

## Chapter 4: Enrolment and Attendance

This chapter reports on student enrolment, attendance, and apparent retention in 2023, using the nationally agreed key performance measures (KPMs) for schooling specified in the Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia 2020.

### 4.1 Enrolment rates

#### Key Facts:

- At the 2021 census, the national enrolment rate for 6–15-year-olds was 99.3%. Enrolment rates were 99.0% or higher in all states and territories except the Northern Territory, which had an enrolment rate of 98.6%.
- Data from the National Schools Statistics Collection indicates that in 2023, the proportion of 6–15-year-olds enrolled in school in Australia was 98.6% – the same as in 2022, but down from 99.0% in 2021.

This section reports on the number of students enrolled, as a proportion of the Australian population in the corresponding age group, as a KPM for schooling.<sup>1</sup> The KPM is specified as the number of students aged 6–15 years enrolled in school, expressed as a proportion of the 6–15-year-old population. As this approximates the age range of students for whom schooling is compulsory, the enrolment rate for this group is close to 100%.

#### Key Performance Measure 1(a)

Proportion of children aged 6–15 years who are enrolled in school

Data for this KPM is drawn from the 5-yearly Australian Census of Population and Housing.<sup>2</sup> At the most recent census (2021), the national enrolment rate for 6–15-year-olds was 99.3%. Enrolment rates were 99.0% or higher in all states and territories except the Northern Territory, which had an enrolment rate of 98.6%. At approaching 100%, KPM1(a) provides evidence that longstanding policies for universal access to schooling and for compulsory education for this age group are implemented in practice.

Before 2019, an annual measure for the enrolment KPM, based on the National Schools Statistics Collection (NSSC), was also reported. From 2019, this measure was deleted as a measure of the KPM because of statistical inconsistencies. However, data drawn from this source is reported in the National Report on Schooling data portal. Based on this measure, the national enrolment rate for 6–15-year-olds in 2023 was 98.6% – the same as in 2022, but down from 99.0% in 2021. Table 4.1 shows this KPM for the Census years 2011, 2016 and 2021; and the annual measure based on the NSSC.

<sup>1</sup> Section 2.1 of this report outlines the structure of Australian schooling, including age requirements for compulsory enrolment in school for children and teenagers living in each of the states and territories. Section 2.2 provides data on the number of students enrolled by school sector, by school level, by state and territory, and over time.

<sup>2</sup> The Census of Population and Housing is Australia's largest statistical collection undertaken by the ABS. It is conducted every 5 years.

**Table 4.1:** Proportion of the population aged 6–15 years enrolled in school, Australia, 2013–2023

	KPM1(a) Proportion of 6–15-year-olds enrolled in school, Australia (%) (Census of population and housing)	Number of children aged 6–15 years enrolled in school (NSSC)	Population, Australia (aged 6–15 years)	Proportion of 6–15-year-olds enrolled in school, Australia (%)
2013	–	2,844,983	2,833,866	100.4
2014	–	2,889,292	2,875,596	100.5
2015	–	2,930,612	2,919,394	100.4
2016	99.4	2,974,656	2,970,505	100.1
2017	–	3,022,905	3,024,364	100.0
2018	–	3,071,847	3,081,581	99.7
2019	–	3,131,591	3,143,378	99.6
2020	–	3,174,506	3,196,673	99.3
2021	99.3	3,198,158	3,229,459	99.0
2022	–	3,215,223	3,259,377	98.6
2023	–	3,242,001	3,287,156	98.6

Note: NSSC enrolment data for a state or territory include students who reside in other jurisdictions and cross state and territory boundaries to attend school. These students are counted in the population (ERP) of the jurisdiction in which they usually reside, not of the jurisdiction where they attend school. This allows state and territory enrolment rates to exceed 100 per cent, and, in the case of ACT, to significantly exceed 100 per cent.

Sources: ABS, Australian Census of Population and Housing, 2011, 2016, 2021; ABS, Schools Australia, 2013–2023; ABS, National, state and territory population June 2023 (release date 14/12/2023).

Data disaggregated by state and territory, and other disaggregations for the census years 2011, 2016, and 2021 is available in the National Report on Schooling data portal.

## 4.2 Student attendance

### Key Facts:

In Australia in 2023:

- the attendance rate for students in Years 1-10 was 88.6%, up from 86.5% in 2022.
- the student attendance level (the percentage of students with above 90 per cent attendance) was 61.6%, up from 49.9% in 2022.
- attendance rates and attendance levels:
  - increased with the level of socio-educational advantage of the school
  - were higher among students in major cities than in remote areas
  - were lower among students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds than for non-Indigenous students.
- While student attendance rates and attendance levels increased substantially in 2023, they have not returned to their pre-COVID levels, owing to continuing COVID outbreaks. In 2019, national attendance rates were 91.4% and attendance levels 73.1%.
- The increase in attendance rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students between 2022 and 2023 was larger than that for non-Indigenous students, resulting in a 0.8 percentage point reduction in the national gap in attendance rates.

Like enrolment rates, the national KPMs for attendance in the Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia 2020 relate to students in the compulsory years of schooling. However, attendance measures are specified in terms of school year (Years 1–10) rather than by student age. Where KPM 1(a) reports on the proportion of children enrolled in school, KPMs 1(b) and 1(c) report on the proportion of available time that students spend at school once enrolled.

#### Key Performance Measure 1(b)

Attendance rate: The number of actual full-time equivalent student-days attended by full-time students in Years 1–10 in Semester 1 as a percentage of the total number of possible student-days attended in Semester 1

#### Key Performance Measure 1(c)

Attendance level: The proportion of full-time students in Years 1–10 whose attendance rate in Semester 1 is equal to or greater than 90 per cent

All school sectors in all states and territories use a common reference period – Semester 1 in each school year – for the collection of attendance data for national reporting. This is consistent with the [National Standards for Student Attendance Data Reporting](#), which came into operation for the 2014 data collection period and onwards. Data is available from 2014 for the attendance rate and from 2015 for the attendance level.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> NSW implemented the national standards in 2018. Attendance rates for NSW and Australia for 2018 onward are not fully comparable to previous years, due to changes in the calculation method for NSW government schools in 2018.

## Attendance rates

Table 4.2 reports KPM 1(b) by state and territory and school sector for 2023. The average school attendance rate for Years 1–10 across Australia in 2023 was 87.5% for government schools, 90.3% for Catholic schools, 91.2% for independent schools and 88.6% for schools overall.

**Table 4.2:** Student attendance rates, Years 1–10, by state/territory and school sector, Australia, 2023 (%)

State/territory	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
Government	88.1	88.6	87.1	86.6	86.8	84.9	75.2	87.8	87.5
Catholic	90.7	90.1	90.5	90.1	90.2	88.5	79.0	89.4	90.3
Independent	91.6	91.5	91.0	90.8	90.8	90.2	85.2	91.1	91.2
All	89.2	89.3	88.3	88.0	88.0	86.4	77.2	88.8	88.6

Note: Excludes part-time students. For data definitions, see the National Standards for Student Attendance Data Reporting.

Source: ACARA, National Student Attendance Data Collection.

The average attendance rate for Years 1–10 in 2023 exceeded 85% in all states and territories except the NT, where, as in previous years, the much lower average attendance rate (59.0%) for the high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students led to an average rate for all students of 77.2%.

There was little difference in the 2023 national average attendance rate for girls (88.7%) and boys (88.6%). Average attendance rates were higher in major cities (89.6%) than in remote areas (81.1%), and lowest in very remote areas (66.1%).<sup>4</sup> As in previous years, a common characteristic across all states and territories was lower average attendance rates in Years 7–10 than in Years 1–6. At the national level in 2023, the average attendance rate for Years 7–10 was 86.4% compared with 90.2% for Years 1–6.

Table 4.3 reports KPM 1(b) nationally, by school sector, for 2013–2023. After a 4.4 percentage point decrease from 2021 to 2022 – which was a result of the impact of the COVID-19 Omicron variant, high Influenza season outbreaks and floods in certain regions across Australia – student attendance rates across Australia increased by 2.1 percentage points nationally in 2023, with increases occurring in all three school sectors.

All states and territories reported higher student attendance rates in 2023 compared to 2022, with increases ranging from 1.2 percentage points in the NT to 2.9 percentage points in the ACT. While student attendance rates were higher in 2023 than in 2022, they have not returned to pre-COVID levels. The [Key Performance Measures Dashboard](#) in the National Report on Schooling data portal reports a downward trend in student attendance rates over the period 2014–2023 of -0.6 percentage points per annum. Further analysis of reasons for absences is required to determine whether there has been an ongoing impact of COVID on attendance rates.

<sup>4</sup> Student attendance rates disaggregated by year level, sex and geolocation are available in the National Report on Schooling data portal, Student Attendance data set.

**Table 4.3:** Student attendance rates, Years 1–10, by school sector, Australia, 2014–2023 (%)

School sector	Government	Catholic	Independent	All
2014	91.9	93.9	94.3	92.7
2015	92.0	93.6	93.9	92.6
2016	91.9	93.6	93.8	92.5
2017	91.8	93.4	93.7	92.4
2018	91.3	92.9	93.5	91.9
2019	90.7	92.4	93.1	91.4
2020	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2021	90.0	92.3	93.0	90.9
2022	85.6	87.9	88.8	86.5
2023	87.5	90.3	91.2	88.6

Notes:

See note for Table 4.2.

Data is only available from 2014 for the attendance rate.

Attendance rates for NSW and Australia for 2018 onward are not fully comparable to previous years, due to changes in the calculation method for NSW government schools in 2018. Attendance data for 2021 to 2023 in NSW is not comparable with previous years due to changes to the attendance calculations for government schools to align with the revised 2020 National Standards for student attendance data reporting.

School attendance data for 2020 has not been published due to inconsistencies in the data as a result of the varying health advice and schooling arrangements across the country in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The inconsistencies in data collection have now been addressed through national agreement by schools and systems. However, the impact of the pandemic varies widely on the operation of individual schools.

Source: ACARA National Student Attendance Data Collection.

Table 4.4 shows comparative attendance rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students in Years 1–10 by state and territory, and the gaps between them, in 2014, 2022 and 2023. In all three years, above average gaps in attendance rates were recorded in the NT, WA, and SA.

At a national level, the increase in attendance rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students between 2022 and 2023 (2.9 percentage points) was larger than that for non-Indigenous students (2.1 percentage points). This reduced the national gap in attendance rates by 0.8 percentage points to 12.1 percentage points in 2023. Increases in student attendance rates among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were largest in WA (3.7 percentage points), NSW (3.5 percentage points) and SA (2.5 percentage points).

Geographic differences were much more marked for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students than for non-Indigenous students. For non-Indigenous students, the average attendance rate in 2023 was 89.9% in major cities, 87.6% in remote areas and 87.0% in very remote areas. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, attendance rates were 80.5% in major cities, 67.7% in remote areas and 55.4% in very remote areas. This results in a difference of 9.4 percentage points between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students in major cities, 20.0 percentage points in remote areas, and a gap of 31.5 percentage points between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students in schools in very remote areas.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> National Report on Schooling data portal, Student Attendance data set.

**Table 4.4:** Student attendance rates, Years 1–10, by state and territory and Indigenous status, Australia, 2014, 2022 and 2023 (%)

State/territory	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
<b>2014</b>									
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	87.5	86.8	85.2	81.1	77.4	88.5	70.2	85.2	83.5
Non-Indigenous students	93.9	93.1	92.8	92.6	92.7	92.4	90.9	92.5	93.2
All students	93.6	93.0	92.2	92.1	91.7	92.1	82.3	92.3	92.7
Gap: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander/non-Indigenous students (percentage points)	6.4	6.3	7.6	11.5	15.4	3.9	20.7	7.4	9.6
<b>2022</b>									
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	77.3	79.6	76.8	72.5	66.4	79.9	57.8	77.1	74.5
Non-Indigenous students	87.1	87.9	87.7	86.4	87.6	85.7	87.9	86.2	87.4
All students	86.4	87.7	86.7	85.6	86.1	85.1	76.0	85.9	86.5
Gap: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander/non-Indigenous students (percentage points)	9.7	8.2	10.9	13.9	21.3	5.8	30.1	9.1	12.9
<b>2023</b>									
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	80.8	81.0	79.1	75.0	70.1	80.9	59.0	79.4	77.4
Non-Indigenous students	89.9	89.5	89.3	88.8	89.4	87.1	89.2	89.1	89.5
All students	89.2	89.3	88.3	88.0	88.0	86.4	77.2	88.8	88.6
Gap: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander/non-Indigenous students (percentage points)	9.1	8.5	10.2	13.8	19.4	6.2	30.2	9.7	12.1
<b>Change in gap 2014–22 (percentage points)</b>									
Change in gap 2014–22 (percentage points)	3.3	1.9	3.2	2.4	5.9	1.9	9.4	1.7	3.2
<b>Change in gap 2014–23 (percentage points)</b>									
Change in gap 2014–23 (percentage points)	2.7	2.2	2.5	2.3	4.0	2.3	9.5	2.3	2.4
<b>Change in gap 2022–23 (percentage points)</b>									
Change in gap 2022–23 (percentage points)	-0.7	0.3	-0.7	-0.1	-1.9	0.4	0.1	0.6	-0.8

Note: See notes for Tables 4.2 and 4.3.

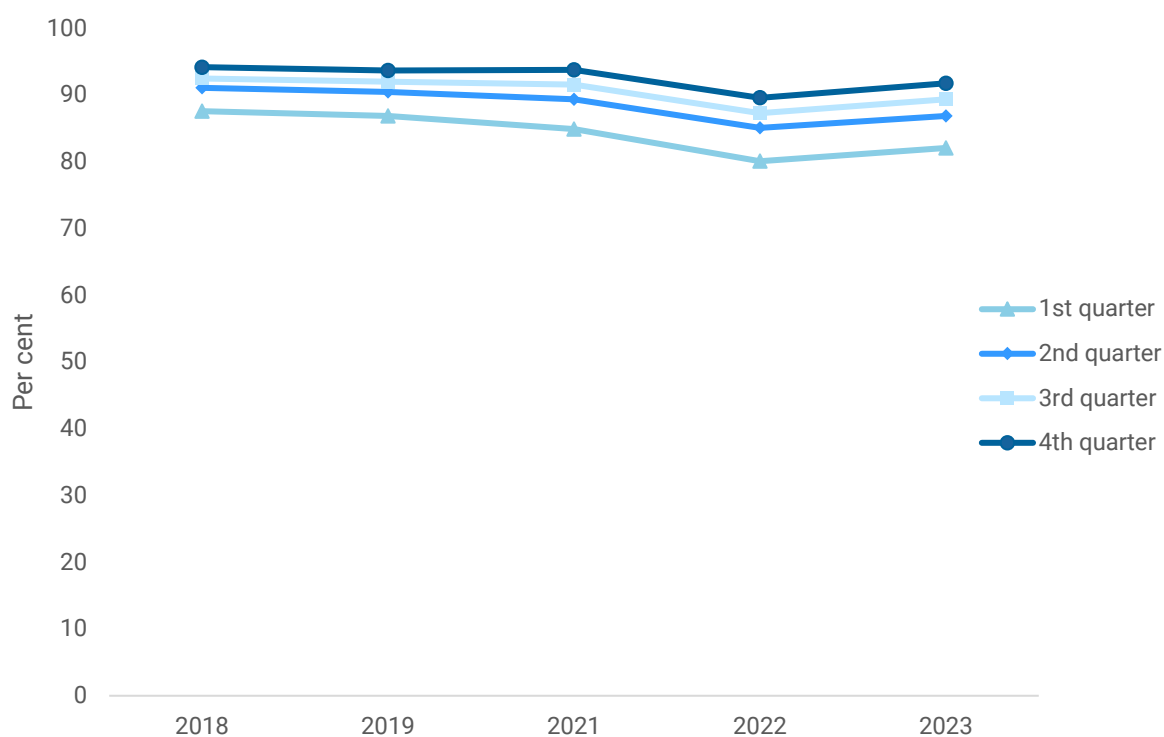
Source: ACARA, National Student Attendance Data Collection.

The average attendance rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students was lower for older year groups; and increases in attendance rates in 2023 were larger among students in younger year groups. In 2023, the average attendance rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students was 81.3% for Years 1–6, up 3.5 percentage points from 77.8% in 2022. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Years 7–10 the average attendance rate was 71.3% in 2023, up 1.8 percentage points, from 69.5% in 2022.

Attendance rates for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in remote and very remote areas were lower than for older students in other locations, with an average national attendance rate of only 39.7% for Year 10 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in very remote areas, compared to 79.7% for non-Indigenous Year 10 students in very remote areas. As a result, the attendance gap is larger at higher year levels in these areas.

Across all states and territories, attendance rates increased with socio-educational advantage (measured by the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA)), as shown in Figure 4.1. In 2023, the average attendance rate for schools in the lowest ICSEA quarter was 82.1%, compared to 91.8% for students in schools in the highest ICSEA quarter. This difference was more pronounced in the NT than in other states and territories, with average attendance rates of 64.1% among students in schools in the lowest ICSEA quarter, compared to 91.4% for students in schools in the highest ICSEA quarter. Declines in attendance rates in 2021 and 2022 were largest among students in schools in the lowest ICSEA quarter. This has resulted in an increase in the gap in attendance rates in the lowest and highest ICSEA quarters – from 6.6 percentage points in 2018 to 9.7 percentage points in 2023.

**Figure 4.1:** Student attendance rates, Years 1–10, by ICSEA quarter, Australia, 2018–2023 (%)



Notes:

See notes for Table 4.2.

Source: ACARA, National Student Attendance Data Collection.

## Attendance levels

The attendance level is a measure of the proportion of full-time students in Years 1–10, whose attendance rate in Semester 1 is greater than or equal to 90%. Several studies have shown that learning outcomes and educational achievement decline markedly when student attendance is below 90%.<sup>6</sup> KPM 1(c) aims to identify populations or groups for whom attendance is over 90%. Conversely, it identifies groups whose lower levels of attendance may put them at a disadvantage.

Table 4.5 shows KPM 1(c) by state and territory, by school sector, for 2023.

**Table 4.5:** Student attendance levels: proportion of students in Years 1–10 whose attendance rate is equal to or greater than 90%, by state and territory and school sector, Australia, 2023 (%); Change 2022–2023 (percentage points)

State/territory	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
<b>2023</b>									
<b>Government</b>	59.9	62.1	56.1	56.3	57.2	50.6	41.6	56.5	58.6
<b>Catholic</b>	65.9	65.0	66.1	63.4	66.5	58.3	44.8	60.3	65.2
<b>Independent</b>	70.9	70.6	68.9	67.9	68.7	64.1	56.6	68.1	69.6
<b>All</b>	63.0	64.0	59.9	59.7	60.6	54.0	44.2	59.5	61.6
<b>Change 2022–2023</b>									
<b>Government</b>	15.7	7.7	6.6	9.5	9.6	6.5	5.1	15.2	10.3
<b>Catholic</b>	14.9	15.4	15.1	18.9	6.5	10.9	9.3	26.4	14.7
<b>Independent</b>	16.5	13.4	9.1	20.3	12.0	13.1	6.7	16.8	14.0
<b>All</b>	15.7	10.1	8.5	13.2	9.6	8.3	6.0	17.8	11.8

Note: See notes for Tables 4.2 and 4.3.

Source: ACARA, National Student Attendance Data Collection.

In 2023, 61.6% of Australian students in Years 1–10 attended school for at least 90% of school days, increasing from 49.9% in 2022, with increases in attendance levels in all school sectors and in all states and territories. Increases in attendance levels were larger for non-government schools compared to government schools, and larger in the ACT, NSW and SA than for other states and territories.<sup>7</sup>

This increase in attendance levels follows a significant drop in 2022, as shown in Figure 4.2. It is likely that this decrease resulted from the spread of COVID-19 and its impact on school operations in 2022. This included public health advice that students with cold and flu symptoms should not attend school.

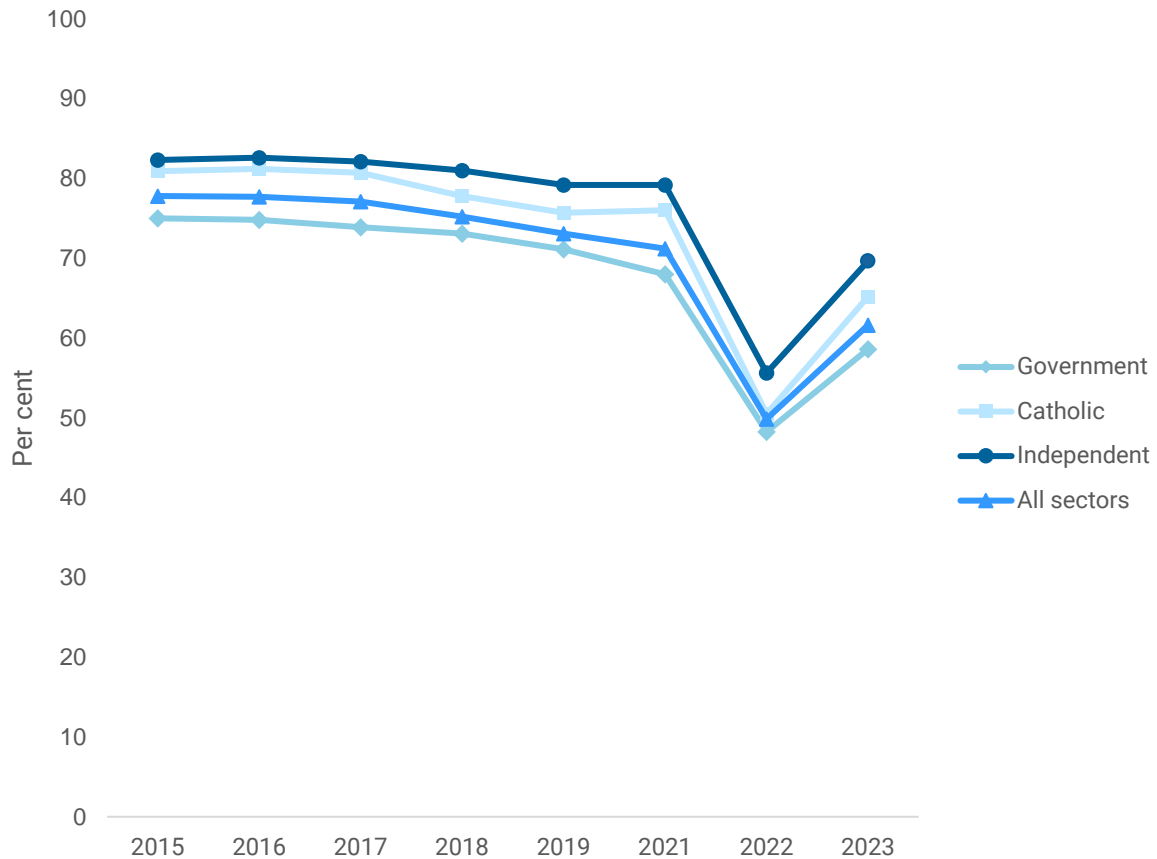
As was the case for student attendance rates, while student attendance levels were higher in 2023 than 2022, they have not returned to pre-COVID levels. The Key Performance Measures Dashboard in the National Report on Schooling data portal reports a downward trend in student attendance levels over the period 2018–2023 of -3.9 percentage points per annum. The lower attendance rates in 2023 compared to 2021 and previous years can thus be seen as consistent with a long-term trend.

<sup>6</sup> For example, Hancock, K.J., Shepherd, C., Lawrence, D., & Zubrick, S. (2013), Student Attendance and Educational Outcomes: Every day counts, Telethon Institute for Child Health Research.

<sup>7</sup> In NSW, the attendance level increase for NSW Government schools was higher than for NSW Catholic schools.



**Figure 4.2:** Student attendance levels: proportion of students in Years 1–10 whose attendance rate is equal to or greater than 90%, by state and territory and school sector, Australia, 2015-2023 (%)



**Notes:**

See notes for Table 4.2.

Data is only available from 2015 for the attendance level. For NSW government schools, attendance level data is only available from 2018.

Source: ACARA, National Student Attendance Data Collection.

KPM 1(c) is intended to monitor progress in Australia’s priority to close the gaps in educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. The measure for 2023 confirms that a much lower proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander than non-Indigenous students were present at school for 90% or more of the expected number of days. Table 4.6 shows student attendance levels for 2023 by Indigenous status and state and territory, and the gap in this measure between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students.

**Table 4.6:** Student attendance levels: proportion of students in Years 1–10 whose attendance rate is equal to, or greater than, 90%, by state and territory and Indigenous status, Australia, 2023 (%); Change 2022–2023

State/territory	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
<b>2023</b>									
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	40.6	42.7	37.4	31.7	27.2	40.9	18.7	37.2	36.4
Non-Indigenous	64.7	64.4	62.2	61.3	63.2	55.6	61.2	60.3	63.4
All students	63.0	64.0	59.9	59.7	60.6	54.0	44.2	59.5	61.6
Gap Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander/non-Indigenous (percentage points)	24.1	21.7	24.8	29.7	36.0	14.7	42.5	23.1	27.1
<b>Change 2022–2023</b>									
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	13.8	7.9	7.0	9.0	8.3	7.3	3.7	13.1	9.7
Non-Indigenous	15.9	10.2	8.7	13.4	9.7	8.5	7.8	18.0	12.0
All students	15.7	10.1	8.5	13.2	9.6	8.3	6.0	17.8	11.8
Gap Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander/non-Indigenous (percentage points)	2.1	2.3	1.7	4.5	1.4	1.2	4.2	4.9	2.2

Notes:

See notes for Table 4.2.

Source: ACARA, National Student Attendance Data Collection.

In 2023, 36.4% of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students attended school for 90% of the time or more, with a gap of 27.1 percentage points between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students. The gaps in SA, WA and the NT were above the national average.

The increase in attendance levels between 2022 and 2023 was larger for non-Indigenous students than for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, resulting in an increase of 2.2 percentage points in the gap in attendance levels since 2022. Between 2022 and 2023, attendance levels for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students increased, however with larger increases in attendance levels for non-Indigenous students, the gap widened in all jurisdictions, with the NT, SA and ACT experiencing the largest increases in the attendance level gap.

### 4.3 Apparent retention

#### Key Facts:

- Apparent retention rates estimate the progression of students through school over several years through several year levels.
- The national apparent retention rate from Year 10 to Year 12 decreased by 0.3 percentage points – from 79.0% in 2022 to 78.7% in 2023.
- The apparent retention rate from Year 10 to Year 12 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students decreased by 0.6 percentage points, from 56.4% in 2022 to 55.8% in 2023.
- Between 2013 and 2023, Year 10 to Year 12 apparent retention for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students was net unchanged, at 55.8% in 2013 and 2023. Among non-Indigenous students, apparent retention rates decreased by 1.8 percentage points over this period, leading to a narrowing of the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students.

Apparent retention rates estimate the progression of students through school over several years through several year levels. They measure the proportion of a year group or cohort that is still enrolled in that cohort after one or more calendar years.

These rates are designated as ‘apparent’ because they are based on aggregate enrolment data and do not record the progression of individual students. Apparent retention rates do not distinguish between students progressing at a ‘normal’ rate of one grade per calendar year and students who repeat a grade or are promoted, thus moving between cohorts; students who choose to adopt flexible study patterns in senior years; or students who join or leave a cohort through migration.

As such, apparent retention rates measure the net change in the size of a cohort as students leave or join it. This provides a measure of student progression for the majority of a year group. This measure is more reliable at the national level than at the state and territory level than at the sector level, and less reliable for geographic areas with mobile populations and for individual schools.<sup>8</sup>

KPM 1(e) in the Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia 2020 measures the apparent retention of students from Year 10 to Year 12.

#### Key Performance Measure 1(e)

Apparent retention rate from Year 10 to Year 12

Table 4.7 and Figure 4.3 show KPM 1(e) by school sector for the period 2013–2023.

<sup>8</sup> Sector-specific apparent retention rates should be interpreted with caution, as the rates do not distinguish between students continuing to Year 12 within a sector and students moving between sectors to complete their senior secondary schooling.

**Table 4.7:** Apparent retention rates (uncapped), Year 10 to Year 12, by school sector, Australia, 2013–2023 (%)

School sector	Government	Catholic	Independent	All
2013	76.7	85.4	88.9	80.7
2014	78.6	86.8	90.9	82.5
2015	79.2	86.3	90.0	82.7
2016	79.5	86.4	89.7	82.9
2017	79.8	86.5	90.9	83.3
2018	79.2	85.4	91.1	82.8
2019	78.0	84.9	91.0	82.0
2020	78.2	85.5	90.5	82.1
2021	77.2	85.4	90.8	81.6
2022	73.5	84.4	90.3	79.0
2023	73.0	84.3	90.4	78.7

**Notes:**

The apparent retention rate measures the number of full-time school students in a designated year level of schooling as a percentage of their respective cohort group in a base year. The base year for apparent retention rates Year 10 to Year 12 is Year 10, two years before. Enrolments are as at the annual Schools Census in the first week of August each year. Part-time students are not included. Ungraded students are not included.

Since 2015, ABS Schools, has included apparent retention rates that are capped at 100%, as well as the uncapped apparent retention rates reported historically. This report continues to publish uncapped apparent retention rates because, due to student movements and international migration, it is quite possible for a state, school sector or school to have higher enrolments in Year 12 than in Year 10 two years before, resulting in apparent retention rates above 100%. Uncapped rates are more suitable for undertaking time series analysis of the data than capped rates.

Declines in the numbers of full fee-paying overseas students (FFPOS), resulting from the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on immigration, may have impacted the numerator and/or the denominator for this measure for 2020, 2021 and 2022.

For NSW Government schools: from 2020, students in mainstream support classes (previously excluded from the data) are reported by their underlying grade of enrolment, affecting the calculation of retention rates.

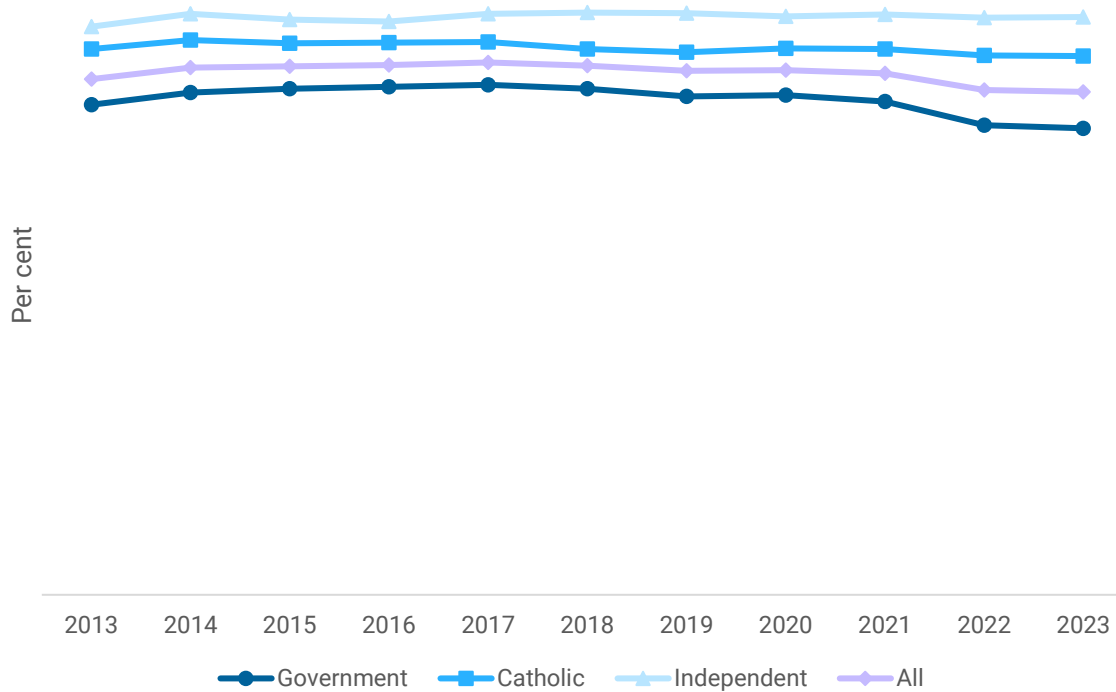
Source: ABS, Schools, 2023 and previous releases.

After 5 successive years of growth from 2012, following the implementation of strengthened participation requirements for 15- and 16-year-olds in 2010 the national apparent retention rate from Year 10 to Year 12 fell in 2018 and 2019.<sup>9</sup> It then rose by 0.1 percentage point in 2020 before falling by 0.5 percentage points in 2021, 2.6 percentage points in 2022 and 0.3 percentage points in 2023.

The Key Performance Measures data set in the National Report on Schooling data portal reports a long-term flat/neutral trend in this measure of 0.1 percentage points per annum for the period 2010–2023.

<sup>9</sup> These included the mandatory requirement for all young people to participate in schooling until they complete Year 10, and the requirement to participate full time in schooling or other education, training or employment, or a combination of these activities, until the age of 17. These were implemented progressively in all states and territories between 2006 and 2010.

**Figure 4.3:** Apparent retention rates (uncapped), Year 10 to Year 12, by school sector, Australia, 2013–2023 (%)



Source: ABS, *Schools*, 2023 and previous releases.

In 2023, apparent retention rates from Year 10 to Year 12 increased slightly (0.1 percentage point) in the independent sector and decreased slightly in the government and Catholic sectors (0.1 and 0.5 percentage points respectively).

The gap in apparent retention rates between the government and independent sectors narrowed from 12.2 percentage points in 2013 to 10.2 percentage points in 2016, but, by 2023, this had widened to 17.4 percentage points, resulting in a net increase in this gap of 5.2 percentage points over the 10-year period 2013–2023.

Sector-specific apparent retention rates should be interpreted with caution, as the rates do not distinguish between students continuing to Year 12 within a sector and students moving between sectors to complete their senior secondary schooling.

Caution is also advised when comparing apparent retention rates between states and territories, as they do not distinguish students progressing from Year 10 to 12 within a state from students moving between jurisdictions or from overseas.

Table 4.8 shows KPM 1(e) by state and territory.

**Table 4.8:** Apparent retention rates (uncapped), Year 10 to Year 12, by state and territory, Australia, 2013, 2022 and 2023 (%) and changes 2022–2023 and 2013–2023 (percentage points)

State/territory	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
2013	75.8	83.1	84.0	87.8	81.0	67.8	62.9	90.4	80.7
2022	73.2	82.1	81.0	86.0	82.0	71.7	62.6	87.8	79.0
2023	73.0	81.9	80.7	85.0	82.0	69.0	61.8	87.7	78.7
Change 2022–2023	-0.2	-0.2	-0.3	-1.0	0.0	-2.7	-0.8	-0.1	-0.3
Change 2013–2023	-2.8	-1.2	-3.3	-2.8	1.0	1.2	-1.1	-2.7	-2.0

Notes:

See notes for Table 4.7.

For a more detailed time series of apparent retention rates and trend analysis by state and territory, see the National Report on Schooling data portal.

Source: ABS, Schools, 2023 and previous releases.

In 2023, apparent retention rates ranged from 61.8 in the NT to 87.7 in the ACT.

Factors that may contribute to differences between states and territories in apparent retention rates from Year 10 to Year 12 include:

- Rates at the state and territory level can be inflated or deflated by interstate migration, including students transferring from one state to another to undertake senior secondary schooling. These movements are not taken into account when calculating rates.
- Differential rates of international immigration, including the temporary entry of overseas students for Years 11 and 12, inflate apparent retention rates in the jurisdictions where these incoming students are concentrated.
- The age distribution of the school population affects the year level (Year 11 or Year 12) to which most students must remain at school in order to meet age-based participation requirements. This varies between states and territories because of historical differences in enrolment requirements and practices. States and territories with younger year cohorts have the potential to achieve relatively high Year 10 to Year 12 apparent retention rates because a higher proportion of their student population is required to remain at school until Year 12.

State and territory retention rates are also affected by factors that are independent of schooling, such as differences in prevailing economic circumstances, including youth employment, and the availability and promotion of training and employment pathways that are recognised as approved alternatives to senior secondary schooling. States with more employment and training opportunities for 16- and 17-year-olds may record lower rates of retention to Year 12.

Table 4.9 and Figure 4.4 report this KPM for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students for the period 2013–2023.

**Table 4.9:** Apparent retention rates (uncapped), Year 10 to Year 12, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students (%) and gap between rates (percentage points) Australia, 2013–2023

School sector	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	Non-Indigenous	Gap
2013	55.8	81.9	26.1
2014	60.4	83.6	23.2
2015	60.6	83.8	23.2
2016	60.9	84.0	23.1
2017	63.0	84.3	21.3
2018	62.6	83.9	21.3
2019	60.0	83.2	23.2
2020	61.5	83.3	21.8
2021	60.5	82.7	22.2
2022	56.4	80.4	24.0
2023	55.8	80.1	24.3

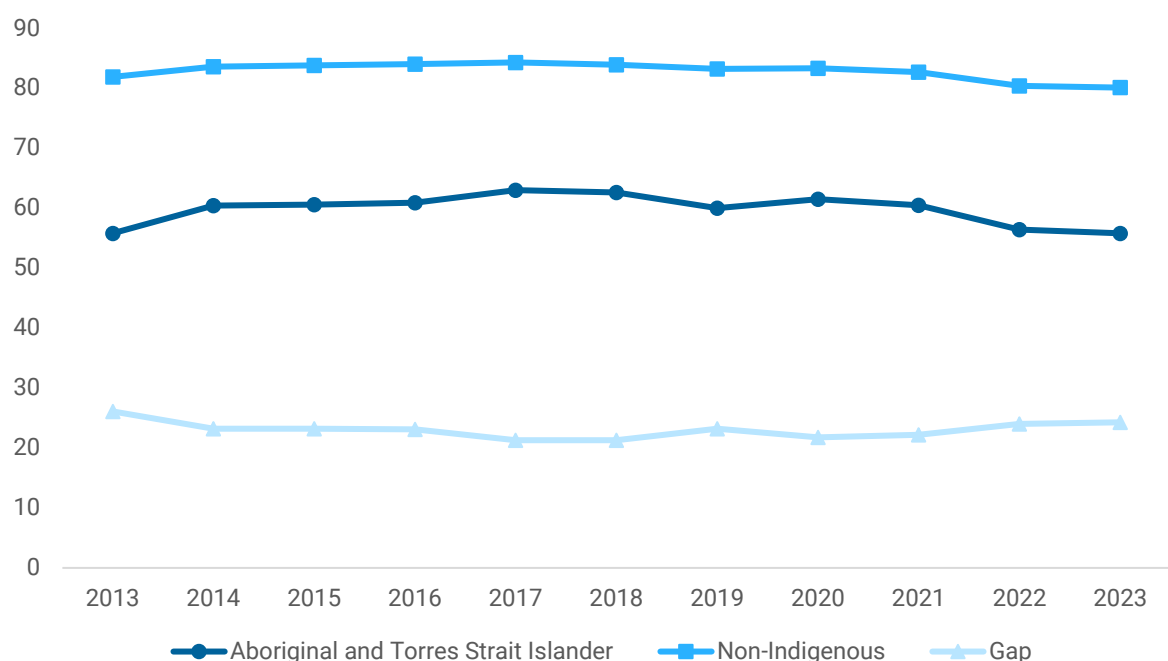
Notes:

See notes for Table 4.7.

Apparent retention rates can be affected by changes over time in whether individuals identify (or are identified) as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Source: ABS, Schools, 2023 and previous releases.

**Figure 4.4:** Apparent retention rates (uncapped), Year 10 to Year 12, by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, Australia, 2013–2023 (%)



Source: ABS, Schools, 2023 and previous releases.

The apparent retention rate for Year 10 to Year 12 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students fell from 56.4% in 2022 to 55.8% in 2023. This 0.6 percentage point decrease followed a fall of 4.1 percentage points in 2022.

Over the last ten years, Year 10 to Year 12 retention for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students was net unchanged at 55.8 in 2013 and 2023. For non-Indigenous students, apparent retention rates decreased by 1.8 percentage points over this period, leading to a narrowing of the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students (by 1.8 percentage points.)

With the gap at 24.3 percentage points in 2023, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are still less likely to proceed to Year 12 than other students. However, as noted above, retention rates for 'all students' are inflated by students entering the cohort since Year 10, both as permanent migrants and as temporary international students. This also applies to rates for non-Indigenous students but not to rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who, by definition, are Australian residents. The gap would therefore be smaller if recent immigrants and overseas students were excluded from the Year 12 count.<sup>10</sup>

Table 4.10 reports KPM 1(e) by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status and state and territory for 2013, 2022 and 2023. The table displays variations between states and territories in apparent retention rates for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students and in the percentage point gap between these rates.

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<sup>10</sup> These students are not separately identified in the NSSC. There may be instances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students returning from living overseas who were also not counted in the Year 10 cohort 2 years before.



**Table 4.10:** Apparent retention rates (uncapped), Year 10 to Year 12, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students (%) and gap between rates (percentage points), by state and territory 2013, 2022 and 2023

State/territory	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
<b>2013</b>									
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	46.7	58.0	67.0	75.4	53.5	47.5	43.4	64.2	55.8
Non-Indigenous students	77.2	83.4	85.2	88.3	82.6	69.4	75.3	90.9	81.9
All students	75.8	83.1	84.0	87.8	81.0	67.8	62.9	90.4	80.7
Gap	30.5	25.4	18.2	12.9	29.1	21.9	31.9	26.7	26.1
<b>2022</b>									
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	45.0	62.4	64.1	74.4	62.5	62.0	42.7	79.5	56.4
Non-Indigenous students	75.1	82.4	82.5	86.6	83.2	72.8	75.7	88.1	80.4
All students	73.2	82.1	81.0	86.0	82.0	71.7	62.6	87.8	79.0
Gap	30.1	20.0	18.4	12.2	20.7	10.8	33.0	8.6	24.0
<b>2023</b>									
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	44.5	67.6	63.8	64.8	61.9	53.7	44.7	75.8	55.8
Non-Indigenous students	75.0	82.1	82.1	86.1	83.3	70.7	72.4	88.0	80.1
All students	73.0	81.9	80.7	85.0	82.0	69.0	61.8	87.7	78.7
Gap	30.5	14.5	18.3	21.3	21.4	17.0	27.7	12.2	24.3
Change in gap 2022–2023	0.4	-5.5	-0.1	9.1	0.7	6.2	-5.3	3.6	0.3
Change in gap 2013–2023	0.0	-10.9	0.1	8.4	-7.7	-4.9	-4.2	-14.5	-1.8

Notes:

See notes for Tables 4.7 and 4.9.

Source: ABS, Schools, 2023 and earlier releases.

Between 2022 and 2023, the gap in apparent retention between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students widened in NSW, SA, WA, Tas and the ACT and narrowed in Vic, Qld and the NT. This resulted in an overall widening of the gap by 0.3 percentage points at a national level.

Over the ten-year period from 2013 to 2023, the gap in apparent retention between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students has widened in SA (by 8.4 percentage points) and in Qld (by 0.1 percentage point), has remained constant in NSW and has narrowed in all other states and territories (ranging from 4.2 percentage points in the NT to 14.5 percentage points in the ACT).

As well as factors affecting the state-by-state comparison of apparent retention rates for 'all students', variations between jurisdictions in retention rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students may be due to:

- the number and proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students within each population – small numbers in some states and territories can affect results for these jurisdictions
- changes over time in whether individuals identify (or are identified) as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- movement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students between states and territories (for example, through scholarship programs for senior schooling)
- the age profile of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student population in relation to age participation requirements
- the extent of training and employment programs that provide alternative options to senior schooling
- the geographic distribution of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.

Additional data on apparent retention from Year 10 to Year 12 is available in the Key Performance Measures data set and (including for other year groups) the Apparent Retention data set, in the National Report on Schooling data portal.