

EXTRACT FROM NCVET report entitled:
Improving participation and success in VET for disadvantaged learners, by
Stephen Lamb, Quentin Maire, Anne Walstab, Graeme Newman, Esther
Doecke and Merryn Davies (pp. 21-24), 22 March 2018 (details at end of document)

Regional analysis of VET participation and completion

This section of the report presents the findings from a regional analysis of VET participation and completion across Australia designed to identify communities exhibiting high levels of engagement and success with learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. The regions performing at higher-than-expected levels, in the context of the demographic and economic profile of their community, invite further subsequent investigation through case studies of effective practice carried out in the fourth section of the report. These high-performing regions are identified through a series of analyses. The method of estimating regional rates and measuring VET participation and completions is detailed in appendix A.

VET participation rates

Participation in vocational training varies markedly across different regions of Australia. Table 1 shows the mean regional rates of participation across all SA3s for all students and for different groups of learners. As well as the mean rates, figures are provided showing the standard deviation, minimum and maximum rates, and the range of rates. The minimum and maximum rates show the spread of participation rates across regions.

The overall mean regional participation rate in the VET activity in scope for this study is 7%. The results show that, on average, 15.1% of the adult Indigenous population within regions are enrolled in VET. Furthermore, the mean rate of participation in VET across all regions is 6.6% for the culturally and linguistically diverse population, 19.4% for the unemployed and 7.5% for people with low levels of prior educational attainment.

Table 1 Regional VET participation rates, for all learners and disadvantaged learners, 2014 (%)

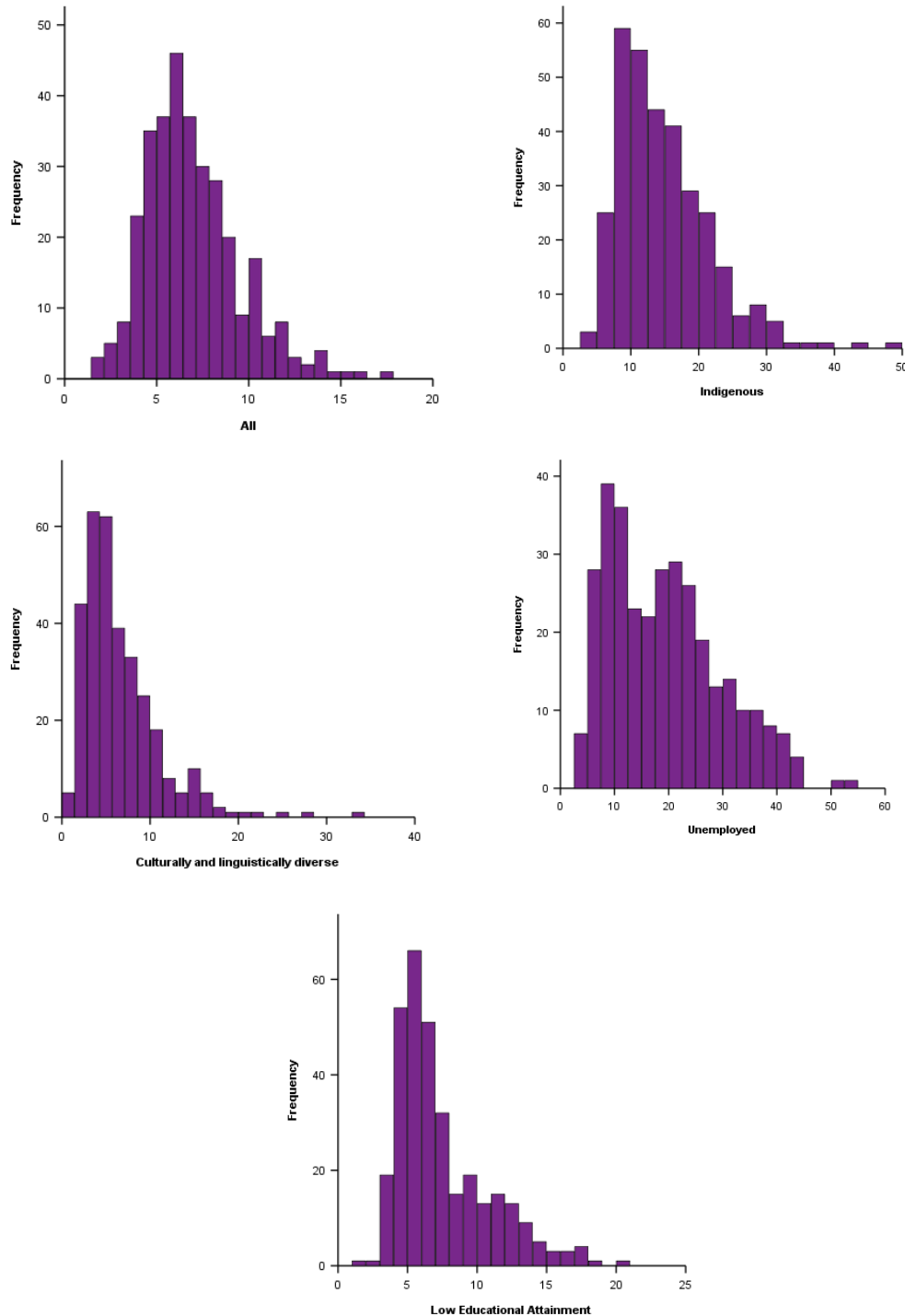
	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Range
All learners	7.0	2.6	2.0	17.2	15.1
Indigenous	15.1	7.6	3.0	57.2	54.2
CALD	6.6	4.4	1.1	34.2	33.1
Unemployed	19.4	10.3	3.8	53.7	50.0
Low prior educational attainment	7.5	3.3	1.9	20.9	19.0

Source: Calculations derived from the National VET Provider Collection (2014), unpublished.

The full extent of the variations across regions is shown in figure 2, which presents the distributions of regional VET participation rates for different groups of disadvantaged learners. The bars in each graph report the number of regions. The spread of bars reveals the differences in participation rates for each learner group. For example, the VET participation rates for learners who are unemployed range from 3.8% in six regions to over 50% in two regions. This range means that some regions are achieving high levels of engagement in VET for those members of their communities who are unemployed, while others are not. There is a wide spread for Indigenous populations as well. For Indigenous populations, the rates vary from under 5% to over 40%, depending on the region. For individuals with low educational attainment (mainly early school leavers), the rates vary from 2% to over 20%.

VET participation rates vary across regions and depend on the types of VET provision available, including the number of providers, the courses they offer (AQF levels), the types of providers (TAFE, private, community) and the mode of delivery (campus-based, online, workplace and community delivery). The relationship between participation and provision is evident in a series of correlation analyses which examine the associations between regional rates of VET participation for different learner groups and regional VET course and provider characteristics. These are reported in table 2.

Figure 1 Distributions of regional VET participation rates, by learner population, 2014



Source: Participation estimates derived using enrolment data supplied by NCVET from the National VET Provider Collection, and population data from the Estimated Resident Population data series (ABS, 2015) and the Census of Population and Housing (ABS, 2012).

The strength of the association can be identified by the level of statistical significance and the size of the correlation coefficient. Regions with relatively high concentrations of learners in TAFE institutes or universities, for example, correspond to higher rates of participation in VET by Indigenous learners (significant to 0.01 with positive correlation coefficients of 0.155). Conversely, regions with higher proportions of learners enrolled with private providers are associated with the lower engagement of Indigenous learners, learners with a disability, CALD and unemployed learners (significant to 0.01 with correlation coefficients of -0.265, -0.193, -0.144, -0.195 respectively). The reverse relationship exists for learners with low levels of educational attainment, as there is a positive association with more private provider activity and a negative association with TAFE and university activity (coefficients of 0.141 significant to 0.05, and -0.273 significant to 0.01 respectively).

Table 2 Correlations between regional VET participation rates for different learners and regional VET course and provider characteristics, 2014

		Regional VET participation rates (Learner groups)				
		Indigenous	Disability	CALD	Unemployed	Low attainment
Provider type	% TAFE/university	.155**	.019	.046	.031	-.273**
	% Community providers	.372**	.620**	.311**	.544**	.453**
	% Private providers	-.265**	-.193**	-.144**	-.195**	.141*
AQF level	% Advanced	-.215**	-.264**	-.297**	-.097	-.291**
	% Middle	-.364**	-.392**	-.325**	-.363**	-.122*
	% Basic	.385**	.453**	.437**	.319**	.286**
Delivery mode	% Classroom	.118*	.096	.185**	.232**	.396**
	% Electronic	.140*	.024	-.051	.108	-.217**
	% Employment-based	.004	-.137*	-.134*	-.132*	-.231**
Delivery locations	N TAFE/university sites	-.013	.013	.028	-.031	.183**
	N Community provider sites	.309**	.398**	.355**	.436**	.531**
	N Private provider sites	-.099	-.185**	-.125*	-.190**	.024

Notes: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Source: Estimates derived from the National VET Provider Collection, 2014, unpublished.

These associations, however, are eclipsed by the significant and large positive correlations found between regional participation in community providers and higher rates of participation across all disadvantaged learner groups (see table 2). Highlighting the role that community providers play in serving some of the most disadvantaged populations, the associations are strongest for learners with a disability, unemployed learners and learners with low prior educational attainment (all significant at the 0.01 level, coefficients 0.620, 0.544, 0.453 respectively).

This is mirrored in the significant and strong correlations between the number of community provider sites delivering VET in a region and the rates of participation of different groups of disadvantaged learners. Regions which have more delivery locations for community providers have stronger participation rates for every disadvantaged learner group.

Other interesting findings in table 2 concern the results for the regions with higher proportions of students undertaking basic-level VET courses (certificate I or certificate II). Across all disadvantaged learner groups, there is a significant positive association between the amount of basic VET activity

occurring in a region and VET participation rates. Other levels of VET (advanced, middle) see a negative relationship with participation.

There are also some differences across mode of delivery. Regions where there are relatively higher concentrations of learners undertaking classroom-based learning correspond to higher rates of participation by learners with low attainment, the unemployed, and CALD learners (significant to 0.01, correlation coefficients of 0.396, 0.232 and 0.185 respectively). This pattern carries through to Indigenous learners (significant to 0.05, coefficient 0.118), but not for people with a disability. Employment and online-based courses see a significant negative correlation between classroom-based learning and learners with low levels of prior educational attainment relative to other groups.

NOTE FROM COMMUNITY COLLEGES AUSTRALIA: This is an unedited extract from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) report, entitled *Improving participation and success in VET for disadvantaged learners*, by Stephen Lamb, Quentin Maire, Anne Walstab, Graeme Newman, Esther Doecke, Merryn Davies, 22 March 2018, available at <https://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/publications/all-publications/improving-participation-and-success-in-vet-for-disadvantaged-learners>

It is reprinted under Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Australia
<<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/au>> licence.