



# France

This country note provides an overview of key characteristics of the education system in France 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 and on the labour market. 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

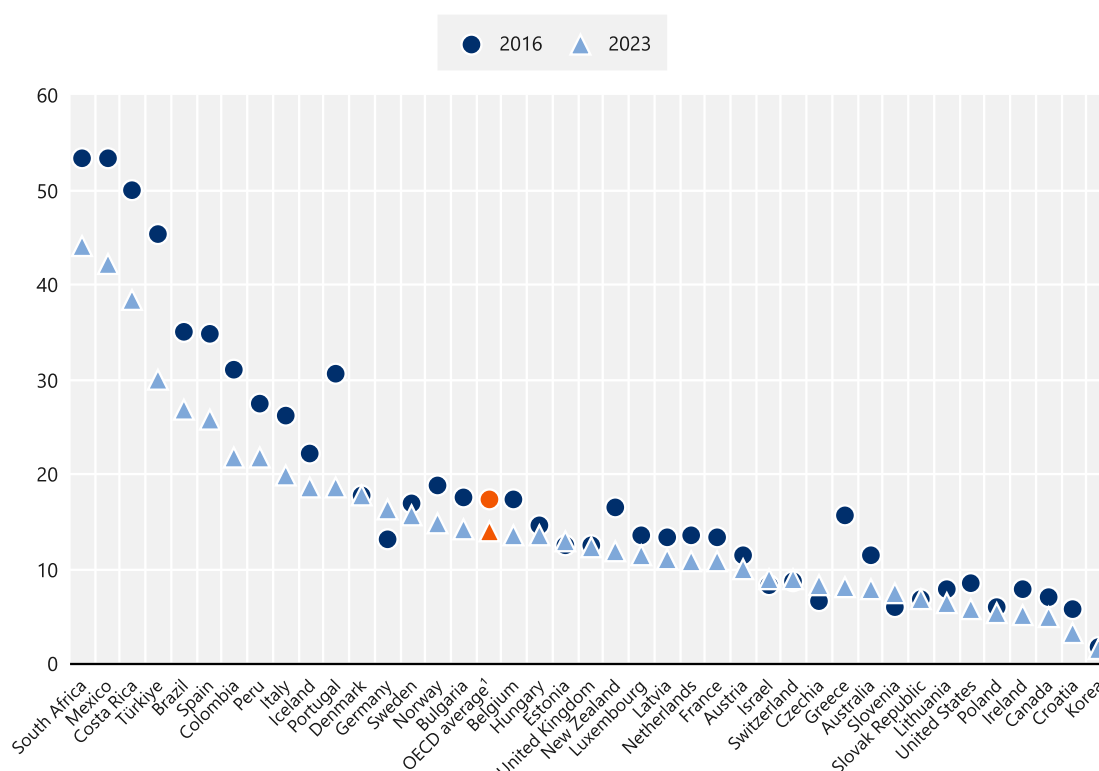
- Adults with below upper secondary educational attainment are at considerable risk of poor social and labour-market outcomes throughout their lives. Reducing the share of young adults without an upper secondary qualification has been a priority in many countries and their share has decreased between 2016 and 2023 in 28 out of 35 OECD member countries. This is also the case in France where the share of 25-34 year-olds without upper secondary educational attainment decreased from 13 % in 2016 to 11 % in 2023. The OECD average fell from 17 % to 14 % over the same period (Figure 1).
- The difficult labour-market situation faced by workers without an upper secondary qualification is reflected in employment rates among 25-34 year-olds. In France, only 54% of 25-34 year-olds without an upper secondary qualification are employed (the OECD average is of 61%), compared to 78% of those with an upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary qualification (the OECD average is of 79%).
- Strong labour markets and increasing participation in education have led to a decline in the share of 18-24 year-olds who are neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET) in most OECD member countries. Across the OECD, the average NEET rate decreased from 15.8 % to 13.8% between 2016 and 2023. In France, the share of NEETs decreased from 19.8% to 16.1% over this period.
- 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 in 2023 (54% compared to 41% on average across OECD countries). With a tertiary educational attainment rate of 56% for women and 48% for men, the gap is much narrower than the OECD average in France.
- Although girls clearly outperform boys in education, the picture is reversed when they enter the labour market; the key measures of labour-market outcomes are generally worse for women than for men. Women aged 25-34 are less likely to be in employment than men, with the gap typically widest for those with below upper secondary educational attainment and narrowest for those with tertiary attainment. In France, only 41% of young women with below upper secondary educational

attainment are in employment in 2023 (the OECD average is of 47%), while the corresponding share for young men is 64% (the OECD average is of 72%).

- Parents' education has a strong impact on the educational attainment of their children. In France, 80% of 25-64 year-olds who have at least one parent with tertiary attainment in 2021 also attained a tertiary qualification (the average is of 72%). In contrast, only 25% of 25-64 year-olds who do not have at least one parent with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment have a tertiary qualification (the average is of 19%).
- The labour market is particularly sensitive to people's qualifications, whatever their migration status. The likelihood of being employed increases with educational attainment, but labour markets tend to underuse the potential skills of foreign-born adults. In France, among all 25-64 year-olds, 55% of native-born adults and 54% of foreign-born adults with below upper secondary education are employed in 2023 (the OECD averages are respectively of 60% and 63%), rising to 88% of native-born and 77% of foreign-born adults with tertiary attainment (the OECD averages are respectively of 88% and 82%).

**Figure 1. Trends in the share of 25-34 year-olds with below upper secondary educational attainment (2016 and 2023)**

In per cent



1. The OECD average is derived from the unweighted mean of all countries with available and comparable data for both years. Countries are ranked in descending order of the share of 25-34 year-olds with below upper secondary attainment in 2023. See Table A1.2 for data. For more information see *Education at a Glance 2024 Sources, Methodologies and Technical Notes* (<https://doi.org/10.1787/e7d20315-en>).



### Access to education, participation and progression

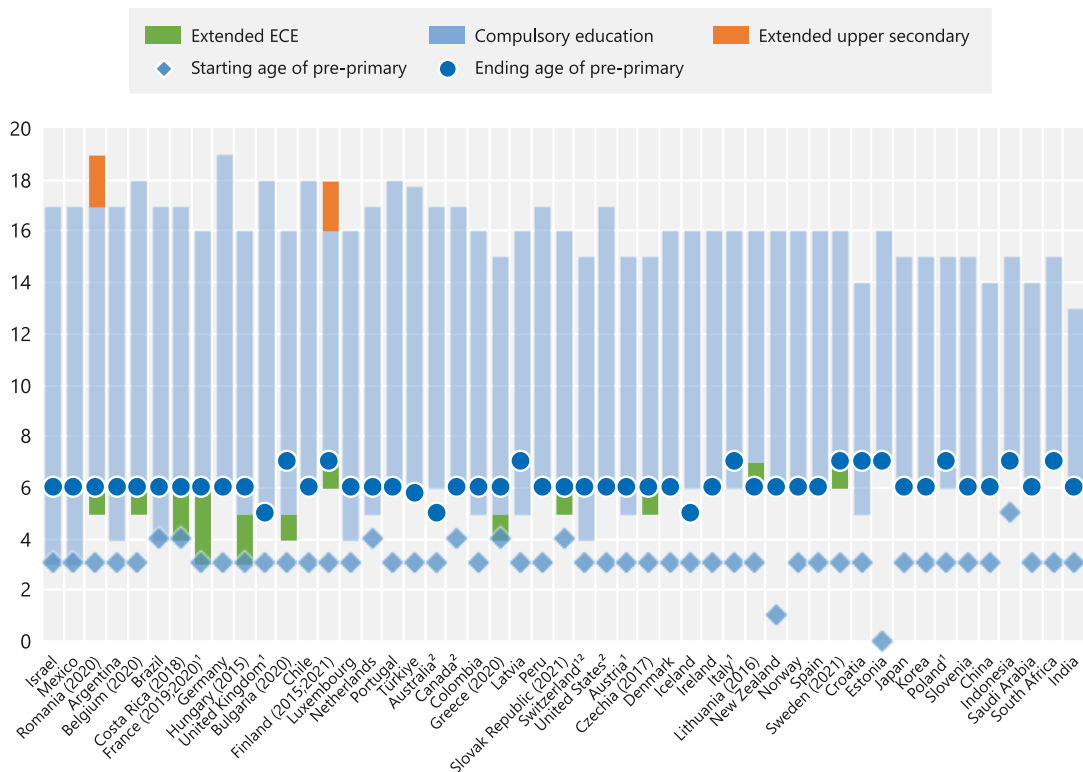
- Childcare and parental leave policies vary considerably between countries. Of particular importance for low-income families is the so-called childcare gap, the period between the end of paid parental leave and the start of free early childhood education and care or compulsory education. In eight OECD 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, France is one of eight countries where the childcare gap is 2 years between the end of paid parental leave and the start of free compulsory education while the other 22 OECD countries present a gap of 3 years or more. In France, the Caisse l'allocation familiale (CAF) provides a complément de libre choix du mode de garde (CMG) for parents of children under 6, so that they can choose the childcare arrangement that suits them best. In the case of enrolment in a micro-crèche, for example, the CMG covers 85% of the fees payable to the childcare facility.
- Participation in early childhood education and care is particularly important for children from disadvantaged families. However, in France, as in most other OECD countries, children aged 0-2 from families in the bottom income tertile are less likely in 2022 to participate in childcare and education than children from the top income tertile (33% compared to 85% for France against 32% and 50% for the OECD average). The difference of 52 percentage points in participation between children from families in the top and bottom tertile in France is larger than the OECD average of 19 percentage points.
- The overall participation of children aged 0-2 to ECEC is 58 % in France, compared to 40 % on OECD average. In France, the access to pre-primary education for the 2-year olds is prioritized in schools located in disadvantaged social environments, whether in urban, rural, and mountainous areas, as well as in overseas departments and regions.
- Early childhood education helps to reduce the developmental gaps that put some children at a disadvantage when they start school. One year before the start of primary education, a large majority of children is enrolled in early childhood education in most OECD countries. In France, 100% of children in this age group in 2022 are enrolled, compared with an OECD average of 96%.
- Although most children and youths participate in education in the years before and after compulsory education, not all do so. In order to increase enrolment in the early years or among youths, twelve OECD member and accession countries have increased the duration of compulsory education over the past decade. France is one of them as the start of compulsory education was extended by 3 years in September 2019. Compulsory education in France lasts from the age of 3 to 16 for a total of 13 years, which is above the OECD average of 11 years (Figure 2). Moreover, in September 2020 in France, training became mandatory for students aged between 16 and 18.
- Grade repetition is common in many countries to give students more time to master the content of a grade, although its effectiveness is debated. In 2022, 1.2% of primary, 1.1% of lower secondary and 2.4% of upper secondary students in France repeat a grade in their current level of education, while the OECD average is 1.5% of primary, 2.2% of lower secondary and 3.2% of upper secondary students repeat a grade in their current level of education. Furthermore, in the long term, the grade repetition has significantly decreased in France: the rate of repeaters among the students at the beginning of lower secondary education (whatever the grade repeated) decreased from 17.2% in 2005 to 4.8% in 2022 (DEPP, 2023<sup>[1]</sup>).
- Even in the most equitable countries, the most disadvantaged students do not achieve the same level of performance in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) as their more

advantaged peers. In France, the proportion of disadvantaged students (bottom quartile) achieving at least PISA level 2 in mathematics in 2022 is 45% lower than that of advantaged students (top quartile) (The OECD average is of 40%).

- The likelihood of tertiary students successfully completing their studies depends on their family background. In 2020, 75% of students with at least one parent with tertiary attainment in France successfully completed their tertiary studies within three years of the theoretical end of the programme, while only 57% of students whose parents had less than upper secondary education did so. The difference between these two groups ranges from less than 7 percentage points in Estonia, Finland and Sweden to more than 19 percentage points in the Flemish Community of Belgium, Slovenia, and the United States.
- Women are significantly over-represented in tertiary education and the gap is widening in most countries. In France, 56% of new entrants to tertiary education in 2022 are women, in line with the OECD average. 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 France, only 16% of new entrants in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics in 2022 are women (15 % for the OECD average), while 40 % are men (41 % for the OECD average). In contrast, only 6% of new entrants in Health and welfare are men (8% for the OECD average), while 16% are women (20% for the OECD average).

**Figure 2. 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.

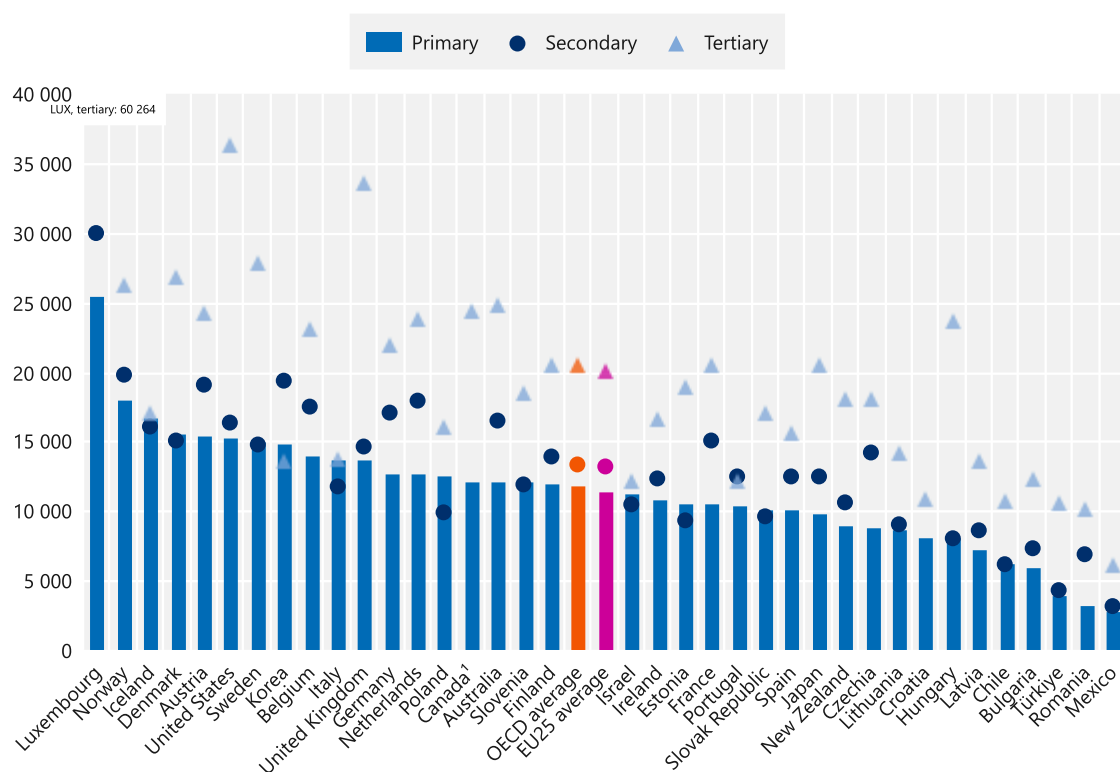
See Table B2.1 for data. For more information see *Education at a Glance 2024 Sources, Methodologies and Technical Notes* (<https://doi.org/10.1787/e7d20315-en>).

## Financial resources invested in education

- In 2021, the average annual expenditure per student from primary to tertiary education in France is USD 14 803 compared to an average of USD 14 209 in OECD countries. In most countries, expenditure increases by level of education, in France, spending per student is USD 10 554 in primary education, USD 15 112 in secondary education and USD 20 458 in tertiary education (Figure 3)<sup>1</sup>.

**Figure 3. Total expenditure per full-time equivalent student in primary, secondary and tertiary education (2021)**

In equivalent USD converted using PPPs, expenditure on educational institutions



**Note:** Expenditure at tertiary level includes R&D.

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



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.

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

- An increasing financial focus on primary education over the last years is notable in France. Between 2015 and 2021, spending per full-time equivalent student rose in France by 1.8% per year on average for primary education and remain roughly constant (+0.1% per year) for secondary education (the OECD averages are respectively of +2.4% per year for primary education and 1.8% per year for secondary education)
- France spends 5.4% its gross domestic product (GDP) on educational institutions at primary to tertiary levels in 2021. This is more 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 at 4.9% between 2015 and 2021. However, trends vary considerably between countries. In France, the expenditure as a share of GDP has risen slightly over this period, from 5.2 % in 2015 to 5.4% in 2021.
- Early childhood education has received attention in recent years in many countries because of its importance, especially for children from disadvantaged families. In France, public investment in early childhood education stayed roughly constant at 0.7% of GDP between 2015 and 2021 (0.7% in 2015 and 0.8% in 2021 for the OECD average).
- Across the OECD, public authorities are responsible for the vast majority of spending on education, particularly at compulsory levels. In 2021, 94% of total expenditure on primary institutions in France comes from public sources, which is similar to the OECD average of 93%.
- Private expenditure makes up a greater share in pre-primary and tertiary education in many countries. In France, the share of private expenditure on pre-primary education is 6%, below the OECD average of 14%, while for tertiary education it is 29%, compared to an OECD average of 28%.
- Private schools in primary education are largely publicly funded in many countries. In France, 14% of primary students are enrolled in private schools in 2021 (the OECD average is 15%) and 73% of the funding of these schools comes from public sources (the OECD average is of 59%).
- Tuition fees are an important component of private expenditure on tertiary education, but they vary considerably across countries. In France, with USD 252 per year for at Bachelor's level in academic year 2022/2023, they are at the lower end of the range among OECD countries for which data are available.

## 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. France was facing teacher shortages in secondary education in some subjects (mainly mathematics), but not in all subjects, unlike 9 of the 21 countries with data. However, in France, the recruitment of contract teachers in secondary education has been used to cover teaching posts not filled in the main competitive examinations in certain academies with a shortage of teachers.
- The share of teachers leaving the profession varies considerably across countries. Among countries with available data, between 2% and 12% of teachers leave the profession in school

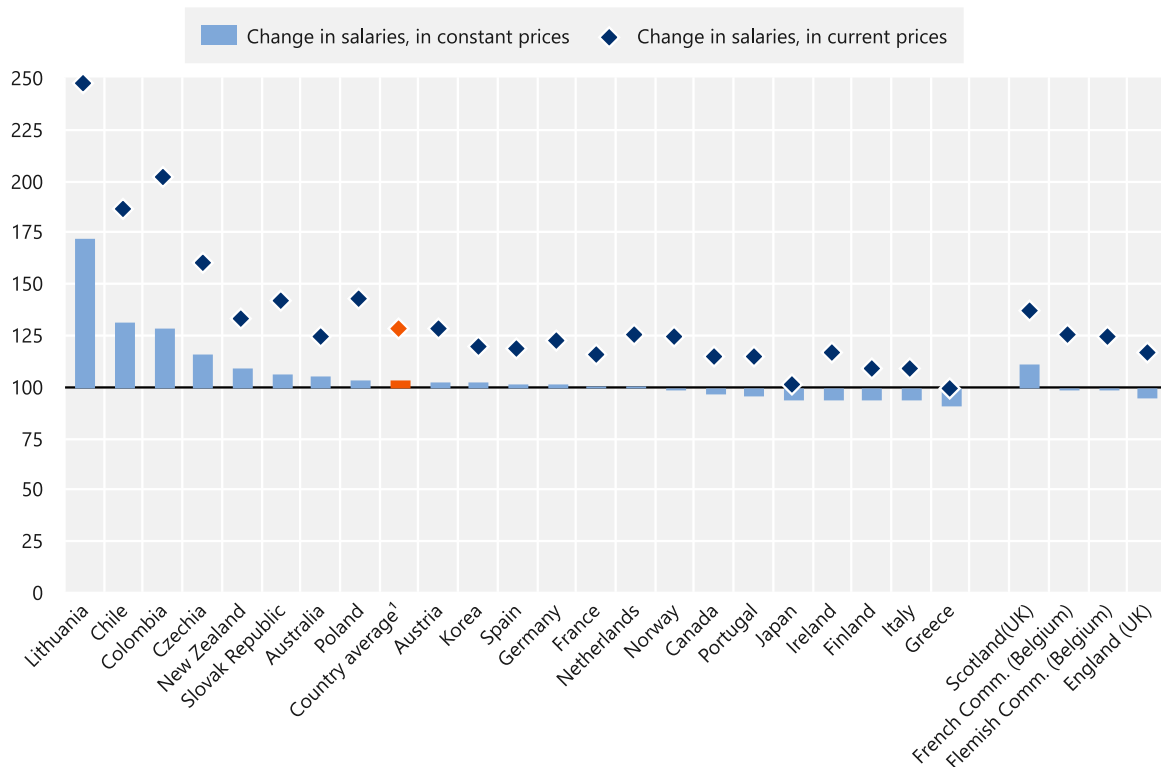


year 2022/23. In France, the share in 2021/22 is at the lower end of this range with 3%. Although typically around 2% of teachers retire each year (2% in France), the share of teachers resigning fluctuates more widely between nearly 0% to up to 10%. In France, it is 0.4% in 2021/22. However, the resignation rate should be interpreted with caution, as it depends on many aspects, such as teachers' contractual status and general labour market characteristics.

- 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 in 2022, compared to 35% in 2013. France has a higher proportion of teachers aged 50 or older in 2022, with 38% of teachers being in this age category in 2022, up from 30% in 2016.
- Between 2015 and 2023, in nominal terms (that is, in current prices, not considering inflation), statutory salaries increased by 15% in France 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 remained stable over the eight-year period in France (+1%) compared to an average increase of 4% across countries with available data (Figure 4).
- Greater upward variations are observed in real terms (i.e. adjusted for inflation) in the statutory salaries of teachers at the start of their careers in France. Overall, over the period covering the school years from 2015 to 2023, salaries (at constant prices) at the start of a career for lower secondary teachers have risen by around 5% in France. A large part of this increase is observed in the last three years of this period.

**Figure 4. 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.

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

- France is the only country with Chile and Hungary where allowances for teaching in socio-economically disadvantaged schools are available for lower secondary teachers. In France, this is a fixed amount complemented by a further amount depending on work-related objectives.
- The work of teachers consists of a variety of task 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 France, teachers at lower secondary level have to teach 720 hours annually in 2023. This is above the OECD average of 706 hours per year.
- Countries make different choices about whether to operate many small schools or fewer large schools. In France, the median primary school has 18 students per grade in 2022 compared to the OECD average of 25. The largest 5% of primary schools in France have 58 or more students per



grade, while the OECD average is 91 or more. At the other end of the scale, the smallest 5% of primary schools have 3 or fewer students per grade compared to an OECD average of 5 or fewer students per grade. Although small schools are important for ensuring primary education is accessible, especially in sparsely populated rural areas, they can be costly to run and may have to resort to multi-grade teaching.

- A general trend across the 27 countries with available data is that metropolitan regions tend to have a smaller share of small primary schools, while non-metropolitan regions tend to have a larger share. This pattern is also visible in France where large primary schools (i.e. schools with more than 21 students per grade) are concentrated in and around Paris, as well as in the southern coastal regions, such as Bouches-du-Rhône. These regions are typically metropolitan. Conversely, in inland rural regions that are far from metropolitan areas, such as Cantal, Creuse and Lozère, the share of small schools (i.e. schools with less than 21 students per grade) exceeds 90%.
- Most education systems involve students and parents in the governance of public schools. In most countries, it is compulsory for parents' representatives in 2023 to be included in the governing board of public schools. Student participation is less widespread, but still common. In France the participation of parents in governing body of public schools is required, and the participation of students varies by level of education.

## References

DEPP (2023), *Repères et références statistiques*, p.78-79,  
<https://www.education.gouv.fr/reperes-et-references-statistiques-2023-378608>.

[1]

## 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](mailto:EDU.EAG@oecd.org).

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