

SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

Compared with 2014, adolescents are more likely to feel pressured by schoolwork and less satisfied with school in around a third of countries/regions.

KEY POINTS

- School experience worsens with age in most countries/regions; school satisfaction and perceived teacher support decline, while schoolwork pressure increases.
- More than half of adolescents report high levels of support from their fellow students and their teachers, but only around a quarter like school a lot.
- Gender differences in schoolwork pressure increase with age, with 15-year-old girls reporting higher levels than boys in most countries/regions.
- Adolescents from higher-affluence families report more schoolwork pressure but also higher student support in some countries/regions.

SCHOOL SATISFACTION (LIKING SCHOOL)

Just over a quarter of adolescents (28%) reported liking school a lot. The largest gender differences were found among 11-year-olds, where 43% of girls and 35% of boys reported liking school a lot, with girls having a higher prevalence than boys in 29 countries/regions. Gender differences in most countries/regions were small by age 15; overall, one in five 15-year-olds (22% of girls and 21% of boys) reported that they liked school a lot. Greenland notably was the only country where school satisfaction was higher among boys in all three age groups. The largest gender differences were seen in the Republic of Moldova among 11-year-olds (22 percentage points) and Armenia among all age groups (17 percentage points or more).

School satisfaction declined with age among both boys and girls in almost all countries/regions. Spain and United Kingdom (Wales) had particularly large declines (around 30 percentage points). Hungary and Slovenia were notable for having the opposite pattern, with high school satisfaction being more prevalent at age 15 in both genders.

Wide cross-national variation in school satisfaction was evident within each age group. Prevalence ranged from 5% among 13-year-old boys and girls in Croatia to 87% of 11-year-old girls in Azerbaijan. Consistently high prevalence across all ages was found in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and North Macedonia. In contrast, Czechia and Estonia had low prevalence across all age groups.

Only a few countries/regions showed significant social inequalities in liking school, and the direction of association varied. The highest levels of inequality were seen in Kazakhstan, where boys from low-affluence families were more likely to say they liked school a lot (27 percentage-point difference).

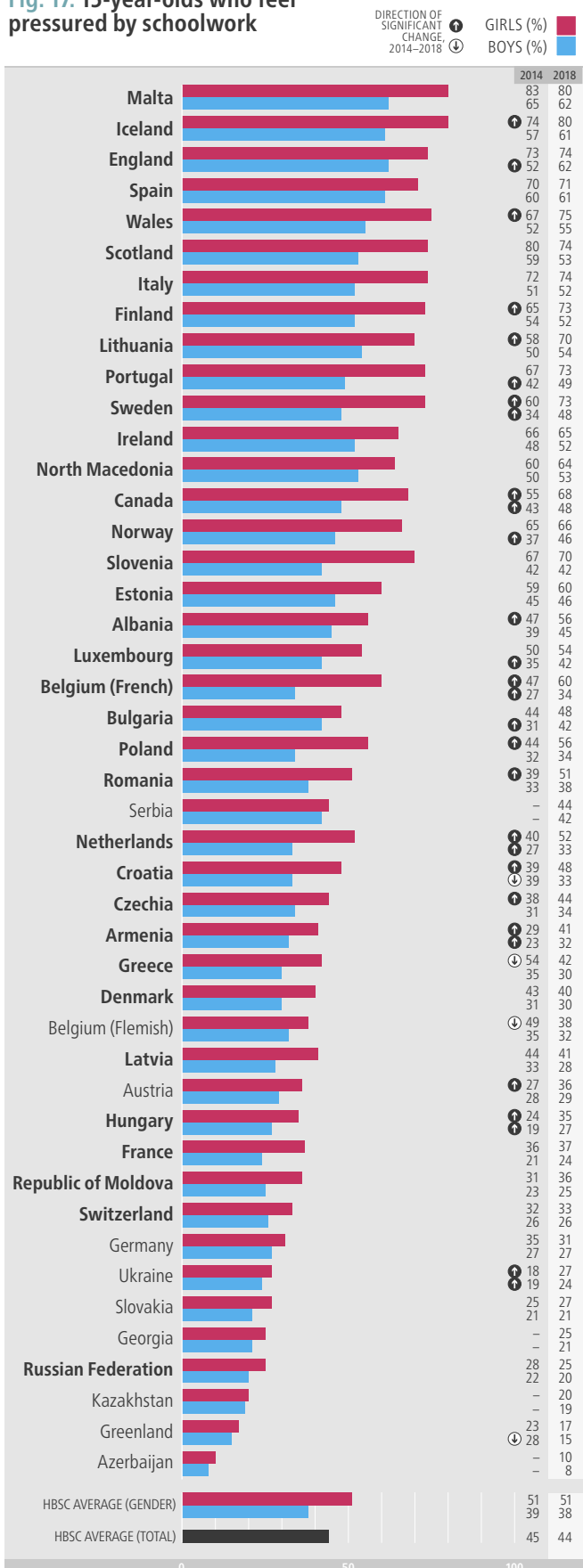
A significant decline in school satisfaction was observed in around one third of countries/regions between 2014 and 2018. In Albania, Armenia, Iceland, Romania, Sweden and United Kingdom (England), school satisfaction declined significantly among boys and girls in all or almost all age groups. The largest declines, of over 20% in some age/gender groups, were seen in Albania and Romania. By contrast, school satisfaction increased significantly in Belgium (French) among adolescents across all age groups, and in Switzerland among 11- and 13-year-old boys and girls.

SCHOOLWORK PRESSURE

Overall, over a third (36%) of adolescents reported feeling some or a lot of pressure from schoolwork. Azerbaijan had the lowest prevalence (around 10%) across all age and gender groups. The highest prevalence (80%) was reported by 15-year-old girls in Malta. Iceland, Lithuania and Spain also had particularly high prevalence across all age groups (Fig. 17).

Schoolwork pressure increased with age, from 26% of 11-year-olds to 44% of 15-year-olds. This increase was seen in 41 countries/regions for girls and 34 for boys. The largest age-related changes in schoolwork pressure for boys and girls were found in Sweden (33 and

“We’re not all good at formal exams.”

Fig. 17. 15-year-olds who feel pressured by schoolwork

Note: country/region name in **bold** indicates significant gender difference in 2018 (at $p < 0.05$); significant change between 2014 and 2018 (at $p < 0.05$) is denoted by an arrow indicating direction of change (averages for 2014 and 2018 are not directly comparable and no significances are shown).

52 percentage points, respectively) and United Kingdom (Scotland) (26 and 52 percentage points, respectively). Gender differences also increased with age. At age 11, fewer than a third of countries/regions showed a gender difference, with six having higher prevalence among girls and eight higher prevalence among boys. **At age 15, girls reported a significantly higher prevalence of schoolwork pressure than boys** in 35 countries/regions, with the largest difference in Slovenia (28 percentage points).

Social inequalities in schoolwork pressure were found in 11 countries/regions for boys and 17 for girls. **In general, adolescents from high-affluence families felt more pressured by schoolwork**, with the largest differences for boys (14 percentage points) in Lithuania and for girls (23 percentage points) in Albania. The opposite pattern was observed in Denmark and United Kingdom (Scotland) for boys only.

A significant increase in schoolwork pressure was observed in some countries/regions between 2014 and 2018, with around a third for boys and slightly more for girls (depending on age group). While increases were generally small, the highest increase of 19 percentage points was seen among 13-year-old girls in Poland. A few countries/regions had significant decreases in schoolwork pressure in some age groups, with the Russian Federation showing particularly large decreases (17 percentage points) among boys and girls aged 11 and Greenland demonstrating decreases of more than 10 percentage points among boys and girls at ages 13 and 15.

STUDENT SUPPORT

Around three fifths (59%) of adolescents reported high levels of support from other students at school.

Boys (62%) were more likely to report higher student support than girls (56%). Gender differences were greater at ages 13 and 15. Boys showed higher prevalence in 14 countries/regions at age 11, 28 at age 13 and 26 at age 15.

There was wide cross-national variation in perceived student support. For boys, prevalence of high student support ranged from 37% in Greece among 15-year-olds to 85% in North Macedonia among 11-year-olds. Prevalence among girls ranged from 27% of 15-year-olds in United Kingdom (Wales) to 87% of 13-year-olds in Azerbaijan.

Adolescents from high-affluence families were more likely to report high support from their fellow students in around half of countries/regions (17 for boys and 21 for girls). The largest inequalities (an over 12 percentage-point difference between the highest and lowest family-affluence groups) were found in Austria, Estonia, Malta and United Kingdom (England and Scotland) among boys, and in Denmark, Estonia, Luxembourg, Malta, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom (Scotland) for girls.

TEACHER SUPPORT

Over half of adolescents (56%) reported high levels of support from their teachers. This was higher among younger pupils, with 72% of 11-year-olds reporting high support compared to only 52% by age 13 and less than half (44%) by age 15. Belgium (Flemish) had particularly large age-related declines in teacher support, with high prevalence at age 11 (82%) falling to 42% at age 15.

Gender differences in teacher support changed with age. Significant gender differences were seen in only about a quarter of countries/regions at ages 11 and 13 but were observed in half among 15-year-olds. The direction of the difference also changed. Specifically, girls at age 11 in 13 countries/regions reported a significantly higher prevalence than boys. In contrast, boys were more likely to report high levels of support from their teachers than girls in 16 countries/regions at age 13 and 23 at age 15. At age 15, 48% of boys and 41% of girls reported high teacher support, with the largest gender differences found in Croatia, Finland and Sweden.

There was wide variation in levels of teacher support among countries/regions across all age groups.

Prevalence ranged from 21% of 15-year-old girls in Poland to 90% of 11-year-old girls in Greenland. Some countries/regions consistently reported high teacher support across all three age groups: Albania, Azerbaijan, Greenland, Kazakhstan, Norway and Sweden were among the top 10 countries in each age group. By contrast, some central and eastern European countries consistently were ranked poorly (Czechia, Hungary, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine).



Teachers need to be approachable.

There was little evidence of an association between teacher support and family affluence. Significant inequalities were found in seven countries/regions for boys and 11 for girls, but with inconsistent patterns.

SUMMARY

Adolescents who enjoy being in school and experience school as a nurturing and supportive environment are more engaged with school, leading to improved long-term educational outcomes and higher well-being. Research has shown that pupils who like school also have higher overall life satisfaction, lower risk of substance use and better mental health (McCarty et al., 2012; Guo et al., 2014; Joyce & Early, 2014; Vogel et al., 2015). It therefore is concerning to see that the most consistent changes since the last survey are decreases in liking school and increases in feelings of school pressure, with only a few countries/regions showing the opposite trend.

Compared to older students, younger students report liking school more, feel less pressured by school and feel more supported by their teachers. Across the HBSC countries/regions generally, gender differences become stronger and are seen in more countries/regions among older students.

Girls tend to like school more than boys but feel more pressured by schoolwork and report lower levels of support from their fellow students. Gender differences in teacher support show a more complex picture; girls feel more supported by their teachers at age 11 but this pattern reverses by age 15, when boys are more likely to report high teacher support and more countries/regions show a gender difference. Liking school and teacher support showed little pattern by family affluence. On the other hand, adolescents from more affluent families in certain countries/regions were more likely to feel supported by their classmates but also to feel more pressured by their schoolwork.