Independent Schools Queensland

choice & diversity

Income Levels of Families with Students in Queensland Schools

Research Report

NOVEMBER 2017

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OUR SCHOOLS – OUR FUTURE

Our Schools – Our Future is an Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) research-based initiative designed to promote informed public policy debate about schooling. Through commissioned and internal research, Our Schools – Our Future explores trends and issues in key areas which determine the nature and performance of our school education systems. While the initiative has a particular focus on the contribution of independent schools to our education provision and outcomes, it examines a range of issues and trends relevant to the development and implementation of effective public policy for schooling. All research reports are available to members on the Independent Schools Queensland website.
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Independent Schools Queensland
PO Box 957, Spring Hill Q 4004
P (07) 3228 1515
E office@isq.qld.edu.au

Cover image: Bethany Lutheran Primary School

From the Executive Director

Diversity is a hallmark of Queensland independent schooling.

Independent schools offer a diversity of education approaches and serve an equally wide range of students and families, from low and high socio-economic backgrounds.

However, these truths about Queensland's independent schooling sector are often ignored in education debates and narrow misconceptions and myths perpetuated.

Drilling down into the 2016 Queensland Census data provides the most accurate and objective picture of the income profile of Queensland families and their school choices.

It confirms what some may find uncomfortable truths: that families from all income levels choose independent schools – not merely those at the top end; and that half of the families in the three highest income levels choose a free state education for their children.

The analysis also confirms that independent and Catholic schools serve families in broadly similar socioeconomic circumstances. There isn't a great chasm as is often cited. In fact the Census data reveals Catholic schools serve a greater proportion of families in the three highest income levels than independent schools.

Families make choices about education based on a range of factors, including their own values and beliefs, what they can afford, and also, critically for some, what other areas of their lives they will sacrifice for that choice.

Governments and policy makers should draw on this data when making critical decisions about future schools funding.

DAVID ROBERTSON

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS QUEENSLAND

Introduction

Queensland independent schools offer a diversity of schooling choices and approaches to education that resonate with Queensland families.

Detailed analysis of the 2016 Queensland Census data provides a revealing insight into the income backgrounds of families and their school choices, with the results busting common myths about all schooling sectors.

The data shows that 15% of all Queensland students attend independent schools and that these students come from all socioeconomic backgrounds.

Key findings:

Queensland independent schools serve families from every income level – from those with the lowest weekly earnings to the highest.

Government schools educate the highest proportion of students whose families earn weekly wages that put them in the highest three income brackets: 50% of families who earn in excess of $2,346 per week, choose a free state education, while 28% choose Catholic schools and 22% choose independent schools

Catholic and independent schools serve families with broadly the same financial profile and capacity to pay fees.

Both non-government sectors serve similar proportions of families earning less than $1,104 per week, Catholic (11%) and independent (9%), with government schools catering for the majority of families (80%).

Data considerations

Data presented is based on the Australian Census of Population and Housing in 2011 and 2016 and was provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Student data include counts of children under 15 or dependent students counted at home attending primary or secondary school by families with dependent children, and the family deciles for Queensland.

Family income deciles represent one tenth of families, with Decile 1 representing income levels where 10% of families had the lowest income levels and with Decile 10 representing income levels where 10% of families had the highest income levels (refer Table 1).

It is important to understand that as not all families have school children, each family income decile does not necessarily include 10% of school-aged children. In 2016, the proportion of Queensland school-aged children in each family income decile ranged from a low of 7% (Decile 2) to a high of 12% (Decile 6 and Decile 9).

Table 1: Weekly Gross Family Income Decile 1 to 10

DECILE	2016	2011
Decile 1	$586 or less	$526 or less
Decile 2	$587 - $812	$527 -$699
Decile 3	$813 - $1,104	$700 -$974
Decile 4	$1,105 - $1,356	$975 -$1,186
Decile 5	$1,357 - $1,645	$1,187 -$1,444
Decile 6	$1,646 - $2,000	$1,445 -$1,776
Decile 7	$2,001 - $2,345	$1,777 -$2,062
Decile 8	$2,346 - $2,802	$2,063 -$2,580
Decile 9	$2,803 - $3,724	$2,580 -$3,139
Decile 10	$3,725 or more	$3,140 or more

Interpreting charts in this report

Decile – Equal groups into which the population can be divided according to the distribution of family income. Each decile includes 10% of the total number of families.

Student profile data – How the total student population is spread across the decile range. As deciles capture the number of families (not students), there is not an equal spread of students across the decile range.

Sector data – Proportion of students attending schools in the government, Catholic and independent sectors.

Independent school participation average – The average proportion of students attending independent schools across the decile range.

School Sector Attendance by Family Income Deciles

The 2016 Australian Census of Population and Housing indicates family income levels influence schooling sectors attended by students.

As shown in Figure 1 and Table 2, students from every decile are represented in each of the three school sectors.

The proportion of students that attend independent or Catholic schools increases as family income levels increase. Attendance at government schools consistently decrease as family income increase.

The only exception to this pattern appears in the lowest two deciles, Decile 1 and Decile 2, where 10% and 7% of Queensland students were represented, respectively (refer Figure 1).

Independent school participation decreased slightly from Decile 1 to Decile 2, while Catholic participation remained stable. In 2016, of those students from families within the lowest income decile 80% attended government schools, while 10% attended Catholic schools and 10% attended independent schools. The proportion of students attending independent schools decreased to 9% in Decile 2 (refer Figure 1).

In all income levels, the government schooling sector is the largest provider of education, despite the pattern of decreasing proportions of students being gained by government schools as income increases.

The government sector caters for at least half of all students in nine deciles. The only exception is Decile 10 where the government sector was still the largest provider amongst the three schooling sectors, catering for 39% of those students with family incomes of at least $3,725 per week.

In Decile 10, 30% of students attended Catholic schools while 31% attended independent schools.

Primary and secondary school participation

At the primary schooling level Government schools and Catholic schools catered for a greater proportion of students than independent schools in all income deciles.

At the secondary schooling level, Government schools catered for a greater proportion of students across all family deciles with the exception of Decile 10 where both Catholic and independent schools catered for a higher proportion of students. Catholic schools catered for a higher proportion of secondary students than independent schools in all but the highest and the lowest deciles (refer Figure 2 and Figure 3).

Figure 1: Queensland Students by Schooling Sector, by Family Income Deciles, 2016

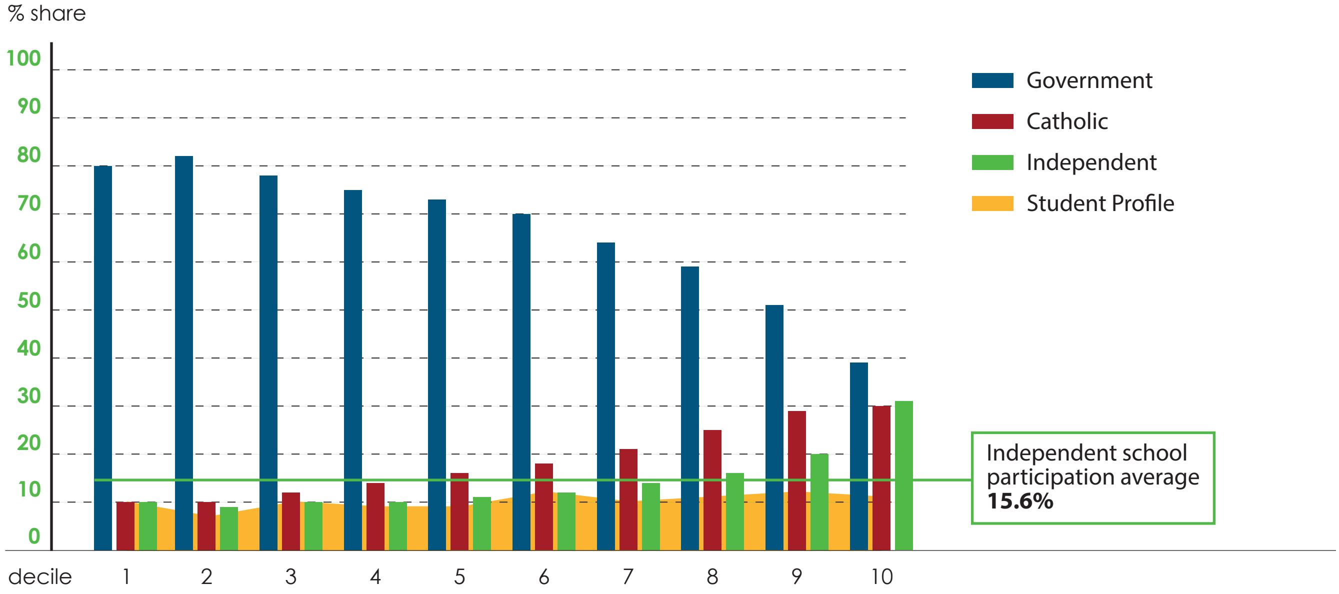


Figure 2: Queensland Primary School Students by Schooling Sector, by Family Income Deciles, 2016

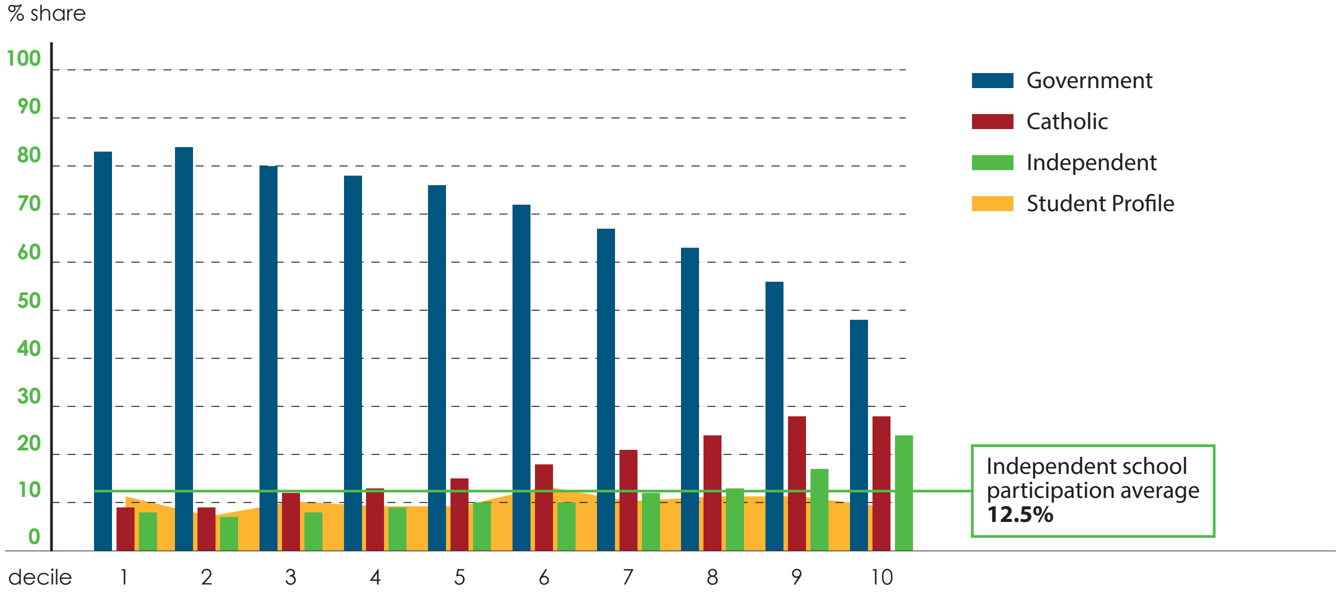


Figure 3: Queensland Secondary School Students by Schooling Sector, by Family Income Deciles, 2016

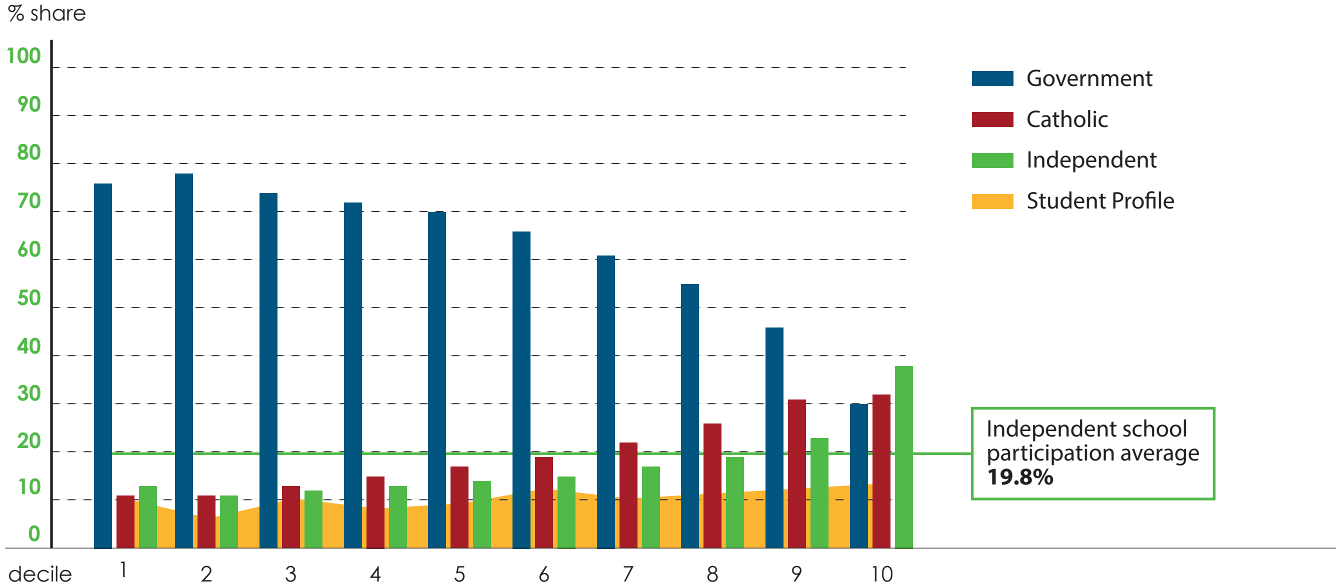


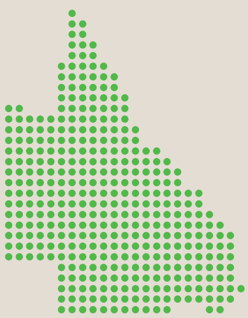
Table 2: Queensland Students by Type of Educational Institution Attending, by Family Income Deciles, 2016[1]

TYPE OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION ATTENDING **2016**	DECILE 1	DECILE 2	DECILE 3	DECILE 4	DECILE 5	DECILE 6	DECILE 7	DECILE 8	DECILE 9	DECILE 10	TOTAL (EXCLUDES INCOME NOT STATED)
PRIMARY											
Government	30,560	19,576	27,947	23,710	24,192	30,535	23,580	22,832	20,510	14,857	238,299
Catholic	3,376	2,131	4,090	4,053	4,777	7,445	7,411	8,793	10,196	8,540	60,812
Independent	2,873	1,630	2,898	2,759	3,043	4,451	4,250	4,885	6,127	7,406	40,322
Primary Total	**36,809**	**23,337**	**34,935**	**30,522**	**32,012**	**42,431**	**35,241**	**36,510**	**36,833**	**30,803**	**339,433**
SECONDARY											
Government	17,571	12,035	17,319	14,191	14,660	18,745	14,292	14,079	13,781	9,369	146,042
Catholic	2,543	1,689	3,141	2,995	3,476	5,448	5,152	6,717	9,338	9,912	50,411
Independent	2,883	1,675	2,850	2,514	2,881	4,165	4,098	4,911	7,030	11,926	44,933
Secondary Total	**22,997**	**15,399**	**23,310**	**19,700**	**21,017**	**28,358**	**23,542**	**25,707**	**30,149**	**31,207**	**241,386**
ALL											
Government	48,131	31,611	45,266	37,901	38,852	49,280	37,872	36,911	34,291	24,226	384,341
Catholic	5,919	3,820	7,231	7,048	8,253	12,893	12,563	15,510	19,534	18,452	111,223
Independent	5,756	3,305	5,748	5,273	5,924	8,616	8,348	9,796	13,157	19,332	85,255
All Schools Total	**59,806**	**38,736**	**58,245**	**50,222**	**53,029**	**70,789**	**58,783**	**62,217**	**66,982**	**62,010**	**580,819**

1 Data is based on place of enumeration and relates to families with children under 15 years or dependents, with children attending schools. Data is constrained to families who identified their family income level. Approximately 86% of student numbers in 2016 and 88% of students in 2011 were able to be assigned to family income deciles.

In Summary

15% of all students in Queensland schools attended independent schools in 2016

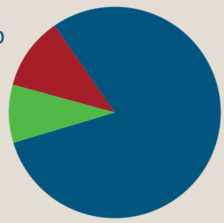


Proportion of students by sector: **Deciles 1–3**

Independent 9%

Catholic 11%

Government 80%

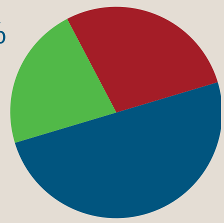


Proportion of students by sector: **Deciles 8–10**

Independent 22%

Catholic 28%

Government 50%



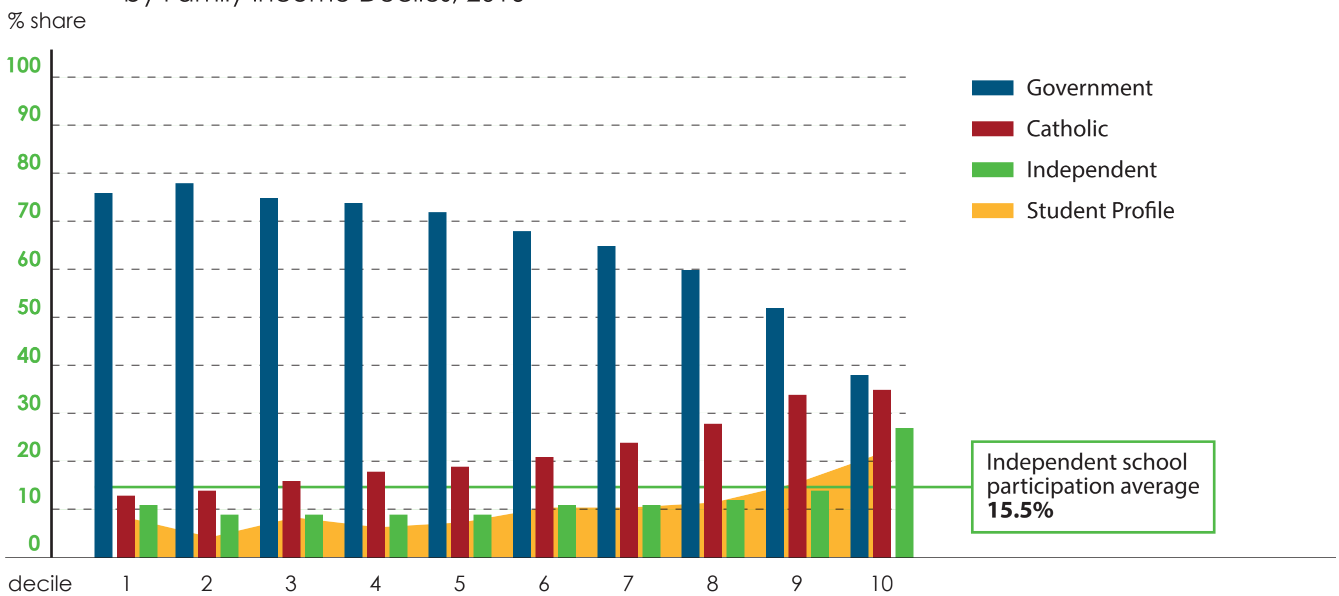
CASE STUDY: Brisbane LGA

Nearly half (48%) of school students residing in Brisbane Local Government Area (LGA) had family income levels in the three highest deciles, compared with 20% of students with family income levels in the three lowest deciles.

Government schools catered for the highest proportion of students in all deciles, and more than half of all students in Deciles 1 to 9. Catholic schools also catered for a higher proportion of students in each family income decile than independent schools, including the highest income decile (refer Figure 4).

In Decile 10 (which accounted for 21% of all students in the Brisbane LGA) government schools catered for the highest proportion of students (38%), followed by the Catholic sector (35%). Independent schools catered for the smallest proportion of students in Decile 10 (27%) as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Brisbane City LGA Students by Schooling Sector, by Family Income Deciles, 2016



Changes in Levels of Growth Between 2011 and 2016

There have been changes in the family income profile of students attending schools in Queensland over the last intercensal period (refer Figure 5). While ABS schools data indicates enrolments in Queensland increased by just over 8% from 2011 to 2016[2], data by family income decile suggest this growth has not been evenly distributed.

Significantly higher growth was recorded in Deciles 3 and 4. In Decile 3, the number of students increased by 25%, while the number of students increased by 17% in Decile 4.

There was growth in the number of students in Decile 9 (7%), however this was lower than the average growth across the deciles. Only modest growth (2%) occurred in the number of students in Decile 10.

The number of students in Decile 5 and Decile 8 recorded decreases of 4% and 5% respectively.

The variations in the number of students in Deciles 8 to 10 have the greatest potential to impact the independent and Catholic sectors, as these are the deciles these sectors cater for a larger proportion of students. Independent schools catered for 22% of students while Catholic schools catered for 28% of students in these three highest deciles.

Variations in growth in each decile also resulted in changes to the proportion of students in each decile. As shown in Figure 5, school students in Decile 3 represented 9% of students in 2011 but represented 10% of students in 2016. This reflects the high growth (25%) experienced in this decile.

Conversely, a decline in student numbers in Decile 8 resulted in the proportion of students contained in this decile decreasing from 12% in 2011 to 11% in 2016.

A different pattern of growth by family income deciles is apparent between primary and secondary schooling levels (refer Figure 6 and Figure 7).

Primary enrolment growth in the period from 2011 to 2016 was much lower than the growth rate experienced in secondary. The number of students in primary grew by only 2%, while the number of students in secondary grew by 18%.

2 Australian Bureau of Statistics: 4221.0 Schools, Australia, 2016

St Margaret's Anglican Girls School

Ananda Marga River School

While growth in the number of secondary students occurred in each family income decile, except for Decile 8, a decline in the number of primary students occurred in four of the 10 deciles over the intercensal period (Deciles 5, 8, 9 and 10).

In both primary and secondary, significant growth at levels well above the total average, occurred in Deciles 3 and 4 (deciles where independent schools cater for lower proportions of the population). There was also significant growth in Decile 9 in secondary.

As the primary student population progresses through to secondary, the declining numbers of primary students in the three highest deciles (where independent schools cater for 18% of primary students and 27% of secondary students) will need to be monitored by the independent school sector.

In Summary

8%

Total student enrolments up

Deciles 3–4 experienced high growth

Deciles 5&8 experienced negative growth

Primary enrolments growth rate

2%

Secondary enrolments growth rates

18%

Figure 5: Proportion of All Students and Percentage Change in Student Numbers, by Family Income Deciles, 2011 to 2016

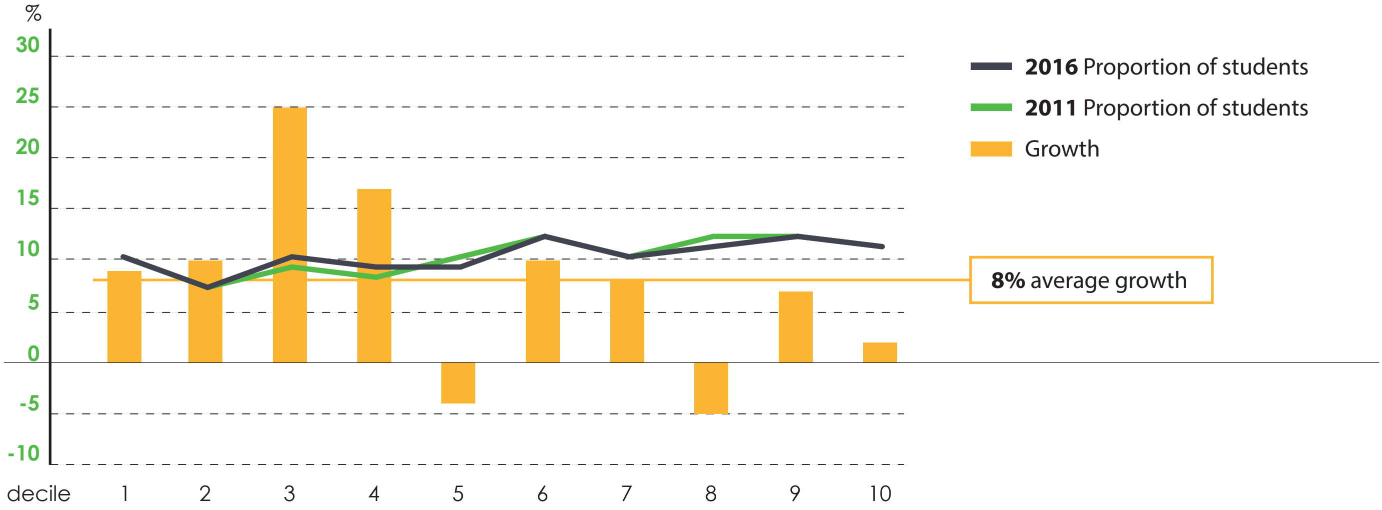


Figure 6: Proportion of Primary Students and Percentage Change in Student Numbers, by Family Income Deciles, 2011 to 2016

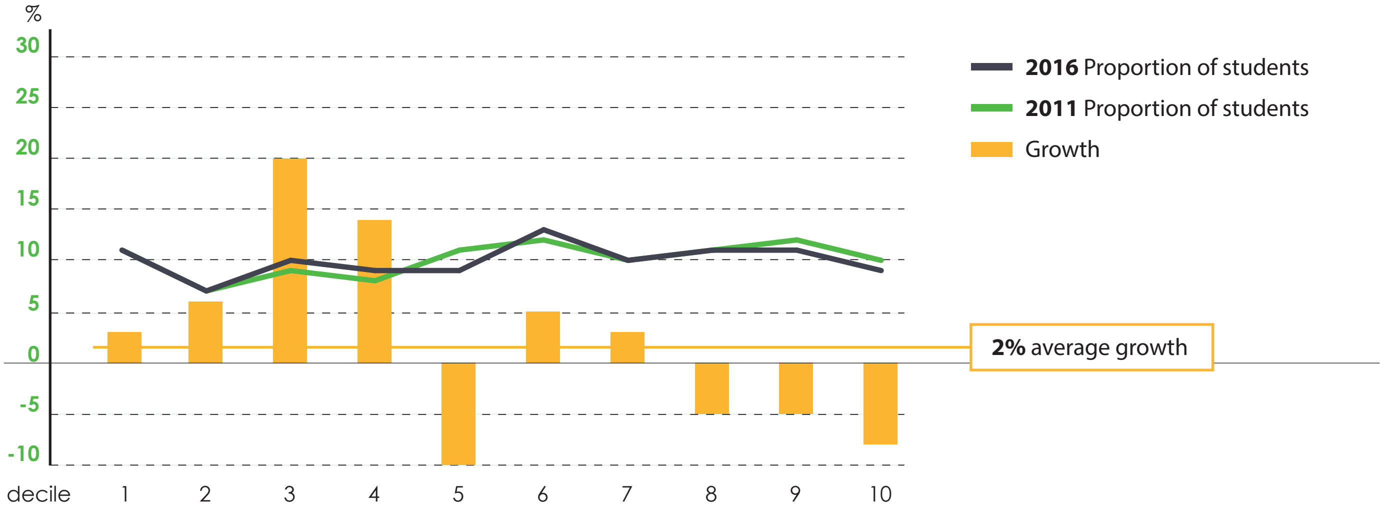
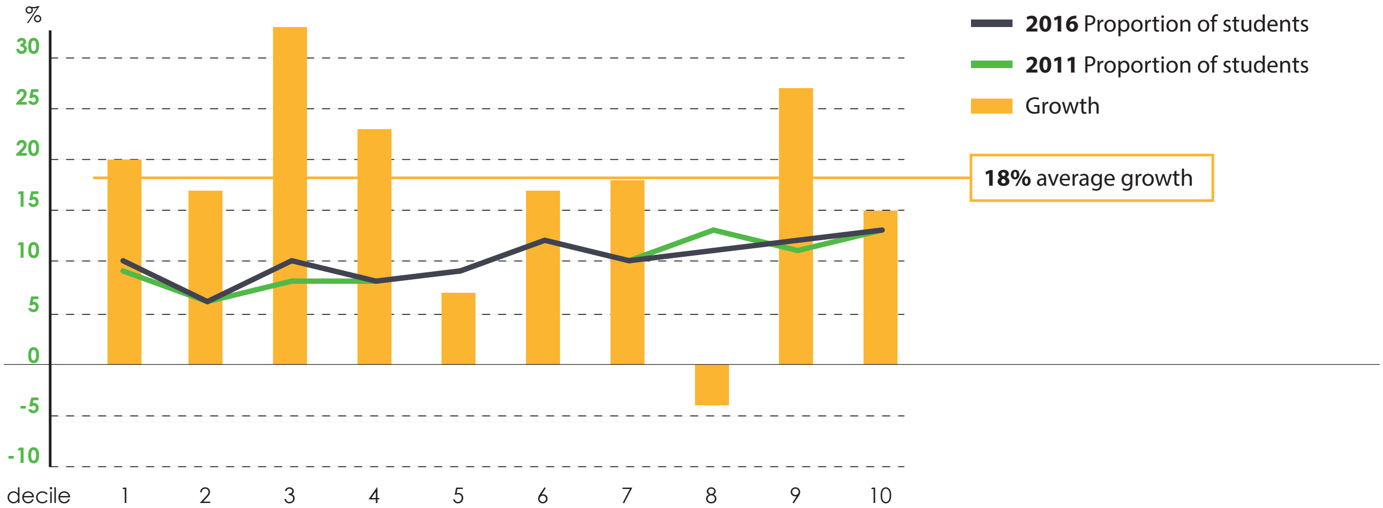


Figure 7: Proportion of Secondary Students and Percentage Change in Student Numbers, by Family Income Deciles, 2011 to 2016



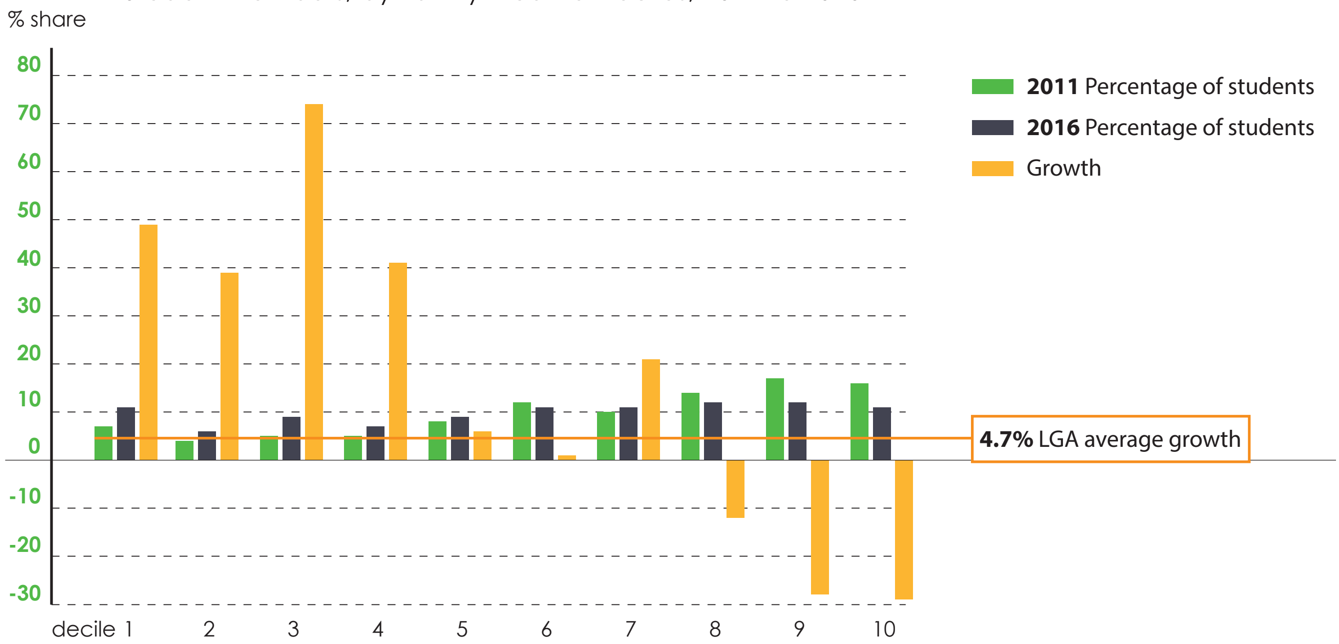
CASE STUDY: Mackay LGA

The 2016 Census of Population and Housing data indicates that overall, the number of school students residing in Mackay Local Government Area (LGA) increased by 4.7% over the 2011 to 2016 period. While there was overall growth in this LGA there was a decline of 0.8% in primary student numbers which was offset by growth of 13% in secondary student numbers.

In the same period, perhaps due to the down-turn in the resources sector, the distribution of students across family income deciles in the Mackay LGA changed significantly. The proportion of school students in each of the three highest deciles decreased, while the proportion of students in the lowest deciles increased.

This change was combined with significant reductions in the number of students with family incomes in the highest deciles and significant increases in the number of students in the lowest deciles, with the number of students in Decile 3 increasing by 75% compared to a decline of nearly 30% in both Decile 9 and Decile 10 (refer Figure 8).

Figure 8: Mackay Regional LGA – Proportion of Students and Percentage Change in Student Numbers, by Family Income Deciles, 2011 to 2016








Clockwise from top left: The Lakes College; The Glennie School; Brisbane Christian College; The Glenleighden School; Genesis Christian College; Stuartholme

Change in Independent School Participation Between 2011 and 2016

Change in Independent School Participation

Data from the Census of Population and Housing in 2011 and 2016 indicate that the proportion of students attending independent schools remained relatively stable over the period. Participation decreased by only 0.2 percentage points over this period, from 15.8% in 2011 to 15.6% in 2016. Gains of 0.1 percentage points were made by both the Catholic and government sector.

A comparison of participation rates by income decile between 2011 and 2016 indicates that the reduction in the proportion of students attending independent schools was not equally distributed across family income deciles.

The independent schooling sector experienced modest reductions (<1%), in the six lowest family income deciles, and a modest increase in Decile 7.

Significant reductions occurred in Deciles 8 and 9, with a 3 and 2 percentage point reduction, respectively. The only decile where independent schools gained more than a 1 percentage point increase was in the Decile 10 (refer Figure 9).

In contrast, Catholic schools maintained similar proportions of students attending schools in most deciles, with the exception of the two lowest family income deciles where reductions occurred, and in Decile 9 where the proportion of students attending Catholic schools increased (refer Figure 9).

Independent schools experienced slight market share losses in both primary and secondary from 2011 to 2016.

The proportion of primary students attending independent schools decreased by 0.2 percentage points, while the proportion of secondary students attending independent schools decreased by 0.5 percentage points. Catholic schools also experienced a reduction in the proportion of primary students (0.7 percentage points), but experienced a 1.1 percentage point increase in the proportion of secondary students catered for by these schools.

Figure 9: Change in Market Share by Schooling Sector, by Family Income Deciles 2011–2016 (left), and Number of Students across Family Deciles 2016 (right): All

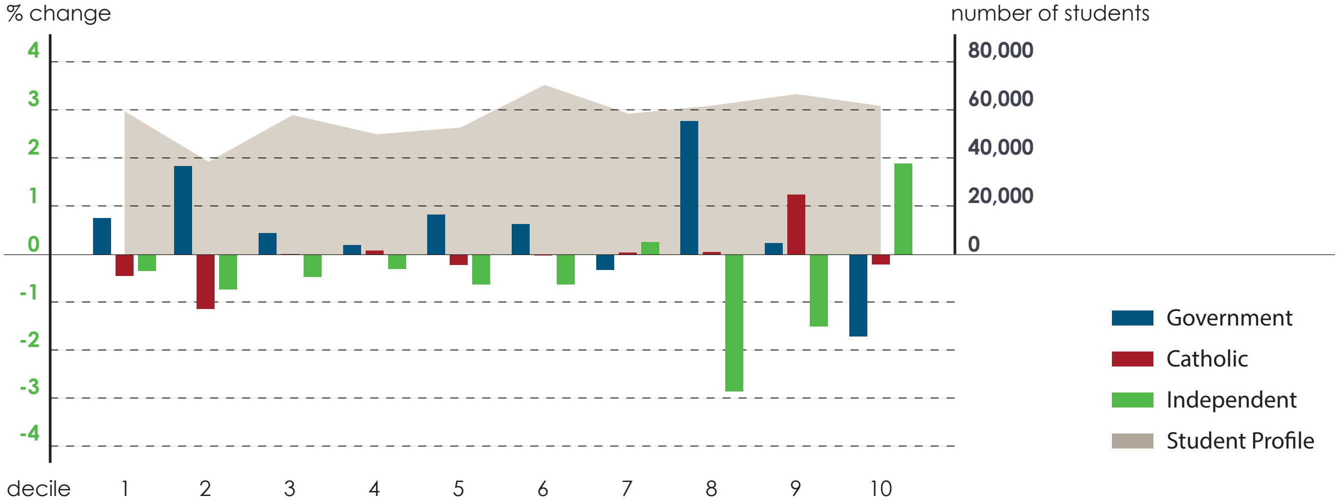


Figure 10: Change in Market Share by Schooling Sector, by Family Income Deciles 2011–2016 (left), and Number of Students across Family Deciles 2016 (right): Primary

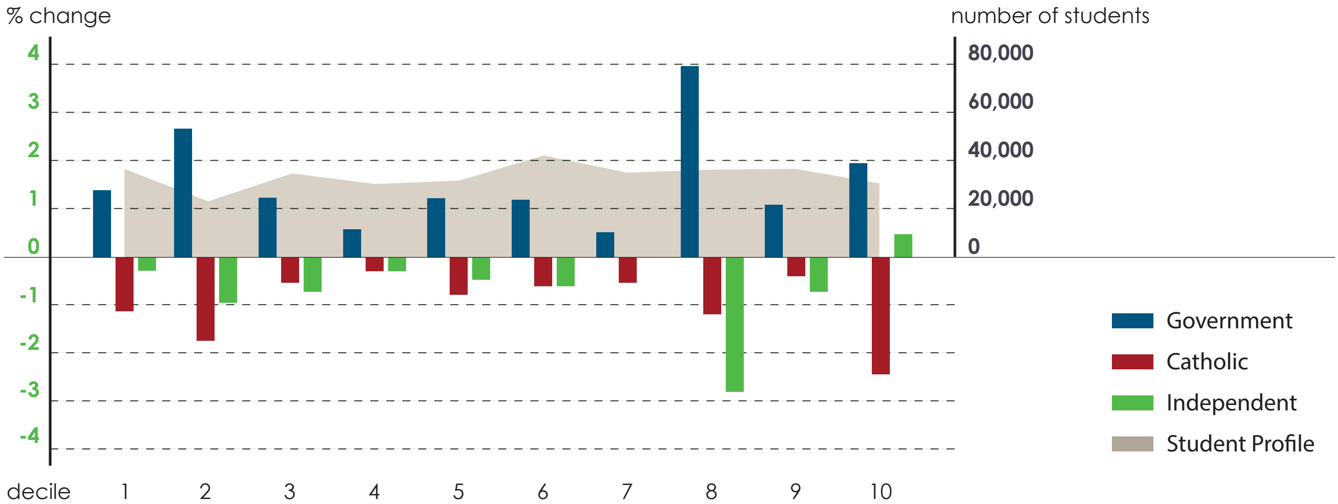
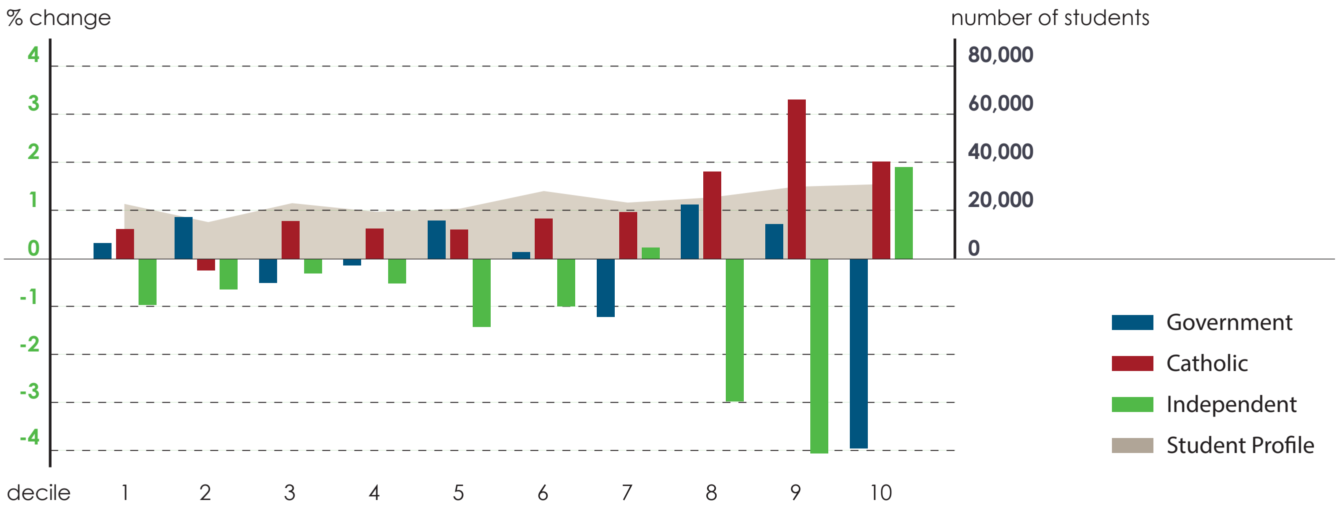


Figure 11: Change in Market Share by Schooling Sector, by Family Income Deciles 2011–2016 (left), and Number of Students across Family Deciles 2016 (right): Secondary



The loss of market share by both independent and Catholic schools in primary resulted in a 0.9 percentage point gain by the government schooling sector, which experienced a similar reduction in secondary market share as the independent school sector (-0.5 percentage points).

A similar pattern of market share loss by independent schools across family income deciles is apparent for both primary and secondary schooling levels (refer Figure 10 and Figure 11).

In primary, independent schools experienced reductions in market share across all family income deciles, except for the highest family income decile where the sector experienced a 0.5 percentage point gain (refer Figure 10). The greatest percentage point loss of market share occurred in the family income Decile 8. Catholic schools experienced a market share loss across all deciles, with greatest market share losses in the family income Deciles 10 and 2.

In secondary, the only deciles where independent schools did not lose market share were in Deciles 7 and 10. The greatest losses were in Decile 9 (4 percentage points) and Decile 8 (3 percentage points).

The Catholic sector's secondary market share is significantly different. Market share gains were made across most family income deciles, with greatest gains in the three highest family income deciles. Gains made in Deciles 8 and 9 have occurred at the expense of the independent school sector.

In Summary

Independent school participation rates remained relatively stable over the period.

2011 → 2016

15.8% → 15.6%

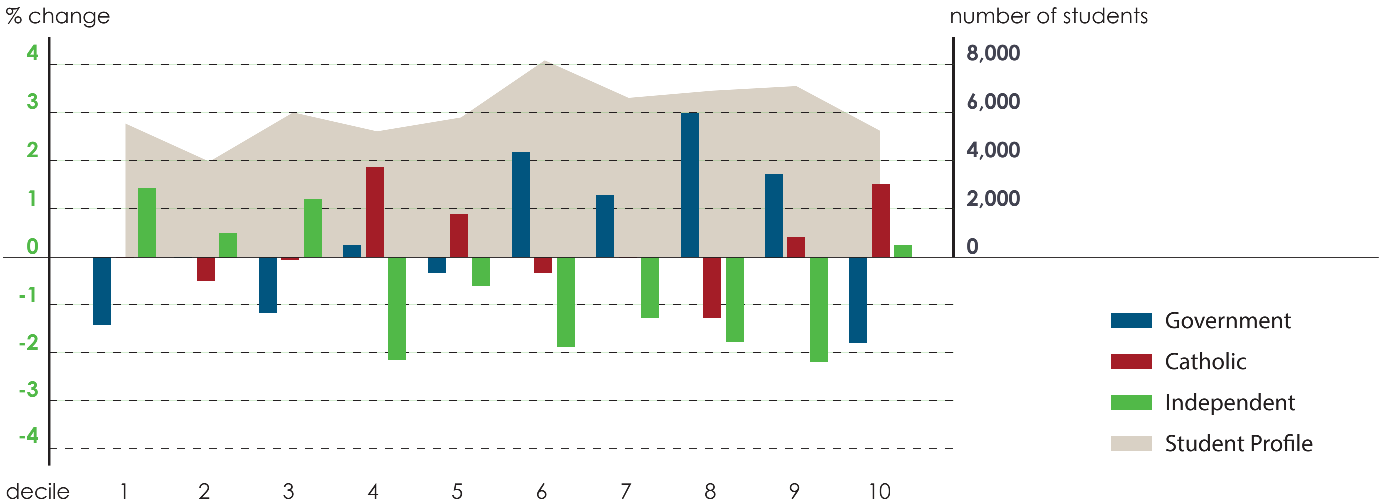
CASE STUDY:

Moreton Bay LGA

The 2016 Census of Population and Housing data indicates nearly one-third (32%) of school students residing in Moreton Bay Local Government Area (LGA) had family income levels in the three highest deciles. This compares to just over one-quarter (26%) of students having family income levels in the lowest three deciles. The balance of students, 42% of students, had family income levels in Decile 4 to 7.

Over the five years from 2011 to 2016, independent schools gained a higher proportion of students in the three lowest family income deciles but lost market share in all other deciles, except for the highest decile where market-share remained relatively stable. Gains in the lowest deciles were made primarily from the government sector, while losses were primarily to the Catholic sector in the lower deciles (Deciles 4 and 5) and to the government sector in Deciles 6 to 9. Catholic schools also increased market share by 1.5 percentage points in the Decile 10, with gains made from the government sector (refer Figure 12).

Figure 12: Moreton Bay LGA Change in Market Share by Schooling Sector, by Family Income Deciles 2011–2016 (left), and Number of Students across Family Deciles 2016 (right)



Independent Schools Queensland
choice & diversity

Independent Schools Queensland Ltd
ACN 614 893 140 **ABN** 88 662 995 577

Head Office
1st Floor, 96 Warren Street, Spring Hill Q 4000
PO Box 957, Spring Hill Q 4004
P (07) 3228 1515 **F** (07) 3228 1575
E office@isq.qld.edu.au **www.isq.qld.edu.au**

Professional Learning Centre
Level 5, 500 Queen Street, Brisbane Q 4000
PO Box 957, Spring Hill Q 4004
P (07) 3228 1507
E events@isq.qld.edu.au