

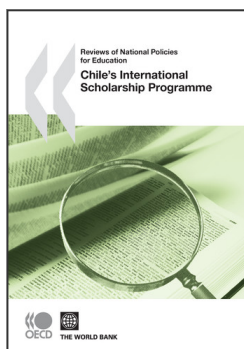
Annex B: Primary and secondary education in Chile

Compulsory education in Chile lasts twelve years, typically starting at the age of six. Eight years are spent in primary (elementary) education and the remaining four in secondary education. Secondary schools fall into three categories: municipal, private-subsidised (which receive vouchers of equal value) and private-paying. Municipal schools operated by the 345 municipalities may charge fees only for secondary education.

It is generally acknowledged in Chile that by and large the private paying schools educate the most socio-economically advantaged students, the private subsidised schools attract middle-income families and the municipal schools cater for the poorer sections of society. After the first two years of secondary education, pupils are streamed into either humanistic-scientific/general education (ISCED 3A) or technical-professional/vocational education (ISCED 3B). In 2006, 64.5% went into the general stream and 35.5% into the vocational stream (OECD, 2008). Many of the poorest and the least academically prepared students are found in municipal vocational schools and streams.

Chile had an upper secondary graduation rate of 73% in 2005, below the OECD average of 82%, but just better than Spain and New Zealand and significantly better than Mexico's 40%. Chile's figure represents significant progress since 2004, when the rate was 66%, and dramatic progress since 1995, when it was 46%.

Chile participates in OECD's Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA). Fifty-seven countries participated in 2006, when the study focused particularly on science but also covered reading and mathematics. In 2006, Chile's students ranked around 40th in all three subjects, significantly below OECD averages. Chile did least well in mathematics, where male students outperformed females by the biggest margin of any participating country. In reading, however, results had improved significantly since the 2003 study. The performance of pupils in different schools varied significantly, reflecting the wide range of quality of secondary schools.



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