



# Delivery of VET: emerging trends in response to the COVID-19 pandemic



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## ABOUT

This interactive publication contributes to the growing body of work investigating online and blended training delivery in vocational education and training (VET). It presents the delivery mode of subject-level enrolments in VET for 2019 (pre-pandemic), 2020 and 2021. The aim is to examine whether, and how, training delivery has changed during the pandemic. In addition to overall subject-level enrolment figures, the publication presents delivery mode by jurisdiction, funding source, training provider type, Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) level and student remoteness. The data are sourced from NCVER's Total VET Activity (TVA) collection.

## BACKGROUND

The information given below contributes to our understanding of how the delivery of VET has changed across the period of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Previous NCVER research (Hume & Griffin 2021) explored the increased use of online training delivery during 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and highlighted key findings from a survey of registered training organisations (RTOs). This survey indicated that more than 61% of RTOs would be more likely to deliver training via blended delivery modes in the future. The data relating to subjects delivered using blended delivery (that is, online in combination with another delivery mode) examined in this publication largely reflect the proposed training delivery approaches of these RTOs.

The intended, and actual, increase in the use of online and blended delivery highlights the importance of future research in informing the use of these delivery modes. A forthcoming publication by Hume and Griffin will investigate the characteristics of the teaching practices and support services associated with online and blended delivery of VET.

The categories that capture delivery mode in the TVA data collection are internal (for example, classroom-based); external (for example, online); and workplace-based (for example, training conducted in the workplace); or any combination of these categories. For this publication, the term 'online' has been used in place of the AVETMISS<sup>1</sup> category of 'external'. Further information on how subject delivery mode is captured is available in the AVETMISS data element definitions document.

For this publication, these delivery mode categories have been condensed into three categories:

- *No online delivery*: this combines the delivery modes of internal only, workplace-based only, and combination of internal and workplace-based
- *Online-only delivery*: this does not include any other categories, and captures the AVETMISS category of external only
- *Blended delivery* (online in combination with another delivery mode): this combines the delivery modes of combination of internal and external, combination of external and workplace-based, and combination of all modes.

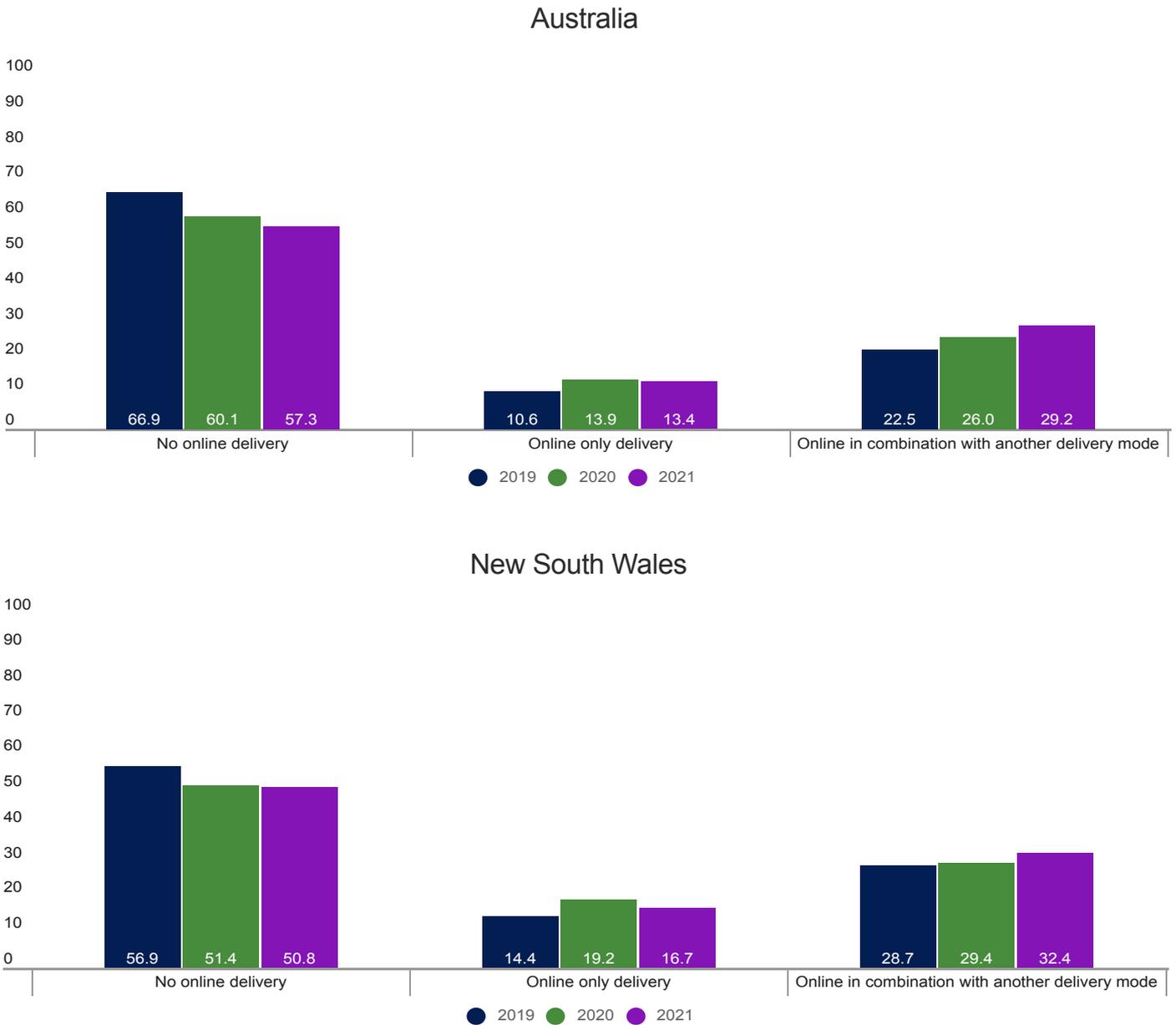
## HOW HAS DELIVERY MODE CHANGED FOLLOWING THE PANDEMIC?

VET delivered through blended delivery (that is, online in combination with another delivery mode) has experienced sustained growth, from almost 23% of subject enrolments in 2019 to just over 29% in 2021. This growth of blended VET delivery is in line with 2021 research findings, whereby surveyed RTOs highlighted an intention to increase their use of blended delivery (Hume & Griffin 2021, 2022).

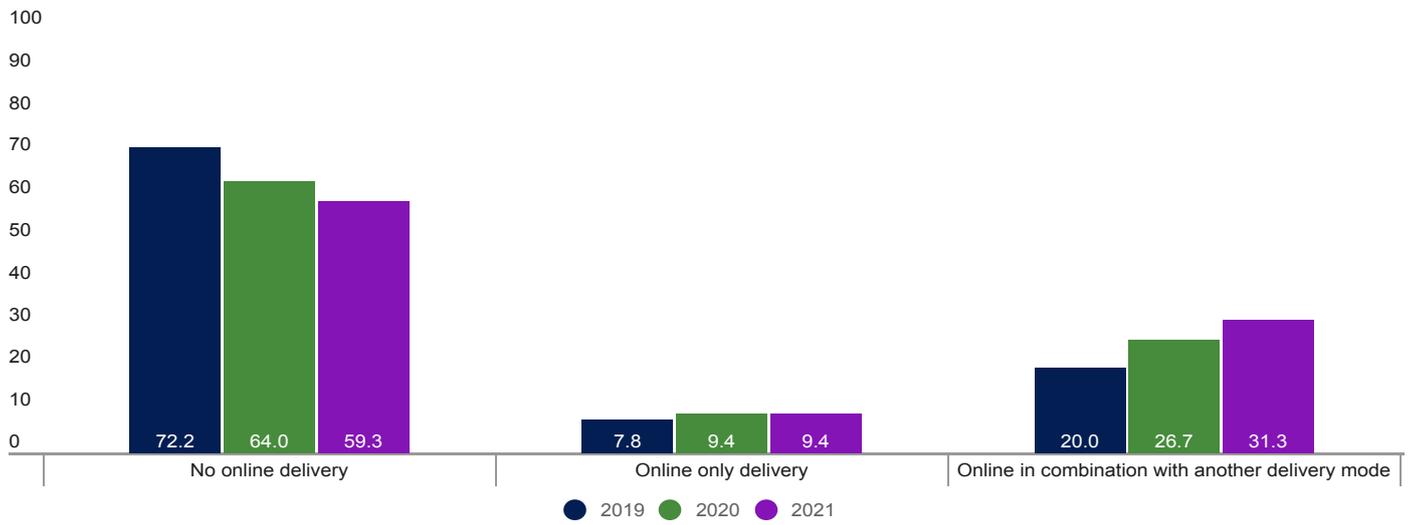
The proportion of online-only VET subjects increased by more than 3% in the year the COVID-19 pandemic was declared (2020). This has since remained relatively steady, with a similar proportion of subjects delivered online-only in 2021.

Since 2019 there has continued to be a decline in the proportion of VET subjects with no online delivery. This was most pronounced in the first year of the pandemic, with a decrease of almost 7%, followed by a smaller decline of just under 3% between 2020 and 2021.

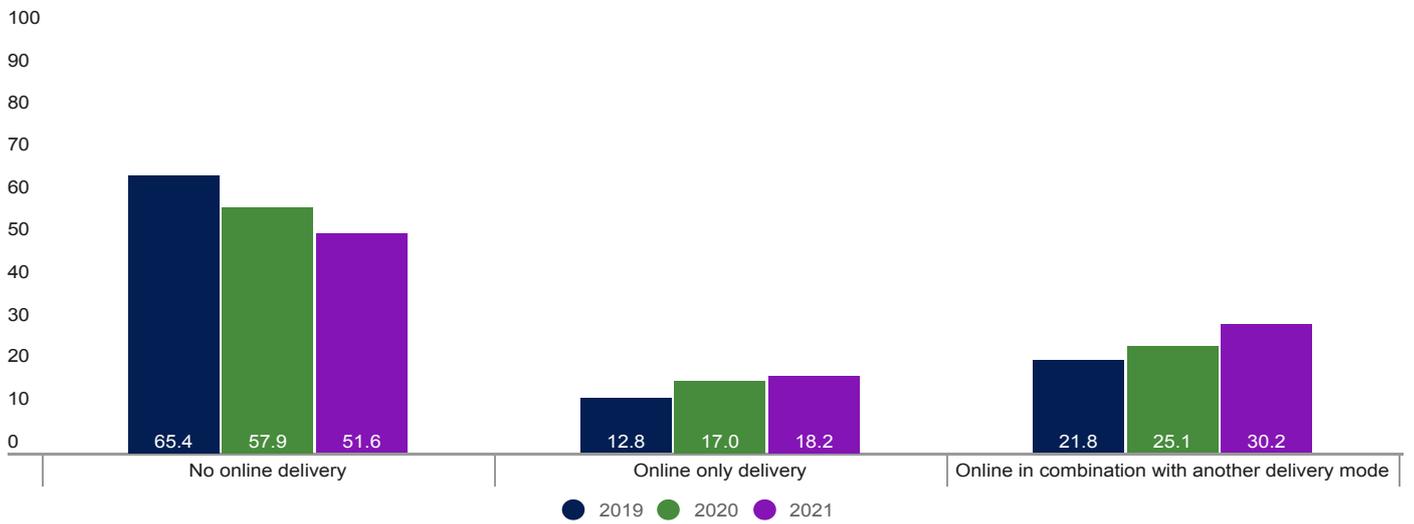
**Figure 1 Proportion of subject enrolments by delivery mode, 2019-21 (%)**



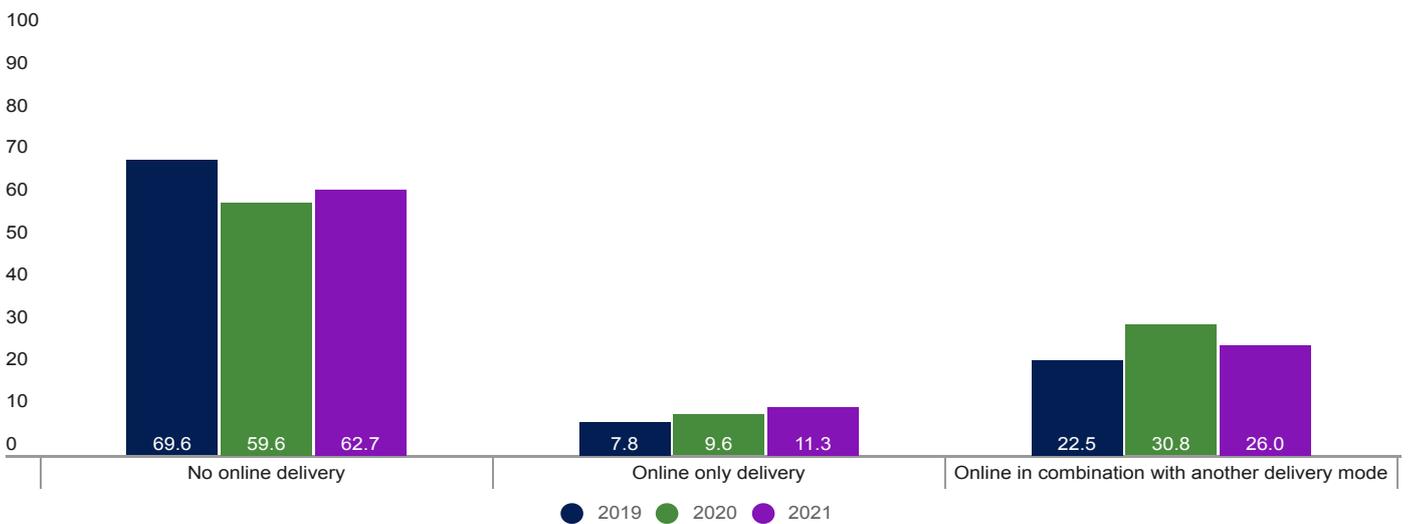
## Victoria



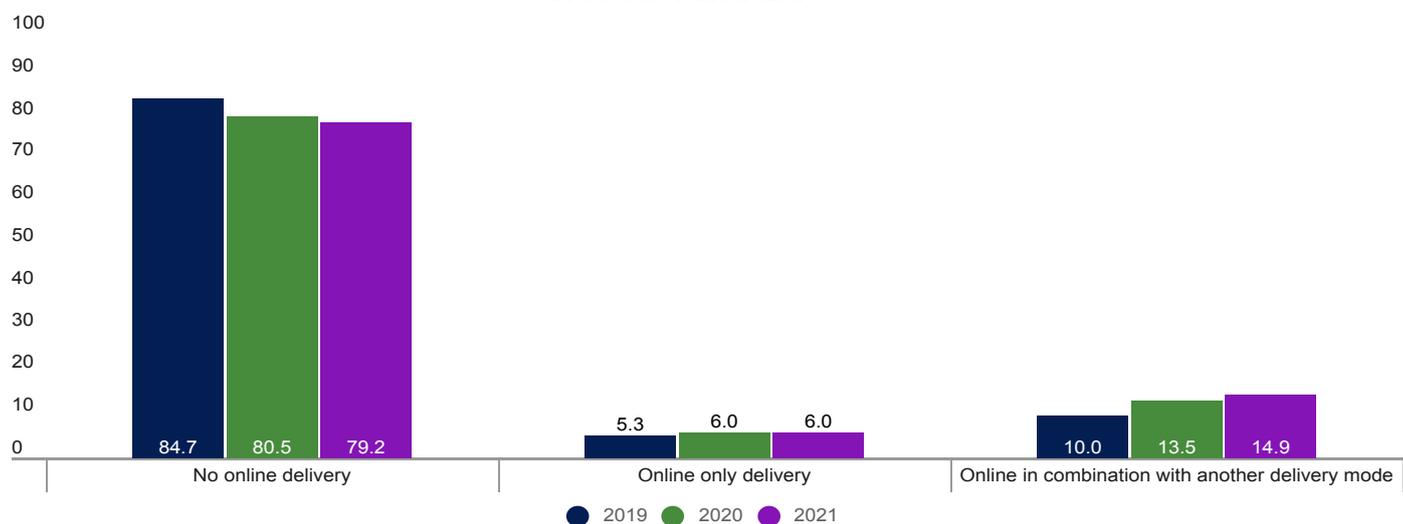
## Queensland



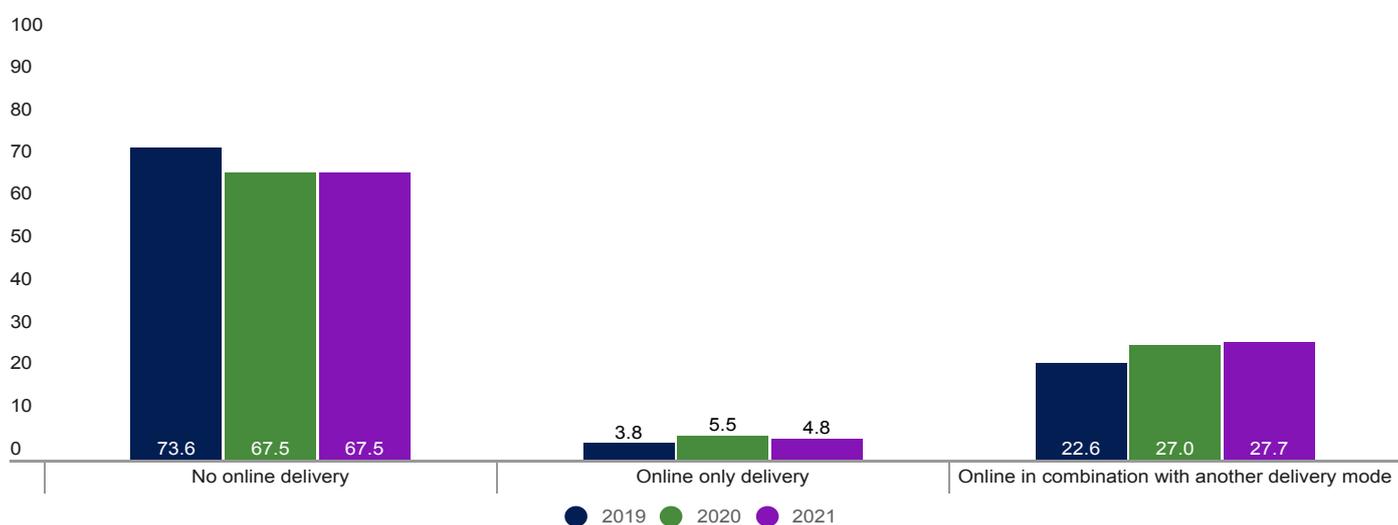
## South Australia



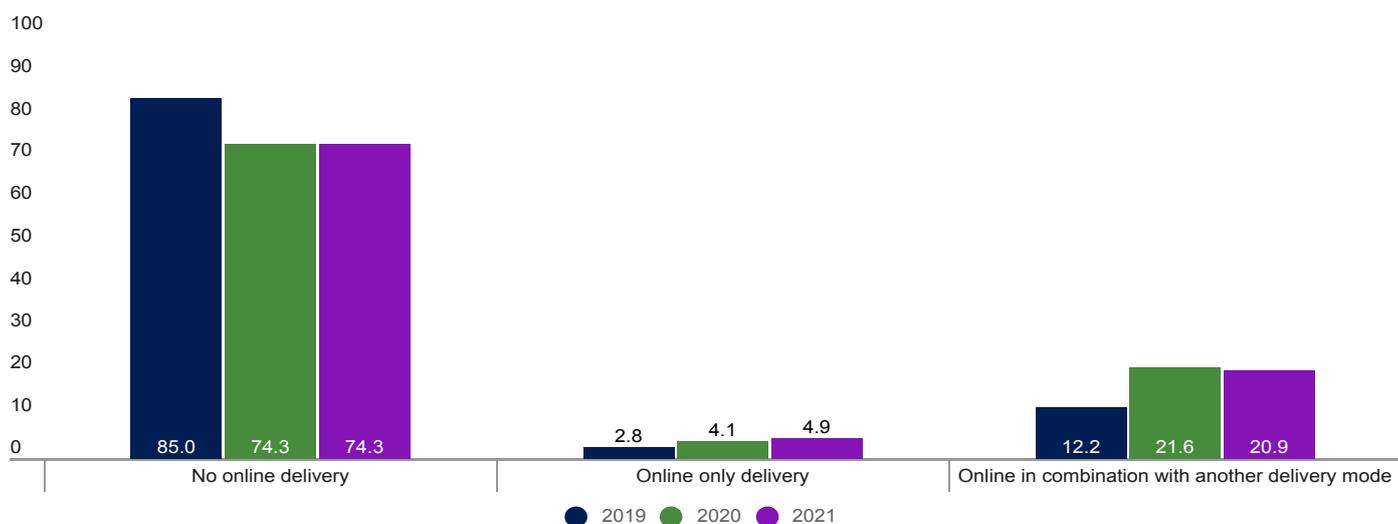
## Western Australia



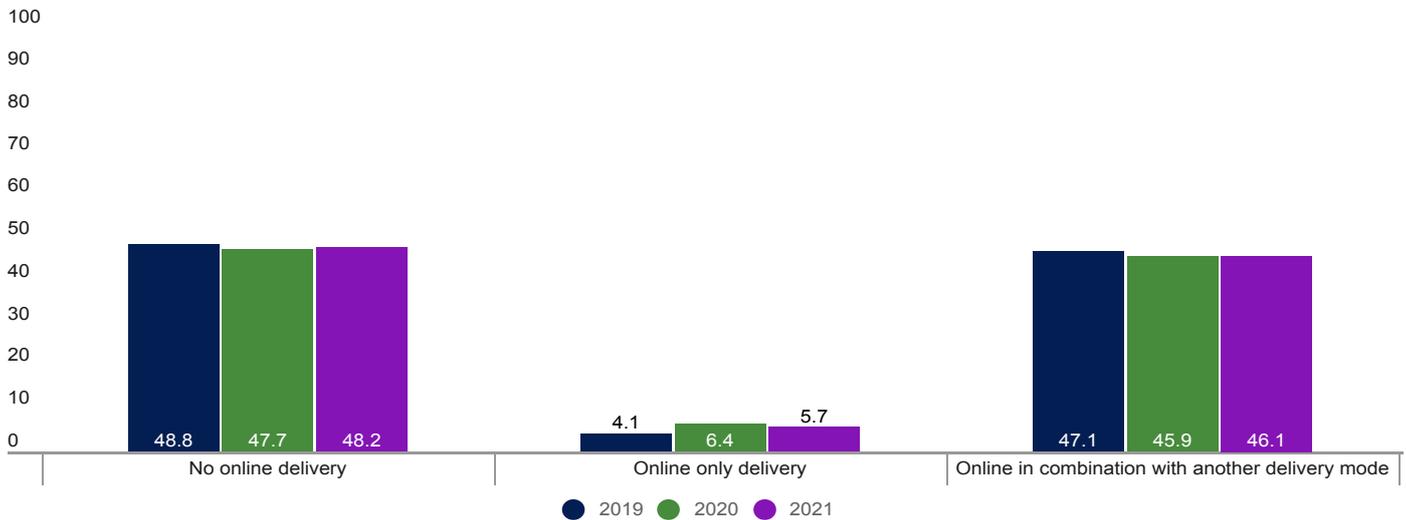
## Tasmania



## Northern Territory



## Australian Capital Territory



Notes: 1. The category 'no online delivery' combines the delivery modes of internal only, workplace-based only, and combination of internal and workplace-based.  
 2. The category 'online in combination with another delivery mode' includes the delivery modes of combination of internal and external, combination of external and workplace-based, and combination of all modes.  
 3. Figures include domestic students only.  
 Source: NCVET Total VET Students and Courses, 2019–21.

## WHAT DOES DELIVERY MODE LOOK LIKE ACROSS THE JURISDICTIONS?

Almost all jurisdictions reported a decrease in subjects with no online delivery (that is, classroom or workplace-based) between 2019 and 2020. For some jurisdictions, such as New South Wales, Western Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory, this initial decline levelled off and remained relatively steady into 2021. For Victoria and Queensland, however, the decline of subjects with no online delivery continued into 2021, decreasing by around 5% and 6% respectively.

For South Australia the proportion of subject enrolments with no online delivery increased in 2021, although not to pre-pandemic levels.

Most jurisdictions reported an increase in the proportion of subject enrolments delivered via blended modes over this three-year period. This was most prominent for Victoria and Queensland, increasing by 11% and 8% respectively. For New South Wales, Western Australia and Tasmania, this increase was less pronounced, at around 4% to 5%. These increases, albeit variable, may confirm that RTOs are carrying out their intentions to increase their use of blended delivery modes, as reported by Hume and Griffin (2022).

The ACT remained relatively steady across the three categories of delivery between 2019 and 2021, except for online-only delivery, which increased by just over 2% in 2020 before declining back slightly in 2021.

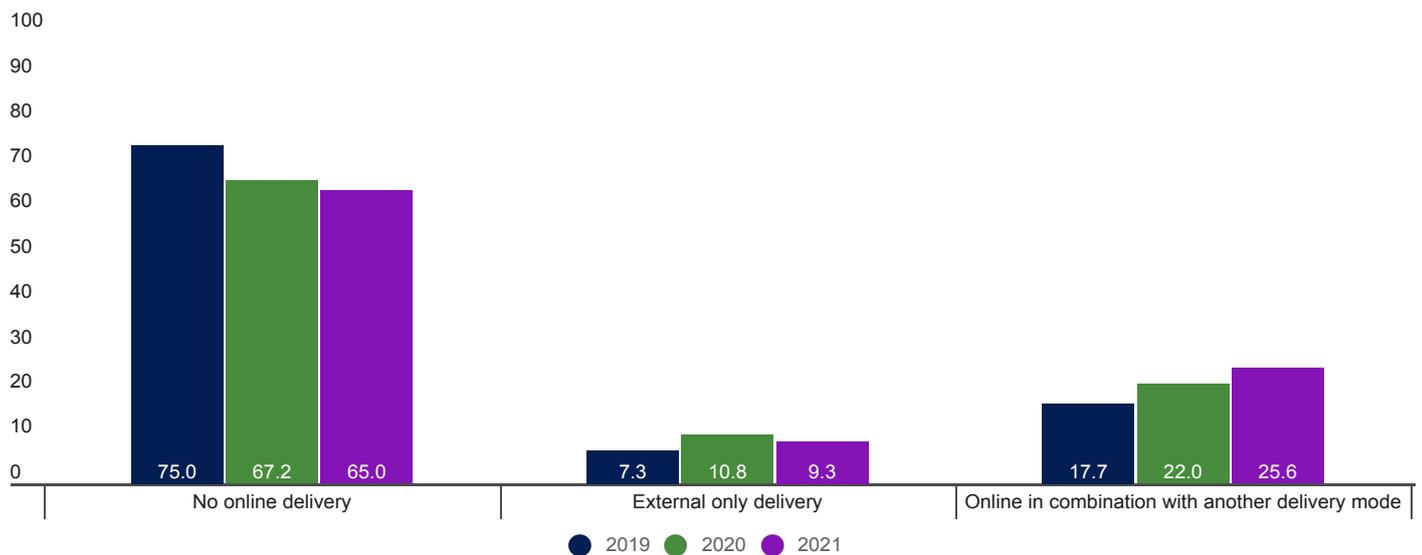
## FUNDING SOURCE AND VET DELIVERY MODES

As highlighted previously, the trend of declining subject enrolments with no online delivery and increasing blended delivery is also apparent when the data are examined by funding source. The proportion of government-funded and fee-for-service subject enrolments with no online delivery declined by similar proportions between 2019 and 2021 (approximately 10% and 9% respectively).

Within fee-for-service subject enrolments, online-only delivery increased in 2020 and remained relatively steady into 2021, whereas government-funded subject enrolments declined by almost 2% in 2021 following the initial increase, in response to the pandemic. Subjects delivered through blended delivery in both government-funded and fee-for-service subject enrolments have seen a year-on-year sustained growth in 2020 and 2021.

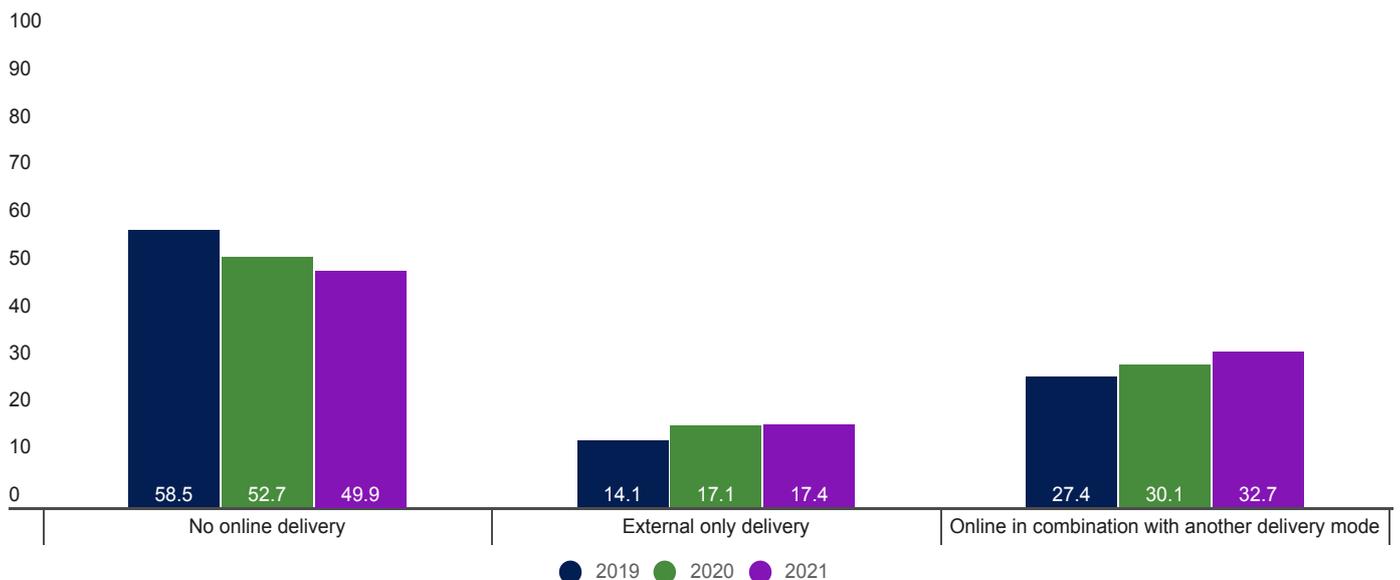
Although both funding sources followed relatively similar trends in 2020 and 2021, the distribution of subject enrolments across the three delivery mode categories is markedly different. Prior to the pandemic, the proportion of fee-for-service subjects delivered online-only was around double that recorded for government-funded (14% and 7% respectively). A sizeable difference was also evident for subjects delivered through blended delivery. By comparison, the proportion of subjects with no online delivery in 2019 was considerably higher for government-funded subject enrolments, at 75%, compared with 59% for fee-for-service.

**Figure 2 Proportion of government-funded subject enrolments by delivery mode for Australia, 2019-21 (%)**



Notes: 1. The category 'no online delivery' combines the delivery modes of internal only, workplace-based only, and combination of internal and workplace-based.  
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 3. Figures include domestic students only.  
 Source: NCVER Total VET Students and Courses, 2019–21.

**Figure 3 Proportion of fee-for-service subject enrolments by delivery mode for Australia, 2019-21 (%)**



Notes: 1. The category 'no online delivery' combines the delivery modes of internal only, workplace-based only, and combination of internal and workplace-based.  
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 Source: NCVER Total VET Students and Courses, 2019–21.

## DELIVERY MODES USED BY DIFFERENT TRAINING PROVIDER TYPES

No online delivery was the dominant category of delivery for all types of training providers prior to the pandemic. The proportion of training delivered in this way did, however, vary between providers, with no online delivery highest among schools (99%); community education (CE) providers (89%); enterprise providers (87%); and universities (83%). Considering the student cohort and the type of training generally delivered by these types of providers, it is not unexpected that they have the highest proportions of in-person training pre-pandemic, whether that be in a classroom or the workplace (or a combination of both).

In relation to private training providers, TAFE (technical and further education) institutes and community education providers, the data continue to reflect the trends highlighted earlier, of a persistent decline for subjects with no online delivery, along with year-on-year increases for blended delivery.

In the first year of pandemic, universities reported a substantial decline, of more than 22%, in subjects with no online delivery. This steep decline was countered by a corresponding increase in subjects delivered via blended delivery. After these considerable fluctuations between 2019 and 2020, the delivery of subjects remained steady across these two categories. Online-only delivery in universities increased marginally by 1% in 2020, remaining stable into 2021.

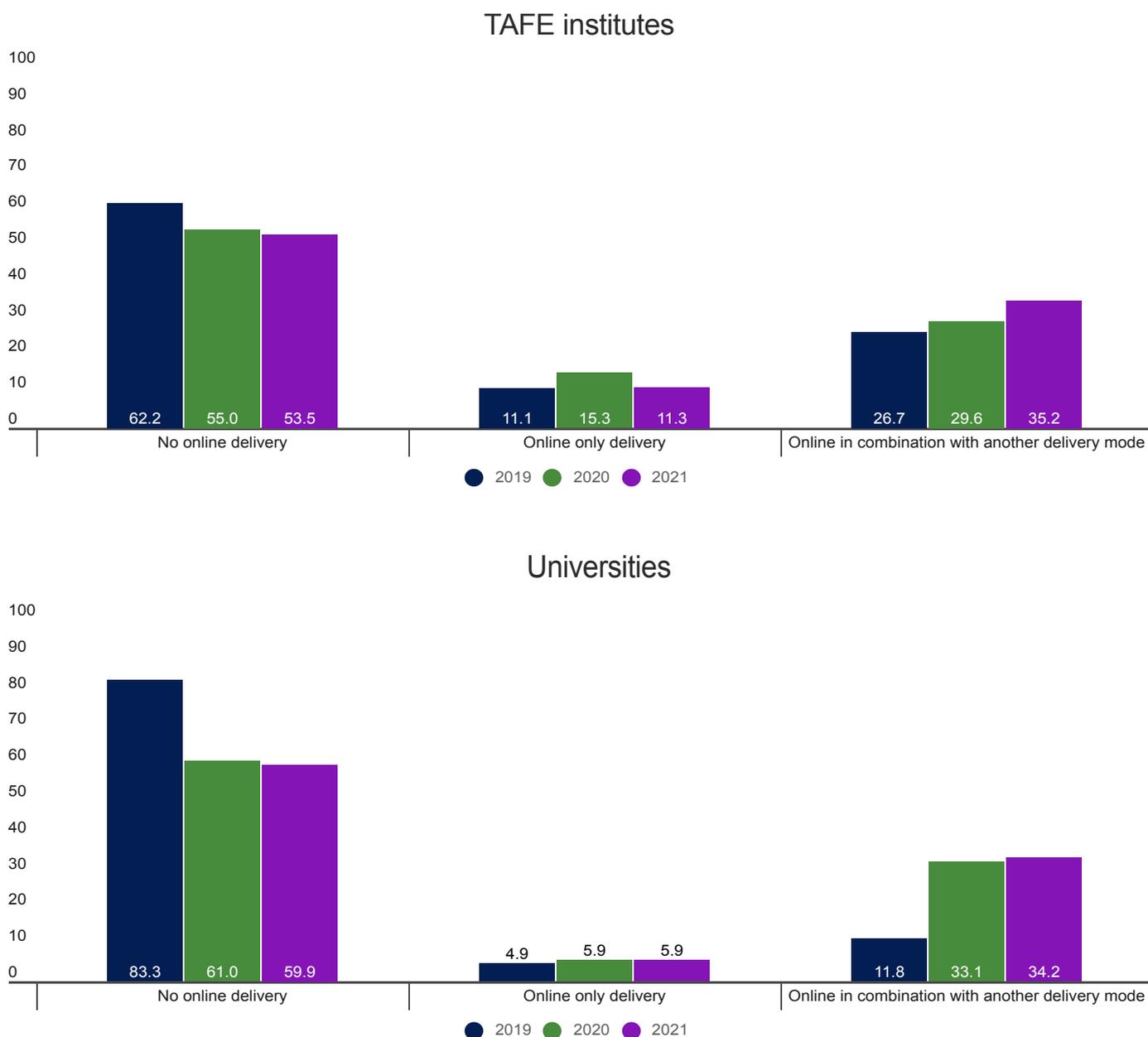
Other training providers, such as private training providers, TAFE institutes and community education providers, reported similar decreases from 2019 to 2020 in subjects with no online delivery (between approximately 6% and 7%). The proportionate decline of subjects with no online delivery in the second year of the pandemic has been considerably less for almost all the training provider types (noting that this increased in 2021 for enterprise providers).

Subjects delivered through blended delivery increased between 2020 and 2021 for private training providers, TAFE institutes and community education providers. TAFE institutes recorded the biggest increase, of almost 6%, while private training providers and community education providers increased by around 3% and 2% respectively.

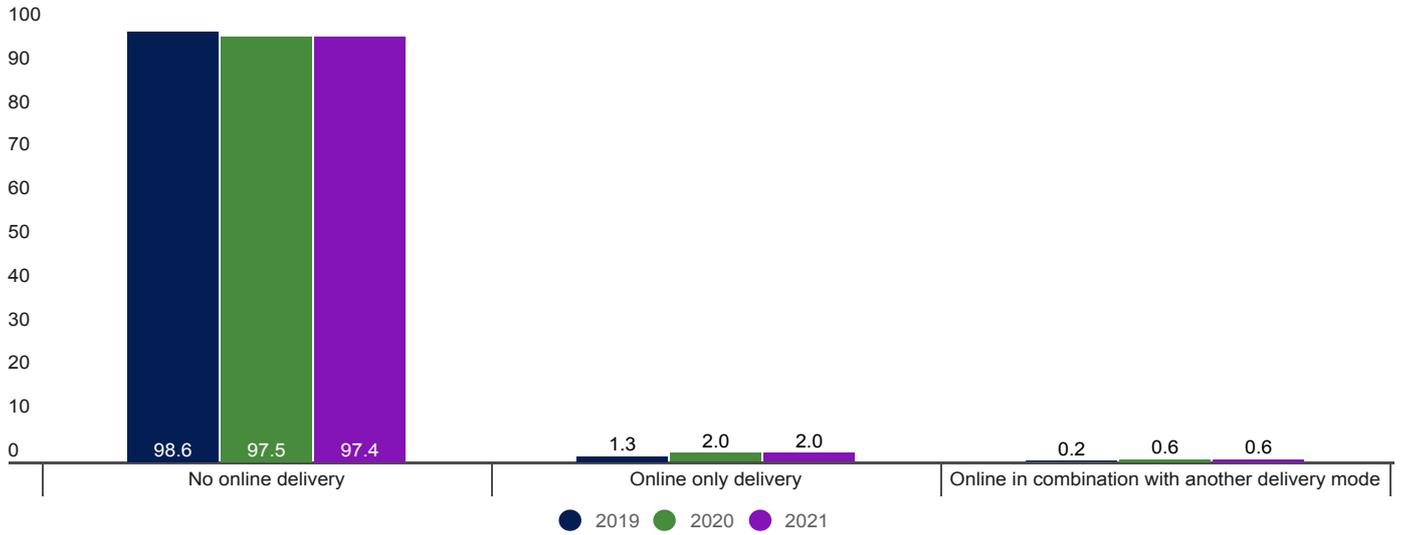
Only private training providers reported a continued growth in online-only enrolments over the three-year period, from 13% in 2019 to almost 17% in 2021. Most of this increase occurred in the first year of the pandemic. In 2021 other training providers have either reverted to pre-pandemic levels (for example, TAFE institutes), or remained at similar levels to 2020 (for example, community education providers and schools). Enterprise providers reported that, by comparison with pre-pandemic figures, fewer subjects were being delivered online-only in 2021.

The modes of delivery for VET subjects in schools have remained relatively stable across the three years, with only marginal changes, of around 1%.

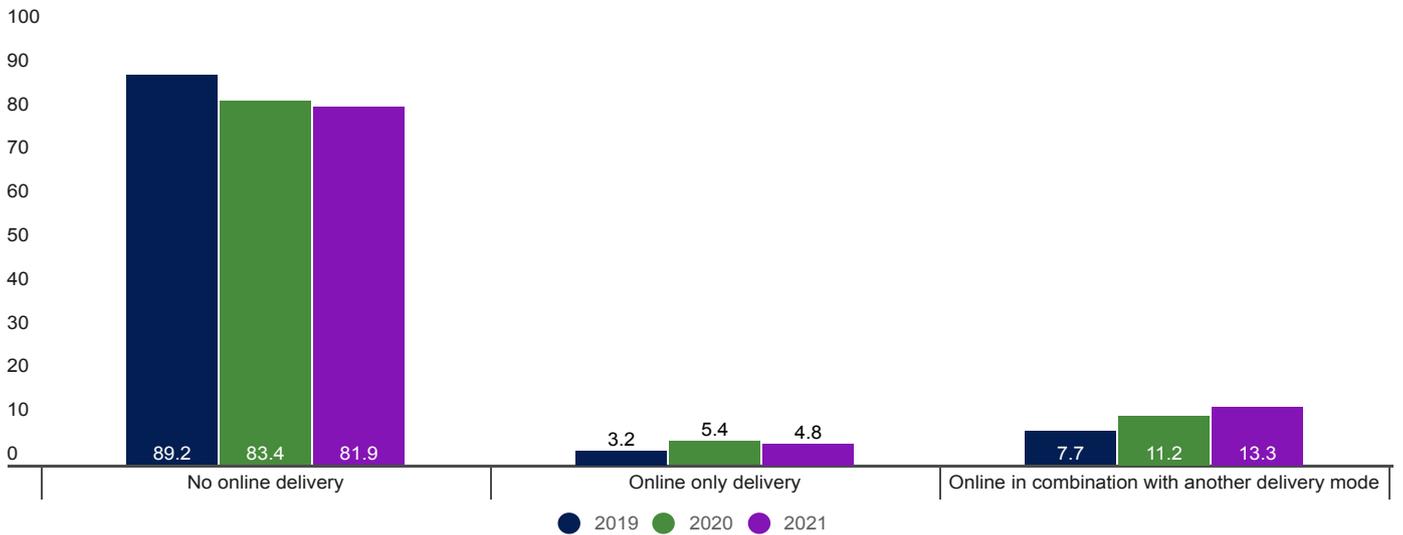
**Figure 4 Subject enrolments by delivery mode for provider type for Australia, 2019-21 (%)**



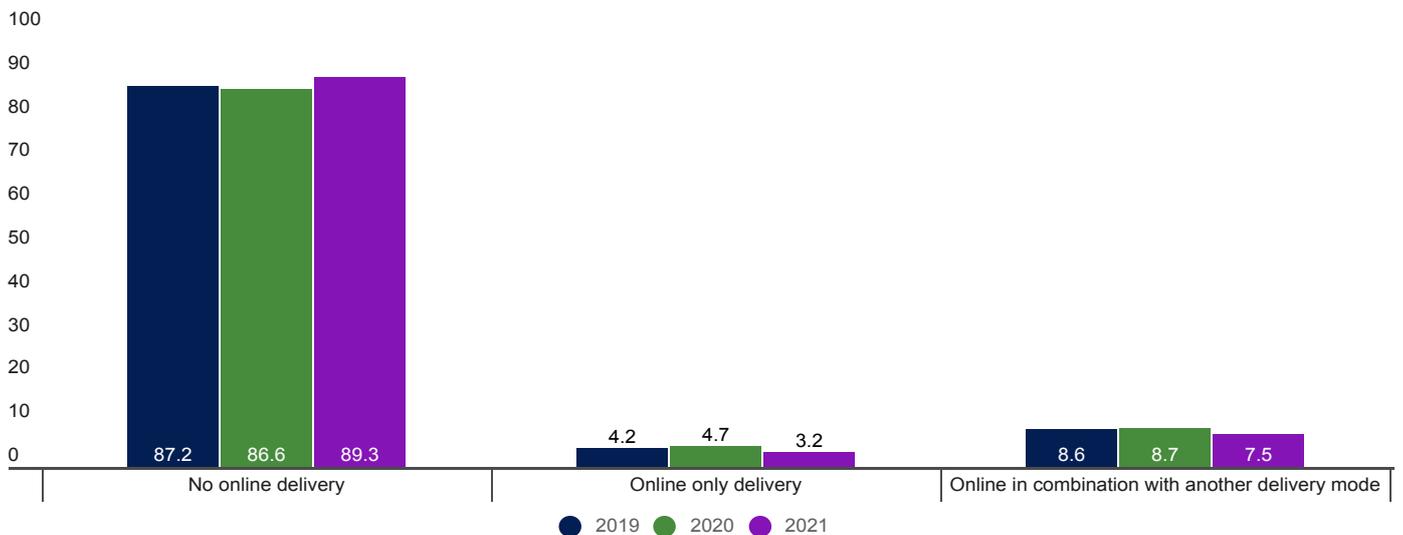
## Schools



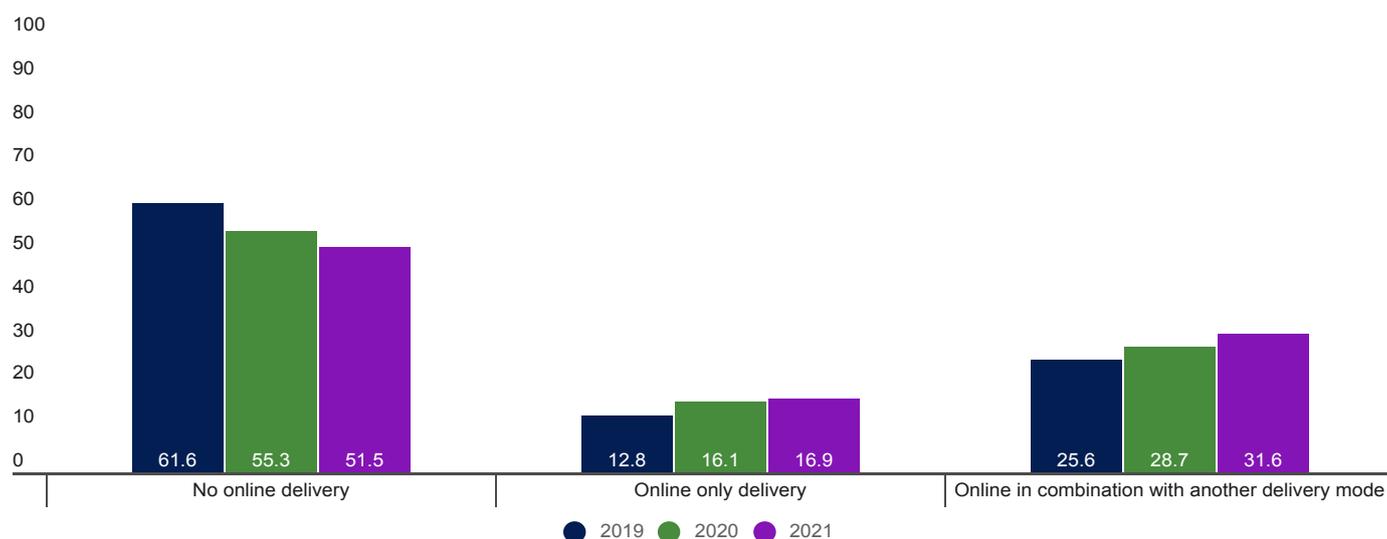
## Community education providers



## Enterprise providers



## Private training providers



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## DELIVERY MODES USED ACROSS DIFFERENT PROGRAM LEVELS

The trend between 2019 and 2020 of subjects with no online delivery declining, and increasing blended delivery, is also apparent when examining the delivery of VET across program levels.

Prior to the pandemic, subjects associated with lower-level qualifications (certificates I and II) were delivered without any online training at a much higher rate than for certificates III and above. For certificates I and II, this was at around 85% and 87% in 2019, respectively, whereas for the certificate III this was approximately 66%, followed by certificate IV (50%) and diploma or higher (56%).

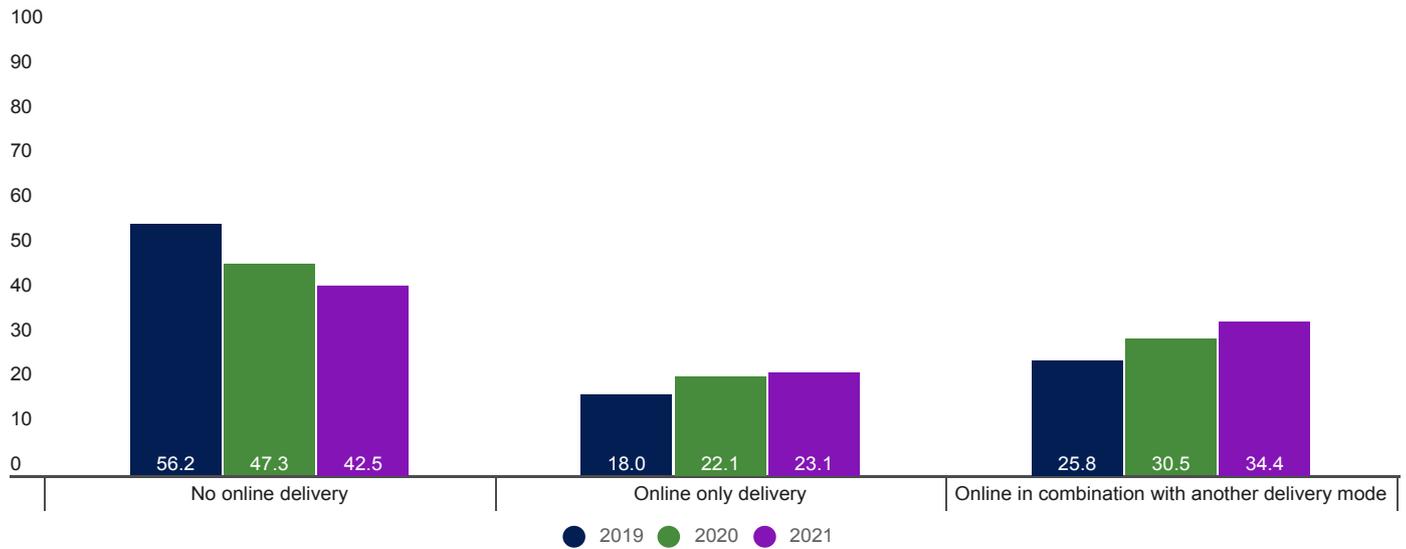
Between 2019 and 2021, subjects associated with certificate I qualifications with no online delivery declined by more than 11%, with the majority of this decrease occurring between 2019 and 2020. For subjects associated with certificate II qualifications, the decline was relatively consistent, at almost 4% in 2020 and 3% in 2021. For subjects associated with certificate III and above qualifications, the most substantial decline occurred in 2020, with much smaller decreases recorded in 2021 (for example, subjects associated with certificate IV qualifications decreased by 9% and subsequently 4%, and the subjects associated with diploma or higher declined by 9%, and then 5%).

Subjects delivered through blended delivery increased across all program levels between 2019 and 2021, and, as before, the most substantial changes were recorded in 2020. Subjects associated with certificate I qualifications increased by approximately 5% between 2019 and 2020, with similar increases also recorded for subjects associated with certificate III and diploma or higher qualifications. Smaller increases of around 3% to 4% were reported for subjects associated with certificate II and IV qualifications.

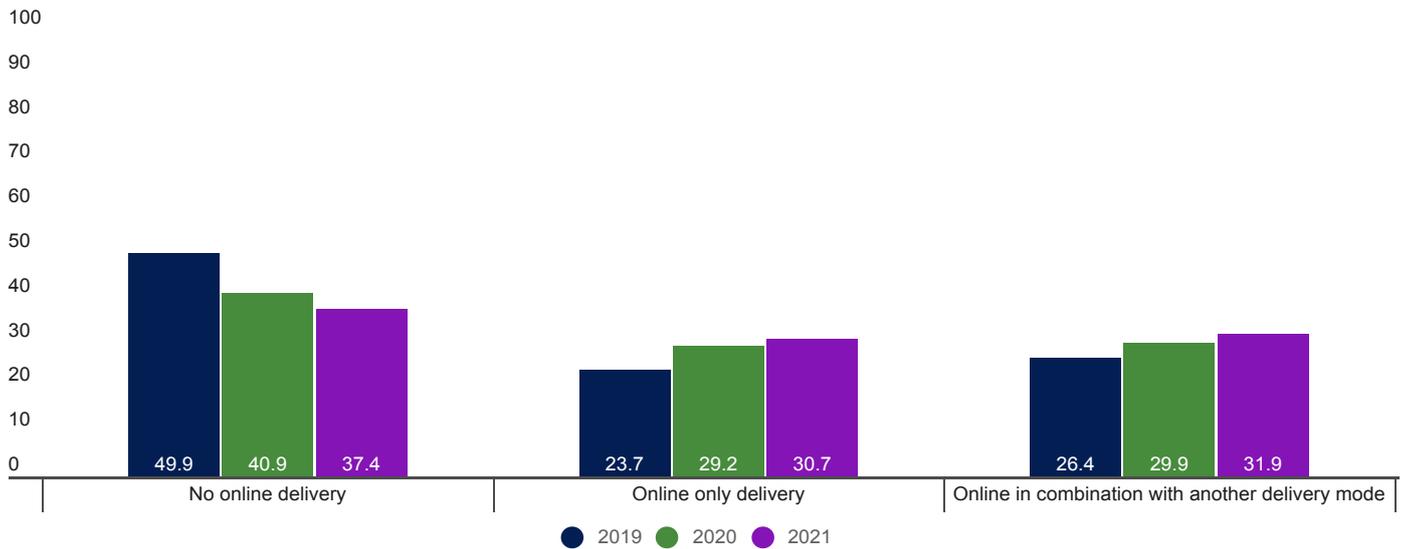
Online-only delivery increased in 2020 and 2021 for subjects associated with certificate I, certificate IV and diploma level qualifications, and, similar to previous trends, this increase was most pronounced in 2020. In 2021, however, online-only subject enrolments in certificate II and III qualifications were relatively similar to those recorded pre-pandemic, with only a slight increase in 2020.

Figure 5 Subject enrolments by delivery mode for program levels for Australia, 2019-21 (%)

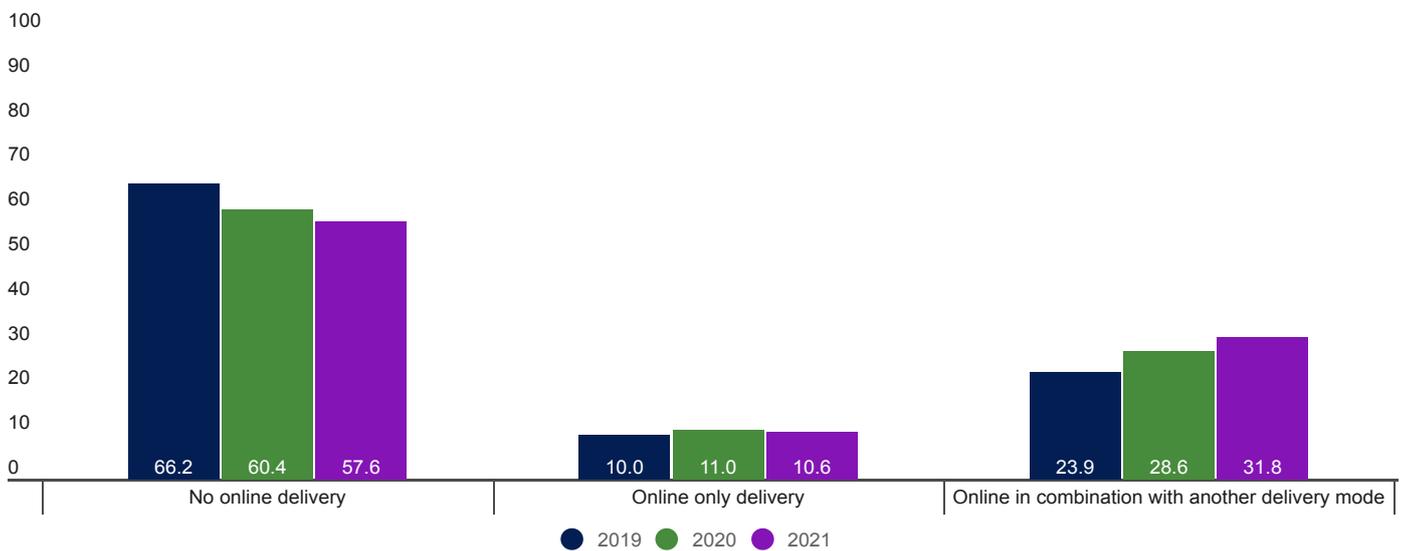
### Diploma or higher



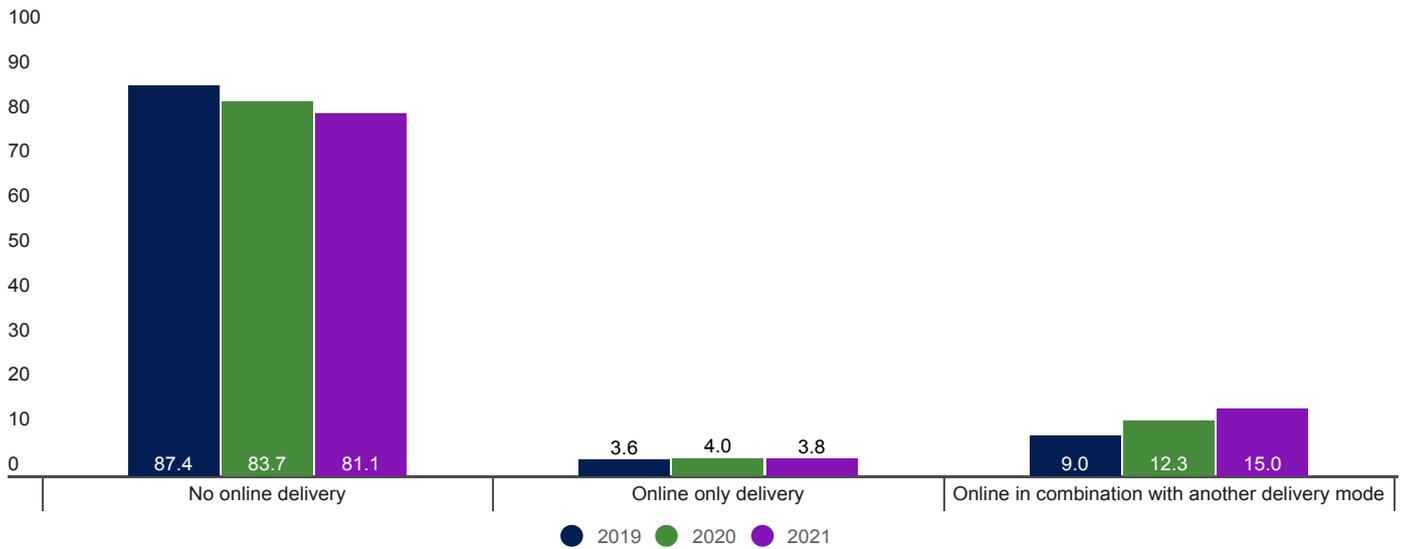
### Certificate IV



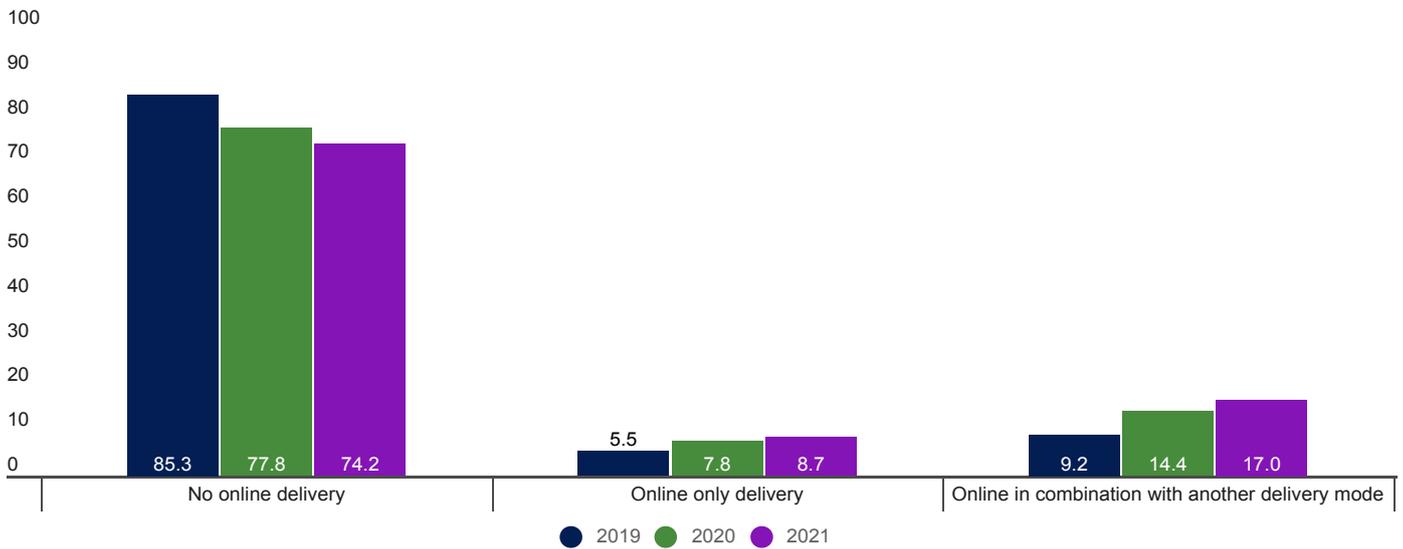
### Certificate III



## Certificate II



## Certificate I



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## STUDENT REMOTENESS AND THE DELIVERY OF VET

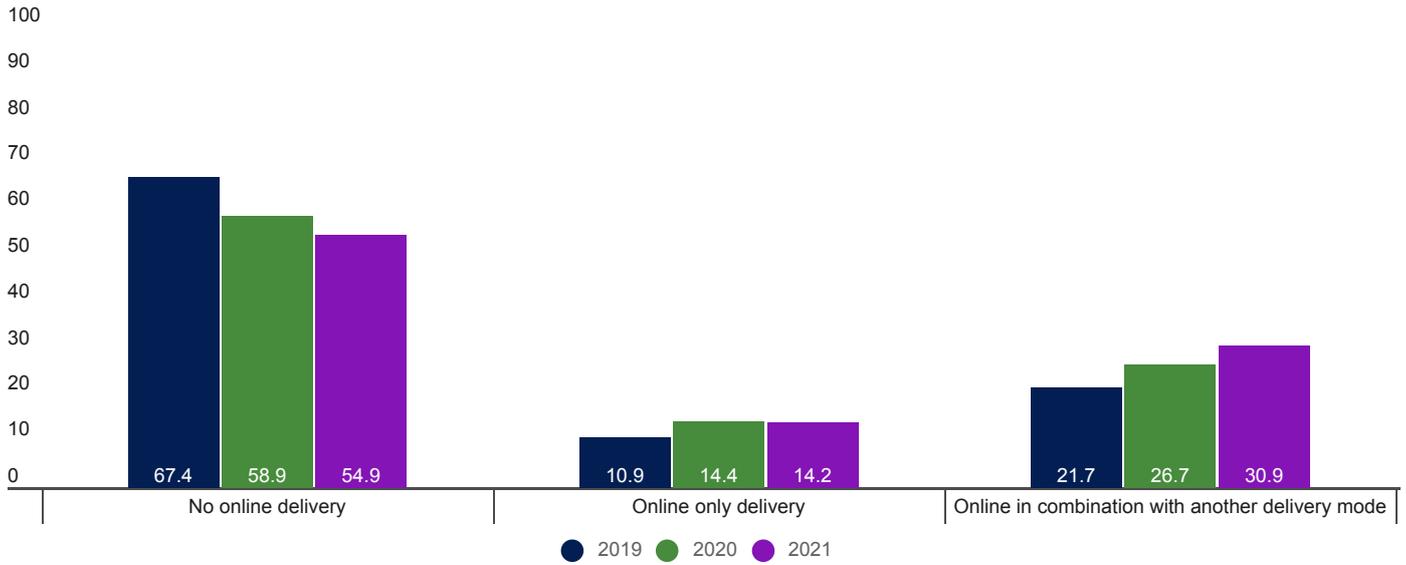
It appears that the initial decline, in 2020, of subjects with no online delivery corresponds to the regions that were more severely impacted by pandemic lockdowns and restrictions. In major cities, the proportion of subjects with no online delivery declined by almost 9%. This figure gradually decreased as remoteness increased, with inner-regional declining by 6%; outer-regional was at 5%, and 4% for both remote and very remote. This decline continued into 2021 for all regions but was less pronounced.

Similarly, the increase between 2019 and 2020 for subjects delivered online-only, and via blended delivery, was highest for major cities (at 4% and 5% respectively) and decreased as remoteness increased.

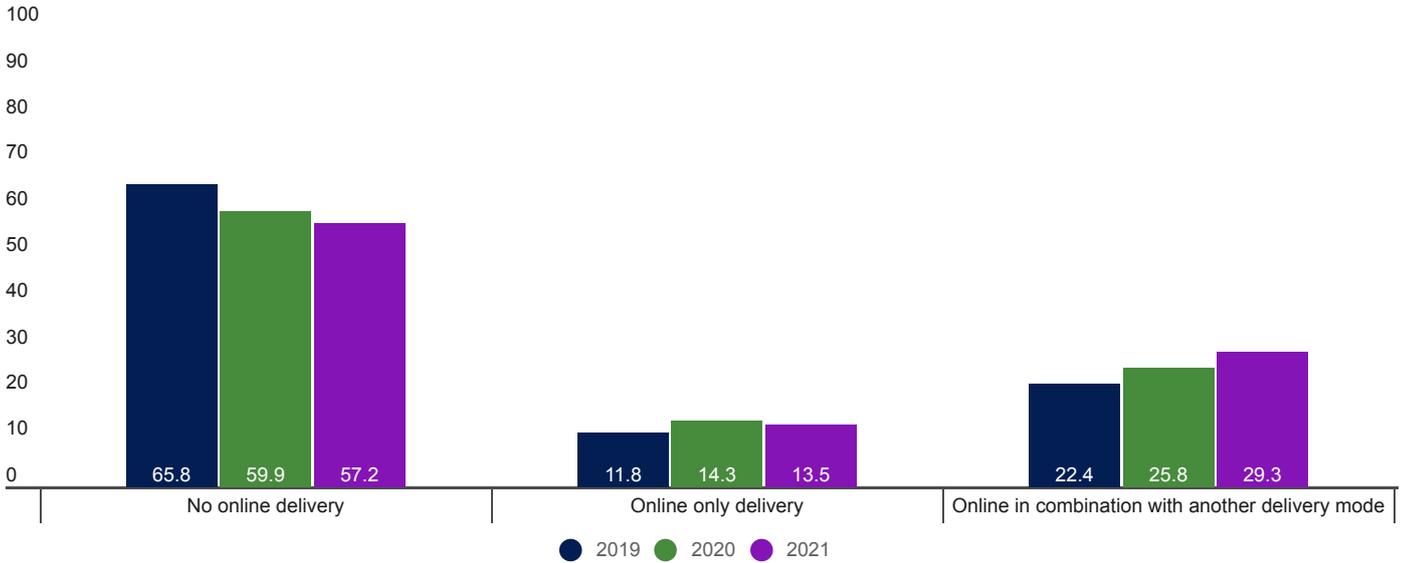
Across all regions, subjects delivered through blended delivery increased year on year, although most increases in 2021 were less than those recorded in 2020. Online-only delivery varied between the regions. In major cities and remote areas, online-only delivery increased in 2020 (by around 4% and 1% respectively), remaining relatively stable into 2021. For inner-regional, outer-regional and very remote areas, online-only delivery decreased in 2021 after the initial spike as a response to the pandemic.

Figure 6 Subject enrolments by delivery mode for student remoteness for Australia, 2019-21 (%)

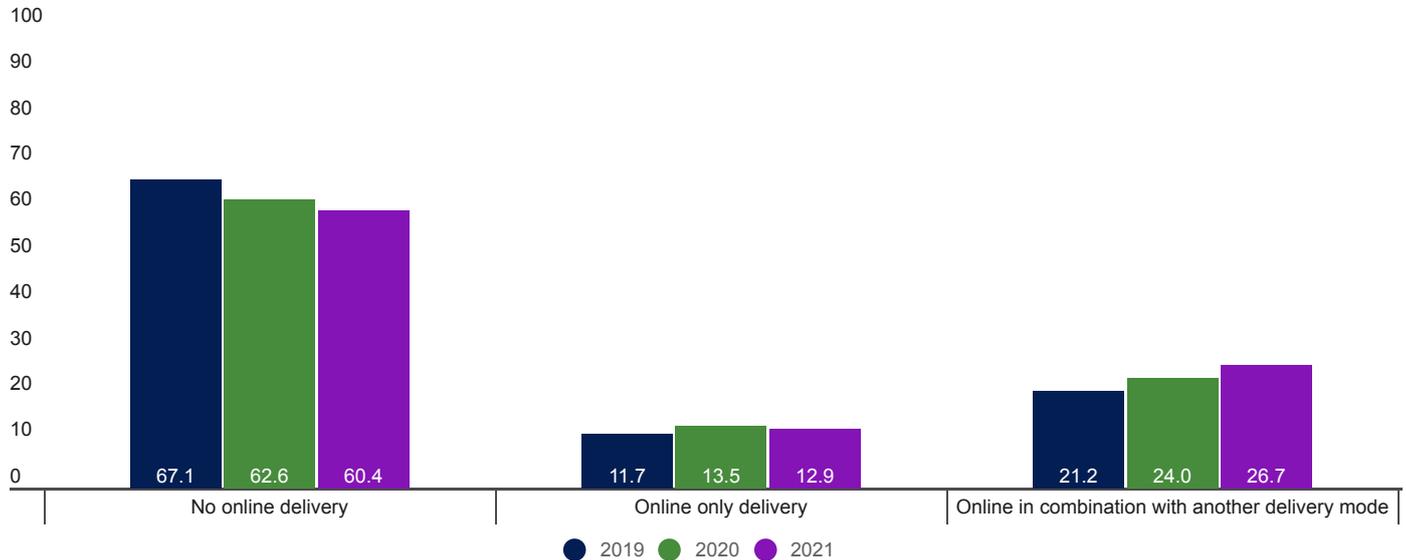
### Major cities



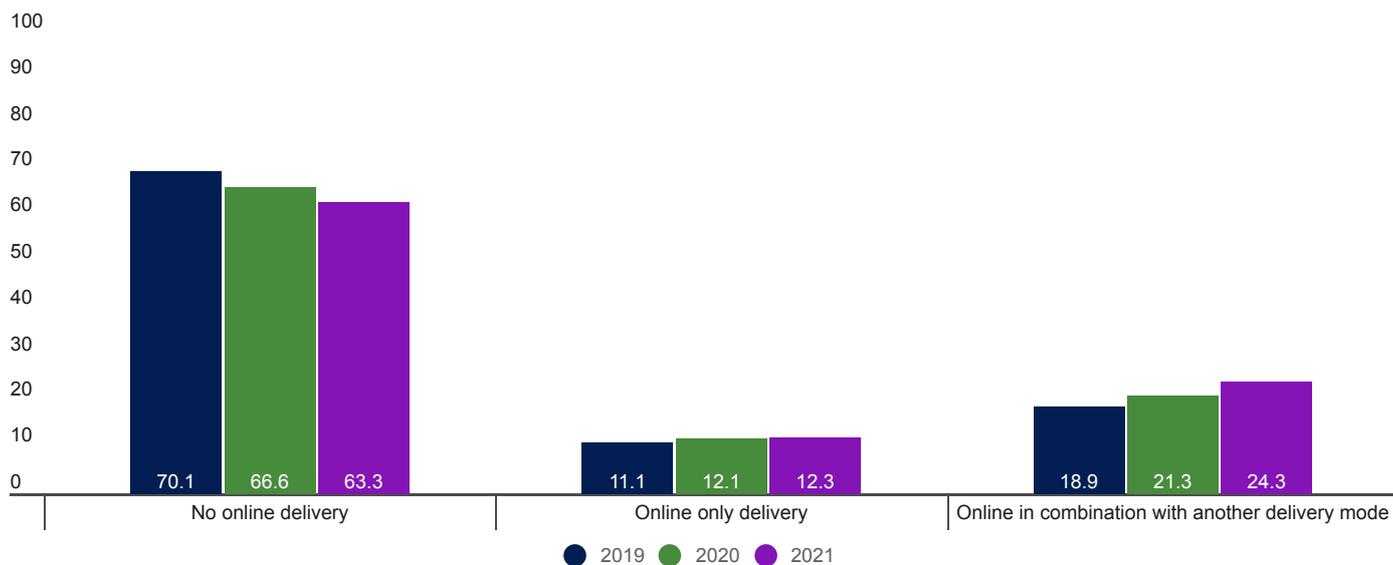
### Inner-regional



### Outer-regional



## Remote



## Very remote



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 Source: NCVET Total VET Students and Courses, 2019-21.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

The data presented in this publication is related to previous and forthcoming NCVER publications, including:

- Griffin, T & Mihelic, M 2019, *Online delivery of VET qualifications: current use and outcomes*, NCVER, Adelaide.
- Hume, S & Griffin, T 2021, *The online delivery of VET during COVID-19: part 1*, NCVER, Adelaide.
- Hume, S & Griffin, T 2022, *The online delivery of VET during the COVID-19 pandemic: part 2*, NCVER, Adelaide.
- Cox, D 2022, *Insights for delivering VET online*, NCVER, Adelaide.
- Hume, S & Griffin, T (forthcoming), *Good practice support services & pedagogy for online delivery of VET*, NCVER, Adelaide

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