

Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators 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 (OECD, 2020[1]).

France

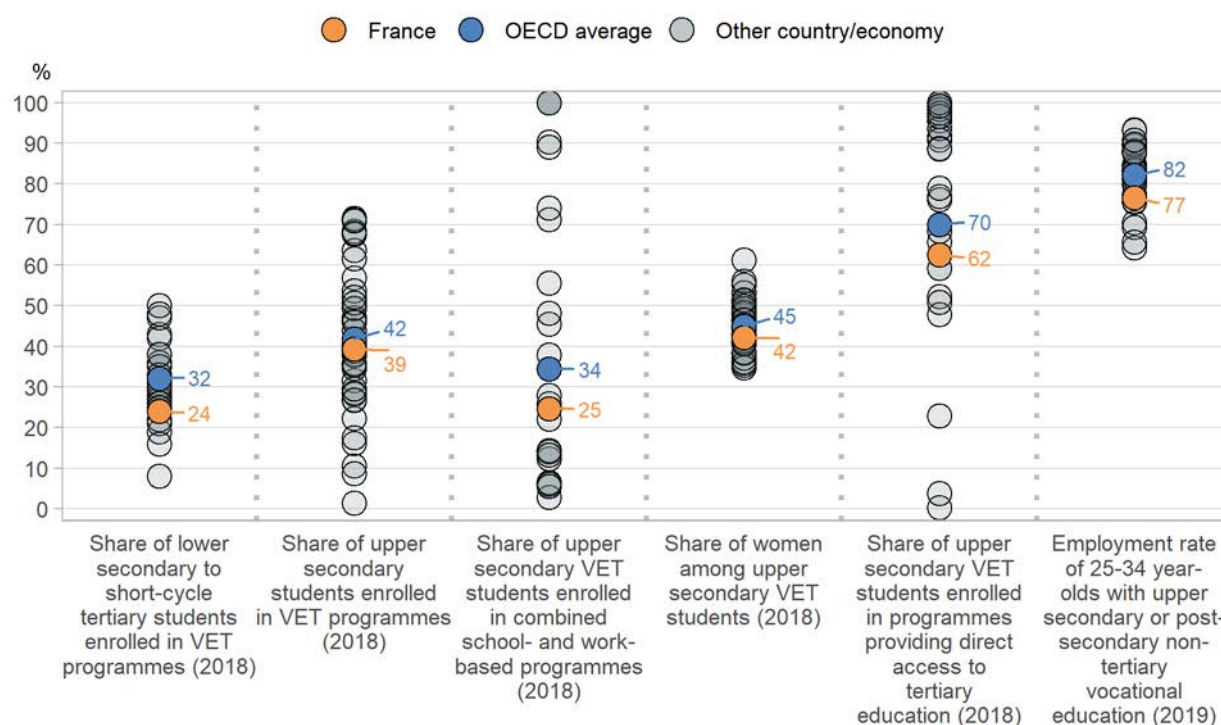
Highlights

- **In France, 39% of upper secondary students enrol in vocational programmes**, slightly below the OECD average of 42%. Among those students, only one in four is enrolled in school- and work-based programmes, compared to one in three on average. Although fewer students are enrolled in these programmes than on average, students in France spend more time in the workplace (between 62 and 75% of the total duration of the programme) during their training than in many OECD countries.
- **In 2019, 48% of 25-34-year-olds held a higher education qualification in France**, compared to 45% on average across OECD countries. **Those who have not attained this level of education are disadvantaged in the labour market.** In 2019, 51% of young adults without an upper secondary qualification were employed (OECD average: 61 %), compared to 75% among those with an upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary qualification (OECD average: 78 %), and 87% for those with a tertiary degree (OECD average: 85 %).
- In France, **13% of pre-primary children enrol in private institutions**, compared to about one in three on average across OECD countries. In 2017, total annual expenditure in pre-primary institutions was USD 8 894 per child on average in France, slightly less than the average across OECD countries (USD 9 079).
- **In 2017, France spent more on primary to tertiary educational institutions per full-time student than the average across OECD countries**, investing a total of USD 12 080 per student, compared to USD 11 231 on average.
- **Teacher salaries progress slowly in France at the beginning of their careers.** Teachers in the middle of their career are particularly disadvantaged: according to the official salary scales at the start of the 2018/2019 school year (data from 2019 in *Education at a Glance*), the statutory salary of primary and secondary teachers after 10 or 15 years of service is at least 18% lower in France than the average across OECD countries.
- **The global COVID-19 pandemic has sent shockwaves around the world.** By the end of June 2020, France had experienced 13 weeks of effective school closures of some form compared to 14 weeks on average across OECD countries.

Participation and outcomes of vocational education and training

- Vocational education and training (VET) programmes attract a diverse range of students, including those seeking qualifications and technical skills to enter the labour market, adults wishing to increase their employability by developing their skills further, and students who may seek entry into higher education later on.
- On average, around 24% of students, from lower secondary to short-cycle tertiary level (ISCED 2 to ISCED 5), is enrolled in a VET programme in France compared to one in three on average across OECD countries. In France, these programmes start at upper secondary level (ISCED 3), which explains why the majority of VET students (67%) enrol at this level (Figure 1). Post-secondary non-tertiary VET programmes (ISCED 4) are almost non-existent in France, and the last third, is enrolled in short-cycle tertiary VET programmes (ISCED 5). (OECD/Eurostat/UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2015 [2]).

Figure 1. Snapshot of vocational education



Note: Only countries and economies with available data are shown. The years shown in parentheses is the most common year of reference for OECD and partner countries. Refer to the source table for more details.

Source: OECD (2020), indicator A3 and B7. See Education at a Glance Database. <http://stats.oecd.org/> for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>).

- VET is an important part of upper secondary education in most OECD countries. On average, 39% of all upper secondary students opt for VET programmes in France, a lower proportion than the OECD average of 42% (Figure 1). Certain fields of study are more common than others at this level. In France, as in many other countries, the most common broad field is engineering, manufacturing and construction with 34% of upper secondary vocational graduates earning a qualification in this field, compared to 33% on average across OECD countries.

- The organisation and delivery of upper secondary VET programmes varies considerably from country to country. In combined school- and work-based programmes, between 25% and 90% of the curriculum is taught as work-based learning, while the remainder is organised within the school environment. In France, only 25% of upper secondary vocational students are enrolled in combined school- and work-based programmes (Figure 1), even though they often offer better opportunities. This proportion is lower than the OECD average of 34%. However, there are wide variations across VET programmes in France. For example, only 8% of students enrolled in a program leading to the Professional baccalaureate (Bac Pro) are trained in work-study programs, compared to 53% among those enrolled in the Certificate of Vocational Ability (CAP). Despite lower participation in combined school- and work-based programmes in France, students enrolled in these programmes spend more time in the workplace (between 62 and 75% of the total duration of the programme) than in many OECD countries. By way of comparison, the time spent in the workplace exceeds 80% of the total duration of the programme only in Finland and Switzerland.
- Almost all OECD countries have implemented major VET reforms since 2013. In France, changes made to the secondary vocational pathway since 2018 aim to make the VET sector more attractive, efficient, and open to the world and the professions of the future. This has been accompanied by the development of apprenticeships in all vocational schools, and by the gradual and guided transformation of low-inclusion streams and a renewed partnership with businesses to encourage the integration of young people.

Vocational upper secondary students are typically less likely to complete their qualification than those from general programmes. France follows this pattern as the completion rate for upper secondary education (within the theoretical duration of the programme) is lower among students enrolled in vocational programmes (73%) than among those in general ones (77%). Nevertheless, the completion rate of students enrolled in vocational programmes in France remains higher than the OECD average (73% vs. 62%). Between 2005 and 2017, the completion rate at upper secondary level (all programmes combined) increased by 8 percentage points mainly due to a 10-percentage point increase in the completion rate of students enrolled in vocational programmes. The higher completion rate at upper secondary level mirrors the drop in the share of students leaving the education system without completing their programme over the same period.

- To support upper secondary vocational students' transition to post-secondary education and improve their career prospects, many countries have created direct pathways from vocational programmes to higher levels of education. In France, 62% of upper secondary vocational students are enrolled in programmes that offer the chance of direct access to tertiary education, slightly lower than the OECD average of 70% (Figure 1). It should be noted that among the remaining 38% (those enrolled in CAP vocational programmes), some will be able to access higher education by continuing their studies to obtain a professional *baccalauréat*.
- In 2019, 31% of 25-34 year-olds in France held an upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary vocational qualification as their highest educational level while 9% held a general one. The employment rate of younger adults with a vocational upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education (83%) tend to be higher than the employment rate of those with general qualifications at this level (73%). France follows this pattern, as 77% of 25-34 year-olds with an upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary vocational qualification are employed compared with 72% of those with a general qualification (Figure 1).
- On average across OECD countries, adults (55-64 year-olds) with an upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary vocational education have similar earnings to their peers with a general education at this level. While the difference in relative earnings between adults with general and vocational upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment is less than 5 percentage points in about one quarter of OECD and partner countries, it is 17 percentage points in favour of general qualifications in France.

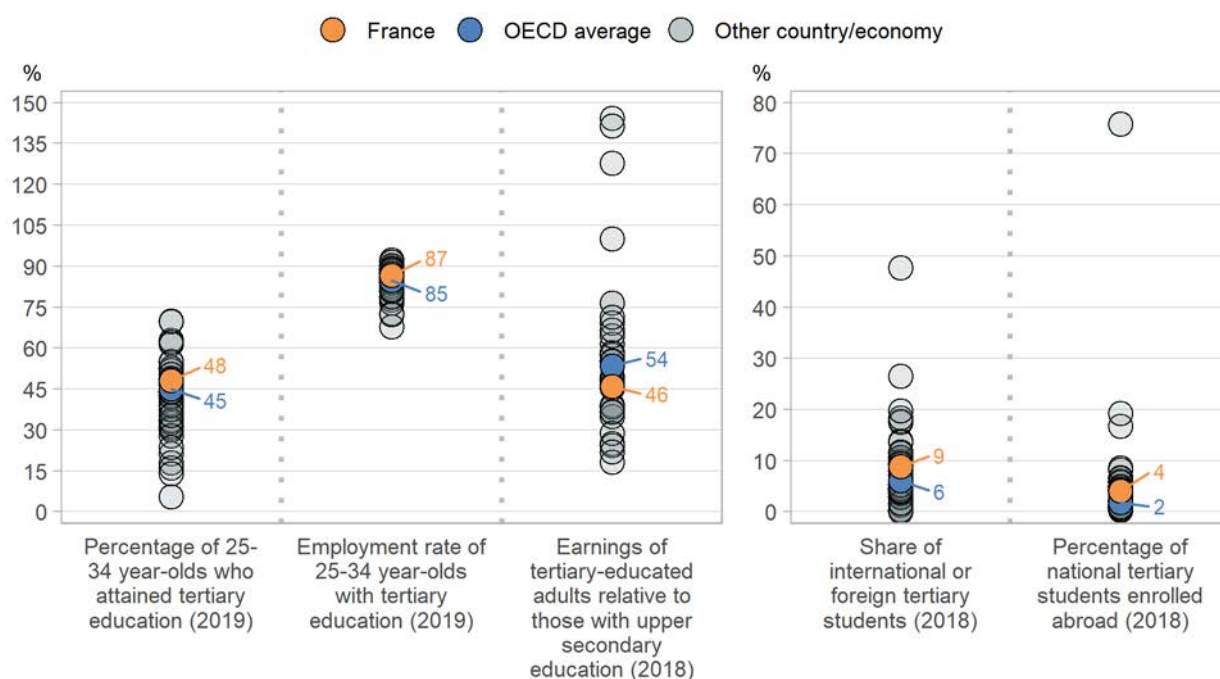
- On average across OECD countries, the ratio of students to teaching staff is similar in both upper secondary vocational and general programmes. In France, there are 13 students for every teaching staff member in general programmes and 8 in vocational ones.

The rising demand for tertiary education

- The expansion of tertiary education is a worldwide trend. Between 2009 and 2019, the share of 25-34 year-olds with a tertiary degree increased in all OECD and partner countries. In France, the share increased by 5 percentage points during this period, lower than the average increase across OECD countries (9 percentage points). In 2019, 48% of 25-34 year-olds had a tertiary degree in France compared to 45% on average across OECD countries (Figure 2).
- Younger women are more likely than younger men to achieve tertiary education in all OECD countries. In France, 52% of 25-34 year-old women had a tertiary qualification compared to 44% of their male peers, while on average across OECD countries the shares are 51% of younger women and 39% of younger men. Since 2009, the difference between the tertiary attainment of young women and men has remained steady in France, while it has increased by 9 percentage points on average in OECD countries.
- Young people can face barriers to labour market entry as they transition from school to work, but higher educational attainment increases their likelihood of being employed. On average across OECD countries, the employment rate in 2019 was 61% for 25-34 year-olds without upper secondary education, 78% for those with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education as their highest attainment and 85% for those with tertiary education. In France, the shares are 51% for below upper secondary, 75% for upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary and 87% for tertiary attainment.
- Having a tertiary degree also carries a considerable earnings advantage in most OECD and partner countries. In France, in 2018, 25-64 year-olds with a tertiary degree with income from full-time, full-year employment earned 46% more than full-time, full-year workers with upper secondary education compared to 54% on average across OECD countries (Figure 2). However, not all higher education qualifications have the same value: 25-64 year-old adults with a bachelor's degree will earn 36% more than someone with a *baccalauréat* or equivalent (OECD average: 43%), while the earning premium more than doubles for those with a master's degree (84% in France versus an OECD average of 89%).
- International student mobility has been expanding quite consistently in the past twenty years. In 2018, 5.6 million tertiary students worldwide had crossed a border to study, more than twice the number in 2005. The share of international students in France was 9% in 2018, a similar share to the EU23 (9%), and higher than the total across OECD countries (6%). France is more attractive to internationally mobile students at doctorate level, where they represent 38% of students, significantly more than the EU23 and OECD total of 23% and 22% respectively.
- Meanwhile 4% of French tertiary students are enrolled abroad compared to 2% in total across OECD countries (Figure 2). English-speaking countries are the most attractive student destinations overall in the OECD area, with Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States receiving more than 40% of all internationally mobile students in OECD and partner countries. Among students leaving France to study, the most popular destination country is Canada.
- Beyond the economic and employment outcomes, higher educational attainment is related to greater social benefits. For example, those with a tertiary education are more likely to feel they have a say in what their government does. In 2018, on average across OECD countries participating in the European Social Survey, 52% of tertiary-educated adults agreed with this sentiment compared to 26% of those with below upper secondary education. In France, 45% of

tertiary-educated adults feel this way compared with 18% of those with below upper secondary education.

Figure 2. Snapshot of tertiary education



Note: Only countries and economies with available data are shown. The years shown in parentheses is the most common year of reference for OECD and partner countries. Refer to the source table for more details.

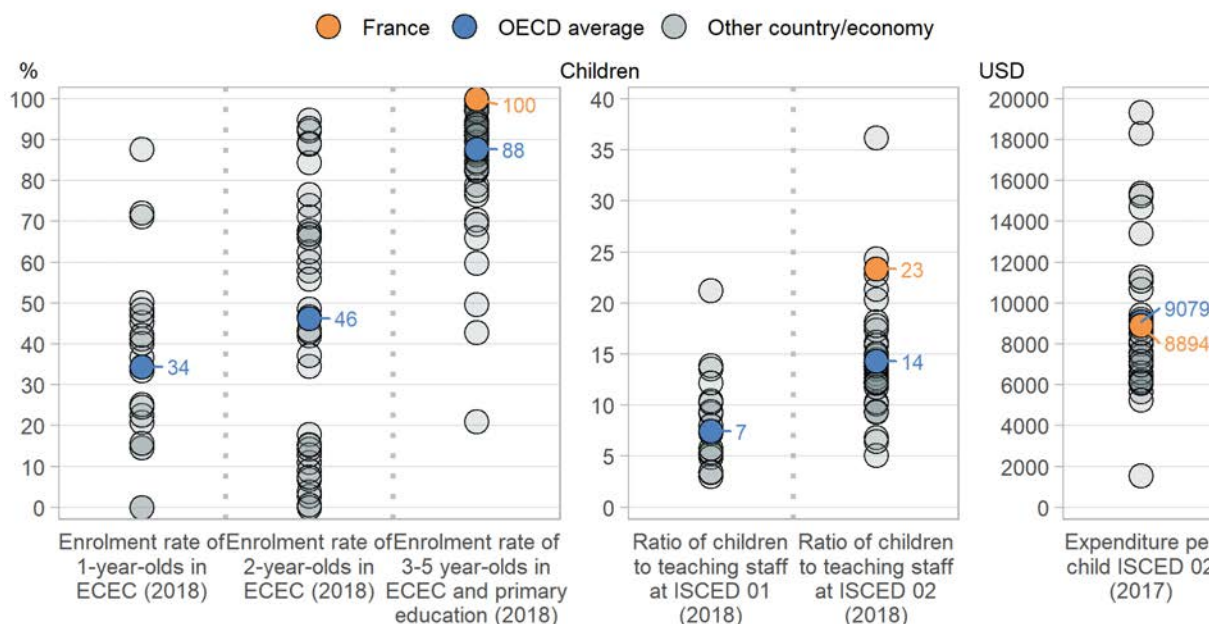
Source: OECD (2020), indicator A1, A3, A4 and B6. See Education at a Glance Database <http://stats.oecd.org/> for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>).

Starting strong

- In many OECD countries, ECEC begins for most children long before they turn 5 and there are universal legal entitlements to a place in ECEC services for at least one or two years before the start of compulsory schooling. Education has been compulsory from the age of 3 in France since the 2019/2020 school year, and all 3-5-year-olds are enrolled in ECEC (ISCED 0) or primary education, compared to 88% on average across OECD countries (Figure 3).
- Public provision of early childhood education and care is an important factor in ensuring broad access to affordable ECEC. Enrolment in private institutions is usually less common for 3-5 year-olds, who are usually enrolled in pre-primary education (ISCED 02), than for younger children. In France, 13% of children attending pre-primary education are enrolled in private institutions, compared to one in three children on average across OECD countries.
- The workforce is at the heart of high-quality early-childhood education and care: stimulating environments and high-quality pedagogy are fostered by better-qualified practitioners and high-quality interactions between children and staff facilitate better learning outcomes. In that context, lower child-staff ratios are found to be consistently supportive of staff-child relationships across different types of ECEC settings (NICHHD, 2002 [3]). In France, the ratio of children for every full-time equivalent (FTE) teacher working in pre-primary education (ISCED 02) is 23 compared to 14 on average across OECD countries (Figure 3). However, France makes greater use of assistants

(specialised pre-school helpers or ATSEM) than other countries, bringing the ratio down to 16 students per contact staff (compared to 11 on average across the OECD).

Figure 3. Snapshot of early childhood education and care



Note: Only countries and economies with available data are shown. Annual expenditure per child is shown in equivalent USD converted using PPPs. The years shown in parentheses is the most common year of reference for OECD and partner countries. Refer to the source table for more details.

Source: OECD (2020), indicator B2. See Education at a Glance Database <http://stats.oecd.org/> for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>).

- France is among the four countries that insist on particularly high qualifications to teach in pre-primary education. Since the 2010/11 school year, teachers at this level are required to obtain a master's degree (and a successful result in the state civil service exam). In contrast, in the majority of other countries, only a bachelor's degree is required to teach at that level.
- Sustained public financial support is critical for the growth and quality of ECEC programmes. In 2017, annual total expenditure in pre-primary settings (ISCED 02) averaged USD 8 894 per child in France, slightly lower than the average across OECD countries (USD 9 079) (Figure 3). In addition, 93% of funding at this level comes from public sources, compared to an average of 83% in OECD countries.

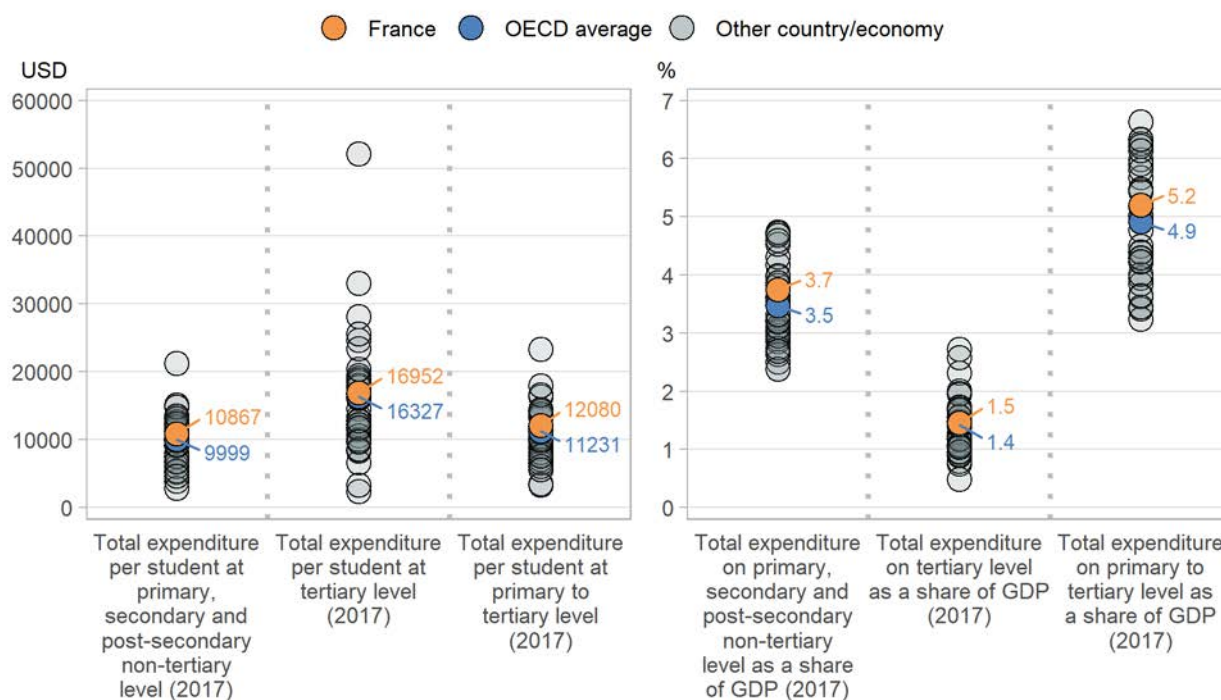
Investing in education

- Annual expenditure per student on educational institutions from primary to tertiary level provides an indication of the investment countries make in each student. In 2017, France spent more on primary to tertiary educational institutions per full-time student than the OECD average, investing a total of USD 12 080 per student compared to USD 11 231 on average across OECD countries (Figure 4).
- The way education is provided influences how resources are allocated between levels of education and between public and private institutions. In 2017, France spent USD 10 867 per student at non-tertiary level (primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education), USD 868 slightly higher than the OECD average of USD 9 999. However, in 2017, there was a significant gap in the distribution of education expenditure per student between primary and secondary schools (to the advantage of secondary education) in France. Per-student expenditure in France is 7% higher than the OECD average in lower secondary education (USD 11 252 vs. USD 10 527), and 35% higher in upper secondary education (including general secondary schools and agricultural schools, and apprenticeships in school- and work-based training centres (USD 14 743 vs. USD 10 888). In contrast, it is 8% lower than the OECD average in primary education (USD 8 319¹ vs. USD 9 090). However, the Law for the School of the Republic Reform (2013) addressed the imbalance in the distribution of education spending between primary and secondary education by investing more in the first levels of education. The current Minister of National Education, Youth and Sports has made primary education the first of his priorities in education policy, and many measures concerning it are being taken in the framework of the Law for a School of Confidence promulgated in 2019 (OECD, 2020 [4]). At tertiary level, France invested USD 16 952 per student, USD 624 more than the OECD average (Figure 4).
- Between 2012 and 2017, expenditure per student from primary to tertiary education increased by an average annual growth rate of 1.3% across OECD countries, compared to just 0.3% in France. More specifically, expenditure by educational institutions in France has increased at an average rate of 1.1% per year (OECD average: 1.4%), while the number of students increased by an average of 0.8% per year (OECD average: 0.2%) over the same period. This resulted in an average annual growth rate of 0.3% in expenditure per student between 2012 and 2017.
- In most OECD countries, expenditure per upper secondary student varies according to programme orientation. Spending per student on upper secondary vocational programmes tends to be higher than for upper secondary general ones due to the higher cost of equipment, lower student-to-teacher ratios, and work-based requirements of such programmes. France follows the same pattern: spending per student amounted to USD 16 227 in upper secondary vocational programmes, USD 2 283 higher than spending per student on general ones at the same level.
- The share of national wealth devoted to educational institutions is higher in France than on average among OECD countries. In 2017, France spent 5.2% of gross domestic product (GDP) on primary to tertiary educational institutions, which is 0.3 percentage points higher than the OECD average. France devoted a share of GDP that was higher than the OECD average to primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary levels combined (3.7% vs. 3.5% on average) and a share that was slightly above the OECD average to tertiary education (1.5% vs. 1.4% on average) (Figure 4).
- Tuition fees for public institutions in France are among the lowest for a bachelor's or master's programme in countries for which data are available. Students are charged USD 240 per year for a bachelor's degree and USD 334 for a master's degree. These annual fees are respectively 2% and 9% higher than the amount that students had to pay on average in 2007/08.

¹ These figures do not take into account the reforms of the 2017/2018 school year, with, in particular, the halving of CP and CE1 class sizes in high-priority areas.

- Compensation of teachers and other staff employed in educational institutions represents the largest share of current expenditure from primary to tertiary education. In 2017, France allocated 80% of its current expenditure to staff compensation, compared to 74% on average across OECD countries. Around 59% of current expenditure in public primary and secondary schools in France goes to teachers' salaries. This figure is lower than that of the EU23 (61%). A significant proportion of expenditure is allocated to non-teaching staff in France (22% vs. 15% for the EU23).

Figure 4. Snapshot of the financial resources invested in educational institutions



Note: Only countries and economies with available data are shown. Expenditure in national currencies is converted into equivalent USD by dividing the national currency figure by the purchasing power parity (PPP) index for GDP. The years shown in parentheses is the most common year of reference for OECD and partner countries. Refer to the source table for more details.

Source: OECD (2020), indicator C1 and C2. See Education at a Glance Database <http://stats.oecd.org/> for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>).

Working conditions of teachers and school heads

- Teacher salaries in France progress slowly at the start of their career. Teachers in the middle of their career are at a particular disadvantage: according to the official salary scales at the start of the 2018/2019 school year (2019 data in *Education at a Glance*), the statutory salary of primary and secondary teachers after 10 or 15 years is at least 18% lower in France than the average across OECD countries. By way of comparison, the difference with the OECD average is less than 10% at the beginning of their career (see Figure 5 and Box 1 on the methodology used to calculate salaries). However, in the second half of their careers, French teachers tend to catch up. For example, the statutory salary of primary teachers with maximum qualifications at the end of their career is 76% higher than that of teachers at the start of their career with minimum qualifications (the OECD average is 78%).
- Between 2005 and 2019, the statutory salaries of teachers with 15 years of experience and the most prevalent qualifications increased between 5-7% at primary and lower and upper secondary

general levels, on average across OECD countries, despite a decrease of salaries following the 2008 financial crisis. In France, teachers' salaries at these levels decreased by 2%-5%. This decrease since 2005 masks a slight increase at each level of education, especially – since 2015 – at the pre-primary and primary levels.

- Teachers' real salaries reflect their statutory salaries as well as additional payments related to their work. Average actual salaries also depend on certain characteristics of the teaching community, such as their age, level of experience, level of qualification and specific civil servant status (see Box 1 on the methodology used). In France, teachers' average actual salaries² equate to USD 43 047³ at pre-primary level (above the OECD average of USD 38 677⁴), to USD 41 924 at primary level (slightly below the OECD average of USD 43 942), to USD 47 146 at lower secondary general level (slightly above the OECD average of USD 46 225) and to USD 52 964 at upper secondary general level (slightly above the OECD average of USD 49 778) (Figure 5).
- Teachers' average actual salaries remain lower than those of tertiary-educated workers in almost all countries, and at almost all levels of education. Teachers' average actual salaries at pre-primary (ISCED 02), primary and general secondary levels of education are 80-94% of the earnings of tertiary-educated workers on average across OECD countries and economies. In France, the proportion ranges from 83% at pre-primary level (ISCED 02), 80% at primary level to 90% at lower secondary level. However, at upper secondary level, the average actual salary of teachers is 2% higher than that of workers with tertiary qualifications (Figure 5).
- Attracting, retaining and training high-calibre school leaders is fundamental to improving the quality of learning environments. The status of school leaders can vary in France. In fact, primary school heads are teachers; they have less autonomy and responsibility and are paid using teacher salary scales, while secondary school heads, who must sit a specific competitive exam, are paid using specific scales for management staff. Thus, school heads at primary level are paid almost 30% less than those at secondary level (USD 55 375 USD per year versus USD 71 977). This is the greatest salary difference between the two levels of education across the OECD. The actual salary of secondary school heads in France is slightly below the OECD average of USD 73 404 per year⁵.
- The average number of teaching hours per year required of a typical teacher in public educational institutions in OECD countries tends to decrease as the level of education increases, from 993 hours at pre-primary level (ISCED 02), to 778 hours at primary level, 712 hours at lower secondary level (general programmes) and 680 hours at upper secondary level (general programmes). In France, school teachers are required to teach 900 hours per year at pre-primary and primary level, while certified teachers must teach 684 hours per year at lower and upper secondary level (general programmes). France is therefore one of the few countries within the OECD where primary teachers teach for 30% more hours per year than their lower secondary counterparts.
- The size of the school-age population is projected to increase in some countries, putting many governments under pressure to recruit and train new teachers. In France, 12% of primary teachers

² The data on actual salaries in France are based on 2017 rather than 2019.

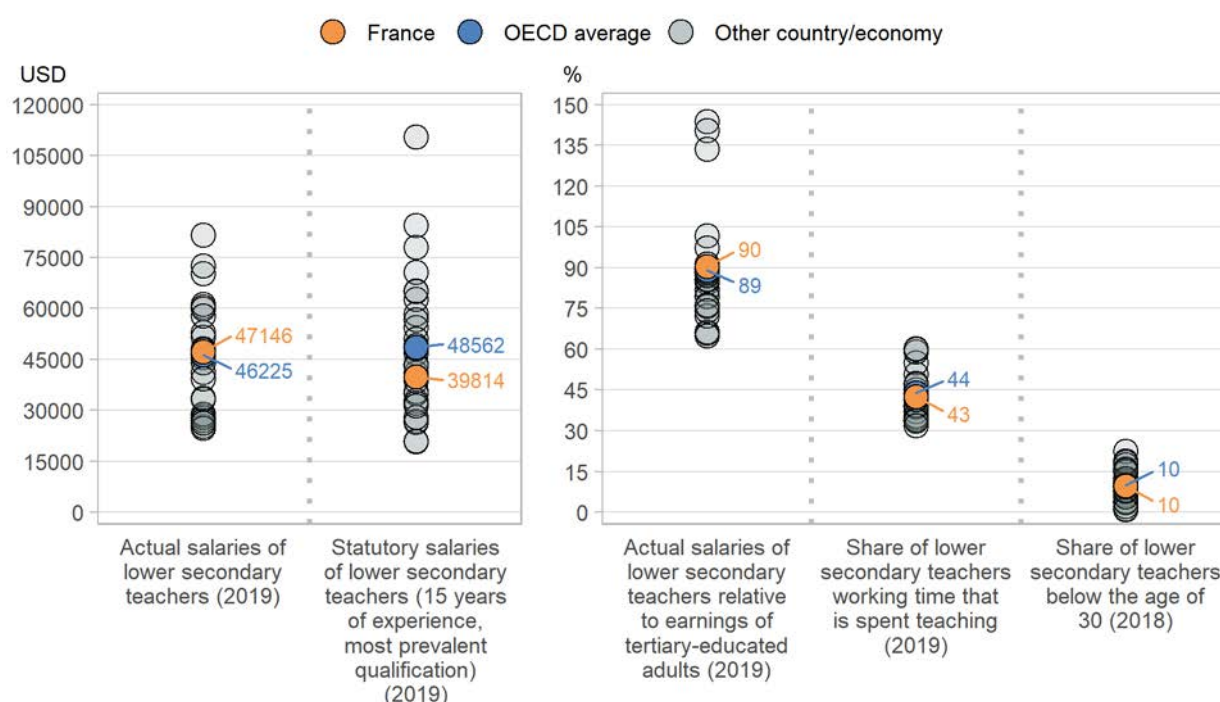
³ The difference in salary between pre-primary and primary teachers is due to the individual characteristics of the two groups: pre-primary teachers are, on average, older than primary teachers.

⁴ Some OECD countries were unable to provide data on actual salaries. Consequently, the OECD average actual salary has been calculated using a smaller number of countries than the average calculated for the statutory salary. This must be taken into account when interpreting the data.

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are considered young teachers (under the age of 30), which is the same as the OECD average of 12%. On average across OECD countries, the proportion of young teachers decreases at other levels of education, to 10% in lower secondary education and 8% in upper secondary education. In France, the proportion of young teachers is 10% at lower and upper secondary levels (Figure 5). Large proportions of teachers in many OECD countries will reach retirement age in the next decade. However, fewer French teachers are of retirement age, in comparison with their counterparts in many neighbouring countries. Around 29% of primary and secondary teachers are aged 50 or older, compared with 35% on average in OECD countries.

Figure 5. Snapshot of teachers' working conditions



Note: Only countries and economies with available data are shown. Teachers' salaries are shown in equivalent USD converted using PPPs. The years shown in parentheses is the most common year of reference for OECD and partner countries. Refer to the source table for more details.

Source: OECD (2020), indicator D3, D4 and D5. See Education at a Glance Database <http://stats.oecd.org/> for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>).

Box 1. Teachers' salaries: the OECD's calculation method

Education at a Glance publishes data every year on the gross annual salary of teachers working in general programmes in public schools (general and technological programmes in France). The figures are presented in US dollars for all OECD countries. The OECD uses the purchasing power parity (PPP) for private consumption as a conversion factor. This enables the purchasing power of different currencies to be expressed in a common unit. Using the purchasing power parity for private consumption to convert the Education at a Glance 2020 figures into Euros, 1 US Dollar is equivalent to 0.84 Euro.

The teacher salary indicator is constructed based on two measures: statutory salary and average salary (known as actual salary).

The statutory salary in the publication corresponds to the remuneration stipulated in the official salary scales at the beginning of the 2018/2019 school year. The statutory salary is presented for typical teacher cases, i.e. for primary school teachers and certified secondary school (*collège* and *lycée*) teachers, as these positions make up the vast majority at these levels of education. The salary is presented at different steps of a teacher's career (at the start, after 10 years, after 15 years and at the end). It corresponds to the gross salary plus the allowances that all teachers receive. The statutory salary calculation for pre-primary and primary teachers therefore takes into account the residence allowance and the student support allowance (ISAE). For secondary level (*collège* and *lycée*), all teachers receive, in addition to the residence allowance, a fixed student monitoring and guidance allowance (ISOE), introduced to achieve "individual monitoring and evaluation of students". Almost all teachers also teach a minimum of one hour overtime per week, which is counted as part of the statutory salary as well.

All other allowances paid to only a certain portion of teachers (for fulfilling the role of class/form teacher, for working a second hour of overtime, for working in high-priority areas, etc.) are not taken into account when calculating the statutory salary, even though they may represent a significant supplement for some. In addition, there may be, at different levels of education, teachers with different characteristics from those that correspond to the typical case. In France, besides certified teachers, there are also *professeurs agrégés* (specialist teachers) at secondary level, who account for around 6% of all qualified teachers in *collèges* and 30% of qualified teachers in *lycées* (general and technological programmes). For this reason, the OECD has also, on an annual basis since 2013, published statistics on the average actual salary of teachers by level of education. These statistics are also expressed in gross terms per year and take into account the real salaries of all full-time teachers (i.e. what can be seen on their payslip), whether they are certified or *agrégés* for secondary education, for example, and regardless of their age and length of service for all levels of education. It is an average salary that takes into account a more complete teaching population and more varied compensation elements than the statutory salary. For example, teachers who are *agrégés* and work in a *lycée* push the average up, as do teachers who work overtime significantly.

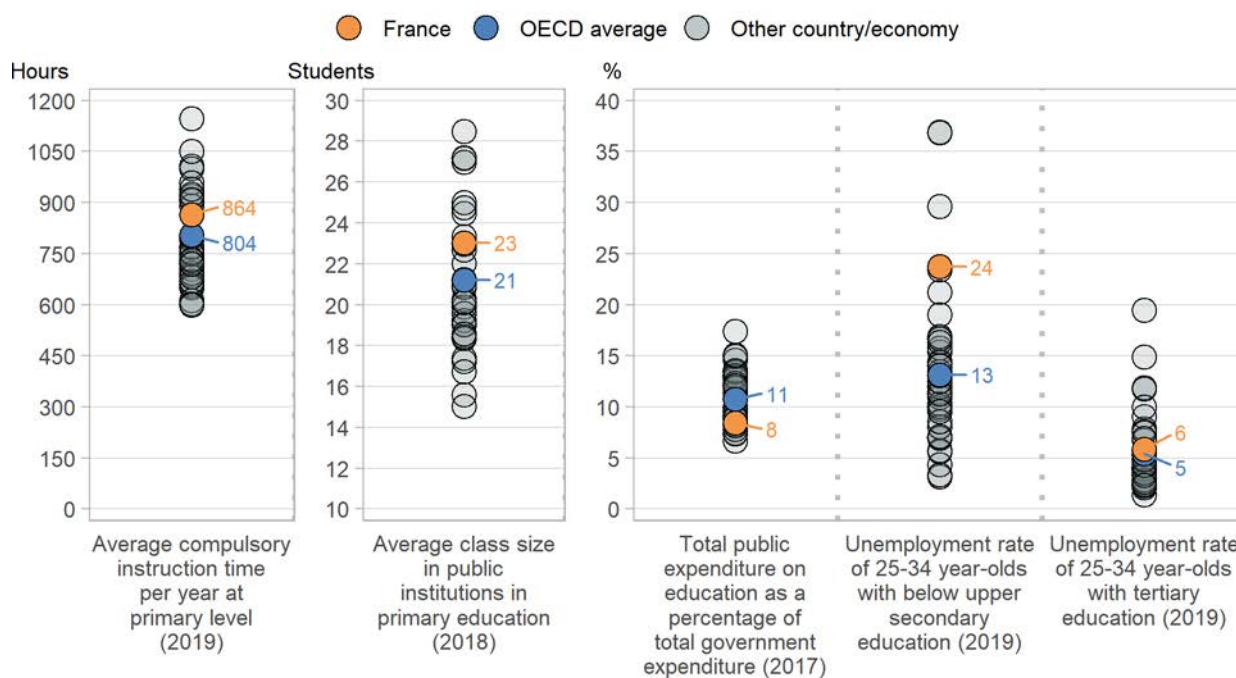
Contract teachers and qualified teachers working part-time hours, as well as those working in private schools (state-funded or not) are not included in this indicator.

The impact of COVID-19 on education

- The global 2020 COVID-19 pandemic has sent shockwaves around the world. In a first effort to contain the virus, many countries have imposed a lockdown and schools and/or universities have closed for several months across all OECD and partner countries (Schleicher, A. and F. Remiers (2020[5]). In France, the closures were localised from 3 March 2020 and on 16 March 2020, closures became nationwide. Schools started progressively reopening on 11 May 2020. By 25 May 2020, schools had fully reopened. By the end of June, France had experienced 13 weeks of effective school closures in some form, compared to 14 weeks on average across OECD countries (UNESCO, 2020[6]).
- Excluding the non-compulsory part of the curriculum, students in public institutions in France attended classes for 864 hours per year on average at primary level in 2019. Each week of school closure therefore represents about 24 hours of compulsory instruction time at the primary level during which students have physically not attended school (Figure 6). During this time, many OECD and partner countries have turned to distance learning to ensure the continuity of education.
- School reopening in the context of the pandemic is contingent on the capacity to maintain a safe distance of 1-2 metres between pupils and staff. Countries with smaller class sizes may find it easier to comply with new restrictions on social distancing, provided they have premises of adequate size. In France, the average class size at primary level is 23 students in public institutions in 2018, which is larger than the OECD average of 21. In public lower secondary institutions, there are 25 students per class in France, compared to 23 students per class on average across OECD countries (Figure 6). Following a recent reform, children attending school in the most disadvantaged areas benefit from smaller class sizes. It is therefore, in theory, easier to respect social distancing guidelines in these schools, even though a larger share of students in these institutions have lost touch with the school during distance learning (DEPP, 2020 [7]). (Figure 6).
- While there is uncertainty about the likely overall impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education expenditure, governments will face difficult decisions on the allocation of resources, as government funds are injected into the economy and the health sector. In 2017, public spending on primary to tertiary education as a share of government expenditure in France was 8%, lower than the OECD average of 11% (Figure 6).
- As unemployment rises, private funding of education may also be at risk. The impact may be most severe in those countries and levels of education that rely most heavily on household expenditure, in particular early childhood education and care and tertiary education. This is less the case in France. In pre-primary education (ISCED 02), private sources accounted for 7% of total expenditure in France in 2017, lower than the OECD average of 17%. At tertiary level, 21% of total expenditure comes from private sources, compared to 29% on average across OECD countries. In France, tuition fees in public higher education are relatively modest, and a significant part of private expenditure stems from other private entities (companies, foundations etc.).
- The crisis may have a severe impact on the internationalisation of higher education as the delivery of online course material and travel restrictions may raise questions among international students' perception on the value of obtaining their degree from an institution abroad. France, with a higher share of international students than in total across the OECD, may be more strongly affected than other countries. A decrease in the share of international students may have repercussions on the funding model of some higher education institutions, as foreign students may pay higher tuition fees than domestic ones. This was not the case in France prior to the start of the 2019 school year, as students from inside and outside the European Union (EU)/European Economic Area (EEA) were paying similar fees to French nationals up to that point.
- Unemployment may increase, as the economy struggles to cope with the reduced activity that resulted from the lockdown. Those with lower educational attainment are the most vulnerable, as

they are the most unlikely to benefit from remote working. In 2019, before the pandemic hit, 24% of young adults with below upper secondary education in France were unemployed compared to 6% of tertiary-educated 25-34 year-olds (Figure 6). In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, the unemployment of young adults without an upper secondary education increased by 4 percentage points between 2008 and 2009 in France compared to 1.8 percentage points among those with tertiary education.

Figure 6. Snapshot of indicators relevant to the impact of COVID-19 on education



Note: Only countries and economies with available data are shown. The years shown in parentheses is the most common year of reference for OECD and partner countries. Refer to the source table for more details.

Source: OECD (2020), indicator A3, D1, D2, and C4. See Education at a Glance Database <http://stats.oecd.org/> for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>).

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More information

For more information on Education at a Glance 2020 and to access the full set of Indicators, visit www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance-19991487.htm

For more information on to the methodology used during the data collection for each indicator, the references to the sources and the specific notes for each country, visit Annex 3 of the publication (<https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>).

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

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.

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The calculation on the number of weeks of school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic is based on data from UNESCO (UNESCO, 2020). For general information on the methodology considered for the data, please refer to the [methodological note](#).

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On 15 May 2020, the OECD Council invited Costa Rica to become a Member. While Costa Rica is included in the OECD averages reported in this note, at the time of its preparation, Costa Rica was in the process of completing its domestic procedures for ratification and the deposit of the instrument of accession to the OECD Convention was pending.

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