

Social

Traders



Understanding outcomes in employment-focused social enterprises

Prepared by Deloitte Access Economics and Social Traders
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7	
10	This report is a companion to the report: Understanding the benefits, costs and funding flows to tailored jobseeker supports , which provides more detailed information on the costing methodology and its development.
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19	Cover image: Community Construction
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Key terms used in this report

Social enterprises are businesses that exist to achieve a social mission, using commercial operations to create social, cultural, or environmental impact.

Employment-focused social enterprises have the primary purpose to create job opportunities for people facing barriers to employment. This support may be provided through direct employment, training, and/or brokering pathways to open employment. Employment-focused social enterprises can be positioned as:

- **Destination enterprises**, where participants are employed in the social enterprise on an ongoing basis
- **Transitional enterprises**, where the employment or traineeship term is fixed, and oriented toward supporting participants to move into external employment
- **Combination enterprises**, which offer both ongoing employment within the social enterprise and fixed-term traineeships or work that support external employment

An **employment program** is a specific initiative (in the case of this report, one run by an employment-focused social enterprise), to support individuals facing barriers to employment. Some programs operate as standalone entities (that is, the 'employment program' is the full scope of an enterprise) while others operate within a broader organisation (such as a multi-program social enterprise or a commercial entity). To classify employment programs by enterprise type, respondents were asked to report on a single program when self-categorising as a destination, transitional or combination enterprise. In this report, a combination enterprise refers to one employment program with a combination of goals, rather than a social enterprise that is operating a combination of separate destination and transitional programs.

The **Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey** is a national longitudinal household study that has collected data on Australians' income, employment, education, health and family dynamics since 2001. In this report, HILDA data has often been used to contextualise data from survey responses.

Job readiness occurs when individuals possess the skills, attitudes and behaviours required to secure and perform in an employed position.

People who are **marginally attached to the labour force** are a subgroup of people who are not working and not in the labour force, who show interest in working, but do not meet the criteria for unemployment (for instance, because they are not available to start work immediately or have not recently actively looked for work).

Open employment refers to work in the mainstream, competitive job market where individuals apply for standard positions and earn at least minimum wage. Open employment is open to all people, including those with disability.

An **outcome** is defined in this report as a milestone achieved by participants in an employment-focused social enterprise. While many milestones relate to employment transitions (in other organisations), some occur within an enterprise (for example, an extended period of employment for a staff member within a 'destination' social enterprise). This report considers:

- **Employment-related outcomes**, such as increased job readiness, sustained employment, increased earnings or job stability
- **Non-employment-related outcomes**, such as improved physical or emotional wellbeing, housing stability or increased social skills

Outcome rates refer to the share of participants achieving an outcome.

Participants in an employment-focused social enterprise includes both paid employees, and other trainees or beneficiaries who engage with job supports.

Placement support is assistance provided by an employment program to help individuals secure suitable job opportunities. This may include job matching, interview preparation and ongoing mentoring to ensure successful integration into the workplace.

Social Traders is Australia's national certification body for social enterprises.

Work-integrated training is an employment program or model that integrates work experience alongside structured learning for jobseekers. In the Social Traders data, the employment-focused social enterprises that offer work-integrated training are distinguished through the payment of wages to participants.

Executive summary (1/3)

Understanding the outcomes achieved in social enterprise employment programs helps ensure the sector and its funders can learn from what works in which contexts to support job pathways.

Context to this work

Social enterprises are organisations whose business operations are designed to generate value in line with a social mission.

For many of these organisations, that mission includes providing employment opportunities and pathways to individuals who are furthest from the labour market. Some social enterprises act as critical intermediaries in the employment system, while others are long-term employers for those who face significant barriers to accessing or retaining work in other contexts. Both types of enterprises offer on-the-job experience, often alongside wellbeing support, mentoring and formal training opportunities.

Ongoing reforms to the employment service system present an opportunity to highlight the role that social enterprises can play in addressing the needs of those furthest from the labour market, through tailored support. Building on research to understand delivery costs in social enterprises, this report focuses on the outcomes achieved by participants in social enterprise employment programs. It provides a foundation for valuing these outcomes and, in time, estimating the return on investment by comparing the cost per outcome against the value generated. It also outlines the current state of outcomes measurement within the sector and identifies how funders and government can better support social enterprises to measure outcomes.

Measuring outcomes rigorously and consistently is essential, to understand which models are effective in which contexts and for which participants. It is also foundational evidence in demonstrating the return to investment in social enterprise.

Scope of this work

This report set out to demonstrate the nature and benefits of employment programs delivered within the social enterprise sector. This includes understanding:

- Different models and approaches to supporting jobseekers,
- How social enterprises tailor their programs to address participants' different barriers,
- The types of cohorts serviced by social enterprise, and the intersections in labour market disadvantage,
- The outcomes which different enterprises are seeking for their participants,
- How enterprises currently measure those outcomes and key barriers to measurement (and the implications for how funders and government can better support this), and
- The outcomes rates (share of participants achieving an outcome) which emerge from that measurement.

This work, delivered with funding from the Minderoo Foundation, draws on two key evidence points:

- A survey of more than 100 certified social enterprises, fielded by Social Traders, which sought to uncover different approaches to outcomes definition and measurement, and collect information on outcomes using a consistent set of parameters.
- Analysis of the Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey to analyse outcomes rates, job transitions and employment outcomes in social enterprises against the average outcomes for individuals who are detached from the labour market. This approach presents a highly stylised benchmark and proof of concept for further work, using administrative data.

This report has been prepared by Deloitte Access Economics with close input from Social Traders in both the survey design and interpretation of data.

Executive summary (2/3)

While the types of models and supports vary, employment-focused social enterprise models have a common goal: to provide pathways to lasting work for those facing complex disadvantage.

What this work offers the sector

Increasing the prominence of social enterprise in the employment services system (and ensuring supports are funded appropriately) requires an understanding of the sector's role in supporting those furthest from the labour market to access work. It requires answers to analytic questions like:

1. *How many people access employment-focused social enterprises, and in which regions?*
2. *What are the different types of models, and how do they differ in role, capability, and intended outcomes?*
3. *Which models are best suited to address which types of barriers to work?*
4. *What is the cost and benefit of achieving different outcomes?*
5. *How can quality be understood and assured?*

Previous research, supported by the Paul Ramsay Foundation, has leveraged the Social Traders certification database to develop evidence in relation to the first four research questions (with a focus on the costs of delivering employment programs). This report provides complementary evidence, with a particular focus on measuring outcomes. While the research is oriented toward building social enterprises' prominence in the system, it also provides an immediate set of resources for the sector, by providing:

- Frameworks to explain different support models and their intended outcomes to audiences less familiar with the sector.
- Examples of outcomes measures and measurement approaches which can be implemented by individual enterprises (and which can be integrated into Social Traders' certification), to support the sector to make the case for program investment.
- Evidence on the barriers and enablers of quality outcomes measurement, to inform the building of a shared measurement capability across the sector.
- A set of outcomes rates across the sector which can be used as an initial benchmark, and can inform more comprehensive benchmarking with more granular data.

What the research found

The findings highlight *variation* in social enterprise models. This includes variation in the definitions of 'success' for participants, the common characteristics of participants and the types of supports included in their employment programs. The extent of engagement with external employers also varies. These differences in models partially reflect differences in intent. At one end of the spectrum, transitional enterprises focus on providing pathways for cohorts of participants to move into open employment settings over time, while at the other end, destination enterprises focus on employing participants on an ongoing basis within their enterprise.

The findings also highlight *consistency* across the sector. Regardless of their model, social enterprises share a focus on creating pathways to decent and lasting employment for those who would otherwise be far from the labour market. Nearly three in four social enterprises report that the majority of their program participants have disrupted employment histories, limited formal training, or both. The top three goals of surveyed social enterprises are improving participants' self-esteem, social skills and job-readiness. While these are not explicitly 'employment-focused' goals, they are preconditions to access work and serve as a reminder of social enterprises' role in value generation (through the avoided costs of unemployment, social disengagement and poor wellbeing).

Social enterprises are committed to measuring their impact, though face challenges in resourcing and efficiently delivering systematic data collection. Social enterprises self-report that employment outcomes are often measured systematically, though not often beyond the 12-month milestone after a participant's transition to external employment. Other measurement is ad hoc or unstructured. Organisations face resourcing challenges in operationalising and scaling regular, rigorous data collection. Survey responses demonstrate the practical challenges of measuring outcomes, including response rates falling once participants 'graduate' from a supported employment setting – a challenge that is best solved in collaboration with funders and through access to centralised, government administrative data.

Executive summary (3/3)

There are opportunities to improve the rigour, efficiency and breadth of outcomes measurement, by building capacity and capability in the sector, enabled by government, funders and enterprises working in partnership.

Funders can (and do) influence the focus of social enterprises and the nature of outcomes measurement. More than two in five social enterprises report that funding influences program participant eligibility criteria to a moderate, large or very large extent. Similarly, three in five social enterprises report that funding agreements influence *what* data they collect, *how* results are reported, or both. This influence presents an opportunity for funders and enterprises to develop agreed approaches to outcomes measurement (and the resourcing of that measurement), so that both parties have access to quality information about what is working well in their programs, and where different approaches may be needed.

Organisations that do measure outcomes demonstrate promising results.

The comparisons presented in this report are intended as a proof of concept for benchmark reporting on outcomes; though the results themselves are positive.

- Transitional enterprises report that 39% of participants are employed externally within 12 months. In comparison, HILDA data shows that among a group who are long-term unemployed or marginally attached, 24% to 43% achieve employment within 12 months.
- The HILDA benchmarks are stylised, capturing a cohort of people who are long term unemployed or who are not looking for work but are interested in working. Some people in this group may not face as many barriers to work as the average participant in a social enterprise.
- Around 45% of the HILDA cohort report “trouble finding a job”, where it could be assumed all participants in a social enterprise would meet this criteria. This suggests that it may not be reasonable to expect social enterprises to achieve outcomes at the upper range of the HILDA results. This report presents a proof of concept for benchmarking, noting that access to more granular (person-level) data about participants in social enterprises could enable a matched comparison in the future.

The implications of these findings

This work has highlighted actions that can be taken by funders, enterprises, sector stewards (such as Social Traders) and government in strengthening the evidence base on the public value created through social enterprise. These actions include:

- **Clarifying the key outcomes** for which social enterprises are funded, and seeking funding (recognising that the employment, education and social outcomes to which social enterprises contribute are funded through different mechanisms and by different parties).
- **Setting expectations about the extent and rigour of outcomes measurement** to be delivered, the measurement approaches which can be used to deliver this, and the resourcing commitments required.
- **Facilitating access to external data sources and research tools**, which can reduce the reliance on (and burden of) direct research that traces graduating participants over time, and can help build efficiency into operations.
- **Learning from regular outcomes monitoring**, by establishing opportunities for benchmarking, and by building a culture of knowledge sharing across the sector on what works to achieve outcomes in different contexts.

These actions can strengthen the sector’s case for inclusion in mainstream funding systems (and inform the nature of this role). Most critically, and most immediately, this work can ensure the sector is as effective as possible in generating lasting employment outcomes for those furthest from the labour market.

Key findings (1/3)

2 | Approaches to supporting jobseekers

While enterprises define 'success' differently and offer varied support, they share the goal to create pathways to work for those furthest from the labour market.

- Most social enterprises operate as intermediaries to the employment system, with many offering additional support such as mentorship and wellbeing services. Some are ongoing (destination) employers.
- Paid employment is the most common support offered by social enterprises, with mentorship and foundational skills training more commonly offered by transition and combination enterprises.
- Definitions of success are typically centred on employment, but also include skill development and increased confidence.
- Transitional enterprises focus more on external job readiness, while destination enterprises focus more on longer-term participant wellbeing.

3 | The types of barriers addressed by social enterprise

Some social enterprises target specific cohorts, often picking up people experiencing intersecting barriers to participation.

- Around 3 in 4 social enterprises focus on participants with particular characteristics and nearly half target a single cohort.
- Participants face significant labour market barriers, including long-term unemployment, low education and income support reliance.
- Distance from the labour market was common across participants, irrespective of how eligibility is defined, with 73% of enterprises reporting the majority of their cohort has been out of the labour market, and 63% report that the majority of their cohort has experienced long-term unemployment.
- HILDA data highlights intersections between employment barriers and demographic characteristics. For instance, people with a long-term health condition, who receive income support or who are aged under 24 are more likely to face barriers including limited work experience, skill gaps, or challenges with transport.

4 | The current state of outcomes measurement

Social enterprises are committed to measuring impact, but face challenges in resourcing and efficiently delivering systematic data collection.

- The top outcomes measured include improved sense of belonging, self-esteem and empowerment, improved social skills and relationships, and improved job readiness.
- 43% of outcomes measurement is reported to occur systematically (meaning regular structured and consistent data collection), with the remainder occurring on an ad hoc or unstructured basis.
- External employment transitions and sustained employment are the most systematically measured employment-related outcomes (based on self-reported data).
- Funders shape what is measured and how it is reported.
- Staff capacity and funding constraints are the main barriers to measurement.

5 | Emerging outcome rates and benchmarks

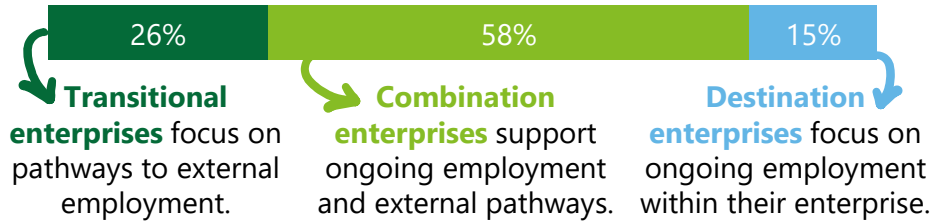
Organisations that do measure outcomes demonstrate promising results.

- When asked consistent questions about job transitions, employee retention and other work-related outcomes, 82% of enterprises could answer at least one of those questions with data on hand.
- 39% of participants in transitional enterprises (n=22) moved to external employment within a year.
- 58% of participants in destination enterprises (n=6) remained in internal employment within a year (36% of participants in destination enterprises (n=9) progressed within their organisation).
- Benchmarking with HILDA data shows comparable employment transition rates to long-term unemployed people in the broader population, providing initial indications that social enterprises provide effective support to those furthest from the labour market.

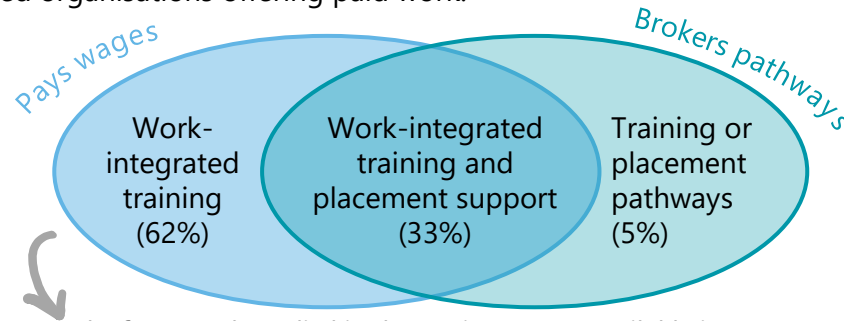
Key findings (2/3)

Types of models

Social enterprises differ in how closely they connect participants to jobs outside their organisation.



They also offer three different types of employment programs, with 95% of surveyed organisations offering paid work.

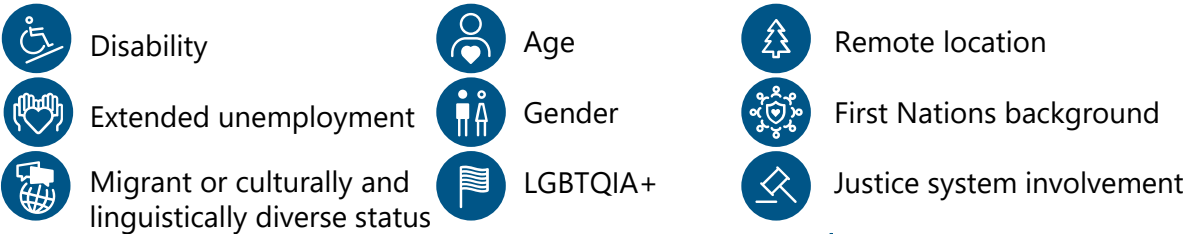


The supports offered by each program also vary, and include:



Supporting different cohorts

A wide variety of participants are supported by these social enterprises, including cohorts that may be characterised by:



Across all groups, participants are challenged by disengagement from the labour market. Other common employment barriers include **limited education**, ongoing **reliance on income support** and a history of **long-term unemployment**.

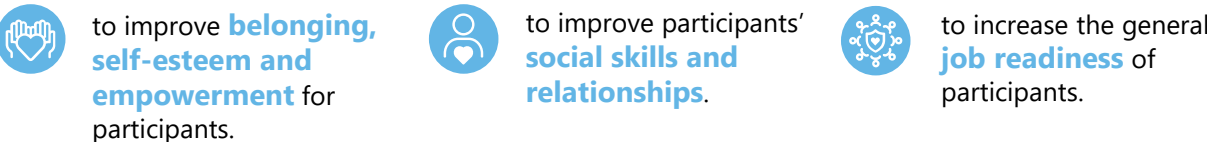
Defining success

Social enterprises describe 'success' for participants differently, prioritising both employment and non-employment outcomes.

*"Success is the development of **foundational employability skills** and **sustainable employment**."*

*"Participants should **feel confident, valued** and **supported**."*

Enterprises sought to achieve a range of outcomes, with the **top three** outcomes being:



Key findings (3/3)

Measuring outcomes

While most organisations measure some outcomes, it is often ad hoc and targeted to a few key outcomes.

Almost **8 in 10** enterprises report systematically collecting data on **employment-related** outcomes, like transitions to external employment and sustained employment and development of industry-relevant skills.

However, only **4 in 10** enterprises report that they systematically collect data about **non-employment-related** outcomes, such as improved sense of belonging, self-esteem and empowerment, improved social skills, relationships, improved financial skills and stability.



This discrepancy in the self-reported systematic measurement of outcomes could reflect the reporting priorities of different organisations (and their funders), or the challenges in collecting data for these types of outcomes.

Funders can (and do) influence the extent of impact measurement and type of reporting.

2 in 5

social enterprises say that funders influence **what data they collect** and **how outcomes are reported**.

This suggests that there is an opportunity for funders to set and support an expectation of more systematic outcomes measurement.

Social enterprises reported multiple barriers to outcomes measurement, with key barriers including:



Lack of staff capacity



Insufficient funding for data collection and analysis



Lack of suitable data tools or frameworks

Outcome rates

When asked to report against standardised outcome metrics, more than **4 in 5** social enterprises (82%) were able to provide data on at least one outcome with the data they had on hand. Survey findings show strong employment outcomes for participants, which can be contextualised by HILDA data, and provide a proof of concept for continued data collection.

Among a sample of **transitional enterprises**,¹ on average:

39% transitioned to external employment after 12 months of participating in a social enterprise employment program.

*As a comparison, HILDA data shows that among a group of people who are long-term unemployed or marginally attached, **24% to 43%** transitioned to work within 12 months.*

15% remained in internal employment at the social enterprise after 12 months of being employed in a program.

Along with employment-related outcomes, social enterprises also target other outcomes, such as:



Job retention



Skill development



Increased confidence



Job readiness



Career progression



Increased earnings

¹ Sample sizes vary by outcome (even within a social enterprise type), reflecting variation in what social enterprises measure and report and are provided in [Chapter 5](#).

01 Context and scope of this report

The research in this report builds an understanding of the outcomes sought and measured by social enterprises. It complements previous cost research, with a future objective of linking costs to outcomes so the value employment-focused social enterprises can be demonstrated.

This section explains the purpose of this report, outlines the different components of this research and summarises the methodology of the survey used.

Approach to research in this report

This report adds to the evidence base on outcomes sought and achieved by social enterprises. It provides important complementary data to existing work on social enterprise costs and is necessary research for interpreting costs and calculating return on investment in relation to quality outcomes.

[11](#)

This report presents findings from a survey of more than 100 social enterprises, which was fielded by Social Traders. It also uses HILDA data as a reference point for participant characteristics and to benchmark employment outcomes. The report aims to establish evidence on outcomes measurement, but also serves as a proof of concept that outcomes can be measured and benchmarked across the social enterprise sector.

[12](#), [13](#)

1.1 Context to the research presented in this report

This report complements previous work on costs, with a focus on understanding the rate and characteristics of outcomes achieved through social enterprises.

This report complements research into the costs associated with employment-generating social enterprise models.

In 2024, Deloitte Access Economics delivered a report for the Paul Ramsay Foundation, titled '[Understanding the benefits, costs, and funding flows to tailored jobseeker supports](#)'. The report used cost and outcomes data from 10 PRF partner organisations operating a mix of employment-focused social enterprises, business incubators, and other employment supports. The purpose of this research was to collate and strengthen evidence on *what works* to generate lasting employment outcomes in which contexts, while establishing the evidence base for the type and level of resourcing needed to achieve more enduring outcomes for those facing complex barriers to work.

With support of the Paul Ramsay Foundation, Social Traders and Deloitte Access Economics expanded the research to cover 301 employment generating social enterprises. This work strengthened the reliability of cost ranges, refined the costing methodology to account for differences in data collection, and advanced the conceptual alignment between total cost and impact cost frameworks.

Together, these reports have contributed to a more established evidence base on the resourcing required to generate lasting employment outcomes for those facing complex barriers to work. Understanding the nature and duration of outcomes achieved in the sector can ensure that

- costs are assessed with reference to a consistent outcome measure (quality standard)
- the economic value of outcomes can be established
- The 'return to investment' in social enterprises can be calculated, so that funding decisions can be made with reference to the economic and social value created when employment outcomes last.

To progress evidence about the value created by social enterprises, this report has worked to better understand the outcomes sought and measured by the sector

In partnership, Social Traders and Deloitte Access Economics, with the support of the Minderoo Foundation, have expanded the research to consider the rate and characteristics of outcomes achieved through social enterprises. This reflects the need to move beyond cost analysis to better understand the value created by the sector.

To strengthen social enterprises' role in national employment and social service systems, it is critical to link cost estimates to program outcomes so that the value they create is clearly demonstrated. This requires being able to estimate the value of outcomes achieved, which relies on consistent and rigorous measurement.

In pursuit of that goal, this report seeks to:

- highlight which outcomes are sought by the sector
- understand how social enterprises measure outcomes
- highlight opportunities to support more consistent and rigorous measurement across the sector.

Once the rate and characteristics of outcomes achieved by social enterprises are understood, outcomes can be assigned an economic value and cost estimates can be linked to outcomes (enabling a view of return to investment in the sector).

This objective will be achieved over time, enabled by frequent and increasingly rigorous data collection, delivered through collaboration with funders, enterprises and government.

1.2 Research components in this report

With support from Social Traders, this research brings together new survey data and analysis of longitudinal HILDA, to strengthen the understanding of outcomes achieved by social enterprises.

This research strengthens the outcomes evidence base by surveying social enterprises and contextualising results with analysis of data from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey.

The social enterprise survey

The survey was fielded by Social Traders and collected information from more than 100 participating social enterprises that offer employment programs. Survey data captures how social enterprises deliver programs, how they define and measure outcomes and how they support different participant cohorts. It also examines their approaches to program eligibility criteria, the influences of funding sources and their participant outcomes such as transitions to employment. The survey questions are included in the Appendix.

The survey relied on the Social Traders certification dataset to identify potential respondents. Certification currently focuses on verifying an organisation's *social mission*, which also allows employment-focused social enterprises to be identified. The survey began to collect information about the quality of employment and the outcomes achieved for participants (such as the length of employment support). Capturing this kind of outcome data consistently across the sector is something Social Traders could support over time, through certification and complimentary tools.

HILDA benchmarking analysis

The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey analysis component of this research uses nationally representative data to (at a basic level) start to benchmark the employment outcomes revealed in this report's survey data. It draws on longitudinal data from the HILDA survey to examine the employment transitions, job retention and barriers among disadvantaged job seekers in the broader population. It contextualises the characteristics of program participants and establishes an (initial) reference point for assessing the effectiveness of social enterprises in building employment pathways.

This research was made possible through close collaboration with Social Traders throughout the study design, data collection, and analysis phases.

Social Traders' certification dataset provided the foundation for identifying employment-focused social enterprises appropriate to respond to the survey, and supplemented survey responses with contextual data on enterprises' characteristics.

Prior to fielding, Social Traders provided feedback on the design of the survey instrument and facilitated a pilot with a small group of social enterprises, enabling refinement of the questions and approach.

Social Traders then managed all survey participant communications - distributing the survey to 318 certified employment-focused social enterprises with active follow-up and support. Their trusted position within the sector and deep relationships with individual enterprises were instrumental in achieving a strong response rate of 98 completed surveys (an additional 19 social enterprises partially completed the survey).

It is important to note that response rates vary by question. This is not indicative of high rates of partial completion, but rather that different questions were asked to each type of social enterprise, and that some questions were 'nested' (that is, the questions about outcomes rates achieved were only asked to those enterprises that reported that they sought and measured the relevant outcome).

Throughout the analysis phase, Social Traders provided ongoing input as findings emerged, bringing sector knowledge and interpretive perspective that contributed to the framings and conclusions of this report.

1.3 Overview of the outcomes survey

The survey covers four key themes: the employment focus of the model, the types of support offered and in demand, how organisations define and measure success, and the level of outcomes achieved.

This report builds the evidence base on benefits across the social enterprise sector.

- **The research draws on a sector-wide survey of over 100 social enterprises** focused on employment, fielded across March 2026 to collect consistent data on program models, participant cohorts and reported outcomes using a structured set of questions.
- **With 98 complete responses and 19 partial responses analysed**, the sample comprises certified social enterprises engaged through the Social Traders network.
- **Social enterprises were classified by their employment model and their support approach**, which enabled more appropriate comparison of outcomes across differing program intents. Classifying enterprises by their employment model identified whether organisations offered work-integrated training models, placement-focused models or combinations of both. Support approaches were categorised by transitional, destination or combination pathways.
- **Survey questions** sought to understand social enterprises’ varying support models and target cohorts, as well as how organisations define success, measure and track outcomes and the extent to which participants achieve outcomes. (survey themes are summarised in Figure 1.1 and the full survey instrument is provided in [Appendix A](#)).
- **A key limitation of the survey is that it relies on a self-selecting sample**, which may not fully represent the broader social enterprise sector. Outcomes are also self-reported, and differences in how organisations define, measure, and collect data may affect consistency and comparability of the results, alongside variation in survey interpretation and data collection capacity.
- **Many questions used predefined response options** – such as closed lists or broad bands like ‘majority of participants’ or ‘about half of participants’ for the [Chapter 3](#) characteristic questions – to make the survey easier to complete and to account for the differing levels of data available to social enterprises. As a result, there are limitations to how precisely the nature of participant cohorts can be understood from survey data.

Figure 1.1: Survey themes

Social enterprise model	<i>This section asked about the types of supports provided, their employment model types, and the extent to which transitions to external employment are supported.</i>
Support models and types of need	<i>This section asked about approaches to participant eligibility, including how social enterprises define eligibility for their employment programs, the barriers to employment experienced by participants, the extent of specialisation in supporting a particular cohort and the influence of funding on those decisions.</i>
Defining and measuring success	<i>This section asked how social enterprises define success for participants, the employment-related and non-employment-related outcomes they are intending to achieve for participants and how these outcomes are tracked. It also asked about approaches to data collection and measurement, the duration of outcome tracking and the role of funding in outcome measurement and program design.</i>
Achievement of outcomes	<i>This section collected data from social enterprises on the intended and actual length of employment programs, in addition to the share of participants achieving outcomes (e.g., transitions to external employment, remained in internal employment).</i>

Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026)

02 Approaches to supporting jobseekers in social enterprise

Social enterprises are diverse in their definitions of 'success', their intended outcomes for participants, the needs of participants and the types of supports in their employment programs. This section explains how support is offered across work-integrated training, external placement programs and combined models. It also examines how social enterprises define 'success' and demonstrates how their definitions depend on the types of support models they offer.

Key findings

Many social enterprises act as intermediary employers, offering supported pathways.

[15](#)

Social enterprises surveyed self-categorised themselves as either transitional (developing participants' skills for employment elsewhere), destination (internally employing participants on an ongoing basis) or a combination of both models.

Social enterprises provide a suite of supports to ensure candidates can access and retain work. Enterprises report embedding additional mentoring, and wellbeing services to participants, to complement 'on the job' training. More than 6 in 10 provide extensive connections to external employers as part of the experience.

[16](#)

Social enterprises define success in relation to the individual. When asked about the outcomes they are focused on, almost all social enterprises reported participant 'belonging, self esteem and empowerment' alongside vocational outcomes like skills and job readiness.

[17,18](#)

2.1 Classifying social enterprises

Most employment-focused social enterprises operate as intermediaries to the employment system, though 1 in 7 intend to provide longer-term employment.

To support meaningful comparison across social enterprises in this report (and in seeking to recognise the diversity of organisations within the sector), the survey asked enterprises to self-categorise into the following model types based on the primary intent of their employment programs:

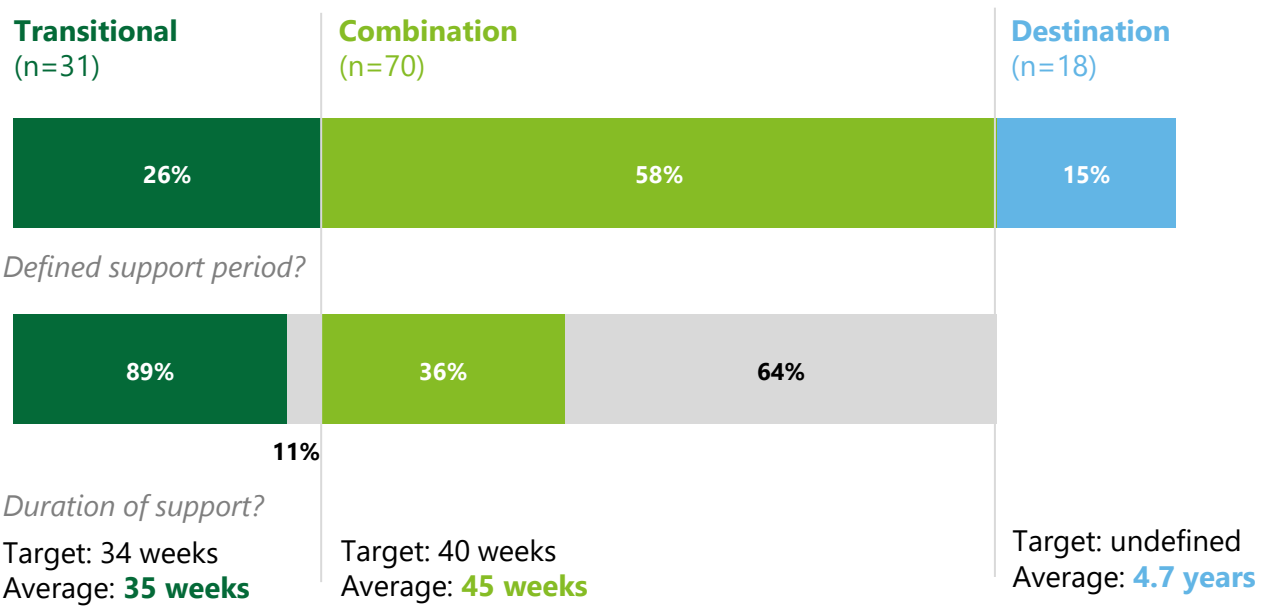
- **Transitional** employment program, where the primary goal is to prepare participants for employment elsewhere through skill development, training, and/or work experience.
- **Combination** employment program, where the primary goal is to build participants' skills and support pathways into external employment, while allowing individuals to remain employed within the enterprise without time limits.
- **Destination** employment program, where the primary goal is to employ participants on an ongoing basis within the enterprise.

Amongst the enterprises surveyed:

- 26% of social enterprises said that they operate a transitional employment program. Within these programs, 89% set a defined period of support on average, 34 weeks. Overall, the average length of support is 35 weeks.
- 58% operate as a combination model, where 36% of social enterprises set a defined period of support (on average, 40 weeks). The average length of support is 45 weeks.
- 15% of social enterprises operate as a destination model, where participants are employed for, on average, 4 years and 7 months.

Chart 2.1: Types of support programs and duration of support provided

All social enterprises



Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Social Traders' social enterprise survey (2026)
Q6 – How would you best describe your social enterprise employment model? (n=117), Q23 – Do you have an intended length of the program or employment placement for a participant? (n=88), Q24 – What is the intended length of the program or employment placement for a participant? (n=45), Q25 – On average, how long does a participant remain engaged with the program or employment placement? (n=36), Q34 – On average, how long does a participant remain employed within the social enterprise? (n=11)

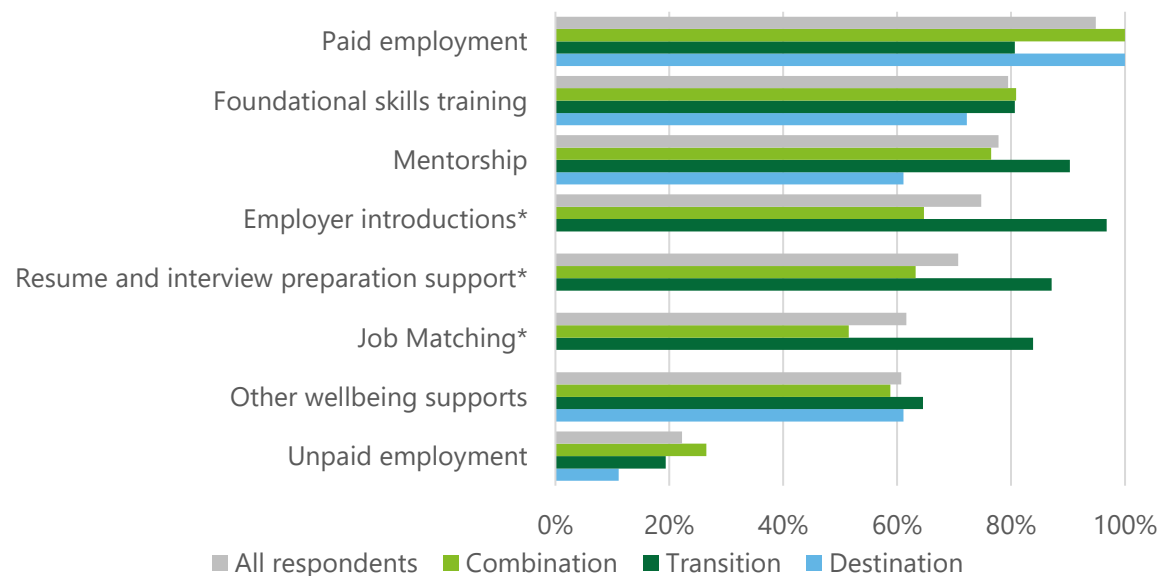
2.2 The extent of work-integration

Paid employment is the most common support offered by social enterprises, with mentorship and foundational skills training more commonly offered by transition and combination enterprises.

Almost all programs integrate some form of work experience, mostly paid.

- Most programs embed foundational skills training (79% of total) and mentoring (78% of total) within their programs
- 3 in 5 social enterprises embed wellbeing supports (e.g., counselling or mental health programs) into their programs
- Transition social enterprises are more likely to provide help with finding work outside the organisation, including employer introductions, resume and interview preparation support and job matching.

Chart 2.2: Supports offered to participants by organisation type

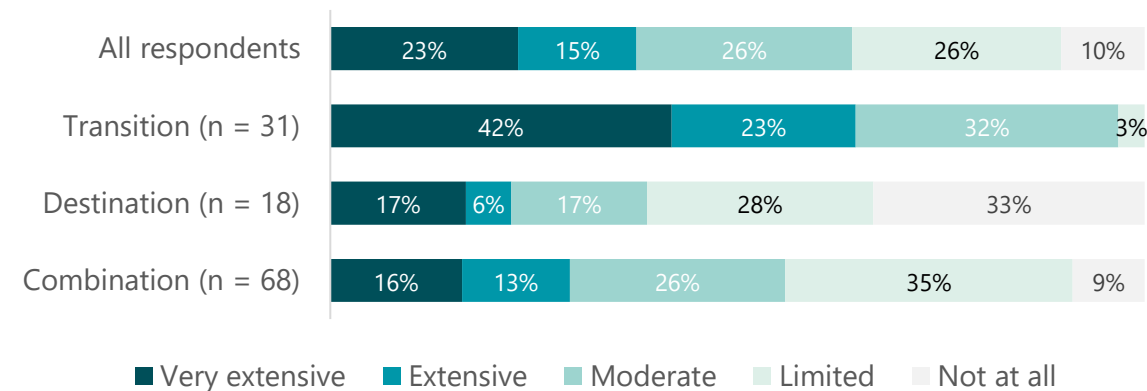


Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Social Traders' social enterprise survey (2026)
Q7 (Multiple responses permitted) - Which of these work-integrated employment or training supports does your social enterprise program offer? (n=117) Note: *Not asked to destination enterprises
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More than 6 in 10 social enterprises provide participants with moderate, extensive or very extensive support to secure external employment, including some destination models.

- All transition social enterprises offer some form of support to help participants secure external employment – reflecting that this is an explicit focus.
- A third of destination social enterprises (or 33%) offer no support to participants to apply or prepare for external employment.
- Most combination enterprises (91%) offer support finding external work. Taking this result with the [duration of support](#) suggests that these enterprises take a more participant-led, less time-bound approach to supporting transitions, also acting as a destination employer for some individuals.

Chart 2.3: Extent of support for participants in securing external employment



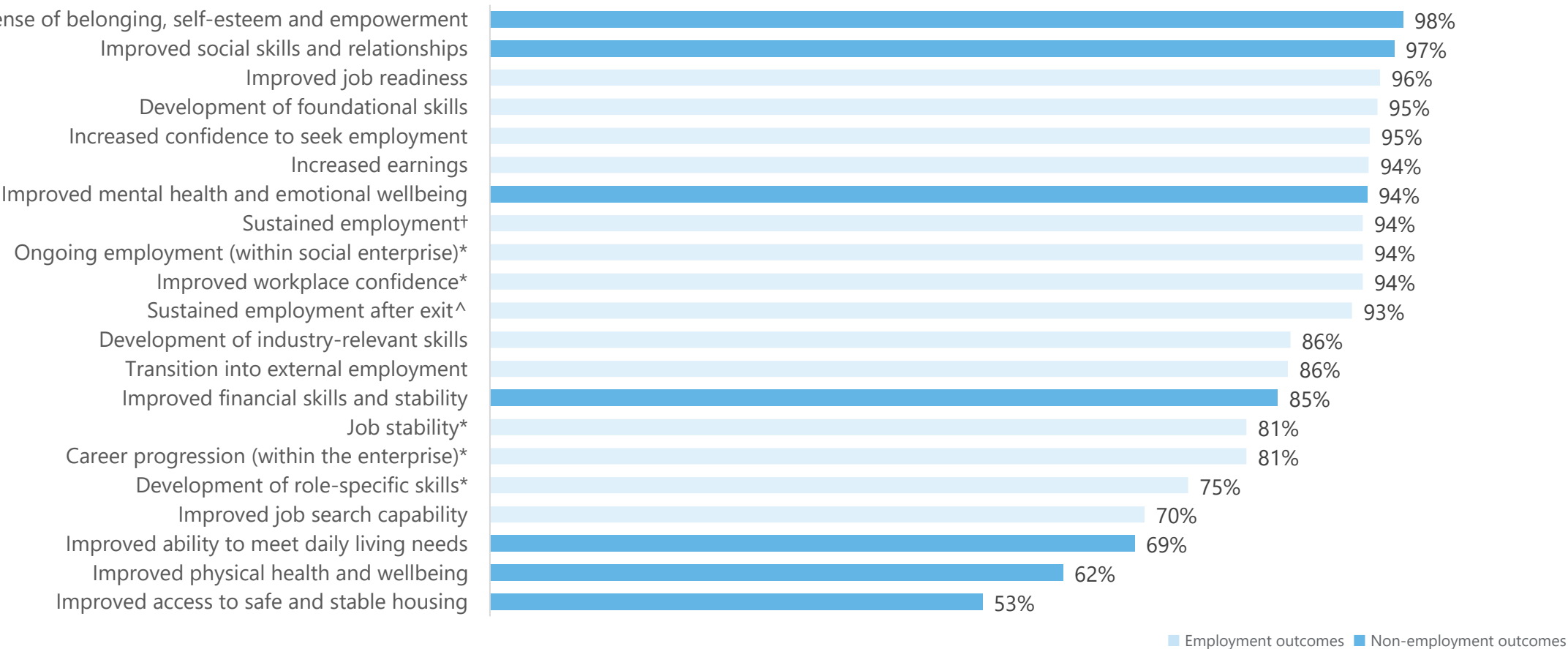
Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Social Traders' social enterprise survey (2026)
Q8 To what extent does your enterprise support participants to secure employment with external employers? (n=117)

2.3 Defining success for participants

Social enterprises seek to achieve both employment and non-employment-related outcomes.

Almost all social enterprises sought to achieve outcomes related to improved belonging, self esteem and empowerment (98%), improved social skills (97%) and improved job readiness (96%). The outcomes sought also vary systematically by whether the organisation is a combination, destination or transitional enterprise. These differences are detailed in [Appendix A](#).

Chart 2.4: Employment and non-employment-related outcomes sought by social enterprises for participants



Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Social Traders' social enterprise survey (2026)
Q14 – Which of the following employment-related outcomes is your enterprise seeking to achieve for participants? (n=104) & Q16 – Which of the following outcomes not directly related to employment is your enterprise seeking to achieve? (n=104)
^ Response option was only available for transitional enterprises. * Response option was only available for destination social enterprises. † Response option was only available for combination social enterprises

2.4 Defining success for participants

While Social Enterprises describe 'success' for their participants in different ways, access to decent work is often at the centre, and serves as a reminder that quality experiences underpin retention.

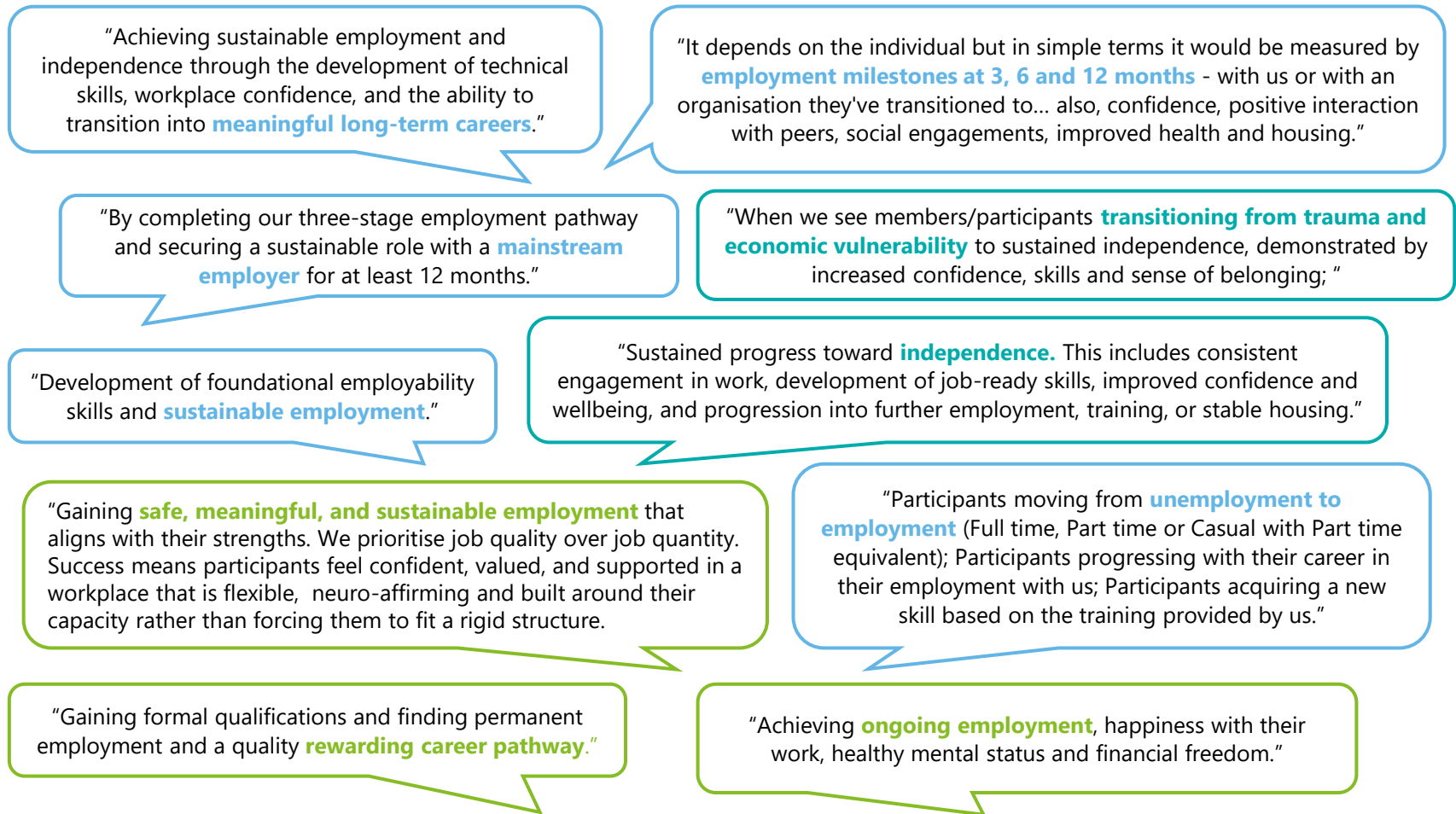
This figure (right) presents extracts from open-text responses in which enterprises described how they define program success.

These responses complement Chart 2.4, which captures predefined outcome options, and together show consistent priorities across both question formats. Survey responses most commonly defined success in terms of **employment** (mentioned in 75% of responses, examples in blue), followed by skills (26%) and transition to work (17%). Additional measures of success mentioned in responses included increased **confidence and independence** (19%) and access to **meaningful work** (11%).

Definitions of success and outcomes sought can depend on the type of enterprise, as explained in [Appendix A](#). Transitional enterprises tended to focus on readiness for external employment, combination enterprises focused on confidence and foundational skills and destination enterprises emphasised longer-term participant wellbeing and satisfaction.

Social enterprises also described success as participants achieving goals outlined at the start of the program, such as those in employment action plans or NDIS plans. Broader definitions of success addressed increased dignity, choice and job satisfaction, as well as greater community participation and improved English language proficiency.

Figure 2.1: Social enterprise responses to the survey question "how do you define success for participants in your employment programs?"



03 The types of barriers addressed by social enterprise

Most social enterprises offer a tailored employment program, focused on the needs of a cohort(s) with intersecting barriers to entering and remaining in work. This section describes the profile of participants in social enterprise – seeking to understand both demographic characteristics, and to assess relative need, by understanding participants employment histories and experiences.

This section also introduces analysis from an external dataset, the HILDA Survey, as a reference point to start to understand the intersection between personal employment characteristics and the level of need for employment supports, noting that social enterprises' mission often leads them to focus on supporting those furthest from the labour market.

Key findings

Social enterprises deliver programs that are tailored to their participant's labour market barriers. Most enterprises use eligibility criteria based on individual demographic characteristics or employment histories (with many using both).

[20](#)

Social enterprises consistently reach those far from the labour market.

Regardless of the nature or number of eligibility criteria, enterprises consistently report that most of their employees have a history of long-term unemployment or non-participation in the labour market and formal education.

[21](#), [22](#)

Data from the HILDA survey provides some context to this analysis.

While social enterprise participants cannot be directly identified in HILDA data, the analysis reveals that similar dynamics exist across the labour market: those who are distant from employment (e.g., long-term unemployed or marginally attached to the labour market) often face multiple barriers to finding work. This reinforces the positioning of social enterprises as supporting those furthest from the labour market.

[23](#), [24](#)

3.1 Determining eligibility for support

Social enterprises specialise in supporting specific cohorts through tailored delivery models.

Most social enterprises target particular cohorts through their employment programs.

The survey asked social enterprises to identify the cohorts supported through their tailored employment programs. Overall, 3 in 4 social enterprises target particular cohorts through their employment programs (Chart 3.1).

The extent of specialisation varies. Among social enterprises that target particular cohorts, nearly 1 in 2 social enterprises target a single cohort (for example, people with a disability *only*). On average, social enterprises target 3 cohorts through the eligibility of their employment programs, with many programs designed to support participants with intersecting characteristics – for example, migrant women or young people with experience in the justice system.

The most commonly targeted jobseeker cohorts include people with a disability (57%), migrant, refugee or culturally and linguistically diverse people (38%) and those who had experienced long-term unemployment (36%) (Chart 3.2).

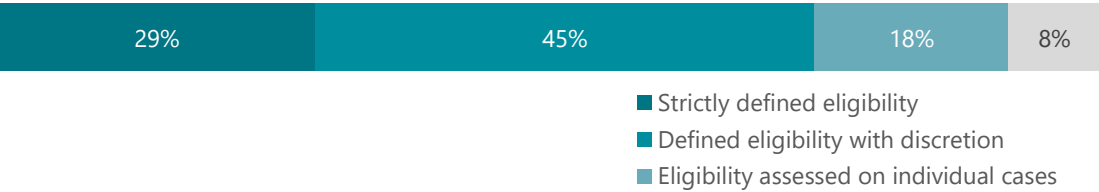
The framing of eligibility criteria is often influenced by the availability of funding.

Social enterprises commonly draw on multiple funding sources, each with distinct social and economic objectives attached, which can shape program design and participant eligibility. For example, employment programs supporting migrant women might receive funding focused on achieving settlement, training, and/or employment outcomes.

The survey finds that more than 2 in 5 social enterprises reported that funding influences eligibility criteria to a moderate, large or very large extent, and this may explain why some enterprises demonstrate more discretion in their intake (Chart 3.1). Understanding the extent to which social enterprises specialise in supporting particular cohorts is essential to understanding their potential role in the broader employment system and in assessing delivery costs.

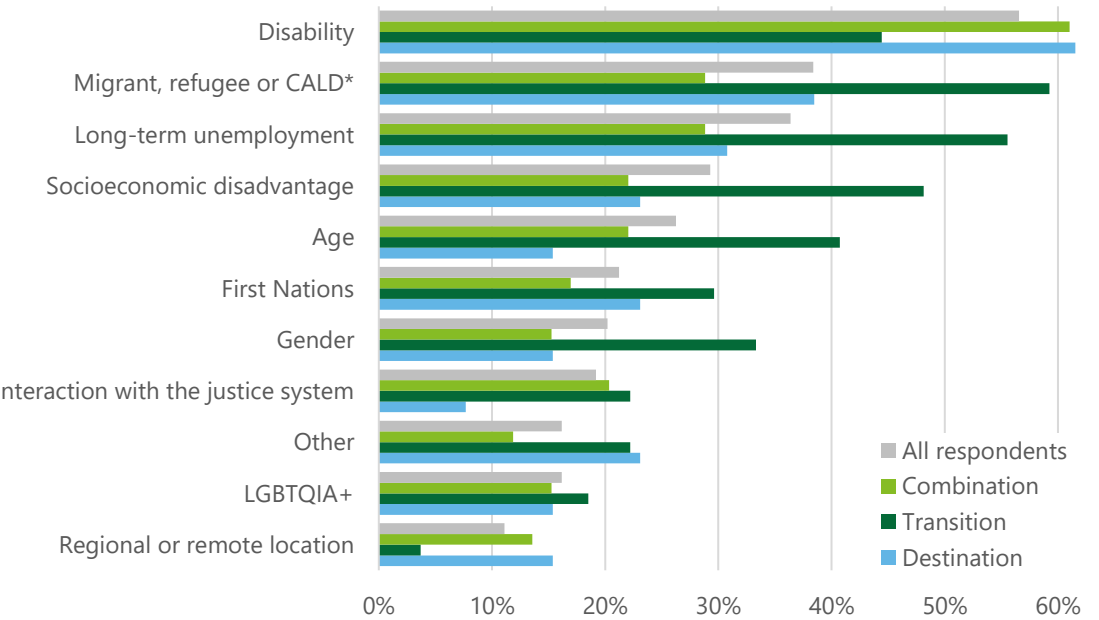
These findings underscore the opportunity for benchmarking the social enterprise sector’s outcomes based on the cohorts they are supporting (per the exploratory analysis in [Chapter 5](#) of this document).

Chart 3.1: Approach to eligibility criteria



Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Social Traders’ social enterprise survey (2026)
Q9, Which of the following best describes your organisation’s approach to participant eligibility? (n=108)

Chart 3.2: Factors considered in determining eligibility for social enterprise program



Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Social Traders’ social enterprise survey (2026)
Q10 (Multiple responses permitted) - On what basis is eligibility for the program defined? (n=99)
*CALD: Culturally and linguistically diverse

3.2 Participants’ characteristics and employment barriers

Long-term unemployment was common among program participants, regardless of whether it was an explicit eligibility requirement for a social enterprise.

In addition to questions related to the eligibility criteria of employment programs, the survey also examined the labour market barriers commonly experienced by participants. This approach recognises that a traditional focus on ‘cohort’ characteristics is generally intended as a proxy for participants’ relative need or labour market disadvantage – and that need varies *within* each group.

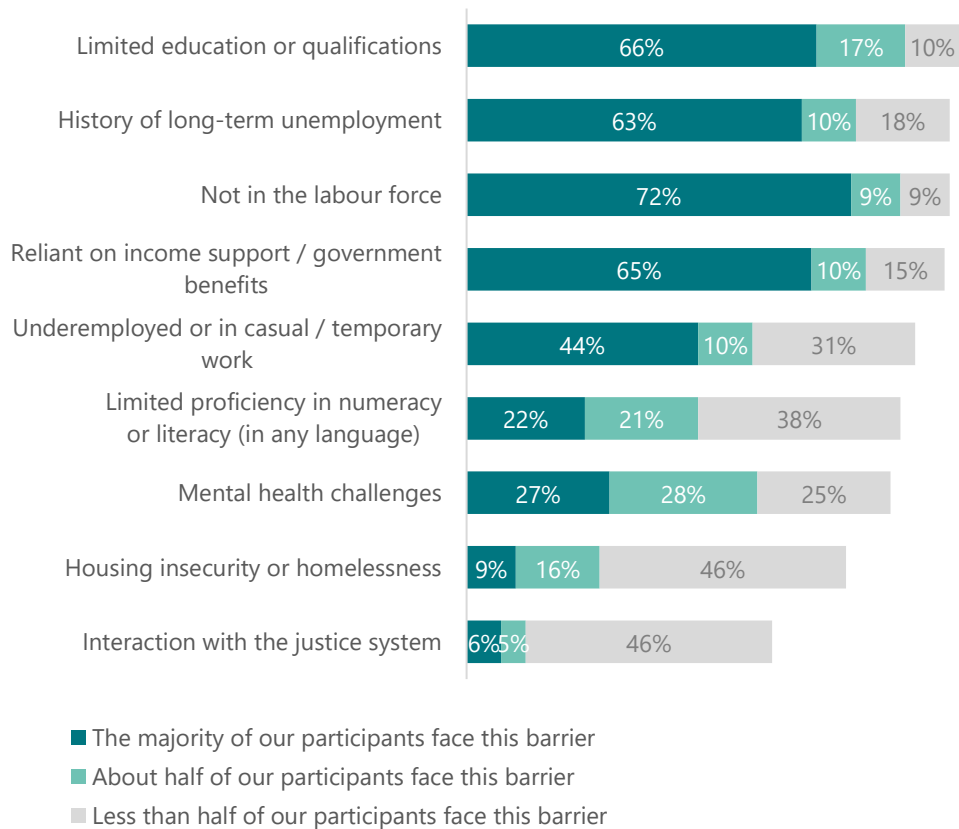
Across participants distance from both the labour market and education was a common experience.

- Nearly 3 in 4 social enterprises reported that the majority of participants were not in the labour force prior to joining their employment program. Within this cohort, 58% of social enterprises also reported most participants had experienced a history of long-term unemployment.
- Other common barriers included limited education or qualifications (66% of enterprises saying the majority of participants faced this barrier) and reliance on income support (65%).
- Across social enterprises models, combination and transitional enterprises were more likely (relative to destination enterprises) to support participants who had experienced long-term unemployment, were not in the labour force prior to program entry or were reliant on income support.
- Meanwhile, destination social enterprises were more likely to support participants who had experienced underemployment or unstable work prior to program entry.

Implications for the social enterprise sector

Almost all of surveyed social enterprises reported that at least some participants (and in many case the majority) had a history of long-term unemployment prior to joining the program (91%) or were not in the labour force (90%). This suggests that when social enterprises are benchmarking their outcomes, one option would be to consider the average employment transitions (and other outcome rates) seen among the population who are distant from the labour market (e.g., long-term (12+ months) unemployed Australians or not in the labour force but interested in work). Using data from the Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey, [Chapter 5](#) presents a ‘of concept’ for this benchmarking exercise.

Chart 3.3: Extent of barriers faced by participants **prior** to joining the respondent’s program.



Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Social Traders’ social enterprise survey (2026)
Q11 - Roughly what proportion of your participants experience the following employment barriers prior to joining your program? (n=108)

3.3 Participants’ characteristics and employment barriers

Distance from the labour market is common across participants, irrespective of eligibility criteria, highlighting the role social enterprises in offsetting the costs of prolonged unemployment.

Table 3.1 shows the relationship between cohort-based eligibility criteria for employment programs and the labour market barriers faced by participants.

For each eligibility criterion (columns), the table shows the share of social enterprises who reported that a majority of their program participants had experienced the corresponding labour market barrier (rows). For example, of social enterprises that use ‘disability status’ as an eligibility criteria, 75% also said that the majority of their participants were not previously in the labour force – suggesting a relationship between disability status and distance from the labour market.

The results also illustrate the impact of discretion in the application of eligibility criteria. For example, among social enterprises that report using long-term unemployment as a criterion, only 67% report that a majority of their participants *have* experienced long-term unemployment.

These observations are not intended to highlight shortcomings in enterprises’ eligibility criteria, but rather illustrate the complexity and intersection of participant needs. In practice, social enterprises often apply [multiple eligibility criteria](#) and may have incomplete information about participants’ characteristics prior to commencing work.

Notwithstanding this variation, there is a relatively strong degree of consistency in the labour market barriers reported across programs. Distance from both the labour market and limited formal education or training emerge as the two most common barriers, regardless of how the eligibility criteria are defined.

Table 3.1: Percentage of enterprises that said that the majority of their participants face each barrier, by the eligibility criteria used.

<i>The majority of participants experience the following employment barriers prior to joining the program</i>	<i>– On what basis is eligibility for the program defined? –</i>						
	People with disabilities (n=56)	Migrant, refugee or CALD* background (n=38)	History of long-term unemployment (n=36)	Socioeconomic disadvantage (n=29)	Age (n=26)	Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (n=21)	Gender (n=20)
Not in the labour force	75%	71%	75%	72%	77%	67%	80%
Limited education or qualifications	66%	58%	58%	52%	73%	43%	70%
Reliant on income support	75%	58%	61%	69%	73%	57%	65%
History of long-term unemployment	61%	61%	67%	62%	73%	52%	75%
Underemployed or in casual or temporary work	36%	34%	42%	41%	50%	29%	30%
Mental health challenges	36%	21%	33%	38%	42%	29%	45%
Limited English proficiency, numeracy or literacy	16%	37%	19%	7%	15%	10%	15%

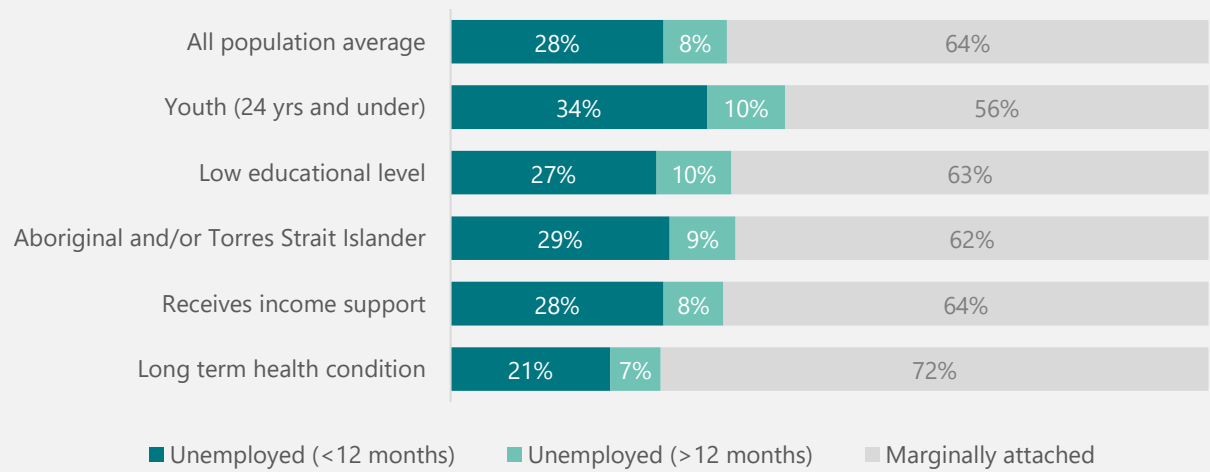
3.4 Understanding intersecting disadvantage: reference points from the HILDA data

On average across 2024, just under 783,000 Australians were unemployed or not in the labour market but seeking work.¹ Data from the HILDA survey provides context to this cohort and the barriers they face.

Of those not working but wanting to work identified in the HILDA survey, 28% are unemployed for 12 months or less, 8% are unemployed for more than 12 months, and 64% are not in the labour force but marginally attached (that is, they want to work and are actively looking for work but do not have the availability to start within the next month, so are not technically classified as unemployed).²

The nature of labour market disadvantage varies across cohorts. As shown in Chart 3.4, those aged under 24 are much more likely to be unemployed for less than 12 months, and slightly more likely to be unemployed for more than 12 months, while those with a long-term health condition are more likely to be further from the labour market (i.e., those ‘marginally attached’). Across the cohorts identified in Chart 3.4, 35-55% reported having trouble getting a job.

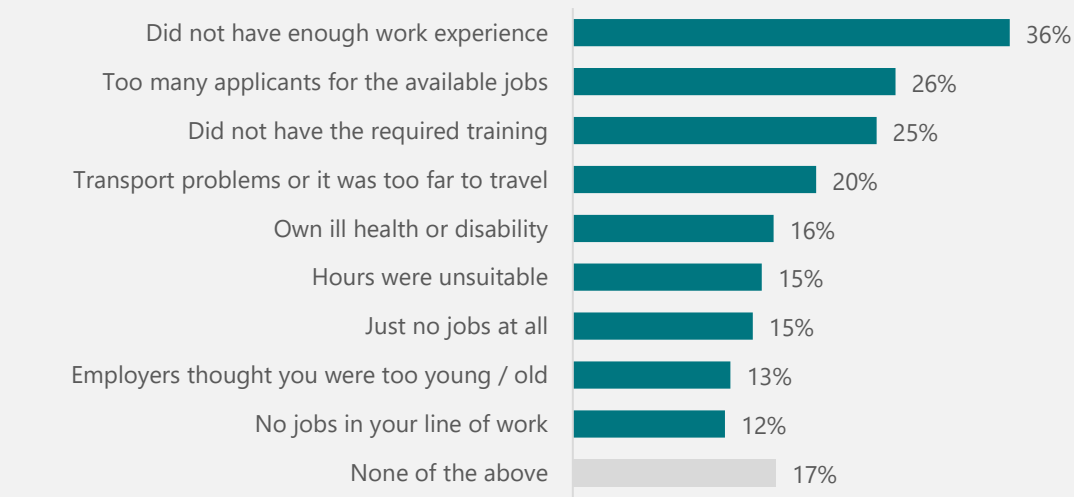
Chart 3.4: Types of disconnection from the labour force, by cohort (2024)



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026) based using Wave 24 of the HILDA Survey
Note: Relative to the groups identified in the social enterprise survey, this analysis does not include the group of recently arrived migrants, given this population is not well represented in the HILDA Survey sample.
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Among this group, 45% said they had trouble getting a job. Over half of those having trouble getting a job indicated there were multiple reasons they had trouble getting a job (52% of the surveyed population). One third of those having trouble getting a job cited three or more reasons. While direct comparisons between the HILDA cohort and social enterprise participants is not possible – because the survey design prioritised ease of response in reporting barriers at a group, rather than individual level – the [higher prevalence of reported barriers](#) reinforces the position of social enterprises as supporting those who are *furthest* from the labour market.

Chart 3.5: Reasons had trouble getting a job, *Proportion reporting each reason (2024)*



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026) based using Wave 24 of the HILDA Survey.
¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Labour Force Survey, Australia*, 2026
² Department of Social Services; Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, 2025, "The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey, RESTRICTED RELEASE 24 (Waves 1-24)", <https://doi.org/10.26193/GMYVPW>, ADA Dataverse, V4

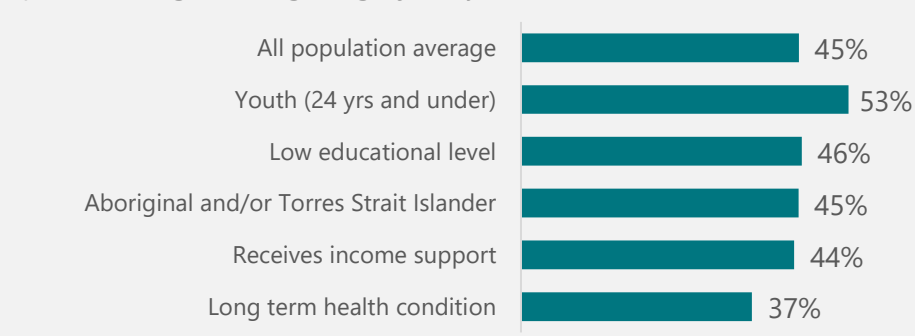
3.4 Understanding intersecting disadvantage: reference points from the HILDA data

Social enterprises’ focus on integrating work experience and training directly addresses a common barrier to employment across priority cohorts.

Implications for the social enterprise sector

While HILDA data cannot be used to identify those working within a social enterprise specifically, this analysis reinforces what is often reported by enterprises – that the targeted intake and tailored nature of support around priority cohorts (such as those identified in Chart 3.6) is likely to mean that participants have a relatively higher incidence of labour market disadvantage. In particular, the findings highlight an alignment between the common barriers to accessing work – a lack of work experience and limited formal training to access quality jobs – and the focus of social enterprise models. They also highlight the importance of addressing transport barriers, given the high share of unemployed people affected, suggesting that commuting support or local employment pathways could complement employment programs.

Chart 3.6: Share of people not employed but looking for work who reported having trouble getting a job, by cohort (2024)



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026) based using Wave 24 of the HILDA Survey

Chart 3.7: Most common barriers to employment, by cohort
Proportion of people in each cohort who reported each reason for having trouble getting a job



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026) based using Wave 24 of the HILDA Survey

04 The current state of measurement

Social enterprises are committed to measuring impact, and demonstrate a strong theoretical understanding of what and how to measure outcomes. That said, they face challenges in resourcing and efficiently delivering *systematic* data collection.

Practical support to enable data collection (potentially through the Social Traders certification process) may help to streamline measurement, and this report also highlights opportunities for centralised data collection or benchmarking approaches. This section examines the state of outcome measurement within the sector, including what is measured, factors influencing measurement and approaches to measurement.

Key findings

Employment-related outcomes are systematically measured by most of the sector, with 76% of social enterprises self-reporting that they systematically track at least one employment-related outcome. Other employment-related outcomes, such as workplace confidence, are less likely to be systematically measured and are typically recorded on an ad hoc basis. [27](#)

Non-employment outcomes were less likely to be measured systemically. Improved sense of belonging, self-esteem and empowerment is the outcome most commonly sought, though only 37% of social enterprises report tracking this on a systematic basis. [28](#)

Outcomes measurement is strong until program completion. Outcomes are commonly measured by supervisor assessment or administrative records of employment or training. Observing outcomes post-program becomes more challenging for individual enterprises: around 1 in 10 social enterprises (on average) continue to track outcomes more than 12 months after participant departure. [29](#)

Funders can play a role in supporting measurement. Around 2 in 5 social enterprises reported that funders influence both data collection and reporting. [30](#)

Most social enterprises face at least one barrier to outcome measurement. The top barriers to outcome measurement include limited staff capacity (47%), funding constraints (42%) and lack of suitable tools/ framework (34%). [31](#)

4.1 The state of outcomes measurement

Outcome measurement – whether ad hoc or systematic – is common across social enterprises, particularly for employment outcomes. However, few social enterprises track outcomes beyond 12 months after program completion, with staff time reported as the main barrier to measurement.

How systematic is outcomes measurement?	What influences measurement?	Which employment outcomes are prioritised?	What other outcomes are being measured?
- On average, 43% of outcome measurement is occurring on a systematic basis (noting that 77% of organisations report that they measure at least one outcome systematically). - Enterprises’ reference points as to what constitutes ‘systematic’ measurement are likely to vary (considering differences in frequency, approach to data collection and response rates, especially after participants ‘graduate’ from a program). On average, 57% of outcome measurement is occurring on an ad hoc or unstructured basis. - Nearly 1 in 4 social enterprises (or 23%) do not measure any outcome systematically (based on self-reported data). 4% do not measure any outcomes at all. Of those enterprises that said they systematically measure an outcome, 7% could not report an outcome when asked.	2 in 5 social enterprises report that funding agreements influence both what data they collect and how results are reported. - The main barrier to measurement is staff time, with nearly 1 in 2 social enterprises (or 47%) reporting insufficient time or staff capacity to collect or measure outcomes data. - Lack of knowledge was rarely identified as a barrier, with only 13% of surveyed social enterprises reporting uncertainty about how or what to measure. 1 in 5 social enterprises (or 19%) use online impact measurement platforms to support outcome measurement or impact tracking.	- The top employment-related outcomes sought are improved job readiness (96%), development of foundational skills (95%) and increased confidence to seek employment (95%). - However, the top outcomes measured on a systematic basis do not align to these outcomes and tend to relate the employment transitions. - The most common outcomes measured on a systematic basis are transitions to external employment (66% of total) and sustained employment after exit (64% of total), based on self-reported data. - More than 1 in 3 social enterprises (or 36%) track employment outcomes up to 6 months after completion. - A further 24% of social enterprises track employment outcomes up to 12 months after completion.	- The most commonly measured non-employment-related outcome is improved sense of belonging, self-esteem and empowerment (around 4 in 10 measuring for this). - Just over 1 in 5 (or 22%) track non-employment-related outcomes up to 6 months after completion. - A further 15% of social enterprises track non-employment-related outcomes up to 12 months after completion.

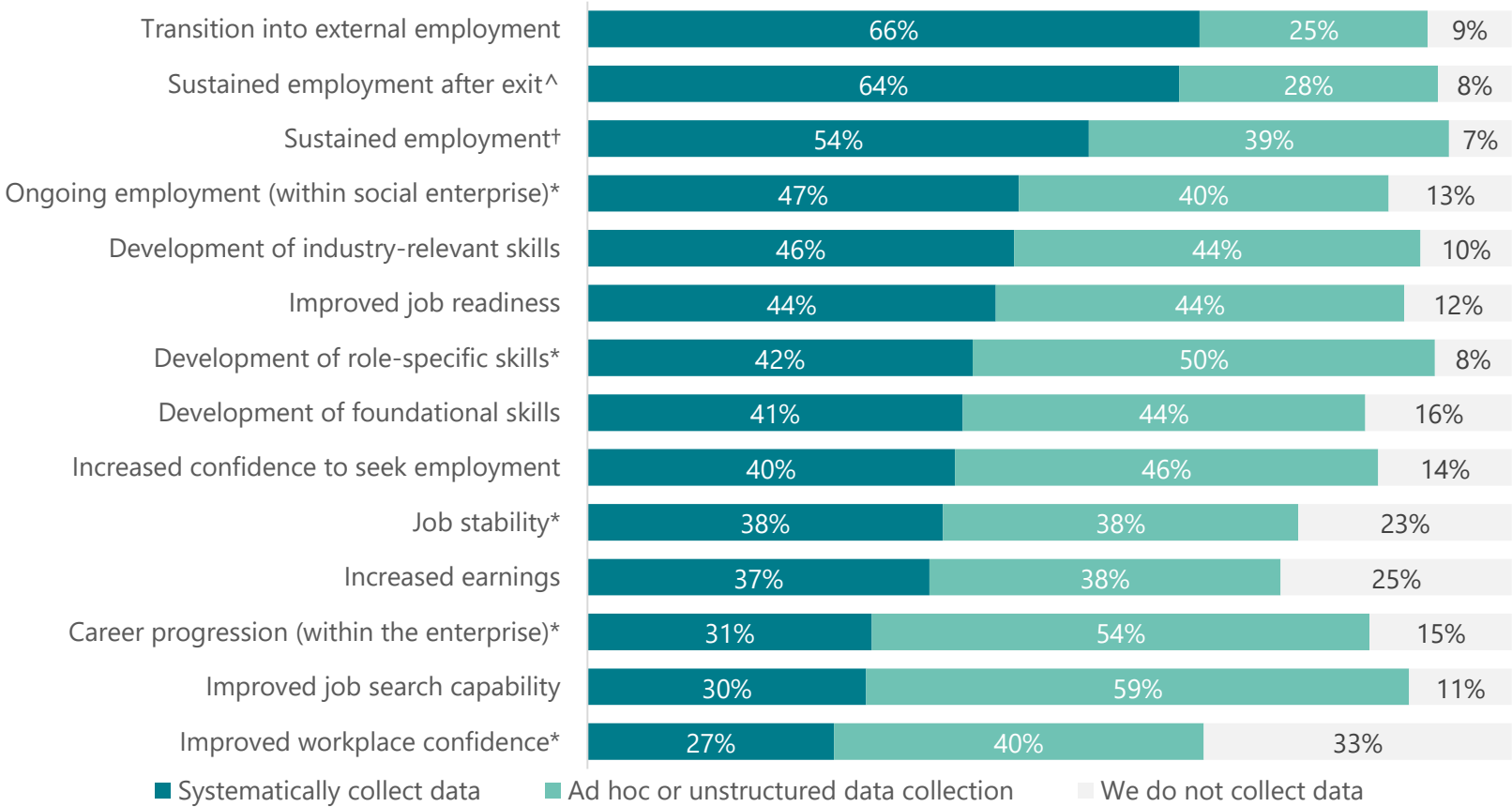
4.1 The state of outcomes measurement

Although social enterprises seek to achieve a diversity of employment-related outcomes, the extent to which those outcomes are supported by systematic data collection varies considerably.

Most social enterprises (76%) systematically collect data on at least one employment-related outcome, based on self-reported data.

- The employment outcomes most commonly measured on a systematic basis relate to transitions to external employment and/ or sustained employment, based on self-reported data. With 66% tracking transitions to external employment, followed by sustained employment after exit (64%) and sustained employment (54%).
- Other aspects of employment, such as workplace confidence, increased earnings or job stability are less likely to be collected, including on an ad hoc basis.

Chart 4.1: Data collection practices for sought employment outcomes



Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Social Traders' social enterprise survey (2026)
Q15 - Of the employment outcomes your organisation is prioritising, which are you actively tracking through data collection? (n=104)
[^] Response option was only available for transitional enterprises; * Response option was only available for destination social enterprises; [†] Response option was only available for combination social enterprises

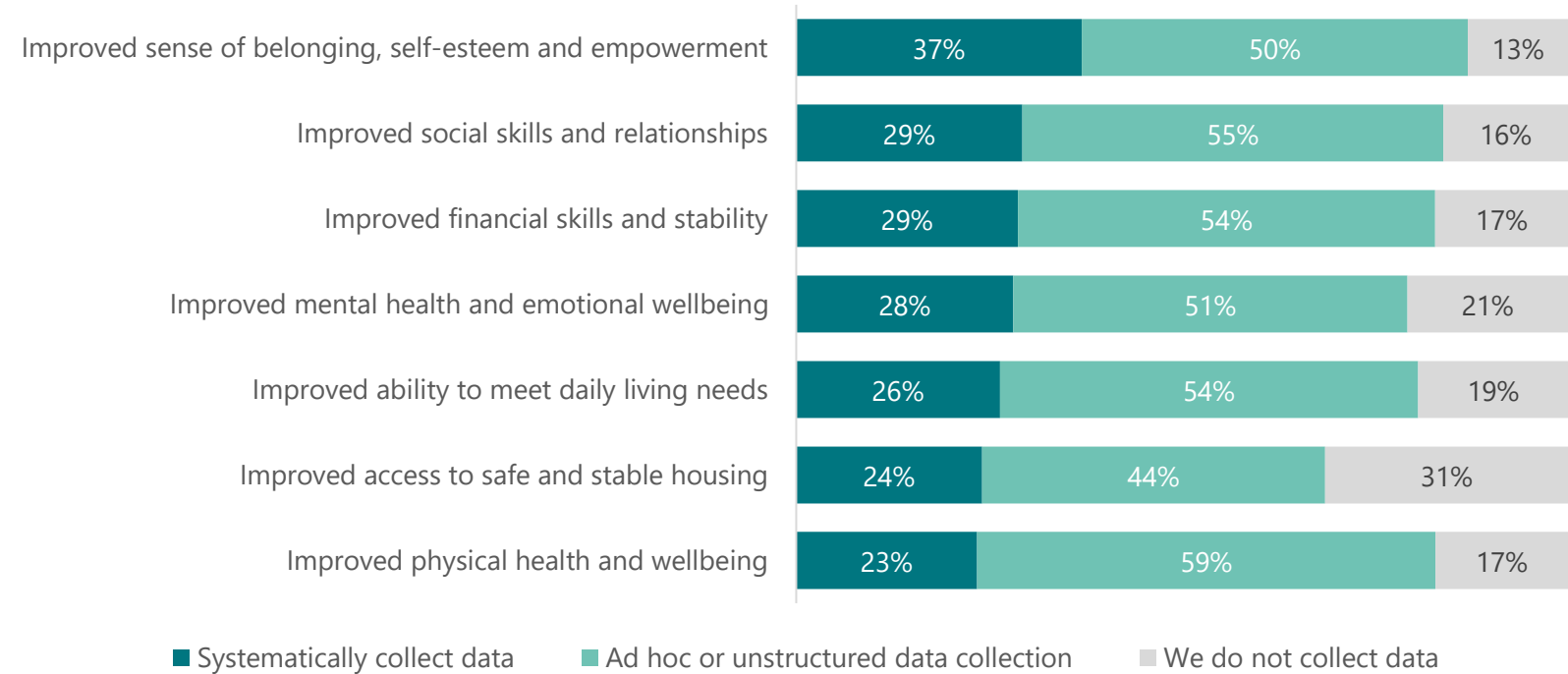
4.1 The state of outcomes measurement

Social enterprises report that they are less likely to measure non-employment-related outcomes systematically, with most data collection occurring on an ad hoc or unstructured basis.

Less than half (or 41%) of social enterprises systematically collect data on at least one non-employment-related outcome, based on self-reported data.

The most common non-employment-related outcome measured which enterprises report that they measure on a systematic basis are improved sense of belonging, self-esteem and empowerment (37%), followed by improved social skills and relationships (29%) and improved financial skills and stability (29%) (Chart 4.2).

Chart 4.2: Data collection practices for sought non-employment outcomes



Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Social Traders' social enterprise survey (2026)
Q17 - Which of the following outcomes not directly related to employment is your enterprise seeking to achieve? (n=104)

4.1 The state of outcomes measurement

Social enterprises utilise a range of approaches to measure participant outcomes, with more than half measuring outcomes through to program completion, but far fewer tracking outcomes over time.

Outcome measurement most commonly relies on directly observing outcomes through the program administration.

The majority of organisations measure impact through the mentor or supervisor’s direct oversight, or because measures (like employment status, participation or training completed) are included in employee records. 7 in 10 also ask participants to self-report outcomes (e.g., through surveys), while only 50% seek external feedback (for example, through relationships with graduates’ future employers).

Chart 4.3: Approaches to measure participant outcomes



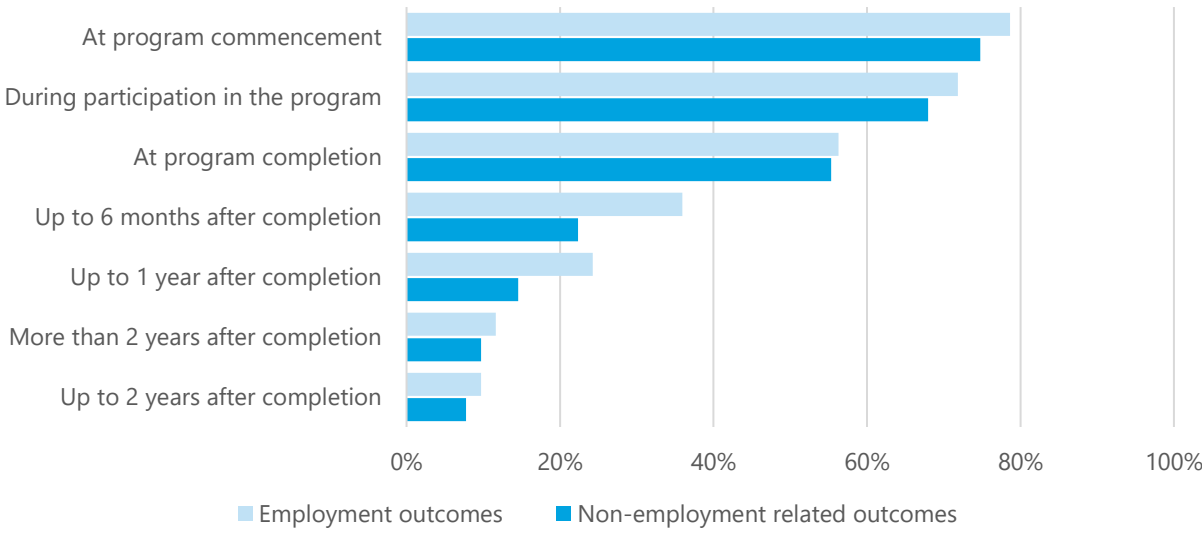
Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Social Traders’ social enterprise survey (2026)
Q18 – Please select the approaches your organisation uses to measure participant outcomes? (n=103)

Employment and non-employment-related outcomes are well measured at the start, during and completion of programs, but much less so over time.

More 1 in 2 social enterprises (or 56%) measure employment and non-employment-related outcomes at program completion, on average. However, observing outcomes post-program becomes more challenging for individual enterprises: fewer than 1 in 5 social enterprises continue to track outcomes more than 12 months after participant departure.

Among transitional social enterprises, more than 3 in 4 measure (or 78%) measure at least one employment or non-employment-related outcome after program completion. Destination and combination record much lower levels of outcome measurement post program completion.

Chart 4.4: Timeframes for measuring employment and non-employment outcomes



Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Social Traders’ social enterprise survey (2026)
Q19 – At what points in the participant journey do you collect employment-related and non-employment-related outcomes? (n=103)

4.2 Barriers and enablers to quality measurement

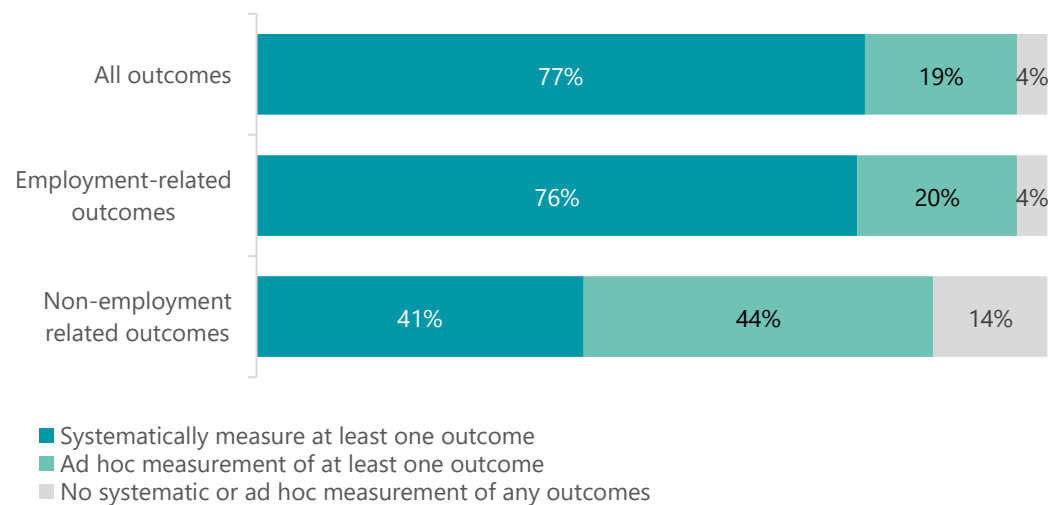
While outcome measurement is relatively common, funding plays a large role in shaping both what is measured and how outcomes are reported.

Nearly 1 in 4 social enterprises (or 23%) report that they do not measure any outcome (including employment and non-employment-related) systematically.

4% of survey social enterprises do not measure any outcomes at all, even on an ad hoc or unstructured basis (Chart 4.5).

- Relative to employment-related outcomes, social enterprises are much more likely to measure non-employment-related outcomes on an ad hoc basis or not at all.

Chart 4.5: Data collection of at least one employment or non-employment-related outcome

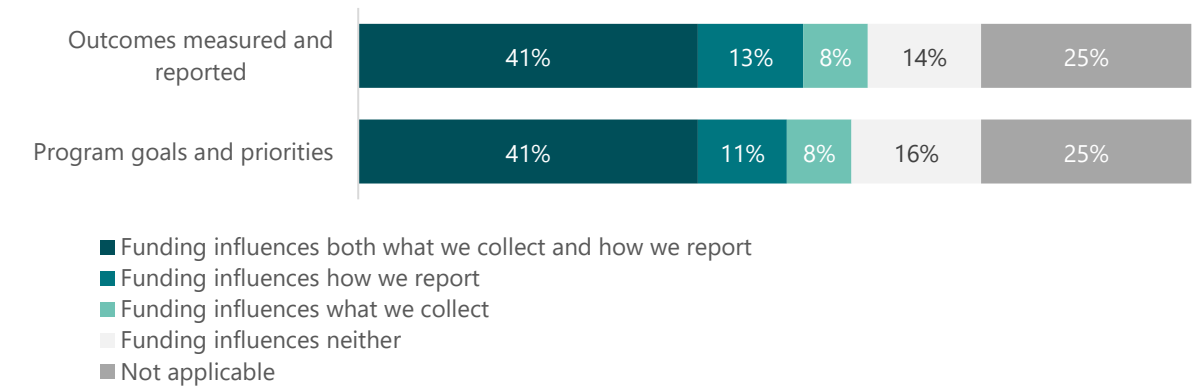


Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Social Traders' social enterprise survey (2026)
Q15 – Of the employment outcomes your organisation is prioritising, which are you actively tracking through data collection? (n=104) & Q17 – Of the outcomes your organisation is prioritising, which are you actively tracking through data collection? (n=104)

Funding plays a significant role in shaping eligibility criteria, outcome measurement and program goals and priorities.

- Around one third (or 30%) of social enterprises reported that available funding influences how they manage participant eligibility to a very large or large extent, while 32% reported it influenced it moderately and to some extent.
- 41% reported that funding influences both *what* outcomes data they collect and how they report it, with funding more likely to affect both than either activity alone (Chart 4.6).
- However, 2 in 5 social enterprises reported that funding does not influence their outcome measurement or program priorities, either because it has no influence or because they do not rely on external funding.

Chart 4.6: The extent to which funding requirements influence the following aspects of a program



Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Social Traders' social enterprise survey (2026)
Q20 - To what extent do funding requirements (including government and other funding sources) influence the following aspects of your program? (n=103)

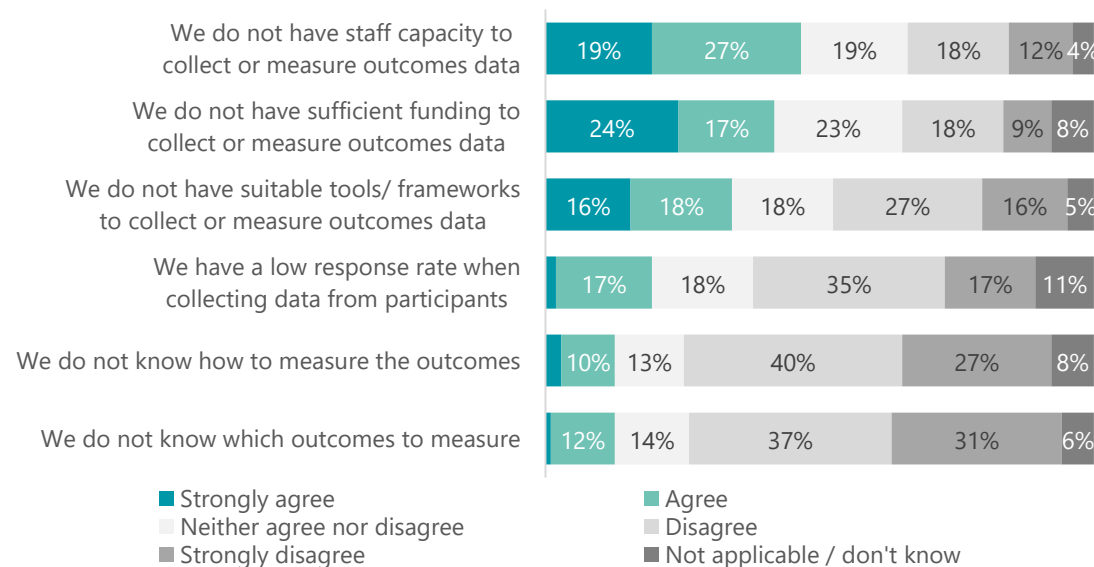
4.2 Barriers and enablers to quality measurement

Most social enterprises face at least one barrier in measuring participant outcomes, and these often relate to resource constraints – such as staff, funding or tools – as opposed to lack of knowledge.

Nearly 2 in 3 social enterprises reported facing at least one barrier in measuring participant outcomes.

- Limited staff capacity (47% agree or strongly agree) and funding availability (42%) were the primary barriers to outcome measurement identified by social enterprises (Chart 4.7)
- Lack of knowledge was less commonly identified as a barrier, with only 13% of surveyed social enterprises reporting uncertainty about how or what to measure
- Only 19% of surveyed social enterprises reported facing challenges with the practicality of data collection (i.e., low response rates)

Chart 4.7: Challenges in measuring participant outcomes

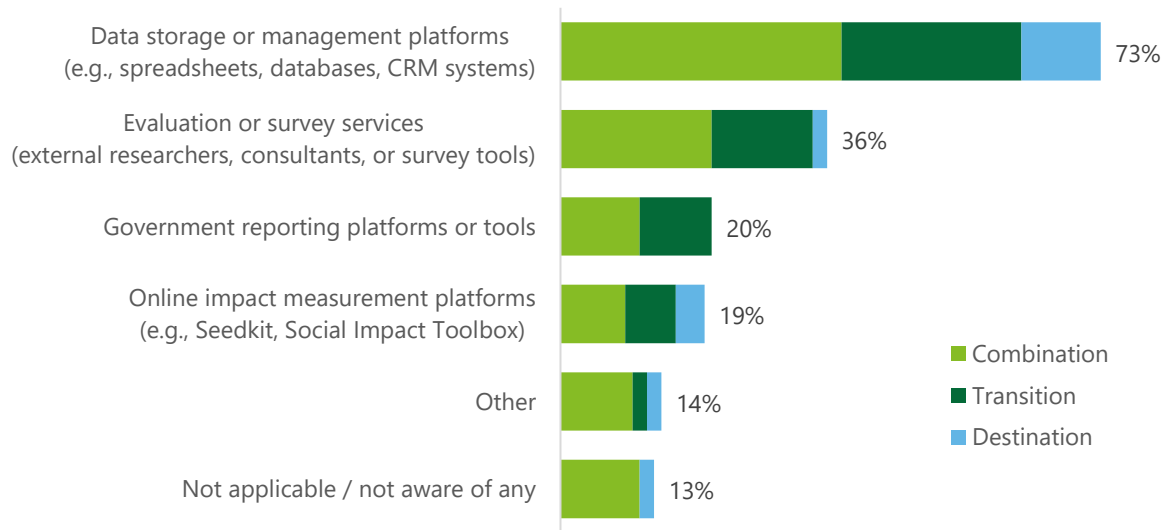


Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Social Traders' social enterprise survey (2026)
Q21 – To what extent do you agree that the following are challenges your organisation faces in measuring participant outcomes? (n=103)

Most social enterprises (73%) use data storage or management platforms (such as spreadsheets or CRM systems) to support with outcome measurement.

- More than a third (or 36%) of social enterprises use external services (such as evaluation or survey services) to support with outcome measurement (Chart 4.8)
- 19% of social enterprises use online impact measurement platforms to support outcome measurement or impact tracking such as Seedkit or the Social Impact Toolbox.
- Other third-party services or platforms included internal human resources/ payroll system. Some organisations track outcomes through case studies of individual participants.

Chart 4.8: Types of third-party services or platforms used to support outcome measurement or tracking



Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Social Traders' social enterprise survey (2026)
Q22 – Which types of third-party services or platforms do you use to support outcomes measurement or impact tracking? (n=103)

05 Outcome rates

In the social enterprise survey, respondents were asked which outcomes they measure. Those that do measure outcomes were then asked to report results in a structured format. This section presents these results, highlighting the sector's capability – albeit with varying levels of maturity – in outcomes measurement. Among those measuring outcomes, findings are promising. These results are considered alongside evidence on transition rates observed among a cohort of potentially comparable jobseekers identified in HILDA.

Key findings

Outcome rates are being measured across the sector, with more than 4 in 5 social enterprises able to provide data on at least one outcome.

[34](#)

Outcome rates are promising for transitional enterprises, and are in line with national workforce average ranges:

[34](#)

- Transitional enterprises report that 39% of participants are employed externally within 12 months. In comparison, HILDA data shows that among a group who are long-term unemployed or marginally attached, 24% to 43% achieve employment within 12 months.

Social enterprises are achieving (and sometimes measuring) outcomes beyond employment. Across the sector, more than half of participants engaged in mentoring or coaching across the sector and almost 3 in 10 participated in accredited training.

[34](#)

HILDA analysis provides a proof of concept for further benchmarking. The analysis in this report provides an example, highlighting cohort-level results for employment outcomes.

[35](#), [36](#)

5.1 Interpreting outcomes rates

The survey demonstrates proof of concept for outcomes data collection, but interpretation and comparisons to benchmarks requires context – given diverse goals and cohort complexity.

The survey demonstrates proof of concept for outcomes data collection within the social enterprise sector.

In the survey, social enterprises were asked to provide data on participant outcomes in a structured format (consistent with the [costing research](#)). More than 4 in 5 social enterprises (or 82%) were able to provide data on at least one outcome, demonstrating a [clear proof of concept](#) for sector-wide outcomes data collection, and a commitment to measuring outcomes over time.

However, outcome rates must be interpreted in context. Social enterprises pursue diverse primary objectives – ranging from transitions to external opportunities to ongoing internal employment – while participants themselves have varied, and not always employment-focused, goals (e.g., transitions to further study). As a result, the relative importance of different outcomes varies across social enterprise models, and reported results represent a point-in-time snapshot, with many participants still progressing towards their goals.

Data from the HILDA survey offers a simplified benchmark for assessing outcomes achieved through social enterprise models.

The report uses data from the HILDA survey to benchmark social enterprise participant outcomes against a cohort of long-term unemployment individuals. Distance from the labour market – for example long-term unemployment or not in the labour force – is used as the basis for comparison as it was identified as among the most common characteristics among participants supported by social enterprise models (page [19-20](#)).

To support more nuanced comparisons, the report also presents cohort-specific benchmarks (e.g., outcome rates for people with a disability, Indigenous Australians). However, these should also be interpreted as indicative rather than precise, as they represent relatively crude proxies for participant need, particularly given many participants align to [multiple cohorts](#).

While benchmarking – even in simplified form – provides a useful reference point, it is likely to underestimate the intensity of need among social enterprise participants. Around

45% of the HILDA cohort report “trouble finding a job”, where it could be assumed all participants in a social enterprise would meet this criteria. Further, the HILDA dataset looks at employment outcome at a point in time (after a year), while some social enterprises define outcomes as *consistent* employment over a year (see box below). Taken together, these difference in measurement suggest that it may not be reasonable to expect social enterprises to achieve outcomes at the upper range of the HILDA results.

More precise benchmarking would require a deeper understanding of participant characteristics within social enterprises, to then define comparable cohorts in large public datasets (for example, through a propensity score matching model). While, in theory, social enterprises could collect more detailed cohort-level data, this would be resource-intensive. A more practical approach would be to leverage administrative datasets to identify participants supported through social enterprises.

This report does not directly compare outcomes achieved through social enterprises with those of the broader employment services systems (e.g., Workforce Australia), as these do not represent like-for-like programs. Instead, comparisons are framed around cohort similarities, providing greater flexibility to assess outcomes across diverse interventions.

Measurement differences between the HILDA data and Social Enterprise survey

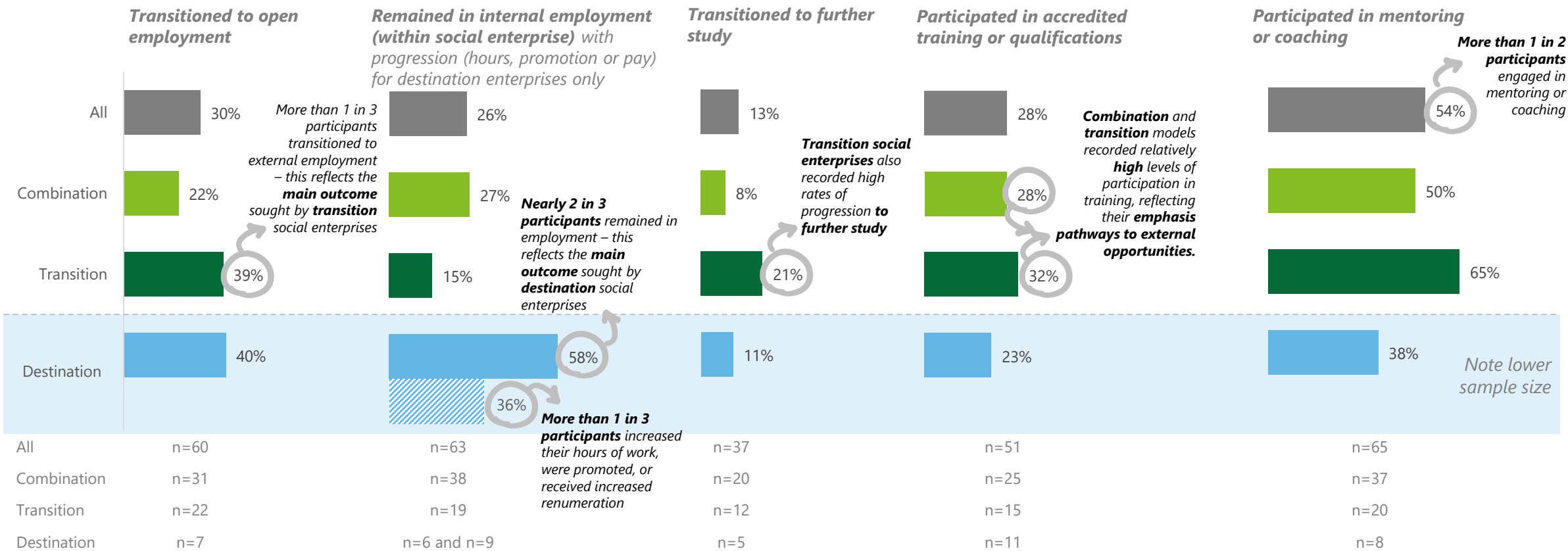
HILDA captures whether an individual is employed at a point-in-time within a given year, rather than whether they have sustained employment over that period (as measured in the survey). Therefore, social enterprises typically apply a higher threshold when defining a transition to employment, meaning the quality and durability of outcomes are likely to be stronger in social enterprise models. In addition, HILDA reflects the 2022-23 period, whereas the transition rates reported in the survey relate to 2024-25. These periods are not directly comparable, given changes in Australian labour market conditions – particularly the relatively low unemployment rate during the COVID-19 recovery – which may influence observed outcomes, including slightly higher transition to employment rates for long-term unemployed individuals observed in the HILDA survey dataset.

5.2 Reported outcome rates

The survey responses suggest that on common measures of employment outcome, most enterprises are tracking data consistently: 82% were able to provide data on at least one of these outcomes.

The survey asked enterprises to report the average proportion of participants achieving different outcomes (noting outcomes of interest vary by social enterprise model). Interpretation of the results in Chart 5.1 is highly dependent on the goals of the individual organisation. For example, low rate of internal employment among transition social enterprises should not be interpreted as underperformance; rather these organisations are designed to support transitions into external opportunities. Some reported outcome rates, particularly for destination social enterprises, are based on small sample sizes and should be interpreted with caution.

Chart 5.1: Average proportion of participants who achieved the following outcomes in the most recent 12-month period



Note: Averages are reported at the social enterprise/ program level. Each enterprise is equally weighted, regardless of the number of participants (e.g., an enterprise with 200 participants is weighted the same as one with 10 participants).
Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Social Traders' social enterprise survey (2026), using survey questions 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39 & 40.

5.3 Benchmarking transition rates: reference points from HILDA data

Comparing the average jobseeker’s rate of transition in and out of employment over time can provide a benchmark to understand the outcomes rates seen among social enterprises.

To provide a benchmark for evaluating labour market interventions, the experiences of a population group who faced unemployment in a given year can be examined. Figure 6.1 shows the share of those unemployed (by length of unemployment) that transition to employment within one year (second column), and the share who are subsequently employed in the following year (third column). These results provide a point-in-time measure of employment, which may not reliably measure *consistent* employment for the 12 months between surveys.

Implications for the social enterprise sector

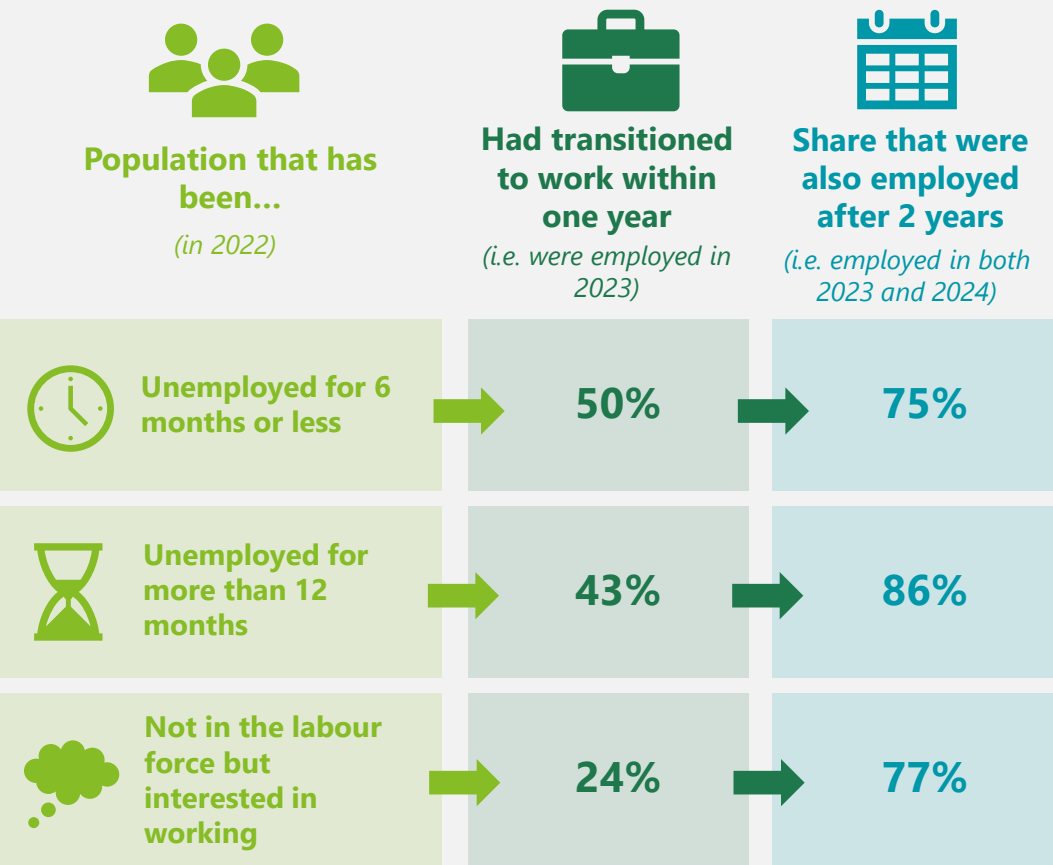
These transition rates could be used as a benchmark for social enterprises to understand the rates at which their participants are achieving certain employment outcomes. For instance, HILDA data shows that among a group of people who are unemployed for more than 12 months, 43% transition to work in the following 12 months. This rate of transition is on par with the average rate among surveyed transitional social enterprises, who on average said that 39% of their participants find external employment within 12 months.

Differences in transition rates across cohorts may reflect that some groups experience multiple, intersecting barriers to employment beyond what their core cohort identifier suggests, compounding challenges in securing and maintaining work.

The ‘more than 12 months’ unemployed population can serve as a simple proxy for the group of people who might be supported in social enterprises. However, given the intensity of need is likely to be higher than the average long-term unemployed individual, the most appropriate proxy likely lies between the 24-43% range of those unemployed for more than 12 months and who are marginally attached.

The table over the page shows these transition rates by cohort and also presents the share of unemployed people in 2022 who were employed in 2024, regardless of their employment status in 2023, highlighting different dynamics across population groups.

Figure 5.1: Employment transitions, by length of unemployment



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026) based using Wave 24 of the HILDA Survey

5.3 Benchmarking transition rates: reference points from HILDA data

Transition and retention rates are slightly lower for cohorts facing certain types of disadvantage.

Table 5.1: Employment rates by cohort, based on labour force status across a three-year period

Labour force status (2022)	Cohort	Transitioned to work within a year ¹	Transitioned to work within a year, still employed the next year ²	Implied retention rate ³	Transitioned to work within two years ⁴
Unemployed for 6 months or less	All population	50%	37%	75%	49%
	Aged under 24	64%	45%	71%	60%
	Income support recipient	32%	20%	64%	32%
	Limited education	51%	36%	70%	50%
	Disability or long-term health condition	44%	27%	62%	35%
	Indigenous Australian ^ ^ Lower sample size	28%	28%	100%	36%
Unemployed for more than 12 months	All population	43%	37%	86%	53%
	Aged under 24 ^ Lower sample size	39%	32%	81%	71%
	Income support recipient	32%	24%	76%	26%
	Limited education	33%	28%	84%	52%
	Disability or long-term health condition ^	24%	18%	73%	27%
	Indigenous Australian ^ ^ Lower sample size	17%	11%	64%	17%
Not in labour market, but wants to work	All population	24%	19%	77%	28%
	Aged under 24	42%	30%	70%	45%
	Income support recipient	12%	9%	75%	14%
	Limited education	25%	18%	72%	29%
	Disability or long-term health condition	15%	12%	77%	20%
	Indigenous Australian	32%	25%	79%	42%

Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026) based using Waves 22, 23, and 24 of the HILDA Survey

¹ Unemployed in 2022 and employed in 2023

² Unemployed in 2022 and employed in both 2023 and 2024

³ The share of people who transitioned to work within a year, that were also employed after 2 years

⁴ Unemployed in 2022 and employed in 2024, irrespective of 2023 employment status

Note: ^ ^ indicates a sample size of fewer than 20 and ^ indicates a sample size between 20 and 50. Results with no symbol have a sample size greater than 50. The specific sample sizes are provided in the [Appendix](#).

06 Implications for further research

While cost analysis is well established, the sector faces gaps in consistent and resourced outcomes measurement.

This report has also identified opportunities to strengthen outcomes measurement across the sector to support monitoring, evaluation and learning, and with a view to measure the value of outcomes and eventually to link cost and outcome data to establish return on investment in the sector.

This section summarises how the report progresses these goals, and the opportunity for funders, enterprises, sector stewards and government to work in partnership to strengthen the evidence base on the public value created through social enterprise.

6.1 Where this work leaves us, and where to next

This analysis demonstrates that systematic outcomes measurement and benchmarking is possible and valuable, to progress the business case for investment in employment-focused social enterprises.

What this work has revealed

This research has highlighted that:

- There is *variation* in social enterprise models – *their definitions of 'success'* and intended outcomes for participants, the common characteristics of participants and the types of supports included in their employment programs.
- There is also *consistency* across the sector – that regardless of their model, social enterprises' central objective is to create *pathways to decent and lasting employment* for those who would otherwise be far from the labour market.
- The employment-related goals speak to social enterprises' role in *avoided costs for society and government*, both in providing employment in the enterprise and reducing participants' likelihood of unemployment in the long-term.
- Social enterprises are committed to measuring impact, but *face challenges in systematic data collection*, including resource constraints and participant reach.
- *Funders and data custodians can enable stronger practice*, by setting clear expectations and providing support to facilitate and build capability around data collection.
- *Organisations that do measure outcomes demonstrate promising results*. There is proof of concept to benchmark these results against national trends seen for possible like cohorts in the labour market.

This report provides contemporary evidence about the sector's scope, and highlights measurement challenges that are familiar to many social enterprise leaders.

The key additions to the evidence are in understanding the state of outcomes measurement, including (1) assessing the outcomes rates which are currently being achieved in the sector, on average, (2) highlighting where the sector can be more effectively supported to strengthen measurement practice, and (3) identifying what is needed to support improved outcomes measurement and benchmarking.

Areas for future research

This research reinforces the value of social enterprises as a specialist support to those furthest from the labour market, whose transition to decent work may require targeted and relatively intensive support, including on-the-job training. It has also highlighted the role of funders, enterprises, sector stewards and government in strengthening the evidence base on the public value created through social enterprise.

These roles include:

1. Strengthening systematic measurement

While some employment outcomes are measured systematically, most measurement is ad hoc or unstructured. Although most organisations say they 'know how' to measure outcomes, staff capacity and data collection challenges limit implementation.

This suggests that there is an opportunity for:

- Individual social enterprises to prioritise investments in reporting that demonstrates their role in employment outcomes, and to inform adjustments to delivery.
- Sector stewards, such as Social Traders, to facilitate quality outcomes research and repeat it over time, through certification and other data-collection approaches.
- Funders and social enterprises to build consensus at the outset of agreements, about:
 - the key outcomes for which social enterprises are funded (recognising that the employment, education and social outcomes to which social enterprises contribute are funded through different mechanisms and often by different parties)
 - the extent and rigour of outcomes measurement to be delivered, the measurement approaches that can be used, and the resourcing required to deliver these approaches

6.1 Where this work leaves us, and where to next

Improving the consistency and efficiency of data collection can strengthen the evidence base, and inform continual improvement of employment models, to support lasting job outcomes.

2. Supporting efficiency and reducing burden in data collection

Enterprises highlight the many frameworks that exist to inform *what* is measured, and most organisations highlight several platforms to store and track those measures. The challenge appears to be in the middle stage: *how* data are collected, in terms of efficiency, rigour and reach. This research reinforces what was highlighted in the preceding cost studies – that support to the sector must pair knowledge dissemination with practical support, including to facilitate research in partnership. This suggests an opportunity for:

- Funders and government, to enable access to external data sources and research tools, which can reduce the reliance on (and burden of) direct research that traces graduating participants over time
- Sector stewards, such as Social Traders, to support in facilitating this benchmarking activity – including consistent benchmarks to identify ‘quality’ outcomes and sharing evidence about measurement approaches that can be used, and the resourcing required to deliver these approaches.

3. Benchmarking outcomes regularly

Data from the Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey provides context to the type of barriers (and intersecting barriers) often faced by people who are furthest from the labour market, and has been used in this report to establish proof of concept for benchmarking outcomes across enterprises with different models.

There is an opportunity for:

- Government and other funders, to support the sector in its efforts to benchmark performance based on the outcomes of labour market participants with similar characteristics. This benchmarking exercise could be developed using person-level data which can more reliably identify those participating in social enterprise, and their relative outcomes.

- Individual social enterprises, to adjust delivery approaches based on regular outcomes monitoring, including by establishing opportunities for benchmarking, collaboration and knowledge sharing across the sector on what works to achieve outcomes in different contexts.

4. Valuing outcomes and connecting cost and outcomes data to establish the return to investment

The design and the delivery of the survey itself also presents a proof of concept for continued compilation of outcomes data, to establish the economic and social value of employment outcomes. Understanding the value of outcomes achieved allows for comparison with the cost metrics, to establish the return to investment in these models.

This research has provided a foundation for:

- Further work to establish the value of outcomes achieved (enabled by continued collection of outcomes information, particularly the length of employment transitions).
- Social Traders to build the capability to capture richer cost and outcome data – and to link the two at the organisation level – through certification and complimentary tools, so that the cost of delivery can be assessed against the value of outcomes achieved.
- Further research which connects cost and outcomes estimates (and which would be best trialled within a specific context, such as a group of social enterprises with a similar mission, target cohort and/or operating region).

These actions can strengthen the sector’s case for inclusion in mainstream funding systems (and inform the nature of this role). Most critically, and most immediately, this work can ensure the sector is as effective as possible in generating lasting employment outcomes for those furthest from the labour market.

Appendix

As further detailed in this appendix, the analysis in this report draws on survey responses from over 100 employment-focused social enterprises across Australia (noting that 98 social enterprises completed the full survey). At a high-level, employment-generating social enterprises who responded to this survey offer work experience (typically paid), are relatively young, operate a single social enterprise and are based in metropolitan areas. The characteristics of the survey sample broadly align with Social Traders certification dataset overall, as well as the sample of social enterprises used in the costing research.

This appendix also provides the complete social enterprise survey questionnaire and explains how HILDA Survey data has been interpreted, specifically definitions and sample sizes of cohorts.

A.1 Classifying social enterprises

Most surveyed employment-focused social enterprises offer paid work experience, and one third integrate both supported employment and connection to external employers.

Figure A.1 presents a classification framework for social enterprises based on the scope of supports provided, distinguishing social enterprises by whether they pay wages and/or broker pathways to external opportunities. The framework groups employment-generating social enterprises into three categories: work-integrated organisations, training or brokerage enterprises, and those that deliver *both*.

More than 9 in 10 surveyed social enterprises are ‘work-integrated’, offering paid work experience for people experiencing barriers to mainstream employment. Within this category:

- 62% of social enterprises deliver work-integrated training only (category 1)
- 33% offer both work-integrated training and placement support for individuals to transition to employment with other organisations (category 2)

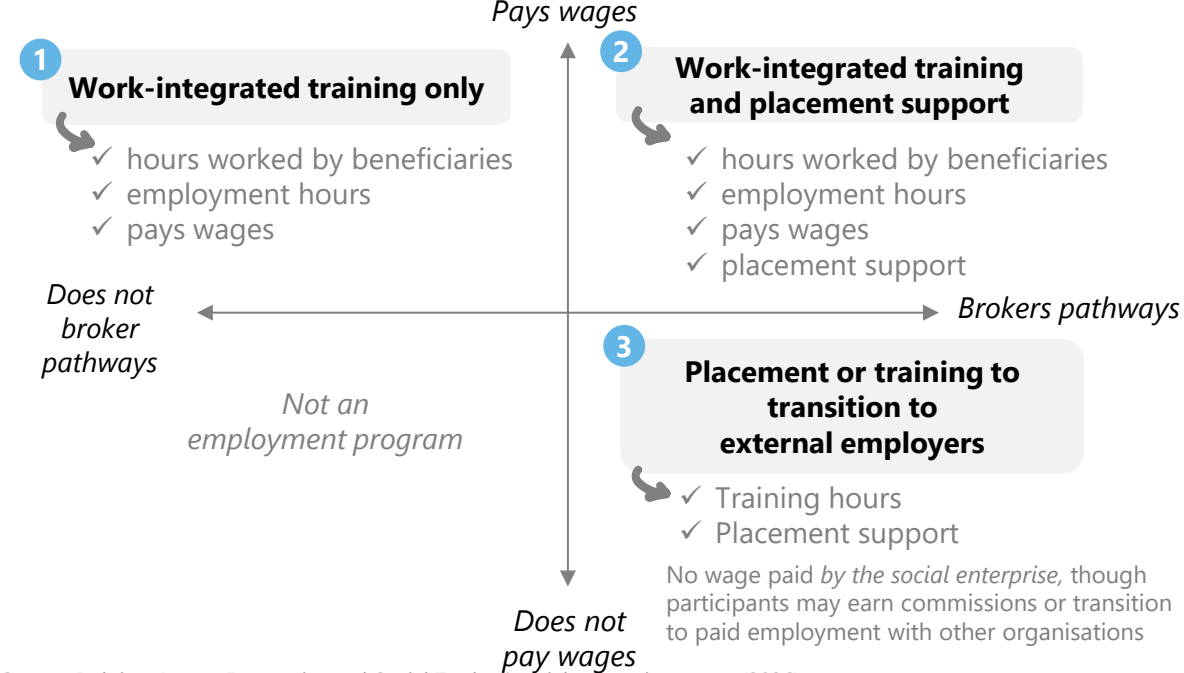
The remainder of surveyed social enterprises (5%) focus on providing generalist job-skills training, or placement support.

This framework was applied in the costing research, where limited information was available to assess organisational goals (without direct engagement). As such, it relied on observable proxies in the certification dataset (e.g., whether the organisation paid wages and brokered pathways) to group similar social enterprises and allow like-for-like comparisons.

This approach differs from that [used in this report](#), which classifies social enterprises based on the primary outcomes sought for participants (which provides a stronger basis for grouping). Accordingly, this report categories – and where relevant compares – social enterprises based on their primary outcomes sought for participants.

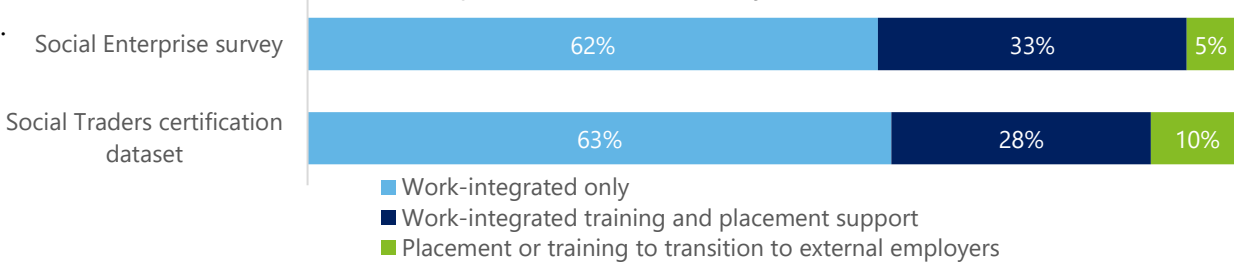
To assess the comparability of Social Traders certification dataset to the social enterprise survey, Chart A.1 applies the costing research framework to surveyed social enterprises, demonstrating broad consistency between the two.

Figure A.1: Classification of social enterprises framework



Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Social Traders’ social enterprise survey (2026)

Chart A.1 Distribution of social enterprise models in the survey and Social Traders certification dataset



Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Social Traders’ social enterprise survey (2026)

A.2 Overview of social enterprises surveyed

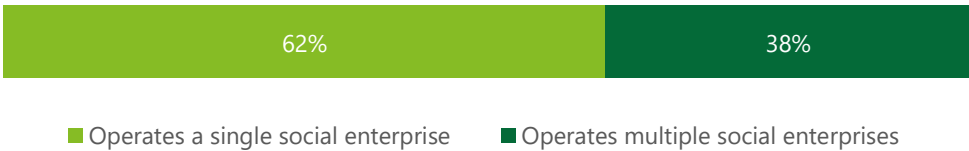
The sample includes 98 complete responses from social enterprises across Australia. Within this cohort, 68 provided consent to link survey responses to Social Traders dataset.

While 117 social enterprises commenced the survey, 98 completed the survey. Chart A.2 and A.3 present the organisation structure and age characteristics of the sample who completed the survey.

Of these respondents, 69% (or 68) provided consent to link their survey responses to the Social Traders accreditation dataset. Within this consenting cohort, all responses were successfully linked based on the social enterprise name, enabling insight into enterprises' location characteristics (which was not directly collected in the survey to minimise the reporting burden). It is intended that data captured in this survey is incorporated into Social Traders accreditation dataset overtime. Chart A.4 and A.5 present the location characteristics of those who completed the survey.

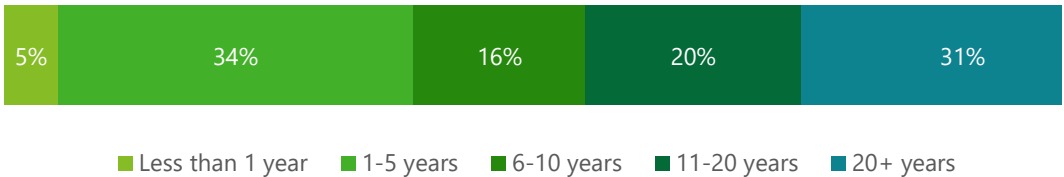
Overall, employment-generating social enterprises who responded to the survey are relatively young, with 55% of social enterprises having operated for less than 10 years. Most enterprises operate a single social enterprise (62%) and are based in metropolitan areas (66%). The sample broadly aligns with the Social Traders certification dataset. The high representation of Victorian social enterprises is consistent with a skew towards the organisations in the Social Traders certification data (reflecting the influence of Victorian social procurement policy).

Chart A.2: Social enterprise organisational structure



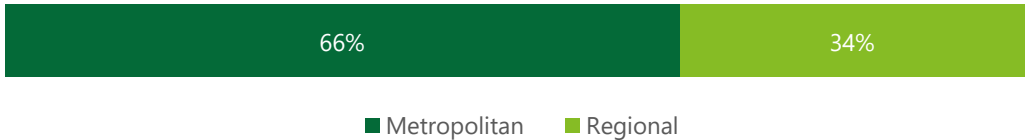
Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Social Traders' social enterprise survey (2026)
Q3 – Select the statement that best describes your organisation? (n=98)

Chart A.3: Social enterprise age



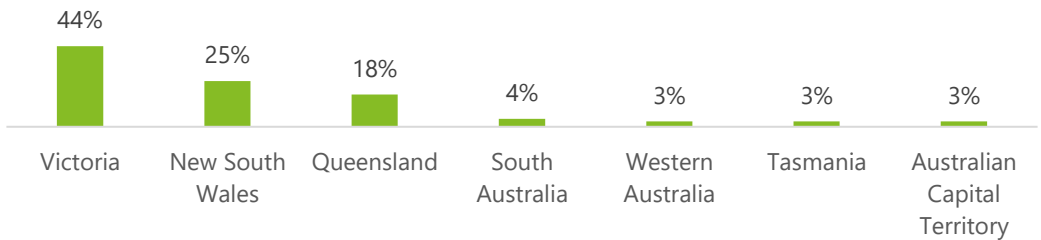
Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Social Traders' social enterprise survey (2026)
Q5 – How long has your social enterprise been operating? (n=98)

Chart A.4: Social enterprise regionality



Source: Deloitte Access Economics based on Social Traders certification dataset (2026)

Chart A.5: Social enterprise location



Source: Deloitte Access Economics based on Social Traders certification dataset (2026)

A.3 Summary of survey questions (1/2)

Appendix A.2 details the survey instrument that was fielded to collect information from social enterprises.

Section 1: Respondents details

1. What position do you hold within your social enterprise?
2. Please provide the registered name of your organisation.
3. We are interested in understanding the focus of your social enterprise's employment program(s) and the outcomes achieved. With that in mind, please select the statement that best describes your organisation. *[our organisation operates a single employment program; our organisation operates a distinct employment program.]*
4. You have indicated that your organisation operates more than one employment program. Please select one social enterprise (preferably the largest or most mature) and answer all remaining questions with reference to that program. Please provide the name of the social enterprise you will be answering the remainder of the survey in reference to.
5. How long has your social enterprise been operating?

Section 2: Social enterprise model

6. How would you best describe your social enterprise employment model? *[destination employment, transitional employment; a combination of destination and transitional employment]*
7. Which of these work-integrated employment or training supports does your social enterprise program offer? *[job matching; employer introductions; resume and interview preparation support; work placements, internships or trial shifts (unpaid); paid employment; mentorship; foundational skills training; other wellbeing supports]*
8. To what extent does your enterprise support participants to secure employment with external employers?

Section 3: Supported participants

9. Which of the following best describes your organisation's approach to participant eligibility? *[Strictly defined eligibility; defined eligibility with discretion; eligibility assessed on individual cases; no eligibility criteria]*
10. On what basis is eligibility for the program defined? *[age; gender; regional or remote location; long-term unemployment or history not participating in the labour force; people with disabilities; migrant, refugee or culturally and linguistically diverse background; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders; LGBTI+ people; interaction with the justice system; socioeconomic disadvantage; other (please specify)]*

11. Roughly what proportion of your participants experience the following employment barriers prior to joining your program? *[not in the labour force; history of long-term unemployment; underemployed or in casual/ temporary work; reliant on income support/ government benefits; limited education or qualifications; interaction with the justice system; housing insecurity or homelessness; mental health challenges; limited English proficiency]*
12. To what extent does your organisation's funding (from government, philanthropy, or other sources) influence your eligibility criteria or which participants you can support?

Section 4: Defining and measuring outcomes

13. How does your enterprise define "success" for a participant?
14. Which of the following employment-related outcomes is your enterprise seeking to achieve for participants? *[improved job readiness; development of foundational employability skills; development of industry-relevant skills and employment-related qualifications; improved job search capability; increased confidence to seek and sustain employment; transition into employment with an external (host) employer or internal progression that enables future external opportunities; sustained employment after exit; increased earnings or financial independence; long-term or ongoing employment within the social enterprise; job stability and reduced employment volatility; career progression or advanced within the enterprise; development of role-specific or specialist skills; improved workplace confidence and performance; sustained employment]*
15. Of the employment outcomes your organisation is prioritising, which are you actively tracking through data collection?
16. In addition to employment outcomes, social enterprise models may contribute to participants' wellbeing and ability to engage in work and daily life. These outcomes may be achieved alongside, or independently of, employment-related outcomes. Which of the following outcomes not directly related to employment is your enterprise seeking to achieve? *[improved sense of belonging, self-esteem and empowerment; improved social skills and relationships; improved financial skills and stability; improved mental health and emotional wellbeing; improved physical health and wellbeing; improved access to safe and stable housing; improved ability to meet daily living needs]*
17. Of the outcomes your organisation is prioritising beyond employment, which are you actively tracking through data collection?

A.3 Summary of survey questions (2/2)

18. Please select the approaches your organisation uses to measure participant outcomes.
[employment outcomes, training, qualifications, and skills development; participant self-reports; staff, mentor, or supervisor assessments; program engagement/ participation; external feedback; other (please specify); not applicable – we do not actively measure participant outcomes]
19. At what points in the participant journey do you collect employment-related and non-employment outcomes?
20. To what extent do funding requirements (including government and other funding sources) influence the following aspects of your program?
21. To what extent do you agree that the following are challenges your organisation faces in measuring participant outcomes?
22. Which types of third-party services or platforms do you use to support outcome measurement or impact tracking?

Section 5A: Achievement of outcomes (transition and combination social enterprises only)

23. Do you have an intended length of the program or employment placement for a participant?
24. What is the intended length of the program or employment placement for a participant?
25. On average, how long does a participant remain engaged with the program or employment placement?
26. What is the intended number of hours per week of participation in the program or employment placement?
27. What is the average number of hours per week that a participant partakes in the program or employment placement?
28. On average, what proportion of participants transitioned to external employment within 12 months of completing the program or employment placement, based on the most recent 12-month period for which you have data?
29. On average, what proportion of participants transitioned to internal employment within 12 months of completing the program or employment placement, based on the most recent 12-month period for which you have data?
30. On average, what proportion of participants transitioned to further study within 12 months of completing the program or employment placement, based on the most recent 12-month period for which you have data?
31. On average, what proportion of participants undertook accredited training or qualifications

while completing the program or employment placement, based on the most recent 12-month period for which you have data?

32. On average, what proportion of participants participated in mentoring or coaching while completing the program or employment placement, based on the most recent 12-month period for which you have data?
33. Is there anything else you would like to share about your social enterprise or the outcomes you measure or achieve?

Section 5B: Achievement of outcomes (destination social enterprises only)

34. On average, how long does a participant remain employed within the social enterprise?
35. On average, what proportion of employees transitioned to external employment within 12 months of being employed in your social enterprise, based on the most recent 12-month period for which you have data?
36. On average, what proportion of participants remained in internal employment, based on the most recent 12-month period for which you have data?
37. On average, what proportion of participants transitioned to further study within 12 months of being employed in your social enterprise, based on the most recent 12-month period for which you have data?
38. On average, what proportion of employees increased their hours of work, were promoted, or received increased remuneration while employed by the social enterprise, based on the most recent 12-month period for which you have data?
39. On average, what proportion of participants undertook accredited training or qualifications while employed by the social enterprise, based on the most recent 12-month period for which you have data?
40. On average, what proportion of participants participated in mentoring or coaching while employed by the social enterprise, based on the most recent 12-month period for which you have data?
41. Is there anything else you would like to share about your social enterprise or the outcomes you measure or achieve?

Section 6: Consent

42. Do you consent to your survey answers being linked to other information Social Traders holds on your social enterprise?

A.4 Further detail on outcomes sought

Social enterprises seek different outcomes depending on their type of enterprise.

Table A.1: Employment and non-employment-related outcomes sought by social enterprises, ranked

	All enterprises	Combination	Destination	Transitional
Improved sense of belonging, self-esteem and empowerment	1	1	1	4
Improved social skills and relationships	2	3	1	4
Improved job readiness	3	4		4
Development of foundational skills	4	2	7	1
Increased confidence to seek employment	5	7		1
Increased earnings	6	5	3	4
Improved mental health and emotional wellbeing	7	6	6	4
Sustained employment†	8		3	
Improved workplace confidence*	8		3	
Ongoing employment (within social enterprise)*	8	7		
Sustained employment after exit^	11			4
Development of industry-relevant skills and employment-related qualifications	12	9	12	12
Transition into external employment	13	11		1
Improved financial skills and stability	14	10	10	11
Job stability*	15		7	
Career progression (within the enterprise)*	15		7	
Development of role-specific skills*	17		12	
Improved job search capability	18	14		4
Improved ability to meet daily living needs	19	12	10	13
Improved physical health and wellbeing	20	13	14	14
Improved access to safe and stable housing	21	15	14	15

Outcomes sought varied by enterprise type in line with program models.

- Combination and destination enterprises most commonly sought wellbeing and workplace-related outcomes, reflecting their focus on sustained employment and its long-term benefits for participants.
- Transitional enterprises, mostly sought employability outcomes, consistent with the design of their programs which support progression into external employment.
- Across all enterprise types, outcomes related to housing, physical health, and daily living needs were less commonly sought, suggesting that they may generally be secondary to employment and wellbeing outcomes.

Gaps in outcomes sought by types of enterprise also reflect the design of the survey.

- Destination enterprises were not provided the response option for job search or job readiness outcomes, reflecting their focus on long-term employment within the enterprise.
- Outcomes related to longer-term career development or job stability were not available as response options for transitional or combination enterprises, who may be more focused on pathways to external employment.

Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Social Traders' social enterprise survey (2026)

Q14 – Which of the following employment-related outcomes is your enterprise seeking to achieve for participants? (n=104) & Q16 – Which of the following outcomes not directly related to employment is your enterprise seeking to achieve? (n=104)

^ Response option was only available for transitional enterprises. * Response option was only available for destination social enterprises. † Response option was only available for combination social enterprises

A.5 Overview of the HILDA analysis

Wave 24 of the HILDA Survey surveyed 17,178 people and provides the variables used to construct the cohorts applied in this analysis.

Part of the analysis presented in this report draws on the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey, Restricted Release 24, a longitudinal and nationally representative survey of Australian households.

Interpreting the HILDA results in [Chapter 3](#)

In Wave 24 of the HILDA Survey (2024), 17,178 people were interviewed and included in the sample. Of these respondents, 432 were unemployed for less than 12 months at the time of collection, while 143 were unemployed for more than 12 months. A further 795 respondents were identified as not in the labour force and marginally attached.

For questions relating to barriers to employment, 681 respondents answered the question on reasons they had difficulty obtaining a job among the population of people not employed but seeking work. Table A.2 presents the sample sizes for the cohorts in 2024 who answered this question.

Table A.2: Sample sizes for respondents reporting barriers to employment (2024)

Cohort	Number of respondents
All population	681
Aged under 24	280
Income support recipient	288
Limited education	395
Disability or long-term health condition	239
Indigenous Australian	69

Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2026) based using Wave 24 of the HILDA Survey

Definitions

The following definitions apply to the cohorts used in the HILDA analysis.

Income support recipient: Respondents who receive Australian Government income support payments, including pensions, parenting payments and allowances (HILDA variable: *bncis*). Allowances include Newstart Allowance, Mature Age Allowance, Sickness Allowance, Widow Allowance, Special Benefit, Partner Allowance, Youth Allowance, Austudy, Abstudy and the Community Development Program.

Disability or long-term health condition: Respondents with a long-term health condition, impairment or disability that restricts everyday activities and has lasted, or is likely to last, for six months or more (HILDA variable: *health*).

Limited education: Respondents whose highest level of educational attainment is Year 11 or below, or Year 12 (HILDA variable: *edhigh1*).

A.5 Overview of the HILDA analysis

The HILDA Survey provides the longitudinal data used to construct employment transition measures in this analysis. Weighting was applied throughout the HILDA analysis to ensure results are representative of the population and comparable across survey waves.

Applying HILDA weights

Cross-sectional weights were applied to all 2024 estimates presented in the analysis, while longitudinal weights were applied when calculating employment transition rates. These weights are provided by HILDA and have been applied consistently to all HILDA analysis in this report.

Weights are used to ensure the survey results are more representative of the broader Australian population, rather than reflecting only the characteristics of the survey sample itself. Cross-sectional weights adjust the 2024 results to better represent the population at a single point-in-time, while longitudinal weights account for survey attrition and ensure transition analysis reflects the population represented across multiple waves of the survey.

Interpreting the HILDA results in [Chapter 5](#)

In Wave 22 of the HILDA Survey (2022), 15,954 people were interviewed and included in the sample. Of these respondents who were also observed in 2023 and 2024, 181 were unemployed for less than six months at the time of collection, 121 were unemployed for 12 months or more, and 806 were not in the labour force and marginally attached. Table A.3 presents sample sizes for these cohorts, based on labour force status in 2022.

Sensitivity testing was undertaken in the estimation of employment transition rates, including alternative base years for labour force status (e.g. 2023) and alternative unemployment duration groupings.

Table A.3: Sample sizes by labour force status, by cohort (2022)

Labour force status (2022)	Cohort	Sample size
Unemployed for 6 months or less	All population	181
	Aged under 24	76
	Income support recipient	73
	Limited education	105
	Disability or long-term health condition	69
	Indigenous Australian	15
Unemployed for more than 12 months	All population	121
	Aged under 24	45
	Income support recipient	67
	Limited education	62
	Disability or long-term health condition	47
	Indigenous Australian	19
Not in labour market, but wants to work	All population	806
	Aged under 24	210
	Income support recipient	417
	Limited education	442
	Disability or long-term health condition	393
	Indigenous Australian	70

Limitation of our Work

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