

4. PAYING FOR EDUCATION

How much do teachers cost?

- Four factors influence the cost of teachers per student: how many hours students spend in the classroom, teachers' teaching hours, estimated class size and teachers' salaries.
- The cost of teachers per student varies significantly between countries; in most countries, the salary cost of teachers per student increases with the level of education taught.
- The cost of teachers per student increased substantially in most countries at the primary and lower secondary levels between 2005 and 2011. On average, it increased by more than 10%: from USD 2 398 to USD 2 627 at the primary level, and from USD 3 473 to USD 3 818 at the lower secondary level.

Significance

The relationship between resources devoted to education and student learning outcomes has been the focus of much education policy debate in recent years, as governments seek to ensure value for money in public spending while satisfying the educational needs of society and the economy. Indeed, various reforms implemented during the last decade in primary and secondary education have had important impacts in this area. Consequently, there is considerable interest in international comparisons of how various school systems allocate resources. Since teachers account for a major part of spending, their costs are of particular interest.

Findings

Similar levels of spending among countries can mask a variety of contrasting policy choices. For example, at the upper secondary level of education, Germany and Portugal showed similar levels of salary costs of teachers per student in 2011, both higher than average. In Germany, this mainly results from significantly higher salaries, while in Portugal, this results mostly from below-average class size.

Teachers' salaries are most often the main driver of the difference from the average cost of teachers per student at each level of education. Estimated class size is the second main driver of the difference at each level. Naturally, teachers' salaries vary according to countries' relative level of wealth. The impact of teachers' salaries on the average cost of teachers per student is weaker when differences in countries' wealth are accounted for.

There are large differences in the cost of teachers per student between education levels. The average salary cost of teachers per student in 2011 was USD 2 757 per primary student, USD 3 456 per lower secondary student and USD 3 420

per upper secondary student. However, in some countries, mainly Finland, the Netherlands and Slovenia, the salary cost of teachers is lower at the upper secondary level than at the lower secondary level.

Trends

Most OECD countries simultaneously increased teachers' salaries and decreased estimated class sizes at the primary and lower secondary levels of education, between 2005 and 2011. During this period, teachers' salaries increased, on average, by more than 14% at the primary level and by nearly 11% at the lower secondary level, while estimated class size decreased, by 18% at the primary level and by 6% at the lower secondary level, in countries with available data for both years. These changes resulted in an increase in the salary cost of teachers. Hungary and Italy are the only two countries where the salary cost of teachers per student decreased significantly between 2005 and 2011 at both primary and lower secondary levels.

Definitions

Data referring to the 2011 school year are based on the UOE data collection on education statistics, as well as on the Survey on Teachers and the Curriculum, which were both administered by the OECD in 2012. Data referring to the 2000 and 2005 school years are based on the UOE data collection on education statistics, and on the Survey on Teachers and the Curriculum, which were both administered by the OECD and published in the 2013 edition (for trend data on teaching time and salary of teachers) and 2002 and 2007 editions (ratio of student to teaching staff and instruction time) of *Education at a Glance*.

Going further

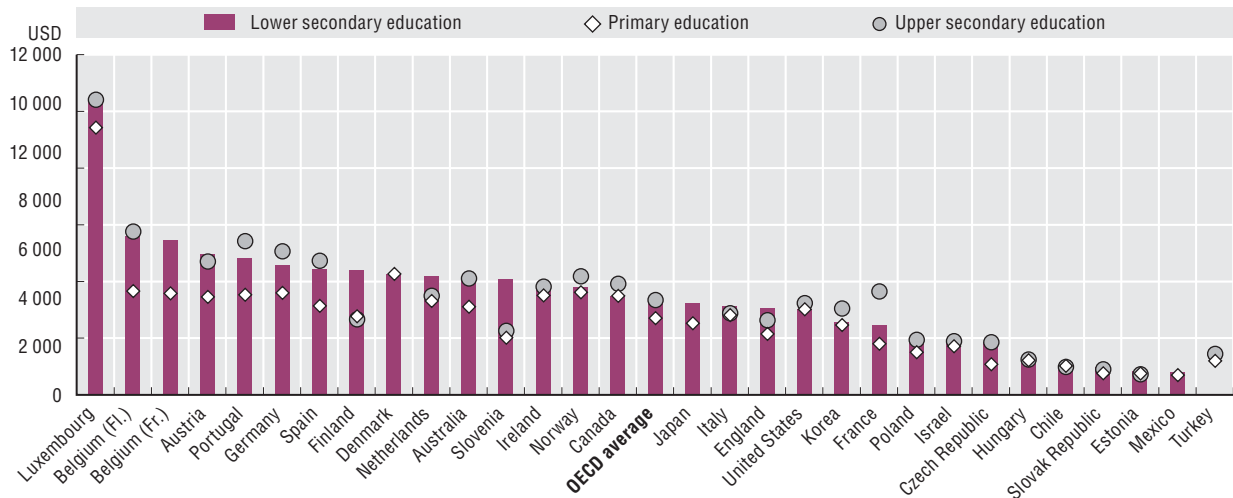
For additional material, notes and a full explanation of sourcing and methodologies, see *Education at a Glance 2013* (Indicator B7).

Areas covered include:

- Salary cost per student by level of education.
- Salary cost per student as a percentage of GDP per capita.

Figure 4.11. Salary cost of teachers per student, by level of education, 2011

This figure compares the salary costs of teachers per student, according to educational levels.



Source: OECD (2013), Education at a Glance 2013, Chart B7.1, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932847222>.

Figure 4.12. Salary cost of teachers per student at lower secondary level (2005, 2011)

This figure compares the salary costs of teachers per student in 2005 and 2011, in lower secondary education.



Source: OECD (2013), Education at a Glance 2013, Chart B7.2, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932847241>.





5. THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

How long do students spend in the classroom?

How many students are in each classroom?

How much are teachers paid?

How much time do teachers spend teaching?



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