

Schools: InBrief mid-year census 2020

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

InBrief summarises the results of the census of students in NSW Government schools undertaken on Friday 7 August 2020, and the census of NSW non-government schools undertaken by the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment.

Mid-year census

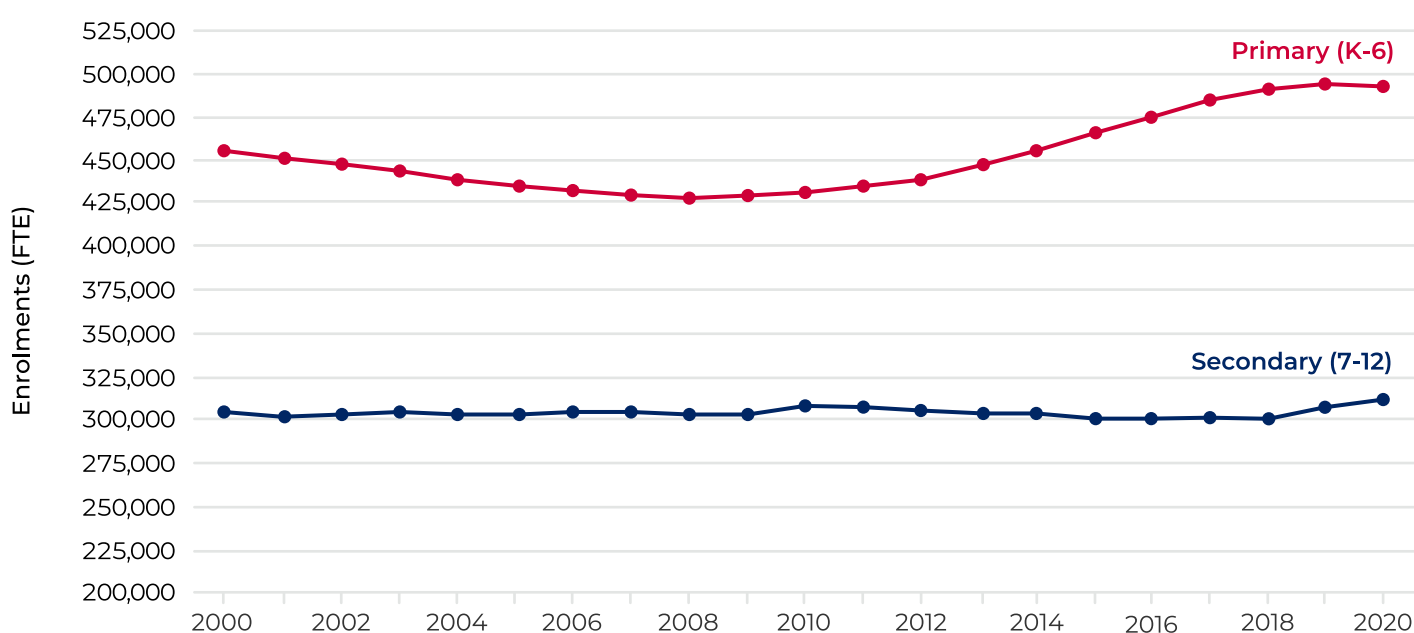
The mid-year census includes data on NSW Government schools (preschool, primary, secondary, central/community and special) and students (age at 1 July, grades, full-time, part-time, gender and Aboriginality).

From 2020, students in mainstream support classes are reported by their underlying grade of enrolment. Prior to 2020, this cohort of students would have been reported as 'ungraded' or 'support'. From 2020 only students in schools for specific purposes (SSPs) are reported as 'ungraded'. This has resulted in a break in series, and is explained in more detail later in this publication.

2020 enrolments

Figure 1

Primary and Secondary enrolments (excluding schools for specific purposes), 2000-2020



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

NSW government

Full-time equivalent (FTE) enrolments

Primary enrolments	492,280
Secondary enrolments	312,016.8
SSP enrolments	5,780
Total enrolments	810,076.8

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

Total Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander enrolments	65,960.4
Percent Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander enrolments	8.2%

Part-time students

Number of part-time students	1,756
FTE enrolments	1,127.8

Preschool students

Number of preschool students	4,271
FTE enrolments	2,257.7

NSW government schools

Primary and infants schools	1,607
Central/community schools	68
Secondary schools	401
Schools for specific purposes (SSPs)	116
Environmental education centres (EECs)	23

Total government schools 2,215

Preschools attached to primary/infants schools	100
Separate preschools	1

Total preschools 101

NSW non-government

Full-time equivalent (FTE) enrolments

Primary enrolments	211,195.1
Secondary enrolments	219,960.1
Total enrolments	431,155.2

NSW non-government schools

Primary schools	494
Secondary schools	140
Primary/secondary schools	254
Special schools	62

Total non-government schools 950

Figure 1 shows primary and secondary enrolments from 2000 to 2020. Primary enrolments declined until 2008, rose steadily until 2019 and stabilised in 2020.

Throughout the 20-year period, there were between 300,000 and 310,000 secondary students enrolled in NSW government schools each year. However, in 2020, secondary enrolments grew significantly by 5,689.0 students (1.9%) from 2019, and were at their highest level in over 20 years.

The trend in secondary enrolments is seven years behind the change in primary enrolments, as students move through the schooling system. This means that 2020 secondary figures largely reflect primary enrolments from 2013. Since primary enrolments rose every year from 2008 to 2019, secondary enrolments are expected to continue to grow for a few more years.

Table 1 shows that the total number of full-time equivalent students in NSW Government schools increased by 4,404.0 or 0.5%, from 805,672.8 in 2019 to 810,076.8 in 2020. This was the twelfth year in a row that total government school enrolments increased, after a sustained downward trend between 1998 and 2008.

Primary enrolments decreased for the first time since 2009, dropping by 1,328 students (0.3%) from 2019. Enrolments at schools for specific purposes (SSPs) were stable compared with 2019 (slight increase of 43 students (0.7%)).

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 per cent; 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).

Table 1**Enrolments in NSW government schools by grade level and schools for specific purposes, 2000-2020**

Year	Primary (K-6)	Secondary (7-12)	SSP	Total
2000	454,363	303,681.0	3,792	761,836.0
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

Note:

- 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.

Kindergarten enrolments in 2020 declined for the second year in a row, though at a slower rate than the previous year (individual grade level data is not presented). This followed a trend of increasing Kindergarten enrolments observed in most years since 2008. Kindergarten enrolments generally reflect the NSW birth rate five years previously. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics

(ABS) 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 eleven years, which may explain the decrease in Kindergarten enrolments.

Secondary 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), illustrated in Map 1. The ASGS is maintained by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (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 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 2020

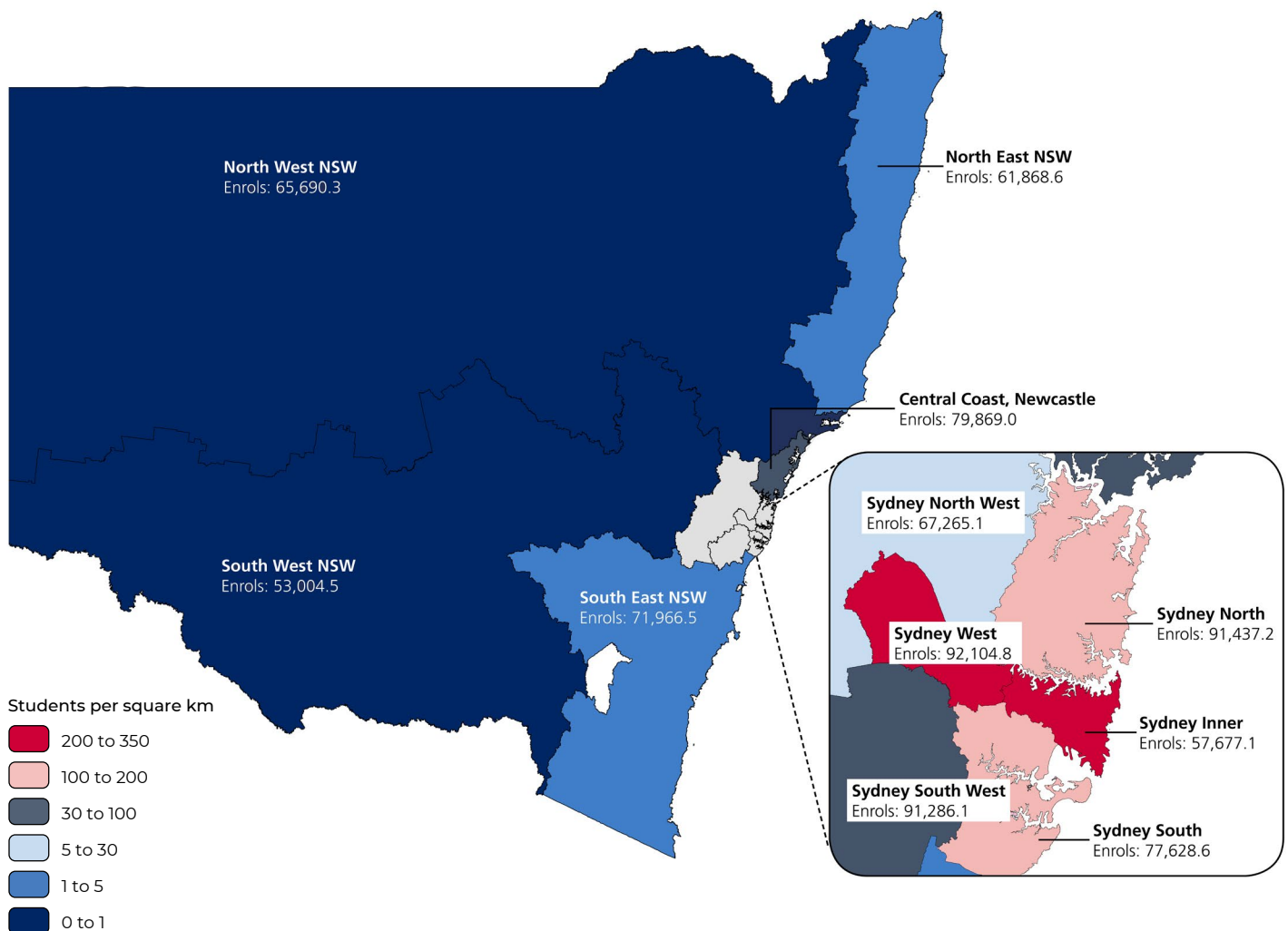


Table 2

Enrolments by ABS Statistical Area Level 4 groupings and grade group in NSW government schools, mid-year 2020

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	26,153	33,087	59,240	22,098	9,635.2	31,733.2	464	91,437.2	11.3%
Sydney-Inner	16,261	19,466	35,727	15,062	6,517.1	21,579.1	371	57,677.1	7.1%
Sydney-South	19,985	26,044	46,029	21,686	9,153.6	30,839.6	760	77,628.6	9.6%
Sydney-South West	23,048	30,333	53,381	26,367	10,706.1	37,073.1	832	91,286.1	11.3%
Sydney-West	27,411	33,259	60,670	21,896	8,510.8	30,406.8	1,028	92,104.8	11.4%
Sydney-North West	17,783	23,333	41,116	18,428	7,317.1	25,745.1	404	67,265.1	8.3%
Sydney total	130,641	165,522	296,163	125,537	51,839.9	177,376.9	3,859	477,398.9	58.9%
North East NSW	14,914	21,443	36,357	18,923	6,459.6	25,382.6	129	61,868.6	7.6%
North West NSW	16,639	22,319	38,958	20,343	6,144.3	26,487.3	245	65,690.3	8.1%
South West NSW	13,582	17,970	31,552	15,854	5,054.5	20,908.5	544	53,004.5	6.5%
South East NSW	18,480	24,604	43,084	21,403	7,036.5	28,439.5	443	71,966.5	8.9%
Central Coast, Newcastle	19,733	26,281	46,014	24,895	8,400.0	33,295.0	560	79,869.0	9.9%
Regional total	83,409	112,708	196,117	101,510	33,129.9	134,639.9	1,921	332,677.9	41.1%
NSW total	214,050	278,230	492,280	227,047	84,969.8	312,016.8	5,780	810,076.8	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 279.0) is included in Regional total and NSW, but does not have an ABS Statistical Area Level 4 code.

In 2020, 58.9% of government students were enrolled in schools within the Sydney area. This varied across grades, with three out of five primary students (60.2%) enrolled in schools in Sydney compared with 56.8% of secondary students.

Primary enrolments (K-6)

Half of the statistical area groupings within the Sydney area experienced an increase in primary enrolments from 2019 to 2020, while Sydney-North, Sydney-Inner and Sydney-South saw decreases of 0.3%, 1.1% and 0.7% respectively. Sydney-North West recorded the largest growth in primary enrolments with an increase of 877 enrolments in 2020. By contrast, enrolments fell in all statistical area groupings outside Sydney, with North West NSW experiencing the largest decrease of 904 enrolments (2.3%).

Secondary enrolments (Years 7-12)

For secondary enrolments, all statistical area groupings increased in 2020, except North East NSW and South West NSW which saw small decreases of 0.2% and 0.8% respectively. Sydney-West had the largest growth from 2019, with a significant increase of 1,131.6 enrolments (3.9%). This was closely followed by Sydney-North, which recorded an increase of 952.0 enrolments, rising by 3.1%. This was the second year since 2010 that secondary enrolments rose in almost all statistical area groupings. This change is especially notable for the Regional areas, where enrolments had declined across most statistical area groupings from 2010 to 2018.

Senior secondary enrolments (Years 11-12)

The number of senior secondary enrolments increased from 2019 to 2020. The increase occurred across all statistical area groupings, with the largest growth in Sydney-South West. The increases in senior secondary enrolments are partly affected by the change in counting rules, as students in mainstream support classes, who would have previously been recorded against years 7 to 10, were reported by their underlying grade of enrolment for the first time in 2020. However, even using the same counting rules as used in previous years, the total NSW and all six Sydney

area statistical area groupings still experienced an increase in senior secondary enrolments. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) population estimates, the number of 16 and 17 year olds (senior secondary aged students) in NSW rose between 2019 and 2020. This may partly explain the increase in senior secondary enrolments.

All years

As Map 1 shows, the areas of Sydney-West, Sydney-North and Sydney-South West had the highest number of enrolments, with 92,104.8, 91,437.2 and 91,286.1 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 25.5% of students identified as Aboriginal, compared with 6.9% 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 2020

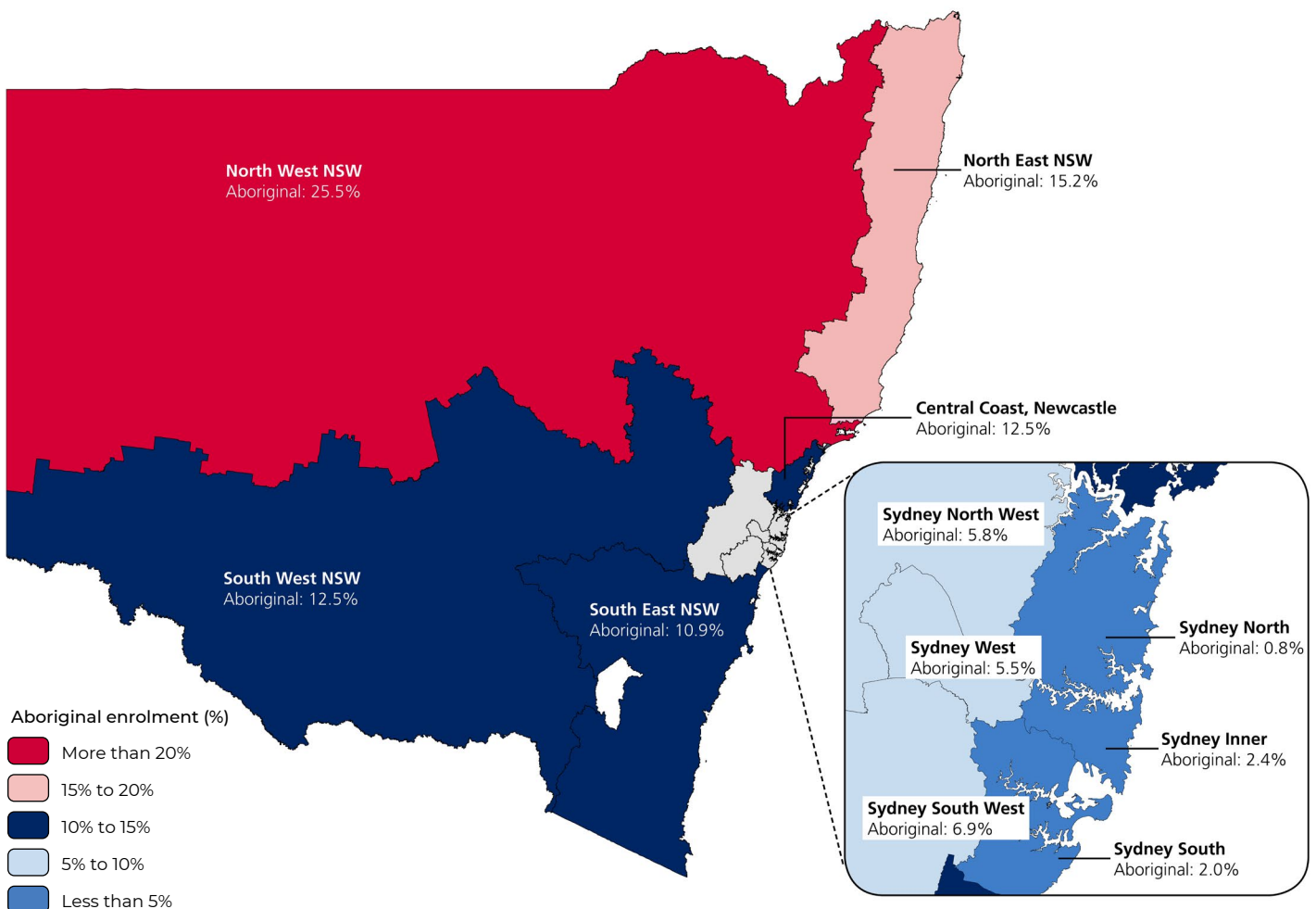


Table 3

Enrolments (FTE) of Aboriginal students by ABS Statistical Area Level 4 groupings and grade group in NSW government schools, mid-year 2020

Statistical area level 4 group	K-2	Y3-6	Primary total	Y7-10	Y11-12	Secondary total	Statistical area total	% of NSW
Sydney-North	132	169	301	152	61.0	213.0	532.0	0.8%
Sydney-Inner	424	548	972	444	145.6	589.6	1,598.6	2.4%
Sydney-South	309	408	717	439	140.2	579.2	1,329.2	2.0%
Sydney-South West	1,243	1,560	2,803	1,335	328.8	1,663.8	4,606.8	6.9%
Sydney-West	1,065	1,211	2,276	984	310.8	1,294.8	3,696.8	5.5%
Sydney-North West	1,086	1,312	2,398	1,131	287.6	1,418.6	3,868.6	5.8%
Sydney total	4,259	5,208	9,467	4,485	1,274.0	5,759.0	15,632.0	23.4%
North East NSW	2,495	3,481	5,976	3,280	862.1	4,142.1	10,160.1	15.2%
North West NSW	4,628	5,698	10,326	5,372	1,221.3	6,593.3	17,019.3	25.5%
South West NSW	2,276	2,789	5,065	2,610	580.5	3,190.5	8,382.5	12.5%
South East NSW	1,935	2,425	4,360	2,305	531.3	2,836.3	7,274.3	10.9%
Central Coast, Newcastle	2,207	2,727	4,934	2,678	633.2	3,311.2	8,361.2	12.5%
Regional total	13,541	17,120	30,661	16,245	3,828.4	20,073.4	51,197.4	76.6%
NSW total	17,800	22,328	40,128	20,730	5,102.4	25,832.4	66,829.4	100.0%
Aboriginal total as a percentage of total NSW enrolments	8.3%	8.0%	8.2%	9.1%	6.0%	8.3%	8.2%	–

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 869 Aboriginal students enrolled in SSPs, representing 15% 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 Regional Total and NSW, 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 (76.6%) of NSW government Aboriginal students were enrolled outside of Sydney in 2020. Although the six Sydney statistical area groupings accounted for 58.9% of all enrolments in NSW, only 23.4% of NSW government Aboriginal students were enrolled in Sydney.

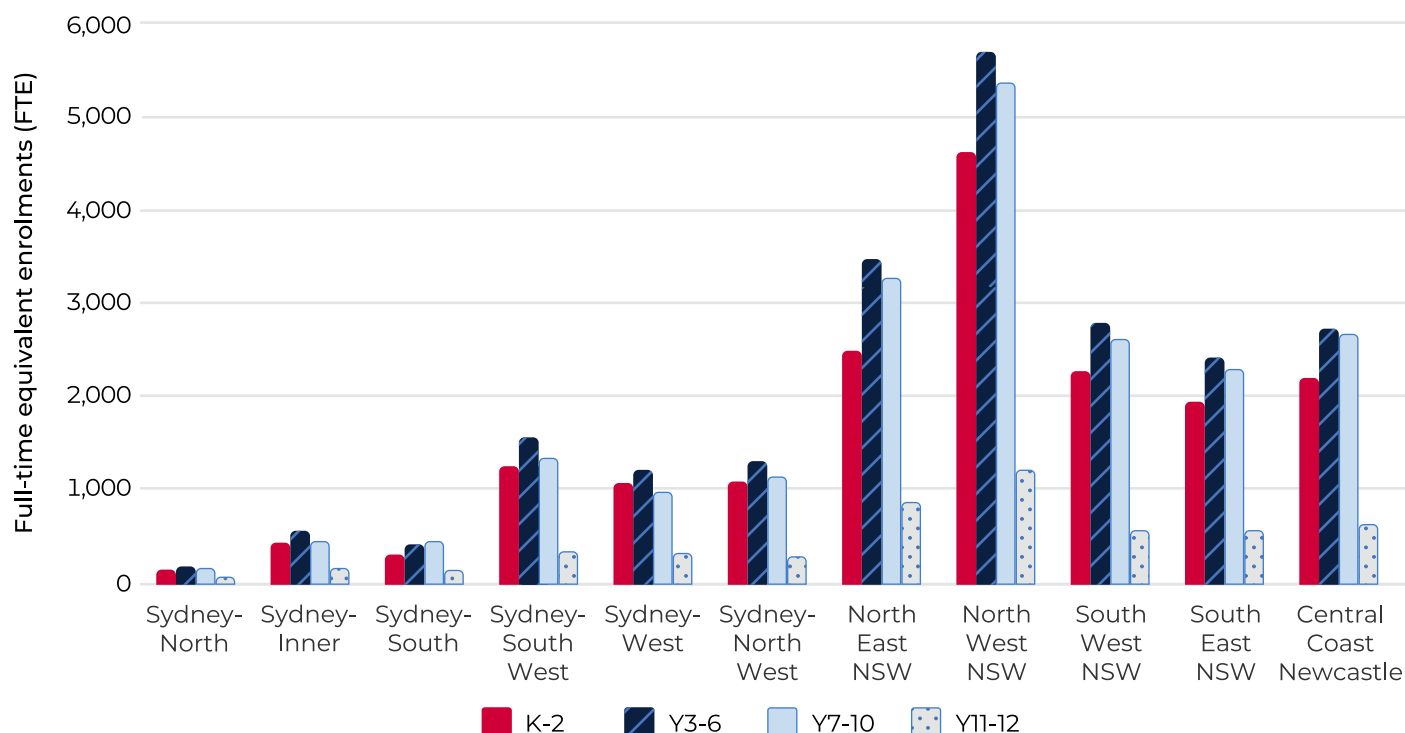
North West NSW and North East NSW had the highest Aboriginal enrolments at 25.5% and 15.2% of all Aboriginal students in these areas respectively.

In Sydney, the statistical area groupings of Sydney-South West, Sydney-North West and Sydney-West had relatively higher Aboriginal student enrolments, at 6.9%, 5.8% and 5.5% of total Aboriginal enrolments respectively. In contrast, Sydney-North only had 0.8% of the Aboriginal enrolments, compared with 11.3% of all students.

Overall, Aboriginal student enrolments increased by 2,136.9 students or 3.3% from 64,692.5 in 2019 to 66,829.4 in 2020. North West NSW recorded the largest increase of 456.1 Aboriginal students, from 16,563.2 in 2019 to 17,019.3 in 2020.

Figure 2

Enrolments (FTE) of Aboriginal students by ABS Statistical Area Level 4 grouping and grade group in NSW government schools, mid-year 2020



Notes:

- 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 2010 and Table 4 provides data in selected years from 1901.

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 2020, the increase dropped slightly to 9,568 students. Since 2010, the total number of students enrolled in education in NSW has increased by 120,803 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. However,

in 2020 government enrolments increased by 4,404.0, compared with an increase of 5,164.2 for non-government schools. This was the first year since 2013 that the enrolment growth in non-government schools was greater than the growth in government schools.

The growth in government enrolments from 2019 to 2020 was mostly driven by a large increase in government secondary aged enrolments of 5,607.0 students. This was the second year in a row that secondary enrolments was the main factor driving government enrolment growth, and this was the largest increase of secondary students in government schools observed for at least 20 years.

In 2020, primary enrolments in NSW government schools dropped for the first time since 2008, falling by 1,203 students (0.2%) from 2019. Primary enrolment growth had been decreasing since 2018, following a period of increasing growth between 2009 and 2017.

Table 4

Enrolments (FTE) and percentage of enrolment share in NSW government and non-government schools, 1901-2020

Year	Government		Non-government		Total
	Enrolment	Share	Enrolment	Share	
1901	210,588	77.6%	60,837	22.4%	271,425
1911	221,810	78.3%	61,550	21.7%	283,360
1921	315,228	80.1%	78,460	19.9%	393,688
1931	387,881	80.8%	92,285	19.2%	480,166
1941	337,073	76.2%	105,319	23.8%	442,392
1951	405,906	75.3%	133,019	24.7%	538,925
1961	610,883	75.2%	201,147	24.8%	812,030
1971	771,713	77.6%	222,195	22.4%	993,908
1981	790,575	76.9%	237,853	23.1%	1,028,428
1986	755,257	73.6%	270,745	26.4%	1,026,011
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
2010	742,141	66.2%	378,288	33.8%	1,120,429
2011	745,540	66.0%	384,209	34.0%	1,129,749
2012	748,234	65.7%	390,756	34.3%	1,138,990
2013	755,346	65.4%	398,813	34.6%	1,154,159
2014	763,698	65.4%	404,623	34.6%	1,168,321
2015	771,978	65.3%	409,627	34.7%	1,181,605
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

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Schools Australia 2020.

Notes:

- From 1993 the table includes full-time and part-time students, reported in full-time equivalent units (FTE).
- Government and non-government school data for 1901-1961 include students in ACT schools.

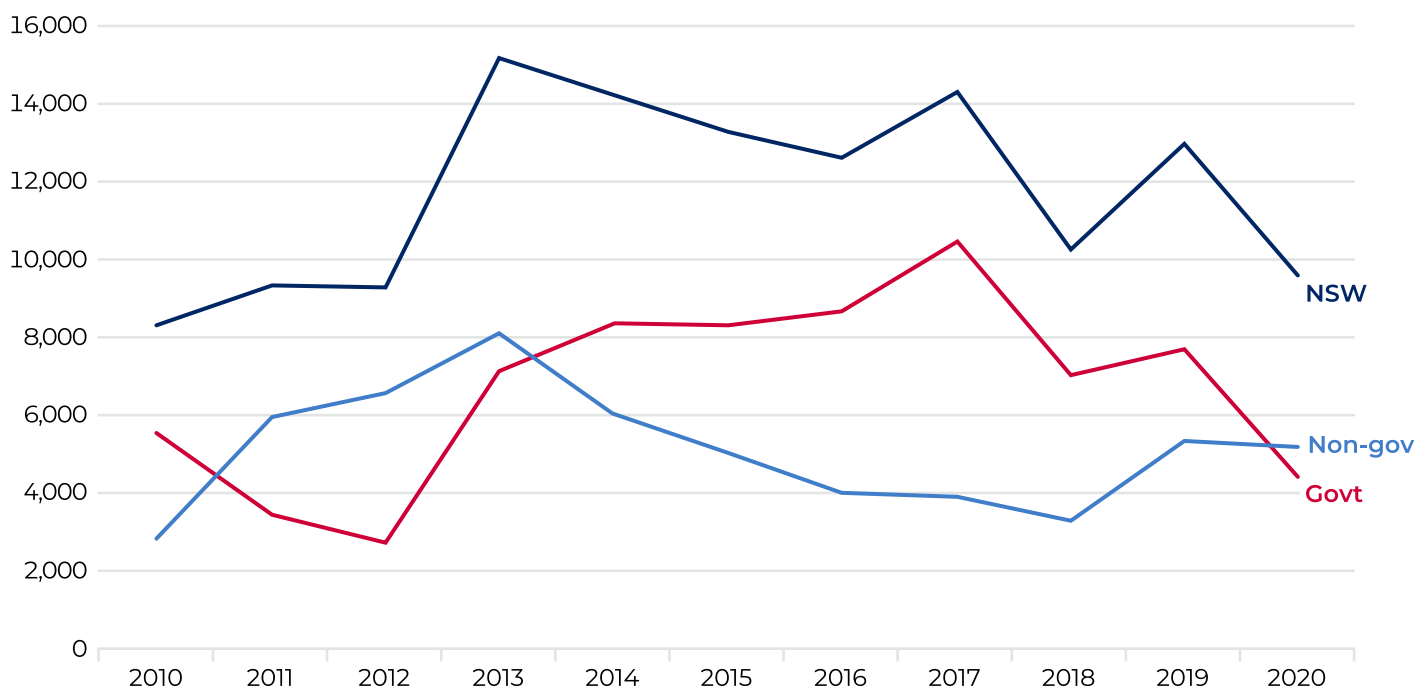
Figure 3**Change in enrolments (FTE) from the previous year, NSW government and non-government schools, 2010-2020**

Table 4 shows the enrolment share for students at government and non-government schools in NSW from 2010 to 2020. 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 2020 it fell slightly by 0.1 percentage points to 65.3%.

Figure 4 shows NSW government enrolment share by education level, for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. Historically government enrolment share for Aboriginal students has been significantly higher than for non-Aboriginal students. In 2020, total government share for Aboriginal students was 83.9%, 19.9 percentage points higher than for non-Aboriginal students (64.0%).

The primary government enrolment share for Aboriginal students in 2020 was 85.8%, 16.8 percentage points higher than non-Aboriginal students at 69.0%. The secondary enrolment share for Aboriginal students in 2020 was 81.1%, 23.6 percentage points higher than for non-Aboriginal students (57.5%).

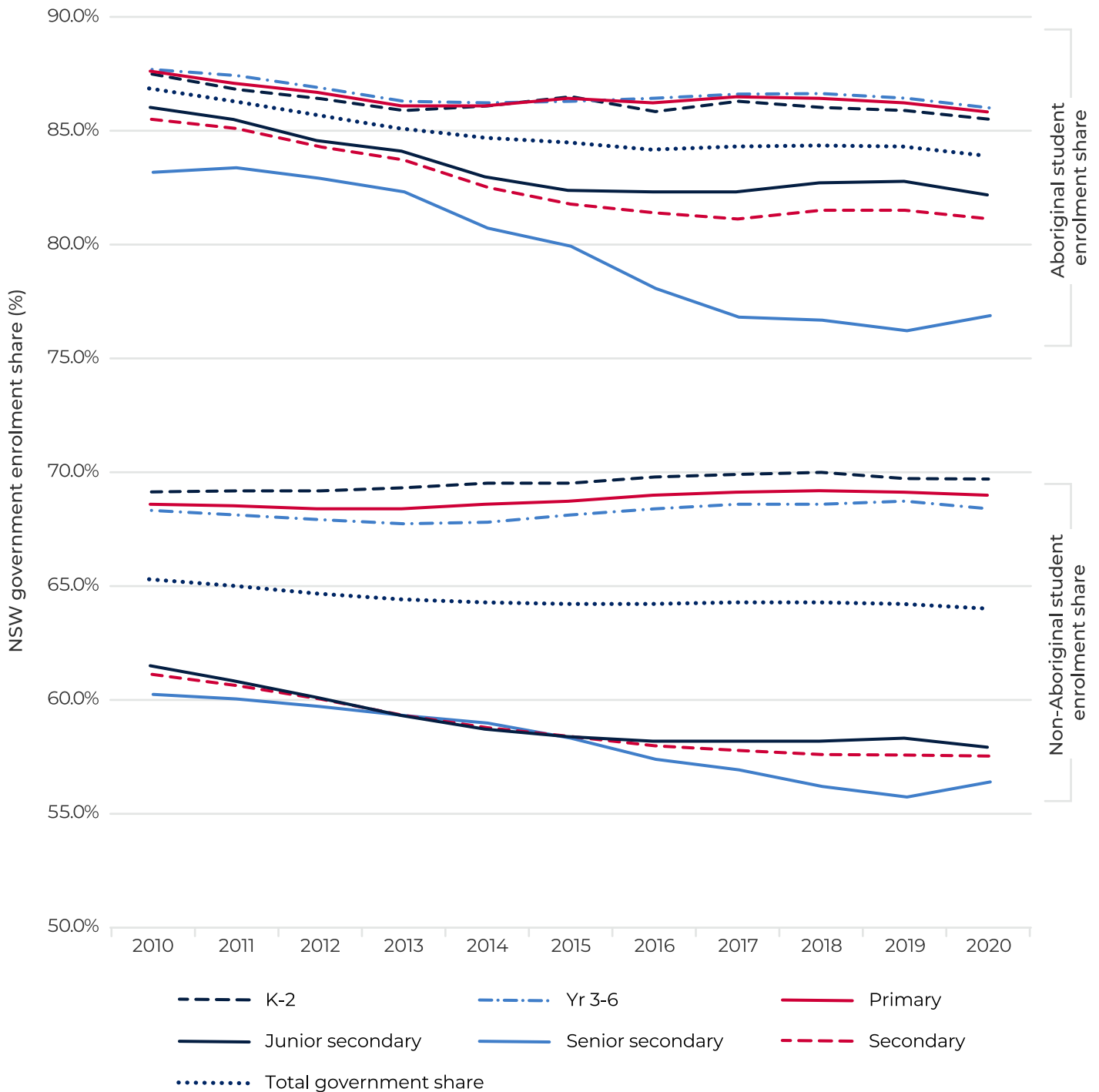
The difference in government enrolment share between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students was highest for junior secondary students, at 24.3 percentage points (Aboriginal students 82.2%, non-Aboriginal students 57.9%).

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 85.5% for this cohort, 15.8 percentage points higher than for non-Aboriginal students at 69.7%.

For both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, secondary enrolment share has consistently been lower than primary enrolment share. In 2020, Aboriginal students' secondary enrolment share was 4.7 percentage points lower than the primary enrolment share, compared with an 11.5 percentage point difference for non-Aboriginal students.

Figure 4

Percentage of NSW government enrolments (FTE) share by grade group, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, 2010-2020



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 4,300 children.

Table 5 shows that the number of children enrolled in government preschools decreased slightly by 45 children from 4,316 in 2019 to 4,271 in 2020. Full-time equivalent enrolments decreased by 36.8, from 2,294.5 in 2019 to 2,257.7 in 2020.

Aboriginal preschool enrolments accounted for 15.1% of FTE enrolments in 2020, a decrease of 1.2 percentage points from 2019. The number of Aboriginal preschool enrolments also fell slightly, with a decrease of 19 students or 3.0% in 2020.

In 2010 children were enrolled in government preschools for 17.3 hours on average (based on a nominal 30-hour week), with Aboriginal children enrolled for an average of 19.2 hours. By 2020, average enrolled hours had fallen to 15.9 hours for all children, and 16.5 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, 2010-2020

Year	All students		Aboriginal students		
	Students	FTE	Students	FTE	% of total FTE
2010	4,325	2,498.6	493	315.1	12.6%
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%

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 stable, increasing by only 2 students (0.3%) in 2020. The percentage of students enrolled in an early intervention program who were Aboriginal increased from 13.7% in 2019 to 14.1% in 2020.

Table 6

Number of students and enrolment full-time equivalents (FTE) in NSW government early intervention programs, 2012-2020

Year	All students		Aboriginal students		
	Students	FTE	Students	FTE	% of total FTE
2012	743	151.6	68	13.0	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%

Secondary enrolments by scholastic year

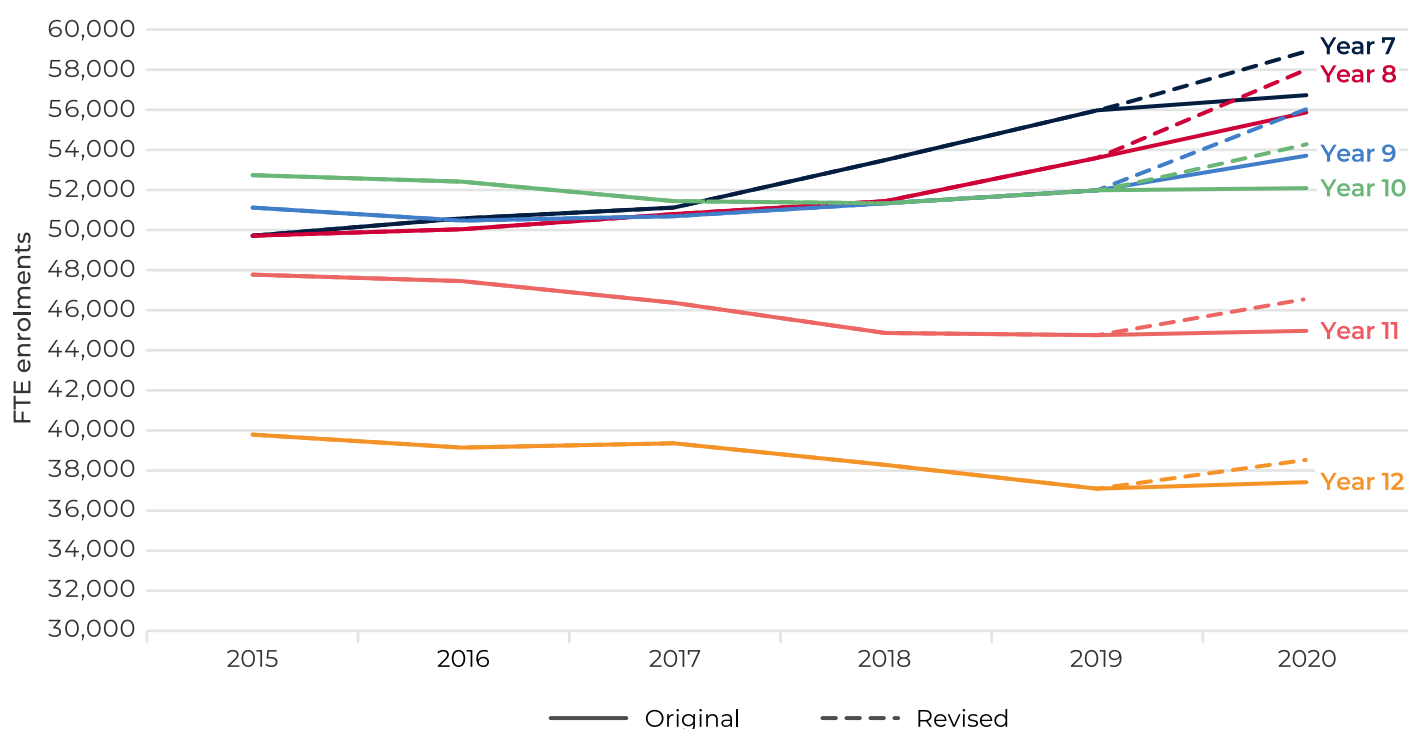
Figure 5 and Table 7 present secondary student enrolments by scholastic year from 2015 to 2020.

The number of NSW government students reported in Years 7 to 12 in 2020 is affected by the change in counting rules. In 2020, 11,629 students in mainstream support classes were reported to the ABS by their underlying grade of enrolment. Prior to 2020, this cohort of students would have been reported as 'ungraded' or 'support'. From 2020, only students in schools for specific purposes (SSPs) were reported as 'ungraded'. This has resulted in a break in series and as a result, 2020 data is not directly comparable to previous years.

The final columns of Table 7 show the impact of the revised counting rules on secondary scholastic years in 2020. The dashed line in Figure 5 presents the 2020 enrolment figures under the revised counting rules, while the solid lines show enrolments using the previous ('original') counting rules. Regardless of which counting rules were used, all secondary scholastic years experienced enrolment growth in 2020, for the first time in over 20 years.

Figure 5

Enrolments (FTE) of secondary students by scholastic year (excluding schools for specific purposes), 2015-2020



Notes:

- From 2020, students in mainstream support classes are reported by their underlying grade of enrolment (revised). Previous counting rule is displayed for comparison to previous years (original).

The largest increases in enrolments in 2020 were in Year 8 and Year 9. While Year 8 enrolments have grown every year since 2016, this was the second year in a row with large increases. 2020 was the first year when Year 9 enrolments rose significantly, following small increases since 2016. While the enrolment figures in Years 8 and 9 are inflated by the change in counting rules, much of the increase is due to the progression of large numbers of Kindergarten students enrolled in 2011 and 2012.

While Year 7 enrolments rose noticeably in 2018 and 2019, also as a result of Kindergarten enrolments from 2011 and 2012, enrolment growth slowed markedly in 2020 (using the original counting rules).

Year 10 enrolments remained fairly stable in 2020 when using the previous counting rules, however this follows annual declines from 2011 to 2018. In 2020, Years 11 and 12 enrolments increased for the first time in five years, following a period of declining enrolments each year from 2015. While these increases are inflated due to the change in recording of students in mainstream support classes, the enrolments still increased by 0.6 to 0.9 percentage points using the previous counting rules.

Table 7

Secondary enrolments by scholastic year (excluding schools for specific purposes), 2015-2020

Year level	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 original	2020 revised
Year 7	49,673	50,501	51,083	53,405	55,866	56,596	58,878
Year 8	49,657	49,953	50,749	51,359	53,505	55,729	58,049
Year 9	51,046	50,365	50,566	51,288	51,914	53,590	55,940
Year 10	52,690	52,355	51,332	51,279	51,933	52,056	54,180
Year 11	47,694.8	47,353.0	46,341.4	44,837.7	44,694.4	44,965.9	46,485.5
Year 12	39,760.3	39,084.9	39,355.4	38,286.5	37,103.4	37,450.6	38,484.3
Secondary ungraded	10,354.0	10,464.0	11,417.0	10,860.0	11,312.0	11,629.3	–
Total	300,875.1	300,075.9	300,843.8	301,315.2	306,327.8	312,016.8	312,016.8

Notes:

- From 2020, students in mainstream support classes are reported by their underlying grade of enrolment (revised). Previous counting rule is displayed for comparison to previous years (original).

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 2020 is the percentage of Year 10 enrolments in 2020 compared to Year 7 enrolments in 2017. 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 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, apparent retention rates are higher across all years and 2020 data is not directly comparable to previous years.

Table 8 and Figure 6 show NSW government apparent retention rates from 2010 to 2020. Year 7 to Year 10 retention rates have been over 100% since 2011, largely due to inter-state and international migration for students in Years 8, 9 and 10.

Table 8

Apparent retention rates by retention period and gender and in NSW government schools, 2010-2020

Year	Years 7-10			Years 7-11			Years 7-12			Years 10-11			Years 10-12		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
2010	99.4	100.2	99.8	81.1	89.7	85.3	64.9	74.8	69.7	84.8	92.2	88.4	67.1	77.4	72.2
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

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 table) are reported by their underlying grade of enrolment. This has resulted in an increase in apparent retention rates across all years. As a result, data from 2020 is not directly comparable to previous years.
- Refer to Explanatory note 2 – Apparent retention rates.

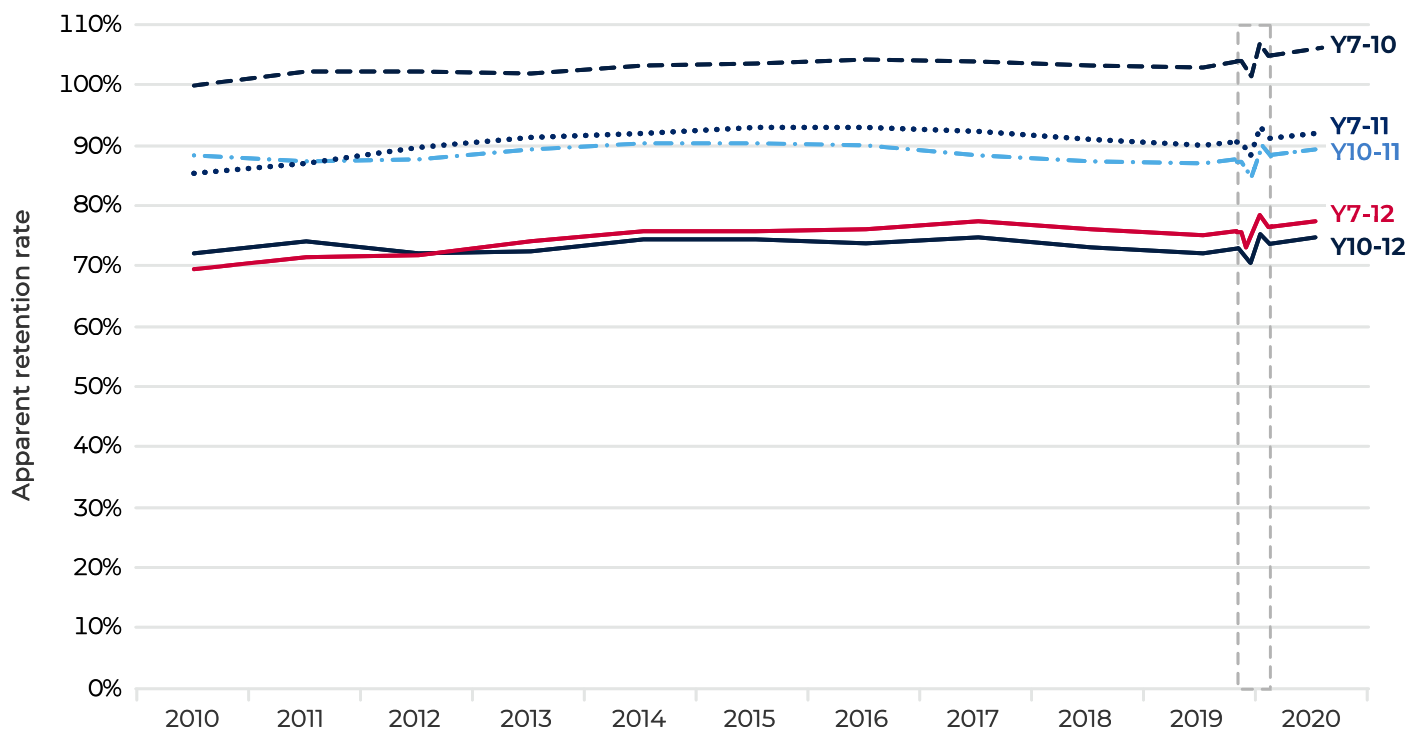
In 2020, apparent retention rates across all cohorts were higher than ten years prior in 2010, when the new school leaving age was introduced.

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 both the 2020 Year 10 to 12 and Year 7 to 12 apparent retention rates for girls 9.9 percentage points higher than boys.

Figure 6

Apparent retention rates by retention period in NSW government schools, 2010-2020



Note:

- From 2020, students in mainstream support classes (previously excluded from this data) are reported by their underlying grade of enrolment. This has resulted in an increase in apparent retention rates across all years. As a result, data from 2020 is not directly comparable to previous years.

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 contribute to the National School Statistics Collection (NSSC) which is collated by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) from state and territory student, school and staffing data. Preschool and early intervention data contribute 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 2020) divided by the total number of full-time students in a previous year (for example, Year 7 in 2015). This would be the Year 7 to 12 apparent retention rate in 2020.

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 under an agreement with the Australian government. Norfolk Island Central School was included in NSW data for the first time in 2016. It has not been designated an ABS Statistical Area Level 4 (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 'Notes' section under each table.

Further information

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

www.abs.gov.au

ABS publication details

4221.0 – Schools Australia, 2020

4240.0 – Preschool Education Australia, 2020

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