

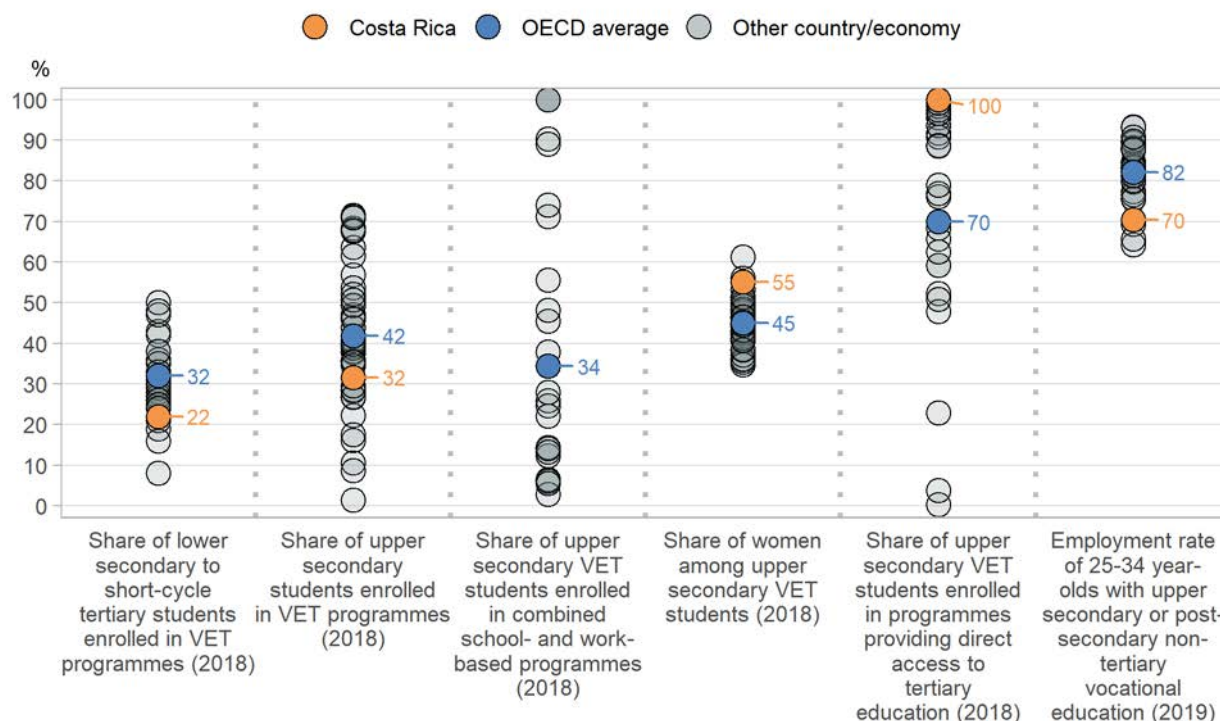
Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators is the authoritative source for information on the state of education around the world. It provides data on the structure, finances and performance of education systems in OECD and partner countries.

Costa Rica

Participation and outcomes of vocational education and training

- Vocational education and training (VET) programmes attract a diverse range of students, including those seeking qualifications and technical skills to enter the labour market, adults wishing to increase their employability by developing their skills further, and students who may seek entry into higher education later on.
- About one in three students from lower secondary to short-cycle tertiary level are enrolled in a VET programme on average across OECD countries. However, there are wide variations across countries, ranging from less than 20% of students enrolled in vocational education to more than 45% in a few countries. In Costa Rica, 22% of students are enrolled in vocational programmes, lower than the OECD average (32%), with the majority of lower secondary to short-cycle tertiary VET students (53%) found in upper secondary education (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Snapshot of vocational education



Note: Only countries and economies with available data are shown. The years shown in parentheses is the most common year of reference for OECD and partner countries. Refer to the source table for more details.

Source: OECD (2020), indicator A3 and B7. See Education at a Glance Database. <http://stats.oecd.org/> for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>).

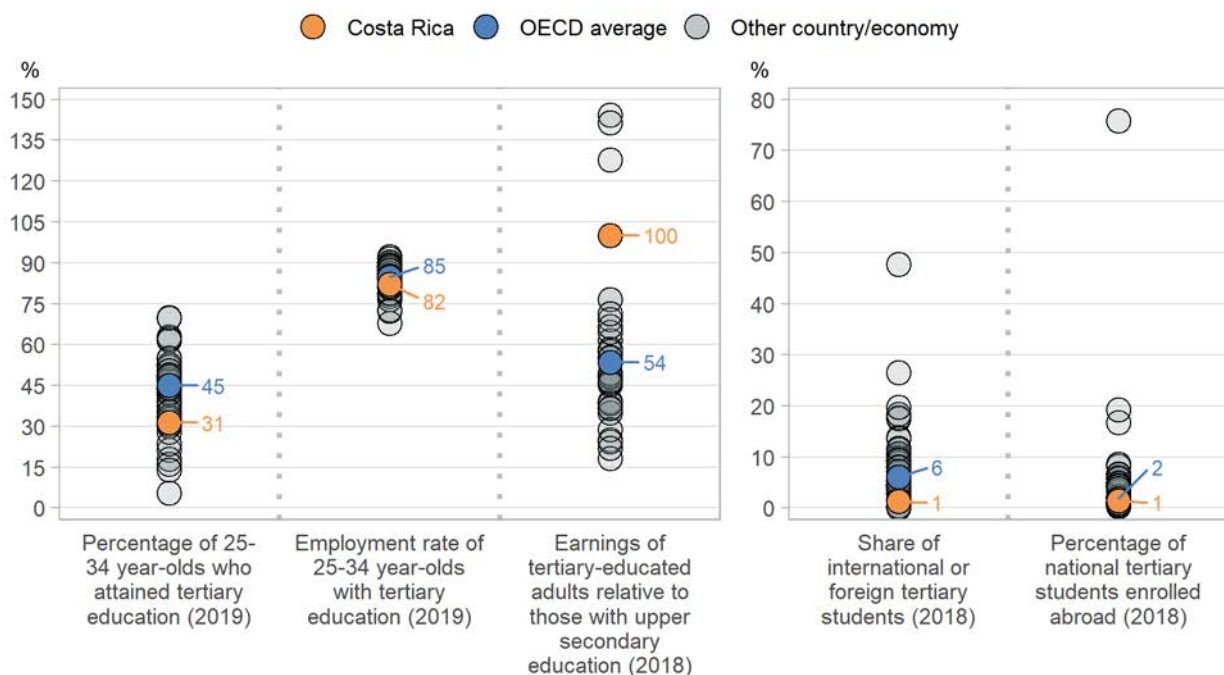
- VET is an important part of upper secondary education in most OECD countries. On average, 32% of all upper secondary students opt for VET programmes in Costa Rica, a lower proportion than the OECD average of 42% (Figure 1).
- To support upper secondary vocational students' transition to post-secondary education and improve their career prospects, many countries have created direct pathways from vocational programmes to higher levels of education. In Costa Rica, all upper secondary vocational students are enrolled in programmes that offer the chance of direct access to tertiary education, higher than the OECD average of 70% (Figure 1).
- In 2019, 2% of 25-34 year-olds in Costa Rica held an upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary vocational qualification as their highest educational level while 20% held a general one. The employment rate of younger adults with a vocational upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education tend to be higher than the employment rate of those with general qualifications at this level (by 9 percentage points on average across OECD countries). Costa Rica is an exception, as 70% of 25-34 year-olds with an upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary vocational qualification are employed compared with 75% of those with a general qualification (the difference is not statistically significant) (Figure 1).
- On average across OECD countries, adults with an upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary vocational education have similar earnings to their peers with a general education at this level. While the difference in relative earnings between adults with general and vocational upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment is less than 5 percentage points in about one quarter of OECD and partner countries, it is 57 percentage points in favour of vocational qualifications in Costa Rica.
- Poorer labour-market prospects of VET qualifications combined with higher tertiary attainment may have contributed to the decline in the share of adults with an upper secondary vocational qualification across generations in many countries. In Costa Rica, among those with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education as their highest attainment, 7% of 55-64 year-olds (older adults), compared with 9% of 25-34 year-olds (younger adults) held a vocational qualification. In comparison, the equivalent OECD averages are 72% for older adults and 59% for younger adults.
- On average across OECD countries, the ratio of students to teaching staff is similar in both upper secondary vocational and general programmes. In Costa Rica, there are 14 students for every teaching staff member in general programmes and 11 in vocational ones.

The rising demand for tertiary education

- The expansion of tertiary education is a worldwide trend. Between 2009 and 2019, the share of 25-34 year-olds with a tertiary degree increased in all OECD and partner countries. In Costa Rica, the share increased by 2 percentage points during this period, lower than the average increase across OECD countries (9 percentage points). In 2019, 31% of 25-34 year-olds had a tertiary degree in Costa Rica compared to 45% on average across OECD countries (Figure 2).
- From the gender perspective, younger women are more likely than younger men to achieve tertiary education in all OECD countries. In Costa Rica, 35% of 25-34 year-old women had a tertiary qualification compared to 28% of their male peers, while on average across OECD countries the shares are 51% of younger women and 39% of younger men.
- Young people can face barriers to labour market entry as they transition from school to work, but higher educational attainment increases their likelihood of being employed and is associated with higher incomes. On average across OECD countries, the employment rate in 2019 was 61% for 25-34 year-olds without upper secondary education, 78% for those with upper secondary or post-

secondary non-tertiary education as their highest attainment and 85% for those with tertiary education. In Costa Rica, the shares are 67% for below upper secondary, 74% for upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary and 82% for tertiary attainment. Having a tertiary degree also carries a considerable earnings advantage in most OECD and partner countries. In Costa Rica, in 2018, 25-64 year-olds with a tertiary degree with income from full-time, full-year employment earned 100% more than full-time, full-year workers with upper secondary education compared to 54% on average across OECD countries (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Snapshot of tertiary education



Note: Only countries and economies with available data are shown. The years shown in parentheses is the most common year of reference for OECD and partner countries. Refer to the source table for more details.

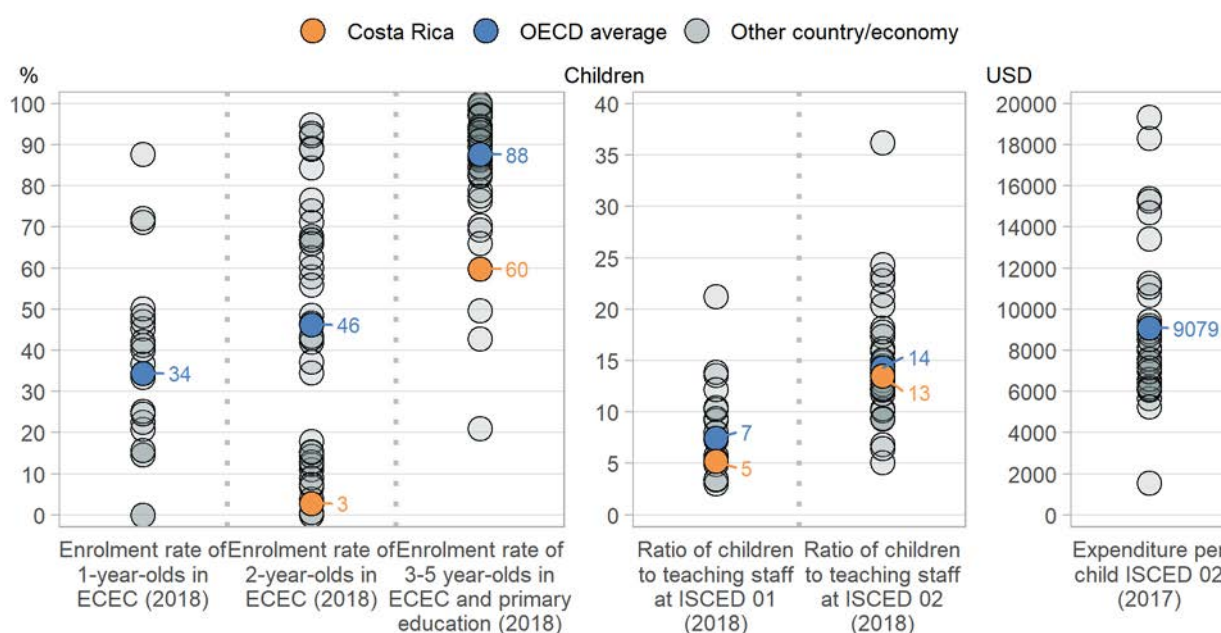
Source: OECD (2020), indicator A1, A3, A4 and B6. See Education at a Glance Database <http://stats.oecd.org/> for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>).

Starting strong

- Early childhood education and care (ECEC) has experienced a surge of policy attention in OECD countries in recent decades, with a focus on children under the age of 3 in many countries. Among 2 year-olds, the enrolment rate at ISCED 0 is 3% in Costa Rica, 43 percentage points below the OECD average of 46% (Figure 3).
- Public provision of early childhood education and care is an important factor in ensuring broad access to affordable ECEC. On average across OECD countries, more than one in two of the children in early childhood educational development services (ISCED 01) are enrolled in private institutions. In Costa Rica, 74% of children enrolled in ISCED 01 programmes attend private ECEC institutions. Enrolment in private institutions is usually less common for 3-5 year-olds, who are usually enrolled in pre-primary education (ISCED 02), than for younger children. In Costa Rica, 10% of children attending pre-primary education are enrolled in private institutions, compared to one in three children on average across OECD countries.

- The workforce is at the heart of high-quality early-childhood education and care: stimulating environments and high-quality pedagogy are fostered by better-qualified practitioners and high-quality interactions between children and staff facilitate better learning outcomes. In that context, lower child-staff ratios are found to be consistently supportive of staff-child relationships across different types of ECEC settings (NICHD, 2002). In Costa Rica, there are 5 children for every teacher working in early childhood educational development services (ISCED 01) compared to 7 on average across OECD countries. In Costa Rica, the ratio of children for every full-time equivalent (FTE) teacher working in pre-primary education (ISCED 02) is 13 compared to 14 on average across OECD countries (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Snapshot of early childhood education and care



Note: Only countries and economies with available data are shown. Annual expenditure per child is shown in equivalent USD converted using PPPs. The years shown in parentheses is the most common year of reference for OECD and partner countries. Refer to the source table for more details.

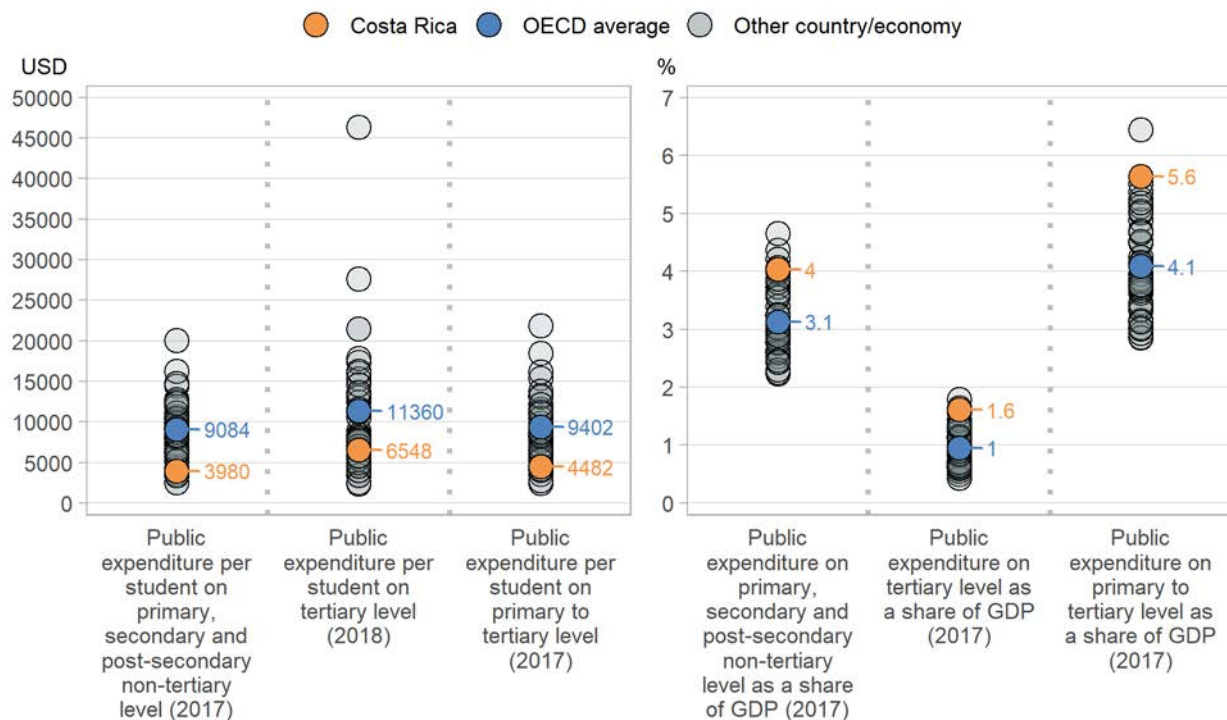
Source: OECD (2020), indicator B2. See Education at a Glance Database <http://stats.oecd.org/> for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>).

Investing in education

- Annual public expenditure per student on educational institutions from primary to tertiary level provides an indication of the public investment countries make in each student. In 2018, Costa Rica spent less on primary to tertiary educational institutions per full-time student than the OECD average, investing a total of USD 4 482 per student compared to USD 9 402 on average across OECD countries (Figure 4).
- The way education is provided influences how public resources to educational institutions are allocated between levels of education. In 2018, Costa Rica spent USD 3 980 public funds per student at non-tertiary level (primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education), USD 5 104 lower than the OECD average of USD 9 084. At tertiary level Costa Rica invested USD 6 548 per student, USD 4 812 below the OECD average (Figure 4).

- The share of public expenditure devoted to educational institutions over the national wealth is higher in Costa Rica than on average among OECD countries. In 2018, the government of Costa Rica spent 5.6% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on primary to tertiary educational institutions, which is 1.6 percentage points higher than the OECD average. Across levels of education, Costa Rica devoted an above average share of GDP than the OECD average at non-tertiary level and an above average share at tertiary level (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Snapshot of the financial resources invested in educational institutions



Note: Only countries and economies with available data are shown. Expenditure in national currencies is converted into equivalent USD by dividing the national currency figure by the purchasing power parity (PPP) index for GDP. The years shown in parentheses is the most common year of reference for OECD and partner countries. Refer to the source table for more details.

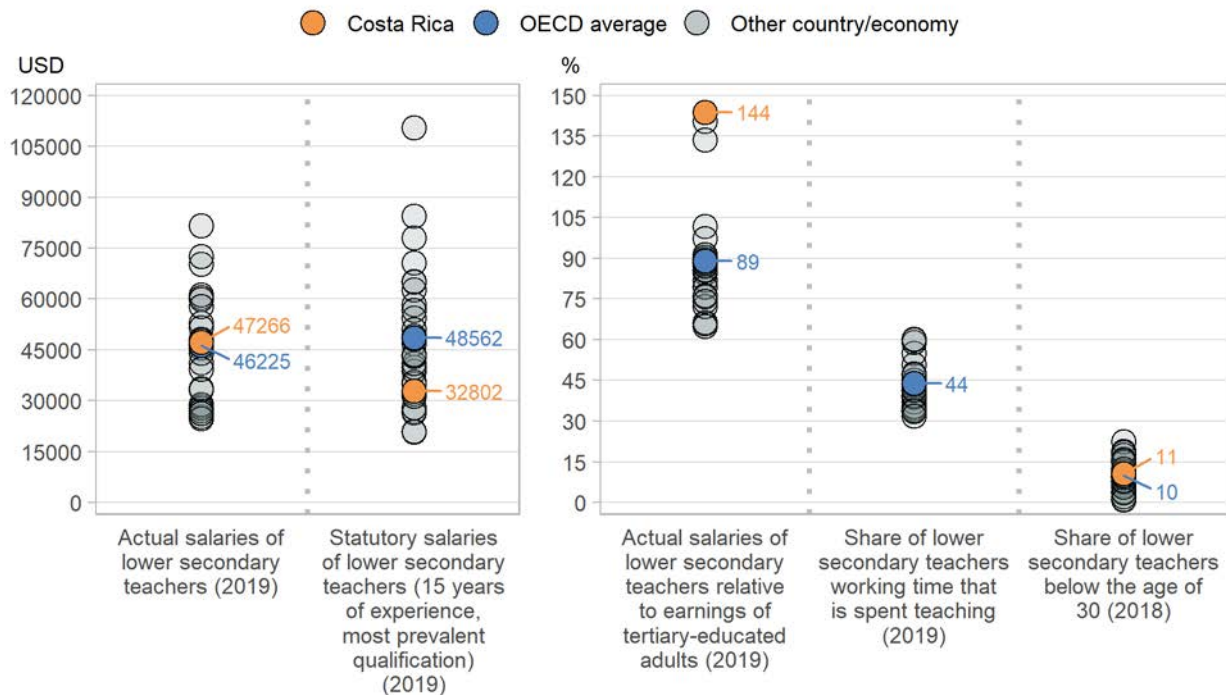
Source: OECD (2020), indicator C1 and C2. See Education at a Glance Database <http://stats.oecd.org/> for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>).

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 a direct 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. In most OECD countries and economies, they also increase with experience. On average, statutory salaries of teachers with maximum qualifications at the top of their salary scales are 78-80% higher than those of teachers with the minimum qualifications at the start of their career at pre-primary (ISCED 02), primary and general lower and upper secondary levels. In Costa Rica, maximum salaries are 173% to 175% higher than minimum salaries at each level of education.

- Teachers' actual salaries reflect their statutory salaries and additional work-related payments. Average actual salaries depend also on the characteristics of the teaching population such as their age, level of experience and qualification level. In Costa Rica, teachers' average actual salaries amount to USD 37 092 at the pre-primary level (ISCED 02) (slightly lower than the OECD average of USD 38 677), USD 39 164 at the primary level (lower than the OECD average of USD 43 942), USD 47 266 at the general lower secondary level (slightly higher than the OECD average of USD 46 225) and USD 47 266 at the general upper secondary level (slightly lower than the OECD average of USD 49 778) (Figure 5).
- Teachers' average actual salaries remain lower than those of tertiary-educated workers in almost all countries, and at almost all levels of education. Teachers' average actual salaries at pre-primary (ISCED 02), primary and general secondary levels of education are 80-94% of the earnings of tertiary-educated workers on average across OECD countries and economies. In Costa Rica, the proportion ranges from 113% at pre-primary level (ISCED 02) 119% at primary level to 144% at lower secondary level and 144% at the upper secondary level (Figure 5).
- 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, from 993 hours at pre-primary level (ISCED 02), to 778 hours at primary level, 712 hours at lower secondary level (general programmes) and 680 hours at upper secondary level (general programmes). In Costa Rica, teachers are required to teach 804 hours per year at pre-primary level, 1 176 hours per year at primary level, 1 254 hours at lower secondary level (general programmes) and 1 254 hours at upper secondary level (general programmes).
- Large proportions of teachers in many OECD countries will 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 Costa Rica, 8% of primary teachers are considered young teachers (under the age of 30), which is lower than the OECD average of 12%. On average across OECD countries, the proportion of young teachers decreases at other levels of education, to 10% in lower secondary education and 8% in upper secondary education. In Costa Rica, the proportion of young teachers increases to 11% at lower secondary level and to 11% at upper secondary level (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Snapshot of teachers' working conditions



Note: Only countries and economies with available data are shown. Teachers' salaries are shown in equivalent USD converted using PPPs. The years shown in parentheses is the most common year of reference for OECD and partner countries. Refer to the source table for more details.

Source: OECD (2020), indicator D3, D4 and D5. See Education at a Glance Database <http://stats.oecd.org/> for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>).

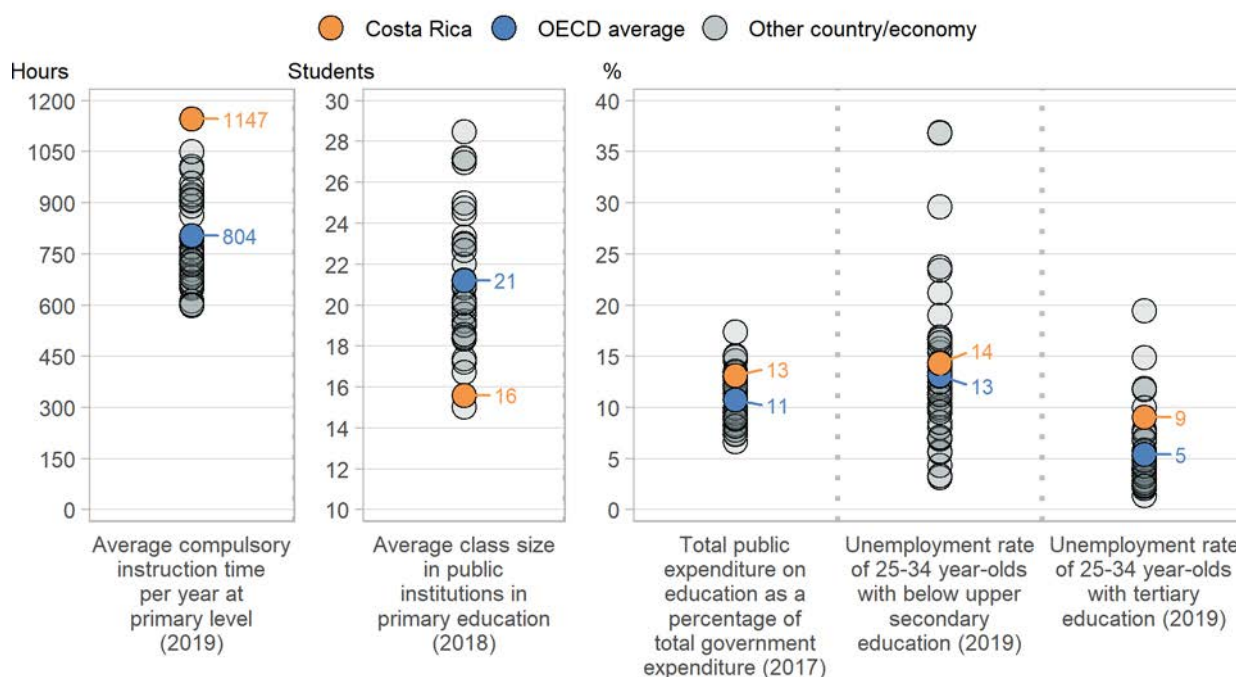
The impact of COVID-19 on education

- The global 2020 COVID-19 pandemic has sent shockwaves around the world. In a first effort to contain the virus, many countries have imposed a lockdown and schools and/or universities have closed for several months across all OECD and partner countries. In Costa Rica, the closures were nationwide from 17 March 2020. By the end of June, Costa Rica had experienced 15 weeks of effective school closures in some form, compared to 14 weeks on average across OECD countries (UNESCO, 2020). However, the actual impact in some countries may have been less severe as some of these periods included scheduled school breaks.
- Excluding the non-compulsory part of the curriculum, students in public institutions in Costa Rica attended classes for 1 147 hours per year on average at primary level and 1 120 hours at lower secondary level in 2019. Each week of school closure therefore represents about 29 hours of compulsory instruction time at the primary level and 28 hours of compulsory instruction time at lower secondary level during which students have physically not attended school (Figure 6). During this time, many OECD and partner countries have turned to distance learning to ensure the continuity of education.
- School reopening in the context of the pandemic is contingent on the capacity to maintain a safe distance of 1-2 metres between pupils and staff. Countries with smaller class sizes may find it easier to comply with new restrictions on social distancing. In Costa Rica, the average class size at primary level is 16 students in public institutions, which is smaller than the OECD average of 21. In public lower secondary institutions, there are 35 students per class in Costa Rica, compared to

23 students per class on average across OECD countries. However, the need to reduce class size may depend on other factors such as physical space, the availability of rooms and staff, and personal decisions by students and staff on whether to return to school (Figure 6).

- While there is uncertainty about the likely overall impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education expenditure, governments will face difficult decisions on the allocation of resources, as government funds are injected into the economy and the health sector (Al-Samarrai, Gangwar and Gala, 2020). In 2018, public spending on primary to tertiary education as a share of government expenditure in Costa Rica was 13%, higher than the OECD average of 11% (Figure 6).
- The crisis may have a severe impact on the internationalisation of higher education as the delivery of online course material and travel restrictions may raise questions among international students' perception on the value of obtaining their degree from an institution abroad. Costa Rica, with a lower share of foreign students than in total across the OECD, may be less strongly affected than other countries.
- Unemployment may increase, as the economy struggles to cope with the reduced activity that resulted from the lockdown. Those with lower educational attainment are the most vulnerable, as they are the most unlikely to benefit from remote working. In 2019, before the pandemic hit, 14% of young adults with below upper secondary education in Costa Rica were unemployed compared to 9% of tertiary-educated 25-34 year-olds (Figure 6). In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, the unemployment of young adults without an upper secondary education increased by 4.1 percentage points between 2008 and 2009 in Costa Rica compared to 1 percentage points among those with tertiary education.

Figure 6. Snapshot of indicators relevant to the impact of COVID-19 on education



Note: Only countries and economies with available data are shown. The years shown in parentheses is the most common year of reference for OECD and partner countries. Refer to the source table for more details.

Source: OECD (2020), indicator A3, D1, D2, and C4. See Education at a Glance Database <http://stats.oecd.org/> for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>).

References

NICHHD (2002), "Child Care Structure>Process>Outcome: Direct and indirect effects of caregiving quality on young children's development", *Psychological Science*, Vol. 13, pp. 199-206.

OECD (2020), *Education at a Glance 2020: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

OECD/Eurostat/UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2015), *ISCED 2011 Operational Manual: Guidelines for Classifying National Education Programmes and Related Qualifications*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264228368-en>.

Schleicher, A. and F. Reimers (2020), *Schooling disrupted schooling rethought: How the Covid-19 pandemic is changing education*, https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=133_133390-1rtuknc0hi&title=Schooling-disrupted-schooling-rethought-How-the-Covid-19-pandemic-is-changing-education (accessed on 3 June 2020).


UNESCO (2020), *School closures caused by Coronavirus (Covid-19)*, <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse> (accessed on 04 August 2020).

More information

For more information on Education at a Glance 2020 and to access the full set of Indicators, visit www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance-19991487.htm

For more information on to the methodology used during the data collection for each indicator, the references to the sources and the specific notes for each country, visit Annex 3 of the publication (<https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>).

For general information on 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.

Explore, compare and visualise more data and analysis using the Education GPS:

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

The calculation on the number of weeks of school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic is based on data from UNESCO (UNESCO, 2020). For general information on the methodology considered for the data, please refer to the [methodological note](#).

<p>Questions can be directed to:</p> <p>Marie-Helene Doumet Directorate for Education and Skills marie-helene.doumet@oecd.org</p>	<p>Country note authors:</p> <p>Etienne Albiser, Eric Charbonnier, Manon Costinot, Corinne Heckmann, Bruce Golding, Yanjun Guo, Simon Normandeau, Daniel Sanchez Serra, Markus Schwabe and Giovanni Maria Semeraro</p>
--	---

This work is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD member countries.

This document, as well as any data and any map included herein, are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area.

On 15 May 2020, the OECD Council invited Costa Rica to become a Member. While Costa Rica is included in the OECD averages reported in this note, at the time of its preparation, Costa Rica was in the process of completing its domestic procedures for ratification and the deposit of the instrument of accession to the OECD Convention was pending.

The use of this work, whether digital or print, is governed by the terms and conditions to be found at www.oecd.org/termsandconditions/.



From:
Education at a Glance 2020
OECD Indicators

Access the complete publication at:
<https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2020), "Costa Rica", in *Education at a Glance 2020: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/862130f9-en>

This work is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD member countries.

This document, as well as any data and map included herein, are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area. Extracts from publications may be subject to additional disclaimers, which are set out in the complete version of the publication, available at the link provided.

The use of this work, whether digital or print, is governed by the Terms and Conditions to be found at <http://www.oecd.org/termsandconditions>.