



3.3 Apprenticeships and traineeships

Apprenticeships and traineeships are well-established parts of the vocational education and training system. They integrate on- and off-the-job training, combining training and employment to enable skill development and workforce participation. Australia's apprenticeship and traineeship system offers nationally recognised qualifications in more than 500 occupations. These include traditional trades as well as most sectors of business and industry. Apprentices are trained in a skilled trade (such as electrical, plumbing, cabinet making or automotive trades) or a non-trade (such as hospitality and child care). Trainees are trained in vocational areas, such as office administration, information technology and tourism. Secondary students of working age may choose to do a school-based apprenticeship. This allows them to gain a formal qualification and earn a wage for their time in the workplace, while completing their school studies (see also Chapter 3.1 'Pathways through education and training').

Key demographics and trends

As at 30 September 2016, there were 278,500 apprentices and trainees in training—a decrease of 5.7% 12 months earlier (NCVER 2017a). In 2015, the majority (74%) of apprentices and trainees aged 15–24 were male, 4.9% were Indigenous, and 1.9% were people with disability (including impairment or long-term condition) (AIHW analysis of NCVER 2016).

Time series analysis by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) shows that for apprenticeships and traineeships in 2016 (as at June 30):

- commencements (in the previous 12 months) had been declining since they peaked in 2012, and were at their lowest since 1998 (168,800 in 2016)
- completions (in the previous 12 months) had been declining since they peaked in 2013, and were at their lowest since 2002 (107,900 in 2016) (NCVER 2017b).

Most of the recent declines were in non-trade occupations. Declines from 2013 coincided with the removal of Australian Government incentive payments for the start and completion of apprenticeships and traineeships not on the National Skills Needs list (Atkinson & Stanwick 2016; Hargreaves & Bloomberg 2015).

Age

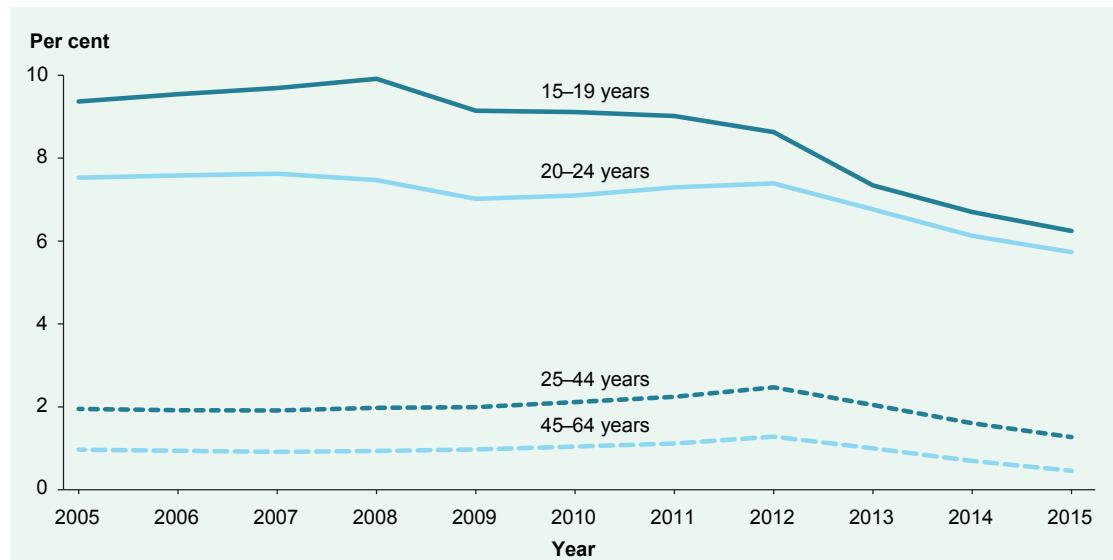
While most apprentices are young, the proportion of older apprentices has been increasing over the last few decades. In 2016, apprentices aged 25–64 accounted for 45% of non-trade apprentices (up from 22% in 1996) and 28% of trade apprentices (compared with 8% 20 years before) (Hargreaves et al. 2017).





Analysis by calendar year shows that, in 2015:

- there were around 187,000 apprentices and trainees aged 15–24 in Australia, or 6.0% of the population aged 15–24 (a decline from 258,000, and 8.7% of 15–24-year-olds in 2008) (Figure 3.3.1)
- 15–19-year-olds (6.2% of the population aged 15–19) were slightly more likely to be undertaking an apprenticeship or traineeship than 20–24-year-olds (5.7%); however, this gap has narrowed since 2005 (9.4% compared with 7.5%, respectively)
- 1.3% of the population aged 25–44 were apprentices and trainees, a 32% decrease from 1.9% in 2005
- 0.5% of people aged 45–64 were undertaking an apprenticeship or traineeship, a decrease from 1.0% in 2005
- a greater proportion of apprentices and trainees aged 15–19 were undertaking school based apprenticeships (23%) than in 2008 (17%) (AIHW analysis of NCVET 2016).



Notes

1. Apprentice and trainee data are annual averages of quarterly figures. Population data are the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimated resident population as at 30 June of the respective year.
2. A small number of apprentices and trainees are aged <15 and >64. These people are included with apprentices and trainees aged 15–19 and 45–64, respectively.
3. Data are collected by registered training organisations and state training authorities around Australia.

Source: AIHW analysis of NCVET 2016.

Figure 3.3.1 Apprentices and trainees as a proportion of the population, by age group, 2005 to 2015





Outcomes of apprenticeships

Completion rates for adult trade apprentices have steadily increased over time, while those for younger trade apprentices are on a slow but steady decline (Hargreaves et al. 2017).

Most people who complete an apprenticeship or traineeship are employed after training. In 2016, more than 90% of trade apprentices and almost 80% of non-trade apprentices were employed six months after finishing training, with rates slightly higher for people aged 15–24 than for people aged 25–64. For people who were not employed before they starting training, completing a trade apprenticeship resulted in employment for 84% of 15–24-year-olds and 66% of 25–64-year-olds. Around half of all people who were not employed before starting a non-trade apprenticeship were employed after completing their training (Hargreaves et al. 2017).

Younger apprentices (aged 15–24) were more likely to report job benefits due to their training than older (aged 25–64) apprentices—such as getting a job, or an increase in earnings or promotion at work. Most trade apprentices were employed in the occupation they trained for (Hargreaves et al. 2017).

What is missing from the picture?

Understanding of apprenticeship and traineeship participation and completion is limited. Key data gaps in this area include factors that influence both the start and completion of these qualifications, the destination and outcomes of apprentices and trainees after they exit the system, and the type and level of training being undertaken relative to known industry needs. Future research should respond to shifting consumer demand for online learning.

Where do I go for more information?

Comprehensive, quality data on apprentices and trainees are available from the [National Centre for Vocational Education Research National Apprentices and Trainees Collection](#) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics [Survey of Education and Work](#).

References

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