



NOTE D'INFORMATION

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Placement test for the beginning of tenth grade class in 2020: improved performance in French, but results still vary according to the characteristics of the students and the schools

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► In September 2020, more than 700,000 tenth-grade students took a placement test to assess their learning outcomes and needs in order to offer them personalized support and to remedy any difficulties they may have.

In the general and technological branch, more than nine out of ten students have a satisfactory or very good mastery of knowledge and skills in French. In Mathematics, more than eight out of ten students have a satisfactory or very good mastery of knowledge and skills. In the professional branch, nearly six out of ten students have a satisfactory or very good mastery of knowledge and skills in French and nearly four out of ten in Mathematics. Boys performed better than girls in Mathematics, regardless of the branch of study. In French, girls' results are slightly higher. The results are correlated with the sector of schooling, especially in Mathematics, and significant differences are observed according to the social profile of the high school.

In 2020, we note an improvement in French results compared to 2019. In Mathematics, the results are stable in the general and technological branch, but lower in the professional one.

► In September 2020, more than 700,000 students enrolled in the first year of high school in more than 4,100 public and private schools under contract took a standardized digital assessment (see [To Learn More - Methodology](#)). Of these students, 76% were enrolled in a general and technological tenth grade class, compared to 24% in the professional branch. This placement test at the beginning of tenth grade class makes it possible to identify the learning outcomes and needs of each student in order to offer them personalized support and to remedy any difficulties they may have. The results also provide a snapshot of the knowledge and skills on which students were evaluated in French and Mathematics at the beginning of tenth grade class, both at national level and in each school zone (académie).

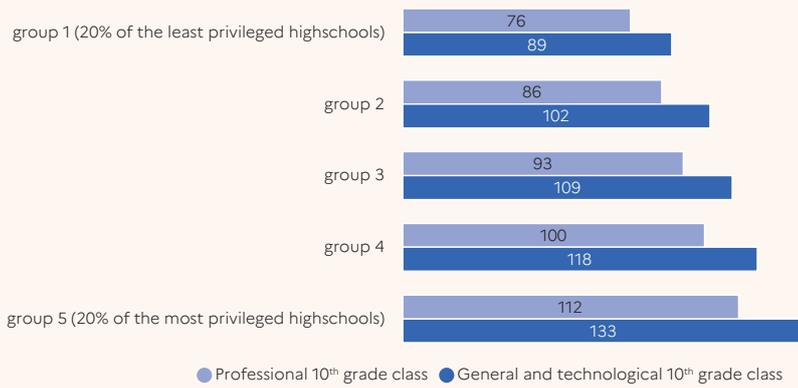
The evaluation does not aim at measuring all the skills and knowledge expected of a student entering the tenth grade in French and Mathematics. For French, the exercises provided benchmarks in areas such as "oral understanding", "reading understanding" and "understanding how language works". For Mathematics, the placement test in the general and technological tenth grade class is built around four mathematical domains:

"numbers and calculations", "organization and management of data", "geometry of reasoning" and "algebraic expressions". The skills of "research", "representation", "calculation" and "reasoning" are also tested. The placement test in professional tenth grade class is built around the following four mathematical domains : "numbers and calculations", "organization and management of data", "geometry of calculation" and "algebraic resolution of problems". This test in professional tenth grade class also questions the skills of "appropriating", "analyzing/reasoning", "carrying out" and "validating" (see [To Learn More - Methodology](#)). The results of these two assessments are placed on the same performance scale. In each of the subjects, knowledge and skills are considered acquired when the level of mastery is very good or satisfactory. It is essential to remember that this assessment provides information about the level of mastery of students when they enter high school. Therefore, it says nothing about the action of high school as such.

Students with different profiles depending on the branch of study

In general and technological tenth grade class, boys represent 46.1% of students. In professional tenth grade class, the distribution is reversed, with 58.2% of students being boys. The distribution of students who have repeated a grade (born before 2005) and students who have not differs according to the branch of study. In professional tenth grade class, 32.1 per cent of students have repeated a grade at least once compared with 8.0 per cent of students in general and technological tenth grade class (see [To Learn More - figures 1.2 and 1.3](#)). The DEPP has developed a social position index (SPI) that provides an account of the social profile of students. The average of this index was calculated for each high school. This made it possible to divide students into five groups for each branch of study, from those belonging to the 20% least advantaged high schools to those belonging to the 20% most advantaged high schools. Depending on the branch of study, the average SPI of the groups of high schools differs for each quintile, the social profile of students in professional high schools being less favored than that of students in general and

1 Average social position index by high school social profile and branch of study



Reading: professional high schools have been divided in five groups, from group 1, which is composed of the 20% of the least privileged high schools, to group 5, which includes the 20% of the most privileged high schools. Similarly, the general and technological high schools are grouped into five groups. The average social position index of the 20% most privileged professional high schools is 112, and 133 for general and technological group 5 high schools.

Field: Metropolitan France + DROM + French Polynesia and Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon, Public + Private under contract.

Source: Placement test at the beginning of the tenth grade class, September 2020, DEPP-MENJS.

Réf. : Note d'Information, n° 21.17. © DEPP

technological high schools. For example, for the 20% least advantaged high schools, the average SPI for the general and technological high schools is 89, whereas it is 76 for the professional high schools [figure 1](#).

At the beginning of general and technological branch, 93% of students have a satisfactory mastery of the areas assessed in French and 84% in Mathematics

At national level, at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year, 93.2% of students enrolled in general and technological tenth grade class have a satisfactory or very good mastery of knowledge and skills in French [figure 2](#).

The results are lower in Mathematics, where the elements necessary for the acquisition of knowledge and skills are correctly assimilated by 83.5% of students [figure 3](#).

At the beginning of the general and technological branch, 93.9% of girls had a satisfactory or very good mastery of the knowledge and skills assessed, compared with 92.2% of boys.

The trend is reversed in Mathematics, where the results are markedly more to the advantage of boys : 86.3% of them show satisfactory or very good mastery, compared with 81.0% of girls.

The mastery rate, measured by the combination of "satisfactory mastery" and "very good mastery", varied significantly between students who have repeated a grade and those who have not (a difference of 15.8 points in French and 23.4 points in Mathematics). In French, for example, more than nine out of ten (94.5%) of the students who have not repeated a grade had a satisfactory or very good mastery of the subject, whereas slightly more than three-quarters (78.7%) of the students who have repeated a grade managed to master the expected level. In the case of Mathematics, 85.3% of students who have not repeated a grade have a satisfactory or very good mastery. This situation concerns only 61.9% of students who have repeated a grade. In both French and Mathematics, very few students who have repeated a grade show a very good mastery: 2.5% and 2.4% respectively.

Differences were noted between students entering general and technological tenth grade class in the private sector under

2 Mastery of knowledge and skills in French at the beginning of the general and technological tenth grade class



Reading: In general and technological tenth grade class, 76.9% of students have a satisfactory mastery of skills and knowledge in French and 16.3% of students have a very good mastery.

Field: Metropolitan France + DROM + French Polynesia and Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon, Public + Private under contract.

Source: Placement test at the beginning of the tenth grade class, September 2020, DEPP-MENJS.

Réf. : Note d'Information, n° 21.17. © DEPP

3 Mastery of knowledge and skills in Mathematics at the beginning of the general and technological tenth grade class



Reading: In general and technological tenth grade class, 70.8% of the girls have a satisfactory mastery of mathematical skills and knowledge compared to 69.9% of the boys.

Field: Metropolitan France + DROM + French Polynesia and Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon, Public + Private under contract.

Source: Placement test at the beginning of the tenth grade class, September 2020, DEPP-MENJS.

Réf. : Note d'Information, n° 21.17. © DEPP

contract and those in the public sector. This is particularly true in Mathematics, where 92.5% of pupils in the private sector have a satisfactory or very good mastery of the subject, compared with 80.9% in the public sector. In French, the difference is less marked (96.7% in the private sector versus 92.2% in the public sector). These findings must, of course, be set against the social structure of the school population. In fact, more than half of the students enrolled in the private sector belong to the group 5 high schools (51.4%), compared to the public sector, where the share of students belonging to group 5 high schools is only 14.2% (see To Learn More - figure 1.4).

Significant differences according to the social profile of general and technological high schools

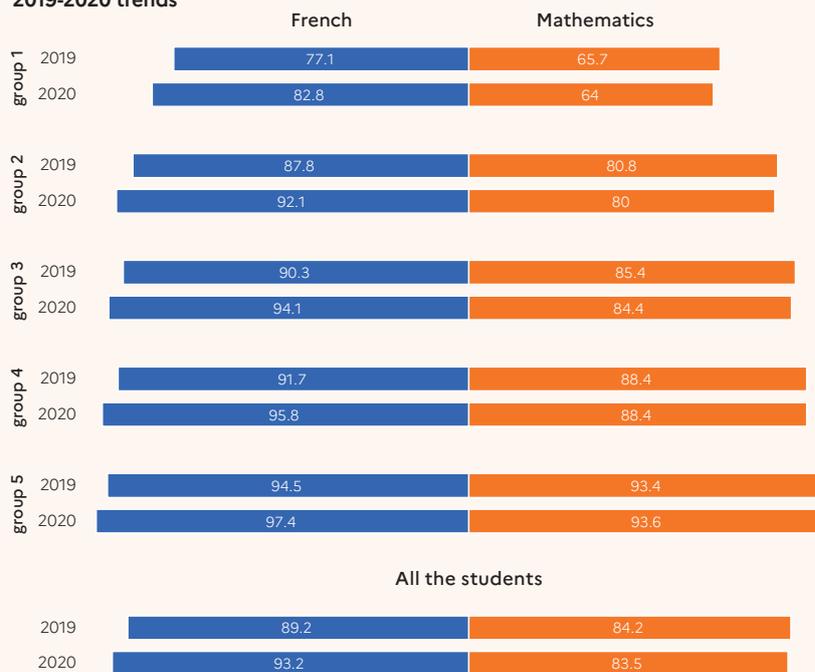
Disparities in mastery are very marked according to the social profile of the school. In the most socially advantaged high schools (group 5), the mastery rates were 97.4% in French and 93.6% in Mathematics. The range of mastery rates among the five groups confirms the generally observed correlation between social origin and the level of student learning outcomes. In the least privileged high schools (group 1), the mastery rates were 82.8% and 64.0% respectively, for French and Mathematics, i.e. a 14.6 point difference in French and a 29.6 points difference in Mathematics compared to the group 5 high schools. This difference in results is mainly due to the gap between groups 1 and 2, with a difference in mastery rates of 9.3 points in French and 16 points in Mathematics.

While, in general, more students master the skills and knowledge assessed in French than in Mathematics, the gap between these mastery rates increases as the social level of the schools decreases. In 2020, it varies from 3.8 points for students in group 5 high schools to 18.8 points for students in group 1 high schools [↘ figure 4](#).

Better results in French and stable results in mathematics compared to 2019 in general and technological tenth grade class

In 2020, there was an improvement in results in French compared to 2019. The mastery rate, measured by the combination of "satisfactory mastery" and "very good mastery", rose from 89.2% in 2019 to 93.2% in 2020 (+4.0 points) [↘ figure 5](#).

↘ 4 Mastery of knowledge and skills in French and Mathematics at the beginning of the general and technological tenth grade class according to the social profile of the high school, 2019-2020 trends



Reading: In general and technological tenth grade class, 77.1% of group 1 students had a satisfactory or very good mastery in French in 2019. In 2020, 82.8% of them have done so.

Field: Metropolitan France + DROM + French Polynesia and Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon, Public + Private under contract.

Source: Placement test at the beginning of the tenth grade class, September 2020, DEPP-MENJS.

Réf. : Note d'Information, n° 21.17. © DEPP

In French, the increase in performance concerns all students, regardless of the social profile of their high school. It is slightly more pronounced in the schools with the least socially advantaged students (groups 1 and 2), where the increase reaches +5.7 points and +4.3 points respectively. In high schools with the most privileged students, the increase is less marked: +3.8 points and +4.1 points in groups 3 and 4 high schools and +2.9 points in group 5 high schools.

In mathematics, the results are more stable: in 2020, 83.5% of students master the skills assessed, compared to 84.2% in 2019, regardless of the social profile of the high school. However, the results show a drop of 1.7 points for the least privileged high schools.

At the beginning of professional tenth grade class, 57% of students have a satisfactory mastery of the areas assessed in French and 37% in Mathematics

At national level, at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year, 56.8 % of students at the beginning of professional tenth grade class have a satisfactory or very good mastery of knowledge and skills in French [↘ figure 5](#). The results are lower in mathematics, where the elements necessary

for the acquisition of knowledge and skills are correctly assimilated by 37.1% of students [↘ figure 6](#).

In French, 60.0% of girls have a satisfactory or very good mastery of the knowledge and skills assessed, compared to 54.5% of boys. The trend is clearly reversed in Mathematics, where the results are to the advantage of the boys : 41.2% of the boys have a satisfactory or very good mastery of the knowledge and skills assessed, compared with only 31.2% of the girls.

In professional tenth grade class, one third of students have repeated a grade at least once. The mastery rate varies significantly between students who have repeated a grade and those who have not (a difference of 13.5 points in French and 10.7 points in Mathematics). In French, for example, more than six out of ten (61.1%) of the "on-time" students have a satisfactory or very good mastery of the subject, while slightly less than half of the students who have repeated a grade (47.6%) manage to master the expected knowledge and skills. In the case of mathematics, 40.5% of students who have not repeated a grade have a satisfactory or very good mastery of the subject. This situation concerns only 29.8% of students who have repeated a grade.

Differences were observed between students entering professional tenth grade class in the private sector under contract and those in the public sector. The gap in mastery is 11.9 points in French and 9.9 points in Mathematics. As for general and technological tenth grade class, these results must be seen in the light of the social structure of the students enrolled. As a matter of fact, a quarter of the students enrolled in the private sector belong to group 5 (26.0%), compared to the public sector, where the proportion of students belonging to group 5 is only 13.1% (see **To Learn More - figure 1.4**).

In professional tenth grade class, the results are also very different depending on the social profile of the high school

As in general and technological tenth grade class, mastery disparities are particularly marked according to the social profile of the school. In the most socially advantaged high schools (group 5), the mastery rate, measured by the combination of “satisfactory mastery” and “very good mastery”, was 65.7% in French and 47.7% in Mathematics.

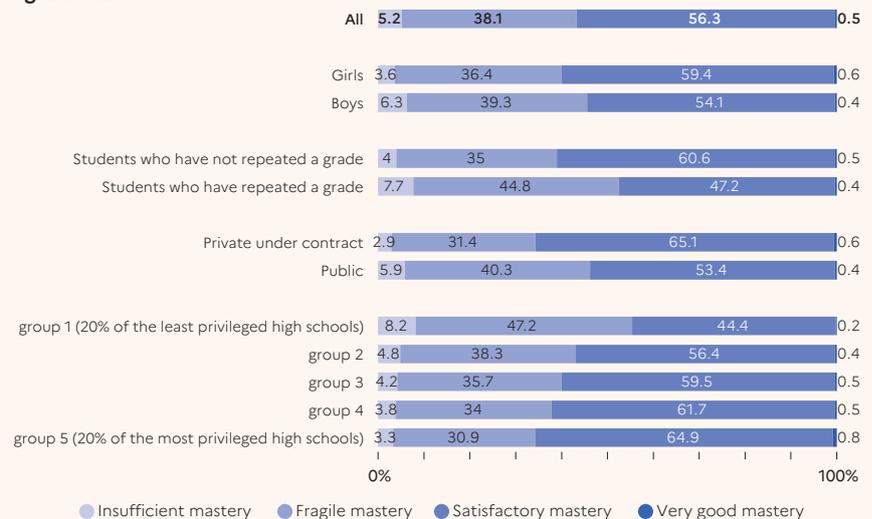
The range of mastery rates among the five groups confirms, once again, the generally observed correlation between social origin and the level of student learning outcomes. In the least privileged schools (group 1), the mastery rates were 44.6% and 24.2% respectively, for French and mathematics, i.e. a 21.1-point difference in French and a 23.5-point difference in mathematics compared with the group 5 high schools.

Better results in French and lower performance in mathematics than in 2019 in professional tenth grade class

In 2020, in professional tenth grade class, there was a slight improvement in results in French compared to 2019 (see **To Learn More - figure 5.1**). The mastery rate, measured by the combination of “satisfactory mastery” and “very good mastery”, increases from 53.3% in 2019 to 56.8% in 2020 (+3.5 points). In Mathematics, the trend is reversed as the mastery rate drops from 40.5% in 2019 to 37.1% in 2020 (-3.4 points).

In French, the progress observed between 2019 and 2020 is more pronounced among boys than among girls. Thus, the share of students showing “satisfactory mastery” or “very good mastery” has increased by 4.8 points among boys in French, compared

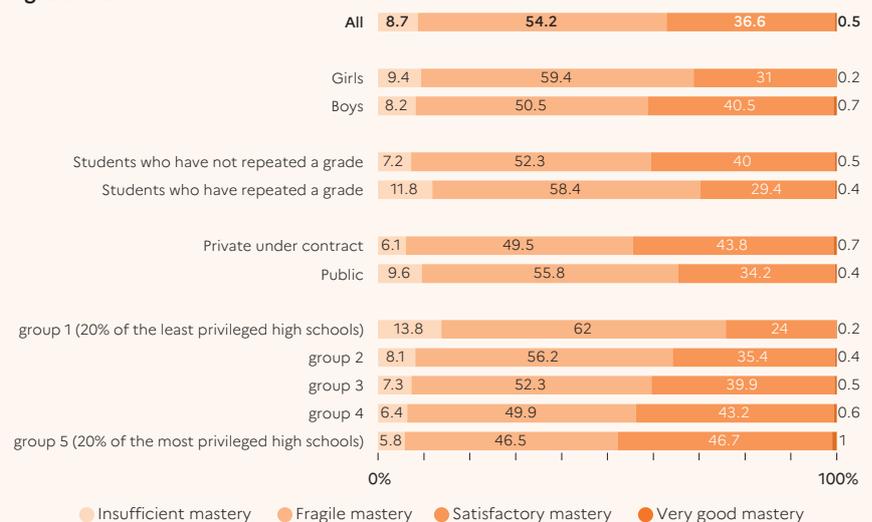
5 Mastery of knowledge and skills in French at the beginning of the professional tenth grade class



Reading: In professional tenth grade class, 4% of students who have not repeated a grade have an insufficient mastery of skills and knowledge in French, compared to 7.7% of students who have repeated a grade at least once.
Field: Metropolitan France + DROM + French Polynesia and Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon, Public + Private under contract.
Source: Placement test at the beginning of the tenth grade class, September 2020, DEPP-MENJS.

Réf. : Note d'Information, n° 21.17. © DEPP

6 Mastery of knowledge and skills in Mathematics at the beginning of the professional tenth grade class



Reading: In professional tenth grade class, 24.0% of group 1 students (20% of the least privileged high schools) have a satisfactory mastery of skills and knowledge in Mathematics, while 46.7% of group 5 students (20% of the most privileged high schools) have a satisfactory mastery.

Field: Metropolitan France + DROM + French Polynesia and Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon, Public + Private under contract.

Source: Placement test at the beginning of the tenth grade class, September 2020, DEPP-MENJS.

Réf. : Note d'Information, n° 21.17. © DEPP

to 1.7 points among girls (see **To Learn More - figure 5.4**). In Mathematics, the drop in performance affects boys slightly more than girls : -4.3 points for boys compared to -2.2 points for girls.

In French, the increase is more marked in the most disadvantaged high schools, whereas the drop in Mathematics is of the same magnitude, whatever the social profile of the high school (see **To Learn More - figure 5.2**). ■

FOR MORE INFORMATION

You can access this *Note d'Information* 21.17, the figures and additional data on education.gouv.fr/etudes-et-statistiques