

HOW MUCH TIME DO TEACHERS SPEND TEACHING?

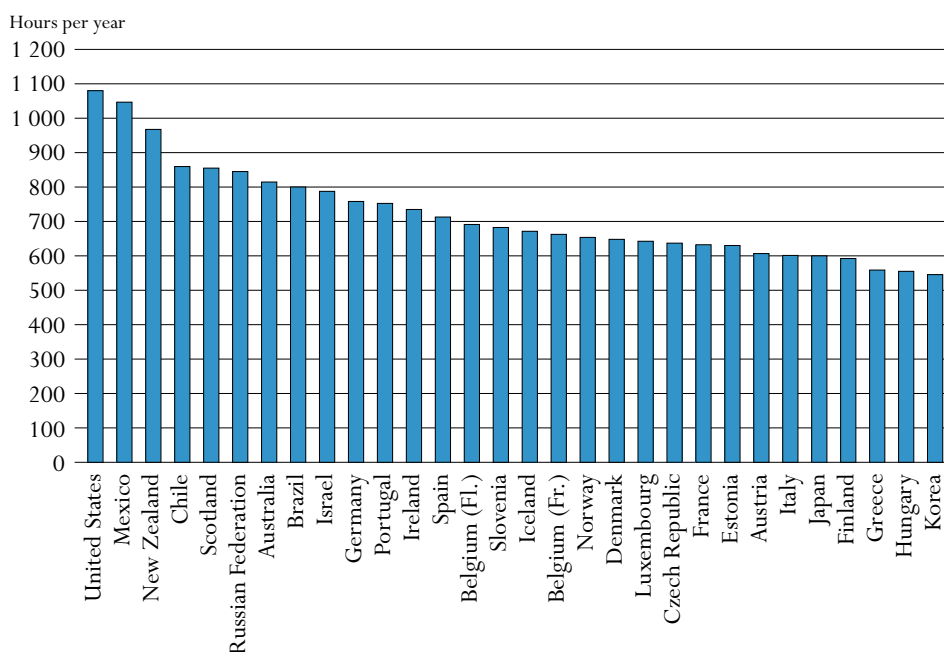
This indicator focuses on the statutory working time and statutory teaching time of teachers at different levels of education. Although working time and teaching time only partly determine teachers' actual workload, they do give valuable insight into differences in what is demanded of teachers in different 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 (2007)

Net contact time in hours per year in public institutions

The number of teaching hours in public lower secondary schools averages 709 hours per year but ranges from 545 hours in Korea to over 1 000 in Mexico (1 047) and the United States (1 080).



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/eag2009).

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/665026260448>

Other highlights of this indicator

- The number of teaching hours in public primary schools averages 798 per year (14 less than in 2006), but ranges from less than 650 in Denmark, Hungary, Turkey and the partner country Estonia to 1 080 in the United States.
- The average number of teaching hours in upper secondary general education is 653, but ranges from 364 in Denmark to 1 080 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.

INDICATOR D4

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.

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 required of the average public school teacher per year. There are usually more teaching hours in primary education than in secondary education.

A primary school teacher teaches an average of 798 hours per year (14 less than in 2006), but this ranges from less than 650 hours in Denmark, Hungary, Turkey and the partner country Estonia to 900 or more in France, Ireland, the Netherlands and New Zealand and over 1 000 in the United States and in partner country Israel (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 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. Denmark and Iceland provide an interesting contrast in this respect. They have a similar annual net teaching time in 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 leads to a substantial difference in the number of days of instruction they must complete each year.

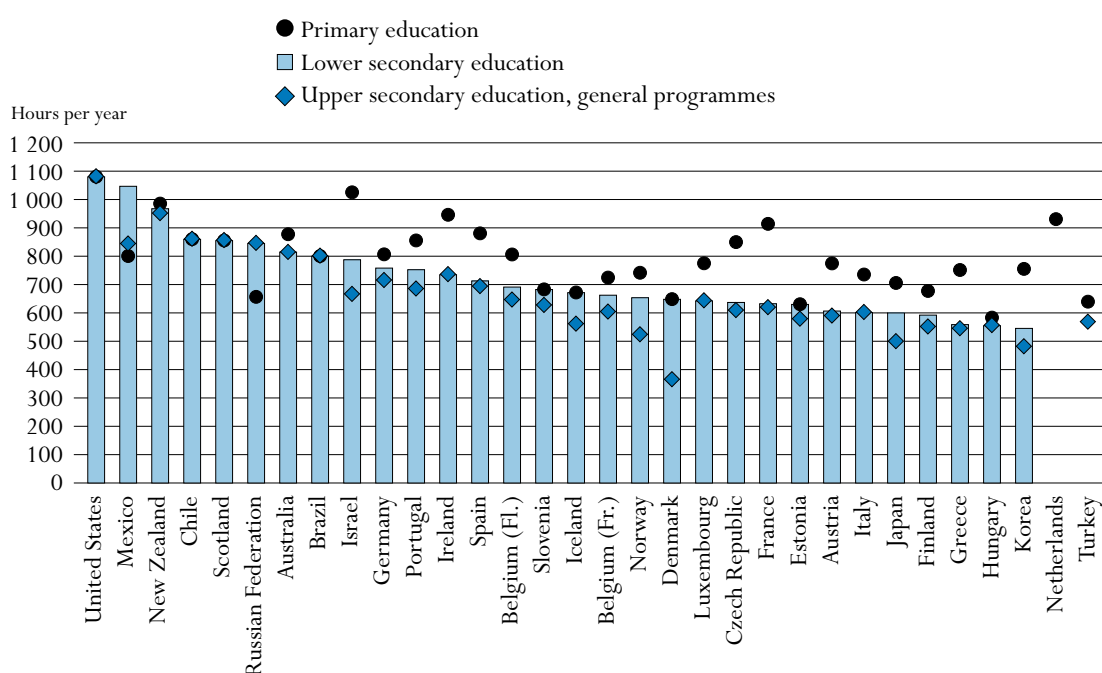
With the exception of Austria, Belgium (French Community), Portugal and Scotland, in most OECD countries with available data, teaching time in primary education was about the same in 1996 and 2007. In Austria, primary teachers were required to teach 13% more in 2007 than in 1996, while in Belgium (French Community) the net contract time dropped by 16% in primary education (Table D4.2).

Teaching time in secondary education

Lower secondary education teachers teach an average of 709 hours per year. The teaching load ranges from less than 600 hours in Finland (592), Greece (559), Hungary (555) and Korea (545) to more than 1 000 hours in Mexico (1 047) and the United States (1 080) (Chart D4.1 and Table D4.1).

The upper secondary general education teaching load is usually lighter than in lower secondary education. A teacher of general subjects has an average statutory teaching load of 653 hours per year. Teaching loads range from 364 hours in Denmark to 800 or more in Australia (813), Mexico (843), Scotland (855) and the partner countries Brazil (800), Chile (860) and the Russian Federation (845), over 900 in New Zealand (950) and over 1 000 in the United States (1 080) (Chart D4.2 and Table D4.1).

Chart D4.2. Number of teaching hours per year, by level of education (2007)
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.

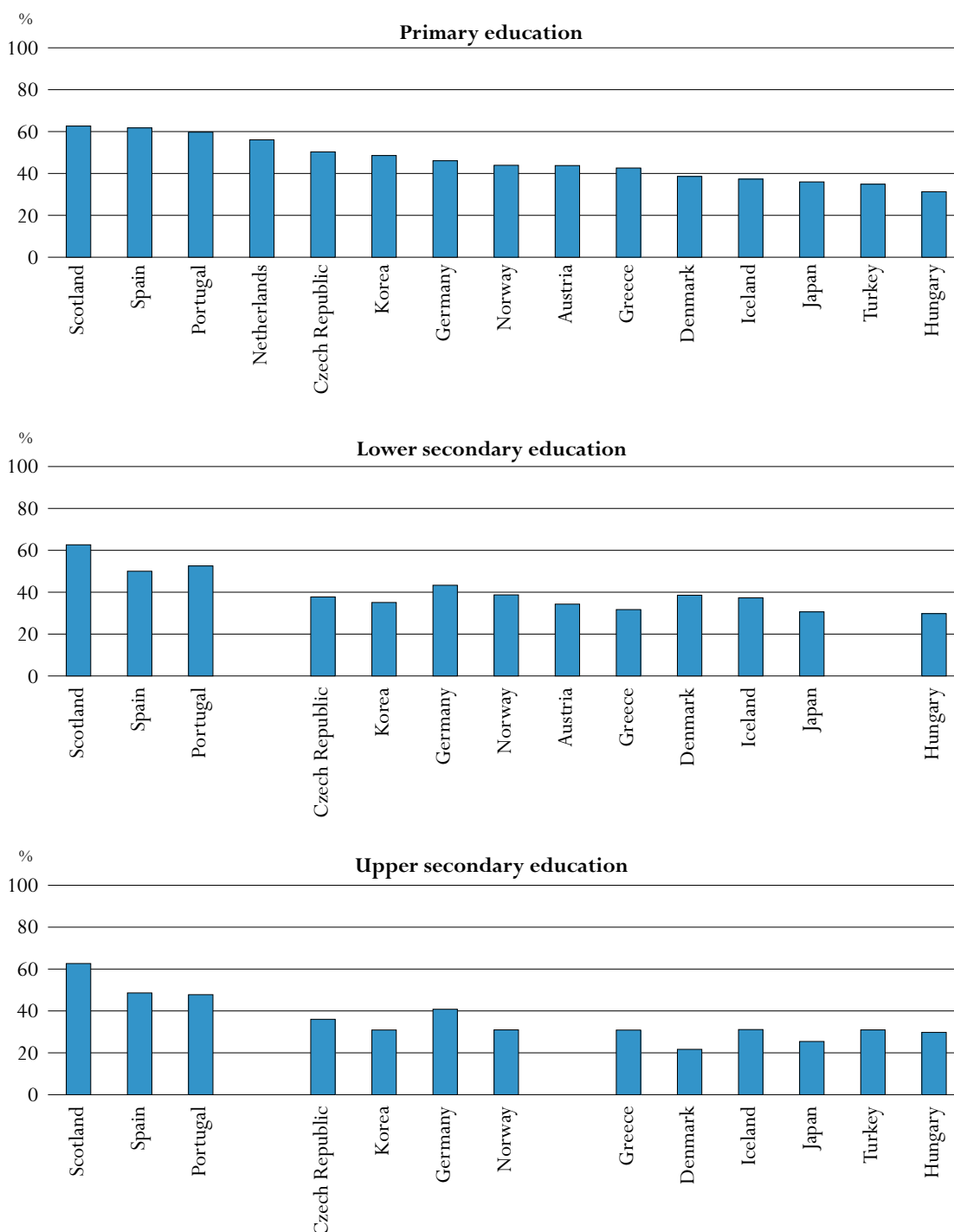
Source: OECD, Table D4.1. See Annex 3 for notes (www.oecd.org/edu/eag2009).

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/665026260448>

As for primary teachers, the number of hours of teaching time and the number of days of instruction vary. As a consequence, the average hours per day that teachers teach also vary widely, ranging at the lower secondary level from three or fewer per day in Greece, Hungary, Japan and Korea to five or more in Mexico and New Zealand and the partner country the Russian Federation, and six in the United States. Similarly, at the upper secondary general level, teachers in Denmark, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Japan, Korea and Norway teach for three hours (or less) per day on average, compared to five hours in New Zealand and, among the partner countries, the Russian Federation and six hours in the United States. Korea provides an interesting example of the differences in the organisation of teachers' work. Korea's teachers must complete the largest number of days of instruction (204) but have the lowest required number of hours of teaching time for lower secondary teachers and the second lowest for upper secondary teachers (Chart D4.3). 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 (2007)

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/eag2009).

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/665026260448>

With the exception of Austria, Belgium (French Community), Germany, Greece, Hungary, Mexico and Portugal, teaching time in secondary education in OECD countries was about the same in 1996 and 2007. However, in Hungary and Portugal secondary teachers were required to teach more than 17% more in 2007 than in 1996. In Denmark, teaching time dropped by 35% in upper secondary education (Table D4.2).

Teaching time contrasts between levels

In the Czech Republic and France and in the partner country Israel a primary teacher is required to teach over 210 hours more than a lower secondary teacher and 240 hours more than an upper secondary teacher (general programmes). By contrast, there is less than a 60 hour 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 Hungary, New Zealand, Scotland and the United States, and the partner countries Brazil, Chile, Estonia and Slovenia. Mexico is the only OECD country and the Russian Federation the only partner country, in which secondary teachers complete a substantially 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 5% 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. These factors can often only be assessed at the school level.

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 England and Sweden and in Switzerland where it is specified at the district level only), 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, Turkey (primary and upper secondary education) and the United States, and the partner countries Brazil, Chile, Estonia and Israel specify the time during which teachers are required to be available at school, for both teaching and non-teaching time.

Greece requires a reduction of teaching hours in line with years of service. Early-career 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 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 New Zealand and in 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 a week. In Belgium (French Community), the additional non-teaching hours at school are set at the school level. There are no regulations regarding lesson preparation, correction of tests and 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 2008 OECD-INES Survey on Teachers and the Curriculum and refer to the school year 2006/07.

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).

- 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.

D4

Table D4.1.

Organisation of teachers' working time (2007)*Number of teaching weeks, teaching days, net teaching hours, and teacher working time over the school year*

	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	197	197	197	877	815	813	1208	1230	1230	a	a
	Austria	38	38	38	180	180	180	774	607	589	a	a	a	1768	1768
	Belgium (Fl.)	37	37	37	179	180	180	806	691	645	931	a	a	a	a
	Belgium (Fr.)	37	37	37	181	181	181	724	662	603	a	a	a	a	a
	Czech Republic	40	40	40	193	193	193	849	637	608	a	a	a	1688	1688
	Denmark	42	42	42	200	200	200	648	648	364	1306	1306	m	1680	1680
	England	38	38	38	190	190	190	m	m	m	1265	1265	1265	1265	1265
	Finland	38	38	38	188	188	188	677	592	550	a	a	a	a	a
	France	35	35	35	m	m	m	914	632	618	a	a	a	a	a
	Germany	40	40	40	193	193	193	806	758	714	a	a	a	1750	1750
	Greece	40	38	38	195	185	185	751	559	544	1500	1425	1425	1762	1762
	Hungary	37	37	37	185	185	185	583	555	555	a	a	a	1864	1864
	Iceland	36	36	35	180	180	175	671	671	560	1650	1650	1720	1800	1800
	Ireland	37	33	33	183	167	167	946	735	735	1036	735	735	a	a
	Italy	38	38	38	167	167	167	735	601	601	a	a	a	a	a
	Japan	40	40	40	200	200	198	705	600	498	a	a	a	1960	1960
	Korea	37	37	37	204	204	204	755	545	480	a	a	a	1554	1554
	Luxembourg	36	36	36	176	176	176	774	642	642	1022	890	890	a	a
	Mexico	42	42	36	200	200	172	800	1047	843	800	1167	971	a	a
	Netherlands	40	m	m	195	m	m	930	m	m	a	a	a	1659	1659
	New Zealand	39	39	38	197	194	190	985	968	950	985	968	950	a	a
	Norway	38	38	38	190	190	190	741	654	523	1300	1225	1150	1688	1688
	Poland	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
	Portugal	37	37	37	171	171	171	855	752	684	1261	1261	1261	1432	1432
	Scotland	38	38	38	190	190	190	855	855	855	a	a	a	1365	1365
	Slovak Republic	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
	Spain	37	37	36	176	176	171	880	713	693	1140	1140	1140	1425	1425
	Sweden	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	1360	1360	1360	1767	1767
	Switzerland	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
	Turkey	38	a	38	180	a	180	639	a	567	870	a	756	1832	a
	United States	36	36	36	180	180	180	1080	1080	1080	1332	1368	1368	a	a
	OECD average	38	38	38	187	186	184	798	709	653	1185	1214	1159	1662	1652
	EU 19 average	38	38	38	185	183	182	794	665	625	1202	1173	1154	1619	1619
Partner countries	Brazil	40	40	40	200	200	200	800	800	800	800	800	800	800	800
	Chile	40	40	40	191	191	191	860	860	860	1152	1152	1152	a	a
	Estonia	39	39	39	175	175	175	630	630	578	1540	1540	1540	a	a
	Israel	43	42	42	183	175	175	1025	788	665	1221	945	945	a	a
	Russian Federation	34	35	35	164	169	169	656	845	845	a	a	a	a	a
	Slovenia	40	40	40	188	188	188	682	682	626	a	a	a	a	a

Source: OECD. See Annex 3 for notes (www.oecd.org/edu/eag2009).

Please refer to the Reader's Guide for information concerning the symbols replacing missing data.


StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/665026260448>


Table D4.2.

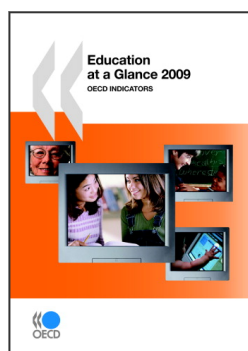
Number of teaching hours per year (1996, 2007)*Net contact time in hours per year in public institutions by level of education, and index of change from 1996 to 2007*

	Primary education			Lower secondary education			Upper secondary education, general programmes		
	2007	1996	Index of change 1996–2007 (1996=100)	2007	1996	Index of change 1996–2007 (1996=100)	2007	1996	Index of change 1996–2007 (1996=100)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
OECD countries									
Australia	877	m	m	815	m	m	813	m	m
Austria	774	684	113	607	658	92	589	623	95
Belgium (Fl.)	806	841	96	691	724	95	645	679	95
Belgium (Fr.)	724	858	84	662	734	90	603	677	89
Czech Republic	849	m	m	637	607	105	608	580	105
Denmark	648	640	101	648	640	101	364	560	65
England	m	w	m	m	w	m	m	m	m
Finland	677	m	m	592	m	m	550	m	m
France	914	900	102	632	647	98	618	w	m
Germany	806	772	104	758	715	106	714	671	106
Greece	751	780	96	559	629	89	544	629	86
Hungary	583	w	m	555	473	117	555	473	117
Iceland	671	m	m	671	m	m	560	m	m
Ireland	946	915	103	735	735	100	735	735	100
Italy	735	735	100	601	601	100	601	601	100
Japan	705	m	m	600	m	m	498	m	m
Korea	755	m	m	545	w	m	480	w	m
Luxembourg	774	m	m	642	m	m	642	m	m
Mexico	800	800	100	1047	1182	89	843	m	m
Netherlands	930	930	100	m	867	m	m	867	m
New Zealand	985	985	100	968	968	100	950	950	100
Norway	741	713	104	654	633	103	523	505	104
Poland	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Portugal	855	783	109	752	644	117	684	574	119
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	639	m	m	a	a	a	567	m	m
United States	1080	w	m	1080	w	m	1080	w	m
<i>OECD average</i>	<i>798</i>	<i>817</i>		<i>709</i>	<i>716</i>		<i>653</i>	<i>659</i>	
<i>EU 19 average</i>	<i>794</i>	<i>810</i>		<i>665</i>	<i>661</i>		<i>625</i>	<i>650</i>	
Partner countries									
Brazil	800	m	m	800	m	m	800	m	m
Chile	860	m	m	860	m	m	860	m	m
Estonia	630	m	m	630	m	m	578	m	m
Israel	1025	m	m	788	m	m	665	m	m
Russian Federation	656	m	m	845	m	m	845	m	m
Slovenia	682	m	m	682	m	m	626	m	m

Source: OECD. See Annex 3 for notes (www.oecd.org/edu/eag2009).

Please refer to the Reader's Guide for information concerning the symbols replacing missing data.

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/665026260448>



From:
Education at a Glance 2009
OECD Indicators

Access the complete publication at:

<https://doi.org/10.1787/eag-2009-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2009), “How much time do teachers spend teaching?”, in *Education at a Glance 2009: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/eag-2009-27-en>

This work is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD member countries.

This document and any map included herein are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area.

You can copy, download or print OECD content for your own use, and you can include excerpts from OECD publications, databases and multimedia products in your own documents, presentations, blogs, websites and teaching materials, provided that suitable acknowledgment of OECD as source and copyright owner is given. All requests for public or commercial use and translation rights should be submitted to rights@oecd.org. Requests for permission to photocopy portions of this material for public or commercial use shall be addressed directly to the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) at info@copyright.com or the Centre français d'exploitation du droit de copie (CFC) at contact@cfcopies.com.