

Spain

Highlights

- **Tertiary education has become the most common level of education attained among 25-34 year-olds** in Spain. The share of tertiary-educated 25-34 year-olds increased from 34% in 2000 to 49% in 2021. At the other spectrum of educational attainment, **28% 25-34 year-olds still not have an upper secondary degree** in Spain, which is twice as much as the average across OECD countries.
- The **likelihood of being employed increases with the level of educational attainment but varies by field of study**. In Spain, 25-64 year-olds with a tertiary degree in information and communication technology (ICT) enjoy the best employment prospective, with an employment rate of 88%. However, **ICT students made up only 6% of new entrants into tertiary education** in Spain. This is the same level as the OECD average.
- **Less than two third of vocational upper secondary graduates in Spain has direct access to tertiary education** in 2020. This limits the possibilities of graduates to pursue the further studies and reduces the attractiveness of vocational education. The average age of graduation from vocational is 24 years in Spain, slightly above the OECD average of 22 years.
- **In 2019, Spain spent 4.3% of its gross domestic product (GDP) on primary to tertiary educational institutions, compared to the average of 4.9% across OECD countries.**
- Spain reported **relatively large share of senior academic staff among OECD countries**. In 2020, 47% of academic staff in Spain are aged 50 or over compared to 40% on average across OECD countries.

The output of educational institutions and the impact of learning

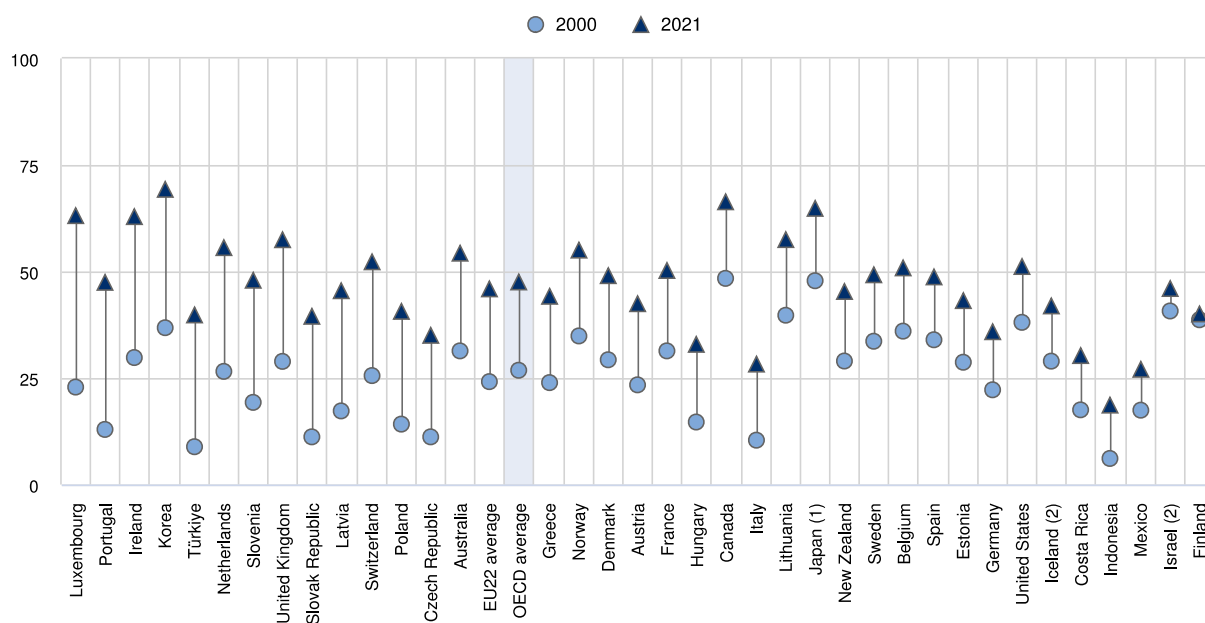
- Educational attainment has been increasing throughout the OECD, in particular at tertiary level. Between 2000 and 2021, the share of 25-34 year olds with tertiary attainment increased on average by 21 percentage points (from 27% to 48%). In Spain, the share also increased albeit at a slower pace, by 15 percentage points (from 34% in 2000 to 49% in 2021) (Figure 1). Spain is one of the 24 OECD countries where tertiary education is the most common highest level of attainment among 25-34 year olds.
- Upper secondary attainment is often seen as a minimum qualification for successful labour market participation. Although the general increase in educational attainment has seen a parallel decline in the share of 25-34 year olds without upper secondary attainment, 14% of young adults across the OECD still left school without an upper secondary qualification in 2021, a decrease of 5 percentage points since 2011. In Spain, the share decreased from 35% in 2011 to 28% in 2021.
- National averages provide only an incomplete picture of the situation in any given country. In most OECD countries, there are large differences in educational attainment across subnational regions.

This is also the case in Spain. In 2021, the difference between the region with the highest share of 25-64 year-olds with tertiary attainment (Basque Country, at 56%) and that with the lowest share (Ceuta, at 25%) was 31 percentage points. The variations in educational attainment across regions reflect, to some extent, the difference in economic conditions and internal migration patterns.

- Higher educational attainment is often associated with better employment prospects and Spain is no exception. In 2021, the employment rate among 25-34 year-olds with tertiary education in Spain is 19 percentage points higher than among those with below upper secondary attainment and 9 percentage points higher than among those with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment. On average across OECD countries, the employment rate among 25-34 year-olds with a tertiary qualification is 26 percentage points higher than among those with below upper secondary attainment and 8 percentage points higher than among those with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment. While the positive link between educational attainment and employment rates holds for both men and for women across the OECD, it is particularly strong for women. In Spain, 49% of women with below upper secondary attainment are employed, compared to 77% of those with tertiary attainment. In contrast, the figures are 66% and 80% for men.
- Across the OECD, the labour market benefits of tertiary attainment have proved especially strong during economic crises. This was also the case during the COVID-19 pandemic in Spain. Between 2019 and 2020, unemployment for 25-34 year-old workers with below upper secondary attainment increased by 4.1 percentage points, by 3.6 percentage points for workers with upper secondary attainment and by 3.3 percentage points for workers with tertiary attainment. In 2021, unemployment for workers with below upper secondary attainment remained constant, while it fell by 1.8 percentage points for workers with upper secondary attainment and by 2 percentage points for workers with tertiary attainment.
- Educational attainment affects not just employment prospects, but also wage levels. On average across the OECD, in 2020, full- and part-time workers aged 25-64 with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment earn 29% more than workers with below upper secondary attainment, while those with tertiary attainment earn about twice as much. In Spain, the earnings advantage of tertiary-educated workers was similar than the OECD average. In 2019, workers with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment earned 32% more than those with below upper secondary attainment and those with tertiary attainment earned 91% more.

Figure 1. Trends in the share of tertiary-educated 25-34 year-olds (2000 and 2021)

In per cent



1. Data for tertiary education include upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary programmes (less than 5% of adults are in this group).

2. Year of reference differs from 2000: 2002 for Israel and 2003 for Iceland.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the difference in the share of tertiary-educated 25-34 year-olds between 2000 and 2021.

Source: OECD (2022), 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/EAG2022_X3.pdf).

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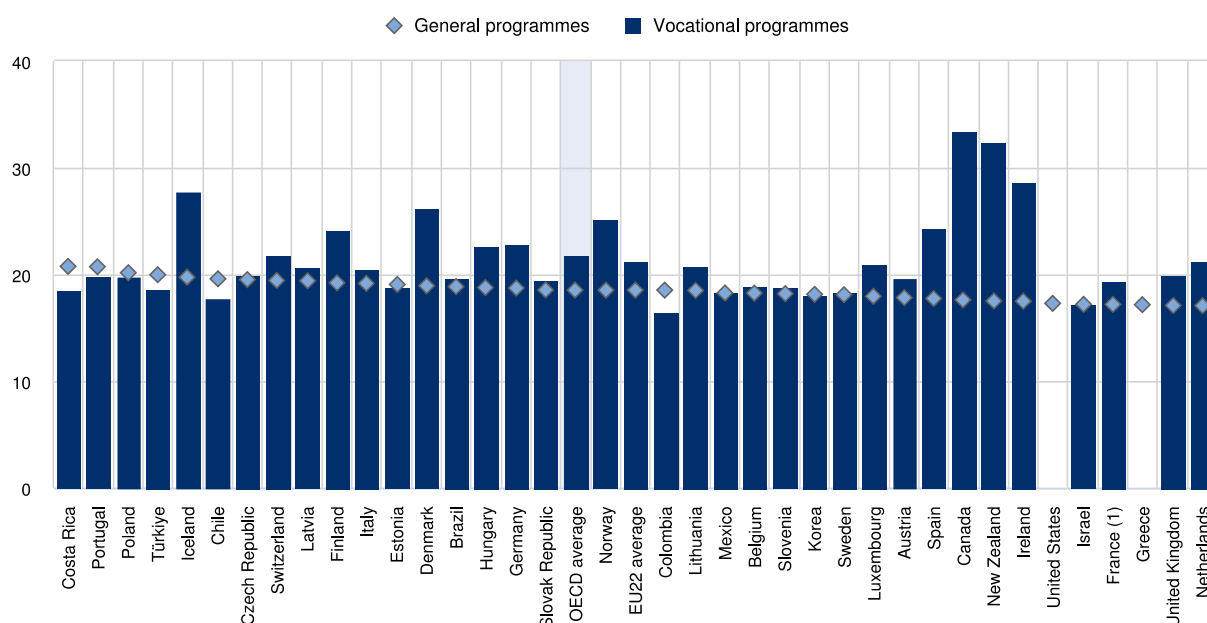
Access to education, participation and progress

- Compulsory education lasts from the age of 6 to the age of 16 in Spain. The range of ages for which at least 90% of the population are enrolled is longer than the period of compulsory education and goes from the age of 3 to the age of 17. This is similar to most other OECD countries, where more than 90% of the population are also enrolled for longer than the period of compulsory education in 2020.
- The age at which children enter early childhood education differs widely across countries. In Spain, early childhood education starts offering intentional education objectives for children younger than 1 and 41% of children under 3 are enrolled in early childhood education in 2020. Across OECD countries, the average enrolment rate among children below the age of 3 is 27%, but the rates range from less than 1% to 63%. The enrolment rate among 3-5 year-olds increases substantially in all OECD countries. In Spain, 97% of all children of this age are enrolled in early childhood education, which is above the OECD average of 83%.
- The average age of graduation from general upper secondary programmes varies from 17 to 21 years across OECD countries and is 18 years in Spain. Differences in the average age of graduation from vocational upper secondary education are much larger and vary from 16 to 34 years across the OECD. These differences largely depend on whether vocational upper

secondary students usually enrol in these programmes towards the end of their compulsory education or in mid-career. In Spain, the average age of graduation from vocational upper secondary education is 24 years, which is above the OECD average at 22 (Figure 2).

- In almost all OECD countries, women make up the majority of those graduating from general upper secondary education. In Spain, the share is 55% in 2020, similar to the OECD average. In contrast, men are overrepresented among graduates of vocational upper secondary programmes in most OECD countries, but not in Spain where they make up 50% of all vocational upper secondary graduates, below the OECD average (55%).
- In Spain, in 2021, 62% of 18-24 year-olds are still in full- or part-time education or training at either upper secondary or tertiary level (largely above the OECD average of 54%). Of these students, 8% combine their education or training with some form of employment in Spain, compared to 17% on average across the OECD.
- One significant difference across countries' education systems is on whether or not vocational upper secondary programmes provide access to tertiary education. In 12 OECD countries, all vocational upper secondary graduates have direct access to tertiary education in 2020. In Spain only 59% of graduates from vocational upper secondary programme have direct access to tertiary education.
- As is the case in all OECD countries, a majority of students enrolled at tertiary level in Spain are bachelor's students in 2020 (57% in Spain and 63% on average across the OECD). However, the next commonest enrolment level varies from country to country. In Spain, short-cycle tertiary students make up the second largest group of tertiary students at 22%. This is also the case in 9 other OECD countries, while in the remaining 27 countries with available data, master's students form the second largest group.
- At 20%, business, administration and law was the most popular field of study among new entrants into tertiary education in Spain, which is the case in most OECD countries in 2020. Despite the growing need for digital skills and the good employment prospects of students with degrees in ICT, only a small fraction of entrants into tertiary education choose this field. In Spain, 88% of 25-64 year olds with a tertiary ICT qualification are employed, but ICT students make up only 6% of new entrants into tertiary education. This is the same level as the OECD average.

Figure 2. Average age of first-time upper secondary graduates, by programme orientation (2020)
In years



1. Average age is based on all graduates instead of first-time graduates.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the average age of first-time upper secondary graduates in general programmes.

Source: OECD/Eurostat/UIS (2022), Tables B3.1 and B3.2. See *Source* section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2022_X3.pdf)

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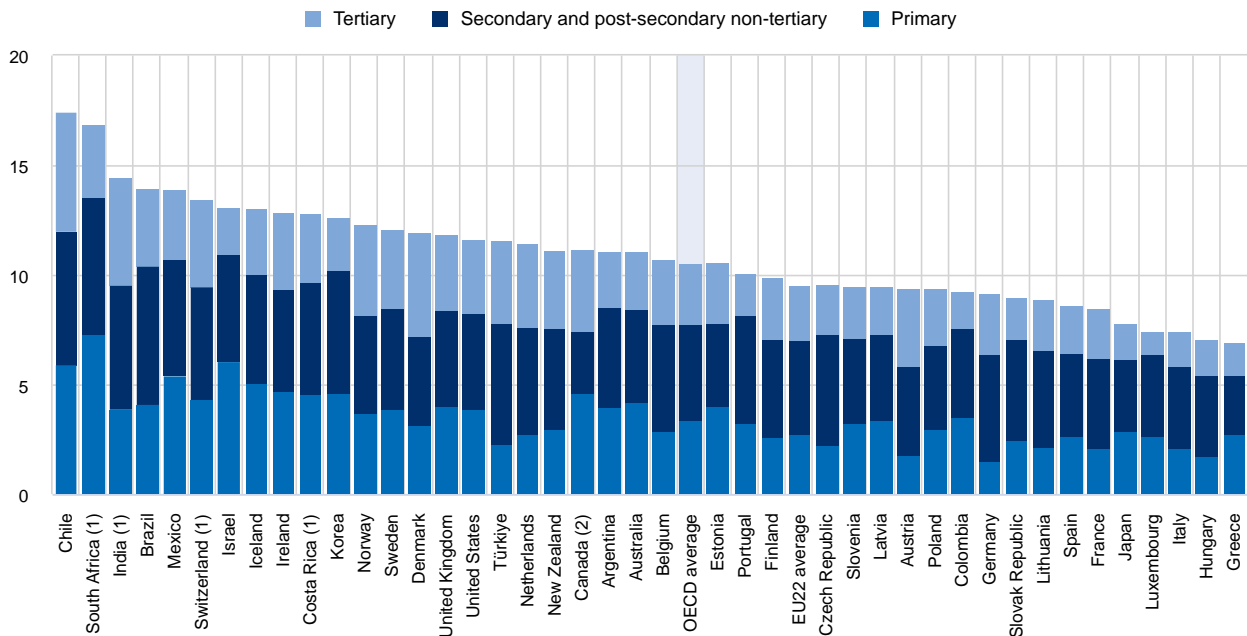
Financial resources invested in education

- All OECD and partner countries devote a substantial share of national output to educational institutions. In 2019, OECD countries spent on average 4.9% of their GDP on primary to tertiary educational institutions (including R&D). In Spain, the corresponding share was lower than the OECD average, at 4.3%. Relative to total government expenditure, public spending on primary to tertiary education (including R&D) was 8.6%, below the OECD average of 10.6% (Figure 3).
- Between 2008 and 2019, funding for educational institutions from all sources grew by 10% in Spain. Over the same period of time, the increase in GDP was lower with 7%. As a consequence, expenditure on educational institutions as a share of GDP grew by 0.1 percentage points over the same time period.
- Spending on educational institutions as share of GDP or public budgets are important measures of the importance that countries place on education in their budgeting decisions. However, they do not show the total amount of funding per student because GDP levels, public budgets and student numbers vary from country to country. Across primary to tertiary education (including R&D), OECD countries spend an average of USD 11 990 per student (in equivalent USD converted using PPPs for GDP) on educational institutions each year. In comparison, Spain spent USD 10 694 per student in 2019. Its cumulative expenditure on educating a student from the age of 6 to 15 was USD 93 094, which was below the OECD average of USD 105 502.

- Across OECD countries, the provision of education at primary and secondary levels in terms of curricula, teaching styles and organisational management leads, on average, to similar patterns of expenditure per student from primary to post-secondary non-tertiary levels. OECD countries as a whole spent on average around USD 9 923 per student at primary and USD 11 400 per student at secondary level. In Spain, the values were USD 8 580 at primary and USD 10 706 per student at secondary level in 2019.
- Expenditure per student at tertiary level in Spain is higher than at other levels of education, as is the case in almost all other OECD countries. In 2019, the average expenditure per student at tertiary level (including R&D) in Spain was USD 14 237 per year, which was about USD 5 700 higher than that of the primary level and USD 3 500 higher than that of the secondary level. This average expenditure per student at tertiary level in Spain was below the OECD average (USD 17 559), but similar to many other countries. In other words, the average expenditure at tertiary level was driven up by high values in a few countries. At 25%, the share of research and development (R&D) expenditure made up a smaller fraction of expenditure on tertiary education in Spain than on average across OECD countries (29%).
- Public funding dominates non-tertiary education (primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary) in all OECD countries, even after transfers to the private sector. In 2019, private funding in Spain accounted for 13% of expenditure at primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary levels, compared to the OECD average of 10%. In contrast, private expenditure at tertiary level is higher in all OECD countries. In Spain, the share of private expenditure at tertiary level was 33%, which was slightly above the OECD average of 31%.

Figure 3. Composition of total public expenditure on education as a percentage of total government expenditure (2019)

Primary to tertiary education (including R&D), in per cent



1. Year of reference differs from 2019. Refer to the source table for more details.

2. Primary education includes pre-primary programmes.

Countries are ranked in descending order of total public expenditure on education as a percentage of total government expenditure.

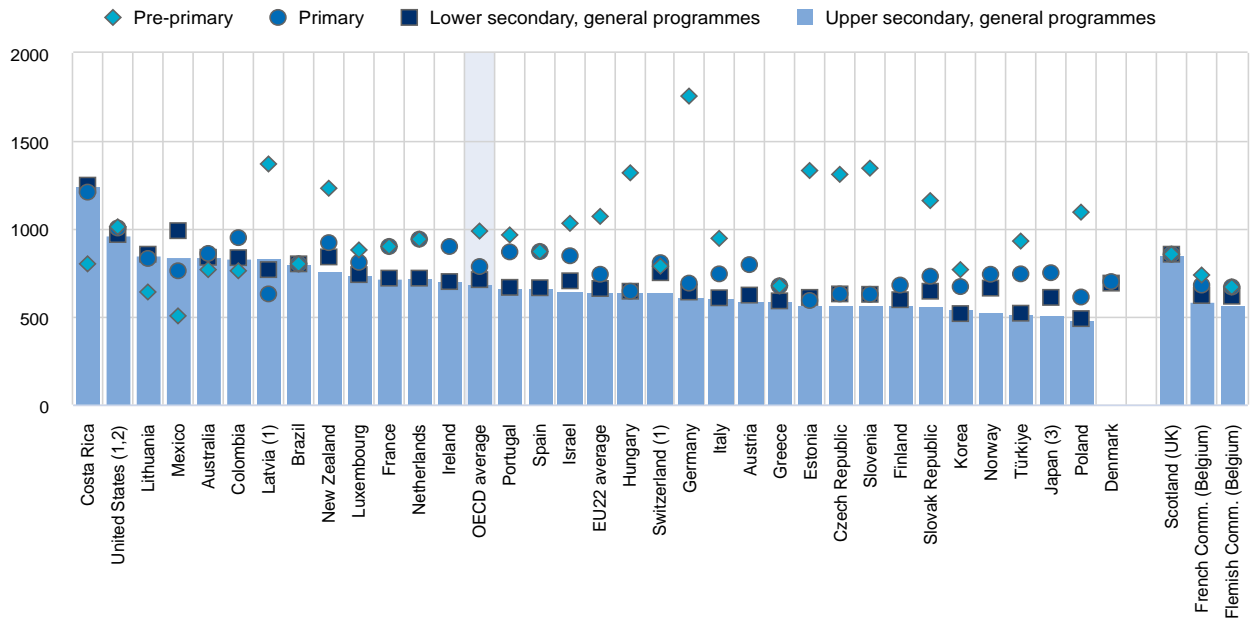
Source: OECD/UIS/Eurostat (2022), Table C4.1. See *Source* section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2022_X3.pdf)

Teachers, the learning environment and the organisation of schools

- Between 2015 and 2021, on average across OECD countries, the statutory salaries of teachers at lower secondary level (general programmes) with 15 years of experience and the most prevalent qualifications increased by 6% in real terms. In Spain, salaries increased by a similar percentage as the OECD average, by 5%.
- The average number of teaching hours per year required from a typical teacher in public educational institutions in OECD countries tends to decrease as the level of education increases. This is also the case in Spain. Based on official regulations or agreements, in 2021, annual teaching hours in Spain are 871 hours per year at pre-primary and primary levels, 665 hours at lower secondary (general programmes) and upper secondary (general programmes) levels (Figure 4).
- During their working hours, teachers also perform various non-teaching tasks such as lesson planning and preparation, marking students' work and communicating or co-operating with parents or guardians. In 2021, at the upper secondary level, 53% of teachers' working time is formally dedicated to non-teaching activities in Spain, compared to an average of 56% across OECD and partner countries.
- The duration of initial teacher education for primary and lower secondary teachers ranges from 2.5 years to 6.5 years across OECD countries. In Spain, initial teacher education typically last 5 years for prospective lower secondary teachers (general programmes). It is shorter for prospective primary teachers, at 4 years. As is the case in almost all OECD countries, a tertiary degree is awarded to prospective teachers of all levels of education upon completion of their initial teacher training.
- Continuing professional development is compulsory to some extent for teachers of general programmes in most countries with data, and Spain is not an exception. In Spain, as defined by the national regulation, continuing professional development is a right and an obligation of all teachers and a responsibility of education administrations and schools themselves.

Figure 4. Teaching time of teachers, by level of education (2021)

Net statutory teaching time in hours per year, in public institutions



1. Actual teaching time (in Latvia except for pre-primary level).

2. Reference year differs from 2021. Refer to the source table for details.

3. Average planned teaching time in each school at the beginning of the school year.

Countries and other participants are ranked in descending order of the number of teaching hours per year in general upper secondary education.

Source: OECD (2022), Table D4.1. See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2022_X3.pdf)

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Focus on tertiary education

- In 2021, among 25-64 year-olds in Spain, master's or equivalent degrees are the most common tertiary attainment at 16% of the population followed by short-cycle tertiary qualifications at 12% and bachelor's or equivalent degrees with 11%. This is different from the OECD average, where bachelor's or equivalent degrees are most common (19%), followed by master's or equivalent degrees (14%) and short-cycle tertiary qualifications (7%). As in all OECD countries, only a small fraction of adults holds a doctoral or equivalent degree: the share is 1% in Spain.
- On average, tertiary attainment generates a wide range of labour-market benefits, including high employment rates. Yet, there are significant differences depending on the field of study. In 2021, employment rates in Spain are highest among tertiary-educated adults who studied ICT with 88% and lowest among those who studied the broad field of arts and humanities, social sciences, journalism and information or the field of education at 78%. However, these differences need to be put into perspective. Even among 25-64 year-olds with tertiary attainment in the fields with the lowest employment rate, this is 7 percentage points higher than among those with upper secondary attainment (all fields combined).
- Despite the labour market advantages of a tertiary degree, many tertiary students do not graduate on time or do not graduate at all. In Spain, 37% of bachelor's students graduate within the theoretical programme duration in 2020. Across the OECD, the completion rate within the theoretical programme duration ranges from 12% to 69%. Completion rates three years after the

theoretical programme duration are significantly higher in most countries and the differences between OECD countries somewhat narrower. In Spain, 72% of bachelor's students have graduated within three years after the end of the theoretical programme duration, compared to 68% on average across the OECD.

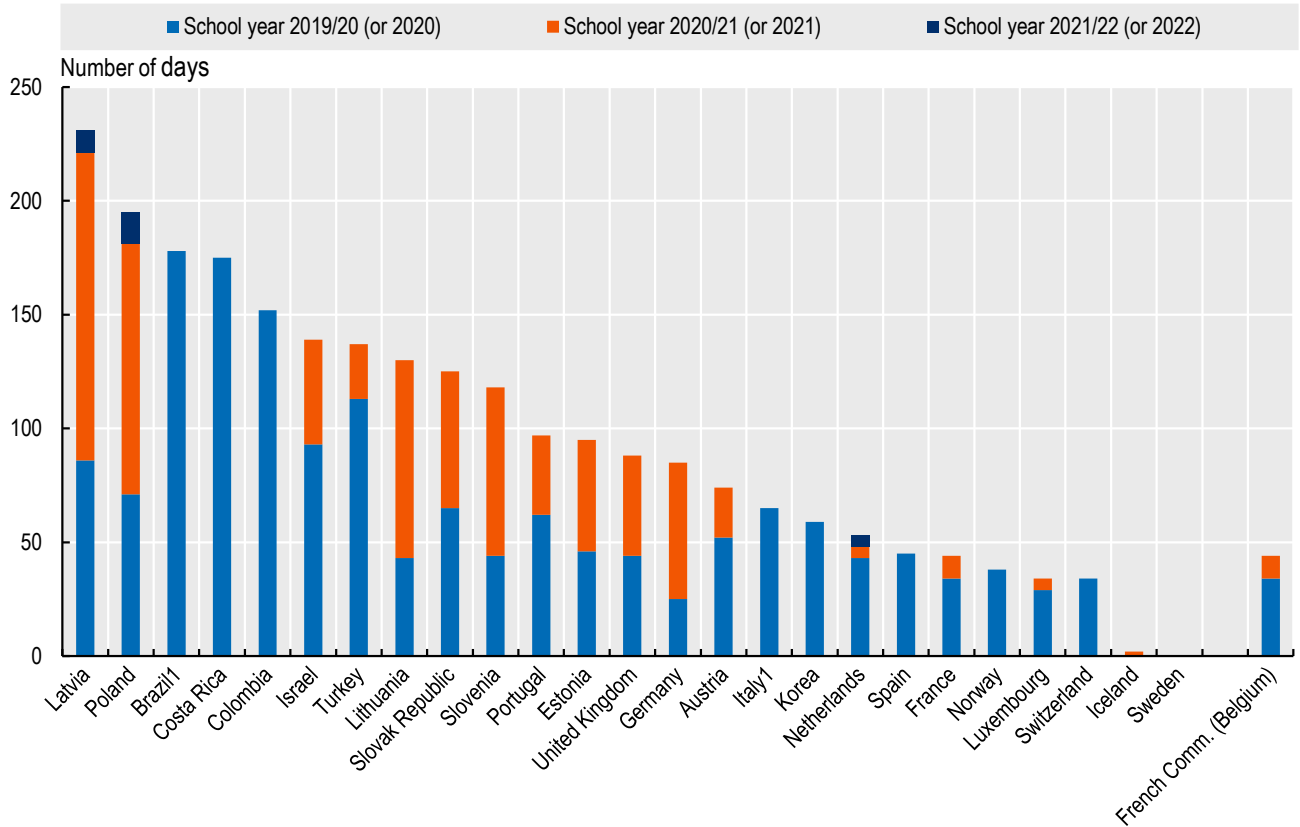
- In all OECD countries, tertiary completion rates are higher for women than for men. In Spain, 79% of women graduated within three years after the end of the theoretical programme duration at bachelor's level, compared to 64% of men.
- Across the OECD, there is little difference between the completion rates of public and private institutions, but the figures differ from country to country. In Spain, 71% of bachelor's students graduate from public institutions within three years after the end of the theoretical programme duration, while the share is 82% for private institutions.
- In most OECD countries including in Spain, tertiary-educated adults have higher rates of participation in non-formal education and training than those with a lower level of educational attainment. In 2021, 18% of 25-64 year-olds with tertiary attainment in Spain had participated in non-formal education and training in the four weeks prior to being surveyed, compared to 4% of their peers with below upper secondary attainment. These rates are similar to the average across OECD countries taking part in surveys with the same reference period, where 16% of tertiary-educated adults compared to 4% of adults with below upper secondary attainment had participated in non-formal education and training.
- Entering tertiary education often means costs for students and their families, in terms of tuition fees, foregone earnings and living expenses, although they may also receive financial support to help them afford it. However, public policies on tuition fees and financial support for students differ greatly across countries. In Spain, mid-range levels of tuition fees are combined with intermediate levels of financial support for students. For the academic reference year 2018/19, public institutions in Spain charged tuition fees of USD 1 768 for national students at bachelor's level and of USD 2 581 at master's level.
- OECD countries have different approaches providing financial support to students enrolled in tertiary education, but in general countries with the highest level of public transfers to the private sector are those that also tend to have the highest tuition fees. In six OECD countries and other participants at least 80% of national students receive public financial support in the form of student loans, scholarships or grants. In another six countries less than 25% of students receive financial support. In these countries and other participants, public financial support is targeted on selected groups of students, such as those from socio-economically disadvantaged families. Spain falls between the two groups, with 44% of students receiving financial support.
- Over the decades, independent private institutions have been established to meet increased demand for tertiary education. On average across the OECD, 17% of students are enrolled in independent private institutions, but this figure masks large differences between countries in 2020. In Spain, 22% of tertiary students are enrolled in such institutions. Independent private institutions charge higher annual tuition fees on average than public institutions for master's programmes in all OECD countries and other participants with available data, except in Chile and Lithuania.
- Enabling students to study part time is an important way to facilitate access to tertiary education. Many part-time students would not be able to study full time, for example because they have child-care responsibilities or have to work to fund their studies. In 2020, the share of part-time students at the tertiary level in Spain is 25%, above the OECD average of 21%. Compared to 2013, it has decreased by 2 percentage points.
- Staff at tertiary level tend to start their careers relatively late due to the length of the education they need to qualify. In Spain, only 3% of academic staff are aged under 30, below the OECD average of 8% in 2020. In contrast, the share of academic staff aged 50 or over is 47%, which is above the OECD average by 7 percentage points.

COVID-19: The second year of the pandemic

- The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted traditional schooling in 2020 and the first half of 2021, leading to school closures across all OECD countries. While most shut down their premises entirely in the wake of the pandemic in 2020, by 2021 the situation had improved and returned to normal in most countries in 2022. In Spain, primary and secondary schools were entirely closed for 45 days in 2019/20, and stayed open during the school years 2020/21 and 2021/22 (Figure 5). There were no partial closures over these three school years.
- Teacher absences also affected the regular operation of schools during the pandemic, whether due to COVID-19 infections or because of precautionary quarantine. However, only approximately half of countries collected information on teacher absenteeism. Spain collected such data. It shows that teacher absenteeism remained constant between school years 2019/20 and 2021/22.
- National examinations have also been affected by the pandemic. At general upper secondary level, 18 OECD countries postponed their national examinations during the school year 2019/20, while 10 countries even cancelled them entirely. In 2020/21, national examinations were postponed in 9 countries and cancelled in 6 countries. Spain rescheduled its national examinations in the school year 2019/20.
- Most countries conducted assessments of the impact of school closures on learning outcomes at various levels of education and along several dimensions. Spain has conducted studies to evaluate the effects of the pandemic on the impact on primary, lower secondary, upper secondary general education. Like many other countries, Spain also evaluated dimensions such as the mental health and well-being of students as well as the effectiveness of distance-learning strategies during school closures.
- In the school year 2021/22, national programmes to support students affected by the pandemic were implemented in Spain at pre-primary, primary, lower secondary, upper secondary general and vocational and tertiary level. At primary to upper secondary education, measures to address the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic included: early warning systems to identify students at risk of dropping out, automatic re-enrolment of students in school. The government is assessing the effectiveness of these programmes.
- The increased digitalisation of education has been a major consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic in many OECD countries. At lower secondary level, Spain has responded to the pandemic with an enhanced provision of digital tools at school, distance learning, hybrid learning, in-service and pre-service digital training to teachers and digital training to students.
- The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on adult learning in most OECD countries. In 2020, the share of adults who participated in formal or non-formal education and training in the four weeks prior to being surveyed decreased by 2 percentage points on average across OECD countries compared with 2019. However, in 2021, participation in non-formal education and training returned to pre-pandemic levels in most countries. In Spain, from 2019 to 2020, the share of adults participating in formal or non-formal education training remained unchanged. From 2020 to 2021, it increased by 3 percentage points and has thus increased above pre-pandemic levels.
- Young adults who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) for prolonged periods are at risk of adverse economic and social outcomes in both the short and the long term. After increasing during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the share of 18-24 year-olds who are NEET in Spain declined in 2021. The share of NEET among 18-24 year-olds was 19% in 2021, at pre-COVID levels.

Figure 5. School closures due to COVID-19 (2020, 2021 and the first quarter of 2022)

Number of instruction days of full closure of lower secondary schools excluding school holidays, public holidays and weekends



Note: The data underlying this report were produced through the Survey on Joint National Responses to COVID 19, a collaborative effort conducted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank (WB), and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Data for other levels of education are available at <https://www.oecd.org/education/Results-4th-wave-COVID-Survey-OECD-database.xlsx>.

1. Data for 2021 and 2022 are missing.

Countries and other participants are ranked in descending order of the total number of days lower secondary schools were fully closed during the school years 2019/20 (2020), 2020/21 (2021) and 2021/22 (2022).

Source: OECD/UIS/UNESCO/UNICEF/WB (2022).

StatLink 2 <https://stat.link/9e2s7x>

References

OECD (2022), *Education at a Glance 2022: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>.

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More information

For more information on Education at a Glance 2022 and to access the full set of Indicators, see: <https://doi.org/10.1787/3197152b-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/EAG2022_X3.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, 2022). 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 Joint Survey on 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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