

How many students study abroad and where do they go?

- Nearly 4.3 million students are enrolled in university-level education outside their home country. Australia, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, New Zealand and Austria have, in descending order, the highest percentage of international students.
- Asian students represent 53% of foreign students enrolled worldwide. The largest numbers of foreign students are from China, India and Korea.
- OECD countries receive more international students than they send abroad for tertiary education. Almost three times as many foreign students are enrolled in tertiary education in OECD countries as there are OECD citizens studying abroad.
- Some 83% of all foreign students are enrolled in G20 countries, while 77% are enrolled in OECD countries. These proportions have remained stable during the past decade.

Significance

This section looks at the extent to which students are studying abroad and their preferred destinations. Pursuing higher-level education in a foreign country allows students to expand their knowledge of other societies and languages, and thus improve their prospects in globalised sectors of the labour market. Beyond its social and educational effects, studying abroad has a considerable economic impact. For host countries, enrolling international students can not only help raise revenues from higher education, but can also be part of a broader strategy to recruit highly skilled immigrants.

Findings

OECD countries attract three out of four students studying abroad, with Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States together receiving more than 50% of all foreign students worldwide.

In terms of geographical area, Europe is the top destination for tertiary level students enrolled outside their country of origin, hosting 48% of these students, followed by North America, which hosts 21% of all international students. The number of international students in Oceania has tripled since 2000, although this region hosts less than 10% of all foreign students. Other regions, such as Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, are also seeing growing numbers of international students, reflecting the internationalisation of universities in an increasing number of countries.

International students from OECD countries mainly come from Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Korea, the Slovak Republic, Turkey and the United States. In the 21 European countries that are members of the OECD, there were 2.7 foreign students per European citizen enrolled abroad.

International students represent 10% or more of the enrolments in tertiary education in Australia, Austria, New Zealand, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. They also account for more than 30% of enrolments in advanced research programmes in Australia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

Trends

Over the past three decades, the number of students enrolled outside their country of citizenship has risen dramatically, from 0.8 million worldwide in 1975 to 4.3 million in 2011, a more than fivefold increase. During the 2000-11 period, the number of foreign tertiary students enrolled worldwide more than doubled, with an average annual growth rate of almost 7%. In OECD countries, the number of foreign students enrolled at the tertiary level mirrored the global trend.

Definitions

Data on international and foreign students refer to the academic year 2010-11 unless otherwise indicated and are based on the UOE data collection on education statistics administered by the OECD in 2012. Additional data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics are also included, although the year of reference is 2010. Students are classified as “international” if they left their country of origin and moved to another country to study. Students are classified as “foreign” if they are not citizens of the country in which they are studying. This latter category includes some students who are permanent residents, albeit not citizens, of the countries in which they are studying (for example, young people from immigrant families).

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

Going further

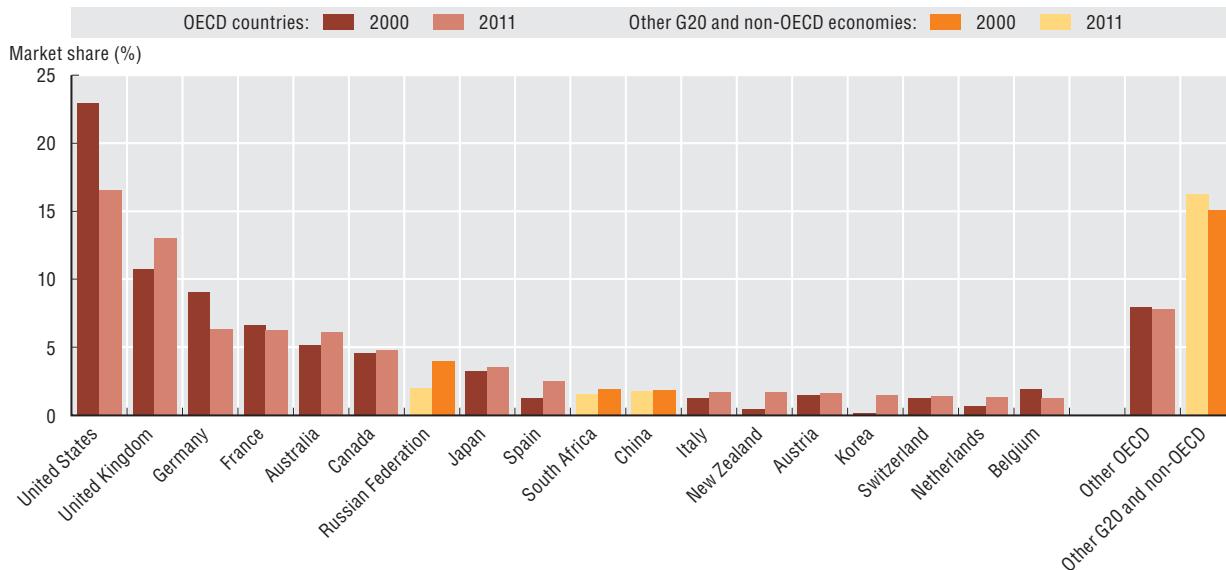
For additional material, notes and a full explanation of sourcing and methodologies, see *Education at a Glance 2013* (Indicator C4).

Areas covered include:

- Distribution of students by country of origin and destination.
- Trends in the numbers of students studying abroad.

Figure 2.9. Trends in international education market shares (2000, 2011).

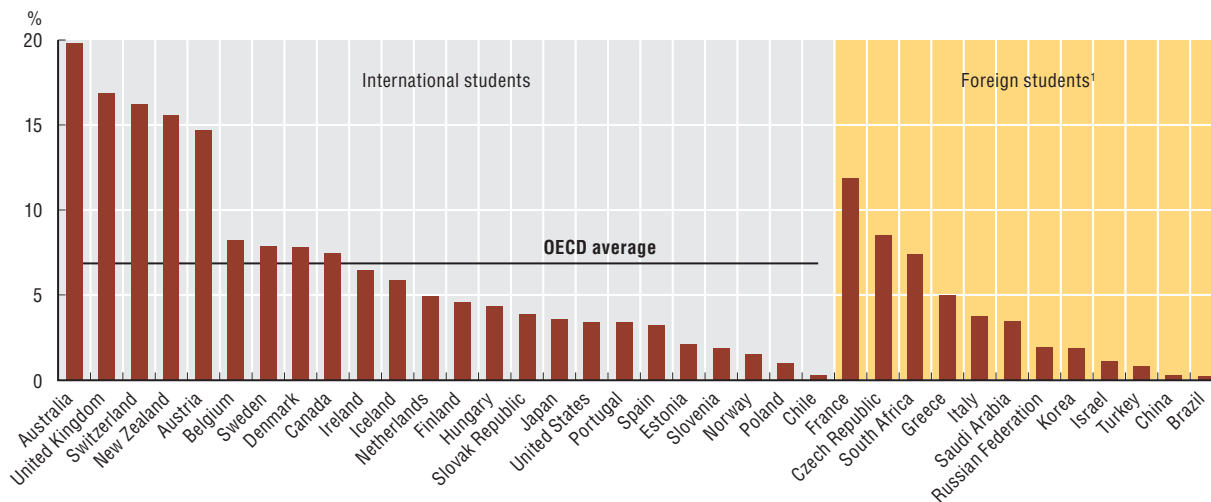
This figure shows the distribution of foreign and international students in tertiary education, by destination.



Source: OECD (2013), Education at a Glance 2013, Chart C4.3, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932847583>.

Figure 2.10. Student mobility in tertiary education, 2011

This figure shows the percentage of international students at the tertiary level in each country.



1. Foreign students are defined on the basis of their country of citizenship, these data are not comparable with data on international students and are therefore presented separately in the chart.

Source: OECD (2013), Education at a Glance 2013, Chart C4.4 available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932847602>.





3. THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL BENEFITS OF EDUCATION

How much more do tertiary graduates earn?

How does education affect employment rates?

What are the incentives to invest in education?

What are the health benefits of education?



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