

Snapshot report

Destinations of school leavers from major city, regional and remote areas of NSW

2024 NSW Post-School Destinations and Experiences Survey

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

This snapshot report provides a high-level overview of findings from the 2024 NSW Post-School Destinations and Experiences Survey. Results are presented for Year 12 completers and early school leavers based on the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) remoteness of their last known school. Findings are presented for 3 distinct groups: those from major city schools, those from inner regional schools and those from outer regional, remote or very remote schools.



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.

It was estimated that:

- 55,904 (81.3%) Year 12 completers and 16,596 (62.5%) early school leavers were from major city areas.
- 10,923 (15.9%) Year 12 completers and 8,116 (30.6%) early school leavers were from inner regional areas of NSW.
- 1,951 (2.8%) Year 12 completers and 1,844 (6.9%) early school leavers were from outer regional, remote or very remote areas of NSW.

The estimation was based on responses received from:

- 24,817 Year 12 completers and 4,108 early school leavers from major city areas
- 5,002 Year 12 completers and 1,924 early school leavers from inner regional areas
- 933 Year 12 completers and 451 early school leavers from outer regional, remote or very remote areas.

Main post-school destinations in 2024

Major city school leavers

It was estimated that in 2024, 90.4% of all recent school leavers, 92.7% of Year 12 completers and 82.4% of early school leavers who attended schools in major cities of NSW were in education, training or employment.

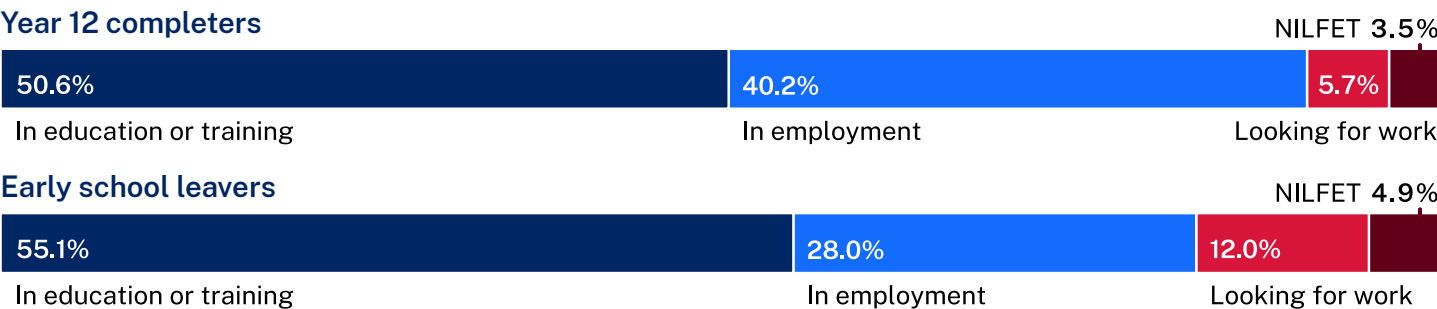
Figure 1: Estimated percentage of Year 12 completers and early school leavers from major city areas in education or training, employment, looking for work or NILFET in the year after leaving or completing school, 2024¹



Inner regional school leavers

It was estimated that in 2024, 87.5% of all recent school leavers, 90.8% of Year 12 completers and 83.1% of early school leavers who attended schools in inner regional areas of NSW were in education, training or employment.

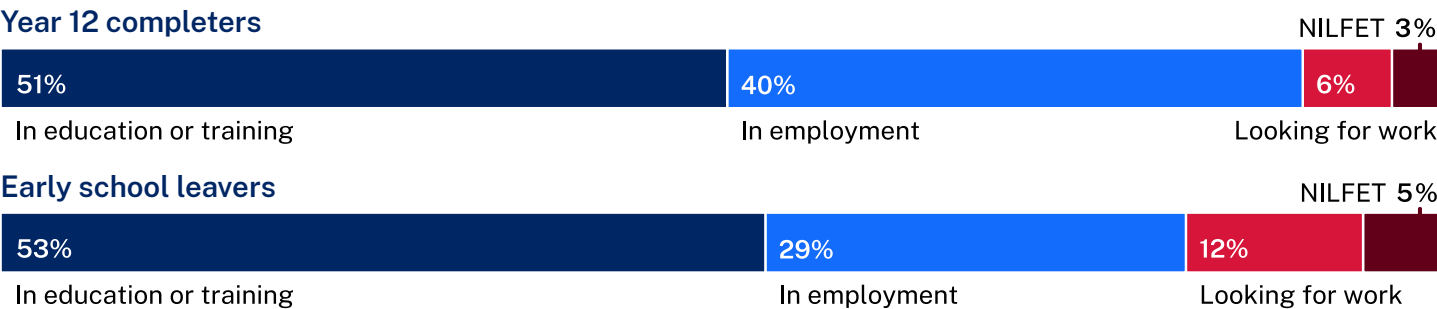
Figure 2: Estimated percentage of Year 12 completers and early school leavers from inner regional areas in education or training, employment, looking for work or NILFET in the year after leaving or completing school, 2024



Outer regional, remote or very remote school leavers

It was estimated that in 2024, 86.6% of all recent school leavers, 90.5% of Year 12 completers and 82.4% of early school leavers who attended schools in outer regional, remote or very remote areas of NSW were in education, training or employment.

Figure 3: Estimated percentage of Year 12 completers and early school leavers from outer regional, remote or very remote areas in education or training, employment, looking for work or NILFET in the year after leaving or completing school, 2024



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

Post-school destinations in 2024

School leavers across NSW in education

	Bachelor	VET cert IV+	VET cert III	VET cert I–II
Major cities Population estimate: 72,500	44.9% ▲ up 0.8 pp since 2023	4.8% ▼ down 0.3 pp since 2023	3.3% ▼ down 0.2 pp since 2023	1.4% ▲ up 0.1 pp since 2023
Inner regional Population estimate: 19,039	18.1% ▼ down 0.4 pp since 2023	3.3% ▼ down 0.2 pp since 2023	5.2% ▲ up 0.1 pp since 2023	2.0% ▲ up 0.2 pp since 2023
Outer regional, remote or very remote Population estimate: 3,795	14.5% ▼ down 0.9 pp since 2023	2.5% ~ no change since 2023	3.1% ▼ down 1.3 pp since 2023	2.1% ▲ up 0.9 pp since 2023

In 2024, more school leavers from major city areas were:

- studying bachelor's degrees (a 26.7 percentage point, or pp, difference) or vocational education and training (VET) certificate IV+ courses (1.5 pp) than school leavers from inner regional areas
- studying bachelor's degrees (a 30.4 pp difference) or VET certificate IV+ courses (2.3 pp) than school leavers from outer regional, remote or very remote areas.

In 2024, more school leavers from inner regional areas were:

- studying VET certificate III courses (a 1.9 pp difference) or VET certificate I–II courses (0.6 pp) than school leavers from major cities
- studying bachelor's degrees (a 3.7 pp difference) or VET certificate III courses (2.1 pp) than school leavers from outer regional, remote or very remote areas.

In 2024, fewer outer regional, remote or very remote school leavers were in education-related destinations than major city or inner regional school leavers.

School leavers across NSW in training or employment

	Apprenticeship	Traineeship	Full-time work	Part-time work
Major cities Population estimate: 72,500	11.6% ▼ down 0.5 pp since 2023	4.1% ▼ down 0.4 pp since 2023*	6.0% ▼ down 1.3 pp since 2023*	14.3% ▲ up 0.7 pp since 2023*
Inner regional Population estimate: 19,039	16.8% ▼ down 1.6 pp since 2023	7.0% ▼ down 0.8 pp since 2023	13.8% ▼ down 1.1 pp since 2023	21.2% ▲ up 1.7 pp since 2023*
Outer regional, remote or very remote Population estimate: 3,795	21.5% ▲ up 1.6 pp since 2023	8.1% ▲ up 0.4 pp since 2023	17.2% ▼ down 0.6 pp since 2023	17.5% ~ no change since 2023

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

In 2024, more school leavers from inner regional areas were:

- in apprenticeships (a 5.3 pp difference), traineeships (3.0 pp), full-time work (7.8 pp), part-time work (6.8 pp), looking for work (2.1 pp) or NILFET (0.8 pp) than school leavers from major city areas
- in part-time work (a 3.7 pp difference) than school leavers from outer regional, remote or very remote areas.

In 2024, more school leavers from outer regional, remote or very remote areas were:

- in apprenticeships (a 10.0 pp difference), traineeships (4.0 pp), full-time work (11.2 pp), part-time work (3.2 pp) or looking for work (2.8 pp) than school leavers from major city areas.
- in apprenticeships (a 4.7 pp difference) or in full-time work (3.4 pp) than school leavers from inner regional areas.

In 2024, fewer school leavers from major city areas were in any of the training or paid-work-related destinations than leavers from inner regional or outer regional, remote or very remote areas.

Trends in destinations of school leavers across NSW by remoteness group between 2014 and 2024

Trends in destinations of school leavers from **major city** schools:

- Bachelor's degree enrolments were trending downwards by **0.2 pp** per year.
- VET certificate IV+ enrolments were trending downwards by **0.4 pp** per year.
- VET certificate III enrolments were trending upwards by **0.1 pp** per year.
- VET certificate I–II enrolments were trending downwards by **0.1 pp** per year.
- Apprenticeships were trending upwards by **0.3 pp** per year.
- Traineeships were trending upwards by **0.1 pp** per year.
- Part-time work was trending upwards by **0.4 pp** per year.
- Looking for work was trending downwards by **0.1 pp** per year.
- NILFET was trending downwards by **0.1 pp** per year.

Trends in destinations of school leavers from **inner regional** schools:

- Bachelor's degree enrolments were trending downwards by **0.4 pp** per year.
- VET certificate IV+ enrolments were trending downwards by **0.5 pp** per year.
- VET certificate I–II enrolments were trending downwards by **0.2 pp** per year.
- Apprenticeships were trending upwards by **0.6 pp** per year.
- Traineeships were trending upwards by **0.1 pp** per year.
- Full-time work was trending upwards by **0.3 pp** per year.
- Part-time work was trending upwards by **0.3 pp** per year.
- Looking for work was trending downwards by **0.3 pp** per year.
- NILFET was trending downwards by **0.1 pp** per year.

Trends in destinations of school leavers from **outer regional, remote or very remote** schools:

- VET certificate IV+ enrolments were trending downwards by **0.4 pp** per year.
- VET certificate III enrolments were trending downwards by **0.3 pp** per year.
- VET certificate I–II enrolments were trending downwards by **0.2 pp** per year.
- Apprenticeships were trending upwards by **0.5 pp** per year.

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

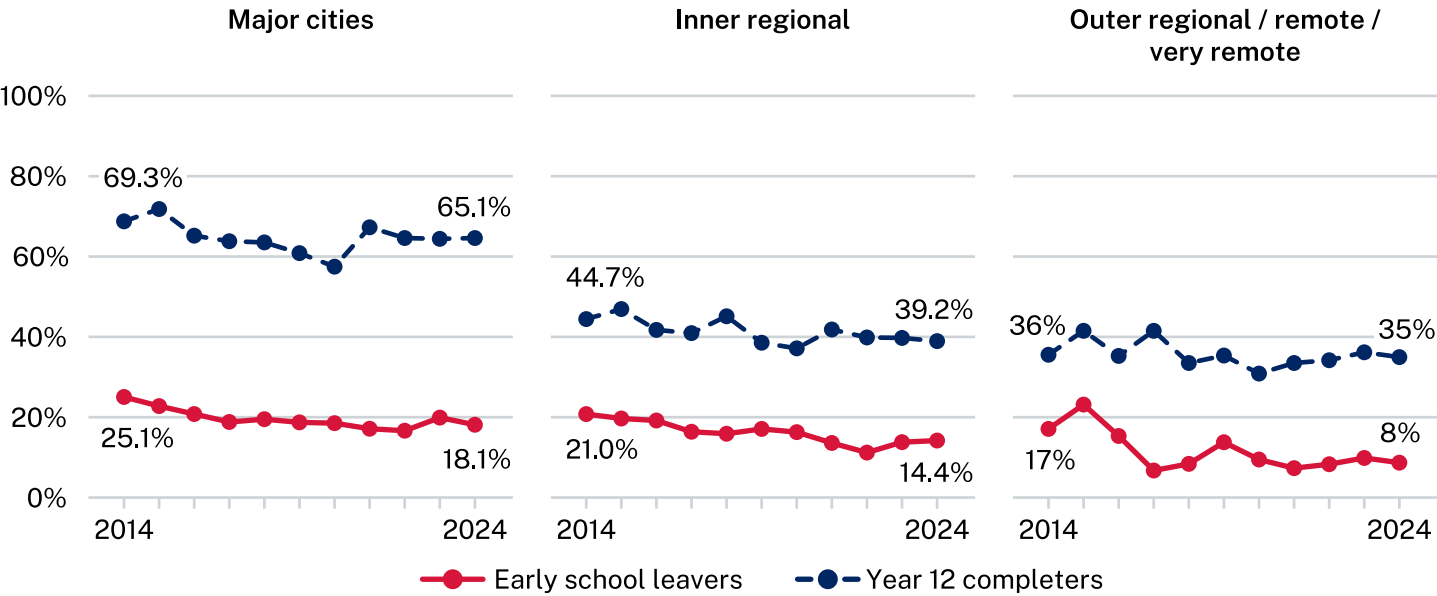
School leavers in education or training²

Between 2014 and 2024 there was a consistently higher estimated percentage of Year 12 completers than early school leavers in education. This is true for leavers from major city, inner regional, and outer regional, remote or very remote schools. In 2024, a higher estimated percentage of Year 12 completers from major cities were in education compared to those from inner regional areas (a 25.9 pp increase), as well as from outer regional, remote or very remote areas (a 29.8 pp increase). While the pattern was similar, the gap was smaller for early school leavers. A higher percentage of early school leavers from major cities was in education compared to those from inner regional areas (a 3.8 pp increase), as well as from outer regional, remote or very remote areas (a 9.9 pp increase).

This indicates that a higher proportion of Year 12 completers in major city schools were engaged in education compared to their peers in inner regional and outer regional, remote or very remote areas. There was also a more noticeable post-COVID jump between 2020 and 2021 for Year 12 completers from major city areas (a 10.0 pp increase) than inner regional (a 4.7 pp increase) or outer regional, remote or very remote areas (a 2.6 pp increase).

The estimated percentage of leavers in education pathways has remained relatively stable since 2022 for Year 12 completers from major city areas (around 65%), inner regional areas (around 40%) and outer regional, remote or very remote areas (around 35%). Despite this, the average rate of growth for Year 12 completers studying in education pathways has seen an overall downward trend since 2014 for major city (0.5 pp per year) and inner regional leavers (0.6 pp per year). Similar overall downward trends can be seen for early school leavers from major cities (0.5 pp per year), inner regional (0.8 pp per year) and outer regional, remote or very remote (1.0 pp per year) areas.

Figure 4: Estimated percentage of NSW school leavers in education by remoteness and leaver type in the year after leaving or completing school, 2014 to 2024

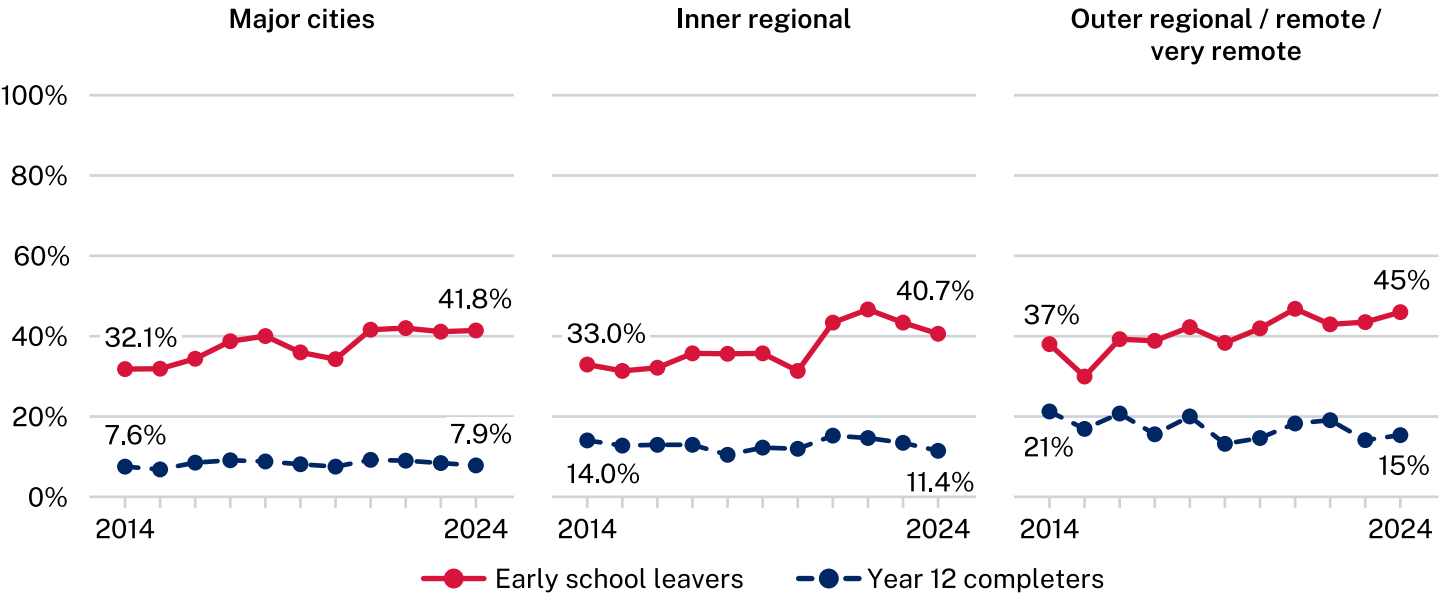


² Education includes the main destinations of bachelor's degree, VET certificate IV+, VET certificate III and VET certificate I–II. Training includes the main destinations of apprenticeship and traineeship.

Between 2014 and 2024, the estimated percentage of early school leavers with a main destination of training (in either an apprenticeship or traineeship) was consistently higher than Year 12 completers regardless of whether they were from major city, inner regional, or outer regional, remote or very remote areas. For early school leavers there has been an upward trend in the uptake of training since 2014 both for leavers from major cities (1.0 pp per year), inner regional (1.3 pp per year) and outer regional, remote or very remote (1.1 pp per year) areas. For Year 12 completers within the same period, these percentages have remained relatively stable, fluctuating between 6.9% and 9.3% for leavers from major cities, between 10.4% and 15.2% for leavers from inner regional areas, and between 13% and 21% for leavers from outer regional, remote or very remote areas.

Training saw a large post-COVID jump between 2020 to 2021 for early school leavers from major cities (7.4 pp) and inner regional (12.1 pp) areas.

Figure 5: Estimated percentage of NSW school leavers in training by remoteness and leaver type in the year after leaving or completing school, 2014 to 2024



Education areas for bachelor and VET students³

The top 3 education areas for all leavers from major cities with a main destination of bachelor’s degree in 2024 were health, management and commerce, and society and culture.

For all school leavers from inner regional areas the top area was also health, followed by society and culture, and education. Similarly, for all school leavers from outer regional, remote or very remote areas, the top area was health, followed by education and society and culture.

In 2024, health occupied the top spot for all remoteness groups but was more commonly studied by bachelor’s degree students from outer regional or remote areas (35%) than major city areas (21.4%) or inner regional areas (29.2%).⁴

³ 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.

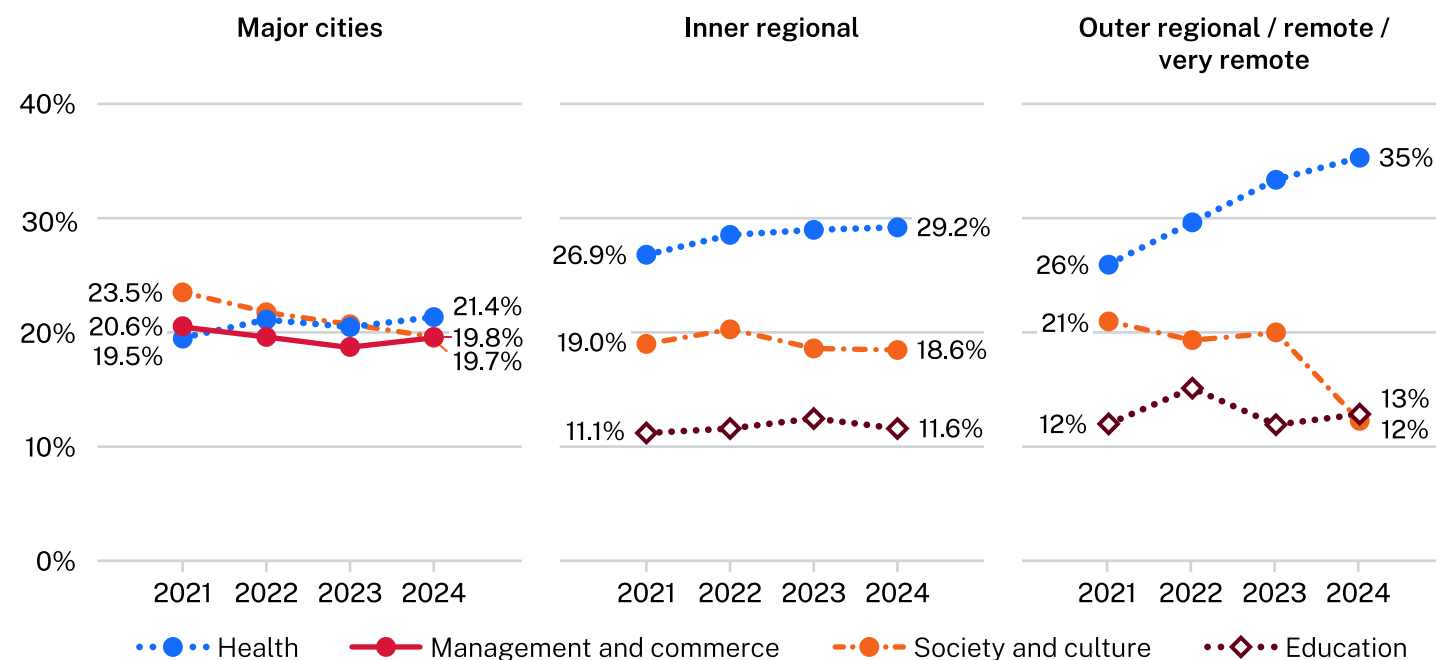
⁴ Percentages in this snapshot report are rounded to the nearest whole number when group total estimates are less than 1,000 and when approximating minimal changes across time (for example, ‘around 20%’). Refer to the technical report for further information.

Compared to 2021 there was a:

- lower estimated percentage of bachelor's degree students from major cities (down 3.8 pp) and outer regional, remote or very remote areas (down 9 pp) who studied society and culture in 2024
- higher estimated percentage of bachelor's degree students from major cities (up 1.9 pp) and outer regional, remote or very remote areas (up 9 pp) who studied health in 2024.

Education was a more common study area for bachelor's degree students from outer regional, remote or very remote areas (second place in 2024 at 12.8%) than for students from major city areas (eighth place in 2024 at 7.1%). Conversely, management and commerce was more commonly studied by bachelor's degree students in major city areas (second place in 2024 at 19.8%) than those from outer regional, remote or very remote areas (fourth place in 2024 at 11%).

Figure 6: Top 3 education areas for all leavers from major cities, inner regional, and outer regional, remote or very remote areas whose main destination was a bachelor's degree, 2021 to 2024

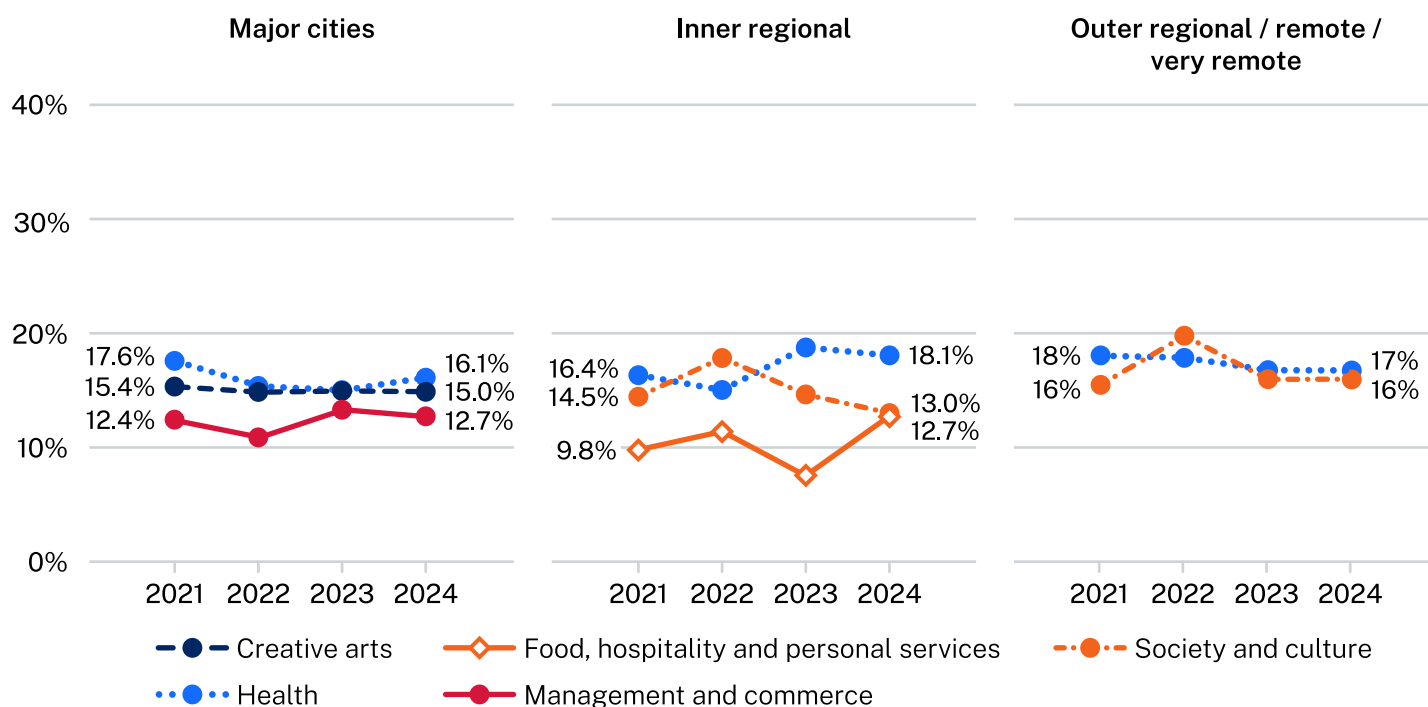


The top 3 education areas for all leavers from major cities with a main destination of VET certificate in 2024 were health, creative arts, and management and commerce. For all school leavers from inner regional areas the top area was health, followed by society and culture, and food, hospitality and personal services (including beauty therapy and hairdressing). In outer regional, remote or very remote areas, the top area for all school leavers was also health, followed by society and culture. In 2024 the third-most common education area for outer regional, remote or very remote VET students was creative arts (13%).

Society and culture, which was the second-most common area of study for VET students in inner regional and outer regional, remote or very remote areas (at 13.0% and 17% respectively), was the fourth-most common study area for VET students from major city areas (at 11.8%).

Food, hospitality and personal services was a more common study area for VET students from inner regional areas (third place in 2024 at 12.7%) than for VET students from major city areas (fifth place in 2024 at 8.6%). Conversely, both creative arts (second place in 2024 at 15.0%) and management and commerce (third place in 2024 at 12.7%) were more commonly studied by VET students in major city areas than by those from inner regional areas, where they came in fifth (at 9.6%) and sixth place (at 8.3%) respectively in 2024. Note that for outer regional, remote or very remote areas (including in the following section, 'Employment areas for apprentices and trainees'), common areas were not reported in instances where data was suppressed in accordance with the NSW Department of Education [Data Suppression Standard](#) published on Metadata.NSW.

Figure 7: Top 3 education areas for all leavers from major city, inner regional, and outer regional, remote or very remote areas whose main destination was a VET cert I–II, VET cert III or VET cert IV+, 2021 to 2024



Employment areas for apprentices and trainees

The top 3 employment areas for all leavers from major cities doing an apprenticeship in 2024 were electricians, carpenters and joiners, and plumbers.⁵ For all school leavers from inner regional areas doing an apprenticeship, the top 3 areas were carpenters and joiners, electricians, and motor mechanics. In 2024 the top 3 apprenticeship employment areas for all leavers from outer regional, remote or very remote areas were motor mechanics in first place, followed by electricians and carpenters and joiners. While electricians was in the top 3 apprenticeship areas for all remoteness areas, it was more commonly studied by apprentices from major city areas (at 18.7% in 2024).

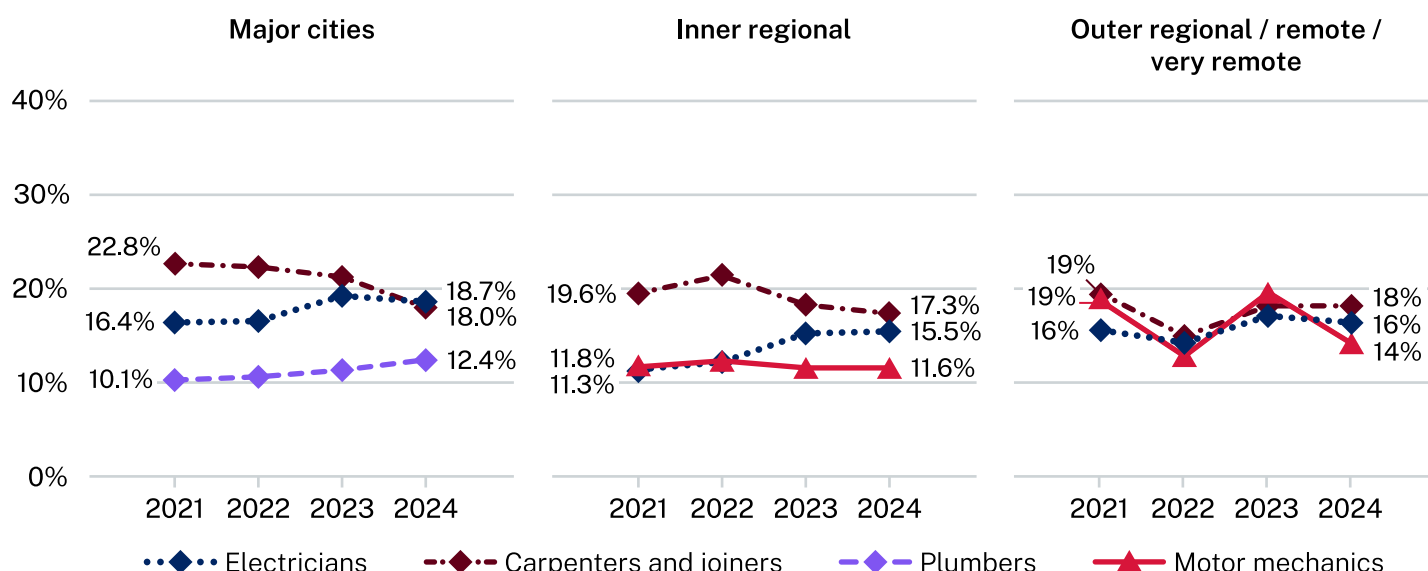
Compared to 2021 there was a:

- higher estimated percentage of students from major city areas doing apprenticeships as plumbers in 2024 (up 2.3 pp)
- lower estimated percentage of students from major city areas doing apprenticeships as carpenters and joiners in 2024 (down 4.9 pp)
- higher estimated percentage of students from inner regional areas doing apprenticeships as electricians in 2024 (up 4.1 pp).

Motor mechanics was a more common employment area for apprentices from outer regional, remote or very remote areas (first place in 2024 at 18%) than for apprentices from major city (fourth place at 7.4%) or inner regional areas (third place at 11.6%). Conversely, plumbing was more common for apprentices from major city areas (third place in 2024 at 12.4%) than for those from inner regional (fourth place at 8.2 %) or outer regional, remote or very remote areas (fifth place in 2024 at 6%).

⁵ 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 8: Top 3 employment areas for all leavers from major city, inner regional, and outer regional, remote or very remote areas whose main destination was an apprenticeship, 2021 to 2024

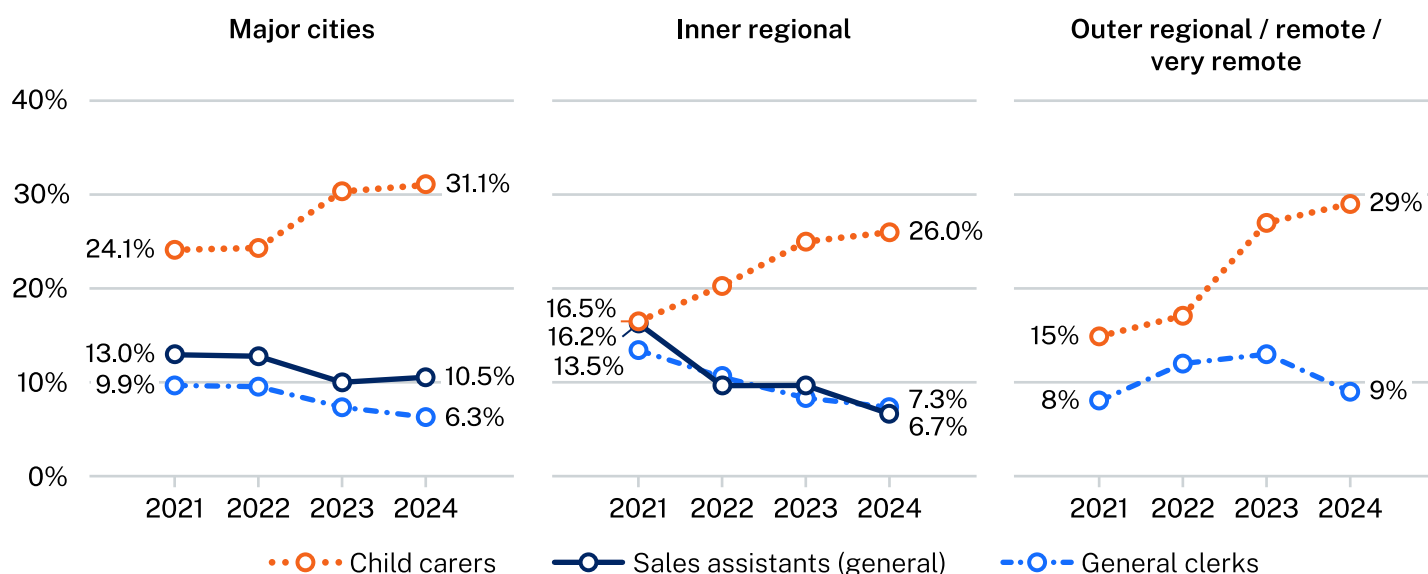


The top 3 employment areas for all leavers from major cities doing traineeships in 2024 were child carers, sales assistants and general clerks.⁶ For inner regional and outer regional, remote or very remote trainees the top area of employment was also child carers, followed by general clerks and sales assistants. Compared to school leavers from inner regional areas there was a higher percentage of school leavers from major city areas who took up traineeships working as sales assistants in 2024 (3.8 pp higher).

Compared to 2021 there was a:

- higher estimated percentage of students from major city, inner regional, and outer regional, remote or very remote areas doing traineeships as child carers in 2024 (up 7.0 pp, 9.6 pp and 14 pp respectively)
- lower estimated percentage of students from major city and inner regional areas doing traineeships as general clerks in 2024 (down 3.7 pp and 6.2 pp respectively)
- lower estimated percentage of students from inner regional areas doing traineeships as sales assistants in 2024 (down 9.5 pp).

Figure 9: Top 3 employment areas for all leavers from major city, inner regional, and outer regional, remote or very remote areas whose main destination was a traineeship, 2021 to 2024



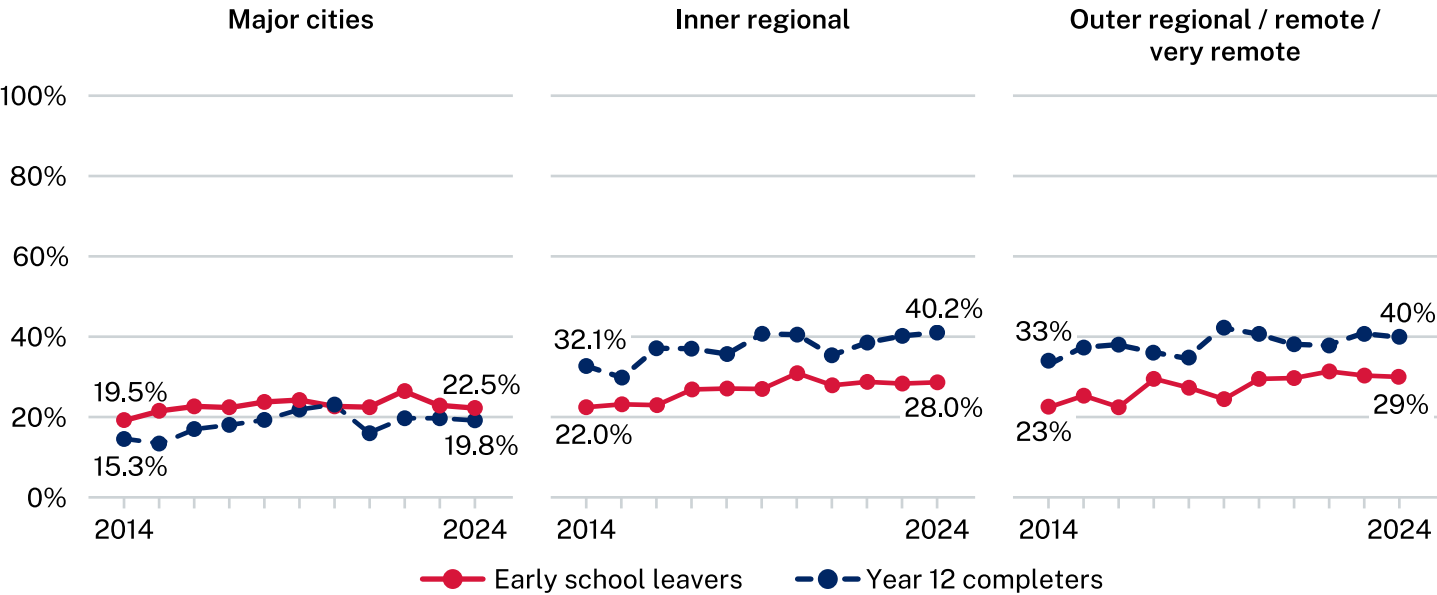
⁶ Estimated percentages for employment in this part of the snapshot report include recent school leavers whose main destination was a traineeship.

School leavers in employment only⁷

For major cities there was a higher estimated percentage of early school leavers than Year 12 completers in employment-only destinations between 2014 and 2024. In contrast, for inner regional and outer regional, remote and very remote areas there were more Year 12 completers than early school leavers in employment only. While a higher percentage of leavers from inner regional areas were in paid work as their main destination, the difference is much more noticeable for Year 12 completers (20.4 pp higher than major cities in 2024) than early school leavers (5.5 pp higher than major cities in 2024).

Since 2022 the estimated percentage of leavers from major city areas in employment-only destinations dropped slightly for early school leavers (down 4.3 pp) and remained relatively stable for Year 12 completers (at around 20%). Despite this, both have seen overall upward growth since 2014 (an average yearly growth rate of 0.2 pp for early school leavers and 0.5 pp for Year 12 completers). The percentage of school leavers from inner regional areas has also seen overall upward growth since 2014 (an average yearly growth rate of 0.5 pp for early school leavers and 0.8 pp for Year 12 completers). While there was also an overall upward trend in employment for early school leavers from outer regional, remote or very remote areas between 2014 and 2024 (0.7 pp per year), the estimated percentage of early school leavers from outer regional, remote or very remote areas in employment has changed little in more recent years (around 30% since 2021).

Figure 10: Estimated percentage of NSW school leavers in paid employment only by remoteness and leaver type in the year after leaving or completing school, 2014 to 2024



⁷ 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

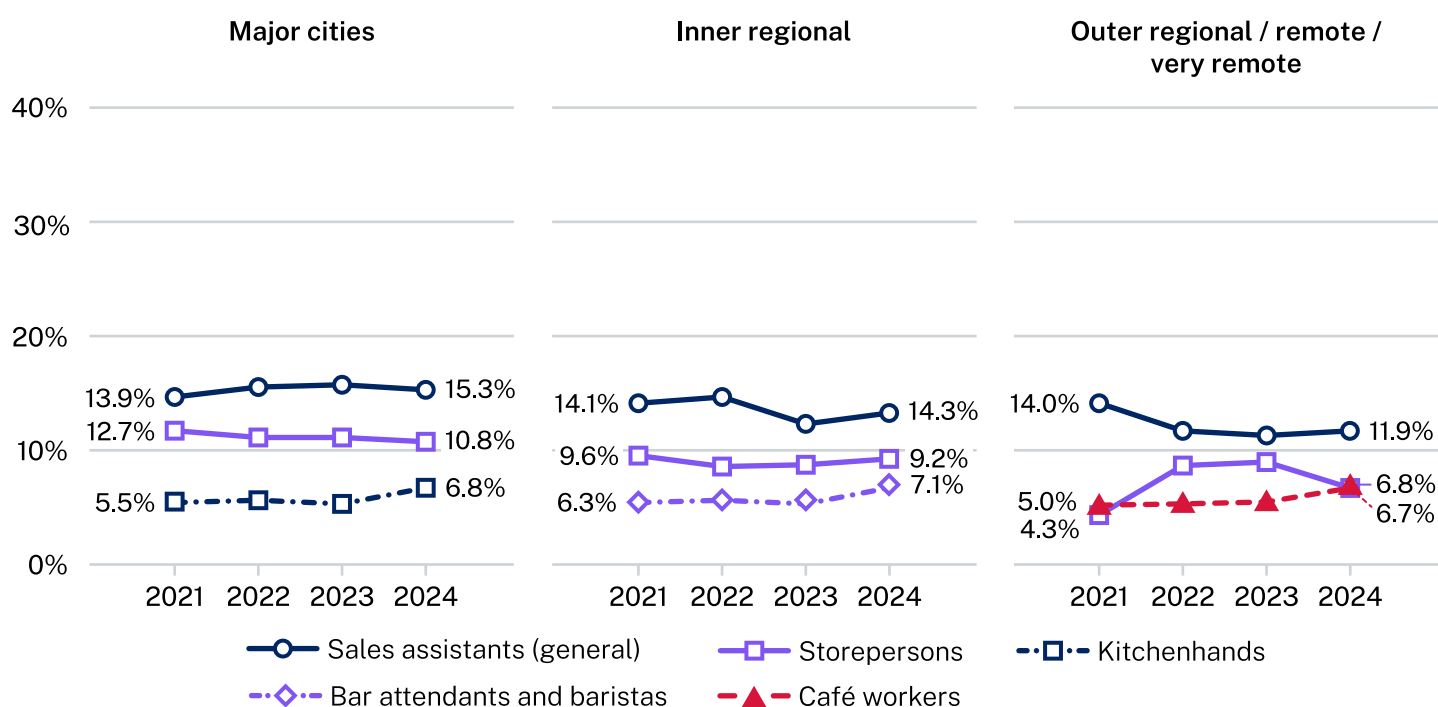
The top 3 employment areas for all leavers from major cities in paid work only in 2024 were sales assistants, storepersons (for example, warehouse assistants) and kitchenhands. For school leavers from inner regional areas doing paid work only, the top 3 areas were sales assistants, storepersons, and bar attendants and baristas. For school leavers from outer regional, remote or very remote areas, the top 2 areas were also sales assistants and storepersons, followed by café workers. In 2024, sales assistants was a more common employment area for paid workers from major city areas than for paid workers from outer regional, remote or very remote areas (3.3 pp lower). Employment as storepersons was more common for major city areas than both inner regional (1.6 pp lower) and outer regional, remote or very remote areas (3.9 pp lower).

Compared to 2021 there was a:

- lower estimated percentage of leavers from major city areas in paid work as storepersons in 2024 (down 1.9 pp)
- higher estimated percentage of leavers from major city areas in paid work as kitchenhands in 2024 (up 1.3 pp).

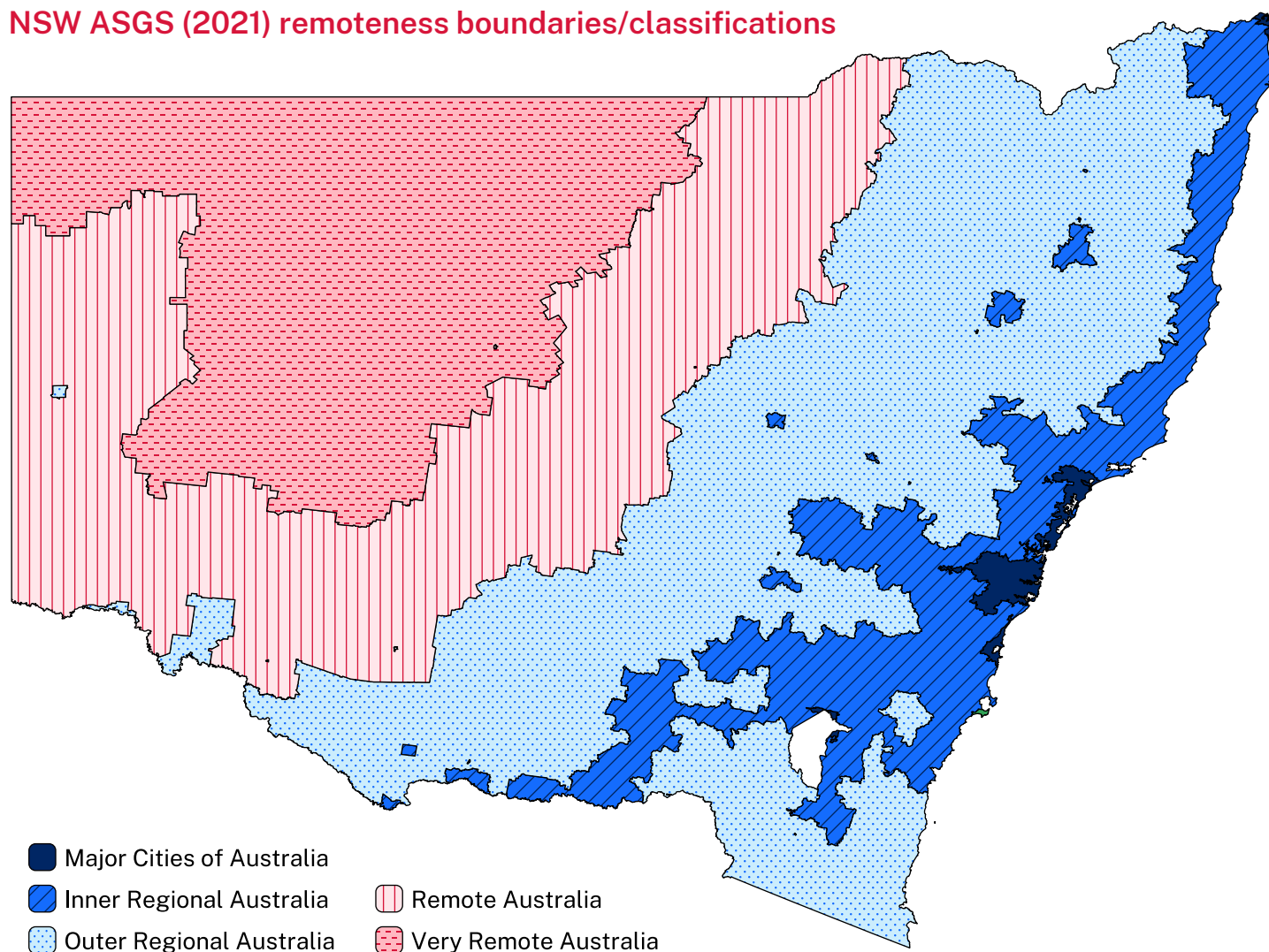
In 2024, bar attendant and barista work was more common for paid workers from inner regional areas (third place at 7.1%) than for those from major city areas (fifth place at 5.4%). Paid work as kitchenhands saw similar uptake in major cities (third place at 6.8% in 2024) and inner regional areas (fourth place at 7.0%) but was less common in outer regional, remote or very remote areas (seventh at 4%). Café work was more common in inner regional (fifth place at 6.3% in 2024) and outer regional, remote or very remote areas (third place at 7%) than it was in major cities (seventh place at 4.4%).

Figure 11: Top 3 employment areas for all leavers from major city, inner regional, and outer regional, remote or very remote areas whose main destination was paid work, 2021 to 2024



Defining remoteness

NSW ASGS (2021) remoteness boundaries/classifications



The region variable used in this snapshot report was constructed from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) 2021 remoteness boundaries/classifications. The 5 remoteness classes/categories, determined based on relative access to services, are:

- major cities
- inner regional
- outer regional
- remote
- very remote.

In this snapshot report, the outer regional, remote and very remote categories have been combined to preserve school leavers' privacy.

The NSW Department of Education has adopted the ASGS remoteness categories through its Remoteness Standard as the consistent method to measure rurality. This approach is based on the ASGS Remoteness Structure but includes department-approved rules to ensure consistent and appropriate application across department reporting and analysis.

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