

CHAPTER 2

Average Geography Scores for the Nation and by Region

A First Look at the Average NAEP Geography Scores of America's Students

This chapter reports the average geography scale scores of students in grades 4, 8, and 12. Findings are presented for the nation, by region, and for major subgroups of students. (Appendix B contains sample questions and question-level results from the NAEP 1994 geography assessment.) The differences in assessment performance discussed in this chapter are *statistically significant*. Other group and regional differences in geography performance may exist, but they are not statistically significant.

Figure 3 and Table 2 present national and regional estimates of the average scores of fourth, eighth, and twelfth graders on the NAEP 1994 geography assessment. Across the nation, the average scores were 206 for fourth-graders, 260 for eighth-graders, and 285 for twelfth-graders. Among the various regions of the country, differences in NAEP geography scale scores were observed. At the fourth-grade level, students in the Central region outperformed those in the other three regions. At grade 8, students in the Northeast and Central regions had higher average scores than those in the Southeast and West. Among high school seniors, students in the Southeast had lower average scores than did those in each of the other regions.

Figure 3. Average NAEP Geography Scores by Grade and by Region

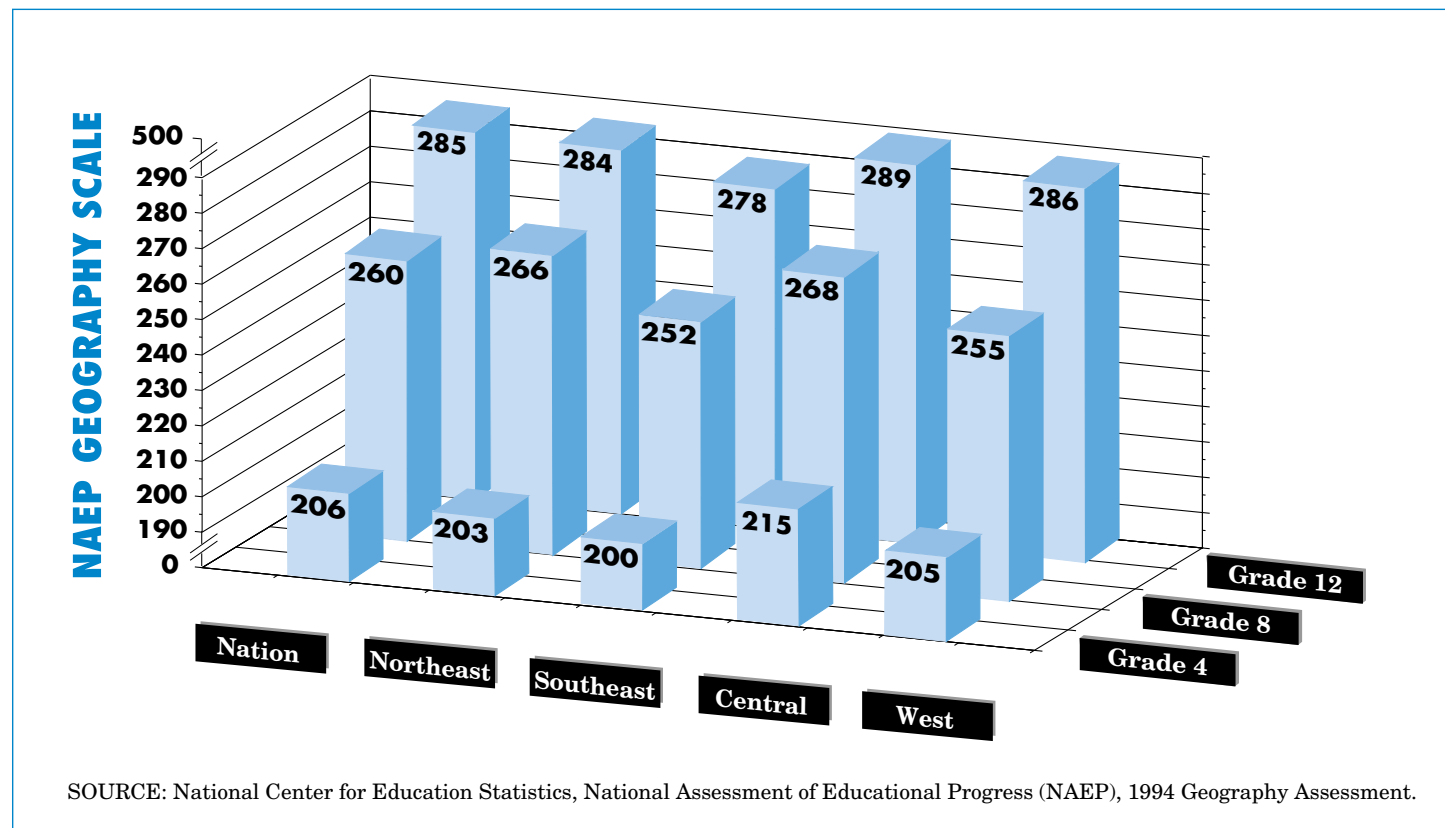




TABLE 2  		
Average Geography Scores by Region		
	Percentage of Students	Average Scale Score
Grade 4		
Nation	100	206
Region		
Northeast	22	203
Southeast	23	200
Central	25	215
West	30	205
Grade 8		
Nation	100	260
Region		
Northeast	20	266
Southeast	25	252
Central	24	268
West	31	255
Grade 12		
Nation	100	285
Region		
Northeast	21	284
Southeast	23	278
Central	28	289
West	29	286

The NAEP Geography scale ranges from 0 to 500.
 The standard errors for the national averages are between 0.7 and 1.2 scale score points. The standard errors for the regional averages range from 1.1 to 3.2 scale score points.
 Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.
 SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1994 Geography Assessment.

Average Geography Scores by Major Reporting Subgroups

Tables 3 through 6 present average geography scale scores for major subgroups of the fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-grade student populations.

Race/Ethnicity. Table 3 presents average geography scores for racial/ethnic subgroups. The 1994 geography assessment, like NAEP assessments in other subject areas, showed substantial variation in the average performance among the different racial/ethnic subgroups. At all three grades, White and Asian students had significantly higher scores, on average, than did Black and Hispanic students. In addition, at all three grades the average scores of Hispanic students were higher than those of Black students. At grade 4, White and Asian students outperformed American Indian

TABLE 3  		
Average Geography Scores by Race/Ethnicity		
	Percentage of Students	Average Scale Score
Grade 4		
Nation	100	206
Race/Ethnicity		
White	69	218
Black	15	168
Hispanic	12	183
Asian	2	218
Pacific Islander	1	205
American Indian	1	193
Grade 8		
Nation	100	260
Race/Ethnicity		
White	69	270
Black	15	229
Hispanic	11	239
Asian	2	271
Pacific Islander	1 !	252 !
American Indian	2 !	248 !
Grade 12		
Nation	100	285
Race/Ethnicity		
White	74	291
Black	12	258
Hispanic	8	268
Asian	3	287
Pacific Islander	1 !	282 !
American Indian	1 !	***

The NAEP Geography scale ranges from 0 to 500.
 The standard errors for the national averages are between 0.7 and 1.2 scale score points. The standard errors for the race/ethnicity averages range from 0.8 to 8.5 scale score points.
 Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding or, in the case of the race/ethnicity variable, because some students categorized themselves as "other".
 ! Interpret with caution any comparisons involving this statistic. The nature of the sample does not allow for accurate determination of the variability of this value.
 *** Sample size insufficient to permit a reliable estimate.
 SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1994 Geography Assessment.

students. In turn, American Indian students exhibited a higher average proficiency than Black students. Finally at grade 4, Pacific Islander students scored significantly higher, on average, than Black and Hispanic students.

For the Pacific Islander and American Indian student samples at grades 8 and 12, the nature of the samples does not allow accurate determination of the standard errors. For this reason, differences among these samples and other racial/ethnic subgroups are not discussed.

Gender. As can be seen in Table 4, the differences in average geography scores between males and females are fairly consistent. At all three grades, males had significantly higher scores, on average, than did females.

TABLE 4		
Average Geography Scores by Gender		
	Percentage of Students	Average Scale Score
Grade 4		
Nation	100	206
Gender		
Male	51	208
Female	49	203
Grade 8		
Nation	100	260
Gender		
Male	51	262
Female	49	258
Grade 12		
Nation	100	285
Gender		
Male	50	288
Female	50	281

The NAEP Geography scale ranges from 0 to 500.
 The standard errors for the national averages are between 0.7 and 1.2 scale score points. The standard errors for the gender averages range from 0.8 to 1.4 scale score points.
 SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1994 Geography Assessment.

Parents' Education Level. As shown in Table 5, the NAEP 1994 geography results reveal a strong positive relationship between levels of parental education and student achievement. It should be noted that at grade 4 — and, to a lesser extent, grade 8 — substantial numbers of students do not know how much education their parents received. Furthermore, the accuracy of student-reported data is open to some question.¹ These caveats notwithstanding, the relationship between parental education and student performance remains striking.

At all grades, groups of students reporting given levels of parental education had significantly higher scores than all groups reporting lower levels of education. So, for example, students who reported that at least one parent had graduated from college displayed higher average scores than those who reported that at least one parent had some education after high school. The latter group in turn outperformed those who reported that at least one parent had graduated from high school. The sole exception to this pattern was at grade 4, where there was no statistically significant difference between students reporting that at least one parent was a college graduate and those reporting that at least one parent had received some education beyond high school.


TABLE 5		
Average Geography Scores by Parents' Education Level		
	Percentage of Students	Average Scale Score
Grade 4		
Nation	100	206
Parents' Education Level		
Graduated College	42	216
Some Education After High School	7	216
Graduated High School	12	197
Did Not Finish High School	4	186
I Don't Know	34	197
Grade 8		
Nation	100	260
Parents' Education Level		
Graduated College	42	272
Some Education After High School	19	265
Graduated High School	22	250
Did Not Finish High School	7	238
I Don't Know	10	234
Grade 12		
Nation	100	285
Parents' Education Level		
Graduated College	44	294
Some Education After High School	25	286
Graduated High School	22	274
Did Not Finish High School	7	263
I Don't Know	3	257

The NAEP Geography scale ranges from 0 to 500.
 The standard errors for the national averages are between 0.7 and 1.2 scale score points. The standard errors for the parents' education level averages range from 0.9 to 3.7 scale score points.
 Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.
 SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1994 Geography Assessment.

Endnotes

1. Looker, E.D., "Accuracy of proxy reports of parental status characteristics," in *Sociology of Education*, 62(4), pp. 257-276, 1989.

Public and Nonpublic Schools. Table 6 shows the NAEP 1994 geography results for students in public and nonpublic schools. As was the case in the NAEP 1994 reading and United States history assessments, students attending nonpublic schools (either Catholic schools or other nonpublic schools) had significantly higher average scores than did students attending public schools.

TABLE 6		
Average Geography Scores by Type of School		
	Percentage of Students	Average Scale Score
Grade 4		
Nation	100	206
Type of School		
Public Schools	90	204
All Nonpublic Schools	10	221
Catholic Schools	6	222
Other Nonpublic Schools	4	220
Grade 8		
Nation	100	260
Type of School		
Public Schools	90	258
All Nonpublic Schools	10	276
Catholic Schools	6	276
Other Nonpublic Schools	4	276
Grade 12		
Nation	100	285
Type of School		
Public Schools	89	283
All Nonpublic Schools	11	294
Catholic Schools	6	291
Other Nonpublic Schools	4	298

The NAEP Geography scale ranges from 0 to 500.
 The standard errors for the national averages are between 0.7 and 1.2 scale score points. The standard errors for the type of school averages range from 0.8 to 3.8 scale score points.
 The percentages of students in the two types of nonpublic schools may not total the percent in all nonpublic schools due to rounding.
 SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1994 Geography Assessment.

As was noted in Chapter 1, the reader is cautioned against using these data to make simplistic inferences about the relative effectiveness of public and nonpublic schools. Average performance differences between the two types of schools are in part related to socioeconomic factors and sociological factors, such as levels of parental education. To get a clearer picture of the differences between public and nonpublic schools, more in-depth analyses must be undertaken.