

More Than Half of Classrooms Were Too Full Before Coronavirus: IEA Delivers Important Reminder to Policy Makers

New analysis of data from IEA's [Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study](#) (TIMSS) has raised worrying questions about how effectively schools will be able to maintain a degree of social distancing when they reopen. Figures from the last cycle of the study show teachers reporting that more than half of classrooms were too full before the crisis caused by COVID-19, something schools and policy makers will have to pay close attention to when drawing up plans for reopening schools.

Commenting on the new analysis, IEA Executive Director, [Dr Dirk Hastedt](#) said,

“As with all [IEA studies](#), TIMSS collects rich contextual data about many of the factors which can have an impact on teaching and learning. In the questionnaire for teachers we asked them “To what extent do you agree with the following statement: There are too many students in the classes”. Across 47 countries and education systems whose 4th grade students were assessed in the study, 30% of the students’ teachers “agreed a lot” and a further 32% also voiced their agreement. In 39 countries and education systems whose 8th grade students took part in TIMSS, 66% of the students’ science and maths teachers agreed with the statement.

“Unsurprisingly, there was a lot of variation in responses between the countries taking part in the study, but well over half of teachers in most of the countries reported that they agreed to some extent that class sizes were too large. This is something schools, and just as crucially, policy makers, should not ignore as they draw up their plans to reopen schools.

“Additionally, TIMSS 2015 asked students’ schools about the emphasis they placed on hygiene and disease prevention. Encouragingly, across the 47 countries and education systems we have data for, 86% said that they placed a high or very high emphasis on handwashing, something that bodes well for hygiene levels in the re-opening schools.

“This data was collected in 2015, when the world looked very different to now. Even the data for our TIMSS 2019 cycle, which will be released this coming December, was gathered in a time where schools and policy makers did not have a global pandemic on their minds. Nevertheless, these data are always of vital importance when ensuring that education is not just maintained, but improved.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors

Enrolment for the next cycle of TIMSS, which will take place in 2023 is still open, with more information available here: <https://www.iea.nl/studies/iea/timss/timss2023>

National figures on the percentage of teachers **agree** with the statement “**There are too many students in the classes**” are available for the following:

Grade 4 in: Armenia, Australia, Bahrain, Belgium (Flemish speaking), Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Chinese Taipei, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Hong Kong (SAR), Hungary, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Korea (Republic of), Kuwait, Lithuania, Morocco, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Norway, Oman, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Singapore, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United States

Grade 8 Mathematics in: Armenia, Australia, Bahrain, Botswana, Canada, Chile, Chinese Taipei, Egypt, England, Georgia, Hong Kong (SAR), Hungary, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Korea (Republic of), Kuwait, Lebanon, Lithuania, Malaysia, Malta, Morocco, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, South Africa, Sweden, Thailand, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United States

Grade 8 Science in: Armenia, Australia, Bahrain, Botswana, Canada, Chile, Chinese Taipei, Egypt, England, Georgia, Hong Kong (SAR), Hungary, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Korea (Republic of), Kuwait, Lebanon, Lithuania, Malaysia, Malta, Morocco, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, South Africa, Sweden, Thailand, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United States

National figures on the percentage of schools teaching **Grade 4** students which place a **high/very high emphasis on handwashing** are available for the following: Armenia, Australia, Bahrain, Belgium (Flemish speaking), Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Chinese Taipei, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Hong Kong (SAR), Hungary, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Korea (Republic of), Kuwait, Lithuania, Morocco, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Norway, Oman, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Singapore, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United States

For your national data, or if you have any questions, contact:

Jennifer Ross

Media and Outreach
+31 (0) 6 12 32 51 82



Researching education, improving learning

International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement

Tel. +31 (0) 20 625 36 25 | Fax +31 (0) 20 420 7136 | www.iea.nl
IEA Amsterdam | Keizersgracht 311 | 1016 EE Amsterdam | The Netherlands

