

## 4. PAYING FOR EDUCATION

### How do public and private schools differ?

- Only about 3% of all primary and secondary students attended independent private schools in 2012.
- Some 11% of pupils in pre-primary education are enrolled in independent private schools.
- Students who attend private schools tend to perform significantly better than students who attend public schools; but students, from public or private schools, in a similar socio-economic context tend to do equally well.

#### Significance

At some point in their child's education, many parents have considered whether it would be worth the expense to enrol their child in a private school. For parents or students, private schools may offer particular kinds of instruction and curricula that are not available in public schools. At the same time, private schools may segregate students and reinforce inequities in educational opportunities. Greater financial resources may enable these schools to attract and recruit the best students and teachers; however, there is no clear evidence about the relationship between the prevalence of private schools and the academic performance of education systems.

#### Findings

Only about 3% of all primary and secondary students attended independent private schools in 2012 in OECD countries. However, as the level of education rises, so does enrolment in independent private schools. About 2% of primary pupils are enrolled in independent private schools while 3% of lower secondary and 5% of upper secondary students are. In Brazil, Colombia, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, Poland and Portugal, more than 10% of upper secondary students attend such schools. Meanwhile, the proportion of pre-primary students enrolled in independent private schools is considerably larger, at 11%.

Private school students perform significantly better than public school students on the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 27 out of 45 countries and economies with available data. In Qatar, the score-point difference is 108 points, the equivalent of nearly three years of schooling. Public schools perform better than private schools in only 4 of the 47 countries and economies: Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong-China, Luxembourg and Thailand. However, the average socio-economic background of private school students is higher than that of public school students in 37 countries and economies. Only in Chinese Taipei is the average socio-economic status of public school students higher than that of private school students.

Public school students with similar social backgrounds to private school students tend to do equally well on the PISA surveys. After accounting for the socio-economic status of

students and schools, private schools outperform public schools in only 8 countries and economies, and public schools outperform private schools in 12 countries and economies. Thus, there is no evidence to suggest that private schools help to raise the level of performance of the school system as a whole.

#### Trends

The share of 15-year-olds enrolled in private schools did not increase, on average, between 2003 and 2012, but some countries saw significant shifts toward public or private schools over this period. The share of students enrolled in private institutions at the tertiary level increased significantly between 2003 and 2012 in 21 of the 29 OECD countries with available data. Enrolments in private universities increased from 23% to 25%, on average, during the period, and enrolments in private vocational tertiary institutions from 33% to 37%.

#### Definitions

Private schools are controlled by a non-government organisation or with a governing board not selected by a government. Independent private schools receive less than 50% of their core funding from government agencies; government-dependent private schools receive more than 50% of their core funding from government agencies. Public schools are controlled and managed by a public education authority or agency.

Information on data for Israel:  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932315602>.

#### Going further

For additional material, notes and a full explanation of sourcing and methodologies, see *Education at a Glance 2014* (Indicator C7).

Areas covered include:

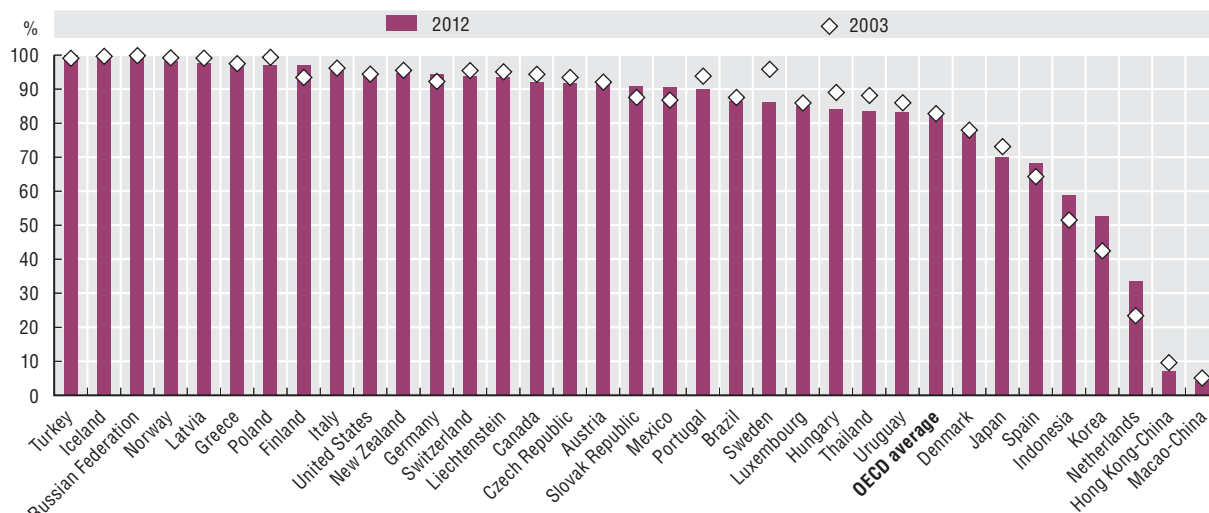
- School type and mathematics performance (PISA 2012).
- The degree of autonomy in determining curricula in public and private schools.

#### Further reading from OECD

OECD (2012), *Public and Private Schools: How Management and Funding Relate to their Socio-economic Profile*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264175006-en>.

**Figure 4.7. Public school enrolment among 15-year-old students (2003, 2012)**

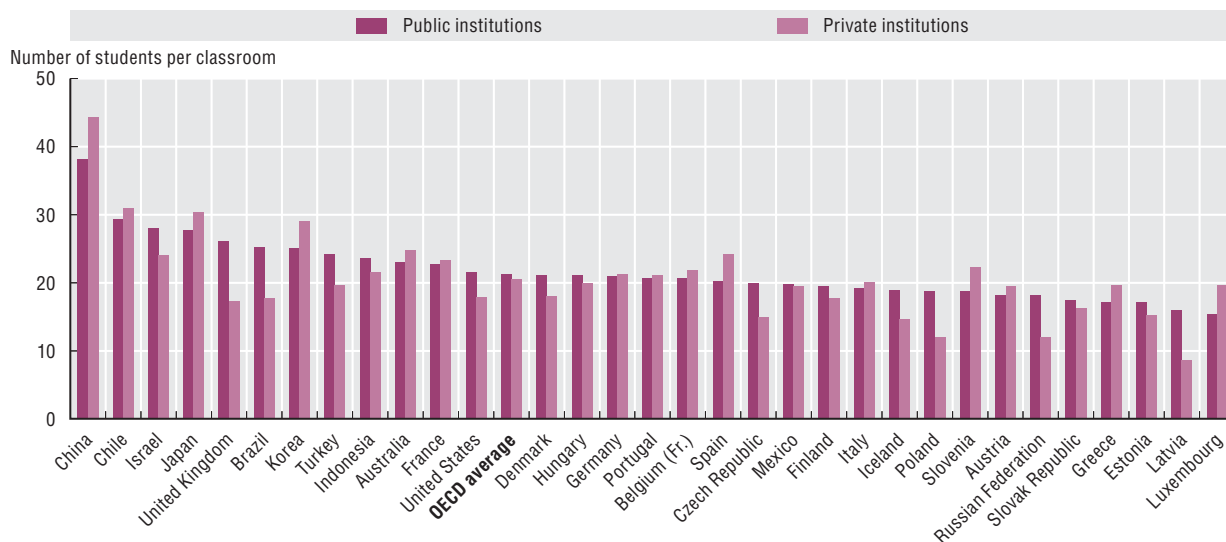
This figure shows the percentage of 15-year-old students who are enrolled in public schools.



Source: OECD (2014), Education at a Glance 2014, Chart C7.1, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933119454>.

**Figure 4.8. Class size in primary schools, 2012**

This figure shows the average class size in public and private primary schools.



Source: OECD (2014), Education at a Glance 2014, Chart C7.3, available at [doi http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933119492](http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933119492).



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