Education at a Glance 2026 – Country Notes: Netherlands

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Netherlands

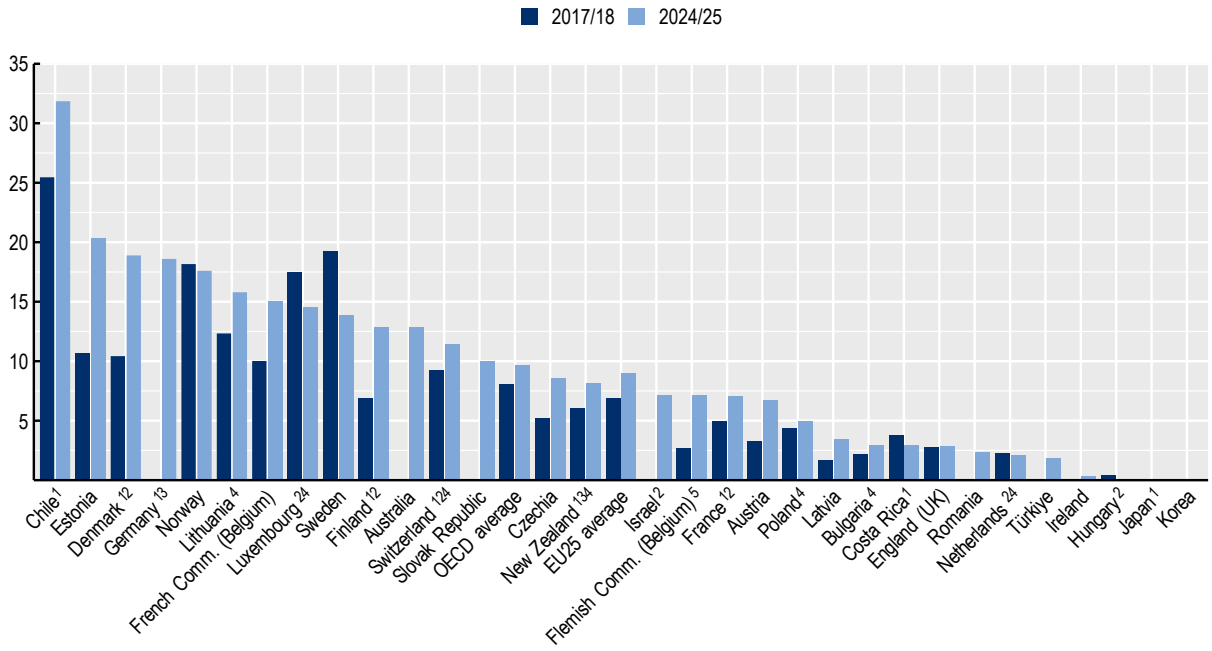
This country note provides an overview of the key characteristics of the education system in the Netherlands based on data from *Education at a Glance 2026*. In line with this year's thematic focus, it emphasises teacher shortages while also covering other parts of the education system. The data in this note are provided for the latest available year. Readers interested in the reference years for the data should refer to the corresponding tables in *Education at a Glance 2026*.

Teacher shortages

- **[t001]** Shortages of skilled workers have affected many sectors across the OECD in recent years, and the teaching profession is no exception. Teacher shortages manifest in different ways across education systems: in some countries, a lack of fully qualified teachers is reflected in a higher share of non-fully qualified staff, while in others a significant number of teaching positions remain unfilled.
- **[t002]** In the Netherlands, 2% of all primary and secondary teachers in public institutions were not fully qualified in 2024/25, below the OECD average of 9.6% [Figure 1.].
- **[t003]** Countries use two main approaches to measuring teacher shortages. The first approach estimates shortages before or at the start of the school year based on projected recruitment needs. The second approach measures shortages by counting the number of positions that remain vacant at the start of the school year or shortly after it begins. The Netherlands uses the second approach, and 2% of all teaching positions in public secondary education were unfilled at or shortly before the start of the 2024/25 school year [Table 2.].

[t002F] . Trends in the share of non-fully qualified teachers in primary and secondary education (2017/18 and 2024/25)

In per cent, full-time equivalents, public institutions



1. Reference year differs from 2024/25: academic year 2022/23 for Austria, academic year 2023/24 for Denmark, Finland, France , Germany, Japan, and Switzerland; calendar year 2024 for Chile and Costa Rica; calendar year 2025 for New Zealand.
2. Pre-primary and primary education are combined in France, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. Upper secondary education is excluded in Denmark, Israel and Switzerland. Upper secondary vocational education is excluded in Finland, Hungary and the Netherlands.
3. Teacher data are based on headcounts instead of full-time equivalents.
4. Reference year differs from 2017/18: academic year 2018/19 for Bulgaria, the Netherlands, and Switzerland; and 2019/20 for Luxembourg and Poland; calendar year 2020 for New Zealand.
5. Including government-dependent private institutions.
For data, see OECD (2026) *Education at a Glance 2026: OECD Indicators*, https://doi.org/UPDATE-ME, Figure 1 and Table 1.

- **[t005]** Recruiting second-career teachers is a common strategy for addressing teacher shortages and helps to diversify the profile of the teaching workforce. On average across the OECD, 8.4% of teachers are second-career teachers; in the Netherlands, they make up 16.9% of all teachers [Figure 2.].
- **[t006]** The attractiveness of the teaching profession depends on a variety of factors, including working conditions and salaries. On average across the OECD, teachers in primary, secondary and vocational education report working 40.8 hours per week in 2023, compared with 41.5 hours for other workers holding a bachelor's or master's qualification. In the Netherlands, these teachers report working 37.1 hours per week on average, while other workers with a bachelor's or master's qualification report working 38.9 hours per week.
- [Table 6.].
- **[t007]** On average across the OECD, a large majority of teachers (68.4%) are satisfied with their employment conditions. In contrast, the share of teachers who are satisfied with their salaries is much lower at 38.7% on average. In the Netherlands, the picture is similar, with 79.7% of teachers being satisfied with their terms of employment and 74.1% satisfied with their salaries [Figure 12.].

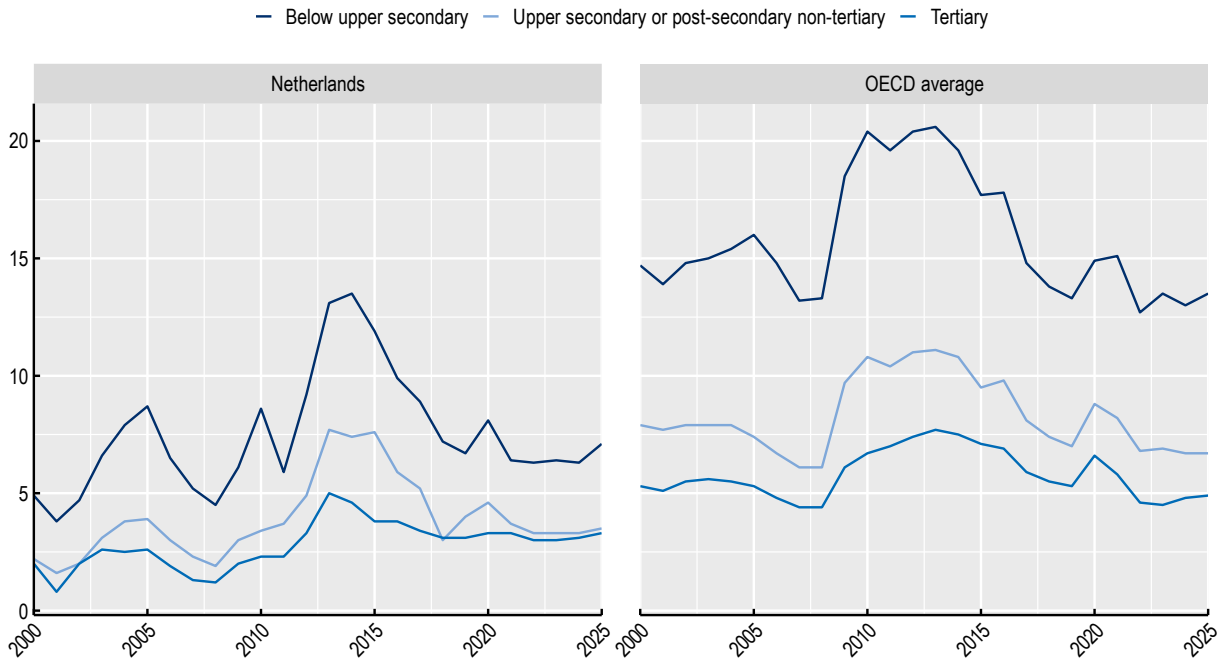
- **[t008]** Teachers tend to be older than other workers. On average across countries with available data, 25% of secondary teachers are aged 55 and over, compared to 19% of employed individuals holding at least a master's degree and 21% of the overall employed population. The Netherlands does not follow this pattern: 25% of secondary teachers are aged 55 and over, compared to 28% of employed individuals holding at least a master's degree and 26% of the overall employed population [Figure 10.].
- **[t009]** High teacher turnover can indicate dissatisfaction with the profession, but the number of teachers in public institutions who leave the profession is also shaped by factors such as the age structure of the workforce, labour-market conditions and the professional culture of a country. In the Netherlands, 6.9% of primary and secondary teachers left the profession (through retirement or resignation) in 2024/25, compared with an OECD average of 6.6% [Figure 8.].
- **[t010]** The number of teachers a system needs is not determined by student numbers alone. On average across the OECD, the number of teachers in public and private primary schools rose by 13% between 2015 and 2024, even though the number of primary students rose by only 2% over the same period, a divergence driven by policy choices around class sizes, teachers' working hours and instruction time. In the Netherlands, the number of primary teachers decreased by 5% over this period, while the number of students decreased by 6%. Looking ahead, the number of children aged 5-14 in the Netherlands is projected to increase by 1% between 2024 and 2033, pointing to broadly stable demand for teachers if other policies remain unchanged [Figure 14. and Figure 15.].

The output of educational institutions and the impact of learning

- **[a001]** Educational attainment remains at an all-time high in 2025 as more people obtain advanced qualifications. Across the OECD, 43% of working-age adults (25-64 year-olds) have a tertiary qualification, while the share of adults with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment is slightly lower at 39%. In The Netherlands, the share of adults with tertiary attainment is above the OECD average at 46%, while the share of adults with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment is below the OECD average at 36% [Table A1.1.].
- **[a002]** The share of young adults without upper secondary attainment continues to decline across the OECD, standing at 12% in 2025. This trend is also apparent in the Netherlands, where the share decreased from 14% to 10% between 2015 and 2025. In parallel, the share of young adults with upper secondary attainment also declined from 41% to 39% on average across the OECD, while it decreased from 40% to 34% in the Netherlands [Table A1.2.].
- **[a003]** As more young adults obtain a tertiary qualification, the share of individuals whose highest qualification is upper secondary with a vocational orientation is decreasing in almost all OECD countries. This is also the case in the Netherlands, where 30% of all 55-64 year-olds have upper secondary vocational attainment in 2025, compared to 27% of all 25-34 year-olds. [Table A1.3.].
- **[a004]** Youth and young adults who are neither employed nor in education or training (NEET) are a key policy concern, as prolonged periods of inactivity at a young age can have lasting negative effects on socio-economic outcomes later in life. In the Netherlands, 6% of all 18-24 year-olds were NEET in 2025, down from 7% in 2015. For comparison, the average share of NEETs across the OECD was 14% in 2025 and 16% in 2015. [Table A2.2.].
- **[a005]** There are growing concerns that artificial intelligence (AI) is leading to rising unemployment, especially among recent tertiary graduates. In the Netherlands, the unemployment rate among tertiary-educated young adults increased from 3% in 2023 to 3.3% in 2025. The corresponding rates across the OECD were 4.5% on average in 2023 and 4.9% in 2025. [Figure A3.1.].

[a005F] . Trends in OECD average unemployment rates of young adults, by educational attainment level (2000 to 2025)

In per cent of 25-34 year-olds in the labour force



For data, see OECD (2026) *Education at a Glance 2026: OECD Indicators*, https://doi.org/UPDATE-ME, Figure A3.1.

- **[a006]** The labour-market significance of advanced qualifications is also reflected in earnings. In almost every OECD country, workers without a tertiary qualification have earnings below the national average. In the Netherlands, workers with general upper secondary attainment earn 5% less than the national average, those with vocational upper secondary attainment earn 16% less and those with below upper secondary attainment earn 27% less. The corresponding wage gaps on average across the OECD are 13% for general upper secondary attainment, 17% for vocational upper secondary attainment and 31% for below upper secondary attainment [Figure A4.1.].
- **[a007]** As the demand for skills in the labour market changes, participation in lifelong learning is essential for all adults. Younger adults (aged 25-44) are more likely to participate in non-formal education or training than older adults (aged 45-64), but differences between the age groups are often small. In the Netherlands, 64% of 25-44 year-olds had participated in non-formal education or training over the last 12 months, compared to 55% of 45-64 year-olds. Across the OECD, average participation rates are 52% among 25-44 year-olds and 45% among 45-64 year-olds [Figure A5.2.].
- **[a008]** Better-educated workers are much more likely to be in jobs where they can work from home in most countries. In the Netherlands, 81% of tertiary-educated workers sometimes or usually work from home compared to 46% of workers with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment [Figure A6.3.].

Access to education, participation and progression

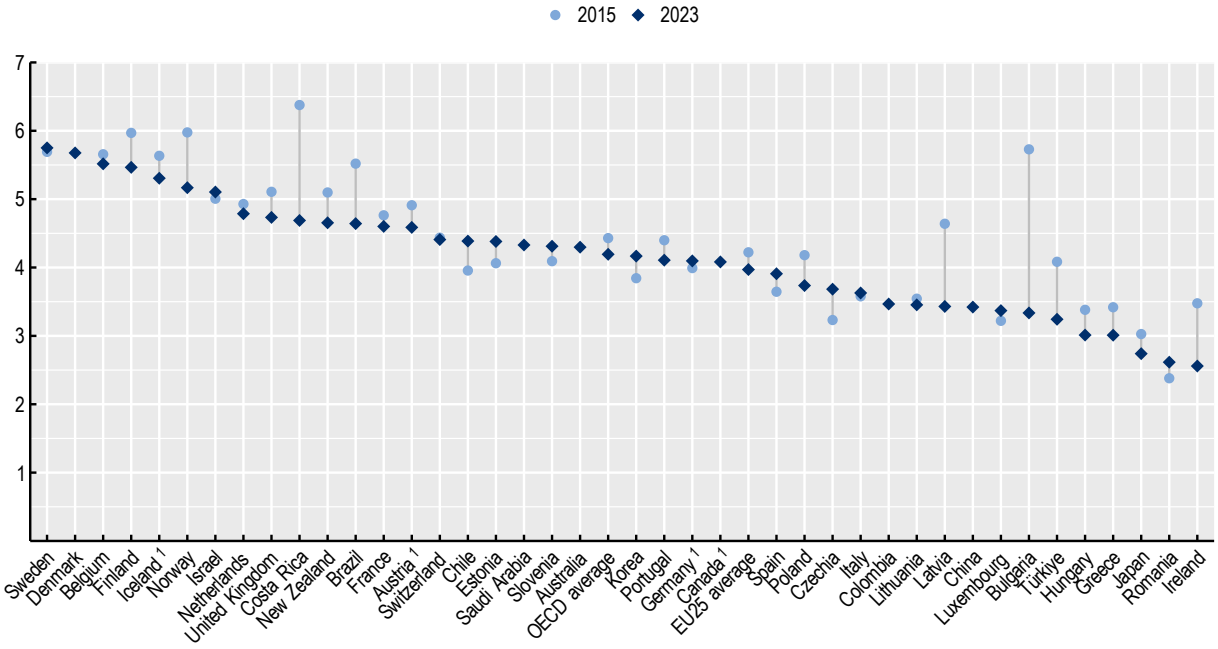
- **[b001]** Participation in early childhood education and care (ECEC) is common among children from the age of 3 in all OECD countries. In the Netherlands, 94% of children between the age of 3 and the starting age of compulsory primary education (age 6 in the Netherlands) were enrolled in ECEC in 2024, higher than the OECD average of 90% [Figure B1.1.]. In addition, 88% of 2 year old children in the Netherlands are enrolled in ECEC services outside the scope of ISCED, such as programmes that primarily provide care [Table B1.1.].
- **[b002]** The number of primary and secondary schools – and thus their geographical proximity to students – varies across countries. Many countries have more primary than lower secondary schools, reflecting the desire to provide education close to primary students' homes while offering secondary students the greater choice of specialist subjects that can only be provided by larger schools. In the Netherlands, there are 5 primary schools for each lower secondary school, well above the OECD average of 2 [Figure B2.4.].
- **[b003]** In most countries, there is no strong alignment between trends in the number of students and trends in the number of schools. In the Netherlands, the number of lower secondary students decreased by 0.3% annually between 2015 and 2024, while the number of schools decreased by 0.39% annually over the same period. On average across the OECD, the number of students increased by 0.95%, while the number of schools decreased by 0.11% [Figure B2.1.].
- **[b007]** At tertiary level, most OECD countries host a larger number of international students than they send abroad. On average across the OECD, outbound internationally mobile students account for 6% of all national students (whether enrolled domestically or abroad), while inbound students account for 12% of all students enrolled domestically in 2024. The top three destination countries for outbound students in the Netherlands are Belgium, the United States and the United Kingdom, while the top three origin countries of inbound students are Germany, Italy and Romania [Table B4.3.].

Financial resources invested in education

- **[c001]** Most investment in education comes from public sources. On average across the OECD, government expenditure on education corresponded to 4% of GDP in 2023, while private expenditure corresponded to 0.6%. In the Netherlands, government expenditure equals 4.3% of GDP, while private expenditure equals 0.7%. [Table C1.8 (web only).].
- **[c002]** In OECD countries with available data for both years, average government expenditure on education has decreased slightly from 4.4% of GDP in 2015 to 4.2% in 2023. Over the same period, it decreased from 4.9% to 4.8% in the Netherlands, thus mirroring the trend of declining government expenditure [Figure C1.2.].

[c002F] . Trends in government expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP (2015 and 2023)

Total expenditure on education (inside and outside of educational institutions); primary to tertiary education



1. Data include or exclude some categories, please refer to the source table for more information.
For data, see OECD (2026) *Education at a Glance 2026: OECD Indicators*, https://doi.org/UPDATE-ME, Figure C1.2 and Table C1.7 (web only).

- **[c003]** Government expenditure as share of GDP varies by a factor of approximately two across OECD countries (ranging from 2.4% to 5.2%), while government expenditure per student varies by a factor of ten (from USD 3 398 to USD 32 832 adjusted for purchasing power parity) as differences in income levels mean nominal expenditure tends to vary more than relative expenditure. On average across the OECD, expenditure per student from primary to tertiary education was USD 13 561 in 2023, while in the Netherlands it was USD 16 949 [Table C1.4. and Table C1.1., column 11].
- **[c004]** In early childhood education, government expenditure per child has grown substantially between 2015 and 2023 in many OECD countries. This was also the case in the Netherlands, where expenditure per child aged 3-5 in 2023 was USD 10 301 compared to USD 7 606 in 2015 [Table C2.3.].
- **[c005]** Government expenditure on education tends to rise with the level of education. In primary education, expenditure per student was USD 15 708 in 2023 in the Netherlands and USD 12 893 on average across the OECD. In lower secondary education, it was USD 19 427 in the Netherlands and USD 14 275 on average across the OECD. Thus, the Netherlands is among the majority of OECD countries where expenditure is higher at lower secondary level than at primary level [Table C3.1.].
- **[c006]** Expenditure can be divided into capital and current expenditure: the former finances investment in assets such as infrastructure, while the latter covers regular operating costs. Current expenditure can be further broken down into staff compensation and other current expenditure, such as purchases of goods and services and routine maintenance. In the Netherlands, 79% of current expenditure in primary educational institutions is dedicated to staff compensation compared

to 79% on average across the OECD, while the remainder is dedicated to other current expenditure [Figure C3.3.].

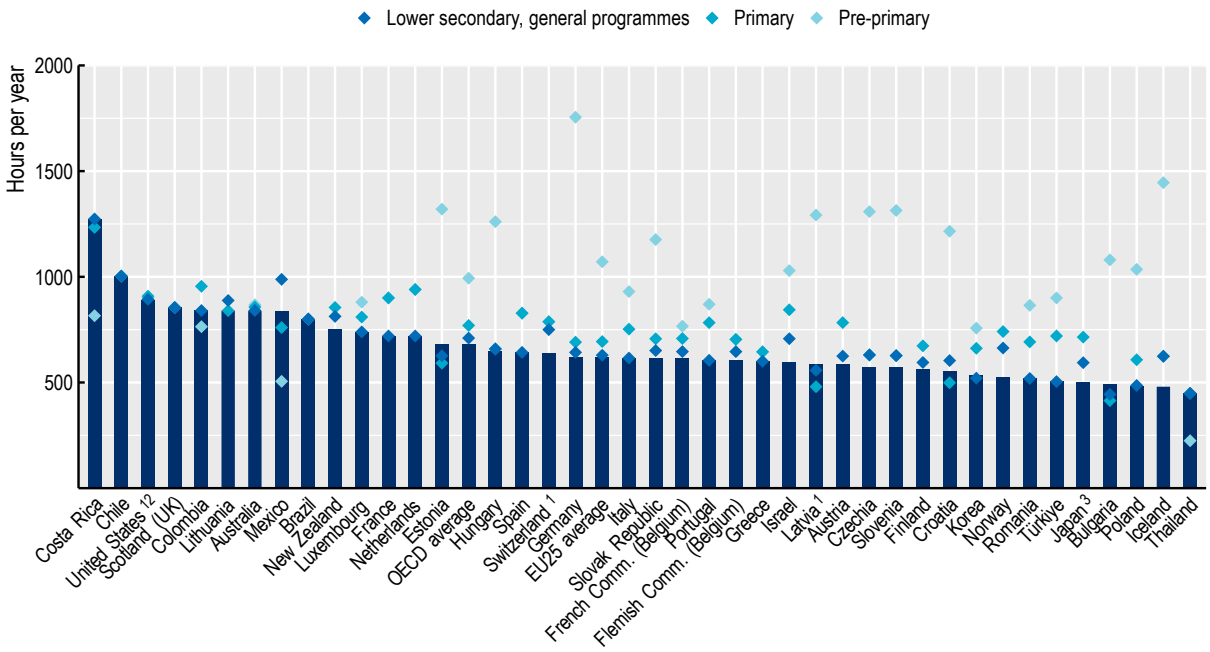
- **[c007]** At upper secondary level, government expenditure per student can differ substantially between general and vocational programmes. Vocational programmes are often more expensive than general programmes due to the need for specialised technical equipment, while at the same time, private contributions, for example from firms, cover a larger share of overall costs in some countries. In the Netherlands, expenditure per student is USD 17 102 in general upper secondary programmes and USD 12 572 in vocational upper secondary programmes, compared to the OECD average of USD 12 386 in general programmes and USD 13 812 in vocational ones [Table C4.1.].
- **[c008]** Government expenditure per student is the highest at tertiary level despite being the level where government expenditure accounts for the smallest share of total expenditure on average across the OECD. The Netherlands is among the countries where government expenditure constitutes a larger share of total expenditure compared to the OECD average. Government expenditure per student was USD 19 413 in 2023, corresponding to 72% of total expenditure on tertiary education (exluding short-cycle tertiary). In comparison, average government expenditure per student across the OECD was USD 16 405, amounting to 68% of total expenditure [Table C5.1., columns 6 and 18].

Teachers, the learning environment and the organisation of schools

- **[d001]** As discussed above, most countries have increased their investment in pre-primary education in recent years. This is also reflected in the ratio of children to teachers. Across the OECD, the number of children in pre-primary education decreased slightly by 4% between 2015 and 2024 while the number of teachers increased by 15%, resulting in a reduction in the ratio of children to teachers of 11%. In contrast, in the Netherlands, the number of children decreased by 4%, while the number of teachers also decreased by 3%, resulting in a decrease of the child-to-teacher ratio of 2% [Data for chart D2.1.].
- **[d002]** In most countries, salaries of teachers are lower than the salaries of other educated workers, especially for teachers at lower levels of education. This is also the case in the Netherlands, where pre-primary teachers earned on average 17% less than other tertiary-educated workers, while lower secondary teachers earned on average 10% less than other tertiary-educated workers [Table D3.2.].
- **[d003]** On average across the OECD, pre-primary teachers teach 994 hours per year compared to 710 hours per year in lower secondary education. In the Netherlands, annual teaching hours are 940 in pre-primary education and 720 in lower secondary education. Thus, the Netherlands is among the large majority of countries where teachers in lower secondary education have to teach fewer hours than those in pre-primary education, although the difference is smaller than average [Table D4.1.].

[d003F] . Teaching time of teachers, by level of education (2025)

Net statutory teaching time in hours per year, in public institutions



Note: Please refer to the source table for information on whether the data refer to typical, minimum or maximum hours.
1. Actual teaching time (in Latvia except for pre-primary level).
2. Reference year differs from 2023. Refer to the source table for details.
3. Average planned teaching time in each school at the beginning of the school year.
For data, see OECD (2026) *Education at a Glance 2026: OECD Indicators*, https://doi.org/UPDATE-ME, Figure D4.1 and Table D4.1.

- **[d004]** Women form the majority of teachers at all levels of education except tertiary. Teachers in pre-primary education are almost entirely women with 96% of teachers being female on average across the OECD. The share of women among pre-primary teachers in the Netherlands is slightly lower at 88%. At 56%, the share of female teachers in lower secondary education is lower, and it is below the OECD average of 68% [Table D5.1.].
- **[d005]** Across the OECD, women are more strongly represented among teachers than among school management staff. In primary education, women in the Netherlands accounted for 87% of teachers and 68% of school management staff in 2024, a gap of 19 percentage points. This gap was larger than the OECD average of 15 percentage points [Figure D5.3.].
- **[d007]** Appraisals of schools are more widespread than those of teachers, with school inspections being used in 24 out of 28 countries and economies with available data. The Netherlands is among the majority of countries with a mandatory appraisal mechanism at primary or lower secondary levels [Figure D6.1.].

More information

For more information on Education at a Glance 2026 and to access the full set of indicators, see: https://doi.org/UPDATE-ME.

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 2026: Sources, Methodologies and Technical Notes, https://doi.org/UPDATE-ME.

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/ 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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