

Schools: InBrief mid-year census 2021

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

InBrief summarises the results of the census of students in NSW Government schools undertaken on Friday 6 August 2021, and the census of NSW non-government schools undertaken by the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment.

Mid-year census

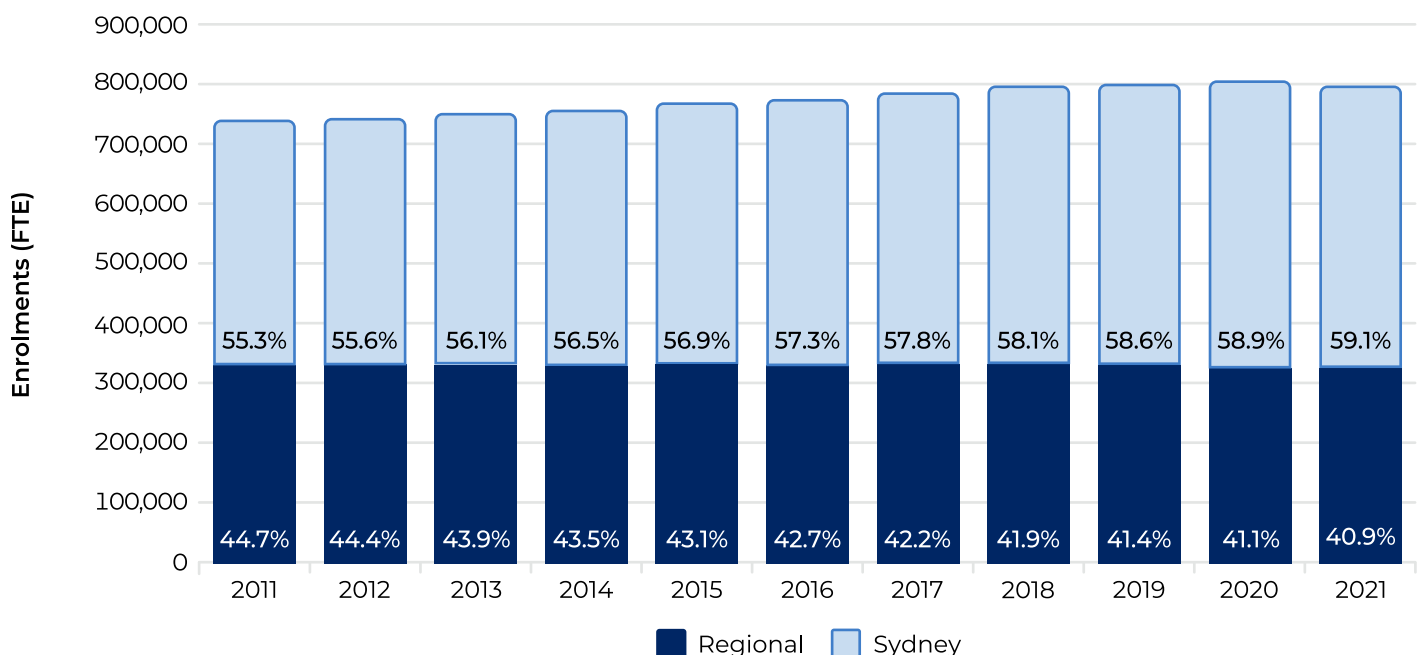
The mid-year census includes data on NSW Government schools (preschool, primary, secondary, central/community and schools for specific purposes) and students (age at 1 July, grades, full-time, part-time, gender and Aboriginality).

From 2020, students in mainstream support classes are reported by their underlying grade of enrolment. Prior to 2020, this cohort of students was reported as 'ungraded' or 'support'. From 2020 only students in schools for specific purposes (SSPs) are reported as 'ungraded'. This resulted in a break in series, and is explained in more detail in [InBrief mid-year census 2020](#).

2021 enrolments

Figure 1

Enrolments and percentage of total enrolments by ABS Statistical Area Level 4 Sydney and Regional groupings in NSW Government schools, 2011 to 2021



Note: Norfolk Island Central School is included in Regional, but does not have an ABS Statistical Area Level 4 code.

Throughout this report student enrolments are reported in full-time equivalent (FTE) units.

| 2021 InBrief summary

NSW Government

Full-time equivalent (FTE) enrolments

Primary enrolments	485,889.0
Secondary enrolments	310,421.4
SSP enrolments	5,872.0
Total enrolments	802,182.4

Aboriginal students

Total Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander enrolments	68,015.4
Percent Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander enrolments	8.5%

Part-time students

Number of part-time students	1,790
FTE enrolments	1,196.4

Preschool students

Number of preschool students	4,203
FTE enrolments	2,229.5

NSW government schools

Primary and infants schools	1,605
Central/community schools	68
Secondary schools	401
Schools for specific purposes (SSPs)	117
Environmental education centres (EECs)	23

Total government schools 2,214

Preschools attached to primary/infants schools	100
Separate preschools	1

Total preschools 101

NSW non-government

Full-time equivalent (FTE) enrolments

Primary enrolments	215,156.7
Secondary enrolments	225,809.9
Total enrolments	440,966.6

NSW non-government schools

Primary schools	491
Secondary schools	140
Primary/secondary schools	261
Special schools	64

Total non-government schools 956

Figure 1 shows enrolments and percentage of enrolments in Sydney and Regional areas from 2011 to 2021, using the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Statistical Area Level 4 groupings. This shows that the increase in enrolments in government schools since 2011 has been concentrated in Sydney.

Enrolments in the Sydney area increased each year between 2011 and 2020, before experiencing a small decline of 0.6% in 2021. Enrolments in NSW Government schools in Sydney were 15.1% higher in 2021 than in 2011.

Enrolments in regional areas increased slightly each year from 2014 to 2018, before resuming the long-term trend of declining enrolments. Regional area enrolments in NSW Government schools were 1.7% lower in 2021 than in 2011.

Enrolments in non-government schools in regional areas (not represented in Figure 1) have not decreased over the same period.

Table 1**Enrolments in NSW Government schools by grade level and schools for specific purposes, 2001 to 2021**

Year	Primary (K-6)	Secondary (7-12)	SSP	Total
2001	451,093	301,774.4	3,873	756,740.4
2002	447,897	302,988.0	3,915	754,800.0
2003	443,213	304,034.0	3,938	751,185.0
2004	438,677	302,849.6	3,981	745,507.6
2005	434,876	302,578.3	4,124	741,578.3
2006	432,660	303,622.0	4,133	740,415.0
2007	429,900	304,457.7	4,278	738,635.7
2008	428,331	303,055.7	4,392	735,778.7
2009	429,000	303,180.7	4,466	736,646.7
2010	430,177	307,291.2	4,673	742,141.2
2011	433,873	306,893.2	4,774	745,540.2
2012	438,681	304,632.1	4,921	748,234.1
2013	446,848	303,433.6	5,064	755,345.6
2014	456,151	302,339.7	5,207	763,697.7
2015	465,767	300,871.1	5,340	771,978.1
2016	475,073	300,069.9	5,457	780,599.9
2017	484,645	300,832.8	5,562	791,039.8
2018	491,043	301,315.2	5,664	798,022.2
2019	493,608	306,327.8	5,737	805,672.8
2020	492,280	312,016.8	5,780	810,076.8
2021	485,889	310,421.4	5,872	802,182.4

Notes:

- Since 1993 some students have enrolled part-time. All enrolments are reported in full-time equivalent (FTE) units and include full-time and part-time students.
- Refer to previous issues of this bulletin for additional historical data.

Table 1 shows that the total number of full-time equivalent students in NSW Government schools decreased by 7,894.4 or 1.0%, from 810,076.8 in 2020 to 802,182.4 in 2021. This was the first year since 2008 that total government school enrolments had decreased, after a sustained upward trend between 2009 and 2020.

Primary enrolments decreased for the second consecutive year, dropping by 6,391 students (1.3%) from 2020. Enrolments at schools for specific purposes increased by 92 students (1.6%) from 2020. Secondary enrolments decreased by 1,595.4 students (0.5%) in 2021, following 4 years of enrolment growth.

Enrolments in NSW Government schools are affected by a number of factors, including the school age population, the participation rate and the enrolment share between government and non-government schools. For students of compulsory school age (6 to 17 years inclusive), the participation rate is close to 100%. However, after this age it declines noticeably. (Since 2010, all NSW students must complete Year 10. After Year 10 and until the age of 17 students must be in school and/or in approved education or training and/or in full-time paid employment.)

Enrolments by scholastic year is discussed in greater detail later in this publication.

Enrolments by ABS Statistical Area Level 4 groups

Table 2 presents the NSW Government schools' enrolment data using a geographical structure based on the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) 2016, illustrated in Map 1. The ASGS is maintained by the ABS and is widely used as it allows comparison of statistical data. ASGS Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4) boundaries in NSW have been combined by the NSW Department of Education into 11 groups for reporting and publication of department data.

Map 1

Enrolments (FTE) by ABS Statistical Area Level 4 groupings in NSW government schools, mid-year 2021

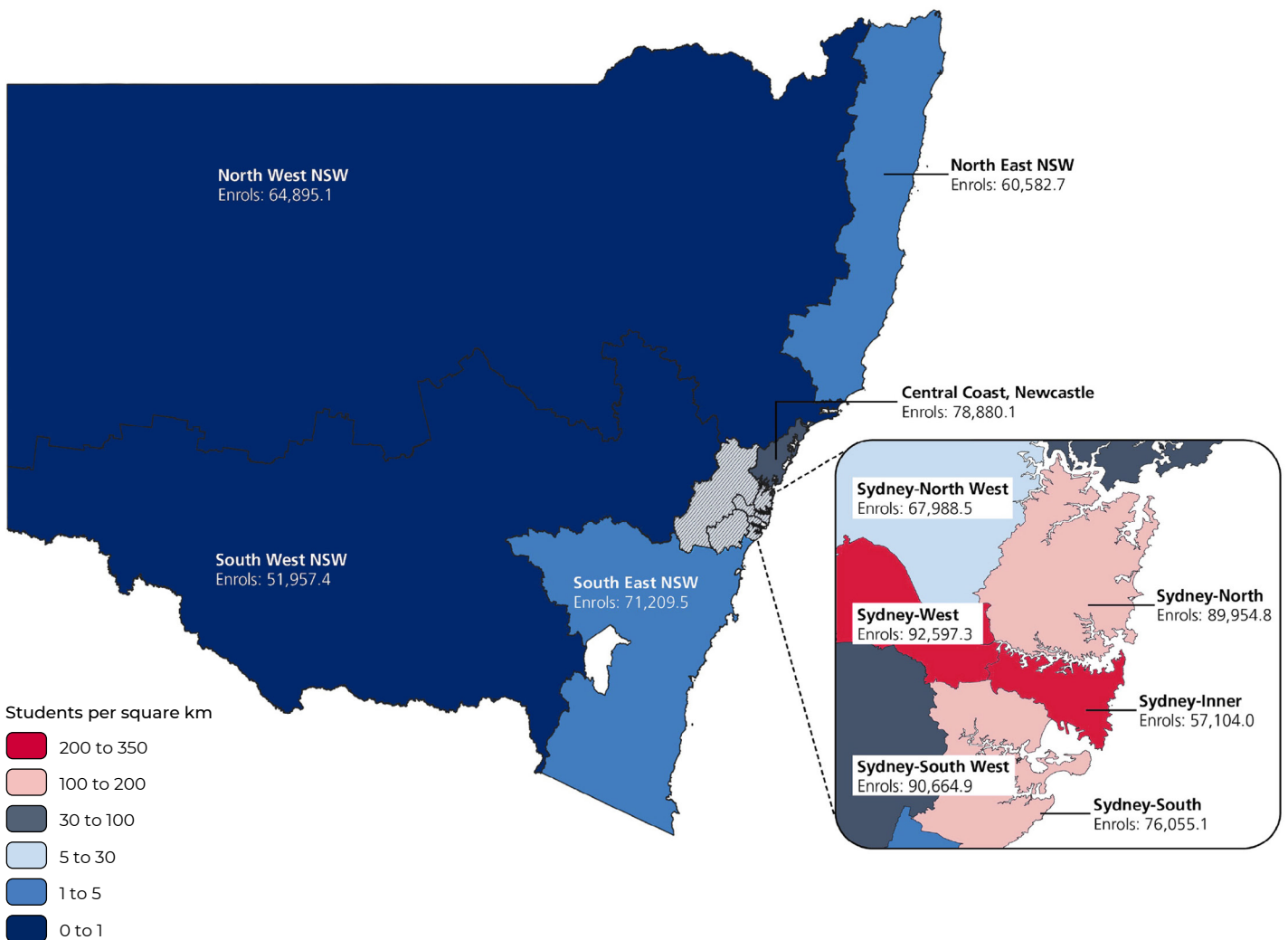


Table 2

Enrolments by ABS Statistical Area Level 4 groupings and grade group in NSW Government schools, mid-year 2021

Statistical Area Level 4 group	K-2	Y3-6	Primary total	Y7-10	Y11-12	Secondary total	SSP	Statistical area total	% of NSW
Sydney-North	24,654	32,962	57,616	22,165	9,707.8	31,872.8	466	89,954.80	11.2%
Sydney-Inner	15,603	19,309	34,912	15,306	6,490.0	21,796.0	396	57,104.0	7.1%
Sydney-South	19,312	25,588	44,900	21,348	9,045.1	30,393.1	762	76,055.1	9.5%
Sydney-South West	22,647	30,402	53,049	26,412	10,367.9	36,779.9	836	90,664.9	11.3%
Sydney-West	26,836	33,992	60,828	22,150	8,579.3	30,729.3	1,040	92,597.3	11.5%
Sydney-North West	17,790	23,896	41,686	18,489	7,390.5	25,879.5	423	67,988.5	8.5%
Sydney total	126,842	166,149	292,991	125,870	51,580.6	177,450.6	3,923	474,364.6	59.1%
North East NSW	14,488	20,954	35,442	19,020	5,993.7	25,013.7	127	60,582.7	7.6%
North West NSW	16,217	22,153	38,370	20,292	5,982.1	26,274.1	251	64,895.1	8.1%
South West NSW	13,224	17,696	30,920	15,737	4,741.4	20,478.4	559	51,957.4	6.5%
South East NSW	18,115	24,553	42,668	21,294	6,784.5	28,078.5	463	71,209.5	8.9%
Central Coast, Newcastle	19,290	26,047	45,337	24,851	8,143.1	32,994.1	549	78,880.1	9.8%
Regional total	81,404	111,494	192,898	101,294	31,676.8	132,970.8	1,949	327,817.8	40.9%
NSW total	208,246	277,643	485,889	227,164	83,257.4	310,421.4	5,872	802,182.4	100.0%

Notes:

- Students in distance education are included with their appropriate grade levels.
- From 2020, students in mainstream support classes are reported by their underlying grade of enrolment.
- Norfolk Island Central School (FTE of 293.0) is included in the NSW and regional totals, but does not have an ABS Statistical Area Level 4 code.

In 2021, 59.1% of NSW Government students were enrolled in schools within the Sydney area. This varied across grades, with 3 out of 5 primary students (60.3%) enrolled in schools in Sydney compared with 57.2% of secondary students.

Primary enrolments (Kindergarten to Year 6)

Within the Sydney area, 2 statistical area groupings experienced an increase in primary enrolments from 2020 to 2021 (Sydney-West and Sydney-North West experienced increases of 0.3% and 1.4% respectively), while all other Sydney area statistical groupings had decreases between 0.6% and 2.7%. For a second consecutive year Sydney-North West recorded the largest growth in primary enrolments with an increase of 570 enrolments in 2021.

Enrolments fell in all statistical area groupings outside Sydney, with North East NSW experiencing the largest decrease of 915 enrolments (2.5%).

Secondary enrolments (Years 7 to 12)

For secondary enrolments, all statistical area groupings within the Sydney area increased in 2021 except Sydney-South and Sydney-South West, which had decreases of 1.4% and 0.8% respectively. Sydney-West had the largest growth from 2020, with an increase of 322.5 enrolments (1.1%). This was closely followed by Sydney-Inner, which recorded an increase of 216.9 enrolments, rising by 1.0%.

All statistical area groupings in regional areas declined from 2020 to 2021. These areas had mostly experienced increases in 2019 and 2020, but the decline in 2021 resumes the slow decline from 2010 to 2018.

Senior secondary enrolments (Years 11 to 12)

The total number of senior secondary enrolments decreased by 2.0% from 2020 to 2021. Sydney-North, Sydney-West and Sydney-North West saw increases in senior secondary enrolments by 0.8%, 0.8% and 1.0% respectively. All other statistical area groupings experienced a decline from 2020, with senior secondary enrolments in North East NSW falling by 7.2%, the largest decrease in NSW.

The previous year had increases across all statistical areas for senior secondary students.

All years

As Map 1 shows, the areas of Sydney-West, Sydney-South West and Sydney-North had the highest number of enrolments, with 92,597.3, 90,664.9 and 89,954.8 enrolments respectively.

Aboriginal enrolments

Map 2 shows the percentage of NSW Government students in each SA4 group who identify as Aboriginal. In North West NSW 25.3% of students identified as Aboriginal, compared with 7.0% or less in each statistical area group in Sydney.

Map 2

Percentage of enrolments (FTE) identified as Aboriginal by ABS Statistical Area Level 4 groupings in NSW Government schools, mid-year 2021

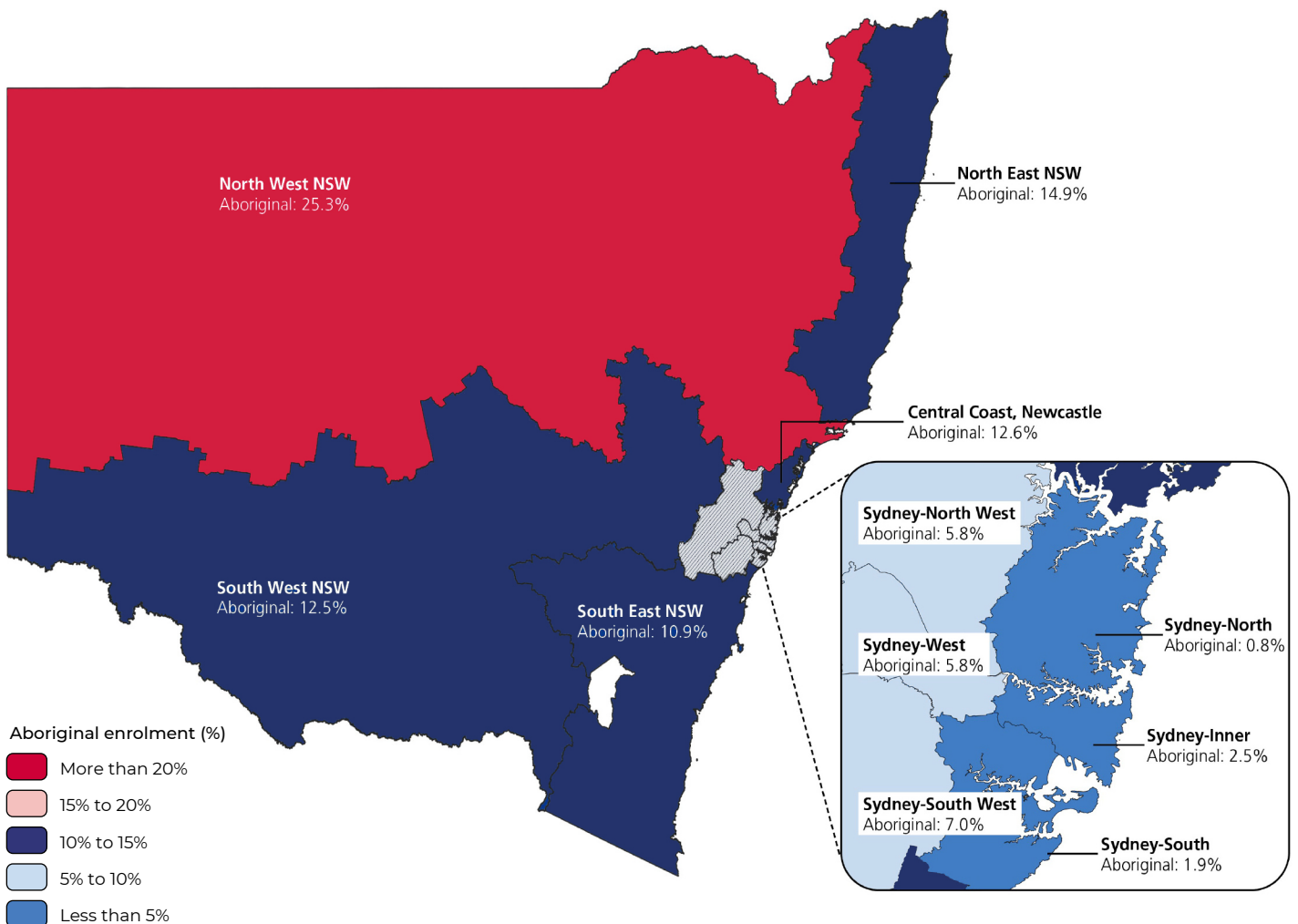


Table 3

Enrolments (FTE) of Aboriginal students by ABS Statistical Area Level 4 groupings and grade group in NSW Government schools, mid-year 2021

Statistical Area Level 4 group	K-2	Y3-6	Primary total	Y7-10	Y11-12	Secondary total	Statistical area total	% of NSW
Sydney-North	129	175	304	159	75.0	234.0	557.0	0.8%
Sydney-Inner	425	575	1,000	507	142.9	649.9	1,699.9	2.5%
Sydney-South	320	425	745	416	146.4	562.4	1,340.4	1.9%
Sydney-South West	1,267	1,636	2,903	1,419	364.8	1,783.8	4,823.8	7.0%
Sydney-West	1,147	1,338	2,485	1,038	300.0	1,338.0	3,975.0	5.8%
Sydney-North West	1,137	1,367	2,504	1,167	289.2	1,456.2	4,022.2	5.8%
Sydney total	4,425	5,516	9,941	4,706	1,318.3	6,024.3	16,418.3	23.8%
North East NSW	2,486	3,515	6,001	3,385	842.6	4,227.6	10,267.6	14.9%
North West NSW	4,623	5,925	10,548	5,558	1,238.0	6,796.0	17,449.0	25.3%
South West NSW	2,255	2,932	5,187	2,726	570.8	3,296.8	8,613.8	12.5%
South East NSW	1,965	2,530	4,495	2,370	557.4	2,927.4	7,505.4	10.9%
Central Coast, Newcastle	2,303	2,870	5,173	2,723	673.3	3,396.3	8,694.3	12.6%
Regional total	13,633	17,773	31,406	16,762	3,882.1	20,644.1	52,532.1	76.2%
NSW total	18,058	23,289	41,347	21,468	5,200.4	26,668.4	68,950.4	100.0%
Aboriginal total as a percentage of total NSW enrolments	8.7%	8.4%	8.5%	9.5%	6.2%	8.6%	8.6%	–

Notes:

- Students in distance education are included with their appropriate grade levels.
- From 2020, students in mainstream support classes are reported by their underlying grade of enrolment.
- There were 935 Aboriginal students enrolled in SSPs, representing 15.9% of total SSP enrolments. Aboriginal students in SSPs are not included in the grade group data but are included in the statistical area total column.
- Norfolk Island Central School is included in the NSW and regional totals, but does not have an ABS Statistical Area Level 4 code.

Table 3 shows NSW Government student enrolments of Aboriginal students by statistical area groupings and grade groups, and Figure 2 illustrates this comparison.

The majority (76.2%) of NSW Government Aboriginal students were enrolled outside of Sydney in 2021. Although the 6 Sydney statistical area groupings accounted for 59.1% of all enrolments in NSW, only 23.8% of NSW Government Aboriginal students were enrolled in Sydney.

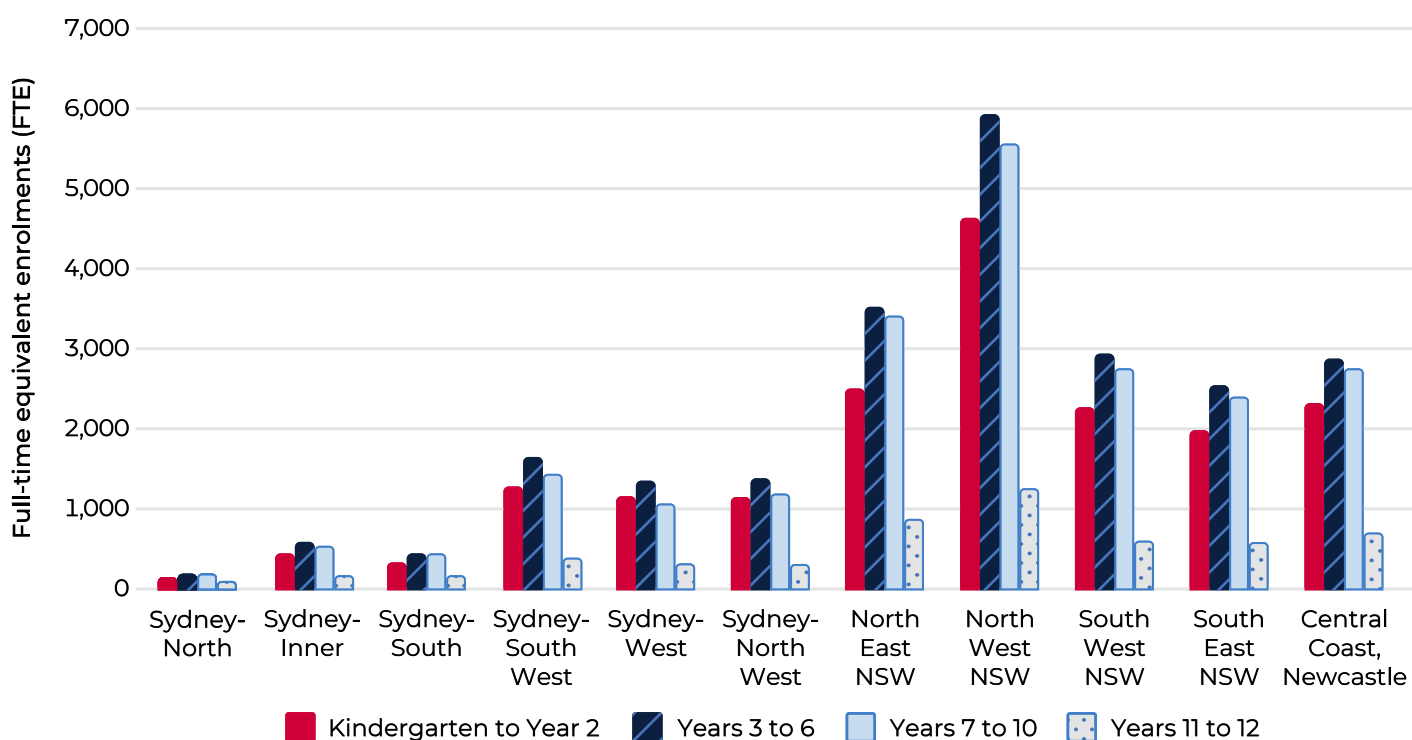
North West NSW and North East NSW had the highest Aboriginal enrolments at 25.3% and 14.9% of all Aboriginal students in these

areas respectively. In Sydney, the statistical area groupings of Sydney-South West, Sydney-North West and Sydney-West had relatively higher Aboriginal student enrolments, at 7.0%, 5.8% and 5.8% of total Aboriginal enrolments respectively. In contrast, Sydney-North only had 0.8% of the Aboriginal enrolments, compared with 11.2% of all students.

Overall, Aboriginal student enrolments increased by 2,121 students or 3.2% from 66,829.4 in 2020 to 68,950.4 in 2021. North West NSW recorded the largest increase of 429.7 (2.5%) Aboriginal students, from 17,019.3 in 2020 to 17,449.0 in 2021.

Figure 2

Enrolments (FTE) of Aboriginal students by ABS Statistical Area Level 4 grouping and grade group in NSW Government schools, mid-year 2021



Note:

- From 2020, students in mainstream support classes are reported by their underlying grade of enrolment.

Government enrolment share

School enrolment growth can be affected by parent and carer choice in selecting non-government education, the base school population, the changing legal and policy framework in NSW and the ability of schools to respond to demographic changes. Figure 3 shows the change in enrolments of government and non-government schools in each year since 2011 and Table 4 provides data in selected years from 1991.

Overall enrolments in NSW increased by more than 8,000 each year since 2010, and by more than 10,000 in each year between 2013 and 2019. In 2021 the increase dropped significantly to 1,917 students. Since 2010, the total number of students enrolled in education in NSW has increased by 122,720 students, driven by changes to the NSW school leaving age and a higher birth rate.

Between 2013 and 2019, government school enrolment growth surpassed the enrolment growth of non-government schools. This trend reversed in 2020 when the enrolment growth in non-government schools was greater than the growth in government schools. In 2021 enrolments in government schools dropped for the first time since 2008, falling by 7,895 students (1.0%).

The drop in government enrolments in 2021 was mostly driven by a 6,391 decrease in government primary aged enrolments. This was the second consecutive decrease, following a period of year-on-year growth since 2009.

Secondary enrolments decreased for the first time since 2016, falling by 1,595.4 (0.5%). This immediately followed a 2-year period (2018 to 2020) where secondary enrolments had been the main factor driving government enrolment growth, and was the largest decrease of secondary students in government schools observed since 2012.

Table 4

Enrolments (FTE) and percentage of enrolment share in NSW Government and non-government schools, 1991 to 2021

Year	Government		Non-government		Total
	Enrolment	Share	Enrolment	Share	
1991	746,417	72.0%	290,896	28.0%	1,037,313
1996	761,034	71.4%	305,373	28.6%	1,066,407
2001	756,738	68.7%	344,228	31.3%	1,100,966
2006	740,415	66.7%	369,902	33.3%	1,110,317
2011	745,540	66.0%	384,209	34.0%	1,129,749
2016	780,600	65.4%	413,588	34.6%	1,194,188
2017	791,040	65.5%	417,430	34.5%	1,208,470
2018	798,022	65.5%	420,670	34.5%	1,218,692
2019	805,673	65.4%	425,991	34.6%	1,231,664
2020	810,077	65.3%	431,155	34.7%	1,241,232
2021	802,182	64.5%	440,967	35.5%	1,243,149

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Schools Australia 2021.

Notes:

- From 1993 the table includes full-time and part-time students, reported in full-time equivalent units.
- Refer to previous issues of this bulletin for additional historical data.

Figure 3

Change in enrolments (FTE) from the previous year, NSW Government and non-government schools, 2011 to 2021

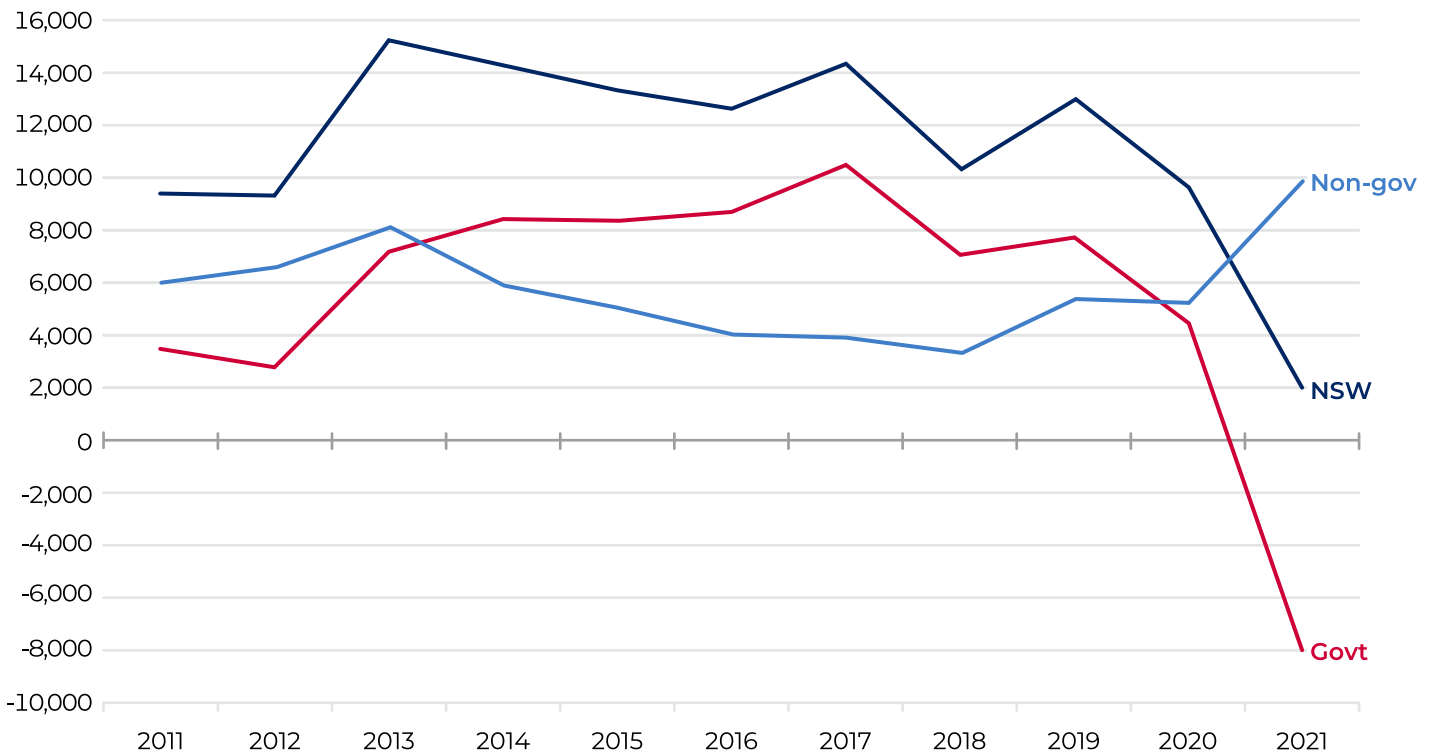


Table 4 shows the enrolment share for students at government and non-government schools in NSW from 2011 to 2021. The total government enrolment share fell gradually, reaching a low of 65.3% in 2015. The enrolment share then increased slightly between 2016 and 2018, before returning to the long-term downward trend in 2019. In 2021 it fell by 0.8 percentage points to 64.5%.

There are a number of likely contributing factors to the drop in the government enrolment share in 2021, including:

- changes in underlying population due to a decrease in births since 2013
- reduced retention due to higher number of school leavers in Years 11 and 12
- more students enrolling in non-government schools and reduced international arrivals due to COVID-19 border controls.

Figure 4 shows the NSW Government enrolment share by education level, for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. Historically the government enrolment share for Aboriginal students has been significantly higher than for non-Aboriginal students. In 2021, the total government share for Aboriginal students was 83.5%, 20.3 percentage points higher than for non-Aboriginal students (63.2%).

For both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, the secondary enrolment share has consistently been lower than the primary enrolment share. In 2021, Aboriginal students' secondary enrolment share was 4.4 percentage points lower than the primary enrolment share, compared with an 11.5 percentage point difference for non-Aboriginal students.

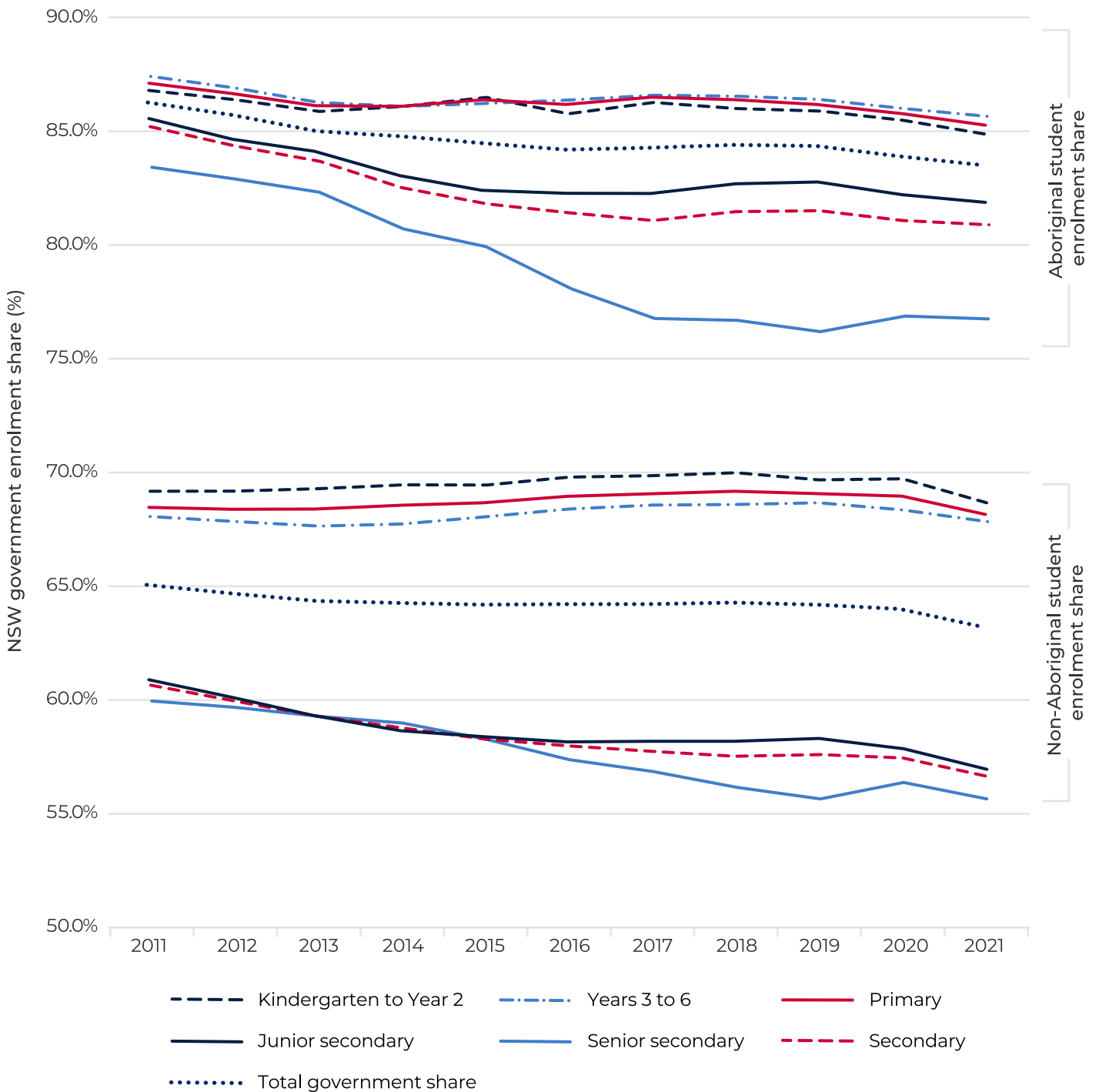
The primary government enrolment share for Aboriginal students in 2021 was 85.3%, 17.1 percentage points higher than non-Aboriginal students at 68.2%. The secondary enrolment share for Aboriginal students in 2021 was 80.9%, 24.2 percentage points higher than for non-Aboriginal students (56.7%).

The difference in government enrolment share between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students was highest for junior secondary students, at 24.9 percentage points (Aboriginal students 81.9%, non-Aboriginal students 57.0%).

The smallest difference between enrolment share for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students was for Kindergarten to Year 2 students. Aboriginal students' government enrolment share was 84.9% for this cohort, 16.2 percentage points higher than for non-Aboriginal students at 68.7%.

Figure 4

Percentage of NSW Government enrolments (FTE) share by grade group, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, 2011 to 2021



Notes:

- From 2020, students in mainstream support classes are reported by their underlying grade of enrolment.
- Primary students in schools for specific purposes (SSPs) are recorded against Years 3 to 6. Secondary students in SSPs are recorded against Junior secondary.

Government preschool

In NSW, most children receiving a preschool education are enrolled at a government-funded community preschool or in a centre-based service. The NSW Government operates 101 preschools, providing an early childhood program in the year prior to school, to around 4,200 children.

Table 5 shows that the number of children enrolled in government preschools decreased slightly by 68 children from 4,271 in 2020 to 4,203 in 2021. Full-time equivalent enrolments decreased by 28.2, from 2,257.7 in 2020 to 2,229.5 in 2021.

Aboriginal preschool enrolments accounted for 15.7% of FTE enrolments in 2021, an increase of 0.6 percentage points from 2020. The number of Aboriginal preschool enrolments remained stable, with an increase of 1 student in 2021.

In 2011 children were enrolled in government preschools for 16.9 hours on average (based on a nominal 30-hour week), with Aboriginal children enrolled for an average of 19.4 hours. By 2021, average enrolled hours had fallen to 15.9 hours for all children, and 16.8 hours for Aboriginal children. This reflects efforts over the last decade to provide more children in NSW with at least 600 hours of early childhood education per year.

Table 5

Number of students and enrolment full-time equivalents (FTE) in NSW Government preschools, 2011 to 2021

Year	All students		Aboriginal students		
	Students	FTE	Students	FTE	% of total FTE
2011	4,416	2,484.9	507	328.7	13.2%
2012	4,424	2,460.7	599	379.9	15.4%
2013	4,433	2,371.1	555	326.8	13.8%
2014	4,365	2,356.8	528	318.4	13.5%
2015	4,278	2,306.6	565	339.6	14.7%
2016	4,446	2,395.7	577	335.5	14.0%
2017	4,442	2,407.4	599	360.6	15.0%
2018	4,522	2,389.7	639	365.9	15.3%
2019	4,316	2,294.5	641	373.1	16.3%
2020	4,271	2,257.7	622	341.9	15.1%
2021	4,203	2,229.5	623	349.3	15.7%

Early intervention preschool children

Children enrolled in an early intervention class at a NSW Government school have been included in the government school census since 2012. Early intervention classes provide early childhood education in a preschool setting for children with disability. Enrolments in early intervention classes decreased by 16 students (2.2%) in 2021.

Aboriginal early intervention enrolments increased slightly from 111 in 2020 to 115 in 2021. As a result the percentage of students enrolled in an early intervention program who were Aboriginal increased from 14.1% in 2020 to 14.6% in 2021.

Table 6

Number of students and enrolment full-time equivalents (FTE) in NSW Government early intervention programs, 2012 to 2021

Year	All students		Aboriginal students		
	Students	FTE	Students	FTE	% of total FTE
2012	743	151.6	68	13	8.6%
2013	684	147.7	76	14.8	10.0%
2014	720	168.1	91	16.7	9.9%
2015	710	162.2	98	19.3	11.9%
2016	707	146.3	105	20.4	13.9%
2017	716	154.1	106	20.1	13.0%
2018	727	166.3	124	24.4	14.7%
2019	725	149.2	109	20.4	13.7%
2020	727	149.7	111	21.1	14.1%
2021	711	152.3	115	22.3	14.6%

Enrolments by scholastic year

Table 7 presents student enrolments by scholastic year from 2016 to 2021. The number of NSW Government students reported by individual grade is affected by the change in counting rules in 2020 (refer to the [2020 release](#) of this publication for further detail).

Kindergarten enrolments in 2021 declined by 2.5% (1,766 students). This was the third decrease in a row and followed a trend of increasing Kindergarten enrolments in most years since 2008 (individual grade level data is only presented for the past 5 years). Kindergarten enrolments generally reflect the NSW birth rate 5 years previously. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics population estimates, NSW experienced a decline in the number of 5-year-olds (Kindergarten-aged children) between 2018 and 2019. This was the first drop in 11 years, which may partially explain the decrease in Kindergarten enrolments.

Year 3 was the only primary grade with an increase in enrolments in 2021, of 349 students (0.5%). All other primary grades had decreased enrolments

of 2.4% to 3.2% for Kindergarten to Year 2. Years 4, 5 and 6 experienced smaller decreases of between 0.3% and 0.6%.

Year 7 experienced the largest decrease in enrolments in 2021, dropping by 2,291 students (3.9%) from 2020. This followed a 6-year period of growth that began in 2015. Years 11 and 12 also experienced decreases of 2.8% and 1.1% respectively in 2021.

However, Years 8, 9 and 10 all experienced enrolment growth in 2021. The largest increase was for Year 9, which rose by 1,453 students (2.6%) and was the fifth consecutive increase for this cohort. Year 10 rose by 877 students (1.6%), which was the third consecutive year of increases for this cohort. Much of the increase in enrolments for Years 9 and 10 in 2021 was due to the progression of large numbers of Kindergarten students enrolled in 2011 and 2012. As discussed previously, care should be taken with comparisons between years due to the change in counting rules. However, even using the previous counting rules, Year 8, 9 and 10 have experienced enrolment growth in the periods identified.

Table 7

Enrolments (FTE) by scholastic year (excluding SSPs), 2016 to 2021

Year level	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Kindergarten	70,348	71,104	72,422	70,775	70,610	68,844
Year 1	69,376	70,163	70,421	71,753	71,043	69,315
Year 2	68,853	69,430	69,944	70,416	72,397	70,087
Year 3	68,812	68,361	68,595	69,393	70,881	71,230
Year 4	66,884	68,748	68,121	68,460	70,325	70,010
Year 5	63,456	66,278	67,733	67,203	68,751	68,562
Year 6	60,308	63,138	65,980	67,270	68,273	67,841
Primary ungraded	7,031	7,412	7,827	8,338	–	–
Year 7	50,501	51,083	53,405	55,866	58,878	56,587
Year 8	49,953	50,749	51,359	53,505	58,049	58,127
Year 9	50,365	50,566	51,288	51,914	55,940	57,393
Year 10	52,355	51,332	51,279	51,933	54,180	55,057
Year 11	47,353.0	46,341.4	44,837.7	44,694.4	46,485.5	45,196.4
Year 12	39,084.9	39,355.4	38,286.5	37,103.4	38,484.3	38,061.0
Secondary ungraded	10,464	11,417	10,860	11,312	–	–
Total	775,143.9	785,477.8	792,358.2	799,935.8	804,296.8	796,310.4

Note:

- From 2020, students in mainstream support classes are reported by their underlying grade of enrolment. As a result, data from 2020 is not directly comparable to previous years. Refer to the 2020 issue of this publication for more detail on the change in methodology.

Apparent retention rate

Apparent retention is one measure of students' engagement with education and is the proportion of students who remain at school through to Year 10, 11 or 12. For example, the Year 7 to Year 10 apparent retention rate in 2021 is the percentage of Year 10 enrolments in 2021 compared to Year 7 enrolments in 2018. Retention is affected by legal and policy changes such as the school leaving age legislation which came into effect in 2010.

From 2020, there is a rolling break in time-series for apparent retention rates for NSW Government students. This is due to the reporting of all students

in mainstream schools against their grade of enrolment. Support students in mainstream schools were previously excluded from the calculation of apparent retention. As a result, reported enrolments in Years 10, 11 and 12 increased from 2020 and retention rates are not directly comparable to previous years.

Table 8 and Figure 5 show NSW Government apparent retention rates from 2011 to 2021. Year 7 to Year 10 retention rates have been over 100% since 2011, largely due to interstate and international migration for students in Years 8, 9 and 10.

Table 8

Apparent retention rates by retention period and gender in NSW Government schools, 2011 to 2021

Year	Year 7-10			Year 7-11			Year 7-12			Year 10-11			Year 10-12		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
2011	102.2	102.4	102.3	83.3	91.3	87.2	66.1	77.6	71.7	83.7	91.1	87.3	69.1	79.7	74.3
2012	101.4	102.8	102.1	86.1	93.3	89.6	66.9	77.4	72.0	84.3	91.0	87.6	67.3	77.3	72.2
2013	102.0	102.1	102.0	88.1	94.6	91.3	69.0	79.7	74.3	86.9	92.0	89.4	67.6	77.8	72.6
2014	103.0	103.2	103.1	89.3	94.9	92.1	70.9	81.2	75.9	87.6	92.9	90.2	69.9	79.0	74.4
2015	103.3	103.9	103.6	90.2	95.9	93.0	71.3	80.7	75.9	87.6	93.0	90.2	70.0	79.0	74.4
2016	103.7	105.0	104.3	89.4	96.9	93.1	71.1	81.6	76.2	86.5	93.3	89.9	69.0	79.1	73.9
2017	103.7	104.4	104.0	88.8	96.0	92.4	71.5	83.4	77.4	85.6	91.5	88.5	69.2	80.3	74.7
2018	103.4	103.1	103.2	86.7	95.2	90.9	70.4	82.4	76.3	83.6	91.2	87.3	67.8	78.5	73.1
2019	103.0	102.7	102.8	86.2	93.9	90.0	69.2	81.4	75.2	83.4	91.1	87.2	66.7	78.0	72.3
2020	107.7	104.4	106.1	89.3	95.0	92.0	72.6	82.5	77.5	86.7	92.5	89.5	70.2	80.1	75.0
2021	105.1	101.0	103.1	86.0	91.0	88.5	70.1	80.9	75.4	79.9	87.2	83.4	68.1	78.8	73.3

Notes:

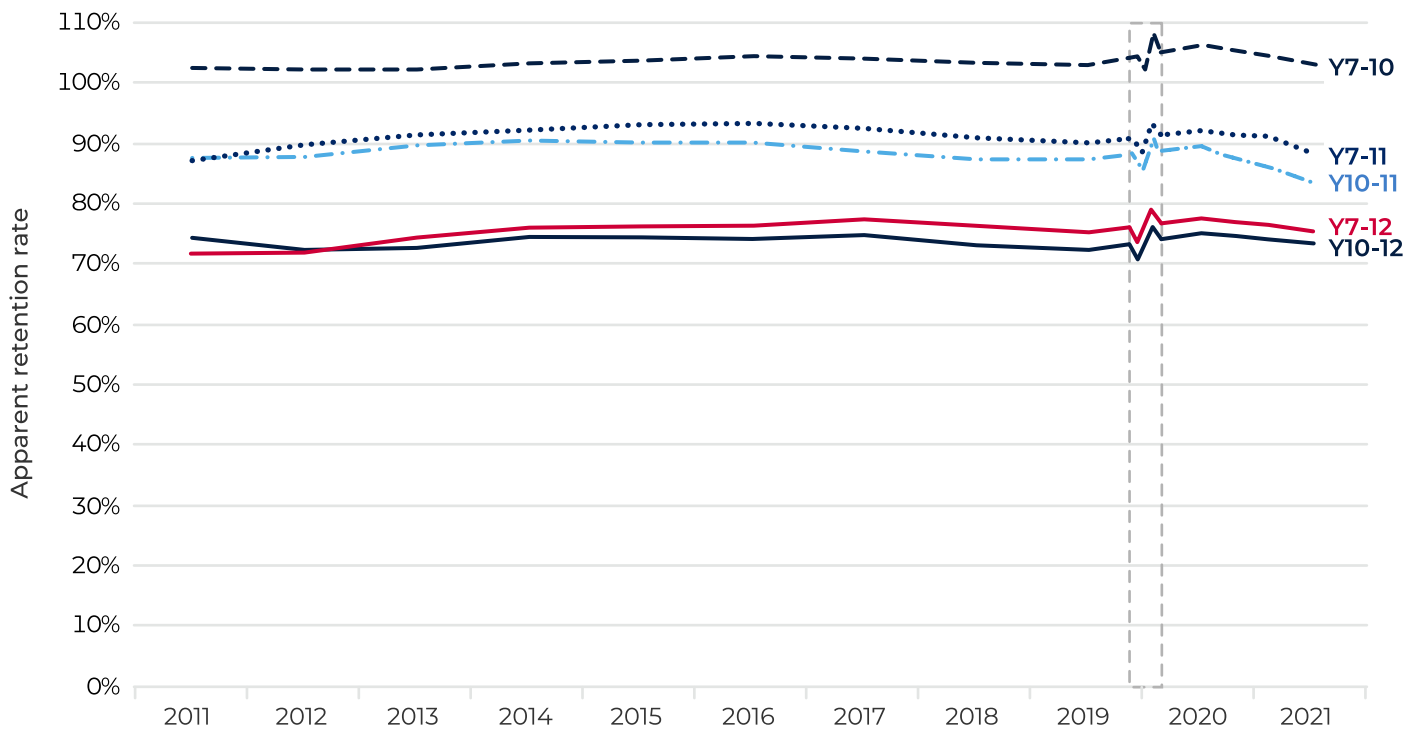
- Apparent retention is based on FTE units, including full-time and part-time students. Students enrolled in distance education classes are included with their appropriate grade levels.
- Legislation raising the minimum school leaving age from 15 to 17 came into effect in January 2010. The Year 12 cohort in 2012 was the first group of students who were required to complete Year 10. This meant that the Year 10 enrolment figure was higher than in previous years, resulting in a relative decline in Year 10 to Year 12 apparent retention in 2012, despite the Year 7 to Year 12 apparent retention rate increasing slightly.
- From 2020, students in mainstream support classes (previously excluded from this calculation) are reported by their underlying grade of enrolment. This results in a rolling break in time-series for apparent retention rates because enrolments increased in 2020 due to the revised counting rule. For more detail, please refer to CESE factsheet [NSW public school student retention rates by statistical areas](#).
- Refer to Explanatory note 2 – Apparent retention rates.

In 2021, apparent retention rates across Year 7 to 10, Year 7 to 11 and Year 7 to 12 were higher than 10 years prior in 2011. Year 10 to 11 and Year 10 to 12 however are lower than in 2011, just after the introduction of the new school leaving age in 2010.

By gender, the apparent retention rates show a clear difference beyond Year 10. Girls are significantly more likely to remain at school until Year 11 or Year 12 than boys, with the 2021 Year 10 to 12 and Year 7 to 12 apparent retention rates for girls higher than boys by 10.7 and 10.8 percentage points respectively.

Figure 5

Apparent retention rates by retention period in NSW Government schools, 2011 to 2021



Note:

- From 2020, students in mainstream support classes (previously excluded from this calculation) are reported by their underlying grade of enrolment. This results in a rolling break in time-series for apparent retention rates because enrolments increased in 2020 due to the revised counting rule. For more detail, please refer to CESE factsheet [NSW public school student retention rates by statistical areas](#).

Explanatory notes

1. Mid-year census

The census is used for state and federal planning and accountability, including reporting requirements under the NSW Education Act 1990 and the National School Reform Agreement 2019. Data contributes to the National School Statistics Collection (NSSC) which is collated by the ABS from state and territory student, school and staffing data. Preschool and early intervention data contributes to the ABS National Early Childhood Education and Care (NECEC) collection.

2. Apparent retention rates

Retention rates are 'apparent' as they do not track individual students through their final years of secondary schooling. What they measure is the ratio of the total number of full-time school students in a designated year (for example, Year 12 in 2021) divided by the total number of full-time students in a previous year (for example, Year 7 in 2016). This would be the Year 7 to 12 apparent retention rate in 2021.

Care should be taken in the interpretation of apparent retention rates, which can exceed 100%, because the method of calculation does not take into account a range of factors such as migration; interstate movements of students; transfers to and from non-government schools; part-time schooling; students repeating a year of schooling; or students pursuing other education and training pathways.

3. Norfolk Island Central School

From 2016, the NSW Department of Education has provided school education services to Norfolk Island Central School under an agreement with the Australian Government. The school was included in NSW data for the first time in 2016. It has not been designated an ABS SA4 group, so is included in regional and NSW totals, but not included in individual SA4 group data (Tables 2 and 3).

4. The use of the term 'Aboriginal' in this report

Throughout this report the term 'Aboriginal' is used to describe the many nations, language groups and clans in NSW, including those from the Torres Strait. The preference for the term 'Aboriginal' over 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' in NSW recognises that Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants of NSW. This is not consistent with the national approach in which 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' is the accepted term ([ABS 2014](#)).

5. Support classes in mainstream schools

The majority of support classes are established in mainstream primary, secondary and central schools. Specialist support classes cater for students with moderate to high learning and support needs including students with intellectual disability, mental health disorder, autism spectrum disorder, physical disability, sensory impairment and behaviour disorders. Many students have comorbid disability. Support class enrolments are included with other primary and secondary enrolments in this bulletin.

From 2020, students in support classes in mainstream schools are reported by their underlying grade of enrolment. Please refer to the 'Notes' section under each table.

Further information

Each year the ABS releases full publications and data cubes of government and non-government school enrolments for all states and territories.

www.abs.gov.au

ABS publication details

4221.0 – Schools Australia, 2021

4240.0 – Preschool Education Australia, 2021

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