

Fact sheet

Destinations of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander school leavers

2023 NSW Post-School Destinations and Experiences Survey

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

This fact sheet provides a high-level overview of findings from the 2023 NSW Post-School Destinations and Experiences Survey for 2 cohorts of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander recent school leavers: Year 12 completers and early school leavers.



Survey sample

In 2023, 64,487 Year 12 completers and 26,263 early school leavers from across NSW were invited to take part in the survey. In the population of NSW recent school leavers it was estimated that:

- 3,081 (4.8%) Year 12 completers self-identify as Aboriginal
- 4,070 (15.5%) early school leavers self-identify as Aboriginal.

Responses were received from 28,831 Year 12 completers and 5,892 early school leavers. Of these responses, 1,421 Year 12 completers and 921 early school leavers self-identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

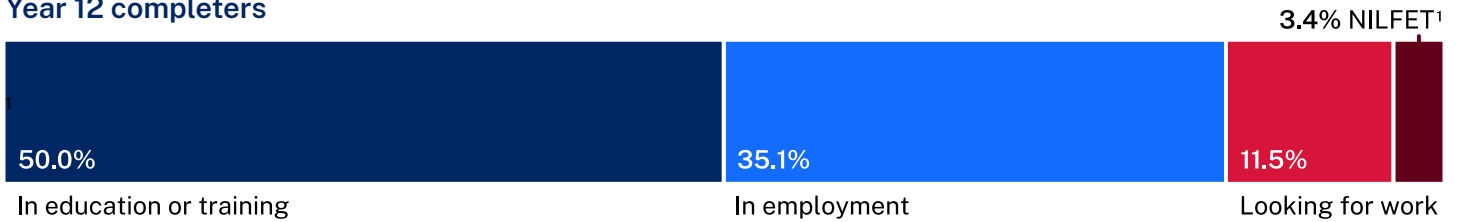
In reporting on the 2023 survey, school leavers have been identified as Aboriginal based on their survey responses. This is a change from previous years, where this identification was based on school enrolment data. This change was made out of respect for Aboriginal school leavers' understandings and expressions of their cultural identity, to promote greater cultural sensitivity and inclusivity, and to improve the recency and validity of the data provided. To ensure consistency and accuracy in this 2023 fact sheet, survey data from previous years has also been presented based on whether school leavers identified as being Aboriginal in their survey responses. The term 'Aboriginal' is used throughout this fact sheet to refer to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander school leavers.

Post-school destinations in 2023

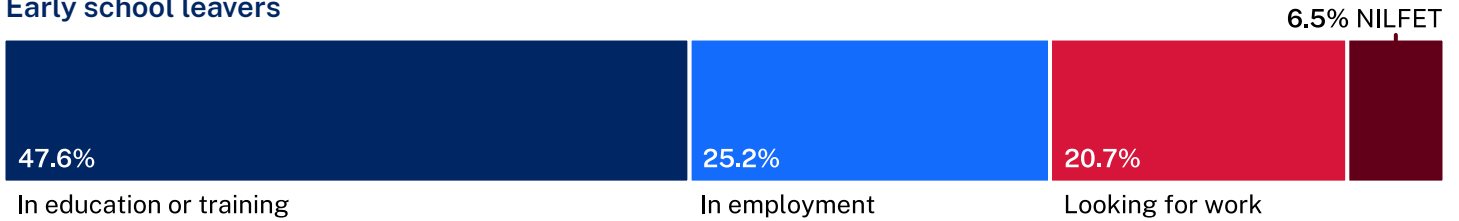
Aboriginal school leavers

It was estimated that in 2023, 78.1% of all Aboriginal recent school leavers, 85.1% of Aboriginal Year 12 completers and 72.8% of Aboriginal early school leavers were in education, training or employment.

Year 12 completers



Early school leavers



Non-Aboriginal school leavers

It was estimated that in 2023, 92.0% of all non-Aboriginal recent school leavers, 93.9% of non-Aboriginal Year 12 completers and 86.8% of non-Aboriginal early school leavers were in education, training or employment.

Year 12 completers



Early school leavers



1 NILFET = not in the labour force, education or training

Aboriginal Year 12 completers by level of education, training or employment

25.2% Bachelor	2.9% VET cert IV+	4.4% VET cert III
▲ up 1.9 pp since 2022	▼ down 0.9 pp since 2022	▲ up 0.2 pp since 2022
1.3% VET cert I–II	9.0% Apprenticeship	7.2% Traineeship
▲ up 0.1 pp since 2022	▲ up 0.4 pp since 2022	▼ down 2.5 pp since 2022
14.5% Full-time work	20.5% Part-time work	
▲ up 0.8 pp since 2022	▼ down 0.1 pp since 2022	

Trends in level of education, training or employment for main post-school destinations of Aboriginal Year 12 completers between 2014 and 2023:

- Bachelor's degree enrolments have decreased on average by **0.7 pp** (percentage points) per year.
- VET certificate IV+ enrolments have decreased on average by **0.8 pp** per year.
- VET certificate I–II enrolments have decreased on average by **0.3 pp** per year.
- Apprenticeships have increased on average by **0.5 pp** per year.
- Full-time work has increased on average by **0.5 pp** per year.
- Part-time work has increased on average by **0.6 pp** per year.

Aboriginal early school leavers by level of education, training or employment

1.0% Bachelor	2.5% VET cert IV+	6.6% VET cert III
▲ up 0.8 pp since 2022	▼ down 0.2 pp since 2022	▲ up 2.3 pp since 2022
2.6% VET cert I–II	24.4% Apprenticeship	10.5% Traineeship
▲ up 0.2 pp since 2022	▼ down 2.5 pp since 2022	▲ up 0.2 pp since 2022
10.3% Full-time work	14.9% Part-time work	
▼ down 2.6 pp since 2022	▼ down 0.8 pp since 2022	

Trends in level of education, training or employment for main post-school destinations of Aboriginal early school leavers between 2014 and 2023:

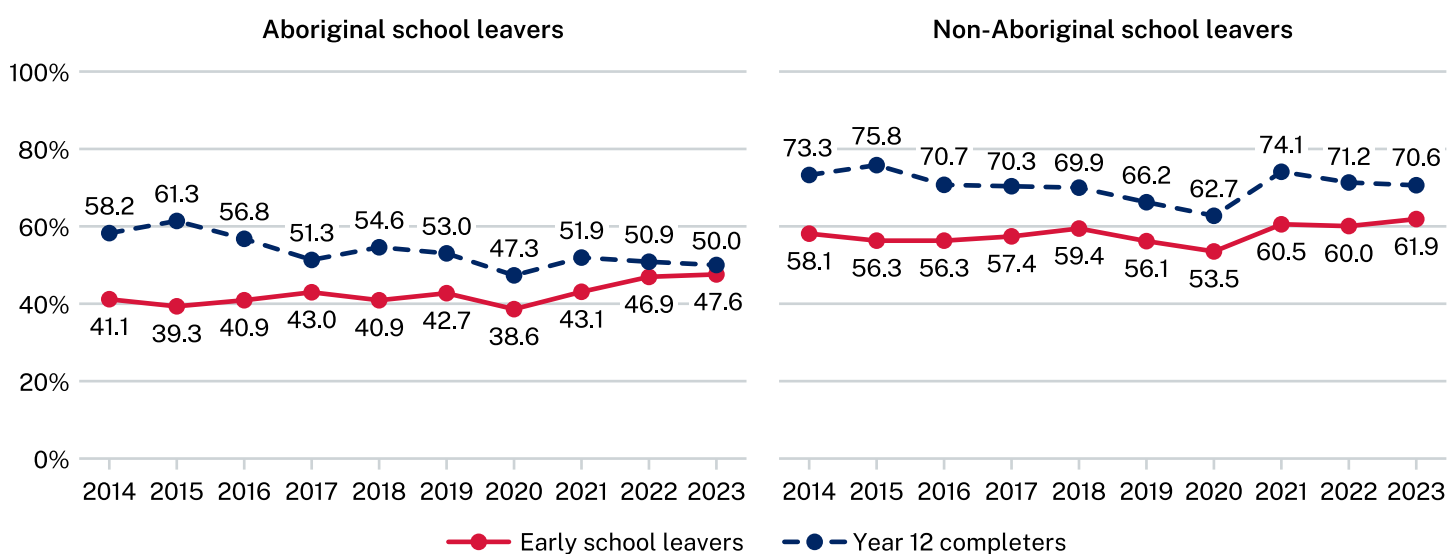
- VET certificate I–II enrolments have decreased on average by **0.8 pp** per year.
- Apprenticeships have increased on average by **1.4 pp** per year.
- Traineeships have increased on average by **0.5 pp** per year.
- Full-time work has increased on average by **0.5 pp** per year.
- Part-time work has increased on average by **0.7 pp** per year.
- Looking for work has decreased on average by **1.0 pp** per year.
- NILFET has decreased on average by **0.9 pp** per year.

In education or training

A consistently higher estimated proportion of Year 12 completers were in education or training than early school leavers over time for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal school leavers.² However, the estimated proportion of Aboriginal Year 12 completers in education or training has gradually decreased since 2014 (an average decrease of 1.1 pp per year). In contrast, the estimated proportion of Aboriginal early school leavers in education or training has increased by almost 5 pp between 2019 and 2023 from 42.7% to 47.6%.

This means that while participation in education or training is generally higher among Aboriginal Year 12 completers than Aboriginal early school leavers, the gap in the proportion of school leavers in education or training over time is narrowing.

Estimated proportion of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal school leavers in education or training, 2014 to 2023



Education trends³

Aboriginal Year 12 completers

Trends in education between 2014 and 2023:

- **Management and commerce** enrolments have decreased on average by **0.9 pp** per year to 9.2% in 2023.
- **Education** enrolments have increased on average by **0.5 pp** per year to 11.9% in 2023.
- **Engineering and related technologies** enrolments have increased on average by **0.5 pp** per year to 10.4% in 2023.
- **Health** enrolments have increased by **0.5 pp** per year to 21.3% in 2023.

Aboriginal early school leavers

Trends in education areas of study between 2014 and 2023:

- **Education** enrolments have increased on average by **0.7 pp** per year to 8.7% in 2023.
- **Engineering and related technologies** enrolments have increased on average by **0.7 pp** per year to 18.7% in 2023.
- **Management and commerce** enrolments have decreased on average by **0.9 pp** per year to 5.4% in 2023.
- **Food, hospitality and personal services** enrolments have decreased on average by **0.6 pp** per year to 11.2% in 2023.

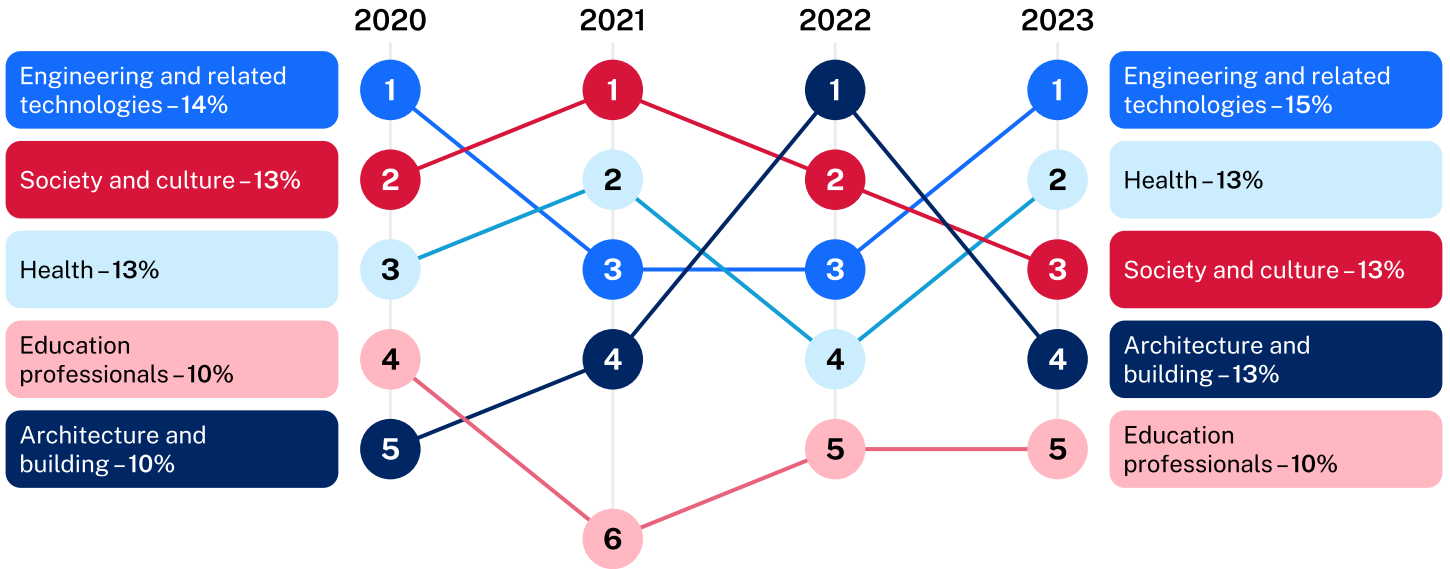
² Education and training include the main destinations of bachelor's degree, VET certificate IV+, VET certificate III, VET certificate I-II, apprenticeships and traineeships.

³ Education trends correspond to broad fields of education in the Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED). All recent leavers who said they were enrolled to study answered these questions.

Most popular education enrolment areas

The top 5 education areas of study for Aboriginal school leavers in 2023 have remained relatively consistent since 2020, with architecture and building moving from the fourth most popular in 2019 and 2021 to the most popular in 2022 before moving back to fourth place in 2023. Engineering and related technologies also saw a return to first position in 2023 after moving down to third position in 2021 and 2022.

Historical rankings for top 5 education areas of study in 2023

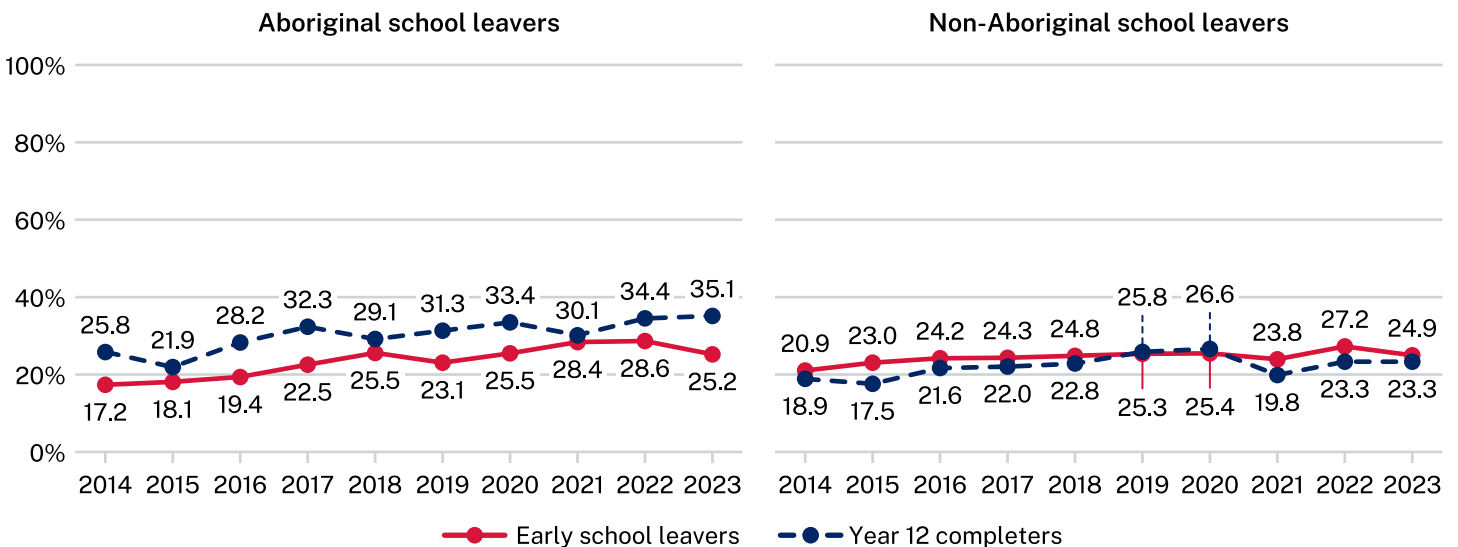


In employment

The estimated proportion of Aboriginal Year 12 completers and early school leavers in employment has increased by an average of 1.1 pp per year since 2014.⁴

The pattern is more consistent for Aboriginal Year 12 completers than early school leavers as there was a decline of 3.4 pp from 2022 to 2023 for Aboriginal early school leavers in employment.

Estimated proportion of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal school leavers in employment, 2014 to 2023



⁴ Estimated proportions for employment include recent school leavers whose main destination was part-time or full-time work.

Employment area trends⁵

Aboriginal Year 12 completers

Trends between 2014 and 2023:

- The estimated proportion of school leavers choosing to be **sales workers** has decreased on average by **1.3 pp** per year to 20.6% in 2023.
- The estimated proportion of school leavers choosing to be **machinery operators and drivers** has increased on average by **0.6 pp** per year to 10.7% in 2023.

Aboriginal early school leavers

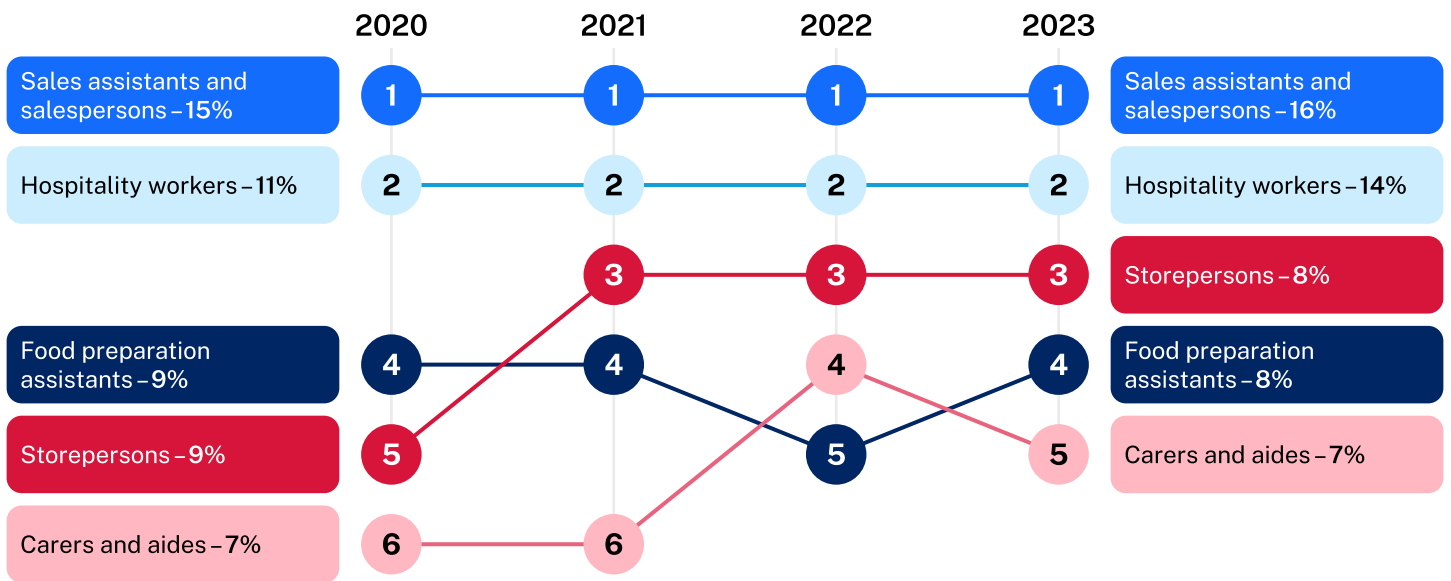
Trends between 2014 and 2023:

- The estimated proportion of school leavers choosing to be **community and personal service workers** has increased on average by **0.7 pp** per year to 20.5% in 2023.
- The estimated proportion of school leavers choosing to be **labourers** has decreased on average by **0.8 pp** per year to 31.5% in 2023.

Most popular employment areas⁶

The top 5 employment areas for Aboriginal school leavers in 2023 have remained relatively consistent since 2020. Sales support workers have dropped from third position in 2020 (11%) to sixth position in 2022 (5%) and 2023 (5%).

Historical rankings for top 5 employment areas in 2023



⁵ Employment trends and rankings include those in education and in the workforce but exclude those in an apprenticeship or traineeship.

⁶ Employment areas are defined by the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) major groups and most popular employment areas are defined by the ANZSCO sub-major groups. Refer to the [ANZSCO latest release](#) for more information.