

Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education Portfolio
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearing 2012-13
17 October 2012

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY, INNOVATION, SCIENCE RESEARCH AND TERTIARY EDUCATION

TOPIC: ATAR scores

REFERENCE: Question on Notice (Hansard, 17 October 2012, page 89)

QUESTION No.: SI-42

Senator MASON: What proportion of students get an ATAR of 80 or above?

Mr de Carvalho: Students who are enrolled, because clearly 20 per cent of students get an ATAR—

Senator Chris Evans: That is exactly the point. Senator, in a sense, it is a mistake in the way you approach the question. I am not trying to correct you, but ATAR is not a score.

Senator MASON: I understand what you are saying.

Senator Chris Evans: Therefore, if you have more people entering university, the average ATAR of those entering should be lower.

Senator MASON: Because it means you are dipping further down.

Senator Chris Evans: Yes, but it is not a mark; it is a percentage of the total taking the examination.

Senator MASON: It is a list; I understand.

Senator Chris Evans: People get fixated on 50, as though it were a pass mark when, in fact, it is a proportion. I am sure the average ATAR in 1901 would have been 99—and with no women. Now it will be whatever it is, but that reflects the greater access to university education.

Senator MASON: This is an important question. What is the correlation between low ATAR scores and low SES status or being a rural or Indigenous student?

Mr de Carvalho: There is a correlation. We can get you some figures on that, if you like.

Senator MASON: Could you do that?

Mr de Carvalho: It is not necessarily a predictor of academic success. So if you come from—

Senator MASON: I accept that.

Mr de Carvalho: If you come from a disadvantaged background or a regional area, for example, that is not necessarily an indicator of your ability to achieve.

Mr Griew: It is also an incredibly complicated issue because of attempts to scale the ranking across different schools and different socio-economic and geographical areas. You would really want to get an expert piece of input on that from the school education people.

ANSWER

The relationships between ATAR and socioeconomic status (SES), region and Indigenous status can be seen in the cross-classification of Year 12 offers by these variables:

SES

Out of all offers made to Year 12 applicants from low SES backgrounds in 2012, 6.4 per cent were for those with ATAR of 50 or less. This compares with 3.5 per cent for medium SES applicants and 0.9 per cent for high SES applicants.

By contrast, 16.7 per cent of offers made to Year 12 low SES applicants were for those with ATAR 90 or above, compared with 23.1 per cent for medium SES applicants and 41.1 per cent for high SES applicants (see Table 1).

Region

Out of all offers made to Year 12 applicants from non-metropolitan areas in 2012, 6.5 per cent were for those with ATAR of 50 or less. This compares with 2.2 per cent for metropolitan applicants.

By contrast, 19.8 per cent of offers made to Year 12 non-metropolitan applicants were for those with ATAR of 90 or above, compared with 30.5 per cent for metropolitan applicants (see Table 2).

Indigenous status

Out of all offers made to Year 12 Indigenous applicants in 2012, 14.6 per cent were for those with ATAR of 50 or less compared with 3.1 per cent for non-Indigenous applicants.

By contrast, 8.8 per cent of offers made to Year 12 Indigenous applicants were for those with ATAR 90 or above, compared with 28.0 per cent for non-Indigenous applicants (see Table 3).

Table 1: Share of domestic undergraduate offers made to Year 12 applicants, by ATAR band and socioeconomic status, 2012

Socioeconomic status	50.00 or less	50.05-60.00	60.05-70.00	70.05-80.00	80.05-90.00	90.05 or more	Total (%)	Total no. of offers made to Year 12 applicants with valid ATAR
High SES	0.9%	4.4%	11.3%	17.1%	25.2%	41.1%	100.0%	37,809
Medium SES	3.5%	9.7%	18.6%	21.5%	23.5%	23.1%	100.0%	59,166
Low SES	6.4%	13.0%	21.2%	21.7%	21.0%	16.7%	100.0%	21,571
Total*	3.2%	8.6%	16.7%	20.2%	23.6%	27.8%	100.0%	119,741

*The socioeconomic status (SES) of a domestic applicant is determined by the postcode of their permanent home address. Some applicants could not be assigned an SES due to missing or overseas postcodes. The "Total" in the table above includes offers made to Year 12 applicants who could not be assigned an SES.

Table 2: Share of domestic undergraduate offers made to Year 12 applicants, by ATAR band and region, 2012

Region	50.00 or less	50.05-60.00	60.05-70.00	70.05-80.00	80.05-90.00	90.05 or more	Total (%)	Total no. of offers made to Year 12 applicants with valid ATAR
Metropolitan	2.2%	7.7%	15.9%	19.6%	24.0%	30.5%	100.0%	89,953
Non-Metropolitan	6.5%	12.1%	20.3%	23.0%	23.4%	19.8%	100.0%	27,675
Total	3.2%	8.6%	16.7%	20.2%	23.6%	27.8%	100.0%	119,741

*The regional status (metropolitan/non-metropolitan) of a domestic applicant is determined by the postcode of their permanent home address. Some applicants could not be assigned a regional status due to missing or overseas postcodes. The "Total" in the table above includes offers made to Year 12 applicants who could not be assigned a regional status.

Table 3: Share of domestic undergraduate offers made to Year 12 applicants, by ATAR band and Indigenous status, 2012

Indigenous status	50.00 or less	50.05-60.00	60.05-70.00	70.05-80.00	80.05-90.00	90.05 or more	Total (%)	Total no. of offers made to Year 12 applicants with valid ATAR
Indigenous (Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or both)	14.6%	16.3%	23.9%	19.8%	16.7%	8.8%	100.0%	1,113
Non-Indigenous	3.1%	8.5%	16.6%	20.2%	23.7%	28.0%	100.0%	118,583
Total*	3.2%	8.6%	16.7%	20.2%	23.6%	27.8%	100.0%	119,741

*Applicants are asked about their indigenous status when they apply for university study. Some applicants choose to identify whether they are indigenous while some may choose not to respond to this question (i.e. they leave the question blank). The "Total" in the table above includes offers made to Year 12 applicants who chose not to identify whether they were indigenous or non-indigenous.