

## 4. THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

### How much time do teachers spend teaching?

- The number of teaching hours per year in public primary schools averages 786, but ranges from fewer than 650 hours in Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Poland and Estonia to 1 097 in the United States.
- The average number of teaching hours per year in upper secondary schools is 661, but ranges from 364 in Denmark to 1 051 in the United States.
- The way teachers' working time is regulated varies substantially among countries.

#### Significance

This spread examines the time teachers spend teaching and doing non-teaching work, such as preparing lessons and assessing students. Although working time and teaching time only partly determine teachers' actual workload, they do provide valuable insights into differences in what is demanded of teachers in different countries and so may be related to the attractiveness of teaching as a profession. The amount of time teachers spend teaching is also one of the factors that affect the financial resources countries need to allocate to education.

#### Findings

Primary teachers tend to spend more hours teaching than secondary teachers, although the size of the gap varies between countries. A primary teacher is required to teach over 200 hours more than a lower-secondary teacher in the Czech Republic, France and Korea, and 200 hours more than an upper secondary teacher in Denmark, Japan, Norway and Israel. By contrast, the gap with lower-secondary and sometimes upper secondary teachers is less than 60 hours or almost non-existent in Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, New Zealand, Poland, Scotland and the United States and Estonia and Slovenia.

The composition of teachers' annual teaching time, in terms of days, weeks and hours a day, varies considerably between countries. In Korea, primary teachers put in the highest number of days of instruction (220), yet their average teaching time per day is only 3.8 hours (below the OECD average of 4.2). In Denmark, teachers must complete 200 days of instruction in 42 weeks, while in Iceland they must complete 180 days in 36 weeks. The number of hours taught per day of instruction explains the difference. While primary teachers in Iceland complete 20 fewer days of instruction than their counterparts in Denmark, they teach for about 30 minutes longer each day.

While some countries formally regulate contact time only, others also set working hours. Indeed, in most countries, teachers are formally required to work a specified number of hours each week, including teaching and non-teaching time, to earn their full-time salary. These hours vary between countries, as does the allocation of time to teaching and non-teaching activities. Usually, the number of teaching hours is specified, but some countries also regulate, at the national level, the amount of time a teacher must be present in the school.

In Belgium (Fr.), Finland, France, Italy and the Russian Federation and Slovenia, there are no formal requirements for primary and secondary education as to how much time teachers should spend on non-teaching duties. However, this does not mean that teachers are given total freedom to carry out other tasks.

#### Definitions

Data are from the 2009 OECD-INES Survey on Teachers and the Curriculum and refer to the 2007-08 school year. Teaching time is defined as the number of hours per year that a full-time teacher teaches a group or class of students. Working time refers to the normal working hours of a full-time teacher and includes time directly associated with teaching and hours devoted to teaching-related activities, such as preparing lessons, counselling students, correcting assignments and tests, and meeting with parents and other staff.

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 2010* (Indicator D4).

Areas covered include:

- Organisation of teachers' working time.
- Number of teaching hours per year, by level of education.

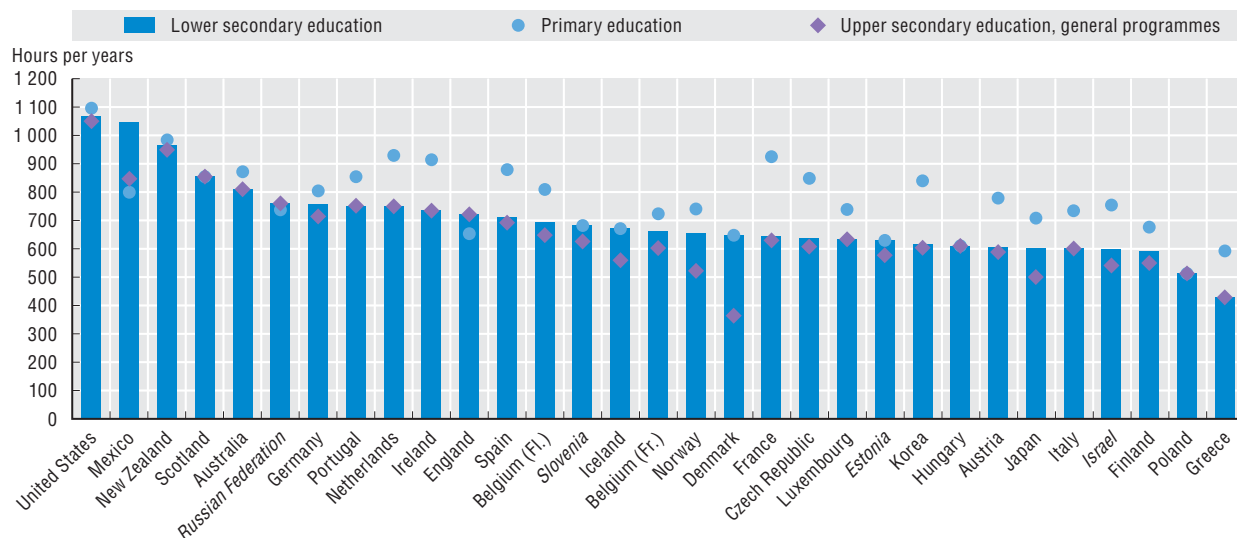
#### Further reading from OECD

*21st Century Learning Environments* (2006).

*Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers* (2005).

Figure 4.7. Annual teaching hours by education level, 2008

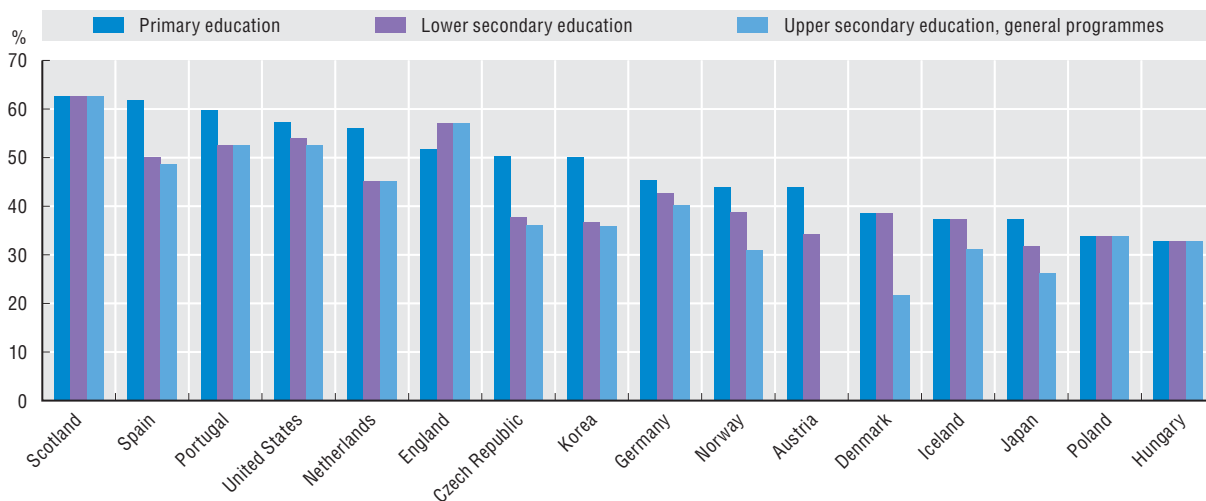
This figure shows the variation in annual teaching hours for teachers in different levels of education.



Source: OECD (2010), Education at a Glance 2010, Table D4.1, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932310529>.

Figure 4.8. Percentage of teachers working time spent teaching, 2008

This figure shows the amount of their working time that teachers spend teaching. Contact time with students is a major part of teachers' workloads, but duties also include preparing classes and correcting assignments.



Source: OECD (2010), Education at a Glance 2010, Table D4.1, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932310529>.



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