

HOW MANY STUDENTS STUDY ABROAD?

As national economies become more interconnected, governments and individuals are looking to higher education to broaden students' horizons. By pursuing high level studies in countries other than their own students may expand their knowledge of other cultures and languages, and better equip themselves in an increasingly globalised labour market. Some countries, particularly in the European Union, have established policies and schemes that promote such mobility to foster intercultural contacts and help build social networks.

Definition

Students are classified as “international” if they left their country of origin for the purpose of study. Students are

classified as “foreign” when they are not citizens of the country where they are enrolled. This includes international students as well as other students who are permanent residents, albeit not citizens, of the countries in which they are studying such as young people from immigrant families.

Comparability

Data on international and foreign students refer to the academic year 2012/2013, based on an annual joint data collection by UNESCO, the OECD and Eurostat.

Overview

OECD countries attract 73% of all students enrolled abroad in countries reporting data to the OECD and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics. Within the OECD area, EU countries host the largest proportion (35%) of international students. At the level of single countries, the United States hosted the largest number of all international students (19% of the total), followed by the United Kingdom (10%), Australia and France (6%), Germany (5%), Canada and Japan (both 3%) and, among the emerging economies with data on foreign students only, Russia (3%). The destinations of international students highlight the attractiveness of specific education systems, whether because of their academic reputation or because of subsequent immigration opportunities.

But they can also reflect language as well as cultural considerations, geographic proximity and the similarities between some education systems.

Students from Asia form the largest group of international students enrolled in countries reporting data: 53% of the total in all reporting destinations. In particular, students from China account for 22% of all international students enrolled in tertiary education in the OECD area, the highest share among all reporting countries.

The share of international students within total enrolment depends on the level of education. On average across OECD countries, international students represent 6% of the students enrolled in programmes at the bachelor's or equivalent level, but this proportion is 14% at the master's or equivalent level and 24% at the doctoral or equivalent level.

Trends in the number of foreign students worldwide, computed until 2012, reveal that this number has been steadily increasing. The number of students enrolled in a country of which they are not citizens increased by 50% (from 3 to 4.5 million) between 2005 and 2012.

Sources

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Further information

Analytical publications

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- OECD (2004), *Internationalisation and Trade in Higher Education: Opportunities and Challenges*, OECD Publishing.

Online databases

- OECD Education Statistics.

Websites

- OECD Education at a Glance (supplementary material), www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance-19991487.htm.



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International student mobility and foreign students in tertiary education

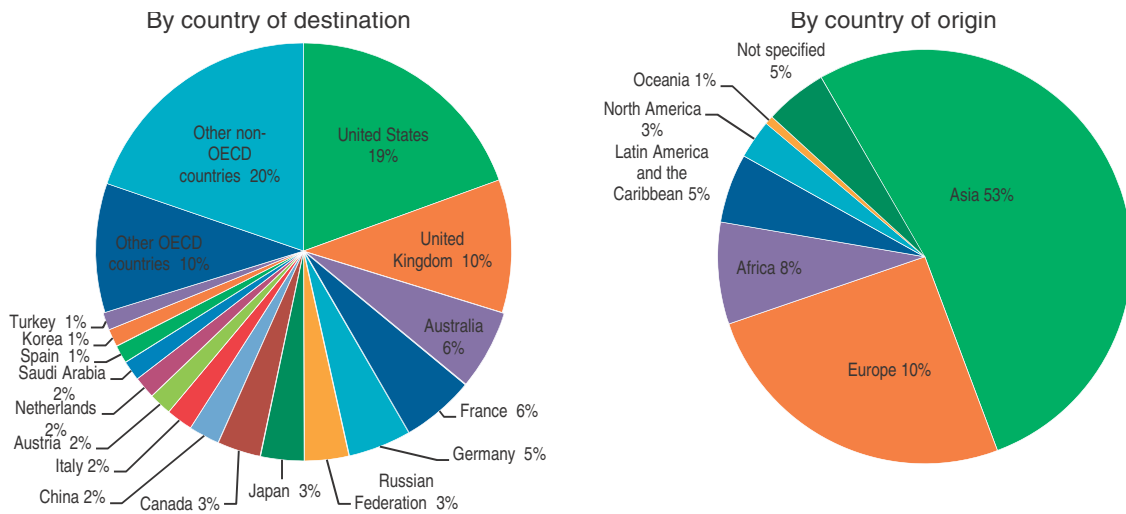
As a percentage of all students (international plus domestic), 2013

	International students					Foreign students				
	Total tertiary education	Short-cycle tertiary programmes	Bachelor's or equivalent level	Master's or equivalent level	Doctoral or equivalent level	Total tertiary education	Short-cycle tertiary programmes	Bachelor's or equivalent level	Master's or equivalent level	Doctoral or equivalent level
Australia	18.0	12.2	14.0	37.9	33.0	..	..	..	..	..
Austria	16.8	1.5	19.7	19.3	27.5	..	..	..	..	..
Belgium	10.0	5.9	7.7	16.1	37.7	..	..	..	..	..
Canada	9.0	9.0	7.3	13.0	25.6	..	..	..	..	..
Chile	0.3	0.1	0.1	2.5	3.4	..	..	..	..	..
Czech Republic	..	..	..	..	..	9.4	4.2	8.1	11.4	12.8
Denmark	10.1	13.3	5.8	17.6	29.5	..	..	..	..	..
Estonia	2.9	..	2.2	4.0	7.2	..	..	..	..	..
Finland	7.1	0.0	5.0	11.5	16.8	..	..	..	..	..
France	9.8	4.2	7.6	13.1	39.9	..	..	..	..	..
Germany	7.1	0.0	4.4	11.7	7.1	..	..	..	..	..
Greece	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Hungary	5.8	0.5	3.7	14.4	7.5	..	..	..	..	..
Iceland	6.5	20.6	5.9	5.6	19.8	..	..	..	..	..
Ireland	6.4	2.1	5.8	10.2	25.3	..	..	..	..	..
Israel	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	3.1	4.2	4.6
Italy	..	..	..	..	..	4.4	5.4	4.4	4.0	12.5
Japan	3.5	3.6	2.6	7.6	18.8	..	..	..	..	..
Korea	..	..	..	..	..	1.7	0.2	1.5	6.2	7.7
Luxembourg	43.5	15.5	24.4	67.1	84.1	..	..	..	..	..
Mexico	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.7	2.6	..	..	..	..	..
Netherlands	10.2	1.5	8.4	17.4	37.8	..	..	..	..	..
New Zealand	16.1	20.7	13.1	20.3	43.3	..	..	..	..	..
Norway	3.6	5.4	1.8	7.0	20.9	..	..	..	..	..
Poland	1.5	0.0	1.1	2.2	1.6	..	..	..	..	..
Portugal	3.9	..	2.6	4.7	15.0	..	..	..	..	..
Slovak Republic	4.9	0.5	3.7	6.3	8.6	..	..	..	..	..
Slovenia	2.6	0.9	2.3	3.6	7.6	..	..	..	..	..
Spain	2.9	5.5	0.8	4.9	16.2	..	..	..	..	..
Sweden	5.8	0.2	2.4	9.3	31.5	..	..	..	..	..
Switzerland	16.8	..	10.1	27.4	52.1	..	..	..	..	..
Turkey	..	..	..	..	..	1.1	0.3	1.1	3.7	4.5
United Kingdom	17.5	5.0	13.2	36.1	41.4	..	..	..	..	..
United States	3.9	1.8	3.2	8.2	32.4	..	..	..	..	..
EU 28	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
OECD	8.6	5.1	6.2	13.9	23.9	..	..	..	..	..
Brazil	..	..	..	..	..	..	0.3	0.2	..	..
China	..	..	..	..	..	0.3	0.0	0.4	1.0	2.4
India	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Indonesia	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Russian Federation	..	..	..	..	..	1.7	0.8	..	3.1	3.9
South Africa	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..

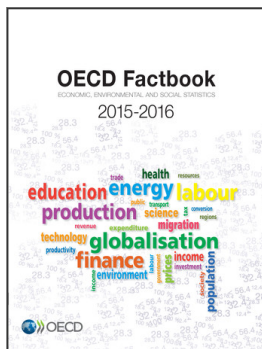
1 2 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933336638>

Distribution of foreign and international students in tertiary education

2013



1 2 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933335551>



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