

COUNTRY NOTE



Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators 2012

ITALY

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KEY FINDINGS

- Entry rates for higher education increased after Italy introduced a new degree structure in the early 2000s. While university-level attainment still remains below the OECD average, the gap for younger generations of Italians is expected to narrow over the next decade.
- Women have made notable progress in higher education in Italy.
- More than one in five 15-29 year-olds in Italy are neither in education nor employed, and many children of parents with low levels of education are caught in a low-education trap.
- Italy allocates a large share of educational expenditures to support pre-primary and primary students.
- Private expenditure on education increased more than public expenditure in recent years.

Entry rates into higher education increased after Italy introduced a new degree structure in the early 2000s, but attainment rates remain below the OECD average.

The proportion of young people in Italy who can expect to enter university-level higher education programmes over their lifetime increased from 39% in 2000 to 49% in 2010 (Table C3.3), and the proportion of young people expected to graduate from such programmes over their lifetime increased even faster, from 19% in 2000 to 32% in 2010 (of which 27% are expected to graduate before the age of 30) (Table A3.2). The proportion of Italians with university-level higher education has increased from generation to generation, from 10% among 55-64 year-olds to 20% among 25-34 year-olds. While university-level attainment for 25-34 year-olds in Italy (20%) remains below the OECD average (28%) in 2010 (Table A1.3a), Italy is expected to further narrow that gap over the next decade.

Women have made notable progress in higher education.

Among 55-64 year-olds, one in ten men (11%) and women (10%) have attained university-level higher education; by contrast, among 25-34 year-olds, one in four women (25%) have attained university-level higher education, compared to only one in six men (16%) (Tables A1.3b, A1.3c, web only). In 2010, entry rates into higher education for women (57%) exceeded entry rates for men (42%) (Table A4.4), and 59% of all university-level first-degree graduates in Italy werewomen, up from 56% in 2000 and in line with the OECD average of 58% (Table A4.5 and A4.6, Chart A4.4). While only one in three (33%) engineering graduates in Italy are women, this proportion is one of the highest among OECD countries: only Estonia, Greece, Iceland and Spain have higher proportions (Table A4.6). Italy also has, after Portugal, the second highest proportion of women among graduates in science-related fields (52%); and, although data refer to 2008, Italy has one of the highest percentages among OECD countries of advanced research qualifications (doctorates) awarded to women (52%) (Table A4.5, Chart A4.4).

The labour market for young graduates has become more difficult over the past decade.

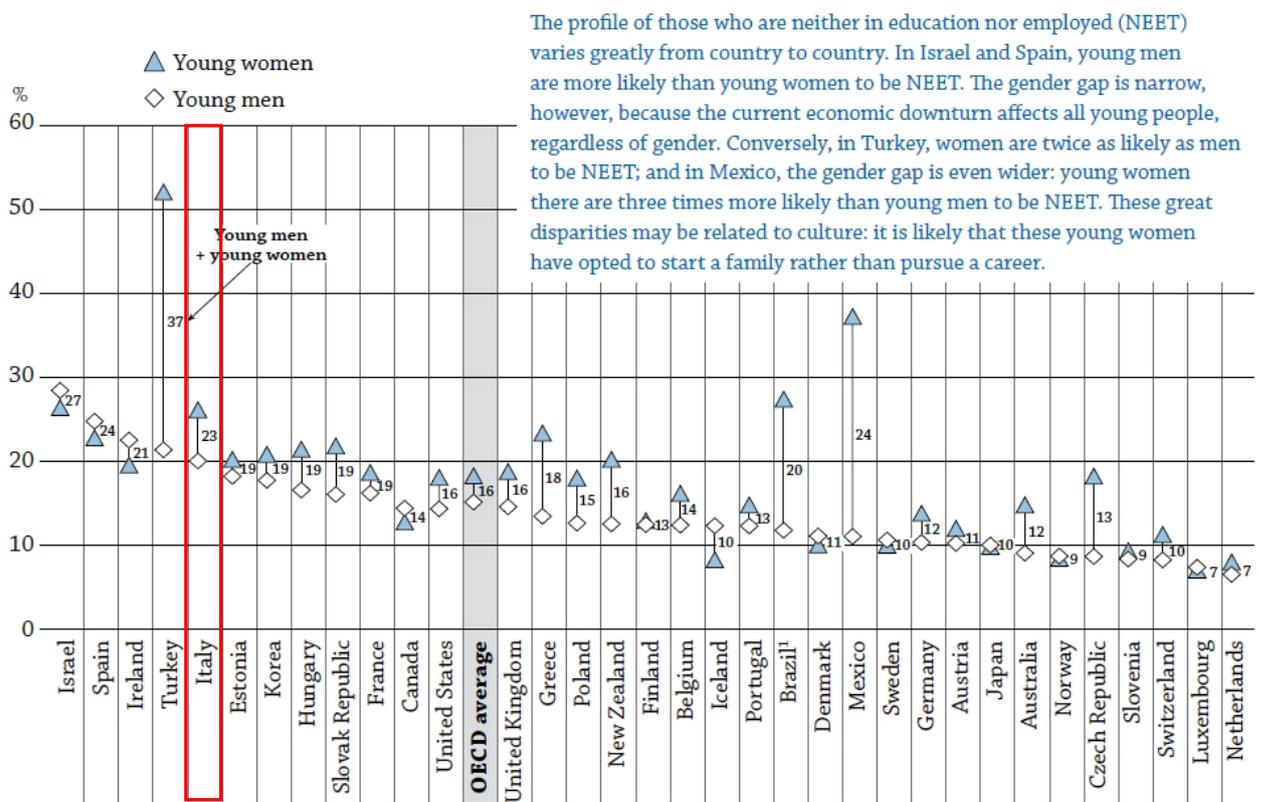
However, even as higher education attainment has increased in successive cohorts of Italians, many indicators suggest that the labour market for young graduates has become more difficult over the past decade.

Employment rates for Italians (25-64 year-olds) with higher education decreased between 2002 and 2010, from 82.2% to 78.3%, while the employment rate of adults with upper secondary education remained stable (72.3% in 2002; 72.6% in 2010) (Table A7.3a). The difference in unemployment rates for these two groups also became smaller: the unemployment rate for people with higher education increased slightly between 2002 and 2010, from 5.3% to 5.6%, while unemployment rates for adults with upper secondary education fell from 6.4% to 6.1% (Table A7.4a). By contrast, on average in OECD countries, unemployment among people with upper secondary education increased more (from 6.1% in 2002 to 7.6% in 2010) than unemployment among people with higher education (from 3.8% in 2002 to 4.7% in 2010). In Italy, for men and women alike, employment and unemployment rates for people with higher education moved closer to those for people with no more than upper secondary education (Table A7.3b, and A7.3c, web only).

Data on earnings also indicate that young graduates of higher education in Italy have trouble finding a suitable job. Relative earnings differences between workers with higher education and those with an upper secondary education are much smaller for young workers than for older workers. Italian workers with a tertiary degree aged 25-34 earn only 9% more than workers with an upper secondary degree in the same age group (the OECD average is 37%). By contrast, workers with a tertiary degree aged 55-64 earn 96% more than workers with an upper secondary degree in the same age group (the OECD average is 69%) (Table A8.1). While the difference in relative earnings for young workers is the second smallest among OECD countries (after Norway), the difference for older workers is among the largest.

More than one in five 15-29 year-olds are neither in education nor employed.

Chart C5.1. Percentage of 15-29 year-olds neither in education nor employed (2010)



The profile of those who are neither in education nor employed (NEET) varies greatly from country to country. In Israel and Spain, young men are more likely than young women to be NEET. The gender gap is narrow, however, because the current economic downturn affects all young people, regardless of gender. Conversely, in Turkey, women are twice as likely as men to be NEET; and in Mexico, the gender gap is even wider: young women there are three times more likely than young men to be NEET. These great disparities may be related to culture: it is likely that these young women have opted to start a family rather than pursue a career.

1. Year of reference 2009.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the percentage of young men who are neither in education nor employed.

Source: OECD, Tables C5.4a, C5.4b and C5.4c (available on line). See Annex 3 for notes (www.oecd.org/edu/eag2012).

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The difficulties young tertiary educated Italians face in finding adequate work are part of larger problem of transitioning from education to employment. Italy struggles with high rates of inactivity among its young people: in 2010, 23% of 15-29 year-olds were neither in education nor employed (NEET). This proportion is the fifth highest among OECD countries, and is well above the OECD average of 16% (Chart C5.1). While the proportion of NEETs in Italy decreased between 1998 (26%) and 2003 (19%), it has increased rapidly since the global recession hit in 2008 (Table C5.4a).

Many children of low-educated parents are caught in a low-education trap.

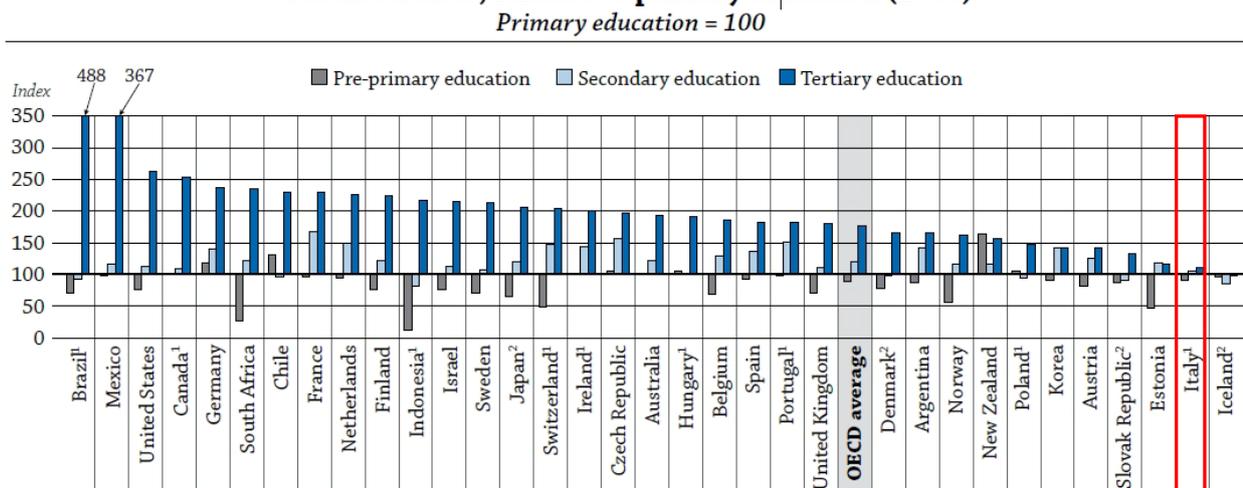
Despite the fact that higher education attainment levels have increased in Italy, many children of parents with low levels of education are still caught in a low-education trap (Chart A6.5, Table A6.3). Among 25-34 year-old non-students, only 9% of those whose parents have not completed upper secondary education have a higher education degree (the OECD average is 20%). What's more, 44% of those whose parents have not completed upper secondary education have also not completed it either (the OECD average is 32%) (Table A6.2, Chart A6.4).

Italy allocates a large share of spending on education to support pre-primary and primary students.

While Italy faces challenges in promoting upward mobility for children from disadvantaged backgrounds and in assuring healthy labour-market outcomes for its youth, annual expenditure per student in the Italian

education system (9 055 USD) is in line with the OECD average (9 249 USD) (Table B1.1a). In fact, expenditure per student in Italy is above the OECD average at pre-primary and primary levels. Italy’s investment in pre-primary education is also reflected in one of the highest enrolment rates for three- (93%) and four-year-olds (97%) among OECD countries (the OECD averages are 66% and 81%, respectively) (Table C2.1). At the same time, expenditure per student does not increase with each successive level of education as much as in other countries (Chart B1.3). As a result, expenditure per tertiary student (9 561 USD) is below the OECD average of 13 719 USD (Table B1.1a).

Chart B1.3. Expenditure per student by educational institutions at various levels of education, for all services, relative to primary education (2009)



Notes: A ratio of 300 for tertiary education means that expenditure per tertiary student by educational institutions is three times the expenditure per primary student by educational institutions.

A ratio of 50 for pre-primary education means that expenditure per pre-primary student by educational institutions is half the expenditure per primary student by educational institutions.

1. Public institutions only.

2. 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 expenditure per student by educational institutions in tertiary education relative to primary education.

Source: OECD. Argentina, Indonesia: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (World Education Indicators programme). South Africa: UNESCO Institute for Statistics. Table B1.1a. See Annex 3 for notes (www.oecd.org/edu/eag2012).

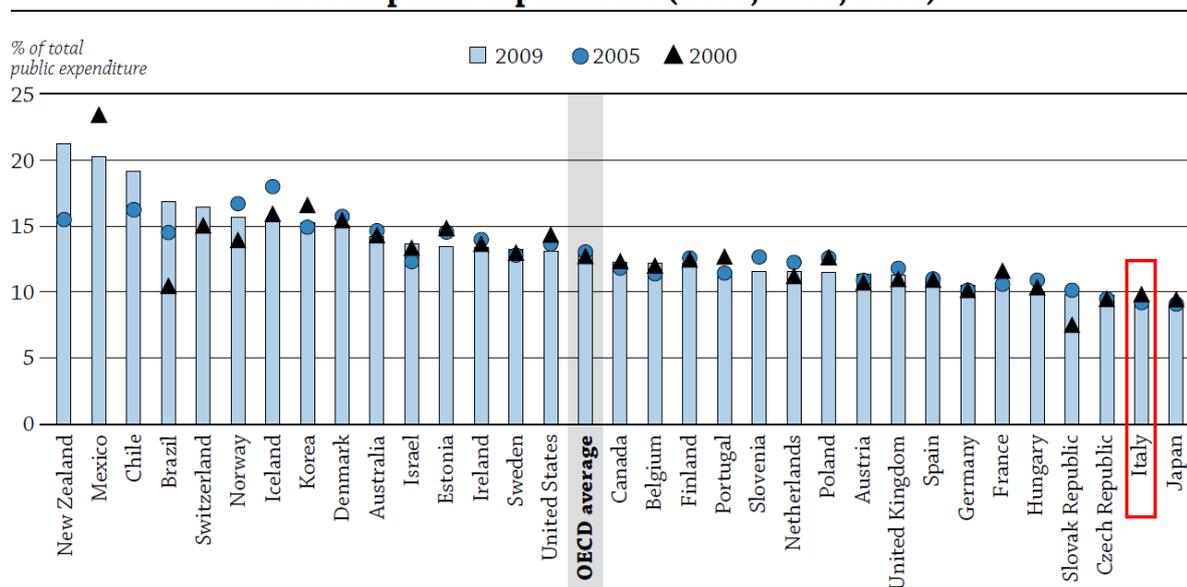
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With the rapid changes occurring in society, Italian schools must also meet new challenges, such as successfully integrating and educating children from immigrant backgrounds. The proportion of immigrant students among 15-year-olds in Italian schools has increased more than fivefold between 2000 and 2009 (from 0.9% to 5.5%), (OECD 2010, Figure V.4.6). This population is relatively concentrated in a small number of schools: 71.9% of immigrant children in Italy are enrolled in one quarter of its schools, compared to an OECD average of 67.6% (Table A5.2; if immigrant students were spread uniformly across schools, this proportion would be 25%).

NOTABLE TRENDS

Private expenditure on education increased more than public expenditure in recent years.

Chart B4.1. Total public expenditure on education as a percentage of total public expenditure (2000, 2005, 2009)



Countries are ranked in descending order of total public expenditure on education at all levels as a percentage of total public expenditure in 2009.

Source: OECD. Table B4.3. See Annex 3 for notes (www.oecd.org/edu/eag2012).

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How to read this chart

This chart shows direct public expenditure on educational institutions, plus public support to households (which includes subsidies for living costs, such as scholarships and grants to students/households and student loans) and to other private entities, as a percentage of total public expenditure, by year.

In 2009, public expenditure on education in Italy represented an amount equal to 4.7% of GDP, well below the OECD average of 5.8%. As a percentage of total public expenditure, public expenditure on education in Italy (9.0%) was the second lowest after that in Japan (Chart B4.1; Table B4.1). Between 2000 and 2009, public expenditure on education as a percentage of total public expenditure decreased from 9.8% to 9.0% (Table B4.3), and increased by only 4% in real terms (the OECD average increase in real terms was 33%) (Table B3.1).

The percentage of national income spent on education each year has, nevertheless, increased from 4.6% in 1995 to 4.9% in 2009 (compared to the OECD average of 6.2% in 2009; Table B2.1). This increase is in line with the average increase in OECD countries, but is largely attributed to increases in spending from private sources.

Between 2000 and 2009, funding for educational institutions from private sources increased in real terms by 77% (Table B3.1). In particular, funding for higher education shifted more markedly from public to private sources than on average in OECD countries. Whereas public sources accounted for 82.9% of funding in 1995 (above the OECD average of 78.9% that year), they accounted for 68.6% in 2009 (below the OECD average of 70.0%) (Table B3.3). The increase in public spending on tertiary educational institutions, equalling 4% in real terms between 2000 and 2009, is the lowest among OECD countries (Table B3.3).

KEY FACTS

Indicator	Italy	OECD average	Italy rank*
Educational Access and Output			
Enrolment rates			
3-year-olds (in early childhood education)	93%	66%	6 of 36 countries
4-year-olds (in early childhood and primary education)	97%	81%	10 of 38 countries
5-14 year-olds (all levels)	99%	96%	15 of 39 countries
Percentage of population that has attained pre-primary or primary levels of education only			
25-64 year-olds	12%	m	14 of 37 countries
Percentage of population that has attained at least upper secondary education			
25-64 year-olds	55%	74%	30 of 40 countries
25-34 year-olds	71%	82%	30 of 36 countries
55-64 year-olds	38%	62%	30 of 36 countries
Percentage of population that has attained tertiary education			
25-64 year-olds	15%	31%	35 of 41 countries
25-34 year-olds	21%	38%	34 of 37 countries
55-64 year-olds	11%	23%	33 of 37 countries
Entry rates into tertiary education			
Vocational programmes (Tertiary-type B)	0%	17%	33 of 33 countries
University programmes (Tertiary-type A)	49%	62%	25 of 36 countries
Graduation rates			
Percentage of today's young people expected to complete upper secondary education in their lifetime	83%	84%	18 of 27 countries
Percentage of today's young people expected to complete university education (tertiary-type A) in their lifetime	32%	39%	19 of 28 countries
Economic and Labour Market Outcomes			
Unemployment rate of 25-64 year-olds			
Below upper secondary	9.1%	12.5%	21 of 33 countries
Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary	6.1%	7.6%	23 of 34 countries
Tertiary	5.6%	4.7%	8 of 34 countries
Average earnings premium for 25-64 year-olds with tertiary education (compared to people with upper secondary education; upper secondary = 100)			
Men and women	150	155	19 of 32 countries
Men	162	160	13 of 32 countries
Women	142	157	27 of 32 countries
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)			
Men and women	79	77	15 of 32 countries
Men	78	78	16 of 32 countries
Women	70	74	24 of 32 countries

Indicator	Italy	OECD average	Italy rank*
Percentage of people not in employment, education or training			
15-29 year-olds (2005 data)	21.1%	15.0%	4 of 32 countries
15-29 year-olds (2010 data)	23%	15.8%	5 of 32 countries
Financial Investment in Education			
Annual expenditure per student (in equivalent USD, using PPPs)			
Pre-primary education	7 948	6 670	9 of 34 countries
Primary education	8 669	7 719	10 of 35 countries
Secondary education	9 112	9 312	18 of 37 countries
Tertiary education	9 562	13 728	24 of 37 countries
Total public and private expenditure on education			
As a percentage of GDP	4.9%	6.2%	31 of 37 countries
Total public expenditure on education			
As a percentage of total public expenditure	9%	13.0%	31 of 32 countries
Share of private expenditure on educational institutions			
Primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education	3%	8.8%	24 of 32 countries
Tertiary education	31.4%	30%	11 of 31 countries
All levels of education	9.3%	16%	21 of 30 countries
Schools and Teachers			
Ratio of students to teaching staff			
Pre-primary education	11.8	14.4	23 of 32 countries
Primary education	11.3	15.8	30 of 36 countries
Secondary education	12.0	13.8	24 of 38 countries
Number of hours of compulsory instruction time per year			
7-8 year-olds	891	774 hours	9 of 33 countries
9-11 year-olds	924	821 hours	5 of 34 countries
12-14 year-olds	1 023	899 hours	4 of 34 countries
Number of hours of teaching time per year (for teachers in public institutions)			
Primary education	770	782 hours	19 of 35 countries
Lower secondary education	630	704 hours	22 of 34 countries
Upper secondary education	630	658 hours	19 of 35 countries
Ratio of teachers' salaries to earnings for full-time, full-year adult workers with tertiary education			
Primary school teachers	0.57	0.82	24 of 27 countries
Lower secondary school teachers	0.60	0.85	22 of 27 countries
Upper secondary school teachers	0.64	0.90	23 of 27 countries

* Countries are ranked in descending order of values.

REFERENCES

OECD (2010), *PISA 2009 Results: Learning Trends: Changes in Student Performance Since 2000 (Volume V)*, OECD publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264091580-en>

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

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