

Right to Education Index 2018: Australia

What is RTEI?

The Right to Education Index (RTEI) is a global index designed to drive accountability and progress towards realizing the right to education. RTEI works with civil society, research institutions, and governments to collect data on a wide variety of indicators of the right to education to identify progress being made towards the fulfillment of the right to education as well as obstacles to it. RTEI is conducted on a biennial basis to track such progress, identify trends, and support efforts towards the right to education. RTEI 2018 was comprised of 21 countries, growing from 15 countries that participated in 2016.

RTEI 2018 Results

Australia has an overall index score of 78 (with 100 being optimal). With 21 countries involved in RTEI 2018, this score places Australia in front of Brazil, DRC, Ethiopia, Haiti, Nigeria, Pakistan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe, but behind Albania, Canada, Chile, Honduras, Indonesia, Kenya, Palestine, Philippines, South Korea, the UK, and the US.

In addition to the overall index score, Australia received the following ratings on the five main themes that comprise the index: Governance 87, Accessibility 80, Acceptability 61, Adaptability 71, and Insufficient Data on Availability. Full results can be viewed below.

Governance		87%
International Framework		65%
National Law		97%
Plan of Action		100%
Monitoring and Reporting		100%
Financing		77%
Data Availability		85%
Availability		Insufficient Data
Classrooms		46%
Sanitation		Insufficient Data
Teachers		67%
Textbooks		Insufficient Data

Accessibility		80%
Free Education		69%
Discrimination		95%
Participation		77%
Acceptability		61%
Aims of Education		61%
Learning Environment		50%
Learning Outcomes		73%
Adaptability		71%
Children with Disabilities		100%
Children of Minorities		33%
Out-of-school Education		67%
Out-of-school Children		84%

Girls' Education	Children with Disabilities	Indigenous and Minority Populations	Private Education	Teachers	Content of Education
96%	100%	53%	80%	100%	75%

Monitoring and Accountability	National Normative Framework	Opportunity and Indirect Costs	Alignment of Education Aims	Sustainable Development Goal 4
79%	79%	61%	89%	85%

This brief focuses on Availability as the lowest scoring theme, and for which there is insufficient data on, as well as the subthemes of Textbooks (insufficient data), Classrooms (46), and Children of Minorities (33) and the cross-cutting theme of Indigenous and Minority Populations (53).

Issue Area 1: Availability: Textbooks and Classrooms

Within Availability, Australia received very low scores in the areas of textbooks and classrooms. While RTEI 2018 findings indicate sufficient textbooks in Australian classrooms, these indicators were dropped from the calculation as the majority of other countries did not have such data. In the end, only data on minimum standards on the number of textbooks per pupil were included in this subtheme. RTEI 2018 found that Australia has no such minimum standard, thus resulting in a 0 for that subtheme. Likewise, the mandated number of pupils per classroom vary from state to state, but no national or state standards could be found, acting as a driving factor to the low score of 46 in this subtheme. This is true as well for the Teachers subtheme in which RTEI found mostly adequate numbers of trained teachers, but no standard in place to guide the target number of pupils per trained teacher.

Issue Area 2: Children of Minorities

RTEI revealed that the subtheme of Children of Minorities is an area of concern, with a score of 33. While schools are generally present for nomadic or hard-to-reach children, national laws do not provide for language of instruction to be in the child's mother tongue, with 29 percent of students not taught in their mother tongue.

Issue Area 3: Indigenous and Minority Populations

The Indigenous and Minority Populations cross-cutting theme scored 53 — the fourth lowest score in this cross-cutting theme across the 21 countries participating in RTEI 2018. This is in comparison to other OECD countries comparable to Australia, such as Canada scoring 94, the UK scoring 82, and the US scoring 44. RTEI revealed that national laws do not forbid discrimination in education on the grounds of language, nationality, sexual orientation, and gender identity. It also revealed that migrant, refugee, or internally displaced children are required to present documents stating their legal status to enroll in school, that national laws do not provide for language of instruction to be in the child's mother tongue, and that refugee children do not receive education integrated with the general education system.

Data Availability

RTEI 2018 found some areas in which Australia has gaps in available data or no data available at all. In particular, this includes pupil-toilet ratios, primary school completion rates, the percentage of teachers trained to teach children with disabilities, and more clear data on the percentage of national education budget allocated to each level of education (primary, secondary, vocational and technical training, and tertiary).

Recommendations

Moving forward, the Government of Australia should consider the following actions to help ensure that the right to education is upheld for all children in our country:

- Ensure that all states and territories develop clear minimum standards in regards to textbook-pupil ratios, classroom-pupil ratios, and teacher-pupil ratios.
- Strengthen laws around discrimination to address all forms as identified by the UN treaty and convention body.
- Remove barriers to education for indigenous and minority populations, such as ensuring that basic education can be instructed in children's mother tongue language where needed.
- Collect and publish data on pupil-toilet ratios, primary school completion rates, the percentage of teachers trained to teach children with disabilities, and the percentage of national education budget allocated to each level of education (primary, secondary, vocational and technical training, and tertiary).