

1. EDUCATION LEVELS AND STUDENT NUMBERS

How many students study abroad?

- In 2006, over 2.9 million students were enrolled in tertiary-level institutions outside their country of citizenship.
- Since 2000, the number of foreign students enrolled in tertiary-level education in OECD countries has increased by 54.1%.
- Asians account for almost 43% of international students in the OECD area.

Significance

This indicator looks at the extent to which students are studying abroad. One way for students to expand their knowledge of other cultures and languages, and to better equip themselves in an increasingly globalised labour market, is to pursue their higher-level education in countries other than their own. Some countries, particularly in the European Union, have even established policies and schemes that promote such mobility to foster intercultural contacts and help build social networks.

Findings

The number of foreign tertiary-level students in the OECD area rose by 3% in 2006 compared with the previous year, and by 2.7% worldwide. Since 2000, the increase in the OECD area was just over 54%.

In the OECD area, the countries that sent the most students abroad were France, Germany, Japan and Korea. Worldwide, however, China and India were the two biggest source countries. Indeed, Asia generally is the biggest source area for international students, accounting for just under 43% of the total in OECD countries. Their presence is particularly strong in Australia, Japan, Korea and New Zealand, where they account for more than 73% of international or foreign students. In the OECD area, the Asian group is followed by the Europeans, accounting for 23% of international students, followed by Africa with 9.9%, South America with 5% and North America with 3.5%. Altogether, 29.3% of international students enrolled in OECD countries come from other OECD countries.

There are big variations between countries in the percentage of international students enrolled in their tertiary education students. In Australia, international students represent 17.8% of the student body; 12% in Austria; 15.5% in New Zealand; 13.7% in Switzerland; and 14.1% in the United Kingdom. By contrast, in the Slovak Republic and Spain, interna-

tional students account for only 1% or less of the tertiary-level student body.

In Australia, Germany, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, more than 30% of all master's degrees (or the equivalent) and advanced research degrees are awarded to international students.

Trends

Over the past three decades, the number of foreign students has grown substantially, from 0.6 million worldwide in 1975 to 2.9 million in 2006, a more than four-fold increase. This growth accelerated during the past ten years, mirroring the globalisation of economies and societies.

Definitions

Data on international and foreign students are based on the UOE data collection on education statistics, administered annually by the OECD. Data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics are also included. Students are classified as international if they left their country of origin and moved to another country in order to study. Students are classified as foreign if they are not citizens of the country in which the data are collected.

Going further

For additional material, notes and a full explanation of sourcing and methodologies, see *Education at a Glance 2008* (Indicators A3 and C3).

Areas covered include:

- Distribution of foreign students by country of origin and destination.
- Trends in the numbers of foreign students.

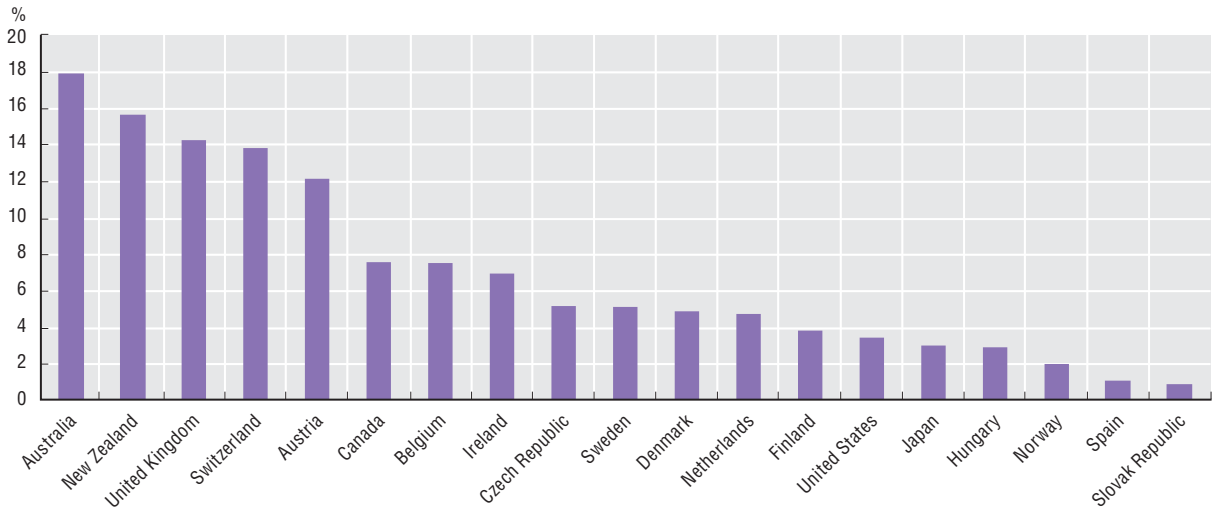
Further reading from OECD

Cross-border Tertiary Education: A Way towards Capacity Development (2007).

Internationalisation and Trade in Higher Education: Opportunities and Challenges (2004).

Figure 1.16. **Percentage of international students enrolled in tertiary education, 2006**

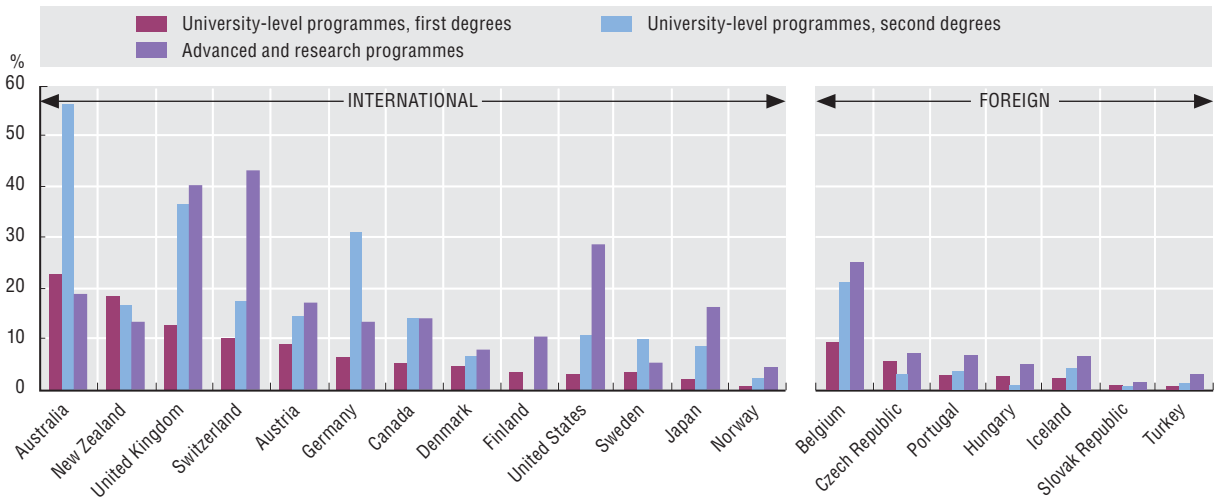
This figure shows the share of international students in each country's student body at tertiary level when that share exceeds 1%. In Australia and New Zealand, international students account for more than 15% of all students at this level.



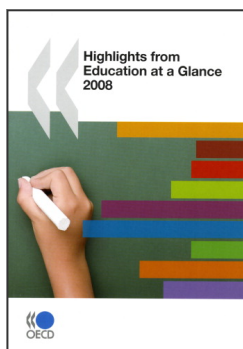
Source: OECD (2008), *Education at a Glance 2008*, Table C3.1, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/402158641726>.

Figure 1.17. **Proportion of international/foreign students in total graduates, 2006**

This figure shows the percentage of graduates in tertiary education who are international and foreign students.



Source: OECD (2008), *Education at a Glance 2008*, Table A3.3, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/401523756323>.



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