

# EQUITY STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN AUSTRALIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

2014-2019

## Acknowledgements

This briefing note was prepared by Paul Koshy of the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE) at Curtin University.

The author would like to acknowledge staff of the NCSEHE for their comments and assistance in the production of this publication and extend thanks to the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment for the provision of student equity data, and external referees for their comments on an earlier draft. Any remaining errors or omissions are the responsibility of the author.

All analysis included here reflects the work of the author and does not necessarily reflect the views of the NCSEHE.

This report may be cited as: Koshy, P. (2020). *Equity Student Participation in Australian Higher Education: 2014 – 2019*. National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE), Perth: Curtin University.

Copyright ownership of this material resides with the NCSEHE.

ISBN-13: 978-0-6487317-5-7

### **National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education**

The National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE) is a research and policy centre funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment and based at Curtin University. The NCSEHE provides national leadership in student equity in higher education, connecting research, policy and practice to improve higher education participation and success for marginalised and disadvantaged people.

The NCSEHE conducts a broad scope of activities including:

- research-based projects both independently and in collaboration with other organisations, funded through external grants or through Centre resources
- the NCSEHE Research Grants Program
- equity policy and program evaluation
- Research Fellowships and Equity Fellowships
- student equity data analysis, online resources and briefing notes
- print and digital publications
- collaborative and independent events
- representation at national and international conferences
- an emphasis on effective communication through channels, including: website, electronic newsletters, social media and general media exposure.

The Centre has established a strong national presence, engaging with key stakeholders and maintaining sector-wide partnerships to enhance outcomes and delivery of research and recommendations. The growing reputation and influence of the Centre has contributed to student equity becoming firmly incorporated into higher education policy.

For further information on the NCSEHE, please visit [www.ncsehe.edu.au](http://www.ncsehe.edu.au).

## Introduction

This NCSEHE briefing note reports on **domestic undergraduate equity student participation** in Australian higher education from 2014 to 2019. It focuses on trends among domestic undergraduate enrolments in Table A Provider institutions in identified equity groups:

- Low socioeconomic status (Low SES) students
- Students with Disability
- Indigenous students
- Women in Non-Traditional Areas (WINTA) students
- Regional students
- Remote students
- Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) students.

All student data reported in this document are sourced from the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment (Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2020), and also reported on the NCSEHE's Student Equity Data website (NCSEHE, 2020).

### The Reporting in this Briefing Note

This briefing note reports across a six-year window, starting in 2014 through to 2019. In keeping with previous editions (e.g., Koshy, 2019), it reports on participation patterns among domestic undergraduates across both Table A Providers (major public universities) and Table B Providers (four private institutions), with system totals ('National') applying to both groups.

### Equity Group Definitions

This note reports on designated groups of underrepresented students, originally designated in *A Fair Chance for All* (DEET, 1990) and formally defined in *Equity and General Performance Indicators in Higher Education* ("the Martin Review") (Martin, 1994), namely:

- **Low socioeconomic status (Low SES) students:** Socioeconomic status (SES) is assigned to students on the basis of the Statistical Area 1 (SA1) in which they reside. SA1s have a population of between 200 to 800 people, averaging around 400. All SA1 areas are ranked nationally using the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) estimates of the *Socio-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA) — Index of Education and Occupation (IEO)*. This is calculated using census data (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015). Low SES students reside in SA1s with the lowest quartile (25%) of the Australian population in this ranking. The 2011 census is used to define SES between 2013 and 2015 and the 2016 census for 2016 to 2018. The Low SES measure reported is the *current address* (address during current year of study), but a comparison to the *first address* measure (address at time of enrolment) is also provided.
- **Students with Disability:** Students self-report disability to their higher education provider, usually via a formal enrolment declaration.
- **Indigenous (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) students:** Students self-report as Indigenous to their higher education provider, either at the time of their enrolment or during their studies.
- **Women in Non-Traditional Areas (WINTA):** WINTA refers to female enrolment in the following 'non-traditional' disciplines: Natural and Physical Sciences; Information Technology; Engineering and Related Technologies; Architecture and Building; Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies;

Management and Commerce; and the narrow field of Education (Economics and Econometrics). The notes reports the official “WINTA participation share”, equal to WINTA students as a proportion of the domestic undergraduate population.

- **Students from regional areas:** Regional students are defined as having a permanent home address in an SA1 area that is classified as regional using the relevant Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) classification, with the 2011 ASGS used for the years 2012–15, and the 2016 ASGS thereafter. As is the case with the Low SES measure, the regional measure reported is the *current address* (address during current year of study), but a comparison to the *first address* measure (address at time of enrolment) is also provided.
- **Students from remote areas:** Remote students are defined as having a permanent home address in an SA1 area that is classified as remote using the ASGS and their *current address* (address during current year of study), with the *first address* measure (address at time of enrolment) also provided.
- **Students from a non-English speaking background (NESB):** A student is assigned NESB status if they are a domestic undergraduate student who arrived in Australia less than 10 years prior to the year in which the data were collected, and who comes from a home where a language other than English is spoken.

### *Institutional Groupings*

For each equity group measure, results are reported by the following institutional groupings:

The Table A Providers are reported by the following institutional groupings, on the basis of membership at the end of 2019:

- **The Group of Eight (‘Go8’):** Australian National University (ANU); The University of Melbourne; Monash University; The University of Sydney; University of New South Wales (UNSW); The University of Queensland (UQ); The University of Western Australia (UWA); and The University of Adelaide.
- **The Australian Technology Network (‘ATN’):** Curtin University; University of Technology Sydney (UTS); RMIT University (RMIT); and University of South Australia (UniSA).
- **The Innovative Research Universities (‘IRU’):** Murdoch University; Flinders University; Griffith University; James Cook University (JCU); La Trobe University; Charles Darwin University (CDU); and Western Sydney University (WSU).
- **Regional Universities Network (‘RUN’):** Southern Cross University (SCU); University of New England (UNE); Federation University; USC (University of the Sunshine Coast); CQUniversity (CQU); University of Southern Queensland (USQ); and Charles Sturt University (CSU).
- **‘Unaligned Group’:** (Other Table A Providers) — Macquarie University; University of Newcastle; University of Wollongong; Deakin University; Queensland University of Technology (QUT); University of Tasmania (UTAS); Australian Catholic University (ACU); University of Canberra; Edith Cowan University (ECU); Swinburne University of Technology; and Victoria University.

It should be noted that there have been several changes in the composition of these institutional groupings recently. These include WSU joining the IRU in October 2017, QUT leaving the ATN in October 2018 and CSU joining RUN in 2019. For this reason, the reporting here by institutional grouping is not directly comparable with that seen in previous editions of the briefing note.

Results for the Table B Providers are also reported collectively (‘Table B Providers’), comprising:

- **Table B Providers:** Bond University (Queensland); The University of Notre Dame Australia (Western Australia); University of Divinity (Victoria); and Torrens University Australia (South Australia).

Totals by Australian state and territory (Table A and B Providers combined) are reported for each year using the main campus location for most universities, with the ACU the sole ‘Multi-State’ institution.

## Total Undergraduate Enrolments: 2014 to 2019

Domestic undergraduate enrolment increased to 765,594 in 2019, rising by 8.4% since 2014, with growth tapering off over the second half of the decade, most notably among Table A Providers, who have seen enrolments increase by 7.7% over this period, in comparison with the smaller group of Table B Providers who have seen 52.3% growth in enrolments since 2014.

Among Table A Providers, enrolment growth has differed across university groupings and states and territories. In 2019, institutions in the Go8 and Unaligned Group saw an annual decline in undergraduate numbers, with RUN group reporting a marginal increase. The Go8 has seen -2.6% growth in student numbers since 2014, partly due to the introduction of Master's qualifications in place of bachelor (undergraduate) courses in Melbourne and UWA. In contrast, the ATN (16.3%) and RUN (16.5%) have expanded their undergraduate enrolments, with moderate growth elsewhere. Similarly, two of the largest states, New South Wales (5.6%) and Queensland (5.8%) saw single digit growth since 2014, growth, with Victoria (11.5%), and more notably South Australia (23.5%) and

**Table 1: Domestic Undergraduate Enrolments, Higher Education, Table A and B Providers, 2014-19**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Growth (14-19) %
<b>National</b>	<b>706,278</b>	<b>727,786</b>	<b>743,030</b>	<b>759,151</b>	<b>764,652</b>	<b>765,594</b>	<b>8.4</b>
Table A Providers	694,583	715,907	729,598	743,816	747,679	747,786	7.7
Table B Providers	11,695	11,879	13,432	15,335	16,973	17,808	52.3
Go8	170,955	170,016	168,914	167,516	166,497	166,519	-2.6
ATN	91,271	94,369	97,374	100,854	104,243	106,187	16.3
IRU	126,053	129,325	130,044	131,997	134,715	134,176	6.4
RUN	62,742	66,826	69,054	71,643	71,882	73,113	16.5
Unaligned Group	243,562	255,371	264,212	271,806	270,342	267,791	9.9
New South Wales	210,434	215,900	217,378	219,120	221,134	222,298	5.6
Victoria	168,617	175,932	180,984	187,228	189,747	187,946	11.5
Queensland	136,867	140,728	142,721	144,378	144,513	144,845	5.8
Western Australia	78,680	76,971	77,008	76,831	76,942	77,048	-2.1
South Australia	48,086	48,922	51,214	54,115	57,241	59,371	23.5
Tasmania	19,546	22,449	24,466	26,592	24,328	23,669	21.1
Northern Territory	6,301	6,502	6,651	6,667	6,935	7,436	18.0
Australian Capital Territory	18,020	18,511	19,256	20,287	20,339	20,157	11.9
Multi-State <sup>a</sup>	19,727	21,871	23,352	23,933	23,473	22,824	15.7

**Note:** a. The Australian Catholic University is the sole multi-state institution.

**Source:** Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment (2020).

## Student Equity Participation: 2014 to 2019

The slowing rate in national undergraduate enrolments to 2019 was comprised of divergent outcomes across equity groups. While the number of Low SES students (16.1%), Students with Disability (44.4%), Indigenous students (36.1%) and WINTA students (9.3%) have all seen greater increases than the overall increase, Regional (3.5%) and Remote (4.4%) student numbers have increased at much lower rates of growth, while NESB student numbers (-2.6% growth) have underperformed the national trend. Notably, the declining trend observed in the NESB group's numbers is now also being seen in the Low SES student and Regional student groups, where enrolment numbers declined marginally in 2019.

**Table 2: Domestic Undergraduate Enrolments, Higher Education, Table A and B Providers, 2014–19**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Growth (14–19) %
<b>National</b>	<b>706,278</b>	<b>727,786</b>	<b>743,030</b>	<b>759,151</b>	<b>764,652</b>	<b>765,594</b>	<b>8.4</b>
Low SES	111,004	115,840	126,293	129,554	129,858	128,839	16.1
Students with Disability	40,679	44,856	47,970	51,773	55,565	58,739	44.4
Indigenous	10,939	11,845	12,878	13,855	14,314	14,892	36.1
WINTA	124,159	125,888	128,210	131,452	134,406	135,649	9.3
Regional	145,018	149,001	150,441	153,800	151,636	150,100	3.5
Remote	5,848	5,911	6,036	6,167	6,076	6,107	4.4
NESB	25,129	26,661	27,158	27,185	25,793	24,488	-2.6

Source: Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment (2020).

Given the decrease in their numbers in 2019, the student population shares of Low SES students (16.8%, from 17.0% in 2018), Regional students (19.6%, from 19.8%) and NESB students (3.2%, from 3.4%) all declined. The WINTA (17.7%) and Remote (0.8%) student groups saw static or marginal changes in their shares. Encouragingly, the Indigenous share of undergraduate enrolments reached a 2.0% share for the first time in 2019, up from 1.6% in 2014. Students with disability accounted for 7.7% of enrolments, representing an historically high level of reporting compared with a 5.8% share in 2014.

**Table 3: Student Equity Enrolment Proportions, %, Table A and B Providers, 2014–19**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Low SES	15.7	15.9	17.0	17.1	17.0	16.8
Students with Disability	5.8	6.2	6.5	6.8	7.3	7.7
Indigenous	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.8	1.9	2.0
WINTA	17.6	17.3	17.3	17.3	17.6	17.7
Regional	20.5	20.5	20.3	20.3	19.8	19.6
Remote	0.83	0.81	0.81	0.81	0.79	0.80
NESB	3.6	3.7	3.7	3.6	3.4	3.2

Source: Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment (2020).

## Low SES Student Participation: 2014 to 2019

Low SES student participation, as defined by the Low SES share of enrolment, has been declining in Australia since 2017, falling from 17.1% in that year to 16.8% in 2019, its lowest level in the four years using the 2016 Census area estimates to define low SES status.

The Table A Providers have tracked the decline in overall low SES participation, with all institutional groupings seeing a decline in low SES share in the last year. The diverse set of institutions in the Unaligned Group saw lower participation rates in 2019 (16.1%) than 2014 (16.2%). In contrast to the overall picture, Table B Providers increased their enrolment shares over the past six years (7.7% in 2013 to 13.6% in 2019).

The decline in low SES participation among the Table A Providers is striking, but their 2019 low SES share of 16.9% is considerably higher than the 15.2% share in 2011 (Koshy, 2017). This increase represents a decade of policy initiatives to encourage participation, including the introduction of the demand driven funding system and Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP). However, the higher education system is still short of the 20% target for participation set by the Rudd and Gillard governments at the turn of the decade (Koshy, 2016).

**Table 4a: Low SES Enrolment Proportion, %, By Institutional Groupings, Table A and B Providers, 2014–19**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>National — Low SES<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>15.7</b>	<b>15.9</b>	<b>17.0</b>	<b>17.1</b>	<b>17.0</b>	<b>16.8</b>
Table A Providers	15.9	16.1	17.1	17.2	17.1	16.9
Table B Providers	7.7	7.8	9.8	12.1	12.5	13.6
Go8	8.9	8.9	10.0	9.8	9.8	9.7
ATN	14.8	15.1	17.1	16.9	16.9	17.0
IRU	19.8	20.2	21.8	21.9	22.1	21.8
RUN	26.8	26.8	27.5	27.6	27.5	27.1
Unaligned Group	16.2	16.3	16.7	16.8	16.4	16.1

**Note:** a. Please see *Introduction* on the measure of Low SES.

**Source:** Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment (2020).

In addition to institutional grouping, geography also plays an important role in defining and shaping Low SES participation. Most Australian undergraduate students attend an institution in their home state. As a result, institutional Low SES shares in large part reflect the size of the Low SES population of the state or territory they are located in. This is important, as in a national ranking, state and territory shares of low SES population will vary around 25%. This can be seen in Table 4b, with the Low SES share of population in the 2016 census ranging from 0.2% in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) to 43.3% in Tasmania. Also of interest is the shift in Low SES population estimates across censuses, with Western Australia seeing an increase in its low SES share of population of 24.1% in 2016, up from 22.7% in 2011, in contrast to declines in New South Wales (24.4% in 2016, from 24.6% in 2011), Queensland (29.8% from 29.9%) and Tasmania (43.3% from 45.6%).

**Table 4b: Low SES Population Share by State, %, National Ranking of SA1 Areas (2011 and 2016 Census Estimates)**

	2011 Census	2016 Census
New South Wales	24.6	24.4
Victoria	20.6	20.7
Queensland	29.9	29.8
Western Australia	22.7	24.1
South Australia	30.7	31.0
Tasmania	45.6	43.3
Northern Territory	23.0	23.3
Australian Capital Territory	0.2	0.2

Source: ABS 2011 Census from Koshy (2017) and 2016 Census from author calculations.

The size of the potential Low SES student population affects participation rates across the states and territories (Table 4c), with historically higher rates of participation in South Australia (for instance, 20.8% in 2019) and Tasmania (24.8%), due in large part to the larger low SES populations. As expected, the recent fall in low SES share of enrolments is reflected across most states and territories, with only South Australia seeing a gain in low SES student share of enrolment since 2017 (20.3% to 20.8%).

**Table 4c: Low SES Enrolment Proportion, %, All Institutions in State or Territory, Table A and B Providers, 2014–19**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
New South Wales	16.9	17.0	18.2	18.2	18.1	18.0
Victoria	14.1	14.3	15.5	15.5	15.3	15.1
Queensland	17.2	17.4	17.9	18.1	18.2	17.7
Western Australia	12.0	12.5	14.9	15.1	14.9	14.9
South Australia	19.0	19.4	20.2	20.3	20.4	20.8
Tasmania	25.7	25.4	24.7	24.7	24.8	24.8
Northern Territory	17.4	17.5	18.5	18.9	19.2	18.7
Australian Capital Territory	5.5	5.3	5.3	5.4	5.2	4.5
Multi-State	12.0	12.1	13.2	13.0	12.8	12.4

Source: Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment (2020).



## Students with Disability Participation: 2014 to 2019

The proportion of domestic undergraduates reporting a disability continued to increase in 2019, with 7.7% of all Australian undergraduates doing so, compared to 5.8% in 2014. As disability is self-reported, this rise may be partly due to the increased willingness of students to self-identify (Brett, 2016). This is part of a decade-long trends, for instance, among Table A Providers, the number of students reporting disability in 2019 was 7.7%, up from 5% in 2011 (Koshy, 2017).

Regional universities (RUN) continued to report the highest levels of enrolment of students with disability in 2019, representing 9.3% of their enrolment. The Table B Providers have reported consistently lower participation rates than larger institutions in the Table A Provider group, with a 5.5% share in 2019. There is considerable variation observed across the states and territories, with participation ranging from 9.7% in South Australia to 6.4% in Queensland in 2019, with rising levels of participation across all jurisdictions with the exception of Tasmania, which has reported a decline since 2016.

**Table 5: Students with Disability Enrolment Proportion, %, By Groupings and State and Territory, Table A and B Providers, 2014-19**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>National — Disability</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>7.7</b>
Table A Providers	5.8	6.2	6.5	6.9	7.3	7.7
Table B Providers	5.5	5.9	5.5	3.8	5.3	5.5
Go8	5.3	6.1	6.3	6.6	7.0	7.8
ATN	5.0	5.2	5.4	5.8	6.4	6.8
IRU	5.7	6.0	6.3	6.9	7.2	7.8
RUN	7.2	7.8	8.2	8.1	8.8	9.3
Unaligned Group	6.0	6.3	6.6	7.1	7.5	7.6
New South Wales	5.6	6.3	6.6	7.0	7.4	7.8
Victoria	5.6	6.0	6.3	6.8	7.3	7.9
Queensland	4.8	5.1	5.3	5.5	6.0	6.4
Western Australia	5.8	6.2	6.4	6.5	7.1	7.4
South Australia	8.2	8.7	9.1	9.2	9.4	9.7
Tasmania	8.9	7.7	7.7	7.6	7.5	7.4
Northern Territory	5.1	4.6	4.8	5.5	5.8	7.4
Australian Capital Territory	6.8	7.5	7.9	9.1	9.8	10.3
Multi-State	6.2	5.9	5.9	6.9	7.6	7.5

**Source:** Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment (2020).

## Indigenous Student Participation: 2014 to 2019

Indigenous students accounted for 2.0% of all domestic undergraduate enrolments in Australia for the first time in 2019, representing a steady increase in representation over the past six years and reflecting the focus on Indigenous participation which has occurred as part of the broader push to widen access and participation in Australian higher education. In 2019, the RUN institutions had higher participation rates than the national average, at 3.7%, while states and territories with larger Indigenous populations, such as Queensland (2.8%) and the Northern Territory (7.4%), also reported higher rates of participation.

**Table 6: Indigenous Enrolment Proportion, %, By Groupings and State and Territory, Table A and B Providers, 2014–19**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>National — Indigenous</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>2.0</b>
Table A Providers	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.8	1.9	1.9
Table B Providers	0.9	1.0	1.2	1.6	1.8	2.0
<b>Groupings</b>						
Go8	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.0
ATN	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.1
IRU	2.1	2.2	2.4	2.5	2.5	2.6
RUN	2.7	3.0	3.1	3.4	3.5	3.7
Unaligned Group	1.7	1.8	1.9	2.0	2.0	2.1
<b>States and Territories</b>						
New South Wales	1.8	1.8	1.9	2.1	2.2	2.3
Victoria	0.7	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.9	1.0
Queensland	2.1	2.3	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.8
Western Australia	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.4
South Australia	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.7
Tasmania	1.8	2.1	2.3	2.3	2.2	2.5
Northern Territory	6.6	6.4	6.3	6.6	6.8	7.4
Australian Capital Territory	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.6
Multi-State	2.0	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.9	1.9

**Source:** Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment (2020).

## Women in Non-Traditional Areas (WINTA) Student Participation: 2014 to 2019

The share of domestic undergraduates who are WINTA students has ranged between 17.3% and 17.6% in recent years and reached 17.7% in 2019.

Among the institutional groupings, the Go8 had the highest 2019 WINTA student share at around 24.9%, with the RUN institutions (14.0%) and the Unaligned Group (14.4%) having substantially smaller shares. The Table B Providers saw their collective share rise in 2019 to 19.7%. Among the mainland states (New South Wales to South Australia) and the ACT, there was generally uniformity in enrolment (18.0% to 18.7%), with Tasmania (11.0%) and the Northern Territory (6.3%) seeing considerably lower rates of WINTA shares of enrolment.

**Table 7: WINTA Enrolment Proportion, %, By Groupings and State and Territory, Table A and B Providers, 2014-19**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>National — WINTA<sup>a</sup></b>	17.6	17.3	17.3	17.3	17.6	17.7
Table A Providers	17.7	17.4	17.4	17.3	17.5	17.7
Table B Providers	8.1	8.2	12.1	17.3	19.6	19.7
Go8	22.1	22.6	23.6	24.1	24.7	24.9
ATN	19.3	19.4	19.4	19.4	19.6	19.7
IRU	16.1	15.5	15.2	15.3	15.8	15.7
RUN	16.5	15.5	14.9	14.7	14.2	14.0
Unaligned Group	15.2	14.8	14.3	14.0	14.1	14.4
New South Wales	18.0	18.0	18.4	18.5	18.6	18.7
Victoria	18.3	18.2	18.2	18.2	18.5	18.5
Queensland	18.5	18.1	17.9	18.0	18.1	18.1
Western Australia	18.5	18.3	18.2	18.1	18.0	18.0
South Australia	15.0	15.1	16.2	17.2	18.0	18.2
Tasmania	16.1	12.2	7.9	5.9	7.5	11.0
Northern Territory	10.7	7.9	7.4	6.8	6.4	6.3
Australian Capital Territory	19.5	19.1	18.6	18.3	18.4	18.0
Multi-State	5.8	5.6	6.1	7.2	7.5	7.2

**Note:** a. The WINTA enrolment share is per cent of total enrolment.

**Source:** Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment (2020).

## Regional Student Participation: 2014 to 2019

Regional student participation share, using the *current address* measure, has continued to decline in Australia, falling from 20.5% in 2014 to 19.6% in 2019. This decline can be seen across most institutional groupings, with the exception of the Table B Providers, who have seen consistent growth in participation since 2015, but whose overall share of 9.9% in 2019 was just over half that of the system average. The Go8 (9.7%) and ATN (9.4%) had similarly lower rates of regional student enrolment than the national average. The RUN institutions have a heavy concentration of regional enrolments, but this continues to decline, reaching 47.5% in 2019, in part due to their establishment of satellite campuses in metropolitan areas.

Regional enrolments track regional population shares within states and territories. In 2019, jurisdictions with larger regional populations had the highest rates of participation, including Queensland (27.4%), Tasmania (63.4%) and the Northern Territory (55.1%), while Western Australia had the lowest at 9.5%.

**Table 8: Regional Enrolment Proportion, %, By Groupings and State and Territory, Table A and B Providers, 2014–19**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>National — Regional<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>20.5</b>	<b>20.5</b>	<b>20.3</b>	<b>20.3</b>	<b>19.8</b>	<b>19.6</b>
Table A Providers	20.8	20.7	20.5	20.5	20.1	19.8
Table B Providers	6.1	6.1	7.6	8.8	8.9	9.9
Go8	10.9	10.5	10.2	10.0	9.9	9.7
ATN	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.3	9.4
IRU	22.7	22.3	22.3	23.4	22.6	22.1
RUN	52.4	51.4	51.0	49.7	48.7	47.5
Unaligned Group	22.9	22.9	22.4	22.1	21.7	21.6
New South Wales	18.1	17.8	17.4	17.0	16.6	16.5
Victoria	18.8	18.7	18.7	18.5	18.1	17.7
Queensland	27.4	27.3	27.3	28.4	28.0	27.4
Western Australia	9.7	10.0	9.8	9.9	9.6	9.5
South Australia	14.4	14.2	14.3	14.2	14.5	14.8
Tasmania	77.1	72.2	67.4	63.9	63.5	63.4
Northern Territory	51.8	51.4	53.0	53.7	54.8	55.1
Australian Capital Territory	16.5	15.9	15.4	15.4	15.5	15.4
Multi-State	9.7	9.6	9.1	8.9	9.0	8.9

**Note:** a. Please see *Introduction* and *Equity Student Group Definitions* for details on the Regional student equity group.

**Source:** Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment (2020).

## Assigning Regional Status Based on First Address

The relocation of Regional students to attend university means that the use of a *first address* measure provides a more accurate picture of their commencing status. This can be seen in the *first address* estimate of the Regional participation rate in 2019, which at 20.7% is 5% higher than the *current address* estimate of 19.6% (a ratio of 1.05). A similar pattern can be seen across institutional groupings, such as the Go8 (*first address* share of 11%, compared to 9.7% using the *current address*) and ATN (11% versus 9.4%), as well as in states and territories with relatively small populations and limited campus presence in the regions, including Western Australia (11.3% compared to 9.5%) and the Australian Capital Territory (18.6% versus 15.4%).

**Table 9: Regional Enrolment Proportion, 2019, %, SA1 Area Measures: First Address and *Current Address***

Regional — First Address	First Address	<i>Current Address</i> <sup>a</sup>	Ratio of First Address to <i>Current Address</i>
<b>National — Regional</b>	<b>20.7</b>	<b>19.6</b>	<b>1.05</b>
Table A Providers	20.9	19.8	1.05
Table B Providers	10.1	9.9	1.02
Go8	11.0	9.7	1.14
ATN	11.0	9.4	1.17
IRU	22.3	22.1	1.01
RUN	47.6	47.5	1.00
Unaligned Group	23.0	21.6	1.06
New South Wales	17.2	16.5	1.04
Victoria	18.7	17.7	1.06
Queensland	29.2	27.4	1.06
Western Australia	11.3	9.5	1.19
South Australia	16.0	14.8	1.08
Tasmania	59.6	63.4	0.94
Northern Territory	51.6	55.1	0.94
Australian Capital Territory	18.6	15.4	1.21
Multi-State	11.1	8.9	1.24

**Note:** a. Estimates using the *current address* are sourced from Table 8.

**Source:** Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment (2020).

## Remote Student Participation: 2014 to 2019

Remote student participation in Australia has declined in the past six years, from a 0.83% share in 2014 to 0.80% in 2019. However, 2019 did see a quite marked increase across several institutional groupings, including the Table B Providers (0.65% in 2019, from 0.57% in 2018), the ATN (0.79%, from 0.73%) and the Go8 (0.48%, from 0.46%).

Patterns across the states and territories reflect the relative underlying populations of these areas, with institutions in the Northern Territory having a remote student participation rate of 9.92% in 2019, in comparison to the Australian Capital Territory at 0.23%.

**Table 10: Remote Enrolment Proportion, %, By Groupings and State and Territory, Table A and B Providers, 2014-19**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>National — Remote<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>0.83</b>	<b>0.81</b>	<b>0.81</b>	<b>0.81</b>	<b>0.79</b>	<b>0.80</b>
Table A Providers	0.83	0.81	0.81	0.82	0.80	0.80
Table B Providers	0.94	0.76	0.76	0.60	0.57	0.65
Go8	0.51	0.49	0.48	0.47	0.46	0.48
ATN	0.83	0.82	0.82	0.80	0.73	0.79
IRU	1.39	1.35	1.35	1.40	1.37	1.35
RUN	1.56	1.52	1.48	1.47	1.48	1.49
Unaligned Group	0.57	0.56	0.59	0.58	0.57	0.54
New South Wales	0.40	0.40	0.42	0.43	0.41	0.42
Victoria	0.25	0.26	0.28	0.29	0.30	0.29
Queensland	1.24	1.18	1.10	1.11	1.12	1.09
Western Australia	1.65	1.58	1.61	1.52	1.40	1.45
South Australia	1.42	1.47	1.45	1.38	1.32	1.41
Tasmania	0.93	1.10	1.13	1.20	1.31	1.17
Northern Territory	10.31	10.34	10.70	11.09	10.68	9.92
Australian Capital Territory	0.22	0.22	0.25	0.27	0.26	0.23
Multi-State	0.20	0.21	0.14	0.16	0.15	0.13

**Note:** a. Please see *Introduction and Equity Student Group Definitions* for details on the Remote student equity group.

**Source:** Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment (2020).

## Assigning Remote Status Based on First Address

The use of *first address* to assign remote status has a more pronounced impact on the remote status measure than the regional status equivalent. The 2019 Remote student share rises from 0.80% using the *current address* measure, to 0.91% using the *first address* measure. This represents a 14% increase in the defined Remote student population (given a ratio between the two of 1.14). Among the institutional groupings, the ATN (1.01%, from 0.79%) sees the largest adjustment, equal to a 28% (a ratio of 1.28) increase in Remote student numbers. The *first address* measure also has a significant impact on state and territory aggregates, with South Australia (1.71%, from 1.41%) and Western Australia (1.87%, from 1.45%) seeing substantial increases in their Remote student shares.

**Table 11: Remote Enrolment Proportion, 2019, %, SA1 Area Measures: First Address and *Current Address***

Remote — First Address	First Address	Current Address <sup>a</sup>	Ratio of First to Current Address
<b>National – Remote</b>	<b>0.91</b>	<b>0.80</b>	<b>1.14</b>
Table A Providers	0.91	0.80	1.14
Table B Providers	0.89	0.65	1.37
<hr/>			
G08	0.55	0.48	1.15
ATN	1.01	0.79	1.28
IRU	1.47	1.35	1.09
RUN	1.62	1.49	1.09
Unaligned Group	0.62	0.54	1.15
<hr/>			
New South Wales	0.45	0.42	1.07
Victoria	0.31	0.29	1.07
Queensland	1.26	1.09	1.16
Western Australia	1.87	1.45	1.29
South Australia	1.71	1.41	1.21
Tasmania	1.17	1.17	1.00
Northern Territory	9.13	9.92	0.92
Australian Capital Territory	0.31	0.23	1.35
Multi-State	0.23	0.13	1.77

**Note:** a. Estimates using the *current address* are sourced from Table 10.

**Source:** Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment (2020).

## Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) Student Participation: 2014 to 2019

The participation share of NESB students among domestic undergraduates declined in 2019 to 3.2%, down from 3.7% in 2016. As noted in relation to Table 2, this reflects a decline in NESB numbers as much as increases in the overall enrolment. The NESB group is unique among equity groups, as the Go8 (4.2%) and ATN (4.4%) institutions have higher levels of NESB enrolment than the national average. Table B Providers (a 1.1% share) and the RUN institutions (1.2%) have lower levels of NESB participation. Patterns across the states and territories generally reflect their respective NESB population shares.

**Table 12: NESB Enrolment Proportion, %, By Groupings and State and Territory, Table A and B Providers, 2014–19**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>National — NESB</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.2</b>
Table A Providers	3.6	3.7	3.7	3.6	3.4	3.3
Table B Providers	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.1
Go8	4.3	4.5	4.4	4.4	4.2	4.2
ATN	5.4	5.6	5.4	5.2	4.7	4.4
IRU	4.3	4.4	4.5	4.4	4.2	4.0
RUN	1.4	1.4	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.2
Unaligned Group	2.6	2.8	2.9	2.8	2.6	2.5
New South Wales	3.6	3.7	3.7	3.6	3.5	3.4
Victoria	4.1	4.2	4.1	4.0	3.8	3.7
Queensland	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.6	2.4
Western Australia	3.4	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.0	2.8
South Australia	4.5	4.5	4.2	3.9	3.5	3.2
Tasmania	2.2	3.2	4.1	4.7	5.0	4.8
Northern Territory	4.1	4.9	5.1	5.4	5.3	5.2
Australian Capital Territory	4.2	3.9	3.6	3.3	3.2	2.8
Multi-State	2.7	3.0	3.0	2.6	2.1	1.9

**Source:** Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment (2020).



## Summary

In 2019, there were 765,594 domestic undergraduate students enrolled in Australia. This represents an increase in enrolments of 8.4% since 2014, with the growth rate in enrolments continuing to taper after a decade of marked expansion. The number of Low SES students, Students with Disability, Indigenous students and WINTA students increased at a rate greater than that seen overall since 2014, while other equity groups saw lower growth rates, with the NESB student group now showing negative growth in enrolments since 2014.

The change in share of student population—percentage point change (PPC)—was negative for Regional (-0.9 PPC), Remote (-0.03 PPC) and NESB students (-0.4 PPC).

**Table 13: Student Equity Enrolments and Enrolment Shares (%), Table A and B Providers, 2014–19<sup>a</sup>**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Growth (14–19) %
<b>National</b>	<b>706,278</b>	<b>727,786</b>	<b>743,030</b>	<b>759,151</b>	<b>764,652</b>	<b>765,594</b>	<b>8.4</b>
Low SES	111,004	115,840	126,293	129,554	129,858	128,839	16.1
Students with Disability	40,679	44,856	47,970	51,773	55,565	58,739	44.4
Indigenous	10,939	11,845	12,878	13,855	14,314	14,892	36.1
WINTA	124,159	125,888	128,210	131,452	134,406	135,649	9.3
Regional	145,018	149,001	150,441	153,800	151,636	150,100	3.5
Remote	5,848	5,911	6,036	6,167	6,076	6,107	4.4
NESB	25,129	26,661	27,158	27,185	25,793	24,488	-2.6
<b>Equity Shares (%)</b>	<b>(%)</b>	<b>(%)</b>	<b>(%)</b>	<b>(%)</b>	<b>(%)</b>	<b>(%)</b>	<b>Change in Share (14–19) PPC<sup>b</sup></b>
Low SES	15.7	15.9	17.0	17.1	17.0	16.8	1.1
Students with Disability	5.8	6.2	6.5	6.8	7.3	7.7	1.9
Indigenous	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.8	1.9	2.0	0.4
WINTA	17.6	17.3	17.3	17.3	17.6	17.7	0.1
Regional	20.5	20.5	20.3	20.3	19.8	19.6	-0.9
Remote	0.83	0.81	0.81	0.81	0.79	0.80	-0.03
NESB	3.6	3.7	3.7	3.6	3.4	3.2	-0.4

**Note:** a. Data reported from Tables 2 and 3.

b. PPC is calculated as percentage share in 2019 minus percentage share in 2014.

**Source:** Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment (2020).

## References

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (2015). *Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas*, Canberra: ABS.  
<http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/seifa?opendocument&navpos=260>
- Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment (2020). Equity Group Statistics, Private Request (September 2019). Canberra: Department of Education, Skills and Employment.
- Brett, M. (2016). Disability and Australian Higher Education. in Harvey, A., Burnheim, C. & Brett, M. (eds.), *Student Equity in Australian Higher Education: Twenty-five years of A Fair Chance for All*. Singapore: Springer. pp. 87–108.
- DEET – Department of Employment, Education and Training (1990) *A Fair Chance for All: National and institutional planning for equity in higher education*. A discussion paper. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Koshy, P. (2016). Equity Policy in Australian Higher Education: Past, present and prospective. in Hill, M., Hudson, A., Mckendry, S., Raven, N., Saunders, D., Storan, J. & Ward, T. (eds.), *Closing the Gap: Bridges for Access and Lifelong Learning*, London: Forum for Access and Continuing Education. pp. 277–302.
- Koshy, P. (2017). *Equity Student Participation in Australian Higher Education: 2011 to 2016*. National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE), Perth: Curtin University.
- Koshy, P. (2019). *Student Equity Performance in Australian Higher Education: 2013 to 2018*. National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE), Perth: Curtin University.
- Martin, L. (1994). *Equity and General Performance Indicators in Higher Education*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- NCSEHE – National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education. (2020). *NCSEHE Student Equity Data Program*.  
<https://www.ncsehe.edu.au/research/student-equity-data/>