

Finland takes number one spot in OECD's latest PISA survey, advance figures show

Finland once again takes the number one spot in OECD's three-yearly PISA test of the abilities of a sample of 15-year old secondary-school students, followed by Hong Kong (China) and Canada in second and third place, according to advance details of results that will be published in full next week.

The PISA survey, based on tests carried out in 2006 in 57 countries that together account for nearly 90% of the world economy, is the only comparable international yardstick of secondary-school students' attainments. After focusing in 2000 on reading skills and in 2003 on mathematics, PISA 2006 tested students on how much they knew about science and their ability to use scientific knowledge and understanding to identify and address questions and resolve problems in daily life.

Comparisons between the results of the 2006 tests and those of previous years are not strictly valid, as the nature of the tests varied. However, average scores showed some countries moving sharply upwards, including Canada, Germany, Austria, and Denmark. Full PISA results will be published on Tuesday 4 December 2007; advance details are being made available following the publication by a Spanish magazine of partial leaked figures.

Commenting on the PISA survey, OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría noted that it is as a tool to assist governments in their policy choices on education. "In today's competitive global economy, quality education is one of the most valuable assets that a society and an individual can have," he said. .

In that context, he added, "PISA is much more than just a ranking. It is about how well individual education systems are equipping their young people for the world of tomorrow. First and foremost, it tells countries where their strengths and weaknesses lie."

For advance details of individual countries' performance in the PISA 2006 survey, see the table below. Full details and analysis will be published by OECD at 10.00 a.m. Paris time on Tuesday 4 December 2007.

Range of rank on the PISA 2006 science scale						
	Mean score	Standard error	OECD countries		All countries/economies	
			Upper Rank	Lower Rank	Upper Rank	Lower Rank
Finland	563	(2.0)	1	1	1	1
Hong Kong-China	542	(2.5)			2	2
Canada	534	(2.0)	2	3	3	6
Chinese Taipei	532	(3.6)			3	8
Estonia	531	(2.5)			3	8
Japan	531	(3.4)	2	5	3	9
New Zealand	530	(2.7)	2	5	3	9
Australia	527	(2.3)	4	7	5	10
Netherlands	525	(2.7)	4	7	6	11

Liechtenstein	522	(4.1)			6	14
Korea	522	(3.4)	5	9	7	13
Slovenia	519	(1.1)			10	13
Germany	516	(3.8)	7	13	10	19
United Kingdom	515	(2.3)	8	12	12	18
Czech Republic	513	(3.5)	8	14	12	20
Switzerland	512	(3.2)	8	14	13	20
Macao-China	511	(1.1)			15	20
Austria	511	(3.9)	8	15	12	21
Belgium	510	(2.5)	9	14	14	20
Ireland	508	(3.2)	10	16	15	22
Hungary	504	(2.7)	13	17	19	23
Sweden	503	(2.4)	14	17	20	23
Poland	498	(2.3)	16	19	22	26
Denmark	496	(3.1)	16	21	22	28
France	495	(3.4)	16	21	22	29
Croatia	493	(2.4)			23	30
Iceland	491	(1.6)	19	23	25	31
Latvia	490	(3.0)			25	34
United States	489	(4.2)	18	25	24	35
Slovak Republic	488	(2.6)	20	25	26	34
Spain	488	(2.6)	20	25	26	34
Lithuania	488	(2.8)			26	34
Norway	487	(3.1)	20	25	27	35
Luxembourg	486	(1.1)	22	25	30	34
Russian Federation	479	(3.7)			33	38
Italy	475	(2.0)	26	28	35	38
Portugal	474	(3.0)	26	28	35	38
Greece	473	(3.2)	26	28	35	38
Israel	454	(3.7)			39	39
Chile	438	(4.3)			40	42
Serbia	436	(3.0)			40	42
Bulgaria	434	(6.1)			40	44
Uruguay	428	(2.7)			42	45
Turkey	424	(3.8)	29	29	43	47
Jordan	422	(2.8)			43	47
Thailand	421	(2.1)			44	47
Romania	418	(4.2)			44	48
Montenegro	412	(1.1)			47	49
Mexico	410	(2.7)	30	30	48	49
Indonesia	393	(5.7)			50	54
Argentina	391	(6.1)			50	55
Brazil	390	(2.8)			50	54
Colombia	388	(3.4)			50	55
Tunisia	386	(3.0)			52	55
Azerbaijan	382	(2.8)			53	55
Qatar	349	(0.9)			56	56
Kyrgyzstan	322	(2.9)			57	57

Statistically significantly above the OECD average
Not statistically significantly different from the OECD average
Statistically significantly below the OECD average

Note to Editors:

PISA is a three-yearly survey of the knowledge and skills of 15-year-olds in OECD member countries and partner countries and economies. The product of collaboration between participating countries through the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), it draws on leading international expertise to develop valid comparisons across countries and cultures.

In 2006, PISA assessed the competencies of 15-year-old students in 57 countries with an extensive two-hour test. More than 400,000 students from 57 countries making up close to 90% of the world economy took part. The focus was on science but the assessment also included reading and mathematics and collected data on student, family and institutional factors that can help to explain differences in performance.

The table summarises the performance of 15-year-olds in science. It shows three main pieces of information:

- The average score of the country on the science assessment. Across the 30 OECD countries the scores are statistically standardised to have an average of 500 points. The scores are also standardised so that approximately two-thirds of the students score between 400 and 600 – that is the standard deviation is 100. The colour coding in the list of the countries in the first column gives an indication of whether the country's score is statistically significantly above, below or not different from the OECD average.
- The rank of the country compared to other OECD countries. When a sample of students represents all students in a country, it is not always possible to state with 100% accuracy what the exact rank of the country is compared with other countries. For this reason, OECD calculates, with 95% confidence, a range of ranks that the country falls within. For example, in the list above, OECD is 95% confident that New Zealand ranks between 2nd and 5th of all the OECD countries.
- The rank of the country compared to all the countries which participated in PISA 2006. The same 95% level of confidence is applied when comparing a country's position to all the other countries. For example, the list above shows, with 95% confidence, that Croatia ranks between 23rd and 30th position of all the countries which participated in PISA 2006.

In addition to ranking the countries according to students' science performance, OECD carries out extensive analysis to explore the reasons for differences between countries, between schools and between students. This analysis will be publicly released on 4 December.

For further background reading, see :

Assessing Scientific, Reading and Mathematical Literacy, A Framework for PISA 2006 :

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/63/35/37464175.pdf>

Sample test questions from the PISA 2006 assessment

http://www.oecd.org/document/25/0,3343,en_32252351_32235731_38709529_1_1_1,00.html