

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Educational attainment is a commonly used proxy for the stock of human capital – say, the skills available in the population and the labour force. As globalisation and technology continue to re-shape the needs of labour markets worldwide, the demand for individuals with a broader knowledge base and more specialised skills, e.g. advanced analytical capacities, and complex communication skills, continues to rise. As a result, more individuals are pursuing higher levels of education now than in previous generations, leading to significant shifts in attainment levels over time within countries.

Definition

Educational attainment refers to the highest level of education completed by a person, shown as a percentage of all persons in that age group. Below upper secondary education includes early childhood education, primary education or lower secondary education. Programmes at the lower secondary education level are designed to lay the foundation across a wide range of subjects. Programmes at the upper secondary level are more specialised and offer students more choices and diverse pathways for completing their secondary education. Tertiary education includes short-cycle tertiary education, bachelor's, master's, or doctoral or equivalent levels.

Overview

An indication of long-term trends in educational attainment can be obtained by comparing the current attainment levels of younger and older adults. Tertiary attainment levels have increased considerably over the past 30 years. On average across OECD countries, 41% of 25-34 year-olds have a tertiary attainment, compared with 25% of 55-64 year-olds. Canada, Korea and Russia lead in the proportion of young adults (25-34 year-olds) with a tertiary attainment, with 55% or more having reached this level of education. In Ireland, Korea and Poland, there is a difference of 25 percentage points or more between the proportion of young adults and older adults who have attained this level of education.

In 2014, over 30% of the population aged between 25 and 64 has attained tertiary level education in more than half of the OECD countries. On average across OECD countries, 24% of adults now have only primary or lower secondary levels of education, 43% have upper secondary education and 34% have a tertiary qualification.

Comparability

The *International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011)* is used to define the levels of education in a comparable way across countries. The *ISCED 2011 Operational Manual: Guidelines for Classifying National Education Programmes and Related Qualifications* describes ISCED 2011 education programmes and attainment levels and examples for each country.

Note that data for Brazil, Chile, France and Russia for 2014 refer to 2013 and for South Africa to year 2012. Data for Indonesia for 2014 refer to 2011 and data for 2010 refer to 2006. In the United Kingdom, data for upper secondary attainment include completion of a sufficient volume and standard of programmes that would be classified individually as completion of intermediate upper secondary programmes (18% of the adults are under this group).

Sources

- OECD (2015), *Education at a Glance*, OECD Publishing.

Further information

Analytical publications

- OECD (2016), *Trends Shaping Education*, OECD Publishing.
- OCDE (2015), *Reviews of National Policies for Education*, OECD Publishing.
- OECD (2012), *Let's Read Them a Story! The Parent Factor in Education*, PISA, OECD Publishing.

Statistical publications

- OECD (2014), *Highlights from Education at a Glance*, OECD Publishing.

Methodological publications

- OECD (2004), *OECD Handbook for Internationally Comparative Education Statistics: Concepts, Standards, Definitions and Classifications*, OECD Publishing.
- OECD/Eurostat/UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2015), *ISCED 2011 Operational Manual: Guidelines for Classifying National Education Programmes and Related Qualifications*, OECD Publishing.

Online databases

- OECD Education Statistics.

Websites

- OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI), www.oecd.org/edu/cei.
- OECD Education at a Glance (supplementary material), www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance-19991487.htm.



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Educational attainment

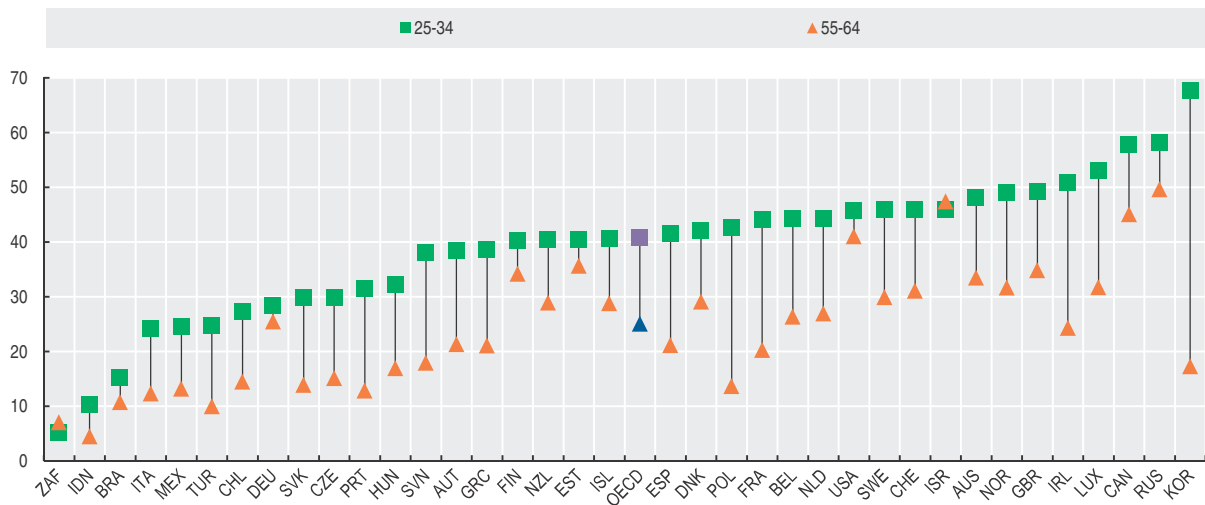
As a percentage of total population in that age group

	Population aged 25-34						Population aged 25-64					
	Below upper secondary		Upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary		Tertiary		Below upper secondary		Upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary		Tertiary	
	2000	2014	2000	2014	2000	2014	2000	2014	2000	2014	2000	2014
Australia	31.7	13.3	36.9	38.6	31.4	48.1	41.2	22.9	31.3	35.2	27.5	41.9
Austria	..	10.0	..	51.6	..	38.4	..	16.1	..	54.0	..	29.9
Belgium	24.7	17.7	39.3	38.0	36.0	44.2	41.5	26.4	31.4	36.7	27.1	36.9
Canada	11.7	7.4	39.9	34.9	48.4	57.7	19.3	10.0	40.6	36.4	40.1	53.6
Chile	..	20.0	..	52.7	..	27.3	..	38.6	..	40.3	..	21.1
Czech Republic	7.6	5.4	81.2	64.7	11.2	29.9	14.1	6.8	75.0	71.7	11.0	21.5
Denmark	13.1	17.8	57.6	40.0	29.3	42.1	20.2	20.4	54.0	43.8	25.8	35.8
Estonia	9.0	11.0	59.7	48.6	31.3	40.4	15.3	8.9	55.8	53.6	28.9	37.5
Finland	13.7	9.8	47.6	49.9	38.7	40.3	26.8	13.5	40.5	44.7	32.6	41.8
France	23.6	14.7	45.0	41.2	31.4	44.1	37.8	25.2	40.7	42.7	21.6	32.1
Germany	15.1	12.7	62.6	58.9	22.3	28.4	18.3	13.1	58.2	59.8	23.5	27.1
Greece	31.3	18.3	44.8	43.0	23.9	38.7	50.7	31.7	31.6	40.2	17.7	28.1
Hungary	18.7	13.0	66.6	54.9	14.7	32.1	30.8	16.9	55.2	59.7	14.0	23.4
Iceland	..	26.2	..	33.2	..	40.6	..	26.7	..	36.2	..	37.1
Ireland	27.0	9.9	43.2	39.3	29.8	50.8	42.7	21.2	35.7	37.8	21.6	41.0
Israel	..	9.2	..	44.8	..	46.0	..	14.6	..	36.8	..	48.5
Italy	43.6	26.2	46.0	49.7	10.4	24.2	57.9	40.7	32.7	42.4	9.4	16.9
Japan	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Korea	6.7	1.7	56.4	30.6	36.9	67.7	31.7	15.0	44.4	40.4	23.9	44.6
Luxembourg	31.8	13.1	45.3	33.9	22.9	52.9	39.1	18.0	42.6	36.0	18.3	45.9
Mexico	62.9	54.4	19.6	21.0	17.5	24.6	70.9	66.3	14.5	15.1	14.6	18.5
Netherlands	25.7	14.8	47.7	40.9	26.6	44.3	35.1	24.1	41.5	41.5	23.4	34.4
New Zealand	31.3	18.9	..	40.7	..	40.4	38.8	25.9	..	38.4	..	35.6
Norway	6.6	18.6	58.5	32.4	34.9	49.0	14.8	18.1	56.8	40.2	28.4	41.8
Poland	10.6	5.8	75.2	51.6	14.2	42.6	20.1	9.5	68.5	63.5	11.4	27.0
Portugal	68.2	35.3	18.9	33.2	12.9	31.4	80.6	56.7	10.5	21.6	8.8	21.7
Slovak Republic	6.3	7.5	82.5	62.6	11.2	29.8	16.2	9.2	73.4	70.5	10.4	20.4
Slovenia	14.6	6.1	66.1	55.8	19.3	38.1	25.2	14.3	59.1	57.1	15.7	28.6
Spain	44.6	34.4	21.3	24.1	34.1	41.5	61.7	43.4	15.7	21.9	22.6	34.7
Sweden	12.7	18.2	53.6	35.9	33.6	46.0	22.4	18.4	47.4	42.9	30.1	38.7
Switzerland	10.2	9.0	64.2	45.0	25.6	46.0	16.1	12.0	59.7	47.8	24.2	40.2
Turkey	72.3	50.5	18.9	24.7	8.9	24.8	76.7	64.4	14.9	18.9	8.3	16.7
United Kingdom	33.2	13.8	37.9	37.1	28.9	49.2	37.4	20.8	36.9	36.9	25.7	42.2
United States	11.8	10.0	50.1	44.3	38.1	45.7	12.6	10.4	50.9	45.3	36.5	44.2
EU 28	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
OECD	24.8	16.8	49.5	42.4	25.9	40.8	35.0	23.6	43.6	42.7	21.5	33.6
Brazil	..	39.2	..	45.5	..	15.3	..	53.6	..	32.7	..	13.7
China	93.9	..	6.1	..	..	..	95.4	..	4.6	..	..	..
India	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Indonesia	..	60.0	..	29.7	..	10.3	..	69.0	..	22.5	..	8.5
Russian Federation	..	5.2	..	36.6	..	58.2	..	5.3	..	40.4	..	54.3
South Africa	..	22.6	..	72.1	..	5.2	..	35.1	..	58.3	..	6.6

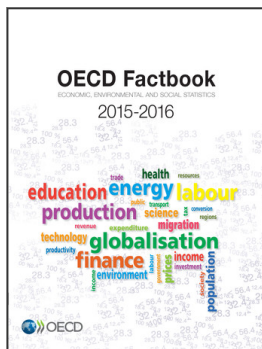
1 2 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933336678>

Population that has attained tertiary education

Percentage, 2014



1 2 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933335606>



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