

Country note for UK of results from PISA: Students' well-being

Introduction and background

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a survey which is carried out every 3 years to measure the extent to which 15 year-olds nearing the end of compulsory schooling have gained the key skills and knowledge which will help them to participate in modern society. It looks not just at what the students know, but also at what they can do with what they know.

In addition to academic subjects, PISA 2015 looked at students' well-being, in the participating OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and development) countries. The survey explored issues such as overall life satisfaction, motivation and relationships. The third of the five volumes published on PISA 2015 is dedicated to well-being issues. The key findings presented below are based on the country note for the UK.

Key findings

Overall life satisfaction and psychological well-being

- Students in the PISA survey were asked to rate their life satisfaction on a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 being the highest. The average life satisfaction score for students in the UK was 6.98, compared to an OECD average of 7.31. As in the majority of countries, boys in the UK reported higher life satisfaction than girls (0.7 point higher).
- Fifty per cent of students in the UK reported studying less than 40 hours per week inside and outside of school, compared to an OECD average of 48 per cent. Just 11 per cent of students reported studying more than 60 hours, against an OECD average of 13 per cent. Across the OECD countries, students who study more than sixty hours a week reported slightly lower levels of life satisfaction than those who study less than 40 hours.
- In the UK, those students who were in the top quarter of the index of achievement motivation (i.e. those who want to be the best in their class, want top grades and are ambitious) score 29 points higher in science – the equivalent of a whole school year.
- Across OECD countries, 55 per cent of students reported feeling very anxious about a test even if they were well-prepared. In the UK the figure was considerably higher, at 79.1 per cent. Girls were much more likely to feel this way with a 19 percentage point difference.
- Students in the UK reported high achievement motivation and a competitive spirit: 90 per cent of UK students reported that they want to be the best in whatever they do, compared to an OECD average of just 65 per cent. Ninety-five per cent of UK students reported that they want top grades in most or all of their courses, compared to an OECD average of 83 per cent.

- Girls in the UK are 10 percentage points more likely than boys to expect to complete a university degree. First generation immigrants in the UK are 20 points more likely than non-immigrant students to expect to graduate.

Students' social life at school

- The social dimension of well-being includes relationships with the family, with peers and with teachers. It also includes students' feelings about their social lives in and outside of school. Survey results placed students from the UK lower than students across OECD averages on the overall index of sense of belonging.
- Students in the survey were asked whether they felt that they belonged at school. Across the OECD, 73 per cent agreed that they felt this way, compared to 67.8 per cent of UK students.
- Students were asked whether they felt like outsiders at school. Across the OECD countries, 82.8 per cent disagreed that they felt this way. A slightly lower proportion of students in the UK (79.9%) disagreed.
- Students were asked if they had been victims of any type of bullying at least a few times a month. Across the OECD, 18.7 per cent responded that this was the case. The figure for students in the UK was higher at 23.9 per cent. Boys in the UK were less likely than girls to report that they are victims of nasty rumours or that they are left out by others. They are, however, more likely to encounter other types of bullying at least a few times a month.
- In the UK, 21 per cent of students reported that their teachers disciplined them more harshly than others at least a few times a month, compared to the OECD average of 14 per cent.

- In the UK, schools with a high incidence of bullying (where more than 10% of students are frequently bullied) score on average 38 points lower in science than schools with a low incidence of bullying (where less than 5% of students report being frequently bullied). This difference shrinks to 12 points after taking differences in school's socio-economic profiles into account.
- In the UK, students are less likely to help around the house. Sixty per cent of boys reported doing so, compared to an OECD average of 70 per cent. The figure for girls was 62 per cent, compared to an OECD average of 75 per cent.

Parents and the home environment

- PISA collects data from students on their perception of parental support, and from parents on activities they do at home with their children. In PISA 2015, data from parents was only collected in Scotland as reflected in some of the findings below
- Students were asked whether they felt that their parents supported them when they were facing difficulties at school. Across the OECD countries, 90.6 per cent agreed that this was the case, compared to 91.5 per cent of UK students. Students were also asked whether they talked to their parents after school. The proportion who said that they did was slightly higher for the UK than across the OECD countries (88.7% vs 86.1%).
- Across the OECD countries, students whose parents are interested in their child's activities at school are 3.4 times less likely to report being dissatisfied with life. The figure for the UK is 3.6.
- The 6 per cent of students in the UK who reported that their parents are not interested in their school activities score around 43 points lower in science than students who perceive that their parents are interested. They are also more likely to report low satisfaction with their life.
- Advantaged students in the UK are more likely to report that their parents are interested in their school activities and that they provide more emotional support than disadvantaged students. Advantaged students were also more likely to report talking with their parents before or after school.
- Around 88 per cent of parents in Scotland (compared to 78% in 11 other OECD countries with comparable data) reported that they had attended a scheduled meeting for parents in the last academic year. However, far fewer parents in Scotland reported that they had discussed their child's behaviour with a teacher in the last academic year (15% compared to an average of 52% across the 11 other OECD countries).
- In the UK, 28 per cent of students reported that they had started using the internet when they were 6 years old or younger. This is considerably higher than the OECD average of 18 per cent. Students in the UK also spend more time per day using the internet. On weekdays they spend an average of 188 minutes online, compared to the OECD average of 146 minutes. At the weekend the figures are 224 minutes per day for UK students and 184 minutes on average for OECD students.
- Students in the UK who reported using the internet for more than 6 hours a day during weekends were more likely to report feeling like an outsider at school by 11 percentage points. They were also more likely to feel awkward and out of place at school by 12 percentage points and to arrive late at school (by 14 percentage points).

Students' use of their time and living habits outside school

- Students were asked whether they participated in sport or exercise before or after school. Pupils in the UK were less likely to do this than their peers across OECD countries (63.4% vs OECD average of 69.8%).
- The number of students who reported working for pay before or after school in the UK 23.3 per cent, in line with the OECD average. In the UK, more boys do paid work (27% vs 19% of girls).
- Some 36 per cent of girls and 22 per cent of boys in the UK reported that they do not eat breakfast before school, compared with 26 per cent of girls and 18 per cent of boys across OECD countries.

The full document can be downloaded from:

<http://www.oecd.org/edu/pisa-2015-results-volume-iii-9789264273856-en.htm>