



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS  
COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA

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# **The Independent School Student: A Demographic Profile**

**An analysis of the Australian Bureau of  
Statistics 2016 Population & Housing Census**

**ISCA Research Report**

**July 2018**

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## Research Purpose

**The main purpose of this report is to present a broad-brush profile of students attending schools across the three school sectors, highlighting any differences among them, and to contrast these profiles with the Australian population in general. Where relevant and possible, the student population in the Independent sector is further investigated, by drilling down into the data based on the available Census variables.**

In addition to providing the Independent sector with a snapshot in time of their students, this analysis will aid in the development of policy and inform ISCA's advocacy on behalf of the sector. This initial analysis can also offer indications as to where further investigations and analysis might be required as the basis for future policy development.

The key demographics explored in this report include: location of student, by state and by region; student gender; indigeneity; citizenship; country of birth, for both the student and their parents; language spoken at home; religious affiliation; family composition & labour force status; family income; qualification and occupation group of highest earning parent; student employment and student volunteer status. The report is divided into sections addressing each of these variables. A full listing of the definitions of the demographics is provided in the Appendix.

Apart from some income, qualification and occupation comparisons, trend data is not the focus of this report, so no comment can be made as to which demographic segments of the population are growing or declining. ISCA has published a supplementary report titled "The changing face of Australian schooling", available from the ISCA website, which details historical Census trends across each school sector, covering the following topics:

- Student enrolment share and growth
- Family income
- Dependent children
- Students recently arrived in Australia
- Religious affiliation.

All charts and tables presented in the body of this document are drawn from an in-depth analysis of ABS 2016 Census data, using the ABS TableBuilder Pro program and from customised tables prepared by the ABS for ISCA.

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## Analysis Notes

**This report provides an analysis of the available ABS 2016 Population & Housing Census statistics, exploring the key demographics of the Australian school age population, focussing on the three school sectors, namely: the Independent sector and the Catholic sector, which are collectively referred to as the non-government sector; and the government sector.**

Throughout the report, statistics concerning the three school sectors are compared against each other, and the Independent sector is also compared with the total school student population and the total Australian population. Where the expression “expected proportion”, “expected share” or “likelihood” is used, this is referring to the percentage observed in the broad population, when not influenced by a given demographic. For example, as 67 percent of the total Australian population were born in Australia, we could expect that the proportion or share of Australian-born school students would also be 67 percent; however, in fact, that share is closer to 87 percent, so we could then say that there is a higher than expected share of school students who were born in Australia.

The classification of the school sectors used in this report stem from the following ABS Census questions, asked of all people who spent the night at the given dwelling on Census night:

- a) Is the person attending a school or any other educational institution?
- b) What type of educational institution is the person attending? (Include secondary colleges and senior high schools under the ‘Secondary school’ category)
  - Pre-school
  - Infants/Primary school
    - Government ▶ Catholic ▶ Other non-government
  - Secondary school
    - Government ▶ Catholic ▶ Other non-government
  - Tertiary institution
    - Technical or further educational institution (including TAFE Colleges) ▶ University or other higher educational institution ▶ Other educational institution

It must be noted that, as the Census is a self-administered questionnaire, respondents answer questions in the way they see best matches their circumstances. In answering the educational institution question, it is assumed that most Catholic Independent students will class themselves as attending a Catholic school, rather than an ‘other non-government’ (hereafter known as ‘Independent’) school. This will impact some of the state-by-state findings, especially in New South Wales and the ACT, due to the high proportion of Independent Catholic school students in these areas.

Also, while the estimated 21,000 international students studying in Australia in 2016 are counted in the Census among the usual Australian student population, there is no way of identifying and excluding these students. As they represent only 0.6 percent of the total student population, they should not have a meaningful impact on any of the demographics considered here.

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## Independent School Students: A Broad-brush Profile

**The Independent sector is comprised of a diverse range of more than 1,100 schools and a highly varied population of more than half a million students.**

While there is no one description to fit all Independent school students, according to the latest Census figures, the profile of the “typical” Australian Independent school student could be portrayed as: a non-indigenous, English-speaking person, equally likely to be male or female, who is an Australian citizen. They may live in any state of Australia (in proportion with that of the broader population) but are more likely to live in a capital city rather than the balance of the country, when compared with the wider Australian population.

In comparison with all school students in Australia, the Independent school student is more likely to be in secondary school than primary school, to live as part of a “couple” family (rather than a one parent family) where both parents are employed, and with a family income in the middle bracket (\$52,000 - \$155,999). It is also more likely that the Independent school student’s main breadwinning parent is university educated and working in a professional or managerial role. While most school students do not hold a part-time job or volunteer in an organisation, the Independent school student is more likely to be volunteering for an organisation but is less likely than the average student to have paid employment.

In terms of religious affiliation, by proportion, the Independent school student is most likely to follow the Anglican religion or have no religion at all (although less likely than the total school student population to have no religion). Also, when contrasted with the general student population, the Independent student is less likely to be Catholic and more likely to be Islamic.

Finally, although most Independent school students are Australian-born native English speakers, if they were born overseas the most likely country of birth would be England, China, South Africa or New Zealand (although students from New Zealand tend to favour government schools). To round out the profile, if English were not the native tongue, the Independent school student would speak Chinese, Arabic or Greek.

Table 1 on the next page shows a summary of the attributes of each demographic for the average Independent school student when compared with the entire school student population in Australia. Characteristics are displayed in order of size, with the highest share attribute being leftmost in each row, progressing to smaller shares when read from left to right. Highlighted in **green** are those attributes where Independent school students are more highly represented than numerically expected when compared with the entire Australian student population, and, conversely, the **red** indicates those with a lower than expected share.

For example, for the *school level* demographic:

School Level:	Secondary > Primary
•	Reading left to right, by proportion, there are more secondary than primary level Independent school students;
•	There are more secondary level ( <b>green</b> ) but fewer primary level ( <b>red</b> ) Independent school students than expected, based on the split of school level in the total Australian school student population.

**Table 1: Independent School Student Profile**

Locality:	Capital city > Balance of country
State:	NSW > VIC > QLD > WA > SA > TAS > ACT > NT
Sex:	Female = Male
School Level:	Secondary > Primary
Indigeneity:	Non-Indigenous > Indigenous
Citizenship:	Australian > Other
Country of Birth:	Australia > England > China > South Africa > New Zealand > USA > India > Philippines
Birthplace of Parents:	Both Australia > Both overseas > Father overseas > Mother overseas
English Proficiency:	English only > English very well/well > English not well/not at all
Language Spoken at Home:	English > Mandarin > Arabic > Greek > Cantonese > Vietnamese = Hindi
Religious Affiliation:	Anglican > No religion > Catholic > Islam > Uniting Church > Pentecostal > Baptist
Family Composition:	Couple family > One parent family
Family Labour Force Status:	Couple - both working > Couple - one working > One parent - working > One parent - not working > Couple – both not working
Family Income:	High (\$156,000 or more) > Medium (\$52,000-\$155,999) > Low (\$51,999 or less)
Qualification*:	University > Other qualification > Year 12 or lower
Occupation*:	Managers & Professionals > Trades & Services > Sales & Admin > Labourers & Operators
Student Labour Force:	Not in labour force > Employed > Unemployed but looking
Voluntary Work:	Not a volunteer > Volunteer

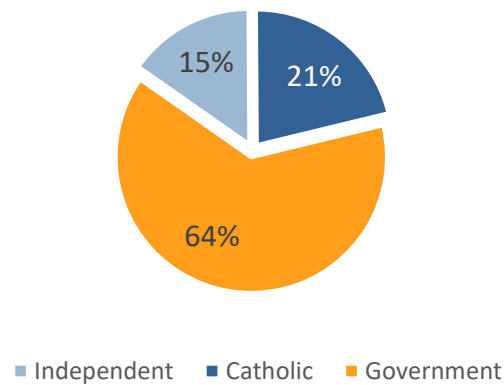
= same proportion > higher proportion **Higher share than expected** **Lower share than expected** \* for highest earning parent

## Size and Location of Student Population

The Independent sector is the smallest school sector, followed by the Catholic sector, with the government sector being the largest. The Independent sector is larger in Western Australia and South Australia, with a higher proportion of Catholic sector students in the ACT<sup>1</sup>.

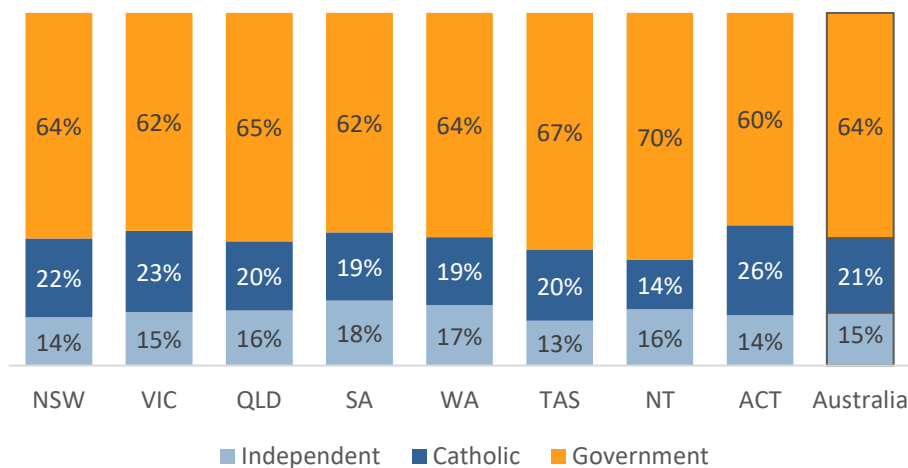
In 2016, 14 percent (3.37 million) of Australia's 23.40 million population were school students. Of these, 15 percent attended Independent schools, 21 percent went to Catholic schools and the remaining 64 percent were government school students.

*Student Population by School Sector*



While these proportions are consistent across most of Australia, South Australia (18 percent) has a higher percentage of Independent school students within their state; ACT skews higher than other states for Catholic sector students (26 percent)<sup>1</sup>; and Tasmania (67 percent) and Northern Territory (70 percent) have a larger government sector.

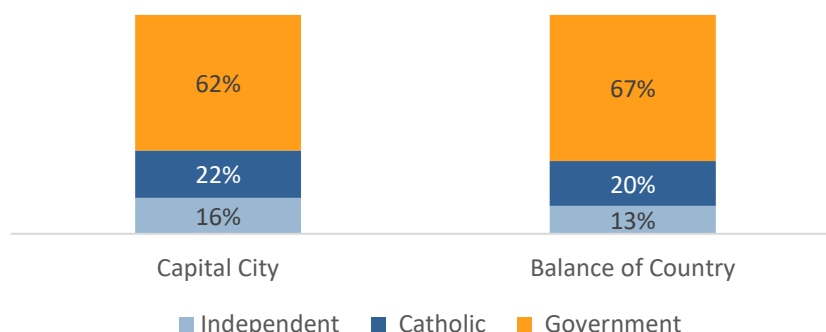
*Student Population by Sector, by State*



<sup>1</sup> While ACT has the highest proportion of Catholic students, many Catholic schools in the ACT are non-systemic and are members of the Association of Independent Schools of the ACT.

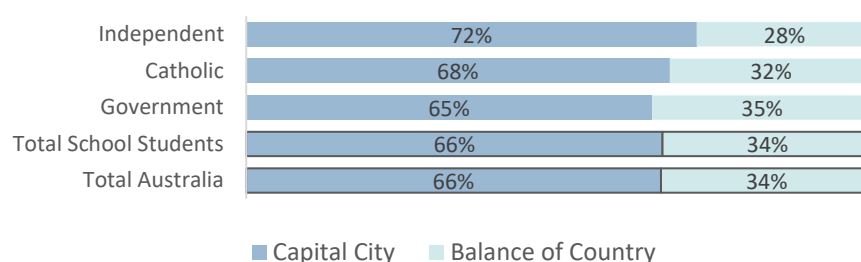
The Independent sector has a higher share of enrolments in the capital city regions, compared with the national data, while the government sector has a greater enrolment share in the balance of the country (outside the capital city area).

### Student Population by School Sector, by Regionality



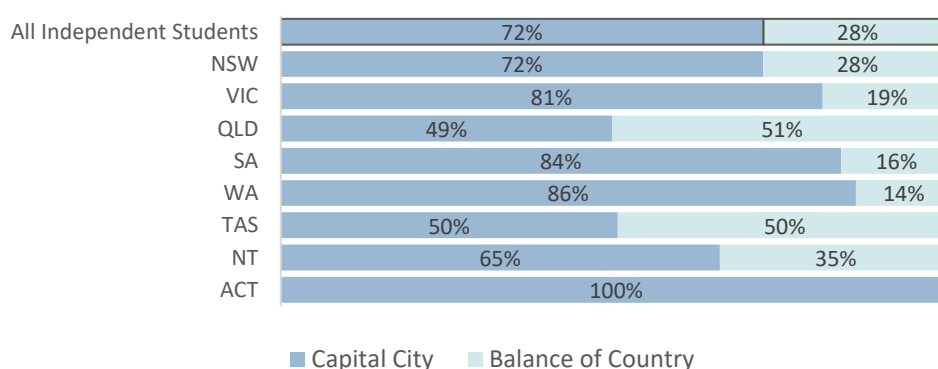
While 66 percent of all school students (equally, 66 percent of all Australians) live in capital city areas, 72 percent of Independent school students live in the capital cities.

### Student Population by Regionality, by School Sector



Looking only at Independent school students, due to the differing levels of urbanisation of Australia's states, the proportion of Independent school students in the capital city area varies by state. In the ABS definition, the entire ACT is defined as being within the capital city area, so 100 percent of the ACT's Independent school students reside in that area. Apart from the ACT, the three states with the highest share of Independent school students in their capital city area are Western Australia, South Australia and Victoria. Conversely, due to the distribution of the population and schools into more remote areas, Queensland, Tasmania and the Northern Territory have a lower than expected share of Independent school students living in capital city areas.

### Regional Distribution of Independent Students

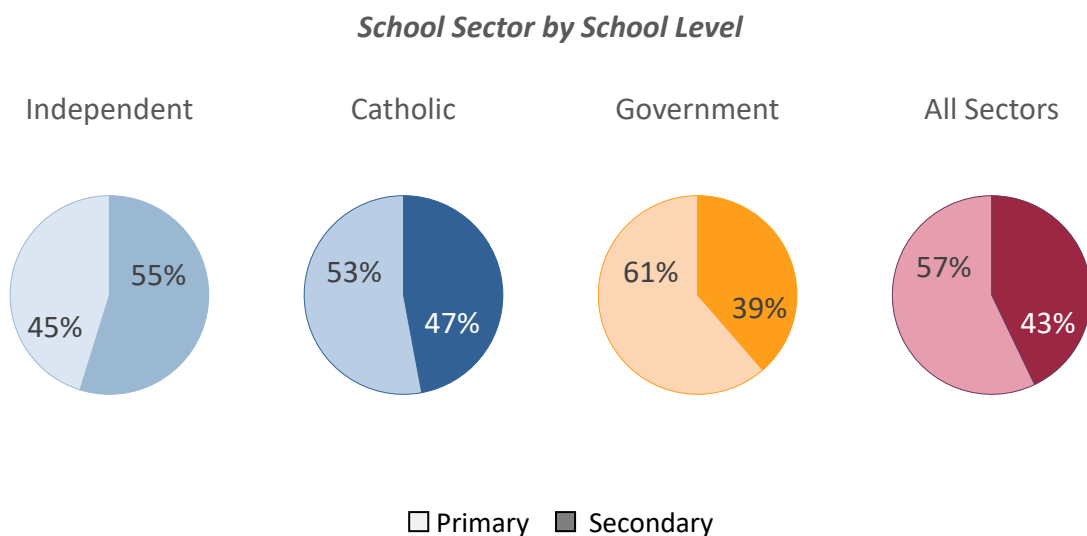




## School Level

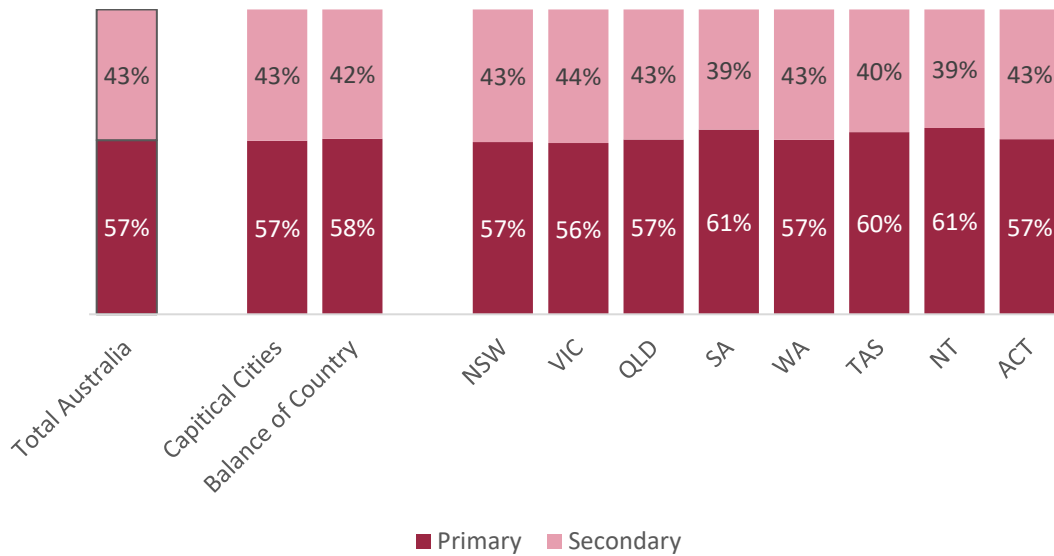
**At the time of the last Census, there were more primary than secondary level students in Australian schools. In Independent schools, however, the reverse was true.**

More than half of Australian school students are in primary school with the balance in secondary school, holding true for both the Catholic and government sectors. The opposite is true for the Independent sector, where secondary students represent a larger share than that of primary students.



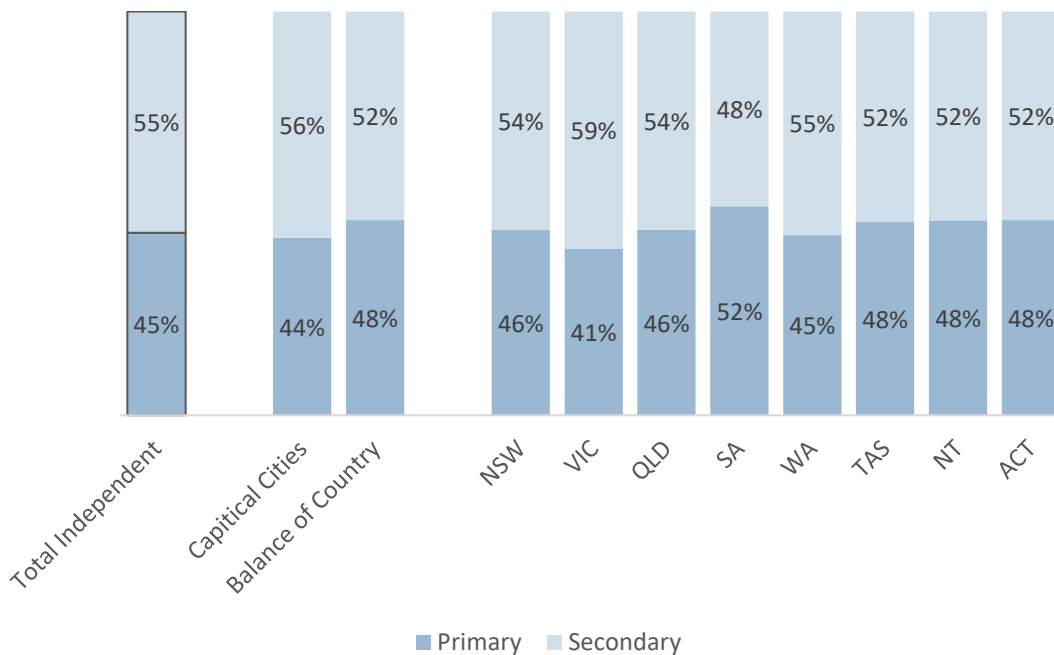
The split by school level for the entire Australian school population is relatively consistent across all Australian states and territories. Three states have a ratio which is larger than the country average (57 percent primary and 43 percent secondary): Northern Territory (61 primary / 39 secondary), South Australia (61 primary / 39 secondary) and Tasmania (60 primary / 40 secondary). It should be noted that Year 7 within South Australia, for the most part, is still included in the primary school level, at the time of the 2016 ABS Census.

### School Student Population by School Level, by Geography



Focussing on Independent school students only, the high share of secondary level students is impacted by the imbalance in capital cities (secondary 56 percent in capital cities vs. 52 percent balance of country) and in Victoria (59 percent of Independent school students in the secondary level). South Australia is the only region with a higher proportion of primary level students (52 percent) than secondary (48 percent), attributable to Year 7 still being included in the primary school level.

### Independent School Student Population by School Level, by Geography



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## Student Gender

There is an equal balance of male and female students across all school sectors, school levels, and the key demographics.

<i>Sex (%)</i>	<i>Independent</i>	<i>Catholic</i>	<i>Government</i>	<i>Primary</i>	<i>Secondary</i>	<i>All Students</i>
<b>Female</b>	50	50	48	49	49	49
<b>Male</b>	50	50	52	51	51	51

Across all demographics considered in this report, males and females are represented equally.

## Indigeneity

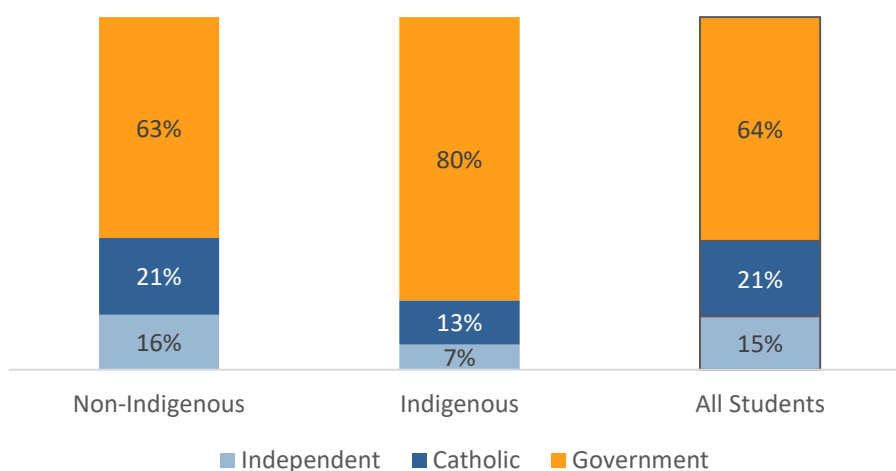
Only a small proportion of Australian students identify as Indigenous, with an even smaller percent of Indigenous students in Independent and Catholic schools.

Across the nation, only three percent of all Australians and five percent of all school students identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. The Independent sector has two percent Indigenous school students, Catholic sector three percent, with the government sector rising to six percent.

Indigeneity (%)	Independent	Catholic	Government	Primary	Secondary	All Students
Non-Indigenous	98	97	94	95	95	95
Indigenous	2	3	6	5	5	5

Of the 163,000 Indigenous school students in Australia, 80 percent attend government schools, with only seven percent at Independent schools and thirteen percent of Indigenous students attending schools in the Catholic sector.

*Student Population by Schools Sector, by Indigeneity*



Among Independent school students, the percentage of Indigenous students is about two percent regardless of school level, student gender or geography. The exception is Northern Territory where there are significantly more Indigenous students in the Independent sector (19 percent) with a varying number in primary (12 percent) vs secondary (23 percent).

## Citizenship

Almost all Australian school students are citizens of Australia, with school students more likely to be citizens than the broader Australian population. Independent schools attract their proportional share of non-citizens.

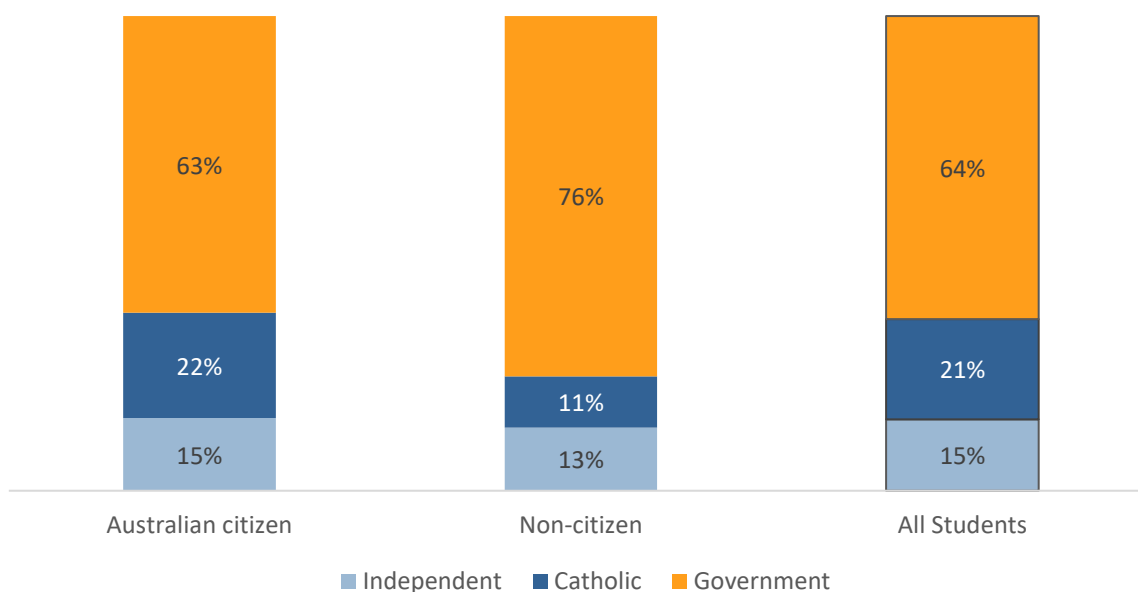
At the time of the Census, 93 percent of all school students held Australian citizenship, as compared to 88 percent across all Census respondents in Australia.

Citizenship	Independent	Catholic	Government	Primary	Secondary	All	Australia
Australian	94	96	91	93	92	93	88
Other	6	4	9	7	8	7	12

Among the 243,000 non-Australian citizen students, 13 percent (about 32,000 people) attend Independent schools. This has decreased from 15 percent from the 2011 Census due to a higher proportion of non-Australian citizens attending government schools.

The share of non-Australian citizens is lower for Catholic schools and higher in government schools.

*Student Population by School Sector, by Citizenship*



In the Independent sector, Western Australia has the lowest proportion of Australian citizens in its schools (91 percent) with the ACT having the highest at 95 percent.

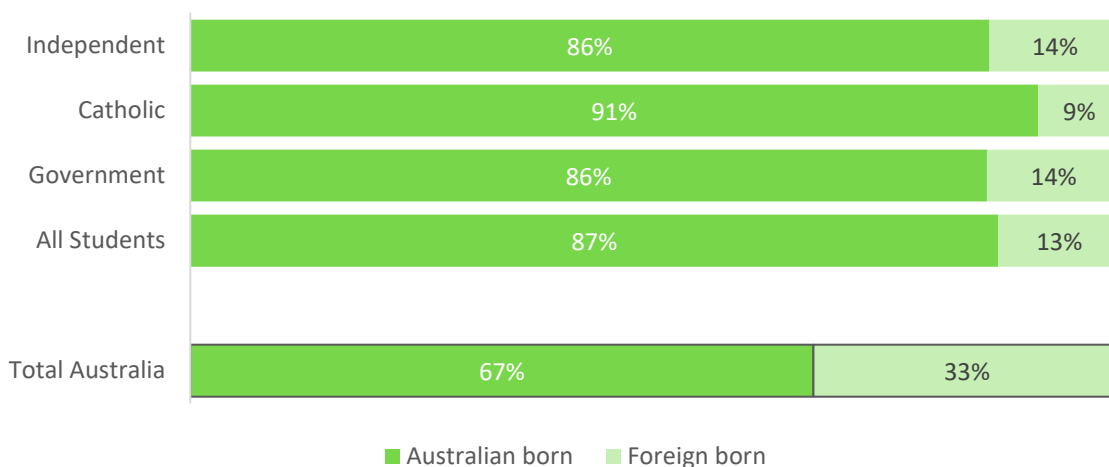
## Country of Birth of Students and their Parents

Nine out of ten school students were born in Australia, while only seven out of ten of all Australians in the broader population were born in Australia. Independent school students in primary schools are more likely to be Australian born than their secondary peers, as are Independent school students living outside of the capital city area of their state, when compared with their capital city counterparts.

In 2016, 67 percent, or 15.6 million of the total Australian population were Australian born.

Among school students, 87 percent (2.9 million) were Australian born (down from 89 percent in 2011).

*Student Population by School Sector, by Country of Birth of Student*

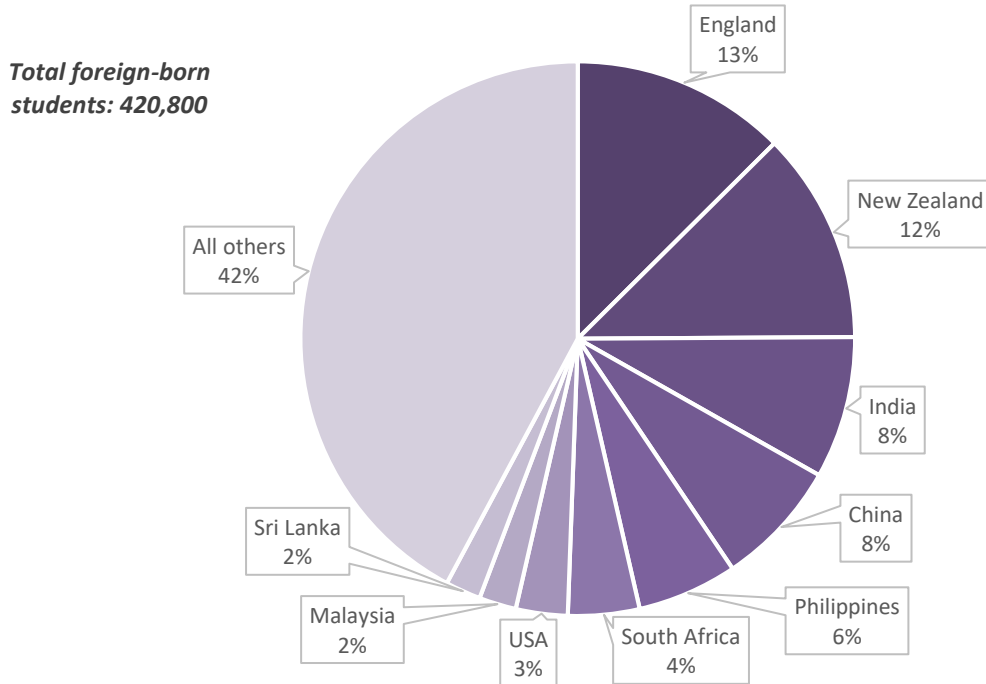


Among Independent school students, primary level students are slightly more likely to be Australian born than their secondary level counterparts (89 percent vs. 83 percent), as are those living in the balance of the country rather than the capital city areas (90 percent vs. 84 percent). Western Australia is the state with the lowest rate of Australian born Independent school students (80 percent), while Tasmania is highest at 92 percent.

**One-quarter of all students born overseas were born in England or New Zealand. Foreign-born students attending Independent schools were more likely to come from England, China or South Africa than the general student population of Australia.**

England (13 percent) and New Zealand (12 percent) contribute most of foreign-born students to schools in Australia. This is followed by India (8 percent) and China (8 percent).

**Country of Birth for Foreign-born Australian Students  
(all school sectors)**



The profile for country of birth of students in Independent schools differs from the broad student population with a higher proportion of students born in England, China, South Africa and the USA, but fewer from New Zealand (predominant in government schools), India (higher in both Catholic and government schools) and Philippines (highest in Catholic schools).

The Independent school students born in England or the USA skew slightly toward primary rather than the secondary school level (England: primary 19 percent vs. secondary 17 percent; USA: primary 7 percent vs. secondary 5 percent), while those born in China tend to the opposite (primary 6 percent vs. secondary 12 percent).

**Country of Birth for Foreign-born Australian Students by School Sector**

<b>Country of Birth (%)</b>	<b>Independent</b>	<b>Catholic</b>	<b>Government</b>
England	18	15	11
New Zealand	8	9	14
India	5	10	9
China	10	4	8
Philippines	2	10	6
South Africa	9	4	3
USA	6	3	2
Malaysia	2	1	2
Sri Lanka	1	3	2
All Others	39	41	43

As may be expected, the distribution of foreign born students differs across the various Australian states, perhaps according to where their own communities have chosen to settle in Australia or where overseas students have chosen to study.

The table below shows the location of foreign-born Independent school students across each of the states and territories. Of note, Western Australia has higher English (24 percent) and South African (17 percent) Independent school student populations, while New Zealanders (15 percent) are concentrated in Queensland and Chinese-born students (19 percent) are far more likely to attend school in Victoria than other states.

### *Country of Birth for Foreign-born Independent Students by Country of Birth, by State*

<i>Country of Birth (%)</i>	<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>All Independent Students</i>
England	17	12	20	24	22	17	14	12	18
China	9	19	5	2	11	8	7	1	10
South Africa	6	4	12	17	7	7	8	7	9
New Zealand	6	6	15	8	4	7	6	9	8
USA	7	6	5	4	4	7	11	18	6
India	4	8	4	4	8	4	7	10	5
Philippines	2	1	2	2	3	1	2	10	2
Malaysia	1	3	1	2	2	1	1	2	2
Sri Lanka	1	3	1	1	1	0	2	0	1
All Others	47	38	35	36	38	48	42	31	39

(\* small cell size – use with caution)

**Almost two-thirds of school age children are from families with both parents born in Australia. However, among families with children attending Independent schools this percentage is lower.**

While 59 percent of all Australian school students have both parents born in Australia, the Independent sector skews lower, at 54 percent.

### *Birthplace of Parents by School Sector*

<i>Birthplace of Parents (%)</i>	<i>Independent</i>	<i>Catholic</i>	<i>Government</i>	<i>All Students</i>
Both parents born in Australia	54	64	59	59
At least one parent born overseas	46	36	41	41
- Both parents born overseas	26	19	25	24
- Father only born overseas	11	9	9	9
- Mother only born overseas	9	8	7	8

Further, for Independent school students, only 48 percent of those who attend school in capital city areas have both parents born in Australia (versus 69 percent for their more rural counterparts). Again, Western Australia is an outlier, with only 44 percent of Independent school students having both parents born in Australia, while South Australia (65 percent), Northern Territory (65 percent) and Tasmania (72 percent) have the highest rates.



## Language Spoken at Home

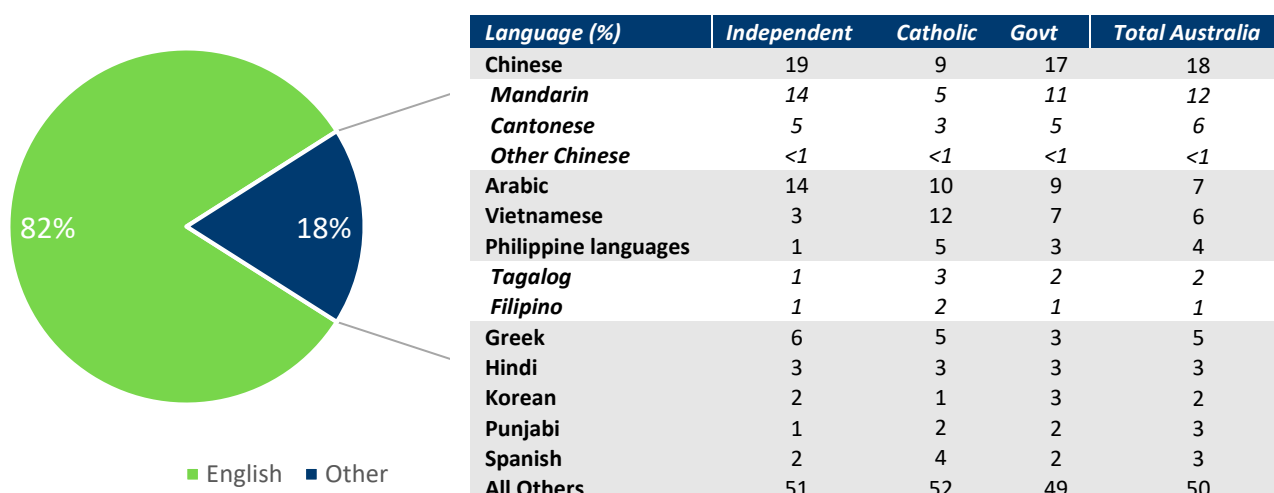
**English is the predominant language spoken at home by Australian school students, regardless of school sector or level. One-third of Independent sector students who speak another language at home speak Arabic or Chinese (Mandarin or Cantonese).**

In 2016, about 82 percent of school students (and 78 percent of the total Australian population) spoke English as the main language spoken at home. This is down from 85 percent of school students (and 82 percent of the total Australian population) in 2011.

Mandarin (12 percent), Arabic (7 percent), Cantonese (6 percent) were the main foreign languages spoken at home among the broad Australian non-English speaking population.

Students in Independent schools were more likely to speak Mandarin (14 percent vs 12 percent of total Australia) and Arabic (14 percent vs 7 percent of total Australia) but less likely to speak Philippine languages (1 percent vs 4 percent of total Australia) or Vietnamese (3 percent vs 6 percent of total Australia) than the broad population, both of which are more commonly spoken by Catholic school students (5 percent and 12 percent, respectively).

*Language Spoken at Home by School Sector*



Within the Independent school student population, consistent with demographic splits for country of birth for students and their parents, students living outside capital cities are more likely to ‘speak English only’ at home (92 percent outside capital cities vs 78 percent inside capital cities).

Among Independent school students it is noted that Arabic is more likely spoken at the primary level (17 percent vs. 11 percent for secondary students) and Chinese is less likely to be spoken among primary level students (13 percent vs. 23 percent for secondary students), for both Mandarin (10 percent and 17 percent) and Cantonese (3 percent and 6 percent).

**Most foreign-born Independent school students speak English at home. Those who do speak another language at home are most likely to be Australian-born to foreign-born parents, and despite speaking their native tongue at home, have indicated they can also speak English very well.**

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Half (52 percent) of the more than 69,000 Independent school students who were born overseas speak only English at home.

Among those Independent school students who speak a language other than English at home, almost two-thirds (63 percent) were born in Australia, and for 62 percent of them both parents were born overseas. That said almost all (96 percent) of these Independent school students who speak another language at home have indicated they can speak English very well or well.

## Religious Affiliation

Two out of three of all Australians have a religious affiliation of some nature, with more than a quarter identifying as Catholics. Naturally, Catholic schools attract more Catholic students to their sector; while close to half of Independent school students follow one of the many non-Catholic Christian faiths.

In answering the question “What is the person’s religion?” in the Census questionnaire, respondents may either select a pre-defined classification (such as Anglican, Greek Orthodox, Islam, etc.) or complete an “Other – please specify” box. There are more than 130 religions specified in the final Census output from the ABS. In summarising the data, some of the religions have been collapsed into logical groupings, per the approach taken by the ABS, to make data handling easier. For details of the groupings of the various religions, see the Appendix. Note, throughout this report and accompanying tables, the label of ‘Christian’ is assigned to all non-Catholic Christians (including those of Orthodox affiliation, per the ABS definition). An important change for the 2016 Census was “No religion” now placed as the first selection.

At Independent schools, 15 percent of students identify as Catholic, with 46 percent following a Christian religion (compared with a Christian population of just 14 percent in Catholic schools and 28 percent in government schools). More than a quarter of Independent school students (28 percent) chose ‘no religion’.

While, in total, 25 percent of all Australian students are Catholic, 70 percent of Catholic school students identify as Catholic while 12 percent of students in the Catholic sector are not affiliated with any religion. Government schools have the highest proportion of non-religious students (43 percent).

### Religious Affiliation by School Sector

Religious Affiliation (%)	Independent	Catholic	Government	All Students	Total Australia
Catholic	15	70	17	28	25
Christian	46	14	29	28	33
<i>Anglican</i>	17	6	12	12	15
<i>Uniting Church</i>	4	2	3	3	4
<i>Pentecostal</i>	4	1	1	2	1
<i>Baptist</i>	4	1	2	2	2
<i>Presbyterian/Reform</i>	2	0	1	1	2
<i>Lutheran</i>	2	0	<1	<1	<1
<i>Other Christian</i>	13	5	8	8	8
Other Religions	11	3	11	9	10
<i>Islam</i>	6	<1	4	4	3
<i>Judaism</i>	2	<1	<1	<1	<1
<i>Hinduism</i>	1	1	2	2	2
<i>Buddhism</i>	1	1	3	2	3
<i>Other Religions</i>	<1	<1	1	1	2
No Religion	28	12	43	34	33

The profiles of Independent school students of Christian or no religious faith do not differ much from the average Independent student, however, followers of ‘other religions’ and the Catholic faith have unique profiles.

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Independent school students living in the capital city areas are more likely to follow 'other' religions, such as Islam, Judaism and Hinduism, than their more rural counterparts (14 percent vs. 3 percent).

By proportion, 93 percent of 'other religion' followers live in capital city areas. The majority live in New South Wales or Victoria. A quarter of these students were born overseas and have a low likelihood of having Australian-born parents (12 percent). Their parental income is likely to be lower than average (25 percent vs. 13 percent average) and they are the least likely group to be employed (15 percent unemployed vs. 8 percent) or work as a volunteer (26 percent vs. 35 percent).

The share of Independent school students of Catholic religion is relatively constant (15 percent) regardless of locality of the student. These Catholic Independent school students are more likely than average Independent school students to be Australian born (90 percent vs. 86 percent), to Australian born parents (63 percent vs. 53 percent), and with a higher household income (49 percent vs. 41 percent in the highest income bracket).

## Family Composition & Labour Force Status

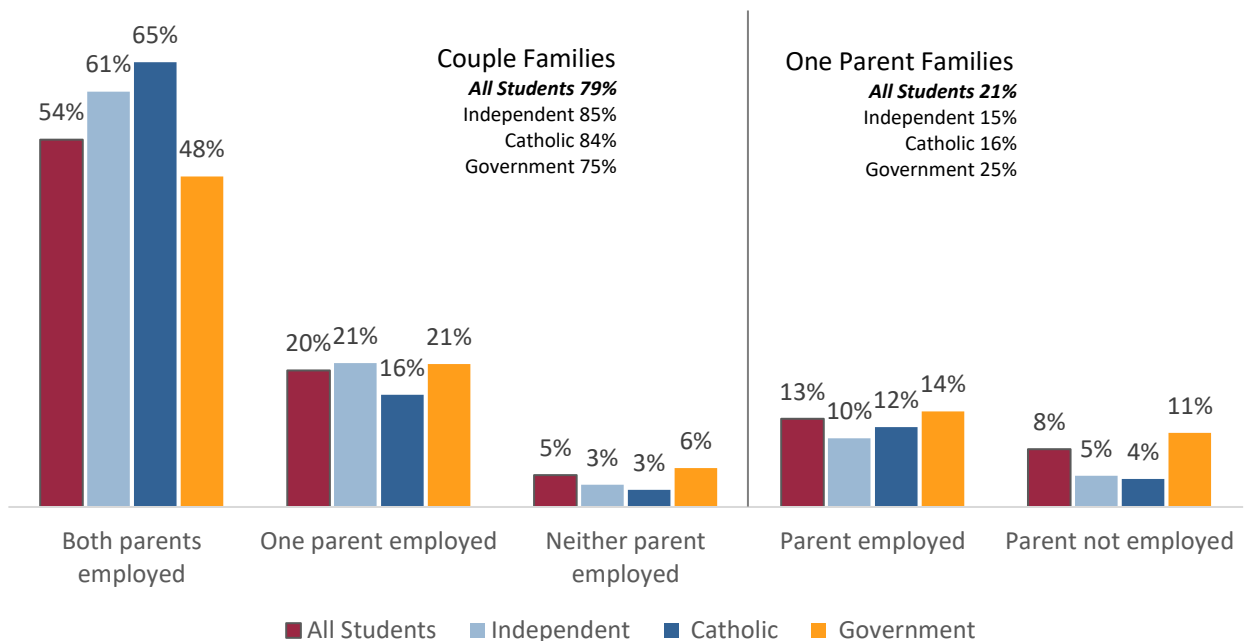
Students at non-government schools are more likely to be from ‘couple’ families, rather than sole parent families. More than half of the students at Independent schools come from families with both parents working.

Four out of five (79 percent) of all students in Australia are from ‘couple’ families, while the balance lives with just one parent. Students from non-government schools, whether the Independent or Catholic sector, are more likely than average to come from such a couple family (85 percent and 84 percent respectively). Also, there is a higher share of students in non-government schools with both parents working.

The demographic profile of Independent school students is similar whether they are from ‘couple families’ or ‘one parent families’, except for the family income, in which the couple families are much more likely to have a higher income (47 percent in the highest bracket vs. 7 percent for one parent families).

Of all the variables considered for Independent school students in this paper, labour force status is one of the most consistent across the various demographics, with little variation among Independent school students’ families, regardless of gender, locality and state. The only exception is for students’ school level, where the parents of Independent secondary school students are more likely to both be employed than those of primary level students, who, in turn, are more likely to have just one parent employed full time.

*Family Composition & Labour Force Status by School Sector*

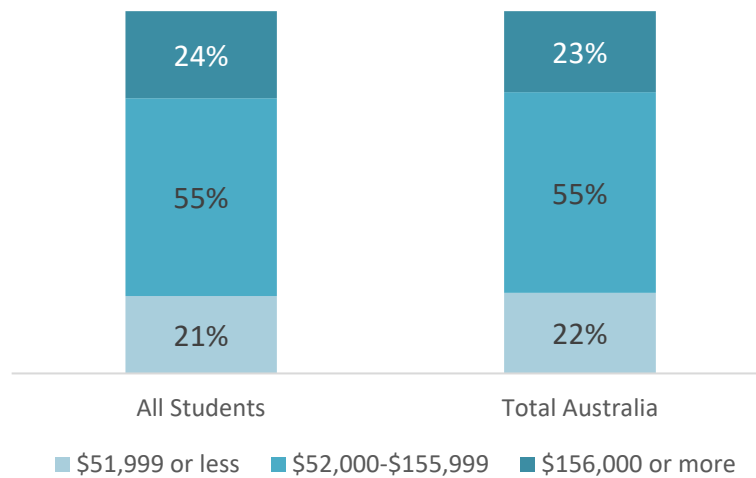


# Household Income

The income profile of households with school-age children matches that of the Australian population in general. Contrary to popular belief, not all high income earners send their children to Independent schools, with about half of such households sending their children to government schools.

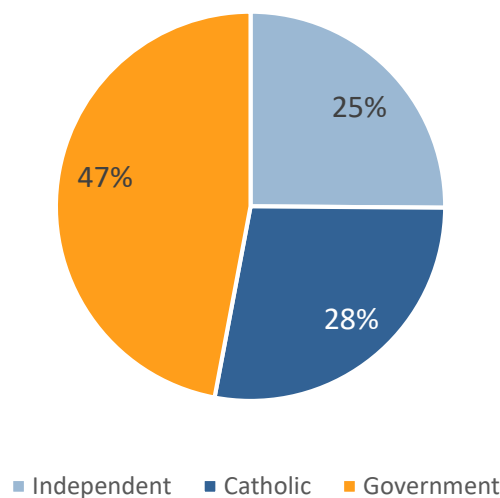
Under the definition of high, medium and low income brackets used in this report, most households fall in the middle range of income. Households with school aged children are no different to the general population in terms of income.

*Annual Household Income: Households with School-Aged Children vs. General Population*



Many people believe that ‘rich people send their children to private schools’, however according to the given data, 47 percent of high income earners (annual household income of \$156,000 or more) actually send their children to government schools.

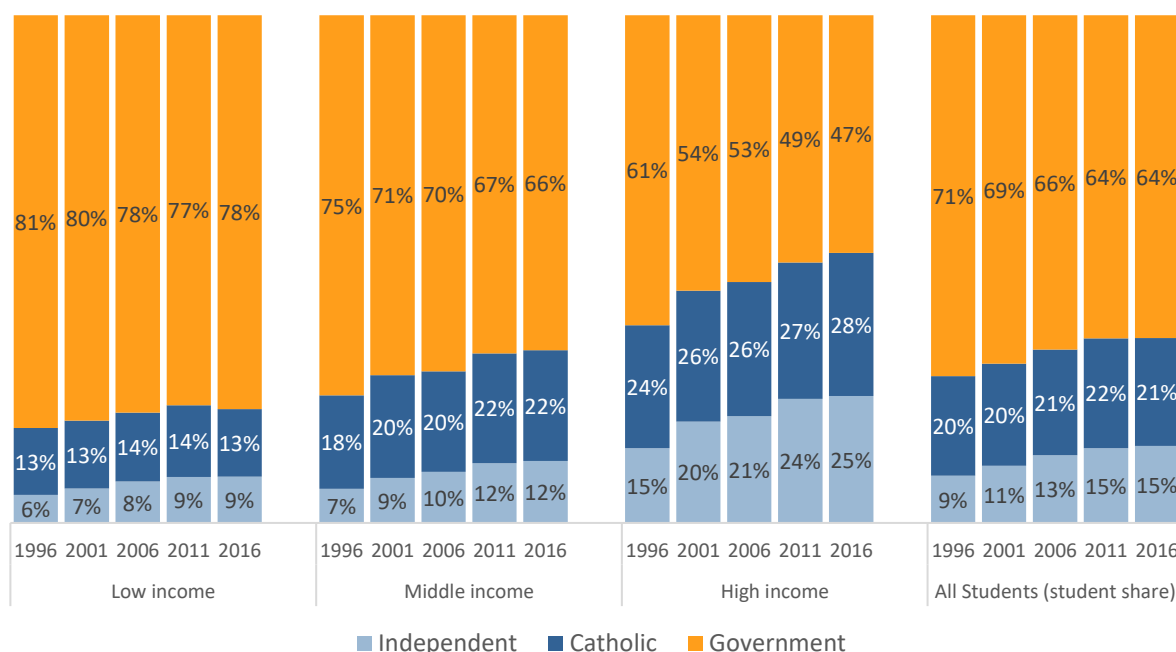
*Families in the Highest Annual Income Bracket by School Sector*



**The growth in the Independent sector over the last few decades has come from households across all income brackets, particularly the middle-income earners.**

Since the 1996 ABS Census of Population and Households, the proportion of the student population attending Independent sector schools has grown from nine percent of all students to fifteen percent of all Australian school students in the 2016 Census, an increase of 63 percent. While the share of Independent sector students from the low and high income brackets has increased respectively by an additional 67% and 72% of the 1996 level, the proportion of children in Independent schools from middle income households has grown by 82 percent, from seven percent, to the current twelve percent.

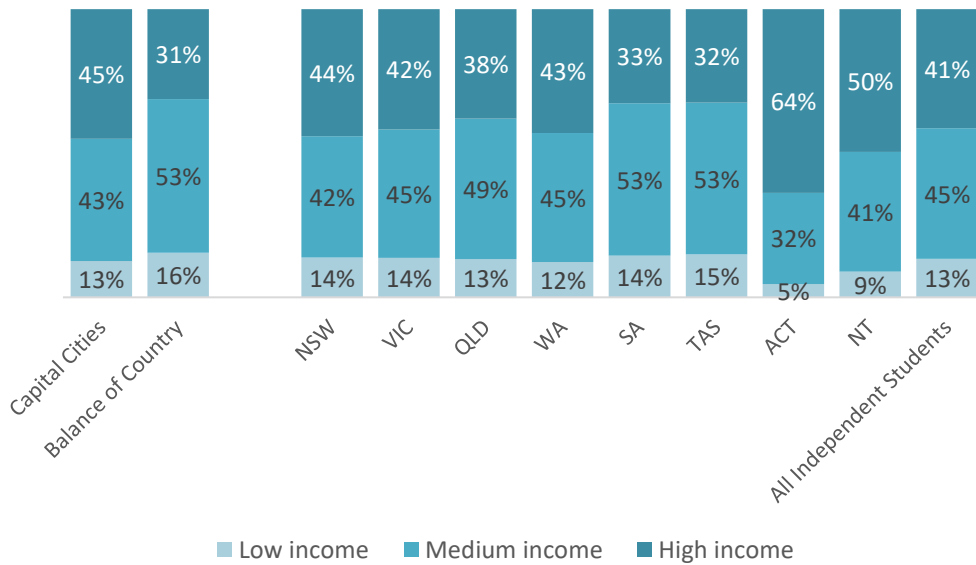
*Income Trend by Sector - All School Levels (1996-2016)*



**Independent school students from high income families differ in their key demographics from those of low income families, notably in terms of: locality; country of birth, if not Australian; birthplace of parents; religion; and family composition and labour force status (for both themselves and their parents).**

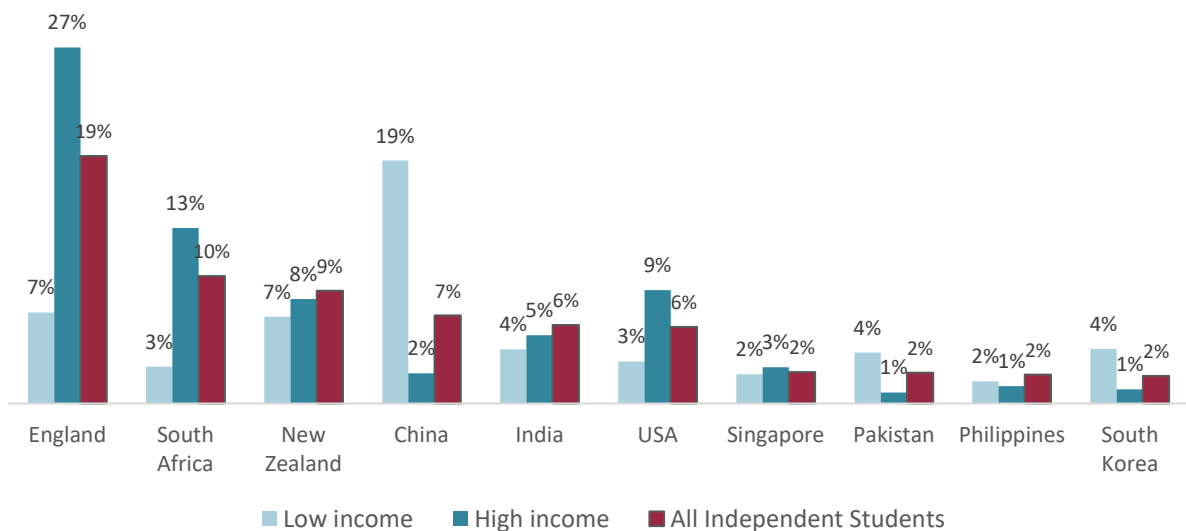
Among Independent school students there is a noticeable difference in income distribution between families in capital city areas and the balance of the country, with almost half (45 percent) of those in capital cities being in the highest income bracket, and half (53 percent) of those in the rest of the country being in the middle-income bracket. There are also differences between the various states, with the ACT, NSW and the Northern Territory skewing to the higher income bracket, while the remaining states are weighted to the middle-income bracket.

### Annual Household Income for Families of Independent School Students



The demographic profile of the Independent school student from a high income family differs from that of the Independent school student from a low income household. Per above, by proportion, there are many more high income Independent school student households in capital city areas (80 percent vs. 69 percent of low income households). Although the students from families in each income level are most likely to be Australian-born (low income: 83% Australian born, high income: 87% Australian born), if they are foreign-born there is a difference in the countries of origin, with the lower income families more likely to be from China or South Korea, and the higher income families from England, South Africa, or USA.

### Country of Birth of Independent School Students Born Overseas, by Household Income



The proportion of higher income families with both parents being born in Australia is higher than for low income families (56 percent vs. 46 percent), and further, the share of 'English only' speaking



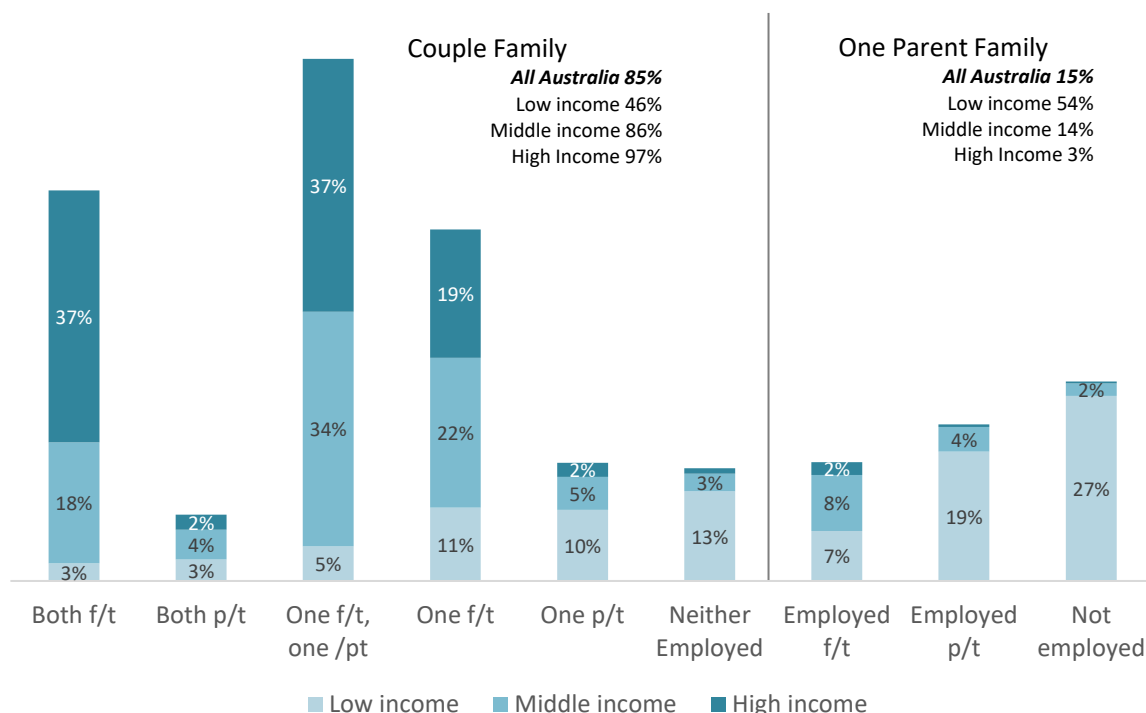
students is higher in those households with higher income (88 percent vs. 68 percent for low income households).

Among the higher income households, Independent school students are more likely to be Christian and less likely to follow 'other' religions than the Independent school students from low income households.

One of the main points of differentiation for these two groups is family labour force status. Almost all (97 percent) of the high income families are couple families, with more than a third (37 percent) having both parents working full time, more than a third (37 percent) with one full time and one part time employed parent, and a further fifth (18 percent) with just one parent employed full time. In contrast, fewer than half (46 percent) of the low income families are in couple families, with three percent having both parents working full time, seven percent with one parent full time, and 40 percent families with no employment, and a further fifth (18 percent) with just one parent employed full time.

Among the high income households of Independent school students, only one percent of parents, whether couple or one parent families, are unemployed. For low income households, whether couple or one parent families, this proportion is 40 percent.

**Family Composition and Labour Forces Status of Independent School Students by Household Income**



Finally, it is the Independent school students in the high income families that are more likely to hold a job themselves (28 percent vs. 16 percent for students from lower income households) and a higher share of these students will be involved in voluntary work (41 percent of Independent school students from high income households vs. 23 percent of the same from low income households).

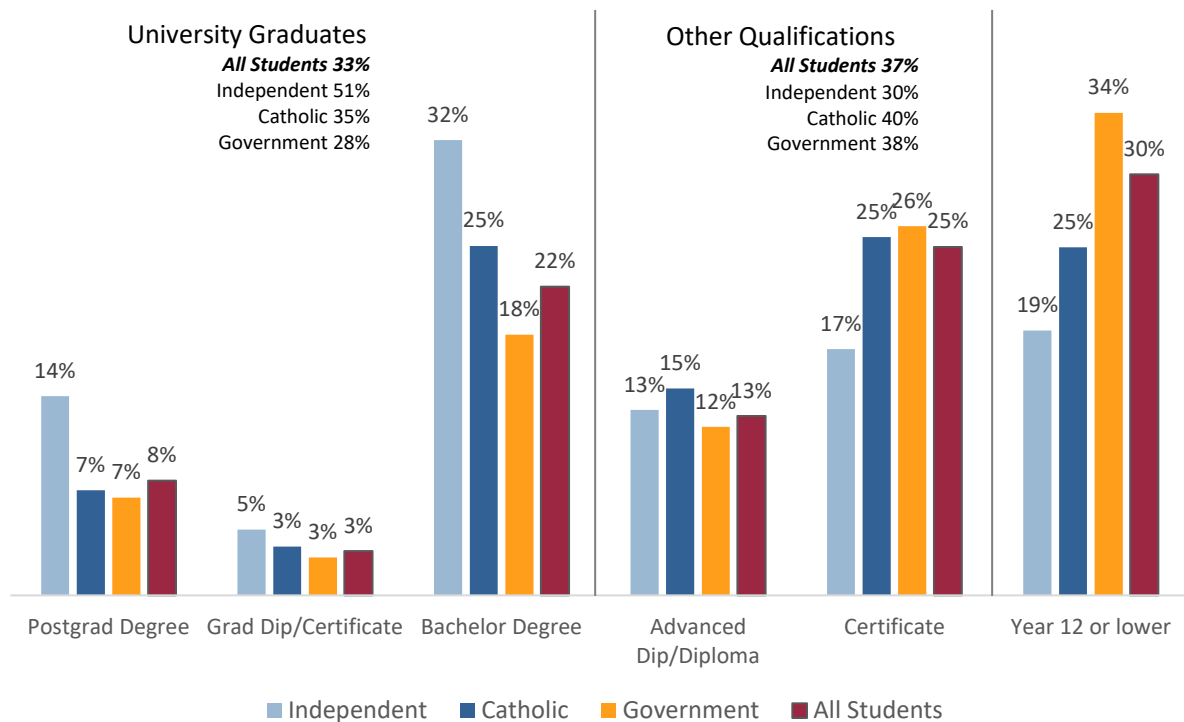
## Qualification & Occupation of Highest Paid Parent

Parents of Independent school students tend to have a higher level of educational attainment than the parents of students in the other school sectors. This has been the case for at least the past fifteen years, and the proportion of Independent school sector parents in this group continues to grow.

Parents in families where the main breadwinner is a university graduate choose Independent schools for their children more frequently than parents in families where the main breadwinner has attained a lesser level of educational qualification. As a result, there are markedly higher proportions of the children of such parents in Independent schools than in Catholic or government schools.

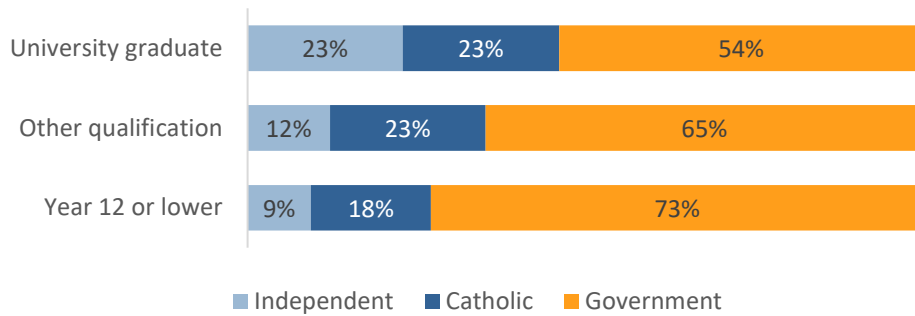
In all, 51 percent of students in Independent schools are from families in which the main breadwinner is a university graduate. There is no difference between the parents of primary and secondary level students, nor female and male students.

*Qualification of Highest Earning Parent by School Sector*



It must be noted, however, that among parents in this category (i.e. highest earning parent holding a university degree), more than half send their children to government schools (54 percent).

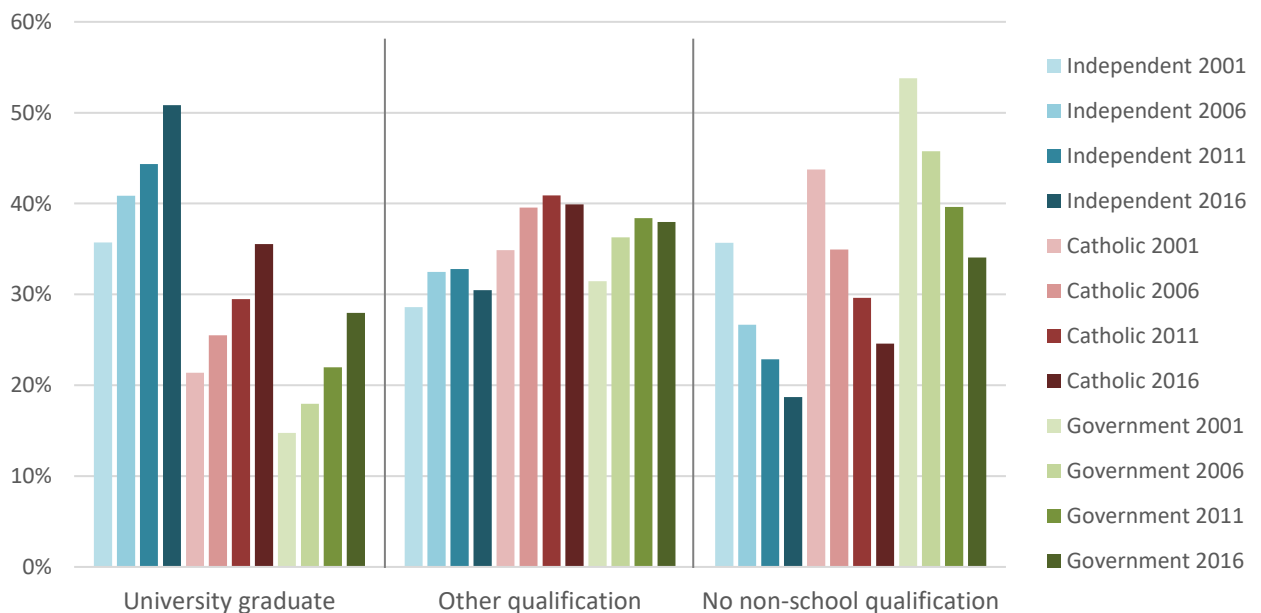
### School Sector by Qualification of Highest Earning Parent



At the other end of the educational qualification spectrum, parents of families in which the main breadwinner has no non-school qualifications, chose Independent schools for their children in only 10 percent of cases, compared with 18 percent going to Catholic schools and 72 percent at government schools.

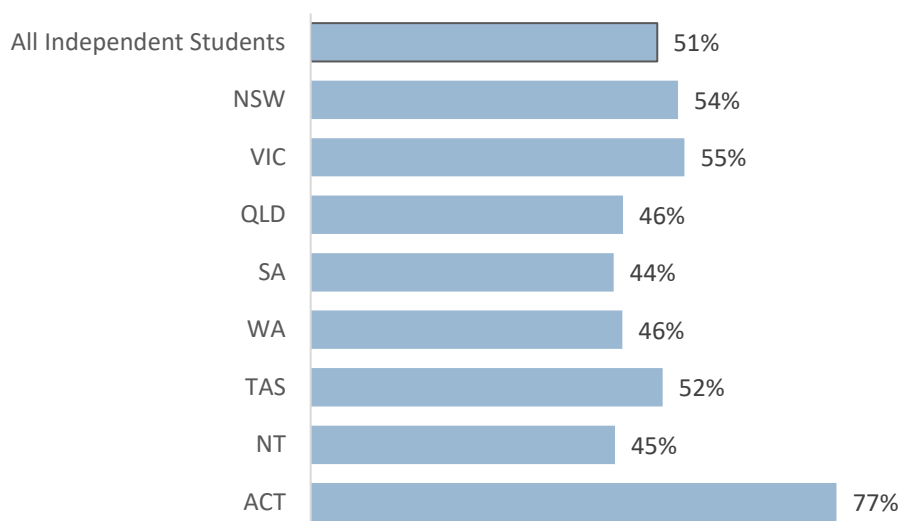
Over the past decade, there has been a 46 percent growth in the proportion of parents with university qualifications, with most of this growth (57 percent) coming from the government school sector, growing from 18 percent in 2006 to 28 percent in 2016. During this period the proportion in the Independent school sector has grown 24 percent. The decline observed in the proportion of main breadwinners with no non-school qualifications in both the Independent and Catholic school sectors is 30 percent, while the decline of the same in the government sector is 26 percent.

### Qualification of Highest Earning Parent by School Sector – 2001 to 2016



In terms of geographic location, Independent school students whose higher earning parent is more educated, are more likely to live in the capital city areas, and, by state, in the ACT, Victoria or New South Wales.

### *Independent Students whose Highest Earning Parent is a University Graduate by State*

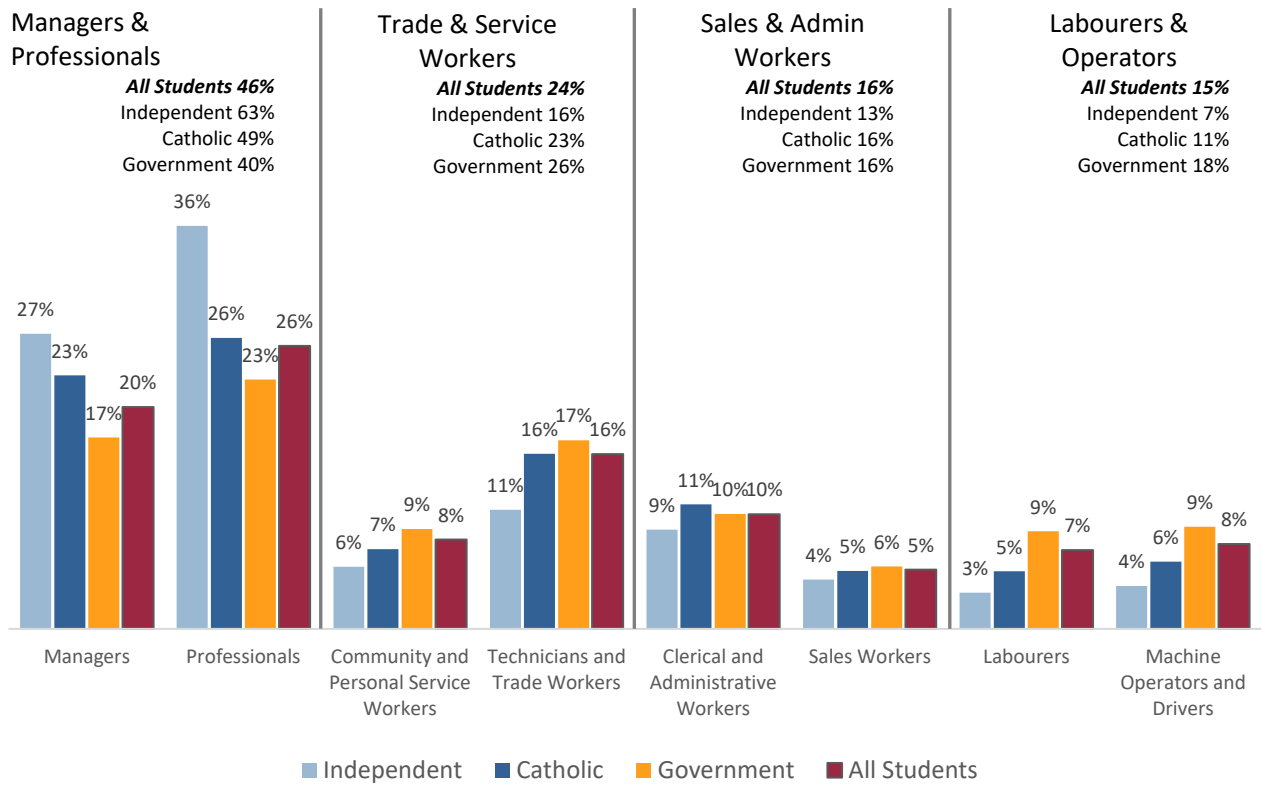


**Paired with the higher qualification standards, parents of Independent school students are also more likely to have a professional or managerial role than the parents of students in the other school sectors.**

The same is evident for students whose main breadwinning parent works in a professional or managerial capacity. Sixty-three percent of students in Independent schools are from families in which the main breadwinner is in a managerial or professional occupation.

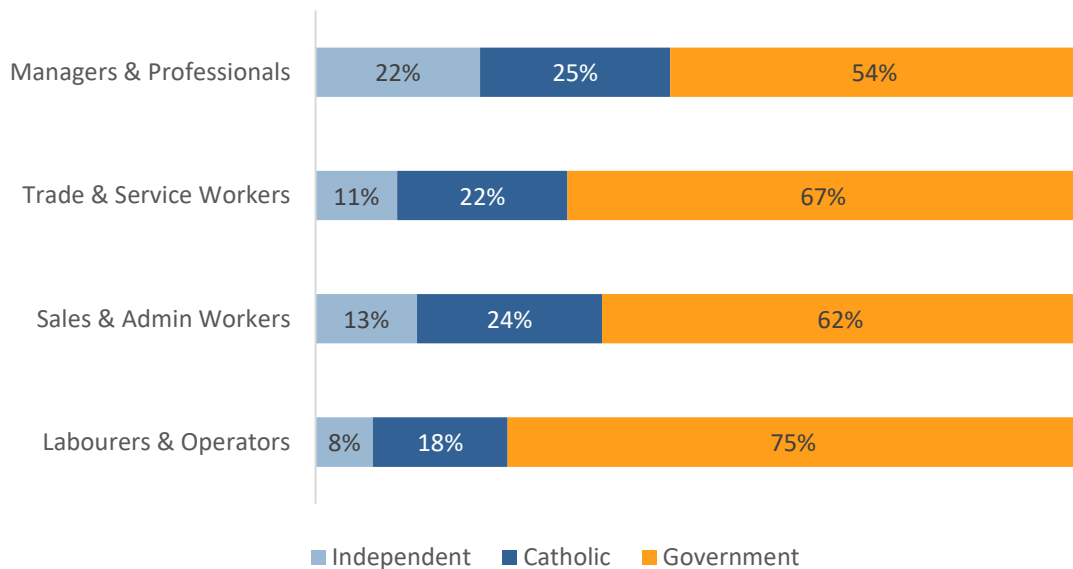
The occupation groups from which the Independent sector draws the smallest proportions of students are the Sales & Administrative Workers (13 percent) and Labourers & Operators (7 percent). Together these groups account for just over one fifth (21 percent) of all Independent school students.

### Occupation Group of Highest Earning Parent by School Sector



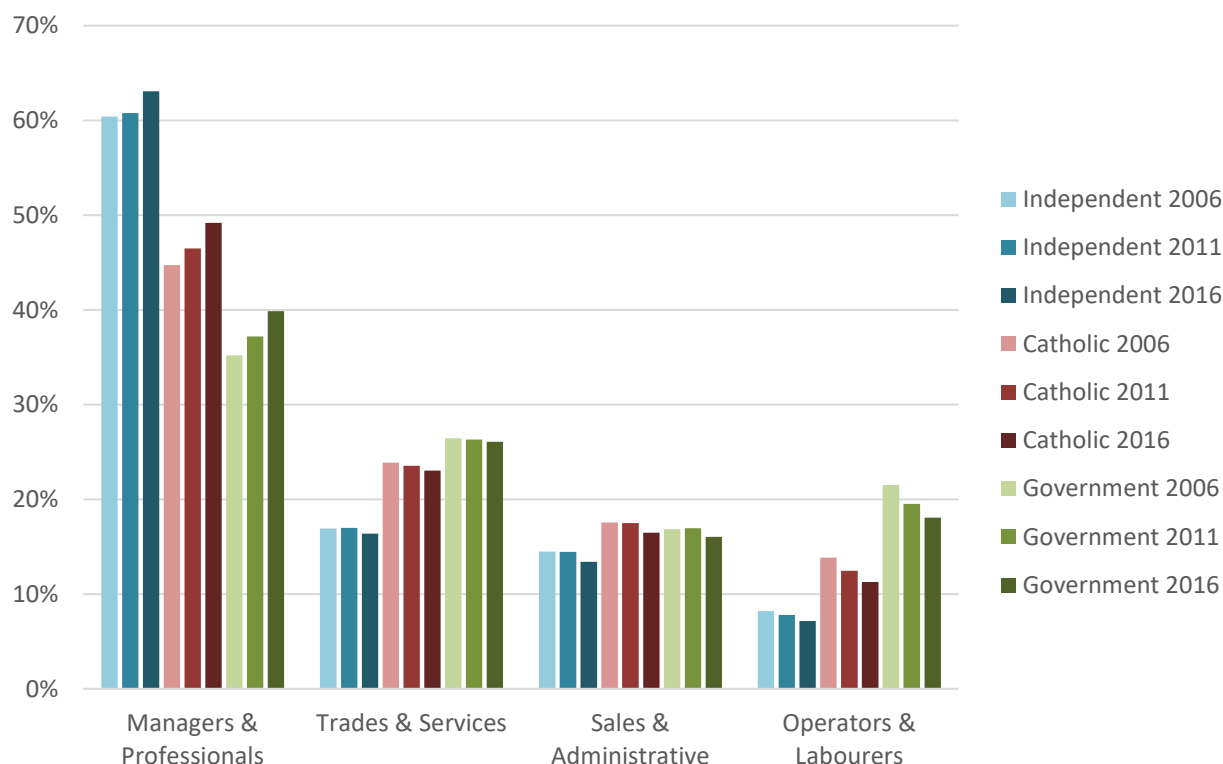
Again, in terms of proportions, it must be noted that among parents in this category (i.e. highest earning parent working in a professional or managerial role), more than half send their children to government schools (54 percent) rather than Independent schools (22 percent).

### School Sector by Occupation Group of Highest Earning Parent



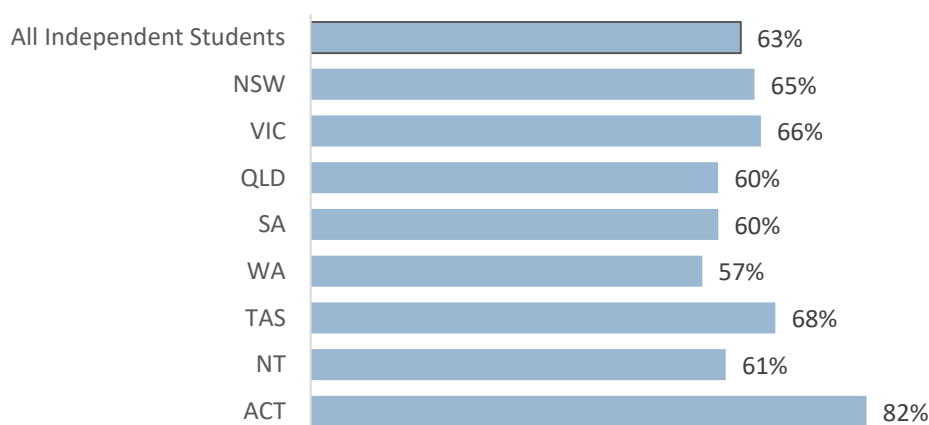
Due to a change in classification of occupation groups by the ABS, the only available comparable historical data is that from 2006 onwards. There have been slight changes in the proportions within occupation groups by school sector over this period, most notably an increasing proportion of Managers/Professionals and a decline in the proportion of Operators and Labourers. This is seen across all school sectors.

### *Occupation Group of Highest Earning Parent by School Sector – 2006 to 2016*



The capital cities have a larger share of Independent school students whose highest earning parent works in a professional or managerial role (75 percent), compared with the balance of the country. When looking at states, the ACT has the highest representation of managers or professionals.

### *Independent Students whose Highest Earning Parent is a Manager/Professional by State*



## Student Employment & Volunteer Status

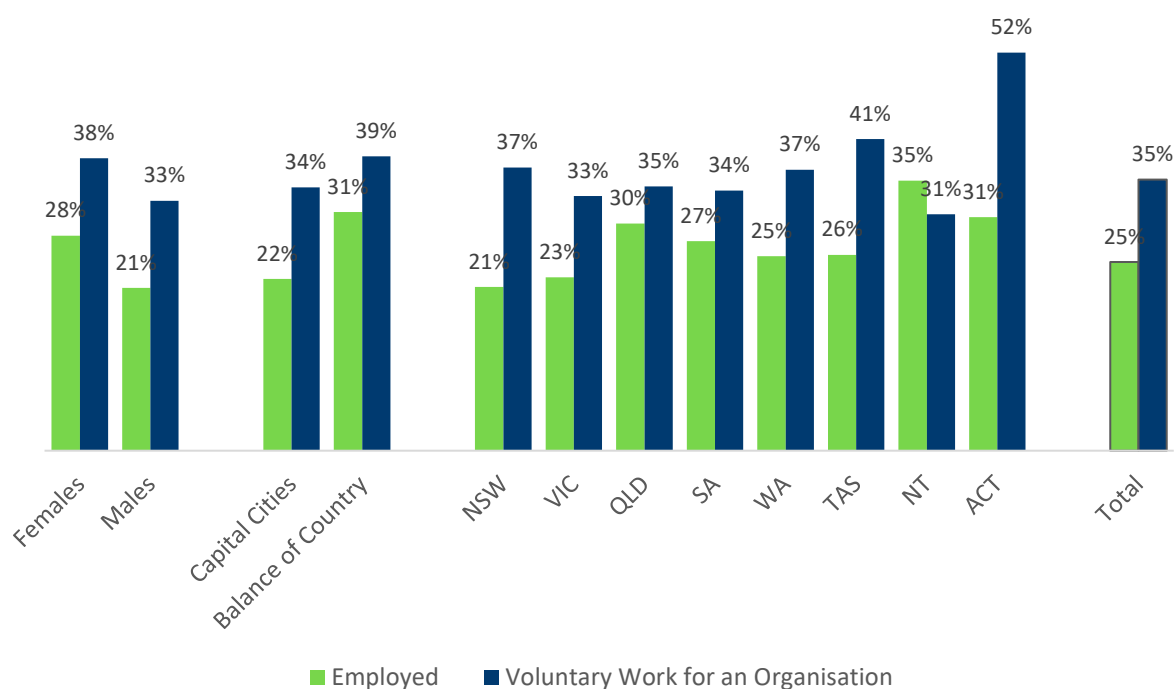
More than a quarter of secondary school students have a paying job. Almost one quarter of secondary school students also do voluntary work for an organisation or group. Independent school students are less likely to work in paid employment but are far more likely to have done volunteer work for an organisation or group in the past year.

While fewer Independent secondary school students (25 percent) are in paid employment than would be expected on average (29 percent), they are more likely to have participated in voluntary work in the past year (35 percent volunteered, versus the average of 24 percent of all Australian students). Catholic school students are most likely to have a paid form of employment, while government school students are the least likely volunteers.

Student Labour Force & Volunteer Status (%)	Independent	Catholic	Government	All Students
Employed	25	35	28	29
Unemployed, looking for work	6	7	8	7
Not in labour force	70	58	64	64
Volunteer	35	29	18	24
Not a volunteer	65	71	82	76

Within the Independent school student population, the groups that are most likely to hold a job and/or to volunteer for a group or organisation are females rather than males, those living outside of the capital cities, and students from the ACT.

### Employment and Volunteer Status of Independent School Students



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# Appendix

## Notes

This report is based on data from the 2016 ABS Population & Housing Census, using the enumerated population of Australia on Census night. The 'Place of Enumeration' is the place where a person spent Census Night, which may or may not be where he or she usually lives.

Note that all Census data is reported as claimed by respondents, so the numbers and percentages presented here may not match other data sources, such as the *ABS Schools Australia* information which is released on an annual basis. In fact, a quick analysis suggests that the ABS Household & Population Census reports only 88 percent of the total student numbers in the ABS Schools Australia (92 percent for Independent schools; 94 percent for Catholic schools; 85 percent for government schools).

Data has been manipulated using TableBuilder Pro software, for which ISCA has one individual licence. In the instances where TableBuilder Pro could not provide the required tables, custom tables were ordered from the ABS. Of note, some variables refer to the student; some to their parents; some to their highest earning parent and some to the whole household.

Unless otherwise specified, all charts and tables in this report exclude overseas visitors (people who indicate they will be in Australia for less than a year and are usually resident in another country) and excludes inadequate, not stated, not applicable or incomplete responses.

Some figures may not add to 100 percent due to rounding. Totals will be different per demographic variable, depending on the number of missing or inadequate responses.

## Definitions (ABS variable name)

This lists the definitions used by the ABS for each of the demographic variables. Further information may be found in the ABS Census Dictionary (see [abs.gov.au](http://abs.gov.au)).

- Geography (GCCSA): Greater Capital City Statistical Area specifies areas counted as capital cities, and areas not in capital cities (balance of country). Capital cities represent a broad socioeconomic definition of each city, containing not only the urban area of the city, but also non-urban areas where much of the population has strong links to the capital city, through for example, commuting to work. Thus, the whole of the ACT is counted as a Capital city area. Totals do not include migratory, offshore and shipping.
- Education level (TYPP): This variable is broken into infants/primary and secondary for each of government, Catholic and other non-government sectors. This paper refers to infants/primary as "primary" and other non-government as "Independent".
- Sex (SEXP): Refers to the sex of the student.
- Indigeneity (INGP): "Indigenous" includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and those who identify as both.
- Australian Citizenship (CITP): Options for response include "Australian" or "not Australian".
- Country of birth of Person (BPLP): While the options printed on the Census are limited to Australia, England, New Zealand, India, Italy, Vietnam and Philippines, there is a space to specify 'other', so the actual list of responses is very extensive. In this report the best approximation of the top 10 countries of birth, as reported by respondents and the ABS, has



been used. "Australia" excludes external territories; "China" excludes SARS & Taiwan; and, "South Korea" is Republic of (South) Korea

- Birthplace of Parents (BPPP): Allows for an indication of whether both parents were born in Australia, mother was born overseas, father was born overseas or both parents were born overseas.
- Proficiency in Spoken English/Language (ENGLP): Determines whether respondents speak English only; speak English very well; speak English well; speak English not well; or, speak English not at all.
- Language Spoken at Home (LANP): Like the country of birth variable, this demographic has many varied responses via the 'other, please specify' box, beyond the most common choices of: Mandarin, Italian, Arabic, Cantonese, Greek and Vietnamese. This analysis uses the best approximation of the top 10 foreign languages spoken at home by school students, as reported by respondents & the ABS.
- Religious Affiliation (RELPA): In summarising the data, some of the religions have been collapsed into logical groupings, such that: "Other Christian" includes Christian nfd (no further description), Brethren, Churches of Christ, Jehovah's Witnesses, Latter-day Saints, Assyrian Apostolic, Salvation Army, Seventh-day Adventist, Pentecostal, Other Protestant, Other Christian, Oriental & Eastern Orthodox; "Other Religions" includes Hinduism, Judaism, Australian Aboriginal Traditional religions, Baha'i, Chinese Religions, Druse, Japanese Religions, Nature Religions, Sikhism, Spiritualism and Miscellaneous Religions. Further, "Christian" is defined as the summation of Anglican, Uniting Church, Baptist, Pentecostal, Lutheran, Presbyterian and Other Christian.  
One key change to RELPA in the 2016 Census was the elevation of "No religion" to the top of the religion selections.
- Family Composition (FMCF): The output for this variable includes: couple family with children, couple family with no children and one parent families. In this report, "Couple family" refers to those with and without (dependent) children combined, as "couple family without children" numbers are small.
- Labour Force Status of Parent/Partner (LFSF): Use of this variable excludes responses of "couple family, both not stated/not present" and "one parent, not stated/not present". The definition of "not employed" used in this paper includes both 'unemployed' and 'not in labour force'.
- Family Income (FINF): The income reported here considers the total income of students' family members (typically just their parents but may include other family members too) as reported in the Census. There are no standard definitions for what constitutes a low, middle or high income, so for the purposes of comparison, and to account for income drift, this study uses a breakdown of roughly 25 percent of the student population in the low income bracket, 50 percent in the middle and 25 percent in the high income bracket, approximated to the closest match in the pre-defined income ranges given by the ABS.
- To illustrate the change in income levels over time, this table shows the data cuts used in each Census year:

	1996	2001	2006	2011	2016
Low	< \$20,800	< \$31,200	< \$33,800	< \$41,600	< \$51,999
Middle	\$20,800 - \$51,999	\$31,200- \$77,999	\$33,800- \$88,399	\$41,600- \$129,999	\$52,000- 155,999
High	\$52,000 +	\$78,000 +	\$88,400 +	\$130,000 +	\$156,000 +

In all cases, 'partial/all income not stated' is excluded.

- Qualification of highest earning parent (QALLP): This demographic shows the highest non-school qualification attained by the highest earning parent, determined at a family level for all families with school aged children. It excludes 'inadequately described and not stated qualification' and 'no stated parent income'.

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- Occupation of highest earning parent (OCCP): This demographic shows the occupation major group of the highest earning parent, determined at a family level for all families with school aged children. It excludes 'inadequately described and not stated occupation' and 'no stated parent income'.
  - Labour Force Status (LFSP): ABS ask this question of all people 15 years or older. "Employed" includes both full and part time, as indicated by respondents.
  - Voluntary Work for an Organisation (VOLWP): ABS ask all people 15 years or older - "In the last twelve months did the person spend any time doing voluntary work through an organisation or group?"