education	63.2%	36.8%
HBO/WO Bachelor	66.8%	33.2%
HBO/WO Master	58.0%	42.0%
PhD	45.5%	54.5%

## 7.2 Income Disparities by Nationality

The census data reveals several key patterns in native versus foreign-born incomes. Natives have higher average incomes than foreign-born residents in most educational categories as shown in table 20. The largest gap appears in senior general education (HAVO/VWO), where natives earn over 25% higher than foreign-born workers, namely 126.73 guilders for every 100 guilders earned by foreign-born workers. This pattern holds true at higher education levels, with natives earning 105-111% of foreign-born workers' salaries at bachelor's, master's and PhD levels. Notable is that at the level of secondary vocational education (levels 1 – 4) the opposite is true, with foreign-born workers earning nearly 20% more than natives.

**Table 20.** Education and gross monthly income by nationality, Curaçao, Census 2023

	Native	Foreign	Native earning per Foreign ANG 100
None	2,793.55	2,356.05	118.57
Primary school	2,102.74	2,158.20	97.43
Preparatory secondary vocational education	2,728.82	2,648.01	103.05
Secondary vocational education level 1	3,042.17	3,626.67	83.88
Secondary vocational education level 2-4	3,624.21	4,371.38	82.91
Senior general education	4,319.09	3,408.02	126.73
HBO/WO Bachelor	6,042.88	5,755.03	105.00
HBO/WO Master	8,345.92	7,472.38	111.69
PhD	11,728.80	10,590.37	110.75

## 8. Conclusion

The analysis of Curaçao's 2023 Census data presents a comprehensive portrait of the island's educational ecosystem, revealing significant patterns and trends in educational attainment, participation, and outcomes that merit consideration within both local and regional contexts.

Curaçao demonstrates exceptional strength in foundational education, achieving a 97.6% participation rate for ages 4-15, positioning the island favourably against international benchmarks. This aligns closely with the international average of 98% (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2023). The data has also shown a remarkable improvement in early childhood education participation, with participation rates among the 0- to 3-year-olds seeing a significant 36.4% increase compared to 2011. This follows global trends that emphasize early education development, with Curaçao's participation rate at 89.1% for 3- and 4-year-olds exceeding the OECD average (NCES, 2023).

The census data reveals important transitions in educational participation patterns. While there has been an increase in secondary education participation from 39.2% (2011) to 41% (2023), tertiary education has experienced a slight decrease in participation from 5.0% to 4.5%. This pattern, coupled with the data indicating that preparatory secondary vocational education (VSBO) represents the highest completed educational level for 36.1% of the population, has implications for the overall educational attainment profile of the island.

Gender-based educational patterns emerge as a significant finding in the census data. Women demonstrate stronger basic education completion rates (16.2% versus 13.7% for males) and higher tertiary education completion rates compared to their male counterparts (15.1% versus 13.4%). This gender gap is most evident from second general education upwards and mirrors broader Caribbean trends where females consistently outperform males across educational levels. Research indicates that this gender gap is more pronounced in the Caribbean (8.4 percentage points) compared to Latin America (5.2 percentage points) (Beuermann et al., 2024). This shift has also become increasingly noticeable globally, with studies in Europe noting that by 2018, 46% of women aged 30-34 had completed tertiary education compared to only 36% of men in the EU (European Institute for Gender Equality [EIGE], 2020). Similarly, research in the United States has documented a growing gap between men and women in college completion rates (Parker, 2021).

The census data highlights notable patterns in educational specialization. Financial Management and Administration leads across all educational levels, with business-related fields being among the most popular fields studied in general. There is a growing affinity with Information Technology at lower educational levels, particularly among the 25-34 age group. However, this trend is not reflected at tertiary levels, which may indicate that students pursuing higher education in this field are doing so abroad. This observation aligns with broader concerns about digital skills shortages, as a 2024 study by the European Commission notes that only 5.1% of new entrants to tertiary institutions choose ICT fields, with the rate being much lower for female students (European Commission, 2024).

The data also reveals concerning trends in key fields such as education and health, which show declining interest among younger generations. Similarly, tourism-related fields, despite being economic drivers for the island, show a significant drop in interest among the upcoming generation (15-24 age bracket) compared to the 25-34 age group. These patterns in educational specialization distribution suggest potential misalignments with market demands, with skills gaps emerging in critical sectors.

Educational attainment emerges as a critical factor for economic outcomes in the workforce. It is not only important for its impact on a country's unemployment but also plays an essential role in a person's success in the workforce. (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2024) If success is measured by income, then it becomes even more important to ensure a country's population achieves the highest possible education. The census data demonstrates a clear positive correlation between education level and income: the higher the education, the higher the gross monthly income. Those with a tertiary degree earn 2.8 times higher on average than those with a primary education alone, and 1.5 times higher than the average income of those with the highest secondary education degree. This mirrors OECD findings where tertiary-educated workers earn on average almost twice as much as those with a 'below upper secondary' education (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2023).

The data also reveals a persistent gender pay gap across all educational levels. Females earn significantly less than their male counterparts despite having equal educational backgrounds. This gender pay gap becomes more pronounced at higher education levels, with females holding a master's degree earning ANG 71.51 for every ANG 100 earned by males with the same qualification. This aligns with broader global trends, with a US study showing college-educated women earn approximately 30% less than their non-Hispanic white male counterparts, even with similar educational qualifications (Black et al., 2008). Research suggests this gender pay gap might be behind the fact that women are more likely to pursue further education, as "women need to earn at least an extra degree to receive the same earnings as men with less education" (Jarosz et al., 2023).

Perhaps the most pressing challenge facing Curaçao's educational system revealed by the census data is the significant outflow of human capital. The annual migration of 300-400 students to the Netherlands, coupled with a mere 5% return rate, represents a substantial drain on the island's intellectual resources (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2023). This "brain drain" reflects a broader Caribbean phenomenon where mass emigration of working-age individuals has created significant skills gaps across various sectors. The decrease in students pursuing education, health, and ICT-related studies mirrors the fields where the most concerning skills gaps are being seen in the region (Jaupart, 2023).

In summary, Curaçao's educational landscape demonstrates remarkable resilience and achievement in foundational areas while facing certain challenges in higher education participation, talent retention, and gender disparities. The 2023 Census data provides valuable insights into the current state of education on the island, highlighting both strengths and areas requiring attention. The data underscores the importance of educational attainment for economic outcomes while also revealing persistent gender disparities in both educational patterns and subsequent labor market outcomes. The challenge of brain drain emerges as a critical factor affecting the island's human capital development, with implications for long-term economic and social development.

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# Appendix B – Tables

**Table 21.** Participation rate by age and gender, Curaçao, Census 2023

Age	2011			2023			Difference
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
0	16.4	16.0	16.2	26.8	30	28.5	12.3
1	45.8	42.8	44.4	48.3	57.8	53.0	8.6
2	60.8	62.6	61.7	70.5	72.9	71.7	10.0
3	79.8	77.5	78.6	82.1	86	84.1	5.5
4	93.9	94.8	94.4	91.7	96.5	94.1	-0.3
5	99.1	99.0	99.0	96.7	98.1	97.4	-1.6
6	99.4	99.7	99.5	97.7	97.9	97.8	-1.7
7	99.9	99.4	99.6	97.3	97.3	97.3	-2.3
8	99.2	99.4	99.3	98.1	97.4	97.8	-1.5
9	99.4	99.7	99.5	97.7	97.6	97.7	-1.8
10	99.2	99.0	99.1	98.0	97.7	97.9	-1.2
11	99.2	99.5	99.3	97.5	98.2	97.9	-1.4
12	99.1	98.7	98.9	97.5	97.7	97.6	-1.3
13	99.3	99.6	99.4	98.4	97.5	98.0	-1.4
14	98.9	99.4	99.2	96.6	97.7	97.1	-2.1
15	97.8	98.5	98.2	95.9	95.3	95.6	-2.6
16	92.5	94.8	93.7	93.2	95.1	94.2	0.5
17	87.3	89.5	88.4	87.4	91.7	89.5	1.1
18	75.7	79.5	77.5	79.4	77.7	78.6	1.1
19	59.1	66.5	62.7	64.8	67.8	66.2	3.5
20	49.9	57.5	53.8	45.8	56.4	50.9	-2.9
21	37.4	52.3	45.0	36.3	47.4	41.5	-3.5
22	31.0	41.8	36.7	29.6	32.1	30.8	-5.9
23	23.9	31.5	27.7	20.7	29.4	25.1	-2.6
24	12.8	21.8	17.7	16.7	24.5	20.8	3.1
25	7.8	17.5	13.0	10.5	13.3	11.9	-1.1
26	7.2	13.4	10.5	7.0	7.9	7.4	-3.1
27	6.4	9.0	7.8	4.8	4.9	4.8	-3.0
28	4.4	7.2	6.0	3.3	5.3	4.4	-1.6
29	3.0	4.5	3.9	1.9	4.1	3.1	-0.8
30+	0.4	0.7	0.6	0.1	0.3	0.2	-0.4



**Table 22.** Preparatory secondary vocational education major by age, Curaçao, Census 2023

	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Grand Total
General education	8.5%	6.2%	8.1%	15.3%	23.2%	22.8%	15.8%	27.6%
Financial management and administration	17.0%	8.0%	7.5%	15.7%	21.3%	19.9%	10.6%	11.8%
Construction	18.7%	11.3%	10.9%	15.8%	20.9%	16.5%	5.8%	5.5%
Carpentry	2.7%	3.5%	9.1%	21.4%	32.3%	22.3%	8.7%	4.7%
Home economics, general care	10.7%	5.7%	5.5%	11.3%	28.4%	27.5%	10.8%	4.2%
General electronics	17.9%	15.1%	15.6%	17.9%	17.9%	11.4%	4.2%	3.4%
Metallurgy, metalworking in general	1.4%	1.8%	4.0%	11.0%	38.0%	31.0%	12.7%	3.1%
Culinary	16.7%	13.5%	15.6%	12.9%	19.0%	17.5%	4.8%	2.1%
General administration	37.0%	9.6%	7.1%	11.7%	15.6%	12.5%	6.4%	1.9%
Technology and technical services	20.2%	14.2%	13.7%	14.2%	18.0%	11.5%	8.3%	1.9%
Unspecified	7.5%	8.9%	8.5%	14.4%	21.4%	21.0%	18.3%	1.8%
Healthcare	26.1%	13.8%	13.9%	15.0%	14.8%	10.5%	5.7%	1.8%
Construction works, machining works, welding, forging, casting	5.1%	8.5%	10.1%	12.8%	29.8%	23.9%	9.7%	1.7%
Home care, elderly care	27.7%	13.7%	8.6%	11.6%	17.1%	18.0%	3.5%	1.6%
Nursing	10.3%	9.9%	6.9%	10.3%	18.1%	24.9%	19.3%	1.5%
Automotive, motorcycle technology	8.8%	11.5%	14.0%	23.2%	19.7%	10.9%	11.5%	1.4%
Economics	43.2%	15.7%	6.0%	9.3%	14.4%	8.0%	3.3%	1.2%
Wellbeing	45.2%	13.6%	8.5%	5.0%	10.3%	11.6%	5.9%	1.2%
Clothing, sewing	0.2%	1.2%	3.1%	12.6%	22.0%	23.3%	37.4%	1.1%
Horeca general	31.0%	20.0%	17.7%	10.6%	8.6%	8.2%	3.8%	1.0%
Mechanical engineers, repairers n.e.c.	6.5%	10.1%	11.7%	22.2%	23.8%	13.2%	12.8%	1.0%
Information Technology in general	54.3%	22.0%	10.6%	6.5%	4.1%	1.8%	0.8%	0.9%
Cleaning	1.0%	5.2%	5.5%	16.3%	34.1%	21.3%	16.5%	0.8%
General tool science	28.6%	8.8%	8.8%	18.6%	23.0%	8.0%	3.8%	0.7%
Haircare	5.7%	11.6%	22.7%	21.5%	18.8%	13.7%	5.7%	0.7%
Retail	2.1%	0.9%	5.8%	19.8%	20.7%	34.0%	17.0%	0.7%

**Table 23.** Secondary vocational education level 1 major by age, Curaçao, Census 2023

	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Grand Total
Financial management and administration	13.3%	19.4%	17.2%	26.9%	10.0%	9.7%	3.3%	15.6%
Education	12.5%	20.7%	11.1%	14.9%	12.0%	17.3%	11.5%	9.0%
Home care, elderly care	25.8%	27.5%	7.5%	11.7%	16.7%	8.3%	2.5%	5.2%
Cooking	39.1%	21.7%	19.6%	15.2%	3.3%	1.1%	0.0%	4.0%
Nursing	7.9%	20.2%	15.7%	12.4%	16.9%	19.1%	7.9%	3.8%
Home economics, general care	21.5%	20.3%	10.1%	21.5%	19.0%	5.1%	3.8%	3.4%
General electronics	35.4%	16.9%	15.4%	6.2%	24.6%	1.5%	0.0%	2.8%
Horeca General	25.4%	36.5%	17.5%	15.9%	4.8%	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%
Care for the disabled, social-pedagogical work	16.4%	39.3%	9.8%	11.5%	9.8%	9.8%	1.6%	2.6%
Healthcare	36.7%	23.3%	16.7%	10.0%	8.3%	6.7%	0.0%	2.6%
Information Technology in general	33.3%	35.0%	18.3%	1.7%	10.0%	3.3%	0.0%	2.6%
Secretarial	8.0%	12.0%	10.0%	36.0%	20.0%	10.0%	4.0%	2.2%
Construction	6.1%	18.4%	20.4%	22.4%	16.3%	10.2%	4.1%	2.1%
Restaurant management	26.7%	17.8%	24.4%	13.3%	13.3%	4.4%	0.0%	1.9%
General management, business administration	8.9%	17.8%	17.8%	17.8%	28.9%	8.9%	0.0%	1.9%
Youth pedagogical work and childcare	7.1%	7.1%	21.4%	16.7%	26.2%	14.3%	7.1%	1.8%
General administration	14.6%	19.5%	12.2%	7.3%	29.3%	19.5%	0.0%	1.8%
Well-being	50.0%	15.0%	17.5%	7.5%	10.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%
Tourism	23.7%	39.5%	18.4%	18.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%
Haircare	21.2%	12.1%	27.3%	15.2%	15.2%	6.1%	6.1%	1.4%
Beauty, body care	32.1%	10.7%	25.0%	10.7%	10.7%	0.0%	10.7%	1.2%
Technology and technical services	11.1%	22.2%	33.3%	22.2%	0.0%	7.4%	3.7%	1.2%
Unspecified	11.5%	23.1%	38.5%	7.7%	15.4%	0.0%	3.8%	1.1%
Money and banking matters	15.4%	23.1%	26.9%	3.8%	19.2%	3.8%	0.0%	1.1%
Construction works, machine works, welding, forging, casting	13.0%	13.0%	13.0%	26.1%	21.7%	17.4%	0.0%	1.0%

**Table 24.** Secondary vocational education level 2-4 major by age, Curaçao, Census 2023

	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Grand Total
Financial management and administration	11.7%	21.1%	25.7%	19.7%	13.7%	6.3%	1.7%	13.7%
Nursing	6.3%	18.2%	20.2%	15.8%	14.3%	16.2%	9.1%	5.6%
Construction	8.9%	20.0%	17.2%	16.7%	19.6%	13.5%	4.0%	5.6%
General electronics	10.2%	19.8%	15.2%	18.0%	18.9%	13.1%	4.8%	5.5%
Care for the disabled, social-pedagogical work	15.2%	34.4%	22.2%	11.4%	11.6%	4.8%	0.2%	5.1%
Education	6.9%	15.8%	25.7%	20.9%	13.6%	10.8%	6.4%	4.2%
Information Technology in general	22.0%	38.9%	27.4%	5.4%	5.1%	1.0%	0.0%	3.3%
General tool science	4.8%	9.0%	19.5%	15.3%	28.4%	16.0%	6.7%	2.5%
Home economics, general care	15.7%	23.5%	24.2%	13.0%	13.9%	7.0%	2.5%	2.4%
Cooking	17.6%	35.9%	24.7%	8.7%	9.6%	3.2%	0.2%	2.3%
Home care, elderly care	14.4%	25.7%	22.1%	14.1%	14.1%	7.2%	2.6%	2.2%
Secretarial	3.9%	6.7%	16.8%	23.3%	24.1%	16.8%	8.3%	2.0%
Tourism	16.9%	42.4%	28.7%	8.3%	1.6%	1.9%	0.0%	2.0%
Horeca	11.8%	32.9%	31.7%	12.4%	9.3%	0.8%	1.1%	1.9%
General administration	15.1%	26.2%	15.1%	20.6%	14.2%	8.3%	0.3%	1.7%
Healthcare	16.9%	24.8%	26.1%	15.6%	8.8%	5.2%	2.6%	1.6%
Technology and technical services	7.6%	11.8%	20.1%	16.7%	19.8%	9.7%	14.6%	1.5%
General management, business administration	5.9%	17.3%	20.6%	27.2%	21.7%	5.5%	2.6%	1.4%
Electrical energy technology	9.5%	22.6%	11.9%	19.8%	16.5%	13.6%	6.2%	1.3%
Money and banking matters	10.5%	24.7%	38.1%	21.3%	2.9%	2.1%	0.4%	1.3%
Wellbeing	18.6%	27.7%	22.7%	10.5%	11.8%	7.7%	0.0%	1.2%
Construction works, machining works, welding, forging, casting	6.5%	16.4%	17.8%	13.1%	20.6%	17.3%	8.9%	1.1%
General security	2.9%	9.2%	22.7%	31.9%	17.4%	12.6%	3.4%	1.1%
Restaurant management	17.2%	39.8%	30.1%	9.7%	2.2%	1.6%	0.0%	1.0%
Metallurgy, metalworking in general	4.9%	9.7%	4.9%	14.1%	29.2%	21.6%	16.2%	1.0%

Table 25. HBO / WO Bachelor major by age, Curaçao, Census 2023

	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Grand Total
Financial management and administration	2.5%	20.1%	24.4%	20.3%	19.3%	9.9%	3.5%	11.7%
Management General, business administration	2.8%	15.9%	27.4%	20.7%	21.8%	9.4%	2.1%	8.1%
Primary education teacher training	0.8%	7.4%	20.4%	14.5%	17.8%	21.8%	17.4%	6.3%
Education	1.7%	10.7%	21.2%	19.4%	19.8%	18.7%	8.7%	4.9%
Information technology in general	2.5%	13.7%	30.5%	22.2%	19.1%	11.2%	1.0%	3.5%
Dutch, general law, judiciary	4.7%	16.8%	19.9%	19.1%	24.2%	11.9%	3.7%	3.3%
Educational science	0.0%	6.3%	16.1%	13.7%	20.9%	26.1%	17.0%	3.1%
Nursing	1.2%	12.3%	20.8%	16.3%	16.5%	24.1%	9.0%	2.9%
Human resources	0.5%	19.9%	26.3%	20.4%	19.9%	11.4%	1.3%	2.6%
Construction	0.3%	14.0%	18.3%	23.8%	20.1%	13.7%	9.9%	2.3%
Social services	0.9%	21.8%	20.6%	15.5%	18.8%	17.0%	5.8%	2.2%
Marketing, commercial Economics	3.0%	25.2%	31.5%	22.1%	10.4%	7.0%	0.7%	2.0%
Educational science	1.1%	6.8%	18.7%	21.2%	16.2%	19.8%	16.2%	1.9%
General administration	0.4%	16.3%	17.5%	32.1%	18.3%	8.5%	6.9%	1.7%
Economics	2.1%	15.6%	26.3%	19.3%	14.8%	14.0%	7.8%	1.7%
Horeca general	2.8%	19.5%	31.2%	27.9%	14.0%	3.7%	0.5%	1.5%
Money and banking matters	2.4%	20.3%	27.4%	20.3%	13.2%	10.8%	5.2%	1.4%
Care for the disabled, social-pedagogical work	1.9%	15.0%	24.6%	11.1%	19.3%	25.1%	2.9%	1.4%
Technology and technical services	0.0%	11.6%	17.2%	26.3%	24.7%	11.1%	10.1%	1.3%
General electronics	1.1%	6.0%	13.7%	20.2%	25.1%	24.6%	9.8%	1.2%
General tool science	0.0%	3.8%	14.2%	14.8%	27.9%	19.1%	19.7%	1.2%
Teacher training for general and vocational subjects	0.6%	9.1%	14.2%	18.2%	21.0%	18.8%	17.6%	1.2%
Fiscal and tax law	4.1%	14.6%	14.0%	17.5%	25.1%	22.2%	1.8%	1.2%
Business Economics	1.3%	15.4%	29.5%	30.9%	14.1%	6.7%	2.7%	1.0%
General Practitioner, specialist, medicine	5.3%	9.1%	21.2%	23.5%	22.0%	16.7%	2.3%	0.9%

Table 26. HBO / WO Master major by age, Curaçao, Census 2023

	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Grand Total
Financial management and administration	1.8%	18.5%	28.2%	24.8%	16.6%	6.5%	3.4%	14.4%
Dutch, general law, judiciary	0.7%	10.5%	19.8%	19.1%	19.5%	20.2%	10.2%	9.8%
Management general, business administration	1.0%	13.1%	23.7%	22.0%	24.3%	11.8%	3.9%	9.3%
Education	2.3%	22.0%	18.6%	17.7%	18.0%	15.4%	5.8%	4.2%
General Practitioner, specialist, medicine	1.0%	10.4%	19.9%	11.8%	21.5%	26.3%	9.4%	3.6%
Primary education teacher training	2.6%	11.6%	18.9%	18.0%	15.9%	23.2%	9.9%	2.8%
Economics	0.0%	10.0%	18.3%	21.0%	27.1%	15.3%	8.7%	2.8%
General administration	1.0%	18.1%	18.1%	28.1%	13.3%	15.7%	5.2%	2.5%
Information Technology in general	0.5%	9.8%	23.4%	24.9%	29.3%	8.8%	3.4%	2.5%
Educational science	0.0%	10.0%	21.8%	15.9%	18.2%	22.4%	11.8%	2.0%
Psychology	5.5%	14.1%	25.2%	17.8%	17.8%	13.5%	6.7%	2.0%
Technology and technical services	0.0%	20.7%	24.1%	14.5%	23.4%	12.4%	4.8%	1.7%
Nursing	3.1%	7.6%	17.6%	20.6%	11.5%	30.5%	9.2%	1.6%
Marketing, commercial economics	1.6%	34.9%	28.7%	11.6%	15.5%	7.8%	0.0%	1.6%
Fiscal law	2.4%	19.7%	22.0%	16.5%	18.9%	14.2%	6.3%	1.5%
Human resources	1.9%	26.4%	24.5%	21.7%	9.4%	13.2%	2.8%	1.3%
Construction	0.0%	3.9%	12.7%	33.3%	23.5%	16.7%	9.8%	1.2%
Money and banking matters	0.0%	13.0%	24.0%	26.0%	19.0%	13.0%	5.0%	1.2%
Construction architecture, city Construction	1.0%	18.8%	16.7%	22.9%	17.7%	15.6%	6.3%	1.2%
Educational science, ("lerarenopleidingen en pedagogisch-didactische cursussen")	0.0%	8.3%	19.0%	27.4%	11.9%	19.0%	10.7%	1.0%
Business Economics	0.0%	11.3%	16.3%	37.5%	28.8%	0.0%	6.3%	1.0%
Industrial design	0.0%	6.3%	32.9%	27.8%	21.5%	2.5%	7.6%	1.0%
Social services	3.9%	18.2%	27.3%	11.7%	16.9%	16.9%	6.5%	0.9%
Medical assistance	0.0%	4.2%	25.4%	15.5%	15.5%	25.4%	12.7%	0.9%
Communication	2.9%	13.2%	38.2%	23.5%	20.6%	1.5%	0.0%	0.8%

**Table 27.** Highest education by country, Curaçao, Census 2023

	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Not known	Total
Aruba	9	17	23	34	70	106	102	1	362
Bonaire	12	27	13	24	56	67	134	0	333
Canada	4	4	14	17	33	12	8	3	95
China	3	34	88	95	48	42	14	0	324
Colombia	130	353	754	1,132	962	517	138	1	3,987
Costa Rica	4	33	13	12	15	3	4	0	84
Cuba	4	25	51	47	47	20	15	0	209
Curaçao	13,267	10,420	10,232	11,336	15,829	14,989	10,660	57	86,790
Dominican Republic	35	182	463	913	947	598	215	0	3,353
Guyana	3	20	38	72	58	29	3	0	223
Haiti	19	124	194	487	417	125	27	8	1,401
India	12	31	147	136	79	41	15	0	461
Jamaica	38	124	211	223	228	79	16	0	919
Mexico	3	3	16	14	8	10	1	0	55
Netherlands	201	1,378	2,896	3,042	3,085	2,353	1,343	12	14,310
Sint Maarten	4	11	16	16	22	10	28	0	107
Suriname	22	28	96	218	150	94	95	0	703
United Kingdom and Northern Ireland	3	8	18	28	26	19	17	0	119
United States of America	57	150	150	231	365	215	81	0	1,249
Venezuela	99	621	796	696	412	212	85	1	2,922

**Table 28.** Highest education by countries (Bachelor), Curaçao, Census 2023

	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
Aruba	0	4	3	5	7	4	4
Bonaire	0	2	1	3	3	2	1
Canada	4	1	8	6	15	4	5
China	0	1	1	2	1	3	0
Colombia	19	56	91	107	85	62	8
Costa Rica	1	11	4	1	7	1	0
Cuba	0	6	16	13	13	6	1
Curaçao	167	1,250	1,563	1,271	1,358	1,189	508
Dominican Republic	1	14	38	43	42	16	0
Guyana	0	0	3	2	3	1	0
Haiti	0	1	6	14	2	1	1
India	4	16	58	34	44	17	6
Jamaica	1	5	9	4	2	4	1
Mexico	0	3	3	5	3	3	0
Netherlands	15	430	1,126	1,091	1,120	892	502
Sint Maarten	0	0	3	1	3	1	2
Suriname	0	10	22	41	36	26	27
United Kingdom and Northern Ireland	0	3	9	5	11	9	1
United States of America	11	61	51	93	131	76	16
Venezuela	10	92	182	119	71	45	8



**Table 29.** Countries by highest education (Master), Curaçao, Census 2023

	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
Aruba	0	0	0	4	2	2	3
Bonaire	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Canada	0	1	1	6	11	5	0
China	0	0	0	0	0	3	0
Colombia	3	40	87	114	58	18	6
Costa Rica	3	21	6	6	3	0	0
Cuba	0	3	10	13	19	6	1
Curaçao	66	504	653	511	534	441	148
Dominican Republic	0	18	37	25	25	18	7
Guyana	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Haiti	0	2	4	7	4	2	0
India	0	7	38	36	16	5	1
Jamaica	0	1	6	1	3	1	0
Mexico	0	0	9	4	3	6	0
Netherlands	7	356	696	704	710	551	320
Sint Maarten	0	0	0	5	4	0	0
Suriname	0	1	7	11	12	15	11
United Kingdom and Northern Ireland	0	3	6	21	7	7	8
United States of America	5	52	65	105	177	96	36
Venezuela	6	99	166	151	90	38	11

