

3. LEARNING TO LEARN – TRENDS

Reading for enjoyment, by gender and background

- Twice as many boys as girls lost interest in reading between 2000 and 2009, widening the gender gap even further.
- Students from less advantaged backgrounds lost interest in reading at a greater rate than those from advantaged backgrounds.
- Boys from disadvantaged backgrounds show even less interest in reading than they did in 2000. In Portugal and the partner country Latvia, the proportion of these students who reported reading for enjoyment shrunk from over two-thirds to less than 50%.

What it means

The gender gap in enjoyment of reading helps to explain why girls continue to outperform boys significantly in reading. It is also worrying that the impact of socio-economic background on reading for enjoyment, which had been relatively weak in 2000, is growing stronger. These trends highlight the particular urgency of finding ways to engage boys from disadvantaged backgrounds in reading for pleasure.

Findings

The drop in the percentage of students who read for enjoyment, by five percentage points overall between 2000 and 2009, was more severe for some groups than for others.

Enjoyment of reading fell by six percentage point for boys compared to three percentage points for girls, on average in OECD countries. This means that the gap between boys' and girls' enjoyment of reading widened. The percentage of boys who reported that they enjoy reading fell from 60% in 2000 to 54% in 2009.

The widening of the gender gap in enjoyment of reading applied to students from both socio-economically advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds. However, the decline in reading for enjoyment was greater among disadvantaged students than among advantaged students. As a result, the gap between the most and least advantaged students in reading for enjoyment widened, on average, from 10 to 16 percentage points.

The combined impact of widening social and gender differences in reading for enjoyment means that socio-

economically disadvantaged boys have become much less likely to enjoy reading. In 2000, a clear majority of these boys, 57%, reported that they read for enjoyment. By 2009, only a minority of 46% did. This decline of 11 percentage points was over double the average decline in reading for enjoyment. In contrast, among the most advantaged girls, 82% reported that they read for enjoyment in 2009, down only slightly from 84% in 2000.

In some countries, the drop in the proportion of disadvantaged boys who reported that they read for enjoyment has been particularly marked. In Portugal and the partner country Latvia, for example, that proportion shrunk from more than 66% to under 50%; in the Czech Republic, it fell from 59% to just 37%.

Definitions

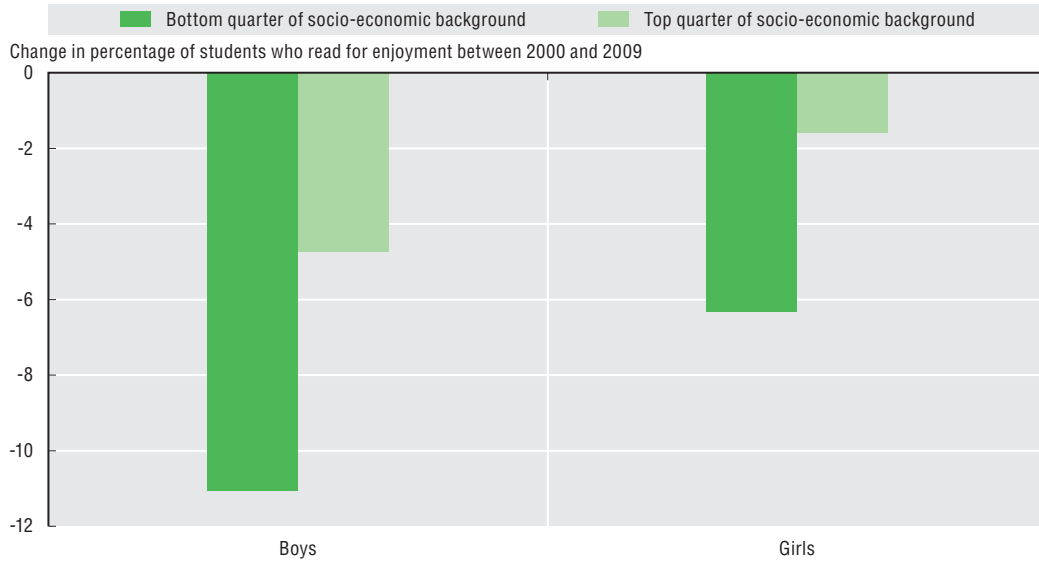
Students were asked how much time they spend each day reading for enjoyment. The possible answers ranged from "I do not read for enjoyment" (students who chose that statement were classified as those who do not read for enjoyment) to "more than 2 hours a day" (students who chose statements indicating that they read for enjoyment from up to 30 minutes a day to more than 2 hours a day were classified as those who read for enjoyment). Only those countries that participated in both PISA 2000 and 2009 are compared. The classification of students by socio-economic background is based on an index reflecting social, economic and cultural characteristics of students' families, as reported by the students.

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

Going further

Further analysis of changes in reading for enjoyment between 2000 and 2009 are presented in Chapter 5 of *PISA 2009 Results Volume V, Learning Trends: Changes in Student Performance Since 2000*. Full data are shown in Tables V.5.1 and V.5.4 at the back of that volume.

Figure 3.7. **Change in the percentage of boys and girls who read for enjoyment between 2009 and 2000, by socio-economic background**



Source: OECD (2010), PISA 2009 Results, Volume V, *Learning Trends: Changes in Student Performance Since 2000*, Figure V.5.10, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932360024>.



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