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PIRLS 2021 International Database Available Open Access

New Study Examines the Effects of School Closures Using PIRLS 2021 Data

AMSTERDAM — On the day that the PIRLS 2021 International Database is made available to the public, IEA releases a study showing the data in use in a new study that investigates the declines in reading achievement seen in PIRLS 2021.

Recent findings from the release of *PIRLS 2021 International Results in Reading* reveal significant declines in reading achievement in many countries after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, confirming existing national research. The reasons for this are still largely unknown. Therefore, a study has been conducted using the latest data to examine the effects of school closures on student reading achievement using international variation in school closure policies.

Representative trend data from more than 300,000 students in 29 countries was used to examine whether the length of school closures is related to changes in student achievement before and after the outbreak of COVID-19.

Commenting on the latest findings, the Co-Head of IEA's Research and Analysis Unit, Dr. Rolf Strietholt said, "We believe that our findings could offer valuable insights into understanding the educational challenges presented by the pandemic. At the onset of COVID-19 countries were largely working in the dark and limited evidence was available on the benefits and costs of decisions, like whether or not to close schools. New PIRLS data now available open access will support countries with making more informed decisions in the event of future disruptions to education in the case of future pandemics, or other events like teacher strikes, or armed conflicts."

Key Findings From the Study Include:

- A significant and substantial negative effect of school closures was observed on student reading achievement.
- The estimated effect implies that a year of school closures corresponds roughly to the loss of a little more than half a school year of learning.
- This effect is even more pronounced for socioeconomically disadvantaged students and those without home computer access.

The new study is entitled *School Closure Policies and Student Reading Achievement: Evidence Across Countries* by Alec I. Kennedy and Rolf Strietholt. Find the paper containing the full findings [here](#).

Recommended citation:

Kennedy, A. I., & Strietholt, R. (2023, May 31). *School Closure Policies and Student Reading Achievement: Evidence Across Countries*. <https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/93rgz>

About the PIRLS 2021 International Database

On **22 June 2023**, IEA and the TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center release the [PIRLS 2021 International Database](#). This publicly available database contains a rich array of fourth grade achievement and contextual data from the latest PIRLS cycle to support and promote secondary analyses aimed at improving reading literacy education.

The international database comprises student achievement data and student, home, teacher, school, and national context questionnaire data for the 57 countries and 8 benchmarking systems that participated in PIRLS 2021. Across countries, the database includes records from about 400,000 students, 380,000 parents, 20,000 teachers, 13,000 school principals, as well as the National Research Coordinators of each participating country.

Available in SPSS, SAS, and R, the International Database is accompanied by the IEA International Database Analyzer, a downloadable application developed by IEA to facilitate the analyses of PIRLS data as well as data from other large-scale assessments.

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