

Educational Pluralism in International Context

A Look at Seventeen Countries

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About Cardus Education

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Key Points

- Educational pluralism is a system of education in which the government funds and regulates, but does not necessarily deliver, the education.
- Robust systems of educational pluralism are characterized by availability, accessibility, and accountability.
- This paper offers metrics by which educational pluralism can be assessed across countries, and it applies these metrics to seventeen OECD countries.
- The top-line findings of this study are:
    - Countries can provide significant scope for pluralist education while also maintaining a commitment to academic quality for all students.
    - Most countries studied have policies that support accessibility, especially for underprivileged communities.
    - Each country studied has some accountability structure in place for independent schools.
- The paper notes that accountability and freedom can come into conflict. Public policy regarding school accountability should be developed carefully to preserve the freedoms for education expressed, for example, in international human rights documents.

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Introduction

This paper examines the extent to which educational pluralism is present in seventeen OECD countries. As discussed in the Cardus paper "The Three Pillars of Educational Pluralism," educational pluralism is a system of education in which the government funds and regulates, but does not necessarily deliver, the education.[1] Educational pluralism is premised on the conviction that education is not a neutral enterprise but rather is indivisible from worldview and value systems. It also asserts that education has both a particular and a public character: Parents need to be able to choose the kind of education that aligns with their convictions and best fits their child's needs, and the broader society also has an interest in the outcomes of education and in the development of its citizens.

A robust system of educational pluralism has three pillars or essential characteristics: availability, accessibility, and accountability. The first pillar, availability, refers to the presence of schooling options within a given geographical area. The second, accessibility, refers to the ability of students of varied socioeconomic backgrounds to enrol in these schools, typically through some form of government funding. And the third, accountability, refers to the mechanisms by which schools are accountable to the state for the quality of education that they provide.

By presenting measures for each pillar of educational pluralism, this paper offers a way to evaluate the extent of educational pluralism across countries. This paper also suggests that descriptive measures of the third pillar, accountability, ought to be included in any evaluation of robust educational pluralism.

A Note on Terminology

Scholars of educational pluralism point to challenges relating to an inconsistent use of terminology and unclear or limited definitions. The most frequently applied terms to describe state and non-state schools are the terms "public" and "private." These terms are inadequate, however, in contexts of robust pluralism. For example, charter schools are "public" schools that may be privately managed, and "private" schools may be government-funded. Moreover, the term "private" carries the connotation that such schools exist to exclude others or to advance private interests. This may be accurate in some cases, but many "private" schools in Canada are non-profit institutions that strive to be accessible to applicants and view themselves as educating for the common good.

Cardus uses the terms "district" and "independent." The term "district" was chosen instead of "public" because in most education systems, when students attend these schools they attend the one in their district, based on their place of residence. The term "independent" was chosen for schools that are fully or partially managed independent of government. Thus the category includes charter schools, independent schools that are state-funded, and independent schools that receive no state funds. Often all three can operate side by side.

1 J. DeJong VanHof, "The Three Pillars of Educational Pluralism," Cardus, 2025, https://cardus.ca/research/education/reports/the-three-pillars-of-educational-pluralism/.

This paper draws on data from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the International Organization for the Right to Education and Freedom of Education (OIDEL), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Where Cardus would use the term "independent school" or "independent education," the OECD speaks of "private schools," OIDEL of "non-governmental schools," and UNESCO of "non-state actors."[2]

Educational Pluralism and International Covenants

The principles of educational pluralism are embedded in major international covenants. These covenants express commitment to the availability and accessibility of educational options, as well as an acknowledgement of the importance of accountability through the requirement to uphold at least minimum standards set by government.

Article 26 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights, for example, declares that "parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children."[3] The UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights holds that "the States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions."[4] The UN International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights similarly states,

> The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to choose for their children schools, other than those established by the public authorities, which conform to such minimum educational standards as may be laid down or approved by the State and to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.

Additionally,

> No part of this article shall be construed so as to interfere with the liberty of individuals and bodies to establish and direct educational institutions, subject always to the observance of the principles set forth in paragraph I of this article and to the

2 OECD, "PISA 2022 Technical Report," March 2024, https://doi.org/10.1787/01820d6d-en; OIDEL, "Freedom of Education Index 2023: A Quantitative Analysis of Educational Pluralism Worldwide," https://www.oidel.org/fei/?lang=en; UNESCO, Global Education Monitoring Report: Non-State Actors in Education, 2021–22, https://www.unesco.org/gem-report/en/non-state-actors.

3 United Nations, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," Article 26:3, https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights. We understand "prior right" to mean prior to any other rights holders, such as the state.

4 United Nations, "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights," Article 18:4, https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights.

requirement that the education given in such institutions shall conform to such minimum standards as may be laid down by the State.[5]

The UN Convention Against Discrimination in Education guards the freedom of parents to "choose for their children institutions other than those maintained by the public authorities but conforming to such minimum educational standards as may be laid down or approved by the competent authorities" and emphasizes the protection and preservation of minority culture and language in education and the necessity of ensuring "the religious and moral education of the children in conformity with their own convictions."[6]

And finally, the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention of the International Labour Organization advocates for development, protection, and resources toward educational options that honour "their value systems and their further social, economic and cultural aspirations," and insists that minority communities should be able to "establish their own educational institutions and facilities, provided that such institutions meet minimum standards established by the competent authority in consultation with these peoples."[7]

How the Countries Were Selected

We began by limiting our study to the thirty-eight OECD member countries, all of which are democracies, because comparison between countries is more challenging under different government regimes and educational pluralism is fostered by democratic norms and institutions, in education systems as a whole and in individual schools.[8] In addition, these countries all participate in the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), and we wanted to include these academic outcomes in our analysis.

These countries also each exhibit, at least to a minimum degree, the three pillars of educational pluralism:

- Availability. Non-state education is legally protected, and the country has some percentage of the student population enrolled in independent schools.

5 United Nations, "International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights," Article 13:3, 4, https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights. The "paragraph I" referenced here restates the principles of article 26 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights.

6 United Nations, "Convention Against Discrimination in Education," Article 5:1b, 1c, https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-against-discrimination-education.

7 International Labour Organization, "C169—Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989," Article 27:1, 3, https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:55:0::NO::P55_TYPE,P55_LANG,P55_DOCUMENT,P55_NODE:REV,en,C169,/Document.

8 "Members and Partners," OECD, https://www.oecd.org/en/about/members-partners.html; A.R. Berner, *Educational Pluralism and Democracy: How to Handle Indoctrination, Promote Exposure, and Rebuild America's Schools* (Harvard Education Press, 2024), 7–12, 45–61; Q. Wodon, "Measuring Education Pluralism Globally," *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 19, no. 2 (2021): 102–109, https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2021.1917155.

- Accessibility. The country provides some level of government funding for independent schools.
- Accountability. The country has the state capacity to regulate district (public) schools, and thus by implication also has the capacity to regulate independent schools.[9]

From this initial group of thirty-eight countries, seventeen were selected for full examination, representing a diversity of population size and geography. The final list includes Australia, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Measuring Educational Pluralism

Charles Glenn and Jan DeGroof, pioneers in the definition, description, and measurement of educational pluralism, produced a four-volume publication in 2012 that laid the groundwork for a philosophy of educational pluralism and applied a chosen set of metrics to evaluate the extent to which it existed in education systems around the world.[10] Their work has been preserved in Johns Hopkins University's Educational Pluralism Database.[11] Importantly, the country profiles in this database include metrics to assess the three pillars of educational pluralism: accessibility, availability, and accountability. However, many of the profiles are more than ten years old, and much has changed in the various countries since that time.

The International Organization for the Right to Education and Freedom of Education (OIDEL) publishes a Freedom of Education Index every two years. The index includes measures for whether the country recognizes a right to establish independent schools; whether it provides funds to independent schools, and if so, to what extent; and the percentage of enrolment in independent schools. Thus, while this index provides a useful indication of the availability and accessibility of educational options, it does not include metrics relating to accountability. OIDEL's latest study, in 2023, applied this index to 157 countries, resulting in a score for each country out of a possible total of 100 points, and a rank ordering from 1 (the country with the highest degree of educational pluralism) to 157 (lowest).[12]

9 State capacity is assumed based on the World Bank classification of these countries as upper-middle to high income (GNI per capita of $4,516 to $14,005, and $14,005 or more, respectively) in 2024–25. E. Metreau, K.E. Young, and S.G. Eapen, "World Bank Country Classifications by Income Level for 2024–25," July 1, 2024, https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/opendata/world-bank-country-classifications-by-income-level-for-2024-2025.

10 C.L. Glenn and J. De Groof, *Balancing Freedom, Autonomy, and Accountability in Education*, 4 vols. (Wolf Legal, 2012).

11 "Educational Pluralism Database," Johns Hopkins School of Education Institute for Education Policy, https://education.jhu.edu/edpolicy/k-12-education-solutions/educational-pluralism-database/.

12 For details, see I. Grau, J. Zingg, and M. San Andres, *Freedom of Education Index 2023: A Quantitative Analysis of Education Pluralism Worldwide* (OIDEL and FUNCIVA, 2023), 16–18, https://www.oidel.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/FREEDOM-OF-EDUCATION-INDEX-2023.pdf.

Building on the work of Glenn and DeGroof, scholars D'Agostino and Grau i Callizo use the criteria of "autonomy" and "educational freedom" to assess the extent of educational pluralism in various countries.[13] They use OECD PISA 2009 data to plot countries according to measurements of accessibility and autonomy for independent (private) education.[14] The autonomy index is created from survey responses indicating whether schools have control over hiring and dismissal of staff, can set teacher salaries, and can make curricular and/or assessment decisions, and accessibility is determined from variables of market share and percent of government funding for independent (private) education.

Wodon et al. created an index of educational pluralism based on traditional measures of market concentration, using UNESCO data on the number of students enrolled in district (public) or independent (private) schools. Positing that the market share of independent education when disaggregated by different types of schooling is a reflection of the extent of educational pluralism in a given country, they adapted the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index to quantify the diversity of school provision.[15] Here again, these metrics shed light on the availability and accessibility pillars but do not enable assessment of accountability.

And finally, UNESCO has conducted extensive analysis on the presence and action of independent providers of education (what UNESCO refers to as "non-state actors") worldwide, demonstrating that these providers are increasingly prevalent. This activity takes various forms in different countries, making the delineation between public and private education difficult and thus rendering the diversity of non-state activity within education challenging to quantify. Still, UNESCO estimates that "without non-state actors, the education of 350 million more children would fall to the responsibility of the state," and that the proportion of independent providers has increased to approximately 17 percent for primary education and 26 percent for secondary education over the last twenty years.[16] Independent providers make up a considerable proportion of the global educational landscape.

In all of the above frameworks, it is challenging to adequately account for the ways in which different regulatory frameworks, or countries with higher or lower concentrations of religious communities, interact with the metrics chosen. Additionally, it should be noted that these frameworks do not account for the existence of choice *within* district (public) systems, which may also contribute toward educational pluralism in a given jurisdiction.

The country profiles provided in the appendix of our study draw on the "Three Pillars" paper and on these other scholars' work, to assess the extent of educational pluralism present in each country by means of the following information:

13 A. D'Agostino and I. Grau i Callizo, "Toward Understanding the Global Landscape of Educational Pluralism," *Journal of School Choice* 16, no. 3 (2022): 379, https://doi.org/10.1080/15582159.2022.2088072.

14 In their index, the authors define pluralistic schools as "any school operated in full or in part by a non-state actor" (p. 378).

15 Q. Wodon, "Measuring Education Pluralism Globally," 104.

16 UNESCO, "Global Education Monitoring Report: Non-State Actors in Education," 2021–22, 2, 33, https://www.unesco.org/gem-report/en/non-state-actors.

1. A brief description of the overall structure of the country's education system, as well as the country's most recent Gross National Income (GNI) per capita as an indication of relative country wealth.
2. The enrolment distribution for district (public) and independent schools, based on the most recent available data. The overall percentages are provided, and percentages for primary and secondary enrolments are broken out, if available.
3. Two OECD-related outcomes:
    a. The country's most recent PISA scores in mathematics, reading, and science for fifteen-year-old students (the OECD average is provided for comparison).
    b. The country's achievement gap (the difference between the highest- and lowest-performing students, according to income levels) in mathematics (the OECD average is provided for comparison). The achievement gap expresses the relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement.[17]
4. Two OIDEL measures (as described above):
    a. The Freedom of Education score (out of a possible 100 points).
    b. The Freedom of Education Index, rank from 1 (highest) to 157 (lowest).
5. Metrics to assess the availability pillar:
    a. Is non-state education protected by legislation?
    b. Is non-state education protected by mention in the country's constitution?
    c. Is home-schooling legal?
    d. Are independent schools diverse in terms of pedagogical, religious, and cultural identity?[18]

These metrics offer an indication of the range of educational options that exist. Legal or constitutional protection of independent schooling indicates historical, cultural, or social support for diversity in education such that it is a norm within the country. To permit home-schooling suggests a level of commitment and openness to parental decision-making.

17 We present the achievement gap for PISA 2022 math scores. Globally, academic achievement has been trending downwards, and it was particularly negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. In many countries, achievement gaps widened since the previous iteration of PISA in 2018. It remains to be seen whether these gaps will close in future PISA iterations. Further context to these scores is provided in the executive summary of the 2022 PISA results: OECD, *PISA 2022 Results (Volume I): The State of Learning and Equity in Education*, 2023, tables I.1, I.2, I.3, I.4, 28–35, https://doi.org/10.1787/53f23881-en.

18 This assessment is based on descriptions in the country profiles in the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, "Profiles Enhancing Educational Reviews (PEER)," https://education-profiles.org/. For schooling within a country to be considered diverse, all three forms of schooling (religious, pedagogical, and cultural) had to be readily apparent in the profile.

6. Metrics to assess the accessibility pillar:

    a. Does the government provide funding for independent schooling? If so, what is the percentage of funding provided?

    b. Is the funding delivered to schools, or to students?

    c. Is any funding directed specifically to underserved or low-income students?

    d. If funding is delivered to schools, are they required to maximize access to the school (e.g., through government regulation of fee setting, and/or admission policies?

    Funding may be delivered to schools based on enrolment, or may be delivered through grants, subsidies, or vouchers directly to students. Countries may provide funds specifically for low-income students, students with disabilities, those who live in more remote locations, or other disadvantaged groups. Countries may use various policy levers to require or encourage schools to maximize their accessibility.

7. Metrics to assess the accountability pillar:

    a. Are all schools required to follow a common national or subnational (e.g., provincial) curriculum?

    b. Are all students assessed via a national or subnational form of assessment (e.g., national exams, diploma exams, or regular assessments for core benchmarks of achievement)?

    c. Is certification required for educators?

    d. Are safety parameters required in all schools (e.g., staff background checks, fire and building code compliance, health and safety protocols)?

    e. Are all schools regularly inspected?

    f. Are all schools subject to reporting requirements?

    g. Are independent schools subject to governance requirements (e.g., that they must be non-profit)?

    h. If home-schooling is legal, is it regulated?

    These metrics provide an indication of the extent to which all schools, whether district (public) or independent, are held accountable for quality and safety. Countries may vary in the ways and extent to which these measures of accountability are assessed and applied, but the presence or absence of these measures gives perspective on the extent to which a shared commitment to the outcomes of education exists within the country.

Discussion

The seventeen profiles demonstrate that educational pluralism varies across countries. At the same time, three additional observations may be drawn from this study.

The first observation is that it is possible for countries to provide a significant amount of support for pluralist education while maintaining a commitment to academic quality for all students. Although no analysis has been done in this study to associate educational pluralism with academic performance, a correlation can be informally observed. Based on the most recent PISA results, fourteen of the countries have scores at or above the OECD average for math, fifteen countries have scores at or above the average for reading, and fourteen countries have scores at or above the average for science. Eleven of the countries have a math achievement gap at or below the OECD average. A body of research has uncovered specific policy levers that contribute to high academic achievement, one of which is school autonomy.[19] Whether additional levers that are directly related to educational pluralism can be associated with educational quality is a subject for ongoing research.

Second, there are policies in most of the countries (though to varying degrees) to support accessibility, especially for underprivileged communities. Of the seventeen countries profiled, fully sixteen provide a significant level of funding to independent schools (at least 30 percent of the school's operational funding), and six provide funding of at least 80 percent (with some providing capital funding as well). At least thirteen have policies that seek to increase access for low-income or other disadvantaged communities, such as funds targeted for students with special education needs, priority funding for Indigenous populations or rural communities, and grants for schools with high percentages of students from low-income communities. The policies vary by country and subnational jurisdiction, and this study does not evaluate their relative efficacy. Other research suggests that the efficacy of various policies is difficult to determine and that as enrolment broadens to include the most disadvantaged students, the achievement gap tends to widen.[20] That these policies exist, however, demonstrates a commitment to access within educationally plural systems. The ability of these countries to provide funding to increase access for low-income communities, and the specific policies that facilitate this access, may be instructive for jurisdictions in which pluralism is increasing.

The third observation is that each of these countries has some accountability structure in place for independent schools. Measures of accountability have not historically been included in assessments of pluralism. The UN Special Rapporteur for Education's call for accountability to be included as a fifth "A" (alongside the existing principles that education should be available, accessible, acceptable, and adaptable) is very recent.[21] Yet it is an important consideration, not least when considering the need for learning recovery at a global scale, as is the current reality

19 L. Woessman, E. Luedemann, G. Schuetz, and M.R. West, *School Accountability, Autonomy and Choice around the World* (Edward Elgar, 2009).

20 A.K. Chmielewski and S. Bell, "Cross-National Socioeconomic Inequality and Educational Policy," in *The Sage Handbook of Sociology of Education* (2024), 327–42, https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529783506.n21.

21 F. Shaheed, "Q&A with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education," 2023, updated 2024, UNESCO, https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/qa-un-special-rapporteur-right-education.

post-COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, the OECD's publication of the 2022 PISA results includes the remark that resilient education systems—those best able to withstand shocks coming from the outside—are more likely to exhibit certain features, including "combining school autonomy and quality assurance mechanisms." Additionally, research suggests that the kind of regulatory policy that balances the autonomy of educational institutions with their accountability for student outcomes may be very important for school participation in government accessibility and accountability mechanisms.[22] Finally, in a global context in which concern may exist about the unregulated proliferation of some forms of private enterprise within education, the inclusion of accountability measures may be increasingly relevant for the study of educational pluralism.

Introducing accountability into the measurement of educational pluralism carries with it philosophical and ideological challenges.[23] By their very nature, accountability and freedom can come into conflict, which perhaps is why accountability has not been included in metrics of educational pluralism until now. However, it is difficult to compare academic or civic educational outcomes cross-nationally if the nature of regulation in each country's system of education is not considered. Moreover, the role that regulation can play in ensuring not only the quality but also the sustainability of diverse schooling options suggests it is an essential component of any measurement of educational pluralism. However, in formulations of educational pluralism that include an accountability component, care needs to be taken to define this accountability in ways compatible with freedoms expressed, for example, in international human rights codes.[24] In the case of the Netherlands and Denmark, for example, a commitment to educational freedom is deeply rooted in these countries' histories and cultural values and thereby also protected by their respective constitutions. Denmark articulates this right to freedom of education as encompassing five components: ideological freedom, pedagogical freedom, financial freedom, freedom of employment, and freedom to admit pupils.[25]

This paper has sought to articulate a set of variables that might be used to measure educational pluralism across countries. We focused on independent schools, and measurements of availability, accessibility, and accountability for them. As mentioned earlier, however, there is an additional factor contributing to educational pluralism—the extent of choice that exists within district (public) school systems. For example, some Canadian provinces fund religious (primarily Roman Catholic) and minority-language schools within district systems, rendering the profile here an underestimate of educational pluralism in Canada. Though a less robust form of educational

22 M.H. Lee, E.W. Price, and L.E. Swaner, "The Effect of Private School Choice Regulations on School Participation: Experimental Evidence from the Christian School Sector," *Journal of School Choice* 18, no. 1 (2024): 138–56, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15582159.2022.2113011.

23 For a thorough discussion of the consequences and challenges posed by systems of education committed to pluralism, see A.R. Berner, *Educational Pluralism and Democracy*.

24 For an extended treatment of how such trade-offs are addressed within international rights documents, including what is meant by the phrase "minimum educational standards" and the limits of parental rights pertaining to standards for educational structures and educational content, see I. Grau, "To What Extent Can Parental Rights Be Limited by 'Minimum Educational Standards as May Be Laid Down or Approved by the State'?" *Peabody Journal of Education* 99, no. 5 (2024): 541–56, https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2024.2407246.

25 Hojskolerne, "The Danish Free School Tradition," 2018, https://danishfolkhighschools.com/media/17344/faelles_international_hefte_18.pdf.

pluralism, the availability of choice within district systems is an additional component to consider.[26]

As independent education continues to grow worldwide, it will be increasingly necessary to examine the systems and policy mechanisms that enable educational pluralism and to understand the relationship between achievement outcomes and specific policy choices, in the context of each country's history and culture.

26 For a thorough treatment and quantification of the availability of choice within and outside of district systems across Canada, see S. Asadolahi, J. Farney, T. Triadafilopoulos, and L.A. White, "Charting the Rise of School Choice Across Canadian Provinces: A Policy Index," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 55, no. 1 (2022): 188–207, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008423921000901.

Australia



Schooling is compulsory for ages 6 to 15. Students attend primary, secondary, and senior secondary schools. The government supports both government (district) and 14 "independent public schools" which have greater decision-making authority than regular district (public) schools. Funding is shared by federal and state/territory governments. Independent (private) schools have a large and growing place within the country's schooling system.

GNI per capita (USD) $60,840

Enrolment Distribution*

School sector	Percentage (%)
District (public) schools	63.4
Primary	–
Secondary	–
Independent schools	19.9 (Catholic schools) 16.8 (Other independent schools)
Primary	–
Secondary	–

	OECD average	Country average
2022 PISA math score	472	487
2022 PISA reading score	476	498
2022 PISA science score	485	507
Achievement gap for math (lower = better)	93	101

OIDEL Freedom of Education score **70.0** / 100

OIDEL Freedom of Education rank
(of 157 countries, with 1 = highest, and 157 = lowest) **14** / 157

Sources (for full citations, see the References section of this report): UNESCO, "Australia: Non-State Actors in Education," 2021; OIDEL, "Freedom of Education Index 2023: A Quantitative Analysis of Educational Pluralism Worldwide"; OECD, "Education Policy Outlook in Australia," April 10, 2023; Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Schools: Data on Government and Non-Government Students, Staff and Schools* (2025); OECD, "PISA 2022 Results (Volume I and II)—Country Notes: Australia."

Availability

Is non-state education protected by legislation?
Yes

Is non-state education protected by mention in the country's constitution?
Yes

Is home-schooling legal?
Yes

Are independent schools diverse in terms of pedagogical, religious, and cultural identity? Yes = all 3 forms of diversity are readily apparent within the country; Some = there is some evidence of 2 forms of diversity; No = there is little evidence of diversity.
Yes

Accessibility

Does the government provide funding for independent schooling?
Yes

If so, what is the percentage of funding proportionate to students in public (district) schooling?
20–90%

Is the funding delivered to schools, or to students?
Schools

Is any funding directed specifically toward underserved or low-income students?
Yes. Additional grants are allocated toward specific areas of educational disadvantange.

If funding is delivered to schools, are they required to maximize access to the school (e.g., through government regulation of fee setting, and/or admission policies)?
Varies by state

Accountability

Are all schools required to follow a common national or subnational (e.g., provincial) curriculum?
Yes

Are all students assessed via a national or subnational form of assessment (e.g., national exams, diploma exams, or regular assessments for core benchmarks of achievement)?
Yes

Is certification required for educators?
Yes

Are safety parameters required in all schools (e.g., staff background checks, fire and building code compliance, health and safety protocols)?
Yes

Are all schools regularly inspected?
Yes

Are all schools subject to reporting requirements?
Yes

Are independent schools subject to governance requirements (e.g., that they must be not-for-profit)?
Yes (must be not-for-profit)

Is home-schooling regulated?
Yes

Features of interest

The Roman Catholic Church is a key provider of education (National Catholic Education Commission). Core funding to independent schools is provided by the federal government and is tied to socio-economic status (SES). Schools with higher SES scores receive less per capita core funding.

*Enrolment percentages were obtained from UNESCO's report, "Non-State Actors in Education." In calculating percent enrolment, UNESCO uses the net enrolment rate, which is the total number of students who are primary or secondary school age who are enrolled in that level of education, expressed as a percentage of the total population of that age group. The net enrolment rate serves as a marker of access to education in a given country. Percent enrolments in independent and district education are based on the net enrolment rate and also do not account for sector-switching or lagged enrolment reporting; for these reasons, percentages may not total to exactly 100%. In many cases, the percentages of students who are home-schooled or out of school are not provided.

Canada



Education is funded, regulated, and managed by each province. Education is compulsory for ages 6 to 16 in most provinces (grades 1–10). District (public) schools are free and may provide school choice options, such as specialized programs for students with special needs or heritage-language programs. Catholic separate public schools exist in Alberta, Ontario, and Saskatchewan. Minority official-language district (public) schools exist in all provinces/territories, and alternative choice options to varying degrees in different provinces. Some school districts give parents the option of choosing a district (public) school outside of their assigned catchment area, to increase access to equitable schooling. Public funding for education comes from the provincial or territorial government, or a combination of provincial transfers and local taxes collected by the local government or by the boards with taxing powers. First Nations schools are funded by the federal government.

GNI per capita (USD) $52,960

Enrolment Distribution*

School sector	Percentage (%)
District (public) schools	92.4
Primary	93.6
Secondary	91.2
Independent schools	7.6
Primary	6.4
Secondary	8.8

	OECD average	Country average
2022 PISA math score	472	497
2022 PISA reading score	476	507
2022 PISA science score	485	515
Achievement gap for math (lower = better)	93	76

OIDEL Freedom of Education score **66.7** / 100

OIDEL Freedom of Education rank
(of 157 countries, with 1 = highest, and 157 = lowest) **25** / 157

Sources (for full citations, see the References section of this report): UNESCO, "Canada: Non-State Actors in Education," 2021; OIDEL, "Freedom of Education Index 2023: A Quantitative Analysis of Educational Pluralism Worldwide"; OECD, "PISA 2022 Results (Volume I and II)—Country Notes: Canada."

Availability

Is non-state education protected by legislation?
Yes

Is non-state education protected by mention in the country's constitution?
Yes

Is home-schooling legal?
Yes

Are independent schools diverse in terms of pedagogical, religious, and cultural identity? Yes = all 3 forms of diversity are readily apparent within the country; Some = there is some evidence of 2 forms of diversity; No = there is little evidence of diversity.
Varies by province

Accessibility

Does the government provide funding for independent schooling?
Varies by province

If so, what is the percentage of funding proportionate to students in public (district) schooling?
30-70%

Is the funding delivered to schools, or to students?
Schools

Is any funding directed specifically toward underserved or low-income students?
Varies by province

If funding is delivered to schools, are they required to maximize access to the school (e.g., through government regulation of fee setting, and/or admission policies)?
No

Accountability

Are all schools required to follow a common national or subnational (e.g., provincial) curriculum?
No. Curriculum requirements vary by province.

Are all students assessed via a national or subnational form of assessment (e.g., national exams, diploma exams, or regular assessments for core benchmarks of achievement)?
No. Assessment requirements vary by province.

Is certification required for educators?
Varies by province

Are safety parameters required in all schools (e.g., staff background checks, fire and building code compliance, health and safety protocols)?
Yes

Are all schools regularly inspected?
Varies by province

Are all schools subject to reporting requirements?
Varies by province

Are independent schools subject to governance requirements (e.g., that they must be not-for-profit)?
Varies by province

Is home-schooling regulated?
Varies by province

Features of interest

Federal Constitution makes provision for minority language and religious accommodation in education, resulting in varying degrees of educational pluralism across the country. British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Quebec provide funding, protection, and regulation of independent education to varying degrees. Ontario regulates independent schools that provide provincial curriculum at the secondary level, but does not regulate elementary schools or require teacher certification. Ontario does not fund independent schools. Each of these provinces also maintains separate (minority language) schools and some accommodate religious public schools (mainly Catholic systems). There are few independent schools in the Atlantic provinces, which maintain single district (public) systems.

*Enrolment percentages were obtained from UNESCO's report, "Non-State Actors in Education." In calculating percent enrolment, UNESCO uses the net enrolment rate, which is the total number of students who are primary or secondary school age who are enrolled in that level of education, expressed as a percentage of the total population of that age group. The net enrolment rate serves as a marker of access to education in a given country. Percent enrolments in independent and district education are based on the net enrolment rate and also do not account for sector-switching or lagged enrolment reporting; for these reasons, percentages may not total to exactly 100%. In many cases, the percentages of students who are home-schooled or out of school are not provided.

Chile



Education is compulsory for 13 years. The system mainly comprises government-subsidized independent schools, state municipal schools, and paid (non-funded, non-regulated) private schools. State education is administered by municipalities, and funding is provided by federal (central) and municipal governments. "Delegated administration establishments" are government schools with operation delegated to private non-profit organizations, typically for technical or professional education.

GNI per capita (USD) $15,360

Enrolment Distribution*

School sector	Percentage (%)
District (public) schools	34.0 (municipal schools) 2.0 (delegated administration corporations)
Primary	–
Secondary	–
Independent schools	53.9 (independent funded) 9.2 (independent non-funded)
Primary	–
Secondary	–

	OECD average	Country average
2022 PISA math score	472	412
2022 PISA reading score	476	448
2022 PISA science score	485	444
Achievement gap for math (lower = better)	93	69

OIDEL Freedom of Education score **78.6** / 100

OIDEL Freedom of Education rank
(of 157 countries, with 1 = highest, and 157 = lowest) **5** / 157

Sources (for full citations, see the References section of this report): UNESCO, "Chile: Actores no estatales en la educación" ["Chile: Non-State Actors in Education," translation accessed via browser], 2021; OIDEL, "Freedom of Education Index 2023: A Quantitative Analysis of Educational Pluralism Worldwide"; OECD, "PISA 2022 Results (Volume I and II)—Country Notes: Chile"; OECD, "Funding of School Education in Chile," 2017.

Availability

Is non-state education protected by legislation?
Yes

Is non-state education protected by mention in the country's constitution?
Yes

Is home-schooling legal?
Yes

Are independent schools diverse in terms of pedagogical, religious, and cultural identity? Yes = all 3 forms of diversity are readily apparent within the country; Some = there is some evidence of 2 forms of diversity; No = there is little evidence of diversity.
Yes

Accessibility

Does the government provide funding for independent schooling?
Yes

If so, what is the percentage of funding proportionate to students in public (district) schooling?
49%

Is the funding delivered to schools, or to students?
Schools (vouchers)

Is any funding directed specifically toward underserved or low-income students?
Yes

If funding is delivered to schools, are they required to maximize access to the school (e.g., through government regulation of fee setting, and/or admission policies)?
No

Accountability

Are all schools required to follow a common national or subnational (e.g., provincial) curriculum?
Yes, at basic level

Are all students assessed via a national or subnational form of assessment (e.g., national exams, diploma exams, or regular assessments for core benchmarks of achievement)?
Yes

Is certification required for educators?
No. University degree is required.

Are safety parameters required in all schools (e.g., staff background checks, fire and building code compliance, health and safety protocols)?
No

Are all schools regularly inspected?
Yes

Are all schools subject to reporting requirements?
Yes

Are independent schools subject to governance requirements (e.g., that they must be not-for-profit)?
Yes (must be not-for-profit)

Is home-schooling regulated?
No

*Enrolment percentages were obtained from UNESCO's report, "Non-State Actors in Education." In calculating percent enrolment, UNESCO uses the net enrolment rate, which is the total number of students who are primary or secondary school age who are enrolled in that level of education, expressed as a percentage of the total population of that age group. The net enrolment rate serves as a marker of access to education in a given country. Percent enrolments in independent and district education are based on the net enrolment rate and also do not account for sector-switching or lagged enrolment reporting; for these reasons, percentages may not total to exactly 100%. In many cases, the percentages of students who are home-schooled or out of school are not provided.

Denmark



Education is compulsory for ages 6 to 15. The majority of children attend free public schools known as *folkescholer* (people's schools). Denmark also has a long history of supporting independent schools, known as *friskoler* or free schools. These schools are established according to five principles of freedom rooted in the ideals of protection of the minority, which is enshrined in the Danish Constitution. The government also supports a wide range of adult learning opportunities, including the tradition of folk high schools, which are independent boarding schools offering non-formal courses to young adults.

GNI per capita (USD) $73,520

Enrolment Distribution*

School sector	Percentage (%)
District (public) schools	–
Primary	77.0
Secondary	94.0
Independent schools	–
Primary	16.0
Secondary	6.0

	OECD average	Country average
2022 PISA math score	472	489
2022 PISA reading score	476	489
2022 PISA science score	485	494
Achievement gap for math (lower = better)	93	74

OIDEL Freedom of Education score **70.6** / 100

OIDEL Freedom of Education rank
(of 157 countries, with 1 = highest, and 157 = lowest) **12** / 157

Sources (for full citations, see the References section of this report): UNESCO, "Denmark: Non-State Actors in Education," 2021; OIDEL, "Freedom of Education Index 2023: A Quantitative Analysis of Educational Pluralism Worldwide"; Hojskolerne, "The Danish Free School Tradition," 2018; OECD, "PISA 2022 Results (Volume I and II)—Country Notes: Denmark."

Availability

Is non-state education protected by legislation?
Yes

Is non-state education protected by mention in the country's constitution?
Yes

Is home-schooling legal?
Yes

Are independent schools diverse in terms of pedagogical, religious, and cultural identity? Yes = all 3 forms of diversity are readily apparent within the country; Some = there is some evidence of 2 forms of diversity; No = there is little evidence of diversity.
Yes

Accessibility

Does the government provide funding for independent schooling?
Yes

If so, what is the percentage of funding proportionate to students in public (district) schooling?
80%+ of annual operating costs

Is the funding delivered to schools, or to students?
Schools

Is any funding directed specifically toward underserved or low-income students?
Yes

If funding is delivered to schools, are they required to maximize access to the school (e.g., through government regulation of fee setting, and/or admission policies)?
No

Accountability

Are all schools required to follow a common national or subnational (e.g., provincial) curriculum?
Yes

Are all students assessed via a national or subnational form of assessment (e.g., national exams, diploma exams, or regular assessments for core benchmarks of achievement)?
Yes. Participation by free schools is voluntary.

Is certification required for educators?
No

Are safety parameters required in all schools (e.g., staff background checks, fire and building code compliance, health and safety protocols)?
Yes

Are all schools regularly inspected?
Yes

Are all schools subject to reporting requirements?
Yes

Are independent schools subject to governance requirements (e.g., that they must be not-for-profit)?
Yes (must be not-for-profit)

Is home-schooling regulated?
No

Features of interest

Free schools are established on the five principles of freedom: ideological freedom, pedagogical freedom, financial freedom, freedom of employment, and freedom to admit pupils. Free schools may not receive donations of more than about $3,000 USD from states or persons outside the EU.

*Enrolment percentages were obtained from UNESCO's report, "Non-State Actors in Education." In calculating percent enrolment, UNESCO uses the net enrolment rate, which is the total number of students who are primary or secondary school age who are enrolled in that level of education, expressed as a percentage of the total population of that age group. The net enrolment rate serves as a marker of access to education in a given country. Percent enrolments in independent and district education are based on the net enrolment rate and also do not account for sector-switching or lagged enrolment reporting; for these reasons, percentages may not total to exactly 100%. In many cases, the percentages of students who are home-schooled or out of school are not provided.

Finland



The education system is divided into basic education, combining elementary and secondary education up to age 15, and upper secondary education, ages 16 to 18. Education is free and compulsory to age 18. The vast majority of students are educated in district (public) schools, with just 3 percent enrolled in independent schools in basic education, and 10 percent in upper secondary education. Government funding exists for education at all levels irrespective of provider.

GNI per capita (USD) $54,930

Enrolment Distribution*

School sector	Percentage (%)
District (public) schools	97.0
Primary	–
Secondary	–
Independent schools	3.0
Primary	–
Secondary	10.0

	OECD average	Country average
2022 PISA math score	472	484
2022 PISA reading score	476	490
2022 PISA science score	485	511
Achievement gap for math (lower = better)	93	83

OIDEL Freedom of Education score **75.3** / 100

OIDEL Freedom of Education rank
(of 157 countries, with 1 = highest, and 157 = lowest) **6** / 157

Sources (for full citations, see the References section of this report): UNESCO, "Finland: Non-State Actors in Education," 2021; OIDEL, "Freedom of Education Index 2023: A Quantitative Analysis of Educational Pluralism Worldwide"; OECD, "PISA 2022 Results (Volume I and II)—Country Notes: Finland."

Availability

Is non-state education protected by legislation?
Yes

Is non-state education protected by mention in the country's constitution?
Yes

Is home-schooling legal?
Yes

Are independent schools diverse in terms of pedagogical, religious, and cultural identity? Yes = all 3 forms of diversity are readily apparent within the country; Some = there is some evidence of 2 forms of diversity; No = there is little evidence of diversity.
Yes

Accessibility

Does the government provide funding for independent schooling?
Yes

If so, what is the percentage of funding proportionate to students in public (district) schooling?
100%

Is the funding delivered to schools, or to students?
Schools

Is any funding directed specifically toward underserved or low-income students?
Yes

If funding is delivered to schools, are they required to maximize access to the school (e.g., through government regulation of fee setting, and/or admission policies)?
Yes

Accountability

Are all schools required to follow a common national or subnational (e.g., provincial) curriculum?
Yes

Are all students assessed via a national or subnational form of assessment (e.g., national exams, diploma exams, or regular assessments for core benchmarks of achievement)?
No

Is certification required for educators?
Yes

Are safety parameters required in all schools (e.g., staff background checks, fire and building code compliance, health and safety protocols)?
Yes

Are all schools regularly inspected?
—

Are all schools subject to reporting requirements?
—

Are independent schools subject to governance requirements (e.g., that they must be not-for-profit)?
Yes (must be not-for-profit)

Is home-schooling regulated?
Somewhat

Features of interest

Independent schools may not charge students any tuition fees.

*Enrolment percentages were obtained from UNESCO's report, "Non-State Actors in Education." In calculating percent enrolment, UNESCO uses the net enrolment rate, which is the total number of students who are primary or secondary school age who are enrolled in that level of education, expressed as a percentage of the total population of that age group. The net enrolment rate serves as a marker of access to education in a given country. Percent enrolments in independent and district education are based on the net enrolment rate and also do not account for sector-switching or lagged enrolment reporting; for these reasons, percentages may not total to exactly 100%. In many cases, the percentages of students who are home-schooled or out of school are not provided.

France



The education system is divided into public schools, private contracted schools, and private non-contracted schools. Education is compulsory for ages 3 to 18. Contracted schools hold a contract with the state, comply with state regulations and curriculum, and receive state support. Non-contracted schools are not funded by the state. Perhaps due to high regulations for contracted private schools, the non-contracted, non-funded independent school sector is growing in enrolment and diversity.

GNI per capita (USD) $45,290

Enrolment Distribution*

School sector	Percentage (%)
District (public) schools	–
Primary	–
Secondary	–
Independent schools	20.7 (independent funded) 2.1 (independent non-funded)
Primary	–
Secondary	–

	OECD average	Country average
2022 PISA math score	472	474
2022 PISA reading score	476	474
2022 PISA science score	485	487
Achievement gap for math (lower = better)	93	113

OIDEL Freedom of Education score **67.8** / 100

OIDEL Freedom of Education rank
(of 157 countries, with 1 = highest, and 157 = lowest) **22** / 157

Sources (for full citations, see the References section of this report): UNESCO, "France: Acteurs non étatiques dans l'éducation," ["France: Non-State Actors in Education," translation accessed via browser], 2021; OIDEL, "Freedom of Education Index 2023: A Quantitative Analysis of Educational Pluralism Worldwide"; OECD, "PISA 2022 Results (Volume I and II)—Country Notes: France."

Availability

Is non-state education protected by legislation?
Yes

Is non-state education protected by mention in the country's constitution?
Yes

Is home-schooling legal?
Yes

Are independent schools diverse in terms of pedagogical, religious, and cultural identity? Yes = all 3 forms of diversity are readily apparent within the country; Some = there is some evidence of 2 forms of diversity; No = there is little evidence of diversity.
Yes

Accessibility

Does the government provide funding for independent schooling?
Yes, for those that have contract with the state

If so, what is the percentage of funding proportionate to students in public (district) schooling?
75–100%

Is the funding delivered to schools, or to students?
Schools

Is any funding directed specifically toward underserved or low-income students?
Some

If funding is delivered to schools, are they required to maximize access to the school (e.g., through government regulation of fee setting, and/or admission policies)?
Yes

Accountability

Are all schools required to follow a common national or subnational (e.g., provincial) curriculum?
Yes

Are all students assessed via a national or subnational form of assessment (e.g., national exams, diploma exams, or regular assessments for core benchmarks of achievement)?
Yes

Is certification required for educators?
Yes

Are safety parameters required in all schools (e.g., staff background checks, fire and building code compliance, health and safety protocols)?
Yes

Are all schools regularly inspected?
Yes

Are all schools subject to reporting requirements?
Yes

Are independent schools subject to governance requirements (e.g., that they must be not-for-profit)?
Yes, for funded/contracted (must be not-for-profit)

Is home-schooling regulated?
Restricted, authorization required

Features of interest

Foreign nationals who are not members of the EU or EEA must obtain authorization to start an independent school. Opening of the school is subject to approval from the municipal mayor, state representatives, and the public prosecutor. The non-contracted, non-funded independent school sector is growing.

*Enrolment percentages were obtained from UNESCO's report, "Non-State Actors in Education." In calculating percent enrolment, UNESCO uses the net enrolment rate, which is the total number of students who are primary or secondary school age who are enrolled in that level of education, expressed as a percentage of the total population of that age group. The net enrolment rate serves as a marker of access to education in a given country. Percent enrolments in independent and district education are based on the net enrolment rate and also do not account for sector-switching or lagged enrolment reporting; for these reasons, percentages may not total to exactly 100%. In many cases, the percentages of students who are home-schooled or out of school are not provided.

Germany



Schooling is compulsory from age 6 for 9 or 10 years, depending on the path of the student. Primary school runs from grades 1 to 4, or 1 to 6, and is followed by secondary school, in which students are divided into various educational paths. Upper secondary education can take place in a variety of types of schools, depending on lower secondary education performance and aptitudes. Most schools are district (public) schools, and independent schools are highly regulated. There are many more independent schools at the secondary level, and these are divided into alternative schools and supplementary schools (offering an education that does not exist in the district system).

GNI per capita (USD) $54,030

Enrolment Distribution*

School sector	Percentage (%)
District (public) schools	91.7
Primary	–
Secondary	–
Independent schools	8.3
Primary	–
Secondary	–

	OECD average	Country average
2022 PISA math score	472	475
2022 PISA reading score	476	480
2022 PISA science score	485	492
Achievement gap for math (lower = better)	93	111

OIDEL Freedom of Education score **65.6** / 100

OIDEL Freedom of Education rank
(of 157 countries, with 1 = highest, and 157 = lowest) **30** / 157

Sources (for full citations, see the References section of this report): UNESCO, "Germany: Non-State Actors in Education," 2021; Christina Grabbe, "Education Policy and Integration in Germany," 2018; OIDEL, "Freedom of Education Index 2023: A Quantitative Analysis of Educational Pluralism Worldwide"; OECD, "PISA 2022 Results (Volume I and II)—Country Notes: Germany."

Availability

Is non-state education protected by legislation?
Yes

Is non-state education protected by mention in the country's constitution?
Yes

Is home-schooling legal?
No

Are independent schools diverse in terms of pedagogical, religious, and cultural identity? Yes = all 3 forms of diversity are readily apparent within the country; Some = there is some evidence of 2 forms of diversity; No = there is little evidence of diversity.
Yes

Accessibility

Does the government provide funding for independent schooling?
Varies by state

If so, what is the percentage of funding proportionate to students in public (district) schooling?
>60%

Is the funding delivered to schools, or to students?
Schools

Is any funding directed specifically toward underserved or low-income students?
No

If funding is delivered to schools, are they required to maximize access to the school (e.g., through government regulation of fee setting, and/or admission policies)?
Yes

Accountability

Are all schools required to follow a common national or subnational (e.g., provincial) curriculum?
Yes

Are all students assessed via a national or subnational form of assessment (e.g., national exams, diploma exams, or regular assessments for core benchmarks of achievement)?
—

Is certification required for educators?
Yes

Are safety parameters required in all schools (e.g., staff background checks, fire and building code compliance, health and safety protocols)?
Yes

Are all schools regularly inspected?
Yes

Are all schools subject to reporting requirements?
Yes

Are independent schools subject to governance requirements (e.g., that they must be not-for-profit)?
Yes, in some states (must be not-for-profit)

Is home-schooling regulated?
n/a

*Enrolment percentages were obtained from UNESCO's report, "Non-State Actors in Education." In calculating percent enrolment, UNESCO uses the net enrolment rate, which is the total number of students who are primary or secondary school age who are enrolled in that level of education, expressed as a percentage of the total population of that age group. The net enrolment rate serves as a marker of access to education in a given country. Percent enrolments in independent and district education are based on the net enrolment rate and also do not account for sector-switching or lagged enrolment reporting; for these reasons, percentages may not total to exactly 100%. In many cases, the percentages of students who are home-schooled or out of school are not provided.

Ireland



Schooling is compulsory for ages 4 to 19. Education is provided almost entirely by independent or non-state schools, based on the Constitution, which characterizes the state's role as a provider and supporter of "private and corporate educational initiative." All primary schools and most post-primary (secondary) schools are independent schools funded entirely by the Irish government. Historically, many of these schools were Catholic; however, diversity among school types is increasing, due to government commitment to support new school initiatives. A very small portion of schools are independent private schools, which receive no funding and are not subject to state regulation.

GNI per capita (USD) $79,730

Enrolment Distribution*

School sector	Percentage (%)
District (public) schools	5.0
Primary	0.0
Secondary	36.0
Independent schools	95.0
Primary	100.0
Secondary	74.0

	OECD average	Country average
2022 PISA math score	472	492
2022 PISA reading score	476	516
2022 PISA science score	485	504
Achievement gap for math (lower = better)	93	74

OIDEL Freedom of Education score **100.0** / 100

OIDEL Freedom of Education rank
(of 157 countries, with 1 = highest, and 157 = lowest) **1** / 157

Sources (for full citations, see the References section of this report): UNESCO, "Ireland: Non-State Actors in Education," 2021; OIDEL, "Freedom of Education Index 2023: A Quantitative Analysis of Educational Pluralism Worldwide"; OECD, "PISA 2022 Results (Volume I and II)— Country Notes: Ireland."

Availability

Is non-state education protected by legislation?
Yes

Is non-state education protected by mention in the country's constitution?
Yes

Is home-schooling legal?
Yes

Are independent schools diverse in terms of pedagogical, religious, and cultural identity? Yes = all 3 forms of diversity are readily apparent within the country; Some = there is some evidence of 2 forms of diversity; No = there is little evidence of diversity.
Some

Accessibility

Does the government provide funding for independent schooling?
Yes

If so, what is the percentage of funding proportionate to students in public (district) schooling?
100%

Is the funding delivered to schools, or to students?
Schools

Is any funding directed specifically toward underserved or low-income students?
Yes

If funding is delivered to schools, are they required to maximize access to the school (e.g., through government regulation of fee setting, and/or admission policies)?
Yes, if funded

Accountability

Are all schools required to follow a common national or subnational (e.g., provincial) curriculum?
Yes, if funded

Are all students assessed via a national or subnational form of assessment (e.g., national exams, diploma exams, or regular assessments for core benchmarks of achievement)?
—

Is certification required for educators?
Yes, if funded

Are safety parameters required in all schools (e.g., staff background checks, fire and building code compliance, health and safety protocols)?
—

Are all schools regularly inspected?
Yes, if funded

Are all schools subject to reporting requirements?
Yes, if funded

Are independent schools subject to governance requirements (e.g., that they must be not-for-profit)?
Yes, if funded (must hold charitable status)

Is home-schooling regulated?
Yes

Features of interest

The Irish model of education is based on a historical public-private partnership, mainly with the Catholic Church, which covers most schools.

*Enrolment percentages were obtained from UNESCO's report, "Non-State Actors in Education." In calculating percent enrolment, UNESCO uses the net enrolment rate, which is the total number of students who are primary or secondary school age who are enrolled in that level of education, expressed as a percentage of the total population of that age group. The net enrolment rate serves as a marker of access to education in a given country. Percent enrolments in independent and district education are based on the net enrolment rate and also do not account for sector-switching or lagged enrolment reporting; for these reasons, percentages may not total to exactly 100%. In many cases, the percentages of students who are home-schooled or out of school are not provided.

Israel



Education takes place for 12 years, from ages 6 to 18, through primary education, lower secondary education, and upper secondary education. The majority of schools are public (state) schools, with 4 school types by religion and language (secular, religious, and orthodox Hebrew schools, and Arabic language schools).

GNI per capita (USD) $55,140

Enrolment Distribution*

School sector	Percentage (%)
District (public) schools	–
Primary	76.5
Secondary	86.6
Independent schools	–
Primary	23.5
Secondary	12.2

	OECD average	Country average
2022 PISA math score	472	458
2022 PISA reading score	476	474
2022 PISA science score	485	465
Achievement gap for math (lower = better)	93	124

OIDEL Freedom of Education score **69.2** / 100

OIDEL Freedom of Education rank
(of 157 countries, with 1 = highest, and 157 = lowest) **16** / 157

Sources (for full citations, see the References section of this report): UNESCO, "Israel: Non-State Actors in Education," 2021; OIDEL, "Freedom of Education Index 2023: A Quantitative Analysis of Educational Pluralism Worldwide"; OECD, "PISA 2022 Results (Volume I and II)—Country Notes: Israel."

Availability

Is non-state education protected by legislation?
Yes

Is non-state education protected by mention in the country's constitution?
No

Is home-schooling legal?
Yes

Are independent schools diverse in terms of pedagogical, religious, and cultural identity? Yes = all 3 forms of diversity are readily apparent within the country; Some = there is some evidence of 2 forms of diversity; No = there is little evidence of diversity.
Some

Accessibility

Does the government provide funding for independent schooling?
Varies by school type

If so, what is the percentage of funding proportionate to students in public (district) schooling?
Varies; subsidization of teachers' salaries and operating costs

Is the funding delivered to schools, or to students?
Schools

Is any funding directed specifically toward underserved or low-income students?
Yes

If funding is delivered to schools, are they required to maximize access to the school (e.g., through government regulation of fee setting, and/or admission policies)?
Yes

Accountability

Are all schools required to follow a common national or subnational (e.g., provincial) curriculum?
Yes, with some exceptions

Are all students assessed via a national or subnational form of assessment (e.g., national exams, diploma exams, or regular assessments for core benchmarks of achievement)?
No

Is certification required for educators?
Yes

Are safety parameters required in all schools (e.g., staff background checks, fire and building code compliance, health and safety protocols)?
Yes

Are all schools regularly inspected?
Yes

Are all schools subject to reporting requirements?
Yes

Are independent schools subject to governance requirements (e.g., that they must be not-for-profit)?
Yes

Is home-schooling regulated?
Yes

Features of interest

All schools, with the exception of the ultra-Orthodox stream, must follow a Ministry of Education-prescribed national curriculum, which can be adapted to special circumstances. Government schools are divided according to language and religious orientation. There are 4 educational tracks for governmental schools, 3 for the Hebrew-speaking community (secular, religious, and ultra-Orthodox), and 1 for the Arabic-speaking community. Non-governmental schools are divided into four categories: Non-State-Managed State Schools, Non-State-Funded State Schools, Non-State Schools, State-Funded Non-State Schools.

*Enrolment percentages were obtained from UNESCO's report, "Non-State Actors in Education." In calculating percent enrolment, UNESCO uses the net enrolment rate, which is the total number of students who are primary or secondary school age who are enrolled in that level of education, expressed as a percentage of the total population of that age group. The net enrolment rate serves as a marker of access to education in a given country. Percent enrolments in independent and district education are based on the net enrolment rate and also do not account for sector-switching or lagged enrolment reporting; for these reasons, percentages may not total to exactly 100%. In many cases, the percentages of students who are home-schooled or out of school are not provided.

Japan



Compulsory schooling begins at age 6 for 6 years (primary school), followed by middle school for 3 years. High school begins at age 16 and is not compulsory.

GNI per capita (USD) $42,440

Enrolment Distribution*

School sector	Percentage (%)
District (public) schools	–
Primary	Primary: 98.0 Middle: 92.0
Secondary	High: 73.0
Independent schools	–
Primary	Primary: 2.0 Middle: 8.0
Secondary	High: 27.0

	OECD average	Country average
2022 PISA math score	472	536
2022 PISA reading score	476	516
2022 PISA science score	485	547
Achievement gap for math (lower = better)	93	81

OIDEL Freedom of Education score **52.2** / 100

OIDEL Freedom of Education rank
(of 157 countries, with 1 = highest, and 157 = lowest) **99** / 157

Sources (for full citations, see the References section of this report): UNESCO, "Japan: Non-State Actors in Education," 2021; OIDEL, "Freedom of Education Index 2023: A Quantitative Analysis of Educational Pluralism Worldwide"; OECD, "PISA 2022 Results (Volume I and II)—Country Notes: Japan."

Availability

Is non-state education protected by legislation?
Yes

Is non-state education protected by mention in the country's constitution?
No

Is home-schooling legal?
No

Are independent schools diverse in terms of pedagogical, religious, and cultural identity? Yes = all 3 forms of diversity are readily apparent within the country; Some = there is some evidence of 2 forms of diversity; No = there is little evidence of diversity.
Some

Accessibility

Does the government provide funding for independent schooling?
Yes, via grant subsidies

If so, what is the percentage of funding proportionate to students in public (district) schooling?
Minimal

Is the funding delivered to schools, or to students?
Schools

Is any funding directed specifically toward underserved or low-income students?
Yes

If funding is delivered to schools, are they required to maximize access to the school (e.g., through government regulation of fee setting, and/or admission policies)?
No

Accountability

Are all schools required to follow a common national or subnational (e.g., provincial) curriculum?
Yes, national curriculum standards

Are all students assessed via a national or subnational form of assessment (e.g., national exams, diploma exams, or regular assessments for core benchmarks of achievement)?
Yes, grades 6 and 9

Is certification required for educators?
Yes

Are safety parameters required in all schools (e.g., staff background checks, fire and building code compliance, health and safety protocols)?
Yes

Are all schools regularly inspected?
Yes

Are all schools subject to reporting requirements?
Yes

Are independent schools subject to governance requirements (e.g., that they must be not-for-profit)?
Yes

Is home-schooling regulated?
n/a

*Enrolment percentages were obtained from UNESCO's report, "Non-State Actors in Education." In calculating percent enrolment, UNESCO uses the net enrolment rate, which is the total number of students who are primary or secondary school age who are enrolled in that level of education, expressed as a percentage of the total population of that age group. The net enrolment rate serves as a marker of access to education in a given country. Percent enrolments in independent and district education are based on the net enrolment rate and also do not account for sector-switching or lagged enrolment reporting; for these reasons, percentages may not total to exactly 100%. In many cases, the percentages of students who are home-schooled or out of school are not provided.

Netherlands



Schooling is compulsory for ages 5 to 18. Schools are governend by local municipal councils and are free to generate additional funds through fundraising or, in the case of independent schools, limited ancillary fees. Independent schools receive the same funding as district (public) schools, and the freedom to educate according to conviction or belief is a deeply held value.

GNI per capita (USD) $60,230

Enrolment Distribution*

School sector	Percentage (%)
District (public) schools	–
Primary	31.0
Secondary	29.0
Independent schools	–
Primary	68.0 (independent funded)
Secondary	71.0 (independent funded)

	OECD average	Country average
2022 PISA math score	472	493
2022 PISA reading score	476	459
2022 PISA science score	485	488
Achievement gap for math (lower = better)	93	106

OIDEL Freedom of Education score **92.7** / 100

OIDEL Freedom of Education rank
(of 157 countries, with 1 = highest, and 157 = lowest) **2** / 157

Sources (for full citations, see the References section of this report): UNESCO, "Netherlands: Non-State Actors in Education," 2021; OIDEL, "Freedom of Education Index 2023: A Quantitative Analysis of Educational Pluralism Worldwide"; OECD, "PISA 2022 Results (Volume I and II)—Country Notes: Netherlands."

Availability

Is non-state education protected by legislation?
Yes

Is non-state education protected by mention in the country's constitution?
Yes

Is home-schooling legal?
Yes (exemption to compulsory education law must be received and is valid for one year).

Are independent schools diverse in terms of pedagogical, religious, and cultural identity? Yes = all 3 forms of diversity are readily apparent within the country; Some = there is some evidence of 2 forms of diversity; No = there is little evidence of diversity.
Yes

Accessibility

Does the government provide funding for independent schooling?
Yes

If so, what is the percentage of funding proportionate to students in public (district) schooling?
100%

Is the funding delivered to schools, or to students?
Schools

Is any funding directed specifically toward underserved or low-income students?
Minimal

If funding is delivered to schools, are they required to maximize access to the school (e.g., through government regulation of fee setting, and/or admission policies)?
No

Accountability

Are all schools required to follow a common national or subnational (e.g., provincial) curriculum?
No

Are all students assessed via a national or subnational form of assessment (e.g., national exams, diploma exams, or regular assessments for core benchmarks of achievement)?
Yes

Is certification required for educators?
Yes

Are safety parameters required in all schools (e.g., staff background checks, fire and building code compliance, health and safety protocols)?
Yes

Are all schools regularly inspected?
Yes

Are all schools subject to reporting requirements?
Yes

Are independent schools subject to governance requirements (e.g., that they must be not-for-profit)?
Yes

Is home-schooling regulated?
No

Features of interest

The Dutch Inspectorate of Education has the right to close independent schools that do not comply with compulsory education law. Schools are also accountable for a school plan, updated every 4 years. Independent (private) schools may charge limited ancillary fees. The country streams students according to interest and ability after grade 6.

*Enrolment percentages were obtained from UNESCO's report, "Non-State Actors in Education." In calculating percent enrolment, UNESCO uses the net enrolment rate, which is the total number of students who are primary or secondary school age who are enrolled in that level of education, expressed as a percentage of the total population of that age group. The net enrolment rate serves as a marker of access to education in a given country. Percent enrolments in independent and district education are based on the net enrolment rate and also do not account for sector-switching or lagged enrolment reporting; for these reasons, percentages may not total to exactly 100%. In many cases, the percentages of students who are home-schooled or out of school are not provided.

Norway



Schooling occurs from ages 6 to 12 (primary school), 13 to 15 (lower secondary), and 16 to 18 (upper secondary). The majority of non-state schools are found at the upper secondary level and consist of government-funded independent schools and folk schools. Independent schools are prohibited from operating on a for-profit basis.

GNI per capita (USD) $95,520

Enrolment Distribution*

School sector	Percentage (%)
District (public) schools	–
Primary	96.0
Secondary	92.0
Independent schools	–
Primary	4.0
Secondary	8.0

	OECD average	Country average
2022 PISA math score	472	468
2022 PISA reading score	476	477
2022 PISA science score	485	478
Achievement gap for math (lower = better)	93	81

OIDEL Freedom of Education score **65.8** / 100

OIDEL Freedom of Education rank
(of 157 countries, with 1 = highest, and 157 = lowest) **29** / 157

*Enrolment percentages were obtained from UNESCO's report, "Non-State Actors in Education." In calculating percent enrolment, UNESCO uses the net enrolment rate, which is the total number of students who are primary or secondary school age who are enrolled in that level of education, expressed as a percentage of the total population of that age group. The net enrolment rate serves as a marker of access to education in a given country. Percent enrolments in independent and district education are based on the net enrolment rate and also do not account for sector-switching or lagged enrolment reporting; for these reasons, percentages may not total to exactly 100%. In many cases, the percentages of students who are home-schooled or out of school are not provided.

Availability

Is non-state education protected by legislation?
Yes

Is non-state education protected by mention in the country's constitution?
No

Is home-schooling legal?
Yes

Are independent schools diverse in terms of pedagogical, religious, and cultural identity? Yes = all 3 forms of diversity are readily apparent within the country; Some = there is some evidence of 2 forms of diversity; No = there is little evidence of diversity.
Some

Accessibility

Does the government provide funding for independent schooling?
Yes

If so, what is the percentage of funding proportionate to students in public (district) schooling?
85%

Is the funding delivered to schools, or to students?
Schools

Is any funding directed specifically toward underserved or low-income students?
Yes (special education)

If funding is delivered to schools, are they required to maximize access to the school (e.g., through government regulation of fee setting, and/or admission policies)?
Yes

Accountability

Are all schools required to follow a common national or subnational (e.g., provincial) curriculum?
Yes, or approved alternative curriculum

Are all students assessed via a national or subnational form of assessment (e.g., national exams, diploma exams, or regular assessments for core benchmarks of achievement)?
Yes

Is certification required for educators?
Yes

Are safety parameters required in all schools (e.g., staff background checks, fire and building code compliance, health and safety protocols)?
Yes

Are all schools regularly inspected?
Yes

Are all schools subject to reporting requirements?
Yes

Are independent schools subject to governance requirements (e.g., that they must be not-for-profit)?
Yes

Is home-schooling regulated?
Yes (supervised by local municipality, which can mandate school attendance in cases of insufficient quality)

Features of interest

The approval process for independent schools is regulated significantly. Schools that apply must be deemed to not have a negative impact on government schools, and must identify with a pedagogical, philosophical, or religious orientation to differentiate their program from government schools. Schools must demonstrate access to capital funds and be legally registered, must submit to inspection for their premises to be approved, and may be required to adhere to regulations on student-teacher ratios. Independent and folk schools are prohibited from charging tuition fees that exceed 15% of the total operating costs of the school.

Sources (for full citations, see the References section of this report): UNESCO, "Norway: Non-State Actors in Education," 2021; OIDEL, "Freedom of Education Index 2023: A Quantitative Analysis of Educational Pluralism Worldwide"; OECD, "PISA 2022 Results (Volume I and II)—Country Notes: Norway."

South Korea



Compulsory education consists of primary education (beginning at age 6), and lower secondary education (beginning at age 12), for a total of 9 years. Upper secondary education begins at age 15 and is not compulsory. Independent (private) schools are owned and operated by an individual, corporation, or school foundation. All schools are prohibited from charging tuition for compulsory education, restricting the provision of independent providers at the primary and lower secondary level.

GNI per capita (USD) $36,190

Enrolment Distribution*

School sector	Percentage (%)
District (public) schools	–
Primary	98.5
Secondary	70.5
Independent schools	–
Primary	1.5
Secondary	29.5

	OECD average	Country average
2022 PISA math score	472	527
2022 PISA reading score	476	515
2022 PISA science score	485	528
Achievement gap for math (lower = better)	93	97

OIDEL Freedom of Education score **62.6** / 100

OIDEL Freedom of Education rank
(of 157 countries, with 1 = highest, and 157 = lowest) **44** / 157

Sources (for full citations, see the References section of this report): UNESCO, "Republic of Korea: Non-State Actors in Education," 2021; OIDEL, "Freedom of Education Index 2023: A Quantitative Analysis of Educational Pluralism Worldwide"; OECD, "PISA 2022 Results (Volume I and II)—Country Notes: Korea"; NCEE (National Center on Education and the Economy), "Korea."

Availability

Is non-state education protected by legislation?
Yes

Is non-state education protected by mention in the country's constitution?
No

Is home-schooling legal?
No

Are independent schools diverse in terms of pedagogical, religious, and cultural identity? Yes = all 3 forms of diversity are readily apparent within the country; Some = there is some evidence of 2 forms of diversity; No = there is little evidence of diversity.
Some

Accessibility

Does the government provide funding for independent schooling?
Yes

If so, what is the percentage of funding proportionate to students in public (district) schooling?
>75%

Is the funding delivered to schools, or to students?
Schools (apply for funding)

Is any funding directed specifically toward underserved or low-income students?
No

If funding is delivered to schools, are they required to maximize access to the school (e.g., through government regulation of fee setting, and/or admission policies)?
Yes (no tuition charging for compulsory education)

Accountability

Are all schools required to follow a common national or subnational (e.g., provincial) curriculum?
Yes

Are all students assessed via a national or subnational form of assessment (e.g., national exams, diploma exams, or regular assessments for core benchmarks of achievement)?
Optional

Is certification required for educators?
Yes

Are safety parameters required in all schools (e.g., staff background checks, fire and building code compliance, health and safety protocols)?
Yes

Are all schools regularly inspected?
No, unless warranted

Are all schools subject to reporting requirements?
Yes

Are independent schools subject to governance requirements (e.g., that they must be not-for-profit)?
Yes, accounting restrictions; board requirements for foundations

Is home-schooling regulated?
n/a

Features of interest

Education is governed at the local level, with each jurisdiction managed by a superintendent. Approval for private institutions must be granted locally.

*Enrolment percentages were obtained from UNESCO's report, "Non-State Actors in Education." In calculating percent enrolment, UNESCO uses the net enrolment rate, which is the total number of students who are primary or secondary school age who are enrolled in that level of education, expressed as a percentage of the total population of that age group. The net enrolment rate serves as a marker of access to education in a given country. Percent enrolments in independent and district education are based on the net enrolment rate and also do not account for sector-switching or lagged enrolment reporting; for these reasons, percentages may not total to exactly 100%. In many cases, the percentages of students who are home-schooled or out of school are not provided.

Spain



Primary education begins at age 6, for 6 years, and secondary education at age 12, for 4 years, and is compulsory. Upper secondary education (ages 16–18) is not compulsory and is taught either as vocational training or as general education. Independent schools are either funded or enter into a contract with the state to receive funding.

GNI per capita (USD) $32,090

Enrolment Distribution*

School sector	Percentage (%)
District (public) schools	–
Primary	68.5
Secondary	70.3
Independent schools	–
Primary	31.5
Secondary	29.7

	OECD average	Country average
2022 PISA math score	472	473
2022 PISA reading score	476	474
2022 PISA science score	485	485
Achievement gap for math (lower = better)	93	86

OIDEL Freedom of Education score **70.2** / 100

OIDEL Freedom of Education rank
(of 157 countries, with 1 = highest, and 157 = lowest) **13** / 157

Sources (for full citations, see the References section of this report): UNESCO, "España: Actores no estatales en la educación," ["Spain: Non-State Actors in Education," translation accessed via browser], 2021; OIDEL, "Freedom of Education Index 2023: A Quantitative Analysis of Educational Pluralism Worldwide"; OECD, "PISA 2022 Results (Volume I and II)—Country Notes: Spain."

Availability

Is non-state education protected by legislation?
Yes

Is non-state education protected by mention in the country's constitution?
Yes

Is home-schooling legal?
No

Are independent schools diverse in terms of pedagogical, religious, and cultural identity? Yes = all 3 forms of diversity are readily apparent within the country; Some = there is some evidence of 2 forms of diversity; No = there is little evidence of diversity.
Yes

Accessibility

Does the government provide funding for independent schooling?
Yes

If so, what is the percentage of funding proportionate to students in public (district) schooling?
Varies; subsidization of teachers' salaries and operating costs

Is the funding delivered to schools, or to students?
Schools

Is any funding directed specifically toward underserved or low-income students?
Yes (special education)

If funding is delivered to schools, are they required to maximize access to the school (e.g., through government regulation of fee setting, and/or admission policies)?
Yes

Accountability

Are all schools required to follow a common national or subnational (e.g., provincial) curriculum?
Yes

Are all students assessed via a national or subnational form of assessment (e.g., national exams, diploma exams, or regular assessments for core benchmarks of achievement)?
Yes

Is certification required for educators?
Yes

Are safety parameters required in all schools (e.g., staff background checks, fire and building code compliance, health and safety protocols)?
Yes

Are all schools regularly inspected?
Yes

Are all schools subject to reporting requirements?
Yes

Are independent schools subject to governance requirements (e.g., that they must be not-for-profit)?
Yes, if funded; no, if not funded

Is home-schooling regulated?
n/a

*Enrolment percentages were obtained from UNESCO's report, "Non-State Actors in Education." In calculating percent enrolment, UNESCO uses the net enrolment rate, which is the total number of students who are primary or secondary school age who are enrolled in that level of education, expressed as a percentage of the total population of that age group. The net enrolment rate serves as a marker of access to education in a given country. Percent enrolments in independent and district education are based on the net enrolment rate and also do not account for sector-switching or lagged enrolment reporting; for these reasons, percentages may not total to exactly 100%. In many cases, the percentages of students who are home-schooled or out of school are not provided.

Sweden



Schooling is compulsory for 9 years, beginning at age 7, and is provided by municipal and independent schools. Independent schools must be approved by the Schools Inspectorate and follow the same curriculum and regulations as public (district) schools. Governance is mediated at the municipal level, with each municipality responsible for ensuring the standards of quality and safety in independent schools.

GNI per capita (USD) $63,500

Enrolment Distribution*

School sector	Percentage (%)
District (public) schools	86.0
Primary	–
Secondary	–
Independent schools	14.0
Primary	–
Secondary	–

	OECD average	Country average
2022 PISA math score	472	482
2022 PISA reading score	476	487
2022 PISA science score	485	494
Achievement gap for math (lower = better)	93	99

OIDEL Freedom of Education score **64.6** / 100

OIDEL Freedom of Education rank
(of 157 countries, with 1 = highest, and 157 = lowest) **39** / 157

Sources (for full citations, see the References section of this report): UNESCO, "Sweden: Non-State Actors in Education," 2021; OIDEL, "Freedom of Education Index 2023: A Quantitative Analysis of Educational Pluralism Worldwide"; OECD, "PISA 2022 Results (Volume I and II)—Country Notes: Sweden."

Availability

Is non-state education protected by legislation?
Yes

Is non-state education protected by mention in the country's constitution?
No

Is home-schooling legal?
No (but permitted in rare circumstances)

Are independent schools diverse in terms of pedagogical, religious, and cultural identity? Yes = all 3 forms of diversity are readily apparent within the country; Some = there is some evidence of 2 forms of diversity; No = there is little evidence of diversity.
Some

Accessibility

Does the government provide funding for independent schooling?
Yes

If so, what is the percentage of funding proportionate to students in public (district) schooling?
>90%

Is the funding delivered to schools, or to students?
Schools (student-directed voucher)

Is any funding directed specifically toward underserved or low-income students?
No

If funding is delivered to schools, are they required to maximize access to the school (e.g., through government regulation of fee setting, and/or admission policies)?
Yes

Accountability

Are all schools required to follow a common national or subnational (e.g., provincial) curriculum?
Yes

Are all students assessed via a national or subnational form of assessment (e.g., national exams, diploma exams, or regular assessments for core benchmarks of achievement)?
No

Is certification required for educators?
Yes

Are safety parameters required in all schools (e.g., staff background checks, fire and building code compliance, health and safety protocols)?
Yes

Are all schools regularly inspected?
Yes

Are all schools subject to reporting requirements?
Yes

Are independent schools subject to governance requirements (e.g., that they must be not-for-profit)?
No

Is home-schooling regulated?
n/a

Features of interest

Sweden also runs 5 publicly governed Sami schools, which operate using a Sami curriculum and in the Sami language. There were 168 students in Sami schools in 2016–17. Sweden does not restrict ownership for independent schools, and approval and funding is granted to for-profit and not-for-profit schools alike. Applications for new independent schools must receive approval. They may be rejected, for example, if the teacher-student ratio does not adhere to a prescribed standard. Sweden requires that independent schools be run based on democratic values. Schools may have a denominational orientation but are prohibited from including confessional elements in the standard curriculum (for example, they may not teach creationism in science class). Religious schools may incorporate faith practices such as prayer, and may provide instruction in religious studies.

*Enrolment percentages were obtained from UNESCO's report, "Non-State Actors in Education." In calculating percent enrolment, UNESCO uses the net enrolment rate, which is the total number of students who are primary or secondary school age who are enrolled in that level of education, expressed as a percentage of the total population of that age group. The net enrolment rate serves as a marker of access to education in a given country. Percent enrolments in independent and district education are based on the net enrolment rate and also do not account for sector-switching or lagged enrolment reporting; for these reasons, percentages may not total to exactly 100%. In many cases, the percentages of students who are home-schooled or out of school are not provided.

United Kingdom (England only)



Education is compulsory for ages 5 to 16, and at least part-time education or apprenticeship until age 18. Schools are divided into maintained schools (community public schools or faith schools), academies (similar to charter schools), and fully independent schools. Maintained schools operate publicly but may be religiously associated and managed, mainly by the Church of England or the Roman Catholic Church, but also by Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, and Hindu communities. Maintained schools and academies are fully funded by the government. Independent schools are not funded by the government and are also exempt from complying with most government regulation. The vast majority of English students attend academies and faith schools, rather than community public schools or fully independent schools.

GNI per capita (USD) $49,240

Enrolment Distribution*

School sector	Percentage (%)
District (public) schools	93.5% of all students in England attend maintained or academy schools.
Primary	–
Secondary	–
Independent schools	–
Primary	29.7 (academy/funded charter) 28 (independent funded) 3.25 (independent non-funded)
Secondary	72.3 (academy/funded charter) 18 (independent funded) 3.25 (independent non-funded)

	OECD average	Country average
2022 PISA math score	472	489
2022 PISA reading score	476	494
2022 PISA science score	485	500
Achievement gap for math (lower = better)	93	86

OIDEL Freedom of Education score **83.3** / 100

OIDEL Freedom of Education rank
(of 157 countries, with 1 = highest, and 157 = lowest) **4** / 157

Sources (for full citations, see the References section of this report): UNESCO, "United Kingdom: Non-State Actors in Education," 2021; OIDEL, "Freedom of Education Index 2023: A Quantitative Analysis of Educational Pluralism Worldwide"; OECD, "PISA 2022 Results (Volume I and II)—Country Notes: England."

Availability

Is non-state education protected by legislation?
Yes

Is non-state education protected by mention in the country's constitution?
Yes (1998 Human Rights Act)

Is home-schooling legal?
Yes

Are independent schools diverse in terms of pedagogical, religious, and cultural identity? Yes = all 3 forms of diversity are readily apparent within the country; Some = there is some evidence of 2 forms of diversity; No = there is little evidence of diversity.
Yes

Accessibility

Does the government provide funding for independent schooling?
Yes, if academies or voluntary faith schools; no, if fully independent schools

If so, what is the percentage of funding proportionate to students in public (district) schooling?
100%

Is the funding delivered to schools, or to students?
Schools

Is any funding directed specifically toward underserved or low-income students?
Yes

If funding is delivered to schools, are they required to maximize access to the school (e.g., through government regulation of fee setting, and/or admission policies)?
Yes, if funded; no, if not funded

Accountability

Are all schools required to follow a common national or subnational (e.g., provincial) curriculum?
No

Are all students assessed via a national or subnational form of assessment (e.g., national exams, diploma exams, or regular assessments for core benchmarks of achievement)?
Yes, if funded; no, if not funded

Is certification required for educators?
No

Are safety parameters required in all schools (e.g., staff background checks, fire and building code compliance, health and safety protocols)?
Yes

Are all schools regularly inspected?
Yes

Are all schools subject to reporting requirements?
Yes

Are independent schools subject to governance requirements (e.g., that they must be not-for-profit)?
Yes

Is home-schooling regulated?
No, but required to inform local school authority of plans to home-school

Features of interest

Unregistered schools in England have been identified and assigned a task force since 2012. This task force follows up on suspected illegal schooling.

*Enrolment percentages were obtained from UNESCO's report, "Non-State Actors in Education." In calculating percent enrolment, UNESCO uses the net enrolment rate, which is the total number of students who are primary or secondary school age who are enrolled in that level of education, expressed as a percentage of the total population of that age group. The net enrolment rate serves as a marker of access to education in a given country. Percent enrolments in independent and district education are based on the net enrolment rate and also do not account for sector-switching or lagged enrolment reporting; for these reasons, percentages may not total to exactly 100%. In many cases, the percentages of students who are home-schooled or out of school are not provided.

United States



Each state has its own laws governing free and compulsory education, and most specify for the provision of free, public education between the ages of 5 and 21. District (public) education includes public, magnet, and charter schools.

GNI per capita (USD) $76,770

Enrolment Distribution*

School sector	Percentage (%)
District (public) schools	89.7
Primary	–
Secondary	–
Independent schools	8.3
Primary	–
Secondary	–

	OECD average	Country average
2022 PISA math score	472	465
2022 PISA reading score	476	504
2022 PISA science score	485	499
Achievement gap for math (lower = better)	93	102

OIDEL Freedom of Education score **68.6** / 100

OIDEL Freedom of Education rank
(of 157 countries, with 1 = highest, and 157 = lowest) **19** / 157

Sources (for full citations, see the References section of this report): UNESCO, "United States of America: Non-State Actors in Education," 2021; OIDEL, "Freedom of Education Index 2023: A Quantitative Analysis of Educational Pluralism Worldwide"; OECD, "PISA 2022 Results (Volume I and II)—Country Notes: United States of America"; C. Francies and Z. Perez Jr., "50-State Comparison: Free and Compulsory School Age Requirements," ECS (Education Commission of the States), August 2020.

Availability

Is non-state education protected by legislation?
Yes

Is non-state education protected by mention in the country's constitution?
Yes

Is home-schooling legal?
Yes

Are independent schools diverse in terms of pedagogical, religious, and cultural identity? Yes = all 3 forms of diversity are readily apparent within the country; Some = there is some evidence of 2 forms of diversity; No = there is little evidence of diversity.
Yes

Accessibility

Does the government provide funding for independent schooling?
Varies by state

If so, what is the percentage of funding proportionate to students in public (district) schooling?
30–90%

Is the funding delivered to schools, or to students?
Students (vouchers, ESAs, tax credits)

Is any funding directed specifically toward underserved or low-income students?
Varies by state

If funding is delivered to schools, are they required to maximize access to the school (e.g., through government regulation of fee setting, and/or admission policies)?
No

Accountability

Are all schools required to follow a common national or subnational (e.g., provincial) curriculum?
Varies by state

Are all students assessed via a national or subnational form of assessment (e.g., national exams, diploma exams, or regular assessments for core benchmarks of achievement)?
No

Is certification required for educators?
Varies by state

Are safety parameters required in all schools (e.g., staff background checks, fire and building code compliance, health and safety protocols)?
Yes

Are all schools regularly inspected?
Varies by state

Are all schools subject to reporting requirements?
Varies by state

Are independent schools subject to governance requirements (e.g., that they must be not-for-profit)?
Varies by state

Is home-schooling regulated?
Varies by state

Features of interest

Charter schools are viewed as an extension of the public education system. Though they are funded and owned publicly, they are mananged independently and are often exempt from state requirements, in order to meet the purpose of their charter and in exchange for stronger regulations.

*Enrolment percentages were obtained from UNESCO's report, "Non-State Actors in Education." In calculating percent enrolment, UNESCO uses the net enrolment rate, which is the total number of students who are primary or secondary school age who are enrolled in that level of education, expressed as a percentage of the total population of that age group. The net enrolment rate serves as a marker of access to education in a given country. Percent enrolments in independent and district education are based on the net enrolment rate and also do not account for sector-switching or lagged enrolment reporting; for these reasons, percentages may not total to exactly 100%. In many cases, the percentages of students who are home-schooled or out of school are not provided.

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