



# National Student Outcomes Survey 2020 (international component): how to interpret survey results

National Centre for Vocational  
Education Research

This document was produced as an added resource for further information on *International onshore VET qualification completion outcomes 2020*. The report is available on NCVER's Portal: <https://www.ncver.edu.au>.

## Publisher's note

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# How to interpret the survey estimates

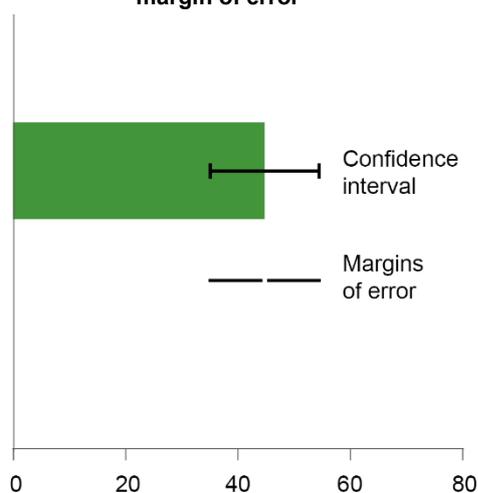
The population for the international component of the National Student Outcomes Survey is selected from the National VET Provider and National VET in Schools collections. The international component was conducted as a census of international onshore VET graduates who were not being surveyed for the domestic component of the survey, and had a unique student identifier (USI) or contact information that could be sourced from state training authorities or NCVER.

Survey responses have been weighted to population benchmarks of international onshore VET graduates from the national collections. As the survey estimates are based on information provided by qualification completers who responded to the survey rather than the population, they may differ from the estimates that would have been obtained had all international onshore VET qualification completers responded to the survey.

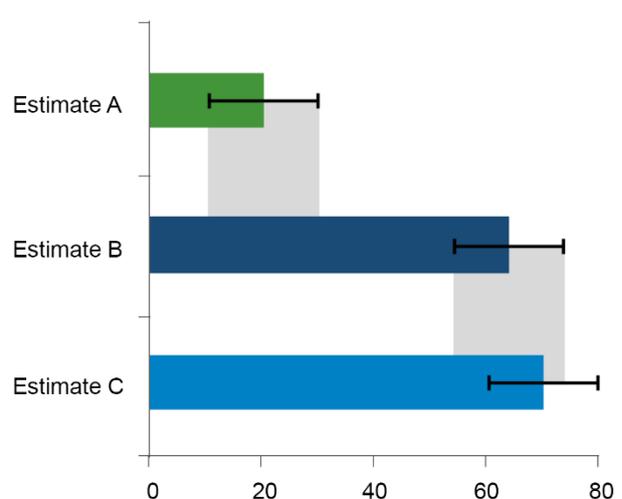
How close the estimate is likely to be to the true population value is reflected in the confidence interval. The confidence interval can be calculated for any confidence level, but usually a level of 90%, 95%, or 99% is used. For this publication we use a confidence level of 95%, which means the probability that the confidence interval contains the true population value is 95%.

The confidence interval can be shown graphically using a black bar around the estimate (see figure A). Smaller bars correspond to more accurate estimates. The confidence interval is sometimes expressed as *Estimate +/- margin of error*. That is, the margin of error is half the width of the confidence interval. For example, in figure B, *Estimate A* is equal to 70% and the margin of error (using a confidence level of 95%) is 5%. The confidence interval for this estimate is 65% to 75%, which means we can be 95% confident the true value is between 65% and 75%.

**Figure A** Confidence interval and margin of error



**Figure B** Confidence intervals



It is important to consider the margin of error when making comparisons between groups and years, particularly when the results are close. Data users are encouraged to use the margin of error to determine if a difference between groups is statistically significant. The margin of error is available for

all estimates presented in the DataBuilder and Excel products, and is shown graphically in the summary publication.

In figure B, the black bars for *Estimate A* and *Estimate B* do not overlap. This means that it **can** be concluded with a 95% level of confidence that there is a difference between *Estimate A* and *Estimate B*. However, the error bars for *Estimate B* and *Estimate C* do overlap. This means that it **cannot** be concluded with a 95% level of confidence that there is a difference between *Estimate B* and *Estimate C*. It also cannot be concluded that *Estimate B* and *Estimate C* are similar, and further testing needs to be undertaken to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the estimates.

For further technical details about the international component of the National Student Outcomes Survey, please refer to the technical notes supporting document at <https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/collections/student-outcomes/international-onshore-vet-qualification-completer-outcomes>.



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