

## EDUCATION AT A GLANCE 2013

# UNITED STATES

The 2013 edition of *Education at a Glance*<sup>1</sup> offers a snapshot of how people who participate in and benefit from education, fared during the worst economic crisis seen in decades. The crisis in unemployment, particularly among young people, started early and then intensified in most OECD countries, including the United States, hitting adults with low levels of education the hardest. Although the growth rate of tertiary attainment in the United States is slower than many other OECD countries, the United States still has among the largest proportions of tertiary-educated adults in the world.

### Unemployment rates among all adults remain high...

As in most OECD countries, unemployment rates increased in the United States between 2008 and 2011. In 2011, 8.3% of American adults were unemployed – above the OECD average of 7.1%. Although the United States had lower unemployment rates than 8 other OECD countries, including Spain (19.5%) and Greece (16%), in Korea, the Netherlands and Norway, unemployment rates were under 3.5% that same year.

### ...and the proportion of young adults who were neither employed nor in education or training (NEET) slightly increased during the crisis.

The proportion of youth (15-29 year-olds) who were neither employed nor in education or training (NEET) increased by 2.1 percentage points between 2008 and 2011, on average across OECD countries, and by more than 5 percentage points in Greece, Ireland and Spain. During the same period, the United States recorded an increase of 1.3 percentage points in the proportion of NEET. In 2011, 15.9% of American young adults were NEET compared with the OECD average of 15.8%.

The ageing of the population in OECD countries, including the United States, may improve employment prospects for young adults. However, during recessionary periods, high general unemployment makes the transition from school to work substantially more difficult for young people, as those with more work experience are favoured over new entrants into the labour market. In order to improve the transition from school to work, regardless of the economic climate, education systems should ensure that individuals have the skills that are needed to succeed in the labour market, and work to reduce the proportion of young adults who are neither in school nor in work.

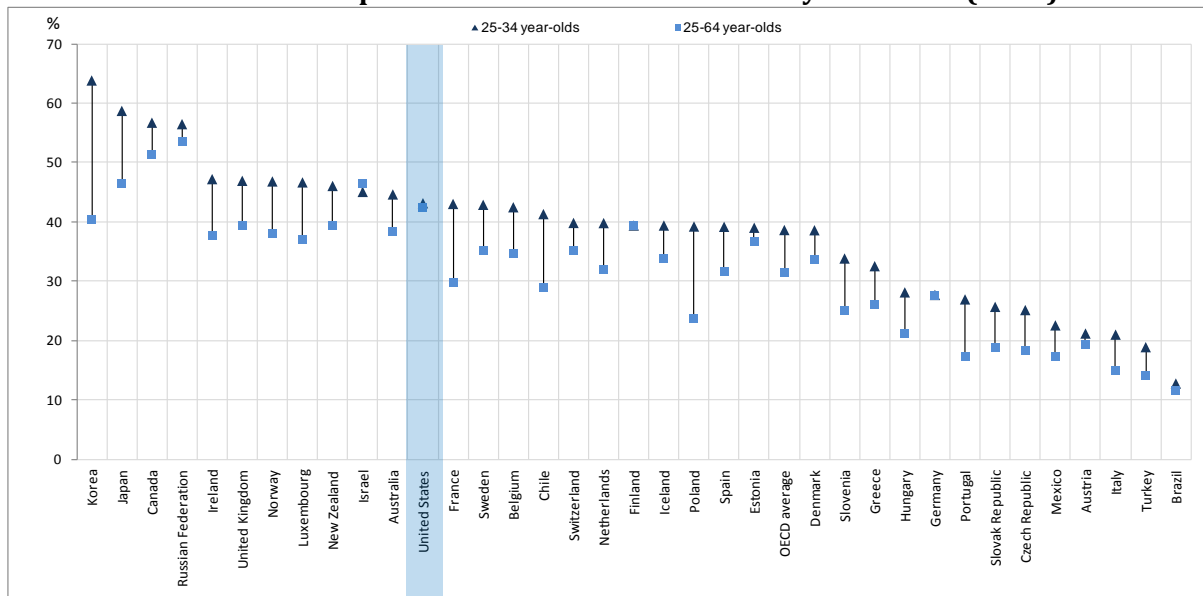
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<sup>1</sup> *Education at a Glance* features data on education from the 34 OECD member countries as well as Argentina, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia and South Africa.

## The United States ranks 5<sup>th</sup> in tertiary attainment among 25-64 year-olds, but 12<sup>th</sup> when considering 25-34 year-olds

Some 42% of American adults aged 25 to 64 have a tertiary degree; only Canada (51%), Israel (46%), Japan (46%) and the Russian Federation (53%) have higher tertiary attainment levels among this age group. At the same time, a number of countries have now surpassed the United States in the percentage of younger adults with a tertiary attainment. In 2011, 43% of 25-34 year-old Americans had attained a tertiary education – above the OECD average of 39% but far behind Korea, with a 64% tertiary attainment rate among this age group. The United States ranks 12<sup>th</sup> among 37 OECD and partner countries in this measure.

**Chart A1.1. Population that has attained tertiary education (2011)**



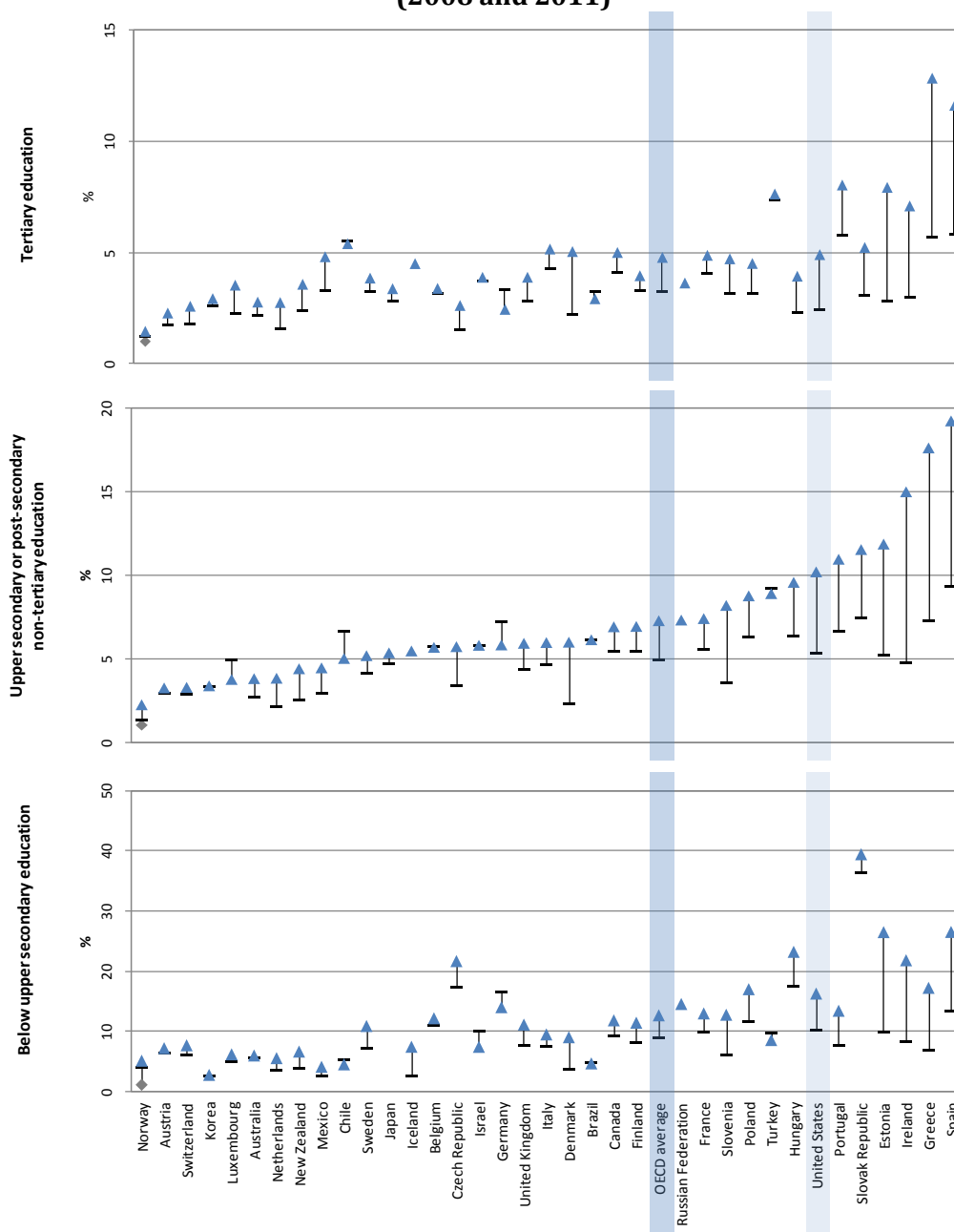
Countries are ranked in descending order of the percentage of 25-34 year-olds who have attained tertiary education.  
Source: OECD. Table A1.3a. See Annex 3 for notes ([www.oecd.org/edu/eag.htm](http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag.htm))

In 2011, 32% of 25-64 year-old Americans had attained a tertiary-type A (largely theory-based) education; only Norway had a larger proportion (36%) of adults who had completed this type of education. However, since only 33% of 25-34 year-olds in the United States had completed this type of education (the OECD average is 30%), the United States ranks 13<sup>th</sup> of 36 OECD and partner countries with available data on this measure.

## With higher levels of education come better prospects for employment...

People without an upper secondary education were hit hardest by the recession. In the United States, the unemployment rate for people who had attained this level of education increased by more than 6 percentage points between 2008 and 2011, reaching 16.2% in 2011. By comparison, across OECD countries, the unemployment rate increased by slightly less than 4 percentage points to 12.6% during the same period.

The difference in unemployment rates between those with low levels of education and those with high levels of education is stark. Between 2008 and 2011, unemployment rates among US adults with a tertiary degree increased 2.5 percentage points, up to 4.9% (across OECD countries, the rate rose an average of 1.5 percentage points to 4.8%).

**Chart A5.2. Unemployment rates among 25-64 year-olds, by educational attainment (2008 and 2011)**


Countries are ranked in ascending order of 2011 unemployment rates among 25-64 year-olds with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education. Source: OECD. Table A5.4a. See Annex 3 for notes ([www.oecd.org/edu/eag.htm](http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag.htm)). StatLink

### ... and higher earnings premiums.

The relative earnings premium for those with a tertiary education increased in most OECD countries over the past ten years, indicating that the demand for more educated individuals still exceeds supply. However, in the United States, relative earnings have fluctuated over the period. In 2000, a tertiary-educated 25-64 year-old earned 76% more than an adult in the same age group with an upper secondary education (the OECD average was 49% more). After variations in relative earnings throughout the decade, in 2011, a tertiary-educated 25-64 year-old earned 77% more than an adult in the same age group with an upper secondary education (the OECD average is 64% more). Chile,

Hungary, Slovenia and the United States have the highest earnings premiums for tertiary-educated workers.

### **Spending on education fell slightly during the crisis...**

While public investment in education for all levels of education combined increased by an average of 5% among OECD countries between 2008 and 2010, it dropped by 1% in the United States. Among the 31 countries with available data for the period, only four countries in addition to the United States cut back on public expenditure on educational institutions: Estonia (by 10%), Hungary (by 10%), Iceland (by 3%) and Italy (by 7%).

### **...but public spending on education remains relatively high...**

In 2010, the United States spent 7.3% of its GDP on all levels of education combined. This is well above the OECD average (6.3%), and more than all other OECD countries, except Denmark (8.0), Iceland (7.7%), Israel (7.4), Korea (7.6%), and Norway (7.6%). Across all levels of education, annual per-student spending by educational institutions in the United States (USD 15 171) is higher than in any other country.

The level of spending on education, from both public and private sources, varies with the level of education concerned. As a percentage of GDP, public and private spending on early childhood education in the United States is similar to the OECD average (0.5%), significantly above average for primary and lower secondary education (3.0% compared with 2.6%), and below average for upper secondary education (1.1% compared with 1.3%).

The largest difference is in higher education, on which the United States spends 2.8% of its GDP, much more than the OECD average (1.6%), and more than every other country. Annual spending per student by higher educational institutions in the United States amounts to USD 25 576, compared to the OECD average of USD 13 528. Only in Canada (USD 22 475) and Switzerland (USD 21 893) does spending exceed USD 20 000.

### **...and the share of private funding for education is large.**

In general, a larger-than-average proportion of the United States' spending on education comes from private sources. Some 69% of expenditures on all levels of education combined come from public sources; 31% come from private sources. By comparison, across all OECD countries, 84% of education expenditures are from public sources, and 16% of expenditures are from private sources.

In the United States, the public-private balance of expenditure on tertiary education is nearly the reverse of the average across other OECD countries. In the United States, 36% of expenditure on higher education come from public sources, and 64% come from private sources. Across all OECD countries, 68% of expenditure on tertiary education come from public sources, while 32% come from private sources.

Nearly half (48%) of all private expenditure on higher education in the United States comes from households. This proportion is even higher in Chile (70%), Japan (52%) and the United Kingdom (56%). In fact, over the past decade, the share of household spending on higher educational institutions has more than doubled in OECD countries. In most cases, these increases in private spending for higher education have been accompanied by increases in public financing (which may

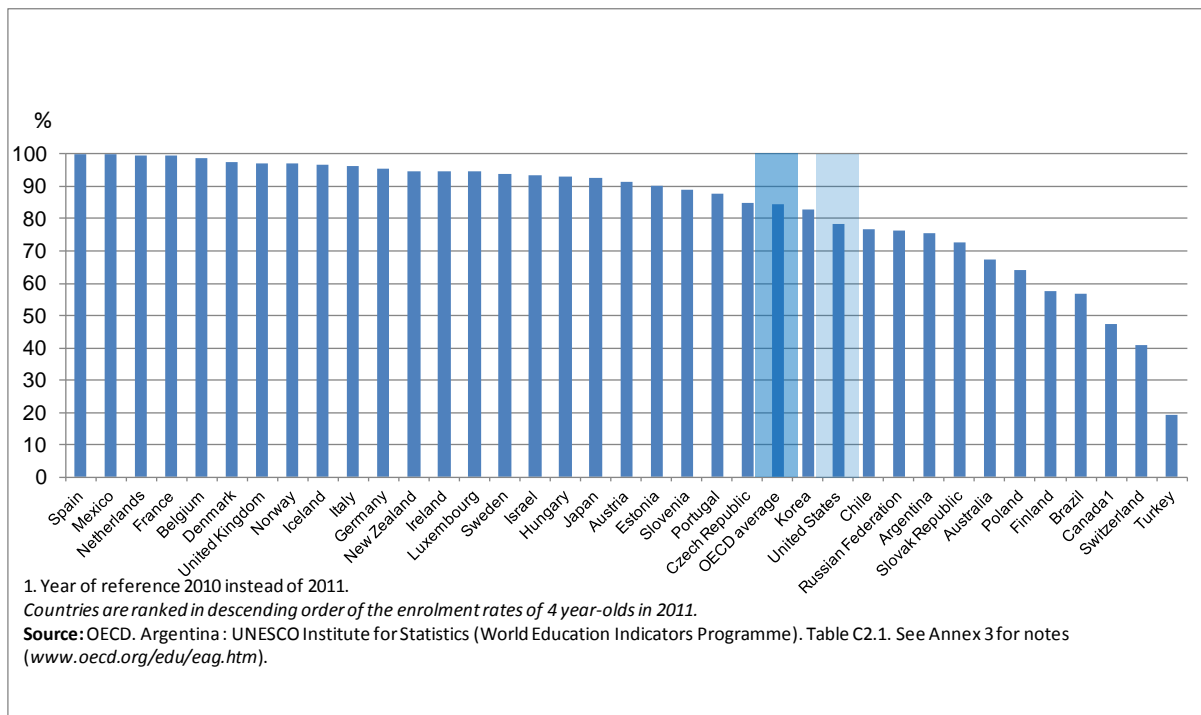
flow through households), not only to increase the number of places available for students, but also to ensure that the quality of education offered doesn't suffer as a result of this expansion.<sup>2</sup>

## Early childhood education is not as well-developed as in some other countries...

For most children in a majority of OECD countries, especially in European countries, education now begins well before they are five years old. In the United States, in 2011, only 50% of children were enrolled in early childhood education at the age of 3, compared to 68% on average among OECD countries. In some countries, such as Belgium, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Norway, Spain and Sweden more than 90% of 3-year-olds were enrolled in early childhood education.

The typical age for entering early childhood education in the United States is 4 years old, but in 2011, only 78% of children this age were enrolled, compared with 85% of 4-year-olds across OECD countries. While enrolment rates have improved since 2005, when 65% of 4-year-olds in the United States were enrolled, there is a lot of room for improvement – especially given the findings from the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) that 15-year-old students who had attended at least one year of pre-primary education perform better in reading than those who did not, even after accounting for socio-economic background.

**Chart C2.1. Enrolment rates at age 4 in early childhood and primary education (2005 and 2011)**



## ...despite higher-than-average expenditures per student.

In 2010, the United States spent the equivalent of USD 10 020 on early childhood education, compared with the OECD average of USD 6 762. However, when considered as a percentage of GDP, total public and private expenditure on early childhood education is slightly below the OECD average (0.5% versus

<sup>2</sup> OECD Yearbook 2013.

0.6%). The ratio of pupils to teaching staff in early childhood programmes in the United States is slightly below the OECD average (13.1 students per teacher compared with 14.3).

## Teachers' salaries have risen modestly over the past decade...

Of the 26 OECD countries with available data, teachers' salaries increased between 17% and 20% in real terms between 2000 and 2011 – however, in the United States, the increase has been 3%. Only in France and Japan did teachers' salaries at all three levels fall in real terms by almost 10% during that period. However, during the first years of the economic crisis (2009-11), teachers' salaries fell for the first time since 2000, by around 2% at each of the three levels of education (primary, lower and upper secondary) for OECD countries with available data.

## ...and they are not competitive with the salaries of similarly educated workers.

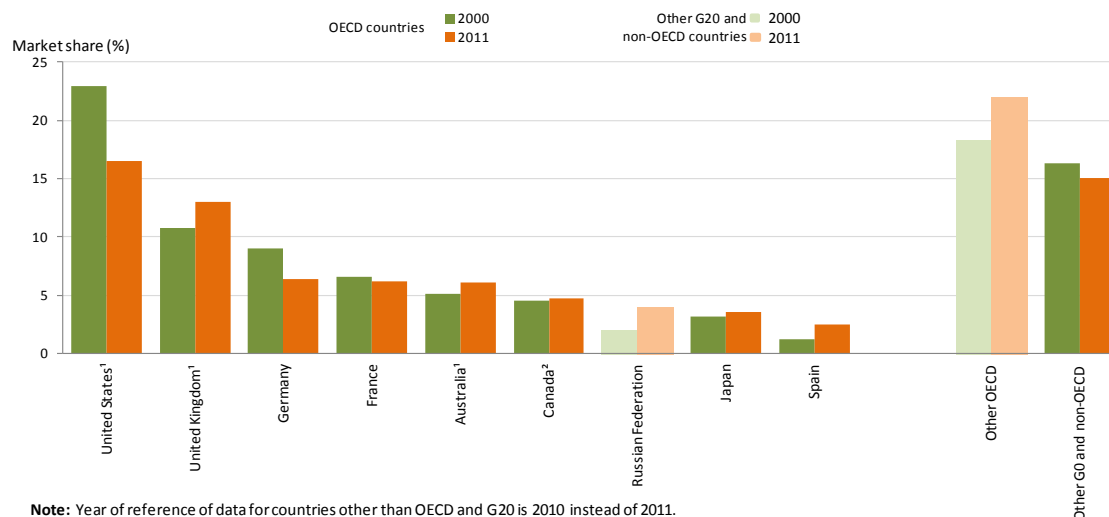
On average, a primary school teacher in the United States can expect to earn only 66% of the salary of the average tertiary-educated worker in another field (the OECD average is 82%); a lower secondary school teacher can expect to earn 67% of the salary of his or her tertiary-educated peer (the OECD average is 85%); and an upper secondary school teacher can expect to earn 70% of what a tertiary-educated peer earns (the OECD average is 89%). These relatively low wages may make it difficult to attract the best candidates to the teaching profession.

## Other findings:

- **At all levels of education, more men than women are employed in the United States.** In 2011, for instance, 58% of American men and 41% of American women with a lower secondary education were employed (the OECD average is 69% for men and 48% for women), while 86% of American men and 76% of American women with a tertiary-type A or advanced research degree were employed (the OECD average is 88% for men and 79% for women).
- **An average of 77% of today's young people in the United States will complete upper secondary education.** In 2000, only 70% of young Americans were expected to complete this level of education. In OECD countries, the expected graduation rate increased from 76% in 2000 to 83% in 2011, leaving the United States slightly behind. The average age of a first-time upper secondary graduate in the United States is 17, compared to the OECD average of 19.
- **There is no strong link between tuition fees and access to tertiary education in the United States.** In 2010, the annual average tuition fee charged for full-time students at public universities in first-degree programmes was USD 5 402, one of the highest among OECD countries. While tertiary institutions in a number of countries, including the Nordic countries, charge no tuition fees, other countries offer significant public support to students to compensate for tuition fees. In the United States, 28% of public expenditure on tertiary education is dedicated to support for households and other private entities, higher than the OECD average of 22%.
- **A smaller proportion of international students are choosing to study in the United States.** In 2011, about 4.3 million tertiary-level students were enrolled outside their country of citizenship. North America is the second most attractive destination for foreign students (21% of the total share) after Europe (48% of the total share). The share of international students choosing the United States to pursue their tertiary studies dropped from 23% in 2000 to 16% in 2011, whereas other countries such

as Australia, Korea, New Zealand, the Russian Federation, Spain and the United Kingdom saw their share increase by at least one percentage point during the same period.

**Chart C4.3 Trends in international education market shares (2000, 2011)**  
 Percentage of all foreign tertiary students enrolled, by destination



**Note:** Year of reference of data for countries other than OECD and G20 is 2010 instead of 2011.

1. Data relate to international students defined on the basis of their country of residence. For the UK, data for 2011 is based on citizenship.

2. Year of reference 2010 instead of 2011.

Countries are ranked in descending order of 2011 market shares.

**Source:** OECD and UNESCO Institute for Statistics for most data on non-OECD countries. Table C4.7, available on line. See Annex 3 for notes ([www.oecd.org/edu/eag.htm](http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag.htm)).

- Compared to their peers in other countries, teachers in the United States spend a great deal of time in front of the class.** On average, primary school teachers spend almost 1 100 hours a year teaching (the OECD average is 790 hours); lower secondary teachers teach for about 1 070 hours a year (the OECD average is 709 hours); and upper secondary school teachers spend about 1 050 hours a year in the classroom (the OECD average is 664 hours). In most OECD countries, the number of hours of teaching per year tends to decrease as the level of education rises; but in the United States, the number of teaching hours is roughly the same in primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education.

Please note: all Tables, Charts and Indicators are found in *Education at a Glance 2013* ([www.oecd.org/edu/eag.htm](http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag.htm))

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## Key Facts for United States in Education at a Glance 2013

Table	Indicator	United States		OECD average		Rank among OECD countries and other G20 countries*
<b>Educational Access and Output</b>						
	<b>Enrolment rates***</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2005</b>	
C2.1	3-year-olds (in early childhood education)	50%	35%	67%	64%	26 of 36
	4-year-olds (in early childhood and primary education)	78%	65%	84%	79%	25 of 36
C1.1a	5-14 year-olds (all levels)	96%		99%		28 of 38
	<b>Percentage of population that has attained below upper secondary education</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2000</b>	
A1.4a	25-64 year-olds	11%	13%	26%	34%	32 of 35
	<b>Percentage of population that has attained upper secondary education</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2000</b>	
A1.4a	25-64 year-olds	47%	51%	44%	44%	12 of 36
	<b>Percentage of population that has attained tertiary education</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2000</b>	
	25-64 year-olds	42%	36%	31%	22%	5 of 36
A1.3a	30-34 year-olds	44%		39%		13 of 34
A1.4a	25-34 year-olds	43%	38%	39%	26%	12 of 36
	55-64 year-olds	41%	30%	24%	15%	4 of 36
	<b>Entry rates into tertiary education</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2000</b>	
C3.1a	Vocational programmes (Tertiary-type B)	m	m	19%	16%	m
	University programmes (Tertiary-type A)	72%	58%	60%	48%	8 of 36
	<b>Graduation rates</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2000</b>	
A2.1a	Percentage of today's young people expected to complete upper secondary education in their lifetime	77%	70%	83%	76%	20 of 27
A3.1a	Percentage of today's young people expected to complete university education (tertiary-type A) in their lifetime	39%	34%	39%	28%	15 of 26
<b>Economic and Labour Market Outcomes</b>						
	<b>Unemployment rate of 25-64 year-olds - Men and Women</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2008</b>	
A5.4b	Below upper secondary	16.2%	10.1%	12.6%	8.8%	9 of 35
	Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary	10.2%	5.3%	7.3%	4.9%	7 of 36
	Tertiary	4.9%	2.4%	4.8%	3.3%	12 of 36
	<b>Unemployment rate of 25-64 year-olds - Women</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2008</b>	
A5.4d	Below upper secondary	15.2%	8.5%	12.2%	9.5%	8 of 35
	Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary	8.8%	4.9%	8.0%	5.7%	12 of 35
	Tertiary	4.7%	2.5%	5.1%	3.6%	15 of 36
	<b>Average earnings premium for 25-64 year-olds with tertiary education**</b>	<b>2011 or latest year available</b>		<b>2011</b>		
A6.1	Men and women	177		157		5 of 33
	Men	182		162		8 of 33
	Women	181		161		6 of 33
	<b>Average earnings penalty for 25-64 year-olds who have not attained upper secondary education**</b>	<b>2011 or latest year available</b>		<b>2011</b>		
A6.1	Men and women	64		76		31 of 33
	Men	64		77		32 of 33
	Women	58		74		30 of 33
	<b>Percentage of people not in employment, education or training for 15-29 year-olds, by level of education attained</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2008</b>	
C5.4d	Below upper secondary	12.5%	13.1%	15.8%	14.4%	20 of 34
	Upper secondary	19.4%	17.9%	16.2%	13.6%	11 of 34
	Tertiary	12.2%	9.2%	13.3%	10.6%	19 of 34



## Key Facts for United States in Education at a Glance 2013

Table	Indicator	United States		OECD average		Rank among OECD countries and other G20 countries*
<b>Financial Investment in Education</b>						
	<b>Annual expenditure per student (in equivalent USD, using PPPs)</b>	<b>2010</b>		<b>2010</b>		
B1.1a	Pre-primary education	10020 USD		6762 USD		3 of 32
	Primary education	11193 USD		7974 USD		4 of 34
	Secondary education	12464 USD		9014 USD		5 of 34
	Tertiary education	25576 USD		13528 USD		1 of 33
	<b>Total expenditure on educational institutions as a percentage of GDP</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2000</b>	
B2.1	As a percentage of GDP	7.3%	6.2%	6.3%	5.4%	6 of 33
	<b>Total public expenditure on education</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2000</b>	
B4.1	As a percentage of total public expenditure	12.7%	13.8%	13.0%	12.6%	15 of 32
	<b>Share of private expenditure on educational institutions</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2000</b>	
B3.2a	Pre-primary education	29.1%		17.9%		5 of 28
B3.2a	Primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education	7.7%	8.3%	8.5%	7.1%	16 of 31
B3.2b	Tertiary education	63.7%	62.6%	31.6%	22.6%	5 of 30
B3.1	All levels of education	30.6%	28.0%	16.4%	12.1%	4 of 29
<b>Schools and Teachers</b>						
	<b>Ratio of students to teaching staff</b>	<b>2011</b>		<b>2011</b>		
D2.2	Pre-primary education	13 students per teacher		14 students per teacher		18 of 31
	Primary education	15 students per teacher		15 students per teacher		21 of 35
	Secondary education	15 students per teacher		14 students per teacher		11 of 36
	<b>Total intended instruction time for students (hours)</b>	<b>2011</b>		<b>2011</b>		
D1.1	Primary education	m		4717 hours		m
	Lower secondary education	m		3034 hours		m
	<b>Number of hours of teaching time per year (for teachers in public institutions)</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2000</b>	
D4.2	Pre-primary education	1090 hours		994 hours		10 of 29
	Primary education	1097 hours	1080 hours	790 hours	780 hours	2 of 31
	Lower secondary education	1068 hours	1080 hours	709 hours	697 hours	2 of 30
	Upper secondary education	1051 hours	1080 hours	664 hours	628 hours	2 of 31
	<b>Index of change in statutory teachers' salaries for teachers with 15 years of experience/minimum training (2000 = 100)</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2008</b>	
D3.4	Primary school teachers	103	103	120	120	19 of 23
	Lower secondary school teachers	103	103	116	116	18 of 22
	Upper secondary school teachers	103	103	117	118	15 of 22
	<b>Ratio of teachers' salaries to earnings for full-time, full-year adult workers with tertiary education</b>	<b>2011</b>		<b>2011</b>		
D3.2	Pre-primary school teachers	0.65		0.80		16 of 22
	Primary school teachers	0.66		0.82		20 of 27
	Lower secondary school teachers	0.67		0.85		20 of 27
	Upper secondary school teachers	0.70		0.89		20 of 27

\* Countries are ranked in descending order of values.

\*\* Compared to people with upper secondary education; upper secondary = 100.

'm': data is not available.