

In OECD countries, the education systems generally provide universal access to primary and secondary schools for children aged 5-14 years, although some parents may decide to send their children to private schools for various reasons. Access to tertiary education depends on the successful completion of secondary education, the mix of public and private costs for this higher level of education and other reasons.

In all OECD countries, the public sector pays for the bulk of primary and secondary education to ensure universal access to basic education. On average, nearly 91% of the funds for primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary educational institutions came from public sources in 2011, with the remaining 9% coming from private sources (mainly direct household expenditure).

Still, there are important variations across countries. Private expenditure on primary, secondary and post-secondary (non-tertiary) educational institutions in Chile (22%), Korea (19%) and Mexico (17%) are relatively higher whereas private expenditure represented less than 1% of total spending for these educational levels in Finland and Estonia. In general, households in Anglo-Saxon countries (Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States) tend to spend more for those educational institutions because more students are enrolled in private schools (around 10% on average), whereas households in Nordic countries tend to spend less given that very few students go to private schools.

Tertiary institutions and, to a lesser extent, pre-primary institutions obtain the largest proportions of funds from private sources: 31% and 19%, respectively. High private returns to tertiary education justify a greater contribution of individuals (or their families) to related costs, but as long as there are ways to ensure that sufficient funding is available to all students to pursue their tertiary education regardless of their socio-economic background. More than 50% of the costs of tertiary education are borne by households or other private sources in several OECD countries, including Chile, Korea, the United Kingdom, Japan and the United States. By contrast, this share of private funding remains relatively low in Nordic countries where tuition fees charged by tertiary institutions are low or negligible.

The proportion of young people entering tertiary type A education is relatively high in some Nordic countries (Iceland, Norway, Denmark) and in Poland and Slovenia, where private expenditures on tertiary education are lower. But entry rates to tertiary education are also high in other countries like Australia and New Zealand where private households bear a greater share of tertiary-level expenditure. In the two latter countries the share of international students entering university is much higher than in other OECD countries. When excluding international students, the share of students entering tertiary type A education drops from 102% to 76% in Australia and from 78% to 61% in New Zealand (OECD, 2014).

On average in OECD countries between 2000 and 2012, there has been a 10 percentage point increase in entry rates in tertiary type A education (58% in 2012). With the exception of Hungary, New Zealand (where entry rates can drastically fluctuate from one year to another due to the high number of international students), Sweden and Finland (where entry rates were already very high leaving only small room for expansion) entry rates have increased in all other OECD countries for which trend data are available. The increase was particularly strong in Czech Republic, Germany and Turkey.

Methodology and definitions

Data for both figures 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. Countries are ranked in descending order of the share of private expenditure on educational institutions for tertiary education. For more details see: www.oecd.org/edu/eag.html.

Entry rates represent the percentage of an age cohort that is expected to enter a tertiary programme over a lifetime. This estimate is based on the number of new entrants in 2012 and the age distribution of this group. Therefore, the entry rates are based on a synthetic cohort assumption, according to which the current pattern of entry constitutes the best estimate of the behaviour of today's young adults over their lifetimes. Entry rates are sensitive to changes in the education system, such as the introduction of new programmes or a variation in the number of international students. Entry rates can be very high, and even greater than 100% (thus clearly indicating that the synthetic cohort assumption is implausible), during a period when there are unexpected entries. For more details see: www.oecd.org/edu/eag.html.

Further reading

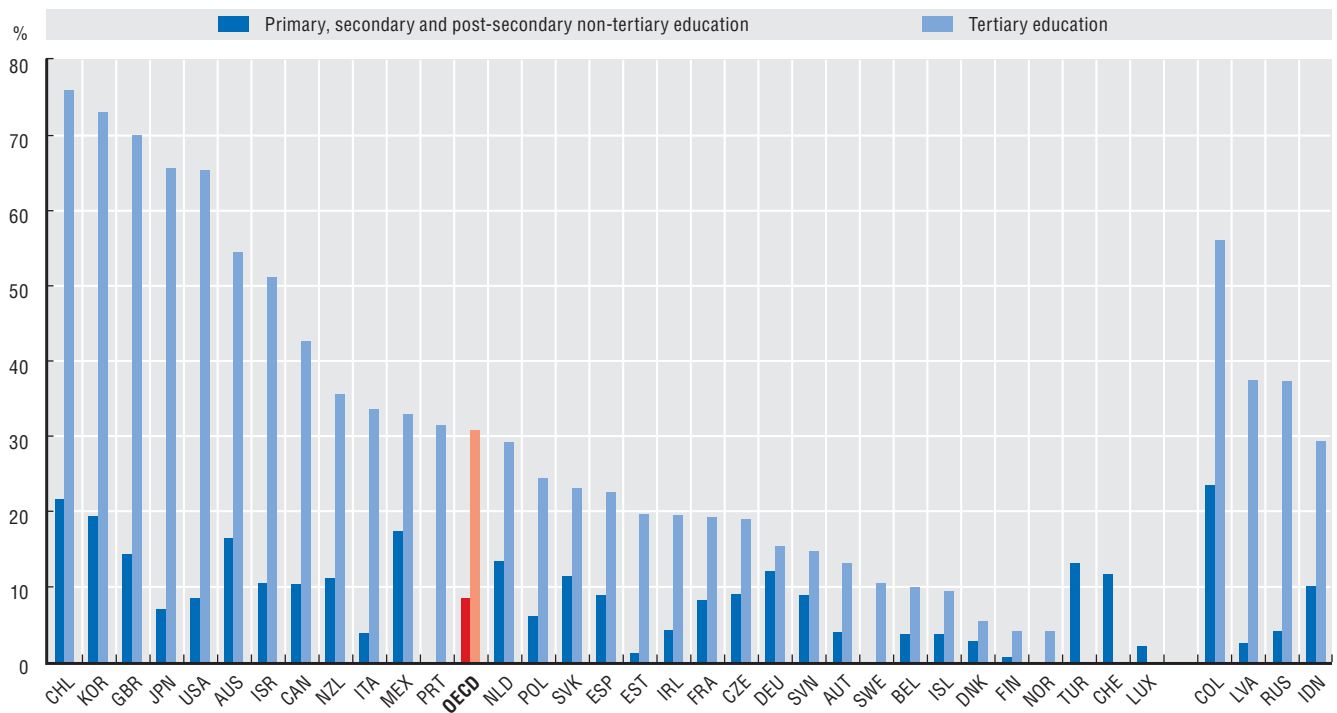
OECD (2014), Education at a Glance 2014. OECD, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2014-en>.

Figure notes

- 12.8: Some levels of education are included with others for Japan, Canada, the Slovak Republic and Denmark.
- 12.9: For the United States entry rates for tertiary-type A programmes include tertiary-type B programmes. For Germany, there is a break in time series between 2008 and 2009 due to a partial realisation of vocational programmes. For Belgium, data refer to 2001 rather than 2000.

Information on data for Israel: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932315602>.

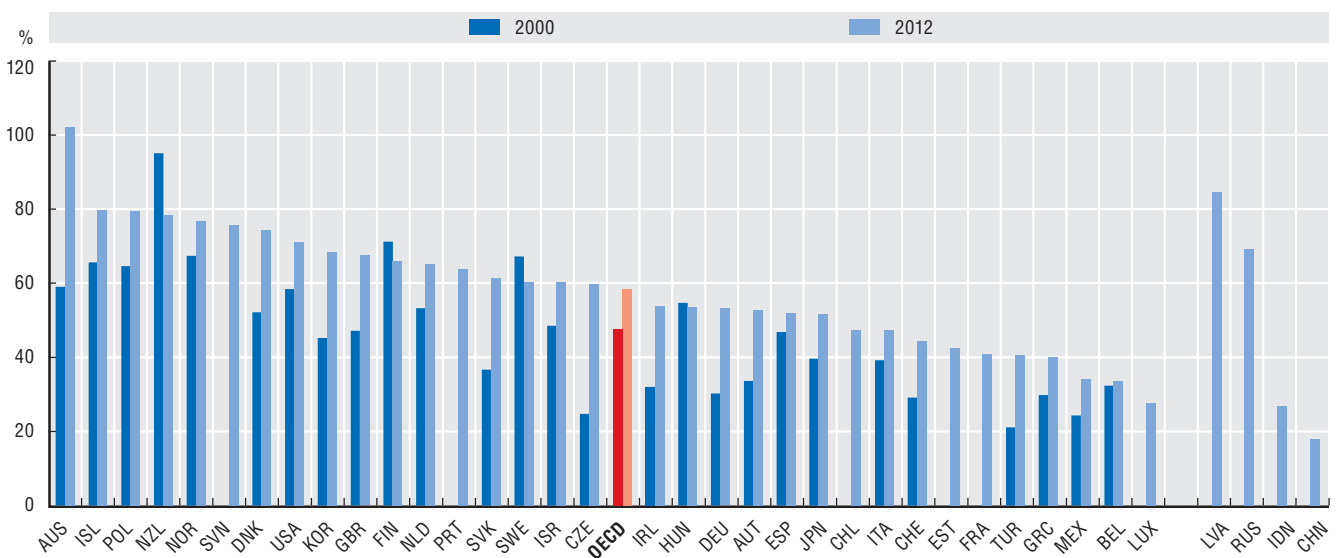
12.8. Share of private expenditure on educational institutions, 2011



Source: OECD (2014), Education at a Glance 2014, Indicator B3, OECD, Paris.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933249415>

12.9. Entry rates into tertiary-type A education (university), 2000 and 2012



Source: OECD (2014), Education at a Glance 2014, Indicator C3, OECD, Paris.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933249424>



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