



SECTOR
PROFILE

Sport and Recreation



HumanAbility





Industry sector overview

The sport and recreation sectors contribute significantly to the economic, health, and social fabric of society.

The industry is diverse, intersecting with and enhancing other industry sectors such as tourism, education, and community services. It plays a crucial role in achieving public health and social policy goals. The positive and preventative impact of sport and recreation on the health of Australia's population is well recognised^{(94) (95)}.

“The terminology used to categorise ‘sport and recreation’ does not accurately and inclusively describe the entire active industry.”

Training for the workforce can be undertaken through both higher education and VET and through training provided and by professional associations. VET workforce occupations include: personal trainers, gym instructors, coaches, sports managers, and outdoor leaders. While there are opportunities for career progression and permanent full-time work, a high percentage of roles are seasonal, part-time or casual (such as swimming instructors and lifeguards), and voluntary (such as scouts or local community sports coaches).

The sector plays an important role in promoting active lifestyles, skill development, and social cohesion. It generates measurable health and social benefits, such as reducing the burden of disease, improving mental health, decreasing absenteeism, and enhancing skill development. It also plays a key role in supporting other human services to achieve better outcome for individuals. For example, through partnerships with mental health services, aged care, disability services, and veterans care, the sector provides exercise, recreation and adventure-based services.

“Active industries within Sport and recreation, should be recognised as providing broad preventative health benefits, that could provide cross-sectoral support to other sectors such as Aged Care, Health, Disability, and Early Childhood Education. Benefits could be provided to both the workforce within these sectors, their clientele, and communities they serve.”

The industry's focus on lifelong learning and personal growth for the Australian population is evident in programs that teach essential life skills, such as leadership training and swimming skills^{(94) (95)}. Overall, the sport and recreation sectors contribute to building healthier, more connected, and resilient communities^{(95) (96) (97)}.

The 3 largest occupation groups (based on ANZSCO codes) are:

- 4523 Sports Coaches, Instructors and officials
- 4521 Fitness Instructors
- 4524 Sportspersons

While they represent a smaller portion of the sport and recreation sector, there are emerging job roles that interconnect between the early childhood education sector, mental health and social services, such as nature play educators, bush kindergarten, bush adventure therapists.

There are also roles in managing, planning, training and delivering the full range of sport and recreation services, that provide career paths. However, these are not captured well in the national data sets.

“Actively promoting the sector in schools will give students an understanding of career pathways and improve attraction.”



SECTOR DEMOGRAPHICS

Sports and Recreation Workforce Key Industries⁽⁷⁾

153,000

people working in Sports and Recreation



“[I’d like] to see some positive movement towards recognising the Outdoor Education sector as a hybrid between recreation and Education as it helps recognise the educator skills needed.”



50%
are female



34 years
average age

2%
are First Nations

62%
are part-time

23%
Bachelors Degree or above

So “many opportunities for cross over and career pathways into other industries such as business, allied health, disability and aged care”.

Sports and Personal Service Workers 10 year projected workforce growth by 2033⁽²⁾

12.9%



Key Occupation Estimates⁽⁹⁸⁾



45,000

Fitness Instructors



12,000

Sportspersons

62,000

Sports coaches, instructors, and officials



3,000

Outdoor Adventure Guides



Supply, Demand and Gap insights

Drivers of demand

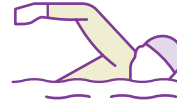


Increased health consciousness has led to more participation in sports and recreation⁽⁹⁷⁾

A million more Australians are participating in weekly sports today than in 2017⁽⁹⁷⁾



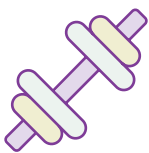
Participation in swimming was at a 20-year high in 2020, with 1.4 million considering starting to swim⁽⁹⁴⁾



Stakeholder experience indicates this is **a growing industry with significant employment demands**

Supply

7,850 gyms and fitness centres employ **30,781** people⁽⁹⁹⁾



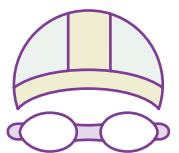
1,473 private sport and recreation facilities, employ **17,519** people⁽⁹⁹⁾



2,326 sport and recreation clubs, employ **22,217** people⁽⁹⁹⁾



2,113 aquatic facilities nationally, employ **65,000** people⁽¹⁰⁰⁾



Outdoor recreation supports a broad range of full-time roles across a range of occupations, with **up to 30,000 full time roles**, part of which are outdoor educators and guides^{(101) (102) (103)}



Significant volunteer involvement in Sports and Physical Recreation Activities⁽¹⁰⁴⁾



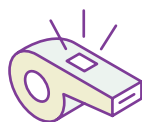
High demand for occupations like fitness instructors, outdoor adventure guides, sports coaches, instructors and officials, with **6 out of 31 occupations on the Skills Priority List**⁽⁴⁴⁾

Workforce shortages are most pronounced in rural and remote areas, with high turnover rates. In the Northern Territory, **11 out of the 31 sport and recreation occupations are on the Skills Priority List**, the highest of any state or territory⁽⁴⁴⁾



While there has been decline in some parts of Australia, there have also been **large regional employment increases** in some locations:

Sports coaches, Instructors and officials have seen up to an **85% increase over last 5 years** in some areas (New England and Northwest)⁽¹⁰¹⁾














Fitness instructors have increased by **8% nationally over the last 5 years** ^{(44) (101)}

“There is a need to create year-round work and less seasonal work to provide stable local employment and job security.”

Government policy and initiatives

This is an evolving and non-exhaustive list of strategies or initiatives that will inform or be informed by HumanAbility in some way. For overarching or cross-cutting strategies, see the HumanAbility Workforce Plan.

| Strategy | Key sections / recommendations | Challenges |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| National Sport Plan – Shaping the future direction of sport in Australia | <p>The Plan outlines four key priority areas, with a focus on ensuring an adequate supply of suitably qualified workers to meet the sector’s growing demands. HumanAbility collaborates with industry stakeholders to identify current and future workforce needs, allowing us to develop adaptive qualifications and skill sets that address emerging skills gaps, ultimately enhancing the capability of the workforce.</p> <p>HumanAbility has a focus on mapping clearer career pathways and promoting opportunities within and across the sector while addressing barriers to participation and volunteering.</p> |     |
| National Sport Participation Strategy | <p>The strategy outlines six key themes critical to engaging more Australians in sport, including ‘Elevate - Creating a capable and engaged workforce’.</p> <p>HumanAbility’s collaborates with industry stakeholders to identify current and future workforce needs, allowing us to develop adaptive qualifications and skill sets that address emerging skills gaps. By creating clear career pathways and promoting opportunities within the sector, we aim to enhance the capability of the sport and recreation workforce.</p> |     |
| National Sport Strategy | <p>Currently under development, this strategy aims to set a shared vision and priorities for sport in Australia, replacing the existing Sport 2030 plan and aligning with state and territory strategies. It includes a priority to ‘strengthen Australia’s sport industry’.</p> <p>HumanAbility will work with the sector and government to ensure training package development and workforce work are aligned with the strategy on its release.</p> |    |



Labour force shortages



Skills gaps



Training and qualification issues



Limited career pathways



Lack of diversity and inclusion



Data deficiencies



Policy and regulatory settings

Given that the industry attracts adventurers, who want short term work who travel interstate and match their work with holiday making there is a need for portability and nationalising child safe certificates and the types of drivers licences needed to transport groups of people.



Enrolments and completions

Enrolments in the Sport and Recreation sector remain concentrated in a few key qualifications and completions, and while these are steady in some areas they still lag behind the growth in enrolments across the sector.

Some qualifications, like the Diploma of Sport and Certificate IV in Outdoor Leadership, continue to perform well in terms of completion. In contrast, completion outcomes remain challenging in others, such as fitness and entry-level sport and recreation.

The data highlights the need to improve completion outcomes, particularly in qualifications with strong initial interest but lower course completion rates.

Enrolments and completions by qualification⁽⁹⁾ ⁽¹⁰⁾

Certificate I in Sport and Recreation (SIS10115)

Enrolments: 396
Completions: 72

Certificate II in Sport and Recreation (SIS20115)

Enrolments: 14,620
Completions: 5100

Certificate II in Sport – Developing Athlete (SIS20219 and SIS20221)

Enrolments: 0
Completions: 0

Certificate II in Sport Coaching (SIS20319 and SIS20321)

Enrolments: 4980
Completions: 2154

Certificate II in Outdoor Recreation (SIS20419)

Enrolments: 5209
Completions: 1609

Certificate III in Sport and Recreation (SIS30115)

Enrolments: 19,729
Completions: 4485

Certificate III in Sport – Athlete (SIS30419 and SIS30421)

Enrolments: 35
Completions: 27

Certificate III in Sport Coaching (SIS30519 and SIS30521)

Enrolments: 3761
Completions: 1283

Certificate III in Outdoor Leadership (SIS30619)

Enrolments: 1187
Completions: 371

Certificate III in Fitness (SIS30315 and SIS30321)

Enrolments: 36,238
Completions: 11,576

Enrolments Completions

Certificate III in Aquatics and Community Recreation (SIS31015)

Enrolments: 1146
Completions: 564

Certificate IV in Sport and Recreation (SIS40115)

Enrolments: 159
Completions: 58

Certificate IV in Fitness (SIS40215 and SIS40221)

Enrolments: 16303
Completions: 5563

Certificate IV in Sport Coaching (SIS40319 and SIS40321)

Enrolments: 113
Completions: 24

Certificate IV in Sport Development (SIS40419 and SIS40421)

Enrolments: 810
Completions: 80

Certificate IV in Outdoor Leadership (SIS40619 and SIS40621)

Enrolments: 635
Completions: 322

Diploma of Sport and Recreation Management (SIS50115)

Enrolments: 364
Completions: 124

Diploma of Sport (SIS50319 and SIS50321)

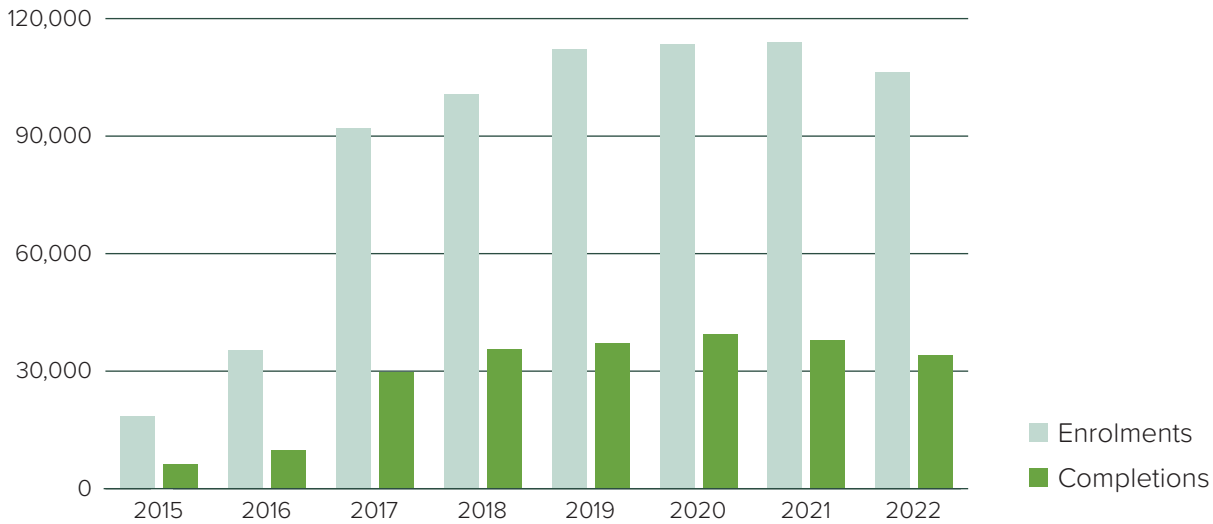
Enrolments: 945
Completions: 573

Diploma of Outdoor Leadership (SIS50419 and SIS50421)

Enrolments: 117
Completions: 61

Source: Total VET Students and Courses 2022 program enrolments and completions.

Total enrolments and completions for human services qualifications^{(9) (10)}



| | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
|-------------|--------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Enrolments | 18,573 | 35,383 | 92,073 | 100,785 | 112,108 | 113,369 | 114,041 | 106,391 |
| Completions | 6136 | 9890 | 29,740 | 35,506 | 37,125 | 39,346 | 37,969 | 34,062 |

Source: Total VET Students and Courses 2022 program enrolments and completions.



Data shows that while enrolments consistently showed a gradual increase between 2017 and 2021, there has been a decline more recently. Completions have remained relatively consistent during this time yet have also seen a slight decline between 2021–2022.

“Vocational student placements, and workplace experience [are needed] to consolidate skills and build connections.”

“[There is a] lack of qualified applicants for outdoor adventure instructors”

Gender⁽⁹⁾ (10)

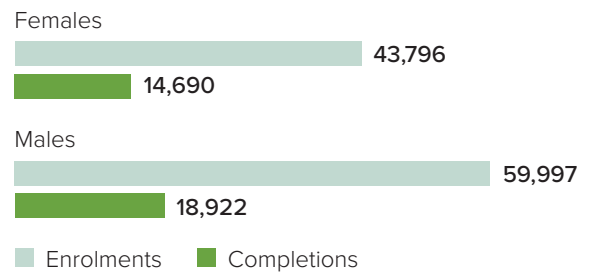
Females accounted for **41.2%** of enrolments and **42.1%** of completions

Males represented **56.4%** of enrolments and **54.2%** of completions

People who identified as 'Other' comprised **0.1%** of enrolments and **0.1%** of completions

Learners whose gender is **not known** comprised **2.2%** of enrolments and **3.6%** of completions

Enrolments and completions by gender



* Other: 127 Enrolments; 48 Completions

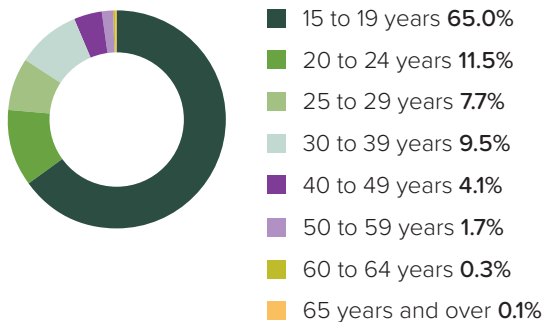
Not known: 2391 Enrolments; 1266 Completions

Source: Total VET Students and Courses 2022 program enrolments and completions.

In the Sport and Recreation sector, **males** make up the majority of both enrolments (**56.4%**) and completions (**54.2%**), while **females** represent a smaller share, with **41.2%** of enrolments and **42.1%** of completions. A small proportion of learners whose gender is **not known** accounted for **2.2%** of enrolments and **3.6%** of completions, and those identifying as '**Other**' make up a very small fraction of both enrolments and completions. Compared to overall VET program data, this sector shows a slightly higher **male** participation, as the broader VET sector tends to have a more balanced gender distribution across many fields.

Age⁽⁹⁾ (10)

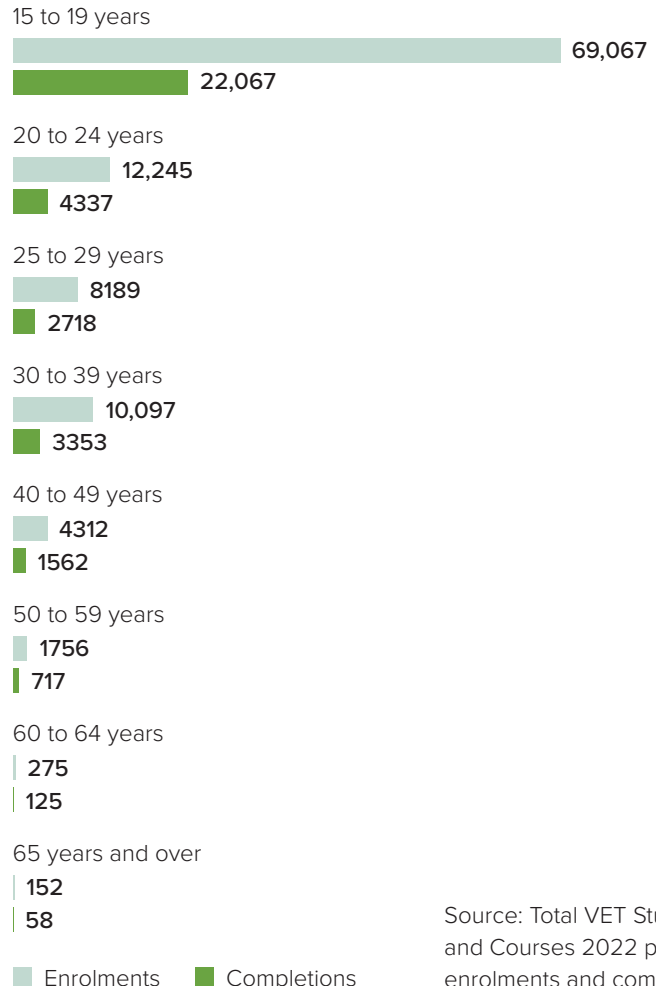
% of overall enrolments by age



The Sport and Recreation sector is dominated by younger learners, with the majority of enrolments (**65.0%**) and completions (**63.1%**) by learners aged **15–19 years**, reflecting a high level of participation through VET in school programs.

Participation declines significantly for learners aged 25 and over.

Enrolments and completions by age



Source: Total VET Students and Courses 2022 program enrolments and completions.

First Nations students⁽⁹⁾ ⁽¹⁰⁾



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners accounted for **4.0%** of enrolments and **3.2%** of completions

Non-Indigenous learners made up **85.0%** of enrolments and **81.1%** of completions

Not known learners comprised **11.0%** of enrolments and **15.7%** of completions

Students with disability⁽⁹⁾ ⁽¹⁰⁾



Learners with a disability represented **4.0%** of enrolments and **3.5%** of completions in the sports, recreation, and outdoor leadership sector

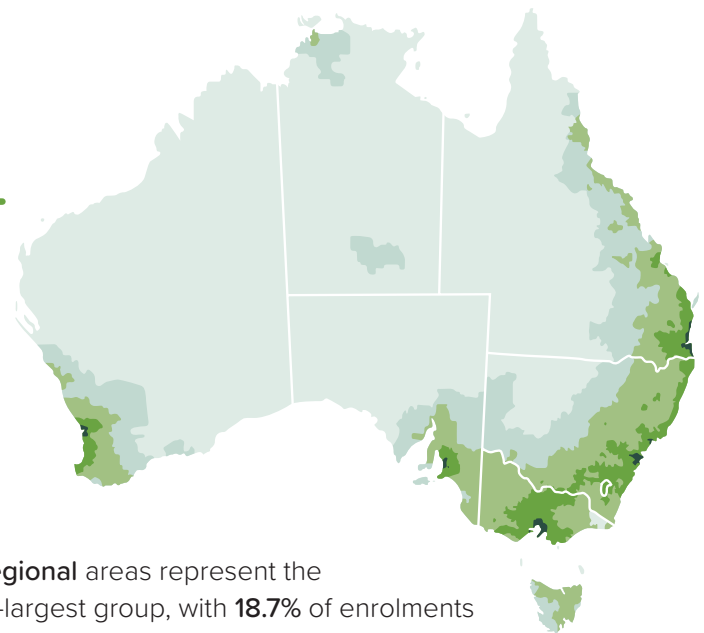
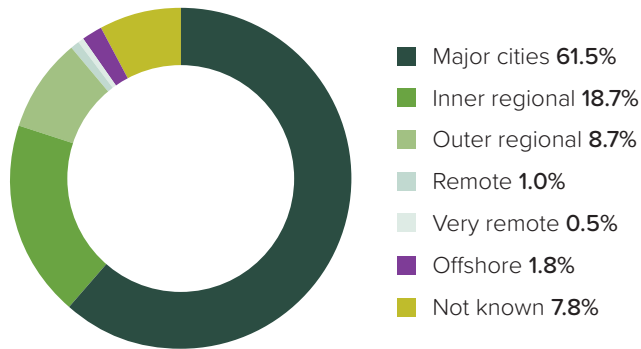
This is slightly lower than the overall VET program, where learners with a disability account for **6.0%** of enrolments and **5.3%** of completions.

Geographic location⁽⁹⁾ ⁽¹⁰⁾

Remoteness

Remoteness Index of Australia

% of overall enrolments by remoteness



Source: Total VET Students and Courses 2022 program enrolments and completions.

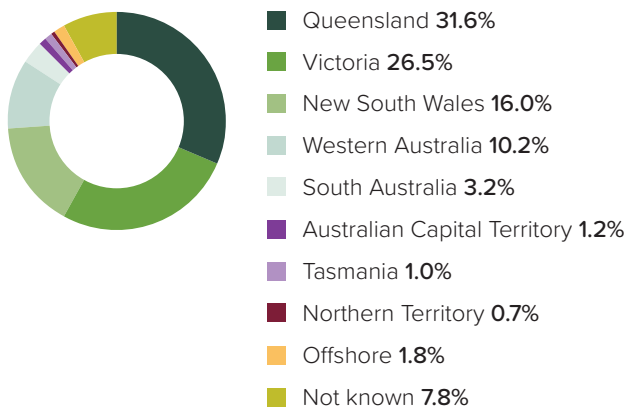


Major Cities made up **61.5%** of enrolments and **58.9%** of completions

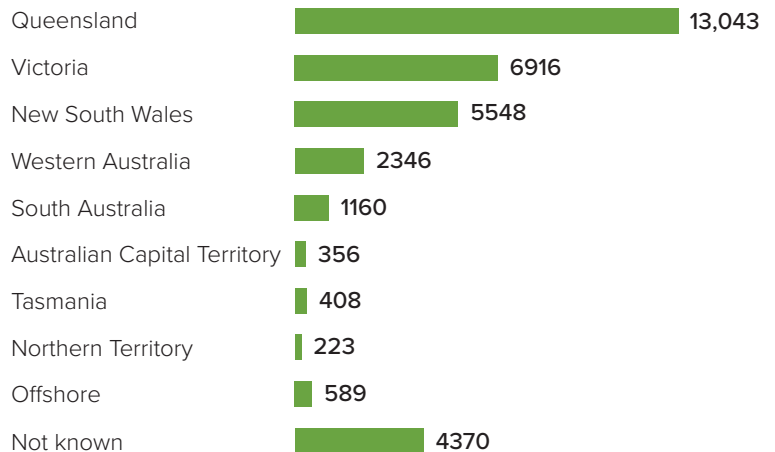
Inner regional areas represent the second-largest group, with **18.7%** of enrolments and **16.7%** of completions, followed by **outer regional** areas with **8.7%** of enrolments and **12.5%** of completions. The lowest completion rates were in **very remote** locations (**0.4%**).

State/territory

% of overall enrolments by state/territory



Number of completion of qualifications by state/territory



Queensland accounted for **31.6%** of enrolments and **37.3%** of completions.

Victoria follows, accounting for **26.5%** of enrolments and **19.8%** of completions, while **New South Wales** represents **16.0%** of enrolments and **15.9%** of completions.

Understanding the factors that may influence Queensland's success in completion in the sector has the potential to inform other jurisdictions and potential sectors.

Source: Total VET Students and Courses 2022 program enrolments and completions.



Actions

Research



Completion rates project: understanding the drivers and opportunities for intervention to address low completion rates in key qualifications.

Training Package Development and Review



Identify priority qualifications for review and update annually.



Review the SIS Outdoor Recreation and Leadership qualifications: the review will ensure the four qualifications, seven skill sets, and 195 units of competency meet the current industry demands, and are adaptable enough to support future growth, assist with career development by outlining pathways and address forthcoming challenges.

Note: For all references in this sector profile, please refer to the HumanAbility 2024 Workforce Plan.

