

Education at a Glance 2023

Country note

Latvia

This country note provides an overview of the key characteristics of the education system in Latvia. It draws on data from *Education at a Glance 2023*. In line with the thematic focus of this year's *Education at a Glance*, it emphasises vocational education and training (VET), while also covering other parts of the education system. Data in this note are provided for the latest available year. Readers interested in the reference years for the data are referred to the corresponding tables in *Education at a Glance 2023*.

Highlights

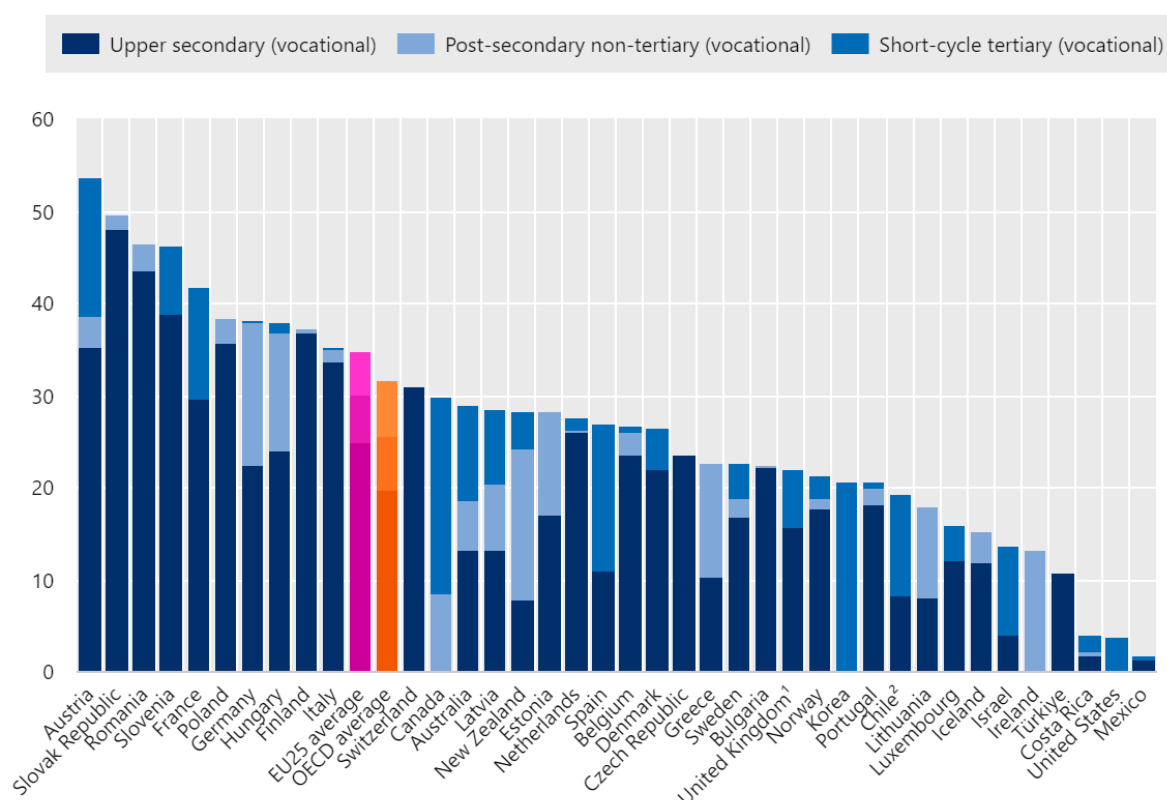
- Vocational education and training (VET) equips young people with skills in demand at workplaces, facilitating school-to-work transition. In Latvia, nearly three out of ten 25-34 year olds have a VET qualification as their highest level of attainment.
- Unemployment rates for 25-34 year-olds with vocational upper secondary attainment are lower than for their peers with general upper secondary attainment in Latvia (6.9% and 10.3% respectively), as in many other OECD countries.
- Wages of workers with upper secondary vocational degrees are comparatively low in Latvia. Young workers aged 25-34 with a vocational upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary degree earn 17% less than workers with a general upper secondary degree.
- Yet, young workers who attained short-cycle tertiary education earn 50% more than those with vocational upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment, the largest earnings advantage among the OECD countries (average at 13%).
- Moreover, Latvia is one of the few OECD countries where young workers with short-cycle tertiary qualification earn only slightly less than those with bachelor's degree: 74% and 81% respectively more than young workers without upper secondary attainment. Across the OECD countries, the earnings gap is much wider.
- In Latvia, 74% of entrants into general upper secondary programmes complete their programmes on time, while only 63% of entrants into vocational programmes do so. Two years after the end of the theoretical programme duration, the shares rise to 79% for general programmes and 72% for vocational programmes. On average across countries and other participants with available data, 62% of vocational entrants complete their studies on time and 73% within an additional two years.
- High-quality early childhood education and care helps to give all children an equitable start in life and is especially vital for the most disadvantaged children. Participation in early childhood education is almost universal from the age of 3 in Latvia, even before the starting age of compulsory education.
- Latvia shows an increase in the share of teachers aged 50 or older in the recent years, as other OECD countries do, but to a larger extent. In 2021, a little over half of the teachers in both general and vocational upper secondary programmes in Latvia are aged 50 or older, while the share stands at 40% on average across the OECD countries.

The output of educational institutions and the impact of learning

- High-quality VET programmes integrate learners into labour markets and open pathways for further personal and professional development. However, the quality and importance of VET programmes differ greatly across countries. In some countries, half of all young adults (25-34 year-olds) have a vocational qualification as their highest level of educational attainment, while the share is in the low single digits in other countries. In Latvia, 29% of 25-34 year-olds have a VET qualification as their highest level of attainment: 13% at upper secondary level, 7% at post-secondary non-tertiary level, and 8% at short-cycle tertiary level (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Share of 25-34 year-olds whose highest level of education has a vocational orientation, by level of educational attainment (2022)

In per cent



1. Data for upper secondary attainment include completion of a sufficient volume and standard of programmes that would be classified individually as completion of intermediate upper secondary programmes (9% of adults aged 25-34 are in this group).

2. Year of reference differs from 2022. Refer to the source table for more details.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the share of 25-34 year-olds who attained vocational upper secondary, vocational post-secondary non-tertiary or vocational short-cycle tertiary education.

Source: OECD (2023), Table A1.3. See Source section for more information and (OECD, 2023^[11]) *Education at a Glance 2023 Sources, Methodologies and Technical Notes* (<https://doi.org/10.1787/d7f76adc-en>) for notes.

- Across the OECD, unemployment rates for 25-34 year-olds with vocational upper secondary attainment are lower than for their peers with general upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment. This is also the case in Latvia, where 6.9% of young adults with vocational

upper secondary attainment are unemployed, compared to 10.3% of those with general upper secondary attainment.

- Although an upper secondary qualification is often the minimum attainment needed for successful labour-market participation, some 25-34 year-olds still leave education without such a qualification. On average across the OECD, 14% of young adults have not attained an upper secondary qualification. In Latvia, the share is lower than the OECD average (11%).
- Workers in Latvia aged 25-34 with vocational upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment earn 16% more than those without upper secondary attainment, whereas the earning advantage for workers with general upper secondary attainment is 39%.
- On average across OECD countries, younger adults who attained short-cycle tertiary education earn 13% more than those with vocational upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment. The earnings advantage is the largest in Latvia (50%), followed by the United Kingdom (31%).
- In almost all OECD countries, tertiary degrees provide a significantly larger earnings advantage. In particular, Latvia is one of the few OECD countries where the difference in earnings advantage is not so large between a short-cycle tertiary qualification and a bachelor's (or equivalent) degree. In Latvia, 25-34 year-old workers with short-cycle tertiary attainment earn 74% more than their peers with below upper secondary attainment, and those with bachelor's attainment (or equivalent) earn 81% more (OECD averages are 39% and 58% respectively).
- Tertiary attainment continues to increase among the working age population. On average across the OECD, tertiary attainment is becoming as common as upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment among 25-64 year-olds. In Latvia, 39% of 25-64 year-olds have tertiary attainment, a smaller share than those that have upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment (50%).
- On average across OECD countries, 14.7% of young adults aged 18-24 are not in education, employment or training (NEET), while in Latvia the corresponding figure is 12.3%. Reducing NEET rates among young adults is a particularly important challenge in all countries because those who become NEET face worse labour-market outcomes later in life than their peers who remained in education or training at this age.
- As the demand for skills in the workplace changes ever more quickly, the importance of lifelong learning continues to grow. In Latvia, the share of adults who participated in non-formal job-related education over a four-week reference period is 3% among 25-64 year-olds with vocational upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment, 2% among those with general upper secondary attainment and 13% among those with tertiary attainment. This compares to average shares of 7% (vocational upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment), 7% (general upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment) and 14% (tertiary) across the OECD.
- In Latvia, 25-64 year-old workers in large firms (in terms of the number of employed persons) showed higher participation rate in non-formal job-related education and training than those in smaller firms. The difference in the participation rate marks 20 percentage points between the firms with more than 249 employees and the firms with 10-49 employees, which is the largest among the countries with comparable data. A large difference in the participation rate is also observed between employees in public enterprises and private enterprises: 22% and 7% respectively.

Access to education, participation and progress

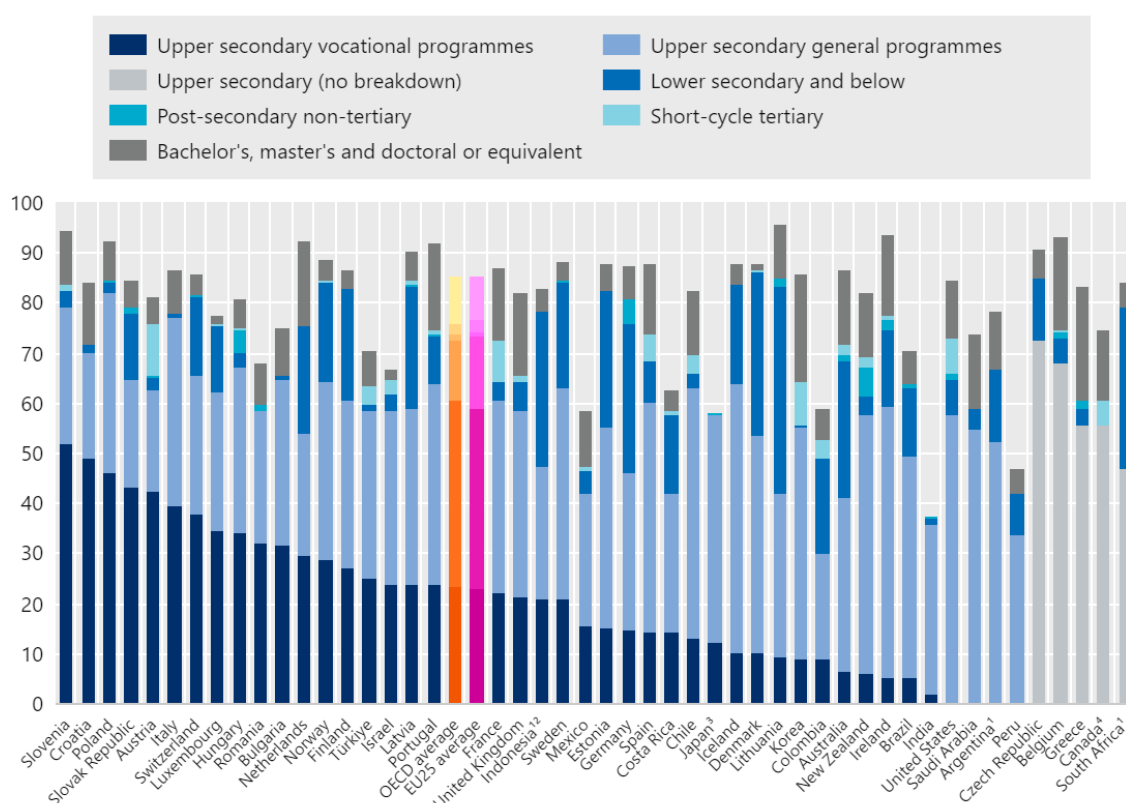
- Participation in high-quality early childhood education (ECE) has a positive effect on children's well-being, learning and development in the first years of their lives. In Latvia, 74% of 2-year-olds are enrolled in ECE. This increases to 90% of 3-year-olds, 94% of 4-year-olds and 97% of 5-year-

olds. Moreover, a large majority of children continues to be enrolled in ECE until the age of 6 (93%), as Latvia is one of the six OECD countries where children start primary education at the age of 7.

- Compulsory education in Latvia starts at the age of 5 and continues until the age of 16. Students typically graduate between the ages of 18 and 19 from general upper secondary programmes. The age range for completing vocational programmes is just as wide, with students typically graduating from vocational upper secondary programmes between 20 and 21. This is different from most OECD countries, where graduates from vocational upper secondary programmes have a wider age range, reflecting the greater diversity of pathways into these programmes than for general ones.
- The large majority of 15-19 year-olds across the OECD are enrolled in education. In Latvia, 35% of this age group are enrolled in general upper secondary education and 24% in vocational upper secondary education. A further 24% are enrolled in lower secondary programmes and 7% in tertiary programmes. This compares to an OECD average of 37% enrolled in general upper secondary programmes, 23% in vocational upper secondary programmes, 12% in lower secondary programmes and 12% in tertiary programmes (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Enrolment rates of 15-19 year-olds, by level of education (2021)

In per cent



1. Year of reference differs from 2021: 2020 for Argentina and South Africa; 2018 for Indonesia.

2. Excludes students enrolled at tertiary levels.

3. Breakdown by age not available after 15 years old.

4. Excludes post-secondary non-tertiary education.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the share of students enrolled in upper secondary vocational education.

Source: OECD/UIS/Eurostat (2023), Table B1.2. See *Source* section for more information and (OECD, 2023^[11]) *Education at a Glance 2023 Sources, Methodologies and Technical Notes* (<https://doi.org/10.1787/d7f76adc-en>) for notes.

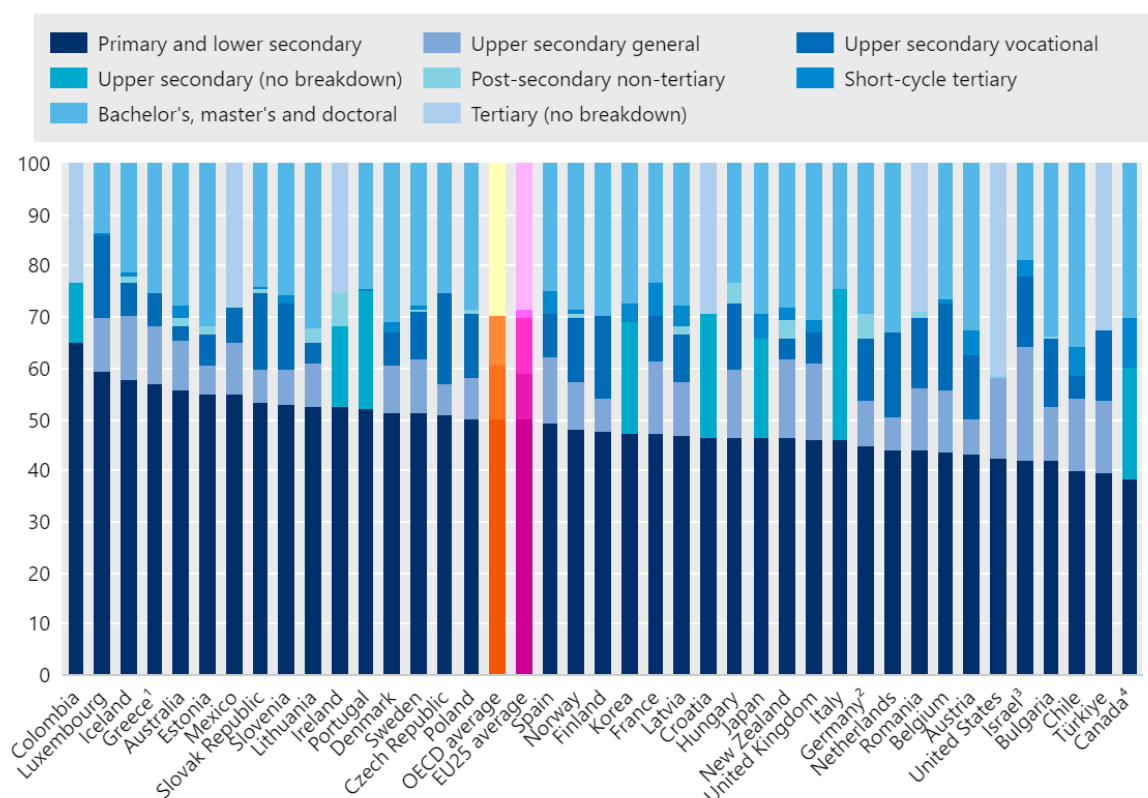
- Workplaces are powerful environments for the acquisition of both technical and soft skills. Latvia is one of four OECD countries (together with Denmark, Hungary and Ireland) where all students in upper secondary vocational programmes are enrolled in combined school- and work-based programmes.
- On average across countries and other participants with comparable data, 77% of entrants into general upper secondary education successfully complete their upper secondary studies (either in general or in vocational programmes) within the theoretical duration of the programme. The completion rate increases by an average 10 percentage points within two years after the end of the theoretical duration. In Latvia, 74% of entrants into general upper secondary education complete their programme within the theoretical duration, but this share increases to 79% after allowing an additional two years.
- In most countries with available data, completion rates in vocational upper secondary programmes are lower than in general upper secondary programmes. In Latvia, 63% of vocational students complete upper secondary education (either general or vocational programmes) within the expected duration and 72% complete their programme after an additional two years. On average across countries and other participants with available data, 62% of vocational entrants complete their studies on time and 73% within an additional two years.
- In some OECD countries, including Latvia, upper secondary students can transfer from vocational to general programmes. In Latvia, 13% of upper secondary students who entered vocational programme graduate from a general programme by two years after the end of the theoretical duration of the programme. This is the second-highest share across the countries with available data.
- To facilitate more flexible learning in vocational education, amendments to the Latvian Vocational Education Law in 2022 outline the possibility for students to receive state-recognised certificates for both full and partial completion of vocational education programmes. Learners therefore have the opportunity to accumulate and to transfer recognised vocational qualifications on a basis that is more suited to their individual needs.
- Perhaps surprisingly, the share of international students at tertiary level has not been negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in many OECD countries. However, a few countries experienced double digit declines in the share of international students. Latvia is not one of them, as the share of international students increased from 10% of all tertiary students in 2019 to 13% in 2021.

Financial resources invested in education

- All OECD and partner countries devote a substantial share of their domestic output to education. In 2020, OECD countries spent on average 5.1% of their gross domestic product (GDP) on primary to tertiary educational institutions. In Latvia, the corresponding share was 4.3% of GDP, of which 31% was dedicated to primary education, 15% to lower secondary education, 20% to upper secondary education, 1% to post-secondary non-tertiary education, 4% to short-cycle tertiary programmes and 28% to bachelor's, master's and doctoral or equivalent programmes (Figure 3).
- Funding for education in absolute terms is strongly influenced by countries' income levels. Countries with higher per capita GDP tend to spend more per student than those with lower per capita GDP. Across all levels from primary to tertiary education, Latvia spends USD 8 907 annually per full-time equivalent student (adjusted for purchasing power), compared to the OECD average of USD 12 647. Expenditure per student is equivalent to 27% of per capita GDP, which is the same as the OECD average of 27%.

Figure 3. Total expenditure on primary to tertiary educational institutions, by level of education (2020)

In per cent



1. Year of reference differs from 2020. Refer to the source table for more details.

2. Upper secondary vocational programmes include lower secondary vocational programmes.

3. Upper secondary programmes include lower secondary programmes.

4. Primary education includes pre-primary programmes.

Countries are ranked in descending order of total expenditure on primary and lower secondary institutions.

Source: OECD/UIS/Eurostat (2023), Table C2.1. See *Source* section for more information and (OECD, 2023^[1]) *Education at a Glance 2023 Sources, Methodologies and Technical Notes* (<https://doi.org/10.1787/d7f76adc-en>) for notes.

- The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented challenges for education systems across the world. On average across the OECD, expenditure on primary to tertiary educational institutions per full-time equivalent student (including expenditure on research and development) grew by 0.4% from 2019 to 2020 (the first year of the pandemic and the latest period with available data). In Latvia, it increased by 0.2%. This change in expenditure per student is the result of a constant total expenditure on educational institutions and the total number of full-time equivalent students decreasing by 0.2%.
- The distribution of spending between general and vocational upper secondary programmes depends on a variety of factors, such as the number of VET students, the fields of study within VET programmes and the importance given to VET relative to general programmes. In Latvia, 11% of all funding for educational institutions is spent on general upper secondary education and 9% on vocational upper secondary education (similar to the OECD average of 11% and 10% respectively). Meanwhile, total expenditure per full-time equivalent student in vocational upper secondary

education is 1.26 times higher than that in general upper secondary education. This could be related to the fact that Latvia captures expenditure associated to the work-based component.

- Government sources dominate non-tertiary education funding in all OECD countries, while the private sector contributes 9% of the total expenditure on educational institutions on average. Private funding in Latvia accounted for 6% of expenditure at primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary levels.
- In most countries, private sources¹ accounted for similar shares of expenditure on general and vocational programmes at upper secondary level. However, in a few countries the differences in the share of private funding between general and vocational programmes were wider. In Latvia, the private sector is responsible for 11% of expenditure on general upper secondary programmes and 6% of expenditure on vocational upper secondary programmes.
- On average across OECD countries, more than half of government expenditure on primary to post-secondary non-tertiary education comes from subnational governments. Latvia is one of six OECD countries (along with Estonia, Lithuania, Mexico, Poland and the Slovak Republic) where the majority of funding on primary to post-secondary non-tertiary education is sourced initially from the central government, but after transfers between levels of government, the majority of funding comes from subnational governments. In Latvia, after transfers, 19% of the funding comes from the central government and 81% from the local level. The local governments receive earmarked grants from the central government for salaries of teaching staff.

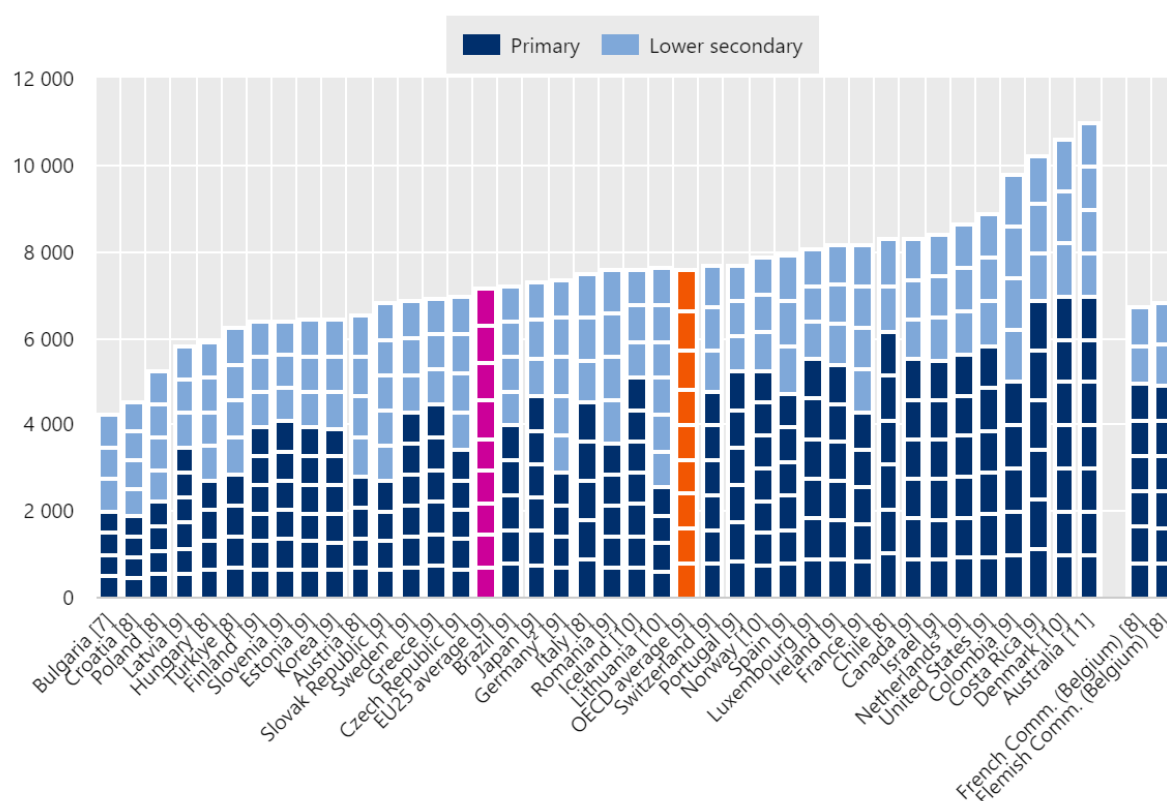
Teachers, the learning environment and the organisation of schools

- The total compulsory instruction time throughout primary and lower secondary education varies widely from country to country (Figure 4). Across the OECD, over the course of primary and lower secondary education, compulsory instruction time totals an average of 7 634 hours, distributed over nine grades. In Latvia, the total compulsory instruction time is lower, at 5 840 hours, over nine grades.
- Most of the total compulsory instruction time is distributed in the later years of compulsory education. In Latvia, average annual compulsory instruction time gradually increases from 516 hours to 763 hours between the ages of 7 and 13. This is the second largest increase across the OECD countries with data.
- On average across OECD countries, 25% of the compulsory instruction time in primary education is devoted to reading, writing and literature and 16% to mathematics. In lower secondary education, the share is 15% for reading, writing and literature and 13% for mathematics. In Latvia, 23% of time is devoted to reading, writing and literature and 18% to mathematics at primary level compared to 15% each to both subjects at lower secondary level.
- Teachers' salaries are an important determinant of the attractiveness of the teaching profession, but they also represent the single largest expenditure category in formal education. In most OECD countries, the salaries of teachers in public educational institutions increase with the level of education they teach. On average across OECD countries, actual salaries range from USD 42 371 at the pre-primary level to USD 53 119 at the upper secondary level. In Latvia, actual salaries are on average USD 24 038 at pre-primary level and USD 32 226 at upper secondary level.

¹ Private expenditure on education refers to expenditure by households and other private entities. It also includes expenditure by private companies on the work-based element of school and work-based training of apprentices and students.

Figure 4. Compulsory instruction time in general education (2023)

In hours, in primary and lower secondary education, in public institutions



Note: Instruction hours for each grade refer to average hours per grade for the level of education. Numbers in square brackets refer to the total number of years for primary and lower secondary education.

1. Estimated number of hours by level of education based on the average number of hours per year, as for some subjects, the allocation of instruction time across multiple levels is flexible.

2. Year of reference 2022.

3. The number of grades in lower secondary education is three or four, depending on the track. The fourth year of pre-vocational secondary education was excluded from the calculation.

Countries and other participants are ranked in ascending order of the total number of compulsory instruction hours.

Source: OECD (2023), Table D1.1. See Source section for more information and (OECD, 2023^[11]) *Education at a Glance 2023 Sources, Methodologies and Technical Notes* (<https://doi.org/10.1787/d7f76adc-en>) for notes.

- On average across OECD countries and other participants with available data for the period 2015 to 2021, actual salaries of teachers increased by about 2% at primary level, 3% at lower secondary level and 6% at upper secondary level. In Latvia, the increase exceeded 40% at each level of education.
- In Latvia, on average teachers in upper secondary vocational programmes have higher level of actual salaries than those in upper secondary general programmes. Teachers in general programmes earn on average USD 32 226, while teachers teaching general subjects in vocational programmes earn on average USD 36 124 and those teaching vocational theory and practice earn USD 32 582. Actual salaries include bonuses and additional payments on top of base salary, and differences in actual salaries between teachers in general and vocational programmes may result from differences in the regulatory framework regarding teachers' workload and allowances.

- Besides average teacher salaries themselves, annual teaching time requirements, annual hours of compulsory instruction time for students, and class size also impact total spending on teacher salaries. When combined, these factors can be used to estimate an average cost of salaries per student and show the relative impact of each individual factor on total salary spending. Total teacher salary costs per primary student are USD 2 181 in Latvia, lower than the OECD average of USD 3 614. This difference can be broken down into these four factors: lower teacher salaries reduce costs (by USD 1 541), below-average teaching hours increase costs (by USD 563), below-average student instruction time reduces costs (by USD 837) and smaller classes increase costs (by USD 382). Between 2015 and 2021, the salary cost of teachers per student increased by 25% in Latvia (from USD 1 747 to USD 2 181).
- On average across OECD countries, in full-time equivalent terms, there are 14 students for every teaching staff member in general upper secondary programmes and 15 students per staff member in vocational upper secondary programmes. In Latvia, in full-time equivalent terms, there are 10 students per staff member in general upper secondary programmes, lower than the OECD average. In vocational upper secondary programmes, in full-time equivalent terms, there are 17 students for every teaching staff member (slightly above the OECD average). The high student to teacher ratio may be due to the fact that students in vocational programmes in Latvia spend time in work-based learning outside school. It could also be explained by the restructuring of the VET system in Latvia in the past decade to reduce the number of VET schools while forming more organised networks of VET schools (OECD, 2020^[2]).
- The average age of teachers varies across OECD countries. In some countries, the teaching workforce is much younger than the labour force in general, whereas in others, teachers tend to be older. In Latvia, 57% of teachers in general upper secondary programmes are aged 50 or older, compared to the OECD average of 39%. Teachers in vocational programmes are younger than their general programme peers, with 53% aged 50 or above (43% on average across the OECD). The share of upper secondary teachers aged 50 or older increased notably in the recent eight years from 51% in 2015.
- National/central assessments (standardised tests with no consequence on students' progression through school or certification) are more common at primary and lower secondary levels than at upper secondary level, while most OECD countries conduct national/central examinations (standardised tests with formal consequence) in the final years of upper secondary education. These national/central assessments and examinations take place at different grades and can have different periodicities, their contents may vary over years and/or across students and are not necessarily compulsory for students. In Latvia, there are two national assessments at primary level, and one at lower secondary level. At the end of lower-secondary level students must take one national examination consisting of compulsory sessions on Latvian language, foreign language, and mathematics. At upper secondary level, there is one national examination consisting of three compulsory sessions on Latvian language and literature, mathematics and a foreign language and sessions on optional subject areas.

References

- OECD (2023), *Education at a Glance 2023 Sources, Methodologies and Technical Notes*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/d7f76adc-en>. [1]
- OECD (2023), Education at a Glance Database, <https://stats.oecd.org/>. [3]
- OECD (2023), *Education at a Glance 2023: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/e13bef63-en>. [4]
- OECD (2020), "Education Policy Outlook in Latvia", *OECD Education Policy Perspectives*, No. 19, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/8b07fc9f-en>. [2]

More information

For more information on *Education at a Glance 2023* and to access the full set of indicators, see: <https://doi.org/10.1787/e13bef63-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 *Education at a Glance 2023 Sources, Methodologies and Technical Notes* (<https://doi.org/10.1787/d7f76adc-en>).

For general information on the methodology, please refer to the *OECD Handbook for Internationally Comparative Education Statistics 2018* (<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.

Explore, compare and visualise more data and analysis using the Education GPS:

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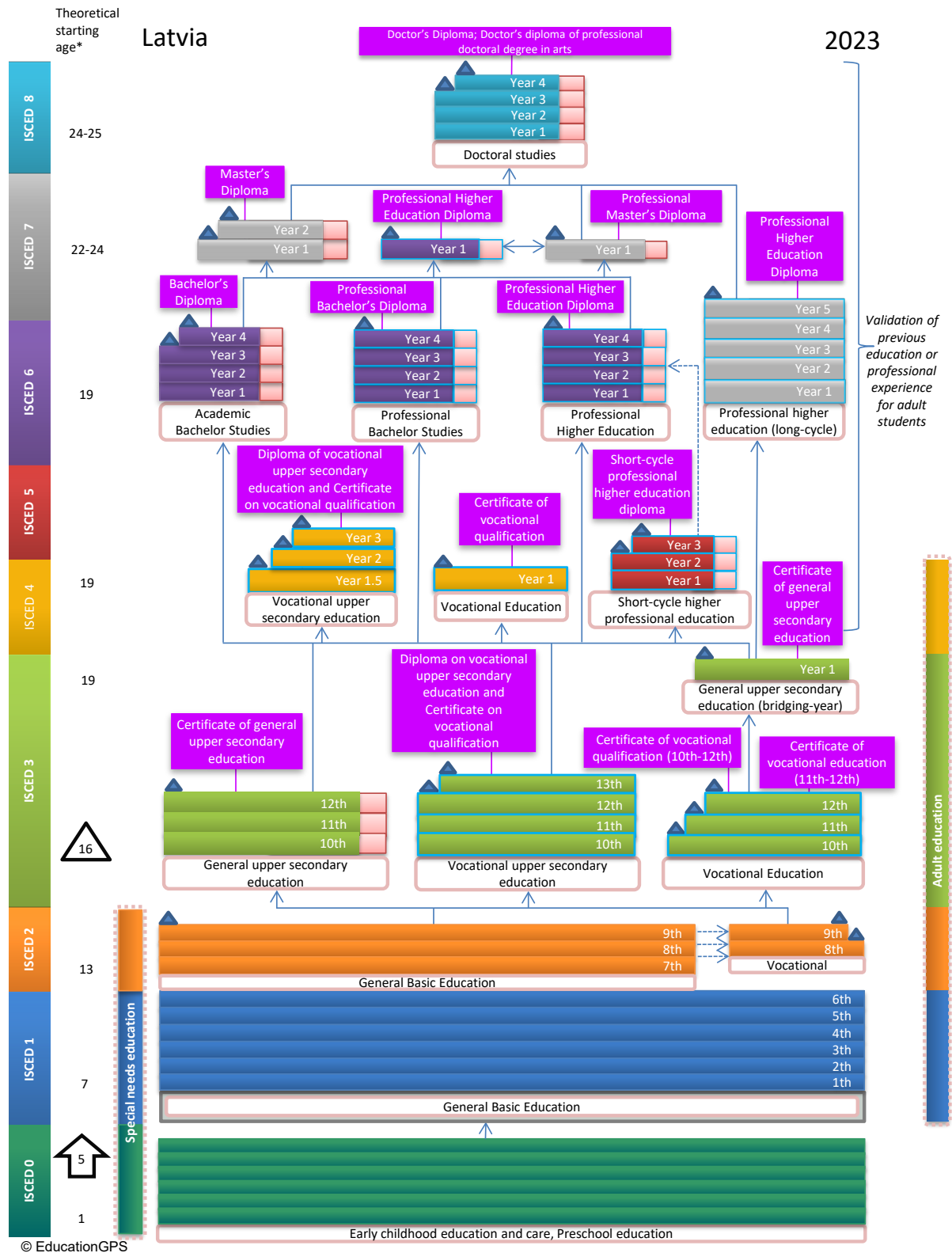
Key facts for Latvia in *Education at a Glance 2023*

Indicator	Country		OECD average		Source	
Educational attainment of 25-34 year-olds by gender	2022		2022		Table A1.2	
	% Men	% Women	% Men	% Women		
	Below upper secondary	14%	7%	16%		12%
	Upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary	51%	36%	44%		35%
Tertiary	35%	57%	41%	54%		
NEET rates of 18-24 year-olds by gender	2022		2022		OECD (2023 _[3])	
	% Men	% Women	% Men	% Women		
	10.6%	14.1%	14%	15.5%		
Employment rates of 25-64 year-olds by educational attainment and gender	2022		2022		OECD (2023 _[3])	
	% Men	% Women	% Men	% Women		
	Below upper secondary	68%	56%	70%		48%
	Upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary	79%	71%	84%		69%
Tertiary	89%	85%	90%	83%		
Enrolment rate of children aged 3 in ECEC	2021		2021		Table B2.1	
	90%		73%			
Enrolment rate of 15-19 year-olds	2021		2021		Table B1.1	
	91%		84%			
Share of upper secondary students enrolled in VET programmes	2021		2021		Table B1.3	
	40%		44%			
Upper secondary completion rates by programme orientation	2021		2021		Table B3.1	
	General	Vocational	General	Vocational		
By the end of the programme duration	74%	63%	77%	62%		
Two years after the end of the programme duration	79%	72%	87%	73%		
Expenditure on educational institutions per full-time equivalent student by level of education (in USD PPP)	2020		2020		Table C1.1	
Primary	USD 7 142		USD 10 658			
Lower secondary	USD 7 157		USD 11 941			
Upper secondary	USD 9 460		USD 12 312			
Tertiary	USD 13 043		USD 18 105			
Total expenditure on primary to tertiary educational institutions as % of GDP	2020		2020		Table C2.1	
	4.3%		5.1%			
Share of total education expenditure on upper secondary educational institutions by programme orientation	2020		2020		Figure C2.2	
	General	Vocational	General	Vocational		
	11%	9%	11%	10%		
Total compulsory instruction time in primary and lower secondary education	2023		2023		Table D1.1	
	5 840 hours		7 634 hours			
Statutory salaries of upper secondary teachers in general programmes with the most prevalent qualifications after 15 years of experience (in USD PPP)	2022		2022		Table D3.1.	
	m		USD 53 456			
Change in statutory salaries of upper secondary teachers in general programmes with the most prevalent qualifications after 15 years of experience (in real terms)	2015-2022		2015-2022		Table D3.7	
	m		4%			
Share of teachers in general upper secondary programmes aged 50 or older	2021		2021		Table D7.2.	
	57%		39%			

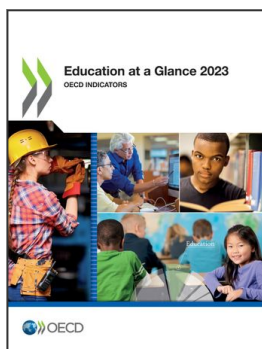
Note: The OECD average for completion rates reflects a different country coverage (see Indicator B3).

Source: OECD (2023^[3])

Diagram of the education system



Source: OECD (2023), "Latvia: Diagram of education system", OECD Education GPS, http://gpseducation.oecd.org/Content/MapOfEducationSystem/LVA/LVA_2011_EN.pdf
Please refer to "Latvia: Diagram of education system" for information on the keys.



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