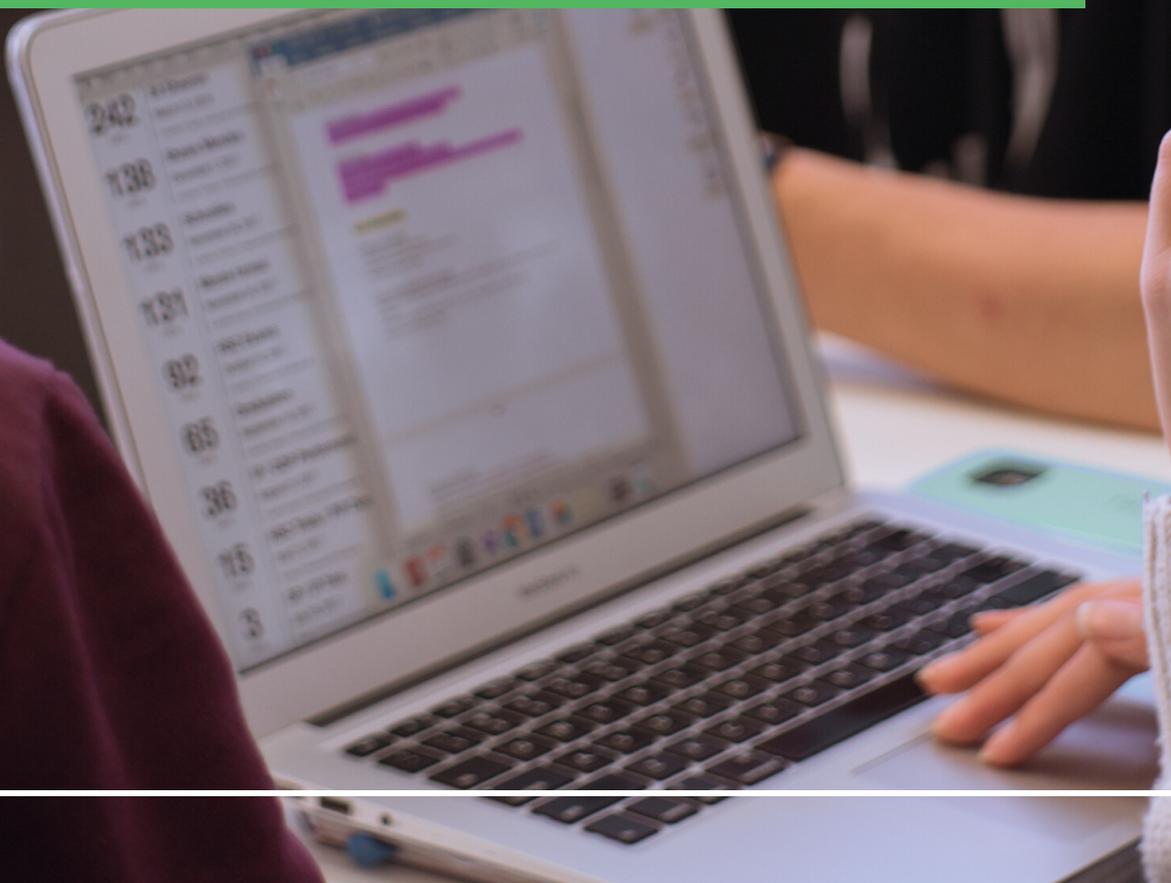




Art of Smart

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# THE COVID-19 HSC IMPACT REPORT



# ABOUT ART OF SMART EDUCATION

Art of Smart Education has been an award winning provider of tutoring and mentoring for students in Years K-12 for the past 10 years. We've supported over 5,000 students and have over half a million students, parents and teachers access our resources each year. We provide 1 on 1 sessions in the comfort of your own home, online sessions and classes at our state of the art campus in Hornsby!

We help students excel academically at school by equipping them with proven study and life skills based on 10 years of research we've conducted with Australia's top students. We mentor students and help them find direction, lift results and stand out with our study and career mentoring program, Pathfinder.

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This report may be cited as: Kunz, R. & Metham, M. (2020). The COVID-19 HSC Impact Report. Art of Smart Education: Sydney, NSW.

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## THE CONTEXT

The HSC has never been as stressful and anxiety inducing for students as it is in 2020. The COVID-19 restrictions forcing tens of thousands of students to study for their HSC from home has only added to the stress of studying for the HSC. With limited face-to-face teaching time and a greater focus on independent study, students are feeling the pressure of the HSC greater than ever.

This completely unprecedented form of learning at such a large scale in New South Wales has further tested schools' ability to effectively transition to online learning and continue supporting their students. As expected, disparities have emerged between the effectiveness of face-to-face teaching in the classroom and online teaching, which can range from the likes of independent study to live video lessons and many variations in-between. Moreover, with no set recommendation or method offered as to how to manage this transition, individual schools have been left to teach students as they deem suitable, causing further discrepancies among differing schools.

Art of Smart supports thousands of students each year and we have seen these challenges first-hand. We'd like to help the broader community in understanding these challenges so we can provide support for students, their families and teachers. The aims of this report are therefore two-fold, analysing the impact of the COVID-19 restrictions upon HSC students across public, selective, private and independent and Catholic school sectors across New South Wales while also observing the effectiveness of schools' transition to online learning.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rowan Kunz".

**Rowan Kunz**  
CEO, Art of Smart Education

## KEY FINDINGS



**4 in 5**

Feel disadvantaged for their HSC due to COVID-19



**43%**

Do not learn effectively at home via online learning



**3 in 5**

Say their mental health has been impacted



**87%**

Have felt distracted while studying at home



**1 in 2**

Agree their school has made an effective transition to online learning



**76%**

Agree their motivation levels have dropped significantly



**56%**

Have exercised less during COVID-19 restrictions



**2 in 5**

Find studying for the HSC from home their biggest source of anxiety



**1 in 10**

May not have the internet connectivity required for effective online learning

## METHODOLOGY

Year 12 students surveyed

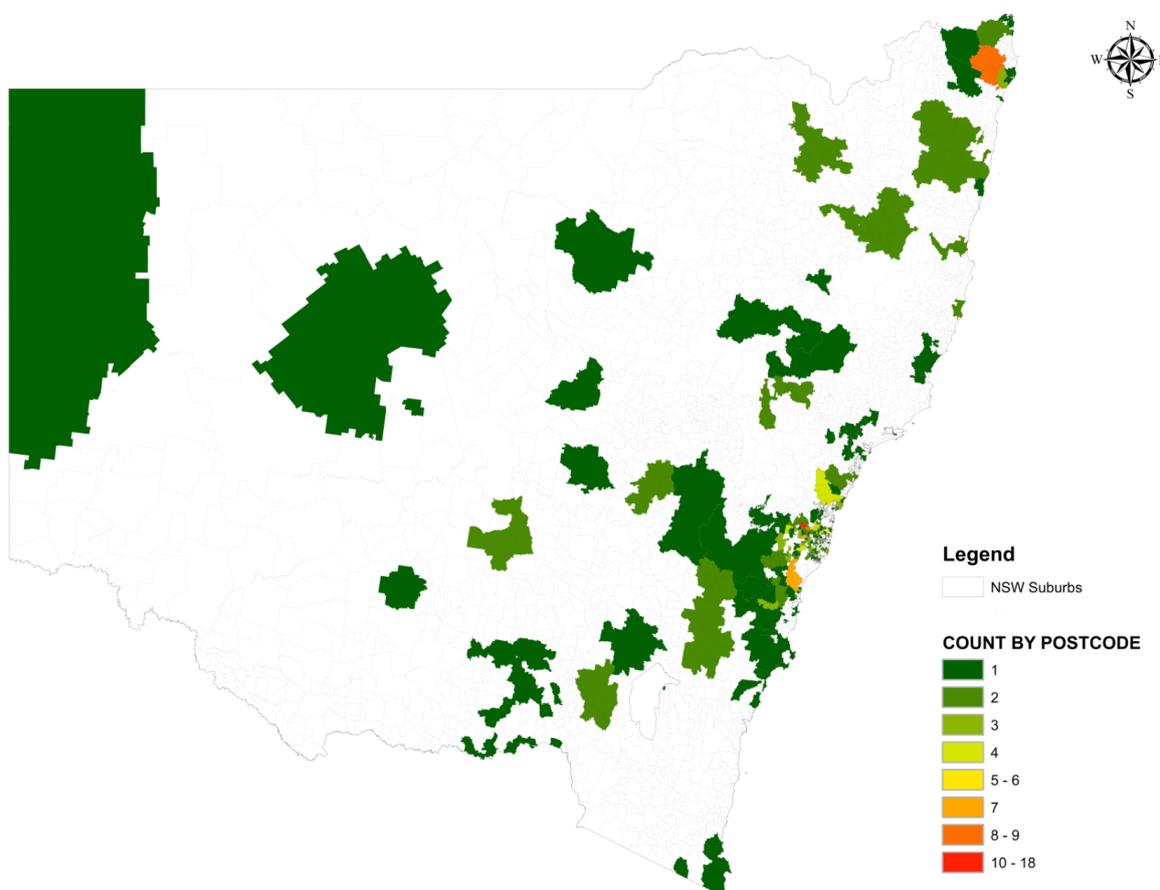
# 383

Unique suburbs students live in

# 201

Data was collected via a survey completed by 383 Year 12 students, from the 67,915 students sitting the HSC in 2020. This gave us a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error in our results. Geographically, there was a diverse range of students taking our survey from many of Sydney's major regions including the City, North Shore, Northern Beaches, Eastern Suburbs, Inner West, Greater Western Sydney, Sutherland Shire and outer Sydney regions such as the Central Coast, Wollongong, Newcastle and Byron Bay. Students came from over 200 different suburbs.

Below is a heat map showing the geographical spread of public, selective, private and Catholic school students across NSW that completed our survey.



# PART 1: IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON HSC STUDENTS

## Biggest sources of worry and anxiety for HSC students

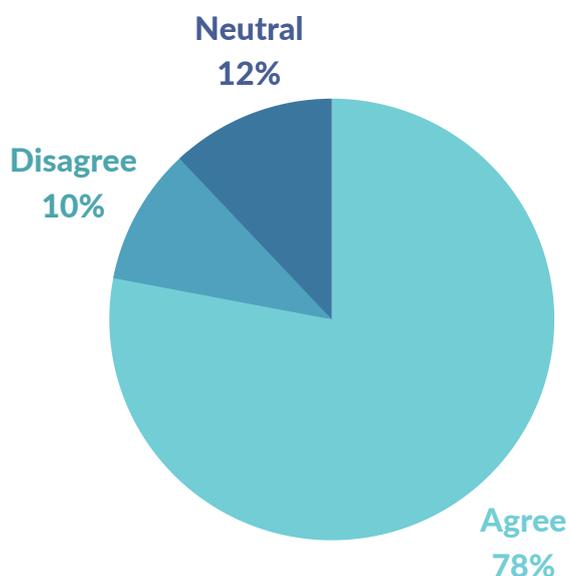
The biggest source of worry and anxiety across all school systems was preparing and studying for HSC Trials and exams from home. The second biggest worry for public and selective school students, as well as Catholic school students, was being unable to get into their goal university course whereas for private and independent schools, it was about unclear information surrounding the state of the HSC. **Interestingly, almost twice as many public school students were worried about family financial concerns** compared to students in private and independent schools and Catholic schools.

**1** Preparing and studying for HSC Trials and exams from home

**2** Unable to get into their goal course at university

**3** Year 11 marks will count towards university entrance

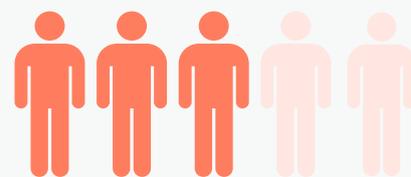
## HSC students feel overwhelmingly disadvantaged



It was clear that students across all schools felt as though they were disadvantaged for their HSC due to the COVID-19 restrictions, **with an overwhelming 78% of students agreeing that they felt disadvantaged**. This isn't surprising as the 2020 HSC cohort are in an unprecedented situation, not only studying for their HSC but doing so via online learning at home and facing a new height of pressure that previous cohorts did not have to endure. With limited face-to-face teaching time, reduced class time, changed assessments formats, increase in assessment weightings and a lack of access to classroom resources for Major Works, just to name a few, it is apparent that this year's HSC cohort are one of the most disadvantaged.

## Impact of COVID-19 restrictions upon students' mental health

**Three in five HSC students agreed that their mental health has been impacted by COVID-19 restrictions.** A lack of social interaction that attending school provided, an increased amount of time indoors and a changed routine can be attributed to this. Furthermore, the uncertainty around when assessments will be held, changed assessment weightings and whether this will impact students' assessment performance and ability to gain entrance into their goal university course are sources of anxiety and stress. Research by the Black Dog Institute has also revealed that changes in routine can have a large impact on students' mental health, with students experiencing sleeping problems and unable to create boundaries between school work, study time and rest.



# 3 in 5

Say their mental health has been impacted by COVID-19

**“ Distraction is at an all time high and motivation at an all time low.”**

**87%**

**Felt distracted while studying at home.**

**76%**

**Agreed their motivation levels have dropped significantly.**

**56%**

**Have exercised less.**

Studying at home has been a huge distraction for the 2020 HSC cohort, with almost 9 in 10 feeling **distracted while studying at home** from access to their smartphones, online streaming services and other family members studying or working from home. This has caused **76% of students' motivation level drop significantly** and **56% of students to exercise less.**

# PART 2: EFFECTIVENESS OF TRANSITION TO ONLINE LEARNING

## Biggest challenges studying for the HSC from home

**1** Losing motivation to study

**2** Procrastinating doing study and homework

**3** Getting distracted and unable to focus

The biggest challenge for students studying for their HSC from home was **losing motivation to study, followed by procrastinating doing study and homework, and getting distracted and being unable to focus.** This may be a result of the new learning environment students are faced with by studying from home where distractions are easily accessible and more prevalent than that in a school environment.

## Effectiveness of school resources for online learning

Overall, 64% of students agreed that their school has the resources for effective online learning. Comparatively, 3 in 4 private and independent school students agreed that their school has effective resources, with only 1 in 2 of public and selective school students recording their school's resources as effective. Furthermore, 18% of public school students don't believe their school has the resources to conduct effective online learning compared to 6% at private schools, and 8% at Catholic schools. This means that **3 times as many public school students compared to private school students believe their school does not have the resources for effective online learning.**

**64% AGREED THAT THEIR SCHOOL HAS EFFECTIVE RESOURCES**

**1 in 2**



Public/selective students agree their school has effective resources

**VS**

**3 in 4**



Private/independent students agree their school has effective resources

## Effectiveness of schools' transition to online learning

Overall, 51% of students agreed that their school had made an effective transition to online learning. Private and independent schools had the greatest numbers of those who agreed their online transition had been effective with 67%, compared to 40% from those in public and selective schools.

Furthermore, **27% of public school students believed their school had not made an effective transition, compared to only 7% of private school students.** This means that **almost 4 times as many public school students, compared to private school students, believe their school has not made an effective transition to online learning,** highlighting disparities between the two school systems.

## Effectiveness of online learning

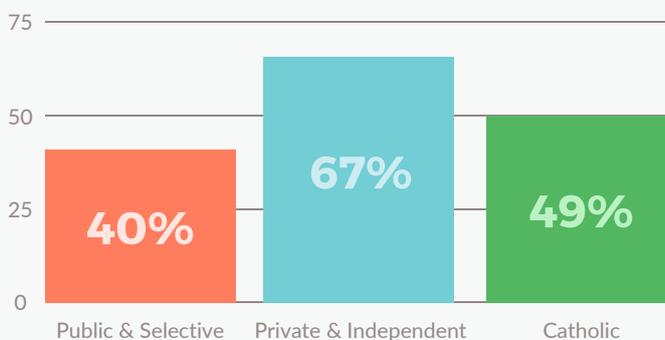
The disparity between the effectiveness of face-to-face teaching and online teaching became very clear as 85% of students agreed that face-to-face teaching was effective while only 24 per cent found online teaching to be effective. This can be attributed to students feeling less accountable for their studies without a teacher constantly present, less class time and a greater focus on independent learning tasks. Overall, 43% of HSC students disagreed that they learn effectively online. At public and selective schools, 45% of students disagreed that they learned effectively via online teaching, compared to 35% of Catholic school students.

Overall agree their school has made an effective transition to online learning

51%

Overall disagree their school has made an effective transition to online learning

17%



Percentage of students who agree their school's transition to online learning has been effective



85%

Agree they learn effectively via face-to-face teaching

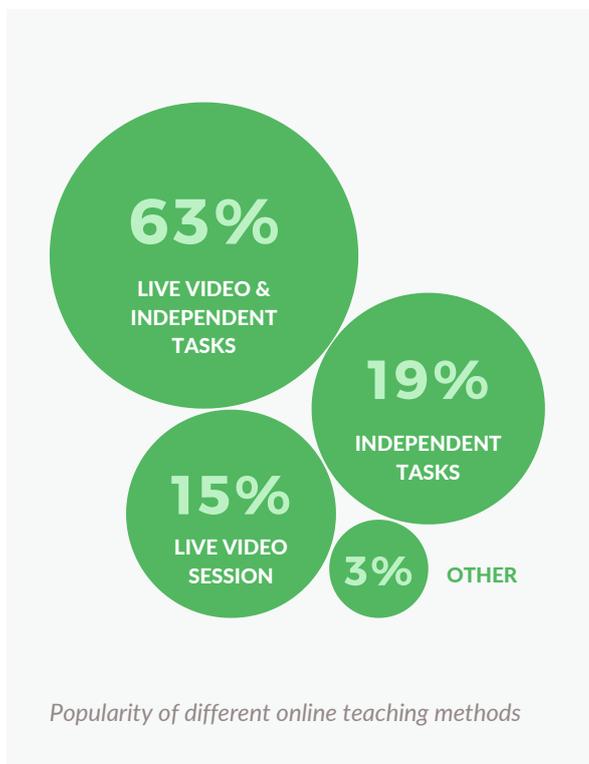
VS



24%

Agree they learn effectively via online teaching

## How schools transitioned to online learning

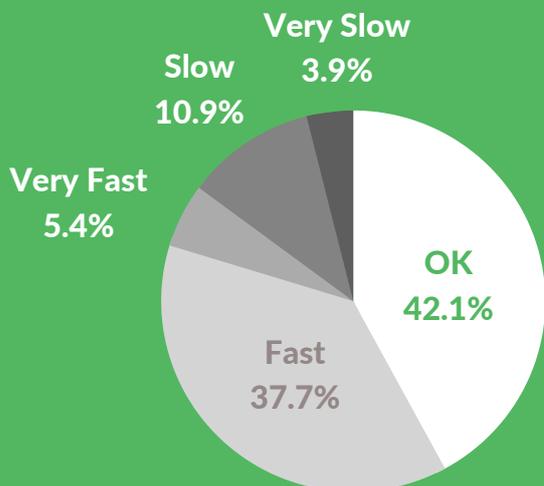


The majority of HSC students, or 63%, learned using a mixture of watching live video sessions and completing independent tasks that were set by their teacher. This can be attributed to different classes using different methods of teaching, resulting in a mix of learning methods. **Almost 1 in 5 students have used solely independent tasks** such as those set via email, posted on a lesson sharing site and submission via these same methods while 15% used solely live video sessions, such as through video conferencing websites.

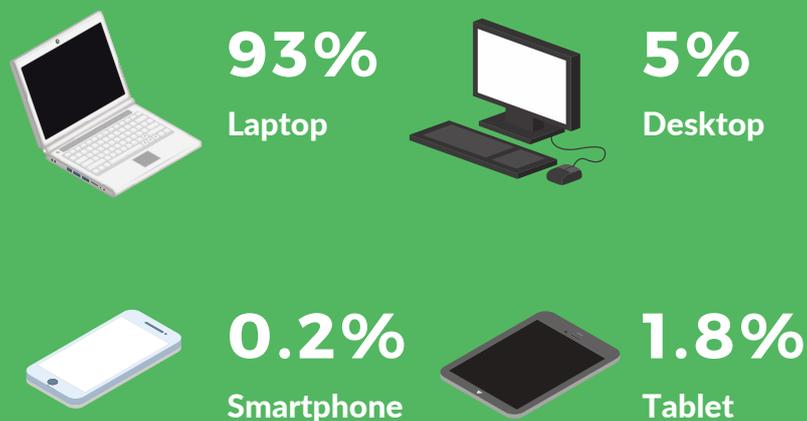
Most students' home internet connection was 'OK', followed by 37% with 'fast' internet and 10% with 'slow' internet. This means 1 in 10 students may not have the internet connectivity required for effective online learning.

Access to online learning was most popular using a laptop for students, followed by a desktop computer, tablet and just 1 person recording using their smartphone.

### Internet connection at home



### Devices used to access online learning



## Services we provide at Art of Smart Education



### Tutoring and Mentoring

We provide **1 on 1 tutoring and mentoring** sessions for K-12 students in the comfort of your own home, **online sessions** and **classes** at our state of the art campus in Hornsby! **We offer a holistic approach to tutoring**, focusing on your academic improvement and lasting study skills with a mentor who keeps you focused on your goals and wellbeing!

[Find out more!](#)



### Pathfinder Program

The **Pathfinder Program** is a study and career mentoring program for students in Years 10-12 where we **help students find direction, lift results and stand out, all while staying healthy!** We help you fight distractions, build strong study plans and make choices regarding uni preferences and life after school to help you find success, whatever your ATAR.

[Find out more!](#)



### HSC Resources

Our online **HSC Resources** which include study tips, subject-specific study guides, practice questions and more, **are accessed by over half a million** students, parents and teachers each year!

Our YouTube channel, **ArtofSmartTV** has **over 1.5 million views**, with mini series to help you ace English such as the HSC English Literary Program **#HELP** and the HSC Economic Review **#HER** for Economics!

[Find out more!](#)



### Practical Workshops

Our **practical workshops** for students in Years 7-12 are **highly targeted sessions**, designed to help HSC students **master parts of their HSC syllabus** and develop key English and Maths skills.

Our Years 7-10 workshops are focused on helping students **grasp important base skills and concepts** they'll use all throughout high school!

[Find out more!](#)



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