

School teachers



School teachers play a crucial role in developing the skills and capabilities of children, while also caring for their social and emotional needs. School teachers influence the overall development of individual children as well as their future employability, and ultimately affect the wellbeing of society as a whole.¹

There are increasing demands on education providers to deliver the best outcomes for children's education. Universities and government departments face the challenge of supplying enough appropriately trained teachers to meet these expectations. An understanding of the characteristics of the current teacher workforce underpins effective planning to meet the future demand for teachers.

An ageing profession, mostly women

Compared with the Australian workforce, teachers are generally older, more likely to be women, Australian-born and living in couple families. These characteristics have been consistent over time, with only gradual changes in the last 10 years.

From 1996 to 2006 there was an increase in the median age of all teachers from 41 to 44 years. The median age of comparable occupation groups—all other Professionals and Specialist managers—was lower at 41 years in 2006, although it too had increased from 39 years in 1996. Ageing in the teaching profession is not just an issue in Australia: it is a global concern. In Australia in 2006, a little over 60% of teachers were aged 40 and over. Similarly, in many European Union countries over half the teaching force is 40 years and over.² As many of this large group of teachers begin to approach traditional retirement ages over the next 5 to 10 years, losses are expected to have a major impact on teaching workforces in Australia and overseas.³

In 2006 there were 2.6 female teachers to every male teacher—driven by the higher proportion of female primary teachers. Past census data reveal that the ratio of female to male teachers has gradually increased over time. In 1996 there were 2.2 females to every male and in 2001 the ratio had increased to 2.5 to 1. This trend is likely to continue. Applications by women for teaching degrees in 2003 for instance, were almost 3 times higher than for men.⁴

In this article, unless otherwise specified, **teachers** is a collective term that comprises people aged 20 years and over who reported being employed as Primary school teachers, Secondary school teachers, School principals or other teachers (comprising School teachers not further defined, Early childhood, including pre-school, Middle school, and Special education teachers). In this article, these four groups are referred to as primary teachers, secondary teachers, principals and other teachers.

When comparisons are made with people in other occupations, teachers (other than School principals) are compared with all of the remaining occupations in the 'Professionals' category. School principals are compared with the remaining occupations in the 'Specialist managers' category. These occupation groups are considered to have comparable levels of skills and qualifications. For more information on occupations see Glossary.

School teacher qualified refers to people whose highest completed non-school qualification was in the following 'Teacher Education' fields: Early childhood, Primary, Secondary, Teacher-Librarianship and Special education. For more information on qualifications see Glossary.

Selected personal characteristics of teachers, aged 20 years and over

	Median age years	Aged 40 years and over	Born overseas %	Females/ males ratio	Total	
		%			'000	%
Primary school teachers	43	57.6	14.1	5.5	125.8	41.1
Secondary school teachers	44	61.5	19.7	1.4	118.4	38.7
School principals	50	84.8	12.7	1.0	18.0	5.9
Total(a)	44	61.1	17.0	2.6	305.9	100.0

(a) Total includes 43,580 'other teachers', see box on previous page.

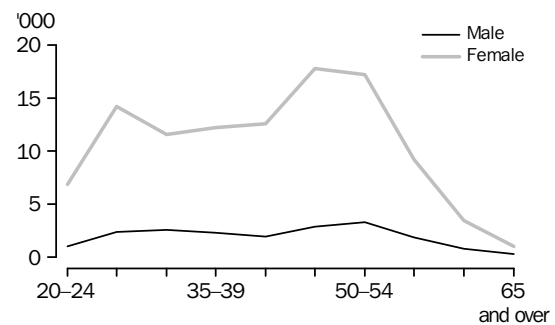
In 2006, 83% of teachers were Australian-born compared with 73% of the Australian workforce. Secondary teachers were more likely to have been born overseas (20%) than primary teachers (14%) and principals (13%). These were much lower levels than for occupations such as Social professionals (53%) and Generalist medical practitioners (51%). Teachers were also less likely to be recent arrivals (see Glossary) to Australia than the total workforce (1.4% and 3.2% respectively).

Most teachers live in couple families. Around 75% of the teaching workforce lived in couple families, slightly higher than the working population (71%). As a result, teachers were more likely than the total working population to live in families with school-aged children, aged 5–14 (22% compared with 19%). Teaching may be more suitable than other professions for parents of school-aged children because teachers' formal working hours and leave largely align with their children's school hours and holidays.

Primary teachers—younger and mostly women

Primary teachers had a lower median age and a substantially higher ratio of women to men, compared with principals or secondary teachers. The median age for primary teachers was 43 in 2006, an increase of three years from 40 in 1996. Female primary teachers outnumbered males, and this disparity widened between 1996 and 2006, from 4.6 to 1, to 5.5 to 1. Many reasons for the predominance of women in primary teaching have been put forward, including the perception that primary school teaching includes a nurturing role that is more suited to women; negative social perceptions about male teachers; and the isolation and loneliness experienced by male teachers.⁵

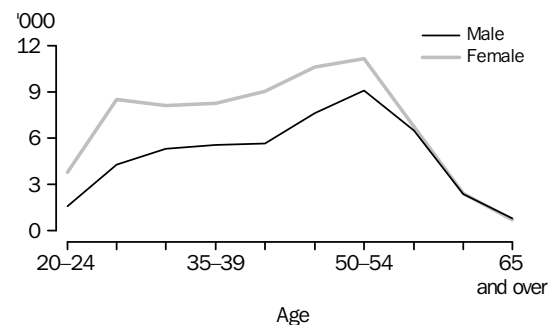
Age and sex of primary teachers



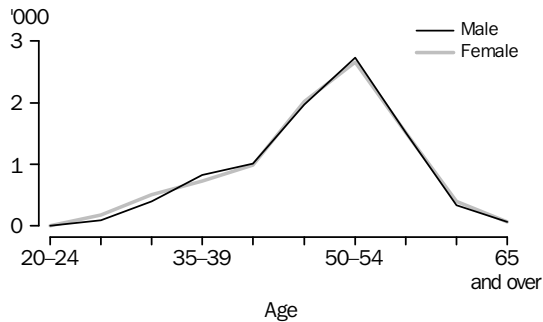
Secondary teachers—greater gender balance

Secondary teachers had a slightly higher median age but less gender imbalance than primary teachers. Secondary teachers had a median age of 44, an increase of three years from 1996 to 2006. In comparison, the median age for all other Professionals increased by one year, from 39 to 40 years. Similar to primary school teachers, the ratio of women to men has also increased, from 1.2 to 1 in 1996 to 1.4 to 1 in 2006.

Age and sex of secondary teachers



Age and sex of principals



Principals—older men and women

Compared with other members of the teaching profession, principals were the oldest group. The higher median age is strongly associated with most principals being teachers with many years experience. That said, from 1996 to 2006, principals showed the greatest increase in median age, with a 4 year increase from 46 to 50. In comparison, the median age for all other Specialist managers increased from 41 to 43 across the same time period.

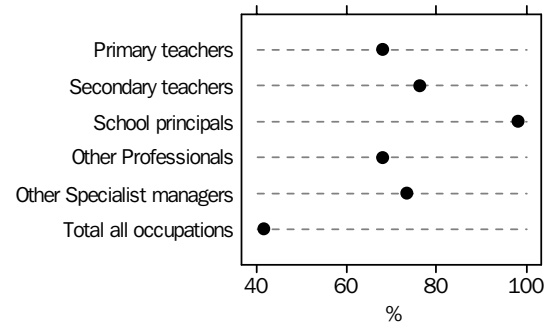
Principals were also the sector of the teaching profession with the most gender equity. In 1996, male principals outnumbered females (1.5 to 1). However, by 2006, female principals very slightly outnumbered males. This was in contrast to the gender imbalance of primary and secondary teachers.

Teachers' incomes and hours worked

The census provides information on teachers' working conditions, in terms of hours worked and gross weekly income. Hours worked was measured for the week before the 2006 Census, which was held during the school term. Although a relatively high proportion of teachers worked part-time compared with other Professionals and Specialist managers (30% compared with 22%), only people who worked full-time are considered in this section when making comparisons between occupations.

In 2006, 31% of full-time teachers worked long hours (50 hours or more per week), this was similar to other full-time Professionals and Specialist managers at 32% (see table next page). Teachers are able to make use of stand-down time in school holidays to compensate for working longer hours during the terms.

Teachers and selected occupation groups with higher incomes(a)(b)



(a) Full-time employed persons aged 20 and over.

(b) Gross personal income of \$1,000 or more per week.

The *personal incomes* of full-time teachers were slightly higher than those of comparable full-time professionals. Almost three quarters (73%) of full-time teachers had *higher incomes* (that is, gross personal income of \$1,000 or more per week) compared with 70% of all other Professionals and Specialist managers (see higher income graph on this page). In addition, full-time teachers were slightly less likely to have *middle incomes* (\$400–\$999 per week) than other Professionals and Specialist managers (26% compared with 28%).

However, there were differences in income for full-time workers with very high *personal incomes* (\$2,000 or more per week). Teachers were less likely to have very high incomes than other Professionals and Specialist managers (2% compared with 19%).

Primary teachers—more part-time, reflecting high proportion of women

Primary teachers were more likely to work part-time (35% in 2006) than secondary teachers (24%) or other Professionals (26%). Female primary teachers were more likely than male primary teachers to work part-time (38% compared with 22%).

Just over one quarter of both male and female full-time primary teachers worked long hours (50 hours or more per week): 27% of men and 26% of women. However working long hours was less common for male primary teachers than for male Professionals (33%). On the other hand, female primary teachers were more likely to work long hours than other female Professionals (26% compared with 19%). A lower proportion of primary teachers worked long hours (26%) than secondary teachers (30%) or principals (67%).

Education...School teachers

The *personal incomes* of full-time primary teachers were comparable with other Professionals working full-time. However, full-time primary teachers were more likely to have *middle incomes* (31%) and less likely to have *higher incomes* (68%) than full-time secondary teachers (see table, p. 134).

Secondary teachers—higher incomes more common

Full-time female and male secondary teachers were more likely to work long hours (both 30%) than full-time primary teachers. Compared with other full-time Professionals, female secondary teachers were more likely to work long hours than other female Professionals. On the other hand, male secondary teachers were less likely than other male Professionals to work long hours.

A teacher's salary level increases according to years of experience and also increases for teachers with additional responsibilities, such as year or subject co-ordinators. Associated with their older age profile and greater opportunities for additional responsibilities, full-time secondary teachers were more likely to have *higher incomes* (76%) than full-time primary

teachers. When compared with other Professionals working full-time, secondary teachers were more likely to have *higher incomes* and less likely to have *middle incomes*.

Principals—long hours and higher incomes the norm

Principals were less likely to work part-time than other Specialist managers (4% compared with 10%). For those working full-time, principals were more likely to work long hours than primary and secondary teachers or other Specialist managers. Over two thirds of full-time principals worked long hours (67%) compared with less than half other Specialist managers (43%).

Consistent with their experience and the responsibilities related to their position, 98% of full-time principals had *higher incomes*. In comparison, 74% of other Specialist managers who worked full-time had *higher incomes*. However, 17% of full-time principals had very high incomes (\$2,000 or more per week), somewhat lower than other full-time Specialist managers (25%).

Teachers, Principals and other occupations, hours worked(a)(b)

	Part-time	Full-time	Total	Long hours
				(50 hours or more)
	%	%	%	% of FT workers
Primary school teachers	35.4	64.6	100.0	26.3
Secondary school teachers	23.7	76.3	100.0	30.1
School principals	3.7	96.3	100.0	66.9
Total teachers/principals(c)	30.0	70.0	100.0	30.6
Professionals(d)	25.7	74.3	100.0	27.4
Specialist managers(e)	10.2	89.8	100.0	42.5
Total Professionals and Specialist managers	21.9	78.1	100.0	31.7

(a) Employed persons aged 20 and over.

(b) Part-time: 1–34 hours, full-time: 35 hours or more.

(c) Includes 'other teachers', see definition p. 129.

(d) Excludes school teachers.

(e) Excludes school principals.

Teachers not teaching— what are they doing?

Having an adequate number of teachers to meet requirements of schools is affected by the substantial number of people who leave the profession. In addition to retirement, international studies have shown that a high proportion of teachers leave in the early stages of their careers, a trend commonly accepted to be present among Australian teachers.⁶

Reflecting this, many people whose highest qualification was teaching do not work as school teachers. In 2006, 513,800 people aged 20 and over were school teacher qualified (had school teaching qualifications). Of these, almost three quarters were employed (73%), and slightly over a quarter were not in the labour force (26%).

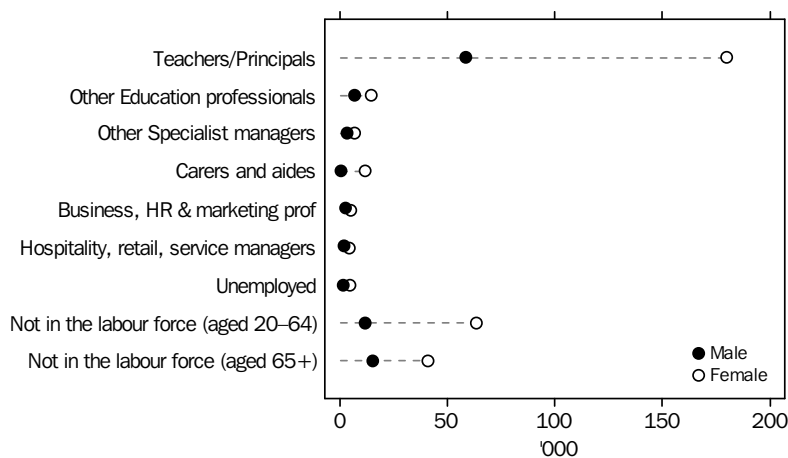
Of those not in the labour force, 43% were aged 65 years and over and were most likely retired. Of those aged 20–64 who were not in the labour force, a large group were women (63,500)—the largest single group of people who were school teacher qualified, but not teaching. These women were more likely to live in a family with children under 5 than all women not in the labour force (28% compared with 23%). In addition, there were 11,800 school teacher qualified men aged 20–64 who were not in the labour force (see occupation graph below). About one third of these men lived in older couple families with no children, compared with one fifth of all men not in the labour force.

Census misses some with teaching qualifications

The number of people holding a teacher qualification and not working in the profession is likely to be higher than indicated by the census figures. Apart from issues related to census collection methods, the census measures only the highest qualification a person has attained, not all their qualifications. People could hold a teaching qualification and a graduate or postgraduate qualification which is not related to education. In this case, the teaching qualification would not be recorded in the census results.

In 2006, of those school teacher qualified people who were employed (373,200), 64% were employed as a teacher or principal. After teaching, those who were working were most likely to be employed as other Education professionals (6% or 21,600 people), such as Vocational education teachers or Private tutors and teachers. For men, the most common non-education related occupations for those with teacher qualifications were Business, human resources and marketing professionals (2,600) and Hospitality, retail and service managers (2,100). For school teacher qualified women these occupations were Carers and aides (11,900) and Business, human resources and marketing professionals (5,100).

Most common occupations of people qualified(a) as school teachers



(a) People whose highest qualification was teaching.

Pay better for full-time teachers

The *personal income* levels of school teacher qualified workers in other fields were generally lower than for those who remained in teaching. The incomes of full-time teachers in 2006 indicated that they fare as well, if not better, than people with school teacher qualifications who worked full-time in other comparable occupations.

In 2006, the proportion of full-time primary teachers with *middle* and *higher incomes* was similar to that of people who were school teacher qualified but who worked full-time in other Professional occupations. Full-time secondary teachers were more likely to earn *higher incomes* than other Professionals with school teacher qualifications who worked full-time—76% and 67% respectively had *higher incomes*.

Principals who worked full-time generally earned more than other full-time Specialist managers with teacher qualifications, with a much higher proportion with *higher incomes* (98% compared with 71%). Likewise, the proportion of full-time principals who had very high incomes was higher than that of other Specialist managers with teacher qualifications (17% and 14 % respectively).

While the incomes of those in the teaching profession were generally higher than for those with teacher qualifications who worked in other fields, there appeared to be little opportunity to earn very high incomes, unless as a principal. In 2006, less than 1% of primary and secondary teachers earned \$2,000 or more per week, well below the proportion in other common occupations of school teacher qualified full-time workers. For example, the proportion of teacher-trained Business, human resources and marketing professionals with very high incomes was 14% for men and 7% for women.

Gross personal weekly incomes: full-time teachers and school teacher qualified persons(a)

	Lower income (\$1–\$399)	Middle income (\$400–\$999)	Higher income (\$1 000 or more)	Very high income (\$2 000 or more)	Total	
	%	%	%	%	%	'000
All employed teachers						
Primary school teachers	0.9	31.0	68.1	0.4	100.0	76.4
Secondary school teachers	0.5	23.1	76.3	0.9	100.0	85.6
School principals	0.1	1.7	98.1	16.8	100.0	16.4
Total teachers/principals(b)	0.8	26.2	73.0	2.0	100.0	201.8
Teacher qualified—non-teaching occupations						
Professionals(c)	3.7	29.5	66.7	5.3	100.0	21.4
Specialist managers(d)	2.0	27.4	70.7	14.3	100.0	8.3
Other occupations	8.8	58.6	32.6	4.6	100.0	40.4
Total non-teaching occupations	6.4	45.9	47.6	6.0	100.0	70.0

(a) People aged 20 years and over whose highest completed non-school qualification was in the following 'Teacher Education' fields: Early childhood, Primary, Secondary, Teacher-Librarianship and Special education.

(b) Includes 'other teachers', see definition p. 129.

(c) Excludes school teachers.

(d) Excludes school principals.

Demand for teachers

The number of teachers employed at any one time is dependent upon a variety of factors linked to both supply and demand. Population growth, student retention rates and changes in teacher/student ratios all affect the demand for teachers. From 1996 to 2006, the number of school-aged children (5–14 years) increased by over 127,200 (or 5%).⁷ The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Schools collection shows that over the same period apparent retention rates increased from 72% in 1997 to 75% in 2006, further increasing the total number of children attending school. In addition, the ratio of students to teachers also changed. Between 1997 and 2006, the ratio for primary students decreased from 17.9 to 16.0 students (full-time equivalent) per teacher, and that for secondary students from 12.8 to 12.2.⁸ All of these changes increased the demand for teachers and resulted in a 22% increase in the number of employed teachers between 1996 and 2006 (55,100 additional teachers).

A regular supply of new and returning teachers is needed to satisfy demand. The pool of available teachers increases as graduates enter the profession, people return from leave and teachers migrate to Australia. Supply is reduced through declining graduate numbers and the loss of teaching staff, temporarily, for example, to take maternity leave, or permanently, through resignation or retirement. Retirement currently has the potential to have the greatest impact on teacher numbers, because the teaching workforce is rapidly ageing. Between 1996 and 2003, losses of teaching staff to retirement accounted for around 1% of the teaching workforce each year, with slightly higher proportions of teachers leaving the government sector.³ With one third of teachers aged 50 and over in 2006, it is anticipated that in coming years the proportion of teachers retiring will be much higher.³

Over recent years, the teaching profession has experienced a decrease in teacher graduate numbers. Census data show that between 1996 and 2006, the number of young people (20–24 years) with a teaching degree decreased by just under 3%. This is despite a 30% increase in the number of young people with a Bachelor degree over the same period.

Further, many new teachers do not expect to remain in teaching for their whole working lives.⁹ The loss of teaching staff has been somewhat offset by increases in teacher migration to Australia. The proportion of employed teachers who were recent arrivals increased from 0.9% to 1.4% between 1996 and 2006, increasing from 2,300 to 4,300. This was low compared with the increase in Professional and Specialist managers who were recent arrivals over the same period, with the proportion of people in these occupations who were recent arrivals increasing from 2.5% to 4.3%.

Endnotes

1 Skillbeck, M. and Connell, H. 2004, *Teachers for the future: The changing nature of society and related issues for the teaching workforce*, Report to the Teacher Quality and Educational Leadership Taskforce of the Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA).

2 European Commission 2000, *Key data on education in Europe*, p. xviii, European Commission, Luxembourg.

3 MCEETYA 2003, *Demand and supply of primary and secondary school teachers in Australia (Main report) Part A*, MCEETYA, Melbourne.

4 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) 2003, *Students 2003 Tables: Selected Higher Education Statistics*, 3.1 Commencing Students, Table 3, DEEWR, Canberra.

5 Mulholland, J. 2001, *Meeting the demand for male primary teachers?*, paper presented at the Australian Teacher Education Association Conference, September 2001, Melbourne.

6 MCEETYA 2003, *Demand and supply of primary and secondary school teachers in Australia: Part G, literature review*, MCEETYA, Melbourne.

7 Counts based on estimated resident population. ABS 2007, *Regional Population Growth, Australia, 1996 to 2006*, unpublished data, cat. no. 3218.0, ABS, Canberra.

8 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2008, *Schools, Australia, 2007*, cat. no. 4221.0, ABS, Canberra.

9 Australian Education Union (AEU) 2007, *Beginning teacher survey 2007: results and report*, AEU, Melbourne.