Governments are increasingly looking to international comparisons of education opportunities and outcomes as they develop policies to enhance individuals’ social and economic prospects, provide incentives for greater efficiency in schooling, and help to mobilise resources to meet rising demands. The OECD Directorate for Education and Skills contributes to these efforts by developing and analysing the quantitative, internationally comparable indicators that it publishes annually in Education at a Glance. Together with OECD country policy reviews, these indicators can be used to assist governments in building more effective and equitable education systems.

Education at a Glance addresses the needs of a range of users, from governments seeking to learn policy lessons to academics requiring data for further analysis to the general public wanting to monitor how their countries’ schools are progressing in producing world-class students. The publication examines the quality of learning outcomes, the policy levers and contextual factors that shape these outcomes, and the broader private and social returns that accrue to investments in education.

Education at a Glance is the product of a long-standing, collaborative effort between OECD governments, the experts and institutions working within the framework of the OECD Indicators of Education Systems (INES) programme, and the OECD Secretariat. The publication was prepared by the staff of the Innovation and Measuring Progress Division of the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills, under the responsibility of Deborah Roseveare and Marie-Hélène Doumet, and in co-operation with Étienne Albiser, Majda Benzidia, Andrea Borlizzi, Éric Charbonnier, Manon Costinot, Gillian Golden, Bruce Golding, Fatine Guedira, Corinne Heckmann, Karinne Logez, Camila de Moraes, Simon Normandeau, Gara Rojas González, Daniel Sánchez Serra, Markus Schwabe, Giovanni Maria Semeraro, and Choyi Whang. Administrative support was provided by Valérie Forges, and additional advice and analytical support were provided by Vanessa Denis, Majda Eddaifi, Yanjun Guo, Julia Himstedt and Hajar Sabrina Yassine. Marilyn Achiron, Cassandra Davis and Sophie Limoges provided valuable support in the editorial and production process. The development of the publication was steered by member countries through the INES Working Party and facilitated by the INES Networks. The members of the various bodies as well as the individual experts who have contributed to this publication and to OECD INES more generally are listed at the end of the book.

While much progress has been made in recent years, member countries and the OECD continue to strive to strengthen the link between policy needs and the best available internationally comparable data. This presents various challenges and trade-offs. First, the indicators need to respond to education issues that are high on national policy agendas, and where the international comparative perspective can offer added value to what can be accomplished through national analysis and evaluation. Second, while the indicators should be as comparable as possible, they also need to be as country-specific as is necessary to allow for historical, systemic and cultural differences between countries. Third, the indicators need to be presented in as straightforward a manner as possible, while remaining sufficiently complex to reflect multi-faceted realities. Fourth, there is a general desire to keep the indicator set as small as possible, but it needs to be large enough to be useful to policy makers across countries that face different challenges in education.

The OECD will continue not only to address these challenges vigorously and develop indicators in areas where it is feasible and promising to develop data, but also to advance in areas where a considerable investment still
needs to be made in conceptual work. The OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and its extension through the OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (Survey of Adult Skills [PIAAC]), as well as the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), are major efforts to this end.
Table of contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreword</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editorial</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction: The indicators and their framework</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reader’s guide</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive summary</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth in the Education Sustainable Development Goal</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter A. The output of educational institutions and the impact of learning</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator A1. To what level have adults studied?</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator A2. Transition from education to work: Where are today’s youth?</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator A3. How does educational attainment affect participation in the labour market?</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator A4. What are the earnings advantages from education?</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator A5. What are the financial incentives to invest in education?</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator A6. How are social outcomes related to education?</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator A7. To what extent do adults participate equally in education and learning?</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter B. Access to education, participation and progress</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator B1. Who participates in education?</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator B2. How do early childhood education systems differ around the world?</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator B3. Who is expected to graduate from upper secondary education?</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator B4. Who is expected to enter tertiary education?</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator B5. How many students complete tertiary education?</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator B6. What is the profile of internationally mobile students?</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator B7. What are the characteristics and outcomes of doctoral graduates?</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter C. Financial resources invested in education</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator C1. How much is spent per student on educational institutions?</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator C2. What proportion of national wealth is spent on educational institutions?</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator C3. How much public and private investment in educational institutions is there?</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator C4. What is the total public spending on education?</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator C5. How much do tertiary students pay and what public support do they receive?</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator C6. On what resources and services is education funding spent?</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator C7. Which factors influence teachers’ salary cost?</td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter D. Teachers, the learning environment and the organisation of schools

Indicator D1. How much time do students spend in the classroom? 358
Indicator D2. What is the student-teacher ratio and how big are classes? 376
Indicator D3. How much are teachers and school heads paid? 390
Indicator D4. How much time do teachers spend teaching? 414
Indicator D5. Who are the teachers? 434
Indicator D6. What are the admission systems for tertiary education? 446

Annex 1. Characteristics of education systems 463
Annex 2. Reference statistics 469
Annex 3. Sources, methods and technical notes 479
Contributors to this publication 481
Education Indicators in Focus 489

TABLES

Table A1.1. Educational attainment of 25-64 year-olds (2018) 49
Table A1.2. Trends in educational attainment of 25-34 year-olds, by gender (2008 and 2018) 50
Table A1.3. Fields of study among tertiary-educated 25-64 year-olds (2018) 51
Table A2.1. Percentage of 18-24 year-olds in education/not in education, by work status (2018) 61
Table A2.2. Trends in the percentage of young adults in education/not in education, employed or not, by age group (2008 and 2018) 62
Table A2.3. Percentage of 18-24 year-olds in education/not in education, by work status and duration of unemployment (2018) 63
Table A3.1. Employment rates of 25-64 year-olds, by educational attainment (2018) 77
Table A3.2. Trends in employment rates of 25-34 year-olds, by educational attainment and gender (2008 and 2018) 78
Table A3.3. Employment, unemployment and inactivity rates of 25-34 year-olds, by educational attainment (2018) 79
Table A3.4. Employment rates of tertiary-educated adults, by field of study (2018) 80
Table A3.5. Unemployment rates of 25-64 year-olds, by duration of unemployment and educational attainment (2018) 81
Table A4.1. Relative earnings of workers, by educational attainment (2017) 91
Table A4.2. Level of earnings relative to median earnings, by educational attainment (2017) 92
Table A4.3. Differences in earnings between female and male full-time workers, by educational attainment and age group (2017) 93
Table A4.4. Relative earnings of tertiary-educated adults, by field of study (2017) 94
Table A5.1a. Private costs and benefits for a man attaining tertiary education (2016) 108
Table A5.1b. Private costs and benefits for a woman attaining tertiary education (2016) 109
Table A5.2a. Public costs and benefits for a man attaining tertiary education (2016) 110
Table A5.2b. Public costs and benefits for a woman attaining tertiary education (2016) 111
Table A5.3a. Private/public costs and benefits for a man attaining tertiary education, by level of tertiary education (2016) 112
Table A5.3b. Private/public costs and benefits for a woman attaining tertiary education, by level of tertiary education (2016) 113
Table A6.1. Social connections, by educational attainment (2015 or 2017) 129
Table A6.2a. Work-life balance, by educational attainment (2015 or 2016) 130
Table A6.2b. Job intensity and flexibility, by educational attainment (2012 or 2015) 131
Table A7.1. Participation in formal and/or non-formal education and training, by gender, age group and educational attainment (2016) 141
Table A7.2a. Distribution of non-formal education and training activities, by gender, age group and educational attainment (2016)  142
Table A7.3. Enrolment in formal education, by age group, and distribution by level of education (2017)  143
Table B1.1. Enrolment rates by age group (2005, 2010 and 2017)  157
Table B1.2. Enrolment rates in tertiary education, by age group and level of education (2017)  158
Table B1.3. Profile of students enrolled in tertiary education (2017)  159
Table B2.1. Enrolment rates of children under the age of 3 in early childhood education and care, by type of service and age (2005, 2010 and 2017)  175
Table B2.2. Enrolment rates in early childhood education and care (ECEC) and primary education, by age (2005, 2010 and 2017)  176
Table B2.3. Enrolment of children in early childhood education and care (ISCED 0) in private institutions, ratio of children to teaching staff and minimum qualification of ECEC staff (2017)  177
Table B2.4. Financing of early childhood education and care (ISCED 0) and change in expenditure as a percentage of GDP (2012 and 2016)  178
Table B3.1. Profile of upper secondary graduates from vocational programmes (2017)  189
Table B3.2. Profile of post-secondary non-tertiary graduates from vocational programmes (2017)  190
Table B3.3. Trends in upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary first-time graduation rates (2005, 2010 and 2017)  191
Table B4.1. Profile of first-time entrants into tertiary education (2017)  204
Table B4.2. Distribution of new entrants by field of study, gender and tertiary level (2017)  205
Table B4.3. First-time entry rates, by tertiary level (2017)  206
Table B5.1. Completion rate of full-time tertiary students, by level of education and gender (2017)  225
Table B5.2. Completion rate of full-time tertiary students, by level of education and students’ upper secondary programme orientation (2017)  226
Table B5.3. Status of full-time bachelor’s students at various timeframes after entry (2017)  227
Table B6.1. International and foreign student mobility in tertiary education (2010, 2013 and 2017)  242
Table B6.2. Distribution of international or foreign students by field of study and by region of origin (2017)  243
Table B6.3. Mobility patterns of foreign and international students (2017)  244
Table B7.1. Profile of doctoral graduates (2017)  257
Table B7.2. Distribution of graduates from doctoral programmes, by field of study (2017)  258
Table B7.3. Educational attainment and employment rates of 25-64 year-olds at master's and doctoral levels (2018)  259
Table C1.1. Total expenditure on educational institutions per full-time equivalent student (2016)  274
Table C1.2. Total expenditure on educational institutions per full-time equivalent student for core educational services, ancillary services and R&D (2016)  275
Table C1.3. Index of change in total expenditure on educational institutions per full-time equivalent student (2005, 2011 and 2016)  276
Table C2.1. Total expenditure on educational institutions as a percentage of GDP (2016)  286
Table C2.2. Total expenditure on educational institutions as a percentage of GDP, by final source of funds (2016)  287
Table C2.3. Index of change in total expenditure on educational institutions as a percentage of GDP (2005, 2011 and 2016)  288
Table C3.1. Relative share of public, private and international expenditure on educational institutions, final source of funds (2016)  299
Table C3.2. Relative share of public, private and international expenditure on educational institutions, initial source of funds (2016)  300
Table C3.3. Trends in the share of public, private and international expenditure on educational institutions (2005, 2010 and 2016)  301
Table C4.1. Total public expenditure on education as a percentage of total government expenditure (2016)  311
Table C4.2. Share of sources of total public funds devoted to education (2016)  312
Table C4.3. Trends in total public expenditure on education as a percentage of total government expenditure (2005, 2010 and 2016)  313
Table C5.1. Annual average (or most common) tuition fees charged by tertiary institutions to national and foreign students (2017/18)  327
Table C5.2. Tuition fees charged by institutions for full-time students, in USD converted using PPPs, and percentage of national students receiving financial support (2017/18)  329
Table C5.3. Public loans to students, repayment and remission in tertiary education (2017/18)  330
Table C5.4. Changes in tuition fee policies and public support to students (2007/08 to 2017/18)  331
Table C6.1. Share of current and capital expenditure, by education level (2016)  339
Table C6.2. Current expenditure, by resource category (2016)  340
Table C6.3. Share of current expenditure, by resource category and type of institution (2016) 341
Table C7.1. Salary cost of teachers per student, by level of education (2017) 354
Table C7.2. Contribution of various factors to salary cost of teachers per student in primary education (2017) 355
Table C7.3. Contribution of various factors to salary cost of teachers per student in lower secondary education (2017) 356
Table D1.1. Instruction time in compulsory general education\(^1\) (2019) 371
Table D1.2. Organisation of compulsory general education\(^1\) (2019) 372
Table D1.3a. Instruction time per subject in primary education (2019) 373
Table D1.3b. Instruction time per subject in general lower secondary education (2019) 374
Table D2.1. Average class size, by type of institution (2017) and index of change between 2005 and 2017 387
Table D2.2. Ratio of students to teaching staff in educational institutions, by level of education (2017) 388
Table D2.3. Ratio of students to teaching staff, by type of institution (2017) 389
Table D3.1a. Teachers’ statutory salaries, based on the most prevalent qualifications at different points in teachers’ careers (2018) 410
Table D3.2a. Actual salaries of teachers and school heads relative to earnings of tertiary-educated workers (2017) 411
Table D3.4. Average actual salaries of teachers and school heads, by age group and by gender (2017) 412
Table D3.10. Minimum/maximum school heads’ statutory salaries, based on minimum qualifications (2018) 413
Table D4.1a. Organisation of teachers’ teaching time (2018) 427
Table D4.1b. Organisation of teachers’ working time (2018) 428
Table D4.2. Number of teaching hours per year (2000, 2005 to 2018) 429
Table D4.3a. Tasks of teachers, by level of education (2018) 430
Table D4.3b. Other responsibilities of teachers, by level of education (2018) 431
Table D5.1. Age distribution of teachers (2017) 443
Table D5.2. Gender distribution of teachers (2017) 444
Table D5.3. Gender distribution of teachers by age group (2017) and percentage of female teachers for all ages (2005 and 2017) 445
Table D6.1a. Organisation of the admission system and application process to first-degree tertiary programmes in public institutions (2017) 459
Table D6.2a. Examinations and additional criteria used for admission to first-degree tertiary programmes in public institutions (2017) 460
Table D6.3. Minimum qualification and academic performance requirements for entry into tertiary education (government perspective) (2017) 462

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