

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.¹

¹ 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 4.1 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 4.1: 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%).² 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 4.2 reports KPM 1(b) nationally, by school sector, for 2014–2023. 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.

² 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 4.2: 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 4.1.

Data is only available from 2014 for the attendance rate. National attendance data for 2020 was collected but not published as it was not considered nationally consistent because of differing arrangements in states and territories due to COVID-19.

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.

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.

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.

Source: ACARA National Student Attendance Data Collection.

Table 4.3 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.³

³ National Report on Schooling data portal, Student Attendance data set.

Table 4.3: 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
2014									
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
2022									
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
2023									
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
Change in gap 2014–22 (percentage points)									
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
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 4.1 and 4.2.

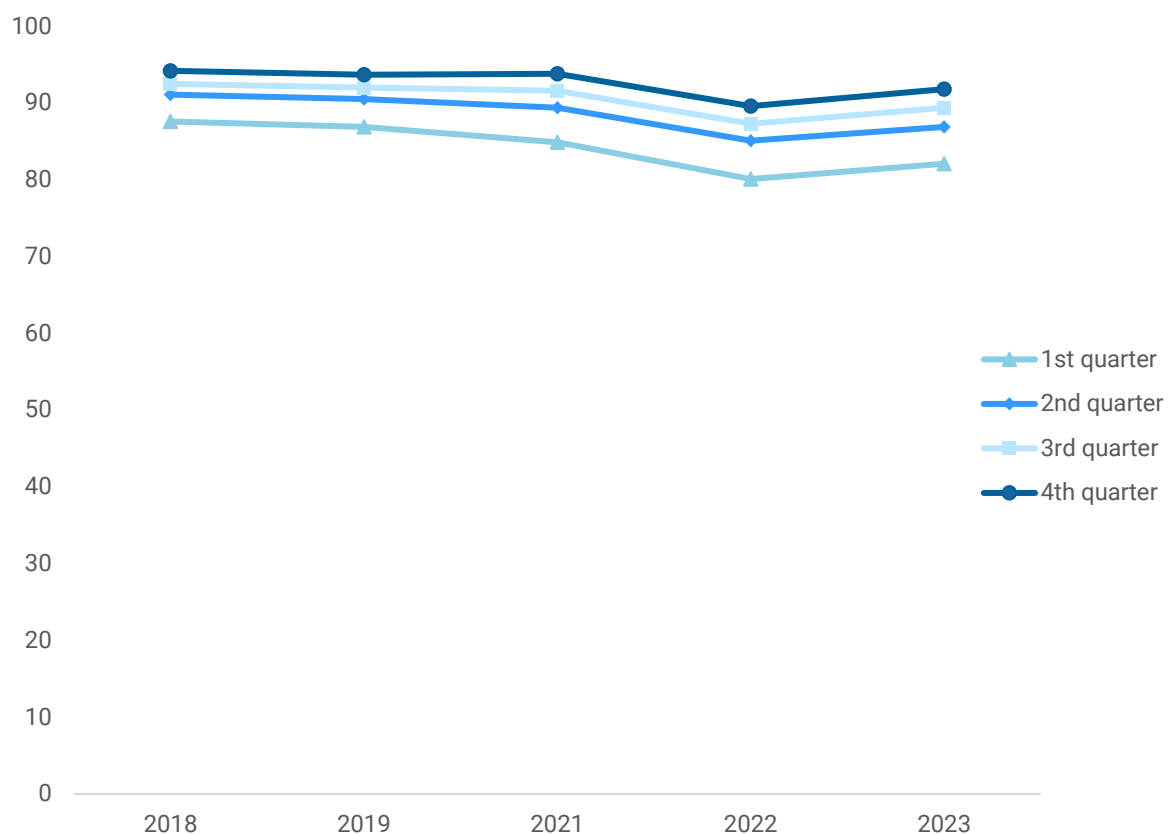
Source: ACARA, National Student Attendance Data Collection.

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 4.1.

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%. A number of studies have shown that learning outcomes and educational achievement decline markedly when student attendance slips below 90%.⁴ KPM 1(c) aims to identify populations or groups for whom attendance is generally satisfactory. Conversely, it identifies groups whose lower levels of attendance may put them at a disadvantage.

Table 4.4 shows KPM 1(c) by state and territory, by school sector, for 2023.

Table 4.4: 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
2023									
Government	59.9	62.1	56.1	56.3	57.2	50.6	41.6	56.5	58.6
Catholic	65.9	65.0	66.1	63.4	66.5	58.3	44.8	60.3	65.2
Independent	70.9	70.6	68.9	67.9	68.7	64.1	56.6	68.1	69.6
All	63.0	64.0	59.9	59.7	60.6	54.0	44.2	59.5	61.6
Change 2022–2023									
Government	15.7	7.7	6.6	9.5	9.6	6.5	5.1	15.2	10.3
Catholic	14.9	15.4	15.1	18.9	6.5	10.9	9.3	26.4	14.7
Independent	16.5	13.4	9.1	20.3	12.0	13.1	6.7	16.8	14.0
All	15.7	10.1	8.5	13.2	9.6	8.3	6.0	17.8	11.8

Note: See notes for Tables 4.1 and 4.2.

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.⁵

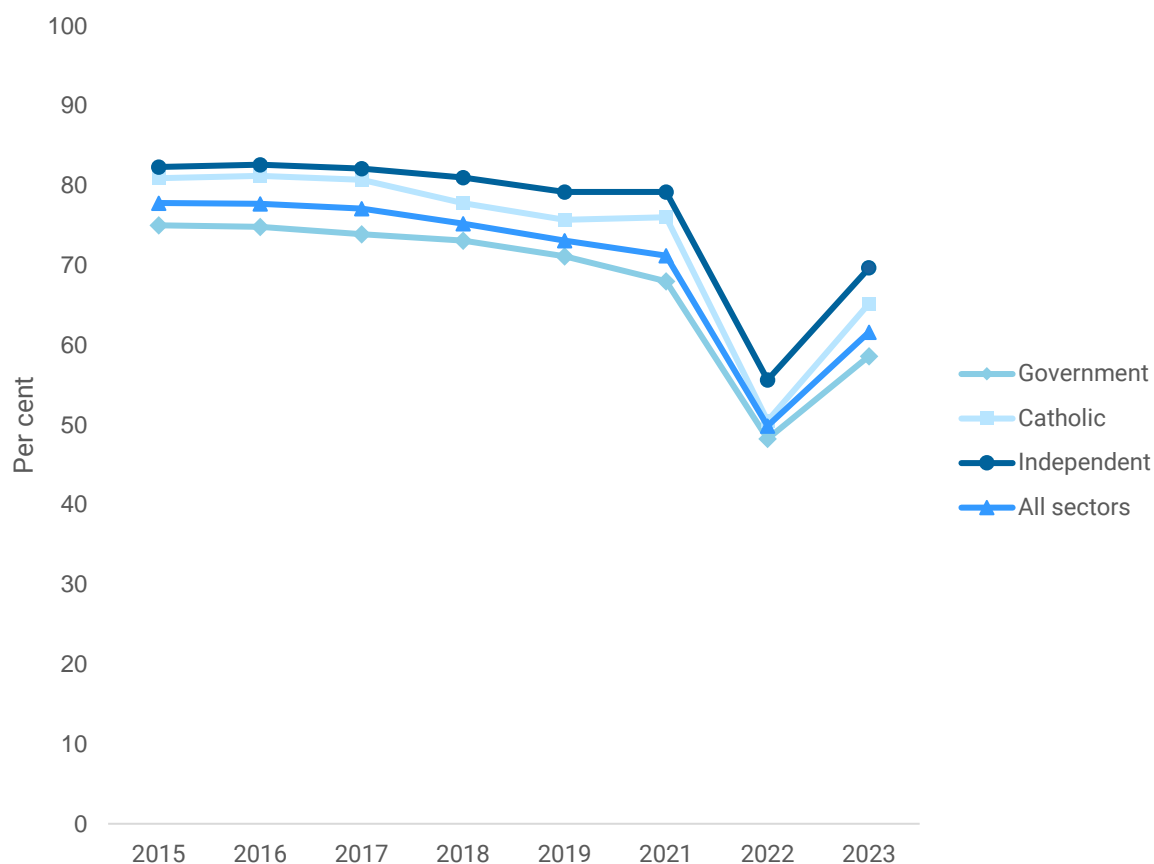
This increase in attendance levels follows a significant drop in 2022, as shown in Figure 4.2. It is likely that this decrease resulted from the spread of COVID-19 and its impact on school operations in 2022. This included public health advice that students with cold and flu symptoms should not attend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

⁴ 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.

⁵ In NSW, the attendance level increase for NSW Government schools was higher than for NSW Independent 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 4.1.

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 4.5 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 4.5: 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 Indigenous status, Australia, 2023 (%); Change 2022–2023

State/territory	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
2023									
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
Change 2022–2023									
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 4.1.

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.