



Australian Government



Jobs and Skills Australia

Foundation Skills Study

Administrative data report

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Contents

Jobs and Skills Australia Deputy Commissioner's foreword	2
Executive summary	3
Key themes.....	4
What are foundation skills?	5
Priority groups of interest	6
Measurement of foundation skills proficiency.....	6
Administrative data.....	7
Comparison to the Australia-wide population	8
ACSF assessments.....	8
Adult Migrant English Program.....	8
Skills for Education and Employment	10
Foundation Skills for Your Future	13
Pre-enrolment VET assessments.....	15
VET foundation skills units of competency	17
Other metrics of foundation skills	21
VET qualification enrolments and completions.....	21
VET graduate outcomes	26
LANTITE.....	28
NAPLAN.....	32
Conclusion	34
References	35
Appendix A Priority groups of interest	36

Jobs and Skills Australia

Deputy Commissioner's foreword

Foundation skills - literacy, numeracy, and digital capability - are the bedrock of workforce participation, lifelong learning, and social inclusion. They underpin our ability to communicate, solve problems, and adapt to change. As Australia continues to navigate economic transformation and technological advancement, ensuring equitable access and provision for everyone to opportunities to build these essential skills is more important than ever.

This report marks the culmination of a period of discovery, negotiation, acquisition and analysis for Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA), dedicated to strengthening the national evidence base on foundation skills. It reflects our commitment to a long-term program of work that will inform policy, guide investment, and support inclusive participation.

Drawing on administrative data from a wide range of government and education sources, this report provides valuable early insights into the foundation skills proficiency of key priority cohorts - women, First Nations people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and people living with disability. While not representative of the entire adult population, these findings offer a critical starting point for understanding the experiences and outcomes of those most likely to benefit from targeted support.

Building a clear and comprehensive evidence base is essential. It enables us to identify gaps, monitor progress, and design programs that are responsive to the needs of diverse communities. This report also highlights the importance of improving data collection practices, particularly in relation to digital literacy and disability status, to ensure future reporting is more inclusive and robust.

I would like to acknowledge the contribution of Professor Barney Glover in establishing strong foundations for this work, including his creation of the Foundation Skills Steering Committee, whose guidance and expertise have been instrumental in shaping this work. Their collaboration reflects the shared commitment across government, education, and community sectors to improving foundation skills outcomes for all Australians.

Trevor Gauld

Deputy Commissioner

Jobs and Skills Australia

Executive summary

Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) is leading the development of a new study on adult literacy, numeracy, and digital skills. A key component of this study is the national survey - Understanding Skills Across Australia - which aims to comprehensively measure literacy and numeracy among Australian adults. However, as the survey results will not be available until 2026, this report seeks to supplement the forthcoming findings with the insights drawn from administrative data provided by identified Commonwealth agencies, state and territory governments, education institutions and non-government organisations.

Administrative data is information collected by organisations as part of delivering services - such as in education, employment, health, and social support - and maintained for operational or reporting needs. For the purposes of this report, it includes data about individuals who have engaged with programs designed to support literacy, numeracy, and digital skills development. This encompasses those currently participating in foundation skills programs, individuals identified through screening or assessment as having low levels of literacy, and those required to undertake a foundation skills assessment prior to enrolling in a Vocational Education and Training (VET) or higher education qualification. It also includes participants in formal and informal courses focused on developing foundation skills.

While this data provides valuable insights, it is limited in scope and does not represent the foundation skills levels of the broader adult population. It primarily reflects individuals who have interacted with specific programs, assessments, or qualifications.

This report focuses on identified groups of interest to explore differences in foundation skills proficiency across literacy, numeracy, and digital skills. The priority cohorts are:

- women,
- people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds,
- First Nations people, and
- people living with disability.

Following an extensive data discovery process in 2023, it is apparent that no single or integrated dataset could fully capture the foundation skills levels of Australian adults of these priority groups. However, there was substantial data available for adults who accessed a foundation skills program, undertook a foundation skills assessment or enrolled in a specialised foundation skills program, including those who:

- accessed a foundation skills program (e.g. the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) program or the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP))
- undertook a foundation skills assessment (e.g. the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF))
- enrolled in specialised foundation skills courses (e.g. accredited training in language, literacy, numeracy, or digital skills).

This report provides information on foundation skills proficiency for participants in three Commonwealth-administered programs: the Adult Migrant English Program, Skills for Education and Employment, and Foundation Skills for Your Future.

It also includes significant data from the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector, covering enrolment and completion of specialised foundation skills qualifications and units of competency, as well as graduate outcomes for those who complete these qualifications. Additionally, it presents VET pre-enrolment assessment information for individuals demonstrating the foundation skills needed to successfully complete a VET qualification.

There is limited data on adult skills at higher level qualifications and professional occupations. The only identified information available comes from the Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education (LANTITE). The LANTITE report includes administrative data on the proportion of initial teacher education students who demonstrate literacy and numeracy proficiency within the top 30% of the Australian adult population—a standard all students are expected to meet prior to graduating from an accredited initial teacher education course in Australia.¹

Since the administrative data in this report does not offer a quantitative assessment of foundation skills for all Australian adults, key findings for each program are presented individually. However, consistent themes emerge across the datasets, particularly for the priority groups of interest.

Key themes

Women

Across most programs examined in this report, women tend to demonstrate slightly higher proficiency in literacy and slightly lower proficiency in numeracy compared to men. Patterns of participation also differ, with some programs showing a significantly higher proportion of female participants. However, the available data provided no indication or evidence that women face specific barriers to accessing or participating in foundation skills programs.

First Nations people

First Nations people have access and participate in most foundation skills programs, with the exception of specialised programs for recent migrants or those from a CALD background. First Nations participants in foundation skills programs have noticeably better oral communication than other foundation skills, especially writing skills which has a higher proportion of participants in the lower levels of proficiency.

People from a CALD background

Those from a CALD background participate in most foundation skills programs at a much higher proportion than they represent in the broader Australian population, which suggests there are no access or participation barriers for this priority group. Those from a CALD background who have recently migrated to Australia have lower foundation skills than those who are currently active in the labour force.

Those from a CALD background also have lower numeracy and digital literacy skills than other participants in most of the presented foundation skills programs.

¹ [Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education - Department of Education, Australian Government](#), accessed 22 July 2025.

People living with disability

The data for people living with disability is limited to those who enrol in or complete a foundation skills VET qualification or unit of competency. The subject load pass rate and qualification completion data indicate that people living with disability are equally likely to successfully complete foundation skills VET programs or subjects. Disability data for individuals undertaking VET qualifications and units of competency is clearly defined through self-reporting and is consistently collected across the sector. In contrast, disability status for participants in other programs referenced in this report is either not clearly defined, inconsistently collected, or represents a small subset of the overall cohort, making it unreliable for analysis.

What are foundation skills?

The ability to read, write, count, use mathematical reasoning, and engage with technology is a critical foundation for meaningful work and active participation in the community. The [National Foundation Skills Strategy 2025–2035](#) defines foundations skills as the core skills or competencies that underpin workforce participation, productivity, and social inclusion. These are grouped into two categories:

- Language, literacy, numeracy and digital (LLND) skills – listening, speaking, reading, writing, numeracy (the use of mathematical ideas) and digital literacy.
- Employability skills – a set of non-technical skills, knowledge and understandings that underpin successful participation in work, such as initiative and innovation, planning and organising, problem solving and teamwork.

These definitions are drawn directly from the Strategy and provide a nationally consistent framework for understanding foundation skills in the Australian context.

Foundation skills are critical drivers of workforce productivity and economic growth. A population with strong foundation skills is better equipped to adapt to technological change, engage in lifelong learning, and contribute effectively to the labour market. As a result, improvements in foundation skills can enhance employability, increase earnings, social inclusion and boost national productivity.²

Jobs and Skills Australia is leading a new national study of adult foundation skills (the study). The study consists of:

- a survey of around 10,000 adults across Australia to assess their current literacy and numeracy skill levels;
- analysis of administrative data supplied by Commonwealth agencies, state and territory governments, education institutions, and non-government organisations to ‘drill down’ into the results for priority groups;

² Shomos, A. and Forbes, M. (2014) Literacy and Numeracy Skills and Labour Market Outcomes in Australia, Productivity Commission Staff Working Paper, Canberra.

- a study into the feasibility of assessing the skill levels of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including those in regional and remote areas³; and
- a project aimed at defining digital literacy to support the development of essential digital skills for Australia's adult population.

In 2023, JSA conducted a data discovery process to identify administrative data sources related to foundation skills. Through consultation with over 60 organisations — including Commonwealth agencies, state and territory governments, education institutions, and non-government organisations — it was found that no single dataset could fully capture the foundation skills levels of Australian adults. However, a combination of datasets provides a broad understanding, particularly for individuals who have participated in foundation skills programs, undertaken a foundation skills assessment, or enrolled in relevant education and training pathways.

Priority groups of interest

This report will focus on the administrative data for foundation skills for the following priority groups of interest:

- women;
- culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities; and
- people living with a disability; and
- First Nations people.

Each priority group of interest is further explained in Appendix A.

Measurement of foundation skills proficiency

During the data discovery process, it was clear that there are multiple methodologies and frameworks which measure the levels of foundation skills proficiency in Australian adults. This diversity in measurement approaches presents challenges for data analysis, particularly in terms of comparability and consistency across datasets. This report will therefore be divided into two sections: foundation skills proficiency measured or aligned with the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) or the Digital Literacy Skills Framework (DLSF), and other metrics, such as enrolment, completion, or graduate outcomes from a foundation skills program. These distinctions are necessary to highlight the limitations and nuances in interpreting the data.

Australian Core Skills Framework / Digital Literacy Skills Framework

The ACSF⁴ describes the real-life performance in 5 foundation skills domains of: learning, reading, writing, oral communication, numeracy, and the DLSF⁵ covers digital literacy. Within

³ This is now the Murtu Yayngiliyn (Walking Together) study. Murtu Yayngiliyn will provide recommendations on how to measure the literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills levels of First Nations people, including those in regional and remote areas, in a culturally safe and responsive, and statistically sound manner.

⁴ [Australian Core Skills Framework](#), accessed 7 August 2025

⁵ [Digital Literacy Skills Framework](#), accessed 7 August 2025

each domain there are seven levels of proficiency Pre Level 1 A, Pre Level 1 B, Level 1, Level 2, Level 3, Level 4 and Level 5.

This report will provide the most recent assessment or outcome for the following foundation skills programs using the ACSF/DLSF⁶:

- recent migrants enrolled in the Adult Migrant English Program,
- job seekers referred to the Skills for Education and Employment program,
- employed or recently unemployed adults who participated in the Foundation Skills for Your Future program,
- VET units of competencies aligned to the ACSF from the Foundation Skills VET Training Package (FSK),
- assessments conducted by registered training organisations to measure foundation skills proficiency before enrolment in a VET qualification.

Other metrics for measuring foundation skills proficiency

The measurement of foundation skills using other metrics can be provided using administrative data from the following:

- enrolment, completion and graduate outcomes from students enrolled in a specialised foundation skills VET qualification,
- test candidates who are required to meet the Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education (LANTITE) standard,
- Year 9 students who undertake a literacy and numeracy assessment through the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) program.⁷

Administrative data

Administrative data refers to information collected by organisations during the routine delivery of services such as education, healthcare, taxation, and social support. This data is recorded in structured systems and maintained in official records, often used to monitor performance, support research, and guide decision-making. It provides a reliable source of evidence for understanding population trends and improving service delivery.

Administrative data for foundation skills is mainly collected for Australian adults connected to a foundation skills program or the vocational education and training (VET) sector. These programs often target individuals with lower foundation skills proficiency, so data is rarely collected for those with higher proficiency or no connection to these programs. While this

⁶ Some programs may undertake multiple assessments of participant's foundation skills with data available for an initial assessment aligned to the ACSF to benchmark against any subsequent assessments. Most analyses in this report will refer to a participant's latest assessment, which is the most recent assessment and could be an assessment after completion, upon withdrawal of the program or the initial assessment if no additional assessment has been completed.

⁷ While NAPLAN is designed to assess literacy and numeracy skills among school-aged children, it represents the most recent and comprehensive national dataset capturing foundational skills across the majority of Australian students. Its inclusion in this report provides a useful benchmark for understanding the literacy and numeracy environment in which future adults are currently being educated. By examining NAPLAN results, we can gain insights into the skill levels of emerging cohorts and identify potential long-term trends or gaps that may influence adult literacy outcomes over time.

data doesn't cover all Australian adults, it provides insights into those who undertake an ACSF assessment or enrol in specific VET foundation skills qualifications.

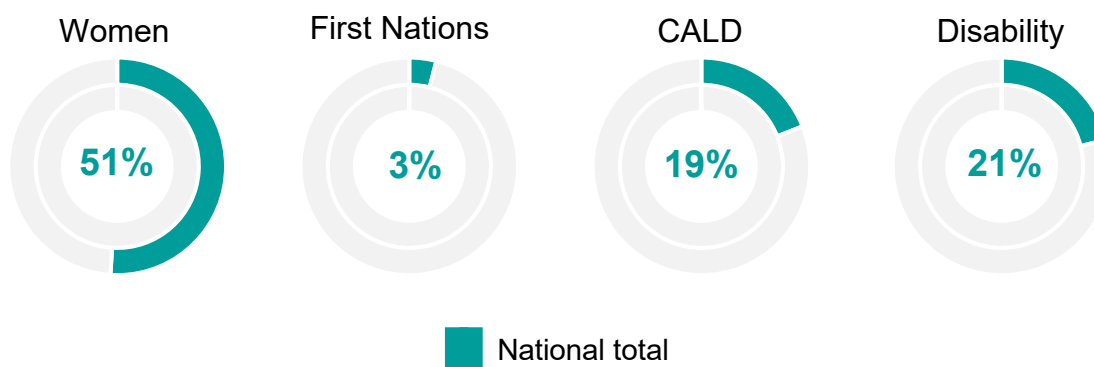
This report presents each participant's most recent assessment of foundation skills, which may occur before, during, or after program participation. This approach reflects the individual's current proficiency level and is not intended to compare programs. Differences in assessment timing across programs are acknowledged, and readers should interpret results within the context of each program's design and data availability.

Comparison to the Australia-wide population

One of the key advantages of using administrative data is the ability to identify the proportion of priority groups participating in each program. This enables comparisons between the representation of these groups within programs and their representation in the broader Australian population. Such analysis supports monitoring of access and equity, helping to ensure that priority groups are both able to and actually do participate in these programs.

Each foundation skills program included in this report features a set of graphs that illustrate this comparison. These are presented as paired pie charts: the outer ring represents the proportion of each priority group in the Australia-wide population, while the inner ring shows their proportion within the specific program. The national proportions for each priority group are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The Australia-wide proportion of women, First Nations people, people from a CALD background and people living with disability



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Females, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people not born in an English speaking country and speaks another language at home in Australia 2021 Census Table Builder, accessed 24 March 2024. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022) Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia [Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2022 | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#), accessed December 2024.

ACSF assessments

Adult Migrant English Program

The Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)⁸ is an Australian government administered program which provides free English language tuition to eligible adult migrants and humanitarian entrants to help them successfully settle and participate in Australian society.

⁸Further information about AMEP can be found on the Department of Home Affairs' website: [About the Adult Migrant English Program \(AMEP\)](#)

The program focuses on improving English skills for everyday communication, employment, and further education.

Targeted cohort: Recent migrants and humanitarian entrants

Eligibility: Migrants aged 18 or over who have less than vocational English and are either permanent residents, eligible temporary visa holders, or Australian citizens who previously held an eligible permanent visa or permanent entry permit. During the 2017–2019 period, most participants were required to have arrived in Australia within the previous 12 months to access the program, although some exceptions and extensions applied.

Years of data in the analysis: 2017 - 2019⁹

Average commencements per year: 27,000

Priority groups of interest: All participants in the AMEP can be classified as being from a CALD background. While women participants can be identified in the data, people living with disability could not be, as disability status was not captured in the administrative data for the years analysed.

Assessment data presented: Latest assessment

Participants characteristics:

Figure 2: Percentage of women, First Nations people and people from a CALD background participants in AMEP as compared to the national total population percentage.



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2024) Australian Migrant English Program [DataLab], accessed 4 June 2024. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Females, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people not born in an English speaking country and speaks another language at home in Australia 2021 Census Table Builder, accessed 24 March 2024.

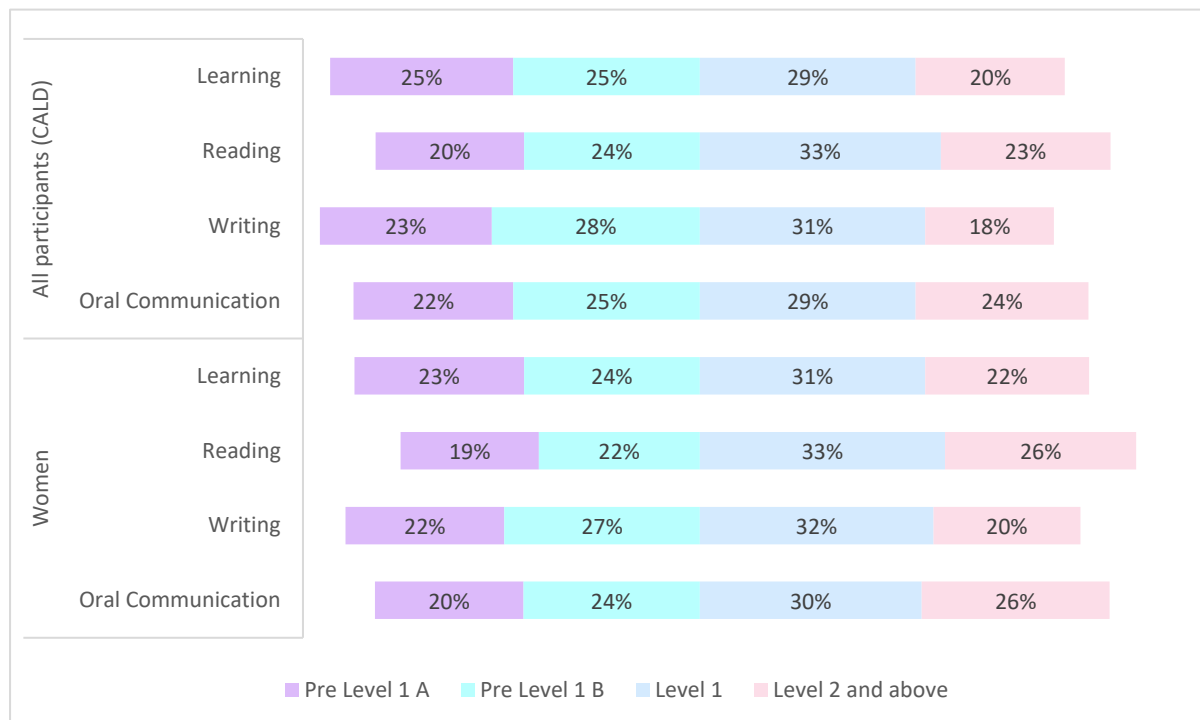
Key findings (Figure 3):

- **CALD participants show a wide range of foundational skill levels**
 - Just under 50% of recent migrant AMEP participants - who are all from a CALD background - were assessed at Pre Level 1 across learning, reading, writing, and oral communication in their most recent ACSF assessment.
 - In contrast, approximately 1 in 5 participants were assessed at Level 2 or above, highlighting the wide variation in foundational skill levels within this cohort.

⁹ The AMEP MADIP dataset only contains two years of ACSF assessment data - 1/7/2017 to 30/6/2019.

- **Women demonstrate slightly stronger literacy and communication skills**
 - In reading, writing, and oral communication, women AMEP participants showed a slightly higher proportion at Level 2 and above compared to the overall participant group.
 - This may reflect factors such as higher engagement, differing learning needs, or greater program retention among women.¹⁰

Figure 3: Latest foundation skills proficiency for participants in AMEP from 2017 to 2019



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2024) Australian Migrant English Program [DataLab], accessed 4 June 2024

Skills for Education and Employment

The Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) program is an Australian Government administered program which offers free English language, literacy, numeracy and digital skills to eligible Australian adults over the age of 15 and who have left school. Prior to July 2024, the SEE program primarily targeted job seekers. On 1 July 2024, the redesigned SEE program commenced, offering two distinct and complementary foundation skills delivery streams: General SEE Delivery and SEE First Nations. While job seekers are still eligible for the program, they are not the sole focus, with eligibility now expanded to all people 15 years and over who are not at school.

The data for this report relates to the SEE program prior to July 2024 where the primary targeted cohort was job seekers¹¹.

¹⁰ Women participants received, on average, 40 more tuition hours than males and tended to enter the program with slightly higher English proficiency levels. [AMEP Impact Evaluation Project – Paper A: Profile of AMEP Clients \(2022\)](#).

¹¹ Further information about the SEE program can be found on the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations website: [Skills for Education and Employment \(SEE\) Program - Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, Australian Government](#), accessed 13 June 2025

Targeted cohort: Job seekers

Eligibility: Job seekers who are: aged between 15 years and age pension age, registered as a job seeker, deemed suitable for training that would prevent successful participation, and either an Australian citizen, permanent resident or have working rights.

Years of data in analysis: 2018-19 to 2022-23

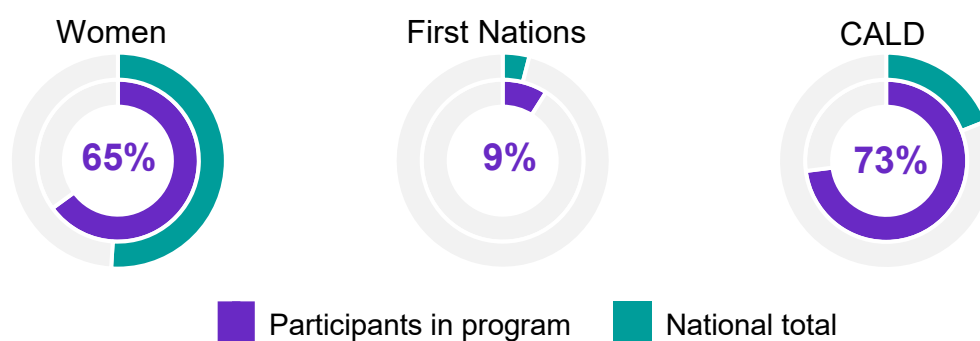
Average commencements per year: 14,000

Priority groups of interest: Women, First Nations people and people from a CALD background can be identified in the SEE program.

Assessment data presented: Latest assessment

Participants characteristics:

Figure 4: Percentage of women, First Nations people and people from a CALD background participants in the SEE program as compared to the national total percentage.



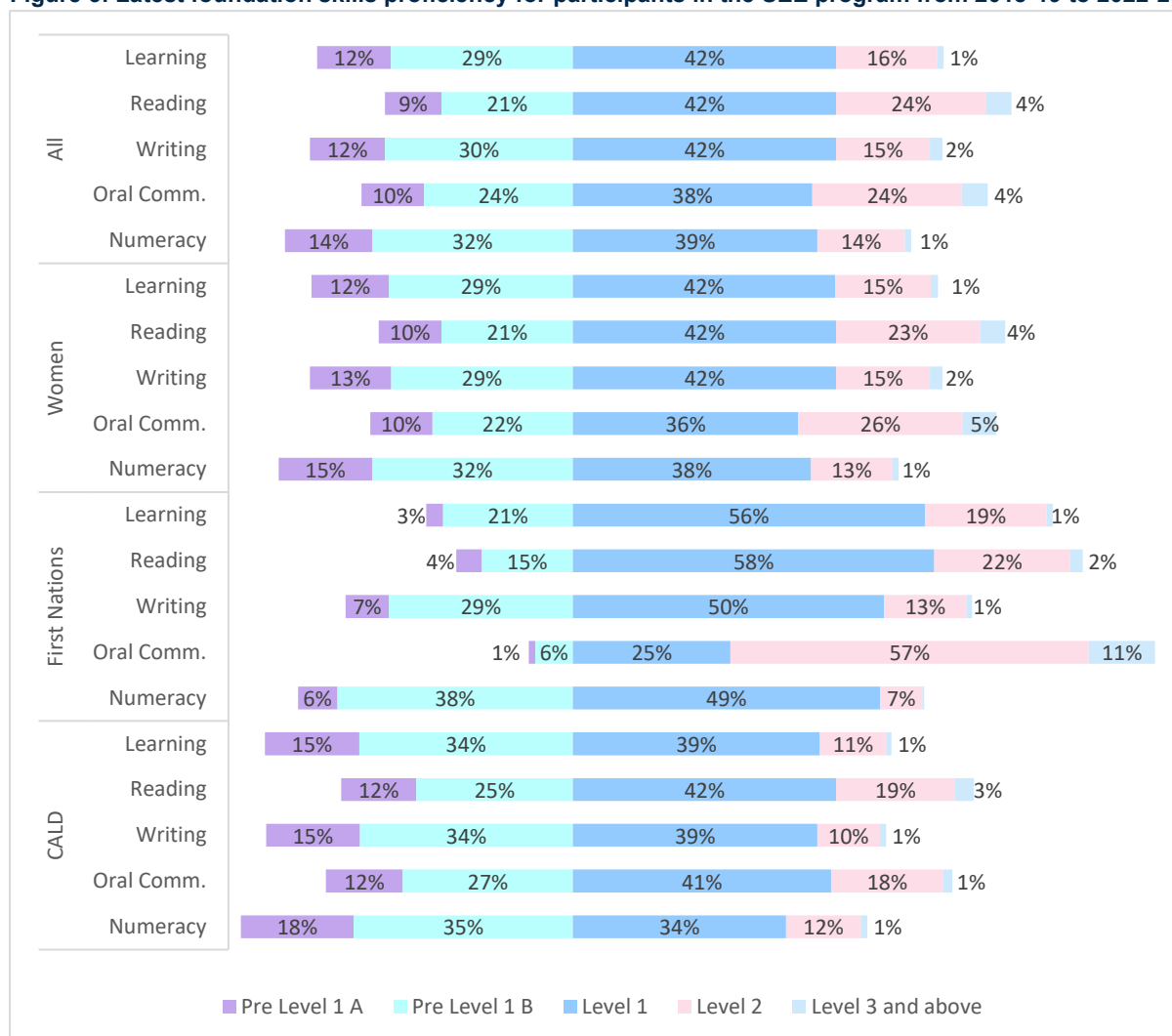
Source: Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (2024) Skills for Education and Employment, supplied March 2024. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Females, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people not born in an English speaking country and speaks another language at home in Australia 2021 Census Table Builder, accessed 24 March 2024.

Key findings (Figure 5):

- **Women demonstrate stronger oral communication skills**
 - Across oral communication, women were more likely than the overall cohort to be assessed at Level 2 or above, suggesting relatively stronger proficiency in this area. In reading and writing, women performed comparably, though slightly fewer reached Level 2 or higher compared to the overall cohort.
- **First Nations participants show stronger oral communication than writing proficiency**
 - A higher proportion of First Nations participants were assessed at Level 2 or above in oral communication, while writing showed a greater concentration at Level 1 or below, indicating variation in skill strengths across domains.
- **CALD participants are more frequently represented in lower proficiency bands**
 - CALD participants had higher proportions at Pre Level 1 A and B across all skill areas, particularly in numeracy, reading, and writing. As CALD learners make up 73% of the cohort, their skill distribution closely reflects the overall group.
- **Numeracy proficiency is low across all priority cohorts**

- Nearly half of all participants were assessed at Pre Level 1 A or B in numeracy. This trend is consistent across women, First Nations, and CALD participants, highlighting numeracy as a common area of lower proficiency.

Figure 5: Latest foundation skills proficiency for participants in the SEE program from 2018-19 to 2022-23



Source: Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (2024) Skills for Education and Employment, supplied March 2024.

Foundation Skills for Your Future

The Foundation Skills for Your Future (FSfYF) program was an Australian Government initiative aimed at enhancing the language, literacy, numeracy and digital skills of adults to improve their employability and workplace participation. The program offered free, tailored training to adults aged 15 years and over who had left secondary school, including those employed or recently unemployed, to help them improve their foundation skills.

The program also supported employers by providing workplace-based training to upskill the LLND skills of their employees. The program concluded in June 2024, with findings from the program being integrated into the redesigned SEE program from July 2024¹².

Targeted cohort: Employed or recently unemployed people

Eligibility: Employed or recently unemployed people who are: an Australian citizen or permanent resident, aged 15 years and over and not in currently in full-time education.

¹²The program guidelines regarding the Foundation Skills for Your Future program can be located on the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations website. [Foundation Skills for Your Future Program Guidelines - Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, Australian Government](#)

Years of data in the analysis: 2020-21 – 2023-24

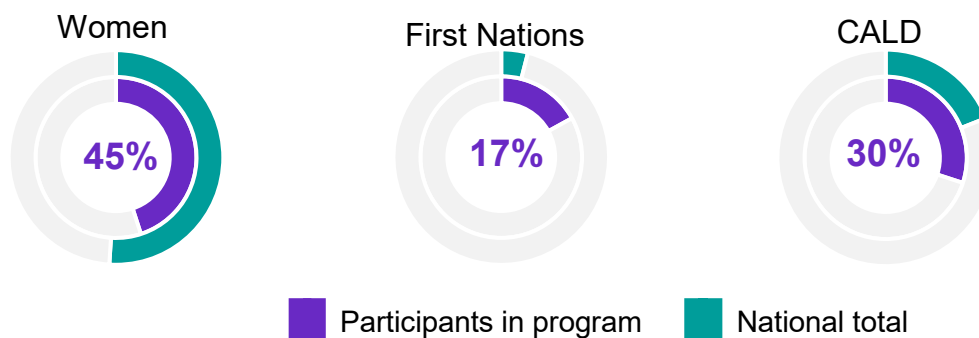
Average commencements per year: 600

Priority groups of interest: Women, First Nations people and people from a CALD background can be identified in the FSfYF program.

Assessment data presented: Latest assessment

Participants characteristics:

Figure 6: Percentage of women, First Nations people and people from a CALD background participants in the FSfYF program as compared to the national total percentage.



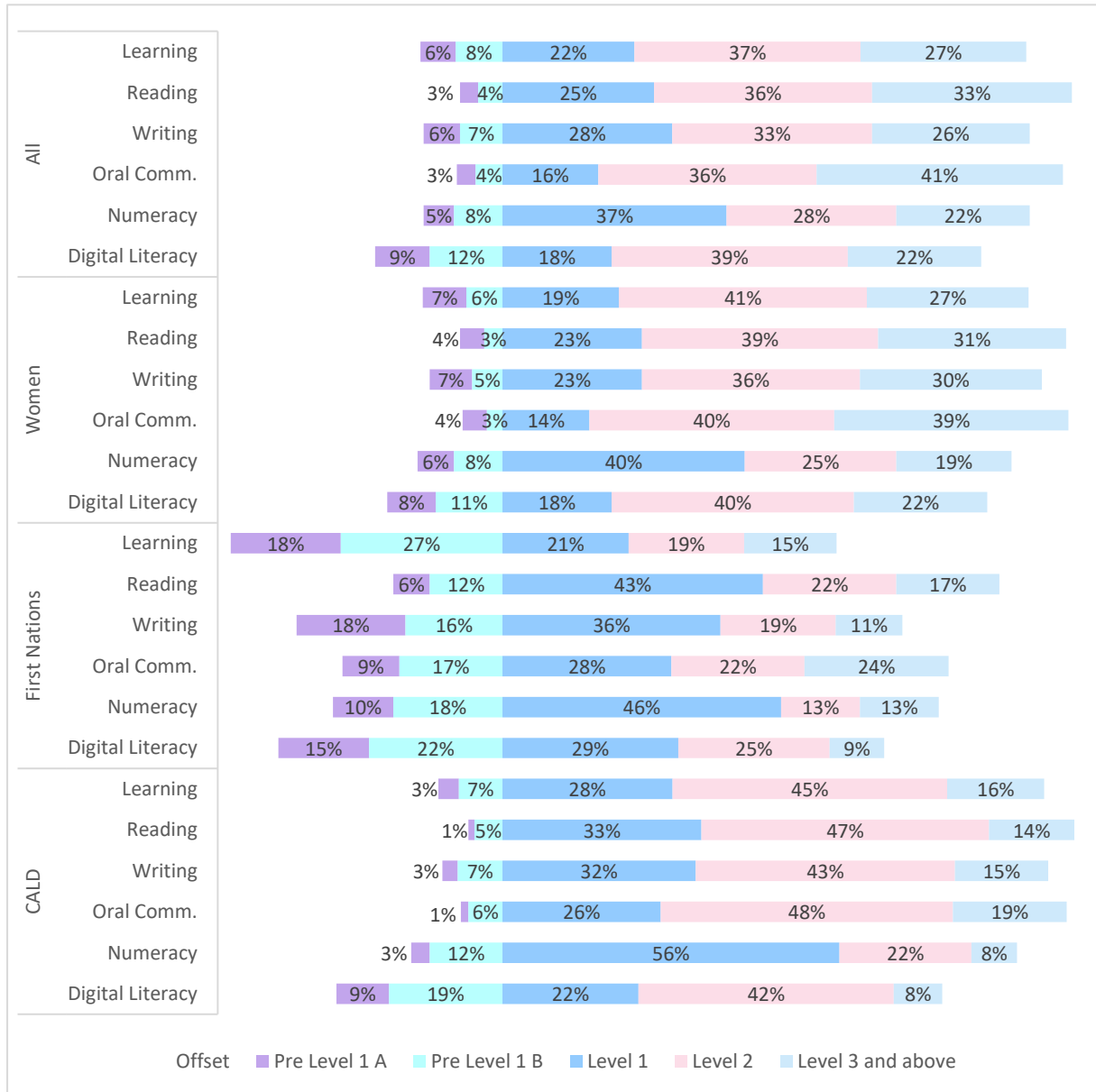
Source: Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (2024) Foundation Skills for Your Future, supplied March 2024. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Females, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people not born in an English speaking country and speaks another language at home in Australia 2021 Census Table Builder, accessed 24 March 2024.

Key findings (Figure 7):

- **Most participants demonstrate solid foundation skills in literacy and learning**
 - The majority of FSfYF participants were assessed at Level 2 or above in learning, reading, writing, and oral communication, indicating a strong foundation across core literacy domains.
- **Women show slightly stronger literacy and communication skills**
 - Female participants were more likely than the overall group to be assessed at Level 2 or above in learning, writing, and oral communication.
 - In contrast, the overall group showed slightly stronger performance in numeracy, indicating some variation in skill strengths across domains.
- **First Nations participants show a broader distribution of skill levels**
 - First Nations participants were more frequently represented in lower proficiency bands across learning, writing, and digital literacy.
 - However, oral communication skills were comparatively stronger, with a higher proportion assessed at Level 2 or above.
- **CALD participants show stronger literacy than numeracy performance**
 - Among CALD participants, reading, writing, and oral communication were most commonly assessed at Level 2, indicating relatively stronger performance in these areas.

- In contrast, numeracy was more frequently assessed at Level 1, and learning and digital literacy showed a wider spread across proficiency levels, with fewer participants reaching the highest levels.

Figure 7: Latest foundation skills proficiency for participants in the FSfYF program from 2018-19 to 2022-23



Source: Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (2024) Skills for Education and Employment, supplied March 2024.

Pre-enrolment VET assessments

Before commencing Vocational Education and Training (VET), training providers are required to ensure that students possess the necessary foundation skills¹³. One approach to meeting this requirement is through the use of approved assessment tools that evaluate literacy and numeracy proficiency against the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF), which spans from Pre-Level 1 to Level 5.

¹³ This is a legislative requirement if the student is to receive a loan for their VET education, through the *VET Student Loans Act 2016*.

While many assessments are likely undertaken to satisfy eligibility requirements for VET Student Loans, they are not limited to this purpose. Registered Training Organisations may require foundation skills assessments for any student, regardless of loan status. The data available to Jobs and Skills Australia does not include indicators that identify whether an assessment was conducted specifically for loan eligibility.

This report analyses pre-enrolment assessment data provided by registered training organisations and assessment tool owners. The dataset does not contain personal characteristics or priority group identifiers and may include multiple assessments for the same individual.

Targeted cohort: Students who undertake an assessment before enrolment in a VET qualification.

Years of available data: 2019-2023

Priority groups of interest: Women, First Nations people and people from a CALD background cannot be identified in the pre-enrolment VET assessment data.

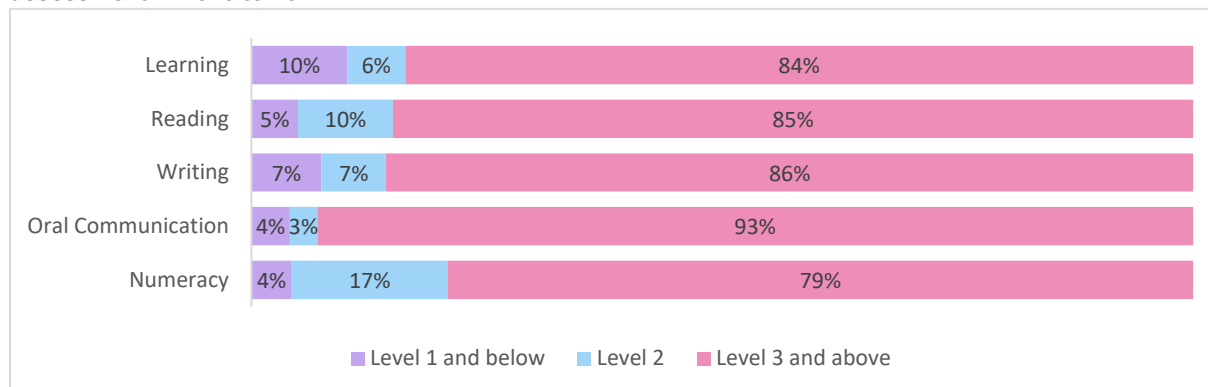
Assessment data presented: All assessments, as it is not possible to identify or remove for individuals who may undertake multiple assessments.

Participants characteristics: There is no personal characteristics information in the data provided to JSA.

Key findings (Figures 8 and 9):

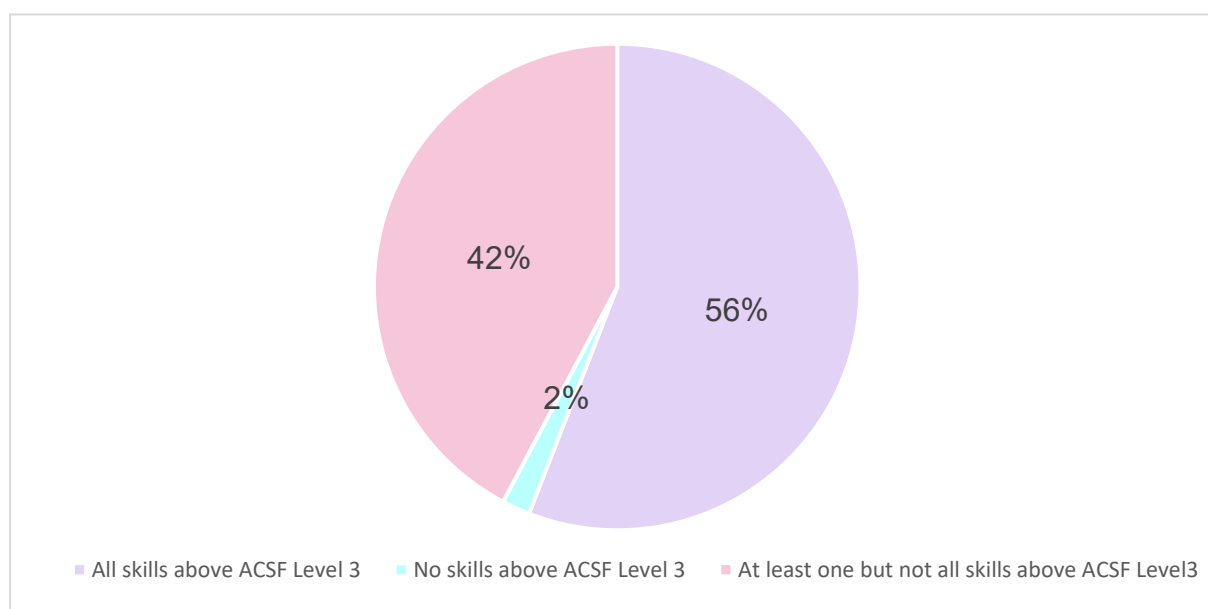
- **Most participants demonstrate strong foundational skill readiness**
 - The majority of VET pre-enrolment assessments were at Level 3 or above across all foundation skill areas, particularly in oral communication, writing, and reading, indicating a high level of preparedness for training
- **Numeracy proficiency shows greater variation**
 - While many participants were assessed at Level 2 in numeracy, fewer reached Level 3 or above compared to other skill areas, suggesting a broader distribution of numeracy skills.
- **High overall proficiency across foundation skill domains**
 - More than half of participants achieved Level 3 or above in all five foundation skills - learning, reading, writing, oral communication, and numeracy - indicating a generally high level of foundational skill readiness prior to commencing VET training.
- **Most participants have multiple skills at Level 3 or above**
 - Over 50% of participants had all assessed skills above ACSF Level 3, while a significant portion had some but not all skills at this level. Only a small minority had no skills above Level 3, reinforcing the overall strength of foundational skills among this group.

Figure 8: Foundation skills proficiency for participants who undertook a VET pre-enrolment ACSF assessment in 2018 to 2024



Source: Pre-enrolment assessment data provided by various registered training organisations and assessment tool owners.

Figure 9: Percentage of participants who achieved and ACSF Level 3 and above for all five foundation skills areas in a VET pre-enrolment ACSF assessment in 2018 to 2024



Source: Pre-enrolment assessment data provided by various registered training organisations and assessment tool owners.

VET foundation skills units of competency

The Foundation Skills Training Package (FSK) is designed to support learners in the vocational education and training (VET) sector by strengthening foundational skills required for successful participation in training and employment. The FSK is closely aligned with the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF), which provides nationally recognised benchmarks for core skills including learning, reading, writing, oral communication, and numeracy. Each unit of competency within the FSK is mapped to one ACSF skill domain and one ACSF level, indicating the expected level of proficiency for successful participation. However, this alignment does not guarantee that a learner who completes a subject will demonstrate that level in a formal ACSF assessment.

The FSK Training Package includes three nationally endorsed qualifications and approximately 100 units of competency (subjects), each designed to address specific foundational skill needs. While the package includes some digital literacy components, these are limited in scope and are not aligned with the proficiency levels outlined in the DSLF.

Given its comprehensive coverage of core skills, the ACSF continues to serve as the primary framework for interpreting learner progress in foundational skills across VET programs, providing a consistent basis for benchmarking and curriculum alignment.

Further details about FSK training package units of competency and the alignment to the ACSF can be found on training.gov.au: [FSK Foundation Skills Training Package](#). More information about VET data and Total VET Activity can be found on the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) [website](#).

Cohort: Students who enrol in at least one FSK training package unit of competency.

Years of available data: 2019-2023

Average enrolments in an FSK training package unit of competency per year¹⁴:

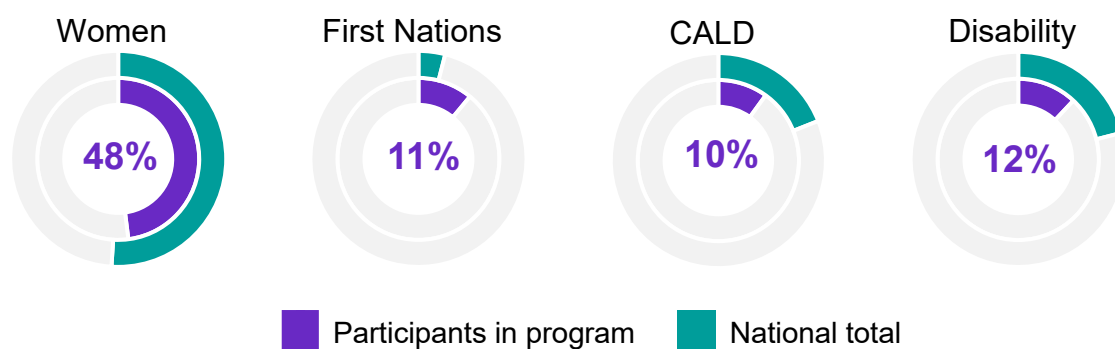
490,960

Priority groups of interest: Women, First Nations people, people from a CALD background¹⁵ and people living with a disability can be identified in Total VET Activity (TVA) data.

Data presented: The subject load pass rate measures the proportion of total subject hours successfully completed by students - those who passed - relative to the total hours attempted by all students, including those who failed or withdrew. This metric is reported for all unit of competency enrolments, first by the six core skill areas, and then by ACSF or DSLF proficiency levels.

Participants characteristics:

Figure 10: Percentage of women, First Nations people, people from a CALD background and people living with disability enrolled in a FSK training package unit of competency as compared to the national total percentage.



Source: NCVER 2024, Total VET students and courses 2023, NCVER, Adelaide. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Females, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people not born in an English speaking country and speaks another language at home in Australia 2021 Census Table Builder, accessed 24 March 2024. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022) Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia [Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2022 | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#), accessed December 2024.

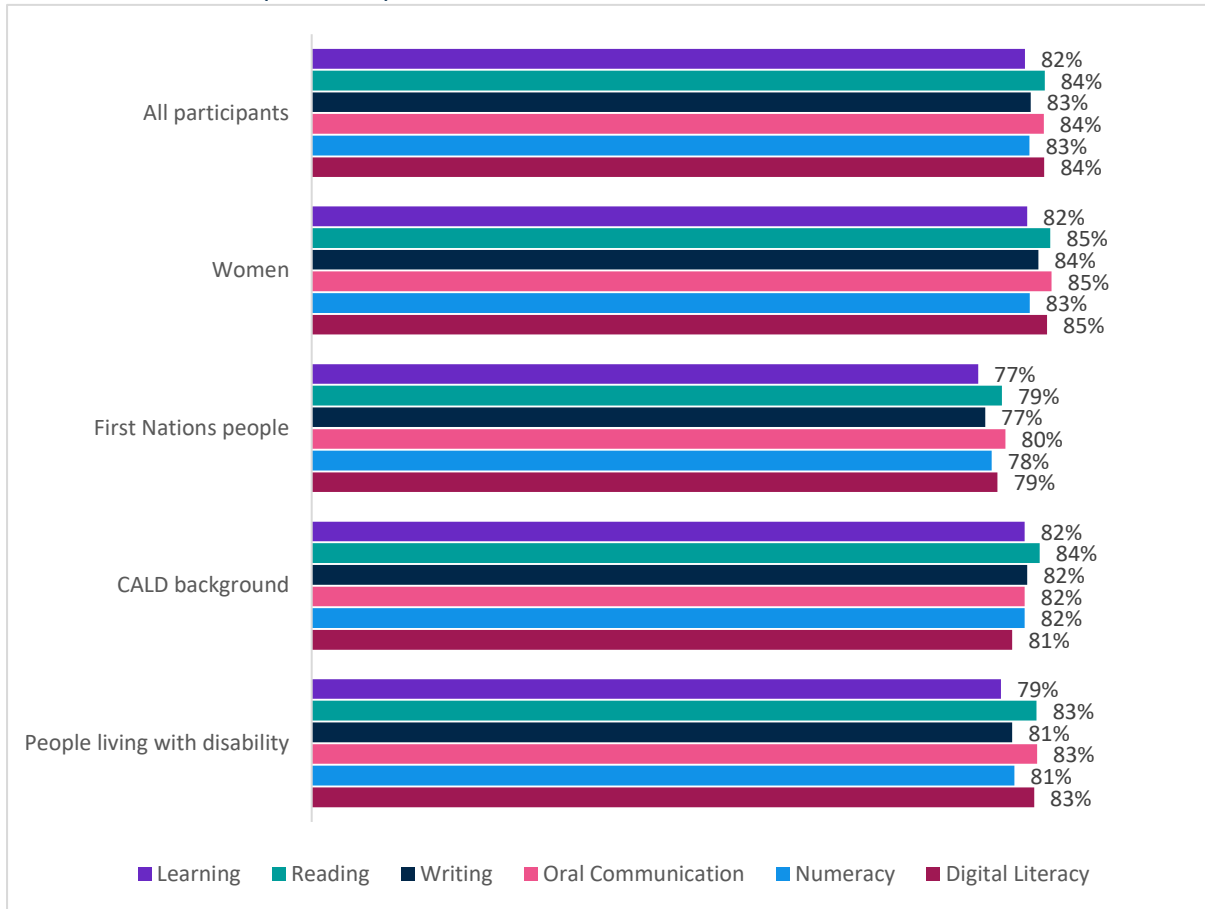
¹⁴ This is all enrolments in a FSK training package, where the Activity End Date is between 1 January 2019 and 31 December 2023 and includes all subject outcomes, international students and could contain multiple enrolments in the same subject.

¹⁵ There is no CALD indicator flag in TVA data, however, it was derived using country of birth and language spoken at home.

Key findings (Figures 11 and 12):

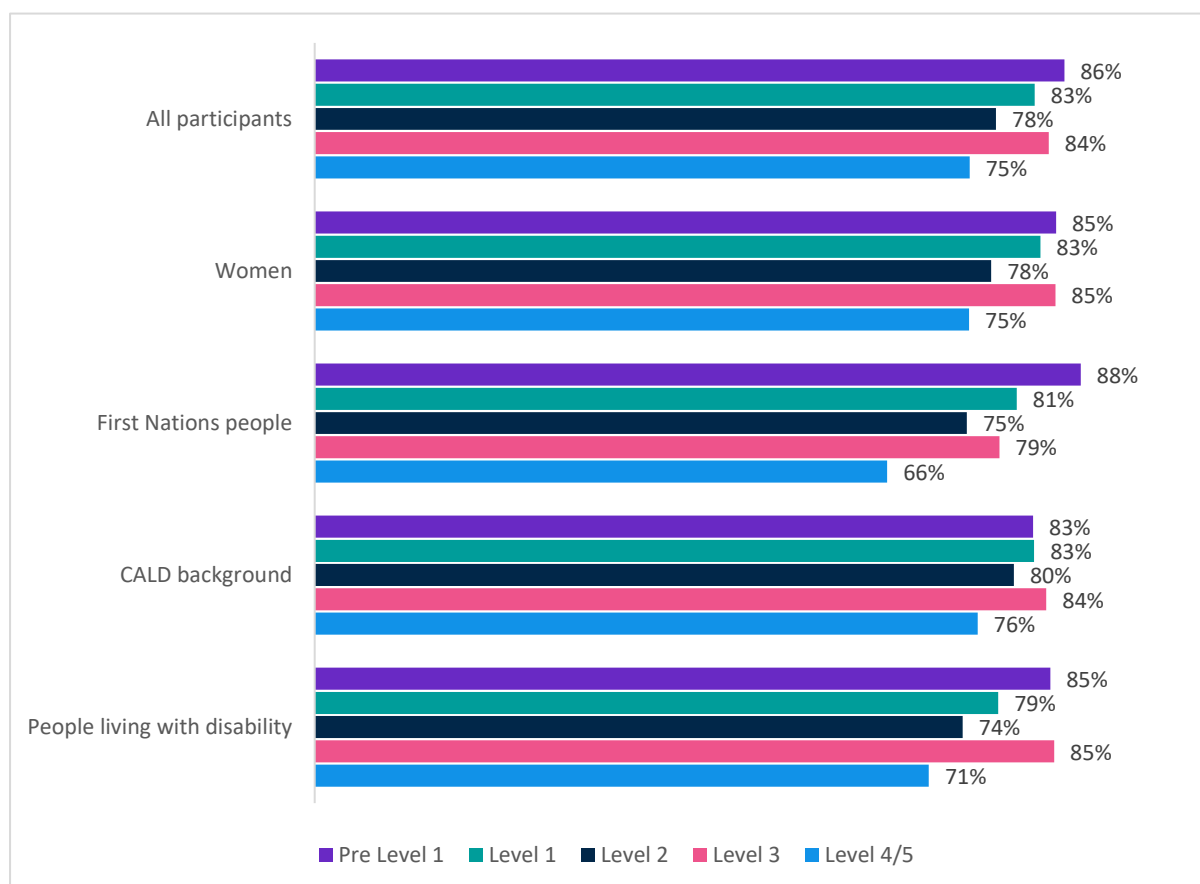
- **Strong subject pass rates across foundation skills**
 - Subject load pass rates are consistently high (82–84%) for all participants across foundation skill areas in the FSK Training Package, indicating strong engagement and completion in units aligned to ACSF domains and levels.
- **Women achieve slightly higher pass rates in literacy domains**
 - Women show marginally higher subject load pass rates than the overall cohort in reading, writing, oral communication, and digital literacy (84–85%), and are more likely to successfully complete FSK units aligned to ACSF Level 3 or above.
- **First Nations learners show stronger outcomes in lower-level units**
 - First Nations learners recorded subject load pass rates ranging from 66% to 88% across ACSF-aligned levels in the FSK Training Package. The highest pass rate was in Pre Level 1 units (88%), while the lowest occurred at Level 4/5 (66%). This pattern suggests stronger performance in lower-level units and potential challenges in subjects aligned to higher foundational skill levels.
- **CALD students perform consistently across skill areas**
 - CALD background learners demonstrate consistently high subject load pass rates across ACSF-aligned levels in the FSK Training Package, with the strongest performance at Level 3 (84%) and steady outcomes across lower levels (80–83%). A slight decline is observed at Level 4/5 (76%). Across foundation skill domains, pass rates are consistently strong in learning, reading, writing, and oral communication (82–84%), indicating solid foundational readiness in both domain-specific and level-aligned units.
- **Level 2 units present a challenge across skill areas**
 - Learning, writing, and numeracy are the most challenging areas for all VET students, with a noticeable dip in subject load pass rate in FSK units aligned to ACSF Level 2 compared to both Level 1 and Level 3.
- **Performance trends are consistent across cohorts**
 - Subject load pass rates are generally consistent across cohorts and skill areas, with no extreme outliers, reinforcing the reliability of performance trends in FSK units aligned to ACSF domains.

Figure 11: Subject load pass rate of students completing an FSK training package unit of competency by foundation skills area (2019-2023)



Source: NCVET 2024, Total VET students and courses 2023, NCVET, Adelaide.

Figure 12: Subject load pass rate of students completing an FSK training package unit of competency by ACSF level (2019-2023)



Source: NCVET 2024, Total VET students and courses 2023, NCVET, Adelaide.

Other metrics of foundation skills

VET qualification enrolments and completions

In the VET sector, foundation skills are core competencies needed for success in vocational education, training, and employment. An LLND VET qualification focuses on developing foundational skills essential for everyday communication, learning, and participation in modern society, particularly in reading, writing, numeracy, and using digital technologies¹⁶. These qualifications are designed to support learners who may need to strengthen these core competencies before progressing to further education or employment. In contrast, an employability skills VET qualification emphasises the development of practical, transferable skills that are directly relevant to the workplace, such as teamwork, problem-solving, communication, time management, and adaptability. While LLND qualifications build the basic capabilities needed for learning and functioning in various contexts, qualifications which deliver employability skills, prepare individuals to meet the expectations, and demands of employers across different industries.

People enrol in foundation skills VET programs for various reasons, such as achieving career goals, improving literacy and numeracy for higher education, or gaining confidence in

¹⁶ The list of LLND VET qualifications referenced in this report was developed by Jobs and Skills Australia in consultation with internal and external stakeholders to support analysis of foundation skills enrolments and completions.

community engagement. These motivations affect program completion rates. Research by NCVET¹⁷ highlights factors contributing to non-completion in VET programs, which likely apply to foundation skills students as well.

VET program enrolments

Cohort: Students who enrol in an LLND or employability skills qualification.

Years of available data: 2019-2023

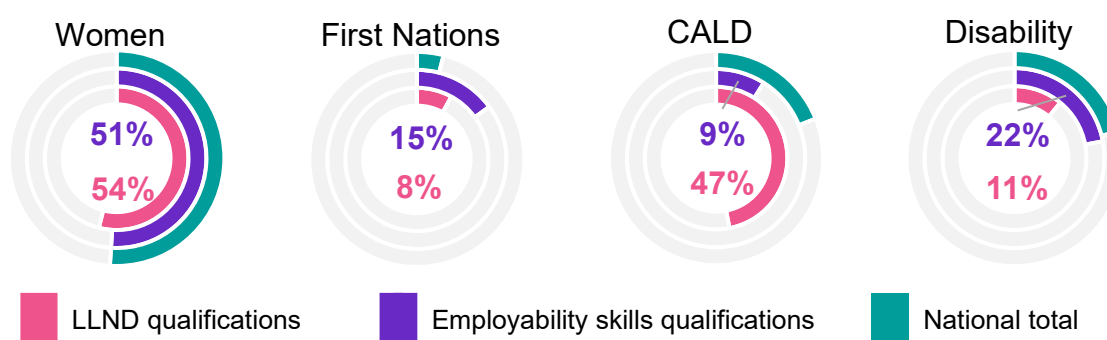
Average enrolments in a foundation skills qualification per year: 113,400 (LLND) and 15,200 (employability skills)¹⁸

Priority groups of interest: Women, First Nations people, people from a CALD background and people living with a disability can be identified in Total VET Activity (TVA) data.

Data presented: Total number of enrolments in a LLND or employability skills qualification

Participants characteristics:

Figure 13: Percentage of women, First Nations people, people from a CALD background and people living with disability enrolled in a foundation skills (LLND and employability skills) qualification as compared to the national total percentage



Source: NCVET 2024, Total VET students and courses 2023, NCVET, Adelaide. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Females, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people not born in an English speaking country and speaks another language at home in Australia 2021 Census Table Builder, accessed 24 March 2024. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022) Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia [Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2022 | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#), accessed December 2024.

Key findings (Figure 14):

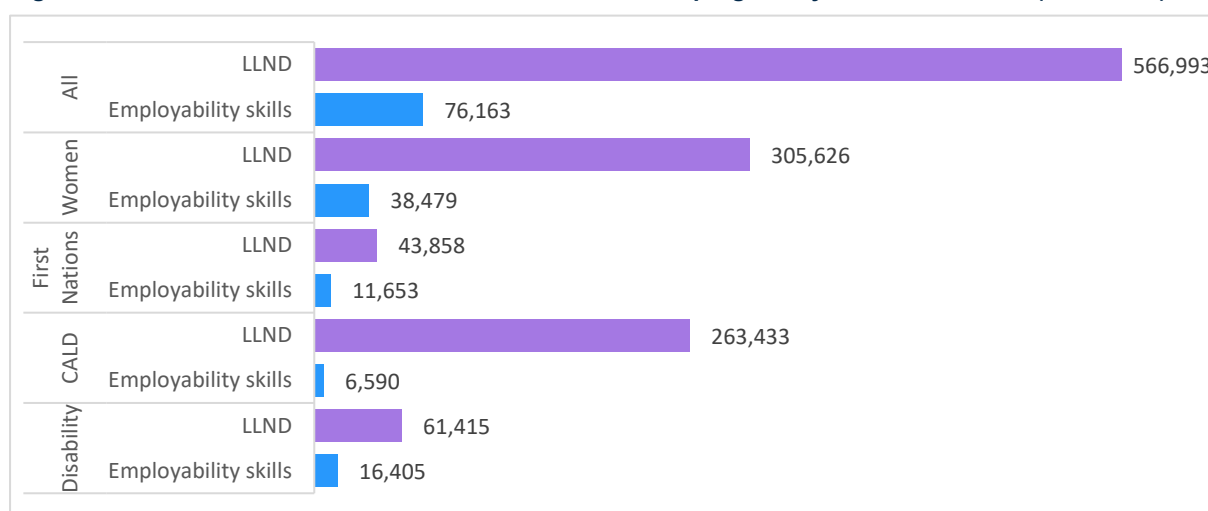
- **LLND programs are the predominant enrolment choice**
 - Across all cohorts, enrolments in LLND programs significantly exceed those in employability skills VET programs. For all students, the ratio is approximately 7:1 in favour of LLND.
- **First Nations learners engage more evenly across program types**

¹⁷ Wibrow, B, Hall, M & Griffin, T 2024, The student journey: the many faces of completion and non-completion in VET, NCVET, Adelaide.

¹⁸ This is all enrolments in a VET foundation skills qualification for those who had an Activity End Date for a subject enrolment between 1 January 2019 and 31 December 2023. This may include multiple enrolments for students who may enrol in more than one foundation skill qualification.

- First Nations students have a lower LLND-to-employability enrolment ratio (4:1), indicating a relatively higher engagement with employability skills programs compared to other cohorts.
- **CALD learners show a strong preference for LLND programs**
 - Students from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds show a pronounced preference for LLND programs, with a 40:1 enrolment ratio compared to employability skills programs.
- **Learners living with disability show distinct enrolment patterns**
 - Students living with disability are more likely to enrol in employability skills programs relative to their representation in the population, suggesting a distinct pattern of engagement that may reflect targeted support needs or program suitability.

Figure 14: Number of enrolments in a VET foundation skills program by cohort of interest (2019-2023)



Source: NCVET 2024, Total VET students and courses 2023, NCVET, Adelaide.

VET program completion

Cohort: Students who complete an LLND or employability skills qualification.

Years of available data: 2019-2023

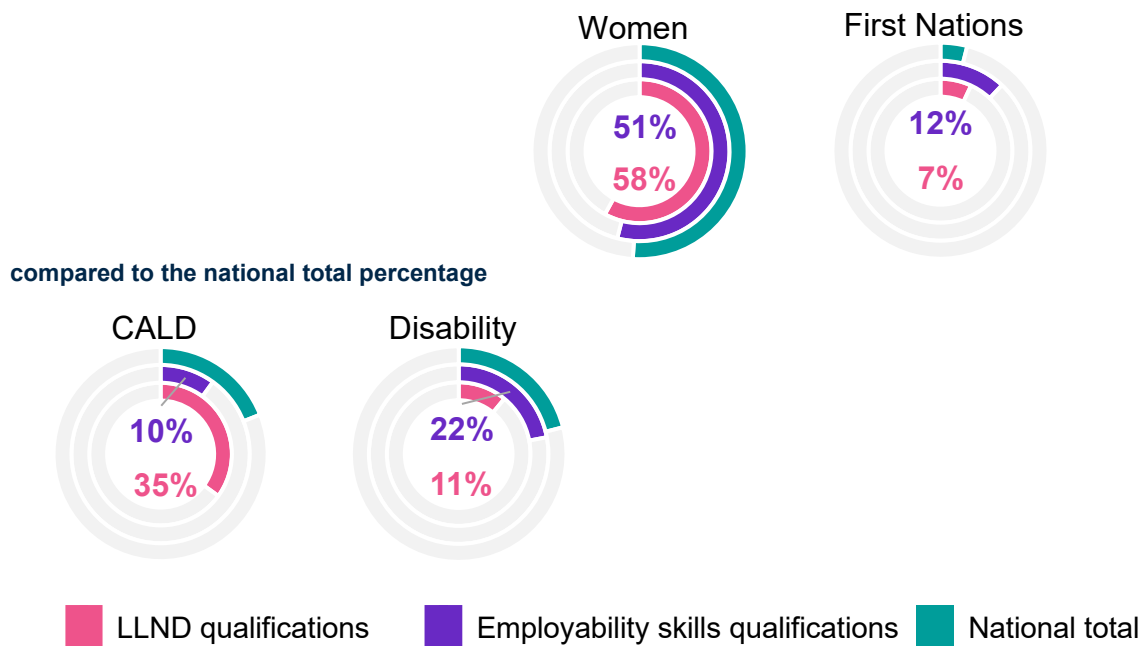
Average completion in a foundation skills qualification per year: 29,900 (LLND) and 7,150 (employability skills)

Priority groups of interest: Women, First Nations people, people from a CALD background and people living with a disability can be identified in Total VET Activity (TVA) data.

Data presented: Total number of completions in a LLND or employability skills qualification

Participants characteristics:

Figure 15: Percentage of women, First Nations people, people from a CALD background and people living with disability who completed a foundation skills (LLND and employability skills) qualification as

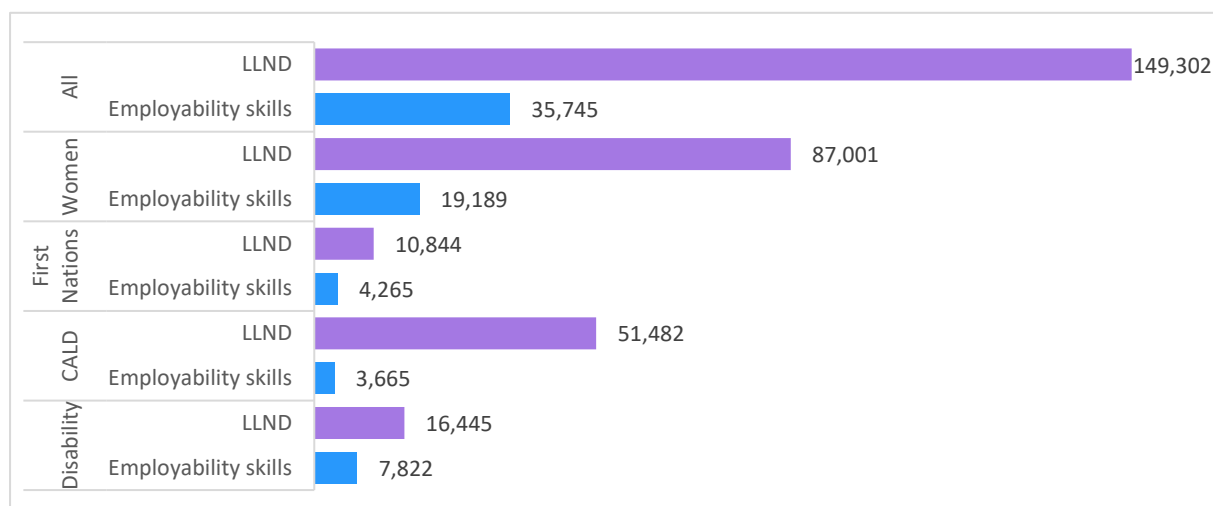


Source: NCVER 2024, Total VET students and courses 2023, NCVER, Adelaide. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Females, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people not born in an English speaking country and speaks another language at home in Australia 2021 Census Table Builder, accessed 24 March 2024. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022) Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia [Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2022 | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#), accessed December 2024.

Key findings (Figure 16):

- **Women show strong completion outcomes across both program types**
 - Women account for 58% of LLND completions and 54% of employability skills completions, slightly above their enrolment share. This indicates that women are more likely than men to complete LLND qualifications and are equally likely to complete employability skills qualifications.
- **First Nations learners complete qualifications in line with their enrolment share**
 - First Nations students make up 7.3% of LLND completions and 11.9% of employability skills completions, which closely matches their share of enrolments. This suggests that First Nations learners are successfully completing foundation skills programs at levels consistent with their participation.
- **CALD learners are less likely to complete qualifications compared to their enrolment share**
 - CALD students make up 46.5% of LLND enrolments but only 34.5% of LLND completions, and 8.7% of employability skills enrolments but just 10.3% of completions. This suggests that, overall, CALD learners are underrepresented in completions relative to how many begin foundation skills programs.
- **Learners with disability show strong completion outcomes in employability skills**
 - Students with disability account for 11% of LLND completions and 21.9% of employability skills completions, exceeding their enrolment shares. This suggests a distinct pattern of engagement and successful outcomes, particularly in employability skills programs.

Figure 16: Number of completions in a VET foundation skills program by cohort of interest (2019-2023)



Source: NCVET 2024, Total VET students and courses 2023, NCVET, Adelaide.

VET graduate outcomes

The VET National Data Asset (VNDA) is a key resource for understanding Australia's VET system. It provides data on domestic students' progression after completing a nationally recognized qualification, including further education, income changes, employment, and reliance on income support.

The VNDA reports outcomes for all participants who completed a foundation skills qualification. While it does not provide disaggregated outcomes specifically for priority groups, it does include the proportion of graduates who are women, First Nations people, and people living with disability. This means that although we cannot see the specific outcomes for these groups, we can understand their representation among graduates. More information on VET graduate outcomes can be found on the Jobs and Skills Australia website: [VET National Data Asset \(VNDA\) | Jobs and Skills Australia](#).

Cohort: Students who completed a nationally recognised foundation skills qualification in 2019-20

Years of reported data: 2019-20

Priority groups of interest: Graduate outcomes are not reported by priority groups of interest, however, the proportions of graduates who are women, First Nations people, or people living with disability are available as student characteristics.

Data presented: Graduate outcomes (the employment rate, change in employment rate, the percentage who exited income support, enrolled in further study in higher-level VET) for students in the year after completion who complete the top 5 most completed LLND and employability skills qualifications.

Key findings (Table 1):

- **LLND programs support strong pathways into further study**
 - Graduates from LLND qualifications are consistently more likely to continue into higher-level VET, with several programs showing over 50% progression rates. This highlights LLND as a key stepping stone in educational pathways.
- **LLND programs show consistent improvements in employment outcomes**

- Most LLND qualifications are associated with double-digit increases in employment rates post-completion, indicating their effectiveness in enhancing job readiness.
- **Employability skills programs show mixed employment outcomes**
 - While some employability skills qualifications (e.g. leadership programs) report high employment rates, others show modest gains, suggesting varied effectiveness depending on the program type and learner profile.
- **Women are well represented across both program types**
 - Women consistently make up the majority of graduates in both LLND and employability skills programs, particularly in LLND, where their representation often exceeds 70%. This reflects strong engagement and completion among female learners.
- **Program choice varies by learner characteristics**
 - The distribution of graduates across LLND and employability skills programs suggests that enrolment decisions are often shaped by individual learner needs. Among First Nations learners and students living with disability, there are clear patterns in the types of qualifications completed - indicating that these learners may be guided into specific programs that align with their goals, support needs, or pathways to employment and further study.

Table 1: VET graduate outcomes and student characteristics for the most completed LLND and employability skills VET qualifications (2019-20)

Qualification	Graduate outcomes				Student characteristics		
	Employment rate	Change in employment rate	Exited income support	Further study in higher-level VET	Women	First Nations people	People living with disability
LLND qualifications							
Certificate I in Access to Vocational Pathways	40%	+10% points	14%	34%	51%	20%	25%
Certificate I in Skills for Vocational Pathways	45%	+19% points	19%	51%	50%	13%	25%
Certificate I in Spoken and Written English	30%	+19% points	21%	74%	73%	0%	3%
Certificate II in Skills for Work and Vocational Pathways	57%	+23% points	25%	33%	47%	18%	19%
Certificate II in Spoken and Written English	35%	+18% points	32%	68%	79%	0%	2%
Employability skills qualifications							
Certificate I in Leadership	61%	+16% points	3%	34%	56%	58%	20%
Certificate I in Work Education	38%	+4% points	1%	53%	38%	0%	93%
Certificate II in Work Education	52%	+17% points	0%	6%	32%	0%	89%
Certificate II in Leadership	47%	+20% points	14%	30%	71%	56%	8%
Certificate II in Active Volunteering	85%	+42% points	-	36%	50%	13%	11%

Source: Jobs and Skills Australia (2024), VET Graduate Outcomes 2019-20 qualification completers, [VET National Data Asset Dashboard | Jobs and Skills Australia](#), accessed March 2025.

LANTITE

National data on the foundational skills of people in higher education or occupations is limited. The Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education (LANTITE) was identified as one of the only data sources that includes this data group. The LANTITE is a national test for prospective teacher and initial teacher education (ITE) students in Australia to ensure students who graduate from accredited initial teacher education courses have the

necessary literacy and numeracy skills for effective teaching. This dataset is included as it provides a unique perspective on the literacy and numeracy skills of a specific adult cohort - those undertaking or intending to undertake accredited initial teacher education.

While not representative of the general adult population, this data offers valuable insights into the foundational skills expected of future teachers. It has two parts: literacy, which assesses reading and technical skills of writing, and numeracy, which assesses the ability to interpret and communicate important non-technical mathematical information and apply it to solve real-world problems.

The LANTITE sets a national benchmark to ensure accredited ITE graduates possess personal literacy and numeracy skills equivalent to the top 30% of the Australian adult population. More information is available on the Department of Education website: [Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education - Department of Education, Australian Government](#).

Targeted cohort: ITE students to graduate from accredited ITE courses in Australia¹⁹ and prospective ITE students²⁰ (test candidates).

Years of available data: 2019-2023

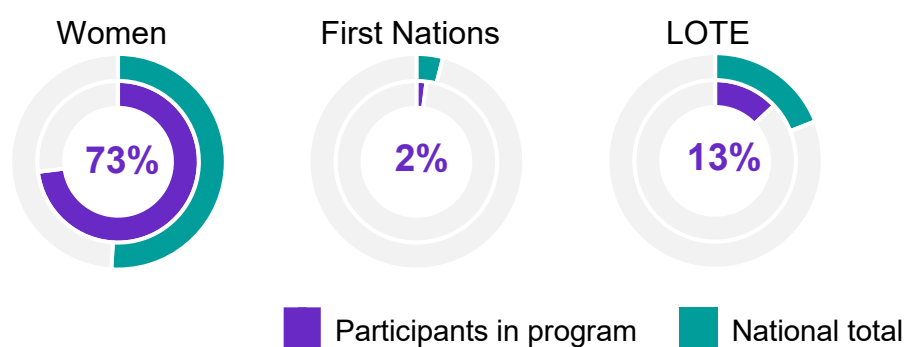
Average number of first-time candidates per year: 19,000

Priority groups of interest: Women and First Nations people are identified in the data acquired, although First Nations results were not supplied by year but aggregated for 2019-2023. Those from a CALD background are not identified in the available data, language other than English (LOTE) is reported.

Data presented: Participant characteristics and percentage of first time ITE test candidates meeting the standard in their first year of registration.

Participants characteristics:

Figure 17: Percentage of women, First Nations people and people from a LOTE background attempting the LANTITE as ITE students compared to the percentage of the Australian population



Source: Department of Education (2025) Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education, supplied February 2025. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Females, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people not born in an English speaking country and speaks another language at home in Australia 2021 Census Table Builder, accessed 24 March 2024.

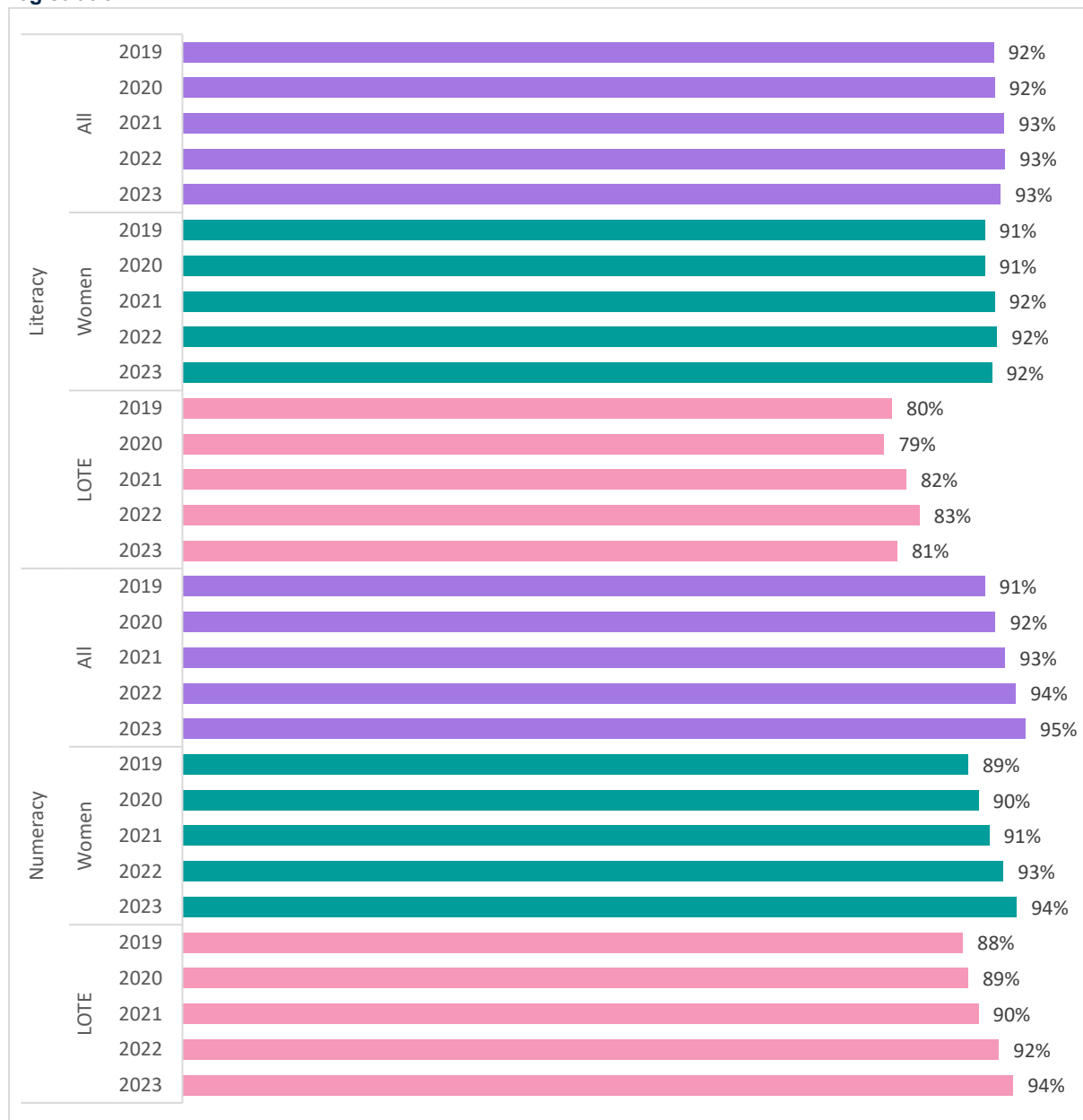
Key findings (Figures 18 and 19):

¹⁹ <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/deliver-ite-programs/standards-and-procedures>

²⁰ From 2023, prospective ITE students may sit the LANTITE if they want. A prospective student is defined as 'a person who is not currently enrolled in an accredited ITE course'.

- **Most candidates met LANTITE standards within their first year**
 - In every year from 2019 to 2023, at least 90% of test candidates met the literacy and numeracy standards in their first year of attempting the LANTITE, with a gradual increase in success rates over time.
- **Gender differences in LANTITE outcomes were minimal but consistent**
 - Women achieved proficiency standards in literacy slightly less often than men in their first year of attempting the LANTITE. In numeracy, men consistently outperform women, as shown by the lower percentage of women achieving proficiency compared to the overall average. These differences were small and stable over time.
- **English language background influences LANTITE outcomes**
 - Candidates whose first language is not English were less likely to have met the literacy and numeracy standards in their first year compared to candidates whose first language is English. This gap is more pronounced in literacy.
- **First Nations candidates show strong performance**
 - Around 9 in 10 First Nations candidates met the literacy and numeracy standards in their first year of attempting the LANTITE, indicating strong outcomes for this group.

Figure 18: Percentage of first time ITE test candidates meeting the standard in their first year of registration



Source: Department of Education (2025) Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education, supplied February 2025

Figure 19: Percentage of First Nations test candidates achieving a literacy and numeracy level of proficiency in the top 30% of the Australia adult population within the first year of attempt in 2019-23



Source: Department of Education (2025) Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education, supplied February 2025

NAPLAN

In Australian secondary schools, foundation skills are crucial for students' academic development and future success. NAPLAN tests in Years 3, 5, 7, and 9 assess students' reading, writing, language conventions, and numeracy skills. While NAPLAN is designed to assess school-aged children, it represents the most recent and comprehensive national dataset capturing foundational skills across the majority of Australian students. Its inclusion in this report provides a useful benchmark for understanding the literacy and numeracy environment in which future adults are currently being educated. Year 9 results, in particular, offer valuable data on students' foundation skills prior to leaving school.

Some research suggests that skills developed in school predict future literacy and numeracy competence. Therefore, JSA considers NAPLAN data important for reporting on foundation skills and identifying potential long-term trends or gaps that may influence adult literacy outcomes over time. Further information regarding NAPLAN assessment is provided by Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA): [NAPLAN National Results](#)

Targeted cohort: Year 9 students who undertake a NAPLAN assessment

Years of available data: 2024

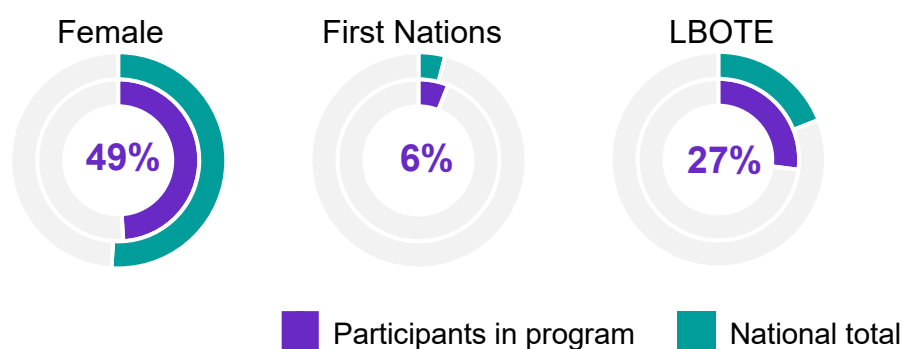
Number of total enrolled students: 326,300

Priority groups of interest: Female and First Nations people are identified in NAPLAN data. Those from a CALD background are not identified in the available data, language background other than English (LBOTE)²¹ is reported and used as a proxy measure.

Data presented: Percentage of students achieving reading, writing and numeracy against 4 levels of proficiency (needs additional support, developing, strong and exceeding).

Participants characteristics:

Figure 20: Percentage of women, First Nations people and people from a LBOTE background completing a NAPLAN assessment in 2024 as compared to the national total percentage



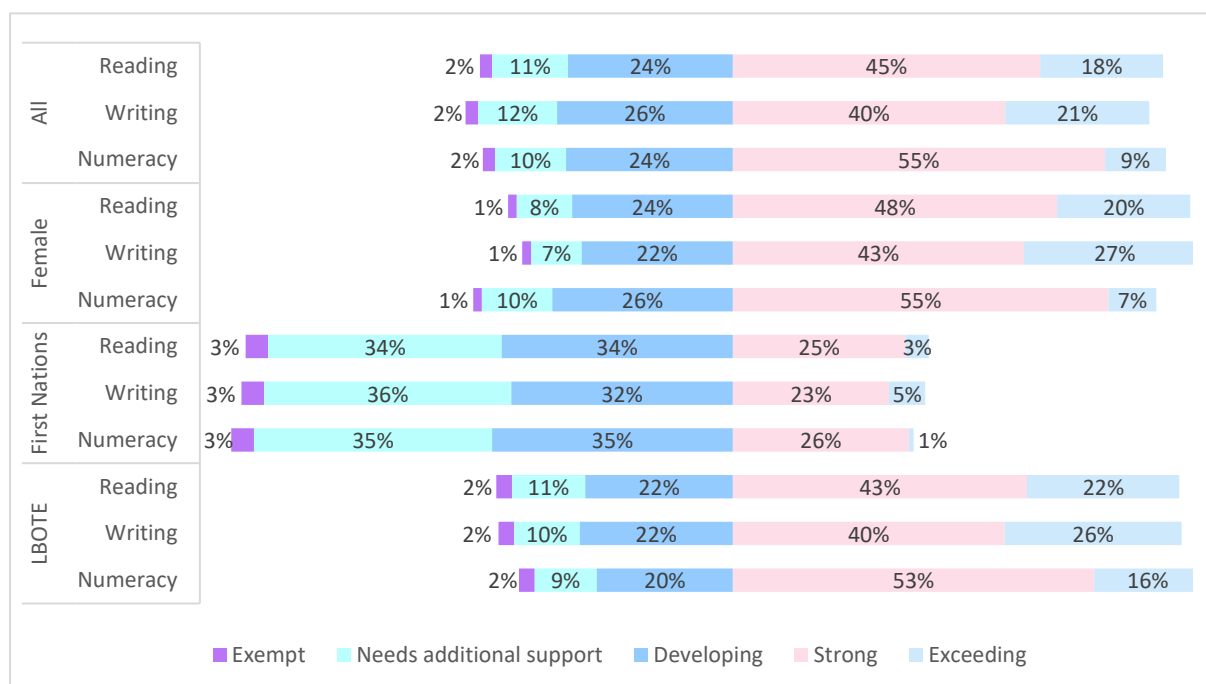
Source: ACARA, NAPLAN national results, [NAPLAN National Results](#) accessed February 2025. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Females, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people not born in an English speaking country and speaks another language at home in Australia 2021 Census Table Builder, accessed 24 March 2024.

²¹ Students are identified as LBOTE, if they or either parent speaks a language other than English at home.

Key findings (Figure 21):

- Most Year 9 students demonstrate strong foundation skills**
 - In 2024, the majority of Year 9 students achieved strong or exceeding proficiency in reading, writing, and numeracy. Over 60% of students reached these levels in each domain, indicating solid foundational skills across the cohort.
- Female students outperform in literacy, slightly trail in numeracy**
 - Female Year 9 students are more likely than males to achieve strong or exceeding proficiency in reading and writing, with 70% reaching these levels in writing. In numeracy, however, they are slightly less likely to reach the highest proficiency levels compared to male students.
- First Nations students are more frequently represented in the lower proficiency bands**
 - In 2024, most First Nations Year 9 students were assessed at the 'needs additional support' or 'developing' levels in reading, writing, and numeracy. A smaller proportion were assessed at the 'strong' or 'exceeding' levels compared to the overall student population.
- LBOTE students show strong literacy and numeracy outcomes**
 - Year 9 students with a language background other than English (LBOTE) performed slightly better than the overall student population in reading, writing, and numeracy. Over 65% of LBOTE students achieved strong or exceeding proficiency across all domains.

Figure 21: NAPLAN achievement for Year 9 in reading, writing and numeracy by student background, Australia 2024



Source: ACARA, NAPLAN national results, [NAPLAN National Results](#) accessed February 2025

Conclusion

This report provides a detailed snapshot of foundation skills proficiency among Australian adults who engage with government-funded programs and vocational education and training (VET), with a particular focus on four priority groups: women, First Nations people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, and people living with disability.

Across the programs analysed, consistent patterns emerge:

- Women tend to demonstrate stronger literacy and oral communication skills, though numeracy remains a common area of lower proficiency. Their participation and completion rates are high across most programs.
- First Nations participants are actively engaged across a range of foundation skills programs. They tend to show stronger oral communication skills, while writing proficiency is often lower. Their participation patterns suggest a need for continued culturally responsive approaches that build on strengths and address areas of need.
- CALD participants are highly engaged in foundation skills programs, often at rates exceeding their representation in the broader population. However, recent migrants within this group tend to have lower proficiency, especially in numeracy and digital literacy.
- People living with disability show comparable completion and pass rates in VET programs, indicating strong engagement and outcomes. However, data outside the VET sector is limited and inconsistently collected, making broader analysis challenging.

While administrative data cannot fully capture the foundation skills of all Australian adults, it offers valuable insights into the experiences and outcomes of those who participate in targeted programs. These findings highlight the importance of improving data collection - particularly for digital literacy and disability status - and suggest future reporting could benefit from more granular analysis, including intersectionality across priority groups, geographic remoteness, and education background.

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Appendix A Priority groups of interest

This report focuses on four priority groups: women, First Nations people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, and people living with disability. These groups are identified based on available administrative data and aligned with national priorities for foundation skills development.

A.1. Women

While the national survey is expected to provide detailed proficiency levels by gender, administrative data used in this report offers early insights into LLND proficiency for women. Data sources vary in whether they report sex or gender. According to the ABS²², sex refers to biological characteristics observed at birth, while gender relates to social and cultural identity and expression. For consistency, this report includes individuals identified as female or women in the sex/gender variable, regardless of the terminology used in the source dataset.

A.2. First Nations people

Most datasets used in this report include a self-reported indicator for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status. Individuals identifying as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, or both are included in the First Nations category.

Where conflicting indicators exist for the same individual (e.g., both First Nations and non-First Nations identifiers across different records), the person is classified as First Nations for the purposes of this report. This approach ensures inclusive representation and aligns with common data practices that prioritise self-identification. It also reflects the principle that First Nations identity may be expressed differently across datasets or over time, and that individuals who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander should be recognised as such, even if inconsistencies appear in administrative records. This decision supports respectful and accurate reporting of First Nations participation in foundation skills programs.

A.3. People from a CALD background

CALD status is commonly and reliably captured in foundation skills administrative data. The ABS²³ defines CALD using four core indicators: country of birth, main language other than English spoken at home, English proficiency, and Indigenous status. Additional indicators may include parents' country of birth, religious affiliation, and year of arrival in Australia. Due to variation in data standards across sources, this report applies a prioritised approach to defining CALD status. The hierarchy is as follows:

1. ABS core indicators
2. CALD flags or indicators defined by data providers
3. Country of birth and main language other than English

²² [Standard for Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables, 2020 | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#)

²³ [Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity, Australia | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#)

4. Country of birth from a non-English speaking country
5. Other relevant indicators

This prioritisation reflects both data availability and relevance to the report's objectives.

A.4. People living with disability

Disability status is inconsistently reported across administrative datasets. Identifiers may include self-identification, activity limitation indicators, or proxy measures.

Reporting foundation skills levels for people with disability is complex due to the diversity of conditions and experiences. Unlike other cohorts, disability may directly influence foundation skills development, but this relationship is not uniform. This report acknowledges that people with disability have varied foundation skills levels, which may or may not be associated with their disability.