



VET Workforce Report

Understanding, growing, retaining and
developing the VET workforce for the
care and support sectors





Acknowledgement of Country

HumanAbility acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders – past and present, and recognise their enduring connection to their culture, lands, seas, waters and communities.

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List of abbreviations and acronyms

Acronym	
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACE	Adult and Community Education
ACECQA	Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AEU	Australian Education Union
Ahpra	Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ANMF	Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation
ANZSCO	Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations
ANZSIC	Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification
ASQA	Australian Skills Quality Authority
ATSIHPBA	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia
AVETRA	Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association
CEC	Children's Education and Care
CHC	Community Services Training Package
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DEWR	Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
ECEC	Early childhood education and care
EWYL	Earn While You Learn
GTO	Group Training Organisation
HLT	Health Training Package
HPI	Hourly Paid Instructor
JSA	Jobs and Skills Australia
JSC	Jobs and Skills Council

KPI	Key Performance Indicators
LLN	Language, Literacy and Numeracy
LOTE	Languages Other Than English
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NFP	Not For Profit
NSW	New South Wales
NT	The Northern Territory
PM	Performance Management
QLD	Queensland
RAP	Reconciliation Action Plans
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
SA	South Australia
SIS	Sports, Fitness and Recreation Training Package
TAE	Training and Education Training Package
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TAS	Tasmania
TTA	Teach, Train, and/or Assess
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VIC	Victoria
WA	Western Australia
WAVE	Women in Adult and Vocational Education
WGEA	Workplace Gender Equality Agency

Executive summary

Australia's care and support economy (aged care and disability services, children's education and care, health, human (community) services, and sport and recreation sectors) employs almost one in five workers – almost 3.22 million as of November 2024.¹ It is also the largest and fastest-growing part of the Australian economy; a conservative estimate of overall projected employment growth in the health care and social assistance sectors is 21.02% by May 2034.² The Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector workforce plays a crucial role in equipping the future care and support workforce with the skills needed to deliver essential services that contribute to Australians' health and wellbeing. However, the VET workforce is under pressure, and the future supply of teaching, training, and assessing professionals is not expected to keep up with growing student demand.

The VET Workforce Blueprint, developed by the Australian government in collaboration with states, territories, and stakeholders, identifies key actions to understand, grow, retain, and develop the VET workforce. HumanAbility, as one of 10 Jobs and Skills Councils (JSCs), received funding to conduct an 18 month, 3-stream research project (October 2025–April 2026), commissioned by the Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, to explore the current VET workforce for our sectors, identify issues around pathways, recruitment, and retention (stream 1), and then investigate (Stream 2) and support (Stream 3) industry-led initiatives to these identified challenges.³

This report presents HumanAbility's findings from Stream 1 of this project. This was conducted from October 2024 to June 2025 using a mixed-methods approach encompassing desktop research of existing evidence, extensive original qualitative and quantitative research – consultations and surveys involving current VET professionals and key stakeholders across states, territories, sectors, and a range of Registered Training Organisation (RTO) types.

This report provides a contemporary understanding of the current VET workforce roles across the care and support sectors. It offers evidence on demographics, roles, and responsibilities of the care and support VET workforce, pathways into and out of the workforce, and challenges to recruitment, retention, and development.

¹ ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics), [Labour Force, Australia, Detailed](#), ABS website, November 2024. This data was trended by JSA based on the 2021 Census.

² Victoria University, n.d., [Employment projections - May 2024 to May 2034](#) [data set], Jobs and Skills Australia website.

³ Skills and Workforce Ministerial Council, *VET Workforce Blueprint*, 2024, <https://www.dewr.gov.au/download/16477/vet-workforce-blueprint/38784/vet-workforce-blueprint/pdf>, last accessed 23 May 2025.

Findings

The care and support VET workforce is predominantly older, female, and highly motivated by intrinsic values

HumanAbility's research found that the care and support VET workforce is predominantly female, skews older, and is not as diverse as the broader Australian workforce or student population. It also found there are nuances between sectors, particularly within sport and recreation, where a much lower proportion of respondents were female (33.9%).

Teach, train, and assess (TTA) roles were held by over 80% of respondents (81.2%), with just under 20% holding a role in curriculum development and learning design (19.2%) and leadership (18.7%). Respondents across the care and support sectors hold high levels of education, with nearly 40% holding a bachelor's degree. An in-depth look at people in TTA roles finds that the majority hold a full-time contract (63.6%), whilst over half also hold multiple roles in VET (53.4%).

Salary has been identified as a strong motivator to join the care and support VET workforce. TTA respondents' average annual income is higher than that for TTA professionals in the wider VET workforce and the average Australian workforce.

Recruitment for VET workforce roles can be difficult due to a small pool of suitable candidates and challenges in offering competitive pay and benefits between organisations

This stream of research explored the journey to joining, remaining, and developing within the VET workforce and uncovered key facilitators and barriers at play. RTOs highlighted recruitment challenges, including few suitable candidates, competition for these candidates, and challenges to offering competitive pay and benefits. Individual professionals encountered barriers in the recruitment process, including challenges involving the recognition of prior learning and overseas qualifications. Additionally, some also hold (or reported others holding) negative perceptions of working in VET compared to industry and other education sectors.

'Making a difference' is a strong motivator for people joining the VET care and support workforce

TTA professionals in the care and support sector often join the VET workforce due to strong social-altruistic motivations and a desire to make a difference. Additionally, they are strongly motivated by the opportunity to support new professionals entering the sector by sharing their own knowledge and skills from working in the industry.

Close networks were seen to be key in promoting a role in VET to potential new employees. Many respondents reported hearing about their role through word of mouth.

Despite strong retention, research insights point to how the workforce can be better supported

HumanAbility's research found relatively low levels of recruitment and turnover. This was also reflected through the high proportion of VET professional survey respondents who stated they intend to remain in their role for the next two years (79%).

Key factors that support retention in the care and support VET workforce include feeling connected to the sector and VET colleagues, understanding the role and responsibilities, strong motivations to make a difference, and having a strong support system.

However, there are barriers and challenges that prompt some professionals to leave the VET workforce. This includes increasing amounts of compliance and administration that affect the ability to perform other core responsibilities, technological changes, feelings of uncertainty due to policy and system changes, and the lack of knowledge and skills, or access to developing these skills, to succeed in the role. Within the report, these are explored in relation to specific sectors, demographics, and organisation type and size.

Opportunities to strengthen and better support the care and support VET workforce

The findings of this research indicate that the care and support VET workforce is motivated to make a difference, share knowledge, and support students. However, these professionals are navigating several points of friction that need to be addressed to ensure the sustainability of the workforce into the future. Taking a systems approach to examine and address the challenges identified will be crucial in the next steps of research, where HumanAbility will work with its sectors to further understand these challenges and identify industry-led solutions.

Several of the insights from this first stream of research in the JSC-led VET workforce project can inform the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations and areas of foundational actions (including the VET workforce data strategy and occupational mapping project). Importantly, the findings will inform subsequent project streams, which will explore key challenges and identify industry-led responses.

Some of the key takeaways from this initial stream of research:

- There is a risk of loss of institutional knowledge due to an ageing workforce, and therefore an opportunity to ensure a sustainable pipeline of workers into the future.
- The workforce does not fully reflect the students it is teaching, which may directly impact student outcomes. There is opportunity to increase the proportions of professionals with a language other than English (LOTE), living with a long-term health condition or disability, or identifying as First Nations to be more representative of the student cohorts and Australian population.
- There is an attrition risk due to lack of professional development, particularly for smaller RTOs, which warrants investigation into collective approaches to delivering and accessing knowledge.
- Across all sectors, there is a need to build confidence and capability in areas critical to VET practice, including digital delivery and use of education technologies.

1. Background and context

1.1 Project background and context

The Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector ensures that millions of Australians have the skills required to secure well-paid roles. However, the workforce itself is at risk of not keeping up with demand, particularly for teach, train, and assess (TTA) roles. Employment projections by Victoria University for Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) suggest that VET TTA employment demand is likely to grow by 12% in the next five years, and 21% within the decade, exceeding employment projections for total occupations.⁴

The VET Workforce Blueprint, developed by the Australian Government in collaboration with states and territories, provides a roadmap to grow, support, and sustain this VET workforce, and is funded by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR).⁵ This blueprint was a response to stakeholder consultations and data that also highlighted concerns about the VET workforce supply, especially TTA roles. Gaps at the industry, sector, and subsector levels were also noted, indicating a need for focused research to generate a clearer and more nuanced understanding.

In response to these workforce challenges, the blueprint has identified three goals:

- Grow the workforce: Increase the number of people entering the VET workforce to ensure long-term supply of staff to support quality training.
- Retain and develop the workforce: Improve retention and support workforce capability to ensure a sustainable, highly skilled, and quality VET workforce.
- Understand the workforce: Develop data collection systems for the VET workforce and undertake foundational work and research to better understand the various roles and pathways across all VET contexts.

HumanAbility is one of the Jobs and Skills Councils to receive government funding under the blueprint to conduct a 3-stream research project to identify and respond to VET workforce challenges within its sectors.

This first stream of research (October 2024 to June 2025) involved HumanAbility undertaking industry-specific VET workforce studies to develop a contemporary understanding of industry-specific roles, including at JSC and sector levels, and pathways, recruitment, and retention. The

⁴ Victoria University, Employment Projections, produced for the Australian Government Jobs and Skills Australia, accessed 17 November 2023.

⁵ Skills and Workforce Ministerial Council, *VET Workforce Blueprint*, 2024, <https://www.dewr.gov.au/download/16477/vet-workforce-blueprint/38784/vet-workforce-blueprint/pdf>, last accessed 23 May 2025.

findings from this initial stream inform the next phases of research (June 2025 to March 2025) by DEWR and HumanAbility.

These are:

- Stream 2: Investigate industry-specific VET workforce challenges and issues and identify industry-led responses.
- Stream 3: Investigate and support pathways and pipeline of VET workforces and identify industry-led actions, e.g. attraction and promotion strategies.

Together, this body of work will build the evidence base to support the growth and sustainability of the VET workforce.

1.2 Report purpose and aim

This report sets out the findings from Stream 1 of this 3-stream project, in which each JSC leads targeted research into the VET workforce for their sectors.

As the JSC for aged care and disability services, early childhood education and care, health, human (community) services, and sport and recreation sectors, HumanAbility was tasked with research to examine and strengthen the VET workforce for these sectors, with a focus on TTA roles.

The findings aim to provide a contemporary understanding of:

- The demographic profile of the VET workforce across the care and support sectors
- Roles and responsibilities of TTA professionals
- Pathways into and out of the VET workforce
- Facilitators and challenges to joining, remaining, and upskilling within the VET workforce
- Future and emerging VET workforce challenges across the care and support sectors

The intent is that findings provide a view of the VET workforce for HumanAbility's sectors (industries), including industry-specific features, requirements, and challenges.

The insights will inform subsequent streams 2 and 3 of the research, which will investigate and support industry-led responses and actions to maintain and grow the care and support VET workforce.

1.3 Scope and methodology

Scope

The aim of this research is to understand, grow, and develop the care and support VET workforce. The scope of Stream 1 of the research (October 2024 to June 2025) was limited to current VET professionals (including full-time, part-time, casual, and volunteers) working in a sector or sectors under HumanAbility's remit, across any state or territory.

Overview of HumanAbility's sectors: a large, growing, and vital component of Australia's workforce and community

Approximately 360,600 workers are employed in the category of 'aged and disabled carers' alone, with almost half a million employed in other occupations within these subsectors. Together, these workers play a vital role in meeting the needs of Australia's ageing population and people living with disabilities to live meaningful and dignified lives.⁶ The size of this workforce underscores the importance of developing a pipeline of skilled workers to ensure quality care and services in the future. With significant reforms underway and demand continuing to rise, VET enrolments in this sector are strong, with the latest NCVER (National Centre for Vocational Education Research) data reporting 158,495 enrolments in 2023 for aged care and disability services qualifications (under the CHC training package), and 74,030 completions in the same year.⁷

Children's education and care (CEC) is one of the largest and fastest-growing workforce segments in the care and support economy. Currently, 920,400 people are employed in the sector,⁸ with a projected growth to 963,300 workers by 2034 on current trends (excluding recent major policy announcements necessitating a need for many more educators and other roles).⁹ In 2023, there were 150,510 enrolments and 33,860 completions in CEC training package qualifications.¹⁰

The health services sector collectively supports the largest workforce in the care and support economy, comprising various roles across healthcare, social services, mental health, disability support, and other community-based services. As of the most recent data, the workforce stands at 1,290,200,¹¹ and is projected to grow to 1,432,700 by 2029.¹² In 2023, there were 117,255 enrolments and 37,120 completions in health qualifications under the HLT (Health Training Package).¹³

The size of the human (community) services workforce is difficult to estimate¹⁴ due to overlapping occupations and industries (such as aged care, disability, early childhood, and health). As of November 2024, there were 545,000 people employed in the 'other social assistance services'

⁶ ABS, [Labour Force, Australia, Detailed](#), ABS website, February 2025. This data was trended by the Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA), last accessed 23 May 2025. This figure includes some university-qualified roles beyond HumanAbility's remit that are not qualified through the VET sector.

⁷ NCVER (National Centre for Vocational Education Research), [Total VET students and courses](#) 2024, [VOCSTATS], NCVER website, last accessed 23 May 2025.

⁸ ABS, [Labour Force, Australia, Detailed](#), ABS website, November 2024. This data was trended by JSA based on the 2021 Census, last accessed 23 May 2025. This figure includes school teaching and leadership roles beyond HumanAbility's remit.

⁹ Victoria University, n.d., [Employment projections - May 2024 to May 2034](#) [data set], Jobs and Skills Australia website, last accessed 23 May 2025.

¹⁰ NCVER, [Total VET students and courses](#) 2024, [VOCSTATS], NCVER website, last accessed 23 May 2025.

¹¹ ABS, [Labour Force, Detailed, November 2024: EQ06 four-quarter averages](#), ABS, 2024, last accessed 23 May 2025.

¹² ABS, [Labour Force, Detailed, November 2024: EQ06 four-quarter averages](#), ABS, 2024, last accessed 23 May 2025.

¹³ NCVER, [Total VET students and courses](#) 2025, [VOCSTATS], NCVER website, last accessed 23 May 2025.

¹⁴ Disaggregated Health and Human (community) Services data in ANZSCO is limited, and there are limited national-level data sets for community service subsectors. The 'other social assistance services' sector includes non-residential aged and disability services as well as 'welfare' and counselling services. 'Other residential care services' (ANZSIC 8609) is unrelated to aged and disability care, and focuses on 'children's homes', crisis accommodation, and refugees.

industry.¹⁵ In 2023, there were 132,675 enrolments and 35,855 completions in human (community) services programs qualifications in the CHC training package.¹⁶

The sport and recreation workforce currently stands at around 117,700 workers,¹⁷ with a projected growth to 169,600 by 2034.¹⁸ This expansion reflects the growing community engagement in health, fitness, and recreational services. In 2023, there were 105,980 enrolments and 33,725 completions in sports and recreation qualifications under the SIS training package.¹⁹

Many factors contribute to the much smaller number of completions each year compared to enrolments. These include differing course durations, learners studying or training part-time, learners taking a leave of absence, or learners discontinuing their studies because they obtained the skills or knowledge they needed at that time for their particular role without needing to complete the whole qualification. Other factors are also at play, including the course not meeting their needs and inadequate supports. HumanAbility is exploring these factors, and opportunities to improve completion rates, in a separate research project.

RTOs are crucial in developing a skilled care and support workforce. They deliver a substantial volume of nationally recognised qualifications across the HLT Health, CHC Community Services, and SIS Sports and Recreation training packages.

Varying in size, structure, and scope, RTOs delivering qualifications across the care and support sectors are distributed across urban, regional, and remote locations. Private RTOs are by far the most prominent providers, with approximately 2271 delivering relevant qualifications across Australia.

Secondary schools also represent a significant entry point into the different sectors, with approximately 246 delivering qualifications across the various states and territories. Community providers, which are often deeply embedded within local neighbourhoods and regional communities, account for the third largest share of total RTOs, with 120 providers nationally.

Geographically, the national spread of RTOs delivering qualifications across the care and support sectors reflects population and sector-specific needs. New South Wales (NSW) has 867 providers, followed by Queensland (QLD) with 799, and Victoria (VIC) with 708. In Western Australia (WA), there are 248 providers, South Australia (SA) has 126, and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), Tasmania (TAS), and Northern Territory (NT) have 45, 38, and 34 RTOs, respectively. [Table 1](#) provides a more detailed breakdown of RTO types and their distribution across states and territories within the care and support sectors.

¹⁵ ABS, [Labour Force, Detailed, November 2024: EQ06 four-quarter averages](#), for ANZIC 8790 ABS, 2024, last accessed 23 May 2025.

¹⁶ NCVER, [Total VET students and courses](#) 2024, [VOCSTATS], NCVER website, last accessed 23 May 2025.

¹⁷ JSA, [Data, Occupation and Industry Profiles, Arts and Recreation Services - Feb 2025 data](#), JSA, 2025, last accessed 23 May 2025.

¹⁸ JSA, n.d., [Employment projections](#), JSA, last accessed 23 May 2025.

¹⁹ NCVER, [Total VET students and courses 2023: program enrolments](#), 2024, NCVER, last accessed 23 May 2025.

Table 1: RTOs delivering care and support qualifications

RTO type	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Total
Community Provider	4	48	2	14	3	1	39	9	120
Group Training Organisation (GTO)		1		1	1		2		5
Higher Education	2	2		6			1	5	16
Enterprise RTO	2	33	3	16	6	4	24	11	99
Private RTO	32	732	25	583	105	30	565	199	2271
Public RTO	1	16	2	8	8	2	41	10	88
Secondary School	4	15	2	171	3	1	36	14	246
Total	45	847	34	799	126	38	708	248	2845

Methodology

Stream 1 of HumanAbility's VET workforce project used a mixed-methodology approach encompassing desktop research of existing evidence, supplemented by original qualitative and quantitative research. The research instruments and data sources used in the research are presented in

[Table 2](#) below and are detailed in the subsequent section. A detailed methodology is available in [Appendix 2](#), where [Table 16](#) provides a breakdown of survey type, sample size, and target audience.

Table 2: Data sources for research

Research type	Data collection details
Desktop research (quantitative)	<p>Review of relevant documents, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data provided by DEWR (JSA workforce taxonomy, ABS census data, National Training Register data) • Publicly available VET workforce data (e.g. NCVER) • Publicly available reports documenting VET workforce data
Desktop research (qualitative)	<p>A systematic review of 73 pieces of relevant grey and peer-reviewed literature, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviews of the VET workforce care and support sector • Journal articles regarding the challenges of attraction, retention, and development in VET workforce • Government reports on the VET workforce • Conference papers assessing the VET workforce <p>A list of search terms and inclusion criteria is available in Appendix 3.</p>
Workshops to shape research	<p>Between October and November 2024, HumanAbility conducted a series of nine 2-hour discovery workshops online and in each state and territory.</p> <p>Consultation took place with up to 160 key stakeholders in the VET workforce sector, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RTOs • TAFE (Technical and Further Education) institutes • Peak bodies • Unions
In-depth interviews for deeper dive	<p>Thirteen structured 45-minute interviews were conducted virtually in November 2024 with selected participants identified from each workshop to delve deeper into the key emerging themes and challenges identified. Interviews were conducted with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aged care and disability services representatives • Health representatives • Sports and recreation representatives • Human (community) services representatives • Children's education and care representatives

Surveys to complement consultation data	<p>Three workforce surveys were deployed between November 2024 and April 2025.</p> <p>Surveys to understand attraction, retention, and development in VET workforce sector:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VET Workforce Organisations Demographic and Diversity Survey • VET Workforce Professionals Demographic and Diversity Survey • Follow-up VET Professionals Survey with deep dive into pathways, attraction, and retention
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Survey responses were collected from 191 different organisations and 851 professionals across:

- TAFE institutes
- Adult and Community Education (ACE) providers
- Registered Training Organisations (RTOs)
- Dual-sector universities

Survey data was subsequently analysed by HumanAbility’s data analyst using Excel and Power BI ([Appendix 4](#)). Unless otherwise indicated, all figures in tables and charts are original data collected via survey by HumanAbility for this project in 2025. Statements made throughout this document in relation to quantitative data gathered from the surveys will indicate the type of survey respondents (professionals vs organisations) and the slice, or in some instances sub-slice, from that grouping (specified sections from the whole), and then a percentage from within the slice/sub-slice toward which the statement applies.

For example, in the statement, ‘[32.2% of \[Teach, Train, and Assess professional\] respondents in \[the aged care and disability services\] sector reported earning between \\$91,001 and \\$104,000 annually,](#)’ ‘professional’ is the type of respondent, ‘aged care and disability sector’ is the slice from the professional respondents, ‘Teach, Train, and Assess’ is the sub-slice from the ‘aged care and disability sector’ slice, ‘32.2%’ is the percentage from within the ‘Teach, Train, and Assess’ sub-slice, and ‘earning between \$91,001 and \$104,000 annually’ is the statement that applies to the ‘32.2%’.

Notable factors influencing the sample size for data-point references are:

- Some questions were not asked in all three surveys; therefore, quantitative statements made using the results of these questions come from a smaller sample size.
- Some questions were not mandatory to answer, so some responses may be incomplete; therefore, the sample size may fluctuate from question to question.

It was worth noting that some questions allowed multiple responses; as a result, total percentages across response options may exceed 100%. More information regarding the data process behind quantitative data sourced from the surveys is available in [Appendix 2](#). The sample size for each data point referenced has been retained by HumanAbility and is available upon request.

This report does not identify participants' organisations, names, or positions to preserve their anonymity and confidentiality. Participants represent a range of different organisations, sectors, and job roles, and were broadly representative.

All research projects and methods have limitations. For this project, they are:

- The survey relied on non-probability sampling methods (e.g. convenience and snowball sampling) and is consequently susceptible to biases.
- The total population size of the VET workforce is currently unknown. The total number of respondents to the surveys (851 total across the two VET professionals surveys and 191 across the two organisations surveys) is likely less than the generally accepted sample size for statistical representation of the target population (10%). Data points throughout are presented as percentages of survey respondents in conjunction with and/or are supportive of other research findings.
- Despite research outreaches targeting both current and past VET professionals, all survey respondents indicated they were currently working in the VET workforce.

2. Demographic profile of the VET workforce across the care and support sectors

This section presents findings from HumanAbility’s original research on the demographic composition of the VET care and support workforce, comparing it to the wider VET workforce, the broader Australian workforce, and, where possible, the underlying industries it supports.

While overall, the VET care and support workforce is more female-dominated and older than the wider VET and Australian workforces, nuances exist between the care and support sectors. Findings indicate that VET professionals in sports and recreation-related roles, for example, are more likely to be male. Variances also occur between the different care and support sectors’ VET workforces in the areas of First Nations identity and cultural and linguistic diversity.²⁰

2.1 Most respondents work in teach, train, and assess roles

Role

Across HumanAbility’s sectors, the most commonly reported role was in the TTA segment (81.2%), followed by curriculum development and learning design (19.1%) and leadership (18.7 %), as seen in [Figure 1](#). Across states, there were small differences, where 73.2% of respondents from SA reported holding TTA roles. Under the JSA VET workforce taxonomy, TTA roles included head teacher, VET teacher, TAFE lecturer, senior trainer and assessor, assessor only, and language, literacy, and numeracy (LLN) practitioners.²¹ For this research, VET trainer and/or assessor was also included in this segment.

While the TTA proportion of survey respondents is much higher than that found in JSA’s national study of Australia’s VET workforce (48.5%),²² this reflects the fact that this research project targeted people in TTA roles, given their sector-specific knowledge and expertise, and that respondents could select multiple roles within the HumanAbility’s survey for professionals. A deeper dive into TTA roles is explored in Section 3.

²⁰ All data on the proportion of First Nations people in HumanAbility’s original data and other reported data sets (such as NCVER) need to be treated with caution. This is because an unknown proportion of First Nations people choose not to disclose their Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander identity, and also because some data sets do not collect this, or do not collect in a consistent or culturally safe way. In some cases, the proportion of respondents where Indigenous identity is not known is equal to or greater than the proportion that disclose they are Indigenous.

²¹ Respondents were able to submit multiple responses for their current role; therefore, percentages per role will total greater than 100%.

²² JSA, *VET Workforce Study*, 2024, https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-10/vet_workforce_study_2024.pdf, last accessed 23 May 2025.

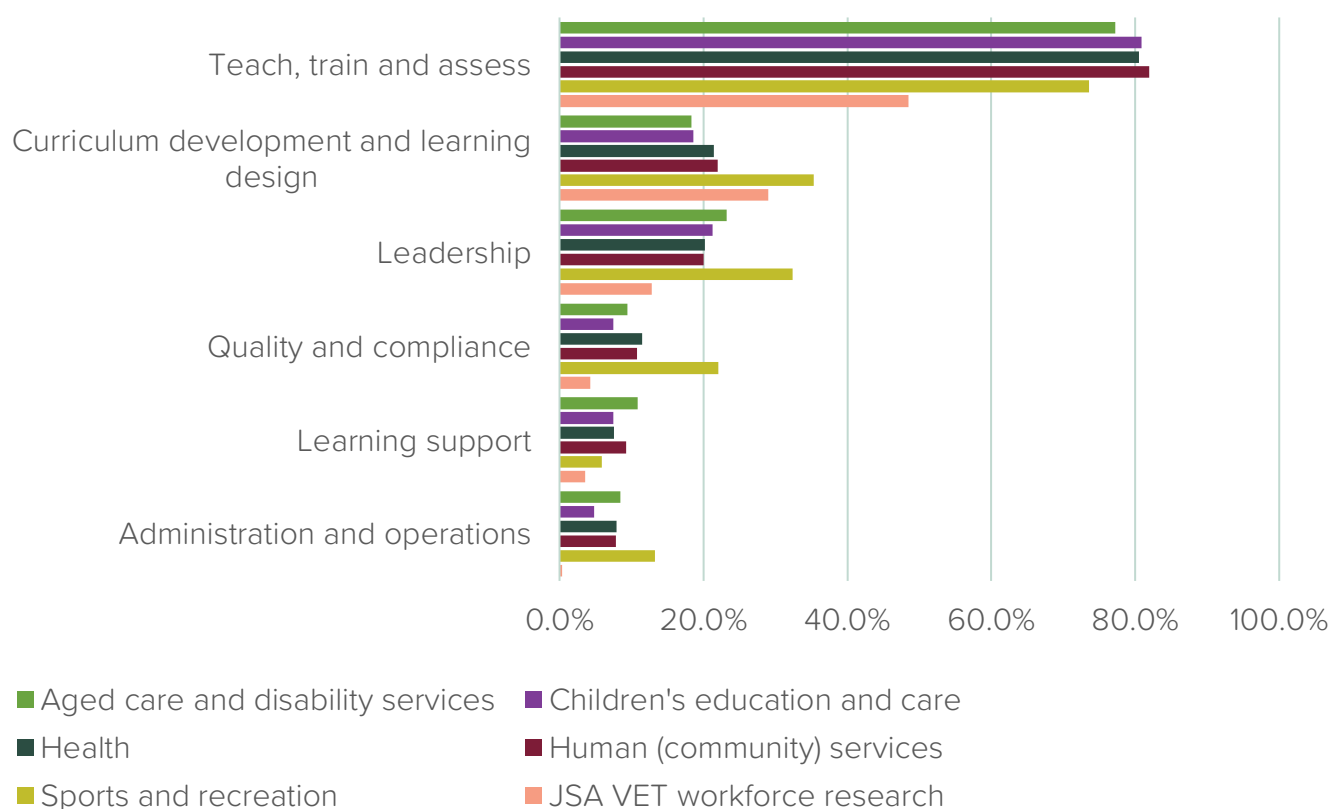
Within curriculum development and learning design, curriculum developers comprised the majority of roles (80.4%), followed by instructional designers (29.7%) and eLearning designers (25.6%). Analysis with a jurisdictional lens illuminated some interesting differences, where 47.3% of respondents from ACT reported holding a curriculum development and learning design role vs 19.1% across all states.

Administration and operational roles were less commonly reported (5.8% of respondents). However, differences across states were noted. For example, 7.5% of respondents in NSW reported holding an administration and operational role compared to 1.7% in VIC. Learning support roles overall were reported slightly more frequently (6.9%), where, again, NSW held the highest proportion of VET professionals in the segment (12.6%), a finding that is consistent with research into the wider VET workforce.

Respondents holding leadership roles made up 18.7% of the care and support VET workforce, a finding that is higher than reported for the wider VET workforce (12.8%).²³ The most reported role within the leadership segment was a cross-cutting role, RTO operations manager/CEO (10.5%), where the proportion of respondents holding this role was highest for smaller RTOs (17.6%).

A small number of respondents (2.0%) identified their role as 'other', which highlights an opportunity to expand the JSA taxonomy beyond current segmentation. Specific roles identified are explored in subsequent sector-specific sections.

Figure 1: Distribution of VET roles across care and support sectors



²³ JSA, *VET Workforce Study*, 2024.

Gender

The care and support VET workforce appears to reflect its sectors. The overwhelming majority (84.1%) of respondents identified as female, a stark contrast to only 57.2% in JSA's national study in 2024 and the wider Australian workforce (48.5%).²⁴ This gender difference was most noticeable in the TTA segment, where female respondents make up 84.7% (compared to 51.1% reported by JSA for the wider VET workforce).²⁵ The highest proportion of male respondents was seen in the curriculum development and learning design segment (26.1%). These percentages varied across sectors and are discussed in sector profiles later in this section.

This pattern was, however, reversed when looking at seniority. Fewer female respondents (18.3%) than male respondents (22.7%) reported being in leadership roles. Additionally, a smaller proportion of female respondents than male respondents held TTA extended scope roles (27.3% vs 37.5%, respectively).²⁶ While the sample size of males for survey responses was low, results still indicate the possible presence of structural barriers to advancement and progression within VET. This is because these findings are consistent with research undertaken in 2024 by Women in Adult and Vocational Education (WAVE), which found that while Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) data reported that 65% of the education and training workforce are women, 64% of CEOs within the sector are male.²⁷

Age

The care and support workforce is older than both the wider VET workforce and the Australian workforce. Most of the workforce that responded was aged between 50 and 59 years old (37.5%). Less than 1.4% reported being under 30 years, and these younger employees were more likely to report working for small or medium-sized RTOs (33.3% each). The full distribution of age ranges across sectors is in [Figure 2](#). An older workforce was seen within the TTA workforce, where over half of respondents were over 50 years old (53.6%).

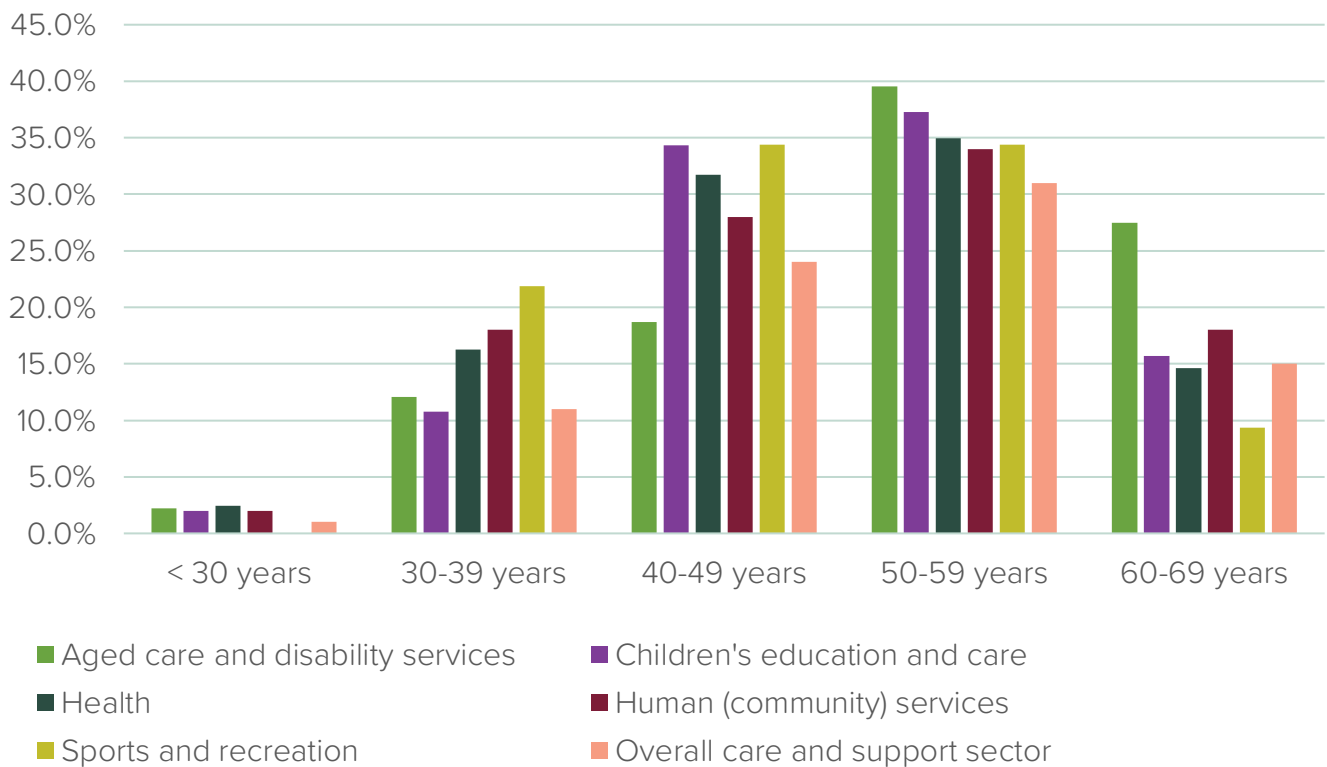
²⁴ JSA, *VET Workforce Study*, 2024.

²⁵ JSA, *VET Workforce Study*, 2024.

²⁶ Extended scope, as defined by JSA in the 2024 *VET Workforce Study*, includes professionals with an extended scope and responsibility for substantial programs of training and assessment.

²⁷ Women in Adult and Vocational Education (WAVE), *Submission to the development of a blueprint for Australia's VET workforce*, 2024, <https://wave.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/WAVESubmissionVETWorkforceBluePrint25March2024.pdf>, last accessed 23 May 2025.

Figure 2: Age distribution of care and support VET workforce respondents



An older VET demographic fits the slightly older workforces that the VET workforce trains and supports. For example, within aged care and disability services, the median age for carers is 42 years old, while for registered nurses, this is 39 years old.²⁸

The older age across the care and support VET workforce reflects the prerequisite for TTA professionals to hold industry experience. It also reflects what HumanAbility heard in survey free-text responses and workshops, where people mentioned professionals entered VET to ‘give back’ and to ‘train the next generation’. (See Section 4 for fuller discussions of motivations for entering the VET workforce.)

Cultural background and languages other than English (LOTE) spoken at home

The VET workforce in care and support sectors does not appear to fully reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of modern Australia. For example, while 68.1% of respondents identify as Australians, with a further 26.3% identifying as ‘Anglo-European’, almost all (94.2%) are citizens, with only 5.3% permanent residents. This is far smaller than the proportion of born overseas reported for the wider VET workforce (33.0%) and Australian workforce (32.4%).²⁹ These findings do suggest consistency with JSA’s conclusion that migration pathways are used infrequently for VET roles at a national level.³⁰

²⁸ ABS, Customised report based on Labour Force Survey, 2024, four-quarter average data.

²⁹ JSA, *VET Workforce Study*, 2024.

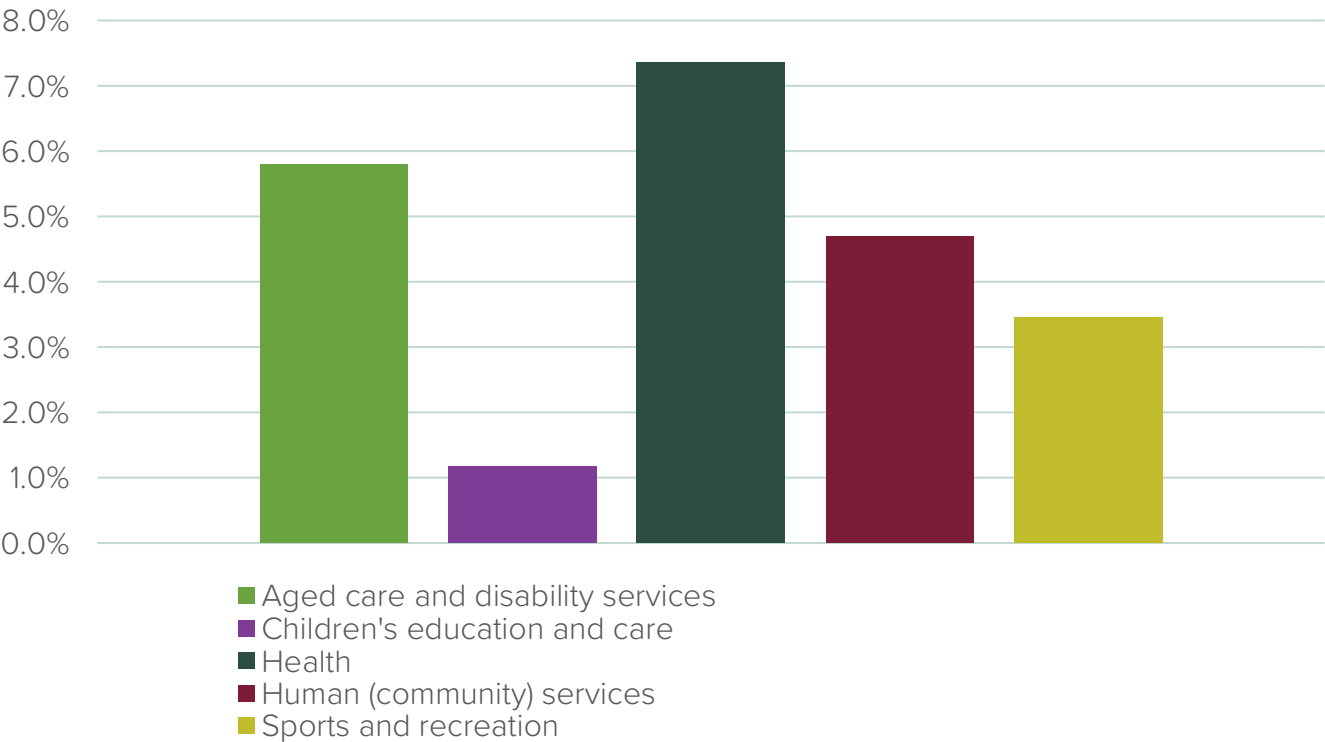
³⁰ JSA, *VET Workforce Study*, 2024.

Respondents were overwhelmingly English-speaking and monolingual. Only 4.5% reported speaking a language other than English (LOTE) at home. This is far lower than the wider VET workforce (20.5%) and the wider Australian workforce (23.4%).³¹

First Nations professionals in the care and support VET workforce

Almost 1 in 20 respondents identified as First Nations. The proportion of respondents from the care and support VET workforce identifying as First Nations (4.5%) is more than double the proportion of First Nations people working in VET as found by JSA (1.8%) and in the last Australian census (2.1% in 2021).³² The proportion of respondents identifying as First Nations within the TTA segment was similar to the overall proportion: 4.7%. However, variations in the proportion of people identifying as First Nations were observed at a sector level, as seen in Figure 3, below. The nuances of this finding are explored later in this section.

Figure 3: Percentage First Nations in care and support VET workforce



While noting the smaller size of this sample, these sector-specific proportions of VET professionals who identify as First Nations are noteworthy in the context of the composition of the workforces they support. The relatively high proportion of First Nations VET professionals in aged care and disability services, for instance, stands in contrast to the directly employed nursing and personal care staff in the aged care sector itself, where First Nations staff make up just 1.2% based on the

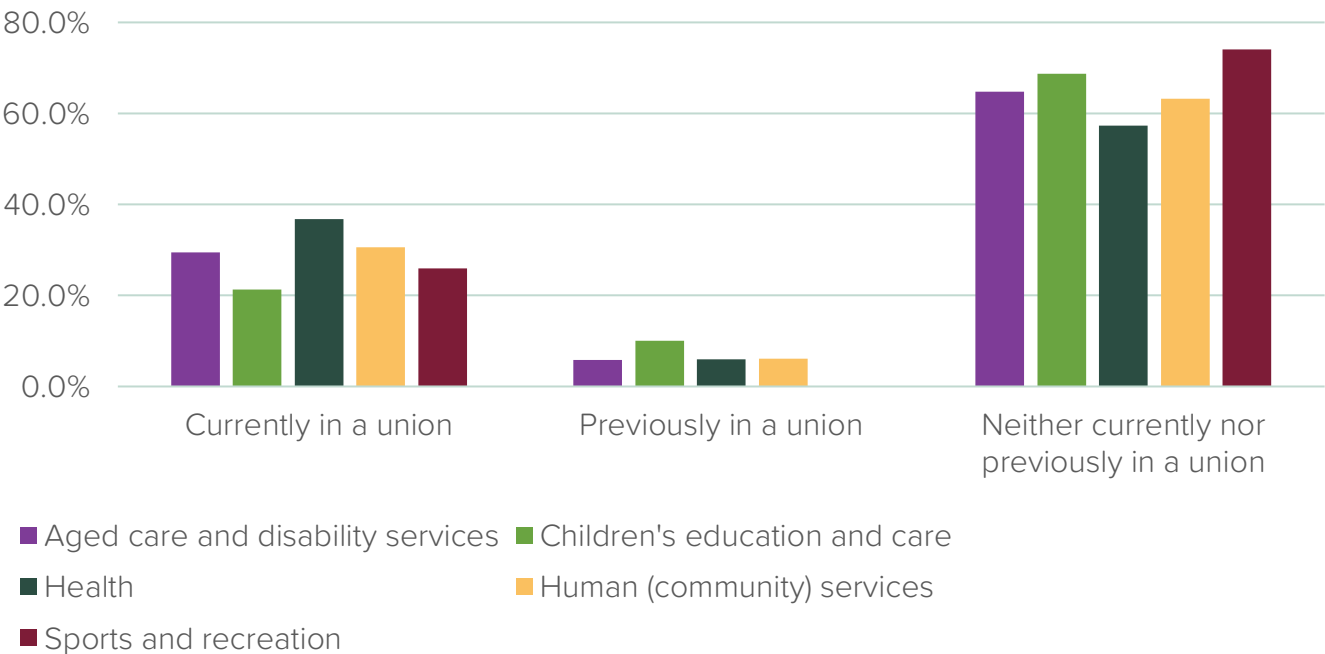
³¹ JSA, *VET Workforce Study*, 2024.
³² JSA, *VET Workforce Study*, 2024.

2024 Aged Care Provider Workforce Survey report.³³ Conversely, while these findings suggest just 1.2% of the children’s education and care VET respondents identify as First Nations, the 2024 national census of the early childhood education and care (ECEC) workforce indicated a far higher proportion of First Nations staff: 3.8%.³⁴

Union status of the care and support VET workforce

Nearly one third (30.8%) of respondents in the VET workforce in HumanAbility’s sectors are current union members. This is nearly double the proportion estimated among the wider VET workforce (16.1%).³⁵ A further 6.8% of respondents reported they had previously been a member of a union. Looking between sectors (Figure 4) highlights that currently professionals within health are more likely to be in a union (36.7% of respondents) than those in other sectors such as CEC (21.2%).

Figure 4: Union status in care and support VET workforce, by sector



³³ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2023 Aged Care Provider Workforce Survey Report, 2024, https://www.gen-agedcaredata.gov.au/getmedia/aa6c9983-5ee1-42c2-a7a8-183d76fad46b/2023_ACPWS_Report, last accessed 16 May 2025.

³⁴ Commonwealth Department of Education, 2024 Early Childhood Education and Care National Workforce Census Report, 2025, <https://www.education.gov.au/download/19099/2024-early-childhood-education-and-care-national-workforce-census-report/40926/document/pdf>, last accessed 16 May 2025.

³⁵ JSA, VET Workforce Study, 2024.

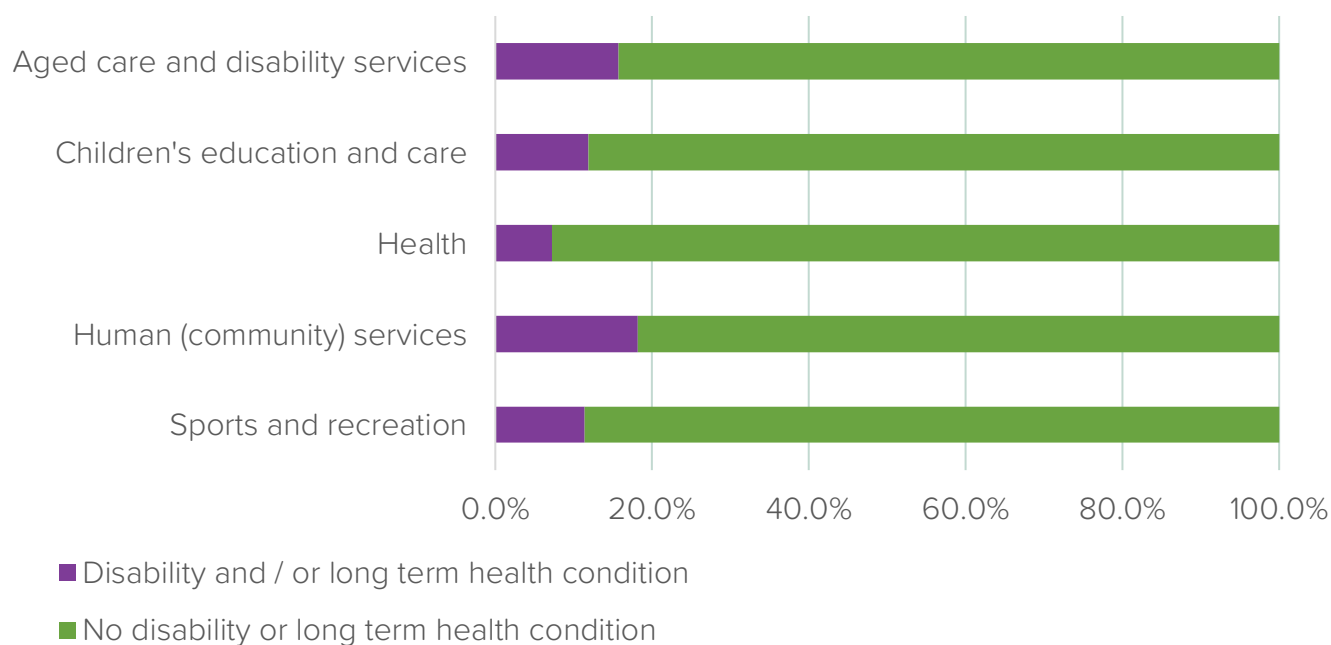
The most commonly reported unions that participants were current members of included the Australian Education Union (AEU), State School Teachers Union of Western Australia (SSTUWA), Queensland Teachers Union (QTU), Queensland Nurses & Midwives' Union (QNMU), Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF), NSW Teachers Federation, NSW Nurses & Midwives' Association (NSWNMA), and the Together Union.

Long-term health condition or disability among the care and support VET workforce

A much smaller proportion of the VET workforce for the care and support sectors appears to have a disability or long-term health condition compared to the national VET workforce or Australian population. When looking at survey responses, 12.3% of respondents reported having a disability or long-term health condition. This is lower than the proportion of the wider VET workforce who reported having a long-term health condition (36%) and the 1.2% of the wider VET workforce who require assistance with core activities.

Differences were seen between organisation type, where 11.0% of TAFE respondents reported having a long-term health condition or disability, compared to 14.7% of private RTO respondents. Differences were also noted when examining the size of the organisation where respondents were employed. This data suggests medium-sized organisations (100–999 students) employed the highest number of VET professionals with a long-term health condition or disability (14.0%).

Figure 5: Respondents reporting a disability or a long-term health condition, by sector



Qualifications of the care and support VET workforce

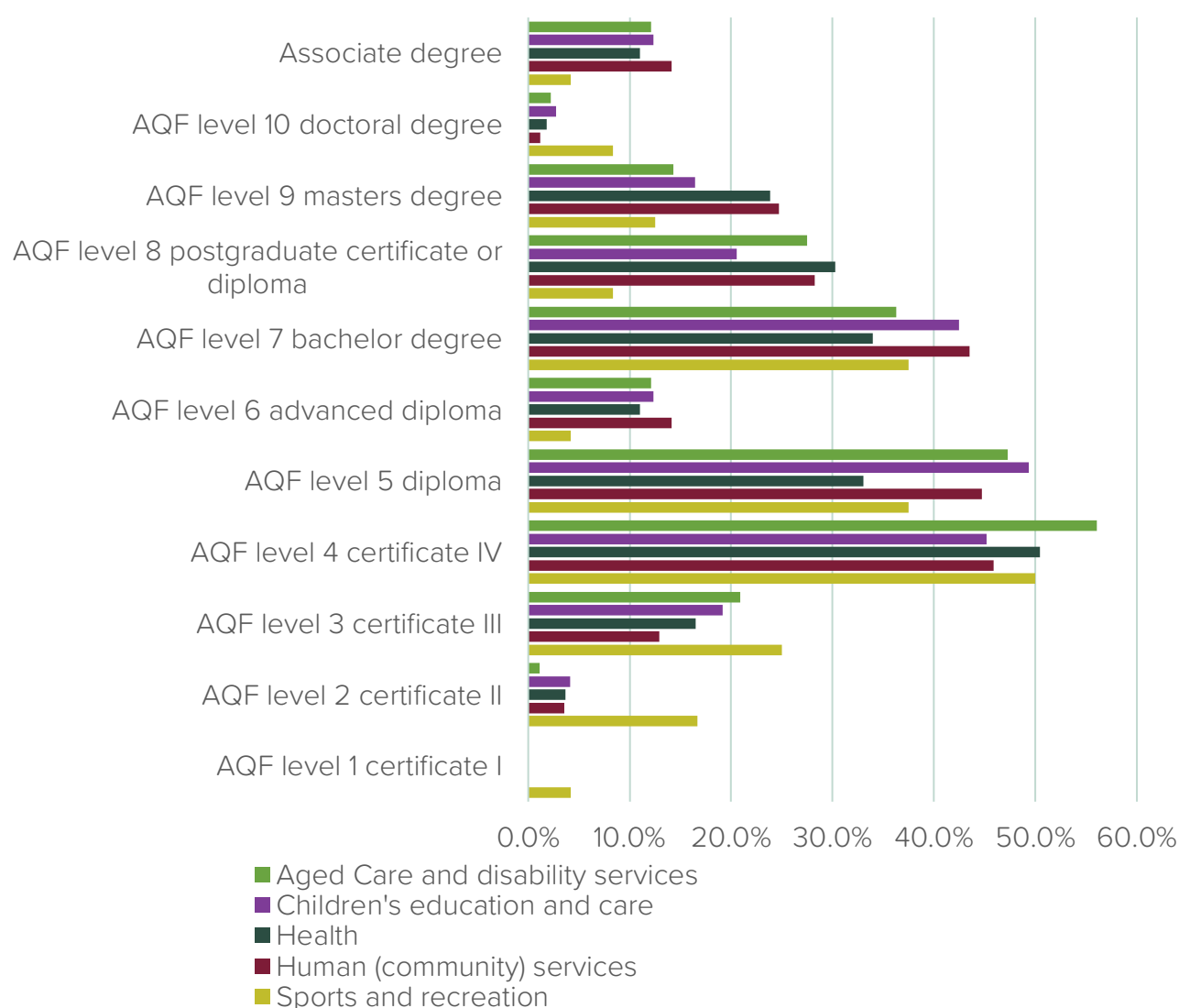
HumanAbility asked respondents about qualifications they held or were currently pursuing, with individuals able to provide multiple responses. Across the care and support workforce, there is a high level of education, with 39.7% holding a bachelor's degree, 25.8% holding a postgraduate degree, 18.5% holding a master's degree, and 1.9% holding a doctoral degree. This is higher than previous research by JSA found for the wider VET workforce, where just under a quarter (24.8%) had a bachelor's degree and 17.2% had a postgraduate degree as their highest level of qualification.³⁶ The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) was used to describe and identify qualifications that respondents reported holding or working towards.

Table 3: Top 10 reported previously held qualifications in care and support VET workforce

Qualification	Percent
Certificate IV in Training and Assessment	94.9%
Diploma of Vocational Education and Training	22.9%
Diploma of Training Design and Development	15.8%
Assessor Skill Set	9.1%
Graduate Diploma of Adult Language, Literacy and Numeracy Practice	2.0%
Enterprise Trainer and Assessor Skill Set	1.3%
Online Learning and Assessment Skill Set	1.0%
Enterprise Trainer and Assessor Skill Set/Facilitator Skill Set	0.6%
Workplace Trainer Skill Set	0.6%
Other	1.6%

³⁶ JSA, *VET Workforce Study*, 2024. Note that in the previous 2019 NCVER research, only the highest qualifications held were captured, and this research collected data regarding all qualifications held.

Figure 6: Qualifications in care and support VET workforce, by sector



Qualifications currently being pursued by the care and support VET workforce

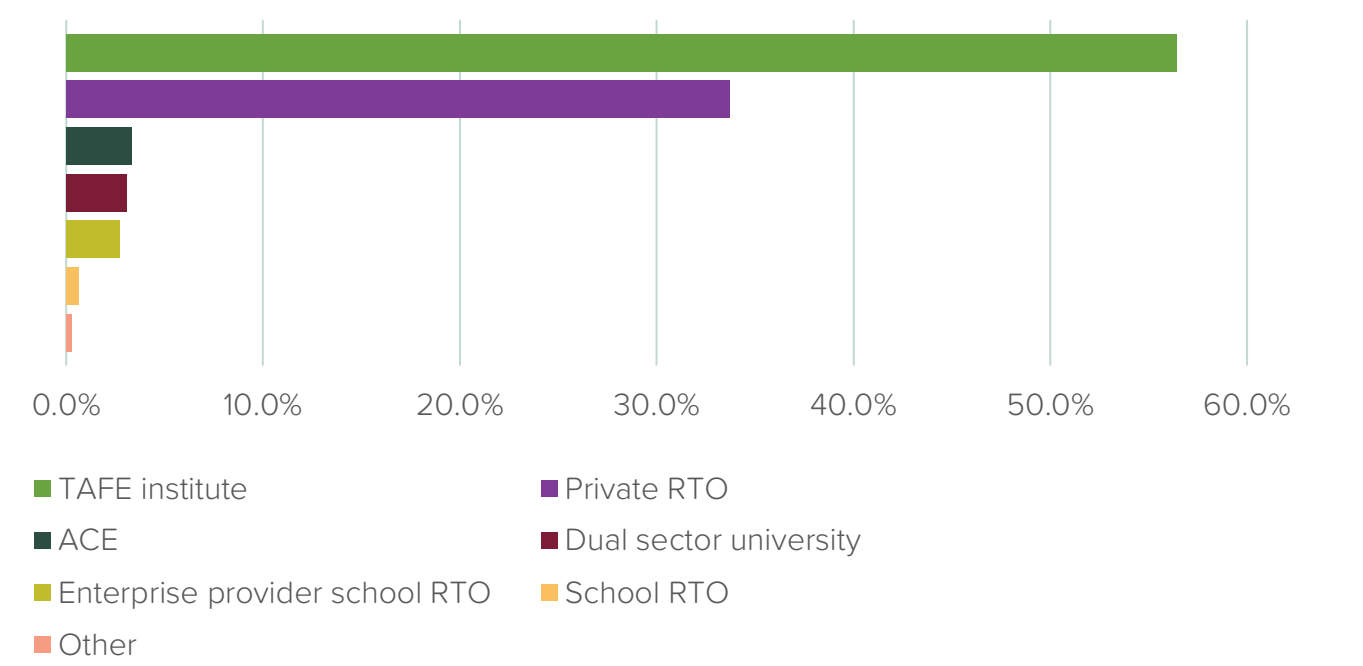
The majority of the workforce reported that they are not currently pursuing any qualifications (73.9%). Of those currently pursuing qualifications, the TAE50122 *Diploma of Vocational Education and Training* (24.1%) and the TAE40122 *Certificate IV in Training and Assessment* (21.8%) were commonly reported. When looking between sectors, of those currently pursuing qualifications, respondents in aged care and disability services and sports and recreation were more likely to report studying the TAE (75.0%). Outside of the TAE, the workforce reported studying master's degrees in Education and Teaching and associate degrees and graduate certificates in Vocational Education and Training.

Types of RTO where the care and support VET workforce is employed

Over half of respondents reported currently working for TAFE (56.4%), with 33.7% working for a private RTO. Clear distinctions in the makeup of the VET workforce were identified between type

of organisations, where professionals reporting working for TAFEs hold higher distributions of their workforce in a TTA role (90.5%) and have fewer professionals in leadership (6.8%) or administration (1.6%) positions compared to professionals reporting working for private RTOs (70.1%, 35.2%, and 11.3%, respectively).

Figure 7: Distribution of care and support VET workforce across different types of RTOs



Demographic differences across employing RTOs in the care and support sectors

RTOs differ in the demographic composition of their workforces. The survey data collected suggests that larger RTOs have less cultural and linguistic diversity than smaller organisations when it comes to their professionals working in/for the care and support sectors.

Table 4: Proportion of key demographic cohorts by size of the employing RTO

Demographic	Small (<100 students)	Medium (100–999 students)	Large (>1000 students)
Female	75.9%	84.3%	85.2%
First Nations	15.6%	3.7%	2.7%
LOTE at home	8.2%	6.6%	2.9%
Disability	13.1%	14.0%	11.4%

Demographic differences between rural, remote, and metropolitan areas

Most respondents within the care and support VET workforce reported living or working in metropolitan areas (Table 5), with a smaller proportion working in rural or remote areas (16.2%). When looking at the demographic makeup of these geographical areas, it is seen that the rural and remote areas have a higher proportion of female respondents (86.2%), with no respondents reporting LOTE (0%). However, these areas contain a higher proportion of professionals who identify as First Nations (12.3%), compared to the proportion in regional (9.1%) and metro regions (1.3%).

When looking at contract type, regional locations also held the greatest proportion of full-time VET professionals (69.6%).

Table 5: Rural, remote, and metropolitan distribution of the care and support VET workforce

	Residential location	Primary VET employer location
Metropolitan	71.0%	66.8%
Regional centre	14.6%	15.2%
Large rural towns	6.7%	4.2%
Medium rural town	1.4%	1.2%
Small rural town	3.6%	9.7%
Remote community	0.8%	1.2%
Very remote community	1.6%	1.5%

2.2 Demographic findings on the VET workforce in aged care and disability services

Of all HumanAbility's sectors, the VET workforce in aged care and disability services has the most culturally diverse profile and the oldest age profile. Two thirds (67.0%) reported being over 50 years old, far higher than the wider care and support VET average of over half (55.5%). Conversely, those aged between 30 and 49 years make up only 30.7% of VET professionals reporting in aged care and disability, well below the wider care and support VET average of 43.0%. The age profile of this workforce was raised by several stakeholders, particularly with respect to the need to increase the pool of younger VET professionals as older professionals transition into retirement. However, stakeholders also emphasised the deep knowledge and extensive experience these professionals bring, especially to mentoring and on-the-job support to younger staff entering the sector.

The sector comprises the highest proportion of non-Australian background professionals (39.4%) and the second-highest proportion of people identifying as First Nations (5.7%). The percentage of VET staff in the sector with a disability or long-term health condition (15.7%) is higher than the overall care and support VET sector average of 12.3%, exceeded only by human (community) services (18.1%).

From an organisational perspective, aged care and disability services VET professionals reported being notably more likely to work in adult and community education (ACE), with 7.2% of respondents working at such providers, compared to the wider care and support VET average of 3.3%.

By geographical location, VET staff in aged care and disability are more likely (19.1%) to work in regional centres than colleagues in other care and support sectors (14.7%).

Within the aged care and disability services sector, TTA professionals made up 77.2% of survey responses.

Figure 8: Role distribution within the aged care and disability services workforce

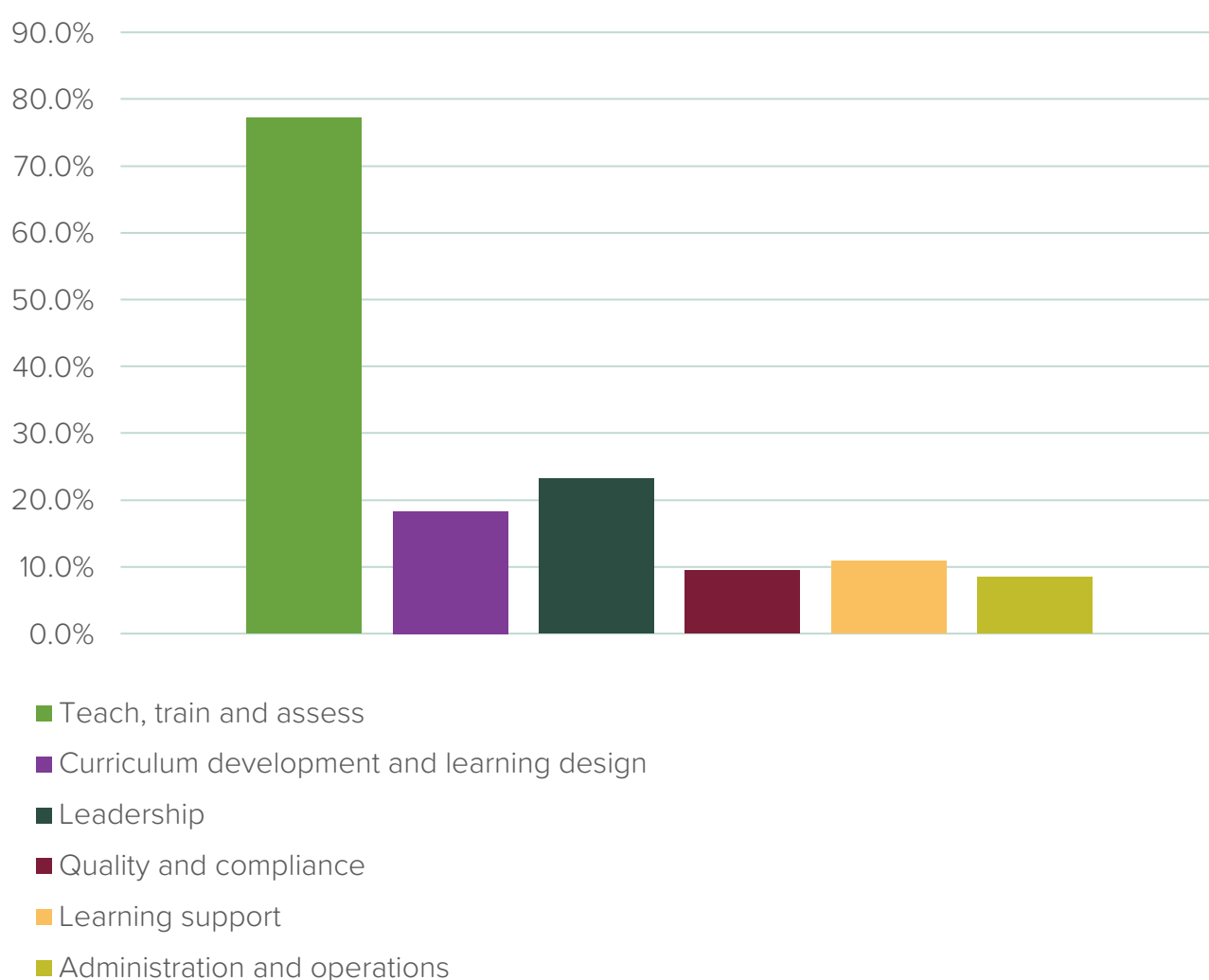


Table 6: Demographic data points within aged care and disability services VET workforce

Demographic	Aged care and disability services	Care and support VET workforce	Student demographic (enrolments) ³⁷
Female	88.8%	84.1%	70.9%
First Nations	5.7%	4.3%	3.3%
Disability or long-term health condition	15.7%	12.3%	5.2%
LOTE at home	5.7%	4.6%	33.1%

2.3 Demographic findings on the VET workforce in children's education and care

The children's education and care VET workforce has the highest proportion of female respondents and least culturally diverse respondents of the VET care and support sectors.

While women make up 84.1% of VET respondents across the broader care and support sector, in children's education and care, this value rises to 93.8%. This is notably higher than the children's education and care workforce itself, in which women comprise 81%.³⁸

Culturally, 72.9% of the sector respondents identify as coming from an Australian background, above the wider care and support VET average of 68.1%. The proportion of reported First Nations professionals (1.1%) falls well below the care and support VET average of 4.3%. First Nations professionals in the children's education and care VET workforce also make up a smaller proportion than in VET overall (1.8% in 2024) and in the wider Australian community (2.1% in 2021).³⁹ The proportion of respondents in the sector reporting they have a disability or long-term health condition is the same as the average across the VET workforce in care and support (11.8% vs 12.3%, respectively).

Perhaps a consequence of the known issue of ECEC service concentration in major urban centres,⁴⁰ VET professional respondents supporting the sector working in metropolitan areas make up 70.5% of the workforce, slightly higher than the wider care and support VET average of 68.9%.

³⁷ NCVER, [Total VET students and courses](#), 2025, [VOCSTATS], NCVER website. Reflected here are data for students enrolled in aged care and disability services related qualifications under the CHC training package in 2023.

³⁸ ABS, EQ06 - Employed persons by Industry group of main job (ANZSIC), Sex, State and Territory, November 1984 onwards (Pivot Table) [data set], [Labour Force, Australia, Detailed](#), November 2024.

³⁹ JSA, *VET Workforce Study*, 2024.

⁴⁰ Mitchell Institute, 'Childcare deserts & oases: How accessible is childcare in Australia?', 2022, <https://www.vu.edu.au/mitchell-institute/early-learning/childcare-deserts-oases-how-accessible-is-childcare-in-australia>, last accessed 23 May 2025.

Over 80% of respondents in the CEC reported holding a TTA role (80.9%).

Figure 9: Role distribution within the children’s education and care workforce VET workforce

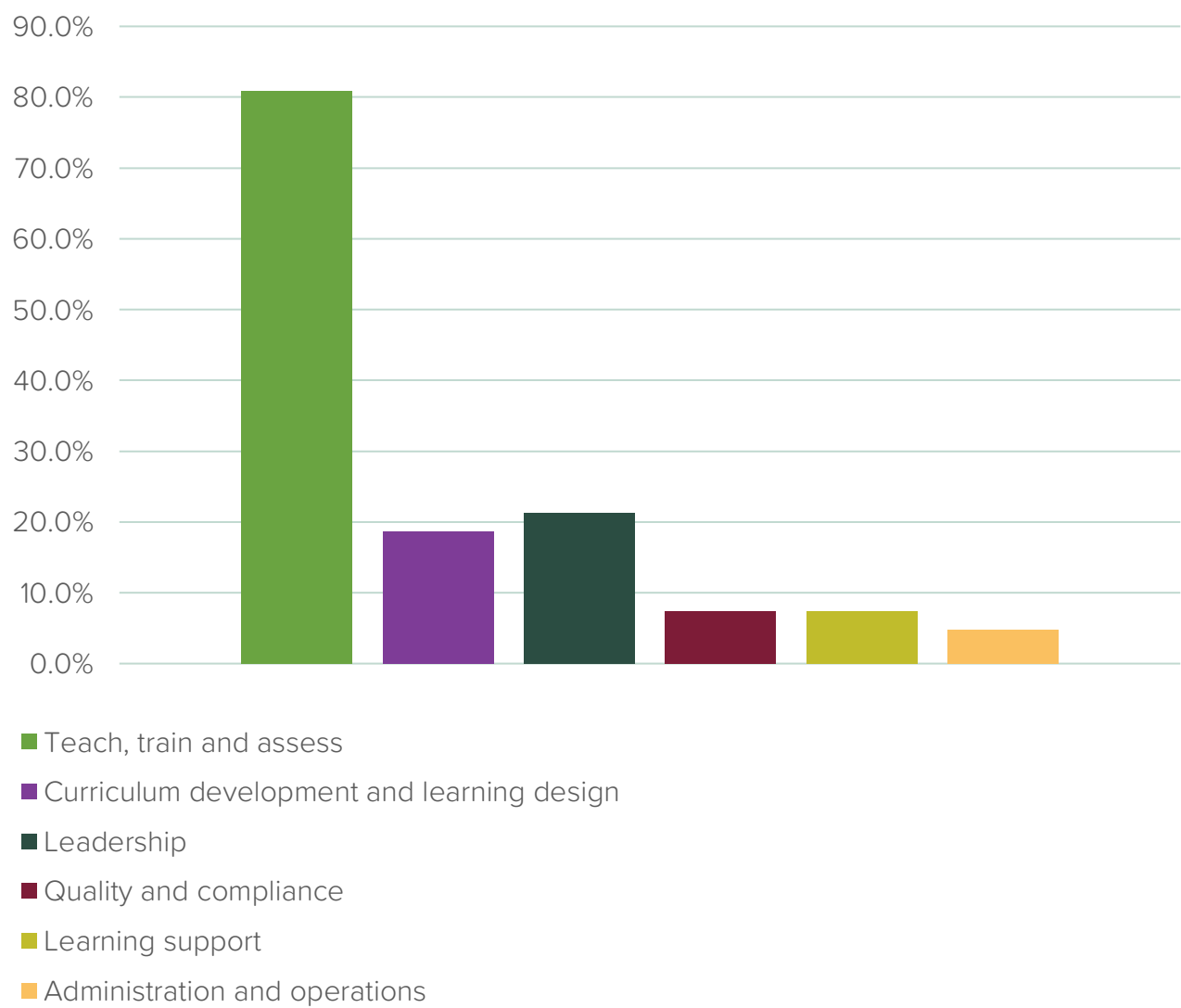


Table 7: Demographic data points within the children’s education and care VET workforce

Demographic	Children’s Education and Care	Care and support VET workforce	Student demographic (enrolments) ⁴¹
Female	93.8%	84.1%	93.8%
First Nations	1.1%	4.3%	5.3%
Disability or long-term health condition	11.8%	12.3%	6.6%
LOTE at home	1.6%	4.6%	24.3%

2.4 Demographic findings on the VET workforce in health

Survey findings indicated that the health VET sector is among the most culturally diverse in the broader care and support VET workforce.

First Nations staff make up 7.3% of the reported health VET workforce, a higher proportion than any other care and support sector. However, the sector reported the lowest proportion of VET staff with a disability or long-term health condition: 7.2%, compared to the wider care and support VET average of 12.3%.

In terms of the geographic composition of the workforce, the health sector is second only to aged care and disability services sector in terms of the proportion of its VET workforce centred in regional areas (17.8% vs 19.1%), while it sits at around the broader care and support VET average of 2.9% for its proportion of staff working in remote and very remote communities, with 2.1% reporting they are located in ‘very remote’ regions, and 0.8% in ‘remote’.

Within the health sector, 80.6% of respondents reported holding a TTA role.

⁴¹ NCVER, [Total VET students and courses](#), 2024, [VOCSTATS], NCVER website. Reflected here are data for students enrolled in children’s education and care related qualifications under the CHC training package in 2023. Accessed May 2025.

Figure 10: Role distribution within the health VET workforce

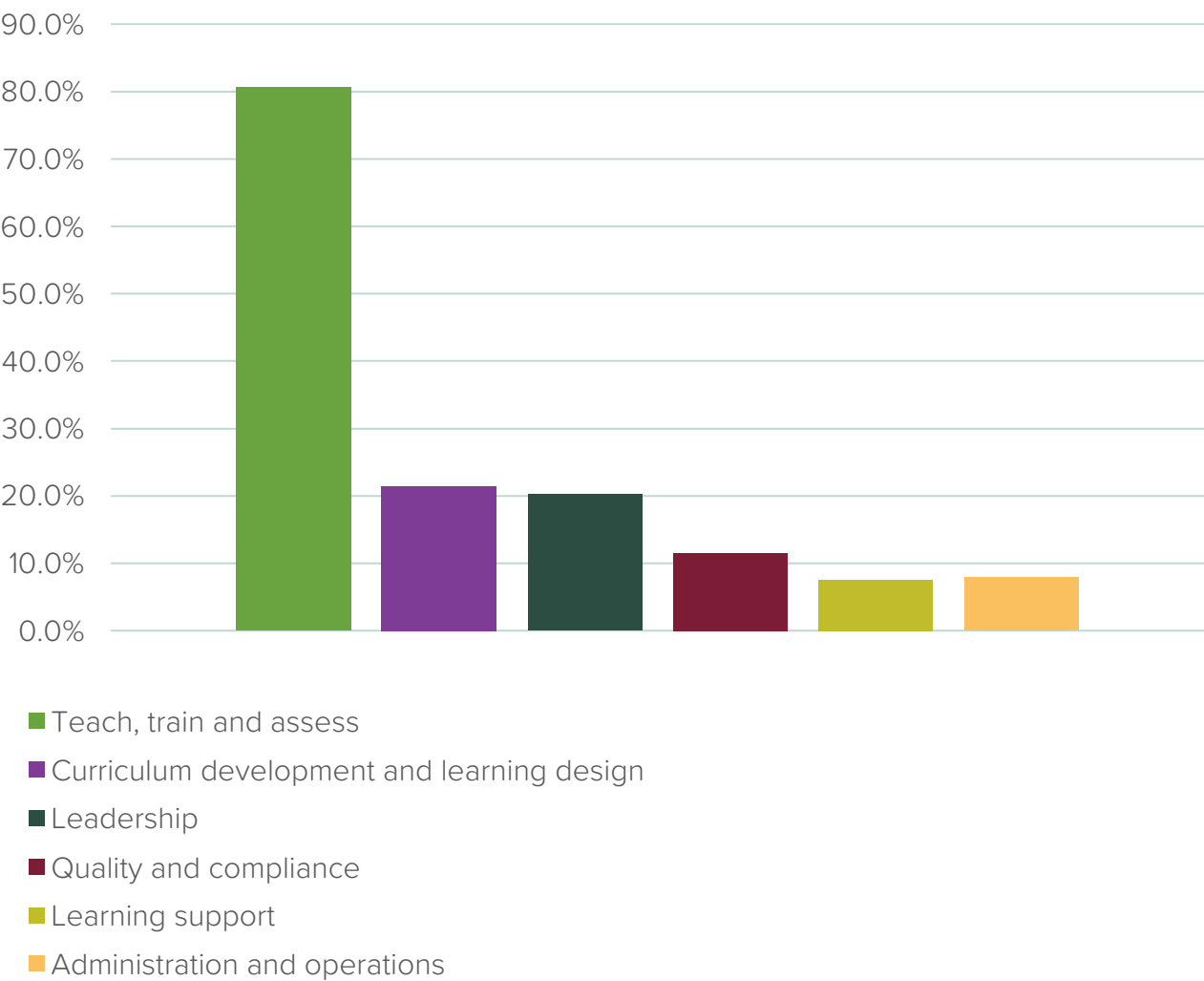


Table 8: Demographic data points within the health VET workforce

Demographic	Health	Care and support VET workforce	Student demographic (enrolments) % ⁴²
Female	87.5%	84.1%	81.1%
First Nations	7.3%	4.3%	5.6%
Disability or long-term health condition	7.2%	12.3%	6.6%
LOTE at home	6.7%	4.6%	22.7%

⁴² NCVER, [Total VET students and courses](#), 2024, [VOCSTATS], NCVER website. Reflected here are data for students enrolled in health qualifications under the HLT training package in 2023, last accessed 23 May 2025.

2.5 Demographic findings on the VET workforce in human (community) services

Respondents working in the human (community) services sector of the VET workforce skew towards the lower end of the broader care and support VET sector by age profile (48.0% vs 44.45% under 50 years old), and it has the highest proportion of professionals with a disability or long-term health condition (18.1% vs 12.3%).

In rural and remote areas, the workforce is proportionally larger than the wider care and support VET average (22.8% vs 16.2% reported), while its strong level of cultural diversity sees it rank alongside health and aged care and disability services as one of the most diverse sectors.

Through a cultural lens, the workforce is diverse; it falls above the wider sector averages for both the proportion of professional respondents from First Nations (4.6% vs 4.3%) and non-Australian backgrounds (38.5% vs 36.3%).

The workforce is considerably spread out across geographical areas. While 16.2% of the wider care and support VET workforce reported being in rural and remote communities, this value rises to 22.2% in human (community) services.

Respondents reporting a TTA role made up 81.9% of the human (community) services sector. This was the highest proportion of all the care and support sectors.

Figure 11: Role distribution within human (community) services VET workforce

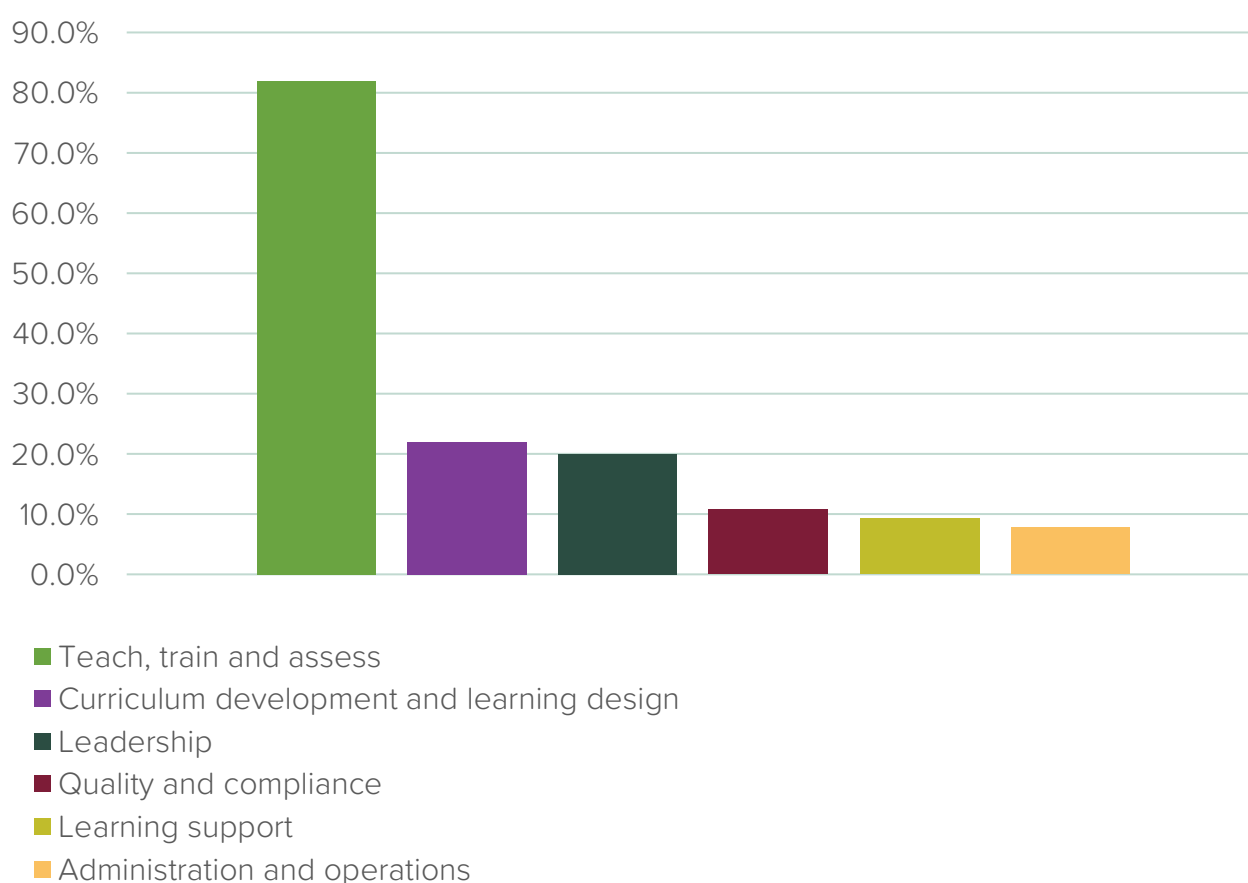


Table 9: Demographic data points within the human (community) services VET workforce

Demographic	Human (community) services	Care and support VET workforce	Student demographic (enrolments) ⁴³
Female	84.7%	84.1%	71.4%
First Nations	4.6%	4.3%	8.9%
Disability or long-term health condition	18.1%	12.3%	10.3%
LOTE at home	4.5%	4.6%	18.2%

2.6 Demographic findings on the VET workforce in sports and recreation

Although the overall size of the sample for this cohort was relatively small,⁴⁴ survey data suggest that the sports and recreation VET workforce is the youngest of the care and support sectors and comprises more male than female workers. Professionals aged 30–39 make up 21.8% of the sports and recreation workforce, compared to the 14.1% across the wider care and support VET workforce.

The sports and recreation workforce bucks the gender profile of HumanAbility’s other sectors, with almost two thirds (66.1%) of its respondents identifying as male (vs an average of 15.8%).

The sector sits at around the wider care and support VET average in terms of its cultural diversity, though falls slightly below the average with respect to its proportion of First Nations staff (3.4%, compared to the wider average of 4.3%).

Geographically, respondents in the sports and recreation VET workforce are more concentrated in metropolitan and regional centres, with 13.3% of the workforce operating in rural and remote communities, compared to the 16.2% average across the wider care and support VET sector.

Within the sports and recreation sector, 73.5% reported holding a TTA role. This was the smallest proportion out of all the care and support sectors.

⁴³ NCVER, [Total VET students and courses](#), [VOCSTATS], NCVER website. Reflected here are data for students enrolled in human (community) services related qualifications under the CHC training package in 2023, last accessed 21 May 2025.

⁴⁴ 70 respondents reported working in sports and recreation.

Figure 12: Role distribution within the sports and recreation VET workforce

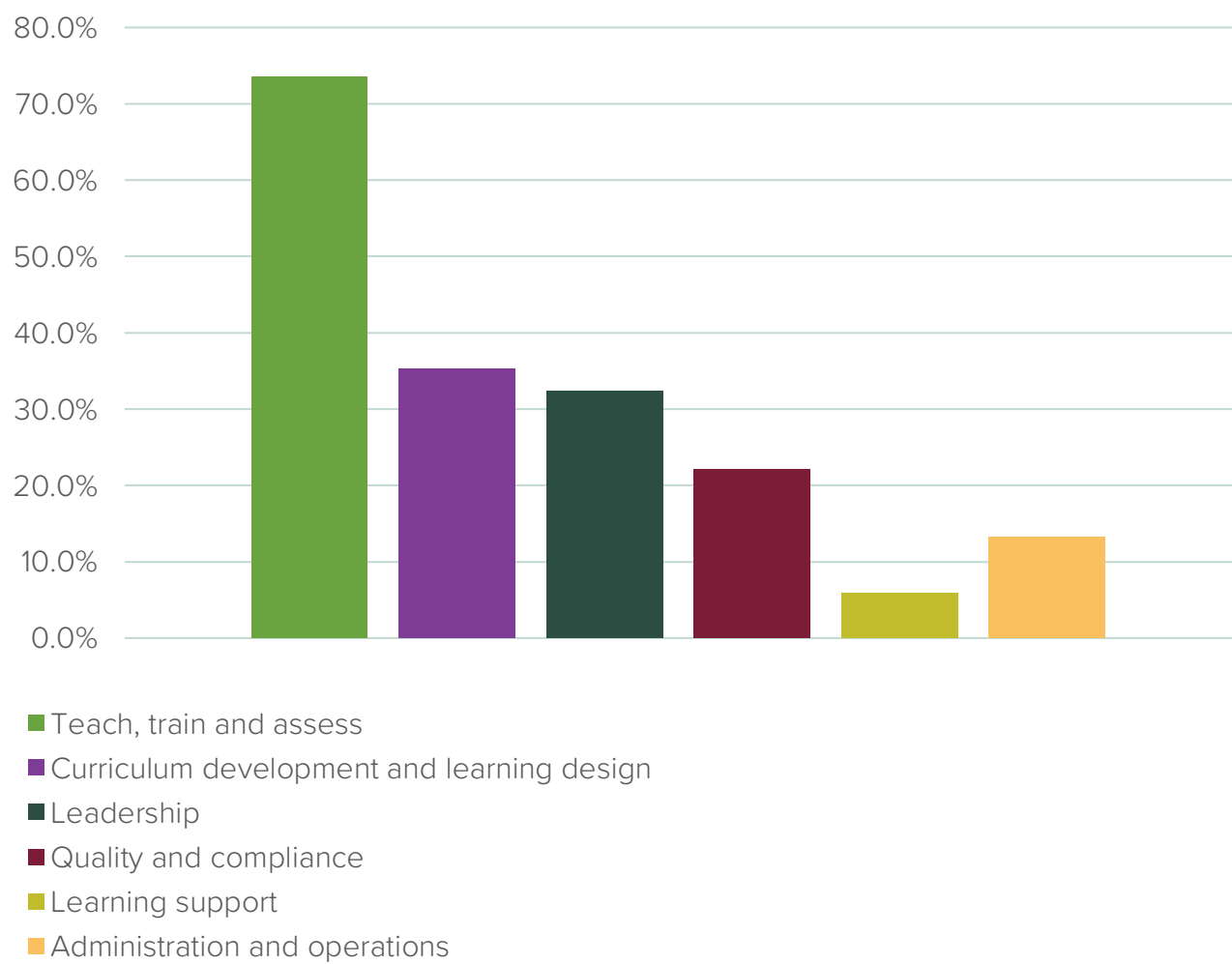


Table 10: Demographic data points within the sports and recreation VET workforce

Demographic	Sports and recreation	Care and support VET workforce	Student demographic (enrolments) ⁴⁵
Female	33.9%	84.1%	41.5%
First Nations	3.4%	4.3%	4.2%
Disability or long-term health condition	11.4%	12.3%	3.8%
LOTE at home	0.0%	4.6%	5.5%

⁴⁵ NCVER, [Total VET students and courses](#), 2024, [VOCSTATS], NCVER website. Reflected here are data for students enrolled in sports and recreation qualifications under the SIS training package in 2023, last accessed 21 May 2025.

3. Teachers, trainers, and assessors deep dive

This section presents detailed findings from key VET professional roles within HumanAbility's five sectors. While focusing on TTA roles, it also identifies new or additional VET professional roles in these sectors, and outlines the key tasks and responsibilities associated.

The findings demonstrate how role titles can often be ambiguous or insufficient in capturing the diversity and specialisation of roles, especially within smaller RTOs, such as course managers and other leadership roles. It also demonstrates the varying interpretations of these roles, as certain terms are sometimes used interchangeably, which is supported by the observations regarding the tasks performed.

Finally, this section reports on the growing use of online and hybrid delivery for courses, reinforcing national research that shows advanced digital skills are now a core requirement.

3.1 TTA professionals hold multiple roles and responsibilities

Teachers, trainers, and assessors across HumanAbility's sectors

The majority of the TTA respondents reported a combined trainer and assessor role (41.3%), while smaller proportions reported holding a specific trainer role (2.8%) or assessor role (4.6%).

Differences were seen across sectors, as apparent in [Table 11](#). It is important to note that during stakeholder consultations, it was apparent that terms like 'teacher', 'trainer', and 'educator' are often used interchangeably, with no clear differentiation between them.

In addition, some roles have been captured under 'other' (4.9%). This includes but is not limited to team leaders, course coordinators, course managers, advanced skills teachers, and mentors.

Table 11: TTA role distribution of the care and support VET workforce, by sector

	Aged care and disability services	Children's education and care	Health	Human (community) services	Sports and recreation	Care and support VET workforce
VET trainer and assessor	50.0%	43.4%	32.5%	42.8%	34.0%	41.3%
VET teacher	27.5%	19.0%	30.0%	20.8%	12.0%	23.9%
Senior trainer and/or assessor	12.8%	11.1%	16.2%	16.0%	28.0%	14.9%
TAFE lecturer	7.6%	19.7%	16.2%	16.0%	20.0%	17.3%
Head teacher	11.5%	10.5%	12.3%	10.7%	26.0%	11.1%
VET trainer	3.8%	2.6%	3.9%	2.3%	4.0%	2.9%
VET assessor	7.0%	4.6%	2.4%	4.1%	2.0%	4.6%
LLN practitioner	3.8%	1.9%	0.9%	2.9%	2.0%	1.6%

Spread across RTO type and size

The majority of the TTA workforce respondents reported they work at a TAFE institute (63.4%), with 28.9% at a private RTO, and 8.9% at dual-sector universities, enterprise RTOs, school RTOs, and ACE organisations combined. Nearly two-thirds (63.5%) of the TTA workforce are currently employed by large organisations with over 1000 students.

Key tasks and responsibilities

TTA respondents reported holding responsibilities across a range of domains. Outside of the expected TTA responsibilities such as delivering training sessions (91.8% of TTA respondents agreed to holding this responsibility), core actions often extended to responsibilities within curriculum learning and design, and quality assurance and compliance, as seen in [Table 12](#). A high proportion of TTA professionals reported assessing learner capabilities (81.7%) and are involved in creating learning and assessment materials (77.7%). Around half of TTA respondents engage in business development or industry activities (55.0%) and are involved with administrative tasks (61.7%) and VET compliance and documentation (47.9%).

Table 12: TTA role reported tasks across the care and support VET workforce⁴⁶

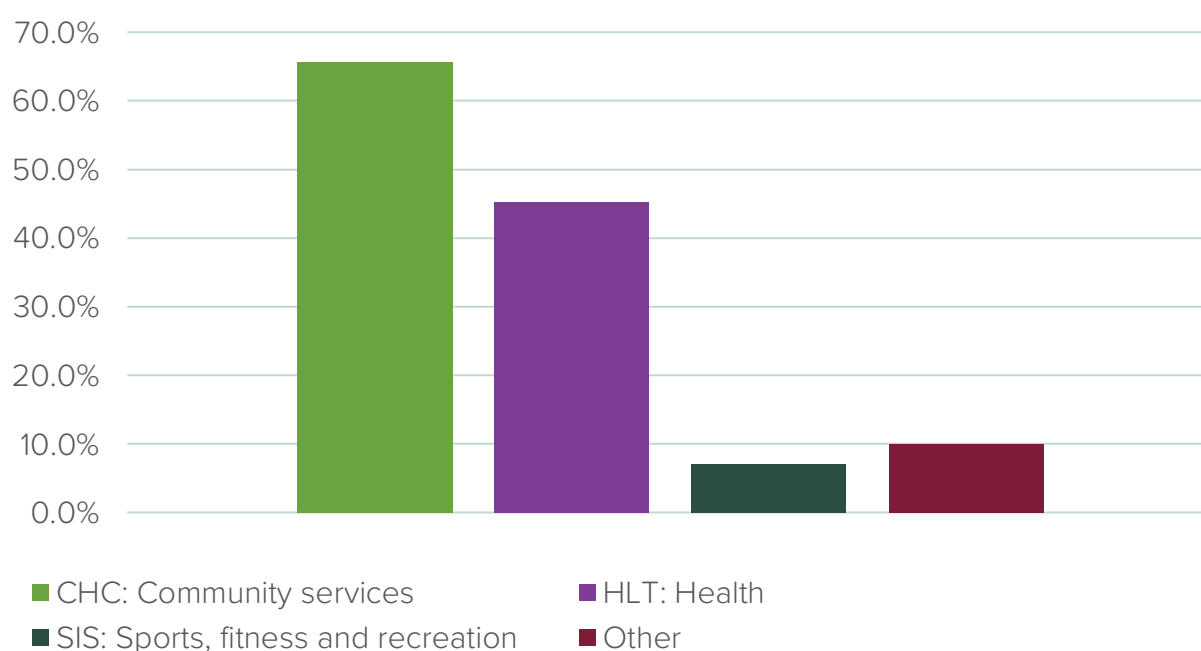
	Head teacher	Senior trainer and/or assessor	TAFE lecturer	VET teacher	VET trainer and assessor
Deliver training sessions	86.2%	93.5%	91.9%	93.2%	95.4%
Pursue professional development and participate in continuous improvement	93.1%	93.5%	83.8%	85.1%	78.6%
Network with industry and stakeholders	100.0%	78.3%	86.5%	78.4%	72.5%
Assess learner capabilities	65.5%	84.8%	91.9%	82.4%	86.3%
Follow legislative and policy requirements	89.7%	87.0%	75.7%	81.1%	76.3%
Create learning and assessment materials	75.9%	82.6%	75.7%	81.1%	77.1%
Supervise or mentor staff	100.0%	93.5%	64.9%	43.2%	54.2%
Select and create learning resources	86.2%	71.7%	62.2%	56.8%	56.5%
Attend meetings and perform administrative tasks	75.9%	76.1%	62.2%	54.1%	61.8%
Engage in business development or industry activities	86.2%	69.6%	64.9%	41.9%	46.6%

Training packages taught by professionals who teach, train, and assess

HumanAbility's workforce sectors are trained through three training packages, for which HumanAbility is also responsible. These are CHC Community Services, HLT Health, and SIS Sports, Fitness and Recreation. Over two thirds of respondents in a TTA role are involved with teaching the CHC community services training package (68.1%). It was noted, however, that over half of the respondents also reported being involved in teaching across multiple training packages (50.5%).

⁴⁶ Darker colour gradient indicates higher percentages, and lighter colour gradient indicates lower percentages, demonstrating the amount of overlap in reported tasks across roles listed.

Figure 13: Training packages taught by the teach, train, and assess workforce⁴⁷



Most respondents hold multiple roles

Over half of TTAs in the care and support workforce reported holding more than one role within VET (53.4%). When looking across geographic areas, respondents in rural and remote areas were less likely to hold multiple roles (50.9%). Additionally, a proportion of the workforce also reported holding another role outside of VET (37.2% of TTA professionals).

Common combinations of roles reported include being a VET teacher, trainer, and assessor, while also holding a role in leadership or in curriculum development. Some respondents identified working separate TTA roles, for example, one in TAFE and one outside of TAFE. Interestingly, while several TTA professionals identified holding administration and compliance responsibilities, only a handful identified as holding an official administrative role. Combinations of roles outside of TTA included holding roles both in leadership and in quality and compliance.

Amongst TTA professionals, respondents working in TAFE institutes were less likely to hold multiple roles, with 46.5% reporting multiple roles vs 66.6% for enterprise provider schools, 65.1% for private RTOs, and 64.7% for ACE. TTA professionals were also more likely to hold multiple roles when working for small organisations (fewer than 100 students), with 71.0% reporting multiple roles versus 62.0% for organisations with 100–999 students and 48.1% for organisations with greater than 1000 students.

⁴⁷ Respondents were able to submit multiple responses; therefore, percentages across values total greater than 100%.

Contract types

Exploring employment type highlights that the proportion of respondents within the TTA segment under full-time contracts (63.6%) is similar to both the wider VET workforce (66.3%) and Australian workforce (58.9%). Across all RTO types, the proportion of TTA respondents under part-time contracts is again similar to the Australian workforce (27.8% vs 32.9%), with 12.1% working under casual contracts. It was noted during stakeholder consultations that bringing in TTAs on Hourly Pay Instructor (HPI) contracts was one strategy used to manage fluctuations in workforce needs, with a reported long-term goal of bringing on the professional full-time. Capturing volunteering roles, which was not previously measured by JSA, shows that volunteers only make up a small proportion of the total TTA respondents across the care and support workforce (0.8%).

Delivery modes for teaching, training, and assessment

The JSA VET Blueprint noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to the growth of and shift to online and blended delivery.⁴⁸ When looking at the care and support VET workforce, over half of respondents reported using a mixed-methods delivery for their TTA role (58.0%), with a small portion (6.3%) using online only. By comparison, NCVER estimated that around 8.6% of all VET program commencements in 2017 were in courses delivered fully online.⁴⁹ While this survey data does not suggest a high use of online only, the high proportion of blended learning may present future challenges for TTA professionals. When looking at open-ended survey responses, it was highlighted that there are challenges with hybrid/online teaching, where classroom set-up does not best support online delivery, courses themselves are not suited to online delivery, and there are challenges with engaging students in self-directed learning.

‘There are lots of systemic problems with the Cert IV in Mental Health Peer Work that need addressing including that many courses are delivered online only (not appropriate for this course).’
– Survey respondent

‘[It’s] always challenging to engage self-directed students and ensure understanding of concepts. [Would recommend to] take away as much of online learning as possible because it is so much better to learn in person.’
– Survey respondent

Previous research by Walstab (2023) showed how delivery mode can impact student satisfaction, where students who complete or part-complete qualifications online are generally less satisfied than those who engage in face-to-face learning.⁵⁰ Therefore, it is essential that TTA professionals

⁴⁸ Skills and Workforce Ministerial Council, *VET Workforce Blueprint*, 2024, <https://www.dewr.gov.au/download/16477/vet-workforce-blueprint/38784/vet-workforce-blueprint/pdf>, last accessed 23 May 2025.

⁴⁹ T Griffin and M Mihelic, *Online delivery of VET qualifications: current use and outcomes*, NCVER, 2019, <https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/publications/all-publications/online-delivery-of-vet-qualifications-current-use-and-outcomes>, last accessed 23 May 2025.

⁵⁰ A Walstab, ‘How learner perspectives can inform VET teacher training: Student satisfaction with VET teaching’, *Australian Council of Deans of Education Vocational Education Group Shaping VET teachers for Australia’s future*, 9th Annual Conference, 2023, <https://www.acde.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/acdeveg-2023-walstab-how-learner-perspectives-inform-vet-teacher-training.pdf>, last accessed 23 May 2025.

are building strong digital competencies now to ensure high levels of student engagement and quality teaching, particularly for professionals coming from industry roles that require little digital engagement. Professional development opportunities to assist teaching in a digital setting are already being utilised. HumanAbility's research identified that courses currently being pursued by TTA professionals include the TAESS00023: Online Learning and Assessment Skill Set, and Innovative Learning Design.

Salary range for teach, train, and assess roles across the care and support VET workforce

In 2024, the average salary reported for a TTA professional in the care and support VET workforce (\$83,592)⁵¹ was higher than the average annual income for TTA roles in the wider VET workforce (\$79,546) and the Australian workforce average (\$74,679).⁵² The Educational Services (Post-Secondary) Award states that annual wage rates provide points of comparison, where salary for full- and part-time academic teachers under the award, as of July 2024, begin at \$63,636 for a Level A.1 professional and rise to \$108,751 for those who move up to Level C.6.⁵³

However, gender differences in pay are seen within the care and support sectors. While there are fewer male VET professionals in most of HumanAbility's sectors, these respondents were more likely to report higher salaries. The average salary for a female in a TTA role was \$82,012,⁵⁴ a difference of 10.6% compared to the average for a male (\$90,707).⁵⁵ However, it is important to consider the small sample size that this comparison is drawn from. Differences between TAFE and private RTOs are notable (Table 13) with respondents working at TAFEs skewing towards higher salary ranges.

Gender differences are also seen when considering salary range; 41.7% of females in a TTA role reported salaries less than \$78,000 vs 23.1% of males, whereas 26.0% of males reported salaries greater than \$104,000 vs 19.9% of females. A disparity in pay for the wider VET workforce has also been identified in the VET Blueprint, where the average gender pay gap is 16% across the workforce, with women earning \$14,773 less on average than men.⁵⁶

Concerns around wage gaps have been further highlighted in previous research. The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) noted that nurses' and carers' wages have been suppressed by chronic undervaluing of the feminised workforce, where women taking substantial periods of parental leave see detrimental impacts on potential pay increments, which negatively impacts retention and recruitment of staff.⁵⁷

⁵¹ Respondents selected from a multiple-choice list of salary ranges; 'average salary', as noted, calculated using the mid-points for each range.

⁵² JSA, *VET Workforce Study*, 2024.

⁵³ Fair Work Ombudsman, Educational Services (Post-Secondary Education) Award 2020, 2024, https://awards.fairwork.gov.au/MA000075.html#_Toc175826799, last accessed 28 May 25.

⁵⁴ Respondents selected from a multiple-choice list of salary ranges; 'average salary', as noted, calculated using the mid-points for each range.

⁵⁵ Respondents selected from a multiple-choice list of salary ranges; 'average salary', as noted, calculated using the mid-points for each range.

⁵⁶ Skills and Workforce Ministerial Council, *VET Workforce Blueprint*, 2024.

⁵⁷ Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, *Developing a Blueprint for the VET Workforce*, 2024, <https://www.anmf.org.au/media/kc1nbhmt/2024-03-26-anmf-submission-vet-workforce-blueprint.pdf>, last accessed 23 May 2025.

Figure 14: Salary ranges for teachers, trainers, and assessors, male vs female

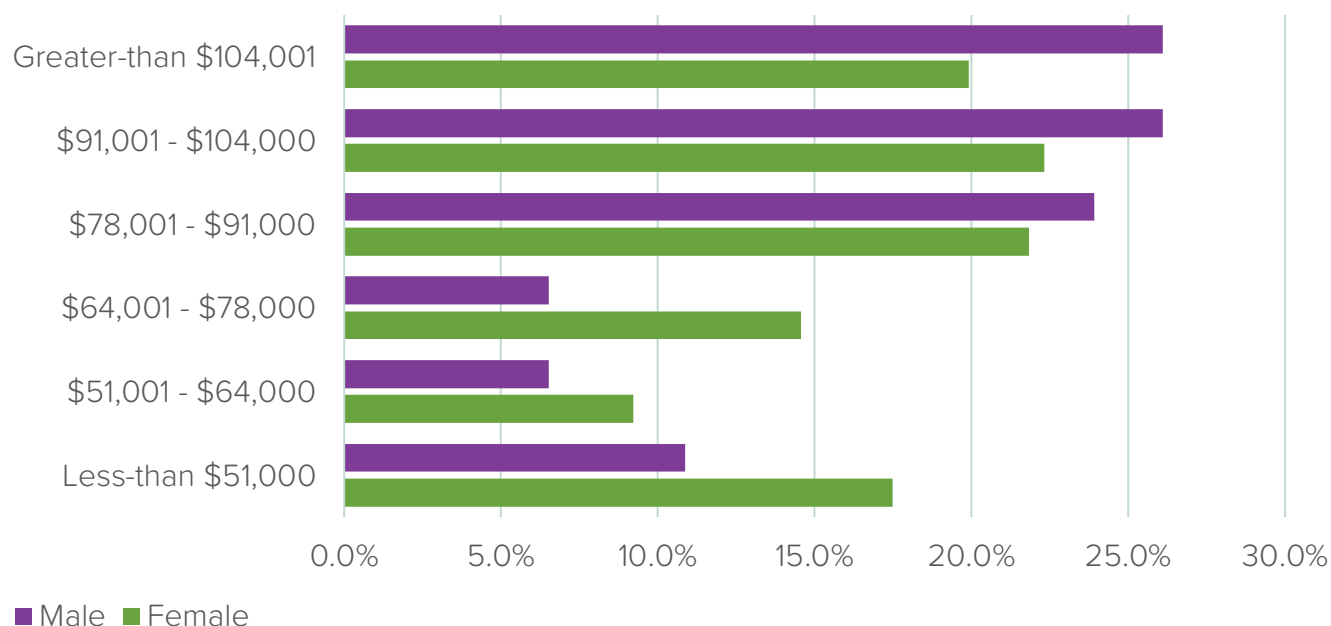


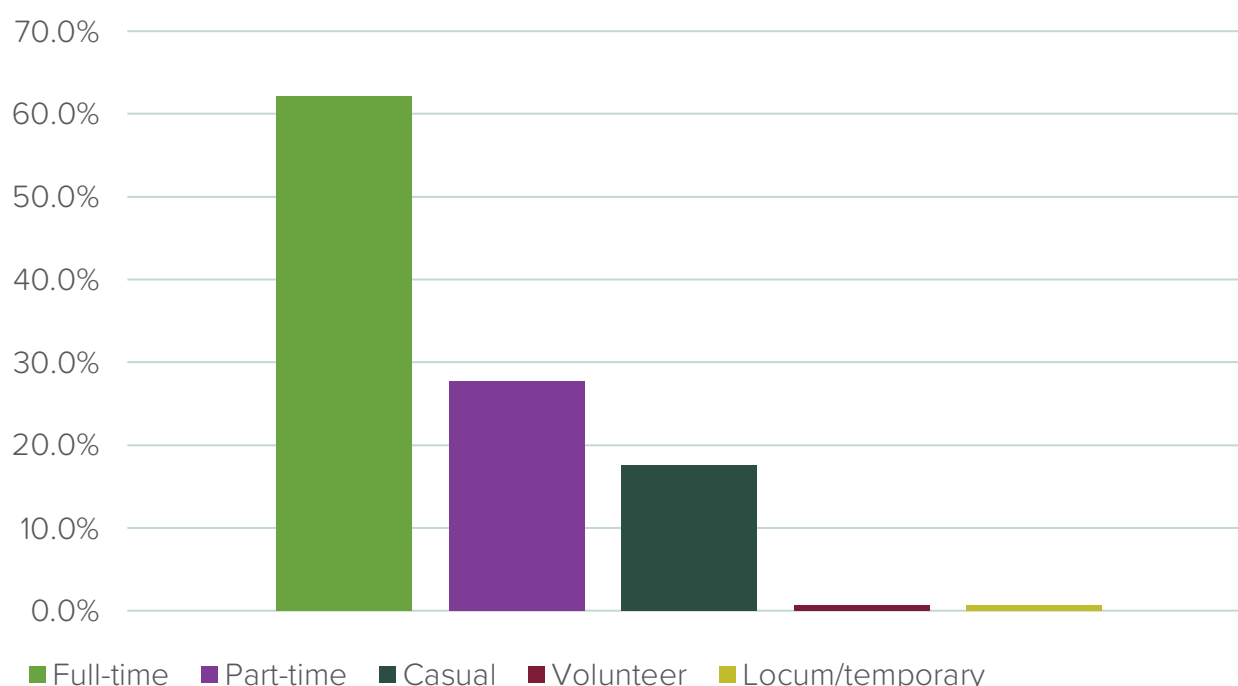
Table 13: Salary ranges TAFE vs private RTO for teachers, trainers, and assessors

Salary Range	TAFE	Private RTO	Overall TTA workforce
Less than \$51,000	12.4%	18.7%	16.0%
\$51,001–\$64,000	5.8%	13.7%	9.0%
\$64,001–\$78,000	7.3%	22.5%	12.9%
\$78,001–\$91,000	23.3%	21.2%	21.9%
\$91,001–\$104,000	28.4%	16.2%	23.9%
Greater than \$104,001	26.2%	12.5%	20.7%

3.2 Teachers, trainers, and assessors in courses for the aged care and disability services sector

Respondents in the TTA segment predominantly work under full-time contracts (62.1%), with part-time (27.7%), casual (17.5%), volunteer (0.6%), and locum/temporary (0.6%) arrangements representing smaller proportions.

Figure 15: Contract types with the aged care and disability services TTA workforce



Salary distribution highlights that 22.8% of the TTA workforce reported earning within the \$91,000–104,000 bracket, while 22.4% earn less than \$51,000.

Regarding roles, 58.9% of TTA professionals in the sector reported holding multiple roles, indicating a high degree of flexibility and diversification. Conversely, 41.0% hold a single role, suggesting that while multi-role engagement is prevalent, a substantial portion still maintain a focused and specialised position within the sector.

A newly identified role is course manager, which is held by 1.2% of the TTA respondents within the sector. Other roles, such as education team leader, coordinator, director of faculty, mentor, and training and education team leader, collectively account for 2.5% of the workforce and are included in the JSA VET workforce taxonomy under the TTA category.

Outside of TTA roles, an additional job title worth noting due to its prevalence in the sector is education manager, which accounts for 0.9% of respondents for this sector. This role was mentioned in the JSA VET workforce study, where the role represents 5% of leadership positions and falls under the leadership segment of the taxonomy. Notably, this role is projected to experience substantial growth, with a projected 21% increase over the next 10 years.⁵⁸

Compared to responsibilities undertaken by the total care and support VET workforce, TTA respondents in the aged care and disability services sector were less likely to network with industry and stakeholders (70.6% vs 76.9% across the care and support sector) and are slightly less involved in business development and industry activities (49.3% vs 55.0%, respectively). While the reason for this is not clear through the research, it could be suggested that TTAs within this

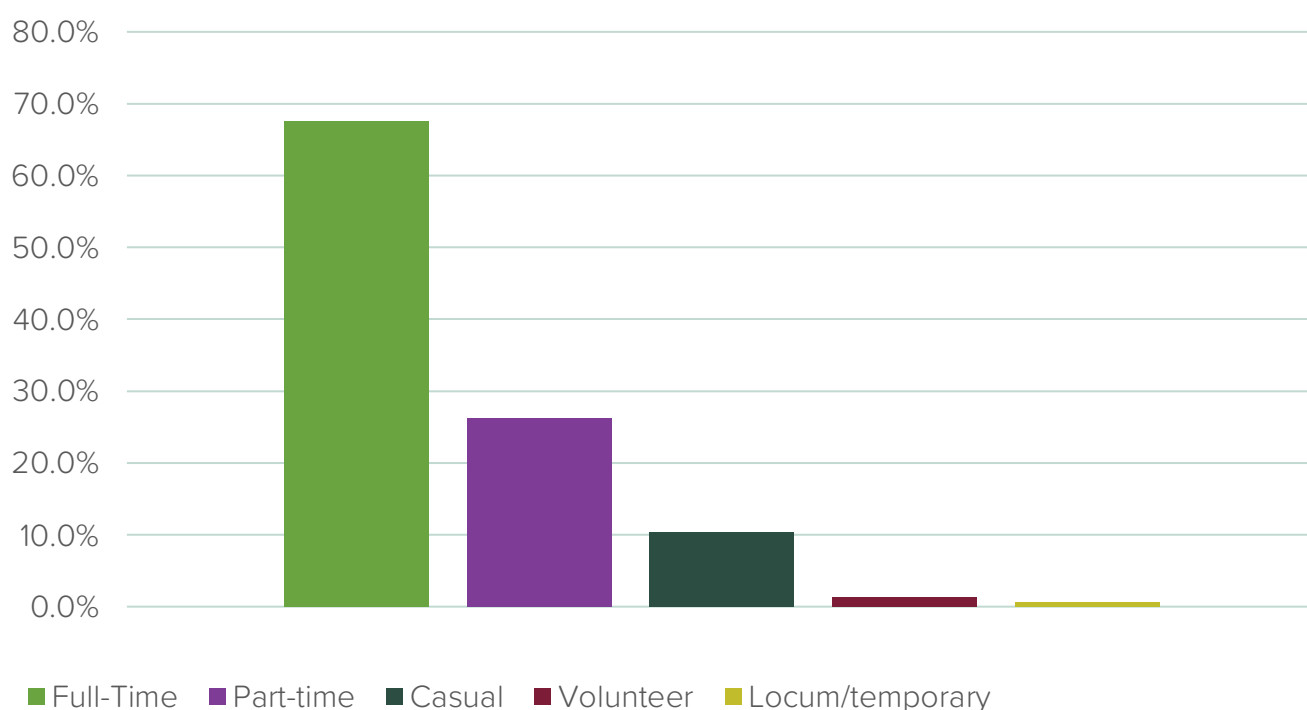
⁵⁸ JSA, *VET Workforce Study*, 2024.

sector may experience conflicting responsibilities, where industry engagement/networking may be a lower priority. However, TTA respondents in this sector were more likely to provide professional development focused on e-learning skills (21.3% vs 17.1% across the care and support sector), offer tutoring support (56.0% vs 44.6%, respectively), and organise forums, workshops, and mentor groups (29.3% vs 26.0%, respectively). Again, while the motivation for this is less clear, it can be suggested that TTA professionals within this sector are assisting in upskilling the workforce to respond to the rapid technological/digital changes of the sector and consciously creating opportunities to share knowledge with those newer to a TTA role.

3.3 Teachers, trainers, and assessors in courses for the children's education and care sector

Employment arrangements for TTA roles in the CEC sector show a greater proportion of respondents occupying full-time positions. Specifically, 68.1% reported being employed full-time, 26.8% part-time, and 8.3% on a casual basis, while 1.1% undertake volunteer roles and 0.5% are engaged in locum/temporary positions. This distribution highlights the sector's reliance on stable, full-time employment, with a smaller but notable portion operating in flexible or non-permanent roles.

Figure 16: Contract types within the children's education and care TTA workforce



In terms of earnings, 32.2% of TTA respondents in this sector reported earning between \$91,001 and \$104,000 annually, while 9.6% earn less than \$51,000. This variation points to notable income disparities within the workforce, likely influenced by contract type, workforce shortages, level of responsibility, and geographic location.⁵⁹

Looking at role distribution highlights that more TTA respondents in CEC hold a team leader position compared to other sectors (1.9%). As noted in the JSA VET Workforce Study, this role falls under the TTA segment with a broad/extended scope of responsibility and autonomy. Additional roles stood out for this sector, where there were more respondents in specific roles outside of the TTA segment and sitting within leadership positions, including education team leads (1.9% of total CEC TTA responses), and 1.5% holding an education manager role. As previously mentioned, education managers are projected to grow 21% over 10 years, a trend that the CEC sector may be experiencing more than others.⁶⁰

Role distribution within the sector reveals that 46.7% of TTA respondents in this sector hold multiple roles within VET, while 53.2% occupy a single role. This suggests that a significant proportion of the workforce demonstrates versatility and the ability to manage diverse responsibilities across different functions. However, the majority still specialise in a single area, indicating a prevailing preference for focused expertise over multi-role engagement.

Considering key responsibilities highlights that TTA professionals in this sector were less likely to report engaging in business development and industry activities or providing counselling, welfare information, and tutoring support.

3.4 Teachers, trainers, and assessors for courses in the health sector

Survey responses on employment arrangements reveal a strong lean towards stability, with 57.5% of TTA professionals within the sector reporting a full-time role. A further 32.9% reported working part-time, offering flexibility within the workforce. Casual employment accounts for 13.6%, while volunteer and locum/temporary roles remain minimal at 1.0% and 2.6%, respectively. This distribution underscores a sector that values ongoing engagement and workforce continuity.

⁵⁹ JSA, *The Future of the Early Childhood Education Profession, Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Capacity Study*, 2024 <https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-02/The%20Future%20of%20the%20Early%20Childhood%20Education%20Profession%20%E2%80%93%20Extended%20Report.pdf>, last accessed 23 May 2025.

⁶⁰ JSA, *VET Workforce Study*, 2024.

Figure 17: Contract types within the health TTA workforce



Earnings among TTA professionals in this sector vary significantly; 23.3% of the workforce reported earning between \$91,001 and \$104,000 annually, while 30.0% fell within the \$78,001 to \$91,000 range. On the lower end of the scale, 11.1% reported earning less than \$51,000.

While noting both this diversity of roles held by respondents (spanning administrative, support, TTA, and leadership roles, among others) and the fact that many VET employers have their own enterprise bargaining agreements, analysis of the Educational Services (Post-Secondary) Award provides some context behind these findings. Annual wage rates for full- and part-time academic teachers under the award, as of July 2024, begin at \$63,636 for a Level A.1 professional, rising to \$108,751 for those at Level C.6.⁶¹ The large proportion of respondents earning salaries at the mid-high levels of this scale seemingly reflects the relatively high levels of experience and tenure evident in the care and support VET workforce, as outlined throughout Section 2 of this report.

An additional role captured during the research, and not currently part of the taxonomy, is ‘course manager’, which makes up 1.4% of TTA respondents for the sector. Education manager, categorised within the leadership component of the JSA VET workforce taxonomy, makes up 0.7%, and team leader, categorised under the TTA extended scope, makes up 2.9%.

An analysis of the distribution of roles among TTA professionals in the health sector shows an even split, with 54.1% of TTA respondents reporting holding multiple roles. This indicates a workforce marked by both versatility and specialisation.

TTA professionals in the health sector also exhibit distinct professional behaviours compared to their peers in the wider care and support VET workforce, where survey respondents were less likely to select learning support responsibilities as one of their key tasks or responsibilities. This

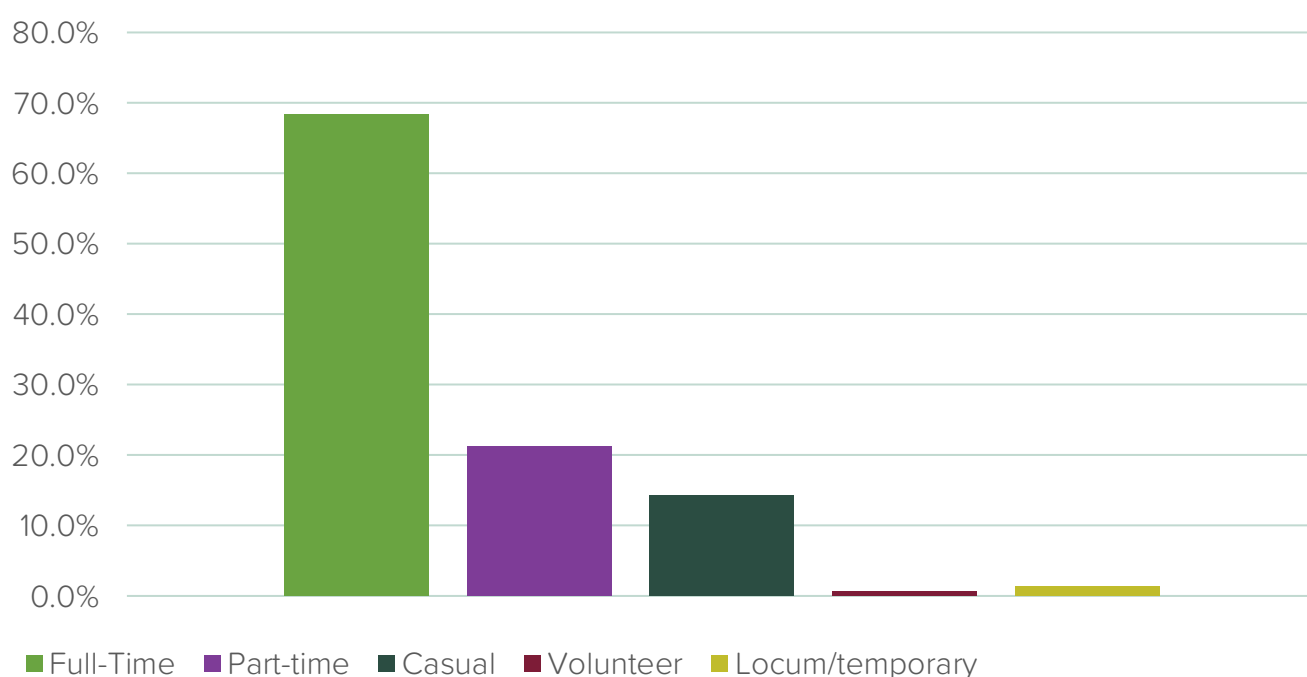
⁶¹ Fair Work Ombudsman, Educational Services (Post-Secondary Education) Award 2020, 2024, https://awards.fairwork.gov.au/MA000075.html#_Toc175826799, last accessed 28 May 2025.

included providing tutoring assistance, referring students to external services, or organising forums, mentor groups, and workshops. On the other hand, they are more inclined to participate in business development, industry activities, curriculum design, and learning. This includes selecting and creating learning resources and offering professional development for e-learning skills.

3.5 Teachers, trainers, and assessors in courses for the human (community) services sector

Employment patterns within the human (community) services sector based on TTA responses exhibit a relatively balanced distribution between permanent and flexible work arrangements. Approximately 68.3% of TTA respondents in this sector reported being employed full-time, while 21.2% work part-time. Casual employment contracts made up 14.9% of responses, indicating a substantial reliance on non-permanent staff to meet service delivery requirements. Locum/temporary contracts and volunteer roles constitute a smaller segment, with notably only two and one respondents reporting they hold these contract types.

Figure 18: Contract types within the human (community) services TTA workforce



Salary levels in this sector show considerable variation. Around 30.9% of TTA respondents in the sector reported earning between \$104,000 and \$156,000 annually, reflecting high remuneration opportunities for experienced professionals. However, 18.3% of TTA respondents in the sector reported earning less than \$51,000, highlighting notable income disparity that may be influenced by role seniority and contract type.

Additional key roles identified in this sector include course coordinator (2.3%), which is also recognised in the JSA workforce taxonomy under TTA-focused leadership roles.⁶² Responses also indicated that 1.2% of TTA respondents within the sector take on a 'mentor' role. Important to note is that it was highlighted in the JSA VET workforce study that workplace trainers and assessors are well-positioned to offer mentorship or informal pastoral care, particularly to apprentices, highlighting that professionals in this mentoring role possess industry and workplace experience while remaining separate from the apprentices' line management chain.⁶³

A key characteristic of the human (community) services sector workforce is the diversity of roles. Approximately 60.1% of TTA respondents within the sector reported holding multiple positions. When considering multiple roles, key combinations of roles included a TTA role alongside a curriculum development and learning design role.

TTA respondents in the human (community) services sector, when compared to the broader care and support sector, engage in research activities and training needs analysis less frequently (26.7% vs 29.7% across all sectors) and provide learning support less often (70.6% vs 72.12%, respectively). However, TTA respondents in this sector are more likely to supervise or mentor staff under their training and assessment roles (66.6% vs 60.9% across all sectors). TTA respondents in this sector were also more likely to offer counselling and welfare information (38.6% vs 31.9% across all sectors), focus on providing e-learning skills for professional development (21.3% vs 17.1% across all sectors), and support VET compliance and documentation (56.0% vs 47.9%, respectively).

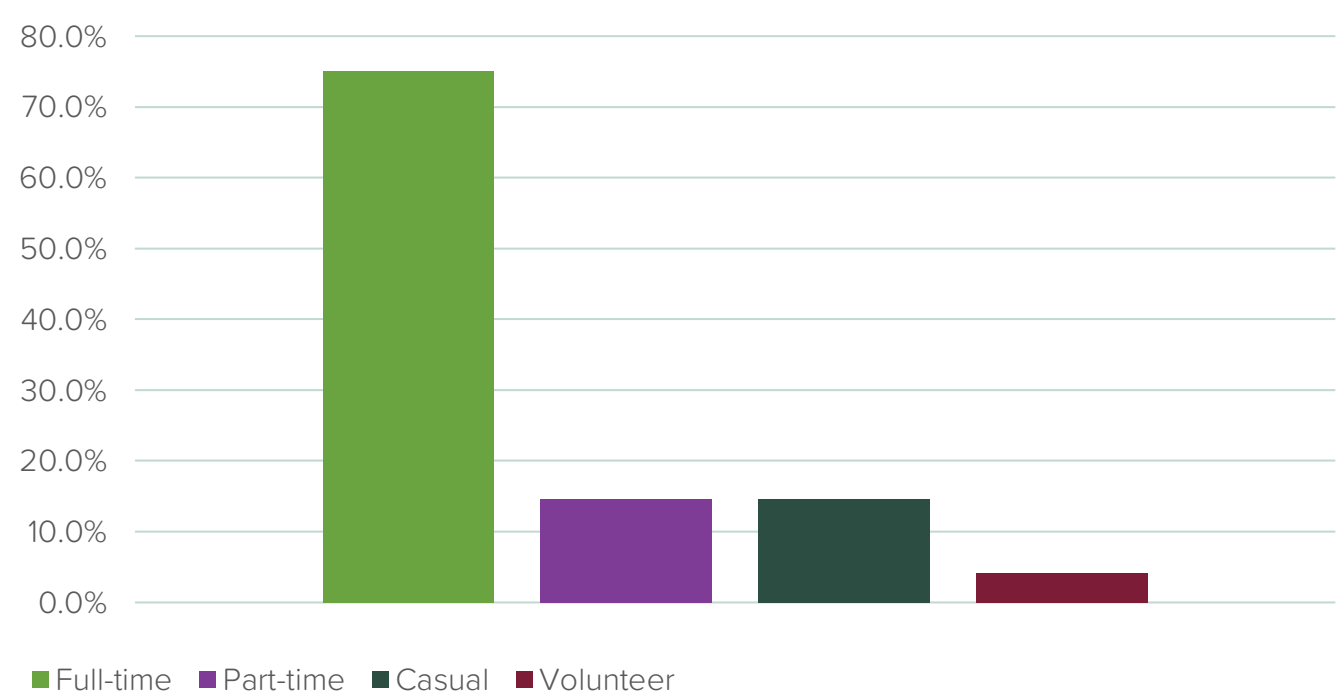
3.6 Teachers, trainers, and assessors for courses in the sports and recreation sector

Sports and recreation respondents reported the highest proportion of full-time contracts across all the care and support sectors (75.7%). In contrast, only 14.5% of TTA respondents within this sector reported being employed part-time, and the same share (14.5%) reported being employed on a casual basis. Volunteer roles make up 4.1% of the TTA sports and recreation respondents, the highest of all the care and support sectors.

⁶² JSA, *VET Workforce Study*, 2024.

⁶³ JSA, *VET Workforce Study*, 2024.

Figure 19: Contract types reported by sports and recreation TTA respondents



Most TTA professionals in this sector reported annual earnings greater than \$104,000 (26.0%), though this observation is drawn from a small sample. The prevalence of salaries in this upper range indicates a workforce that assumes high levels of responsibility in areas such as TTA and leadership roles.

Additional roles reported in this sector include education manager (1.4%), which is highlighted in the JSA VET workforce study under the leadership component of the taxonomy,⁶⁴ and mentor (2.0%), a newly identified role that has the highest reported share across all sectors. Furthermore, mentoring was seen as an integral part of daily practice, with 86.3% of TTA professionals reporting that in this sector it is a responsibility they regularly undertake. Holding multiple roles is also common, and 70.0% of TTA respondents in the sector reported performing more than one role.

In contrast to broader trends in the care and support VET workforce, TTA professionals in sports and recreation reported being more likely than the wider care and support VET TTA workforce to hold key leadership responsibilities. Core additional responsibilities they reported included:

- Consult with academic and administrative staff: 68.1% vs 42.3%
- Address staff and student development needs: 72.7% vs 41.2%
- Develop and evaluate policies: 54.5% vs 21.9%
- Develop and deliver training for VET professionals: 50.0% vs 21.9%

Additionally, TTA survey respondents in sports and recreation were more likely to take on mentoring responsibilities and agree that they supervise and mentor staff (86.3% vs 60.9%).

⁶⁴ JSA, *VET Workforce Study*, 2024.

4. Journey to joining and remaining in the care and support VET workforce

This section explores the journeys taken by VET care and support professionals as they join, navigate, and develop within the VET system. Findings are presented at both overall and sector-specific levels. Drawing on the multiple modes of consultation with HumanAbility stakeholders, both facilitators and barriers at each stage of the career journey – choosing to and then entering the VET workforce; remaining in the workforce; and undertaking professional development and maintaining industry currency – are unpacked.

At a high level, the findings suggest that many of the issues affecting the wider VET workforce are evident within the care and support VET workforce. These include challenges faced by training providers in identifying and recruiting new staff members, a need on the part of VET professionals to balance everyday duties with those arising from compliance, administration, and complex student needs and behaviours, and varying levels of quality of and accessibility to specialised and relevant professional development opportunities.

More positively, the findings indicate that a large proportion of respondents in the VET care and support workforce feel engaged, challenged, and supported in their current roles. There is evidence that the initial sense of purpose that attracted them to the VET system – wishing to impart their industry-specific skills and knowledge to support new professionals enter their original sectors – is reinforced by sustained and meaningful relationships with colleagues. Such relationships exist on multiple levels, for instance, in their more immediate teams but also across Communities of Practice or in networks bringing together the VET sector and industry-based partners.

This section also spotlights numerous case studies of strategies and practices employed by training providers attempting to improve workforce attraction, retention, and development.

4.1 Pathways and challenges in entering the care and support VET workforce

Requirements to join the VET workforce as a teacher, trainer, or assessor

There are several entry pathways and potential progressions within VET, as visualised by JSA in Figure 20.⁶⁵ These pathways were also noted within the VET Blueprint 2024.⁶⁶

1. Educators who previously worked in different education sector occupations, including in universities and schools
2. Industry professionals who previously worked in a VET-relevant vocational occupation

⁶⁵ JSA, *VET Workforce Study*, 2024.

⁶⁶ Skills and Workforce Ministerial Council, *VET Workforce Blueprint*, 2024.

- Corporate and administration professionals – origin roles in this pathway could include office management or program administration

To move into a TTA role, there are several requirements:

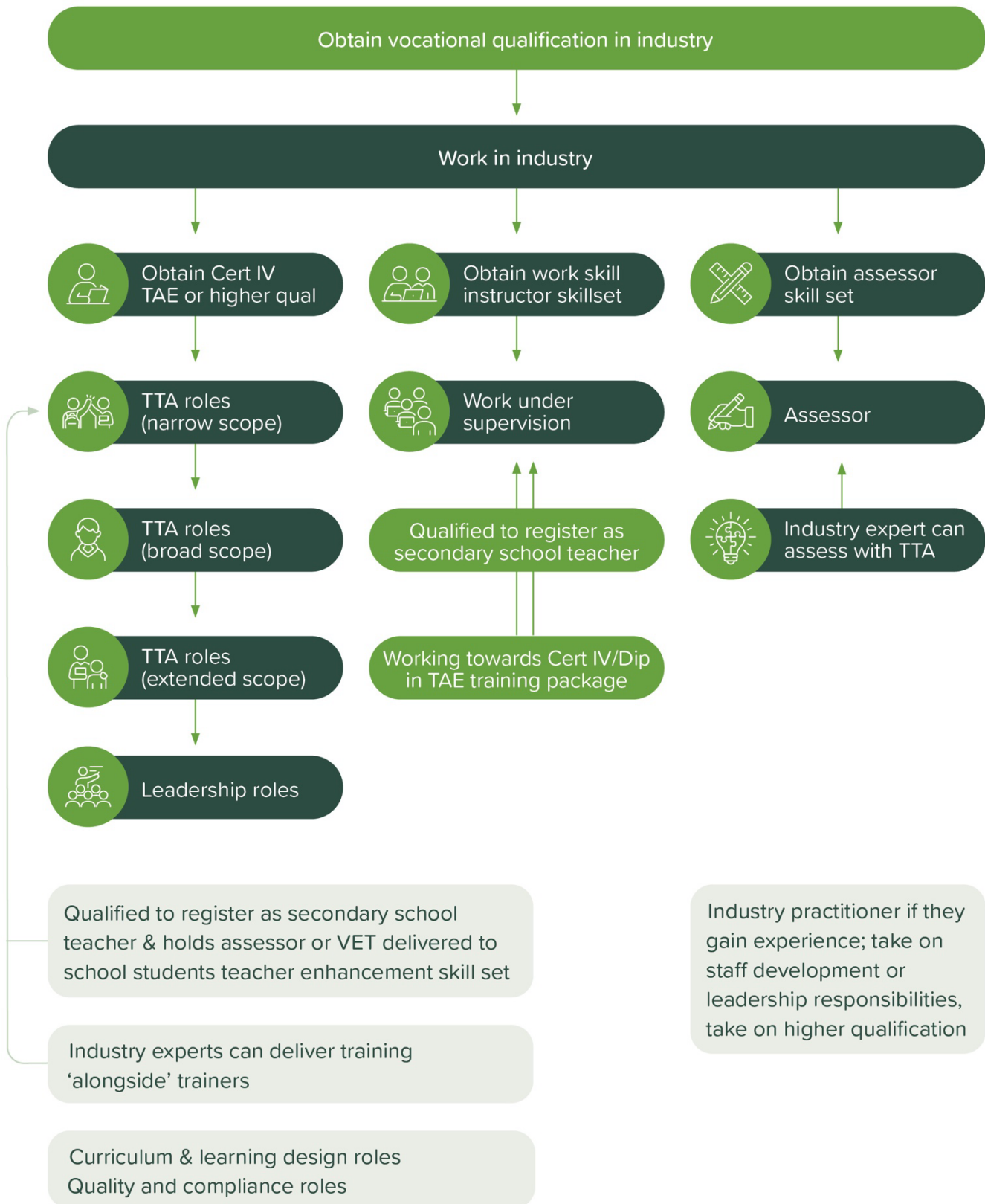
Table 14: TTA role requirements

Role	
TTA working under supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum requirements per RTO Standards Actively working towards Cert IV/diploma from TAE Training Package OR qualified to register as a secondary school teacher
TTA roles with focused scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum requirements per RTO Standards TAE Cert IV Vocational competencies or industry expert, or qualified as secondary school teacher and holds specific skill set
Assessor-only roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum requirements per RTO Standards Assessor skill set Vocational competencies at least to level assessed, OR industry expert working alongside TTA or qualified to register as secondary school teacher and holds specific skill set Commonly holds Cert IV
Adult literacy and numeracy teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum requirements per RTO standards Typically holds Cert IV May hold diploma or higher-level qual in adult literacy and numeracy and/or teaching/education

However, RTO standards and the award are not the only regulatory instruments. Other regulatory requirements within care and support sectors include:

- Professional registration requirements for enrolled nurses under the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra)
- Registration as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander health practitioner with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia (ATSIHPBA)

Figure 20: Potential pathways and progressions into VET roles and segments⁶⁷



⁶⁷ JSA, *VET Workforce Study*, 2024.

Once in the workforce, VET TTA professionals must then show they have industry currency, in addition to keeping up to date with pedagogical developments. Providing or supporting this professional development is a requirement for training providers and is part of their government registration process.⁶⁸ In the revised Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) draft practice guide for trainers and assessors, considerations for industry currency compliance include demonstrating that ‘all trainers and assessors are maintaining an understanding of current industry practices, including but not limited to:

- Volunteering or working part-time in industry area
- Undertaking accredited training, or higher-level qualifications relevant to the industry area
- Belonging to industry associations
- Engaging with industry
- Subscribing to industry journals and newsletters
- Staying informed about changes to technology
- Keeping up to date with changes to legislation’⁶⁹

Journey to joining and remaining in the care and support VET workforce

This research has considered specific factors that help enable or stand in the way of an individual joining and remaining in the VET workforce. Through a behavioural lens,⁷⁰ stakeholder consultations highlighted significant factors that operate at various levels within the decision-making context (individual, interpersonal, organisational, and policy level). These factors were then measured within the workforce through a survey.

Recruitment method

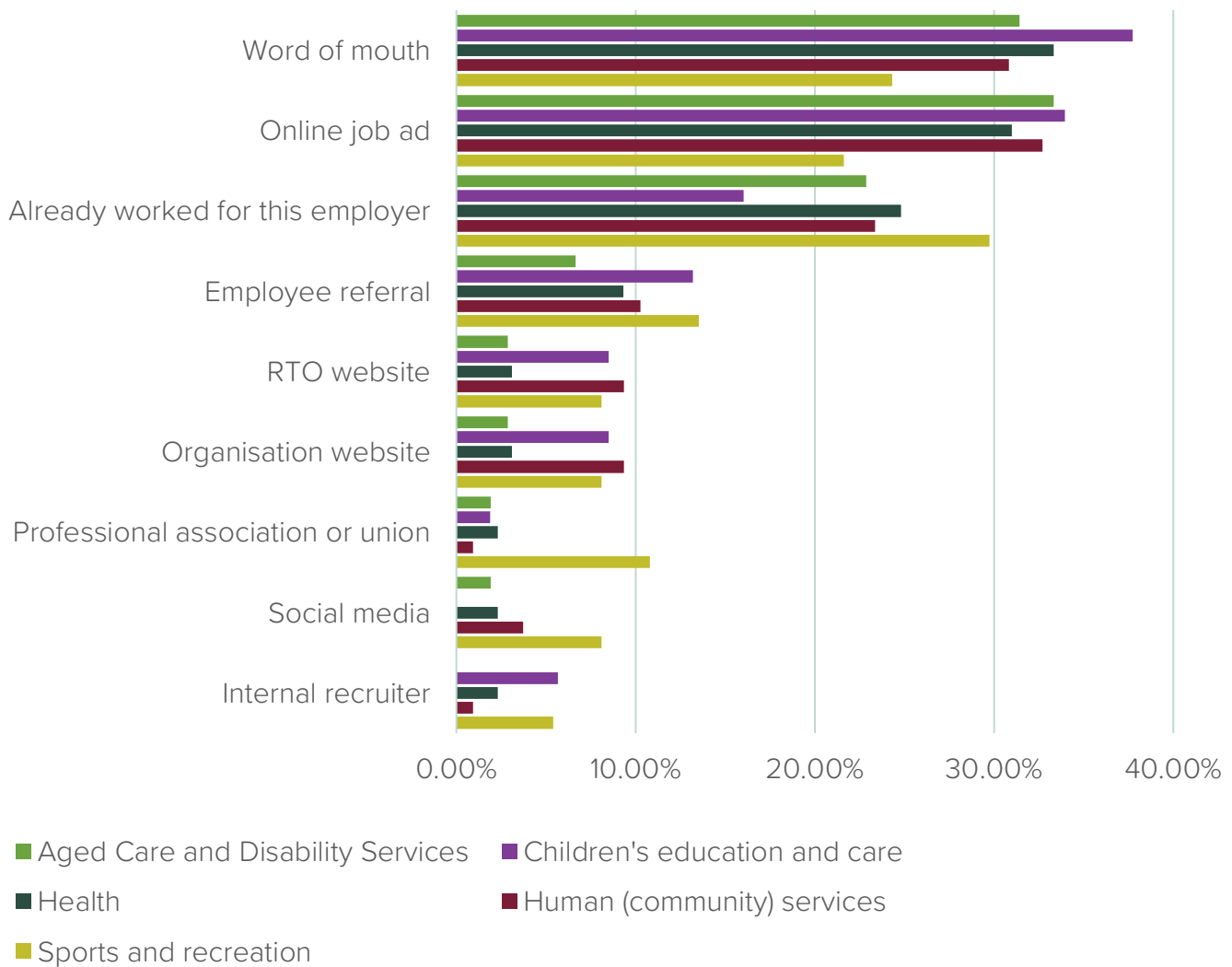
Most respondents learned about their current TTA position through word of mouth. This was closely followed by online ads and already holding a position with the employer (Figure 21). This suggests that internal and informal networks play crucial roles in reaching candidates for a role in VET. In Tasmania, for example, some stakeholders highlighted that recruitment across sectors is through word of mouth, where professionals, particularly within the dental sector, are ‘poached’ from industry to move into a TTA role. It was further understood that word of mouth is key in not only ensuring that professionals understand the role and requirements but also can ascertain their suitability.

⁶⁸ Skills and Workforce Ministerial Council, *VET Workforce Blueprint*, 2024.

⁶⁹ Australia Skills Quality Authority, *Draft Practice Guide: Trainer and Assessor Competency*, 2025, www.asqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-03/DRAFT%20-%20Practice%20Guide%20-%20Trainer%20and%20Assessor%20Competencies.pdf, last accessed 27 May 2025.

⁷⁰ A behavioural lens includes the use of Behavioural Science frameworks, theories, and research approaches to understand behaviour.

Figure 21: How respondents first heard about their TTA role



Online jobs were also effective for sourcing VET professionals into the TTA workforce. It was noted in consultations, however, that there are challenges to this method, where complex VET language and terminology can act as a barrier in reaching suitable candidates. Finding a balance between VET and industry terminology in online job adverts is important to prevent barriers to application, along with ensuring that adverts promote a diverse range of applicants applying. Further research into the optimisation of job adverts to help source suitable candidates from a diverse range of backgrounds will be important in future streams of research.

Factors attracting professionals into teach, train, and assess roles

Two factors were responsible for attracting over 95% of respondents to move into a TTA role:

- Contributing industry knowledge and expertise
- Meaningful work to make a difference in the sector/world

The high level of agreement with these survey statements reflects sentiment heard during consultation, where it was apparent that individuals working within the care and support sectors

are frequently motivated by their values and the opportunity to challenge themselves in a new type of role that utilises their previous knowledge.

‘Working in the aged care sector and previous to that I have been a trainer in a number of different areas in VET. I love making a difference and seeing others succeed.’

– Survey respondent

For most, motivation was a result of having a strong passion for teaching and empowering students. For others, the motivation differed and was instead framed around feelings of apprehension regarding the future of the sector and the workforce. Concerns included the quality of the current workforce and the changing needs of the sector that are not currently met by the course content taught.

Overall, this finding is consistent with previous research, which suggests that motivations to become a VET teacher as a second career can arise from social altruistic drives (the desire to shape the future of young people) combined with seeing an opportunity available and holding intrinsic values of one’s teaching ability and vocation.⁷¹ While better pay or conditions prompt some to join the care and support VET workforce, drawing on individual reflective motivations, such as attitudes, intentions, and goals, is key for future recruitment processes.

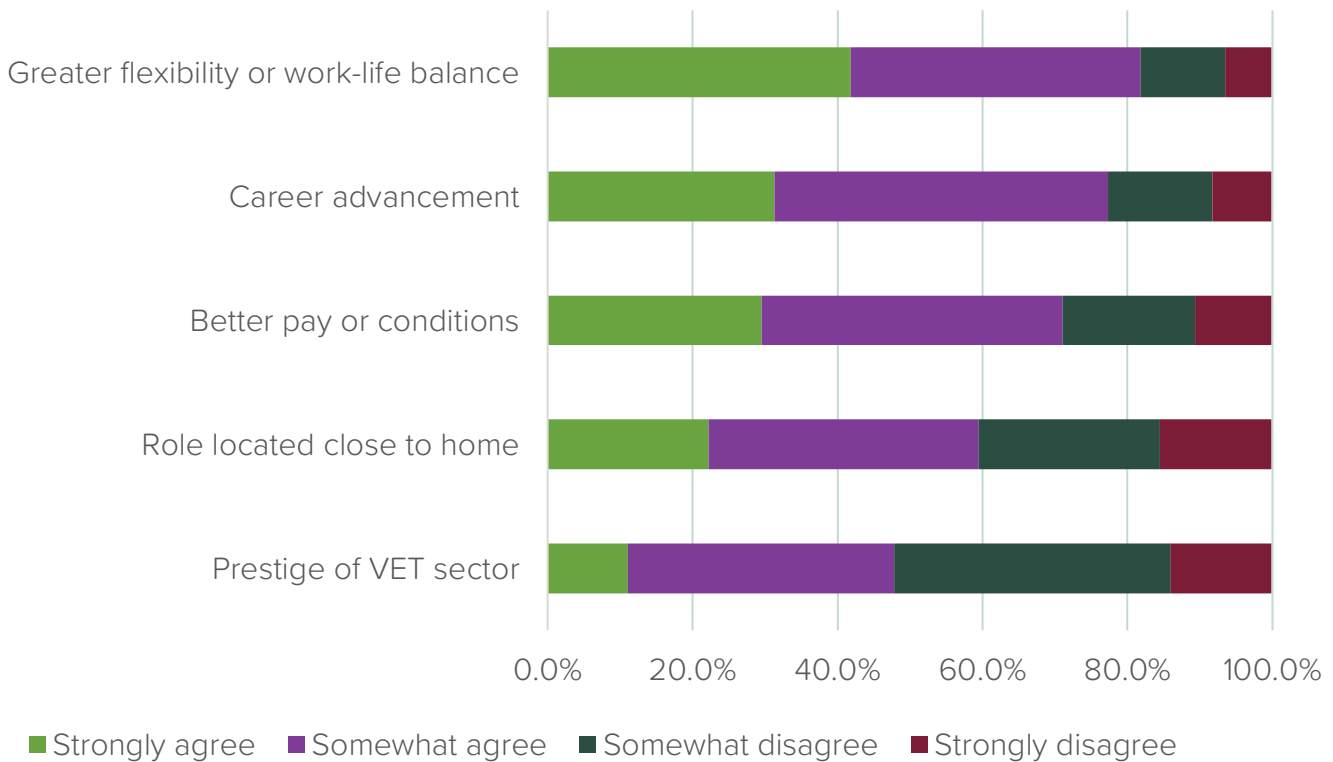
[*What influenced your decision to join the VET workforce?*] ‘Supervising students in the workplace that had poor skills from VET qualifications, I thought I would enter the VET sector to have an impact.’

– Survey respondent

Flexibility in the nature of the role was also a pull factor to the VET workforce. For those who have reached a new milestone in their life, for example, returning to work following parental leave, a role in VET allows greater flexibility. While for others, it is the reduction or removal of regular physical labour – such as lifting children on and off nappy-change tables, combined with continuous bending and squatting to provide care and education for very young children – that appealed.

⁷¹ R Mičiulienė and K Kovalčikienė, ‘Motivation to Become a Vocational Teacher as a Second Career: A Mixed Method Study’, *Vocations and Learning*, 2023, 16: 395–419, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12186-023-09321-2>.

Figure 22: Factors attracting respondents to a TTA role in VET

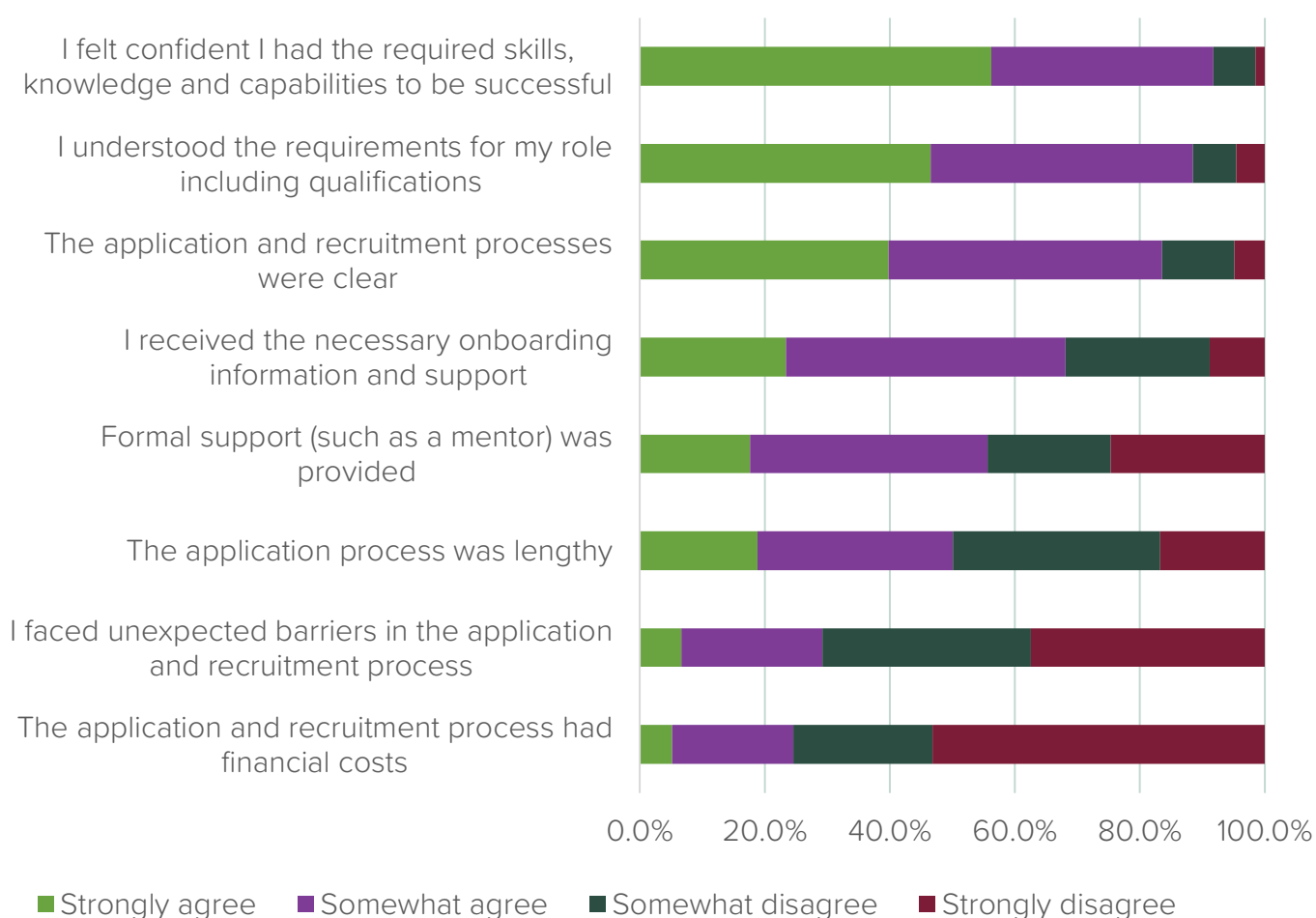


When exploring facilitators to joining the VET workforce, differences are seen between types of RTOs. It was seen that more TTA respondents working in TAFEs were attracted by better pay and conditions (78.5% somewhat agree or strongly agree) than for private and not-for-profit RTOs (50.0%). Further differences were seen when considering the size of RTO; respondents working at smaller RTOs were less likely to be attracted by pay or conditions (37.5% somewhat agree or strongly agree) compared to medium (54.2%) and large (76.2%). This finding supports concerns raised in HumanAbility’s stakeholder consultations, where smaller, private RTOs often vocalised challenges competing with other organisations’ salaries.

Amendments to RTO standards in March 2024 to allow secondary school teachers to deliver training under supervision have been noted by stakeholders as a positive and significant change that assists the growth of the VET workforce. The changes have strengthened the pathway for secondary school teachers, by allowing those who qualify for schoolteacher registration to transition into VET. Teachers who qualify to register can deliver training under supervision, or without supervision if the Assess Skill Set or VET Delivered to School Students Teacher Enhancement Skill Set is held. One stakeholder noted that within their sports and recreation organisation, the change has been a sensible, good move forward that alleviates recruitment challenges. For this organisation, despite the assessment process in VET being quite different to higher education and secondary school, they noted that the ‘*bridge is not a long one to cross for someone who has that experience*’.

The application and onboarding process was reported by many survey respondents as clear and supported, with few unexpected barriers. Survey data indicated that during the recruitment and onboarding process, the requirements for the role and process itself were clear. Few encountered unexpected barriers or unexpected costs, and a majority were confident that they had the required skills (Figure 23). While a positive finding, open-ended survey responses indicated that there are challenges in the process, where there are frequently long wait times and sometimes costs involved (e.g. funding police checks). As costs are increasingly expected in all jobs, especially teaching, student-facing, and care roles, it is important to ensure barriers and points of friction in other areas of the application process are reduced where possible.

Figure 23: Application and onboarding process for a TTA role in VET



Survey responses highlighted that strong mentorship while transitioning into the workplace can reduce feelings of overwhelm and support successful onboarding. This included having a mentor the new TTA professional could shadow on the job and learn the systems and processes from. However, many respondents reported they were not offered a mentor. For future onboarding processes, components of successful mentorship should be considered and incorporated. The example below highlights the importance of not only being provided with a mentor but building a relationship with them to gain confidence and support.

‘I was very fortunate to have been paired with an outstanding trainer and assessor who was also teaching Early Childhood Education and Care. I spent about a month working alongside her, taking classes, marking, and having constructive professional development meetings. This mentoring relationship helped me gain confidence and supported me to become the trainer I am today.’
– Survey respondent

Barriers that impact completion of application to join VET

HumanAbility’s research revealed the existence of barriers as well as facilitators, although both can be challenging to quantify in terms of prevalence and severity. The qualitative research found the following categories of barriers:

- Lived experience, prior learning, and overseas credentials are not always valued
- Pay and conditions not always attractive
- A lack of prestige of the VET sector
- A poor onboarding experience

These barriers are explored in more depth below:

Lived experience and prior learning are not always valued

In terms of prerequisites when entering the workforce, stakeholders in workshops highlighted that lived experience, particularly as a carer, is underappreciated. Open-ended survey responses reiterated this point, while also pointing out that not all prior experience feels valued or recognised by RTOs. As some TTA professionals are motivated to join the workforce due to their lived experience and industry knowledge, evidenced in the open-ended survey responses, it is critical to ensure this experience feels acknowledged and valued, particularly in care and support sectors, where students are more likely to have lived experience.

‘[to improve], take the lead from many independent RTOs who work side by side with industry and have their trainers and assessors on the job... the embedding of trainers/assessors within industry and recognising existing employees skills and knowledge through Candidate Centred RPL practices creates a larger pool of “qualified” persons to become trainers and assessors, who in turn can continue to assess and train on the job through RTOs (as embedded assessors).’
– Survey respondent

Overseas credentials add barriers to entry

The minimal use of the skilled migration system to increase the pipeline of VET TTA professionals (as identified in the VET Blueprint, 2024)⁷² is also apparent across the care and support VET workforce, where under 0.2% of respondents reported non-resident status. When discussing the requirements and recruitment process for overseas applicants with RTO professionals across the care and support sectors, it was noted that the process itself is ambiguous and unclear. These applicants may be required to have qualifications assessed and visas granted, which adds time and financial costs. For teachers with secondary teaching

⁷² Skills and Workforce Ministerial Council, *VET Workforce Blueprint*, 2024.

qualifications, there are additional barriers, as credentials must be issued by a higher education provider defined in 16-1 of the Higher Education Support Act, and therefore TTA professionals are unable to use their overseas teaching qualifications to deliver training and assessment.⁷³ These barriers prevent potential applicants from applying and reduce the talent pool that RTOs can recruit from, highlighting an opportunity for further investigation in future streams of research.

‘When I first emigrated to Australia, getting into the VET sector had huge barriers. My qualifications and experience were not accepted in Australia despite having a teaching qual, a training qual, a degree, a master’s, and lots of experience. I had to re-train to get into the VET sector here.’
– Survey respondent

Pay and conditions are not always strong enough ‘pull’ factors

Pay and benefits are not always higher than industry roles or competing sectors, or enough to pull professionals into VET. Specific examples of this are explored in the subsequent sector deep dives but include salaries offered by other sectors, such as mining in Western Australia or in roles available in schools, such as School Based Education Support roles. Flexibility, which can be experienced through part-time and casual contracts, is also not always seen as a benefit. Workshop respondents highlighted that often professionals seek stability and confidence in the future of their VET role through the offer of a full-time contract. Importantly, if students have opportunity to go on to receive higher pay than their teachers, trainers or assessors within industry, then there is little incentive to consider entering the VET workforce.

‘My students have no qualifications, and they are doing a Cert IV; they earn \$105,000 a year plus incentives. I have a degree, 2 diplomas and TAE, which are relevant to this role, and I am earning \$103,500...’
– Survey respondent

The lack of perceived ‘prestige’ of VET and the care and support sectors in Australia may deter potential applicants from applying

A career in VET was often described by workshop respondents as less prestigious than one in other industries, which may discourage potential applicants from applying. When the current workforce was asked if they were attracted by the prestige of the VET sector, respondents were slightly more likely to either somewhat disagree or strongly disagree (54.6%). This finding is unsurprising; the seemingly persistent negative narrative regarding a role in VET (e.g. poorly paid vs higher education, undervalued, less prestigious than university, high compliance responsibilities) was frequently referenced during stakeholder consultation.

⁷³ Training Accreditation Council, Western Australia, Trainer and Assess Regulatory Requirements, 2024, <https://www.wa.gov.au/media/47430/download?inline>, last accessed 26 May 2025.

Additionally, as noted in the HumanAbility 2024 Workforce Plan, the care and support sectors are undervalued, where pay and conditions fail to reflect both the demanding nature of the service provision and value to society.⁷⁴ There is opportunity to challenge the narrative within the wider system, where industry, government, and jobs and skills councils can clearly promote the benefits of a VET role in care and support sectors.

Onboarding experiences vary, and do not always set TTA professionals up for success

Even when professionals make it through the application process, they are not always being set up for success in their role. Huge variation was identified in the onboarding process and standard provided by different RTOs. For some, onboarding positively sets the tone for how the organisation will continue to support the employee:

'[Onboarding] was well organised and easy to follow. The orientation was the most comprehensive I have ever experienced.'

– Survey respondent

For others, quality onboarding was almost non-existent and relied on the assumption that individuals already possess the required skills and knowledge to transition into and succeed in the role. Just over half of respondents (56.1%) agreed that formal support was provided by their organisation; however, free-text responses highlighted that even when support or mentors were offered, they were not always available or able to assist with transitioning into VET. As a result, individuals are often left taking a trial-and-error approach to finding answers to their questions and solutions to their challenges.

'I was thrown into a teaching role as the department was short-staffed. Learnt on the job with little or no mentoring. The assumption was that I had knowledge of the processes and systems, which was not the case.'

– Survey respondent

Under the VET Workforce Blueprint (2024),⁷⁵ *'making it easier for high-quality teachers, trainers and assessors to enter and stay in the VET workforce'* is a key opportunity. Improvements should be made to the application process itself, including streamlining the process, acknowledging previous experience, and reducing wait time, along with guidance for RTOs to implement these changes.

Recruitment

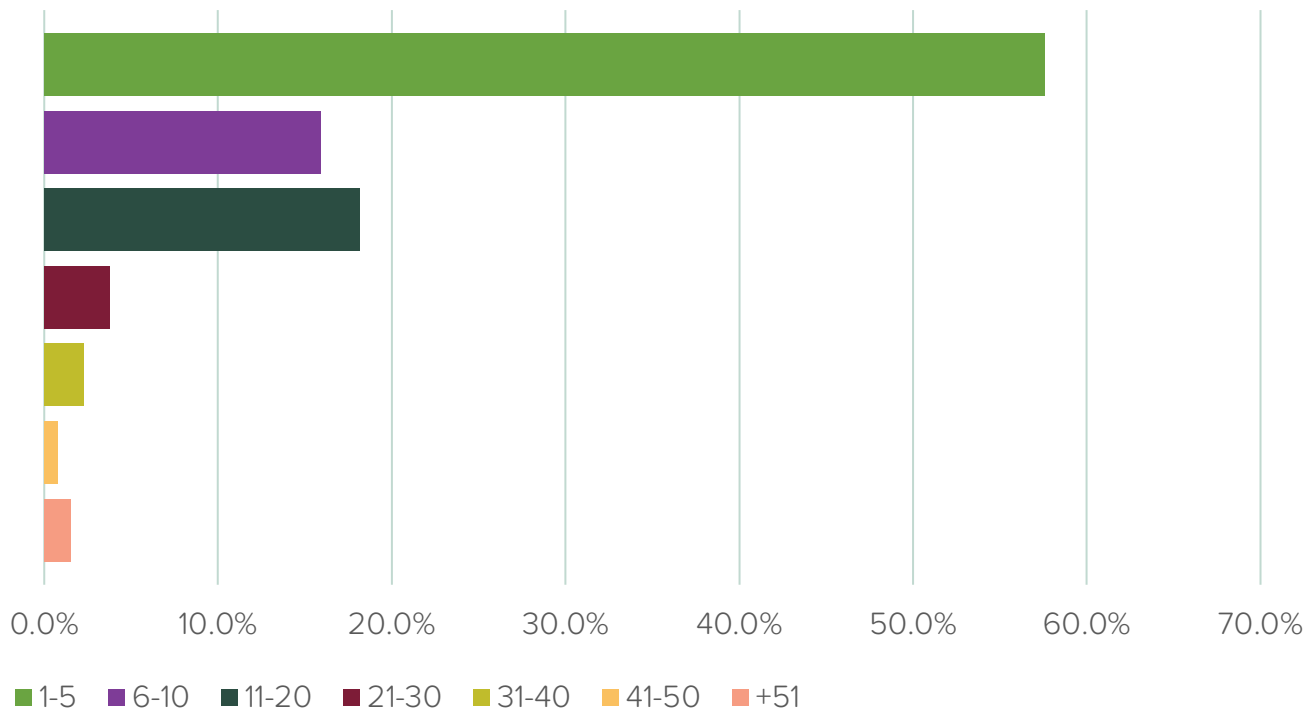
Many providers (42.4%) reported seeking to recruit more than five new staff into their workforce over the past 12 months. However, the majority (57.5%) reported recruiting fewer than five members of staff in the same period.

⁷⁴ HumanAbility, *Workforce Plan 2024*, 2024,

<https://humanability.com.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/WFP/Workforce%20Plan%202024.pdf>, last accessed 28 May 2025.

⁷⁵ Skills and Workforce Ministerial Council, *VET Workforce Blueprint*, 2024.

Figure 24: Number of roles recruited for in the last 12 months

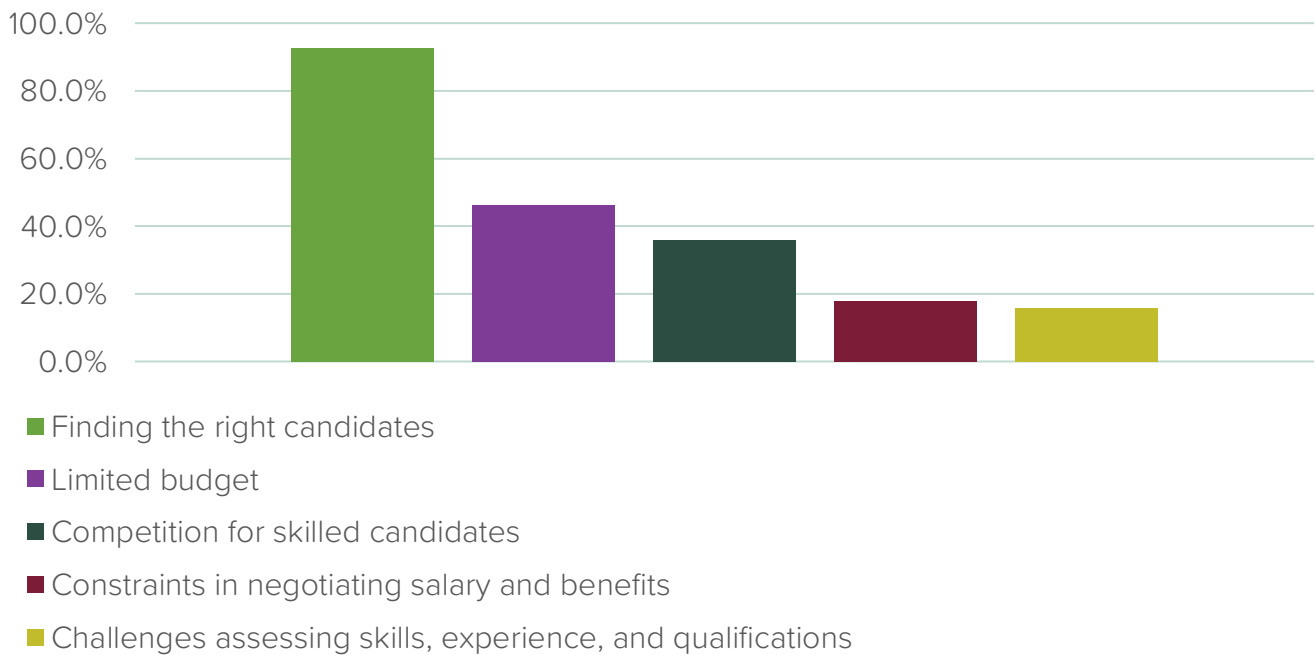


When conducting the recruitment process, a major challenge faced by organisations is finding the right candidate, as the talent pool is often the same market that already experiences a skill shortage (Figure 25). As discussed, the qualifications and requirements for a role in VET provide an initial barrier. Alongside this, stakeholders vocalised a desire for certain personal characteristics or skills that are likely to lead to a professional having a successful VET career (e.g. persistence, ability to present in a classroom setting). Combined with competition from industry, especially in the context of high, chronic labour shortages in ECEC, health, disability services, and aged care, this can lead to a small pool of candidates who are eligible, available, interested, and suited to the specific position and RTO.

‘It’s a tough market out there... we’ve really struggled in South Australia... [people] might have great facilitation skills, they might have good theory around dementia practice, but they’ve never actually been a practitioner... that’s been a major hold back for us.’

– Interview participant

Figure 25: Top 5 recruitment challenges for RTOs



Care and support VET professionals are drawn from a variety of occupations

The top 10 previous roles span multiple industries and levels of responsibility. Almost one quarter reported (24.7%) working as nurses.

Table 15: Previous role prior to moving into VET

Most common previous role among care and support VET workforce	Percentage
Nurse	24.7%
Management role/business management	11.0%
Teacher/teacher aid/assistant	9.5%
Leadership role	8.1%
Educator/assistant	7.7%
Social worker	2.9%
Coordinator	2.5%
Support worker	2.5%
Administration	2.2%
Community worker	1.8%

Several of the roles held prior to joining VET involved shift work or conditions that may no longer suit individuals' lifestyles, leading to dissatisfaction. Stakeholder consultations frequently highlighted that this may, in turn, drive individuals out of industry, as professionals are in search of a role that better suits their needs (e.g. regular working hours).

The high proportion of the care and support VET workforce who have previously worked in nursing supports this insight, where removing physical requirements of a role and providing more regular hours can act as a facilitator for getting individuals into VET, and highlights where targeted recruitment can take place and prompt consideration of a role in VET earlier on in an industry career.

4.2 Facilitators and challenges to staying in VET in the care and support sectors

Facilitators

There are six main facilitators that enable TTA professionals to succeed and remain in a role in VET: feeling connected to the colleagues and sector, clearly understanding TTA responsibilities, having resilience and social-altruistic motivations, being surrounded by a strong support system, and having access to knowledge sharing.

Most of the care and support VET workshop participants and survey respondents agree that they feel connected to their colleagues and sectors. Making connections at various levels, including back with industry, has been highlighted as important during consultations, particularly for those early on in a career in VET and for those working in remote or regional areas. Feeling connected at multiple levels within is important to not only access support but also to assist in building a dual identity, where professionals can form a VET TTA identity while also maintaining an industry identity. HumanAbility's finding is consistent with international research, which noted the importance of this dual identity, where 'boundary crossing' between the practices of occupation and VET allows for TTA professionals to constantly develop and maintain industry currency and maintain occupational identity.⁷⁶

Having a clear understanding of the role, requirements, and expectations helps individuals succeed in their role. Promisingly, 74.7% of TTA respondents strongly agree that they have the knowledge and capability to perform their role well (Figure 26). It is important to have a clear articulation of the responsibilities to ensure that professionals understand what is expected of them. This may be through explicit guidelines or through a clear onboarding experience where their role is articulated. This knowledge then assists individuals in understanding where there are gaps in their knowledge and subsequently helps to create a plan for their development.

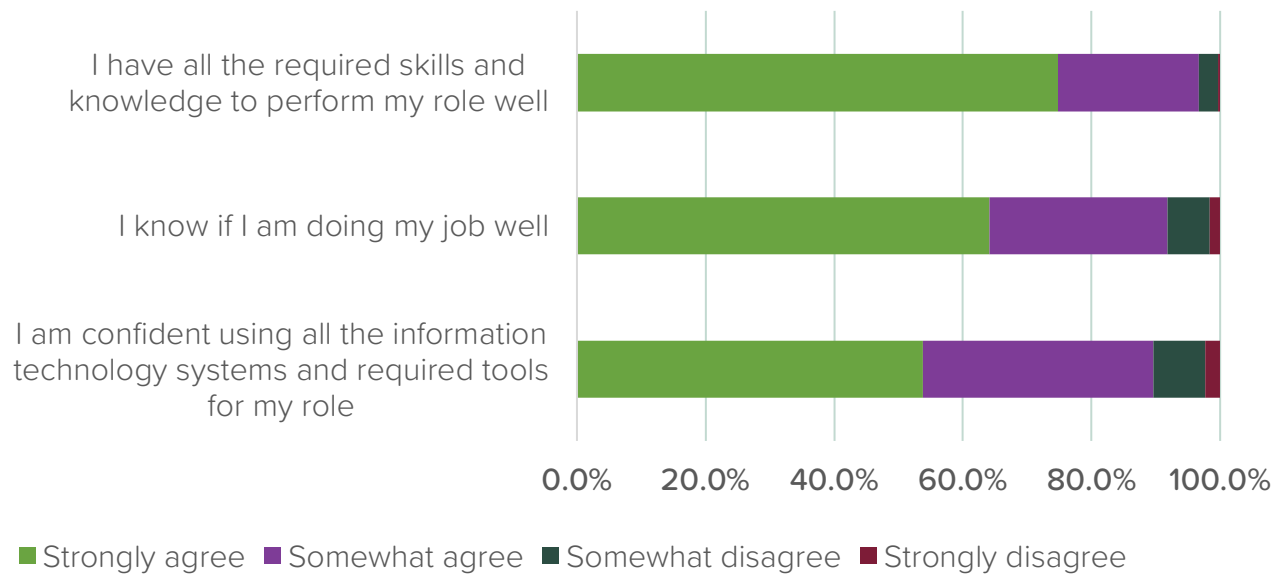
Some survey respondents highlighted how prior experience and knowledge (e.g. of Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) and Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra)

⁷⁶ E Bükki and A Fehérvári, 'Teacher, Professional or Both? A Mixed Method Study of the Professional Identity of Vocational Teachers and Trainers in Hungary', *International Journal for Research in Vocational Education and Training (IJRVET)*, 2024, <https://journals.sub.uni-hamburg.de/hup2/ijrvet/article/view/1314/404>, last accessed 23 May 2025.

Accreditation process, RTO funding and the VET system), along with guidance on where to upskill (through an RTO, Jobs and Skills Council, ASQA, industry) can assist in feeling knowledgeable and capable, and set them up for success. Joining VET under an HPI or casual role can also assist in building this knowledge and be seen as a strategy used by some organisations to ensure the TTA professionals are well-suited for the role.

‘Luckily, I was a HPI prior and knew the systems.’
– Survey respondent

Figure 26: TTA VET workforce knowledge and capacity



Stakeholder consultations highlighted how personal characteristics can help individuals succeed in a role in VET. Characteristics including strong levels of resilience and commitment, efficient time management, and the motivation to work hard and continuously upskill were highlighted as some of the traits that enable individuals to succeed and work through the challenges of a role in VET. While difficult to measure, some stakeholders highlighted how the interview steps in the recruitment process are key in understanding if an individual possesses characteristics that may help them succeed in the role.

Social-altruistic motivations to see a positive impact on students, the sector, and the community also facilitate retention in the care and support VET workforce. The ability to perform rewarding work and empower people to change their lives was highlighted across all sectors, where professionals continue to be motivated through observing student growth and development while also helping address the workforce needs of the sector. Stakeholders noted that if professionals have managed to successfully navigate the onboarding challenges experienced at the beginning of their VET career, this motivation can often outweigh any barriers faced and lead to professionals remaining in VET.

A support system provided by like-minded individuals is crucial, especially early on in a VET career. Looking at the wider context and the system that a VET role falls within highlights how

professionals belong to numerous groups, including their organisation, sector, state, and secondary/additional roles. When it comes to support, it is crucial that there is not only an organisational culture of support, including the leadership team, but also a perspective of being able to build unique relationships and receive support from industry, peers, and academics. Key components of a supportive culture highlighted by professionals within open-ended responses to HumanAbility's survey included providing autonomy and freedom – where professionals are trusted to perform their role and bring their previous experience (e.g. assist in writing assessment material) into their VET role.

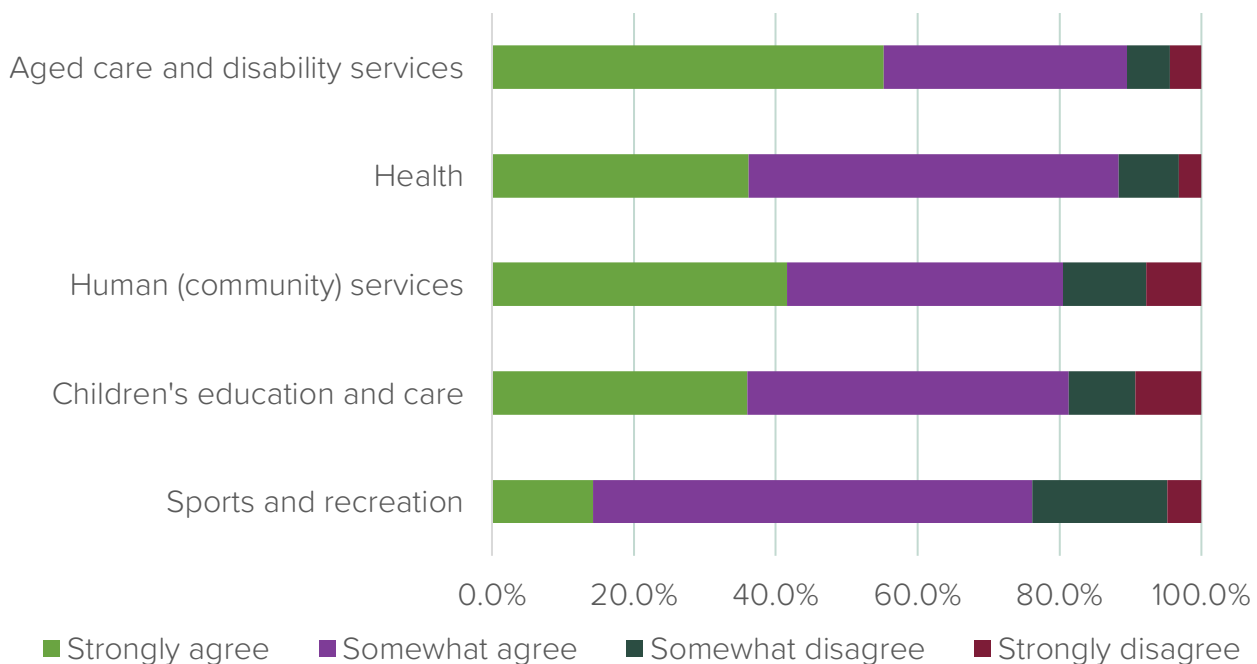
Reasonable adjustments are needed for people with long-term health conditions or a disability to remain in the workforce. For the care and support VET workforce, the proportion of TTA respondents agreeing their organisation provides reasonable adjustments was similarly high for people reporting they had a disability or long-term health condition (84.4%) as those without (90.5%). While many RTOs – and department managers within these – do an excellent job providing necessary understanding, the results indicate a need for further research to understand barriers that prevent this always being the case.

Access and promotion of knowledge sharing was a key facilitator assisting in retaining the VET workforce. Knowledge sharing between individuals and working with other trainers to not only build their own skills but help others build theirs can lead professionals to feel confident in their skills and ability to succeed in their TTA role. For example, stakeholders in regional areas, where external professional development opportunities may not always be readily available, have come together across different organisations to develop mentoring partnerships, supporting newer VET staff while also providing opportunities for experienced professionals to develop their skills and networks. Other examples of such cross-organisational cooperation extend to less formal, albeit just as valuable, relationships – such as professionals from different training providers working together to understand, navigate, and mitigate the impact of system-level reforms, including changes to state-based funding arrangements.

Intention to remain in current VET role

Overall, 79.0% of the care and support VET workforce respondents intend to remain in their role in the next two years. Additionally, over 84.4% agreed with the statement that they would recommend working in VET to a friend. Minimal differences were seen between HumanAbility's sectors, as seen in [Figure 27](#). No difference in intention to remain was observed for VET professionals with a disability (80.7%). However, LOTE respondents reported higher intentions to remain (93.7%) than those who only spoke English at home (79.4%).

Figure 27: 'I would recommend working in VET to a friend'



The proportion of respondents intending to remain is much lower (66.6%) among First Nations VET professionals. While the sample size is small, which presents challenges generalising this finding, this points to a need for close reflection and listening to First Nations stakeholders, particularly those in the RTO sector.

No differences are seen for intention when comparing metro, regional, rural, and remote locations. However, when looking at the state, a greater proportion of respondents intend to remain in their role in WA (83.7%) compared to SA (70.3%). Deep diving into the TTA segment highlights that 80.5% intend to stay in their role for the next two years. Differences were seen when comparing the type of organisation, where a greater proportion of professionals intend to stay at TAFE (83.3%) compared to private RTOs, both for-profit (71.1%) and not-for-profit (73.9%). Differences in pay and conditions between RTO type may contribute to this intention, where open-ended survey responses and stakeholder workshops highlighted the higher pay that TAFE can offer.

'We don't feel valued... trainer/assessors who get paid what they are worth are employed by TAFE.'

– Survey respondent

Barriers

HumanAbility's research surfaced multiple barriers to retention, which can be grouped into eight main categories: high levels of compliance, complexity of the VET sector, increase in pastoral responsibilities, mismatch between perception of role and reality of responsibilities, growing use of technology, changes to training products, uncertainty due to policy changes, and TAFE not setting up TTA professionals for success.

Combined, these barriers may contribute to over two thirds of the TTA survey respondents somewhat or strongly agreeing with the statement '*at my VET role I experience high levels of work-related frustration and exhaustion*' (69.9%). This was lower for TTA respondents working at small organisations (56.2%) and greater for TTA respondents who have been in the VET workforce for over 10 years (75.1%).

Compliance and administration are taking increasing amounts of time and require new skills and knowledge. A TTA role requires a range of skill sets and responsibilities that some professionals are ill-equipped for or find difficult to learn in-between other TTA responsibilities. Some VET professionals cited that administration has increased to taking over 80% of their time, where their focus is on compliance over the education that they can provide to students. For TTA respondents intending to leave the VET workforce, 92.0% (vs 73.9% amongst all TTA respondents) agreed that compliance, reporting, and administration negatively affect their ability to perform their role. When looking at organisation type and size, 78.9% of TTA respondents at TAFEs reported that compliance negatively impacts their ability to perform their role, while for private RTOs, this was far lower, at 64.0%.

'We are every year burdened with tasks that are not core to our reason for existence. Student needs, compliance, uncertainties with funding, changes to industrial relations which don't reflect our sectors' needs. There is enough to do in the classroom to provide an engaging and effective program to students without the hours of additional compliance work each evening on top of this.'

– Survey respondent

The complexity of the VET sector was noted as a key factor that increases the challenges felt through performing compliance and administrative tasks. It was noted in stakeholder workshops that funding models, reporting structures, and changing regulators and contractors all take considerable time to understand. This challenge is only exaggerated for those at dual-sector institutes (RTO and university), where there are additional systems to navigate. RTO standards were called out by workshop participants and within free-text responses, where any changes then require time both at an organisation level and individual level to ensure that organisations remain compliant.

'[It's challenging] keeping up with compliance standards and constantly reviewing these for best practice and quality control in a practical industry that is always changing and evolving.'

– Survey respondent

One interview participant raised concerns around the nature of compliance assessments, where they felt that the compliance review could be influenced by the perspective of the reviewer. This uncertainty could then negatively impact their productivity. Additionally, it was noted in free-text survey responses that key areas associated with ASQA are loosely defined, which then makes it challenging for RTOs and TTA professionals to have any clear direction, understanding, or continuity until they are audited.

‘Another issue is the subjective nature of compliance, which also depends on who is doing the review. Usually when perspectives differ around compliance requirements, this interferes with workflow and continuity.’

– Interview participant

Additional concerns were raised around the content of ASQA audits themselves, where it was raised in consultation that audits should include training delivery as an outcome, and therefore audit the delivery of lessons, along with other core functions of TTA professionals, across all modes of delivery.

‘ASQA auditor must include training delivery as an outcome, not just the paperwork for compliance. We recently completed a full audit, and at no stage was the delivery of a lesson looked at or considered. Auditors, like trainers, should have knowledge of the industry.’

– Survey respondent

However, consultations did highlight that previous roles (such as child protection and nursing) can assist with the transition into the VET workforce, where prior administration or compliance experience can bring knowledge that reduces feelings of overwhelm.

Pastoral care responsibilities are taking up more of TTA professionals’ time, but this does not always negatively impact their ability to perform their role. While a similarly large portion of the respondents agreed with the statement that pastoral care of students is taking an increasing amount of their time (84.7%), a smaller proportion (65.4%) agreed that this negatively impacts their ability to perform their core functions. Differences between type of organisation were seen again, where impact on ability to perform core functions was higher for those working within TAFE (72.4% reported agreeing) than private RTOs (57.2% reported agreeing). Challenges include supporting the changing needs of students, including learning styles and motivations. While a small sample, it highlights where different organisational approaches can impact the capability to handle increasing pastoral care responsibilities and changing student needs.

Recent research into effective teaching and learning provides strategies and resources that can help teachers develop skills to manage changing student needs.⁷⁷ The research, which held interviews and focus groups with recent ‘VET teacher/trainers of the year’, found that many VET teachers use a similar overarching strategy that enables student and teaching success, for example, considering specific learning needs, rather than, or in addition to, learning styles and preferences. The research presents strategies and resources to assist in the development of higher-level VET teaching skills, including updated education resources on VOCEDplus.⁷⁸ Future streams of this research may look to promote these resources and consider how the sector can best support the implementation of good teaching practices.

⁷⁷ T Griffin and N Davidson, *Effective teaching and learning: teacher perspectives on what works best for whom*, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2025, https://www.ncver.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0044/9695177/Effective_teaching_and_learning_teacher_perspectives_on_what_works_best_for_whom_F.pdf, last accessed 23 May 2025.

⁷⁸ VET Practitioner Resource: VOCEDplus, The international tertiary education and research database, <https://www.voced.edu.au/vet-practitioner-resource>, last accessed 23 May 2025.

The perceived responsibilities of a TTA role sometimes do not match the reality and can lead to burnout early on in a VET career. A key challenge that was raised by workshop participants involved the misalignment between the expectation of the role and the reality of responsibilities, where the focus on administration and overall expectations is higher than expected, and frequently leads to burnout. Stakeholders in workshops highlighted that the greatest dropout rates are at the 3- and 6-month mark, when TTA professionals navigate new systems and responsibilities. Greater clarity needs to be made on the specific administration and compliance responsibilities during the recruitment process, and onboarding/continued support needs to be in place to support these responsibilities, without making assumptions that professionals possess the skills required to perform these roles. In addition, it was noted by interview participants that while they have a range of skills to succeed, they may not hold them all, such as experience as a practitioner in required areas. Future research may look to explore how RTOs can support professionals coming into VET with different skill sets.

VET professionals feel positive about their digital capability, yet organisations raised concerns over the growing use of technology. Most respondents from the TTA care and support VET workforce agreed to feeling confident using technology systems and tools (88.8%, with 60.3% strongly agreeing) for their role, with no significant difference for older demographics. However, during stakeholder consultations, concerns were raised regarding low levels of digital literacy in the context of the assessment process and navigating the student use of AI tools. Across the care and support sectors, the use of technology is rising and will continue to. It is therefore important to ensure that the workforce has the digital skills required for success, and points to a need for ongoing and on-demand professional learning and support in the space, given the fast pace of technological change.

Significant changes to training packages and qualifications can feel disconnected from VET professionals' experiences and sector needs, which can reduce motivation to remain in VET. Some VET professionals highlighted in open-ended survey questions that the direction of training packages does not accurately reflect the needs of the sector or take their experience teaching into consideration. For example, one survey respondent suggested that currently there is a fragmented view of competencies that does not work for complex human service delivery. Professionals highlighted challenges in having any influence with leadership to create meaningful change or having the space to highlight their experience. Combined, VET professionals may not feel valued in their role or motivated to teach training packages that do not align with areas they feel are important.

In addition, when changes are made to qualifications, TTA are required to perform additional work to ensure that their teaching materials are up to date and suitable. This additional time may fall outside of their 'core' responsibilities and lead to time pressures.

'When there are massive changes to qualifications, [I'm] teaching things that I know don't really happen in the sector or teaching skills that I know are outside the scope of practice of workers in the sector.'

– Survey respondent

Uncertainty and change created by policy, funding, and organisational change lead to concerns regarding job security. In addition to the changes to teaching material, government policies and funding frequently undergo changes. Our research found that these changes can create an environment that feels unstable for a VET professional, where within the care and support workforce, 64.9% of TTA respondents agreed that changing funding impacts their job security. This was higher for not-for-profit RTOs (82.7%) vs TAFEs (62.9%). There is opportunity to build trust and feelings of support regarding job security and building a career in VET.

‘Many trainers work for RTOs on a part-time basis as courses are filled, and once that course is finished, they don’t know if they have ongoing work. Why would a staff member be invested in the organisation if they don’t know if they have future work?’

– Survey respondent

The TAE qualification is not always setting up TTA professionals for success. During stakeholder workshops, interviews, and surveys, challenges due to the content of the TAE were frequently referenced. Some benefits to more recent changes to undertaking the TAE were mentioned (e.g. studying the TAE on the job/with a mentor/accelerated learning). However, these were accompanied by numerous challenges that professionals face when then entering the VET workforce. When studying the TAE, it is frequently regarded as too technical and notoriously difficult to complete, with the purpose of the content often unclear. Access to the TAE can be a further challenge, with stakeholders in remote areas highlighting a lack, in some cases, of access to the qualification in face-to-face settings. While available online, the process of undertaking the qualification without contact with trainers and fellow students was noted as being less engaging.

If the TAE can be offered on the job with a mentor, the organisation must be able to find employees with the time and capability to facilitate this. Once completed, stakeholders and survey respondents articulated that the TAE does not prepare them for the realities of the role, such as ‘standing and delivering’ in a classroom setting. Finally, concerns were also raised during workshops around the quality of how the TAE is taught, with participants calling out varying levels of teaching quality that then impacts recruitment and success in a role in VET.

‘The TAE does not prepare you at all for the reality of working in VET and in front of a classroom of students.’

– Survey respondent

While it is understood that amendments to the TAE are out of scope for this research, it is important to consider aspects of the challenges that could be addressed through interventions and responses designed in Stream 2 and Stream 3.

4.3 Challenges maintaining industry currency and engaging in professional development

There are several barriers identified through thematic analysis on both qualitative and quantitative evidence that prevent TTA professionals from engaging in professional development or maintaining industry currency. These barriers, reported by professionals, included unclear

expectations for professional development, no clear value proposition perceived for engaging in development, lack of funding to engage, other TTA responsibilities that take priority, and a lack of knowledge of how to engage back with industry.

As part of their role, TTA professionals are required to show that they have industry currency, in addition to keeping up to date with pedagogical developments. However, survey response data and consultations highlighted barriers to this, with over half of TTA respondents (56.2%) reporting it is difficult to maintain industry currency. Additionally, 3.8% of TTA respondents reported that they did not currently maintain industry currency, with that rate of non-currency highest among respondents from the human (community) services sector (8.9%).

Extrinsic organisational factors, such as the support of highly relevant professional development and fostering opportunities to maintain currency, can positively impact the retention of new VET professionals.⁷⁹ It is important to address these barriers to ensure the sustainability of the VET workforce for the future.

Unclear expectations for maintaining industry currency and ongoing professional development can result in overassessment and unclear goals. Some stakeholders noted that prioritisation of where to develop professionally can be unclear, particularly for those who do not see a well-defined career pathway within VET. Additionally, it was heard that for roles specifically within the health sector, there are often several units of professional development, which can make prioritisation within professional development challenging. Changes to Training Packages and Standards can exaggerate this barrier and move development goalposts. For example, one stakeholder cited that changes to the National Quality Standard in early childhood education and care have necessitated that experienced educators undertake additional training/learning to understand updated regulatory expectations. In the absence of clear strategies relating to ongoing professional development for VET TTA roles, responsibility then falls to individuals or RTOs.⁸⁰

‘Career progression is available, but it’s slow and not well supported. Roles and responsibilities become blurred. People either help or you have to muddle through. Sometimes there is no clear answer, or direction.’

– Survey respondent

The value proposition for engaging in professional development is not always clear. During consultations, some VET professionals raised that there is often little understanding of the potential benefits offered by professional development. Others considered their own capabilities and skill sets to already be at a sufficient level to undertake their duties to a high standard. Importantly, consultations highlighted that the current professional development offered does not feel immediately relevant. TTA professionals highlighted differences between their needs and the development opportunities offered, where the content of development opportunities appears

⁷⁹ M Tyler, D Dymock and AH Le, ‘Retaining teachers and trainers in vocational education and training (VET): motivating career-changers to remain as VET educators’, *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, 2024, 29(2): 1–21, doi: 10.1080/13596748.2024.2330782.

⁸⁰ T Schmidt, *When the whole is more than the sum of its parts: Investigating ways that advanced skills for VET teachers are conceptualised and how they are developed*, 2019, <https://research-repository.griffith.edu.au/server/api/core/bitstreams/9ad0ff57-c1c9-4fc1-993c-ea71150cff43/content>, last accessed 23 May 2025.

generalist rather than tailored to the specific delivery areas. On top of this, it was voiced that content can be repetitive and lack quality, which in turn makes the TTA roles feel undervalued or misunderstood. As previous experience, knowledge, and skills are also undervalued and not always acknowledged, motivation to consider upskilling and confidence in teaching/assessing abilities can be reduced.

Recent research by Schmidt and colleagues explored if supporting scholarly activity as an approach to continuing professional development (CPD) could result in increased VET teachers' engagement in richer and more meaningful development opportunities.⁸¹ Their findings suggested that teachers in community services, health, and nursing were motivated to participate in research related to learning and teaching. This approach to CPD may assist in reducing barriers that some professionals face in meeting an accreditation requirement of evidence of scholarly activity (e.g. nursing) and provide meaningful development opportunities for more experienced VET teachers. However, it is noted that high levels of organisational support will be required to facilitate the offer. Consideration should be taken in understanding how current and previous TTA professional development and experience can be acknowledged, respected, mapped, and input into contents of a variety of professional development opportunities.

Funding restraints reduce the opportunity for some RTOs to proactively support professional development and maintain industry currency. Evidence generated in the consultations indicated that it can be difficult for some RTOs to devote a great deal of finances to support industry initiatives or offer the same capabilities as other organisations for paid professional development opportunities. Stakeholders who represented rural, remote, or smaller RTOs commented that funding formulas dependent on (changing) student numbers made it challenging to devote costs to regular professional development or industry engagement opportunities.

'Funding restoration and other project-type grants for employers would certainly enable us and our clients to engage in more training and development. Specific rural grants would be beneficial as many hubs outside metropolitan areas find it difficult financially to come to the city for training.'

– Survey respondent

This was seen when exploring survey responses, where TTA professionals in rural and remote areas were more likely to disagree that their organisation provided time and funding for regular professional development (44.1% vs 32.5% for all geographic areas). It can be suggested that while an individual and organisation may have the motivation to create an ongoing environment for TTA development, strong financial barriers within the wider system can make this more difficult at times. Stakeholder consultations called for funding for private RTOs to allow 'back to industry' days, industry release programs, and paid development opportunities to allow the workforce to remain current in specialist areas without negatively impacting the organisation.

⁸¹ T Schmidt, T Flenady, J Bradshaw, R Cole and S Singh, *Progress, benefits and barriers: Supporting scholarly activity and development of Vocational Education and Training (VET) teachers in a regional university*, 2024.

Recent announcements in Victoria may assist with the barrier of cost, where TAFE and Learn Local teachers will see a \$9 million investment to contribute to teaching scholarships and professional development opportunities.⁸²

Even when there is individual motivation to engage in professional development, time-sensitive teaching, training, and assessment take priority. For a large proportion of TTA, there is appetite and motivation to develop, but the current day-to-day workload is too heavy to permit it. In workshops, lack of time was a key barrier, where professionals are required to use time outside of their working hours due to working full-time and having conflicting responsibilities within their TTA and teaching timetable. While some organisations provided mandatory days (e.g. TAFE Paid to Learn), the realities of taking this time posed challenges. Additionally, navigating workload pressures and conflicting priorities is a barrier, where professionals are required to determine which responsibilities take priority. Stakeholder consultations highlighted that some do not always feel there is permission to engage in professional development at the expense of other priorities. However, positive examples were seen, where some RTOs have successfully created environments that provide permission to take part in development and support positive continuous learning, through providing internal networks of knowledge sharing, leadership-driven development, and manager check-ins.

Additional factors may exaggerate the barriers above due to the high proportion of females in the VET workforce. Previous research from 2021 has demonstrated that ‘female dominated workplaces are characterised by poor working conditions and a learning environment that constrains workplace learning’.⁸³ The WAVE submission to the development of the blueprint highlighted that there may also be a higher opportunity cost that women may experience when looking to increase their skills, which is influenced heavily by systemic gender inequality.⁸⁴ These factors can include care responsibilities, economic barriers, and unaccommodating workplace policies.

Recommendations identified in the report by WAVE to navigate these challenges included:

- The next policy on training packages developed by DEWR recognises the barriers faced by many women to developing industry currency currently encoded by regulation and training package frameworks
- That the RTO standards and training package policy be evolved to ensure that VET currency can reflect partnership approaches so that industry and education currency is centred in the learning environment and not just in one individual
- That the national and state regulators and training package developers have their capacity and capability developed to ensure that the implementation of these revised training package processes are implemented in the spirit of equity

⁸² Backing Victorian Workers and Good Secure Jobs, Victorian Budget 2025/2026, 20 May 2025.

⁸³ K Sjöberg Forssberg, K Parding and A Vänje, ‘Conditions for workplace learning: a gender divide?’ *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 33(4): 302–314, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JWL-08-2020-0134>.

⁸⁴ Women in Adult and Vocational Education (WAVE), *Submission to the development of a blueprint for Australia’s VET workforce*, 2024.

A gendered lens should be considered during future stages of research to ensure that industry-led solutions that target working conditions and learning environments can best support the care and support VET workforce.

A barrier to engaging with industry currency is the lack of knowledge and networks to successfully do so. Some organisations highlighted having strong industry ties and networks with key industry partners to assist with engagement (communities of practice, conjoint agreements between TAFE and industry). Others, however, cited frequently being met with ‘red tape’ when approaching industry, such as requiring police checks and vaccinations, both of which are reasonable and beneficial but require further planning and preparation. Additionally, the requirement to present a strong case for industry support was also cited as a challenge. Smaller organisations in particular reported lacking confidence in practical knowledge and guidance on how to engage with industry, including developing, sustaining, or increasing partnerships. This lack of knowledge and understanding can go both ways. People in HumanAbility’s sectors reported a mixed understanding among industry partners and connections about why and how they, as VET professionals, need to engage in industry.

‘Industry doesn’t understand why teachers need to go back – they think we are checking on their practices and refuse the applications.’

– Workshop participant

On top of this, it was suggested that TTA professionals often need to learn how to best engage with industry, as this is not currently covered in the TAE Certificate IV. However, teaching of industry engagement is covered within VET teacher training courses, and suggestions have been made at recent research conferences within VET to offer the 2022 ‘Enterprise and Industry Engagement Skill Set’ free of charge to VET staff.⁸⁵

When looking at survey results, it was seen that TTA respondents who currently hold a role outside of VET (likely to be within their sector) are more likely to strongly agree they maintain industry currency (81.9% vs 65.9% amongst TTA respondents who do not currently hold a role outside of VET). This indicates the importance of holding multiple roles within and outside of VET, and the importance of at least understanding how to best connect back with industry.

Stakeholders raised concerns that the workforce is at risk of falling behind on industry currency. As noted earlier in the report, stakeholders highlighted concerns around digital and technological developments within the care and support sectors. Rapid transformation, particularly within aged care and disability services, requires immediate upskilling of the workforce, and thus of TTA professionals preparing the current and future workforces for these sectors. During workshops, some stakeholders within the sector highlighted that the higher-than-average tenure in the VET workforce, when combined with low engagement back with industry, risks professionals falling behind on currency and potentially negatively impacting the future of the sector.

⁸⁵ E Smith and A Smith, ‘How Australian VET teachers engage with industry - empirical data’, *AVETRA Conference* 2025.

‘People have been in the workforce a long time. If they haven’t been in industry for 5 years, that’s long enough to fall behind industry currency, with the rapid change of the sector... that’s a threat to the sector, where the workforce can fall behind what is current practice.’

– Workshop participant

4.4 Not-for-profit, First Nations, and geographical challenges

Community Education Australia

Consultations with Community Education Australia (CEA) highlighted specific challenges and pressures for their VET workforces. While discussions were not specific to sectors under the care and support sector, challenges relevant to sectors under HumanAbility’s remit were raised.

Funding is a huge challenge, where dynamic policy and funding settings can create workforce instability, such as when short-term funding adjustments are made based on skills lists. Organisations then face challenges sourcing and upskilling trainers, or, conversely, can immediately lose trainers when cuts are made. For example, they said funding changes to disability and early childhood education and care qualifications have led to concerns around job security for professionals in these areas. Additional financial pressures were raised, where it was highlighted that Smart and Skill pricing has not been reviewed for some qualifications since 2015. Consequently, organisations face increased financial pressures to deliver courses under the same budget, despite seeing an increase in other costs.

Community colleges and NFPs also highlighted a loss of their VET workforce to TAFEs, which can offer higher pay and conditions. Additionally, the TAFE is currently available under Fee-Free TAFE and offered as an Earn While You Learn (EWYL) model, making it easier for TAFE to potentially recruit professionals into VET. Consequently, community colleges or not-for-profit organisations lose both potential and current VET professionals. Fee-Free TAFE can have further implications on an organisation’s ability to manage the workforce needs, as funding cuts for certain courses can move students away from not-for-profits (NFPs) into Fee-Free TAFE courses.

However, some key facilitators to specifically joining an NFP were raised, including the draw of joining an organisation that holds a high sense of purpose and community, which are components of their culture that are not always found within other RTOs.

Spotlight on the First Nations-identifying workforce

Some important variations can be seen between VET professionals in HumanAbility’s sectors identifying as First Nations and respondents not identifying as First Nations.

Analysis of First Nations VET professionals (inclusive of all VET roles) across the care and support sectors reveals key differences in recruitment pathways, workplace experiences, and motivations for joining the VET workforce. Notably, 41.1% of First Nations professionals reported entering the VET workforce through existing employment within their organisation (vs 20.7% non-First Nations), while a similar proportion were recruited by word of mouth (35.2% vs 34.1%, respectively). These findings also align with findings from the JSA’s First Nations VET Workforce Research Insights

Presentation, which revealed a scarcity of conventional recruitment practices aimed at promoting the involvement of First Nations staff, except for a handful of acknowledged successful approaches.⁸⁶ The contrast in perceptions and experiences between First Nations respondents and others highlights significant disparities in workplace attraction factors and support systems.

Motivations for joining the sector also differed, with First Nations respondents somewhat less likely to agree that they entered the VET workforce to contribute their industry knowledge and expertise (82.3% vs 95.9%). First Nations respondents were also far less likely to report they were attracted to the role due to greater work-life balance and flexibility (58.8% vs 82.1% non-First Nations) and to report lower access to formal support or mentoring (41.1% vs 58.1%, respectively). All the First Nations respondents who reported positive experiences on this dimension were employed in the VET workforce for the aged care and disability services sector. This suggests structural barriers, recruitment practices, and workplace culture may be influencing both the attraction and retention of First Nations professionals in the VET workforce, and also that promising practices may be used in the aged care the disability sector.

A slightly larger portion of the First Nations respondents (29.4% vs 26.7% non-First Nations) agreed they faced unexpected barriers during the recruitment process. A larger number of First Nation respondents also agreed that the recruitment process was costly (41.1% vs 21.6% non-First Nations), with 52.9% agreeing it was time-consuming (vs 46.49% non-First Nations).

Respondents identifying as First Nations reported feeling less connected to VET colleagues than other respondents (17.64% vs 12.85%).

Racism remains present and troubling. Almost half (43.7%) of First Nations identifying respondents agreed with the statement 'I experience or observe racism in my role', with 12.5% strongly agreeing to this. This, along with the higher levels of work-related frustration and exhaustion reported, signals the need for targeted support and improvements for this important cohort of the VET workforce.

Given the importance of boosting First Nations workforces across the care and support sectors,⁸⁷ this finding suggests much work is still needed to ensure a culturally safe environment.

Organisations should identify strategies to improve workplace experiences by fostering culturally safe and responsive environments and providing clearer pathways and encouragement for First Nations employees to ascend into leadership roles where they aspire to do this. Insights may also contribute to Action 6 of the VET Blueprint: *'Develop localised and bespoke First Nations strategies to build the First Nations VET workforce. These will be developed from the ground up in partnership with First Nations peoples.'*⁸⁸

HumanAbility, as a Jobs and Skills Council, has a role to further research any underrepresentation of First Nations VET professionals and highlight this insight with stakeholders. There is also a role to ensure that the First Nations VET workforce is represented and able to continue to provide knowledge and insights, particularly on industry advisory committees. Finally, it also important to

⁸⁶ JSA, First Nations VET Workforce Research Insights Presentation [unpublished].

⁸⁷ Australian Government, *National Agreement On Closing The Gap*, Canberra: National Indigenous Australian Agency, 2020, <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/national-agreement/national-agreement-closing-the-gap>, last accessed 28 May 2025.

⁸⁸ Skills and Workforce Ministerial Council, *VET Workforce Blueprint*, 2024.

ensure that the VET reform ensures RTOs are kept accountable for intentions to deliver culturally safe training and outcomes to address workforce shortages with mentoring and wraparound services.

Remote, regional, and rural workforce challenges and opportunities

VET providers outside major capital cities and other metropolitan areas often face more pronounced pressures around attraction and retention, although utilising existing connections and networks can be especially invaluable.

Within regional communities, 24.0% of respondents reported entering the workforce after having heard of opportunities via word of mouth, with this value rising to 35.4% in rural and remote areas. In rural and remote areas, 18.7% gained their current VET role having already worked for the employer in another capacity.

Pressures compounding both attraction and retention in regional, remote, and rural areas include the smaller pool of local qualified and eligible candidates. At the same time, attempts to attract staff from more populous markets are frequently hamstrung by severe shortages, and/or high costs, of housing. While several respondents noted the incidence of staff working in rural/remote communities while living in and commuting from larger regional centres, this type of scenario was perhaps just as frequently cited in workshops as a direct reason people had left, or are considering leaving, the VET workforce. Such barriers posed by housing shortages and costs are shared by many other occupations and industries – health care and early education being notable examples – creating flow-on impacts for VET providers, students, and the broader communities to which they belong.

‘The needs of the Northern Territory VET workforce are extremely different to those in other states and territories and should be considered individually (e.g. very small population size, 250,000 people, significant vocational workforce shortages in key areas, with those attracted to VET not holding TAE, IT issues).’

– Survey respondent

Beyond these more practical concerns, VET providers and professionals in these communities also invariably experience difficulties accessing professional development opportunities. While online and other virtual options are available, respondents in the workshops frequently shared that these offerings vary in quality.

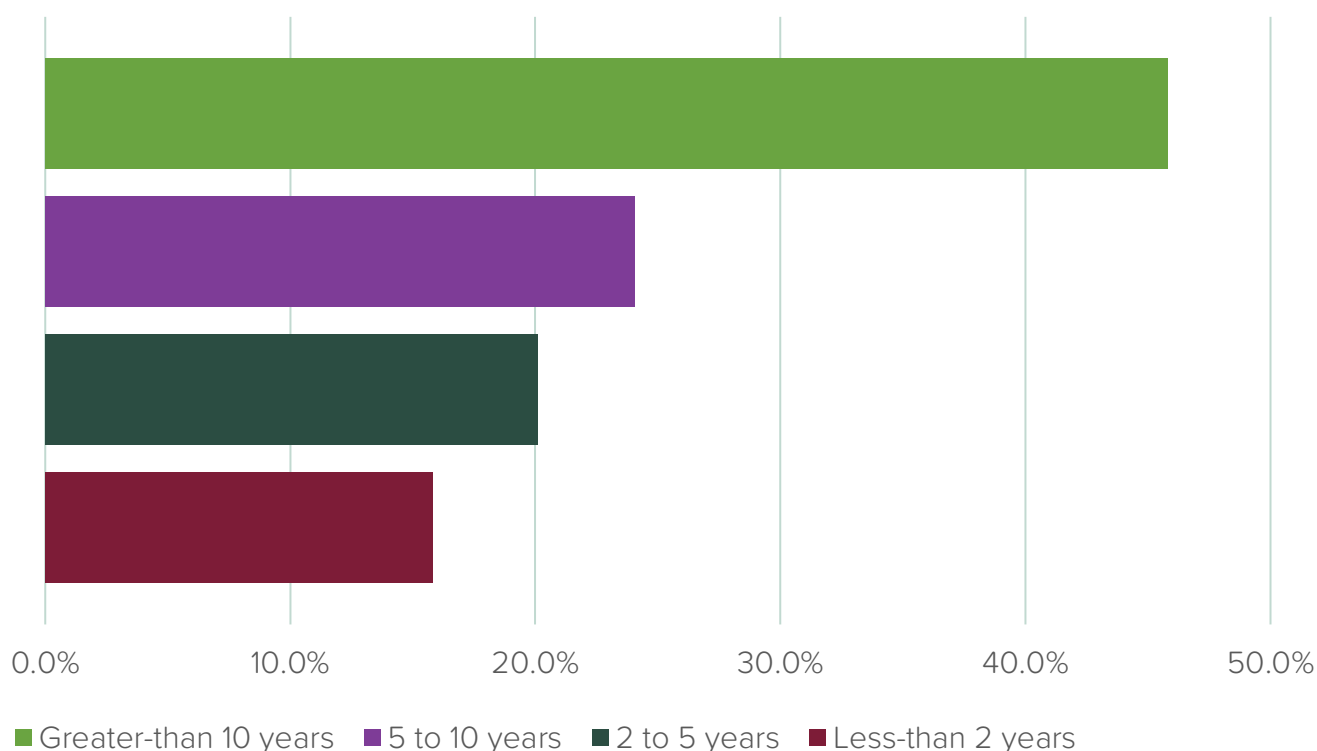
4.5 Pathways out of the VET sector

Years employed in VET sector – care and support VET workforce

Nearly half of all respondents have been in the VET sector for over 10 years (Figure 28). The survey data also highlights that the smallest proportion of respondents indicated that they joined VET in the last two years (15%). The disparity in the number of years of experience in VET raises concerns regarding future skills gaps for two key reasons. Firstly, it is important to ensure that when experienced VET professionals look to retire or leave the VET workforce, consideration is

given to how best to transfer knowledge to newer colleagues. Secondly, as a majority may have left the sector entirely a decade ago, it is imperative that they continue to maintain strong industry currency and remain current with the sector.

Figure 28: Number of years employed in VET sector



Private RTOs and TAFEs have similar proportions of staff reporting years of experience across all categories. However, analysis of survey data revealed variations by the size of respondents' employing organisation. Larger organisations typically had a higher proportion of employees who reported having worked in VET for over 10 years (48.8%) vs smaller organisations (39.1%), where smaller organisations have a higher proportion of employees who reported having worked in VET for under two years (31.08%) vs larger organisations (12.3%).

Differences were also surfaced in roles. Fewer VET professionals working within learning support roles reported having over a decade's experience in VET (21.7%), lower than leadership roles (71.3%) and quality and compliance roles (65.0%).

Intention after leaving the VET sector

Just over 20% of the VET workforce (20.3%) reported intending to leave their role in the next two years. For those reporting plans to leave, 43.7% intend to retire, with 21.8% looking to return to the sector and 10.9% intending to remain in VET but move to a new role.

Turnover

Almost half of the organisations responding to HumanAbility’s survey for RTOs reported low turnover rates – less than 5% within the last 12 months (42.8%). A further 6.6% reported that they had experienced a turnover of over 20% in the past 12 months. Higher turnover rates were reported for smaller organisations (fewer than 100 students), where 13.6% reported turnover rates of over 20% in the past 12 months.

4.6 Retention strategies for the VET workforce in the care and support sectors

Retention strategies

Multiple strategies are in use to strengthen retention, spanning pay, conditions, professional learning, and more. RTO representatives in our workshops described using increased remuneration, flexible work time, paid training, compliance assistance, and investment in 1:1 coaching/mentors as key strategies to retain the VET workforce. HumanAbility’s RTO survey reinforced this finding and highlighted that 52.1% of organisations reported using strategies that specifically assist with professional development engagement, including the delivery of informal development and learning (reported by 83.3% of organisations utilising retention strategies), monitoring professional development (76.0%), and encouraging and supporting employees to obtain higher qualifications (61.4%).

Strategies used by RTOs to attract and retain First Nations professionals

RTOs reported a multifaceted approach to support the attraction and retention of First Nations VET professionals, underpinned by a commitment to cultural safety, inclusion, and long-term workforce development. A key component of these efforts is the implementation of Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs), particularly cited in the ECEC sector. A common theme of RAPs analysed is to increase First Nations representation through targeted recruitment strategies. Cultural awareness training was also cited as being widely used to build staff capability in fostering respectful and inclusive work environments, while organisational cultural learning plans are reported to be helping to embed long-term cultural awareness across all staff levels. These measures align with findings from the JSA’s First Nations VET Workforce Research Insights Presentation, which highlights the significance of recognising the impact of colonial history and addressing its consequences through cultural awareness and sensitivity.⁸⁹

Organisations emphasised mentorship as a critical support mechanism, with experienced staff being assigned to guide and champion First Nations employees through their professional journey. This approach aligns with findings from the JSA’s First Nations VET Workforce Research Insights Presentation, which highlighted the importance of incorporating mentoring, yarning, and consistent, culturally responsive supports to achieve successful professional outcomes for this cohort of employees.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ JSA, First Nations VET Workforce Research Insights Presentation [unpublished].

⁹⁰ JSA, First Nations VET Workforce Research Insights Presentation [unpublished].

Program flexibility – such as adaptable workloads and study leave provisions to support career progression, mobility, and enhancement of career pathways – was also viewed as essential to creating culturally responsive workplaces. First Nations staff were also offered wraparound support services to ensure successful professional outcomes.⁹¹

Several organisations reported creating dedicated positions for First Nations people. They also encouraged staff in this cohort to take time for professional development to support long-term retention, aligning with findings in the JSA's First Nations VET Workforce Research Insights Presentation, which promotes the inclusion of First Nations individuals in conventional teaching, training, and assessment positions, along with the incorporation of Indigenous material.⁹²

Inclusive recruitment practices were also identified. Some organisations mentioned revising their advertisements to explicitly welcome First Nations applicants. Others highlighted collaboration with local businesses to promote roles within the community. This aligns with findings in the JSA's First Nations VET Workforce Research Insights Presentation, which emphasised the significance of providing bespoke opportunities for career progression, leadership, and ownership.⁹³

Regional strategies for attraction and retention

To mitigate workforce attraction issues posed by geographic isolation, some providers in regional, remote, and rural locations have begun considering new strategies, taking on board learnings from outside Australia. The success of the UK National Health Service's 'grow-your-own' workforce approach – identifying and training new health professionals from the local communities to which such individuals retain profound connections – was cited by one TAFE stakeholder, for instance, as informing a new plan to promote the social importance and value of working in VET to professionals in the health and human (community) services sectors in some regional centres.

Incentives and perks were also commonly reported to attract and retain staff in regional and remote locations. These included flexible working arrangements, access to company cars and fuel allowances, and opportunities to take up additional roles in the community, such as on industry-related board committees. Of course, RTOs' capacity to be able to offer such incentives depends on their size and financial situation. Smaller, private training providers can be more susceptible to fluctuating student enrolments, and related funding instability may allow fewer opportunities to do this. Despite the best efforts of state government initiatives that provide targeted funding to regional, remote, and rural providers to enhance workforce sustainability, a factor frequently cited by survey respondents and workshop participants faced by privately run organisations in this context has been, for example, the competing appeal of Fee-Free TAFE options for students in qualifying courses.

⁹¹ JSA, First Nations VET Workforce Research Insights Presentation [unpublished].

⁹² JSA, First Nations VET Workforce Research Insights Presentation [unpublished].

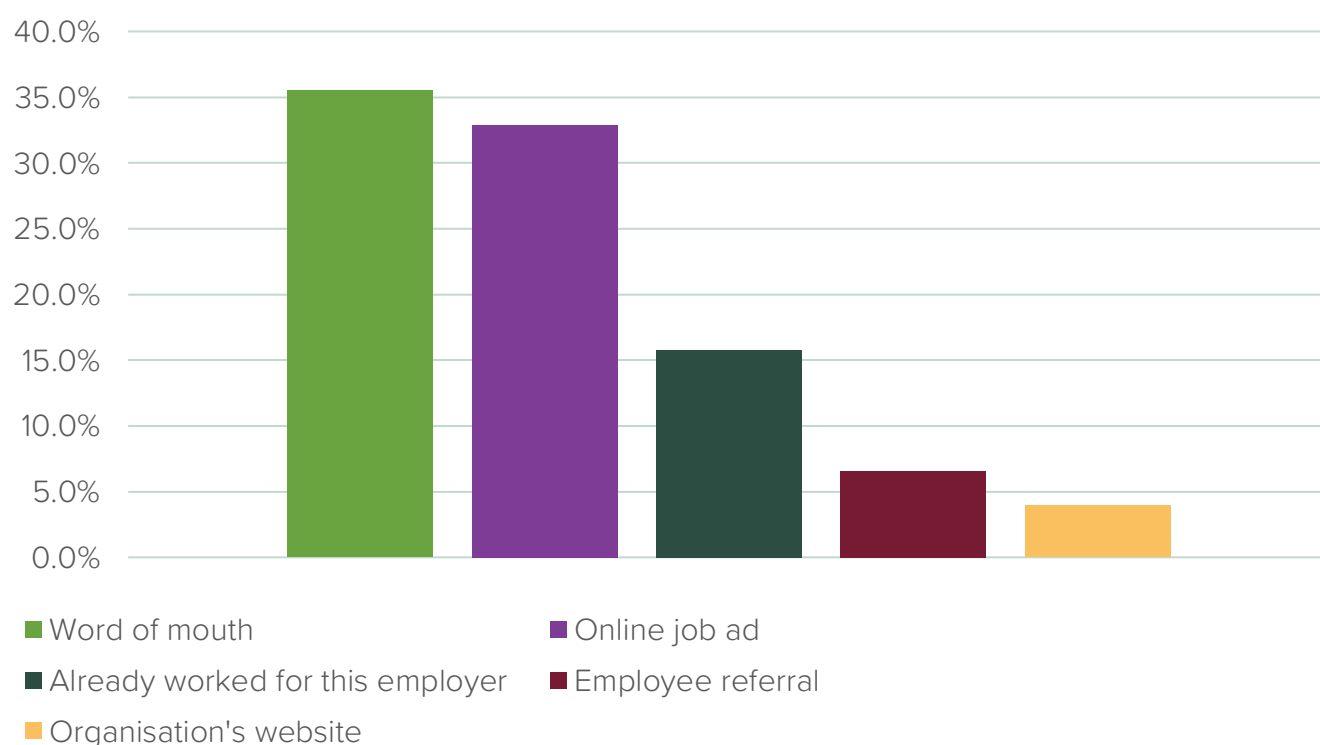
⁹³ JSA, First Nations VET Workforce Research Insights Presentation [unpublished].

4.7 Pathways and challenges in aged care and disability services

Pathways into TTA roles

Over a third of respondents within the aged care and disability services sector heard of their TTA role through word of mouth (Figure 29), with some mentioning that existing partnerships through Earn While You Learn models provided accessible entry points. When examining the journey into the VET as a TTA professional, respondents identified several key factors that facilitated their transition into this field.

Figure 29: How respondents first heard about their TTA role in aged care and disability services



Stakeholders and survey respondents reported entering the sector after experiencing burnout in their previous roles due to the physically and mentally demanding nature of those jobs. Improved pay acted as a significant incentive, with higher wages making the sector more appealing, particularly for professionals with a Certificate III.

Conversely, several challenges were also identified in joining the sector. Interview participants in the sector reported the significant issue of declining salaries associated with certain roles within allied health, nursing, and disability services over time. Another concern cited was the lack of appreciation for the lived experiences of professionals in the sector. Individuals also cited feeling undervalued, which often led to them feeling like they were working below their level of expertise, as a contributing factor for leaving their jobs.

‘An urgent issue with retention is that professionals holding Cert. 3 are often scheduled for small blocks, often in domestic services with some social support. So that often leaves these

professionals feeling like they are operating below their grade even if they are being paid well.’
– Interview participant

Additionally, it was highlighted in the National Disability Services research paper *Aligning the Vocational Education and Training Sector Response to the Needs of the Disability Workforce*, that there are challenges in recruiting trainers and assessors with relevant disability experience into regional and remote areas.⁹⁴ This challenge has been further exacerbated by the strong appeal of alternative industries (including mining) and the availability of roles within the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) space.

Remaining in the VET workforce

Respondents identified several factors that encouraged or discouraged retention. Among the positive factors, participants emphasised the intrinsic rewards of their work, such as a sense of connection to the industry. They highlighted the importance of flexible work arrangements, including adaptable hours, which allow them to balance personal and professional responsibilities. Additionally, respondents noted that strong support systems within their workplaces, such as organisational investment in trainee support and a sense of team cohesion, including being surrounded by like-minded and passionate colleagues, played a crucial role in their decision to continue working in the sector.

Several key obstacles were also identified by respondents as contributing to challenges in long-term retention within the sector. Some professionals in participating in workshops cited feeling uncertain about what constitutes best practices in compliance, leaving them vulnerable to scrutiny. They noted that compliance, in their experience, is often interpreted differently depending on the assessor or regulatory body, adding to their concerns.

‘Guidelines are usually not given, and the opportunity for the organisation to interpret the requirements is usually encouraged, and then when that is done, then we are told we are still not in compliance. Also, what one auditor sees as being compliant, another might not.’
– Workshop participant

Professional development and maintaining industry currency

Respondents consistently highlighted both the facilitators and challenges they faced in accessing and engaging in upskilling activities. Many noted that upskilling was most effective in organisations that have a clear understanding of sector standards and requirements, particularly the NDIS Practice Standards and quality frameworks, which help to reduce ambiguity in their roles.

Competency training – especially when integrated into ongoing practice rather than delivered as one-off sessions – was seen as very valuable to respondents. Training that focuses on building practical, demonstrable skills aligned with daily responsibilities was seen as more relevant and effective. This includes non-accredited competencies and training related to wellbeing, resilience,

⁹⁴ National Disability Services, NDS Skills Project, *Aligning The Vocational Education And Training Sector Response to the Needs of the Disability Workforce*, 2024.

and combating isolation. Additionally, some respondents identified employer-funded professional development as a key support for their growth.

Another key facilitator of upskilling was the use of the Trainer Skills matrix, which is valued for providing a structured framework that clearly outlines the competencies required for effective training and assessment delivery in aged care and disability services.⁹⁵

Respondents also reported experiencing several barriers to upskilling within the sector. These included the rapid pace of change, which includes constant shifts in regulatory requirements, evolving funding models, and changing service delivery expectations. Workers approaching retirement were also described by some participants as having less incentive to engage in professional learning, master new technologies, and maintain industry currency.

Respondents reported scheduling challenges related to development and reconnecting with industry, particularly regarding shift work and maintaining adequate coverage during training periods. Most interview participants highlighted the lack of dedicated facilitators to support clear career development pathways within the sector, emphasising the importance of training and upskilling for workforce retention.

Time in role and future intentions

Like other care and support sectors, TTA professionals in the aged care and disability services sector were likely to hold high levels of experience in VET, with 38.1% holding over 10 years of experience in VET, compared to 20.8% holding under two years. When looking at future intentions, 80.9% of TTA respondents for the sector expressed a desire to remain in their role. Of those who indicated an intention to leave their VET role, 70.0% plan to retire. Intention to remain is higher than seen for the aged care and disability services workforce, where previous research reported that 64.6% intend to remain in their current role in aged care in the next year.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ RTO Pilot, 'How to Build a Compliant Trainer Skills Matrix for RTOs: ASQA Requirements Explained', 2024, <https://rtopilot.com.au/article/build-a-compliant-trainer-skills-matrix-for-rtos#:~:text=A%20Trainer%20Skills%20Matrix%20is%20a%20document%20that%20tracks%20the,and%20supporting%20high%20quality%20training>, last accessed 27 May 2025.

⁹⁶ Department of Health and Aged Care, *Aged Care Worker Survey 2024 Report*, 2024, <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-12/aged-care-worker-survey-2024-report.pdf>, last accessed 23 May 2025.



Case Study

HumanAbility spoke to a small but dedicated aged care and disability services training provider that is passionate about addressing the chronic shortage of VET professionals.

As with many other organisations facing similar difficulties in attracting new staff, the provider proactively seeks out potential trainers from within industry – utilising personal and professional networks established by senior leadership officials over several decades in the VET sector, as well as their refined sense of what to look out for in future VET staff. Beyond using these connections, relationships, and experience to help source their own future trainers and assessors, the organisation also makes concerted efforts to raise the capacity of the VET sector within their broader community. In one such case, the provider assisted a local agency to become an RTO itself, supporting over 10 of the other organisation's staff through the process of undertaking and gaining the Certificate IV in TAE, via the provision of mentoring support provided by its leadership and staff.

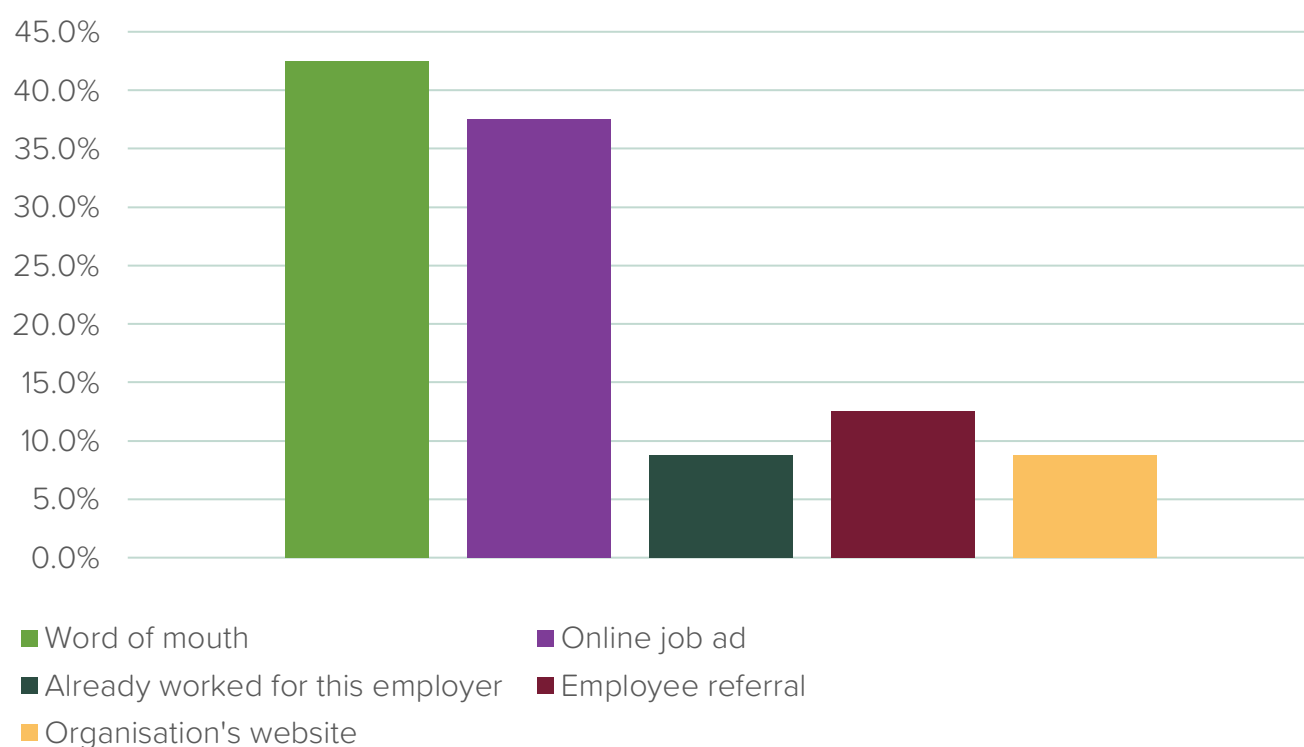
While such an act may seem counterproductive at first glance – effectively helping another organisation raise its staffing capacity while dealing with its own problems in this space – management keenly acknowledged the positive flow-on impacts on the wider VET system of providing such support. Indirectly, too, such collaboration with fellow training providers has served to raise the organisation's own profile and reputation, giving rise to profound benefits, including being sought out by VET professionals as a model employer. In the context of the provider's awareness of the competing pull of jobs in higher education, this reputation-enhancing activity has paid dividends in attracting and sustaining its own VET workforce.

4.8 Pathways and challenges in children's education and care

Pathways into TTA roles

A large proportion of professionals within the children's education and care VET sector first heard about their role through either word of mouth or via an online advert (Figure 30). Staff in the CEC sector reported that the comparatively higher pay than typically offered in industry acted as an appealing motivator to join the VET workforce. While this has been true historically, recent changes to the industrial relations framework governing early childhood education and care (ECEC) – including the Fair Work Commission decision and Australian Government reforms – may have an impact in coming years.

Figure 30: How respondents first heard about their TTA role in children's education and care



Another 'pull' factor attracting professionals from industry into VET roles is the perceived benefit of training adult learners rather than younger children. VET is less physically demanding than being 'on the floor' in ECEC. As a result, respondents suggested that the risk of burnout may be considerably lower in VET settings.

Respondents also indicated that having the chance to remain actively connected to the industry while engaged in VET roles, including through RTO-industry partnerships, was seen as a positive driving force behind attraction into the workforce.

Conversely, other respondents perceived that educating adults and navigating adult learners' emotional and psychosocial complexities could be difficult and pose unforeseen obstacles, even for experienced VET professionals. Related to this point is concern on the part of some prospective new VET professionals about the risk of occupational violence.

Elsewhere, wages and conditions (including paid school holiday periods) in subsectors of the industry can be more appealing than those offered by VET employers, potentially reducing the appeal of transitioning into VET-related occupations.

Perceptions of the range of responsibilities by prospective new VET employees also emerged in the consultations as potential barriers to entry. These include concerns about the weight of compliance and administrative responsibilities in some VET roles, the changing nature and relative instability of the sector and how this might affect job security (for instance, ebbs and flows in areas such as funding and student enrolment numbers).

Remaining in the VET workforce

Respondents reported multiple facilitators to remaining in the CEC VET workforce. Some of these differed by employer type, including the provision by some providers of generous annual leave conditions. Perks and incentives, such as those related to travel (company vehicles and fuel cards, for instance), are also offered by some employers, particularly those in more urgent need of staff, such as in remote communities.

Of ongoing concern for the sector is the list of elements potentially driving existing VET staff away from the workforce, in many cases back to industry. As noted above, although still very early in the process, the effect of reforms to industrial settings in ECEC has already begun to be noted, with some respondents suggesting the wage increases may persuade them to leave VET roles and return to industry. The pull of a return to the ECEC sector also extends, in some cases, to the rise of new specialised roles, which may potentially increase in number amid major reforms in ECEC at state and commonwealth levels. Other retention risk factors noted by workshop respondents include the mental burden imposed on staff of needing to understand and adopt changing technological processes and procedures, and safety concerns held by staff travelling to and working in rural and remote settings.

Professional development and maintaining industry currency

Respondents in CEC reported numerous facilitators to successfully maintaining industry currency and engaging in professional development while within the children's education and care VET workforce. These included the provision, by employers, of subsidised development opportunities, as well as the inclusion of dedicated time for such purposes within industrial instruments. Some employers, for example, give their staff a week-long period each year to work in a trainee capacity within industry, facilitating the absorption of up-to-date industry practices and skills. Other positive scenarios in which professional development is undertaken include situations like that described in the case study below, whereby organisations work together to bridge gaps (such as in more remote or rural areas, where third-party professional development providers are less accessible, or

of more varying levels of quality) and share professionals' knowledge and experience, for the betterment of the broader workforce.

Barriers to effective development and maintenance of industry currency include the unwieldiness of needing to balance administrative responsibilities, the day-to-day teaching and assessing workload, and finding time to participate in development opportunities, reinforcing earlier research findings discussed in this report.

Time in role and future intentions

Surpassed only by TTA respondents within the sports and recreation sector (65.0%), the CEC sector has among the largest proportions of VET professional respondents who have been in the system for more than 10 years, with 50.0% of the workforce in this bracket (compared to TTA respondents in wider care and support VET, 40.9%).

When looking at the intentions of the workforce for the sector itself, the Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) found that nearly three quarters (72%) intend to work in the children's education and care for another five years.⁹⁷ Intention was higher for the VET workforce, where 80.8% of TTA respondents within the sector indicated remaining in their role for the next two years. Amongst those planning to leave within the next two years, just over half report planning to retire (54.5%). Concerningly, 9.0% of those planning to leave report intending to move out of the sector entirely due to negative experiences or concerns for the future of their role.

⁹⁷ Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, *Progressing a national approach to the children's education and care workforce*, 2019, <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-01/ProgressingNationalApproachChildrensEducationCareWorkforce.pdf>, last accessed 23 May 2025.



Case Study

One training provider interviewed is navigating the difficulties of its regional setting – and the attendant issues posed by severe workforce shortages – by focusing heavily on its current staff.

A key pillar of this strategy involves actively providing opportunities to upskill and develop skill sets around education and training. Indeed, the organisation is so committed to this principle that upskilling and increasing staff capabilities form part of senior management's own key performance indicators (KPIs). In recent years, this focus has seen several of the provider's staff move through the ranks of the organisation – for example, from entry-level roles in administration to fully trained trainers and assessors – having been supported both financially and practically to pursue TAE qualifications.

The provider's staff development framework does not end there. In several cases, and despite the organisation's very small size, employees have been supported to ascend even further, into leadership positions. Such nurturing of existing staff ends up benefitting not just the training provider itself but the broader learning community – especially important in areas where the pool of potential VET professionals is already small. Indeed, on at least one occasion, the provider's dedication to staff development led to one staff member gaining the skills and experience that helped them leave to become a senior manager at another local training provider.

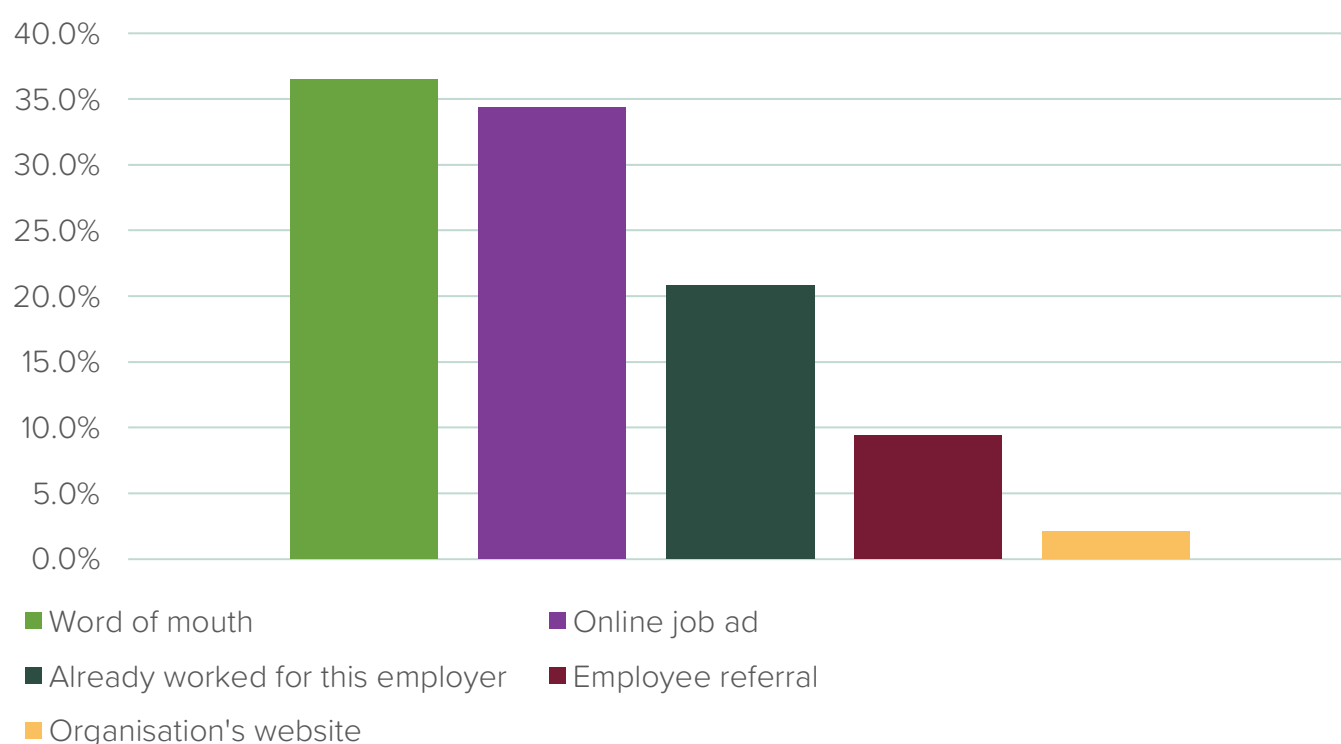
Sharing of skills and knowledge is deepened through the provider's membership of a regional Community of Practice – in which around 35 training providers convene quarterly. Here, they share mentoring strategies and discuss innovative ways to improve teaching practices, all with the common experience of needing to balance the unique demands of operating in areas of differing levels of remoteness. An additional strategy the provider has used to boost retention rates involves providing staff with generous perks and conditions – these include 10 days of leave on top of regular sick/personal leave to allow staff to support family members in cases of illness or other issues, the use of company vehicles and fuel cards to limit costs incurred by travel, and \$300 per year encouraged to be used on items or fees related to enhancing a strong work-life balance.

4.9 Pathways and challenges in health

Pathways into TTA roles

Organisations within the health sector reported adopting targeted recruitment strategies to facilitate entry into the VET workforce. These strategies include utilising social media platforms (e.g. Facebook), advertising on job boards (e.g. LinkedIn, Indeed), and engaging potential candidates through their company websites. Notably, international recruitment was used by some employers as a strategic response to find the right candidate. Survey responses showed that a strong proportion of the workforce first heard about their role through word of mouth or an online advert (Figure 31).

Figure 31: How respondents first heard about their TTA role in health



Respondents reiterated several facilitators to joining the workforce mentioned above, including moving away from physically draining shift work, and those in the older demographics largely cited this as a reason for transitioning into the sector. Several individuals also highlighted that the sector offers better pay compared to other industries, particularly for dental TTA professionals, who are usually paid more than dental assistants.

A common concern was the casual nature of employment, which some workshop participants believe contributes to job insecurity and limits opportunities for long-term professional development. Furthermore, licensing and professional registration requirements may serve as an additional barrier to the sector, such as for enrolled nurses to be registered under the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra). Considering TTA roles within Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander health highlights additional barriers and requirements, where a TTA is required to be

registered with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia (ATSIHPBA). Assessors must also be an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person who has applied skills and knowledge through working as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health worker or practitioner or be registered as a health practitioner with experience relevant to the unit of competency and be accompanied or validated by an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person.⁹⁸

Furthermore, prospective candidates reported feeling that they lack the necessary skill set, particularly regarding care delivery compared to teaching, which serves as another barrier to joining the workforce.

Remaining in the VET workforce

For those already in the sector, positive relationships with industry, external assistance in managing compliance requirements, and organisations that provide Artificial Intelligence (AI) system training were also reported as key factors supporting long-term retention. Additionally, respondents mentioned using online platforms to monitor and manage their workloads, such as Metronomics, as another enabler in workforce retention.

Despite its challenges, respondents noted the work was still less stressful than shift work in the industry and consistently emphasised the significance of feeling heard by their organisation as a crucial factor influencing both job retention and overall satisfaction. This was often achieved through organisation surveys, particularly staff satisfaction surveys.

‘To measure staff satisfaction rate, we use an anonymous survey to get feedback – I have forgotten the name of it – and usually the score is 7 or 8 out of 10. I personally care about their input and contribution into how we do things.’

– Interview

However, several participants noted the perception of their role in the sector as not being valued. For example, some professionals reported feeling invisible in their work compared to those in higher education or industry. Additionally, some TTA professionals mentioned having minimal involvement in training package development, which left them feeling disconnected from the process. Other challenges included unsociable hours, with practical classes often being scheduled on weekends. This can significantly contribute to fatigue and negatively impact work-life balance. Combined with feeling undervalued, these factors risk pushing professionals out of the VET sector.

Professional development and maintaining industry currency

Upskilling through professional development and maintaining industry currency presents both opportunities and challenges. Annual performance management, which includes goal setting and support, is viewed as a valuable facilitator. When employers actively encourage dedicated study

⁹⁸ Skills IQ, *HLT Health Training Package V9.0: Companion volume implementation guide*, 2022, file:///Users/sophieainsworth/Downloads/HLT%20Implementation%20Guide%20Release%209.0_December%202022.pdf, last accessed 27 May 25. Note: Language used reflects the language used within the guide (e.g. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander).

leave, including mandatory eight weeks of engagement with industry, mainly when reflected in enterprise agreements for VET educators, respondents report improved job satisfaction and a stronger commitment to the profession. Another critical facilitator was the provision of dedicated study leave. Respondents cited that when organisations formally allocated time for professional development, whether for attending short courses or participating in sector-specific training, they had significantly greater capacity to engage in meaningful upskilling. In addition, investment in in-house capability and collaboration with client service teams was often mentioned as a mechanism that fostered upskilling in practice. Joint learning opportunities and case-based reflection helped professionals to deepen their applied knowledge while enhancing team cohesion.

While many respondents recognised the significance of continuous learning in their field, several obstacles were identified that hindered their progress. A recurring theme was the lack of technological proficiency, particularly in the use of AI, among certain segments of the workforce that were less familiar with these digital platforms and emerging technologies. Adopting and upskilling in this area often required targeted support and funding, which was not always readily accessible. In addition to technical limitations, some professionals, particularly those in nursing, are required to provide evidence of scholarly activities. For these individuals, the burden of producing research or publications presented a significant barrier, especially when balanced against high workloads.

Career progression in the sector was also frequently cited as being hindered due to inadequate support through systems and processes.. The ANMF also noted barriers to development in a previous report, where there are no career pathways and recognition of prior learning (RPL) within VET, particularly for the Diploma of Nursing.⁹⁹ As a result, professionals lack any incentive to continue to develop their skills through the qualification framework.

Time in role and future intentions

A large proportion of the workforce has held their role in VET for over a decade (36.0%), with a smaller proportion moving into the sector in the last two years (22.2%). This highlights the long-term commitment of many VET health professionals. Most of the health TTA respondents, 82.8%, indicated they intended to remain in their VET role. However, of the minority that planned to leave, 40.0% were planning to retire from the sector, and 50.0% were planning to return to their role in industry. This may be a result of pay factors that stakeholders expressed in consultations; wages can often be higher in clinical settings within industry. The reported intention to remain in VET is similar to that of the wider health workforce, where analysis of 10 years of Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) registration data showed that nearly 80% intend to stay in their role.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, *Developing a Blueprint for the VET Workforce*, 2024, <https://www.anmf.org.au/media/kc1nbhmt/2024-03-26-anmf-submission-vet-workforce-blueprint.pdf>, last accessed 23 May 2025.

¹⁰⁰ J Tan, R Divakar, L Barclay, B Bayyavarapu, S Anderson and E Saar, 'Trends in retention and attrition in nine regulated health professions in Australia', *Australian Health Review*, 2025, 49, AH24268, <https://www.publish.csiro.au/AH/AH24268>.



Case Study

After struggling in recent years to find enough VET professionals, one national health organisation with a training arm has implemented several mutually reinforcing strategies to support both attraction and retention.

On the attraction front, one strategy seeks to address the common issue of enthusiastic applicants approaching the organisation with the specific skills required for VET teaching, but not necessarily yet having the adequate level of industry experience. This year, the organisation is establishing an in-house department aimed at supporting such applicants to gain hands-on industry experience – leveraging its community-facing client services component to at once meet the needs of the wider community and bolster its own internal training capacity. This will also serve an important purpose of allowing its VET workforce to maintain industry currency.

To further strengthen retention, the organisation continues to develop a key partnership with a higher education (university sector) provider, through which interested employees are encouraged to pursue higher qualifications such as diplomas, master's, and doctorates related to the organisation's focus. A key related element is the provision to staff of dedicated study time as part of their pay and conditions framework. A consequence of the relatively small size of the VET component of the organisation is also that the staffing structure is relatively flat. Feedback from staff – for instance, through satisfaction surveys and check-ins – has suggested this form of organisational structure is viewed in a positive light, allowing staff to feel engaged in decision-making and to have strong levels of agency in influencing the directions taken by the organisation.

4.10 Pathways and challenges in human (community) services

Pathways into TTA roles

Over a third of respondents within the human (community) services sector heard about their role through word of mouth (Figure 32). When exploring motivations for joining, it was apparent that personal and value-driven aspirations were important. A consistent theme among respondents was the desire to help others and make a meaningful impact, particularly through shaping the upcoming workforce and contributing to the development of future professionals.

'[reason for joining] about being able to contribute to prepare the future workforce and contributing to improvements in the design and delivery of education and training programs.'

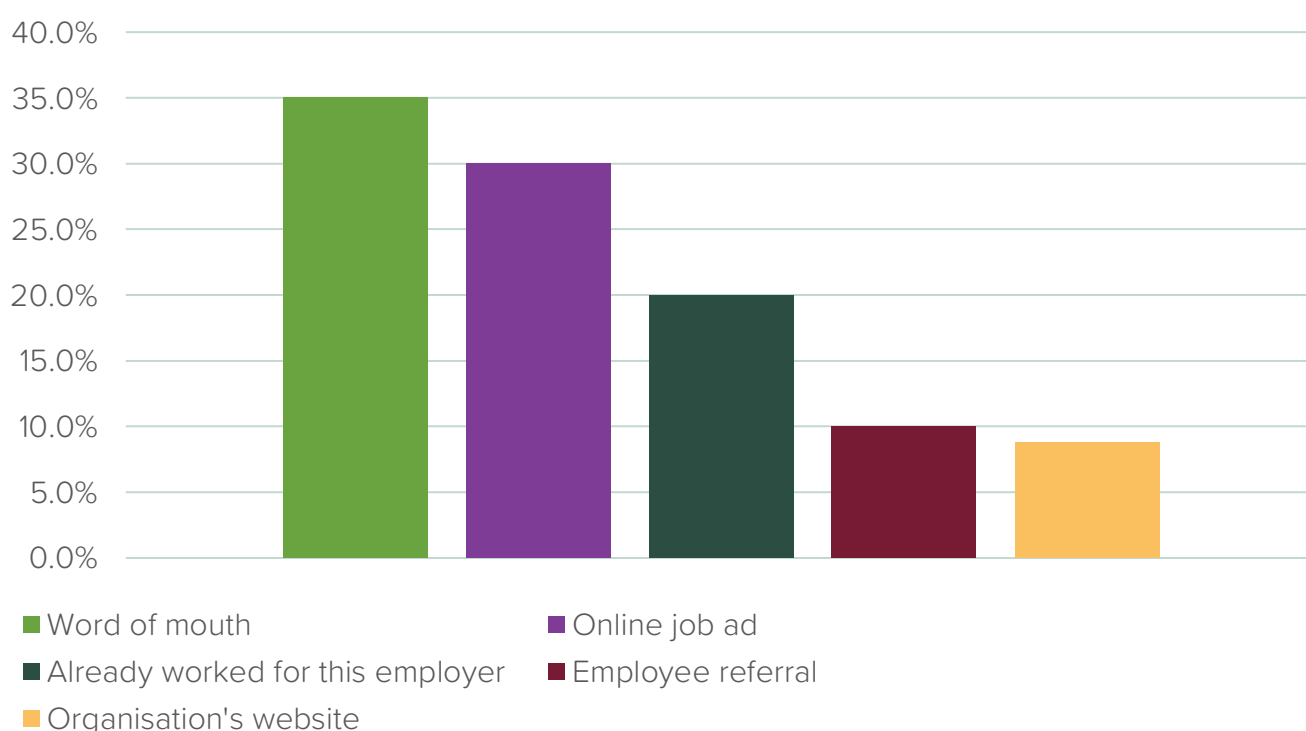
– Survey respondent

Many individuals were also motivated by the opportunity to share their industry knowledge and create authentic learning experiences for students, providing them with real-life insights and practical skills relevant to their future careers.

'[motivated to join by] sharing industry skills for persons wanting to work in the industry, and the development of skills for existing community services workers.'

– Survey respondent

Figure 32: How respondents first heard about their TTA role in human (community) services



Location played a crucial role in respondents' decisions, with many valuing opportunities close to home that promoted a better work-life balance. For some, entering the sector was a way to rejoin the workforce after extended leave or career breaks related to caregiving responsibilities,

providing a flexible environment to rebuild their professional identity and confidence. Others reported joining out of a passion for teaching, driven by a strong interest in mentoring and fostering the learning of others.

Several respondents had also transitioned from other sectors, often after experiencing burnout or high stress in previous roles. Importantly, some respondents highlighted that the sector was welcoming to individuals with a disability, reinforcing a sense of inclusion and belonging.

'[Attracted to this role by:] Working with an organisation that welcomes deaf people as I am deaf myself.'

– Survey respondent

Key barriers to entering the sector included the requirement to hold a TAE and lack of recognition of prior learning, which can make those with significant industry or teaching experience and high qualifications feel that their expertise is not valued.

Remaining in the VET workforce

Passionate colleagues, flexible workplace, external assistance with compliance, and professional development were consistently reported as key factors supporting long-term retention. Some respondents also noted that higher pay (such as social workers being paid higher in education roles) was a significant motivator for remaining in the VET sector.

Many respondents indicated that their previous experience with compliance, particularly in roles such as child protection, had directly prepared them for their current positions. Additionally, several participants noted that the career paths within this sector provided opportunities for faster advancement once they were qualified compared to other fields. However, factors such as high administrative workloads, particularly for temporary workers and increasing changes to training packages that reduce teaching time were cited as contributing factors to stress and attrition.

Professional development and maintaining industry currency

Facilitators for upskilling included mandatory training requirements to ensure staying updated with evolving practices and sector innovations. Respondents noted that this approach alleviated the pressure of seeking out professional development independently and validated the time spent away from regular duties for learning purposes. Respondents also mentioned that organisations that bring teams together collectively to train for continuous improvement foster enhanced collective development of knowledge and skills, as well as collaboration.

Barriers such as limited understanding of what, why and how to engage in professional development. Respondents also consistently identified lack of funding as impacting the opportunity to onboard trainers and offer them cultural safety training, an issue said to not be in alignment with the priority areas outlined in the Closing the Gap policy.

Finally, bureaucratic processes involving complex administrative procedures and approval processes were repeatedly raised by workshop and survey participants as standing in the way of engaging in upskilling. Respondents noted a multitude of red tape that hindered re-engagement

with the industry, including the frequent refusal of shadowing applications by industry, which often results in delays or missed opportunities.

Time in role and future intentions

A large proportion of the workforce have held their role in VET for over 10 years (41.1%), while a half of this amount have entered the VET workforce in the last two years (20.7%).

Additionally, 77.6% of TTA respondents in the sector reported intending to remain in their positions for the next two years, indicating strong retention intentions. Among those planning to leave, 54.5% reported intending to retire, while 27.2% reported planning to return to the sector. A smaller portion, 9.0% of those planning to leave, reported aiming to move into a role in higher education.



Case Study

For training providers delivering health qualifications in remote communities, many of the issues already identified are amplified considerably.

One such organisation, for which around 70% of enrolments comprise First Nations students living in remote communities, has sought to target several of these recurring concerns – including the difficulty of finding readily accessible professional development for their staff. Rather than encouraging individual staff members to identify their own potential personal development (PD) opportunities (placing onto them the additional burden of dealing with the scarcity and time- and travel-related obstacles involved), the organisation actively brings together its whole staff twice yearly. At these gatherings, carefully pre-planned sessions are held to provide staff with continuous improvement, targeted professional development, and, critically for morale and engagement, team-building sessions and whole-of-staff brainstorming and reviewing of learnings made from the delivery of qualifications to students.

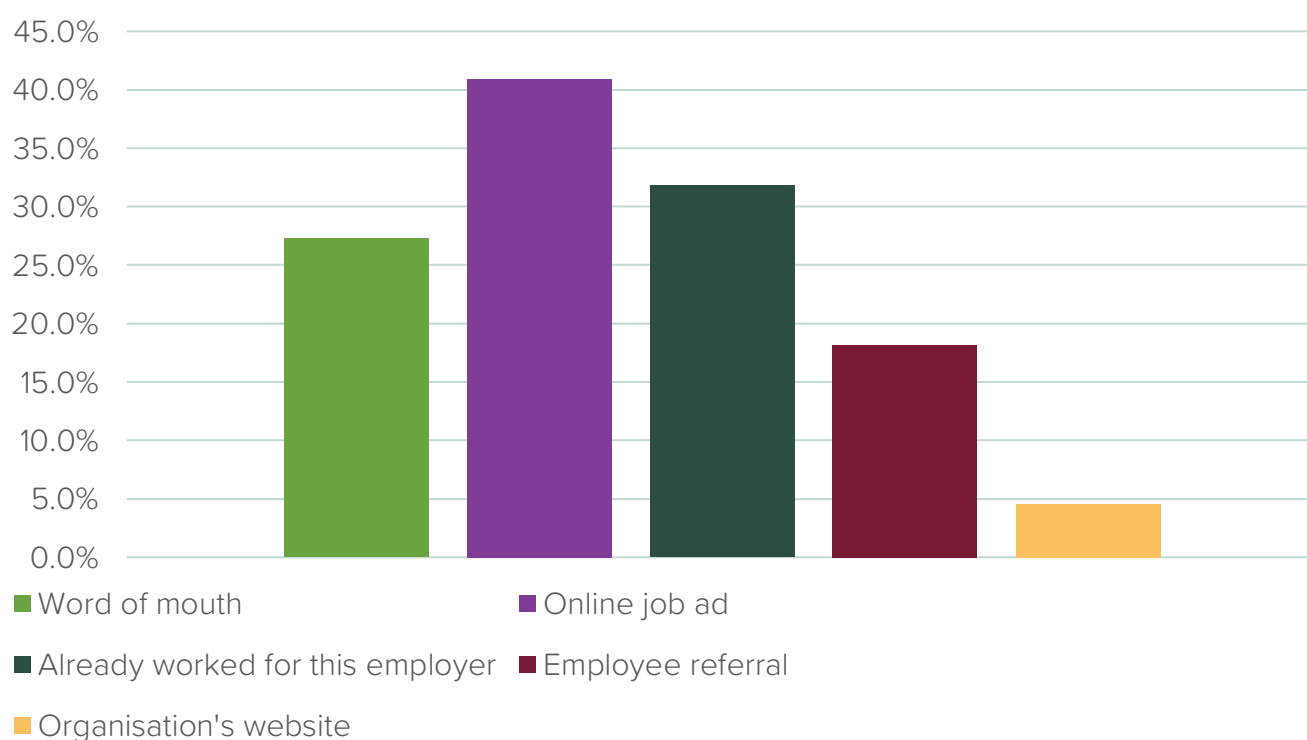
The organisation has also initiated several processes to help minimise attrition-related risks. To address difficulties arising from the management of complex student needs (a particularly prevalent issue among students in human (community) services qualifications, who often find an affinity with such careers due to their own personal, and in many cases ongoing, experience of trauma or hardship), the organisation has provided staff with specific additional training in mental health care and suicide prevention. In addition, the heavy compliance workload often spread out across the staff of other training providers has been centralised and allocated to a core compliance unit – initially an externally engaged consultant, prior to this responsibility being in-sourced through a dedicated staff member.

4.11 Pathways and challenges in sports and recreation

Pathways into TTA roles

Within sports and recreation, a large proportion of respondents reported hearing about their role through an online job advert, with word of mouth less common compared to other care and support sectors (Figure 33).

Figure 33: How respondents first heard about their TTA role in sports and recreation



Respondents holding sports and recreation VET roles reported several similar facilitators and barriers to entry as colleagues in other parts of the care and support VET workforce. As with professionals in children's education and care, for instance, sports and recreation staff noted an especially appealing element of working in VET as being the less physically demanding nature of the work, compared to in industry. As discussed in a case study below, another element supporting entry into the VET workforce in this sector involves the willingness of some training providers to take on younger staff passionate about the sports and recreation industry, with a view to providing them with a direct pathway to formal training (such as via the Certificate IV in TAE).

Another facilitator to entry (not just in sports and recreation, although it was a development raised by stakeholders from within the sector) has been the change from March 2024 allowing qualified secondary school teachers to upskill to a VET role by accessing funding to attain just some core skill sets from the TAE – as opposed to completing the entire qualification. Given the popularity of sports and recreation VET courses at senior secondary school level, this stepping stone from school teaching to VET may potentially have considerable impact in the coming years.

A broader characteristic of working in VET noted by some stakeholders as holding considerable value was the opportunity presented by such roles to be directly involved with highly respected sporting individuals and organisations. For many, the appeal of potentially training people who will go on to work with elite athletes – or indeed getting the chance to engage with such individuals through their own ongoing relationships within the industry – was a large driver behind entering the sports and recreation VET workforce.

Among barriers to entry into the sector are, once again, elements familiar to stakeholders from across other care and support VET workforces. These include a limited awareness of available opportunities, and difficulties faced in pursuing and attaining all the qualifications and knowledge required for entry (particularly here, given the younger demographics of the sports and recreation VET workforce, as discussed in Section 2.6). Once again, too, respondents noted that in their experience, a factor discouraging potential applicants from pursuing a career in VET is the perception that the sector is hampered by a relative lack of job security.

Related to this is the irregularity of working patterns, although this can, of course, differ from one training provider to another and can also depend on variables such as geography, student intake numbers, and the diversity of programs offered by the provider. A final barrier to entry, again shared by all care and support VET sectors, is the negative perception held by prospective new staff regarding the level and nature of compliance-related duties in many TTA roles.

Remaining in the VET workforce

Among the current workforce, respondents raised the high esteem in which TTA professionals (and other professionals in the broader VET system) are held by those in the industry they support as a key driver behind wishing to remain in their current roles. At a more tangible level, others pointed to the higher pay and better conditions offered by some VET employers over those available in the underlying industry. Others still considered the opportunity to leverage their own skills and knowledge from time in the industry when helping shape course content and delivery as an important factor in consolidating their sense of self-worth and desire to keep working in the sector.

At the other end of the spectrum, respondents noted issues that could discourage people shifting into the VET workforce from the sports and recreation industries. The issues raised most often were the highly casualised nature of the workforce and lingering problems caused by limited direction and support at the onboarding stage of a VET career pathway.

Professional development and maintaining industry currency

Regarding participation in professional development and actions to help maintain industry currency, a key facilitator reported by respondents in sports and recreation was the availability of dual roles. In these roles, professionals undertake TTA duties while balancing continuing work in the underlying sector itself.

The quality of professional development programs offered by organisations such as the national and state-based institutes of sport was also raised as a positive factor leading to successful upskilling in the sector. In Victoria, a pilot program offered by the Victorian Institute of Sport –

centred on the provision of individualised professional development and upskilling plans – was spotlighted by one respondent. Meanwhile, as with several other sectors, the willingness of employers to provide dedicated time to staff to participate in development and/or activities aimed at maintaining industry currency was once again highlighted as a key facilitator underpinning success in this space.

Time in role and future intentions

TTA professionals in sports and recreation responding to the survey were much more likely to have worked in the VET system for over 10 years compared with TTA respondents in other sectors (65.0% vs 40.9% across the wider care and support VET workforce TTA respondents). Anecdotal findings from our consultations suggest this might be explained by the very young age individuals begin engaging with the sports and recreation VET sector – such as in assistant and trainee roles directly from secondary school settings, through which they begin by supporting teachers and assessors, before gaining their own VET qualifications on the job.

Of TTA respondents in sports and recreation, 24 reported intending to leave their VET role in the next two years (25%). Of those, five were retiring, and 10 planned to return to industry roles. Intention to remain is higher than seen in specific sports and recreation workforces themselves, where, in aquatics, for example, 68% of the workforce intend to remain in their role within the next two years.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Royal Life Saving Australia, *National Aquatic Industry Workforce Report*, 2023, https://www.royallifesaving.com.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0005/75290/RLS_National-Aquatic-Industry-Workforce-Report-2023_Double-Page_Final.pdf, last accessed 23 May 2025.



Case Study

One training provider interviewed, which delivers qualifications in Outdoor Leadership, reported struggling with many of the attraction and retention issues faced by similar organisations in the sector. To combat this, they have taken proactive measures on multiple fronts.

A sizeable cohort of its new VET staff come on board as not yet fully TAE-qualified trainers or educators, but as passionate graduates of the same qualifications the provider itself delivers. At first, these individuals are placed in assistant roles supporting existing trainers, allowing for a more casual and less pressurised onboarding process during which they can see first-hand what the training workload looks like and involves. For those who become interested in taking the next step, the organisation then supports them – including financially – to pursue and complete the Certificate IV in TAE. Again, though, no timeframe is placed on this pathway between working as assistants to trainers and taking an active interest in undertaking their own qualifications in training and assessing.

The provider also takes great care when shaping the onboarding process from a more practical standpoint. For instance, assistants are not expected to provide training support in high-risk outdoor activities right away; rather, they progress slowly, beginning with low-risk lessons where they can focus more on how the trainer engages and deals with students, absent the distraction of worrying about their own personal safety in the first place. As the organisation progresses assistant trainers through lessons centred on more technical activities, time is taken to touch base with them and measure their comfort levels and their own assessments of their progress.

For the organisation's broader VET staff – including those who progress from assistants to become fully-fledged trainers and assessors – a recurring issue remains the impact of periods between student intakes, when staff are at risk of disengaging and perhaps looking elsewhere for employment. To address this, the organisation commits to creating a semi-regular pattern of work during these off-season periods, while also investing in creating a close-knit team of staff who feel engaged and supported throughout the year.

To support such processes, staff are asked after the completion of each course to fill out a satisfaction survey – including assessing the level of support they received from coordinators and senior management – while an annual audit of staff's professional development capacity and potential gaps is undertaken, helping inform conversations about career progression.

5. Future and emerging VET workforce challenges across the care and support sectors

5.1 The VET workforce in care and support sectors has distinctive strengths, challenges, and opportunities

This original research by HumanAbility found multiple current and future challenges and opportunities facing the VET workforce for our sectors and their employing RTOs. These are derived from the unique profile, skills, and attributes of this workforce and those they train, and fall into six thematic categories: an ageing workforce that is not as diverse as the Australian or student population, changes to RTO standards, Fee-Free TAFE, ability to access and provide professional development and mentoring, engagement with industry, and future workforce shortages. While most of these challenges are not specific to HumanAbility's sectors, some are more pronounced or have greater significance for our sectors than for other sectors and industries.

The care and support VET workforce:

- 84.2%: female
- 37.5%: 50–59 years old
- 4.6%: LOTE
- 4.4%: First Nations
- 12.3%: disability or long-term health condition

Across the care and support VET workforce, there are several challenges anticipated due to the demographics of the workforce. Most of the workforce is aged between 50 and 59 years old, which presents challenges in ensuring a sustainable workforce for the future, as despite low intentions of leaving VET within the next two years, a sizeable minority plan to retire or return to industry. This underscores the importance of effective talent management, succession planning, and information management systems and processes, such as structured mentoring and internal data and insight repositories, to retain and share accumulated expertise for continued professional development of current and future VET professionals.

The lower cultural and linguistic diversity of the VET workforce in the care and support sectors and lower proportions of VET workers in these sectors reporting a disability or chronic health condition (both relative to the Australian population and learners in these courses) present different challenges and opportunities. For example, it could make it more difficult for VET workers and their employing RTOs to notice and know how to respond to learners and staff in these cohorts. This means learners and staff may not ask for, or receive, reasonable adjustments, or suggestions and linkages to support services, or may experience a lower sense of belonging. Each of these can negatively impact staff and student wellbeing and retention.

Further challenges and opportunities are presented due to the dynamic changes in digital technologies in the VET sector and across the care and support sectors. The use of AI provides two key challenges that TTA professionals and others will be required to navigate and mitigate, as identified by consultants within the sector.¹⁰² The first concerns how best to manage and assess student usage of AI. Currently, ASQA recognises the risk of student use of AI, but there is no clear guidance for RTOs or TTA professionals. The second challenge concerns how professionals can best prepare their students for work where job roles and tasks are changing due to the use of AI.¹⁰³

Fee-free TAFE provides many benefits for learners, workers, and the community, with multiple qualifications under HumanAbility's remit eligible across Australia. However, private and community RTOs also play a vital role in the VET system, especially in regional or remote areas where there may be no TAFE institution at all, or in the relevant sectors. While beneficial, there are ways in which fee-free TAFE can have unintended impacts on private RTOs. For example, stakeholders in workshops highlighted that in situations where students take advantage of fee-free TAFE, private RTOs see the impact of this, with smaller proportions of enrolments. As access to quality and relevant training is a key pathway to employment, it is important to ensure that this training and the accompanying VET workforce can be supported across a range of training partners.

Stakeholders from private RTOs also highlighted growing compliance challenges. During workshops, it was noted that private RTOs need to balance compliance and revenue while maintaining quality and strong student outcomes. This balancing act only becomes more challenging with dynamic policy changes and funding settlements in response to and intersecting with labour shortage changes.

Challenges specifically affecting the aged care and disability service sector include the introduction of the new standards. Stakeholders raised concerns about the impact of the new Aged Care Quality Standards, along with an estimated workforce gap – particularly in home care, where many personal carers do not hold a Certificate III qualification.

Stakeholders within the disability sector noted growth within the delivery of online short courses, which may impact the requirements for the VET workforce of the future. RTOs in the sector noted that they have seen growth in the number of students and employers interested in short courses and micro-credentials (both accredited and non-accredited) as a method to support professional development, maintain industry currency, and progress a career in VET.¹⁰⁴ A small proportion of RTOs also highlighted an increasing use of online teaching and hybrid delivery (mix of online and in-person).

Within children's education and care, stakeholders in workshops raised concerns regarding the pipeline and pool of First Nations TTA professionals and sector mentors. This finding was

¹⁰² C Field, 'Is VET intelligent enough to get its response right on artificial intelligence?', <https://clairefield.com.au/is-vet-intelligent-enough-to-get-its-response-right-on-artificial-intelligence/>, last accessed 23 May 2025.

¹⁰³ C Field, 'Is VET intelligent enough to get its response right on artificial intelligence?'

¹⁰⁴ National Disability Services, NDS Skills Project, *Aligning the Vocational Education and Training Sector response to the needs of the Disability Workforce*, 2024.

reinforced by survey data, where the proportion of respondents identifying as First Nations was lower than in other care and support sectors, the wider VET workforce, and Australian workforce.

For emerging industries, such as within health, there are challenges in ensuring that there is an adequately prepared and sized VET workforce. Stakeholders raised primary healthcare for First Nations as an example of where there are not enough qualified professionals, making it difficult to find VET teachers. Changes to Medicare and/or private health rebates may also have a flow-on effect for enrolment numbers and trainers. For example, changes to private health rebates for natural therapies, introduced in 2019, included the removal of naturopathy from private health rebates.¹⁰⁵ Whilst we note that a 2024 review has reintroduced naturopathy for some private insurer rebates, it has been seen that student numbers have dwindled in this time. For example, enrolments in 2023 for the Diploma of Reflexology have reduced by 22.5% compared to 2022.¹⁰⁶

Within human (community) services, and specifically in South Australia, a new policy has been introduced as part of the Social Workers Registration Scheme, which mandates that all social workers must be registered to practise. Due to be enforced from July 2025, with staff required to be registered by 31 December 2025, this requirement is of concern to stakeholders who are awaiting further clarity on the registration pathways options for people currently in the workforce who have another qualification and/or extensive experience in social work services. There may be implications for the sector, where some VET qualifications are no longer sufficient to support the breadth of work required. Stakeholders in workshops expressed concern that this may affect the student pipeline and, in turn, the VET workforce.¹⁰⁷

Sports and recreation exemplified a common challenge across all care and support sector VET workforces – attracting and retaining experts in highly specialised areas. In addition to this, several areas have been noted by Jobs and Skills Australia as occupational shortages – swimming coaches/instructors nationally, and outdoor adventure instructors, sports umpires, fitness centre managers, and sports administrators in some states and territories – with shortages exacerbated in regional and remote areas.¹⁰⁸

When considering the numerous facilitators, barriers, and challenges involved in attraction, retention, and development, it is vital to note that individual factors do not exist in isolation and are influenced by the broader VET policy and regulatory systems. Adopting a systems approach to carefully examine and address challenges related to attraction, retention, and attrition as part of a larger framework will be a crucial step in subsequent research stages, ensuring that meaningful change and impactful solutions can be realised.

¹⁰⁵ Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, *Natural Therapies Review 2024*, 2025, <https://www.health.gov.au/topics/private-health-insurance/reforms/natural-therapies-review>, last accessed 30 May 2025.

¹⁰⁶ VOCSTATS, Total VET students and courses, TVA Program completions and TVA program enrolments, 2023, extracted on 12 November 2024.

¹⁰⁷ SA Health: Government of South Australia, Social Work Registration. <https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public+content/sa+health+internet/clinical+resources/clinical+governance+and+leadership/allied+and+scientific+health/allied+and+scientific+health+social+work+registration>, last accessed 29 May 2025.

¹⁰⁸ JSA, *Occupation Shortages*, 2024, <https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/data/occupation-shortages-analysis/occupation-shortage-list>, last accessed 27 May 2025.

5.2 Ongoing data limitations, gaps, and opportunities

The size of the VET workforce in the care and support sector is unknown.

HumanAbility acknowledges that there are ongoing challenges with VET workforce data collection, which complicates estimating the overall size of the VET workforce. As identified by JSA in the 2024 VET Workforce Study, this includes: a reliance on Census data to count the VET workforce, challenges capturing previous industry and teaching qualifications, and difficulties accounting for volunteers, secondary teachers, TTA professionals working across multiple RTOs, in dual roles (with industry), or working casually or for short, targeted areas and times.¹⁰⁹ As a result, the size of the VET workforce in our sectors, across all types of contracts, remains unknown.

JSA, in its study of the VET workforce, made three key recommendations for future data collections:¹¹⁰

1. A regular but minimum collection of data via regulatory bodies such as ASQA;
2. The universal implementation of a VET workforce standard where RTOs submit workforce data as part of their annual Total VET Activity returns; and/or
3. A regular census-style survey of RTOs and employees, which is piloted systematically, can be extrapolated across the diversity of provider types and includes attitudinal data on why VET teachers leave and what will make them stay.

HumanAbility looks forward to working with JSA to use the data collected from this stream of research to inform the VET Workforce Blueprint National Actions Project to have a 'nationally consistent collection of VET workforce data'. As identified in the Blueprint report, this key action will help to support and enable informed policy and workforce strategies into the future.

5.3 Future streams of research

HumanAbility is in the process of finalising workplans for the subsequent streams of research for this project. This research, which will take place from July 2025 to early 2026, will further investigate industry-specific VET workforce challenges and issues, investigate and support pathways and pipeline of VET workforces, and identify industry-led responses and actions (e.g. attraction and promotion strategies). During this stream of research, stakeholder and industry engagement across the care and support VET workforce will be crucial. These future streams respond to the challenges and opportunities identified in this research, which resonates with industry.

A summary of initial opportunities and actions is below, noting that these ideas represent a point-in-time snapshot of the findings currently being tested with stakeholders, and may or may not form HumanAbility's finalised streams 2 and 3.

¹⁰⁹ JSA, *VET Workforce Study*, 2024.

¹¹⁰ JSA, *VET Workforce Study*, 2024.

- 1. Growing and supporting the First Nations VET workforce (with a focus on teachers, trainers, assessors, and curriculum and learning design roles)**
 - It is important that the VET workforce reflects the diversity of the Australian population, student cohort, and service recipients.
 - Some HumanAbility sectors have very low proportions of VET professionals identifying as First Nations, while others are above population proportions, with many successful programs from which other sectors and/or RTOs can potentially learn.
- 2. Growing and supporting teachers, trainers, and assessors living with disability or long-term health conditions (across all HumanAbility sectors)**
 - Currently, the proportion of TTA professionals with a disability or long-term health condition is not reflective of the student cohort or wider VET workforce. Only 13% of the care and support VET workforce has a disability and/or long-term health condition, less than half the proportion of the wider VET workforce.
 - The proportion of VET course completions by people with a disability is lower in all sectors than the proportion of course commencements by people with a disability. A higher proportion of TTA professionals living with disability or chronic health conditions could contribute to additional workforce talent and lived expertise, potentially leading to higher completions from this same cohort to help address workforce shortages.
- 3. Growing and supporting teachers, trainers, and assessors from language backgrounds other than English (LOTE with a focus on children's education and care)**
 - The VET workforce in HumanAbility sectors is not representative of the wider VET workforce, the Australian population, or the workers and clients across sectors.
 - LOTE students also have lower completion rates than others, suggesting that students discontinue VET study at higher rates.
- 4. Investigating and expanding collective approaches to delivering and accessing knowledge, professional learning, and mentoring for TTA professionals in small RTOs and remote RTOs**
 - There is an attrition risk within the VET workforce due to limited or poor professional development and mentoring, particularly for smaller RTOs in regional and remote areas.
 - These RTOs experience difficulties in accessing and delivering specialist professional development, knowledge, mentoring and professional peer support.
- 5. Reducing the barriers for industry engagement and maintaining currency (small–medium RTOs across all sectors)**
 - It is important to ensure the workforce continues to upskill and maintain currency; however, RTOs and individual TTA professionals face varying challenges when attempting to do so.
 - There is an opportunity to assist in building industry and organisational ties and removing organisational and systemic barriers.

6. Understanding and strengthening pathways and pipelines to the VET workforce

- Consultations with stakeholders highlighted the success of changes to the secondary school pathways into a VET TTA role. There is an opportunity to strengthen this pathway across other sectors and organisations, particularly for specified industries with fewer industry professionals to recruit from.
- It was found that other pathways and pipelines can be strengthened, including highlighting a VET role earlier on in an industry career or while studying and removing friction for those applying from Higher Education and overseas.
- These pathways and pipelines should not be limited to TTA roles, where stakeholders highlighted that some professionals are better suited to curriculum learning and design roles.

Additionally, HumanAbility is an active participant in a weekly cross-JSC meeting, where two further ideas are being developed.

7. Transition to Teaching Pilot Proposal (industry workers, seasonal workers, and those returning to work)

- It is crucial to support and set professionals up for success before and after entering the workforce. This includes providing professionals with pre-employment support and with the key foundational skills and knowledge needed to feel confident in the role (including digital, presentation skills, and understanding the VET system).
- Providing pre-employment support and a strong onboarding process has not been consistent across HumanAbility sectors, and the opportunity to improve this has been identified across sectors outside of HumanAbility's remit.
- Accessing high-quality development and mentoring is linked to greater worker retention, satisfaction, and productivity.

8. Digital capability development

- VET professionals bring deep subject expertise but may have limited experience with the digital technologies required to succeed in modern VET practice.
- There is a need across sectors to build confidence and capability in areas critical to VET practice, including digital delivery and use of education technologies.

9. Recruitment Best Practice Framework

- Developing a framework aimed at improving diversity, increasing the recruitment of underrepresented groups, and prioritising skills over qualifications.

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Appendix 2: Methodology

A systematic review of grey and peer-reviewed literature was conducted to explore factors influencing attraction, retention, and professional development of the VET workforce across HumanAbility's five sectors. This method was chosen to conduct an extensive investigation, employing rigorous qualitative strategies to minimise subjectivity and bias in the exploration of research questions related to a specific area of interest. Adopting a systematic approach required using the research questions as a foundation to construct a comprehensive overview of the evidence base, ensuring a balance between feasibility and comprehensiveness. The search focused on publicly available data and any additional materials identified by Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA). The search resulted in 73 documents, intending to achieve saturation on key themes.

The exploration encompassed four databases to identify relevant literature on the subject: Google Scholar, R Discovery, Consensus, and NCVER research publications. The search was limited to publications published between 1990 and 2024 and included a combination of key search terms (Appendix 3).

Given the substantial volume of results in each search, the focus was narrowed to both international and Australian literature published within the English language to provide more depth to the analysis.

The following inclusion criteria were applied for general guidance and to narrow the field of possible literature:

- Relevance to VET sector (regardless of date, due to paucity of materials)
- Preference for Australian research
- International research with VET Systems
- Foundational VET Sector Studies
- General and human resources research on retention and attraction, for comparison

The data review focused on identifying publicly available data describing the facilitators and barriers to attraction and retention across the VET workforce in HumanAbility's five sectors.

Between October and November 2024, HumanAbility conducted a series of nine 2-hour discovery workshops online and in each state and territory.

These workshops aimed to gather undocumented insights, identify key themes and issues, and test initial research ideas with up to 160 VET faculty heads and coordinators to better understand the project's context.

A series of invitations to participate in the workshops was sent out through Vision6. Each invitation included a registration link along with details about the nature and purpose of the workshop, as well as the date, time, venue, and state where the workshop would be held.

Conversations in the workshops were centred around a previously prepared workshop deck that mapped the key challenges to attraction and retention, based on findings from the literature review, across the three stages of a VET professional's journey:

- Apply to join the VET workforce
- Stay working in the VET workforce
- Maintain industry currency and engage in professional development

Thirteen structured 45-minute interviews were conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams in November 2024 with selected participants identified from each workshop to delve deeper into the key emerging themes and challenges identified. A HumanAbility researcher took field notes and facilitated the interviews after securing participants' consent. In addition to field notes, audio recordings and transcriptions of the interviews were also obtained. Once the data collection process was completed, an analytical framework was employed to categorise the de-identified responses from participants into distinct themes. These themes were derived from major topics outlined in the discussion guide that directed the interviews.

Three workforce surveys were deployed between November 2024 and April 2025, with the initial two, HumanAbility: VET Workforce Organisations Demographic and Diversity Survey and HumanAbility: VET Workforce Professionals Demographic and Diversity Survey, aimed at mapping the VET workforce that trains students across all the care and support sectors, including key demographic and diversity details. In February 2025, a HumanAbility Follow-up VET Professionals Survey was deployed to explore the factors influencing the attraction, retention, and professional development of VET professionals across the care and support sectors. The surveys were developed internally by HumanAbility's research team and executed using the Qualtrics platform.

All three surveys were promoted via multiple channels, including the HumanAbility newsletter, TDA newsletter, and various social media channels. Potential participants were screened based on the following criteria:

- Having worked for an organisation within the VET sector
- Having worked in one of HumanAbility's five sectors
- Having worked in the VET sector at any point in the last 12 months

Participants were also required to provide informed consent before commencing each survey.

Table 16: Survey type, sample size, and target audience

Survey type	Sample size and target audience
HumanAbility: VET workforce organisations demographic and diversity survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 400 responses (sample aiming for population representation of RTO and TAFE, including type, location, size). • Sample size calculated for this survey using the total of 4088 RTOs with ASQA, 199 with the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority, and 186 with the Training Accreditation Council and a confidence interval of 0.5, using the assumption that organisations within the care and support sectors make up 50% of the total.¹¹¹
HumanAbility: VET workforce professionals demographic and diversity survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 400 individuals from VET workforce (sample aiming for population representation of VET workforce across the care and support sectors). • The sample size has been calculated using the target population size of 246,000 calculated by NCVER (VET Workforce Survey)¹¹² and a confidence interval of 0.05. HumanAbility is aware that the population size has been underestimated within the workforce study.¹¹³
HumanAbility follow-up VET professionals survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 400 teachers past and current VET professionals from VET workforce (sample aiming for population representation of VET workforce across the care and support sectors). • The sample size has been calculated using the target population size of 246,000 calculated by NCVER (VET Workforce Survey)¹¹⁴ and a confidence interval of 0.05. HumanAbility is aware that the population size has been underestimated within the JSA workforce study.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ The anticipated sample size was determined to be large enough to allow for results to be generalised.

¹¹² G Knight, I White and P Granfield, 2020, *Understanding the Australian vocational education and training workforce*, NCVER, accessed 6 September 2024.

¹¹³ For the purposes of the calculations, it has been assumed that HumanAbility workforce accounts for at least 50% of this population (an assumption was made using JSA data for the total number of students (JSA data placemat)). The sample size of 400 was determined to be large enough to allow for results to be generalised to 50% of the VET workforce.

¹¹⁴ G Knight, I White and P Granfield, 2020, *Understanding the Australian vocational education and training workforce*, NCVER, accessed 6 September 2024.

¹¹⁵ For the purposes of the calculations, it has been assumed that HumanAbility workforce accounts for at least 50% of this population (an assumption was made using JSA data for the total number of students (JSA data placemat)). The sample size of 400 was determined to be large enough to allow for results to be generalised to 50% of the VET workforce.

Appendix 3: Key search terms and search engines used in desktop review

Databases searched: Google Scholar; R Discovery; Consensus, NCVER research publications, and references used in articles.

Search terms used: 'train the trainer: AND ('allied health' OR 'Aged Care' OR 'Vocational Education' ('trainer': AND ('social services' OR 'TAFE' OR 'Vet' OR 'early childhood teacher' 'attracting AND retaining trainers' AND TAFE OR VET 'Australian TAFE teachers' AND ('attraction' OR 'retention' OR 'attrition') AND ('TAFE' OR 'VET') 'VET teachers' AND ('attraction' OR 'retention' OR 'attrition') AND ('factors' OR 'influences') 'Workforce retention' AND ('teaching' OR 'Education' OR 'VET Educator' OR 'VET trainer' OR 'Community Services') Retention AND Attraction AND Strategies 'teacher attrition' AND ('Vocational' or TAFE' OR 'RTO' OR 'VET') 'retention' OR 'Attraction' AND ('career stage' OR 'life stage' OR 'graduate' OR 'mid-career' OR 'experienced' OR 'retire'), retention AND Interventions, 'teacher retention strategies' AND ('effectiveness'), 'evidence' AND ('workforce retention' OR 'teacher retention' OR 'teacher attraction' OR 'VET trainer') , 'VET teachers' AND ('retention' OR 'job satisfaction' OR 'motivation'('VET' OR 'TAFE') AND ('teachers' OR 'educators') AND ('retention' OR 'job satisfaction' OR 'motivation' OR 'career satisfaction' OR 'factors contributing to retention' OR 'workplace engagement' OR 'job security' OR 'career development' OR 'workplace satisfaction').

Appendix 4: Quantitative Analysis

The following methodology was applied to the quantitative analysis underpinning this report:

- The survey outputs were downloaded from Qualtrics (from the three surveys undertaken, two aimed at an audience of current and former VET professionals, and one targeting senior personnel representing VET training providers at the organisation level).
- Respondents who did not continue beyond screening questions (e.g. those in the professional surveys whose VET roles have not been connected to any of the HumanAbility sectors) were dropped from the analysis.
- Responses to identifying questions were dropped (with such data, including contact details, saved securely separately for non-specific follow-ups if/when required, ensuring they were not connected to responses for the analysis stage).
- A unique index was created, anonymously identifying each respondent.
- Some free-text responses were merged with multiple-choice responses.
- Separate tables for multiple response questions were created, with duplicate index assignments per individual response to allow one-to-many joins.
- A secondary index was created for nested response questions joining the standard index and the previous-layer variable to allow two-factor one-to-many joins.
- Roll-up assignments were defined for specific features, via a triangulated, blind, peer-reviewed approach involving multiple members of HumanAbility's Research team and stored via separate tables joined on the original features.
- A data model joining separate tables (multiple answer, nested response, roll-ups, etc.) to a master table using the created index.
- A dashboard was created with matrices displaying percentage of responses to each available field value (or rolled-up value where applicable).
- Each individual matrix was connected through the data model so that selecting values (individual, multiple, or multiple across multiple matrices) acts as a slicer for matrices throughout the dashboard (allowing users to view percentage of responses to each available field value within a slice defined by a separate value(s)).



Thank you to all the VET professionals and organisations who completed our surveys and took part in our workshops and interviews. Your responses have given us a greater understanding of the VET workforce's demographics and diversity and contributes to opportunities and actions included in the report.

Find us online:
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