



OECD Skills Outlook 2021

France

How does France compare?

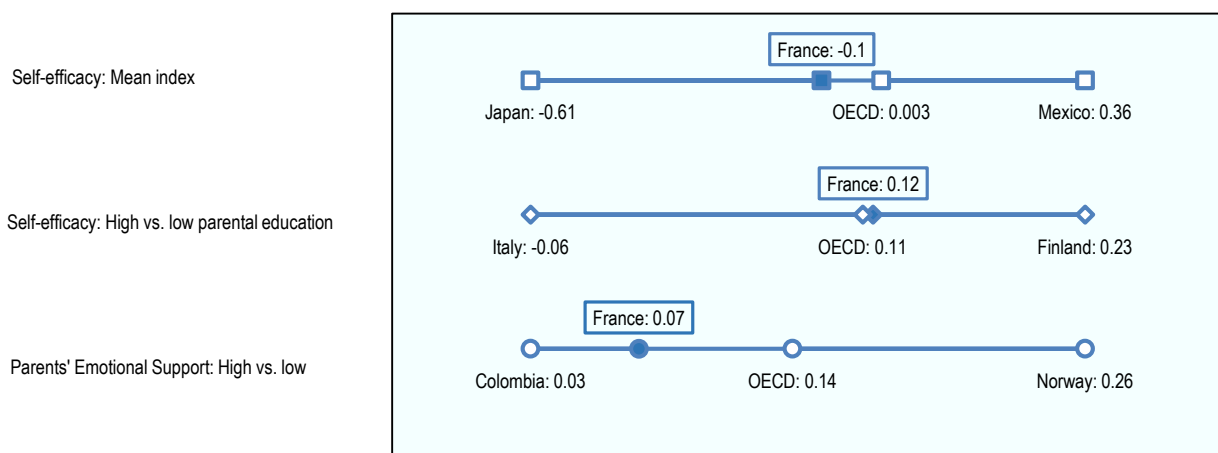
The COVID-19 pandemic, and the resulting need for physical distancing, have caused an unprecedented disruption in the provision of education and training. Now more than ever, supporting people in learning throughout their lives, and equipping them with solid skills that they can use fully and effectively at work and in society, is key to ensuring that both individuals and society thrive in this increasingly complex, interconnected and changing world. Lifelong learning is key for individuals to adapt and succeed in labour markets and societies.

The foundations of lifelong learning

What happens at home, in early-learning centres and schools is important to equip children with strong skills, as well as the readiness and willingness to learn throughout their lives. Positive attitudes towards lifelong learning are associated with higher academic achievement. They prompt children to invest in future learning by participating in post-compulsory education and engaging in careers that offer greater work-based learning opportunities. Teachers' enthusiasm and parents' emotional support have a positive impact on the development of lifelong learning attitudes. One such attitude is self-efficacy, which expresses the degree to which individuals feel confident about performing academic tasks.

In France, in 2018, 15-year-old students reported levels of self-efficacy that were below the OECD average. In France, students with at least one parent who had obtained a tertiary degree reported higher levels of self-efficacy compared to students with no parent educated at the tertiary level, a difference that was in line with the OECD average. Furthermore, 15-year-old students with at least one parent who completed tertiary education reported that their parents provided them with greater support compared to students whose parents were not educated at the tertiary level; this difference was lower than the OECD average.

Figure 1: Self-efficacy and parents' emotional support



Note: How to read the data? Self-efficacy: Mean index = standardised index of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy: High vs. low parental education = difference in index of self-efficacy between students with highly educated parents (where at least one parent has completed tertiary education) and students with less-educated parents (where no parent has completed tertiary education); positive signs indicate higher levels of self-efficacy among students with highly educated parents. Parents' Emotional Support: High vs. low parental education = difference in parental emotional support between parents with a high level of education (at least one parent has completed tertiary education) and parents with a low educational background (neither parent has completed tertiary education); positive signs indicate higher emotional support among the more highly educated parents.

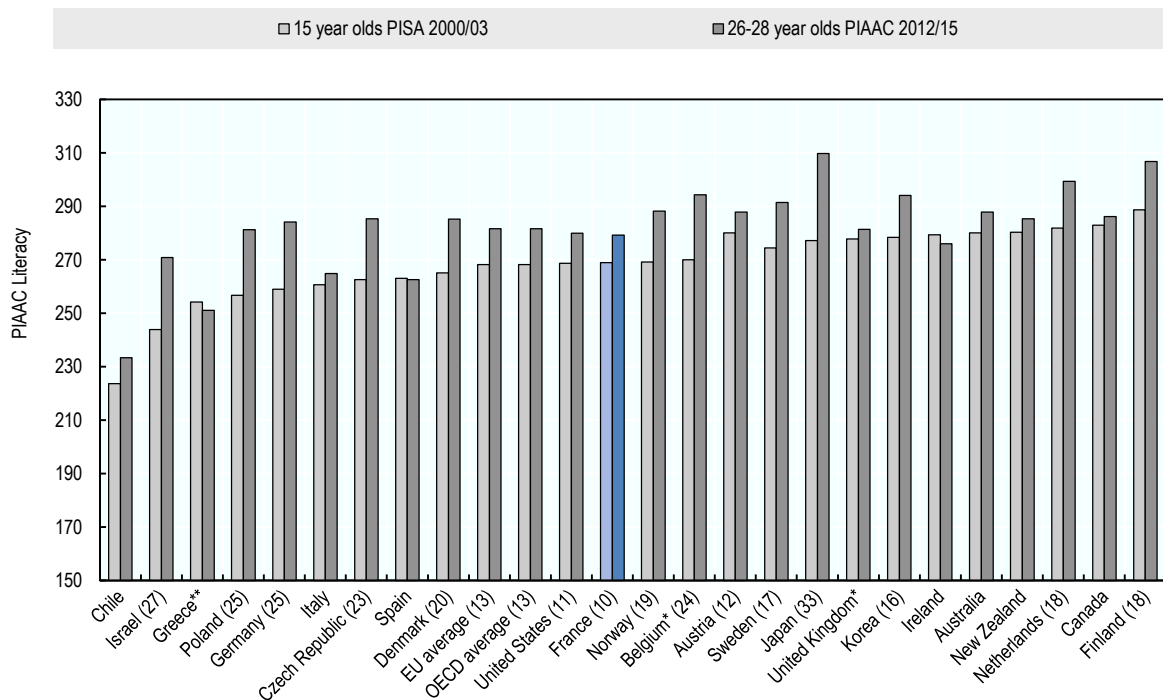
Source: OECD (2018), *PISA database 2018*, <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/data/2018database/>.¹

Transitions into further education, training and the labour market

The early years spent in compulsory schooling represent a crucial period for developing foundation skills, during which schools tend to equalise the learning opportunities to which individuals are exposed. By contrast, learning trajectories become increasingly differentiated in the years marking the transition between adolescence and early adulthood as individuals can choose for the first time to participate in different forms of education and training, as well as engage in informal and non-formal learning opportunities in the workplace. Across OECD countries, overall literacy achievement grows between ages 15 and 26-28, but growth differs across countries and population groups.

Between 2000 and 2018, the average literacy achievement of students at age 15 declined by 12 points in the original PISA scale. The decline occurred between 2000 and 2009. When comparing the literacy achievement of the cohort of individuals (but not the same individuals) who were 15-year-old students in 2000 and 26-28-year-old adults in 2012, literacy achievement in France grew by 10 points on the PIAAC scale, which was in line with the OECD average growth of 13 points. In France, the literacy proficiency level of the cohort of students who were 15-years-old in 2000 was 269 points on the PIAAC scale, which is in line with the OECD average of 268 points. Among the cohort of individuals whose parents completed tertiary education, literacy achievement at ages 26 to 28 grew compared to the literacy level at age 15 by 14 points; the OECD average growth was 14 points. Among the cohort of individuals whose parents did not complete tertiary education, literacy achievement at ages 26 to 28 grew compared to the literacy level at age 15 by 10 points; the OECD average growth was 10 points.

Figure 2: Achievement growth in literacy between ages 15 and 27, by country



Note: Countries are sorted in ascending level of achievement among 15-year-olds. Differences in literacy achievement between age 15 and ages 26-28 that are statistically significant at the 5% level are reported in parenthesis next to the country name. PISA reading scores are expressed in PIAAC literacy scores. PISA data for Chile and Greece refer to 2003. PIAAC data for Chile, Greece, Israel, New Zealand refer to 2015. How concordance scores between PISA and PIAAC were derived is described in Box 3.1 of the report.

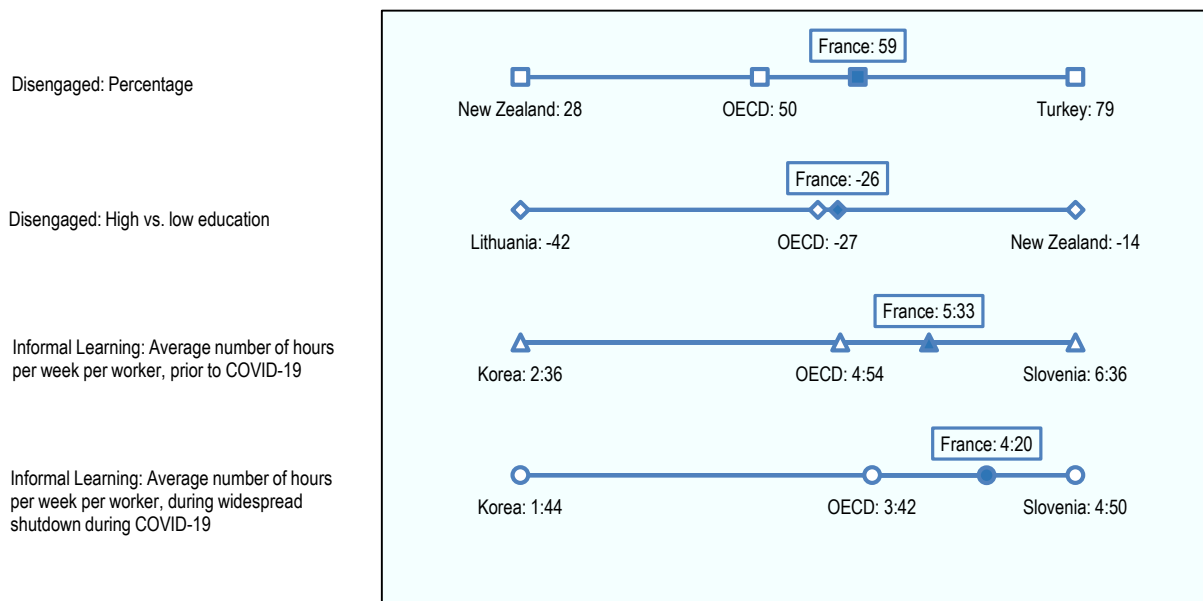
Source: OECD (2000), *PISA database 2000*; <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/data/database-pisa2000.htm>; OECD (2003), *PISA database 2003*; <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/data/database-pisa2003.htm>; OECD (2012), (2015), *Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) databases*; <http://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/publicdataandanalysis/>.

Engaging adults in learning

Engagement in adult learning can reduce the loss of foundation skills owing to ageing. It can help individuals acquire new skills and knowledge so that they can remain engaged in the labour market and society, despite technological and social transformations. Adult learning encompasses learning occurring in formal settings, such as vocational training and general education, as well as through participation in other forms of non-formal and informal training. Participation and willingness to participate in the available adult learning opportunities were already low before the pandemic. COVID-19 mitigation strategies had a strong impact on the availability of learning opportunities, especially derived from informal and non-formal learning.

According to data from PIAAC 2012, in France, 59% of adults do not participate in adult learning and report being unwilling to participate in the learning opportunities for job related purposes that are currently available to them (“i.e. they are disengaged from adult learning”)². This rate is higher than the 50% average disengagement rate across all OECD countries. Workers who obtained a tertiary qualification (“highly educated”) are 26 percentage points less likely to be disengaged than workers without a tertiary qualification, which is in line with the OECD average. Estimates indicate that before the pandemic, workers in France spent on average 6 hours per week engaged in informal learning, compared to 5 hours per week in OECD countries. Estimates indicate that in the presence of widespread shutdowns of economic activities, workers might have spent 1 hour and 15 minutes less per week on informal learning, compared to the OECD average of 1 hour and 15 minutes.

Figure 3: Adult learning



Note: How to read the data? Disengaged: Percentage = percentage of 25-65 year-olds who do not participate or want to participate in adult learning. Disengaged: High vs. low education: difference in share of disengaged between workers who obtained tertiary qualifications (highly educated) and workers who did not obtain a tertiary education (low-educated). Informal learning: average number of hours per week per worker prior to COVID-19: Average weekly hours of informal learning per worker (e.g. learning from others, learning by doing and learning new things at work) prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Informal learning: Average number of hours per week per worker, during widespread shutdown owing to COVID-19 = average weekly hours of informal learning per worker (e.g. learning from others, learning by doing and learning new things at work) during the COVID-19 pandemic under the assumption of a widespread lockdown.

Source: OECD (2012), (2015), (2019), *Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) databases*; <http://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/publicdataandanalysis/>.

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In France, only 25% of upper secondary students were enrolled in combined school and work-based programmes in 2018 (i.e. between 25% and 90% of the curriculum is taught as work-based learning, while the remainder is organised within the school environment). This is below the OECD average of 34%. However, changes made to the secondary vocational pathway since 2018 aim to make the VET sector more attractive, efficient, and open to the world and the professions of the future. This has been accompanied by the development of apprenticeships in all vocational schools, and by the gradual and guided transformation of low-inclusion streams and a renewed partnership with businesses to encourage the integration of young people, OECD (2020).

The following transformations of the educational system in France are currently ongoing:

«*Loi Avenir professionnel* (Loi n° 2018-771 du 5 septembre 2018)», intended to increase the number of apprentices,

«*Loi Avenir professionnel* (Loi n° 2018-771 du 5 septembre 2018)», creation of training accounts,

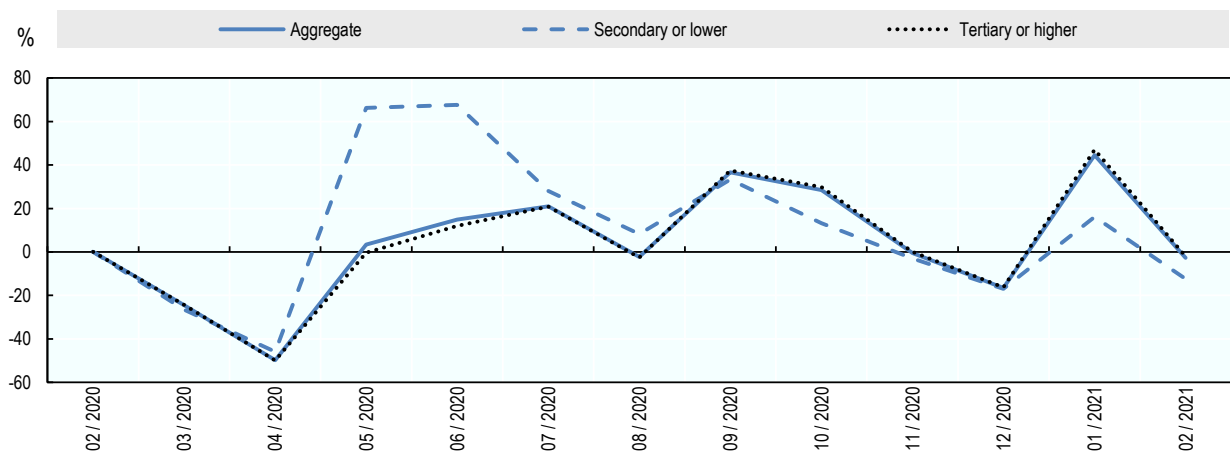
«*Plan d'investissement dans les compétences*», which provides training to youth and job seekers.

Source: OECD (2020); Educational attainment and outcomes, Indicator B7, Education at a Glance, OECD.Stat, OECD Statistics, <https://stats.oecd.org/>.

Impact of COVID-19 on online vacancies

COVID-19 caused major disruptions to labour markets worldwide. Among the many effects of the pandemic on labour market, uncertainty, fear of infection, and mitigation and suppression policies leading to the suspension or closure of economic activities caused large contractions in the volume of job vacancies advertised on line. In France, online job vacancies increased in 2020, and continued to increase between January and March 2021. As a result, the overall volume of vacancies posted on line was 37% lower in March/April 2020 than in January-February 2020. In France, the five occupations showing the strongest decline in vacancies posted on line over March-July 2020 compared to January-February 2020 were: Handicraft and printing workers, General and keyboard clerks, Hospitality, retail and other services managers, Customer services clerks, Other clerical support workers.

Figure 4: Evolution of online vacancies in France



Note: The figure shows the percentage change in the number of vacancies posted online compared to the reference period (January and February 2020). Aggregate refers to all vacancies. Secondary or lower refers to vacancies requiring candidates to hold secondary qualifications or less. Tertiary or higher refers to vacancies requiring candidates to hold tertiary qualifications or higher.

Source: OECD calculations based on data from Burning Glass Technologies, May 2021.

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Notes

1 The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a standardised, low-stakes international assessment administered to 15-year-old students since 2000 every three years. Key assessment domains are reading literacy, mathematics and science literacy. For more information visit www.oecd.org/pisa.

2 According to more recent sources such as the 2016 Adult Education Survey (AES), disengagement could be lower, and even significantly lower than the European Union average. According to Eurostat data based on the 2016 Adult Education Survey in France, 51% of 18-64 year-olds who had completed their initial training (44 % across the European Union) had taken part in a formal or non-formal training course in the 12 months prior to being interviewed. Of these, 76% reported that they would not have liked to take part in any training (79,4 % across the European Union), a 'disengagement' rate of 37% among 18-64 year-olds, 15 point lower than the average across the European Union (52%). However AES data and PIAAC data are not directly comparable and 2016 AES data are available only for a subset of OECD countries.

Source: Eurostat (2020), *Taux de participation à l'éducation et à la formation par sexe*, Eurostat Database Explorer, <https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>, (consulté le 14 Juin 2021).

* Data for Belgium refer only to Flanders and data for the United Kingdom refer to England and Northern Ireland jointly.

** The data for Greece include a large number of cases (1 032) in which there are responses to the background questionnaire but where responses to the assessment are missing. Proficiency scores have been estimated for these respondents based on their responses to the background questionnaire and the population model used to estimate plausible values for responses missing by design derived from the remaining 3 893 cases.

The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

Contact

Francesca BORGONOVİ (OECD Centre for Skills):

(✉ Francesca.BORGONOVİ@oecd.org)

Eric CHARBONNIER (OECD Directorate for Education and Skills):

(✉ Eric.CHARBONNIER@oecd.org)

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