

5.4.4 Adults attaining a vocational qualification

Vocational education and training (VET) has important economic benefits that tend to be stronger in certain technological contexts. A recent cross-country study compared the effect on labour productivity of different VET systems using data from six EU member countries. It found multiple patterns of skill complementarity — especially in production-oriented sectors, in the presence of ICTs and in countries with apprenticeship-based VET systems. The complementarity between different skill types was weaker in service-oriented sectors and generally absent for countries with classroom-based VET systems.¹ *Australia* is primarily a service-oriented economy with a relatively modest proportion of adult population with VET qualifications in comparison with the OECD. In 2020–21, 19.4 per cent of Australians (aged 25 to 64 years) had VET qualifications, which is a slight decrease from 21.1 per cent in 2015–16.² It is estimated that apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities will be reduced by 30 per cent in the short-term as practice-oriented learning is impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, further reducing prospects of attaining VET qualifications. Recovery of the labour market through vocational education measures can be achieved by ensuring that programs remain relevant and accessible in the future.³

¹ European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (2014) *Macroeconomic benefits of vocation education and training*, Research paper No. 40 (https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/5540_en.pdf)

² OECD (2021) *Education at a Glance 2021: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing (<http://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/>)

³ OECD (2021) *Implications of the COVID-19 Pandemic for Vocational Education and Training*, OECD Publishing (https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/implications-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-for-vocational-education-and-training_55afea00-en)

Figure: Adults attaining vocational education, share of working-age adults, OECD countries, per cent, latest 2020

