

Study: Where Are Teachers Most Respected?

By [Liana Heitin](#) on October 4, 2013 12:19 PM

The "[status](#)" of teachers varies widely across countries, according to a new survey, with educators in China having the highest social standing of those countries measured.

The study, conducted by the nonprofit Varkey GEMS Foundation, based in the United Arab Emirates, looked at responses from 1,000 people in 21 countries that take part in international assessments. The survey included questions about how teachers are respected compared to other professions, whether parents would encourage their children to become teachers, and how much (and how) teachers should be paid. From those responses, the authors created a Global Teacher Status Index, which ranks countries based on how much the public there respects and values teachers.

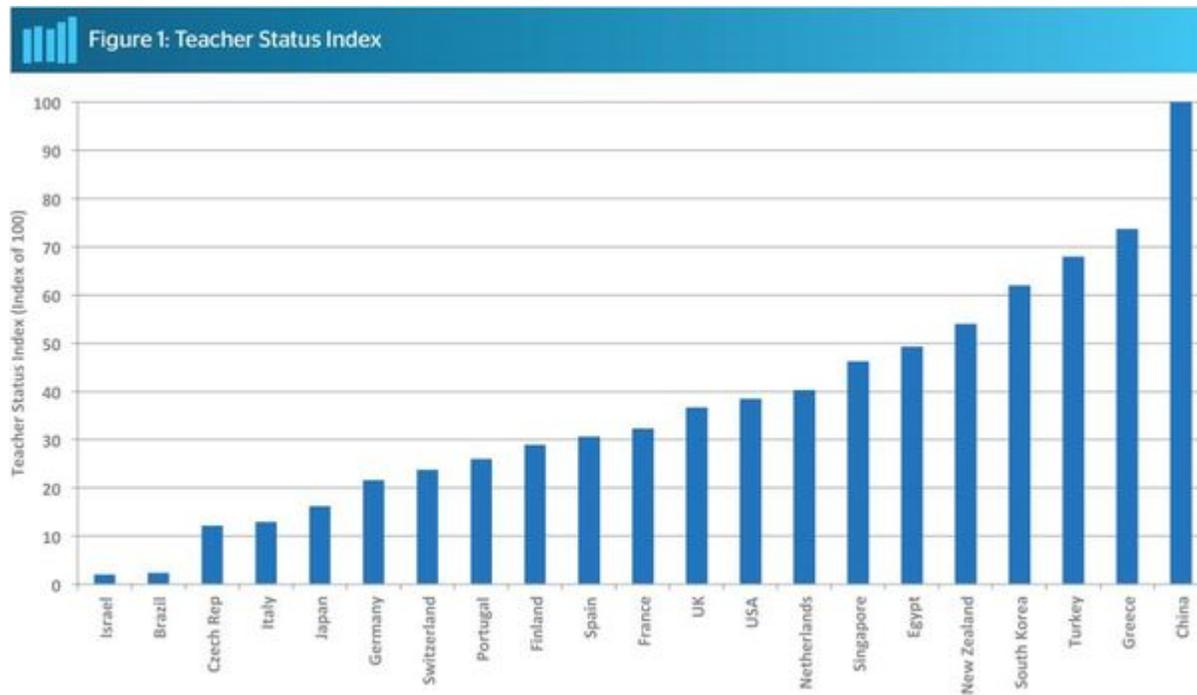
While complicated and likely open to various interpretations, the study does produce some interesting findings. For example:

- China, Greece, Turkey, and South Korea, in that order, top the list of places teachers are most respected. The U.S. ranks 9th out of the 21 countries.
- Teachers have the lowest social status in Israel, with Brazil, the Czech Republic, and Italy not far behind.
- There is no specific correlation between teacher status and student achievement scores on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) test.
- 50 percent of respondents from China said they would "probably" or "definitely" encourage their child to become a teacher. In the U.S., that percentage is just over 30. Only 8 percent of people in Israel said the same.
- In China, people are more likely to compare teachers to doctors than other professions. No other country made this comparison as often.
- In the U.S., Brazil, France, and Turkey, teachers are most often compared to librarians. In Greece, Egypt, Switzerland, and many other countries, teachers are seen as most like social workers.
- In all 21 countries, about 60 percent of people said teachers should be paid according to their students' performance. In the U.S., 80 percent of people supported this.

The survey also looked at average teacher pay in the countries studied, converted to U.S. dollars. While those comparisons are a bit tenuous, since the report did not include average salaries for other professions in those countries, it's worth noting pay was the highest in Singapore at \$45,755 and lowest in Egypt at \$10,604. The average teacher salary in the U.S. was \$44,917.

Sunny Varkey, the founder of the Varkey GEMS Foundation, writes in the report's introduction that "In many countries teachers no longer retain the elevated status that they used to enjoy. ... Over time, this declining respect for teachers will weaken teaching, weaken learning, damage the learning opportunities for millions and ultimately weaken societies around the world."

There's lots more to dissect, including attitudes on the influence of teachers' unions and the strength of education systems overall, so be sure to head to [the report itself](#). And, as always, leave your reactions below.



(21 survey countries indexed on a relative scale 1-100)