

PISA 2025 highlights continued decline in reading skills and importance of balanced learning

The latest results of the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment ([PISA 2025](#)) show that reading performance among 15-year-olds continues to decline, reinforcing concerns about literacy, changing reading habits and the growing role of digital technologies in education.

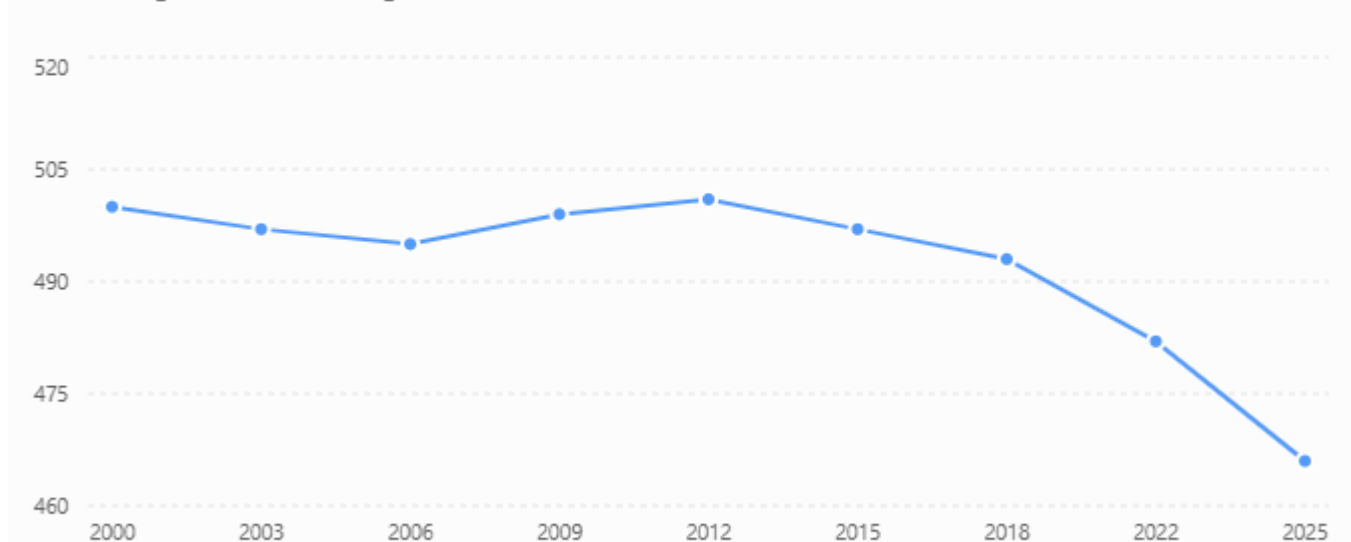
More than 760,000 students across 91 countries and economies participated in PISA 2025. Across OECD countries, average reading scores fell by 28 points between 2015 and 2025, equivalent to around one and a half years of learning. Between 2018 and 2025 alone, reading performance declined by 25 points. One in five 15-year-olds is now a low performer in science, mathematics and reading.

Across Europe, results vary considerably. Some of the lowest reading scores were recorded in Cyprus (379 points), Bulgaria (387), Romania (413), Malta (415), Greece (423) and Latvia (430), all below the OECD average of 461 points. At the other end of the spectrum, Estonia (499), Ireland (500) and the United Kingdom (494) remained among Europe's strongest performers.

The results also point to changes in how students engage with written information. The proportion of so-called "hasty readers" – students who respond quickly but incorrectly – increased from almost 7% in 2018 to 11% in 2025. Performance declined particularly on tasks involving longer texts and higher-level reading processes such as evaluating, reflecting and connecting information. PISA 2025 does not attribute this decline to one single factor, but previous scientific evidence shows that students who read fiction and longer texts tend to achieve higher reading scores. Students who more frequently read books on paper also tended to perform better than those who primarily read digitally or rarely read books. >>

Reading performance has fallen sharply

OECD average-23, PISA reading scores, 2000–2025



Source: OECD, PISA 2025 Results (Volume I), Figure I.1.5.

The study also underlines that digital technology can support education when used appropriately. Moderate use of digital devices for learning is associated with stronger performance, while excessive use and digital distraction are linked with weaker outcomes. More than one in four students reported that classmates were distracted by digital devices during most or every science lesson, and students surrounded by distracted classmates tended to perform less well, were less engaged in learning and reported a weaker sense of belonging at school.

PISA 2025 also provides new insights into the growing use of artificial intelligence. Students who reported not using AI to draft text for writing assignments tended to outperform those who did. At the same time, among frequent AI users, students who used it to support learning and had been taught how to assess the quality of AI-generated information tended to perform better than those who received no such guidance. The findings therefore point towards purposeful use of AI as a support for learning, rather than as a substitute for students' own attention, effort and understanding.

PISA's new Learning in the Digital World assessment further highlights the importance of combining digital competence with strong foundational skills. Almost two-thirds of students across OECD countries reached the relevant proficiency level in computational problem solving, but only around half did so while also demonstrating basic proficiency in science, reading and mathematics. These findings also reinforce the message behind Intergraf's Print Ahead campaign, which aims to highlight the continued value of print in education and learning. Rather than presenting print and digital media as competing formats, the campaign promotes a balanced approach in which each is used where it offers the greatest benefit. In the context of reading, the evidence continues to point to an important role for printed materials in supporting sustained attention, deeper comprehension and engagement with longer texts.

Online Print Summit 2027 to focus on turning AI into revenue

The Online Print Summit (OPS) 2027 will take place on 13–14 April 2027 at the Alte Kongresshalle in Munich, Germany, under the motto "Turn Intelligence into Revenue". A networking get-together will take place on the evening of 12 April.

The 2027 edition will focus on how artificial intelligence, automation and connected production systems can be translated into measurable business value. The programme will look at how these tools can contribute to increased revenue, improved margins, stronger customer relationships and more efficient production. Bernd Zipper, founder and CEO of zipcon consulting and co-organisator of the Summit, will address the topic of Agentic Print, exploring how AI agents could increasingly find, configure and reorder print products independently.

This topic is also being taken forward through the dedicated print vertical for Google's Universal Commerce Protocol (UCP). The aim is to create a common, machine-readable framework allowing AI agents to understand the complex specifications involved in purchasing print, including formats, substrates, colours, finishing, quantities and delivery requirements. The initiative was launched by Initiative Online Print, BVDM and Intergraf and has since expanded internationally to include dpsuisse, VIGC, the Ghent Workgroup, CIP4, PRINTING United Alliance and APTech – the Association for PRINT Technologies. Registration for OPS 2027 is now open. Early Bird rates are available until 26 October 2026.



Shaping the Future with Packaging returns to Brussels in February 2027

Intergraf and FTA Europe, supported by Smithers, are pleased to announce the next edition in the Shaping the Future with Print conference series: Shaping the Future with Packaging 2027.

The event will take place on Thursday 18 and Friday 19 February 2027 at the Sheraton Brussels Airport Hotel and will bring together professionals from across the European packaging sector to discuss the regulatory, market and technological developments shaping the future of the industry.

The programme will address some of the most important issues currently facing packaging businesses, including the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) and its practical implementation, packaging market developments, innovation, artificial intelligence and packaging design, design for recycling, and industry case studies.

The conference will begin with a welcome lunch on Thursday, 18 February, followed by the first half-day of presentations and discussions.

Participants will then have the opportunity to continue conversations during a networking dinner that evening. The programme will resume on Friday morning, 19 February, with further conference sessions before concluding with lunch.

The Shaping the Future with Print series, organised by Intergraf in collaboration with Smithers, explores key segments of the European printing industry and the developments affecting their future. Previous editions have focused on areas including books, commercial print, magazines and direct mail. The 2027 conference, co-organised by Intergraf and FTA Europe, will put the spotlight on packaging and its growing importance for the European print industry. Registration will open in October.

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Paperisation gains ground as fibre-based alternatives replace single-use plastics

Fibre-based [alternatives](#) are increasingly being developed to replace single-use plastics across a wide range of everyday applications, from bottles and cable ties to protective packaging and drinking straws.

A recent article by Two Sides highlights several examples of this growing “paperisation” trend and shows how fibre-based materials are moving beyond traditional packaging formats.

One of the more ambitious developments is in beverage packaging. AUM Premium plans to launch a paper-based water bottle by the end of 2026. The company says the bottle will be 100% plastic-free and made from responsibly sourced paper. Developing paper-based water packaging is particularly challenging, as the bottle must safely contain liquid while also meeting consumer expectations around durability, handling and appearance.

In industrial and logistics applications, Atlantic Packaging has launched FibreStrap, a fibre-based cable tie made from certified Scandinavian wood fibres. It is designed to replace conventional single-use plastic ties while maintaining the strength and durability required for bundling and securing products.

Another innovation focuses on protective packaging. Research funded by the US Department of Energy has explored the use of waste sawdust from wood mills to create packaging foam with strength and impact resistance comparable to polystyrene. The material could potentially be used for products that require lightweight but robust protection during transport.

The trend also extends to food service. Michelin-starred restaurant The Whitebrook in Wales is producing drinking straws from dried ground elder stems grown and foraged locally. Their naturally hollow structure allows them to function as biodegradable alternatives to disposable plastic straws.

Together, these examples illustrate how fibre-based innovation is opening up new possibilities for replacing single-use plastics. As demand for more sustainable materials grows, paper, pulp and other fibre-based solutions are likely to play an increasingly important role across packaging and other product applications.



New EU rules on environmental claims now apply

New EU rules aimed at tackling greenwashing entered into application on 27 September 2026 under the Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition Directive ([EmpCo](#)). Member States were required to transpose the Directive into national law by 27 March 2026.

The Directive strengthens existing EU consumer protection rules and introduces stricter requirements for environmental claims and sustainability labels used in business-to-consumer (B2C) communications. Generic claims such as “green”, “eco-friendly” or “environmentally friendly” may only be used under specific conditions and must be properly substantiated. The rules also prohibit displaying sustainability labels that are not based on a certification scheme or established by a public authority, as well as certain climate claims based on greenhouse gas offsetting.

For the printing industry, the main impact is likely to come through customers. Brand owners, retailers and other businesses will need to ensure that environmental messages appearing on packaging, labels, leaflets, catalogues and advertising materials comply with the new requirements. While responsibility for the claim remains with the business communicating it to consumers, printers may support customers in their compliance journey and may also increasingly be asked

to provide accurate supporting information about substrates, production processes, recycled content, recyclability or other environmental characteristics.

The Directive concerns consumer-facing commercial practices rather than purely B2B communication. Printers should nevertheless be aware that environmental information provided to business customers may later be reused in B2C marketing. It may therefore be useful to review and properly substantiate B2B environmental information.

Printers should therefore expect greater scrutiny of environmental messaging and growing demand from customers for reliable information that can support compliant sustainability communications.



New study highlights the impact of typography on reading

A new [study](#) published in *Frontiers in Education* suggests that typography can significantly influence the way parents read books aloud with their children.

Researchers observed 72 parent-child pairs reading picture books using both conventional and expressive typography, including variations in font, size, positioning and letter forms. They found that reading interactions were approximately 8% longer when books used expressive typography.

The effect was even more noticeable in the way the books were read. Parents changed their tone around 64% more frequently and their reading pace around 72% more frequently when reading books with expressive typography compared with conventional typography.

The findings suggest that typography does more than shape the visual appearance of a printed page. Changes in font size, lettering and layout can provide cues for rhythm, emphasis and emotion, helping to influence how a story is performed and experienced.

Interestingly, although parents were generally aware of typography in children's books, they did not necessarily recognise the extent to which it influenced their own reading behaviour.

For publishers, designers and the wider printing industry, the research provides another example of how the physical and visual design of printed content can contribute to the reading experience.

EVENTS

- Intergraf Currency+Identity 2026 conference, 14-16 October 2026, Copenhagen, Denmark
- Shaping the Future with Packaging 2027, February, 18-19 February 2027, Brussels, Belgium

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