

Students with Disability Review

to strengthen the inclusion, learning and wellbeing of students with disability



Profile of Students with Disability in South Australian Catholic Schools

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Context of paper

The *Profile of Students with Disability in South Australian Catholic Schools* is one component of the suite of material that has been generated by the independent Review of Students with Disability established by the South Australian Commission for Catholic Schools in 2020.

The Students with Disability webpage at www.cesa.catholic.edu.au/news/students-with-disability-review includes the *Review Purpose and Process* and the *Review Discussion Paper*.

The webpage also includes reports and analyses that have come out of the Review's engagement and consultation process:

- Students with Disability Conversations Report
- Parents/Carers/Guardians Survey Report
- Community Members Survey Report
- Principals of Catholic schools Survey Report
- School Staff Survey Report
- Catholic Education Office Staff Survey Report.

In parallel with the stakeholder engagement and consultation process, the Review has undertaken the following further activities:

- visited the following groups of schools to interview Principals, Inclusion Coordinators and other leadership team members to gain their insights into each school's Students with Disability programs and structures and to gather relevant documentation in:
 - mainstream schools in country and metropolitan locations
 - the five schools with special units
 - the flexible learning school and two special schools
- interviewed members of Catholic Education's Executive Leadership Team
- interviewed Catholic Education's School Quality Performance Consultants
- interviewed members of the Catholic Education's Learning Diversity and Equity team
- consulted with external disability experts, including the State Government's Disability Advocate
- consulted with Department of Education senior officers with responsibility for Disability policy and programs
- consulted with senior officers from a Local Area Coordination agency responsible for providing NDIS programs and support services
- analysed NDIS Reports and the Reports of major Disability Reviews in other Australian states and territories
- analysed NCCD data related to students with disability in Catholic schools in South Australia.

Purpose of paper

The purpose of the *Profile of Students with Disability in South Australian Catholic Schools* paper is to gain a better understanding of the profile of students with disability in Catholic schools.

The paper uses NCCD data from the 2020 annual census that schools provided in August this year.

The paper presents tables and graphs that address:

- the number and percentage of students with disability according to their Levels of Adjustment and Categories of Disability
- their gender breakdown
- their enrolment pattern across school-year levels
- the categories of school in which they are enrolled.

How are students with disability identified and supported in South Australian Catholic Schools?

All schools in Australia are required to assist students with disability in accordance with the *Disability Discrimination Act (1992)* and the *Disability Standards for Education (2005)*.

South Australian Catholic schools, as do all Australian schools, identify students with disability through the Australian Government's Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD). The NCCD records the Levels of Adjustments required to address the functional impact of a student's disability.

These adjustments also apply to students' different Categories of Disability which may be physical, cognitive, sensory, or social-emotional in nature. It is possible for more than one category of disability to apply to an individual student; however the NCCD only records one category for each student.

A disability diagnosis is one piece of evidence used to make a professional judgment on the need for adjustments. However a diagnosis may not in itself provide sufficient information about adjustments to support participation in an education and thus inclusion in the NCCD.

In the NCCD, there are four Levels of Adjustments:

Support provided within quality differentiated teaching practice (QDTP): adjustments are provided through usual school processes, without drawing on additional resources.

Supplementary adjustments: adjustments that are supplementary to the strategies and resources already available for all students within the school; adjustments occur for particular activities at specific times throughout the week.

Substantial adjustments: support needs are provided with essential adjustments and considerable adult assistance; adjustments to the usual educational program occur at most times on most days.

Extensive adjustments: Students with disability and very high support needs are provided with extensive targeted measures and sustained levels of intensive support; adjustments are highly individualised, comprehensive, ongoing, and occur at all times.

Schools submit NCCD data to the Australian Government at the time of the annual enrolment census in August of each year.

The Government issues Guidelines for the NCCD that require schools to keep records and evidence of the adjustments they provide. Schools are required to follow defined processes. They are also subject to external audits of the NCCD data.

What is the number and proportion of students with disability in South Australian Catholic schools?

Every Catholic school in South Australia includes students with disability. They are enrolled in every Catholic primary school, secondary school, and R-12 college. They are present in both country and metropolitan locations and across all socio-economic settings.

Table 1 provides the breakdown of the Levels of Adjustments that apply for students with disability in South Australian Catholic primary and secondary year levels across country and regional locations. The data for the two special schools in metropolitan Adelaide are reported separately.

For the purpose of the table, metropolitan refers to all schools equal to or closer than Murray Bridge.

Table 1: All CESA schools NCCD 2020 – Levels of Adjustment

	QDTP		Supplementary		Substantial		Extensive	
	FTE	QDTP FTE as % of total Primary/Secondary student enrolment	FTE	Supplementary FTE as % of total Primary/Secondary student enrolment	FTE	Substantial FTE as % of total Primary/Secondary student enrolment	FTE	Extensive FTE as % of total Primary/Secondary student enrolment
Country	517.2	9.49%	499.8	9.17%	122.7	2.25%	16.5	0.30%
Primary	293.0	8.71%	384.8	11.44%	83.7	2.49%	10.5	0.31%
Secondary	224.2	10.80%	115.0	5.52%	39.0	1.87%	6.0	0.29%
Metro	2,564.9	6.27%	3,971.4	9.70%	1,057.3	2.58%	229.1	0.56%
Primary	1,264.0	5.96%	2,300.0	10.84%	522.9	2.46%	53.1	0.25%
Secondary	1,300.9	6.60%	1,671.4	8.48%	534.4	2.71%	65.8	0.33%
Primary Special							38.0	0.18%
Secondary Special							72.2	0.37%
Grand Total	3,082.1	6.64%	4,471.2	9.64%	1,180.0	2.54%	245.6	0.53%

*Metro = all schools geographically equal to or closer to Adelaide than Murray Bridge

Based on the NCCD Levels of Adjustment, the table demonstrates both an overall consistency, however with some variations, in the enrolment of students with disability in Catholic schools relative to total student enrolments:

- Overall in 2020, students with disability are 19.36% of total enrolments; with 12.71% receiving Supplementary, Substantial or Extensive Levels of Adjustment.
- For the QDTP Level of Adjustment there are proportionally more students in country schools than in metropolitan schools.
- For Supplementary and Substantial Levels of Adjustment there is generally the same proportion of students in country primary year levels as there are in metropolitan primary year levels; however there is a greater proportion of students with these Levels of Adjustment in metropolitan secondary years than there are in country secondary years.
- For the Extensive Level of Adjustment, any analysis using percentages needs to take into account the relatively small number of students across the different settings. The greater proportion of students with an Extensive Level of Adjustment is also related to the existence of the five special units and the two special schools in metropolitan Adelaide.

Is the number of students with disability increasing in South Australian Catholic schools?

As Catholic schools in South Australia have become more familiar with the NCCD requirements, together with the increased number and complexity of students with disability, the number of students recorded on the NCCD has steadily increased.

The following table shows the Level of Adjustments from the NCCD data from the annual enrolment census for 2019 and 2020. The table presents the percentage increase between the two years.

It should be noted that the proportion of students with disability in each year is dependent on the total number of student enrolments for the corresponding year.

Table 2: All CESA schools NCCD change 2019 to 2020

	2019			2020			NCCD FTE growth	NCCD % growth
	NCCD FTE	% of Enrolment	% of NCCD	NCCD FTE	% of Enrolment	% of NCCD		
QDTP	3396.2	7.43%	39.15%	3082.1	6.64%	34.33%	-314.1	-9.25%
Supplementary	4031.1	8.82%	46.46%	4471.2	9.64%	49.80%	440.1	10.92%
Substantial	1018.0	2.23%	11.73%	1180.0	2.54%	13.14%	162.0	15.91%
Extensive	230.4	0.50%	2.66%	245.6	0.53%	2.74%	15.2	6.60%
Total NCCD Students	8675.7	18.99%	100%	8978.9	19.36%	100%	303.2	3.49%
Total Student Enrolment	45687.2			46385.4			698.2	1.53%

The table demonstrates that the proportion of students with disability overall increased from 18.99% in 2019 to 19.36% of total enrolments.

Between the two years, the proportion of students with disability with the QDTP Level of Adjustment decreased from 7.43% to 6.64% of total enrolments, or a rate of decrease by 9.3%.

For the Supplementary Level of Adjustment there was an increase from 8.82% of total enrolments to 9.64%, or a rate of increase by 10.9%.

For the Substantial Level of Adjustment there was an increase from 2.23% of total enrolments to 2.54%, or a rate of increase by 15.9%.

For the Extensive Level of Adjustment there was an increase from 0.50% of total enrolments to 0.53%, or a rate of increase by 6.6%.

What is the number and proportion of students in each NCCD Category of Disability?

Based on the NCCD Guidelines, schools are required to record one of four Categories of Disability for each student. It should be noted that only one Category can be recorded for a student:

- Physical
- Sensory
- Cognitive
- Social-emotional

The following table indicates the overall percentage of students with disability recorded for each Category of Disability in South Australian Catholic schools from the 2020 annual enrolment census.

Table 3: All CESA schools NCCD 2020 – Categories of Disability

	Cognitive		Physical		Sensory		Social-Emotional	
	FTE	Cognitive FTE as % of total Primary/Secondary student enrolment	FTE	Physical FTE as % of total Primary/Secondary student enrolment	FTE	Sensory FTE as % of total Primary/Secondary student enrolment	FTE	Social-Emotional as % of total Primary/Secondary student enrolment
Country	888.5	16.31%	54.0	0.99%	23.8	0.44%	237.7	4.36%
Primary	610.5	18.15%	38.0	1.13%	14.8	0.44%	155.5	4.62%
Secondary	278.0	13.34%	16.0	0.77%	9.0	0.43%	82.2	3.94%
Metro	5,543.4	13.54%	261.0	0.64%	172.6	0.42%	1,797.9	4.39%
Primary	3,062.5	14.43%	128.0	0.60%	95.6	0.45%	799.5	3.77%
Secondary	2,380.3	12.07%	129.4	0.66%	77.0	0.39%	992.4	5.03%
Primary Special	38.0	0.18%	2.6	0.01%			4.0	0.02%
Secondary Special	62.6	0.32%	1.0	0.01%			2.0	0.01%
Grand Total	6,431.9	13.87%	315.0	0.68%	196.4	0.42%	2,035.6	4.39%

*Metro = all schools geographically equal to or closer to Adelaide than Murray Bridge

What are the variations in school year level enrolments of students with disability?

The previous Table 1 provides a general overview of the enrolment of students with disability in primary and secondary settings according to their NCCD Levels of Adjustment.

Table 3 provides a similarly general overview of students with disability enrolments in primary and secondary settings for their Categories of Disability.

The following section provides a more detailed analysis of the pattern of enrolments of students with disability in the different year levels from Reception to Year 12. The data does not include the enrolment of students in the two special schools.

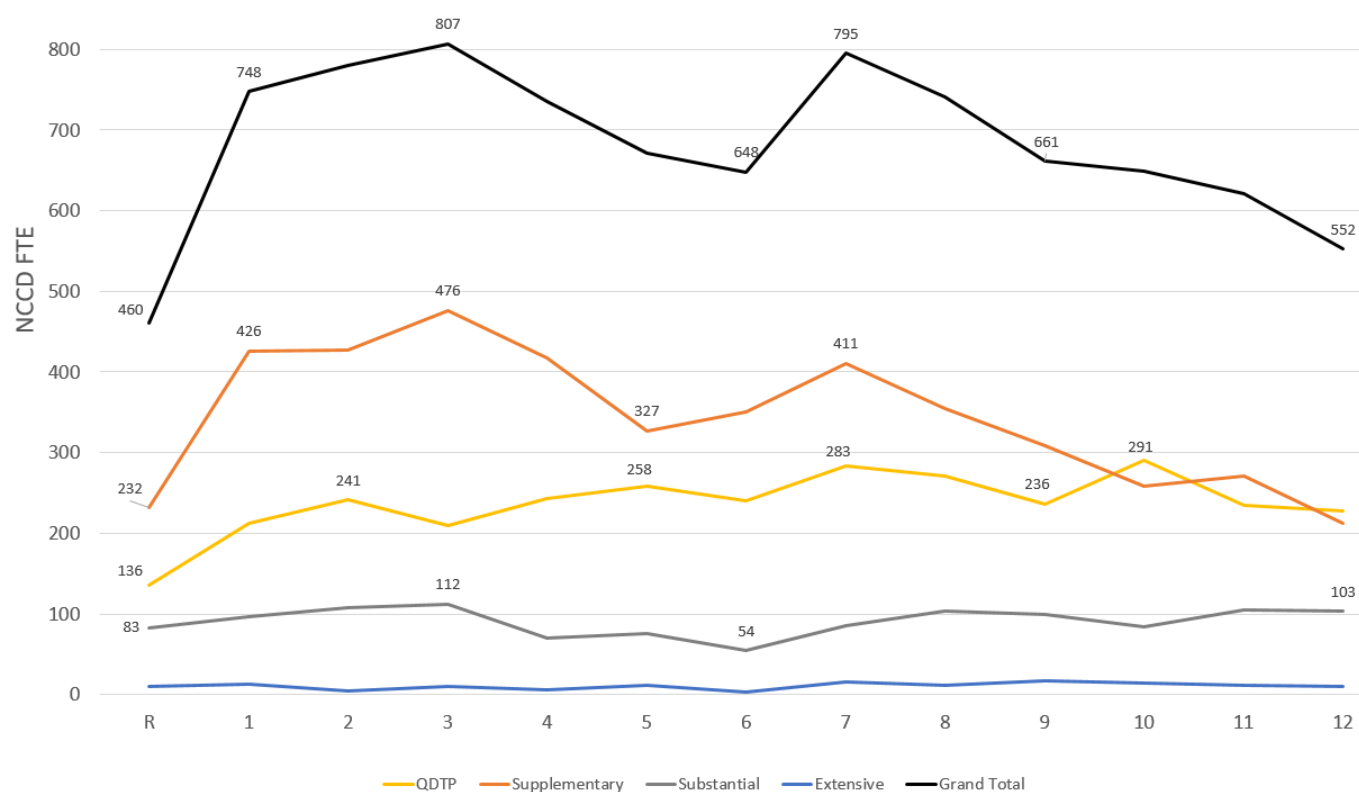
The following data presents year level breakdowns for each of the four Levels of Adjustment:

- Table 4 presents the numbers of students with Levels of Adjustment for each year level
- Graph 1 presents the same data in a graphical format.

Table 4: Student Numbers by Levels of Adjustment by Year Level

	Rec	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12
QDTP	136	212	241	209	243	258	240	283	271	236	291	234.7	227.4
Supplementary	232	425.8	427	476	417	327	350	411	355	308	259	271	212.4
Substantial	82.5	96.9	107.7	111.6	70	75.9	54	86	103	100	84.4	105	103
Extensive	9.5	13	4	10	6	11	3.5	15	12	17	14	11	9.4
Grand Total	460	747.7	779.7	806.6	736	671.9	647.5	795	741	661	648.4	621.7	552.2

Graph 1: Student Numbers by Levels of Adjustment by Year Level



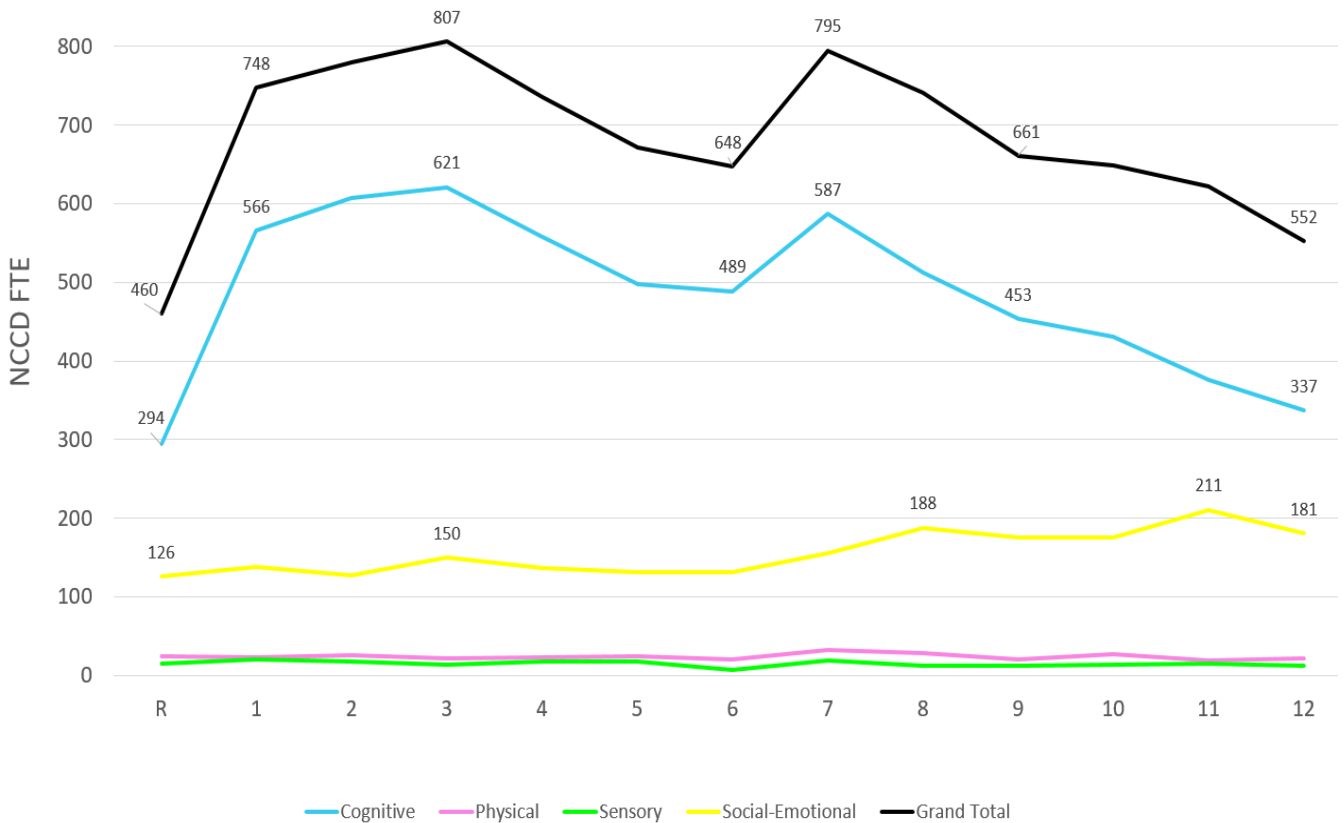
The following data presents the year level breakdowns for each of the four Categories of Disability.

- Table 5 presents the numbers of students in each Category of Disability for each year level
- Graph 2 presents the same data in a graphical format.

Table 5: Student Numbers by Categories of Disability by Year Level

	Rec	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12
Cognitive	294.2	565.8	608	621	558	498	489	587	512	453	431.4	376.7	337.2
Physical	25	23	26	22	23	24	20	33	28	20	27	19	21.4
Sensory	15	21	17.8	13.6	18	18	7	19	13	12	14	15	13
Social-Emotional	125.8	137.9	127.9	150	137	131.9	131.5	156	188	176	176	211	180.6
Grand Total	460	747.7	779.7	806.6	736	671.9	647.5	795	741	661	648.4	621.7	552.2

Graph 2: Student Numbers by Categories of Disability by Year Level

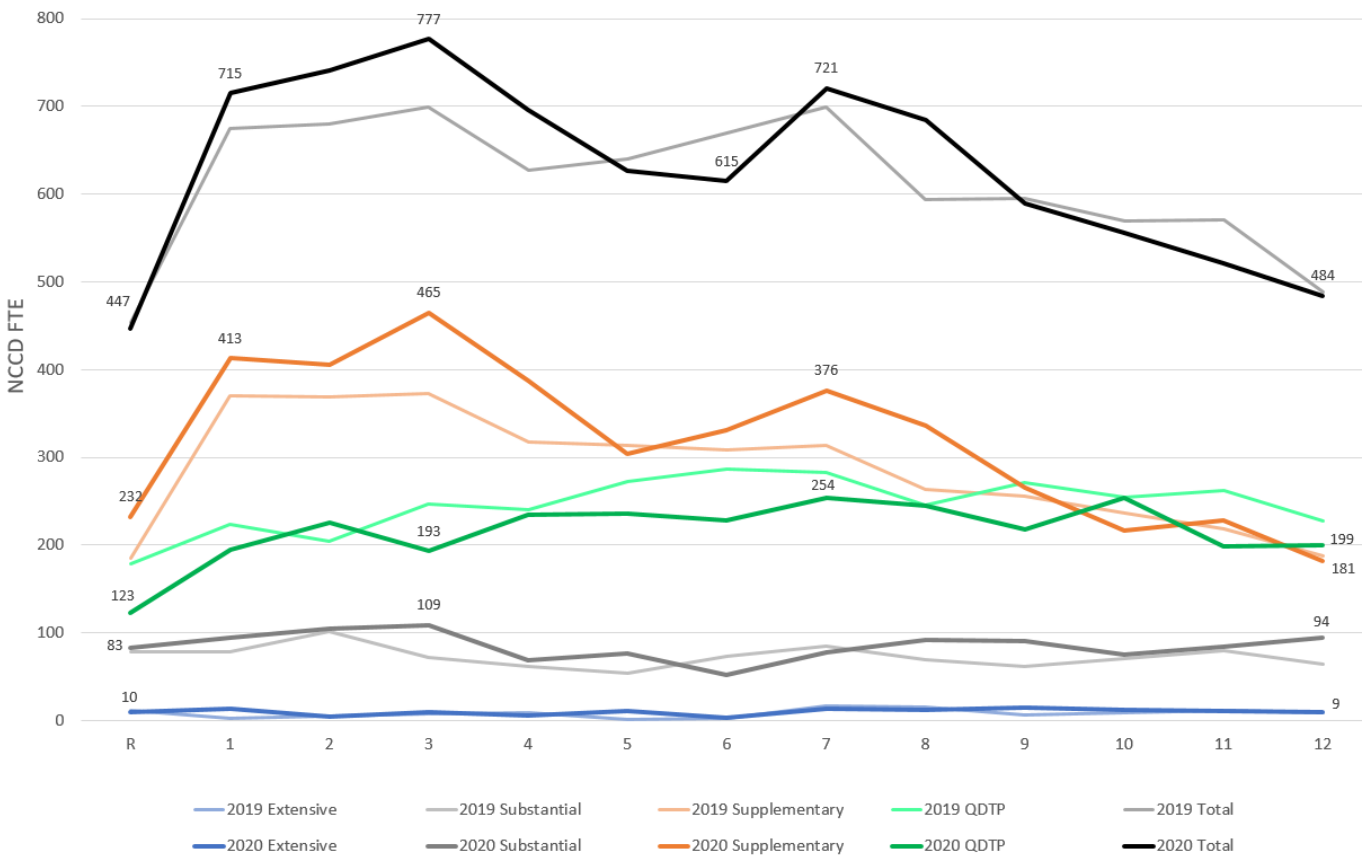


The data raises the issue of whether the varying numbers of students with Levels of Adjustment and Categories of Disability in successive year levels relates to the characteristics of a single cohort of students in the one calendar year or whether it applies to students moving from one year to the next.

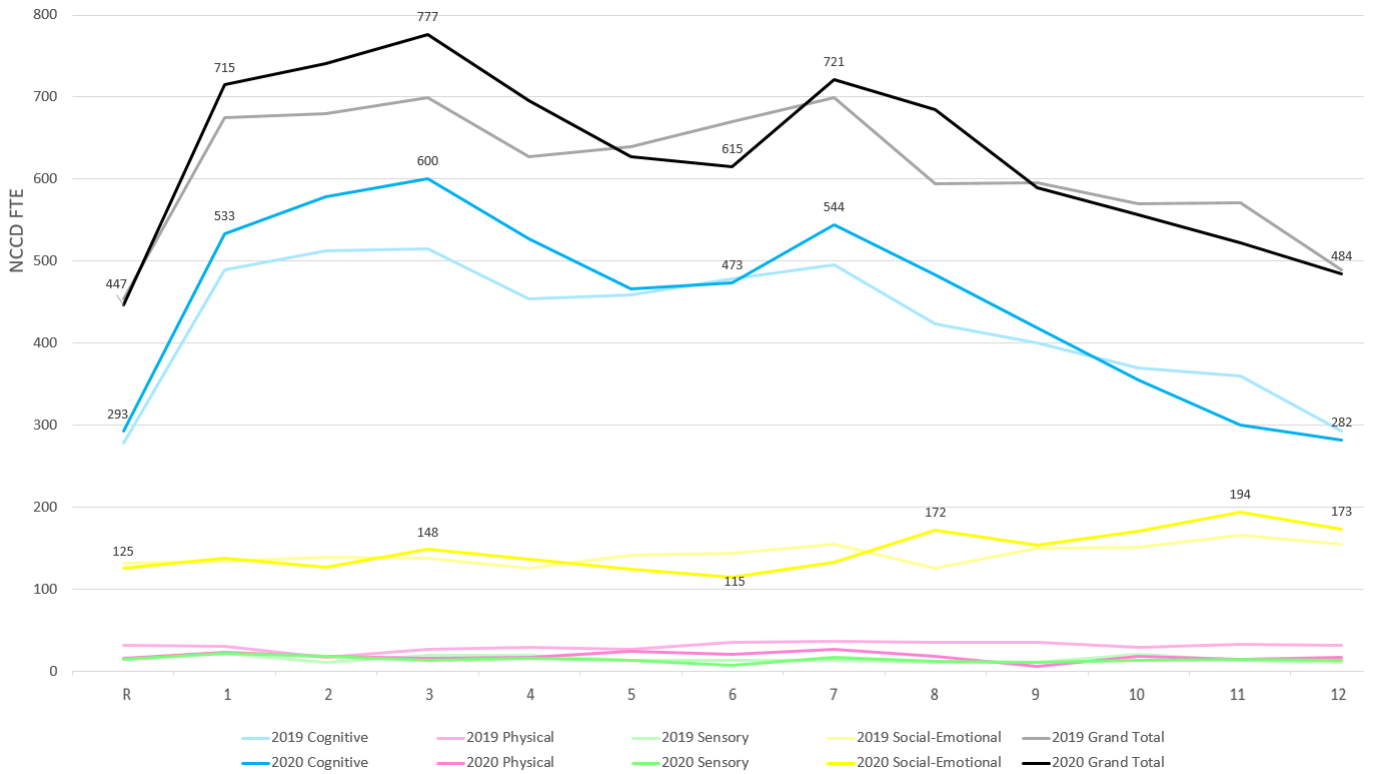
To explore the matter further, the Review endeavoured to analyse the same NCCD data set for 2019 as a comparison with the 2020 data. This was not a straightforward process, and it was not possible to obtain an exact matching data set. The nature of the data recorded also meant it was not possible to track the progression of individual students from one school year to the next.

Despite these limitations, the Review has been able to analyse the 2019 NCCD data relative to the 2020 data with the exception of the 2 special schools and five non-systemic Catholic schools as shown in Graphs 3 and 4.

Graph 3: 2019 and 2020 Student Numbers by Levels of Adjustment by Year Level



Graph 4: 2019 and 2020 Student Numbers by Category of Disability by Year Level



Taken together the data point to the value of a careful consideration of such matters as the:

- processes for identifying students with disability when they enter Reception and then making adjustments during the early years of primary schooling
- processes for making adjustments for students during the different school years
- arrangements for managing the transition of adjustments from one school year to the next
- departure data to analyse whether students may have left because of factors related to disability
- pathways of students with disability into SACE or the modified SACE.

What are the variations between males and females for Levels of Adjustment and Categories of Disability?

The 2020 NCCD Census data for all schools point to a gender differentiation between male and female students with disability.

Of the 8,978.9 FTE students with disability in CESA schools there are:

- 5,499.8 FTE males representing 61% of students with disability
- 3,479.1 FTE females representing 39% of students with disability.

Categories of Disability:

For the Cognitive Category of Disability there are 6,431.9 FTE students or 72% of the total NCCD. Of these students:

- 3,970.8 FTE are males representing 62% of students in the Cognitive Category
- 2,461.1 FTE are females representing 38% of students in the Cognitive Category.

For the Social-Emotional Category of Disability there are 2,035.6 FTE students or 23% of total NCCD. Of these students:

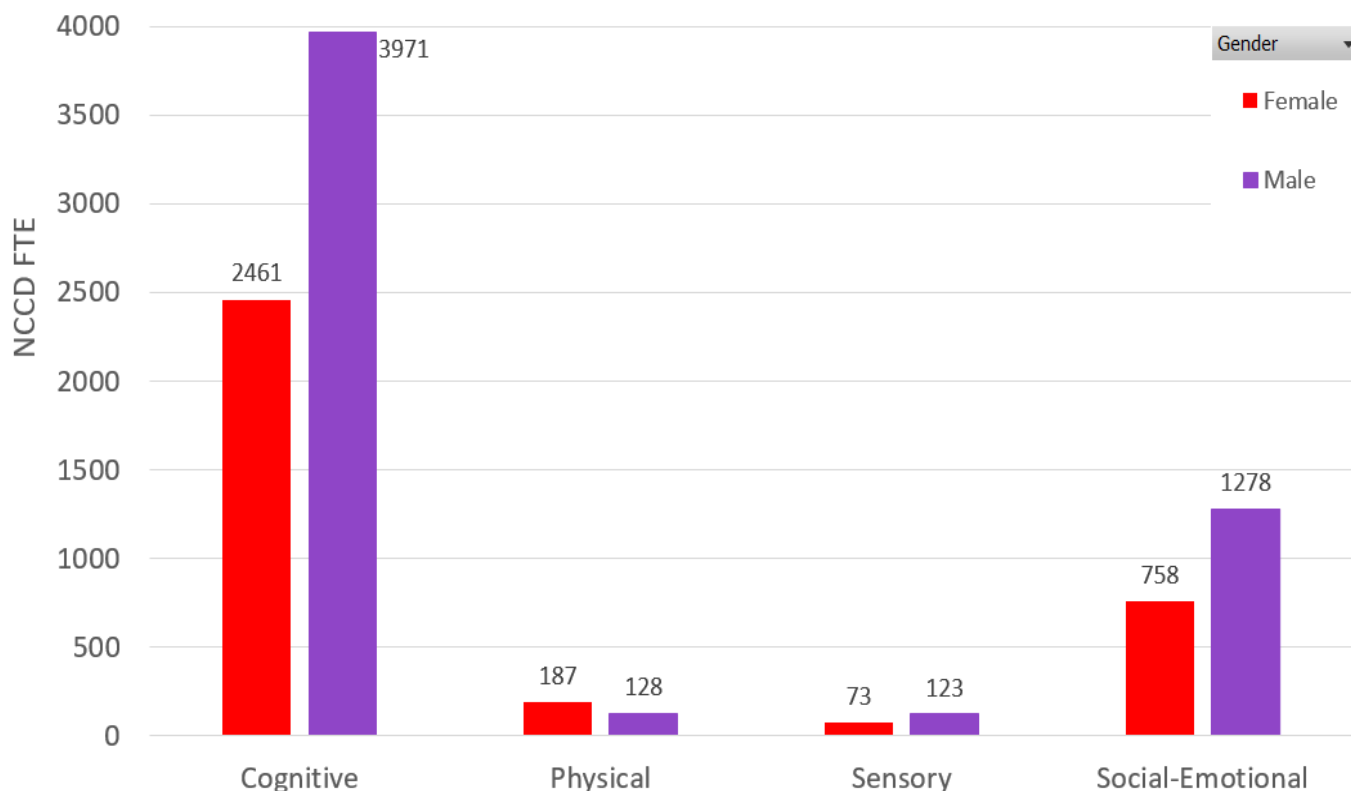
- 1,278 FTE are males representing 63% of students in the Social-emotional Category
- 757.6 FTE are females representing 37% of students in the Social-emotional Category.

The Sensory Category of Disability represents 3% of total NCCD. It also has 2:1 male-female ratio.

The Physical Category of Disability represents 2% of total NCCD. It has a 2:3 male-female ratio.

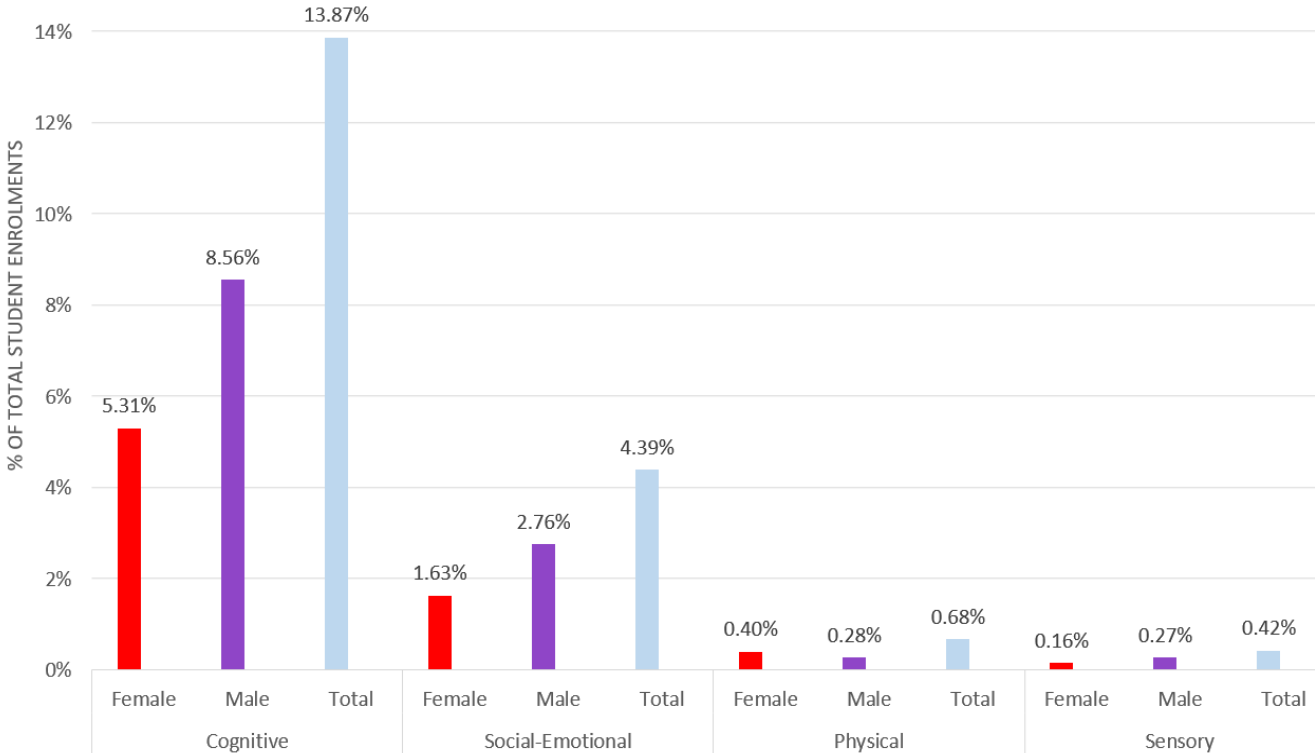
The differential relationship between the gender of students with disability and their Category of Disability is highlighted in the following graph.

Graph 5: Number of Male/Female students by Category of Disability

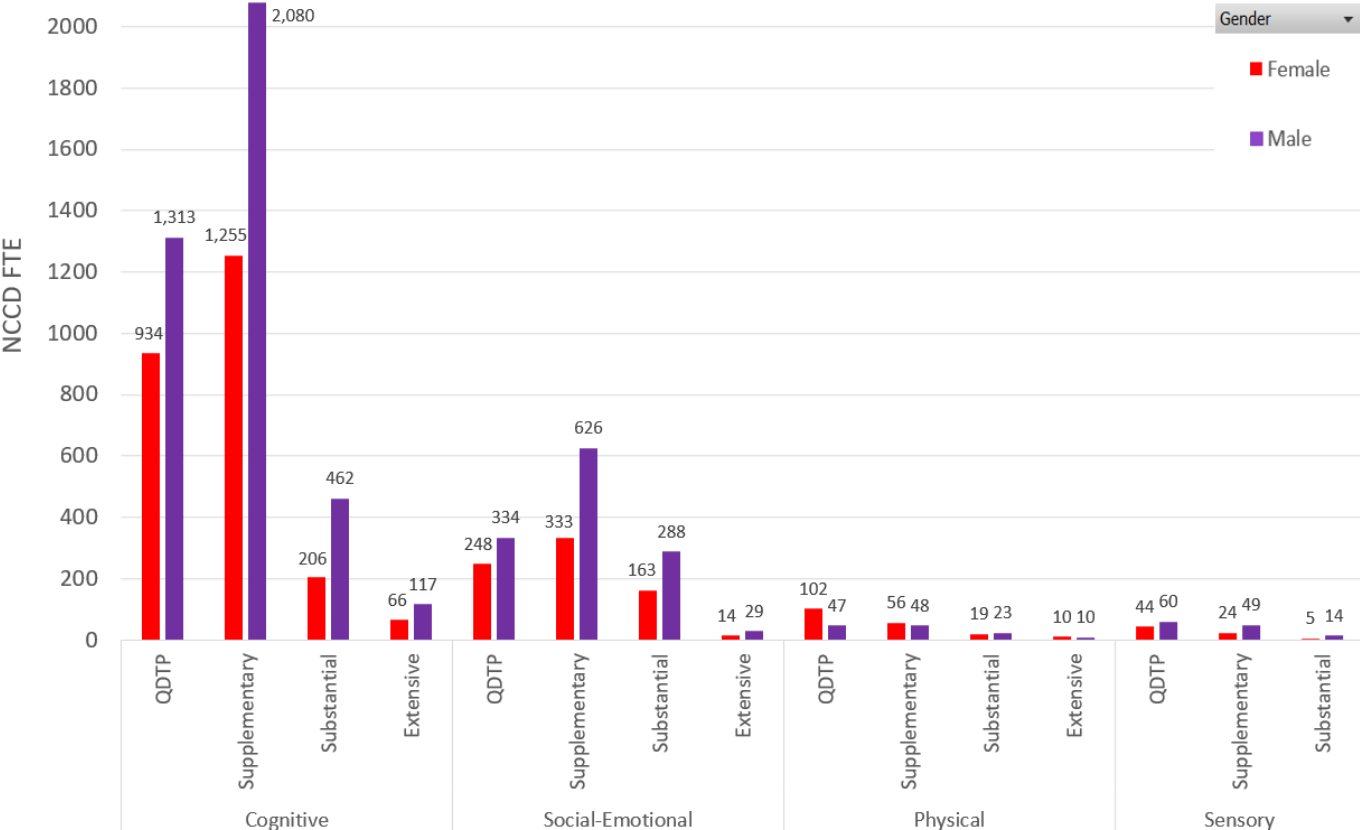


Graph 6 presents the same gender relationship for the Category of Disability as a percentage of total student enrolments.

Graph 6: Percentage of Male/Female students by Category of Disability



Graph 7: Number of Male/Female students by Level of Adjustment by Category of Disability

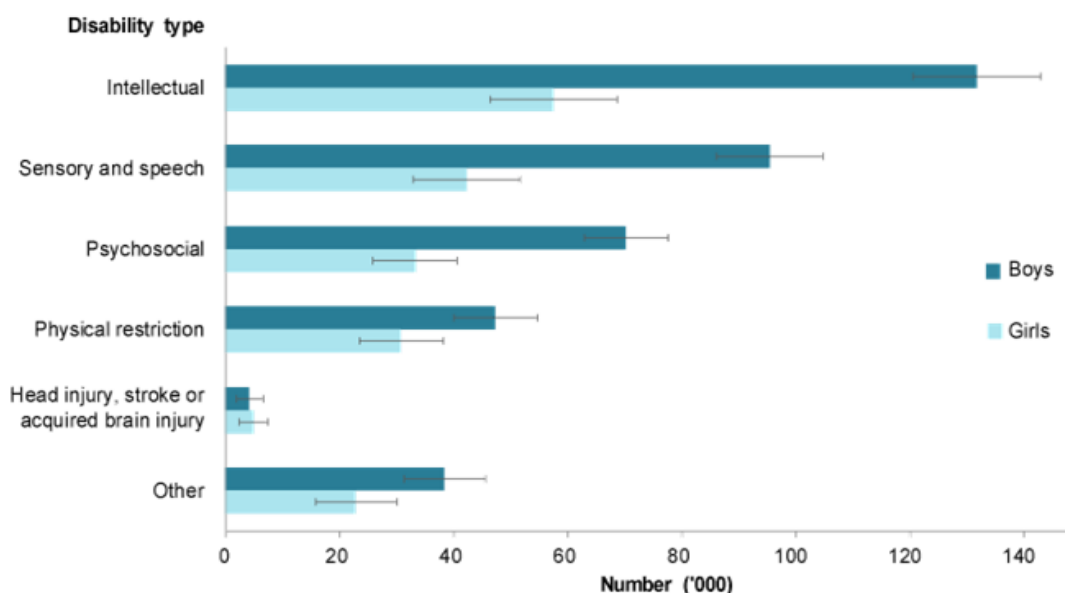


Graph 7 particularly highlights the gender differentiation in the Cognitive and Social-emotional Categories of Disability at the Supplementary and Substantial Levels of Adjustment.

It should be noted that the differential relationship of gender for students with disability is not unique to Catholic schools in South Australia.

The same differential relationship is present in data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS):

Figure 1: Children aged 0-14 with disability, by disability group, 2015



Another disability research report has stated: “The most comprehensive analysis of autism’s sex ratio, published in 2017, drew on data from 54 prevalence studies worldwide. That analysis estimated about 4.2 boys (*are diagnosed*) with autism for every girl.” (Source: www.spectrumnews.org).

Other research points to the gender imbalance varying with cognitive ability, with a male to female ratio of approximately 2:1 among individuals with co-occurring intellectual disability and a much larger ratio of as much as 6:1 among those with average to above average IQ.

This pattern may indicate that, as the autism spectrum has expanded to include more individuals without co-occurring intellectual disability, females in this group have not been adequately identified.

It is important, however, not to draw simplistic conclusions. Other studies have also found that even when presenting with comparable levels of socio-communicative impairment, females are less likely than males to be diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). They are more likely to be able to “camouflage” their social impairments on performance-based measures. This is particularly true in the case of females without co-occurring intellectual disability. (Source: www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov (USA National Library of Medicine))

Other reasons for higher rates of ASD diagnoses in males can relate to the experience and awareness of medical practitioners and also differences in the biological make-up of males and females.

The importance of schools having an understanding of the relationship between gender and disability was highlighted in many comments made by parents and community members in the Review surveys.

Where are students with disability enrolled?

The following graphs present the South Australian Catholic schools where students with disability are enrolled.

There are two groups of graphs:

- Primary settings: students with disability enrolments in Reception to Year 6
- Secondary settings: students with disability enrolments in Years 7 to 12.

For R-12 schools, students enrolled in the primary or secondary years have been assigned to the corresponding primary/secondary setting graphs.

For each school's enrolments there is a breakdown of the four Levels of Adjustment:

- QDTP
- Supplementary
- Substantial
- Extensive.

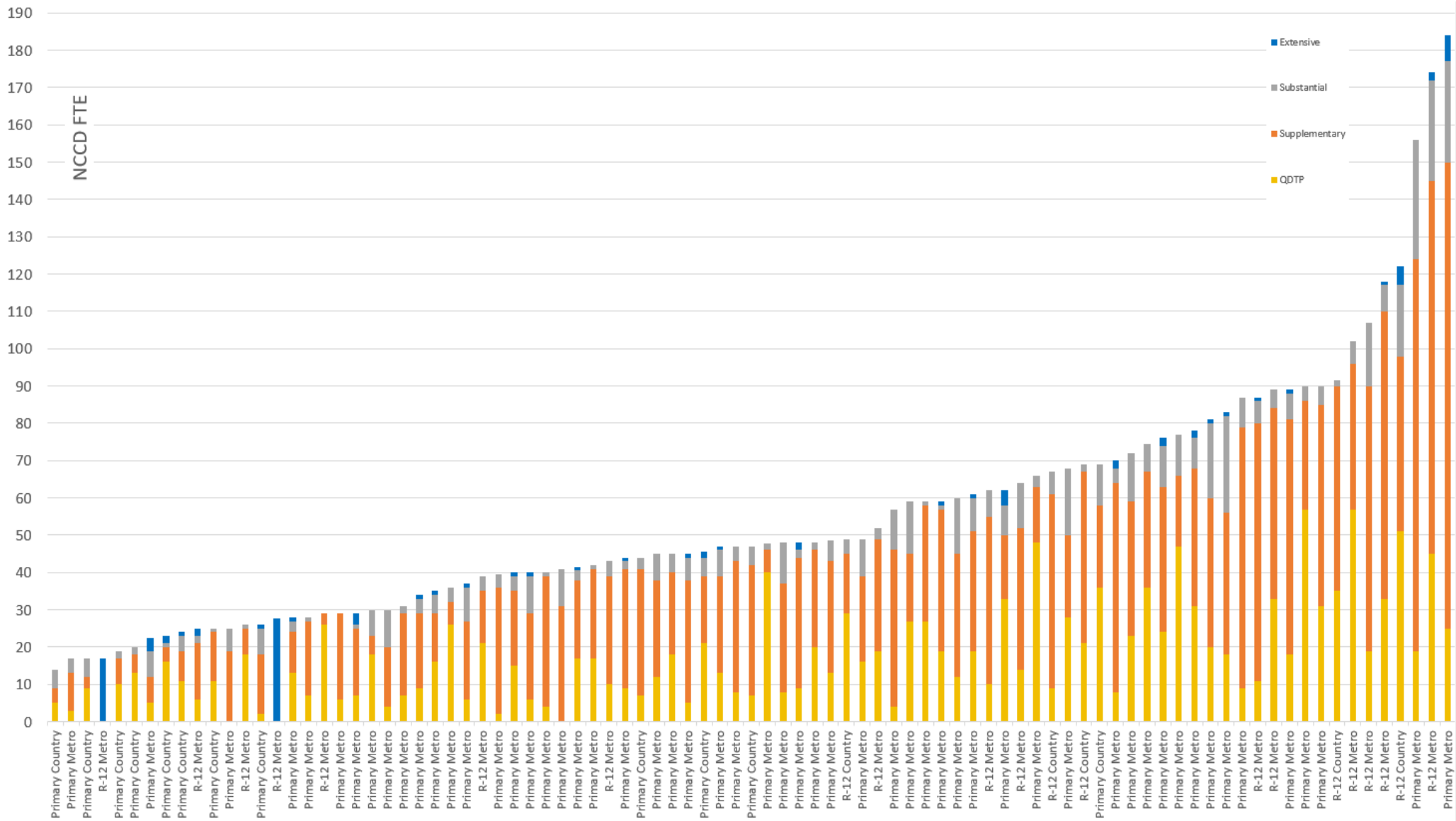
The school enrolment data of students with disability in each school are presented as:

- number of students with disability in each school
- percentage of students with disability within each school's total school enrolments.

The final two tables and graph present the distribution of Levels of Adjustment and Categories of Disability for students with disability in schools that are grouped according to the CESA Regions that are to apply from 2021 onwards.

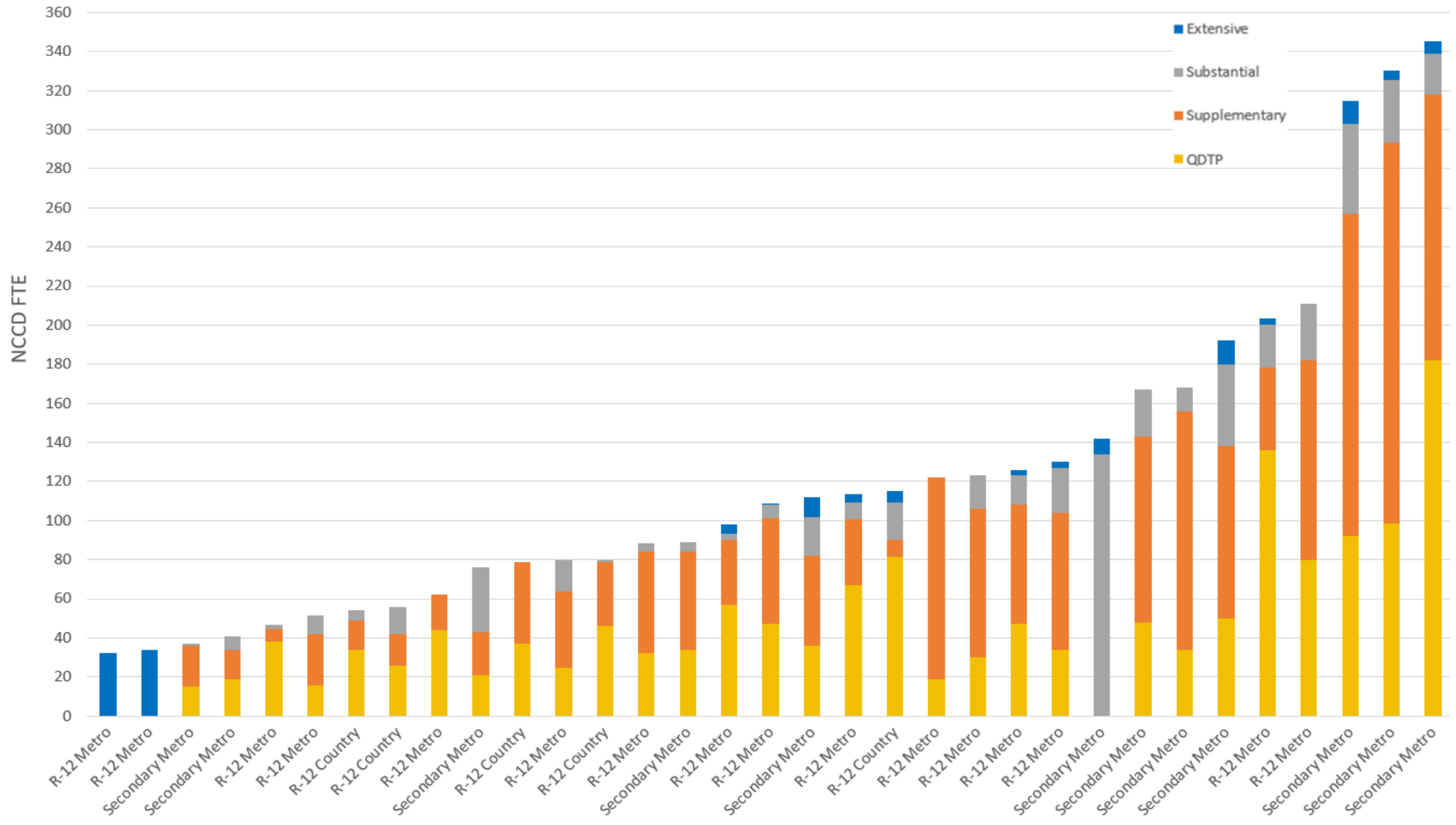
Primary settings

Graph 8: Numbers of Students with Levels of Adjustment by Primary Setting



Secondary settings

Graph 10: Numbers of Students with Levels of Adjustment by Secondary Setting



Graph 11: Percentage of Students with Levels of Adjustment by Secondary Setting

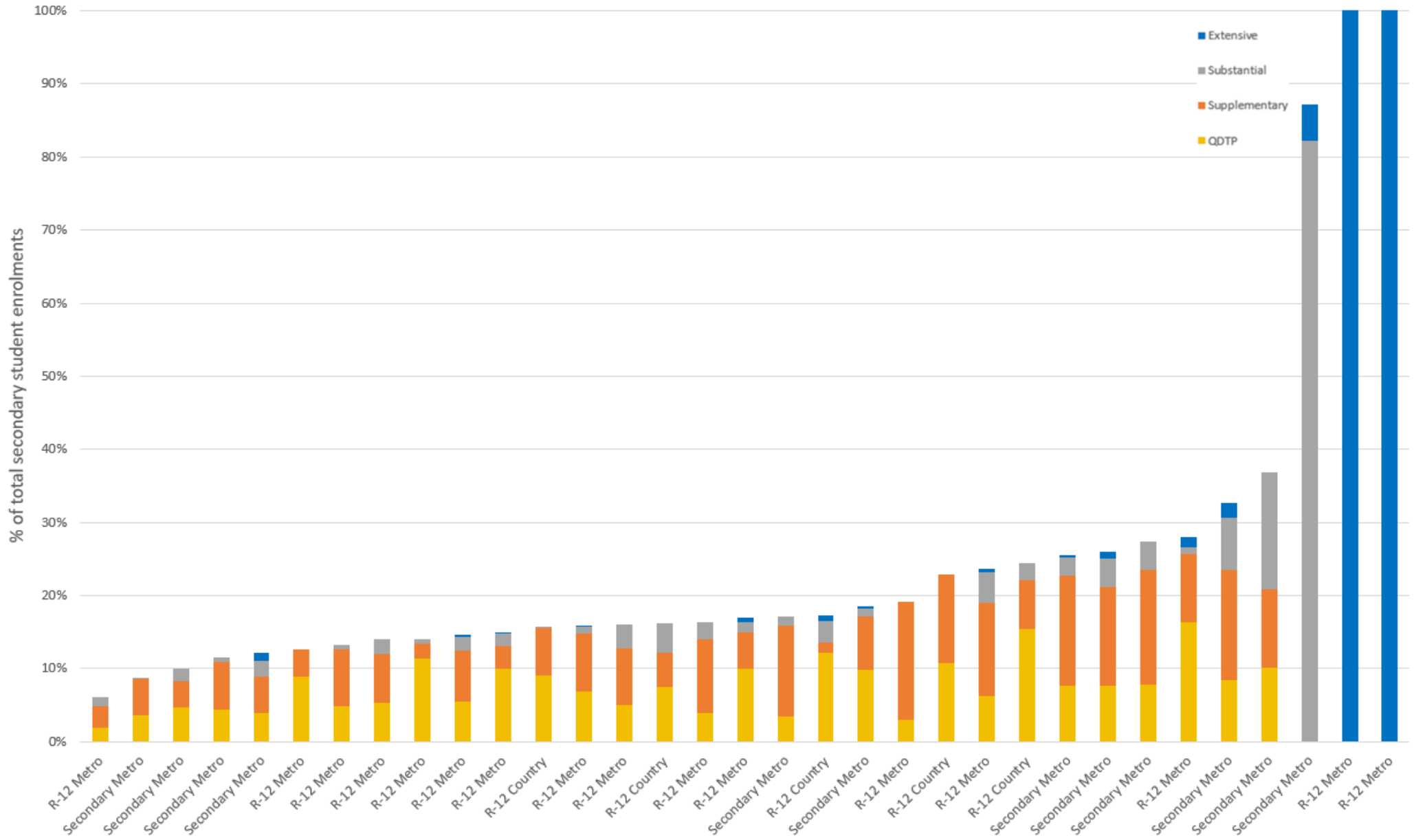


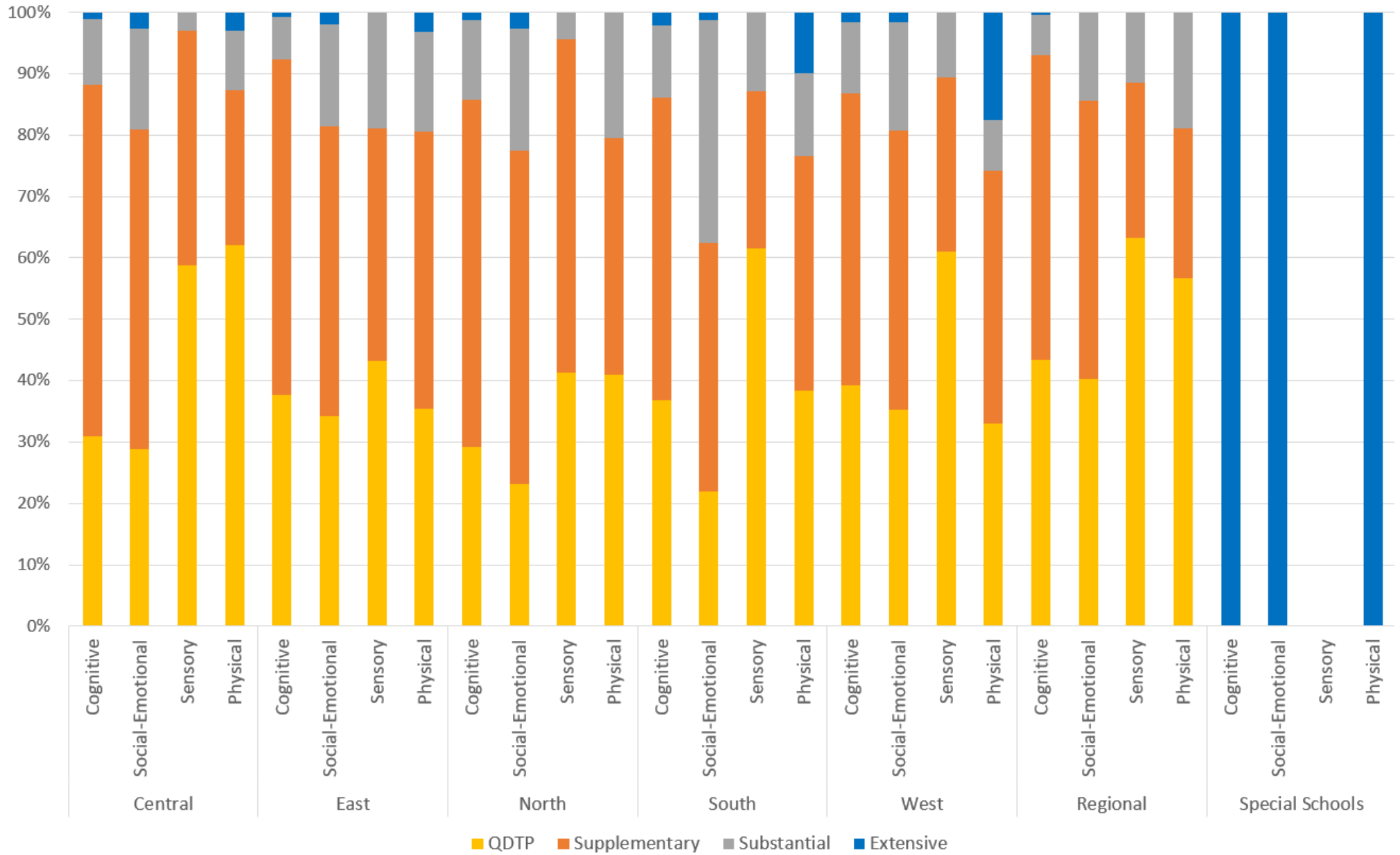
Table 6: All schools by 2021 Regions: Total FTE per Level of Adjustment

	QDTP	Supplementary	Substantial	Extensive	Total NCCD FTE	Total Student Enrolments	Total NCCD as % of Student Enrolments
West	546.8	663.4	183.6	27.9	1,421.7	8,152.9	17.44%
East (excl SS)	445.7	630.7	115.9	12.0	1,204.3	7,374.0	16.33%
Central	528.0	858.5	186.0	25.0	1,597.5	8,891.3	17.97%
North	492.0	962.0	252.0	26.0	1,732.0	8,886.4	19.49%
Regional	392.0	423.8	77.5	3.0	896.3	4,242.5	21.13%
South	677.6	932.8	365.0	41.5	2,016.9	8,726.6	23.11%
Sp Schools				110.2	110.2	111.7	98.66%
Total	3,082.1	4,471.2	1,180.0	245.6	8,978.9	46,385.4	19.36%

Table 7: All schools by 2021 Regions: Level of Adjustment FTE as % of Region's Student Enrolments

	QDTP	Supplementary	Substantial	Extensive	Total NCCD FTE	Total Student Enrolments	Total NCCD as % of Student Enrolments
West	6.7%	8.1%	2.3%	0.3%	1,421.7	8,152.9	17.44%
East (excl SS)	6.0%	8.6%	1.6%	0.2%	1,204.3	7,374.0	16.33%
Central	5.9%	9.7%	2.1%	0.3%	1,597.5	8,891.3	17.97%
North	5.5%	10.8%	2.8%	0.3%	1,732.0	8,886.4	19.49%
Regional	9.2%	10.0%	1.8%	0.1%	896.3	4,242.5	21.13%
South	7.8%	10.7%	4.2%	0.5%	2,016.9	8,726.6	23.11%
Sp Schools				98.7%	110.2	111.7	98.66%
Total	6.64%	9.64%	2.54%	0.53%	8,978.9	46,385.4	19.36%

Graph 12: All schools by 2021 Regions: Level of Adjustment as % of Category of Disability



Conclusion

The data analysis points to the professional engagement of South Australian Catholic schools with the NCCD process.

It demonstrates this level of engagement exists in Catholic schools across both the primary and secondary levels of schooling. It exists across both country and metropolitan locations.

The analysis highlights a number of key issues related to the personal characteristics of students with disability, including:

- the high proportion of students with disability in the Cognitive Category of Disability followed by the Social-emotional Category of Disability
- the higher proportion of boys with Levels of Adjustment, particularly in the Cognitive and Social-emotional Categories of Disability.

The analysis also points to other key issues related to the provision of programs and support for students with disability in schools, including:

- the identification process for students with disability at Reception and in the early years
- the changing pattern of identification, adjustments and/or retention of students with disability during the primary years
- the changing pattern of identification, adjustments and/or retention of students with disability during the secondary years
- the variability between schools in the Levels of Adjustment that are provided for students with disability – a variability that exists between schools in both primary and secondary settings and also between schools in both country and metropolitan locations.

Finally the NCCD data analysis reveals the strengths and also significant limitations in the nature of the NCCD data itself.

The strength of the NCCD data is it serves as a rich source of information about both students with disability and also the nature and level of engagement of schools in providing adjustments to the functional impact of their disability. The data assists the analysis of this engagement at both the individual school and system levels.

However the database is limited by a number of factors:

- the validity and reliability of the data is verified at only one point of the school year at the time of the annual census
- it records only the main Category of Disability which negates the analysis of the interrelationship with other Categories of Disability
- it provides an unstructured and adhoc arrangement for recording the definitions of a student's disability, again limiting the capacity for more refined analyses.

The NCCD database provides important possibilities to better understand the needs of students with disability and how schools can best provide adjustments to address the needs. It could do even more to meet this goal.

From a larger perspective, the *Profile of Students with Disability Report* reinforces the value of data and information, where they are available, to inform and strengthen our insights into students with disability and the nature of their needs.

From there the data and information assists educators to identify the strategies that best address the needs and provide the students with greater opportunities for personal fulfilment and success.