



Spain

This country note provides an overview of key characteristics of the education system in Spain based on Education at a Glance 2024. In line with the thematic focus of Education at a Glance 2024, it highlights issues of equity in education. Data in this note are provided for the latest available year as indicated in Education at a Glance 2024.

Highlights

- Tertiary education has become the most common level of education among 25-34 year olds in Spain. The share of 25-34 year olds with tertiary education has increased from 41% in 2016 to 52% in 2023. At the other end of the educational attainment spectrum, 26% of 25-34 year olds in Spain still have not completed upper secondary education, which is a substantial decline from 2016, when the share was 35%, but still above the OECD average of 14%
- In Spain, 30% of children under 2 years old are enrolled in early childhood education and care, compared to an OECD average of 18%. By age 2, 64% of children in Spain are enrolled, while the OECD average is 42%. Until compulsory education begins at age 6, enrolment rates for children in Spain consistently exceed the OECD average.
- The likelihood of being employed increases with educational attainment. In Spain, 63% of 25-34 year-olds without upper secondary education are employed, compared with 71% of those with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education and 84% of those with tertiary education. Across the OECD, the average NEET rate fell from 15.8% to 13.8% between 2016 and 2023. In Spain, the share of NEETs decreased from 23.2% to 17.8%.
- In Spain, 2.1% of pupils in primary education, 7.8% in lower secondary education and 6.5% in general upper secondary education repeat a grade in their current level of education, which are higher than the OECD averages: 1.5% at primary, 2.2% at lower secondary and 3.2% at general upper secondary level.
- Spain spends 4.9% of its gross domestic product (GDP) on educational institutions from primary to tertiary level (including R&D). This is in line with the OECD average of 4.9% of GDP. In Spain, 88% of total expenditure on primary institutions comes from public sources, which is below the OECD average of 93%.
- In real terms (adjusted for inflation), teachers' salaries increased by 2% over the eight-year period, compared to an average increase of 4% in countries where data is available.



The output of educational institutions and the impact of learning

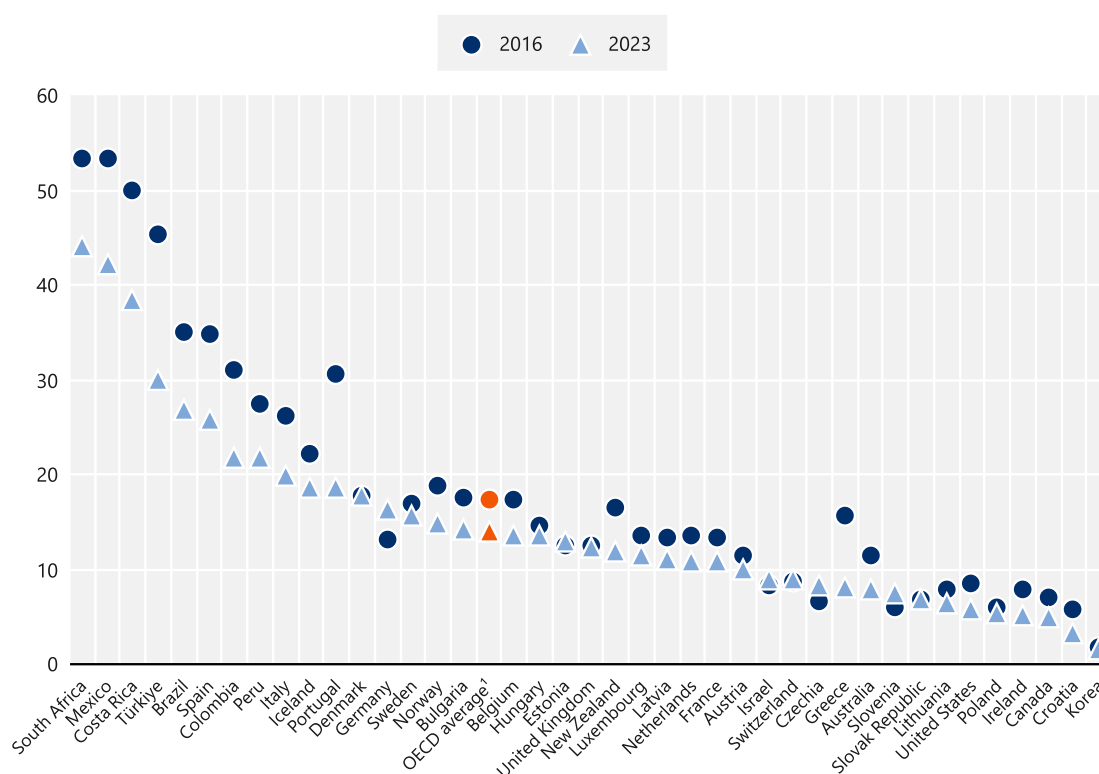
- Adults without upper secondary qualification are at considerable risk of poor social and labour-market outcomes throughout their lives. Reducing the share of young adults without an upper secondary qualification has been a priority in many countries and their share has decreased between 2016 and 2023 in 28 out of 35 OECD member countries. This is also the case in Spain. Their share of 25-34 year-olds without upper secondary educational attainment decreased by 9 percentage points between 2016 and 2023. At 26%, it is 12 percentage points above the OECD average in 2023. Parents' education has a strong impact on the educational attainment of their children. In Spain, 77% of 25-64 year-olds who have at least one parent with tertiary attainment also attained a tertiary qualification. In contrast, only 31% of 25-64 year-olds with parents without an upper secondary qualification have obtained a tertiary qualification themselves. This compares to the averages of 72% and 19%, respectively (Figure 1).
- The difficult labour-market situation faced by workers without an upper secondary qualification is reflected in employment rates among 25-34 year-olds. In Spain, 63% of 25-34 year-olds without an upper secondary qualification are employed, compared to 71% of those with an upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary qualification. The corresponding OECD averages are 61% and 79%, respectively. Moreover, workers without an upper secondary qualification are at risk of earning very low wages in most OECD countries. In Spain, 33% of 25-64 year-olds with below upper secondary educational attainment earn at or below half the median income compared to 26% of workers with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary educational attainment and 15% of workers with a tertiary qualification. Across the OECD, the respective shares are 28%, 17% and 10%.
- Strong labour markets and increasing participation in education have led to a decline in the share of 18-24 year-olds who are neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET) in most OECD member countries. Across the OECD, the average NEET rate decreased from 15.8% to 13.8% between 2016 and 2023. In Spain, the share of NEETs decreased from 23.2% to 17.8%.
- By almost all available measures, girls and women have better educational outcomes than boys and men, and in many cases the gap is widening. This is reflected in gender gaps in educational attainment. In all OECD member countries, women aged 25-34 are as likely or more likely than their male peers to have a tertiary qualification (54% compared to 41% on average across OECD countries). With a tertiary educational attainment rate of 58% for women and 46% for men, the gap is similar to the OECD average in Spain.
- Although girls and women clearly outperform boys and men in education, the picture is reversed when they enter the labour market; the key measures of labour-market outcomes are generally worse for women than for men. Women aged 25-34 are less likely to be employed than men, with the gap typically widest for those with below upper secondary educational attainment and narrowest for those with tertiary attainment. In Spain, only 51% of young women with educational attainment below upper secondary educational level are employed, while the corresponding share for young men is 71% (the corresponding OECD averages are 47% and 72%). In contrast, 81% of young women with a tertiary qualification are employed, while the corresponding share for young men is 85% (the corresponding OECD averages are 84% and 90%). However, tertiary attainment does not help to reduce the wage gap between men and women. Across the OECD, young women with a tertiary qualification earn on average 83% of the wage of their male peers, while the corresponding fraction is 91% in Spain. Among those with upper secondary or post-secondary non-

tertiary attainment, young women earn on average 84% of the wage of their male peers across the OECD and 82% in Spain.

- Parents' education has a strong impact on the educational attainment of their children. In Spain, 77% of 25-64 year-olds who have at least one parent with tertiary attainment also attained a tertiary qualification. In contrast, only 31% of 25-64 year-olds with parents without an upper secondary qualification have obtained a tertiary qualification themselves. This compares to the averages of 72% and 19%, respectively.

Figure 1. Trends in the share of 25-34 year-olds with below upper secondary educational attainment (2016 and 2023)

In per cent



1. The OECD average is derived from the unweighted mean of all countries with available and comparable data for both years. Countries are ranked in descending order of the share of 25-34 year-olds with below upper secondary attainment in 2023.

Source: OECD (2024), Table A1.2. For more information see *Education at a Glance 2024 Sources, Methodologies and Technical Notes* (<https://doi.org/10.1787/e7d20315-en>).

Access to education, participation and progression

- Childcare and parental leave policies vary considerably between countries. Of particular importance for low-income families is the so-called childcare gap, the period between the end of paid parental leave and the start of free early childhood education and care or compulsory education. In eight OECD countries, there is no childcare gap as free early childhood education

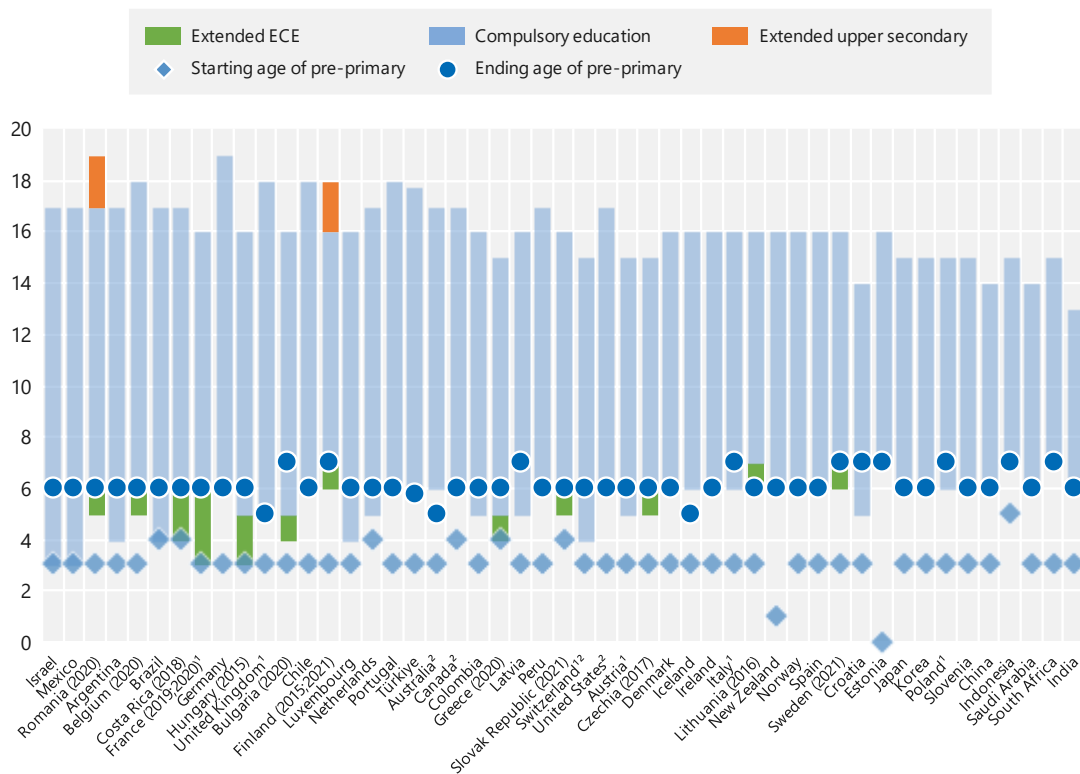


or compulsory education starts immediately following the end of paid parental leave. In contrast, Spain has a childcare gap of almost 3 years between the end of paid parental leave and the start of free early childhood education, and sixteen countries would have a gap close to 4 or 5 years.

- Participation in early childhood education and care is particularly important for children from disadvantaged families. However, in Spain, as in most other OECD countries, children aged 0-2 from families in the bottom income tertile are less likely to participate in childcare than children from the top income tertile (39% compared to 59%). The difference of 20 percentage points in participation between children from families in the top and bottom tertile is similar to the OECD average of 19 percentage points.
- Early childhood education can help to reduce the developmental gaps that put some children at a disadvantage when they enrol in primary school. In most OECD countries, the large majority of children are enrolled in early childhood education one year before the start of primary education. In Spain, 97% of children in this age group are enrolled, compared with an OECD average of 96%.
- Although most children and youths participate in education in the years before and after compulsory education, not all do so. In order to increase enrolment in the early years or among youths, twelve OECD member and accession countries have increased the duration of compulsory education over the past decade. Spain does not belong to this group. Compulsory education in Spain lasts from the age of 6 to 16 for a total of 10 years, which is below the OECD average of 11 years (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Duration of compulsory education (2022)

In years



Note: The year in parentheses indicates when policy changes were made to the duration of compulsory education. In addition, extended ECEC/extended upper secondary refers to the extension in the duration of the relevant level since 2013.

1. There are other compulsory activities to complete by the end of compulsory education (see Table B2.1).

2. Starting age, ending age, and duration of compulsory education may vary at sub-national level.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the duration of compulsory education.

Source: OECD (2024), Table B2.1. For more information see Education at a Glance 2004 Sources, Methodologies and Technical Notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/e7d20315-en>).

- Grade repetition is common in many countries to give students more time to master the content of a grade, although its effectiveness is debated. In Spain, 2.1% of primary, 7.8% of lower secondary and 6.5% of general upper secondary students repeat a grade in their current level of education, while the OECD average is 1.5% at primary, 2.2% at lower secondary and 3.2% at general upper secondary level.
- Women are significantly over-represented in tertiary education and the gap is widening in most countries. In Spain, 54% of new entrants to tertiary education are women, compared with an OECD average of 56%. As women are also more likely than men to complete tertiary education, the gap is even greater among graduates (see Education at a Glance 2022). However, there are large differences between fields of study in all OECD countries. In Spain, only 13% of women entering tertiary education were studying science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields, while only 6% of men were entering education-related fields.



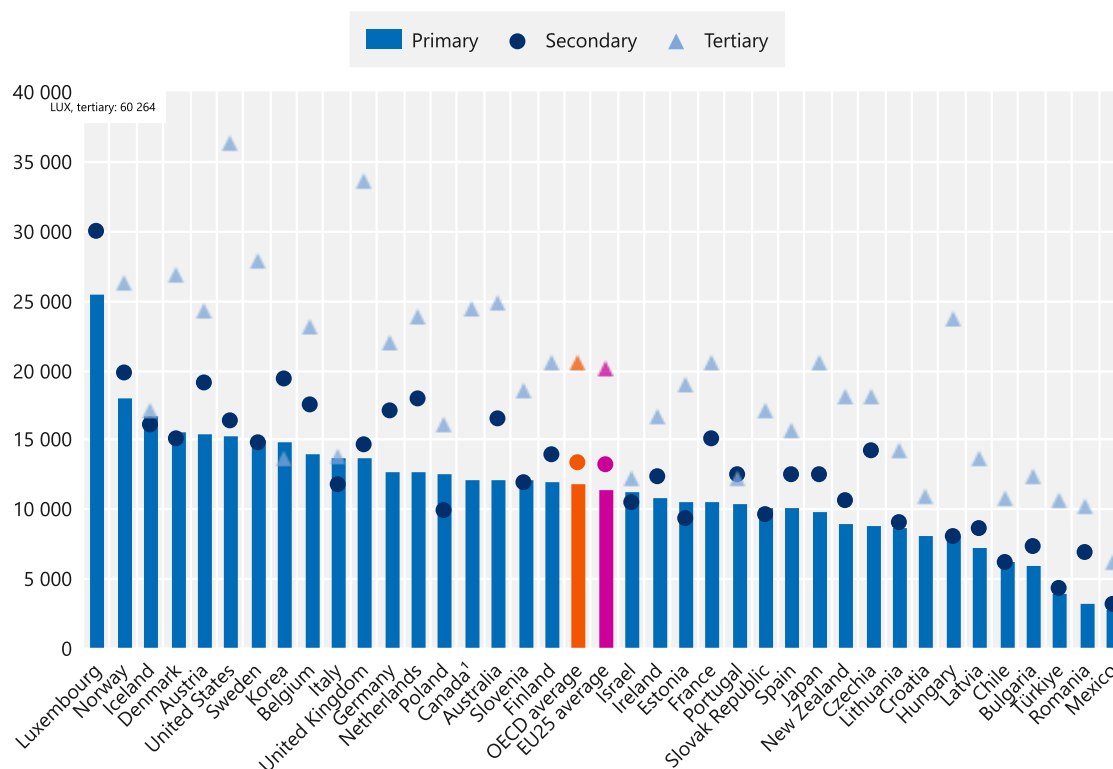
- Across the OECD, 63% of students who graduated with a bachelor's degree did so from public institutions. However, private education is slowly becoming more common across all levels of tertiary education and the share of graduates from private institutions has grown by 3 percentage points between 2013 and 2022. In Spain, the share of bachelor's graduates from private institutions decreased from 24% to 23%.

Financial resources invested in education

- The average annual expenditure per student from primary to tertiary education (including R&D) in Spain is USD 12 426 compared to an average of USD 14 209 in OECD countries. In most countries, expenditure increases by level of education. In Spain, spending per student is USD 10 181 in primary education, USD 12 541 in secondary education and USD 15 654 in tertiary education.
- Spain spends 4.9% of its gross domestic product (GDP) on educational institutions at primary to tertiary levels (including R&D). This is equal to the OECD average of 4.9% of GDP. On average across the OECD, the share of GDP dedicated to educational institutions (from primary to tertiary levels) has been broadly stable, with 4.9% in 2015 and 2021. However, trends vary considerably between countries. Spain is among the countries where expenditure as a share of GDP increased, going from 4.4% to 4.9%.
- Early childhood education has received much attention in recent years because of its importance, especially for children from disadvantaged families. In Spain, public investment in early childhood education stayed roughly constant at 0.8% of GDP between 2015 and 2021, although the number of children enrolled has decreased (Figure 3).¹

¹ All expenditure figures in this note are expressed in USD calculated based on purchasing power parity (PPP) exchange rates.

Figure 3. Total expenditure per full-time equivalent student in primary, secondary and tertiary education (2021)



1. Primary education includes pre-primary and lower secondary programmes.
 Countries are ranked in descending order of the total expenditure per full-time equivalent student in primary education.
Source: OECD (2024), Table C1.1. For more information see *Education at a Glance 2024 Sources, Methodologies and Technical Notes* (<https://doi.org/10.1787/e7d20315-en>).

- Across the OECD, public authorities are responsible for the vast majority of spending on education, particularly at compulsory levels. In Spain, 88% of total expenditure on primary institutions comes from public sources, which is below the OECD average of 93%. Private expenditure makes up a greater share in pre-primary and tertiary education in many countries. In Spain, the share of public expenditure on pre-primary education is 87%, similar to the OECD average of 86%, while for tertiary education it is 67%, also similar to the OECD average of 68%.
- How private institutions are funded varies considerably across countries, with some fully or largely government funded, while others receive little or no public funding. In Spain, government sources spend USD 10 736 per full-time equivalent student in public primary institutions, while the figure is USD 5 035 per full-time equivalent student in private ones (the OECD averages are USD 11 914 for public primary institutions and USD 7 867 for private ones).
- Tuition fees are an important component of private expenditure on tertiary education, but they vary considerably across countries. In Spain, with USD 1 708 per year for national students in bachelor’s programmes, they are in the middle of the range among OECD countries for which data are available.

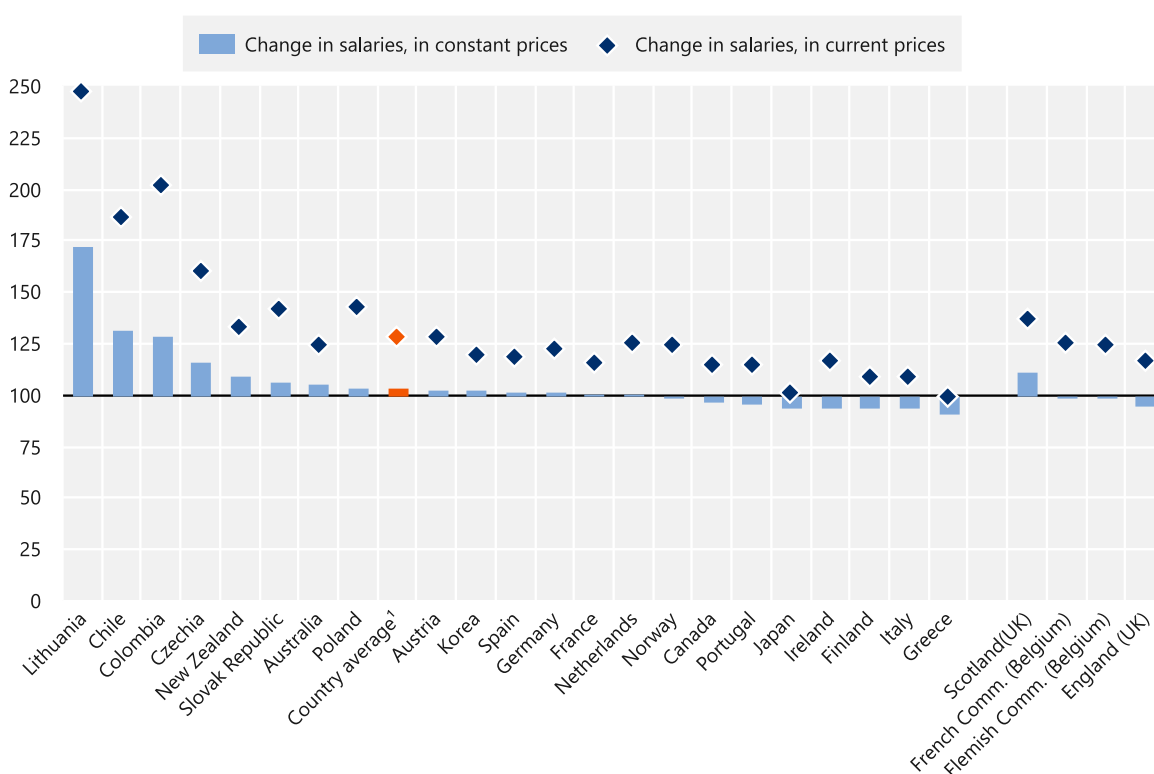
- Education is a major expenditure item and accounts, considering expenditure on education from primary to tertiary levels is 10.0% of all public expenditure on average across the OECD, and for all levels and non-formal learning, it reaches the 11.8%. In Spain, this share is lower with 8.4% and 9.2%, respectively.

Teachers, the learning environment and the organisation of schools

- Between 2015 and 2023, nominal statutory salaries increased by 18% in Spain for lower secondary teachers with 15 years of experience. Most of this increase compensated for the rising cost of living. In real terms (i.e. adjusted for inflation), teachers' salaries increased by 2% over the eight-year period compared to an average increase of 4% across countries with available data (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Change in lower secondary teachers' statutory salaries between 2015 and 2023

Index of change in annual salaries of teachers with most prevalent qualifications after 15 years of experience (2015 = 100)



Note: The change in constant prices refers to the change in salaries assuming the same level of purchasing power between 2015 and 2023 (that is, in 2015 prices), whereas change in current prices refers to the nominal change in salary amount between 2015 and 2023.

1. Excludes Australia, Chile and Colombia as data for some years are missing between 2015 and 2023.

Countries and other participants are ranked in descending order of the change in salaries in constant prices.

Source: OECD (2024), Table D3.6 and Table X2.5. For more information see *Education at a Glance 2024 Sources, Methodologies and Technical Notes* (<https://doi.org/10.1787/e7d20315-en>).



- The work of teachers consists of a variety of tasks including teaching, but also preparing lessons, grading assignments and communicating with parents. The number of hours that teachers are contractually obliged to teach varies greatly across countries. In Spain, teachers at lower secondary level have to teach 656 hours annually. This is below the OECD average of 706 hours per year.
- Countries make different choices about whether to operate many small schools or fewer large schools. In Spain, the median primary school has 27 students per grade, the OECD average is 27. The largest 5% of primary schools in Spain have 76 or more students per grade, while the OECD average is 91 or more. At the other end of the scale, the smallest 5% of primary schools have 4 or fewer students per grade compared to an OECD average of 5 or fewer students per grade. Although small schools are important for ensuring primary education is accessible, especially in sparsely populated rural areas, they can be costly to run and may have to resort to multi-grade teaching.
- Most education systems involve students and parents in the governance of public schools. In most countries, it is compulsory for parents' representatives to be included in the governing board of public schools. Student participation is less widespread, but still common. In Spain, the participation of parents in governing body of public schools is required, and the requirement for the participation of students varies by level of education.
- Student-teacher ratios vary between countries and between levels of education. On average across the OECD, there are 14 students per teacher in primary education, 13 students in lower secondary education and 13 students in upper secondary education. In Spain, the corresponding numbers are 12 in primary education, 11 in lower secondary education and 10 in upper secondary education. While lower student teacher ratios allow teachers to focus more on the needs of the individual, they require higher overall spending on teacher salaries and have to be weighed against alternative spending priorities.
- Between 2013 and 2022, the average age of teachers has increased across the OECD. In lower secondary education, 36% of teachers are 50 years or older, compared to 35% in 2013. Spain has similar share of teachers aged 50 or older, with 38% of teachers being in this age category, up from 34% in 2013.



More information

For more information on Education at a Glance 2024 and to access the full set of indicators, see: <https://doi.org/10.1787/c00cad36-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 Education at a Glance 2024: Sources, Methodologies and Technical Notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/e7d20315-en>).

For general information on the methodology, please refer to the *OECD Handbook for Internationally Comparative Education Statistics 2018* (<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264304444-en>).

Updated data can be found on line at <http://data-explorer.oecd.org/s/5q> and by following the StatLinks  in the publication.

Explore, compare and visualise more data and analysis using the Education GPS: <https://gpseducation.oecd.org/>.

Questions can be directed to the Education at a Glance team at the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills: EDU.EAG@oecd.org.

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