

Ireland

Ensuring equal opportunities for students across socio-economic backgrounds

- Tuition fees charged by public institutions in Ireland are among the highest for a bachelor's programme across countries with available data. National students were charged USD 8 304 per year for a bachelor's degree in 2020/21, 14% more than they were charged on average in 2009/10. However, the fees actually paid by national students are considerably lower due to government support, with Irish students paying just USD 3 770 for a typical bachelor's programme.
- Across most OECD countries, socio-economic status influences learning outcomes more than gender and immigrant status. In Ireland, 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 16% lower than that of children from the top ESCS quartile, a smaller share than the OECD average of 29%.
- International student mobility at the tertiary level has risen steadily reaching about 24 900 students in Ireland and representing 11% of tertiary students in 2019. The largest share of international tertiary students studying in Ireland comes from India. 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 22% in Ireland.
- Large differences in educational attainment may lead to starker earnings inequality in many countries. In Ireland, 41% of 25-64 year-old adults with below upper secondary attainment earned at or below half the median earnings in 2019, above the OECD average of 27%.

Gender inequalities in education and outcomes

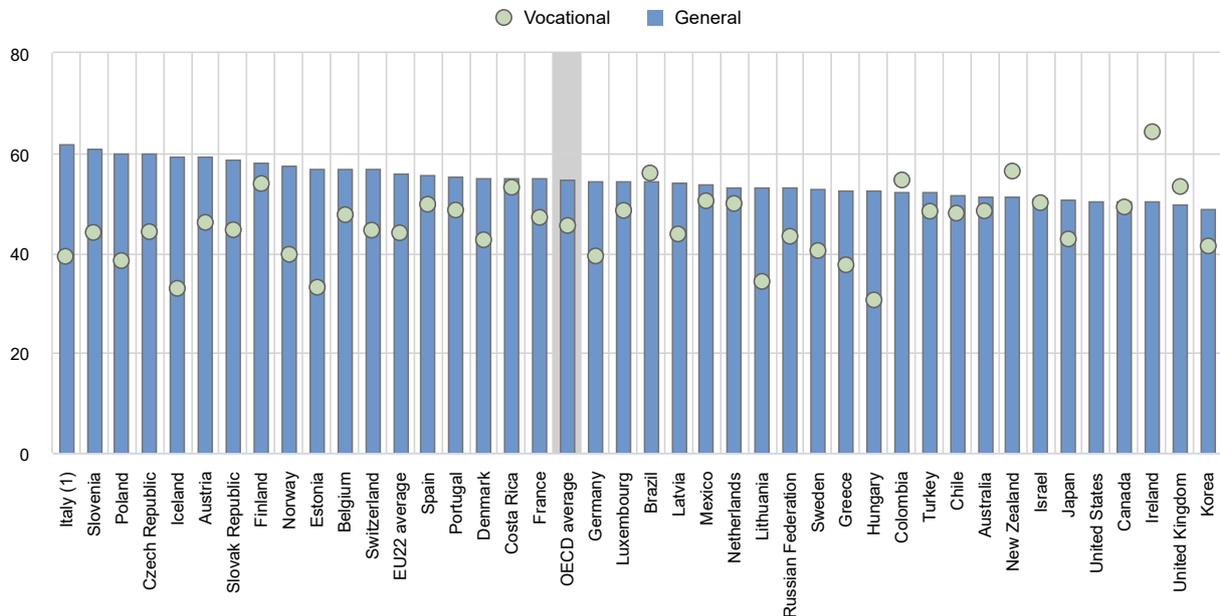
- In Ireland, 0.2% of students in lower secondary and 0.6% in upper secondary initial education repeated a grade in 2019, compared to 1.9% and 3% respectively on average across OECD countries. Boys are more likely to repeat a grade at lower secondary initial education than girls. In Ireland, 53% of repeaters at lower secondary level were boys, lower than the OECD average of 61%. At upper secondary level, the share of boys repeating a grade in Ireland increases to 54%, compared to 57% on average across OECD countries.
- 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 Ireland, where 36% 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 Ireland women represent 50% of graduates from upper secondary general programmes, compared to 55% on average across OECD countries (Figure 1).
- 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 Ireland, 62% of 25-34 year-old women had a tertiary qualification in 2020 compared to 54% 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. On average, 26% of new entrants in engineering, manufacturing and construction and 20% in information and communication technologies were women in 2019. In Ireland, women represented 24% of new entrants in engineering, manufacturing and construction programmes and 22% in information and communication technologies. In contrast, they represented 72% of new entrants to the field of education, a sector traditionally dominated by women.
- Young women are less likely to be employed than young men, particularly those with lower levels of education. Only 33% of 25-34 year-old women with below upper secondary attainment were employed in 2020 compared to 53% of men in Ireland. 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. Compared to other education levels, women with tertiary education in Ireland have the lowest earnings relative to men with a similar education level, earning 69% as much, while those with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education earn 81% as much.
- On average across countries with available data, 25-64 year-old women tend to participate slightly more in adult learning than men of the same age. In Ireland, 54% of both men and women participated in formal and/or non-formal education and training in 2016. Family reasons were reported as barriers to participation in formal and/or non-formal education and training by 51% of women compared to 35% of men.

Figure 1. Share of women among upper secondary graduates, by programme orientation (2019)

In per cent



1. Includes post-secondary non-tertiary level.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the share of women in general programmes.

Source: OECD (2021). Table B3.1. See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2021_Annex3_ChapterB.pdf).

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 Ireland, the share of foreign-born adults among all adults with a given level of educational attainment is the highest among tertiary-educated adults (27% in 2017).
- 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). As a result, the employment rate for foreign-born adults with low educational attainment is higher than the rate for their native-born peers in many countries. 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 Ireland, however, the employment rate of foreign-born adults without upper secondary attainment was 48% in 2017, lower than that of their native-born peers (51%).
- 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 Ireland, among tertiary-educated adults, 87% of native-born adults and 80% of foreign-born adults are employed.

Foreign-born adults who arrived in the country at an early age have spent some years in their host country's education system and gained nationally recognised credentials. As a result, their labour-market outcomes are generally better than that of those who arrived at a later age with a foreign qualification. In Ireland, among foreign-born adults with tertiary attainment, 84% of those who arrived by the age of 15 are employed, compared to 80% of those who arrived in the country at age 16 or later.

- 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 Ireland, the difference is 2 percentage points (14.5% compared to 12.9%). Early arrival in the country is generally associated with a lower risk of becoming NEET. In Ireland, however the share of NEETs among foreign-born young adults who arrived by the age of 15 is 16%, while the share of NEETs among those who arrived at age 16 or later is 14%.
- 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 Ireland, in 2016, foreign-born full-time workers with below upper secondary attainment earned 85% as much as their native-born peers earned. Those with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment also earned 85% of that of their native-born peers, while those with a tertiary education earned 93% as much.

Cross-regional disparities in education

- Tertiary attainment may vary significantly within a country. In Ireland, the share of 25-64 year-old adults with tertiary education varies from 46% in the region of Southern to 54% in the region of Eastern and Midland, one of the lowest regional variations across OECD countries with available data.
- 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 education (17 percentage points) than for those with tertiary education (8 percentage points). In Ireland, there is a difference of 6 percentage points in the employment rate of adults with below upper secondary education between different regions of the country compared to 2 percentage points for tertiary-educated adults.
- The proportion of young people who are NEET shows significant subnational as well as national variation across OECD and partner countries. In Ireland, the difference in the share of 18-24 year-old NEETs between regions with the highest and lowest value is 5 percentage points, compared to 11 percentage points on average across OECD countries.

COVID-19: 18 months into the pandemic

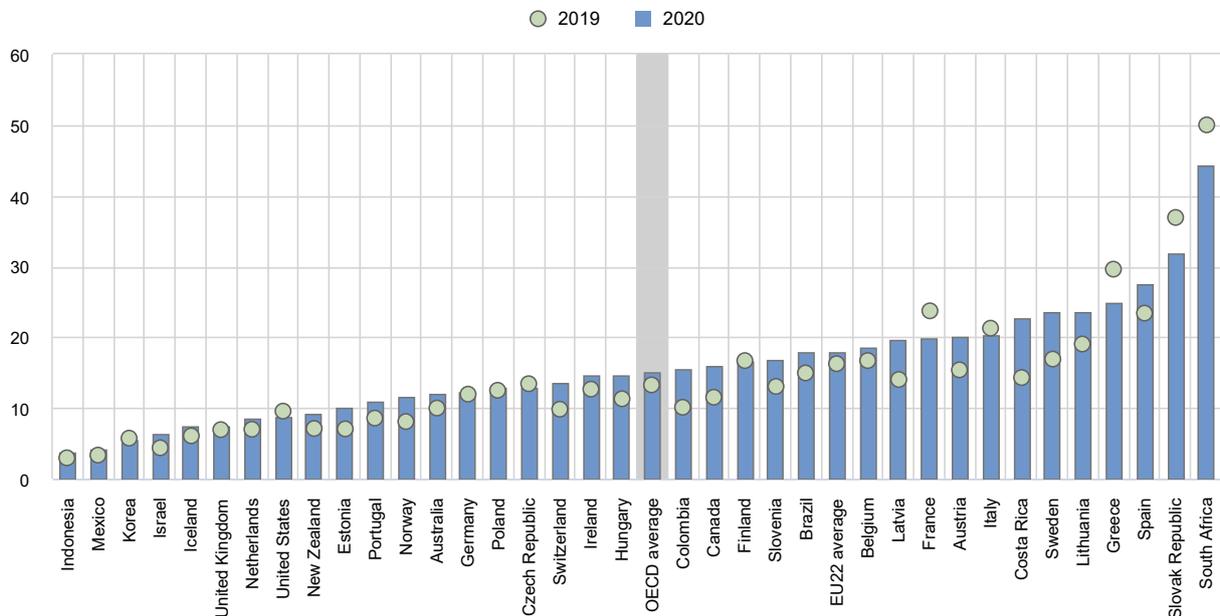
- The spread of COVID-19 has continued to impede access to in-person education in many countries around the world in 2021. By mid-May 2021, 37 OECD and partner countries had experienced periods of full school closure since the start of 2020.
- The number of instructional days when schools were fully 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. Ireland is an exception. In Ireland, pre-primary schools were fully closed for an average of 72 days between 1 January 2020 and 20 May 2021.

Meanwhile primary schools closed for at least 96 days, lower secondary for 91 days and upper secondary general schools for at least 72 days. In comparison, respective closures were 55, 78, 92 and 101 days on average across the OECD.

- In many countries, schools did not fully close but remained open with reduced capacity. Schools at upper secondary (general) level in Ireland, for instance, experienced 19 days of partial opening between January 2020 and May 2021, all of which took place in 2021. This was lower than the total 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. When adding both the number of days where schools were fully and partially closed, learning in upper secondary general education was disrupted by 91 days in Ireland between January 2020 and May 2021.
- 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 Ireland, declared that additional measures were taken to support the education of children who might face additional barriers to learning during the pandemic. 22 of these countries, including Ireland, stated that they had subsidised devices for students to help them access education. Measures to encourage disadvantaged or vulnerable students to return to school after closures were also implemented in 29 OECD and partner countries, including in Ireland.
- 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 Ireland reached 2.3% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2018, which was lower 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 academic year, Ireland reported no additional COVID related funding allocation in the fiscal year education budget for primary and secondary general education in the 2019/20 school year. However, increases in COVID related funding of EUR 639 million were reported at these levels for the fiscal school year 2020/21, which covered the period September 2020 to August 2021. Of this EUR 639 million, EUR 331 million was allocated for spend in 2020.
- Countries' approach to prioritise teachers in vaccination campaigns against COVID-19 has varied. In total, 19 OECD and partner countries, excluding Ireland, 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).
- 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 Ireland, the unemployment rate among 25-34 year-olds with below upper secondary attainment was 14.5% in 2020, an increase of 2 percentage points from the previous year. In comparison, the average youth unemployment rate of 15.1% in 2020 across OECD countries represented an increase of 2 percentage points from 2019 (Figure 2).
- 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 Ireland, the participation of adults in formal and/or non-formal education and training in this period decreased by 26% in Ireland.
- 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 Ireland, the share of 18-24 year-old NEETs was 12.9% in 2019, which increased to 15.2% in 2020.

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.

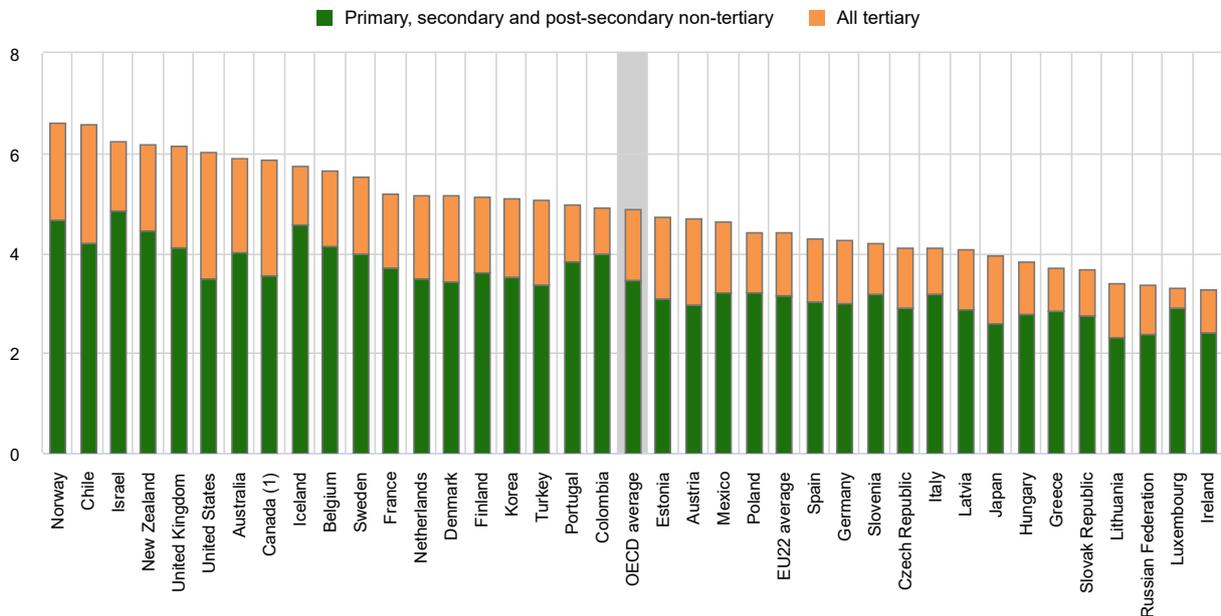
Source: OECD (2021), Table A3.3. See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2021_Annex3_ChapterA.pdf).

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 Ireland was USD 9 378 in 2018 (in equivalent USD converted using PPPs for GDP) compared to USD 10 000 on average across OECD countries.
- The provision of education across public and private institutions influences the allocation of resources between levels of education and types of institution. In 2018, Ireland spent USD 9 921 per student at primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education, USD 533 lower than the OECD average of USD 10 454. At tertiary level, Ireland invested USD 17 152 per student, USD 87 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 Ireland, where total expenditure on primary to tertiary public institutions amounts to USD 11 172 per student, compared to USD 11 739 on private institutions.
- Ireland was among the ten OECD countries that spent the lowest proportion of GDP on primary to tertiary educational institutions. In 2018, Ireland spent 3.3% of GDP on primary to tertiary educational institutions, which is 1.6 percentage points lower than the OECD average. Across levels of education, Ireland devoted a lower share of GDP than the OECD average at both non-tertiary and tertiary levels (Figure 3).

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

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).

Working conditions of school teachers

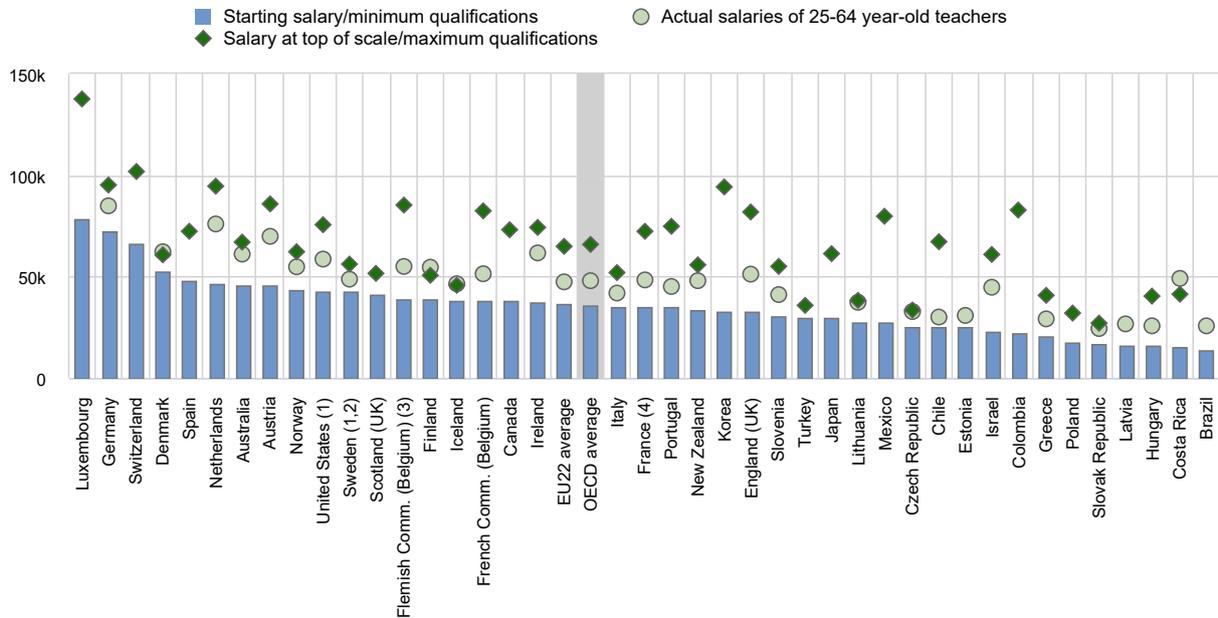
- The salaries of school staff, and in particular teachers and school heads, represent the largest single expenditure in formal education. Their salary levels also have an impact on the attractiveness of the teaching profession. In most OECD countries and economies, statutory salaries of teachers (and 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 primary and general lower and upper secondary levels in 2020. In Ireland, maximum salaries were 97% to 100% higher than minimum salaries at each level of education (Figure 4). However, most teachers were paid between these minimum and maximum salaries.
- Between 2005 and 2020, the statutory salaries of teachers with 15 years of experience and the most prevalent qualifications increased (at constant prices) by 2% to 3% at primary and general lower and upper secondary levels, on average across OECD countries with data for all reference years, despite a decrease of salaries following the 2008 financial crisis. In Ireland, teachers' salaries at these levels increased by 16%-17%.
- 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 Ireland, teachers' average actual salaries (after

conversion to USD using PPPs for private consumption) amount to USD 59 204 at the primary level, USD 61 652 at the general lower secondary level and USD 61 652 at the general upper secondary level. On average across OECD countries, teachers' average actual salaries were USD 45 687, USD 47 988 and USD 51 749 at the 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 primary and general secondary levels of education are between 86% and 96% of the earnings of tertiary-educated workers on average across OECD countries and economies. In Ireland, the proportion ranged from 86% to 89% at 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 actual salaries of teachers are compared to salaries of tertiary educated workers, these relative salaries are usually higher for women, and lower for men. In Ireland, the proportion ranges from 105% to 110% for women (98% to 110% on average across OECD countries and economies), and from 71% to 75% for men (76% to 85% on average across OECD countries and economies) in primary and general secondary education.
- 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 791 hours at primary level to 723 hours at lower secondary level (general programmes) and 685 hours at upper secondary level (general programmes) in 2020. In Ireland, teachers are required to teach 909 hours per year at primary level, 704 hours at lower secondary level (general programmes) and 704 hours at upper secondary level (general programmes).
- In primary and secondary education, about 35% of teachers on average across OECD countries will 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, the proportion of teachers in Ireland aged at least 50 years old was lower than the OECD average and reached 21% in 2019.

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).

References

OECD (2021), *Education at a Glance 2021: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>.

OECD (2021), "Regional education", *OECD Regional Statistics (database)*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/213e806c-en> (accessed on 27 July 2021).

OECD (2021), "The state of global education – 18 months into the pandemic", OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/1a23bb23-en>.

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).

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. For example, regional variation in enrolment may be influenced by students attending school in a different region from their area of residence, particularly at higher levels of education. Also, regional disparities tend to be higher when more subnational entities are used in the analysis.

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

<https://gpseducation.oecd.org/>

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.

<p>Questions can be directed to:</p> <p>Marie-Helene Doumet Directorate for Education and Skills marie-helene.doumet@oecd.org</p>	<p>Country note authors:</p> <p>Etienne Albiser, Heewoon Bae, Andrea Borlizzi, António Carvalho, Eric Charbonnier, Corinne Heckmann, Bruce Golding, Yanjun Guo, Gara Rojas Gonzalez, Daniel Sanchez Serra, Markus Schwabe and Giovanni Maria Semeraro</p>
--	--

This work is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD member countries.

This document, as well as any data and any map included herein, are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area.

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

The use of this work, whether digital or print, is governed by the terms and conditions to be found at www.oecd.org/termsandconditions/.



From:
Education at a Glance 2021
OECD Indicators

Access the complete publication at:
<https://doi.org/10.1787/b35a14e5-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2021), "Ireland", in *Education at a Glance 2021: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/7d62f281-en>

This work is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD member countries.

This document, as well as any data and map included herein, are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area. Extracts from publications may be subject to additional disclaimers, which are set out in the complete version of the publication, available at the link provided.

The use of this work, whether digital or print, is governed by the Terms and Conditions to be found at <http://www.oecd.org/termsandconditions>.