

3. LEARNING TO LEARN

Do boys and girls have different reading habits?

- In almost every country, girls read for enjoyment more than boys.
- On average, only about half of boys read for enjoyment; in Austria, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the partner country Liechtenstein, less than 40% do so.
- Girls read fiction and magazines more than boys, but boys are more likely to read newspapers and comic books.

What it means

The fact that girls outperform boys in reading is associated with girls' greater enjoyment of reading. Policy makers in countries where this gap is particularly pronounced should consider including measures to improve students' engagement in reading in any strategy to raise reading proficiency levels. With PISA results showing that boys have different reading habits than girls, policy makers should take into account boys' preference for reading different types of material when trying to raise their interest in and enjoyment of reading.

Findings

In every country except Korea, girls reported reading for enjoyment more than boys. On average across OECD countries, just over half of boys (52%) but nearly three-quarters of girls (73%) said that they read for enjoyment.

The gender gap in the proportion of girls and boys who read for enjoyment is greatest in Estonia, the Netherlands and in the partner countries Latvia and Lithuania, where it is at least 30 percentage points.

In 14 countries, only a minority of boys said that they read for enjoyment. In Austria, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the partner country Liechtenstein, fewer than 40% said that they read for enjoyment.

In some of the countries that show small gender differences in enjoyment of reading, both boys and girls are relatively unlikely to report that they enjoy reading. In Japan, for example, only 54% of boys and 58% of girls reported that they enjoy reading. In some countries, the narrow gender gap reflects the opposite: both boys and girls enjoy reading to nearly the same extent. For

example, in the partner countries and economy Albania; Indonesia; Kazakhstan; Kyrgyzstan; Shanghai, China and Thailand, at least 80% of boys and 90% of girls said that they read for enjoyment.

Other data from PISA show that girls and boys typically enjoy different kinds of reading. Girls are twice as likely to read fiction for enjoyment, and are more likely than boys to read magazines; boys more commonly read newspapers and comic books. This pattern applies across virtually every country in the case of girls' greater enjoyment of fiction and magazines, and across the great majority of countries in the case of boys preferring comic books and newspapers.

The fact that two in three boys, on average in OECD countries, reported that they read newspapers for pleasure, compared to only one in five who said they read fiction for enjoyment, shows that there could be far more potential for strengthening boys' reading skills by encouraging other types of reading in addition to literature.

Definitions

Students who participated in PISA were asked how much time they spend each day reading because they want to. The questionnaire also asked how often they read different types of materials because they want to. The results show the percentage of those 15-year-olds who read these kinds of materials at least "several times a month" or "several times a week".

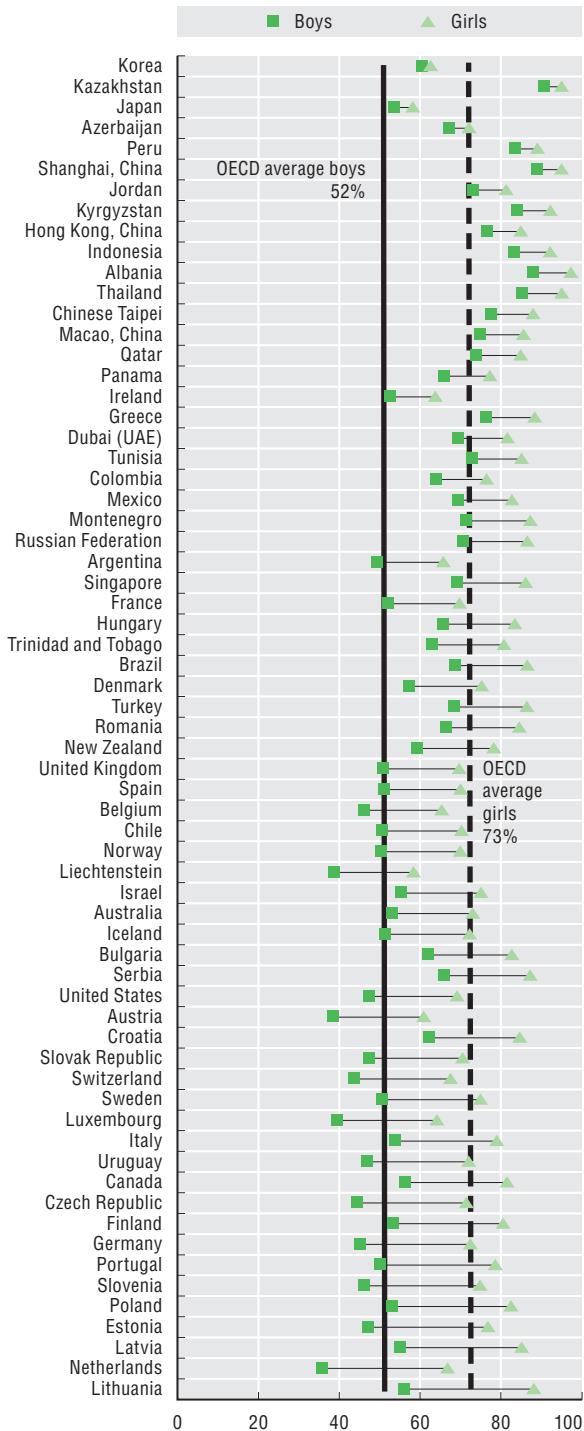
Information on data for Israel: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932315602>.

Going further

Further analysis is presented in Chapter 2 of *PISA 2009 Results Volume III, Learning to Learn: Student Engagement, Strategies and Practices*. Full data are shown in Tables III.2.2 and III.2.10 at the back of that volume.

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Figure 3.3. Percentage of boys and girls who read for enjoyment

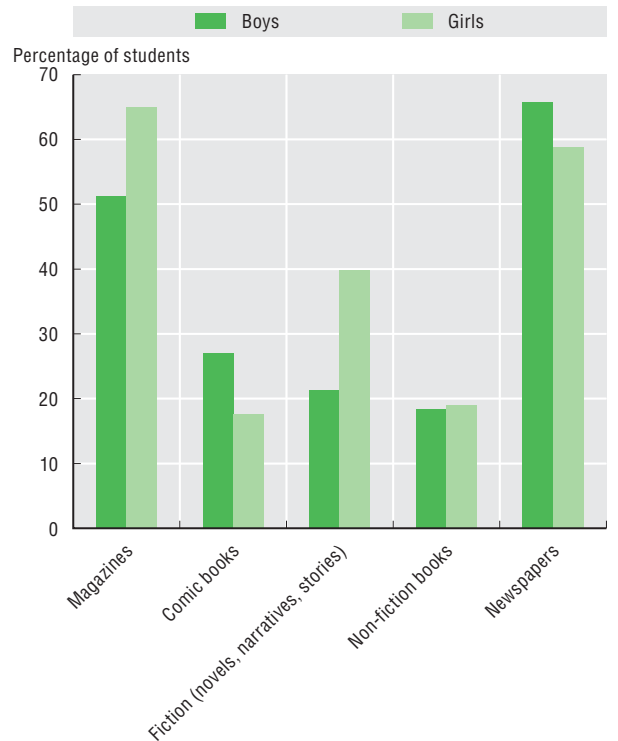


Note: Countries are ranked in ascending order of the difference of boys and girls who read for enjoyment.

Source: OECD (2010), PISA 2009 Results, Volume III, Learning to Learn: Student Engagement, Strategies and Practices, Figure III.2.4, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932360195>.

Figure 3.4. What boys and girls read for enjoyment, OECD average

Percentage of boys and girls who reported that they read the following materials because they want to “several times a month” or “several times a week”



Source: OECD (2010), PISA 2009 Results, Volume III, Learning to Learn: Student Engagement, Strategies and Practices, Figure III.2.14, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932360195>.



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