



## EDUCATION AT A GLANCE 2015

*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 the 34 OECD countries and a number of partner countries.

### Italy

This Country Note focuses on five major topics covered in the 2015 edition of *Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators*. These topics are: educational attainment, skills and participation in the labour market, equity in education and the labour market, financing of education, the teaching profession, and tertiary education (based on the new ISCED 2011 classification).

The table *Key facts for Italy in Education at a Glance 2015* presents a summary of figures for Italy and the OECD average.

#### **Tertiary education: Short-cycle, bachelor's, master's and doctoral programmes**

*Italy combines high graduation rates for master's degrees with low graduation rates for short-cycle and bachelor's programmes.*

If current patterns persist, 20% of young Italians can be expected to obtain a master's or equivalent degree (for example, *laurea magistrale*) during their lifetime, a larger proportion than the 17% on average across OECD countries. Yet, only 42% of Italy's young people are expected to enter tertiary education, the smallest share among all OECD countries except Luxembourg and Mexico. Overall, 34% of Italy's young people are expected to graduate from tertiary education, compared to the OECD average of 50% (Chart A3.1).<sup>1</sup> The small difference between expected graduation rates at the master's level and overall tertiary graduation rates suggests that most tertiary graduates leave education after having earned a master's degree.

In recent years, Italy has taken several steps to create tertiary education programmes that prepare students for rapid entry into the labour market, mainly by creating new institutions (*istituti tecnici superiori*) for short-cycle tertiary programmes in close collaboration with employers and existing tertiary institutions. Italy must continue to strengthen these kinds of programmes.

Short-cycle tertiary programmes are less theoretical than bachelor's programmes and serve to deepen knowledge by imparting new techniques, concepts and ideas not generally covered in upper secondary education. Until recently, only a negligible share of students in Italy – less than 1% in 2013 – enrolled in these types of programmes. On average across OECD countries, 18% of those entering tertiary education for the first time chose this kind of programme (Table C3.2). These kinds of programmes can raise overall

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<sup>1</sup> Part of the difference with the OECD average (5 percentage points or less) may be due to the fact that international students represent a smaller share of graduates in Italy than on average across OECD countries.



tertiary graduation rates substantially and help workers and firms to become more competitive in today's dynamic global economy.

**Table 1 Graduation rates, by tertiary ISCED level (%)**

	Short-cycle tertiary education	Bachelor's or equivalent	Master's or equivalent	At least one tertiary degree
Italy	0.2	28	20	34
OECD average	11	36	17	50

Source: Table A3.1

Note: Individuals who are expected to graduate from more than one ISCED level are counted in more than one column.

**Italian tertiary education is not attractive to students from other OECD countries.**

In 2013, about 46 000 Italians were enrolled in tertiary education in another OECD country, with a further 3 000 choosing to study in a non-OECD country. The United Kingdom, Austria and France were the top destinations for these students. The numbers have been steadily growing. For example, in 2007, about 6 000 Italians studied in the United Kingdom; by 2013, this number had risen to 8 000. Other countries send even larger numbers of students abroad. About 72 000 students from France and 115 000 from Germany studied in other OECD countries in 2013 (Table C4.6).

Meanwhile, Italian universities attract few foreign students. Fewer than 16 000 foreign students from other OECD countries were enrolled in Italy's tertiary institutions (the largest group comes from Greece), compared to about 46 000 in France and 68 000 in Germany. If anything, this comparison overstates the numbers in Italy, because Italy counts the total number of foreign students studying within the country, including permanent immigrants, whereas France and Germany only report the number of international students who moved specifically for the purpose of studying there.

Many international students face a language barrier when coming to Italy, but Italian universities are trying to overcome this problem. Some 20% of them offered at least one English-taught programme in academic year 2013/14 according to a survey by the Academic Cooperation Association (compared to 43% in Germany and 16% in France; Chart C4.a).

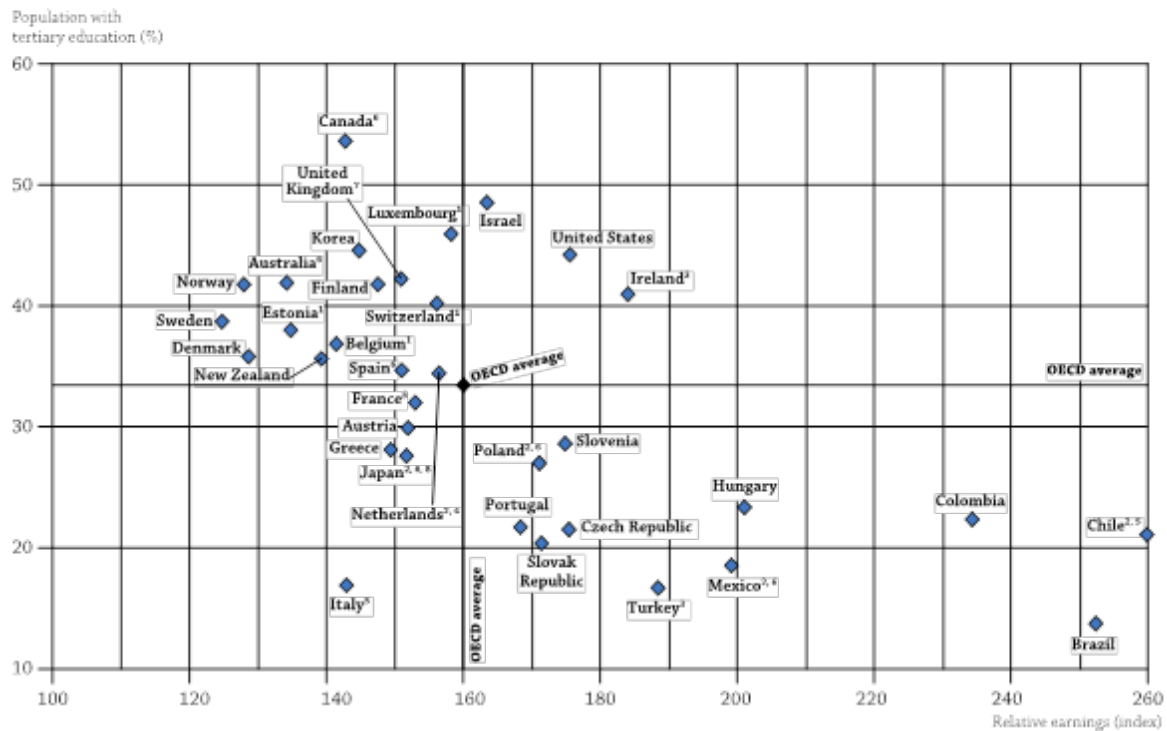
## **Educational attainment, skills and participation in the labour market**

**Despite their low numbers, tertiary education graduates in Italy earn relatively less in the labour market.**

On average, in Italy as elsewhere, tertiary graduates earn more in the labour market than those with lower educational attainment. But Italy stands out among countries with similarly small shares of tertiary graduates. Across OECD and partner countries, fewer graduates tend to be associated with a higher earnings premium. In 2014, only 17% of adults (25-64 year-olds) in Italy had a tertiary degree, similar to the share in Brazil, Mexico and Turkey. However, whereas in these three countries the difference between the earnings of tertiary-educated graduates relative to those of adults with only upper secondary education as their highest level of attainment are much higher than the OECD average, in Italy relative earnings are lower: 143%, compared to the OECD average of 160% (Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Relative earnings of tertiary educated workers and their share in the population (2013)**  
 25-64 year-olds with income from employment; upper secondary education = 100



**Note:** All tertiary includes short cycle tertiary, bachelor's, master's, doctoral or equivalent degrees. Data on educational attainment refers to year 2014 or latest available year.

1. Belgium, Estonia, Luxembourg, Switzerland: Index 100 refers to the combined ISCED levels 3 and 4 of the educational attainment levels in the ISCED 2011 classification.

2. Chile, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Poland: Index 100 refers to the combined ISCED levels 3 and 4 of the educational attainment levels in the ISCED-97 classification.

3. Ireland, Turkey: Earnings net of income tax.

4. The Netherlands: Year of reference 2010.

5. Chile, France, Italy: Year of reference 2011.


6. Australia, Canada, Finland, Japan, Mexico, Poland, Spain: Year of reference 2012.

7. The United Kingdom: Data for upper secondary attainment includes completion of a sufficient volume and standard of programmes that would be classified individually as partial level completion of upper secondary education.

8. Japan: Data on educational attainment exclude short-cycle tertiary education at the tertiary level.

Source: OECD. Tables A1.3a and A6.1a.

See Annex 3 for notes ([www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance-19991487.htm](http://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance-19991487.htm)).

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933283719> (Education at a Glance 2015, Chart A6.4)

Finding a job is particularly difficult for 25-34 year-old graduates, especially first-generation graduates.

Only 62% of 25-34 year-old graduates from tertiary education were employed in Italy in 2014, 5 percentage points less than the rate in 2010. This is a level comparable to Greece, and is the lowest among OECD countries (the OECD average is 82%). Italy and the Czech Republic are the only OECD countries where the employment rate among 25-34 year-olds is lower among tertiary graduates than among individuals with only upper secondary (or post-secondary non-tertiary) education as their highest level of attainment. Students entering tertiary education in Italy may have to wait a long time before realising a return in the labour market.



**Table 2 Employment rates in Italy by age group and educational attainment (%)**

	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64
Tertiary – Italy	62	86	90	76
Upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary – Italy	63	76	77	57
Tertiary – OECD average	82	88	89	69
Upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary – OECD average	75	81	79	56

Source: Table A5.3a

The employment rate is particularly low for tertiary-educated 25-34 year-olds whose parents did not attain tertiary education, and who are less likely to have access to an extensive social network to find a job. While on average across the countries that participated in the 2012 Survey of Adults Skills, the employment rate among first-generation graduates is 88%, close to the 90% employment rate among children of tertiary graduates, in Italy it is more than 12 percentage points lower (Chart A4.5).

*Participation in post-secondary and tertiary education did little to limit the increase in young people who are neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET).*

The prospect of such relatively low and uncertain returns, after a long period spent in education, may explain young Italians' limited appetite for entering tertiary education. Some 35% of 20-24 year-olds are neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET), the second-highest share among OECD countries. Between 2010 and 2014, employment rates plummeted for this age group (from 32% to 23%), but the share of 20-24 years-old in education remained stable at 41% (Chart C5.1, Table C5.2b). This suggests that for young people who experience difficulties in finding a job, further education is rarely seen as an investment that could improve their job-market prospects.

*Many tertiary graduates have difficulties synthesising information from complex or lengthy texts.*

Many different factors, including a lack of demand for workers with academic qualifications by employers and the effect of the 2008-09 economic crisis, could explain the difficulties tertiary graduates in Italy have in finding a job. However, several indicators suggest that one main cause is the fact that formal qualifications often do not correspond to strong skills, raising questions about the quality of learning in tertiary institutions. Italy, together with Spain and Ireland, had the lowest literacy scores among tertiary-educated 25-34 year-olds who participated in the OECD Survey of Adult Skills (Table A1.9a, EAG 2014). Many tertiary graduates have difficulties performing multiple-step operations to integrate, interpret or synthesise information from complex or lengthy texts, and evaluating subtle truth claims or arguments.

The unbalanced pattern of international student mobility (see above) and the low level of funding for tertiary education are further signs of weakness in Italy's tertiary education system.

## Financing of education

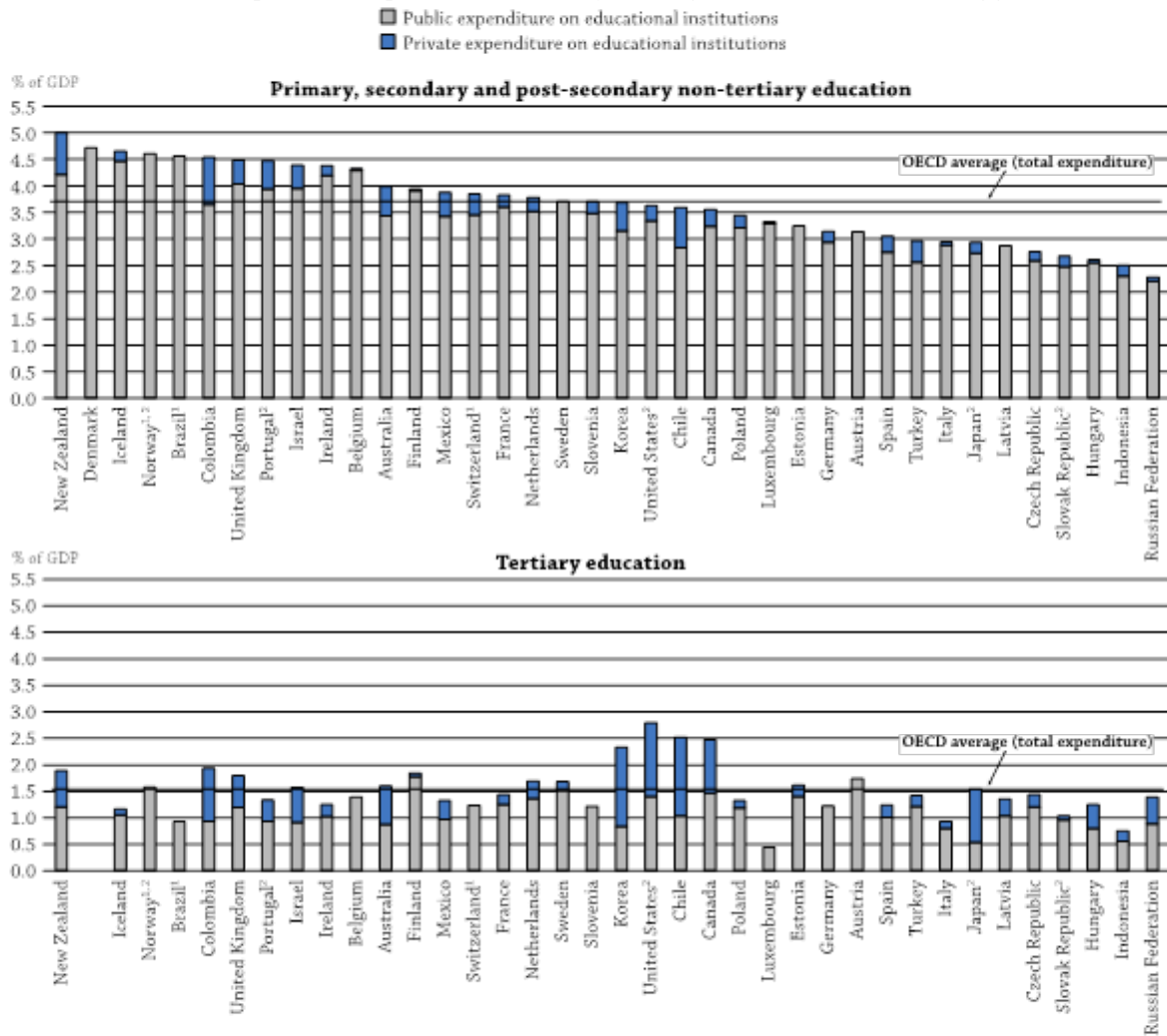
*The level of expenditure on tertiary education in Italy is comparatively low.*

In Italy in 2012, tertiary educational institutions spent USD 10 071<sup>2</sup> per student. This is higher than the expenditure per student in more than one-third of OECD and partner countries, but it is only two-thirds the OECD average (Table B1.1a). The funding of tertiary educational institutions represented 0.9% of Italy's GDP, slightly up from 0.8% in 2000 (Table B2.2), but still the second lowest share among OECD countries after Luxembourg, and a level similar to those in Brazil and Indonesia. In contrast, countries such as Canada, Chile, Denmark, Finland, Korea and the United States devoted close to 2% or more of their GDP to tertiary education.

<sup>2</sup> Values reported in equivalent US dollars (USD) have been converted using purchasing power parities (PPPs).



**Figure 2: Expenditure on educational institutions as a percentage of GDP**  
*From public and private sources, by level of education and source of funds*



1. Public expenditure only (for Switzerland, in tertiary education only; for Norway, in primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education only).

2. Some levels of education are included with others. Refer to "x" code in Table B1.1a for details.

Countries are ranked in descending order of expenditure from both public and private sources on educational institutions in primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education.

Source: OECD, Table B2.3.

See Annex 3 for notes ([www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance-19991487.htm](http://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance-19991487.htm)).

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933283959> (Education at a Glance 2015, Chart B2.2)

## The teaching profession

*Italy's teaching force is older than that in any other OECD country.*

In 2013, 57% of all primary teachers in Italy, 73% of teachers in upper secondary education and 51% of teachers in tertiary education were 50 years and older, the largest proportions among OECD and partner countries (Charts D5.1 and D5.2). As many of these teachers can be expected to retire over the coming decade, Italy faces an unprecedented opportunity to redefine the teaching profession.

In 2013, there were fewer primary students per teacher in Italy than the average in OECD or EU countries, and a similar number of students at the lower and upper secondary levels (Table D2.2). At the same time, teachers in Italy earned less than similarly educated workers. For example, in 2013, teachers aged 25-64 in public lower secondary schools earned, on average, two-thirds of the average salary of workers with



comparable qualifications, compared to the OECD average proportion of 80% (Chart D3.1). Furthermore, teachers' salaries are mostly related to seniority (years of experience) and do not reward outstanding performance, as is the case in Finland and France, for example (Table D3.7).

*No regular teacher or school leader appraisal is required by regulation in Italy.*

Teacher appraisal is the evaluation of individual teachers resulting in judgements about their competencies and performance. A majority (30 out of 37) of OECD and partner countries reported that during the school year 2014/15 teacher appraisal in lower secondary education was legislated by policy or regulation. This included Italy, where the appraisal of teachers was required upon completion of the probation period. Within this group, however, Italy was one of few countries (together with Ireland, Israel and Spain) in which policy or regulations do not require the regular appraisal of teachers' performance over their career. Italy also did not have policies or regulations to link either mandatory or voluntary appraisals to promotions or reward schemes (Table D7.1).

Among OECD and partner countries with available data for the school year 2014/15, Italy was one of only four countries, together with Austria, Japan and Luxembourg, with no requirement for school inspections as part of the accountability system nor for school leader appraisal. However, the recently legislated system requires all schools in Italy to complete, every year, a self-evaluation report in which they address, among other factors, the quality of school management, instruction and students' learning outcomes. These reports are published on line to be widely accessible (Tables D6.9, D6.12a-c and D7.7). Once fully implemented, the new system will also introduce external school evaluations and school leader appraisals.

*Information and communication technology (ICT) is not used frequently at school.*

In 2013, some 31% of lower secondary teachers in Italy reported that they use ICT "frequently", or "in all or nearly all lessons", for project or class work with students – compared to an average of 40% across OECD countries. And in 2012, a majority of 15-year-old students (57%) reported that they do not use the Internet at school during a typical school day (the OECD average was 36%). A lack of preparation among teachers may contribute to below-average levels of the use of ICT. Indeed, even if 53% of lower secondary teachers reported in 2013 that they had participated in professional development activities, over the previous year, to improve their ICT skills for teaching, some 36% of teachers – the second-highest proportion among countries participating in the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) – still reported a high level of need for developing their ICT skills (Chart D8.4; Tables D8.1 and D8.4).

## Equity in education

*Women are well represented in tertiary education, but parents continue to hold gendered expectations for their children's careers.*

In many respects, Italy has closed the gender gap in tertiary attainment (Tables A3.2, A3.4 and A3.7). Women make up 59% of first-time graduates from tertiary education, and 52% of first-time graduates at the doctoral level in Italy (the OECD average is 47% at the doctoral level). In addition, in Italy more women than men graduate in sciences. In 2013, about a third of the graduates in engineering, manufacturing and construction were women, five percentage points above the OECD average. However, this figure shows that, as in other OECD countries, women are still under-represented in this field of study.

To close the remaining gender gaps in education and in the economy, a concerted effort by parents, teachers, policy makers and opinion leaders is needed. For instance, when students select their field of study, they are strongly influenced by parents, who often have gendered notions of what is suitable for girls and boys. An analysis of PISA 2012 data shows that parents of 15-year-olds are more than twice as likely to report that they expect their sons, rather than their daughters, to pursue a career in science,



technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM), even when their sons and daughters have similar proficiency in mathematics and science (Chart A10.a). By nurturing the talent of boys and girls equally, countries can ensure that they contribute fully to the economic growth and well-being of their societies.

Women also represent only 37% of teachers in tertiary education, less than the OECD average of 41%, but the proportion of women could increase as the older cohorts of teachers retire. In all other levels of education, Italy has a larger share of women teachers than the OECD average, particularly in pre-primary and primary education, where almost all teachers are women.

**Table 3 Proportion of female teachers at different educational levels (%)**

	Pre-primary	Primary	Lower Secondary	Upper Secondary	Tertiary
Italy	98	96	78	67	37
OECD average	96	82	68	58	41

Source: Table D5.3

### *Many boys underperform in secondary school.*

In secondary education, boys tend to be over-represented among low-performing students. According to PISA 2012, 14% of boys in Italian schools were low achievers in mathematics, reading and science, whereas only 9% of girls were assessed as low achievers in all three domains (these were the same as the OECD averages for both genders; Table A10.1). Low achievers in PISA are students who do not reach proficiency Level 2 (for example, in mathematics, students at this level are expected to be able to correctly substitute numbers into simple formulae to solve a problem). Students who perform poorly in all subjects are hard to motivate as they may feel disconnected from and disengaged with school.

The gender gap in reading performance narrows considerably when comprehension is assessed on digital texts (Table D8.3). Boys appear more motivated and engaged when they read on line. By including reading materials that boys seem to prefer, such as newspapers, teachers can promote the habit of reading and support engagement with school more generally.

### *Attendance at early childhood education is nearly universal, but less common among children of immigrants.*

Almost all young children in Italy are enrolled in early childhood education: 98% of 4-year-olds, compared to 88% on average across OECD countries. Enrolment in early childhood education is also higher than the OECD average among children of immigrants, but a full 10 percentage points lower than among children of native-born parents (OECD, 2015: Figure 13.5).

In Italy, 15-year-olds who had attended pre-primary education as young children scored better in the PISA 2012 assessment of reading, even after accounting for differences in socio-economic status. This relationship is particularly strong among immigrant children who arrived in Italy before the age of six (Chart C2.2). This shows that early education could play an important role in successfully integrating the growing numbers of immigrant children in Italy.



## References

OECD (2015), *Education at a Glance 2015: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2015-en>.

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


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### Note regarding data from Israel

The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and are under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

For more information on **Education at a Glance 2015** and to access the full set of Indicators, visit [www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance-19991487.htm](http://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance-19991487.htm).

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:  **Education GPS**  
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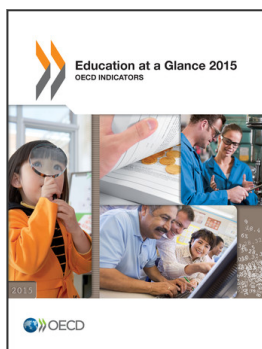
## Key Facts for Italy in Education at a Glance 2015

Table	Indicator	Italy	OECD average
<b>Educational Access and Output</b>			
	<b>Enrolment rates</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2013</b>
C2.1	3-year-olds (in early childhood education)	94%	74%
	<b>Highest educational attainment level of 25-64 year-olds</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2014</b>
A1.4a	Below upper secondary	41%	24%
	Upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary	42%	43%
	Tertiary	17%	34%
	<b>Highest educational attainment level of 25-64 year-olds (disaggregation at tertiary level)</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2014</b>
A1.1a	Short cycle tertiary	**	8%
	Bachelor's or equivalent	3%	16%
	Master's or equivalent	13%	11%
	Doctoral or equivalent	0%	1%
	<b>Entry and graduation rates</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2013</b>
C3.1	Percentage of today's young people expected to enter tertiary education at least once during their lifetime	42%	67%
A3.1	Percentage of today's young people expected to graduate with a bachelor's or equivalent degree in their lifetime	28%	36%
<b>Economic and Labour Market Outcomes</b>			
	<b>Unemployment rate of 25-64 year-olds</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2014</b>
A5.4a	Below upper secondary	15.2%	12.8%
	Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary	9.1%	7.7%
	Tertiary	7.6%	5.1%
	<b>Average earnings premium for tertiary-educated 25-64 year-olds (upper secondary = 100)</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2013</b>
A6.1a	Short cycle tertiary	**	125
	Bachelor's or equivalent	**	157
	Master's, Doctoral or equivalent	**	214
	All tertiary	143	160
	<b>Percentage of people not in employment, education or training (NEET) for 15-29 year-olds</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2014</b>
C5.2b	Men	26.5%	13.2%
	Women	28.7%	17.9%
<b>Financial Investment in Education</b>			
	<b>Annual expenditure per student (in equivalent USD, using PPPs)</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2012</b>
B1.1a	Primary education	7924 USD	8247 USD
	Secondary education	8774 USD	9518 USD
	Tertiary (including R&D activities)	10071 USD	15028 USD
	<b>Total expenditure on primary to tertiary educational institutions</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2012</b>
B2.2	As a percentage of GDP	3.9%	5.2%
	<b>Total public expenditure on primary to tertiary education</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2012</b>
B4.2	As a percentage of total public expenditure	7.4%	11.6%
<b>Schools and Teachers</b>			
	<b>Ratio of students to teaching staff</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2013</b>
D2.2	Primary education	12 students per teacher	15 students per teacher
	Secondary education	12 students per teacher	13 students per teacher
	<b>Average actual teachers' salaries</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2013</b>
D3.4	Pre-primary school teachers	33379 USD	37798 USD
	Primary school teachers	33379 USD	41248 USD
	Lower secondary school teachers (general programmes)	35757 USD	43626 USD
	Upper secondary school teachers (general programmes)	38675 USD	47702 USD

The reference year is the year cited or the latest year for which data are available.

\*\* Please refer to the source table for details on this data.





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