

Fact sheet

2023 Alternative Supervision Arrangements Survey

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

The survey

The department surveyed schools daily between 14 August–1 September 2023 (Term 3 Weeks 5 to 7). Each day, schools were asked to submit the number of casual teachers they required and the number of casual teachers engaged that day. Where there was a shortfall of casual teachers, schools were asked to record the alternative supervision strategies used to ensure duty of care requirements were met.

The survey provides a measure of the casual teacher shortfall across all NSW public schools. A shortfall exists where the number of casual teachers engaged is less than the total number required to cover all classes. The survey also provides insights into the alternative arrangements used by schools.

Key findings

- 42%** NSW public schools had an average casual teacher shortfall of **42%** per day across the survey window. This ranged from 38.8% to 44.4% on individual days.
- 3,184** This equates to an average gap of **3,184** casual teachers each day. This ranged from 2,798 to 3,574 on individual days during the survey window.
- 87%** These staffing challenges were widespread, with **87%** of all public schools reporting a shortage of casual teachers during the survey window.
- 68%** Casual supply challenges and impacts were greatest in Schools for Specific Purposes (SSPs), with a **68%** casual teacher shortfall. Primary (41%) and secondary (40%) schools had similar average casual shortfalls.

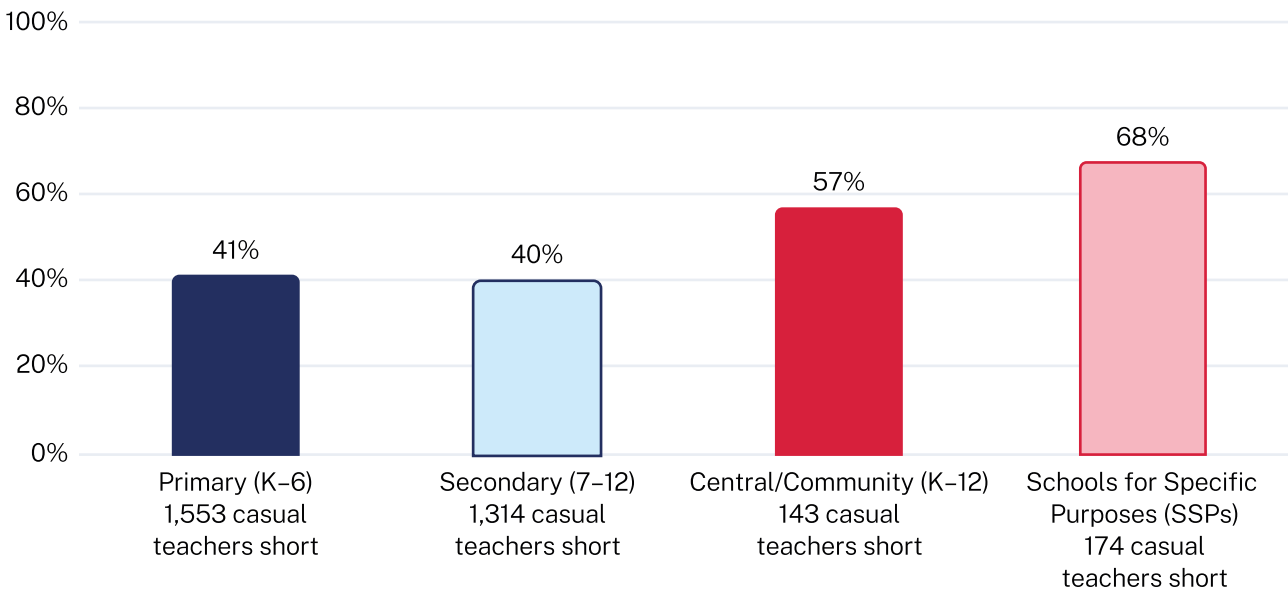
Some geographic areas and individual schools were more greatly affected by casual teacher shortfalls, and experienced greater lesson disruption, including at twice or three times the state average.

Shortfalls by level of schooling

Casual teacher shortfalls were reported across all levels of schooling. Schools reported an average daily shortfall of 42% across all NSW public schools. This shortfall means that 42% of the total number of casual teachers needed could not be engaged, or that only 58% of the required number of casual teachers were engaged by schools.

Primary and secondary schools had similar average casual teacher shortfalls. Central and Community schools had a larger gap, which is connected to challenges experienced in regional areas of NSW. Schools for Specific Purposes (SSPs) had the largest casual shortfall gap of 68%.

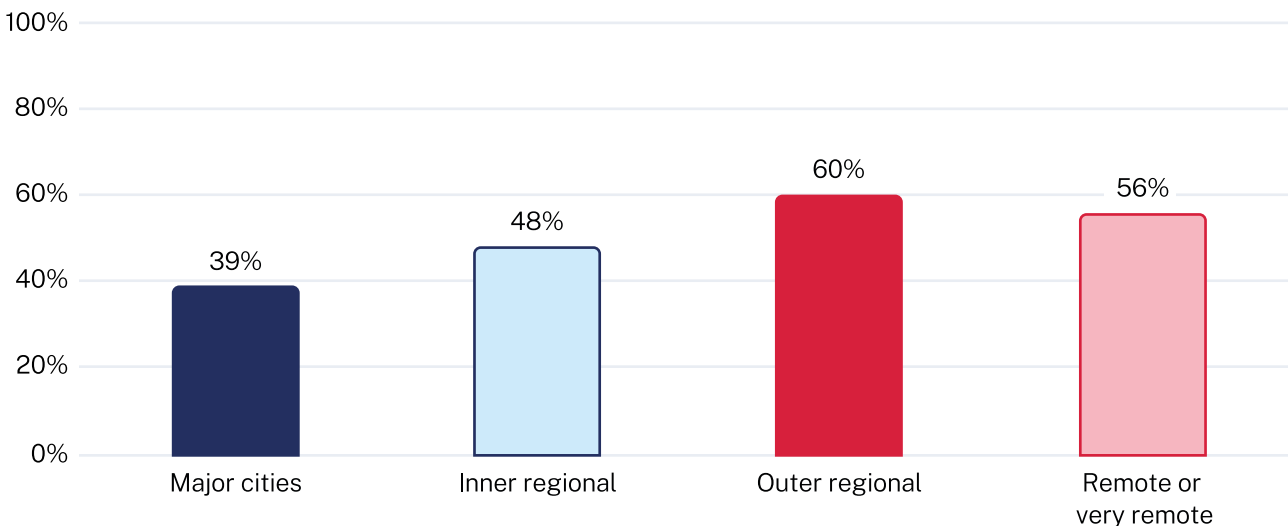
Relative casual teacher shortfall by level of schooling



Shortfalls by school location

Casual teacher shortfalls were experienced across all areas of the state. Across the window, 87% of schools were unable to engage enough casual teachers to cover all absent colleagues. Shortfalls were greatest in non-metropolitan areas of NSW.

Casual teacher shortfall in schools by remoteness classification



Impact on lessons

As a result of the casual shortfall, an average of 9,822 out of an estimated total of 168,700 scheduled lessons in NSW public schools required alternative supervision arrangements each day. This is approximately **6%** of all lessons scheduled, meaning **1 in 17** lessons did not go ahead as timetabled and required alternative arrangements.

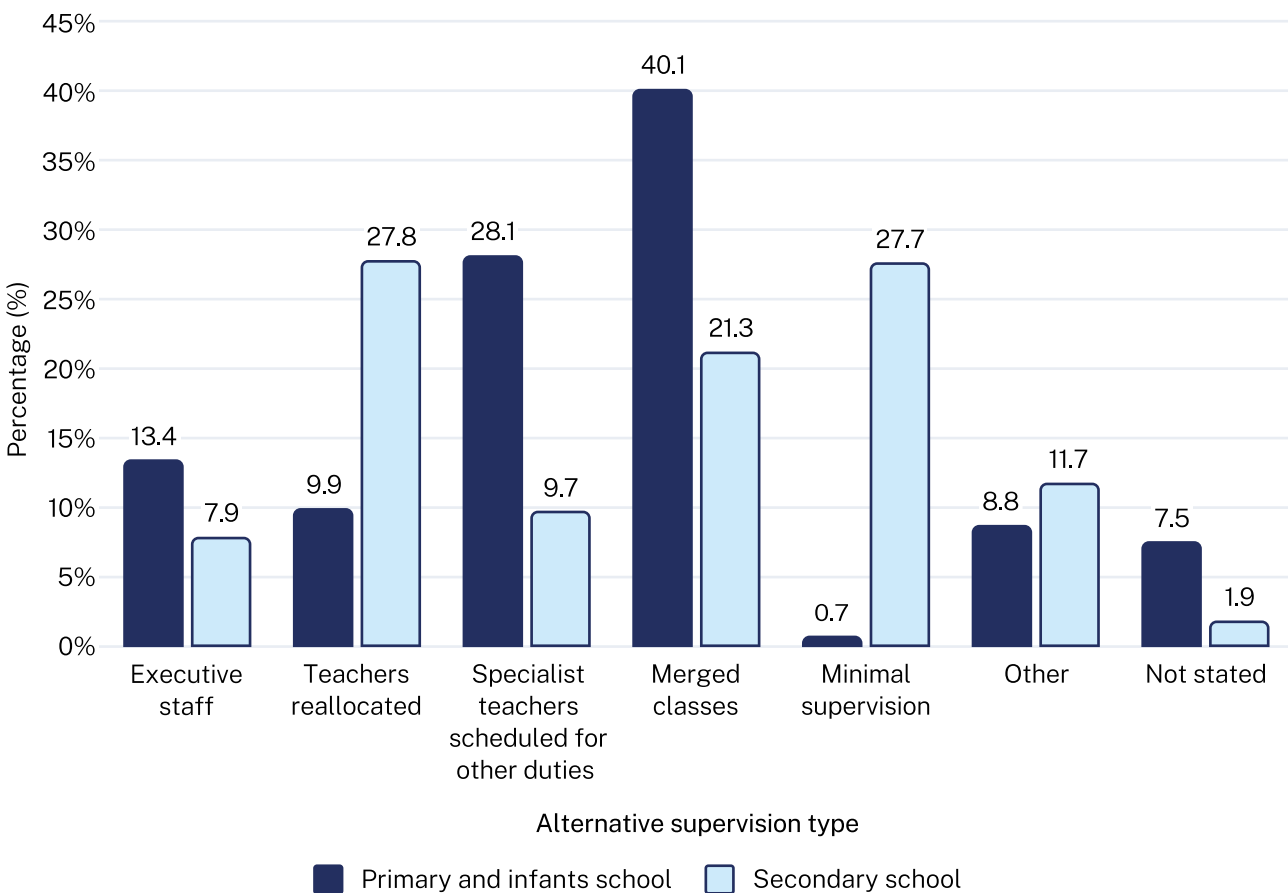
Use of alternative supervision arrangements

Schools were asked to record how many lessons required alternative supervision arrangements, including the types of arrangements used to ensure duty of care requirements were met.

Schools used a variety of alternative supervision arrangements in different settings, but with some patterns:

- **Primary schools** mostly covered lessons by merging classes (40%) or using specialist teachers not scheduled for class. Primary schools used minimal supervision sparingly.
- **Secondary and central schools** covered lessons with minimal supervision (28%).
- **Executive teachers** covering classes was common across all school settings. Executive Cover was higher in regional and remote areas.

Proportion of lessons covered by alternative arrangements, primary and secondary schools



Note: Specialist teachers such as English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), COVID ILSP, and Learning and Support teachers (LAST) across primary and secondary schools are asked to pause their planned program such as small group support to cover lessons.

Further information

Staffing the school

When teaching staff are absent from school, their scheduled classes or lessons require cover by another teacher. Typically, schools engage teachers on a casual basis to provide cover for these lessons. The casual teacher takes the classes and students continue to follow the curriculum.

Wherever possible, schools work to engage casual teachers and deploy staff to cover all classes and deliver the curriculum as planned. Teacher shortages mean that this is not always possible, especially in areas where casual teachers are less readily available or there are several vacancies or high rates of sick leave.

Where there are not enough casual teachers available to cover scheduled classes, schools use a range of alternative supervision arrangements to ensure that the school's duty of care requirements are met. This could include strategies such as classes being merged together or multiple classes being placed under group supervision, also known as minimal supervision.

Survey methodology

Summary

- **2,173** public schools were in scope for the survey. This scope included schools with a regular student enrolment.
- The survey was opt-in, with schools encouraged to participate every day.
- **88%** of schools participated for one or more school days. Participation involved submitting data each school day. Due to operational issues and workload, not all schools could submit every day.
- **76%** of all schools (those that submitted data for five or more days) were included in the sample. This provided a representative sample of each school's staffing numbers across the survey window.
- The sample school results were weighted to provide a **representative measure** across levels of schooling, school size and geographical areas. This was completed for the total survey window (15 days) and for each individual school day.
- Data was triangulated with existing data sources for validation.
- Relative Standard Error (RSE%) is a measure of precision. Our estimate of casual teachers required has a RSE of 0.6% at state level. There is greater risk of increase in error ranges at smaller subdivisions of the statewide data.

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