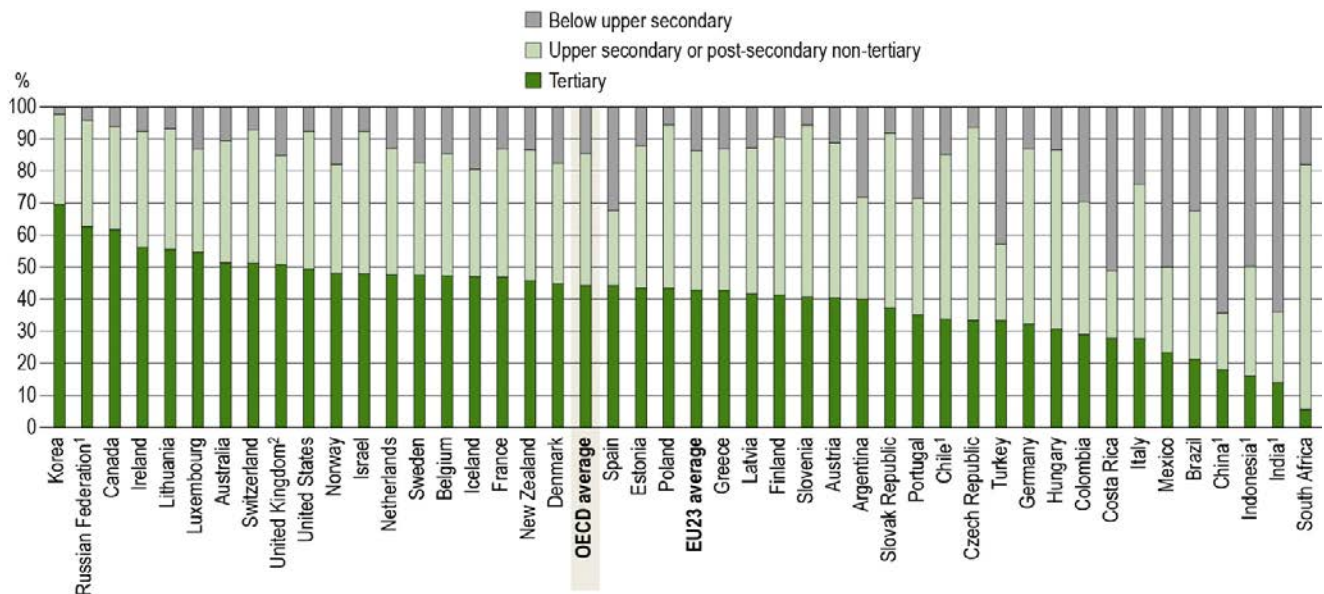


*Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators* (OECD, 2019<sup>[1]</sup>) is the authoritative source for information on the state of education around the world. It provides data on the structure, finances and performance of education systems in OECD and partner countries.

## Korea

- **Students enter tertiary education at a younger age than the average for OECD countries**, with the majority of students enrolling in private institutions and more than one-third majoring in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics.
- Nearly all young adults in Korea have an upper secondary qualification. Furthermore, **Korea has the highest share of young adults with tertiary qualification among OECD countries**, with above-average employment rate for those with a tertiary education.
- Korea spends more on education than the OECD average at primary to tertiary levels of education. **Private expenditure is significantly higher than public expenditure at tertiary level.**
- **Enrolment rates in early childhood and care are high**, with the majority of children enrolled in private institutions.

Figure 1. Educational attainment of 25-34 year-olds (2018)



1. Year of reference differs from 2018. Refer to Table A1.1 for more details.  
 2. 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 (13% of adults aged 25-64 are in this group).  
 Countries are ranked in descending order of the percentage of tertiary-educated 25-34 year-olds.  
 Source: OECD (2019), Education at a Glance Database, <http://stats.oecd.org>. See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/f8d7880d-en>).

## Students typically start tertiary education immediately after completing upper secondary education, with a high share of enrolment in private institutions

- In Korea, at least 90% of 3-17 year-olds were enrolled in education in 2017. The enrolment rate reached 87% among 15-19 year-olds, and fell to 50% for 20-24 year-olds, and these rates were 3-8 percentage points higher than the OECD averages. However, among 25-29 year-olds the enrolment rate fell to 9%, 7 percentage points below the OECD average.
- The majority of young people in Korea first enter tertiary education directly after completing upper secondary education. On average, students in Korea enter bachelor's programmes at the age of 19, and 50% of 19-20 year-olds and 46% of 21-22 year-olds were enrolled in a bachelor's programme (the OECD averages are 30% and 29% respectively). As in most other OECD countries, students in Korea who enter short-cycle tertiary programmes are older on average (21, compared to 25 on average across OECD countries). Enrolment rates in short-cycle tertiary programmes were 22% for 19-20 year-olds and 12% for 21-22 year-olds (the OECD averages are 5% and 4%).
- Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) are popular fields of study at the tertiary level in Korea. More than one-third (34%) of new entrants to bachelor's programmes were enrolled in these fields, the second highest proportion among OECD countries after Germany (40%), and well above the OECD average of 27%. STEM fields also account for the largest share of new entrants to short-cycle tertiary programmes: 28%, compared with 26% on average across OECD countries.
- The majority of tertiary students are enrolled in private institutions. In particular, 80% of students in bachelor's programmes were enrolled in independent private institutions in 2017, the highest proportion among OECD countries and well above the OECD average of students enrolled in both government-dependent and independent private institutions (29%).

## Young adults with a tertiary qualification show higher employment rates, while the earnings premium from a tertiary education is relatively low

- About 12% of 25-64 year-olds in Korea did not attain an upper secondary qualification in 2018, which is 10 percentage points lower than the OECD average. The proportion fell to 2% among 25-34 year-olds, the lowest share across OECD and partner countries for both men and women.
- Almost half of 25-64 year-olds held a tertiary qualification in 2018. The share of 25-34 year-olds with a tertiary qualification rose from 58% in 2008 to 70% in 2018, as a result of high tertiary enrolment rates at an early age, combined with very high completion rates (94% for bachelor's programmes), the highest among OECD and partner countries in 2018 (Figure 1).
- The employment advantage from a tertiary qualification is greater than the OECD average for younger adults in Korea but not for everyone of working age. The employment rate for tertiary-educated 25-64 year-olds was 78% in 2018, 6 percentage points higher than for those with an upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary qualification. Across OECD countries, the employment rate for tertiary-educated adults was 85%, 9 percentage points higher than for those with an upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary qualification. Among tertiary-educated 25-34 year-olds, the employment rate was 76% in Korea, which was below the OECD average of 84%, but they enjoyed a greater employment advantage: 11 percentage points compared with 6 percentage points on average across OECD countries.
- The earnings premium from a tertiary qualification is lower in Korea than on average across OECD countries. In 2017, 25-64 year-olds with tertiary qualification could expect to earn 41% more than those with only upper secondary education in Korea, below the OECD average of 57%. The premium varies across age groups, from 24% among 25-34 year-olds to 65% among 45-54 year-olds, whereas on average across OECD countries it ranges from 38% to 70%.

## A considerable share of Korea's resources is allocated to education, with expenditure largely funded by private sources, especially at tertiary level

- In 2016, total expenditure on primary to tertiary education amounted to 5.4% of gross domestic product (GDP) in Korea, 0.4 percentage points above the OECD average. Expenditure on primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education accounted for 3.7% of GDP, 0.2 percentage points higher than the OECD average, while for tertiary education it amounted to 1.7% of GDP, about 0.2 percentage points higher than the OECD average.
- While 14% of expenditure on primary to post-secondary non-tertiary education came from private sources in 2016 (above the OECD average of 10%), this rose to 62% for tertiary education, almost double the OECD average of 32%. Over two-thirds of the private expenditure came from households, which accounted for 44% of total expenditure on tertiary education through tuition fees and other private payments to educational institutions.
- Tuition fees for tertiary programmes in Korea are much higher than in most other OECD countries. Public institutions charged national students USD 4 886<sup>1</sup> per year in 2018 for bachelor's programmes and fees were 31% higher for master's or equivalent level programmes (USD 6 414) and 47% higher for doctoral or equivalent programmes (USD 7 167). Tuition fees in independent private tertiary institutions were nearly 1.8 times higher: USD 8 760 for bachelors' programmes, the fourth highest fees among OECD countries with available data after the United States, Australia and Japan. Tuition fees in independent private tertiary institutions were 34% higher at master's or equivalent level (USD 11 755) and 45% higher at doctoral or equivalent level (USD 12 674).
- Private entities other than households (e.g. private school foundations, private businesses) also play a significant role in the funding of tertiary education. About 18% of total expenditure on tertiary institutions in 2016 came from these private entities, double the OECD average of 9%. They also funded 13% of overall research and development expenditure within tertiary institutions in 2016 (OECD, 2019<sup>[2]</sup>), a relatively high share among OECD countries with available data.

## Early childhood education and care is widely spread, and a large proportion of children are enrolled in private institutions

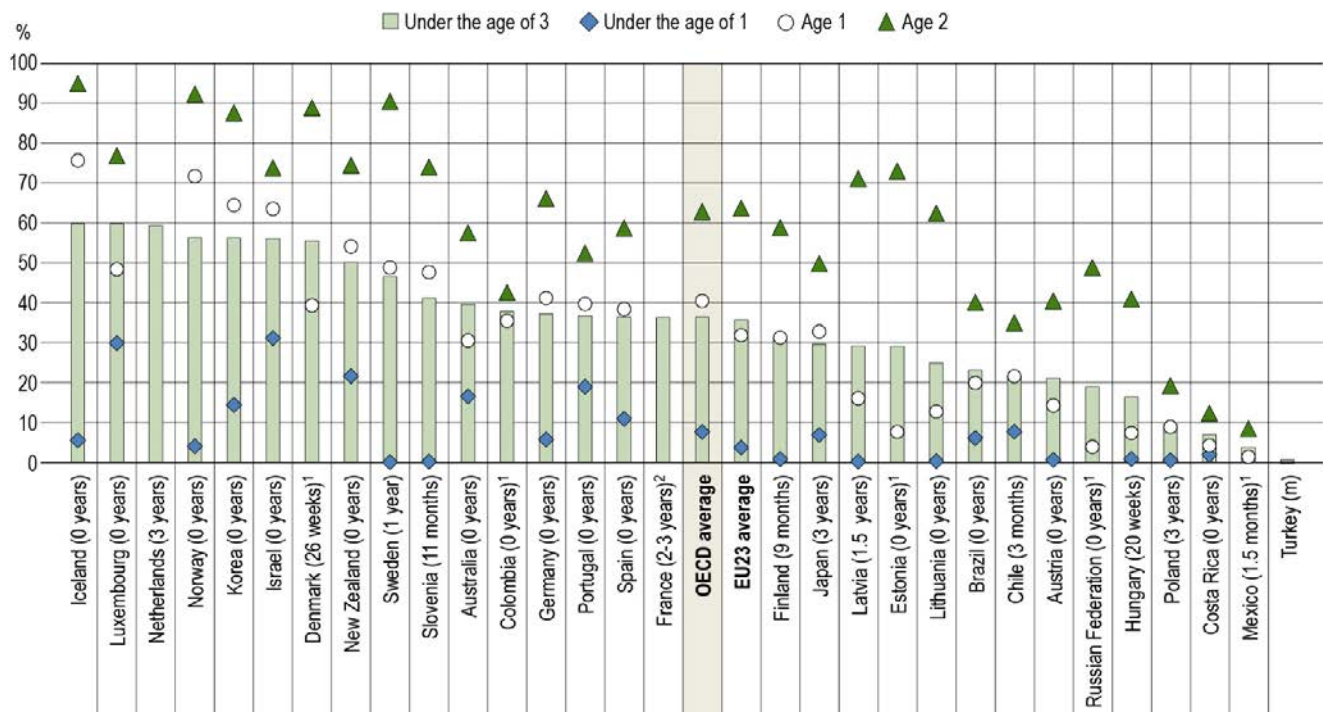
- Enrolment in early childhood education is nearly universal for 3-5 year-olds in Korea, even though compulsory primary education typically does not begin until the age of 6. In 2017, 56% of children under the age of 3 and 95% of 3-5 year-olds were enrolled in early childhood education and care (ECEC), well above the OECD averages of 36% for children under 3 and 87% for 3-5 year-olds (Figure 2).
- Despite high enrolment rates for pre-primary education, Korea spends a smaller proportion of GDP than on average in OECD countries on this level. Total expenditure on pre-primary education amounted to 0.5% of GDP in 2016 in Korea (the OECD average is 0.6%). A small proportion of expenditure (18%) came from private sources, which was similar to the OECD average (17%).
- Most of the children in ECEC are enrolled in private institutions in Korea, whereas most of them are enrolled in public institutions on average in OECD countries. In 2017, 90% of children in early childhood development programmes (ISCED 01) were enrolled in private ECEC institutions and 78% of those in pre-primary education (ISCED 02), well above the OECD averages of 47% and 34% respectively.

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<sup>1</sup> Values reported in equivalent US dollars (USD) have been converted using purchasing power parities (PPPs) for GDP.

**Figure 2. Enrolment rates of children under the age of 3 in early childhood education and care, by age (2017)**

All ECEC services (Early childhood education (ISCED 0) and other registered ECEC services outside the scope of ISCED 0)



**Note:** Figures in parentheses refer to the age when ECEC systems start offering intentional education objectives.

1. Age 1 also includes children under the age of 1.

2. Data for other registered ECEC services come from the survey "Modes de garde et d'accueil des jeunes enfants 2013" conducted by the statistical division of the French Ministry for Solidarities and Health (DREES). Figures refer to the primary custody arrangements.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the enrolment rates in ISCED 0 of children under the age of 3.


**Source:** OECD (2019), Table B2.1. See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/f8d7880d-en>).

## References

OECD (2019), *Education at a Glance 2019: OECD indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, [1]  
<https://doi.org/10.1787/f8d7880d-en>.

OECD (2019), "Gross domestic expenditure on R-D by sector of performance and source of funds", [2]  
*OECD Science, Technology and R&D Statistics* (database), <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/data-00189-en> (accessed on 21 June 2019).

**For more information on Education at a Glance 2019** and to access the full set of Indicators, visit [www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance-19991487.htm](http://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance-19991487.htm).

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: 

<http://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=KOR&treshold=10&topic=EO>.

<b>Questions can be directed to:</b> Etienne Albiser Directorate for Education and Skills <a href="mailto:etienne.albiser@oecd.org">etienne.albiser@oecd.org</a>	<b>Country note author:</b> Choyi Whang Directorate for Education and Skills <a href="mailto:choyi.wang@oecd.org">choyi.wang@oecd.org</a>
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On 25 May 2018, the OECD Council invited Colombia to become a Member. While Colombia is included in the OECD averages reported in this note, at the time of its preparation, Colombia was in the process of completing its domestic procedures for ratification and the deposit of Colombia's instrument of accession to the OECD Convention was pending.

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#### Note regarding data from Israel

The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and are 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.

## Key Facts for Korea in Education at a Glance 2019

Source	Main topics in <i>Education at a Glance</i>	Korea		OECD average	
<b>Tertiary education</b>					
<b>Educational attainment of 25-64 year-olds</b>					
Table A1.1	Short-cycle tertiary	14%		7%	
	Bachelor's or equivalent	31%		17%	
	Master's or equivalent	5%		13%	
	Doctoral or equivalent	**		1%	
<b>Tertiary attainment of 25-34 year-olds, by gender</b>					
Table A1.2		<b>2008</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2018</b>
	Men	56%	64%	31%	38%
	Women	60%	76%	40%	51%
	Total	58%	70%	35%	44%
<b>Distribution of first-time tertiary entrants by education level</b>					
Table B4.1		<b>2017</b>			
	Short-cycle tertiary	**		17%	
	Bachelor's or equivalent	**		76%	
	Master's or equivalent	**		7%	
<b>Share of international or foreign students, by education level<sup>1</sup></b>					
Table B6.1		<b>2017</b>			
	Bachelor's or equivalent	2%		4%	
	Master's or equivalent	8%		13%	
	Doctoral or equivalent	10%		22%	
	All tertiary levels of education	2%		6%	
<b>Employment rate of 25-64 year-olds, by educational attainment</b>					
Table A3.1		<b>2018</b>			
	Short-cycle tertiary	77%		82%	
	Bachelor's or equivalent	77%		84%	
	Master's or equivalent	85%		88%	
	Doctoral or equivalent	**		92%	
	All tertiary levels of education	78%		85%	
<b>Employment rate of tertiary-educated 25-64 year-olds, by field of study</b>					
Table A3.4		<b>2018</b>			
	Education	**		84%	
	Business and administration and law	**		86%	
	Engineering, manufacturing and construction	**		89%	
	Health and welfare	**		87%	
<b>Relative earnings of full-time full-year 25-64 year-old workers, by educational attainment (upper secondary education = 100)</b>					
Table A4.1		<b>2017</b>			
	Short-cycle tertiary	115		120	
	Bachelor's or equivalent	145		144	
	Master's, doctoral or equivalent	188		191	
	All tertiary levels of education	141		157	
<b>Upper secondary and vocational education and training (VET)</b>					
<b>Upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment rate</b>					
Table A1.2	Share of 25-34 year-olds with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary as their highest attainment	28%		41%	
<b>Percentage of first-time upper secondary graduates with a vocational qualification</b>					
Table B3.1	Vocational programmes	18%		40%	
<b>Age at graduation from upper secondary education, by programme orientation</b>					
Figure B3.1	General programmes	18		18	
	Vocational programmes	18		21	
<b>Share of women among upper secondary graduates, by programme orientation</b>					
Figure B3.2	General programmes	49%		55%	
	Vocational programmes	42%		46%	
<b>Employment, unemployment and inactivity rates of 25-34 year-olds, with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education</b>					
Table A3.3		<b>2018</b>			
	Employment rate	65%		78%	
	Unemployment rate	8%		7%	
	Inactivity rate	30%		16%	
<b>Total expenditure on upper secondary educational institutions, in USD<sup>2</sup> per full-time equivalent student, by programme orientation</b>					
Table C1.1		<b>2016</b>			
	General programmes	**		USD 9 397	
	Vocational programmes	**		USD 10 922	
<b>Early childhood education and care (ECEC)</b>					
<b>Enrolment rate of 3-5 year-olds in education</b>					
Table B2.2	ECEC and primary education	95%		87%	
<b>Share of children enrolled in private institutions</b>					
Table B2.3	Pre-primary level (ISCED 02)	78%		34%	
<b>Ratio of children to teaching staff</b>					
Table B2.3	Pre-primary level (ISCED 02)	13		16	
<b>Expenditure on children aged 3-5 enrolled in education</b>					
Table B2.4	Annual expenditure per child, in USD <sup>2</sup> per child	USD 7 366		USD 8 141	



Source	Main topics in <i>Education at a Glance</i>	Korea		OECD average	
<b>Social outcomes and adult learning</b>					
<b>Participation in formal and/or non-formal education, by educational attainment</b>		<b>2016</b>			
Table A7.1	Below upper secondary	21%		n.a.	
	Upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary	43%		n.a.	
	Tertiary	71%		n.a.	
<b>Participation in cultural or sporting activities in the last 12 months, by educational attainment</b>		<b>2015</b>			
Table A6.1	Below upper secondary	**		n.a.	
	Upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary	**		n.a.	
	Tertiary	**		n.a.	
<b>Financial resources invested in education</b>					
<b>Total expenditure on educational institutions, by level of education<sup>2</sup></b>		<b>2016</b>			
Table C1.1 and C2.1		<b>USD/student</b>	<b>% GDP</b>	<b>USD/student</b>	<b>% GDP</b>
	Primary	USD 11 029	1.6%	USD 8 470	1.5%
	Lower secondary	USD 11 477	0.9%	USD 9 884	0.9%
	Upper secondary	USD 13 113	1.2%	USD 10 368	1.1%
	Tertiary (including R&D)	USD 10 486	1.7%	USD 15 556	1.5%
<b>Share of expenditure on educational institutions, by final source of funds</b>		<b>2016</b>			
Table C3.1		<b>Public</b>	<b>Private</b>	<b>Public</b>	<b>Private</b>
	Primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary	86%	14%	90%	10%
	Tertiary (including R&D)	38%	62%	66%	32%
<b>Total public expenditure on primary to tertiary education</b>		<b>2016</b>			
Table C4.1	As a percentage of total government expenditure	12.9%		10.8%	
<b>Teachers, the learning environment and the organisation of schools</b>					
<b>Actual salaries of teachers and school heads in public institutions relative to earnings of full-time, full-year workers with tertiary education</b>		<b>2017</b>			
Table D3.2a		<b>Teachers</b>	<b>School heads</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>School heads</b>
	Pre-primary	**	**	0.78	**
	Primary	**	**	0.84	1.25
	Lower secondary (general programmes)	**	**	0.88	1.34
	Upper secondary (general programmes)	**	**	0.93	1.43
<b>Annual statutory salaries of teachers in public institutions, based on most prevalent qualifications, at different points in teachers' careers<sup>2</sup></b>		<b>2018</b>			
Table D3.1a		<b>Starting salary</b>	<b>Salary after 15 years of experience</b>	<b>Starting salary</b>	<b>Salary after 15 years of experience</b>
	Pre-primary	USD 32 485	USD 57 179	USD 31 276	USD 42 078
	Primary	USD 32 485	USD 57 179	USD 33 058	USD 45 947
	Lower secondary (general programmes)	USD 32 548	USD 57 242	USD 34 230	USD 47 675
	Upper secondary (general programmes)	USD 31 799	USD 56 493	USD 35 859	USD 49 804
<b>Organisation of teachers' working time in public institutions over the school year</b>		<b>2018</b>			
Tables D4.1a and D4.1b		<b>Net teaching time</b>	<b>Total statutory working time</b>	<b>Net teaching time</b>	<b>Total statutory working time</b>
	Pre-primary	789 hours	1 520 hours	1 024 hours	1 613 hours
	Primary	675 hours	1 520 hours	783 hours	1 612 hours
	Lower secondary (general programmes)	526 hours	1 520 hours	709 hours	1 634 hours
	Upper secondary (general programmes)	547 hours	1 520 hours	667 hours	1 629 hours
<b>Percentage of teachers who are 50 years old or over</b>		<b>2017</b>			
Table D5.1	Primary to upper secondary	24%		36%	
<b>Share of female teachers, in public and private institutions</b>		<b>2017</b>			
Table D5.2	Primary	78%		83%	
	Lower secondary	70%		69%	
<b>Total number of compulsory instruction time, by level of education</b>		<b>2019</b>			
Table D1.1	Primary	3 928 hours		4 568 hours	
	Lower secondary	2 525 hours		3 022 hours	
	Upper secondary	**		**	
<b>Average class size by level of education</b>		<b>2017</b>			
Table D2.1	Primary	23		21	
	Lower secondary	27		23	

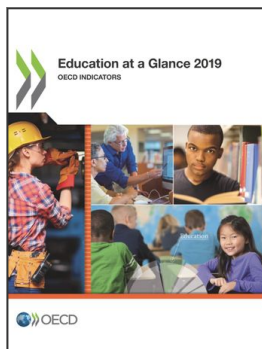
The reference year is the year cited or the latest year for which data are available.

1. For some countries, data on foreign students are provided instead of international students.

2. Values reported in equivalent US dollars (USD) have been converted using purchasing power parities (PPPs) for GDP

\*\* Please refer to the source table for details on these data.

Cut-off date for the data: 19 July 2019. Any updates on data can be found on line at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-data-en>.



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