

### 3. LEARNING TO LEARN

## What kinds of reading are associated with being a good reader?

- In most countries, students who read fiction for enjoyment are much more likely to be good readers.
- Students who read newspapers, magazines and non-fiction are also better readers in many countries, although the effect on reading performance is not as pronounced.
- Students are much more likely to read newspapers and magazines frequently than other types of reading material.

### What it means

Students who read widely for pleasure have a better chance to build and enhance their reading skills. While the strongest readers are those who read fiction, in practice many students show a preference for other forms of reading that have more direct relevance to their daily lives. Encouraging the reading of diverse materials, such as magazines, newspapers and non-fiction, can help to make reading a habit, especially for some weaker readers who might not be inclined to read a work of fiction.

### Findings

In most countries, students who read fiction are particularly likely to be good readers. On average across OECD countries, students who read fiction for their own enjoyment at least several times a month score 53 points above those who do so less frequently. This is equivalent to three-quarters of a proficiency level.

However, the link between reading fiction and strong reading performance varies greatly across countries. In Mexico, Turkey and seven other countries, this link is not apparent; but in the OECD countries Australia, Austria, Finland, Luxembourg and Sweden, there is a gap of at least one proficiency level between the scores of those 15-year-olds who read fiction frequently and those students who read fiction less often. Students who read magazines and newspapers regularly for enjoyment also tend to be better readers than those who do not. However, the relationship is less strong than that between performance and reading fiction. Only in Iceland, Israel, Sweden and the partner countries Kyrgyzstan and Peru do regular readers of newspapers score at least 35 points more, on average, than other students. Students who read magazines regularly score at least 35 points above those who do not in Finland, Hungary, the Netherlands, the Slovak Republic and in the partner countries Bulgaria and Montenegro.

Frequent readers of non-fiction read at a higher level than average in some countries, but in most countries,

there is no significant positive relationship with performance. The difference is greater than 35 score points in the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the partner countries Bulgaria, Croatia and Lithuania.

Reading comic books is generally associated with a low level of reading performance. This could well be because weaker readers find comic books more accessible.

These findings need to be set alongside the actual frequency with which students read different materials for enjoyment. On average in OECD countries:

- 62% of students read newspapers at least several times a month;
- 58% read magazines;
- 31% read fiction;
- 22% read comic books; and
- 19% read non-fiction.

### Definitions

Students were asked how often they read various types of material because they want to. The graph opposite compares those who said they read fiction and comic books “several times a week” or “several times a month” to those who said they read these materials less frequently or do not read them for enjoyment at all. The results take into account students’ gender, socio-economic background and immigrant status.

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

### Going further

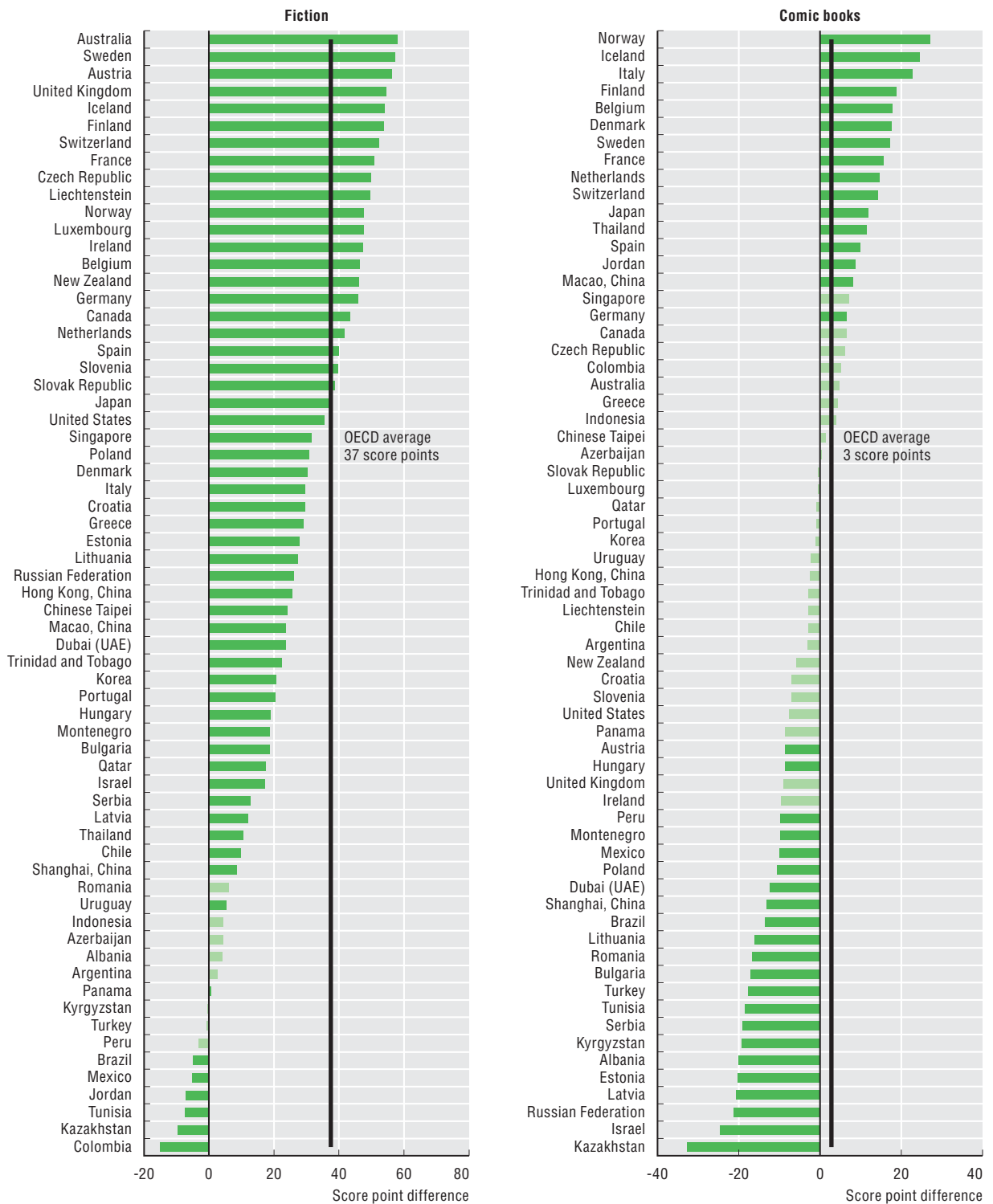
Further analysis is presented in Chapters 1 and 2 of *PISA 2009 Results Volume III, Learning to Learn: Student Engagement, Strategies and Practices*. Full data are shown on Tables III.1.2, III.1.6 and III.2.9 at the back of that volume.

### Further reading from the OECD

*Learners for Life: Student Approaches to Learning* (2003).

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Figure 3.2. Relationship between the types of materials students read and performance in reading



Note: Score point differences that are statistically significant are marked in a darker tone. Score point difference associated with reading several times a month or several times a week compared to a student who does not read for enjoyment, accounting for gender, socioeconomic background and whether the student has an immigrant background.

Source: OECD (2010), PISA 2009 Results, Volume III, Learning to Learn: Student Engagement, Strategies and Practices, Figure III.1.6, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932360176>.



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