

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 2024:

- 26.0% of 15–19-year-olds completed at least one unit of competency at AQF Certificate II or above, up from 25.5% in 2023.
- Almost half (49.1%) of qualifications gained by 15–19-year-olds were at AQF level II and one-third (33.3%) were at AQF level III.
- The long-term trend in the proportion of 15–19-year-olds participating in VET was downward, from 28.5% in 2015 to 26.0% in 2024.
- The number of 15–19-year-olds undertaking a school-based apprenticeship or traineeship increased by 11.1% from 2023 and the number of 15–19-year-olds undertaking other VET courses at school increased by 5.2%.

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’.

The Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) plays a national role in the governance, financing, and overarching policy development for the Australian VET system, working cooperatively with state and territory skills departments. State and territory training authorities are responsible for the operation of the VET system within their state or territory. Each training authority participates in the formulation of national policy, planning and objectives, and promotes and implements agreed policies and priorities within the state or territory, supported by statutory advisory and regulatory bodies.²

¹ Nationally recognised VET qualifications are detailed on a 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 Senior Secondary Certificate of Education (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.

The national VET in Schools data collection is compiled by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) from data provided by states and territories. 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.

Since January 2015, VET students have been allocated a Unique Student Identifier (USI) and 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 a break in the time series between 2014 and 2015. For this reason, only data from 2015 onwards is presented in this chapter.³

6.1 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.⁴

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.⁵

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 2024, 26.0% of 15–19-year-olds completed at least one unit of competency at AQF Certificate II or above, up from 25.5% in 2023.

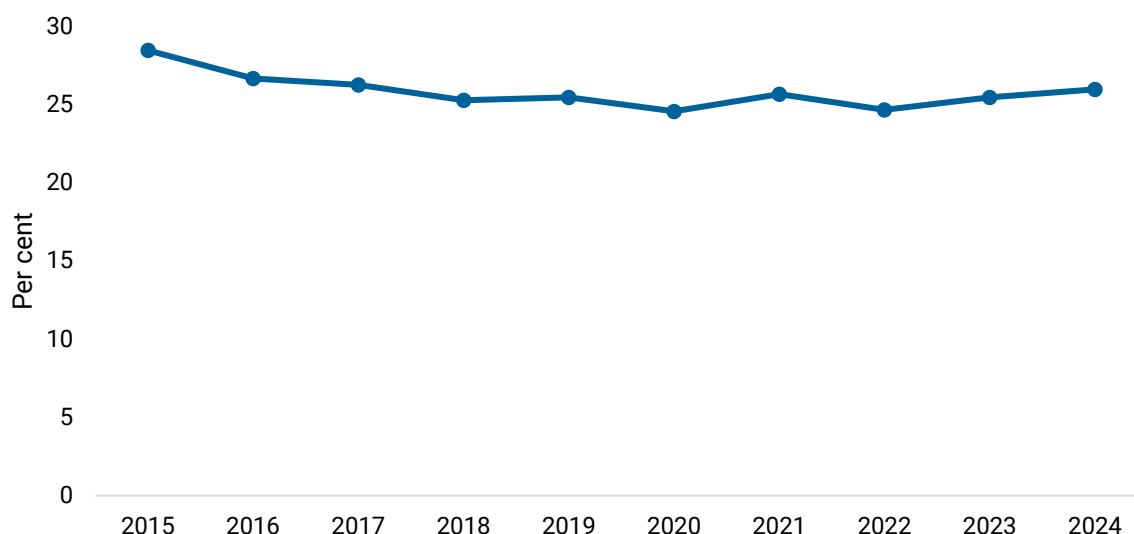
³ Data from 2015 is consistent year-on-year. For further information, please refer to [Counting Students in Total VET students and courses](#).

⁴ Data for this KPM is revised annually. The latest year is always a preliminary estimate. The number of program completions over the years 2015 to 2023 was previously overstated and has now been revised. As such, figures for Victoria, and therefore figures at the national level, differ from those published previously. For further information, please refer to NCVER (2025), [Total VET students and courses 2024: explanatory notes](#).

⁵ AQF Certificate II is regarded as entry-level training for employment.

Figure 6.1 shows national data for this KPM for the period 2015–2024.

Figure 6.1: Proportion of 15–19-year-olds successfully completing at least one unit of competency at AQF Certificate II or above (%), Australia, 2015–2024 (%)



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.

Sources: NCVER, unpublished data; ABS, *National, state and territory population December 2024* (release date 19/06/2025).

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 part of a VET qualification at AQF Certificate II or above. There is a long-term downward trend of 0.2 percentage points per annum from 2015 to 2024.

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, 2015–2024

	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 (%)
2015	418.7	1469.9	28.5
2016	393.8	1475.2	26.7
2017	390.0	1481.5	26.3
2018	377.2	1488.3	25.3
2019	381.9	1494.8	25.5
2020	366.3	1486.4	24.6
2021	380.4	1479.2	25.7
2022	379.5	1533.9	24.7
2023	409.8	1608.8	25.5
2024	432.8	1662.9	26.0

Note: See notes for Figure 6.1.

Sources: NCVER, unpublished data; ABS, *National, state and territory population December 2024* (release date 19/06/2025).

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. The VET program measures are used to monitor and report on the performance of the VET sector in Australia. Figure 6.2 reports VET Program Measure 1 (the number of 15–19-year-olds who have completed a unit of competency at AQF Certificate II or higher by field of education) for 2023 and 2024 using the Australian standard classifications for field of education as a proxy for occupation and industry profile.⁶

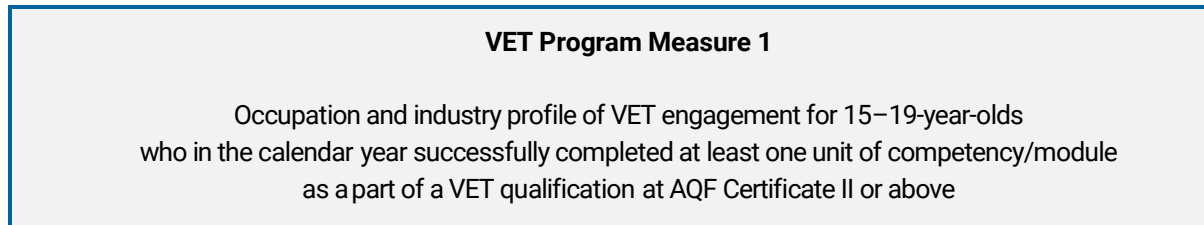
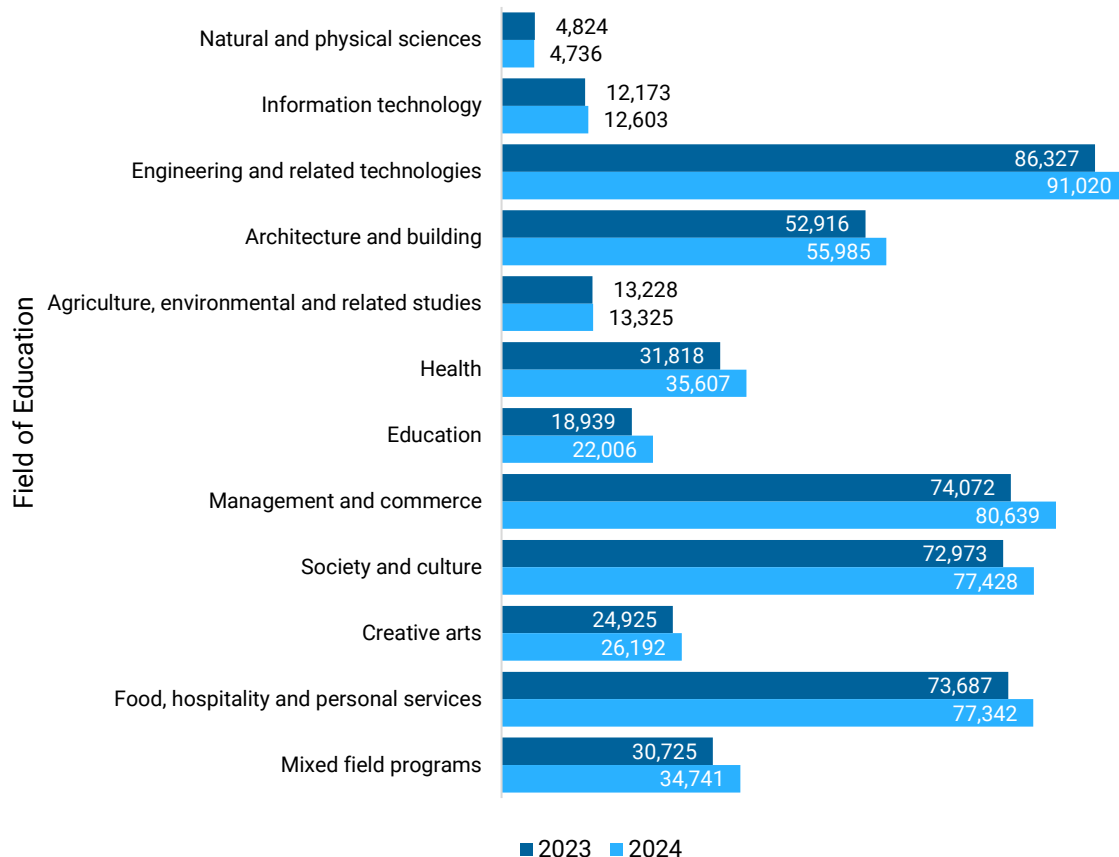


Figure 6.2: Number of 15–19-year-olds successfully completing at least one unit of competency as part of a VET qualification at AQF Certificate II or above, by field of education, Australia, 2023 and 2024



Notes: The number of students by field of education is greater than the unique count of students (432,844), 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 at AQF certificate II or above. Field of education is categorised according to ABS 1272.0 – Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED), 2001.

Source: NCVER, National VET Provider Collection 2023 and 2024.

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. However, these estimates should be interpreted with caution due to the high proportion of unknown values for sex, language background, Indigenous status and geolocation.

In 2024, Engineering and related technologies had the highest number of 15–19-year-olds who had completed at least one unit of competency (91,020), followed by Management and commerce (80,639), Society and culture (77,428) and Food, hospitality and personal services (77,342). These were also the fields with the highest number of completions in 2023.

Between 2023 and 2024, the number of 15–19-year-olds who had completed at least one unit of competency increased in all fields except Natural and physical sciences, where there was a 1.8% decline. The fields with the largest increases in completions were Education (16.2%), Mixed field programs (13.1%) and Health (11.9%).

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, by the AQF qualification level. In 2024, 243,285 VET qualifications were completed by 15–19-year-olds, up 8.3% from 224,716 in 2023. Of the VET qualifications gained by 15–19-year-olds in 2024, almost half (49.1%) were at AQF level II and one third (33.3%) were at AQF level III.

Table 6.2: VET qualifications completed by 15–19-year-olds, by qualification level of major course, Australia, 2024

Qualification level	Number	%
Certificate I	16,381	6.7
Certificate II	119,436	49.1
Certificate III	81,117	33.3
Certificate IV	14,326	5.9
Diploma or higher	12,025	4.9
Total	243,285	100.0

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

Source: NCVER, National VET Provider Collection 2024.

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.

6.2 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 interests and career 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. Some, but not all, VET courses completed by secondary students provide credit towards their Senior Secondary Certificate of Education and/or ATAR scores.⁸

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 collection⁹, these are students who are undertaking accredited VET as a part of an SSCE.¹⁰ This data is not restricted to Certificate II or above, or to students who have successfully completed at least one unit of competency.¹¹

In 2024, there were 263,785 students aged 15–19 years enrolled in VET in Schools/VET delivered to secondary students – an increase of 5.6%, from 249,695 in 2023 and the highest number of students since the data collection began in 2006. Based on this data, it is estimated that nearly half of senior secondary students (48.0%) undertook one or more VET courses in 2024 as part of their SSCE.¹²

Among 15–19-year-old students undertaking VET in 2024, 21,385 (8.1%) were undertaking school-based apprenticeships or traineeships (SBAT). The majority of students undertaking school-based apprenticeships or traineeships were enrolled in Certificate III qualifications (85.1%). A further 11.8% were undertaking Certificate II qualifications. Of those 15–19-year-old students enrolled in other (non-SBAT) qualifications, the most common qualifications undertaken were Certificate II (51.5%) and Certificate III (38.9%).

In 2024, most 15–19-year-olds undertaking VET delivered to secondary students were enrolled in 'training package' qualifications. Training packages specify the knowledge and skills required by individuals to perform effectively in the workplace, expressed in units of competency, and detail how units of competency can be packaged into nationally recognised and portable qualifications that comply with the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF).

⁸ The term 'VET delivered to secondary students' has generally replaced the term 'VET in Schools (VETiS)' historically used for these programs.

⁹ The national VET in Schools data collection is compiled by NCVET from data provided by states and territories. Numbers are rounded to the nearest 5.

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ Enrolments and qualifications achieved in VET by secondary students are reported at the school level, by field of education and qualification level on the *My School* website.

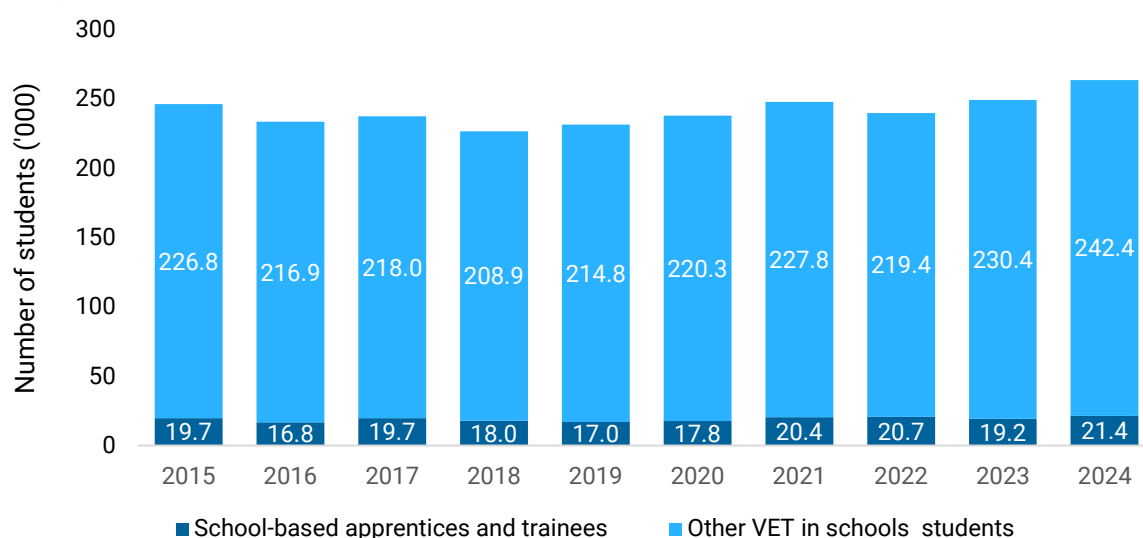
¹² This estimate is calculated as the number of VET in Schools students as a proportion of the number of senior secondary students (full-time plus part-time) as reported in Chapter 2 (Table 2.6) of this report. It is an estimate only, as there are some disparities between the counting of VET in Schools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

Students undertaking training package qualifications as part of a school-based apprenticeship were predominantly enrolled in Business services (16.2%), Community services (12.0%), Tourism, Travel and Hospitality (11.1%), Retail Services (10.0%) and the Construction, Plumbing and Services Integrated Framework Package (9.2%).

Among 15–19-year-olds undertaking non-SBAT training package qualifications, the most common training packages were Sport, Fitness and Recreation (15.9%); Tourism, Travel and Hospitality (14.2%); Business Services (13.8%); Creative Arts and Culture (7.8%) and Community Services (6.6%).

Figure 6.3 shows the number of 15–19-year-old students undertaking VET delivered to secondary students each year in the period 2015–2024 with school-based apprentices and trainees disaggregated.

Figure 6.3: Number of 15–19-year-old students undertaking VET in Schools, Australia, 2015–2024 ('000)



Note: 'School-based apprentices and trainees' numbers are calculated from students enrolled in an apprenticeship or traineeship at any point during the calendar year

Sources: NCVER, National VET in Schools Collection, 2024; NCVER [VET in Schools 2024](#); NCVER, [DataBuilder](#).

After a 14.8% increase in the number of 15–19-year-old students undertaking school-based apprenticeships and traineeships between 2020 and 2022, driven largely by growth in Queensland, the number declined by 7.2% between 2022 and 2023.¹³ In 2024, there were 21,385 15–19-year-olds undertaking a school-based apprenticeship or traineeship, representing 8.1% of all 15–19-year-old secondary students undertaking VET. This was an increase of 2,135 students (11.1%) compared with 2023.

Between 2018 and 2021, the number of 15–19-year-old students undertaking non-SBAT VET courses increased by 9.0%, before a 3.7% decline in 2022. From 2022 to 2023, the number of 15–19-year-old students undertaking non-SBAT VET courses rose by 5.0% and from 2023 to 2024 there was a further 5.2% increase.

Further detailed information, including data disaggregated by state and territory, data definitions and data quality issues, is available in NCVER [VET in Schools 2024](#) and NCVER, [DataBuilder](#).

¹³ 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).