

LA EDUCACIÓN, A EXAMEN

Galician girls get excellent marks, but their male classmates take the special prizes

Two Galician universities have studied the results of the most outstanding students in Compulsory Secondary Education (or 'ESO' in Spain) in the exam for the special prize. What is most surprising about the results is that there are many more females (63%) than males (37%) with top average marks at this educational stage, yet in the exam, the boys fare better.

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Winning the prize is very complicated, given that only 20 are awarded each year. / SINC.

Education is vital for the economic and social development of any country. To measure the performance of students, regional governments establish a series of prizes. One of them is the special ESO prize, a written test for students whose average over the four years at this stage has been excellent.

A study by the University of Santiago de Compostela (USC) and the University of A Coruña has analysed the results achieved by students sitting this test to obtain results by sex.

“The methodology is based on analysing all of the qualifications obtained for

the period 2008-2013, classifying them depending on different variables: sex, home environment (urban or rural), school type (public or private), parents' qualifications and their employment," explains Francisco Jesús Ferreiro, from the USC and co-author of the research to SINC.

A total of 1,522 students were analysed for this period, all of whom sat the test in Galicia.

"In order to sit the test for the prize the student's average must be the top mark of 'excellent', and there were more girls (63%) with this mark than boys (37%). Winning the prize is very complicated, given that only 20 are awarded each year, which is 5.2% of the total number of students who sit the test. It is interesting that the ESO results in general are not high, and on average students fail in several subjects. The worst score is in Mathematics, followed by Social Sciences, Geography and History and in the options of Physics and Chemistry, and Biology and Geology," confirms the researcher. However, they do pass languages (Spanish and Galician), and gain the best average results in English.

"The most striking thing about this study is seeing that in all these subjects put together the boys obtain a better average mark than the girls and significantly so," adds the expert. "That is to say that there is a statistical probability of 95% that the average mark for the boys is better than the average mark for the girls".

Yet, if during the school year there are more girls with excellent marks, how is it possible that the special prize does not reflect this?

"We would like to emphasise that any study must be treated with caution. Firstly, because our sample has special characteristics that cannot be extrapolated to the whole of secondary education, given that they are tests done only in Galicia and for a collective of excellent students; and secondly, because there are no national or international studies which analyse the results in this type of students allowing us to compare the results," they conclude.

The study is in conjunction with another broader study on the average performance in the special ESO prize in Galicia, where they analyse the

influence of the different variables, such as home and family environment and type of centre.

References:

Francisco Jesús Ferreiro Seoane, María Dorinda Mato Vázquez, Rocío Chao Fernández. "Análisis del rendimiento académico por género medido a través del premio extraordinario de la ESO", RIPS 13 (2), 53-76. 2014.

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