

Education Expenditures by Country

In 2016, the United States spent \$13,600 per full-time-equivalent (FTE) student on elementary and secondary education, which was 39 percent higher than the average of Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) member countries of \$9,800 (in constant 2018 U.S. dollars). At the postsecondary level, the United States spent \$31,600 per FTE student, which was 95 percent higher than the average of OECD countries (\$16,200).

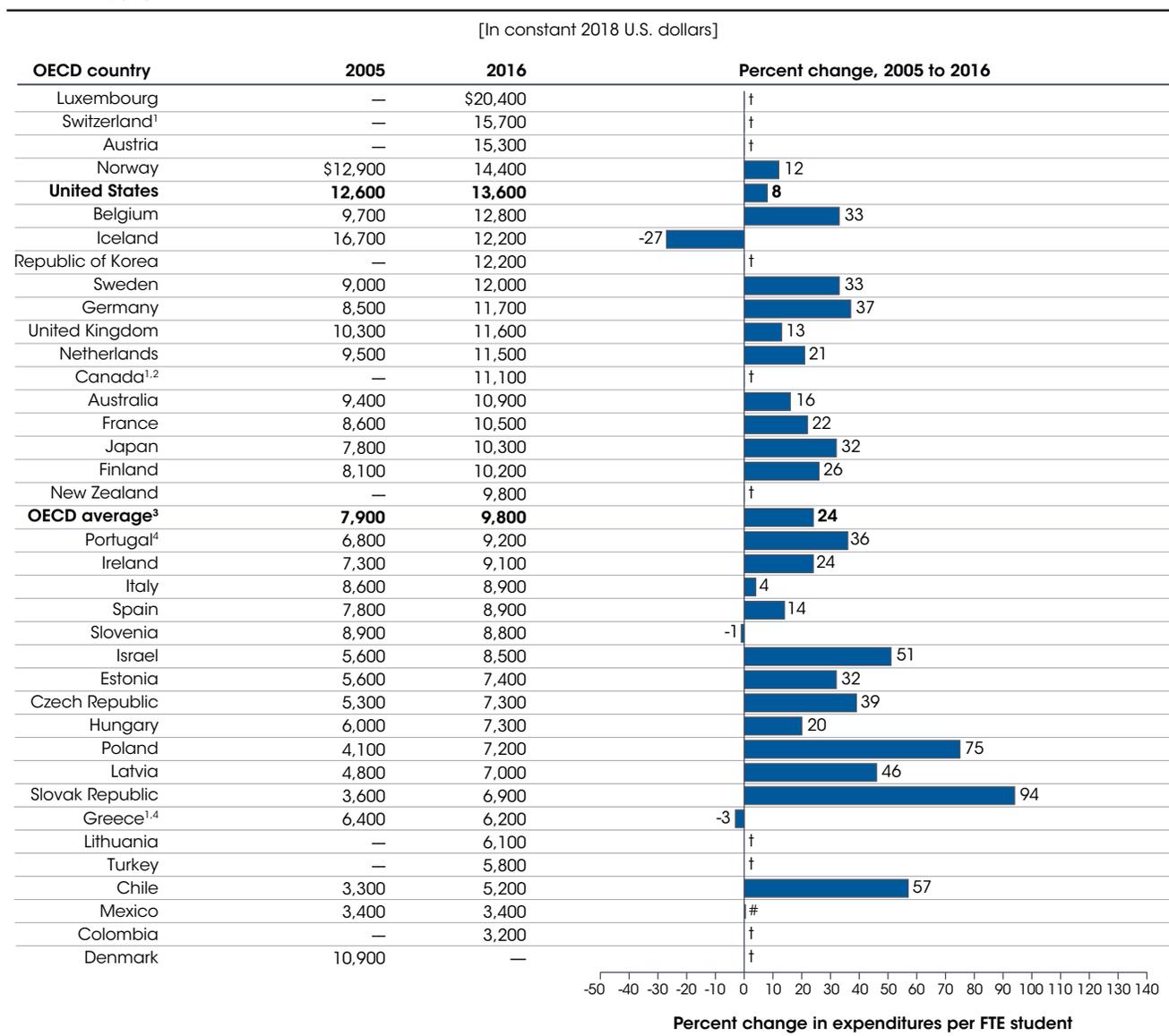
This indicator uses material from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to compare countries' expenditures on education using two measures: *expenditures on public and private education institutions per full-time-equivalent (FTE) student* and *total government and private expenditures on education institutions as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP)*. The OECD is an organization of 37 countries that collects and publishes an array of data on its member countries. Education expenditures are from public revenue sources (governments) and private revenue sources, and they include current and capital expenditures. Private sources include payments from households for school-based expenses such as tuition, transportation fees, book rentals, and food services, as well as public funding via subsidies to households, private fees for education services, and other private spending that goes through the educational institution. The *total government and private expenditures on education institutions as a percentage of GDP* measure allows for a comparison of countries' expenditures relative

to their ability to finance education. Purchasing power parity (PPP) indexes are used to convert other currencies into U.S. dollars. Monetary amounts are in constant 2018 dollars based on national Consumer Price Indexes.¹

Expenditures per FTE student at the elementary/secondary level varied across OECD countries² in 2016, ranging from \$3,200 in Colombia to \$20,400 in Luxembourg. The United States spent \$13,600 per FTE student at the elementary/secondary level, which was 39 percent higher than the average of OECD countries³ reporting data (\$9,800).

Expenditures per FTE student at the postsecondary level also varied across OECD countries in 2016, ranging from \$6,900 in Colombia to \$50,000 in Luxembourg. The United States spent \$31,600 per FTE student at the postsecondary level, which was 95 percent higher than the average of OECD countries reporting data (\$16,200).

Figure 1. Expenditures and percentage change in expenditures per full-time-equivalent (FTE) student for elementary and secondary education, by Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) country: 2005 and 2016



— Not available.

† Not applicable.

Rounds to zero.

¹ Includes public institutions only.

² Education expenditures include preprimary education (for children ages 3 and older).

³ Refers to the mean of the data values for all reporting Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, to which each country reporting data contributes equally. The average includes all current OECD countries for which a given year's data are available, even if they were not members of OECD in that year.

⁴ Education expenditures exclude postsecondary non-higher education.

NOTE: Includes both government and private expenditures. Expenditures for International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) level 4 (postsecondary non-higher education) are included in elementary and secondary education unless otherwise noted. Data adjusted to U.S. dollars using the purchasing power parity (PPP) index. Constant dollars based on national Consumer Price Indexes, available on the OECD database cited in the SOURCE note below. Some data have been revised from previously published figures. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

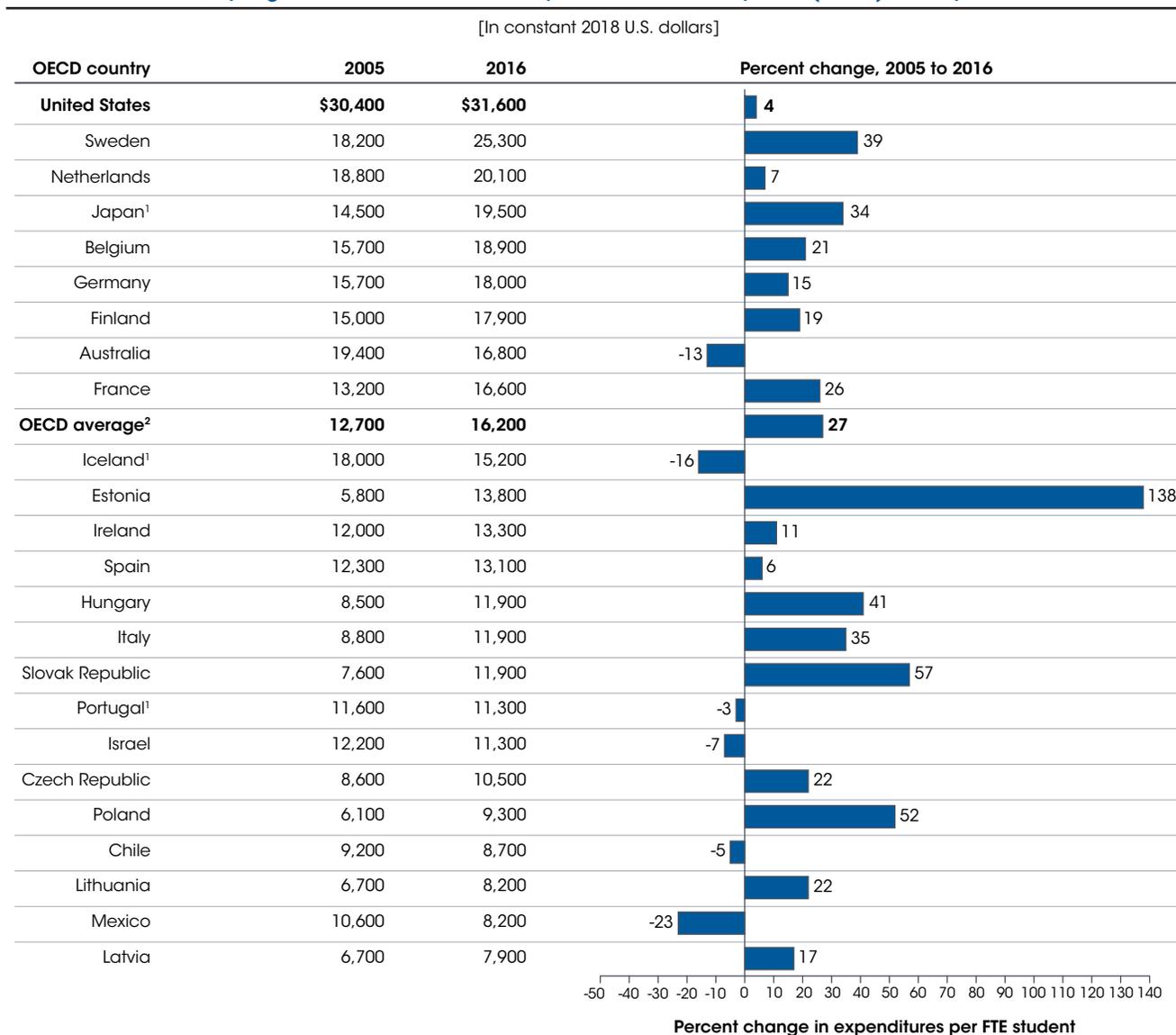
SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Online Education Database, retrieved November 20, 2019, from <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, table 605.10.

In 2016, the average of OECD countries' expenditures per FTE student at the elementary/secondary level was \$9,800, compared with \$7,900 in 2005. In 24 of the 27 OECD countries with data available for both years, including the United States, expenditures per FTE student at the elementary/secondary level were higher in 2016 than in 2005, after adjusting for inflation. The percentage increases ranged from a low of less than one-half of 1 percent in Mexico to a high of 94 percent in the Slovak Republic. Three countries (Iceland, Greece, and Slovenia) had expenditures per FTE student at the elementary/secondary level that were lower in 2016 than in 2005. In the United States, expenditures per FTE student were 8 percent higher in 2016 (\$13,600) than in 2005

(\$12,600). Of the 27 countries with data available in both 2005 and 2016, some 21 had higher percentage increases in expenditures than the United States; Italy, Mexico, Slovenia, Greece, and Iceland were lower.

In 2005, the United States had the third highest expenditures per FTE student at the elementary/secondary level of the 27 countries with available data for 2005 and 2016, after Iceland (\$16,700) and Norway (\$12,900).

In 2016, the United States was second behind Norway (\$14,400). In addition, the gap between the United States and the country with the highest expenditures per FTE student at the elementary/secondary level decreased from \$4,200 in 2005 to \$800 in 2016.

Figure 2. Expenditures and percentage change in expenditures per full-time-equivalent (FTE) student for postsecondary education, by Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) country: 2005 and 2016

¹ Postsecondary non-higher education included in both secondary and postsecondary education in one or both data years (2005 and 2016).

² Refers to the mean of the data values for all reporting Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, to which each country reporting data contributes equally. The average includes all current OECD countries for which a given year's data are available, even if they were not members of OECD in that year.

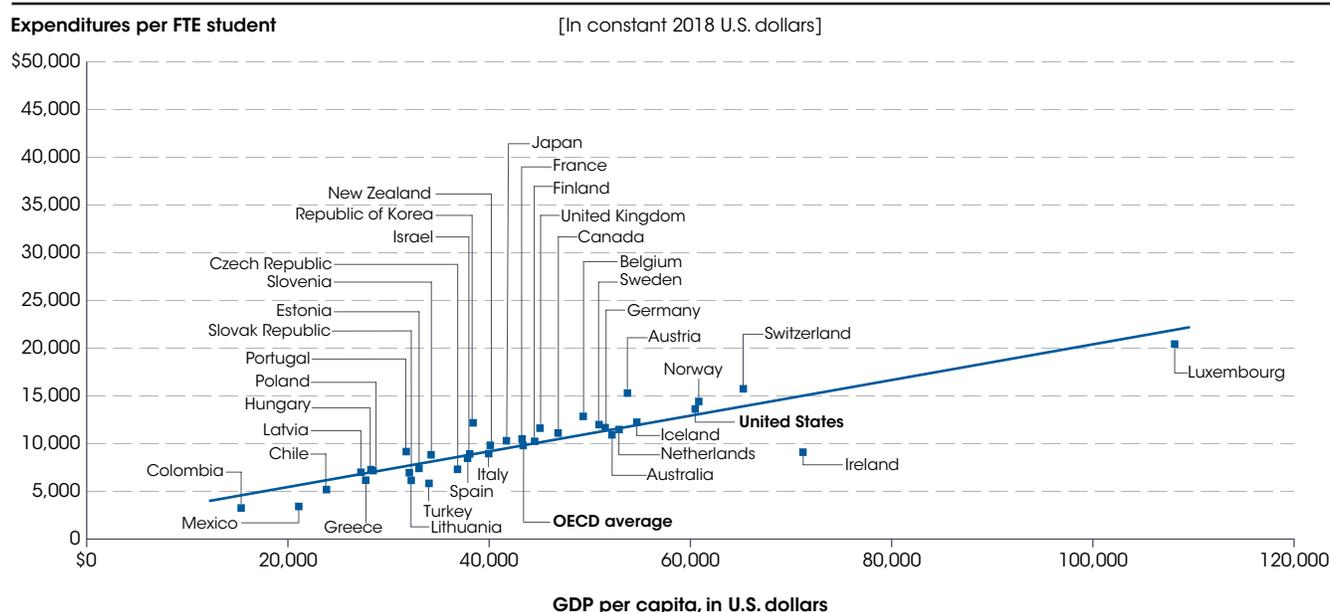
NOTE: Austria, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, Greece, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Norway, the Republic of Korea, Slovenia, Switzerland, Turkey, and the United Kingdom are excluded from this figure because data on expenditures were unavailable for either 2005 or 2016. Includes both government and private expenditures. Data adjusted to U.S. dollars using the purchasing power parity (PPP) index. Constant dollars based on national Consumer Price Indexes, available on the OECD database cited in the SOURCE note below. Some data have been revised from previously published figures. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Online Education Database, retrieved November 20, 2019, from <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, table 605.10.

In 2016, the average of OECD countries' expenditures per FTE student at the postsecondary level was \$16,200, compared with \$12,700 in 2005. Of the 24 OECD countries with data available in both years, expenditures per FTE student at the postsecondary level were higher in 2016 than in 2005 in 18 countries, including the United States. In the United States, expenditures per FTE student at the postsecondary level were 4 percent higher in 2016 (\$31,600) than in 2005 (\$30,400). Of the 18 countries with expenditures per FTE student that were higher in 2016 than in 2005, the percentage increase in

expenditures per FTE student at the postsecondary level ranged from a low of 4 percent in the United States to a high of 138 percent in Estonia. While the United States had the smallest percentage increase in expenditures per FTE student at the postsecondary level between 2005 and 2016, it had the highest expenditures per FTE student in both 2005 and 2016 among the OECD countries reporting data in both years. Six countries (Mexico, Iceland, Australia, Israel, Chile, and Portugal) had expenditures per FTE student at the postsecondary level that were lower in 2016 than in 2005.

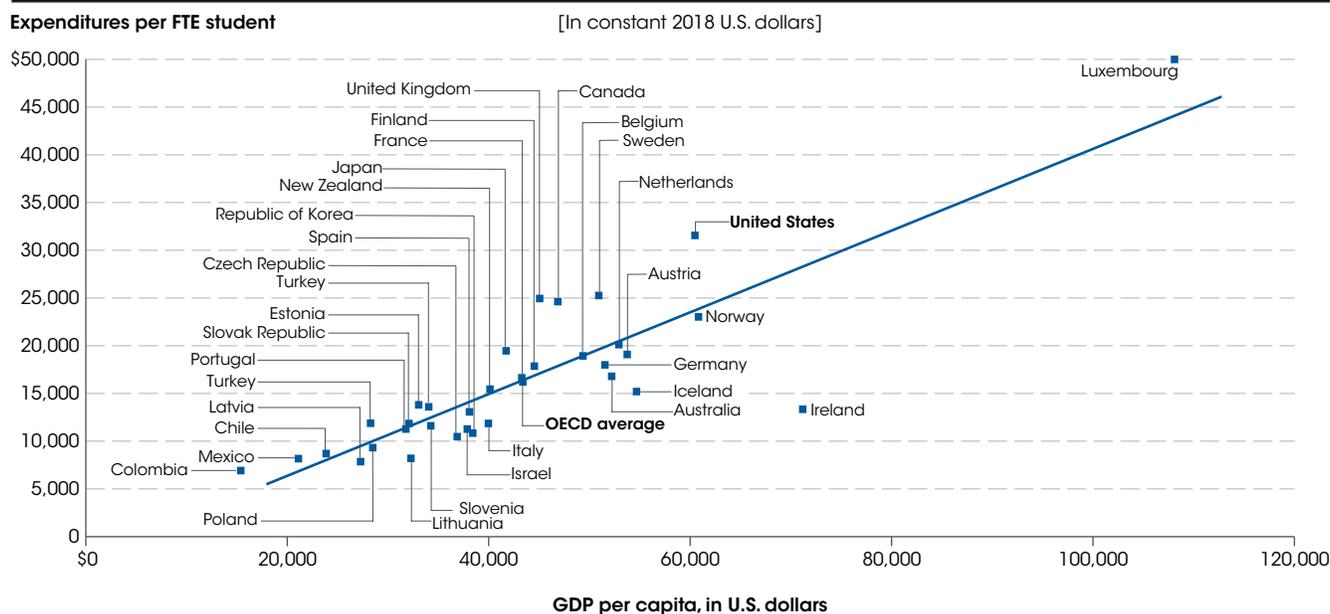
Figure 3. Expenditures per full-time-equivalent (FTE) student for elementary and secondary education in selected Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, by gross domestic product (GDP) per capita: 2016



A country's wealth (defined as GDP per capita) is positively associated with its education expenditures per FTE student at the elementary/secondary and postsecondary levels. In 2016, of the 15 countries with a GDP per capita greater than the average of OECD countries that also reported data for elementary/secondary education expenditures per FTE student, 14 countries had elementary/secondary education expenditures per FTE student that were higher than the average of OECD countries. These 14 countries were Luxembourg, Switzerland, Norway, the United States, Iceland, Austria, the Netherlands, Australia, Germany, Sweden, Belgium, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Finland. The exception was Ireland, which had lower elementary/secondary expenditures per FTE student than the average of OECD countries (\$9,100 vs. \$9,800).

Of the 21 countries with a GDP per capita lower than the average of OECD countries that also reported data for elementary/secondary education expenditures per FTE student, 17 countries also had elementary/secondary education expenditures per FTE student that were lower than the average of OECD countries in 2016. These 17 countries were Italy, Spain, Israel, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Turkey, Estonia, Lithuania, the Slovak Republic, Portugal, Poland, Hungary, Greece, Latvia, Chile, Mexico, and Colombia. The exceptions were New Zealand, France, Japan, and the Republic of Korea, which had expenditures per FTE student at the elementary/secondary level that were higher than the average for OECD countries.

Figure 4. Expenditures per full-time-equivalent (FTE) student for postsecondary education in selected Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, by gross domestic product (GDP) per capita: 2016



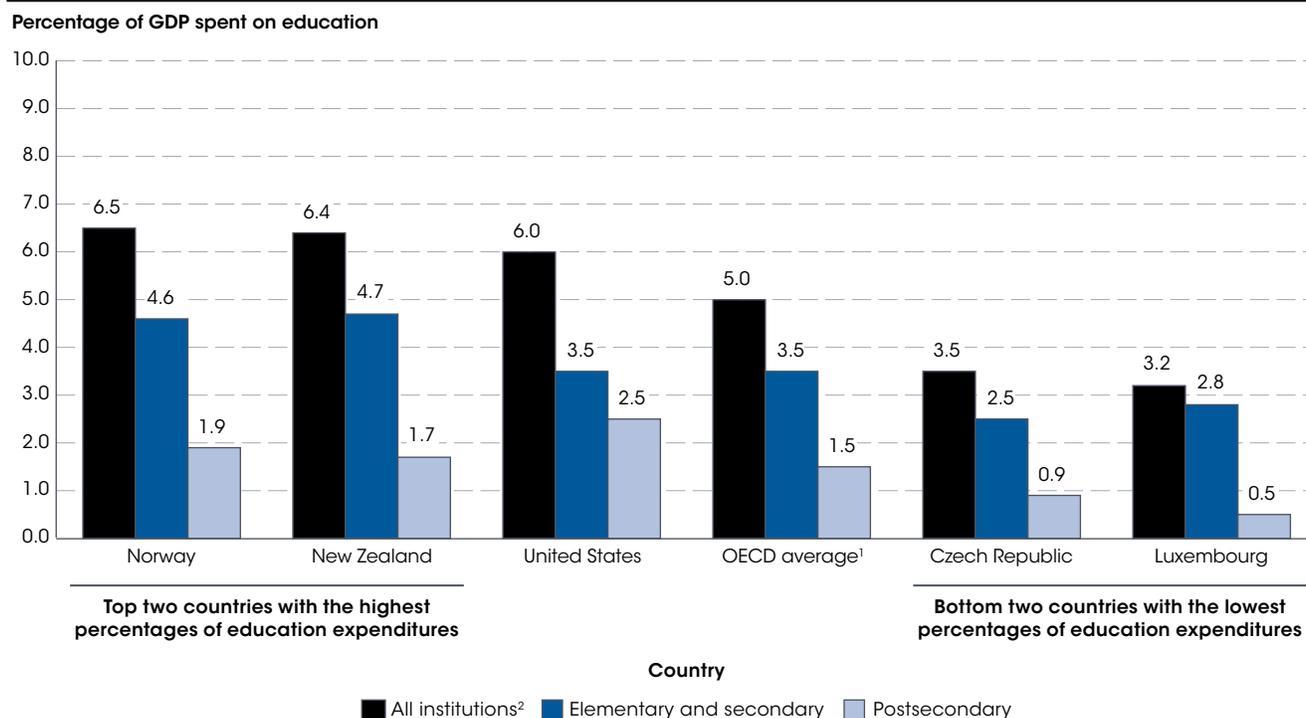
NOTE: Denmark, Greece, and Switzerland are excluded from this figure because data on expenditures were not available in 2016. Includes both government and private expenditures. GDP per capita data are estimated or provisional for Mexico and Spain. Data on expenditures for Japan and Portugal include International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) level 4 (postsecondary non-higher education). Data adjusted to U.S. dollars using the purchasing power parity (PPP) index. Constant dollars based on national Consumer Price Indexes, available on the OECD database cited in the SOURCE note below. "OECD average" refers to the mean of the data values for all reporting Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, to which each country reporting data contributes equally. The average includes all current OECD countries for which a given year's data are available, even if they were not members of OECD in that year.

SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Online Education Database, retrieved November 20, 2019, from <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, table 605.10.

At the postsecondary level in 2016, of the 14 countries with a GDP per capita that was higher than the average of OECD countries that also reported data for postsecondary education expenditures per FTE student, 12 also had postsecondary education expenditures per FTE student that were higher than the average of OECD countries. The two exceptions were Ireland and Iceland, both of which had lower expenditures per FTE student at the postsecondary level (\$13,300 and \$15,200, respectively) than the average of OECD countries (\$16,200). Of the

20 countries with a lower GDP per capita than the average of OECD countries that also reported data for postsecondary education expenditures per FTE student, 18 countries had education expenditures per FTE student that were lower than the average of OECD countries at the postsecondary level. The two exceptions were Japan and France; both countries reported higher postsecondary expenditures per FTE student (\$38,000 and \$41,000, respectively) than the average of OECD countries.

Figure 5. Government and private expenditures on education institutions as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) for Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries with the two highest and lowest percentages of expenditures for all institutions, by level of education: 2016



¹ Refers to the mean of the data values for all reporting Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, to which each country reporting data contributes equally. The average includes all current OECD countries for which a given year's data are available, even if they were not members of OECD in that year.

² Includes expenditures that could not be reported by level of education.

NOTE: Expenditures for International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) level 4 (postsecondary non-higher education) are included in elementary and secondary education. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Online Education Database, retrieved October 14, 2019, from <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, table 605.20.

Among the 35 OECD countries reporting data in 2016, there were 19 countries that spent a higher percentage of GDP on total government and private expenditures on education institutions than the average of OECD countries. Norway reported the highest total education expenditures as a percentage of GDP (6.5 percent), followed by New Zealand (6.4 percent), Colombia (6.2 percent), the United Kingdom (6.2 percent), Chile (6.1 percent), and the United States (6.0 percent). Conversely, 16 countries spent a percentage of GDP on total education expenditures that was lower than the average of OECD countries. Luxembourg reported the lowest total education expenditures as a percentage of GDP (3.2 percent), followed by the Czech Republic and Ireland (both 3.5 percent) and Lithuania and Italy (both 3.6 percent).

At the elementary/secondary level, the percentage of GDP that the United States spent on total government and private expenditures in 2016 (3.5 percent) was nearly

the same as the average of OECD countries. Nineteen other countries also spent a percentage of GDP on elementary/secondary education that was greater than or equal to the average of OECD countries. Seven of these 20 total countries spent 4.0 percent or more of GDP on elementary/secondary education. In contrast, 15 countries spent a percentage of GDP on elementary/secondary education that was less than the average of OECD countries.

At the postsecondary level, the percentage of GDP that the United States spent on total government and private expenditures (2.5 percent) was higher than the average of OECD countries (1.5 percent) and higher than the percentages of all other OECD countries reporting data, except for Chile (also 2.5 percent). In addition to the United States and Chile, only two other countries spent 2.0 percent or more of GDP on postsecondary education: Canada (2.3 percent) and Colombia (2.2 percent).

Endnotes:

¹ National Consumer Price Indexes are available at the OECD Online Education Database (<https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>).

² Denmark is excluded from all analyses on expenditures on public and private education institutions per FTE student because expenditure data at the elementary/secondary and postsecondary levels were not available in 2016. Greece and Switzerland are excluded from analyses of expenditures per FTE student at the postsecondary level because 2016 expenditure data were not available for this level.

³ Throughout this indicator, the “average of OECD countries” refers to the simple average of the individual country values for all reporting OECD countries, to which each country reporting data contributes equally. The average includes all current OECD countries for which a given year’s data are available, even if they were not members of the OECD in that year. Countries excluded from analyses in this indicator may be included in the OECD average.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, tables 605.10 and 605.20

Related indicators and resources: [International Educational Attainment](#); [Public School Expenditures](#)

Glossary: Constant dollars; Consumer Price Index (CPI); Elementary school; Expenditures per pupil; Full-time-equivalent (FTE) enrollment; Gross domestic product (GDP); International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED); Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); Postsecondary education; Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) indexes; Secondary school