



# PLUMBING, GASFITTING & DRAINLAYING

*Advice to the Tertiary Education Commission  
for training investment in 2027*

Published November 2025



**WAIHANGA ARA RAU**

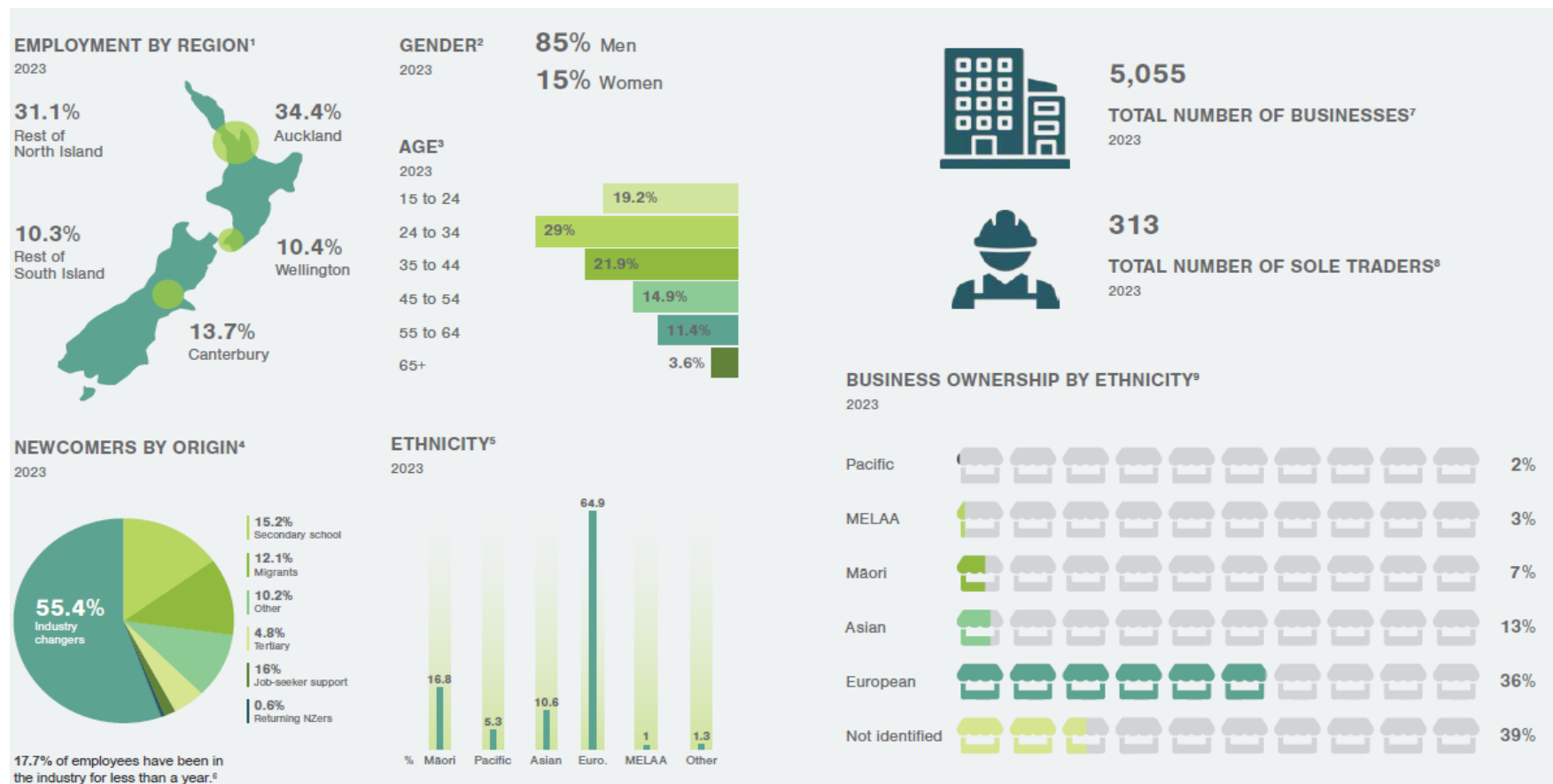
**Construction and  
Infrastructure**

Workforce Development Council

# SECTOR DATA

This data in the snapshot below is sourced from Stats NZ's Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) and Inland Revenue (IRD) and is presented via the [Workforce Information Platform](#). Individuals are counted based on whether they work for or own a business with a relevant ANZSIC (industry) code. This approach enables a consistent and streamlined methodology across all sectors.

One limitation of administrative data is that it may not fully reflect the sector's actual state. For example, insights from Master Plumbers suggest the number of active businesses is closer to **3,000** which indicates that the admin data includes inactive businesses. Similarly, the reported number of women in the sector includes all women working in businesses with relevant ANZSIC codes, regardless of their role. The [Plumbers, Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board 2025 Annual Report](#) provides data on authorised practitioners and indicates that **women make up just over 1% of these**, albeit for a different calendar year to the data presented below.



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# PLUMBING, GASFITTING & DRAINLAYING NARRATIVE

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The recovery of the construction sector has taken longer than expected, leading to a reduction in the number of apprentices in training across the PGD sector. There has been a 15% decrease in apprentice numbers since 2022, with further decreases expected by the end of 2025. The industry expects 2026 to return to a period of growth, with an increase in apprentice numbers.

Self-certification for plumbing and drainlaying will be introduced in 2026 following legislative changes to reduce the time and cost of residential construction. The PGD Board is responsible for implementing and monitoring the self-certifying programme, including eligibility requirements, which may require additional training. Going forward, **additional training to support self-certification could be built into Level 5 qualifications**. These qualifications have undergone a recent high-level review, which allows the industry to determine which future qualifications may need to be developed or revised to support the new regime. Please note that gasfitting is already a self-certifying trade.

Due to publicity around the supply of natural gas, the industry is concerned that gasfitting qualification numbers may decline significantly over the coming years, as apprentices opt out of the qualification.

## Training provision

The PGD Strategic Reference Group (PGD SRG) remains concerned that training providers are focusing on Level 3 pre-trade programmes rather than Level 4 apprentice programmes.

There has been slow uptake of workplace assessment in the sector. This is an important aspect of the new qualifications, ensuring a reduction in the overall number of block courses.

There continue to be concerns about the quality of the training facilities for block-course delivery and the lack of equipment and materials during a block course. Waihangā Ara Rau is undertaking an evaluation of all delivery sites during 2025 as part of their moderation function. This will result in recommendations for improvements for block course delivery going forward.

Over-durations remain a concern for the sector, and although the overall numbers have stabilised, the high numbers remain unacceptable. The PGD Board examinations are one of the requirements for completing the qualifications, and providers need to implement solutions to ensure greater focus on the exams, including additional support for learners.

The PGD SRG will continue to monitor training providers delivering more than their allocated capacity for Level 3 pre-trade programmes and may look to reduce learner numbers further.

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# INVESTMENT ADVICE

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## Overarching narrative

This document should be read alongside the overarching narrative document, which provides the introduction and overarching assumptions for Waihangara Rau's 2025 investment advice to the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), focused on training provision for 2027.

The sector versions outline our approach to qualifications relevant to each sector, regardless of whether they meet TEC's investment threshold. This ensures that all stakeholders, from policymakers to industry leaders, can engage with advice that aligns with their areas of interest.

## 2027 Investment advice baseline year

We're applying a similar approach to last year's. **The baseline year is 2024**, which provides the most recent full year of training data. Unless we are advising a reduction in provision or giving specific guidance, the number of active learners in the 2024 calendar year sets the minimum level of provision expected in 2027.

## Investment advice threshold (for 2027 delivery)

The threshold is intended to ensure our advice prioritises qualifications that could materially impact current TEC funding. Qualifications below the threshold generally fall within the margins of existing funding activity and therefore do not significantly affect TEC's funding availability. It is made explicit throughout that the overall growth percentage should be applied to all relevant qualifications, regardless of whether they meet the threshold. Publishing our approach for all qualifications under our coverage also enables providers and industry to understand the provision landscape.

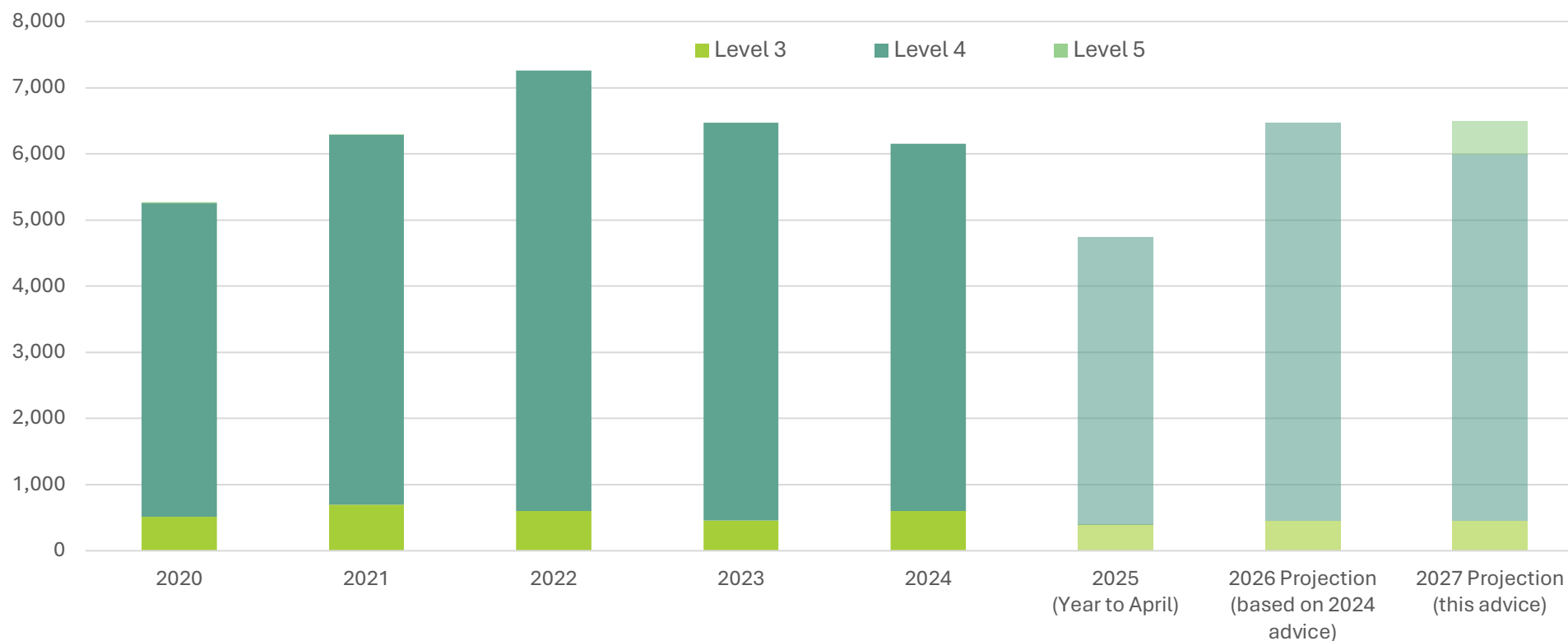
For qualifications within our scope, only those meeting the threshold are included in our formal submission to the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC). The 2027 threshold includes:

- Growth or reduction of more than 20 learners compared to the 2024 baseline.
- Not registered or not TEC-funded learners in 2024, but expected activity in 2027.
- Fewer than 20 learners in 2024, with projected growth that more than doubles by 2027.
- Qualifications where specific context and narrative are important to articulate are treated with particular attention.

This advice covers **11 qualifications, programmes, and complex apprenticeships within Waihangara Rau's PGD sector. Based on the 2024 baseline, these show an overall growth of 345 learners in 2027.** This relates to 4 qualifications that meet the TEC advice threshold and are included in the formal advice submitted to TEC.

## Learner trends and projections (2020-27)

Like many parts of the C&I sector, PGD saw a significant increase in learner numbers during 2021–22, largely driven by Government interventions such as Targeted Training and Apprenticeship Fund, First Year Fees Free, and Apprenticeship Boost. With the conclusion of most of these initiatives, aside from Fees Free shifting to final years, learner volumes have returned to more ‘normal’ levels.



### Notes:

- Learner data is sourced from TEC’s Ngā Kete as of April 2025. It includes all active TEC-funded learners within a calendar year and excludes non-TEC-funded training.
- **2025** data reflects learner numbers as of April. Based on sector conversations, end-of-year figures are expected to be similar to 2024 levels or slightly lower.
- **2026** figures are based on advice provided in 2024, which projected no growth in 2023 learner numbers with a reduction in Level 3 provision.
- **2027** figures represent projected provision based on this year’s advice.

## Context: Investment advice table

The PGD sector, like many others within the Construction grouping, considers the growth assumption to be optimistic, given the current environment facing many businesses. The underpinning assumptions suggested that project activity would begin trending upward from 2026. However, there is a sense across the industry that this may extend into 2027, even if current forecasts do not yet fully reflect this. On this basis, the sector has taken a conservative **approach, assuming no growth, with the 2027 provision set at 2024 activity levels**. This advice will be revisited in 2026 should significant changes occur that require reflection in 2027 funding decisions.

### *New Zealand Certificate in Plumbing, Gasfitting and Drainlaying (Level 3) [Ref 2660]*

In our 2023 supplementary and in-cycle advice, we asked TEC to implement a freeze on funding at 2023 levels for this qualification. This advice was followed up in October 2024 with further out-of-cycle advice based on Ngā Kete data as of September 2024, indicating that 2024 learner activity had exceeded 2023 levels.

The PGD SRG needs TEC to give effect and **actively enforce** previous advice and continue to address provider non-compliance by:

- A **maximum provision of 280 EFTS (Effective full-time students), which is approximately 450 learners**.
- Limiting providers to one Level 3 programme per provider, or provider delivery site, per year.
- Ensuring that providers do not receive TEC funding for over-duration apprentices. The perception is that there are currently no funding implications for providers who do not address the over-duration numbers.
- Actively monitoring over-durations and programme completion rates each quarter for PGD programmes, to ensure that apprentices achieve their programmes within the funded programme duration.
  - *We need to see a significant improvement in over-duration rates. If this does not occur, we need TEC to consider further funding reductions and a decreased cap on Level 3 provision.*
- Ensuring training providers improve and/or provide more detailed exam support.
- That apprentices are not charged provider fees post their normal duration.

### *Level 5 programmes (3838, 3839, 3840)*

Self-certification for plumbing and drainlaying will be introduced in 2026; gasfitting is already a self-certifying trade. The PGD Board will oversee implementation, including eligibility requirements, which may involve additional training. This training could be integrated into Level 5 qualifications, recently reviewed to allow industry input into future development.

As highlighted in our 2023 advice, this could **lead to approximately 500 learners per year across the three pathways**. This accounts for the fact that some learners will be undertaking three pathways (Plumbing, Gasfitting, Drainlaying – a separate pathway for each), however, **weighted more heavily towards plumbing and drainlaying**.

## Investment advice table

Reapplying the reduced-cap model of one Level 3 programme per provider or provider delivery site per year **would translate to 280 EFTS, or approximately 450 learners per year**. Based on the final 2024 learner numbers from Ngā Kete of 605, this would be a reduction of 325 learners. Noting in last year's advice, it was a reduction of 135 based on 2023 levels.

| Code | NZQA Qualification Title                                                  | 2027 Total Provision | Growth on 2024 base | Meets threshold |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| 2660 | New Zealand Certificate in Plumbing, Gasfitting and Drainlaying (Level 3) | 450 (280 EFTS)       | -155 learners       | Yes             |
| 2661 | New Zealand Certificate in Drainlaying (Level 4)                          | 1,550                | 0                   | No              |
| 2662 | New Zealand Certificate in Gasfitting (Level 4)                           | 185                  | 0                   | No              |
| 2663 | New Zealand Certificate in Plumbing (Level 4)                             | 165                  | 0                   | No              |
| 3838 | New Zealand Certificate in Plumbing (Level 5)                             | 500                  | 500                 | Yes             |
| 3839 | New Zealand Certificate in Drainlaying (Level 5)                          |                      |                     | Yes             |
| 3840 | New Zealand Certificate in Gasfitting (Level 5)                           |                      |                     | Yes             |
| -    | Complex Apprenticeship (PGD)                                              | 2,660                | 0                   | No              |
| -    | Complex Apprenticeship: Plumbing & Drainlaying                            | 975                  | 0                   | No              |
| -    | Complex Apprenticeship: Plumbing & Gasfitting                             | 0                    | 0                   | No              |
|      | Programme: LCP in Plumbing & Drainlaying Level 4 (d12)                    | 10                   | 0                   | No              |
|      | <b>Total</b>                                                              | <b>6,495</b>         | <b>345</b>          |                 |

## Products in Development

| Reference | Title                              | Type             | Status                   | Likely Year |
|-----------|------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-------------|
| TBC       | PGD Solar Water MC                 | Micro-credential | Developing Business Case | TBC         |
| TBC       | Public Health, Hydraulic Design L6 | TBC              | Developing Idea          | 2027        |
| TBC       | PGD Backflow MC                    | Micro-credential | In Development           | 2026/27     |