On Track 2023

Destinations of Victorian school leavers

About the study

Since 2003, the annual On Track survey has followed the outcomes of Victorian students who finish Year 12 and those who leave school before completion. Between July to September 2023, the Department of Education surveyed 16,158 students who completed Year 12 in 2022 and 1,317 students who left school in Years 10, 11 or 12 in 2022 (non-completers). The sample included 9,774 female, 7,603 male, and 98 respondents who either did not identify as either male or female, or for whom such information was unavailable.

Over time, the participation of school leavers in the On Track survey has steadily declined,   
with fewer students providing permission to be contacted for the survey or responding to the survey when contacted. In 2023, the survey included 28.0% of Year 12 completers and only 6.9%   
of non-completers, compared to 59.2% of Year 12 completers and 18.6% of non-completers in 2014.

This trend aligns with cultural changes among young people, such as the increasing preference for online communication and reluctance to answer calls from unknown numbers or have a telephone conversion with a stranger. All these changes have negatively affected the strength of phone surveys as a research methodology.

We recognise the diversity of Aboriginal people living throughout Victoria. While the terms ‘Koorie’ or ‘Koori’ are commonly used to describe Aboriginal people of southeast Australia, we have used the term ‘Aboriginal’ to include all people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent who are living in Victoria.

# Key findings 2023

A large majority of Year 12 completers (74.0%) continue their education and training, with enrolment in a bachelor’s degree (54.9%) being the most popular destination.   
  
Over the past decade, the proportion of Year 12 completers transitioning directly to employment in the year after school has increased from 16.7% in 2014 to peak of 24.3% in 2022, before decreasing slightly to 22.6% in 2023.

The proportion of non-completers entering employment in the year after leaving school was higher in 2022 (37.8%) and 2023 (33.1%) than over the previous decade (22.4% to 27.5%), while the proportion of those looking for work was lower than in previous years.

In 2023, the most popular field of study for those in education and training was Health for both Year 12 completers (24.9%) and non-completers (33.8%), reflecting a steep jump in popularity for non-completers compared to previous years. Over the long term, the study of Creative Arts, and Management and Commerce are declining in popularity for Year 12 completers.

Consistent with previous years, those in employment who completed Year 12 were most likely to be employed as Sales Assistants and Storepersons (25.5%) or in Food, Hospitality and Tourism (26.0%), while non-completers were most likely to be employed in Food, Hospitality and Tourism (18.9%) or Building and Construction (15.2%).

## Destinations are different for Year 12 completers and non-completers

The post-school destinations of Year 12 completers and non-completers follow different but well-established patterns, with broad trends from previous years continuing in 2023.

A large majority of Year 12 completers (74.0%) remain in education and training, with enrolment in a bachelor’s degree (54.9%) being the most popular destination. Year 12 completers not in education or training are more likely to be in part-time employment (13.5% of all Year 12 completers) than full-time employment (9.1%).

Around half of non-completers continue to participate in education and training (52.7%). An apprenticeship/ traineeship remained the most popular destination for non-completers in education or training (35.9% of all non-completers). Non-completers not in education or training were also more likely to be in part-time employment (18.8% of all non-completers) than full-time employment (14.3%).

Destinations of Year 12 completers and non-completers, 2023

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Destination | Year 12 completers | Non-completers |
| **In Education or Training** | **74.0%** | **52.7%** |
| Bachelor’s degree | 54.9% | 2.2% |
| Certificate/diploma | 9.9% | 14.6% |
| Apprenticeship/traineeship | 9.1% | 35.9% |
| **Not in Education or Training** | **26.0%** | **47.3%** |
| Employed | 22.6% | 33.1% |
| Employed full-time | 9.1% | 14.3% |
| Employed part-time | 13.5% | 18.8% |
| Looking for work | 2.5% | 9.5% |
| Not in the labour force, education or training | 0.9% | 3.2% |

## A bachelor’s degree is still the most popular pathway for Year 12 completers, although more are transitioning directly to employment

The proportion of Year 12 completers in employment decreased slightly from 24.3% in 2022 to 22.6% in 2023 but remained higher than results from 2010 to 2021 which ranged between 17.0% and 19.8%. From 2022 to 2023, the proportion of completers pursuing a bachelor’s degree increased slightly from 52.3% to 54.9%, while those undertaking an apprenticeship/traineeship or certificate/diploma remained stable.

Figure 1: Proportion of Year 12 completers by destination, 2019 to 2023

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| Bachelor’s degree | 54.1% | 54.5% | 56.1% | 52.3% | 54.9% |
| Employed | 19.7% | 17.6% | 18.0% | 24.3% | 22.6% |
| Certificate/diploma | 12.8% | 11.9% | 11.3% | 9.7% | 9.9% |
| Apprenticeship/traineeship | 8.2% | 8.2% | 9.8% | 10.2% | 9.1% |
| Looking for work | 4.4% | 6.4% | 3.9% | 2.7% | 2.5% |

## More non-completers are in further education or employment

The proportion of non-completers in employment in the year after leaving school was also higher in 2022 (37.8%) and 2023 (33.1%) than over the previous decade (22.4% to 27.5%). The proportions of those looking for work in 2022 (9.7%) and 2023 (9.5%) were lower than in previous years (14.6% to 18.8%).

The proportion of non-completers in an apprenticeship/traineeship remained stable (35.4% in 2022   
and 35.9% in 2023). The proportion of non-completers enrolled in a certificate/diploma increased slightly from 12.0% in 2022 to 14.6% in 2023, but remained lower than results from 2010 to 2020 which ranged between 28.1% and 18.9%. As in previous years, few non-completers undertook a bachelor’s degree.

Figure 2: Proportion of non-completers by destination, 2019 to 2023

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| Apprenticeship/traineeship | 32.7% | 30.1% | 35.9% | 35.4% | 35.9% |
| Employed | 26.8% | 22.4% | 27.2% | 37.8% | 33.1% |
| Certificate/diploma | 19.7% | 19.4% | 15.6% | 12.0% | 14.6% |
| Looking for work | 14.8% | 18.8% | 14.6% | 9.7% | 9.5% |
| Bachelor’s degree | 1.3% | 2.3% | 1.8% | 1.6% | 2.2% |

## Health is the most popular field of study for both Year 12 completers and non-completers

In 2023, the most popular field of study for Year 12 completers was Health (24.9%), followed by Society and Culture (14.7%), and Management and Commerce (13.0%). These have been the 3 most popular fields since 2017, but while the proportion of completers studying Health has grown over time, Management and Commerce has declined. The study of Creative Arts has declined from being the most popular field in 2014 (at 16.9%) down to 6th place in 2023 at 9.1%.

Figure 3: Proportion of Year 12 completers in education or training across the 6 most popular fields of study, 2019 to 2023

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| Health | 19.4% | 20.7% | 21.8% | 21.5% | 24.9% |
| Society and Culture | 15.3% | 16.8% | 16.8% | 17.3% | 14.7% |
| Management and Commerce | 15.8% | 14.4% | 14.0% | 13.5% | 13.0% |
| Natural and Physical Sciences | 13.3% | 13.3% | 12.3% | 12.2% | 12.8% |
| Engineering and Related Technologies | 7.8% | 7.7% | 7.8% | 8.3% | 9.6% |
| Creative Arts | 12.3% | 10.8% | 10.6% | 10.5% | 9.1% |

In 2023, non-completers were most likely to study Health (33.8%\*), followed by Education (16.2%),   
and Creative Arts (14.1%), with both Health and Education showing increases in 2023 on previous years.

Food and Hospitality Services (7.7%) and Management and Commerce (5.6%) showed declines from 2022 (when they were at 14.1% and 11.6% respectively).

Figure 4: Proportion of non-completers in education or training across the 6 most popular fields of study, 2019 to 2023

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| Health | 9.8% | 13.5% | 12.7% | 12.1% | 33.8% |
| Education | 7.6% | 8.6% | 8.7% | 8.0% | 16.2% |
| Creative Arts | 11.4% | 13.3% | 12.7% | 12.6% | 14.1% |
| Food, Hospitality and Personal Services | 11.4% | 11.1% | 11.2% | 14.1% | 7.7% |
| Information Technology | 3.9% | 4.4% | 4.7% | 6.0% | 7.7% |
| Management and Commerce | 9.2% | 10.8% | 14.1% | 11.6% | 5.6% |

\*The smaller sample size of the non-completer cohort means that results are subject to greater fluctuation from year to year.

## Top industries of employment have remained relatively stable

Leading industries of employment for Year 12 completers and non-completers have remained largely unchanged since 2017. Respondents who completed Year 12 are most likely to gain employment as Sales Assistants and Storepersons (25.5%), or in the Food, Hospitality and Tourism industry (26.0%).

These 2 industries have alternated as the top industry of employment over previous years of the On Track survey.

As in previous years, Food, Hospitality and Tourism (18.9%) and Building and Construction (15.2%) were the top 2 industries of employment for non-completers.

Top 5 employment destinations for Year 12 completers and non-completers, 2023

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Rank | Year 12 completers | % | Year 12 non-completers | % |
| 1 | Food, Hospitality and Tourism | **26.0%** | Food, Hospitality and Tourism | **18.9%** |
| 2 | Sales Assistants and Storepersons | **25.5%** | Building and Construction | **15.2%** |
| 3 | Teaching, Childcare and Library | **10.2%** | Sales Assistants and Storepersons | **14.0%** |
| 4 | Labourers, Factory and Machine Workers | **6.4%** | Labourers, Factory and Machine Workers | **7.2%** |
| 5 | Health, Fitness, Hair and Beauty | **4.5%** | Motor Vehicle Service and Repair | **6.7%** |

## Demographic differences are associated with different post-school destinations

The On Track survey provides information on post-school destinations by selected student characteristics, including gender\*, location, and language background. For both those who complete Year 12 and those who do not the following trends can be seen:

Males are more likely to commence an apprenticeship/traineeship, while females are more likely to pursue a bachelor’s degree, or certificate/diploma.

Young people with a language background other than English are more likely to enrol in a bachelor’s degree, and less likely to undertake an apprenticeship/traineeship, than those from English-speaking backgrounds.

Young people in non-metropolitan areas are less likely to enrol in a bachelor’s degree and more likely to undertake an apprenticeship/ traineeship than their metropolitan counterparts.

\*Data represented by gender is described as male and female. This analysis does not include respondents who either did not identify as either male or female or for whom such identifying information has been suppressed due to the small number of respondents in this category.

## Post-school pathways for Aboriginal young people

In 2023, there were 278 Aboriginal respondents (209 Year 12 completers and 69 non-completers)   
to the On Track survey.

Compared to 2022, the proportion of Aboriginal non-completers looking for work dropped from   
20.5% to 8.7%, with a corresponding increase in those enrolled in an apprenticeship/traineeship   
from 26.0% to 33.3%.

For Aboriginal Year 12 completers, the proportion undertaking an apprenticeship/traineeship   
dropped from 24.2% in 2022 to 14.4% in 2023, while those employed increased from 32.0% to 37.3%.

The smaller sample size of the Aboriginal cohort means that results are subject to greater fluctuation from year to year.

Destinations of Aboriginal Year 12 completers and non-completers, 2023

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | In education or training | | | Not in education or training | | |
|  | **Apprenticeship /traineeship** | **Bachelor’s degree** | **Certificate/diploma** | **Employed** | **Looking  for work** | **Not in labour force, education or training** |
| Year 12 completers | 14.4% | 29.2% | 12.0% | 37.3% | 4.8% | 2.4% |
| Non-completers | 33.3% | 2.9% | 13.0% | 36.2% | 8.7% | 2.9% |

## Non-completers are less likely to find career activities useful

In 2023, the proportion of respondents finding career advice somewhat or very useful was greater for Year 12 completers (71.1%) than for non-completers (53.3%). These proportions show a long-term declining trend, with a small increase for non-completers from 2022 to 2023.

Proportions of Year 12 completers and non-completers finding career activities somewhat or very useful, 2019 to 2023

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| Year 12 completers | 78.5% | 78.2% | 73.5% | 71.0% | 71.1% |
| Non-completers | 61.4% | 61.2% | 55.8% | 49.9% | 53.3% |

The 3 most attended career activities were different for Year 12 completers and non-completers, with Year 12 completers more likely to have had a one-on-one talk with the school’s career advisor (83.6% vs 35.3%).

Proportion of Year 12 completers and non-completers attending the 3 most popular career activities, 2023

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Career activity attendance | Year 12 completers | Career activity attendance | Non-completers |
| 1. Have a one-on-one talk with the school’s career advisor | 83.6% | 1. Identify careers that match your interests and abilities | 67.5% |
| 2. Search online for career options at school | 76.0% | 2. Receive written material about career and study options | 58.4% |
| 3. Identify careers that match your interests and abilities | 72.4% | 3. Search online for career options at school | 57.4% |

## Post-school destinations vary between school sectors

In 2023, the proportion of Year 12 completers enrolled in a bachelor’s degree was greater for the   
non-government school sector (62.1%) than for the government school sector (48.5%).

Year 12 completers and non-completers from the government sector are more likely to transition into employment than those from the non-government sector. This trend has been consistent over time.

Destinations for Year 12 completers by school sector, 2023

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | In education or training | | | Not in education or training | | |
|  | **Apprenticeship /traineeship** | **Bachelor’s degree** | **Certificate/diploma** | **Employed** | **Looking  for work** | **Not in labour force, education or training** |
| Government | 10.6% | 48.5% | 11.4% | 25.1% | 3.3% | 1.1% |
| Non-government | 7.5% | 62.1% | 8.2% | 19.8% | 1.7% | 0.6% |

### Find out more

Contact the Performance Insights team:

insights.and.evidence@education.vic.gov.au