

Shanghai teenagers are world's smartest

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Teenagers from the Chinese city of Shanghai have the best education in the world, according to a major international study of standards in maths, science and literacy released Tuesday.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's "Pisa" report, released every three years, studied 470,000 15-year-old pupils in 65 [countries](#) around the more developed parts of the world.

South Korea and Finland topped the country rankings in the survey but, taken separately from China, the huge city of Shanghai -- taking part in the survey for the first time -- came top in all three of the disciplines.

"More than one-quarter of Shanghai's 15-year-olds demonstrated advanced mathematical thinking skills to solve complex problems, compared to an OECD average of just three percent," the OECD said.

Other Asian countries and regions also scored particularly well, and OECD education expert Eric Charbonnier said the continent's success was a result of educational values that favour equality as well as quality.

"In Shanghai, a city of 20 million, they followed policies to fight against [social inequality](#), to target the schools that were in most difficulty and send them the best performing heads and most experienced teachers," he said.

[South Korea](#) came second in comprehension, fourth in maths and sixth in science and Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and Japan were well-

placed.

Finland, whose [educational system](#) has been hailed by Western experts, remains the best performing European country, coming third in comprehension, second in science and third in maths.

Seven European countries performed better than the OECD average: Belgium, Estonia, Iceland, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland and Switzerland. Of these, Poland was praised for making rapid progress through school reform.

The United States, Sweden, Germany, France, Ireland, Denmark, Britain, Hungary and Portugal scored around the average for richer countries, but pupils in Sweden and Ireland performed worse than three years ago.

"Better educational outcomes are a strong predictor for future economic growth," said OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría.

"While national income and educational achievement are still related, PISA shows that two countries with similar levels of prosperity can produce very different results," he said.

"This shows an image of a world divided neatly into rich and well-educated countries and poor and badly-educated countries is now out of date."

The study also found that girls read better than boys in every country, by the equivalent of one year of school. The gender gap has not shrunk anywhere since 2000, and widened in France, Israel, Korea, Portugal and Sweden.

Analysing the results, experts found that high performing school systems

prefer to pay teachers more rather than reduce class sizes, and countries that force underperformers to repeat years to do badly overall.

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