

Korea

Ensuring equal opportunities for students across socio-economic backgrounds

- Socio-economic status may significantly impact students' participation in education, particularly at levels of education that rely, in many countries, most heavily on private expenditure, such as early childhood education and care and tertiary education. In Korea, private sources accounted for 18% of total expenditure in pre-primary institutions, slightly higher than the OECD average of 17%. At tertiary level, 60% of expenditure comes from private sources in Korea, compared to 30% on average across OECD countries.
- Tuition fees for bachelor's programmes at public institutions in Korea are the eighth-highest among the 27 countries with available data. National students were charged USD 4 792 per year for a bachelor's degree in 2019, which is 13% lower than they were charged on average in 2009.
- Across most OECD countries, socio-economic status influences learning outcomes more than gender and immigrant status. In Korea, the proportion of children from the bottom quartile of the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) achieving at least PISA level 2 in reading in 2018 was 18% lower than that of children from the top ESCS quartile, a smaller share than the OECD average of 29%.
- International student mobility at the tertiary level has risen steadily reaching about 98 900 students in Korea and representing 3% of tertiary students in 2019. The largest share of foreign tertiary students studying in Korea comes from China. Students from low and lower-middle income countries are generally less likely to study abroad. In 2019, they represented 29% of international students in OECD countries, compared to 33% in Korea.
- Large differences in educational attainment may lead to starker earnings inequality in many countries. In Korea, 23% of 25-64 year-old adults with below upper secondary attainment earned at or below half the median earnings in 2019, below the OECD average of 27%.

Gender inequalities in education and outcomes

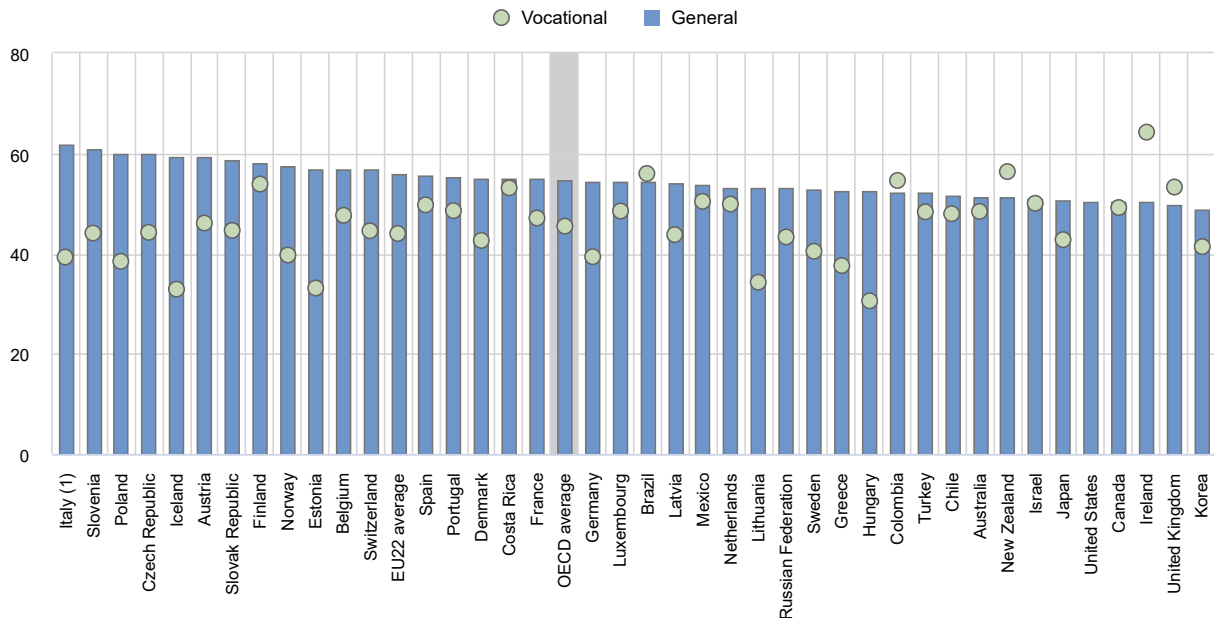
- In Korea, a negligible percentage of students in lower and upper secondary initial education repeated a grade in 2019, compared to 1.9% and 3.0% respectively on average across OECD countries.
- Men are more likely than women to pursue a vocational track at upper secondary level in most OECD countries. This is also the case in Korea, where 59% of upper secondary vocational graduates in 2019 were men (compared to the OECD average of 55%). Women are generally more likely to graduate from upper secondary general programmes. In Korea, women represent 49% of graduates from upper secondary general programmes, compared to 55% on average across OECD countries (Figure 1).
- Tertiary education has been expanding in the last decades, and, in 2020, 25-34 year-old women were more likely than men to achieve tertiary education in all OECD countries. In Korea, 76% of

25-34 year-old women had a tertiary qualification in 2020 compared to 64% of their male peers, while on average across OECD countries the shares were 52% among young women and 39% among young men.

- Gender differences in the distribution of tertiary entrants across fields of study are significant. Women tend to be under-represented in certain fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) across most OECD countries. On average, 26% of new entrants in engineering, manufacturing and construction and 20% in information and communication technologies were women in 2019. In Korea, women represented 21% of new entrants in engineering, manufacturing and construction programmes and 27% in information and communication technologies. In contrast, they represented 76% of new entrants to the field of education, a sector traditionally dominated by women. In Korea, men represent 38% of teachers across all levels of education, compared to 30% on average across OECD countries.
- Young women are less likely to be employed than young men, particularly those with lower levels of education. Only 48% of 25-34 year-old women with below upper secondary attainment were employed in 2020 compared to 76% of men in Korea. This gender difference is slightly larger than the average across OECD countries, where 43% of women and 69% of men with below upper secondary attainment are employed.
- In nearly all OECD countries and at all levels of educational attainment, 25-64 year-old women earn less than their male peers: their earnings correspond to 76%-78% of men's earnings on average across OECD countries. This proportion varies more across educational attainment levels within countries than on average across OECD countries. Compared to other education levels, women with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education in Korea have the lowest earnings relative to men with a similar education level, earning 70% as much, while those with below upper secondary education earn 75% as much.
- On average across OECD countries with available data, 25-64 year-old women tend to participate slightly more in adult learning than men of the same age. In Korea, 46% of women participated in formal and/or non-formal education and training in 2016, compared to 54% of men. Family reasons were reported as barriers to participation in formal and/or non-formal education and training by 28% of women compared to 2% of men.

Figure 1. Share of women among upper secondary graduates, by programme orientation (2019)

In per cent



1. Includes post-secondary non-tertiary level.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the share of women in general programmes.

Source: OECD (2021). Table B3.1. See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2021_Annex3_ChapterB.pdf).

Cross-regional disparities in education

- National level data often hide important regional inequalities in children's access and participation to education. In general, inequalities across regions tend to widen at non-compulsory levels of education. For example, in the majority of countries, the variation in enrolment rate of 3-5 year-olds is often greater than the variation among 6-14 year-olds. This is the case in Korea, where the enrolment rate of 3-5 year-olds varies from 86% in the region of Seoul to 99% in the region of Jeollabuk-do (although many 3-5 year-olds attend private institutions which are not covered under the ISCED classification) whereas the enrolment of 6-14 year-olds varies from 97% to 100% across regions. Similarly, the enrolment rate of 15-19 year-olds varies from 67% to 100% in Korea.

COVID-19: 18 months into the pandemic

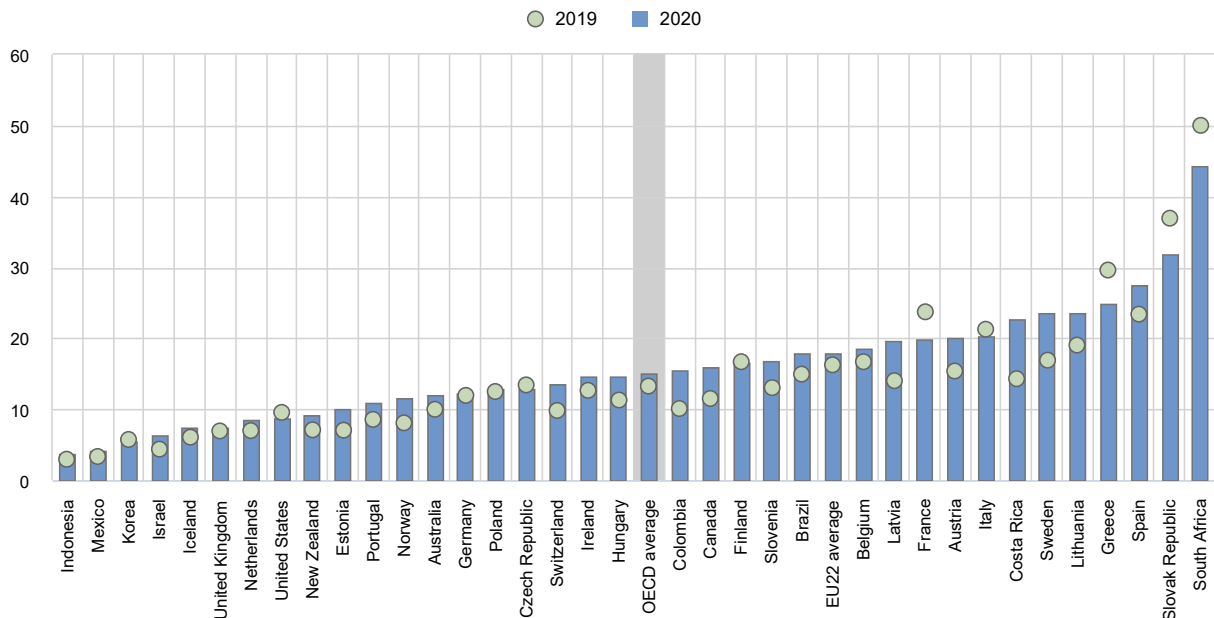
- The spread of COVID-19 has continued to impede access to in-person education in many countries around the world in 2021. By mid-May 2021, 37 OECD and partner countries had experienced periods of full school closure since the start of 2020.
- The number of instructional days when schools were fully closed since the start of 2020 due to the pandemic (excluding school holidays planned before the pandemic, public holidays and weekends) varies significantly between countries and increases with the level of education. In Korea, pre-primary, primary and lower secondary general schools were fully closed for 59 days, and upper secondary general schools for 54 days between 1 January 2020 and 20 May 2021. These days

correspond to the first period of school closure in Korea. The Korean government implemented full school closure in 2020 as an initial response to preventing the spread of COVID-19. In comparison, respective closures were 55, 78, 92 and 101 days on average across the OECD.

- The impact of COVID-19 and school closures on educational equity has been a concern for many countries. 30 out of the 36 OECD and partner countries surveyed, including Korea, declared that additional measures were taken to support the education of children who might face additional barriers to learning during the pandemic. 22 of these countries, including Korea, stated that they had subsidised devices for students to help them access education. Measures to encourage disadvantaged or vulnerable students to return to school after closures were also implemented in 29 OECD and partner countries, including in Korea.
- Countries have faced difficult decisions on how to best manage their resources to ensure that students can continue to access quality education in the safest possible conditions and to minimise disruption to learning. Before the pandemic, total public expenditure on primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education in Korea reached 3.2% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2018, which was similar to the OECD average. About two-thirds of OECD and partner countries reported increases in the funding allocated to primary and secondary schools to help them cope with the crisis in 2020. Compared to the previous year, Korea reported no change in the fiscal year education budget for primary and lower secondary general education in both 2020 and 2021.
- 20 OECD and partner countries, including Korea, stated that the allocation of additional public funds to support the educational response to the pandemic in primary and secondary schools was based on the number of students or classes. At the same time, 16 countries targeted additional funds at socio-economically disadvantaged students as a way to ensure that resources targeted those that needed them the most, and Korea left the decision to the discretion of schools and local-level governance.
- Countries' approach to prioritise teachers in vaccination campaigns against COVID-19 has varied. In total, 19 OECD and partner countries, including Korea, have prioritised at least some teachers as part of the government's plans to vaccinate the population on a national level (as of 20 May 2021).
- The impact of the pandemic on the economy has raised concerns about the prospects of young adults, especially those leaving education earlier than others. In Korea, the unemployment rate among 25-34 year-olds with below upper secondary attainment was 5.6% in 2020, a similar rate as the previous year. In comparison, the average youth unemployment rate of 15.1% in 2020 across OECD countries represented an increase of 2 percentage points from 2019 (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Trends in unemployment rates of 25-34 year-olds with below upper secondary attainment (2019 and 2020)

In per cent



Compare your country: <https://www.compareyourcountry.org/education-at-a-glance-2021/en/2/3044+3045+3046/trend//OAVG>

Countries are ranked in ascending order of the unemployment rate of 25-34 year-olds with below upper secondary attainment in 2020.

Source: OECD (2021), Table A3.3. See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2021_Annex3_ChapterA.pdf).

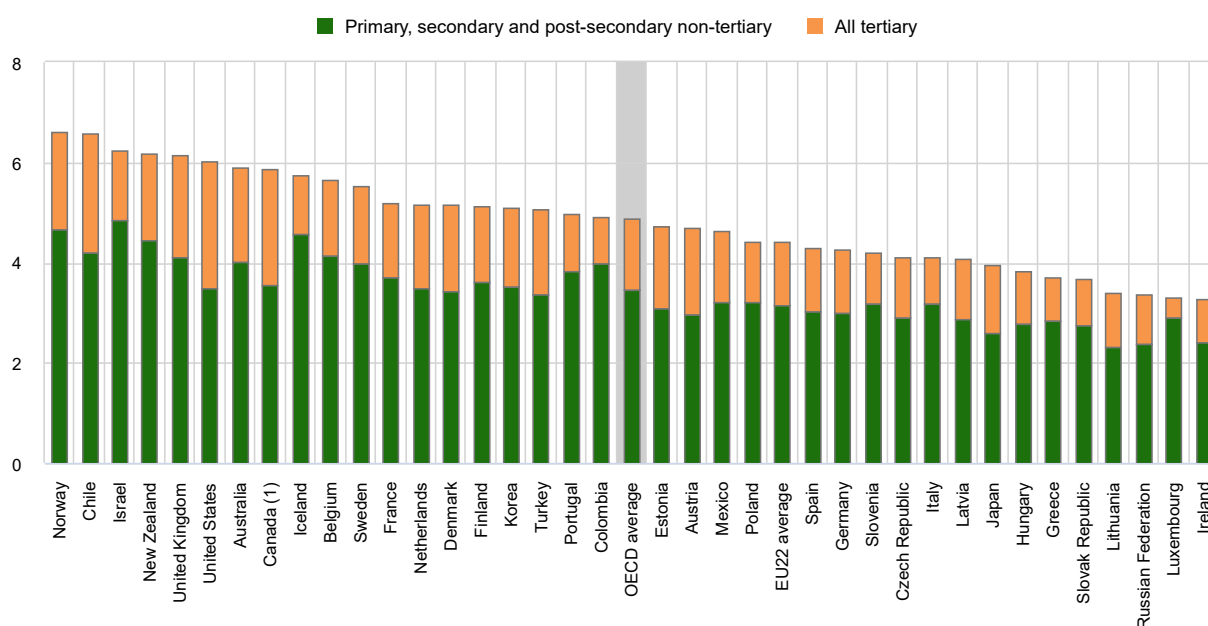
Investing in education

- Annual expenditure per student on educational institutions provides an indication of the investment countries make on each student. After accounting for public-to-private transfers, public expenditure on primary to tertiary educational institutions per full-time student in Korea was USD 9 504 in 2018 (in equivalent USD converted using PPPs for GDP) compared to USD 10 000 on average across OECD countries.
- The provision of education across public and private institutions influences the allocation of resources between levels of education and types of institution. In 2018, Korea spent USD 13 794 per student at primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education, USD 3 340 higher than the OECD average of USD 10 454. At tertiary level, Korea invested USD 11 290 per student, USD 5 775 less than the OECD average. Expenditure per student on public educational institutions is higher than on private institutions on average across OECD countries. This is also the case in Korea, where total expenditure on primary to tertiary public institutions amounts to USD 14 536 per student, compared to USD 10 365 on private institutions.
- The share of national wealth devoted to educational institutions is higher in Korea than on average among OECD countries. In 2018, Korea spent 5.1% of its GDP on primary to tertiary educational institutions, which is 0.2 percentage points higher than the OECD average. Across all levels of education, Korea devoted a slightly above-average share of GDP than the OECD average (Figure 3).

- The share of capital costs on total expenditure on educational institutions is higher than the OECD average at primary to tertiary level in Korea. At primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary level, capital costs account for 15% of total spending on educational institutions, 7 percentage points above the OECD average (8%). At the tertiary level, capital costs represent 10%, slightly lower than the average across OECD countries of 11%.
- Compensation of teachers and other staff employed in educational institutions represents the largest share of current expenditure from primary to tertiary education. In 2018, Korea allocated 71% of its current expenditure to staff compensation, compared to 74% on average across OECD countries. Staff compensation tends to make up a smaller share of current expenditure on tertiary institutions due to the higher costs of facilities and equipment at this level. In Korea, staff compensation represents 61% of current expenditure on tertiary institutions compared to 76% at non-tertiary levels. On average across OECD countries, the share is 68% at tertiary level and 77% at non-tertiary level.

Figure 3. Total expenditure on educational institutions as a percentage of GDP (2018)

In per cent



Compare your country: <https://www.compareyourcountry.org/education-at-a-glance-2021/en/5/3059+3060+3061+3062+3063+3064/default>

1. Primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education includes pre-primary programmes.

Countries are ranked in descending order of total expenditure on educational institutions as a percentage of GDP.

Source: OECD (2021), Table C2.1. See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2021_Annex3_ChapterC.pdf).

Working conditions of school teachers

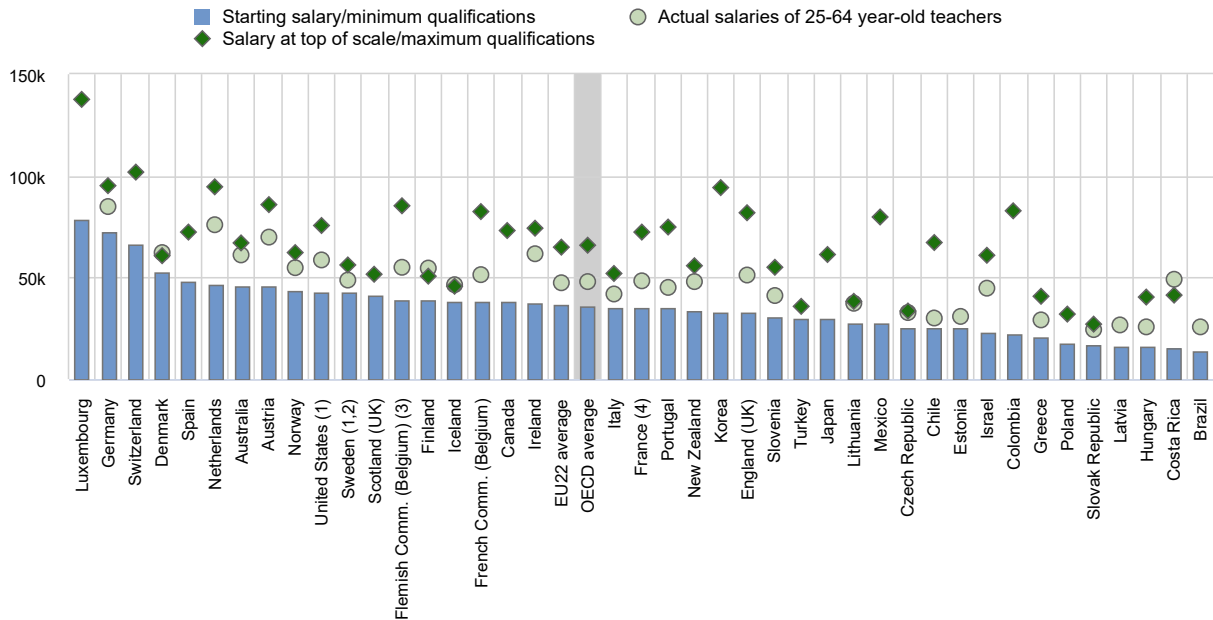
- The salaries of school staff, and in particular teachers and school heads, represent the largest single expenditure in formal education. Their salary levels also have an impact on the attractiveness of the teaching profession. In most OECD countries and economies, statutory salaries of teachers (and school heads) in public educational institutions increase with the level of

education they teach, and also with experience. On average, statutory salaries of teachers with maximum qualifications at the top of their salary scales (maximum salaries) were between 86% and 91% higher than those of teachers with the minimum qualifications at the start of their career (minimum salaries) at pre-primary (ISCED 02), primary and general lower and upper secondary levels in 2020. In Korea, maximum salaries were 181% to 193% higher than minimum salaries at each level of education (Figure 4). However, most teachers were paid between these minimum and maximum salaries.

- Between 2005 and 2020, the statutory salaries of teachers with 15 years of experience and the most prevalent qualifications increased (at constant prices) by 2% to 3% at primary and general lower and upper secondary levels, on average across OECD countries with data for all reference years, despite a decrease of salaries following the 2008 financial crisis. In Korea, teachers' salaries at these levels increased by 10%-11%.
- 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: it ranged from 989 hours at pre-primary level (ISCED 02), to 791 hours at primary level, 723 hours at lower secondary level (general programmes) and 685 hours at upper secondary level (general programmes) in 2020. In Korea, teachers teach 778 hours per year at pre-primary level, 680 hours per year at primary level, 513 hours at lower secondary level (general programmes) and 539 hours at upper secondary level (general programmes).
- During their working time, teachers also perform various tasks other than teaching itself such as lesson planning and preparation, marking students' work and communicating or co-operating with parents or guardians. At the lower secondary level, teachers in Korea spend 34% of their statutory working time on teaching, compared to 44% on average among countries with available data.
- In primary and secondary education, about 35% of teachers are at least 50 years old on average across OECD countries and may 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 2019, 15% of primary teachers in Korea were at least 50 years old, which was lower than the OECD average of 33%. On average across OECD countries, the proportion of teachers aged at least 50 years old increases with higher levels of education taught, to 36% in lower secondary education and 40% in upper secondary education. In Korea, this proportion varies from 29% at lower secondary level to 30% at upper secondary level.

Figure 4. Lower secondary teachers' average actual salaries compared to the statutory starting and top of the scale salaries (2020)

Annual statutory salaries of teachers in public institutions, in equivalent USD converted using PPPs



Compare your country: <https://www.compareyourcountry.org/education-at-a-glance-2021/en/7/all/default>

Note: Actual salaries include bonuses and allowances.

1. Actual base salaries.
2. Salaries at the top of the scale and the minimum qualifications, instead of the maximum qualifications.
3. Salaries at the top of the scale and the most prevalent qualifications, instead of the maximum qualifications.
4. Includes the average of fixed bonuses for overtime hours.

Countries and economies are ranked in descending order of starting salaries for lower secondary teachers with the minimum qualifications.

Source: OECD (2021), Table D3.3 and Education at a Glance Database, <http://stats.oecd.org>. See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2021_Annex3_ChapterD.pdf).

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More information

For more information on Education at a Glance 2021 and to access the full set of Indicators, see: <https://doi.org/10.1787/b35a14e5-en>

For more information on the methodology used during the data collection for each indicator, the references to the sources and the specific notes for each country, see Annex 3 (https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2021_Annex3.pdf).

For general information on the 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.

Data on subnational regions for selected indicators are available in the *OECD Regional Statistics* (database) (OECD, 2021). When interpreting the results on subnational entities, readers should take into account that the population size of subnational entities can vary widely within countries. For example, regional variation in enrolment may be influenced by students attending school in a different region from their area of residence, particularly at higher levels of education. Also, regional disparities tend to be higher when more subnational entities are used in the analysis.

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The data on educational responses during COVID-19 were collected and processed by the OECD based on the Survey on Joint National Responses to COVID-19 School Closures, a collaborative effort conducted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS); the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); the World Bank; and the OECD.

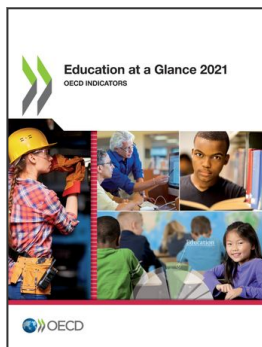
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