

Chapter 6: Participation in Vocational Education and Training

This chapter reports on participation of young people aged 15–19 in Vocational Education and Training (VET).

Key Facts:

- In Australia in 2023:
 - 26.8% of 15–19-year-olds completed at least one unit of competency at AQF Certificate II or above, up from 26.3% in 2022.
 - Almost half (49.2%) of qualifications gained by 15–19-year-olds were at AQF level II and 33.6% were at AQF level III.
- At the national level, the long-term trend in the proportion of 15–19-year-olds participating in VET was downward, from 29.6% in 2015 to 26.8% in 2023.

Vocational Education and Training (VET) is a part of the Australian tertiary education system. It is a type of education that prepares students for the current and future workforce by focusing on the skills and technical knowledge required for a particular job function. VET offers standalone qualifications as well as learning while in paid employment.

The Australian VET sector provides nationally recognised training and qualifications for employment for those entering or already engaged in the workforce. Competency standards (units of competency or accredited modules) for VET qualifications in different industries and occupations are included in national industry-developed training packages or accredited courses, which also define qualifications in each industry.¹

The National Skills Agreement endorsed by the National Cabinet on 31 August 2022 articulates a vision for a VET sector that ‘provides high-quality, responsive and accessible education and training to boost productivity and support students to obtain the skills they need to participate and prosper in the modern economy’.

While all governments have a shared role in national policy leadership for VET, the state and territory governments and schools have responsibility for determining arrangements for delivery within their jurisdictions.² These arrangements are summarised in the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) [VOCEDplus](#) website.

¹ Nationally recognised VET qualifications are detailed on a national register at [training.gov.au](#). The requirements for each level of VET qualification are set out in the [Australian Qualifications Framework \(AQF\)](#), which also provides guidelines for SSCE (Year 12) qualifications and qualifications in the higher education sector.

² For example, the VCE Vocational Major (VCE VM) and the Victorian Pathways Certificate (VPC) were introduced in Victorian secondary schools in 2023. All government secondary schools in Victoria now offer the VCE VM to their students, with 25 schools delivering a vocational senior secondary certificate for the first time in 2023.

Participation of young people in VET

The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Declaration commits Australian governments to “supporting senior years of schooling” and “embedding pathways for learning throughout life and supporting effective transitions”.

KPM 1(f), participation of 15-19-year-olds in VET, is an indicator of the success of schools in supporting students throughout schooling and in their transitions to post-school education and work.

In addition to KPM 1(f), education ministers have approved 2 program measures for young people’s participation and attainment in VET, disaggregated by industry area and by qualification level.

Key performance measure 1(f)

Participation of young people, including secondary students, in VET

Proportion of the population aged 15–19 years who in the calendar year successfully completed at least one unit of competency as part of a VET qualification at AQF Certificate II or above

The KPM for participation in VET includes all 15–19-year-old VET students, regardless of if they are enrolled in school, as a proportion of the 15–19-year-old population. The specification for participation is the completion of at least one unit of competency (or accredited course module) in a VET qualification at AQF Certificate II or above.³

The specification of the successful completion of a unit of competency in the KPM is a marker for genuine participation in a VET course. This is opposed to an initial enrolment, which may not be followed through. It is not intended that this KPM be seen as a measure of attainment.

In Australia in 2023, 26.8% of 15-19-year-olds completed at least one unit of competency at AQF Certificate II or above, up from 26.3% in 2022. Figure 6.1 shows national data for this KPM for the period 2013–2023.⁴

There is a break in the time series between 2013 and 2014, when reporting requirements for VET providers were extended to include privately funded accredited VET training. This change contributes to the higher numbers and proportions of 15–19-year-olds reported as participating in VET in 2014 than in previous years.

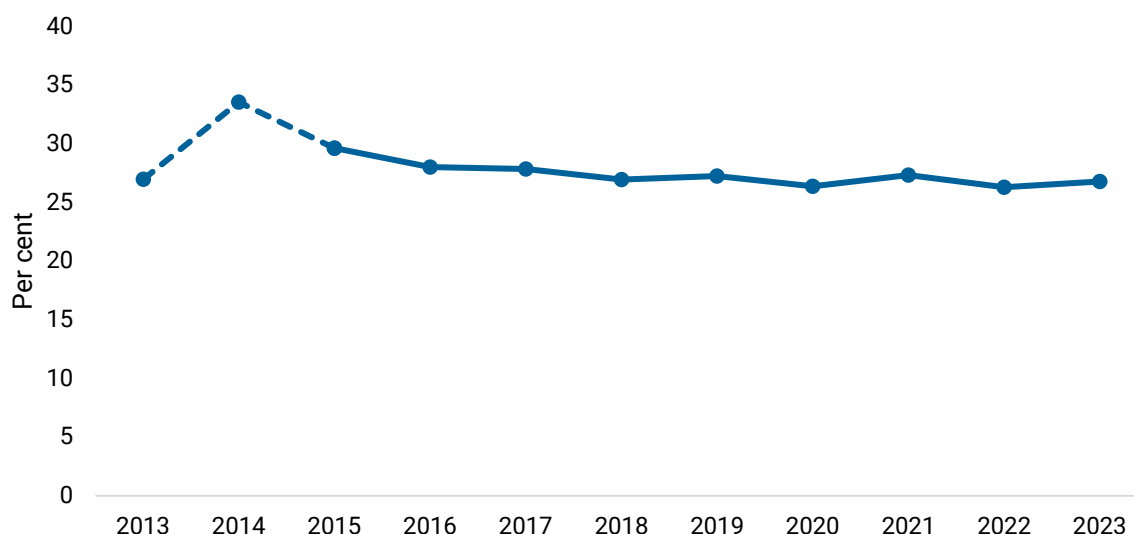
There is a further break in the series between 2014 and 2015, following the introduction of a national USI for VET students. The USI allows all training activity undertaken by a student to be electronically linked, irrespective of where the training took place. This enabled the removal of many duplicate student entries from 2015, resulting in reductions in the KPM and a break from data reported for 2014.⁵

³ AQF Certificate II is regarded as entry-level training for employment.

⁴ Data for this KPM is revised annually as the latest year is always a preliminary estimate. Data by state and territory, disaggregated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, sex, geolocation and language background is provided in the National Report on Schooling data portal.

⁵ However, as data for many VET in Schools students was provided without a USI, some duplication may occur in the count of these students.

Figure 6.1: Proportion of 15–19-year-olds successfully completing at least one unit of competency at AQF Certificate II or above (%), Australia, 2013–2023 (%)



Notes:

'Unit of competency' includes training package units of competency and nationally accredited VET modules. A successfully completed unit of competency or module includes competencies with an outcome of competency achieved or pass or recognition of prior learning granted.

From January 2014, all Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), including private providers, were required to collect and report full Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard (AVETMISS) data on all nationally accredited training. This represents a break in the series.

From January 2015, VET students have been allocated a Unique Student Identifier (USI). From 2015 onwards, NCVER has applied a de-duplication process, using the USI, to better estimate the counts of students participating in VET activity. This change constitutes another break in the time series between 2014 and 2015. Data from 2015 is consistent year-on-year (and data prior to 2015 is represented by a dashed line). For further information, please refer to [Counting Students in Total VET students and courses](#).

Sources: NCVER, National VET in Schools Collection 2013–2023; NCVER, National VET Provider Collection 2013–2023; ABS, *National, state and territory population December 2023* (release date 13/06/2024).

Table 6.1 provides further detail with the number and proportion of 15–19-year-olds who successfully completed at least one unit of competency as a part of a VET qualification at AQF Certificate II or above. There is a long-term downward trend of 0.3 percentage points per annum from 2015 to 2023.

Table 6.1: Number and proportion of 15–19-year-olds who successfully completed at least one unit of competency as a part of a VET qualification at AQF Certificate II or above, Australia, 2013–2023

	Number of 15–19-year-olds successfully completing at least one unit of competency at AQF Certificate II or above ('000)	15–19-year-old population ('000)	Proportion of 15–19-year-olds successfully completing at least one unit of competency at AQF II or above (%)
2013	395.5	1,466.7	27.0
2014	494.8	1,474.7	33.6
2015	435.6	1,469.9	29.6
2016	413.4	1,475.2	28.0
2017	412.6	1,481.6	27.8
2018	401.1	1,488.4	27.0
2019	407.5	1,495.1	27.3
2020	392.1	1,486.8	26.4
2021	404.5	1,479.6	27.3
2022	403.4	1,533.9	26.3
2023	431.4	1,608.8	26.8

Note: See notes for Figure 6.1.

Sources: NCVER, National VET in Schools Collection 2013–2023; NCVER, National VET Provider Collection 2013–2023; ABS, *National, state and territory population December 2023* (release date 13/06/2024).

Alongside KPM1(f), VET program measures are used to monitor and report on the performance of the VET sector in Australia. VET program measure 1 measures the number of 15-19-year-olds who have completed a unit of competency at AQF Certificate II or higher by field of education.

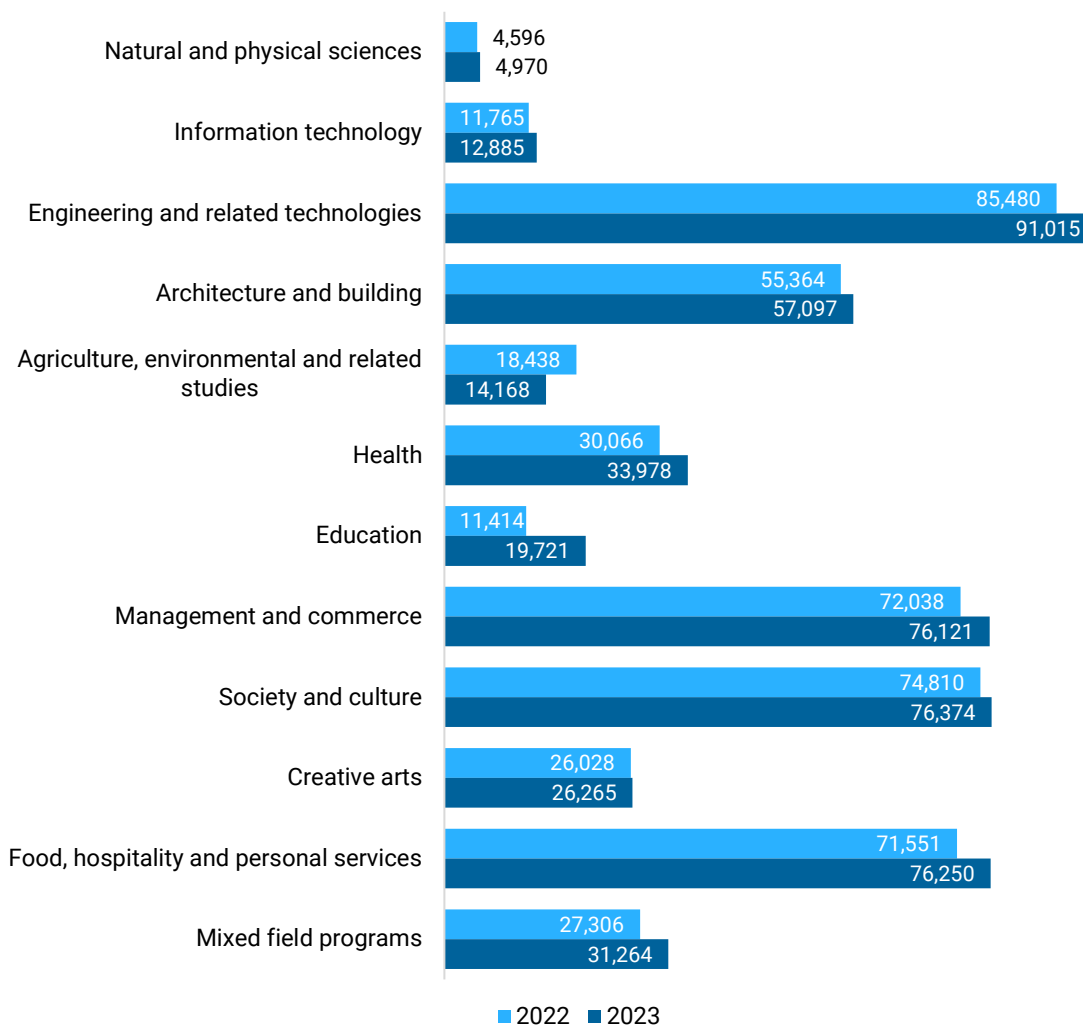
VET Program Measure 1

Occupation and industry profile of VET engagement for 15–19-year-olds who in the calendar year successfully completed at least one unit of competency/module as a part of a VET qualification at AQF Certificate II or above

Figure 6.2 reports VET program measure 1 for 2022 and 2023 using the Australian standard classifications for field of education as a proxy for occupation and industry profile. From 2020, students undertaking multiple courses in different fields of education are counted once within each relevant field.⁶

⁶ Other disaggregations, by skills service organisation and by occupational category, are provided in the National Report on Schooling data portal along with disaggregations by state/territory and equity group.

Figure 6.2: Number of 15–19-year-olds successfully completing at least one unit of competency as part of a VET qualification at AQF Certificate II or above, by field of education, Australia, 2022 and 2023



Notes: The number of students by field of education is greater than the unique count of students (431,347), as students undertaking multiple courses are counted once for each field of education in which they have successfully completed at least one unit of competency in at AQF II or above. Field of education is categorised according to ABS 1272.0 – Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED), 2001.

Sources: NCVET, National VET in Schools Collection 2022 and 2023; NCVET, National VET Provider Collection 2022 and 2023.

In 2023, Engineering and related technologies had the highest number of 15–19-year-olds who had completed at least one unit of competency (91,015), followed by Society and culture (76,374), Food, hospitality and personal services (76,250), and Management and commerce (76,121). These were also the fields with the highest number of completions in 2022.

Between 2022 and 2023, the number of 15–19-year-olds who had completed at least one unit of competency increased across all fields of education except Agriculture, Environmental studies and related studies, where completions declined from 18,438 in 2022 to 14,168 in 2023 (a 23.2% decline).

The number of 15–19-year-olds who had completed at least one unit of competency in the education field increased by 72.8%, from 11,414 in 2022 to 19,721 in 2023. These courses mainly covered early childhood education and care, or education support.

VET Program Measure 2

Level of AQF certification for 15–19-year-olds who in the calendar year successfully completed a VET qualification

Table 6.2 reports on VET program measure 2 – the number of VET qualifications completed by 15–19-year-olds in 2023, by the AQF level of qualifications. In 2023, 221,090 VET qualifications were completed, up 13.0% from 198,825 in 2022. Of the VET qualifications gained by 15–19-year-olds in 2023, 49.2% were at AQF level II and 33.6% were at AQF level III.

Table 6.3: VET qualifications completed by 15–19-year-olds, by qualification level of major course, Australia, 2023

Qualification level	Number	%
Certificate I	15,842	7.2
Certificate II	108,751	49.2
Certificate III	74,215	33.6
Certificate IV	12,578	5.7
Diploma or higher	9,704	4.4
Total	221,090	100.0

Note: Major course relates to the highest qualification attempted by a student in the reporting year.

Sources: NCVER, National VET in Schools Collection 2023; NCVER, National VET Provider Collection 2023.

Numbers of qualifications completed by 15–19-year-olds and numbers of students completing a qualification should not be compared, as student numbers include students who are beginning or continuing a multi-year course as well as those in the final year of a course. Also, due to time constraints, VET courses delivered to secondary students do not always lead to the achievement of a full AQF VET qualification. Where they do not, students assessed as competent in one or more units of competency receive a statement of attainment towards a certificate or other qualification and are eligible to complete the full qualification post-school.⁷

⁷ State and territory data for VET qualifications completed by 15–19-year-olds as well as a breakdown in participation by 15-19-year-olds by student attributes is provided in the National Report on Schooling data portal.

VET delivered to secondary students

Secondary school students in all states and territories can undertake nationally recognised VET as part of their school program, usually in the senior years of schooling. Students now have more options to engage in VET with a wider range of pathways that can include VET and an increasing number of VET subjects available to secondary school students. This flexibility allows students to tailor their education to their career interests and goals.

Secondary students enrolled in VET include school-based apprentices and trainees. These are students who, as well as undertaking an accredited VET qualification as a part of their school studies, have entered a formal contract of part-time paid employment and training with an employer. Typically, these students undertake part of their traineeship or apprenticeship while at school and complete it once they have left school.

VET delivered to secondary students is regulated by the VET sector and is identical to VET offered in any other context.⁸ Some, but not all, VET courses completed by secondary students provide credit towards their Senior Secondary Certificate of Education and/or ATAR scores.⁹

KPM 1(f) and the VET program measures include all 15–19-year-old students undertaking VET. The data in this section refers to VET delivered to 15–19-year-old secondary school students. For the purposes of the national VET in Schools data collection¹⁰, these are students who are undertaking accredited VET as a part of a SSCE.¹¹ This data is not restricted to Certificate II or above, or to students who have successfully completed at least one unit of competency.¹²

In 2023, there were 249,695 students aged 15–19 years enrolled in VET in Schools/VET delivered to secondary students, up 4.0% from 240,120 in 2022. Based on this data, it is estimated that nearly half of senior secondary students (47.4%) undertook one or more VET courses in 2023 as part of their SSCE.¹³

Among secondary students undertaking VET in 2023, most (49.0%) were enrolled in Certificate II qualifications and a further 42.1% were enrolled in Certificate III qualifications, while 19,250 (7.7%) were undertaking a school-based apprenticeship or traineeship.

Overall, the most common training packages undertaken by secondary students in 2023 were Sport, Fitness and Recreation; Tourism, Travel and Hospitality; Business Services; Community Services and Creative Arts and Culture.

⁸ The term 'VET delivered to secondary students' has generally replaced the term 'VET in Schools (VETIS)' historically used for these programs. However, in 2023, the term 'VET in Schools' continued to be used in the VET sector to identify VET delivered to secondary students and for data collection and reporting purposes.

⁹ Secondary student enrolments in VET, school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, and VET qualifications issued to secondary students are reported at the school level on the *MySchool* website for schools with senior secondary enrolments.

¹⁰ The national VET in Schools data collection is compiled by NCVET from data provided by states and territories.

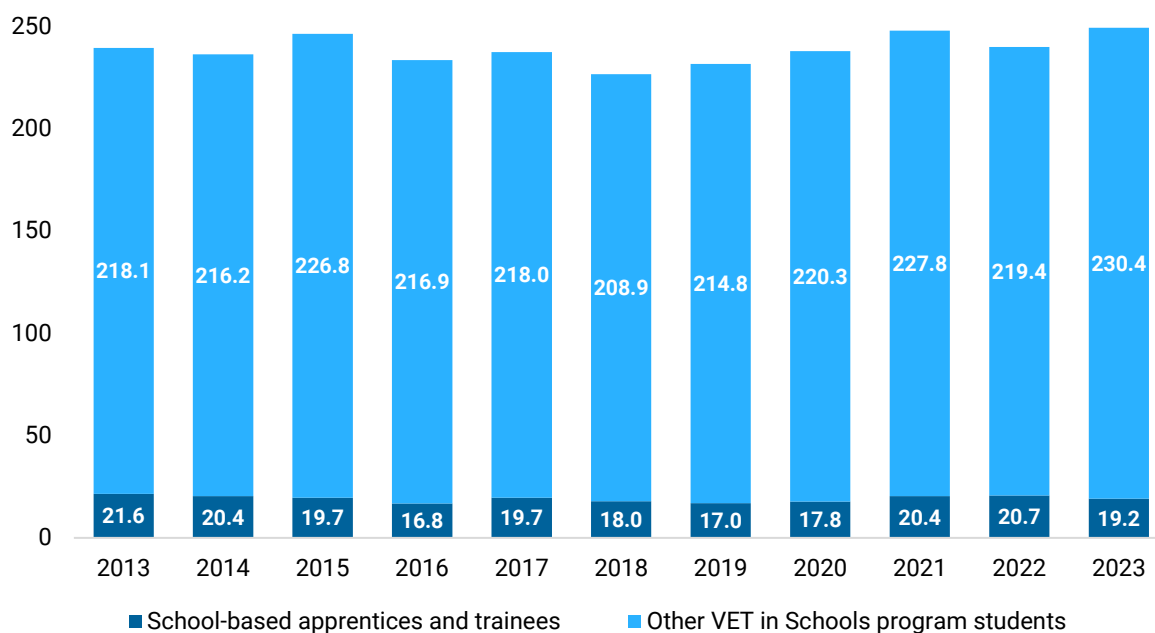
¹¹ In some jurisdictions, students who have left school (that is, they are not secondary students) but are receiving credit for a VET course towards a senior secondary certificate may be included in these counts. To the extent that these students are included, this inflates the data as a measure of the number of secondary school students undertaking VET.

¹² Enrolments and qualifications achieved in VET by secondary students are reported at the school level, by field of education and qualification level on the *MySchool* website.

¹³ This estimate is calculated as the number of VET in Schools students as a proportion of the number of senior secondary students (full-time plus part-time) as reported in Chapter 2 (Table 2.6) of this report. It is an estimate only, as there are some disparities between the counting of VET in Schools students and of Year 11 and 12 students in the NSSC.

Figure 6.3 shows the number of 15–19-year-old students undertaking VET delivered to secondary students each year in the period 2013–2023 with school-based apprentices and trainees disaggregated. Between 2022 and 2023, the number of secondary students aged 15–19 years undertaking VET increased by 4.0% after a 3.3% decline between 2021 and 2022. After a 14.6% increase in the number of school-based apprentices and trainees between 2020 and 2021, largely due to increases in Queensland, the number of school-based apprentices and trainees in Australia declined by 7.2% between 2022 and 2023.¹⁴

Figure 6.3: Number of 15–19-year-old students undertaking VET in School, Australia, 2013–2023 ('000)



Note: 'School-based apprentices and trainees' includes students who undertook at least one unit of competency or accredited module in a school-based apprenticeship or traineeship.

Sources: NCVET, National VET in Schools Collection, 2023; NCVET [VET in Schools 2023](#); NCVET, [DataBuilder](#).

Further detailed information, including data disaggregated by state and territory, data definitions and data quality issues, is available in NCVET [VET in Schools 2023](#) and NCVET, [DataBuilder](#).

¹⁴ The increase in VET in Schools students over the past several years in Qld corresponds to the state's VET investment budget which invested heavily in skills, including Certificate I and II training for VET in Schools students. Much of the increase has been driven by an increase in Foundation Skills training (NCVER, *VET in Schools*, 2022).