



National assessments at the beginning of primary school

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NOTE D'INFORMATION

n° 22.01 – Janvier 2022.

National assessments at the beginning of primary school : the negative effects of the 2020 health crisis are no longer apparent in 2021

► At the start of the 2021 school year, all first grade « Cours Préparatoire (CP) » or second grade « Cours Élémentaire première année (CE1) » students were assessed in French and mathematics (nearly 1.6 million students in 33,000 schools) after a school year still disrupted by the health crisis in 2020-2021.

At the beginning of both CP and CE1, there is an increase in the proportion of students with satisfactory mastery in all domains assessed compared to 2020. Students' results return to the 2019 level or better.

At the beginning of CP, the least successful exercises are still the same (recognizing letters among letters and associating a number with a position), but these are the ones that show the most significant progress since 2020 and even 2019.

At the beginning of CE1, in French, fluency exercises remain the least successful, although students perform better there than in 2019. In mathematics, students continue to struggle with problem solving and the number line, despite marked progress. Online calculation sees a strong increase in its mastery rate.

Between 2020 and 2021, these changes are accompanied, particularly in CE1, by a decrease in the performance gap between students in priority education and those in schools outside of priority education, contrary to the increase observed in 2020.

In mathematics, as in previous years, the performance of pupils by gender reverses at the start of CE1. In fact, boys perform better there than girls, unlike at the beginning of CP.

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► In September 2021, students entering in first grade « Cours Préparatoire (CP) » or second grade « Cours Élémentaire première année (CE1) » took a standardized paper-based assessment. In total, nearly 1.6 million students were evaluated in 33,000 public and private schools under contract. This is the fourth edition of this device initiated in 2018. The aim of this assessment is to provide teachers with benchmarks at the beginning of the year to help them assess the learning achievements of their students, so that they can address the needs of each student as quickly as possible.

In 2021, the exercises offered to students were strictly identical to those of 2020, a year that saw two exercises modified from 2019. This stability therefore makes it possible to compare the results observed two years apart (with the exception of these two exercises) and is particularly important since it makes it possible to observe the evolution of results, especially one year after the period in which schools were closed due to the health crisis in the spring of 2020.

At the beginning of the first grade, results are up compared to 2020

In the first grade, results are up in both French and math compared to 2020. The two domains for which the increase in results is the most significant in French between 2020 and 2021 are letter recognition (+ 6.6 points) and knowledge of the names of letters and the sound they make (+ 3.8 points) [↗ figure 1](#).

These two domains, along with syllable manipulation, had seen the greatest decline in scores between 2019 and 2020. This decline, observed for all domains in 2020 (from 0.9 to 2.5 points), was to be related to the spring 2020 school closing period.

In 2021, student achievement returns to at least a similar level as in 2019, or even greater than or equal to one point for «know the names of letters and the sound they make» and «understand words read by the teacher.» The letter recognition exercise even increases by 5 points between 2019 and 2021.

In mathematics, the domains that have seen the greatest increase in mastery compared to 2020 are «comparing numbers» (+3.2 points), «associating a number with a position» (+2.8 points) and solving problems (+2.7 points)

[↗ figure 2](#). The slight decline in achievement

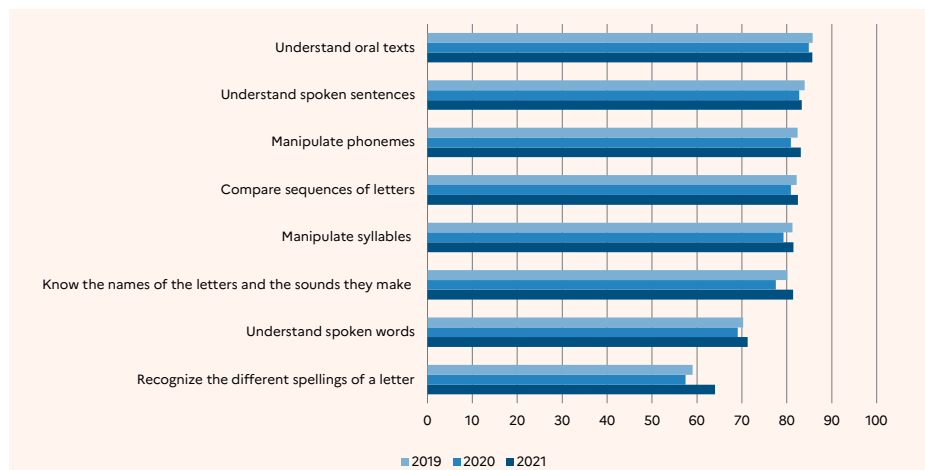
observed between 2019 and 2020 is again offset. In 2021, student achievement returns to at least a similar level as in 2019, if not higher.

«Reproduce an assembly» is the only domain that sees a slight drop in results between 2019 and 2021 (-0.3 points). «Reading numbers» and «quantifying collections» show stable levels of mastery over the same period, while all other domains see an increase (from 1 to 3 points).

Between 2020 and 2021, in CP, a decrease in the performance gap between the public outside priority education and priority education

At the beginning of CP in 2021, as in previous years, the two least successful exercises remain «recognition of letters among letters» (despite an increase of more than 5 points in two years) and «oral comprehension of words». For the latter, the difficulties in vocabulary mastery are confirmed [↗ figure 1](#) (and [Pour en savoir Figure 10](#)). The best successes were in the sentence and text comprehension exercises (83.3% and 85.7% of students with satisfactory mastery, respectively). In mathematics, the number line and problem solving exercises also remain the least successful. The most successful are the exercises in reading and writing whole

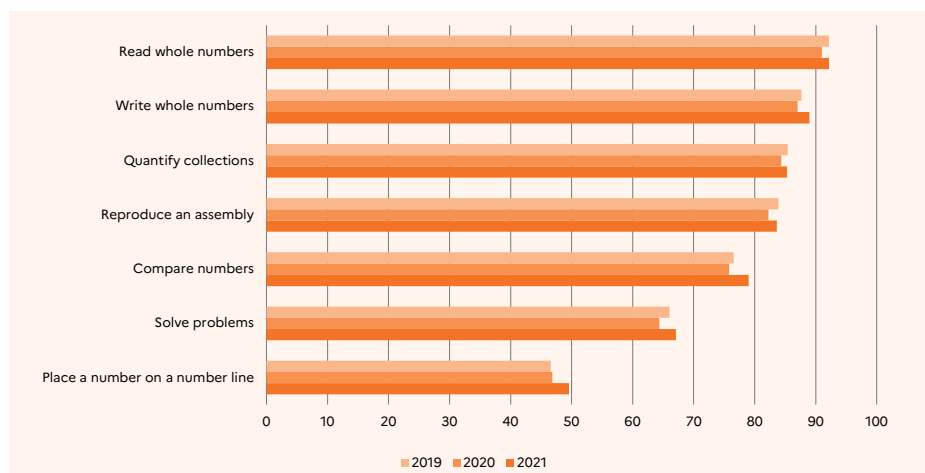
1 Proportion of students with satisfactory mastery (above threshold 2) according to the domain assessed in French at the beginning of CP (in %)



Reading: At the beginning of CP, in 2021, 81.5% of students show satisfactory mastery in the domain «Manipulating syllables».
Field: Metropolitan France + DROM, French Polynesia and Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon. Public + Private under contract.
Source: DEPP, Repères CP-CE1.

Réf. : Note d'Information, n° 22.01. DEPP

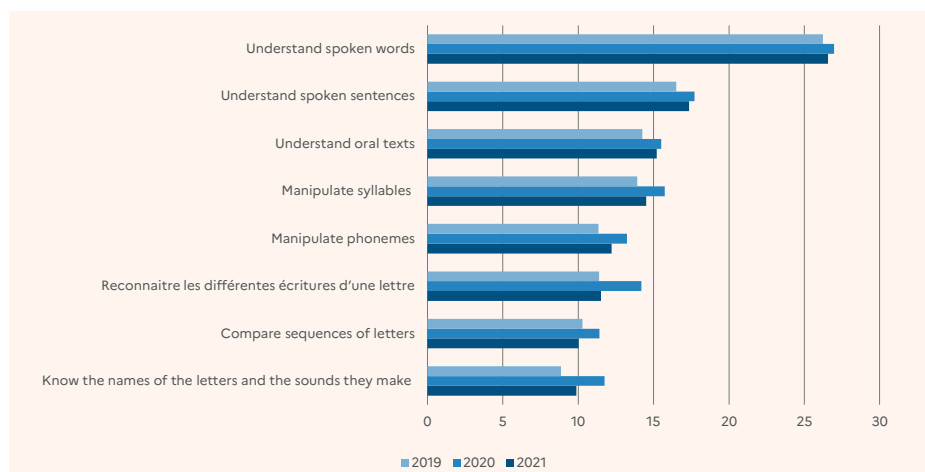
2 Proportion of students with satisfactory mastery (above threshold 2) according to the domain assessed in mathematics at the beginning of CP (in %)



Reading: At the beginning of CP, in 2020, 67.1% of students had satisfactory mastery in the domain of «Problem Solving».
Field: Metropolitan France + DROM, French Polynesia and Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon. Public + Private under contract.
Source: DEPP, Repères CP-CE1.

Réf. : Note d'Information, n° 22.01. DEPP

3 Performance gaps in comparable domains in French in CP between students enrolled in the public sector outside priority education and students enrolled in priority education in 2019, 2020 and 2021



Reading: In 2020, in the domain «Manipulate phonemes», at the beginning of CP the performance gap between students enrolled in the public sector outside priority education and students enrolled in priority education is 13.2 percentage points. In 2021, this gap is 12.2 percentage points.

Field: Metropolitan France + DROM, French Polynesia and Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon. Public + Private under contract.
Source: DEPP, Repères CP-CE1.

Réf. : Note d'Information, n° 22.01. DEPP

numbers [figure 2](#) (and For more information [Figure 11](#)).

Whatever the domain assessed at the beginning of the CP class in French, girls perform better than boys (see For more information [figure 12](#)). For oral word comprehension, if we look at the proportion of students above threshold 2, and who therefore show satisfactory mastery, the gap is 3.1 points. This is the smallest gap among the domains assessed. On the other hand, the gap is higher for the comprehension of oral sentences (7 points). Finally, for the domain relating to the recognition of the different spellings of a letter, the gap is 6 points. In mathematics, girls performed better than boys in all domains assessed, with two exceptions: the domains of «comparing numbers» and «associating a number with a position» (an exercise consisting of placing a number on a number line) (see For more information [figure 13](#)). If we look at the proportion of students above threshold 2, in both problem solving and number knowledge, the differences are about 2 points in favor of girls. For the geometry exercise consisting of reproducing an assembly, the gap is 3.7 points in favor of girls. The performance gaps between students in the public sector outside priority education and those in priority education narrow between 2020 and 2021 after the increase between 2019 and 2020 to reach a level comparable to 2019 (gaps of less than 1 point except in number comparisons)

[figures 3 et 4](#).

Between 2020 and 2021, the reduction in gaps is greater between the non-priority education sector and the REP+ (12 out of 15 domains see their gap reduced by more than one point and up to nearly 4 points) than between the non-priority education sector and the REP (only 3 domains see a reduction in their gap of more than 1 point) (see For more information [figure 9](#)).

In CP, between 2020 and 2021, the drop in performance gaps between the public sector outside priority education and priority education even exceeds two points in two domains: «recognizing letters among letters» (-2.7 points) and «comparing numbers» (-2.3 points). It even rises to nearly 4 points for «recognizing letters among letters» if we compare students in REP+ and the public sector outside PE.

In mathematics, the differences in performance according to schooling sector remain the highest for the use of numbers, in particular for problem solving (almost 25 points difference between REP+ and public sector outside priority education for this exercise, if we look at pupils above threshold 2), and the lowest for reading

whole numbers (7.3 points) (see For more information figure 15).

At the beginning of CE1, results are up compared to 2019 and 2020

In 2020, in French, negative changes were observed in seven out of eight domains. In 2021, the level of mastery of students is at least equivalent to that of 2019

figures 5 et 6. We even observe an increase of more than 1 point for «reading aloud a text» and «understanding sentences read alone». The exercise of reading aloud words even shows an increase of 2.3 points between 2019 and 2021, after a decrease of 4.3 points between 2019 and 2020 and an increase of 7 points between 2020 and 2021.

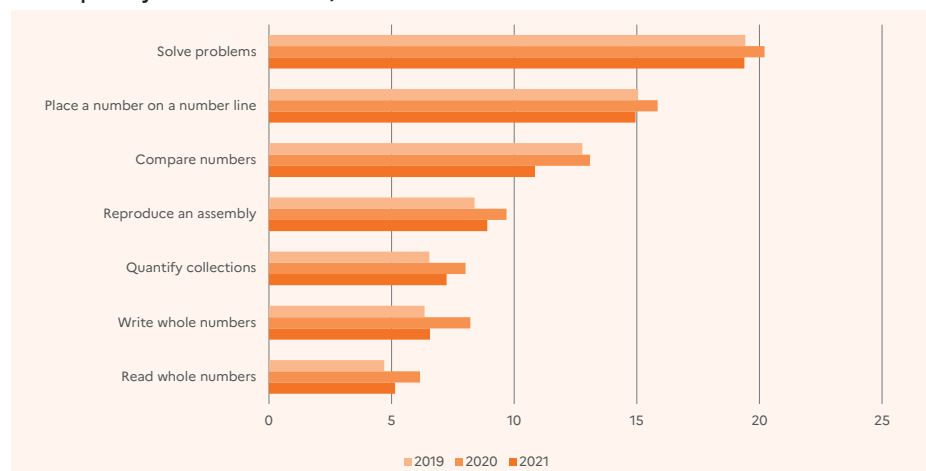
In 2020, in mathematics, the decrease compared to 2019 was less marked than in French. In fact, it was only one point higher in the domain of «representing whole numbers» (-1.2 points).

After this drop in results observed for certain exercises at the beginning of the CE1 year in 2020, student success in 2021 is on the rise and even becomes higher than that observed in 2019 in all domains. This is particularly true for «writing whole numbers» (+3.3 points), «reproducing an assembly» (+2.9 points), «reading whole numbers» (+2.6 points) and «solving problems» (+2.4 points). In 2021, online calculation will see a strong increase in its mastery rate compared to 2020 (+3.7 points for addition and + to 4.8 points for subtraction).

Between 2020 and 2021, a decrease in the performance gap between the public sector outside of priority education and priority education in CE1

In CE1, the year 2020 was marked by an increase in the performance gaps between students enrolled in the public sector outside priority education and those enrolled in priority education. In CE1, the gaps increased by more than 3 points in five domains assessed in French. The increase in gaps was less marked in mathematics, except for two domains: +4 points for «reading whole numbers» and «writing whole numbers». In CE1, in 2021, compared to 2020, we observe a decrease in performance gaps between pupils in the public sector outside priority education and those in priority education, which can go up to 4.3 points for «reading whole numbers» and 4.1 points for «writing whole numbers» in mathematics, and up to 3.2 points for «understanding phases read alone» and 2.8 points for fluency («reading words aloud» and «reading a text aloud»)

4 Performance gaps in comparable domains in mathematics in CP between students enrolled in the public sector outside priority education and students enrolled in priority education in 2019, 2020 and 2021



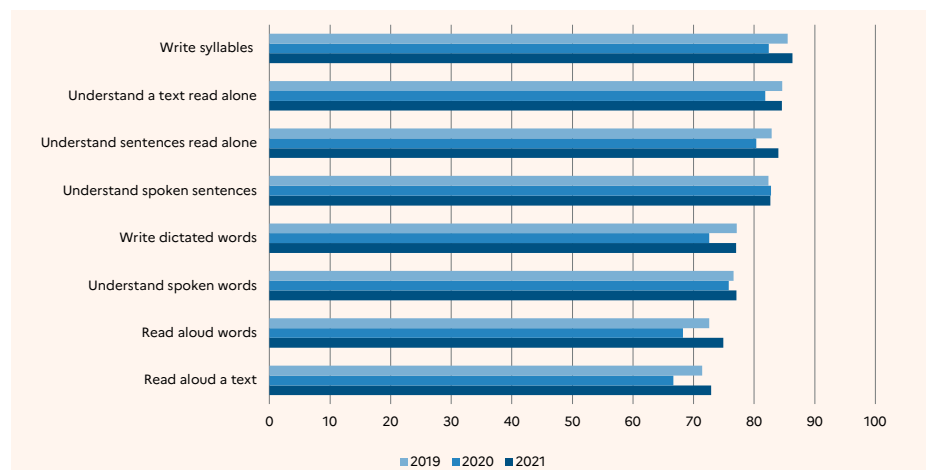
Reading: In 2020, in the domain «Quantify collections», at the beginning of CP the performance gap between students enrolled in the public sector outside priority education and students enrolled in priority education is 8 percentage points. In 2021, this gap is 7.2 percentage points.

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

Source: DEPP, Repères CP-CE1.

Réf. : Note d'Information, n° 22.01. DEPP

5 Proportion of students with satisfactory mastery (above threshold 2) according to the domain assessed in French at the beginning of CE1 (in %)



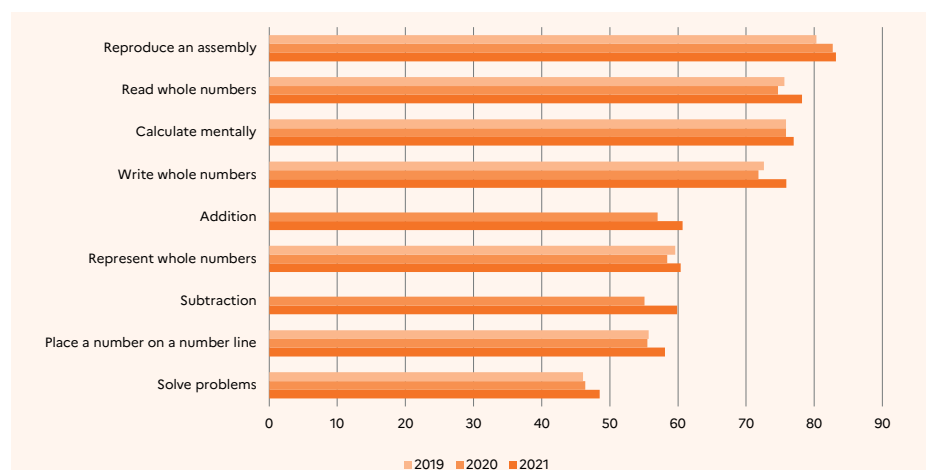
Reading: At the beginning of second grade, in 2021, 86.3% of students had satisfactory mastery in the «Writing syllables» domain.

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

Source: DEPP, Repères CP-CE1.

Réf. : Note d'Information, n° 22.01. DEPP

6 Proportion of students with satisfactory mastery (above threshold 2) according to the domain assessed in mathematics at the beginning of CE1 (in %)



Reading: At the beginning of CE1, in 2021, 48.5% of students had satisfactory mastery of the «Problem Solving» domain.

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

Source: DEPP, Repères CP-CE1.

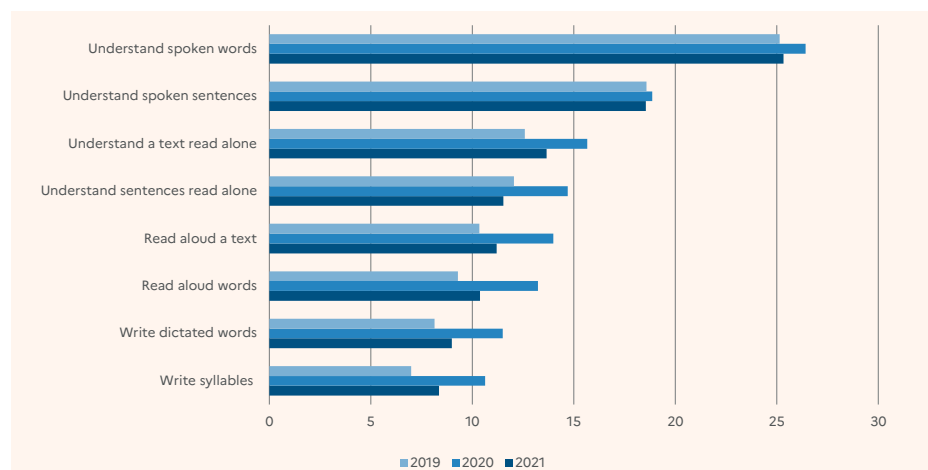
Réf. : Note d'Information, n° 22.01. DEPP

figures 7 et 8. This decrease in gaps is even greater if we limit the comparison between REP+ students and students in the public sector outside priority education (3.8 points for «understanding phases read alone», 3.2 points for «reading aloud words» and «reading aloud a text», 4.9 points for «reading whole numbers» and 4.7 points for «writing whole numbers») (see For more information figure 16). In CE1, in 2021, we observe a decrease in performance gaps between students in the public sector outside priority education and those in priority education, which can be as high as 4.3 points for «reading whole numbers» and 4.1 points for «writing whole numbers» in mathematics, and as low as 3.2 points for «understanding phases read alone» and 2.8 points for fluency («reading aloud words» and «reading aloud a text») figures 7 et 8. This decrease in gaps is even greater if we limit the comparison between REP+ students and students in the public sector outside priority education (3.8 points for «understanding phases read alone», 3.2 points for «reading aloud words» and «reading aloud a text», 4.9 points for «reading whole numbers» and 4.7 points for «writing whole numbers») (see For more information figure 16).

In CE1, in 2021, compared to 2020, we observe a decrease in performance gaps between pupils in the public sector outside priority education and those in priority education, which can go up to 4.3 points for «reading whole numbers» and 4.1 points for «writing whole numbers» in mathematics, and up to 3.2 points for «understanding phases read alone» and 2.8 points for fluency («reading words aloud» and «reading a text aloud») figures 7 et 8. This decrease in gaps is even greater if we limit the comparison between REP+ students and students in the public sector outside priority education (3.8 points for «understanding phases read alone», 3.2 points for «reading aloud words» and «reading aloud a text», 4.9 points for «reading whole numbers» and 4.7 points for «writing whole numbers») (see For more information figure 16). In CE1, in 2021, we observe a decrease in performance gaps between students in the public sector outside priority education and those in priority education, which can be as high as 4.3 points for «reading whole numbers» and 4.1 points for «writing whole numbers» in mathematics, and as low as 3.2 points for «understanding phases read alone» and 2.8 points for fluency («reading aloud words» and «reading aloud a text») figures 7 et 8. This decrease in gaps is even greater if we limit the comparison between REP+ students and students in the public sector outside priority education (3.8 points for «understanding phases read alone», 3.2 points for «reading aloud words» and «reading aloud a text», 4.9 points for «reading whole numbers» and 4.7 points for «writing whole numbers») (see For more information figure 16).

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7 Performance gaps in comparable domains in French in CE1 between students enrolled in the public sector outside priority education and students enrolled in priority education in 2019, 2020 and 2021



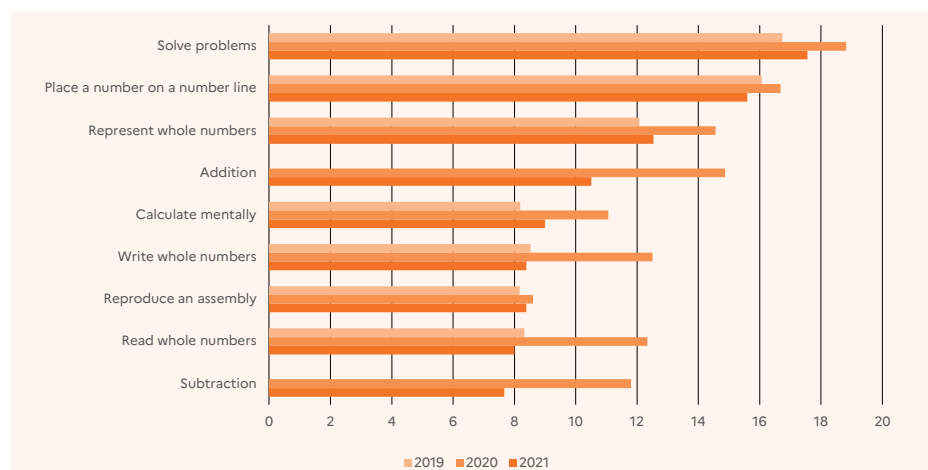
Reading: In 2020, in the domain «Reading aloud words», at the beginning of CE1, the performance gap between students enrolled in the public sector outside priority education and students enrolled in priority education is 13.2 percentage points. In 2021, this gap is 10.4 percentage points.

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

Source: DEPP, Repères CP-CE1.

Réf. : Note d'Information, n° 22.01. DEPP

8 Performance gaps in comparable domains in mathematics in CE1 between students enrolled in the public sector outside priority education and students enrolled in priority education in 2019, 2020 and 2021



Reading: In 2020, in the domain «reading whole numbers», at the beginning of CE1, the performance gap between students enrolled in the public sector outside priority education and those enrolled in priority education is 12.3 percentage points. In 2021, this gap is 8 points.

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

Source: DEPP, Repères CP-CE1.

Réf. : Note d'Information, n° 22.01. DEPP

and 4.7 points for «writing whole numbers») (see For more information figure 16).

In CE1, in contrast to the beginning of CP, boys perform better than girls in the domains assessed in mathematics

In French, the proportion of girls showing satisfactory mastery (above the threshold of 2) is comparable to that of boys in exercises designed to assess fluency (reading text or words aloud) (see For more information figure 19). In other domains of French, girls perform more confidently than boys (between 2.6 and 5.2 points in favor of girls). This is particularly the case for writing dictated words and for understanding spoken sentences or a text read alone (about 5 points difference in these three domains).

In mathematics, as in previous editions of the Repères assessment, there was a reversal of the situation at the start of CE1 compared with the start of CP. As in the previous year, boys perform better than girls in all the domains assessed in this discipline in CE1, with two exceptions: geometry (exercise «Reproduce an assembly») and mental arithmetic (see For more information figure 20). The largest difference concerns addition: 12.8 points in favour of boys if we are interested in the proportion of students who show satisfactory mastery (above the threshold 2). For subtraction, the difference is 6.8 points. ■

FOR MORE INFORMATION

You can access this Note d'Information 22.01, the figures and additional data on education.gouv.fr/etudes-et-statistiques