

# Understanding school attendance problems through attendance statistics

International comparative views on the situation in Sweden, Germany, the UK (England), and Japan

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# Today's presentation

1. This presentations covers results from one part of an international comparative research project
2. What kind of data on SAPs recorded, reported and publicly available in four chosen countries
3. Comparison??
4. What can we in Sweden learn regarding the value of comparative statistics

# Purpose of our research project

The purpose of this project is to investigate national, organisational and individual dimensions of school attendance problems (SAPs) among 15 to 17-year-olds in Sweden, the UK, Germany and Japan. The project uses a mixed method approach combining quantitative analysis of large-scale data on the national level with qualitative case studies on the organisational and individual level.

# Mixed method approach with three studies

1. The first study analyses data from PISA and national statistics.
2. Study 2 focuses on organizational dimensions: support systems' structures, practised and key professionals' perspectives.
3. Study 3 will put the individual in focus, asking how we can understand the situation of youths including their perspective on received support (students' perspective).

# What can national and international comparative statistics contribute to our understanding of SAPs of adolescents in Sweden, compared to other chosen countries?

The purpose of our article is to understand how SAPs are conceptualised in four different countries and how attendance data are recorded, reported, and published. The following questions guide our analysis:

- What kinds of data are published and publicly available on SAPs, and can any trends be seen in the four countries?
- Which indicators of absence are recorded and reported in the four countries in relation to school attendance and SAPs?
- How can information on recording and reporting data, as well as published data, on school attendance be compared between these countries?

# Method

- The article analyses statistics and official data collected by national school authorities and education agencies.

Limitations:

The presentation does not analyse systematically how these data are collected.

Compulsory schooling vs. compulsory education.

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# International statistics

*School attendance statistics in the four countries is difficult to compare because of...*

- *Challenges with regards to accessibility of data in some countries*
- *The way data are collected*
- *The way non-attendance is defined*

# Definitions – examples for differences

- UK - England: Persistent absenteeism is defined as at least ten percent (approximately 18 school days a year) of absence including both authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Japan: most attention on *futôkô*: 30 days per school year (about 15% but excluding illness, poverty ...)
- Sweden: No national statistics, only single studies with varying definitions
- Germany: Different practices of recording and reporting in 16 federal states, the presentation gives examples from two states

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# What kinds of data are published and publicly available on SAPs, and can any trends be seen in the four countries?

- There is a great variation of what kind of data are publicly available in the four countries
- The statistics in a few countries allow to see trends (timelines in Japan, England, Thuringia)
- Sweden has no data that allows us to see trends

# Which indicators of absence are recorded and reported in the four countries on school attendance and SAPs?

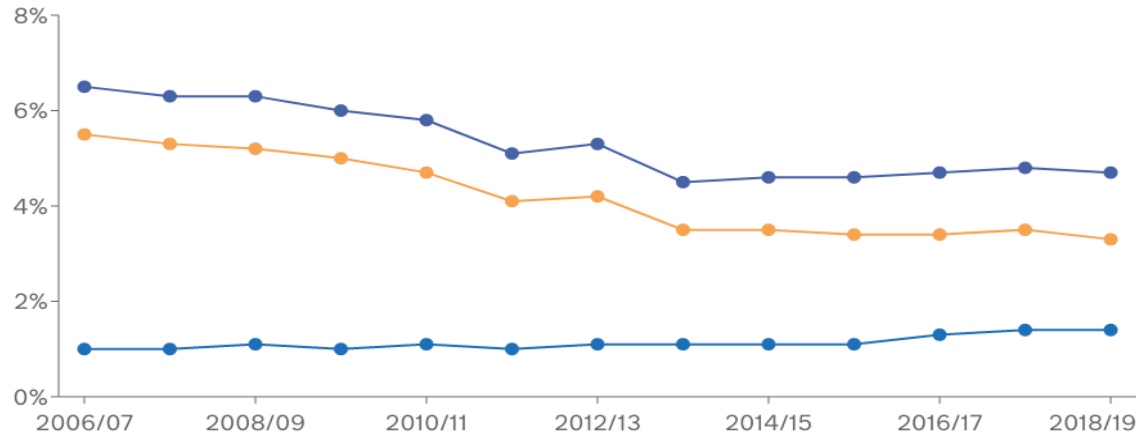
Country	England	Japan	Germany		Sweden
Example			Berlin	Thuringia	
<b>Timeline</b>	Since 2006; Definition changed	Since 1991 with same definition; since 1962 with 50-day definition	Since 2018/19 school year	2010/11 to 2019/20	No timeline studies to date
<b>Data availability</b>	Absence data freely available online	Data tables for different categories	Some tables	Data available online	Data not available online
<b>Problem definition of “persistent absence”</b>	More than 10% of overall absence (other values also available)	More than 30 days per year of absence not due to illness or economic reasons (≈15%)	More than 20 days of unauthorised absence per term (about 22%)	More than 10 days of unauthorised absence per year (about 5.5%)	No central definition, “all kind of absence can be problematic”

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# Timeline of absence rates in England

## Absence rates in England between 2006/07 and 2018/19

- Overall absence rate
- Authorised absence rate
- Unauthorised absence rate

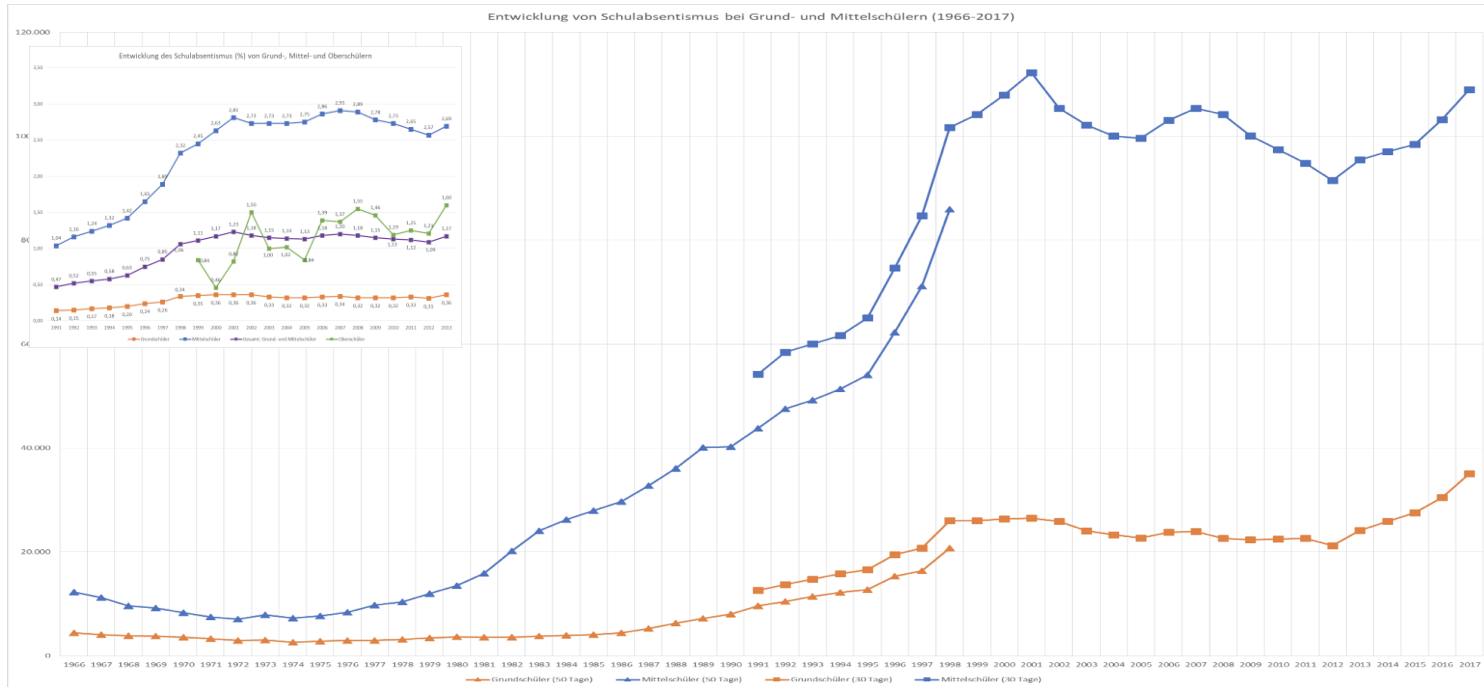


Absence rates in state funded primary and secondary schools and special schools in England between 2006/07 and 2018/19  
Source: DfE (2020a)

## Footnotes

1. Absence rates are the number of absence sessions expressed as a percentage of the total number of possible sessions.

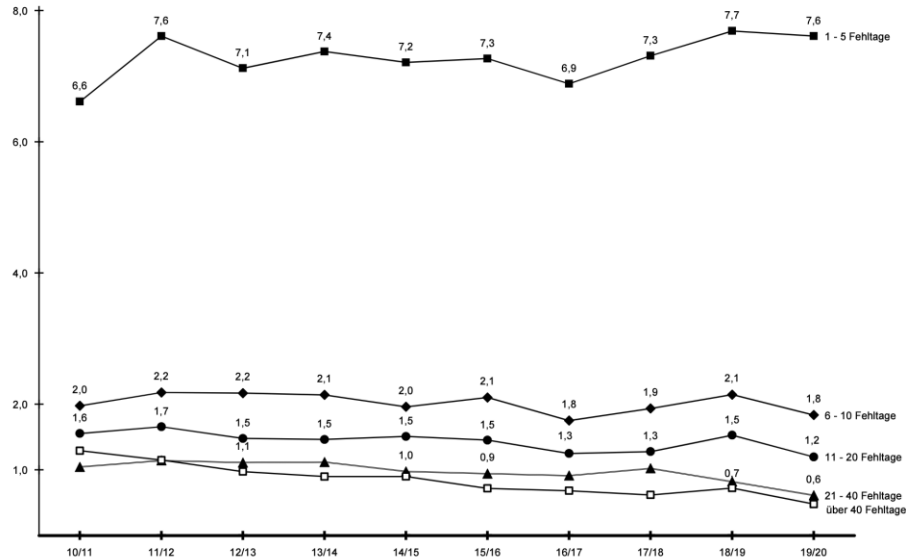
# Japan (1966-2017) (50 days, 30 days absent) Futôkô in primary schools and secondary schools



Kreitz-Sandberg & Lesch, 2019 (MEXT data).

# Timeline Thuringia 2010/11-2019/20

Schüler mit unentschuldigten Fehltagen in Prozent nach Fehltagebereich sowie Schuljahr (BBS)



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# Which indicators of absence are recorded and reported in the four countries on school attendance and SAPs?

overall absence



unauthorised absence

overall absence rates  
rates



persistent absence



How many students have  
missed school in average?



How many students  
are "at risk"?

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# Which indicators of absence are recorded and reported in the four countries on school attendance and SAPs?

Country	England	Japan	Germany		Sweden
Example			Berlin	Thuringia	
<b>Absence rate</b>	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Overall absence	x	(x)	x	-	-
Authorised absence	x	(x)	-	-	-
Unauthorised absence	x	(x)	x	x	x
<b>Rate of long-term/persistent absent students</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Overall absence	x	(Available but seldom presented)	-	-	x
Unauthorised absence	-	x	x	x	x

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# Overall absence and persistent absence

## Examples from definitions in England

- **Overall absence** is the aggregated total of all authorised and unauthorised absences.
  - Authorised absence is absence with permission from a teacher or other authorised representative of the schools, e.g. illness.
  - Unauthorised absence is absence without permission from the school. This includes all unexplained or unjustified absences and arrivals after registration has closed.
- **Persistent absence** is when a pupil enrolment's overall absence equates to 10 per cent or more of their possible sessions.  
(UK Department for Education; A guide to absence statistics)



# Which indicators of absence are recorded and reported in the four countries on school attendance and SAPs?

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# How can information on recording and reporting data, as well as published data, on school attendance be compared between these countries?

- *Basically the answer is:*

The extend of school attendance problems cannot be compared on the basis of the available date between the four countries.

## What can national and international comparative statistics contribute to our understanding of SAPs of adolescents in Sweden, compared to other chosen countries?

- Without data that is regularly collected according to stable criteria, we cannot understand how SAPs are developing in the country overall and for different population groups.
- Relevant to have reliable data both on overall absence, authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Discuss where to put the level for risk groups with persistent absence.
- Data not for the sake of data but in order to work with support and prevention!



# Thank you very much for your attention! Questions?

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