

Key Stats Snapshot 2: Children and Young People with Disability in Education



Inclusion in mainstream education costs less and improves outcomes for all students.

But many children and young people with disability in Australia experience segregation and discrimination, bullying, lower rates of attendance and retention, and other issues in education.

Engagement in education

There were around 380,000 children aged five to 18 in primary or secondary school in 2018. In Australia:

Compared to their non-disabled peers, students with disability are:



One in 10 students had disability



Nearly one in 18 students had severe or profound disability



89% of disabled students went to mainstream school



More likely to leave school earlier



Less likely to have completed year 12



For ages **15 to 24**, less likely to be fully engaged in work or study.

Bullying and exclusion

Bullying and exclusion are widespread and increasing for students with disability.



75% report being bullied, up from **70%** in 2022



72% are excluded from school activities or events, up from **65%** in 2022



Only one in four feel supported to learn



Only one in two feel welcome and included.

School restrictions and difficulties

Students with disability face other unique challenges including being segregated from their peers, suspension, and expulsion.



One in 10 go to a segregated school



One in five attend special classes in a mainstream school



83.7% have some form of education restriction



One in seven report being suspended or expelled



Nearly 60% report difficulties at their place of learning

Schooling support and adjustments

Over one million students receive an educational adjustment due to disability. Yet additional support still often falls short of needs.



Two in five students need more support than they are getting



One in four need support, but are not getting any



45.5% of all who need support have profound or severe disability.

Further education

187,000 people aged 15 to 64 were studying beyond school in 2018. But their experiences differ compared to non-disabled students.

In higher education, disabled students are half as likely to get their bachelor's degrees. Around 13.5 per cent of current university students identify as disabled, up from 12.7 per cent in 2023. Disabled students generally report lower ratings for their:



Sense of belonging



Freedom of expression



Overall experience

Some groups face greater barriers

Boys are more likely to be in mainstream settings, and more than three times likely to be expelled than girls.

First Nations students report more difficulty at school, segregation and expulsion

Students with severe or profound disability are far more likely to go to a special school than other students with disability.

Data gaps remain

The experiences of students with disability are still not fully captured in national data, while inconsistent approaches to data collection across states and sectors make comparisons difficult.



Find out more

Explore CYDA's full Key Statistics Report for more in-depth data, analysis, and sources.

<https://cyda.org.au/key-statistics/>