

Snapshot report

Destinations of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander school leavers

2024 NSW Post-School Destinations and Experiences Survey

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

This snapshot report provides an overview of findings from the 2024 NSW Post-School Destinations and Experiences Survey for 2 cohorts of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander school leavers who left school in 2023 in NSW: Year 12 completers and early school leavers.¹



Survey sample

In 2024, 95,334 students (68,778 Year 12 completers and 26,556 early school leavers) from across NSW were invited to take part in the survey. In the population of recent school leavers, it was estimated that:

- 3,489 (5.1%) Year 12 completers were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.
- 4,384 (16.5%) early school leavers were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

The estimation was based on responses received from 30,752 Year 12 completers and 6,483 early school leavers. Of these responses, 1,515 Year 12 completers and 991 early school leavers were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

¹ The annual NSW Post-School Destinations and Experiences Survey collects information about school leavers from NSW Government, Catholic and independent schools in the year after leaving school. This snapshot report presents findings from the 2024 survey which was conducted between July and November 2024. NSW school leavers who completed Year 12 in 2023 (Year 12 completers) or who left school in 2023 while they were in Year 10, 11 or 12 (early school leavers) were invited to participate.

In this snapshot report, school leavers' Aboriginality is based on whether they indicated being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in the survey. As such, estimates in this report may differ from estimates using sources based on school enrolment data.² The term 'Aboriginal' is used throughout this snapshot report to refer to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander school leavers.

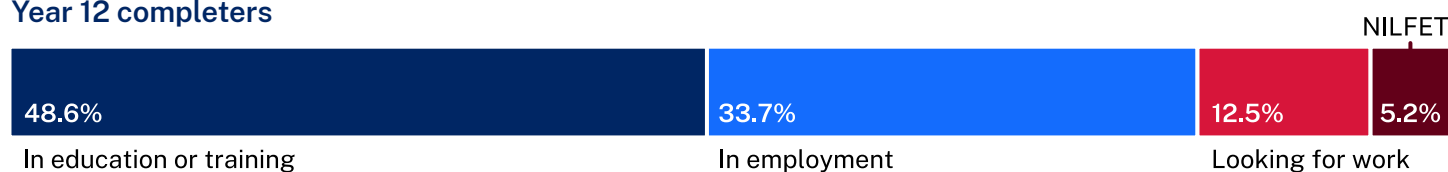
Main post-school destinations in 2024

Aboriginal school leavers

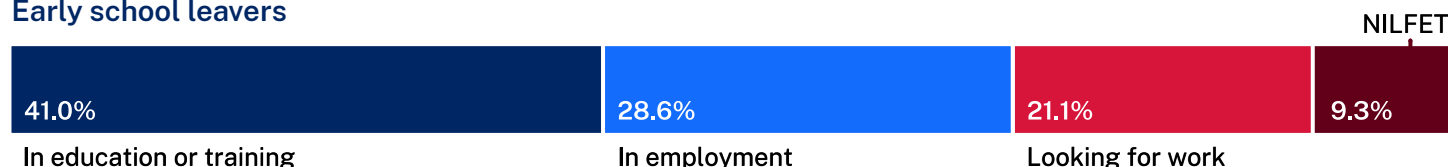
In 2024, 75.2% of **Aboriginal** recent school leavers, 82.3% of Aboriginal Year 12 completers and 69.6% of Aboriginal early school leavers were estimated to be in education, training or employment.

Figure 1: Estimated percentage of Aboriginal Year 12 completers and early school leavers in education or training, employment, looking for work or NILFET in the year after leaving or completing school, 2024³

Year 12 completers



Early school leavers



Non-Aboriginal school leavers

In 2024, 90.9% of **non-Aboriginal** recent school leavers, 92.9% of non-Aboriginal Year 12 completers and 85.2% of non-Aboriginal early school leavers were estimated to be in education, training or employment.⁴

Figure 2: Estimated percentage of non-Aboriginal Year 12 completers and early school leavers in education or training, employment, looking for work or NILFET in the year after leaving or completing school, 2024

Year 12 completers



Early school leavers



2 The estimated population of Aboriginal school leavers from the 2024 survey was higher than similar estimates using sources based on enrolment information. For example, there were 2,841 Year 12 Aboriginal students enrolled in NSW schools in the August 2023 census (Refer to 'Table 42b Number of full-time and part-time students, 2006–2024.xlsx' released by the [Australian Bureau of Statistics](#)).

3 NILFET = not in the labour force, education or training.

4 In this report, data for non-Aboriginal school leavers includes those responding to the question about Aboriginality with 'no', 'prefer not to say' or 'don't know'.

Post-school destinations in 2024

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

22.1% Bachelor	4.7% VET cert IV+	4.0% VET cert III
▼ down 3.1 pp since 2023*	▲ up 1.8 pp since 2023*	▼ down 0.5 pp since 2023
2.1% VET cert I–II	7.8% Apprenticeship	7.8% Traineeship
▲ up 0.9 pp since 2023	▼ down 1.2 pp since 2023	▲ up 0.7 pp since 2023
13.2% Full-time work	20.5% Part-time work	
▼ down 1.4 pp since 2023	~ no change since 2023	

Trends in level of education, training or employment for main post-school destinations of Aboriginal Year 12 completers between 2014 and 2024:

- 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 **0.6 pp** per year.
- Apprenticeships have increased on average by **0.4 pp** per year.
- Full-time work has increased on average by **0.4 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 employment⁵

1.3% VET cert IV+	7.5% VET cert III	3.3% VET cert I–II
▼ down 1.2 pp since 2023*	▲ up 0.9 pp since 2023	▲ up 0.7 pp since 2023
19.3% Apprenticeship	9.3% Traineeship	9.8% Full-time work
▼ down 5.1 pp since 2023*	▼ down 1.2 pp since 2023	▼ down 0.5 pp since 2023
18.7% Part-time work		
▲ up 3.9 pp since 2023*		

Trends in level of education, training or employment for main post-school destinations of Aboriginal early school leavers between 2014 and 2024:

- VET certificate IV+ enrolments have decreased on average by **0.3 pp** per year.
- VET certificate I–II enrolments have decreased on average by **0.6 pp** per year.
- Apprenticeships have increased on average by **1.0 pp** per year.
- Traineeships have increased on average by **0.4 pp** per year.
- Full-time work has increased on average by **0.4 pp** per year.
- Part-time work has increased on average by **0.7 pp** per year.
- Looking for work has decreased on average by **0.9 pp** per year.
- NILFET has decreased on average by **0.6 pp** per year.

* indicates statistically significant change (refer to [technical report](#) for details).

Note: Trends discussed in 'Post-school destinations in 2024' refer only to statistically significant changes (refer to technical report for more details).

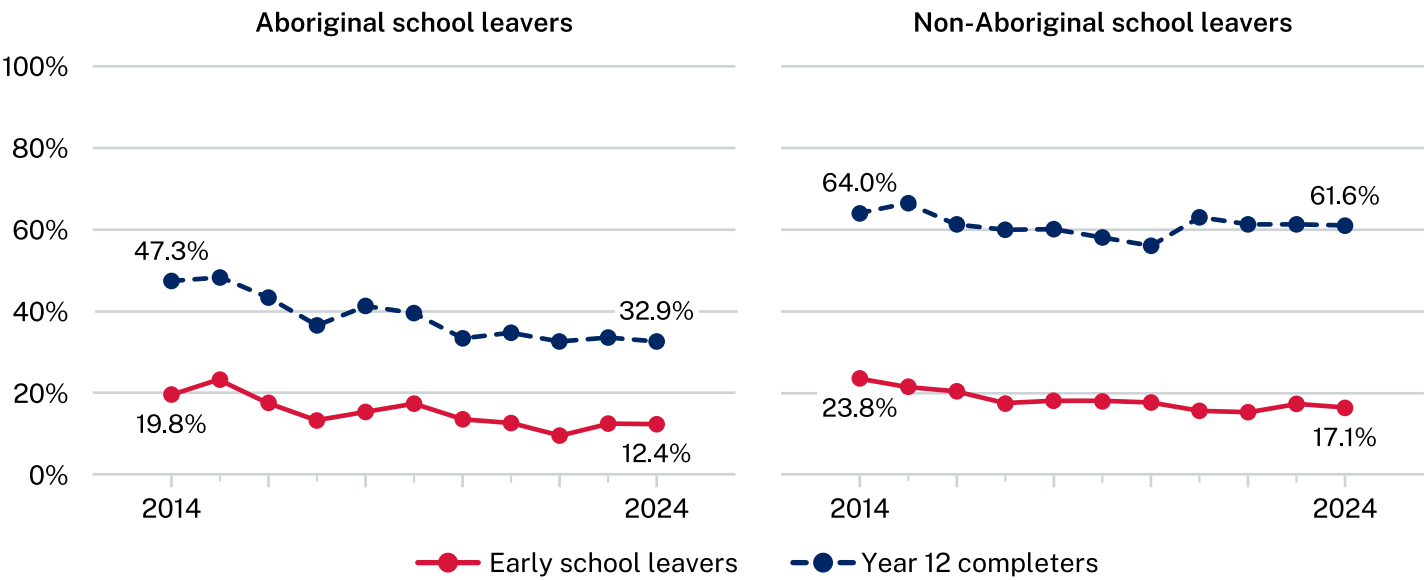
⁵ In 2024, less than 1.0% of Aboriginal early school leavers were undertaking bachelor's degrees. In accordance with the NSW Department of Education Data Suppression Standard published on Metadata.NSW, the exact percentage and also the percentage point change since 2023 have been suppressed.

School leavers in education or training⁶

A consistently higher percentage of Year 12 completers were estimated to be in education compared to early school leavers, for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal leavers. However, since 2014 the estimated percentage of Aboriginal Year 12 completers in education has decreased more noticeably than the percentage of non-Aboriginal Year 12 completers in education (average decreases of 1.6 pp and 0.3 pp per year respectively). Similarly, since 2014 the estimated percentage of Aboriginal early school leavers in education has decreased more noticeably than the percentage of non-Aboriginal Year 12 completers in education (average decreases of 1.0 pp and 0.6 pp per year respectively).

The gap between Aboriginal Year 12 completers' and early school leavers' participation in post-school education has become less pronounced since 2014.

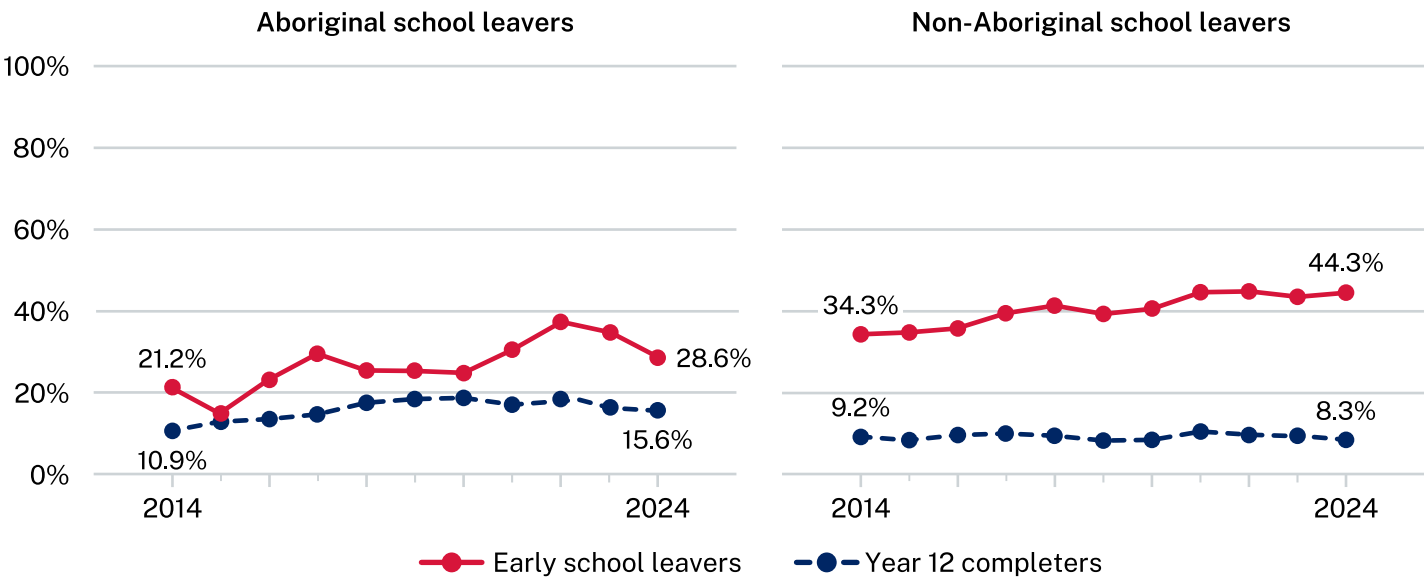
Figure 3: Estimated percentage of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal NSW school leavers in post-school education in the year after leaving or completing school, 2014 to 2024



For both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal leavers, the percentage of early leavers in training in the year after leaving school is consistently higher than it is for Year 12 completers. The estimated percentage of Aboriginal Year 12 completers in training has steadily increased since 2014 (average increase of 0.5 pp per year) while the percentage of non-Aboriginal Year 12 completers has remained relatively stable during this time (at around 9.2%). While the percentages of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal early school leavers participating in training have increased since 2014 (average increases of 1.4 pp and 1.0 pp respectively), the percentage of Aboriginal early school leavers in training has dropped by 8.6 pp in the last 2 years and the percentage of non-Aboriginal early school leavers in training has been stable since 2021 (at around 44%).

6 Education includes the main destinations of bachelor's degree, VET certificate IV+, VET certificate III and VET certificate I–II. Training includes the main destinations of apprenticeship and traineeship.

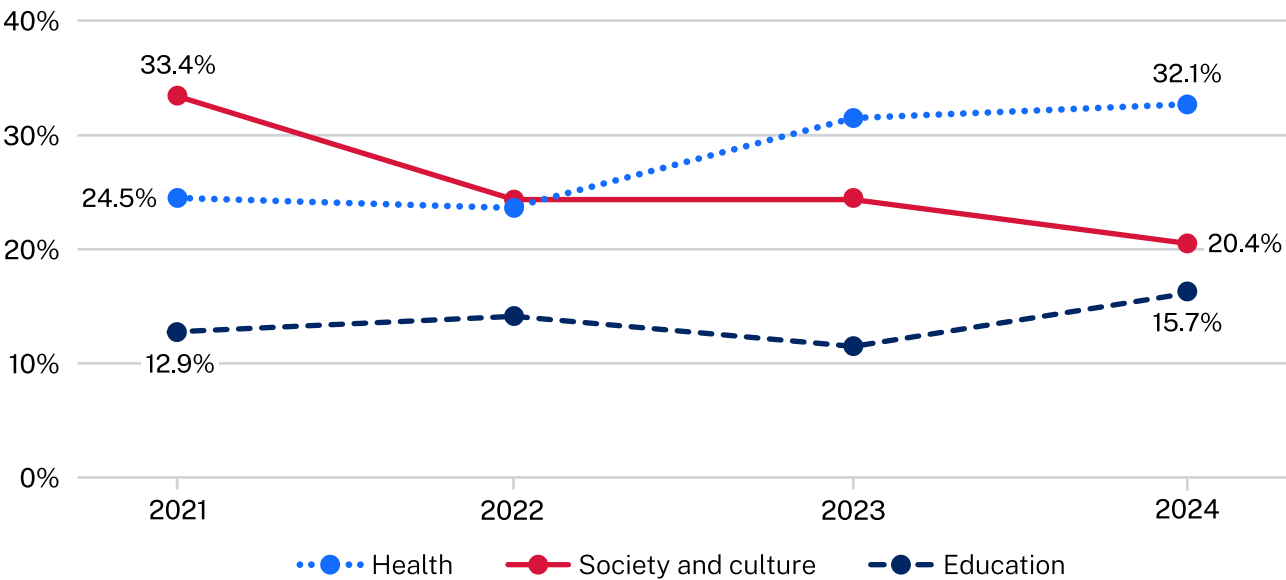
Figure 4: Estimated percentage of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal NSW school leavers in training in the year after leaving or completing school, 2014 to 2024



Education areas for bachelor and VET students⁷

The top 3 education areas for all Aboriginal leavers with a main destination of bachelor’s degree in 2024 were health (for example, nursing), society and culture (for example, law), and education (for example, teacher education). Since 2021 there has been a decrease in the uptake of society and culture and an increase in health. This aligns with broader trends in these education areas for bachelor’s degrees at a state level. While education was the third-most common area of study for Aboriginal students doing a bachelor’s degree, management and commerce was the third-most common area for all leavers across NSW (refer to ‘Education areas for bachelor and VET students’ in the annual report).

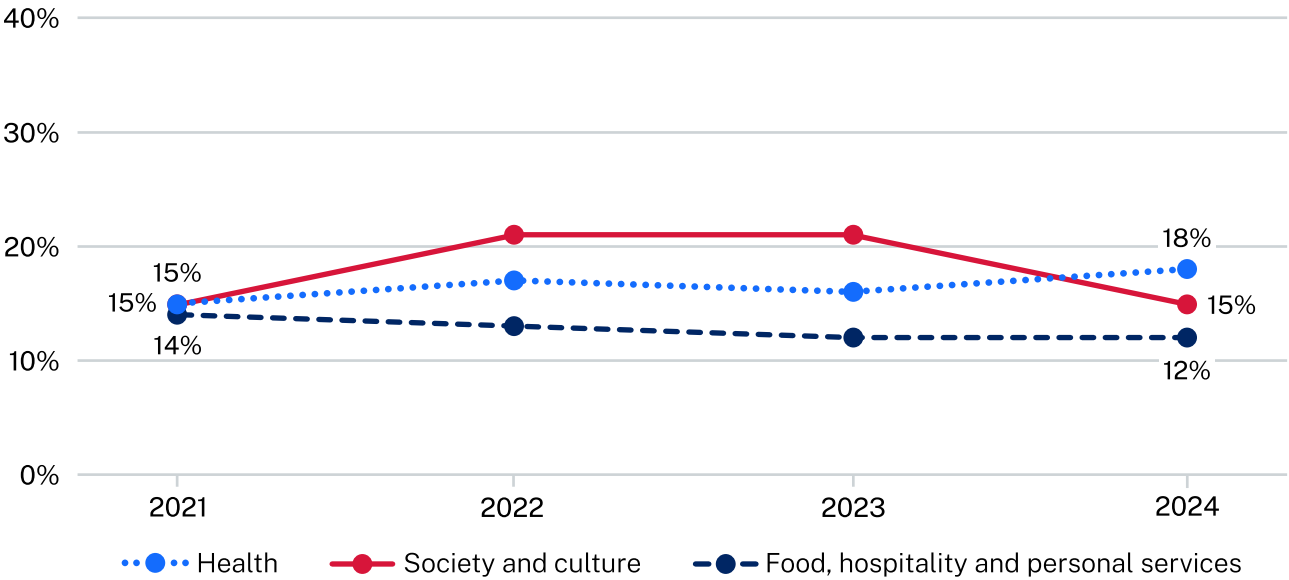
Figure 5: Top 3 education areas for all Aboriginal leavers whose main destination was a bachelor’s degree, 2021 to 2024



7 Education trends correspond to broad fields of education in the Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED), 2001. In contrast to earlier reports, only recent leavers who said they were currently studying a bachelor or VET-level course that did not form part of an apprenticeship or traineeship were included in the base for reporting.

The top 3 education areas for all Aboriginal leavers with a main destination of VET certificate were health (for example, nursing), society and culture (for example, human welfare studies and services), and food, hospitality and personal services (for example, food and beverage services, beauty therapy). In 2024 creative-arts-focused courses, which were the second-most common at the state level, were the fifth-most common VET education area for Aboriginal school leavers (10.2%), following education (11.5%) in fourth place.

Figure 6: Top 3 education areas for all Aboriginal leavers whose main destination was either VET cert I–II, VET cert III or VET cert IV+, 2021 to 2024

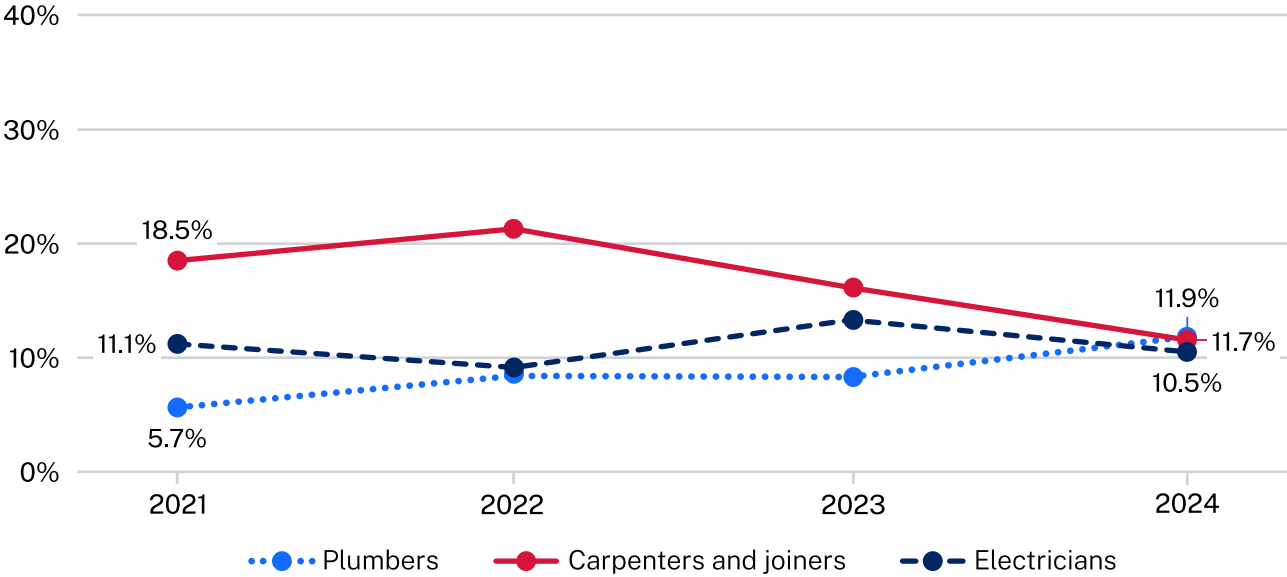


Employment areas for apprentices and trainees

In 2024, the 3 most common employment areas for all Aboriginal leavers doing apprenticeships were plumbers, carpenters and joiners, and electricians.⁸ These were also the top 3 employment areas for all leavers across NSW, although there was clearer evidence of a preference for apprenticeships as electricians (17.7%) or carpenters and joiners (17.5%) at the state level (refer to ‘Employment areas for apprentices and trainees’ in the annual report). Since 2022 there has been a noticeable decline in apprenticeships for carpenters and joiners (–9.5pp) moving from first to second place in 2024. Plumbing, which was the fourth-most common employment area for all Aboriginal leavers in apprenticeships in 2023, increased by 3.7 pp, making it the most common apprenticeship area for this group in 2024.

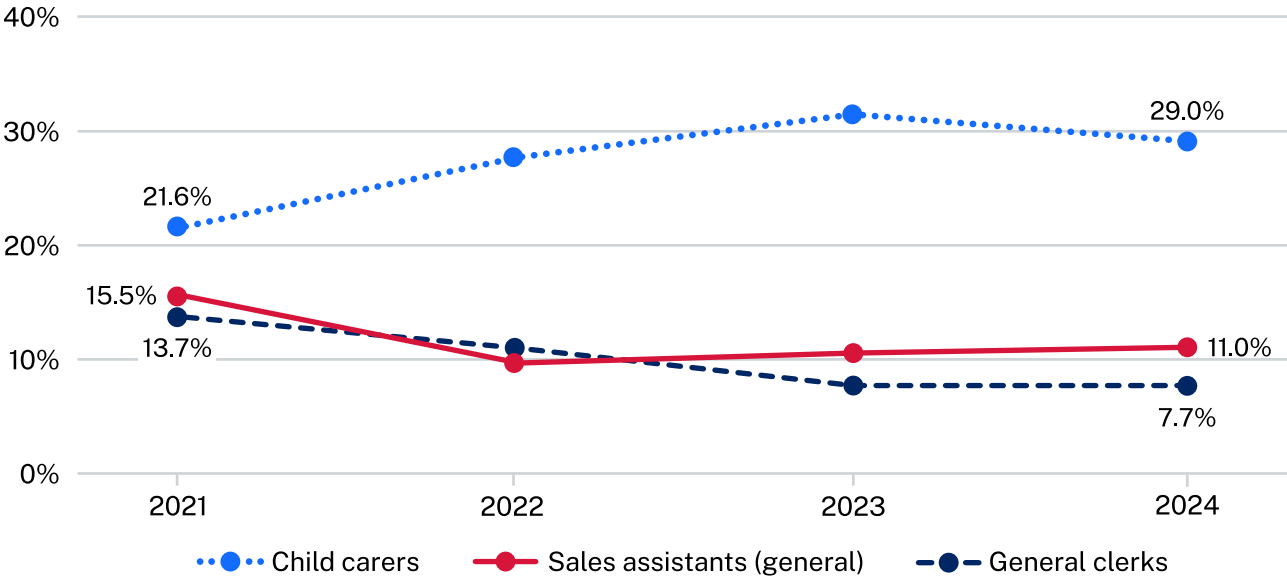
⁸ Employment areas are defined by the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) unit-level groups. Refer to the ANZSCO release for more information. Estimated percentages for employment in this part of the snapshot report include recent school leavers whose main destination was an apprenticeship.

Figure 7: Top 3 employment areas for all Aboriginal leavers whose main destination was an apprenticeship, 2021 to 2024



In 2024, the top 3 most common employment areas for all Aboriginal school leavers in traineeships were child carers, sales assistants and general clerks.⁹ Child carer traineeships increased between 2021 and 2023 (9.8 pp) and then decreased by 2.5pp in 2024. Trends for the top 3 traineeship employment areas follow similar patterns to those seen for all leavers at the NSW level, with child carers noticeably ahead of other fields of traineeships in 2024 (refer to ‘Employment areas for apprentices and trainees’ in the annual report).

Figure 8: Top 3 employment areas for all Aboriginal school leavers whose main destination was a traineeship, 2021 to 2024



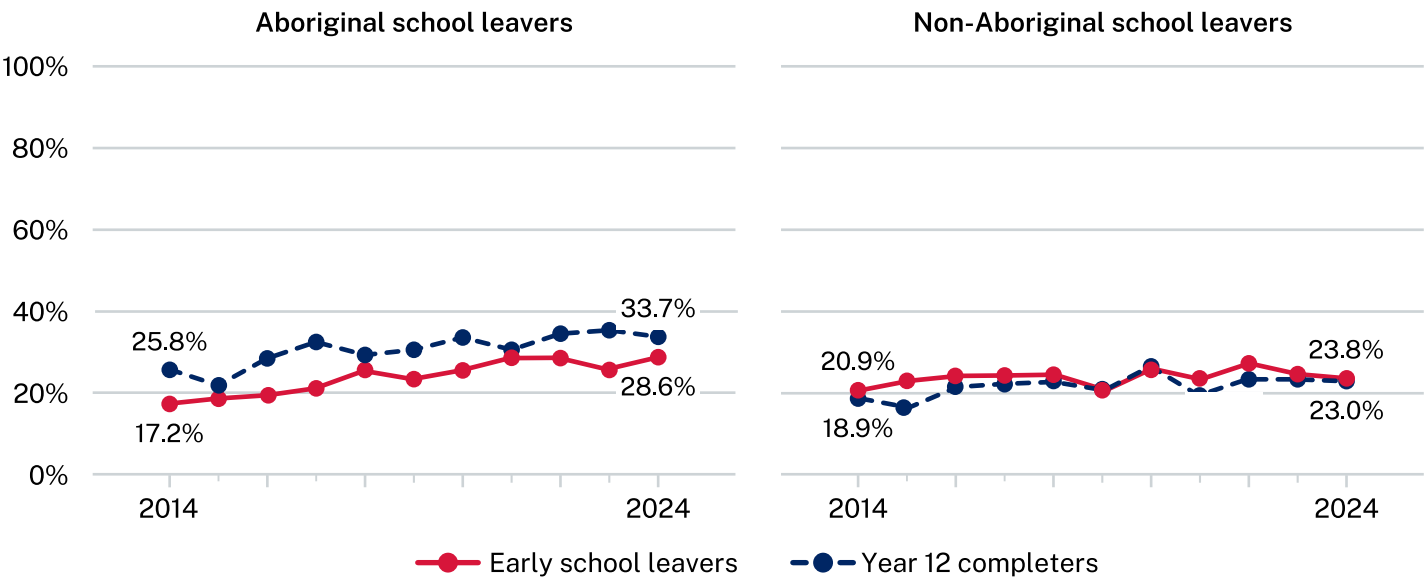
9 Estimated percentages for employment in this part of the snapshot report include recent school leavers whose main destination was a traineeship.

School leavers in employment only¹⁰

Since 2014, the estimated percentage of Aboriginal Year 12 completers and early school leavers with a main destination of paid employment has increased by 1.0 pp and 1.1 pp per year respectively. The percentage of all Aboriginal leavers in paid work has been higher for Year 12 completers than early school leavers since 2014.

While there is also an upward trend in the uptake of paid work for non-Aboriginal Year 12 completers (0.4 pp per year) and early school leavers (0.2 pp per year) it is not as noticeable as it is for Aboriginal school leavers. Since 2022 the percentage of non-Aboriginal Year 12 completers entering paid work as their main post-school destination has remained stable (around 23%) while the percentage of non-Aboriginal early school leavers entering paid work has dropped slightly (-3.4 pp).

Figure 9: Estimated percentage of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal NSW school leavers in paid employment only in the year after leaving or completing school, 2014 to 2024



¹⁰ Employment trends and areas include those whose main destination was part-time or full-time work but exclude those in an apprenticeship or traineeship.

Employment areas for those in paid work only

In 2024, sales assistants, storepersons (for example, warehouse assistants) and kitchenhands were the top 3 areas of employment for Aboriginal school leavers, with little variation in the top-ranking employment areas for early school leavers and Year 12 completers. From 2021 to 2022, the percentage of Aboriginal school leavers working as sales assistants increased by 4.4 pp and those working as kitchenhands decreased by 2.4 pp. In 2023, sales assistants decreased by 3.0 pp (to 13.6%) and kitchenhands increased by 2.3 pp (to 7.1%), close to their respective 2024 percentages. These areas of employment are aligned with the top 3 areas of employment at the NSW level (refer to ‘Employment areas for those in paid work only’ in the annual report).

Figure 10: Top 3 employment areas for all Aboriginal leavers whose main destination was paid work, 2021 to 2024

