KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR STUDENTS

Jobs and Skills Report 2026

Five findings from *Pathways to Success*, and what each one means for you.

≤4.5%
unemployment rate since Dec 2021

1 Plenty of jobs, but not all are easy to fill

Unemployment has stayed low, yet almost 3 in 10 occupations (29% in 2025, down from 36% in 2023) still struggle to find enough skilled workers.

Tip: Match the jobs in demand with what you enjoy and do well.

3×+
more critical-thinking mentions in construction job ads

2 Broader skills matter, even in the trades

Employers want broader capabilities alongside technical ones. As AI changes how work is done, people who combine tools with human judgement become more valuable.

Tip: Build communication, problem-solving and judgement, not just technical skills.

62%
of VET completers saw their employment improve

3 Finishing matters, but starting still helps

Part-completers did slightly less well (53%), but 48% of those not working before enrolling found a job within a year. Apprenticeships had some of the strongest part-completer results.

Tip: Plan what support you'll need to finish. If plans change, partial progress still counts.

57%
of job moves by 15–24s went up a skill level (26% for ages 55+)

4 Early careers are where the big moves happen

Hospitality, retail and construction are common entry points to work. Skills built through work experience often stay invisible next to formal qualifications.

Tip: Your first job is a starting point. Note the skills you build in work, caring or sport.

66%+
of 15–24s studying after school are doing a uni degree

5 More school leavers, mostly heading to uni

Just under 1 in 4 are doing VET at Certificate III or above, and there are around 40,000 more 20-year-olds than in 2022. For many, it's about when and how they use both.

Tip: Treat VET, apprenticeships and university as options you can combine over time.

Read the full report: jobsandskills.gov.au/publications/jobs-and-skills-report-2026

Source: MARU Academy email, "Jobs and Skills report 2026: key takeaways", 9 November 2026. Figures are from *Pathways to Success: Jobs and Skills Report 2026* (Jobs and Skills Australia). Chapter fact sheets are also available on the Jobs and Skills Australia website.