

Fact sheet

Early school leavers

Pathways Outcomes for Learners

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

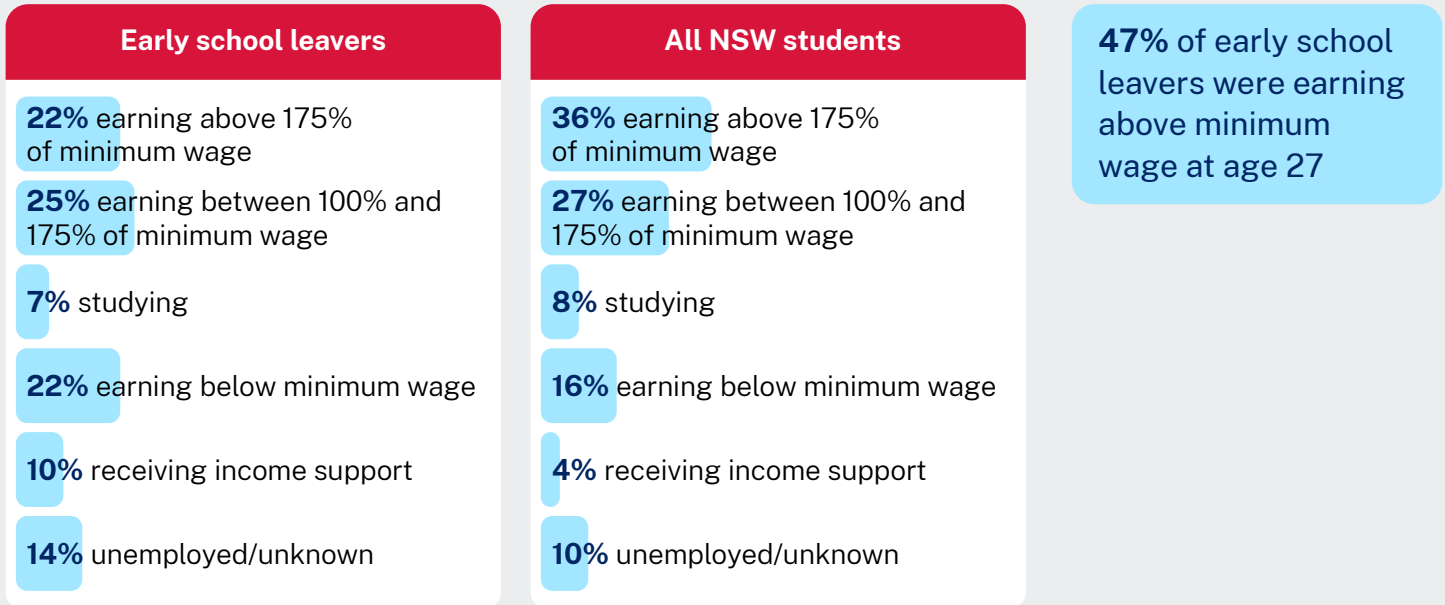
This fact sheet provides a high-level overview of findings from the Pathways Outcomes for Learners dashboard relating to **early school leavers**.

The new **Pathways Outcomes for Learners** dashboard has been updated to map the journeys of over 80,000 NSW students from school at age 16 (in 2010) to employment at age 27 (in 2021). Early school leavers are defined as NSW students who left school without completing the Higher School Certificate. This fact sheet compares outcomes for early school leavers with outcomes for all students from their wider Year 10 cohort.

Secondary enrolments from age 16



Outcomes at age 27¹



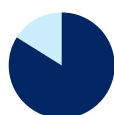
¹ Due to rounding, the sum of the categories may not add up to 100%.

Tertiary enrolments by age 27²



Vocational education and training (VET)

Early school leavers



84%

All NSW students



60%



University



11%



52%



Both VET and university



8%



21%

84% of early school leavers enrolled in tertiary VET, while only **11%** enrolled in university

² Note that students may be counted in more than one category as categories are not mutually exclusive.

Top tertiary fields of study by age 27³



VET

Early school leavers

- 1 Engineering and related technologies (15%)
- 2 Management and commerce (15%)
- 3 Architecture and building (11%)

All NSW students

- 1 Management and commerce (13%)
- 2 Engineering and related technologies (8%)
- 3 Society and culture (7%)

VET study in engineering and related technologies was the most common tertiary field of study for early school leavers



University

- 1 Health (2%)
- 2 Society and culture (2%)
- 3 Education (1%)

- 1 Management and commerce (8%)
- 2 Society and culture (8%)
- 3 Health (8%)

³ Percentages expressed as a proportion of the entire cohort at age 27, including those with no tertiary enrolment.

Top occupations at age 27⁴

Early school leavers

- 1 Technicians and trades workers (24%)
- 2 Labourers (18%)
- 3 Community and personal service workers (15%)

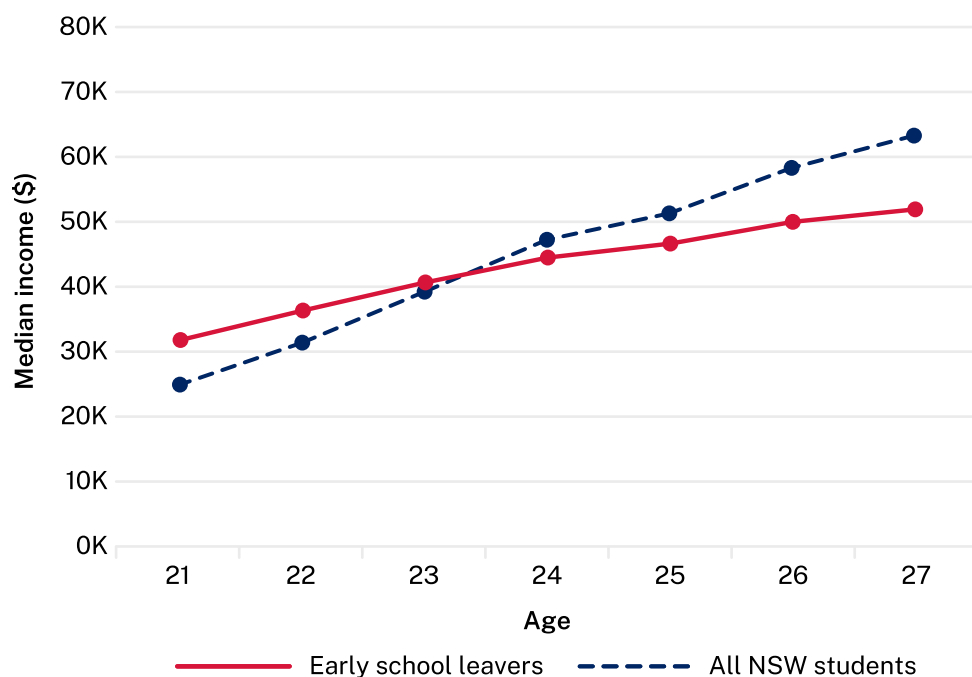
All NSW students

- 1 Professionals (30%)
- 2 Community and personal service workers (13%)
- 3 Technicians and trades workers (13%)

Technicians and trades workers was the most common occupation for early school leavers

⁴ Percentages expressed as a proportion of students employed at age 27.

Income from age 21 to age 27⁵



From age 21 to age 27, the median income of early school leavers **increased at a slower rate** than the wider cohort

⁵ Income has not been adjusted for inflation.

More information about Pathways Outcomes for Learners

The Pathways Outcomes for Learners dashboard draws on the [Pathways for the Future Program](#) dataset which covers the background, education and employment data of 6.5 million people aged 11 to 67 in NSW from 1996 onwards. The dashboard is a data visualisation tool and offers high-level insights about pathways students take in senior secondary school through to tertiary study and into employment.

This new release is the first showcase to the public of findings from the updated dataset. Using learnings from the pilot dataset (which was limited to NSW young people aged 15 to 24 from 1996 to 2016), the expanded data allows users a more complete picture of student pathways through education to employment. Dashboard users will gain valuable insights about school completion level, levels of tertiary enrolment and outcomes of NSW students and learners at ages 21, 24 and 27. In addition, a new outcome category has been added and visual enhancements have been made.

The following caveats should be kept in mind when using the dashboard:

- The data for each student and learner group provides a snapshot of education-to-employment pathways up to age 27. Longer-term outcomes for each group may vary, especially for pathways with longer study lengths.
- The data presented is descriptive and exploratory in nature and does not identify root causes of educational outcomes achieved by students.
- Education-to-employment pathways can be shaped by many factors not explored in this dashboard, including economic, wellbeing and social circumstances as well as student experiences with the justice, health and social services systems. These factors are likely to be especially important when looking at particular segments of young people.
- Outcomes at age 27 include income and income support received during 2021, which were impacted by large changes in the labour market during the first 2 years of the COVID-19 pandemic. We recommend caution when comparing outcome measures from this period with earlier measures.

Data sources

The NSW Department of Education would like to acknowledge the assistance of the following organisations involved in the Pathways for the Future Program:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)
- Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA)
- Monash Health Research Committee
- National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER)
- NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA)
- NSW Ministry of Health and the Centre for Health Record Linkage (CHeReL)
- NSW Skills Board
- TAFE NSW
- the Office of the Student Identifiers Registrar (OSIR)
- the Person Level Integrated Data Asset (PLIDA) accessed through the ABS DataLab
- Universities Admissions Centre (UAC).

We would also like to note the following statement about PLIDA data:

The results of these studies are based, in part, on data supplied to the ABS under the *Taxation Administration Act 1953*, *A New Tax System (Australian Business Number) Act 1999*, *Australian Border Force Act 2015*, *Social Security (Administration) Act 1999*, *A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) Act 1999*,

Paid Parental Leave Act 2010 and/or the *Student Assistance Act 1973*. Such data may only be used for the purpose of administering the *Census and Statistics Act 1905* or performance of functions of the ABS as set out in section 6 of the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975* (the ABS Act). No individual information collected under the *Census and Statistics Act 1905* is provided back to custodians for administrative or regulatory purposes. Any discussion of data limitations or weaknesses is in the context of using the data for statistical purposes and is not related to the ability of the data to support the Australian Taxation Office, Australian Business Register, Australian Government Department of Social Services and/or Australian Government Department of Home Affairs' core operational requirements.

Legislative requirements to ensure privacy and secrecy of these data have been followed. For access to PLIDA and/or Business Longitudinal Analysis Data Environment (BLADE) data under section 16A of the ABS Act or enabled by section 15 of the *Census and Statistics (Information Release and Access) Determination 2018*, source data are de-identified and so data about specific individuals has not been viewed in conducting this analysis. In accordance with the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*, results have been treated where necessary to ensure that they are not likely to enable identification of a particular person or organisation.

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