Low-performing students

Why they fall behind & how to help them succeed

If by 2030, every 15-year-old in high-income OECD countries acquires at least basic literacy and numeracy skills, the long-term gains for their economies could be **about 1.5 times their current GDP.**

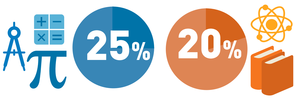
For **upper-middle income countries the gains** could be **about 7 times their GDP.**

In OECD countries, more than

1 in 4 students

do not reach the baseline proficiency level in at least **one of the 3 PISA subjects**: mathematics, reading & science.

The share of low performers is almost **25% in mathematics** compared to almost **20% in reading and science.**



There are many risk factors associated with low performance at age 15:

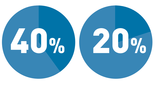
In OECD countries, students with **an immigrant background** and who **do not speak the same language at home as in school** are about **2.5 times more likely** to be low performers.

Girls are at **greater risk** of being **low performers in mathematics** than boys. Whereas **boys** are more commonly **low performers in reading and science**.

The share of **low performers** is **larger** among **students from rural areas** and **from single-parent families**.

Students who **have repeated a grade** are **7 times more likely** to be **low performers** at age 15 than those who haven't.

For students **who had not attended pre-primary education,** the chances of being low performers are **3 times greater** than for those who had attended for more than one year.



Around **40%** of students enrolled in **a vocational track** and **20%** of students enrolled in **a general track** are low performers in mathematics.

Low performers in mathematics tend to have **less perseverance, motivation and self-confidence** and **skip school more.**

Students who have **skipped school** at least once in the two weeks prior to the PISA test are **3 times more likely** to be **low performers in mathematics**.

In all countries, socio-economically disadvantaged students are more likely to be low performers than their advantaged peers; and the **cumulative effect of other risk factors** contributing to low performance is **greater for these students** than for advantaged students.

Between 2003 and 2012, Brazil, Germany, Italy, Mexico, Poland, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Tunisia and Turkey managed **to reduce the percentage of low performers** in mathematics.

Actions countries can take to reduce their share of low performers include:

Improve access to early education for everyone

Help struggling students early. Provide **assistance** with **homework** and **exam preparation**, and **offer attractive school activities**. **Limit grade repetition** and **sorting** students by ability.

Help motivate students by creating a **nurturing environment. Teachers** with **high morale**, who **support** and **hold high expectations** for all students, help low performers the most.

Distribute resources more equitably across schools and **encourage social diversity**.

Give schools more freedom to decide what to teach and how they assess students' progress.

Involve parents and **local communities** and offer **special programmes** for **immigrant, minority-language** and rural students and **single-parent families**.