

NATIONAL OVERVIEW

1 The context of Australian schooling

1.1 Introduction

This *National Report on Schooling in Australia, 1997* is intended to inform the people of Australia about the schooling that was provided during 1997 to some 3.17 million full-time primary and secondary students enrolled in 9,609 schools in Australia's eight States and Territories. (Note: the term 'State' will be used throughout the *National Overview* to refer to both 'State' and 'Territory'.)

Primary and secondary schooling in Australia is delivered through both government and non-government providers, with slightly more than 70 per cent of students enrolled at government schools in 1997. This *National Report* contains information concerning the schooling provided by the government school sector in each State, and by the Catholic and independent school sectors — Australia's non-government schooling providers.

This *National Report* follows the format introduced with the 1995 *Report*. The first part comprises an extensive *National Overview*, which describes and broadly quantifies the structure and scope of schooling in Australia, then summarises national achievements in areas identified by education authorities as a focus for 1997. In the second part of the *National Report*, the States and the Commonwealth report in detail on their own specific priority objectives for 1997 and chart highlights of their progress towards achieving the Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia.

The *National Overview* incorporates detailed statistical information within the text of each section, enabling it to be read in the appropriate context. In early sections of the *National Overview*, key statistics serve to provide an understanding of the extent of schooling in Australia in terms of

schools and students, as well as the resourcing of teaching and learning and physical facilities. In later sections, statistics are used to quantify and report on progress in focus areas linked closely to the national goals for schooling.

The agreed focus area for Goals 1, 2, 4 and 5 in 1997 is school-industry linkages. Section 4 of the *National Overview* summarises the nature and extent of vocational education programs in schools, credit transfer and certification of courses taken by senior secondary students, and the arrangements and agreements in place to link senior students and their schools with industry.

Goal 3, with its equity focus, has Indigenous school students as its 1997 reporting focus and much of the emphasis here will be on States' reporting in accordance with agreements under the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programme (IESIP).

Goals 6–10, which relate to skills and knowledge, have one focus on languages other than English (LOTE) and another on technology.

1.2 Responsibility for schooling in Australia

State governments have the constitutional and major financial responsibility for school education in Australia. They are required to ensure the provision of schooling to all children of school age, necessitating the provision and administration of substantial funding for primary and secondary schooling.

Within each State, Ministers, departments, statutory authorities and individual schools (particularly in the case of non-government schools) variously determine policies and practices on such matters as curriculum, course accreditation, student assessment, resource allocation and utilisation, as well as teacher employment and professional development. States have also developed equity policies and programs which aim to provide quality schooling for all

students irrespective of their social background or geographic location.

The Commonwealth's policies and programs for schools and students are administered through the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA). Through DEETYA the Commonwealth provides significant supplementary financial input to State and non-government school authorities to support agreed priorities and strategies.

The Commonwealth also has specific responsibilities for the provision of financial assistance to students and for Australia's international relations in education, as well as shared responsibilities for schooling in Australia's external territories of Christmas Island, the Cocos (Keeling) Islands and Norfolk Island.

Roles shared with State and non-government school authorities include the identification of national priorities for schooling, promoting national consistency and coherence in the provision of schooling across Australia, and identifying strategies for achieving these aims.

1.3 MCEETYA

The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) comprises the State, Commonwealth and New Zealand Ministers with responsibility for the portfolios of education, employment, training and youth affairs. Papua New Guinea and Norfolk Island have observer status. It is the Ministerial forum for national collaboration in policy development and implementation relating to schooling in Australia, in the wider context of education and training, employment and youth culture.

Ministers whose portfolios include school education are responsible for both government and non-government schools. The Council, as a matter of principle, has established a range of consultative mechanisms at both national and State levels to obtain the views of the non-government school sector and, wherever possible, extends membership of its taskforces to the national bodies representing the non-government education authorities—the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) and the National Council of Independent Schools' Associations (NCISA).

Regular consultation also takes place with peak national bodies representing:

- parents – the Australian Council of State Schools Organisations (ACSSO) and the Australian Parents

Council (APC), representing government and non-government school parents respectively;

- teachers – the Australian Education Union (AEU) and the Independent Education Union of Australia (IEU), representing government and non-government school teachers respectively; and
- the business sector – the National Industry Education Forum (NIEF), representing a range of peak industry bodies, including the Business Council of Australia (BCA) and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI).

Two national research and development companies, partly or wholly funded by Commonwealth and State Ministers of education, facilitate cooperative initiatives in schooling:

- Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), founded in 1930, undertakes, promotes, disseminates and markets research and development projects, including educational and psychological tests; and
- Curriculum Corporation, which commenced full operation in 1990 in the development and publication of curriculum materials resulting from national collaboration. It is managed by a board comprising representatives from the government and non-government sectors and parent and teacher organisations.

MCEETYA held three meetings in 1997. Its ongoing work is undertaken through a number of taskforces which have clearly defined terms of reference and are subject to annual review. The Council is supported by a small, independent secretariat, which is funded by all governments and is located in Melbourne.

During 1997, national collaboration under MCEETYA resulted in a number of key initiatives to enhance schooling outcomes across the nation.

Literacy and numeracy benchmarks

In 1997, the priority previously given by Ministers to the development of strong literacy skills was extended to numeracy through the adoption of the amended national goal:

“that every child leaving primary school should be numerate, and be able to read, write, and spell at an appropriate level”.

Ministers committed themselves to achieving this goal by endorsing a national plan which includes the

comprehensive assessment of all students by teachers as early as possible in the first years of schooling to ensure the literacy and numeracy needs of all students are met, and to intervene as early as possible to address the needs of those students identified as at risk of not making adequate progress towards the national numeracy and literacy goals.

The plan also aims to use State-based assessment procedures to assess students against national benchmark standards for literacy and numeracy at years 3 and 5. Benchmark standards describe a minimum standard of achievement at each year level, expressed simply and briefly. Development of the benchmarks has been the responsibility of a MCEETYA taskforce representing all Australian governments and peak national non-government school authorities, working with Curriculum Corporation.

In 1997, work was commenced on the development of year 3 and year 5 benchmarks for numeracy, with the expectation that trialing would commence in 1998. Benchmarks on literacy for years 3 and 5 (writing, spelling and reading), development of which had commenced in 1996, were trialed and subsequently endorsed by Ministers subject to validation and wide consultation occurring on the final drafts, with a final sign off expected in April, 1998. Finalisation of benchmarks in speaking, listening and viewing is also expected in 1998.

In addition to the ongoing work of the taskforce in the development of year 3 and 5 benchmarks, the taskforce was asked to investigate issues in developing literacy and numeracy benchmarks for years 7 and 9/10 and to undertake a review of the literacy and numeracy benchmarks at the end of the first reporting cycle (data collection in 1998 for reporting in 1999).

National goals for schooling

In March 1997, Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to national collaboration and consultation in the pursuit of national goals for schooling. They also decided, that it was timely to review the Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling to ensure that they reflect current and possible future educational developments.

When Ministers agreed in 1989 to ten national goals for schooling it was acknowledged that those goals would need to be reviewed from time to time in response to the changing needs of the community. It was further agreed that future development and refinement of the goals should be undertaken as a consultative process involving both the government and non-government sectors of schooling in all States as well as the Commonwealth.

In June 1997, Ministers decided that a review of the goals should be undertaken by a specially constituted taskforce which would consult with key stakeholders in school education. The National Goals Taskforce includes representatives from all States, the peak non-government school authorities (NCEC and NCISA) and the Commonwealth. As part of its function, the taskforce is to undertake the development of additional statements of specific objectives and targets appropriate to each goal.

National strategy in schooling to prevent paedophilia and other forms of child abuse

Ministers adopted a national strategy in schooling to prevent paedophilia and other forms of child abuse. Key elements of the strategy include:

- the implementation of effective child protection education as an integrated part of ongoing health and personal development programs within the context of whole school approaches to student welfare;
- a commitment to inter-agency collaboration in child protection facilitated by common goals;
- the maintenance of information by employing authorities regarding certain agreed categories of employees, past employees, or applicants refused employment, and the sharing of information about their category status with other education authorities, using confidential processes and common and agreed procedures;
- police record checks for applicants for employment in school-based positions; and
- mandatory notification, either by legislation or by employer direction, for all school-based staff, of suspected sexual, physical and emotional abuse and neglect.

New Apprenticeships in schools

A framework and set of principles were agreed upon as guidelines to assist State and Territory government and non-government sectors, schools and industry to progressively implement apprenticeships and traineeships in schools from 1998. The implementation of these vocational education courses in schools was seen as an important element of the pathways between school education, training and higher education. The MCEETYA Taskforce on Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Schools will review the principles and framework by June

1998 and make recommendations regarding implementation for 1999 and beyond.

Ministers also agreed to establish a series of User Choice pilot programs for New Apprenticeships in schools to commence in 1998. The objective of User Choice is to increase the responsiveness of the vocational education and training system to the needs of users through allowing clients to negotiate and exercise direct influence over training delivery options including choice of provider, content, timing, location, sequencing and mode of delivery with public funds going to the provider of choice. These pilots will be evaluated in 1998 with a view to implementation of User Choice in 1999. (NB NSW reserved its position on User Choice).

1.4 The structure of schooling in Australia

Schools in Australia can be readily categorised as either government schools or non-government schools. Government schools, which are under the direct responsibility of the State education Ministers, enrol the large majority of students at both primary and secondary levels. Non-government schools include schools with religious affiliations and others independent of such links. Non-government schools, while not subject to direct Ministerial control, operate under conditions set by State government registration authorities. They are required, for example, to provide certain minimum educational standards and operate in satisfactory premises.

Most non-government schools have a religious affiliation, most commonly with the Catholic church; 65.8 per cent of all non-government schools in Australia in 1997 were Catholic and 66.2 per cent of full-time non-government students were enrolled in those schools. Non-government, non-Catholic schools, referred to in this report as independent schools, totalled 881 schools in 1997.

Schooling is compulsory from age 6–15 in all States except Tasmania, where compulsion extends to 16. In most States, however, children start primary school at the age of five, when they enrol in a preparatory or kindergarten year, after which primary education continues for either six or seven years, depending on the State (Figure 1A). In 1997, there were in excess of 1.85 million full-time primary students in Australia, of whom 73.7 per cent were enrolled in government schools. All government primary schools and most non-government primary schools are co-educational.

Figure 1A. The structure of primary and secondary schooling in Australia

Level	NSW, Vic., Tas., ACT	SA, NT	Qld, WA
Year 12	SECONDARY	SECONDARY	SECONDARY
Year 11			
Year 10			
Year 9			
Year 8			
Year 7	PRIMARY	PRIMARY	PRIMARY
Year 6			
Year 5			
Year 4			
Year 3			
Year 2			
Year 1			
Pre-Year 1	(a)	(b)	

(a) Pre-year 1 is known as Kindergarten (K) in NSW & ACT and Preparatory (Prep or P) in Vic. & Tas.

(b) Pre-year 1 is known as Reception (R) in SA and Transition (T) in NT.

Note Pre-year 1 is not included in the pattern of study in Qld or WA.

Secondary education is available for either five or six years, depending on the State and the length of primary education. Students usually commence their secondary schooling at age 12 or 13, reaching year 12 when 17 or 18. In 1997, 1.32 million full-time secondary students were enrolled in Australian schools, with 65.6 per cent of those enrolments in government schools. Most government secondary schools are co-educational, but a significant number of non-government schools are single-sex.

1.5 National goals and 1997 priorities

Although schooling is provided to students in Australia through eight separate and distinct State government systems, and through large numbers of non-government providers in each State, there exists a significant degree of national agreement about its underlying objectives. The nationally agreed goals for schooling, listed at the beginning of this chapter, underpin that agreement and provide a framework for the development of specific objectives and strategies.

The Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia are acknowledged by all Australian governments as an appropriate basis for the collaborative efforts required

to enhance Australian schooling. The goals are not static, Ministers having adopted a new goal on literacy and numeracy in 1997. In addition, planned, periodic review, such as that undertaken in 1997, is intended to ensure they continue to reflect the changing needs of Australian society.

Individual States' and authorities' priority objectives for 1997 were all closely related to the national goals. In those objectives, State government systems and non-government providers sought to reflect and respond to the needs of their students and the communities from which they came. A recurring fundamental objective was that all students should develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to fulfil their individual potential. Young people were encouraged to remain at school longer and to prepare themselves as fully as possible for participation in work or further study after the end of their schooling.

System and individual school authorities determined a broad range of objectives for schooling in the government sector in 1997. Common objectives included:

- improved learning outcomes for students, with literacy and numeracy among targeted areas and increased monitoring and benchmarking among strategies used;
- targeting excellence in teaching and learning, by aiming to further develop skills and effective classroom practices, increasing the use of technology in education, and adopting school leadership and management strategies;
- further developing community confidence and partnership in public education through closer linking with parents and community, more focussed reporting of student outcomes, student and parent participation in decision making, and reporting of school performance;
- working to ensure the provision of safe, challenging and creative schools, through areas such as child protection, student welfare, personal and community health and well-being and school attendance; and
- incorporating strategies to ensure that programs addressed the needs of all students.

Reporting from both Catholic and independent sectors indicated support for this broad range of objectives, while also showing evidence of being shaped by a range of religious and other factors specific to the ethos and environment of individual schools. The key contribution of schools to their students' individual growth and spiritual development, was commonly expressed by church-affiliated schools. Schools with strong ethnic or Indigenous links sought to develop an awareness of that particular culture and its importance in multi-cultural Australia, viewing those

links as important to the social development of their students, assisting with the development of self-image and the ability to relate to others.

In 1997, the Commonwealth Government sought to enhance the educational outcomes of all school students in Australia by providing support for schools and educational systems through its funding programs and through policy development and research on and analysis of nationally significant issues in the area of education.

Within the context of the Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia, the Commonwealth's policies and programs aimed to address aspects of schooling in Australia which had implications for the achievement of national social and economic goals.

The Commonwealth's highest priority in 1997 was the improvement of the literacy and numeracy skills of all young Australians, on the basis that the attainment of appropriate skills in these key areas is a prerequisite for achievement in subsequent education and training and is critical to successful participation in the labour market. This priority was reflected in the Commonwealth's strong support for the decision by Ministers in March 1997 to adopt a new national literacy and numeracy goal and a national plan for assessment, intervention and reporting on literacy and numeracy in primary schools.

Other top priorities for the Commonwealth in 1997 were:

- to assist the transition of young people from school to work through a stronger national focus on vocational education and training and provision of options for all students, particularly those who do not wish to proceed to higher education;
- to support choice in schooling in the interests of freedom of expression, diversity, innovation and greater accountability;
- to assist educationally disadvantaged students to access and participate in education in order to maximise their educational outcomes;
- to accelerate the improvement of educational outcomes for Indigenous students so that the level of those outcomes is similar to the level achieved by other Australian students;
- to support civics and citizenship education in schools with the aim of ensuring that all students leaving school are prepared for informed and responsible participation in civic life; and
- to enhance the development and professionalism of teachers and principals to meet the increasing demands

of educational, social, economic and technological change.

1.6 Key statistics on schooling in Australia in 1997

Table 1A draws together a selection of key data elements from tables and figures presented elsewhere in this National Overview to present a numerical 'snapshot' view of schooling in Australia in 1997. Its selected indicators summarise the scope, sectoral breakdown, involvement of teaching and other personnel, student participation and the level of expenditure involved in schooling to meet the needs of Australia's population in 1997.

Australia's population

From Table 1B, which charts the population of Australia by age group, it can be calculated that from 1996 to 1997 the estimated resident population of Australia has grown by 221,533 persons or approximately 1.2 per cent.

It is also possible to see that the 5–14 age group — that most closely approximating the years of compulsory schooling — is estimated to have grown by 13,840 persons, or 0.5 per cent, in the year to 30 June 1997.

Table 1B also provides on-going evidence of the relative aging of Australia's population. In 1986 the 5–14 cohort comprised 15.5 per cent of the total Australian population (already down from 17.3 per cent in 1981). By 1991 the

cohort represented only 14.5 per cent of the population, decreasing further to 14.3 per cent in 1996 and 14.2 per cent by 1997. The size of the 0–4 cohort actually decreased by 0.4 per cent from 1996 to 1997, further contributing to the continued relative aging.

Figure 1B makes clear the changing rates of growth of the total Australian population and of the 5–14 cohort in particular. Both continued to grow in 1997, although each did so more slowly than in the previous year. The 5–14 cohort, in fact, grew at around 44 per cent of the rate at which the total population grew. The changes occurring in the rates of population growth and distribution continue to provide challenges for the planning of schooling.

Table 1B. Population by age group, selected years, Australia

Age	1986	1991	1996	1997
0–4	1,208,485	1,271,703	1,297,049	1,292,230
5–14	2,491,033	2,513,827	2,614,266	2,628,106
15–19	1,347,222	1,364,074	1,279,119	1,294,551
20–29	2,685,176	2,796,427	2,814,881	2,826,836
30–39	2,535,899	2,754,122	2,900,508	2,904,763
40–49	1,856,604	2,323,416	2,649,021	2,671,143
50–59	1,492,387	1,572,884	1,842,331	1,946,832
60+	2,401,544	2,687,583	2,913,539	2,967,786
Total	16,018,350	17,284,036	18,310,714	18,532,247

Source: ABS Cat. No. 3101.0 *Australian Demographic Statistics*, December Qtr 1997 and earlier publications

Table 1A. Key features of Australian schooling, 1997

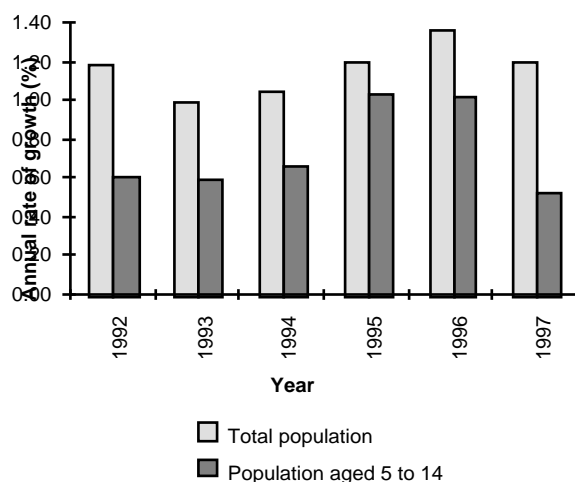
	<i>G o v t</i>	<i>N o n - g o v t</i>	<i>T o t a l</i>
Schools	7,029	2,580	9,609
Students (full-time)			
All students	2,230,052	941,572	3,171,624
Indigenous students	84,854	11,953	96,807
Full-fee paying overseas students	2,490	10,892	13,326
Staff (in schools) (FTE)	182,388	79,552	261,940
Teachers (in schools) (FTE)	145,536	61,523	207,059
Expenditure (1996–97) – government schools	\$11.9 billion	n.a.	n.a.
Apparent retention rates to year 12 (per cent)			
Males	59.6	80.1	66.2
Females	72.1	89.7	77.8
Persons	65.7	84.8	71.8
Participation rates (per cent)			
16 year olds	—	—	80.1
17 year olds	—	—	60.2
Full-time student/teaching staff ratios			
Primary	17.6	18.7	17.9
Secondary	12.7	12.8	12.7

Note: Components may not add to totals due to rounding.

n.a. Not available.

Sources: ABS Cat. No. 4221.0 *Schools, Australia*, 1997 and MCEETYA, *National Schools Statistics Collection*, 1997

Figure 1B. Percentage change in total Australian population and population aged 5–14, 1992–1997



Source: ABS Cat. No. 3101.0 *Australian Demographic Statistics*, March 1997 and earlier publications

Schools in Australia in 1997

There were 9,609 schools operating in Australia in August 1997, a decrease of 21 since 1996. The number of non-government schools increased by 38 to 2,580, while the number of government schools decreased by 59 to 7,029 (Table 1D). Table 1C shows the percentage change in the number of schools in each State. The decrease in the number of schools in some States was in part due to the amalgamation of schools into multi-campus institutions.

Primary schools comprised 70.5 per cent of schools in Australia in 1997 while 15.8 per cent were secondary schools. A further 9.8 per cent of schools were combined primary/secondary schools and 3.9 per cent were special schools (Figure 1C).

Of the 6,773 schools across all sectors which offered only primary education, 29.4 per cent had less than 100 enrolments, a further 17.3 per cent had between 100 and 200 enrolments and only 11.6 per cent had more than 500 enrolments. These figures suggest a slight move towards larger primary schools, with 1997 having a smaller percentage of schools with less than 200 enrolments and a larger percentage of schools with more than 500 students, than the previous year.

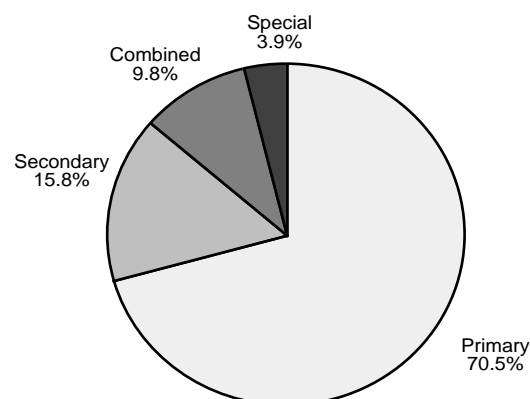
Of the schools providing secondary education only 3.0 per cent had less than 100 students, 3.6 per cent with enrolment levels from 100 to 200 and 70.7 per cent had more than 500 enrolments. The 942 Australian schools which offered both primary and secondary schooling ranged in size and focus

from small schools in rural locations with less than 40 total enrolments (27 schools in total), to large, urban area schools with more than 1,500 student enrolments.

Nationally, there was a net increase of 38 non-government schools from 1996 to 1997 (1.5 per cent growth). The majority (33 additional schools) of that increase comprised new independent schools. Forty-five per cent of the growth in non-government schools occurred in New South Wales, although significant numbers of new schools were also established in Western Australia, Queensland and Victoria.

Settlement patterns have helped to determine the numbers of schools of different types and levels in the different States. For example, South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory have higher proportions of sparsely populated rural areas and comparatively fewer secondary schools. Those same States, along with Tasmania, also have a greater proportion of smaller towns and centres and a resultant higher proportion of schools offering combined primary/secondary education programs.

Figure 1C. Percentage of schools, by category, 1997



Source: ABS Cat. No. 4221.0 *Schools, Australia*, 1997

Table 1C. Percentage change in number of schools, by State and category, 1996–97

State	Govt	Non-govt	Total
New South Wales	—	1.7	0.5
Victoria	- 2.3	0.7	- 1.4
Queensland	- 0.4	1.7	0.1
South Australia	- 1.5	1.0	- 0.9
Western Australia	0.4	3.5	1.2
Tasmania	- 3.1	- 4.3	- 3.3
Northern Territory	- 0.7	7.4	0.6
Australian Capital Territory	—	2.5	0.7
Australia	- 0.8	1.5	- 0.2

Sources: ABS Cat. No. 4221.0 *Schools, Australia*, 1996 and 1997

Table 1D. Number of schools by category (and non-government affiliation) and level of education, by State, 1997

	<i>Government</i>		<i>Non-government</i>			<i>All schools</i>	
			<i>Catholic</i>	<i>Independent</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
New South Wales							
Primary	1,649		424	112	536	2,185	22.7
Secondary	389		131	22	153	542	5.6
Combined prim/sec	64		32	130	162	226	2.4
Special	84		6	25	31	115	1.2
Total	2,186		593	289	882	3,068	31.9
Victoria							
Primary	1,267		386	64	450	1,717	17.9
Secondary	272		92	15	107	379	3.9
Combined prim/sec	40		10	103	113	153	1.6
Special	82		6	8	14	96	1.0
Total	1,661		494	190	684	2,345	24.4
Queensland							
Primary	996		192	48	240	1,236	12.9
Secondary	187		65	14	79	266	2.8
Combined prim/sec	73		15	81	96	169	1.8
Special	53		0	2	2	55	0.6
Total	1,309		272	145	417	1,726	18.0
South Australia							
Primary	472		75	46	121	593	6.2
Secondary	79		13	12	25	104	1.1
Combined prim/sec	69		17	29	46	115	1.2
Special	21		2	2	4	25	0.3
Total	641		107	89	196	837	8.7
Western Australia							
Primary	516		108	44	152	668	7.0
Secondary	96		26	10	36	132	1.4
Combined prim/sec	93		16	58	74	167	1.7
Special	62		1	1	2	64	0.7
Total	767		151	113	264	1,031	10.7
Tasmania							
Primary	144		25	9	34	178	1.9
Secondary	41		5	1	6	47	0.5
Combined prim/sec	26		7	19	26	52	0.5
Special	11		0	1	1	12	0.1
Total	222		37	30	67	289	3.0
Northern Territory							
Primary	86		7	9	16	102	1.1
Secondary	11		2	3	5	16	0.2
Combined prim/sec	42		6	2	8	50	0.5
Special	5		0	0	0	5	0.1
Total	144		15	14	29	173	1.8
Australian Capital Territory							
Primary	69		22	3	25	94	1.0
Secondary	24		6	1	7	31	0.3
Combined prim/sec	1		2	7	9	10	0.1
Special	5		0	0	0	5	0.1
Total	99		30	11	41	140	1.5
Australia							
Primary	5,199		1,239	335	1,574	6,773	70.5
Secondary	1,099		340	78	418	1,517	15.8
Combined prim/sec	408		105	429	534	942	9.8
Special	323		15	39	54	377	3.9
Total all schools 1997	7,029		1,699	881	2,580	9,609	100.0
1996	7,088		1,694	848	2,542	9,630	100.0
1995	7,122		1,693	833	2,526	9,648	100.0

Note: Components may not add to totals due to rounding.

Source: ABS Cat. No. 4221.0, *Schools, Australia*, 1997

Students in Australia in 1997

There were 3,171,624 full-time students attending schools in Australia, representing an increase of 28,609 (0.9 per cent) over the 1996 total. Enrolments of full-time students in government schools increased by 8,495 (0.4 per cent) from the 1996 total, a far smaller increase in terms of actual student numbers and percentage increase, than had occurred from 1995–1996. The number of full-time students attending non-government schools maintained the level of increase shown a year earlier, increasing by 20,114 students (2.2 per cent) from the 1996 enrolment total. Around 70 per cent of the total increase in full-time student numbers occurred in non-government schools.

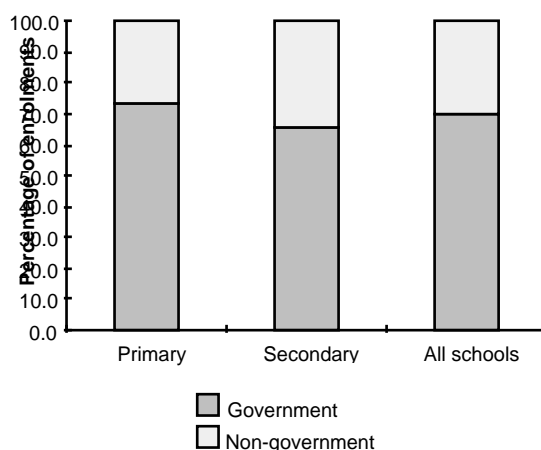
In 1997, 70.3 per cent of all full-time students in Australia attended government schools, a marginal decline from the 70.7 per cent in 1996. As shown in Table 1E and Figure 1D, 73.7 per cent of primary students and 65.6 per cent of secondary students attended government schools.

All States had students enrolled part-time in government as well as non-government secondary schools. There was no national consistency of enrolment policy or course availability for part-time students. Data about the age of part-time secondary students were not collected by all States.

A total of 26,040 secondary students attended part-time, an increase of 3,006 students (13.1 per cent) from the 1996 total. This total was equivalent to 10,482.7 full-time equivalent (FTE) students, a 16 per cent increase over the comparable 1996 figure. Changed only marginally from 1996, 66.6 per cent of part-time students in 1997 were undertaking year 11 or year 12 and 97.1 per cent attended government schools.

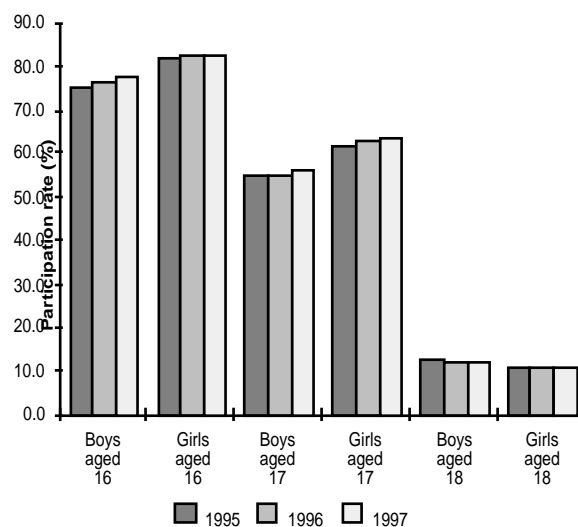
At the national level, apparent retention rates of full-time secondary students to year 12 increased to 71.8 per cent in 1997. The overall rate for girls was 77.8 per cent (up from 77.0 per cent), while that for boys was 66.2 per cent (up from 65.9 per cent). The apparent retention rate for government schools was 65.7 per cent in 1997. The apparent retention of boys in government schools decreased from 59.8 per cent in 1996 to 59.6 per cent in 1997, the rate for girls increasing from 72.0 per cent in 1996 to 72.1 per cent in 1997. An increased apparent retention rate to year 12 for students attending non-government schools (from 83.2 per cent in 1996 to 84.8 per cent in 1997) resulted from increased rates for both boys and girls. As in previous years, girls were more likely to remain at school until year 12 than boys in both government and non-government schools.

Figure 1D. Percentage of full-time student enrolments, by school type and level of schooling, Australia, 1997



Source: ABS Cat. No. 4221.0 *Schools, Australia, 1997*

Figure 1E. Participation of 16–18 year olds in schooling, by gender, Australia, 1995–1997



Source: ABS Cat. No. 4221.0, *Schools, Australia, 1995, 1996 and 1997*

Nationally, the rate of participation in schooling of those aged 15–19 continued the growth of recent years, growing from 48.8 per cent in 1996 to 49.5 per cent in 1997. This reflected an increase in the participation rates for this age group in all States. From Figure 1E it can be seen that participation rates for 16-year-olds and 17-year-olds of both genders increased from 1995 to 1997. Figure 1E also shows clearly the higher participation rate for girls in each of these two age cohorts.

Table 1E. Proportion of full-time students enrolled in government and non-government schools by level of education (a) (b), by State, selected years (per cent)

Level of education	1991			1996			1997		
	Govt	Cath.	Indep.	Govt	Cath.	Indep.	Govt	Cath.	Indep.
New South Wales									
Primary	74.1	20.5	5.4	73.9	19.7	6.4	73.7	19.5	6.8
Junior secondary	69.8	21.2	8.9	69.0	21.2	9.8	68.4	21.4	10.2
Senior secondary	66.9	21.9	11.1	64.7	23.2	12.1	64.6	23.2	12.2
Total secondary	69.0	21.4	9.5	67.9	21.7	10.4	67.4	21.9	10.7
Total	72.0	20.9	7.2	71.3	20.5	8.1	71.0	20.5	8.4
Victoria									
Primary	69.9	23.6	6.5	69.7	23.2	7.1	69.6	23.1	7.3
Junior secondary	65.3	21.2	13.5	63.4	22.0	14.6	63.0	22.2	14.8
Senior secondary	63.3	20.6	16.1	60.6	21.9	17.5	60.5	21.9	17.6
Total secondary	64.7	21.0	14.3	62.6	22.0	15.4	62.3	22.1	15.6
Total	67.6	22.4	10.0	66.6	22.7	10.7	66.4	22.7	11.0
Queensland									
Primary	78.7	16.1	5.2	77.2	15.7	7.1	76.8	15.7	7.5
Junior secondary	70.1	17.2	12.8	66.5	18.0	15.5	66.2	18.1	15.7
Senior secondary	67.8	18.3	13.9	63.4	19.1	17.5	63.0	19.2	17.7
Total secondary	69.2	17.6	13.2	65.5	18.4	16.1	65.1	18.5	16.4
Total	75.0	16.7	8.3	72.6	16.8	10.7	72.2	16.8	11.0
South Australia									
Primary	78.3	13.6	8.1	74.8	15.0	10.2	73.9	15.2	10.8
Junior secondary	72.1	15.2	12.6	68.6	17.0	14.4	67.8	17.2	14.9
Senior secondary	69.9	15.9	14.2	63.3	18.8	17.9	62.4	18.9	18.6
Total secondary	71.3	15.5	13.3	66.9	17.6	15.5	66.1	17.8	16.1
Total	75.7	14.3	10.0	72.1	15.9	12.0	71.2	16.1	12.7
Western Australia									
Primary	79.1	15.6	5.4	77.1	16.1	6.7	76.4	16.4	7.2
Junior secondary	70.6	18.0	11.4	67.7	18.5	13.8	67.7	18.4	13.9
Senior secondary	68.1	18.3	13.6	65.5	18.8	15.7	65.1	19.1	15.8
Total secondary	69.8	18.1	12.1	67.0	18.6	14.4	66.8	18.7	14.5
Total	75.5	16.5	7.9	73.2	17.1	9.7	72.7	17.3	10.0
Tasmania									
Primary	77.7	15.2	7.0	76.5	15.9	7.6	76.7	15.8	7.5
Junior secondary	74.5	14.4	11.1	72.6	15.5	11.9	72.6	15.6	11.7
Senior secondary	77.8	12.2	10.0	70.6	16.3	13.1	71.5	15.9	12.7
Total secondary	75.3	13.9	10.8	72.2	15.7	12.2	72.3	15.7	12.0
Total	76.7	14.6	8.7	74.6	15.8	9.6	74.8	15.7	9.5
Northern Territory									
Primary	82.4	13.5	4.1	80.5	14.0	5.5	80.2	14.2	5.6
Junior secondary	75.6	14.7	9.7	71.1	13.3	15.7	68.9	13.7	17.4
Senior secondary	85.7	8.2	6.1	77.9	9.9	12.2	79.1	9.6	11.3
Total secondary	78.6	12.8	8.6	72.7	12.5	14.8	71.6	12.6	15.8
Total	81.2	13.3	5.5	78.2	13.5	8.3	77.6	13.7	8.7
Australian Capital Territory									
Primary	68.3	26.1	5.6	68.1	26.0	5.9	67.4	26.6	6.0
Junior secondary	60.0	28.5	11.5	58.0	29.6	12.4	57.8	29.7	12.5
Senior secondary	71.4	19.8	8.8	69.4	20.7	9.9	69.4	20.9	9.7
Total secondary	63.8	25.6	10.6	61.7	26.7	11.6	61.5	26.9	11.6
Total	66.2	25.8	7.9	65.1	26.3	8.5	64.7	26.7	8.6
Australia									
Primary	74.9	19.2	5.9	74.0	18.9	7.1	73.7	18.9	7.4
Junior secondary	68.7	19.9	11.3	66.9	20.3	12.8	66.4	20.5	13.1
Senior secondary	66.9	19.6	13.4	63.7	21.0	15.3	63.5	21.0	15.5
Total secondary	68.3	19.8	12.0	66.0	20.5	13.5	65.6	20.6	13.8
Total	72.1	19.5	8.4	70.7	19.6	9.7	70.3	19.6	10.0

Note: Components may not add to totals due to rounding.

(a) As from 1990, students in special schools have been allocated to either primary or secondary education on the basis of age – primary if aged 12 or under and secondary if over 12.

(b) Junior secondary comprises years 7–10 in NSW, Vic., Tas. & ACT and years 8–10 in Qld, SA, WA & NT.

Sources: ABS Cat. No. 4221.0, *Schools, Australia*, 1997 and earlier related publications

Table 1F. Full-time students, by level of education (a) (b), category of school (and non-government affiliation), and gender, by State, 1997

	Primary	Junior secondary (b)	Senior secondary yr 11–12	Total secondary	Total
Government					
New South Wales	453,142	233,481	76,294	309,775	762,917
Victoria	304,773	154,013	59,690	213,703	518,476
Queensland	267,147	100,605	47,511	148,116	415,263
South Australia	118,812	40,267	17,432	57,699	176,511
Western Australia	145,088	54,932	26,055	80,987	226,075
Tasmania	35,663	20,567	6,691	27,258	62,921
Northern Territory	20,350	5,652	2,292	7,944	28,294
Australian Capital Territory	22,032	11,191	6,372	17,563	39,595
Australia	1,367,007	620,708	242,337	863,045	2,230,052
Males	705,001	319,408	116,465	435,873	1,140,874
Females	662,006	301,300	125,872	427,172	1,089,178
Catholic					
New South Wales	120,168	73,110	27,345	100,455	220,623
Victoria	101,310	54,398	21,583	75,981	177,291
Queensland	54,605	27,550	14,471	42,021	96,626
South Australia	24,479	10,230	5,289	15,519	39,998
Western Australia	31,178	14,961	7,660	22,621	53,799
Tasmania	7,321	4,431	1,484	5,915	13,236
Northern Territory	3,607	1,123	279	1,402	5,009
Australian Capital Territory	8,683	5,760	1,915	7,675	16,358
Australia	351,351	191,563	80,026	271,589	622,940
Males	178,444	96,547	38,254	134,801	313,245
Females	172,907	95,016	41,772	136,788	309,695
Independent					
New South Wales	41,609	34,645	14,426	49,071	90,680
Victoria	32,055	36,192	17,410	53,602	85,657
Queensland	25,932	23,910	13,375	37,285	63,217
South Australia	17,384	8,854	5,193	14,047	31,431
Western Australia	13,582	11,304	6,317	17,621	31,203
Tasmania	3,487	3,326	1,187	4,513	8,000
Northern Territory	1,413	1,424	326	1,750	3,163
Australian Capital Territory	1,969	2,421	891	3,312	5,281
Australia	137,431	122,076	59,125	181,201	318,632
Males	69,674	61,883	29,096	90,979	160,653
Females	67,757	60,193	30,029	90,222	157,979
Total non-government					
New South Wales	161,777	107,755	41,771	149,526	311,303
Victoria	133,365	90,590	38,993	129,583	262,948
Queensland	80,537	51,460	27,846	79,306	159,843
South Australia	41,863	19,084	10,482	29,566	71,429
Western Australia	44,760	26,265	13,977	40,242	85,002
Tasmania	10,808	7,757	2,671	10,428	21,236
Northern Territory	5,020	2,547	605	3,152	8,172
Australian Capital Territory	10,652	8,181	2,806	10,987	21,639
Australia	488,782	313,639	139,151	452,790	941,572
Males	248,118	158,430	67,350	225,780	473,898
Females	240,664	155,209	71,801	227,010	467,674
All schools					
New South Wales	614,919	341,236	118,065	459,301	1,074,220
Victoria	438,138	244,603	98,683	343,286	781,424
Queensland	347,684	152,065	75,357	227,422	575,106
South Australia	160,675	59,351	27,914	87,265	247,940
Western Australia	189,848	81,197	40,032	121,229	311,077
Tasmania	46,471	28,324	9,362	37,686	84,157
Northern Territory	25,370	8,199	2,897	11,096	36,466
Australian Capital Territory	32,684	19,372	9,178	28,550	61,234
Australia	1,855,789	934,347	381,488	1,315,835	3,171,624
Males	953,119	477,838	183,815	661,653	1,614,772
Females	902,670	456,509	197,673	654,182	1,556,852

(a) As from 1990, students in special schools have been allocated to either primary or secondary education on the basis of age – primary if aged 12 or under and secondary if over 12.

(b) Junior secondary comprises years 7–10 in NSW, Vic., Tas. & ACT and years 8–10 in Qld, SA, WA & NT.

Source: ABS Cat. No. 4221.0, *Schools, Australia*, 1997

Table 1G. Number of full-time students, actual and projected (a), by level of education and category of school, Australia, selected years ('000 as at July each year)

Year	Primary (b) (c)			Secondary (c)			Total		
	Govt	Non-govt	Total (d)	Govt	Non-govt	Total (d)	Govt	Non-govt	Total (d)
1981	1,485	386	1,871	814	302	1,116	2,299	688	2,987
1986	1,290	410	1,700	918	384	1,301	2,208	794	3,001
1990	1,323	441	1,763	871	407	1,278	2,193	848	3,042
1991	1,339	448	1,787	879	410	1,289	2,217	858	3,075
1992	1,352	453	1,804	882	412	1,295	2,234	865	3,099
1993	1,359	457	1,816	869	414	1,282	2,228	870	3,098
1994	1,361	465	1,826	854	419	1,274	2,215	884	3,099
1995	1,361	472	1,834	847	429	1,276	2,208	901	3,110
1996	1,367	481	1,848	854	441	1,295	2,222	921	3,143
1997	1,367	489	1,856	863	453	1,316	2,230	942	3,172
1998	1,372	497	1,870	867	462	1,329	2,239	959	3,199
1999	1,377	507	1,884	870	471	1,341	2,246	978	3,225
2000	1,383	516	1,899	868	479	1,347	2,251	994	3,245
2001	1,384	522	1,906	866	486	1,352	2,250	1,007	3,258
2002	1,385	526	1,911	867	495	1,362	2,252	1,021	3,273
2003	1,387	530	1,917	870	505	1,375	2,257	1,035	3,292
2004	1,395	535	1,929	876	514	1,390	2,270	1,049	3,319
2005	1,400	537	1,937	877	526	1,403	2,277	1,063	3,340
2006	1,406	539	1,945	884	536	1,420	2,290	1,075	3,365
2007	1,411	541	1,952	884	544	1,428	2,296	1,085	3,381

(a) Figures for 1998 and beyond are based on 1996 and 1997 actual enrolments and the maintenance of 1996/97 grade progression ratios. They will not reflect such factors as the effects of future changes in education and immigration and other government policies and social and economic conditions.

(b) Prior to 1984 ungraded students were classified as primary students.

(c) From 1984 students in special schools have been allocated to either primary or secondary education.

(d) Components may not add to totals due to rounding.

Source: Commonwealth DEETYA

As well as reporting the number of full-time students in Australian schools in total and also by sector, level, and State, Table 1F also details the gender balance of Australia's school students in 1997. In 1997, 50.9 per cent of full-time students in schools were male. Gender relativity was not maintained across all levels and providers of schooling. For example although male students comprised 51.1 per cent of all junior secondary students, the situation was reversed at senior secondary, where only 48.2 per cent of full-time students were male. Male students at senior secondary were out-numbered by females in government, Catholic and independent schools.

Information provided by the Commonwealth in Table 1G gives an overview of both the historical changes in the total

number of students in Australian schools and of the projected growth in student numbers until the early years of the next century.

Table 1G indicates that:

- there was an increasing number of children attending non-government primary and secondary schools, through the period from 1981 to 1997;
- the growth of enrolments in non-government schools averaged 3.1 per cent per annum from 1981 to 1986, 1.6 per cent per annum in 1986–91, and 1.6 per cent per annum during 1991–97; and
- projections as far ahead as 2007 suggest a continuing annual growth in non-government school enrolments over the next ten years.

During the period covered by Table 1G enrolment levels in government schools show significant fluctuations. For example:

- a large fall in the number of students in government primary schools between 1981 and 1986 was followed by a period from 1986 to 1996 when primary enrolments increased every year;
- government primary school enrolments are expected to increase in 1998, fluctuate marginally during the next five years, and then to grow noticeably until 2007; and
- secondary enrolments in government schools in 1997 continued the growth trend away from a low in 1995. After a slight dip around the turn of the century, levels should grow, peaking in nine or ten years time.

Teaching and non-teaching staff in Australia in 1997

The number of teaching and non-teaching staff (in full-time equivalents) in both government and non-government schools again increased in 1997. The total number of teachers increased by 3,087 (1.5 per cent) to 207,059. Total staff increased by 4,115 (1.6 per cent) to 261,940.

Considered nationally, full-time student/teaching staff ratios fell marginally at primary level in government and non-government schools from 1996 to 1997. The equivalent ratios at secondary level remained unchanged.

Females comprised 78.3 per cent of all primary teachers (78.0 per cent in government schools and 79.2 per cent in

non-government schools). The gender imbalance for teachers in secondary schools was far less extreme than in primary schools, with 57.6 per cent of secondary teachers being females (57.8 per cent in government schools and 57.4 per cent in non-government schools). The percentage of female teachers at both levels, however, increased from 1996 to 1997.

The percentage of female non-teaching staff in all schools remained at 79.3 per cent (82.3 per cent in government schools, compared with 73.0 per cent in non-government schools).

1.7 International comparisons

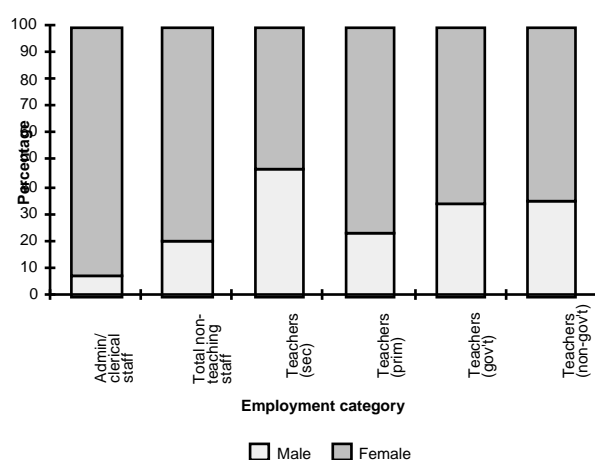
Although the most recently published, comparative data on Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries relates to 1994 and 1995, it presents the only readily available means of assessing key aspects of Australian education in an international context.

Table 1H, which includes data for 1995, shows Australia with the highest percentage of five to 29-year-olds enrolled in education, at nearly 76 per cent compared with an OECD country mean of 61 per cent. Sixty per cent of five to 29-year-olds were engaged in primary or secondary schooling, with a further 15.2 per cent participating in education at other levels (eg early childhood education or tertiary education).

A relatively high proportion of the Australian population over 25 years old had completed tertiary education: around 24 per cent, compared with the country mean of 22 per cent. Student-teacher ratios for Australia were below the country means, at 18.1 for primary students and 12.6 for secondary students, compared with 18.8 and 14.9 respectively (see Figure 1G).

Australia's direct public expenditure in 1994 on all educational institutions — school and tertiary — was 4.6 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which was below the OECD country mean of 5.1 per cent. Direct public spending on primary and secondary schools, however, was 3.4 per cent of GDP, identical with the OECD total though slightly below the country mean of 3.6 per cent. When total expenditure on school education from all sources is considered, Australia spent 4.1 per cent of GDP, above the OECD country mean of 3.9 and the OECD total of 3.8 per cent. Public expenditure on primary and secondary education as a percentage of total public expenditure in Australia was 9.5 per cent in 1994 compared with a country mean of 8.7 per cent.

Figure 1F. School staff, by gender, by sector, level and function, Australia, 1997



Source: ABS Cat. No. 4221.0 *Schools, Australia, 1997*

Table 1H. Percentage of the population aged 5 to 29 years enrolled in various levels of education, OECD countries (a) (b), 1995

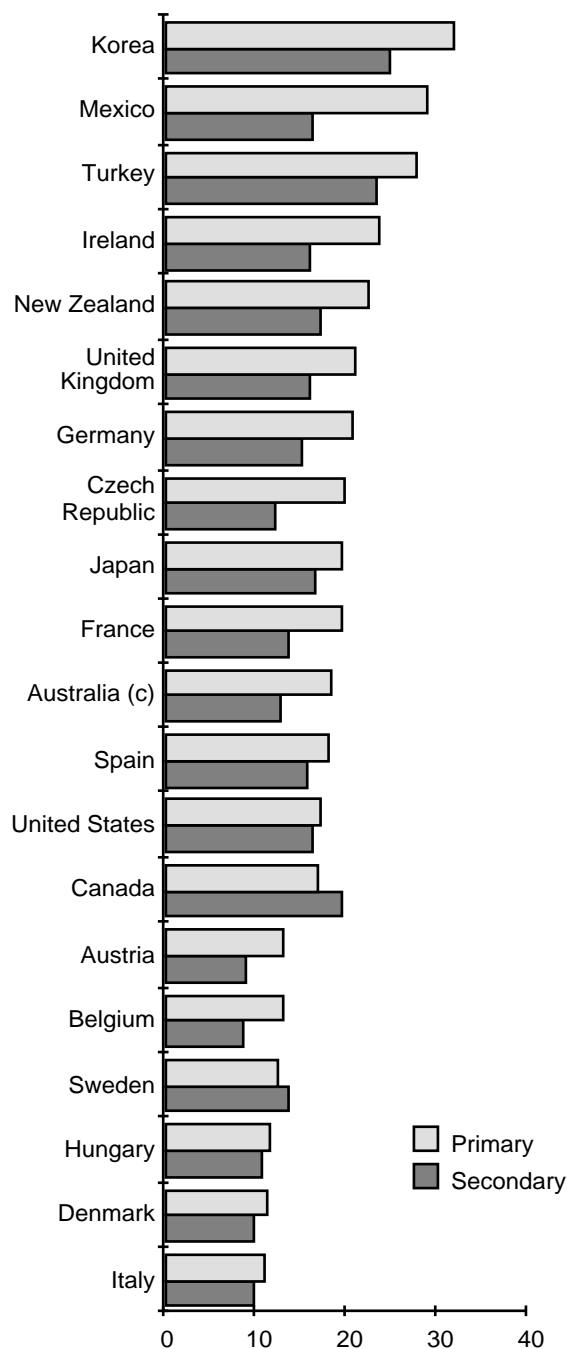
OECD country	Primary + lower secondary schooling	Upper secondary schooling	Other levels of education	All levels of education
Australia	44.5	15.9	15.2	75.6
Belgium	34.3	20.8	14.7	69.8
New Zealand	41.0	15.7	12.2	69.0
United States	38.1	10.1	19.9	68.2
Canada	35.6	11.9	20.3	67.8
Finland	36.0	15.6	16.2	67.7
Sweden	35.0	17.0	15.1	67.1
Iceland	40.4	16.2	10.4	67.0
United Kingdom	33.8	22.9	9.2	65.9
Ireland	39.2	12.1	14.0	65.3
Netherlands	37.7	14.0	13.3	65.0
Norway	31.8	14.5	18.2	64.4
France	37.5	12.5	14.1	64.2
Russian Federation (b)	35.8	7.6	20.4	63.8
Denmark	32.6	13.6	16.8	62.9
Spain	28.8	20.6	13.5	62.9
Portugal	38.5	12.4	10.5	61.5
Country mean	34.5	14.0	13.4	61.3
Germany	35.2	11.7	13.3	60.2
Italy	25.5	15.4	18.1	59.0
Switzerland	34.1	11.7	12.6	58.4
Japan	31.8	12.4	13.3	57.4
Austria	28.6	14.9	13.1	56.6
Hungary	28.8	17.1	10.4	56.3
Korea	32.2	11.2	12.6	56.1
Czech Republic	29.6	16.8	9.0	55.4
Greece	—	—	9.9	52.7
Mexico	39.7	4.8	6.4	50.8
Luxembourg	31.4	9.5	8.1	48.9
Turkey	29.5	6.6	4.2	40.4

(a) Some countries did not provide information for this table.

(b) Non-OECD country included in original data.

Source: *Education at a Glance*, OECD, 1997

Figure 1G. Ratio of primary and secondary students to teaching staff, government and non-government education (a)(b), 1995



(a) Some countries did not provide information for the table.

(b) Some countries may also include vocational education.

(c) The source for Australia's secondary student to teacher ratio is ABS Cat. No. 4221.0, *Schools Australia*, 1995.

Source: *Education at A Glance*, OECD, 1997