

3.14 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in tertiary education for health-related disciplines

The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in tertiary education for health-related disciplines

Data sources

Data for this measure come from the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training's Higher Education Student Statistics Collection and the National Centre for Vocational Education Research collection.

Higher Education Student Statistics Collection

The Higher Education Student Statistics Collection is an annual collection of enrolments and completions. These data are held by the Department of Education, Science and Training. This collection includes data sources from all Australian universities.

National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) collection

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) collection is an annual collection of enrolments and completions by field of education in the vocational education and training sector. These data are held by the NCVER.

Analyses

Higher education sector

Data on Indigenous students enrolled and who have completed health-related courses in the higher education sector are available from Department of Education, Science and Training. Data for 2004 are presented below.

- In 2004, there were approximately 846 Indigenous undergraduate students enrolled in health-related courses and 103 Indigenous undergraduate students who completed a health-related course (Table 3.14.1).
- The most common type of health-related course in which Indigenous undergraduate students were enrolled or had completed in 2004 was nursing (425 enrolled and 38 completed) followed by public health (253 enrolled and 34 completed).
- Approximately 1.3% of all undergraduate students enrolled in health-related courses in 2004 were Indigenous. Only 0.7% of undergraduate students who completed a health-related course in 2004 were of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin.

- Public health had the highest Indigenous representation of all health-related courses. Approximately 7% of students enrolled in this course were Indigenous and 5% of students who completed this course in 2004 were Indigenous.
- The proportion of university students enrolled in health-related courses who were of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin was similar in most states and territories (between 1% and 2%) except in the Northern Territory where around 15% of students enrolled in health-related courses were Indigenous (Figure 3.14.1).

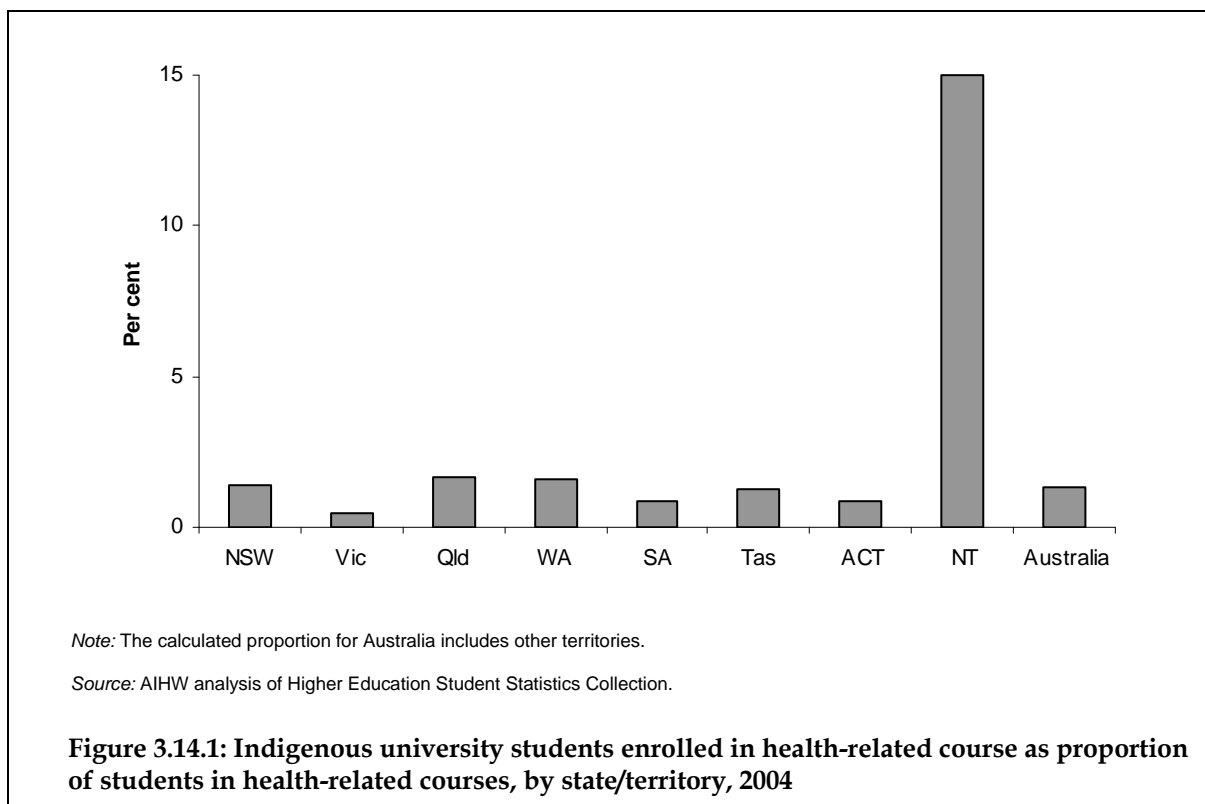
Table 3.14.1: Undergraduate students enrolled in and completed health-related courses, Indigenous and total students,^(a) 2004

	Enrolled			Completed		
	Indigenous	Total	Indigenous as a proportion of total	Indigenous	Total	Indigenous as a proportion of total
	No.	No.	%	No.	No.	%
Nursing	425	30,355	1.4	38	8,110	0.5
Public health	253	3,576	7.1	34	708	4.8
Medical studies	103	9,571	1.1	13	1,730	0.8
Rehabilitation therapies	41	10,838	0.4	9	2,291	0.4
Pharmacy	9	4,575	0.2	3	984	0.3
Radiography	8	1,945	0.4	2	519	0.4
Optical science	5	583	0.9	2	157	1.3
Dental studies	4	1,601	0.2	2	336	0.6
Total^(b)	846	62,773	1.3	103	14,795	0.7

(a) Based on ABS narrow fields of education.

(b) The data take into account the coding of Combined Courses to two fields of education. As a consequence, counting both fields of education for Combined Courses means that the totals may be less than the sum of all fields of education.

Source: AIHW analysis of Higher Education Student Statistics Collection.



Vocational education and training (VET) sector

Data on Indigenous students enrolled and who have completed health-related courses in the vocational education and training sector are available from NCVET. Data for 2004 are presented below.

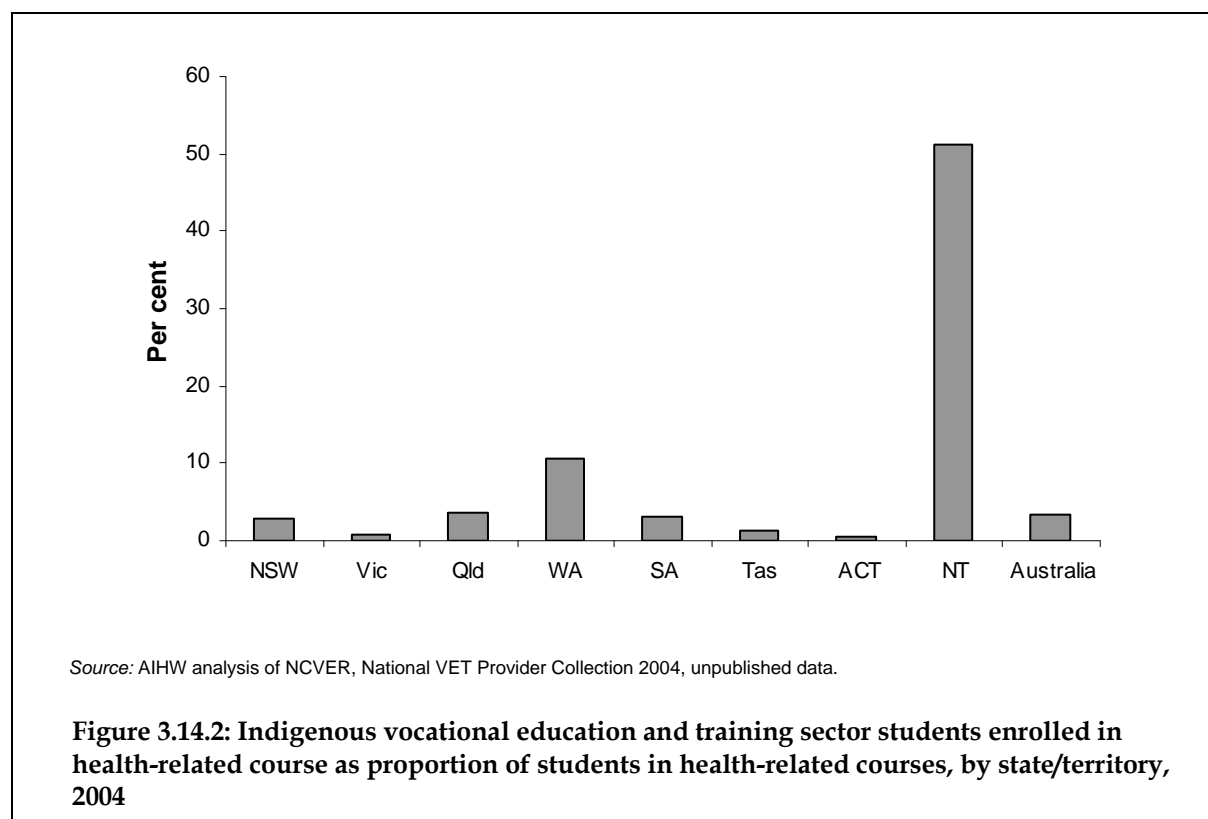
- In 2004, there were approximately 4,039 Indigenous students enrolled in health-related courses in the VET sector and 199 Indigenous students who completed a health-related course in the VET sector (Table 3.14.2).
- The most common type of health-related course in which Indigenous VET students were enrolled or had completed in 2004 was public health (2,123 enrolled and 123 completed) followed by nursing (172 enrolled and 40 completed).
- Approximately 3.9% of all VET sector students enrolled in health-related courses in 2004 were Indigenous and 3.1% of VET sector students who completed a health-related course in 2004 were of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin.
- Medical studies and public health had the highest Indigenous representation of all health-related courses. Approximately 5% of VET sector students enrolled in these courses were Indigenous. Approximately 2% of VET sector students who had completed a course in medical studies and 9% of students who had completed a course in public health in 2004 were of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin.
- The proportion of VET sector students enrolled in health-related courses who were of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin ranged from 0.5% in the Australian Capital Territory to 51% in the Northern Territory (Figure 3.14.2).

Table 3.14.2: Vocational education and training sector students enrolled and completed health-related courses,^(a) 2004

	Enrolled			Completed		
	Indigenous	Total	Indigenous as a proportion of total	Indigenous	Total	Indigenous as a proportion of total
	No.	No.	%	No.	No.	%
Public health	2,123	45,953	4.6	123	1,327	9.3
Nursing	172	13,140	1.3	40	2,182	1.8
Medical studies	62	1,219	5.1	1	45	2.2
Dental studies	54	3,286	1.6	18	1,000	1.8
Complementary therapies	33	3,708	0.9	6	763	0.8
Rehabilitation therapies	18	1,170	1.5	0	161	0.0
Optical science	5	910	0.5	0	106	0.0
Pharmacy	0	23	0.0	0	9	0.0
Other health	1,572	33,213	4.7	11	837	1.3
Total	4,039	102,622	3.9	199	6,430	3.1

(a) Qualification field of education classification.

Source: AIHW analysis of NCVER, National VET Provider Collection 2004, unpublished data.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker occupations

Tables 3.14.3 and 3.14.4 present the number and rate of VET sector students completing a course aimed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers in 2004.

- In 2004, approximately 111 VET sector students had completed a course aimed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker occupations in Australia. The majority of these course completions were at the certificate III or IV level (99 or 89%) (Table 3.14.3).
- Western Australia had the highest number of students completing a course aimed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker occupations (47), followed by Queensland (28).
- Of all VET sector students who had completed a course aimed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker occupations in 2004, 72% were female (79 course completions) and 28% were males (31 course completions) (Table 3.14.4).

Table 3.14.3: Number of vocational education and training sector students completing a program aimed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker occupations,^{(a)(b)} by qualification type and state/territory, 2004

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
Certificate I	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Certificate II	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Certificate III	—	—	7	23	11	—	—	8	49
Certificate IV	—	—	10	24	7	—	—	9	50
Diploma or higher	1	—	11	—	—	—	—	—	12
Total	1	—	28	47	18	—	—	17	111

(a) Australian Standard Classification of Occupations code 3493—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers.

(b) An Australian Standard Classification of Occupations code assigned to the courses indicates the most likely occupation associated with this course. It should also be remembered that students may enrol in more than one course.

Note: Rates per 1,000 population have not been presented as the numbers are too small to produce rates.

Source: NCVET, National VET Provider Collection 2004, unpublished data.

Table 3.14.4: Number of vocational education and training sector students completing a program aimed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker occupations,^{(a)(b)} by qualification type and sex, 2004

	Males	Females	Persons
	No.	No.	No.
Certificate I	0	0	0
Certificate II	0	0	0
Certificate III	16	32	48
Certificate IV	13	37	50
Diploma or higher	2	10	12
Total	31	79	110

(a) Australian Standard Classification of Occupations code 3493—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers.

(b) An Australian Standard Classification of Occupations code assigned to the courses indicates the most likely occupation associated with this course. It should also be remembered that students may enrol in more than one course.

Note: Rates per 1,000 population have not been presented as the numbers are too small to produce rates.

Source: NCVET, National VET Provider Collection 2004, unpublished data.

Data quality issues

Higher Education Student Statistics Collection

The Higher Education Student Statistics Collection only includes information from higher education institutions in Australia as determined under the Higher Education Funding Act 1988. This includes:

- *institutions that receive block operating grant funding for teaching and research activities*
- *other public higher education institutions that receive some level of operating grant funding*
- *the Australian Film, Television and Radio School, the National Institute of Dramatic Art and the Australian Defence Force Academy*
- *Private institutions are not required to report statistical data to the Department of Education, Science and Training and are therefore outside the scope of the collection (ABS 2003). The collection of data from private higher education institutions is being trialled (ABS 2004).*

The Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) has provided institutions with suggested wording for questions relating to Indigenous status (ABS 2003).

Approximately 3% of students in this data collection have a 'Not stated' Indigenous status. At the moment these are recorded as non-Indigenous although plans are under way to separately record the 'Not stated' responses.

National Centre for Vocational Education Research

This collection gathers information from providers (in receipt of public VET funding) about activity of the VET system in Australia. The collection encompasses all delivery funded wholly or in part from public funds. In-scope activity includes all VET delivered by:

- *technical and further education organisations*
- *higher education institutions*
- *other government providers (for example, agricultural colleges)*
- *community education providers*
- *government-funded private registered training organisations*
- *schools funded through government allocations for VET*
- *all other Australian Government and state recurrent and specific-purpose funded VET, regardless of the location of the training organisation.*

Out-of-scope activity includes:

- *all delivery at overseas campuses other than overseas Australia territories*
- *all fee-for-service delivery by private training organisations*
- *all delivery by private training organisations to full fee-paying overseas clients*
- *all non-VET activity (ABS 2003).*

The completeness of the Indigenous status of students needs to be considered when interpreting these data. In 2003, 3.9% of government-funded VET students in Australia identified themselves as Indigenous, while 13.8% of students did not report their Indigenous status (SCRGSP 2005).

References

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) 2003. Directory of Education and Training AVETMISS Vocational Education and Training (VET) Provider Collection. ABS cat. no. 1136.0. Canberra: ABS.

ABS 2004. Measuring learning in Australia: plan to improve the quality, coverage and use of education and training statistics. ABS cat. no. 4231. Canberra: ABS.

SCRGSP (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision) 2005. Report on government services 2005. Vol. 2. Canberra: Productivity Commission.