

## COUNTRY NOTE



### *Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators 2012*

# KOREA

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## KEY FINDINGS

- Korea has reduced the share of individuals without upper secondary education while the proportion of tertiary-educated individuals increased rapidly over the past 14 years.
- In 2010, Korea had slightly above the OECD average enrolment rates in early childhood education among four-year-olds; but that level of education is largely funded from private sources.
- Korea increased expenditure on primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education significantly between 2000 and 2009. Much of that increase was absorbed in reducing class size.
- On average, Korea has a relatively young teaching force at the primary level. Teachers are well-paid in comparison to teachers in other OECD countries.

*Korea has reduced the share of individuals without upper secondary education while the proportion of tertiary-educated individuals increased rapidly over the past 14 years...*

In 1997, 38% of 25-64 year-olds in Korea had not attained an upper secondary education; by 2010, this proportion had decreased to 20% - a drop of 18 percentage points over 14 years, compared with an average decrease of 11 percentage points across OECD countries. At the same time, the share of tertiary graduates increased from 20% in 1997 to 40% in 2010 - the largest percentage-point increase among all OECD countries (Table A1.4).

*...to the extent that Korea now has the highest proportion of 25-34 year-olds who have attained at least an upper secondary education among all other OECD countries.*

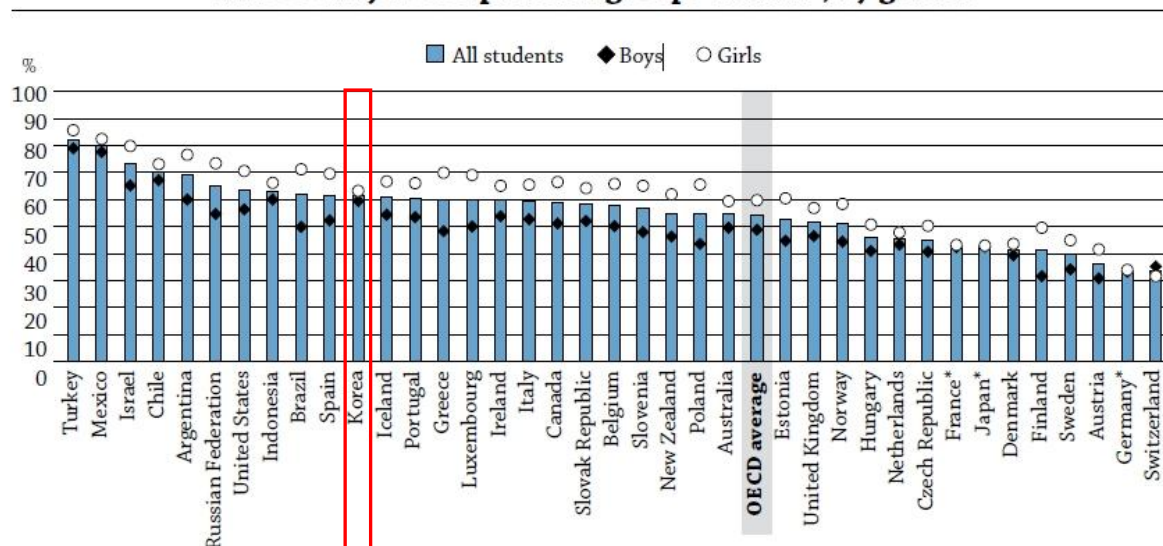
In 2010, 98% of 25-34 year-old Koreans attained an upper secondary education – the highest proportion among OECD countries. This is 55 percentage points higher than the attainment rate of 55-64 year-olds in

Korea, showing the magnitude of the expansion of upper secondary education over just one generation (Table A1.2a). In addition, 65% of 25-34 year-olds have completed tertiary education – again, the highest proportion among OECD countries (Table A1.3a).

*While more girls than boys aspire to high-status careers...*

Some 61.4% of 15-year-old boys and girls expect to work in high-status careers, such as legislators, senior officials, managers and professionals, a proportion greater than the OECD average of 54.5%. Korean girls are 3.8 percentage points more likely to expect to work in high-status careers than boys (Table A4.1). However, when it comes to planning a career in engineering and computing, including architecture, the picture looks very different: 12.4% of boys report aspiring to such a career while only 2.6% of girls do. However, more girls than boys report that they want to pursue a career in health services (Tables A4.2, A4.3 and Chart A4.2).

**Chart A4.1. Percentage of 15-year-old boys and girls who plan to work in ISCO major occupational groups 1 and 2<sup>1</sup>, by gender**



Note: Countries in which gender differences are not statistically significant are shown with an asterisk.

1. Group 1 refers to legislators, senior officials and managers and group 2 refers to professionals in the ISCO classification.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the percentage of 15-year-old students who plan to work in ISCO major occupational groups 1 and 2.

Source: OECD, PISA 2006 Database. Table A4.1. See Annex 3 for notes ([www.oecd.org/edu/eag2012](http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag2012)).

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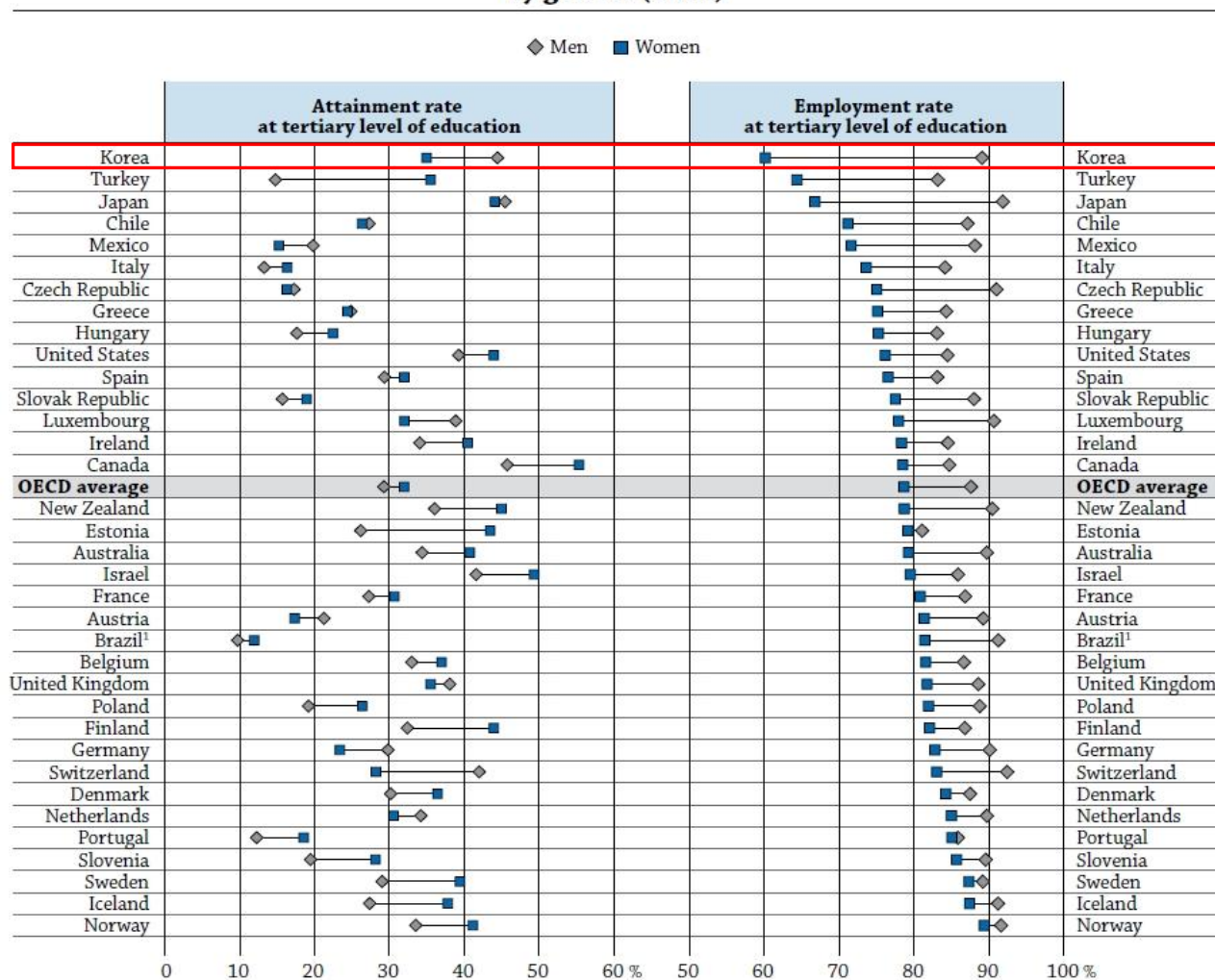
*...Korean women have lower tertiary attainment rates and their employment rates are much lower than those of men.*

In 2010, 35% of 25-64 year-old women in Korea had a tertiary education, above the OECD average of 32% but below that of Korean men (44%) – and the inverse of what is seen in some other OECD countries. However, this picture might change in the near future as 98% of 25-34 year-old women now obtain tertiary qualifications, well above the OECD average of 83% (see Indicator A1, Tables A1.3b and A1.3c, available on line, Chart A7.3).

On the other hand, when it comes to employment rates, some 60% of tertiary-educated Korean women are employed – the lowest rate among OECD countries. In addition, the gap in the rate of employment between tertiary-educated Korean men and women is the widest among OECD countries (29 percentage points in favour of men) (Tables A7.1a, Chart A7.3 and Table A7.3c, available on line). At the same time, 25-64 year-

old women who have attained a tertiary degree earn 65% of what tertiary-educated men earn, and this difference in earnings is also larger than the OECD average (Table A8.3a). Specific policy measures are thus needed to make it easier for highly educated women in Korea to offer their skills to the labour market. These could include increasing the availability of affordable, flexible, high-quality childcare services, providing maternity and paternity leave, and offering flexible working hours.

**Chart A7.3. Percentage of 25-64 year-olds with tertiary education, and their employment rate, by gender (2010)**



1. Year of reference 2009.

Countries are ranked in ascending order of 2010 employment rate for women with tertiary education.

Source: OECD, Tables A1.3b, A1.3c, A7.3b and Table A7.3c, available on line. See Annex 3 for notes ([www.oecd.org/edu/eag2012](http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag2012)).

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**In 2010, enrolment rates in early childhood education among four-year-olds in Korea were slightly above the OECD average.**

Early childhood education gives children a head start in life, and the availability of affordable high-quality programmes could also promote women's participation in the labour market. In 2010, 82.5% of four-year-olds in Korea were enrolled in early childhood, slightly above the OECD average of 81%. Some 79% of these children attend independent private institutions and 17% are enrolled in public institutions – nearly the

exact inverse of the OECD average, where 15.8% of children attend independent private institutions and 62.7% are enrolled in public institutions. (Tables C2.1, C2.2, and Chart C2.1).

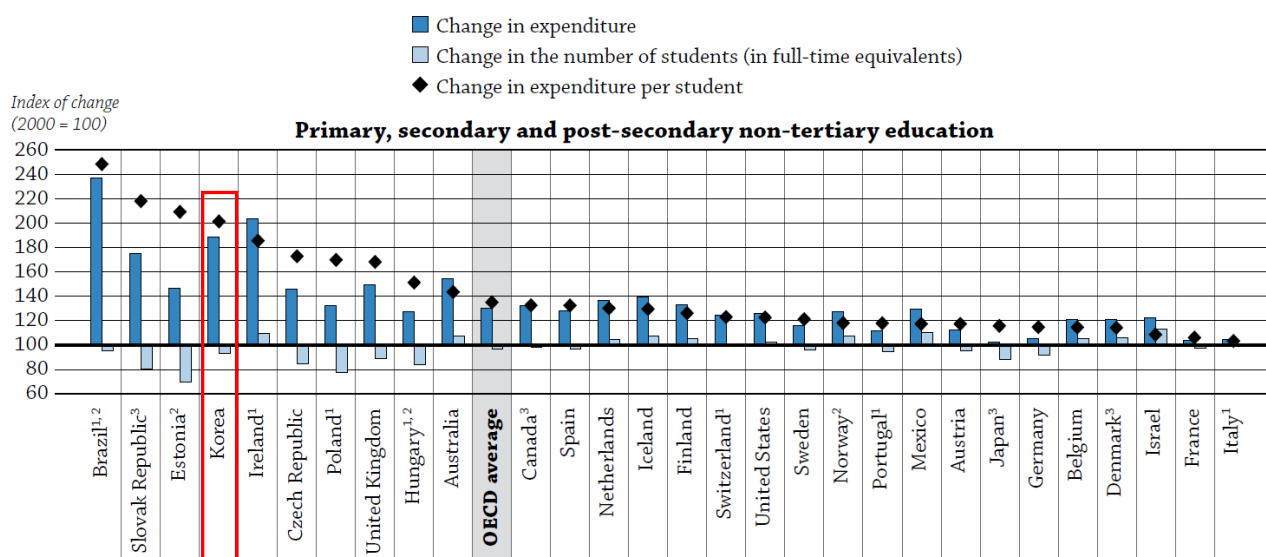
**Early childhood education in Korea is largely funded from private sources.**

Out of the total expenditure on early childhood education in 2009, 42.6% came from public sources and 57.4% came from private sources while, on average across OECD countries, 81.7% of total expenditure on this level of education came from public sources and 18.3% came from private sources. Moreover, Korea annually spent USD 6 047 per pre-primary student, less than the OECD average of USD 6 670 (Table C2.2). However, with the introduction of a financial support programme that provides tuition fees for all five-year-olds in 2011 and extension of this programme to three and four-year-olds expected to begin in 2013, the increase in the proportion of total expenditure from public source will be apparent in future editions of *Education at a Glance*.

**Korea increased expenditure on primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education significantly between 2000 and 2009...**

Expenditure on primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary students by educational institutions increased by 89% in Korea between 2000 and 2009, even as student enrolments declined by 6% over the same period. Expenditure per student increased by 102% during that period – the 4th largest increase among 29 countries with available data (Chart B1.6). In addition, Korea’s expenditure on these levels of education as a percentage of GDP increased from 3.5% in 2000 to 4.7% in 2009, a larger proportion than the 2009 OECD average of 4.0% (Tables B2.1 and B2.3).

**Chart B1.6. Changes in the number of students and changes in expenditure per student by educational institutions, by level of education (2000, 2009)**  
*Index of change between 2000 and 2009 (2000 = 100, 2009 constant prices)*



1. Public institutions only.  
 2. Public expenditure only.  
 3. Some levels of education are included with others. Refer to "x" code in Table B1.1a for details.  
 Countries are ranked in descending order of change in expenditure per student by educational institutions.

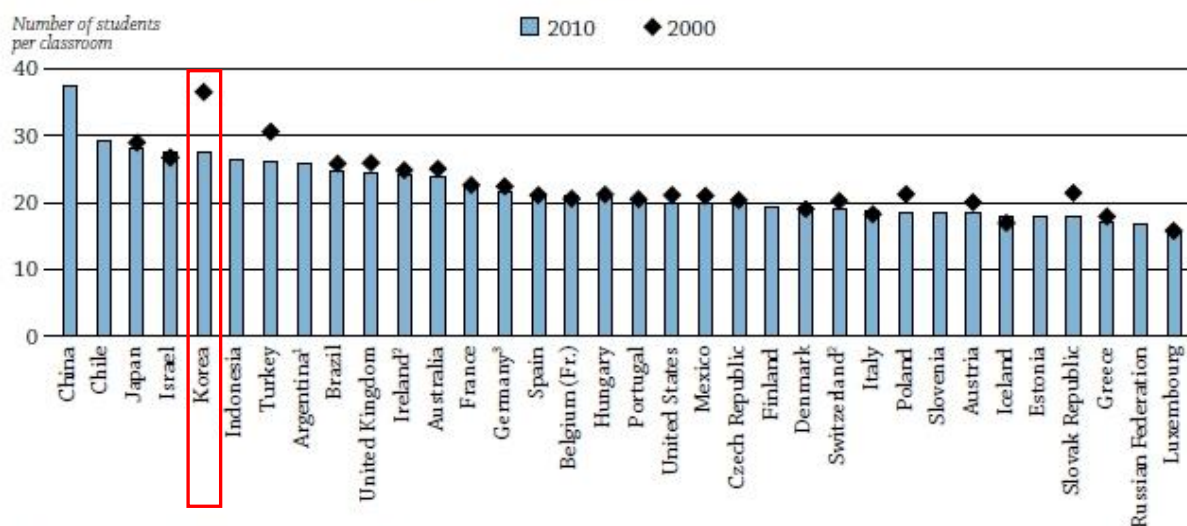
**Source:** OECD. Tables B1.5a and B1.5b. See Annex 3 for notes ([www.oecd.org/edu/eag2012](http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag2012)).

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...much of which has been absorbed by shrinking class size.

The average primary school class in Korea has 27.5 students, more than the OECD average of 21.2 students per class in 2010 (Chart D2.2). At the lower secondary level, the average class in public institutions is 34.7 students, larger than the OECD average of 23.4 students (Table D2.1). Although classes are comparatively large, between 2000 and 2010 Korea managed to reduce the average primary class by nine students and the average lower secondary class by four students (Chart D2.1). As a result, class size has been one of the most important factors driving the increase in the cost of education in Korea (Tables B7.1a and B7.2).

Chart D2.1. Average class size in primary education (2000, 2010)



1. Year of reference 2009 instead of 2010.

2. Public institutions only.

3. Years of reference 2001 and 2010.

Countries are ranked in descending order of average class size in primary education in 2010.

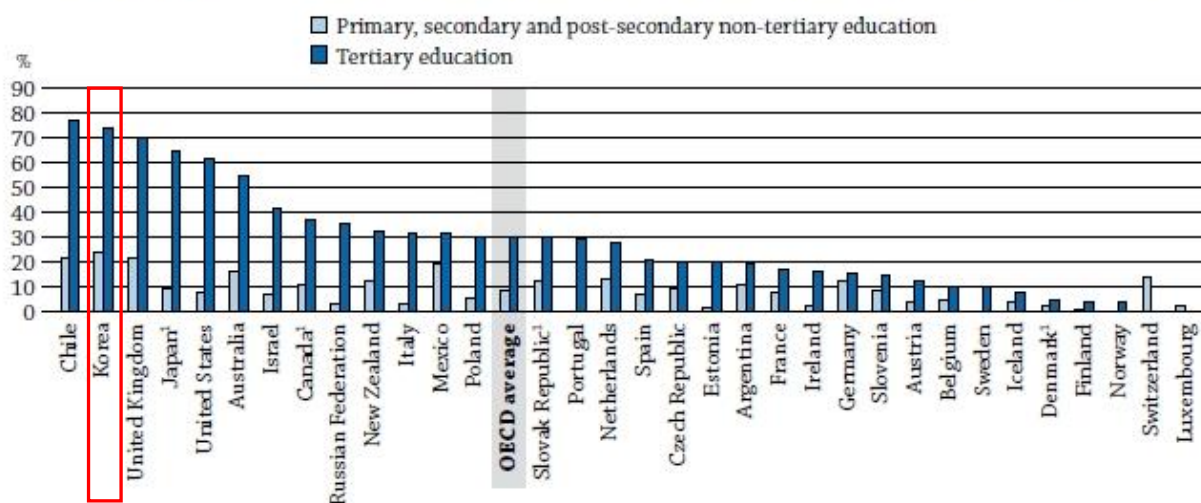
Source: OECD. Argentina, China, Indonesia: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (World Education Indicators programme). 2010 data: Table D2.1. 2000 data: Table D2.5 available on line. See Annex 3 for notes ([www.oecd.org/edu/eag2012](http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag2012)).

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### Private funding for education is substantial in Korea.

Between 2000 and 2009, the share of private funding for primary and lower secondary education in Korea increased by 4.6 percentage points to 23.8% – 15 percentage points higher than the OECD average. In contrast, at 76.2%, the proportion of public funding at these levels of education is lower than the OECD average (91.2%) (Table B3.2a). However, Korea has increased its public expenditure on primary and lower secondary education by 78%, while private funding increased by 134% between 2000 and 2009.

In 2009, the share of Korea's public spending on tertiary education was one-third of the OECD average of 26.1%. Meanwhile, the proportion of private expenditure on tertiary education (73.9%) was almost 44 percentage points higher than the OECD average of 30% (Table B3.2b). However, Korea increased its public expenditure on tertiary education by 2.8 percentage points (an increase of 83%) between 2000 and 2009 (Table B3.3).

**Chart B3.1. Share of private expenditure on educational institutions (2009)**

1. Some levels of education are included with others. Refer to "x" code in Table B1.1a for details.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the share of private expenditure on educational institutions for tertiary education.

Source: OECD. Argentina: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (World Education Indicators programme). Tables B3.2a and B3.2b. See Annex 3 for notes ([www.oecd.org/edu/eag2012](http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag2012)).

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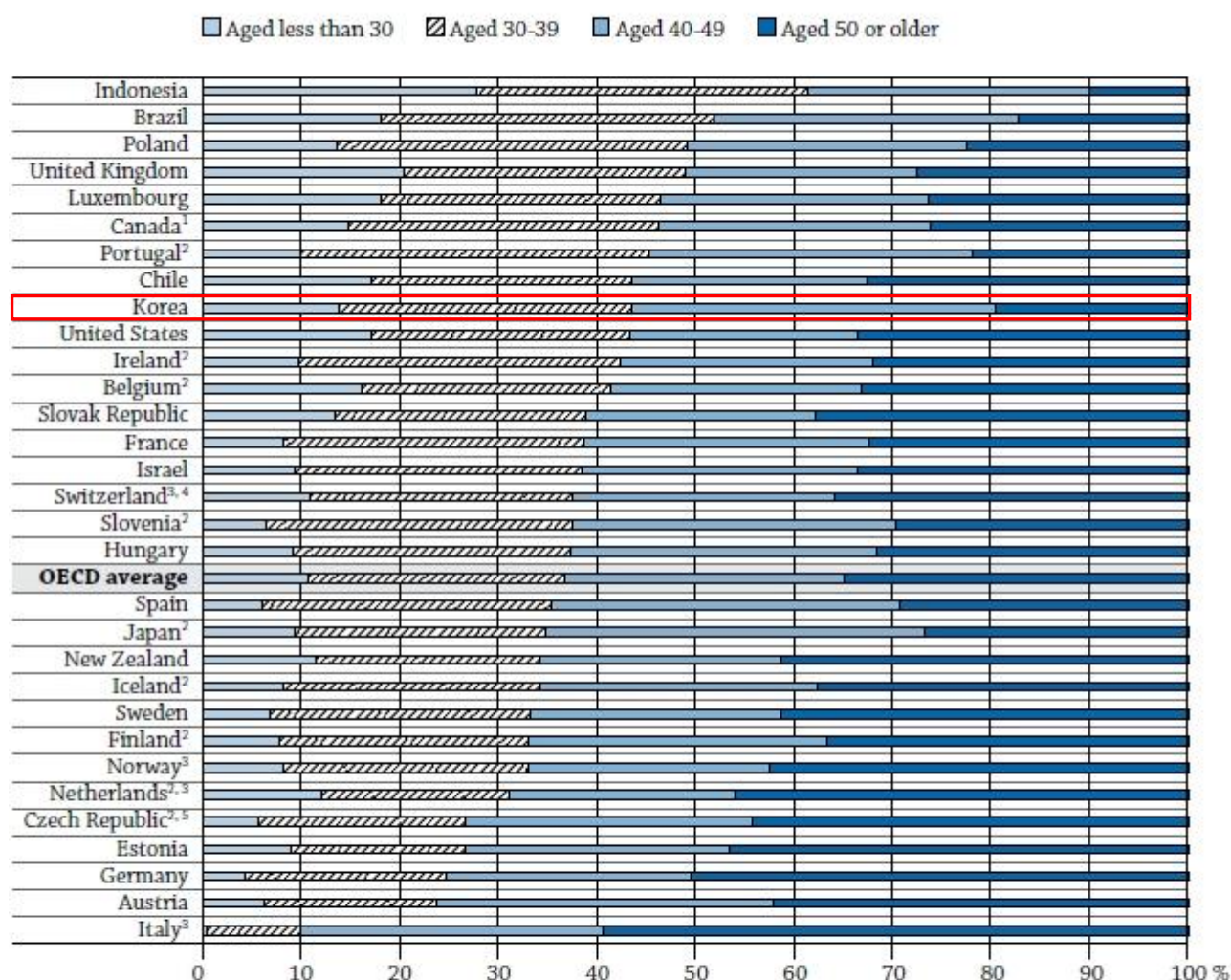
### *At the age of 15, Korean students study more hours in public institutions than the OECD average.*

Students in Korea are expected to receive total of 5 908 hours of instruction time in public institutions between the ages of 7 and 14, 955 hours less than the OECD average of 6 862 hours (Chart D1.1). However, at the age of 15, Korean students are expected to receive 1 020 hours of instruction time in public institutions, 113 hours more than the OECD average (Table D1.1). In addition, according to PISA 2006 results, 15-year-old Korean students spend over four-and-a-half hours per week in after-school classes, which take place both in and outside of school.

### *Korea has a relatively young teaching force at the primary level.*

A high proportion of teachers in Korea are between the ages of 30 and 39 and a large proportion of teachers below the age of 30. Some 58.7% of primary school teachers are younger than 40 – a significantly larger proportion than the OECD average of 41.1% (Table D5.1 and Chart D5.3). While 44.6% of lower secondary teachers and 42.6% of upper secondary teachers are at least 40 years old, the age range of teachers in Korea is still younger than the average across OECD countries (Table D5.1 and Chart D5.3).

**Chart D5.1. Age distribution of teachers in secondary education (2010)**  
*Distribution of teachers in educational institutions, by age group*



1. Year of reference 2009.

2. Secondary education includes post-secondary non-tertiary education.

3. Public institutions only.

4. Upper secondary education includes general programmes only.

5. Upper secondary education includes tertiary-type B education.

Countries are ranked in ascending order of the percentage of teachers aged 40 or older at the secondary level.

**Source:** OECD. Indonesia: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (World Education Indicators programme). Table D5.2. See Annex 3 for notes ([www.oecd.org/edu/eag2012](http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag2012)).

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*On average, teachers are well-paid in comparison to teachers in other OECD countries, and their salaries are more than those of full-time, full-year workers with tertiary education in other professions.*

For Korean primary school teachers with at least 15 years of experience, statutory salaries average USD 46 338, above the OECD average of USD 37 603. The statutory salaries of lower secondary school teachers with at least 15 years of experience average USD 46 232, also higher than the OECD average of USD 39 401 (Table D3.1).

Between 2000 and 2010, primary, lower secondary and upper secondary teachers' salaries increased by 17% in real terms in Korea. Most of those increases occurred between 2000 and 2005, when there was a 25% increase at the primary level, and a 26% increase at both the lower secondary and upper secondary levels (Table D3.2 and Chart D3.3).

## KEY FACTS

Indicator	Korea	OECD average	Korea rank*
<b>Educational Access and Output</b>			
<b>Enrolment rates</b>			
3-year-olds (in early childhood education)	78%	66%	15 of 36 countries
4-year-olds (in early childhood and primary education)	82%	81%	23 of 38 countries
5-14 year-olds (all levels)	100%	96%	11 of 39 countries
<b>Percentage of population that has attained at least upper secondary education</b>			
25-64 year-olds	80%	74%	17 of 40 countries
25-34 year-olds	98%	82%	1 of 36 countries
55-64 year-olds	43%	62%	29 of 36 countries
<b>Percentage of population that has attained tertiary education</b>			
25-64 year-olds	40%	31%	7 of 41 countries
25-34 year-olds	65%	38%	1 of 37 countries
55-64 year-olds	13%	23%	29 of 37 countries
<b>Entry rates into tertiary education</b>			
Vocational programmes (Tertiary-type B)	36%	17%	5 of 33 countries
University programmes (Tertiary-type A)	71%	62%	10 of 36 countries
<b>Graduation rates</b>			
Percentage of today's young people expected to complete upper secondary education in their lifetime	94%	84%	4 of 27 countries
<b>Economic and Labour Market Outcomes</b>			
<b>Unemployment rate of 25-64 year-olds</b>			
Below upper secondary	3.1%	12.5%	33 of 33 countries
Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary	3.5%	7.6%	32 of 34 countries
Tertiary	3.3%	4.7%	27 of 34 countries
<b>Average earnings premium for 25-64 year-olds with tertiary education (compared to people with upper secondary education; upper secondary = 100)</b>			
Men and women	151	155	17 of 32 countries
Men	143	160	24 of 32 countries
Women	155	157	17 of 32 countries
<b>Average earnings penalty for 25-64 year-olds who have not attained upper secondary education (compared to people with upper secondary education; upper secondary = 100)</b>			
Men and women	69	77	25 of 32 countries
Men	71	78	24 of 32 countries
Women	77	74	14 of 32 countries



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<b>Financial Investment in Education</b>			
<b>Annual expenditure per student (in equivalent USD, using PPPs)</b>			
Pre-primary education	6 047	6 670	17 of 34 countries
Primary education	6 658	7 719	20 of 35 countries
Secondary education	9 399	9 312	15 of 37 countries
Tertiary education	9 513	13 728	25 of 37 countries
<b>Total public and private expenditure on education</b>			
As a percentage of GDP	8%	6.2%	2 of 37 countries
<b>Total public expenditure on education</b>			
As a percentage of total public expenditure	15.3%	13.0%	8 of 32 countries
<b>Share of private expenditure on educational institutions</b>			
Primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education	23.8%	8.8%	1 of 32 countries
Tertiary education	73.9%	30%	2 of 31 countries
All levels of education	40%	16%	2 of 30 countries
<b>Schools and Teachers</b>			
<b>Ratio of students to teaching staff</b>			
Pre-primary education	17.1	14.4	11 of 32 countries
Primary education	21.1	15.8	6 of 36 countries
Secondary education	18.0	13.8	5 of 38 countries
<b>Number of hours of compulsory instruction time per year</b>			
7-8 year-olds	612	774 hours	25 of 33 countries
9-11 year-olds	703	821 hours	30 of 34 countries
12-14 year-olds	859	899 hours	22 of 34 countries
<b>Number of hours of teaching time per year (for teachers in public institutions)</b>			
Primary education	807	782 hours	13 of 35 countries
Lower secondary education	627	704 hours	24 of 34 countries
Upper secondary education	616	658 hours	22 of 35 countries
<b>Ratio of teachers' salaries to earnings for full-time, full-year adult workers with tertiary education</b>			
Primary school teachers	1.31	0.82	1 of 27 countries
Lower secondary school teachers	1.30	0.85	2 of 27 countries
Upper secondary school teachers	1.30	0.90	2 of 27 countries

\* Countries are ranked in descending order of values.

See: *Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators*

Visit: [www.oecd.org/edu/eag2012](http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag2012)

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