

A report from the Swedish Association  
of Independent Schools  
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# About independent schools

 Friskolornas  
riksförbund



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## The independent school sector

The Swedish Association of Independent Schools is a trade association that organises about 70% of the independent preschools, preschool classes, compulsory schools and upper-secondary schools in Sweden. Many people want to know more about our sector. How many pupils go to independent schools and how well do they perform? Who owns the independent schools and who works there? How are the schools financed? How many pupils have a foreign background?

We have compiled answers to the most frequently asked questions in this fact sheet. The statistics have been obtained from several sources, primarily the National Agency for Education, Statistics Sweden and the Swedish Schools Inspectorate. We have also included tips on reports related to the municipal vs. independent school choice debate. If you would like more information about independent schools or the association, please contact us or visit our website [www.friskola.se](http://www.friskola.se). You can also follow us on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).

Happy reading!

**Ulla Hamilton**

CEO, Swedish Association of Independent Schools

## What is an independent school?

An independent school is a school that is run by a proprietor other than a municipality, region or the state. This could be, for example, a foundation, a company, an association, a private person or a religious group. An independent school operates under the framework of the Swedish Education Act (2010) and is inspected by the Swedish Schools Inspectorate. A more correct term for an independent school is a private school, or a school run by an independent proprietor.

The independent school system includes preschools, compulsory schools and upper-secondary schools. Independent schools must be open to all pupils – they are not permitted to select pupils – but some selection principles, which must be public and clearly formulated, may be applied when the number of applicants exceeds the number of places. Sibling priority, school waiting list and proximity to the school, certain educational connections (i.e. from preschool to school) and, in special cases, skill tests for schools with a cultural specialisation (music, dance or art) are the only selection criteria permitted.<sup>1</sup>

Independent schools follow the same Education Act and curricula as municipal schools, are tax-funded with school vouchers, and are not allowed to charge fees. Some independent compulsory schools adjust their timetables within the framework of the Education Act, or use the timetable's "school specialisation" hours to focus on their own specialism by devoting extra time to one or more subjects.

<sup>1</sup> Swedish Education Act 10:9–9a and Swedish Education Ordinance 9:25–27. Some specialist classes require prior knowledge, such as dance, music and physical education and health. The Swedish Schools Inspectorate has therefore approved the use of skill tests from Grade 4. When skill tests are used as a basis for selection to a certain school unit, no other selection criteria may be applied.

## No two independent school operators are alike

Most independent schools have a general focus – they do not have a religious affiliation nor apply the Waldorf method of teaching. However, many independent school proprietors have their own specialism, which is aimed at promoting what they are good at or their own specific way of working, in order to offer alternatives to the more or less uniform municipal school system. You could therefore say that all independent school operators have their own niche.

The special focus of an independent school can be described as the environment, language, culture, internationalism, global issues or a cultural specialisation. The focus might also be a specific way of working/method of teaching (Waldorf, Freinet or Montessori), certain core values (including religious values)<sup>2</sup>, a special learning environment, a location, or the fact that the school is small and can therefore offer a safe environment. Some independent schools have limited their intake to pupils who need extensive support (schools for children with special educational needs). These schools are only therefore permitted to admit these pupils. In other words, no two independent school operators are alike.<sup>3</sup>

The former concept of private schools referred to schools that were privately operated before the independent school reform and the introduction of the school voucher system. They were mainly located in major cities and funded by school fees paid by parents. There were also boarding schools. There are still a few boarding schools, but teaching is covered by the school voucher system and follows the curriculum. However, boarding and extra after-school activities are not covered by the school voucher system and are funded by school fees.

<sup>2</sup> Teaching in preschools and schools with a religious affiliation must be non-religious. Otherwise, the education at independent schools, independent preschools and independent after-school clubs may have a religious affiliation, but participation in religious activities may only be voluntary (Swedish Education Act, Chap.1, Sections 6–7).

<sup>3</sup> The Swedish Schools Inspectorate only specifies three types of focus – no focus (general), Waldorf or religious.

## What is a proprietor and what does that mean for an independent school?

Every school, both independent and municipal, must have someone who is responsible for the management of the school. The organisation is the actual proprietor, i.e. an association, municipality, foundation or limited liability company. When the school's proprietor is a municipality, the proprietor is represented by the board responsible for the control of schools and ultimately by the municipal council.

For independent preschools and schools, an organisation (or the company registration number) is the proprietor and submits an application to provide education to the municipality (for preschools) or the Swedish Schools Inspectorate (schools). But a company registration number cannot act on its own. It must be represented by someone, typically the organisation's board of directors. Therefore, the board of directors is the proprietor for the preschool or school. The company registration number is granted approval by the municipality or the Swedish Schools Inspectorate, but the board of directors is ultimately responsible for the management of the school.

For independent schools, proprietorship entails a right – approval/registration – to set up a preschool, compulsory or upper-secondary school and after-school club. The approval applies to the type of school or the grades and programmes granted by the supervisory body, and governance of the school is mainly determined by the education ordinances. Proprietorship may also involve the exercise of authority, by setting grades for example, even though an independent school is not an authority.

We usually call the organisation that has been granted approval as a proprietor the “owner.” This could be the shareholders of a limited liability company or the members of an association or even a religious group, even though it sounds strange that a group of people can “own” a school.

An owner may also have several registrations – proprietorships – since each individual school unit (the premises, adjacent buildings and outdoor areas) must be registered separately. We usually refer to an organisation (such an association or a company) with several registrations as a group. In turn, a group can be either several companies with one approval per company, or a parent company with approvals for several individual school units.

The responsibilities of a proprietor are set out in the Swedish Education Act. The Act also sets out the responsibilities of the principal. Many proprietors are only responsible for one school. In these schools, the principal is usually the owner of the limited liability company that has been registered, i.e. the proprietor. A proprietor wears three different hats. In large independent schools with several owners, several individual school units and several proprietorships, ownership is actually exercised by the parent company's board and CEO, the proprietorship in practice by the board of directors, CEO and joint staffs, despite the fact that the formal proprietorship rests with the subsidiaries who have been registered, and the principals of the same types of school are managed jointly across the proprietorship.

Owners with several individual school units and/or proprietorships also differ in terms of how centralised/decentralised they exercise their proprietorship over the schools. Many owners have clear governance, a joint systematic approach to quality and coherent communication, where central management works together with the principals, and sometimes with the teachers as well. Others structure their school in such a way that the board of directors remains the proprietor, but there is no extensive central organisation and each school unit is responsible for development instead. Unfortunately, there is very little research on the organisation of proprietorship, for both independent and municipal proprietors, and the significance it holds for the results achieved. One of the most interesting studies is a report published by the Swedish Schools Inspectorate, *Hur huvudmännen styr grundskolan* (How proprietors govern compulsory schools), in 2015. It suggests that the private ownership of independent schools leads to stronger engagement, clearer governance, closer monitoring, higher quality and better results than municipal ownership.

## Waiting list for independent preschools and compulsory schools

Admission to preschools takes place by registering the child on the waiting list of each preschool. Sometimes the preschools and the municipality agree on a joint waiting list system where everyone can register their children. Parents are offered a place for their child in waiting list order, and siblings are given priority. Sometimes the proximity principle is also applied. Independent preschools may also accept children from other municipalities; there are no catchment areas. Independent and municipal preschools may have the same selection criteria. Since the municipality grants approval for an independent preschool, the municipality also approves the selection criteria that may be applied if there are more children than places at the independent preschool.

Admission to independent compulsory schools takes place by registering the child on the waiting list of each independent school. The school decides how long the waiting list stays open. The child can be registered as soon as they receive a personal identity number. However, more and more independent schools are opening their waiting lists later. For example, large independent school proprietors have set 1 February of the year the child turns one as the earliest date. As the beginning of the school year approaches, the children are offered a place according to their position on the waiting list, but siblings are given priority. The admission process is usually digital. Since most parents place their children on the waiting lists of several independent schools, many may already have taken up an offer in another school, so the waiting list is often much shorter than expected considering the number of children on the list.

A waiting list system means that the children/pupils are admitted according to their position on the list. The fact that an independent school has a waiting list system does not mean that no places will be available. There could be more places than children/pupils on the waiting list.

Independent schools may also decide to base admissions totally or partly on the proximity principle, i.e. in the same manner as municipal schools.

Admission to municipal compulsory schools is based on a combination of parents' choice<sup>4</sup> of (optional municipal) school and the municipality's obligation to offer a school place close to where the child lives. In practice, this also enables the possibility of giving priority to siblings at municipal schools through school choice and/or proximity to the home.<sup>5</sup> According to the municipality's school placement principles, anyone who does not choose a school must be offered a place in a school within a reasonable distance from their home. In some municipalities, admissions to independent and municipal schools take place simultaneously in a coordinated admission system. A small number of compulsory schools with specialist classes – music, dance, etc. – are permitted to use skill tests<sup>6</sup> for admissions instead.

## Joint admission to upper-secondary school

Almost without exception, admission to upper-secondary school takes place in a joint regional or municipal admission system for independent and municipal schools. Upper-secondary school places are offered on the basis of the pupil's ranked selection and their results from compulsory school, as well as the availability and demand for each programme and school.

<sup>4</sup> School choice is mandatory in some municipalities, i.e. all guardians must choose a school, but choosing a school is optional in most municipalities (Swedish Education Act 9: 12 and 15, 10:24 and 30, 11: 24 and 29).

<sup>5</sup> Neither choosing a school nor sibling priority is a right in municipal schools. It is a possibility that presumes that all children in each municipal school can be placed in a school close to where they live. If this is not possible, the right to be placed in a school close to where they live overrules the right to choose a school, also for siblings, in municipal schools. The above sources.

<sup>6</sup> Refer to Note 1 on page 4.

## What is required to set up an independent school?

Applications for approval to set up or expand an independent school must be submitted to the Swedish Schools Inspectorate by 31 January in order to open the school in the autumn term of the following year. The application must contain the information that is required to show there is a sufficient pupil population for the school in relation to the proposed number of places, how the number of pupils is intended to increase, that funding – school vouchers – cover the school’s costs, the required number of teachers, other staff, premises, educational materials and so forth. Proprietors must show they have long-term economic viability, and how the school will be run in accordance with the applicable governing documents.

The owners and management of the independent schools are also carefully assessed. When lodging the application, documentation for an ownership and management suitability assessment must also be provided. The Swedish Schools Inspectorate must ensure that the board of directors and the school’s managers have the appropriate expertise in education law, labour law, health and safety at work and finance. These people are also checked by obtaining extracts from the criminal records registry, the Swedish Tax Agency and the Swedish Enforcement Agency.

During the spring, the information provided in the application is reviewed and supplementary information is often requested. In addition, the applications are sent to the relevant municipalities for their views on whether or not the proposed school will affect the municipal proprietor.

The Swedish Schools Inspectorate announces its decision by 30 September.

During the spring before the school opens, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate performs a pre-registration inspection to ensure that the conditions for setting up the school are in place, i.e. premises, special premises and teachers with the appropriate expertise.

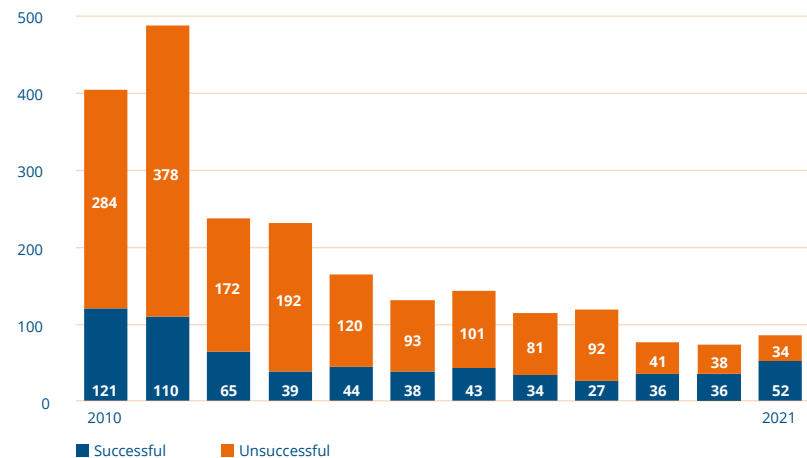
Six months after the school has opened, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate performs an initial inspection to ensure that the school is being run in the manner described in the registration.

The same rules apply to setting up an independent preschool, except that the municipality approves the application.

## Fewer applications for independent schools

The number of applications to set up an independent school has fallen sharply over the past decade, from nearly 500 in 2011 to just over 80 in 2019 and 2020. In 2021, the number of applications increased to 123.

Between 2010 and 2018, just over 25% of the applications were approved by the Swedish Schools Inspectorate, about 35 applications per year to set up a new school. The number of applications has been falling since 2019, which is why the number of approvals has risen to just over 40%.

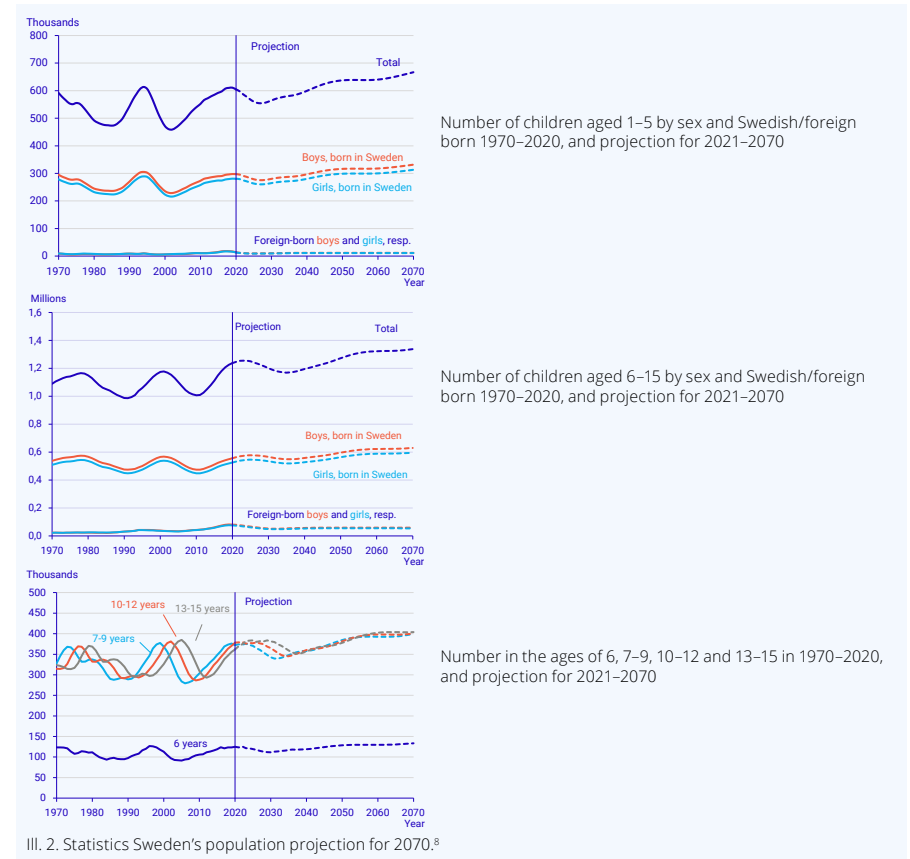


Ill. 1. Number of successful and unsuccessful applications to set up a new independent school between 2010 and 2021 (Swedish Schools Inspectorate, 2021).

In recent years, the number of applications to expand an existing school with more compulsory school grades or upper-secondary school programmes has ranged from 100–200 applications per year. The number of applications in 2021 was 100, of which 55 were approved (55%).

At the same time, the need for school places is increasing in line with the growing number of school-aged children. There is a huge need for places – 100,000 in total. Much seems to indicate that municipal budgeting will become a growing challenge. Premises represent the second-largest expense for schools, and the cost of building new premises to meet the need for school places would amount to billions for municipalities.<sup>7</sup> The question is whether independent schools can help to solve the school shortage in municipalities, considering the number of unsuccessful applications to set up new schools or expand the number of places.

According to Statistics Sweden’s population projection for 2021–2070, the number of children under 1 year of age will increase by 17%, children aged 1–5 will increase by 11% and children aged 6–15 by 8%.<sup>8</sup>



<sup>7</sup> Can Sweden manage the school shortage? About obstacles to setting up independent schools in the shadow of the growing school shortage (Swedish Association of Independent Schools, January 2020).

<sup>8</sup> Statistics Sweden's Population Projection 2021–2070, pp 22–24 (Statistics Sweden, 2021).

## Independent schools and segregation

Free school choice and independent schools are often accused of contributing to school segregation. The segregation of schools, interpreted as a uniform pupil composition, is mainly due to a highly segregated housing market and the fact that municipalities apply a proximity principle for admission to their municipal schools, which is why most pupils go to a municipal school close to where they live.<sup>9</sup>

**/ The question is whether independent schools can help to solve the school shortage in municipalities, considering the number of unsuccessful applications to set up new schools or expand the number of places.**

<sup>9</sup> Read more under Other relevant research and reports.

## Schools and pupils

### All municipalities have pupils who go to independent schools

There are independent preschools in 247 of Sweden's 290 municipalities. There are independent compulsory schools in 185 municipalities, and independent upper-secondary schools in 97 municipalities. There are municipal preschools and compulsory schools in all 290 municipalities. 254 municipalities have upper-secondary schools run by the municipality or region. Even municipalities without an independent school can have pupils who go to an independent school in another municipality.<sup>10</sup>

	Independent	Municipality/ Region
Preschools	247	290
Compulsory schools	185	290
Upper-secondary schools	97	254

III. 3. Number of municipalities with independent and state schools.

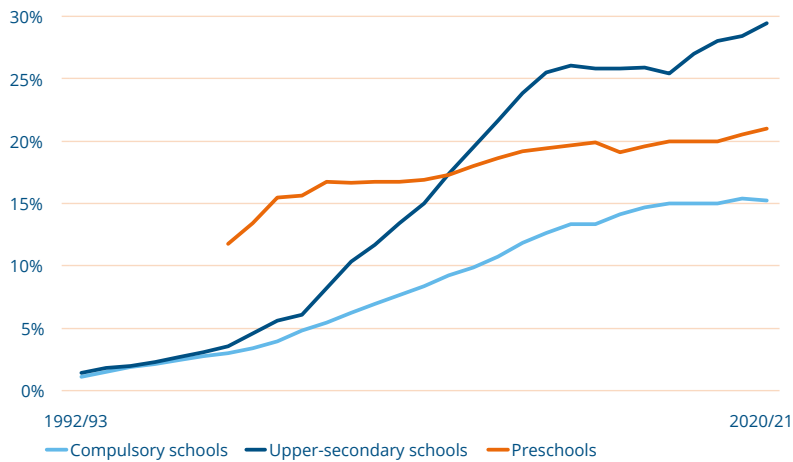
### Breakdown of schools – 1 in 4 are independent

There are 4,059 independent preschools and schools in Sweden. This represents 26% of all 15,665 preschools and schools in Sweden. 2,788 (29%) of the 9,589 preschools are independent. 822 (17%) of the 4,803 compulsory schools, and 449 (35%) of the 1,273 upper-secondary schools, are independent.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Table 1: Preschool and school units/after-school clubs. Children/pupils, 2020/21 academic year (Official Statistics of Sweden, 2021).

<sup>11</sup> Table 1: Preschool and school units/after-school clubs. Children/pupils, 2020/21 academic year (Official Statistics of Sweden, 2021).





Ill. 4. Percentage of children/pupils in independent schools (National Agency for Education, 2021).<sup>12</sup>

Independent schools are usually small. More than every third independent compulsory school (32%) has fewer than 100 pupils. Of the independent upper-secondary schools, slightly more than one fifth (21%) has fewer than 100 pupils. The average number of pupils per school unit in independent compulsory schools is 228, and 259 in municipal schools. The average number of pupils per school unit in independent upper-secondary schools is 237, and 311 in municipal schools<sup>13, 14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Compulsory schools – Pupil statistics, 20/21 academic year, Upper-secondary schools – Pupil statistics, 20/21 academic year (National Agency for Education, 2021) and Preschools – Children, % in independent schools (National Agency for Education comparative figures, 2021).

<sup>13</sup> Compulsory schools – Number of pupils per grade, 2020/21 academic year (National Agency for Education, 2021).

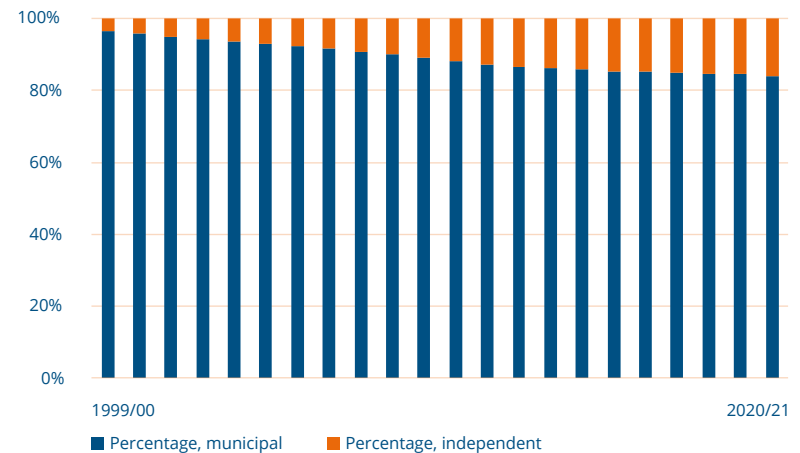
<sup>14</sup> Upper-secondary schools – Number of pupils, 2020/21 academic year (National Agency for Education, 2021).

## Breakdown of children and pupils – 1 in 5 go to an independent school

Just over 400,000 children and pupils go to an independent preschool, compulsory school or upper-secondary school, representing 19.3% of just over 2 million children and pupils in Swedish preschools and schools.

In preschools, almost 108,000 children (21%) go to an independent school (of a total of just over 517,000 children). The corresponding figure for compulsory schools<sup>15</sup> is 15%, just over 186,000 pupils (of a total of just over 1.2 million pupils), and 29% for upper-secondary schools, just over 106,000 pupils (of a total of just over 367,000 pupils).<sup>16</sup>

Both the number and percentage of pupils in independent schools have increased over the past 20 years, from 3% to 16%.



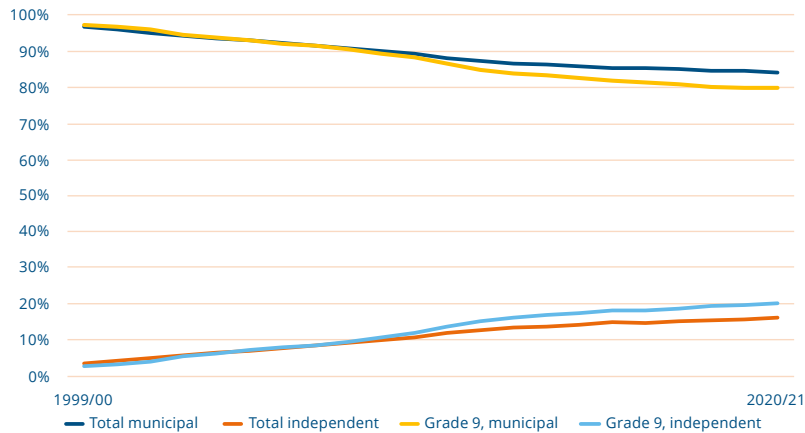
Ill. 5. Percentage of pupils in municipal and independent compulsory schools (National Agency for Education, 2021).<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Incl. preschool class.

<sup>16</sup> All types of schools and after-school clubs – Children/pupils – National level, Table 1: Preschool and school units/after-school clubs. Children/pupils, 2020/21 academic year (Official Statistics of Sweden, 2021).

<sup>17</sup> Table 2 A: School units and pupils, 2015/16–2020/21 academic years (Official Statistics of Sweden, 2021).

At the same time, as many as 20% of the compulsory school pupils who completed Grade 9 in 2021 went to an independent school. The closest school, which is usually municipal, is a more natural choice for younger children. As a pupil grows older, the range of possible school alternatives broadens.<sup>18</sup>



III. 6. Total percentage of pupils in compulsory school and percentage of Grade 9 (National Agency for Education, 2021).<sup>19</sup>

In the 2020/21 academic year, 91% of the pupils in independent compulsory schools went to schools with a general focus.<sup>20</sup> 6% went to confessional schools, and 3% to Waldorf schools.<sup>21</sup> There are 60 compulsory schools and six upper-secondary schools in Sweden with a religious affiliation, of which 57 are Christian and nine are Muslim confessional schools.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Number of pupils per grade, 2020/21 academic year (National Agency for Education, 2021).  
<sup>19</sup> Table 1: Preschool and school units/after-school clubs. Children/pupils 2020/21 academic year (Official Statistics of Sweden, 2021) and Compulsory schools – Number of pupils per grade (National Agency for Education, 2021).  
<sup>20</sup> This includes schools with a specialism, such as teaching method, language or subject area.  
<sup>21</sup> Table 2 G: School units and pupils, 2020/21 academic year, independent school units (Official Statistics of Sweden, 2021).  
<sup>22</sup> Source of information about six confessional upper-secondary schools: School Unit Register, Dec 2021. The information about religious affiliation is based on the information that proprietors have submitted to the Swedish Schools Inspectorate, which is voluntary (National Agency for Education, 2021).



III. 7. Breakdown of pupils in independent compulsory schools per school focus.<sup>23</sup>

In the independent upper-secondary schools, 63% of pupils are enrolled in a university preparatory programme, 30% in a vocational programme and 7% in an introductory programme.<sup>24</sup> The corresponding figures for municipal upper-secondary schools were 59% in a university preparatory programme, 28% in a vocational programme and 13% in an introductory programme.<sup>25</sup>

## Size and type of company – most have one or two units

The vast majority of proprietors<sup>26</sup> that run independent preschools, compulsory schools or upper-secondary schools have only one or two units. 89% of preschool proprietors have only one or two units, 70% of compulsory school proprietors have one or two units, and 43% of upper-secondary school proprietors have one or two units.

<sup>23</sup> Table 2 G: School units and pupils, 2020/21 academic year, independent school units (Official Statistics of Sweden, 2021).  
<sup>24</sup> Upper-secondary schools – Pupil statistics, 2020/21 academic year, independent proprietor (National Agency for Education, 2021).  
<sup>25</sup> Upper-secondary schools – Pupil statistics, 2020/21 academic year, municipal proprietor (National Agency for Education, 2021).  
<sup>26</sup> Proprietor refers to a school governor or a governing body that is affiliated via a company or a brand.

No. of units	No. of proprietors		
	Preschools	Compulsory schools	Upper-secondary schools
1	2,354	507	157
2	60	40	18
3	16	8	8
4	11	9	6
5	2	3	2
6	2	0	2
7	2	1	3
8	0	0	0
9	2	2	0
10	1	0	0
11-20	4	1	7
21-30	1	2	1
31-40	0	1	1
41-50	0	1	0
>50	1	0	0
Total	2,456	575	205

III. 8. Number of proprietors<sup>27</sup> who run preschools, compulsory schools and upper-secondary schools per number of school units they operate (National Agency for Education, 2021).<sup>28</sup>

Please note that this list of proprietors **cannot** be compared with The largest owners section at the end of this report, since one owner can own several proprietors – both large and small. One large owner may therefore own several proprietors with one, two or more units, as shown in The largest owners section.

<sup>27</sup> "Proprietor" is not used for preschools. The information refers to the number of brands/owners and should be considered uncertain.

<sup>28</sup> Information about preschools, 2020 (National Agency for Education, 2020), Compulsory schools – Number of pupils per grade (National Agency for Education, 20/21) and Upper-secondary schools – Number of pupils (National Agency for Education, 20/21).

13 preschool proprietors with more than five units (0.5% of the number of preschool proprietors) own 7.6% of the number of preschool units, eight compulsory school proprietors with more than five units (1.4% of the number of compulsory school proprietors) own 25.4% of the number of compulsory schools, and 14 upper-secondary school proprietors with more than five units (6.8% of the number of upper-secondary school proprietors) own 53.7% of the number of upper-secondary schools. In other words, the ownership concentration is highest for upper-secondary schools and lowest for preschools. For the distinction between an owner and a proprietor, refer to the introductory section: What is a proprietor and what does that mean for an independent school?

	Preschools	Compulsory schools	Upper-secondary schools
No. of proprietors with more than five units	13	8	14
Percentage of proprietors with more than five units	0.5%	1.4%	6.8%
Percentage of units owned by proprietors with more than five units	7.6%	25.4%	53.7%

III. 9. The number of independent proprietors in each type of school with more than five units, their share of the number of proprietors and number of units.<sup>29</sup>

70% of all compulsory schools and upper-secondary schools are run as a limited liability company, and attended by 78% of the pupils.<sup>30</sup>

	Compulsory schools and upper-secondary schools	
	Pupils	Schools
Limited liability companies	78%	70%
Associations	11%	19%
Foundations	11%	10%
Others*	1%	1%

III. 10. Schools and pupils in independent compulsory and upper-secondary schools per form of legal entity (National Agency for Education, 2021. 2020/21 academic year).

\*general partnership, limited partnership or religious group

<sup>29</sup> Information about preschools, 2020 (National Agency for Education, 2020), Compulsory schools – Number of pupils per grade (National Agency for Education, 20/21) and Upper-secondary schools – Number of pupils (National Agency for Education, 20/21).

<sup>30</sup> Table 2 A: School units and pupils, 2015/16–2020/21 academic years (Official Statistics of Sweden, 2021).

Upper-secondary schools account for the highest share of limited liability companies. 88% of these schools are run as a limited liability company. 87% of the pupils in independent schools go to these schools.

	Upper-secondary schools			
	Pupils		Schools	
Limited liability companies	92,148	87%	394	88%
Associations*	1,821	2%	11	2%
Foundations	11,344	11%	37	8%
Others**	900	1%	7	2%

III. 11. Schools and pupils in independent upper-secondary schools per form of legal entity (National Agency for Education, 2021)

\* Economic and non-profit

\*\* General partnerships and religious groups

For compulsory schools, 61% of independent schools are run as a limited liability company and 72% of the pupils in independent compulsory schools go to a school that is run as a company.

	Compulsory schools			
	Pupils		Schools	
Limited liability companies	124,091	72%	502	61%
Associations*	29,207	17%	226	27%
Foundations	18,163	11%	86	10%
Others**	860	0%	8	1%

III. 12. School units and pupils, 2015/16–2020/21 academic years (Official Statistics of Sweden, 2021).

\* Economic and non-profit

\*\* General partnerships and religious groups

45% of the independent preschools are run as a company and attended by 58% of the preschool children.<sup>31</sup>

	Preschools			
	Children		Units	
Companies**	62,379	58%	1,243	45%
Natural persons	291	0.3%	10	0.4%
Others**	45,231	42%	1,535	55%

III. 13. (National Agency for Education, 2021)

\*\* Limited liability companies, partnerships, general partnerships, limited partnerships

\*\*\* Economic associations, non-profit associations and registered religious groups

31 Table 3: Number of preschool units and enrolled children per operational and legal form, 2015–2020 (Official Statistics of Sweden, 2021).

## Pupil background – higher percentage of pupils with a foreign background in independent schools

In 2020/21, 27% of the pupils in independent compulsory schools had a foreign background. The corresponding figure for municipal compulsory schools was 26%.<sup>32</sup> 32% of the pupils in independent upper-secondary schools had a foreign background, and 29% in municipal upper-secondary schools.<sup>33</sup> The corresponding figure for region-operated upper-secondary schools is 5%.<sup>34</sup>

The differences in the socio-economic backgrounds of pupils in independent and municipal compulsory schools is gradually decreasing. More and more pupils have at least one parent with post-secondary education.<sup>35</sup> In compulsory schools, 71% of the pupils in independent schools have parents with post-secondary education. In municipal compulsory schools, the corresponding figure is 59%.<sup>36</sup> In upper-secondary schools, 55% of the pupils who go to independent schools have parents with post-secondary education, and 54% in municipal schools.<sup>37</sup> In region-operated upper-secondary schools, 47% of the pupils have parents with post-secondary education.<sup>38</sup>

32 Compulsory schools – Pupil statistics (National Agency for Education, 2021).

33 Upper-secondary schools – Pupil statistics (National Agency for Education, 2021).

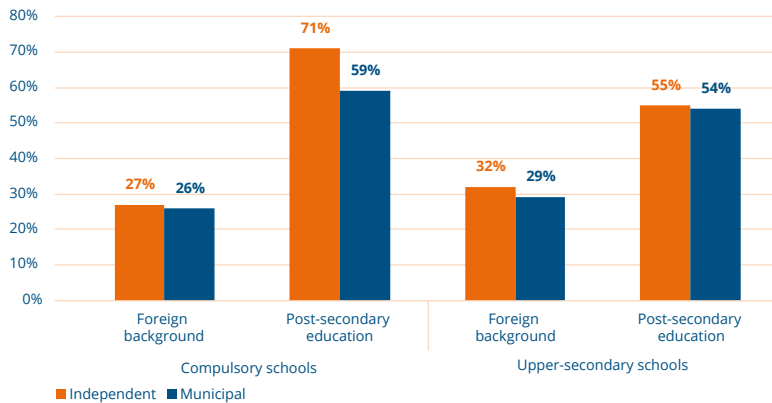
34 Upper-secondary schools – Pupil statistics, 2020/21 academic year (National Agency for Education, 2021).

35 Compulsory schools – Pupil statistics (National Agency for Education, 2021).

36 Compulsory schools – Pupil statistics (National Agency for Education, 2021).

37 Upper-secondary schools – Pupil statistics (National Agency for Education, 2021).

38 Upper-secondary schools – Pupil statistics, 2020/21 academic year (National Agency for Education, 2021).



Ill. 14. The socio-economic background of pupils in 2020/21 (National Agency for Education, 2021).

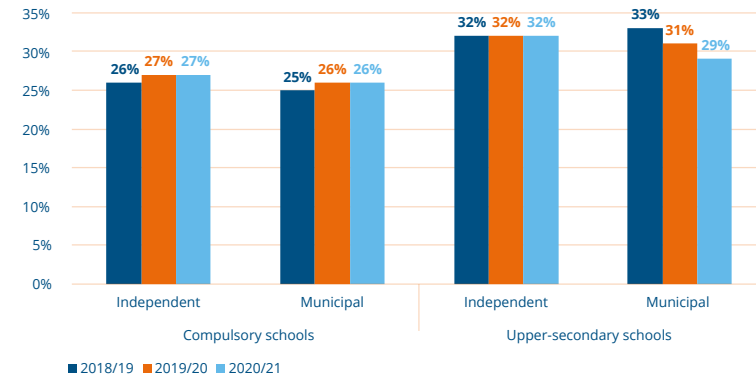
The changes compared with 2019/20 are minor. The percentage of pupils with a foreign background in municipal upper-secondary schools has fallen 2 percentage points, and the percentage of pupils in municipal upper-secondary schools whose parents have post-secondary education has increased 2 percentage points.<sup>39</sup>

Compulsory school		Foreign background	Post-secondary education
20/21	Independent	27%	71%
	Municipal	26%	59%
19/20	Independent	27%	70%
	Municipal	26%	58%
18/19	Independent	26%	69%
	Municipal	25%	57%
Upper-secondary school		Foreign background	Post-secondary education
20/21	Independent	32%	55%
	Municipal	29%	54%
19/20	Independent	32%	54%
	Municipal	31%	52%
18/19	Independent	32%	52%
	Municipal	33%	49%

Ill. 15. The socio-economic background of pupils in 2020/21 compared with earlier (National Agency for Education, 2021).

<sup>39</sup> The socio-economic background of pupils in 2020/21 (National Agency for Education, 2021).

The following diagram shows the trend over the past three years.

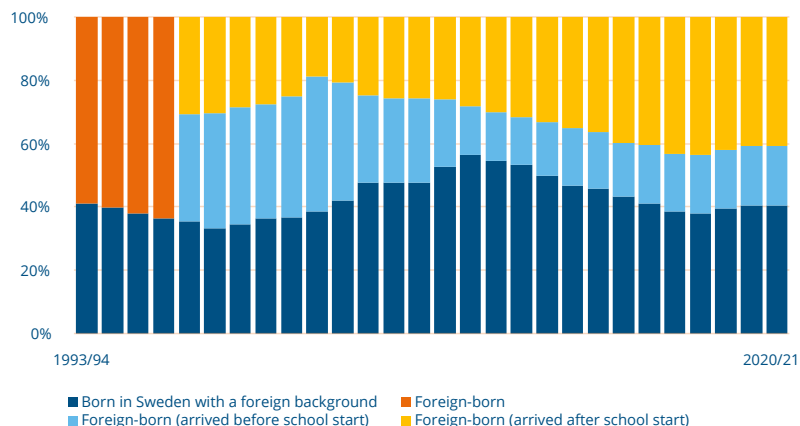


Ill. 16. Pupils with a foreign background (National Agency for Education, 2021).

The percentage of pupils with a foreign background increased in 2020/21, except in upper-secondary schools where it remained unchanged in independent upper-secondary schools and deteriorated in municipal upper-secondary schools, compared with 2018/19.

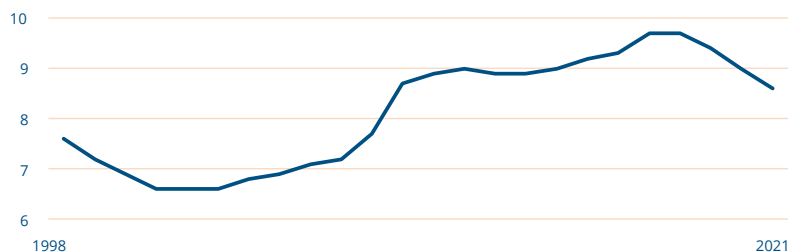
During the 2000s, the percentage of pupils with a foreign background in compulsory schools rose from 15% to 26%.

For the group of pupils with a foreign background, the percentage who immigrated to Sweden after the beginning of the school year accounted for the biggest increase in compulsory schools during the 2000s. In recent years, this group has accounted for about 40% of the pupils with a foreign background in Grade 9.



III. 17. Pupils with a foreign background in compulsory schools per country of birth, Grade 9, 1993–2021 (Official Statistics of Sweden; Table 1A: Pupils who completed Grade 9, 2016/17–2020/21, 2021 academic years).

The age of foreign-born children when they arrive in Sweden is highly significant for their academic performance. The later a pupil arrives in Sweden, the fewer years they have to achieve the results. The average age of immigration has risen over the past 20 years. There was a steep increase in the average age of immigration between 2007 and 2010, and the figure continued to rise, albeit at a slower rate, to almost ten years in 2017.



III. 18. Average ages of immigration (most recent year of immigration) for foreign-born Grade 9 pupils, 1998–2021 (National Agency for Education, 2021).

## Socio-economic redistribution of school voucher funding

Since about 12 years ago, three quarters of the municipalities in major cities and near major cities have been distributing some of the school voucher funding in the form of a socio-economic structural fund. More than half of the small municipalities and rural municipalities do so. The need for redistribution is motivated by the fact that not all pupils have the same conditions.

Large cities are usually more heterogeneous with a higher degree of residential segregation which, in itself, affects the pupil population of the schools. There are also more schools to choose from in large municipalities which, in turn, can create different pupil compositions in different schools. Rural municipalities rarely have a range of schools to choose from and also have fewer schools in total. Almost half of the municipalities that apply socio-economic distribution redistributed up to 5% of school voucher funding based on socio-economic factors. One-third redistributed 6–10%, one-sixth 11–15% and the remaining municipalities more than 20%.<sup>40</sup>

There is a general shift in how the redistribution is calculated, away from the SALSA<sup>41</sup> parameters, parental educational level, boy or girl and foreign background, to the index used by the National Agency for Education for distribution of the equity contribution:<sup>42</sup>

- ♦ guardian educational level
- ♦ year of the pupil’s immigration to Sweden
- ♦ income of the guardians
- ♦ the pupil’s sex
- ♦ financial assistance to the guardians
- ♦ if the pupil is registered at the same address as both guardians
- ♦ number of siblings registered at the address
- ♦ socio-economic status of the residential area where the pupil is registered

<sup>40</sup> Socio-economic resource distribution in schools and preschools (Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, 2018).

<sup>41</sup> National Agency for Education’s Tool for Local Relationship Assessments (SALSA)

<sup>42</sup> State funding for a more equitable school system (National Agency for Education, 2021).

## Percentage of pupils entitled to home-language tuition and percentage of pupils with special educational needs

In independent compulsory schools, 27% of the pupils are entitled to home-language tuition. In municipal compulsory schools, the figure is 29%. 18.2% of the pupils in independent compulsory schools participate in home-language tuition, representing 67% of those who are entitled. In municipal schools, 16.9% of the pupils participate, corresponding to 58% of those who are entitled.

The percentage of pupils with special educational needs (and an action plan) in independent schools is 5.3%, and 5.9% in municipal schools. At the same time, a higher percentage of pupils in independent schools receive individual tuition.<sup>43</sup>

	Independent	State
With action plan	5.3%	5.9%
Receive individual tuition	1.6%	0.9%
In special needs group	1.1%	1.3%
Individually adapted study programme	1.2%	1.2%
With study guidance in home language	0.7%	3.4%
Entitled to home-language tuition	27.0%	29.0%
Participants in home-language tuition	18.2%	16.9%

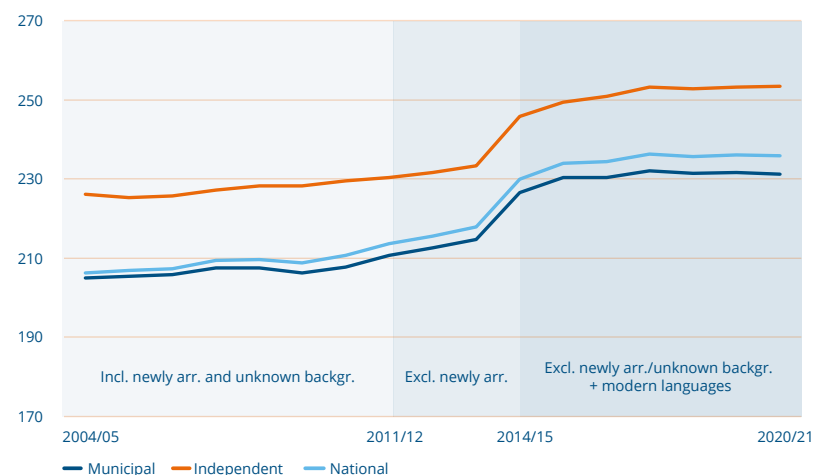
Ill. 19. Percentage of pupils entitled to home-language tuition and percentage of pupils with special educational needs (National Agency for Education, 2021)

43 Tables 8A and 9B (Official Statistics of Sweden, 2021).

## Academic achievement

### Pupils in independent compulsory schools have 10% higher grades

In independent compulsory schools, the average merit rating for a pupil in Grade 9 for the 2020/21 academic year was 253.5 points (excluding newly arrived immigrant pupils and pupils with an unknown background). The national average was 235.9, and 231.2 for municipal schools. In upper-secondary schools for the 2020/21 academic year, the average grade points for pupils with a school leaving certificate from an independent school was 15.0, and 14.8 from a municipal school.<sup>44</sup>

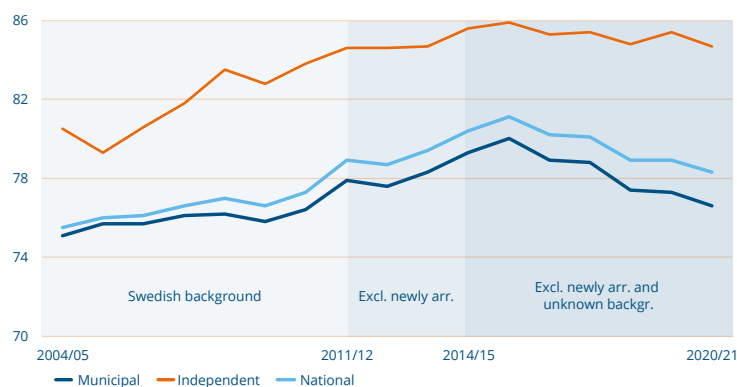


Ill. 20. Average merit rating Grade 9, 2004/05–2020/21. Separate reporting of newly arrived immigrant pupils began in 2011/12 and these pupils are subsequently excluded from the total. After 2014/2015, both newly arrived immigrant pupils and pupils with an unknown background were excluded from the total. Compulsory schools – Final grades, Grade 9 (National Agency for Education, 2021).

44 Upper-secondary schools – Graduating pupils, national programmes (National Agency for Education, 2021).

## Goal achievement – more pupils achieve the goals in independent schools

In independent compulsory schools, 84.7% of Grade 9 pupils (excluding newly arrived immigrant pupils and pupils with an unknown background) achieved the proficiency requirements in all subjects in 2020/21. The national figure is 78.3% and 76.6% for municipal schools.



III. 21. Percentage of Grade 9 pupils who achieved the proficiency requirements in all subjects. Separate reporting of newly arrived immigrant pupils began in 2011/12 and these pupils are subsequently excluded from the total. After 2014/2015, both newly arrived immigrant pupils and pupils with an unknown background were excluded from the total. Compulsory schools – Final grades, Grade 9 (National Agency for Education, 2021).

The presentation of parental educational level shows that a higher proportion of Grade 9 pupils in independent schools achieved the proficiency requirements in all subjects, regardless of parental educational level or the pupil’s country of origin.<sup>45</sup>

Parental educational level	Independent	Municipal
Post-secondary	89% (15%)	85% (46%)
Pre-secondary or secondary	72% (6%)	61% (34%)

III. 22. Percentage of Grade 9 pupils who achieved the goals in all subjects per parental educational level, 2020/21 academic year. Each group’s share of all Grade 9 pupils is shown in parentheses.

Country of origin	Independent	Municipal
Swedish background	87% (75%)	81% (74%)
Foreign background, born in Sweden	80% (14%)	68% (10%)
Foreign background, foreign-born	73% (12%)	49% (16%)

III. 23. Percentage of pupils who achieved the goals in all subjects per country of origin, 2020/21 academic year. Each group’s total share of all Grade 9 pupils is shown in parentheses. Compulsory schools – Final grades, Grade 9. (National Agency for Education, 2021)

The percentage of Grade 9 pupils who were eligible for upper-secondary school in 2020/21 was highest in independent schools. 92.5% of the pupils in independent schools were eligible for vocational programmes. The corresponding figure for municipal schools was 84.6%.

	Vocational programmes	University preparatory programmes		
		Aesthetics	Economics, Humanities, Civics	Science, Technology
Independent	92.5%	91.6%	90.4%	89.5%
Municipal	84.6%	83.3%	81.7%	80.2%

III. 24. Percentage of pupils who were eligible for upper-secondary school programmes, 2020/21. Compulsory schools – Grades and Tests – National level, Official Statistics of Sweden (National Agency for Education, 2021).

<sup>45</sup> Compulsory schools – Final grades, Grade 9 (National Agency for Education, 2021).



75.0% of the pupils in independent upper-secondary schools completed their education within three years in 2021.<sup>46</sup> 66.5% of the pupils in municipal upper-secondary schools completed upper-secondary school within three years.

	First academic year		
	2018	2017	2016
	3 years	4 years	5 years
Independent	75.0%	77.2%	75.9%
Municipal	66.5%	69.5%	71.3%

Ill. 25. Percentage of the pupils who left in 2021 who completed upper-secondary school within 3, 4 and 5 years. Upper-secondary schools – Throughput (National Agency for Education, 2021).

## Pupils in independent schools perform better in subject tests and PISA<sup>47</sup>

For the 2019/20 and 2020/21 academic years, there were essentially no national tests due to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>48</sup>

In PISA 2018, the Swedish results continued to rise. 67% of the deterioration in test scores since PISA 2000 has now been erased. Among pupils with at least one parent born in Sweden, the entire deterioration has been reversed.

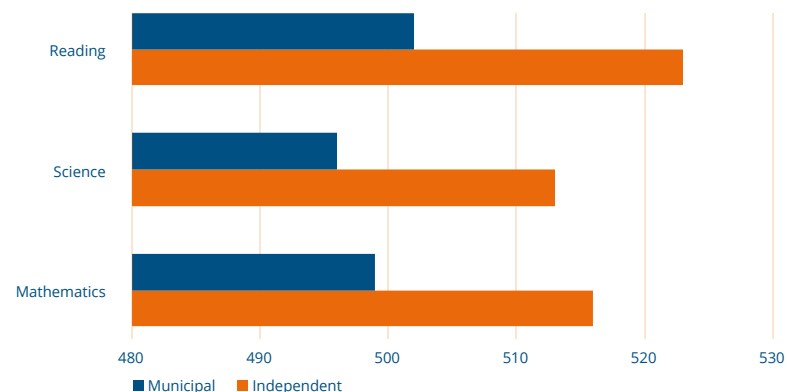
In PISA 2018, all Grade 9 pupils in independent schools performed better in all subject tests. The difference was 17 points for science, 17 points for mathematics and 21 points for reading.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Pupils who completed upper-secondary school are those pupils with a school leaving certificate, or a study certificate for graded courses of 2,500 points or more.

<sup>47</sup> During the spring term of 2018, there were signs that some of the national tests in mathematics for Grade 9 had been accessed in advance. The National Agency for Education therefore recommended that schools use substitute tests. The results from these tests were not collected. Instead, when collecting the results, the instructions were to state “the pupil did not participate,” which means that normal tests were not used. For the test results in mathematics, the total percentage of pupils who were reported as “the pupil did not participate” was so high (nearly 76%) that the results cannot be published with the quality required for official statistics under Section 3a of the Swedish Official Statistics Act (2001:99).

<sup>48</sup> National Agency for Education, 2021.

<sup>49</sup> What can we learn from PISA 2018? Factors affecting the results of Swedish pupils, page 15 (Confederation of Swedish Enterprise, 2021).



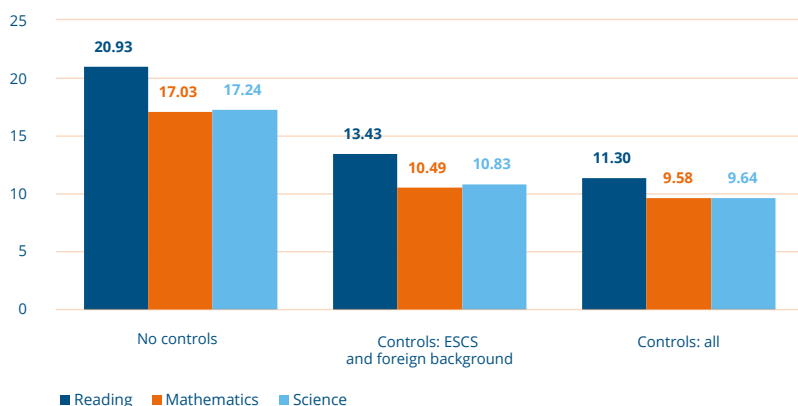
Ill. 26. Points per test in PISA 2018.<sup>50</sup>

By adjusting the PISA measure of socio-economic status (ESCS)<sup>51</sup> and foreign background – which the National Agency for Education usually includes as control variables in its analyses – the difference is reduced, but remains statistically significant for all three subjects. If *all* control variables<sup>52</sup> are adjusted, the difference is further decreased, but only marginally, and remains statistically significant. The difference in favour of independent schools with all control variables included is 11 points for reading and 10 points for both mathematics and science. This corresponds roughly to the learning that takes place during one-third of an academic year.

<sup>50</sup> What can we learn from PISA 2018? Factors affecting the results of Swedish pupils (Confederation of Swedish Enterprise, November 2021).

<sup>51</sup> It is derived from three variables: indices of household possessions, parental educational achievement and parental occupational status. PISA 2018 can also be adjusted for the educational achievement and occupational status of both parents. What can we learn from PISA 2018? Factors affecting the results of Swedish pupils, page 15 (Confederation of Swedish Enterprise, 2021).

<sup>52</sup> These include pupils’ sex, age and age on arrival in Sweden, the languages that pupils speak at home, how many years the pupils went to preschool, digital resources in the home, and the emotional support offered by parents, based on how the pupils respond to these three statements. What can we learn from PISA 2018? Factors affecting the results of Swedish pupils, page 15 (Confederation of Swedish Enterprise, 2021).



III. 27. Differences between independent and municipal schools in PISA 2018. The scale shows the difference in points between independent and municipal schools.<sup>53</sup>

Reasons for the differences could be that the independent schools differ from municipal schools in that the pupils receive more adapted teaching than pupils in municipal schools, receive more feedback, and have a better study climate and more often digital aids in the classroom, a rough total of 5 score points (40%) of their advantage over municipal schools. They also receive more teacher support, but this difference is not statistically significant.<sup>54</sup>

At the same time, pupils in independent schools also report higher values for several variables with a negative correlation to the results. They more often use subject-related IT outside the classroom, are more often late for school and more often skip a whole day of school than pupils in municipal schools, a rough total of 4-5 score points, where independent schools could further improve their PISA results. They also use more IT in school generally and more often skip individual classes, but these differences are not statistically significant.

<sup>53</sup> What can we learn from PISA 2018? Factors affecting the results of Swedish pupils, page 17 (Confederation of Swedish Enterprise, 2021).

<sup>54</sup> What can we learn from PISA 2018? Factors affecting the results of Swedish pupils, pp 21–22 (Confederation of Swedish Enterprise, 2021).

## Why choose an independent school?

### Why parents choose independent schools

- ♦ **Absence of violence/bullying** is valued higher by parents who have chosen an independent school than those with children in a municipal school. Absence of violence/bullying and order in the classroom are the most important things that motivate parents in their school choice.<sup>55</sup>
- ♦ **The teaching method** is highly significant for parents with children in an independent school, and that the school cares about the children/pupils and offers support for problems.<sup>56</sup>
- ♦ The statement *The school's style of teaching suits the way my child learns* gets a clearly higher score from the parents of children in independent schools (8.0 compared with 7.0 for municipal schools on a scale of 1 to 10).<sup>57</sup>
- ♦ **Small group teaching** is valued higher by parents of children in independent schools than parents who have chosen a municipal school – despite the fact that independent schools have larger groups of pupils on average.<sup>58</sup>
- ♦ **Communication** between the preschool and the parent about the child's development is perceived as better in independent schools than municipal schools.<sup>59</sup>
- ♦ Parents with children in independent schools do not value **proximity to the school** as highly as parents with children in municipal schools. They also attach less importance to the school chosen by their child's friends than parents with children in municipal schools.<sup>60</sup>
- ♦ According to international research, parents with a weak socio-economic background place more value on **academic quality** over factors such as well-being in their school choice, while more highly paid parents are more likely to prioritise soft factors such as how the pupils treat each other, well-being, and so forth.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Compulsory school choice (Swedish Association of Independent Schools, Almega, 2018, page 4).

<sup>56</sup> How satisfied are parents and pupils with their school, 2016 and 2019 (Swedish Quality Index, 2020).

<sup>57</sup> Municipal vs. Independent schools – what parents and teachers think about their compulsory school.

A summary of the Swedish Schools Inspectorate's school survey, autumn term 2016 (Swedish Association of Independent Schools, 2017).

<sup>58</sup> Compulsory school choice, page 4.

<sup>59</sup> How satisfied are parents and pupils with their school, 2016 and 2019 (Swedish Quality Index, 15 January 2020).

<sup>60</sup> Compulsory school choice, page 4.

<sup>61</sup> Compulsory school choice, page 4.

## Why pupils choose independent schools

The older they get, the more children can influence the choice of their school. When moving from elementary school up to intermediate school, it becomes important that parents and children agree on their choice of school, and even more important when moving up to lower-secondary school. The roles are reversed when choosing an upper-secondary school – the pupils choose their school, while parents play an important role by offering advice.

The reasons given by pupils for choosing an independent school are:

- ♦ the school has a **special focus or working method**
- ♦ **the classroom environment**, more modern, smaller, calmer and nicer/younger teachers
- ♦ new/social relationships

Soft values such as a calm classroom environment, stimulation and challenges are rated higher by pupils in independent schools compared with pupils in municipal schools.<sup>62</sup>

For upper-secondary schools, many pupils choose independent schools because they are smaller, and municipal schools because they have more pupils and often have more traditions and social activities.

<sup>62</sup> Pupils at independent schools are more satisfied with their classroom environment (Svenska Dagbladet, 2018).

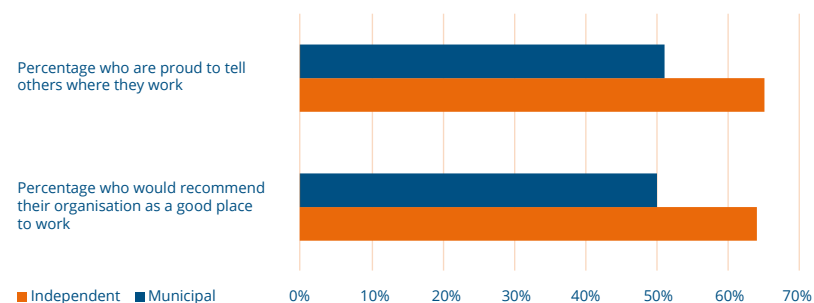
## Why teachers choose independent schools

Teachers in independent schools are more satisfied than teachers in municipal schools in all questions asked by the Swedish Quality Index survey's Job Health Index<sup>63</sup> below. The largest difference was noted for the question of whether sickness absence is low at the workplace (25 percentage points).

The difference for *The immediate manager's ability to provide feedback on your performance* and *It is possible to receive support and assistance for managing a heavy workload* is also high (18 and 17 percentage points, respectively).

### Workplace pride

Teachers in independent schools feel a greater sense of **pride** when telling others about where they work than teachers in municipal schools, and are more likely to recommend their school as a good place to work. The difference is 14 percentage points.

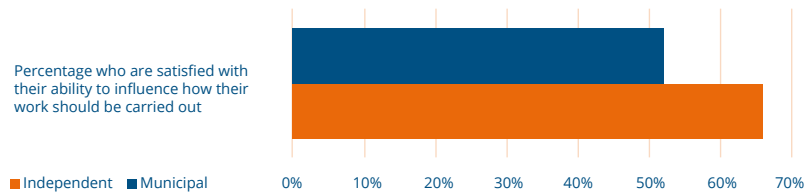


Ill. 28. Workplace pride (Job Health Index 2021)

<sup>63</sup> Swedish Quality Index survey, Job Health Index 2021. 548 teachers in municipal schools, and 351 teachers in independent schools, responded to a total of 73 questions.

### Ability to influence

Teachers in independent schools feel they are more able to influence how their work should be carried out than teachers in municipal schools. The difference is 14 percentage points.



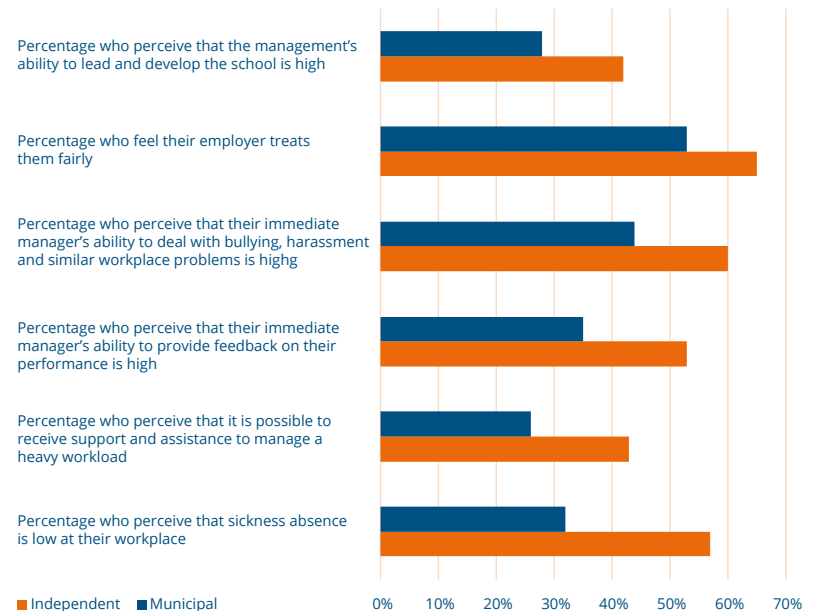
III. 29. Ability to influence (Job Health Index 2021)

### Leadership/occupational health and safety (OHS)

Teachers in independent schools feel that senior management is more able to lead and develop the school than is perceived by teachers in municipal schools. They more often feel fairly treated by their employer and that the ability of their immediate manager to deal with bullying, harassment and similar workplace problems is better than in municipal schools. The difference is 14, 12 and 12 percentage points, respectively.

Teachers in independent schools more often feel that the immediate manager's ability to provide feedback on their performance is good and that it is possible to receive support and assistance for managing a heavy workload than teachers in municipal schools. The difference is 18 and 17 percentage points, respectively. The question about support and assistance for managing a heavy workload has the highest percentage of respondents who do not agree.

The largest difference between teachers in independent schools and teachers in municipal schools was related to sickness absence. 57% of the teachers in independent schools believe that sickness absence is low, compared with only 32% of municipal employees, a total difference of 25 percentage points.



III. 30. Leadership/OHS (Job Health Index 2021)

# Satisfaction

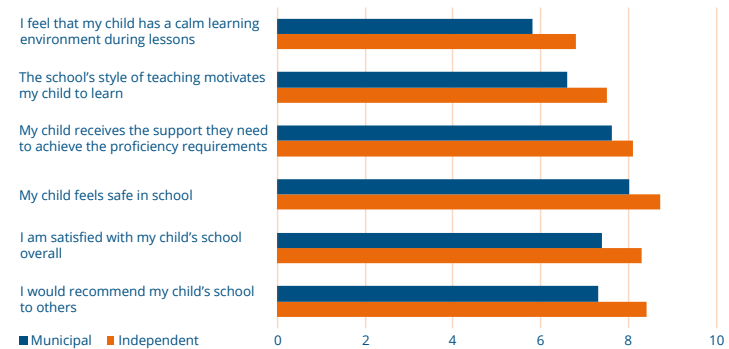
Every year, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate sends out a School Survey to guardians of pupils in compulsory schools, Grade 5 and 9 pupils, pupils in the second year of upper-secondary school and teaching staff in compulsory and upper-secondary schools. The results are used in the Swedish Schools Inspectorate’s risk assessment as a basis for determining the schools that should be prioritised in inspections.

For example, in the spring term of 2021, a survey for Grade 9 was sent out to 283 independent schools with 14,627 pupils and to 559 municipal schools with 45,208 pupils – about three times as many as in the preceding year.

The survey comprised a large number of questions. In the National Agency for Education’s database, the results for six of these questions are summarised for pupils, guardians and teaching staff, and the results for five of the questions for Grade 5 pupils. The mean value of the results is presented on a scale of one to ten in diagrams 31–36.

## More satisfied parents

For the six selected questions, parents with children in independent schools are more satisfied than parents with children in municipal schools. The largest difference was noted for the recommendation rate (+1.1). The difference in perceived calm classroom environment is also high (+1.0).

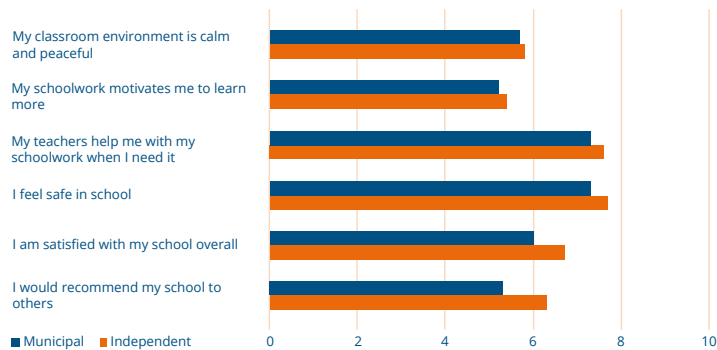


III. 31. Guardians, Grades 1–9, spring term 2021 (National Agency for Education, 2021). The Swedish Schools Inspectorate, School Survey 2021 results

The least difference was noted for the perception of how much the teachers help the child (+0.5).

## More satisfied Grade 9 pupils

Grade 9 pupils in independent schools are also more satisfied than pupils in the same grade in municipal schools for the six selected questions. The largest difference was noted for the recommendation rate (+1.0). The pupils in independent schools also feel more secure (+0.4).

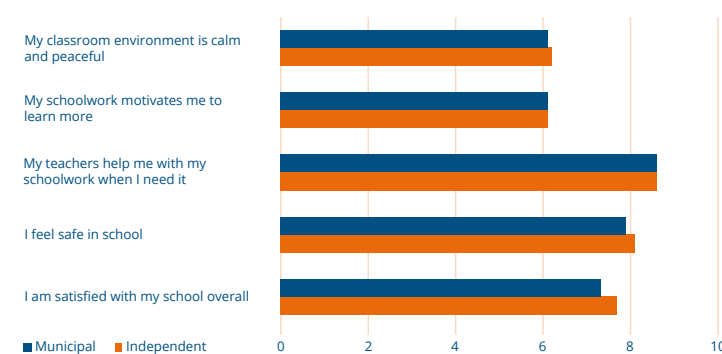


Ill. 32. Grade 9 pupils, spring term 2021 (National Agency for Education, 2021). The Swedish Schools Inspectorate, School Survey 2021 results

The least difference was noted for calm classroom environment (+0.1) and motivating schoolwork (+0.2).

## Also slightly more satisfied Grade 5 pupils

Grade 5 pupils in independent schools are also more satisfied than pupils in the same grade in municipal schools for three of the six questions summarised by the National Agency for Education. The largest difference was noted for overall satisfaction with the school (+0.4). Grade 5 pupils in independent schools also feel more secure (+0.2).

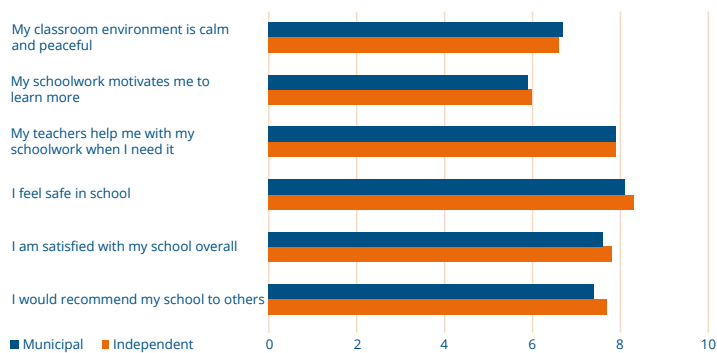


Ill. 33. Grade 5 pupils. Spring term 2021 (National Agency for Education, 2021). The Swedish Schools Inspectorate, School Survey 2021 results

However, the difference between independent schools and municipal schools is smaller for Grade 5 pupils than for Grade 9 pupils, and they perceive that they receive the same amount of help from their teachers in municipal schools and that their motivation to learn more is the same.

## Also more satisfied pupils in upper-secondary school

Second-year pupils in independent upper-secondary schools are more satisfied than second-year pupils in municipal schools for four of the six selected questions. The largest difference was noted for the recommendation rate (+0.3). Second-year pupils in independent upper-secondary schools also feel more secure (+0.2).

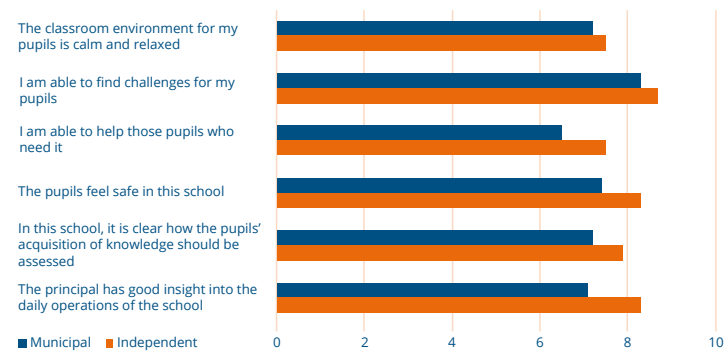


Ill. 34. Second-year pupils in upper-secondary school, spring term 2021 (National Agency for Education, 2021). The Swedish Schools Inspectorate, School Survey 2021 results

Second-year pupils in municipal upper-secondary schools perceive a slightly calmer classroom environment than pupils in independent schools.

## More satisfied compulsory school teachers

Teachers in independent compulsory schools are far more satisfied than teachers in municipal schools for the six selected questions.<sup>64</sup> The largest difference was noted for the perception of the principal’s insight into the daily operations (+1.2). The difference in conditions for helping pupils in need of help was also great (+1.0).



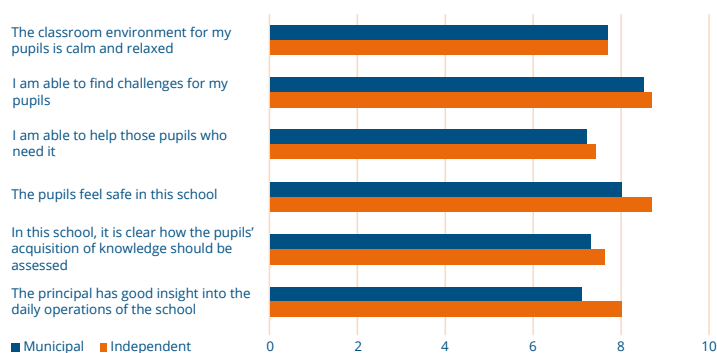
Ill. 35. Compulsory school teaching staff, spring term 2021 (National Agency for Education, 2021). The Swedish Schools Inspectorate, School Survey 2021 results

The least difference was noted for the perception of a calm classroom environment for the pupils (+0.3).

<sup>64</sup> The National Agency for Education has summarised the survey responses of teaching staff. Four of the questions correspond to four in the summary for guardians and pupils. Teachers are not asked questions about satisfaction, or the likelihood that they would recommend their school as a good place to work. The results of two other important questions have been included instead – assessment and principal.

## More satisfied upper-secondary school teachers

Teachers in independent upper-secondary schools are also more satisfied than teachers in municipal schools for the same six questions. The largest difference in upper-secondary schools was also noted for the perception of the principal’s insight into the daily operations (+0.9). The next-largest difference was noted for the perception of security for pupils (+0.7).



Ill. 36. Upper-secondary school teaching staff, spring term 2021 (National Agency for Education, 2021).

There is no difference in the perception of a calm classroom environment for the pupils.

## Employees

### Gainfully employed – 19% work at independent schools

In 2020, 431,858 people worked at schools and preschools in Sweden. Of all gainfully employed at the various types of schools, almost 81,000 (19%) work at independent schools.<sup>65</sup>

Type of school	State	Independent
Preschools	110,137	29,455
Compulsory schools	189,545	31,658
Compulsory schools for pupils with learning difficulties	3,750	531
Upper-secondary schools for pupils with learning difficulties	1,275	359
Upper-secondary school, university preparatory	37,641	12,171
Upper-secondary school, vocational programme	8,648	6,688
Total	350,996	80,862

Ill. 37. Number of gainfully employed in schools in 2020 (RAMS Statistics Sweden, 2021).

### Higher pupil-teacher ratio in early years at independent schools

The pupil-teacher ratio is expressed as the average number of pupils per teacher.

Grade	Independent			Municipal		
	18/19	19/20	20/21	18/19	19/20	20/21
Preschool	5.1	5.0	5.0	5.3	5.2	5.2
Preschool class	16.2	17.6	17.8	16.4	18	18.3
1-3	13.8	14.8	14.7	14.9	13.9	13.9
4-6	12	13.9	13.8	14	12.1	12.1
7-9	11	12.2	12.3	12.1	11.2	11.2

Ill. 38. Pupil-teacher ratio at schools with various combinations of school grades, 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21 academic years (National Agency for Education, 2021).

<sup>65</sup> Number of gainfully employed in schools in 2020 (RAMS Statistics Sweden, 2020).



From an international perspective, Sweden has the same pupil-teacher ratio in comprehensive schools as the OECD average. In elementary and intermediate schools, Sweden had 14.8 pupils per teacher in 2021. The OECD average was 15. For lower-secondary schools, the figures were 13.0 for Sweden and 13 for the OECD.<sup>66</sup>

## Teacher shortage

There are too few people who want to become teachers. The estimated shortage has been revised downwards by the National Agency for Education due to Statistics Sweden's estimates that the number of pupils will decrease slightly in the coming years before rising again. The National Agency for Education estimates a shortage of approximately 12,000 (full-time) qualified teachers and preschool teachers by 2035.<sup>67</sup> This equates to nearly one in 13 teachers of the estimated need for 153,000 teachers.<sup>68</sup>

Vocational teachers in upper-secondary schools and subject teachers for Grades 7–9 of compulsory schools are expected to account for the greatest shortage. A certain shortage of preschool teachers, as well as compulsory school teachers for Grades 4–6, is also expected by 2035. For subject teachers in upper-secondary schools, the total number of qualified teachers is expected to exceed the need.

In 2020, the proportion of qualified teachers was 72%, excluding preschools and after-school clubs. Another 12% had an education degree, but were not qualified to teach in the actual type of school or subject. The remaining 16% had either no, or only some, post-secondary education.

<sup>66</sup> Compulsory schools – Pupil statistics, 2020/21 academic year and Compulsory schools – Qualified staff statistics – per subject and category, 2020/21 academic year (National Agency for Education, 2021).

<sup>67</sup> Lärarprognos 2021. The estimates are based on the teacher situation in 2020 (National Agency for Education, 2021).

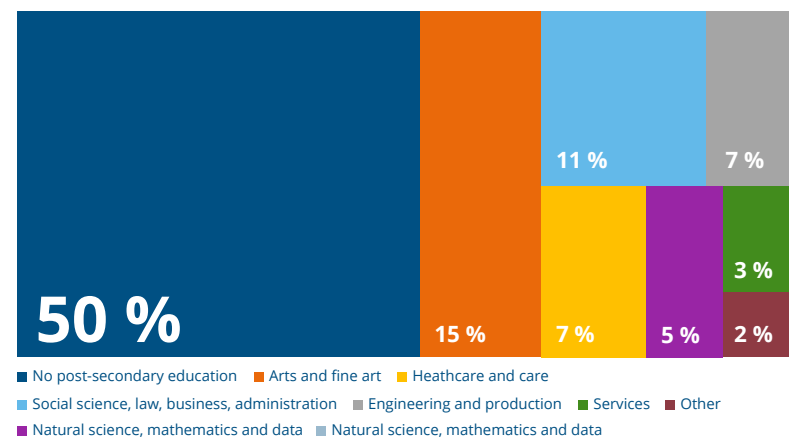
<sup>68</sup> Lärarprognos 2021. According to Lärarprognos 2019, there will be a shortage of 45,000 qualified teachers by 2033 (National Agency for Education, 2021).

To reduce the shortage of qualified teachers, the status of the teaching profession needs to be raised, the quality of teacher training needs to improve, the competence of unqualified teachers needs to be developed, and schools need to be organised so that unqualified teachers can continue working, according to Lärarprognosen (the Teacher Forecast).

## Unqualified teachers

In compulsory schools, there are more than 17,200 unqualified teachers in all subjects. However, 7% are qualified for a type of school other than compulsory schools, 5% have an education degree but are not certified, 25% have some form of post-secondary teaching training, and the remaining 63% have no post-secondary teacher training at all.<sup>69</sup>

Those with no post-secondary teacher training are not a homogeneous group.



Ill. 39. Background of unqualified teachers.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Lärarprognos 2021 (National Agency for Education, 2021).

<sup>70</sup> Unqualified teachers in compulsory schools are not an homogeneous group (National Agency for Education, 2021).

In many subjects, teachers who are qualified to teach in compulsory schools but not the specific subject account for a high share of the unqualified teachers. The largest proportion of unqualified teachers who are qualified to teach in compulsory schools but not the actual subject are teaching art (40%), technology (39%) and music (34%).

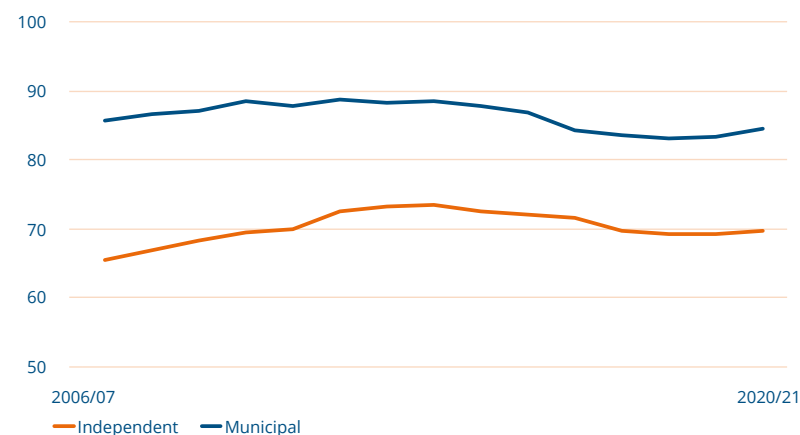
In home and consumer studies, physical education and health, music, modern languages and crafts, between one in four and one in ten teachers have no post-secondary teacher training at all.<sup>71</sup>

## The educational level of teachers is falling

Following an increase in the proportion of teachers with an education degree in Swedish schools up to 2013/14, the trend has deteriorated slightly in recent years in both independent and municipal schools. The proportion of qualified teachers in independent schools is 69.7%, compared with 84.5% in municipal compulsory schools.<sup>72</sup> Teachers with a foreign teaching qualification – who are employed in some independent schools – are not included in Statistics Sweden's statistics. In 2020/21, however, the proportion of teachers with an education degree rose slightly.

<sup>71</sup> Unqualified teachers in compulsory schools are not an homogeneous group (National Agency for Education, 2021).

<sup>72</sup> Compulsory schools – Staff statistics, 2020/21 academic year (National Agency for Education, 2021).



Ill. 40. Percentage of teachers with an education degree in compulsory schools (National Agency for Education, 2021).

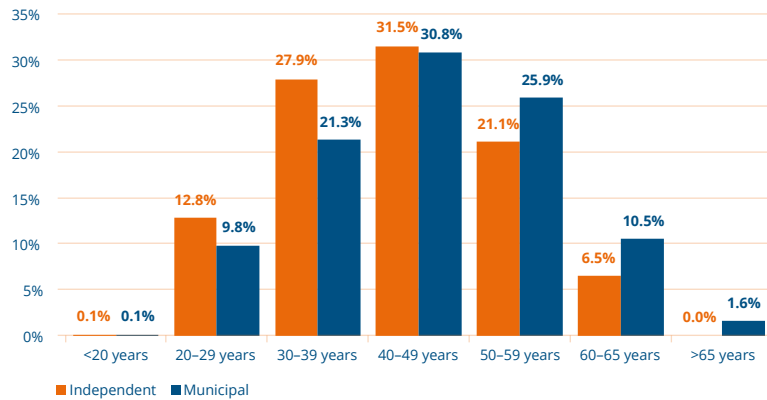
In upper-secondary schools, the proportion of teachers with an education degree is 71.5% in independent schools, 83.3% in municipal schools and 66.2% in region-operated schools.<sup>73</sup>

## Age of teachers – younger teachers in independent schools

Independent preschools and schools have younger teachers than municipal schools. In the preschool teacher/compulsory school teacher/recreation instructor group, 41% of the employees in independent schools are under the age of 40. In municipal schools, 31% are under 40. 39% of the teachers in independent upper-secondary schools are under the age of 40, and 22% in municipal schools.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Upper-secondary schools – Staff statistics, 2020/21 academic year (National Agency for Education, 2021).

<sup>74</sup> Table 1C. (Official Statistics of Sweden, 2021).



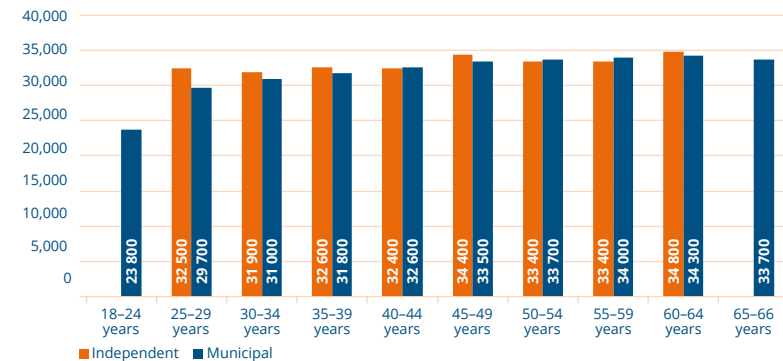
Ill. 41. Proportion of employees in the preschool teacher/compulsory school teacher/recreation instructor group per age group (Official Statistics of Sweden, 2021).

## Teacher salaries – higher starting salaries with private proprietors

Teachers in independent preschools and compulsory schools have higher salaries on average than teachers in municipal schools. The exceptions are preschool teachers aged 40–44 and 50–59, and compulsory school teachers aged 60 and over. Upper-secondary school teachers in municipal schools have higher salaries than teachers in independent schools, especially after the age of 35.<sup>75</sup>

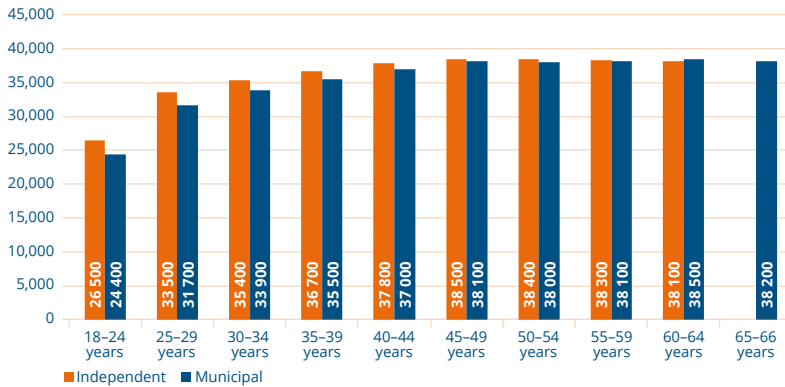
Age	Preschool teacher		Compulsory school teacher		Upper-secondary school teacher	
	Independent	Municipal	Independent	Municipal	Independent	Municipal
18–24 years	n/a	23,800	26,500	24,400	n/a	26,200
25–29 years	32,500	29,700	33,500	31,700	n/a	33,400
30–34 years	31,900	31,000	35,400	33,900	34,900	35,600
35–39 years	32,600	31,800	36,700	35,500	36,100	37,800
40–44 years	32,400	32,600	37,800	37,000	36,800	39,200
45–49 years	34,400	33,500	38,500	38,100	37,500	40,000
50–54 years	33,400	33,700	38,400	38,000	37,800	40,300
55–59 years	33,400	34,000	38,300	38,100	n/a	40,700
60–64 years	34,800	34,300	38,100	38,500	n/a	41,300
65–66 years	n/a	33,700	n/a	38,200	n/a	41,300

Ill. 42. Average monthly salary 2021 per occupation and age (Salary structure statistics, Statistics Sweden, 2021). n/a = no information available

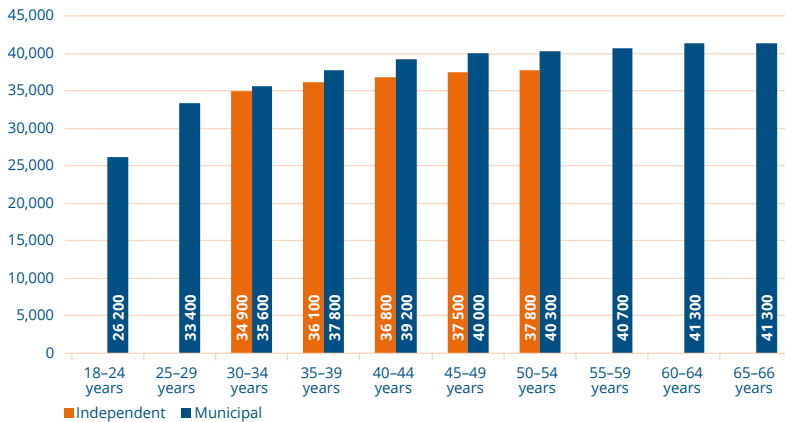


Ill. 43. Average monthly salary 2021 for preschool teachers (Salary structure statistics, Statistics Sweden, 2021).

<sup>75</sup> Average monthly salary in municipalities per Swedish Standard Classification of Occupations 2012 (SSYK 2012), age, sex and year, and Average monthly salary (total salary), private sector individuals (SLP), kronor per occupation (SSYK 2012), age, sex and year (Statistics Sweden, 2021).



Ill. 44. Average monthly salary 2021 for compulsory school teachers (Salary structure statistics, Statistics Sweden, 2021).



Ill. 45. Average monthly salary 2021 for upper-secondary school teachers. The salary structure statistics are based on a private sector sample survey. The information for teachers younger than 30 and older than 55 is either unavailable, too uncertain for disclosure or deleted for confidentiality purposes. (Salary structure statistics, Statistics Sweden, 2021).

# Finance

## Independent school funding

Swedish independent schools are financed by municipal school vouchers and state funding. It is not permitted to charge school fees or application/registration/waiting list fees. Education must be free of charge.

Independent schools are mainly funded by school vouchers, which are contributions paid by the municipalities in which the pupils live. The vouchers are calculated on a per pupil basis and correspond to the municipality’s own budgeted costs per pupil – the “basic amount” – for teaching, pupil health, buildings, and so forth. In many municipalities, some of the budget is earmarked for socio-economic redistribution (a structural fund) and for pupils with special educational needs – in normal schools, or in schools for children with special educational needs (additional funding).

In 2020, total municipal costs for the 15% of pupils who go to independent compulsory schools was just over SEK 18.4 billion, corresponding to 14.5% of total costs for compulsory schools.<sup>76</sup> In 2020, independent compulsory schools received funding of SEK 98,100 per pupil from the municipalities.<sup>77</sup>

The schools also receive various forms of state funding, which has increased in recent years. Several forms of state funding are available for various extra-curricula activities and pilot projects.

<sup>76</sup> Costs for schools and other educational activities in 2020, page 9 (National Agency for Education, 2021).  
<sup>77</sup> Costs for schools and other educational activities in 2020, page 12 (National Agency for Education, 2021).

According to the National Agency for Education, municipal school vouchers fund 90.7% of the costs for independent compulsory schools.<sup>78</sup> This means that state funding accounts for most of the difference, about SEK 10,000/pupil, or almost 10%. In 2021, the state granted funding of SEK 6.3 billion in the equity contribution alone, which is available to all compulsory schools on the basis of socio-economic background factors.

## Independent schools receive less funding than municipal schools

The issue of whether school voucher funding is calculated equally for independent and municipal schools is a constantly recurring discussion and has been raised by the Equity Inquiry.<sup>79</sup> According to the Inquiry, independent schools are over-funded in relation to municipal schools, since they do not have the same responsibility as municipalities to ensure participation in compulsory schooling and must also maintain an even capacity across demographic cycles. The Inquiry proposes that municipalities should be able to deduct these costs when school voucher funding for independent schools is determined.<sup>80</sup>

School researcher Gabriel Heller-Sahlgren has calculated that total public funding of independent schools in 2018 was just over SEK 105,000 per pupil, and that municipal resources, excluding school transport, amounted to SEK 113,400 per pupil in those municipalities with independent schools. This means that in 2018, independent schools received SEK 8,300-8,500 less funding per pupil than municipal schools, or about 8%.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Costs for schools and other educational activities in 2020, page 12 (National Agency for Education, 2021).

<sup>79</sup> A more equitable school system (SOU, 2020:28).

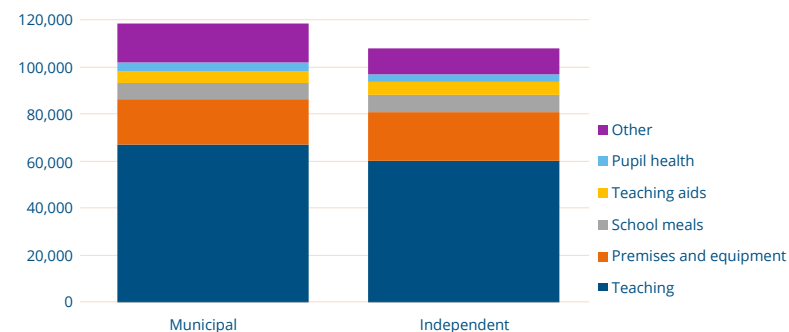
<sup>80</sup> A more equitable school system, 9.2.3, page 528 (SOU, 2028:28).

<sup>81</sup> Independent schools and school costs, page 33 (Confederation of Swedish Enterprise, 2020). This applies despite the fact that the additional costs allegedly incurred by municipalities for complying with their regulatory responsibilities, such as compulsory schooling and the reception of newly arrived immigrants, according to A more equitable school system (SOU 2020:28), section 3.3.2, page 122 if were credited to the municipalities. Municipal costs for school transport were also deducted.

## Independent schools have lower costs per pupil

The proprietors' costs and their composition are based on information that they themselves have submitted to the National Agency for Education.<sup>82</sup> In 2020, the cost per pupil in municipal compulsory schools was SEK 118,200, according to the municipalities<sup>83</sup>. In 2020, the cost per pupil in independent compulsory schools was SEK 108,100, according to the independent schools<sup>84</sup>.

According to the reported costs, independent compulsory schools had higher average costs per pupil for premises and equipment, school meals and teaching aids in 2020, a total of SEK 1,900 per pupil. This is partly due to the fact that independent schools, unlike municipal schools, are not entitled to full VAT recovery.<sup>85</sup> This is one important explanation for why independent schools have higher premises costs. Costs for pupil health and teaching are higher in municipal schools, a total of SEK 2,150 per pupil. The 'Other' cost type is therefore SEK 4,900 higher per pupil in municipal schools.<sup>86</sup>



III. 46. Costs in compulsory schools 2020, page 11 (National Agency for Education, 2021).

<sup>82</sup> Costs for schools and other educational activities in 2020, page 5. The National Agency for Education requests information from municipal and private proprietors via Statistics Sweden (National Agency for Education, 2021).

<sup>83</sup> Costs for schools and other educational activities in 2020, page 12 (National Agency for Education, 2021).

<sup>84</sup> Costs for schools and other educational activities in 2020, page 12 (National Agency for Education, 2021).

<sup>85</sup> Independent schools recover VAT via a flat-rate refund of 6% of school vouchers.

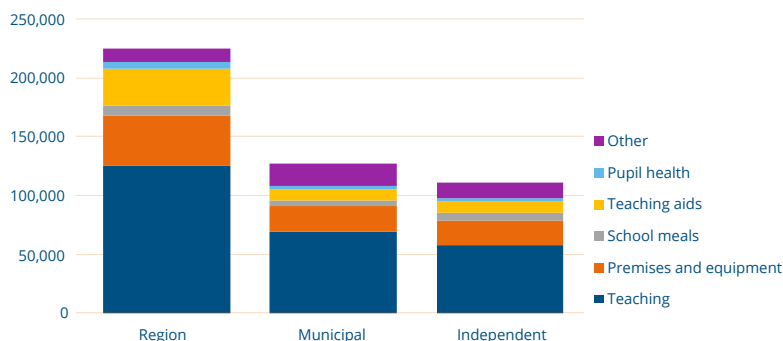
<sup>86</sup> Costs for schools and other educational activities in 2020, page 11. 'Other' costs include all costs not included in other cost types, such as vocational guidance, administration and costs for professional development (National Agency for Education, 2021).

Independent schools receive a flat-rate refund of 3% for administrative expenses. Nobody knows how high administrative expenses are for each municipality.

At the same time, according to Heller-Sahlgren, municipalities report their costs net under all cost types except 'Other,' which means that the costs are presented as lower than they actually are because some costs are offset by external income.<sup>87</sup>

## Independent and municipal upper-secondary schools

In 2020, the average cost of a pupil in a municipal upper-secondary school was SEK 127,800. The average cost per pupil in an independent upper-secondary school was SEK 110,500. However, the costs are not comparable because they are heavily impacted by the mix of programmes offered by the proprietors. In 2020, the regions, which mainly offer costly agricultural programmes, had an average cost per pupil of SEK 224,900.<sup>88</sup>



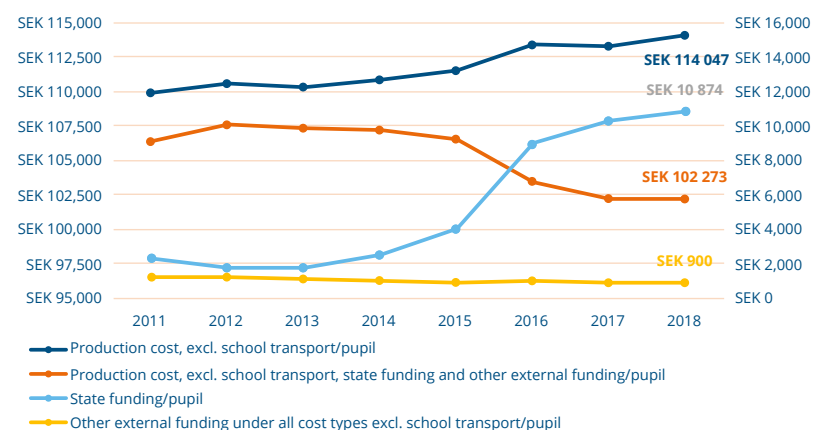
III. 47. Costs in upper-secondary schools 2020, page 15 (National Agency for Education, 2021).

<sup>87</sup> Independent schools and school costs, pp 28–29 (Confederation of Swedish Enterprise, 2020). Examples of external income include contributions not classified as state funding, rent for premises and income from regions. This income is therefore deducted from the school municipality's costs under each individual cost type, except for those specified under the 'Other' cost type. In addition to the presentation of costs as lower than they actually are, this also affects how the costs are allocated depending on the cost type under which the actual external income is reported. The lower the proportion of this income that is reported under the 'Other' cost type, the smaller the proportion of the total costs that are captured in the real costs.

<sup>88</sup> Costs for schools and other educational activities in 2020, p. 15. 'Other' costs include all costs not included in other cost types, such as vocational guidance, administration and costs for professional development (National Agency for Education, 2021).

## The difference between municipal and independent schools is growing

In Heller-Sahlgren's report, the light-blue curve in diagram 48 shows the increase in state funding for schools<sup>89</sup> – SEK 8,300 per pupil. The higher proportion of state funding of the total production cost (dark-blue curve in diagram 48) has made it possible for municipalities to reduce school funding, also for independent schools, by SEK 4,940 per pupil (orange curve in diagram 48).<sup>90</sup>



III. 48. Independent schools and school costs.<sup>91</sup>

Heller-Sahlgren also shows how municipal funding for independent schools decreased between 2014 and 2018 by nearly the exact same amount (SEK 4,776 per pupil, blue curve in diagram 49) as the decrease in net production costs for municipal schools, and therefore municipal funding for independent schools (orange curve in diagram 48). Since costs are reported net, the municipalities' costs do not increase and nor therefore funding

<sup>89</sup> Independent schools and school costs (Confederation of Swedish Enterprise, 2020).

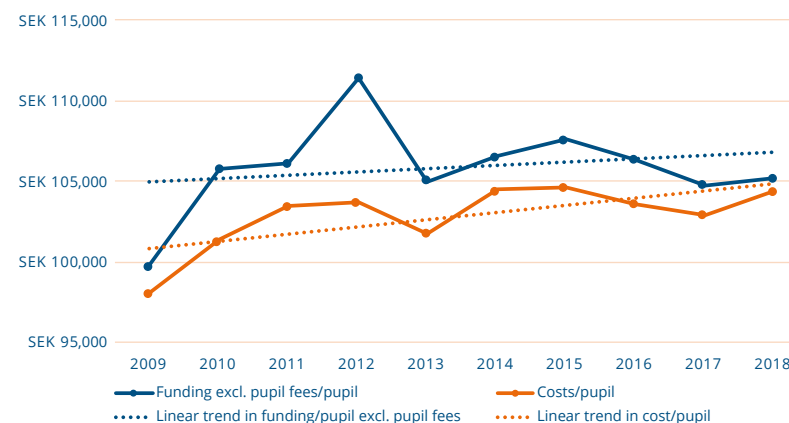
<sup>90</sup> Independent schools and school costs, page 37, figure 8 (Confederation of Swedish Enterprise, 2020). The information shown in diagram 48 may overstate the state funding to – and understate the municipal funding of – municipal schools somewhat, since some state funding is channelled to the independent schools via the municipalities. However, proprietors apply for most of the state funding individually (Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, 2020).

<sup>91</sup> Independent schools and school costs, page 37 (Confederation of Swedish Enterprise, 2020).

for independent schools, which is why the difference between funding for municipal and independent schools is growing. Therefore, the state funding has both offset the deterioration in municipal funding and enabled a total cost increase (dark-blue curve in diagram 48) instead of, in full, providing resources for schools.

### Operating (EBIT) margin only 3.5%

A figure in Heller-Sahlgren's report shows<sup>92</sup> how the funding and costs of independent schools have gradually developed. The EBIT margin (the difference between the blue and red curves in diagram 49) is decreasing and in 2018, with the funding and costs he calculated as described above, was only 0.6% for the entire independent school sector.<sup>93</sup>



Ill. 49. Independent schools and school costs.<sup>94</sup>

The average EBIT margin for a limited liability company that runs independent pre-schools or schools is 3.4%. That is less than the average for a service company in other parts of the business sector. Operating profit (EBIT) is a company's total earnings before the deduction of financial expenses and tax. Net profit is therefore lower.

Companies often decided to retain profit in a limited liability company in order to finance investments or expansion with their own funds, for example. In recent years, shareholder dividends are estimated to be in the order of MSEK 200–300 per year, corresponding to less than 1% of the costs for all independent schools, including those run by associations, cooperatives, and so forth.<sup>95</sup> In 2020, total costs for all independent pre-schools, compulsory schools and upper-secondary schools amounted to SEK 44.7 billion.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Independent schools and school costs, page 36, figure 6 (Confederation of Swedish Enterprise, 2020).

<sup>93</sup> Independent schools and school costs, page 36. In the explanatory text, "school fees" refers to the funding/school fees that Swedish boarding schools and international schools – which are counted as independent schools – often have. They are not public resources and should not be included in comparisons of whether the public funding of municipal and independent operators is equal. (Confederation of Swedish Enterprise, 2020).

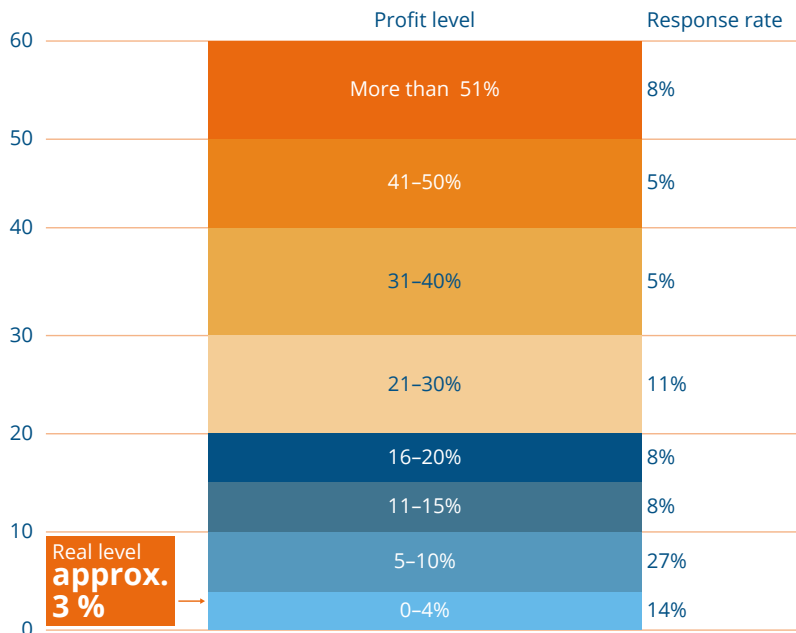
<sup>94</sup> Independent schools and school costs, page 36 (Confederation of Swedish Enterprise, 2020).

<sup>95</sup> Refers to those companies that run pre-schools, compulsory schools or upper-secondary schools according to Statistics Sweden's Standard Industrial Classification. Some of these also run adult education, which is why profit from these activities is also included. EBIT statistics for the most recently reported financial year from independent school companies was obtained from Bisnis Analys. A summary of Dividends from Education Companies was compiled by Valuation Branschfakta i Sverige AB.

<sup>96</sup> Costs for schools and other educational activities in 2020, pages 7, 9 and 13 (National Agency for Education, 2021)

## Perception of profit-making by independent schools

One of the myths about independent schools is that they make high profits. According to a survey conducted by Demoskop,<sup>97</sup> more than half the population believes that independent schools generate average profits of more than 10% of their income. One-third of the respondents believe the profit level is more than 20%. The real figure for the EBIT margin has been about 3% for many years. That leaves about 2.5% after amortisation/depreciation and tax.



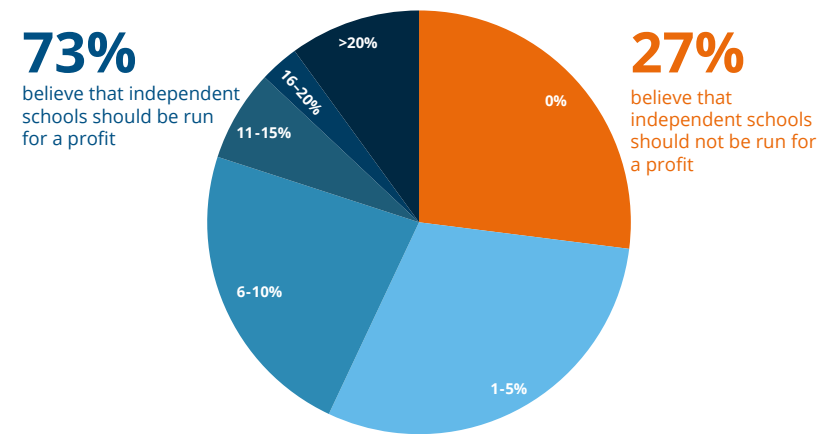
Basis: 1 374 interviews. 14% have no perception of profits in independent schools.

Ill. 50. Roughly, about how much profit do you think that independent schools make from their total income?<sup>98</sup>

<sup>97</sup> Public perception of profits generated by independent school companies (Demoskop, 2021).

<sup>98</sup> Demoskop, 2021.

A high percentage of the general public believes it is reasonable that independent schools need to generate a profit in order to run their business. To the question about how much profit a school company should be able to make, the average answer is 7%. That is nearly three times as much as the real figure of about 2.5%.



Ill. 51. How much do you think that a school company that is publicly funded should be able to make in profit as a percentage of its total income?<sup>99</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Demoskop, 2021.



## The largest independent school owners

Below is a summary of the ownership structure in January 2022 for those independent schools that, according to the National Agency for Education's unit register, had five or more compulsory and upper-secondary school units (schools for pupils with learning difficulties are included). Among the 20 owners of five or more compulsory and upper-secondary school units, ten schools are owned by private individuals, two by foundations, two by employees, one by a religious group and five are listed.<sup>100</sup>

### AcadeMedia AB

Listed. Largest owner is family company Mellby Gård AB. Second-largest owner is Nordea. Runs 78 compulsory schools (of which 68 have a preschool class) with about 24,500 pupils, and 151 upper-secondary schools with about 42,700 pupils.

### Ansgarskolorna

Run by a religious group. Runs five compulsory schools (of which two have a preschool class and one is a school for pupils with learning difficulties) with about 700 pupils, and two upper-secondary schools (of which one is a school for pupils with learning difficulties) with about 100 pupils.

### Aprendere AB

Listed on Nasdaq First North Growth Market. Largest owners are Bellissima Holding AB and Netsom AB. Runs eight compulsory schools with 330 pupils, and six upper-secondary schools with 900 pupils.

### Atvexa AB

Listed on Nasdaq Stockholm. Largest owner is Alteria Holding AB. Second-largest owner is Svenska Rehabiliteringssjukhus AB. Runs 31 compulsory schools and one school for pupils with learning difficulties with approximately 6,400 pupils in total.

<sup>100</sup> Data for each organisation in January 2022.

### Cedergrenska AB

Listed on Nasdaq First North Growth Market. Cedergrenska runs five upper-secondary schools with about 3,300 pupils, and four compulsory schools (of which three have a preschool class) with about 2,500 pupils.

### Dibber AB

Privately owned company. Runs 15 compulsory schools in total (13 compulsory schools, and two compulsory schools for students with learning difficulties) with about 2,300 pupils.

### Fridaskolorna AB

Employee-owned company. Runs six compulsory schools with about 3,000 pupils, and two upper-secondary schools with about 400 pupils.

### Futuraskolan AB

Privately owned company. Runs six compulsory schools with 2,309 pupils.

### Internationella Engelska Skolan AB

Was recently delisted and is now owned privately by Peutinger AB. Runs 42 compulsory schools with about 30,000 pupils, and one upper-secondary school with about 700 pupils.

### Jensen Education AB

Privately owned family company. Runs 11 compulsory schools with 3,000 pupils, and 14 upper-secondary schools with 4,000 pupils.

### Kunskapsskolan i Sverige AB

Privately owned company. Runs 29 compulsory schools (of which one is a school for children with special educational needs) with about 12,200 pupils, and seven upper-secondary schools with about 2,400 pupils.

### Lärande i Sverige AB

Privately owned company. Runs eight compulsory schools (of which one is a school for children with special educational needs) with about 1,000 pupils, of which six have a preschool class (including the school for children with special educational needs), and 20 upper-secondary schools with about 3,700 pupils.

### Magelungen Utveckling AB\*

Employee-owned company. Runs 12 compulsory schools with about 260 pupils, and six upper-secondary schools with about 500 pupils.

### Nytida AB\*

Owned by Ambea, a listed company. Runs five compulsory schools for children with special educational needs, two of which are combined with therapy, and seven compulsory and upper-secondary schools for students with learning difficulties with about 400 pupils.

### Raoul Wallenbergsskolorna AB

Privately owned company. Runs five compulsory schools with about 2,500 pupils.

### Stadsmissionens Skolstiftelse

Foundation-owned operation. Runs six upper-secondary schools under the name of Grill-ska and adult education at Stadsmissionen's folk high school and Stadsmissionen's school of higher vocational education with about 2,600 pupils in total.

### Stiftelsen Viktor Rydbergs Skola

Foundation-owned operation. Runs four compulsory schools (of which only one with a preschool class for about 60 children) with about 1,600 pupils, and four upper-secondary schools with about 2,400 pupils.

### Thorénggruppen AB

Privately owned company. Runs 15 compulsory schools (of which 11 with a preschool class) with about 3,700 pupils, and 38 upper-secondary schools with about 9,200 pupils.

### Utvecklingspedagogik Sverige AB\*

Privately owned company. Runs four compulsory schools with about 300 pupils, and three upper-secondary schools with about 260 pupils.

### Watma Education AB

Privately owned company. Runs five compulsory schools with 2,000 pupils and eight upper-secondary schools with about 2,500 pupils.

*\*The main focus is schools for children with special educational needs, which means they have a limited intake.*

## Other relevant research and reports

The following summary is not intended to be complete, but it contains aspects of relevance to independent schools.

### 2021

#### [Segregation i Sverige \(Segregation in Sweden\) – 2021 annual report on the development of socio-economic residential segregation](#)

In this report, the Delegation Against Segregation (Delmos) responds to an assignment from the government on the development of a key aspect of segregation in Sweden, socio-economic residential segregation. Segregation is when groups of people live and work separately from each other. This separation means that people with similar characteristics are concentrated in certain residential areas, schools and parts of the labour market. There are different types of segregation. This report describes socio-economic residential segregation. Socio-economic residential segregation is when people are separated into various residential areas based on educational level, occupational group or access to financial resources. Since where an individual lives affects their life chances, such as a child's access to education or an adult's opportunities to find work, the location is highly significant for the impacts of segregation.

#### [What can we learn from PISA 2018?](#)

School researcher Gabriel Heller-Sahlgren, the Research Institute of Industrial Economics

The Swedish test scores continued upwards in PISA 2018 and 67% of the deterioration since PISA 2000 has now been erased. Among pupils with at least one parent born in Sweden, the entire deterioration has been reversed. In PISA 2018, pupils in independent schools performed better than pupils in municipal schools with a statistically significant margin, both before and after adjustment for the background of the students. After adjustment for a number of background variables, the difference was 10–13 score points, roughly corresponding to the learning that takes place during one-third of an academic year.

The report analyses factors that could possibly have influenced the test score differences in PISA 2018 in Sweden. They include a comparison between independent and municipal proprietorship, teaching methods, study climate, use of digital aids, lateness and truancy.

#### [Bra skolor i hela landet – skillnader i resultat mellan stad och land \(Good schools all over Sweden – differences in results between urban and rural areas\) in TIMSS 2019](#)

School researcher Gabriel Heller-Sahlgren, the Research Institute of Industrial Economics

This is not a comparison between independent schools and municipal schools. The report analyses the differences in test results between Grade 8 pupils in urban and rural areas in TIMSS 2019. TIMSS tests are marked externally and since data from surveys on how the schools function is also collected, this enables analyses of the underlying mechanisms for any differences in test results. The results show that pupils in rural areas and small towns significantly underperform in TIMSS compared with their peers in large cities and nearby suburbs, when keeping the background variables of the students constant. Pupils in other cities perform roughly midway between the other two groups. The lower academic achievement of pupils in rural areas and small towns is not because they are underachievers on average, but primarily because they do not achieve average or higher standards of proficiency. The probability of a pupil in a rural area or small town achieving an advanced level of mathematics is, for example, only half as great compared with pupils in major city and suburban schools, or in schools in other cities. The analysis presents several possible explanations for the lower academic achievement of schools in rural areas and small towns. Since resources are already greater in rural areas and small towns compared with cities, and since this relative resource advantage has gradually increased, it seems unlikely that the solution mainly involves more money.

## 2020

### [Friskolorna och skolkostnaderna \(Independent schools and school costs\), no. 2020:21](#)

School researcher Gabriel Heller-Sahlgren, London School of Economics and the Research Institute of Industrial Economics

Since the independent school reform in 1992, the debate on its effects have been intensive. Recently, a new perspective on the issue of relative funding for independent and municipal schools has become increasingly important. While some argue that the system disadvantages independent schools, others maintain that municipal operators receive less money than independent operators, because the demand for equal treatment ignores the fact that the assignments vary for each of the proprietors.

### [Skolvalet, kunskaperna och likvärdigheten \(School choice, knowledge and equity\)](#)

Gabriel Heller-Sahlgren, London School of Economics and the Research Institute of Industrial Economics

What effects do school choice and independent schools really have on the quality, equity, segregation and grade setting of Swedish schools? In this report from 2020, school researcher Gabriel Heller-Sahlgren summarises the empirical research in this area.

### [The Value Added of Internationella Engelska Skolan, Policy Paper No. 89, 2020](#)

School researcher Gabriel Heller-Sahlgren, London School of Economics and the Research Institute of Industrial Economics, and Professor Henrik Jordahl, the Research Institute of Industrial Economics

The report is the first step of a research project to estimate the value added for as many proprietors and schools as possible. Similar studies to analyse other proprietors and schools, both independent and municipal, will also be carried out in the future. The project is financed with funds from the Economics of the Service Sector Research Programme, and by the proprietors taking part in the project, including IES and Kunskapsskolan.

## 2019

### [Bostadsmarknaden – ett instrument för att välja grundskola? \(The housing market – an instrument for choosing a compulsory school?\) Economic debate no. 5, 2019](#)

Fredrik W Andersson, PhD in Economics

The article studies the relocation behaviour of families when their first child starts school. The results indicate that families with small children tend to relocate before preschool class starts. Moreover, there are signs that the families who relocate place their children in schools where the pupils have a higher socio-economic status. Families with small children in Sweden show a similar pattern of behaviour to US families with small children – they seem to use the housing market to help their children achieve more in school.

### [Does school segregation lead to poor educational outcomes? Evidence from fifteen cohorts of Swedish ninth graders](#)

Maria Brandén, Institute for Analytical Sociology, Linköping University and Department of Sociology, Stockholm University. Gunn Elisabeth Birkelund, Institute for Analytical Sociology, Linköping University and Department of Sociology and Human Geography, Oslo University Ryszard Szulkin, Department of Sociology, Stockholm University

The researchers have studied the issue of whether the ethnic composition of compulsory schools affects the performance of the pupils. Does it play any role in a pupil's chances of getting good grades if they go to a school with 50% foreign-born pupils, for example, compared with a school with 5% foreign-born pupils? Their findings show that the effect of ethnic school segregation is considerably overestimated in the political debate and by the media.

They used data that included all pupils who completed Grade 9 in 1998–2012. In order to separate the effect of growing up in families with lower status in terms of income and education from the effect of the school's ethnic composition, they compare the outcomes for siblings who had different school situations. The results show that the impact on final grades in Grade 9 that can be linked to the percentage of foreign-born pupils in the school is more or less zero. This means that the sibling who goes to a school with many foreign-born children does not have worse grades than the sibling who goes to a school with fewer immigrants. There is some effect on eligibility for upper-secondary school, but this is limited to a few percentage points.

The fact that the high level of ethnic segregation in Swedish schools does not have the negative consequences that are often assumed does not mean that schools with a diverse ethnic

and socio-economic composition should not be pursued. For the children, especially those from less privileged home environments, early interventions that support cognitive development are particularly important. They have a clear impact on future educational outcomes. This means that a high-quality preschool and school are key social resources for equal life chances. Their ethnic composition probably plays a minor role.

[Jämlikhet i möjligheter och utfall i den svenska skolan \(Equality of opportunities and outcome in Swedish schools\). Appendix 7 of the Long-term Survey.](#)

SOU 2019:40, Stockholm. Holmlund, H., Sjögren, A., & Öckert, B. (2019)

The report studies equity in compulsory and upper-secondary schools in Sweden. The focus lies on quantitative analyses that contribute to an understanding of the school's compensatory mission, especially for knowledge and academic performance. Differences in performance between pupils and schools, and changes over time, may be due to pupil background factors, such as parental educational level, country of birth and age of immigration, as well as the school's resources and quality.

The school's performance can thus be related to the pupil composition, but also to the availability and allocation of resources and teaching skills, and to the school's ability to manage its teaching resources and equalise conditions between various pupil cohorts. We refer to these two factors – conditions for pupils and the school's resources – as the school's input factors. The report studies firstly how various input factors are allocated over time from an equity perspective. The school's outcome is then analysed in terms of performance and quality. These analyses are focused on differences in performance and quality between schools, on how school quality varies between pupils with different conditions, and on the development of the family background's significance for pupils' academic performance.

[Lika för alla? \(Equity for all?\) An ESO report on educational equity](#)

Robert Erikson and Lena Unemo (ed.) Anders Böhlmark, Camilla Brørup Dyssegaard, Niels Egelund, Sigrun K. Ertesvåg, Jan O. Jonsson, Mikael Lindahl, Anders Stenberg and Georg Treuter, Expert Group on Public Economics (ESO) Report 2019:1

Both Swedish and international experts maintain that educational equity has deteriorated in recent decades. How can this trend be reversed? This question was studied by a number of researchers in the new ESO report "Equity for all?"

In their report, the authors maintain that the concept of equity is imprecise, but they also make several suggestions for how pupils could achieve better results at school.

Equity therefore presumes that all pupils receive good quality education in good schools. One of the editors, Robert Erikson, shows in his chapter how the measures used to assess equity say very little about the conditions that exist in different schools, and he also questions the opportunities that are actually available to schools to help reduce differences in the performance of pupils from different backgrounds. Other issues raised by the report include the need for studies that produce more reliable results for learning interventions, especially for pupils who receive less support at home. The significance of vocational guidance for pupils' educational choices and opportunities for later employment, the importance of strong leadership in schools, and the ability for teachers to adapt their teaching styles to the needs of pupils are other issues that are highlighted. There is no universal solution to the problem of inequity or that some schools provide poorer quality education.

[Segregation – Final report from a research programme](#)

Peter Hedström, Professor of Analytical Sociology at Linköping University, senior research fellow at Nuffield College, Oxford, and so forth.

According to researchers, the recent debate on school segregation has been somewhat misguided. Many people seem to believe that schools have become far more segregated in recent years and that the free school choice has been a key driving factor. However, their research shows that school segregation has remained surprisingly stable and that free school choice has had a fairly marginal effect on the extent of school segregation. School segregation is more likely due to the combination of a highly segregated housing market and the fact that most pupils choose a school that is close to where they live.

## 2018

### [Lönsamma kunskaper - Sambandet mellan vinst och kvalitet i svenska grundskolor \(Profitable knowledge – The relationship between profit and quality in Swedish compulsory schools\)](#)

Gabriel Heller-Sahlgren, London School of Economics and the Research Institute of Industrial Economics, and Henrik Jordahl, Research Institute of Industrial Economics.

In this report from 2018, the researchers study the relationship between the profitability of schools and educational quality. The analysis is based on a limited liability company, which is the dominant form of organisation for independent schools. The findings indicate that profit and quality go hand-in-hand at Swedish compulsory schools. The applies to both academic quality indicators based on the academic performance of the pupils, and to softer indicators based on the attitudes of the pupils. To determine whether the relationships are due to grade inflation, the final grades of the pupils are compared with their national test scores. There is nothing to suggest that the profitability of independent schools and the academic performance of their pupils could be due to grade inflation. Nor do the authors find any evidence that profitable independent schools have a more favourable pupil composition. Contrary to such concerns, there is almost no difference in the pupil composition between independent schools with varying levels of profit. According to the authors, high-quality education thus appears profitable for school companies, as can also be expected in other markets.

## 2017

### [Ankomst och härkomst \(Arrival and country of origin\) – an ESO report on academic performance and background](#)

Hans Grönqvist and Susan Niknami, Expert Group on Public Economics (ESO) Report 2017:3

To increase the chances of foreign-born pupils succeeding in school, efforts must also be focused on the pupils' parents and the residential segregation. This is one of the ESO report's conclusions. In recent years, Sweden has received a record-high number of refugee children, many between 13 and 17 years old. Since completed upper-secondary education is key to finding work for young people in Sweden, it is also important that newly arrived young people do well at school. Unfortunately, the performance gap between Swedish-born and

foreign-born pupils has been steadily increasing since the end of the 1980s. While the age of the children when they arrive in Sweden and where they come from play a major role in academic performance, the overriding factor is the socio-economic situation of their parents.

### [Att organisera för skolframgång – strategier för en likvärdig skola \(Organising for success at school – strategies for educational equity\)](#)

Maria Jarl, Ulf Blossing and Klas Andersson, Natur & Kultur 2017

How can there be such huge differences between the performance of pupils in different schools? Why are some schools more successful than others? Organising for school success refers to thinking about schools as a local organisation and how the activities in a school can be organised to create the best conditions for learning.

The book presents a comparative study of four successful and four unsuccessful schools. The schools selected by the study enable an understanding of what does and doesn't work, and why. The authors work at the Department of Education and Special Education at Gothenburg University and have extensive experience in teacher and school principal training courses.

## 2016

### [När skolan själv får välja \(When schools can decide\) – an ESO report on the establishment pattern of independent schools](#)

Nikolay Angelov and Karin Edmark, Expert Group on Public Economics (ESO) Report 2016:3

The ESO report shows that independent schools are more frequently established in areas with more highly educated people – but also in immigrant-dense areas. Independent schools are also more frequently established in areas where incomes are expected to be higher and the cost of premises lower. But surprisingly enough, financial conditions do not seem to affect the location decisions of for-profit independent schools. The report also shows that expectations of high incomes and low premises costs seem to play a role in the location decisions of non-profit independent schools. For the for-profit schools, however, financial conditions do not seem to affect their location decision.

### [Friskolorna och Pisa \(Independent schools and PISA\) \(2016\)](#)

According to a report from the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR): “The analysis indicates that pupils in independent schools perform about 18 score points higher in reading comprehension, 10 score points higher in mathematics and 14 score points higher in science compared with pupils in municipal schools, holding the background variables constant. This means that pupils in independent schools, when controlling background variables, lie just over two months ahead in mathematics, three months ahead in science and four months ahead in reading of their peers in municipal schools.”

## 2015

### [Independent Schools and Long-run Educational Outcomes: Evidence from Sweden's Large-scale Voucher Reform, \*Economica\*, Vol. 82, pp. 508–551, 2015](#)

Anders Böhlmark, Stockholm University and Mikael Lindahl, Uppsala University

In their analysis of the effects of independent schools for compulsory schools, Böhlmark and Lindahl (2015) find that a higher percentage of pupils in independent schools – regardless of whether they are for-profit or non-profit – improve the performance of the pupils. The effects are similar for final grades, and for the long-term academic outcome of the pupils in upper-secondary school and at university. The authors also show that the positive effects increase over time – and are not, in fact, statistically clear until 11 years after the independent school reform – indicating that it takes a certain amount of time before the competition has a positive effect on knowledge, and that a certain level of competition is required before the effects become clear.

## 2014

### [Decentralisering, skolval och fristående skolor: resultat och likvärdighet i svensk skola \(Decentralisation, school choice and independent schools: performance and equity in Swedish schools\)](#)

Holmlund, H., Häggblom, J., Lindahl, E., Martinson, S., Sjögren, A., Vikman, U., et al. (2014). Report 2014:25, The Institute for Evaluation of Labour Market and Education Policy (IFAU), Uppsala.

The authors study how the major school reforms of the 1990s – municipalisation, free school choice and independent schools – affected pupil performance and equity in education. The report shows that the performance of pupils in Swedish schools had already begun to deteriorate before the school reforms of the 1990s. However, the grade gaps between schools have not increased and are due to the fact that pupils with the same background often go to the same school. But the significance of family background for compulsory school grades remains unchanged.

## Other

### [Ifous](#)

Ifous is an independent research and development (R&D) institute that works to create value for Swedish schools and preschools. The institute coordinates practice-oriented research and development activities, where teachers and school leaders are involved in the research process. Particular focus is placed on areas of development with a major impact on learning.

### [Confederation of Swedish Enterprise's Ekonomifakta](#)

This page provides information about schools and education in Sweden.



## The Swedish Association of Independent Schools' reports

### 2020

[Se skolans verkliga utmaningar – låt alla goda krafter bidra \(See the real challenges facing schools – let all positive forces contribute\)](#)

The report describes the challenges facing Swedish schools due to the major changes in the pupil population over the past decade. Sweden needs a debate on how all schools can become good schools.

Time and time again, the discussion reverts to the issue of proprietorship. On one day, it's focused on profits and proprietors, the next day, on segregation and proprietors. But the challenges facing Swedish schools are far greater. It is unacceptable that proprietors, year after year, deliver comprehensive school pupils who are ineligible for upper-secondary school. When it comes to the success factors, the research is clear. The quality gap between schools in Sweden has increased. The subsequent conclusion cannot be to "stop the top," but to ensure that those pupils who are at risk of falling behind can catch up. Because the absolute most important work with equity is to ensure that all pupils – regardless of their background – acquire good understanding and knowledge in compulsory school. The successful schools can teach us how to achieve that goal.

### 2019

[Sveriges bästa och sämsta grundskolor \(The best and worst compulsory schools in Sweden\)](#)

A report with a list of the schools that produce the highest and lowest Grade 9 results, according to the National Agency for Education's SALSA statistics. Since SALSA accounts for the background factors of pupils, it becomes clear that schools with essentially the same conditions can achieve very different levels of success.

### 2018

[Granskning av lika villkorsprincipen och ersättning till kommunala och enskilda skolor \(Review of the equal terms principle and funding for municipal and independent schools\)](#)

A review by Deloitte shows that it is not possible to determine whether funding for municipal and independent preschools and schools complies with the equal terms principle. Deloitte proposes several areas to focus on to facilitate the review of whether municipalities comply with this legal requirement.

[Jobbhälsindex Skola 2018 – anställdas syn på jobbet inom utbildningssektorn \(Job Health Index, Schools 2018 – insight into the health and well-being of education staff\)](#)

The Job Health Index (formerly the Job Health Barometer, and a survey conducted by the Swedish Quality Index) shows private employees in the education sector are more satisfied with their conditions and workplace than municipal employees. This includes the physical workplace, opportunities for assistance to manage a heavy workload and the ability of management to lead the school effectively.

[Compulsory school choice](#)

Proximity is important for parents when choosing a school, especially for those with young children. But the school choice is based on a wide range of factors. Parents with a weak socio-economic background place more value on academic quality over factors such as well-being, while more highly paid parents are more likely to prioritise soft factors. This was shown by the report, which studied active school choices in seven municipalities.

[Om den snabba tillväxten av unga åldersklasser och framtida behov av friskoleplatser \(About the rapid growth of young age groups and future needs for individual school places\)](#)

The Swedish population is growing at an historical rate, and the birth rate has reached a level unseen since the early 1900s. This is obviously a positive trend, but also presents a welfare challenge. The report analyses the trend for the number of children and young people aged 0–19, both nationally and for the 17 municipalities with more than 100,000 inhabitants. The results show that the increase in people aged 0–19 exceeds the number of people aged 65 and over in 2017–2027.



**The Swedish Association of Independent Schools is the sector association for independent preschools and schools.**

Anyone who operates or is planning to set up an independent preschool or school can become a member of the Swedish Association of Independent Schools.

We have more than 500 members all over Sweden, comprising associations, cooperatives, foundations and limited liability companies.

In total, our members run more than 1,200 schools of various sizes, with a range of teaching methods and ways of working.

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