

Switzerland

Ensuring equal opportunities for students across socio-economic backgrounds

- Across most OECD countries, socio-economic status influences learning outcomes more than gender and immigrant status. In Switzerland, the proportion of children from the bottom quartile of the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) achieving at least PISA level 2 in reading in 2018 was 32% lower than that of children from the top ESCS quartile, a larger share than the OECD average of 29%.
- Students from lower socio-economic background are more likely to enter upper secondary vocational programmes than general ones. In Switzerland, students without any tertiary-educated parent represented 65% of entrants to upper secondary vocational programmes, compared to 36% among entrants to general programmes.
- International student mobility at the tertiary level has risen steadily reaching about 55 700 students in Switzerland and representing 18% of tertiary students in 2019. The largest share of international tertiary students studying in Switzerland comes from Germany. Students from low and lower-middle income countries are generally less likely to study abroad. In 2019, they represented 29% of international students in OECD countries, compared to 8% in Switzerland.
- Large differences in educational attainment may lead to starker earnings inequality in many countries. In Switzerland, 30% of 25-64 year-old adults with below upper secondary attainment earned at or below half the median earnings in 2019, above the OECD average of 27%.

Gender inequalities in education and outcomes

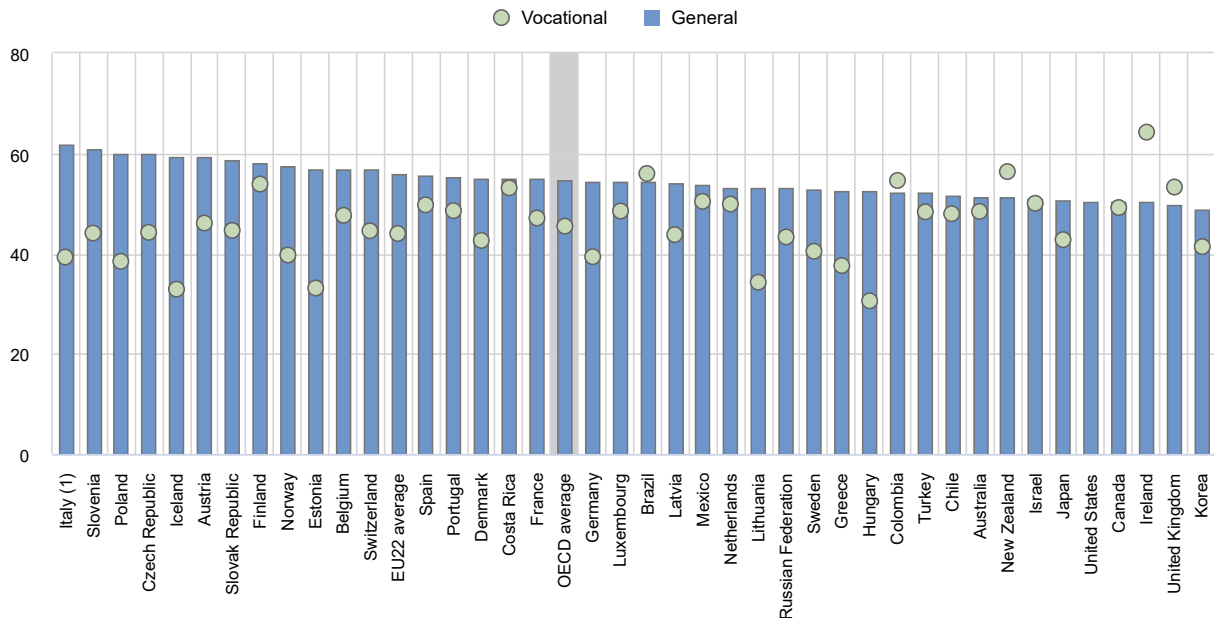
- In Switzerland, 1.2% of students in lower secondary and 5.3% in upper secondary initial education repeated a grade in 2019, compared to 1.9% and 3% respectively on average across OECD countries. Boys are more likely to repeat a grade at lower secondary initial education than girls. In Switzerland, 58% of repeaters at lower secondary level were boys, lower than the OECD average of 61%. At upper secondary level, the share of boys repeating a grade in Switzerland decreases to 52%, compared to 57% on average across OECD countries.
- Men are more likely than women to pursue a vocational track at upper secondary level in most OECD countries. This is also the case in Switzerland, where 55% of upper secondary vocational graduates in 2019 were men (compared to the OECD average of 55%). Women are generally more likely to graduate from upper secondary general programmes. This is also the case in Switzerland, where women represent 57% of graduates from upper secondary general programmes, compared to 55% on average across OECD countries (Figure 1).
- Tertiary education has been expanding in the last decades, and, in 2020, 25-34 year-old women were more likely than men to achieve tertiary education in all OECD countries. In Switzerland, 55% of 25-34 year-old women had a tertiary qualification in 2020 compared to 51% of their male

peers, while on average across OECD countries the shares were 52% among young women and 39% among young men.

- Gender differences in the distribution of tertiary entrants across fields of study are significant. Women tend to be under-represented in certain fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) across most OECD countries. On average, 26% of new entrants in engineering, manufacturing and construction and 20% in information and communication technologies were women in 2019. In Switzerland, women represented 19% of new entrants in engineering, manufacturing and construction programmes and 13% in information and communication technologies. In contrast, they represented 72% of new entrants to the field of education, a sector traditionally dominated by women. In Switzerland, men represent 38% of teachers across all levels of education, compared to 30% on average across OECD countries.
- Young women are less likely to be employed than young men, particularly those with lower levels of education. Only 57% of 25-34 year-old women with below upper secondary attainment were employed in 2020 compared to 74% of men in Switzerland. This gender difference is smaller than the average across OECD countries, where 43% of women and 69% of men with below upper secondary attainment are employed.
- In nearly all OECD countries and at all levels of educational attainment, 25-64 year-old women earn less than their male peers: their earnings correspond to 76%-78% of men's earnings on average across OECD countries. This proportion varies more across educational attainment levels within countries than on average across OECD countries. Compared to other education levels, women with below upper secondary education in Switzerland have the lowest earnings relative to men with a similar education level, earning 77% as much, while those with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education earn 84% as much.
- On average across OECD countries with available data, 25-64 year-old women tend to participate slightly more in adult learning than men of the same age. In Switzerland, 68% of women participated in formal and/or non-formal education and training in 2016, compared to 70% of men. Family reasons were reported as barriers to participation in formal and/or non-formal education and training by 40% of women compared to 27% of men.

Figure 1. Share of women among upper secondary graduates, by programme orientation (2019)

In per cent



1. Includes post-secondary non-tertiary level.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the share of women in general programmes.

Source: OECD (2021). Table B3.1. See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2021_Annex3_ChapterB.pdf).

Education and migration background

- On average across the OECD, foreign-born adults (25-64 year-olds) account for 22% of all adults with below upper secondary attainment, 14% of those attaining upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment, and 18% of tertiary-educated adults. In Switzerland as in most OECD countries, the share of foreign-born adults among all adults with a given level of educational attainment is the highest among adults with below upper secondary attainment (74%) in 2020.
- Foreign-born adults have more difficulty finding a job than their native-born peers as they face various challenges, such as discrepancies in credential recognition, skills, and language. Thus, foreign-born workers are likely to have a lower reservation wage (the lowest wage rate at which a worker would be willing to accept a particular type of job). As a result, the employment rate for foreign-born adults with low educational attainment is higher than the rate for their native-born peers in many countries. On average across OECD countries, among adults without upper secondary attainment, 57% of native-born adults are employed compared to 61% of foreign-born adults. In Switzerland, the employment rate of foreign-born adults without upper secondary attainment was 71% in 2020, higher than that of their native-born peers (65%).
- The likelihood of being employed increases with the level of educational attainment, but foreign-born adults with tertiary attainment generally have lower employment prospects than their native-born peers. On average across OECD countries, 86% of native-born tertiary-educated adults are employed compared to 79% for foreign-born tertiary-educated adults. In Switzerland, among tertiary-educated adults, 92% of native-born adults and 84% of foreign-born adults are

employed. Foreign-born adults who arrived in the country at an early age have spent some years in their host country's education system and gained nationally recognised credentials. As a result, their labour-market outcomes are generally better than that of those who arrived at a later age with a foreign qualification. In Switzerland, among foreign-born adults with tertiary attainment, 90% of those who arrived by the age of 15 are employed, compared to 83% of those who arrived in the country at age 16 or later.

- Foreign-born young adults (15-29 year-olds) are also more likely to be neither employed nor in education or training (NEET) than native-born young adults. On average across OECD countries, 18.8% of foreign-born and 13.7% of native-born adults are NEET. In Switzerland, the difference is 5 percentage points (10.7% compared to 5.9%). Early arrival in the country is generally associated with a lower risk of becoming NEET. In Switzerland, the share of NEETs among foreign-born young adults who arrived by the age of 15 is 8%, while the share of NEETs among those who arrived at age 16 or later is 13%.
- In many OECD countries, foreign-born adults earn less than native-born adults. This pay gap may narrow with higher levels of educational attainment. On average across OECD countries, foreign-born adults with below secondary attainment working full-time earn 89% as much as their native-born peers, while this gap disappears among tertiary-educated adults. In Switzerland, in 2019, among adults with below upper secondary attainment, the earnings of foreign-born full-time workers represented 102% that of their native-born peers, 90% among adults with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment, and 101% among those with a tertiary-education.

Cross-regional disparities in education

- National level data often hide important regional inequalities in children's access and participation to education. In general, inequalities across regions tend to widen at non-compulsory levels of education. For example, in the majority of countries, the variation in enrolment rate of 3-5 year-olds is often greater than the variation among 6-14 year-olds. This is the case in Switzerland, where the enrolment rate of 3-5 year-olds varies from 38% in the region of Central Switzerland to 85% in the region of Ticino whereas the enrolment of 6-14 year-olds varies from 99% to 100% across regions. Similarly, the enrolment rate of 15-19 year-olds varies from 79% to 91% in Switzerland.
- Tertiary attainment may vary significantly within a country. In Switzerland, the share of 25-64 year-old adults with tertiary education varies from 40% in the region of Eastern Switzerland to 56% in the region of Zurich, one of the lowest regional variations across OECD countries with available data.
- On average across OECD and partner countries with subnational data on labour-force status, there is more regional variation in employment rates among those with below upper secondary education (17 percentage points) than for those with tertiary education (8 percentage points). In Switzerland, there is a difference of 16 percentage points in the employment rate of adults with below upper secondary education between different regions of the country compared to 8 percentage points for tertiary-educated adults.
- The proportion of young people who are NEET shows significant subnational as well as national variation across OECD and partner countries. In Switzerland, the difference in the share of 18-24 year-old NEETs between regions with the highest and lowest value is 6 percentage points, compared to 11 percentage points on average across OECD countries.

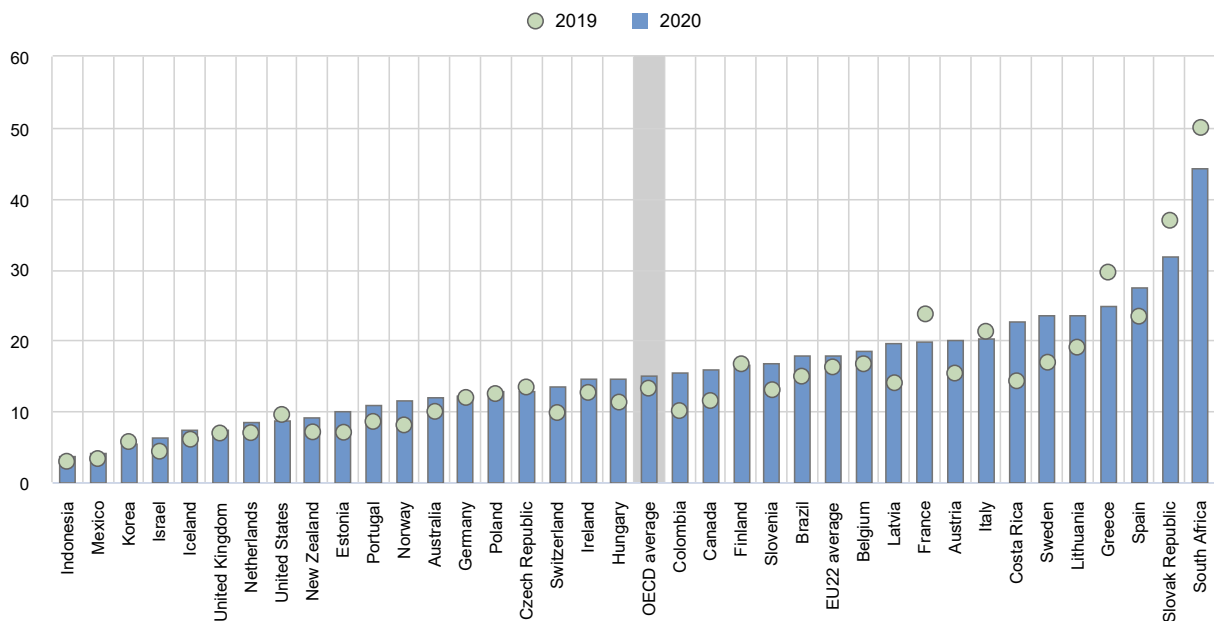
COVID-19: 18 months into the pandemic

- The spread of COVID-19 has continued to impede access to in-person education in many countries around the world in 2021. By mid-May 2021, 37 OECD and partner countries had experienced periods of full school closure since the start of 2020.
- The number of instructional days when schools were fully closed since the start of 2020 due to the pandemic (excluding school holidays, public holidays and weekends) varies significantly between countries and generally increases with the level of education. Switzerland does not follow this pattern. In Switzerland, pre-primary, primary, and lower secondary schools were fully closed for 34 days between 1 January 2020 and 20 May 2021. Meanwhile, only upper secondary general schools closed for longer (56 days). In comparison, respective closures were 55 days in pre-primary schools, 78 in primary, 92 in lower secondary and 101 days in upper secondary general schools on average across the OECD.
- During periods of full school closure in 2020, 21 OECD and partner countries have opted to keep upper secondary general schools virtually open as a national level strategy, including Switzerland. However, in 4 countries, excluding Switzerland, each day of remote learning was not considered equivalent to a full day of in-person instruction. The way that online platforms have operated during school closures has varied between countries. In Switzerland, decisions on how online platforms should operate were made at the cantonal level from pre-primary to upper secondary education. Some made use of online platforms, others did not.
- The impact of COVID-19 and school closures on educational equity has been a concern for many countries. 30 out of the 36 OECD and partner countries surveyed, including Switzerland, declared that additional measures were taken to support the education of children who might face additional barriers to learning during the pandemic. 22 of these countries, including Switzerland, stated that they had subsidised devices for students to help them access education. Measures to encourage disadvantaged or vulnerable students to return to school after closures were also implemented in 29 OECD and partner countries, although not in Switzerland.
- 20 OECD and partner countries, although not Switzerland, stated that the allocation of additional public funds to support the educational response to the pandemic in primary and secondary schools was based on the number of students or classes. At the same time, 16 countries targeted additional funds at socio-economically disadvantaged students as a way to ensure that resources targeted those that needed them the most, though this was not the case in Switzerland.
- Countries' approach to prioritise teachers in vaccination campaigns against COVID-19 has varied. In total, 19 OECD and partner countries, excluding Switzerland, have prioritised at least some teachers as part of the government's plans to vaccinate the population on a national level (as of 20 May 2021).
- The impact of the pandemic on the economy has raised concerns about the prospects of young adults, especially those leaving education earlier than others. In Switzerland, the unemployment rate among 25-34 year-olds with below upper secondary attainment was 13.4% in 2020, an increase of 4 percentage points from the previous year. In comparison, the average youth unemployment rate of 15.1% in 2020 across OECD countries represented an increase of 2 percentage points from 2019 (Figure 2).
- At the same time, the number of adults participating in formal and/or non-formal education and training decreased by 27% on average in the OECD between the second quarter of 2019 and the second quarter of 2020 (i.e. during the peak of the first wave of COVID-19 in many OECD countries). In Switzerland, the participation of adults in formal and/or non-formal education and training in this period decreased by 35% in Switzerland.
- Despite the impact of the crisis on employment, the share of NEETs among 18-24 year-olds did not greatly increase in most OECD and partner countries during the first year of the COVID-19

pandemic. On average, the share of 18-24 year-old NEETs in OECD countries rose from 14.4% in 2019 to 16.1% in 2020. In Switzerland, the share of 18-24 year-old NEETs was 8.8% in 2019, which decreased to 8.7% in 2020.

Figure 2. Trends in unemployment rates of 25-34 year-olds with below upper secondary attainment (2019 and 2020)

In per cent



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Countries are ranked in ascending order of the unemployment rate of 25-34 year-olds with below upper secondary attainment in 2020.

Source: OECD (2021), Table A3.3. See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2021_Annex3_ChapterA.pdf).

Investing in education

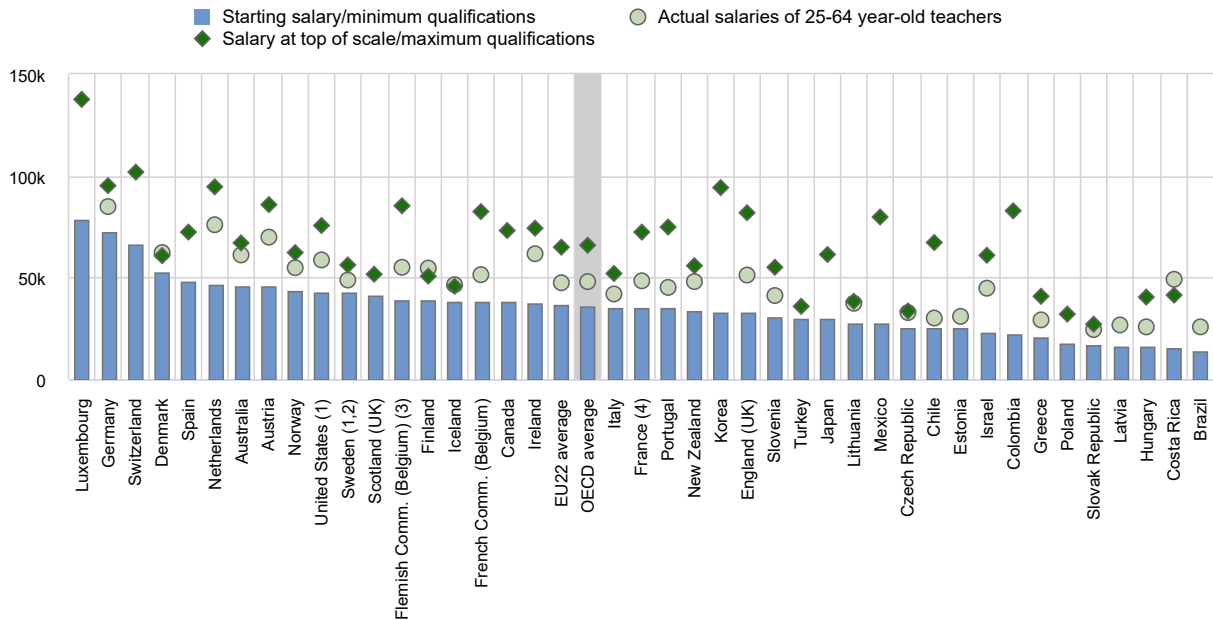
- Annual public expenditure per student on educational institutions provides an indication of the public investment countries make on each student. In 2018, Switzerland spent more on primary to tertiary educational institutions per full-time student than the OECD average, investing a total of USD 18 607 per student (in equivalent USD converted using PPPs for GDP) compared to USD 10 000 on average across OECD countries.
- The provision of education influences the allocation of public resources to public educational institutions between levels of education. In 2018, Switzerland spent USD 16 352 public funds per student at primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education, USD 6 251 higher than the OECD average of USD 10 101. At tertiary level Switzerland invested USD 30 090 per student, above the OECD average (USD 13 855).

Working conditions of school teachers

- The salaries of school staff, and in particular teachers and school heads, represent the largest single expenditure in formal education. Their salary levels also have an impact on the attractiveness of the teaching profession. In most OECD countries and economies, statutory salaries of teachers (and school heads) in public educational institutions increase with the level of education they teach, and also with experience. On average, statutory salaries of teachers with maximum qualifications at the top of their salary scales (maximum salaries) were between 86% and 91% higher than those of teachers with the minimum qualifications at the start of their career (minimum salaries) at pre-primary (ISCED 02), primary and general lower and upper secondary levels in 2020. In Switzerland, maximum salaries were 52% to 54% higher than minimum salaries at each level of education (Figure 3). However, most teachers were paid between these minimum and maximum salaries.
- The average number of teaching hours per year required of a typical teacher in public educational institutions in OECD countries tends to decrease as the level of education increases: it ranged from 989 hours at pre-primary level (ISCED 02), to 791 hours at primary level, 723 hours at lower secondary level (general programmes) and 685 hours at upper secondary level (general programmes) in 2020. In Switzerland, teachers teach 788 hours per year at pre-primary level, 806 hours per year at primary level, 750 hours at lower secondary level (general programmes) and 638 hours at upper secondary level (general programmes).
- During their working time, teachers also perform various tasks other than teaching itself such as lesson planning and preparation, marking students' work and communicating or co-operating with parents or guardians. At the lower secondary level, teachers in Switzerland spend 41% of their statutory working time on teaching, compared to 44% on average among countries with available data.
- In primary and secondary education, about 35% of teachers are at least 50 years old on average across OECD countries and may reach retirement age in the next decade, while the size of the school-age population is projected to increase in some countries, putting many governments under pressure to recruit and train new teachers. In 2019, 31% of primary teachers in Switzerland were at least 50 years old, which was slightly lower than the OECD average of 33%. On average across OECD countries, the proportion of teachers aged at least 50 years old increases with higher levels of education taught, to 36% in lower secondary education and 40% in upper secondary education. In Switzerland, this proportion varies from 34% at lower secondary level to 43% at upper secondary level.

Figure 3. Lower secondary teachers' average actual salaries compared to the statutory starting and top of the scale salaries (2020)

Annual statutory salaries of teachers in public institutions, in equivalent USD converted using PPPs



Compare your country: <https://www.compareyourcountry.org/education-at-a-glance-2021/en/7/all/default>

Note: Actual salaries include bonuses and allowances.

1. Actual base salaries.
2. Salaries at the top of the scale and the minimum qualifications, instead of the maximum qualifications.
3. Salaries at the top of the scale and the most prevalent qualifications, instead of the maximum qualifications.
4. Includes the average of fixed bonuses for overtime hours.

Countries and economies are ranked in descending order of starting salaries for lower secondary teachers with the minimum qualifications.

Source: OECD (2021), Table D3.3 and Education at a Glance Database, <http://stats.oecd.org>. See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2021_Annex3_ChapterD.pdf).

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More information

For more information on Education at a Glance 2021 and to access the full set of indicators, see:
<https://doi.org/10.1787/b35a14e5-en>

For more information on the methodology used during the data collection for each indicator, the references to the sources and the specific notes for each country, see Annex 3 (https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2021_Annex3.pdf).

For general information on the methodology, please refer to the OECD Handbook for Internationally Comparative Education Statistics: Concepts, Standards, Definitions and Classifications (<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264304444-en>).

Updated data can be found on line at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-data-en> and by following the *StatLinks*  under the tables and charts in the publication.

Data on subnational regions for selected indicators are available in the *OECD Regional Statistics* (database) (OECD, 2021). When interpreting the results on subnational entities, readers should take into account that the population size of subnational entities can vary widely within countries. For example, regional variation in enrolment may be influenced by students attending school in a different region from their area of residence, particularly at higher levels of education. Also, regional disparities tend to be higher when more subnational entities are used in the analysis.

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<https://gpseducation.oecd.org/>

The data on educational responses during COVID-19 were collected and processed by the OECD based on the Survey on Joint National Responses to COVID-19 School Closures, a collaborative effort conducted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS); the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); the World Bank; and the OECD.

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