

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS READING

Key Findings: Canada, England, France, Germany, Italy, Russian Federation, Scotland, United States

All of the countries presented, with the exception of England, had greater percentages of fourth-graders with high index scores on the attitudes toward reading index than the United States.

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) was an assessment of the reading literacy of fourth-graders in 35 countries. To examine fourth-graders' views on reading for enjoyment and appreciating books, PIRLS 2001 created an index of Students' Attitudes Toward Reading (SATR). The index was based on students' agreement with a set of statements related to reading such as, "I enjoy reading" and "I would be happy if someone gave me a book as a present." Responses to each statement were averaged across each student and used to categorize the students into high, medium, or low categories for the index.

The percentage of fourth-graders with high index scores ranged from 42 in the United States to 58 in France (figure 9a). All of the countries reporting data had a greater percentage of fourth-graders in the high category than the United States with the exception of England, whose percentage of fourth-graders was not measurably different from the corresponding percentage in the United States.

Definitions and Methodology

The Students' Attitudes Toward Reading index was based on the following statements: I read only if I have to (reverse coded); I like talking about books with other people; I would be happy if someone gave me a book as a present; I think reading is boring (reverse coded); and I enjoy reading.

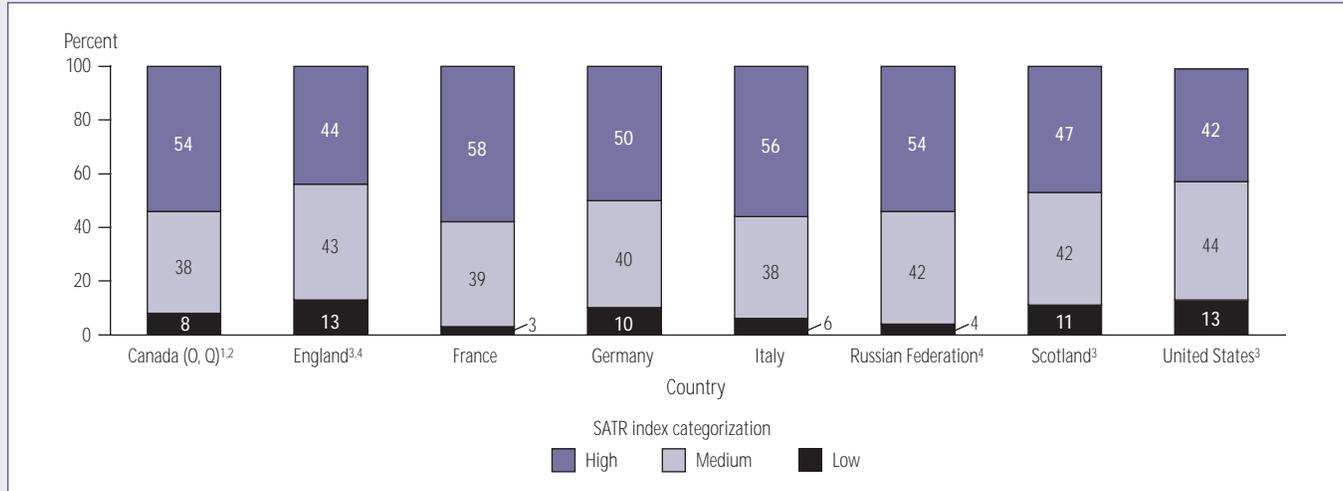
In 2001, 13 percent of fourth-grade students in the United States had a low index score on the SATR. This was a higher percentage than the percent of students with a low index score in Canada, France, Germany, Italy, and the Russian Federation.

In the United States and all other participating countries, a higher percentage of girls than boys had high index scores on the SATR (figure 9b). Fifty-two percent of fourth-grade girls in the United States had high scores on the SATR index, compared to 33 percent of boys. Conversely, girls in the United States were less likely than boys to have low index scores for attitudes towards reading. Eight percent of girls and 19 percent of boys in the United States had low scores on the SATR index (data not shown in figures).

Within all reporting countries, including the United States, fourth-graders who were in the high category of attitudes toward reading had higher reading literacy achievement scores than fourth-graders in either the medium or low reading attitude categories (data not shown in figures). However, it is not possible to infer causality from these findings, since they do not explain whether attitudes cause achievement differences or vice versa or some other factor influences both. Regardless, these findings suggest an association between reading attitudes and achievement in reading within the eight countries presented.

Responses were computed on a 4-point scale: Disagree a lot=1, Disagree a little=2, Agree a little=3, and Agree a lot=4. Responses were categorized as high, medium, or low and averaged for each student. Students in the high category had an average response of greater than 3; students in the medium category had an average response greater than or equal to 2 and less than or equal to 3; and students in the low category had an average below 2.

Figure 9a. Percentage distribution of fourth-grade students' attitudes toward reading based on the index of Students' Attitudes Toward Reading (SATR), by country: 2001



¹National Desired Population (all 9-year-olds with some national exclusions) does not cover all of International Desired Population (all 9-year-olds) because coverage falls below 65 percent.

²Canada is represented by the provinces of Ontario and Quebec (O,Q) only.

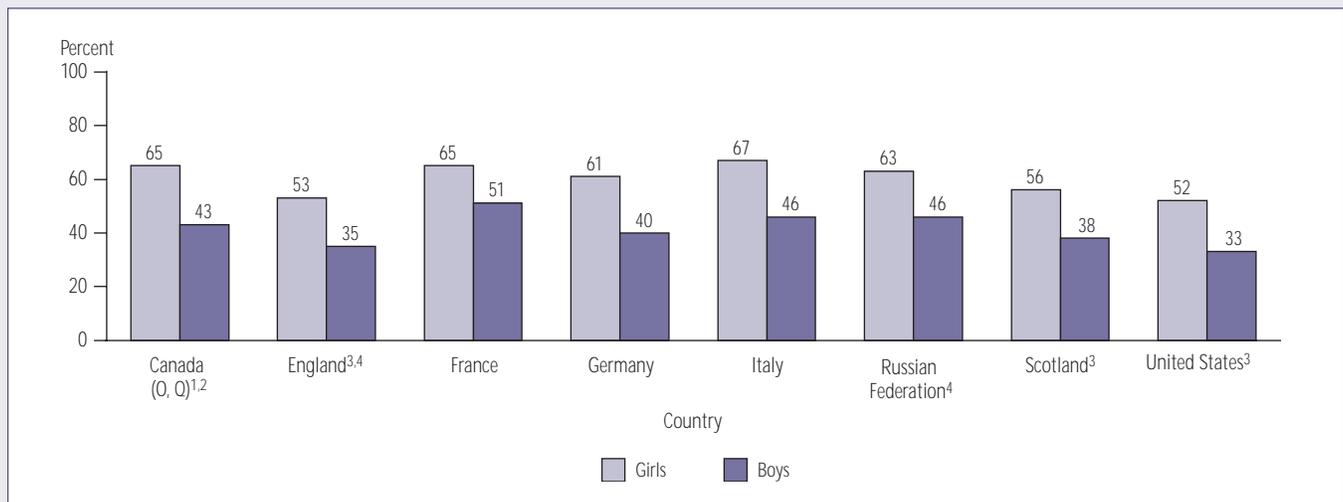
³Met guidelines for sample participation rates after replacement schools were included.

⁴National Defined Population (weighted sample size) covers less than 95 percent of National Desired Population (all 9-year-olds).

NOTE: PIRLS 2001 assessed students in the upper of the two grades with the most 9-year-olds. In the United States and most other countries, this age group corresponds with the fourth grade. However, in England and Scotland, this age group refers to students who have received 5 years of formal schooling. Responses were computed on a 4-point scale: Disagree a lot=1, Disagree a little=2, Agree a little=3, and Agree a lot=4. Responses were categorized as high, medium, or low and averaged for each student. Students in the high category had an average response of above 3; students in the medium category had an average response of 2 through 3; students in the low category had an average below 2. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: Mullis, I.V.S., Martin, M.O., Gonzalez, E.J., and Kennedy, A.M. (2003). *PIRLS 2001 International Report: IEA's Study of Reading Literacy Achievement in Primary Schools in 35 Countries*, Exhibit 8.1. Chestnut Hill, MA: Boston College.

Figure 9b. Percentage of fourth-grade students with high scores on the index of Students' Attitudes Toward Reading (SATR), by sex and country: 2001



¹National Desired Population (all 9-year-olds with some national exclusions) does not cover all of International Desired Population (all 9-year-olds) because coverage falls below 65 percent.

²Canada is represented by the provinces of Ontario and Quebec (O,Q) only.

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⁴National Defined Population (weighted sample size) covers less than 95 percent of National Desired Population (all 9-year-olds).

NOTE: Responses were computed on a 4-point scale: Disagree a lot=1, Disagree a little=2, Agree a little=3, and Agree a lot=4. Responses were categorized as high, medium, or low and averaged for each student. Students in the high category had an average response of above 3; students in the medium category had an average response of 2 through 3; students in the low category had an average below 2. PIRLS 2001 assessed students in the upper of the two grades with the most 9-year-olds. In the United States and most other countries, this corresponds with the fourth grade. However, in England and Scotland, this refers to students who have received 5 years of formal schooling.

SOURCE: Mullis, I.V.S., Martin, M.O., Gonzalez, E.J., and Kennedy, A.M. (2003). *PIRLS 2001 International Report: IEA's Study of Reading Literacy Achievement in Primary Schools in 35 Countries*, Exhibit 8.2. Chestnut Hill, MA: Boston College.