

Trends in numbers graduating with bachelors or masters degrees from 2015 to 2024

Data series



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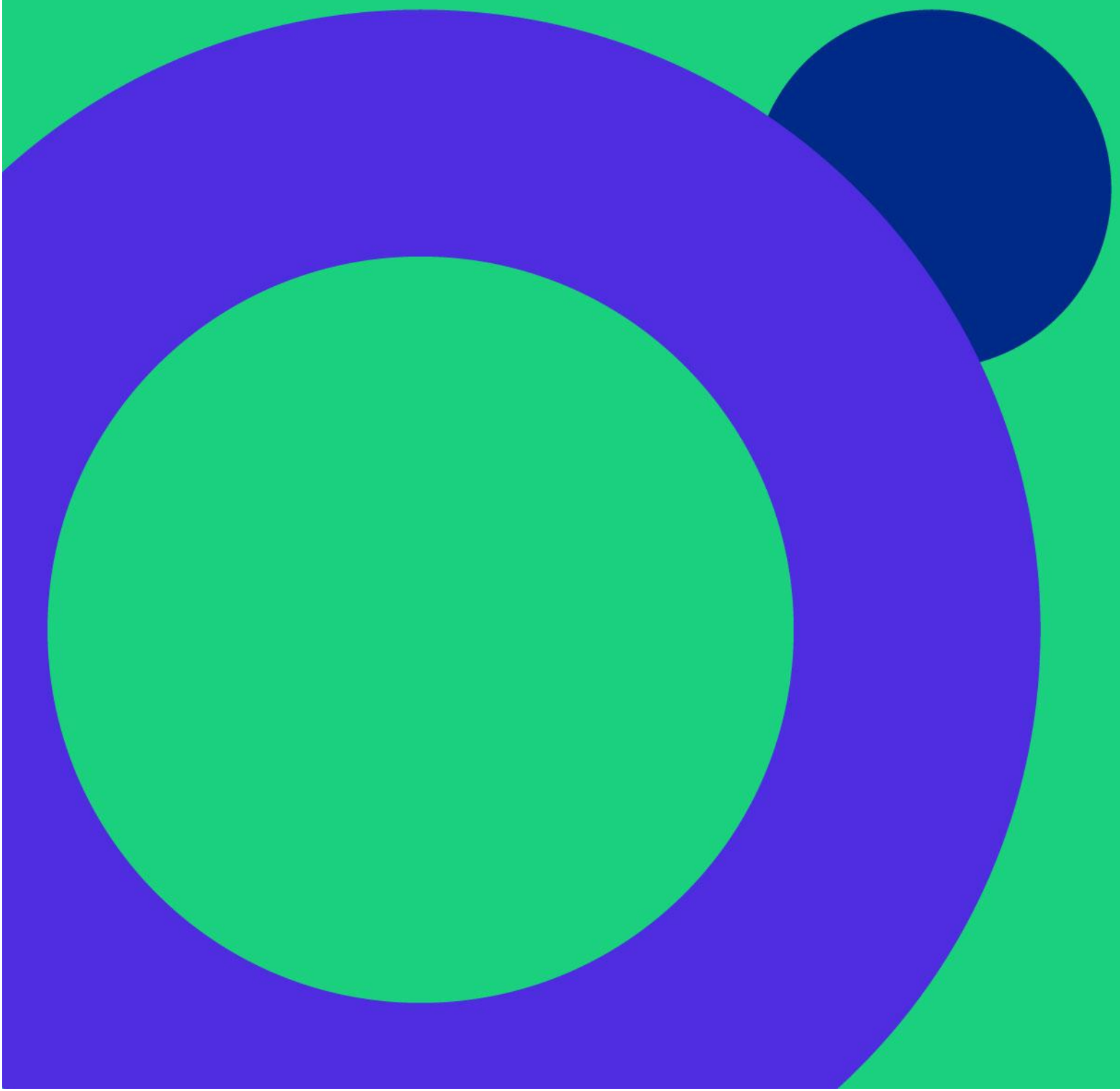
Abstract

The analysis explores graduation trends at NFQ levels 8 and 9 across private/independent (priv./ind.) and public higher education institutions (HEIs), focusing on **honours bachelor degrees (HBDs)** and **masters degrees**.

It found that since 2019, Irish HEIs have awarded proportionally more masters degrees than HBDs, a trend consistent with other jurisdictions. Together, HBDs and masters degrees make up roughly three-quarters of all awards made at NFQ levels 8 and 9 in Ireland, with the share of masters degrees continuing to grow. Priv./ind. HEIs show that this growth is concentrated in 'business, administration & law' and 'ICT' fields of learning. Public HEIs exhibit broader expansion, except in 'education and generic' programmes.

Female graduates outnumber males in both award types, with the gender gap widening across the two sectors. HBD graduates are generally younger than masters graduates. Among masters graduates, those in priv./ind. HEIs tend to be younger than those in public HEIs. Public HEIs have seen non-EU masters graduates rise from 13% in 2015 to 36% in 2024, while HBD international proportions remain stable. The growth in masters degrees within priv./ind. HEIs is concentrated in a few institutions, indicating limited diversification. Public HEIs show more evenly distributed growth.

Introduction and context



1 Introduction and context

The ratio of the number of masters degrees to honours bachelor's degrees (HBDs) being awarded annually is increasing in Ireland and beyond.

[Eurostat's educational attainment report](#) shows that in 2024, 19% of 20–24-year-olds in the EU had third level educational attainment¹. Of these, a growing proportion hold masters degrees. [Eurostat's education and training data](#) indicate that between 2015 and 2023, the share of EU-27 individuals aged 20–24 participating in masters degree programmes or equivalent increased by 1.7 percentage points (from 9.2% to 10.9%), compared with a smaller rise of 0.9 percentage points for students participating in HBD programmes (from 22.5% to 23.4%) over the same period.

According to the latest figures from HESA (Higher Education Student Statistics) in the UK:

'The number of postgraduate taught qualifications obtained has increased markedly since 2019/20, rising by 15% between 2022/23 and 2023/24. Postgraduate taught qualifications became the most awarded qualification in 2023/24, surpassing first degrees for the first time since our records began'².

Some studies suggest that this increase is driven by the fact that the benefits of postgraduate education outweigh the associated costs. Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) report [Education Pays, 2022](#)³ indicates that individuals with a masters degree earn approximately 16–20% more than those holding only a bachelors degree (the precise figures vary by occupations or field of study).

A study conducted in the UK in 2020, found that graduates with postgraduate qualifications earn, on average, 18% more than those with only undergraduate degrees six months after graduation. The study also highlighted that completing a masters degree improves employment prospects and provides graduates with greater resilience during economic downturns⁴.

The results of the [HEA 'Graduate Outcomes Survey - 2025 publication'](#) shows that in 2024 among *Undergraduate Honours Degrees graduates* who disclosed their salaries '68.5% earned up to €39,999 with 31.5% earning more than €40,000'. In comparison, 62.4% of *Postgraduate Taught graduates* earn over '€40,000 per annum. 13% of *Postgraduate Taught Graduates* earn over €80,000 compared to 1.6% of *Undergraduate Honours Degree graduates*'.

¹ View also: [EU share of population with a degree by age 2024 | Statista](#)

[Ireland, the EU and Educational Attainment Educational Attainment Thematic Report 2024 - Central Statistics Office](#)

² [Higher Education Student Statistics: UK, 2023/24 | HESA](#)

³ [Education pays, 2022: Career Outlook \(May 2023\), U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.](#)

⁴ House, G., (May 2020). [Postgraduate Education in the UK](#). Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI). The study identified a notable increase in postgraduate enrolments in the UK between 2008/09 and 2017/18. In this period, the number of postgraduate starters rose by 16%. According to the study, this growth is attributed, in part, to the benefits postgraduate qualifications offer to graduates: i) postgraduates earned, on average, 18% more than those with only undergraduate qualifications six months after graduation (the precise figures vary by source, field of study, and specific time period); ii) postgraduate qualifications offer greater relative benefit for women: female postgraduates earn 28% more than female undergraduates, while for males the difference is 12%; iii) postgraduates were more likely to be employed than first-degree graduates throughout most of the study period. The study illustrates that this was especially evident after the 2008 financial crisis, where employment levels for postgraduates declined more slowly and recovered more quickly.

This paper analyses trends in the numbers graduating in Ireland with qualifications at Levels 8 and 9 of the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), with a particular focus on honours bachelor's and master's degrees.

It draws on data provided by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) relating to graduates of public higher education institutions as well as QQI data on qualifications awarded in the private and independent higher education sector. The dataset includes graduation years from 2015 to 2024.

Acknowledgement

We sincerely thank the HEA for providing the data that enabled this study.

Caveats

All values in this analysis are rounded to the nearest five graduates to minimise the risk of statistical disclosure. As each figure is rounded independently, the sum of component items may not correspond exactly to the totals presented in charts and tables.

The study does not explore the underlying causes or reasons behind the observed trends.

1.1 National trends in the numbers graduating at NFQ levels 8 and 9

Over the ten-year period covered by this analysis, there has been a steady increase in the numbers graduating at NFQ levels 8 and 9. This upward trend reflects growth across both public and private higher education institutions (HEIs), encompassing all award types.

Tables 1 and 2 present the 'award type' classifications as recorded in the QQI database for private/independent HEIs and in the HEA database for public HEIs.

Table 1 - Award types as recorded in QQI database – private/independent HEIs⁵

| Award type as listed | NFQ Level |
|-------------------------------|-----------|
| Honours Bachelor Degree (HBD) | level 8 |
| Higher Diploma | level 8 |
| Masters Degree | level 9 |
| Minor Award | level 8 |
| | level 9 |
| Postgraduate Diploma | level 9 |
| Special Purpose Award | level 8 |
| | level 9 |

Table 2 - Award types as recorded in HEA database – public HEIs

| Award type | Award type as listed | NFQ level |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| Certificate | Certificate | level 8 |
| | | level 9 |
| | Undergraduate Certificates Pre16/17* | level 8 |

⁵ Information on the award types used in QQI awards is outlined in QQI's [Policy and Criteria for Making Awards](#).

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|---------|
| Honours Degrees (HBD) | Honours Degrees | level 8 |
| Masters Degree | Masters Research | level 9 |
| | Taught Masters | level 9 |
| Higher Diplomas | Higher Diplomas ⁶ | level 9 |
| Postgraduate Certificates | Postgraduate Certificates | level 9 |
| Postgraduate Diplomas | Post Graduate Diplomas | level 9 |
| | Postgraduate Diplomas Pre16/17 ⁷ | level 9 |
| Postgraduate Occasional | Postgraduate Occasional | level 9 |
| Professional Training Qualification | Professional Training Qualification | level 9 |
| Undergraduate Diplomas | Undergraduate Diplomas | level 8 |

Figure 1 – Total numbers graduating at NFQ levels 8 and 9 from private/independent and public HEIs (2015–2024), including all award types

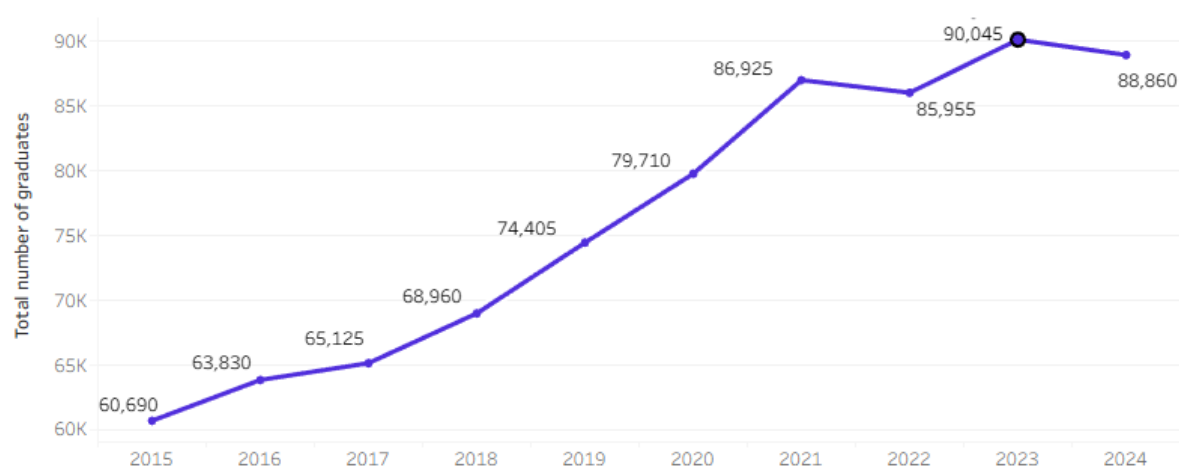


Figure 2 below provides an overview of the share of graduates from private/independent HEIs vs public HEIs completing awards at NFQ levels 8 and 9, presented both in total and broken down by level.

It shows that the proportion of graduates at these two levels is rising within private HEIs relative to the overall, with the increase particularly pronounced at NFQ level 9. In 2015, those graduating from private/independent HEIs represented just 7% of total graduates at this NFQ level, by 2024 this share increased to 18%.

⁶ HEA SRS Codebook definitions for:

- Higher Diploma: “Typically one year in duration (60 ECTS credits, sometimes 90). Leads to a Higher Diploma, a major award at NFQ Level 8 or 9.”
- Postgraduate Diploma: “Typically one year in duration (60 ECTS credits). Leads to a Postgraduate Diploma, a major award at NFQ Level 9.”

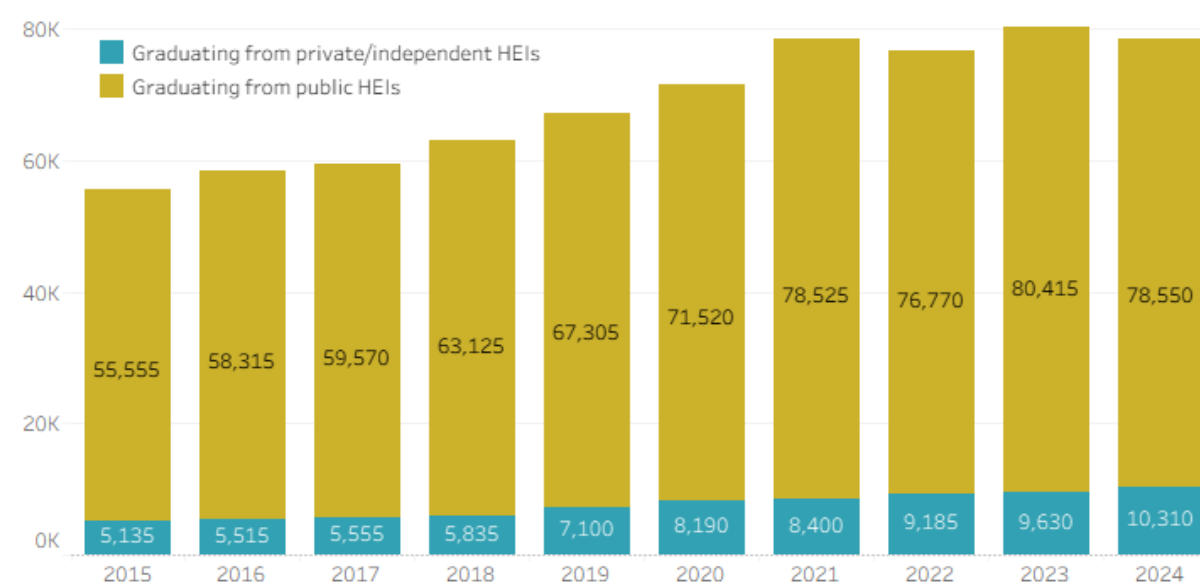
⁷ Postgraduate Diplomas Pre16/17 refers to changes introduced when certain award tags were split into two from the 2016/17 academic year onward. These changes follow the HEA 2016/17 SRS Codebook updates. Before 2016/17:

- The Undergraduate Certificate and Higher Certificate shared same code, despite having different ECTS values.
- The Postgraduate Diploma (level 9) and Higher Diploma (level 8) shared the same code.

Figure 2 - Share of graduates completing NFQ Level 8 and 9 awards as a proportion of the total — private/independent vs. public sector



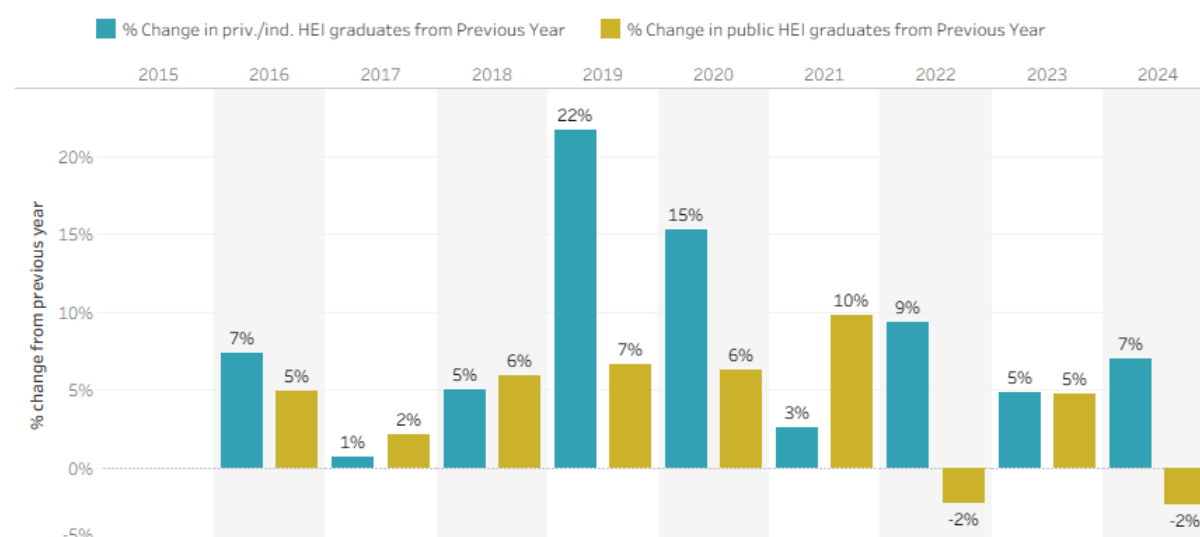
Figure 3 – Total numbers graduating at NFQ levels 8 and 9, private/independent vs public HEIs (2015–2024), including all award type



While the data suggest that the number of graduates attaining NFQ level 8 and 9 qualifications is increasing, this growth is more pronounced in private/independent HEIs (priv./ind. HEIs) than in their public counterparts. There are indications of a plateau in more recent years, and the spike in 2021 may reflect the impact of COVID-19.

Figure 4 below shows that year-on-year, the numbers graduating at NFQ levels 8 and 9 have shown consistent growth. Private/independent HEIs experienced an average growth of 8% in graduate numbers with peak increases in 2019 and 2020. In contrast, public HEIs recorded more modest increases over the same period (averaging 4%) and experienced declines in graduate numbers in 2022 and 2024 compared with the previous years.

Figure 4 – Percentage change from previous year in the total numbers graduating at NFQ levels 8 and 9 by public and private HEIs (2015–2024), including all award types



Awards at NFQ levels 8 and 9 include a range of qualifications, which are characterised differently by private/independent HEIs and QQI compared to public HEIs and the HEA (see table 1 and 2 for further information).

Figure 5 below presents the proportion of those graduating at NFQ levels 8 and 9 for each ‘award type’ within the overall total. On average, honours bachelor (HBD) and masters degrees together account for approximately 75% of all awards at these levels in the private/independent higher education sector, and 71% within public HEIs. The figure also indicates that:

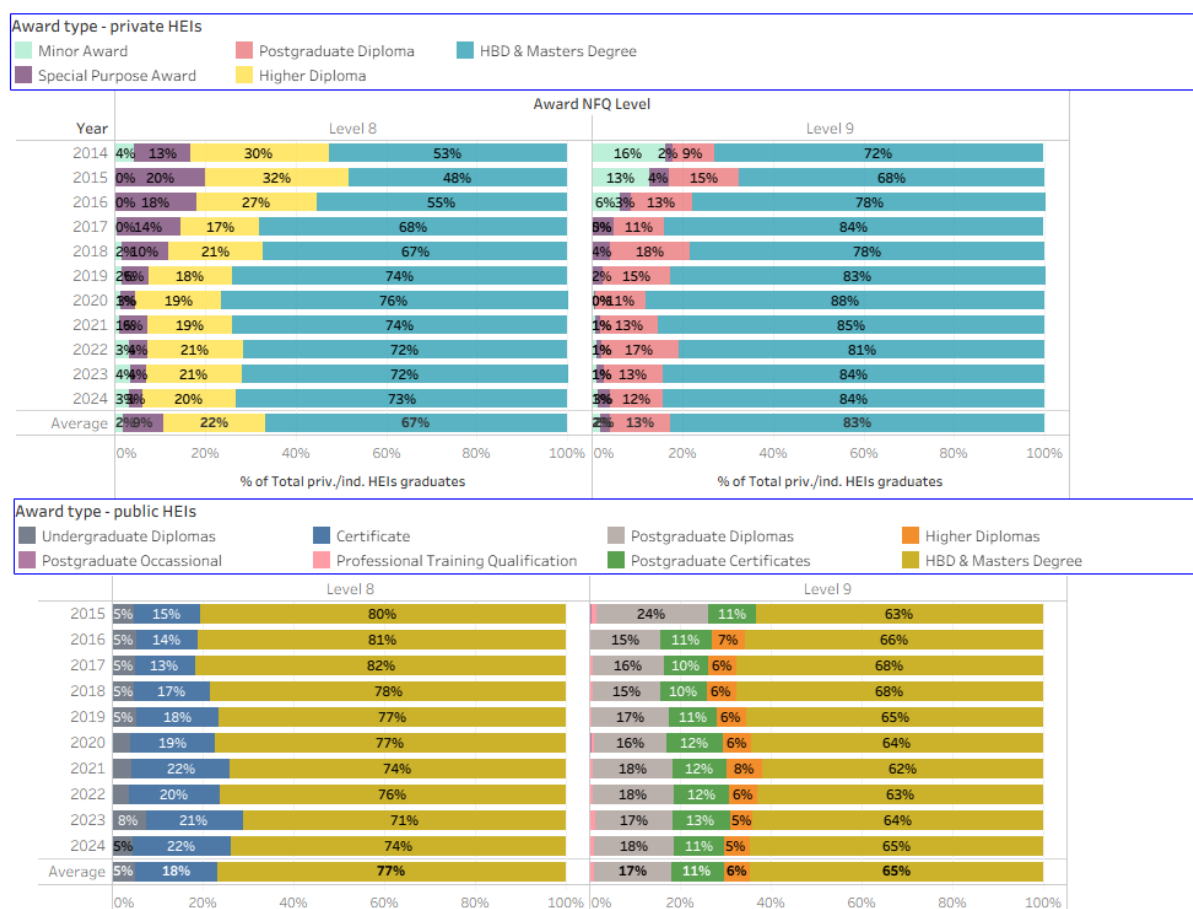
At level 8:

- The majority of awards in both sectors are HBDs.
- On average over the analysis period, HBDs have accounted for a higher proportion of awards at this level in the public sector compared to the private/independent sector.
- However, the proportion of HBD awards in the private/independent sector has increased over time and has been broadly comparable to the public sector for the past five years.

At level 9:

- A significantly higher—and growing—proportion of awards in the private/independent sector are masters degrees, compared to the equivalent proportion in the public sector.

Figure 5 – Proportion the total numbers graduating at NFQ levels 8 and 9, public/ private HEIs (2015–2024), by award type



For the purpose of this analysis, which focuses on HBD and masters degrees, we have grouped the different type of awards into three categories:

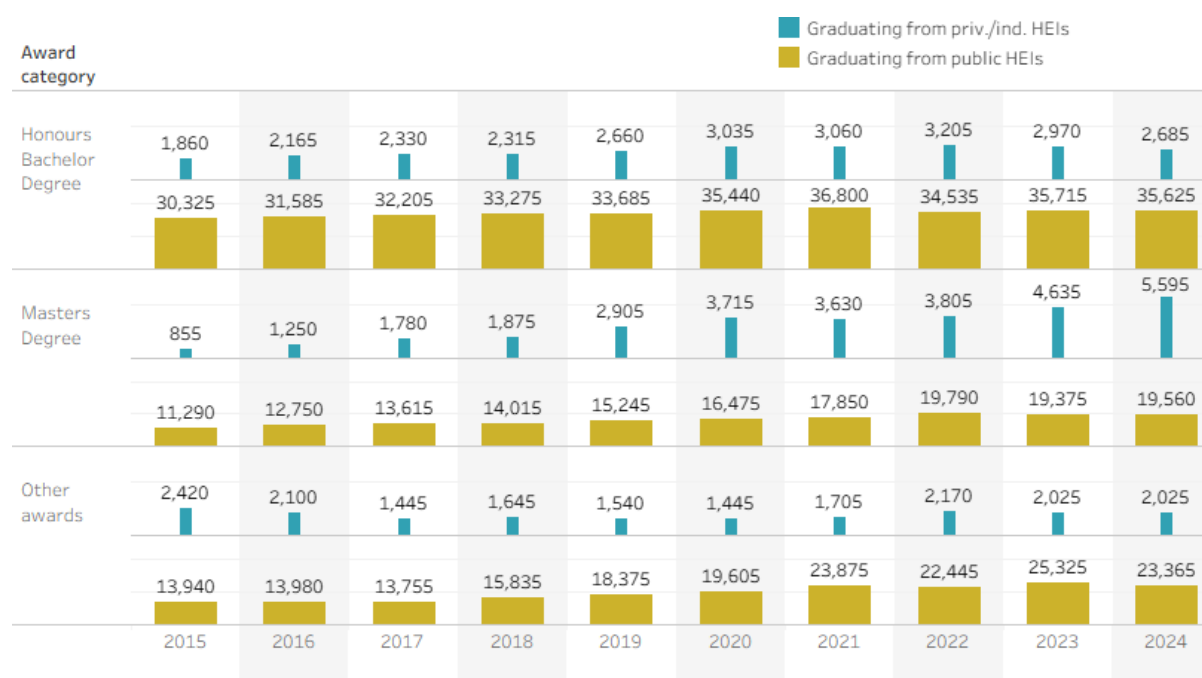
1. 'HBD'
2. 'Masters degree': taught and research masters
3. 'Other awards': the remaining awards at NFQ levels 8 and 9, i.e. those that are not HBD or masters degrees, which includes certificates, higher diplomas, postgraduate diplomas, postgraduate certificates, postgraduate occasional, professional training qualification, undergraduate diplomas, minor awards and special purpose awards (see tables 1 and 2 for further information).

The increase observed in numbers graduating has affected these award categories differently, with notable fluctuations in numbers over the ten-year period:

- Numbers graduating with HBD have declined in both public and private/independent HEIs starting from 2022.
- Numbers graduating with masters degrees show consistent and significant growth throughout the 10-year period, particularly in the private/independent sector. It is particularly notable that the private/independent sector now confers more masters degrees than HBD, marking a significant shift from the beginning of the period when HBD awards were predominant.

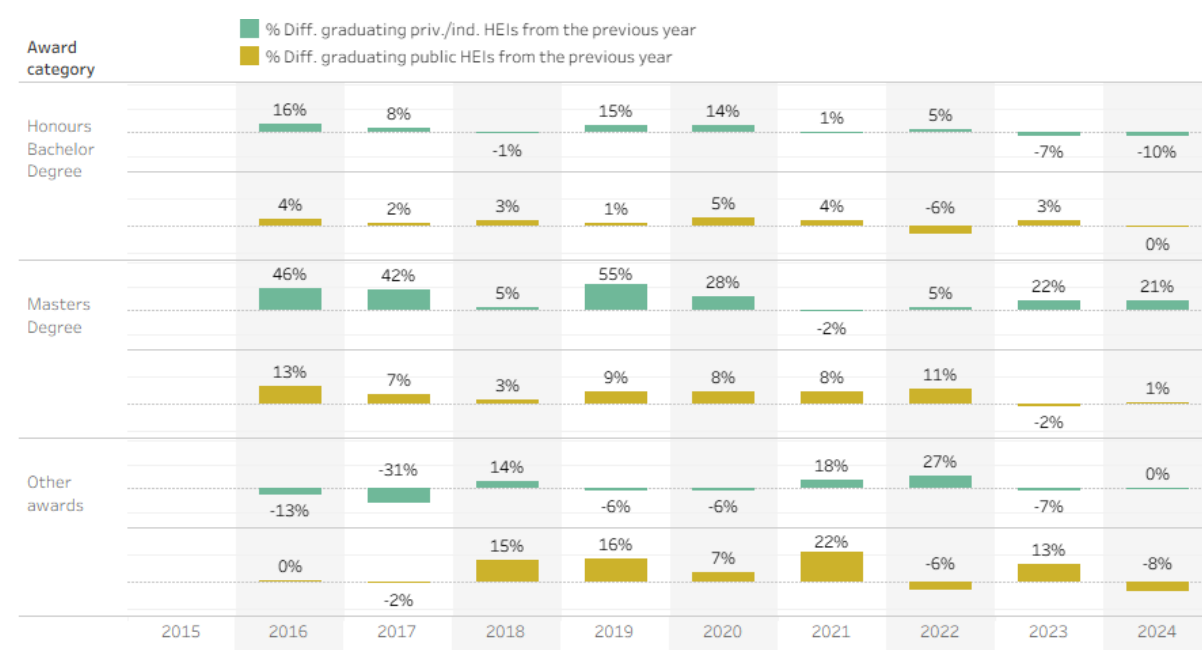
- The numbers graduating with 'other awards' is variable, with a steady increase in private/independent HEIs, and fluctuations in public HEIs, including a decline in 2017 followed by a recovery.

Figure 6 – Numbers graduating from public vs private/independent HEIs (2015–2024), by award type*

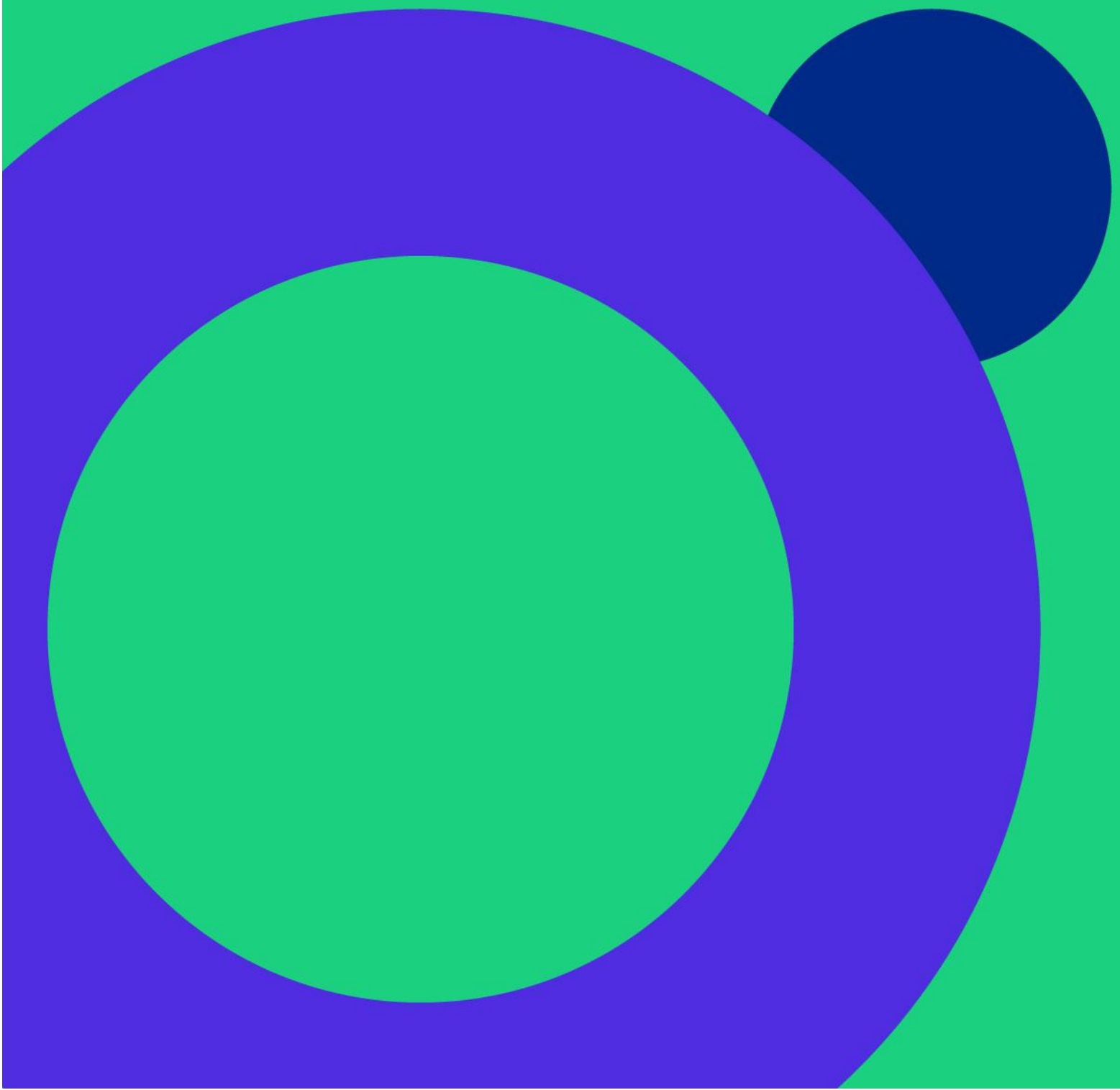


*The width of the bars represents the relative volume or number of graduates within each category

Figure 7 – Percentage change from previous year in the numbers graduating from private/independent vs public HEIs (2015–2024), by award category



**More detailed
analysis of trends
from 2015 to 2024**



2 More detailed analysis of trends from 2015 to 2024

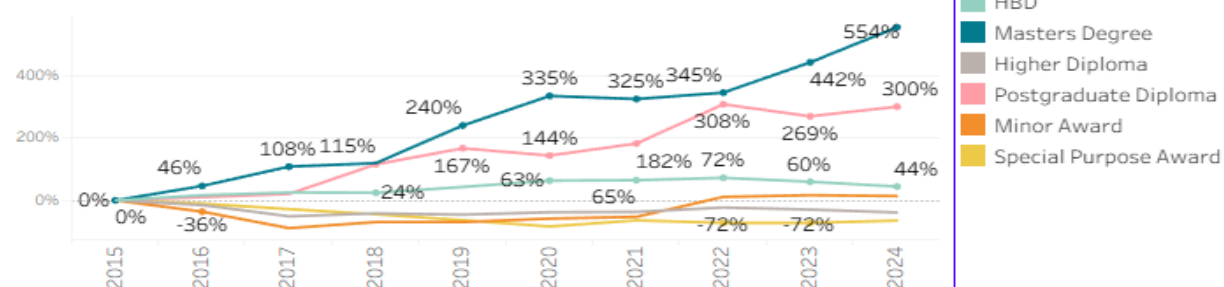
Between 2015 and 2024, the number of masters degree graduates from private/independent HEIs grew by 25%, compared to just 5% growth in honours bachelor degree (HBD) awards over the same ten-year period. This trend is less pronounced in the public sector: between 2015 and 2024, HBDs increased by only 2%, while masters degrees rose by 6%. The following analysis explores these trends further.

2.1 Overview

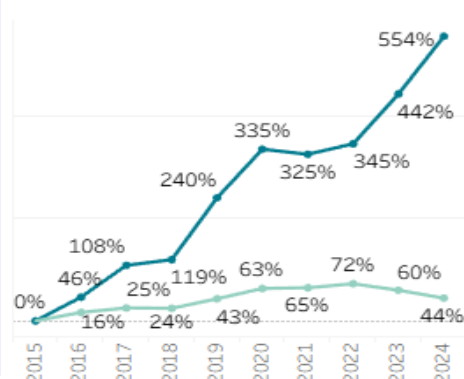
Dashboards 1 and 2 below present more detailed data on trends in the number of students attaining NFQ level 8 and 9 qualifications with a focus on HBD and masters degrees, for both the private/independent and public HEIs.

Dashboard 1 – Private/independent HEIs, analysis per graduation year – graduating at NFQ level 8 & level 9, graduation years 2015-2024

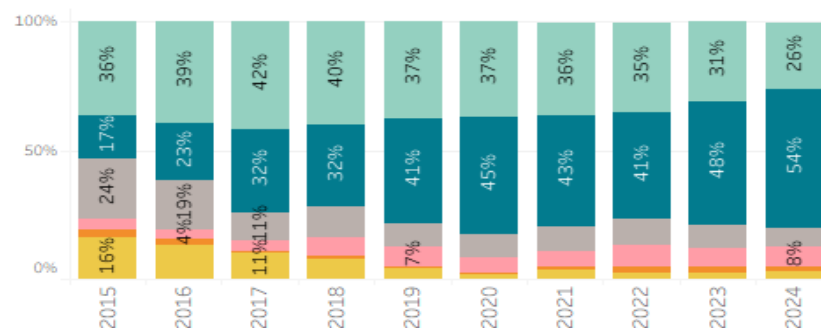
% increase from year 1 (2015)- numbers graduating private HEIs by award type



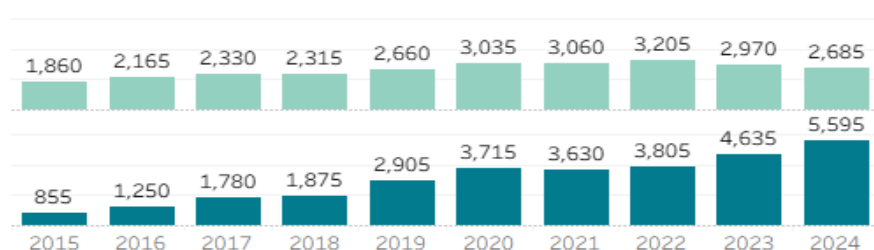
Focused view - HBD & Masters Degree



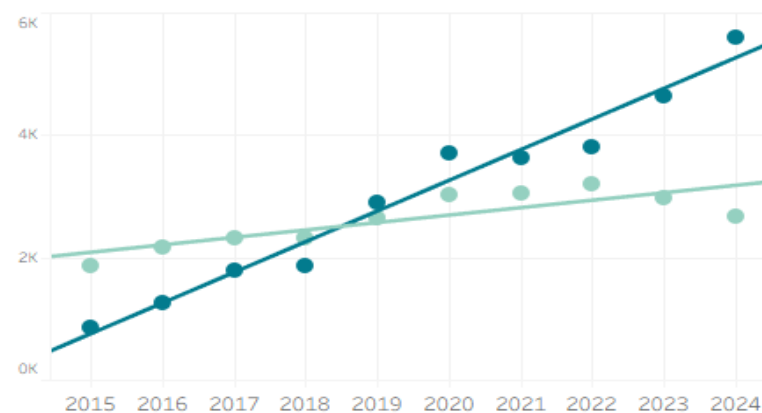
Proportion numbers graduating - priv./ind. HEIs all award type, levels 8 & 9,



Numbers graduating - priv./ind. HEIs



Trend Line, numbers graduating - priv./ind. HEIs



Description trend line:

- Equation HBD: # Private HEIs graduates = $121.485 \cdot \text{Year} + -242710$

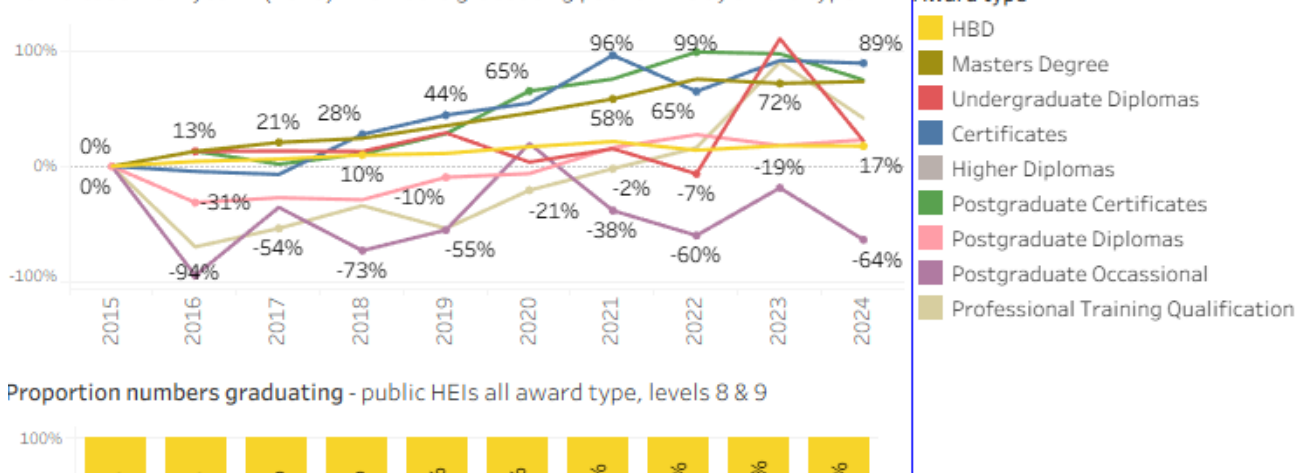
P-value: 0.0034439

- Equation Masters Degree: # Private HEIs graduates = $500.333 \cdot \text{Year} + -1.00742e+06$

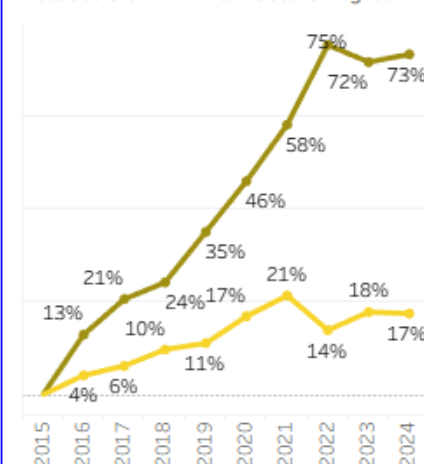
P-value: < 0.0001

Dashboard 2 – Public HEIs, analysis per graduation year - graduating NFQ level 8 & level 9, graduation years 2015-2024

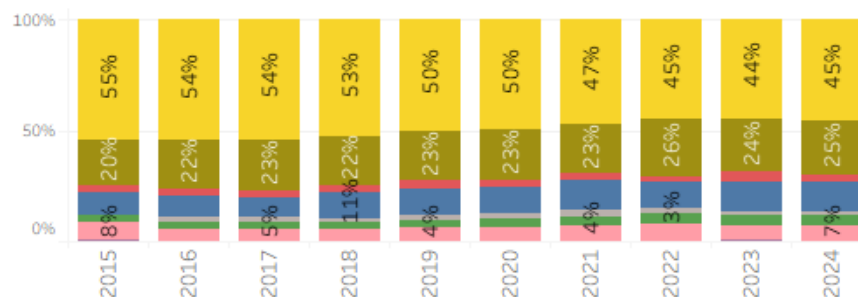
% increase from year 1 (2015) - numbers graduating public HEIs by award type



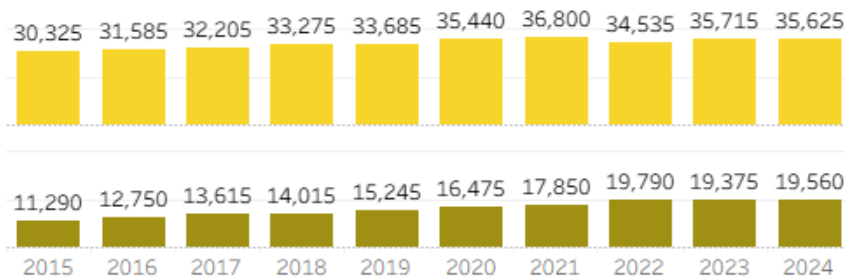
Focused view - HBD & Masters Degree



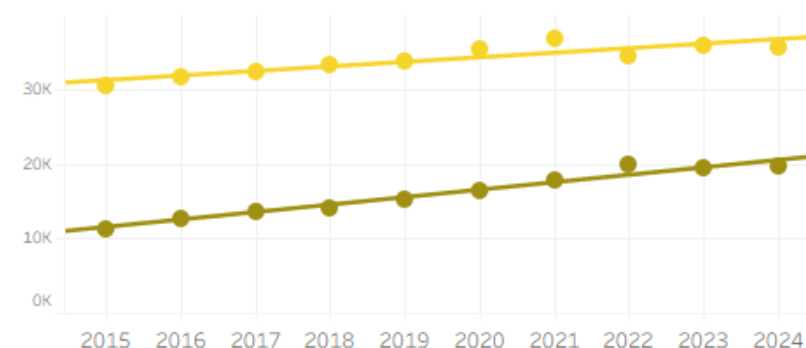
Proportion numbers graduating - public HEIs all award type, levels 8 & 9



Numbers graduating - public HEIs



Trend Line, numbers graduating - public HEIs



Description trend line:

- Equation HBD: # Public HEIs graduates = $609.533 \cdot \text{Year} + -1.19703e+06$

P-value: 0.0006038

- Equation Masters Degree: # Public HEIs graduates = $996.467 \cdot \text{Year} + -1.99637e+06$

P-value: < 0.0001

The analysis presented in Dashboards 1 and 2 indicates that the numbers graduating with masters degree continue to grow, with the increase particularly noticeable among private/independent HEIs.

In 2015, masters degrees in private/independent HEIs accounted for 17% of all award types at levels 8 and 9; by 2024, this share had risen to 54%. The line chart in the top-right corner of Dashboard 1 illustrates the percentage increase each year compared to the baseline year (2015). While HBDs have also grown, the rate of increase for master's degrees is approximately 500% higher than that of HBDs. This trend is further confirmed by the analysis in the bottom-right corner of Dashboard 1, the trendline suggests a shift in the private/independent sector towards postgraduate education, with growing numbers graduating at this level and a corresponding decline in undergraduate provision.

These trends are also evident in the public HEIs, although less pronounced. The share in the numbers graduating with masters degrees increased from 20% to 25% from 2015 to 2024, while for HBDs, the number of graduates declined from 55% to 45%. The number of masters degree graduates in 2024 was 73% higher than in 2015, compared to a 17% increase for HBD. This rate of growth is illustrated by the trend line analysis displayed in the bottom-right corners of the dashboards. It is also worth noting that patterns in the data suggest a potential plateau in the number of master's degree graduates from around 2021 onwards.

As shown in Dashboards 1 and 2 the numbers graduating with HBDs rose steadily from 2015 until around 2021, after which they stabilised or began to decline. To assess whether a breakpoint in the numbers graduating with HBD occurred around 2021, we applied the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) to fit a piecewise linear model⁸. The lowest AIC indicates a breakpoint at year 2021, splitting the trend into two distinct phases in the numbers graduating with HBD: an initial period of growth (between 2015 and 2020) followed by a phase of plateau or stabilisation (from 2021 onwards). This pattern is consistent across both sectors, private/independent and public.

2.2 Ratio of numbers graduating with HBD to masters degrees

The analysis provided in Figure 8 presents the ratio of masters degrees to HBD awarded per year. A ratio greater than 1 indicates that the number of masters degree graduating is higher relative to numbers graduating with HBD. Conversely, a ratio less than 1 means the numbers graduating with masters degree is lower compared to those graduating with HBD.

In private/independent HEIs, the ratio exceeded 1 in 2019 and in the following years, reaching its peak in 2024.

⁸ The AIC methodology identifies whether breakpoints occur in time-series trends and pinpoints their location. We applied this methodology to the numbers graduating with HBD in both, private/independent and public HEIs. It involves splitting the data into two segments: one before and one after each year in the period under analysis, then fitting separate trendlines for each segment and year. A lower AIC value, derived from the minimum Residual Sum of Squares (RSS), indicates the most plausible breakpoint. A lower AIC suggests that a model with two distinct periods provides a better statistical fit and reveals where the structural change occurs.

For linear regression, the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) is calculated as followed:

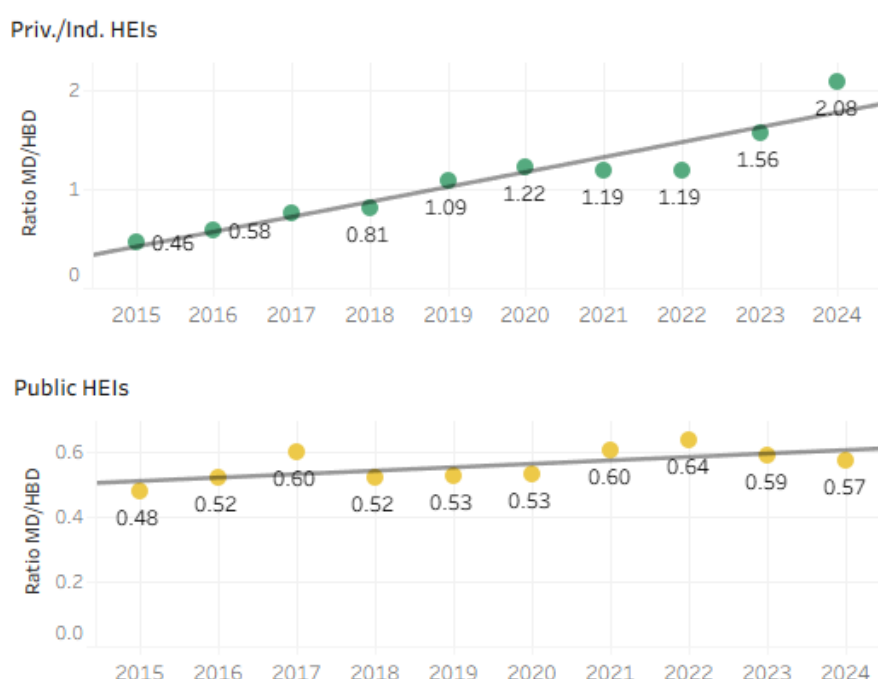
$$AIC = n \cdot \ln\left(\frac{RSS}{n}\right) + 2k$$

Where:

- n = number of observations (10).
- RSS = residual sum of squares (RSS for each segment: Total RSS = RSS Segment 1 + RSS Segment 2).
- k= number of parameters (4, two slopes + two intercepts)

In public HEIs, the ratio never surpassed 1 during the period analysed, although it is increasing.

Figure 8 – Ratio: Numbers graduating with masters degree relative to numbers graduating at HBD, private/independent vs public HEIs (2015–2024)



2.3 Analysis by ISCED broad field of learning

Dashboards 3 and 4 below present an analysis of the numbers graduating with HBDs and masters degrees by ISCED broad field of learning and graduation year. They show that public HEIs offer a more diversified range of programmes, across all broad fields of learning, compared to private/independent HEIs.

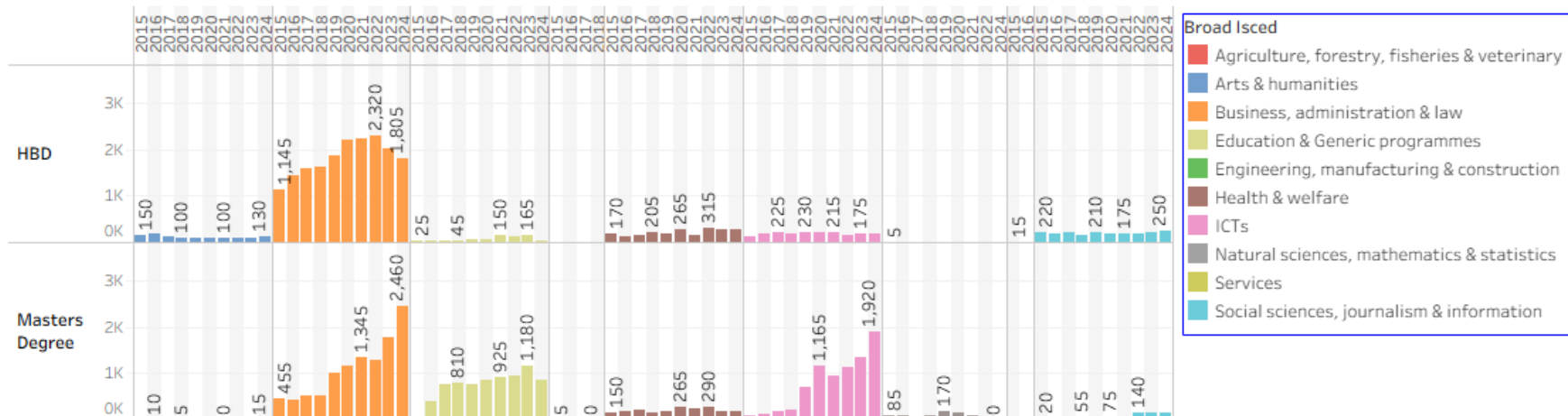
The analysis in Dashboard 3 shows that in private/independent HEIs there has been an increase in the number graduating with masters degrees in the fields of ‘business, administration & law’ and ‘ICT’, while awarding at this level for other fields of learning and HBDs have remained relatively stable over the period of analysis. The growth in the numbers graduating with masters degrees within ‘business, administration & law’ appears to coincide with a decline in HBDs awards in this sector within this field of learning.

For public HEIs, the numbers graduating with masters degree have grown consistently across all fields of learning, except for ‘education & generic programmes’. In contrast, the numbers graduating with HBDs have remained stable over time when analysed by ISCED broad fields of learning.

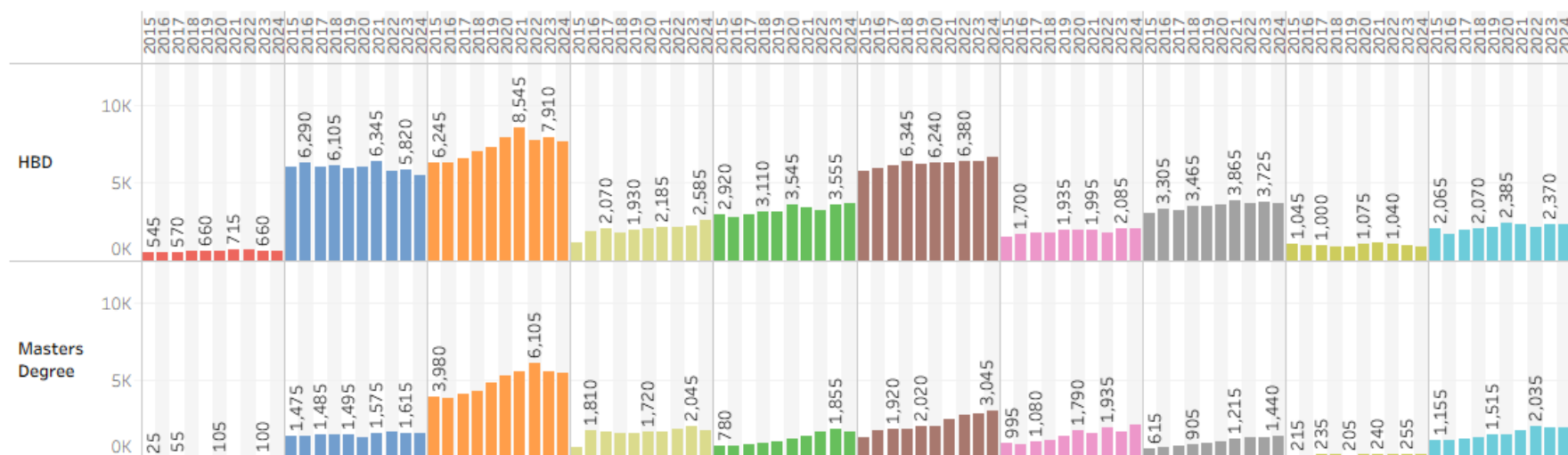
Dashboard 4 shows the share of graduates by ISCED broad field of learning over time. In private/independent HEIs, a large proportion of graduates are concentrated in ‘business, administration, and law’. Masters degree graduates are increasingly represented in the ‘ICT’ field of learning, contributing significantly to the overall growth in masters degrees. In public HEIs, the distribution of graduates by field of learning has remained relatively stable throughout the 10-year analysis period for both HBDs and masters degrees.

Dashboard 3 – Numbers graduating with HBD and masters degrees by ISCED broad field of learning, private/independent and public HEIs (2015–2024)

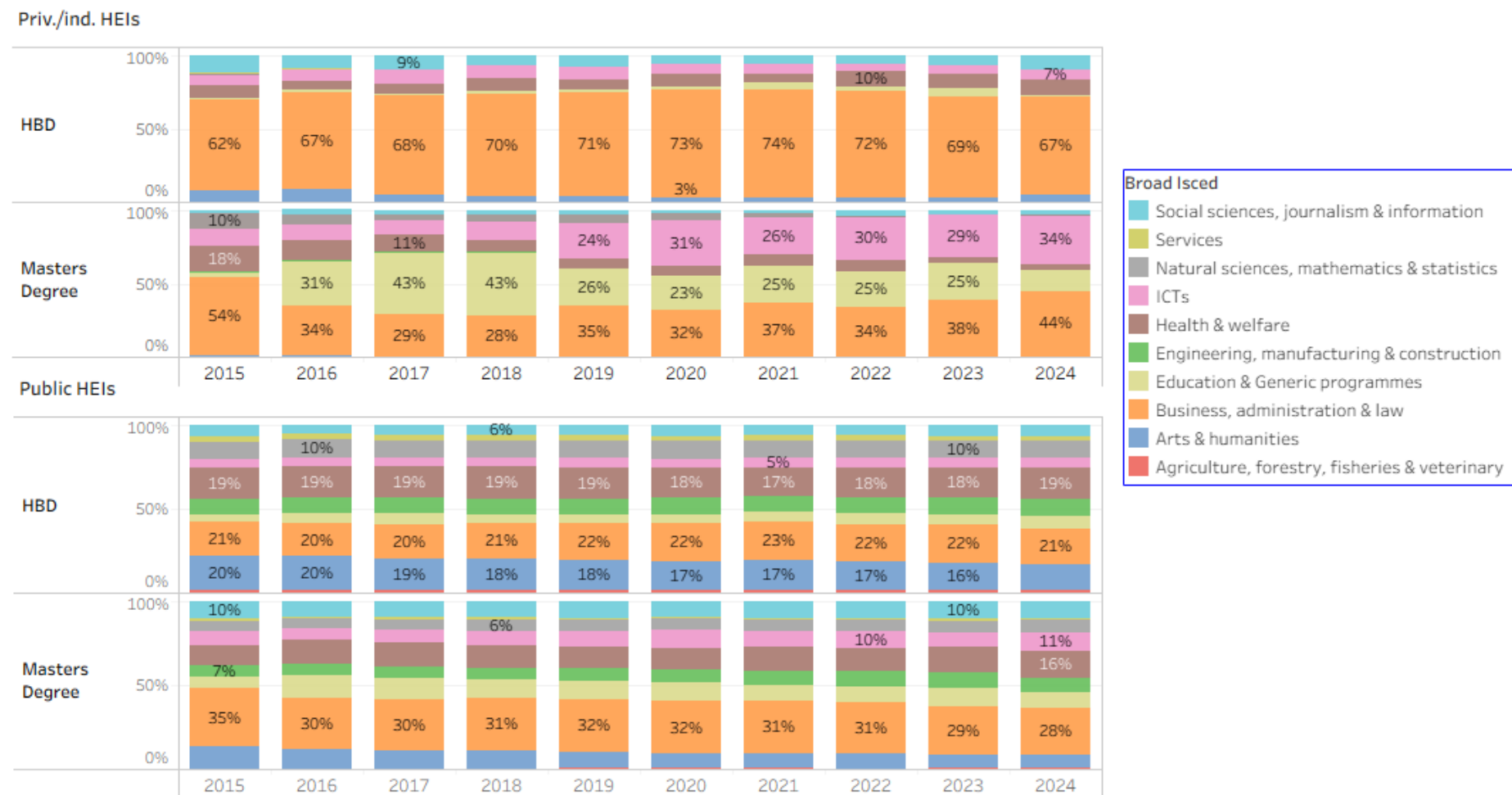
Priv/ind. HEIs



Public HEIs



Dashboard 4 – Share of numbers graduating with HBD and masters degree by ISCED broad field of learning, private/independent vs public HEIs (2015–2024)



2.4 Graduate profile

This section outlines the gender, age, and nationality distribution of those graduating with HBD and masters degree across both private/independent and public HEIs.

2.4.1 Gender

Figure 9 illustrates graduate numbers by gender, indicating that female graduates outnumber their male counterparts. This gender gap is more pronounced in private/independent HEIs for HBD programmes. For masters degrees, the proportion of female to male is similar across private/independent and public HEIs. In public HEIs, gender distribution remains consistent for both HBD and master's degrees, with approximately 45% male and 55% female attaining either qualification.

Figure 9 – Numbers and proportion of graduates by gender: private/independent vs public HEIs for all graduation years (2015–2024), HBD and masters degree

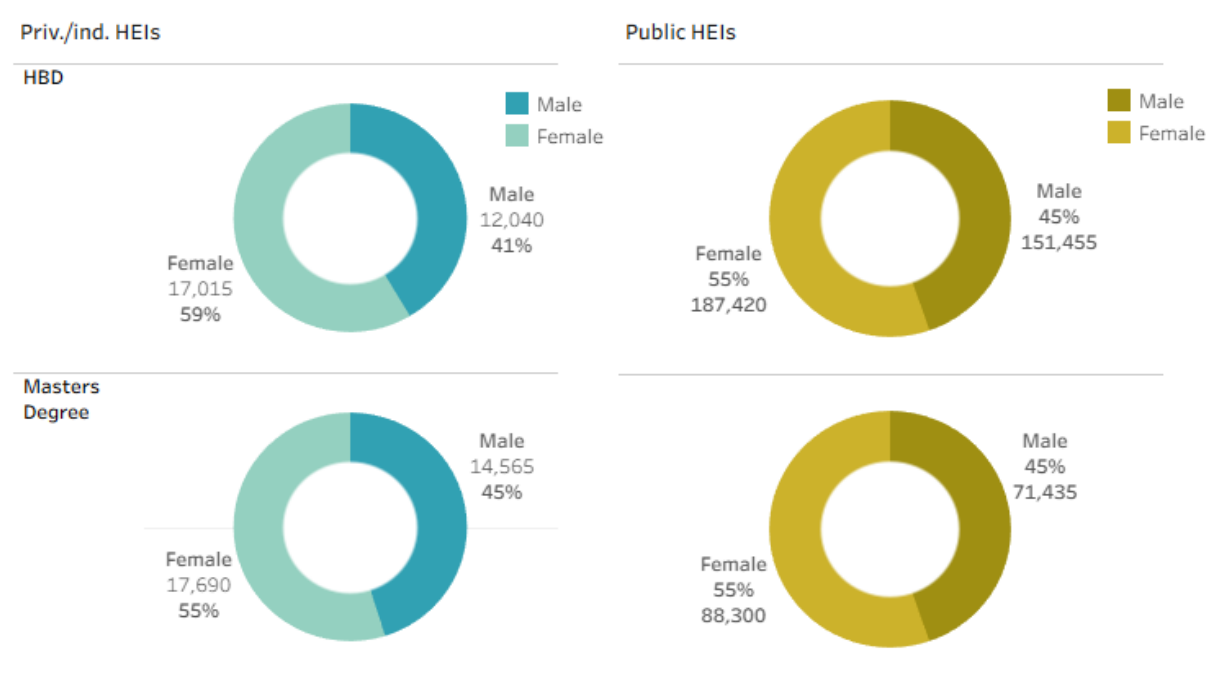


Figure 10 below shows that the gender gap is consistently widening in private/independent HEIs for HBDs. In 2015, 45% of graduates were male, compared to just 37% in 2024. A similar trend is observed for masters degrees, although the gap is less pronounced: in 2015, 54% of those attaining masters degrees were male, falling to 45% in 2024.

In public HEIs, the gender gap is also widening for both HBD and masters degrees, though not as markedly as in the private/independent sector. For HBDs, the proportion of male graduates declined from 47% in 2015 to 42% in 2024. For master's degrees, the figures were 48% in 2015 and 44% in 2024.

These findings suggest potential policy implications, particularly the need to develop targeted strategies to encourage greater male participation in HE programmes⁹. This would be especially

⁹ Data from the EU '[Education and training monitor 2025](#)' report suggests that the gender gap in EU countries is on an average 11.2 percentage point and most EU countries recorded an increase in the gender gap. The report highlights that the dynamics behind this gender gap are complex and multi-faceted but that '[...] women gain more from

relevant in fields of learning traditionally associated with specific genders as shown in Figure 11.

Figure 10 – Proportion of graduates by gender: private/independent vs public HEIs by graduation year (2015–2024), HBD and masters degree

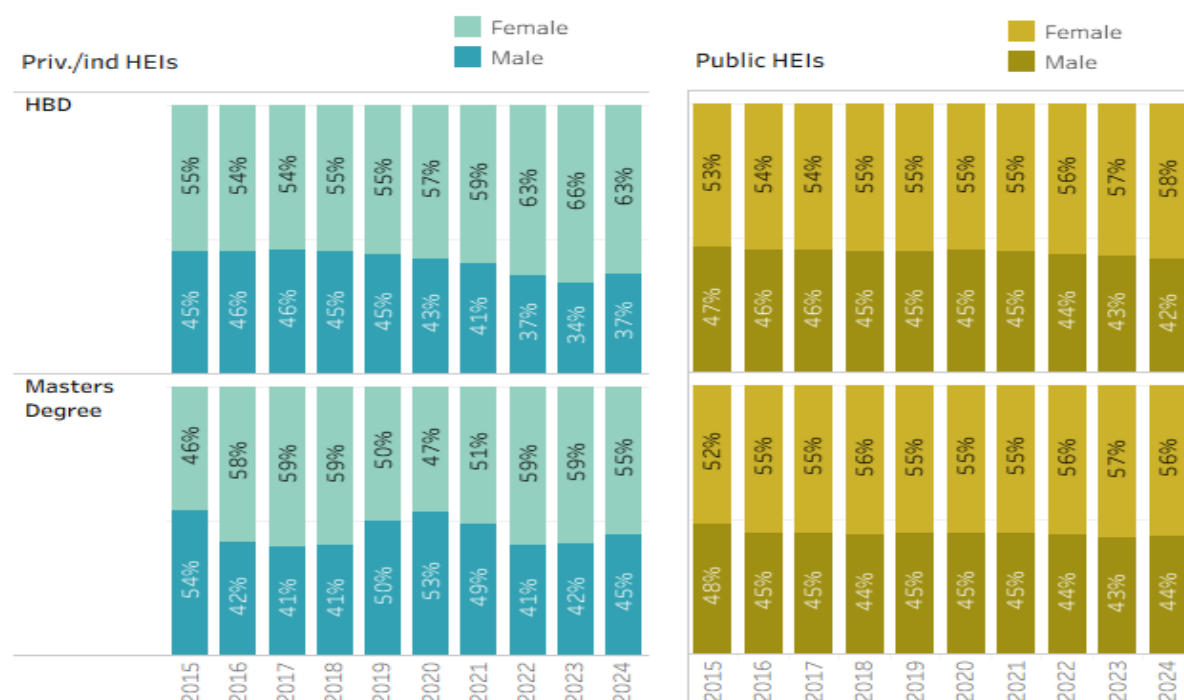
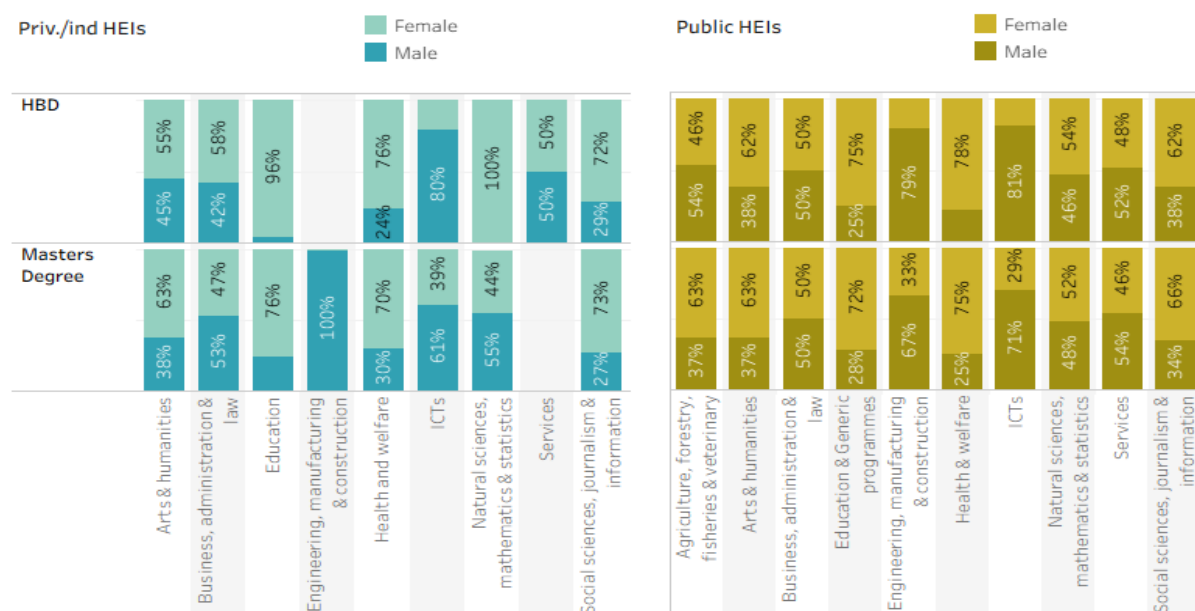


Figure 11 – Proportion of graduates by gender and ISCED broad field of learning: private/independent vs public HEIs by graduation year (2015–2024), HBD and masters degree



pursuing higher tertiary education due to the substantially higher unemployment rates they face with just lower level of educational attainment when compared with men’.

2.4.2 Age

Figures 12 and 13 show the age distribution of those graduating with HBDs and masters degrees. QQI public-facing data categorises learners into 10-year age bands¹⁰, while HEA uses two categories: under 23 and 24+. For comparability, QQI data has been regrouped into two similar categories: '24 and under' and '25+'. It is important to note that the QQI '24 and under' group includes learners aged 24, making this group slightly older than the HEA 'under 23' category.

Among private/independent HEIs, a higher proportion of those graduating with HBD are aged 24 or older, whereas public HEIs display a younger profile, with the majority of those graduating with HBDs aged 23 or under. For masters degrees in public HEIs, only 15% of graduates fall into the under-23 category.

Figure 12 – Numbers and proportion of graduates by age group: private/independent vs public HEIs for all graduation years (2015–2024), HBD and masters degree

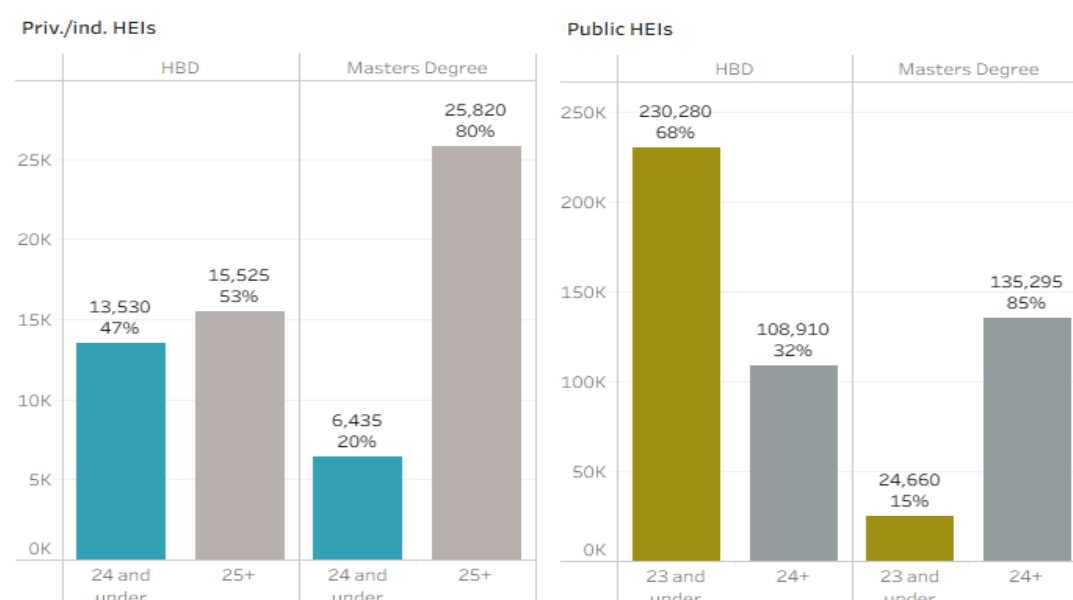


Figure 13 below indicates contrasting trends between private/independent and public HEIs. In private/independent institutions, those obtaining HBDs are becoming older, while the age profile of those obtaining masters degree remains relatively stable. In 2015, 52% of those obtaining HBDs in private/independent HEIs were '24 and under' years of age; by 2024, this proportion had declined to 39%. For masters degrees, the share '24 and under' decreased slightly from 84% in 2015 to 80% in 2024.

Conversely, in public HEIs, the trend is reversed: those obtaining HBDs are becoming younger, with the proportion under 24 increasing from 62% in 2015 to 71% in 2024. For masters degrees, the share of the '24 and under' category fell from 17% to 14% over the same period.

¹⁰ QQI collects data at the individual learner level for certification purposes, including the learner's exact age at the time of certification. However, for GDPR compliance, QQI only reports age in 10-year bands.

Figure 13 – Proportion of graduates by age group: private/independent vs public HEIs by graduation year (2015–2024), HBD and masters degree

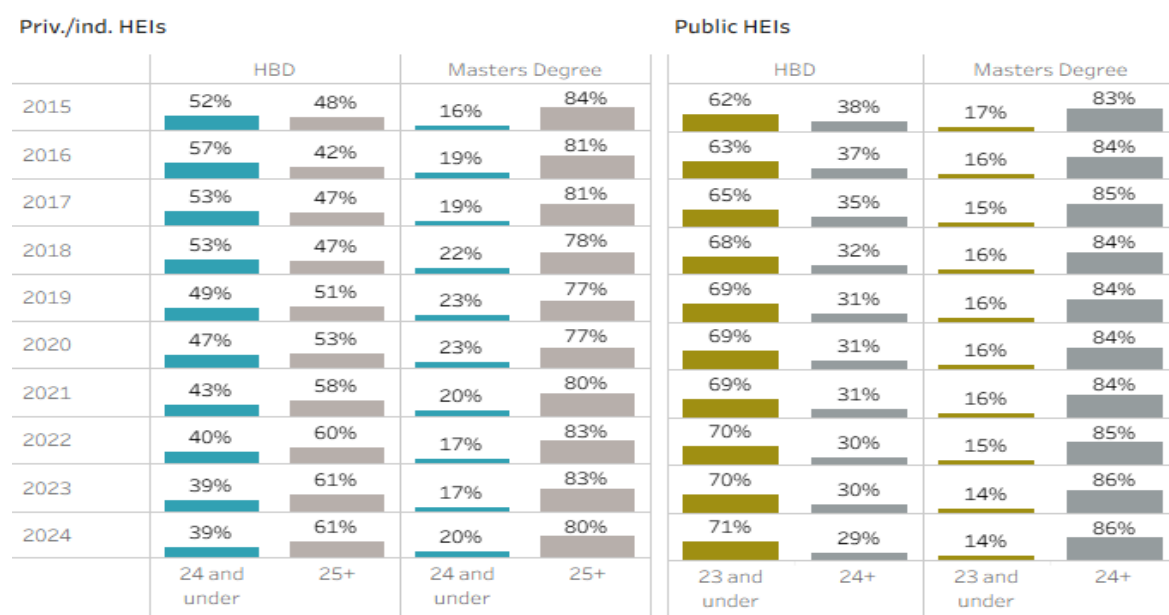
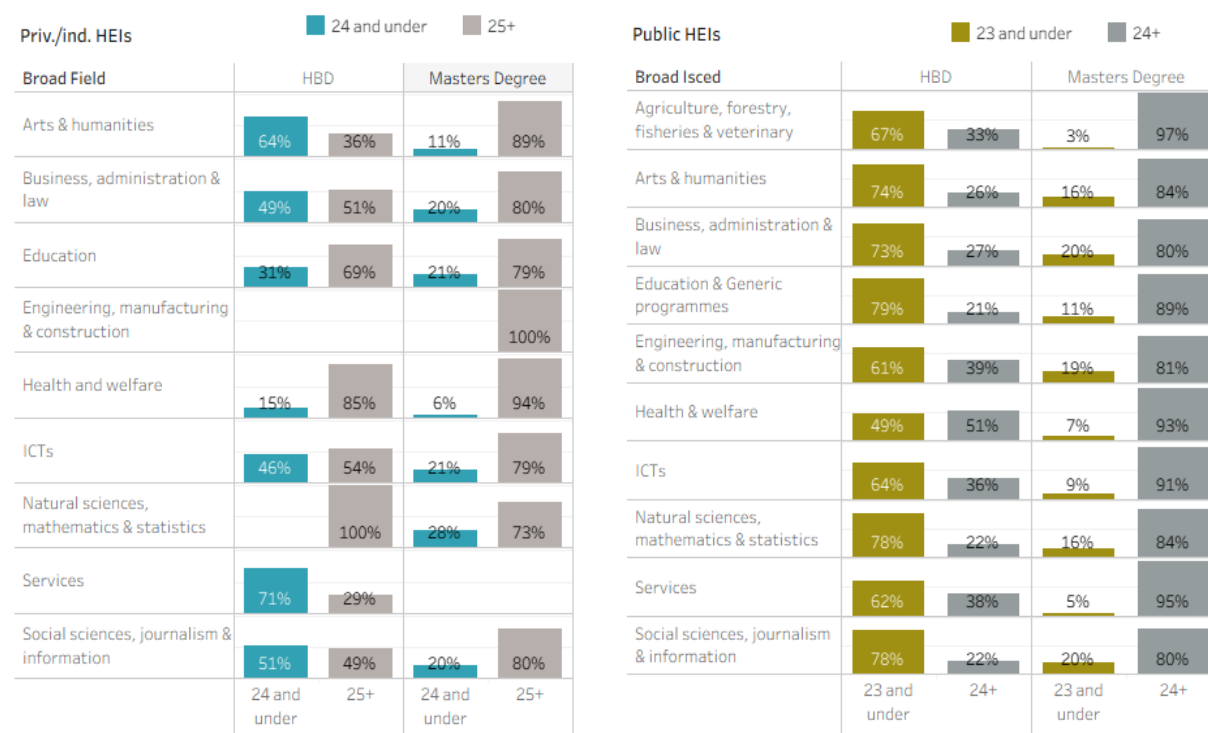


Figure 14 below illustrates the distribution of those with HBD and masters degrees by age group and ISCED broad field of learning. The data show that the distribution varies by field of learning. For example, in both private/independent and public higher education institutions, graduates obtaining an HBD in the ‘health and welfare’ field of learning tend to be older relative to those in other fields.

Figure 14 – Proportion of graduates by age group and broad field of learning: private/independent vs public HEIs by graduation year (2015–2024), HBD and masters degree

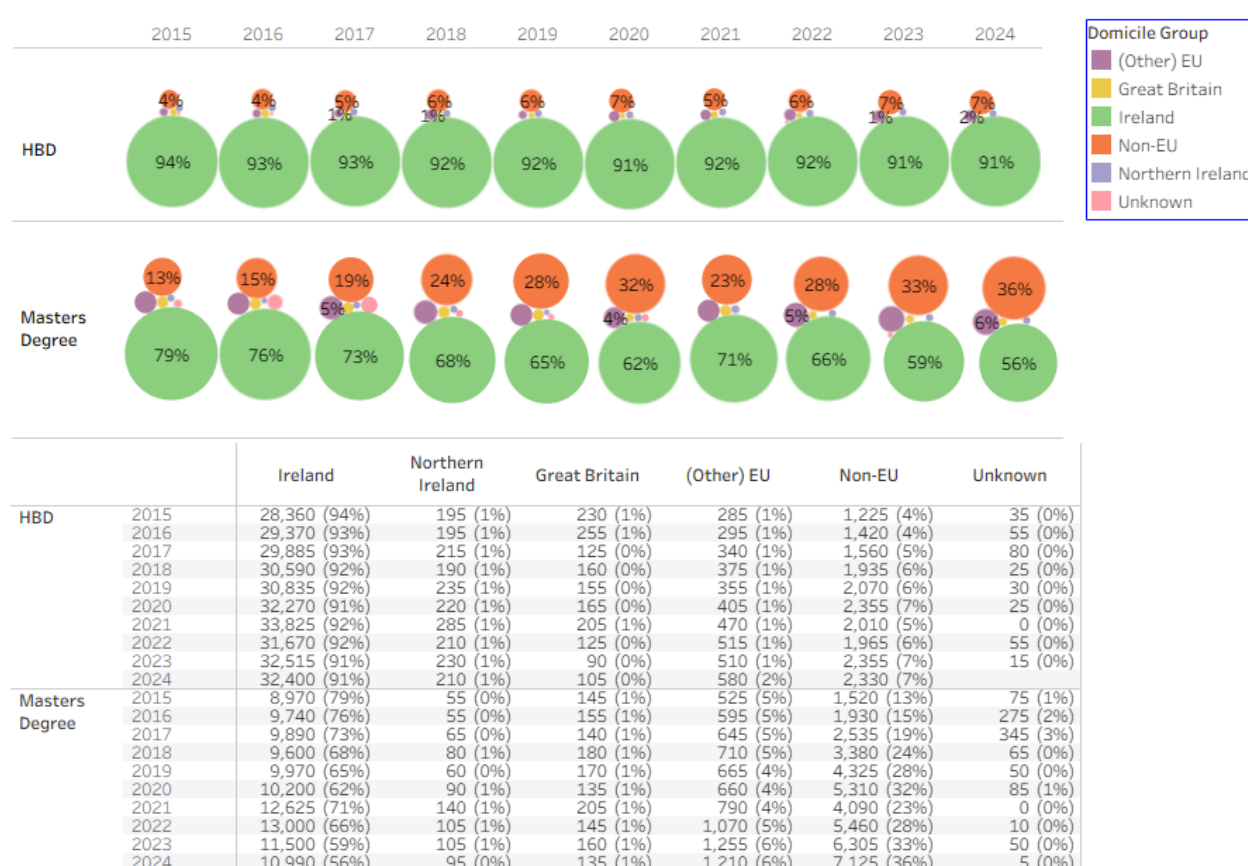


2.4.3 Domicile group

QQI certification data does not include information on the nationality of award holders; therefore, this analysis is limited to HEA data for public HEIs.

Figure and Table 15 show that the numbers graduating from countries outside of Ireland at both HBD and masters degree levels have increased, with the exception of graduates from Great Britain. The growth is particularly pronounced among non-EU students in masters programmes: in 2015, they represented 13% of all domicile groups, rising to 36% by 2024. In contrast, the proportion of international graduates at HBD level has remained stable across all domicile groups.

Figure and Table 15 – Numbers and proportion graduating by domicile groups: public HEIs by graduation year (2015–2024), HBD and masters degree



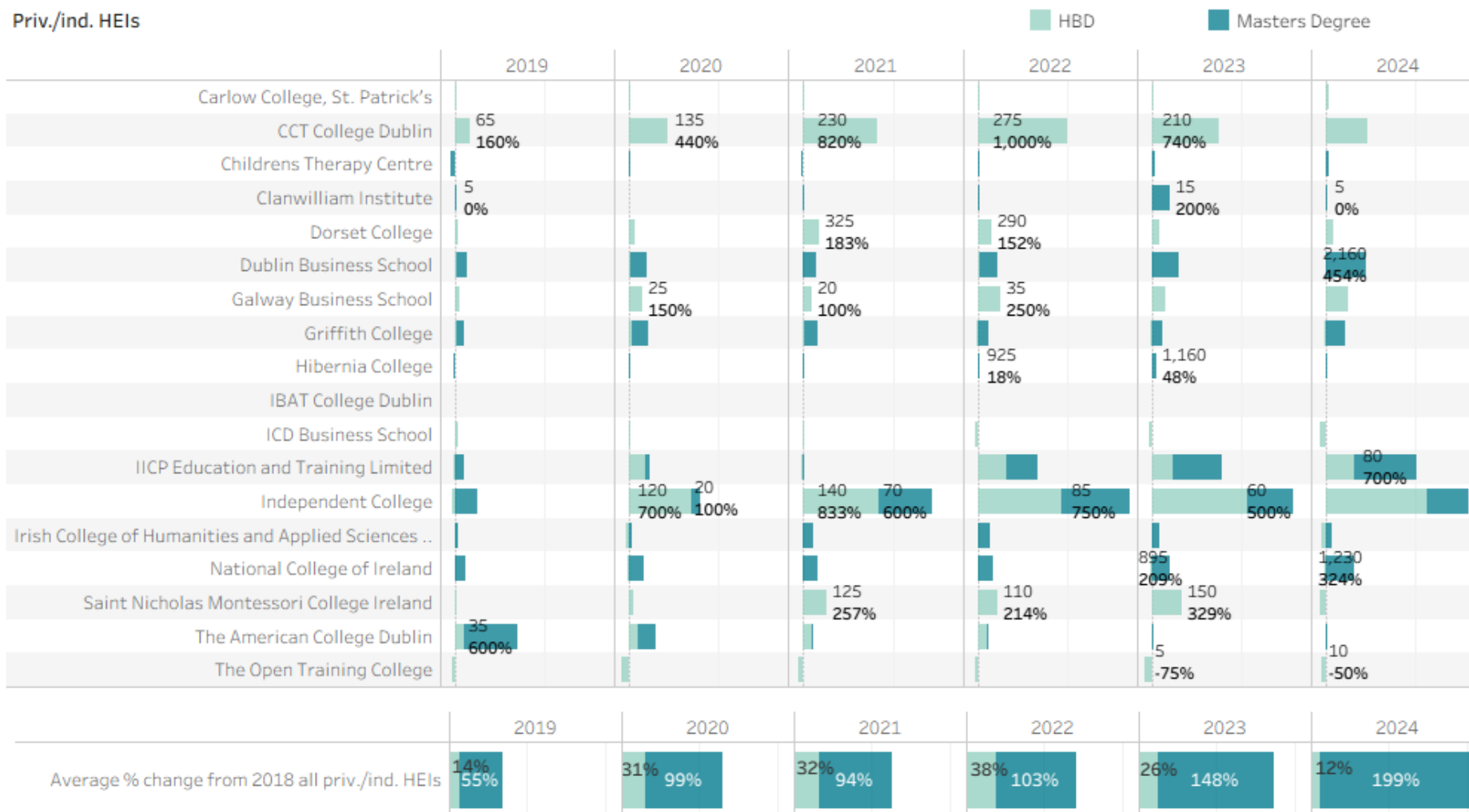
2.5 Provider analysis

Dashboards 5 and 6 provide an analysis by HEI, focusing on the seven most recent graduation years (2018–2024) of the study. We reduce the number of years to simplify the analysis. It examines how the numbers graduating with HBDs and master's degrees have increased or decreased over this period by calculating the percentage difference relative to the base year, i.e. 2018, by HEI. For example, the numbers graduating in 2019 are compared to 2018, 2020 to 2018, and so forth.

Dashboard 5 presets the analysis for private/independent HEIs, indicating that, in almost all institutions, the numbers graduating have increased for both HBDs and masters degrees in all years compared to 2018. On average, the growth is more pronounced for masters programmes. However, this increase is not uniform across all institutions and appears to be concentrated in a small number of providers which account for the largest share of growth in masters degrees. Conversely, some institutions show only marginal increases or remain stable. This uneven growth across private/independent HEIs may indicate limited diversification of postgraduate programmes, particularly those targeting older learners or international students. It may also reflect capacity constraints among smaller providers.

Dashboard 6 presents the analysis for public HEIs. The data again show a greater increase in the numbers graduating with masters degrees compared to those graduating with HBDs. The percentage growth from 2018 among public HEIs appears more evenly distributed than among private/independent HEIs, although there are some unusual patterns driven by offerings from three specific institutions.

Dashboard 5 – Actual numbers (rounded) and percentage change relative to graduation year 2018 in the numbers graduating with HBD and masters degree by private/independent HEIs (2019-2024)



Dashboard 6 – Actual numbers (rounded) and percentage change relative to graduation year 2018 in the numbers graduating with HBD and masters degree by public HEIs (2019-2024)

