2014 Family Occupation and Education Index (FOEI)

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

2014 FOEI scores for NSW government schools have been calculated from student and parent data extracted from ERN on 26 April 2014.

2014 is the second year that FOEI scores have been generated and used as the basis for the equity loading for socio-economic background. The Department is committed to ongoing refinement and improvement of FOEI so that it is the most accurate and fairest measure possible of the socio-economic background of students in NSW public schools. Consultation with key groups over the past 12 months has enabled further refinements to the FOEI process.

This information sheet explains the changes made to FOEI for 2014, and provides an overview of the differences between FOEI scores in 2013 and 2014.

1. Improvements in missing data

Many schools took the opportunity following the release of the 2013 FOEI to review and follow up missing parental background information. The rates of missing parental data in 2014 are considerably lower than in 2013. The following graph shows the improvements in missing parental data rates over the last 5 years.

Many schools have more than halved their rates of missing data between 2013 and 2014. Around 20 per cent of schools in 2014 (compared to less than 1 per cent in 2013) have missing data rates of less than 5 per cent across all parental background information.

The improvements in missing data have had some impact on the overall distribution of parental education levels and occupation groups across the state. As expected, the percentages of parents in the lowest category for educational qualifications and occupation group have increased, by around 2 percentage points, with small decreases across most of the other categories.

At the school level, there have been some much larger changes in the distribution of parental information. For some schools, the percentages of parents in the lowest education and occupation categories have increased by more than 20 percentage points. On the other hand, some schools have significantly fewer parents in the lower education and occupation categories. Such changes are not unexpected in the first few years of using FOEI for funding as schools seek to ensure that their parental data is as complete and accurate as possible.

With more complete parent data, we have greater confidence in the 2014 FOEI being a more accurate reflection of each school’s relative level of socio-economic disadvantage.

2. Changes to school FOEI scores

As a result of improvements in missing data and the changes in the distribution of parental education and occupation, the FOEI scores for some schools have changed significantly from 2013 to 2014. This has had some impact on the FOEI values for other schools given that FOEI is a measure of ‘relative’ disadvantage. This means that whilst a school’s 2014 parental profile may be similar to 2013, the school’s FOEI score could
decrease if more schools have a greater level of disadvantage in 2014 compared to 2013.

The following table shows the changes in FOEI across all schools from 2013 to 2014 (note, an increase in FOEI corresponds to a higher level of disadvantage). For the majority of schools (over 75 per cent), 2014 FOEI is very close, within 10 points, of the 2013 FOEI. Of those schools that have changed significantly (by more than 30 points) almost all are small schools with less than 100 enrolments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change in FOEI from 2013 to 2014</th>
<th>Number of schools</th>
<th>Percentage of schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decrease of more than 30 points</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease of &gt;20-30 points</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease of &gt;10-20 points</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within 10 points</td>
<td>1672</td>
<td>76.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase of &gt;10-20 points</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase of &gt;20-30 points</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase of more than 30 points</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the changes experienced by some schools, 2014 FOEI aligns well with 2013 FOEI, especially for larger schools, as shown in the following scatterplots.

Figure 2: Scatterplots of 2014 FOEI with 2013 FOEI

All schools

![Scatterplot of 2014 FOEI with 2013 FOEI for all schools](image1)

Schools with 100+ enrolments

![Scatterplot of 2014 FOEI with 2013 FOEI for schools with 100+ enrolments](image2)

This level of alignment indicates that the rigorous process used to determine a school’s FOEI score each year is robust and reliable.

3. Students whose parent/carers are a Caseworker or Guardian Organisation

Consultation with principals’ groups following the release of the 2013 FOEI indicated a need to review the treatment of parental data for students whose parent/carers are Caseworkers or a Guardian Organisation. For these students, either the parent education and occupation information was missing, or if not missing, reflected the education and occupation of the Caseworker or Guardian and was not reflective of the socio-economic background of the student. Students whose parent/carers are Caseworkers or Guardian Organisations are likely to be very disadvantaged.

Consequently, the parental education or occupation information for parent/carers who are Caseworkers of Guardian Organisations was not used for the 2014 FOEI. Instead, if information was available for an alternative parent/carer, that information was used. If there was no other parent/carer extracted from ERN for a student, then the parental data for that student was recoded to the lowest categories (Year 9 school education, no non-school qualifications, not in paid work).

This change was approved by both the Deputy Secretary, Public Schools NSW and Deputy Secretary, Office of Education.

For FOEI 2014, parental education and occupation were recoded to the lowest categories for a total 4,870 students with Caseworkers or Guardian Organisations and where no other parental data was extracted from ERN. For a further 829 students where an alternative parent/carer was available, the parental education and occupation of only that parent was used for the calculation of FOEI.

This refinement to the FOEI process ensures that the socio-economic profile of students with a high level of need is accurately captured.

1 One exception to this is international students (visa subclass 571) under the care of a Guardian Organisation. These students are unlikely to have the same level of educational disadvantage.

2 Parental data for international students whose parent/carer was a Guardian Organisation was not recoded to the lowest categories. Instead, any parental education and occupation data for the carers of these students was recoded to missing and an imputation process was used to better estimate the parental backgrounds for these students. This applied to 929 international students in 2014.

Further information

Further information about FOEI is available in a Learning Curve publication available on the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation website.

If you have any questions about your school’s 2014 FOEI please contact the Statistics Unit:

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