



## SNAPSHOT

### 4.2 School retention and completion

Remaining engaged in and successfully completing secondary school improves transitions into further study and employment (Deloitte Access Economics 2012).

The apparent retention rate to Year 12 is the most common measure of school participation. It is an estimate of the percentage of students who remain enrolled full-time in secondary education from the start of secondary school (Year 7 or 8 depending on the state or territory) to Year 12.

The apparent retention rate reflects enrolment in school, but it is not a measure of the successful completion of Year 12.

Completing Year 12, or an equivalent vocational qualification, is a key factor in improving economic and social opportunities in life through preparing students for tertiary education and the labour market, and to become engaged citizens. These qualifications have increasingly become the norm in advanced economies (OECD 2014).

#### School retention

- The Year 12 apparent retention rate has gradually increased from 72% in 2000 to 84% in 2014 (Table S4.2.1; ABS 2015).
- The apparent retention rate for Indigenous students to Year 12 has also increased steadily, from 36% in 2000 to 59% in 2014. Although this remains considerably lower than for other students (85% in 2014), the gap between Indigenous and other students has decreased by 12 percentage points over this time.
- Females had a higher Year 12 apparent retention rate than males (87% compared with 80% in 2014), consistent with research showing that males are more likely to leave school before Year 12 and undertake vocational programs (such as apprenticeships) or find employment (Curtis & McMillan 2008).

#### Completion of Year 12 or equivalent

A senior secondary certificate of education (known under different names in different states and territories) is awarded to students who have successfully completed senior secondary schooling (Years 11 and 12). In 2014, most 20–24 year olds had completed Year 12 (77%), an increase from 74% in 2005. The proportion among 15–19 year olds was lower in 2014 (32%), reflecting those still studying towards this qualification, and was similar to the proportion in 2005 (31%) (ABS 2014).

Research shows that the completion of Year 12 leads to better labour market outcomes. Vocational education is an alternative pathway for those students not suited to secondary schooling, with an equivalent qualification considered to be a Certificate III or above (Lim & Karmel 2011).

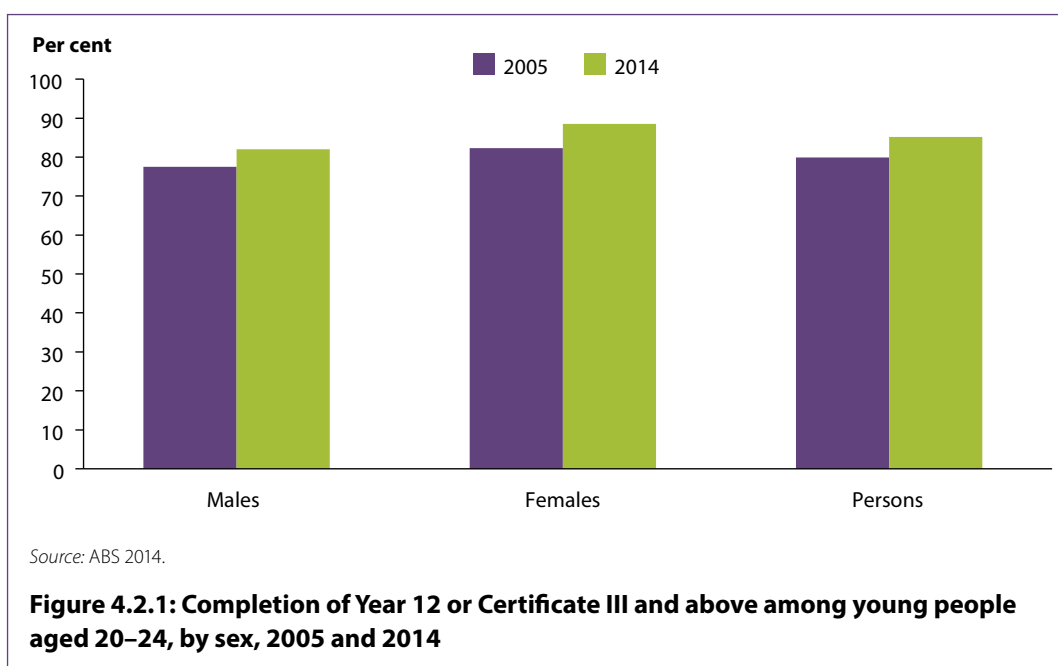
The National Education Reform Agreement (NERA) sets targets of 90% of young people to have attained Year 12 or a Certificate II or above by 2015, and Year 12 or a Certificate III or above by 2020. Both the NERA and the National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA) set a target of at least halving the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in attainment rates of Year 12 or Certificate II or above by 2020.



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- In 2014, 86% of 20–24 year olds had completed Year 12 or at least Certificate II which was an increase from 81% in 2005. The proportion completing Year 12 or at least Certificate III was 85%, an increase from 80% in 2005 (Figure 4.2.1, Table S4.2.2) (ABS 2014).
- Females were more likely than males to complete Year 12 or at least Certificate II in 2014 (90% compared with 83%) and Year 12 or at least Certificate III (88% compared with 82%).
- In 2012–13, 59% of Indigenous 20–24 year olds had completed Year 12 or equivalent, an increase from 45% in 2008. The rate for non-Indigenous young people increased slightly during this time from 85% in 2008 to 87% in 2012 (Australian Government 2015).

(See also the Year 12 attainment indicator in Chapter 8 'Indicators of Australia's welfare')



### What is missing from the picture?

Information on apparent retention rates is from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) National School Statistics Collection (NSSC). The NSSC is currently a largely aggregate data collection. The retention rate is therefore an estimate (an 'apparent' rate), as individual students cannot be tracked from Year 7/8 through to Year 12, for reasons such as student migration between states and territories, transfers between school sectors, and students progressing through school slower or faster than expected (for further details see ABS 2015).

### Where do I go for more information?

More information on youth education is available at [www.aihw.gov.au/youth-health-and-wellbeing](http://www.aihw.gov.au/youth-health-and-wellbeing) and from the ABS reports [Schools](#) and [Education and work](#).



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### References

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