

HOW MUCH TIME DO TEACHERS SPEND TEACHING?

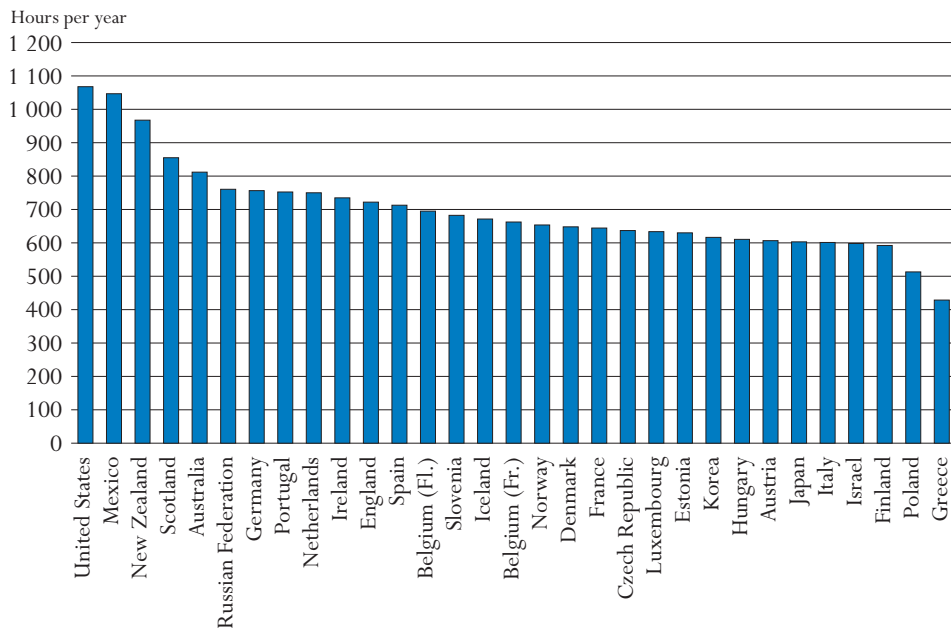
This indicator focuses on the statutory working time and statutory teaching time of teachers at different levels of education. Although working time and teaching time only partly determine teachers' actual workload, they do give valuable insight into differences in what is demanded of teachers in different countries. Together with teachers' salaries (see Indicator D3) and average class size (see Indicator D2), this indicator presents some key measures of the working lives of teachers.

Key results

Chart D4.1. Number of teaching hours per year in lower secondary education (2008)


Net contact time in hours per year in public institutions

The number of teaching hours in public lower secondary schools averages 703 hours per year but ranges from less than 520 hours in Greece (429) and Poland (513) to over 1 000 in Mexico (1 047) and the United States (1 068).



Countries are ranked in descending order of the number of teaching hours per year in lower secondary education.

Source: OECD, Table D4.1. See Annex 3 for notes (www.oecd.org/edu/eqq2010).

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Other highlights of this indicator

- The number of teaching hours in public primary schools averages 786 per year (13 less than in 2007), but ranges from less than 650 in Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Poland and the partner country Estonia to 1 097 in the United States.
- The average number of teaching hours in upper secondary general education is 661, but ranges from 364 in Denmark to 1 051 in the United States.
- The composition of teachers' annual teaching time, in terms of days, weeks and hours per day, varies considerably. For instance, while teachers in Denmark teach for 42 weeks per year (in primary and secondary education) and teachers in Iceland for 35-36 weeks per year, teachers in Iceland have more total annual teaching time (in hours) than teachers in Denmark.
- Regulations concerning teachers' required working time also vary. In most countries, teachers are formally required to work a specific number of hours; in some, teaching time is only specified by the number of lessons per week and assumptions may be made about the amount of non-teaching time required per lesson (at school or elsewhere). For example, in Belgium (French Community), additional non-teaching hours at school are set at the school level; the government only defines the minimum and maximum number of teaching periods per week at each level of education.

Policy context

In addition to class size and the ratio of students to teaching staff (see Indicator D2), students' hours of instruction (see Indicator D1) and teachers' salaries (see Indicator D3), the amount of time teachers spend teaching affects the financial resources countries need to allocate to education (see Indicator B7). Teaching hours and the extent of non-teaching duties are also important elements of teachers' work and may determine the attractiveness of the teaching profession.

D4

The proportion of working time spent teaching provides information on the amount of time available for activities such as lesson preparation, correction, in-service training and staff meetings. A large proportion of working time spent teaching may indicate that less working time is devoted to tasks such as student assessment and lesson preparation. However, such duties may be performed at the same level as for teachers with less teaching time but outside of regulatory working hours.

Evidence and explanations

Teaching time in primary education

In both primary and secondary education, countries vary in terms of the number of teaching hours per year required of the average public school teacher. There are usually more teaching hours in primary education than in secondary education.

A primary school teacher teaches an average of 786 hours per year (13 less than in 2007), but this ranges from less than 650 hours in Denmark (648), Greece (593), Hungary (611), Poland (513) and the partner country Estonia (630) to 900 or more in France (926), Ireland (915), the Netherlands (930) and New Zealand (985) and over 1 000 in the United States (1097) (Chart D4.2 and Table D4.1).

Teaching time can be distributed quite differently throughout the year. Korea is the only country in which primary teachers must complete the largest 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). Denmark and Iceland provide an interesting contrast in this respect. They have similar annual net teaching time in terms of hours (Chart D4.2). However, teachers in Denmark must complete 200 days of instruction in 42 weeks, and those in Iceland 180 days in 36 weeks. The number of hours taught per day of instruction explains the difference. Primary teachers in Iceland complete 20 fewer days of instruction than teachers in Denmark, but each of these days includes, on average, 3.7 hours of teaching compared to 3.2 in Denmark. Iceland's teachers must provide just over half an hour more teaching time per day of instruction than Denmark's teachers, but this relatively small difference is combined with a substantial difference in the number of days of instruction they must complete each year.

With the exception of Belgium (French Community), Greece, Portugal and Scotland, in most OECD countries with available data, teaching time in primary education was about the same in 1996 and 2008. In Portugal, primary teachers were required to teach 9% more in 2008 than in 1996, while in Greece the net contract time dropped by 24% in primary education (Table D4.2).

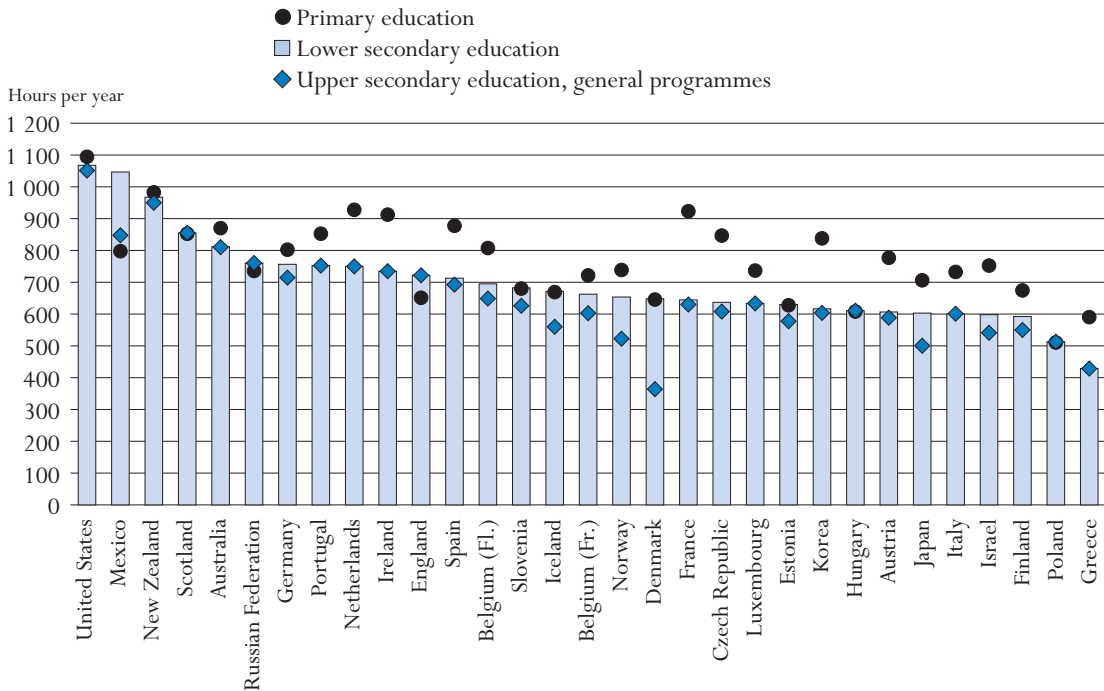
Teaching time in secondary education

Lower secondary education teachers teach an average of 703 hours per year. The teaching load ranges from less than 600 hours in Finland (592), Greece (429), Poland (513) and the partner country Israel (598) to more than 1 000 hours in Mexico (1 047) and the United States (1 068) (Chart D4.1 and Table D4.1).

The upper secondary general education teaching load is usually lighter than that of lower secondary education. A teacher of general subjects has an average statutory teaching load of 661 hours per year. Teaching loads range from 364 hours in Denmark to 800 or more in Australia (810), Mexico (848), and Scotland (855), over 900 in New Zealand (950) and over 1 000 in the United States (1 051) (Chart D4.2 and Table D4.1).


Chart D4.2. Number of teaching hours per year, by level of education (2008)

Net contact time in hours per year in public institutions



Countries are ranked in descending order of the number of teaching hours per year in lower secondary education.

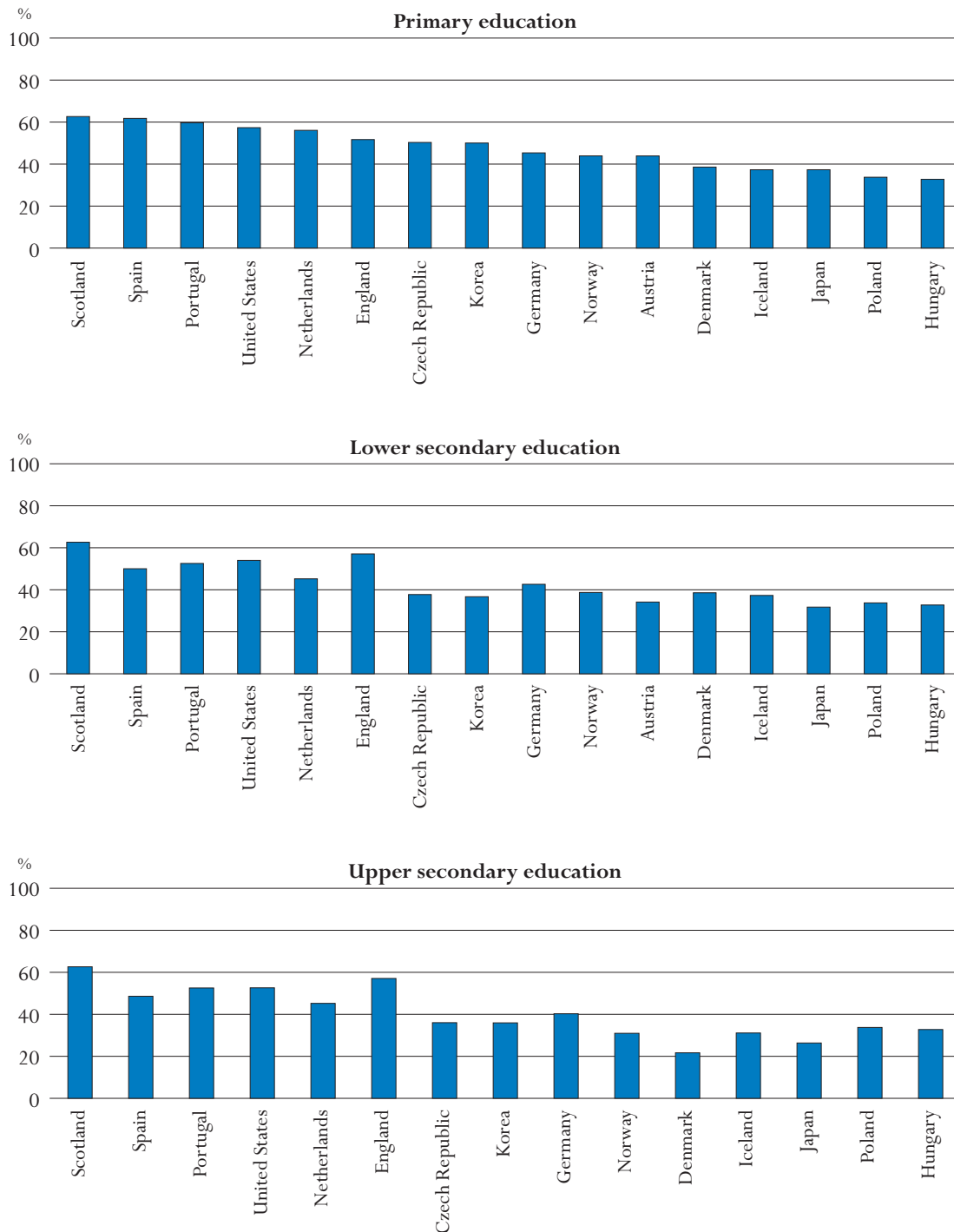
Source: OECD, Table D4.1. See Annex 3 for notes (www.oecd.org/edu/eqg2010).

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As is the case for primary teachers, the number of hours of teaching time and the number of days of instruction for secondary education teachers vary. As a consequence, the average hours per day that teachers teach also vary widely, ranging at the lower secondary level from three hours or less per day in Greece, Japan, Korea and Poland to five or more in Mexico, New Zealand and the United States. Similarly, at the upper secondary general level, teachers in Denmark, Finland, Greece, Japan, Korea, Norway and Poland teach for three hours or less per day on average, compared to five hours or more in New Zealand and the United States (Chart D4.3). Korea provides an interesting example of the differences in the organisation of teachers' work. Korea is the only country in which secondary teachers teach for more than five days per week on average, yet their total annual teaching time is below the average because they teach, on average, fewer hours per day. The inclusion of breaks between classes in teaching time in some countries, but not in others may explain some of these differences.


Chart D4.3. Percentage of teachers' working time spent teaching, by level of education (2008)

Net teaching time as a percentage of total statutory working time



Countries are ranked in descending order of the percentage of teachers' working time spent teaching in primary education.

Source: OECD, Table D4.1. See Annex 3 for notes (www.oecd.org/edu/eqg2010).

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At the lower secondary level, half of the countries for which data are available saw at least a 5% change in teaching time between 1996 and 2008, and at the upper secondary level, this was also the case in ten out of sixteen countries. However, the direction of change varies. In Hungary, secondary teachers were required to teach 29% more in 2008 than in 1996 and in Portugal, upper secondary teachers were required to teach 31% more. In Denmark, teaching time dropped by 35% in upper secondary education and in Greece it dropped by 32% in both lower and upper secondary education (Table D4.2).

Teaching time contrasts between levels

In the Czech Republic, France and Korea, a primary teacher is required to teach over 200 hours more than a lower secondary teacher. In addition to these countries, a primary teacher in Denmark, Japan, Norway and the partner country Israel is required to teach over 200 hours more than an upper secondary teacher (general programmes). By contrast, there is a difference of less than 60 hours, or even no difference, between the number of required teaching hours for primary and lower secondary teachers and sometimes also for primary and upper secondary teachers in Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, New Zealand, Poland, Scotland, the United States and the partner countries Estonia and Slovenia. England, Mexico and the partner country the Russian Federation are the only countries in which secondary teachers complete a larger number of hours of teaching than primary teachers. In Mexico, required teaching hours for lower secondary teachers are just over 30% more than for primary teachers. Upper secondary teachers in Mexico have a smaller number of teaching hours than lower secondary teachers but their required teaching hours are still 6% higher than for primary teachers (Chart D4.1). This is largely because of greater daily contact time.

In interpreting differences in teaching hours among countries, it should be noted that net contact time, as used for the purpose of this indicator, does not necessarily correspond to the teaching load. Contact time is a substantial component, but preparation for classes and necessary follow-up (including correcting students' work) also need to be included in comparisons of teaching loads. Other relevant elements (such as the number of subjects taught, the number of students taught, and the number of years a teacher teaches the same students) should also be taken into account.

Teachers' working time

The regulation of teachers' working time varies considerably. While some countries formally regulate contact time only, others also establish working hours. In some countries, time is allocated for teaching and non-teaching activities within the formally established working time.

In most countries, teachers are formally required to work a specified number of hours per week to earn their full-time salary; this includes teaching and non-teaching time. Within this framework, however, countries differ in the allocation of time to teaching and non-teaching activities (Chart D4.3). Typically, the number of hours for teaching is specified (except in Sweden), but some countries also regulate at the national level the time a teacher has to be present in the school.

Australia, Belgium (Flemish Community for primary education), Denmark (primary and lower secondary education), England, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, the United States and the partner countries Estonia and Israel specify the time during which teachers are required to be available at school, for both teaching and non-teaching time.

Greece applies a reduction of teaching hours in line with years of service. At the secondary level, teachers have 21 teaching hours per week. After 6 years, this drops to 19 and after 12 years to 18. After 20 years of service, teachers have 16 teaching hours a week, nearly three-quarters that of early career teachers. However, the remaining hours of teachers' working time must be spent at school.

In Austria (primary and lower secondary education), the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Japan, Korea, the Netherlands, Poland and Scotland, teachers' total annual working time, at school or elsewhere, is specified (but the split between time spent at school and time spent elsewhere is not). In addition, in some countries the number of hours to be spent on non-teaching activities is also (partly) specified. However, it is not specified whether or not the teachers have to spend the non-teaching hours at school.

Non-teaching time

In Belgium (French Community), Finland, France, Italy and partner countries the Russian Federation and Slovenia, there are no formal requirements for primary and secondary education as to how much time should be spent on non-teaching duties. However, this does not mean that teachers are given total freedom to carry out other tasks. In Austria, provisions concerning teaching time are based on the assumption that the teacher's duties (including preparing lessons and tests, marking and correcting papers, examinations, and administrative tasks) amount to total working time of 40 hours per week. In Belgium (Flemish Community), the additional non-teaching hours at school are set at the school level. There are no regulations regarding lesson preparation, correction of tests, marking students' papers, etc. The government defines only the minimum and maximum number of teaching periods a week (of 50 minutes each) at each level of education (Table D4.1).

Definitions and methodologies

Data are from the 2009 OECD-INES Survey on Teachers and the Curriculum and refer to the school year 2007-08.

Teaching time

Teaching time is defined as the number of hours per year that a full-time teacher teaches a group or class of students as set by policy. It is normally calculated as the number of teaching days per year multiplied by the number of hours a teacher teaches per day (excluding periods of time formally allowed for breaks between lessons or groups of lessons). Some countries, however, provide estimates of teaching time based on survey data.

At the primary level, short breaks between lessons are included if the classroom teacher is responsible for the class during these breaks.

Working time

Working time refers to the normal working hours of a full-time teacher. According to a country's formal policy, working time can refer to:

- the time directly associated with teaching (and other curricular activities for students, such as assignments and tests, but excluding annual examinations); and
- the time directly associated with teaching and hours devoted to other activities related to teaching, such as lesson preparation, counselling students, correcting assignments and tests, professional development, meetings with parents, staff meetings, and general school tasks.

Working time does not include paid overtime.

Working time in school

Working time in school refers to the time teachers are required to spend at work, including teaching and non-teaching time.

Number of teaching weeks and days

The number of teaching weeks refers to the number of weeks of instruction excluding holiday weeks. The number of teaching days is the number of teaching weeks multiplied by the number of days per week a teacher teaches, less the number of days on which the school is closed for holidays.

Table D4.1. Organisation of teachers' working time (2008)

Number of teaching weeks, teaching days, net teaching hours, and teacher working time over the school year, in public institutions

	Number of weeks of instruction			Number of days of instruction			Net teaching time in hours			Working time required at school in hours			Total statutory working time in hours		
	Primary education	Lower secondary education	Upper secondary education, general programmes	Primary education	Lower secondary education	Upper secondary education, general programmes	Primary education	Lower secondary education	Upper secondary education, general programmes	Primary education	Lower secondary education	Upper secondary education, general programmes	Primary education	Lower secondary education	Upper secondary education, general programmes
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)
OECD countries															
Australia	40	40	40	196	196	196	873	812	810	1 207	1 228	1 228	a	a	a
Austria	38	38	38	180	180	180	779	607	589	a	a	a	1 776	1 776	a
Belgium (Fl.)	37	37	37	180	181	181	810	695	649	936	a	a	a	a	a
Belgium (Fr.)	37	37	37	181	181	181	724	662	603	a	a	a	a	a	a
Chile	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Czech Republic	40	40	40	193	193	193	849	637	608	a	a	a	1 688	1 688	1 688
Denmark	42	42	42	200	200	200	648	648	364	1 306	1 306	m	1 680	1 680	1 680
England	38	38	38	190	190	190	654	722	722	1 265	1 265	1 265	1 265	1 265	1 265
Finland	38	38	38	188	188	188	677	592	550	a	a	a	a	a	a
France	36	36	36	m	m	m	926	644	630	a	a	a	a	a	a
Germany	40	40	40	193	193	193	805	756	715	a	a	a	1 775	1 775	1 775
Greece	36	32	32	178	158	158	593	429	429	1 140	1 170	1 170	a	a	a
Hungary	37	37	37	185	185	185	611	611	611	a	a	a	1 864	1 864	1 864
Iceland	36	36	35	180	180	175	671	671	560	1 650	1 650	1 720	1 800	1 800	1 800
Ireland	37	33	33	183	167	167	915	735	735	1 036	735	735	a	a	a
Italy	38	38	38	167	167	167	735	601	601	a	a	a	a	a	a
Japan	40	40	40	201	201	198	709	603	500	a	a	a	1 899	1 899	1 899
Korea	40	40	40	220	220	220	840	616	604	a	a	a	1 680	1 680	1 680
Luxembourg	36	36	36	176	176	176	739	634	634	900	828	828	a	a	a
Mexico	41	41	36	200	200	173	800	1047	848	800	1 167	971	a	a	a
Netherlands	40	m	m	195	m	m	930	750	750	a	a	a	1 659	1 659	1 659
New Zealand	39	39	38	197	194	190	985	968	950	985	968	950	a	a	a
Norway	38	38	38	190	190	190	741	654	523	1 300	1 225	1 150	1 688	1 688	1 688
Poland	38	38	38	185	185	185	513	513	513	a	a	a	1 520	1 520	1 520
Portugal	37	37	37	171	171	171	855	752	752	1 261	1 261	1 261	1 432	1 432	1 432
Scotland	38	38	38	190	190	190	855	855	855	a	a	a	1 365	1 365	1 365
Slovak Republic	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Spain	37	37	36	176	176	171	880	713	693	1 140	1 140	1 140	1 425	1 425	1 425
Sweden	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	1 360	1 360	1 360	1 767	1 767	1 767
Switzerland	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Turkey	m	a	m	m	a	m	m	a	m	m	a	m	m	a	m
United States	36	36	36	180	180	180	1 097	1 068	1 051	1 381	1 381	1 378	1 913	1 977	1 998
OECD average	38	38	37	187	186	184	786	703	661	1 178	1 192	1 166	1 659	1 662	1 657
EU19 average	38	37	37	184	181	181	763	661	632	1 149	1 133	1 108	1 601	1 601	1 585
Partner countries															
Brazil	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
China	35	35	35	175	175	175	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Estonia	39	39	39	175	175	175	630	630	578	1 540	1 540	1 540	a	a	a
India	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Indonesia	44	44	44	252	164	164	1 260	738	738	m	m	m	m	m	m
Israel	43	42	42	185	178	178	755	598	541	981	783	712	a	a	a
Russian Federation	34	35	35	164	169	169	738	761	761	a	a	a	a	a	a
Slovenia	40	40	40	188	188	188	682	682	626	a	a	a	a	a	a

Source: OECD. India, Indonesia: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (World Education Indicators Programme). China: The Ministry of Education, Notes on the Experimental Curriculum of Compulsory Education, 19 November 2001. See Annex 3 for notes (www.oecd.org/edu/eag2010). Please refer to the Reader's Guide for information concerning the symbols replacing missing data.


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Table D4.2.

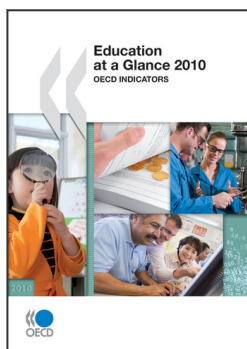
Number of teaching hours per year (1996, 2008)*Net contact time in hours per year in public institutions by level of education, and index of change from 1996 to 2008*

	Primary education			Lower secondary education			Upper secondary education, general programmes			
			Index of change 1996–2008 (1996 = 100)			Index of change 1996–2008 (1996 = 100)			Index of change 1996–2008 (1996 = 100)	
	2008 (1)	1996 (2)	(3)	2008 (4)	1996 (5)	(6)	2008 (7)	1996 (8)	(9)	
OECD countries	Australia	873	m	m	812	m	m	810	m	m
	Austria	779	684	114	607	658	92	589	623	95
	Belgium (Fl.)	810	841	96	695	724	96	649	679	96
	Belgium (Fr.)	724	858	84	662	734	90	603	677	89
	Chile	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
	Czech Republic	849	w	m	637	607	105	608	580	105
	Denmark	648	640	101	648	640	101	364	560	65
	England	654	w	m	722	w	m	722	m	m
	Finland	677	m	m	592	m	m	550	m	m
	France	926	900	103	644	647	100	630	636	99
	Germany	805	772	104	756	715	106	715	671	106
	Greece	593	780	76	429	629	68	429	629	68
	Hungary	611	w	m	611	473	129	611	473	129
	Iceland	671	m	m	671	m	m	560	m	m
	Ireland	915	915	100	735	735	100	735	735	100
	Italy	735	735	100	601	601	100	601	601	100
	Japan	709	m	m	603	m	m	500	m	m
	Korea	840	m	m	616	w	m	604	w	m
	Luxembourg	739	m	m	634	m	m	634	m	m
	Mexico	800	800	100	1 047	1 182	89	848	m	m
	Netherlands	930	930	100	750	867	87	750	867	87
	New Zealand	985	985	100	968	968	100	950	950	100
	Norway	741	713	104	654	633	103	523	505	104
	Poland	513	m	m	513	m	m	513	m	m
	Portugal	855	783	109	752	644	117	752	574	131
	Scotland	855	975	88	855	m	m	855	917	93
	Slovak Republic	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Spain	880	900	98	713	a	m	693	630	110	
Sweden	a	624	m	a	576	m	a	528	m	
Switzerland	m	871	m	m	850	m	m	669	m	
Turkey	m	m	m	a	a	a	m	m	m	
United States	1 097	w	m	1 068	w	m	1 051	w	m	
<i>OECD average</i>	<i>786</i>	<i>817</i>		<i>703</i>	<i>716</i>		<i>661</i>	<i>658</i>		
<i>EU19 average</i>	<i>763</i>	<i>810</i>		<i>661</i>	<i>661</i>		<i>632</i>	<i>649</i>		
Partner countries	Brazil	m	m	m	800	m	m	800	m	m
	Estonia	630	m	m	630	m	m	578	m	m
	Israel	755	m	m	598	m	m	541	m	m
	Russian Federation	738	m	m	761	m	m	761	m	m
	Slovenia	682	m	m	682	m	m	626	m	m

Source: OECD. See Annex 3 for notes (www.oecd.org/edu/eag2010).

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StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932310529>



From:
Education at a Glance 2010
OECD Indicators

Access the complete publication at:

<https://doi.org/10.1787/eag-2010-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2010), "How much time do teachers spend teaching?", in *Education at a Glance 2010: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/eag-2010-28-en>

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