
A Education

Part A: Education preface

Education is a lifelong activity, delivered both informally (for example, by family, through the community or at work) and formally through the three sectors that comprise Australia's education and training system (the school education, vocational education and training [VET] and higher education sectors).

Australia's formal system of education and training has a range of objectives, some of which are common across all sectors of education (for example, to increase knowledge) while others are more specific to a particular sector. The objectives of:

- the school education sector, as reflected in the national goals for schooling (box 3.1), include a focus on developing the capacities and talents of all young people so they have the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills and values for a productive and rewarding life
- the VET sector, as reflected in the National Strategy for VET 1998–2003 (box 4.3, 2005 Report), include a focus on equipping Australians for the world of work, enhancing labour mobility and achieving equitable outcomes within VET. The objectives of the VET sector, as reflected in the current National Strategy for VET 2004–10 (box 4.3, 2005 Report), include a focus on giving industry a highly skilled workforce to support strong performance in the global economy and giving Indigenous Australians skills for viable jobs and to ensure their learning culture will be shared
- the higher education sector, as reflected in the *Higher Education Report for the 2003–2005 Triennium*, include advancing and applying knowledge and understanding to benefit the Australian economy and society.

Australian, State and Territory governments provide funding to government and non-government providers to deliver formal education and training services within each of the three education and training sectors. Government providers include government schools (preschool, primary and secondary), technical and further education (TAFE) institutes and universities. Non-government providers include privately operated schools and preschools, and private registered training organisations (RTOs) in the VET sector.

Chapters 3 and 4 cover the performance of the school education and VET sectors. Preschool programs, which provide a variety of educational and developmental experiences for children before full time schooling, are covered in chapter 14. Comparisons between the government and non-government school systems are included.

Some of the performance indicators in chapters 3 and 4 were also reported as key indicators of Indigenous disadvantage in the *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2003* Report.

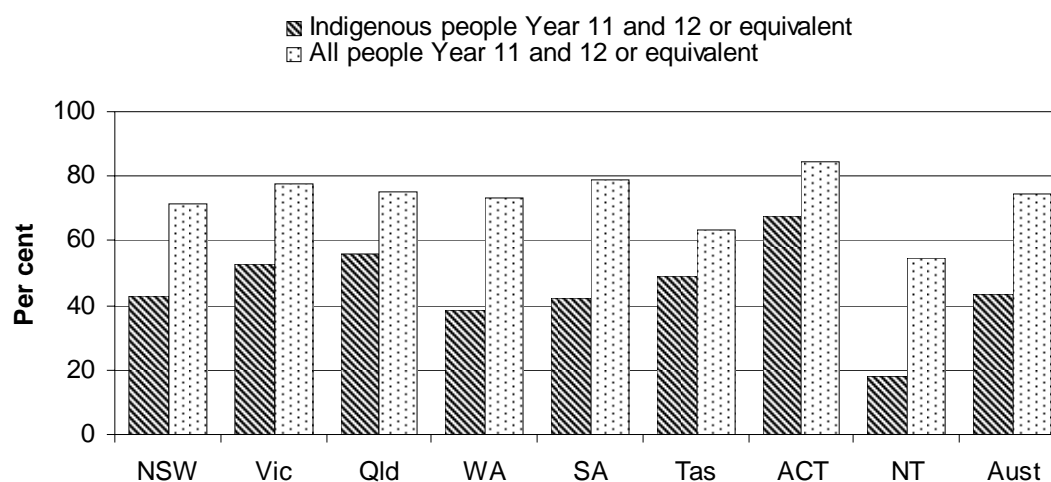
Measuring the performance of the education and training system

The level of participation in education and training varies across jurisdictions for many reasons. These include different age/grade structures, starting age at school, minimum leaving age, the number of compulsory years of schooling and the level of service provision. Other influences on participation include labour market changes, population movements, urbanisation, socioeconomic status and Indigenous status.

Attainment data for Indigenous and all students are provided from the 2001 Census. These data provide information on the differences between Indigenous and all students on the highest level of school completed. The greatest difference between Indigenous and all students was the proportion of students who completed senior years of schooling.

The proportion of all students who completed year 11 or equivalent and/or year 12 or equivalent was higher for all students than for Indigenous students for all jurisdictions for 20–24 year olds. Nationally, 43.4 per cent of Indigenous students and 74.2 per cent of all students completed year 11 or equivalent and/or year 12 or equivalent in 2001 (figure EP.1).

Figure EP.1 Highest level of schooling completed by people aged 20–24 years, by Indigenous status



	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>Aust</i>
Indigenous people									
Years 11 and 12 or equivalent	43.0	53.0	56.2	38.6	41.9	49.1	67.6	18.0	43.4
Years 9 and 10 or equivalent	43.3	34.7	33.5	43.8	37.8	43.0	24.4	36.8	38.7
Year 8 or below	5.4	5.1	4.3	9.4	12.0	1.6	5.7	32.8	9.9
Other ^a	8.3	7.1	5.9	8.2	8.3	6.2	2.3	12.4	8.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
All people									
Years 11 and 12 or equivalent	71.2	77.8	75.1	73.0	78.8	63.1	84.7	54.7	74.2
Years 9 and 10 or equivalent	20.2	12.8	18.1	19.4	14.9	29.7	9.1	23.3	17.5
Year 8 or below	1.1	1.2	1.1	1.0	1.1	0.8	0.5	10.8	1.2
Other ^a	7.5	8.2	5.7	6.5	5.3	6.5	5.8	11.2	7.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

^a 'Other' includes people who did not go to school, are still at school and those not stated.

Source: ABS 2001 Census of Population and Housing (unpublished); 2005 Report, p. B.19, figure B.5.