

Report to Mining and Petroleum Competence Board on certificates of competence examination results 2022– 2024

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Introduction

The Resources Regulator annually prepares reports on certification for the NSW Mining and Petroleum Competence Board.

This report is for certificate of competence exams competent/not yet competent rates (pass or fail) over the past 3 years from 2022–2024 and certificates issued from 2020 to 2024.

Practising certificates granted and renewed are now reported separately. Refer to the Board publications page for the report:

<https://www.resources.nsw.gov.au/resources-regulator/our-role/other-functions/mining-and-petroleum-competence-board/board>

Data sources

Data for this report is obtained from the NSW Resources Regulator data and published examiners' reports on the Regulator's website.

Background

Candidates sitting exams in 2024 had to pass the written and oral exams in the same year due to implementing the blueprinting of exams to the revised competency framework, where different competencies may be examined each year. A small and diminishing number of legacy candidates still exist under the former system where they were given credits to pass written exams they failed previously for up to 3 years, and 3 attempts for oral exams in 3 years.

The Board has addressed issues raised in the previous examination report by publishing 'Recommendations for the NSW mining industry from observations of the report for certificate of competence exams 2018–2023 and practising certificates' on its webpage. This is intended to encourage stakeholders to assist in improving results.

Observations

The following summary observations are made for the overall statistics and for each statutory function:

- 1) The number of certificates of competence granted annually peaked in 2022, reflecting a post-pandemic surge in candidate activity. Since then, rates have returned to pre-pandemic levels.
- 2) Underground mine supervisor and deputy continue to have the highest number of certificates issued by function, reflecting the large number of candidates seeking the certification.
- 3) The number of candidates attempting the exams has increased for most functions. However, the number of candidates passing has remained steady which means there is a lower proportion of successful outcomes.
- 4) The proportion of competent versus not-yet-competent for each statutory function has remained largely stable over the last 3 years. There is also consistently lower rates observed for mining, mechanical and electrical engineering managers and engineers, and higher rates for underground mine supervisor.

- 5) Blueprinting of exams for electrical, mechanical and quarry manager functions for 2022 and the remaining functions in 2024 does not seem to have had any significant negative impact on the rate of candidates achieving competency.
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Recommendations

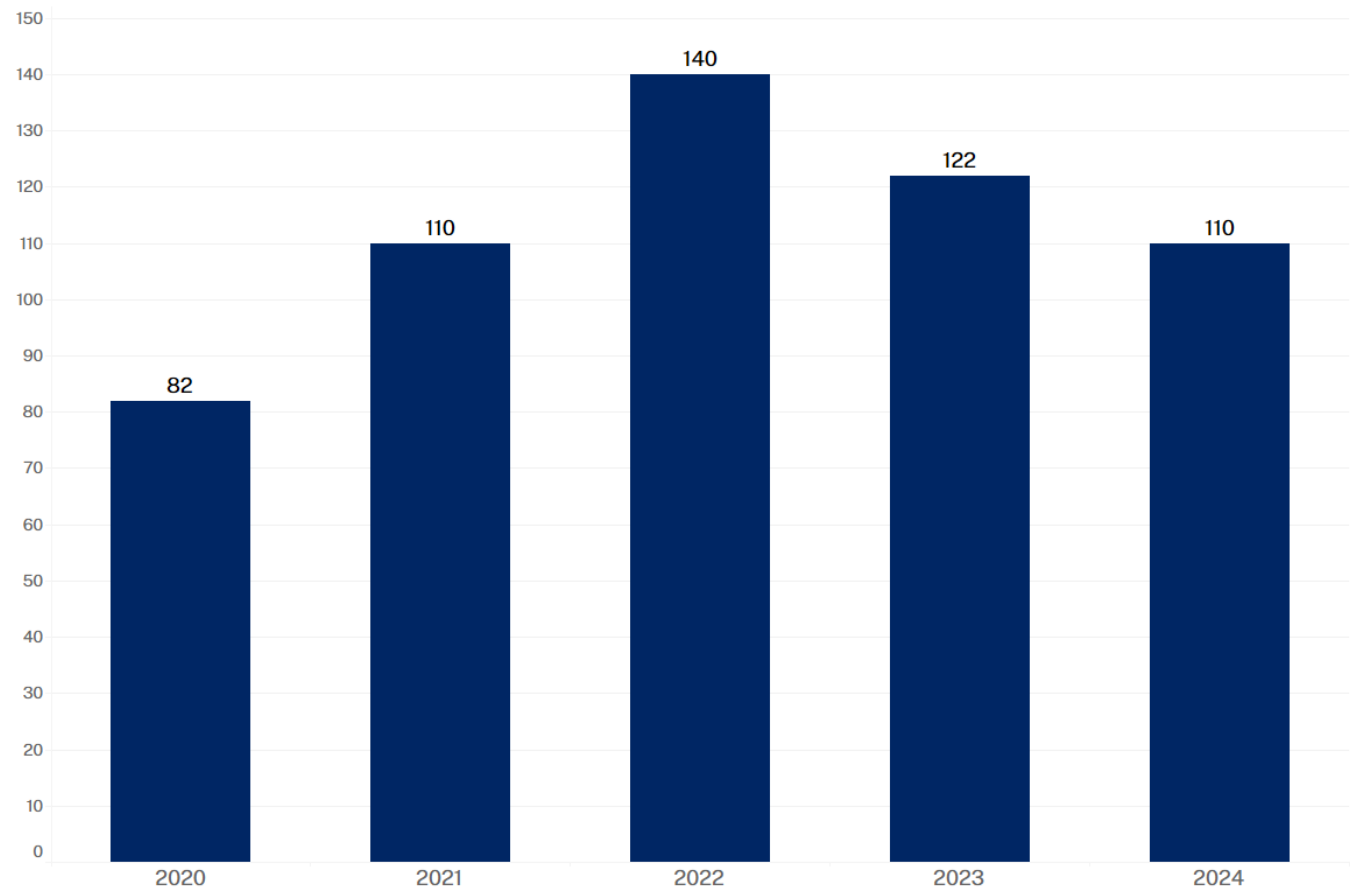
That the Board should continue to monitor exam failure rates and implement actions to address any identified issues through its strategic plan work to 2029.

Exam outcomes across mine classes and functions

All functions – certificates of competence issued

Figure 1 shows the number of certificates of competence issued in the past 5 years, from 2020 to 2024.

Figure 1. Certificates of competence issued

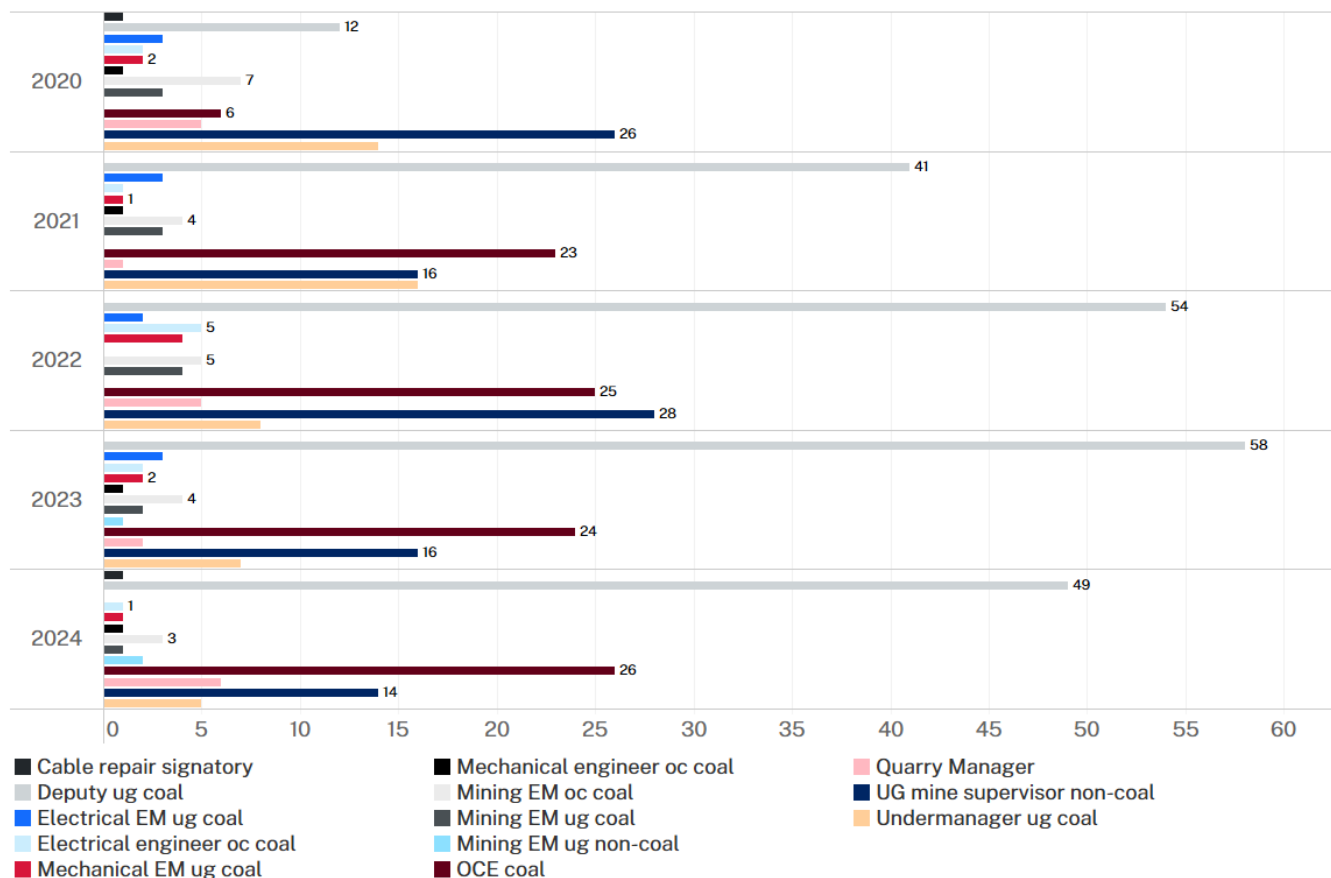


Note: certificates issued in a year may not match the number of candidates who passed oral exams as exam rounds are often completed in the following calendar year for the last oral exam.

Certificates of competence issued by statutory function

Figure 2 shows a larger number of certificates issued to Level 1 certificate of competence functions (the underground mine supervisor of underground mines other than coal mines, open cut examiner and the deputy underground coal mine). This is due to the large number of candidates that apply to undertake these functions.

Figure 2. Certificates of competence issued by statutory function

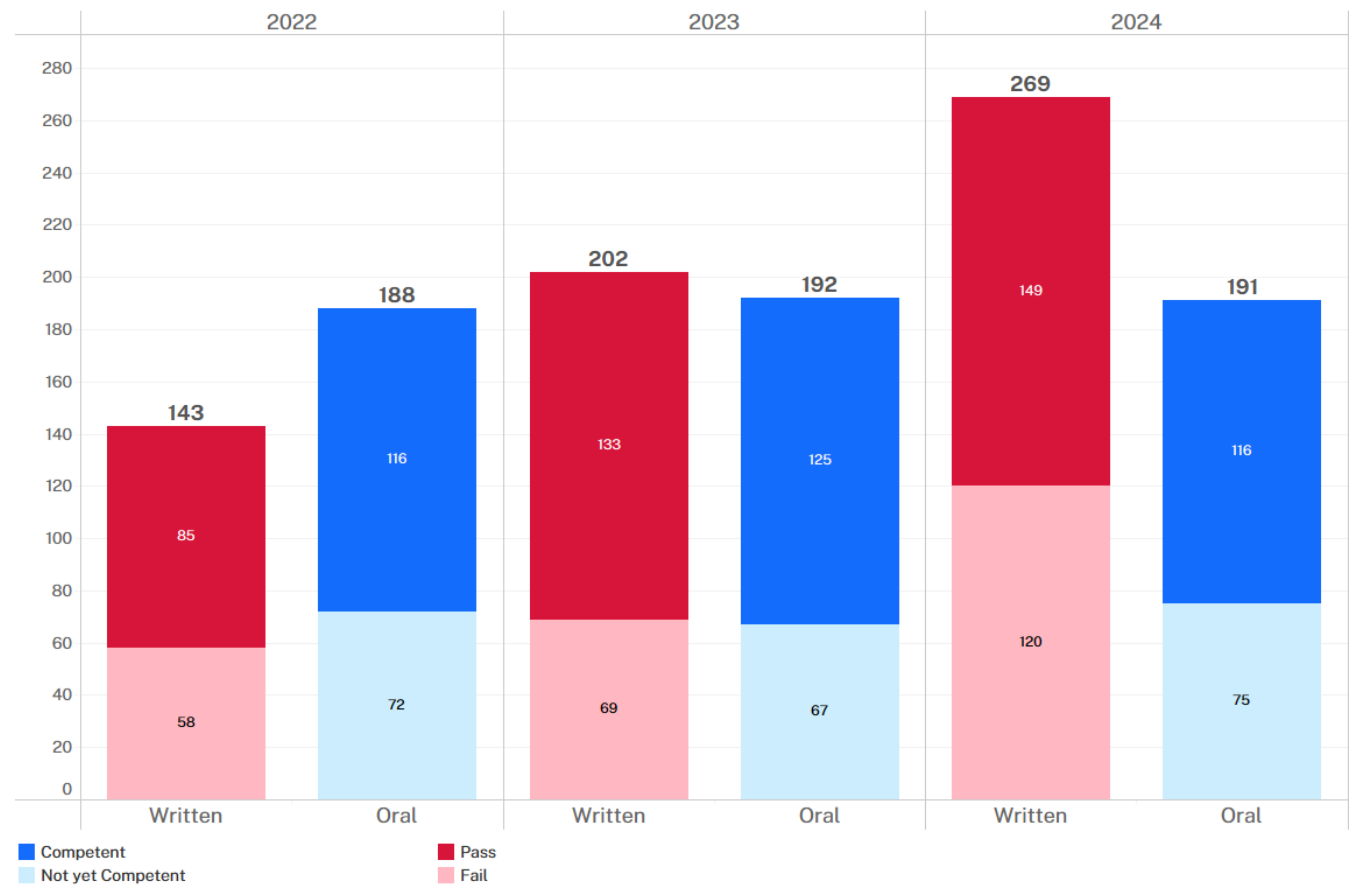


Examination results

Figure 3 shows the number of candidates undertaking and passing the written and oral exams. The number of candidates sitting the written exams will not match the number sitting the oral exams. The Underground mine supervisor and Cable Repair Signatory candidates only sit an oral exam.

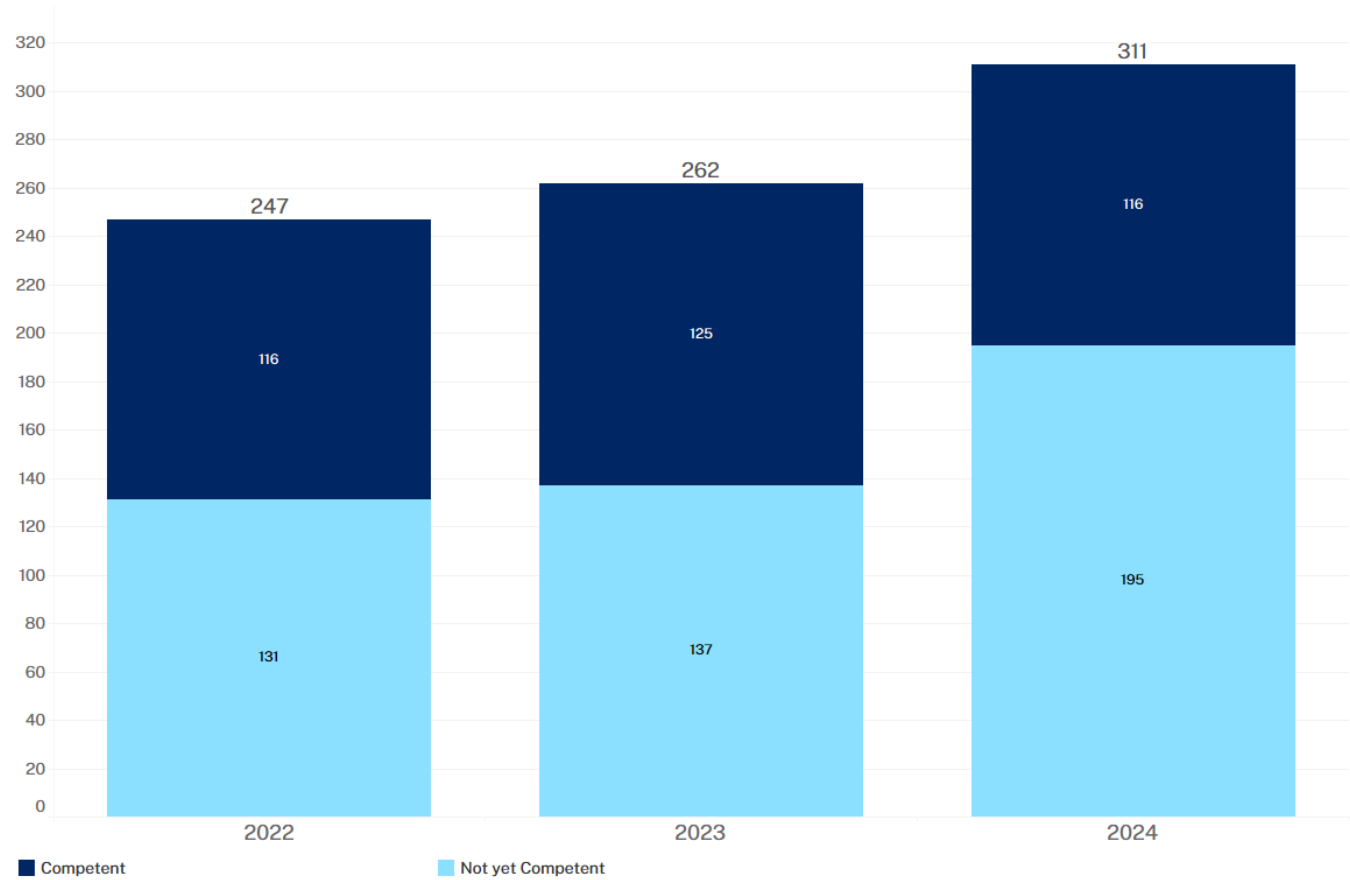
The number of candidates sitting and passing the written exams has increased each year. The number of candidates undertaking the oral exams is greater than the number of candidates that passed the written exam due to the diminishing number of legacy candidates, who had 3 attempts at the oral exam.

Figure 3. Candidate performance by exam type (all statutory functions within an exam calendar)



The number of candidates undertaking exams has increased since 2022 (see Figure 4). However, the number of candidates being deemed competent has not increased (i.e. the percentage of candidates that apply and go on to complete certification has reduced).

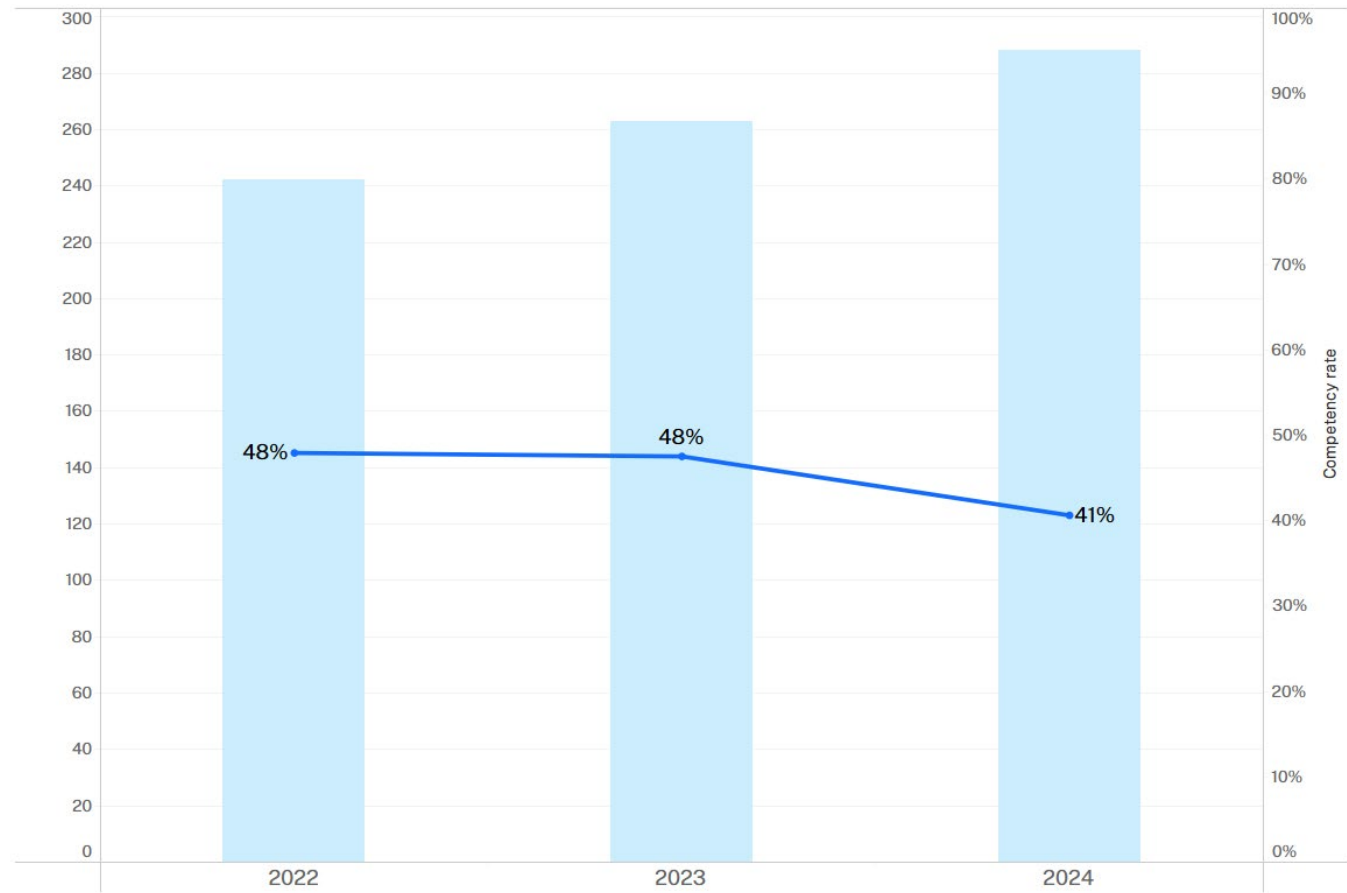
Figure 4. Individual candidate performance by year (attempted at least one exam for function in the exam period)



Oral examination results

Figure 5 shows how many times exams were attempted across all statutory functions. Please note that an individual candidate could attempt multiple exams. From 2024, most candidates were only allowed 2 attempts under the updated blueprinting rules which may account for the lower success rate (legacy candidates were allowed 3 attempts).

Figure 5. Oral examinations – total number of candidate attempts and competency rates



Oral examination competency rates

Figure 6 shows the competency rate for the supervisor level oral exams. The pass rates for functions other than deputy of underground coal mines are consistent across the years. The deputy of underground coal mines passing rate dropped from 45% in 2023 to 32% in 2024. This may be because the written exam pass mark threshold was too low, allowing some candidates to move on to the oral exam without being adequately prepared.

Figure 6. Supervisor oral examinations – total number of candidate attempts and competency rates

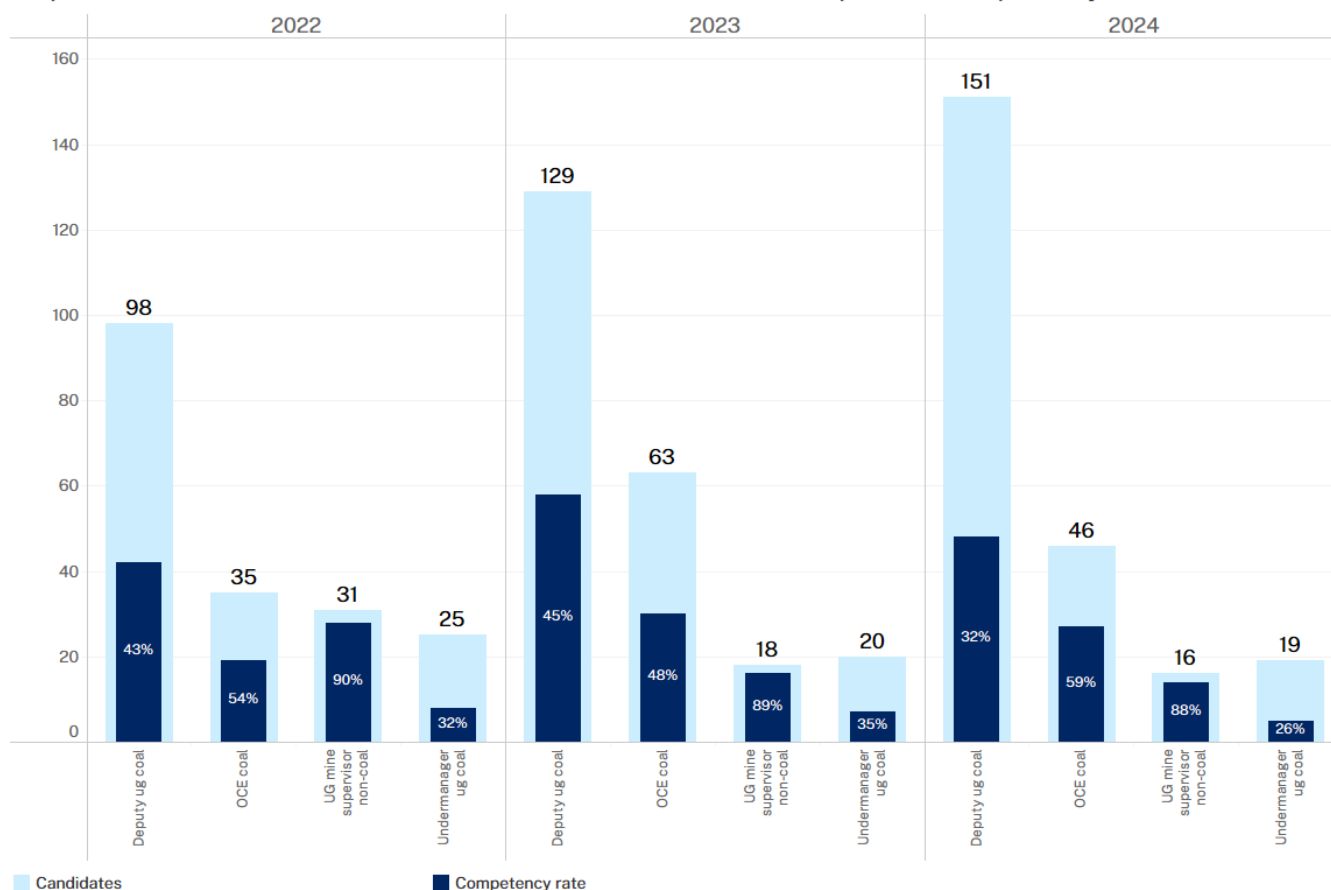
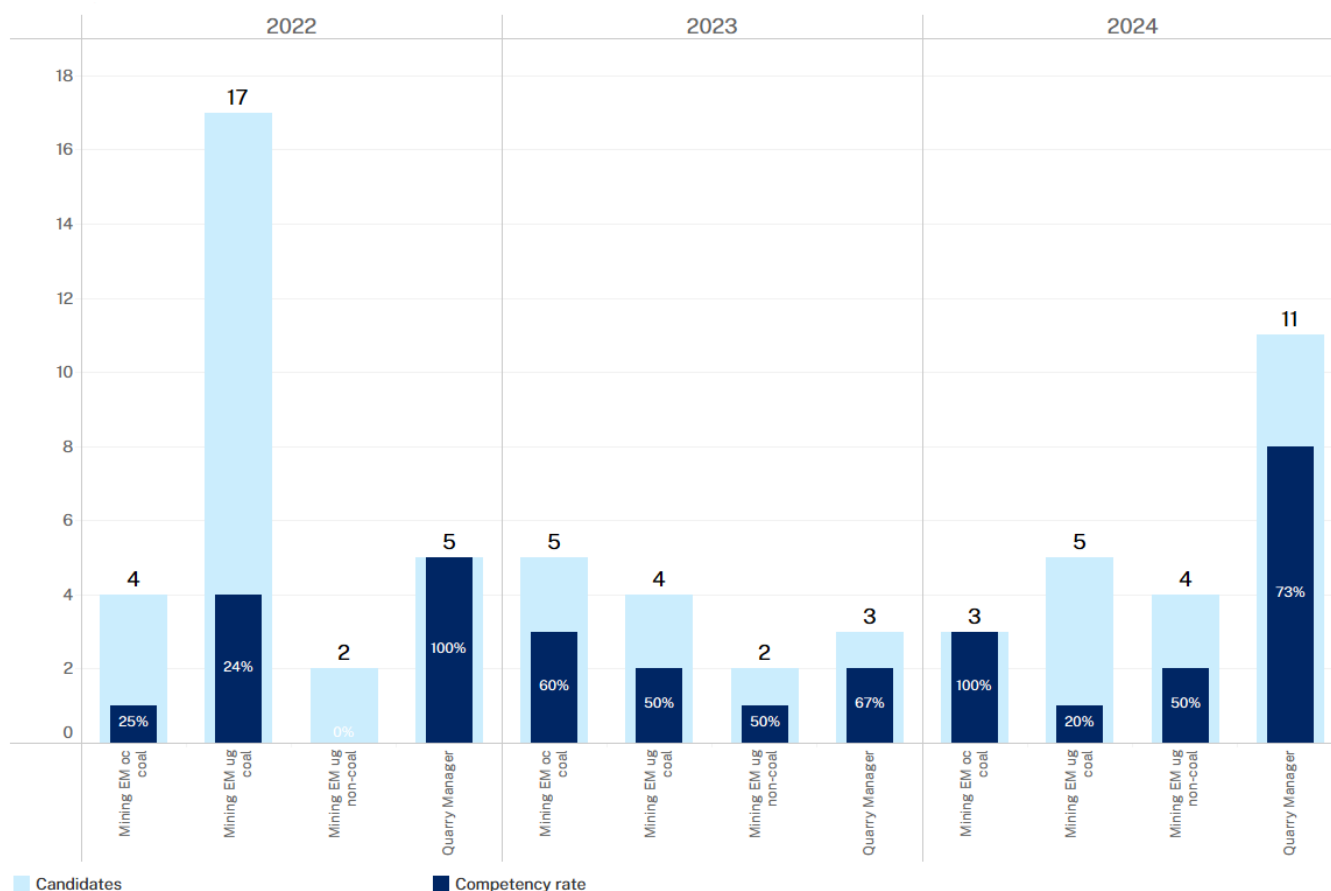


Figure 7 below shows the competency rate for the manager level.

Figure 7. Manager oral examinations – total number of candidate attempts and competency rates



The bar with 0% means all candidates were not yet competent.

Notable statistics are:

- There was an increase in candidates for the mining engineering manager of underground coal mines in 2022 but no specific cause has been identified.
- Last year there was an increase in candidates attempting quarry manager exams. This may partly be due to the fact that some quarries have been reclassified from tier 2 to tier 1, which requires a certificate of competence.
- In 2024, Mining engineering manager of underground coal mines oral exams had a very low pass rate (1 candidate out of 5).

Individual statutory function exam results

Coal mines

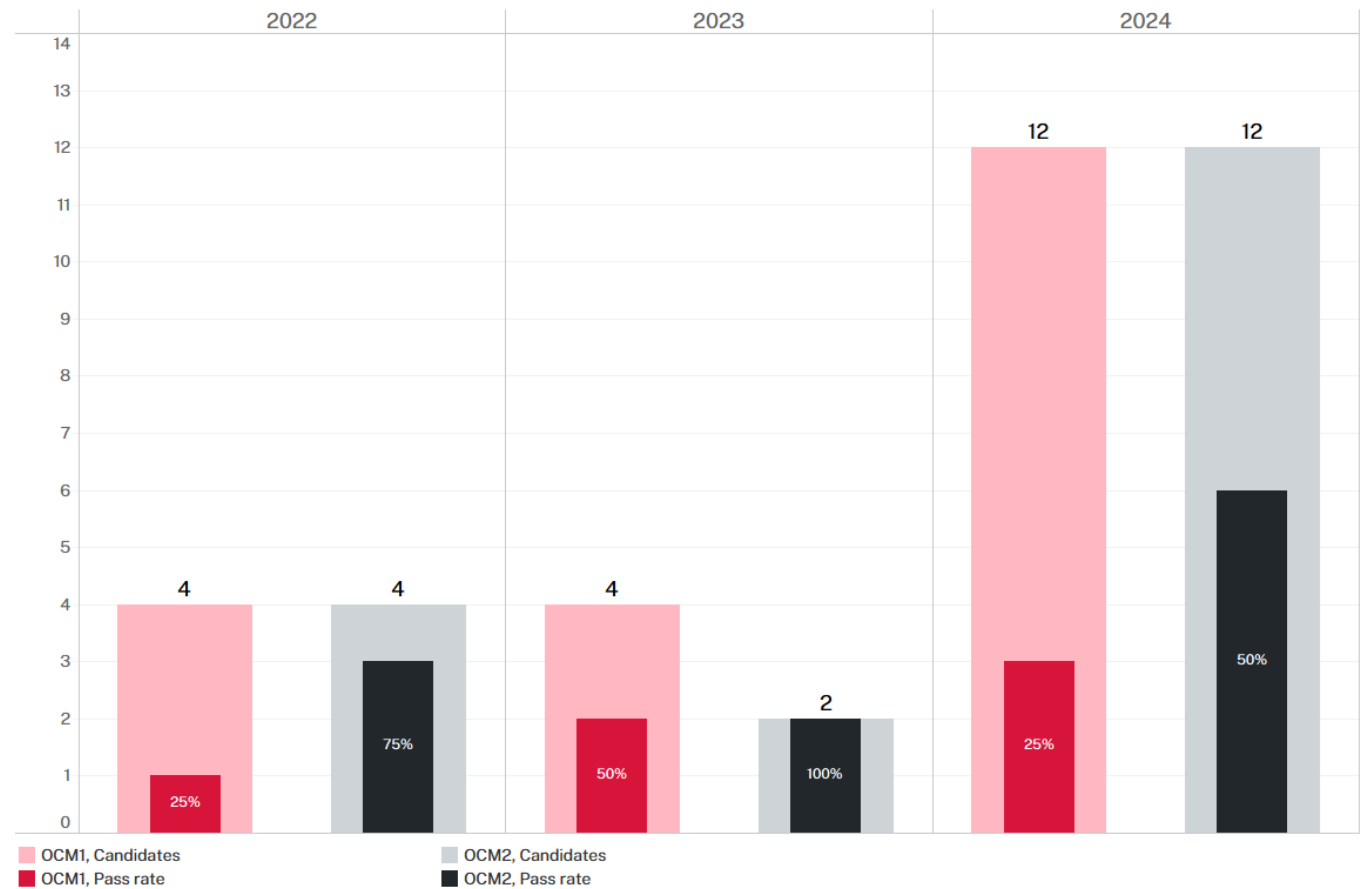
Mining engineering manager

Written exams

OCM1 is the legislation paper and OCM2 is the open cut mining practice paper.

There has been a significant upturn in candidates attempting exams in 2024. Pass rates remain similar across the years.

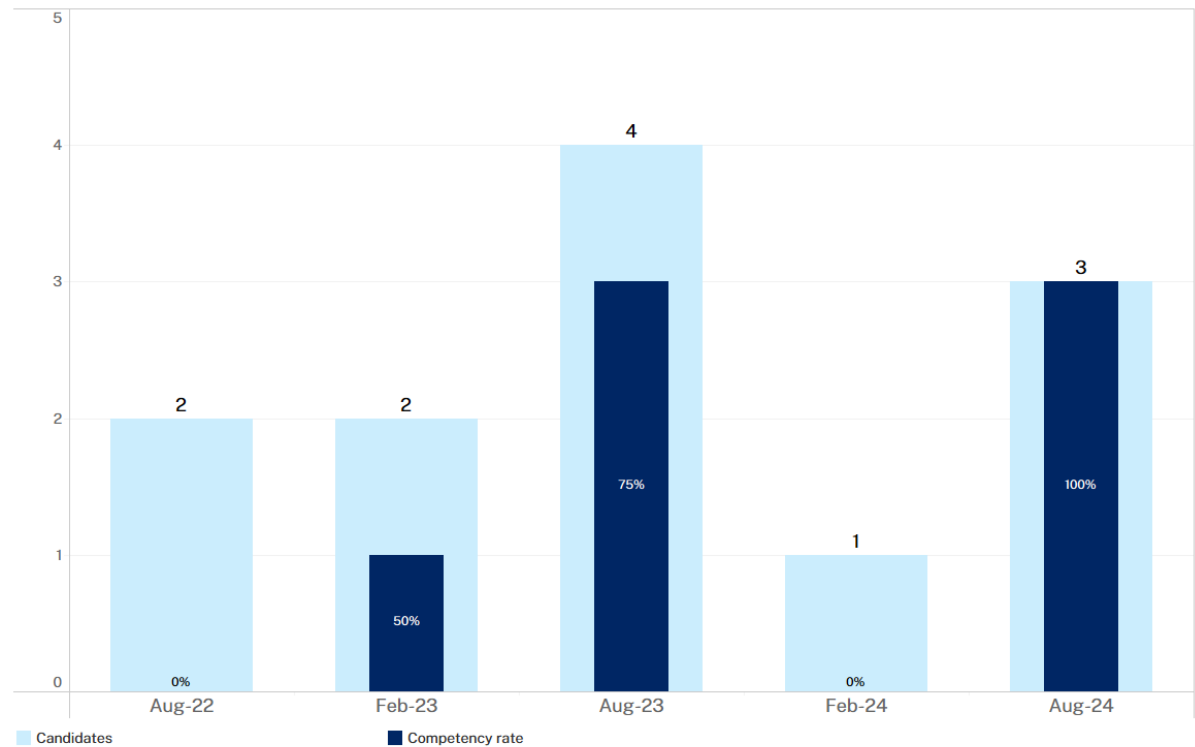
Figure 8. Coal mines other than underground – Mining engineering manager written examinations (pass rates)



Oral exams

Figure 9 shows that success rates varied significantly in 2024, ranging from 0% in February to 100% in August. However, the small sample sizes make it challenging to identify a clear trend.

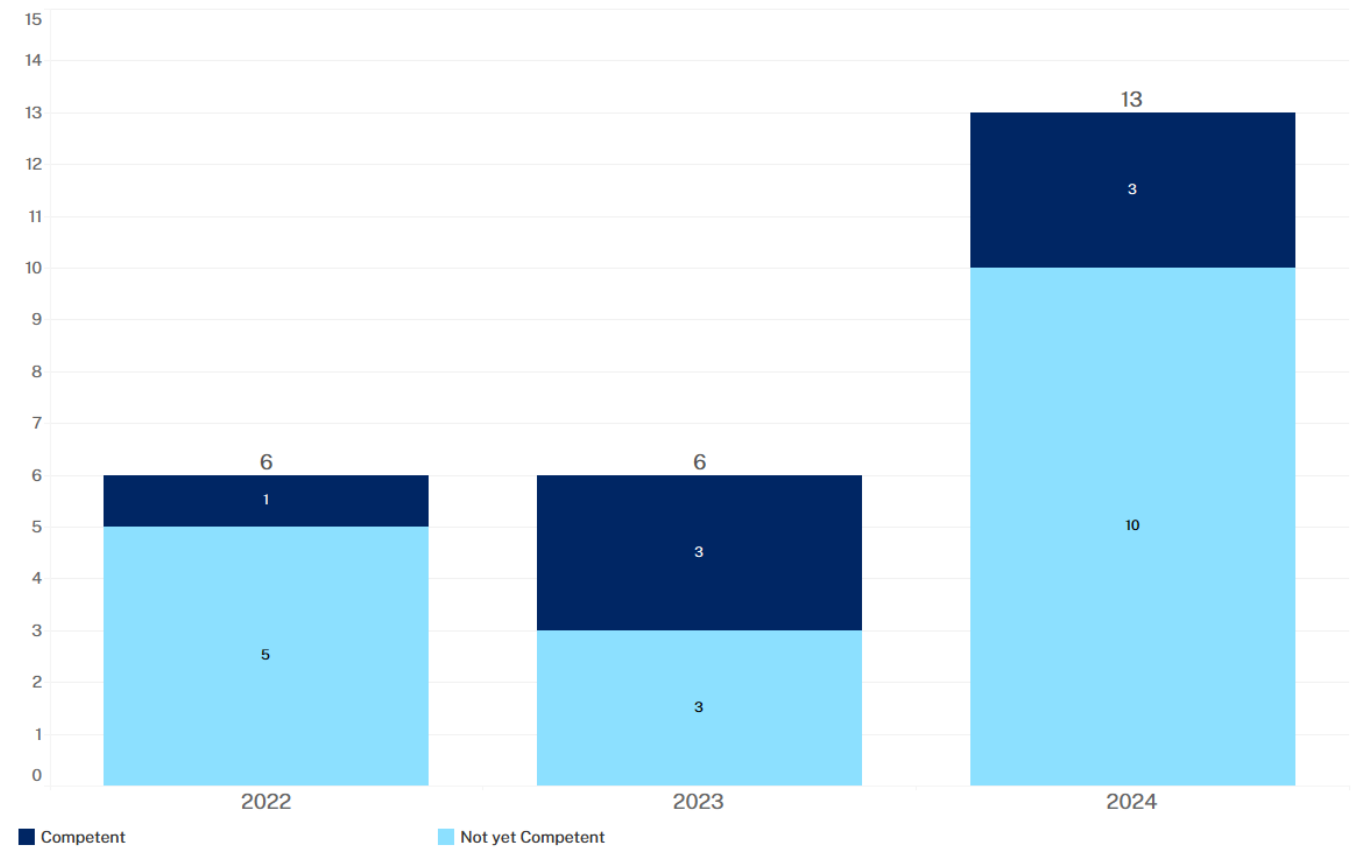
Figure 9. Coal mines other than underground – Mining engineering manager oral examinations (competency rates)



Number of candidates each year granted a certificate of competence

Figure 10 shows that while the number of candidates who passed the coal mines other than underground exam remains the same, the proportion of those who passed has dropped from 50% in 2023 to 23% in 2024.

Figure 10. Coal mines other than underground – Mining engineering manager individual candidate performance by year (attempted at least one exam for function in the exam period)



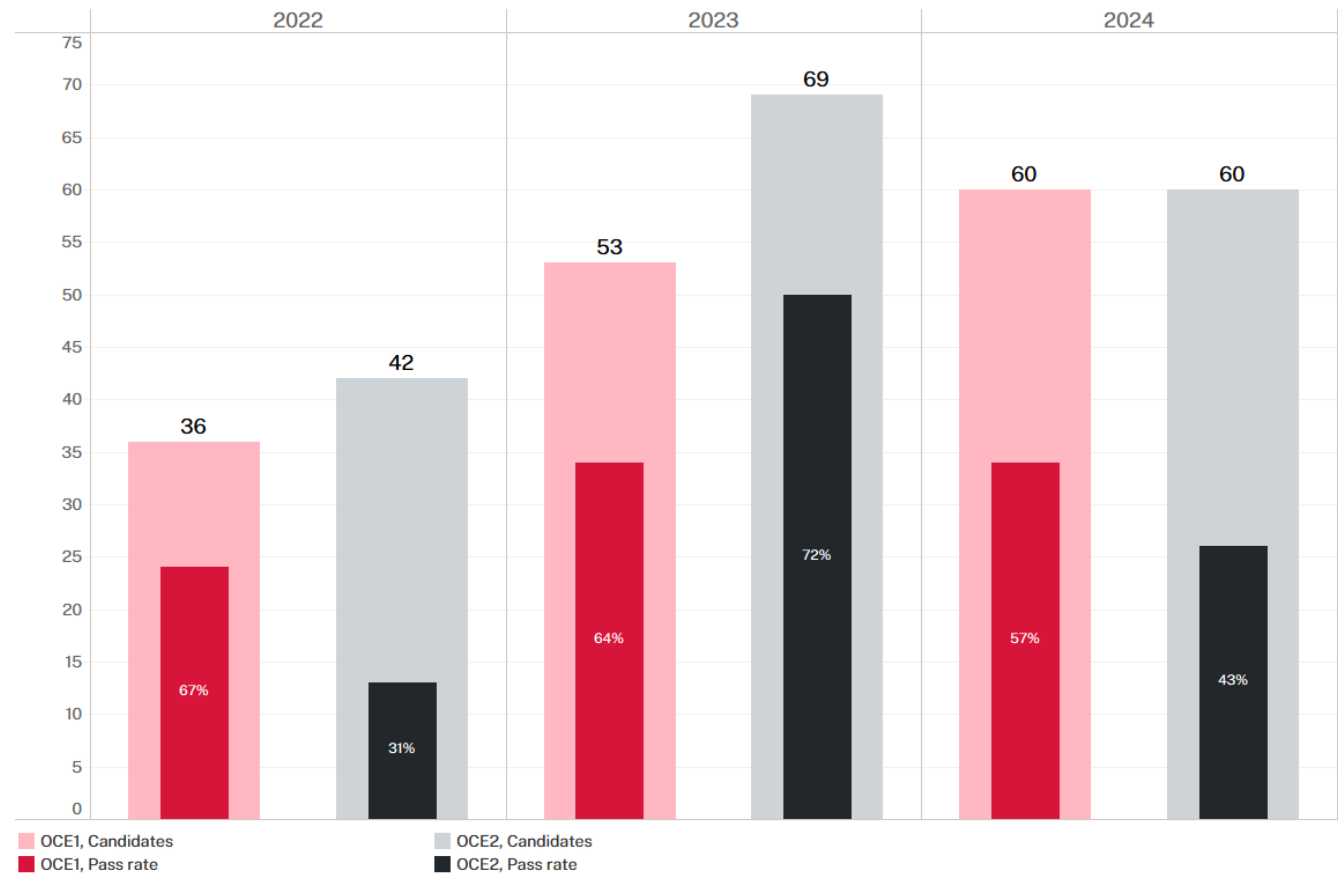
Open cut examiner

Written exams

OCE1 is the legislation paper and OCE2 is the open cut mining practise paper.

New candidate numbers have increased but success rates have dropped off in 2024.

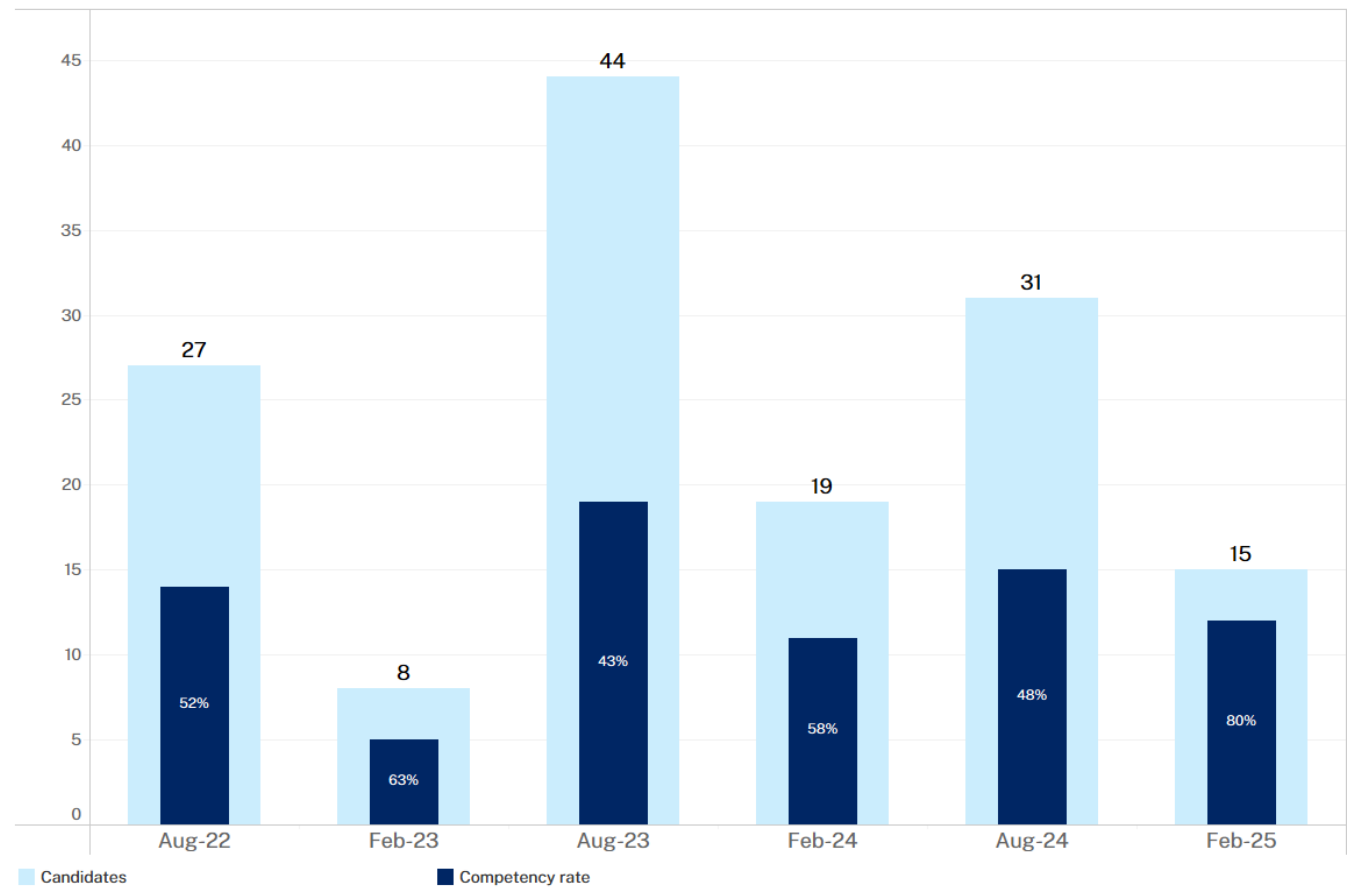
Figure 11. Coal mines other than underground – Open cut examiner written examinations (pass rates)



Oral exams

A higher proportion of candidates pass the oral exam on their second attempt (February exams are second attempts).

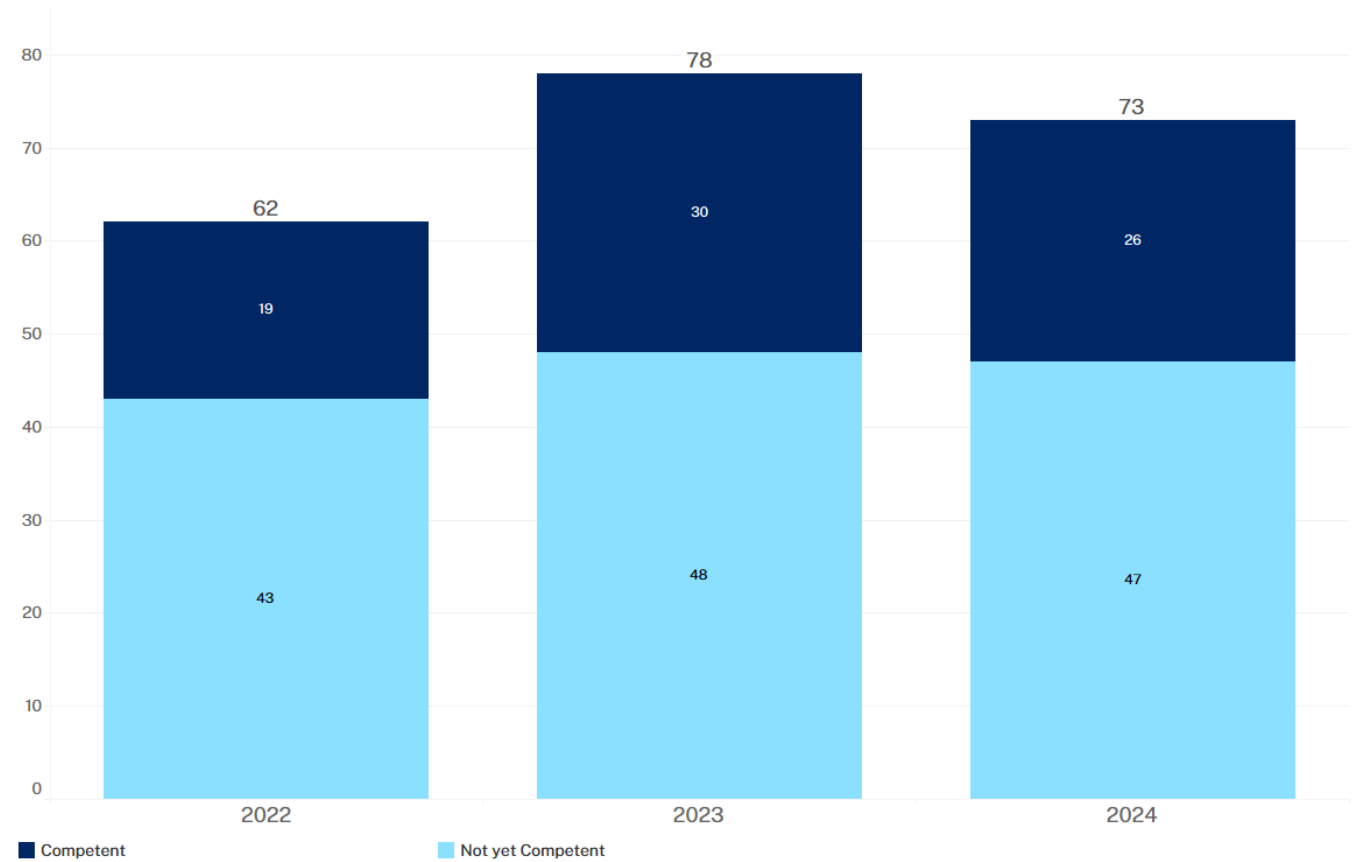
Figure 12. Open cut coal mines – Open cut examiner oral examinations (competency rates)



Number of candidates each year granted a certificate of competence

The number of candidates applying for an OCE certificate of competency has remained consistent through 2023 and 2024. The pass rate has also remained consistent.

Figure 13. Coal mines other than underground – Open cut examiner individual candidate performance by year (attempted at least one exam for function in the exam period)



Electrical engineer

Written exams

There is 1 combined legislation and practice paper CEE3. Number of candidates attempting are low, but pass rates overall are high.

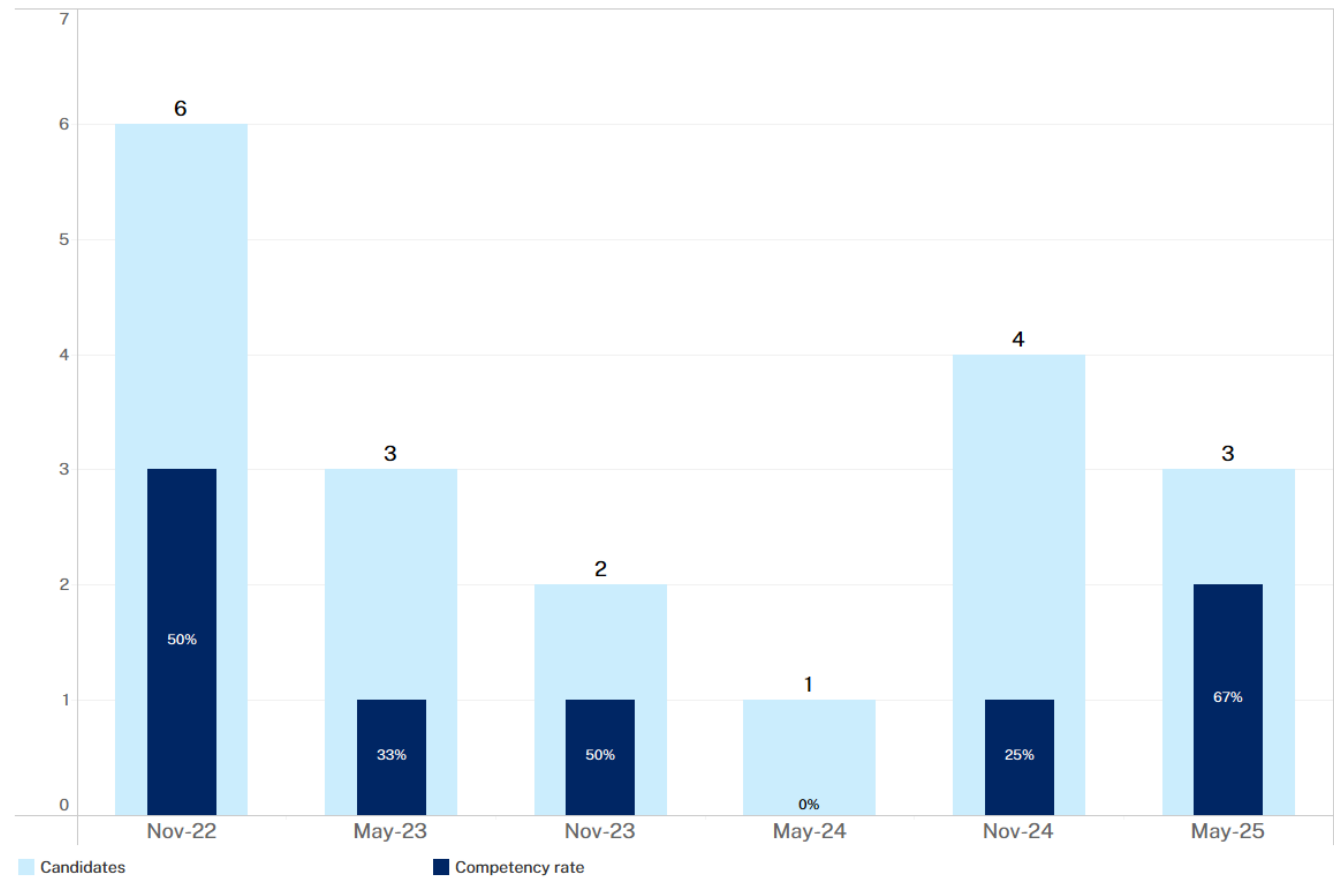
Figure 14. Coal mines other than underground – Electrical engineer written examinations (pass rates)



Oral exams

Number of candidates attempting are low and the pass rate is variable.

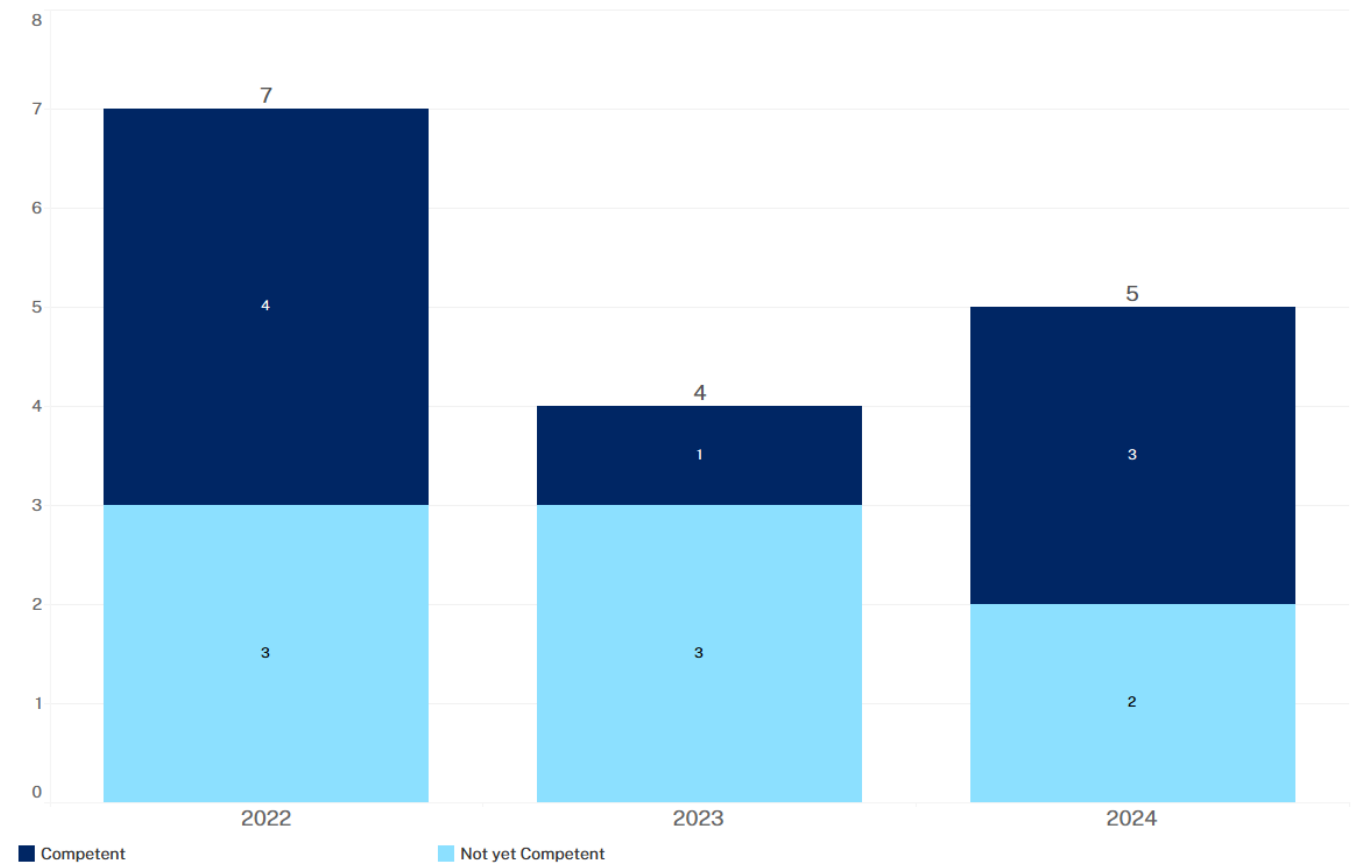
Figure 15. Coal mines other than underground – Electrical engineer oral examination (competency rates)



Number of candidates each year granted a certificate of competence

Low numbers of candidates attempted to obtain this qualification and the pass rate was lowest in 2023.

Figure 16. Coal mines other than underground – Electrical engineer individual candidate performance by year (attempter at least one exam for function in the exam period)



Mechanical engineer

Written exams

Candidates sit 1 combined legislation and practice paper CME3. There are consistently low candidate numbers.

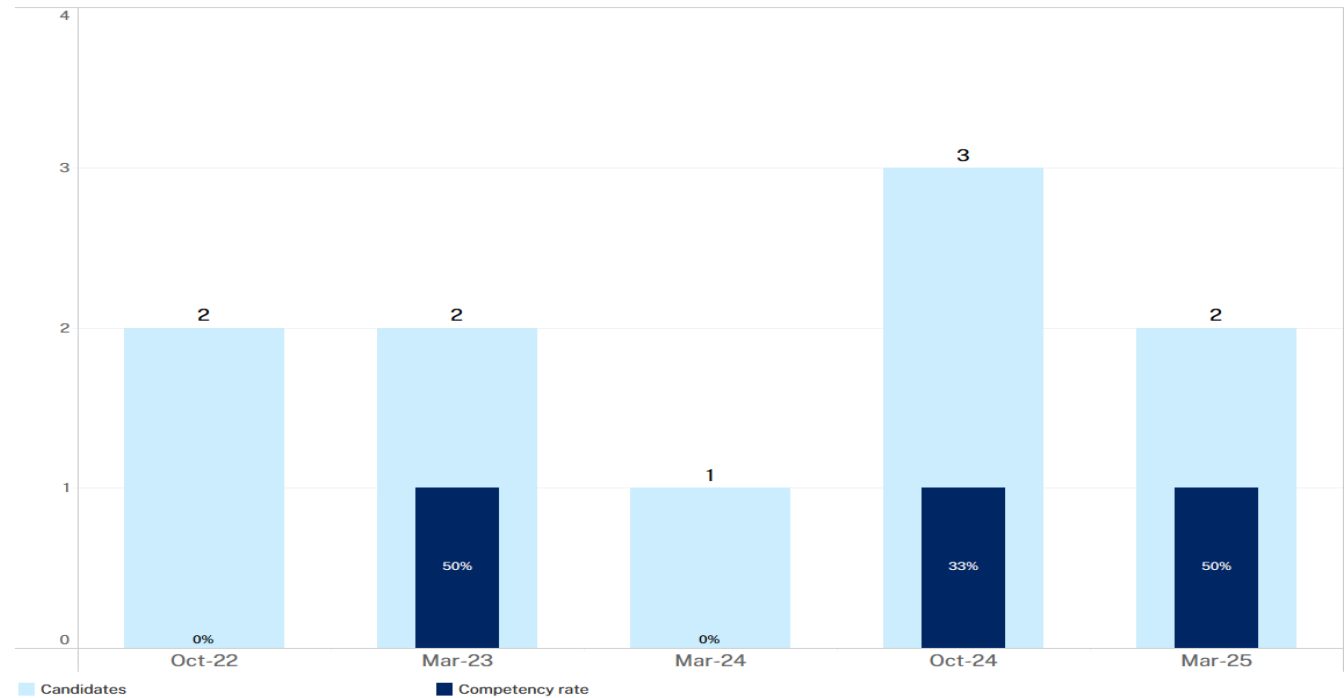
Figure 17. Coal mines other than underground- Mechanical engineer written examinations (pass rates)



Oral exams

There are low candidate numbers and a low competency rate of 50% or less each year.

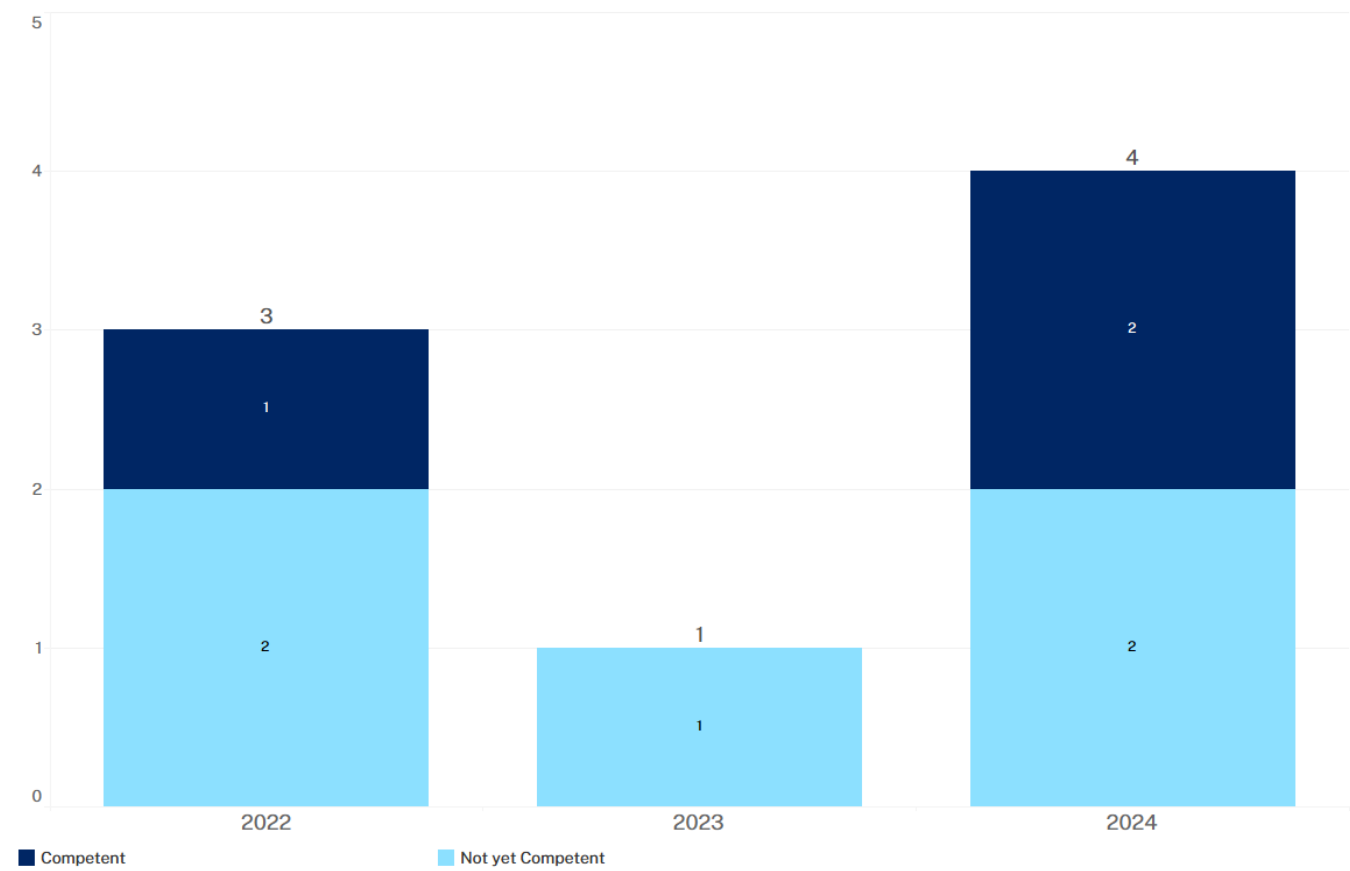
Figure 18. Coal mines other than underground – Mechanical engineer oral examinations (competency rates)



Number of candidates each year granted a certificate of competence

Candidate numbers remain low.

Figure 19. Coal mines other than underground – Mechanical engineer individual candidate performance by year (attempted at least one exam for function in the exam period)



Underground coal mines

Mining engineering manager

Written exams

MB1 is the legislation paper, MB2 is the ventilation paper and MB3 is the coal mining practice paper. The number of candidates who sat in 2024 increased, but fewer candidates passed compared to 2023 and 2022.

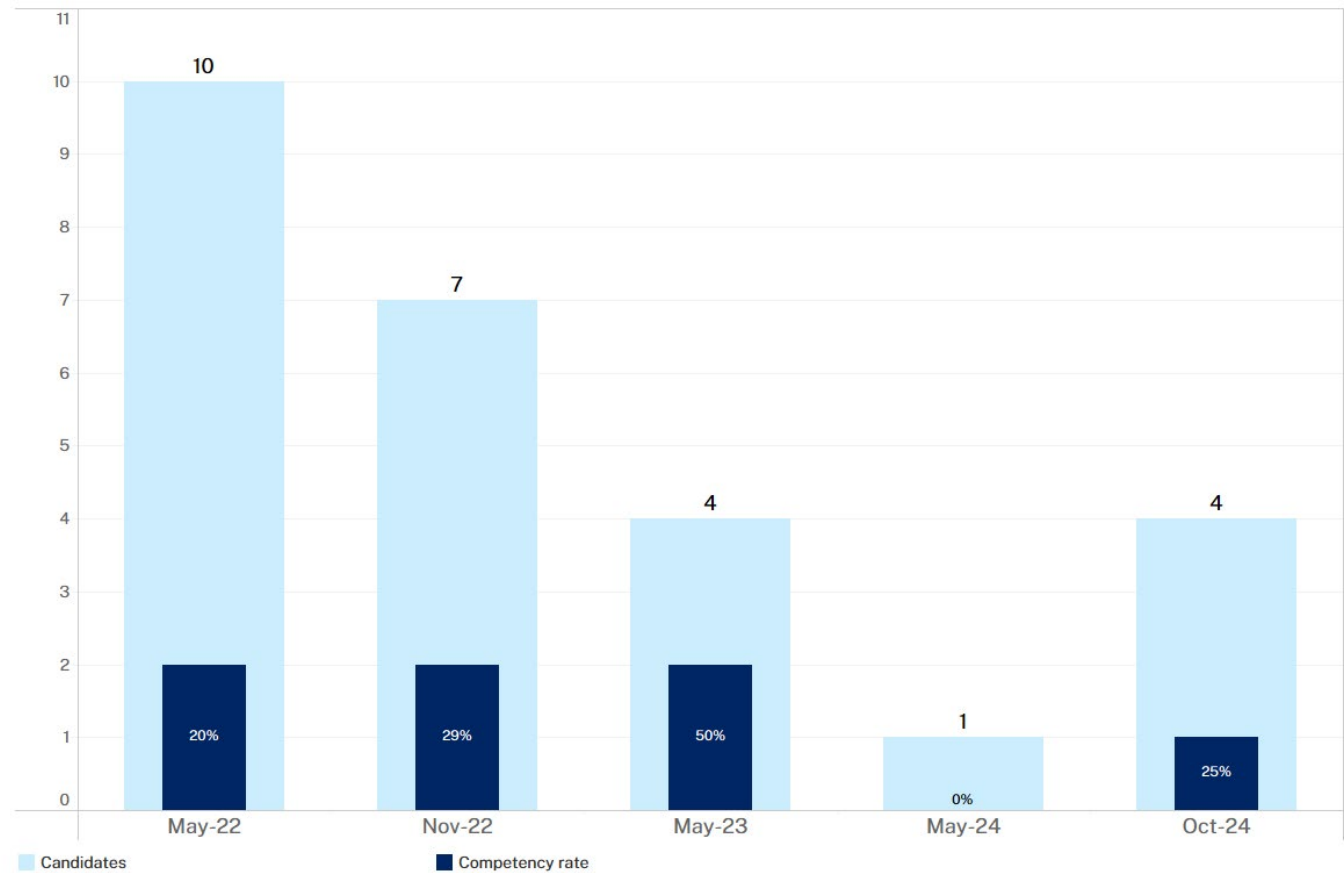
Figure 20. Underground coal mines – Mining engineering manager written examinations (pass rates)



Oral exams

Fewer candidates are attempting each year, with a low competency rate of 50% or less.

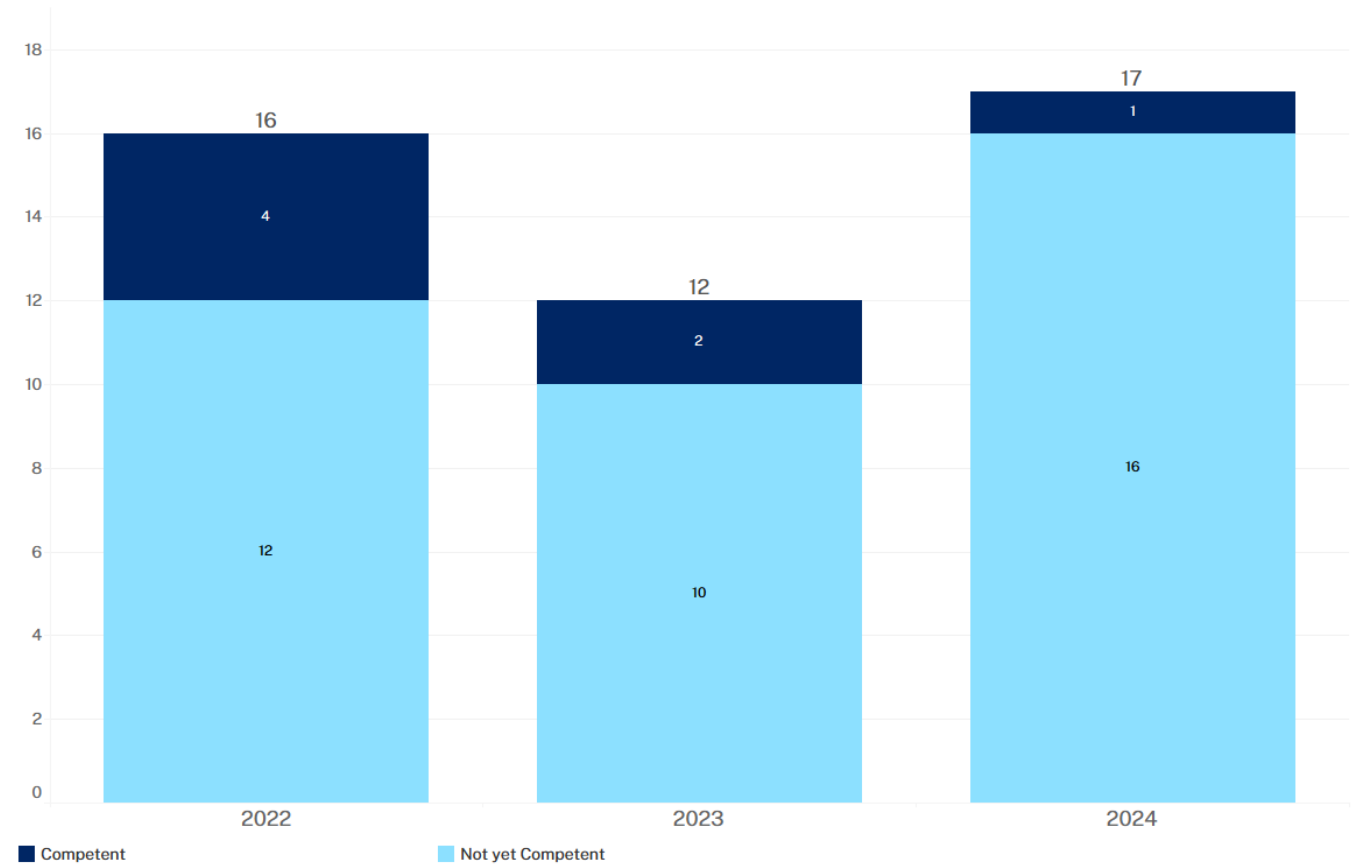
Figure 21. Underground coal mines – Mining engineering manager oral examinations (competency rates)



Number of candidates each year granted a certificate of competence

The number of candidates who apply for this function that are ultimately granted a certificate each year is very low (less than 6% in 2024).

Figure 22. Underground coal mines – Mining engineering manager individual candidate performance by year (attempted at least one exam for function in the exam period)



Undermanager

Written exams

Papers are according to type of candidate:

Existing legacy candidates (3 year credit system)

UB1 – Legislation

UB2 – Mine ventilation

UB3 – Coal mining practice paper

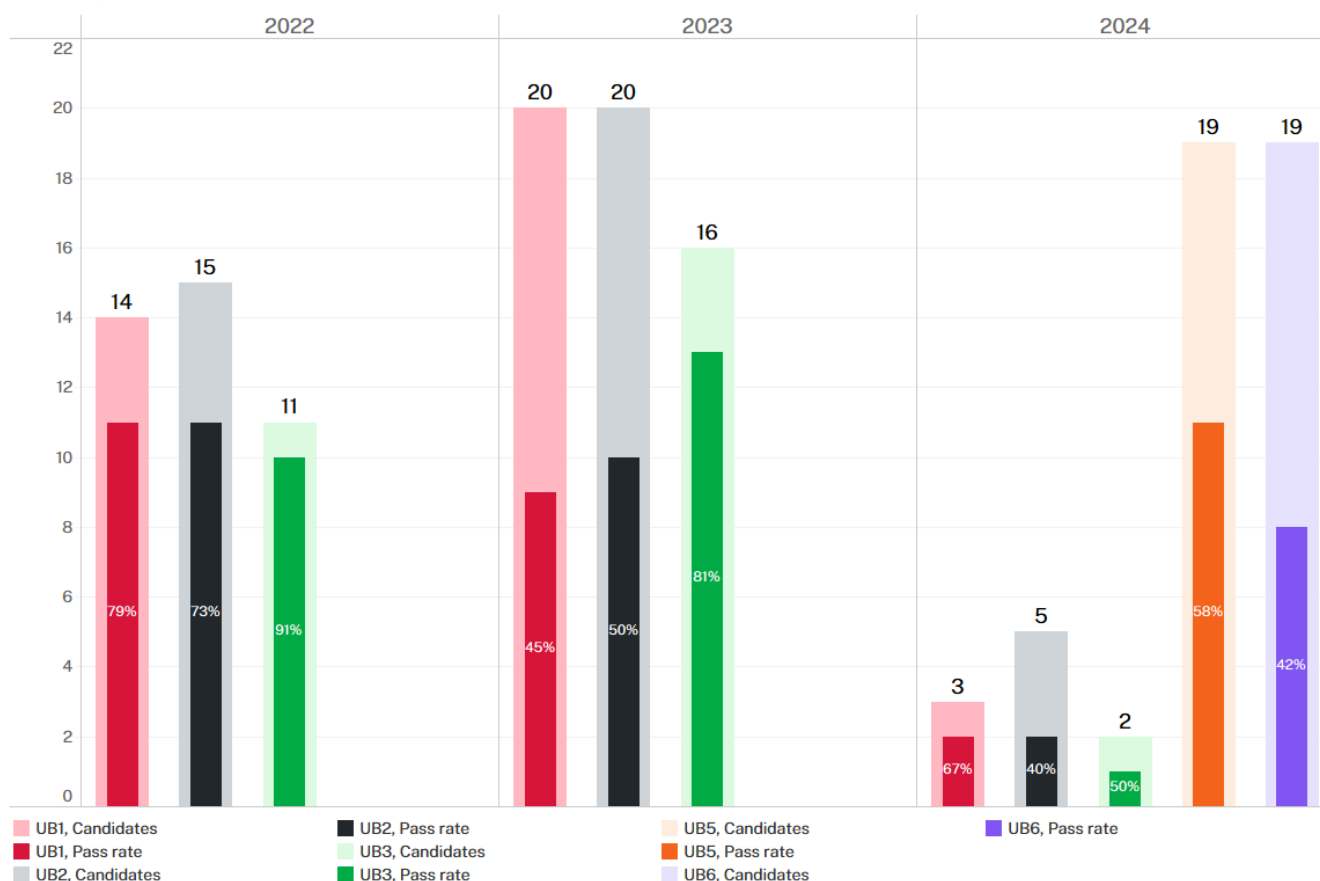
New candidates since 2024

UB5 – Legislation and coal mining practice (combined paper)

UB6 – Mine ventilation paper

There was a small overall reduction in the pass rate in 2024. The number of candidates progressing through the written assessment process remains consistent due to legacy candidates.

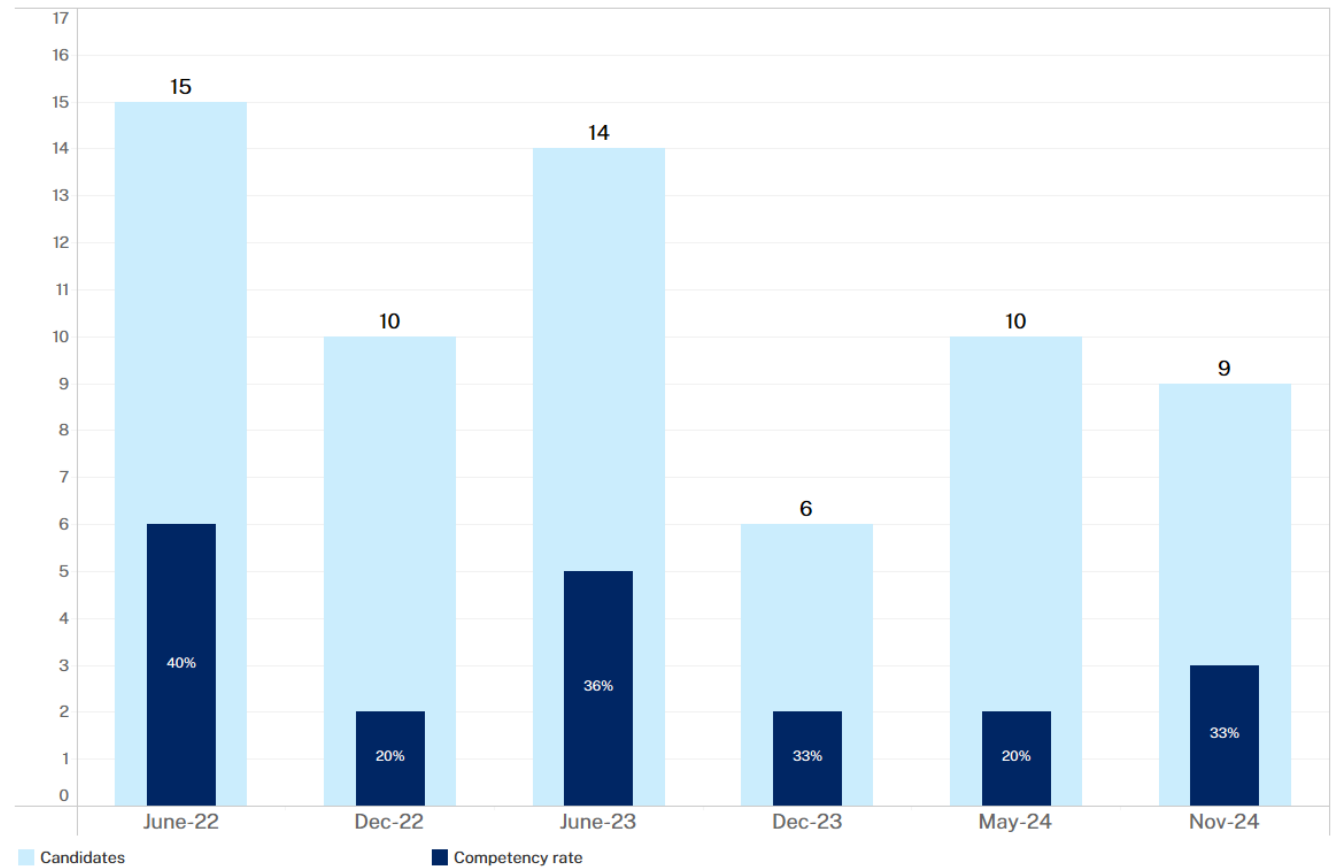
Figure 23. Underground coal mines – Undermanager written examinations (pass rates)



Oral exams

Consistently low numbers of candidates are achieving competency each year.

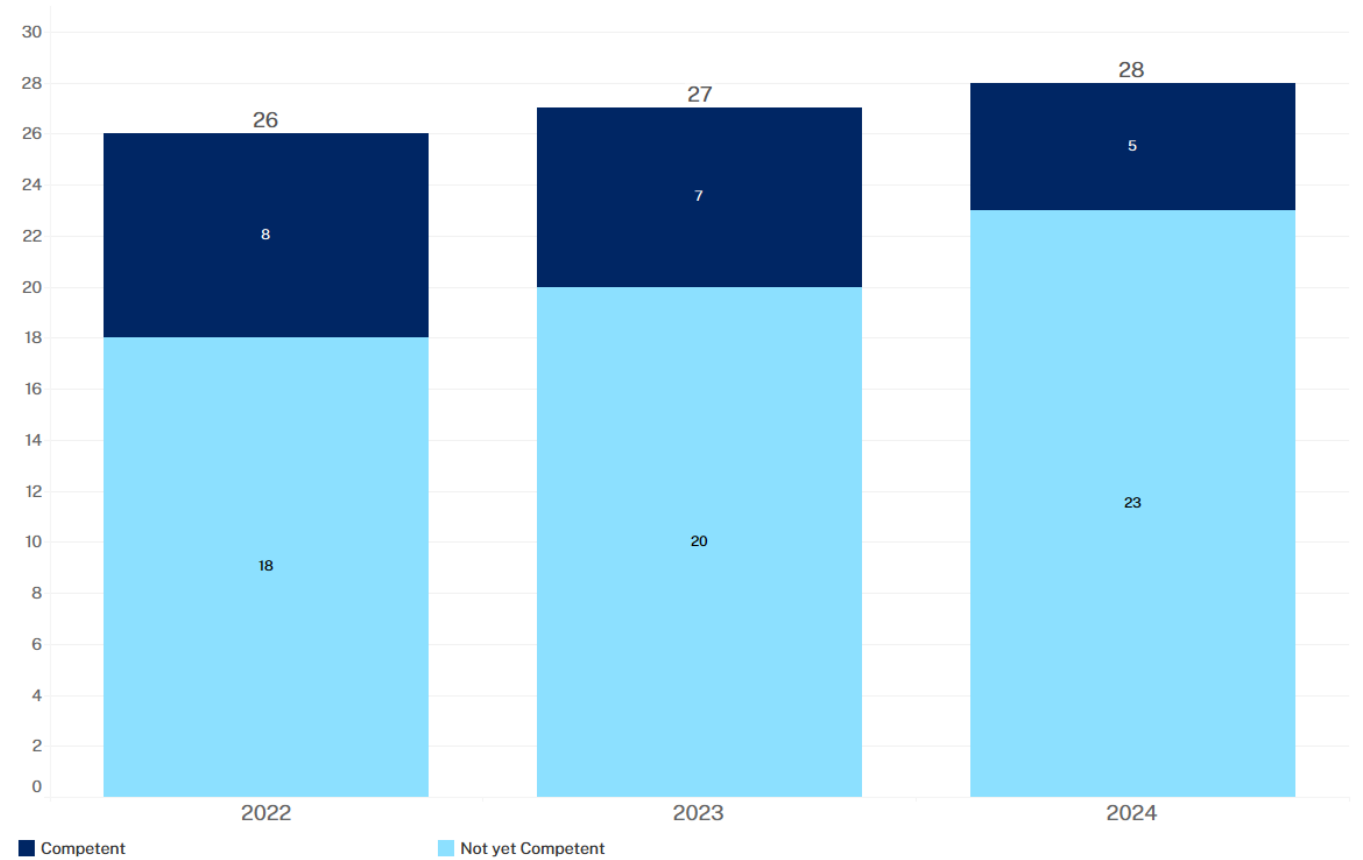
Figure 24. Underground coal mines – Undermanager oral examinations (competency rates)



Number of candidates each year granted a certificate of competence

There has been a small increase in the number of candidates attempting this certificate each year and a decrease in successful candidates.

Figure 25. Underground coal mines – Undermanager individual candidate performance by year (attempted at least one exam for function in the exam period)



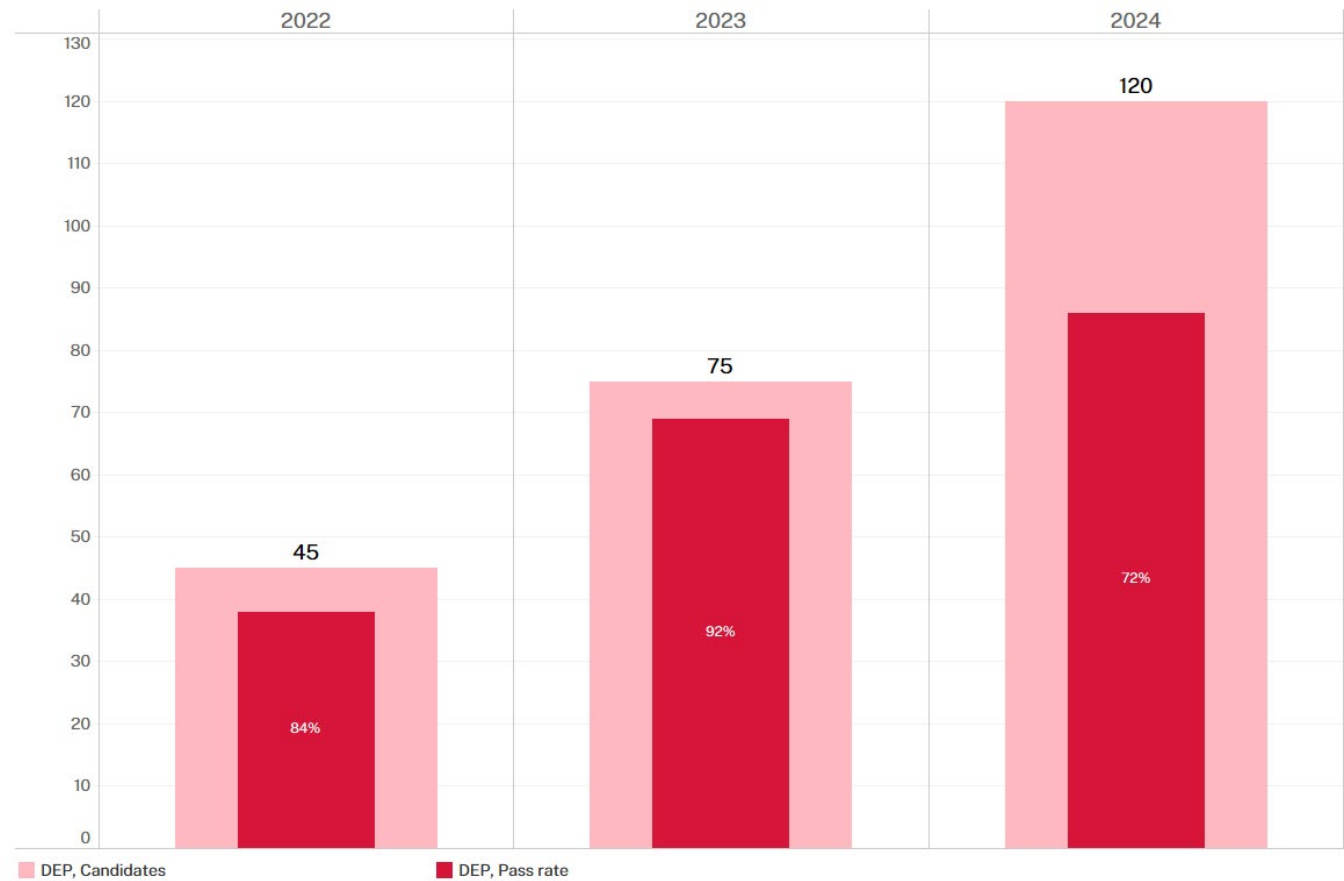
Deputy

Written exams

There is only a combined legislation and practice exam paper.

The number sitting has increased significantly each year, but the pass rate has decreased significantly in 2024.

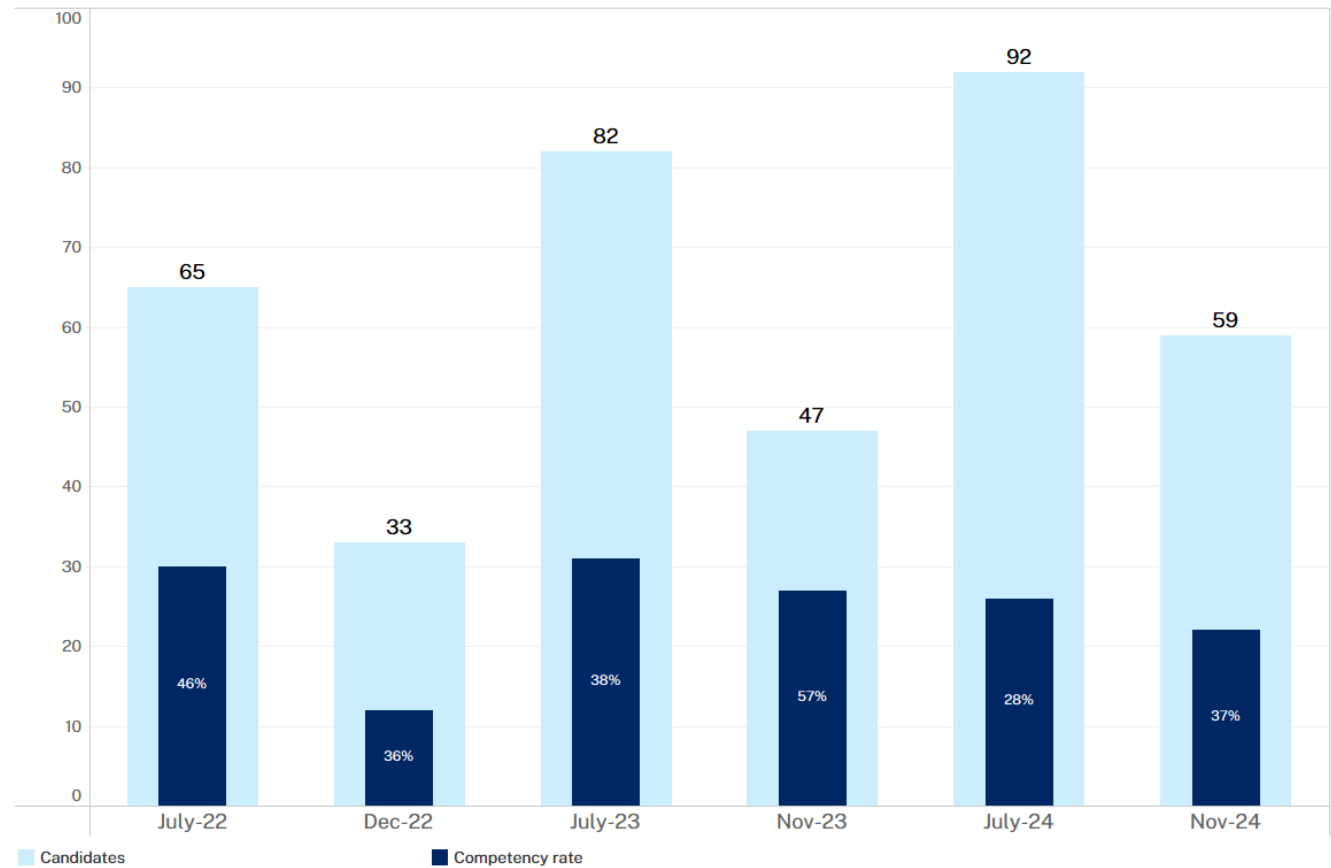
Figure 26. Underground coal mines – Deputy written examinations (pass rates)



Oral exams

The overall number of candidates attempting this certificate has increased across the past three years. However, the competency success rate was at its lowest in 2024. The exam panel is reviewing the rigorousness of the written paper to improve the calibre of candidates eligible to sit the oral exam.

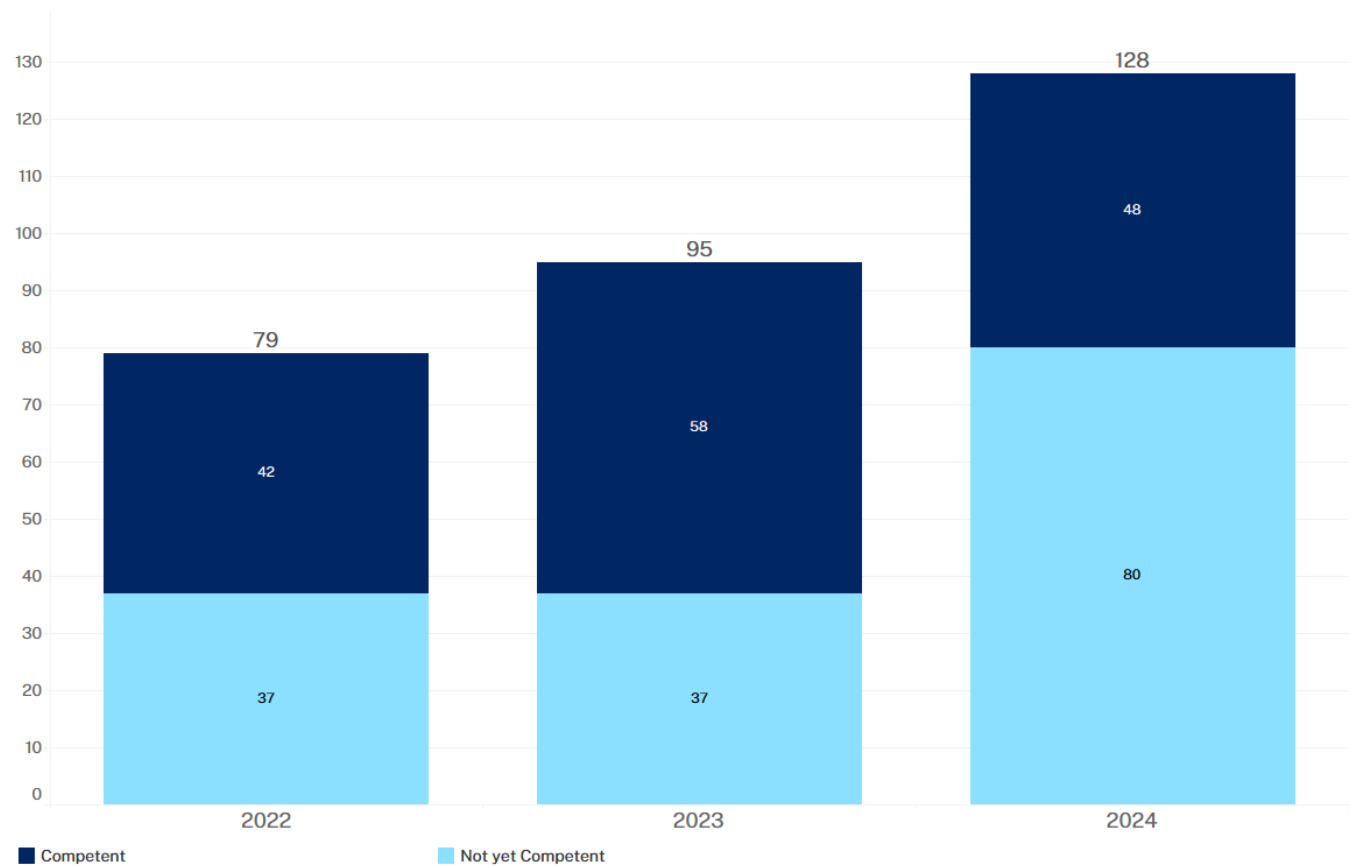
Figure 27. Underground coal mines – Deputy oral examinations (competency rates)



Number of candidates each year granted a certificate of competence

Significantly more candidates are sitting for examination each year but significantly fewer were granted a certificate in 2024 over the previous year.

Figure 28. Underground coal mines – Deputy individual candidate performance by year (attempted at least one exam for function in the exam period)



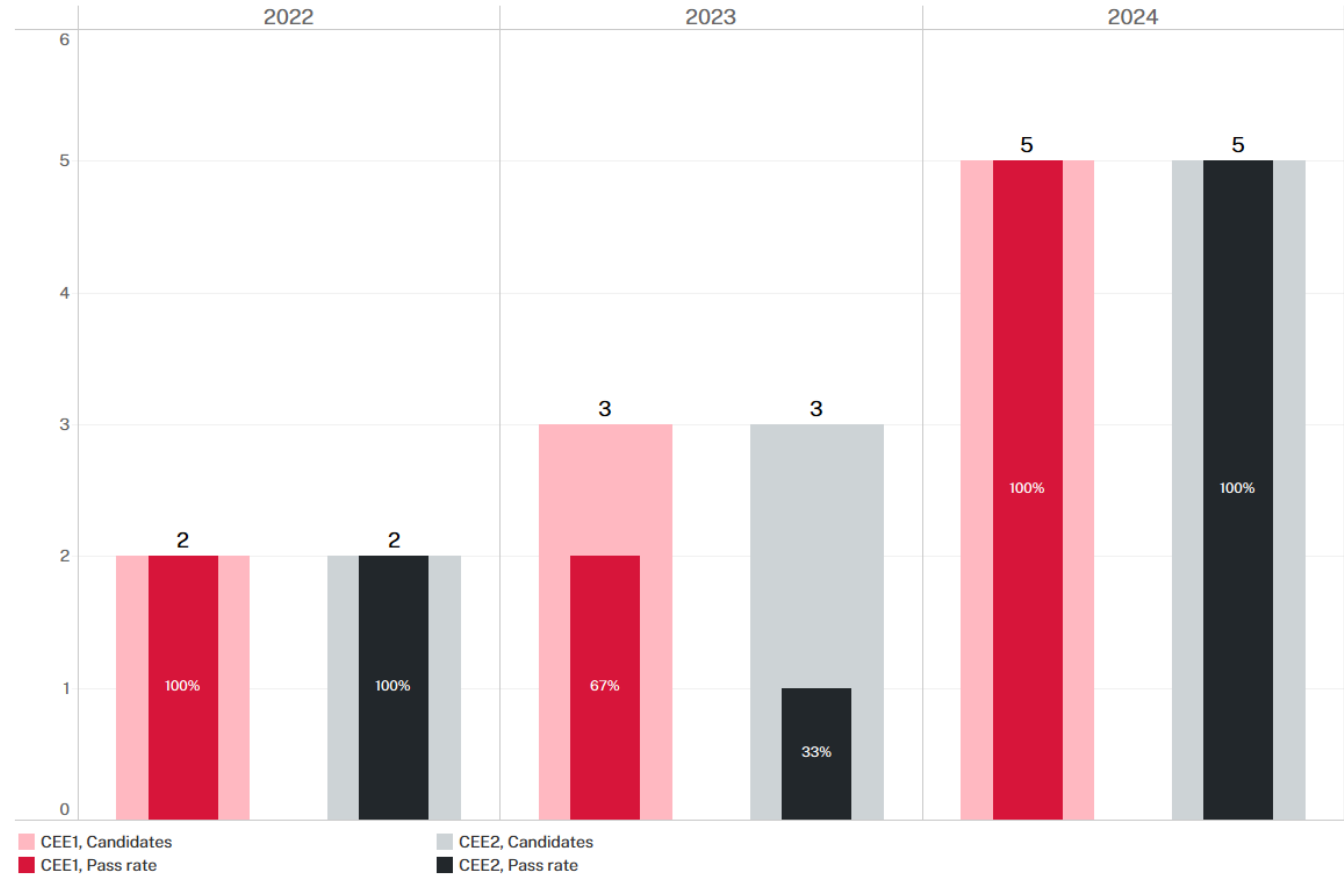
Electrical engineering manager

Written exams

CEE1 is the paper for electrical engineering applied to coal mines and CEE2 is the legislation and Australian standards paper.

Numbers of candidates sitting remains low, however 2024 was an outstanding year with a 100% pass rate.

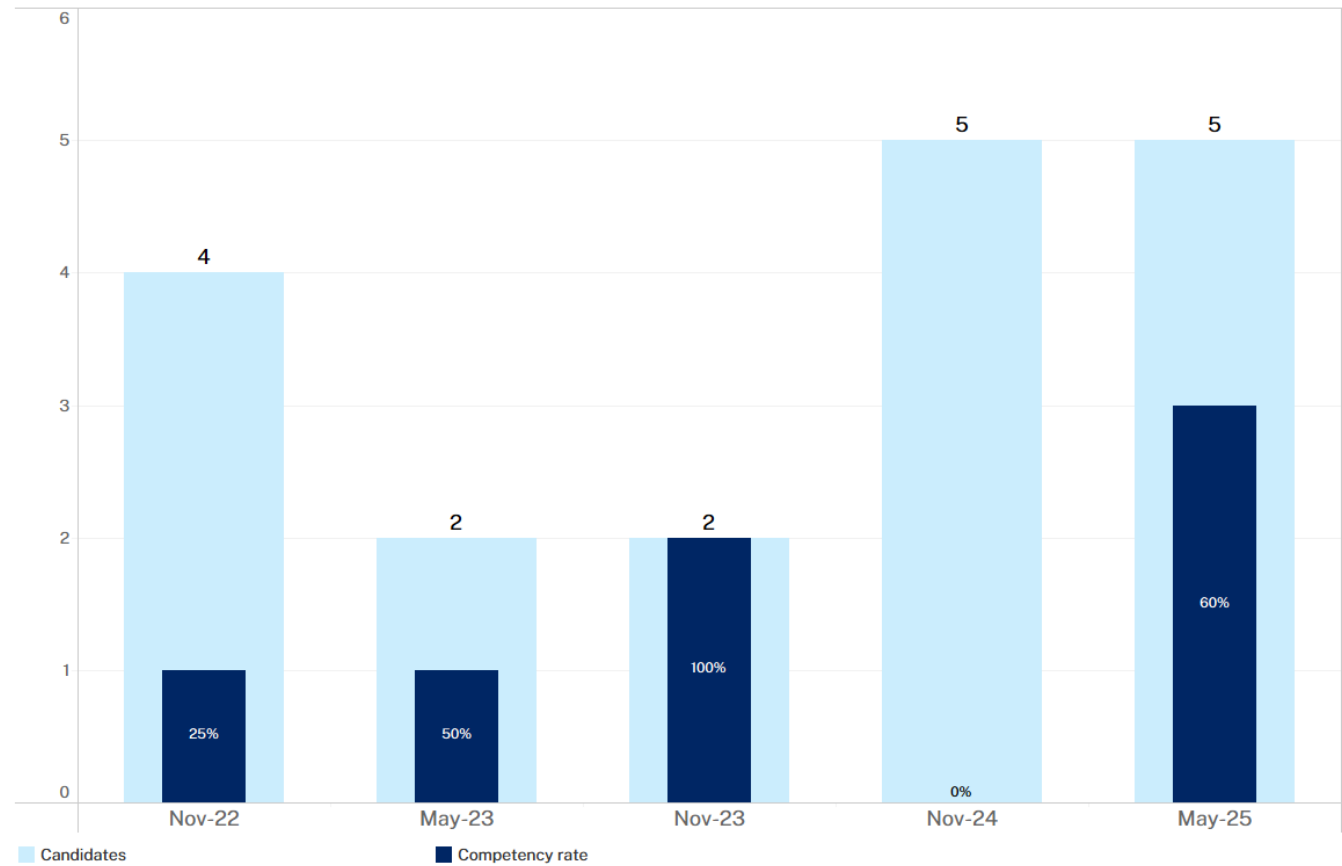
Figure 29. Underground coal mines – Electrical engineering manager written examinations (pass rates)



Oral exams

There are low numbers of candidates progressing from the written exam stage. In contrast to the written exam results for 2024, the competency rate was very low overall.

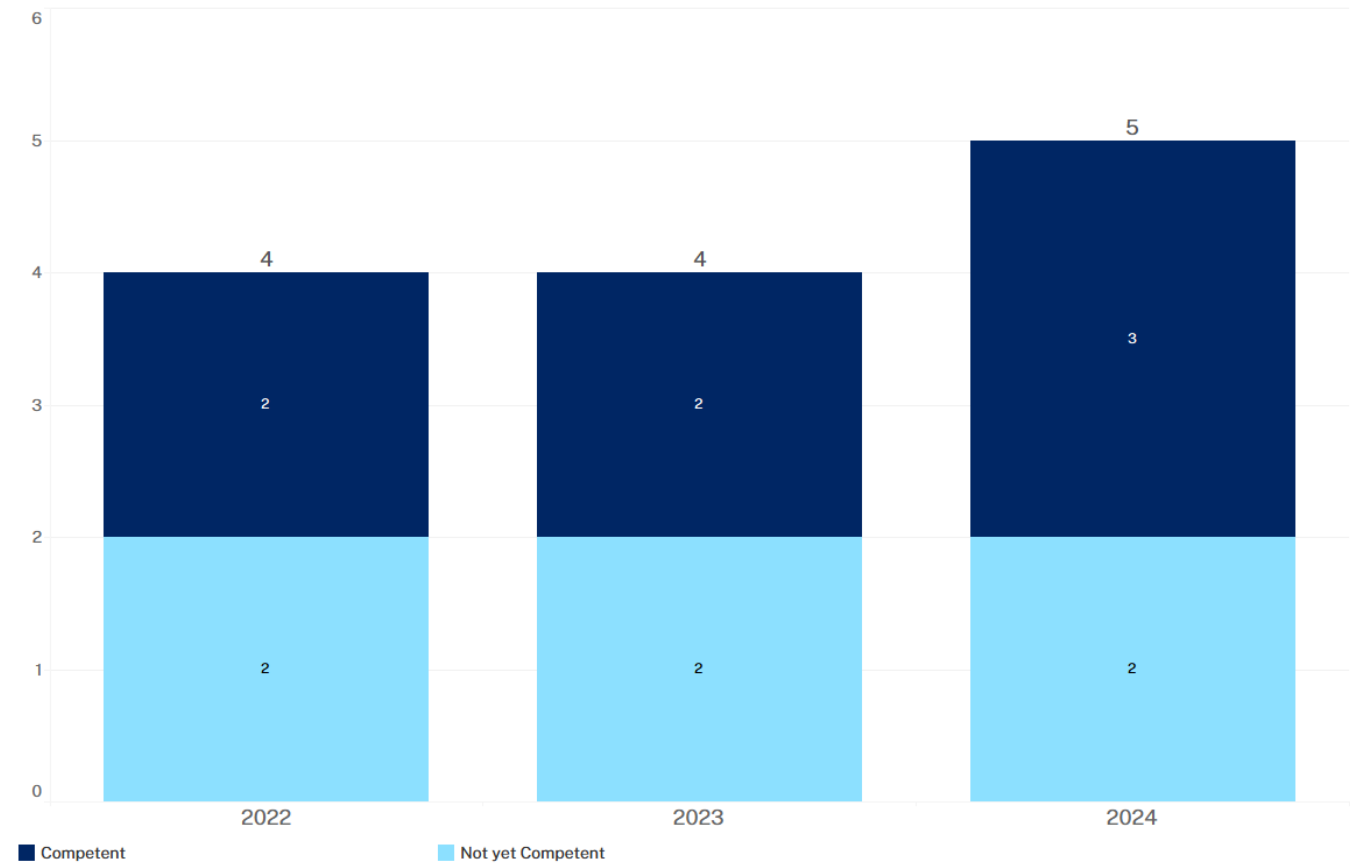
Figure 30. Underground coal mines – Electrical engineering manager oral examinations (competency rates)



Number of candidates each year granted a certificate of competence

The number of candidates attempting and obtaining a certificate are similar between the years.

Figure 31. Underground coal mines – Electrical engineering manager individual candidate performance by year (attempted at least one exam for function in the exam period)



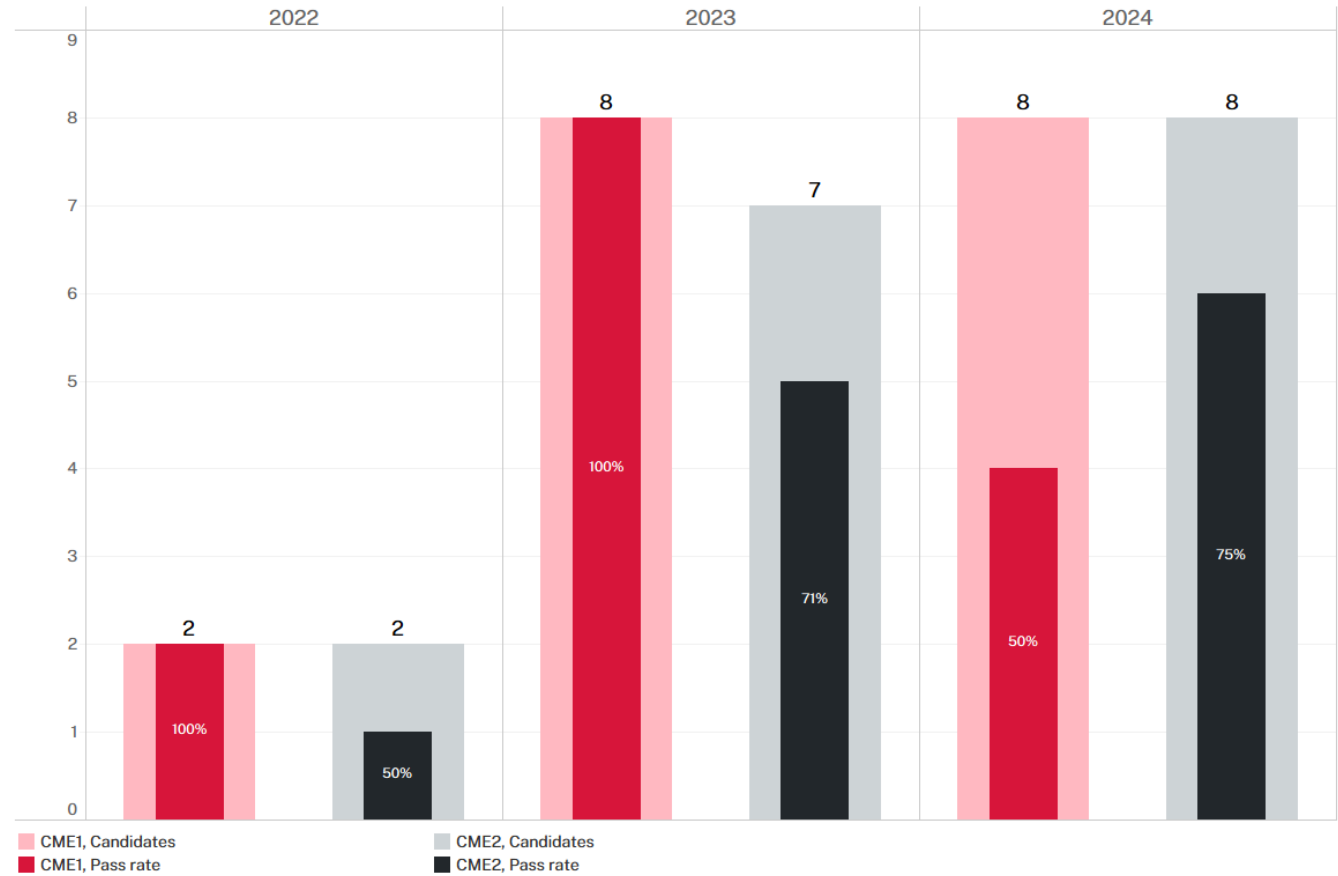
Mechanical engineering manager

Written exams

CME1 is the paper for mechanical engineering applicable to underground coal mines and CME2 is the legislation and Australian standards paper.

Candidate numbers have increased significantly in the last 2 years, but pass rates have been variable.

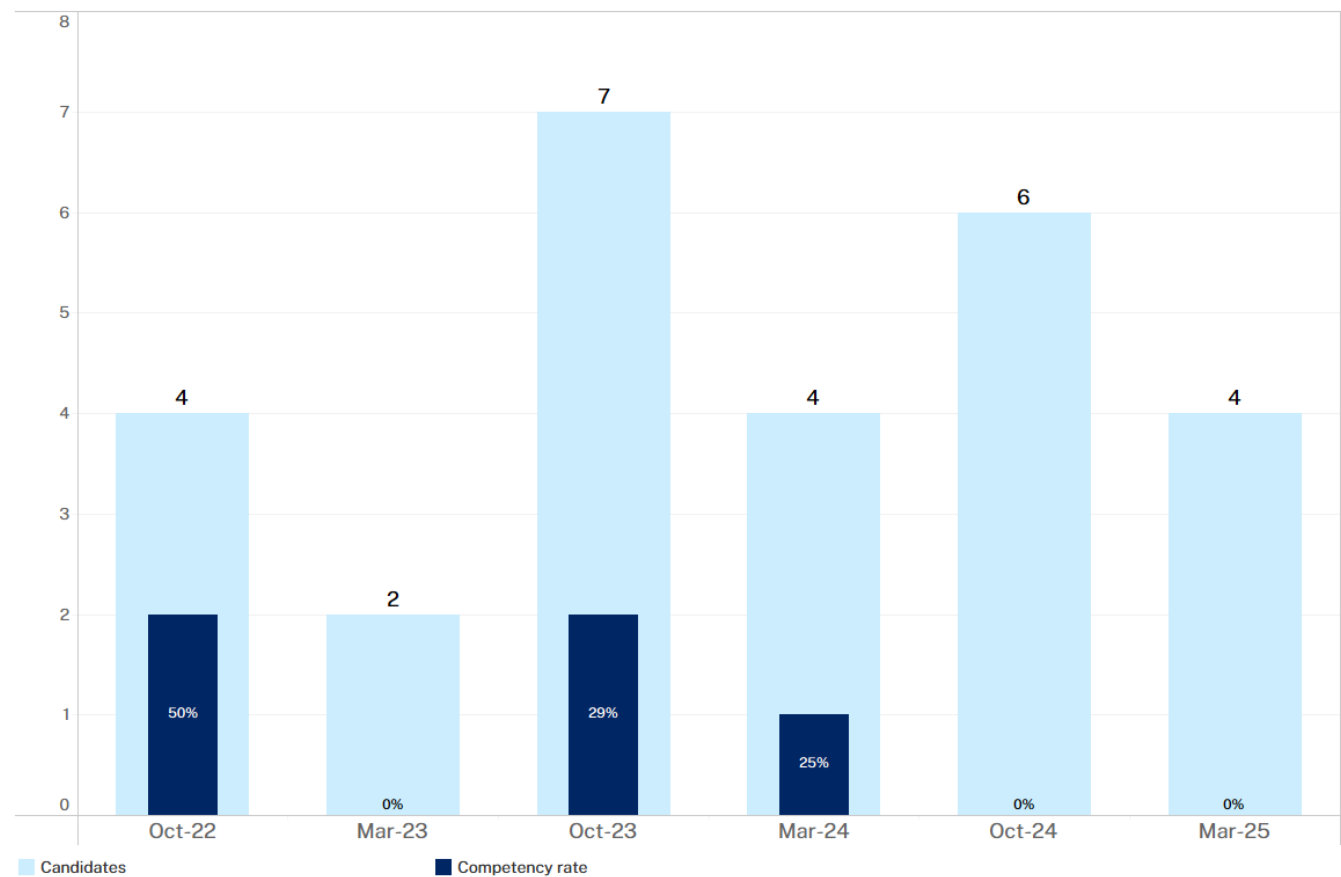
Figure 32. Underground coal mines – Mechanical mining engineering manager written examinations (pass rates)



Oral exams

Many candidates are failing the oral examination. The examiners’ report for 2024 identified that candidates lacked understanding of important topics, including risk management and required too much leading and prompting.

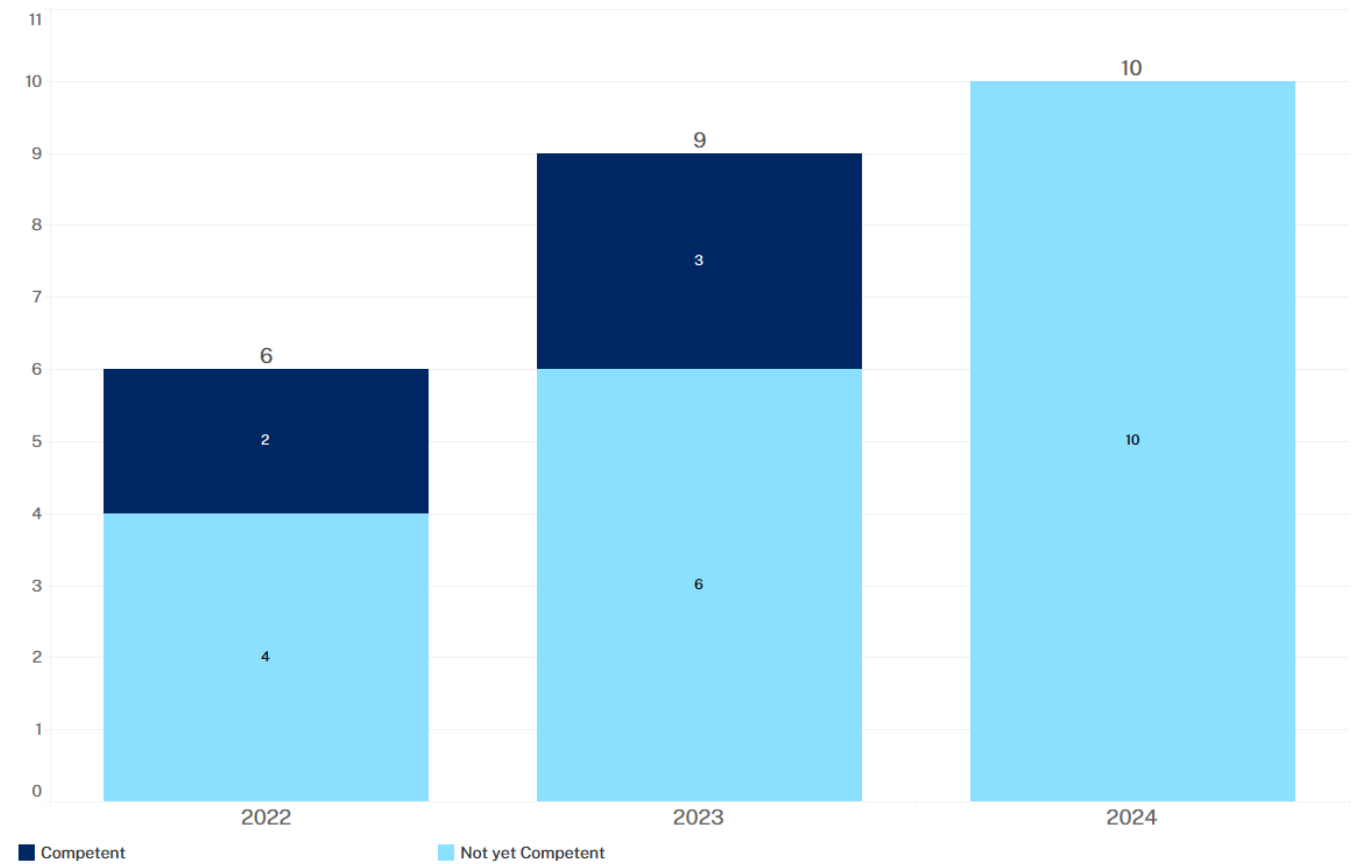
Figure 33. Underground coal mines – Mechancial engineering manager oral examinations (competency rates)



Number of candidates each year granted a certificate of competence

The number of candidates attempting and obtaining a certificate are very low.

Figure 34. Underground coal mines – Mechanical engineer individual candidate performance by year (attempted at least one exam for function in the exam period)



Underground mines other than coal

Mining engineering manager

Written exams

Papers A and B were combined in 2023 to make one paper covering both legislation and practice. There was only one candidate in 2023 and 2024 (and no candidates in 2022).

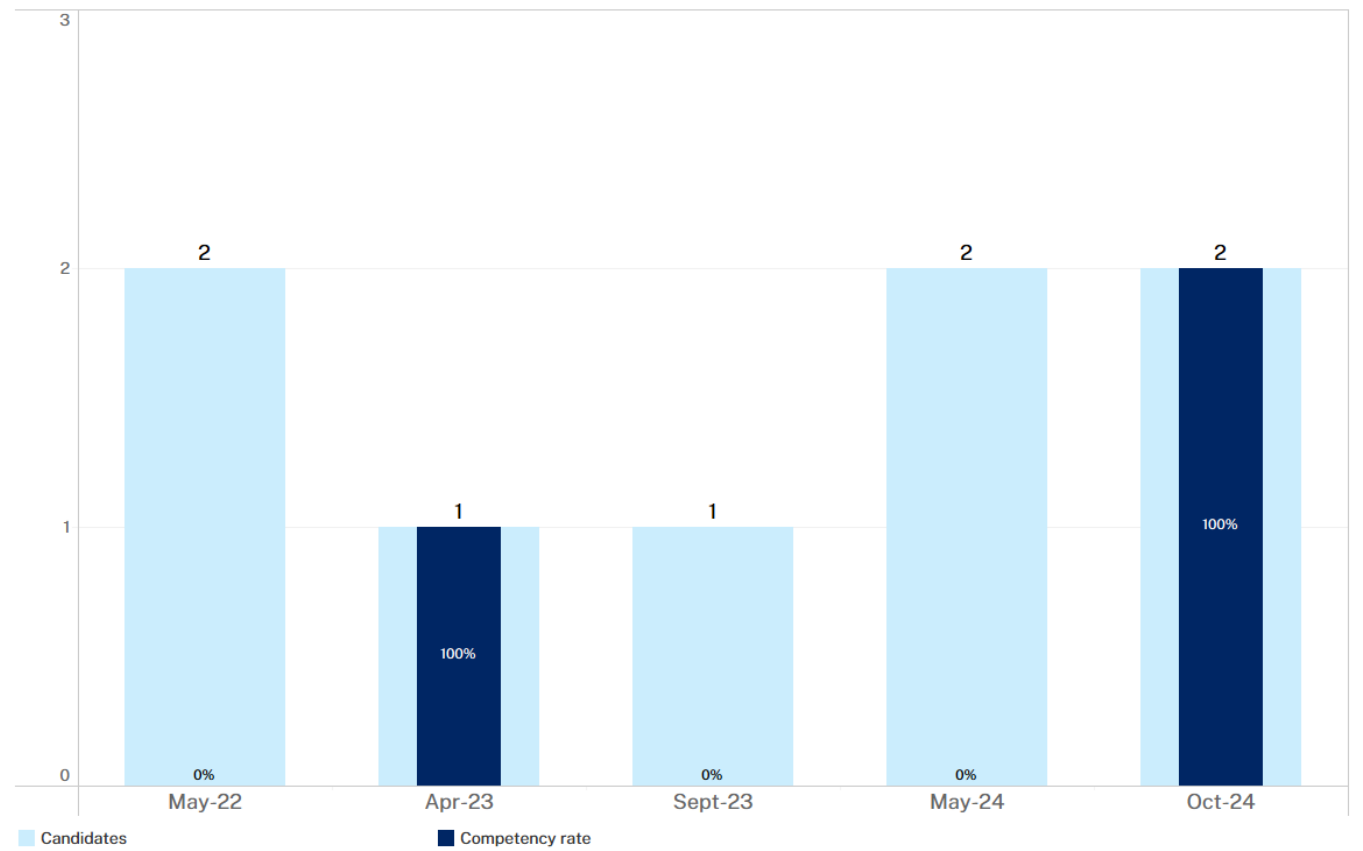
Figure 35. Underground mines other than coal – Mining engineering manager written examinations (pass rates)



Oral exams

Despite only one candidate sitting the written exams, there were legacy candidates and candidates allowed to defer one oral exam to the following year’s exam due to extenuating circumstances that accounts for the number sitting.

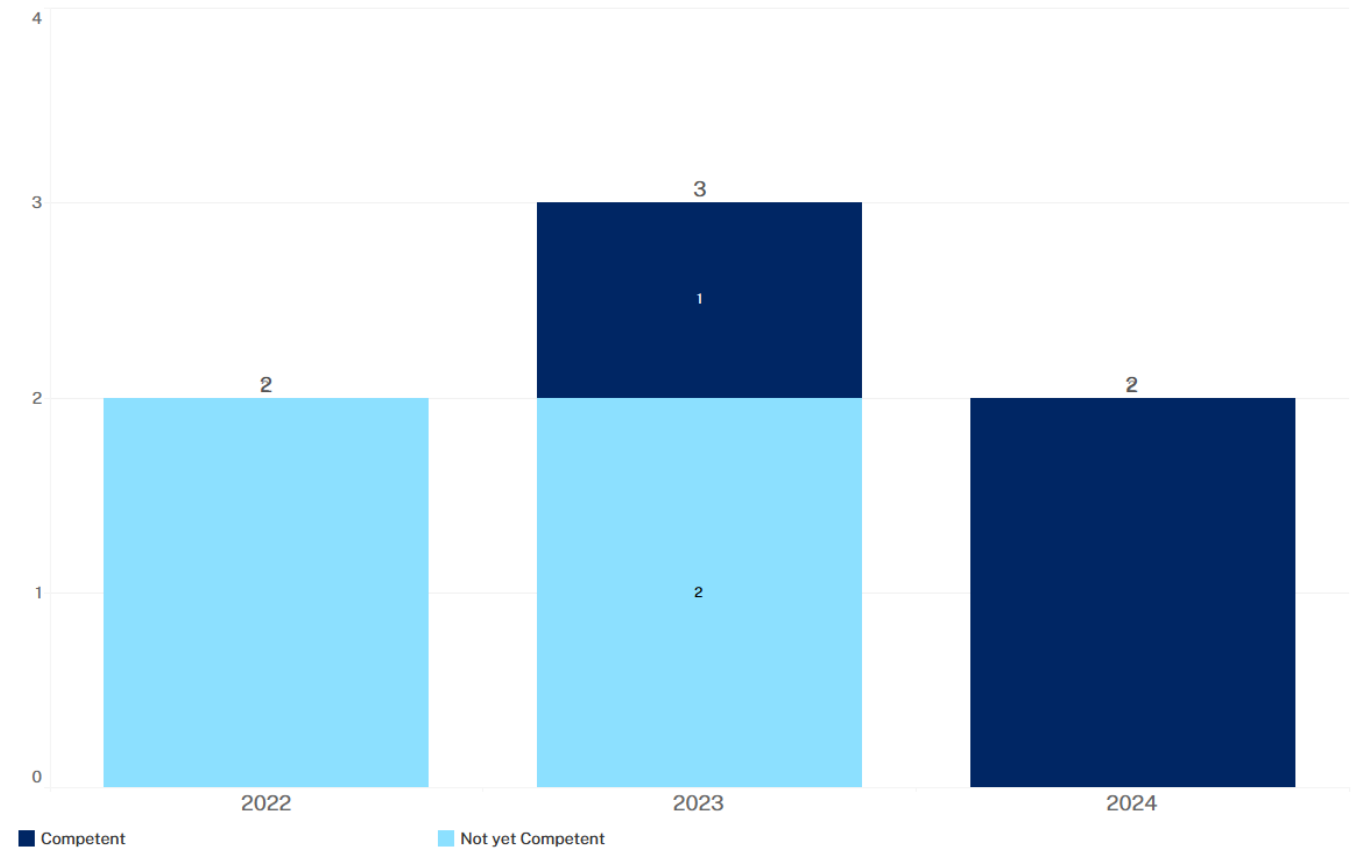
Figure 36. Underground mines other than coal – Mining engineering manager oral examinations (competency rates)



Number of candidates each year granted a certificate of competence

The number of candidates attempting and obtaining a certificate are similar between the years.

Figure 37. Underground mines other than coal – Mining engineering manager individual candidate performance by year (attempted at least one exam for function in the exam period)

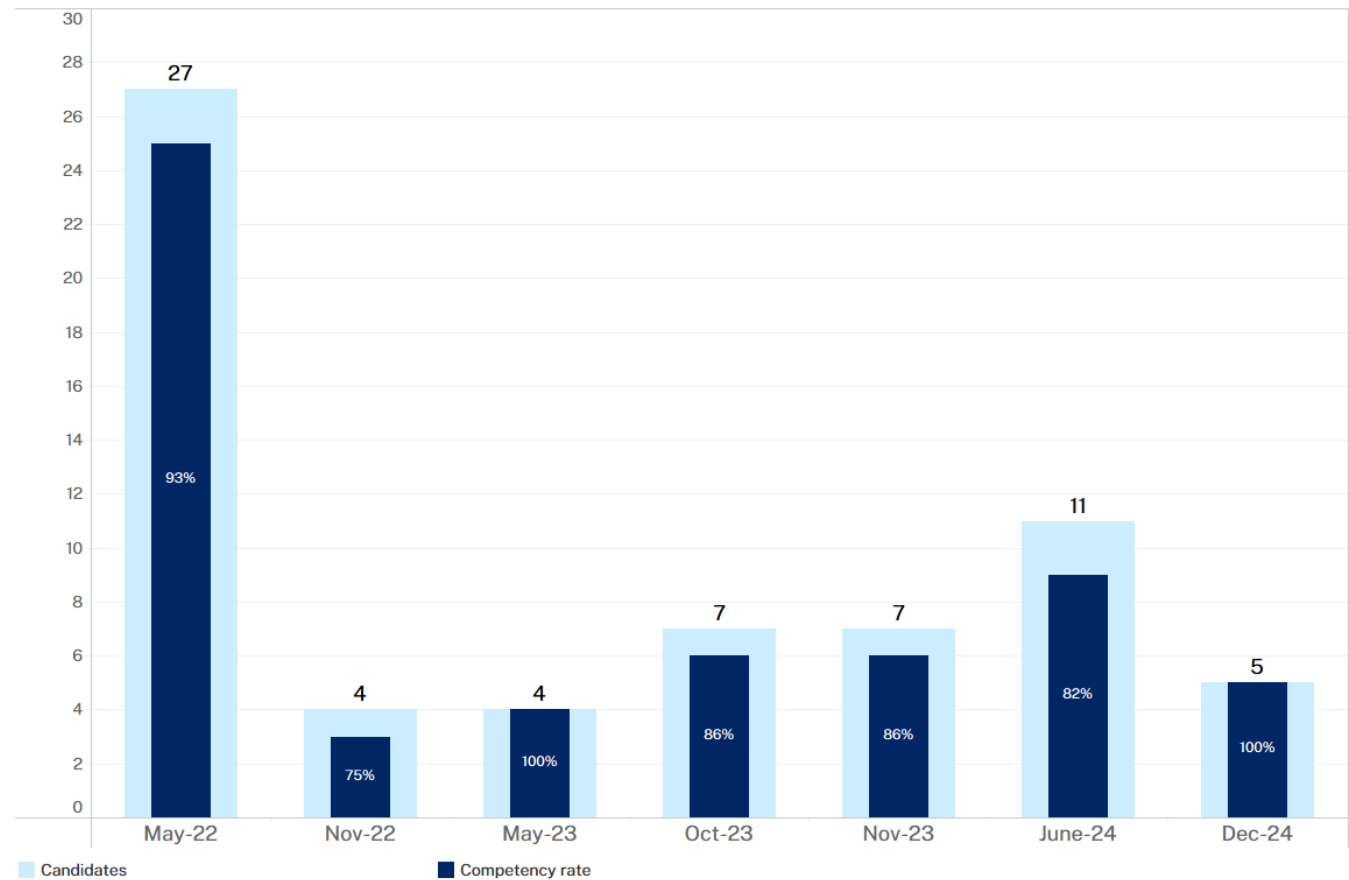


Underground mine supervisor

Oral exams (no written)

The data shows a consistently high competence rate.

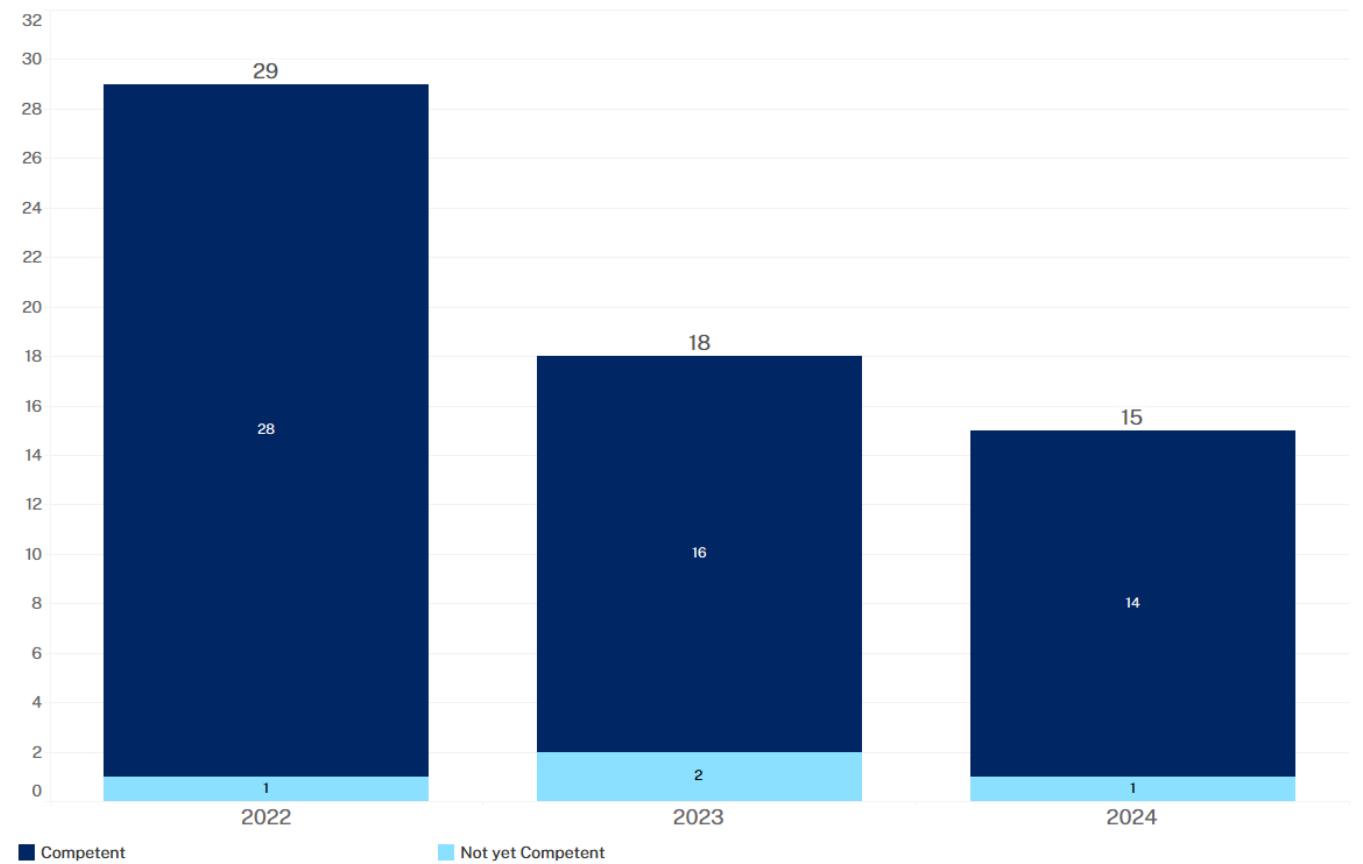
Figure 38. Underground mines other than coal – Mine supervisor oral examinations (competency rates)



Number of candidates each year granted a certificate of competence

This function has the highest proportion of candidates that obtain a certificate.

Figure 39. Underground mines other than coal – Mine supervisor candidate performance by year (attempted at least one exam for function in the exam period)



Mines other than underground mines or coal mines

Quarry manager of mines other than underground mines or coal mines

Written exams

Pilot online written exams were conducted in 2022, which were successful and so continued. Blueprinting exams from 2022 onwards coincides with an increase in pass rates.

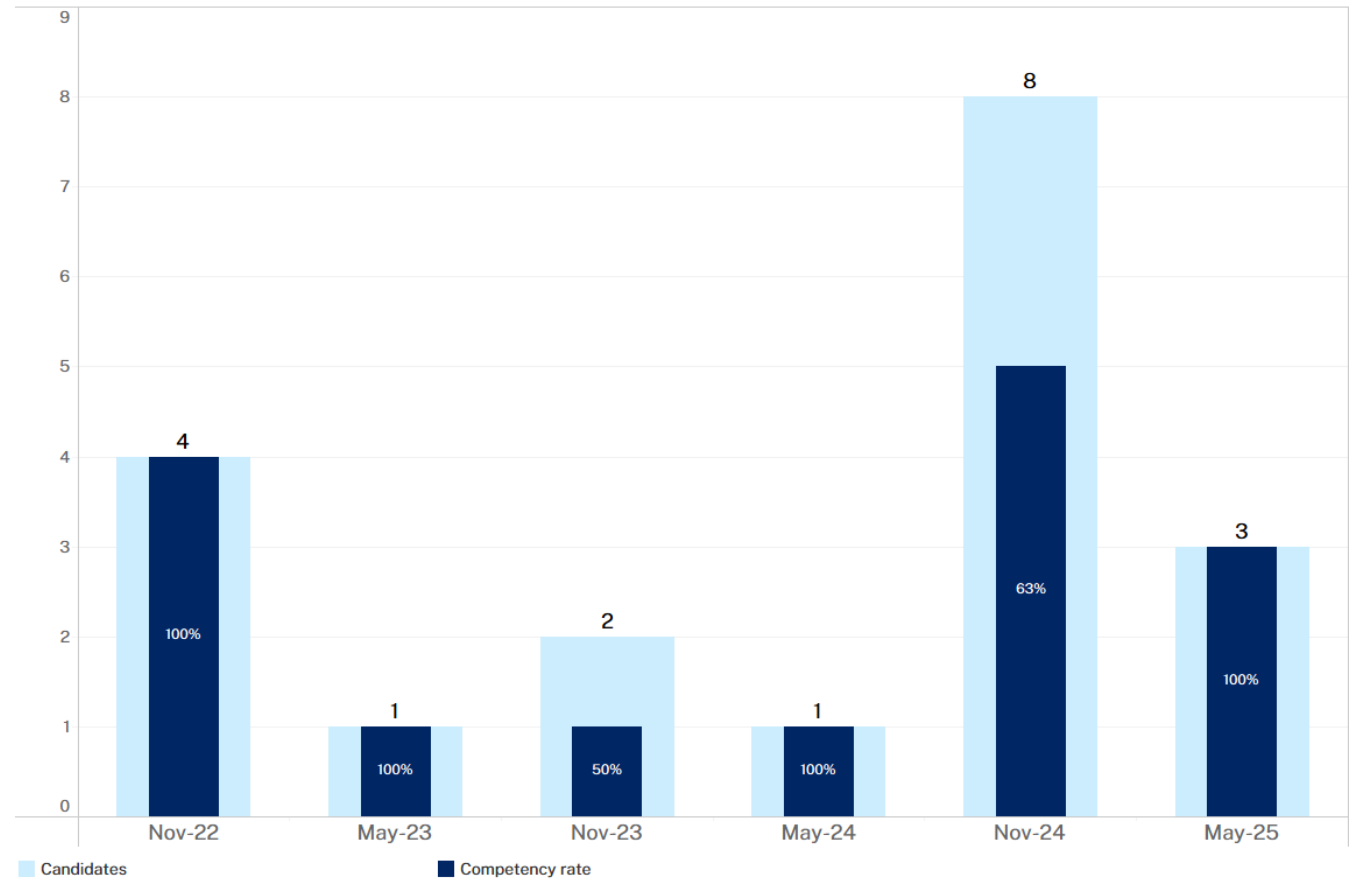
Figure 40. Quarry manager written examinations (pass rates)



Oral exams

Competency rates have remained similarly high over the 3 years.

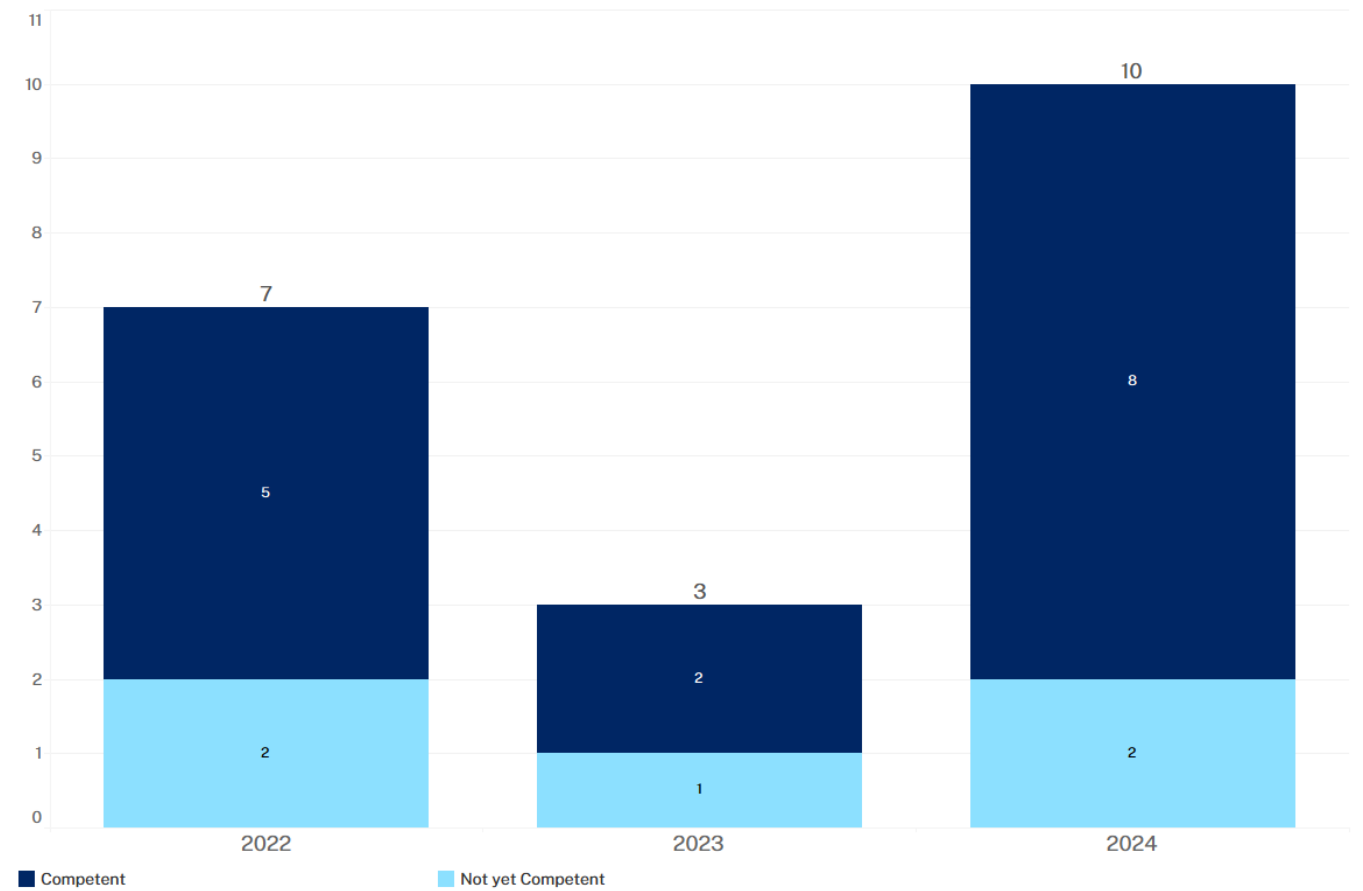
Figure 41. Quarry manager oral examinations (competency rates)



Number of candidates each year granted a certificate of competence

The number and proportion of candidates attempting and obtaining a quarry manager certificate is high.

Figure 42. Quarry manager individual candidate performance by year (attempted at least one exam for function in the exam period)



Cable repair signatory

Oral exams only

There were no candidates in 2022. Two candidates sat in 2023 and did not pass.

Figure 43. Cable repair signatory oral examinations (competency rates)

