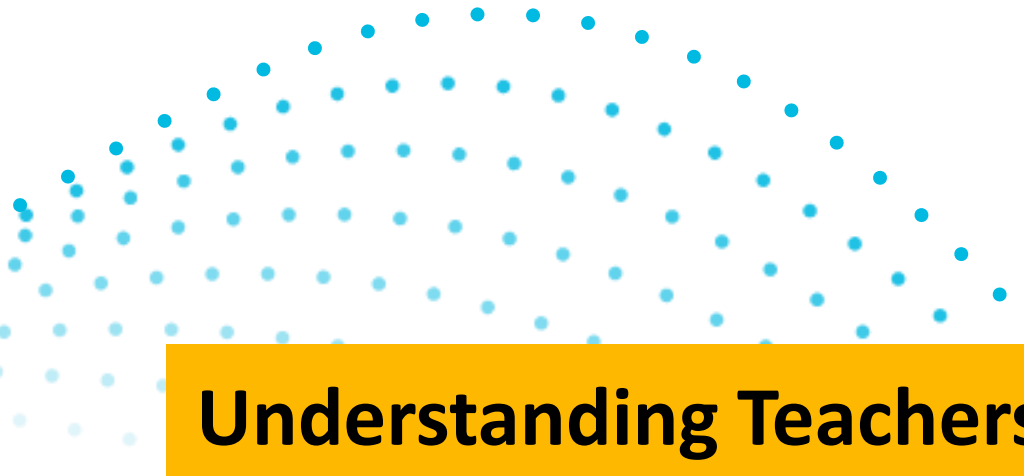


A decorative pattern of small blue dots is located on the left side of the slide, arranged in a roughly circular shape.

Understanding Teachers' Work with Students with Disability: Voices from the Teaching and Learning International Survey

Jane Jarvis

(with Julie McMillan & Tim Friedman)

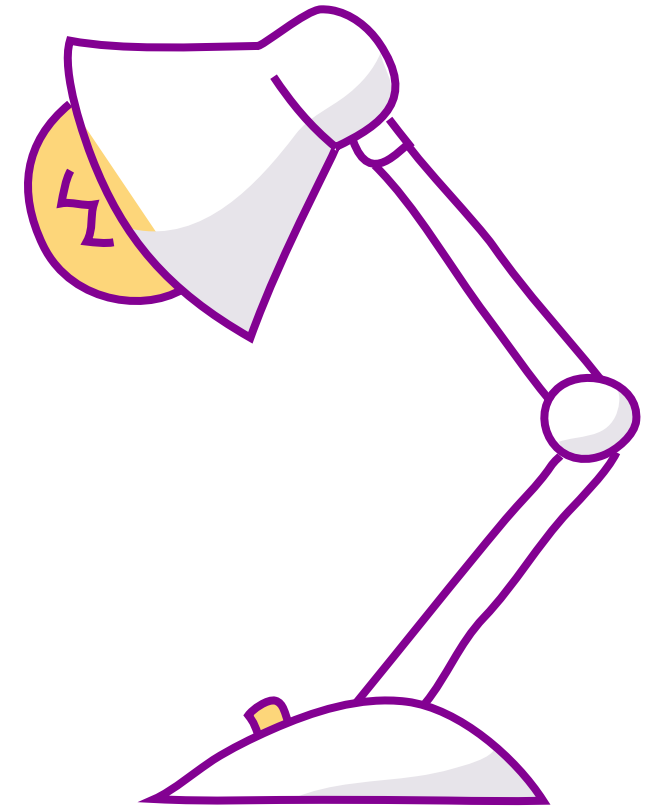
AASE National Conference

3 September 2026



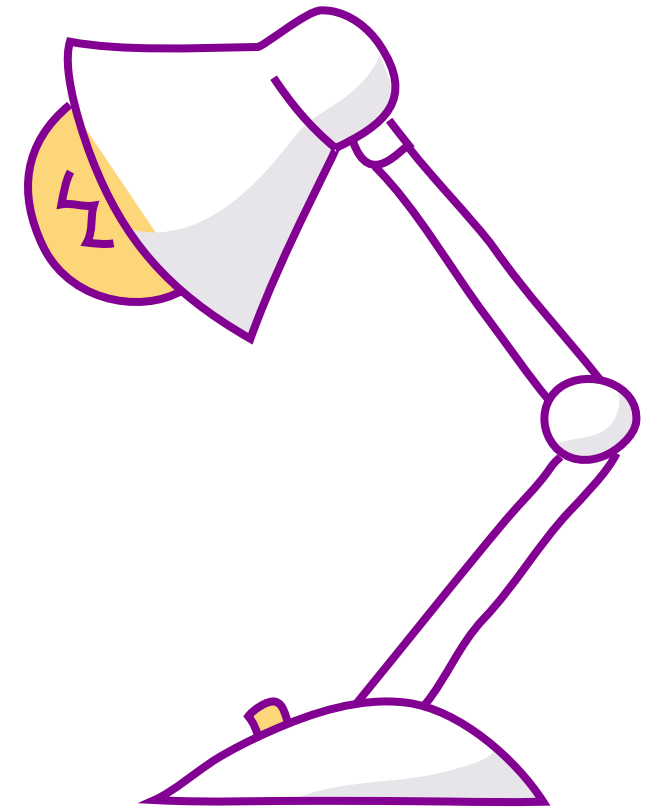
What's going on?

- Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD) commenced full implementation in 2015
- In 2025, 27% of students in Australian schools received educational adjustments due to a learning difficulty or disability, with about 1 in 5 receiving at least supplementary adjustments
- Almost 90% of school-age children with disability attend mainstream schools

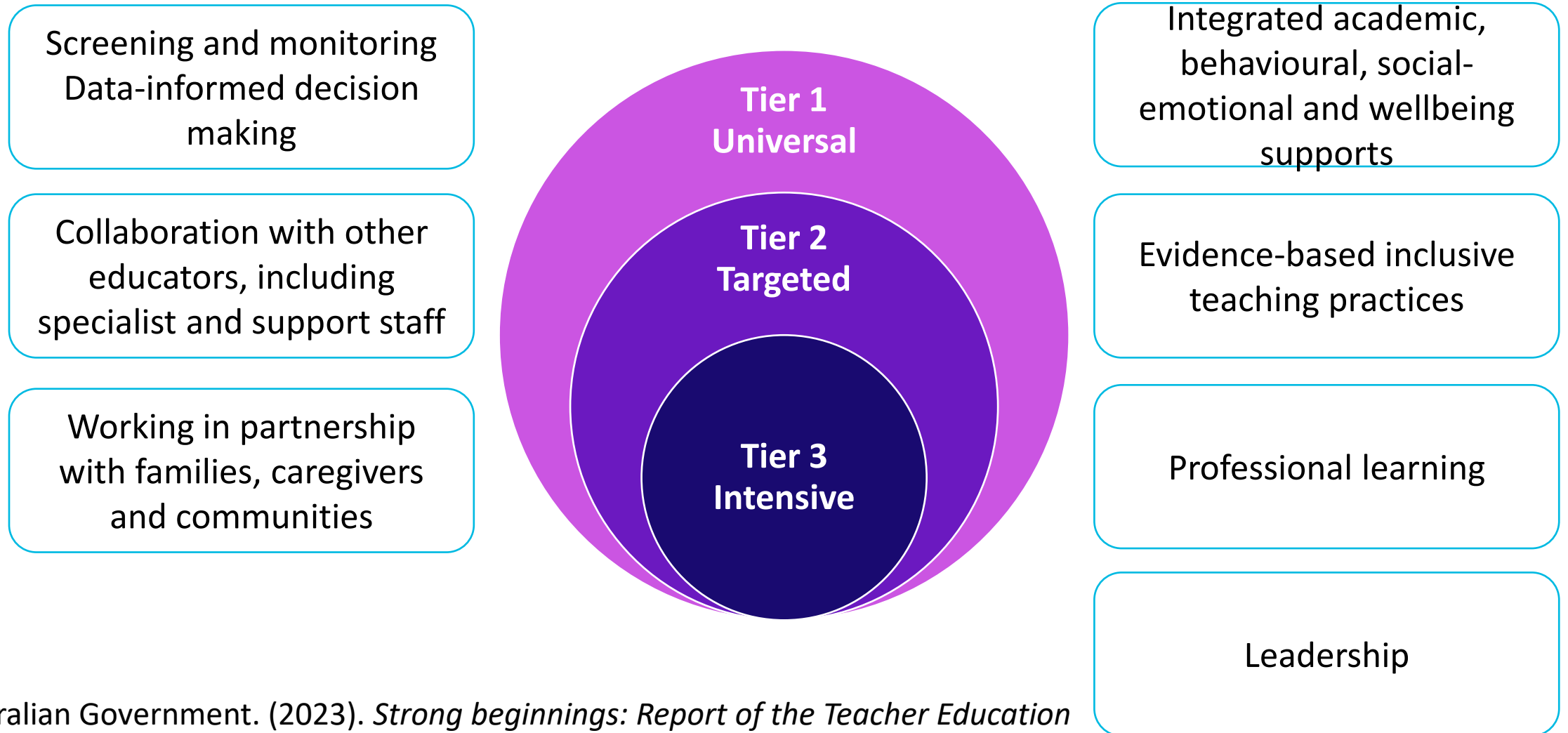


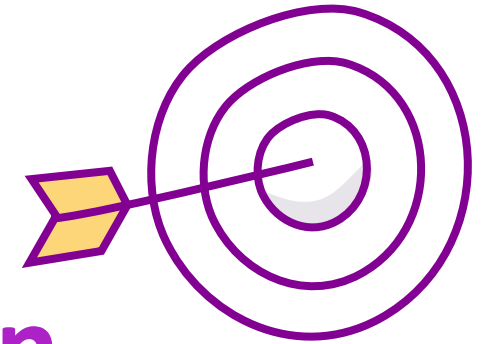
What's going on?

- The national policy environment has enhanced the focus on schools' support for students with **disability** (e.g. Better Fairer Schools Agreement, Thriving Kids Initiative, Changes to NDIS funding arrangements, Disability Royal Commission)
- National Teacher Workforce Action Plan highlights ongoing teacher shortages, declining new graduates, teachers leaving the profession, and an ageing workforce
- TEMAG review of initial teacher education led to new core content requirements including MTSS



Core content on Multi-tiered Systems of Support in ITE





What do we know about Australian teachers' experience of teaching students with disability?

What might be some current priorities for professional learning and other support?

About TALIS

What is TALIS?



Teaching and Learning
International Survey
(OECD)

What does it
address?



Framework outlines
key areas relevant to
the working life of
educators

Why does it
matter?



Gives a voice to
teachers and
provides comparable
evidence to inform
policy

How does it
work?



Questionnaires
from
representative
samples across
countries

Australia's 2024 sample included 204 lower secondary (Years 7–10) and 208 primary schools, with 20 teachers randomly selected per school.

‘Special Education Needs’ in TALIS

Because TALIS is an international project, terminology and definitions are determined by the OECD and used in a way that enables comparison with past surveys.

Students with ‘special education needs’ cover those for whom a special learning need has been formally identified because they are intellectually or physically disadvantaged. Often, they will be those for whom additional public or private resources (personnel, material or financial) have been provided to support their education.

What does TALIS explore related to students with SEN?

- the composition of classes/schools that include students with SEN (reported by teachers and school leaders)
- self-efficacy for different aspects of teaching students with SEN
- professional learning experiences and needs related to teaching students with SEN

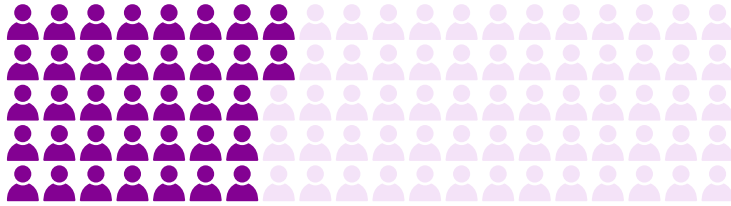


Rates of students with SEN in Australia

Australian teachers who worked in schools with more than 10% of students with special educational needs.

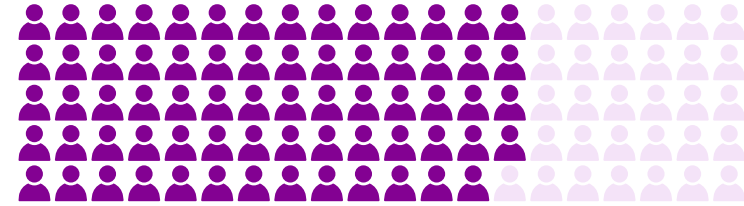
Primary teachers

37%



2018

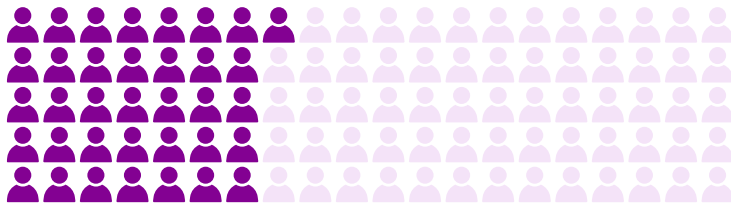
69%



2024

Lower secondary teachers

36%



2018

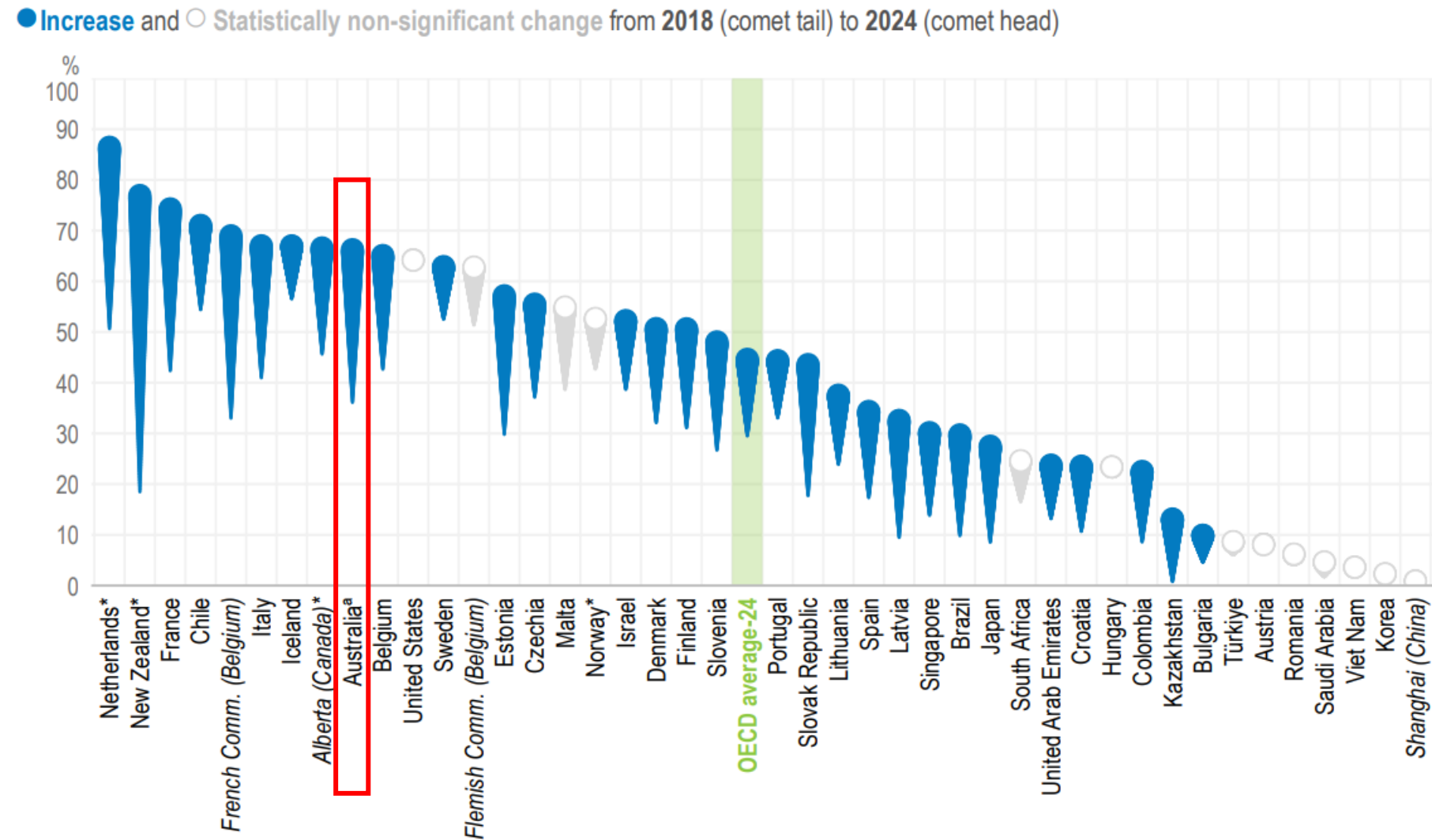
66%



2024

Figure 1.9. Change in schools' composition of students with special education needs, from 2018 to 2024

Percentage of lower secondary teachers teaching in schools with more than 10% of students who have special education needs

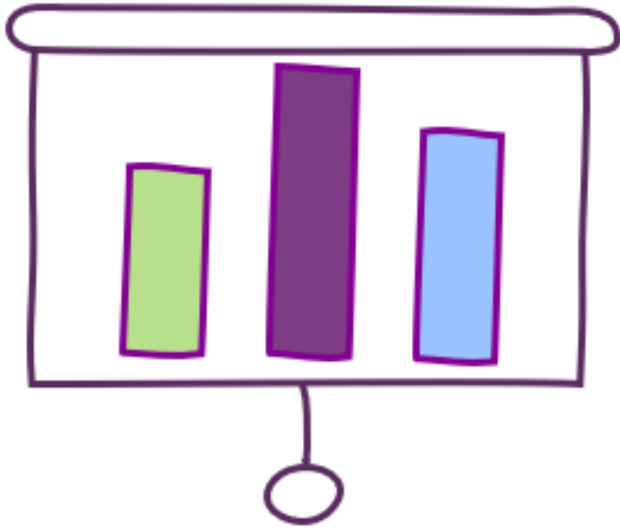


Teachers at schools with higher proportions of students with SEN....

...are more likely to report using **adaptive practices** (lower secondary)

- Consider students' prior knowledge and needs when planning a lesson
- Point students to different materials for learning depending on their needs
- Change the way of explaining a topic or task when a student has difficulties understanding it
- Adapt teaching methods to students' needs
- Ask questions at various difficulty levels to check students' understanding of the subject matter

Teachers at schools with higher proportions of students with SEN....



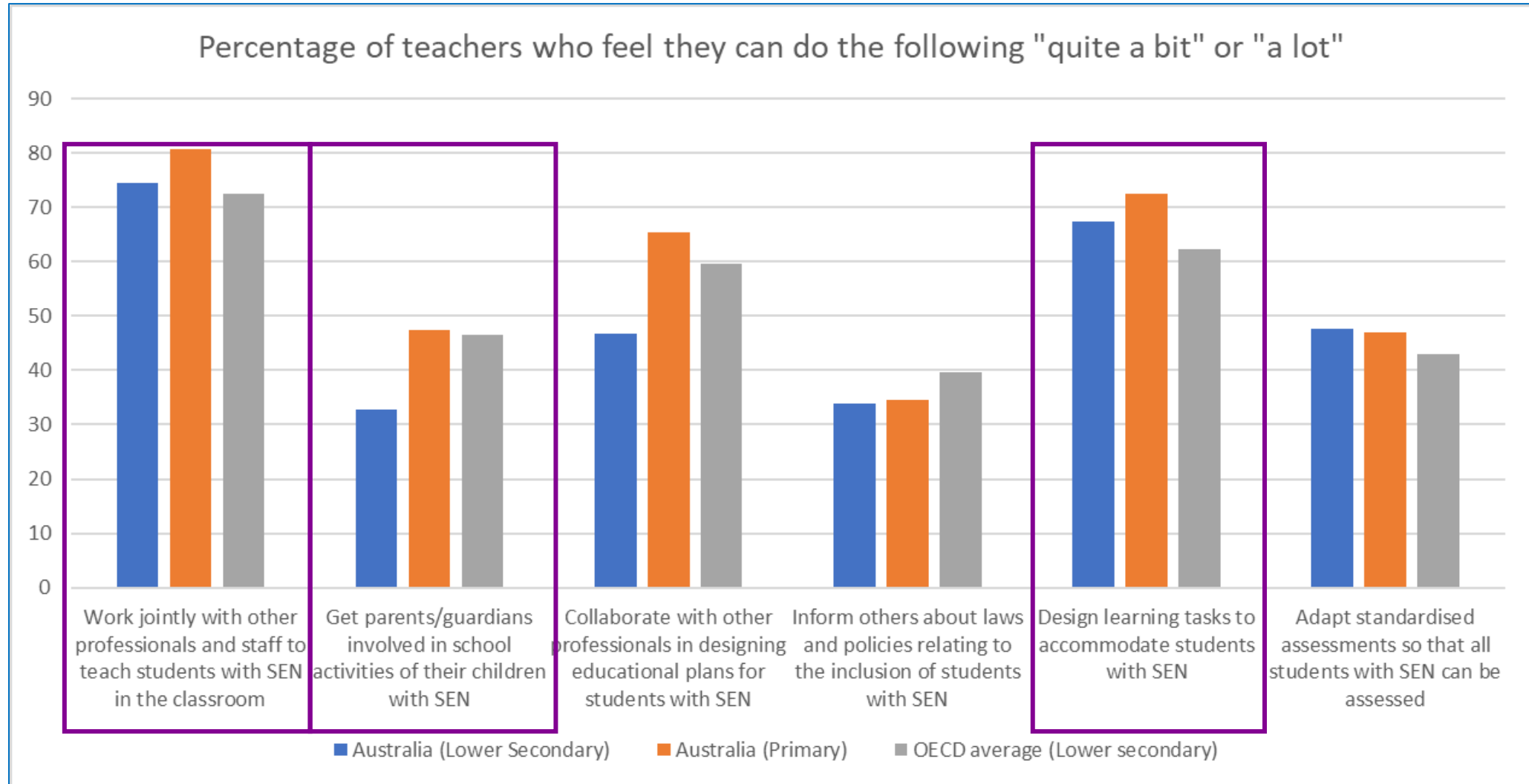
...are more likely to **employ digital tools** (but not in Australia)

...are more likely to **implement practices to develop students' social-emotional skills** (but not in Australia)

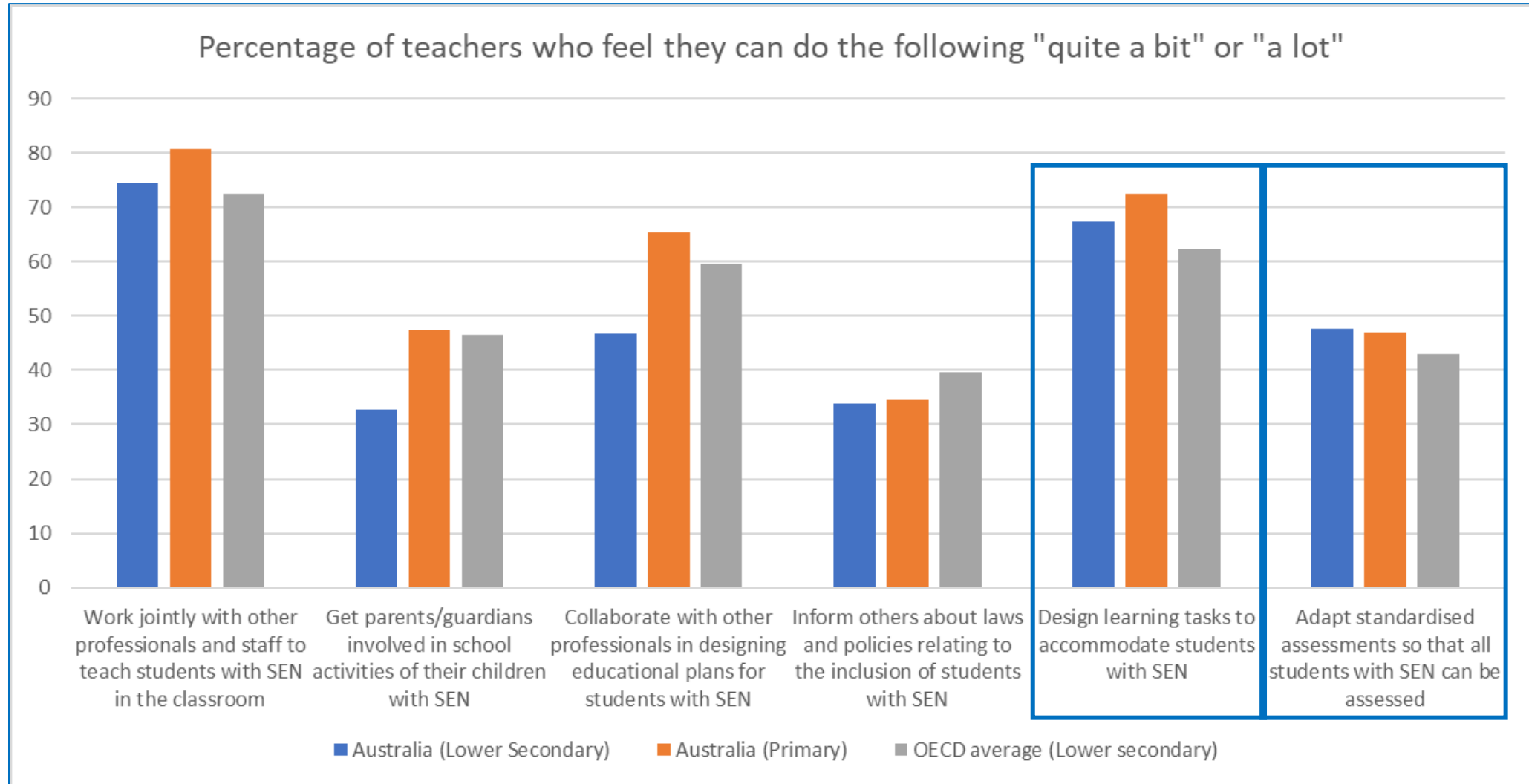
In many countries (but not in Australia), younger and more inexperienced teachers tend to work in schools with higher proportions of SEN students.

- Work jointly with other professionals and staff to teach students with SEN in the classroom
- Get parents/guardians involved in school activities of their children with SEN
- Collaborate with other professionals to design learning plans for students with SEN
- Inform others about laws and policies relating to the inclusion of students with SEN
- Design learning tasks to accommodate students with SEN
- Adapt standardised assessments so that all students with SEN can be assessed

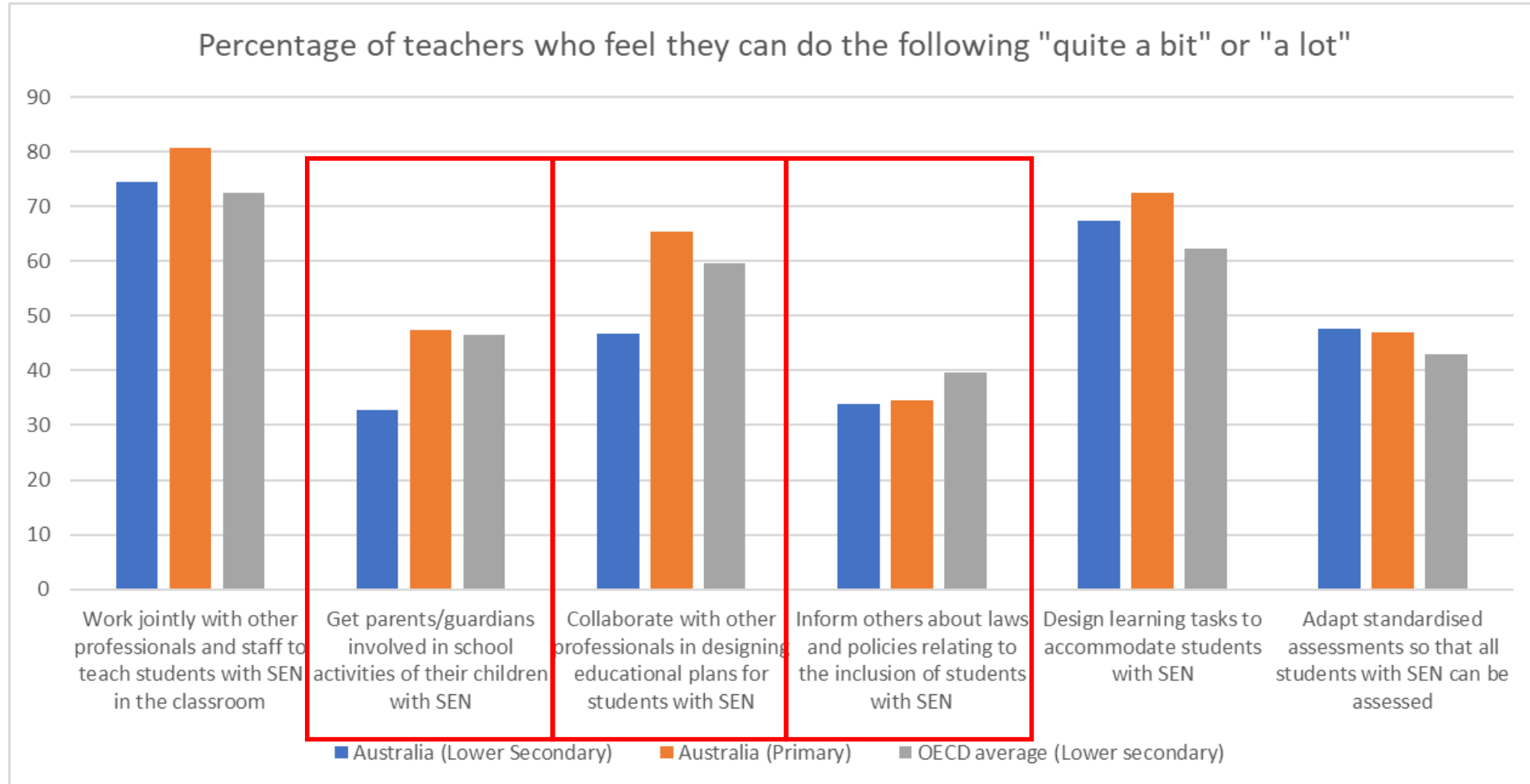
Australian primary teachers report higher self-efficacy than Australian lower secondary teachers for 3 items



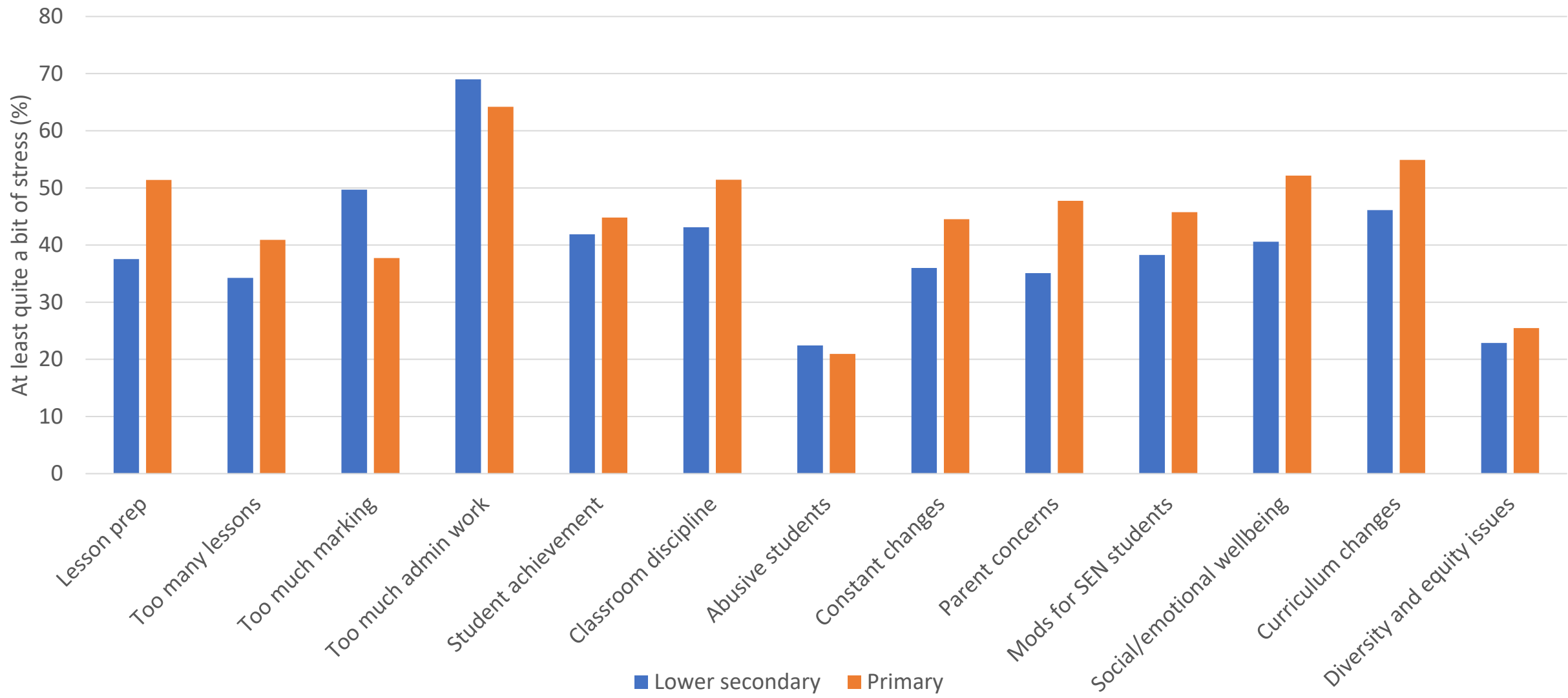
Australian teachers have significantly higher self-efficacy compared with other countries for these items



Australian teachers have significantly lower self-efficacy compared with other countries for these items



Causes of teacher stress



Top 10 sources of stress reported 'quite a bit' or 'a lot'

Primary

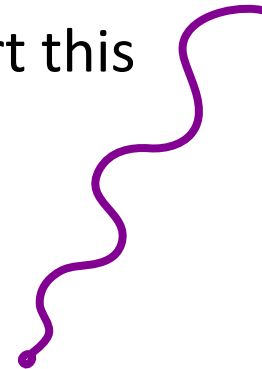
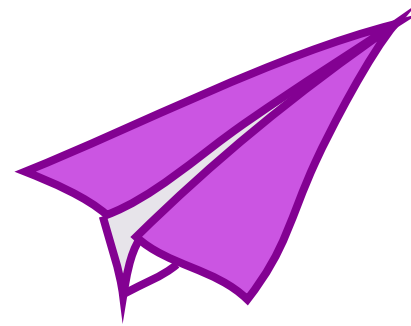
1. Having too much admin work to do
2. Keeping up with curriculum or programme changes
- 3. Being held responsible for students' social and emotional wellbeing (52%)**
- 4. Maintaining classroom discipline (51%)**
5. Having too much lesson preparation
- 6. Addressing parent/guardian concerns (48%)**
- 7. Modifying lessons for students with SEN (46%)**
- 8. Being held responsible for student achievement (45%)**
9. Keeping up with changing requirements
10. Having too many lessons to teach

Lower secondary

1. Having too much admin work to do
2. Having too much marking
3. Keeping up with curriculum or programme changes
- 4. Maintaining classroom discipline (43%)**
5. Having extra duties due to absent teachers
- 6. Being held responsible for student achievement (42%)**
- 7. Being held responsible for students' social and emotional wellbeing (41%)**
- 8. Modifying lessons for students with SEN (38%)**
9. Having too much lesson preparation
10. Keeping up with changing requirements

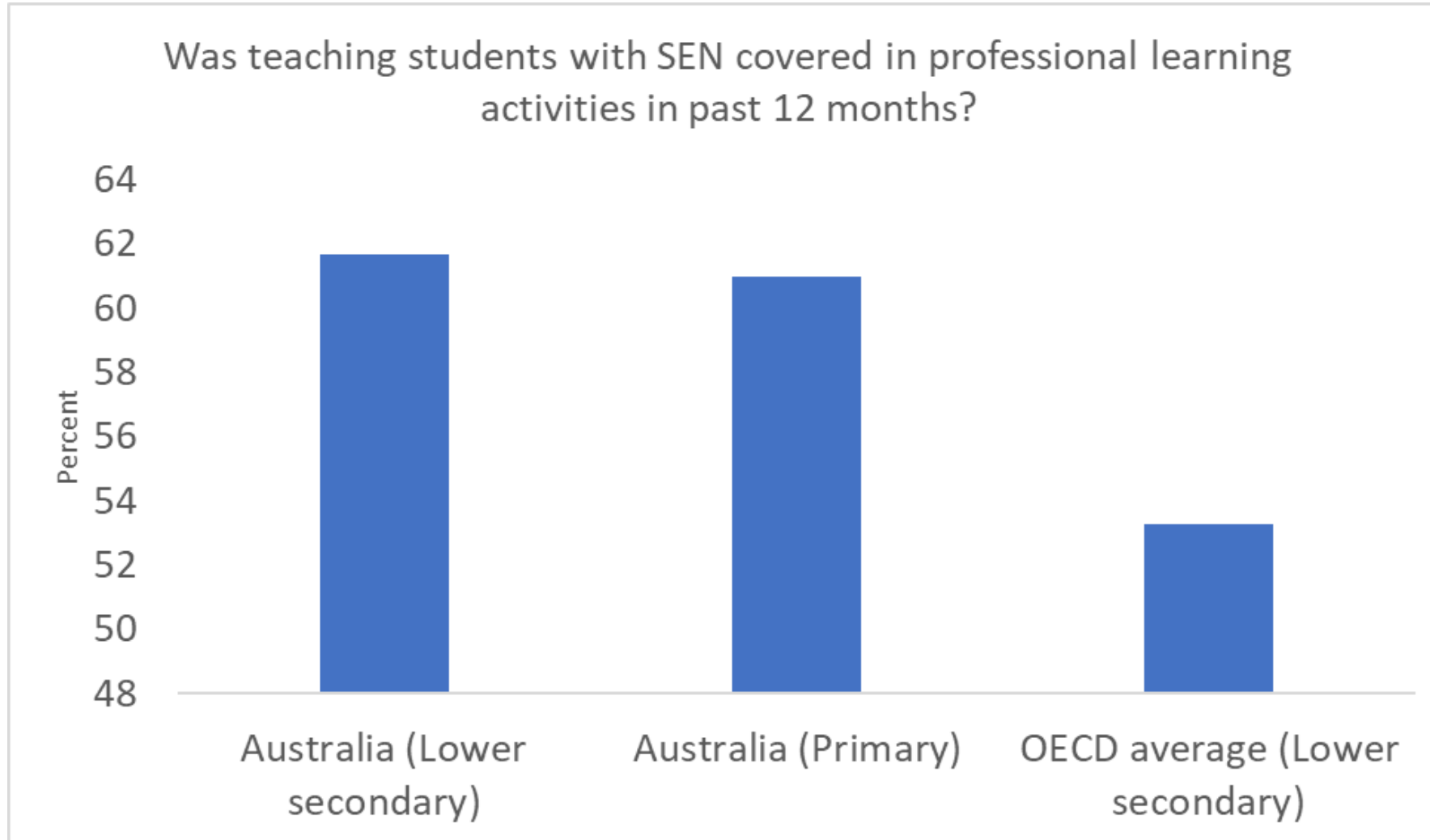
Need for support and professional learning...

- Teachers who reported being stressed by modifying lessons for students with SEN had poorer wellbeing, lower job satisfaction and were more likely to want to leave the profession*.
- There is a strong relationship between experiencing stress related to modifying lessons for students with SEN and reporting a need for professional learning related to teaching students with SEN*.
 - Lower secondary teachers are 4 times more likely to report this need
 - Primary teachers are 2 ½ times more likely
 - OECD teachers on average are twice as likely



After accounting for teacher characteristics (including gender, age (standardised at the international level) and years of teaching experience (standardised at the international level)) and school characteristics (including school location, school governance type, school intake of students from socio-economically disadvantaged homes, school intake of students who have difficulties understanding the language(s) of instruction, and school intake of students with special education needs).

Professional learning

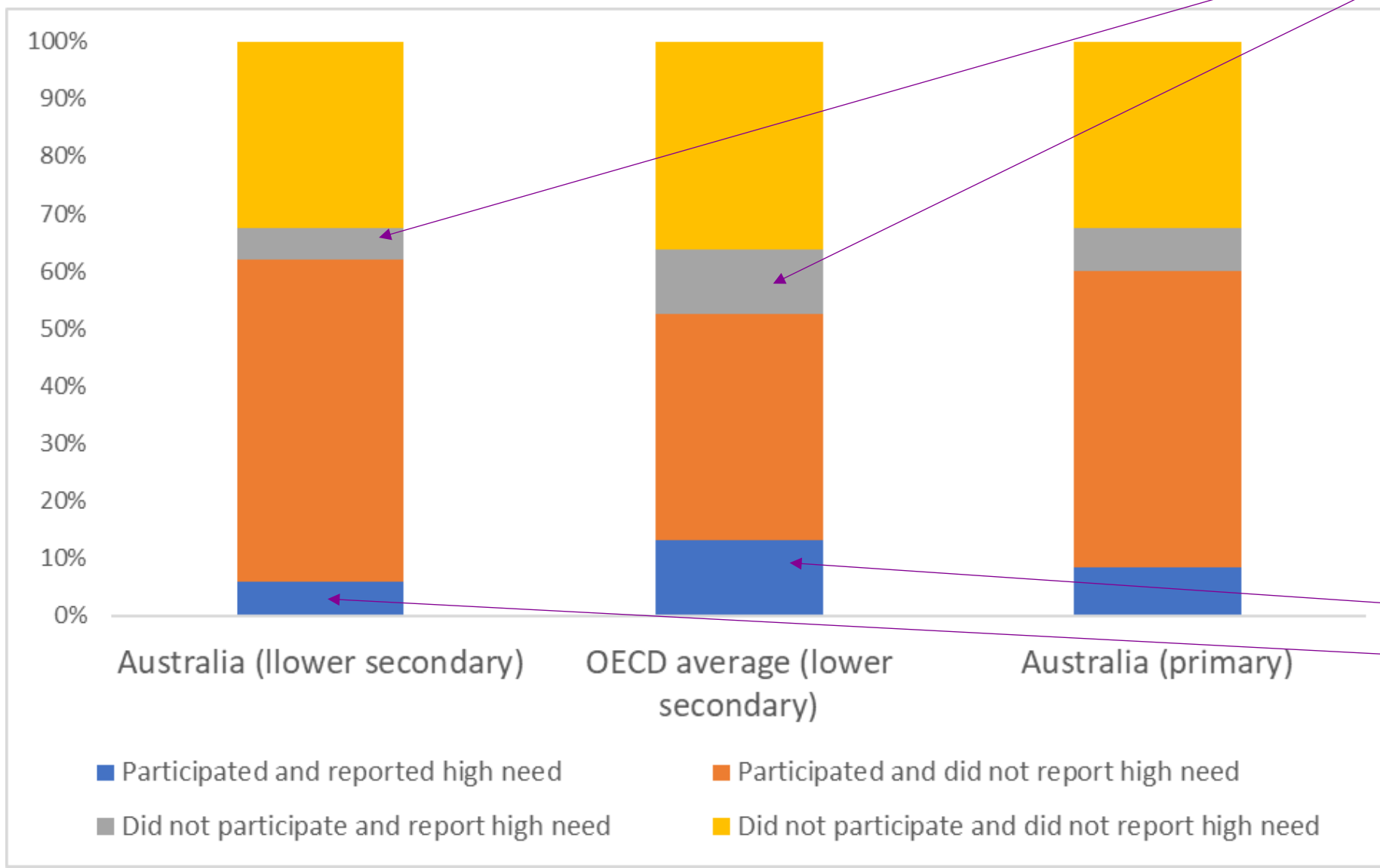


65% of lower secondary teachers with >10 years engaged with relevant PL

57% of lower secondary teachers with ≤ 5 years engaged with PL

In secondary schools, more experienced teachers were more likely to have engaged with this PL

Professional learning need and participation

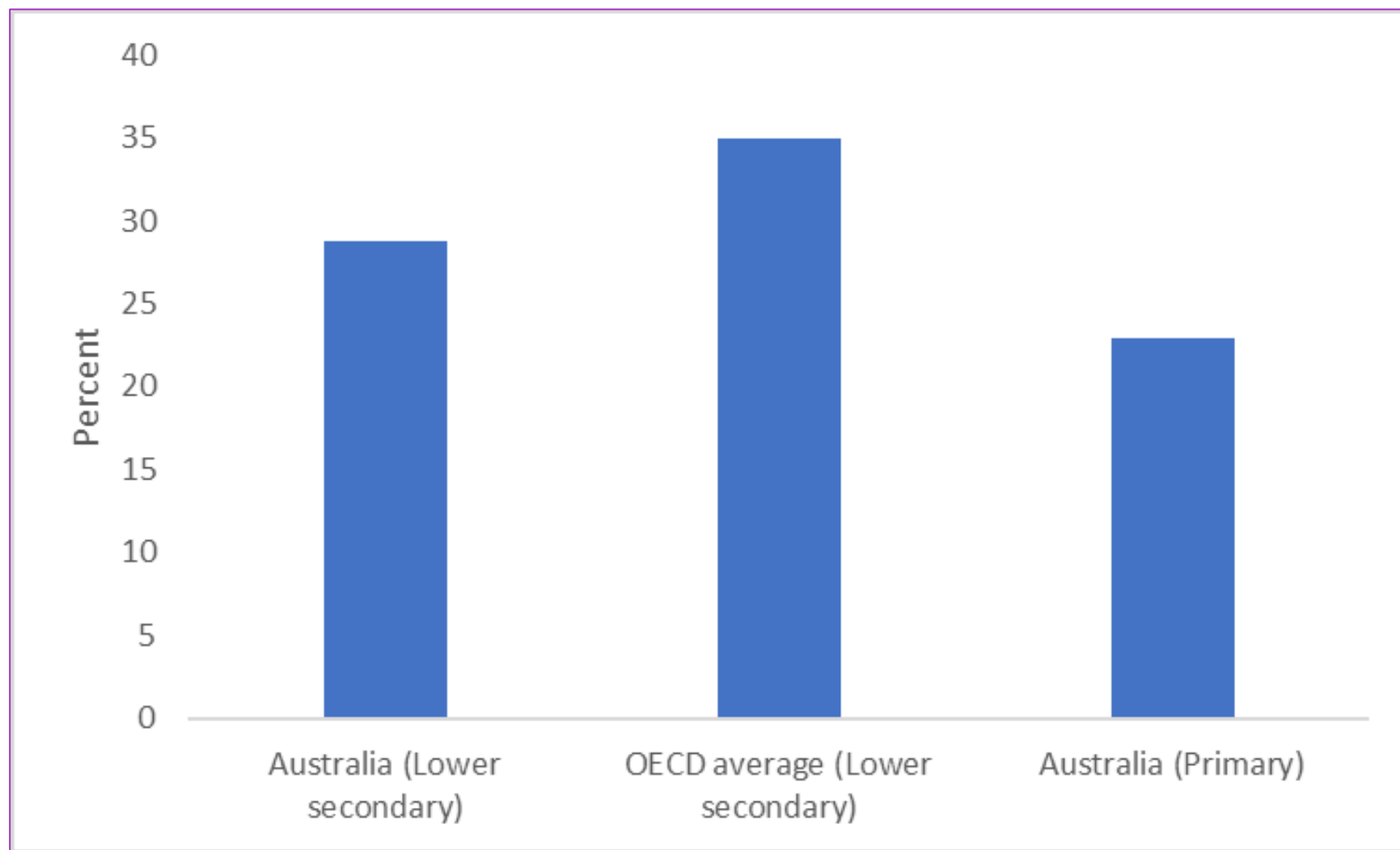


Less experienced teachers more likely to be in this category

SEN training was the third highest professional learning need, after AI and classroom management. Need for PL in teaching students with SEN has increased over time

Less experienced teachers more likely to be in this category

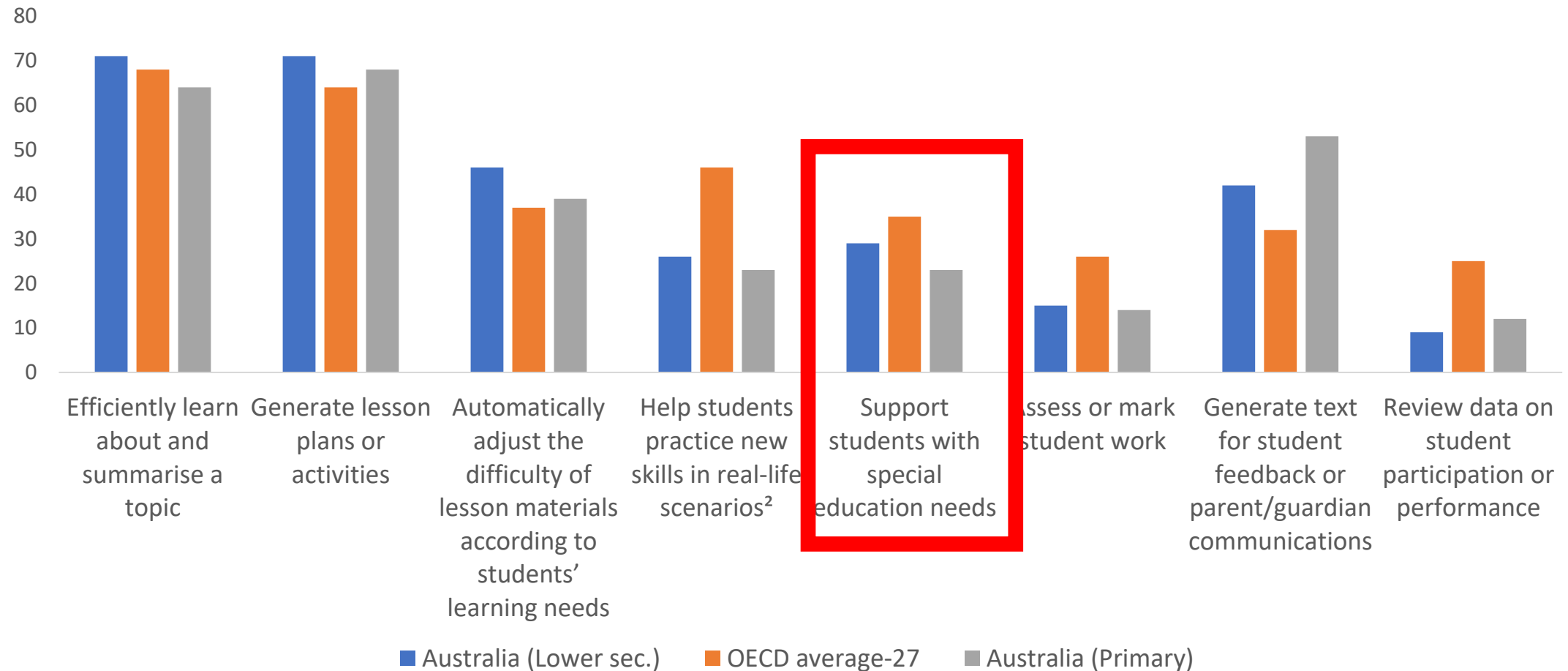
Teachers using AI to support students with SEN (among AI users)



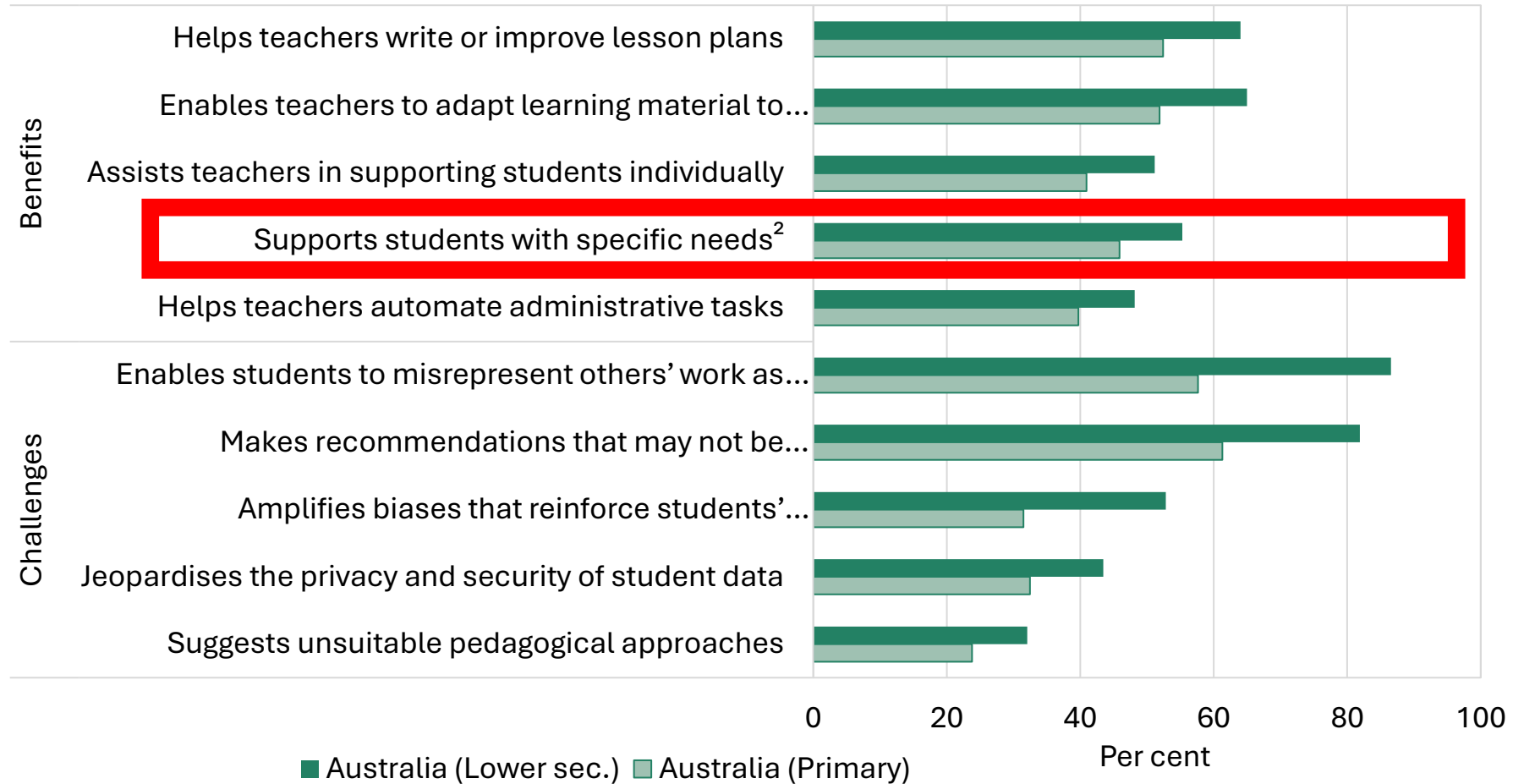
Is there an opportunity to consider how AI use can be leveraged to support students with disability?

Note: This is the proportion of teachers who are already using AI

Uses of AI...what are they using it for?



Benefits and challenges of using AI



Take aways...

- Australia's classrooms are more diverse than the OECD average and becoming increasingly diverse. This includes an increase in the number of schools with a high proportion of students receiving additional supports for their learning, behaviour and/or wellbeing.
- There is a growing focus on school's capacity to effectively support students with disability, and a shift towards more integrated, schoolwide preventive approaches.
- Australian teachers report lower self-efficacy than the OECD average in areas of practice that are critical for implementation of schoolwide inclusive frameworks.

Take aways...

- Australian teachers report that multiple aspects of teaching students with disability are a considerable source of stress.
- There may be opportunities to focus and expand the use of digital tools and AI to support teachers' work with students with disability.
- Professional learning related to teaching students with disability is a growing priority, especially for less experienced teachers.



Thank you

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vimeo.com/acerorg



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References

Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). (n.d.). *School students with disability*. <https://www.acara.edu.au/reporting/national-report-on-schooling-in-australia/school-students-with-disability>

Australian Government. (2023). *Strong beginnings: Report of the Teacher Education Expert Panel*. [2051 Teacher Expert Education Panel \(TEEP\) Report ACC.pdf](#)

Friedman, T. et al. (2025). *TALIS 2024: Australian Report*. Australian Council for Educational Research.
