

# United Kingdom

## Highlights

- Similarly to other OECD countries, there is a **gap in the learning outcomes of children according to socio-economic status** in the United Kingdom. In 2018, the share of socio-economically disadvantaged children achieving at least PISA level 2 in reading was 19% lower than that of the most advantaged children in the United Kingdom. This was a smaller gap than the OECD average (29%).
- In the United Kingdom, **young women are more likely to achieve tertiary education than men** but they are **less likely to start a tertiary degree in science, technology, engineering and mathematics**. In 2020, 59% of 25-34 year-old women had a tertiary qualification compared to 52% of men. This gender difference of 7 percentage points is small compared to the OECD average of 13 percentage points. However, only 21% of new entrants in information and communication technologies degrees at tertiary level were female in 2019, slightly higher than the OECD average of 20%.
- **The percentage of 25-64 year-old adults with tertiary education varies considerably by region in the United Kingdom**, ranging from 38% in North East England to 68% in Greater London. This was one of the highest regional variations across OECD countries with available data.
- The **United Kingdom spent the fifth highest proportion of its GDP on primary to tertiary educational institutions** out of countries in the OECD. In 2018, spending on primary to tertiary educational institutions in the United Kingdom was 6.1% of GDP, which was 1.3 percentage points higher than the OECD average.
- There are **subnational disparities in teachers' salaries** in the United Kingdom. Statutory salaries at different stages of teachers' careers varied more within England, where maximum salaries were 152% higher than minimum salaries in 2020, than within Scotland, where maximum salaries were 26% higher.

## Gender inequalities in education and outcomes

- Men are more likely than women to pursue a vocational track at upper secondary level in most OECD countries. This is not the case in the United Kingdom, where 47% of upper secondary vocational graduates in 2019 were men (compared to the OECD average of 55%). Women are generally more likely to graduate from upper secondary general programmes, but in the United Kingdom women represent 50% of graduates from upper secondary general programmes, compared to 55% on average across OECD countries.
- Although there are similar proportions of men and women graduating from upper secondary vocational programmes, there are notable gender differences in certain fields. Only 1% of female upper secondary students from vocational programmes graduated in the field of engineering, manufacturing and construction in the United Kingdom in 2019, compared to 10% in the OECD on

average. In contrast, 17% of male vocational students graduated from a vocational programme in the same field in the United Kingdom (Figure 1). This was lower than the OECD average of 50%.

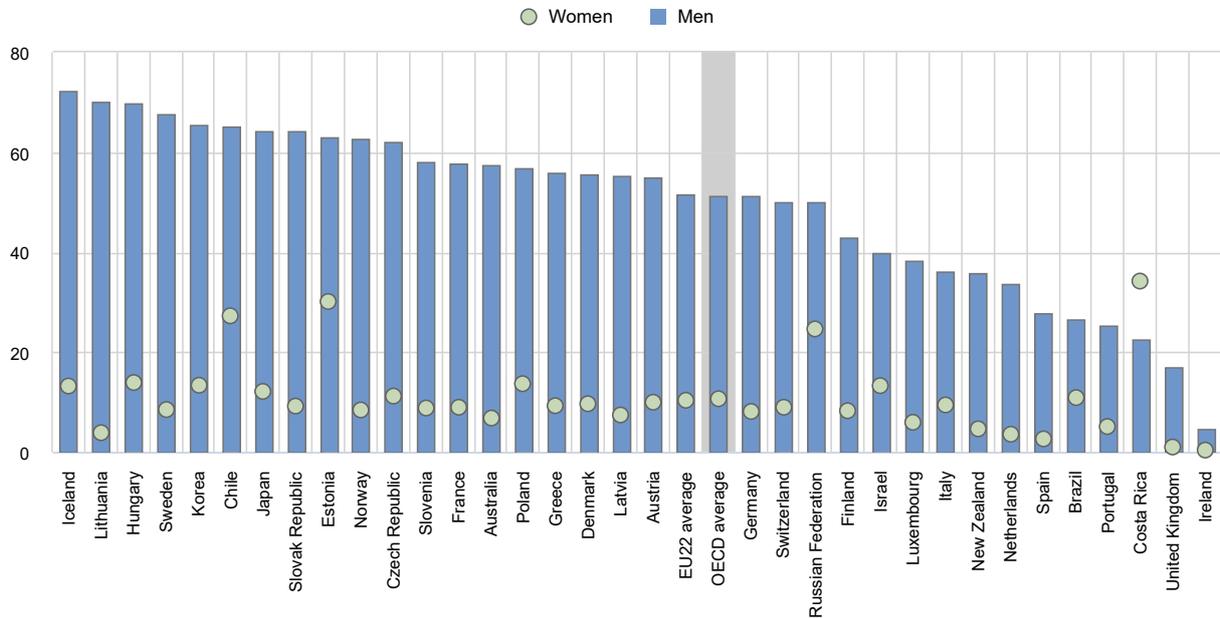
- Tertiary education has been expanding in the last decades, and, in 2020, 25-34 year-old women were more likely than men to achieve tertiary education in all OECD countries. In the United Kingdom, 59% of 25-34 year-old women had a tertiary qualification in 2020 compared to 52% of their male peers, while on average across OECD countries the shares were 52% among young women and 39% among young men.
- Gender differences in the distribution of tertiary entrants across fields of study are significant. Women tend to be under-represented in certain fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) across most OECD countries. In 2019, women represented 26% of new entrants in engineering, manufacturing and construction degrees and 20% in information and communication technologies on average across the OECD. Similarly, the share of female new entrants in engineering, manufacturing and construction degrees was 25% in the United Kingdom, whilst it was 21% in the field of information and communication technologies. In contrast, 78% of new entrants to the field of education were female in the United Kingdom, a sector traditionally dominated by women. This was the same as the OECD average. In the United Kingdom, men represent 33% of teachers across all levels of education, compared to 30% on average across OECD countries.
- In order to improve female participation in STEM subjects, the UK government has contributed funding to several research programmes. For example, the Department for Education has granted over £2 million in funding for the Gender Balance in Computing project, which is conducting randomised control trials on interventions for girls in computer science across 972 schools in England. Government funds have also been invested in the Improving Gender Balance project to tackle the gender imbalance in Physics.<sup>1</sup>
- Young women are less likely to be employed than young men, particularly those with lower levels of education. Only 53% of 25-34 year-old women with below upper secondary attainment were employed in 2020 compared to 74% of men in the United Kingdom. This gender difference is smaller than the average across OECD countries, where 43% of women and 69% of men with below upper secondary attainment are employed.
- In nearly all OECD countries and at all levels of educational attainment, 25-64 year-old women earn less than their male peers: their earnings correspond to 76%-78% of men's earnings on average across OECD countries. This proportion varies more across educational attainment levels within countries than on average across OECD countries. In the United Kingdom, the biggest difference between women's and men's earnings is for those with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education; women with this level of education earn 72% as much as men with a similar education level, while those with tertiary education earn 76%.
- On average across OECD countries with available data, 25-64 year-old women tend to participate slightly more in adult learning than men of the same age. This is the case in the United Kingdom, where 54% of women participated in formal and/or non-formal education and training in 2016, compared to 50% of men. Family reasons were reported as barriers to lifelong participation in formal and/or non-formal education and training by 46% of women compared to 32% of men in the United Kingdom.

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<sup>1</sup> More information about these research programmes can be found on the following websites: <https://teachcomputing.org/gender-balance>; <https://www.iop.org/what-were-doing-address-gender-imbalance-physics#ref>.

**Figure 1. Distribution of upper secondary vocational graduates in the field of engineering, manufacturing and construction by gender (2019)**

In per cent



Countries are ranked in descending order of the share of male upper secondary vocational graduates in the field of engineering, manufacturing and construction.

**Source:** OECD/UIS/Eurostat (2021). Education at a Glance Database (<http://stats.oecd.org>). See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes ([https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2021\\_Annex3\\_ChapterB.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2021_Annex3_ChapterB.pdf)).

## Ensuring equal opportunities for students across socio-economic backgrounds

- Socio-economic status may significantly impact students' participation in education, particularly at levels of education that rely, in many countries, most heavily on private expenditure, such as early childhood education and care and tertiary education. In 2018, private sources accounted for 38% of total expenditure in pre-primary institutions in the United Kingdom, which was one of the highest proportions in the OECD, where the average was 17%. Net costs for parents in the United Kingdom average more than 50% of women's median full-time earnings for a middle-income two-earner couple, compared to 17% in the OECD on average (OECD, 2020<sup>[1]</sup>). Once public-to-private transfers are taken into account, 71% of expenditure at tertiary level come from private sources in the United Kingdom, compared to 30% on average across OECD countries.
- Tuition fees at tertiary level vary according to students' home regions and their region of study within the United Kingdom. Tuition fees in England are the highest for a bachelor's programme in publicly supported institutions across OECD countries with available data. National students in government-dependent private institutions in England were charged USD 12 330 per year for a bachelor's degree in 2018/19. This was more than 3 times the amount that they were charged in 2009/10 on average, following reforms that raised the cap on tuition fees in 2012/13. At the same time, 96% of English students received government support through student loans for short-cycle tertiary and Bachelor's programmes in 2019/20.

- In contrast, Scottish students do not pay tuition fees for studying in Scotland and Northern Irish students benefit from a lower tuition fee cap to study in Northern Ireland. Scottish, Welsh, and Northern Irish domicile students can apply for both student loans and grants for undergraduate study; however, maintenance grants have not been available for English domicile students starting full-time undergraduate courses from August 2016 onwards.
- Across most OECD countries, socio-economic status influences learning outcomes more than gender and immigrant status. In the United Kingdom, the proportion of children from the bottom quartile of the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) achieving at least PISA level 2 in reading in 2018 was 19% lower than that of children from the top ESCS quartile, compared to 29% lower on average across OECD countries.
- International student mobility at the tertiary level has risen steadily reaching about 489 000 students in the United Kingdom and representing 19% of tertiary students in 2019. The largest share of international tertiary students studying in the United Kingdom comes from China. Students from low and lower-middle income countries are generally less likely to study abroad. In 2019, they represented 29% of international students in OECD countries, compared to 15% in the United Kingdom.
- Large differences in educational attainment may lead to starker earnings inequality in many countries. In the United Kingdom, 18% of 25-64 year-old adults with below upper secondary attainment earn at or below half the median earnings in 2019, below the OECD average of 27%.

## Education and migration background

- On average across the OECD, foreign-born adults (25-64 year-olds) account for 22% of all adults with below upper secondary attainment, 14% of those attaining upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment, and 18% of tertiary-educated adults. But in the United Kingdom, the share of foreign-born adults among all adults with a given level of educational attainment is the highest among tertiary-educated adults (22% in 2020).
- Foreign-born adults have more difficulty finding a job than their native-born peers, as they face various challenges, such as discrepancies in credential recognition, skills, and language. Thus, foreign-born workers are likely to have a lower reservation wage (the lowest wage rate at which a worker would be willing to accept a particular type of job), and this implies that they are more likely to accept any job they can get. This may explain the fact that, in many countries, the employment rate for foreign-born adults with low educational attainment is higher than the rate for their native-born peers. On average across OECD countries, among adults without upper secondary attainment, 57% of native-born adults are employed, compared to 61% of foreign-born adults. In the United Kingdom, however, the employment rate of foreign-born adults without upper secondary attainment was 63% in 2020, slightly lower than that of their native-born peers (65%).
- The likelihood of being employed increases with the level of educational attainment, but foreign-born adults with tertiary attainment generally have lower employment prospects than their native-born peers. On average across OECD countries, 86% of native-born tertiary-educated adults are employed compared to 79% for foreign-born tertiary-educated adults. In the United Kingdom, among tertiary-educated adults, 87% of native-born adults and 85% of foreign-born adults are employed. Since foreign-born adults who arrived in the country at an early age have spent some years in the education system of the host country and gained credentials recognised by the host country, their labour-market outcomes are better than of those who arrived at a later age with a foreign qualification. In the United Kingdom, however among foreign-born adults with tertiary attainment, 84% of those who arrived by the age of 15 are employed, while 85% of those who arrived in the country at age 16 or later are employed.

- Foreign-born young adults (15-29 year-olds) are also more likely to be neither employed nor in education or training (NEET) than native-born young adults. On average across OECD countries, 18.8% of foreign-born and 13.7% of native-born adults are NEET. In the United Kingdom, the difference is less than 1 percentage point (11.8% compared to 12.5%). Early arrival in the country is generally associated with a lower risk of becoming NEET. In the United Kingdom, the share of NEETs among foreign-born young adults who arrived by the age of 15 is 10%, while the share of NEETs among those who arrived at age 16 or later is 13%.
- In many OECD countries, foreign-born adults earn less than native-born adults. This pay gap may narrow with higher levels of educational attainment. On average across OECD countries, foreign-born adults with below secondary attainment working full-time earn 89% as much as their native-born peers, while this gap disappears among tertiary-educated adults. In the United Kingdom, in 2019, among adults with below upper secondary attainment, the earnings of foreign-born full-time workers represented 64% that of their native-born peers, 90% among adults with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment, and 97% among those with a tertiary-education.

### Cross-regional disparities in education

- In the United Kingdom, education policy is a devolved matter that is the responsibility of the UK Government in England and the Devolved Administrations in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. In England, schools have a lot of decision-making power and most decisions (65%) affecting lower secondary education are taken at the school level (OECD, 2018<sup>[2]</sup>). Only 6% of decisions at this level are taken at the local level. On the other hand, 44% of decisions are made by local authorities in Scotland, whilst 48% are made by schools. Remaining decisions are taken at multiple levels.
- In England, Scotland, and Wales, the compulsory school starting age is 5 years old. However, in Northern Ireland, the compulsory school starting age is 4 years old for most children. The school leaving age for full-time compulsory education is 16 years old across the United Kingdom. However, young people in England have to remain in full- or part-time education or training until they are at least 18 years old.
- National level data often hide important regional inequalities in children's access and participation to education. In general, inequalities across regions tend to widen at non-compulsory levels of education. For example, in the majority of countries, the variation in enrolment rate of 3-5 year-olds is often greater than the variation among 6-14 year-olds. This is the case in the United Kingdom, where the enrolment rate of 3-5 year-olds varies from 81% in Scotland to 100% in all regions of England except Greater London. The enrolment of 6-14 year-olds varies from 94% in Greater London to 100% in North West England. Meanwhile, the enrolment rate of 15-19 year-olds varies from 76% in Wales and Northern Ireland to 89% in Scotland. It should be noted that variations in enrolment rates for 15-19 year-olds are likely to result from differences in school leaving age (between England and the rest of the United Kingdom) and differences in tuition fees.<sup>2</sup>
- Tertiary attainment may vary significantly within a country. In the United Kingdom, the share of 25-64 year-old adults with tertiary education varies from 38% in the region of North East England to 68% in the region of Greater London, one of the highest regional variations across OECD countries with available data.

<sup>2</sup> Regional variation in enrolment may also be influenced by students attending school in a different region from their area of residence, particularly at higher levels of education.

- On average across OECD and partner countries with subnational data on labour-force status, there is more regional variation in employment rates among those with below upper secondary levels of education (17 percentage points) than for those with tertiary education (8 percentage points). In the United Kingdom, there was a difference of 21 percentage points in the employment rate of adults with below upper secondary education between different regions of the country, ranging from 51% in Northern Ireland to 73% in South East England in 2020. In comparison, employment rates for tertiary-educated adults ranged from 84% in Scotland to 88% in Greater London.
- The proportion of young people who are NEET shows significant subnational as well as national variation across OECD and partner countries. In the United Kingdom, the proportion in the subnational region with the highest share of 18-24 year-old NEETs (North East England) is 8 percentage points higher than in the region with the lowest share (South East England). This was lower than the average difference in the share of NEETs between regions within countries across the OECD, which was 11 percentage points.

### COVID-19: 18 months into the pandemic

- The spread of COVID-19 has continued to impede access to in-person education in many countries around the world in 2021. By mid-May 2021, 37 OECD and partner countries had experienced periods of full school closure since the start of 2020. In the United Kingdom, there were periods of full school closure in both 2020 and 2021 in all regions, although decisions about the length of closures and school provision during lockdown differed across the four governments in the country. The following data are focused largely on England.
- The number of instructional days when schools were fully closed since the start of 2020 due to the pandemic (excluding school holidays, public holidays and weekends) varies significantly between countries and increases with the level of education.<sup>3</sup> The United Kingdom follows this pattern. In England, pre-primary schools were fully closed for an average of 34 days between 1 January 2020 and 20 May 2021. Meanwhile primary schools closed for 78 days, lower secondary for 88 days and upper secondary general schools for 88 days. In comparison, respective closures were 55, 78, 92 and 101 days on average across the OECD. In Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland too, younger pupils were generally prioritized to return to school following school closures.
- Schools did not fully close but remained open with reduced capacity in many countries. In some cases, schools were open with a reduced number of students per classroom, whilst in others they were fully open but only for certain age-groups and/or in certain regions. Schools at upper secondary (general) level in England for instance experienced 28 days of partial opening between January 2020 and May 2021, all of which took place in 2020. This was lower than the number of days of partial opening in the OECD on average (57 days), where there were 27 days of partially open instruction in 2020, and 30 days in 2021. During times of partial closure, strategies for schools in England included the combination of distance learning and in-person classes, the progressive return to school of students by age cohort, and the classroom attendance of students scheduled in shifts. When adding both the number of days where schools were fully and partially closed, learning in upper secondary general education was disrupted by 116 days in England between January 2020 and May 2021.

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<sup>3</sup> In this context, “fully closed” means government-mandated or/and recommended closures of educational institutions (e.g. closure of buildings) affecting all or most of the student population enrolled at a given level of education. In many countries, including in the United Kingdom, despite school closures at national level, schools were still open for vulnerable students or/and children of key workers.

- The impact of COVID-19 and school closures on educational equity has been a concern for many countries. 30 out of the 36 OECD and partner countries surveyed, including the United Kingdom, declared that additional measures were taken to support the education of children who might face additional barriers to learning during the pandemic. In England, this included the National Tutoring Programme, worth £350 million over the 2020/21 academic year, to increase access to high-quality tuition for the most disadvantaged children.<sup>4</sup> In June 2021, a further £1 billion was announced to support tuition for the following three academic years. 22 countries, including the United Kingdom, stated that they had subsidised devices for students to help them access education. During the first lockdown in England, the Department for Education announced plans to fund over 200 000 laptops and tablets, and over 50 000 4G wireless routers in April 2020, most of which were delivered by mid/late June.<sup>5</sup> As of the end of the academic year 2020/21, 1.35 million devices and over 77,000 4G wireless routers had been distributed, and schools had been supported in accessing over 33,000 mobile data uplifts for families. Measures to encourage disadvantaged or vulnerable students to return to school after closures were also implemented in 29 OECD and partner countries, including in the United Kingdom.
- Countries have faced difficult decisions on how to best manage their resources to ensure that students can continue to access quality education in the safest possible conditions and to minimise disruption to learning. Before the pandemic, total public expenditure on primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education in the United Kingdom reached 3.5% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2018, which was higher than the OECD average of 3.2%. About two-thirds of OECD and partner countries reported increases in the funding allocated to primary and secondary schools to help them cope with the crisis in 2020. Compared to the previous year, the United Kingdom reported an increase in the fiscal year education budget for primary and lower secondary general education in both 2020 and 2021.
- 20 OECD and partner countries stated that the allocation of additional public funds to support the educational response to the pandemic in primary and secondary schools was based on the number of students or classes. At the same time, 16 countries targeted additional funds at socio-economically disadvantaged students as a way to ensure that resources targeted those that needed them the most. In England, additional public funds were allocated according to the number of students and classes, the socio-economic characteristics, the number of students with SEN, and the additional costs incurred at each school.
- Countries' approach to prioritise teachers in vaccination campaigns against COVID-19 has varied. In total, 19 OECD and partner countries have prioritised at least some teachers as part of the government's plans to vaccinate the population on a national level (as of 20 May 2021). In the United Kingdom, teachers were not explicitly prioritised for vaccination and they were offered the vaccine against COVID-19 in line with their age group. However, all adults were offered a first dose of vaccine by mid-July 2021.
- The impact of the pandemic on the economy has raised concerns about the prospects of young adults, especially those leaving education earlier than others. In the United Kingdom, the unemployment rate among 25-34 year-olds with below upper secondary attainment was 7.4% in 2020, an increase of 0.5 percentage points from the previous year. This was a lower increase than the OECD average, where the youth unemployment rate of 15.1% in 2020 represented an increase of 1.9 percentage points from 2019 (Figure 2).

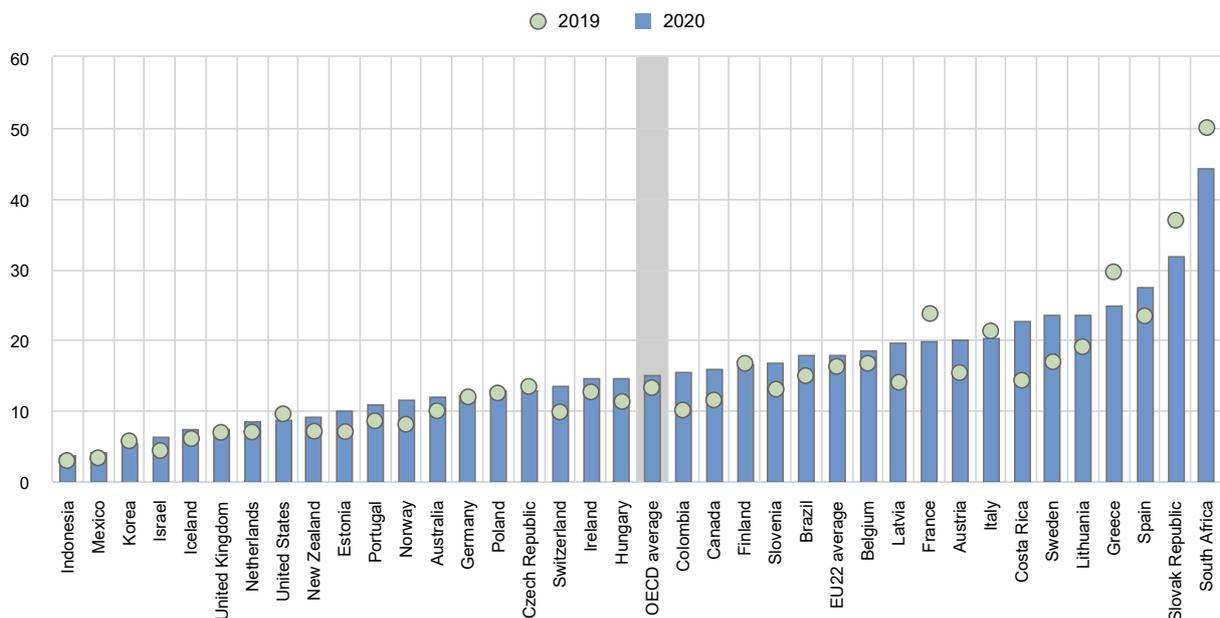
<sup>4</sup> More information about this programme can be found at the following website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/laptops-and-tablets-progress-data-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

<sup>5</sup> Further details about the distribution of digital equipment can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/laptops-tablets-and-4g-wireless-routers-progress-data>.

- At the same time, the number of adults participating in formal and/or non-formal education and training decreased by 27% on average in the OECD between the second quarter of 2019 and the second quarter of 2020 (i.e. during the peak of the first wave of COVID-19 in many OECD countries). In the United Kingdom, the participation of adults in formal and/or non-formal education and training in this period decreased by only 4%.
- Despite the impact of the crisis on employment, the share of NEETs among 18-24 year-olds did not greatly increase in most OECD and partner countries during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. On average, the share of 18-24 year-old NEETs in OECD countries rose from 14.4% in 2019 to 16.1% in 2020. In the United Kingdom, the share of 18-24 year-old NEETs was 14.5% in 2019, which increased to 15.2% in 2020.
- Several initiatives have been implemented in order to try to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on young people who are NEET, or are at risk of becoming NEET. For example, the UK government has announced £101 million of funding for school leavers to study eligible qualifications if they cannot find work or training, as well as funding for employers to provide new jobs, apprenticeships and traineeships for young people (Powell, 2021<sup>[3]</sup>).

**Figure 2. Trends in unemployment rates of 25-34 year-olds with below upper secondary attainment (2019 and 2020)**

In per cent



Compare your country: <https://www.compareyourcountry.org/education-at-a-glance-2021/en/2/3044+3045+3046/trend//OAVG>

Countries are ranked in ascending order of the unemployment rate of 25-34 year-olds with below upper secondary attainment in 2020.

Source: OECD (2021), Table A3.3. See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes ([https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2021\\_Annex3\\_ChapterA.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2021_Annex3_ChapterA.pdf)).

### Investing in education

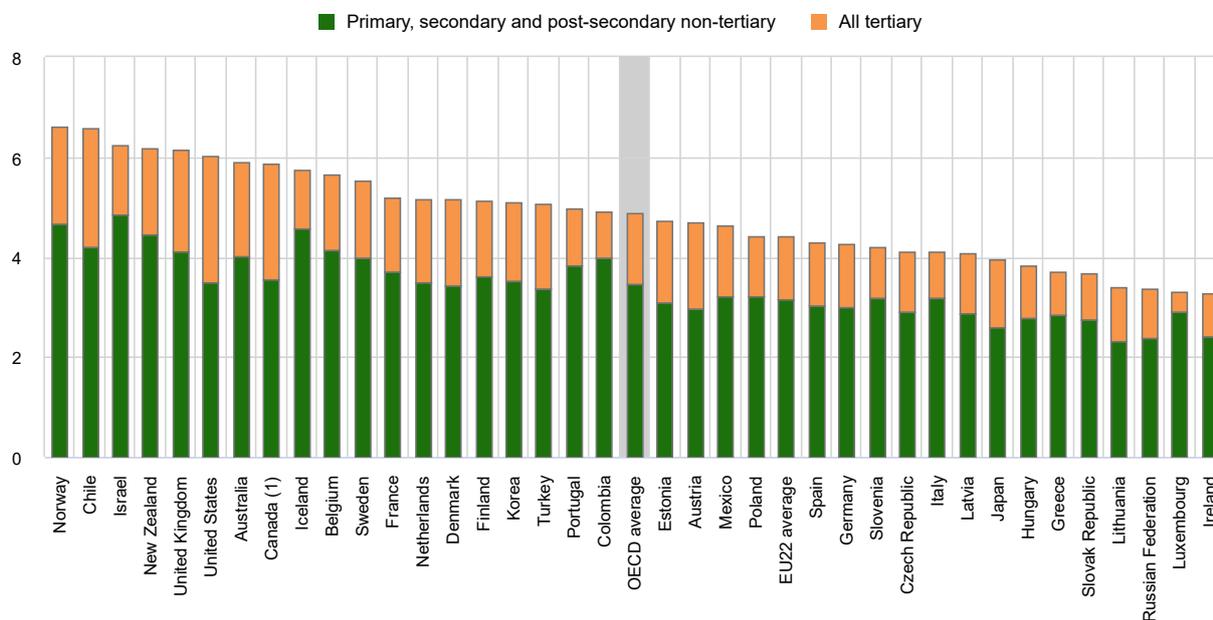
- Annual expenditure per student on educational institutions provides an indication of the investment countries make on each student. After accounting for public-to-private transfers, public expenditure

on primary to tertiary educational institutions per full-time student in the United Kingdom was USD 9 704, which was lower than average across OECD countries (USD 10 000). However, public expenditure on educational institutions at these levels before transfers were higher in the United Kingdom (USD 11 149) than on average in the OECD (USD 10 564).

- Expenditure on core educational services such as instruction and teaching make up the largest share of education expenditure. However, ancillary services (such as student welfare) and research and development (R&D) activities also influence the level of expenditure per student. In primary to tertiary education, 84% of institutions' expenditure per student is devoted to core educational services in the United Kingdom (compared to 89% on average across OECD countries). This share is generally lower at the tertiary level due to expenditure on research and development, including in the United Kingdom where 74% of total expenditure is devoted to core educational services.
- The provision of education across public and private institutions influences the allocation of resources between levels of education and types of institution. In 2018, the United Kingdom spent USD 12 245 per student at primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education, USD 1 791 higher than the OECD average of USD 10 454. At tertiary level, the United Kingdom invested USD 29 911 per student, USD 12 846 more than the OECD average. Expenditure per student on public educational institutions is higher than on private institutions on average across OECD countries. However, this is not the case in the United Kingdom, where total expenditure on primary to tertiary public institutions amounts to USD 11 470 per student, compared to USD 17 711 on private institutions.
- Between 2012 and 2018, expenditure per student from primary to tertiary education increased at an average annual growth rate of 1.6% across OECD countries. In the United Kingdom, expenditure on educational institutions grew at an average annual rate of 1.9%, while the number of students remained fairly stable. This resulted in an average annual growth rate of 1.8% in expenditure per student over this period.
- Among OECD countries, the United Kingdom spent the fifth highest proportion of its GDP on primary to tertiary educational institutions. In 2018, the United Kingdom spent on average 6.1% of GDP on primary to tertiary educational institutions, which is 1.3 percentage points higher than the OECD average. Across levels of education, the United Kingdom devoted an above-average share of GDP at non-tertiary levels and an above-average share at tertiary level (Figure 3).
- The share of capital costs on total expenditure on educational institutions is lower than the OECD average at primary to tertiary level in the United Kingdom. At primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary level, capital costs account for 3% of total spending on educational institutions, 5 percentage points below the OECD average (8%). At the tertiary level, capital costs represent 11%, the same as the average across OECD countries.
- Compensation of teachers and other staff employed in educational institutions represents the largest share of current expenditure from primary to tertiary education. In 2018, the United Kingdom allocated 74% of its current expenditure to staff compensation, the same as the average across OECD countries. Staff compensation tends to make up a smaller share of current expenditure on tertiary institutions due to the higher costs of facilities and equipment at this level. In the United Kingdom, staff compensation represents 64% of current expenditure on tertiary institutions compared to 79% at non-tertiary levels. On average across OECD countries, the share is 68% at tertiary level and 77% at non-tertiary level.

**Figure 3. Total expenditure on educational institutions as a percentage of GDP (2018)**

From public, private and international sources, by level of education, in per cent



**Compare your country:** <https://www.compareyourcountry.org/education-at-a-glance-2021/en/5/3059+3060+3061+3062+3063+3064/default>

1. Primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education includes pre-primary programmes.

Countries are ranked in descending order of total expenditure on educational institutions as a percentage of GDP.

**Source:** OECD (2021), Table C2.1. See *Source* section for more information and Annex 3 for notes ([https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2021\\_Annex3\\_ChapterC.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2021_Annex3_ChapterC.pdf)).

## Working conditions of school teachers

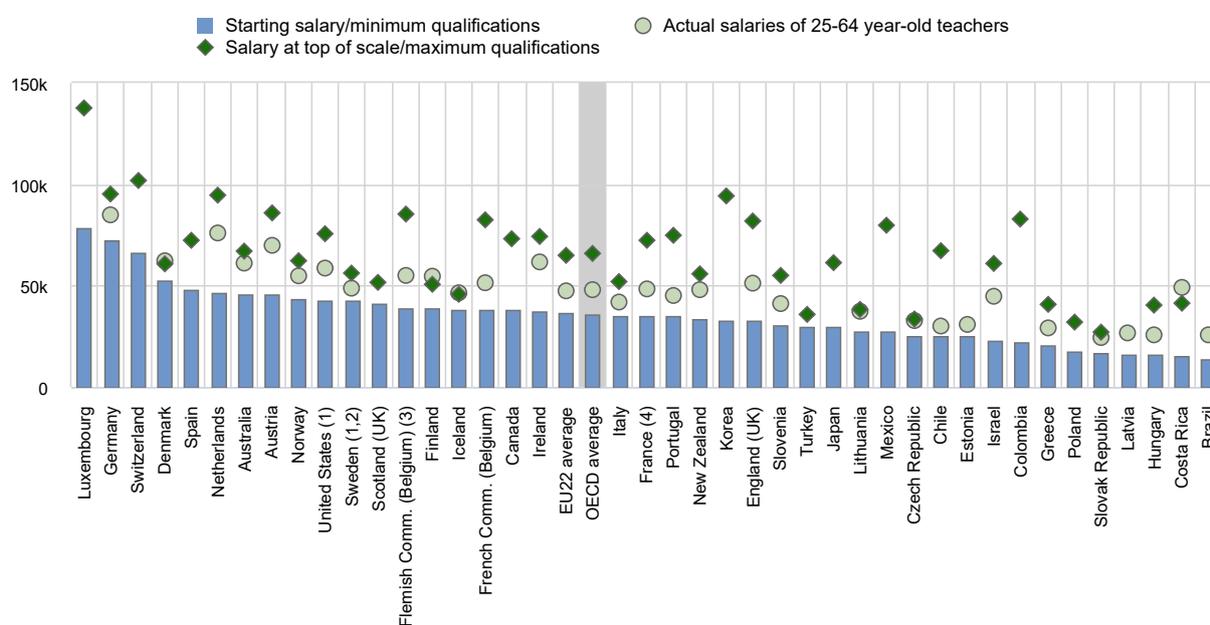
- The salaries of school staff, and in particular teachers and school heads, represent the largest single expenditure in formal education. Their salary levels also have an impact on the attractiveness of the teaching profession. Across the United Kingdom, statutory salaries vary at the subnational level. For example, the starting salaries of primary school teachers varied by 38% (USD 11 344) across subnational entities in 2019, ranging from USD 29 789 in Northern Ireland to USD 41 133 in Scotland.
- In most OECD countries and economies, statutory salaries of teachers (and school heads) in public educational institutions increase with the level of education they teach, and also with experience. On average, statutory salaries of teachers with maximum qualifications at the top of their salary scales (maximum salaries) were between 86% and 91% higher than those of teachers with the minimum qualifications at the start of their career (minimum salaries) at pre-primary (ISCED 02), primary and general lower and upper secondary levels in 2020. In England, maximum salaries were 152% higher than minimum salaries at each level of education in 2020, whilst in Scotland maximum salaries were 26% higher. However, most teachers were paid between these minimum and maximum salaries.
- Teachers' actual salaries reflect their statutory salaries and additional work-related payments. Average actual salaries also depend on the characteristics of the teaching population such as their age, level of experience and qualification level. In England, teachers' average actual salaries (after

conversion to USD using PPPs for private consumption) amount to USD 45 849 at the pre-primary (ISCED 02) and the primary level. They were USD 51 164 at the general lower secondary and the general upper secondary level. On average across OECD countries, teachers' average actual salaries were USD 40 707, USD 45 687, USD 47 988 and USD 51 749 at the pre-primary, primary, lower secondary and upper secondary level respectively (Figure 4).

- Teachers' average actual salaries remained 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 between 81% and 96% of the earnings of tertiary-educated workers on average across OECD countries and economies. In England, the proportion ranged from 84% to 93% at pre-primary, primary and general secondary levels of education.
- However, there are significant differences between men and women in relative salaries of teachers due to the gender gap in earnings across the labour market (statutory salaries are equal for male and female teachers in public educational institutions). When average salaries of teachers are compared to salaries of tertiary educated workers, average actual salaries of teachers are usually higher for women, and lower for men. In England, the proportion ranges from 99% to 109% for women (98% to 110% on average across OECD countries and economies), and from 75% to 85% for men (76% to 85% on average across OECD countries and economies) in primary and general secondary education.
- Women are over-represented among primary, lower secondary and upper secondary teachers (representing respectively 82%, 68% and 60% of teachers at these levels on average across OECD countries in 2019). However, women are under-represented in tertiary education (44% of tertiary teachers on average). In the United Kingdom, the proportion of female teachers ranged from 86% at the primary level to 63% at lower secondary level, 60% at upper secondary level, and 46% at the tertiary level in 2019.
- 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: it ranged from 989 hours at pre-primary level (ISCED 02), to 791 hours at primary level, 723 hours at lower secondary level (general programmes) and 685 hours at upper secondary level (general programmes) in 2020. In Scotland, teachers are required to teach 855 hours per year at all levels from pre-primary to upper secondary level (general programmes).
- During their working time, teachers also perform various non-teaching tasks such as lesson planning and preparation, marking students' work and communicating or co-operating with parents or guardians. At the lower secondary level, teachers in Scotland spend 63% of their statutory working time on teaching, compared to 44% on average among countries with available data.
- In primary and secondary education, about 35% of teachers are at least 50 years old on average across OECD countries and may reach retirement age in the next decade, while 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 2019, 16% of primary teachers in the United Kingdom were at least 50 years old, which was lower than the OECD average of 33%. On average across OECD countries, the proportion of teachers aged at least 50 years old increases with higher levels of education taught, to 36% in lower secondary education and 40% in upper secondary education. In the United Kingdom, this proportion varies from 18% at lower secondary level to 28% at upper secondary level.

**Figure 4. Lower secondary teachers' average actual salaries compared to the statutory starting and top of the scale salaries (2020)**

Annual statutory salaries of teachers in public institutions, in equivalent USD converted using PPPs



**Compare your country:** <https://www.compareyourcountry.org/education-at-a-glance-2021/en/7/all/default>

**Note:** Actual salaries include bonuses and allowances.

1. Actual base salaries.
2. Salaries at the top of the scale and the minimum qualifications, instead of the maximum qualifications.
3. Salaries at the top of the scale and the most prevalent qualifications, instead of the maximum qualifications.
4. Includes the average of fixed bonuses for overtime hours.

*Countries and economies are ranked in descending order of starting salaries for lower secondary teachers with the minimum qualifications.*

**Source:** OECD (2021), Table D3.3 and Education at a Glance Database, <http://stats.oecd.org>. See *Source* section for more information and Annex 3 for notes ([https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2021\\_Annex3\\_ChapterD.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2021_Annex3_ChapterD.pdf)).

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## More information

**For more information on Education at a Glance 2021 and to access the full set of Indicators, see:**  
<https://doi.org/10.1787/b35a14e5-en>

For more information on the methodology used during the data collection for each indicator, the references to the sources and the specific notes for each country, see Annex 3 ([https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2021\\_Annex3.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2021_Annex3.pdf)).

For general information on the 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.

Data on subnational regions for selected indicators are available in the *OECD Regional Statistics* (database) (OECD, 2021). When interpreting the results on subnational entities, readers should take into account that the population size of subnational entities can vary widely within countries. Also, regional disparities tend to be higher when more subnational entities are used in the analysis.

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The data on educational responses during COVID-19 were collected and processed by the OECD based on the Survey on Joint National Responses to COVID-19 School Closures, a collaborative effort conducted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS); the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); the World Bank; and the OECD.

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