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Opportunities for career guidance in Australian schools

The OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) enables educators, policymakers and the wider community to compare Australian students with each other, as well as with other students around the world.

The most recent PISA study occurred in 2022. PISA measures the extent to which 15-year-old students near the end of compulsory education have acquired the knowledge and skills that they need to meet the challenges of the future.

This Snapshot investigates the career guidance and support available for 15-year-old students in their schools, who has the responsibility for providing this support and whether the type of support available varies according to students' socioeconomic background and the location of their school. It also examines the types of activities students may have engaged in to help them explore their career options.

Career guidance in PISA 2022

In 2022, 99% of students in Australia had principals who reported their school provided career advice to students in Year 10 (compared with 88% across the OECD countries). The large majority of students in Australia (81%, compared to 68% across the OECD countries) noted that this advice was formally scheduled into their time at school, while the remaining 19% reported that this advice was voluntarily sought out by students (compared to 32% across the OECD countries).

These percentages varied when taking into account the geographic location of schools. Eighty-eight per cent of students from regional schools and 80% of students from schools in major cities had career advice formally scheduled into their class time compared with 61% of students from remote schools. Students from advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds had similar percentages of principals who reported that career advice was formally scheduled into school time (81% and 79%, respectively).

For principals who reported providing career advice at their schools, PISA also asked: Who has the main responsibility for career guidance of students in Year 10 at your school? Principals were asked to select one of the following 4 options:

1. All teachers share the responsibility for career guidance.
2. Specific teachers have the responsibility for career guidance.
3. We have one or more specific career guidance counsellors employed at school.
4. We have one or more specific career guidance counsellors who regularly visit the school.

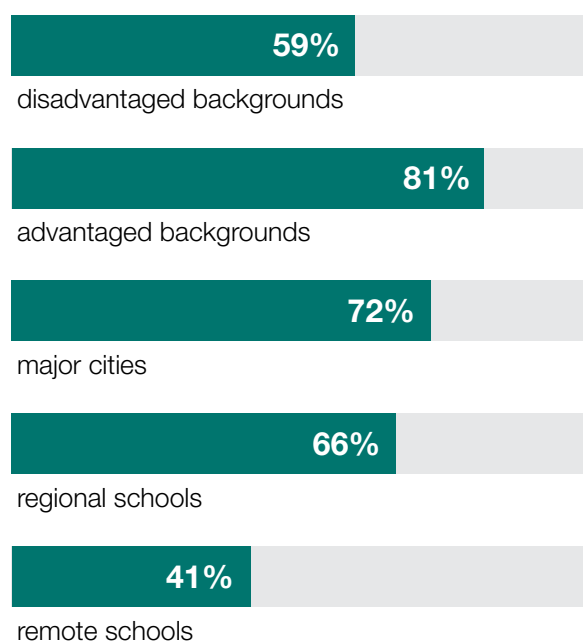
The majority of Australian students (70%) were at schools that employed at least one dedicated career counsellor. Twenty-seven per cent of students were at schools where the provision of career guidance was the responsibility of specific teachers, 2% of students were at schools where it was the responsibility of all teachers, and 1% of students were at schools where one or more career guidance counsellors regularly visited.

Dedicated school-employed career counsellors

A significantly lower percentage of students from disadvantaged backgrounds were at schools that employed a career counsellor compared with students from advantaged backgrounds. Fifty-nine per cent of students from disadvantaged backgrounds were at schools with a career counsellor compared with 81% of students from advantaged backgrounds.

There were also variations according to schools' geographic location. Whereas 72% of students in schools in major cities had a career counsellor employed at their school, this percentage dropped to 66% for students at regional schools and 41% for students at remote schools.

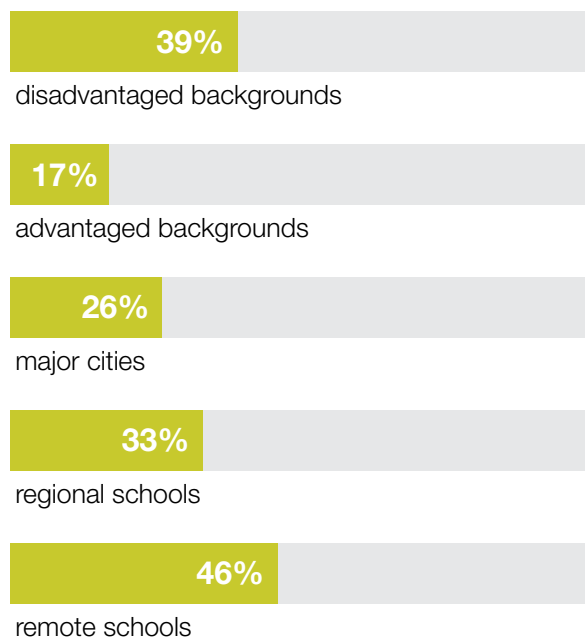
Career counsellors on staff



Teachers responsible for career guidance

Differences between socioeconomic background and geographic location of schools were also apparent when considering principals' reports of whether specific teachers in the school community provided career guidance. A significantly higher percentage of students from disadvantaged backgrounds were at schools where specific teachers were responsible for providing career counselling compared with students from advantaged backgrounds (39% compared with 17%) respectively. Further, while 26% of students at schools in major cities had specific teachers at their school that provided career counselling, this percentage was 33% for students at regional schools and 46% for students at remote schools.

Schools with teachers responsible for career counselling



Student experiences of career guidance

At school

In PISA 2022, students were asked about their experiences of receiving career guidance inside and outside of the school context. Thirty-four per cent said they had spoken to a career advisor at their school once, 29% said they had done this 2 or more times and 37% reported not doing this at all.

Interestingly, 37% of students from schools in major cities had not spoken to a career advisor at their school, compared with 35% of students from regional schools and 28% of students at remote schools. There was only a small difference in the percentages of students from advantaged and disadvantaged schools that had not spoken to a career advisor at their school (36% and 38%, respectively).

Outside school

Alternatively, 16% of students across Australia reported speaking to a career advisor outside of school once, 14% reported doing this 2 or more times and 70% reported not seeing a career advisor outside of school. Again, these percentages varied according to school location. Seventy-one per cent of students from schools in major cities had not spoken to a career advisor outside of their school, compared with 67% of students from regional schools and 51% of students from remote schools. Therefore, almost half of students from remote schools reported speaking to a career advisor outside of school at least once. Sixty-six per cent of disadvantaged students compared with 75% of advantaged students had not spoken to a career advisor outside of school.

What does the data tell us?

As research suggests that school-based career guidance is important for promoting further post-school study, PISA 2022 data can help to highlight important areas for consideration. There were smaller percentages of students from disadvantaged backgrounds (compared with students from advantaged backgrounds) and students in remote schools (compared with students in schools in major cities) who had access to career counsellors employed by their schools. There were also larger percentages of students from disadvantaged backgrounds and students in remote locations whose schools required teachers to provide career guidance to students.

Further reading

PISA 2022. Reporting Australia's results. Volume I Student performance

PISA 2022. Reporting Australia's results. Volume II Student and school characteristics

PISA in Brief 2022. Student performance and equity in education



ASK YOURSELF:

- ▶ Do my students have access to a range of career education resources?
- ▶ Who is responsible for providing career advice to students at my school and would they like more professional development and/or support in their role?

References:

Hooley, T., Matheson, J., & Watts, A.G. (2014). Advancing ambitions: The role of career guidance in supporting social mobility. *The Sutton Trust*.

Tomaszewski, W., Perales, F., & Xiang, N. (2017). School experiences, career guidance, and the university participation of young people from three equity groups in Australia. *National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education*.