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How much time do teachers spend teaching?

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4. THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

How much time do teachers spend teaching?

- The number of teaching hours per teacher in public schools averages 782 hours per year in primary education, 704 hours in lower secondary education and 658 hours in upper secondary education.
- Average teaching time remained largely unchanged between 2000 and 2010 at all levels of education.
- The way teachers' working time is regulated varies significantly among countries.

Significance

This section examines the time teachers spend teaching and doing non-teaching work, such as preparing lessons and assessing students. Although working time and teaching time only partly determine teachers' actual workload, they do provide valuable insights into differences in what is demanded of teachers in different countries. Teaching hours and the extent of non-teaching duties may also affect the attractiveness of teaching as a profession. The amount of time that teachers spend teaching is also one of the factors that affect the financial resources countries need to allocate to education.

Findings

The average number of teaching hours in public primary schools is 782 hours per year in OECD countries but ranges from fewer than 600 hours in Greece and Poland to over 1 000 hours in Chile and the United States. The average number of teaching hours per year in public lower secondary school is 704 hours but ranges from less than 500 hours in Greece and Poland to over 1000 hours in Argentina, Chile, Mexico and the United States. The average number of teaching hours in public upper secondary general education is 658 hours per year but ranges from 377 hours in Denmark to 1 368 hours in Argentina.

Primary teachers tend to spend more hours teaching than secondary teachers, although the size of the gap varies between countries. In the Czech Republic, France, Greece and Israel, primary school teachers have at least 30% more annual teaching time than lower secondary teachers. In contrast, the difference does not exceed 3% in Poland and the United States, and there is no difference in Brazil, Chile, Denmark, Estonia, Hungary, Iceland, Scotland and Slovenia. Argentina, England and Mexico are the only countries in which the teaching load for primary school teachers is lighter than that for lower secondary school teachers.

The composition of teachers' annual teaching time, in terms of days, weeks and hours, varies considerably between countries. As a result, the average number of hours per day that teachers teach also varies widely, ranging at the lower secondary level from three hours or less per day in Greece, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Poland and the

Russian Federation, to more than five hours in Argentina, Chile, Mexico and the United States.

In most countries, teachers are formally required to work a specified number of hours per week, including teaching and non-teaching time, to earn their full-time salary. The number of hours for teaching is usually specified, except in Sweden; but some countries also regulate the time a teacher has to be present in the school.

Trends

In most OECD countries with available data, teaching time remained largely unchanged between 2000 and 2010. The number of teaching hours changed dramatically in a few countries, however. It decreased by more than 30% in Denmark at the upper secondary level, while it increased by more than 25% in the Czech Republic at the primary level and in Portugal and Spain at the secondary level.

Definitions

Teaching time is defined as the number of hours per year that a full-time teacher teaches a group or class of students. Working time refers to the normal working hours of a full-time teacher and includes time directly associated with teaching as well as the hours devoted to teaching-related activities, such as preparing lessons, counselling students, correcting assignments and tests, and meeting with parents and other staff. Data are from the 2011 OECD-INES Survey on Teachers and the Curriculum and refer to the 2009-10 school year.

Information on data for Israel:
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932315602>.

Going further

For additional material, notes and a full explanation of sourcing and methodologies, see *Education at a Glance 2012* (Indicator D4).

Areas covered include:

- Organisation of teachers' working time.
- Number of teaching hours per year, by level of education.

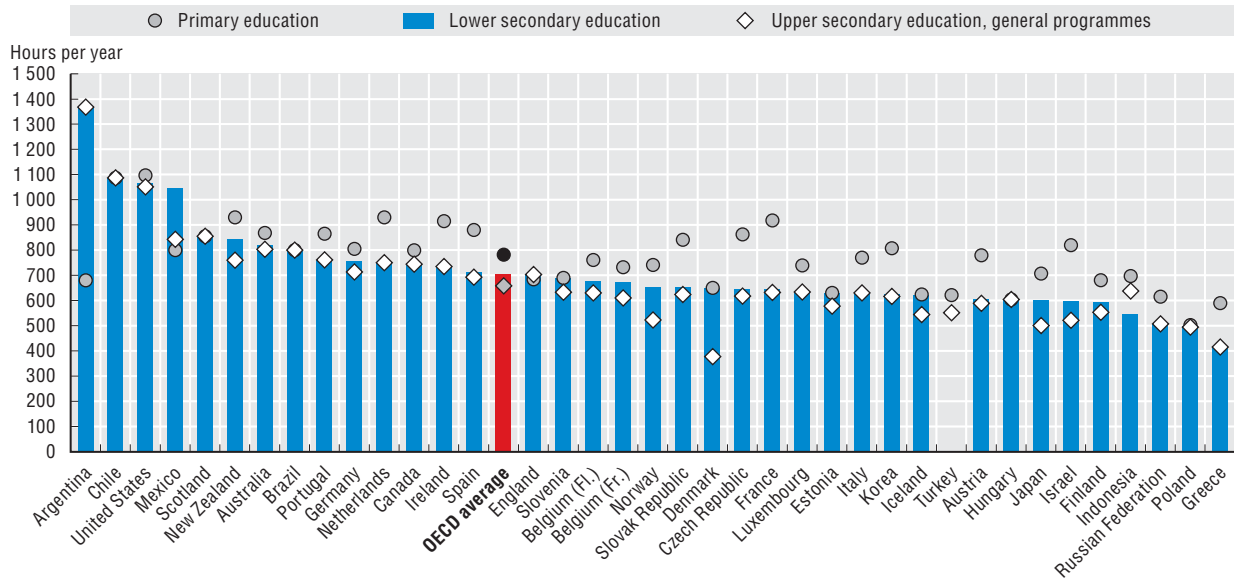
Further reading from OECD

21st Century Learning Environments (2006).

Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers (2005).

Figure 4.7. Annual teaching hours by education level, 2010

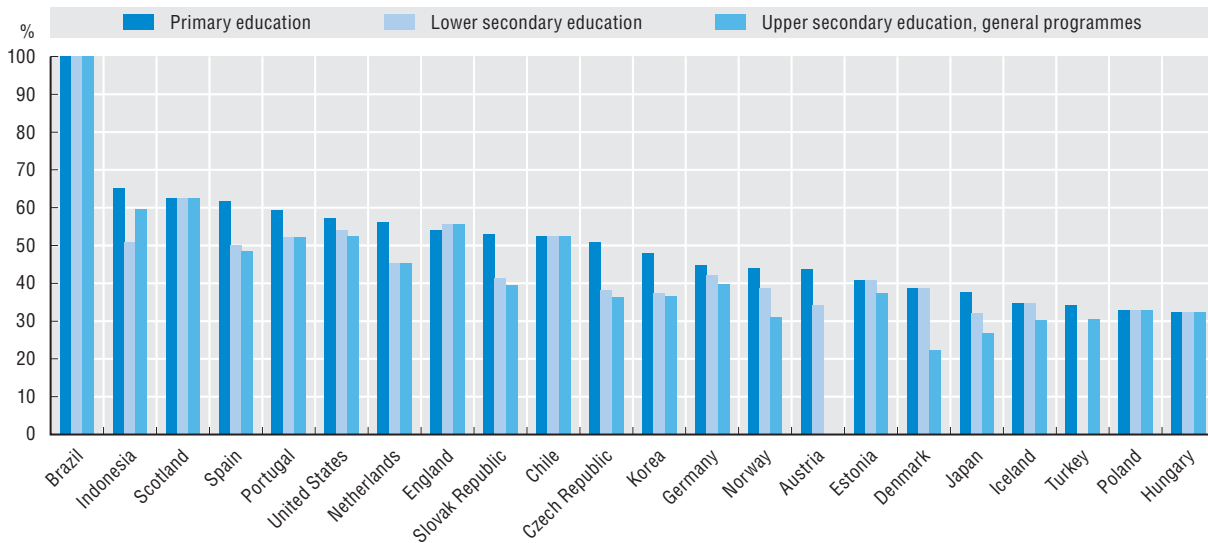
This figure shows the variation in annual teaching hours for teachers at different levels of education.



Source: OECD (2012), Education at a Glance 2012, Table D4.1, available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932668318>.

Figure 4.8. Percentage of teachers' working time spent teaching, 2010

This figure shows the amount of their working time that teachers spend teaching. Contact time with students is a major part of teachers' workloads, but duties also include preparing classes and correcting assignments.



Source: OECD (2012), Education at a Glance 2012, Table D4.1, available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932668318>.