

National
Rail
Skills
Hub

Railway Track Worker— analysis of NCVER data

May 2023

Analysis of Railway Track Worker training data

The National Rail Skills Hub has analysed National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) data¹ relating to seven key units of competency relevant to working as a railway track worker.² The majority of these units are not exclusive to training for work as a railway track worker, and may also be required for various other occupations or job roles in the rail industry or in some cases outside the rail industry.

The three units of competency required for railway track workers with the highest enrolments between 2017 and 2021 were: *Follow work health and safety procedures*, *Safely access the rail corridor*, and *Shift materials safely using manual handling methods*.

Collectively, enrolments in these three units of competency represented over three-quarters of all enrolments from the seven units of competency analysed.

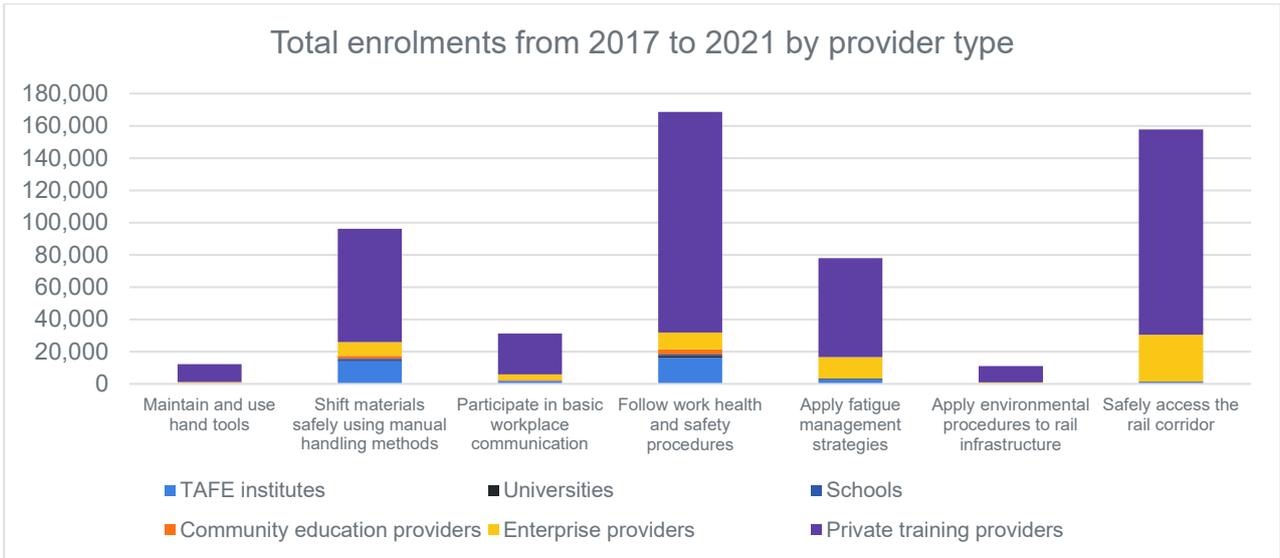
Private training providers delivered the majority of this training: around 80% of all enrolments, with the share exceeding 90% for some units of competency. Enterprise RTOs (12%) and TAFEs (7%) were the other significant training providers, with very low numbers delivered by any of the other provider types.

Most of the delivery by TAFEs was for *Follow work health and safety procedures* and *Shift materials safely using manual handling methods*.³ Among the more rail-specific units, such as *Safely access the rail corridor* and *Apply environmental procedures to rail infrastructure*, training delivery was almost entirely by private and enterprise providers. At enterprise RTOs, around 43% of enrolments from the seven analysed units were for *Safely access the rail corridor*, which was by far the biggest unit of competency (out of the seven analysed) delivered by enterprise providers.

¹ NCVER, *Total VET students and courses 2021: subject enrolments DataBuilder*, 2022, accessed at: <https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/data/databuilder>.

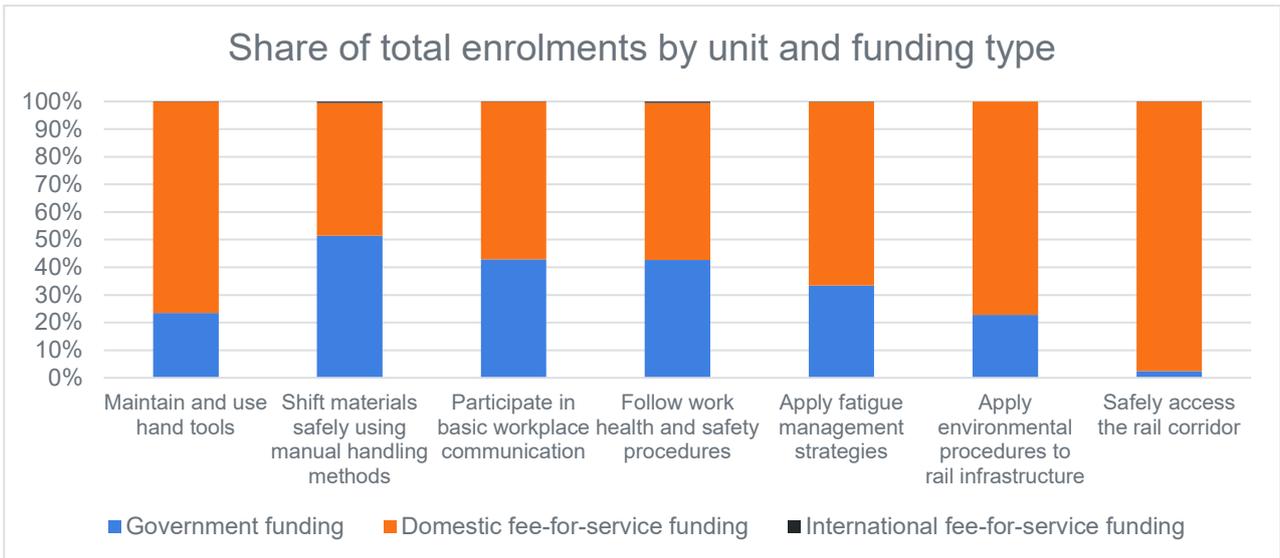
² *Maintain and use hand tools; Shift materials safely using manual handling methods; Participate in basic workplace communication; Follow work health and safety procedures; Apply fatigue management strategies; Apply environmental procedures to rail infrastructure; Safely access the rail corridor.*

³ Around 83% of all TAFE enrolments from the seven analysed units were in these two units.



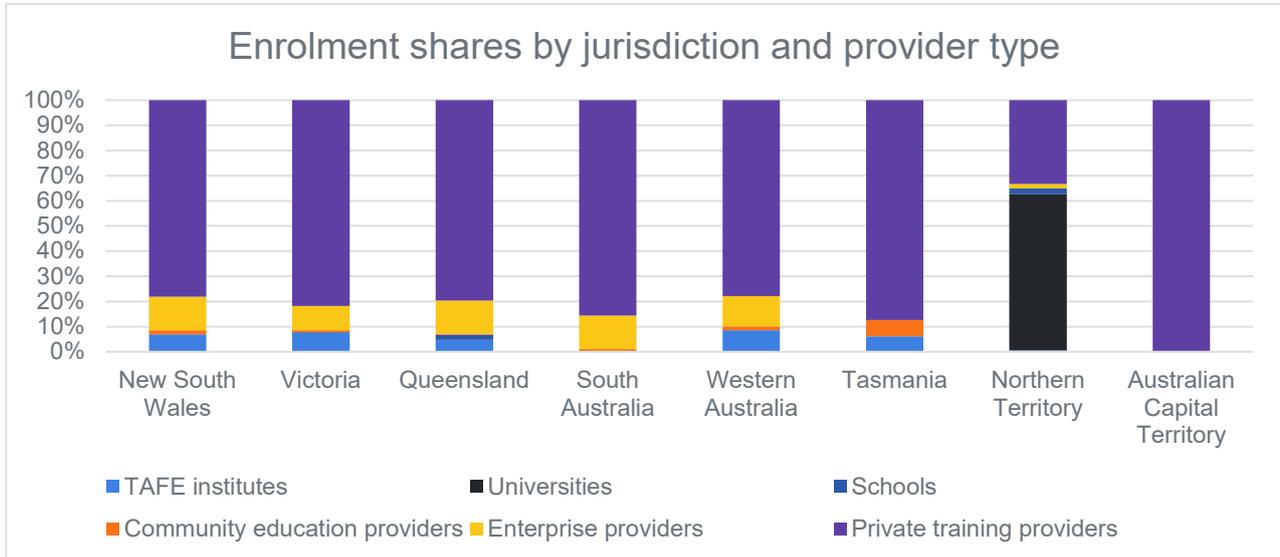
Who's paying for training?

Approximately 70% of enrolments were delivered through domestic fee-for-service funding, with around 30% of enrolments delivered through government funding. Government-funded shares varied considerably by unit: from over half of enrolments in *Shift materials safely using manual handling methods*, to almost none for *Safely access the rail corridor*. Government funding shares were relatively high for enrolments at TAFEs and the three minor training provider types, but relatively low for units delivered by private (30%) and enterprise (14%) RTOs, which likely reflects the mix of units typically delivered by each provider type.



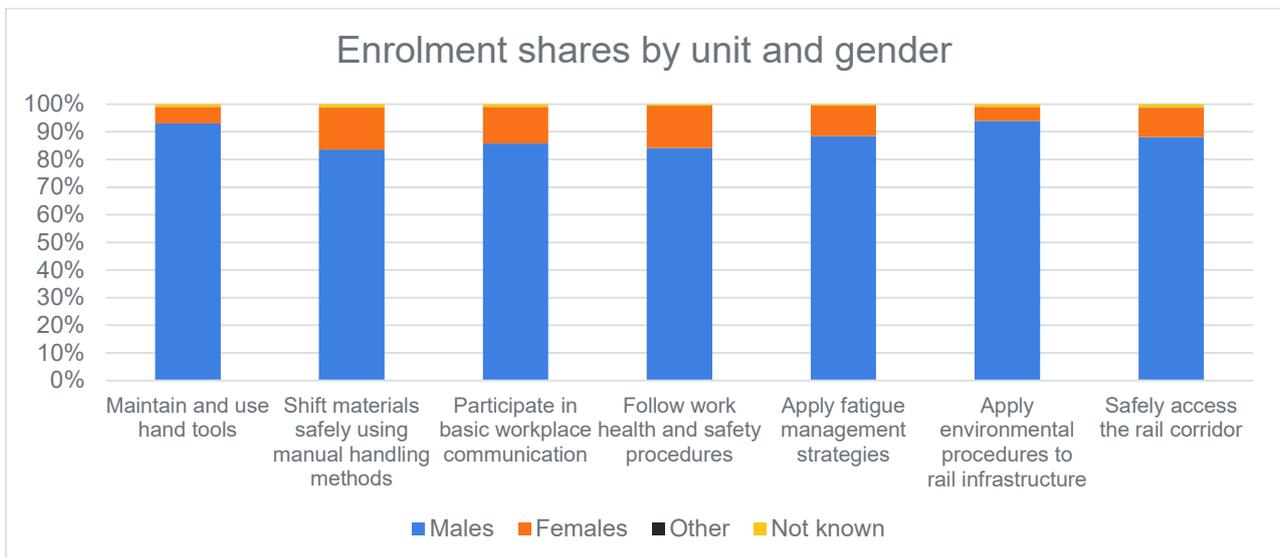
Enrolments by jurisdiction

Enrolments in different units and usage of RTOs varied by jurisdiction. Private training providers delivered at least three-quarters of enrolments in the seven units in all jurisdictions except the Northern Territory (where they delivered around 33%).⁴



Who's training for a rail career?

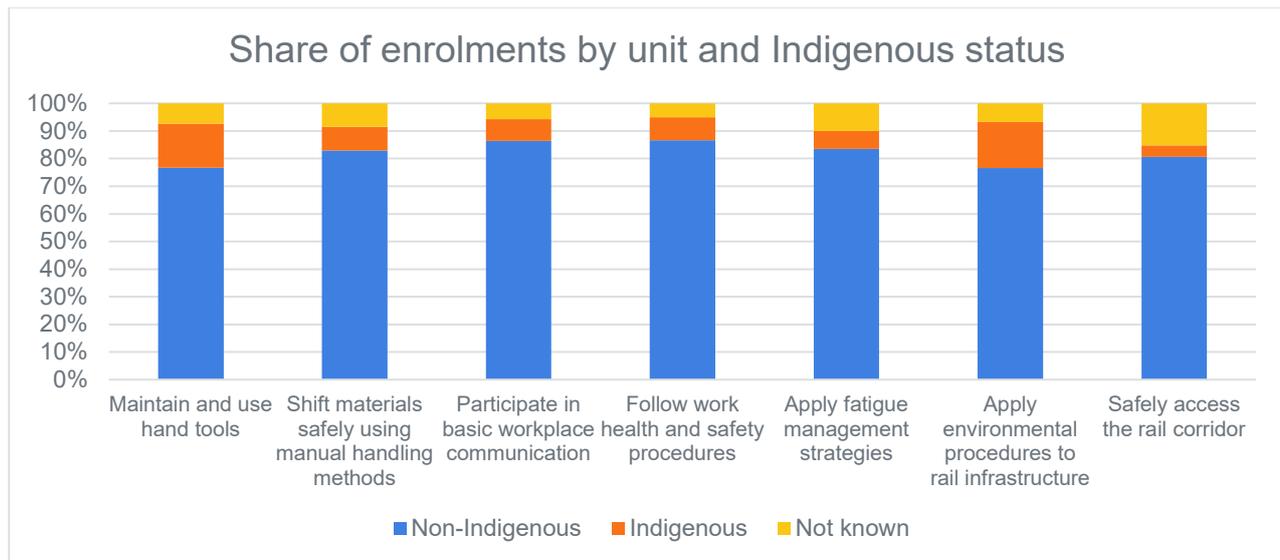
Around 86% of enrolments were by males across the seven analysed units, with the share exceeding 90% for two units (*Maintain and use hand tools* and *Apply environmental procedures to rail infrastructure*).



⁴ The high share shown for universities in the Northern Territory reflects that Charles Darwin University is the largest provider of TAFE in the NT, with this training mostly being in the non-rail-specific units among the seven analysed.

Approximately 7% of enrolments across the seven analysed units were by Indigenous people, with 84% non-Indigenous and 9% not known. The 7% share is higher than the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the total population (3.2%).⁵

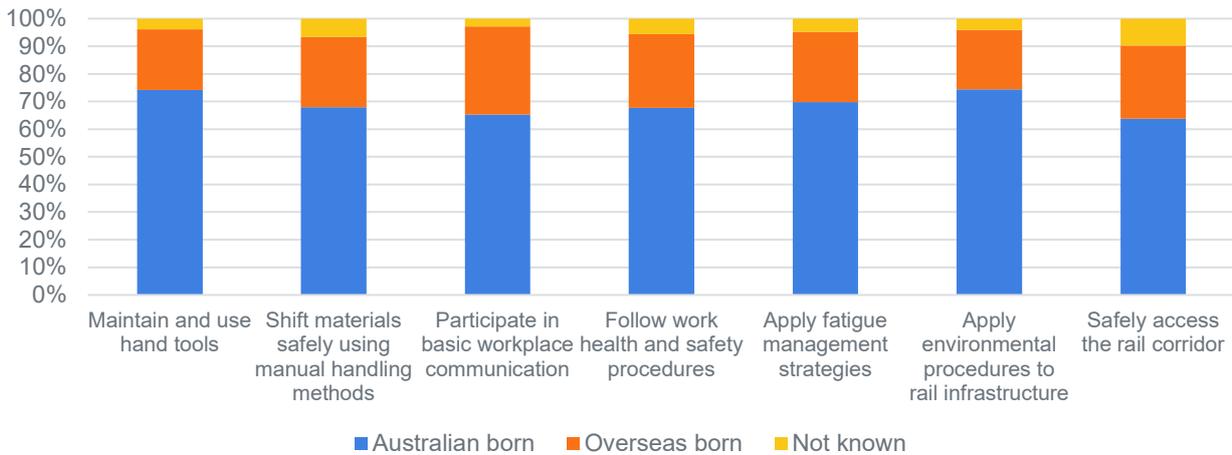
The share of enrolments by Indigenous people was 17% for *Apply environmental procedures to rail infrastructure*, although this was the unit with the fewest enrolments out of the seven analysed. *Safely access the rail corridor* had the lowest Indigenous share of enrolments, albeit with a higher share of 'not known' than any of the other units. Queensland had the highest numbers of Indigenous enrolments across six of the seven analysed units.



Two-thirds of enrolments were by people born in Australia, with 26% born overseas and 7% not known. These shares were relatively similar across the seven analysed units, particularly for the four units with the most enrolments. After Australia, the most common countries of birth were New Zealand, India and the United Kingdom.

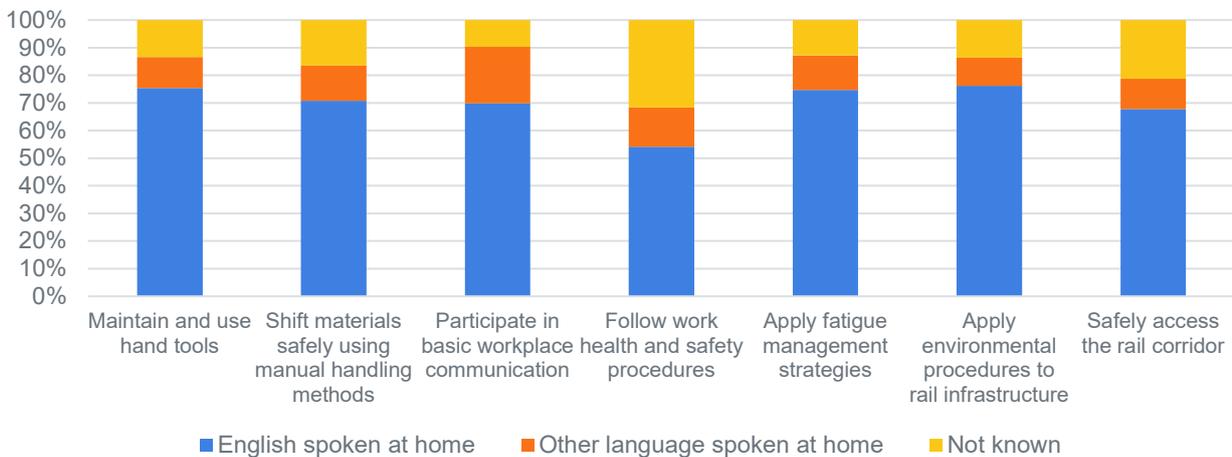
⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Population and Housing: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people data summary*, 2021

Share of enrolments by unit and country of birth



Around two-thirds of enrolments were by people who spoke English at home, with 13% speaking another language and a relatively high share of 21% not known. The share of enrolments by people speaking a language other than English at home was much higher for *Participate in basic workplace communication* than any of the other analysed units, at 21%.

Share of enrolments by unit and language spoken at home



While around 15% of enrolments in the seven analysed units were by people doing an apprenticeship or traineeship, this appears to be primarily in occupations other than a rail track worker. Almost none of these were by people enrolling in rail-related units such as *Maintain and use hand tools*, *Apply environmental procedures to rail infrastructure* and *Safely access the rail corridor*.

Many of the enrolments in the other analysed units were apprentices/trainees in qualification areas such as logistics, freight forwarding, supply chain, warehousing, or road commercial vehicle

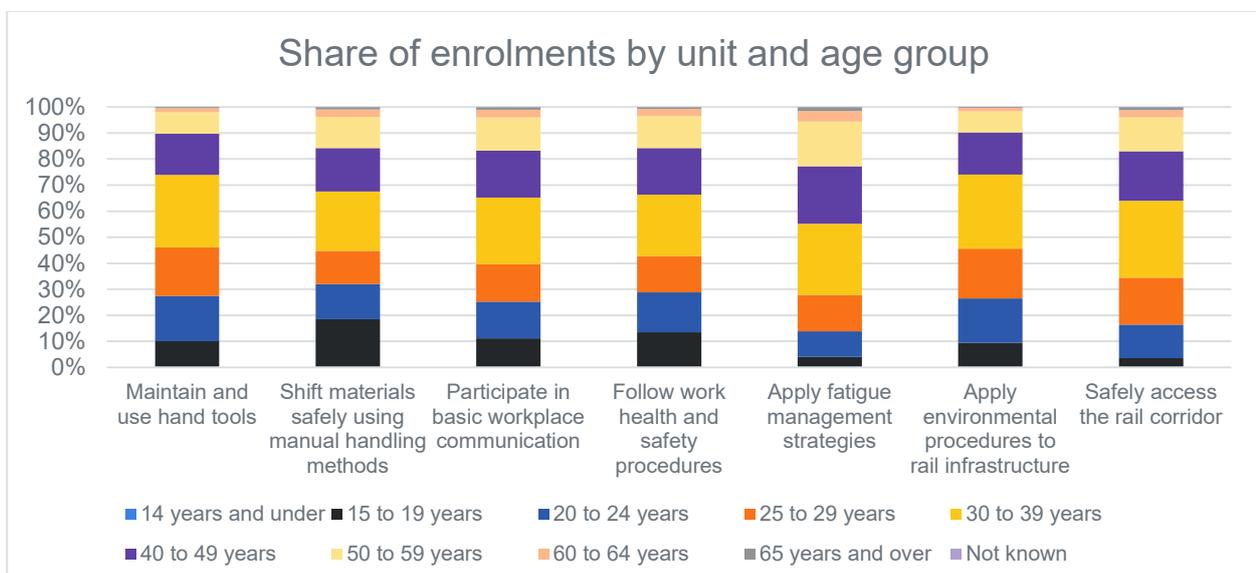
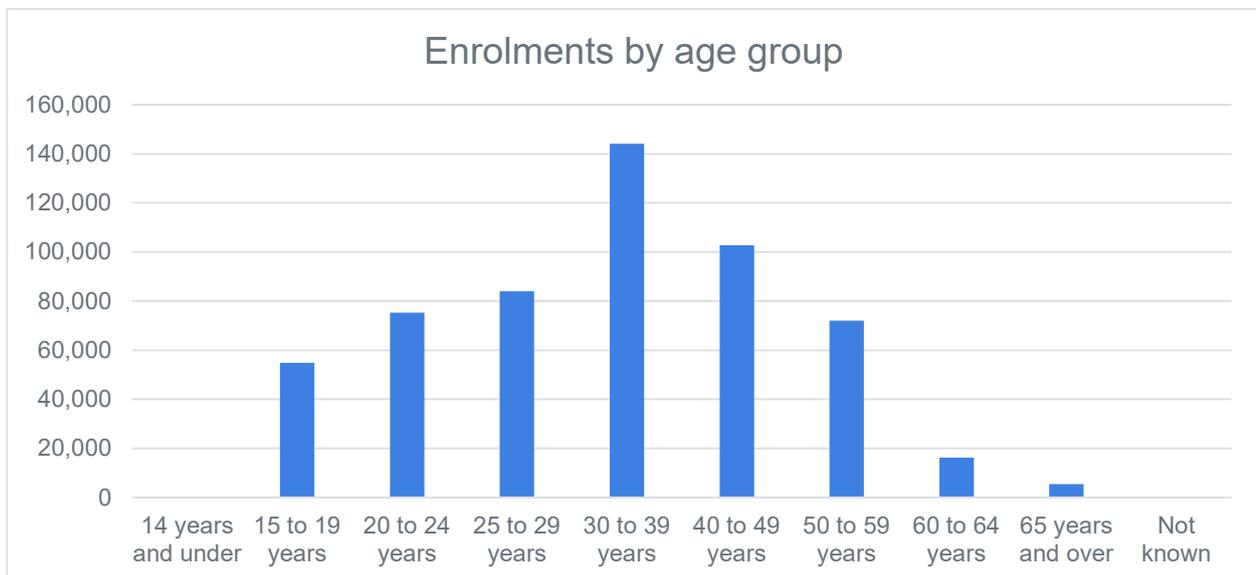
driving. Only small numbers were doing a traineeship as a train driver through a Certificate IV in Train Driving, and even fewer in the Certificate II in Rail Infrastructure.

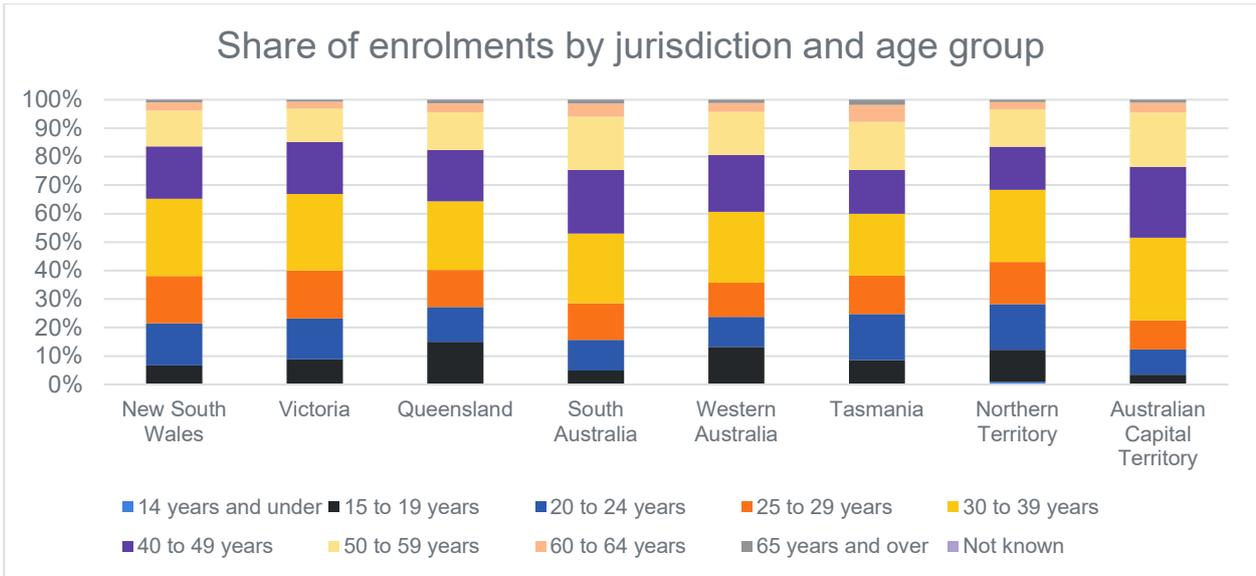
Age of trainees

More than half (55%) of people enrolling in the seven analysed units were aged between 20 and 39. However, there were many people outside these age ranges, including 4% over the age of 60 and 10% in their teenage years.

When assessing the age groups of enrolments by unit of competency, *Apply fatigue management strategies* and *Safely access the rail corridor* tended to have slightly older people enrolling than other units. By contrast, *Shift materials safely using manual handling methods* had around 19% of its enrolments under the age of 20.

Comparing the results by jurisdiction, the ACT and South Australia tended to have slightly older students enrolling than other jurisdictions, while the Northern Territory, Queensland and Victoria tended to have slightly younger students, with 40% of enrolments aged below 30.



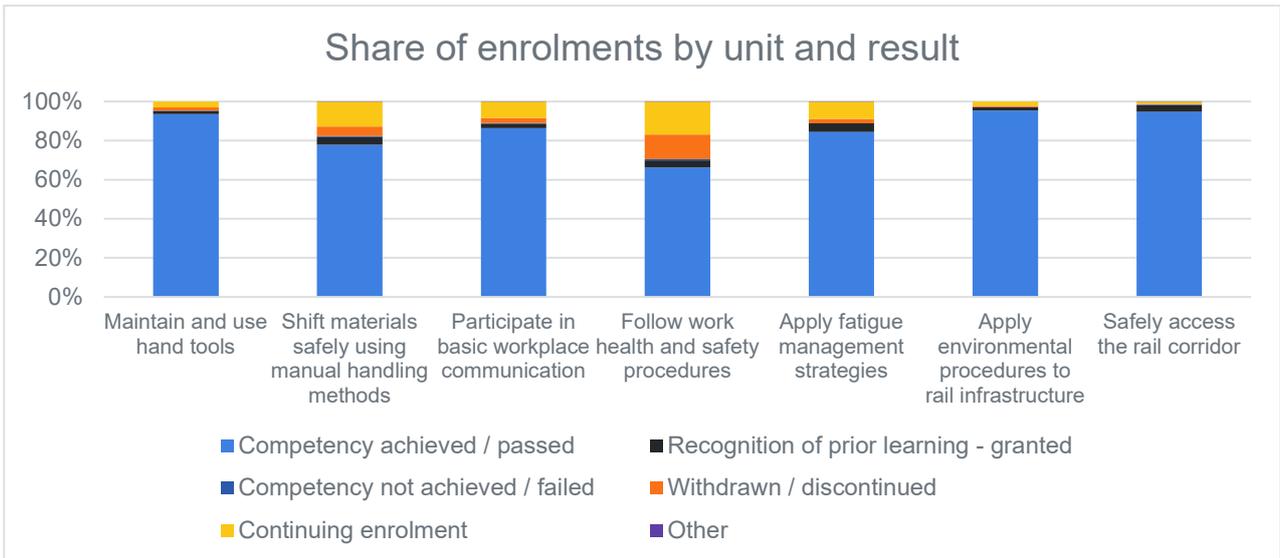


Analysis of results

Examining the results of the enrolments for the seven analysed units in aggregate, around four-fifths of enrolments achieved passes, with 4% having recognition of prior learning granted, 9% having continuing enrolment, 5% withdrawing and 1% failing.

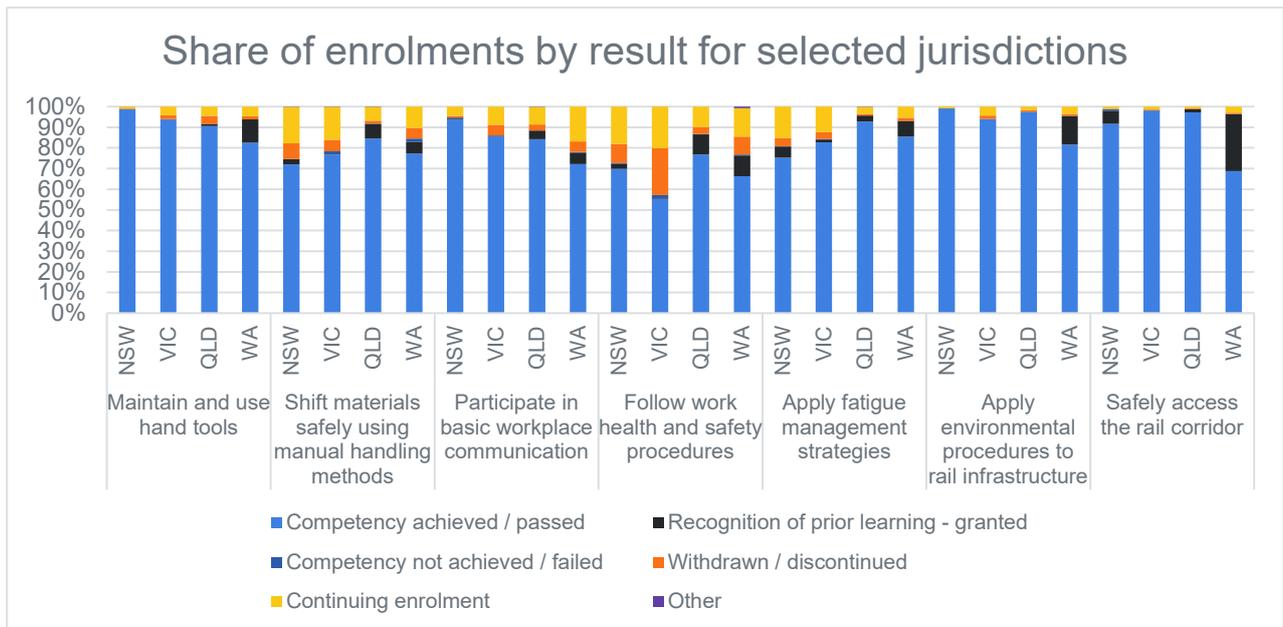
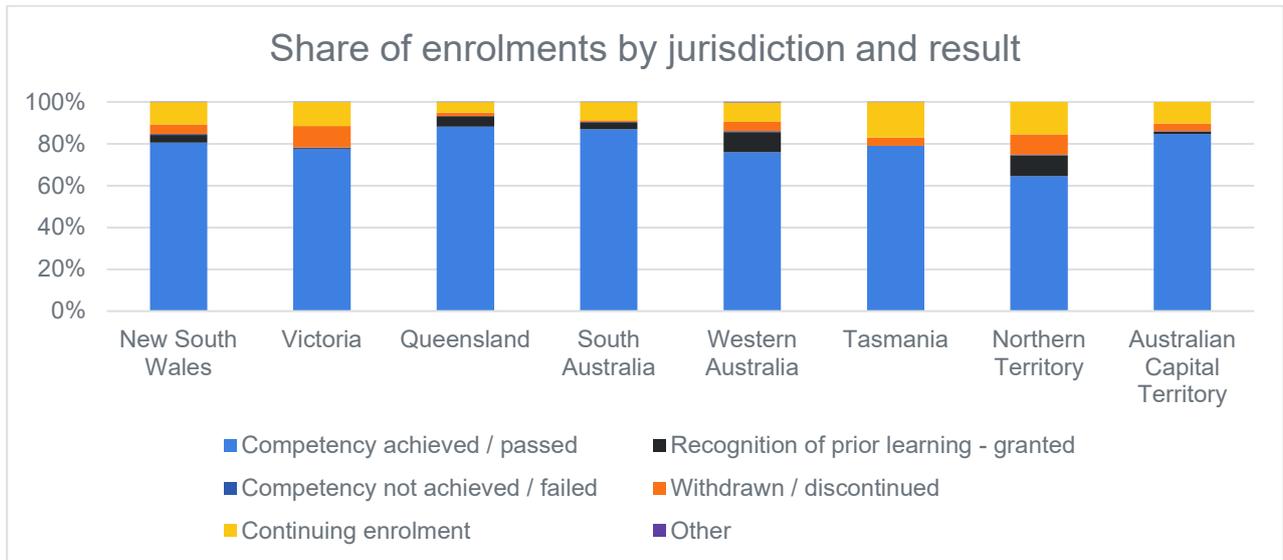
The pass rate was very high, at around 95% for three of the units (including *Safely access the rail corridor*), but was relatively low for *Follow work health and safety procedures* and *Shift materials safely using manual handling methods*, which had relatively high rates of withdrawals and continuing enrolments.

In general, female students had slightly higher rates of withdrawals and continuing enrolments than male students.



Comparing results by location of delivery, Victoria had a relatively high share of withdrawals (the vast majority of which occurred for *Follow work health and safety procedures*) while Western Australia had a relatively share of recognition of prior learning (although NSW and Queensland had higher absolute numbers). For *Safely access the rail corridor* enrolments, WA in particular had a

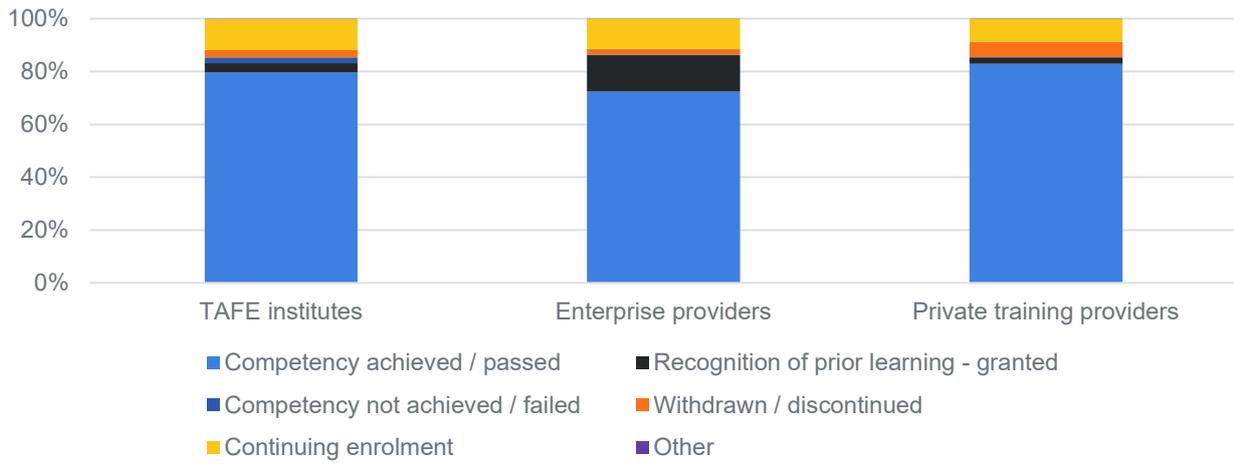
high share of recognition of prior learning with almost 30% of its enrolments in this unit having this outcome.



Among training provider types, enterprise providers were the most likely to use recognition of prior learning, with around 14% of enrolments having this outcome (compared with 4% for TAFEs and 2% for private training providers).

Although low overall, failure rates at TAFEs (2% of total enrolments in the seven analysed units) were higher than the other major provider types, while withdrawals tended to be highest at private training providers (6% of enrolments). These two results were largely driven by the *Follow work health and safety procedures* unit, which tended to have much higher non-completion outcomes and large numbers of enrolments.

Share of enrolments by result and provider type





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Contact us

Email: NRAP-Secretariat@ntc.gov.au

Website: www.railskillshub.gov.au