

Chapter 2: Schools and schooling

This chapter provides information on the status of Australian schooling in 2025, including school structures, student and teacher numbers, and teacher education.

2.1 School structures

In Australia, responsibility for school education rests mainly with the 6 state and 2 territory governments.¹ 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.

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 2025, primary education consisted of a Foundation year (first year of full-time school) followed by Years 1–6, with secondary education from Years 7–12.²

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.

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.³

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.

¹ New South Wales (NSW), Victoria (Vic), Queensland (Qld), South Australia (SA), Western Australia (WA), Tasmania (Tas), Northern Territory (NT) and Australian Capital Territory (ACT).

² In 2022, Year 7 became a secondary school year for all government and non-government schools in South Australia.

³ School type: Combined schools deliver both primary and secondary education; students in special schools 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.

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.

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, 2025

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	5 years by 1 May (Term 1), 5 years between 1 May and 31 October (Term 3)	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. In 2024, South Australia introduced a formal mid-year (Term 3) reception intake for children born between May and October. 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 Tasmania, 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*, 2025.

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.⁴

⁴ Statistical data on preschool education is available in ABS, [Preschool Education](#). 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.

2.2 School numbers

Key Facts

In Australia in 2025:

- There were 9,673 schools – an increase of 20 schools since 2024.
- 69.6% of schools were government schools, 18.2% were Catholic and 12.2% independent.

In Australia, 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 2025 are shown in Table 2.2.⁵

Table 2.2: Number and proportion of schools by school type and school sector, Australia, 2025

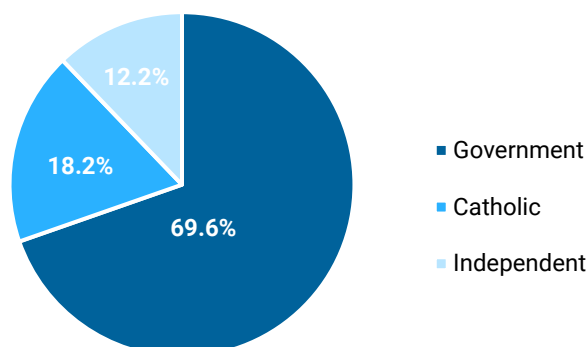
School type	Government schools		Catholic schools		Independent schools		All non-government schools		All schools	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Primary	4,806	77.1	1,231	19.7	196	3.1	1,427	22.9	6,233	100.0
Secondary	1,080	74.0	312	21.4	68	4.7	380	26.0	1,460	100.0
Combined	508	35.3	167	11.6	766	53.2	933	64.7	1,441	100.0
Special	343	63.6	48	8.9	148	27.5	196	36.4	539	100.0
Total	6,737	69.6	1,758	18.2	1,178	12.2	2,936	30.4	9,673	100.0

Source: ABS, *Schools*, 2025.

In 2025 there were 9,673 schools in Australia.⁶ This total included primary, secondary, combined (primary and secondary) and special schools, across government and non-government school sectors.

Of the total number of schools, 69.6% were administered by state and territory governments, 18.2% identified as having Catholic affiliation, and 12.2% 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 2024 is illustrated in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Proportion of schools by school sector, Australia, 2025 (%)



Source: ABS, *Schools*, 2025.

⁵ Please note that throughout this report, percentages may not total exactly 100% due to rounding.

⁶ As at the NSSC schools census date, 1 August 2025.

In 2025, almost two-thirds (64.4%) of schools were primary schools. In general, primary schools are smaller and more localised than secondary schools. More than three-quarters (77.1%) of primary schools were government schools. Most secondary schools (74.0%) and special schools (63.6%) were also government schools, while most combined schools (64.7%) were non-government schools, mainly in the independent school sector. The number and proportion of schools by state and territory in 2025 are shown in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3: Number and proportion of schools by school type and state/territory, Australia, 2025

School type	State/Territory								Australia
	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	
Primary	2,088	1,566	1,143	437	688	154	73	84	6,233
Secondary	516	351	273	85	143	42	23	27	1,460
Combined	347	254	289	164	213	59	92	23	1,441
Special	188	124	98	28	82	8	6	5	539
Total	3,139	2,295	1,803	714	1,126	263	194	139	9,673
Proportion (%)	32.5	23.7	18.6	7.4	11.6	2.7	2.0	1.4	100.0

Source: ABS, *Schools*, 2025.

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 20 from 9,653 in 2024 to 9,673 in 2025. Proportions of schools per state and territory in 2025 did not change substantially from 2024.

The numbers and proportions of schools in the 3 school sectors over this period are shown in Table 2.4. Between 2015 and 2025, the total number of schools in Australia increased by 269 (2.9%). During this period the number of Catholic schools increased by 21 (1.2%), the number of government schools increased by 98 (1.5%) and the number of independent schools increased by 150 (14.6%).

Table 2.4: Number and proportion of schools by school sector, Australia, 2015–2025

Year	Government schools		Catholic schools		Independent schools		All non-government schools		All schools	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
2015	6,639	70.6	1,737	18.5	1,028	10.9	2,765	29.4	9,404	100.0
2016	6,634	70.5	1,738	18.5	1,042	11.1	2,780	29.5	9,414	100.0
2017	6,639	70.3	1,744	18.5	1,061	11.2	2,805	29.7	9,444	100.0
2018	6,646	70.1	1,753	18.5	1,078	11.4	2,831	29.9	9,477	100.0
2019	6,659	70.1	1,756	18.5	1,088	11.4	2,844	29.9	9,503	100.0
2020	6,675	70	1,762	18.5	1,105	11.6	2,867	30.0	9,542	100.0
2021	6,692	69.8	1,762	18.4	1,127	11.8	2,889	30.2	9,581	100.0
2022	6,699	69.7	1,766	18.4	1,149	12	2,915	30.3	9,614	100.0
2023	6,712	69.7	1,764	18.3	1,153	12	2,917	30.3	9,629	100.0
2024	6,727	69.7	1,759	18.2	1,167	12.1	2,926	30.3	9,653	100.0
2025	6,737	69.6	1,758	18.2	1,178	12.2	2,936	30.4	9,673	100.0

Source: ABS, *Schools*, 2025 and previous releases.

2.3 Student numbers

Key Facts

In Australia in 2025:

- A total of 4,160,918 students were enrolled in Australian schools, an increase of 0.7% from 2024.
- 62.8% of school students were enrolled in government schools, 20.0% were in Catholic schools and 17.2% in independent schools.
- 54.4% of students were primary school students and 45.6% 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.

Between 2015 and 2025:

- Total enrolments grew by 409,945 (10.9%), largely reflecting the growth in the school-age population.
- The number of students in independent schools rose from 540,304 to 715,822 – a 32.4% increase. This has resulted in a 2.8 percentage point increase in the proportion of students attending independent schools.

Enrolments by school level and sector

In 2025, a total of 4,160,918 students were enrolled in Australian schools, an increase of 0.7% from 2024. The numbers and proportions of individual students by school level and school sector in 2025 are summarised in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5: Number and proportion of students (full-time plus part-time) enrolled in schools by school level and school sector, Australia, 2025

School level	Government schools		Catholic schools		Independent schools		All schools	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	% (by school level)
Primary	1,531,782	67.7	420,201	18.6	311,245	13.8	2,263,228	54.4
Junior secondary	758,671	57.0	292,324	21.9	280,891	21.1	1,331,886	32.0
Senior secondary	322,951	57.1	119,167	21.1	123,686	21.9	565,804	13.6
Total secondary	1,081,622	57.0	411,491	21.7	404,577	21.3	1,897,690	45.6
Total	2,613,404	62.8	831,692	20.0	715,822	17.2	4,160,918	100.0

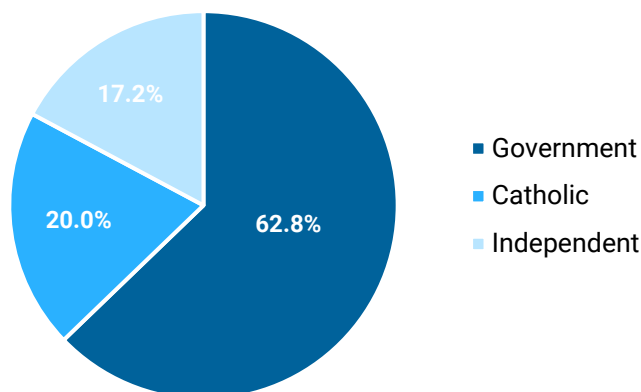
Note: Primary education includes a Foundation (pre-Year 1) year followed by Years 1–6. Secondary education consists of Years 7–12. Junior secondary: the years from start of secondary school to Year 10, including 'ungraded' secondary. Senior secondary: Years 11 and 12. Students attending special schools 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.

Source: ABS, *Schools*, 2025.

Of the 4.16 million school students, 2.26 million (54.4%) were primary students, and 1.90 million (45.6%) 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.

In 2025, 62.8% of Australian school students were enrolled in government schools, 20.0% of students were enrolled in Catholic schools and 17.2% of students were enrolled in independent schools. This is illustrated in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2: Proportion of students (full-time plus part-time) enrolled in schools by sector, Australia, 2025 (%)



Source: ABS, *Schools*, 2025.

The proportions of students enrolled in each school sector differed between levels of education, with government schools accounting for 67.7% of primary students but less than 60% (57.0%) of secondary students.

Part-time students (11,209 students) accounted for only 0.3% of total enrolments. They were concentrated in Years 11 and 12 (71.7%), and in government schools (89.8%).⁷

Enrolments by school level, and state and territory

Enrolments of students (full-time plus part-time) by state and territory and school level in 2025 are shown in Table 2.6.

Table 2.6: Number and proportion of students by school type and state/territory, Australia, 2025

School	State/Territory								
	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
Primary	690,470	579,593	476,196	151,730	257,384	43,176	23,185	41,494	2,263,228
Junior secondary	407,017	336,579	289,475	90,065	145,573	26,001	12,323	24,853	1,331,886
Senior secondary	160,243	148,366	123,964	42,764	63,328	11,103	4,497	11,539	565,804
Total secondary	567,260	484,945	413,439	132,829	208,901	37,104	16,820	36,392	1,897,690
Total students	1,257,730	1,064,538	889,635	284,559	466,285	80,280	40,005	77,886	4,160,918
Proportion of Australian total (%)	30.2	25.6	21.45	6.8	11.2	1.9	1.0	1.9	100.0

Note: See notes for Table 2.5.

Source: ABS, *Schools*, 2025.

⁷ Part-time student numbers disaggregated by gender and state/territory are available in the [Student Numbers](#) data set on the National Report on Schooling in Australia data portal.

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 (77.2%) were enrolled in the 3 most populous states (New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland).

Changes in enrolments over time

Table 2.7 summarises the change in student enrolments, by school sector, from 2015 to 2025.

Table 2.7: Number and proportion of students (full-time plus part-time) by school sector, Australia, 2015–2025

Year	Government schools		Catholic schools		Independent schools		All schools
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
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
2023	2,614,094	64.0	806,323	19.7	666,581	16.3	4,086,998
2024	2,619,513	63.4	820,222	19.9	692,271	16.8	4,132,006
2025	2,613,404	62.8	831,692	20.0	715,822	17.2	4,160,918

Note: See notes for Table 2.5.

Source: ABS, *Schools*, 2025 and previous releases.

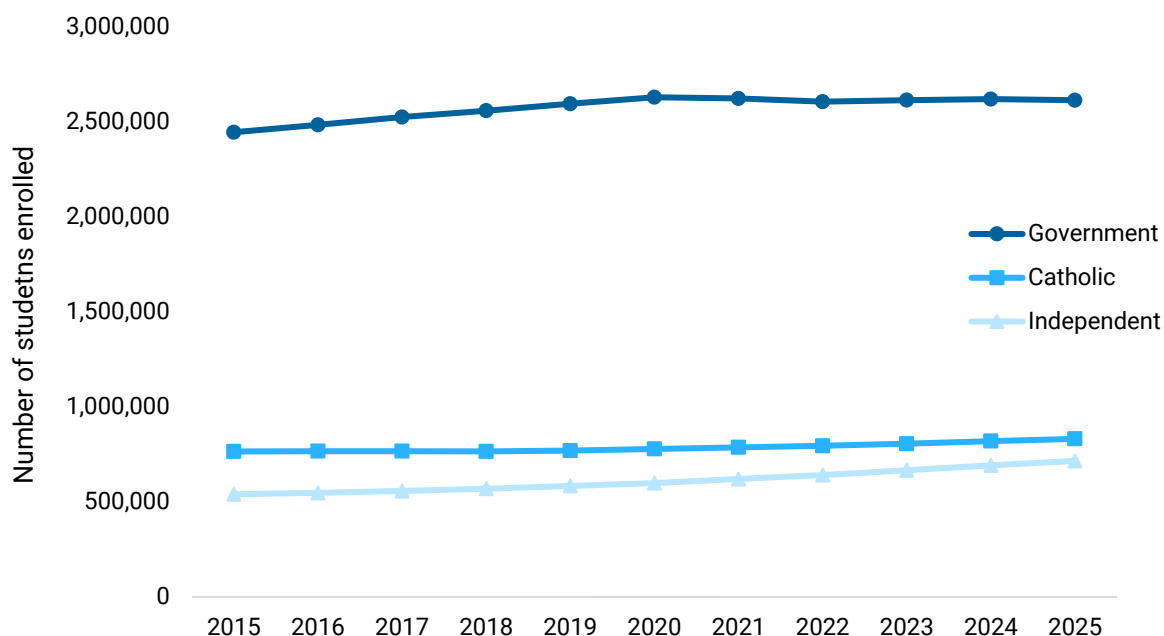
Between 2024 and 2025:

- The number of students enrolled in Australian schools grew by 28,912 (0.7%), with increases in the number of students enrolled in non-government schools (23,551 students (3.4%) in independent schools and 11,470 students (1.4%) in Catholic schools) while the number of students in government schools declined by 6,109 (0.2%).
- Primary school enrolments decreased by 7,013 students (0.3%). This decline is consistent with broader demographic trends, with the estimated population of 5–9 year olds in Australia decreasing by 6,712 between 2024 and 2025.⁸ There was a decrease in enrolments in government schools (-17,589 students; -1.1%), partly offset by increases in enrolments in Catholic schools (3,462 students; 0.8%) and independent schools (7,114 students; 2.3%).
- Secondary enrolments increased across all sectors. Secondary enrolments in government schools increased by 11,480 students (1.1%), secondary enrolments in Catholic schools increased by 8,008 students (2.0%), and independent secondary enrolments increased by 16,437 students (4.2%).
- The shift in the share of total enrolments between government and non-government schools continued, with enrolments in government schools falling by 0.6 percentage points to 62.8%, enrolments in Catholic schools increasing by 0.1 percentage points to 20.0% and enrolments in independent schools increasing by 0.4 percentage points to 17.2% of total enrolments. This continues a long-term trend in the relative growth of the independent sector.

⁸ ABS, 2026, [National, State and Territory Population](#).

Figure 2.3 illustrates the changes in student enrolments between 2015–2025, by school sector.

Figure 2.3: Number of students enrolled (full-time plus part-time) by school sector, Australia, 2015–2025



Source: ABS, Schools, 2025.

Between 2015 and 2025:

- Total school enrolments grew by 409,945 (10.9%), largely reflecting the growth in the school-age population, as schooling is essentially compulsory between the ages of 6 and 17. Primary school enrolments increased by 5.7% and secondary enrolments increased by 17.8%.⁹
- Student numbers increased by 175,518 (32.5%) in independent schools, compared with increases of 168,274 (6.9%) in government schools and 66,153 (8.6%) in Catholic schools. As a result, the share of total enrolments in independent schools increased by 2.8 percentage points, while the shares in government and Catholic schools declined by 2.4 and 0.4 percentage points respectively.
- Primary school enrolments increased by 42,601 (2.9%) in government schools, 16,082 (4.0%) in Catholic schools and 63,974 (25.9%) in independent schools. As a result, the share of total primary enrolments in independent schools increased by 2.2 percentage points, while the shares in government and Catholic schools declined by 1.9 and 0.3 percentage points respectively.
- Secondary enrolments increased by 125,673 (13.1%) in government schools, 50,071 (13.9%) in Catholic schools and 111,544 (38.1%) in independent schools. As a result, the share of total secondary enrolments in independent schools increased by 3.1 percentage points, while the shares in government and Catholic schools declined by 2.4 and 0.7 percentage points respectively.

⁹ Growth in secondary enrolments, is also influenced by Year 11 and 12 retention rates and the number of Full-Fee Paying Overseas Students (FFPOS) enrolled in Australian schools. FFPOS numbers declined during the COVID-19 period, falling by 5,355 between 2020 and 2021 and by a further 1,561 between 2021 and 2022. Numbers rebounded strongly in 2023, increasing by 36.6% to 21,124 students, and rose by a further 23.4% in 2024 to return to pre-pandemic levels (ABS, *Schools*, 2024). In 2025, FFPOS enrolments increased by 959 students (3.7%) to 27,027 – the highest level since 2019 (ABS, *Schools*, 2025).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

In 2025 there were 283,611 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in Australian schools, making up 6.8% of the total school student population.¹⁰ Table 2.8 shows the number and proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in 2025, by school level and state and territory.

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, 2025

School level	State/Territory								
	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
Primary	56,499	13,479	48,428	9,310	19,767	5,108	9,149	1,544	163,284
Junior secondary	32,054	7,643	27,519	5,135	10,473	3,002	4,985	898	91,709
Senior secondary	8,031	2,612	9,135	2,031	3,970	1,103	1,422	314	28,618
Total secondary	40,085	10,255	36,654	7,166	14,443	4,105	6,407	1,212	120,327
Total	96,584	23,734	85,082	16,476	34,210	9,213	15,556	2,756	283,611
Proportion of the Australian total of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students per state/territory (%)	34.1	8.4	30.0	5.8	12.1	3.2	5.5	1.0	100.0
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as a proportion of total students in each state/territory (%)	7.7	2.2	9.6	5.8	7.3	11.5	38.9	3.5	6.8

Note: See notes for Table 2.5.

Source: ABS, *Schools*, 2025.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are not evenly or proportionately distributed among states and territories. New South Wales had the highest number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments in 2025, with 96,584 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (34.1% of the national total). This is more than the New South Wales share of total enrolments nationally (30.2%) and represented 7.7% of the state's students, more than the national average of 6.8%. Queensland schools accounted for 30.0% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (compared with 21.4% of total enrolments) and Western Australia had 12.1% of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (compared with 11.2% of total enrolments).

¹⁰ 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. Over the past decade, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student cohort has increased at a higher proportional rate than the non-Indigenous cohort. As a result, observed changes in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as a proportion of total students may partly reflect the increase in the number of students identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. The ABS (2025) has recently updated population estimates of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, increasing the count of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Census, noting that less than half (43.5%) of this increase can be accounted for by demographic factors (births, deaths and migration) with the remainder due to other factors, including changes in the propensity of people to identify as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person. For further information refer to: <https://www.pc.gov.au/closing-the-gap-data/explain/population-revisions/>.

The highest concentration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students was in the Northern Territory, which accounted for only 1.0% of total school enrolments in 2025, but for 5.5% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments. The 15,556 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in Northern Territory schools made up 38.9% of the Territory's school population. For this reason, data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students has a greater impact on overall statistics for the Northern Territory than for any other state or territory.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were under-represented in senior secondary years, with 5.1% of senior secondary students identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander in 2025, compared with 6.9% of junior secondary students and 7.2% 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.¹¹

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students predominantly attended government schools, with 80.6% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments in government schools compared with 62.8% of enrolments for all students. Overall, 19.4% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were enrolled in non-government schools (11.8% in Catholic schools, 7.5% in independent schools) with this proportion rising from 15.9% for primary students to 27.0% for senior secondary students.

¹¹ Apparent retention rates are presented in Chapter 4 of this Report.

2.4 School students with disability

Key Facts

In Australia in 2025:

- 1,125,502 school students received an educational adjustment due to disability. This represents 27.0% of total enrolments, up from 25.7% in 2024 and 18.0% in 2015.
- 2.8% 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 5.2% were provided with substantial support, 11.7% were provided with supplementary support and 7.4% were supported through quality differentiated teaching practices.
- Among school students who received an educational adjustment due to disability, 53.0% of adjustments were provided to students with cognitive disability, 36.3% to students with social-emotional disability, 8.3% for students with physical disability and 2.4% for sensory disability.

The [Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability](#) (NCCD) 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 records information on students who received an educational adjustment to address the functional impact of a disability for a minimum of 10 weeks of school education in the 12 months preceding Census Day.¹² In the context of the NCCD data, students with disability may include, but are not limited to:

- students who have a functional need due to disability, with disability as defined in section 4 of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and includes disability that presently exists, previously existed but no longer exists, may exist in the future, or is imputed to a person;
- students who have been diagnosed with a disability by a medical or allied health practitioner;
- students who do not have a formal diagnosis of a disability but have an impairment requiring an adjustment(s) or can be supported through quality differentiated teaching; students who live with cognitive, physical, sensory and social/emotional disability or difficulties in learning due to disability or difficulties in behaviour due to disability; and
- students who are gifted and talented and whose learning is impacted by disability.

¹² Census Day is the date on which schools identify the student population to count for the government and non-government School Census, which includes the NCCD. A student must be counted in the NCCD when the student has been counted in the school's Census, the student has a disability as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA), and the school has evidence that the student has been provided with an adjustment(s) to address the functional impact of a disability for a minimum of 10 weeks of school education in the 12 months preceding the Census Day. Where a student has been provided different levels of adjustment for the minimum of 10 weeks in the 12 months preceding Census Day, a school must report the highest level of adjustment provided (NCCD Guidelines, 2025).

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, and
- the broad category of disability under which each student best fits (physical, cognitive, sensory or social/emotional).¹³

The four levels of adjustment in the NCCD are:

- **Support within quality differentiated teaching practice (QDTP):** Students that receive minor adjustments reasonably expected as part of quality teaching/school practice. These adjustments are provided through usual school processes, without drawing on additional resources.
- **Supplementary:** Students receive adjustments supplementary to the strategies and resources already available for all students within the school for particular activities at specific times throughout the week.
- **Substantial:** Students have substantial support needs and receive essential adjustments and require considerable assistance to the usual educational program at most times, on most days.
- **Extensive:** Students have very high support needs and are provided with extensive targeted measures and sustained levels of intensive support at all times.

The four broad categories of disability used in the NCCS align with the definitions used in the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and the Disability Standards for Education 2005:

- **Cognitive:** difficulties with learning, thinking, problem-solving, and processing information, including intellectual disability and specific learning disorders.
- **Physical:** conditions that affect a student's mobility, physical functioning, or ability to perform daily activities, including chronic health conditions.
- **Sensory:** impairments that affect vision and/or hearing, impacting how a student accesses information.¹⁴
- **Social/emotional:** conditions that affect a student's emotional regulation, behaviour, social interaction, or mental health.

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.¹⁵

¹³ If a student has multiple disabilities or does not neatly fit into a single category, school teams should select the disability category that demands the greatest extent of reasonable adjustment(s) (NCCD Guidelines, 2025).

¹⁴ In practice, the sensory category is applied primarily to students with vision and hearing impairment requiring adjustments in addition to glasses, hearing aids, cochlear implants or classroom sound-field systems. Where students have conditions with multiple functional impacts (e.g. autism or ADHD), they are typically classified under the category that reflects the main driver of adjustments, such as social/emotional or cognitive. (NCCD Guidelines, 2025). Due to the low prevalence of these types of disabilities, reported proportions in the sensory category are very small and may round to zero.

¹⁵ Education Council (2017), *2017 data on students in Australian schools receiving adjustments for disability*.

In 2025, 1,125,502 school students received an educational adjustment due to disability. This represented 27.0% of total enrolments. Table 2.9 shows the number and proportion of students that received an adjustment due to disability in 2025, by level of educational adjustment and category of disability.

Table 2.9: School students with disability receiving adjustments as a percentage of the total school enrolments, by category of disability and level of adjustment, 2025

Level of adjustment	Category of disability				
	Cognitive	Physical	Sensory	Social/emotional	All
Support within QDTP	3.3	1.5	0.2	2.4	7.4
Supplementary	6.8	0.4	0.3	4.2	11.7
Substantial	2.7	0.2	0.1	2.2	5.2
Extensive	1.5	0.1	0.1	1.1	2.8
Total	14.3	2.2	0.7	9.8	27.0

Note: Activities which have been funded through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) are not eligible for inclusion in the NCCD ([NCCD Quick Guide](#), 2025).

Source: NCCD, 2025.

Among students who received an adjustment for disability, the most common adjustment level was supplementary (11.7% of total school enrolments), followed by support within QDTP (7.4% of total school enrolments). The most common categories of disability for which school students received adjustments were cognitive disabilities (14.3%), followed by social/emotional disabilities (9.8%). Adjustments for physical disability were made for 2.2% of students, while less than 1% of students received adjustments for sensory disabilities.¹⁶

Table 2.10 shows the proportion of school students with disability, by school sector and level of adjustment provided in 2025. Overall, the proportion of students who received adjustments due to disability was lower in Catholic schools (24.3%) and independent schools (24.4%) than in government schools (28.6%). This may be at least partly due to the fact that the majority of special schools are government schools. The proportion of students who received adjustments for cognitive, sensory and social/emotional disability was higher among students in government schools than in non-government schools. However, the proportion of students who received an adjustment for physical disability was higher in the independent sector (3.0%) than in the Catholic (2.1%) and government (2.1%) sectors.

Table 2.10: School students with disability receiving adjustments as a percentage of the total student population, by category of disability and school sector, 2025

School sector	Category of disability				
	Cognitive	Physical	Sensory	Social/emotional	All
Government	14.8	2.1	0.8	11.0	28.6
Catholic	14.3	2.1	0.4	7.4	24.3
Independent	12.9	3.0	0.4	8.1	24.4
Total	14.3	2.2	0.7	9.8	27.0

Note: See note for Table 2.9.

Source: NCCD, 2025.

¹⁶ Activities which have been funded through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) are not eligible for inclusion in the NCCD ([NCCD Quick Guide](#), 2025). Sensory disabilities are defined as 'total or partial loss of the persons bodily or mental functions, or a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction.' In practice, the sensory category is applied primarily to students with vision and hearing impairment requiring adjustments in addition to glasses, hearing aids, cochlear implants or classroom sound-field systems. Due to the low prevalence of these types of disabilities, reported proportions in the sensory category are very small and may round to zero. Other conditions with sensory-related features (e.g., autism, ADHD) are recorded under the social/emotional or cognitive categories because those functional impacts are judged to drive the adjustments more than sensory loss does.

Table 2.11 shows the proportion of students with disability in 2025, by school sector and level of adjustment provided. The proportion of students who received extensive support was higher in government schools (3.7%) than in Catholic (1.1%) and independent schools (1.4%). As was the case for the proportion of students who received adjustments by category of disability, this difference is likely to be at least partly because the majority of special schools are government schools.

Table 2.11: School students with disability receiving adjustments as a percentage of the total school student population, by level of adjustment and school sector, 2025

School sector	Level of adjustment				
	Support within QDTP	Supplementary	Substantial	Extensive	All
Government	8.0	11.3	5.6	3.7	28.6
Catholic	4.4	13.6	5.2	1.1	24.3
Independent	8.1	11.0	3.9	1.4	24.4
Total	7.4	11.7	5.2	2.8	27.0

Note: See note for Table 2.9.

Source: NCCD, 2025.

The proportion of students in Catholic schools who received support within QDTP (4.4%) was lower than in independent schools (8.1%) and government schools (7.0%), while the proportion of students in Catholic schools who supplementary support (13.6%) was higher than in independent and government schools (11.0% and 11.3% respectively).

The proportion of students who received an adjustment due to disability was higher than average in the Northern Territory, Victoria, and South Australia, as shown in Table 2.12.

Table 2.12: School students with disability receiving adjustments as a percentage of the total school student population, by level of adjustment and state/territory, 2025

Level of support	State/Territory								
	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
Support within QDTP	7.6	8.2	5.0	7.8	9.7	4.0	4.3	7.8	7.4
Supplementary	12.4	10.3	11.8	15.2	10.1	11.2	13.7	11.7	11.7
Substantial	4.6	5.7	6.2	4.6	3.6	7.0	11.2	4.6	5.2
Extensive	2.6	4.1	2.5	2.7	1.3	2.2	5.6	1.5	2.8
Total	27.2	28.4	25.4	30.3	24.6	24.3	34.7	25.6	27.0

Note: See note for Table 2.9.

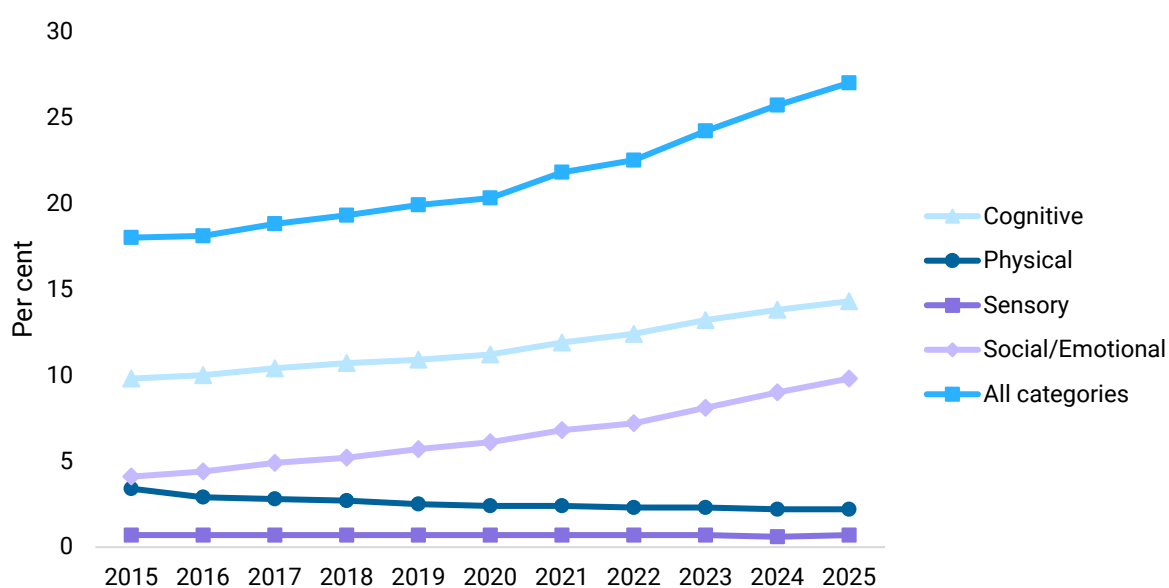
Source: NCCD, 2025.

The Northern Territory had the highest proportion of school students receiving assistance, with 34.7% of students having received adjustment due to disability in 2025 – 13.7% of students received supplementary support, 11.2% received substantial support and 5.6% received extensive support. In South Australia, 30.3% of school students received an adjustment due to disability, with higher proportions receiving support within QDTP (7.8%) and supplementary support (15.2%) than substantial or extensive support (4.6% and 2.7% respectively).

The proportion of Australian school students that received an adjustment due to disability in 2025 was 1.3 percentage points higher than in 2024, with a 0.5 percentage point increase in the proportion of students receiving an adjustment for a cognitive disability, a 0.8 percentage point increase in the proportion of students receiving an adjustment for a social-emotional disability, a 0.1 percentage point increase in the proportion of students receiving an adjustment for sensory disability and no change in the proportion that received an adjustment for physical disability.

Between 2015 and 2025, the proportion of school students receiving an adjustment due to disability increased by 9.0 percentage points, from 18.0% to 27.0%, as shown in Figure 2.4. While the proportion of school students receiving adjustments for cognitive and social-emotional disabilities increased by 4.5 and 5.7 percentage points respectively, the proportion of students receiving adjustments for sensory disabilities remained steady and the proportion receiving adjustments for physical disabilities declined from 3.4% in 2015 to 2.2% in 2025.¹⁷

Figure 2.4: School students with disability receiving adjustments as a percentage of the total student population, by category of disability, 2015–2025



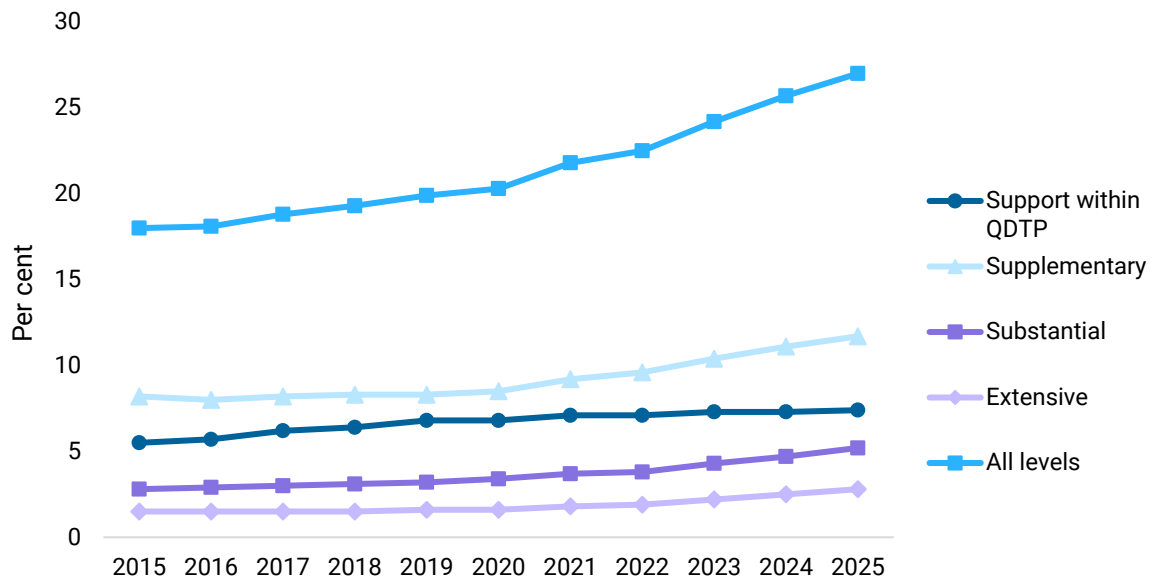
Source: NCCD, 2025 and previous years.

At the national level, the proportion of students receiving supplementary support increased by 0.6 percentage points between 2024 and 2025, while the proportion of students receiving extensive and substantial support increased by 0.3 and 0.5 percentage points respectively and the proportion receiving support within QDTP increased by 0.1 percentage point.

Figure 2.5 shows that between 2015 and 2025 the proportion of school students receiving support increased across all levels of adjustment. The proportion of students receiving support within QDTP increased by 1.9 percentage points, while the proportion receiving supplementary support increased by 3.5 percentage points. Smaller increases were observed for students receiving substantial (2.4 percentage points) and extensive (1.3 percentage points) levels of support.

¹⁷ Independent reviews of the quality of the data found that schools' level of understanding of the data 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 (Education Council (2017), *2017 data on students in Australian schools receiving adjustments for disability*).

Figure 2.5: School students with disability receiving adjustments as a percentage of the total student population, by level of adjustment, 2015–2025



Source: NCCD, 2025 and previous years.

2.5 School staff numbers

Key Facts

In Australia in 2025:

- There were 325,191 full time equivalent (FTE) teaching staff in Australia – an increase of 4,814 (1.5%) from 2024.
- Staff numbers closely reflected enrolments, with 61.9% of school teachers employed in government schools, 19.3% in Catholic schools and 18.8% in independent schools.
- Australia's teaching workforce continued to be predominantly female, with women making up 72.0% of FTE teachers in 2025. The gender difference was more pronounced at the primary level (82.4 female) than at secondary level (61.5% female).

In 2025, there were 325,191 FTE teaching staff across primary and secondary schools in Australia. FTE teaching staff accounted for 64.7% of the FTE of all school staff. In addition to teaching staff, 177,600 FTE staff were employed in administrative and clerical roles, as teacher aides and assistants (28.2% of all staff), as specialist support staff (3.8%) or in building and maintenance (3.3%).

The numbers and proportions of full-time equivalent (FTE) teaching staff by school sector, school level and gender in 2024 are shown in Table 2.13.

Table 2.13: Number and proportion of full-time equivalent teaching staff by school sector, school level and gender, Australia, 2025

	Government schools	Catholic schools	Independent schools	Total non-government schools	All schools
Primary level					
Male	20,030	4,202	4,349	8,551	28,581
Female	91,780	24,056	18,402	42,458	134,238
Total	111,810	28,258	22,751	51,009	162,819
% of all teaching staff	68.7	17.4	14.0	31.3	100.0
Secondary level					
Male	33,581	13,131	15,798	28,929	62,510
Female	55,888	21,322	22,652	43,974	99,862
Total	89,469	34,453	38,450	72,903	162,372
% of all teaching staff	55.1	21.2	23.7	44.9	100.0
Total					
Male	53,611	17,333	20,147	37,480	91,091
Female	147,667	45,379	41,053	86,432	234,099
Total	201,279	62,712	61,200	123,912	325,191
% of all teaching staff	61.9	19.3	18.8	38.1	100.0

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.

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

Source: ABS, *Schools*, 2025.

Across Australia in 2025, 61.9% of FTE teachers were employed in government schools, 19.3% in Catholic schools and 18.8% in independent schools. This remains broadly consistent with the distribution of (full-time plus part-time) students across school sectors.

In 2025, Australia's teaching workforce continued to be predominantly female, with women making up 72.0% of FTE teachers, with the difference was more pronounced at the primary level (82.4% female) than at secondary level (61.5% female). This gender gap is similar to that in previous years.

The number and proportion of FTE teaching staff by state and territory in 2025 is shown in Table 2.14. The distribution of FTE teaching staff between states and territories remains broadly consistent with the overall distribution of students.

Table 2.14: Number and proportion of FTE teaching staff by state and territory and school level, Australia, 2025

School level	State/Territory								Australia
	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	
Primary	48,033	44,912	33,127	11,160	17,090	3,397	2,094	3,007	162,819
Secondary	47,399	44,104	35,432	10,656	16,921	3,363	1,546	2,952	162,372
Total	95,431	89,015	68,559	21,816	34,011	6,759	3,640	5,959	325,191
Proportion (%)	29.3	27.4	21.1	6.7	10.4	2.1	1.1	1.8	100.0

Note: See notes for Table 2.13.

Source: ABS, *Schools*, 2025.

Changes in teaching staffing levels for the period 2015–2025 are shown in Table 2.15. In 2025, the total number of FTE teachers in Australian schools was 4,814 (1.5%) higher than in 2024. This increase was made up of a rise of 2,042 teachers in independent schools (3.5% increase), 1,656 teachers in government schools (0.8% increase), and 1,116 teachers in Catholic schools (1.8% increase). Between 2015 and 2025, the total number of FTE teaching staff increased by 55,991 (20.8%). This increase, which was substantially more than the percentage growth in (full-time plus part-time) total student enrolments (10.9%) over the same period, was made up of increases of 17.2% in government schools, 20.2% in Catholic schools and 35.2% in independent schools.¹⁸

Table 2.15: Number of FTE teaching staff by school sector, Australia, 2015–2025

Year	School sector				
	Government schools	Catholic schools	Independent schools	Total non-government schools	All schools
2015	171,763	52,160	45,277	97,437	269,200
2016	176,819	53,154	46,357	99,511	276,330
2017	180,973	53,839	47,248	101,087	282,059
2018	185,458	54,511	48,614	103,125	288,583
2019	182,959	55,372	49,963	105,335	288,294
2020	189,069	56,645	50,802	107,447	296,516
2021	193,186	57,667	52,686	110,353	303,539
2022	193,932	58,666	54,631	113,297	307,228
2023	194,949	60,051	56,655	116,706	311,655
2024	199,623	61,596	59,158	120,754	320,377
2025	201,279	62,712	61,200	123,912	325,191

Note: See notes for Table 2.13.

Source: ABS, *Schools*, 2025 and previous releases.

¹⁸ Time series data on school staff by state and territory, school sector and school level is available in the National Report on Schooling in Australia data portal.

2.6 Student-teacher ratios

Key Facts

In Australia in 2025:

- The average student to teaching staff ratio was 12.8 students per teacher, compared to 12.9 students per teacher in 2024 and 13.9 students per teacher in 2015.
- The average student to teaching staff ratio was lower in independent schools (11.7 students per teacher) compared to Catholic schools (13.3 students per teacher) and government schools (13.0 students per teacher).
- The average student-teacher ratio was 11.7 students per teacher at the secondary level, compared with 13.9 students per teacher at the primary level.

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 2025 across the 3 school sectors.

Table 2.16: FTE student–teacher ratios, by school sector and school level, Australia, 2025

School sector	Primary schools	Secondary schools	All schools
Government	13.7	12.0	13.0
Catholic	14.9	11.9	13.3
Independent	13.7	10.5	11.7
All non-government	14.3	11.2	12.5
All schools	13.9	11.7	12.8

Source: ABS, *Schools*, 2025.

For all Australian schools, the average FTE student–teacher ratio in 2025 was 12.8 students per teacher, compared to 12.9 students per teacher in 2024.

Student–teacher ratios are consistently lower for secondary education than for primary education in all school sectors and across all states and territories. In 2025, the average FTE student–teacher ratio was 11.7 teachers per student at the secondary level, compared with 13.9 teachers per student 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.

In 2025, average student-teacher ratios were lowest in the Northern Territory (11.0 students per teacher) and highest in Western Australia (13.7 students per teacher).

Table 2.17 shows average student–teacher ratios in 2025 by school level and state and territory.

Table 2.17: FTE student–teacher ratios, by state/territory and school level, Australia, 2025

School level	State/Territory								
	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
Primary schools	14.4	12.9	14.4	13.6	15.1	12.7	11.1	13.8	13.9
Secondary schools	12.0	11.0	11.6	12.4	12.3	11.0	10.8	12.3	11.7
All schools	13.2	11.9	12.9	13.0	13.7	11.8	11.0	13.0	12.8

Source: ABS, *Schools*, 2025.

Figure 2.6 shows the change in the average number of school students per teacher, by sector, from 2015 to 2025. During this period, the average student–teacher ratio at the national level fell from 13.9 students per teacher in 2015 to 12.8 teachers per student in 2025, with reductions across all school sectors. Time series data (2001–2025) on student–teacher ratios by state and territory, school sector and school level is available in the National Report on Schooling data portal.

Figure 2.6: Average number of school students per teacher, by sector, 2015–2025