

# Teenage Part-time Working: how schools can optimise benefits and reduce risks for secondary school students

Part-time work is a form of career development that can be expected to provide students with resources of value to their transitions into work. International research shows that teenagers who work part-time alongside their full-time studies can expect to do better when they entered the labour force as young adults. Studies suggest strongly that part-time work can help students to build technical and soft skills, develop social networks of value and enhance confidence in career planning. However, excessive working alongside full-time secondary education can be expected to impact negatively on academic achievement.

This Policy Brief draws on evidence from PISA, national longitudinal studies and wider research literature to address three main questions:

- What are the likely impacts of part-time work on students' future employment outcomes and why can benefits be expected?;
- What types of students are more likely to work part-time across the OECD?;
- How can schools optimise positive outcomes for young people?

The concept of a young person's capacity to aspire, as articulated by Appadurai (2004<sup>[1]</sup>), underscores the importance of accessing relevant information and resources to critically explore career aspirations and gain insights and experiences that facilitate smooth transitions into the workforce. At the heart of this concept lies the importance of enabling students to engage with actual workplace settings while they are still in the educational system. Engaging in real workplaces provides students with access to information and experiences which are commonly perceived as authentic and trustworthy (Mann, Denis and Percy, 2020<sup>[2]</sup>). Such exposure is important for students as it encourages and enables them to envision potential career trajectories, develop human, social and cultural capitals relevant to their transition into the workforce, grounded in real-world labour market experiences rather than on classroom learning (OECD, 2021<sup>[3]</sup>).

While still in secondary education, students can gain access to workplace experience in three common forms. They can undertake internships or work placements typically mediated by their schools, engage in volunteering within the community or work in paid employment. Through each of these means, students can gain experience in undertaking tasks under the supervision of a professional who is not a teacher within a workplace setting. An examination of available national longitudinal datasets commonly suggests positive correlations between first-hand experiences of the world of work during adolescence through all three of these forms of engagement and enhanced employment prospects, job satisfaction and earnings in young adulthood (Covacevich et al., 2021<sup>[4]</sup>). Schools can thus enhance student career readiness by actively helping young people gain useful work experiences through career guidance programmes which include and/or encourage authentic workplace experiences. This paper focuses on part-time employment undertaken alongside full-time secondary education as a form of career development, reviewing national longitudinal studies, data from the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and wider academic literature to shed light on the importance of active student engagement with the working world, variation in participation levels and approaches which schools can adopt to optimise positive outcomes – and reduce potential risks - for young people (Mann, Denis and Percy, 2020<sup>[2]</sup>; OECD, 2021<sup>[3]</sup>). Two related papers with regard to internships (OECD, 2025<sup>[5]</sup>) and community volunteering (OECD, 2025<sup>[6]</sup>) further this discussion of workplace experiences which are undertaken during secondary education.

## What is part-time working within secondary education?

Part-time working refers to forms of employment where individuals work fewer hours than the standard full-time work week. While there is no universally defined threshold for part-time employment, it typically involves working less than 35-40 hours per week, with the specific number of hours varying based on local labour laws and policies (ILO, 2016<sup>[7]</sup>). For secondary school students, part-time employment is generally undertaken in addition to full-time engagement in education and includes paid work undertaken during school holidays, weekends and before and after the beginning and end of the school day. Countries vary in their regulations pertaining to the minimum age at which young people are legally permitted to engage in paid employment. They vary in the number of hours which they permit students to work and the types of tasks which are permissible. See for example, employment restrictions for young people of school age in [France](#), [Ireland](#), [Sweden](#) and the [United Kingdom](#). In most systems however, students from the age of 15 are allowed to undertake at least some work for pay. Part-time employment varies in character, including both formal employment under contract and informal jobs undertaken for family members, neighbours or other acquaintances.

## How does teenage part-time working relate to later employment outcomes?

Even though teenage part-time working takes place outside of school hours and oversight, it is relevant to educational programmes of career development due to strong links with employment outcomes in adulthood. Over the last generation, many studies have explored longitudinal datasets to ascertain whether statistical relationships can be established between teenage part-time working alongside full-time secondary education and later outcomes linked to progression into and within the working world (Covacevich et al., 2021<sup>[4]</sup>; Mann, Denis and Percy, 2020<sup>[2]</sup>). **Table 1** summarises identified studies and their conclusions published over the last 25 years. These studies span multiple OECD countries, including Australia, Canada, Germany, Korea, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Australian, British and American studies are particularly common. All the studies use control variables, including age, academic attainment, social background, gender and ethnicity to reduce the risk of results being a mask for other characteristics which might influence employment outcomes. Of the 31 studies identified, 27 (87.1%) find some evidence of better ultimate outcomes. Studies primarily look for outcomes related to

whether secondary school students who engage in part-time working alongside their studies go on to experience lower rates of being Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) as adults or other indication of better employment outcomes, in terms of higher rates of employment or lower rates if unemployment. Of 26 studies exploring NEET and related outcomes, 22 (84.6%) find evidence that better outcomes in adulthood could be linked statistically to teenage part-time working. While most studies look at immediate transitions into the labour market after secondary education, others take a longer view and find evidence of better than expected outcomes when respondents are in their mid-twenties or mid-thirties (Covacevich et al., 2021<sup>[4]</sup>; Hotz et al., 2002<sup>[8]</sup>; Light, 1999<sup>[9]</sup>; Mann, Denis and Percy, 2020<sup>[2]</sup>). The majority of studies which look for links between teenage part-time working and higher than expected earnings in adulthood also find significant positive relationships. Of 18 studies of longitudinal datasets that explore impact on earnings, 12 (66.7%) find significant evidence of benefits being related to teenage employment. However, with regard to job satisfaction, studies are unlikely to identify such a relationship with only two of seven studies confirming the relationship. Seven studies look specifically at the experiences of students with different forms of learning and physical disabilities, and all find evidence of a significant relationship between teenage part-time working and some form of better long-term employment outcomes, highlighting the importance of such experience for vulnerable students (Ballo et al., 2022<sup>[10]</sup>). Four of the reviewed studies find no significant associations of relevance, and it is possible that outcomes may vary in relation to engagement with labour markets in specific locations over specific periods of time.

**Table 1. Studies exploring associations between teenage part-time working and outcomes**

Study	Findings
Australia: Covacevich et al. (2021 <sup>[4]</sup> ), Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY), 2933 respondents surveyed at final follow-up between ages 15 (2009) and 25 (2015).	No significant associations between part-time work and likelihood of NEET or earnings.
Australia: Anlezark and Lim (2011 <sup>[11]</sup> ), Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) Y03 (19-year-old) cohort, 13 613 respondents surveyed between ages 15 (2003) and 19 (2007).	Teenagers worked part-time upper secondary school who enter the labour market after completing secondary education are more likely to be in employment two years later than peers who did not work part-time.
Australia: Marks (2006 <sup>[12]</sup> ), Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth, 2933 respondents surveyed at final follow-up between ages 15 (1995) and 21 (2002).	Teenagers who worked part-time at school were more likely to be in full-time employment 4 years after secondary school than non-working peers by 11 percentage points.
Australia: Vickers, Lamb and Hinkley (2003 <sup>[13]</sup> ), Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth, 7885 respondents surveyed between ages 15 (1995) and 18 (1998).	Teenagers who worked part-time during high school were less likely to be NEET after school compared to those without work experience. Students who worked part-time have a 65% higher chance of securing apprenticeships and a 46% higher chance of gaining full-time employment, compared to those who did not work during high school.
Australia: Robinson (1999 <sup>[14]</sup> ), Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth, 3198 respondents surveyed between ages 17 (1992) and 19 (1994).	Teenagers who worked part-time during secondary school are 45% less likely to experience unemployment at age 19 than comparable peers entering the labour force after completion of secondary school and in some instances earn slightly higher wages.
Canada: Covacevich et al. (2021 <sup>[4]</sup> ), Youth In Transition Survey (YITS), 10927 respondents surveyed between ages 15 (2002 and 2009) and 25 to 29-30 (2014).	Teenagers who worked at age 15 are 4 percentage points less likely to be NEET at 25 and earn 5% more at age 30 than comparable peers who did not work part-time at age 15. No significant association found with career satisfaction.
Germany: Covacevich et al. (2021 <sup>[4]</sup> ), The National Educational Panel Study (NEPS), 5589 respondents surveyed between ages 14 to 16 (2010) and 23-25 (2018).	Teenagers aged 14-16 who perceived their part-time work experience to be useful for their future career are 0.4 times less likely to be NEET at ages 23-25 compared to their peers who did not report gaining useful experience. There was a negative association between teenage part-time work and career satisfaction at ages 23-25.
Korea: Covacevich et al. (2021 <sup>[4]</sup> ), Korean Educational Longitudinal Study 2005, 3720 respondents surveyed between ages 14-15 (2006) and 25-26 (2018).	No significant associations between teenagers who worked part-time and likelihood of NEET, earnings in adulthood or career satisfaction if in employment as an adult.

#### 4 | NO. 116 – TEENAGE PART-TIME WORKING: HOW SCHOOLS CAN OPTIMISE BENEFITS AND REDUCE RISKS FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Norway: Ballo et al. (2022 <sup>[10]</sup> ), Administrative data following 1985 birth cohort (N = 50 000), Participants were followed from age 16 (2001) to 29 (2014).	Young people who worked between the ages of 16 and 18 (including many who worked part-time alongside full-time education) are less likely to be NEET at both age 25 and age 29 with impacts stronger for individuals who left school without completing secondary education and who have disabilities.
United Kingdom: Covacevich et al. (2021 <sup>[4]</sup> ), British Cohort Study, 5511 respondents surveyed between ages 16 (1986) and 34 (2004).	Teenage part-time work was associated with a reduced likelihood of experiencing unemployment up to age of 26, 6% higher earnings. No relation with greater career satisfaction in adulthood identified.
United Kingdom: Holford (2020 <sup>[15]</sup> ), UK Next Steps (a continuation of the Longitudinal Survey of Young People in England), 10785 respondents surveyed between ages 14 (2004) and 25 (2015).	Teenagers who worked part-time are not significantly less likely to be NEET at ages 17 or 19. There was also no association between earnings or job satisfaction at age 25 and teenage part-time work.
United Kingdom: Mann, Denis and Percy (2020 <sup>[2]</sup> ), British Cohort Study, 5511 respondents surveyed between ages 16 (1986) and 34 (2004).	Teenage boys who work part-time experience an increase in full-time employment of 5.8 percentage points on average, and 2.9% increase in wages, relative to non-working peers at age 34. Teenage girls who worked part-time experience an increase in full-time employment of 3.4 percentage points on average, and 5.4% increase in wages, relative to non-working peers.
United Kingdom: Crawford et al. (2010 <sup>[16]</sup> ), Longitudinal Study of Young People in England, 7707 respondents surveyed between ages 16/17 (2007) and 18/19 (2009).	Teenage part-time workers at age 16/17 were more likely to transition into employment or further training by age 18/19, reducing NEET risks. There was no significant association found with earnings.
United Kingdom: Crawford et al. (2010 <sup>[16]</sup> ), Labour Force Survey, 60,000 households surveyed for individuals between ages 16/17 and 18/19 between 1993 to 2008.	Teenagers who combine full-time education and work have a lower probability of becoming NEET in the short term compared to those who were in full-time secondary education only by 3 to 6 percentage points. Teenagers with experience of work before the age of 16 were more likely to be in work at ages 18/19.
United Kingdom: Crawford et al. (2010 <sup>[16]</sup> ), British Household Panel Survey, 5500 households surveyed for individuals between ages 16/17 and 18/19 between 1991 to 2008.	Teenagers who combined full-time education and work are 4.1 percentage points less likely to be NEET five years later than peers who were in full-time secondary education only at 16/17. Similarly, 18/19-year-olds who combined full-time education and work are 5.8 percentage points less likely to be NEET five years later.
United Kingdom: Duckworth and Schoon (2012 <sup>[17]</sup> ), British Cohort Study, 9872 respondents surveyed between ages 16 (1986) and 34 (2004).	Teenagers who worked part-time at age 16 are half as likely to be NEET between the ages of 16 and 18 than comparable peers.
United States: Alon, Donahoe and Tienda (2001 <sup>[18]</sup> ), National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979, 1386 young women surveyed between ages 14 and 21 (1979) and annually to 1994.	Young women who worked part-time during secondary education are more likely to be in stable employment between the ages of 25 and 28.
United States: Baum and Ruhm (2014 <sup>[19]</sup> ), National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 (NLSY79), 12 686 respondents surveyed between ages 14 and 21 (1979) and annually to 1994.	High school graduates who worked an average of 20 hours a week during their final year of secondary education earn on average 8.3% at ages 23 to 29 more than comparable peers who did not work in school.
United States: Baum and Ruhm (2014 <sup>[19]</sup> ), National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97), 6,748 respondents surveyed between ages 12 and 16 (1997) and annually to 2010.	High school graduates who worked an average of 20 hours a week during their final year of secondary school earn on average 4.4% more at ages 23 to 29 than comparable peers who did not work in school.
United States: Carter, Austin and Trainor (2011 <sup>[20]</sup> ), National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), 11,272 youth with disabilities. Participants were followed over a 10-year period, from 2001.	Youths with a wide range of disabilities experiencing paid work during their time in secondary school were 2.4 times more likely to be employed 2 years after school than peers, significantly reducing their risk of becoming NEET. And those with prior part-time work transitioned more effectively into competitive, higher-wage employment over time compared to those without early work experience.
United States: Connors et al. (2014 <sup>[21]</sup> ), National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), 11,272 youth with disabilities. Participants were surveyed over a 10-year period, from 2001.	Youth with visual impairments who undertook part-time work during secondary school are less likely to become NEET. Part-time working students were 3.6 times more likely to be in full-time employment at ages 23 to 26, compared to those who did not work for pay as teenagers.



United States: Covacevich et al. (2021 <sup>[41]</sup> ), National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97), 5466 respondents between ages 14-16 (1997) and 25-29 (2011).	Teenagers who did not work part-time at ages 14-16 were 1.28 times more likely to be NEET ages 27-28 than comparable peers who did work part-time ages 14-16 with slightly better outcomes linked to lower levels of working. Teenagers with more consistent and longer part-time work experience also reported 0.08 points higher on a 0-5 job satisfaction scale at ages 27-28 relative to comparable peers with less part-time work experience. Teenagers who worked part-time at ages 14 to 16 also earned about 6% more annually at ages 27 to 28 compared to their peers who did not work part-time.
United States: Covacevich et al. (2021 <sup>[41]</sup> ), Educational Longitudinal study (ELS), 13,250 respondents between ages 15 (2003) and 25 (2012).	No significant associations between teenage part-time work and likelihood of NEET or variation earnings in adulthood.
United States: Joshi, Bouck and Maeda (2012 <sup>[22]</sup> ), National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), 62,513 participants aged 13 to 16 with 'mild intellectual disabilities' surveyed over 9-year period from 2000.	Teenagers with mild intellectual disabilities who participated in paid employment experiences while in school are 5.7 times more likely than comparable peers who did not do so to ever engage in employment after school as a young adult.
United States: Vuolo, Mortimer and Staff (2013 <sup>[23]</sup> ), Youth Development Study, 1 010 respondents surveyed between ages 14-15 (1987-88) and 18-19 (1991-92).	Teenagers who undertook more steady part-time work (over many years, low weekly hourly total) are more likely to have smoother transitions and were less at risk of becoming NEET. A limited association is found between part-time work and job satisfaction / long-term earnings in adulthood.
United States: Mortimer et al. (2008 <sup>[24]</sup> ), Youth Development Study, 1 010 respondents surveyed between ages 14-15 (1987-88) and 30 in 2003.	Teenagers who worked during secondary school are more likely to work in an occupation which they considered to be a long-term career at an earlier age than peers who did not work.
United States: Mortimer (2003 <sup>[25]</sup> ), Youth Development Study, 761 respondents surveyed between ages 14-15 (1988) and 24-25 (1998).	Teenagers who worked up to a maximum of 20 hours per week during secondary school earn on average \$5 629 more annually at age 21, than non-working comparable peers or those who worked more than 20 hours per week. Students who worked moderately during high school are less likely to be NEET (particularly, more likely to pursue higher education degrees compared to non-working peers).
United States: Light (2001 <sup>[26]</sup> ), National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, 2 077 respondents surveyed between ages 15 - 22 (1979) and 27 - 34 (1991) (Males only).	Teenagers who accumulated 2 years of work experience while completing 16 years of school are less likely to be NEET and earn 10% more than their peers without experience of work in secondary school.
United States: Hotz et al. (2002 <sup>[8]</sup> ), National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, 2 570 respondents surveyed between ages 15 - 22 (1979) and 27 - 34 (1991).	No significant association between teenage part-time working and earnings
United States: Light (1999 <sup>[9]</sup> ), National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, 685 respondents surveyed between ages 15 - 22 (1979) and 27 - 34 (1991) (Males only).	Young men who worked 25 hours per week throughout their last 2 years of secondary school earn on average 7.5% more over a 9 year period after leaving school than non-working comparable peers. The wage premium dropped to 3% for teenagers working 10 hours per week, but remains higher than those without any part-time work experience.
United States: Wehman et al. (2014 <sup>[27]</sup> ), National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), 2,900 respondents surveyed between ages 16 (2000-01) and 21 (2005-6).	Teenagers with disabilities who combined part-time employment with full-time secondary education are significantly more likely to be in employment at age 21.

Within longitudinal analyses, effective control groups are created which allow for reasonable comparisons to be undertaken between young people who engaged in part-time work alongside their full-time studies and those who did not. This provides a strong basis for understanding the potential impacts of this form of career development. However, longitudinal datasets are concentrated in a small number of countries and inevitably old, looking at the experiences of young people who completed secondary education often decades ago, raising questions about continuing associations in light of changing labour markets. In the absence of randomised control trials, an alternative means of exploring the potential impacts of part-time work on young people who had left education more recently is to question young adults about their recollections of such employment in light of their current circumstances. An assessment of survey data of 96 886 young adults in 28 lower income countries by Nilsson (2015<sup>[28]</sup>) finds strong correlations between recalled participation in part-time employment whilst in secondary education and lower rates of adult

unemployment, quicker transitions into first employment, but no apparent link with the quality of employment. Two recent OECD studies in Madrid (Spain) and Virginia (United States) have also surveyed young adults aged 19-26, but used statistical controls to strengthen understanding of links between teenage part-time employment and later outcomes. Both found significant relationships between recalled teenage working and lower NEET rates and other indications of more positive transitions (Mann and Diaz, 2024<sup>[29]</sup>; OECD, 2023<sup>[30]</sup>). In the case of Madrid, the survey of 1 015 young adults also found that 96% of the respondents who had worked in a part-time job while in secondary education agreed that the experience had been useful to them “in planning and preparing for [their] working lives after secondary education”. Half stated that the experience had been ‘somewhat useful’ and 44% that it had been ‘very useful’ (Mann and Diaz, 2024<sup>[29]</sup>). The methodology provides opportunity for future analysis which can provide new insights into the potential value of part-time working to students in ways which will supplement limited longitudinal and other forms of data collection.

## Explaining positive impacts on adult employment outcomes

As well as studies of the links between first-hand teenage experiences of work and later employment outcomes, reviews of longitudinal datasets related to a wider range of teenage career development linked to how students *explore* and *think* about their possible futures in work also find considerable evidence of positive outcomes in terms of adult NEET rates, earnings and/or career satisfaction (Covacevich et al., 2021<sup>[4]</sup>). Reviewed collectively, studies point towards teenage career development as providing resources which can build the human, social and cultural capital of students in ways which are relevant to more coherent, productive and informed progression through education and training and ultimate entry into the labour market (Jones, Mann and Morris, 2015<sup>[31]</sup>; OECD, 2024<sup>[32]</sup>). Through experiences in workplaces in particular, students are presented with opportunities to build all three forms of capital in forms (Jones, Mann and Morris, 2015<sup>[31]</sup>).

Human capital relates to the knowledge, skills and experience possessed by individuals and is often codified in the form of qualifications (Jones, Mann and Morris, 2015<sup>[31]</sup>; Mann, Denis and Percy, 2020<sup>[2]</sup>) (OECD, 2024<sup>[32]</sup>). Within career development, human capital formation can relate to technical skills which are valued within specific workplaces, but also to the social and emotional skills and employability skills which enable a worker to be personally effective in their work (Mann, Denis and Percy, 2020<sup>[2]</sup>). Through career development, students can also gain new information influencing their choices of, and investment in, programmes of education and training. Across these domains, workplace experience often provides opportunities for learning which are not available so effectively within the classroom (Stanley and Mann, 2014<sup>[33]</sup>).

Studies show, moreover, that young people themselves see part-time employment themselves as valuable to their own skills development and future search, and preparation, for full-time jobs (Payne and Gollings, 2024<sup>[34]</sup>; Howieson, McKechnie and Semple, 2012<sup>[35]</sup>; Simpson, McKechnie and Hobbs, 2018<sup>[36]</sup>). Drawing on insights gathered from a large-scale, comprehensive Scottish research project which surveyed 10% of Scotland’s entire national school population between the ages of 14 and 18, Howieson et al. (2012<sup>[37]</sup>) finds that it is commonplace for part-time working school students to undertake tasks involving cooperation with colleagues (81% agreeing that they been required to do this within their employment), having direct interactions with customers (76%), using equipment such as cash registers and computers (48%), working with tools and machinery (28%), spending time reading, writing or completing paperwork (24%) and, for a sizeable minority, supervising and training others (22%). The study finds that such responsibilities, and opportunities for learning, increase with age as young people increase their productive capacities (Howieson, McKechnie and Semple, 2012<sup>[35]</sup>). From an Australian perspective, Fullarton (1999<sup>[38]</sup>) finds that teenage part-time workers strongly agreed that their employment had helped them to develop particular skills needed in a job, to follow instructions in work and to get along with other people (Duckworth and Schoon, 2012<sup>[17]</sup>). Other studies, such as (Crawford et al., 2010<sup>[16]</sup>) agree, finding that teenagers who

engaged in part-time work felt that they had developed a range of important soft skills that are valued by employers, such as time management, responsibility, communication, teamwork, and adaptability. In comparative studies undertaken by Connors et al. (2014<sup>[21]</sup>) and Smith and Green (2005<sup>[39]</sup>), teenagers who had worked part-time were much more likely to agree that their jobs had helped them to develop ‘employability skills’ than was the case for peers who had undertaken work placements or internships through their schools, a view endorsed by the large Scottish study of students, employers and educationalists undertaken by Howieson, McKechnie and Semple (2012<sup>[35]</sup>).

Through part-time working young people gain not only the opportunity to gain experience and to develop skills of relevance to future employment, but also the capacity to demonstrate to potential future recruiters that they can successfully work for wages in a workplace, so reducing perceptions of risk in the hiring process (Heller and Kessler, 2024<sup>[40]</sup>). Beyond skill acquisition, workplace experience has an inherent capacity to enhance social capital as it requires young people to engage with supervisors and employers who may well bring with them knowledge of the labour market (and routes into it) that is different from that possessed by parents and teachers. Such knowledge is often seen as particularly trustworthy by young people (Mann, Denis and Percy, 2020<sup>[2]</sup>). In such a way, new workplace contacts can act as bridges to resources and opportunities which were previously unavailable. Students are presented with opportunities to gain useful knowledge in the form of advice and guidance, but also to receive practical help to support transitions through recommendations, references or even post-secondary employment itself (Heller and Kessler, 2024<sup>[40]</sup>; OECD, 2021<sup>[3]</sup>).

A third form of important development relates to understanding of the culture of work, its norms and practices. As Fullarton (1999<sup>[38]</sup>) and Howieson et al. (2012<sup>[35]</sup>) highlight, teenagers believe that they gain stronger understanding of what work is really like, including working conditions, while also fostering independent thinking, self-organisation and decision-making skills through part-time employment. They also commonly feel more confident about themselves, and studies show that they can be expected to gain insight into how recruitment processes work, something that cannot be taken for granted. A recent UK survey of 1 030 young people aged 15 to 21 for example notes that respondents who had had part-time job were more likely to have received advice on improving their CVs, tailoring their applications or describing their skills and qualities than peers without such experience of work (Payne and Gollings, 2024<sup>[34]</sup>). Participation in school-mediated workplace experiences has been linked to the cultivation of the growth mind-set, which suggests that an individual’s abilities and intelligence can evolve over time (Dweck, 2006<sup>[41]</sup>; Mann, Denis and Percy, 2020<sup>[2]</sup>; OECD, 2019<sup>[42]</sup>). This contrasts with the fixed mind-set, which posits that people possess innate abilities and intelligence that stay unchangeable by experience (Dweck, 2006<sup>[41]</sup>). PISA 2018 data reveal that students who participate in part-time work are more likely to believe that intelligence can be developed through effort and experience (OECD, 2019<sup>[42]</sup>). This growth-oriented perspective encourages motivation, self-efficacy, and resilience, while reducing fear of failure. Analysis shows a statistically significant relationship between participation in part-time working and disagreement with the statement ‘Your intelligence is something about you that you can’t change very much’ with teenage workers around 13% more likely to disagree with the statement than their non-working student peers (Mann, Denis and Percy, 2020<sup>[2]</sup>; OECD, 2019<sup>[42]</sup>). As Howieson et al. (2012<sup>[35]</sup>) note in their large survey of Scottish youth, 62% agreed that their part-time job had allowed them to “learn a lot of new things.”

Adolescents often describe their work experiences as transformative, helping them approach challenges with persistence and adaptability. This was particularly noted in Howieson et al. (2012<sup>[37]</sup>), where teenagers stated that their employment experiences had given them a stronger sense of preparedness for adult life and a clearer understanding of their potential. Analysis of PISA data reveals significant relationships between greater levels of personal confidence and part-time working, even after controls are used for student gender, economic, social and cultural status, migrant background and academic proficiency. PISA 2018 shows that compared to peers who had not worked, teenagers with experience of working are significantly more likely to agree with the following statements (Mann, Denis and Percy, 2020<sup>[2]</sup>):

- I can deal with unusual situations
- I can change my behaviour to meet the needs of new situations
- I can adapt to different situations even when under stress or pressure
- I can adapt easily to a new culture
- When encountering difficult situations with other people, I can think of a way to resolve the situation
- I am capable of overcoming my difficulties in interacting with people from other cultures

As Howieson et al. (2012<sup>[37]</sup>) notes, these social and emotional benefits to students are likely to be more pronounced as individuals take on meaningful responsibilities that align with developmental capacities. Part-time working experiences have also been shown to encourage reflection and increase student thoughtfulness in career planning and exploration (Creed and Patton, 2003<sup>[43]</sup>). Howieson et al. (2012<sup>[37]</sup>) find a correlation between part-time employment and reduced career uncertainty among Scottish adolescents, indicating that those involved in part-time employment were more likely to identify and articulate career aspirations. The insight is also apparent in analysis of PISA data which shows that students with experience of part-time working are also on average less likely to be uncertain about their career plans even after controlling for other characteristics (Mann, Denis and Percy, 2020<sup>[2]</sup>). In these ways, student understanding of the culture of work and their confidence in approaching it can be seen to grow, building cultural capital of ultimate value in planning for, and navigating, future transitions into employment (OECD, 2024<sup>[32]</sup>).

While part-time working is strongly connected with improved career development, it does include important structural limits on the capacity of students to build skills and experience and develop social networks and insights related to the world of work. Part-time working opportunities tend to be more undertaken within narrower fields of employment than is the case with school-mediated work placements/internships or volunteering opportunities (Howieson, McKechnie and Semple, 2012<sup>[35]</sup>). In the study by Fullarton (1999<sup>[38]</sup>), students reported that school-mediated work experience placements (or internships) were of much greater value to them in deciding on the career they would like after school than part-time employment. Moreover, as illustrated below, PISA shows that many students gain experience of part-time work from people who they know already, working on family enterprises or for neighbours on an informal basis. Consequently, it can be expected that opportunities for career development will vary in relation to the character of employment.



## How common is part-time working?

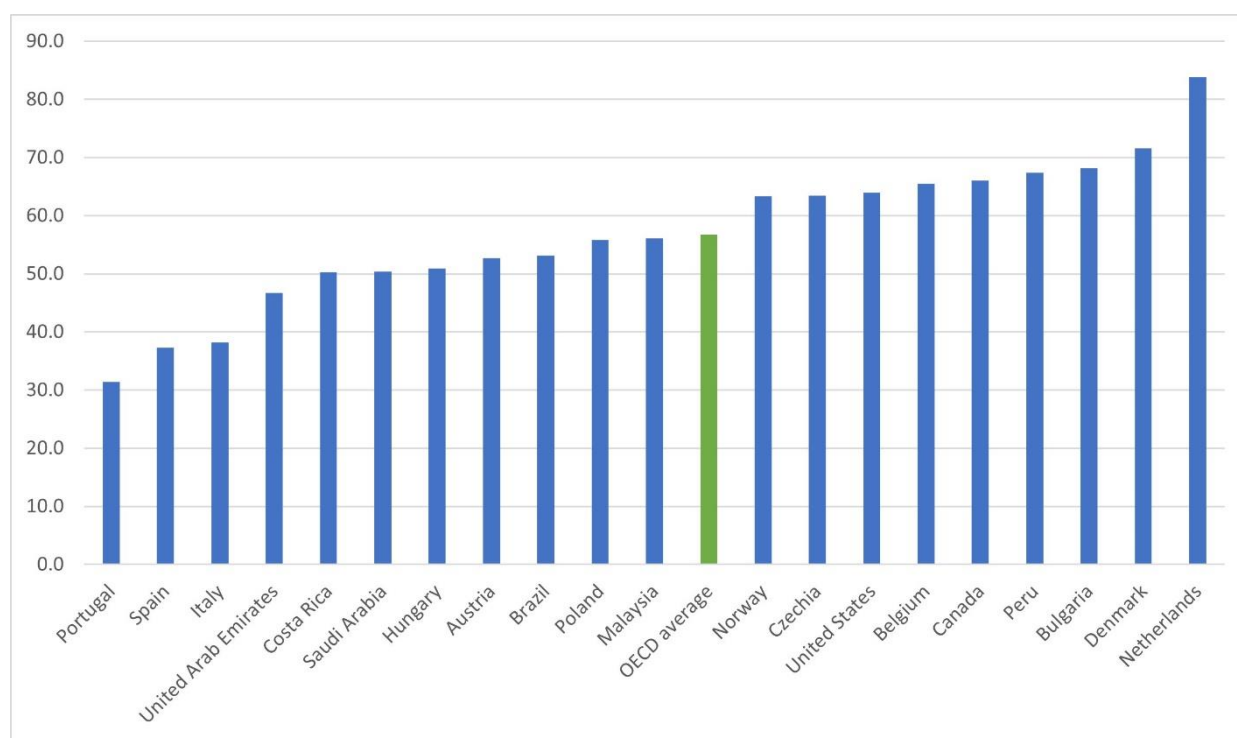
The OECD's PISA 2022 surveyed 15-year-olds from 20 participating OECD and non-OECD countries on part-time working. PISA's Financial Literacy Questionnaire distinguishes three forms of part-time work:

1. Employment undertaken outside of school hours, including during holidays or summer vacation.
2. Occasional, informal employment (such as babysitting or gardening).
3. Employment at a family enterprise.

The questionnaire did not include any questions pertaining to the number of distinct jobs undertaken, the duration of employment, or the type of job. However, as it did ask about the frequency of employment. There is considerable variation in the extent of student part-time working between countries. On average, 57% of 15-year-old students across participating countries and economies responded that they work outside of school in any of the three forms of part-time work while still in full-time education (**Figure 1**). The likelihood of students undertaking any form of part-time work is strongly linked to the country in which they live. Participation rates ranged from 84% in the Netherlands to 31% in Portugal.

**Figure 1. Percentage of students who engage in any form of part-time work**

Students among PISA 2022 participating countries who work outside school hours (e.g., a holiday job), working in a family business or occasional informal jobs (e.g., baby-sitting or gardening)



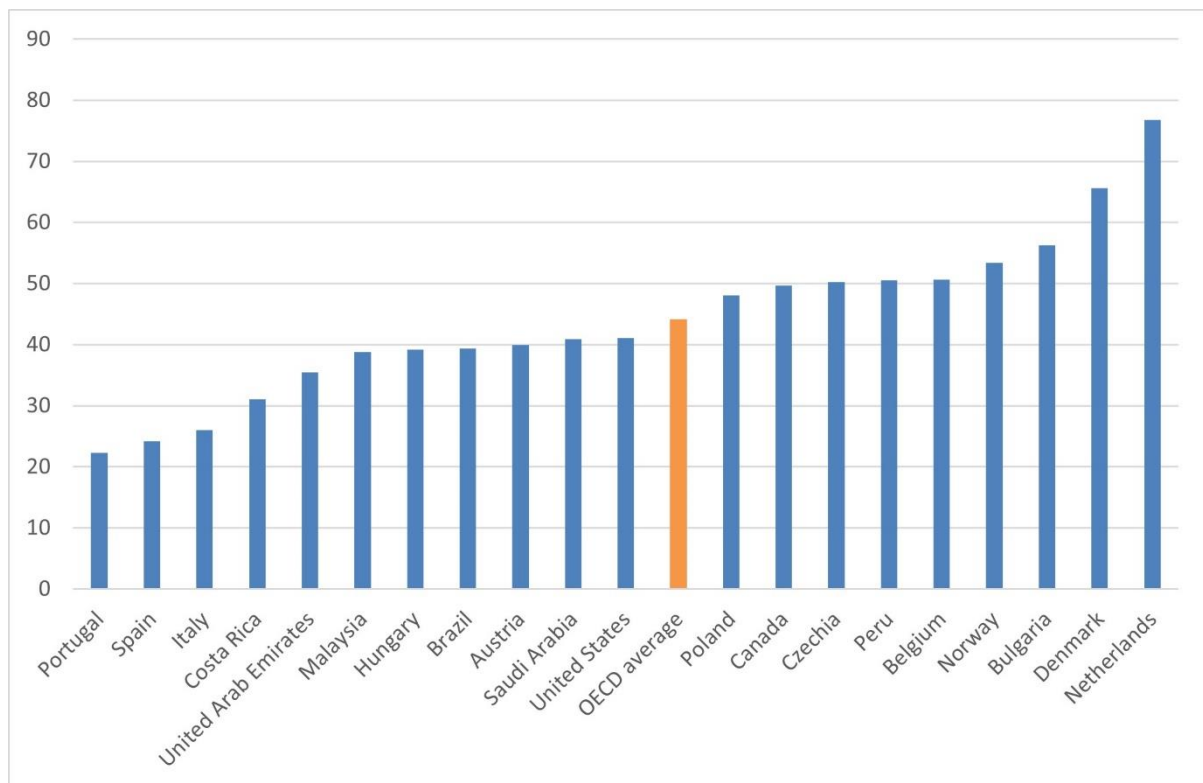
Source: OECD PISA 2022 Database

## 10 | NO. 116 – TEENAGE PART-TIME WORKING: HOW SCHOOLS CAN OPTIMISE BENEFITS AND REDUCE RISKS FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

PISA 2022 shows that the most common type of employment that secondary school students undertake is 'part-time work outside of school hours, such as a holiday job', which can be understood as a more formal form of career development with greater likelihood of students working under the supervision of people who are not family members or neighbours in more formal workplace settings. On average, about 44% of students across the OECD agreed that they earn money this way with again substantial variation in the participation levels of students in different countries (**Figure 2**).

**Figure 2. Percentage of students doing part-time work outside school hours**

All students across PISA 2022 participating countries who agree that they earn money outside school hours (e.g., a holiday job or part-time work)

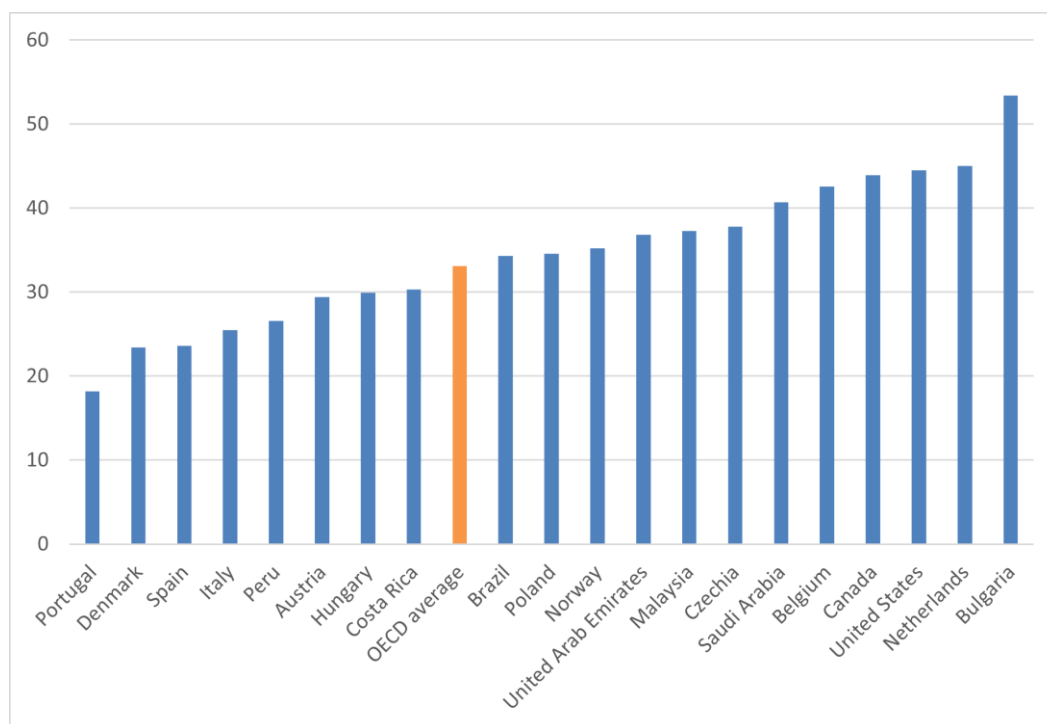


Source: OECD PISA 2022 Database

The second most commonly reported type of part-time work in PISA is through occasional informal jobs. On average across the OECD, 33% of students reported earning money through employment such as babysitting or gardening (**Figure 3**).

**Figure 3. Percentage of students earning money from occasional informal jobs**

All students across PISA 2022 participating countries who agreed that they earn money from occasional informal jobs (e.g., baby-sitting or gardening).



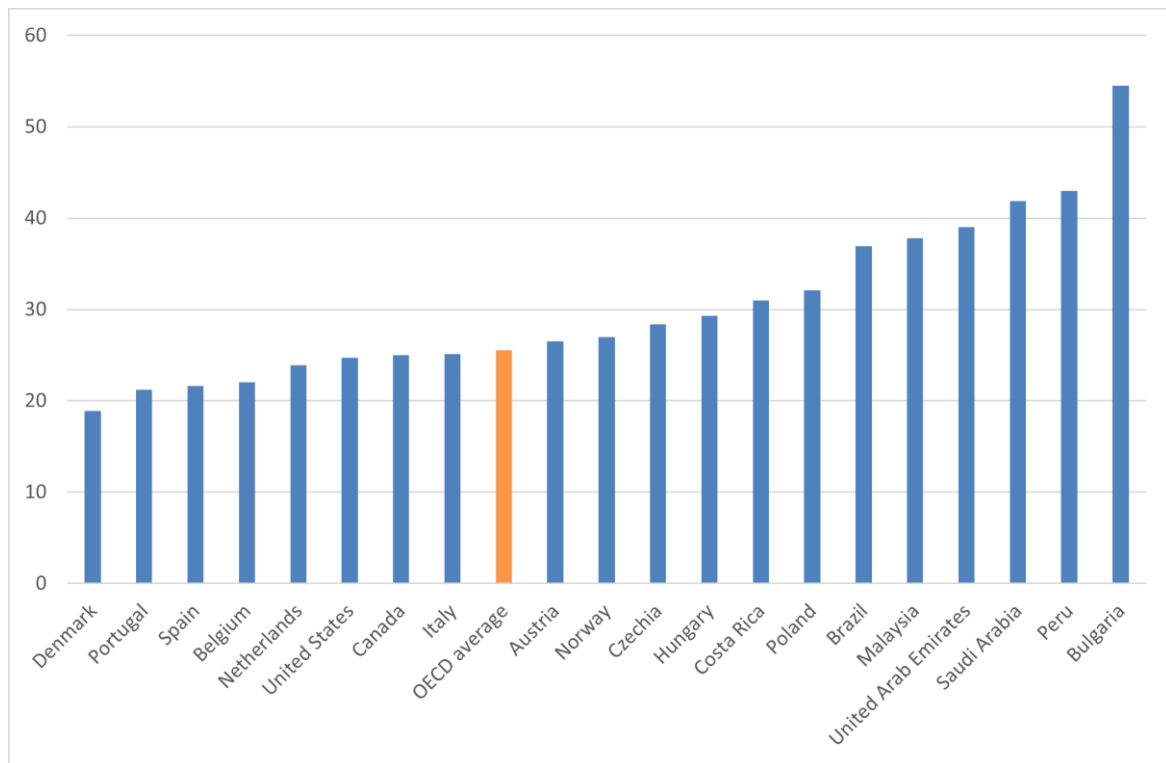
Source: OECD PISA 2022 Database

## 12 | NO. 116 – TEENAGE PART-TIME WORKING: HOW SCHOOLS CAN OPTIMISE BENEFITS AND REDUCE RISKS FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

The least reported type of part-time work among students was working in family business. On average across the OECD, 26% of students agreed that they earn money from working in a family business (Figure 4).

**Figure 4. Percentage of students reporting that they work part-time in a family business setting**

All students across PISA 2022 participating countries who agreed that they earn money from working in a family business.

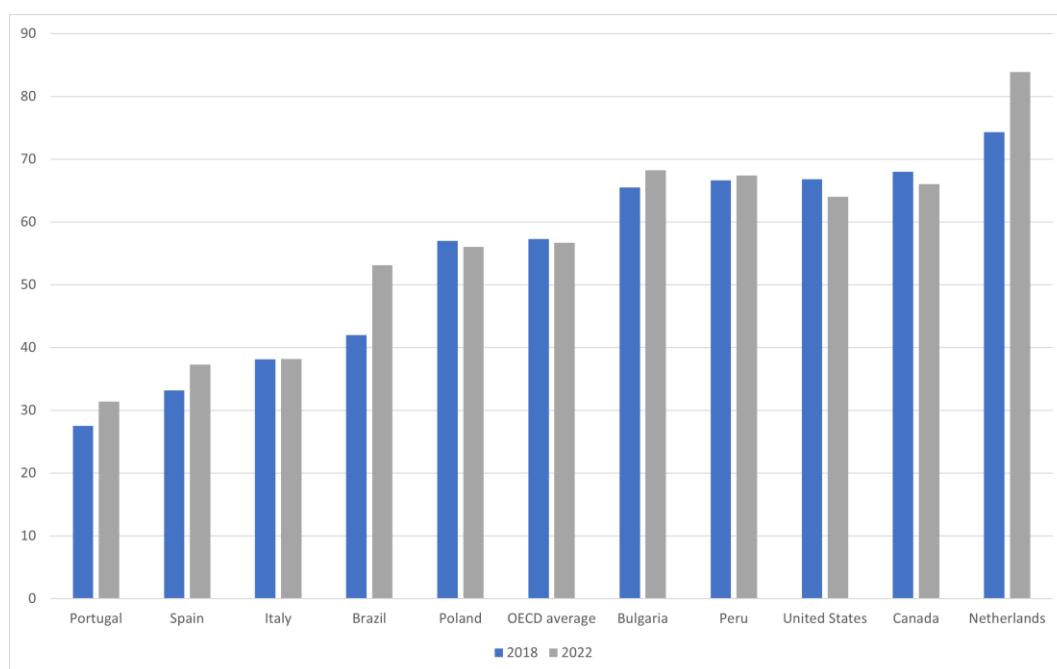


Source: OECD PISA 2022 Database

For 10 countries, data on part-time working are available from both PISA 2018 and PISA 2022 surveys (**Figure 5**). Across the countries examined, levels of participation in part-time working tended to remain steady or increase over a four-year period which included the COVID-19 pandemic. The average for seven OECD countries over the period shows a marginal decrease of 0.6 percentage points, indicating a stable trend overall. In spite of some national studies which see a steady reduction of teenage part-time working in light of changes in technology and working cultures (Conlon, Patrignani and Mantovani, 2015<sup>[44]</sup>), engagement of teenagers in part-time work around the age of 15 appears to have remained steady in many countries.

**Figure 5. Student Part-Time Working between PISA2018 and PISA2022**

Percentage of students agreeing that they earn money through some form of part-time working, including outside school hours (e.g. a holiday job), occasional informal jobs (e.g. baby-sitting or gardening) or family business.



Note: A total of 10 countries participated in the financial literacy questionnaire in both PISA2018 and PISA2022.

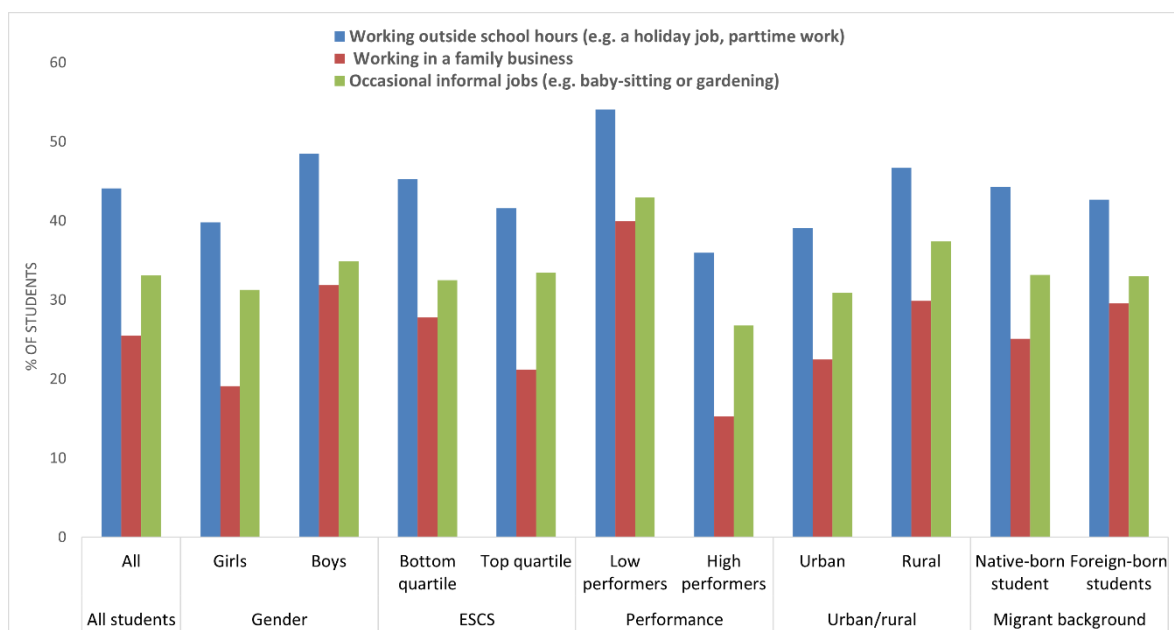
Source: PISA 2018 Database, PISA 2022 Database



## Who undertakes part-time work?

Overall, PISA 2022 data show that students who report higher levels of part-time employment in different settings are more likely to be boys, students from rural communities and who demonstrate lower levels of academic performance in mathematics, reading and science as shown by the PISA academic assessments (**Figure 6**).

**Figure 6. Characteristics of student part-time workers: insights from PISA 2022**



Note: The Economic, Social, and Cultural Status (ESCS) index, as defined by PISA, classifies students based on their socioeconomic background, with students in the top quartile of ESCS within their country or economy categorised as "advantaged" and those in the bottom quartile as "disadvantaged." Performance is measured using PISA scores in reading, mathematics, and science. High Performers are students who achieve at least Level 4 proficiency in one core subject while maintaining at least Level 2 proficiency in the other two, whereas Low Performers are those scoring below Level 2 proficiency in any subject. Geographical classifications include Urban areas, defined as having populations of 100,000 or more, and rural areas, defined as having populations of up to 3,000. Student origin/migrant background is categorised as Native-Born, referring to students who complete the PISA test in their country of birth, and Foreign-Born, referring to students born outside the country where they complete the test. See Volume I of the PISA 2022 Results for more information.

Source: OECD PISA 2022 Database

## The relationship between part-time working and education achievement

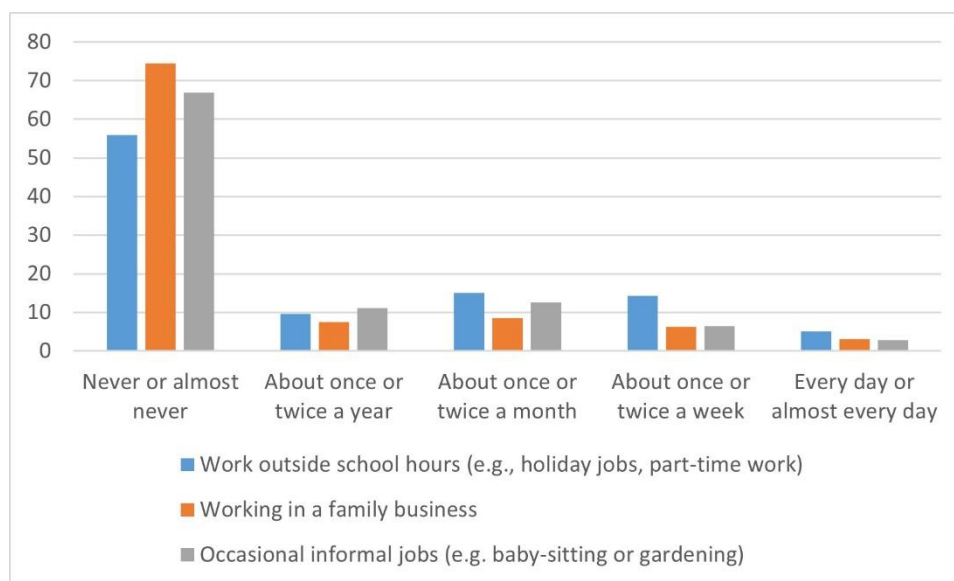
While studies point consistently towards teenage part-time working being linked with better employment outcomes in adulthood, they also raise concerns that such employment may shape progression into the workforce through its possible influence on educational achievement. The longitudinal studies cited above typically take account of the highest levels of qualifications that students achieve but explore less often whether part-time work can be seen to shape the educational success with which young people enter the labour market. Studies that do explore such relationships suggest that, depending on the intensity with which it is undertaken, working part-time can be a modest positive, significant negative or negligible factor in student educational achievement. While some studies find educational benefits linked to working in terms of factors such as better time management, greater senses of personal responsibility, and improved contextualisation of learning (Howieson et al., 2012<sup>[37]</sup>; Mortimer, 2005<sup>[45]</sup>; Nilsson, 2015<sup>[28]</sup>), in general low intensity working (typically defined as working less than 10-20 hours a week) is seen as having minimal impact on qualification achievement within secondary education (McCoy and Smyth, 2007<sup>[46]</sup>; Payne, 2003<sup>[47]</sup>; Ruhm, 1995<sup>[48]</sup>; Vuolo, Mortimer and Staff, 2013<sup>[23]</sup>; Van Santen, Fillisch and Tully, 2015<sup>[49]</sup>).

Consequently, if part-time working is not too intense, long-term employment benefits are not typically outweighed by potential negative impacts on educational engagement which may stem from reduced time availability for study outside of school or reduced academic motivation (Holford, 2020<sup>[15]</sup>). However, working longer hours is commonly found to be associated with poorer educational outcomes (including higher levels of drop out from secondary education) than would otherwise be expected (Holford, 2020<sup>[15]</sup>; McCoy and Smyth, 2007<sup>[46]</sup>; Payne, 2003<sup>[47]</sup>; Vuolo, Mortimer and Staff, 2013<sup>[23]</sup>; Vickers, Lamb and Hinkley, 2003<sup>[13]</sup>). For students working longer hours there is a trade-off between long-term occupational gains from teenage workplace experience and losses from reduced academic success (Holford, 2020<sup>[15]</sup>; Mann, Denis and Percy, 2020<sup>[2]</sup>). In one rare study of the British Cohort Study, Mann, Denis and Percy (2020<sup>[2]</sup>) review employment outcomes in light of part-time working up to the age of 16 taking into account academic assessments at 5, 10 and 16. If controls for age 16 are removed, positive associations between teenage part-time working and higher rates of full-time employment and higher wages at 26 are still found, but the size of benefits are reduced, illustrating how trade-offs may effect some students. Reductions in impact size were less pronounced for students who did not complete tertiary education.

Studies suggest steady patterns of employment of less than 10-20 hours per week are mostly beneficial for most students. However, for students seeking direct entry to labour force after the leaving secondary education, more intense part-time working can be expected to smooth transitions into adult employment. In a longitudinal study, Smith and Green (2005<sup>[39]</sup>) find that 44% of Australian youth who worked in a part-time job immediately before leaving secondary school continued in their job for at least 18 months. Of these, half increased their hours after leaving schools and one-fifth became full-time workers. In such circumstances, young people can find themselves easing into the adult labour market, but perhaps at the expense of academic achievements which will underpin easier further progression within it.

PISA 2022 asks students in participating countries how frequently they worked part-time. **Figure 7** sets out results from participating OECD countries and finds that on average 14% work about once or twice a week and 5% every day or almost every day in more formal employment ('working outside school hours'). Consequently, between one in five students and one in twenty students across participating OECD countries may be working at an intensity which raises concerns over their capacity to engage fully in education.

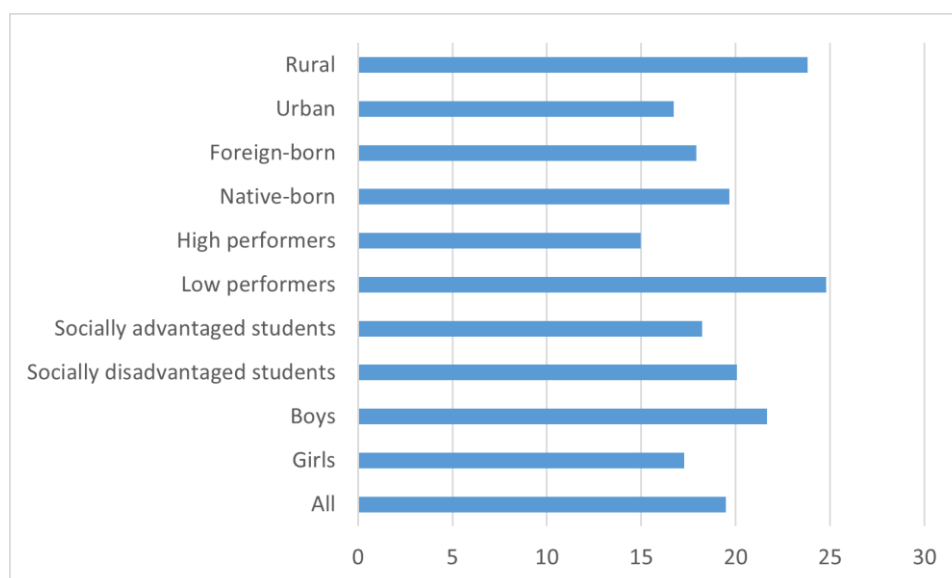
**Figure 7. Frequency of part-time working by mode of employment**



Source: OECD PISA 2022 database

Looking at the characteristics of students from OECD countries who may be at risk of working hours that impact negatively on their educational achievement, on average it is students who live in rural communities and lower performers on the PISA academic assessments who are more likely to engage in such intense working. However, across all groups many students work on a weekly or daily basis. While the achievement of some students may well be reduced by their engagement in part-work (Mann, Denis and Percy, 2020<sup>[2]</sup>), individuals may also feel that their investment in work, if providing opportunities for human, social and cultural capital development relevant to their long-term aspirations, provides an attractive investment for their time outside of school. For some students, economic pressures and a desire or need to contribute to household income are linked to patterns of engagement in part-time work and plans for life after the completion of secondary education. However, as **Figure 8** illustrates, PISA data suggest that, on average, while students from the most socially disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to work part-time than their peers from the most socially advantaged quartile of respondents, this gap is modest at two percentage points. PISA 2022 also asks students from all participating countries about how typical it is for them to work for pay after school. On average across OECD countries, 12.6% of students work three times or more a week after their secondary school has finished with a stronger contrast between low performing students (19.2% who reported working at such intensity) and high performing students (6.4%). Again, students from the lowest quartile by economic, social and cultural status are more likely to work than their most advantaged peers. Although notable, the difference is more modest than that linked to academic performance (14.2% to 10.3%).

**Figure 8. Percentage of students working more intensely (once or twice a week or every or nearly every day) outside school hours (e.g., holiday jobs, part-time work)**



Source: OECD PISA 2022 database

## The role of schools in supporting beneficial student engagement in part-time working

While on average students who combine full-time education with part-time work go on to enjoy better employment outcomes than would otherwise be expected, the impact of such working on career development is complex. Notably, excessive hours are likely to be damaging to academic achievement, potentially undermining long-term gains in the labour market. Students will vary individually with regard to their aspirations and capacities to progress within education and for some longer hours will be beneficial in enabling smoother immediate transitions into full-time employment after secondary education, for others longer hours may put progression plans at risk. Students will also vary in the extent to which the forms of part-time employment in which they engage enables the formation of human, social and cultural capital of value to their career development and progression. Consequently, while it is a good thing in general for schools to encourage and enable part-time working, individual students' circumstances will vary in its likely impacts.

### ***Career guidance and part-time working***

Analysis of PISA data shows a very strong relationship between part-time student employment and their participation in career development activities such as internships, workplace visits, job shadowing, job fairs and speaking with career advisors (Mann, Denis and Percy, 2020<sup>[2]</sup>). Such activities may introduce students to potential employers looking for part-time employees (Smith and Green, 2005<sup>[39]</sup>). They may also give students confidence to pursue part-time employment (Mann, Denis and Percy, 2020<sup>[2]</sup>). Studies suggest that young people themselves would welcome greater support from their schools in accessing part-time employment: one-third of 1 744 young adults aged 19 to 24 surveyed in the United Kingdom in 2017 agreed that they wished that they had received more support to have done so while they were in secondary education (Mann et al., 2017<sup>[50]</sup>). As well as by giving students first opportunities to experience workplaces and to develop technical and/or employability skills, schools can also help them develop and practice skills of value in the search for part-time employment. A survey of 1 018 young adults, aged 19 to

26, in Madrid (Spain) found that among the most useful school-delivered career development activities identified by young adults were how to create a strong CV or application and how to perform well in interview. These forms of career development also ranked very highly when respondents were asked which forms of support they wished they had received more of while in secondary education (Mann and Diaz, 2024<sup>[29]</sup>). The Career Education Framework adopted by the Canadian province of New Brunswick stresses that by the final years of secondary education, students should have learned both how ‘to find part-time or summer work’ and ‘how working part-time or in the summer can help me to understand career pathways and my plans for the future’. In addition, students are expected to draw on experiences of part-time work to reflect on understanding of work/life balances (Department of Early Childhood Development and Education, 2024<sup>[51]</sup>). Guidance counsellors can also help students to think strategically about how they engage in part-time work. For instance, German teenagers who perceived their part-time work as career-relevant were 0.4 times less likely to be NEET later in life than peers (Covacevich et al., 2021<sup>[4]</sup>). Counsellors and other school staff can act as contact points for local employers, inviting details of job vacancies which can be displayed on school noticeboards and intranet sites. Alumni networks can also provide support by offering mentoring programmes, career talks, and networking that serve to connect students to part-time employment opportunities (Rodríguez and Romero García, 2020<sup>[52]</sup>). Importantly too, schools can help students to make sense of how to make full use of the experience they gain in part-time work, presenting it within applications to tertiary institutions or potential post-secondary employers as evidence of capabilities and drawing links with academic subjects while counselling them on the risks of excessive hours.

### ***Integrating part-time work within academic study: cooperative education***

Schools can help students derive deeper meaning from their part-time work by linking it to their academic coursework and future aspirations (Howieson, McKechnie and Semple, 2012<sup>[35]</sup>). For example, assignments or class discussions can encourage students to reflect on the skills they are developing in their jobs, such as teamwork, time management, or customer service, and how these skills apply to their academic learning or career goals. Teachers can also incorporate workplace experiences into the curriculum, creating opportunities for students to analyse the relevance of their part-time roles in real-world contexts, such as business studies, economics, or civic education.

In the United States, cooperative education programmes enable students to gain work experience in fields related to their academic studies while earning credits toward graduation (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2024<sup>[53]</sup>). These programmes are typically offered in the final years of general secondary education and involve structured partnerships between schools and employers. A number longitudinal studies have found links between cooperative education and long-term employment outcomes for participants (Herdman et al., 2024<sup>[54]</sup>). Kim (2016<sup>[55]</sup>) for example finds that US students who participate in cooperative education programmes in high school go on to secure jobs of higher occupational status (requiring more training, education or experience) than comparable peers up to ten years after leaving secondary education.

In contrast with school-mediated internships within general education which are generally unpaid and of short duration (1-2 weeks), students enrolled in programmes of cooperative education typically work in paid, supervised work placements of many weeks that align with their career aspirations and academic learning. The On-the-Job Training (OJT) Program offered by the Florida Department of Education for example is designed to provide students with workplace experience of value within cooperative education provision while they earn elective high school credits. A central feature of the programme is the Training Agreement, a formal contract signed by the student, their parent or guardian, the employer, and the teacher or programme coordinator. The agreement outlines the responsibilities of the individuals involved, ensuring a collaborative approach to the student’s educational and professional development. Complementing the agreement is the Training Plan, an individualised document that details the student’s job description, specific tasks, and instructional objectives. This plan is also signed by the student, the teacher or



coordinator, and the employer, ensuring alignment between the work experience and the student's career aspirations. The OJT also requires students to maintain timecards, which record their work hours and serve as essential documentation for verifying participation and progress.

## Conclusion

Over the last generation, many studies have explored the relationships between teenage part-time working and later outcomes for young people. Overwhelmingly, they find that students who combine full-time education with part-time employment on average do better in the early labour market than comparable former classmates who did not work at all while in school. It is likely that benefits stem from students increasing their career readiness through authentic experiences of undertaking tasks for pay under the supervision of working professionals, so securing opportunity to build their human, social and cultural capital in ways that are relevant to future progression. However, in some cases short-term gains may be at the risk of long-term penalties for some students. Working more than 10-20 hours a week towards the final years of secondary education is commonly associated with poorer academic achievement than would otherwise be expected. PISA 2022 shows that by the age of 15, on average half of students work part-time, but participation levels vary considerably between countries for which data are available. Further data show that between one in five and one in twenty students may be working hours which typically can be expected to reduce educational success. Schools can ensure that students and their parents/guardians are aware of both the potential benefits and risks of part-time working and actively encourage and enable students to gain appropriate part-time work or related forms of workplace experience, such as through volunteering in the community or internships. Opportunities also exist to apply lessons from part-time working experiences to school-mediated programmes of workplace exposure. The research literature on part-time working is richer than that on student internships/work placements or volunteering in the community (Covacevich et al., 2021<sup>[4]</sup>). Studies can also unpack more deeply the forms of part-time working that can be most strongly associated with better outcomes for specific groups of students, notably exploring separately the career journeys of young people with specific vulnerabilities, such as students with disabilities, and/or who seek to go straight into the labour market after secondary education and their peers who continue to tertiary education. Further research will support career advisors in providing more personalised advice to students who seek balance different opportunities, responsibilities, capabilities, and aspirations as they progress through secondary provision.

### The bottom line: part-time working represents a valuable form of career development for young people but does come with risks

Teenage part-time working is strongly linked with better ultimate employment outcomes in longitudinal studies. Qualitative studies highlight ways in which it can be seen to enhance the human, social and cultural capital of young people as they progress through education and approach transitions into work. Excessive hours however bring risks to educational achievement. Schools can optimise benefits by encouraging part-time working while providing informed advice to students and their parents about their employment, based on their individual aspirations, circumstances and the nature of the work undertaken.

## Career Readiness

This document was prepared by the Career Readiness team at the OECD.

The OECD Career Readiness project provides policy makers and practitioners with evidenced guidance on how schools can best prepare young people for employment. The project makes particular use of the results from PISA, analysis of national longitudinal datasets and insights from practice within jurisdictions.



**For more information, visit:** <https://www.oecd.org/education/career-readiness>

**Contact:** Anthony Mann, project leader, [Anthony.Mann@oecd.org](mailto:Anthony.Mann@oecd.org)

### Key papers include:

OECD (2025), "Voluntary work in the community: a guide to delivering an effective career development activity", *OECD Education Policy Perspectives*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

OECD (2025), "Internships for secondary school students in general education", *OECD Education Policy Perspectives*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

Covacevich, C., et al. (2021), "Indicators of teenage career readiness: an analysis of longitudinal data from eight countries ", *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 258, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/cec854f8-en>.

OECD (2024), *Challenging Social Inequality Through Career Guidance: Insights from International Data and Practice*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/619667e2-en>.

Chang, Y. and A. Mann (2024), "Enhancing green career guidance systems for sustainable futures", *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 318, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/e6ad2d9c-en>.

The team also manages the **OECD Observatory on Digital technologies in Career guidance for Youth**: <https://www.oecd.org/en/about/programmes/odicy.html>

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This Education Policy Perspective has been authorised by Andreas Schleicher, Director of the Directorate for Education and Skills, OECD.

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