

PISA 2025: Ireland's 15-year-olds demonstrate strong educational performance, despite declines in reading and mathematics

Press Release

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This press release provides key information on PISA and a high-level summary of the PISA 2025 results for Ireland.

Key points

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is the largest educational study in the world. It assesses 15-year-olds in the domains of science, reading, mathematics, and learning in the digital world (computational problem solving).

Overall performance and trend patterns

- Students in Ireland outperformed their counterparts in most other participating countries across all four domains.
- Ireland's performance was above the OECD and EU averages in all domains.
- Ireland's science performance, as well as average science performance across OECD and EU countries, remained relatively stable compared to previous cycles.
- Ireland's average performance in reading and mathematics declined compared to previous cycles. Declines were also observed at the OECD and EU levels.

Low- and top-performing students

- There were considerably lower proportions of low performers (i.e. students lacking key skills and competences) in Ireland across all domains compared to the average across OECD and EU countries.
- Ireland did not have as high a proportion of top performers (i.e. students with advanced competencies) as might be expected given its strong overall performance.

Gender

- In Ireland, boys outperformed girls on average in science, mathematics, and computational problem solving, while girls outperformed boys in reading.

Immigration status

- Second-generation immigrants (i.e. students born in Ireland to immigrant parents) demonstrated strong performance across all domains. In mathematics and computational problem solving, this group significantly outperformed their peers.
- First-generation immigrants (i.e. students born outside Ireland to immigrant parents) had the lowest performance across all domains, except for computational problem solving, where they performed better than non-immigrant students.

Grade levels and school types

- Students in Transition Year performed better than those in other grade levels.
- Students in secondary schools and those in non-DEIS schools performed better, on average, than their peers in other school types.



Overall performance in science, reading, mathematics, and computational problem solving

Science was the major domain in PISA 2025, with students in Ireland achieving a mean science score (500 points) that was above both the OECD (482 points) and EU (476 points) averages. Overall science performance in Ireland and across the OECD on average remained relatively stable compared to recent PISA cycles. A pattern of small declines was observed at the EU level, where the average science score in 2025 was lower than those achieved in 2015 and 2018.

In PISA 2025, students in Ireland achieved mean reading (500 points) and mathematics (480 points) scores that were above the corresponding OECD (reading: 461 points, mathematics: 463 points) and EU (reading: 451 points, mathematics: 460 points) averages. However, a significant decline in reading and mathematics performance was observed in Ireland in 2025 compared to previous cycles. Similar declines were observed between 2022 and 2025 across the OECD and the EU, on average, while over the longer term, the OECD and the EU saw larger drops than Ireland in their average reading and mathematics performance.

In PISA 2025, student performance in computational problem solving was assessed as part of the innovative domain of learning in the digital world. This domain was assessed only in 2025, measuring students' ability to learn, adapt, and solve problems using new digital tools in unfamiliar environments. Students in Ireland achieved a mean score in computational problem solving (511 points) that was above the OECD (500 points) and EU (492 points) averages.

Low- and top-performing students

Across all domains assessed, Ireland had lower proportions of low performers (science: 17.6%, reading: 16.5%, mathematics: 24.2%) compared to the OECD (science: 25.7%, reading: 31.0%, mathematics: 34.9%) and EU (science: 27.3%, reading: 33.9%, mathematics: 34.8%) averages. On the other hand, despite the fact that Ireland performed above the OECD and EU averages across all domains, the proportion of top performers in mathematics (6.1%) was lower than the OECD average (7.8%) and similar to the EU average (6.7%). In science, the proportion of top performers in Ireland (7.4%) was above the EU average (6.1%) but similar to the OECD average (7.2%). Reading was the only domain in which the proportion of top-performing students was higher in Ireland (8.5%) than in the OECD (5.5%) and EU (4.2%). These patterns are broadly consistent with those observed in previous cycles.

Performance differences by gender

Gender differences in performance were observed across all domains in Ireland, as well as on average across OECD and EU countries. In Ireland, boys performed on average better than girls in science (difference of 7 points); this is in contrast to the patterns observed at the OECD and EU levels, where the gender differences were in favour of girls. Boys in Ireland also achieved higher mean scores than girls in mathematics and computational problem solving (difference of 17 points in mathematics and 16 points in computational problem solving); similar patterns were observed at the OECD and the EU on average. Girls outperformed boys in reading in Ireland (by 19 points), as well as on

average across OECD and EU countries. Both boys and girls attending single-sex schools had higher mean scores across all four domains than their counterparts in mixed schools.

Performance differences by immigration status

The proportion of students with an immigrant background taking part in PISA in Ireland has gradually increased over the last decade, mostly due to the increased number of second-generation immigrants; 13% of students who took part in PISA 2025 in Ireland were second-generation immigrants, and 10% were first-generation immigrants. At the OECD and EU levels, non-immigrant students outperformed, on average, both first- and second-generation immigrant students in all four domains. In Ireland, however, different patterns emerged. In science and reading, non-immigrant students had broadly similar average performance to second-generation immigrant students, but higher than first-generation immigrants (difference of 24 points in science and 35 points in reading). In mathematics, second-generation immigrant students achieved the highest mean score, outperforming both non-immigrant (by 8 points) and first-generation immigrant students (by 17 points), but non-immigrant students still performed, on average, better than their first-generation immigrant peers (difference of 9 points). In computational problem solving, non-immigrant students performed less well, on average, than both second- and first-generation immigrants (difference of 22 and 9 points, respectively).

Examining trends over time, non-immigrant students maintained stable performance in science, but their mean scores in reading and mathematics were lower in 2025 than in previous cycles. First-generation immigrant students experienced significant declines across all three domains compared with most previous cycles, with the decline in reading being particularly pronounced and substantially greater than the declines observed in the other domains and among non-immigrant students. Second-generation immigrant students, on the other hand, maintained stable performance across all three domains over time; in the case of science, this group's performance has improved since 2018. Overall, performance trends in these three domains broadly resembled those observed for non-immigrant students.

Performance differences by grade level, school type, and DEIS status

Across all domains, students in Transition Year outperformed, on average, their peers in other grade levels (differences ranged between 15 and 38 points across domains). Students attending secondary schools performed, on average, better than those attending ETB or community/comprehensive schools (differences ranged between 14 and 35 points across domains). Finally, students in DEIS schools had lower mean scores than their peers in non-DEIS schools (differences ranged between 30 and 53 points across domains).

Further information

What is PISA?

PISA is the world's largest educational study. It is a project of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) that examines the knowledge and skills of 15-year-old students in science, reading, mathematics, and an innovative domain that changes with each cycle. In PISA 2025, *learning in the digital world* was the

innovative domain, assessing *computational problem solving* (i.e. students' ability to learn, adapt, and solve problems using new digital tools in unfamiliar environments).

How is PISA administered?

Since 2015, PISA has been administered as a computer-based assessment in the majority of participating countries, including all OECD countries. In 2025, PISA was administered in 91 countries and economies across the world, with over 760,000 students completing the assessment. In Ireland, a representative sample of 6,356 15-year-olds from 172 schools took part between March and April 2025 (most students attended Third Year and Transition Year, with a small proportion in other grade levels). In Ireland, PISA is implemented by the Educational Research Centre (ERC) on behalf of the Department of Education and Youth. In 2025, PISA was administered in schools by inspectors from the Department of Education and Youth, alongside support test administrators, technical support personnel, and ERC representatives. To ensure internationally consistent administration, external quality monitors were contracted by the PISA consortium to monitor testing procedures in schools in all countries/economies, including Ireland.

Reports

The national PISA 2025 report (authored by Karakolidis, A., Duggan, B., Keating, A., & Toole, N.) can be accessed [here](#).

The international PISA 2025 report can be accessed [here](#).

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More information about PISA can be found at erc.ie/pisa and oecd.org/pisa.