

## COUNTRY NOTE



### *Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators 2012*

## SWEDEN

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### KEY FINDINGS

- Sweden enjoys an 81.5% employment rate for all levels of education – the second highest rate of all OECD countries after Iceland (Table A7.1b).
- Some 10% of 15-29 year-olds in Sweden are neither in education nor employed (NEET) – one of the smallest percentage of NEETs among all OECD countries (Chart C5.1).
- Sweden spends USD 11 400 per student from primary to tertiary education, more than the OECD average of USD 9 249 (Table B1.1).
- Some 7.3% of Sweden's GDP is devoted to spending on education, while the OECD average is 5.8% (Table B4.1).
- In Sweden, the annual income for teachers at the end of their careers is USD 38 696, compared with the OECD average of USD 45 100.

Sweden, with a population of 9.5 million, maintains a generous welfare system, with compensations for such life-changing events as illness or retirement, and an emphasis on providing equal benefits for all people (Larsson, Bäck, 2008). As a result, tax revenue as a percentage of GDP in Sweden is high – up to 45.8% in 2010, among the highest across OECD countries. Consequently, while employment rates are relatively high at all levels of education, after-tax earnings are relatively low for individuals.

Overall, the employment rate in Sweden is 81.5% – the second-highest rate, after Iceland, of all OECD countries (Table A7.1b). The average difference in earnings between people with tertiary education and those with upper secondary education is relatively small, at 33 percentage points, compared with the OECD average of 65 percentage points (Table A8.1). In addition, as in all the Nordic countries, the earnings premium for people with higher education has decreased slightly over time in Sweden.

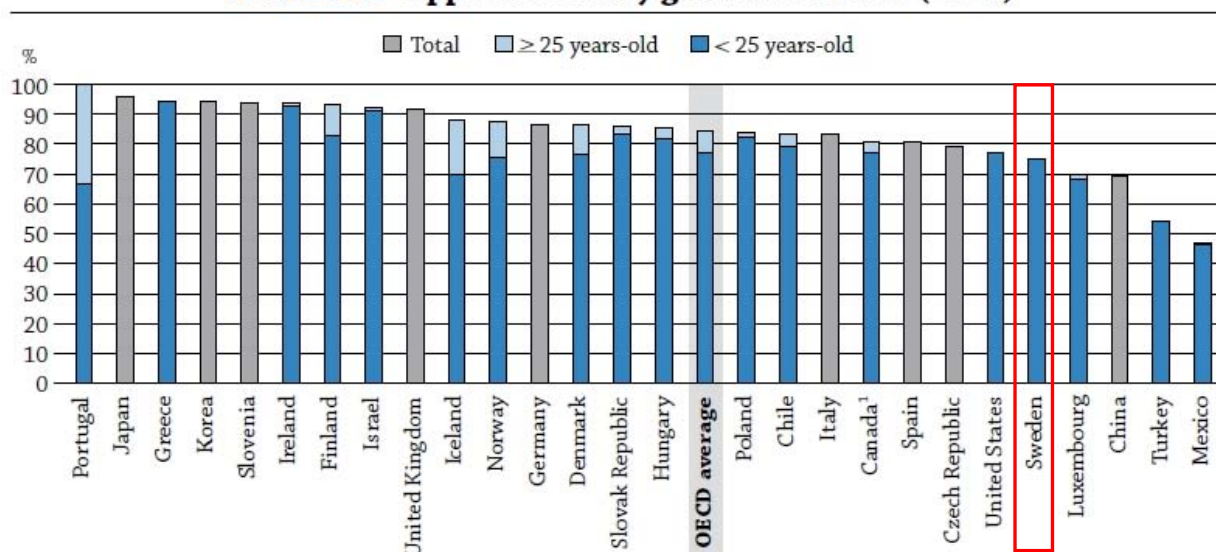
*Equity is a hallmark of the Swedish education system...*

*In spite of the rapidly expanding enrolment rates, especially in higher education, equity in educational opportunities has not suffered.*

Enrolment rates for early childhood and primary education are relatively high in Sweden. Some 90% of three-year-olds attend school (compared with the OECD average of 69%), and 94% of four-year-olds do (the OECD average is 81%). Since 2005, the enrolment rate among three-year-olds increased by 6 percentage points, compared to an average of 2 percentage points among all OECD countries. Early enrolment can be seen as a sign of equity insofar as PISA data show that students who have attended pre-primary school outperform students who have not, even after students' socio-economic backgrounds are taken into account. (Table C2.1, Chart C2.1)

Relatively few young people in Sweden are neither in education nor employed (NEET). In fact, Sweden has one of the lowest percentages – 10% – of NEETs among all OECD countries. Only 5.4% of 15-19 year-olds in Sweden are in this group (Table C5.4a). Meanwhile, 87% of 24-65 year-olds have attained at least an upper secondary education, compared with 74% across OECD countries. This difference is widest among the oldest age cohort. While some 91% of 24-35 year-olds have attained at least an upper secondary education (the OECD average is 82%), 77% of 55-64 year-olds in Sweden have attained this level of education – which is 15 percentage points more than the OECD average (Table A1.2a.).

**Chart A2.1. Upper secondary graduation rates (2010)**



**Note:** Only first-time graduates in upper secondary programmes are reported in this chart.

1. Year of reference 2009.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the upper secondary graduation rates in 2010.

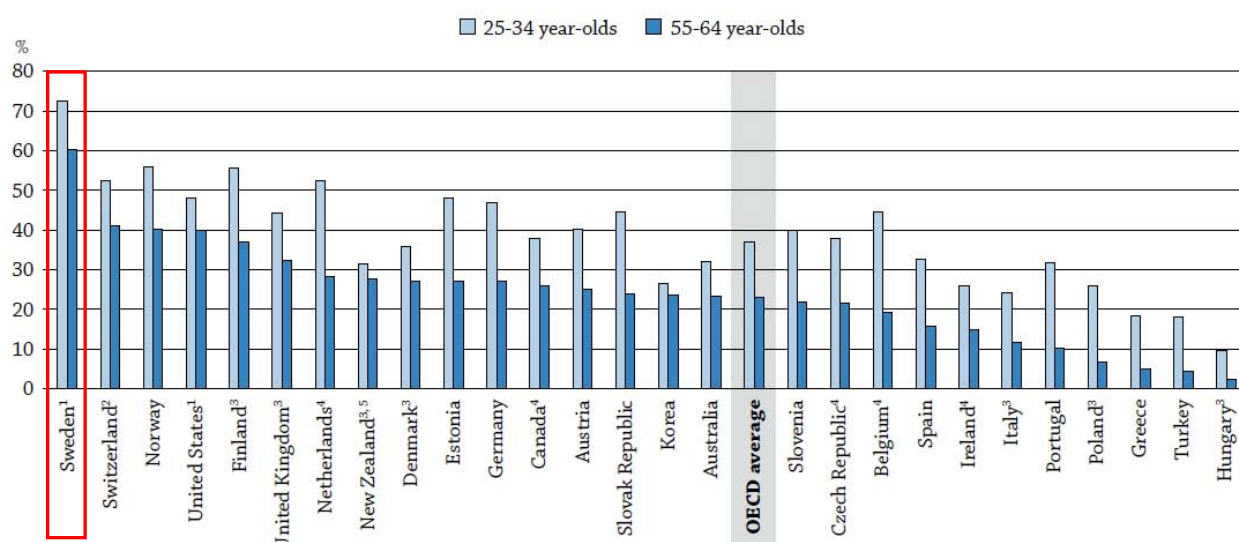
**Source:** OECD. China: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (World Education Indicators programme). Table A2.1. See Annex 3 for notes ([www.oecd.org/edu/eag2012](http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag2012)).

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Sweden has already achieved the goal, set by the European Union in its Europe 2020 Strategy, of ensuring that at least 40% of 30-34 year-olds in the country hold a tertiary degree: some 42% of the country's 25-34 year-olds have attained a tertiary education (the OECD average for this age group is 38%). Among the wider population of 25-64 year-olds, 34% have attained this level of education – three percentage points higher than the OECD average.

Equity is also reflected in the idea that everyone is given a chance to succeed in the long run. Sweden embraces lifelong learning: the level of participation in formal and non-formal education among 25-64 year-olds who have not attained an upper secondary education is the highest in among OECD countries – nearly 56% (Table C6.7). In fact, participation in formal and non-formal education is prevalent for people at all levels of education, where Sweden is at the top of the rankings.

Chart C6.2. Participation in non-formal education, by age group (2007)



1. Year of reference 2005.

2. Year of reference 2009.


3. Year of reference 2006.

4. Year of reference 2008.

5. Excludes adults who participated only in "short seminars, lectures, workshops or special talks".

Countries are ranked in descending order of the participation rate of 55-64 year-olds (2007).

Source: OECD, Table C6.4a. See Annex 3 for notes ([www.oecd.org/edu/eag2012](http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag2012)).

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Equity in education is also reflected in learning outcomes, and in Sweden, students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds perform at a relatively high level. The mean PISA score of the country's most disadvantaged schools<sup>1</sup> is 476 score points, compared to the average score of 458 points among similar schools throughout the OECD area (Table A5.4).

### *..but there is a price to pay for equity in education.*

Sweden funds its equitable education system by devoting a relatively high percentage of its GDP to education and by having one of the highest levels of expenditure per student in the world. Some 7.3% of GDP is allocated to education and R&D undertaken within higher education institutions (the OECD average is 5.8%) (Table B4.1). This has been a trend for many years, as the percentage of GDP devoted to education was 7.1% in 1995 (Table B4.3). This funding goes to both public and private educational institutions. All pre-primary, primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education is publicly funded. The country

<sup>1</sup> Disadvantage quartiles are defined at the country level, ranking schools according to the proportion of students with low-educated mothers. The highest disadvantage quartile, the top quartile, is the one with the 25% of schools where the proportion of students with low-educated mothers is highest. The opposite is true for the lowest disadvantaged quartile, the bottom quartile. Low-educated mothers are those with an educational attainment level lower than upper secondary education. Highly educated mothers are those with a tertiary level of education.

## SWEDEN – Country Note – Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators

spends USD 11 400 per student from primary to tertiary education – more than USD 2 000 more per student than the OECD average.

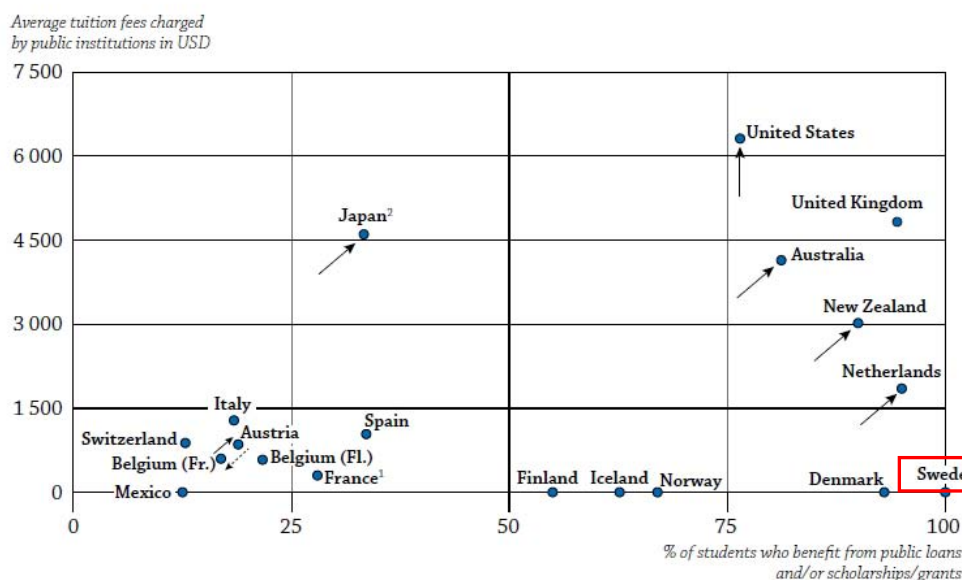
Nearly 90% of total expenditure on tertiary education in Sweden, including R&D, comes from public sources. While many countries have seen an increase in the share of private spending on tertiary education over the past decade, Sweden has maintained its high level of public spending during this period. Some USD 19 961 is allocated per tertiary student per year, compared with the OECD average of USD 13 719 (Table B1.1).

Research and development accounts for more than 40% of total expenditure per student in Sweden. Private expenditure goes mainly to R&D. At least 10% of expenditure on tertiary institutions is covered by private entities other than households, and these contributions are largely directed to sponsoring research and development.

The proportion of public expenditure funding education is high in the Swedish system, at 97.4% for all levels of education, compared to 2.6% for all private sources. The proportion even reaches 100% for pre-primary, primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education. In higher education, 89.8% of the total expenditure is public, which is high compared to the OECD average.

Over the past decade, the share of private expenditure devoted to education has increased in most countries, whereas in Sweden, it has remained stable (Table B3.3). One unique aspect of Sweden's system is even that public and government-dependent private tertiary institutions do not charge tuition fees for students who are Swedish nationals (Table B5.1). Recently, however, tuition fees have been introduced in tertiary education for citizens from countries outside the EEA and from Switzerland. Though scholarships have been granted at the same time, there has been a significant decline in the enrolment rate of students from these countries.

**Chart B5.1. Relationship between average tuition fees charged by public institutions and proportion of students who benefit from public loans and/or scholarships/grants in tertiary-type A education (academic year 2008-09)**  
For full-time national students, in USD converted using PPPs



1. Average tuition fees from USD 190 to 1 309 for university programmes dependent on the Ministry of Education.

2. Tuition fees refer to public institutions but more than two-thirds of students are enrolled in private institutions.

Source: OECD, Tables B5.1 and B5.2. See Annex 3 for notes ([www.oecd.org/edu/eag2012](http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag2012)).

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***Reforms are needed to make the teaching profession more attractive.***

Between 2000 and 2010, teachers' salaries increased by an average of 22 percentage points across all OECD countries, while in Sweden, salaries increased by only 8 percentage points (Table D3.1). Except for starting salaries, there is a wide gap between teachers' salaries in Sweden and the OECD average. The starting salary for a primary school teacher is USD 28 937, just above the OECD average of USD 28 523. However, after ten years of experience, Swedish primary school teachers earn USD 32 182 USD (the OECD average is USD 34 968); and at the top of the pay scale, Swedish teachers earn USD 38 696 compared with the OECD average of USD 45 100. At the same time, the total statutory working time for teachers in Sweden is one the highest in the world (Table D2.2), while the ratio of students to teaching staff in primary and secondary education is far below the OECD average (Table D4.1). Sweden is implementing reforms to raise the status of the teaching profession by focusing on continuous professional development and launching a campaign to attract teachers. Thus, additional resources of up to SEK 3.8 billion have been allocated in the 2011 budget bill to "break the downward trend in learning outcomes among Swedish pupils" (Swedish Government, 2011). In the bill, the government also proposes to explore the prerequisites for implementing a state-financed incentive payment.

Under the Swedish education system, the Swedish Association for Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) and the teachers' unions have signed a framework agreement on worktime and starting salaries, among other issues. It is then up to the individual school organiser, often the principal, and each teacher, sometimes with the support of trade unions, to negotiate an annual salary, based, for example, on qualifications, the labour-market situation, the teacher's performance, and the range of responsibilities required of the teacher.

## NOTABLE TRENDS

***An ageing teaching force***

Seven of the 32 countries with the oldest teachers are EU21 countries. In Sweden, 41.2% of secondary school teachers are aged 50 or older. At the other end of the spectrum, 6.8% of the teachers are younger than 30. This imbalance in the age distribution of the teaching force can have many consequences for the education system.

The risk of teacher shortages grows as a large number of teachers reaches retirement age, thus raising the issue of quality, since the quality of teaching strongly depends on the pool of talent from which teachers are recruited.

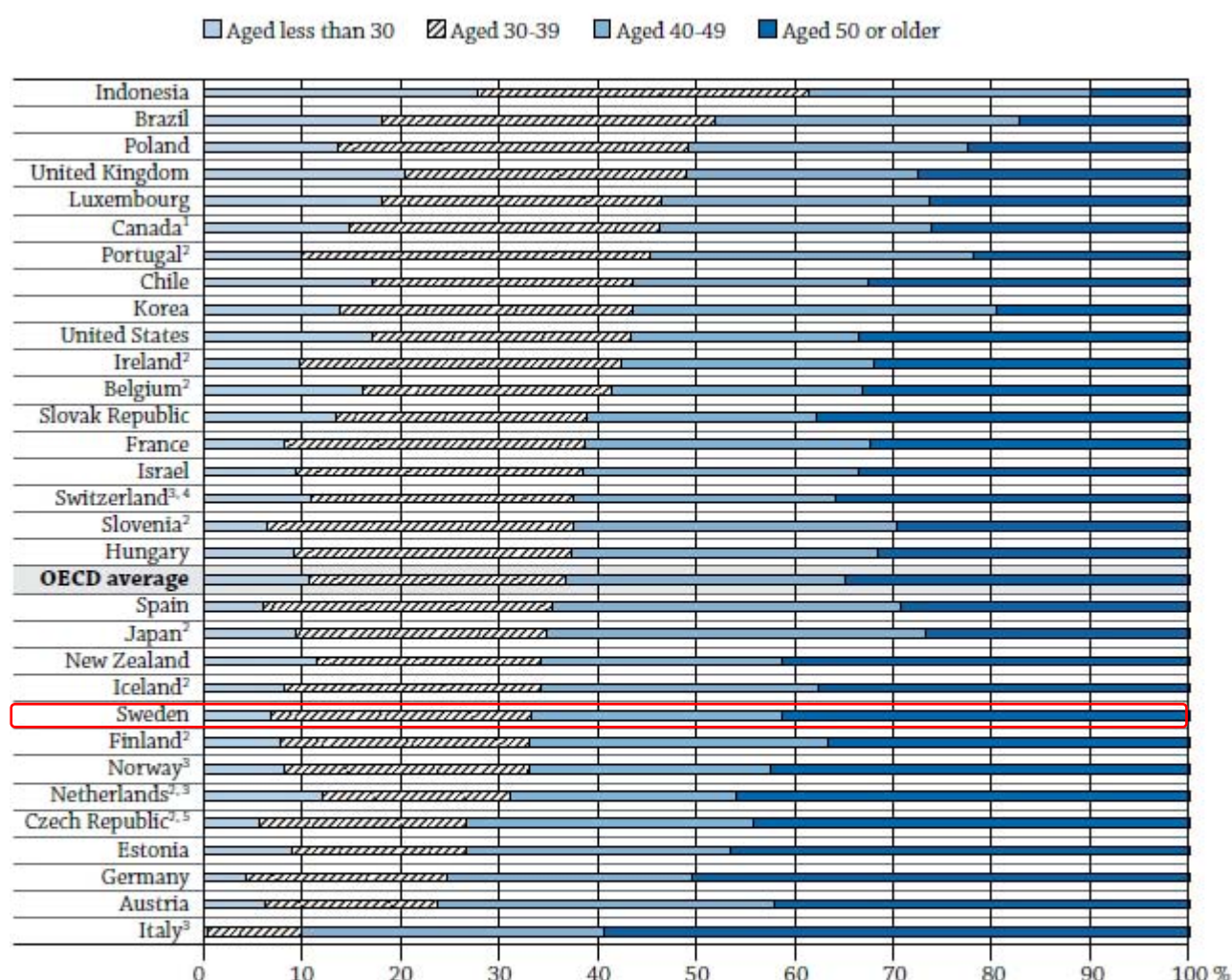
The ageing of the teaching force also has budgetary implications, as there is a link between teachers' salaries and years of experience in most countries. If more resources are devoted to compensating teachers with many years of experience, the less resources are available for other school policies, particularly when public budgets are tight.

To meet this challenge, the recent efforts to make the teaching profession more attractive seem to be a step in the right direction.



**Chart D5.1. Age distribution of teachers in secondary education (2010)**

*Distribution of teachers in educational institutions, by age group*



1. Year of reference 2009.

2. Secondary education includes post-secondary non-tertiary education.

3. Public institutions only.

4. Upper secondary education includes general programmes only.

5. Upper secondary education includes tertiary-type B education.

Countries are ranked in ascending order of the percentage of teachers aged 40 or older at the secondary level.

**Source:** OECD, Indonesia: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (World Education Indicators programme). Table D5.2. See Annex 3 for notes ([www.oecd.org/edu/eag2012](http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag2012)).

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## KEY FACTS

Indicator	Sweden	OECD average	Sweden rank*
<b>Educational Access and Output</b>			
<b>Enrolment rates</b>			
3-year-olds (in early childhood education)	90%	66%	7 of 36 countries
4-year-olds (in early childhood and primary education)	94%	81%	15 of 38 countries
5-14 year-olds (all levels)	99%	96%	23 of 39 countries
<b>Percentage of population that has attained pre-primary or primary levels of education only</b>			
25-64 year-olds	4%	m	23 of 37 countries
<b>Percentage of population that has attained at least upper secondary education</b>			
25-64 year-olds	87%	74%	8 of 40 countries
25-34 year-olds	91%	82%	7 of 36 countries
55-64 year-olds	77%	62%	10 of 36 countries
<b>Percentage of population that has attained tertiary education</b>			
25-64 year-olds	34%	31%	17 of 41 countries
25-34 year-olds	42%	38%	15 of 37 countries
55-64 year-olds	27%	23%	13 of 37 countries
<b>Entry rates into tertiary education</b>			
Vocational programmes (Tertiary-type B)	12%	17%	21 of 33 countries
University programmes (Tertiary-type A)	76%	62%	8 of 36 countries
<b>Graduation rates</b>			
Percentage of today's young people expected to complete upper secondary education in their lifetime	75%	84%	23 of 27 countries
Percentage of today's young people expected to complete university education (tertiary-type A) in their lifetime	37%	39%	17 of 28 countries
<b>Economic and Labour Market Outcomes</b>			
<b>Unemployment rate of 25-64 year-olds</b>			
Below upper secondary	11%	12.5%	17 of 33 countries
Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary	6.1%	7.6%	24 of 34 countries
Tertiary	4.3%	4.7%	16 of 34 countries
<b>Average earnings premium for 25-64 year-olds with tertiary education (compared to people with upper secondary education; upper secondary = 100)</b>			
Men and women	125	155	31 of 32 countries
Men	133	160	29 of 32 countries
Women	127	157	31 of 32 countries
<b>Average earnings penalty for 25-64 year-olds who have not attained upper secondary education (compared to people with upper secondary education; upper secondary = 100)</b>			
Men and women	82	77	7 of 32 countries
Men	81	78	10 of 32 countries
Women	80	74	8 of 32 countries
<b>Percentage of people not in employment, education or training</b>			
15-29 year-olds (2005 data)	9.2%	15.0%	26 of 32 countries
15-29 year-olds (2010 data)	10.3%	15.8%	27 of 32 countries

SWEDEN – Country Note – Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators

Indicator	Sweden	OECD average	Sweden rank*
<b>Financial Investment in Education</b>			
<b>Annual expenditure per student (in equivalent USD, using PPPs)</b>			
Pre-primary education	6 549	6 670	14 of 34 countries
Primary education	9 382	7 719	8 of 35 countries
Secondary education	10 050	9 312	13 of 37 countries
Tertiary education	19 961	13 728	4 of 37 countries
<b>Total public and private expenditure on education</b>			
As a percentage of GDP	6.7%	6.2%	9 of 37 countries
<b>Total public expenditure on education</b>			
As a percentage of total public expenditure	13.2%	13.0%	14 of 32 countries
<b>Share of private expenditure on educational institutions</b>			
Primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education	0%	8.8%	31 of 32 countries
Tertiary education	10.2%	30%	27 of 31 countries
All levels of education	2.6%	16%	29 of 30 countries
<b>Schools and Teachers</b>			
<b>Ratio of students to teaching staff</b>			
Pre-primary education	6.3	14.4	31 of 32 countries
Primary education	11.7	15.8	29 of 36 countries
Secondary education	12.3	13.8	21 of 38 countries
<b>Number of hours of compulsory instruction time per year</b>			
7-8 year-olds	741	774 hours	15 of 33 countries
9-11 year-olds	741	821 hours	23 of 34 countries
12-14 year-olds	741	899 hours	33 of 34 countries
<b>Number of hours of teaching time per year (for teachers in public institutions)</b>			
Primary education	m	782 hours	m
Lower secondary education	m	704 hours	m
Upper secondary education	m	658 hours	m
<b>Ratio of teachers' salaries to earnings for full-time, full-year adult workers with tertiary education</b>			
Primary school teachers	0.79	0.82	15 of 27 countries
Lower secondary school teachers	0.81	0.85	15 of 27 countries
Upper secondary school teachers	0.86	0.90	13 of 27 countries

\* Countries are ranked in descending order of values.



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