

Executive summary

Over the past two decades, participation in education in Türkiye has expanded significantly: participation in primary and lower secondary education is now universal and, in 2018, over 90% of 15-year-olds were enrolled in education.

Over the same period, student performance has improved. On average, 10-13 year-olds in Türkiye now perform better than children of the same age across other countries that participate in the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). Fifteen-year-olds today score on average 45 points higher in the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) than their peers in 2003.

This trajectory of improvement stands out internationally because Türkiye has been able to bring previously out-of-school children – who generally perform poorer than their in-school peers – into the education system and improve performance at the same time.

This report provides a picture of how student performance has evolved over this period and analyses how factors related to student backgrounds – such as gender or socio-economic status – are associated with performance. By analysing the PISA and TIMSS data, the report focuses on the following questions:

- How do students in Türkiye perform in the main domains of mathematics, science and reading across schooling, compared to other countries?
- How has the performance of students in Türkiye changed over time and across different levels of schooling?
- Are there certain student characteristics that are associated with lower (or higher) performance in Türkiye? How do these associations change and develop as students progress through school?
- How are school-level characteristics and features associated with performance? Do these associations change depending on the level of schooling?
- Are there certain domains or aspects of learning in specific domains where students in Türkiye excel? What are the weaknesses of students in Türkiye across the main domains?

Key findings

- Students' average performance in mathematics and science in TIMSS Grades 4 and 8 and reading, mathematics and science in PISA has improved substantially over time. The improvement in performance was driven by a significant decline in the share of low performers in all grades and subjects across both assessments.
- Science is an area of national strength, with students in Türkiye excelling in the subjects of physics and chemistry in particular.
- Students from advantaged backgrounds tend to participate more and for longer in early childhood education and care (ECEC) compared to students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

- In primary school, inequities in performance that are associated with student background such as their socio-economic background are among the highest of all countries that participate in TIMSS.
- There are also wide differences in performance across different types of schools. The difference in performance between schools in cities and less-populated towns or rural areas is one of the highest across the OECD. There are also wide performance differences across different types of upper secondary schools. At the top, Science High Schools score 216 points more than Multi-Programme High Schools at the bottom.
- Across the PISA and TIMSS data, schools, where the majority of students are from an advantaged background, report lower student-teacher ratios, fewer shortages in school resources and provide more study help to their students.
- As students move through school, some of the differences in performance related to student background and across different types of schools seem to decline. By TIMSS Grade 8, differences in performance between schools and between students from advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds decline slightly. This might be driven by school attendance having an equalising effect on learning outcomes; put simply, school might be compensating for initial differences in support and resources related to students' home and wider environments.



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