

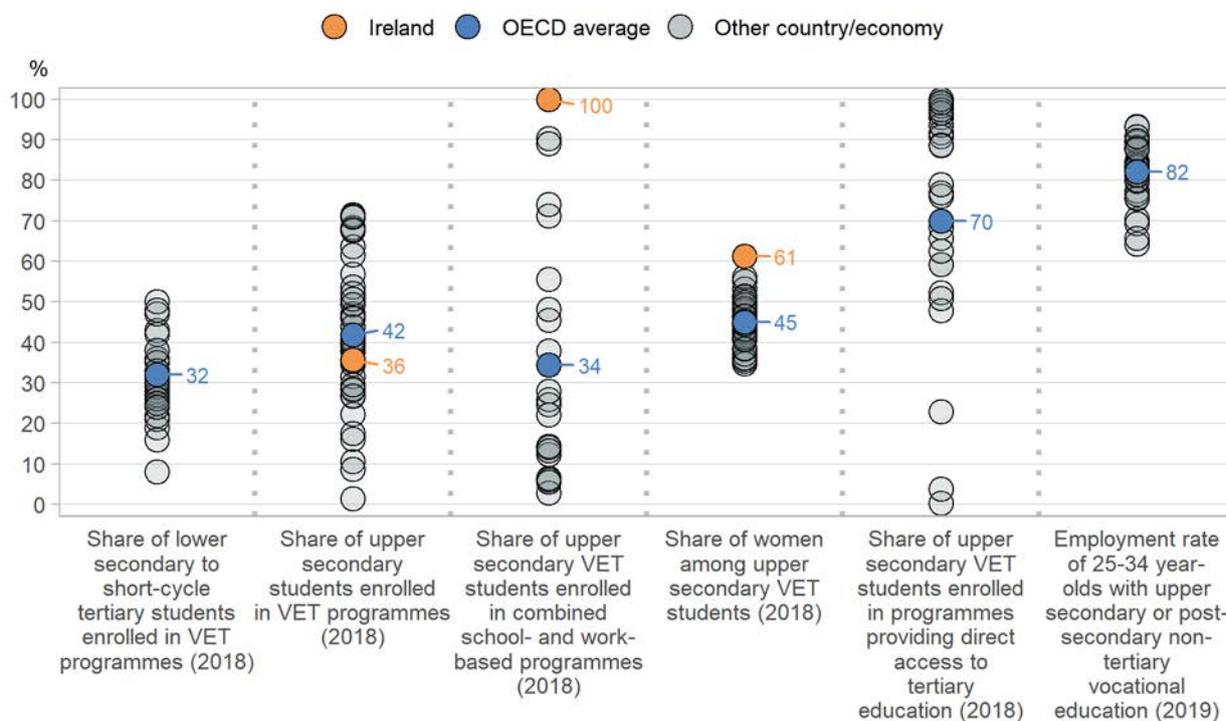
Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators is the authoritative source for information on the state of education around the world. It provides data on the structure, finances and performance of education systems in OECD and partner countries.

Ireland

Participation and outcomes of vocational education and training

- Vocational education and training (VET) programmes attract a diverse range of students, including those seeking qualifications and technical skills to enter the labour market, adults wishing to increase their employability by developing their skills further, and students who may seek entry into higher education later on.
- VET is an important part of upper secondary education in most OECD countries. On average, 36% of all upper secondary students opt for VET programmes in Ireland, a lower proportion than the OECD average of 42% (Figure 1). Certain fields of study are more common than others at this level. In Ireland, the most common broad field is health and welfare with 36% of upper secondary vocational graduates earning a qualification in this field, compared to 13% on average across OECD countries.

Figure 1. Snapshot of vocational education



Note: Only countries and economies with available data are shown. The years shown in parentheses is the most common year of reference for OECD and partner countries. Refer to the source table for more details.

Source: OECD (2020), indicator A3 and B7. See Education at a Glance Database. <http://stats.oecd.org/> for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>).

- The organisation and delivery of upper secondary VET programmes varies considerably from country to country. In combined school- and work-based programmes, between 25% and 90% of the curriculum is taught as work-based learning, while the remainder is organised within the school environment. In Ireland, all upper secondary vocational students are enrolled in combined school- and work-based programmes, which is higher than the OECD average of 34% (Figure 1).
- The average age of enrolment in upper secondary vocational programmes across OECD countries (21 years) tends to be higher than for general programmes (17 years), a pattern also found in Ireland. The average age of enrolment in upper secondary education is higher for students in vocational programmes (35 years) than for students in general programmes (17 years). The share of upper secondary vocational students tends to increase with age. In Ireland, the share of upper secondary students enrolled in VET is 11% among 15-19 year-olds (OECD average: 37%), and 98% among 20-24 year-olds (OECD average: 62%).
- To support upper secondary vocational students' transition to post-secondary education and improve their career prospects, many countries have created direct pathways from vocational programmes to higher levels of education. This is less the case in Ireland where most students are enrolled in upper secondary vocational programmes that do not offer the chance of direct access to tertiary education. However, these programmes offer their graduates opportunities to continue their education at the post-secondary non-tertiary level (ISCED 4), often in the form of one or two years training courses.

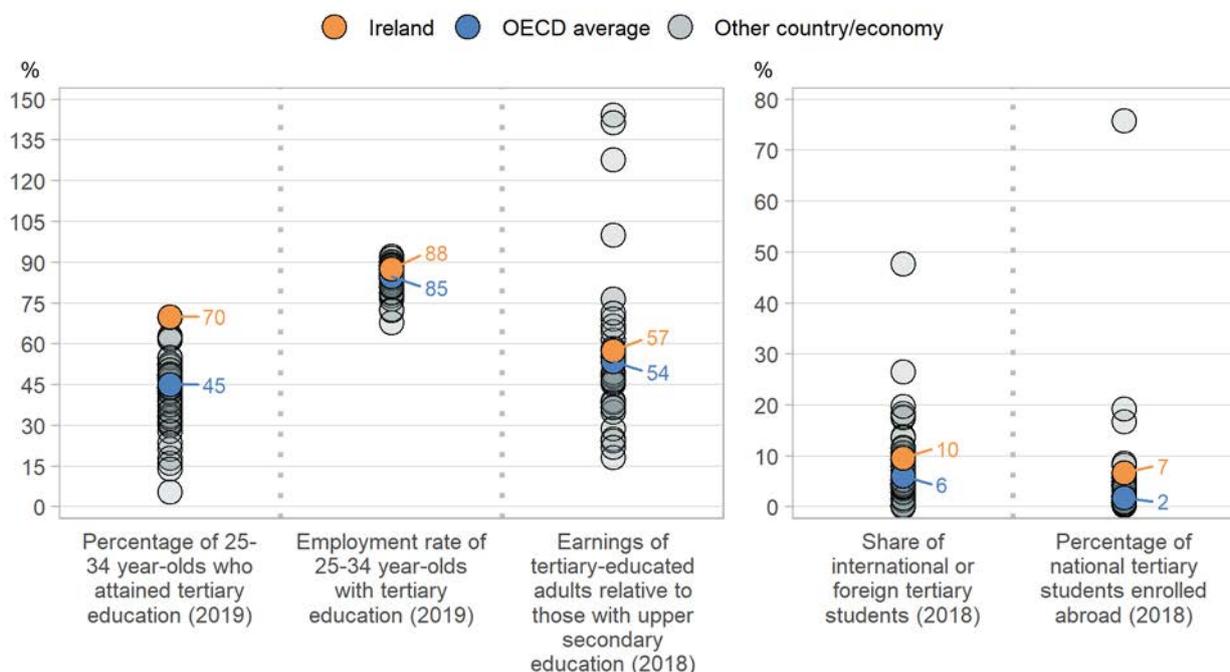
The rising demand for tertiary education

- The expansion of tertiary education is a worldwide trend. Between 2009 and 2019, the share of 25-34 year-olds with a tertiary degree increased in all OECD and partner countries. In Ireland, the share increased by 7 percentage points during this period, higher than the average increase across OECD countries (9 percentage points). In 2019, 55% of 25-34 year-olds had a tertiary degree in Ireland compared to 45% on average across OECD countries (Figure 2).
- From the gender perspective, younger women are more likely than younger men to achieve tertiary education in all OECD countries. In Ireland, in 2019, 59% of 25-34 year-old women had a tertiary qualification compared to 51% of their male peers, while on average across OECD countries the shares are 51% of younger women and 38% of younger men.
- Young people can face barriers to labour market entry as they transition from school to work, but higher educational attainment increases their likelihood of being employed and is associated with higher incomes. On average across OECD countries, the employment rate in 2019 was 61% for 25-34 year-olds without upper secondary education, 78% for those with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education as their highest attainment and 85% for those with tertiary education. In Ireland, the shares are 49% for below upper secondary, 76% for upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary and 88% for tertiary attainment. Having a tertiary degree also carries a considerable earnings advantage in most OECD and partner countries. In Ireland, in 2018, 25-64 year-olds with a tertiary degree with income from full-time, full-year employment earned 57% more than full-time, full-year workers with upper secondary education compared to 54% on average across OECD countries (Figure 2).
- International student mobility has been expanding quite consistently in the past twenty years. In 2018, 5.6 million tertiary students worldwide had crossed a border to study, more than twice the number in 2005. In Ireland, the share of foreign or international students increased from 7% in 2014 to 10% in 2018. Meanwhile 7% of Irish tertiary students are enrolled abroad compared to 2% in total across OECD countries (Figure 2). English-speaking countries are the most attractive student destinations overall in the OECD area, with Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States receiving more than 40% of all internationally mobile students in OECD and

partner countries. Among students leaving Ireland to study, the most popular destination country is the United Kingdom.

- Beyond the economic and employment outcomes, higher educational attainment is related to greater social benefits. For example, those with a tertiary education are more likely to feel they have a say in what their government does. In 2018, on average across OECD countries participating in the European Social Survey, 52% of tertiary-educated adults agreed with this sentiment compared to 26% of those with below upper secondary education. In Ireland, 53% of tertiary-educated adults feel this way compared with 24% of those with below upper secondary education.

Figure 2. Snapshot of tertiary education



Note: Only countries and economies with available data are shown. The years shown in parentheses is the most common year of reference for OECD and partner countries. Refer to the source table for more details.

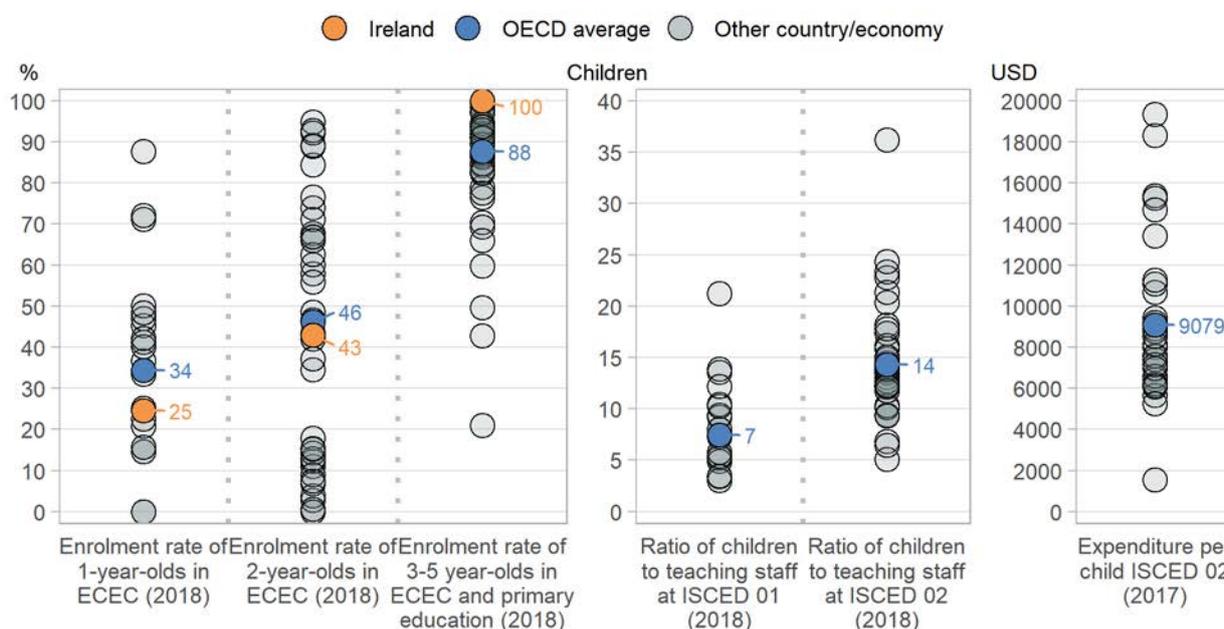
Source: OECD (2020), indicator A1, A3, A4 and B6. See Education at a Glance Database <http://stats.oecd.org/> for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>).

Starting strong

- Early childhood education and care (ECEC) has experienced a surge of policy attention in OECD countries in recent decades, with a focus on children under the age of 3 in many countries. In Ireland, 25% of 1-year-olds were enrolled in a formal ECEC programme (ISCED 0) in 2018, below the OECD average of 34%. Among 2-year-olds, the enrolment rate at ISCED 0 is 43% in Ireland, 3 percentage points slightly below the OECD average of 46% (Figure 3).
- In many OECD countries, ECEC begins for most children long before they turn 5 and there are universal legal entitlements to a place in ECEC services for at least one or two years before the start of compulsory schooling. While compulsory education begins at age 6 in Ireland, all 3-5 year-olds in 2018 are enrolled in ECEC programmes and primary education in Ireland, compared to 88% on average across OECD countries (Figure 3).

- Public provision of early childhood education and care is an important factor in ensuring broad access to affordable ECEC. On average across OECD countries, more than one in two of the children in early childhood educational development services (ISCED 01) are enrolled in private institutions. In Ireland¹, 100% of children enrolled in ISCED 01 programmes attend private ECEC institutions. Enrolment in private institutions is usually less common for 3-5 year-olds, who are usually enrolled in pre-primary education (ISCED 02), than for younger children. In Ireland, 99% of children attending pre-primary education are enrolled in private institutions, compared to one in three children on average across OECD countries.

Figure 3. Snapshot of early childhood education and care



Note: Only countries and economies with available data are shown. Annual expenditure per child is shown in equivalent USD converted using PPPs. The years shown in parentheses is the most common year of reference for OECD and partner countries. Refer to the source table for more details.

Source: OECD (2020), indicator B2. See Education at a Glance Database <http://stats.oecd.org/> for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>).

Investing in education

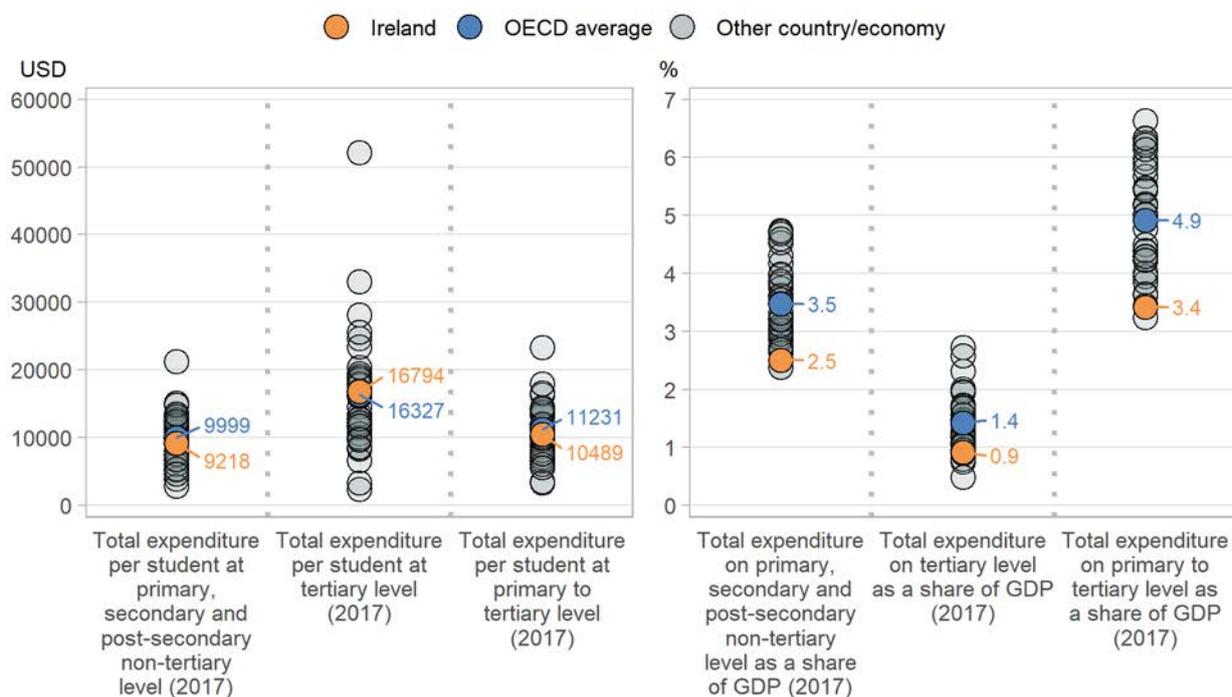
- Annual expenditure per student on educational institutions from primary to tertiary level provides an indication of the investment countries make in each student. In 2017, Ireland spent less on primary to tertiary educational institutions per full-time student than the OECD average, investing a total of USD 10 489 per student compared to USD 11 231 on average across OECD countries (Figure 4).
- The way education is provided influences how resources are allocated between levels of education and between public and private institutions. In 2017, Ireland spent USD 9 218 per student at non-tertiary level (primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education), USD 781 slightly lower than the OECD average of USD 9 999. At tertiary level, Ireland invested USD 16 794 per

¹ In Ireland, most of the children at ISCED 0 are enrolled in government dependant private institutions.

student, USD 467 more than the OECD average (Figure 4). Expenditure per student on private educational institutions is higher than on public institutions on average across OECD countries. This is also the case in Ireland, where total expenditure on public institutions from primary to tertiary level amounts to USD 10 471 per student, compared to USD 12 372 on private ones.

- Among OECD countries, Ireland was among the countries that spent the lowest proportion of its gross domestic product (GDP) on primary to tertiary educational institutions. In 2017, Ireland spent 3.4% of GDP² on primary to tertiary educational institutions, which is 1.5 percentage points lower than the OECD average. Across levels of education, Ireland devoted a below average share of GDP at non-tertiary levels and a lower share at tertiary level (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Snapshot of the financial resources invested in educational institutions



Note: Only countries and economies with available data are shown. Expenditure in national currencies is converted into equivalent USD by dividing the national currency figure by the purchasing power parity (PPP) index for GDP. The years shown in parentheses is the most common year of reference for OECD and partner countries. Refer to the source table for more details.

Source: OECD (2020), indicator C1 and C2. See Education at a Glance Database <http://stats.oecd.org/> for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>).

- Tuition fees in public institutions in Ireland are among the highest for a bachelor's programme across countries with available data. National students are charged USD 8 708 per year for a bachelor's degree 10% more than they paid on average in 2007/08. However, the majority of first-cycle tertiary students benefit from the Free Fees Scheme and pay only an annual student contribution charge of USD 3 800 towards the cost of their programme of study. Public transfers to

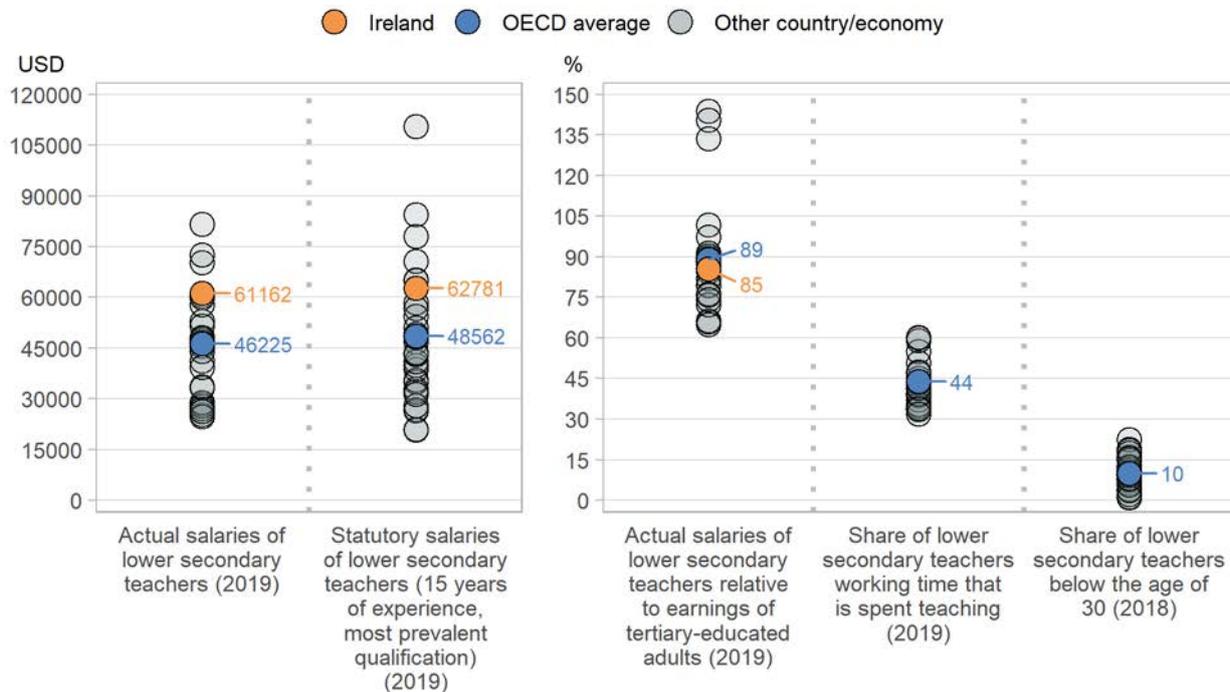
² Changes from 2014 to 2015 are largely driven by the substantial increase in GDP in 2015. For more information on this increase see http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/newsevents/documents/pr_GDPexplanatorynote.pdf. In 2016 Ireland produced a modified estimate of the gross national income (GNI*) that was recommended by the Economic Statistics Review Group and is designed to exclude globalisation effects that are disproportionately impacting the measurement size of the Irish Economy.

the private sector play an important role in the financing of tertiary education in Ireland and in providing financial support to students. They account for 23% of the total funds devoted to tertiary educational institutions, the second highest share across OECD countries.

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 a direct impact on the attractiveness of the teaching profession. Statutory salaries of teachers (and school heads) in public educational institutions increase with the level of education they teach. In most OECD countries and economies, they also increase with experience. On average, statutory salaries of teachers with maximum qualifications at the top of their salary scales are 78-80% higher than those of teachers with the minimum qualifications at the start of their career, for each level of education. In Ireland, maximum salaries are 97% to 101% higher than minimum salaries at primary and secondary education levels.
- Between 2005 and 2019, the statutory salaries of teachers with 15 years of experience and the most prevalent qualifications increased between 5-7% at primary and general lower and upper secondary levels, on average across OECD countries, despite a decrease of salaries following the 2008 financial crisis. In Ireland, teachers' salaries at these levels increased by 17%.
- Teachers' actual salaries reflect their statutory salaries and additional work-related payments. Average actual salaries depend also on the characteristics of the teaching population such as their age, level of experience and qualification level. In Ireland, teachers' average actual salaries amount to USD 57 486 at the primary level (higher than the OECD average of USD 43 942), USD 61 162 at the general lower secondary level (higher than the OECD average of USD 46 225) and USD 61 162 at the general upper secondary level (higher than the OECD average of USD 49 778) (Figure 5).
- Teachers' average actual salaries remain 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 80-94% of the earnings of tertiary-educated workers on average across OECD countries and economies. In Ireland, the proportion ranges from 80% at primary level to 85% at lower secondary level and 85% at the upper secondary level (Figure 5).
- 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, from 993 hours at pre-primary level (ISCED 02), to 778 hours at primary level, 712 hours at lower secondary level (general programmes) and 680 hours at upper secondary level (general programmes). In Ireland, teachers are required to teach, 905 hours per year at primary level, 704 hours at lower secondary level (general programmes) and 704 hours at upper secondary level (general programmes).

Figure 5. Snapshot of teachers' working conditions



Note: Only countries and economies with available data are shown. Teachers' salaries are shown in equivalent USD converted using PPPs. The years shown in parentheses is the most common year of reference for OECD and partner countries. Refer to the source table for more details.

Source: OECD (2020), indicator D3, D4 and D5. See Education at a Glance Database <http://stats.oecd.org/> for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>).

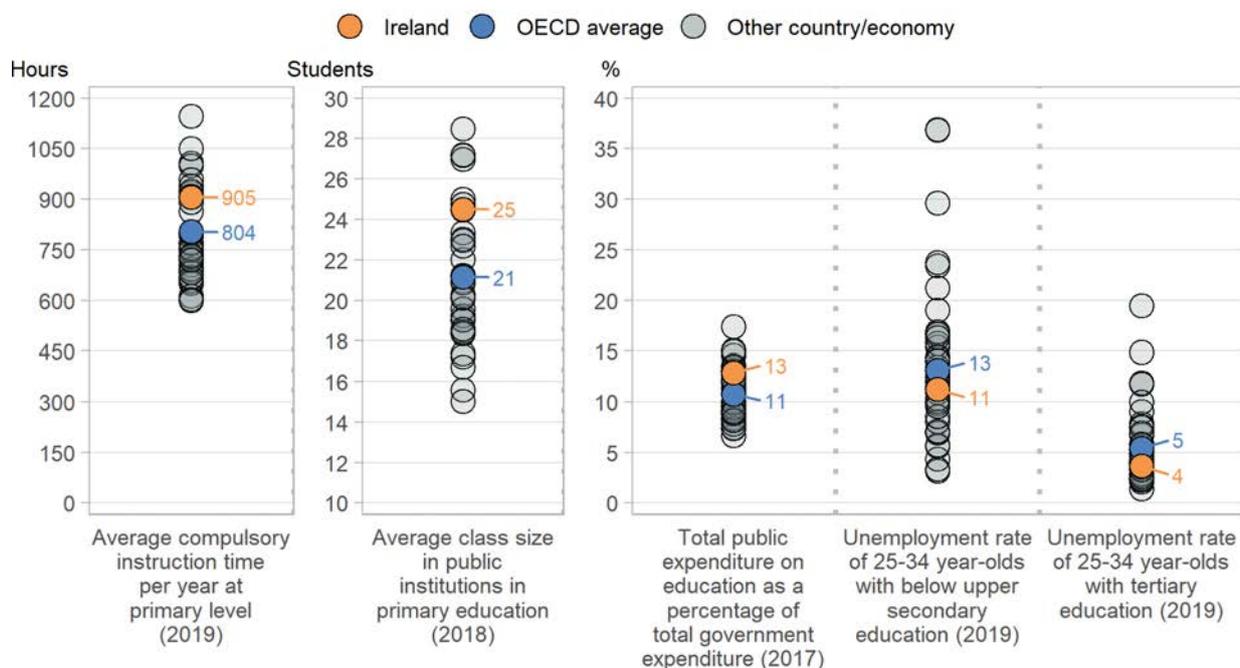
The impact of COVID-19 on education

- The global 2020 COVID-19 pandemic has sent shockwaves around the world. In a first effort to contain the virus, many countries have imposed a lockdown and schools and/or universities have closed for several months across all OECD and partner countries. In Ireland, the closures were nationwide from 12 March 2020. By the end of June, Ireland had experienced 16 weeks of effective school closures in some form, compared to 14 weeks on average across OECD countries (UNESCO, 2020). However, the actual impact in some countries may have been less severe as some of these periods included scheduled school breaks. In Ireland, this period includes two weeks of Easter holiday and the beginning of the summer break which started early June for post-primary level.
- School reopening in the context of the pandemic is contingent on the capacity to maintain a safe distance of 1-2 metres between pupils and staff. Countries with smaller class sizes may find it easier to comply with new restrictions on social distancing. In Ireland, the average class size at primary level is 25 students in public institutions, which is larger than the OECD average of 21. However, the need to reduce class size may depend on other factors such as physical space, the availability of rooms and staff, and personal decisions by students and staff on whether to return to school (Figure 6).
- Excluding the non-compulsory part of the curriculum, students in public institutions in Ireland attended classes for 905 hours per year on average at primary level and 924 hours at lower secondary level in 2019. Each week of school closure therefore represents about 25 hours of compulsory instruction time at the primary level and 28 hours of compulsory instruction time at

lower secondary level during which students have physically not attended school (Figure 6). During this time, many OECD and partner countries have turned to distance learning to ensure the continuity of education.

- While there is uncertainty about the likely overall impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education expenditure, governments will face difficult decisions on the allocation of resources, as government funds are injected into the economy and the health sector. In 2017, public spending on primary to tertiary education as a share of government expenditure in Ireland was 13%, higher than the OECD average of 11% (Figure 6).
- The crisis may have a severe impact on the internationalisation of higher education as the delivery of online course material and travel restrictions may raise questions among international students' perception on the value of obtaining their degree from an institution abroad. Ireland, with a higher share of international students than in total across the OECD, may be more strongly affected than other countries.
- Unemployment may increase, as the economy struggles to cope with the reduced activity that resulted from the lockdown. Those with lower educational attainment are the most vulnerable, as they are the most unlikely to benefit from remote working. In 2019, before the pandemic hit, 7% of young adults with below upper secondary education in Ireland were unemployed compared to 4% of tertiary-educated 25-34 year-olds (Figure 6). In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, the unemployment rate of young adults was 15.7% in 2009 while it was just 6.3% in 2008. The unemployment rate for young adults with tertiary education was 3.4% in 2008 and increased to 8.2% in 2009. The unemployment rates for 2008 and 2009 in respect of Ireland are not directly comparable due to a change in the education attainment classification during this period.

Figure 6. Snapshot of indicators relevant to the impact of COVID-19 on education



Note: Only countries and economies with available data are shown. The years shown in parentheses is the most common year of reference for OECD and partner countries. Refer to the source table for more details.

Source: OECD (2020), indicator A3, D1, D2, and C4. See Education at a Glance Database <http://stats.oecd.org/> for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>).

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More information

For more information on Education at a Glance 2020 and to access the full set of Indicators, visit www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance-19991487.htm

For more information on to the methodology used during the data collection for each indicator, the references to the sources and the specific notes for each country, visit Annex 3 of the publication (<https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>).

For general information on 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.

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

The calculation on the number of weeks of school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic is based on data from UNESCO (UNESCO, 2020). For general information on the methodology considered for the data, please refer to the [methodological note](#).

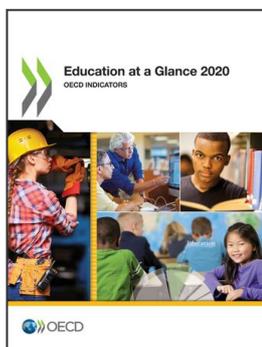
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On 15 May 2020, the OECD Council invited Costa Rica to become a Member. While Costa Rica is included in the OECD averages reported in this note, at the time of its preparation, Costa Rica was in the process of completing its domestic procedures for ratification and the deposit of the instrument of accession to the OECD Convention was pending.

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