

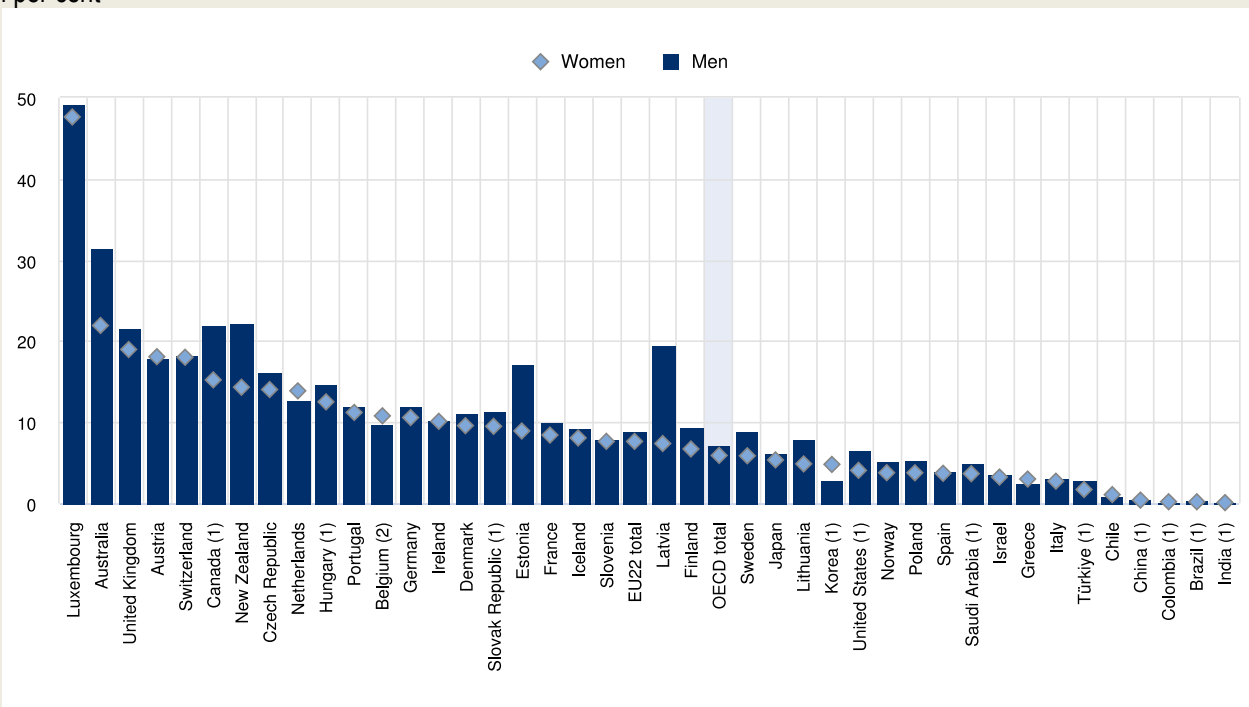
Indicator B6. What is the profile of internationally mobile students?

Highlights

- Students are more likely to cross borders to pursue their studies as they reach more advanced levels of education. Internationally mobile students account for only 5% of bachelor's students, but 14% of master's students and 24% of doctoral students on average in OECD countries.
- 31% of tertiary mobile students are enrolled in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) programmes. This is a larger share than among national students, of whom 23% are enrolled in STEM. The share of mobile students enrolled in STEM programmes increased by 2 percentage points between 2015 and 2020 while remaining constant in other fields such as education and health and welfare.
- Students from Asia form the largest group of international students enrolled in tertiary education programmes at all levels, representing 58% of all mobile students across the OECD in 2020.

Figure B6.1. Share of international or foreign students at tertiary level, by gender (2020)

In per cent



1. Share of foreign rather than international students.

2. Data on short-cycle tertiary programmes are based on nationality and refer to the Flemish community only.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the share of international or foreign students among female students enrolled in tertiary programmes.

Source: OECD/UIS/Eurostat (2022), Table B6.2. See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2022_X3-B.pdf).

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Context

Studying abroad has become a key differentiating experience for young adults enrolled in tertiary education, and international student mobility has received increasing policy attention in recent years. Studying abroad can be a way to access high-quality education at a prestigious institution and acquire skills that may not be taught at home (King and Sondhi, 2018^[1]). It is also seen as a means of accessing career opportunities abroad and improving employability in increasingly globalised labour markets, and for some, it is a first step to migrate to another country in the long-term (Crossman and Clarke, 2010^[2]; Wintre et al., 2015^[3]). Other motivations include the desire to expand one's knowledge of other societies and to improve language skills, particularly English (Sánchez, Fornerino and Zhang, 2006^[4]; Wu, 2014^[5]).

For host countries, mobile students (whether international or foreign) may be an important source of income and have a considerable impact on their economic and innovation systems (Halterbeck and Conlon, 2021^[6]). They often pay higher tuition fees than domestic students (see Indicator C5) and, in some countries, are subject to higher registration fees. They also contribute to the local economy through their living expenses (Canmac Economics, 2020^[7]). In the longer run, highly educated mobile students have the ability to integrate into domestic labour markets more easily than other migrants and contribute to innovation and economic performance. Attracting mobile students, especially if they stay permanently, is therefore a way to tap into a global pool of talent, support the development of innovation and production systems, and, in many countries, mitigate the impact of an ageing population on future skills supply (Hawthorne, 2008^[8]).

For their countries of origin, mobile students might be viewed as lost talent (or “brain drain”). However, mobile students can contribute to knowledge absorption, technology upgrading and capacity building in their home country, if they return home after their studies or maintain links with nationals at home. They gain tacit knowledge that is often shared through personal interactions and can help their home country to integrate into global knowledge networks. Some research suggests that the number of students overseas is a good predictor of future scientist flows in the opposite direction, providing evidence of movement of skilled labour across nations (Appelt et al., 2015^[9]). Student mobility also appears to shape international scientific co-operation networks more deeply than either a common language or scientific proximity.

In 2020, higher educational institutions around the world implemented campus shut downs to control the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and many shifted to distance learning. While campus closures affected the continuity of learning and the delivery of courses for all students, lockdowns were particularly problematic for many of the 4.4 million international and foreign students studying in OECD countries. Students were faced with uncertainty over whether they would be able to physically reach the country where their course was expected to take place due to restrictions on borders, or find work within the period of time allowed for international students to seek employment after the end of their studies (EMN/OECD, 2020^[10]). This may partly explain why in some contexts, like Australia, international students reported larger declines in the quality of their educational experience in 2020 than national students (QILT, 2020^[11]).

Other findings

- International mobility patterns show the importance of cultural, linguistic and physical proximity for students in choosing where to study. For instance, Latin American students represent 6% of mobile students overall in the OECD, but 75% of those in OECD countries within the Latin American region.
- Most OECD countries are net “importers” of students; that is, they have more students coming into the country to study than those leaving to study abroad. In total in 2020, OECD countries hosted four international students for each national student studying abroad, but this ratio exceeds ten in Australia and the United Kingdom.
- Erasmus+ and other European Union (EU) programmes account for the great majority (69%) of credit-mobile graduates in European OECD countries who studied abroad for at least three months, ranging from 32% in Denmark, to 95% or more in Greece, Latvia and Slovenia.

Note

This indicator focuses mostly on **degree mobile** students, who are enrolled as regular students abroad with the intention of graduating from a programme in the country of destination. This does not include **credit-mobile** students, who are temporarily enrolled in tertiary education and/or a study-related traineeship abroad in order to gain academic credit for a tertiary programme at an institution in their country of origin (see Box B6.1 for a discussion of credit mobility).

Analysis

Mobility patterns and international student flows

Many factors at the individual, institutional, national and global levels drive patterns of international student mobility. These include personal ambitions and aspirations for better employment prospects, a lack of high-quality higher educational institutions at home, the capacity of higher education institutions abroad to attract talent and government policies to encourage cross-border mobility for education (Bhandari, Robles and Farrugia, 2018^[12]). The needs of increasingly knowledge-based and innovation-driven economies have spurred demand for tertiary education worldwide, while increasing wealth in emerging economies has prompted the children of the growing middle classes to seek educational opportunities abroad. At the same time, economic (e.g. costs of international flights), technological (e.g. the spread of the Internet and social media enabling contacts to be maintained across borders) and cultural factors (e.g. use of English as a common working and teaching language) have contributed to making international study substantially more affordable and easier to access than in the past.

The perceived quality of instruction abroad and the perceived value of host institutions are key criteria for international students when choosing where to study (Abbott and Silles, 2016^[13]). The top destinations for internationally mobile students include a large number of top-ranked higher educational institutions. Students worldwide are increasingly aware of differences in quality among tertiary education systems, as university league tables and other international university rankings are widely disseminated. At the same time, institutions' ability to attract international students has become a criterion for assessing their performance and quality. As governments seek to encourage the internationalisation of higher education, they have revised performance agreements with domestic institutions, for example by taking into account inflows of international students in university funding formulas. In Finland, for example, the internationalisation of higher education is one of the dimensions considered for the funding of tertiary institutions, along with quality and impact measures (Eurydice, 2020^[14]). Similarly, in Estonia and Norway, the share of foreign or international students is an indicator used to determine the level of block grant funding allocated to tertiary institutions (OECD, 2019^[15]).

Most countries have implemented reforms aiming to lower the barriers to migration of highly skilled individuals, beyond the purposes of education, and most countries operate funding programmes to support inward, outward or return mobility. While the conditions of migration differ (e.g. short-term versus long-term settlement), the most common target for these programmes are pre-doctoral students and early-stage researchers (both doctoral and postdoctoral).

Although setting appropriate tuition fees remains one of the most debated topics in education policy, setting higher fees for international students is less politically controversial and often constitutes an important revenue stream for higher educational institutions. In some countries, international students in public universities pay twice as much for tuition as national students, attracted by the perceived quality of the education and potential labour-market prospects in their host country. However, the existence of large gaps in tuition fees for national and international students may become a cause for concern if funding for places becomes an issue. In the United Kingdom, for example, the Russell Group collective of universities recently warned that universities in England are facing increasing deficits, which have led to fears that institutions may prioritise the enrolment of international students in order to cover their costs (Russell Group, 2022^[16]).

In contrast, some countries may seek to promote international mobility within a region by reducing or eliminating fees. Students from the European Economic Area can study in any other country within this area, paying the same tuition fees as national students (see Indicator C5).

By gender

Gender differences among internationally mobile tertiary students are small across the OECD but, on average, a higher proportion of male students (7%) are internationally mobile than female students (6%). There are only a few countries in which there is a larger share of international students among women at tertiary level, and even in these the gender gaps are fairly small. In Belgium, Korea and the Netherlands, the share of female students who are internationally mobile is only higher than the share of male students by 1 to 2 percentage points. There are more pronounced gender differences in several countries where a higher proportion of male students are mobile. In Australia and Latvia, for example, the share of male students who are mobile is at least 10 percentage points higher than the share of female students (Figure B6.1).

Gender differences may be partly explained by the fact that mobile students tend to be more likely than national students to enrol in STEM-related programmes, which tend to enrol more male students than female ones (Myers and Griffin, 2019^[17]). The predominance of mobile student enrolments in STEM fields in some countries, such as Germany, may contribute to the

higher share of men among mobile students in these countries compared to others, such as the United Kingdom (Donkor et al., 2020^[18]). However, many countries are making concerted efforts to attract more women to STEM-related fields, as well as to higher levels of education (see Indicator B4).

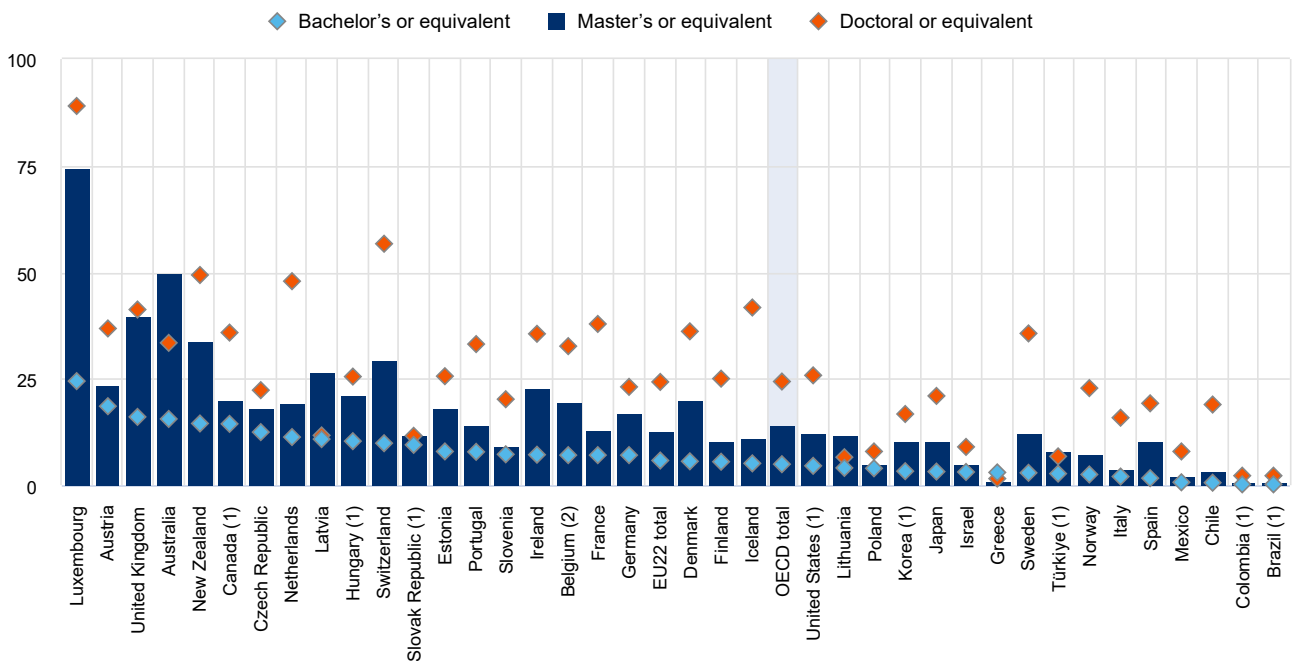
There may also be social and cultural reasons behind the gender differentials between mobile and national students, depending on the countries of origin and destination. In some contexts, men are much more likely than women to study abroad, which reflects differing societal expectations for women (Findlay, 2011^[19]). Qualitative research suggests that in some patriarchal societies, men are more likely to be able to use the cultural capital from studying abroad to succeed in the labour market back home (Holloway, O'Hara and Pimlott-Wilson, 2012^[20]).

By level of study

In all but a few countries, the share of international students enrolled in tertiary programmes increases with the level of tertiary education. In total across OECD countries, international students account for 7% of total enrolment in tertiary programmes in 2020. International enrolment in bachelor's or equivalent programmes remains relatively low (under 5% in nearly 40% of the countries for which data are available). However, a few countries have a more international profile at this level. In Australia, Austria, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom, 15% or more bachelor's students are international (Figure B6.2).

Figure B6.2. Incoming student mobility in tertiary education, by level of study (2020)

Mobile student enrolment as a percentage of total enrolment in tertiary education, in per cent



1. Share of foreign rather than international students.
 2. Data on short-cycle tertiary programmes are based on nationality and refer to the Flemish community only.
 Countries are ranked in descending order of the percentage of international or foreign students enrolled in bachelor's or equivalent programmes in 2020.
Source: OECD/UIS/Eurostat (2022), Table B6.1. See *Source* section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2022_X3-B.pdf).

International enrolment increases substantially at master's or equivalent level. In total across the OECD, international students account for 14% of total enrolments at this level. The proportion of mobile students at least doubles between bachelor's and master's levels in nearly two-thirds of OECD countries. In Chile, Spain and Sweden, the share of mobile students at master's

level is at least four times higher than at bachelor's level. Greece is the only OECD country where the share of mobile students at master's level is slightly lower than at bachelor's level (Figure B6.2).

At doctoral or equivalent level, mobile students represent 24% of enrolled students. The share of mobile doctoral students is roughly equal to that of national students in the Netherlands and New Zealand (Table B6.1). In Luxembourg and Switzerland, there are more international students in doctoral programmes than national students (89% in Luxembourg and 57% in Switzerland). Most countries have higher shares of mobile students at doctoral level than at master's level. However, in Australia and Latvia, the share of international students at doctoral level is at least 15 percentage points lower than at master's level (Figure B6.2).

Most OECD countries are net "importers" of students; that is, they have more students coming into the country to study than those leaving to study abroad. In total across OECD countries in 2020, there were four mobile students for each national student studying abroad, but this ratio exceeds ten in Australia and the United Kingdom. However, a number of countries are net "exporters" of students; that is, more students travel abroad to study than those coming in to study. Colombia, Luxembourg and the Slovak Republic are among the OECD countries with the lowest ratios of mobile students to national students abroad, where there were less than 0.5 mobile students per national student abroad. Among partner countries, the People's Republic of China and India, who together are responsible for more than 30% of the pool of mobile students, are also net exporters of students (Table B6.1).

Box B6.1. Credit mobility in European OECD member countries

Initiatives at supranational, national, regional, local or institutional level have also contributed to cross-border mobility. In 2011, the EU set the ambitious goal of increasing the proportion of EU graduates from higher education who completed a period of their studies or training abroad to 20% by 2020 (Council of the European Union, 2011^[21])

The EU had already started to make European higher education more homogeneous and comparable across countries and more attractive to international students in 1999 with the Bologna process, which set in motion a series of reforms. Its main objectives were the introduction and standardisation of a three-cycle degree system (bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees), and the recognition of qualifications from foreign institutions and periods of study abroad. One of the underlying objectives of the process was to stimulate mobility across EU of students, teachers and researchers.

The Erasmus+ programme (and its predecessor Erasmus) gives students and teaching staff the opportunity to develop their skills and boost their employment prospects. Students can study abroad for up to 12 months (during each cycle of tertiary education). Over the period 2014-20, around 2 million students were expected to have benefited from Erasmus+ (Eurostat, 2018^[22]).

Students who are temporarily studying abroad to gain academic credit within the framework of a tertiary education programme at their home institutions are defined as credit-mobile students (UNESCO-UIS/OECD/Eurostat, 2018^[23]). **Credit mobility** is distinct from **degree mobility**; degree mobile students – the main subject of this indicator – are enrolled as regular students with the objective of graduating in the country of destination. On average across the European countries that are members of the OECD (EU22), 10% of 2020 graduates had benefited from credit mobility, ranging from 2% in Greece, Hungary and Poland to 45% in Luxembourg. In all countries with available data, most credit-mobile graduates spent at least three months abroad, ranging from 68% in Austria to 90% in Sweden (Table B6.a.).

On average, the share of national graduates with credit mobility has remained unchanged at both bachelor's and master's level in countries with available data in both 2016 and 2020. The share of credit-mobile graduates fell slightly in 9 out of 16 countries, by up to 3 percentage points in Finland and Luxembourg (Table B6.a.). This could reflect the negative effects of the pandemic, which meant that many students' credit mobility periods were cancelled (Gabriels and Benke-Aberg, 2020^[24]). However, it is likely that it is still too soon to see whether the pandemic will lead to sharp reductions in the number of graduates with credit mobility. In countries such as Italy, the Slovak Republic and Spain, the share of national graduates with credit mobility actually increased between 2016 and 2020 by 1 or 2 percentage points (Table B6.a.).

In most countries, credit-mobile graduates are more commonly found at bachelor's level than at master's or doctoral level. On average, only 37% of credit-mobile graduates in European OECD countries had studied at master's or doctoral programme in 2020, but this average disguises substantial differences at country level. On the one hand, there are countries with a large share of credit-mobile students at these higher levels, such as the Czech Republic, France and Italy, where 60% or more of

credit-mobile students were enrolled either at master’s or doctoral level. On the other hand, in countries such as Greece, Lithuania and Luxembourg, the share was less than 20% (Table B6.a.).

Erasmus+ and other EU programmes account for the great majority (69%) of credit-mobile graduates in European OECD countries who studied abroad for at least three months, ranging from 32% in Denmark to 95% or more in Greece, Latvia and Slovenia (Table B6.a.). Students may also benefit from credit mobility through other international or national programmes, including other bi- or multilateral programmes such as partnerships between universities, or other programmes involving students organising their own study abroad, which is then credited by their home institution. The Nordic and Baltic countries, for example, operate the *Nordplus Higher Education Programme*, a broad mobility and network programme that aims to reinforce collaboration, joint curriculum planning, student and teacher mobility, and the sharing of best practices between institutions (Rannis, 2020_[25]).

Table B6.a. Credit mobility in European OECD member countries (2016 and 2020)

OECD Countries	Share of national graduates with credit mobility								Share of credit mobile graduates who stayed at least three months (or 15 ECT credits)	Credit mobile graduates (at least 15 ECTs)	
	Bachelor's		Master's		Doctoral		All tertiary			Share of graduates under EU programmes (i.e. ERASMUS or other EU programmes)	Share of master's and doctoral graduates
	2016	2020	2016	2020	2016	2020	2016	2020	2020		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
Austria	15	15	16	14	16	12	10	9	68	62	44
Belgium	m	7	m	7	m	m	m	7	m	58	34
Czech Republic	m	5	m	11	m	10	m	8	79	82	62
Denmark	8	10	11	11	m	26	9	9	m	32	35
Estonia	m	m	m	m	m	m	m		m	80	m
Finland	17	12	16	18	2	2	16	14	75	59	45
France	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	37	69
Germany ¹	12	11	17	17	m	m	14	13	m	49	43
Greece ¹	3	3	0	0	m	m	3	2	m	96	4
Hungary ¹	2	1	5	4	1	4	3	2	m	85	43
Italy ¹	6	6	11	15	m	64	8	10	m	77	65
Latvia	10	10	5	6	10	9	7	7	85	98	25
Lithuania	8	8	5	4	11	9	8	7	73	86	19
Luxembourg	m	m	m	m	m	m	47	45	100	82	2
Netherlands	22	24	22	18	m	m	21	22	m	39	22
Norway	10	10	13	10	0	0	10	9	84	0	31
Poland	m	1	m	2	m	4	m	2	m	93	51
Portugal	8	7	9	7	1	1	8	7	m	87	31
Slovak Republic	1	4	4	5	4	6	3	4	76	93	57
Slovenia	m	4	m	3	m	0	m	3	79	96	29
Spain	13	16	7	5	m	34	8	9	85	78	22
Sweden	11	12	14	15	6	6	11	11	90	36	46
Switzerland	6	m	12	m	13	m	8	m	m	m	m
Average	10	9	11	9	m	m	11	10	m	69	37
Average for countries with available data in both years	10	10	10	10	m	m	9	9			

Note: The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) allows credits taken at one higher education institution to be counted towards a qualification studied for at another. ECTS credits represent learning based on defined learning outcomes and their associated workload. 60 credits are the equivalent of a full year of study or work. In a standard academic year, 60 credits would be usually broken down into several smaller components.

1. The indicator is slightly overestimated as it includes degree mobile graduates

Source: Eurostat (2022), Credit mobile graduates (at least 3 months abroad) by education level, type of mobility scheme, type of mobility and sex (Database), Eurostat, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/educ_uae_mobc01/default/table?lang=en. Eurostat (2022), Credit mobile graduates (less than 3 months abroad) by education level, country of destination, type of mobility and sex (Database), Eurostat, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/educ_uae_mobc03/default/table?lang=en.

By country of destination and origin

The pools and flows of mobile talent remain very geographically concentrated worldwide, and mobility pathways are deeply rooted in historical patterns. Identifying the determinants of international student mobility is key to designing efficient policies to encourage the movement of skilled labour. Student migration is mainly driven by differentials in education capacity (a lack of educational facilities in the country of origin or the prestige of educational institutions in the country of destination). It is also driven by differences in the returns to or rewards for education and skills in the origin and destination countries (see Indicators A3 and A4). Economic factors include better economic performance in the host country, exchange rates, more affordable mobility (due to lower tuition fees or higher education subsidies, for instance) and higher-quality education in the host country. In addition, the decision to study abroad may be determined by non-economic factors, such as political stability or cultural and religious similarities between the origin and destination countries, as well as the desire to improve foreign language skills or gain a better understanding of other societies (Guha, 1977^[26]; UNESCO Office Bangkok and Regional Bureau for Education in Asia and the Pacific, 2013^[27]; Weisser, 2016^[28]; Wu, 2014^[5]).

English is the *lingua franca* of the globalised world, with one in four people using it worldwide (Sharifian, 2013^[29]). Not surprisingly, English-speaking countries are the most attractive student destinations overall. For instance, the top five destination countries in the OECD are Australia, Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States, four of those countries are English-speaking countries. Together, these four countries receive more than 35% of all internationally mobile students in OECD and partner countries. The United States is the top OECD destination country for mobile tertiary students. Of the 4.39 million internationally mobile students in OECD countries, 957 000 are enrolled in the United States. Among the English-speaking countries, after the United States, the United Kingdom accounts for 551 000 international students, Australia 458 000 and Canada 323 000. As a destination country, the United States alone takes 15% of the global education market share, i.e. 15% of all international students in the world enrolled in the United States, while Australia and the United Kingdom each have 7% and 9% of the global market share respectively, and Canada has 5%. Among non-English speaking countries, Germany (6%), France and China (both 4%) have substantial shares of the global market (Table B6.1).

International mobility patterns demonstrate the importance of cultural, linguistic and physical proximity to students' choice of host country. For instance, the average share of Latin American international students in OECD countries is only 6% (Table B6.2). However, in Latin American OECD countries, students from the region accounted for over 75% of all mobile students on average, ranging from 43% in Mexico to 91% in Chile (Table B6.2). Similarly, in Austria, Colombia, Costa Rica, Greece, Indonesia, Poland and the Slovak Republic, more than 55% of international or mobile students in 2020 came from neighbouring countries (Table B6.2).

Students from Asia form the largest group of international students enrolled in tertiary education programmes at all levels, totalling 58% of all mobile students in OECD countries in 2020. In total, over 30% of mobile students in OECD countries come from China and India. Around two-thirds of Chinese and Indian students are concentrated in only four countries: Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States. Beyond these four, a substantial share of Chinese students are enrolled in Japanese programmes (9%), and Indian students in German programmes (5%). Europe is the next largest region of origin, with European international students making up 21% of all mobile students enrolled in OECD countries. European students prefer to stay in Europe, accounting for 41% of mobile students enrolled in the EU22 countries. At least 8 out of 10 mobile students in Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia come from other European countries (Table B6.2, and Tables B6.5 and B6.6, available on line).

Profile of internationally mobile students*By field of study*

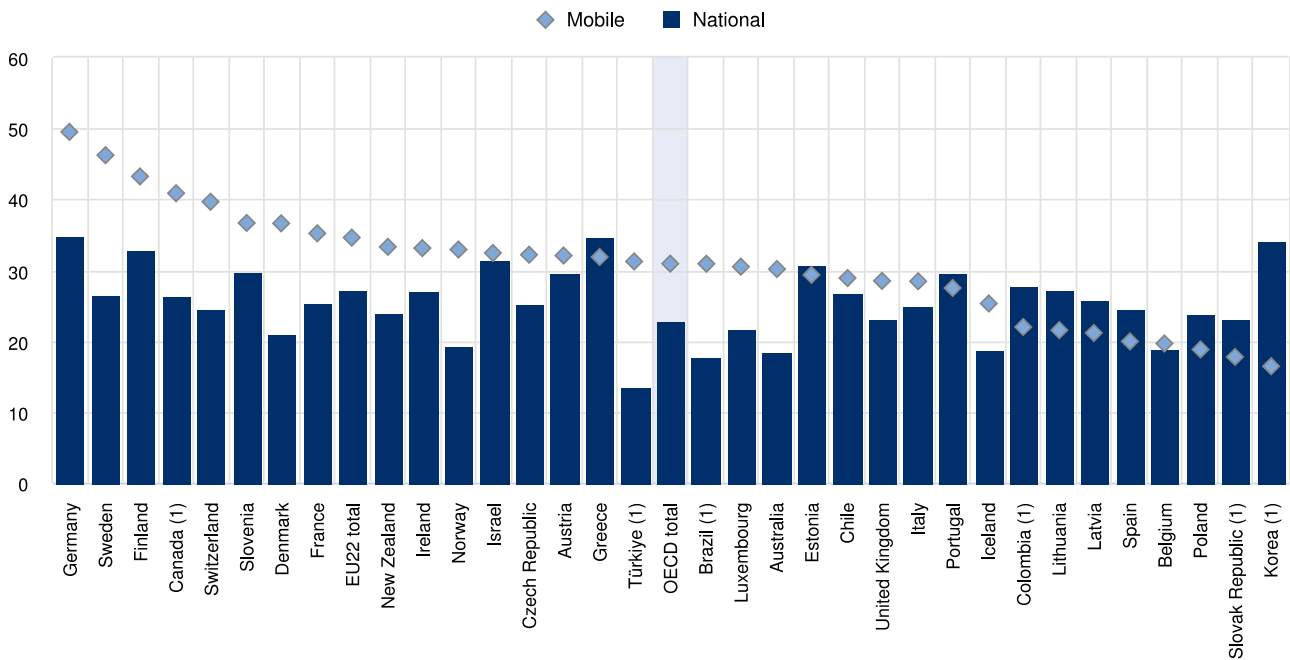
Fields of study are a key consideration for students choosing to pursue a tertiary degree abroad. Some countries devote more resources to research in certain fields and therefore benefit from strong international recognition, particularly at higher levels of tertiary education. Across OECD countries, the distribution of national and mobile students across fields of study differ considerably in education; health and welfare; and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). The field of education attracts only 3% of mobile students, compared to 7% of national students, while the field of health and welfare attracts 10% of mobile students compared to 14% of national students. In contrast, internationally mobile students are more likely to enrol in STEM-related fields than national students in total across the OECD: 31% of mobile students chose a STEM subject, but only 23% of national students (Table B6.3).

There are also striking differences between countries. For instance, in about one-third of OECD countries with available data, STEM-related fields are more popular among national students than among mobile students. This may imply that these countries are less attractive for international students wanting to specialise in these fields. However, the difference is small and does not exceed 6 percentage points in any of these countries except Korea, where the difference is 18 percentage points (Figure B6.3). Meanwhile, nearly 40% of all foreign students in the Slovak Republic entered a health and welfare programme, more than double of the share of national students who chose that field. In the field of education, there were only three countries in which mobile students were more likely to enrol in the field of education than their national peers, and even in those countries the difference was no more than 1 percentage point (Table B6.3).

On average, the distribution of mobile students across various fields of study did not change substantially between 2015 and 2020 across the OECD. In education and health and welfare, the share of mobile students enrolled remained constant at the OECD level, and the share of mobile students enrolled in STEM increased by only 2 percentage points, from 29% in 2015 to 31% in 2020 (Table B6.3). In the field of education, there was little variation across OECD countries, with 21 out of 35 countries with available data recording no change in the share of mobile students enrolled in education. However, there were considerable cross-country differences in health and welfare and STEM. The share of mobile students enrolled in health and welfare rose by over 5 percentage points in Lithuania and New Zealand between 2015 and 2020, but fell by 5 percentage points or more in Ireland, the Slovak Republic and Spain. Meanwhile, the share of mobile students enrolled in STEM rose by at least 9 percentage points in Latvia, Luxembourg and the Slovak Republic in the same period, but fell by 6 percentage points in Korea (Table B6.3).

Figure B6.3. Share of tertiary students in STEM fields, by mobility status (2020)

In per cent



1. Share of foreign rather than international students.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the share of mobile students enrolled in STEM fields at tertiary level in 2020.

Source: OECD/UIS/Eurostat (2022), *Education at a Glance Database*. See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2022_X3-B.pdf).

Definitions

Foreign students are those who are not citizens of the country in which they are enrolled and where the data are collected. Although they are counted as internationally mobile, they may be long-term residents or even be born in the “host” country. While pragmatic and operational, this classification may be inappropriate for capturing student mobility because of differing national policies regarding the naturalisation of immigrants. For instance, Australia has a greater propensity than Switzerland to grant permanent residence to its immigrant populations. This implies that even when the proportion of foreign students in tertiary enrolment is similar for both countries, the proportion of international students in tertiary education will be smaller in Switzerland than in Australia. Therefore, for student mobility and bilateral comparisons, interpretations of data based on the concept of foreign students should be made with caution. In general, international students are a subset of foreign students.

International students are those who left their country of origin and moved to another country for the purpose of study. The country of origin of a tertiary student is defined according to the criteria of “country of upper secondary education”, “country of prior education” or “country of usual residence” (see below). Depending on country-specific immigration legislation, mobility arrangements (such as the free mobility of individuals within the European Union and the European Economic Area) and data availability, international students may be defined as students who are not permanent or usual residents of their country of study, or alternatively as students who obtained their prior education in a different country.

Mobile students are students who are either international or foreign.

National students are students who are not internationally mobile. Their number is computed as the difference between the total number of students in each destination country and the number of international or foreign students.

The **country of prior education** is the country in which students obtained their upper secondary qualification (upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary completion with access to tertiary education programmes) or the qualification required to enrol in their current level of education. Where countries are unable to operationalise this definition, it is recommended that they use the country of usual or permanent residence to determine the country of origin. Where this too is not possible and no other suitable measure exists, the country of citizenship may be used.

Permanent or usual residence in the reporting country is defined according to national legislation. In practice, this means holding a student visa or permit, or electing a foreign country of domicile in the year prior to entering the education system of the country reporting the data.

Country-specific operational definitions of international students are indicated in the tables as well as in Annex 3 (https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2022_X3-B.pdf).

Methodology

Defining and identifying mobile students, as well as their types of learning mobility, are a key challenge for developing international education statistics, since current international and national statistical systems only report domestic educational activities undertaken within national boundaries (OECD, 2018^[30]).

Data on international and foreign students are therefore obtained from enrolments in their countries of destination. This is the same method used for collecting data on total enrolments, i.e. records of regularly enrolled students in an education programme. Students enrolled in countries that did not report to the OECD or to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics are not included and, for their countries of origin, the total number of national students enrolled abroad may be underestimated.

The total number of students enrolled abroad refers to the count of international students, unless data are not available, in which case the count of foreign students is used instead. Enrolment numbers are computed using a snapshot method, i.e. counting enrolled students at a specific day or period of the year.

This methodology has some limits. OECD international statistics on education tend to overlook the impact of distance and e-learning, especially fast-developing massively online open courses (MOOCs), students who commute from one country to another on a daily basis, and short-term exchange programmes that take place within an academic year and are therefore under the radar. Other concerns arise from the classification of students enrolled in foreign campuses and European schools in host countries’ student cohorts.

Current data for international students can only help track student flows involving OECD and partner countries as receiving countries. It is not possible to assess extra-OECD flows and, in particular, the contribution of South-South exchanges to global brain circulation.

For more information, please see the OECD *Handbook for Internationally Comparative Education Statistics 2018* (OECD, 2018_[30]) and Annex 3 for country-specific notes (https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2022_X3-B.pdf).

Source

Data refer to the 2019/20 academic year and are based on the UNESCO-UIS/OECD/Eurostat data collection on education statistics administered by the OECD in 2021 (for details, see Annex 3 at: https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2022_X3-B.pdf).

The UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) provided data 1) for Argentina, China, India, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and South Africa; 2) for all countries beyond the OECD and partner countries; and 3) for OECD countries for the period not covered by OECD statistics (2005 and 2010-20).

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Indicator B6 tables

Tables Indicator B6. What is the profile of internationally mobile students?

Table B6.1	International and foreign student mobility in tertiary education (2015 and 2020)
Table B6.2	Profile of international and foreign students (2020)
Table B6.3	Share of tertiary students enrolled in selected broad fields of study, by mobility status (2015 and 2020)
WEB Table B6.4	<i>Distribution of international and foreign students by country of origin (2020)</i>
WEB Table B6.5	<i>Distribution of international and foreign students by country of destination (2020)</i>

StatLink  <https://stat.link/o37kmb>

Cut-off date for the data: 13 June 2022. Any updates on data can be found on line at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-data-en>. More breakdowns can also be found at <http://stats.oecd.org>, *Education at a Glance Database*.

Table B6.1. International and foreign student mobility in tertiary education (2015 and 2020)

International or foreign student enrolment as a percentage of total tertiary enrolment

Reading the eighth column of the upper section of the table (international): 26% of all students in tertiary education in Australia are international students and 18% of all students in tertiary education in Switzerland are international students.

Reading the eighth column of the lower section of the table (foreign): 18% of all students in tertiary education in Canada are not Canadian citizens, and 4% of all students in tertiary education in Korea are not Korean citizens.

	Number of international or foreign students (in thousands)	International or foreign student enrolment as a percentage of total tertiary enrolment									Percentage of national tertiary students enrolled abroad	Number of international or foreign students per national student abroad	Number of international or foreign students for every hundred national students home and abroad	Percentage of international or foreign students coming from neighbouring countries	International education market share		
		Bachelor's			Master's			Doctoral								All tertiary	
		2020	2015	2010	2015	2020	2015	2010	2015	All tertiary							
		(1)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)						(12)	(13)
International students																	
OECD Countries																	
Australia	458	15	50	33	13	43	34	26	15	1	34	35	3	7			
Austria	76	19	23	37	18	19	27	18	16	7	3	20	59	1			
Belgium ¹	53	7	20	33	9	18	42	10	11	4	3	11	48	1			
Chile	13	1	4	19	0	1	8	1	0	2	1	1	30	0			
Czech Republic	48	12	18	22	9	12	15	15	11	4	4	17	48	1			
Denmark	31	6	20	36	6	18	32	10	10	2	5	11	37	0			
Estonia	6	8	18	26	4	7	11	12	5	8	2	13	34	0			
Finland	24	6	10	25	5	12	20	8	8	4	2	8	11	0			
France	252	7	13	38	7	13	40	9	10	4	2	10	13	4			
Germany	369	7	17	23	5	13	9	11	8	4	3	12	14	6			
Greece	22	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	3	5	1	3	70	0			
Iceland	2	5	11	42	6	9	32	9	8	14	1	8	6	0			
Ireland	24	7	23	36	6	13	25	10	7	7	2	11	7	0			
Israel	13	3	5	9	3	4	6	3	3	5	1	3	8	0			
Italy	59	2	4	16	5	5	13	3	5	4	1	3	18	1			
Japan	223	3	10	21	2	7	18	6	3	1	7	6	52	3			
Latvia	10	11	27	12	5	13	9	13	6	7	2	14	13	0			
Lithuania	7	4	12	7	3	7	4	6	4	9	1	6	21	0			
Luxembourg	4	24	75	89	26	71	87	48	46	77	0	22	48	0			
Mexico	43	1	2	8	0	1	3	1	0	1	1	1	46	1			
Netherlands	125	11	19	48	9	15	36	13	10	2	6	15	25	2			
New Zealand	44	14	34	49	16	24	46	17	21	2	9	21	7	1			
Norway	13	2	7	23	2	7	21	4	4	5	1	4	17	0			
Poland	62	4	5	8	2	3	2	4	3	2	2	5	63	1			
Portugal	44	8	14	33	3	6	21	12	5	6	2	12	2	1			
Slovenia	6	7	9	20	2	4	9	8	3	5	2	8	47	0			
Spain	82	2	11	19	1	7	m	4	3	2	2	4	27	1			
Sweden	32	3	12	36	2	10	33	7	6	3	2	7	18	1			
Switzerland	58	¹⁰ 29	57	10	28	54	18	17	7	7	3	21	54	1			
United Kingdom	551	16	40	41	14	37	43	20	18	2	14	25	9	9			
Foreign students																	
Canada	323	14	20	36	10	14	30	18	11	3	6	22	3	5			
Colombia	5	0	1	2	m	m	m	0	0	2	0	0	61	0			
Costa Rica	3	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	56	0			
Hungary	38	10	21	25	5	14	7	13	7	5	3	15	21	1			
Korea	112	3	11	17	1	6	9	4	2	3	1	4	54	2			
Slovak Republic	14	9	12	12	4	8	9	10	6	20	0	9	60	0			
Türkiye	185	3	8	7	1	4	6	2	1	1	4	2	49	3			
United States	957	5	12	26	4	9	38	5	5	1	9	5	5	15			
OECD total	4 390	5	14	24	4	11	25	7	5	2	4	7	18	69			
EU22 total	1 388	6	13	24	5	10	17	8	7	4	2	9	25	22			
Foreign students																	
Partners																	
Argentina ²	116	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	47	2			
Brazil	22	0	1	2	0	1	3	0	0	1	0	0	38	0			
China	225	m	m	m	m	m	m	0	0	m	m	m	30	4			
India	49	m	m	m	m	m	m	0	0	m	m	m	49	1			
Indonesia ³	8	m	m	m	m	m	m	0	0	m	m	m	73	0			
Saudi Arabia	69	m	m	m	m	m	m	4	5	m	m	m	43	1			
South Africa ²	41	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	4	m	m	m	47	1			

Note: See *Definitions* and *Methodology* sections for more information. Data on short-cycle tertiary (Columns 2 and 6) are available for consultation on line (see StatLink below).

1. Data on short-cycle tertiary programmes are based on nationality and refer to the Flemish community only.

2. Year of reference 2019.

3. Year of reference 2018.

Source: OECD/UIS/Eurostat (2022). See *Source* section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2022_X3-B.pdf).

Please refer to the Reader's Guide for information concerning symbols for missing data and abbreviations.

StatLink  <https://stat.link/jacu6b>

Table B6.2. Profile of international and foreign students (2020)

	Share of international or foreign students among female students					Share of international or foreign students among male students					Distribution of international or foreign students by region of origin					
	Short-cycle tertiary	Bachelor's	Master's	Doctoral	All tertiary	Short-cycle tertiary	Bachelor's	Master's	Doctoral	All tertiary	Africa	North America	Latin America and Caribbean	Asia	Europe	Oceania
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)
	International students															
OECD Countries																
Australia	27	13	45	28	22	43	19	56	39	31	2	1	5	85	3	1
Austria	2	19	24	40	18	1	19	23	34	18	1	1	2	9	84	0
Belgium ¹	2	8	19	32	11	2	6	20	33	10	13	1	3	8	57	0
Chile	1	1	3	22	1	1	1	4	17	1	0	0	91	1	2	0
Czech Republic	7	12	17	22	14	8	13	20	22	16	2	1	1	17	79	0
Denmark	11	5	19	33	10	9	6	21	40	11	2	3	2	13	80	1
Estonia	a	6	13	18	9	a	11	28	35	17	10	3	3	33	51	0
Finland	a	5	8	21	7	a	6	14	30	9	7	2	3	38	28	0
France	3	6	12	38	8	3	8	14	38	10	50	2	6	23	16	0
Germany	0	7	15	23	11	0	7	20	23	12	10	3	5	41	33	0
Greece	a	3	1	1	3	a	3	1	2	3	3	1	0	67	20	0
Iceland	24	5	10	33	8	21	5	15	54	9	4	14	3	23	55	1
Ireland	2	7	21	32	10	3	7	25	39	10	5	16	2	51	23	1
Israel	2	3	4	8	3	2	3	6	11	4	3	18	5	19	37	1
Italy	0	2	3	15	3	0	2	4	17	3	9	2	8	49	32	0
Japan	7	3	14	27	5	17	3	8	18	6	1	1	1	94	3	0
Latvia	0	5	18	7	7	2	17	39	18	20	1	1	0	57	41	0
Lithuania	a	3	9	4	5	a	5	18	10	8	7	1	1	40	46	0
Luxembourg	8	26	74	88	48	9	23	75	89	49	8	1	3	14	74	0
Mexico	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	1	51	43	1	3	0
Netherlands	2	12	20	45	14	3	10	19	51	13	2	2	2	16	57	0
New Zealand	9	12	31	45	14	21	18	38	55	22	2	5	2	80	4	8
Norway	1	2	6	18	4	1	3	9	28	5	8	5	4	38	42	0
Poland	0	3	4	7	4	0	5	7	9	5	4	2	1	23	70	0
Portugal	15	8	14	29	11	12	8	14	37	12	35	1	44	6	14	0
Slovenia	4	7	9	20	8	3	8	10	20	8	2	1	1	5	92	0
Spain	2	2	9	18	4	1	2	12	20	4	6	3	46	10	36	0
Sweden	0	3	11	31	6	0	3	15	40	9	4	3	3	32	37	0
Switzerland	0	10	30	56	18	0	10	29	58	18	4	3	4	13	70	0
United Kingdom	5	15	37	40	19	5	17	45	42	22	6	5	2	59	28	1
	Foreign students															
Canada	21	13	15	29	15	29	17	27	43	22	9	3	6	71	9	0
Colombia	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	3	84	2	11	0
Costa Rica	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	0	2	90	2	6	0
Hungary	1	10	19	22	13	1	11	23	29	15	9	2	2	42	45	0
Korea	1	4	12	20	5	1	2	9	14	3	2	1	1	95	1	0
Slovak Republic	1	9	11	8	9	1	10	14	15	11	1	0	0	9	89	0
Türkiye	0	2	6	5	2	1	3	9	9	3	15	1	0	72	12	0
United States	1	4	9	17	4	2	6	17	34	7	5	3	8	76	7	1
OECD total	3	5	12	22	6	4	5	17	26	7	8	3	6	58	21	1
EU22 total	3	6	11	23	8	2	6	14	25	9	15	2	8	28	41	0
	Foreign students															
Partners																
Argentina ²	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	0	3	91	1	3	0
Brazil	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	1	3	0	23	4	50	11	11	0
China	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
India	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	22	5	0	70	1	0
Indonesia ³	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	4	0	3	86	3	4
Saudi Arabia	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	23	1	0	69	3	0
South Africa ²	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	83	2	0	3	5	0

Note: See *Definitions* and *Methodology* sections for more information.

1. Data on short-cycle tertiary programmes are based on nationality and refer to the Flemish community only.

2. Year of reference 2019.

3. Year of reference 2018.

Source: OECD/UIS/Eurostat (2022). See *Source* section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2022_X3-B.pdf).

Please refer to the Reader's Guide for information concerning symbols for missing data and abbreviations.

Table B6.3. Share of tertiary students enrolled in selected broad fields of study, by mobility status (2015 and 2020)

	2020						2015					
	Education		STEM		Health and welfare		Education		STEM		Health and welfare	
	Mobile	National	Mobile	National	Mobile	National	Mobile	National	Mobile	National	Mobile	National
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
	International students											
OECD Countries												
Australia	4	11	30	19	11	24	2	11	27	17	9	20
Austria	5	14	32	30	9	9	6	15	30	29	8	7
Belgium	3	10	20	19	32	26	4	13	19	17	34	26
Chile	5	11	29	27	17	22	6	10	28	26	13	22
Czech Republic	2	14	32	25	18	13	2	11	31	27	18	12
Denmark	2	8	37	21	9	25	2	9	31	18	9	23
Estonia	3	8	29	31	4	14	0	7	21	31	4	11
Finland	3	6	43	33	11	19	2	5	43	33	11	19
France	1	3	35	25	7	15	2	4	32	25	6	17
Germany	2	9	50	35	7	9	2	8	44	37	7	7
Greece	5	4	32	35	12	8	4	4	31	34	11	9
Iceland	8	15	25	19	4	17	8	12	23	21	4	14
Ireland	1	8	33	27	24	17	1	6	30	28	29	16
Israel	13	20	32	32	11	9	8	18	24	31	13	8
Italy	1	8	28	25	9	14	m	m	m	m	m	m
Japan	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Latvia	1	8	21	26	25	15	2	7	13	25	26	12
Lithuania	1	4	22	27	26	19	3	6	15	25	17	13
Luxembourg	5	19	30	22	2	12	6	21	21	18	3	9
Mexico	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Netherlands	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
New Zealand	5	8	33	24	8	18	m	9	m	22	m	17
Norway	4	17	33	19	11	18	5	15	36	21	11	18
Poland	2	9	19	24	17	14	2	10	15	27	17	10
Portugal	4	3	27	30	12	16	7	4	30	30	10	16
Slovenia	4	10	37	30	7	14	6	9	35	29	10	12
Spain	4	12	20	25	22	16	4	12	21	26	27	14
Sweden	3	14	46	27	11	18	3	13	47	26	12	19
Switzerland	5	11	40	25	9	18	5	10	37	24	7	16
United Kingdom	2	6	28	23	7	17	2	8	30	28	7	17
	Foreign students											
Canada	1	5	41	26	5	17	1	6	36	22	5	15
Colombia	6	8	22	28	16	7	m	m	m	m	m	m
Costa Rica	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Hungary	m	14	m	26	m	9	m	11	m	27	m	8
Korea	3	6	16	34	4	14	3	6	22	33	5	13
Slovak Republic	9	13	18	23	42	18	8	12	8	24	56	16
Türkiye	5	4	31	14	14	13	6	6	31	17	11	7
United States	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
OECD total	3	7	31	23	10	14	3	8	29	24	10	13
EU22 total	2	8	35	27	12	14	3	8	31	29	13	13
	Foreign students											
Partners												
Argentina	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Brazil	12	19	31	18	17	19	9	18	35	22	12	15
China	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
India	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Indonesia	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Saudi Arabia	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
South Africa	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m

Note: STEM refers to the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Mobile students refer to students who are either international or foreign. See *Definitions* and *Methodology* sections for more information.

Source: OECD/UIS/Eurostat (2022). See *Source* section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2022_X3-B.pdf). Please refer to the Reader's Guide for information concerning symbols for missing data and abbreviations.



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