

Japan

This country note provides an overview of key characteristics of the education system in Japan based on *Education at a Glance 2024*. In line with the thematic focus of *Education at a Glance 2024*, it highlights issues of equity in education. Data in this note are provided for the latest available year as indicated in *Education at a Glance 2024*.

The output of educational institutions and the impact of learning

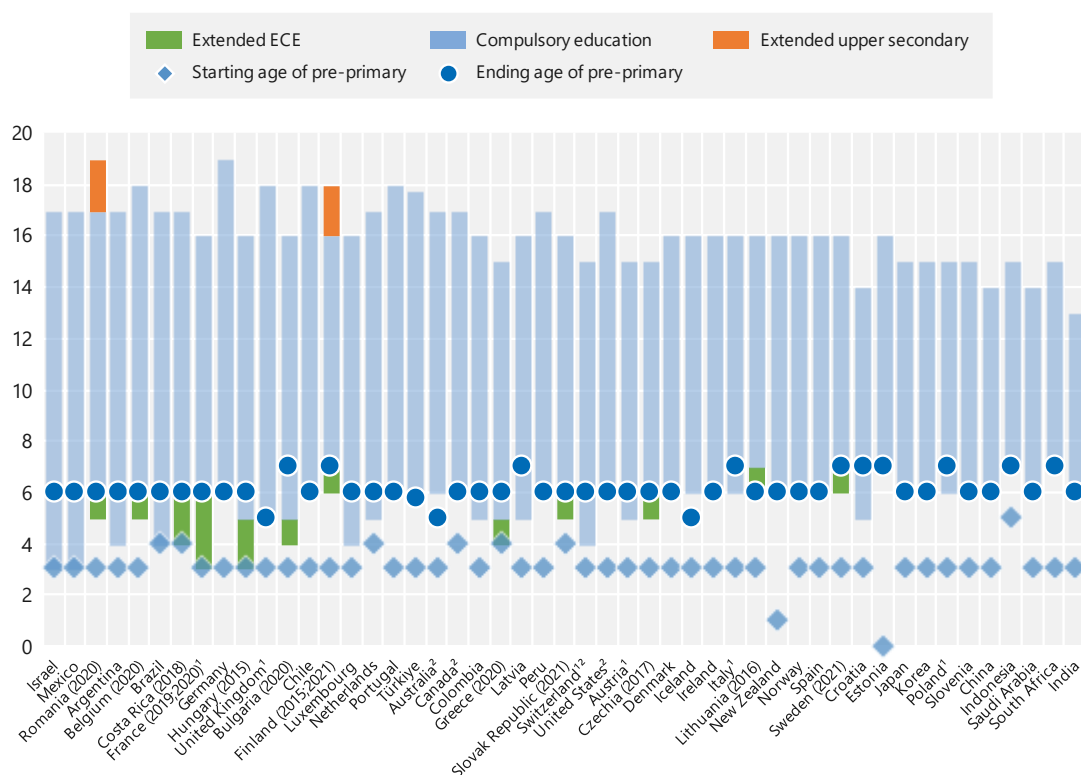
- By almost all available measures, girls and women have better educational outcomes than boys and men, and in many cases the gap is widening. This is reflected in gender gaps in educational attainment. In all OECD member countries, women aged 25-34 are as likely or more likely than their male peers to have a tertiary qualification (54% compared to 41% on average across OECD countries). With a tertiary educational attainment rate of 69% for women and 62% for men, the gap is much narrower than the OECD average in Japan.

Access to education, participation and progression

- Childcare and parental leave policies vary considerably between countries. Of particular importance for low-income families is the so-called childcare gap, the period between the end of paid parental leave and the start of free early childhood education and care or compulsory education. In eight OECD countries, there is no childcare gap as free early childhood education or compulsory education starts immediately following the end of paid parental leave. In contrast, Japan has a childcare gap of 2 years between the end of paid parental leave and the start of free early childhood education.
- Early childhood education can help to reduce the developmental gaps that put some children at a disadvantage when they enrol in primary school. In most OECD countries, the large majority of children are enrolled in early childhood education one year before the start of primary education. In Japan, 98% of children in this age group are enrolled, compared with an OECD average of 96%.
- On average across OECD countries, one-third of children in pre-primary education are enrolled in private institutions. However, there is notable cross-country variation. Whereas in few countries, 5% or less of the children in pre-primary education attend private institutions, 79% are enrolled in private institutions in Japan (compulsory education in Japan lasts from the age of 6 to 15 for a total of 9 years, which is below the OECD average of 11 years) (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Duration of compulsory education (2022)

In years



Note: The year in parentheses indicates when policy changes were made to the duration of compulsory education. In addition, extended ECEC/extended upper secondary refers to the extension in the duration of the relevant level since 2013.

1. There are other compulsory activities to complete by the end of compulsory education (see Table B2.1).

2. Starting age, ending age, and duration of compulsory education may vary at sub-national level.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the duration of compulsory education.

Source: OECD (2024), Table B2.1. For more information see Education at a Glance 2024 Sources, Methodologies and Technical Notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/e7d20315-en>).

- Women are over-represented in tertiary education and the gap is widening in most countries. In Japan, 49% of new entrants to tertiary education are women, compared with an OECD average of 56%. As women are also more likely than men to complete tertiary education, the gap is even greater among graduates (see *Education at a Glance 2022*). However, there are large differences between fields of study in all OECD countries. In Japan, only 7% of women entering tertiary education were studying science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields, while only 5% of men were entering education-related fields.
- Across the OECD, 63% of students who graduated with a bachelor's degree did so from public institutions. However, private education is slowly becoming more common across all levels of tertiary education and the share of graduates from private institutions has grown by 3 percentage points between 2013 and 2022. In Japan, the share of bachelor's graduates from private institutions increased from 78% to 79%.

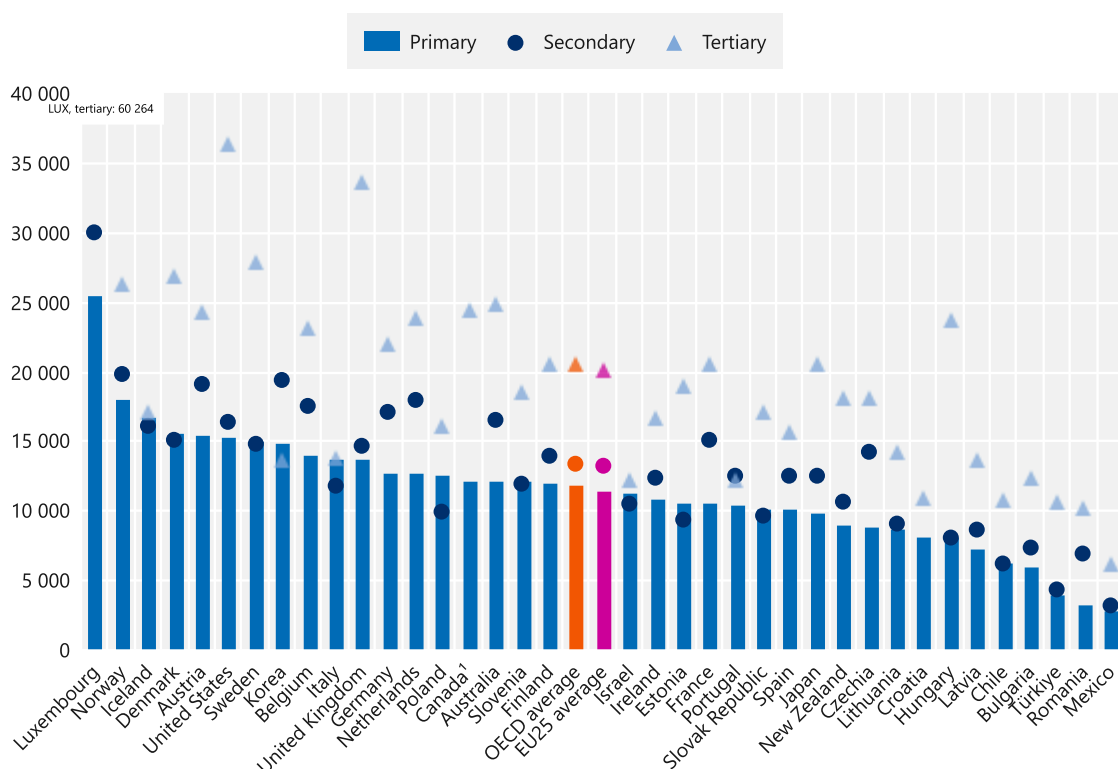
- Many countries seek to attract internationally mobile tertiary students, as they often pay higher tuition fees and, if they decide to stay in the country after graduation, bring valuable skills to the labour market. Across the OECD, a total of 6% of all tertiary students are internationally mobile in 2022. In Japan, the share is 5%, up from 3% in 2013.

Financial resources invested in education

- The average annual expenditure per student from primary to tertiary education (including R&D) in Japan is USD 13 323 compared to an average of USD 14 209 in OECD countries. In most countries, expenditure increases by level of education. In Japan, spending per student is USD 9 928 in primary education, USD 12 444 in secondary education and USD 20 518 in tertiary education (Figure 2.).¹

Figure 2. Total expenditure per full-time equivalent student in primary, secondary and tertiary education (2021)

In equivalent USD converted using PPPs, expenditure on educational institutions



1. Primary education includes pre-primary and lower secondary programmes.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the total expenditure per full-time equivalent student in primary education.

Source: OECD (2024), Table C1.1. For more information see *Education at a Glance 2024 Sources, Methodologies and Technical Notes* (<https://doi.org/10.1787/e7d20315-en>).

¹ All expenditure figures in this note are expressed in USD calculated based on purchasing power parity (PPP) exchange rates.



- Japan spends 4.0% of its gross domestic product (GDP) on educational institutions at primary to tertiary levels (including R&D). This is less than the OECD average of 4.9% of GDP. On average across the OECD, the share of GDP dedicated to educational institutions (from primary to tertiary levels) has been broadly stable, with 4.9% in 2015 and 2021. However, trends vary considerably between countries. Japan is among the countries where expenditure as a share of GDP remained roughly constant at 4%.
- Early childhood education has received much attention in recent years because of its importance, especially for children from disadvantaged families. In Japan, government investment in early childhood educational institutions relative to GDP has increased by 42% between 2015 and 2021. Across the OECD, it has increased on average by 9% over this period. Nevertheless, relatively limited government funds are dedicated to early childhood education in Japan (0.1% of GDP, compared to 0.8% on average across the OECD).
- Across the OECD, public authorities are responsible for the vast majority of spending on education, particularly at compulsory levels. In Japan, 99% of total expenditure on primary institutions comes from public sources, which is above the OECD average of 93%. Private expenditure makes up a greater share in pre-primary and tertiary education in many countries. In Japan, the share of public expenditure on pre-primary education is 76%, below the OECD average of 86%, while for tertiary education it is 37%, compared to an OECD average of 68%.
- About half of the funding for tertiary education is provided by households in Japan, a much higher proportion than the OECD average (19%). Tuition fees are an important component of private expenditure on tertiary education, but they vary considerably across countries. In Japan, with USD 5 645 per year for national students in bachelor's programmes in public institutions, they are at the upper end of the range among OECD countries for which data are available. In independent private institutions, where the majority of tertiary students are enrolled in Japan, the average tuition fees in bachelor's programmes are twice those in public institutions.
- The distribution of government expenditure on education by level of government differs between countries. In some countries, all final expenditure on education comes from central governments, whereas in other countries all final expenditure comes from local or regional governments. In Japan, the central government is responsible for less than 1% of final expenditure on primary education, the regional governments are responsible for 5%, and local governments are responsible for 94% (the central government is responsible for 19%, the regional governments for 42%, and local governments for 39% of initial funds at this level).

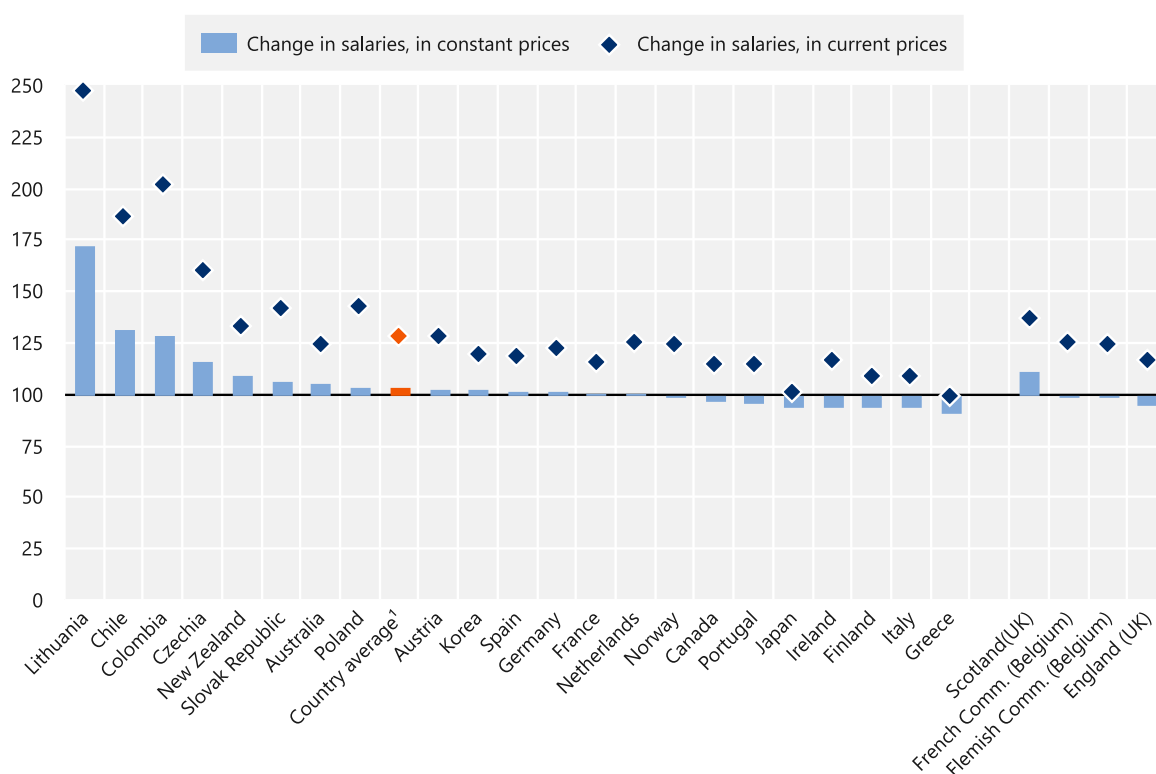
Teachers, the learning environment and the organisation of schools

- Across the OECD, 18 out of 21 countries with available data on secondary education report that they face shortages of fully qualified teachers at the start of academic year 2022/2023. Japan faces teacher shortages for mathematics and foreign languages at lower secondary education, reading, writing and literature and physical education and health at upper secondary education, and natural sciences and arts (including music, and technology and home economics) at both lower and upper secondary levels of education. Japan also faces teacher shortages at primary level (according to a study published by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology in 2022).
- Between 2013 and 2022, the average age of teachers has increased across the OECD. In lower secondary education, 36% of teachers are 50 years or older, compared to 35% in 2013. Japan has fewer teachers aged 50 or older, with only 30% of teachers being in this age category, up from 27% in 2013.

- Between 2015 and 2023, nominal statutory salaries increased by 1% in Japan for lower secondary teachers with 15 years of experience. Most of this increase compensated for the rising cost of living. In real terms (i.e. adjusted for inflation), teachers' salaries decreased by 6% over the eight-year period compared to an average increase of 4% across countries with available data (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Change in lower secondary teachers' statutory salaries between 2015 and 2023

Index of change in annual salaries of teachers with most prevalent qualifications after 15 years of experience (2015 = 100)



Note: The change in constant prices refers to the change in salaries assuming the same level of purchasing power between 2015 and 2023 (that is, in 2015 prices), whereas change in current prices refers to the nominal change in salary amount between 2015 and 2023.

1. Excludes Australia, Chile and Colombia as data for some years are missing between 2015 and 2023.

Countries and other participants are ranked in descending order of the change in salaries in constant prices.

Source: OECD (2024), Table D3.6 and Table X2.5. For more information see *Education at a Glance 2024 Sources, Methodologies and Technical Notes* (<https://doi.org/10.1787/e7d20315-en>).

- The work of teachers consists of a variety of tasks including teaching, but also preparing lessons, grading assignments and communicating with parents. The number of hours that teachers are contractually obliged to teach varies greatly across countries. In Japan, teachers at lower secondary level have to teach 606 hours annually. This is below the OECD average of 706 hours per year.



- Teaching hours per year in Japan decreases as the level of education increases, from 745 hours at primary level to 507 hours at upper secondary level at it is the case across OECD countries (from 773 hours at primary level to 679 at upper secondary level on average in 2023). Teachers also perform various non-teaching tasks during their working time. At the upper secondary level, about 30% of working time is spent teaching, compared to 43% on average across 26 countries with available data.
- Whereas the average class in OECD countries has 21 students at the primary level and 23 students at lower secondary level, class size in Japan is among the largest across countries, with 27 students at primary level and 32 students at lower secondary level.
- Most education systems involve students and parents in the governance of public schools. In most countries, it is compulsory for parents' representatives to be included in the governing board of public schools. Student participation is less widespread, but still common. In Japan, governing bodies are not required (compulsory) in public schools (boards of education are obliged to make efforts to establish the governing body in schools).



More information

For more information on *Education at a Glance 2024* and to access the full set of indicators, see: <https://doi.org/10.1787/c00cad36-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 2024: Sources, Methodologies and Technical Notes* (<https://doi.org/10.1787/e7d20315-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://data-explorer.oecd.org/s/5q> and by following the StatLinks  in the publication.

Explore, compare and visualise more data and analysis using the Education GPS: <https://gpseducation.oecd.org/>.

Questions can be directed to the Education at a Glance team at the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills: EDU.EAG@oecd.org.

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