

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 103
Submitted by: Nicole Sabapathy
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Submitter Comments:

Dear Committee Members, I am the mother of two homeschooled children and I am writing to express my concern regarding the proposed changes that would require homeschooling families to adhere to the Australian Curriculum. I have completed 3 (of 4) years of a teaching degree, before moving into the science field completing my PhD and teaching within the university environment. I value and take my children's education very seriously. While I wholeheartedly agree that every child deserves a quality education, I firmly believe that imposing a standardised curriculum on all homeschooling families is not the solution. Every child is unique, with different learning styles, interests, and needs. We were forced into a situation of having to homeschool my neurodiverse child. The standardised curriculum does not work for her, and she came out of the school environment 2-3 yrs behind in her learning. By having the flexibility to customise her education, and create a program she will actually engage with, we have made significant process in her learning.

My eldest only commenced homeschooling this year, after we saw the advantages of using a tailored educational approach with his sister, (and after being physically assaulted at school on a couple of times). He is an extremely academic child, who while did well academically, however was bored and disengaged with his learning using the Australian curriculum in the school environment. In the home learning environment I have been able to extend his learning, and deep dive into his learning interests. It has been a delight to see his spark for learning reignited. He is now thriving, and I don't feel he would be having such a positive learning experience if we rigidly stuck to the Australian curriculum. I understand that the Australian curriculum serves as a guide for homeschooling families, but mandating its strict adherence would only hinder our ability to provide a personalised and effective education for our children. My children have thrived academically, and their mental health has improved greatly, since leaving the traditional school environment. I feel Imposing the Australian Curriculum on my children and all homeschooling families would be a step backward, limiting the flexibility and effectiveness of our children's education. Furthermore, I want to address any misconceptions or stereotypes surrounding homeschooling. In my experience over the last 2 years, homeschooling parents are deeply passionate and invested in their children's well-being and education. The homeschooling community is caring, supportive, and dedicated to providing the best possible educational experiences for our children. In conclusion, I urge you to reconsider these proposed changes, remove the adherence to acara and instead support the individualised education that homeschooling provides. Let us continue to tailor our children's education to meet their unique needs, interests, and abilities. Thank you for considering my perspective on this important issue. Sincerely, Dr Nicole Sabapathy

Dear Committee,

Following the EETC public briefing I have further concerns and wish to add the following to my submission.

I am concerned that a few misrepresentations were presented to the committee. The biggest two areas were regarding why families home-school and that the proposed changes in the Education Bill will bring Queensland into line with other states.

1. Reasons for home-education

The Department of Education conducted research and presented the Department of Education, Home Education Unit Parent with Child/ren Registered for Home Education Insight Report, 2022.

This is the only locally collated data available and would have been used when developing the current proposals. I encourage the committee to read this document from the Department of Education to see the data firsthand and help with understanding the homeschool landscape.

In individuals who never intended to home-school, **the report shows; 33% home educated for a better learning environment and 38% due to health or disability (pge 26).** Regarding covid, only 3% of people from the total number of home educators surveyed, home-schooled for this reason (pge 15).

Social media is not cited in this document as a reason for commencing home-schooling, but rather is cited as an information source people look at when seeking information to make their decision. On page 44 , it shows the main source of information people look to is; others who have home-schooled 35%, home education and support organisations 22% and social media 19% . I highly doubt the social media posts people are getting information from, or making these HUGE decisions on, are random uneducated opinion posts. In fact the report states *“Much of what is being sought is about how home education works and what is legally required, registration requirements and assistance transitioning from school, as well as reassurance that as a parent they know what is involved and have the ability to actually do a good job home educating their child.” (pge 45).* Indicating the decision to home educate has already been made and individuals are looking for information on how that is done.

From my personal experience, and from what I have heard personally within the homeschooling community, people leave the school environment because the child is either struggling to keep up, or is too advanced of the curriculum, due to bullying, experiencing physical or emotional harm at school, or neurodiverse children having difficulties with overwhelm and emotional regulation in the school environment.

2. Many other states use the National Curriculum

The information given comparing the proposal to other states was majorly misrepresented. I ask that given this misrepresentation, the committee look at the legislation and homeschooling requirements for each state from official and factual sources. For example, from my understanding no other state is required to adhere to the Australian curriculum like is being proposed for QLD.

As a brief summary:

VIC: The legislation DOES NOT refer to the Australian Curriculum, and families DO NOT need to follow the Australian Curriculum. Instead families need to address key learning areas (English, Maths, Science, HASS, Arts, Languages, HPE, ICT). There is also a section allowing a student to receive exemption from one of the learning areas. For reporting in Victoria, I believe they only review one child per family, on all 8 learning areas every 3 years.

NSW: The legislation DOES NOT refer to the Australian Curriculum. It specifies specific key learning areas that need to be covered (eg - for primary - English, Maths, Science and Technology, HASS, Creative and Practical Arts, Personal Development/HPE). I believe families need to plan on 6 key learning areas, but they do not write a report, instead have the home visit where they demonstrate they have done learning from those 6 key learning areas. I recently read a comment from a home-school parent from NSW who stated, "In this visit they are looking for the home educator's ability to adapt the curriculum to the child's needs, not the other way around".

NT: Legislation states that the curriculum used must be one that is approved by ACARA BUT there are also exemptions provided in relation to use of ACARA ('if it is appropriate to do so because of special circumstances').

ACT - Absolutely no requirement to conform, and DOES NOT mention the Australian Curriculum in their legislation.

TAS - No requirement to adhere to any particular program or curriculum and DOES NOT mention the Australian Curriculum in their legislation.

WA: DOES NOT mention the Australian Curriculum in their legislation. Instead, the legislation refers to an educational program and progress that the Regional Executive Director will decide is appropriate according to the WESTERN AUSTRALIAN curriculum (not Australian). I have heard in WA they do not submit a plan but do have a yearly visit by a moderator. A homeschooling mum from WA told me 'We have 8 learning areas to cover, and it follows the WA curriculum, but it is still flexible and we can write our own curriculum. It does need to link to the WA syllabus, however that's not my job, that is the job of the moderator. The moderator visit also doesn't need to be in the family's home, they can also meet in a public place.

SA: The Act does not actually cover home education. It would appear you apply for an exemption from a school and then follow policy guidelines (current guidelines say that while flexible the home education program is to cover the 8 learning areas as defined by the Australian Curriculum).

As you can see the information given in the briefing that this legislation will bring Queensland in line with other states is simply not true.

Queensland does already have a very intensive planning and reporting process. When I submit my plan for my children, we need to plan on 5 learning areas. In the yearly report we report on Maths, English and one other learning area, eg science, history, technology etc. In the report we need to demonstrate how we provided and facilitated learning in our child, as well as show samples of learning at two different time points for each of the 3 subjects we are reporting on. We do this for every child, every year. It is an efficient and effective way to demonstrate the provision of a high-quality education and **increasing the reporting and planning requirements and implementing restriction to the Australian curriculum, will not facilitate families like mine in delivering a higher quality education, rather it would be labour intensive and take away from the time we could be using to teach our children.**

3. Other Comments following the briefing:

i. Continuity of education

I have a couple comments on the continuity of education. The concern was raised that if children returned to school after a period of homeschooling, they would be behind, or have gaps in their education. This is a valid question; however I am not sure there is any evidence to suggest that this is actually occurring, or that if a child was to complete their homeschooling education via an alternate personalised high quality curriculum versus using the standard Australian curriculum that any difference would be seen following a transition back to school.

In NSW, The Board of Studies Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES) NSW, presented Academic Outcomes of Home-Schooling Review of Research and Analysis of Statewide Tests (2014) as part of this research NAPLAN scores of children who were previously home-schooled and returned to school were examined. BOSTES report **"In relation to NAPLAN tests, the analysis showed that students who were previously home schooled scored significantly higher in the Reading and Grammar & Punctuation tests, generally by about 20-25 marks (or about one-third of a standard deviation) in Reading, and 15-25 marks in Grammar & Punctuation. In Writing, Spelling and Numeracy, the home schooled student averages are generally not statistically significantly different from the overall NSW average. These results were consistent, regardless of the Year Levels being tested, and whether students have been registered for home schooling for shorter or longer periods"**.

As a sidenote, this report, also compared NAPLAN homeschool students and homeschool students, they found homeschool students outperformed school children. **"The results indicate that this group of students scored significantly above the overall NSW average in nearly every test. The differences were largest in Reading, Grammar & Punctuation and Numeracy, where home schooled students' average scores were typically about 70 marks (or about one standard deviation) higher than the NSW average. The differences were smaller in Spelling (about 40 marks) and Writing (about 20 marks)."** However, given that only 10% of homeschool students in NSW undertook NAPLAN in the year of analysis, there isn't enough evidence to claim this data to be representative of the entire homeschool population (and I am not going to misrepresent data). However, this data does show

that homeschool students do have the potential to perform as well, or even above their schooled peers.

In regard to students returning to the schooling environment it is worth noting that there are a number of children in the homeschooling environment who have learning difficulties and/or are neurodiverse etc. In fact in The Parent with Child/ren Registered for Home Education Insight Report (2022), it was reported 45% of home-school children are neurodiverse, 31% have social emotional/behavioural difficulties and 27% learning difficulties (pge 10). I would speculate that if learning gaps were seen following the transition back to school, it may be influenced by these factors and would likely be present regardless of the curriculum followed at home. I would also speculate that if a personalised learning plan was followed at home, it would be more likely that those gaps upon returning would be minimised.

Furthermore, schools do already have a lot of children who are behind and have learning gaps. Therefore, if a child did transition back to school and gaps were identified, in theory the school should be able to support these children with support systems the school has in place for the other children in the school who have learning gaps or difficulties. **My children had learning gaps when exiting school, and I commonly hear parents' comment, that their children had learning gaps when their child exited school to commence homeschooling.** Therefore, in some children the gaps are already present when the kids are in the school system prior to homeschooling.

The Parent with Child/ren Registered for Home Education Insight Report, 2022 collected data on the intention of future registration (pge 50). 66% intended to homeschool until student was no longer of compulsory school age, 18% MAY look to change education option and 7% were unsure. Which indicates that the majority of home-schoolers are not planning on returning to the school environment. Some of those in the may look to change category, will be those older students who transition into university, apprenticeships or vocational studies in their senior years. There are also a number of homeschooling teens who will choose to move to distance education for year 11 and 12 as a path to receiving an ATAR score. (From comments I have seen in homeschool support groups this seems to be a process that works well for some senior students).

Furthermore, any home-schooling parent who had the intention to move their child back to the school environment, does have access to the Australian curriculum and if they believed there would be gaps or issues with their child's learning they would be able to incorporate strategies into their learning plan when planning for this transition. I acknowledge there may be the occasional child who slips through the gaps, but I do feel this would be a rarity and not of significant enough numbers to justify limiting thousands of children with their education, especially since there is no guarantee that a child who followed the Australian Curriculum in the home education setting, is less likely to have gaps in their learning than those who do not.

In regards to the continuity of education being used to justify the removal of a provisional registration period, if firstly should be noted that only a very small number of applicants register via the provisional registration process. As shown on the Queensland Government Department of Education website (<https://education.qld.gov.au/schools-educators/other-education/home-education/performance>) in 2023 only 357 (5.9%) of a total 6077 of applicants registered via

provisional registration. The vast number of homeschool registrations are commencing homeschooling after their plan has been completed and are ready to immediately commence their studies using their plan.

I wanted to note that parents can and do sometimes begin educating their child while they are putting the plan together in that provisional period. Secondly, homeschooling is not limited to school days or terms only. Many continually educate, so if a family was to take a short break in the transition process, and perhaps in some situation where the child has experienced things like assault, sexual assault, or severe bullying they may justifiably need time to process and reset their child's nervous system following such trauma. In the school environment, school children do take x number of days a year as school holidays, or away due to being unwell etc. The advantage of homeschooling is that learning days and time are not restrictive to school term timetabling and can be caught up, during the year. We can even learn on weekends, as opposed to solely on weekdays. So trauma families who need to unexpectedly and urgently remove their school from school and have a short gap in the learning in the transition period do have plenty of opportunity to make up this leaning time.

Ultimately protecting the emotional and physical wellbeing of children in this position needs to take priority.

ii. Child safety concerns

I acknowledge the death of a homeschooling child is a tragic event. However, I do not see how this event is related or why it is being used to justify the proposed changes in education bill. The Death Review Board Annual Report 2022-2023 indicates that CYMHS was already aware of this child's situation and held concerns about a range of things other than the child's education, and the child had been referred to the suspected child abuse and neglect team. This child was being neglected not homeschooled, and likely would have still been neglected if they were in school.

This information indicates that even though this child was homeschooling they were still identified by the system at being of risk. The problem lies that child safety didn't act. As tragic as this situation is, this is a child safety issue not a homeschooling issue. The proposals in this bill; increased reporting and planning requirements, following the Australian curriculum, removal of provisional registration would not have changed the outcome for this child.

A more appropriate response may be something like in children who have already been identified by Child Health and Safety as high risk for neglect, who have an abusive parent etc, those particular children have regular welfare checks done, or need to demonstrate that their child can and is being supported and cared for while home educating. Or free counselling for these identified children. Though once again this would probably be a Child Health and Safety issue not a Home Education issue, and these measurements should not be applied to all children/ families. There are sadly other children who are abused and neglected even though they are at school.

As a final comment on this topic, I would say in my opinion **it is likely home education plays a protective role and preventive measure in mental health and suicide statistics.** My children's mental health has greatly improved since moving across to homeschooling.

Numerous children experience things like bullying at school and /or their mental health suffers. Home education provide a means to protect these children while still providing them with a high-quality education. Home education should be made to be more easily accessible to protect these children, not made more difficult. If families are discouraged from using home education as an option, or entering home education seems too overwhelming due to the requirements, children who are suffering mentally at school may be forced to remain in the school system and this may lead to higher suicide rates and poorer mental health outcomes. There are a number of school children who commit suicide each year, and a common experience reported is that these children were subjected to bullying at school. If these children had been removed from the school system and into home education some of these lives may well have been saved.

I would like to end this submission by asking the committee to take a moment to reflect on why the Department of Education has intentionally misled the committee in the briefing, and is attempting to use an emotional event as a reason to justify their proposal? Do they perhaps know that these changes are not in the best interest of our homeschooling children, because if they were, surely they could be upfront and honest?

Kind regards

Dr Nicole Sabapathy

Nb. I will attach the Department of Education, Home Education Unit Parent with Child/ren Registered for Home Education Insight Report, 2022 and the Academic Outcomes of Home Schooling Review of Research and Analysis of Statewide Tests (2014) report conducted by the Board of Studies Teaching and Educational Standards NSW, to this submission.



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

HOME EDUCATION UNIT

PARENT WITH CHILD/REN REGISTERED FOR HOME EDUCATION
RESEARCH INSIGHT REPORT | NOVEMBER 2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Most families that chose to respond to the survey invitation are currently registered (98%) and many have one or two school-aged kids. The majority of families choose to home educate all of their school-aged children, with the remainder opting for a mixed approach between home education and traditional school.

When it comes to understanding why families choose to home educate, almost all believe home education provides a better learning environment for their child/ren.

For many, this is about being able to provide more personal, individual learning at their child's pace. Other factors, such as greater flexibility, more or better learning opportunities, their children coping better, or being able to provide better quality education experiences, also feature highly as reasons to home educate.

Looking beyond this overarching belief that the home learning environment is better, **the top reasons to home educate can often depend on the child or the beliefs held by the family.**

The initial education preference of the parent or guardian is a key differentiating factor on why they choose to home educate. These preferences are likely influenced by their educational philosophy and potentially dictate whether their child/ren will attend a traditional school or not (as well as how many of their other children are home educated).

While there is overlap, there are two overarching segments that are evident:

- **Child-led reasons beyond their control:**
Those choosing to home educate due to a child's disability or health issue, or because of concern about negative influences on their child
- **Family-led reasons within their control:**
Those who choose to home educate due to education philosophy or faith.

Overall, 2 in 3 families indicate their child has a health issue or disability. This high incidence, along with feedback from families, suggests this is an important consideration when opting to home educate. Many of those in this situation were not initially open to home education, but feel it something that became necessary for their child/ren. Here, families typically believe their child copes better in the home environment and their learning style is better suited to instruction at home.

Families supporting a child with a health issue or disability are more likely to adopt a mixed approach between home education and traditional school in order to use what suits each child best.

Where children do not have a health issue or disability, families are more motivated by the flexibility of home education.

Interestingly, those choosing to home educate due to education philosophy or faith typically do not consider this to be their main reason. Instead, it comes back to the broader benefit of the learning environment.

Stakeholder observations around the different types of home education parents reflect similar trends as noted by families.

Stakeholders are seeing increases in parents who weren't aware of home education, or had limited knowledge, but have since discovered it.

Word of mouth from other home educators, home education organisations / support groups and **social media** (especially among those supporting a child with a health issue or disability) are the most common information sources.

Going forward, many families plan to continue with home education and then continue onto tertiary education.

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The Research

This report is underpinned by research involving **565 parents or guardians registered (or previously registered) for home education** in Queensland. Further feedback is included from stakeholder groups.

OBJECTIVE:

The overarching objective is to help understand future demand for home education registration and the associated resourcing of home education registration services provided by the Department of Education.

METHOD:

An email invitation was sent by the Department of Education to all parents currently registered (6,016 at time of send) with the Home Education Unit (HEU). A letter containing the survey link was also posted to those without an email address (59 at time of post). Families were invited to participate between 6 and 19 October 2022.

In-depth interviews with the following four stakeholder groups were conducted by phone or Microsoft Teams:

- Wirraglen
- Home Education Association (QLD)
- Home Educational Association (National)
- Australian Christian Home Schooling (ACHS).

REPORT INTERPRETATION:

Results are shown at an overall level with statistically significant differences between groups shown where applicable. Significant differences between groups are indicated by the following:

GREEN figures are significantly greater than **RED** figures

GREEN **ORANGE** and **RED** figures are significantly different from each other

Qualitative results from stakeholder interviews have been summarised into key themes and supported by verbatims attributed to the different stakeholder organisations. Due to the nature of qualitative research, no quantification of results is undertaken however the order of themes is designed to reflect the extent of mention for each theme.



PROFILE OF FAMILIES HOME EDUCATING

Families opting to home educate typically choose this approach for all school-aged children – with some clear exceptions

Parents and guardians who choose to home educate typically have one to two school-aged children. The majority (75%) choose to home educate all children with the remainder opting for mix approaches between home education and traditional schooling.

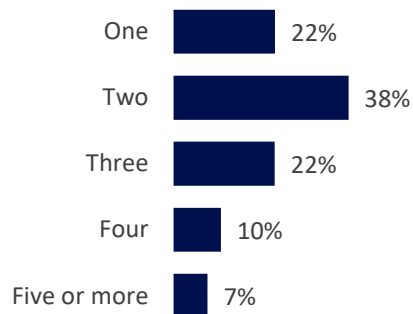
Two-thirds (61%) are home educating a child with a disability or health issue. This high incidence, along with feedback from families, suggests this is an important consideration when opting to home educate. Many of those in this situation were not initially open to home education, but feel it something that became necessary for their child/ren.



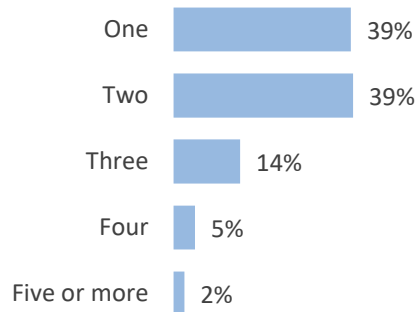
Number of Children

Most families who home educate have between one and three children, with one or two of school-age. Two in five children who are home educated are between five and eleven years old.

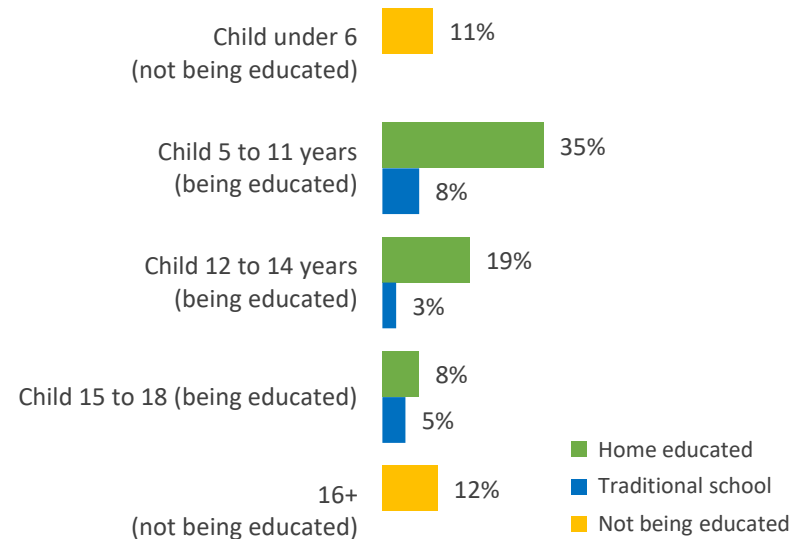
NUMBER OF CHILDREN



NUMBER OF SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN



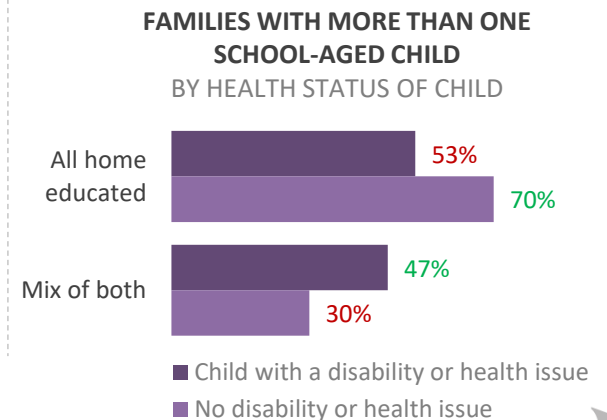
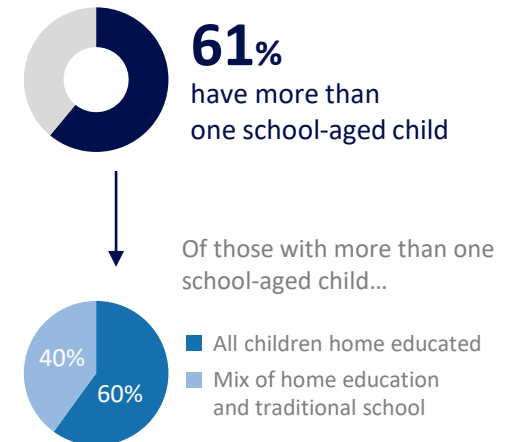
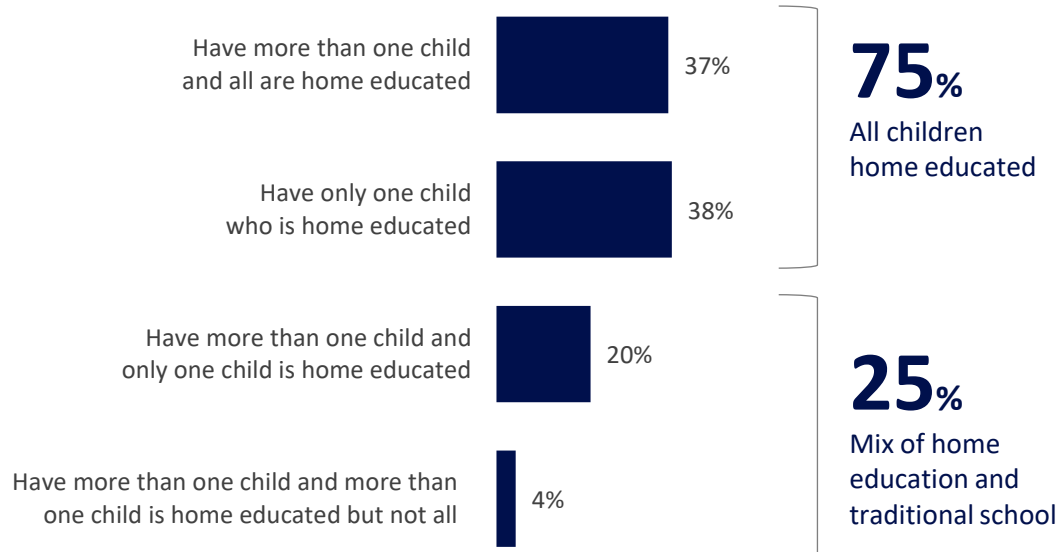
AGE OF CHILDREN



Number of Children Home Educated

Of those families with more than one school-aged child, two in five opt for a mix approach between home education and traditional schooling. Families with multiple school-aged children, who are supporting a child with a health issue or disability are more likely to adopt a mixed approach between home education and traditional school in order to use what suits each child best.

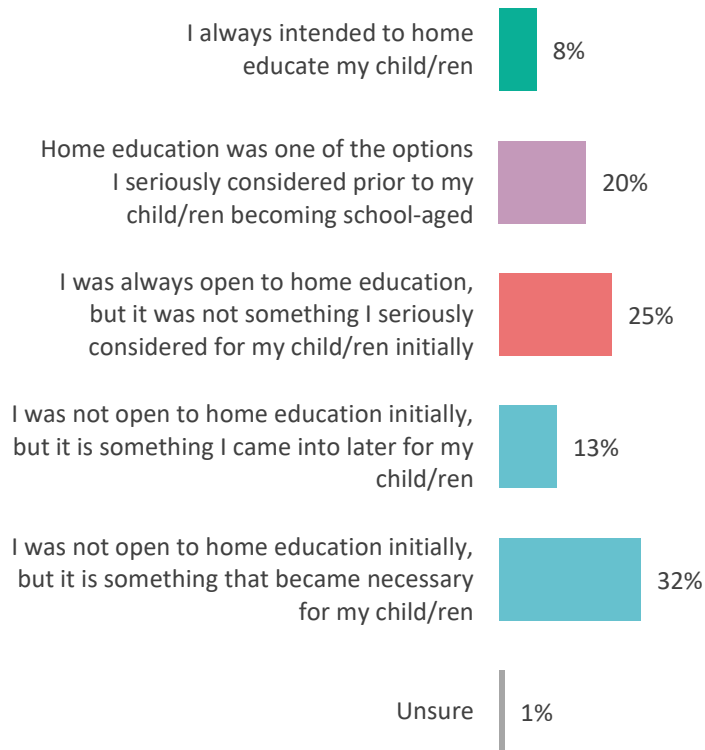
NUMBER OF CHILDREN BEING HOME EDUCATED



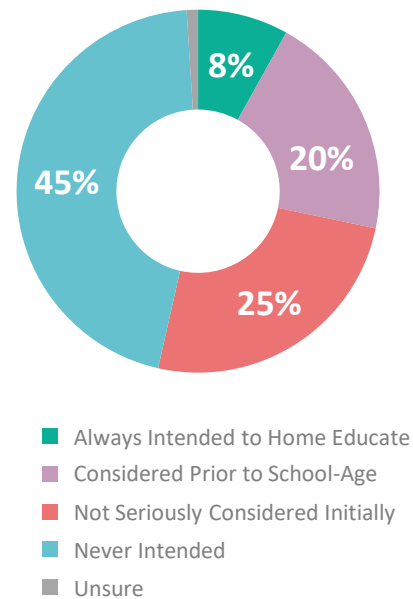
Stance Towards Home Education

Just under half of families opting to home educate were not open to this approach initially – many feel it is something that became necessary for their child/ren. A further 45% were open to the idea of home education prior to their children becoming school-age. Only 1 in 10 always intended to home educate their children.

PREFERENCE TOWARDS HOME EDUCATION



SEGMENTS IDENTIFIED

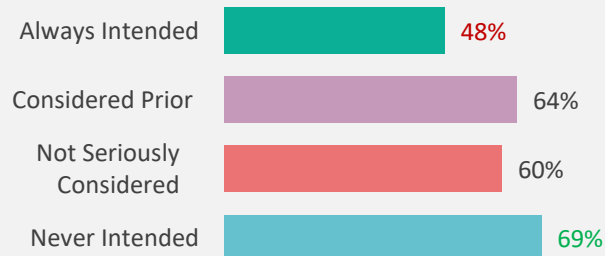


Children with a Disability or Health Issue

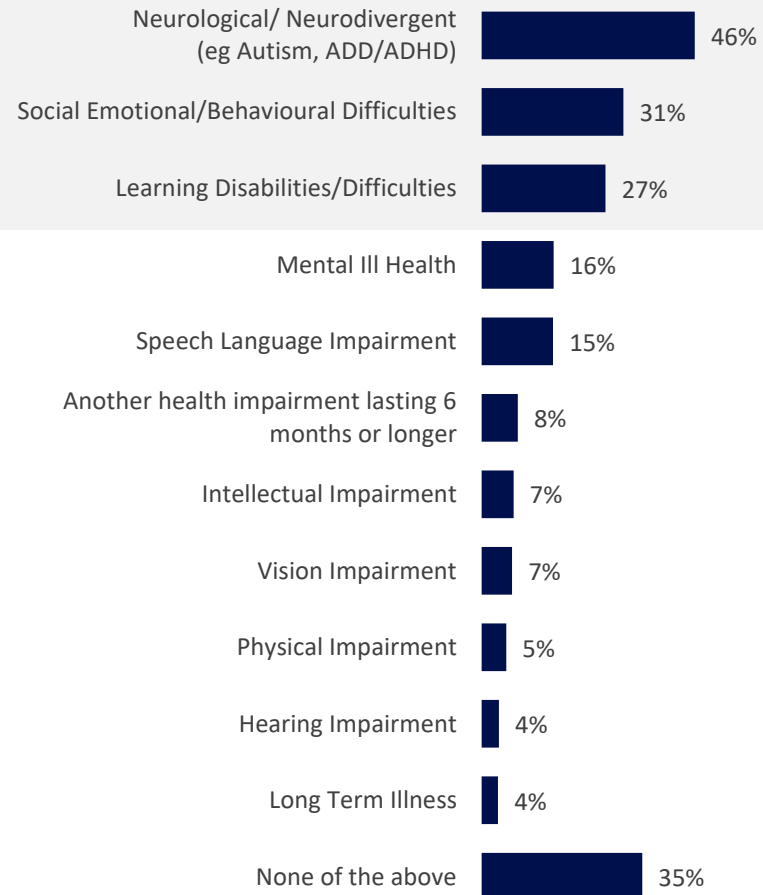
Two-thirds are home educating a child with a disability or health issue. This disability or health issue has either been diagnosed by a professional or is suspected by the parents. The most common disability or health issue includes neurodevelopmental disorders, social emotional or behavioural difficulties, and learning difficulties.



CHILDREN WITH A DISABILITY OR HEALTH ISSUE BY SEGMENTS



CHILDREN WITH A DISABILITY OR HEALTH ISSUE



Base: All respondents (n=565, Always Intended n=48, Considered Prior n=111, Not Seriously Considered n=144, Never Intended n=255)

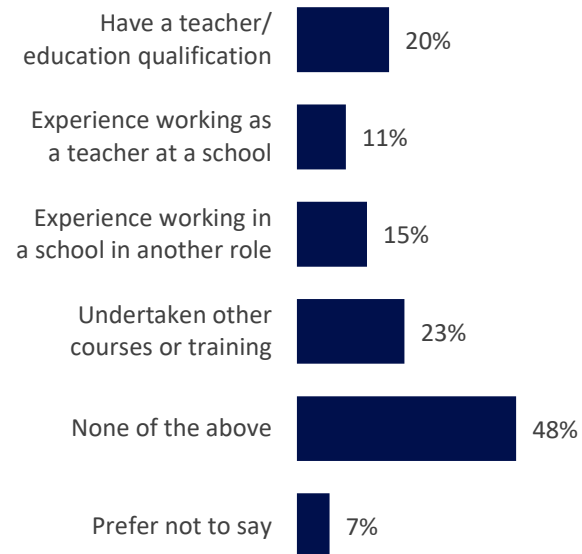
DR5. Has a health or education professional told you, or you suspect, that the child you home educate / most recently home educated / considering home educating has any of the following conditions?



Qualifications to Assist Education

Just under half of parents and guardians who are home educating have relevant training or experience to assist in home education. One in five have teacher education qualifications.

EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS



REASONS FOR HOME EDUCATION

An overarching belief shared by most home educators is the idea that home education provides a better learning environment for their child/ren

When it comes to the main reason to home educate, this can however depend on the child or the beliefs held by the family. While there is overlap, there are two overarching segments that are evident:

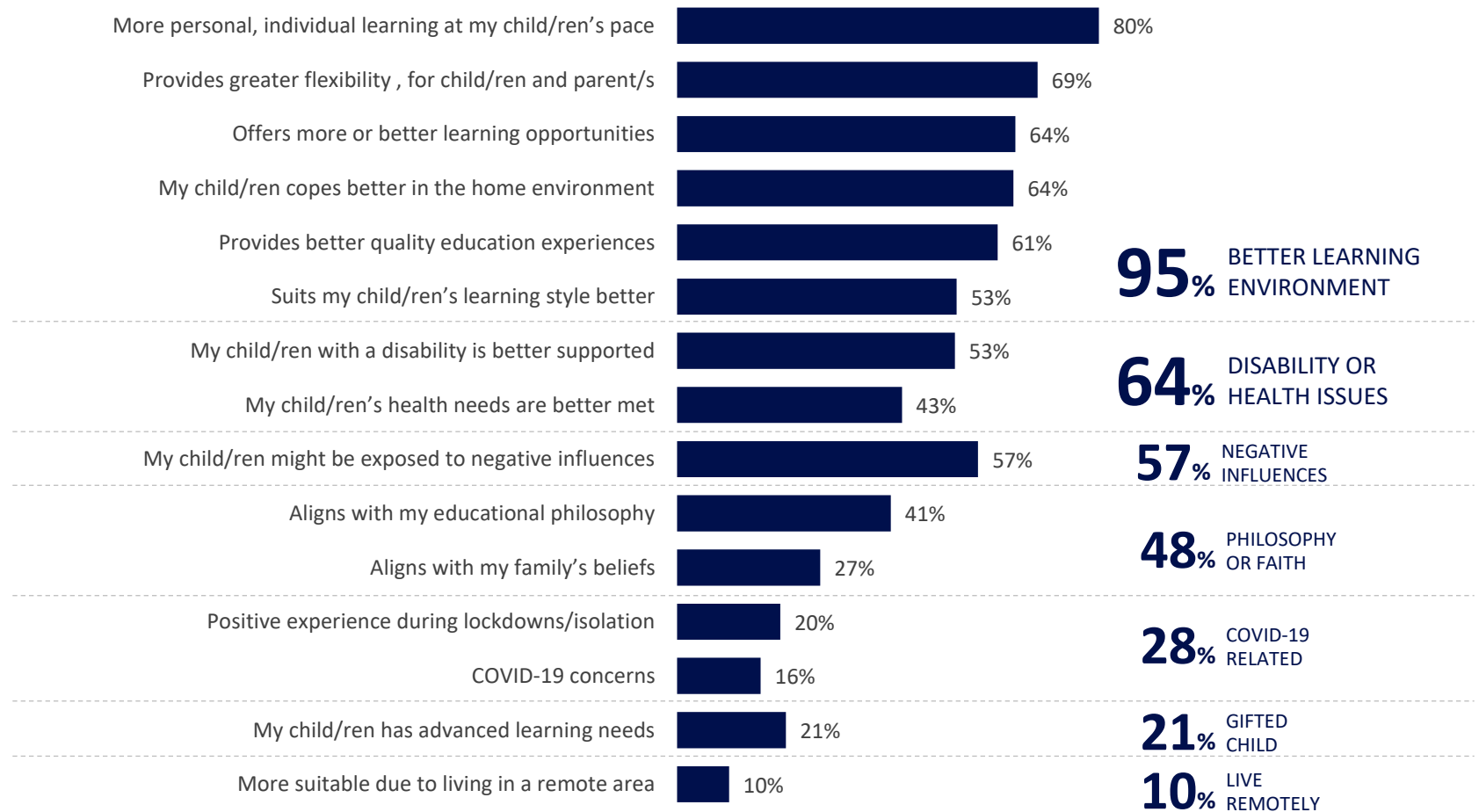
- **Child-led reasons beyond their control:** Those choosing to home educate due to a disability or health issue, or because of concern about negative influences on their child. These child-led reasons tend to outweigh other perceived benefits (such as the learning environment)
- **Family-led reasons within their control:** Those who choose to home educate due to education philosophy or faith. In this case, where disability or a health issue isn't a concern, families predominantly home educate due to the learning environment; but it is clear education philosophy or faith also plays a role.

Other factors, such as COVID-19, gifted children and regional considerations also influence this decision to a lesser extent.



Reasons for Home Educating

Overall, a common reason for home educating includes the child being able to learn at their own pace with a flexible curriculum that meets their needs. Many children who are home educated have a disability or health issue, and it is believed they cope better in the home environment. It is also felt that home education prevents children from being exposed to negative influences, such as bullying.

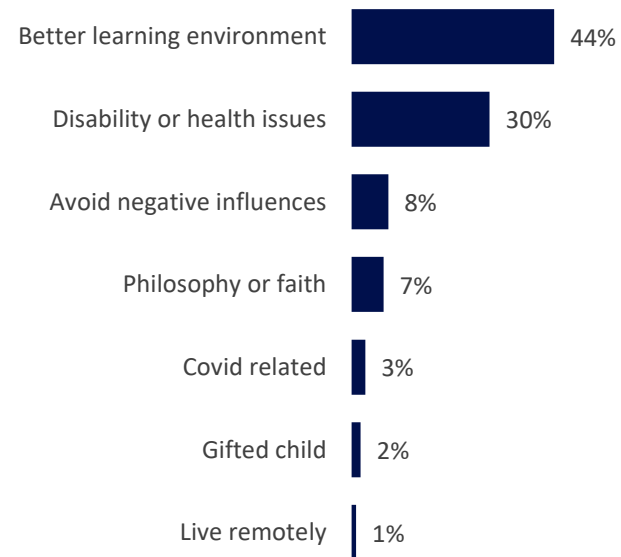


Main Reason for Home Education

After prompting, families typically consider the learning environment or the health of their child as the two main reasons for choosing home education.

Interestingly, those motivated by philosophy or faith reasons tend to not choose this as their main reason for home education. Instead, the belief that home education is a better learning environment holds greater influence overall.

MAIN REASON FOR CHOOSING HOME EDUCATION

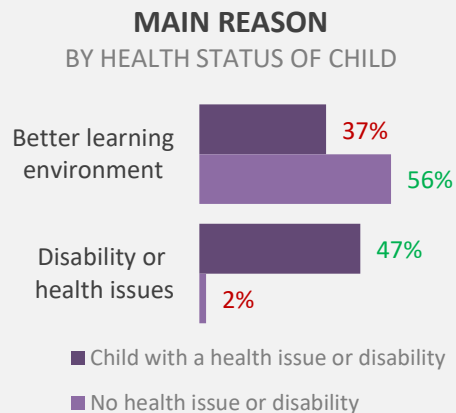


The Impact of Child's Health

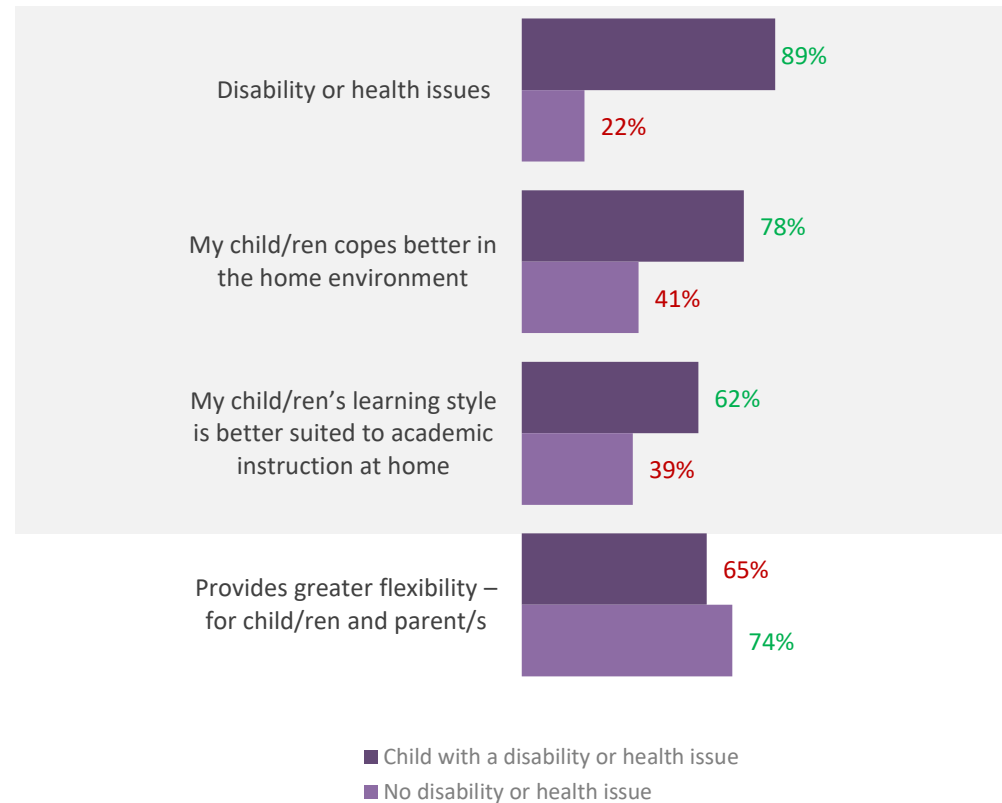
Regardless of preferences or rationale, almost all families believe home education provides a better learning environment for their child/ren.

This however has a different meaning to different families depending on whether their child has a disability or health issue. These families typically believe their child copes better in the home environment or their learning style is better suited to instruction at home.

Where children do not have a disability or health issue, families are more motivated by the flexibility of home education. Feedback suggests home education allows the flexibility to align education with their beliefs.



REASONS FOR CHOOSING HOME EDUCATION BY HEALTH STATUS OF CHILD



Base: All respondents (n=565, Child with a disability or health issue n=346, No disability or health issue n=196)

DR2A. Which of the following best reflects your reasoning for choosing home education registration?

DR2B. Which of these would you say is the main reason for choosing home education registration?

DEEP DIVE INTO REASONS

Child's Health Needs

Among those with a child with a disability or health issue, there are four key themes mentioned as reasons for home education:

- The need to **support the needs** of their child
- Finding a solution that aligns with their **child's abilities**
- Highlighting the **struggles** their child may have (either with their condition or in terms of school work)
- Ensuring a **suitable environment** for their child (this can include managing sensory issues, but also finding an environment that works well for their child – especially in terms of mental health).

While the children referred to in this research cover a wide variety of health issues, anxiety of the child in particular is called out by parents as something they needed to consider when it comes to their child's education (and the environment where it is conducted).

"I have found homeschooling has decreased their anxiety, allowed them to regain their enjoyment of learning." NEVER INTENDED

"He desperately needed the one-on-one support to aid his learning... So we decided to buy a curriculum and teach him at home. He's flourished since then." NEVER INTENDED

"My daughter was struggling with high levels of anxiety while at school which was limiting her classroom participation and affecting her physically causing her to lose confidence and further withdraw." NEVER INTENDED

"My child has autism with a demand avoidant profile and can not be catered for in mainstream or special education units according to all the schools we have spoken to." NEVER INTENDED

"For my child who is currently homeschooling, the reason was that she was struggling to keep up academically in the classroom, and was having a lot of social issues, school avoidance, extreme anxiety and meltdowns etc... Choosing to homeschool works well for us because my daughter requires one on one support for emotional regulation and learning." NEVER INTENDED



Education Environment Reasons

Among those mainly home educating due to the better learning environment, there are four key themes mentioned:

- The need to **support the needs** of their child
- Providing education that can be **tailored** and **pursue certain interests**
- **Suiting their family** and allowing time to be spent together
- Ensuring a **nurturing environment** for their child (this can include avoiding negative influences – real or perceived).

"I felt that home education would allow her to pursue her studies at a deeper level suited to her capabilities. She was also missing home life getting to know her new baby sibling." CONSIDERED PRIOR TO SCHOOL-AGE

"Mainstream school not able to provide the challenges my gifted child required to stay focused and engaged." NEVER INTENDED

"I wanted to have more time and memories with my children. I wanted to know my children were not subject to bullying, abuse, or mental health issues." CONSIDERED PRIOR TO SCHOOL-AGE

"To give him opportunities to pursue his interests and future career at a younger age." NEVER INTENDED

"So that he can learn at his own pace, and I can tailor a educational program that is suited to his personal interests."

NOT SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED INITIALLY

"I value time with my child. I believe children thrive when they are given the time and space to learn at their own pace and in the security of their own family units." ALWAYS INTENDED

"They have achieved excellent education at home because I can taper it to meet their individual needs and mode of learning. It unites us as a family unit, there is no peer pressure, or disobedience or lack of respect..." NOT SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED INITIALLY



Avoidance Reasons

Among those mainly home educating to avoid negative influences, many express **concerns around bullying**, either perceived or from experience.

In this situation, it is often about placing the child in the safer home environment, either long-term or as a short-term solution while different schools are explored.

"My son is a beautiful soul and very smart... He is also a shy and anxious boy and I simply didn't want him around mean kids."

CONSIDERED PRIOR TO SCHOOL-AGE

"My son was expelled from high school for vaping/vape related reasons. There were no positions available to him for distance education as they were at capacity, so I decided to home school him for the last 1/2 of year 9. I did not want to send him to another high school as he would likely fall into similar friendship groups & peer pressure situations & wind up in the same trouble." NEVER INTENDED

"Moving from a much loved Sunshine Coast state school to a small rural school was a culture shock. Kids were rougher and language was far worse... He became the target of much of the bad behaviour... and thus my child found himself surrounded with rough, uncaring children. My child needed guidance as to how to avoid these situations. My child also came to need a different circle of peers to interact with... My son is now building strong relationships within the community of home educators."

NOT SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED INITIALLY



Belief Reasons

Among those mainly home educating due to their educational philosophy or beliefs, there are three key themes mentioned:

- The desire to **support the needs** of their child, particularly in terms of following the lead of their child
- Providing education that **aligns with their values** on how a child should learn, which tends to vary for each family:
 - Those looking for less structure
 - Those looking for a holistic approach to learning
 - Those following their faith
- Allowing **greater connection** with the family unit.

“To provide a stable education environment. To educate within a framework of my values...To teach my children to think rather than accept indoctrination. To enable them to pursue their interests more deeply. To relieve them of the burden of constant peer pressure.”

NOT SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED INITIALLY

“I felt like God was asking me to home educate [CHILD] from beginning to end. His older siblings started at a state school but when [CHILD] was kindergarten age I felt to start home education for all of them for one year, as a trial. We all enjoyed the experience so much that we have continued.”

NOT SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED INITIALLY

“Maintain family closeness and connection... I want my children to be well rounded (physical, emotional, spiritual and cognitive)...”

NOT SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED INITIALLY

“I think that home ed enables the child to follow their own interests. We do not follow structured curriculums, but utilise a natural child led learning style of home schooling, unschooling. I do not like the formal structure of schools... I think structured sitting time for children inhibits their natural enthusiasm and curiosity. I think testing and assessments do not suit some children. I like the flexibility of not being tied to Monday to Friday learning, bedtimes, school lunches etc. We can be more fluid with our daily life. I love the flow of life.”

NOT SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED INITIALLY



COVID-19 as an Initial Catalyst

Stakeholder feedback suggests COVID-19 may have initially been the catalyst for home education; and as a result, provided greater awareness and exposure to families of the possibilities of this education approach.

Feedback from families mentioning COVID-19 as one of their reasons supports this view with some suggesting COVID-19 was a catalyst that encouraged the shift to home education.

“COVID was my initial prompt however after seeing my child empty books from school and the lack of work he did say mainstream school I decided to look into homeschooling. My child has a drive to learn and was coming home from mainstream school and researching anything he would find of interest.” NOT SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED INITIALLY

“During COVID after not being school for 1st half of year children were working well at home.” NOT SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED INITIALLY

“Because they did so well at home during COVID and it was very obviously good for them and their self esteem.”
NOT SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED INITIALLY

“We had a taste of it over COVID lockdown and loved it. We love the freedom and flexibility of it and spending more time together as a family.” CONSIDERED PRIOR TO SCHOOL-AGE



COVID-19 as the Main Reason

Around 3 in 10 mention the impact of Covid-19 as one of their reasons for pursuing home education. However, **very few feel this is their main reason for home education.**

Among those mainly home educating due to COVID-19 mention:

- Issues around anxiety about the virus – either within the family or from the child
- Need to protect immuno-comprised family members
- Anti-Government sentiment towards management of COVID-19, vaccination mandates and lockdowns.

“Covid and forced vaccination was the tipping point – children were getting pressured significantly by peers to get vaccinated, led to bullying.” NOT SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED INITIALLY

“Because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic & the related fact that the Queensland Education Department hasn't taken any measures to reduce transmission e.g. preventative RATs, HEPA filters, CO2 monitors, etc.” NOT SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED INITIALLY

“We decided to home educate our 6 year old (prep) level son this and next year (and possibly beyond) to keep us safe as a family during the Covid 19 Pandemic. This is the sole reason. We have vulnerable family members and deemed it too high risk to send our son to a school and into a room full of unmasked children where the vaccination take up in the 5+ age group is very low and many of the preppies in his class would be too young to be able to get vaccinated. Our son participated in our local state schools' 'pre prep' program last year when Covid numbers were low. He thrived and we were excited about sending him to mainstream school this year then whammo, the borders opened, Covid was everywhere and our lives – including education plans changed overnight.” NEVER INTENDED



REASONS BY SEGMENT

The initial education preference of the parent or guardian is a key differentiating factor on why they choose to home educate

These preferences are likely influenced by their educational philosophy and potentially dictate whether their child/ren will attend a traditional school or not (as well as how many of their children are home educated).



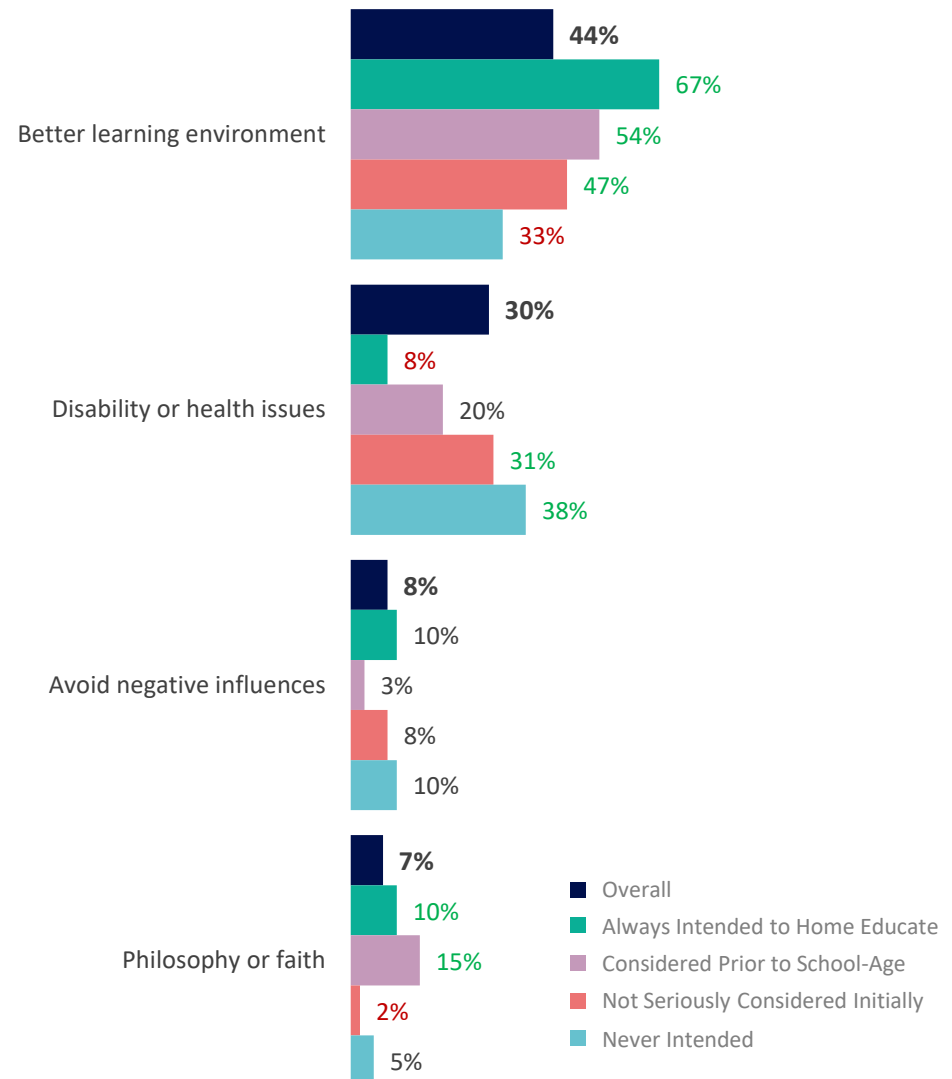
Understanding Reasons by Education Stance

The initial education preference of the parent or guardian is a key differentiating factor on why they choose to home educate.

Those who *Always Intended* or were at least open to the idea of home education are more likely to choose to do so to seek a better learning environment. These segments are also more likely to be influenced by education philosophy or faith.

Those who *Never Intended* or did *Not Seriously Consider Initially* are swayed by disability or health issues of their child.

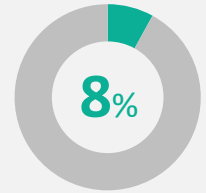
MAIN REASON FOR CHOOSING HOME EDUCATION
BY SEGMENTS



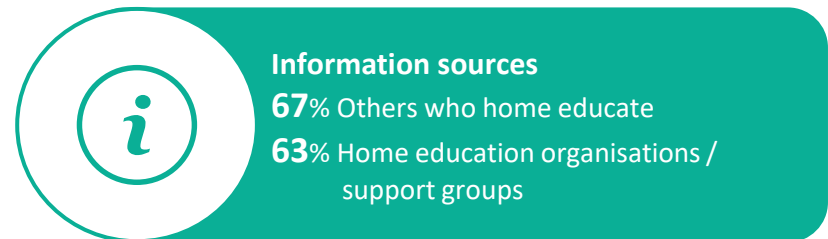
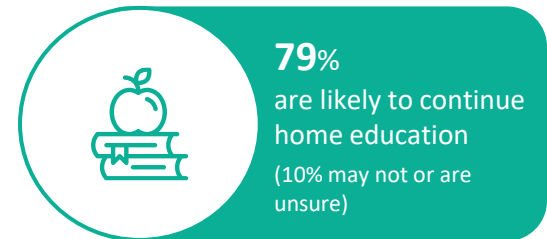
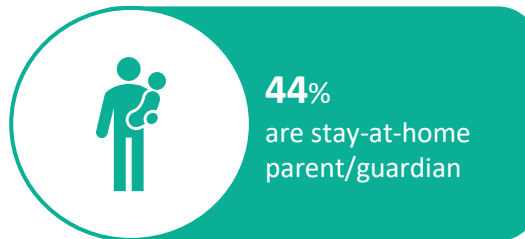
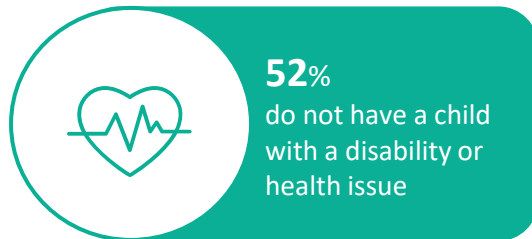
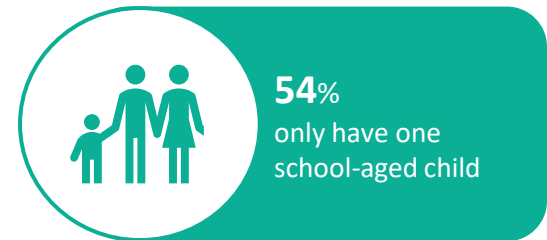
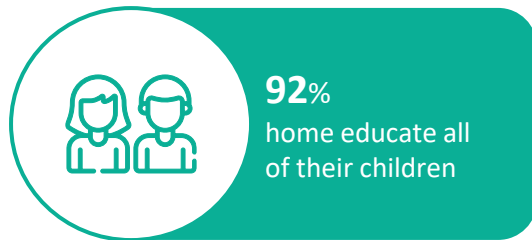
Base: All respondents (n=565, Always Intended n=48, Considered Prior n=111, Not Seriously Considered n=144, Never Intended n=255)

DR2B. Which of these would you say is the main reason for choosing home education registration?

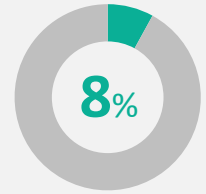
Always Intended to Home Educate (1)



Families in this segment are avid home educators. Most of their children receive their education at home. Very few have attended a traditional school and are not likely to in the future. This segment is not new to home education. Half of the families in this segment have one school-aged child. This makes it easier to provide individualised education that caters to the needs and interests of that child. Children in this segment are the least likely to have a disability or health issues compared to the other segments.



Always Intended to Home Educate (2)



Most of the reasons to home educate for this segment are around an attraction to home education. The educational philosophy of this segment do not align with traditional schooling and many feel they can better educate their children and better prepare them for the future. Home education also prevents their child/ren from being exposed to negative influences.



MORE PERSONAL & FLEXIBLE LEARNING

- 94% Allows for more personal learning
- 88% Provides greater flexibility
- 73% Offers learning opportunities
- 73% Provides better quality education



BETTER LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- 69% Copes better in the home environment
- 63% Learning style is better suited to academic instruction at home



SUITS EDUCATION PHILOSOPHY & BELIEFS

- 71% Aligns with my educational philosophy
- 50% Aligns with my family's beliefs



PREVENTION OF EXPOSURE TO NEGATIVE INFLUENCES

- 69% Child/ren might be exposed to negative influences

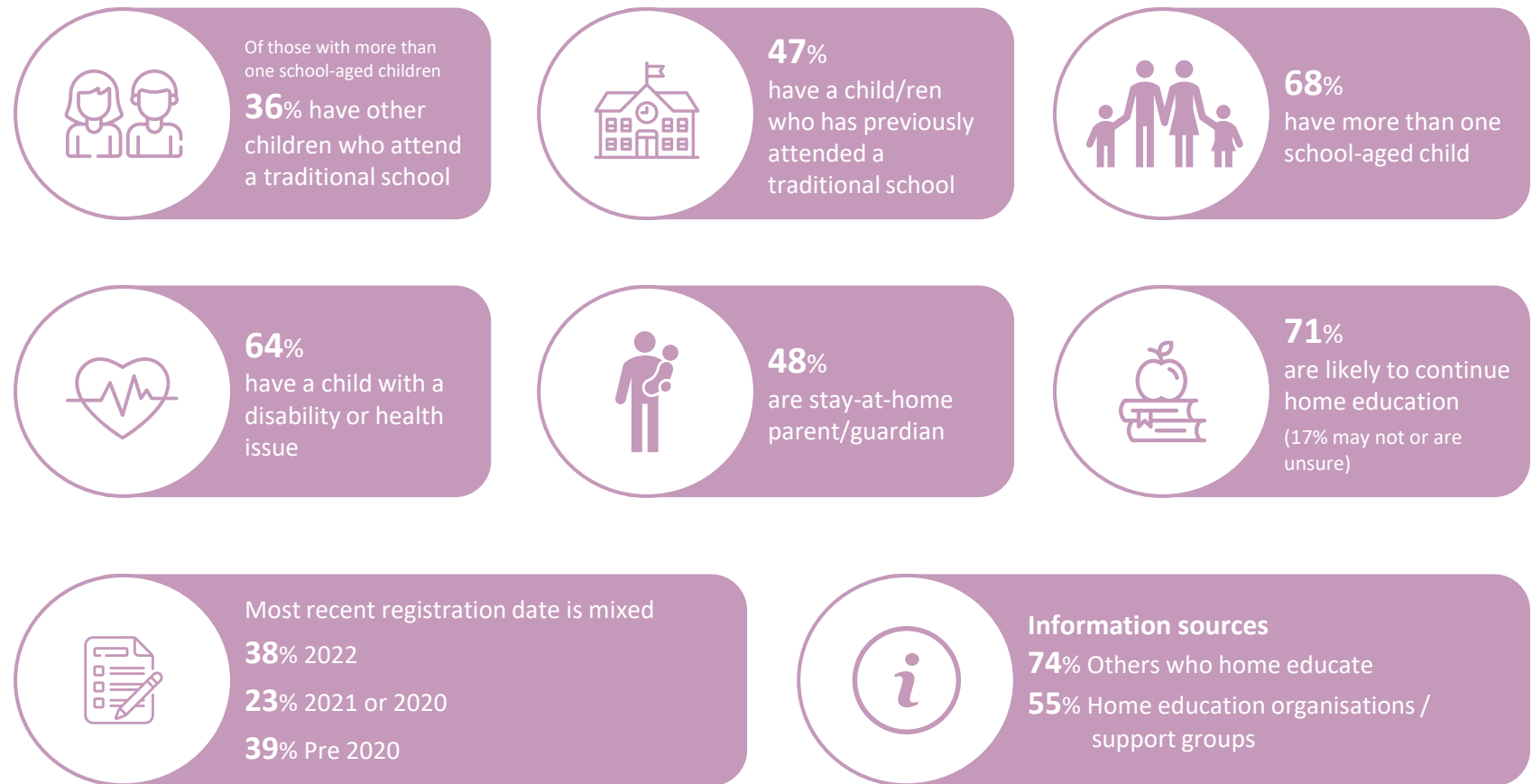
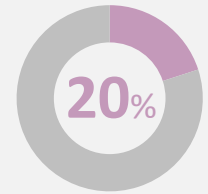
"I chose to home educate to bring the opportunity for my child to express and learn critical thinking. To learn a diverse range of subjects and to be able to delve deeply into subjects that are of great interest and topical. For my child to be able to be creative and a free thinker. To be able to pursue interests with passion and freedom without restrictions and constraints."

"As parents we can better meet the individual learning needs of our child. We have an unschooling philosophy, doing life is learning. We facilitate our child's self-directed learning. Children have a natural desire to learn, which, if nurtured, allows them to flourish."

"One on one attention and tailored learning style. Flexibility and availability to live and learn whilst living. Being exposed to and socialising with people of all ages rather than the artificial group of children all the one age. Being involved and aware of my children's learning."

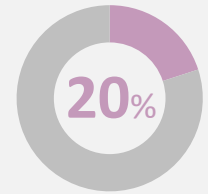
Considered Prior to School-Age ⁽¹⁾

Families in this segment are less avid about home education than the *Always Intended* group. However, they are not new to the idea and see the merits in it. Families in this segment are likely to have two or more school-aged children, some of whom have previously attended a traditional school and some who still do. The children who are home educated are likely to continue to receive their education at home. Two-thirds of these families are home educating a child with a disability or health issue.



Considered Prior to School-Age (2)

The reasons for this segment to home educate include a variety of factors depending on if the child initially went to a traditional school. For those who have not previously sent their child/ren to school, home education is about designing a tailored learning experience that caters to their child's needs and interests. For those who previously sent their child/ren to school, home education is a reaction to an issue, such as their child's inability to keep up or due to bullying.



MORE PERSONAL & FLEXIBLE LEARNING

- 86% Allows for more personal learning
- 78% Provides greater flexibility
- 74% Offers learning opportunities
- 73% Provides better quality education



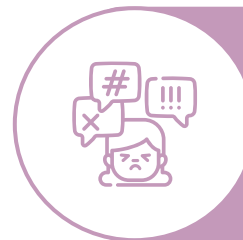
BETTER LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- 63% Copes better in the home environment
- 60% Learning style is better suited to academic instruction at home



CHILD WITH DISABILITY OR HEALTH ISSUES

- 52% Child/ren has a disability, development delay, social emotional/behavioural difficulty, mental health condition, or specific learning needs



MIX OF PREVENTION AND REACTION TO NEGATIVE INFLUENCES

- 57% Child/ren might be/were exposed to negative influences

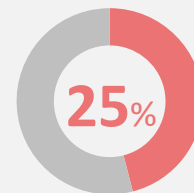
"To encourage a love of learning and provide each child with learning opportunities specific to their gifts and abilities. To create flexibility in our family life schedule. To enjoy learning together as a family. To enable one on one learning opportunities. To facilitate real life learning opportunities. To foster the ability to make a valuable contribution to society"

"Physically bullied at school, found being in a big school (number wise) overwhelming."

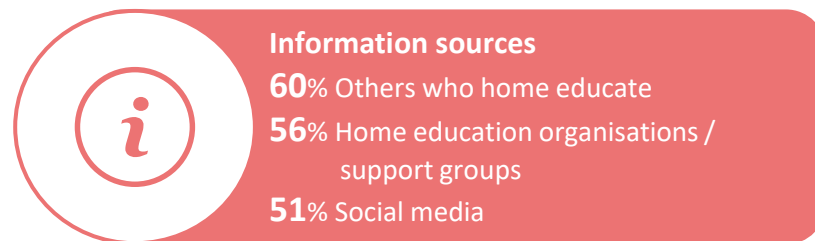
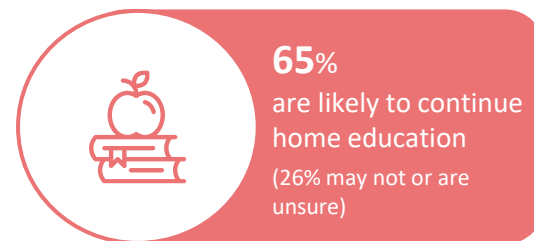
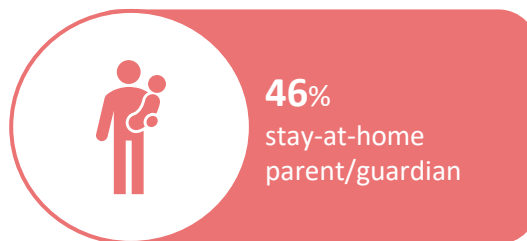
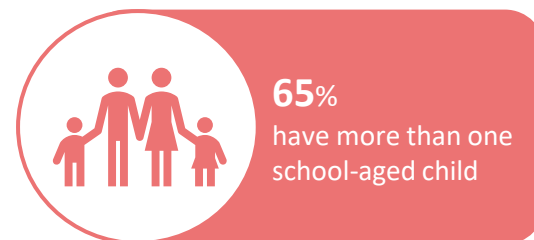
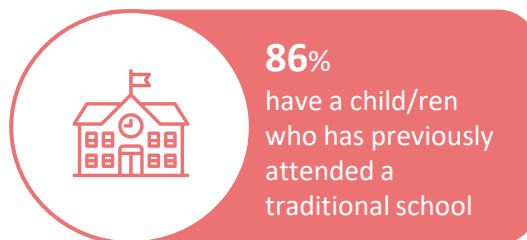
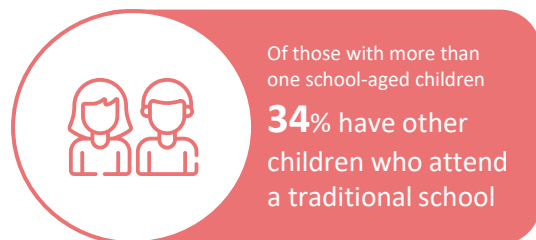
"We wanted to provide a more hands on and play based learning with much more emphasis on physical education. Being active, making healthy food choices, learning resilience and positive self-talk. The kids had lost their love of learning and needed to feel some control and choice over what and how they learnt."

"Only my eldest child fitted mainstream schooling. The youngest two struggled and were getting further and further behind."

Not Seriously Considered Initially (1)

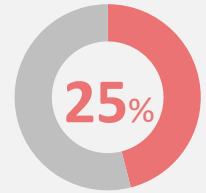


Most children in this segment have previously attended a traditional school, and home education is a reaction to an issue or situation that occurred during that time. As a result, families in the segment may have children being both home educated and attending traditional school (depending on how many children the issue applies to). Two-thirds of this segment are home educating a child with a disability or health issue. Home education may not be the permanent solution for some in this segment. Factors such as the need for social interaction, the parent's employment situation and the possibility of changing schools will play a role in the outcome.



Not Seriously Considered Initially (2)

Reasons for this segment to home educate include avoidance factors where home education is a reaction to an issue from school, such as the child falling behind or bullying. Home education provides these child/ren with a more flexible and personal learning experience. As many children in this segment have a disability, one-on-one learning suits them better. Home education also protects these children from bullying they may have suffered at school.



MORE PERSONAL & FLEXIBLE LEARNING

86% Allows for more personal learning

74% Provides greater flexibility



BETTER LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

64% Copes better in the home environment



CHILD WITH DISABILITY OR HEALTH ISSUES

49% Child/ren has a disability

41% Child/ren has health needs



REACTION TO NEGATIVE INFLUENCES

65% Child/ren might be/were exposed to negative influences

"My child thrives in a home learning environment. One-on-one teaching suits my child best as I can focus on the subjects that needs attention and we can also focus on strengths."

"My oldest also suffered from anxiety and we decided this would be the best option for her. My son also struggled because he is very interest driven and schools can't provide that for him."

"First child was not learning at age-appropriate level was well behind and was struggling, he needed one-on-one help with his education tailored to his needs and interests."

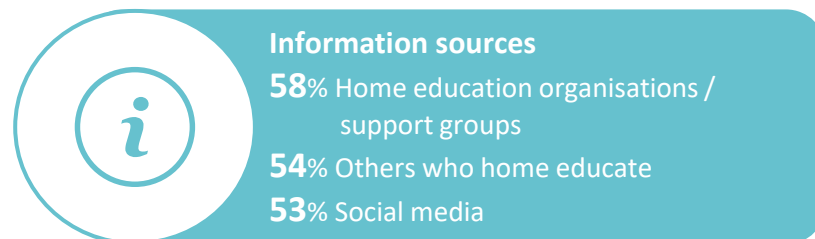
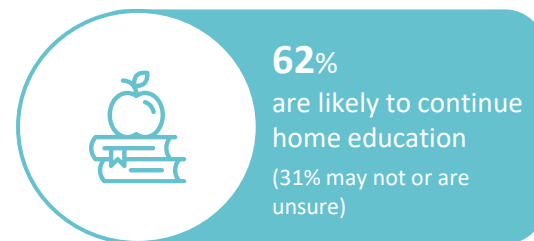
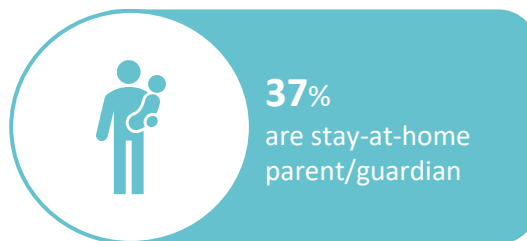
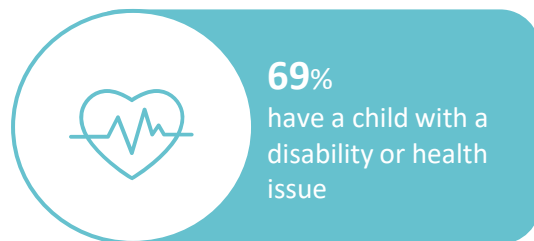
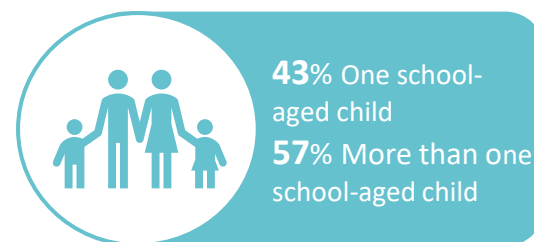
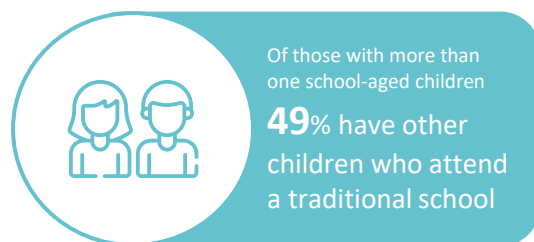
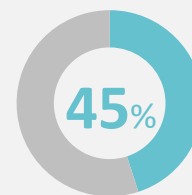
"Because they did so well at home during COVID and it was very obviously good for them and their self-esteem."

"We chose home education to get away from bullying, provide a safe environment to learn and not be constantly worried about peers."



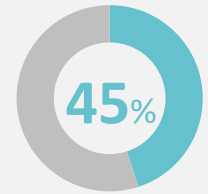
Never Intended (1)

Most children in this segment have previously attended a traditional school, and home education is a reaction to an issue or situation that occurred during that time. As a result, families in the segment may have children being both home educated and attending traditional school (depending on how many children the issue applies to). Two-thirds of this segment are home educating a child with a disability or health issue. Home education may not be the permanent solution for some in this segment. Factors such as the need for social interaction, the parent's employment situation and the possibility of changing schools will play a role in the outcome.



Never Intended (2)

Most of the reasons for this segment are related to supporting the health and disability needs of their child. It can also include a reaction to an issue or situation at school. This may include the child being unable to keep up, seeking a more suitable learning environment, or the child experiencing bullying. As many of the children in this segment have a disability, home education provides them with one-on-one learning at their own pace.



MORE PERSONAL, INDIVIDUAL LEARNING

72% Allows for more personal, individual learning at my child/ren's pace



BETTER LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

65% Copes better in the home environment



CHILD WITH DISABILITY OR HEALTH ISSUES

56% Child/ren has a disability
49% Child/ren has health needs



REACTION TO NEGATIVE INFLUENCES

52% Child/ren might be/were exposed to negative influences

"I have found homeschooling has decreased their anxiety, allowed them to regain their enjoyment of learning."

"He desperately needed the one-on-one support to aid his learning... So we decided to buy a curriculum and teach him at home. He's flourished since then."

"My daughter was struggling with high levels of anxiety while at school which was limiting her classroom participation and affecting her physically causing her to lose confidence and further withdraw."

"My child was being severely bullied at the high school he was attending... I had to pull him out before it destroyed my child completely."

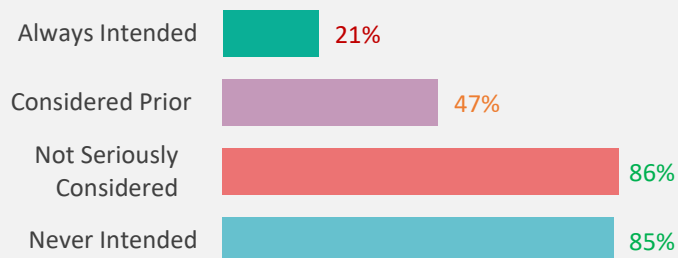
OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Previous Education

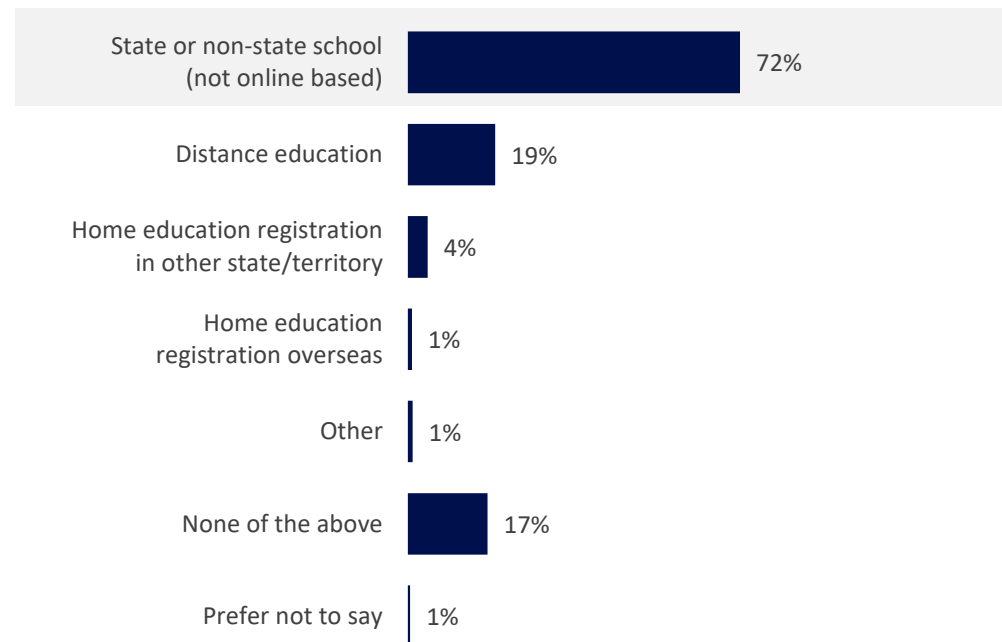
Most children who are home educated have previously attended a traditional school.

Families in this situation are more likely to have registered for home education in the past 3 years.

PREVIOUSLY ATTENDED TRADITIONAL SCHOOL BY SEGMENTS



PREVIOUS EDUCATION BEFORE HOME EDUCATION



Base: Currently registered (n=553, Always Intended n=48, Considered Prior n=109, Not Seriously Considered n=143, Never Intended n=247) S7. Has your child who is currently registered for home education in Queensland previously participated in any of the following education options?

Negative Influences at School

One of the reasons contributing to families choosing home education is around negative influences. For the vast majority, families refer to bullying (either fear of occurring or previous experience).

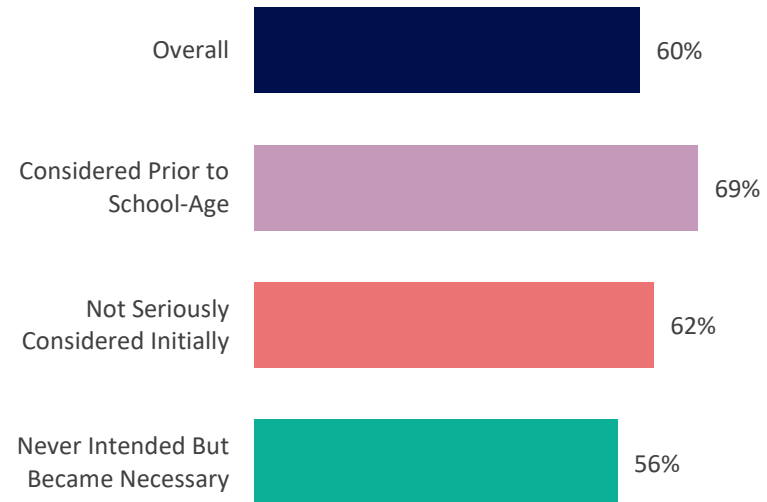
In cases where a child is faced with these negative influences, families feel their child needs greater support and that they are best to remove their child from the situation. For some, this is a short-term solution while they explore options for another school.

“Child had bullying issues at school which led to extreme anxiety.”

“Bullying at school caused extreme social anxiety.”

EXPOSED TO NEGATIVE INFLUENCES

BY PREVIOUSLY ATTENDED SCHOOL



*Always Intended is not shown as base is too small



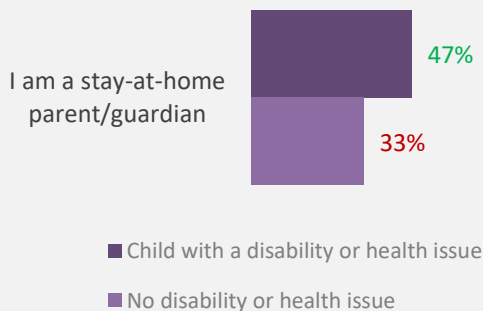
Factors Relating to Parent/Guardian

Many of those who home educate are either a stay-at-home parent/guardian, have a flexible working arrangement or work from home. This allows them the time needed to educate their child/ren.

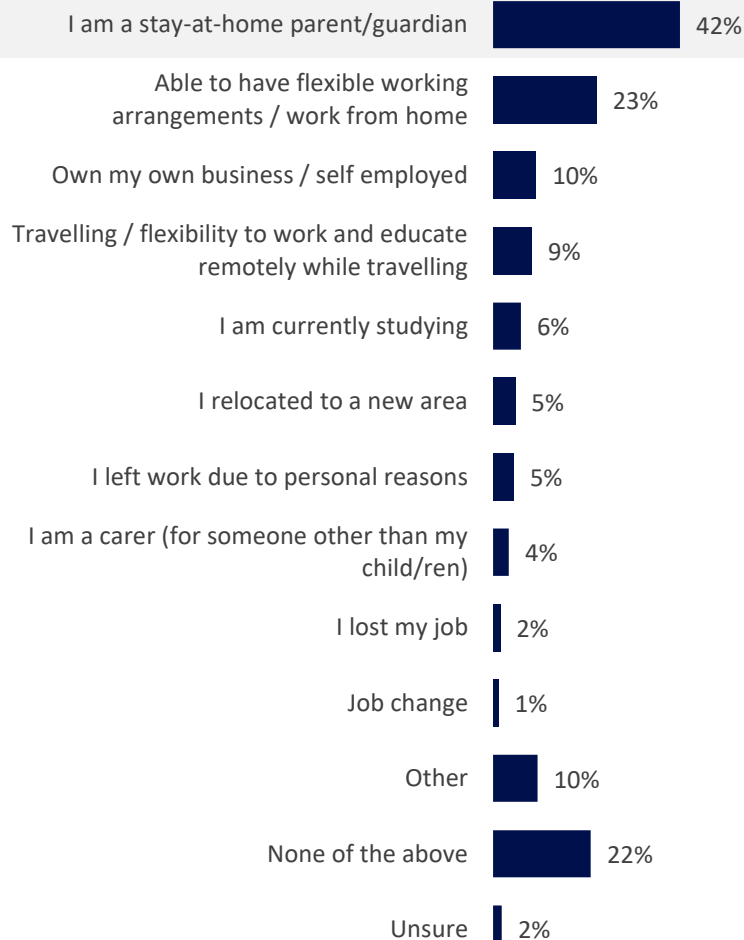
Those who have a child with a disability or health issue are more likely to be a stay-at-home parent/guardian.

There are no significant differences between the segments.

FACTORS IMPACTING DECISION TO HOME EDUCATE BY HEALTH STATUS OF CHILD



OTHER FACTORS IMPACTING DECISION TO HOME EDUCATE



Base: All respondents (n=565, Child with a disability or health issue n=346, No disability or health issue n=196) DR6. Were there any other factors relating to you as the parent/guardian that influences your decision to home educate?

STAKEHOLDER INSIGHTS INTO REASONS

Supporting the Needs of the Child

Stakeholders agree there has been an increase in parents who are leaving the school system as it is not adequately meeting the needs of their child for a variety of reasons, such as:

- Neurodiversity of the child
- Anxiety and mental health factors
- Bullying or other anti-social behaviour.

Stakeholders acknowledge that school is fine for the majority of children but there has been a shift in the willingness of parents to prioritise their child's needs and overall happiness, potentially more so than in the previous decades. This was noted as a general societal shift.

This shift of focus is therefore seen to enable parents to make decisions for their child without the pressure to be 'normal' which was to have their child attend school.

"People who leave are not coming to home education as much as leaving school. An awful lot of them have children with special needs more so than you would find in the general population. These needs are not being met or feel they are not being met. I am not criticising school; school was never designed to cater for 100% of children – no organisation ever could." Wirraglen

"A lot of times it is around disability and mental health and their needs just not being met in the school system. Some are really struggling and many families became aware of the situation during COVID as there was such an emphasis on education and parents became more involved, so even in places without any lockdowns, people started to notice what was going on with their kids and had choices." HEA

"Our research into families who have chosen home schooling shows that there are significant "push factors" in the school environments that motivate parents to remove their children from school. These push factors essentially relate to the needs of the child. They include: (i) concerns over the poor quality of education in schools, (ii) a marked disrespect for parent values in the school environment, (iii) distractions in the classroom due to unacceptable behaviours by some students, (iv) overcrowded classrooms, (v) boredom in classes, (vi) children disengaged from learning, (vii) uncontrolled bullying in schools creating anxiety, stress and school refusal in their children, (viii) anti-social behaviour and (ix) negative peer pressure in schools. On the positive side these parents state that home schooling allows for the individual needs of the child to be addressed. For example, home schooling is flexible enough to meet the needs of academically gifted children and the needs of talented children who participate in elite sports or the performance arts. That flexibility also suits many children who have (i) educational, (ii) psychological, (iii) physical and (iv) health learning challenges, which cannot be met in traditional schooling." ACHS



Impact of COVID-19

The result of COVID-19 was noted as being a catalyst for interest in home education, for a range of reasons including:

- Lockdowns exposing parents to the curriculum (which was often viewed negatively e.g. 'is this what they are learning?') as well as experiencing first-hand the struggles or performance of the child in their learning.
- Lockdowns raising awareness generally of home education as an option
- Protecting the health of the child and/or family members from COVID-19 even in periods without lockdowns by home educating
- Remote working and more flexible work arrangements enabling parents to home educate
- Anti-Government sentiment towards interventions such as lockdowns, isolation rules, and vaccinations (this was a minority view noted, and more prevalent among those with a stronger philosophical view towards home education).

Overwhelmingly, the observation among stakeholders was that exposure to home education during this period resulted in exposure to the benefits of home education and therefore a desire to continue even after school returns were possible.

"COVID's government-mandated 'learning-at-home' requirements meant their children were required to be learning in the family home. This often enabled parents to discover just how little their children had been learning whilst attending school. It also revealed that their children often had significant 'gaps' in their education in terms of their knowledge and skills. Many parents became convinced during COVID lockdowns that they could do better with their children's education than traditional schooling was doing, thus they commenced home schooling. Further, they discovered that if their children were being home educated, they would not miss out any more of their learning experiences, in the event of more government-mandated school lockdowns and learning-at-home requirements." ACHS

"During COVID my wife worked for HEA and parents were felt to be 'forced to home school' but now the kids are happier than they were at school so are doing better. So multiplier effect, but now COVID is gone it will be interesting to see what happens. With the movement towards more people wanting to work from home, we are increasingly looking at an environment to support home education." Wirraglen

"Several families expressed a lack of trust in the government's ability to provide a high-quality education and to keep their children safe in terms of bullying in schools. Parents also expressed concern over the imposition of government-mandated COVID requirements, such as mask-wearing, school exclusions, and the possibility of vaccination onto their children if they remained at school. Home schooling provided a better option in terms of a quality education and child safety." ACHS

"More what has gone on is: people have either tasted the home education lifestyle and said there are benefits to this and we're not going back or they've seen things that have been a little confronting for them and said we need to do a rethink on education." HEA Qld



Groups Observed

Stakeholder observations around the different types of home education parents reflect similar trends as noted by parents.

IDEOLOGY EXISTS BUT IS NOT THE MAIN OR GROWING AUDIENCE

Home Education for ideological reasons (e.g. faith, educational philosophy) is still present, however stakeholders believe this audience is relatively small and static in terms of scope and represents a minority of parents.

Increasingly, stakeholders are seeing parents who weren't aware of home education, or had limited knowledge about it, but discovered home education as a result of the reasons identified earlier. This is particularly the case for those feeling the school system doesn't meet their child's needs, and experiencing the benefits of home education firsthand during COVID-19.

The key benefits noted include:

- Less stress for the child (and therefore the family)
- More tailored learning solutions
- More one-on-one time for better learning outcomes
- Better connection / relationship between the parent and child
- Greater flexibility in what and how learning occurs, and to fit in with other family commitments.

"When I started, the majority would have been for ideological reasons, so whether philosophy of education, or around their personal views, politically, religiously, whatever. Those people still exist now. But we're seeing an increasing number who started out their kids in school and for whatever reason have made the decision to remove them from school and educate at home. Often it's been around areas of, broadly, physical and mental health (bullying, kids exhibiting signs of anxiety, school refusal). Sometimes parents just don't like who their child is becoming – possibly negative influence of peers - so that has been a trend." ." HEA Qld

"Back in 2004 when I started, most were doing it [home education] as first choice - people who had a philosophical reason of one type or another - and what we see now and nationally is that more than half, we think, of all home educators are people for whom school is the first choice. So overwhelmingly people are coming to home education when school fails their kids." HEA

"Home educating parents stated that the family's home environment and their local communities provided many "pull factors" that made home schooling attractive. They stated that the family home and surrounding locality was a far better setting for teaching and learning. It allowed for one-on-one learning. The home provided flexibility of time and for selection of curriculum and allowed the children to follow their personal interests. It provided a context that was safe, caring, less stressful and it aligned with family routines. Home educating parents stressed that they required their children's education to align with their values and philosophies. They also indicated that their children's nurture, development and education was their responsibility. It was not the responsibility of government." ACHS

"So it usually isn't a gallop into home ed it is a reluctant move into home education. But a consistent comment we have had over 15 years so we now anticipate it, is remove the child from school, wait for the 1 month and then have another look and invariably the parents will say 'gee the stresses on the family have just gone away'. Not only the child, the siblings and parents have all been able to relax and they find that the biggest benefit for them. Home education isn't necessarily relaxing but the families we work with that is a very common comment. If you are removing your child from a very stressful situation into a less stressful environment, it will have that effect." Wirraglen

"Parents say after a year of home education are like 'wow, the improvement in their relationship with her two young daughters is just amazing'. They come to love the relationship with the child." Wirraglen

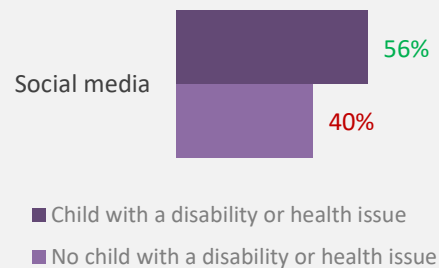
INFORMATION SEEKING

Information Sources

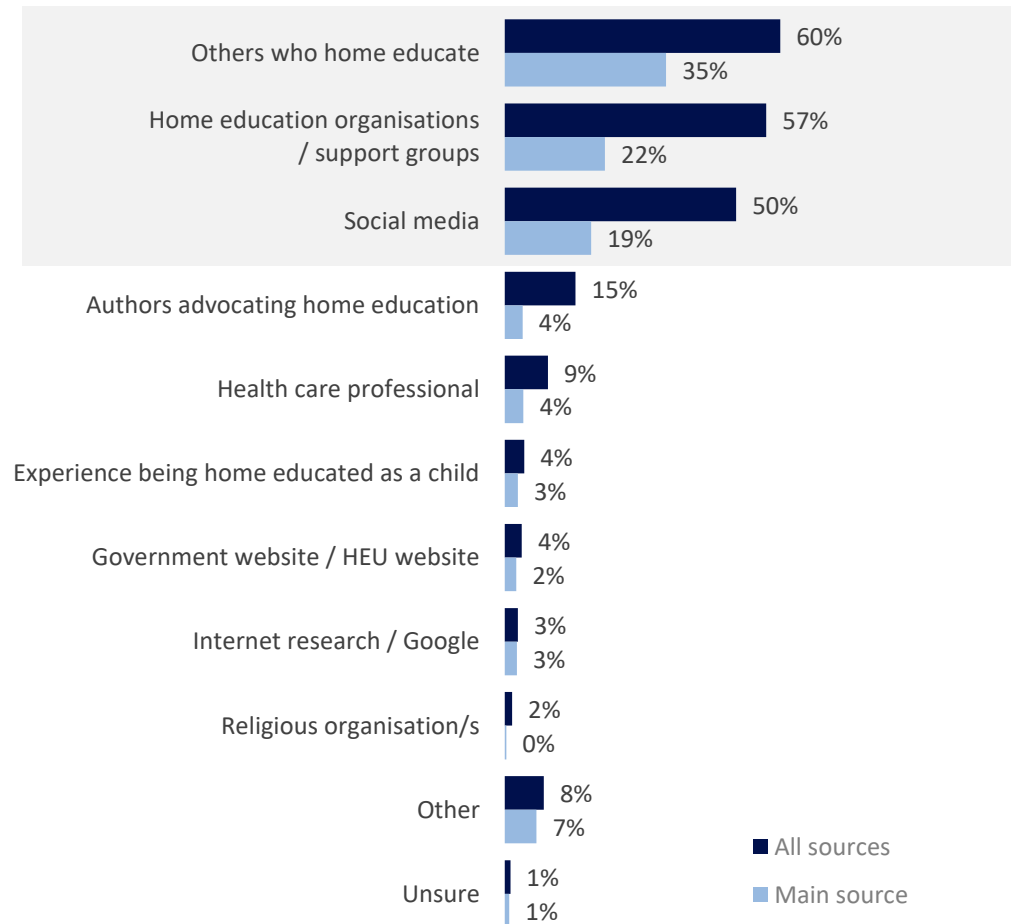
The most common information sources include other home educators, home education organisations / support groups and social media.

Interestingly, social media is more likely to be an information source for those who have a child with a disability or health issue. It is one of the key information sources for those in the *Not Seriously Considered* and the *Never Intended* segments.

**INFORMATION SOURCES
BY HEALTH STATUS OF CHILD**



SOURCES OF INFORMATION OR ADVICE



Base: All respondents (n=565 , Child with a disability or health issue n=346, No disability or health issue n=196) DM1. When deciding to home educate, where did you find information or advice to help in making your decision? DM2. Which of these would you say had the greatest influence on your decision to home educate?

Stakeholder Insights Information Seeking (1)

Stakeholders observe that information seeking evolves over the course of the home education journey.

INITIALLY NEW PARENTS SEEK UNDERSTANDING BUT ALSO REASSURANCE

Stakeholders feel those considering or are new to home education typically seek information via internet searching, use of associations (like HEA), and the Queensland Government. Much of what is being sought is about how home education works and what is legally required, registration requirements and assistance transitioning from school, as well as reassurance that as a parent they know what is involved and have the ability to actually do a good job home educating their child.

ONCE ESTABLISHED, INFORMATION IS MORE SPECIFIC BUT ONGOING SUPPORT IS NEEDED

Parents have specific information needs particularly around reporting requirements, curriculum, resources, and general support.

“They often want to know their legal obligations so actively trying to do what is required by the law. They are unclear about what that is and the steps involved. The other thing they want help with is ‘how do I actually do this?’.” HEA

“There is a lot of internet used these days, sites about home education or Facebook groups etc. Once people have found a group of people in the home education community, they will be the people they will mostly turn to for support and advice.” HEA Qld

“Parents found out about home schooling by various means. Most just initially Googled “home schooling” or “home education” and a wealth of information then comes up about home schooling such as the ACHS or the HEA etc. Others have observed their friends who are home schooling and have seen the positive results and decided that they wanted those outcomes for their own families. They also were able to connect with other home-schooling families and home schooling social and educational groups. This gave further information and support to home educating families” ACHS



Stakeholder Insights Information Seeking (2)

FINDING A 'COMMUNITY' OF SIMILAR-MINDED HOME EDUCATORS IS COMMON

There is a noted reliance among home educators to access communities of other parents; whether digitally or in person.

The use of Facebook groups is common for sharing ideas, asking and answering questions and organising group activities. Other platforms are also used for younger parents.

What stakeholders also note is that the growing interest in home education has made it more mainstream than it has been viewed in the past, meaning home educated parents feel they are part of a sizeable community of accepted parents rather than part of an ostracised minority.

"Suddenly if you do home educate you are no longer isolated as you would have been 20 years ago. There is a community there for them. There could easily be 18,000 home educating (9,000 registered and the others not). When you get up to 18,000 [home educated] / 800,000 children [total school-aged children in Queensland] – when you get up to those numbers suddenly you become a not abnormal group and you have more... people who say 'oh you're home schooling and they are no longer threatened by it'. As it becomes more accepted then more and more people will come to it." Wirraglen

"Facebook is probably a key one; loads of groups and people go to the internet to find that information. The internet, Facebook more specifically. That is changing as the next generation starts to have kids and become home educators and Facebook is not as popular with the younger people, it is all other Reddit, Telegram, all new social media platforms." HEA



FUTURE INTENTIONS

Stakeholder Insights

Future Intentions ⁽¹⁾

Stakeholders feel there is a mix of intentions among home educating parents.

While there will always be a primary group of parents who intend to home educate for the long-term, the intentions of others are mixed.

INTENTIONS DON'T ALWAYS EQUAL REALITY

The main view held among stakeholders is that the group of parents who intend to home educate for a specific period (e.g. to sort out a specific issue for their child or to catch them up) ultimately will fall into two categories:

1. Those who do return to school – which may or may not lead to a return to home education if it doesn't work out
2. Enjoy home education and the difference it makes and decide to continue.

"I think with most parents who pull kids out of school in crisis because school isn't working and feel they have no other choices, I think the vast majority intend to fix their child and send them back, but I suspect that same cohort of people don't send them back. They discover 1) it takes a long time to fix your child and 2) life changes for the better so dramatically so parents and children both don't want to go back." ^{HEA}

"ACHS has assisted many families that have children who have fallen between the educational cracks. These children may not be able to read or to write at their grade-age appropriate level. We also have discouraged and disengaged teenagers who need to regain a love of learning and self-confidence as they enter adulthood. They may stay in home schooling for a year or two until they regain their academic skills and or confidence. Others stay for the long term from Prep to Year 12. It all depends on the needs of the child." ^{ACHS}



Stakeholder Insights

Future Intentions (2)

PATHWAYS TO TERTIARY OPTIONS ARE NOT CONSIDERED A REASON TO RETURN TO SCHOOL

Pathways to tertiary education options for home educated children are felt to be extensive and not a limiting factor.

HOME EDUCATION REGISTRATION IS LIKELY TO REMAIN STRONG

Stakeholders generally feel home education has not yet peaked and are unclear whether levels will return to pre COVID-19 levels. Given the stated reasons, changes in remote working and household flexibility, and becoming increasingly accepted with known benefits, home education is expected to remain a viable choice for parents.

“Some kids do go back to high school for QCE, not many though. There are so many alternate tertiary pathways available to students so the vast majority take another route.” HEA

“For a long time, people would home school as long as they could but would have children that they wanted to get to uni and it felt too hard to know the pathway to do that if they were home educating, and I think there are now more pathways, and they are better known. This is keeping more people in the system who would head on to tertiary study. They tended to be the ones who went back to a school previously.” HEA Qld

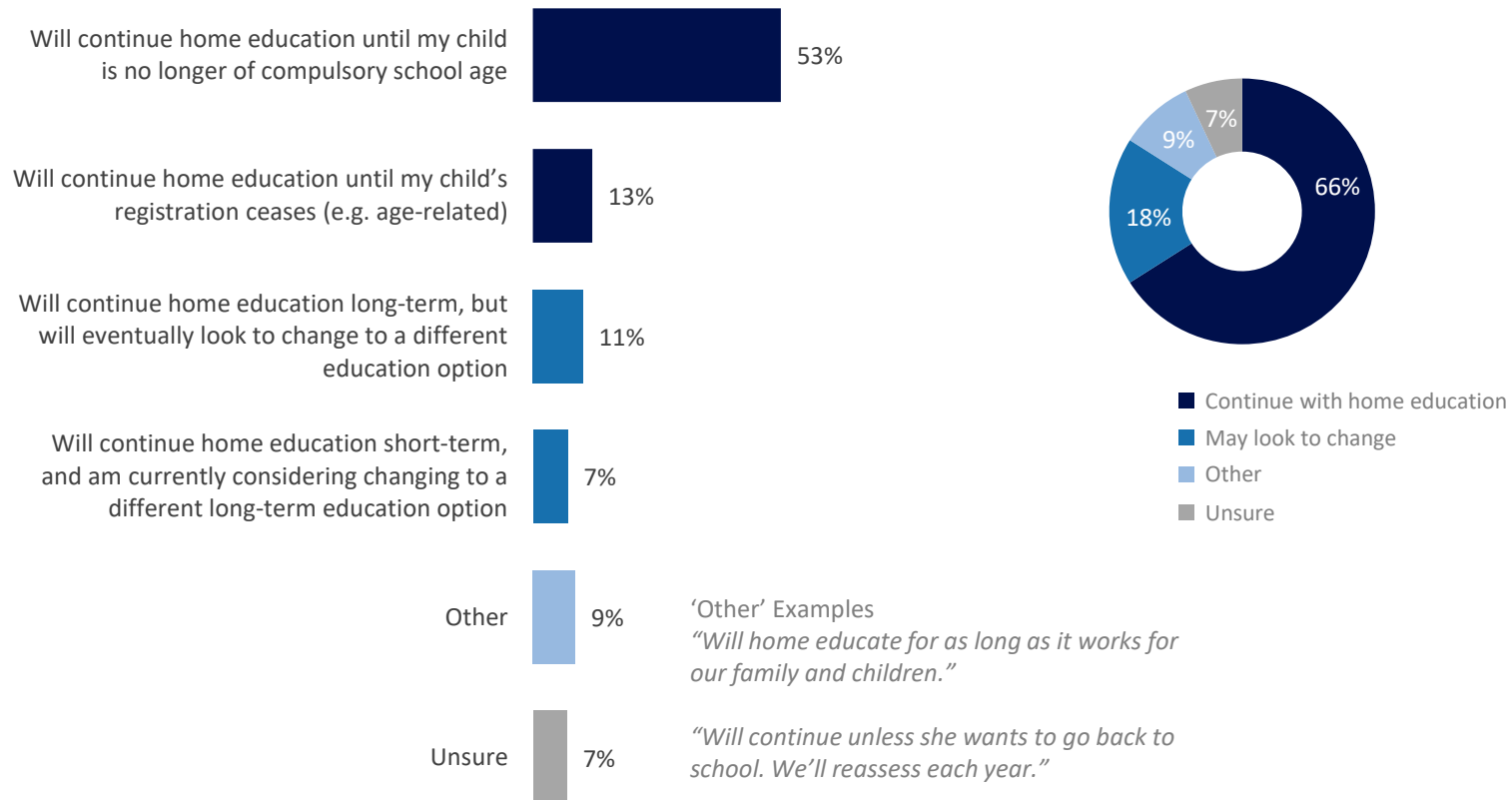
“I don’t believe home education has reached its peak yet, but there will be a peak, as the majority do like school and school does suit the majority of children.” Wirraglen



Future Intentions Regarding Registration

Two-thirds of those who are home educating intend to continue. The other third may or may not continue depending on how the child takes to home education and if they have a desire to return to traditional school.

FUTURE INTENTIONS

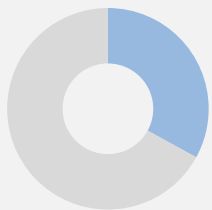


The Impact of Recency on Future Intentions

Parents who registered their child/ren prior to COVID-19 are more likely to continue with home education for the long-term (or until registration ceases). A similar picture is evident among those registering a new child during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic; however, there is significantly greater hesitancy to continue.

Those registering a new child this year are the least likely to continue with home education (albeit, around half plan to continue). This is likely a mix of factors – such as teething issues for those new to home education, or those looking for a short term solution between schools.

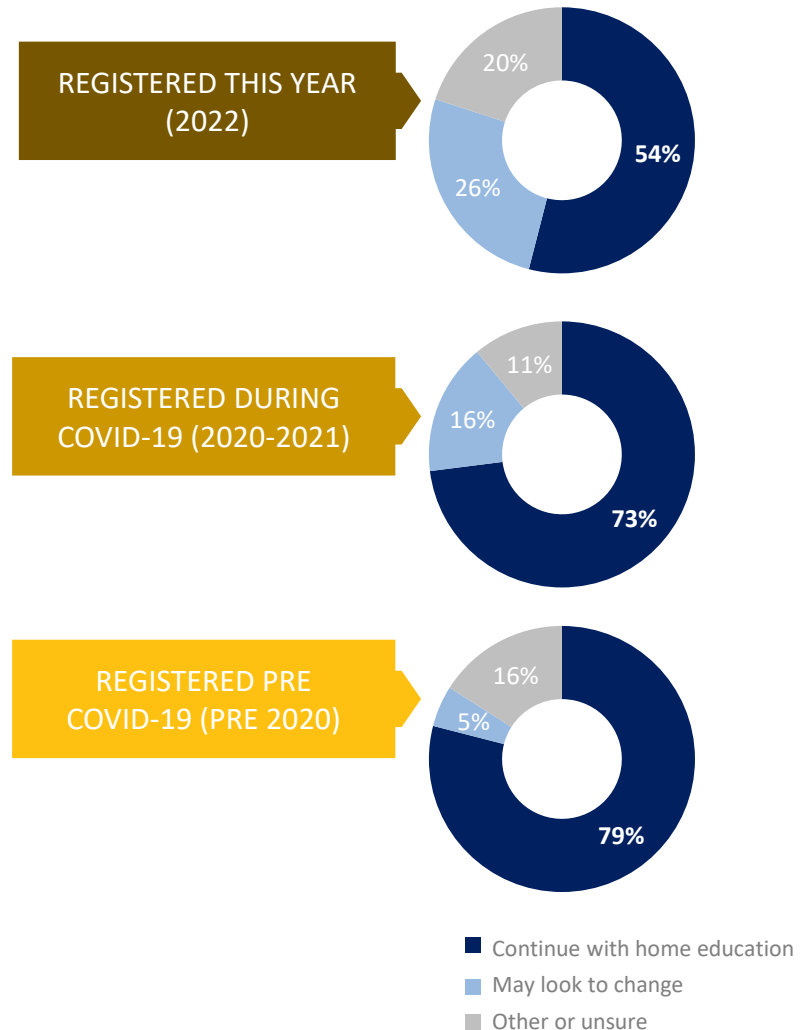
Stakeholder feedback suggests there is typically a cohort who will return to traditional schools after “trying it out”.



33%

of those who mainly choose to home educate to avoid negative influences may look to change

FUTURE INTENTIONS BY MOST RECENT REGISTRATION

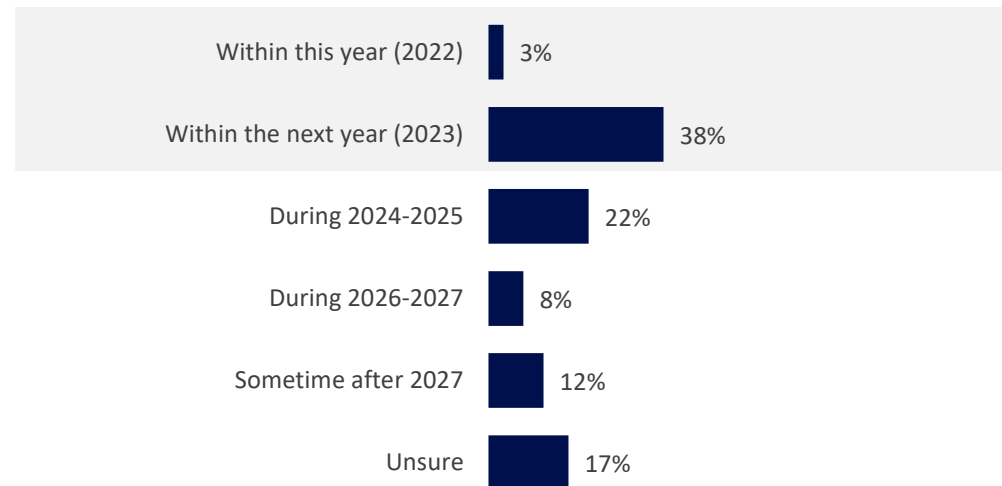


Base: Currently registered (n=553, 2022 n=260, 2020-2021 n=153, Pre 2020 n=132)
F1. For the remainder of your child's education, which of the following best applies when it comes to your intentions regarding home education registration?

Timing of Education Change

Of those likely to cease home education, many are considering doing so next year or in the following two years.

TIMING OF CHANGE FROM HOME EDUCATION



After Registration Ceases

When home education registration ceases, just over 1 in 3 parents/guardians plan for their child to continue onto tertiary education.

Just under 1 in 5 plan for their child to shift to a school.

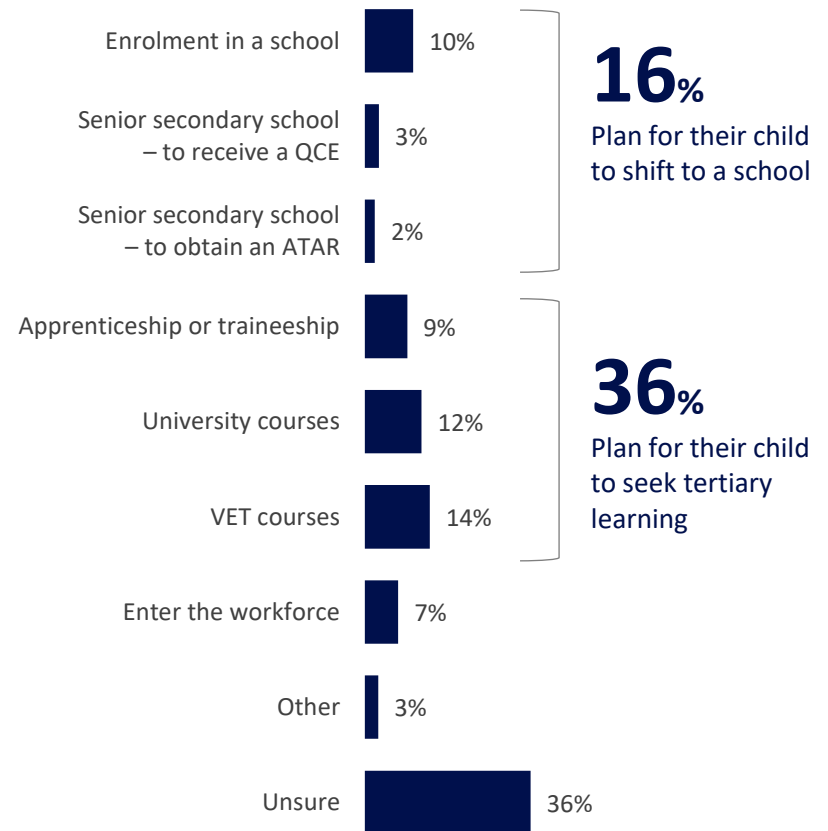
Some parents/guardians are unsure what their child is likely to do as they are still young.

EXAMPLES OF FAMILIES UNSURE:

"This child is still in primary school. There could be many options available to her when the time comes, and we are open to any that will meet her individual needs at the time."

"They are in primary school. We will take it one year at a time."

FUTURE PLANS WHEN REGISTRATION CEASE



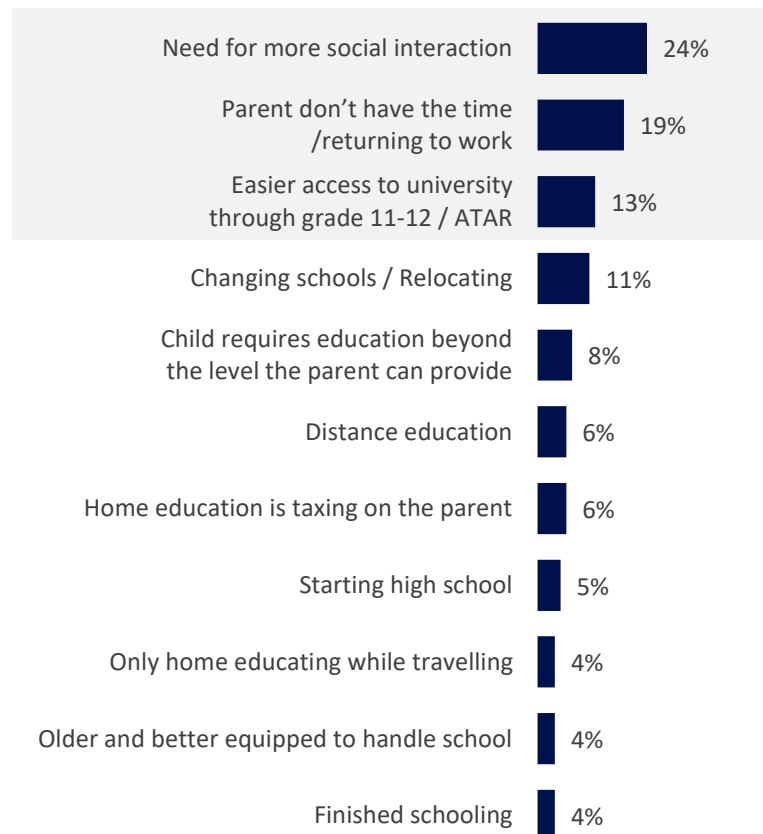
Base: Currently registered (n=553)

F3. After your child's home education registration ceases, for whatever reason, which of the following, is your child next likely to pursue?

Reason For Ceasing Home Education

Reasons for ceasing home education include the need for more social interaction, the parent/guardian having to work and traditional schooling being the easiest pathway to university.

REASON FOR OPTING TO MOVE AWAY FROM HOME EDUCATION



"My son works better in social situations where he has classmates and has to keep up with them."

"My child is missing the social interaction and working from home I don't have the time to take him to lots of events."

"The children miss the daily social interaction with their friends, and I am looking to going back to work full time."

"It is by need that we homeschool, but I would like to return to work and have them attend school in some capacity."

"If we can find a school that is flexible enough to suit our child, I would appreciate being able to return to my previous work, which I have had to stop while home schooling my children."

"I would like my child to go to university if they want, and it is most straightforward for them to do the last years at school."

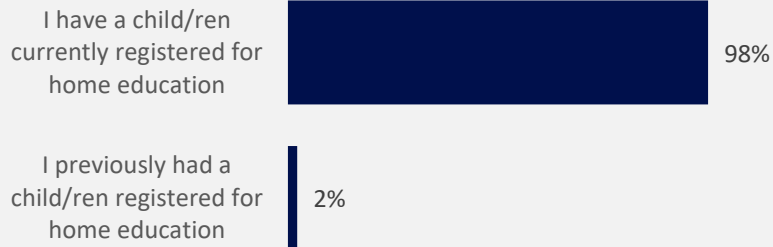
"Child wants to go to university, so we need to have her finish year 11 and 12 at school."



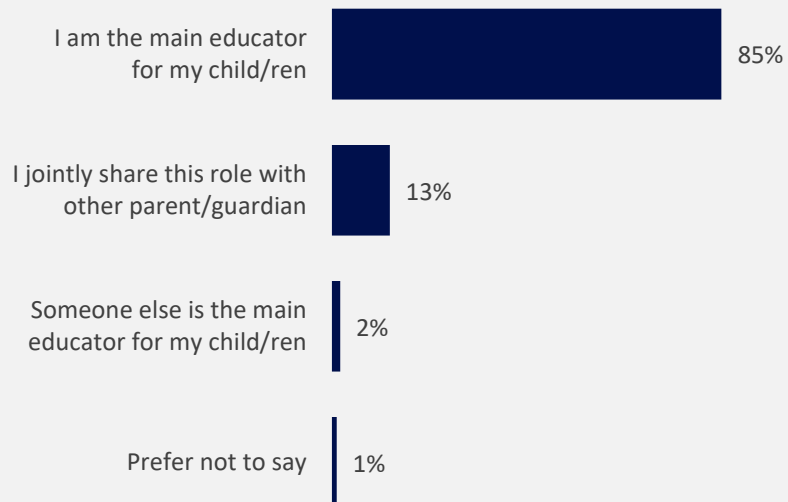
PARTICIPANT PROFILE

Background

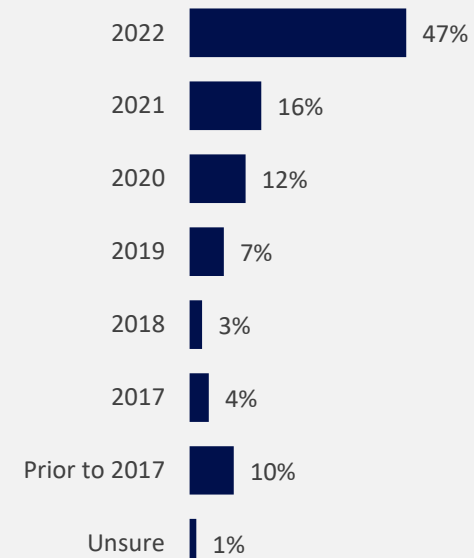
INTEREST IN SURVEY



ROLE IN HOME EDUCATING CHILD/REN

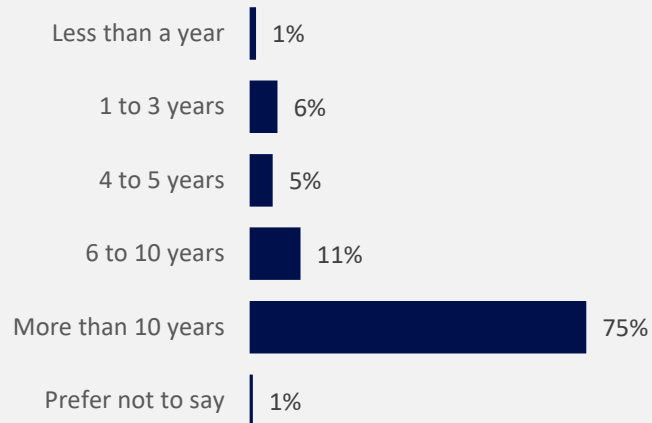


YEAR OF MOST RECENT REGISTRATION



Family Demographics

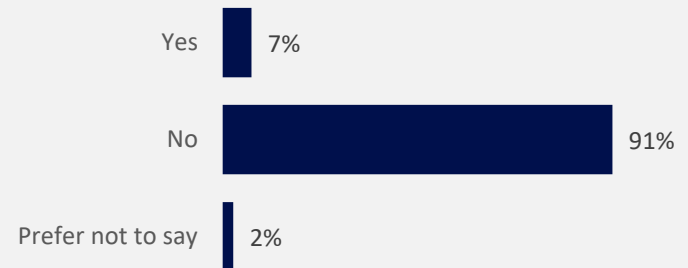
TIME LIVING IN QUEENSLAND



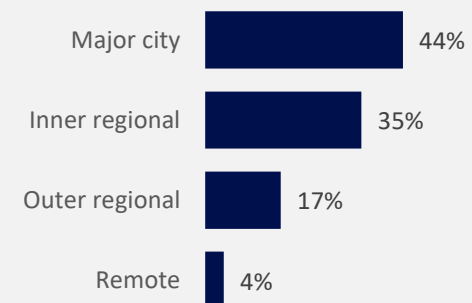
QUEENSLAND LOCATION



NOMADIC LIFESTYLE OR TRAVELLING FAMILY

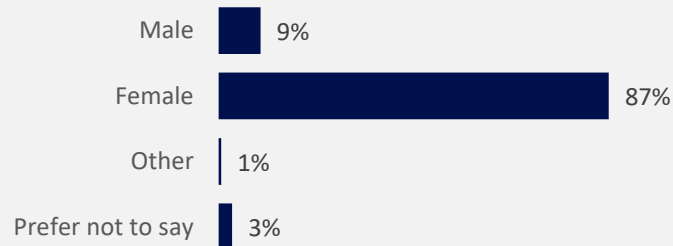


REMOTENESS AREA

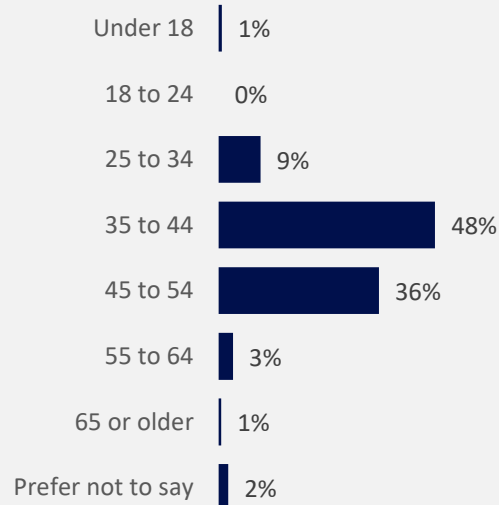


Participant Demographics (1)

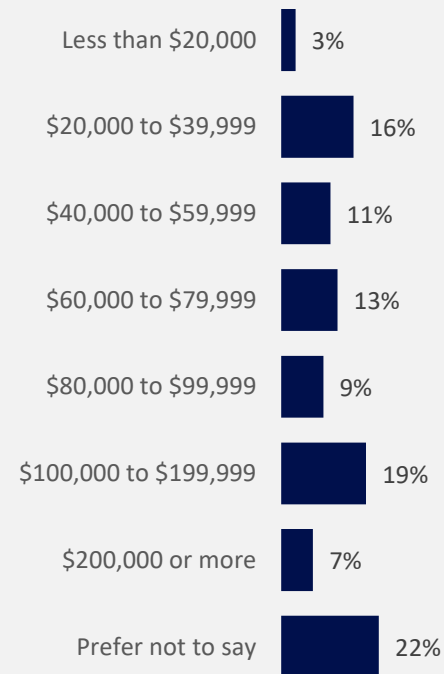
GENDER



AGE GROUP

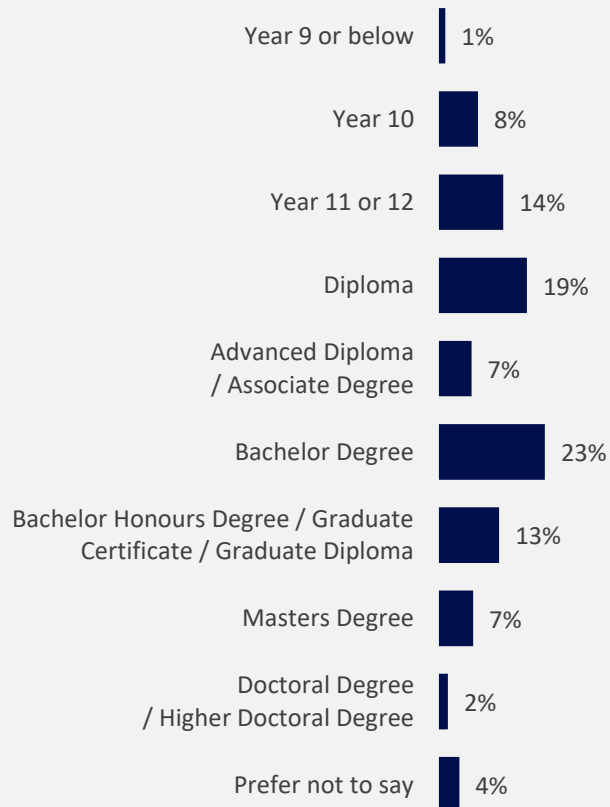


HOUSEHOLD INCOME

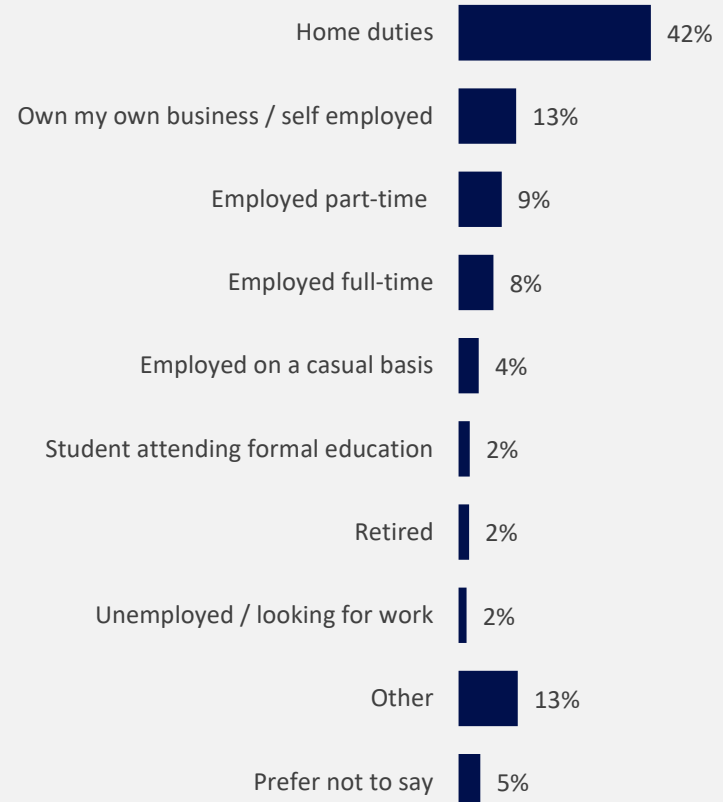


Participant Demographics (2)

EDUCATION LEVEL OF PARENT/GUARDIAN

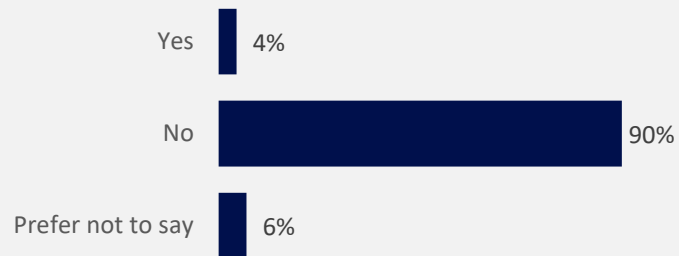


EMPLOYMENT OF PARENT/GUARDIAN

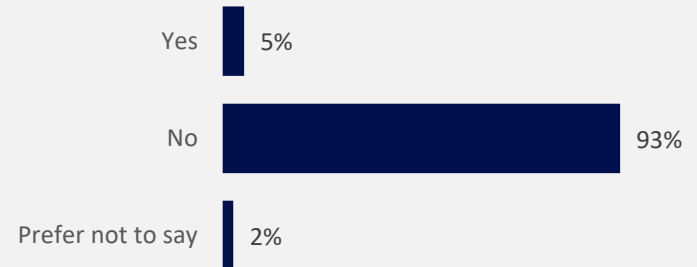


Participant Demographics (3)

IDENTIFY AS ABORIGINAL AND/OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER



SPEAK LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH





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Academic Outcomes of Home Schooling

Review of Research and Analysis of Statewide Tests

December 2014

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Executive Summary

Under the *Education Act 1990* home schooling is education delivered in a child's home by a parent or guardian. Registration with the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards NSW (BOSTES) is a legal requirement for home schooling while a child is of compulsory school age and not enrolled in a school.

This report examines available evidence on the academic outcomes of children who have been home schooled. This evidence includes a literature review of previous studies and analysis of results in statewide assessments such as the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests, School Certificate and Higher School Certificate.

There is a paucity of research evidence on the academic outcomes of home schooled students. The major reviews of the research literature note major shortcomings, including the lack of quantitative studies and the self-selection of participants. These reviews have tentatively concluded that home educated children have achieved at a level at least equivalent to the average achievement of students who attend school.

The research reported in this paper shares similar shortcomings. The only achievement data available for currently home schooled students is that arising from students who voluntarily undertake the NAPLAN tests. Only a small minority of home schooled students (about 10%) choose to undertake the tests, and thus any results must be treated with extreme caution. The results indicate that this group of students scored significantly above the overall NSW average in nearly every test. The differences were largest in Reading, Grammar & Punctuation and Numeracy, where home schooled students' average scores were typically about 70 marks (or about one standard deviation) higher than the NSW average. The differences were smaller in Spelling (about 40 marks) and Writing (about 20 marks).

The other groups for whom data was available were students who had been previously home schooled and had subsequently attended school and participated in statewide tests. While these groups were larger than the small group of current home schooled students in NAPLAN, they still suffer from sampling issues, as it is impossible to know to what extent they represent home schooled students as a whole. In addition, all of these students had some part (in some cases the great part) of their education delivered at school rather than at home.

In relation to NAPLAN tests, the analysis showed that students who were previously home schooled scored significantly higher in the Reading and Grammar & Punctuation tests, generally by about 20-25 marks (or about one-third of a standard deviation) in Reading, and 15-25 marks in Grammar & Punctuation. In Writing, Spelling and Numeracy, the home schooled student averages are generally not statistically significantly different from the overall NSW average. These results were consistent, regardless of the Year Levels being tested, and whether students have been registered for home schooling for shorter or longer periods.

In the School Certificate tests (English, Mathematics and Science) the average results of students who had been previously home schooled were similar to the state averages for all students, particularly for those who had been home schooled for two years or less. For those who had been home schooled for more than two years, average scores were slightly higher than the state average.

In HSC 2 Unit English (Advanced and Standard), there were no statistically significant differences between the average results of students who had been previously home schooled and the average results for the whole HSC cohort. Averages for the two groups generally differed by less than two marks, regardless of the length of time that students had been previously home schooled.

In summary, the research reported in this paper provides no strong evidence to indicate that home schooling is associated with substantially different academic outcomes. The shortcomings in the research, in particular the very limited representation of home schooled students in the samples, prevent any firm conclusions being drawn.

Academic Outcomes of Home Schooling

1 Introduction

Under the *Education Act 1990* home schooling is education delivered in a child's home by a parent or guardian.

Home schooling allows a parent or guardian to integrate the NSW curriculum with the learning processes that occur naturally in the home throughout a child's development.

Parents or guardians who are home schooling a child are responsible for developing and implementing their child's educational program and assessing their child's program. Registration with the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards NSW (BOSTES) is a legal requirement for home schooling while a child is of compulsory school age and not enrolled in a school.

This report examines available evidence on the academic outcomes of children who have been home schooled. This evidence includes a literature review of previous studies and analysis of results in statewide assessments such as the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests, School Certificate and Higher School Certificate.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Overview

Two major summary reports into the outcomes of home schooling have been published, one looking at the international literature and the second looking at Australian research.

Home Schooling: A Comprehensive Survey of the Research, by Robert Kunzman and Milton Gaither, is a major research endeavour that addresses and evaluates the significant international literature published in this area up to 2013. Most of this literature is based on the USA, where the number of home schooled children was around 1.5 million in 2007 and is estimated to have grown substantially since then. The authors also examine the body of English language research in Europe and elsewhere. The numbers of studies in countries outside the USA understandably reflect the smaller numbers of home schooled students in those countries.

The much smaller body of Australian research is outlined in *Summary of Australian Research on Home Education (2014)* by Glenda Jackson. Other reports by Jackson include *Fundamental Elements in Examining a Child's Right to Education: a Study of Home Education Research and Regulation in Australia (2010)* and her 2009 unpublished doctoral thesis, '*More than One Way to Learn': Home Educated Students' Transitions Between Home and School*'.

2.2 Context and Limitations of the Research on Home Schooling

Kunzman and Gaither's work identifies some significant caveats and contextual factors, as identified below, that need to be borne in mind when examining studies in this area:

- Home schooling participants in studies are often self-selected.
- Reliable demographic information about home schooled students is largely unavailable, and random sampling has proven impossible to obtain. Different countries, and different states within countries, have varying rules and arrangements regarding home schooling, therefore comparisons become difficult.
- For the most part, home schooling research is qualitative and anecdotal. Interviews may be the sole source of data collection.

- Research in some cases appears to be politically motivated. Kunzman and Gaither report that in the USA a large number of studies have been performed under the auspices of the prominent home schooling advocacy organisation, the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA).
- There are many aspects to home schooling or home education, and an enormous variety of delivery methods, motivations and beliefs among families who choose to educate their children at home. Individual studies, while valid, may concentrate on a single narrow focus, and there may be little other material to consolidate the findings.

2.3 Academic Outcomes of Home Schooled Students

Kunzman and Gaither are critical of the body of data about USA home schooler academic achievement. Although from 1990 to 2010 five large scale studies of academic achievement were conducted, this research was done under the auspices of the home schooling advocacy organisation, HSDLA. Kunzman and Gaither consider that the research methodology was extremely dubious. This casts doubt on the results: that in every case home schooled students consistently scored in the 80th percentile or above on nearly every measure when compared against the national average.

However, Kunzman and Gaither state that some tentative conclusions about academic achievement of home schooled students can be drawn based on persistently corroborating evidence over two decades. These findings are:

- Home schooling does not have much of an effect at all once family background variables are controlled for.
- Parental background matters very much in home schooler academic achievement.
- Home schooling tends to result in above-average verbal capacities but below-average maths capacities.

Jackson's *Summary of Australian Research on Home Education (2014)* states that "while there are no specific major studies on the academic success of home educated students, a couple of small studies show and most other research indicates that Australian home educated children have achieved an equal or higher than average result to their formally educated peers".

Her earlier (2010) article *Fundamental Elements in Examining a Child's Right to Education: a Study of Home Education Research and Regulation in Australia* amplifies this information in relation to academic achievements in a broader sense. She reports that home schooled students are entering tertiary institutions with ease.

She also notes that home schooled students who do have problems academically usually have identifiable learning difficulties.

3 NAPLAN Results – Home Schooled Students

Home schooled students are eligible to sit for the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests conducted annually for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. Participation in the tests is voluntary, with a fee of about \$40 and the tests are administered by parents using the NAPLAN administration protocols. In the six-year period from 2008 (when NAPLAN commenced) until 2013, a total of about 500 home schooled students in NSW have undertaken the tests, representing about 10% of home schooled students in the relevant age groups over that period.

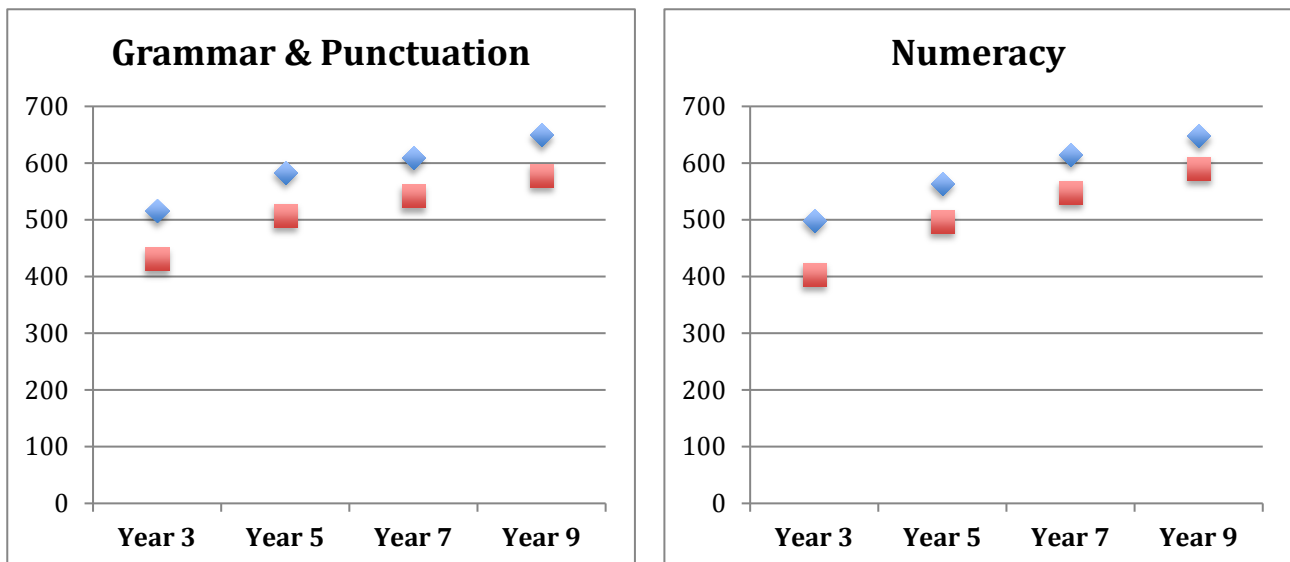
NAPLAN results are reported using five national achievement scales, one for each of the NAPLAN assessment domains of reading, writing, spelling, grammar and punctuation, and numeracy. Student raw scores on tests are converted to a NAPLAN 'scale score' so that those scores can be located on the national scale for each domain. The NAPLAN reporting scales are constructed so that any given

scale score represents the same level of achievement over time. For example, a score of 700 in reading in one year represents the same level of achievement in other testing years.

The average scale scores of NSW home schooled students in the NAPLAN tests for 2008 to 2013 are shown in Tables 1 to 6 (all Tables are in Appendix 1) and Figure 1 below. Because of the small numbers of home schooled students undertaking the tests, the results were aggregated across the full six-year period for each domain in each school year (3, 5, 7 and 9). Also shown are the average scores for all NSW students in each domain, the difference between the home schooled average and the overall average, and whether these differences are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Because the NSW average scores vary slightly each year, the figures shown in Tables 1 to 6 are the average of these scores over the six-year period, weighted according to the relative numbers of home schooled students each year. Results in the writing domain are separated for narrative writing (2008 to 2010) and persuasive writing (2011 to 2014).

Figure 1: Average NAPLAN Scores for Home Schooled and all NSW Students, 2008 – 2013





It can be seen from Tables 1 to 6 and Figure 1 that the average score for home schooled students was higher than the overall NSW average in every instance, with the difference being statistically significant in all cases except one. While there were variations across Year levels, the differences were largest in Reading, Grammar & Punctuation and Numeracy, where home schooled students' average scores were typically about 70 marks (or about one standard deviation) higher than the NSW average. The differences were smaller in Spelling (about 40 marks) and Writing (20 marks).

4 NAPLAN Results – Previously Home Schooled Students

In addition to the relatively small number of currently home schooled students who undertake the NAPLAN tests each year, there is a substantially larger number of students who were previously registered for home schooling but returned to school and completed the NAPLAN tests there. Identification of such students was undertaken by matching student details on the NAPLAN data files with those in the BOSTES records of students registered for home schooling. Matching was based on student name, gender and date of birth.

A total of 3965 matched students who had completed one or more NAPLAN tests were identified, of whom 2572 (65%) had prior home schooling registration(s) totalling two years or less and 1394 (35%) had been registered for more than two years in total. These two groups were analysed separately to provide some differentiation in terms of length of home schooling experience.

Tables 7 to 12 and Figure 2 show the NAPLAN results for students home schooled for two years and less, while Tables 13 to 18 and Figure 3 show results for students home schooled for more than two years. As was the case for the NAPLAN results in the previous part of this report, results are pooled across the period 2008 to 2013 (split for the Writing test), with differences calculated against the weighted average of the overall NSW results over that period.

The findings in Tables 7 to 18 are very consistent, regardless of the Year Levels being tested, and whether students have been registered for home schooling for shorter or longer periods. Students who were previously home schooled scored significantly higher in the Reading and Grammar & Punctuation tests, generally by about 20-25 marks (or about one-third of a standard deviation) in Reading, and 15-25 marks in Grammar & Punctuation. In Writing, Spelling and Numeracy, the home schooled student averages are generally not statistically significantly different from the overall NSW average.

Figure 2: Average NAPLAN Scores for Previously Home Schooled (≤ 2 years) and all NSW Students, 2008 – 2013

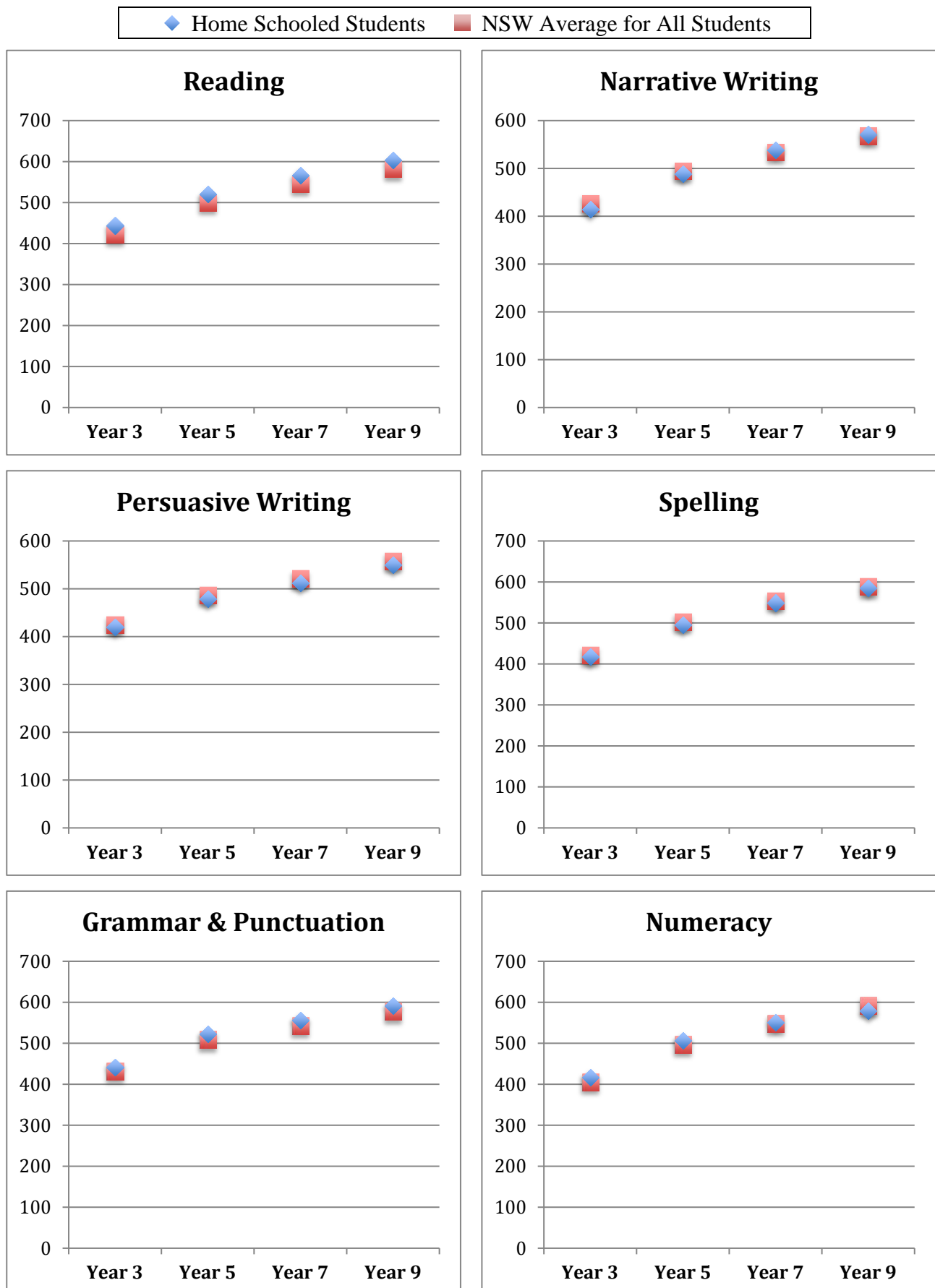
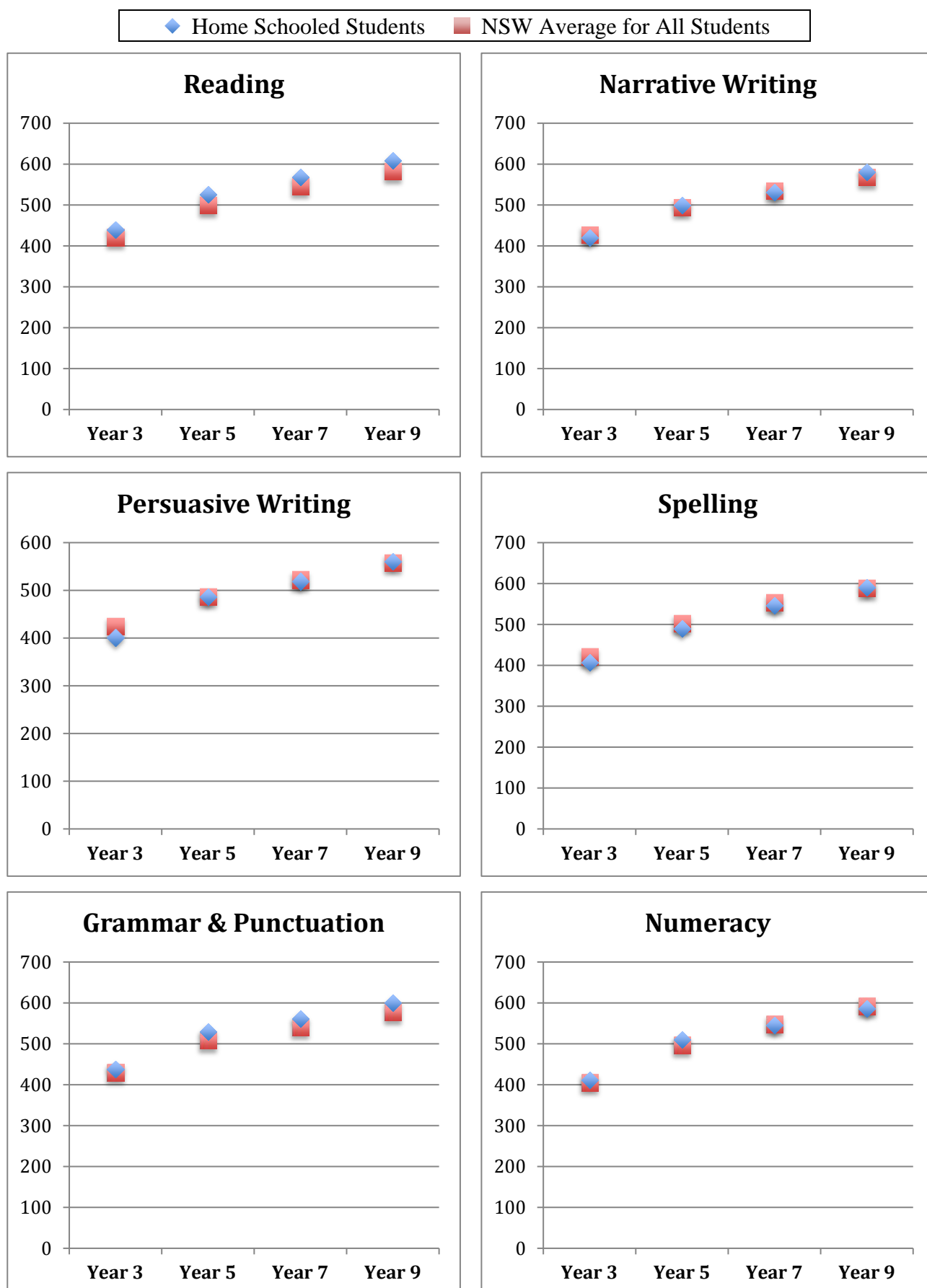


Figure 3: Average NAPLAN Scores for Previously Home Schooled (> 2 years) and all NSW Students, 2008 – 2013



5 School Certificate Test Results – Previously Home Schooled Students

The NSW School Certificate was a credential awarded to eligible students after four years of secondary schooling (Years 7–10). The School Certificate required students to undertake mandatory statewide tests of foundation knowledge and skills at the end of Year 10. The tests were each of two hours duration with students receiving a standards-aligned mark out of 100 for each test.

Nearly all NSW secondary school students undertook the School Certificate, with nearly 85,000 students undertaking the tests in 2011, the last year in which the School Certificate was offered. The School Certificate and the associated tests were only available to students attending school, not to home schooled students.

Data matching (on name, gender and date of birth) was used to identify students who undertook the School Certificate tests and had been previously registered for home schooling. These students were further subdivided into those with total home schooling registration of two years or less, and those with more than two years registration. The results of these students were compared to those for the entire cohort in the English-literacy, Mathematics and Science tests for the last five years of the School Certificate (2007 – 2011). The results are shown in Tables 19 to 24.

It can be seen from Tables 19 to 24 that the pattern of results was very consistent from year to year. For students who had been home schooled for two years or less, average scores were generally within one or two marks of the State average, and differences were not statistically significant. The exception was in 2011, where previously-home schooled students' average scores were statistically significantly higher than the NSW average for English and Science, although the differences were less than 3 marks.

Differences were generally larger for students who had been home schooled for more than two years, with the average marks for these students being significantly higher than the NSW average on the majority of occasions. While these differences were statistically significant, their magnitude was fairly small, being generally about 3 marks.

6 Higher School Certificate English Results – Previously Home Schooled Students

To qualify for the NSW Higher School Certificate (HSC), students must satisfactorily complete a pattern of study that includes at least two units of a Board Developed Course in English. The great majority of students complete the 2 Unit English (Advanced) or English (Standard) courses. Results in these two courses are reported on a common standards-aligned scale as marks out of 100, comprised in equal part of moderated school assessment and statewide examination results.

Data matching (on name, gender and date of birth) was used to identify students who completed HSC English (Advanced) or English (Standard) and had been previously registered for home schooling. These students were further subdivided into those with total home schooling registration of two years or less, and those with more than two years registration. The results of these students were compared to those for the entire HSC cohort in English (Advanced) and English (Standard) for the last five years (2009 – 2013). The results are shown in Tables 25 and 26.

It can be seen from Tables 25 and 26 that the pattern of results was very consistent from year to year. There were no statistically significant differences between the average results of students who had been previously home schooled and the average results for the whole HSC cohort. Averages for the two groups generally differed by less than two marks, regardless of the length of time that students had been previously home schooled.

7 Demographic Characteristics

7.1 Gender

Table 27 shows the percentages of male and female home schooled and previously home schooled students who undertook NAPLAN tests in the period 2008 – 2013, and provides comparative information on the gender composition of all home schooled students, and of all students undertaking NAPLAN. It can be seen from Table 27 that about 46% of home schooled and previously home schooled students undertaking NAPLAN were female, very similar to the overall percentage of female home schooled students (46%) and slightly below the percentage of females in the overall NAPLAN test cohort (49%).

Table 28 shows the percentages of male and female previously home schooled students who undertook School Certificate tests in 2007 – 2011, and comparative information for the entire School certificate test candidature over the same period. Table 28 also shows similar information relating to HSC English (Advanced and Standard) over the period 2009 – 2013. It can be seen from Table 28 that the gender composition of previously home schooled students closely matched the composition for the overall candidature in both the School Certificate tests (49% female) and HSC English (53% female).

7.2 Socio-Economic Status (SES)

Where possible, the addresses of home schooled students were geocoded to enable matching with relevant Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) local area statistics. The socio-economic status of the localities in which home schooled students reside was estimated using the ABS Statistical Area Level 1 (SA1) Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage, 2011. This measure provides a SES measure and percentile rank for each of the approximately 50,000 SA1 locations in Australia. These percentiles were converted into four quartiles, each encompassing 25% of the population.

Data on SES is reported below, separated for the four groups of students analysed in this study:

- Home schooled students – NAPLAN
- Previously home schooled students – NAPLAN
- Previously home schooled students – School Certificate tests
- Previously home schooled students – HSC English 2 Unit

For the School Certificate and HSC, comparative information is provided for the entire candidature (this information is not available for NAPLAN students).

It can be seen from Tables 29 to 32 that the socio-economic status of students was spread fairly evenly across the four quartiles, but that in each case, the smallest proportion was in the high-SES group (top 25%). This was the case even in the HSC English group, where the total student population is skewed towards higher SES (32% in top quartile).

8 Conclusion

There is a paucity of research evidence on the academic outcomes of home schooled students. The major reviews of the research literature note major shortcomings, including the lack of quantitative studies and the self-selection of participants. These reviews have tentatively concluded that home educated children have achieved at a level at least equivalent to the average achievement of students who attend school.

The research reported in this paper shares similar shortcomings. The only achievement data available for currently home schooled students is that arising from students who voluntarily

undertake the NAPLAN tests. Only a small minority of home schooled students (about 10%) choose to undertake the tests, and thus any results must be treated with extreme caution. The results indicate that this group of students scored significantly above the overall NSW average in nearly every test. The differences were largest in Reading, Grammar & Punctuation and Numeracy, where home schooled students' average scores were typically about 70 marks (or about one standard deviation) higher than the NSW average. The differences were smaller in Spelling (about 40 marks) and Writing (about 20 marks).

The other groups for whom data was available were students who had been previously home schooled and had subsequently attended school and participated in statewide tests (NAPLAN, School Certificate and HSC). While these groups were larger than the small group of current home schooled students in NAPLAN, they still suffer from sampling issues, as it is impossible to know to what extent they represent home schooled students as a whole. In addition, all of these students had some part (in some cases the great part) of their education delivered at school rather than at home.

In relation to NAPLAN tests, the analysis showed that students who were previously home schooled scored significantly higher in the Reading and Grammar & Punctuation tests, generally by about 20-25 marks (or about one-third of a standard deviation) in Reading, and 15-25 marks in Grammar & Punctuation. In Writing, Spelling and Numeracy, the home schooled student averages are generally not statistically significantly different from the overall NSW average. These results were consistent, regardless of the Year Levels being tested, and whether students have been registered for home schooling for shorter or longer periods.

In the School Certificate tests (English, Mathematics and Science) the average results of students who had been previously home schooled were similar to the state averages for all students, particularly for those who had been home schooled for two years or less. For those who had been home schooled for more than two years, average scores were slightly higher than the state average.

In HSC 2 Unit English (Advanced and Standard), there were no statistically significant differences between the average results of students who had been previously home schooled and the average results for the whole HSC cohort. Averages for the two groups generally differed by less than two marks, regardless of the length of time that students had been previously home schooled.

In summary, the research reported in this paper provides no strong evidence to indicate that home schooling is associated with substantially different academic outcomes. The shortcomings in the research, in particular the very limited representation of home schooled students in the samples, prevent any firm conclusions being drawn.

Appendix 1: Tables

Table 1: NAPLAN Reading, 2008 – 2013

School Year	Home Schooled Students		NSW Average (Weighted)	Diff between Averages	Stat. Signif. (p<0.5)
	Average Score	n			
Year 3	508	153	423	85	*
Year 5	569	172	500	69	*
Year 7	605	115	545	60	*
Year 9	643	59	581	62	*

Table 2: NAPLAN Narrative Writing, 2008 – 2010

School Year	Home Schooled Students		NSW Average (Weighted)	Diff between Averages	Stat. Signif. (p<0.5)
	Average Score	n			
Year 3	445	59	427	18	*
Year 5	511	72	494	17	*
Year 7	566	51	534	32	*
Year 9	630	20	567	63	*

Table 3: NAPLAN Persuasive Writing, 2011 – 2013

School Year	Home Schooled Students		NSW Average (Weighted)	Diff between Averages	Stat. Signif. (p<0.5)
	Average Score	n			
Year 3	437	93	425	12	
Year 5	503	97	487	16	*
Year 7	554	64	521	33	*
Year 9	601	39	557	44	*

Table 4: NAPLAN Spelling, 2008 – 2013

School Year	Home Schooled Students		NSW Average (Weighted)	Diff between Averages	Stat. Signif. (p<0.5)
	Average Score	n			
Year 3	470	153	422	48	*
Year 5	547	172	504	43	*
Year 7	593	116	554	39	*
Year 9	662	59	587	75	*

Table 5: NAPLAN Grammar & Punctuation, 2008 – 2013

School Year	Home Schooled Students		NSW Average (Weighted)	Diff between Averages	Stat. Signif. (p<0.5)
	Average Score	n			
Year 3	516	153	431	85	*
Year 5	584	172	508	76	*
Year 7	609	116	542	67	*
Year 9	650	59	578	72	*

Table 6: NAPLAN Numeracy, 2008 – 2013

School Year	Home Schooled Students		NSW Average (Weighted)	Diff between Averages	Stat. Signif. (p<0.5)
	Average Score	n			
Year 3	499	153	404	95	*
Year 5	564	171	497	67	*
Year 7	615	116	548	67	*
Year 9	648	61	591	57	*

Table 7: NAPLAN Reading – Students Previously Home Schooled for ≤ 2 years, 2008 – 2013

School Year	Home Schooled Students		NSW Average (Weighted)	Diff between Averages	Stat. Signif. (p<0.5)
	Average Score	n			
Year 3	444	357	422	22	*
Year 5	520	562	500	20	*
Year 7	567	751	545	22	*
Year 9	603	816	582	21	*

Table 8: NAPLAN Narrative Writing – Students Previously Home Schooled for ≤ 2 years, 2008 – 2010

School Year	Home Schooled Students		NSW Average (Weighted)	Diff between Averages	Stat. Signif. (p<0.5)
	Average Score	n			
Year 3	415	155	427	-12	-
Year 5	489	239	494	-5	-
Year 7	539	333	534	-5	-
Year 9	571	394	568	-3	-

Table 9: NAPLAN Persuasive Writing – Students Previously Home Schooled for ≤ 2 years, 2011 – 2013

School Year	Home Schooled Students		NSW Average (Weighted)	Diff between Averages	Stat. Signif. (p<0.5)
	Average Score	n			
Year 3	420	200	425	-5	-
Year 5	479	319	487	-8	-
Year 7	512	419	521	-9	-
Year 9	550	428	558	-8	-

Table 10: NAPLAN Spelling – Students Previously Home Schooled for ≤ 2 years, 2008 – 2013

School Year	Home Schooled Students		NSW Average (Weighted)	Diff between Averages	Stat. Signif. (p<0.5)
	Average Score	n			
Year 3	417	356	422	-5	-
Year 5	495	561	503	-8	-
Year 7	549	752	554	-5	-
Year 9	586	822	588	-2	-

Table 11: NAPLAN Grammar & Punctuation – Students Previously Home Schooled for ≤ 2 years, 2008 – 2013

School Year	Home Schooled Students		NSW Average (Weighted)	Diff between Averages	Stat. Signif. (p<0.5)
	Average Score	n			
Year 3	442	356	431	11	*
Year 5	522	561	508	14	*
Year 7	557	752	542	15	*
Year 9	592	822	577	15	*

Table 12: NAPLAN Numeracy – Students Previously Home Schooled for ≤ 2 years, 2008 – 2013

School Year	Home Schooled Students		NSW Average (Weighted)	Diff between Averages	Stat. Signif. (p<0.5)
	Average Score	n			
Year 3	417	357	405	12	*
Year 5	507	560	496	11	*
Year 7	551	762	548	3	-
Year 9	579	858	592	-13	*

Table 13: NAPLAN Reading – Students Previously Home Schooled for > 2 years, 2008 – 2013

School Year	Home Schooled Students		NSW Average (Weighted)	Diff between Averages	Stat. Signif. (p<0.5)
	Average Score	n			
Year 3	440	100	421	19	*
Year 5	526	250	499	27	*
Year 7	569	433	545	24	*
Year 9	609	551	582	27	*

Table 14: NAPLAN Narrative Writing – Students Previously Home Schooled for > 2 years, 2008 – 2010

School Year	Home Schooled Students		NSW Average (Weighted)	Diff between Averages	Stat. Signif. (p<0.5)
	Average Score	n			
Year 3	420	50	427	-7	-
Year 5	500	142	494	6	-
Year 7	532	218	534	-2	-
Year 9	581	283	568	13	*

Table 15: NAPLAN Persuasive Writing – Students Previously Home Schooled for > 2 years, 2011 – 2013

School Year	Home Schooled Students		NSW Average (Weighted)	Diff between Averages	Stat. Signif. (p<0.5)
	Average Score	n			
Year 3	401	52	425	-24	-
Year 5	486	107	487	-1	-
Year 7	519	216	522	-3	-
Year 9	561	273	558	3	-

Table 16: NAPLAN Spelling – Students Previously Home Schooled for > 2 years, 2008 – 2013

School Year	Home Schooled Students		NSW Average (Weighted)	Diff between Averages	Stat. Signif. (p<0.5)
	Average Score	n			
Year 3	407	102	422	-15	-
Year 5	490	251	503	-13	-
Year 7	547	432	553	-6	-
Year 9	590	557	588	2	-

Table 17: NAPLAN Grammar & Punctuation – Students Previously Home Schooled for > 2 years, 2008 – 2013

School Year	Home Schooled Students		NSW Average (Weighted)	Diff between Averages	Stat. Signif. (p<0.5)
	Average Score	n			
Year 3	438	102	430	8	-
Year 5	530	251	508	22	*
Year 7	562	432	541	21	*
Year 9	601	557	577	24	*

Table 18: NAPLAN Numeracy – Students Previously Home Schooled for > 2 years, 2008 – 2013

School Year	Home Schooled Students		NSW Average (Weighted)	Diff between Averages	Stat. Signif. (p<0.5)
	Average Score	n			
Year 3	412	102	405	7	-
Year 5	510	250	496	14	*
Year 7	545	447	548	-3	-
Year 9	586	569	592	-6	-

Table 19: School Certificate English-literacy Test – Students Previously Home Schooled for ≤ 2 years, 2007 – 2011

Year	Home Schooled Students		NSW Average	Diff between Averages	Stat. Signif. (p<0.5)
	Average Score	n			
2007	74.6	97	74.7	-0.1	-
2008	78.0	106	76.6	1.4	-
2009	78.2	122	77.4	0.8	-
2010	76.8	122	76.8	0.0	-
2011	80.2	144	77.3	2.9	*

Table 20: School Certificate Mathematics Test – Students Previously Home Schooled for ≤ 2 years, 2007 – 2011

Year	Home Schooled Students		NSW Average	Diff between Averages	Stat. Signif. (p<0.5)
	Average Score	n			
2007	68.6	100	69.4	-0.8	-
2008	70.1	104	70.6	-0.5	-
2009	69.2	121	70.6	-1.4	-
2010	70.7	124	72.0	-1.4	-
2011	72.5	140	70.8	1.7	-

Table 21: School Certificate Science Test – Students Previously Home Schooled for ≤ 2 years, 2007 – 2011

Year	Home Schooled Students		NSW Average	Diff between Averages	Stat. Signif. (p<0.5)
	Average Score	n			
2007	73.7	98	73.5	0.3	-
2008	75.3	106	73.6	1.7	-
2009	75.5	122	75.0	0.5	-
2010	76.7	124	76.6	0.2	-
2011	78.1	142	75.3	2.7	*

Table 22: School Certificate English-literacy Test – Students Previously Home Schooled for > 2 years, 2007 – 2011

Year	Home Schooled Students		NSW Average	Diff between Averages	Stat. Signif. (p<0.5)
	Average Score	n			
2007	77.2	75	74.7	2.5	*
2008	80.2	84	76.6	3.6	*
2009	79.9	84	77.4	2.5	*
2010	78.8	105	76.8	2.0	*
2011	78.9	83	77.3	1.6	-

Table 23: School Certificate Mathematics Test – Students Previously Home Schooled for > 2 years, 2007 – 2011

Year	Home Schooled Students		NSW Average	Diff between Averages	Stat. Signif. (p<0.5)
	Average Score	n			
2007	72.5	76	69.4	3.1	*
2008	73.9	83	70.6	3.3	*
2009	71.9	83	70.6	1.3	-
2010	72.7	103	72.0	0.7	-
2011	72.5	84	70.8	1.7	-

Table 24: School Certificate Science Test – Students Previously Home Schooled for > 2 years, 2007 – 2011

Year	Home Schooled Students		NSW Average	Diff between Averages	Stat. Signif. (p<0.5)
	Average Score	n			
2007	76.7	74	73.5	3.2	*
2008	77.8	84	73.6	4.3	*
2009	78.3	84	75.0	3.3	*
2010	78.9	104	76.6	2.4	*
2011	77.0	83	75.3	1.7	-

Table 25: HSC 2 Unit English Results– Students Previously Home Schooled for ≤ 2 years, 2009 – 2013

Year	Home Schooled Students		NSW Average	Diff between Averages	Stat. Signif. (p<0.5)
	Average Score	n			
2009	69.8	65	71.8	-2.0	-
2010	71.0	68	71.6	-0.6	-
2011	71.2	83	72.0	-0.8	-
2012	71.9	79	73.9	-2.0	-
2013	72.2	102	72.2	0.1	-

Table 26: HSC 2 Unit English Results – Students Previously Home Schooled for > 2 years, 2009 – 2013

Year	Home Schooled Students		NSW Average	Diff between Averages	Stat. Signif. (p<0.5)
	Average Score	n			
2009	71.8	61	71.8	0.0	-
2010	73.9	71	71.6	2.3	-
2011	73.6	70	72.0	1.6	-
2012	73.7	90	73.9	-0.2	-
2013	72.2	71	72.2	0.0	-

Table 27: Gender Composition: NAPLAN, 2008 – 2013

Gender	Homeschooled - NAPLAN	Previous Homeschooled – NAPLAN	All Home Schooled	All NAPLAN
Female	45.9%	45.6%	46.4%	48.7%
Male	54.1%	54.4%	53.6%	51.3%

Table 28: Gender Composition: School Certificate Tests and HSC English

Gender	School Certificate Tests		HSC English	
	Previous Homeschooled	All Students	Previous Homeschooled	All Students
Female	48.9%	49.2%	53.6%	52.8%
Male	51.1%	50.8%	46.4%	47.2%

Table 29: SES of Home Schooled students - NAPLAN

SES Quartile	%
Bottom 25%	24.1%
26% – 50%	23.7%
51% – 75%	31.7%
Top 25%	20.5%
Total	100.0%

Table 30: SES of Previously Home Schooled students - NAPLAN

SES Quartile	%
Bottom 25%	25.0%
26% – 50%	29.5%
51% – 75%	24.1%
Top 25%	21.4%
Total	100.0%

Table 31: SES of Previously Home Schooled students – School Certificate Tests

	Previously Home Schooled	All Students
SES Quartile	%	%
Bottom 25%	26.4%	24.0%
26% – 50%	26.7%	24.5%
51% – 75%	27.7%	24.4%
Top 25%	19.2%	27.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Table 32: SES of Previously Home Schooled students – HSC English 2 Unit

	Previously Home Schooled	All Students
SES Quartile	%	%
Bottom 25%	23.1%	20.1%
26% – 50%	24.6%	22.9%
51% – 75%	30.3%	25.1%
Top 25%	22.0%	31.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%