

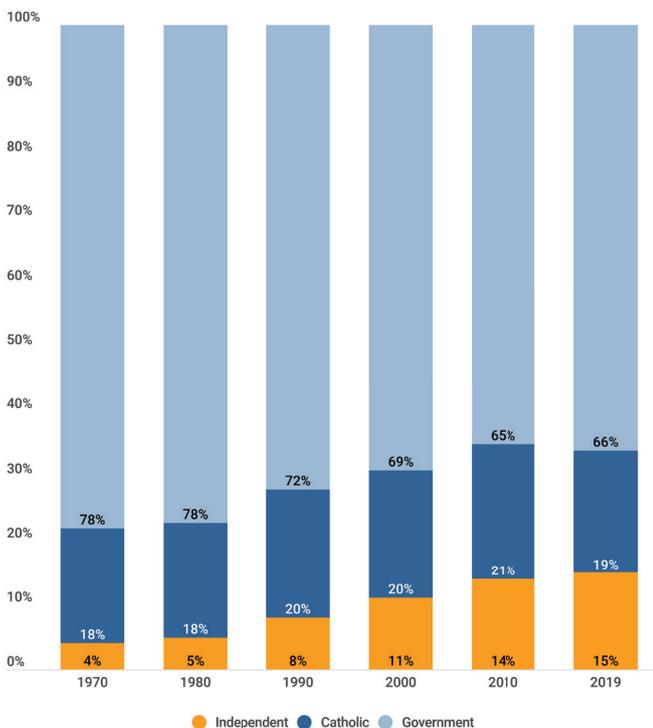
Enrolment Trends



Growth of the Independent school sector

Over the past 40 years, and particularly since the expansion of Australian Government recurrent funding for both government and non-government schools following the recommendations of the ‘Karmel Report’, Schools in Australia: report of the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission (1973), the Independent school sector’s share of Australian full-time (FT) enrolments has grown from 4.1 per cent in 1970 to 14.8 per cent in 2018. This rate of growth has slowed in recent years.

Full-time (FT) enrolment share by sector, selected years, 1970 to 2019

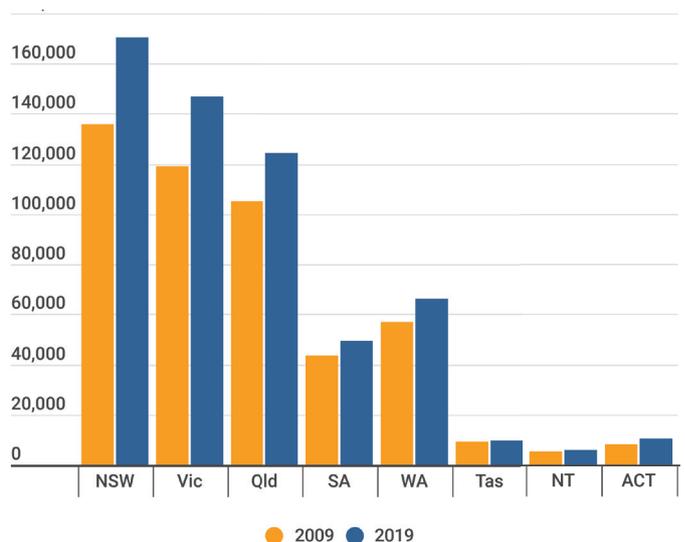


Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics
 Note: The ABS classifies independent Catholic schools as Catholic, rather than Independent. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

In the last decade, the average annual increase in full-time enrolments in the Independent sector, at 1.9 per cent, has consistently exceeded the average growth at Catholic systemic (0.9 per cent) and government (1.3 per cent) schools. The rate of growth in the Independent sector has been progressively slowing, although in recent years has increased again from a low 1.3 per cent increase between 2015 and 2016.

This growth in full-time enrolments has occurred in all states and territories, with the strongest rates of growth in the Australian Capital Territory (2.4 per cent), New South Wales (2.3 per cent) and Victoria (2.1 per cent).

Growth in the Independent sector by state, 2009 to 2019



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics
 Note: The ABS classifies independent Catholic schools as Catholic, rather than Independent.

The highest rates of enrolment growth have been experienced by the larger schools in the sector, schools with enrolments of more than 1000 students. The average annual rate of growth for these schools was around 2.6 per cent, accounting for about 80 per cent of the sector's total growth between 2009 and 2019.

Smaller schools, with fewer than 250 students, have been experiencing a lower rate of enrolment growth. Enrolments in smaller schools have decreased from a peak of over 50,400 students in 2007 to less than 47,800 students in 2019.

Projected growth

As a result of Australia's declining birth rate, the Independent school sector is expected to continue to grow, but at a slower rate, over the coming years. Projections by the Australian Bureau of Statistics indicate that the Australian school population as a whole will continue to grow, but will represent a smaller proportion of the total population over this century.

Enrolments in Independent schools will be influenced by the education and funding policies of governments as well as national and local social and economic development.

Projected enrolment growth in all sectors, 2019 to 2028

	2018	2028**	Change (no.)	Equivalent number of new schools
Government schools				
Primary	1,594,745	1,793,450	198,705	511
Secondary	995,631	1,223,081	227,450	585
Total	2,590,376	3,016,531	426,155	1,096
Catholic				
Primary	404,228	446,065	41,837	95
Secondary	365,263	389,208	23,945	55
Total	769,491	835,273	65,782	150
Independent				
Primary	264,234	287,328	23,094	43
Secondary	319,610	358,572	38,962	73
Total	583,844	645,900	62,057	116
All schools				
Primary	2,263,207	2,526,843	263,636	649
Secondary	1,680,504	1,970,861	290,357	712
Total	3,943,711	4,497,704	553,993	1,361

Source: Australian Government Department of Education and Training

*Based on average school size by sector for 2018 derived from ABS schools data.

**2028 figures based on Department of Education & Training enrolment predictions.