

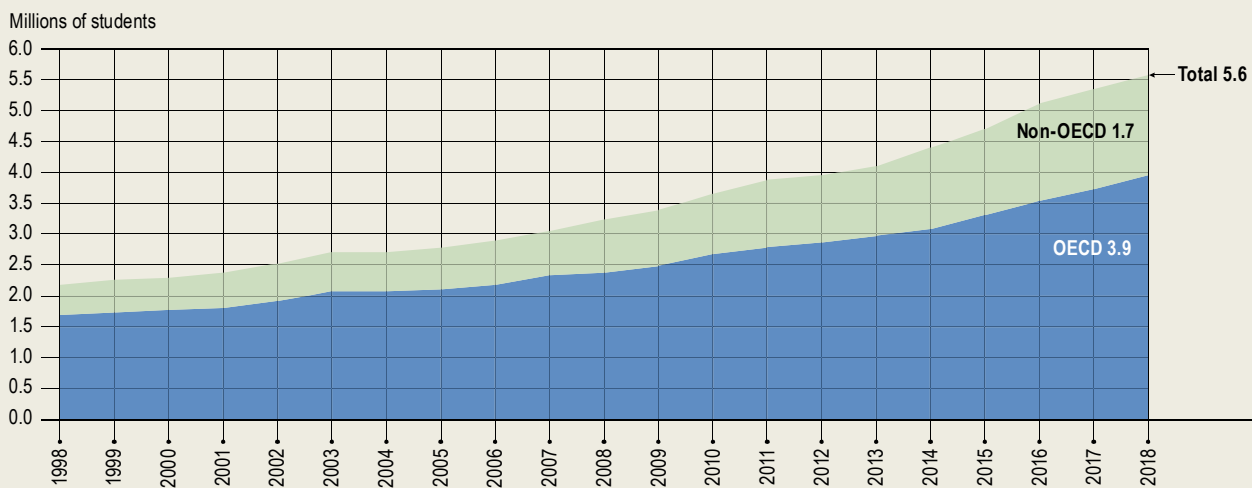
Indicator B6. What is the profile of internationally mobile students?

Highlights

- The number of international and foreign tertiary students has grown on average by 4.8% per year between 1998 and 2018. Even though OECD countries host the great majority of international and foreign students, the fastest growth has been among internationally mobile students enrolled in non-OECD countries.
- In 2018, there were three international or foreign students for each national student studying abroad across OECD countries, but this ratio exceeds 10:1 in Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States.
- In total, women in OECD countries are about as likely as men to travel abroad for a bachelor's or master's degree or equivalent, but less likely to do so to enrol in a doctoral or equivalent programme.

Figure B6.1. Growth in international or foreign enrolment in tertiary education worldwide (1998 to 2018)

Number of international or foreign students enrolled in OECD and non-OECD countries



Note: The data sources use similar definitions, thus making their combination possible. Missing data were imputed with the closest data reports to ensure that breaks in data coverage do not result in breaks in time series

Source: OECD/UIS/Eurostat (2020). Other non-OECD countries and years prior to 2013: UNESCO Institute for Statistics. See *Source* section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>).

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Context

Studying abroad has become a key differentiating experience for young adults enrolled in tertiary education, and international student mobility has received increasing policy attention in recent years. Studying abroad is an opportunity to access high-quality education, acquire skills that may not be taught at home and get closer to labour markets that offer higher returns on education. Studying abroad is also seen as a way to improve employability in increasingly globalised labour markets. Other motivations include the desire to expand knowledge of other societies and to improve language skills, particularly English.

For host countries, mobile students (whether international or foreign) may be an important source of income and have a disproportionate impact on their economic and innovation systems. They often pay higher tuition fees than domestic students (see Indicator C5) and, in some countries, incur higher registration fees. They also contribute to the local economy through their living expenses. In the longer run, highly educated mobile students are likely to integrate into domestic labour markets, contributing to innovation and economic performance. Attracting mobile students, especially if they stay permanently, is therefore a way to tap into a global pool of talent, compensate for weaker capacity at lower educational levels, support the development of innovation and production systems and, in many countries, to mitigate the impact of an ageing population on future skills supply.

For their countries of origin, mobile students might be viewed as lost talent (or “brain drain”). However, mobile students can contribute to knowledge absorption, technology upgrading and capacity building in their home country, provided they return home after their studies or maintain strong links with nationals at home. Mobile students gain tacit knowledge that is often shared through direct personal interactions and can enable their home country to integrate into global knowledge networks. Some research suggests that numbers of students overseas are a good predictor of future scientist flows in the opposite direction, providing evidence of a significant movement of skilled labour across nations. In addition, student mobility appears to shape international scientific co-operation networks more deeply than either a common language or geographical or scientific proximity.

In 2020, higher education institutions around the world closed down to control the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic potentially affecting more than 3.9 million international and foreign students studying in OECD countries (UNESCO, 2020^[1]). The imposed lockdown has affected the continuity of learning and the delivery of course material, as well as students’ perceptions about the value of their degree and their host country’s capacity to look out for their safety and well-being. These changes could have dire consequences on international student mobility in the coming years (Box B6.1).

Other findings

- Students from Asia form the largest group of international or foreign students in tertiary education at all levels, accounting for 57% of all mobile students across the OECD in 2018. Together, the People’s Republic of China and India contribute more than 30% of all mobile students enrolled in OECD countries.
- The United States is the top OECD destination for international students. It accounts for 18% of the global education market share, followed by Australia and the United Kingdom (8% each), and Germany (6%).
- In total across OECD countries, the fields studied by mobile students share a similar pattern to those studied by national ones, with the largest share entering the broad field of business, administration and law, followed by engineering, manufacturing and construction.

Analysis

Trends in international student mobility

International student mobility has been expanding quite consistently in the past twenty years. In 2018, 5.6 million tertiary students worldwide had crossed a border to study, more than twice the number in 2005. Many factors at the individual, institutional, national and global levels drive patterns of international student mobility. These include personal ambitions and aspirations for better employment prospects, a lack of high-quality higher education institutions at home, the capacity of higher education institutions abroad to attract talent, and government policies to encourage cross-border mobility for education (Bhandari, Robles and Farrugia, 2018^[2]). The needs of increasingly knowledge-based and innovation-driven economies have spurred demand for tertiary education worldwide, while rising wealth in emerging economies has prompted the children of the growing middle classes to seek educational opportunities abroad. At the same time, economic factors (e.g. costs of international flights), technological factors (e.g. the spread of the Internet and social media enabling contacts to be maintained across borders) and cultural factors (e.g. use of English as a common working and teaching language) have contributed to making international study substantially more affordable and easier to access than in the past.

The number of international and foreign tertiary students grew on average by 4.8% per year between 1998 and 2018. Even though OECD countries welcome the great majority of international and foreign students, the number of foreign students enrolled in non-OECD countries has been rising faster: their numbers have grown by 6.2% per year on average compared to 4.3% for international and foreign students in OECD countries. In 2018, foreign students enrolled in non-OECD countries represented about 30% of the global pool of internationally mobile students, compared to 23% in 1998 (Figure B6.1).

The growth rate of international or foreign students has fluctuated greatly in the past two decades, for both groups of students, however it has varied more for students from non-OECD countries than from OECD ones. Between 1998 and 2018, the annual growth rate of mobile students in non-OECD countries varied from 0.3% in 2004 to 19% in 2008. In contrast, the annual growth in mobile students in OECD countries fluctuated between 0.7% and 8% over the same period. However, the growth of international and foreign students in non-OECD countries has been slowing down in recent years. Since 2017, their yearly growth rate dropped below 3%, the lowest rate since 2013, and less than half the yearly growth rate of international and foreign students in OECD countries over this period (Figure B6.1).

Despite strong increases in the total number of international and foreign students worldwide, their relative concentration has remained fairly stable, increasing from 5% of all tertiary students in 2014 to 6% in 2018 in total across OECD countries. While their share increased in most OECD countries over this period, there are striking differences across countries: the share of international or foreign students increased by 6 percentage points or more in Australia and Estonia between 2014 and 2018, while it declined by 1 percentage point in Belgium and Greece. In about one-third of OECD countries, international students accounted for more than 10% of enrolled tertiary students in 2018. At least 20% of tertiary students in Australia, Luxembourg and New Zealand are international or foreign, compared to 2% or less in Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, and Turkey (Table B6.1).

Mobility patterns and international student flows

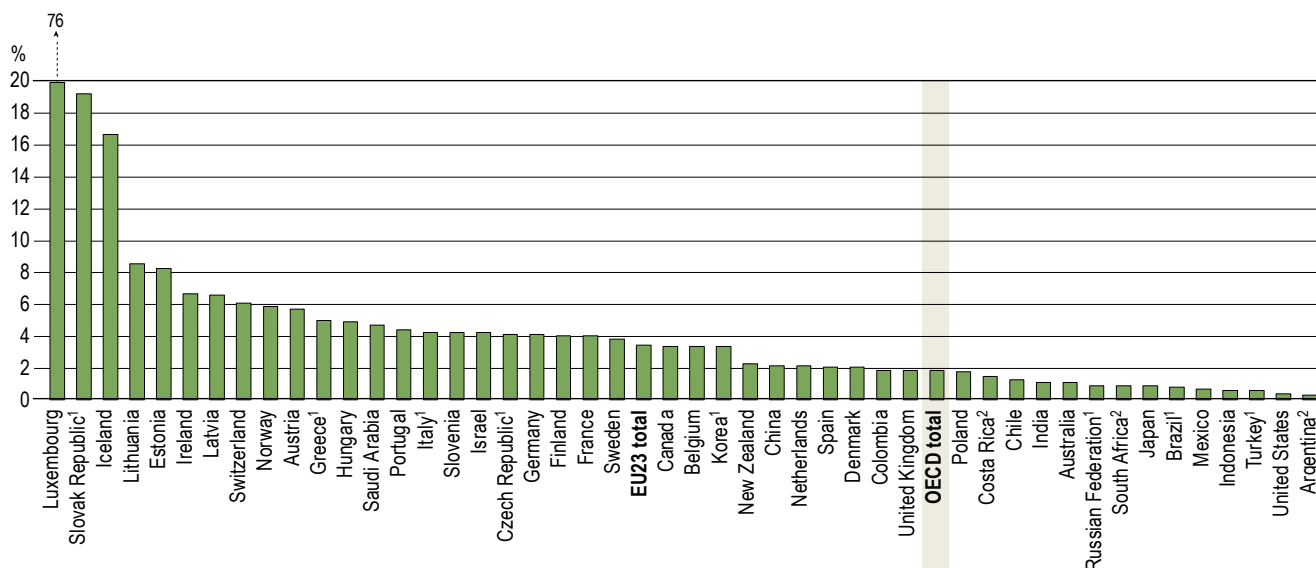
The pools and flows of mobile talent remain very concentrated worldwide, and mobility pathways are deeply rooted in historical patterns. Identifying the determinants of international student mobility is key to designing efficient policies to encourage the movement of skilled labour. Student migration is mainly driven by differentials in education capacity (a lack of educational facilities in the country of origin or the prestige of educational institutions in the country of destination). It is also driven by differences in the returns to or rewards for education and skills in origin and destination countries (see Indicators A3 and A4). Economic factors include better economic performance in the host country, exchange rates, more affordable mobility (due to lower tuition fees or higher education subsidies, for instance) and higher-quality education in the host country. In addition, the decision to study abroad may be determined by non-economic factors, such as political stability or cultural and religious similarities between origin and destination countries (Guha, 1977^[3]; UNESCO Bangkok, 2013^[4]; Weisser, 2016^[5]).

The perceived quality of instruction abroad and the perceived value of host institutions are key criteria for international students when choosing where to study (Abbott and Silles, 2016^[6]). Top destinations for internationally mobile students include a large number of top-ranked higher education institutions. Students worldwide are increasingly aware of differences in quality among tertiary education systems, as university league tables and other international university rankings are widely disseminated. At the same time, the ability to attract international students has become a criterion for assessing the

performance and quality of institutions. As governments seek to encourage the internationalisation of higher education, they have revised performance agreements with domestic institutions, for example by taking into account inflows of international students in university funding formulas. In Finland, for example, the internationalisation of higher education is one of the dimensions considered for the funding of tertiary institutions, along with quality and impact measures (Eurydice, 2020^[7]). Similarly, in Estonia and Norway, the share of foreign or international students is an indicator used to determine the level of block grant funding allocated to tertiary institutions (OECD, 2019^[8]).

Most countries have implemented reforms aiming to lower the barriers to migration of highly skilled individuals, beyond the purposes of education, and most countries operate funding programmes to support inward, outward or return mobility. While the conditions of migration differ (e.g. short-term versus long-term settlement), the most common target for these programmes are pre-doctoral students and early stage researchers (both doctoral and postdoctoral). Although setting appropriate tuition fees remains one of the most debated topics in education policy, setting higher fees for international students is less politically controversial and often constitutes an important revenue stream for higher education institutions. In some countries, international students in public universities pay twice as much for tuition as national students, attracted by the perceived quality of the education and potential labour-market prospects in their host country. In contrast, some countries may seek to promote international mobility within a region by reducing or eliminating fees. Students from the European Economic Area can study in any other country within this area, paying the same tuition fees as national students (see Indicator C5).

Figure B6.2. Share of national tertiary students enrolled abroad (2018)



1. National tertiary students are calculated as total enrolment minus foreign students instead of total enrolment minus international students.

2. Year of reference 2017.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the percentage of national students enrolled abroad.

Source: OECD/UIS/Eurostat (2020). See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>).

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In total across OECD countries, 2% of national tertiary students were enrolled abroad in 2018. Iceland, Luxembourg and the Slovak Republic have the highest share of national tertiary students enrolled abroad for their degree, reaching 76% in Luxembourg (Figure B6.2). Factors such as proximity, language, historical ties, geographical distance, bilateral relationships and political framework conditions (e.g. the European Higher Education Area) are key determinants in selecting a country in which to study (Abbott and Silles, 2016^[6]). For example, the largest share of mobile students from the Slovak Republic study in the Czech Republic, those from Luxembourg study in Germany or Belgium, while those from Iceland are more likely to head to Denmark (Table B6.5, available on line).

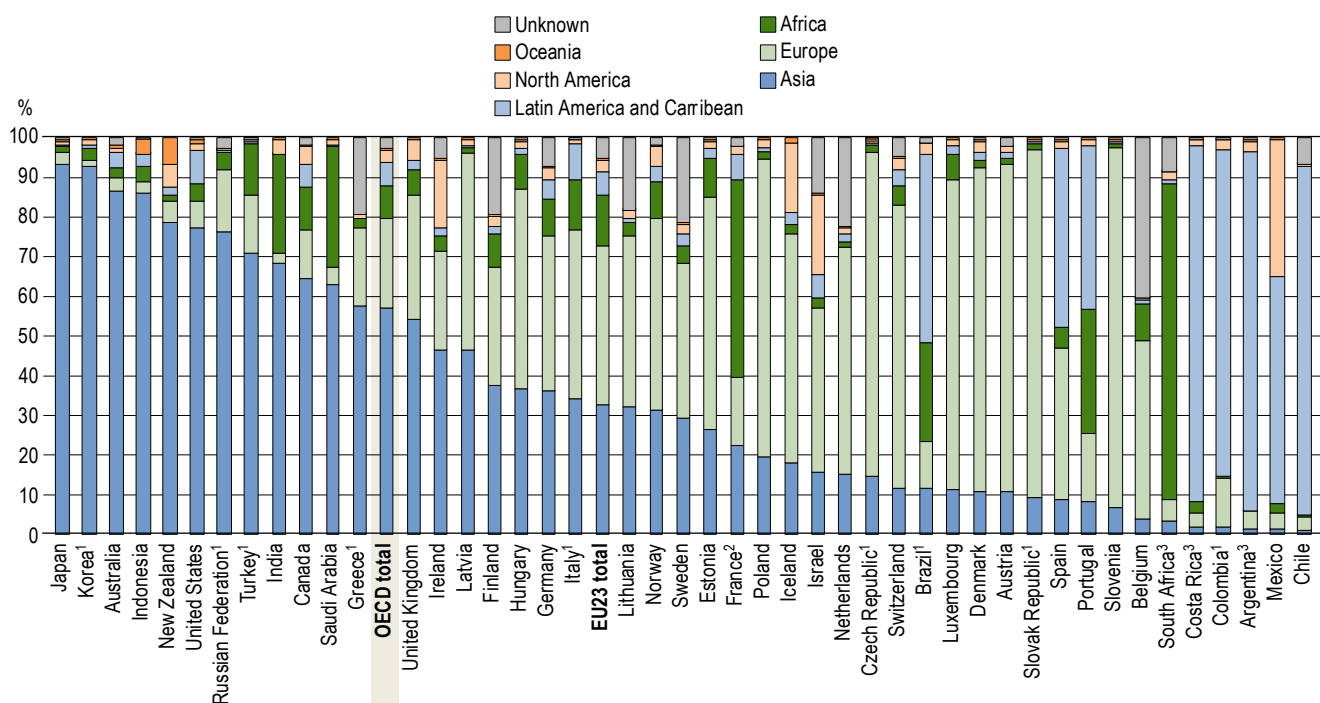
Most countries are net “importers” of students, that is, they have more students coming into the country to study than leave to study abroad. In total across OECD countries in 2018, there were three international students for each national student

studying abroad, but this ratio exceeds ten in Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States. In contrast, a number of countries are net “exporters” of students, that is, more students travel abroad to study than they receive. Chile, Colombia, Luxembourg and Mexico are among the OECD countries with the lowest ratios of international or foreign students to national student abroad. Among partner countries, China and India, who together are responsible for more than 30% of the pool of international students, are also net exporters of talent (Table B6.3).

By country of destination and origin

English is the *lingua franca* of the globalised world, with one in four people using it worldwide (Sharifian, 2013^[9]). Not surprisingly, English-speaking countries are the most attractive student destinations overall, with four countries receiving more than 40% of all internationally mobile students in OECD and partner countries. The United States is the top OECD destination country for international tertiary students. Of the 3.9 million international students in OECD countries, 987 000 are enrolled in programmes in the United States. Among the English-speaking countries, after the United States, the United Kingdom accounts for 452 000 international students, Australia 445 000 and Canada 225 000 (Table B6.1). As a destination country, the United States alone accounts for 18% of the global education market share. Australia and the United Kingdom each have 8% of the global market share, while Germany has 6% (Table B6.3).

Figure B6.3. Distribution of international and foreign students by region of origin (2018)



1. Share of foreign rather than international students.

2. The share of students by country of origin is based on citizenship criteria, while their total number is based on the country of upper secondary education.

3. Year of reference 2017.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the percentage of international or foreign students from Asia.

Source: OECD/UISEurostat (2020). See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>).

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The European Union is another key geographical area for inward mobility, with 1.7 million mobile students enrolled in the 23 OECD countries that are also members of the EU (EU23). After the United Kingdom and Germany, France is also a major EU host country, accounting for 4% of global international students. The Russian Federation is another major destination country outside of the EU, with 5% of global mobile students (Table B6.3).

Students from Asia form the largest group of international students enrolled in tertiary education programmes at all levels, totalling 57% of all mobile students across the OECD in 2018. In total over 30% of mobile students in OECD countries come from China and India. More than two-thirds of Chinese and Indian students are concentrated in only five countries: Australia, Canada, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States. Europe is the next largest region of origin, with European international students making up 23% of all mobile students enrolled in OECD countries. European students prefer to stay in Europe, accounting for 40% of mobile students enrolled in the EU23 countries. At least 8 out of 10 mobile students in Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia come from other European countries (Figure B6.3 and Table B6.4, available on line)

Among OECD and partner countries, students from African countries only make up the majority of mobile students in South Africa, where 80% of mobile students are from other African countries, although they account for more than 3 out of 10 mobile students in Portugal and Saudi Arabia and about 5 out of 10 in France. Student flows from Latin America and the Caribbean highlight the importance of proximity, as they make up the majority of mobile students in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica and Mexico. They also highlight the importance of the language of study: more than 40% of mobile students in Portugal and Spain come from this region. Finally, North American students represent more than 10% of international enrolment only in Iceland, Ireland, Israel and Mexico, while students from Oceania are a minority of international students in all OECD and partner countries, making up less than 1% of mobile students in OECD destination countries (Figure B6.3).

Box B6.1. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on international student mobility flows

The global spread of the coronavirus pandemic has brought tertiary education in OECD countries to a standstill as universities have closed down their premises and countries have shut their borders in response to government lockdown measures. While the crisis has affected all tertiary students, it has had a severe impact on the internationalisation of higher education. In particular, the crisis has affected the safety and legal status of international students in their host country, the continuity of learning and the delivery of course material, and students' perception of the value of their degree, all of which could potentially have dire consequences for international student mobility in the coming years.

International students were particularly badly hit at the start of the lockdown as they have had to sort out the implications of university closures on their status on campus and within their host country. Students have had to decide whether to return home (funding permitting) with limited information of when they might return, or remain in their host country with restricted employment and education opportunities, all while sorting out their visa status. Some countries, such as Canada or the United Kingdom, have offered leniency around visa rules, or the possibility to remain on campus (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2020^[10]) (UKCISA, 2020^[11]) but this has not been the case everywhere. The varying approach across institutions and countries has captured the complexity of ensuring accountability over the well-being and safety of international students in a globalised higher education market.

To ensure the continuity of education despite the lockdown, higher education institutions have sought to use technology and offer online classes and learning experiences as a substitute for in-class time. Although many higher education institutions offered online courses before the pandemic, few students considered it as a sole alternative to physical in-person learning. For example, in the United States, only 13% of first-cycle tertiary students were exclusively enrolled in distance education courses in 2017 (NCES, 2019^[12]). Now with reopening for the coming academic year severely compromised and travel likely to remain restricted even after the confinement period, international students are being forced to face and deal with the reality of online learning.

Beyond the transactional learning experience, students are also losing out on other benefits of international mobility such as international exposure, access to a foreign job market, and networking. A survey of EU students studying in the United Kingdom found that the main reasons for choosing to study abroad were to broaden their horizons/experience other cultures, improve their labour-market prospects and improve their competence in English (West, 2000^[13]). Similarly, the opportunity to live abroad, learn or improve a foreign language and meet new people, were among the three first reasons cited among students participating in the EU-ERASMUS programme (European Commission, 2014^[14]).

A decrease in the share of international students may have severe repercussions on the funding model of some higher education institutions, as international students often pay higher tuition fees than domestic ones. Countries, such as Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States, that rely heavily on international students with differentiated

fees will suffer the highest losses. For instance, at the bachelor's or equivalent level, public institutions in Australia, Canada and the United States charged foreign students over USD 13 800 more per year on average than national ones in 2017/18 (see Indicator C5). Given the large share of international students in these countries, international student inflows provide an important source of revenue to tertiary institutions. In Australia, the estimated revenue from foreign students' tuition fees exceeds one-quarter of the total expenditure on tertiary educational institutions (OECD, 2017^[15]). Overall, doctoral programmes will be particularly affected, as one in five students in these programmes are international. While the investment in a tertiary degree still pays off over a lifetime, students may start to question the value of paying high fees to study abroad in uncertain times, particularly if that learning is to happen on line and they are no longer able to benefit from networking and access to a foreign labour market. Students are already demanding a partial refund of their tuition fees and many institutions have made pro-rata refunds on room and board, or have offered fee deferrals. With the enrolment of international students for the next academic year severely compromised, this will cut into universities' bottom line, affecting not only their core education services, but also the financial support they provide domestic students, as well as research and development activities.

The financial losses are not limited to higher education institutions. Countries have traditionally relied on international student mobility to facilitate the immigration of foreign talent and contribute to both knowledge production and innovation nationally. Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, for example, have reduced barriers to the migration of highly qualified students, facilitating their entry into the labour market after graduation (OECD, 2019^[16]) (OECD, 2016^[17]). The decline in international mobility in these countries risks affecting productivity in advanced sectors related to innovation and research in coming years.

Higher education has often been considered a refuge in periods of low employment, enabling adults to develop their skills. In contrast to previous economic downturns, the lockdown measures of this current crisis has affected the delivery of learning and the experience of studying abroad in ways that extend well beyond the classroom. It has also raised awareness on the vulnerability of international students in times of crisis. All of this is likely to influence the value students perceive they will get from their degree in relation to the price they are willing to pay. As a result, international student mobility is expected to decline in the coming years as students reassess their options. Faced with these challenges, higher education institutions will need to develop a new value proposition that reassesses the quality of learning and delivery mechanisms in the classroom, and that address the needs of an international student population that may be less willing to cross borders for the sole purpose of study.

Profile of internationally mobile students

By level of education

Students are more likely to travel abroad for more advanced education programmes. In all but a few countries, the share of international students enrolled in tertiary programmes increases gradually with education level. In total across OECD countries, international students account for 6% of total enrolment in tertiary programmes. International enrolment in bachelor's or equivalent programmes remains relatively low (below 5% in nearly half of the countries for which data are available). However, a few countries have a more international profile at this level. In Australia, Austria, Luxembourg, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, 15% or more of students at bachelor's level are international (Figure B6.4).

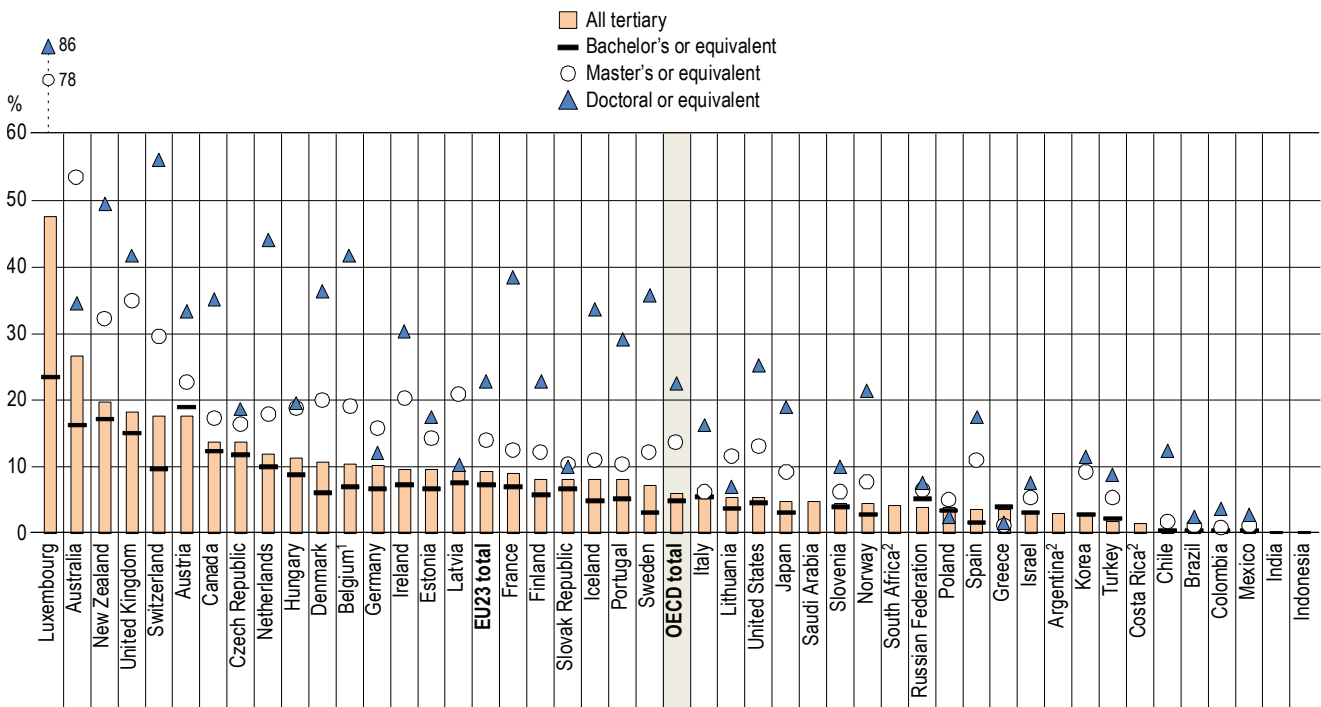
International enrolment increases significantly at master's or equivalent level. In total across the OECD, 13% of students are international or foreign at this level. The proportion of incoming students at least doubles between bachelor's and master's levels in nearly two-thirds of OECD countries. Among countries with more than 1% international or foreign tertiary students, the share of international students in Spain and Sweden is at least four times higher at master's than at bachelor's level. Greece is the only country where the inflow of foreign students at master's level is slightly lower than at bachelor's level (Figure B6.4).

At doctoral or equivalent level, international students represent 22% of enrolled students. The countries with the highest shares are Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands New Zealand, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, which all have 40% or more of their doctoral students coming from abroad. In Luxembourg and Switzerland, there are more international students in doctoral programmes than national students (86% in Luxembourg and 56% in Switzerland). While most countries have higher shares of international students at doctoral than at master's level, a number of countries show the opposite pattern.

This is particularly striking in Australia (53% at master's level and 34% at doctoral level) and Latvia (20% at master's and 10% at doctoral level) (Figure B6.4 and Table B6.1).

Figure B6.4. Incoming student mobility in tertiary education, by level of study (2018)

International or foreign student enrolment as a percentage of total enrolment in tertiary education



Note: All tertiary education includes short-cycle tertiary programmes, which are not presented separately in the figure.

1. Data on short-cycle tertiary programmes are based on nationality and refer to the Flemish community only.

2. Year of reference 2017.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the percentage of international or foreign students in tertiary education.

Source: OECD (2020), Table B6.1. See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>).

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By field of study

Fields of study are a key consideration for students choosing to pursue a tertiary degree abroad. Some countries devote more resources to research in certain fields and therefore benefit from strong international recognition particularly at higher levels of tertiary education. In total across OECD countries, the distribution of fields among mobile students mirrors the distribution among national ones, with in both cases the largest share entering the broad field of business, administration and law, followed by engineering, manufacturing and construction. However, there are also notable exceptions. The field of social sciences, information and journalism attracts 12% of mobile students compared to 9% of national students in total. Similarly, the field of natural sciences, mathematics and statistics attracts 8% of mobile students compared to 5% of national ones. In contrast, internationally mobile students are less likely to enrol in the fields of education and health and welfare than national students in total across the OECD (Table B6.2).

There are also striking differences between countries, highlighting potential specialisations and the attractiveness in some countries for a given field of study. More than half of foreign students in the Slovak Republic entered a health and welfare programme, three times more than the share of national students. In Denmark, Germany and Turkey, the share of international or foreign students entering engineering, manufacturing or construction is 10 percentage points higher than the share among national students. Among countries with the largest share of mobile students, such as Australia, Luxembourg, New Zealand

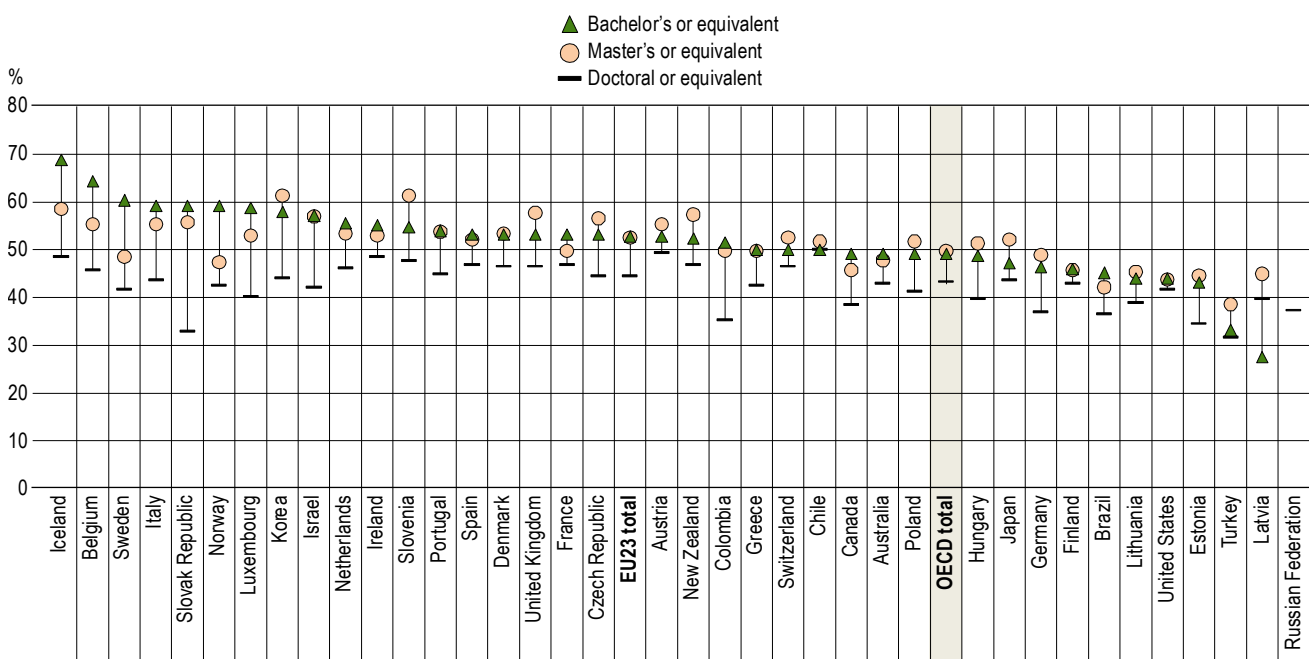
and the United Kingdom, business, administration and law is the most attractive field for international and foreign students (Table B6.2).

By gender

While women outnumber men among entrants and graduates from tertiary education, they are about as likely as men to travel abroad for a bachelor's or master's degree on average across OECD countries. However, they are less likely to do so to enrol in a doctoral programme: at doctoral level, the share of women among mobile students decreases to 43% on average (Figure B6.5).

Across OECD countries, the share of women among mobile students generally decreases with higher tertiary level, and the difference between the share of women among internationally mobile bachelor's and doctoral students exceeds 15 percentage points in about a quarter of them. Only in Latvia is the share of women among mobile doctoral students higher than among mobile bachelor's students. The fall in the share of women among mobile students tends to be more pronounced between master's and doctoral programmes than between bachelor's and master's. While the share of women among mobile students decreases by 6 percentage points between master's and doctoral levels in total across OECD countries, the drop is 15 percentage points or more in Israel, Korea and the Slovak Republic. In contrast, the share of women among mobile students across all three levels of education is very similar in Chile, Finland and the United States although gender parity is only achieved at all three levels in Chile (Figure B6.5).

Figure B6.5. Share of women among international or foreign students, by level of education (2018)



Countries are ranked in descending order of the percentage of women among mobile students enrolled in bachelor's or equivalent programmes.

Source: OECD/UIS/Eurostat (2020). See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>).

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In most countries, the share of women tends to be greater among mobile students enrolled in bachelor's programmes than in any other degree. However the share of women among mobile students also displays the greatest variation across countries at bachelor's level. While 49% of mobile bachelor's students are women in total across OECD countries, this varies from close to 70% in Iceland to less than 30% in Latvia. In master's programmes, the share varies across countries, although to a lesser extent than in bachelor's programmes. In Korea and Slovenia, women account for more than 60% of mobile students in master's programmes, the largest share across all OECD countries, but account for less than 40% in Turkey. At doctoral level, less than half of mobile students are women in all OECD countries except Chile (Figure B6.).

Definitions

Foreign students are those who are not citizens of the country in which they are enrolled and where the data are collected. Although they are counted as internationally mobile, they may be long-term residents or even be born in the “host” country. While pragmatic and operational, this classification may be inappropriate for capturing student mobility because of differing national policies regarding the naturalisation of immigrants. For instance, Australia has a greater propensity than Switzerland to grant permanent residence to its immigrant populations. This implies that even when the proportion of foreign students in tertiary enrolment is similar for both countries, the proportion of international students in tertiary education will be smaller in Switzerland than in Australia. Therefore, for student mobility and bilateral comparisons, interpretations of data based on the concept of foreign students should be made with caution. In general, international students are a subset of foreign students.

International students are those who left their country of origin and moved to another country for the purpose of study. The country of origin of a tertiary student is defined according to the criterion of “country of upper secondary education”, “country of prior education” or “country of usual residence” (see below). Depending on country-specific immigration legislation, mobility arrangements (such as the free mobility of individuals within the European Union and the European Economic Area) and data availability, international students may be defined as students who are not permanent or usual residents of their country of study, or alternatively as students who obtained their prior education in a different country.

Mobile students are students who are either **international** or **foreign**.

National students are students who are not internationally mobile. Their number is computed as the difference between the total number of students in each destination country and the number of international or foreign students.

The **country of prior education** is the country in which students obtained their upper secondary qualification (upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary completion with access to tertiary education programmes) or the qualification required to enrol in their current level of education. Where countries are unable to operationalise this definition, it is recommended that they use the country of usual or permanent residence to determine the country of origin. Where this too is not possible and no other suitable measure exists, the country of citizenship may be used.

Permanent or usual residence in the reporting country is defined according to national legislation. In practice, this means holding a student visa or permit, or electing a foreign country of domicile in the year prior to entering the education system of the country reporting the data.

Country-specific operational definitions of international students are indicated in the tables as well as in Annex 3 (<https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>).

Methodology

Defining and identifying mobile students, as well as their types of learning mobility, are a key challenge for developing international education statistics, since current international and national statistical systems only report domestic educational activities undertaken within national boundaries (OECD, 2018^[18]).

Data on international and foreign students are therefore obtained from enrolments in their countries of destination. This is the same method used for collecting data on total enrolments, i.e. records of regularly enrolled students in an education programme. Students enrolled in countries that did not report to the OECD or to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics are not included and, for their countries of origin, the total number of national students enrolled abroad may be underestimated.

The total number of students enrolled abroad refers to the count of international students, unless data are not available and the count of foreign students is used instead. Enrolment numbers are computed using a snapshot method, i.e. counting enrolled students at a given period of time (e.g. a specific day or period of the year).

This methodology has some limits. OECD international statistics on education tend to overlook the impact of distance and e-learning, especially fast-developing massively online open courses (MOOCs), students who commute from one country to another on a daily basis and short-term exchange programmes that take place within an academic year and are therefore under the radar. Other concerns arise from the classification of students enrolled in foreign campuses and European schools in host countries’ student cohorts.

Current data for international students can only help track student flows involving OECD and partner countries as receiving countries. It is not possible to assess extra-OECD flows and, in particular, the contributions of South-South exchanges to global brain circulation.

For more information, please see the OECD *Handbook for Internationally Comparative Education Statistics 2018: Concepts, Standards, Definitions and Classifications* (OECD, 2018_[18]) and Annex 3 for country-specific notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>).

Source

Data refer to the academic year 2017/18 and are based on the UNESCO-UIS/OECD/EUROSTAT data collection on education statistics administered by the OECD in 2019 (for details, see Annex 3 at <https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>).

The UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) provided data 1) for Argentina, China, India, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and South Africa; 2) for all countries beyond the OECD and partner countries; and 3) for OECD countries for the period not covered by OECD statistics (2005 and 2010-18).

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Indicator B6 Tables

Table B6.1	International and foreign student mobility in tertiary education (2010, 2014 and 2018)
Table B6.2	Distribution of national and international or foreign students by field of study (2018)
Table B6.3	Mobility patterns of foreign and international students (2018)
WEB Table B6.4	<i>Distribution of international and foreign students, by country of origin (2018)</i>
WEB Table B6.5	<i>Distribution of international and foreign students, by country of destination (2018)</i>

Cut-off date for the data: 19 July 2020. Any updates on data can be found on line at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-data-en>. More breakdowns can also be found at <http://stats.oecd.org/>, Education at a Glance Database.

StatLink: <https://doi.org/10.1787/888934163933>

Table B6.1. International and foreign student mobility in tertiary education (2010, 2014 and 2018)

International or foreign student enrolment as a percentage of total tertiary enrolment

Reading the sixth column of the upper section of the table (international): 27% of all students in tertiary education in Australia are international students and 18% of all students in tertiary education in Switzerland are international students.

Reading the sixth column of the lower section of the table (foreign): 3% of all students in tertiary education in Greece are not Greek citizens, and 3% of all students in tertiary education in Korea are not Korean citizens.

	Number of international or foreign students (in thousands)	Share of international or foreign students by level of tertiary education									
		Short-cycle tertiary	Bachelor's or equivalent	Master's or equivalent	Doctoral or equivalent	All tertiary					
						2018			2018	2014	2010
						(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
International students											
OECD Countries	Australia	445	32	16	53	34	27	18	22		
	Austria	75	1	19	22	33	17	15	15		
	Belgium ¹	54	8	7	19	42	10	11	7		
	Canada	225	13	12	17	35	14	10	m		
	Chile	6	0	0	1	12	0	0	m		
	Denmark	33	13	6	20	36	11	10	8		
	Estonia	4	a	7	14	17	10	4	2		
	Finland	24	a	5	12	23	8	7	6		
	France ²	230	3	7	12	38	9	10	m		
	Germany	312	0	7	16	12	10	8	9		
	Hungary	32	1	9	19	19	11	7	5		
	Iceland	1	28	5	11	33	8	7	5		
	Ireland	22	4	7	20	30	10	7	m		
	Israel	11	m	3	5	7	3	3	1		
	Japan	183	8	3	9	19	5	3	m		
	Latvia	8	1	8	20	10	9	5	2		
	Lithuania	6	a	3	11	7	5	3	1		
	Luxembourg	3	10	23	78	86	48	44	m		
	Mexico	7	0	0	1	2	0	0	m		
	Netherlands	105	3	10	17	44	12	10	4		
	New Zealand	53	19	17	32	49	20	19	15		
	Norway	12	1	3	7	21	4	4	3		
	Poland	54	0	3	5	2	4	2	1		
	Portugal	28	3	5	10	29	8	4	3		
	Slovenia	3	2	4	6	10	4	3	2		
	Spain	71	1	1	11	17	3	2	3		
	Sweden	31	0	3	12	36	7	6	7		
	Switzerland	54	0	10	29	56	18	17	17		
United Kingdom	452	4	15	35	41	18	18	16			
United States	987	2	5	13	25	5	4	3			
Foreign students											
	Colombia	5	0	0	1	3	0	0	m		
	Costa Rica ³	3	x(6)	x(6)	x(6)	x(6)	1	m	m		
	Czech Republic	45	5	12	16	18	14	10	m		
	Greece	26	a	4	1	1	3	4	m		
	Italy	107	7	5	6	16	6	5	m		
	Korea	85	1	2	9	11	3	2	2		
	Slovak Republic	12	1	7	10	10	8	6	4		
	Turkey	125	0	2	5	8	2	1	m		
	OECD total	3 939	3	5	13	22	6	5	m		
	Average for countries with available data for all reference years						8	6	5		
	EU23 total	1 738	3	7	14	23	9	8	m		
Foreign students											
Partners	Argentina ³	89	x(6)	x(6)	x(6)	x(6)	3	m	m		
	Brazil	21	0	0	1	2	0	0	0		
	China	178	m	m	m	m	m	m	m		
	India	45	a	x(6)	x(6)	x(6)	0	0			
	Indonesia	8	x(6)	x(6)	x(6)	x(6)	0	m	m		
	Russian Federation	262	1	5	6	7	4	3	2		
	Saudi Arabia	74	x(6)	x(6)	x(6)	x(6)	5	5	m		
South Africa ³	45	x(6)	x(6)	x(6)	x(6)	4	4	m			

1. Data on short-cycle tertiary programmes are based on nationality and refer to the Flemish community only.

2. Break in series between 2017 and 2018. See Annex 3 for more information.

3. Year of reference 2017.

Source: OECD/UIS/Eurostat (2020). See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>).

Please refer to the Reader's Guide for information concerning symbols for missing data and abbreviations.

StatLink  <https://doi.org/10.1787/888934163952>

Table B6.2. Distribution of international or foreign students by field of study (2018)

All tertiary programmes

		Share of students enrolled in selected broad fields of study, by mobility status													
		Education		Arts and humanities		Social sciences, journalism and information		Business, administration and law		Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics		Engineering, manufacturing and construction		Health and welfare	
		International or foreign	National	International or foreign	National	International or foreign	National	International or foreign	National	International or foreign	National	International or foreign	National	International or foreign	National
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)
		International students													
OECD	Countries														
	Australia	2	12	6	13	3	9	49	23	4	7	12	8	9	23
	Austria	6	14	15	10	19	9	17	23	11	8	16	17	9	8
	Belgium	5	11	13	9	11	9	13	24	5	4	10	11	37	26
	Canada	1	6	10	13	12	15	29	22	12	9	19	11	5	16
	Chile	8	11	6	4	6	5	31	22	6	2	18	21	13	22
	Denmark	2	9	11	11	9	10	28	23	7	5	21	11	8	24
	Estonia	2	7	13	13	11	6	39	21	6	6	11	16	3	13
	Finland	3	6	10	12	5	7	24	17	6	5	20	18	10	19
	France	2	4	16	13	12	9	27	28	12	9	16	13	7	16
	Germany	2	9	16	13	8	8	18	23	9	10	29	19	7	8
	Hungary	m	13	m	8	m	8	m	25	m	4	m	16	m	8
	Iceland	6	13	43	9	8	16	7	21	18	4	8	9	4	16
	Ireland	1	7	11	15	7	6	22	21	9	10	11	11	25	16
	Israel	8	19	16	8	20	18	18	14	10	6	9	20	13	8
	Japan	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
	Latvia	1	8	3	7	6	8	32	27	1	3	11	17	30	14
	Lithuania	2	5	10	9	18	8	26	26	2	4	15	19	21	17
	Luxembourg	5	17	7	16	12	11	43	24	9	5	8	10	4	11
	Mexico	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
	Netherlands	2	11	12	8	19	10	28	27	7	6	12	9	8	18
	New Zealand	3	9	7	14	8	13	36	19	9	9	12	9	6	17
	Norway	4	16	19	10	12	11	15	19	16	5	12	10	10	18
	Poland	2	10	11	9	18	11	27	22	2	4	8	17	16	12
	Portugal	5	3	12	10	12	11	24	21	6	6	20	21	12	16
	Slovenia	5	10	10	9	15	8	16	19	8	6	21	18	9	13
	Spain	5	12	9	11	11	10	27	20	5	6	13	14	22	15
Sweden	3	15	13	12	13	12	13	14	13	4	26	17	12	19	
Switzerland	5	11	14	9	12	8	20	27	17	7	18	15	8	17	
United Kingdom	2	7	13	15	12	11	33	18	12	16	14	8	7	18	
United States	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	
		Foreign students													
	Colombia	7	8	10	4	12	9	28	39	2	2	15	20	16	8
	Costa Rica	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
	Czech Republic	2	12	9	9	10	9	20	19	7	6	14	15	19	13
	Greece	4	5	18	13	14	12	13	21	11	9	17	22	13	7
	Italy	2	5	25	16	14	14	15	18	6	8	22	16	11	15
	Korea	2	6	21	16	14	6	30	14	3	5	13	23	4	14
	Slovak Republic	10	13	7	8	5	11	10	19	2	6	8	13	51	16
	Turkey	6	5	13	12	14	10	19	41	5	2	25	12	12	8
	OECD total	3	8	13	11	12	9	27	27	8	5	17	16	9	13
	EU23 total	3	8	14	12	12	10	25	22	9	8	18	14	11	15
		Foreign students													
Partners	Argentina	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
	Brazil	11	19	8	2	8	5	17	30	7	2	21	14	15	18
	China	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
	India	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
	Indonesia	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
	Russian Federation	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
	Saudi Arabia	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
	South Africa	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m

 Source: OECD/UIS/Eurostat (2020). See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>).

Please refer to the Reader's Guide for information concerning symbols for missing data and abbreviations.

Table B6.3. Mobility patterns of foreign and international students (2018)

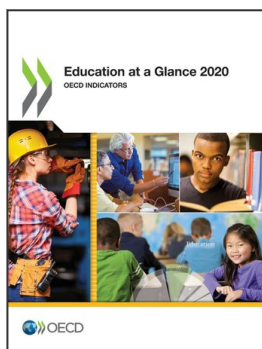
	Percentage of national tertiary students enrolled abroad	Number of international or foreign students per national student abroad	Number of international or foreign students for every hundred national students home and abroad	Percentage of international or foreign students coming from neighbouring countries	International education market shares
	Total tertiary				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
OECD Countries					
Australia	1	33	36	3	8
Austria	6	4	20	58	1
Belgium	3	3	11	38	1
Canada	3	5	16	4	4
Chile	1	0	0	34	0
Colombia	2	0	0	59	0
Costa Rica ³	1	1	1	50	0
Czech Republic ¹	4	4	15	52	1
Denmark	2	6	12	37	1
Estonia	8	1	10	43	0
Finland	4	2	8	13	0
France	4	2	9	14	4
Germany	4	3	11	15	6
Greece ¹	5	1	3	60	0
Hungary	5	3	12	22	1
Iceland	17	0	7	7	0
Ireland	7	1	10	7	0
Israel ²	4	1	3	5	0
Italy ¹	4	1	6	19	2
Japan	1	6	5	54	3
Korea ¹	3	1	3	62	2
Latvia	7	1	10	17	0
Lithuania	9	1	5	24	0
Luxembourg	76	0	22	54	0
Mexico	1	0	0	34	0
Netherlands	2	6	13	28	2
New Zealand	2	10	24	6	1
Norway	6	1	4	20	0
Poland	2	2	4	68	1
Portugal	4	2	8	4	1
Slovak Republic ¹	19	0	7	57	0
Slovenia	4	1	4	27	0
Spain	2	2	4	29	1
Sweden	4	2	7	20	1
Switzerland	6	3	20	54	1
Turkey ¹	1	3	2	47	2
United Kingdom	2	11	22	11	8
United States	0	12	5	5	18
OECD total	2	3	6		70
EU23 total	4	3	10		31
Partners					
Argentina ³	0	10	3	49	2
Brazil ¹	1	0	0	37	0
China	2	0	0	m	3
India	1	0	0	46	1
Indonesia	1	0	0	73	0
Russian Federation ¹	1	4	4	51	5
Saudi Arabia	5	1	5	32	1
South Africa ³	1	5	4	44	1

Note: Neighbouring countries are considered to be those with land or maritime borders with the host country. International education market shares refer to the number of mobile students enrolled in each destination country as a share of all mobile students.

1. National tertiary students are calculated as total enrolment minus foreign students instead of total enrolment minus international students.
2. Excluding internationally mobile students enrolled in short-cycle tertiary programmes.
3. Year of reference 2017.

Source: OECD/UIS/Eurostat (2020). See *Source* section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>). Please refer to the *Reader's Guide* for information concerning symbols for missing data and abbreviations.

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