Understanding the limitations of international student assessment data

Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is an influential international study that compares the educational achievements of 15-year-olds across countries.

Using nationally representative, comparable data is crucial for ensuring reliable cross-country comparisons in the PISA.

Is the data reported by countries for the PISA truly representative of the target population?

Analysis of data from:

- **Canada**
  - PISA 2015
  - Disparity in rules for the inclusion of children with special educational needs
  - Variation in school participation rates
  - Comparatively high rates of students’ absence during the study

- **UK**
  - PISA 2018
  - Low response from participants (England and Northern Ireland)
  - High within-school and pupil-level exclusion of students from the test
  - Disparity in the technical aspects of eligibility criteria

| Non-participation rates | 50% | 40% |

The reliability and transparency of PISA results can be enhanced with an understanding of the limitations and biases inherent in international student assessments.