

# 2023 NSW Post-School Destinations and Experiences Survey

Annual report

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation



# Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

The Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE) is Australia's first hub for education data and evaluation – advancing excellence in evidence, insights and policy to support data-driven decision-making.

As part of the NSW Department of Education, CESE plays a crucial role in:

- administering the Chief Data Office function to ensure effective data governance and improve data quality
- implementing data and research strategies to elevate student outcomes
- promoting evidence-based practices through qualitative and quantitative research, including data analysis, evidence papers and case studies
- ensuring robust data collection mechanisms for research and statistics in the education and training sectors
- establishing a clear and cohesive policy agenda
- streamlining information dissemination with a data release operating model
- developing strategic policy insights to shape a high-quality, equitable and future-focused education system
- engaging nationally on education research and data strategy issues
- trialling innovative initiatives aimed at improving student outcomes.

## Authors

Linda Hamilton, Laz Georgiadis, Matthew Prants, Harrison Denman, Mitchell Nunn and Daniel Piepers

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, January 2025, Sydney, NSW

Please cite this publication as:

CESE (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation) (2025) *2023 NSW Post-School Destinations and Experiences Survey – annual report*, NSW Department of Education.

For more information about this report, please contact:

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation  
Department of Education  
GPO Box 33  
Sydney NSW 2001

[info@cese.nsw.gov.au](mailto:info@cese.nsw.gov.au)

[education.nsw.gov.au/cese](https://education.nsw.gov.au/cese)

We acknowledge the homelands of all Aboriginal people and pay our respect to Country.

## Acknowledgements

CESE and the Survey Research Team would like to thank all those who have contributed to the 2023 Post-School Destinations and Experiences Survey annual report and associated fact sheets. With special thanks to:

- the Social Research Centre for their fieldwork and collection of data for the annual report and other deliverables
- Yoshi Costello, Gerard Smith and Vicki Russell for their hard work in preparing the annual report and other deliverables for publication
- Matt Berger and Yi-Lung Chen for their technical advice regarding bespoke analyses and weighting benchmarks.

We would also like to thank the many recent NSW school leavers from 2022 who took the time to participate in the 2023 survey.

# Table of contents

Introduction and summary	6
Who are our NSW school leavers?	7
What are the destinations of NSW school leavers in 2023	10
Historical destinations of NSW school leavers	11
School leavers in education or training	14
Year 12 completers in education and training	15
Early school leavers in education and training	16
Year 12 completers who deferred further education	16
Early school leavers who deferred further education	17
School leavers in employment only	18

# List of figures

<b>Figure 1</b> Sample frame of 2023 Post-School Destinations and Experiences Survey	7
<b>Figure 2</b> Proportion of early school leavers whose final year at school was Year 10, 11 or 12	8
<b>Figure 3</b> Top 7 main reasons early school leavers left before completing Year 12	9
<b>Figure 4</b> Estimated proportion of most recent NSW school leavers in education, training or employment 6 to 12 months in the year after leaving or completing school, 2023	10
<b>Figure 5</b> Estimated proportion of NSW school leavers in education, training or employment 6 to 12 months in the year after leaving or completing school, 2014 to 2023	11
<b>Figure 6</b> Estimated proportion of NSW school leavers in education, training, employment only, looking for work or NILFET 6 to 12 months in the year after leaving or completing Year 10, 11 or 12, 2014 to 2023	12
<b>Figure 7</b> Estimated proportion of NSW school leavers in education or training 6 to 12 months in the year after leaving Year 10, 11 or 12, 2014 to 2023	14
<b>Figure 8</b> Estimated proportion of NSW school leavers in full-time or part-time employment only 6 to 12 months in the year after leaving Year 10, 11 or 12, 2014 to 2023	18

# Introduction and summary

The NSW Department of Education considers school-to-work transition as one of the most important transitional experiences, particularly with respect to future employment outcomes. The department provides a range of programs and initiatives to ensure young people are prepared for higher education, training and work. Almost all secondary schools provide work-readiness training and opportunities for students to participate in work experience.

The annual NSW Post-School Destinations and Experiences Survey ('destinations survey' or 'the survey') collects information about where school leavers from NSW Government, Catholic or independent schools are, 6 to 12 months in the year after leaving school. The destinations survey has been conducted since 2014 and unpacks information on educational pathways, attainments and destinations of school leavers, and informs policymaking related to students' post-school education, training and employment. Results from the destinations survey are also used to support program evaluation relating to post-school destinations of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students. The data collected through this survey is essential for policy development, changes, and fulfilling our Australian Government obligations to report on the destinations of early school leavers and Year 12 completers.

This report describes the findings from the 2023 survey which was conducted between July and November 2023. NSW school leavers who completed Year 12 in 2022 (Year 12 completers) or who left school in 2022 while they were in Year 10, 11 or 12 (early school leavers) were invited to participate in the survey.

There were 10 main school destinations that relate to further education and current employment: bachelor's degree, vocational education and training (VET) certificate IV+, VET certificate III, VET certificate I–II, apprenticeship, traineeship, full-time work, part-time work, looking for work, and not in the labour force or further education or training (NILFET).<sup>1</sup>

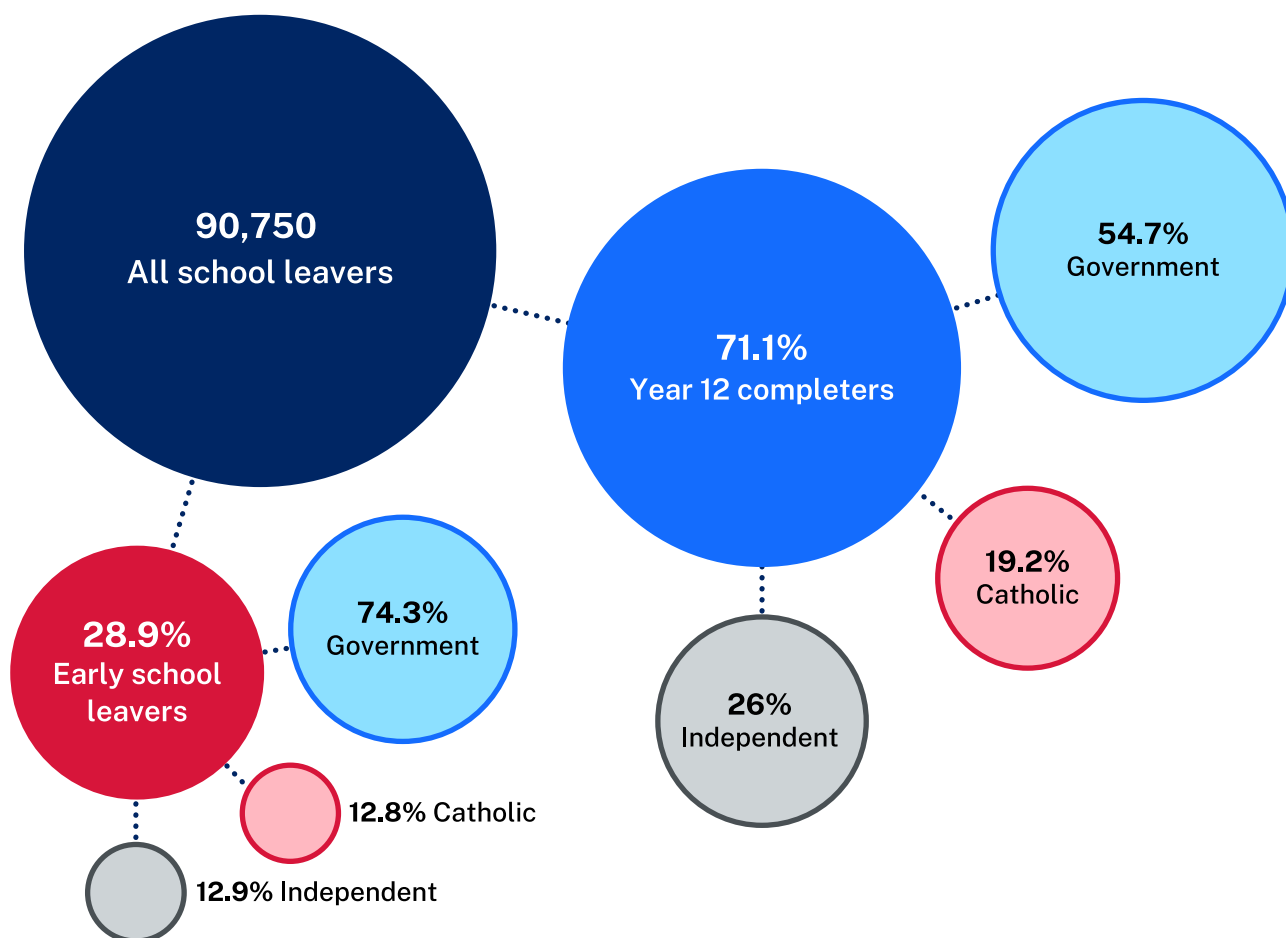
---

1 This classification system is hierarchical and prioritises education-related post-school destinations over participation in paid employment (unless employed as an apprentice or trainee). As such, it represents a young person's main destination since leaving school. For an explanation of the difference between an apprenticeship and a traineeship, refer to [Benefits of apprenticeships and traineeships](#) on the NSW Department of Education website. 'Not in the labour force' means that a person is not working and not looking for work.

# Who are our NSW school leavers?

Figure 1

Sample frame of 2023 Post-School Destinations and Experiences Survey



**Note.** 'All school leavers' are Year 10, 11 or 12 NSW Government, Catholic or independent school students who left school in 2022. 'Early school leavers' are students who left school in Year 10, 11 or 12 before they were awarded an HSC. 'Year 12 completers' are students who were awarded an HSC or fulfilled all requirements except the HSC minimum standard at the time of leaving school.

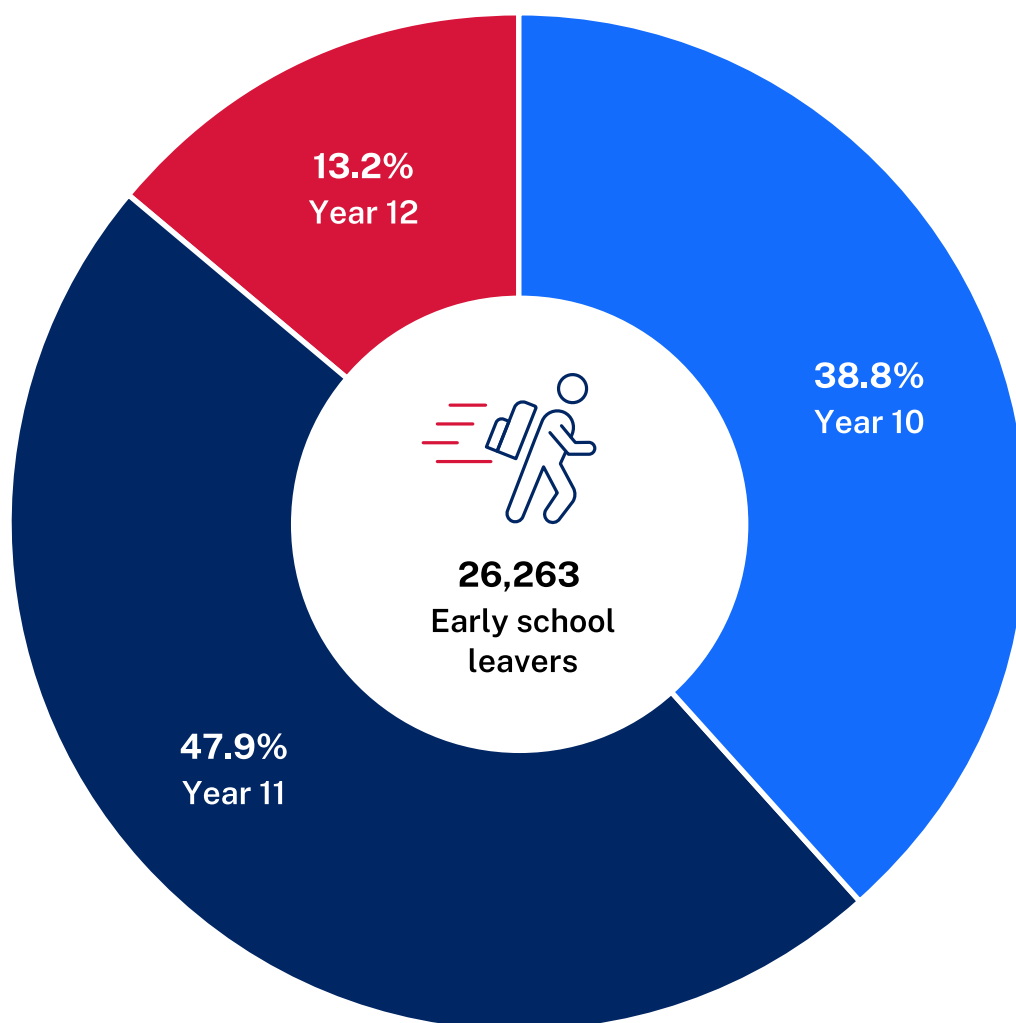
Our NSW school leavers were Year 10, 11 or 12 NSW Government, Catholic or independent school students who left school in 2022. These students may have left before or after completing Year 12. Students who left in Year 10, 11 or 12 before they fulfilled the full pattern of study necessary for the HSC award are categorised as early school leavers. Students who completed Year 12 and were either awarded an HSC or fulfilled all requirements except the HSC minimum standard at the time of leaving school were classified as Year 12 completers.

In 2023, all students who left school in 2022 were invited to complete the survey. This report focuses specifically on the educational pathways, attainment and destinations of Year 12 completers and early school leavers 6 to 12 months in the year after they leave school. A total of 64,487 Year 12 completers and 26,263 early school leavers were invited to take part in the 2023 survey.<sup>2</sup> Responses were received from 28,831 Year 12 completers and 5,892 early school leavers.

Close to half (47.9%) of early school leavers were in Year 11 for their final year of study (refer to Figure 2) with over a quarter of early school leavers specifying work or career aspirations as their main reason for leaving school (refer to [Figure 3](#)).

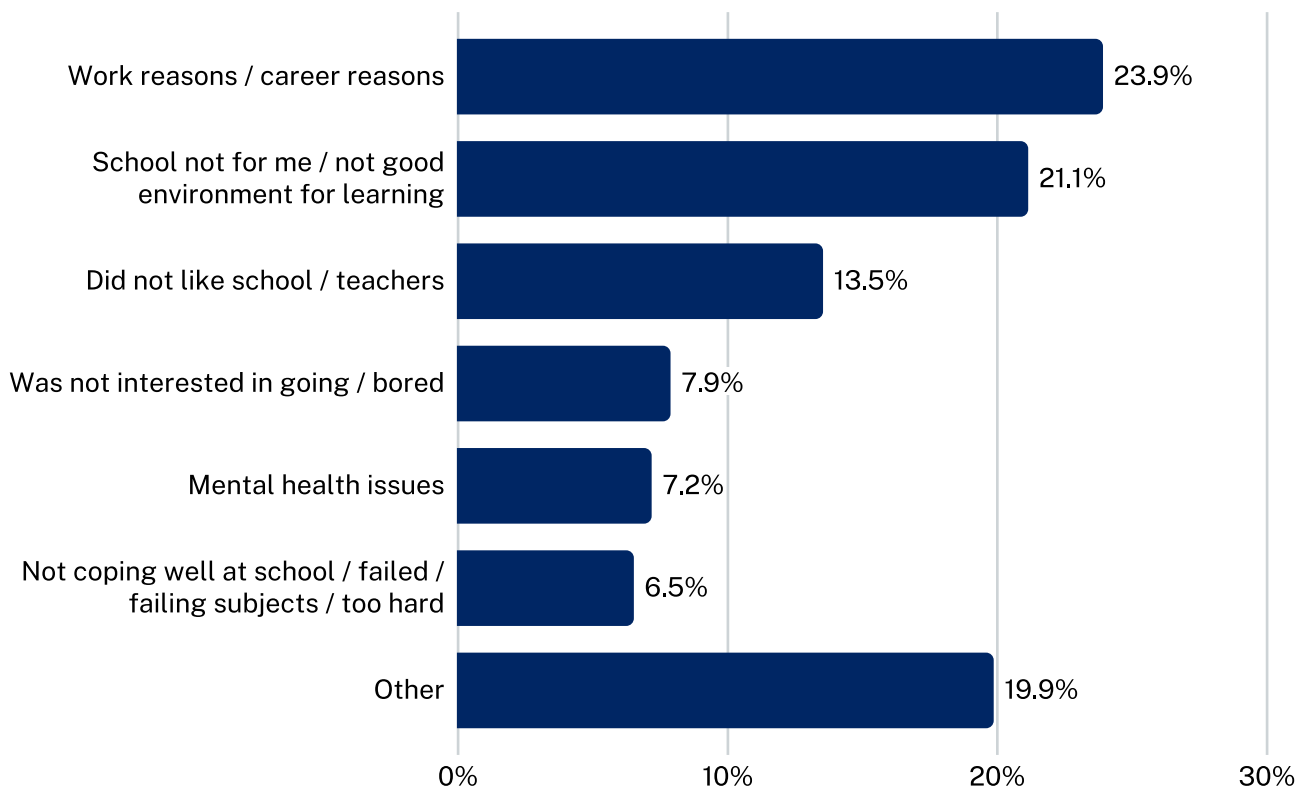
**Figure 2**

**Proportion of early school leavers whose final year at school was Year 10, 11 or 12**



<sup>2</sup> A detailed outline of the survey method, including eligibility guidelines, response rates and the selection process, can be found in the technical report.

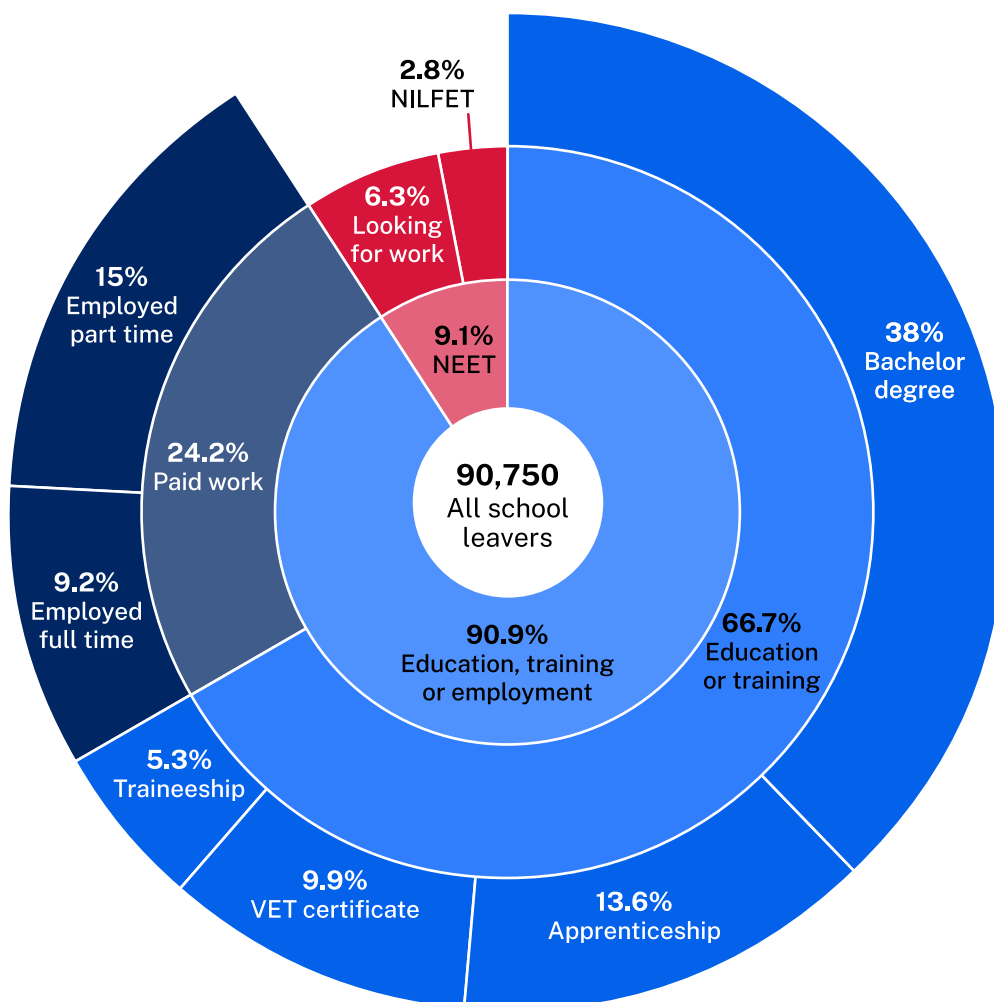


**Figure 3****Top 7 main reasons early school leavers left before completing Year 12**

# What are the destinations of NSW school leavers in 2023

Figure 4

Estimated proportion of most recent NSW school leavers in education, training or employment 6 to 12 months in the year after leaving or completing school, 2023



Of 90,750 NSW school leavers, 9 in 10 school leavers were estimated to be in education, training or employment in 2023.<sup>3</sup> Two-thirds of this category were in education or training, of which the most popular destination was enrolment in a bachelor's degree (38.0%). Apprenticeship (13.6%) and VET certificate (9.9%) were the second and third highest destinations, followed by traineeships (5.3%). Just under one-quarter of school leavers were in paid work only in 2023, with 15.0% in part-time employment and 9.2% in full-time employment.

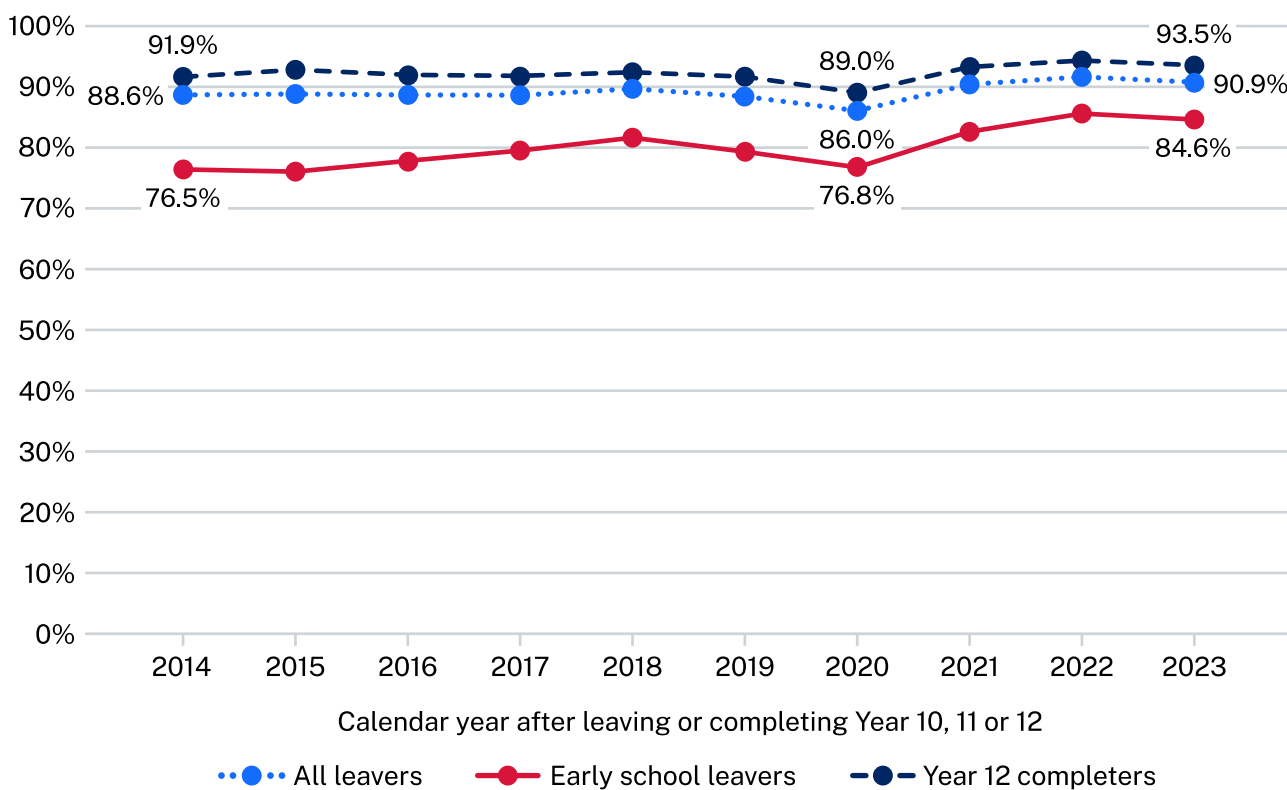
A little less than 1 in 10 school leavers were not in employment, education or training (NEET), with 6.3% stating they were looking for work and 2.8% categorised under NILFET.

<sup>3</sup> Refer to the [2023 NSW Post-School Destinations and Experiences Survey technical report](#) for more information on estimates.

## Historical destinations of NSW school leavers

Figure 5

Estimated proportion of NSW school leavers in education, training or employment 6 to 12 months in the year after leaving or completing school, 2014 to 2023



For all leaver types, 2023 saw the second highest proportion of school leavers in education, training or employment since 2014, with 90.9% of all leavers, 93.5% of Year 12 completers and 84.6% of early school leavers in education, training or employment (refer to Figure 4).

The proportion of school leavers in education, training, or employment fell slightly in 2023 for both Year 12 completers and early school leavers, following the large increases in the two years after the impact of COVID-19 in 2020. However, as shown in Figure 6, 2023 saw the highest proportion of early school leavers in education and training since 2014 at 59.7%.

With 71.1% of school leavers having completed Year 12 (refer to Figure 1), the historical trend of all leavers in education, training and/or employment was similar to Year 12 completers. For all leavers, the increase from 2014 to 2023 was 2.3 pp, and for Year 12 completers the increase was 1.6 pp. The increase for early school leavers in education, training and employment over the same period was 8.2 pp.

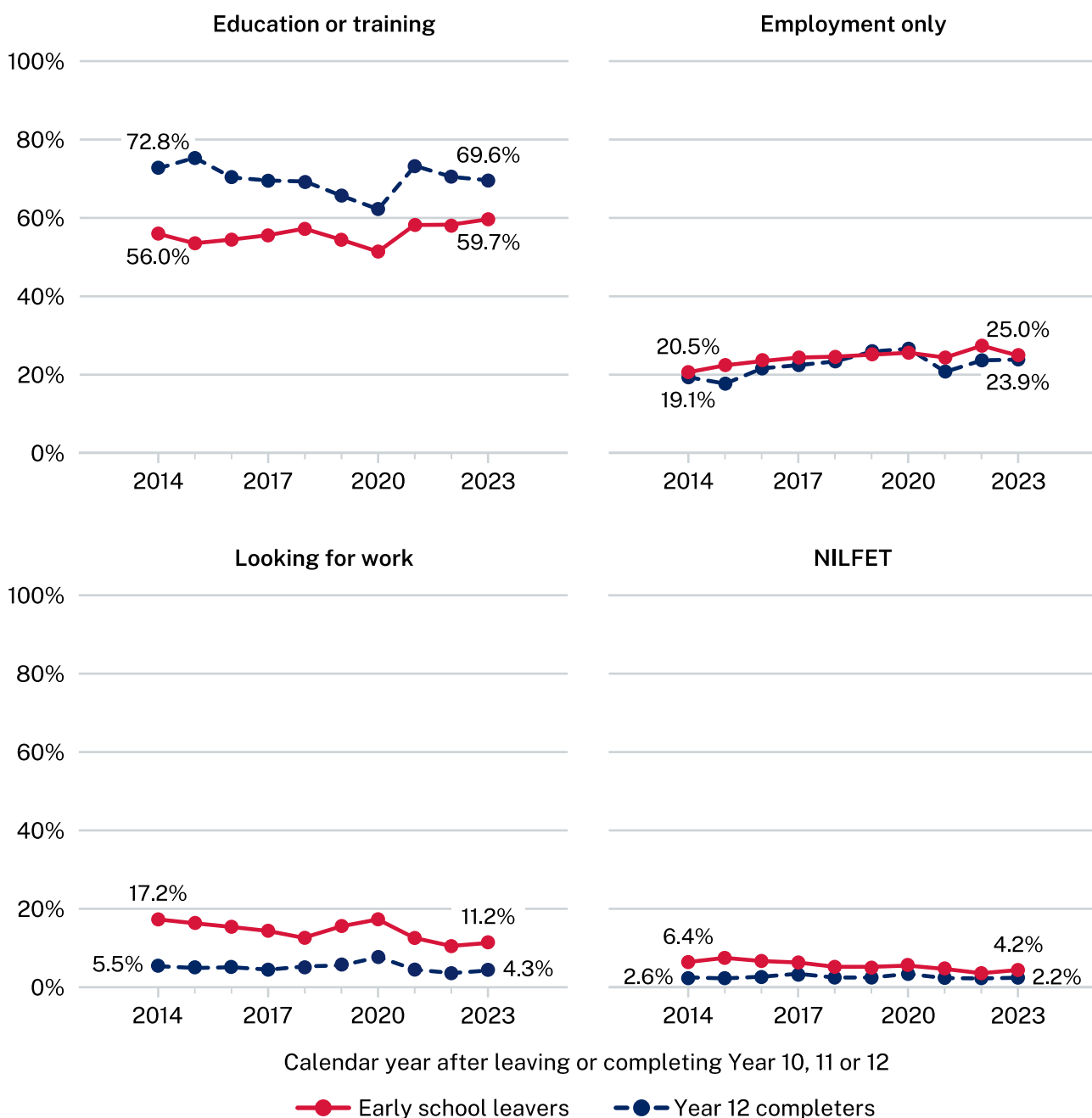
Since 2014, the proportion of early school leavers in education, training and employment has increased on average by 1.0 pp per year, while for Year 12 completers the average increase has been lower at 0.1 pp per year.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Average rate of growth per year was calculated using the unstandardised coefficient from a weighted linear regression analysis of the relevant measure over survey year.

A notable drop was observed for all school leaver types in 2020 due to the impact of COVID-19. Three years after this, the proportion of school leavers in education, training or employment has recovered and the second highest proportion was recorded in 2023.

**Figure 6**

**Estimated proportion of NSW school leavers in education, training, employment only, looking for work or NILFET 6 to 12 months in the year after leaving or completing Year 10, 11 or 12, 2014 to 2023**



Between 2014 and 2023, the main post-school destinations differed slightly between early school leavers and Year 12 completers (refer to Figure 5). A higher proportion of Year 12 completers were in education or training than early school leavers and a higher proportion of early school leavers were looking for work than Year 12 completers, with both leaver types having similar proportions in employment only over time.

Among early school leavers, 3 in 5 (59.7%) school leavers were undertaking some form of education or training in 2023, while for Year 12 completers this was higher (69.6%). The proportion of early school leavers and Year 12 completers in education or training was stable with a decline in 2020 followed by increases in subsequent years. Between 2022 and 2023 there has been a slight decrease in the proportion of Year 12 completers in education or training (-0.8 pp) and a slight increase in the proportion of early leavers in education or training (1.5 pp).

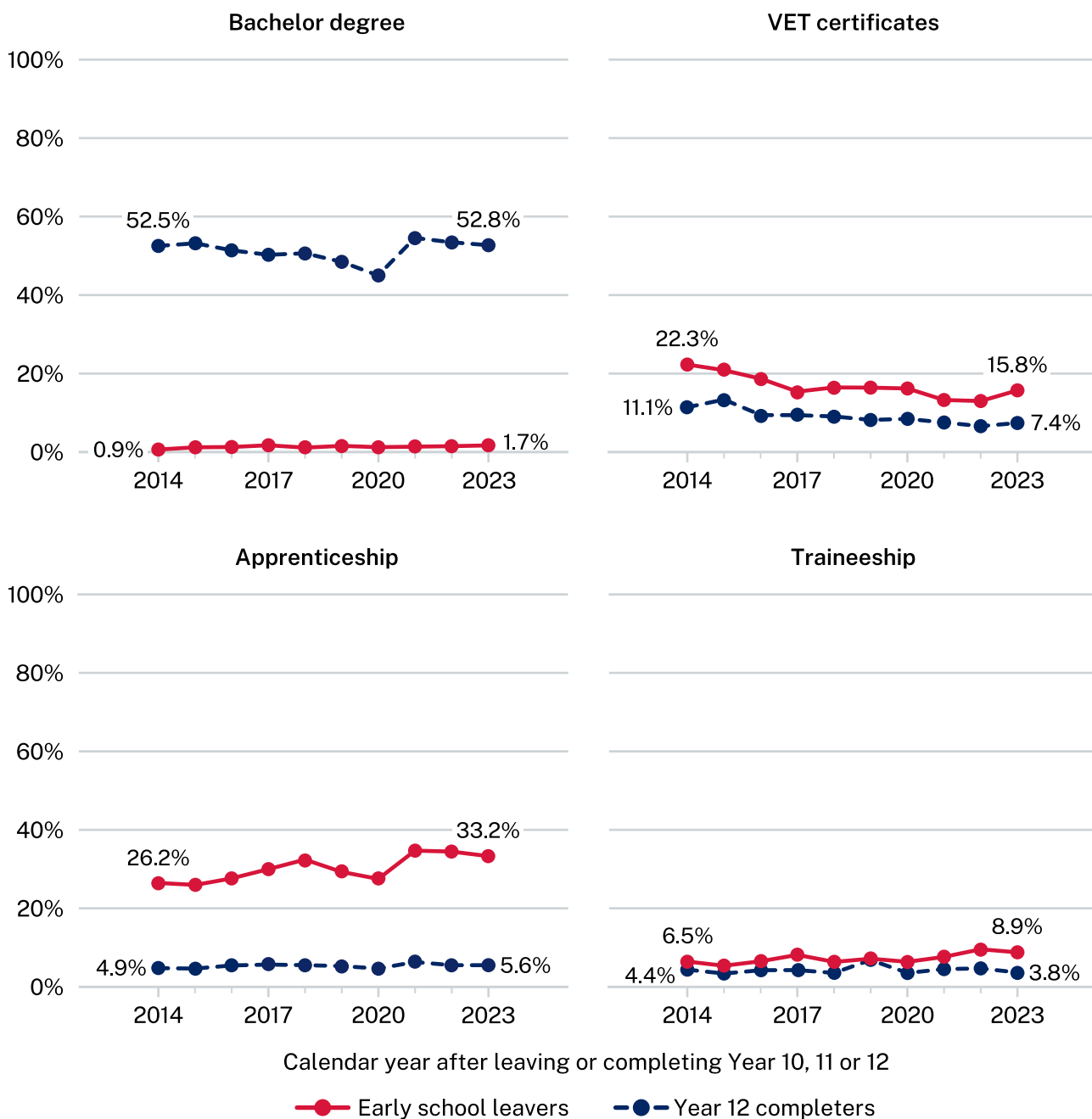
There was also a gradual decline in early school leavers and Year 12 completers looking for work and NILFET from 2014 to 2023, with the second lowest proportion for both Year 12 completers and early school leavers recorded in 2023. The proportion of Year 12 completers and early school leavers looking for work or NILFET has fallen by 1.6 and 8.2 pps respectively since 2014.

Conversely, there was an increase in the proportion of early school leavers in employment-only destinations since 2014. Although the proportion of early school leavers in employment-only destinations fell from the high recording in 2022, it has increased by 4.5 pp since 2014. Similarly, there was an increase in the proportion of Year 12 completers in employment-only destinations since 2014. The proportion of Year 12 completers in employment-only destinations was steady at 23.9% in 2023 compared to the previous year and has risen by 4.8 pp since 2014.

## School leavers in education or training

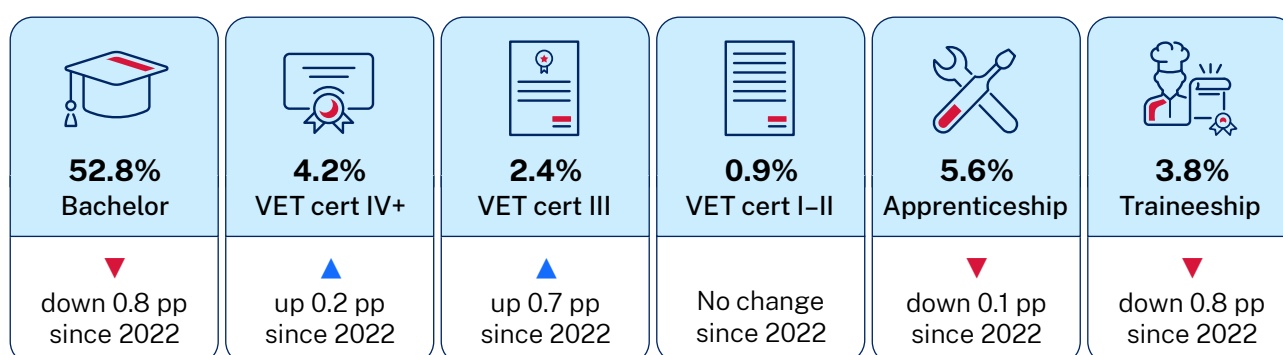
Figure 7

Estimated proportion of NSW school leavers in education or training 6 to 12 months in the year after leaving Year 10, 11 or 12, 2014 to 2023



Education and training destinations of NSW school leavers differed by leaver type, with a higher proportion of Year 12 completers moving on to a bachelor's degree than early school leavers and a higher proportion of early school leavers moving on to VET certificates or apprenticeships than Year 12 completers. For both leaver types, participation in VET certificate courses that do not form part of an apprenticeship or traineeship has gradually decreased over time by 9.3 pp for early school leavers and 4.6 pp for Year 12 completers from 2014 to 2022. In counter to this trend, participation in VET courses increased for both Year 12 completers and early school leavers by 1.0 and 2.9 pps respectively in 2023.

## Year 12 completers in education and training



Bachelor's degrees continue to be the most popular destination among Year 12 completers. However, both bachelor's degrees and traineeships saw the biggest decrease in uptake compared to 2022 (-0.8 pp) while VET certificate III study saw the biggest increase (0.7 pp). Of the Year 12 completers undertaking a bachelor's degree at a university in 2023, 26.6% were undertaking a double degree.

Of the Year 12 completers who were enrolled to study in 2023 (both current and deferred):

- 79.0% were enrolled at university, 15.0% were enrolled through TAFE or a government VET provider and 4.9% were enrolled through a private training college or other education provider<sup>5</sup>
- 86.0% were enrolled to study full-time and 11.8% were enrolled to study part-time.<sup>6</sup>

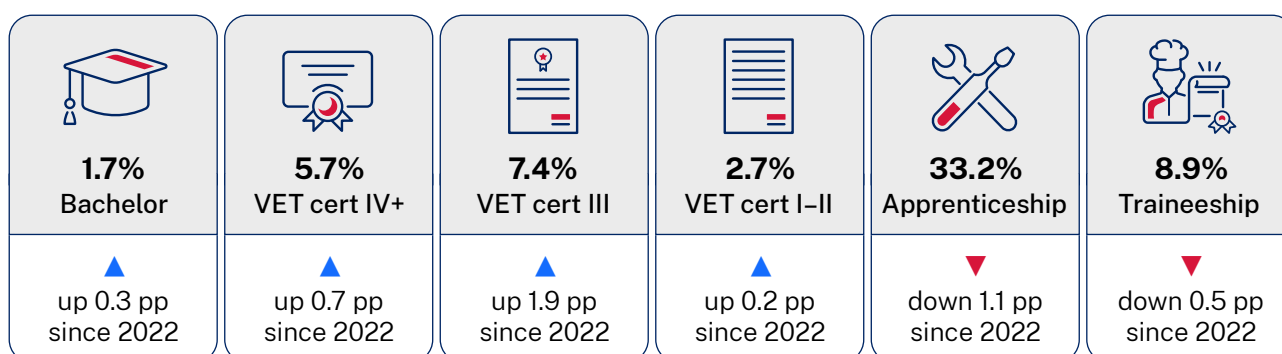
The most common study areas in the education categories were:

- bachelor's degree – health (21.4%)
- VET certificate IV+ – creative arts (20.5%)
- VET certificate III – health (17.6%)
- VET certificate I-II – health (21.2%).

<sup>5</sup> A further 1.0% did not know what type of educational Institution they were enrolled to study through or preferred not to say.

<sup>6</sup> A further 2.2% did not know whether they were enrolled to study full-time or part-time or preferred not to say.

## Early school leavers in education and training

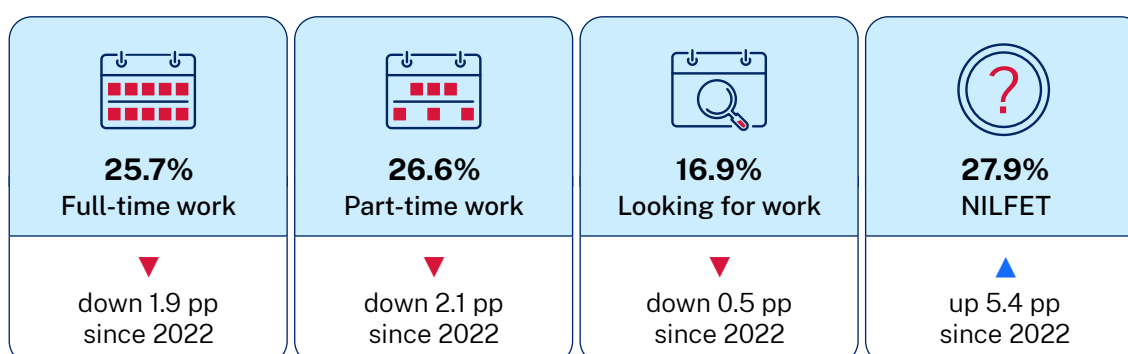


The most popular destination among early school leavers was apprenticeships, increasing by 7.0 pp between 2014 and 2023, with the highest growth between 2014 and 2020. Early school leavers taking up traineeships has remained more stable, increasing by 2.4 pp from 2014 to 2023, with the proportion of early school leavers in traineeships between 2021 and 2023 showing a modest jump compared to the average proportion between 2014 and 2020.

Of the early school leavers who were enrolled to study in 2023, 79.6% enrolled through TAFE or a VET provider and 10.8% were enrolled through a private training college or adult and community education provider.

## Year 12 completers who deferred further education

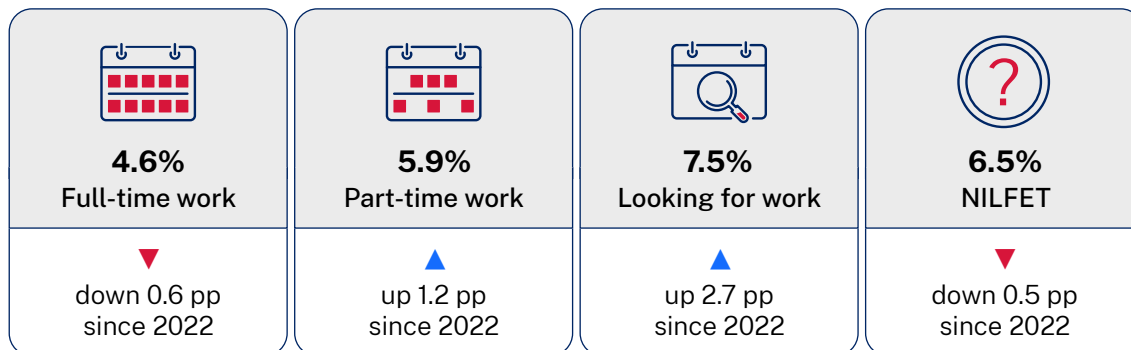
Over 1 in 4 (27.9%) Year 12 completers who were NILFET indicated they were enrolled in a course of study but had deferred it in 2023. Similar rates of deferment were found for those in full-time and part-time employment as their main destination only and slightly lower for those looking for work. The percentage of Year 12 completers who are NILFET and who have deferred further education has increased by 5.4 pp since 2022. The biggest decrease in the percentage of Year 12 completers who had deferred further education was for those in part-time work (-2.1 pp).





## Early school leavers who deferred further education

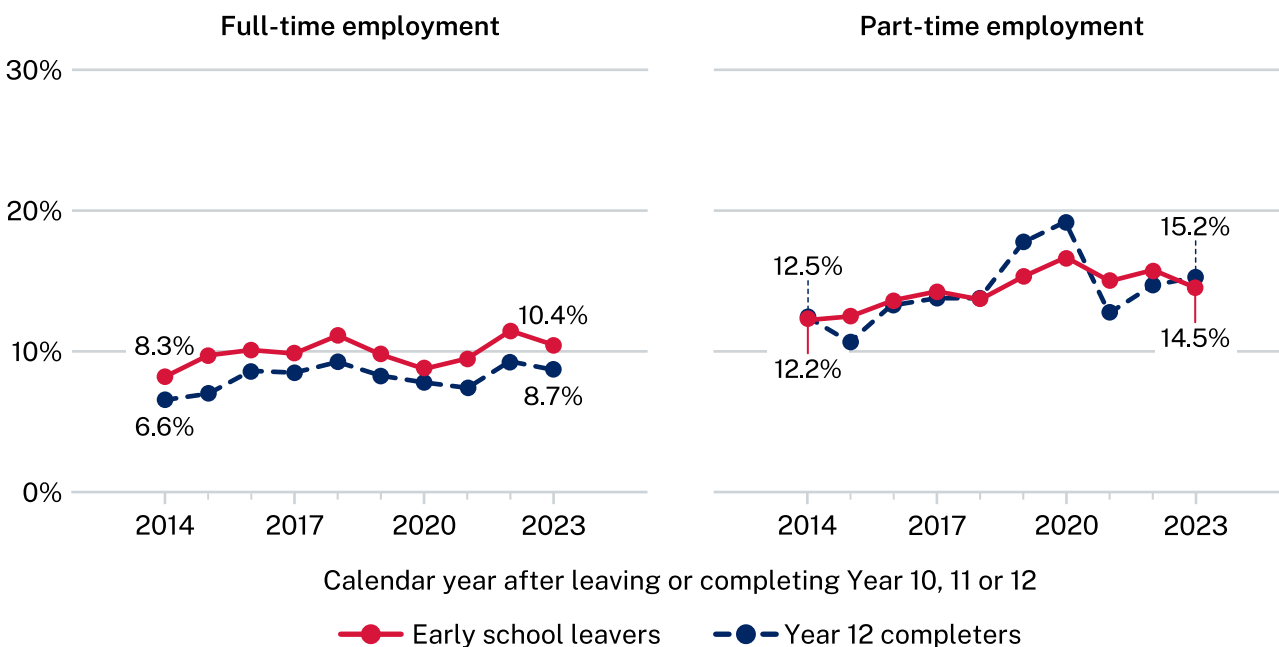
Lower rates of deferment are found for early school leavers in employment only, looking for work or NILFET compared to Year 12 completers. The percentage of early leavers who are looking for work and have deferred further education has increased since 2022.



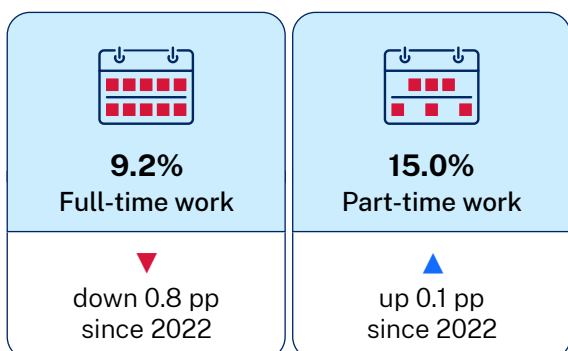
## School leavers in employment only

Figure 8

Estimated proportion of NSW school leavers in full-time or part-time employment only 6 to 12 months in the year after leaving Year 10, 11 or 12, 2014 to 2023



A similar proportion of school leavers from both leaver types were in full-time or part-time employment only after leaving school, while one-quarter (23.9%) of Year 12 completers and almost one-quarter (25.0%) of early school leavers were employed and not in education or training in 2023. The proportion of school leavers in full-time employment decreased by 0.8 pp in 2023, although it remains 1.2 pp above the recent low recorded in 2021. In comparison, the proportion in part-time employment increased by 0.1 pp in 2023 and was 1.6 pp higher than in 2021. School leavers were able to find an increased share of full-time jobs since 2020, with the percentage of employment destinations only in full-time jobs rising from 30.2% to 38.0% since 2020. In addition, 59.5% of Year 12 completers and 52.9% of early school leavers whose main destination was part-time work would prefer to be working more hours.



## Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

GPO Box 33, Sydney NSW 2001, Australia

✉ [info@cese.nsw.gov.au](mailto:info@cese.nsw.gov.au)

🌐 [education.nsw.gov.au/cese](http://education.nsw.gov.au/cese)

🗨️ [yammer.com/det.nsw.edu.au](https://yammer.com/det.nsw.edu.au)

Licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

468\_070125\_GSt\_v2\_AA5GS

