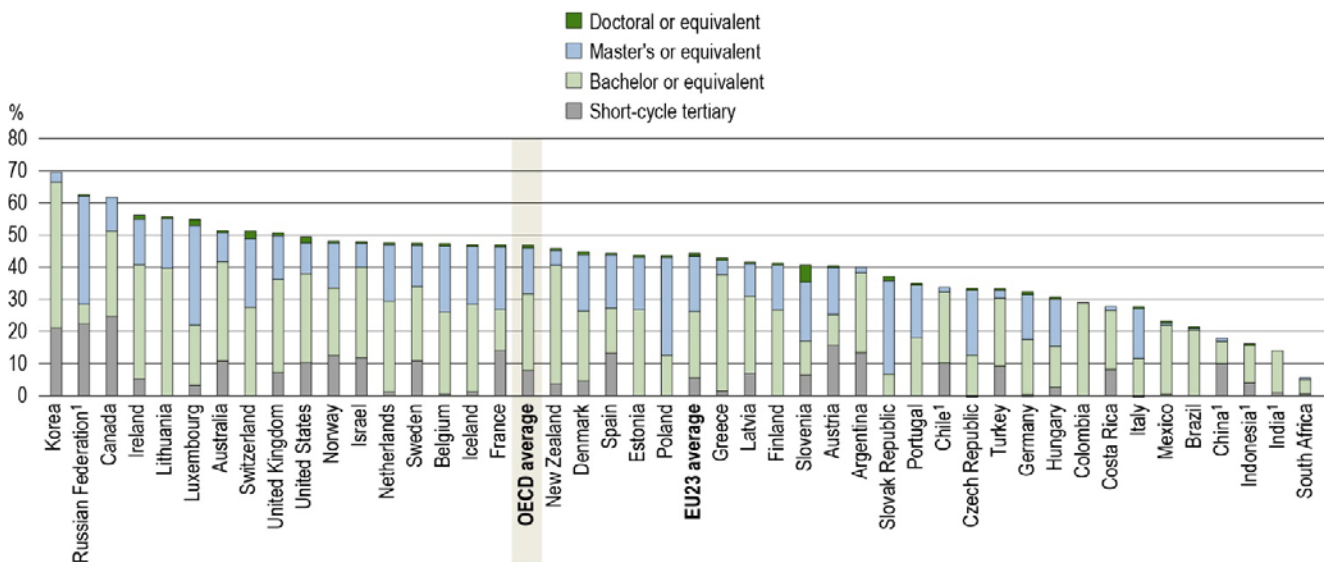


*Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators* (OECD, 2019<sup>[1]</sup>) is the authoritative source for information on the state of education around the world. It provides data on the structure, finances and performance of education systems in OECD and partner countries.

## Australia

- The gender gap in tertiary attainment has increased in the past decade. **In 2018, 59% of young women in Australia were tertiary educated compared to 44% of young men.**
- **Young adults with upper secondary vocational education, particularly men, have good labour-market prospects in Australia:** 83% of all 25-34 year-olds with an upper secondary vocational qualification (Certificate III) are employed, one of the highest rates across OECD countries.
- **Enrolment of 3-year-old children in early childhood education and care is still low.** Only 67% of them were enrolled in 2017, 12 percentage points below the OECD average.
- **The actual salaries of lower secondary teachers in Australia is about one-third higher** than average across OECD countries. They earn about 94% as much as other tertiary-educated workers, one of the smallest differences across OECD countries.

Figure 1. Distribution of 25-34 year-olds with tertiary education, by level of tertiary education (2018)



**Note:** Some categories might be included in other categories. Please refer to Education at a Glance Database, <http://stats.oecd.org> for details.

1. Year of reference differs from 2018. Refer to Table A1.1 for more details.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the total percentage of tertiary-educated 25-34 year-olds.

**Source:** OECD (2019), Education at a Glance Database, <http://stats.oecd.org>. See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/f8d7880d-en>).

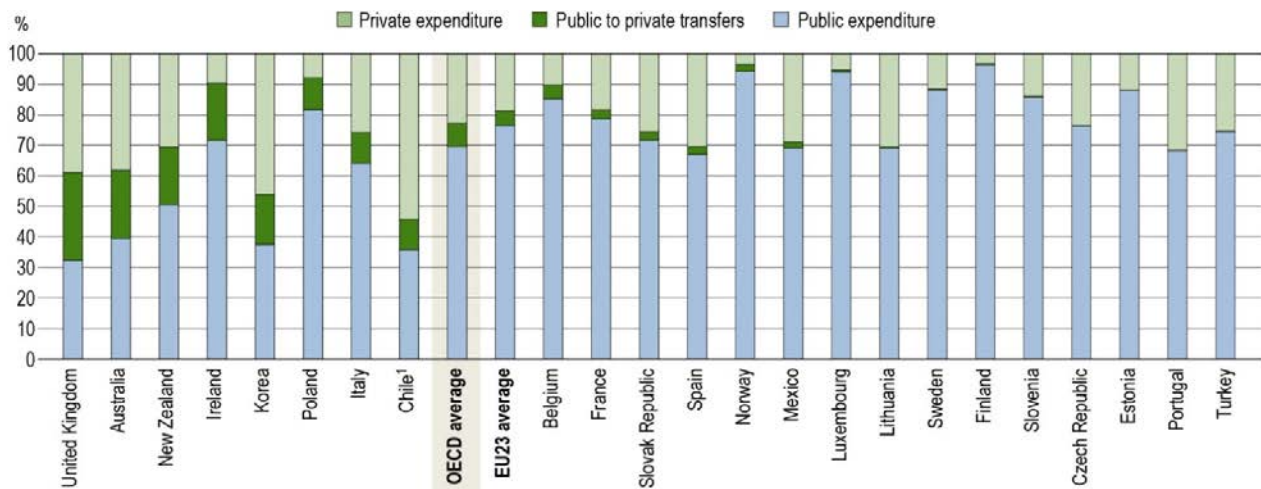
## The gender gap in tertiary attainment has increased in the past decade

- In Australia, the share of 25-34 year-olds with a tertiary degree increased by 9 percentage points between 2008 and 2018, reaching 51%, compared to the OECD average of 44%. However, this figure conceals a wide gender gap: 59% of 25-34 year-old women were tertiary-educated compared to 44% of men in 2018, a widening of the gap since 2008.
- The most common tertiary qualification among young adults in Australia is a bachelor's degree, which was held by 31% of 25-34 year-olds in 2017, compared to 24% on average across OECD countries. Short-cycle tertiary degrees are also relatively common in Australia: 11% of 25-34 year-olds had attained this level, compared to 8% across OECD countries. Few Australians pursue tertiary education beyond a bachelor's degree. Only 10% of young adults have attained a higher level degree (master's or doctoral) compared to 15% on average across OECD countries (Figure 1).
- Tertiary students in Australia take longer to complete their degree than average. The total share of students who had completed a bachelor's programme within the theoretical duration (34%) is below the average across countries with data (39%). However, after three additional years, 70% of students have graduated, compared to 67% on average.
- Information and communication technologies (ICT) and engineering, manufacturing and construction are seen in Australia as especially important for fostering innovation and economic growth. However, 17% of adults (25-64 year-olds) with a tertiary degree had studied these fields, a lower proportion than the OECD average (20%). This share may also be set to decline. While 12% of tertiary-educated adults have a degree in engineering, manufacturing and construction in Australia, only 8% of tertiary students graduating in 2017 had studied this field.

## High tuition fees in Australia are offset by a well-developed system of financial support to students

- Among OECD countries, Australia spends the eighth highest proportion of its gross domestic product (GDP) on primary to tertiary educational institutions (5.8% compared to the OECD average of 5.0%), with above-average expenditure at primary and tertiary levels of education and average expenditure at secondary level. Annual expenditure per student on tertiary educational institutions is about the same as the OECD average (USD 16 170 against USD 15 556 on average). Around one-third of the total spending on tertiary education is allocated to research and development, compared to 29% on average across OECD countries, and about 5% to ancillary services, the same as the OECD average.
- After transfers between the public and private sectors, private sources account for 60% of the total funding of tertiary educational institutions in Australia, almost double the OECD average. Almost three-quarters of private expenditure is covered by households, most of which is spent on tuition fees. Tuition fees for national students in public tertiary institutions averaged USD 5 034 a year for a bachelor's degree in 2017, an increase of about 7% over 2007. These fees are similar to those charged in Canada, Japan, Korea and New Zealand, but significantly lower than those charged in the United States or England (United Kingdom). Tuition fees are higher at master's level, at USD 8 929, the third highest after Chile and the United States and 23% higher than they were in 2007.
- Public transfers to the private sector play an important role in the financing of tertiary education in Australia and in providing financial support to students. They account for 22% of the total funds devoted to tertiary educational institutions, the second highest share across OECD countries after the United Kingdom (Figure 2). Most national students, 89%, benefit from financial support in Australia, in the form of public loans and/or grants, a similar share to New Zealand and the United States, and more than in Canada. While loans may reduce the upfront cost, students are required to repay the cost of their education once they start work. Despite similar tuition fees and financial support systems, students' average debt on graduation in Australia (USD 10 479) is about half that of New Zealand (USD 24 117) and one of the lowest among countries with available data.

**Figure 2. Distribution of transfers and public and private expenditure on educational institutions (2016)**  
Tertiary education levels



**Note:** International expenditure is aggregated with public expenditure for display purposes.  
1. Year of reference 2017.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the proportion of public-to-private transfers.

**Source:** OECD/UIS/Eurostat (2019), Tables C3.1 and C3.2. See *Source* section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/f8d7880d-en>).

- The earnings premium for a tertiary education in Australia is lower than on average across OECD countries: on average, full-time tertiary-educated workers in Australia earn 31% more than those with upper secondary education, compared to 57% on average across OECD countries. The premium for higher tertiary qualifications is also lower in Australia. Adults with a master's or doctoral degree earn on average 52% more than those with upper secondary education compared to 91% more on average across OECD countries. This is partly explained by the good labour-market opportunities available to those with upper secondary vocational qualifications.
- In Australia, the difference in earnings advantage across fields of study is relatively small. Those with the highest-paying degree (engineering, manufacturing and construction) earn only 36% more than those with the lowest-paying (education). In other countries, such as the United Kingdom and the United States, those with a degree in the highest-paying field of study earn about twice what those with a degree in the lowest-paying field of study earn.
- Despite higher tuition fees and lower earning premiums, the private gains (over a lifetime) associated with a tertiary education still exceed the costs for in Australia. However, the net financial return, particularly for men, is lower than the OECD average: USD 229 200 for women and USD 254 300 for men, compared to USD 240 000 for women and USD 310 300 for men on average across OECD countries. This may partially explain the lower tertiary attainment for men.

### Despite high tuition fees, the Australian tertiary education system is very attractive to international students

- The difference in tuition fees between national and foreign students in Australia is one of the highest in the OECD. Public institutions charged foreign students tuition fees of USD 19 029 per year on average for bachelor's programmes, almost four times the fees charged to national students.
- Despite these high fees, Australia is very attractive to tertiary students. It takes in 10% of all the international or foreign tertiary students in OECD member countries, one of the largest shares across OECD countries. International students also make up 21% of all students enrolled in tertiary education in Australia, compared to 6% on average across OECD countries. Although they make up a small share of

students in bachelor's or equivalent programmes (14%), they represent a significant share of those enrolled in master's (48%) and doctoral programmes (32%).

- Students from Asia form the largest group of international students in Australia. About one-third (34%) of international students studying in Australia come from the People's Republic of China and 14% from India. The biggest share of international tertiary students in Australia, about 50%, enrol in the broad field of business, administration and law, significantly above the OECD average (27%) and significantly more than among the tertiary-educated adult population (29%). In contrast, about 12% enrol in engineering, manufacturing and construction, slightly below the OECD average of 18%.
- Australia attracts many more international students than it sends abroad. For each national student abroad, Australia receives 28 international or foreign students, the highest ratio across OECD countries and much higher than the OECD average ratio of 1:4.

### Although those less qualified are disadvantaged in the labour market, upper secondary vocational qualifications offer good employment opportunities

- In Australia, 79% of 25-34 year-old adults who have an upper secondary qualification are employed, compared to 57% of those who have not. The employment rate for younger women (aged 25-34) without upper secondary education is 43%, compared to 69% for their male peers, but the disparities narrow as educational attainment increases. The gender gap in employment shrinks to 17 percentage points among adults with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education and to 11 percentage points among those with tertiary education.
- Among 25-34 year-olds whose highest level of education is upper secondary, the employment rate for those with a vocational qualification (Certificate III) in Australia is higher than for those with a general qualification (Year 12 graduates). The employment rate is 83% for young adults with vocational qualifications (OECD average: 80%) and 74% for those with general qualifications (OECD average: 71%). The average employment rate in Australia for tertiary-educated adults is only 2 percentage points higher than for those with a vocational upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary qualification. This is one of the smallest differences across OECD countries.
- The unemployment rate in Australia is relatively low compared to the OECD average for all levels of education. However, the risk of unemployment is 3 times higher for those without an upper secondary qualification compared to those who attained this baseline level (15% against 5%) compared to twice as high on average across OECD countries.
- The proportion of young people in Australia who are neither employed nor in education or training (NEET) is lower than the OECD average and is similar to 2008. In 2018, 10.8% of 15-29 year-olds were classified as NEET, compared to 10.4% in 2007. In contrast, the NEET rate decreased slightly on average across the OECD to 13.2% in 2018 from 13.4% in 2008.

### Enrolment of 3 year-olds in early childhood education and care is low despite increasing awareness of its importance

- Early childhood education and care (ECEC) has experienced a surge of policy attention in OECD countries in recent decades, with a focus on children under the age of 3. In Australia, 40% of children under 3 are enrolled in ECEC, compared to 36% on average across OECD countries. Australia, in common with about half of OECD countries, has an integrated early childhood education and care service, where the education ministry administers the full ECEC system and sets intentional education objectives for children from the ages of 0 or 1 until they enter primary education.
- Between 2010 and 2017, the enrolment rate of 3-5 year-olds gradually increased from 74% to 84% in Australia. However, most 5-year-olds are enrolled in primary education in Australia, whereas primary education begins at age 6 in most other OECD countries.

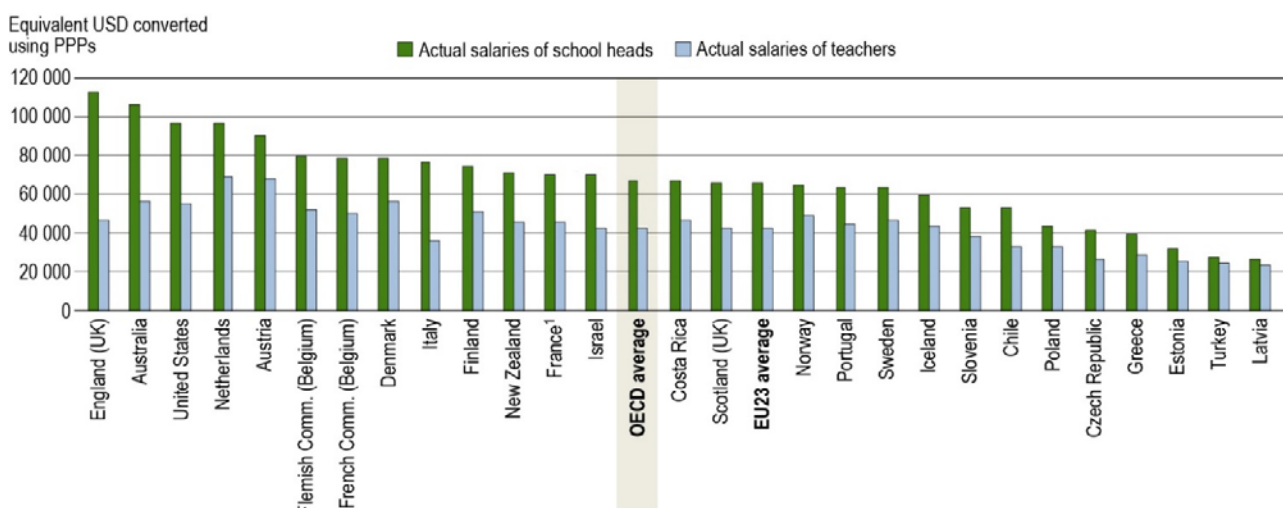
- In 2008, Australia developed the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education, which aims to maintain universal access to quality early childhood education programmes for all children in the year before full-time school (OECD, 2017<sup>[2]</sup>). However, enrolment in ECEC among 4-year-olds is below the OECD average although the gap has narrowed. In 2017, 85% of 4-year-olds were enrolled in Australia, slightly below the OECD average of 87%.
- Enrolment among 3-year-olds is even less widespread: only 67% are enrolled, well below the OECD average of 79%.
- Annual total expenditure on children aged 3 to 5 enrolled in ECEC (ISCED 0) and primary education was similar to the OECD average in Australia in 2016: USD 8 325 per child per year compared to USD 8 141 per child on average. This amounted to 0.6% of gross domestic product (GDP), similar to the average across OECD countries. In Australia, 36% of total investment on ECEC (ISCED 0) education is privately funded compared to 18% on average across OECD countries.

### Teachers' salaries are competitive with their tertiary-educated peers and there are strong financial incentives to become a school head

- Compulsory primary and lower secondary education lasts 11 years in Australia, the longest period among OECD countries. As a result, total instruction time over the period of compulsory education is also the highest across countries. A typical Australian student will attend school for a total of 11 000 hours to complete the 11 years of primary and lower secondary education, 3 410 hours more than the OECD average. The average number of instruction hours per year received by students enrolled in primary and lower secondary in Australia are also significantly above the OECD average (1 000 hours per year against 799 and 919 hours per year on average in primary and lower secondary respectively).
- In Australia, the statutory salaries of teachers in public schools with the most prevalent qualifications are among the highest across OECD countries. For example, the annual statutory starting salary of a primary school teacher is USD 44 287, compared to USD 33 058 on average across OECD countries. Similar patterns apply for pre-primary, and lower and upper secondary teachers.

**Figure 3. Actual salaries of lower secondary teachers and school heads (2017)**

Annual actual salaries of teachers and school heads in public institutions, in equivalent USD converted using PPPs



1. Year of reference differs from 2016. See Table D3.4 for more information.

Countries and economies are ranked in descending order of actual salaries of school heads.

Source: OECD (2019), Table D3.4. See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/f8d7880d-en>).

- However, the distribution of salaries is comparatively flat in Australia, both over the course of teachers' careers and across educational levels. For example, it takes only seven years for a lower secondary



teacher to progress from the statutory starting salary (USD 44 247) to the top of the scale (USD 65 560), compared to 25 years on average across OECD countries. At the top of the scale, statutory salaries are only 48% more than starting salaries at all levels of education taught, compared to 61-67% on average across OECD countries.


- Teachers' actual salaries (including bonuses and allowances) are also above the OECD average. Average actual salaries for Australian teachers are 52% higher than the OECD average at pre-primary level, 36% higher at primary level, 32% higher at lower secondary level, but only 22% higher at upper secondary level. Depending on the level of education taught, teachers' salaries are 93-94% of the average salaries of tertiary-educated workers. These relative earnings are among the highest across all OECD countries and economies.
- Teachers in Australia have strong financial incentives to become school leaders: head teachers' actual salaries are also among the highest across OECD countries at all levels of education. At the lower secondary level for example, school heads in Australia earn USD 105 703 compared to USD 66 534 on average across OECD countries (Figure 3).

## References

OECD (2019), *Education at a Glance 2019: OECD indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, [1]  
<https://doi.org/10.1787/f8d7880d-en>.

OECD (2017), *Starting Strong 2017: Key OECD Indicators on Early Childhood Education and Care*, [2]  
 Starting Strong, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264276116-en>.

**For more information on Education at a Glance 2019** and to access the full set of Indicators, visit [www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance-19991487.htm](http://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance-19991487.htm).

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.

**Explore, compare and visualise more data and analysis using:**   
<http://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=AUS&treshold=10&topic=EO>.

<b>Questions can be directed to:</b>	<b>Country note author:</b>
Marie-Helene Doumet Directorate for Education and Skills <a href="mailto:marie-helene.doumet@oecd.org">marie-helene.doumet@oecd.org</a>	Eric Charbonnier Directorate for Education and Skills <a href="mailto:eric.charbonnier@oecd.org">eric.charbonnier@oecd.org</a>

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On 25 May 2018, the OECD Council invited Colombia to become a Member. While Colombia is included in the OECD averages reported in this note, at the time of its preparation, Colombia was in the process of completing its domestic procedures for ratification and the deposit of Colombia's instrument of accession to the OECD Convention was pending.

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### Note regarding data from Israel

The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and are under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

## Key Facts for Australia in Education at a Glance 2019

Source	Main topics in <i>Education at a Glance</i>	Australia		OECD average	
<b>Tertiary education</b>					
<b>Educational attainment of 25-64 year-olds</b>					
Table A1.1	Short-cycle tertiary	12%		7%	
	Bachelor's or equivalent	26%		17%	
	Master's or equivalent	7%		13%	
	Doctoral or equivalent	1%		1%	
<b>Tertiary attainment of 25-34 year-olds, by gender</b>					
Table A1.2		<b>2008</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2018</b>
	Men	37%	44%	31%	38%
	Women	48%	59%	40%	51%
	Total	42%	51%	35%	44%
<b>Distribution of first-time tertiary entrants by education level</b>					
Table B4.1				<b>2017</b>	
	Short-cycle tertiary	**		17%	
	Bachelor's or equivalent	**		76%	
	Master's or equivalent	**		7%	
<b>Share of international or foreign students, by education level<sup>1</sup></b>					
Table B6.1				<b>2017</b>	
	Bachelor's or equivalent	14%		4%	
	Master's or equivalent	48%		13%	
	Doctoral or equivalent	32%		22%	
	All tertiary levels of education	21%		6%	
<b>Employment rate of 25-64 year-olds, by educational attainment</b>					
Table A3.1				<b>2018</b>	
	Short-cycle tertiary	81%		82%	
	Bachelor's or equivalent	85%		84%	
	Master's or equivalent	86%		88%	
	Doctoral or equivalent	89%		92%	
	All tertiary levels of education	84%		85%	
<b>Employment rate of tertiary-educated 25-64 year-olds, by field of study</b>					
Table A3.4				<b>2018</b>	
	Education	84%		84%	
	Business and administration and law	84%		86%	
	Engineering, manufacturing and construction	85%		89%	
	Health and welfare	86%		87%	
<b>Relative earnings of full-time full-year 25-64 year-old workers, by educational attainment (upper secondary education = 100)</b>					
Table A4.1				<b>2017</b>	
	Short-cycle tertiary	107		120	
	Bachelor's or equivalent	135		144	
	Master's, doctoral or equivalent	152		191	
	All tertiary levels of education	131		157	
<b>Upper secondary and vocational education and training (VET)</b>					
<b>Upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment rate</b>					
Table A1.2	Share of 25-34 year-olds with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary as their highest attainment	38%		41%	
<b>Percentage of first-time upper secondary graduates with a vocational qualification</b>					
Table B3.1	Vocational programmes	**		40%	
<b>Age at graduation from upper secondary education, by programme orientation</b>					
Figure B3.1				<b>2017</b>	
	General programmes	**		18	
	Vocational programmes	32		21	
<b>Share of women among upper secondary graduates, by programme orientation</b>					
Figure B3.2				<b>2017</b>	
	General programmes	51%		55%	
	Vocational programmes	46%		46%	
<b>Employment, unemployment and inactivity rates of 25-34 year-olds, with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education</b>					
Table A3.3				<b>2018</b>	
	Employment rate	79%		78%	
	Unemployment rate	5%		7%	
	Inactivity rate	17%		16%	
<b>Total expenditure on upper secondary educational institutions, in USD<sup>2</sup> per full-time equivalent student, by programme orientation</b>					
Table C1.1				<b>2016</b>	
	General programmes	USD 13 543		USD 9 397	
	Vocational programmes	USD 4 529		USD 10 922	
<b>Early childhood education and care (ECEC)</b>					
<b>Enrolment rate of 3-5 year-olds in education</b>					
Table B2.2	ECEC and primary education	84%		87%	
<b>Share of children enrolled in private institutions</b>					
Table B2.3	Pre-primary level (ISCED 02)	84%		34%	
<b>Ratio of children to teaching staff</b>					
Table B2.3	Pre-primary level (ISCED 02)	**		16	
<b>Expenditure on children aged 3-5 enrolled in education</b>					
Table B2.4	Annual expenditure per child, in USD <sup>2</sup> per child	USD 8 325		USD 8 141	

Source	Main topics in <i>Education at a Glance</i>	Australia		OECD average	
<b>Social outcomes and adult learning</b>					
<b>Participation in formal and/or non-formal education, by educational attainment</b>		2016			
Table A7.1	Below upper secondary	17%		n.a.	
	Upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary	33%		n.a.	
	Tertiary	49%		n.a.	
<b>Participation in cultural or sporting activities in the last 12 months, by educational attainment</b>		2015			
Table A6.1	Below upper secondary	**		n.a.	
	Upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary	**		n.a.	
	Tertiary	**		n.a.	
<b>Financial resources invested in education</b>					
<b>Total expenditure on educational institutions, by level of education<sup>2</sup></b>		2016			
Table C1.1 and C2.1		<b>USD/student</b>	<b>% GDP</b>	<b>USD/student</b>	<b>% GDP</b>
	Primary	USD 10 013	1.8%	USD 8 470	1.5%
	Lower secondary	USD 12 684	1.3%	USD 9 884	0.9%
	Upper secondary	USD 10 199	0.7%	USD 10 368	1.1%
	Tertiary (including R&D)	USD 16 170	1.9%	USD 15 556	1.5%
<b>Share of expenditure on educational institutions, by final source of funds</b>		2016			
Table C3.1		<b>Public</b>	<b>Private</b>	<b>Public</b>	<b>Private</b>
	Primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary	81%	19%	90%	10%
	Tertiary (including R&D)	40%	60%	66%	32%
<b>Total public expenditure on primary to tertiary education</b>		2016			
Table C4.1	As a percentage of total government expenditure	12.5%		10.8%	
<b>Teachers, the learning environment and the organisation of schools</b>					
<b>Actual salaries of teachers and school heads in public institutions relative to earnings of full-time, full-year workers with tertiary education</b>		2017			
Table D3.2a		<b>Teachers</b>	<b>School heads</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>School heads</b>
	Pre-primary	0.93	1.4	0.78	**
	Primary	0.93	1.53	0.84	1.25
	Lower secondary (general programmes)	0.94	1.78	0.88	1.34
	Upper secondary (general programmes)	0.94	1.78	0.93	1.43
<b>Annual statutory salaries of teachers in public institutions, based on most prevalent qualifications, at different points in teachers' careers<sup>2</sup></b>		2018			
Table D3.1a		<b>Starting salary</b>	<b>Salary after 15 years of experience</b>	<b>Starting salary</b>	<b>Salary after 15 years of experience</b>
	Pre-primary	USD 44 729	USD 63 277	USD 31 276	USD 42 078
	Primary	USD 44 287	USD 63 098	USD 33 058	USD 45 947
	Lower secondary (general programmes)	USD 44 247	USD 63 393	USD 34 230	USD 47 675
	Upper secondary (general programmes)	USD 44 247	USD 63 393	USD 35 859	USD 49 804
<b>Organisation of teachers' working time in public institutions over the school year</b>		2018			
Tables D4.1a and D4.1b		<b>Net teaching time</b>	<b>Total statutory working time</b>	<b>Net teaching time</b>	<b>Total statutory working time</b>
	Pre-primary	886 hours	**	1 024 hours	1 613 hours
	Primary	870 hours	**	783 hours	1 612 hours
	Lower secondary (general programmes)	811 hours	**	709 hours	1 634 hours
	Upper secondary (general programmes)	811 hours	**	667 hours	1 629 hours
<b>Percentage of teachers who are 50 years old or over</b>		2017			
Table D5.1	Primary to upper secondary	**		36%	
<b>Share of female teachers, in public and private institutions</b>		2017			
Table D5.2	Primary	**		83%	
	Lower secondary	**		69%	
<b>Total number of compulsory instruction time, by level of education</b>		2019			
Table D1.1	Primary	7 000 hours		4 568 hours	
	Lower secondary	4 000 hours		3 022 hours	
	Upper secondary	**		**	
<b>Average class size by level of education</b>		2017			
Table D2.1	Primary	24		21	
	Lower secondary	22		23	

The reference year is the year cited or the latest year for which data are available.

1. For some countries, data on foreign students are provided instead of international students.

2. Values reported in equivalent US dollars (USD) have been converted using purchasing power parities (PPPs) for GDP

\*\* Please refer to the source table for details on these data.

Cut-off date for the data: 19 July 2019. Any updates on data can be found on line at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-data-en>.