

# Chapter 2: Schools and schooling

Chapter 2 provides information on the status of Australian schooling in 2022, including school structures, student and teacher numbers, and teacher education.

## 2.1 School structures

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In recent years, school structures and age requirements for student enrolment have become more consistent across Australian states and territories. Policy initiatives leading to this include decisions by several jurisdictions to move Year 7 from a primary school year to a secondary school year and national agreement on minimum requirements for leaving school.

In 2022, primary education consisted of a Foundation year (first year of full-time school) followed by Years 1–6, with secondary education from Years 7–12.<sup>1</sup>

The age at which schooling becomes compulsory is 6 years in most states and territories. In practice, most children start the Foundation year of primary school at between 4 and a half and 5 and a half years old.

All states and territories require young people to participate in schooling until they complete Year 10 and to participate full time in education, training or employment, or a combination of these activities, until at least the age of 17.

However, there are still some variations in school structures, in requirements for compulsory school enrolment and in terminology between states and territories. These are summarised in Table 2.1.

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<sup>1</sup> In 2018, the South Australian Government announced that Year 7 would be moved from a primary school year to a secondary school year. In 2020, this change was implemented for a number of non-government schools and 3 government schools. In 2022, Year 7 became a secondary school year for all government and non-government schools in South Australia.

Table 2.1

**Primary and secondary school structures, minimum school starting age, compulsory school starting age, and minimum school leaving age, by state and territory, Australia, 2022**

State/territory	Name of Foundation year	Primary schooling	Secondary schooling	Minimum school starting age (Foundation)	Compulsory school starting age	Minimum school leaving age
NSW	Kindergarten	Kindergarten Years 1–6	Years 7–12	4 turning 5 by 31 July	6 years	17 years
Vic	Preparatory	Preparatory Years 1–6	Years 7–12	4 turning 5 by 30 April	6 years	17 years
Qld	Preparatory	Preparatory Years 1–6	Years 7–12	4 turning 5 by 30 June	6 years 6 months	17 years
SA	Reception	Reception Years 1–6	Years 7–12	4 turning 5 by 1 May	6 years	17 years
WA	Pre-primary	Pre-primary Years 1–6	Years 7–12	4 turning 5 by 30 June	5 years 6 months	17 years 6 months – 18 years
Tas	Preparatory	Preparatory Years 1–6	Years 7–12	5 by 1 January	5 years	17-18 years
NT	Transition	Transition Years 1–6	Years 7–12	4 turning 5 by 30 June	6 years	17 years
ACT	Kindergarten	Kindergarten Years 1–6	Years 7–12	4 turning 5 by 30 April	6 years	17 years

## Notes:

State and territory minimum ages for the commencement of the Foundation year of schooling are as at January of the year of commencement.

All students are required to complete Year 10 or approved equivalent. After Year 10, students must be in school, in approved education, training, or employment or in a combination of training and employment until they turn 17 years of age or, in some jurisdictions, gain a Senior Secondary Certificate of Education or equivalent.

In WA, the requirement to remain at school or undertake an approved combination of training and employment extends to the end of the year in which a student turns 17 years 6 months of age, or they achieve the requirements for secondary graduation, or until they turn 18 years of age, whichever happens first.

In Tas, all young people must participate in education or training until they complete Year 12, attain a Certificate III, or they turn 18 years of age, whichever occurs first. Young people with full-time employment, or other specific circumstances, can apply for an exemption.

Sources: State and territory education authorities; ABS, *Schools*, 2022.

Within the overall structure of primary and secondary education, individual schools may be primary only, secondary only or combined primary and secondary. Secondary schools may cater for the full age range of secondary students or be divided into junior and senior campuses.

In some states and territories, there are government and non-government special schools for students with disability or additional support needs. In other states and territories, most students with additional support needs are enrolled in mainstream classes. See Chapter 10 for definition of special school and special assistance school.

Students who are geographically isolated or who are otherwise unable to attend a local school may study through distance education schools or centres. Boarding facilities are available at some schools, mainly in the non-government sectors.

Students of compulsory school age may also be home-schooled if they have met the criteria set down by the relevant state or territory education authority. However, students undertaking home schooling are only counted in the National Schools Statistics Collection (NSSC) and this report if they are also formally enrolled in a course of study at school, including through distance education.

Each state and territory also has an early childhood education sector that is separate from primary and secondary schooling, although early childhood centres are often attached to, or accommodated in, primary or combined schools. In some jurisdictions, part-time early childhood education programs in the year before full-time schooling that are conducted in primary schools are considered to be a part of schooling. However, these programs are outside the scope and definition of schooling in the NSSC. Statistical data on these and other early childhood education programs is not included in this report.<sup>2</sup>

Data on secondary education provided by adult learning institutions such as institutes of technical and further education (TAFE) is also excluded from this report, except for vocational education and training (VET) programs undertaken by secondary school students.

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<sup>2</sup> Statistical data on preschool education is available in ABS, [Preschool Education](#).

## 2.2 School numbers

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### Key Facts:

In Australia in 2022:

- There were 9,614 schools – an increase of 33 schools since 2021.
- 69.7% of schools were government schools, 18.4% were Catholic and 12.0% independent.
- 64.8% of schools were primary, 15.0% secondary, 14.7% combined and 5.4% were special schools.

In Australia, responsibility for school education rests mainly with the 6 state and 2 territory governments.<sup>3</sup>

All states and territories provide for 13 years of formal school education. Primary education includes a Foundation year and Years 1–6. Secondary education consists of Years 7–12. Typically, schooling commences at age 5, is compulsory from age 6 until age 17 (with provision for alternative study or work arrangements after Year 10) and is completed at age 17 or 18.

The majority of schools are government schools, established and administered by state and territory governments through their education departments or authorities. The remainder are non-government schools, mostly associated with religious organisations. Non-government schools are established and operated under conditions determined by state and territory governments through their registration authorities.

The number and proportion of schools by school type and school sector in 2022 are shown in Table 2.2.

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<sup>3</sup> New South Wales (NSW), Victoria (Vic), Queensland (Qld), South Australia (SA), Western Australia (WA), Tasmania (Tas), Northern Territory (NT) and Australian Capital Territory (ACT).

Table 2.2

## Number and proportion of schools by school type and school sector, Australia, 2022

School type	School sector									
	Government		Non-government				All schools			
	No.	%	Catholic		Independent		Total		Total	% by school type
Primary	4,794	76.9	1,237	19.8	202	3.2	1,439	23.1	6,233	64.8
Secondary	1,059	73.3	325	22.5	60	4.2	385	26.7	1,444	15.0
Combined	505	35.6	157	11.1	755	53.3	912	64.4	1,417	14.7
Special	341	65.6	47	9.0	132	25.4	179	34.4	520	5.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,699</b>	<b>69.7</b>	<b>1,766</b>	<b>18.4</b>	<b>1,149</b>	<b>12.0</b>	<b>2,915</b>	<b>30.3</b>	<b>9,614</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Notes:

School type:

- primary – school delivers primary education
- secondary – school delivers secondary education
- combined – school delivers both primary and secondary education
- special – students may include primary students, secondary students, ungraded students, or a combination of primary, secondary, and ungraded students. Special schools cater for students with disability and/or additional learning support needs.

School sector: Categories used in tables and graphs showing 'school sector' are 'government', 'Catholic' and 'independent'. In some cases, the category 'total non-government' (total of Catholic and independent) is also used. Systemic and non-systemic Catholic schools are counted as Catholic schools in the National Schools Statistics Collection (NSSC) and in this report. Independent public schools established in Qld, WA and the NT are government schools.

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: ABS, *Schools, 2022*.

In 2022 there were 9,614 schools in Australia.<sup>4</sup> This total included primary, secondary, combined (primary and secondary) and special schools, across government and non-government school sectors. (See Chapter 10: Glossary for definitions of school levels, school types and school sectors.)

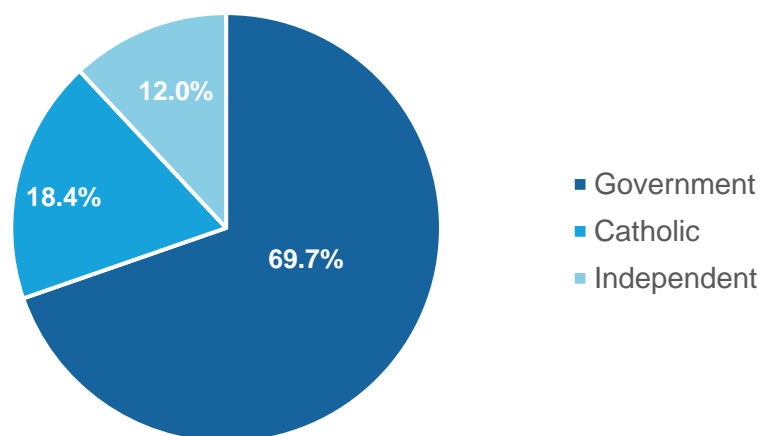
Of the total number of schools, 69.7% were administered by state and territory governments, 18.4% identified as having Catholic affiliation, and 12.0% were classified as independent. Most independent schools are affiliated with religious denominations or promote a particular educational philosophy.

The proportion of schools by school sector in 2022 is illustrated in Figure 2.1.

<sup>4</sup> As at the NSSC schools census date, 5 August 2022.

Figure 2.1

## Proportion of schools by school sector, Australia, 2022 (%)



Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: ABS, *Schools*, 2022.

Almost two-thirds (64.8%) of schools were primary schools. In general, primary schools are smaller and more localised than secondary schools. More than three-quarters (76.9%) of primary schools were government schools.

Most secondary schools (73.3%) and special schools (65.6%) were also government schools, while most combined schools (64.4%) were non-government schools, mainly in the independent school sector.

The number and proportion of schools by state and territory in 2022 are shown in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3

## Number and proportion of schools by state and territory, Australia, 2022

School type	State/territory								Australia
	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	
Primary	2,086	1,571	1,141	436	685	155	73	86	6,233
Secondary	509	343	276	85	143	41	22	25	1,444
Combined	344	249	279	166	207	58	93	21	1,417
Special	181	116	95	28	81	8	6	5	520
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,120</b>	<b>2,279</b>	<b>1,791</b>	<b>715</b>	<b>1,116</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>9,614</b>
<b>Proportion (%)</b>	<b>32.5</b>	<b>23.7</b>	<b>18.6</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>11.6</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: ABS, *Schools*, 2022.

The number of schools in each state and territory is largely determined by the size and geographical distribution of the school-age population. Changes in school numbers from year to year may also be due to administrative or structural changes in schooling and changes in student populations.

The total number of schools in Australia rose by 33 from 9,581 in 2021 to 9,614 in 2022, including increases of 12 in Vic, 9 in Qld and 8 in NSW. Proportions of schools per state and territory in 2022 did not change substantially from 2021.

There was a net rise of 187 (2.0%) in the total number of schools over the period 2012–2022. The numbers and proportions of schools in the 3 school sectors over this period are shown in Table 2.4.

**Table 2.4**

**Number and proportion of schools by school sector, Australia, 2012–2022**

Year	School sector						Total No.
	Government		Catholic		Independent		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
2012	6,697	71.0	1,713	18.2	1,017	10.8	9,427
2013	6,661	70.9	1,717	18.3	1,015	10.8	9,393
2014	6,651	70.8	1,722	18.3	1,016	10.8	9,389
2015	6,639	70.6	1,737	18.5	1,028	10.9	9,404
2016	6,634	70.5	1,738	18.5	1,042	11.1	9,414
2017	6,639	70.3	1,744	18.5	1,061	11.2	9,444
2018	6,646	70.1	1,753	18.5	1,078	11.4	9,477
2019	6,659	70.1	1,756	18.5	1,088	11.4	9,503
2020	6,675	70.0	1,762	18.5	1,105	11.6	9,542
2021	6,692	69.8	1,762	18.4	1,127	11.8	9,581
2022	6,699	69.7	1,766	18.4	1,149	12.0	9,614

Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: ABS, *Schools*, 2022 and previous releases.

Between 2012 and 2022 there was a net rise of 53 in the number of Catholic schools, of 132 in the number of independent schools and of 2 in the number of government schools. The proportion of independent schools grew by 1.2 percentage points to 12.0% nationally over this period.

## 2.3 Student numbers

### Key Facts:

In Australia in 2022:

- A total of 4,042,512 students were enrolled in Australian schools, an increase of 0.3% from 2021.
- 64.5% of school students were enrolled in government schools, 19.7% were in Catholic schools and 15.9% in independent schools.
- 55.6% of students were primary school students and 44.4% were in secondary school. This difference is mainly due to the structure of schooling, in which primary schooling includes more year groups than secondary schooling.

### Enrolments by school level and sector

In 2022, a total of 4,042,512 students were enrolled in Australian schools, a rise of 0.3% from 2021.

At the time of the schools census in August 2021, various restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic were in place which may have impacted on the data. While the majority of schools across Australia continued as normal, initiatives to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the community remained in place, including the implementation of remote online learning where required.<sup>5</sup> By 2022, Australian schools had returned to on-site learning.

The numbers and proportions of individual students by school level and school sector in 2022 are summarised in Table 2.5.

Of the 4.04 million school students, 2.25 million (55.6%) were primary students, and 1.79 million (44.4%) were secondary students. This difference is mainly due to the structure of schooling, in which primary schooling includes more year groups or cohorts than secondary schooling. Also, not all students complete Years 11 and 12, the last 2 years of secondary school.

As shown in Table 2.5, 64.5% of Australian school students in 2022 were enrolled in government schools, 19.7% of students were enrolled in Catholic schools and 15.9% of students were enrolled in independent schools. This is illustrated in Figure 2.2.

<sup>5</sup> For the National Schools Statistics Collection (NSSC), students were considered to be enrolled and active in an education program, even if that program had been temporarily disrupted by COVID-19. This included where programs were temporarily delivered online or remotely and even where schools were temporarily closed for COVID-19 related reasons. Because enrolments were counted in this way, it is estimated that the impacts of COVID-19 on data quality in 2021 were minor (ABS, *Schools*, 2021). The exception to this was the negative impact of international border closures on both the school-age population and the level of school enrolments overall.



Table 2.5

**Number and proportion of students (full-time plus part-time) enrolled in schools by school level and school sector, Australia, 2022**

School level	School sector							
	Government		Catholic		Independent		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	% by level
Primary	1,553,635	69.1	408,701	18.2	285,453	12.7	2,247,789	55.6
Junior secondary	759,168	59.1	276,745	21.5	248,812	19.4	1,284,725	31.8
Senior secondary	293,023	57.5	109,922	21.6	107,053	21.0	509,998	12.6
Total secondary	1,052,191	58.6	386,667	21.5	355,865	19.8	1,794,723	44.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,605,826</b>	<b>64.5</b>	<b>795,368</b>	<b>19.7</b>	<b>641,318</b>	<b>15.9</b>	<b>4,042,512</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Notes:

School level:

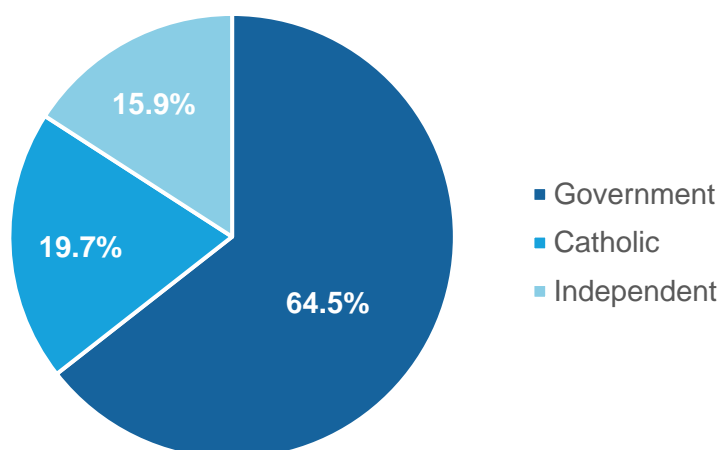
- Primary education includes a Foundation (pre-Year 1) year followed by Years 1–6. In 2022, Year 7 became a secondary school year for all government and non-government schools in South Australia.
- Secondary education consists of the first year of secondary to Year 12. Junior secondary: the years from start of secondary school to Year 10, including 'ungraded' secondary. Senior secondary: Years 11 and 12.
- Students attending special schools are allocated to either primary or secondary school on the basis of school year or school level, where identified. Where the school year or school level is not identified (ungraded), students are allocated to primary or secondary school level according to the typical age level in each state or territory. See Part 5: Glossary for definition of special school.

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: ABS, *Schools*, 2022.

Figure 2.1

**Proportion of students (full-time plus part-time) enrolled in schools by sector, Australia, 2022 (%)**



Source: ABS, *Schools*, 2022.

The proportions of students enrolled in each school sector differed between levels of education, with government schools accounting for 69.1% of primary students but less than 60% (58.6%) of secondary students.

Part-time students (10,884 students) accounted for only 0.3% of total enrolments. They were concentrated in Years 11 and 12 (71.1%), and in government schools (88.2%).<sup>6</sup>

### Enrolments by school level, and state and territory

Enrolments of students (full-time plus part-time) by state and territory and school level in 2022 are shown in Table 2.6.

**Table 2.6**

#### Number of students (full-time plus part-time) enrolled in schools by state/territory and school level, Australia, 2022

School level	State/territory								Australia
	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	
Primary	698,238	565,356	475,976	149,521	248,046	44,555	23,978	42,119	2,247,789
Junior secondary	396,414	319,319	281,928	87,328	137,364	26,737	12,094	23,541	1,284,725
Senior secondary	147,573	131,395	112,915	38,916	54,695	10,218	4,014	10,272	509,998
Total secondary	543,987	450,714	394,843	126,244	192,059	36,955	16,108	33,813	1,794,723
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,242,225</b>	<b>1,016,070</b>	<b>870,819</b>	<b>275,765</b>	<b>440,105</b>	<b>81,510</b>	<b>40,086</b>	<b>75,932</b>	<b>4,042,512</b>
<b>Proportion of Australian total (%)</b>	<b>30.7</b>	<b>25.1</b>	<b>21.5</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>10.9</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Notes: See notes for Table 2.5.

Source: ABS, *Schools*, 2022.

Enrolments by state and territory and school level reflect the school-age population and its age distribution in each jurisdiction. More than three-quarters of students (77.3%) were enrolled in the 3 most populous states of NSW, Vic, and Qld.

### Growth in enrolments

The number of students enrolled in Australian schools grew by 11,795 (0.3%) between 2021 and 2022, the lowest growth in enrolments since 2008 and less than a quarter of the average annual growth rate for the previous decade (1.3% on average over 2012-2022).

This sharp fall in growth was experienced most strongly in government schools where total enrolments actually fell – by 16,929 students (0.6%) between 2021 and 2022 – for the second consecutive year. This included a fall of 30,049 primary students (1.9%) which was partly offset by an increase of 13,120 (1.3%) in secondary students.

<sup>6</sup> Student Numbers data set, National Report on Schooling data portal.

The non-government sector experienced growth in total enrolments in primary and secondary school, but with proportionately lower growth in Catholic schools (1.0%) than in independent schools (3.3%).

There was a shift between 2021 and 2022 in the share of total enrolments between government and non-government schools, with government schools falling by 0.6 percentage points to 64.5%, Catholic schools rising by 0.2 percentage points to 19.7% and independent schools rising by 0.5 percentage points to 15.9% of total enrolments.

The fall in total enrolment growth in 2022 can be largely attributed to the continued disruption of international travel due to COVID-19. One effect of this was a fall in the number of overseas students enrolled in Australian schools. Between 2021 and 2022 the number of full fee-paying overseas students (FFPOS) fell by 1,188 students (9.1%).<sup>7</sup> However, border closures had a much broader effect than on international students, resulting in a fall in net overseas migration to Australia to its lowest level for 75 years.<sup>8</sup> This depressed population growth across all age groups, including those with school-aged children, leading to a negative impact on school enrolments.<sup>9</sup>

Overall, net overseas migration for 5–19-year-olds fell from 66,510 in 2019 to 3,180 in 2021 before increasing to 48,200 in 2022.<sup>10</sup> As government schools provide education for around two-thirds of students, it is not surprising that the ‘loss’ of potential students in 2021 and 2022 – due to greatly reduced immigration – was reflected mainly in government school enrolments. However, the shift in enrolment ‘shares’ between the government and non-government sectors between 2020 and 2022 may indicate that this was more than proportionate. The movement of students between sectors and differences in numbers of students starting and leaving school may have also contributed to this shift.

All states and territories experienced reduced overseas migration during 2021– and subsequent increases in 2022, but with varying effects on total school enrolments. In 2022, total enrolments fell by 1.2% in the NT, 0.3% in Tas and 0.1% in NSW. WA experienced a 0.9% increase in enrolments, with increases of 0.8% in the ACT, 0.5% in Vic and SA and 0.4% in Qld. This had little effect on the distribution of students between states and territories.

Between 2012 and 2022 total enrolments grew by 452,256 (12.6%), largely reflecting the growth in the school-age population, as schooling is essentially compulsory between the ages of 6 and 16.<sup>11</sup> Growth in senior secondary enrolments, including 17-year-olds and 18-year-olds, is influenced by Year 11 and 12 retention rates as well as population growth.

Enrolments have risen both in government and in non-government schools over the past 10 years, with the bulk of total growth over the period (58.2%) occurring in government schools. The number of students in independent schools rose from 511,012 in 2012 to 641,318 in 2022 – a 25.5% increase over 10 years. This has resulted in a 1.7 percentage point increase in the proportion of students attending independent schools. Table 2.7 summarises this data.

<sup>7</sup> This followed a fall of 5,480 FFPOS between 2020 and 2021.

<sup>8</sup> In the year ending 30 June 2022, overseas migration contributed a net gain of 170,920 to Australia's population. This represents a very large increase in net overseas migration on the 2020-21 financial year – which saw a net loss of 84,900 people. ABS, *Overseas migration*, release date 16/12/2022.

<sup>9</sup> For a comparison of growth rates in estimated residential population and school enrolments, see *Schools, Australia 2022*.

<sup>10</sup> ABS, *Overseas migration*, release date 16/12/2022, Net overseas migration: Arrivals, departures and net, State/territory, Age, and sex - Financial years, 2004-05 onwards.

<sup>11</sup> Enrolment requirements in states and territories are summarised in Part 2.1 School structures. The proportion of children aged 6–15 years who are enrolled in school is consistently close to 100%. Enrolment rates for this age group are reported in Chapter 4: Enrolment and Attendance.

Table 2.7

## Number and proportion of students (full-time plus part-time) by school sector, Australia, 2012–2022

Year	School sector						
	Government		Catholic		Independent		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
2012	2,342,379	65.2	736,595	20.5	511,012	14.2	3,589,986
2013	2,375,024	65.1	749,059	20.5	521,436	14.3	3,645,519
2014	2,406,495	65.1	757,749	20.5	529,857	14.3	3,694,101
2015	2,445,130	65.2	765,539	20.4	540,304	14.4	3,750,973
2016	2,483,802	65.4	767,050	20.2	547,374	14.4	3,798,226
2017	2,524,865	65.6	766,870	19.9	557,490	14.5	3,849,225
2018	2,558,169	65.7	765,735	19.7	569,930	14.6	3,893,834
2019	2,594,830	65.7	769,719	19.5	584,262	14.8	3,948,811
2020	2,629,143	65.6	778,605	19.4	599,226	15.0	4,006,974
2021	2,622,755	65.1	787,181	19.5	620,781	15.4	4,030,717
2022	2,605,826	64.5	795,368	19.7	641,318	15.9	4,042,512

Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: ABS, *Schools*, 2022.

Between 2012 and 2019 the government sector share of total enrolments increased by 0.5 percentage points to 65.7%. In 2020, it fell by 0.1 percentage points and in 2021, it fell sharply by 0.5 percentage points to 65.1%, with a net loss in total enrolments in that year. This decline continued in 2022, with a larger net loss in total enrolments than for 2021, and a fall in the government sector share of 0.6 percentage points to 64.5%.

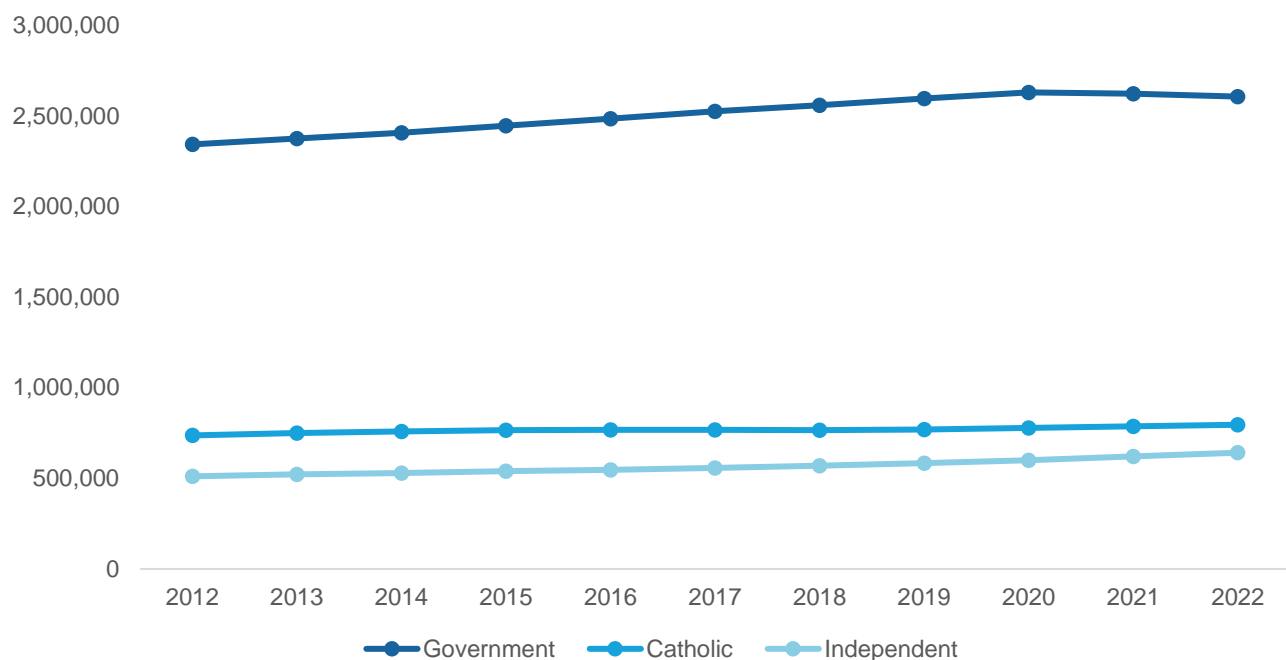
Between 2012 and 2022 independent school enrolments rose by 1.7 percentage points to 15.9% of the total, while Catholic sector enrolments fell by 0.8 percentage points to 19.7% of total enrolments over the period. This continues a long-term trend in the relative growth of the independent sector.

As noted above, it is not clear how much of the shift in sector proportions in 2022 is attributable to the fall in Australia's net overseas migration and how much to net movements of students between sectors.

Figure 2.3 illustrates the growth in student enrolments 2012–2022 by school sector.

Figure 2.3

## Number of students enrolled (full-time plus part-time) by school sector, Australia, 2012–2022



Source: ABS, *Schools*, 2022.

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

In 2022 there were 255,796 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in Australian schools, making up 6.3% of the total school population.<sup>12</sup> Table 2.8 shows the number and proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students by school level and state and territory.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are not evenly or proportionately distributed among states and territories.

With 85,383 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (33.4% of the national total), NSW had the highest number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments in 2022, more than the NSW share (30.7%) of total enrolments nationally. This represented 6.9% of the state's students, more than the national average of 6.3%. Qld schools accounted for 30.5% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (compared with 21.5% of total enrolments) and WA 12.1% (compared with 10.9% of total enrolments).

The highest concentration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students was in the NT, which accounted for only 1.0% of total school enrolments in 2022, but for 6.2% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments. The 15,789 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in NT schools made up 39.4% of the Territory's school population. Because of this, data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students has a greater impact on overall statistics for the NT than for any other state or territory.

<sup>12</sup> This report uses the term 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' to refer to First Nations Australians. This is in line with the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration and definitions used for data collection.

Table 2.8

Number and proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (full-time plus part-time) enrolled in schools by school level and state/territory, Australia, 2022

School level	State/territory								Australia
	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	
Primary	50,624	11,545	45,426	8,222	18,440	4,729	9,534	1,428	149,948
Junior secondary	27,914	6,463	25,100	4,670	9,581	2,902	4,990	749	82,369
Senior secondary	6,845	1,927	7,597	1,745	2,860	931	1,265	309	23,479
Total secondary	34,759	8,390	32,697	6,415	12,441	3,833	6,255	1,058	105,848
<b>Total</b>	<b>85,383</b>	<b>19,935</b>	<b>78,123</b>	<b>14,637</b>	<b>30,881</b>	<b>8,562</b>	<b>15,789</b>	<b>2,486</b>	<b>255,796</b>
<b>Proportion of the Australian total of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students per state/territory (%)</b>	33.4	7.8	30.5	5.7	12.1	3.3	6.2	1.0	100.0
<b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as a proportion of total students in each state/territory (%)</b>	6.9	2.0	9.0	5.3	7.0	10.5	39.4	3.3	6.3

Source: ABS, *Schools*, 2022.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were under-represented in senior secondary years: 4.6% of senior secondary students were identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, compared with 6.4% of junior secondary students and 6.7% of primary school students. These proportions reflect Year 10 to Year 12 apparent retention rates among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, which are still substantially lower than for the overall school population. Apparent retention rates are reported in Chapter 4.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students predominantly attended government schools, with 82.4% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments in government schools compared with 64.5% of enrolments for all students. Overall, 17.6% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were enrolled in non-government schools (11.0% in Catholic schools, 6.6% in independent schools) with this proportion rising from 14.8% for primary students to 21.6% for secondary students.

## 2.4 School students with disability

### Key Facts:

In Australia in 2022:

- 911,131 school students received an educational adjustment due to disability – this represents 22.5% of total enrolments, up from 21.8% in 2021 and 18.0% in 2015.
- Among school students who received an educational adjustment due to disability, 54.9% of adjustments were provided to students with cognitive disability, 32.0% to students with social-emotional disability, 10.2% for students with physical disability and 2.9% for sensory disability.
- 1.9% of all school students were provided with extensive adjustments to enable them to participate in education on the same basis as other students. A further 3.8% were provided with substantial support, 9.6% were provided with supplementary support and 7.1% were supported through quality differentiated teaching practices.

The [Nationally Consistent Collection of Data \(NCCD\)](#) on School Students with Disability collects data about Australian school students with disability who are receiving adjustments in a consistent, reliable, and systematic way. It enables schools, education authorities and governments to better understand the needs of students with disability and how they can be best supported at school; and allocate resources efficiently.

The NCCD identifies students who received an educational adjustment due to disability. Through this collection, teachers use their professional judgement based on evidence to capture information on:

- The level of adjustment that students with disability are being provided to enable them to participate in education on the same basis as other students. The four levels are:
  - support within quality differentiated teaching practice (QDTP)
  - supplementary
  - substantial
  - extensive.
- the broad category of disability under which each student best fits:
  - physical
  - cognitive
  - sensory
  - social-emotional.<sup>13</sup>

Through participating in the collection, schools are embedding better support for all students with disability in their routine day-to-day practice by:

- focusing attention on the educational needs and adjustments required to support individual students,
- facilitating a more collaborative and coordinated approach, including improvements in support systems at the school level, and
- strengthening communication between schools, parents, and the broader community, increasing transparency and reinforcing a culture of inclusion.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Further details about the NCCD, levels of adjustment and categories of disability are available on the [NCCD website](#).

<sup>14</sup> NCCD, 2017 data on students in Australian schools receiving adjustments for disability.



In 2022, 911,131 school students received an educational adjustment due to disability. This represented 22.5% of total enrolments. Table 2.9 shows the number and proportion of students that received an educational adjustment due to disability in 2022, by level of educational adjustment and category of disability.

**Table 2.9**

**School students with disability receiving adjustments as a percentage of the total student population, by category of disability and level of adjustment, 2022**

Level of adjustment	Category of disability				
	Cognitive	Physical	Sensory	Social-emotional	All
Support within QDTP	3.2	1.6	0.2	2.1	7.1
Supplementary	5.8	0.4	0.3	3.1	9.6
Substantial	2.2	0.2	0.1	1.4	3.8
Extensive	1.1	0.1	0.1	0.6	1.9
Total	12.4	2.3	0.7	7.2	22.5

Source: NCCD, 2022.

Table 2.10 shows the proportion of students with disability, by school sector and level of adjustment provided in 2022. Overall, the proportion of students with disability in Catholic schools (19.5%) was lower than that of independent schools (22.4%) and government schools (23.5%). The proportion of students receiving an adjustment for a physical disability was higher in the independent sector (3.5%) than in the Catholic (2.1%) and government (2.0%) sectors. The proportion of students receiving an adjustment for cognitive, sensory, or social-emotional disability was higher among students in government schools than in non-government schools. This may be at least partly due to the fact that the majority of special schools are government schools.

**Table 2.10**

**School students with disability receiving adjustments as a percentage of the total student population, by category of disability and school sector, 2022**

School Sector	Category of disability				
	Cognitive	Physical	Sensory	Social-emotional	All
Government	12.8	2.0	0.8	7.9	23.5
Catholic	11.6	2.1	0.4	5.4	19.5
Independent	11.6	3.5	0.5	6.7	22.4
Total	12.4	2.3	0.7	7.2	22.5

Source: NCCD, 2022.



Table 2.11 shows the proportion of students with disability in 2022, by school sector and level of adjustment provided. The proportion of students in Catholic schools who received support within QDTP (4.4%) was lower than in independent schools (8.9%) and government schools (7.5%). The proportion of students receiving extensive support was higher in government schools (2.5%) than in Catholic (0.7%) and independent schools (1.0%) sectors. As was the case for the proportion of students receiving adjustments by category of disability, this difference is likely to be at least partly because the majority of special schools are government schools.<sup>15</sup>

**Table 2.11**

**School students with disability receiving adjustments as a percentage of the total student population, by level of adjustment and school sector, 2022**

School Sector	Category of disability				
	Support within QDTP	Supplementary	Substantial	Extensive	All
Government	7.5	9.4	4.1	2.5	23.5
Catholic	4.4	10.5	3.9	0.7	19.5
Independent	8.9	9.5	3.0	1.0	22.4
Total	7.1	9.6	3.8	1.9	22.5

Source: NCCD, 2022.

The proportion of students receiving an adjustment due to disability was higher than average in the NT, Vic, and SA, as shown in Table 2.12. With 30.0% of students receiving an adjustment due to disability, 9.7% of students receiving substantial support and 4.1% receiving extensive support, the NT had the highest proportion of school students receiving assistance.

**Table 2.12**

**School students with disability receiving adjustments as a percentage of the total student population, by state/territory and level of adjustment, 2022**

	State/territory								Australia
	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	
Support within QDTP	6.1	8.8	5.2	10.3	8.7	4.1	5.0	6.5	7.1
Supplementary	10.8	8.8	8.8	12.4	8.4	7.3	11.2	8.7	9.6
Substantial	3.6	4.4	3.9	3.4	2.8	4.2	9.7	3.8	3.8
Extensive	1.9	2.7	1.4	2.2	1.0	1.1	4.1	1.1	1.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>22.5</b>	<b>24.7</b>	<b>19.3</b>	<b>28.4</b>	<b>21.0</b>	<b>16.6</b>	<b>30.0</b>	<b>20.1</b>	<b>22.5</b>

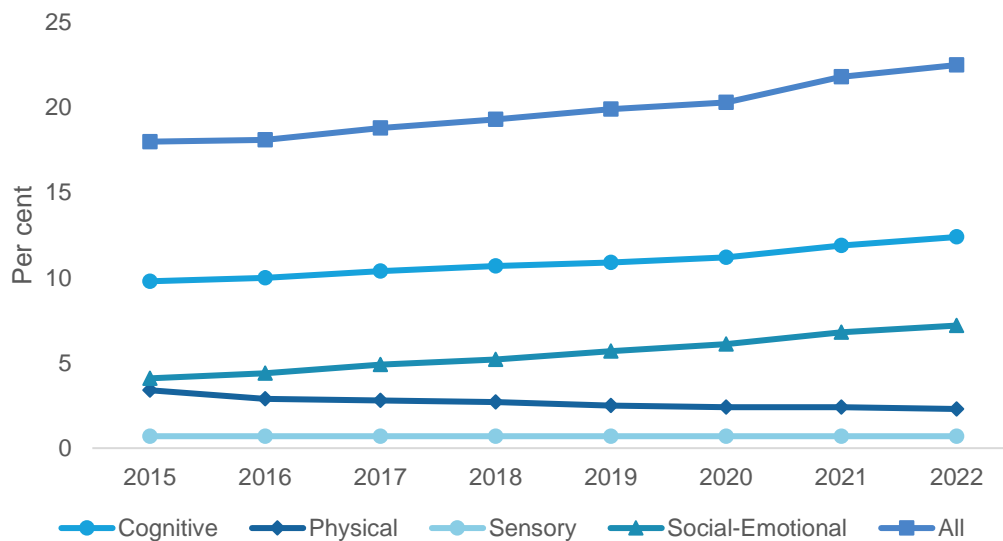
Source: NCCD, 2022.

Between 2015 and 2022, the proportion of school students receiving an adjustment due to disability increased by 4.5 percentage points, from 18.0% to 22.5% in 2022, as shown in Figure 2.4. While the proportion of students receiving adjustments for cognitive and social-emotional disabilities increased by 2.6 and 3.1 percentage points respectively, the proportion of students receiving adjustments for sensory disabilities remained stable at 0.7% and the proportion receiving adjustments for physical disabilities declined from 3.4% in 2015 to 2.3% in 2022.

<sup>15</sup> Independent reviews of the quality of the data found that schools' level of understanding of the collection model, the DDA and the Disability Standards for Education 2005 contributes directly to the quality of the data collected. This may account for some of the variability between states/territories and school sectors, and over time as understanding grows stronger with each year that schools participate (NCCD, 2017 data on students in Australian schools receiving adjustments for disability).

Figure 2.4

School students with disability receiving adjustments as a percentage of the total student population, by category of disability, 2015–2022

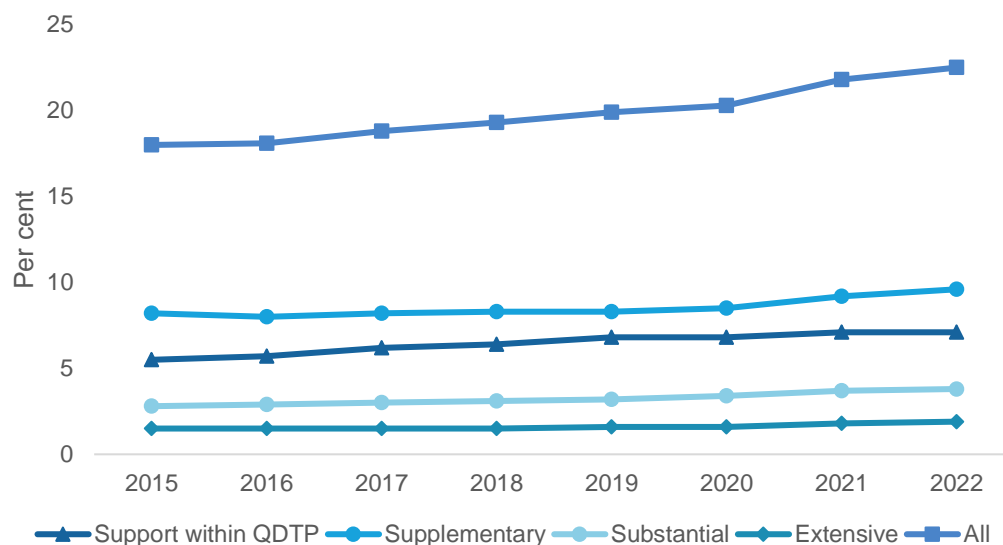


Source: NCCD, 2022 and previous years.

Figure 2.5 shows that between 2015 and 2022, the proportion of school students receiving support within QDTP increased by 1.6 percentage points, the proportion receiving supplementary support increased by 1.4 percentage points, and the proportion of students receiving substantial support increased by 1.0 percentage point. Over this period, the percentage of students receiving extensive support due to disability remained quite stable, with an increase 0.4 percentage points.

Figure 2.5

School students with disability receiving adjustments as a percentage of the total student population, by level of adjustment, 2015–2022



Source: NCCD, 2022 and previous years.

## 2.5 Staff numbers

### Key Facts:

In Australia in 2022:

- There were 307,041 full time equivalent (FTE) teaching staff in Australia — an increase of 3,501 (1.2%) from 2021.
- Staff numbers closely reflected enrolments, with 63.1% of school teachers employed in government schools and 36.9% in non-government schools.
- Australia's teaching workforce continued to be predominantly female, with women making up 71.9% of FTE teachers in 2022. The gender difference was more pronounced at the primary level (82.0% female) than at secondary level (61.4% female).

The numbers and proportions of full-time equivalent (FTE) teaching staff by school sector, school level and gender in 2022 are shown in Table 2.13.

**Table 2.13**

### Number and proportion of FTE teaching staff by school sector, school level and gender, Australia, 2022

School level	Primary				Secondary				Total			
	School sector	Male	Female	Total	% of all staff	Male	Female	Total	% of all staff	Male	Female	Total
Government	19,675	89,073	108,748	35.4	31,820	53,176	84,996	27.7	51,495	142,249	193,744	63.1
Catholic	4,164	22,711	26,875	8.8	12,334	19,457	31,791	10.4	16,498	42,168	58,666	19.1
Independent	4,206	16,191	20,397	6.6	14,096	20,138	34,234	11.1	18,302	36,329	54,631	17.8
Total non-government	8,370	38,902	47,272	15.4	26,430	39,595	66,025	21.5	34,800	78,496	113,297	36.9
<b>All schools</b>	<b>28,045</b>	<b>127,974</b>	<b>156,019</b>	<b>50.8</b>	<b>58,250</b>	<b>92,771</b>	<b>151,021</b>	<b>49.2</b>	<b>86,295</b>	<b>220,745</b>	<b>307,041</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Notes:

In the calculation of numbers of FTE teaching staff, a part-time teacher is counted as a proportion of a full-time teacher according to the time employed, compared with a full-time teacher in the same school system or school. (See Part 5: Glossary for definitions of FTE and teaching staff.)

Staff employed in combined and special schools are allocated to either primary or secondary education on a pro-rata basis.

Percentage columns for primary and secondary show the proportions of FTE primary and secondary teachers employed in each sector, relative to total FTE teaching staff. The total percentage column shows the proportions of total FTE teaching staff employed in each sector. The total (All schools) row shows the number and proportion of total FTE teaching staff employed at each level.

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: ABS, *Schools*, 2022.

In 2022, there were 307,041 FTE teaching staff across primary and secondary schooling in Australia. This was an increase of 3,501 (1.2%) from 2021. It was made up of a rise of 2,944 non-government school teachers (2.7% increase) and 558 government school teachers (0.3% increase). The percentage increase in teaching staff in independent schools (3.7%) was larger than that of Catholic schools (1.7%).

Across Australia in 2022, 63.1% of FTE teachers were employed by the government school sector, 19.1% by the Catholic school sector and 17.8% by the independent sector. This remains broadly consistent with the distribution of (full-time plus part-time) students across school sectors.

In 2022, Australia's teaching workforce continued to be predominantly female, with women making up 71.9% of FTE teachers. This gender gap is similar to that in 2021. In 2022, the difference was again more pronounced at the primary level (82.0% female) than at secondary level (61.4% female).

The number and proportion of FTE teaching staff by state and territory in 2022 is shown in Table 2.14.

**Table 2.14**

**Number and proportion of FTE teaching staff by state and territory and school level, Australia, 2022**

School level	State/territory								
	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
Primary	46,492	42,054	32,426	10,481	16,249	3,311	2,064	2,943	156,019
Secondary	44,882	40,116	32,619	10,251	15,748	3,228	1,441	2,738	151,021
<b>Total</b>	<b>91,373</b>	<b>82,170</b>	<b>65,045</b>	<b>20,732</b>	<b>31,997</b>	<b>6,538</b>	<b>3,505</b>	<b>5,682</b>	<b>307,041</b>
<b>Proportion (%)</b>	<b>29.8</b>	<b>26.8</b>	<b>21.2</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>100.0</b>

See notes for Table 2.12.

Source: ABS, *Schools*, 2022.

The distribution of FTE teaching staff between states and territories remains broadly consistent with the overall distribution of students.

Changes in teaching staffing levels for the period 2012–2022 are shown in Table 2.15.

**Table 2.15**

**Number of FTE teaching staff by school sector, Australia, 2012-2022**

School sector	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Government	167,152	167,903	169,199	171,763	176,819	180,973	185,458	182,959	189,069	193,186	193,744
Catholic	49,427	50,527	50,936	52,160	53,154	53,839	54,511	55,372	56,645	57,667	58,666
Independent	42,407	43,154	43,930	45,277	46,357	47,248	48,614	49,963	50,802	52,686	54,631
Total non-government	91,834	93,682	94,866	97,437	99,511	101,087	103,125	105,335	107,447	110,353	113,297
<b>All schools</b>	<b>258,986</b>	<b>261,585</b>	<b>264,065</b>	<b>269,200</b>	<b>276,330</b>	<b>282,059</b>	<b>288,583</b>	<b>288,294</b>	<b>296,516</b>	<b>303,539</b>	<b>307,041</b>

See notes for Table 2.12.

Source: ABS, *Schools*, 2022.

Between 2012 and 2022, the total number of FTE teaching staff grew by 48,055 (18.6%). This was substantially more than the percentage growth in (full-time plus part-time) student enrolments (12.6%) over the same period.

In 2022, FTE teaching staff accounted for 67.2% of the FTE of all school staff. In addition to teaching staff, 149,605 FTE staff were employed in administrative and clerical roles, as teacher aides and assistants, as specialist support staff or in building and maintenance.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> National Report on Schooling data portal, Staff numbers.

## 2.6 Student–teacher ratios

### Key Facts:

In Australia in 2022:

- The average student to teaching staff ratio was 13.1 students per teacher — a reduction from 13.3 students per teacher in 2021.
- The average student to teaching staff ratio was lower in independent schools (11.7 students per teacher) compared to Catholic schools (13.6 students per teacher) and government schools (13.4 students per teacher).
- The average student-teacher ratio was 11.9 students per teacher at the secondary level, compared with 14.4 students per teacher at the primary level. Student-teacher ratios are consistently lower for secondary education than for primary education in all school sectors. This reflects differing requirements for particular student groups, and for different school subjects in secondary schools.

The student–teacher ratio is calculated as the number of FTE students per FTE teaching staff. Table 2.16 summarises average student–teacher ratios in Australia in 2022 across the 3 school sectors.

**Table 2.16**

### FTE student–teacher ratios, by school sector and school level, Australia, 2022

School sector	Primary	Secondary	All schools
Government	14.3	12.3	13.4
Catholic	15.2	12.2	13.6
Independent	14.0	10.4	11.7
All non-government	14.7	11.2	12.7
<b>All schools</b>	<b>14.4</b>	<b>11.9</b>	<b>13.1</b>

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia, 2022*.

For all Australian schools, the average FTE student–teacher ratio in 2022 was 13.1:1, a reduction of 0.2 from 13.3:1 in 2021.

The average ratio for government schools nationally decreased by 0.2, from 13.6:1 to 13.4:1 between 2021 and 2022. This included a 0.1 reduction both in primary and secondary student teacher ratios. In part, this may have reflected lower-than-expected student numbers in part due to the impact of COVID-19 border closures on net overseas migration.

The average student-teacher ratio for non-government schools decreased by 0.1 between 2021 and 2022. The average ratio for independent schools fell by 0.1 to 11.7:1 and for Catholic schools remained constant at 13.6:1.

Table 2.17 shows average student–teacher ratios in 2022 by school level and state and territory.

Table 2.17

## FTE student–teacher ratios, by state/territory and school level, Australia, 2022

School level	State/territory								Australia
	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	
Primary	15.0	13.4	14.7	14.3	15.3	13.4	11.6	14.3	14.4
Secondary	12.1	11.2	12.1	12.2	12.2	11.4	11.1	12.3	11.9
<b>All schools</b>	13.6	12.3	13.4	13.3	13.7	12.4	11.4	13.3	13.1

Source: ABS, *Schools*, 2022.

Between 2021 and 2022, student–teacher ratios decreased in all states and territories, with decreases of 0.5 in the NT, 0.3 in Tas, 0.2 in the ACT and 0.1 in all other states. The only increases in student–teacher ratios were in the SA secondary sector, where the average student–teacher ratio rose by 0.3 to 12.2, and in the ACT primary sector, where the student–teacher ratio rose by 0.1 to 14.3.

Student–teacher ratios are consistently lower for secondary education than for primary education in all school sectors and across all states and territories. In 2022, the average FTE student–teacher ratio was 11.9:1 at the secondary level, compared with 14.4:1 at the primary level.

This reflects differing requirements for particular student groups, and for different school subjects, in secondary schools, such as smaller maximum class sizes for practical subjects, and for senior secondary classes.

The specialist and administrative duties undertaken by teaching staff in secondary schools, such as non-teaching principals, subject head teachers, teacher librarians and careers advisers, also contribute to this difference. The extent to which teaching staff perform these roles may vary between states and between school systems. This will affect the number of teachers employed in each school, and therefore the average student–teacher ratio.

Lower student–teacher ratios mean there is a smaller number of students per teacher and, potentially, smaller class sizes. However, ratios, by themselves, are only approximate indicators of actual class size because they do not take into account the factors mentioned above.

The average national student–teacher ratio fell from 13.8:1 in 2012 to 13.1:1 in 2022, with reductions across all school sectors. Time series data (2001–2022) on student–teacher ratios by state and territory, school sector and school level is available in the Student–Teacher Ratios data set in the National Report on Schooling data portal.