Fact sheet

Low socioeconomic status
Pathways Outcomes for Learners

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

This fact sheet provides a high-level overview of findings from the Pathways Outcomes for Learners dashboard relating to students from **low socioeconomic status (SES) areas.**

The new Pathways Outcomes for Learners dashboard has been updated to map the journeys of over 80,000 NSW students from school at age 16 (in 2010) to employment at age 27 (in 2021). Socioeconomic status is based on the student's earliest available home address using Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA).[1] This fact sheet compares outcomes for NSW students from the most disadvantaged suburbs (bottom 25%) with outcomes for students from the most advantaged suburbs (top 25%).

1   SEIFA is a product developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). Within SEIFA, the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD) was used to determine the most advantaged/disadvantaged suburb variable for the Pathways Outcomes for Learners dashboard.

Secondary enrolments from age 16

Students from low SES areas

Students from high SES areas

66% of students from low SES areas completed Year 12, compared to **86%** of students from high SES areas

Outcomes at age 27[2]

Students from low SES areas
29% earning above 175% of minimum wage
28% earning between 100% and 175% of minimum wage
8% studying
18% earning below minimum wage
7% receiving income support
10% unemployed/unknown

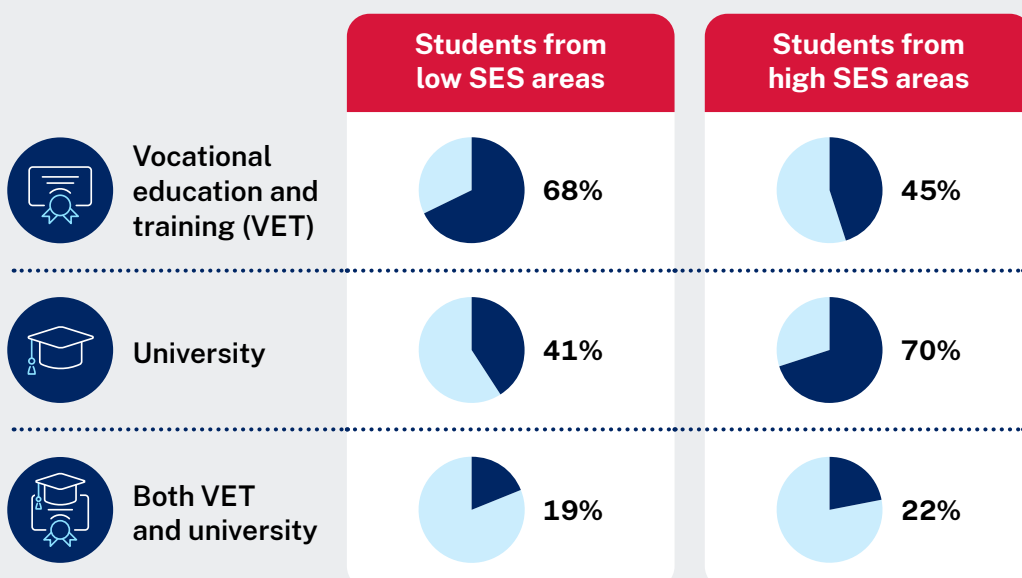| Students from high SES areas |
| --- |
| **43%** earning above 175% of minimum wage |
| **24%** earning between 100% and 175% of minimum wage |
| **8%** studying |
| **12%** earning below minimum wage |
| **2%** receiving income support |
| **11%** unemployed/unknown |

57% of students from low SES areas were earning above minimum wage at age 27, compared to **67%** of students from high SES areas

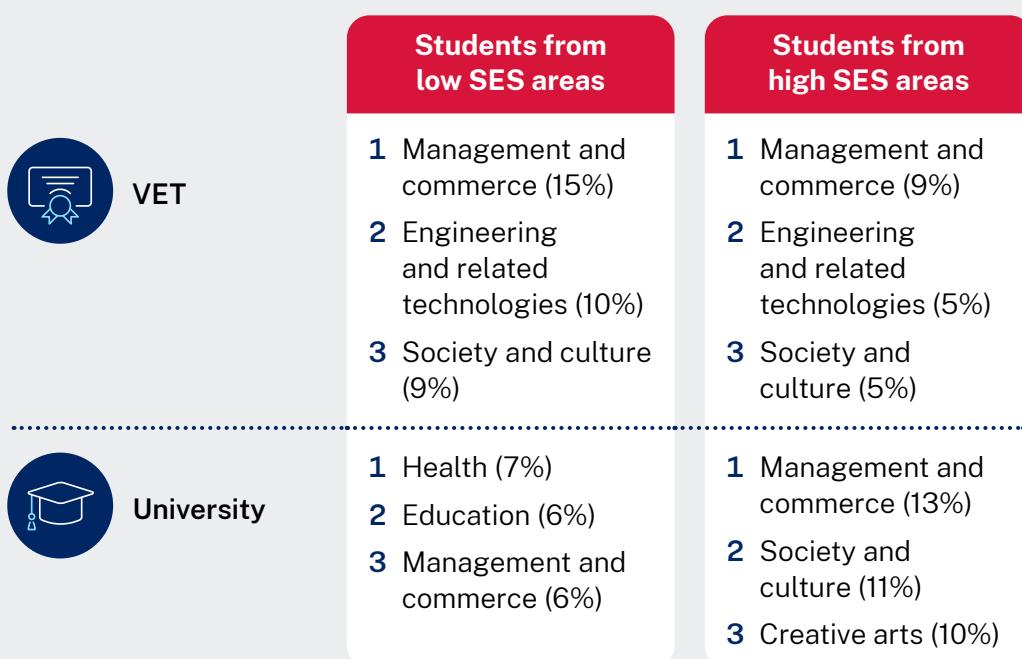2   Due to rounding, the sum of the categories may not add up to 100%.

Tertiary enrolments by age 27[3]

	Students from low SES areas	Students from high SES areas
Vocational education and training (VET)	68%	45%
University	41%	70%
Both VET and university	19%	22%

41% of students from low SES areas enrolled in university, compared to **70%** of students from high SES areas

3 Note that students may be counted in more than one category as categories are not mutually exclusive.
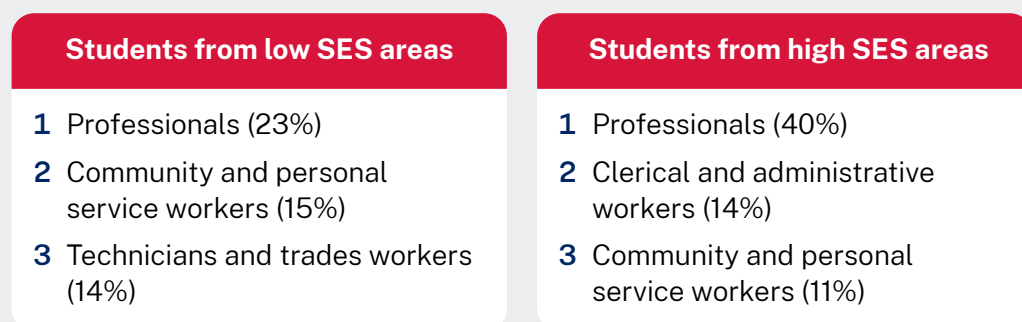
Top tertiary fields of study by age 27[4]

	Students from low SES areas	Students from high SES areas
VET	1 Management and commerce (15%) 2 Engineering and related technologies (10%) 3 Society and culture (9%)	1 Management and commerce (9%) 2 Engineering and related technologies (5%) 3 Society and culture (5%)
University	1 Health (7%) 2 Education (6%) 3 Management and commerce (6%)	1 Management and commerce (13%) 2 Society and culture (11%) 3 Creative arts (10%)

VET study in management and commerce was the most common tertiary field of study for students from low SES areas, compared to **university study in management and commerce** for students from high SES areas

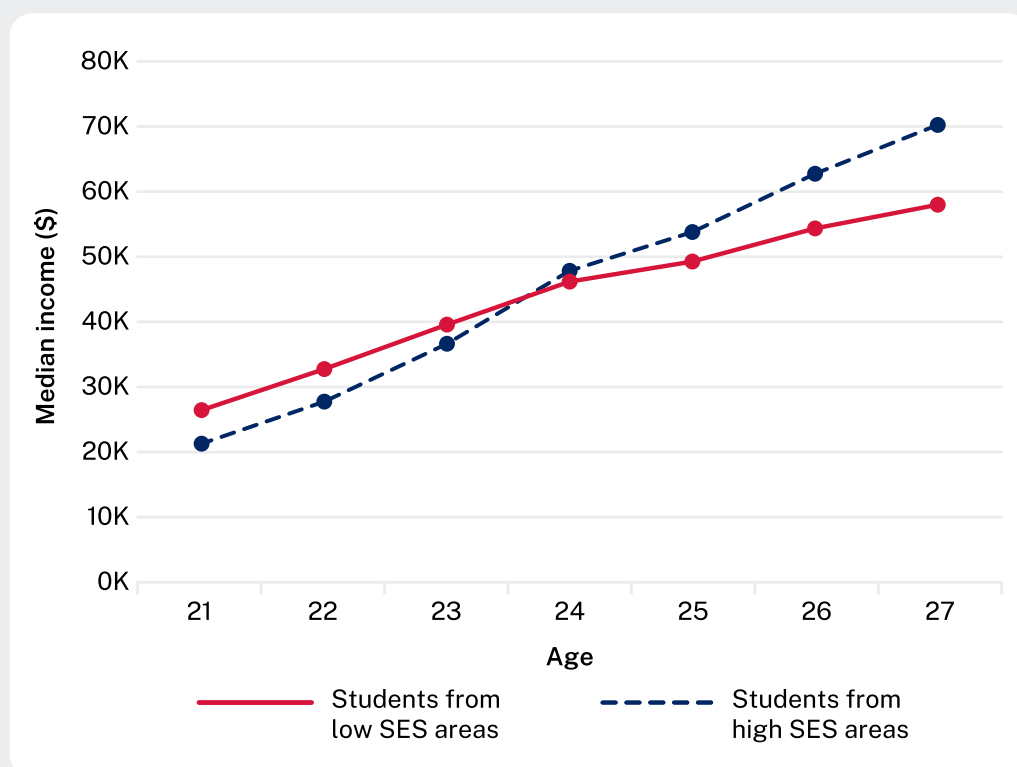4 Percentages expressed as a proportion of the entire cohort at age 27, including those with no tertiary enrolment.

Top occupations at age 27[5]

Students from low SES areas	Students from high SES areas
1 Professionals (23%) 2 Community and personal service workers (15%) 3 Technicians and trades workers (14%)	1 Professionals (40%) 2 Clerical and administrative workers (14%) 3 Community and personal service workers (11%)

Professionals was the most common occupation for students from both low SES and high SES areas, but at a lower rate for students from low SES areas

5 Percentages expressed as a proportion of students employed at age 27.

Income from age 21 to age 27[6]

From age 21 to age 27, the median income of students from low SES areas **increased at a slower rate** than students from high SES areas

6   Income has not been adjusted for inflation.

More information about Pathways Outcomes for Learners

The Pathways Outcomes for Learners dashboard draws on the Pathways for the Future Program dataset which covers the background, education and employment data of 6.5 million people aged 11 to 67 in NSW from 1996 onwards. The dashboard is a data visualisation tool and offers high-level insights about pathways students take in senior secondary school through to tertiary study and into employment.

This new release is the first showcase to the public of findings from the updated dataset. Using learnings from the pilot dataset (which was limited to NSW young people aged 15 to 24 from 1996 to 2016), the expanded data allows users a more complete picture of student pathways through education to employment. Dashboard users will gain valuable insights about school completion level, levels of tertiary enrolment and outcomes of NSW students and learners at ages 21, 24 and 27. In addition, a new outcome category has been added and visual enhancements have been made.

The following caveats should be kept in mind when using the dashboard:

- The data for each student and learner group provides a snapshot of education-to-employment pathways up to age 27. Longer-term outcomes for each group may vary, especially for pathways with longer study lengths.
- The data presented is descriptive and exploratory in nature and does not identify root causes of educational outcomes achieved by students.
- Education-to-employment pathways can be shaped by many factors not explored in this dashboard, including economic, wellbeing and social circumstances as well as student experiences with the justice, health and social services systems. These factors are likely to be especially important when looking at particular segments of young people.
- Outcomes at age 27 include income and income support received during 2021, which were impacted by large changes in the labour market during the first 2 years of the COVID-19 pandemic. We recommend caution when comparing outcome measures from this period with earlier measures.

Data sources

The NSW Department of Education would like to acknowledge the assistance of the following organisations involved in the Pathways for the Future Program:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)
- Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA)
- Monash Health Research Committee
- National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER)
- NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA)
- NSW Ministry of Health and the Centre for Health Record Linkage (CHeReL)
- NSW Skills Board
- TAFE NSW
- the Office of the Student Identifiers Registrar (OSIR)
- the Person Level Integrated Data Asset (PLIDA) accessed through the ABS DataLab
- Universities Admissions Centre (UAC).

We would also like to note the following statement about PLIDA data:

The results of these studies are based, in part, on data supplied to the ABS under the *Taxation Administration Act 1953, A New Tax System (Australian Business Number) Act 1999, Australian Border Force Act 2015, Social Security (Administration) Act 1999, A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) Act 1999,* *Paid Parental Leave Act 2010* and/or the *Student Assistance Act 1973*. Such data may only be used for the purpose of administering the *Census and Statistics Act 1905* or performance of functions of the ABS as set out in section 6 of the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975* (the ABS Act). No individual information collected under the *Census and Statistics Act 1905* is provided back to custodians for administrative or regulatory purposes. Any discussion of data limitations or weaknesses is in the context of using the data for statistical purposes and is not related to the ability of the data to support the Australian Taxation Office, Australian Business Register, Australian Government Department of Social Services and/or Australian Government Department of Home Affairs' core operational requirements.

Legislative requirements to ensure privacy and secrecy of these data have been followed. For access to PLIDA and/or Business Longitudinal Analysis Data Environment (BLADE) data under section 16A of the ABS Act or enabled by section 15 of the Census and Statistics (Information Release and Access) Determination 2018, source data are de-identified and so data about specific individuals has not been viewed in conducting this analysis. In accordance with the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*, results have been treated where necessary to ensure that they are not likely to enable identification of a particular person or organisation.

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