



INSTITUTE FOR  
EDUCATIONAL  
REFORM

# Reclaiming the Lost Years – A Review of Student Disengagement in Years 7–9 in Victoria

The Institute for Educational Reform partnered with ACER to review 15 studies on student disengagement in Victoria's middle years (Years 7–9). The findings point to an urgent problem we can no longer ignore.

**Up to 1 in 2 Victorian students in Years 7–9 are disengaged from school.**

**92% to 86%** Victorian attendance rates have been falling steadily since 2015 and are still declining.

**1 in 6** Students disengage during the transition from primary to secondary school — often arriving already a year behind.

**39% motivation. 38% mental health. 32% confidence.** These are the top three barriers young Victorians say get in the way of their learning.

**Less than 30%** of Years 8–9 students report finishing tasks when they get difficult. Low perseverance and poor self-regulation are widespread — and some students are actively disengaging from their own learning.

**Fewer than half feel they belong.** Only 47% of Years 7–9 students reported a sense of belonging at school. Victoria is the only state to have gone backwards on this measure.

**1 in 5** Victorian students has persistent emotional or behavioural problems. For gender-diverse young people, that figure rises sharply with over 75% identifying mental health as a barrier to their goals.

**Nearly 4,000** fifteen-year-olds across Australia are not enrolled in any school. In Victoria, thousands more have been quietly pushed out without formal records

To download the full report go to [www.educationalreform.org.au](http://www.educationalreform.org.au)

