

Insights into Foundation Skills Provision by Community Education Providers in Regional Australia

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Background

- NCVER project “Provision of foundation programs by community education providers in rural and regional Australia and its implications for VET”
 - Commenced August 2018
 - Release in February 2020
- Principal researchers
 - Dr Lisel O'Dwyer, Project Manager, NCVER
 - Dr Mandy Mihelic, Research Officer, NCVER
- Partners
 - Community Colleges Australia (CCA)
 - Project Advisory Committee

Project aim

- To scope provision of foundations skills training and characterise good practice by community education providers (CEPs) in regional and remote areas
 - Compare patterns for regional and remote based providers with metropolitan providers
 - How do these practices contribute to building human and social capital in regional and rural areas?
 - Do they help people undertake VET?

Definitions

- **Foundation skills**
 - Language, literacy and numeracy + employability skills
- **Community Education Provider**
 - A not-for-profit, community-based organisation with a primary focus on adult education.

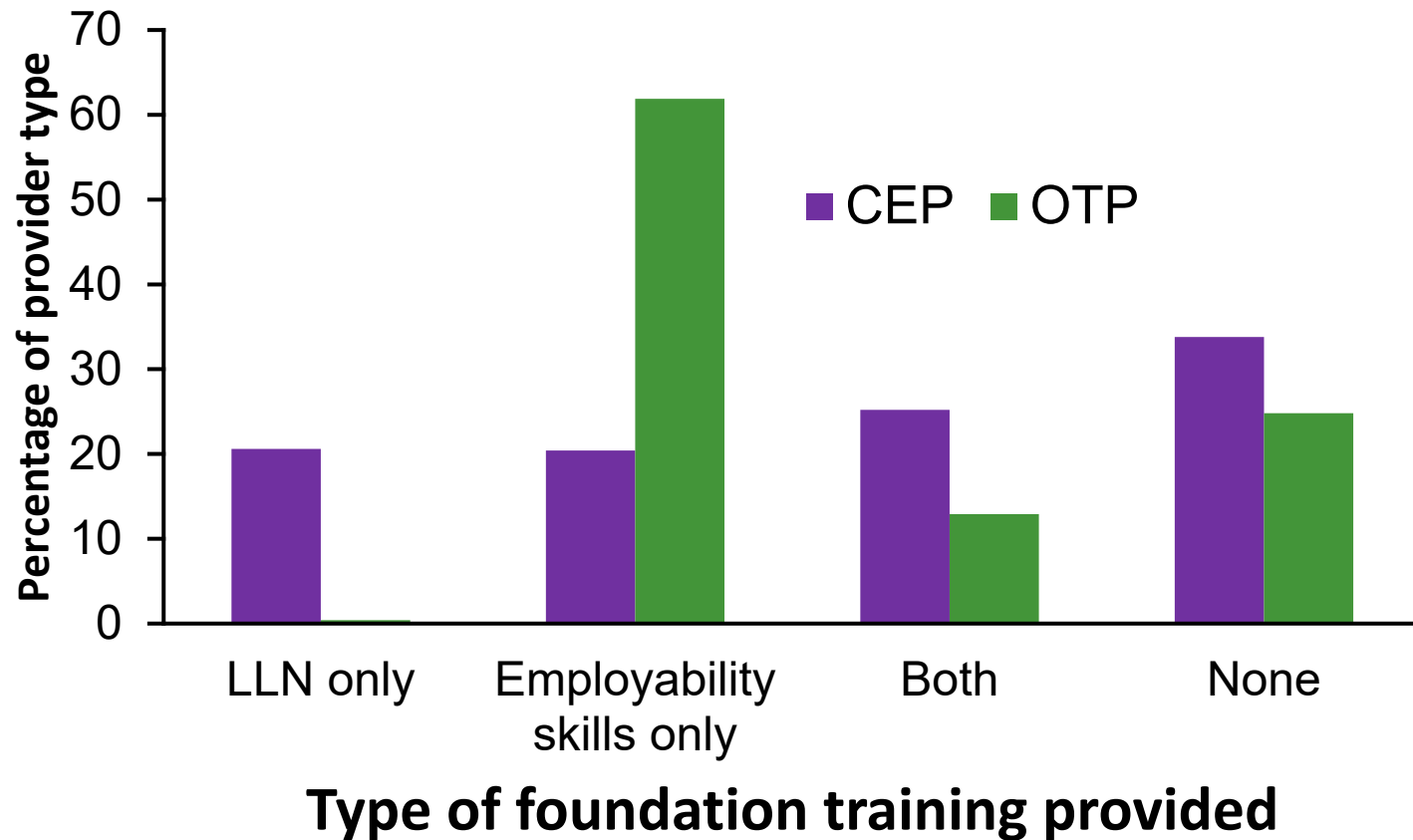
Methods

- Total VET Activity (TVA) database
- Reading Writing Hotline call logs
- National survey of community education providers
- In-depth interviews with selected CEPs

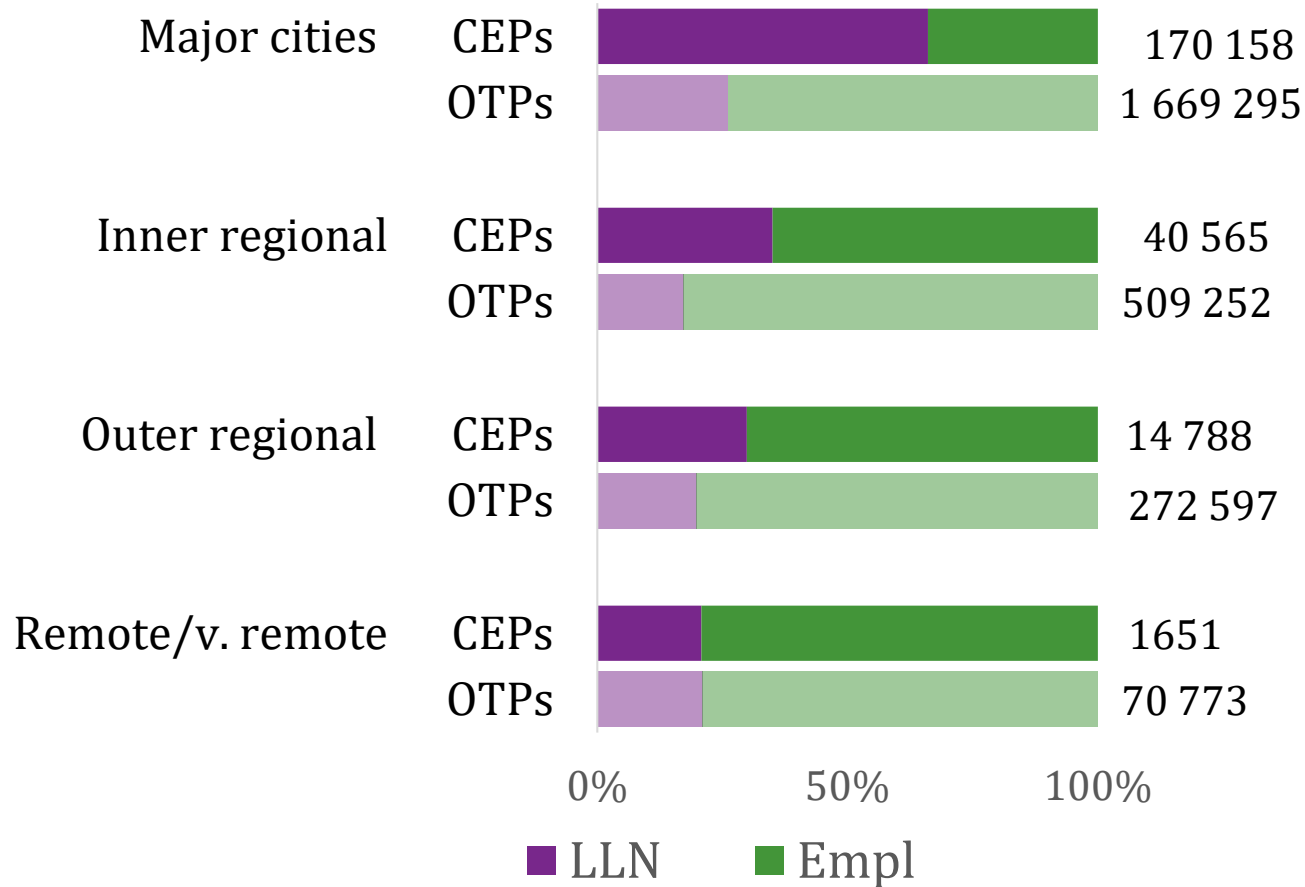
Total VET Activity Collection Analyses

- **2000-2500** - Estimated number of CEPs in Australia
 - - 'most' provide adult basic education (Bowman 2016 p. 7)
- **441** - registered as RTOs and submitted data to TVA in 2018
- approximately **18-22%** of all CEPs included in TVA

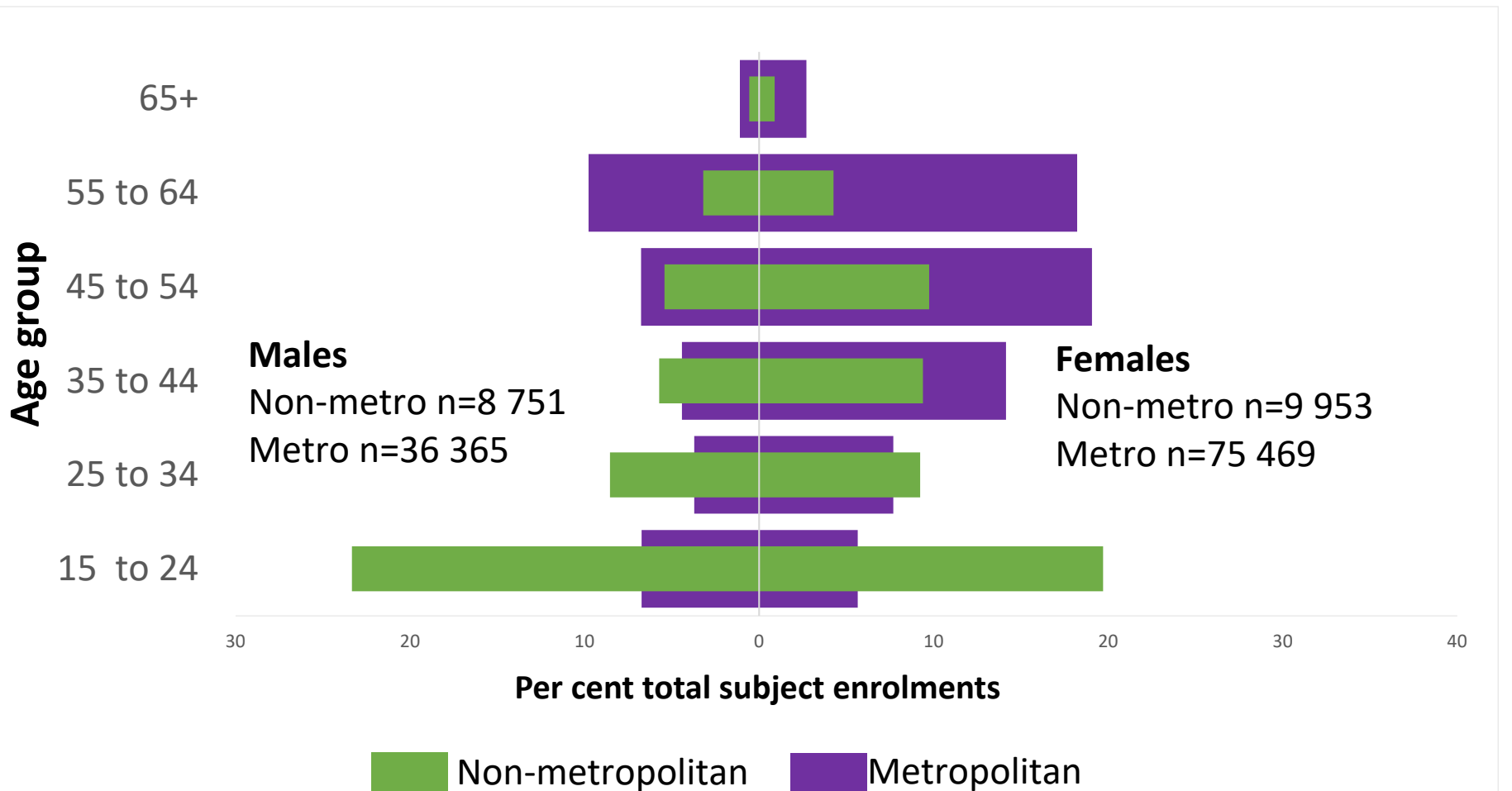
Provision of foundation subjects by provider type, 2018



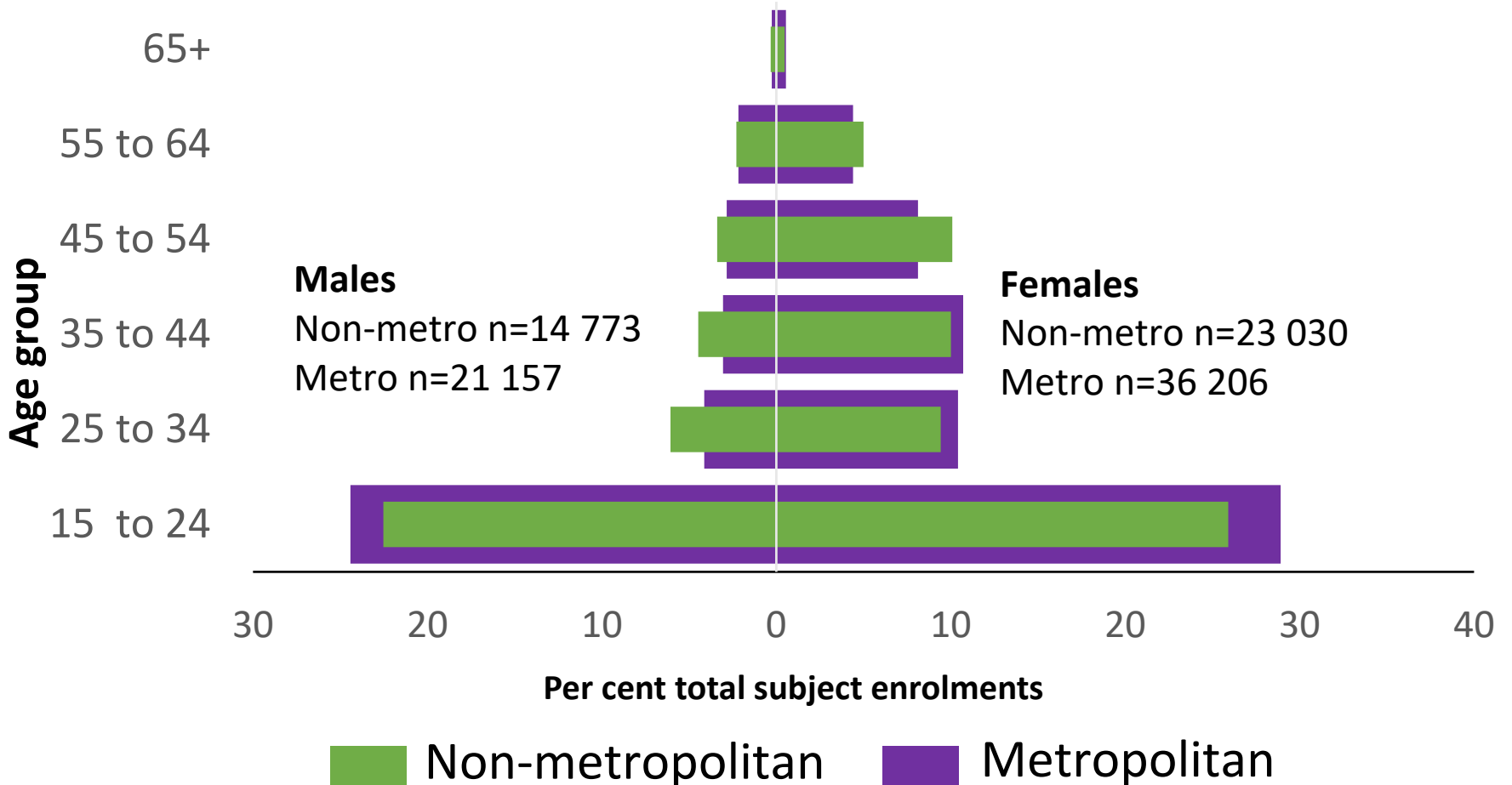
ARIA location of students enrolled in foundation skills subjects by provider type, 2018



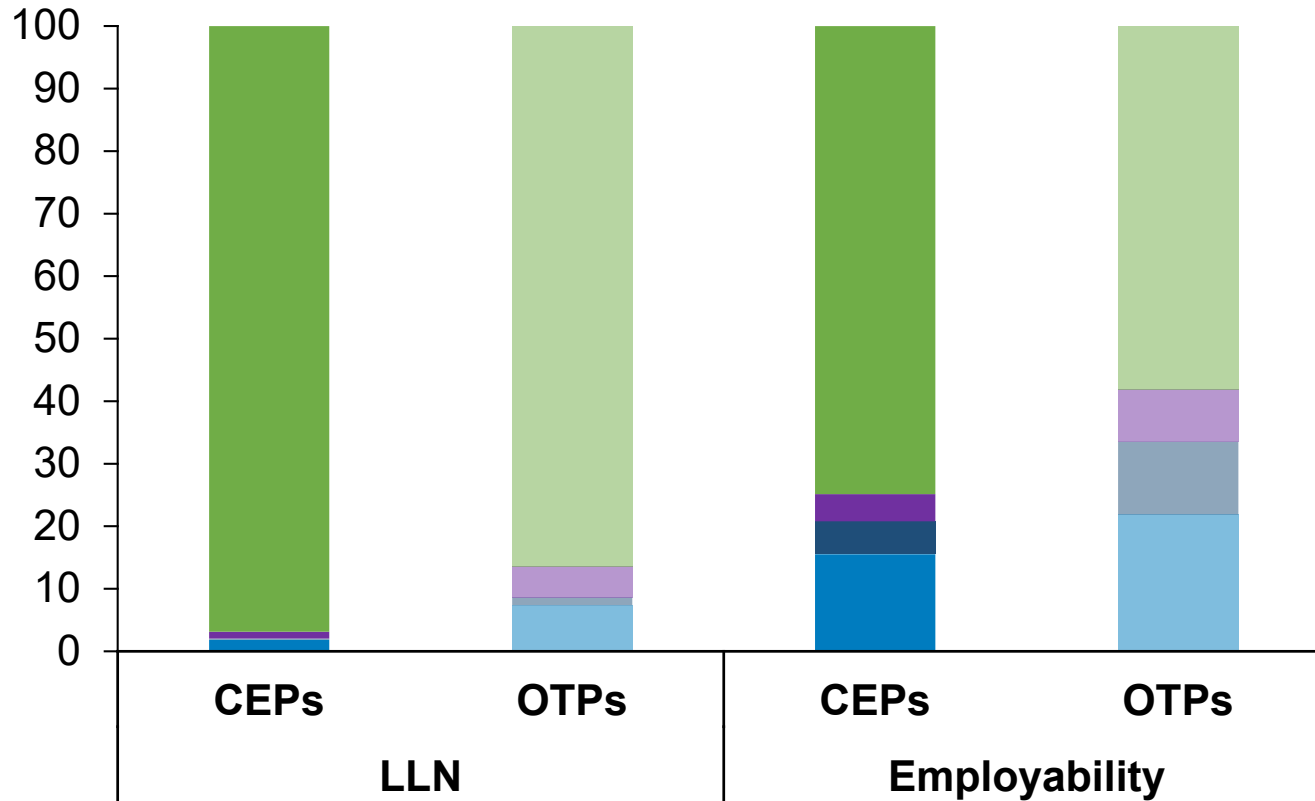
Age-sex structure of students enrolled in LLN subjects with CEPs by broad location of students, 2018



Age-sex structure of students enrolled in **employability skills** subjects with CEPs by broad location of students, 2018



Delivery mode of foundation subject enrolments by provider type, 2018



■ College/Campus based

■ Online/remote access

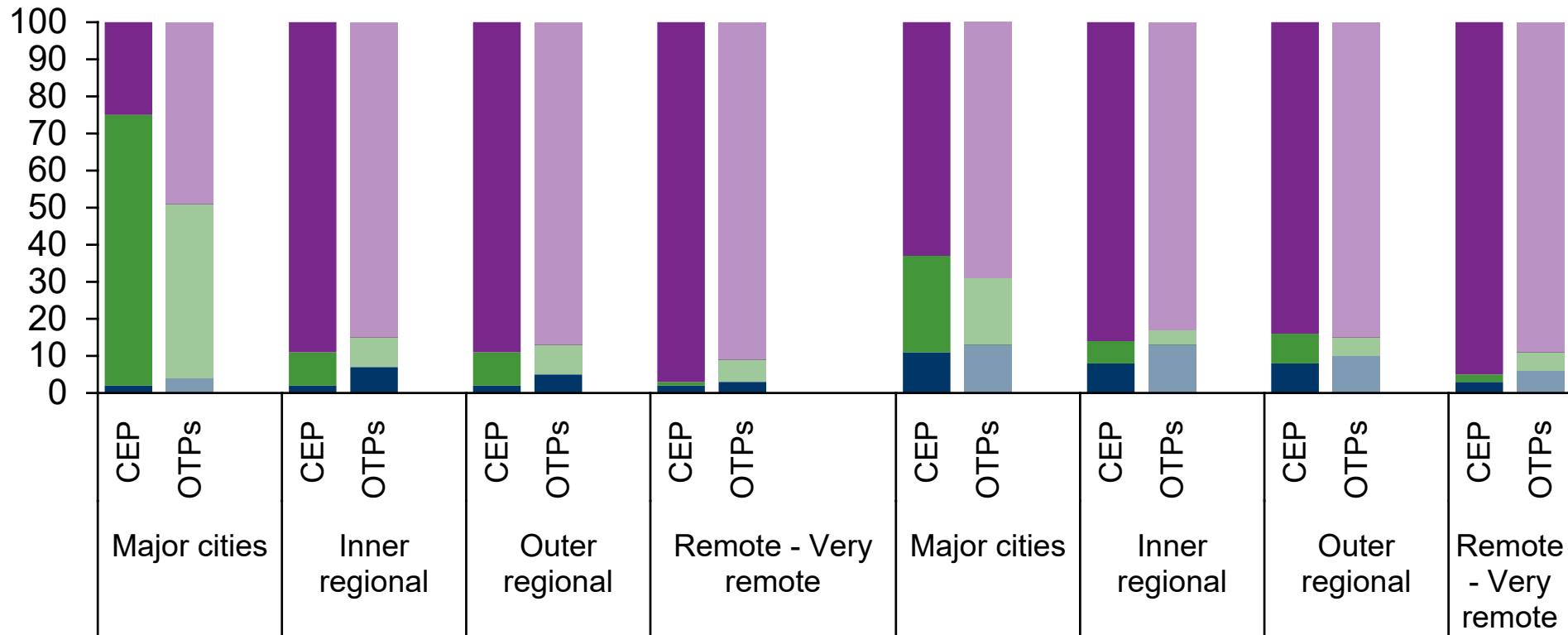
■ Employment based

■ Other

English speaking background status of students enrolled in foundation skills subjects by ARIA and provider type, 2018

LLN

Employability

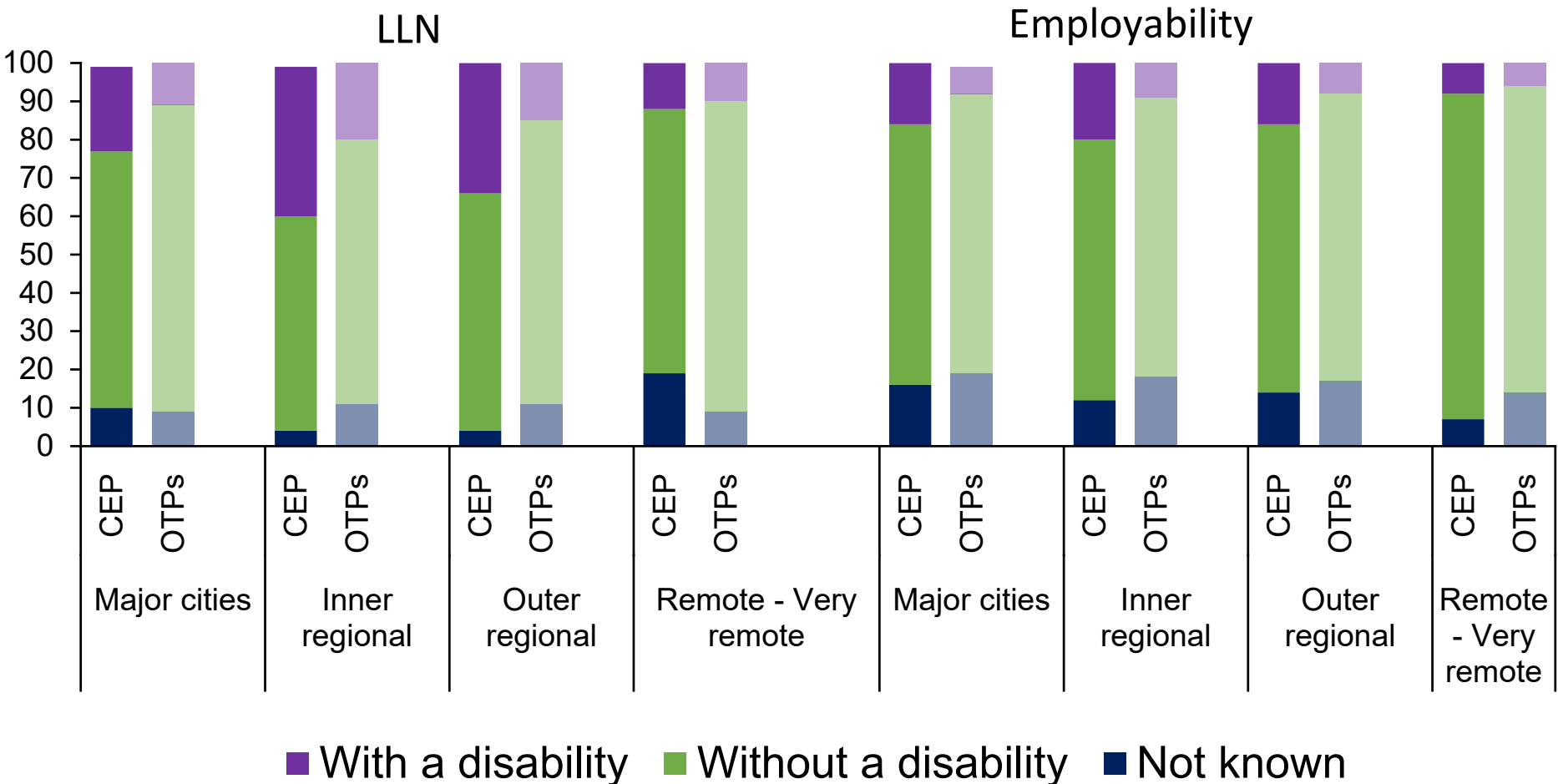


English speaking background countries

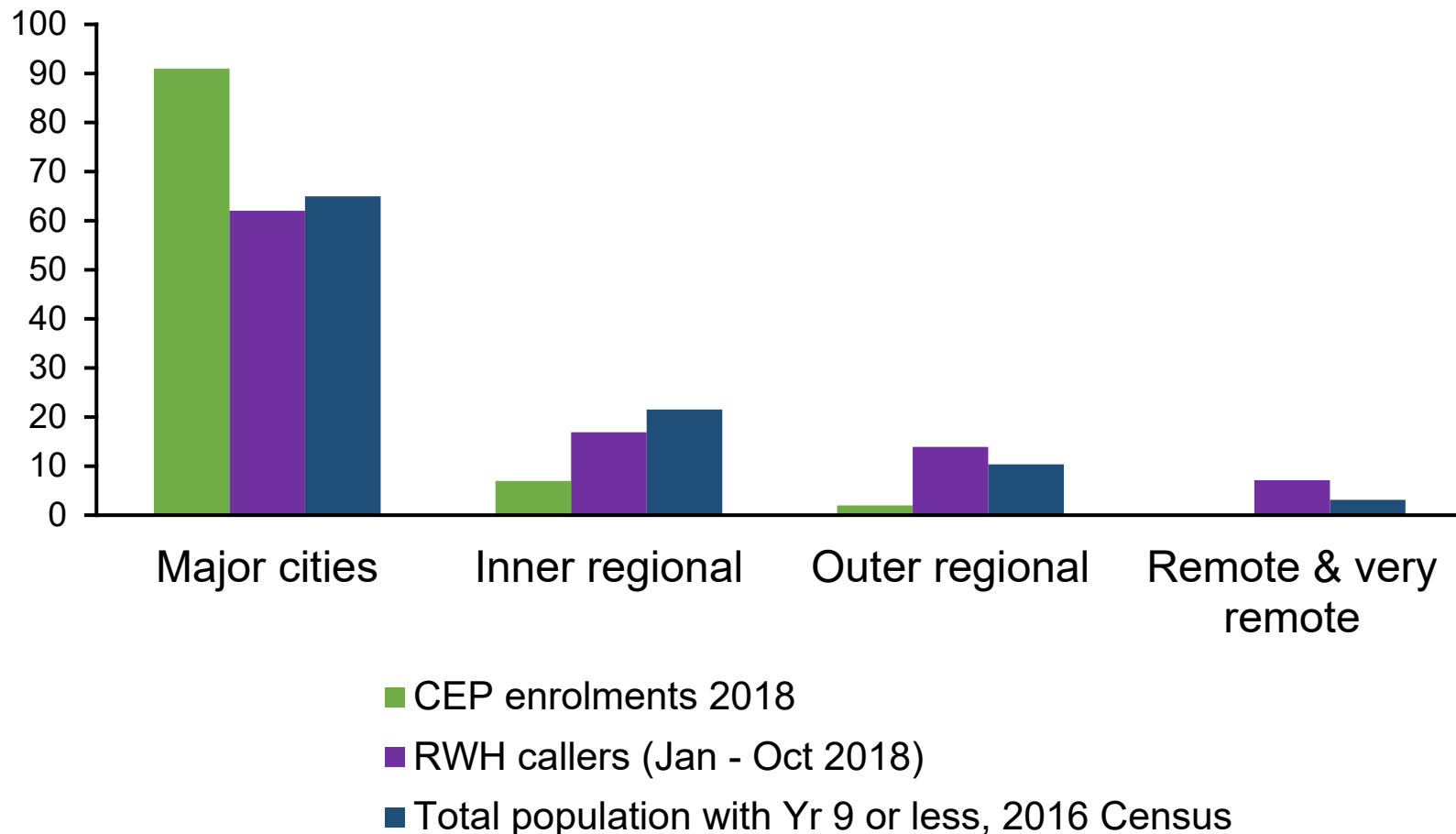
Non-English speaking background countries

Not known

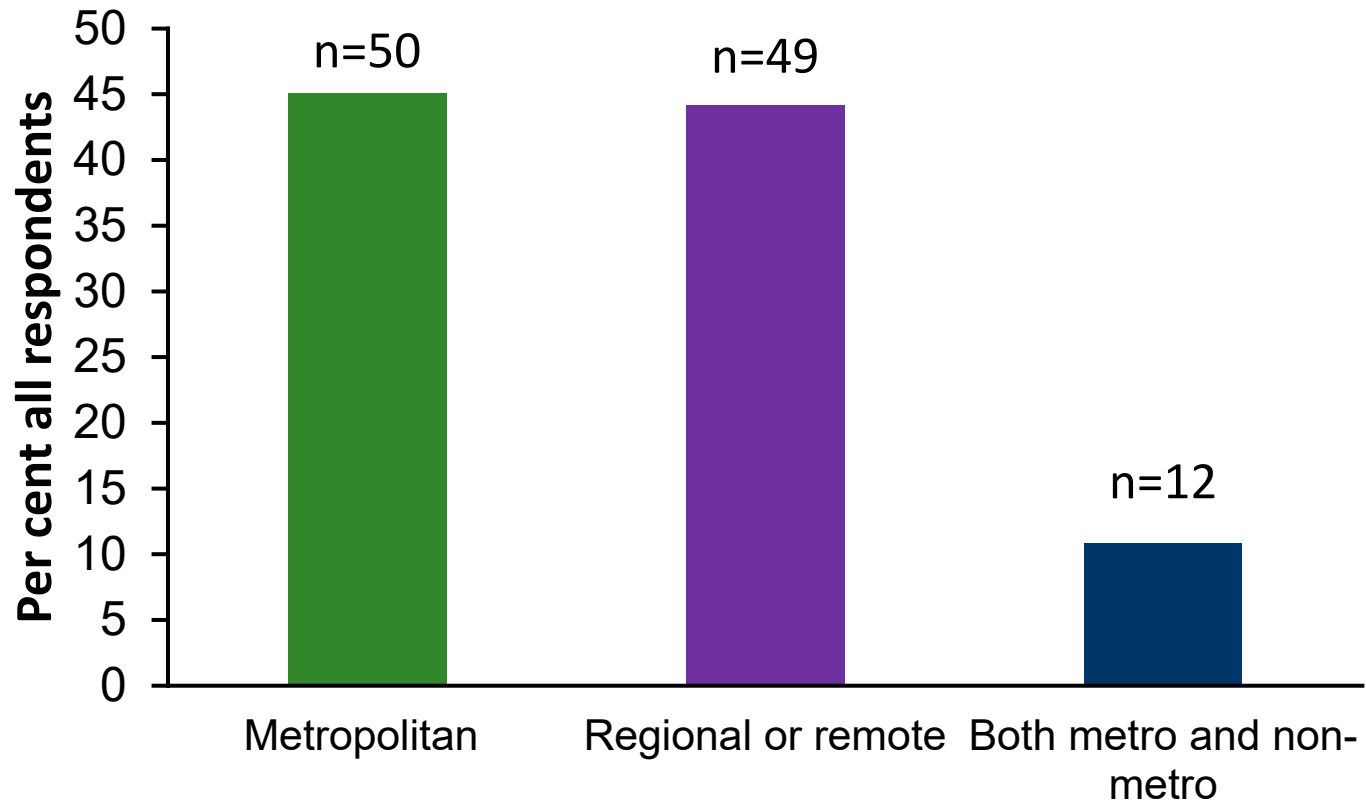
Disability status of students enrolled in foundation skills subjects by ARIA and provider type, 2018



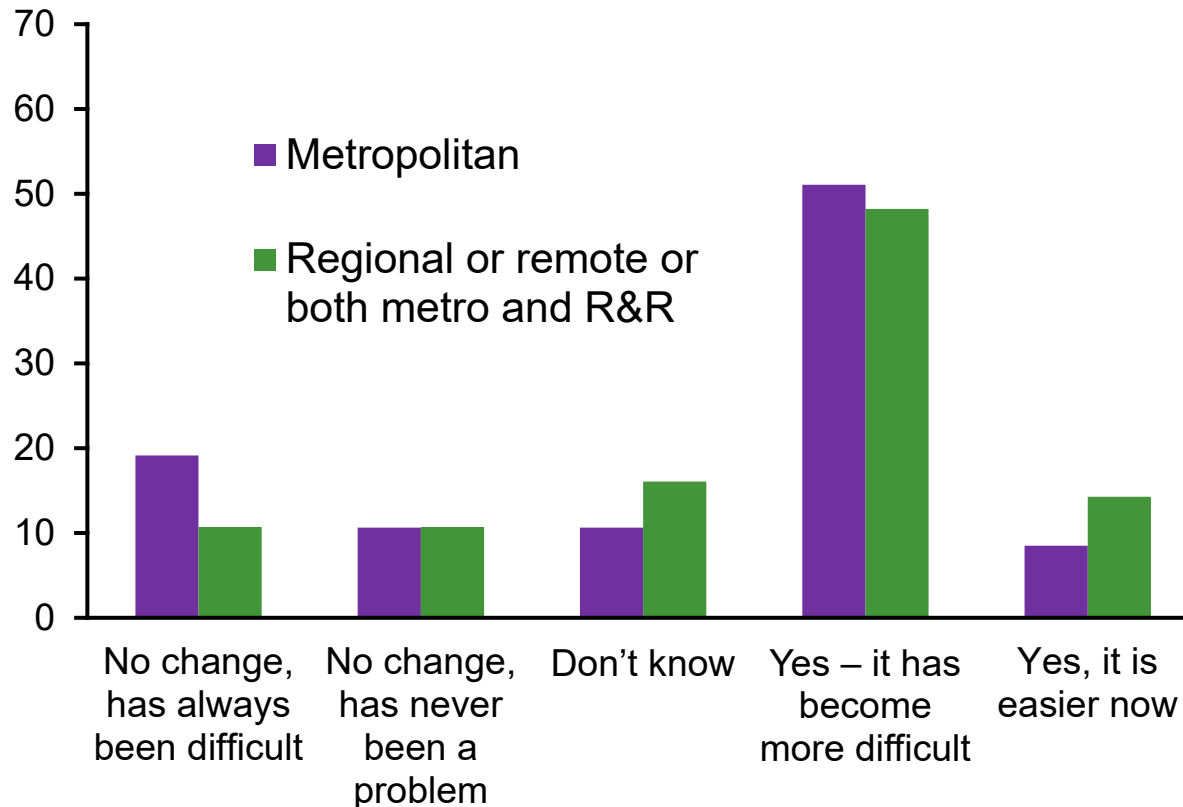
ARIA of students enrolled in CEP language, literacy and numeracy courses, RWH callers and total population with low education levels



Online survey of CEPs (n=114)

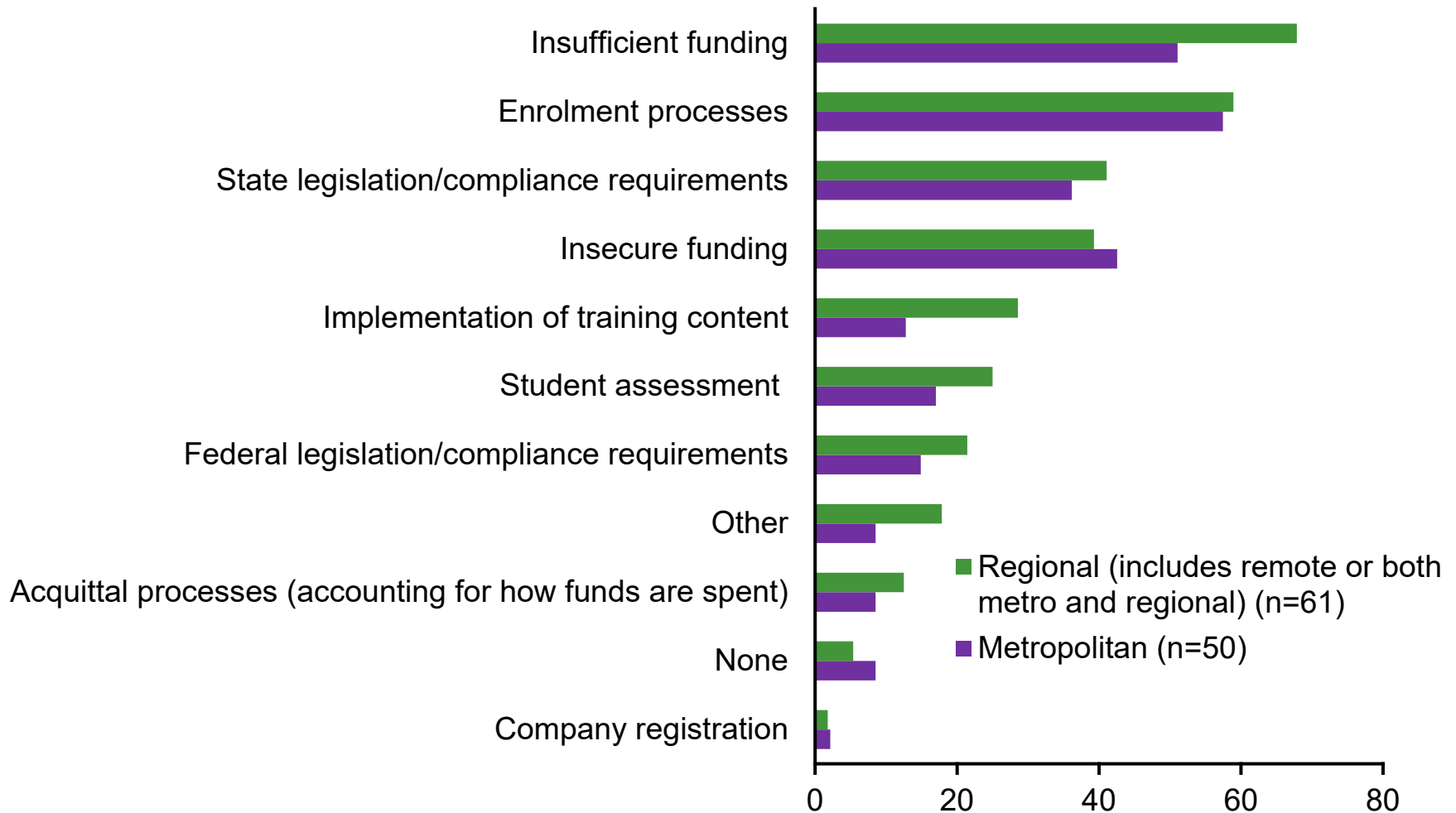


Has provider ability to deliver foundation skills courses changed over last 3 years?



Why it is difficult or has become more difficult

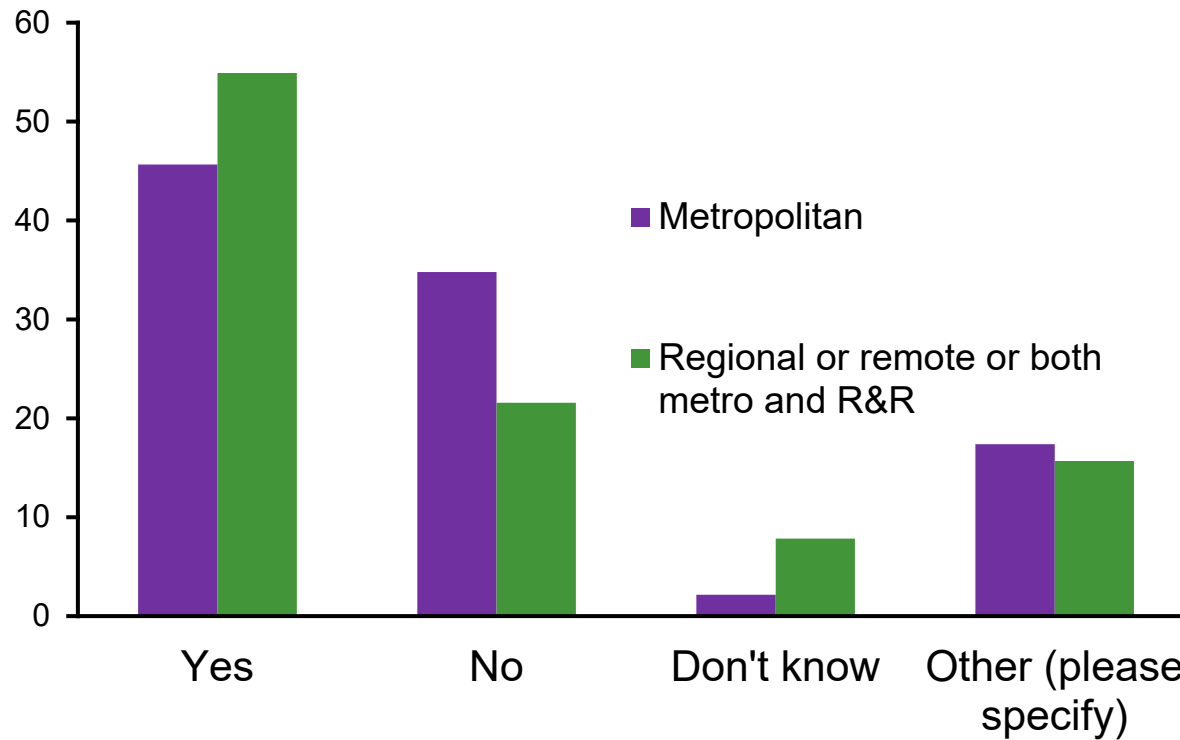
Multiple response



Respondent perceptions of barriers for students who need foundation skills (multiple response)



Do providers track FSk student outcomes?



Case study consultations (n=21)

- Characteristics of FSk students
- Physical facilities for delivering Fsk training
- Delivery models (how they structure the training/teaching methods)
- Goals, learning outcomes and student motivations
- Impacts on social capital
- What happens to the students after they complete?
- No real differences between regional and metro

Social capital

- Providers noticed clear improvement in
 - self-confidence and self-worth
 - better communication skills
 - ability to get along with others
 - propensity to help others
- Development of friendships
- Increased integration of individuals with community
- **But difficult to identify changes at the community level**

Survey respondent comments

- *“The learners' life outcomes improves in all areas of health and well-being, future potential study or work opportunities, increased social capital, increased confidence and feeling of safety and stress prevention or buffering.... We are located in a very low socioeconomic area of a regional town and the **people that come into our organisation would not go to a educational centre like an RTO or TAFE.**”*
- *“There is currently not enough awareness of how beneficial this training can be to promoting positive outcomes **and ensuring completion of further study.**”*
- *“Funded LLN has resolved to be 100% Human Capital based rather than Social Capital based. This makes it difficult for LLN to concentrate on anything other than Employability. We align more closely with ... the **tangible but immeasurable changes that Governments are not interested in.**”*

Comments cont.

*“In a small rural, remote community, the **large RTO (TAFE) don't want to work with us. They don't see us as being a feeder to their courses once we have helped students gain or solidify skills.**”*

*“LLN practitioners will soon be extinct. Many providers are slowly reducing their staff numbers and LLN specialists are the first to go from our organisation. X employs people with **Cert. IVs in Health and Fitness to teach LLN rather than qualified and experienced professional LLN teachers.** Other providers, having to compete with X, are now following suit to reduce costs.”*

*“While any of [ESL students] are looking for work in the future, many of them desire to learn English that will allow them to mix in their community and develop relationships. **FSK courses can make this difficult at times.**”*

*Students will learn if the subject is **linked/relatable to a students life or interest**, small group learning, practical based and the student **feels safe** in their learning environment which community education providers and LLN/employ-ability courses are designed to do...*

Comments cont.

*“[The ACE/community colleges sector] works with the most disadvantaged which creates **tension between compliance and social capital approaches** to addressing LLN.”*

*“**Other orgs will not refer in the first instance** because we are unable to offer a full qualification as part of the funding receivedThis means students can only do the 'gap filler' modules that will only count as RPL for future courses elsewhere. ...we would prefer that clients are able to stay the course to gain a full qualification and have a better opportunity to engage in the local community and increase their social skills.”*

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