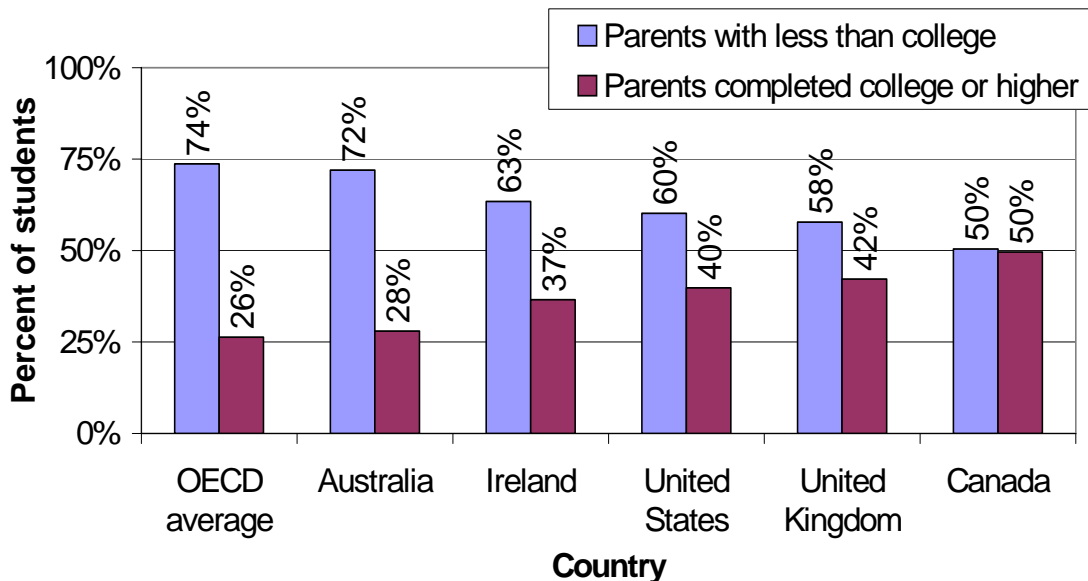


U.S. 15-Year-Olds More Likely to Score Low on Reading Literacy if Parents Did Not Complete College

Results from the 2000 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA)

Percentages of 15-Year-Old Students Scoring At or Below Level 1 on the PISA Combined Reading Literacy Scale, by Parent's Education, 2000



In 2000, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) tested 15-year-olds from 27 member countries as well as four additional countries on reading literacy.



Across OECD countries, almost

three out of four students whose parents did not complete college (74%) scored at the lowest level of reading literacy. Only a quarter (26%) of their classmates whose parents completed college scored at that level. In other words, if a 15-year-old in an OECD country had parents who did not complete college, he or she was almost three times as likely as a classmate whose parents were college graduates to score at the lowest level of reading literacy. Of the English-speaking nations that are members of OECD, Australia came closest to representing these OECD averages.



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For U.S. 15-year-olds, these figures were not quite so extreme. Sixty percent of students with parents who did not graduate from college scored at the lowest reading literacy level, compared with only 40 percent of their counterparts with college-graduate parents. Still, that difference indicates that a U.S. 15-year-old's chances of scoring low on reading literacy increase by half (i.e., the 20 percent gap between the two groups is half of the 40 percent figure for students with better-educated parents). Results for Ireland and the United Kingdom are very similar to those for the U.S.; but, notably, parents' education levels had virtually no association with low reading literacy in Canada.



SOURCE

Characteristics of U.S. 15-Year-Old Low Achievers in an International Context: Findings from PISA 2000. Statistical Analysis Report, National Center for Education Statistics, October 2005. NCES 2006-010. Available online at: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2006/2006010.pdf>.

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