

13 Educational outcomes

More than 513 million adults in the region still lack basic skills in reading, writing and numeracy. Moreover, in South and South-West Asia, one in four children never make it to grade 5 of primary school.

Although school systems have been enrolling many more children they have not always been able to retain those students. In 2005, countries in which a high proportion – more than 90 per cent – of primary students reached grade 5 included Brunei Darussalam; Hong Kong, China; the Republic of Korea; Malaysia; Viet Nam; Tonga; and Turkey. In most other countries in the region, the percentage of students reaching grade 5 was generally between 70 and 90 per cent, except in Bangladesh (65 per cent, 2003); Cambodia (62 per cent, 2005) and the Lao People's Democratic Republic (62 per cent, 2005). Among the subregions, Central Asia had the highest rate with 98.7 per cent.

Some country groups have achieved notable improvements. The percentage of children reaching grade 5 has increased significantly in landlocked developing countries between 2000 and 2005 from 79 to 90 per cent, and in SAARC countries between 1999 and 2004 from 63 to 72 per cent. However the situation in the SAARC countries has fluctuated: the rate rose from 63 per cent in 1999 to 76 per cent in 2002 but then slid back to 72 per cent in 2004. For the ASEAN countries, the rate fell between 2001 and 2005 from 81 to 79 per cent.

According to the 2009 EFA Global Monitoring Report, in the Asia-Pacific region 513 million

people are illiterate – 66 per cent of the world's total. Of the subregions, highest literacy rates – more than 90 per cent – are in Central Asia followed by South-East Asia. However, it is difficult to educate the remaining adults because they are the most vulnerable and most difficult to reach.

In many countries in the region, literacy is a major development issue. Of the 35 countries that had data between 1991 and 2007, nine had literacy rates below 80 per cent. The situation is particularly difficult in South Asia where one in three adults is illiterate – in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Pakistan. The rate is similar in Papua New Guinea. Nevertheless some countries in South Asia have seen significant improvements. Bangladesh, for example, between 1991 and 2007, increased the adult literacy rate from 35.3 to 53.5 per cent. But the greatest improvement was in Nepal which over the same period raised the level from 33 to 56.5 per cent.

It is important, however, to interpret literacy data carefully. Literacy statistics are usually drawn from censuses or household surveys that rely on self-assessments, or third-party reporting, or use educational attainment as a proxy. Generally these overestimate actual literacy levels, including functional literacy. A number of literacy assessment surveys have attempted to measure skills and literacy profiles in a more comprehensive manner, such as the Literacy Assessment Surveys in Cambodia (1999) and in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (2001).

Figure 13.1

Proportion of primary students reaching grade 5, Asia and the Pacific, 1991-2006

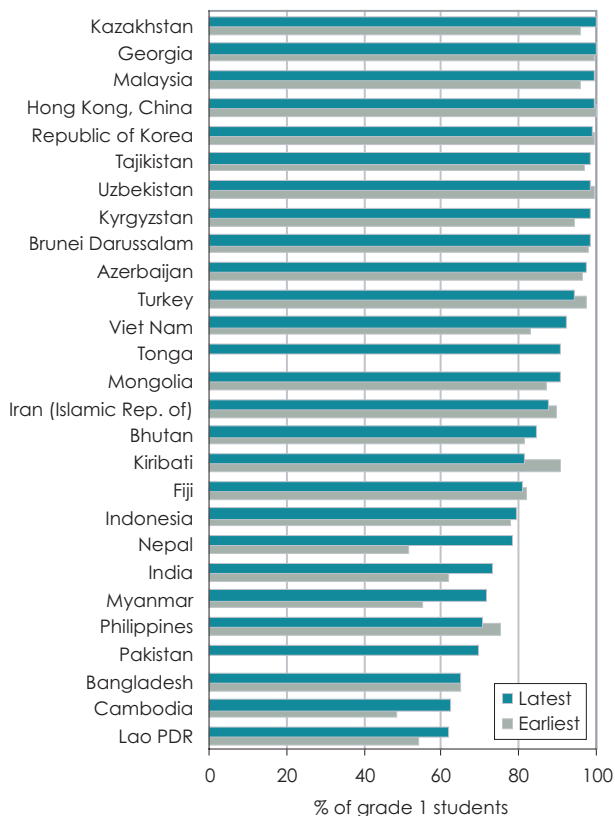
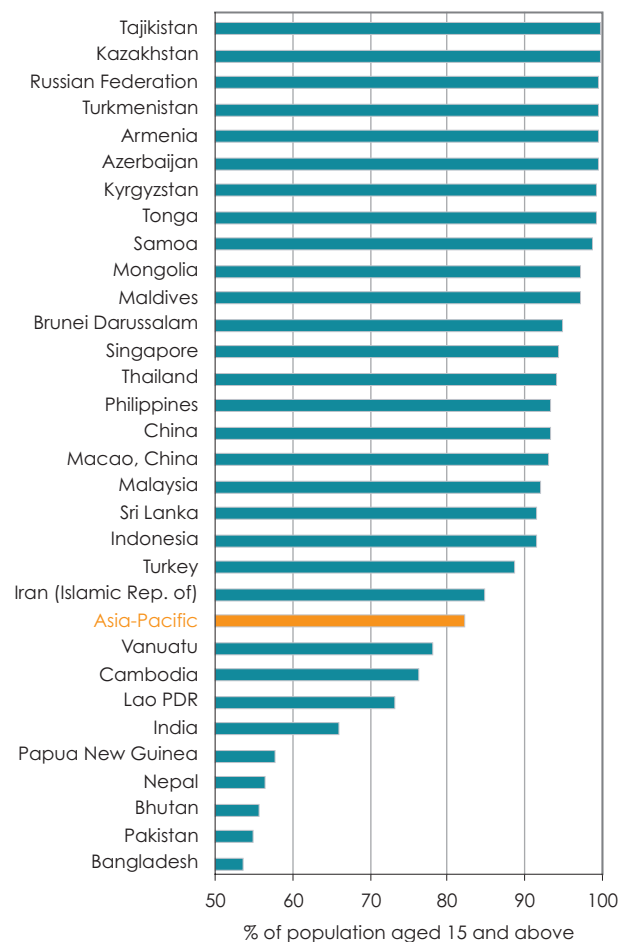


Figure 13.2

Adult literacy rates, Asia and the Pacific, 2007



Children reaching grade 5 (% of grade 1 students)

The percentage of a cohort of pupils enrolled in the first grade of primary-level education in a given school year who are expected to reach grade 5, regardless of repetition.

Aggregates: Averages are calculated using the population aged 5-14 as weight. Missing data have been imputed.

Source: United Nations Millennium Development Goals Indicators (online database, accessed on 13 August 2008).

Adult literacy rate (% of population aged 15 and above)

The proportion of literate persons among adult population, expressed as a percentage of population aged 15 years and above. Literacy is defined as the ability to read and write with understanding a simple statement related to one's daily

life. It involves a continuum of reading and writing skills, and often includes also basic arithmetic skills. **Aggregates:** Aggregate values are calculated by UNESCO Institute for Statistics. **Source:** UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Data Centre (online database, accessed on 1 December 2008).

Gender parity index for adult literacy (ratio)

The number of literate women divided by the number of literate men in the population aged 15 years and above.

Aggregates: Aggregate values are calculated by UNESCO Institute for Statistics. **Source:** UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Data Centre (online database, accessed on 4 September 2008).

13.1 Children reaching grade 5 and literacy

	Children reaching grade 5			Adult literacy rate			Gender parity index for adult literacy						
	% of grade 1 students			% of population aged 15 and above			Ratio						
	Earliest	2001	Latest	Earliest	2005	2007	Earliest	2005	2007				
East and North-East Asia	87.5 (91)					94.1			0.94				
China	86.0	(91)		77.8	(90)	92.6	93.3	0.78	(90)	0.93	0.93		
DPR Korea													
Hong Kong, China	99.8	(91)	99.3	(04)									
Japan	100.0	(91)											
Macao, China				91.3	(01)	92.5	93.0	0.92	(01)	0.93	0.94		
Mongolia	87.2	(99)	88.5	90.9	(03)	97.8	(00)	97.5	97.3	1.00	(00)	1.00	1.01
Republic of Korea	99.3	(91)	99.2	98.8	(06)								
South-East Asia		81.4	79.1	(05)			91.4			0.94			
Brunei Darussalam	98.0	(03)	98.3	(05)	87.8	(91)	94.2	94.9	0.89	(91)	0.96	0.97	
Cambodia	48.6	(99)	63.6	62.2	(06)	67.3	(98)	75.0	76.3	0.72	(98)	0.77	0.79
Indonesia	77.9	(91)	85.9	79.5	(05)	81.5	(90)	90.6	91.4	0.86	(90)	0.92	0.93
Lao PDR	54.3	(99)	62.3	62.0	(05)	60.3	(95)	71.8	73.2	0.65	(95)	0.82	0.83
Malaysia	95.7	(91)	99.4	(04)	82.9	(91)	91.2	91.9	0.87	(91)	0.95	0.95	
Myanmar	55.2	(00)	59.2	71.5	(05)	89.9	(00)			0.92	(00)		
Philippines	75.3	(01)	75.3	70.4	(05)	93.6	(90)	93.2	93.4	0.99	(90)	1.00	1.01
Singapore				89.1	(90)	93.9	94.4	0.87	(90)	0.94	0.94		
Thailand				92.6	(00)	93.7	94.1	0.95	(00)	0.96	0.97		
Timor-Leste													
Viet Nam	82.8	(99)	89.0	92.1	(05)	90.3	(99)			0.93	(99)		
South and South-West Asia		64.6	73.1	(04)			65.2					0.73	
Afghanistan				28.0	(00)					0.29	(00)		
Bangladesh	64.9	(99)		65.1	(03)	35.3	(91)	51.5	53.5	0.58	(91)	0.79	0.82
Bhutan	81.3	(99)		84.4	(05)			52.8	55.6	0.59	(05)	0.59	0.63
India	62.0	(99)	61.4	73.0	(04)	48.2	(91)	64.5	66.0	0.55	(91)	0.69	0.71
Iran (Islamic Rep. of)	89.9	(91)	93.7	87.8	(02)	65.5	(91)	82.4	84.7	0.76	(91)	0.87	0.88
Maldives						96.0	(90)	96.9	97.0	1.00	(90)	1.00	1.00
Nepal	51.3	(91)	77.8	78.5	(05)	33.0	(91)	53.9	56.5	0.35	(91)	0.59	0.62
Pakistan				69.7	(04)	42.7	(98)	49.9	54.9	0.53	(98)	0.55	0.59
Sri Lanka	92.2	(91)				90.7	(01)		91.5	0.97	(01)		0.97
Turkey	97.6	(91)		94.1	(04)	79.2	(90)	88.2		0.84	(04)	0.84	0.84
North and Central Asia	95.7	(99)	97.5	(00)			99.3					0.99	
Armenia						99.4	(01)	99.4	99.5	0.99	(01)	1.00	1.00
Azerbaijan	96.6	(99)	97.4	97.3	(05)	98.8	(99)	99.3	99.4	0.99	(99)	0.99	0.99
Georgia	99.4	(99)	94.1	100.0	(05)								
Kazakhstan	95.9	(00)	94.8	100.0	(06)	99.5	(99)	99.6	99.6	1.00	(99)	1.00	1.00
Kyrgyzstan	94.5	(99)	92.1	98.6	(05)	98.7	(99)	99.2	99.3	0.99	(99)	0.99	1.00
Russian Federation	94.8	(99)	98.7	(00)		99.4	(02)	99.5	99.5	1.00	(02)	1.00	1.00
Tajikistan	96.7	(99)	96.5	98.7	(05)	99.5	(00)	99.6	99.6	1.00	(00)	1.00	1.00
Turkmenistan						98.8	(95)	99.4	99.5	0.99	(95)	1.00	1.00
Uzbekistan	99.5	(99)	97.9	98.6	(05)	96.9	(00)			0.98	(00)		
Pacific	87.1	(91)					92.8					0.99	
Australia	98.8	(91)											
American Samoa													
Cook Islands													
Fiji	82.1	(91)		81.0	(05)								
French Polynesia													
Guam													
Kiribati	90.7	(91)	69.7	81.4	(03)								
Marshall Islands													
Micronesia (F.S.)													
Nauru			25.4										
New Caledonia													
New Zealand													
Niue													
Northern Mariana Is.													
Palau													
Papua New Guinea	62.1	(91)				57.3	(00)	56.9	57.8				0.86
Samoa	92.4	(99)	95.9	(00)		97.9	(91)	98.6	98.7				0.99
Solomon Islands	78.0	(91)											
Tonga			94.6	(00)	90.9	(05)	98.9	(96)	99.2	99.2			1.00
Tuvalu			62.6										
Vanuatu	68.9	(99)				65.5	(94)	76.4	78.1				0.95
Asia and the Pacific							82.3					0.87	
LLDC	79.3	(00)	88.4	89.6	(05)								0.88
LDC	61.2	(99)	58.6	65.2	(03)								0.81
ASEAN			81.4	79.1	(05)								0.94
ECO				81.7	(04)								0.80
SAARC	63.2	(99)	62.0	71.5	(04)								0.70
Central Asia	97.0	(99)	95.8	98.7	(05)								0.99
Pacific island dev. econ.	65.8	(91)											0.90
Low-income													0.82
Middle-income													0.88
High-income	99.7	(91)											0.99
Other world regions													
Africa	61.9	(91)		66.8	(03)								
Europe	97.9	(99)		97.9	(99)								
Latin America & Carib.	73.9	(91)	82.6	82.7	(03)								
North America	92.3	(99)	91.2	95.8	(05)								
Other countries/areas	79.3	(99)		81.5	(04)								0.82
World													