

Access to education

Education systems in OECD countries ensure universal access to primary and secondary education. Yet, more people than ever before are participating in educational programmes beyond compulsory education, and many governments are having difficulties in financing such demand through public funds alone (OECD, 2020).

In 2017, across the OECD, 17% of funds for pre-primary and 29% for tertiary education came from private (i.e. all non-government sources) sources. The share was just 10% for primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education levels (including vocational training). Luxembourg (2%), Belgium (3%) and Latvia (4%) have the smallest shares of private funding for pre-primary education, while Australia (34%), the United Kingdom (41%) and Japan (49%) have the largest. For primary to post-secondary non-tertiary education, Finland, Norway (1% each) and Denmark (2%) have the smallest shares of private funding, while Colombia (35%), Turkey (27%) and Australia (19%) have the largest (Figure 14.7).

Some countries have a policy of charging low tuition fees for tertiary education, such as Denmark and Finland. In these two countries, the share of private funding of education is low (1% and 4% respectively). Others charge high tuition fees so the share of private funding is larger, such as the United Kingdom (71% privately funded), Japan (69%) and the United States (65%) (Figure 14.7). Some of the countries where a larger share of funding comes from private sources provide financial support through public-to-private transfers (e.g. in the form of scholarships, loans and grants to students), including Australia, Ireland, Korea, New Zealand and the United Kingdom (OECD, 2020).

Early childhood education has become a priority for OECD countries. On average in 2018, 88% of 4-year-olds and 78% of 3-year-olds were enrolled in education, which represents an increase from 2005, when only 69% of these age groups were enrolled in any programme. Belgium, Denmark, France, Israel, Spain, and the United Kingdom have reached around 100% enrolment for 3-4 year-olds. Other countries have lower enrolment rates for 3-year-olds, including Switzerland (2%) and Turkey (10%), although the proportion increases for children aged 4 (49% for Switzerland and 39% for Turkey) (Figure 14.8).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, most countries enforced school closures for some part of the 2020 and 2021 school years. Countries used a variety of remote learning resources, including radio and television education, and instructional packages. Almost all OECD countries used online learning platforms (Schleicher, 2020) accessed from smartphones, tablets or computers. In 2018, 89% of students on average in OECD countries had access to a computer at home. In Denmark (98%), Poland (96%) and the Netherlands (95%) nearly all students had a computer, while in Mexico (57%), Colombia (62%), and Turkey (67%) a significant share did not. These latter three countries also had large socio-economic

disparities: in disadvantaged schools only 24% of students in Mexico, 33% in Colombia and 40% in Turkey had access to a computer (Figure 14.9).

Methodology and definitions

Data for funding and enrolment come from the UNESCO-OECD-Eurostat (UOE) data collection on education statistics. Private spending includes all direct expenditure on educational institutions, whether partially covered by public subsidies or not. The classification of education levels follows the 2011 International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). Early childhood education (ISCED 0) includes two types of programmes: early childhood educational development (ISCED 01) and pre-primary (ISCED 02). Enrolment rates are expressed as net enrolment rates, which are calculated by dividing the number of students of a particular age group enrolled in all levels of education by the total population of that age group. Generally, figures are based on head counts and do not distinguish between full-time and part-time study.

Data on students' learning environments come from the student questionnaire of the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). A socio-economically disadvantaged (advantaged) school is a school in the bottom (top) quarter of the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) in the relevant country/economy.

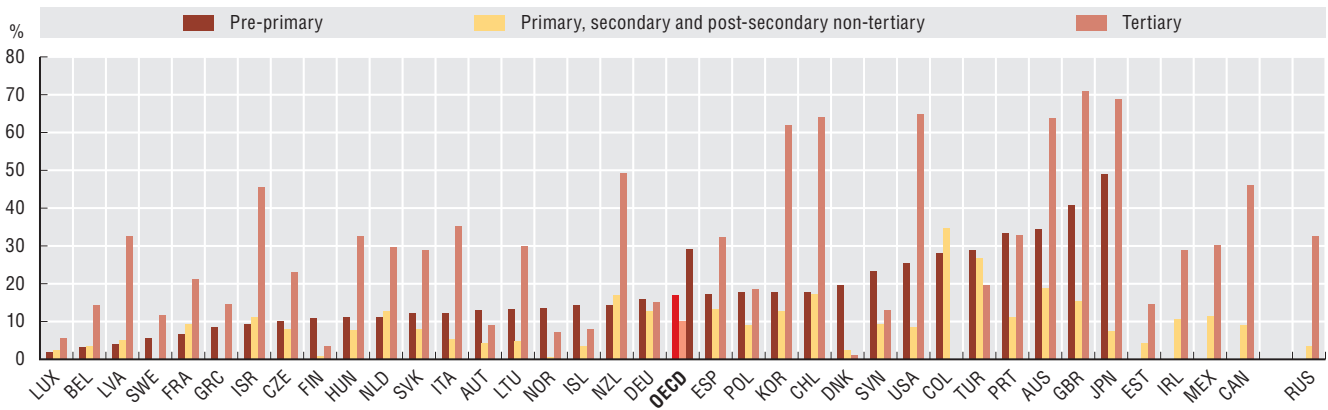
Further reading

- OECD (2020), *Education at a Glance 2020: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>.
- Schleicher, A. (2020) *The Impact of COVID-19 on Education: Insights from Education at a Glance 2020*, OECD, www.oecd.org/education/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-education-insights-education-at-a-glance-2020.pdf.
- Ikedo, M. (2020), "Were schools equipped to teach – and were students ready to learn – remotely?" *PISA in Focus*, No. 108, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/4bcd7938-en>.

Figure notes

- 14.7. Data for Switzerland are missing. Data for Estonia, Ireland and Mexico for pre-primary are missing. Data for Colombia are for 2018 instead of 2017. Primary education in Canada includes pre-primary.
- 14.8. Data for Canada and Greece are missing. Data for the United States exclude ISCED 01 programmes. Data for South Africa refer to 2017 instead of 2018.
- 14.9. Data for China cover Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu and Zhejiang only.

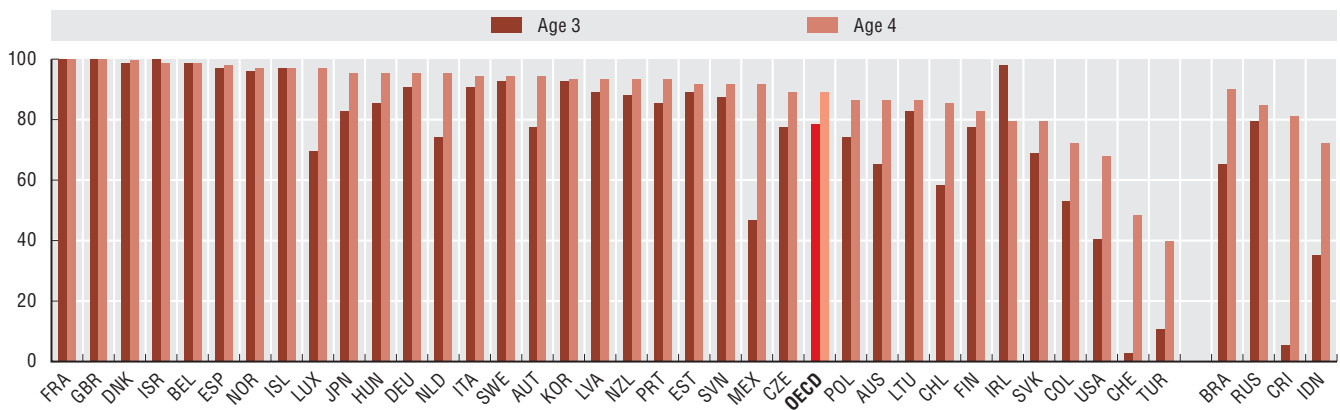
14.7. Share of private expenditures on education after transfers as a share of total spending on education, 2017



Source: OECD (2020), Education at a Glance 2020: OECD Indicators.

StatLink <https://doi.org/10.1787/888934259522>

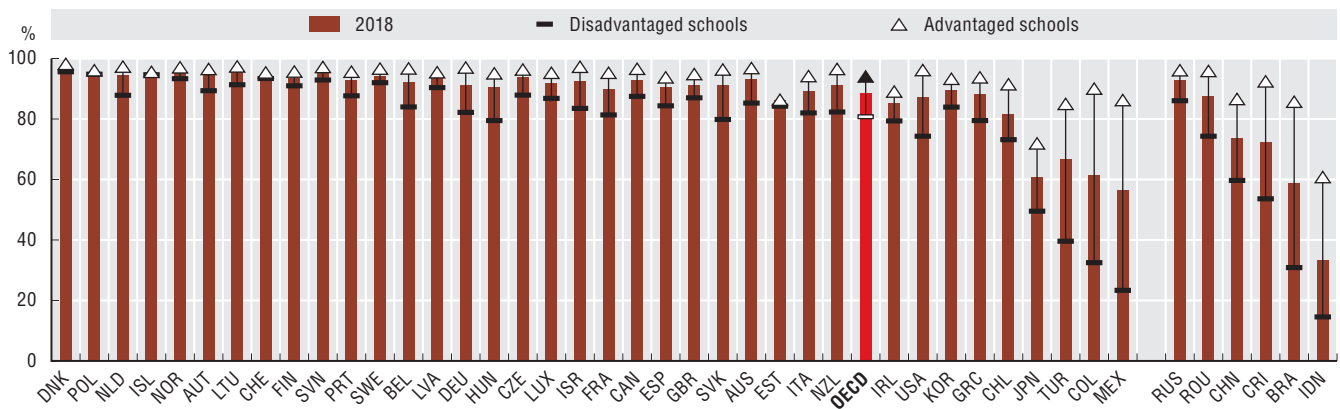
14.8. Enrolment rate at age 3 and 4 in early childhood and pre-primary education, 2018



Source: OECD (2020), Education at a Glance 2020: OECD Indicators.

StatLink <https://doi.org/10.1787/888934259541>

14.9. Percentage of students with access to a computer to do homework at home, 2018



Source: OECD (2020), PISA 2018 Results (Volume V): Effective Policies, Successful Schools.

StatLink <https://doi.org/10.1787/888934259560>



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