

# NEiTA – ACE Teachers Report Card 2021

**Teachers' perceptions of education  
and their profession**



# Welcome

There can be no argument that education changes lives. Evidence shows us that teacher quality is the single greatest school-related influence on student achievement and positive learning outcomes. Teachers transform futures. As such, it is essential that the voices of teachers, as agents of change, are heard. This has never been more important than right now, when a pandemic is turbo-charging changes in how students learn, live and, in time, work.

That is why the NEiTA Foundation (NEiTA), supported by Futurity Investment Group, and the Australian College of Educators (ACE) have joined forces to solicit and capture teachers' views and opinions. The survey received responses from more than 570 teachers living in all corners of Australia, working in all school systems, teaching at all levels, with varying degrees of seniority<sup>1</sup> and experience.

It has been more than four years – and a global pandemic – since a similar survey has been conducted. This year's survey was more ambitious in its inquiries, drilling down further to understand the experiences, wisdom and concerns of teachers, including the challenges faced during lockdowns. The response rate has increased significantly since 2017. Teachers clearly have something to say!

We are optimistic that this year's *Teachers Report Card* will inform public understanding, add value to the discourses and analyses of educators, schools and policymakers, and positively shape the evolution of school education in Australia.

We are immensely grateful to all the teachers who generously gave their time and insights to complete the survey. Your voices matter. We hope that we have done them justice.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Allen Blewitt'.

**Allen Blewitt**  
Chairman  
NEiTA Foundation

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Helen Jentz'.

**Helen Jentz**  
Managing Director  
Australian College of Educators

---

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this Report, unless stated otherwise, 'teachers' is used broadly to capture all preschool and school educators, from early career teachers through to principals.

# Contents

<b>Highlights.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Teaching – a passionate profession .....</b>	<b>8</b>
Passion .....	8
Remuneration.....	9
Promotion and advancement .....	10
<b>Development matters.....</b>	<b>11</b>
Professional learning and development .....	11
Mentoring teaches.....	11
<b>Supportive environments.....</b>	<b>12</b>
Collegial support.....	12
Supporting teachers supporting others.....	12
Schools supporting schools.....	13
Supportive physical environments.....	13
<b>Workload and wellbeing .....</b>	<b>15</b>
Hard at work and outside of work .....	15
Taking its toll .....	16
<b>The student–teacher–parent nexus.....</b>	<b>18</b>
Student–teacher interactions.....	18
Parents – champions and challengers .....	18
<b>Contemporary issues.....</b>	<b>20</b>
The great homework debate .....	20
Digital – de vice or virtue?.....	20
To test or not to test.....	21
Access and equity .....	21
<b>Educating for the future.....</b>	<b>22</b>
Biggest shifts.....	22
Future skills .....	23
Upskilling teachers.....	24
<b>Pandemic – prepared or pandemonium?.....</b>	<b>25</b>
Propelled preparedness.....	25
Supporting students .....	28
Educators’ experiences .....	29
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>31</b>

## FIGURES

<b>Figure 1</b>	Passion for teaching .....	8
<b>Figure 2</b>	Why teachers teach and keep teaching .....	9
<b>Figure 3</b>	Teachers' pay .....	9
<b>Figure 4</b>	Importance and frequency of being promoted .....	10
<b>Figure 5</b>	Participation in PD .....	11
<b>Figure 6</b>	Formal collaboration with other schools or institutions .....	13
<b>Figure 7</b>	Days worked .....	15
<b>Figure 8</b>	Weekly hours worked .....	15
<b>Figure 9</b>	Time spent on non-teaching activities .....	16
<b>Figure 10</b>	Work-life balance is less than ideal or non-existent .....	16
<b>Figure 11</b>	Level and appropriateness of engagement .....	18
<b>Figure 12</b>	Whose role is it to educate children on ...? .....	19
<b>Figure 13</b>	Amount of homework .....	20
<b>Figure 14</b>	Testing matters .....	21
<b>Figure 15</b>	Missing out on educational opportunities .....	21
<b>Figure 16</b>	Biggest shifts over the next 10 years .....	22
<b>Figure 17</b>	Increasing students' skills and abilities .....	23
<b>Figure 18</b>	Increasing teachers' skills and experiences .....	24
<b>Figure 19</b>	Implementation of policies and practices .....	26
<b>Figure 20</b>	Readiness of online curriculum .....	27
<b>Figure 21</b>	Adequacy of training .....	27
<b>Figure 22</b>	Time spent supporting students .....	28
<b>Figure 23</b>	Teacher support and recognition .....	29
<b>Figure 24</b>	Self-assessed resilience and adaptability .....	30

## TABLES

<b>Table 1</b>	Stress, performance and thoughts of leaving .....	17
<b>Table 2</b>	Policies and practices implemented in response to COVID-19 .....	26
<b>Table 3</b>	Time spent supporting students .....	28
<b>Table 4</b>	Teacher support and recognition .....	29
<b>Table 5</b>	Self-assessed resilience and adaptability .....	30

## APPENDICES

<b>Appendix 1</b>	Respondent demographics .....	33
-------------------	-------------------------------	----



# Highlights

Teachers play a central role in the development of Australia's young people. It is essential that their voices are heard by those who make and decide policy, and by others who influence their learning and development. The *NEiTA-ACE Teachers Report Card 2021* is the only report of its kind in Australia, amplifying the voices of teachers on the state of education and on their profession.



This year's report highlights that teachers have an enduring passion for teaching, are invested in their own professional development, enjoy the support of each other, are hardworking and like interacting with engaged students. But their efforts are not fully reflected in their pay or career progression, are not always appreciated by parents, and this is taking a toll on teachers' wellbeing and is impacting on their work-life balance.

In this year's survey we introduced a 'special focus' section that explored the impacts of COVID-19 on teachers and teaching. The results clearly showed that the double disruption of technology and a pandemic is accelerating change in the way teachers teach and students learn.

## TEACHING – A PASSIONATE PROFESSION

- An overwhelming majority of teachers said that they find teaching rewarding or very rewarding although this is no longer a nearly universal view. While almost two-thirds of respondents said that they are either satisfied or very satisfied with their job, and they are typically positive or very positive when speaking about it with family and friends, the number of respondents who are neither satisfied nor positive has risen markedly.
- Teachers are roughly evenly split in their views on remuneration, with just under half claiming that they are paid poorly or very poorly and just over half holding the opposite opinion.
- Two-thirds of teachers place importance on getting promoted. Seven out of ten said this rarely happens. The experience and expectations of teachers vary noticeably by gender.

## DEVELOPMENT MATTERS

- Most teachers had spent time participating in professional learning and development in the last three months, and believed it to be beneficial or very beneficial.
- Two out of five teachers met some or all of the costs of their professional development.
- More than half of teachers have benefited from being mentored by an experienced fellow educator, either formally or informally; most commonly the latter.

## SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

- Eight out of ten teachers feel supported or very supported by their colleagues.
- However, nearly two-thirds of teachers working with students with special learning needs feel they did not receive the resources and support they require.
- Examples of formal collaboration between schools are greater for curriculum development and shared experiences, with more than a third indicating initiatives in these areas.
- More than half of teachers judged the level of investment in infrastructure to be adequate to more than adequate. This, however, masks large system-based discrepancies.



## WORKLOAD AND WELLBEING

- More than a quarter of teachers work more than a five-day week.
- Three out of ten teachers work an extra 10 hours or more a week outside of their classrooms at school before going home. Once at home, two out of ten keep on working for more than 15 hours over the course of a week.
- The standout non-teaching activity that is occupying teachers' time is administrative duties, with nearly four in ten teachers dedicating more than 10 hours each week to this task.
- The work-life balance of four out of five teachers is either less than ideal or non-existent.
- More than three-quarters of teachers are stressed during a typical week at work fairly often to most of the time.
- A third felt that they can be the best teacher they can be only occasionally or very rarely.
- Over the course of a year, just under half think about leaving fairly often if not all the time.

## THE STUDENT-TEACHER-PARENT NEXUS

- Four out of five teachers reported that engagement in their classes is good or very good.
- Nearly two-thirds of teachers said that their school does not adequately take account of the views, aspirations and expectations of students in curriculum development. Nearly half felt the same with regards to social issues.
- Teachers said that most parents have some level of interaction with them. Nearly two-thirds judged the level of parental engagement to be about right.
- The majority of teachers surveyed viewed that both parents and teachers have a role to play in educating children on sex, sexuality and cyber safety. Half claimed that religious education is best left up to the parents. And three out of five felt that teaching children how to behave is a parental responsibility.

## CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

- A small majority of teachers consider that students receive the right amount of homework. A significant minority felt that secondary school students should receive more.
- Most teachers believe that students should be allowed to use their personal digital devices only before or after school, not during the breaks or in the classroom.
- Three out of five teachers think the current form of testing learning outcomes is ineffective or very ineffective. Slightly more than half think that the amount of standardised testing is too much. Few, however, believe that the tests are diverting the focus of their schools.
- One in five teachers felt that students miss out on educational opportunities due to their parents not being able to afford them, with the greater concentration of teachers holding this view being attached to Government schools.

## EDUCATING FOR THE FUTURE

- Technology is shifting the future in a myriad of ways, from the introduction of new digital tools through to technology as an enabler of flexible and alternative models of teaching and learning.
- The top five skills and abilities, nominated by teachers, that students need to excel at in the future are: communication, adaptability and resilience, collaboration and relationships, critical thinking and problem solving, and information technology.
- To prepare students for the future, teachers identified that they have to get better at motivating their students, using information technology, building strong relationships with their students, and applying real world scenarios in teaching. Professional development was said to be key.

## PANDEMIC – PREPARED OR PANDEMONIUM?

- The dark cloud of COVID-19 has a silver lining: Victoria, the state which has been locked down the longest has done the most to implement policies and practices, adapt the curriculum for online delivery, prepare teachers and support the needs of students. However, Victorian teachers have not always felt well supported and it has been a greater struggle to maintain a positive outlook.
- COVID-19 has fast tracked the implementation of some policies and practices. Notably the provision of videoconferencing facilities, the development of digital learning materials, and the introduction of online learning management systems.
- Just over half of teachers said that all or most of the curricula at their schools were ready to be delivered online if the need arises.
- Teachers' feedback on the adequacy of training received to teach online suggests that there is room for improvement.
- Seven out of ten teachers said they are spending more time supporting their students' emotional wellbeing.
- Three out of five said that they are focusing more on helping students improve their study skills and strategies.
- Half said that they are spending time on students' cyber safety.
- Over half of teachers surveyed felt that they were well supported by their school's leadership team.
- Less than half sensed that there is better recognition of the importance of teaching.
- Only a quarter believed the status of the profession is higher.
- The vast majority of teachers attempted things that they had not done before and adopted new teaching methods.
- Seven out of ten felt able to teach effectively despite the challenges.
- Two-thirds indicated they were able to stay positive during lockdowns.





# Teaching – a passionate profession

## PASSION

Teachers' passion for the profession has both endured and waned. Almost two-thirds of respondents said that they are either satisfied or very satisfied with their job and are typically positive or very positive when speaking about it with family and friends. An overwhelming majority of teachers said that they find teaching rewarding or very rewarding.

FIGURE 1 PASSION FOR TEACHING

Overall, in my job, I am satisfied / very satisfied	63%
When I am talking about my job, I am typically positive / very positive	63%
I find teaching rewarding / very rewarding	87%

While this is good news, these figures are down on 2017, when 96% of respondents considered teaching to be rewarding or very rewarding; by 2021, this has slipped to 87%. More concerning is the drop in job satisfaction over four years. The percentage of teachers satisfied or very satisfied with their job has fallen sharply from a high 91% to 63%.

There was a lot of overlap in the reasons given for why teachers teach and what they find rewarding. A popular answer was “to make a difference”.

Teachers want to see their students achieve their potential, exceed their own expectations and believe in themselves. Many teachers find it rewarding to engage with young people, take pleasure in watching children learn and grow, and thrive on the gratitude of current and former students. Teachers talked repeatedly of their love of witnessing the “lightbulb” or “ah-ha!” moments when things suddenly “click” and students “get it”. For many teachers, their initial and ongoing motivation is to help students learn, to instil a love of learning and to encourage learning as a lifelong pursuit. Others are more future-focused: they see their purpose as preparing students for tomorrow’s world of work and equipping them to become engaged citizens.



FIGURE 2 WHY TEACHERS TEACH AND KEEP TEACHING



REMUNERATION

Teachers are roughly evenly split in their views on remuneration, with just under half claiming that they are paid poorly or very poorly and just over half holding the opposite opinion. A number of respondents nominated teachers’ pay as the greatest challenge faced by the profession. Comments shared indicate frustration with levels of pay, and with a lack of consideration for the high expectations placed on the profession or the extra hours required of teachers.

FIGURE 3 TEACHERS’ PAY



- “Not paid for the hours it takes to do it well.”
- “The pay does not meet the professionalism and expectations of DOE and parents”

Seniority did not make a significant difference to the views held, but other factors like gender, years teaching, school type, school system and where teachers live did. Female and male respondents appear to be relatively evenly distributed in terms of their views on remuneration, but male teachers are proportionally more likely to regard themselves as very well paid (9%) than their female counterparts (3%).

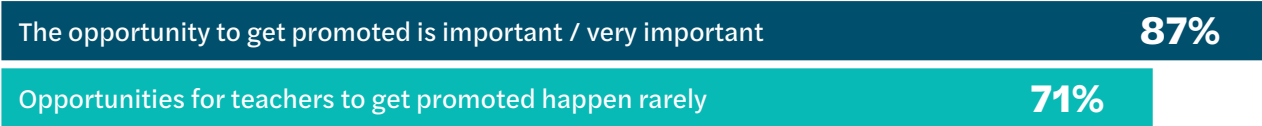
Length of service appears to influence opinions on remuneration: 16% of those with 10 years of experience or less considered themselves very poorly paid versus 9% of their more experienced peers. A majority of teachers at primary schools regarded themselves as poorly to very poorly paid (57%) while, at secondary and combined schools, the majorities considered themselves to be well to very well paid (at 53% and 60% respectively). Similarly, more than half the teachers working in Independent schools (61%) or in regional or remote areas (56%) said they are well or very well paid.

While many respondents have a negative view of their remuneration, less than half (46%) said they would undertake additional certification, such as highly accomplished or lead teacher, if they were guaranteed an increase in their pay and position. The remainder were evenly split between being undecided or saying that they would not. Somewhat surprisingly, in NSW where qualified lead teachers are now recognised with higher pay, only 45% of respondents answered “yes” to the question.

PROMOTION AND ADVANCEMENT

Two-thirds of teachers place importance on getting promoted. Seven out of ten said this rarely happens. The passage of four years since the last *Teachers Report Card* has seen a growth in both the ambitions of teachers and an increased belief that those ambitions will not come to fruition.

FIGURE 4 IMPORTANCE AND FREQUENCY OF BEING PROMOTED



Female teachers placed greater importance on gaining a promotion (68%) than their male counterparts (62%). However, proportionally fewer male teachers believed that achieving a promotion occurs only rarely (66% for males versus 72% for females). This aligns with experience. While only one in five teachers surveyed were male (refer Appendix), this proportion grows with seniority. Two out of five principals surveyed were male.

Most ambitious are teachers with 10 years of experience or less (79%), school leaders<sup>2</sup> (78%), and teachers in Independent schools (71%). School leaders are less likely than most to regard promotion as a rarity (52%). Teachers in primary schools are most likely to believe promotions will not be achieved (81%).

2 School leaders include principals, deputy and assistant principals, lead and head teachers.

# Development matters

## PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Teachers make a difference. What they know, do and care about impacts the learning outcomes and lives of their students. Teaching is complex and demanding work that requires highly specialised skills and knowledge. Professional learning and development matters.

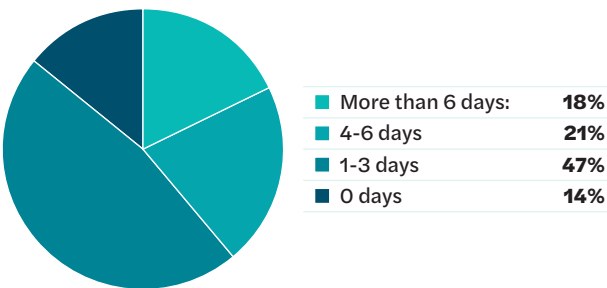
The good news is that, at the time of completing the survey, most (86%) teachers had spent time participating in professional learning and development in the last three months. The other good news is that 81% believed their professional development to be beneficial or very beneficial.

Teachers are so invested in their own professional development that three-quarters engage with online social networks to improve personal practice.

Teacher professional development is an investment in students as well as teachers. However, the survey shows that many teachers contribute to the costs of their own training. One in ten said they personally covered all of their professional learning expenses while 32% said they shared the cost with their school. The total (42%) who said they contributed towards their own professional learning and development is little changed from 2017.

FIGURE 5 PARTICIPATION IN PD

Days participating over the last 3 months



## MENTORING TEACHES

Mentoring is a powerful and collegial means of professional learning. It provides the opportunity for teachers to acquire knowledge and expertise, and to learn with and from each other. It enables teachers to reflect on, and analyse critically, their practice.

A significant proportion of survey participants (59%) said they have benefited from being mentored, either formally or informally, by an experienced fellow educator. Interestingly, almost three-quarters said they sourced their mentoring either informally through contacts and networks (69%) or through other means (5%), while just over a quarter (26%) accessed formal

mentoring programs. One in seven surveyed said they would be interested in participating in a formal mentoring program either as a mentor (49%) or as a mentee (20%).

# Supportive environments

## COLLEGIAL SUPPORT

**Eighty per cent of teachers feel supported or very supported by their colleagues. Their positive sentiments were evident in responses to questions about the rewards of teaching.**

As positive as this result is for 2021, it is down from 95% in 2017.

Teachers who reported feeling unsupported would like to have received greater assistance from their peers and superiors. Lack of support was felt acutely by some in their early years of teaching.

“Working with talented and supportive staff.”

“I enjoy improving outcomes for students by working closely with colleagues.”



## SUPPORTING TEACHERS SUPPORTING OTHERS

**The results are less impressive when it comes to teachers working with students with special learning needs.**

Sixty-five per cent of teachers either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that, when working with students who have different abilities or require specialist support, they have the necessary resources and support required.

Major shortcomings in support and/or resource provision for special learning needs was the greatest challenge identified by a number of teachers. Comments indicate that their frustrations extend to all, not just selective learning needs.

Areas of concern appear to be behavioural issues, students experiencing challenges in their home

environments, physical and intellectual disabilities, and language backgrounds other than English. Respondents indicated frustration not just with the deficits, but with the process of accessing assistance.

“The frustrating amount of time and effort it takes to get funding for students with disabilities.”

“Not enough classroom support for children with verifications or children who are EALD.”



SCHOOLS SUPPORTING SCHOOLS

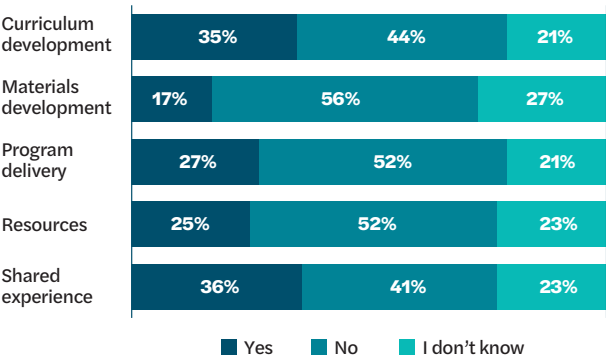
There is strong evidence that collaboration between schools and other institutions can deliver positive gains for students, teachers and schools<sup>3</sup>.

Schools lacking in time, resources and/or specialist expertise can overcome these issues by working together to develop curriculum, programs and materials, pooling resources and sharing experiences.

Based on teachers’ responses, instances of formal collaboration are greatest for curriculum development and shared experiences, with more than a third of teachers indicating initiatives in these areas. Around a quarter of schools work together to deliver programs and pool resources. One in six jointly develop materials. It is important to note that these proportions are likely to be underestimates as many teachers indicated they were not aware of collaborations.

Closer examination of survey responses reveals proportionally more instances of collaboration by Catholic and Independent schools than Government schools. Catholic schools collaborate more often for the purposes of curriculum development (39%), program delivery (34%) and materials development (21%). Independent schools lead the way for sharing experiences (39%) and pooling resources (33%).

FIGURE 6 FORMAL COLLABORATION WITH OTHER SCHOOLS OR INSTITUTIONS



SUPPORTIVE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTS

The sufficiency and design of physical spaces influences the effectiveness of teaching and the engagement and comfort of teachers and students.

More than half (54%) of teachers judged the level of investment in infrastructure to be adequate to more than adequate. This, however, masks large system-based discrepancies. A small majority (58%) of teachers at Government schools deemed investment levels to be inadequate. This contrasts with the

three-quarters (75%) of Independent school teachers and just under two-thirds (64%) of Catholic school teachers who regarded the levels at their schools to be adequate or more than adequate.

3 Atkinson, M et al (2007) *Interschool collaboration, a literature review*, Slough: National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), p xi.



# Workload and wellbeing

## HARD AT WORK AND OUTSIDE OF WORK

For years, the teaching profession has been criticised for being ‘easy’ based on the view that teachers get a holiday when their students do, and classes only run from 9am to 3pm. While many like to think this myth has been well and truly dispelled, there are still some who see teaching as a ‘cruisy’ job.

The reality that the results of this survey bear testament to is that teachers work hard. More than a quarter work more than a five-day week and, while the regular hours of half those surveyed are less than what some would consider a ‘normal’ working week, work does not stop once teachers leave their classrooms. They work many irregular hours; 30% put in more than an additional 10 hours at school before going home and, once at home, 20% keep working for more than 15 hours.

FIGURE 7 DAYS WORKED

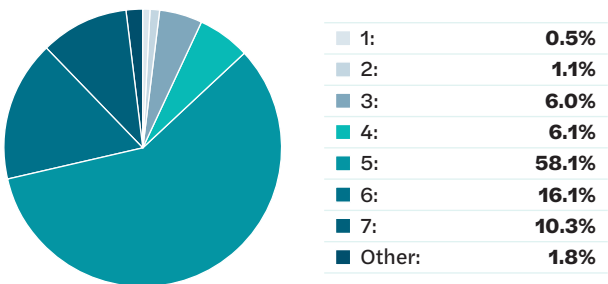
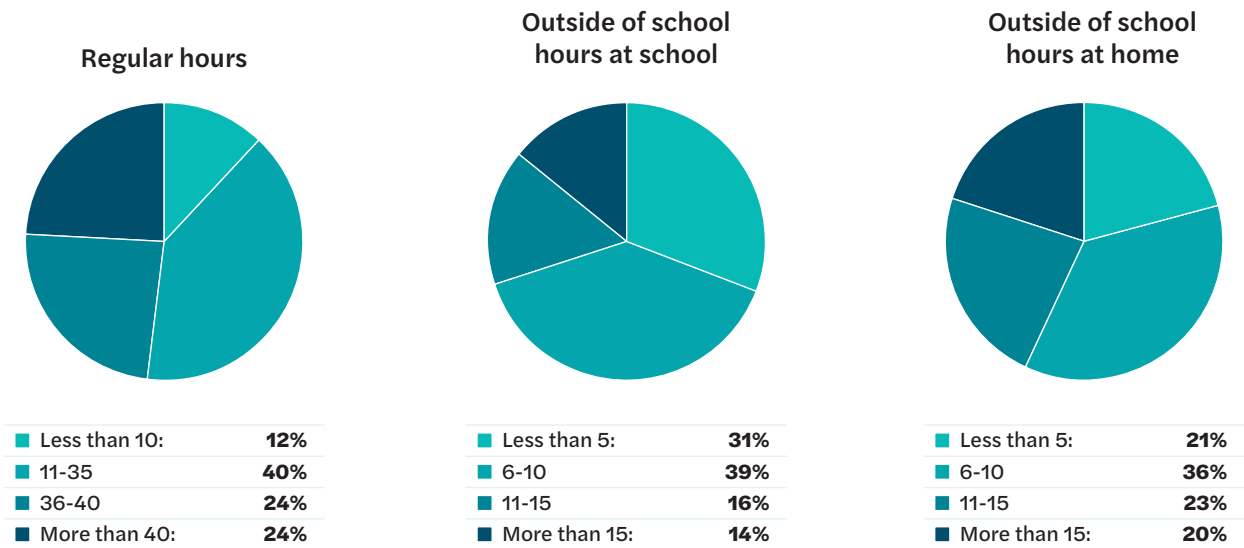
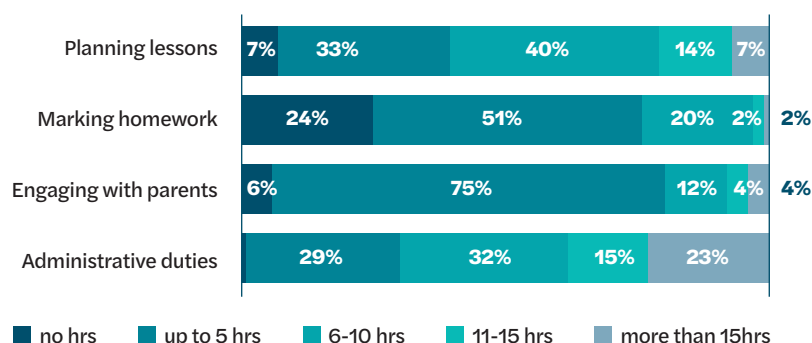


FIGURE 8 WEEKLY HOURS WORKED



Teachers are kept busy beyond the classroom with lesson planning, marking homework, engaging with parents, and administrative duties. Planning and marking takes up to 10 hours each week for seven out of ten teachers. Engaging with parents takes the same amount of time for almost nine out of ten. The standout non-teaching activity is administrative duties, with nearly four in ten teachers dedicating more than 10 hours each week to this task.

**FIGURE 9 TIME SPENT ON NON-TEACHING ACTIVITIES**



## TAKING ITS TOLL

The greatest challenges identified by teachers appear to be time-related. Teachers expressed frustration about administrative demands negatively impacting the time they have to focus on students and teaching.

Some described their workload as “massive” and expectations as “unrealistic”. Teachers said they feel overworked, burnt out and undervalued. Many lamented that they have no work-life balance.

Behaviour management was also frequently nominated by teachers as the greatest challenge they face. Teachers explained that just a small minority of disruptive students can have a large and negative impact on the majority, and that managing these behaviours takes even further time away from teaching. Sixty-eight per cent of teachers indicated that they spend more than 10% of their day managing individual student behavioural issues. Seventeen per cent said that this consumes over half their day.

Demands on teachers’ time, workload, expectations and dealing with behaviour and other challenges is taking its toll. It is impacting work-life balance, creating stress, fuelling pessimism regarding performance, and causing many teachers to think about leaving.

Four out of five teachers told us that their work-life balance is either less than ideal or non-existent. While impacting both genders, this was felt most acutely by female teachers. The encroachment of work on other life priorities was also stark for teachers with 11 to 20 years’ teaching experience, with 86% identifying it as an issue.

“The greatest challenge I face as an educator and lead teacher is the growing demands of administration and compliance that shifts teachers away from their core business of teaching students in the classroom.”

“Behaviour is tricky – one child in a room of 30 can cause significant disruption to an entire lesson.”

**FIGURE 10 WORK-LIFE BALANCE IS LESS THAN IDEAL OR NON-EXISTENT**





More than three-quarters of teachers admitted to feeling stressed during a typical week at work fairly often to most of the time. A third felt that they can be the best teacher they can be only occasionally or very rarely. Over the course of a year, just under half think about leaving fairly often if not all the time. These feelings and thoughts are more common among female teachers than their male counterparts. Response rates varied between different positions, year levels taught, and systems. The Table below captures those differences.

**TABLE 1 STRESS, PERFORMANCE AND THOUGHTS OF LEAVING**

		<b>I feel stressed</b> fairly often / most of the time	<b>I am the best teacher</b> <b>I can be</b> occasionally / very rarely	<b>Think about leaving</b> fairly often / most of the time
<b>Overall</b>		76%	33%	48%
<b>Teacher characteristics</b>				
<b>Gender</b>	Female	78%	33%	50%
	Male	68%	30%	41%
<b>Seniority</b>	Teacher*	80%	38%	51%
	Leader	73%	24%	38%
<b>Years in education</b>	Up to 10	81%	38%	44%
	11 to 20	80%	39%	50%
	Over 20	69%	25%	48%
<b>School characteristics</b>				
<b>Type</b>	Primary	82%	30%	52%
	Secondary	72%	38%	47%
	Combined	72%	28%	43%
<b>System</b>	Government	79%	36%	53%
	Catholic	75%	33%	43%
	Independent	68%	25%	41%
<b>Location</b>	Major cities	74%	32%	46%
	Regional or remote	79%	34%	52%

Note: 'Teacher' in this context refers to the self-identified role of survey respondents. This is in contrast to much of the rest of this Report where 'teachers' is the shorthand used to refer to all survey respondents.

# The student-teacher-parent nexus

## STUDENT-TEACHER INTERACTIONS

### Engagement

Engaged students are more likely to be satisfied students, motivated to learn and improve performance. Interacting with engaged students was cited by some as one of the most rewarding aspects of teaching.

Students' levels of engagement are high. Seventy-nine per cent of teachers reported that engagement in their classes is good or very good. Positive engagement was more often reported by teachers in Independent and Catholic schools (86%) than by their Government school contemporaries (74%).

The corollary is that there is a small proportion of students who are disengaged. Student apathy drew comment from teachers when sharing their greatest challenges.

### Student agency

One of the biggest shifts that teachers foresaw over the next decade is students having greater agency over their learning. According to respondents, this has already started. More than a third (34%) said their school adequately takes account of the views, aspirations and expectations of students in curriculum development. A half (50%) do the same with regards to social issues. Similar to student engagement, based on responses, student agency appears to be more evident and recognised by Independent and Catholic school teachers.

## PARENTS – CHAMPIONS AND CHALLENGERS

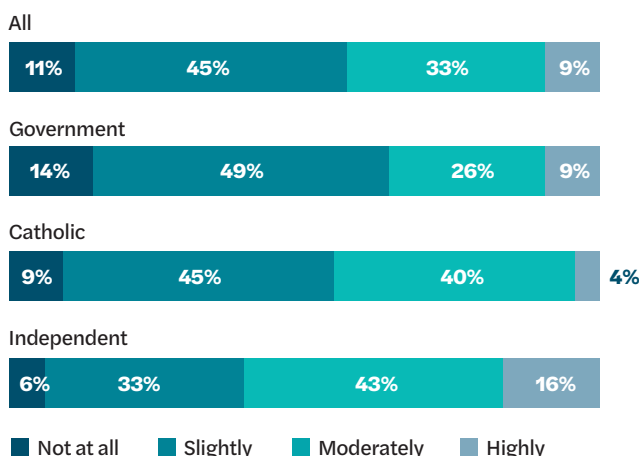
### Engagement

Teachers said that most parents have some level of interaction with them. Teachers at Independent schools indicate the highest levels of parental engagement, with 92% of parents described as slightly to highly engaged and relatively greater concentrations towards

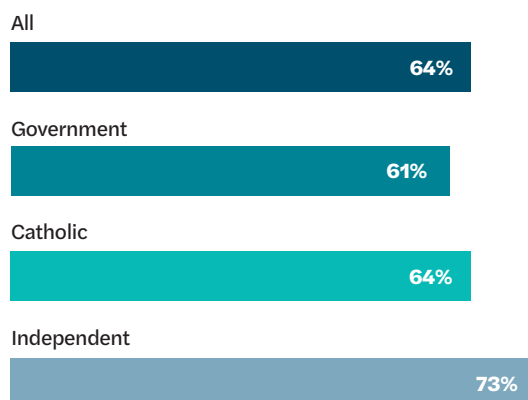
the upper end of this scale. While proportionally fewer parents were considered to take an active interest in their children's extracurricular activities or assisted with their homework, respondents indicated that their view is that parents of children at Independent schools were more involved.

FIGURE 11 LEVEL AND APPROPRIATENESS OF ENGAGEMENT

#### Degree of involvement



#### Is about right



Proportionately more Independent school teachers than Government and Catholic school teachers indicated they believe the level of parental engagement is “about right”. Teachers not of this view either found the level too little or too much and both extremes were seen by some as major challenges. More often, however, it was the nature, rather than the level, of engagement that teachers found challenging.

Some teachers indicated their frustrations with disengaged parents, parents who did not support the efforts and directions pursued by teachers, and parents who treated them as “glorified babysitters”. Others highlighted challenges like the sometimes unrealistic and unreasonable demands of parents, and their undermining of teachers’ professional expertise. Forty-six per cent of teachers said that parents sometimes or frequently disagreed with their assessment of students’ learning development. Teachers were particularly critical of some parents’

deteriorating behaviours, and of occasions when parents resorted to verbal abuse and aggression.

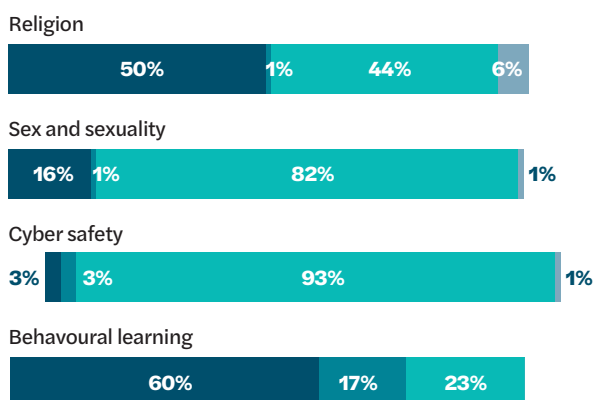
Overall, teachers felt that parents’ opinions and views of them and of the teaching profession were poor. Three out of five (60%) sense that they are either not highly regarded or are completely disregarded.

### WHOSE ROLE IS IT ANYWAY?

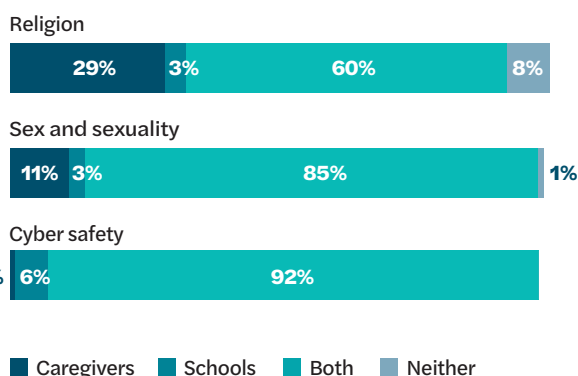
We asked teachers “Whose role is it to educate children” on selected matters: parents, schools, neither or both? The Figure below places the views shared by teachers alongside those shared in a survey of parents that asked them the same question. On matters of sex and sexuality and cyber safety, teachers and parents appear to be in agreement: those are matters where both need to play a role. On matters of religion, there is a greater difference of opinion: teachers are more likely to hold the view that religious education is best left up to the parents.

**FIGURE 12 WHOSE ROLE IS IT TO EDUCATE CHILDREN ON ...?**

#### Teachers’ views



#### Parents’ views\*



Source: \* Futurity Investment Group (2020) *Parents Report Card 2020*, p 27.

“Student behaviours, dysfunctional families or parents who raise their children without self-discipline.”

Parents were not asked for their thoughts on whose responsibility it is for their children’s behavioural learning but teachers were. Responding teachers indicated that they believe this responsibility is predominantly parents first or at least both parents and teachers. They found it a challenge when they sensed that parents had divested their responsibilities in this area to teachers.

# Contemporary issues

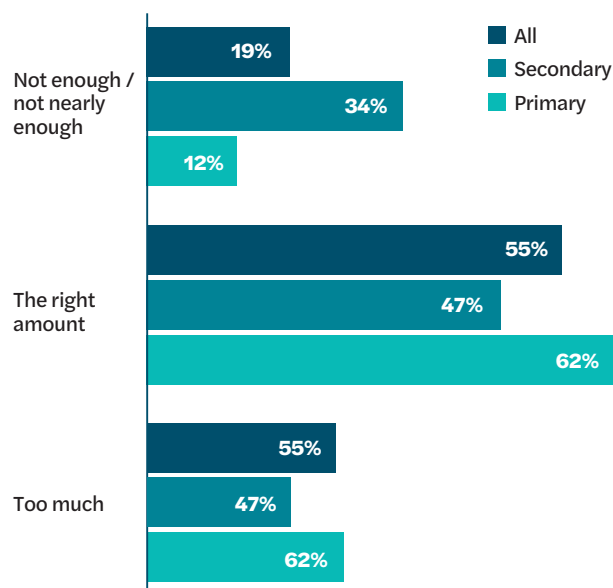
## THE GREAT HOMEWORK DEBATE

The great homework debate has persisted over time, with students, teachers, parents, the media and others weighing in with strongly held views.

This survey finds that a small majority of teachers consider that students receive the right amount of homework. However, given that there are sizable minorities holding diametric views, and that the balance tips depending on whether teachers are at primary or secondary schools, the results suggest that the issue is more complex. Relatively fewer teachers at secondary schools think that students receive the right amount of homework; a third think they should receive more.

Of interest, in a separate survey that asked parents whether or not their children should receive homework, 86% said yes<sup>4</sup>. However, it was how they qualified their answers that is of even greater interest. Many said that it depends on the purpose of homework. Some of the more acceptable reasons given were practice, revision, independent learning and establishing good habits. Parents were less tolerant of homework for homework's sake and of homework for primary-aged students.

FIGURE 13 AMOUNT OF HOMEWORK



## DIGITAL – DE VICE OR VIRTUE?

Another hot topic is digital device use. The survey found most teachers (78%) believe that students should be allowed to use their personal digital devices only before or after school.

A handful (16%) also felt that students should be allowed to access devices during the breaks. Only a small number (5%) thought that unregulated use of personal devices should be allowed at all times.

These views are aligned to, but starker than, the views shared by parents when a similar question was put to them<sup>5</sup>. Some parents pointed to the virtues of becoming digitally dexterous or the importance they

placed on being able to contact their children, while others were acutely aware that their children can become addicted or distracted or feared that their children will become vulnerable to cyberbullying.

<sup>4</sup> Futurity Investment Group (2020) *Parents Report Card 2020*, p 27.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p 26.

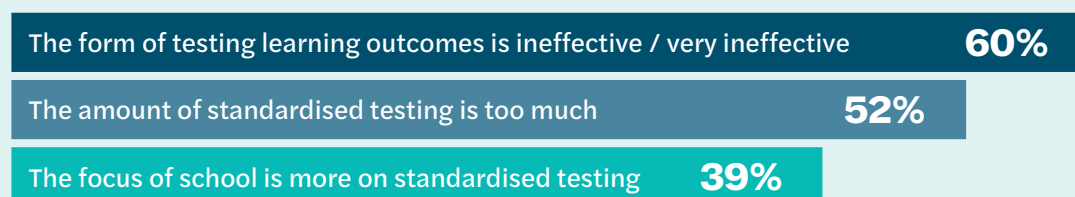


## TO TEST OR NOT TO TEST

Standardised testing has ignited a national debate that has continued for over a decade. Opinions are generally divided and teachers are no exception.

Since teachers were last surveyed, however, they appear to have tipped more pointedly into the ‘against’ camp. Three out of five teachers think the current form of testing learning outcomes is ineffective or very ineffective, up from 45% four years ago. Slightly more than half think that the amount of standardised testing is too much, up from 49% in 2017. However, in a departure from this trend, the experience of relatively fewer teachers is that the focus of their school is on standardised testing. In 2017, this was the experience of 48% of teachers surveyed.

**FIGURE 14 TESTING MATTERS**



The school system in which a teacher works makes a difference to their views. The experience of more than half of teachers in Independent schools is that the form of testing is effective or very effective (52%) and that the amount of testing is about right (54%). Thirty-nine per cent said that the focus of teaching is balanced between standardised testing and supporting student development. Forty-two per cent of teachers in leadership positions in all school systems held the same view.

## ACCESS AND EQUITY

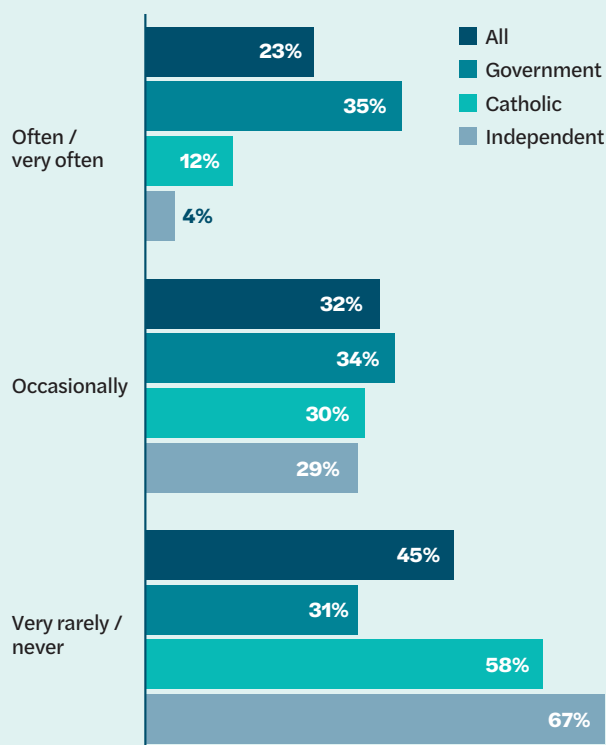
Equity of access to education was cited by a number of respondents as their motivation for teaching. A quality education was seen as pivotal to breaking cycles of disadvantage.

The survey sought teachers’ insights on how often children miss out on educational opportunities due to their parents not being able to afford them. Respondents believe more than one in five miss out often or very often.

The responses were influenced by where teachers teach. Government school teachers indicated that more than a third of children are often or very often missing out. This compares to the much smaller numbers of children that teachers at Independent schools report as missing out.

“I believe that access to quality education can break the cycles of disadvantage, and I want to be a part of this change.”

**FIGURE 15 MISSING OUT ON EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**



# Educating for the future

## BIGGEST SHIFTS

As the world changes, how and what teachers teach is also reshaped to meet the demands of the 21st century. The survey asked teachers for their predictions on the biggest shifts in the next decade.

The clear standout was technology, in a myriad of ways: new technologies; greater use of technology in the physical classroom; technology as a facilitator of online and hybrid forms of learning; technology as a tool for assessment; and the need for a greater focus on digital skills.

Curriculum changes were also a popular response. Many predicted that there will be a move away from teaching content to teaching transferable skills, including problem solving and critical thinking. Some respondents argued that the curriculum is too cluttered or overcrowded and that there is a need to get “back to basics”.

Teachers predict much learning-related change. In the next 10 years they anticipate that learning will be more learner-centric, personalised, self-driven and flexible. Pedagogy will be evidence-based and shaped by the science of how students learn.

Some anticipated a greater focus on the whole child and on student wellbeing.

In relation to the teaching profession itself, many respondents foreshadowed greater challenges ahead. Teachers predicted a general worsening of conditions: increased compliance, fewer teachers and a continuation of the parent-related issues identified earlier.

When it comes to testing, teachers’ views were more mixed. Some lamented the possibility of continued or more standardised testing, while others saw assessment approaches shifting in alternative directions, with changes to the ‘what’, ‘why’ and ‘how’ of testing.

Many were either unsure of what the future holds or pessimistic about what lies ahead

FIGURE 16 BIGGEST SHIFTS OVER THE NEXT 10 YEARS



## FUTURE SKILLS

So, what skills do students need in order to excel in the future? Teachers were asked to assess the importance of students developing skills and abilities in the areas outlined in the Figure below, and to explain their responses.

The overwhelming majority – between 91% and 99% – assessed all areas as important or very important because they transcend content knowledge and are applicable to all areas of learning and life. Interpersonal skills feature prominently in the top five, with communication skills in first place and collaboration and relationship skills in third. In second

place are adaptability and resilience – qualities that a few respondents said are in short supply in some students. In fourth place, critical thinking and problem solving were noted as essential for further learning and work. Technology skills made fifth place and drew comment that digital literacy has become as important as other forms of literacies.

**FIGURE 17 INCREASING STUDENTS' SKILLS AND ABILITIES**

Important / very important

Communication skills	<b>99.4%</b>
Adaptability and resilience	<b>99.0%</b>
Collaboration and relationship skills	<b>98.7%</b>
Critical thinking and problem solving	<b>98.3%</b>
Information technology skills	<b>98.1%</b>
Leadership and taking responsibility	<b>98.1%</b>
Self awareness and mindfulness	<b>97.7%</b>
Imaginative and creativity skills	<b>97.1%</b>
Motivational skills	<b>96.2%</b>
Initiative and entrepreneurialism	<b>92.4%</b>
Data analysis	<b>91.8%</b>

## UPSKILLING TEACHERS

Just as teachers were asked to assess students' future skill requirements, they were also asked about their own. Specifically, they were asked to think about the teacher's role and what importance they attach to increasing their skills and experience in the areas outlined in the Figure below in order to meet the future demands of students' education.

Similar to the future skills of students, a large majority – between 85% and 97% – assessed all areas as either important or very important to the teaching profession. Working through the top five for teachers, motivating students took out the top spot, followed by building strong relationships with students. Given that technology loomed so large in respondents' predictions of the biggest shifts in teaching over the next 10 years, it is no surprise that the use of technology ranked highly, in equal second place.

A number of teachers observed that technology is part of life, now and in the future, yet the digital tools used in the classroom, and the ways they are used, do not reflect societal use. And given the rapid pace of change in recent years, it is also unsurprising that professional development ranked high. Finally, in fifth spot, is the application of real-world scenarios in teaching – essential to help students connect with the importance and relevance of what they are learning.

**FIGURE 18 INCREASING TEACHERS' SKILLS AND EXPERIENCES**

**Important / very important**

Motivating students	97.0%
Use of information technology in teaching	95.4%
Building strong relationships with students	95.4%
Professional development	95.2%
Application of real world scenarios in teaching	95.2%
Managing disruptive behaviour	94.7%
Assessing students' capabilities and progress	93.5%
Ability to integrate social and emotional skills across all subjects	91.2%
Helping students to determine their own learning path	90.5%
Communication skills	89.7%
Personal confidence in teaching	85.7%



# Pandemic – prepared or pandemonium?

During the peak of the first COVID-19 outbreak in Australia (April and May 2020), six out of eight Australian states and territories either required or encouraged their students to stay at home. Schools shut with little forewarning let alone time for teachers, students or families to prepare.



Since then, **at the time of writing**, students in Greater Melbourne had iterated five more times between the physical learning environments of their classrooms and learning online at home. Students in Greater Sydney had been learning from home since the beginning of term three. All the while, students in the rest of the country, with the exception of a few snap lockdown days here and there, have been at school.

In the ‘special section’ of the Teachers Report Card survey we asked teachers about their experiences with teaching online during the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey was open from 9 June 2021 through to 26 July 2021. This period corresponded with the tail end of Victoria’s fourth lockdown and much of its fifth, and the beginning of New South Wales’ second major lockdown. The data shared in this section compares and contrasts the experiences of teachers in Victoria and New South Wales against the comparator state of Queensland. The key finding is that the dark cloud of COVID-19 is not without its silver lining: the state which has been locked down the longest has done more than most to implement policies and practices, adapt the curriculum for online delivery, prepare teachers and support the needs of students. However, they have not always felt well supported by leadership and it has been a greater struggle to maintain a positive outlook.

## PROPELLED PREPAREDNESS

### Policies and practices

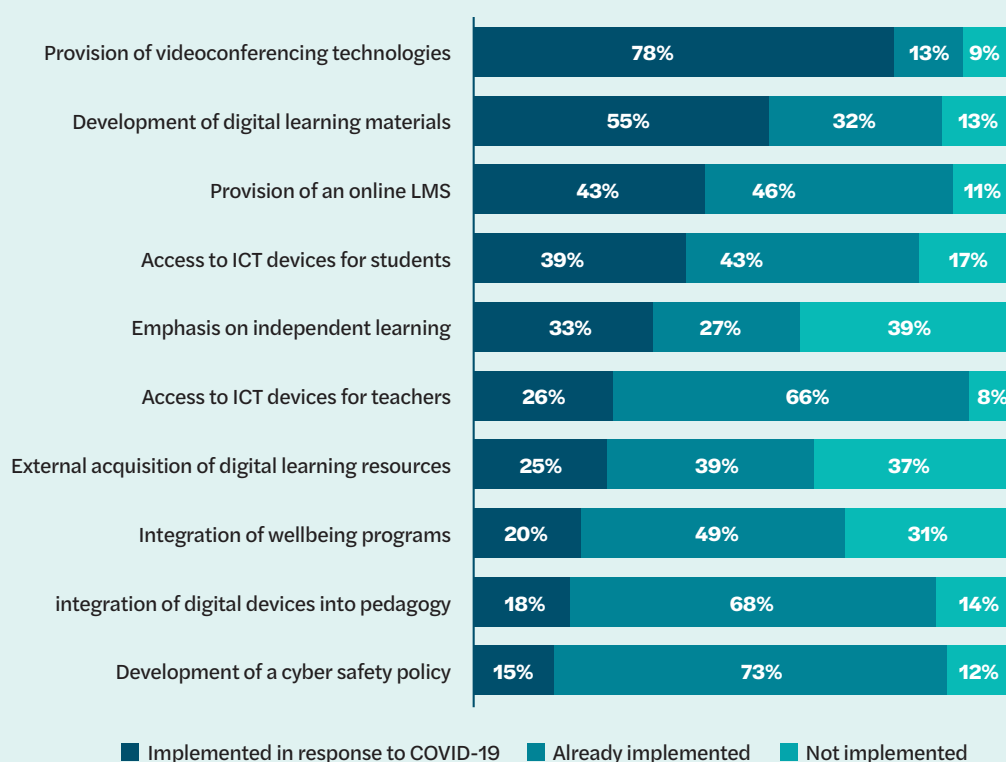
Winston Churchill once famously said, “Never let a good crisis go to waste”. The responses of schools and systems across Australia to the COVID-19 crisis has moved at pace to implement change and provide the training necessary for teachers to adapt.

Out of necessity the implementation of some policies and practices have had to be fast tracked. Videoconferencing facilities have become commonplace overnight. Digital learning materials have been developed where none previously existed. And online learning management systems have had to be put in place. In other areas, such as developing cyber safety policies and integrating digital devices into learning and instruction, schools did not have to start from scratch as policies and practices were already in existence.

More COVID-related changes to overall policy and practice were made in Victoria. NSW made greater changes in a few specific areas, while the next largest state Queensland, which of the three was least effected by COVID, implemented relatively minor changes to policy and practice to meet the challenges of the pandemic.

The picture is a bit more mixed when looked at through the lens of school systems. The differences are best explained by the policies and practices already in place. For example, respondents report that Catholic schools had few videoconferencing facilities in place pre-COVID-19. In other areas, such as the development of digital learning materials, survey responses indicate Government schools worked hard to compensate for a lack of existing materials. Thanks to existing policies and practices, Independent schools appeared well prepared to cope with lockdown, according to respondents.

**FIGURE 19 IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICIES AND PRACTICES**



**TABLE 2 POLICIES AND PRACTICES IMPLEMENTED IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

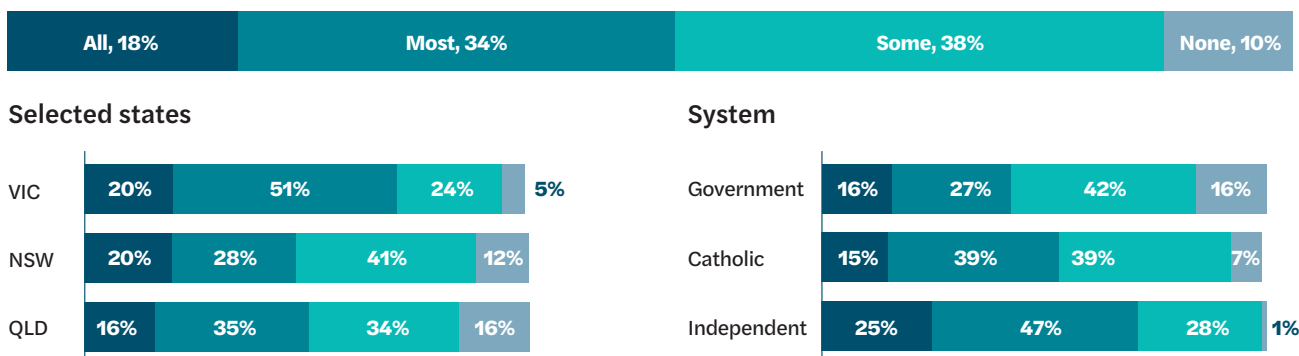
	Selected states			System			All
	VIC	NSW	QLD	Govt	Cath	Indep	
Provision of videoconferencing technologies	86%	82%	68%	74%	87%	81%	78%
Development of digital learning materials	64%	54%	48%	60%	50%	50%	55%
Provision of an online LMS	50%	45%	46%	47%	44%	33%	43%
Access to ICT devices for students	45%	41%	28%	45%	39%	25%	39%
Emphasis on independent learning	35%	35%	33%	30%	42%	33%	33%
Access to ICT devices for teachers	24%	30%	21%	30%	24%	18%	26%
External acquisition of digital learning resources	29%	29%	15%	26%	27%	21%	25%
Integration of wellbeing programs	21%	21%	17%	19%	24%	18%	20%
Integration of digital devices into pedagogy	19%	21%	11%	19%	17%	14%	18%
Development of cybersafety policy	19%	15%	15%	17%	16%	10%	15%

## ONLINE CURRICULUM

Just over half of the teachers surveyed said that all or most of the curricula at their schools were ready to be delivered online if the need arises. The flipside is that just under half had only some or none of their curriculums ready to be taught online.

The readiness of curricula for online delivery is greatest in Victoria and in Independent schools. Least prepared were Government schools.

**FIGURE 20 READINESS OF ONLINE CURRICULUM**



## TEACHER TRAINING

Implementable policies and practices and online ready curricula mean nothing unless teachers are equipped with the skills necessary to teach online. Teachers shared their views on the adequacy of the training they had received. Their feedback suggests that there is room for improvement.

That conclusion holds for even the top-ranked areas of training – digital device use and the use of software to support remote instruction. For the bottom ranked – training in the management of online classroom behaviour – the deficiency and need is large.

Teachers in Independent schools were the most positive about the training they had received. The assessment of the adequacy of training received by teachers in Victoria, was ahead of their peers in New South Wales which, in turn, was better than Queensland's.

**FIGURE 21 ADEQUACY OF TRAINING**

Agree / strongly agree

	Selected states			System			All
	VIC	NSW	QLD	Govt	Cath	Indep	
Use digital devices	66%	62%	57%	51%	66%	82%	61%
Use software to support remote instruction	66%	57%	55%	47%	62%	80%	58%
Prepare and develop digital resources	56%	50%	49%	40%	54%	69%	50%
Deliver remote instruction	60%	48%	43%	36%	55%	70%	48%
Manage online classroom behaviour	38%	36%	30%	22%	35%	54%	33%



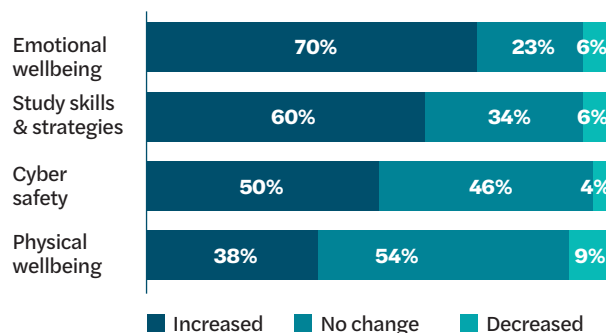
## SUPPORTING STUDENTS

Just as teachers have had to adapt to teaching online, students have had to adapt to learning online. Teachers were asked whether they had spent more or less time supporting their students.

Seven out of ten said they are spending more time supporting their students' emotional wellbeing. Three out of five said that they are focusing more on helping students improve their study skills and strategies. And half said that students' cyber safety had eaten into more of their time. Few teachers indicated that they were spending less time in any of these areas.

As students in Victoria have had to learn from home the longest, it is not surprising that teachers in the State had spent more time supporting their pupils. Out of the school systems, the survey found that it is teachers at Catholic schools who have devoted more time to student wellbeing.

**FIGURE 22 TIME SPENT SUPPORTING STUDENTS**



**TABLE 3 TIME SPENT SUPPORTING STUDENTS**

Increased to some extent / substantially increased

	Selected states			System			All
	VIC	NSW	QLD	Govt	Cath	Indep	
Emotional wellbeing	85%	71%	64%	69%	78%	68%	70%
Study skills and strategies	72%	59%	63%	56%	68%	62%	60%
Cyber safety	62%	52%	46%	46%	61%	50%	50%
Physical wellbeing	45%	37%	43%	39%	41%	32%	38%

## EDUCATORS' EXPERIENCES

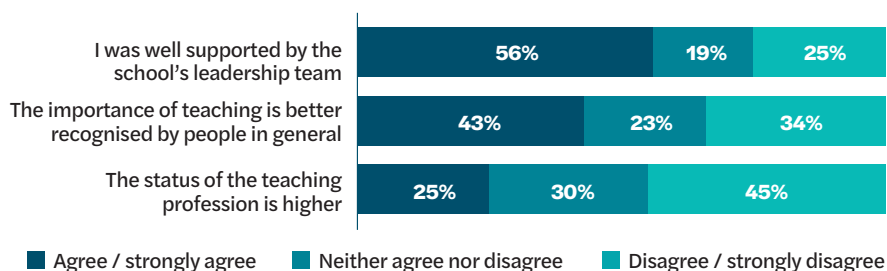
### Support and recognition received

Teachers are spending more time supporting their students. But who is supporting the teachers? And are they being recognised for their efforts as we all come to terms with pandemic conditions?

Over half of teachers surveyed felt that they were well supported by their school's leadership team. A notable quarter did not. Less than half sensed that there is better recognition of the importance of teaching. Over a third did not. Only a quarter believed the status of the profession is higher.

Teachers' 'pessimism' was more pervasive in Victoria and in Government schools.

**FIGURE 23 TEACHER SUPPORT AND RECOGNITION**



**TABLE 4 TEACHER SUPPORT AND RECOGNITION**

#### Agree / strongly agree

	Selected states			System			All
	VIC	NSW	QLD	Govt	Cath	Indep	
I was well supported by the school's leadership team	48%	64%	52%	50%	61%	66%	56%
The importance of teaching is better recognised by people in general	46%	41%	47%	36%	47%	55%	43%
The status of the teaching profession is higher	30%	25%	23%	19%	26%	39%	25%



RESILIENCE AND ADAPTABILITY

Teachers have been remarkably resilient in the face of unprecedented change. The vast majority attempted things that they had not done before and adopted new teaching methods. Many felt able to teach effectively despite the challenges. While many were able to stay positive, this was a bit more of a struggle for some.

Teachers in Victoria embraced the greatest changes and have struggled most to remain positive.

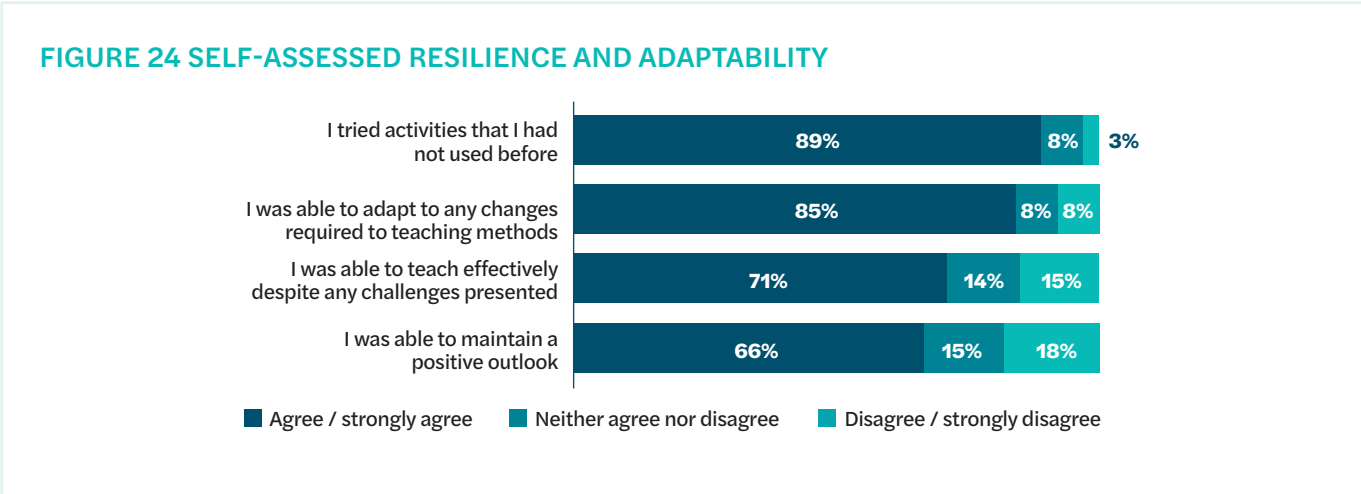


TABLE 5 SELF-ASSESSED RESILIENCE AND ADAPTABILITY

Agree / strongly agree

	Selected states			System			All
	VIC	NSW	QLD	Govt	Cath	Indep	
I tried activities that I had not used before	95%	89%	85%	86%	92%	94%	89%
I was able to adapt to any changes required to teaching methods	91%	82%	83%	78%	93%	92%	85%
I was able to teach effectively despite any challenges presented	77%	67%	69%	63%	74%	87%	71%
I was able to maintain a positive outlook	62%	61%	73%	62%	69%	75%	66%

# Conclusion

**Teachers play a critical and often under-sung role in the development of our young people, and it is vital their views are heard by decision makers, thought leaders, and major stakeholders in Australia's education system, notably parents.**

The present time is one of enormous change for all sectors of society with many long-held beliefs and assumptions coming under the microscope. Education is no exception. Under the pressure of school lockdowns and the need for remote learning, fundamental practices of the teaching profession have had to be adapted. It is still an open question which pandemic-era innovations will endure.

So, the *2021 Teachers Report Card* is inevitably coloured by the unique time in Australia's history when this snapshot of the views and experience of our school educators was taken. In particular, the pandemic commentary captures the differential impact across the three most populous states at a time of ongoing and rapid change in every state.

Many of the findings of 2017 have been reinforced in 2021 and are little changed by the experience of the pandemic and school lockdowns. Other trends may have been accelerated in a concerning way, if only temporarily. Case in point is the apparent paradox that a large majority of respondents find their profession rewarding or very rewarding, yet an increasing proportion now express job dissatisfaction. A partial explanation may be found in the one-third of teachers who feel that only occasionally are they able to be the best teacher they can be.

Some developments over four years may be seen more favourably such as greater focus on enabling student agency and increased attention to student welfare.

Remote learning has clearly accelerated take up of technology and changed modes of teaching. From teachers' free text comments, we learnt that remote learning has proved beneficial for some students to the extent that being home meant parents were more involved. The experience of teachers and students from the pandemic is varied and at times contrasting.

While technology has transformed aspects of teaching, and there appears to have been a reversion toward more engagement by parents, the *2021 Teachers Report Card* illustrates the need for ongoing attention to the bedrock issues faced by the teaching profession and our school education sector.

The perennial debate on standardised testing remains a touchstone for competing philosophies of education but may be losing some of its intensity as younger data-focused teachers enter the profession. While a majority of teachers surveyed in 2021 are now of the view that standardised testing is ineffective, the evidence from this Report is that the pressures that resulted in perceptions of "teaching to the test" are abating.

This year's Report highlights the ongoing need to do more to improve teacher retention levels; it is clearly unsustainable if one in five educators are repeatedly considering exiting the profession. It also indicates that higher pay is not the only answer to workload and wellbeing challenges. As a community we must prioritise reducing the levels of stress our teachers persistently experience so that they can be their best for our children.

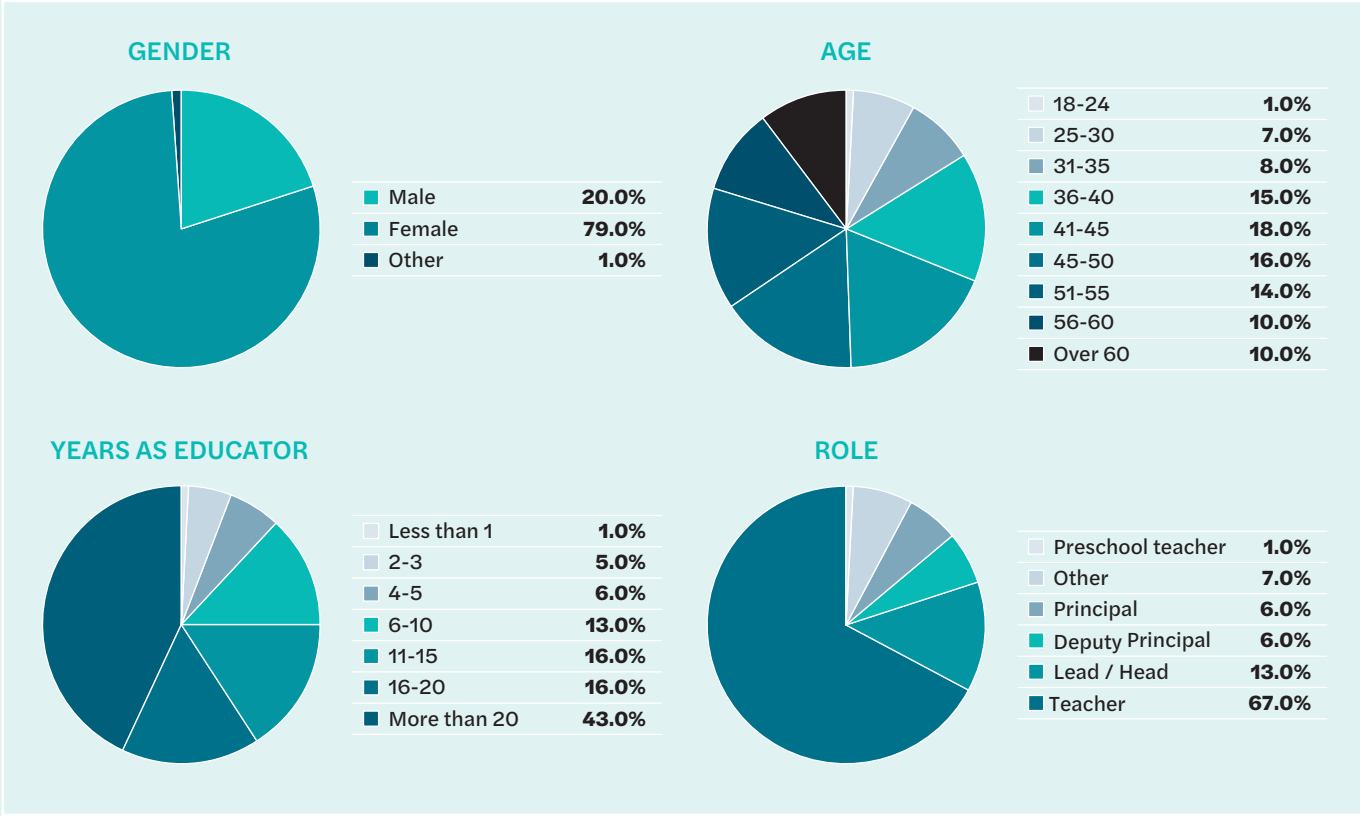
Of course, the COVID-19 pandemic has given parents greater insight into how teaching has evolved since they went to school so it will be interesting to see if a future 'new normal' for teachers is reflected in higher appreciation of and status for the profession.



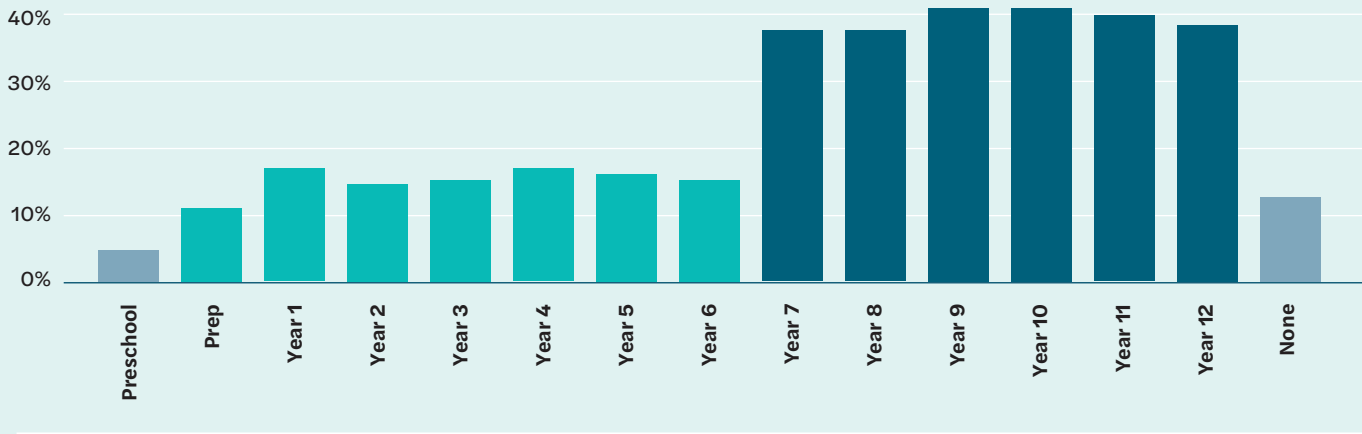


# Appendix 1 Respondent demographics

## TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS

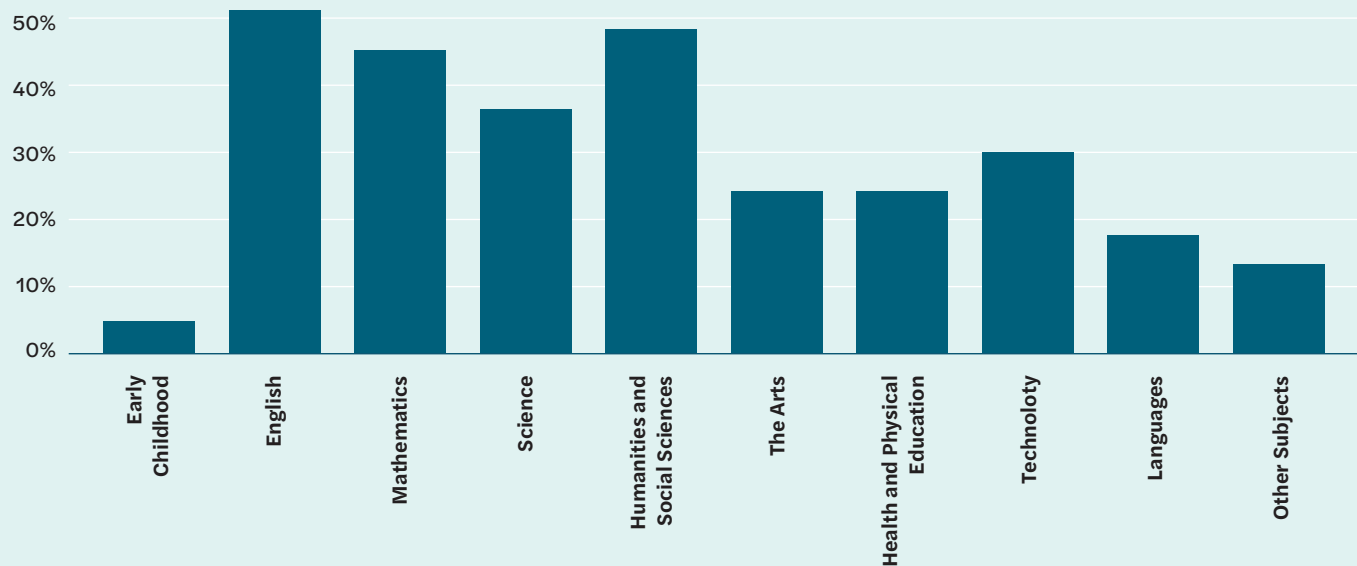


## YEAR LEVEL



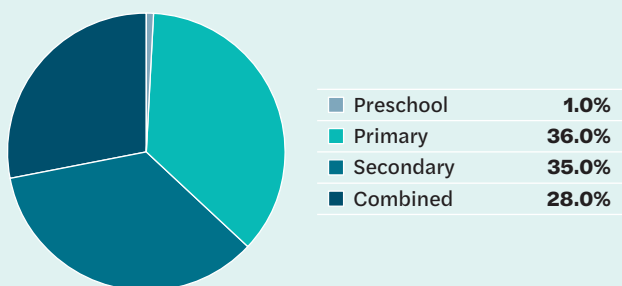
## TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS (CONTINUED)

### YEAR LEVEL

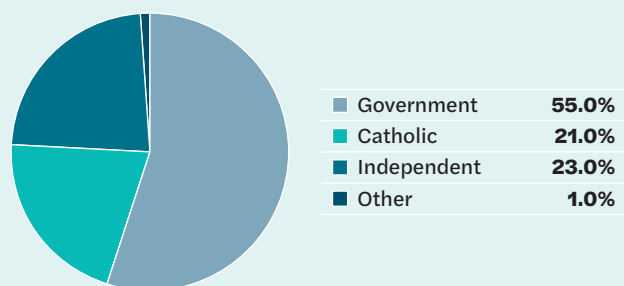


## SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

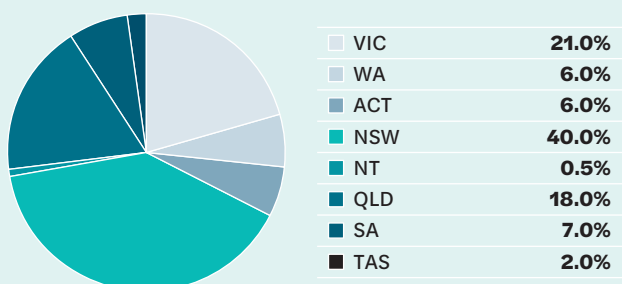
### SCHOOL



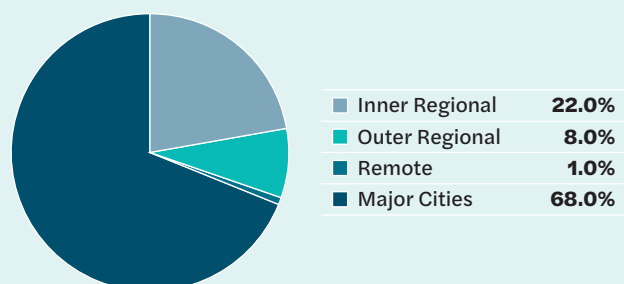
### SYSTEM



### STATE



### REMOTENESS





# About Futurity and the NEiTA Foundation

**Futurity Investment Group is an independent and mutually structured financial institution that has been supporting the education journeys of families for close to 50 years. Since Futurity's inception, more than 565,000 children have received education benefits and \$3.4 billion paid to members and their education beneficiaries.**

As Australia's leading issuer of tax-effective, life-event education bonds, Futurity provides innovative tax-effective solutions to enable its members to attain financial self-sufficiency to meet lifelong education objectives for themselves and their

families. Futurity supports families and individuals to achieve these objectives through a ground-breaking range of education bonds, strong and active education-purposed advocacy, and philanthropy.

---

Visit [futuresinvest.com](https://futuresinvest.com) for more information.

Reflecting its mutual values, Futurity is proud to support the NEiTA Foundation to engage in activities, including partnering with the Australian College of Educators to publish the *NEiTA-ACE Teachers Report Card 2021* to help improve teacher quality and retention while promoting teacher professional recognition and development.

The NEiTA Foundation is responsible for the annual National Excellence in Teaching Awards, which has been recognising and rewarding exceptional and inspirational teachers for more than 25 years. Since 1994, NEiTA has received more than 40,000 nominations, of which nearly 1,100 educators have received awards. NEiTA has awarded close to \$1.2 million in professional development grants, prizes and endowments.

---

For more information, visit [neita.com](https://neita.com)

## About ACE

**The Australian College of Educators (ACE) is the most prestigious and inclusive professional association for educators across all sectors, systems and levels.**

ACE provides a collective voice for all Australian educators. It advocates, leads and drives positive change and raises the status of the education profession.

ACE encourages and fosters open, collaborative discussion to enable our broad membership to provide the best outcomes for Australian students across all levels of education.

---

For more information about ACE, visit [austcolled.com.au](https://austcolled.com.au)



[austcolled.com.au](http://austcolled.com.au)

19 Prospect Hill Road  
Camberwell VIC 3124



PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY



[neita.com](http://neita.com)  
[futuraityinvest.com](http://futuraityinvest.com)

The Rialto Towers, Level 8, North Tower  
525 Collins Street, Melbourne VIC 3000