

VET qualification completion rates FACT SHEET



Which rate and why?

VET qualification completion rates present three different rates; this fact sheet can help you decide which rate you should use and why.

NCVER has two methodologies for generating a rate: the observed and the projected methodology.

Observed methodology

The observed methodology is a simple calculation of the observed number of completions divided by the observed commencements. It is expressed as either a completion rate (after four years) or the proportion completed 'to date', referred to as the completion rate (to date).

What is the difference between the completion rate (after four years) and 'to date'?

To allow for fair comparisons between diverse commencing cohorts (i.e., enrolments grouped together based solely on when they started), NCVER uses a fixed-reference period - time between commencement and completion - that captures most completions.

This fixed-reference period is four years after the commencement year. Some completions may take longer and are reported after four years. These don't contribute to the completion rate (after four years).

The following represents the 2019 commencing cohort, where 100 qualifications commenced. During the four-year period, there were 45 completions, a year later an additional 10, another year later an additional five. The table below demonstrates the impact on the two rate types.



| Rate type | 2024 publication | 2025 publication | 2026 publication |
|-------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Completion rate (after 4 yrs) | 45 / 100 = 45% | 45 / 100 = 45% | 45 / 100 = 45% |
| To date | 45 / 100 = 45% | 55 / 100 = 55% | 60 / 100 = 60% |

A completion rate that uses a fixed-reference period, such as four years, is the most appropriate measure for comparing the performance of different commencing cohorts.

The 'to date' completion rate, i.e. the proportion completed up until the end of 2024, is not timebound and is continually updating with every year of data NCVER receives; some cohorts are informed by many years others few. It could be misleading to compare the performance of different cohorts with the 'to date' rates.

VET qualification completion rates FACT SHEET

Why have a 'to date' rate if they cannot be compared?

The 'to date' rate provides valuable point-in-time insights for individual commencing cohorts.

For commencing cohorts, with more than four years of reporting e.g., commencements in or before 2019, it is possible to see the latest completion rate. This rate can include activity that took longer than four years to complete, such as part time commencements or contract-based training, where their success or otherwise would be obscured.

Conversely, for more recent commencing cohorts where a greater proportion are likely to still be in training, we get an indication of success for shorter duration training. This could be because students had prior knowledge or were completing lower-level qualifications. However, it is too early to say with certainty how the whole system is performing.

Projected methodology

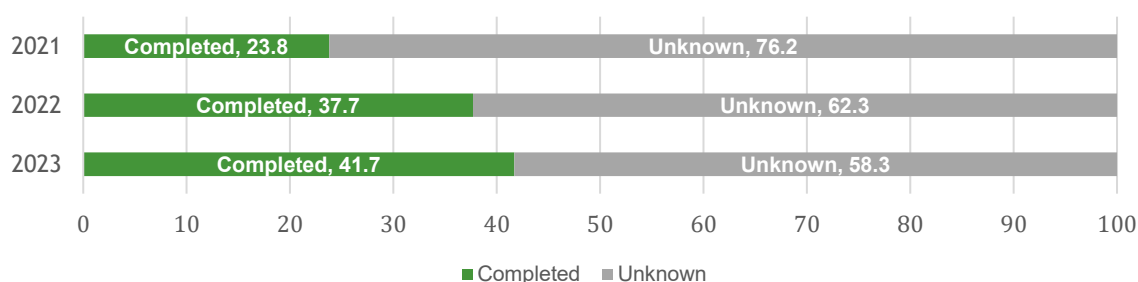
The projected methodology is a little more complex than a simple proportion of completions. It uses principles of an absorbing Markov Chain and knowledge of the proportion completed 'to date' to estimate the eventual completion rate for a cohort.

Why project completion rates?

The National VET Provider Collection does not explicitly capture information about a student's qualification enrolment; that is, we receive no details on the expected completion date, whether the student has deferred training, or - crucially - if they didn't complete.

Each year, as we receive more completions, we get a better picture of the proportion of completed records. However, the state of the other records remains unknown (Figure 1). This allows us to report on the latest proportion of completed records, but these values cannot be compared. The projected completion rate is an earlier indication of the comparative performance of a commencing cohort, should all things remain equal. As a projection, these figures are still subject to change.

Figure 1 Example of 2021 commencements by qualification status and collection year



Which rate should I use?

NCVER will always refer to a fixed-reference period completion rate for comparative statements across the diverse vocational education and training sector.

The other rates have a distinct purpose and can support the sector's understanding of performance in specific contexts.