

Schools: InBrief mid-year census 2022

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

InBrief summarises the results of the census of students in NSW Government schools, undertaken on Friday 5 August 2022, and the census of NSW non-government schools, undertaken by the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment.

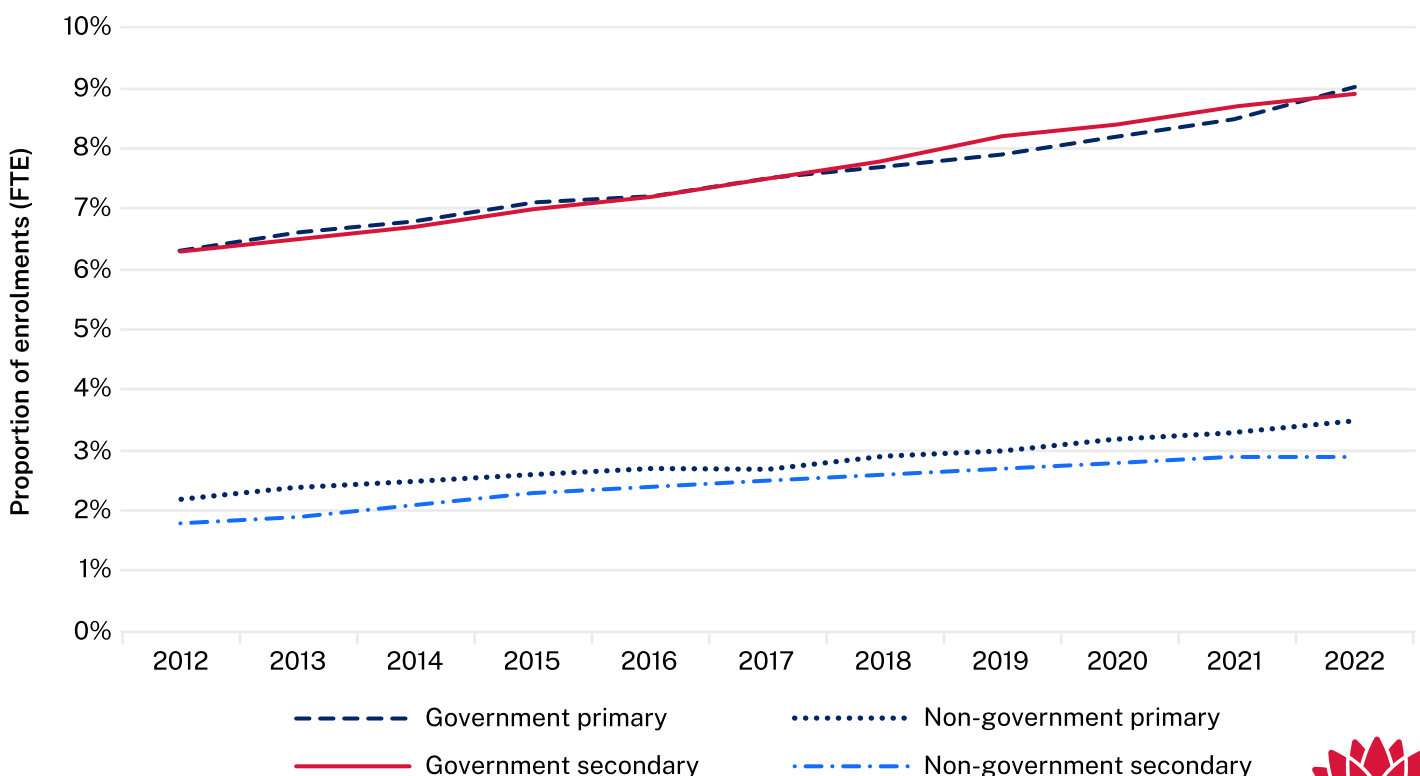
Mid-year census

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](#).

Figure 1

Proportion of primary and secondary Aboriginal students (FTE), by sector, 2012 to 2022



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

2022 InBrief summary

NSW Government

Full-time equivalent (FTE) enrolments

Primary enrolments	476,861
Secondary enrolments	307,958.7
SSP enrolments	6,029
Total enrolments	790,848.7

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

Total Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments	70,865.6
Percent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments	9.0%

Part-time students

Number of part-time students	1,771
FTE enrolments	1,184.7

Preschool students

Number of preschool students	4,223
FTE enrolments	2,288.5

NSW Government schools

Primary and infants schools	1,601
Central/community schools	67
Secondary schools	402
Schools for specific purposes (SSPs)	117
Environmental education centres (EECs)	22
Total government schools	2,209

Preschools attached to primary/infants schools	100
Separate preschools	1
Total preschools	101

NSW non-government

Full-time equivalent (FTE) enrolments

Primary enrolments	218,952.3
Secondary enrolments	231,763.2
Total enrolments	450,715.5

NSW non-government schools

Primary schools	484
Secondary schools	140
Primary/secondary schools	278
Special schools	67
Total non-government schools	969

Figure 1 shows Aboriginal student enrolments as a proportion of their respective grade group (primary or secondary) and school sector (NSW Government or non-government) from 2012 to 2022.

The proportion of Aboriginal enrolments for both primary and secondary students in NSW Government schools has increased each year between 2012 and 2022. The proportion of primary and secondary Aboriginal enrolments in non-government schools has also risen in most years within the same time period.

The figure also shows there has been a larger increase in the proportion of Aboriginal enrolments for both primary and secondary students in government schools since 2012 compared to non-government schools in NSW.

In NSW Government schools, for each of the last 10 years, the rate of increase of both primary and secondary Aboriginal students has been more than 2 percentage points higher than that for the respective non-Aboriginal cohort (not represented in Figure 1).

In 2022, the largest increase in the proportion of Aboriginal enrolments was for government primary students, increasing from 8.5% in 2021 to 9.0% in 2022. Government secondary Aboriginal students grew from 8.7% in 2021 to 8.9% in 2022.

The proportion of non-government primary Aboriginal enrolments also increased in 2022, rising from 3.3% in 2021, to 3.5%. The proportion of non-government secondary Aboriginal enrolments remained stable between 2021 and 2022 at 2.9%.

Students are classified as being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin based on information provided by the student or their parent/guardian on the school enrolment form.

Table 1

Enrolments in NSW Government schools by grade level and schools for specific purposes, 2001 to 2022

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
2022	476,861	307,958.7	6,029	790,848.7

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 11,333.7 or 1.4%, from 802,182.4 in 2021 to 790,848.7 in 2022. This was the second consecutive occasion that total government school enrolments had decreased after a sustained upward trend between 2009 and 2020.

Primary enrolments decreased for the third consecutive year, dropping by 9,028 students (1.9%) from 2021. Following 4 consecutive years of enrolment growth, secondary enrolments have fallen each year since 2020, decreasing by 2,462.7 students (0.8%) from 2021 to 2022. Enrolments at SSPs have increased over the last 10 years, increasing in 2022 by 157 students (2.7%) from 2021.

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 2022

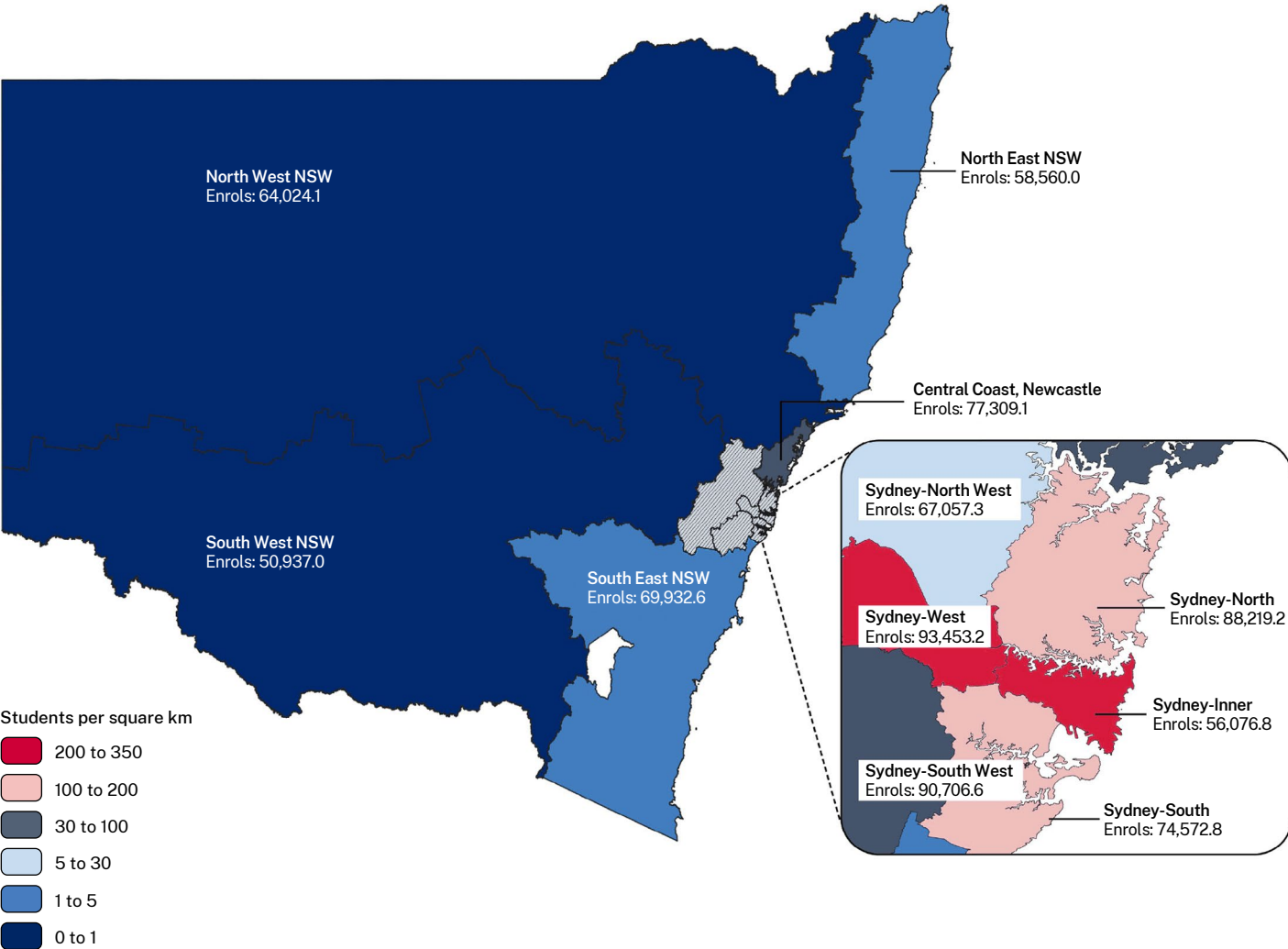


Table 2

Enrolments by ABS Statistical Area Level 4 groupings and grade group in NSW Government schools, mid-year 2022

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	23,664	32,021	55,685	22,276	9,795.2	32,071.2	463	88,219.2	11.2%
Sydney-Inner	14,849	18,832	33,681	15,441	6,543.8	21,984.8	411	56,076.8	7.1%
Sydney-South	18,781	24,978	43,759	21,275	8,762.8	30,037.8	776	74,572.8	9.4%
Sydney-South West	22,253	30,731	52,984	26,661	10,186.6	36,847.6	875	90,706.6	11.5%
Sydney-West	26,434	34,421	60,855	22,842	8,692.2	31,534.2	1,064	93,453.2	11.8%
Sydney-North West	17,335	23,576	40,911	18,396	7,336.3	25,732.3	414	67,057.3	8.5%
Sydney total	123,316	164,559	287,875	126,891	51,316.9	178,207.9	4,003	470,085.9	59.4%
North East NSW	13,963	20,275	34,238	18,341	5,853.0	24,194.0	128	58,560.0	7.4%
North West NSW	16,117	22,066	38,183	19,899	5,668.1	25,567.1	274	64,024.1	8.1%
South West NSW	12,856	17,655	30,511	15,293	4,557.0	19,850.0	576	50,937.0	6.4%
South East NSW	17,792	23,884	41,676	21,116	6,641.6	27,757.6	499	69,932.6	8.8%
Central Coast, Newcastle	18,762	25,616	44,378	24,421	7,961.1	32,382.1	549	77,309.1	9.8%
Regional total	79,490	109,496	188,986	99,070	30,680.8	129,750.8	2,026	320,762.8	40.6%
NSW total	202,806	274,055	476,861	225,961	81,997.7	307,958.7	6,029	790,848.7	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.
- As of 2022, Norfolk Island (previously included in regional and NSW totals) is no longer under the jurisdiction of NSW, and therefore not included in the figures.

In 2022, 59.4% of NSW Government students were enrolled in schools within the Sydney area. This varied across grades, with 60.4% of NSW Government primary students enrolled in schools in Sydney compared with 57.9% of NSW Government secondary students.

Primary enrolments (Kindergarten to Year 6)

Within the Sydney area, Sydney-West was the only statistical area grouping where primary enrolments remained stable, slightly increasing by 27 enrolments from 60,828 in 2021 to 60,855 in 2022. Sydney South-West fell by 65 enrolments (0.1%), while all other Sydney area statistical groupings had larger decreases in 2022, ranging between 1.9% and 3.5% from 2021.

Enrolments fell in all statistical area groupings outside Sydney, with North East NSW experiencing the largest decrease of 1,204 enrolments (3.4%).

Secondary enrolments (Years 7 to 12)

For secondary enrolments, the majority of statistical area groupings within the Sydney area increased in 2022, except Sydney-South and Sydney-North West, which had decreases of 1.2% and 0.6% respectively. Sydney-West had the largest growth in 2022, with an increase of 804.9 enrolments (2.6%) from 2021. Sydney-Inner and Sydney-North recorded increases of 188.8 (0.9%) and 198.4 (0.6%) enrolments respectively. Overall, secondary enrolments increased in the Sydney area by 757.3 (0.4%).

For the second consecutive year, all statistical area groupings in regional areas declined in 2022. These areas had mostly experienced increases in 2019 and 2020, but began falling again from 2021, following a similar trend of slow decline from 2010 to 2018.

Senior secondary enrolments (Years 11 to 12)

The total number of senior secondary enrolments decreased by 1.5% from 2021 to 2022. Sydney-North, Sydney-Inner and Sydney-West saw increases in senior secondary enrolments by 0.9%, 0.8% and 1.3% respectively. For the second consecutive year, all statistical area groupings in regional areas experienced a decline in 2022. Senior secondary enrolments in North West NSW fell by 5.2%, the largest decrease in regional areas and NSW.

All years

As Map 1 shows, the areas of Sydney-West, Sydney-South West and Sydney-North had the highest number of enrolments, with 93,453.2, 90,706.6 and 88,219.2 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 25.4% 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 2022

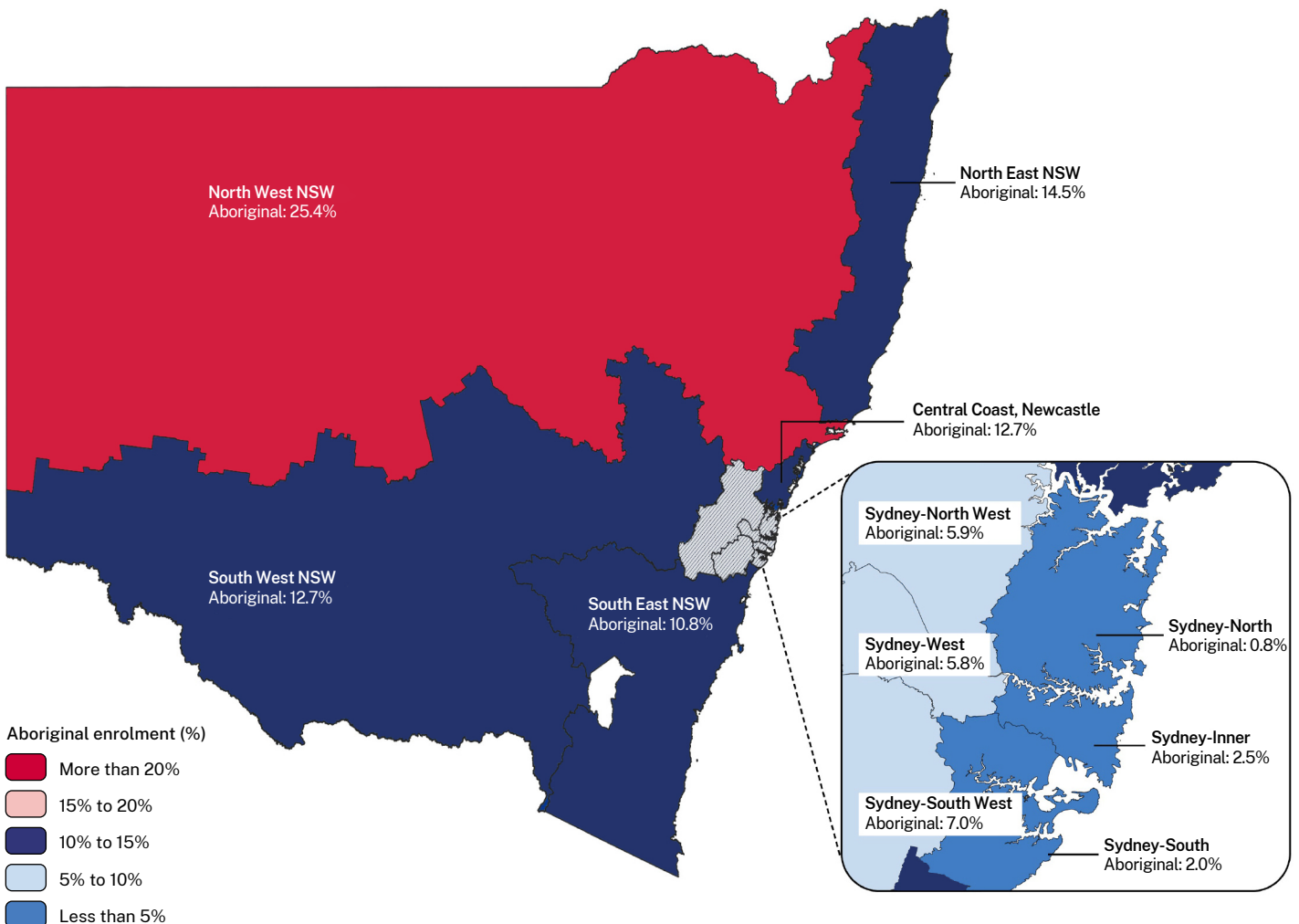


Table 3

Enrolments (FTE) of Aboriginal students by ABS Statistical Area Level 4 groupings and grade group in NSW government schools, mid-year 2022

Statistical area level 4 group	K-2	Y3-6	Primary total	Y7-10	Y11-12	Secondary total	Statistical area total	% of NSW
Sydney-North	136	188	324	160	56.0	216.0	567.0	0.8%
Sydney-Inner	444	574	1,018	512	153.5	665.5	1,737.5	2.5%
Sydney-South	337	451	788	442	134.8	576.8	1,397.8	2.0%
Sydney-South West	1,286	1,719	3,005	1,448	357.8	1,805.8	4,939.8	7.0%
Sydney-West	1,176	1,400	2,576	1,083	302.9	1,385.9	4,103.9	5.8%
Sydney-North West	1,153	1,425	2,578	1,251	269.2	1,520.2	4,162.2	5.9%
Sydney total	4,532	5,757	10,289	4,896	1,274.2	6,170.2	16,908.2	23.9%
North East NSW	2,465	3,536	6,001	3,401	824.6	4,225.6	10,266.6	14.5%
North West NSW	4,759	6,159	10,918	5,717	1,215.6	6,932.6	17,977.6	25.4%
South West NSW	2,421	3,045	5,466	2,828	573.2	3,401.2	9,011.2	12.7%
South East NSW	1,961	2,630	4,591	2,432	552.1	2,984.1	7,669.1	10.8%
Central Coast, Newcastle	2,425	3,024	5,449	2,753	706.9	3,459.9	9,032.9	12.7%
Regional total	14,031	18,394	32,425	17,131	3,872.4	21,003.4	53,957.4	76.1%
NSW	18,563	24,151	42,714	22,027	5,146.6	27,173.6	70,865.6	100.0%
Aboriginal total as a percentage of total NSW enrolments	9.2%	8.8%	9.0%	9.7%	6.3%	8.8%	9.0%	

Notes:

- Students in Distance Education and Opportunity Classes (OC) are included with their appropriate grade levels.
- From 2020, students in mainstream support classes are reported by their underlying grade of enrolment.
- There were 978 Aboriginal students enrolled in SSPs, representing 16.2% 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.
- As of 2022, Norfolk Island (previously included in regional and NSW totals) is no longer under the jurisdiction of NSW, and therefore not included in the figures.

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 (76.1%) of NSW Government Aboriginal students were enrolled outside of Sydney in 2022. Although the 6 Sydney statistical area groupings accounted for 59.4% of all enrolments in NSW, only 23.9% of NSW Government Aboriginal students were enrolled in schools in Sydney.

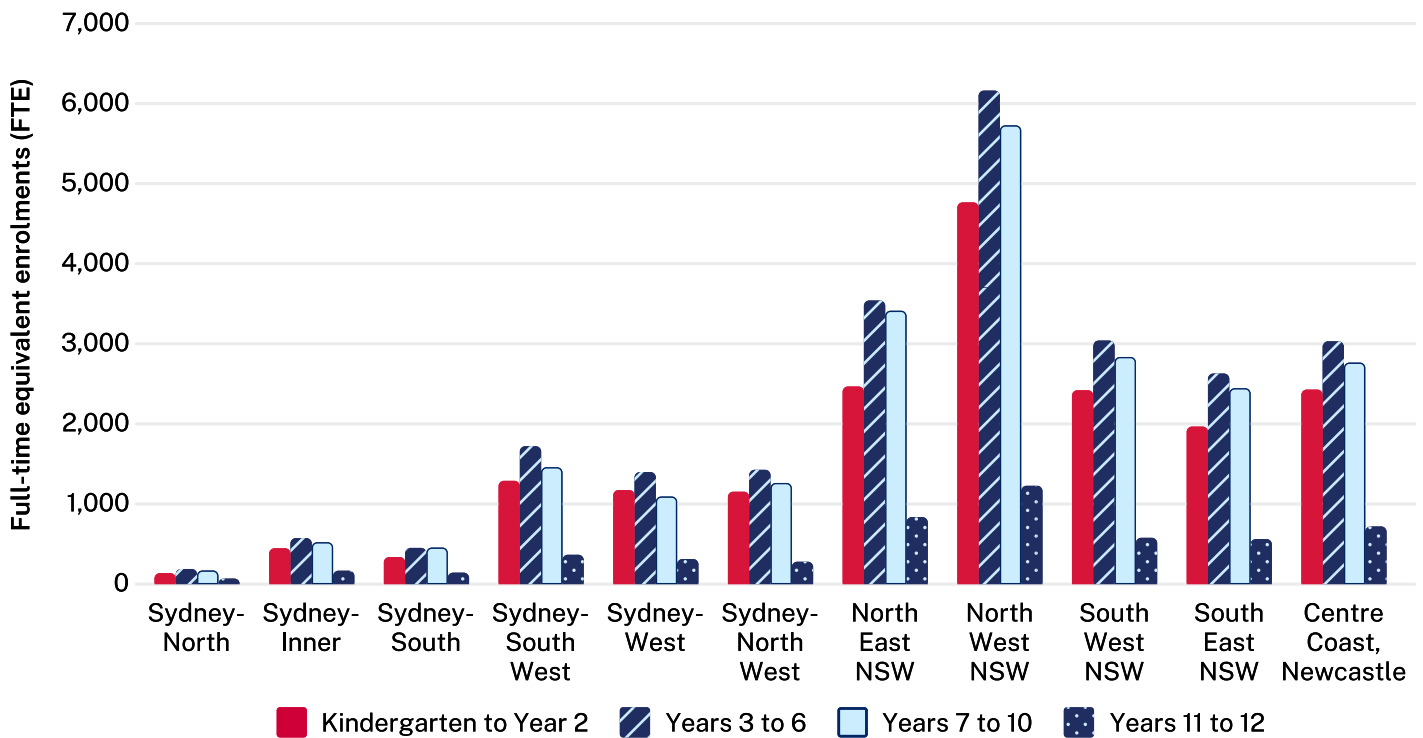
North West NSW and North East NSW had the highest Aboriginal enrolments at 25.4% and 14.5% of all Aboriginal students in these areas respectively. In Sydney, the statistical area groupings of Sydney-South West, Sydney-North

West and Sydney-West had relatively higher Aboriginal student enrolments, at 7.0%, 5.9% 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 1,915.2 students or 2.8% from 68,950.4 in 2021 to 70,865.6 in 2022. North West NSW recorded the largest increase in the number of Aboriginal students, rising by 528.6 (3.0%), from 17,449.0 in 2021 to 17,977.6 in 2022, while South West NSW saw the largest proportional increase in 2022 of 4.6% (397.4 Aboriginal students), from 8,613.8 in 2021 to 9,011.2 in 2022.

Figure 2

Enrolments (FTE) of Aboriginal students by ABS Statistical Area Level 4 grouping and grade group in NSW government schools, mid-year 2022



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 2012 and Table 4 provides data in selected years from 1991.

Across NSW, overall enrolments increased by more than 8,000 each year since 2010, and by more than 10,000 in each year between 2013 and 2019. In 2022, overall enrolments in NSW decreased for the first time since 2008, falling by 1,584 (0.1%). Since 2010, the total number of students enrolled in education in NSW has increased by 121,136 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, and this trend continued in 2022, with enrolments falling by 11,333 (1.4%).

The drop in government enrolments in 2022 was mostly driven by a 9,028 (1.9%) decrease in government primary enrolments. This was the third consecutive decrease in government primary enrolments, following a period of year-on-year growth since 2009.

Secondary enrolments decreased for the second consecutive year, falling by 2,462.7 (0.8%). This 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 2022

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
2022	790,849	63.7%	450,716	36.3%	1,241,565

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Schools Australia 2022.

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, 2012 to 2022

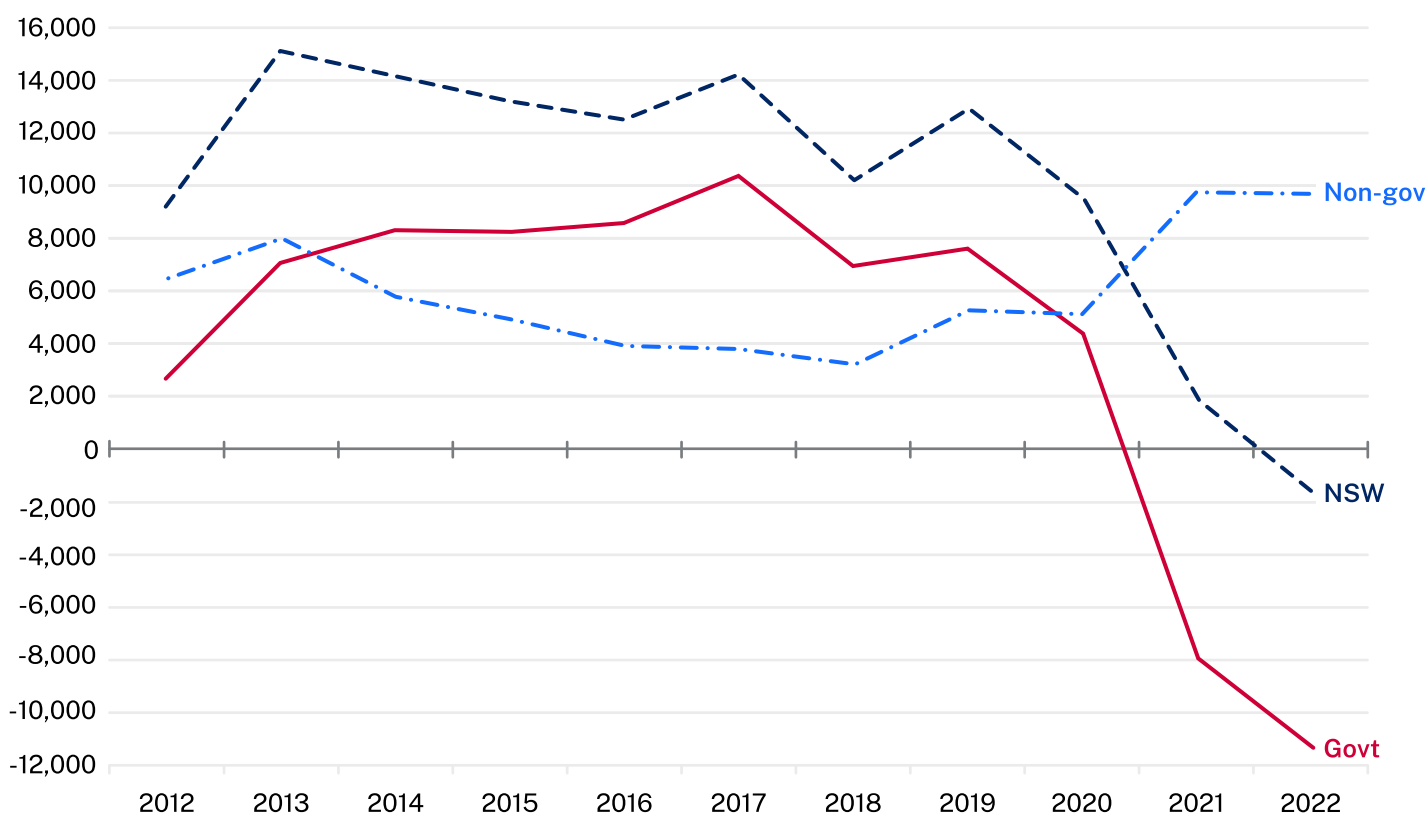


Table 4 shows the enrolment share for students at government and non-government schools in NSW for selected years between 1991 and 2022. The total government enrolment share has been gradually falling since 1991, reaching a low at the time of 65.3% in 2015, before stabilising (+/-0.1pp per year) between 2015 and 2020. In both 2021 and 2022, the total government enrolment share decreased by 0.8 percentage points, falling to a new low of 63.7% in 2022.

There are a number of likely contributing factors to the drop in the government enrolment share in 2022, 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
- lower international arrivals compared to pre COVID-19 figures

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 2022, the total government share for Aboriginal students was 83.1%, 20.8 percentage points higher than for non-Aboriginal students (62.3%).

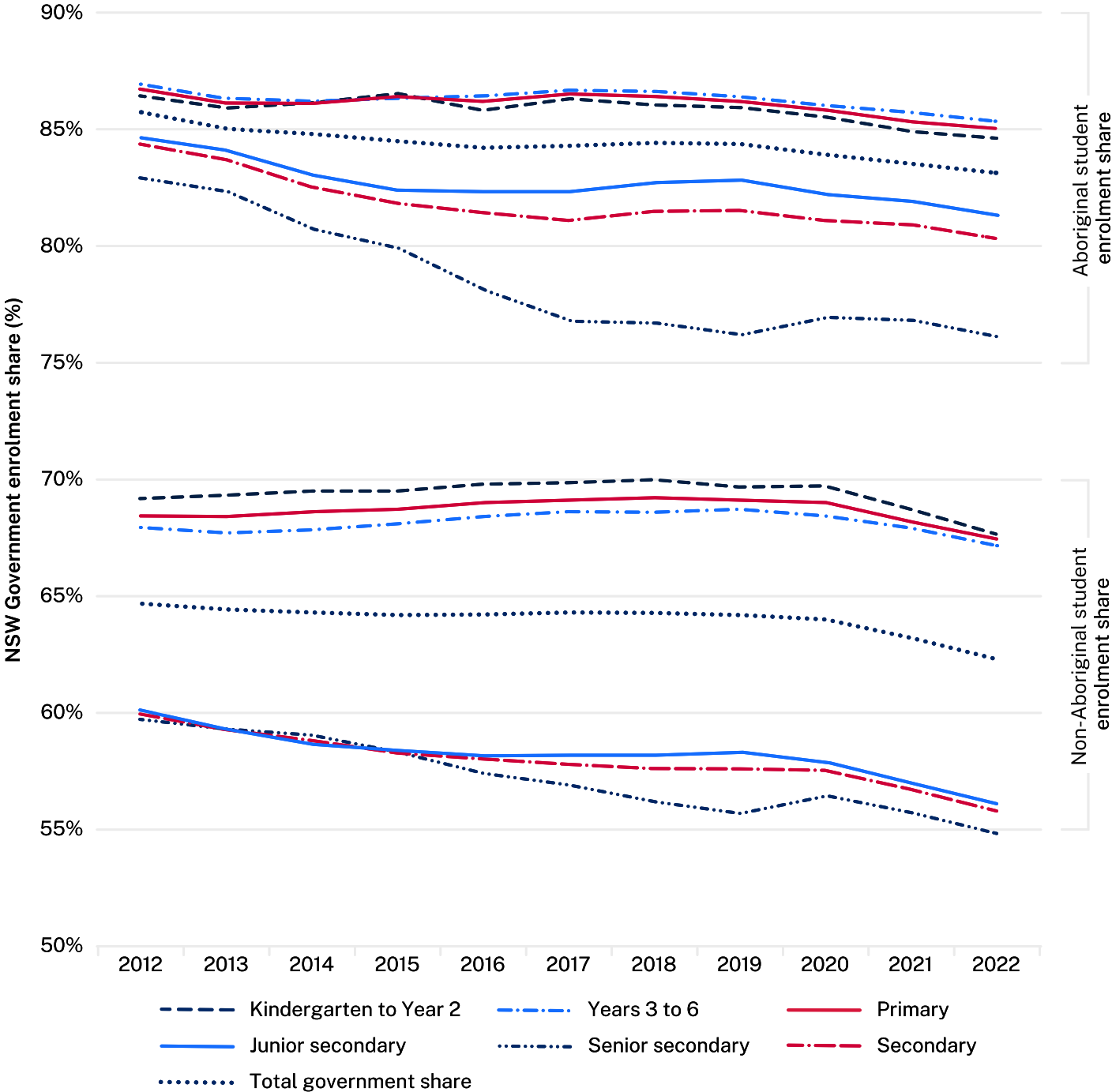
For both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, the secondary enrolment share has consistently been lower than the primary enrolment share. In 2022, Aboriginal students' secondary enrolment share was 4.7 percentage points lower than the primary enrolment share, compared with an 11.6 percentage point difference for non-Aboriginal students.

The primary government enrolment share for Aboriginal students in 2022 was 85.0%, 17.6 percentage points higher than non-Aboriginal students at 67.4%. The secondary enrolment share for Aboriginal students in 2022 was 80.3%, 24.5 percentage points higher than for non-Aboriginal students (55.8%).

The difference in government enrolment share between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students was highest for junior secondary students, at 25.2 percentage points (Aboriginal students 81.3%, non-Aboriginal students 56.1%).

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 84.6% for this cohort, 17.0 percentage points higher than for non-Aboriginal students at 67.6%.

Figure 4
Percentage of NSW Government enrolments (FTE) share by grade group, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, 2012 to 2022



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 Yr 3-6. 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 increased slightly by 20 children from 4,203 in 2021 to 4,223 in 2022. Full-time equivalent (FTE) enrolments increased by 59.0, from 2,229.5 in 2021 to 2,288.5.

Aboriginal preschool enrolments accounted for 17.1% of FTE enrolments in 2022, an increase of 1.4 percentage points from 2021. This is the

largest proportion of preschool FTE enrolments that is represented by Aboriginal children in the last 10 years. In 2022, the number of Aboriginal preschool enrolments increased by 52 children, or 43.1 in FTE enrolments.

In 2012, children were enrolled in government preschools for 16.7 hours on average (based on a nominal 30-hour week), with Aboriginal children enrolled for an average of 19.0 hours. By 2022, average enrolled hours had fallen to 16.3 hours for all children, and 17.4 hours for Aboriginal children. There are continued efforts 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, 2012 to 2022

Year	All students		Aboriginal students		
	Students	FTE	Students	FTE	% of total FTE
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%
2022	4,223	2,288.5	675	392.4	17.1%

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 remained steady, increasing by 7 children from 711 enrolments in 2021 to 718 enrolments in 2022. However, full-time equivalent enrolments fell by 6.1, from 152.3 in 2021 to 146.2 in 2022.

Aboriginal early intervention enrolments increased slightly from 115 in 2021 to 126 in 2022. As a result, the percentage of students enrolled in an early intervention program who were Aboriginal increased by 2.2 percentage points, from 14.6% in 2021 to 16.8% in 2022. This is the largest proportion of early intervention enrolments represented by Aboriginal children over the last 10 years.

Table 6

Number of students and enrolment full-time equivalents (FTE) in NSW Government early intervention programs, 2012 to 2022

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%
2022	718	146.2	126	24.6	16.8%

Enrolments by scholastic year

Table 7 presents student enrolments by scholastic year from 2017 to 2022.

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 2022 declined by 2.4% (1,667 students) from 2021. This was the fourth consecutive decrease 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) in most years between 2019 and 2022. This may partially explain the decrease in Kindergarten enrolments.

Year 4 was the only primary grade with an increase in enrolments in 2022, of 115 students (0.2%). All other primary grades experienced a

decline in enrolments. Kindergarten to Year 3 declined by between 2.4% to 3.8%, while Years 5 and 6 experienced smaller decreases of 0.9% and 0.5% respectively.

Year 8 experienced the largest decrease in secondary enrolments in 2022, dropping by 1,955 students (3.4%) from 2021. This followed a 6-year period of growth that began in 2016. Years 7, 11 and 12 also experienced decreases of 2.6%, 0.3% and 3.0% respectively in 2022.

Years 9 and 10 both experienced enrolment growth in 2022. The largest increase was for Year 10, which rose by 1,697 students (3.1%) and was the fourth consecutive increase for this cohort. Year 9 rose by 503 students (0.9%), which was the sixth consecutive year of increases for this cohort. Much of the increase in enrolments for Years 9 and 10 in 2022 was due to the progression of large numbers of Kindergarten students enrolled in 2012 and 2013. As discussed previously, care should be taken with comparisons between years due to the change in counting rules.

Table 7

Enrolments (FTE) by scholastic year (excluding SSPs), 2017 to 2022

Year level	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Kindergarten	71,104	72,422	70,775	70,610	68,844	67,177
Year 1	70,163	70,421	71,753	71,043	69,315	67,401
Year 2	69,430	69,944	70,416	72,397	70,087	68,228
Year 3	68,361	68,595	69,393	70,881	71,230	68,519
Year 4	68,748	68,121	68,460	70,325	70,010	70,125
Year 5	66,278	67,733	67,203	68,751	68,562	67,920
Year 6	63,138	65,980	67,270	68,273	67,841	67,491
Primary ungraded	7,412	7,827	8,338	-	-	-
Year 7	51,083	53,405	55,866	58,878	56,587	55,139
Year 8	50,749	51,359	53,505	58,049	58,127	56,172
Year 9	50,566	51,288	51,914	55,940	57,393	57,896
Year 10	51,332	51,279	51,933	54,180	55,057	56,754
Year 11	46,341.4	44,837.7	44,694.4	46,485.5	45,196.4	45,064.9
Year 12	39,355.4	38,286.5	37,103.4	38,484.3	38,061.0	36,932.8
Secondary ungraded	11,417	10,860	11,312	-	-	-
Total	785,477.8	792,358.2	799,935.8	804,296.8	796,310.4	784,819.7

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 2022 is the percentage of Year 10 enrolments in 2022 compared to Year 7 enrolments in 2019. 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 underlying 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 2012 to 2022. Year 7 to Year 10 retention rates for all students have been over 100% since 2012, largely due to interstate and international migration for students in Years 8, 9 and 10. In 2022, the Year 7 to 10 apparent retention rate for girls was 99.0%, the first and only time that the apparent retention rate for either gender has fallen below 100% in the last 10 years.

Table 8

Apparent retention rates by retention period and gender in NSW Government schools, 2012 to 2022

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
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
2022	104.1	99.0	101.6	82.2	86.7	84.4	67.9	76.9	72.3	78.2	85.8	81.9	63.1	73.6	68.2

Notes:

- Apparent retention is based on full-time equivalent (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.

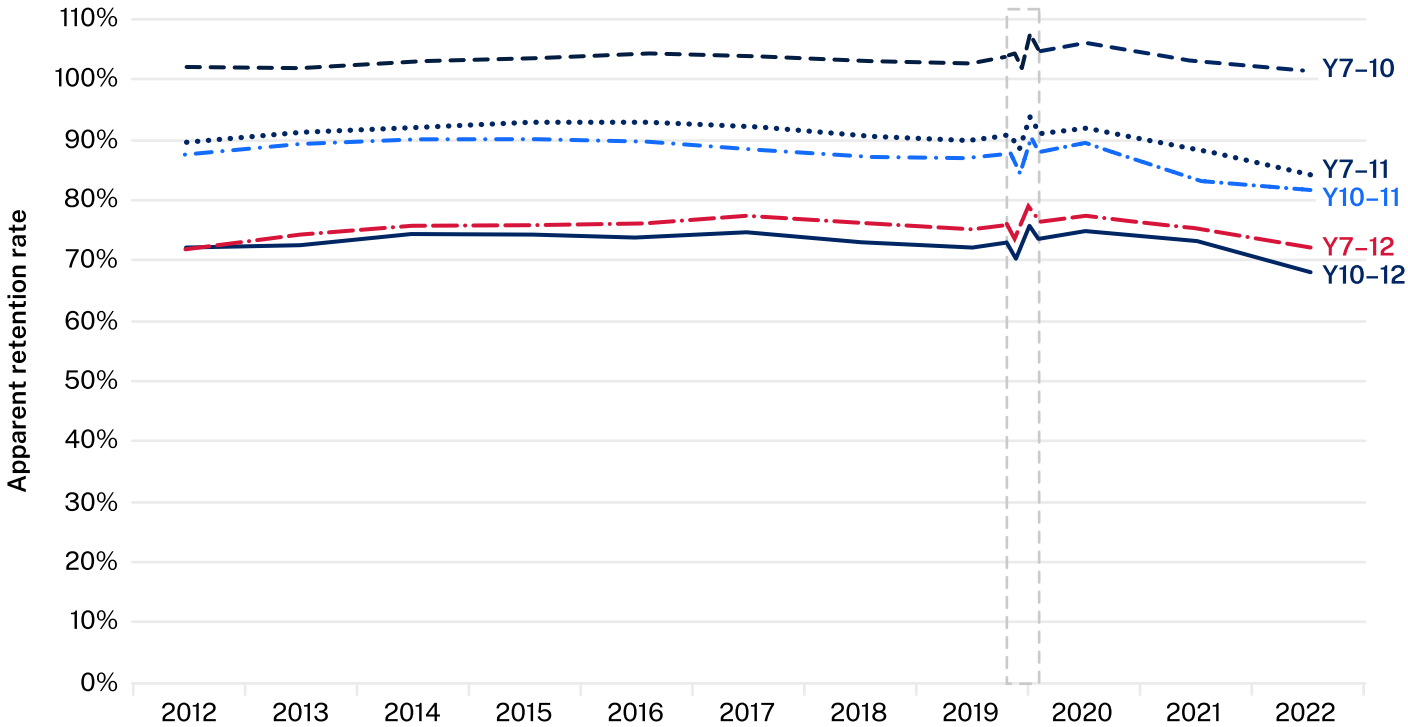
In 2022, the Year 7 to 12 apparent retention rate was higher than 10 years prior in 2012. However, Year 7 to Year 10, Year 7 to Year 11, Year 10 to 11 and Year 10 to 12 are all lower in 2022 compared to 2012, which was just after the introduction of the new school leaving age in 2010.

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 2022 Year 10 to 12 and Year 7 to 12 apparent retention rates for girls higher than boys by 10.5 and 9.0 percentage points respectively. In 2022, only the Year 7 to 10 apparent retention rate was higher for boys than girls, being 5.1 percentage points higher.

Figure 5

Apparent retention rates by retention period in NSW Government schools, 2012 to 2022



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 2022) divided by the total number of full-time students in a previous year (for example, Year 7 in 2017). This would be the Year 7 to 12 apparent retention rate in 2022.

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

Between 2016 and 2021, the NSW Department of Education 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 and has been included in data up to and including 2021. It was not designated an ABS SA4 group, so was included in regional and NSW totals, but not included in individual SA4 group data (Tables 2 and 3). As of 2022, Norfolk Island

Central School is no longer under the jurisdiction of NSW, and therefore not included in data from 2022 onwards.

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

Students are counted as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders if they identify themselves on the school enrolment form.

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. 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, 2022

4240.0 – Preschool Education Australia, 2022

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