

Chapter 7: Participation in education, training and work

This chapter reports on participation in education, training and work among young people aged 15 to 24, as measured by the Australian Bureau of Statistics Survey of Education and Work.

Key Facts

In Australia in 2025:

- The proportion of 15–19-year-olds who were fully engaged in education, training or work was 86.7% – up slightly from 86.6% in 2024. This rate is slightly lower than the 2019 (pre-pandemic) rate of 87.0%.
- The proportion of 20–24-year-olds who were fully engaged in education, training or work in 2025 was 76.7%, up from 75.1% in 2024, but lower than the 2023 rate of 77.4%, which was the highest rate recorded since 2008.
- The proportion of 17–24-year-olds who had left school and were fully engaged in education, training or work was 74.3%, up from 73.1% in 2024.

7.1 Participation in education, training and employment

Key Performance Measures (KPMs) 1(g), 1(h) and 1(i) measure the full-time participation in education, training, and employment of 3 groups of young people:

- 15–19-year-olds, including school students and those who have left school and have moved into tertiary study and/or the workforce
- 20–24-year-olds, who may be undertaking VET or university study, working, or a combination of these activities
- 17–24-year-olds who have left school and who may be undertaking further study and/or work.

Full-time participation is defined as participation in full-time education or training, or full-time work, or a combination of both part-time education or training and part-time work.

Key Performance Measure 1(g)

Proportion of 15–19-year-olds in full-time education or training, in full-time work, or both in part-time work and part-time education or training

Key Performance Measure 1(h)

Proportion of 20–24-year-olds in full-time education or training, in full-time work, or both in part-time work and part-time education or training

Key Performance Measure 1(i)

Proportion of 17–24-year-olds who have left school that are in full-time education or training, in full-time work, or both in part-time work and part-time education or training

The annual measures of these KPMs are based on the ABS Survey of Education and Work (SEW), which is conducted in May each year. Five-yearly measures of the KPMs, based on data drawn from the Census of Population and Housing, are reported for Census years.

KPMs 1(g) and 1(h) for the period 2015–2025 and for Census years 2016 and 2021 are shown in Table 7.1. Figure 7.1 illustrates KPMs 1(g) and 1(h), as measured by the SEW, over the period 2015–2025.

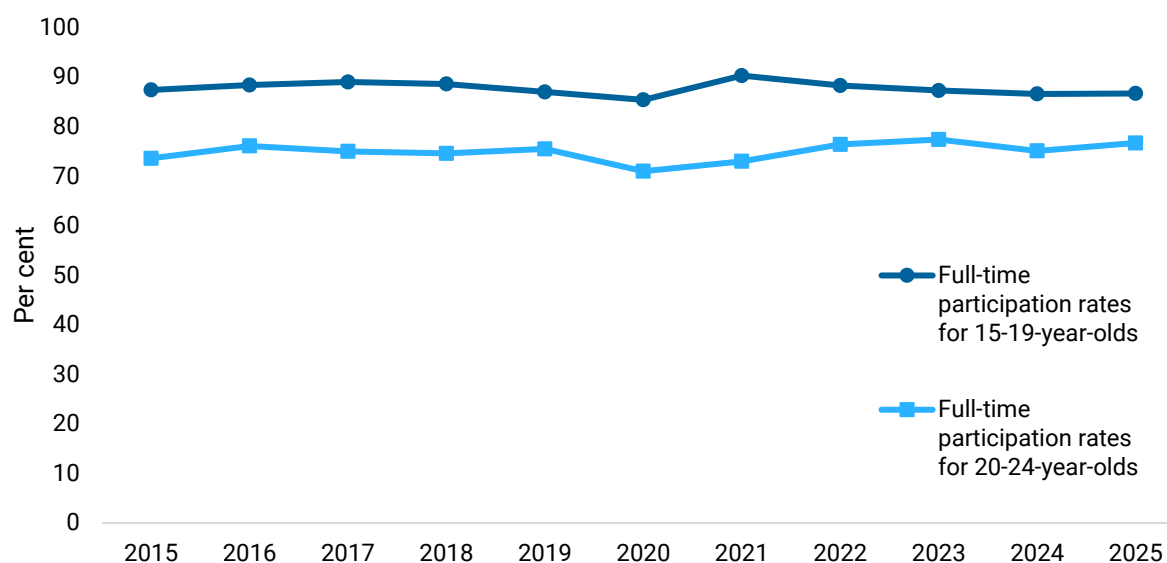
Table 7.1: Proportions of 15–19-year-olds and 20–24-year-olds in full-time education, in full-time work, or both in part-time work and part-time education, Australia, 2015–2025 (%)

| Calendar year | 15–19-year-olds | | | 20–24-year-olds | | |
|---------------|------------------------------|-----|---|------------------------------|-----|---|
| | Full-time participation rate | CI± | Full-time participation rate (Census measure) | Full-time participation rate | CI± | Full-time participation rate (Census measure) |
| 2015 | 87.4 | 0.3 | | 73.6 | 1.7 | |
| 2016 | 88.4 | 1.3 | 86.4 | 76.1 | 1.5 | 72.2 |
| 2017 | 89.0 | 1.0 | | 75.0 | 1.5 | |
| 2018 | 88.6 | 1.2 | | 74.6 | 1.6 | |
| 2019 | 87.0 | 0.9 | | 75.5 | 1.8 | |
| 2020 | 85.4 | 1.2 | | 71.0 | 2.2 | |
| 2021 | 90.3 | 0.9 | 86.9 | 73.0 | 1.9 | 72.3 |
| 2022 | 88.3 | 1.4 | | 76.4 | 2.2 | |
| 2023 | 87.3 | 0.9 | | 77.4 | 1.8 | |
| 2024 | 86.6 | 1.0 | | 75.1 | 1.8 | |
| 2025 | 86.7 | 1.2 | | 76.7 | 1.5 | |

Notes: CI = confidence interval. The percentages reported for SEW data in this table include 95% confidence intervals. Confidence intervals are a way of expressing the degree of sampling and measurement error associated with survey estimates. For example, an estimate of 80 with a 95% confidence interval of ± 2 means that if the total population was surveyed rather than a sample, there is a 95% chance that the result would lie between 78 and 82.

Sources: ABS, Education and Work, Australia, 2025; ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2016, 2021.

Figure 7.1: Proportions of 15–19-year-olds and 20–24-year-olds in full-time education, in full-time work, or both in part-time work and part-time education, Australia, 2015–2025 (%)



Source: ABS, Education and Work, Australia, 2025.

As shown in Table 7.1 and Figure 7.1, full-time participation rates for young people in their mid-to-late teens are consistently higher than for those in their early to mid-20s. This is to be expected, as the 15–19-year age group includes a high proportion of secondary school students for whom full-time participation in education, training or work is compulsory, at least until age 17.

For 15–19-year-olds, full-time participation rates increased from 85.4% in 2020 to 90.3% in 2021. This more than reversed the fall in 2020, recording the highest participation level for this age group to date and above the long-term trend for this measure.¹ Since 2021, full-time participation rates for 15–19-year-olds have declined to 86.7% in 2025, slightly lower than the pre-pandemic rate of 87.0%.

For 20–24-year-olds, full-time participation rates increased by 6.4 percentage points between 2020 and 2023. This increase represented a full recovery to pre-COVID levels and in 2023, full-time participation rates for 20–24-year-olds were at their highest recorded level since 2008, when they were 80.1%. Full-time participation rates declined to 75.1% in 2024, before increasing 1.6 percentage points to 76.7% in 2025.²

Trend data for the annual SEW measures of these KPMs for the period 2006–2025 is included in the Key Performance Measures data set in the National Report on Schooling data portal. This shows a long-term upward trend in KPM 1(g) of 0.1 percentage points per annum, and a long-term downward trend in KPM 1(h) of 0.2 percentage points per annum over this period.

As a participation measure of 17–24-year-olds, KPM 1(i) includes people from the 15–19-year-old and 20–24-year-old age groups but excludes school students from both the numerator and the denominator. This measure is informative as an indicator of the transition of young people from school to post-school education and/or work, and the performance of schooling in facilitating this.

SEW data for this KPM is reported for the period 2015–2025 in Table 7.2, along with Census data for 2016 and 2021.

There was little change in KPM 1(i) between 2014 and 2019. However, like other groups of young people, 17–24-year-olds who had left school were affected by the impact of COVID-19. The fall in this measure of 4.7 percentage points between 2019 and 2020 and the subsequent increase of 4.6 percentage points between 2020 and 2021 were both statistically significant. The increase in 2021 is likely to reflect the policy initiative to provide free and subsidised training courses to school leavers and other young adults as a response to falls in employment due to the COVID pandemic.

The Census reports KPM 1(i) as 73.4% in 2021. This is substantially higher than the result of 71.0% from the 2016 Census. The KPM data set in the National Report on Schooling data portal reports no evident trend in the Census measure for this KPM over the period 2011–2021.

¹ Reasons for this increase may include provision of free courses through TAFE as a COVID measure, upskilling following pandemic changes, domestic and international travel restrictions, fewer school leavers taking a gap year, a significantly lower unemployment rate and increased job opportunities during this period.

² The ABS notes that between 2023 and 2025 there was a decline in the proportion of 15–24-year-olds who were fully engaged primarily through full-time work (from 28% in 2023 to 25% in 2024 and 2025) and an increase in the proportion of 15–24-year-olds who were fully engaged primarily through full-time study (from 49% in 2023 to 51% in 2024 and 52% in 2025) (ABS, *Education and Work, Australia*, November 2025).

The increase in full-time participation rates for 17–24-year-olds to 75.0% in 2022 represented a return to pre-pandemic levels, followed by an exceedance of pre-pandemic levels in 2023. However, the decline from 75.4% in 2023 to 74.3% in 2025 meant that rates were only slightly higher in 2025 than in 2019.³ Longer-term trend data indicates that there is a significant long-term downward trend of 0.2 percentage points per annum between 2005 and 2025.

Table 7.2: Proportion of 17–24-year-olds who have left school that are in full-time education, in full-time work, or both in part-time work and part-time education, Australia, 2015–2025 (%)

| Calendar year | Full-time participation rates for 17–24-year-olds who have left school | CI± | Full-time participation rates for 17–24-year-olds who have left school (Census measure) |
|---------------|--|-----|---|
| 2015 | 72.9 | 1.4 | |
| 2016 | 75.5 | 1.2 | 71.0 |
| 2017 | 74.7 | 1.3 | |
| 2018 | 74.3 | 1.6 | |
| 2019 | 74.0 | 1.6 | |
| 2020 | 69.3 | 1.8 | |
| 2021 | 73.9 | 1.6 | 73.4 |
| 2022 | 75.0 | 1.8 | |
| 2023 | 75.4 | 1.8 | |
| 2024 | 73.1 | 1.6 | |
| 2025 | 74.3 | 1.3 | |

Note: See notes for Table 7.1.

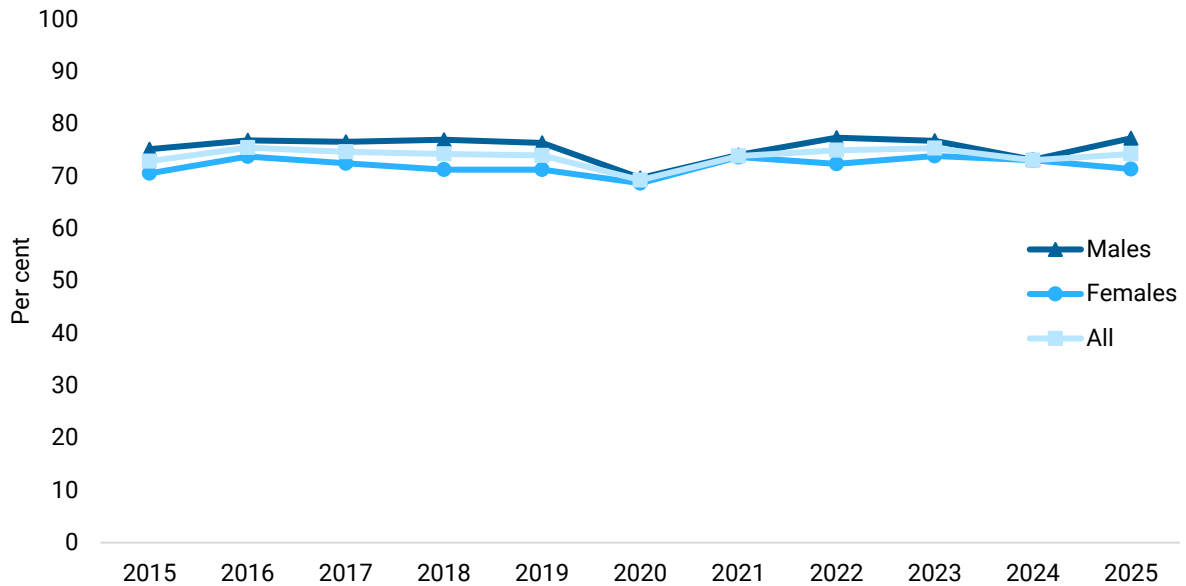
Sources: ABS, Education and Work, Australia, 2025; ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2016, 2021.

Census data provides more robust measures by state and territory and can be disaggregated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status but is only available every 5 years. Census data for these KPMs by state and territory and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status is also reported in the National Report on Schooling data portal. However, because of sample size and survey coverage limitations (including the exclusion of very remote communities), SEW data for specific age groups is less reliable when disaggregated by state and territory, especially for smaller jurisdictions. Because the survey is not conducted in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in very remote areas, and because of sample size, SEW data cannot be disaggregated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status.

SEW data for KPM 1(i), by gender, for the period 2015–2025 is presented in Figure 7.2.

³ This decline is likely to have been at least partly due to changes in economic conditions during this period. Among 15–20-year-olds who had finished Year 12 the previous year, 65% were employed in 2024, compared to 76% in 2023. Similarly, among 15–20-year-olds who had finished Year 12 in 2024, 65% were employed in 2025. Unemployment rates for 15–24-year-olds increased from 7.5% in May 2023 (8.6% for males and 6.4% for females) to 9.3% in May 2025 (9.9% for males and 8.6% for females). (ABS, *Labour Force, Australia*, September 2025).

Figure 7.2: Proportion of 17–24-year-olds who have left school that are in full-time education or training, in full-time work, or both in part-time work and part-time education or training, by gender, Australia, 2015–2025 (%)



Source: ABS, Education and Work, Australia, 2025.

In 2025, full-time participation rates for 17–24-year-olds who had left school were higher for males (77.3%) than females (71.4%). After falling to 69.7% and 68.7% respectively in 2020, rates in 2023 were above their pre-pandemic levels for both males and females.⁴ However, between 2023 and 2024, full-time participation rates for 17–24-year-olds declined by 3.6 percentage points for males and 0.8 percentage points for females.

Between 2024 and 2025, full-time participation rates for 17–24-year-olds who had left school increased by 4.1 percentage points for males and decreased by 1.7 percentage points for females. Between 2019 and 2025, this has resulted in a net increase of 0.9 percentage points for males and 0.1 percentage points for females.

⁴ In 2019, full-time participation rates for 17–24-year-olds who had left school were 76.4% for males and 71.3% for females.