

# Indicator A1. To what level have adults studied?

## Highlights

- Tertiary attainment has increased strongly in most OECD countries among 25-34 year-olds. The average share of younger adults with a tertiary degree has increased from 27% in 2000 to 48% in 2021. In this age group, the share of individuals with tertiary attainment is 7 percentage points higher than the share of individuals with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment on average across OECD countries. If current trends continue, a tertiary education will be the most common attainment among working-age adults on average across OECD countries within a few years.
- A gender gap in educational attainment is opening up among 25-34 year-olds. On average, 57% of younger adults with at least a bachelor's or equivalent degree are women, compared with a more balanced gender ratio among older adults (55-64 year-olds). Women make up at least half of all 25-34 year-olds with bachelor's, master's or doctoral or equivalent attainment in every OECD country except Japan.
- Within most countries there are large regional differences in educational attainment. Often, the tertiary attainment rate among 25-64 year-olds in the best-performing subnational region is twice that of the lowest. Urban regions tend to have much higher shares of tertiary-educated adults than rural ones, with the capital region (which is frequently home to a country's largest city) often having the highest concentration of adults with tertiary attainment.

## Context

Educational attainment measures the percentage of the population holding a formal qualification at a given level as their highest level of education. It is frequently used as a proxy measure for human capital, even if formal qualifications do not necessarily mean the holders have acquired the relevant skills in demand from employers. In many professions with nationally or professionally regulated admission (e.g. medical doctors), the achievement of certain formal qualifications is an essential entry requirement. But even in occupations where formal qualifications are not mandated, employers tend to perceive formal qualifications as the most important signals of the type of knowledge and skills that potential employees have acquired. They are especially important for recent graduates, but they often affect individuals' careers throughout their working lives.

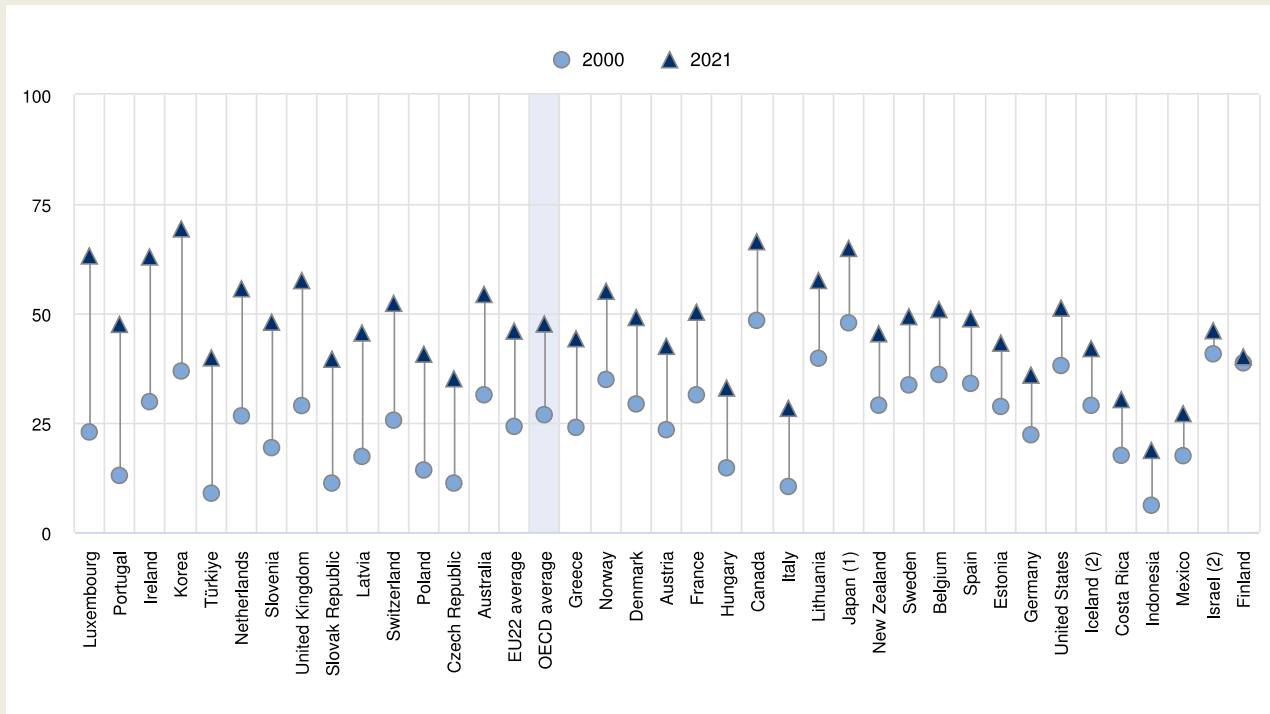
Higher levels of educational attainment are associated with positive economic, labour market and social outcomes for individuals (see Indicators A3, A4 and A6). Highly educated individuals tend to be more socially engaged and have higher employment rates and relative earnings. While educational attainment measures formal educational achievements and not learning outcomes, higher attainment is strongly correlated with greater proficiency in literacy and numeracy (OECD, 2016<sup>[1]</sup>).

The benefits of higher attainment offer strong incentives for individuals to pursue their education. At the same time, many governments have adopted policies to expand access to education because of the societal and economic benefits. Together, these have resulted in strong increases in educational attainment in OECD and partner countries in recent decades.

While increasing educational attainment has yielded important economic and social benefits, in some countries tertiary attainment may have risen faster than the labour markets' capacity to absorb tertiary graduates. Moreover, even if the increase in educational attainment is beneficial on average, tertiary attainment does not yield the same benefit to everyone. As educational attainment is likely to increase further, it is important for governments and providers to continuously improve the way tertiary education responds to current and future labour-market needs to provide attractive education options outside of the tertiary sector.

Figure A1.1. Trends in the share of tertiary-educated 25-34 year-olds (2000 and 2021)

In per cent



1. Data for tertiary education include upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary programmes (less than 5% of adults are in this group).

2. Year of reference differs from 2000: 2002 for Israel and 2003 for Iceland.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the difference in the share of tertiary-educated 25-34 year-olds between 2000 and 2021.

Source: OECD (2022), Education at a Glance Database, <http://stats.oecd.org/>. See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes ([https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2022\\_X3-A.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2022_X3-A.pdf)).

StatLink  <https://stat.link/j9wp23>

## Other findings

- Upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education remains the most common level of attainment in a number of European countries, where few young people (25-34 year-olds) leave the education system with below upper secondary attainment, but tertiary attainment rates are below the OECD average. In contrast, low upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment rates may reflect either high rates of below upper secondary attainment, such as in Costa Rica and Mexico, or very high rates of tertiary attainment, as in Canada and Korea.
- Although some countries have achieved near universal upper secondary education among 25-34 year-olds, across the OECD 14% of younger adults have still left school without an upper secondary qualification. Across OECD countries, this rate is especially high in Costa Rica and Mexico (about 45%) but also in Colombia (25%), Italy (23%), Spain (28%) and the Republic of Türkiye (36%).
- There are large differences among OECD countries in the prevalence of different fields of study among 25-64 year-olds with tertiary attainment. For example, on average across the OECD, 12% of tertiary-educated 25-64 year-olds had studied education, but the percentage ranges from 5% to around 20%. One might expect that the field of education prepares students to become teachers but this wide range among OECD countries suggests that the same field of study can prepare people for different career paths in different countries.

## Analysis

### ***Tertiary attainment***

Rising educational attainment is most strongly reflected in the increases in tertiary attainment rates over the past few decades. On average across OECD countries with available trend data, the share of 25-34 year-olds with a tertiary degree (i.e. short-cycle tertiary, bachelor's, master's or doctoral or equivalent) has increased from 27% in 2000 to 48% in 2021 (Figure A1.1). These increases mean a tertiary qualification has become the most common level of attainment among younger adults on average across OECD countries. If current trends continue, tertiary attainment will overtake upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment as the most common level of educational attainment among the entire working-age population in the near future as the current group of 25-34 year-olds age and younger cohorts with higher levels of tertiary attainment enter the workforce. Tertiary attainment is already becoming the norm among young adults in many OECD countries. In 14 OECD countries, more than half of all 25-34 year-olds have a tertiary degree, rising to at least two-thirds in Canada and Korea. Italy and Mexico are the only OECD countries where tertiary attainment among younger adults is below 30% (Table A1.2).

The trend of increasing tertiary attainment has persisted steadily throughout the last two decades. The average increase in tertiary attainment since 2011 closely matches the growth of the previous decade. However, at the country level, important differences exist. Whereas most of Korea's increase in tertiary attainment occurred in the early 2000s, the opposite is the case for Portugal and Türkiye, where tertiary attainment grew faster between 2011 and 2021 than between 2000 and 2011 (Figure A1.1 and Table A1.2).

Although the timing varies somewhat across countries, the increase in tertiary attainment has been a nearly universal trend. Countries that started with low tertiary attainment levels in 2000 have experienced strong growth. The share of tertiary-educated 25-34 year-olds quadrupled in Türkiye, from 9% in 2000 to 40% in 2021. Similarly, rates increased from 13% to 47% in Portugal and from 11% to 39% in the Slovak Republic over the same period. However, countries that had already high tertiary attainment levels in 2000, such as Ireland and Korea, have also experienced strong growth between 2000 and 2021: from 30% to 63% in Ireland and from 37% to 69% in Korea (Figure A1.1).

### *By fields of study*

Across the OECD, business, administration and law is the most common broad tertiary field of study. On average, 24% of the tertiary-educated 25-64 year-olds studied this field, followed by the arts or humanities, social sciences, journalism and information, at 18%. However, when taken together, the combined fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) are the most prevalent: in total, 25% of all 25-64 year-olds with tertiary attainment have studied a STEM field, with 16% having studied engineering, manufacturing and construction (Table A1.3).

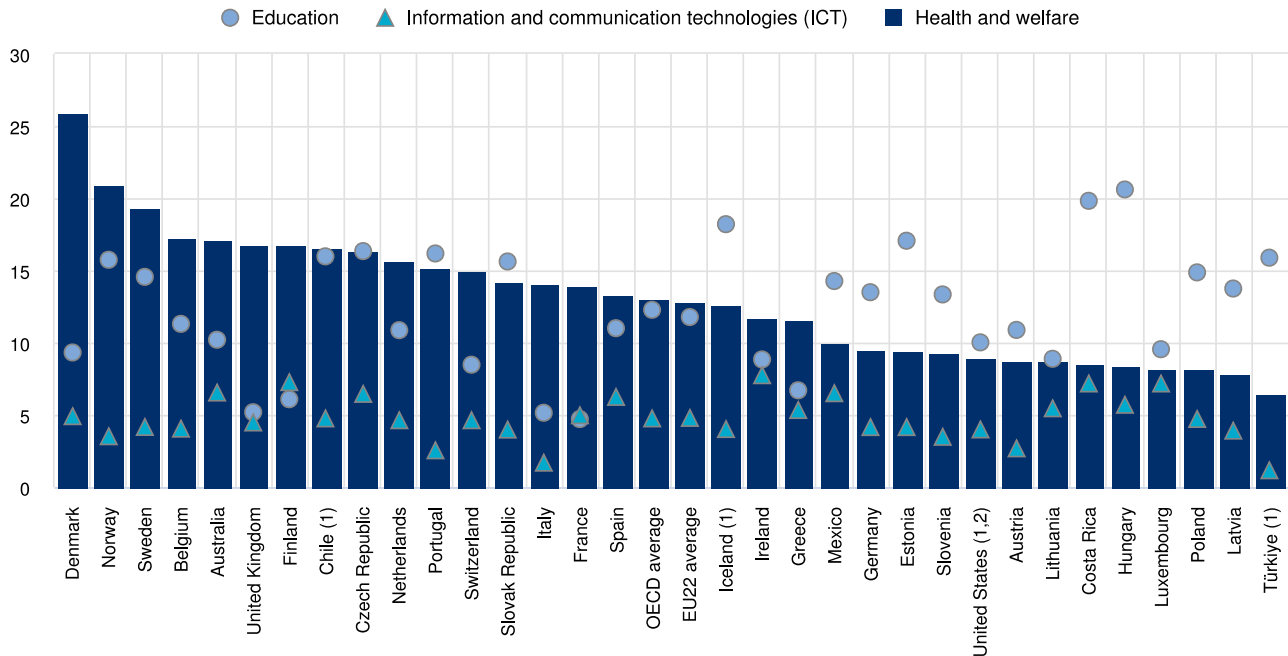
Overall OECD averages do not reflect the situation in most individual countries, however, as the popularity of different fields of study varies widely across countries. For example, 1% of the 25-64 year-olds with tertiary attainment studied natural sciences, mathematics and statistics in Chile and Costa Rica, compared to 10% in the United States. Likewise, 10% of tertiary-educated individuals studied engineering, manufacturing and construction in Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg and the United States, while the share is 25% or more in Austria and Germany (Table A1.3).

On average across OECD countries, 13% of the 25-64 year-olds have a tertiary qualification in the field of health and welfare. Three Nordic countries present the highest rates for this indicator: Denmark (26%), Norway (21%) and Sweden (19%) (Figure A1.2).

While some of these differences are due to differences in the economic structure of countries and the resulting differences in labour-market demand for skills, this cannot explain all the variation in the prevalence of different fields of study. For example, 5% of tertiary-educated adults had studied education in France, Italy and the United Kingdom, compared with 21% in Hungary (Table A1.3). One might think that the field of education prepares students to become a teacher but this large range among OECD countries suggests that the same field of study can prepare people for different career paths in different countries. Indirectly, it can also imply that the acquisition of subject knowledge constitutes only a small fraction of the value of tertiary attainment in the labour market, while the acquisition of other skills is more important.

**Figure A1.2. Field of study among tertiary-educated 25-64 year-olds (2021)**

Tertiary-educated adults who studied a given field as a percentage of all tertiary-educated adults




1. Year of reference differs from 2021. Refer to the source table for more details.

2. Data refer to bachelor's degree field, even for those with additional tertiary degrees.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the share of health and welfare graduates among all tertiary-educated 25-64 year-old adults.

Source: OECD (2022), Table A1.3. See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes ([https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2022\\_X3-A.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2022_X3-A.pdf)).

StatLink  <https://stat.link/ic4rsy>

### Upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment

As tertiary attainment has become more common across OECD countries, the share of the population with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education as their highest level of attainment has declined. However, this decline has been less pronounced than the increase in tertiary attainment because of a parallel shift from below upper secondary attainment. As more young people have obtained upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary qualifications, this has compensated in part for the increasing numbers who have stayed on in education to tertiary level. In 2021, on average 39% of the population aged 25-34 had an upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary qualification as their highest level of educational attainment, which is only 4 percentage points less than 10 years earlier (Table A1.2).

Upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education remains the most common attainment level in countries where few young people leave formal education with below upper secondary attainment, but tertiary attainment rates remain comparatively low. This is the case in the Czech Republic (58% of 25-34 year-olds had an upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment and 7% below upper secondary attainment) and a number of other European countries. In contrast, low levels of upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment are common both in countries with particularly low attainment levels as well as in those with particularly high ones. In Costa Rica and Mexico, for example, upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment is below 30% because a large share of the population only achieves below upper secondary attainment. In contrast, the share is also less than 30% in Canada and Korea, where at least two-thirds of 25-34 year-olds have obtained a tertiary qualification (Table A1.2).

### Below upper secondary attainment

Upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment has become essential for successful participation in a modern economy and society. Individuals without it struggle in the labour market and face worse social outcomes. While the share of younger adults with below upper secondary attainment has declined by 5 percentage points since 2011 on average across OECD countries, 14% still did not have an upper secondary education in 2021. It is highest in the OECD countries with the lowest per capita gross domestic product (GDP), Costa Rica (45%) and Mexico (44%). However, it is also high in some countries with significantly higher income levels, such as Italy (23 %) and Spain (28%). Among partner countries, Brazil is notable for having reduced its share of younger adults without upper secondary attainment from 43% in 2011 to 29% in 2021, despite an income level that is lower than that of any OECD country (Table A1.2).

Some countries have achieved near universal upper secondary attainment among younger adults. In Korea, only 2% of 25-34 year-olds have not attained at least an upper secondary education. Similarly, in Slovenia, the share is 4% and in Canada and Ireland it is 5% (Table A1.2). These numbers should encourage countries still struggling with higher rates of below secondary attainment among younger adults.

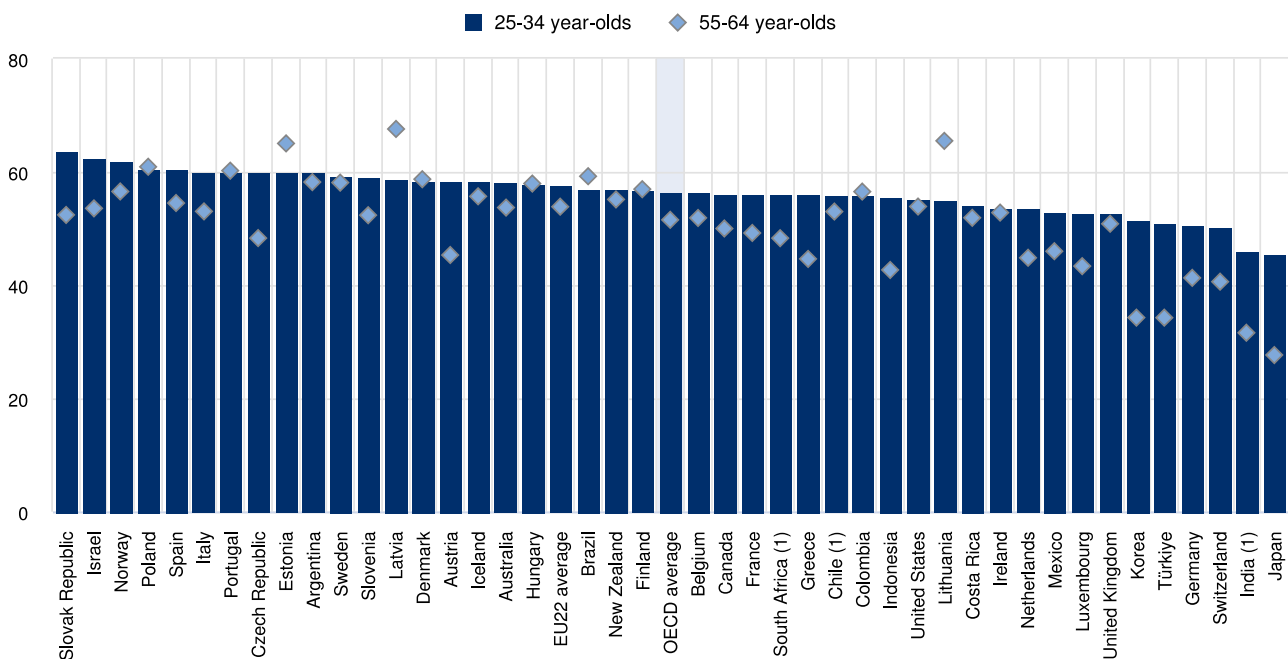
### Variations in educational attainment

#### By gender

On average across OECD countries, the share of younger women (25-34 year-olds) with tertiary education (i.e. short-cycle tertiary, bachelor's, master's or doctoral) is 53% compared with 41% for men (Table A1.2). If only master's and doctoral or equivalent attainment are considered, younger women still show a higher rate than younger men (OECD, 2022<sup>[2]</sup>).

**Figure A1.3. Share of women among adults with a bachelor's, master's, doctoral or equivalent degree, by age group (2021)**

In per cent



1. Year of reference differs from 2021. Refer to the source table for more details.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the share of women among 25-34 year-olds with a bachelor's, master's or doctoral or equivalent degree.

Source: OECD (2022), Education at a Glance Database, <http://stats.oecd.org/>. See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes ([https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2022\\_X3-A.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2022_X3-A.pdf)).

StatLink  <https://stat.link/cafz42>

While tertiary attainment is becoming more common for both men and women, the increase is particularly strong among women. As a consequence, women now make up a clear majority of 25-34 year-olds with a bachelor's, master's or doctoral or equivalent degree, at 57%. In contrast, gender ratios among 55-64 year-olds with tertiary attainment are nearly balanced, as 52% of adults in this group are women (Figure A1.3).

The increase in the share of women with at least a bachelor's or equivalent degree has been a prominent trend across most OECD countries. It has been particularly strong in OECD and partner countries where women are under-represented in older cohorts. This has led to gender ratios converging across countries. Countries with a smaller share of women among 55-64 year-olds with a bachelor's or equivalent degree have experienced a particularly strong intergenerational shift. In Türkiye, for example, only 34% of 55-64 year-olds who attained at least bachelor's or equivalent level of education are women while the share has increased to 51% among 25-34 year-olds. As a consequence of this convergence in gender ratios, women make up more than half of all 25-34 year-olds with bachelor's, master's or doctoral or equivalent attainment in every OECD country except Japan. Similar increases can also be observed in the India, where female tertiary attainment (excluding short-cycle tertiary) is nearly at parity with the male tertiary attainment rate among younger adults (Figure A1.3). The change in India is particularly important as this country accounts for approximately one-fifth of the global population.

Although the educational advantage of women has increased at the upper end of the attainment spectrum, it has remained stable at the lower end. In 2021, on average across OECD countries, 12% of women and 16% of men aged 25-34 had below upper secondary attainment. This gender gap is the same as it was in 2011, as the shares of both younger women and younger men without upper secondary attainment have each declined by 5 percentage points over the past 10 years. Men now make up a larger share of the population of younger adults with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment (Table A1.2).

### *By subnational region*

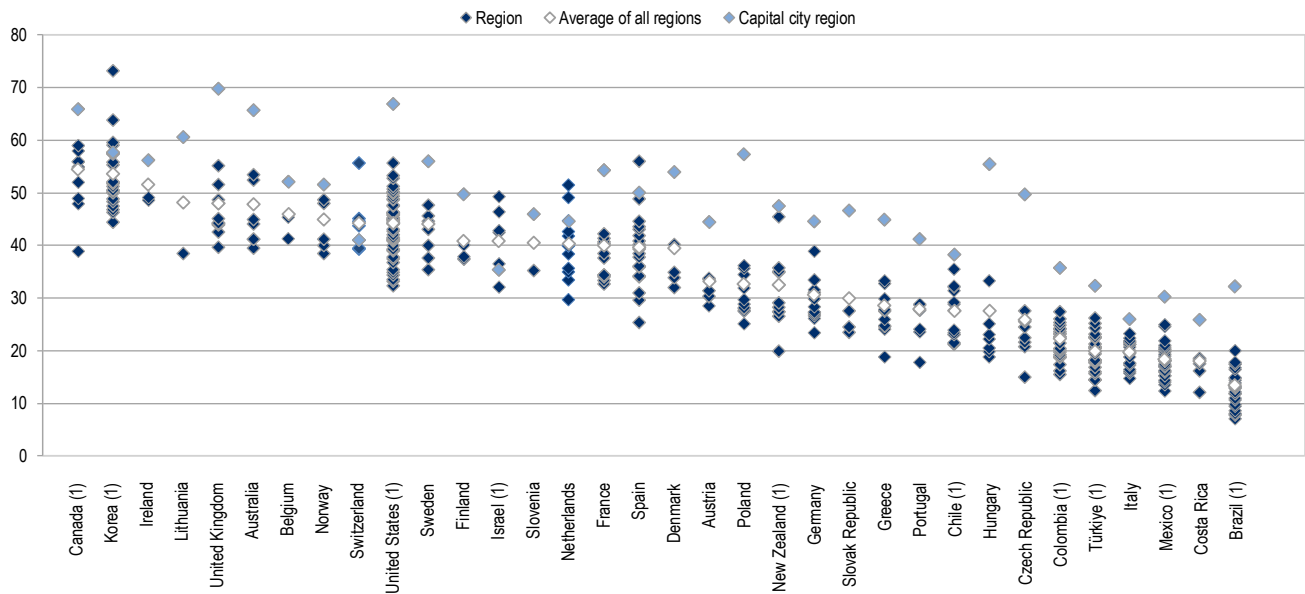
In most OECD countries, tertiary attainment rates vary widely across subnational regions. Among countries with available data, the share of the 25-64 year-olds with tertiary degrees frequently varies by a factor of two across regions. For example, in Spain, the shares range from 25% to 56%, while similar-sized differences exist in many other countries. This diversity within countries has important policy implications. For example, some regions within a country might face shortages of skilled workers, while in other regions workers with the same qualifications are unemployed. It is therefore important to look beyond national averages and develop policies that can adapt to regional contexts (Figure A1.4).

A notable pattern in many countries is exceptionally high tertiary attainment levels in the region that is home to the capital (Figure A1.4). Partly, this is due to the high number of tertiary-educated workers employed in national administrations, which have their seat in the capital regions. More importantly, however, it is because the capital region is often home to the largest city of a country. Urban areas tend to have higher rates of tertiary attainment than rural areas.

Cities have high levels of tertiary attainment for multiple reasons. Urban economies are characterised by a strong knowledge-intensive service sector, which provides job opportunities for tertiary-educated workers (OECD, 2019<sup>[3]</sup>). Moreover, wage levels in cities are higher than in rural areas even for workers in the same occupation and the differences are especially large for highly educated workers (Combes and Gobillon, 2015<sup>[4]</sup>). Thus, labour markets provide strong incentives for tertiary-educated workers to move to urban areas. These effects are amplified by the concentration of higher education institutions in cities. Tertiary students often move to cities to study there. After they graduate, many of them stay in the area and thereby contribute to a higher share of tertiary attainment in the region.

Figure A1.4. Percentage of 25-64 year-olds with tertiary attainment, by subnational region (2021)

In per cent



**Note:** The country average is the unweighted average of the regions for 25-64 year-olds.

1. Year of reference differs from 2021: 2020 for Chile, Colombia, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand and Türkiye; 2019 for the United States; 2017 for Israel; 2016 for Canada; and 2015 for Brazil.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the country average of the percentage of 25-64 year-olds with tertiary attainment (unweighted average of regions).

**Source:** OECD INES/CFE Subnational Data Collection (2022). See *Source* section for more information and Annex 3 for notes ([https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2022\\_X3-A.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2022_X3-A.pdf)).

StatLink  <https://stat.link/4tj2li>

## Definitions

**Age groups: Adults** refer to 25-64 year-olds; **younger adults** refer to 25-34 year-olds; **older adults** refer to 55-64 year-olds.

**Educational attainment** refers to the highest level of education successfully completed by an individual.

**Fields of study** are categorised according to the ISCED Fields of education and training (ISCED-F 2013). See the *Reader's Guide* for full listing of the ISCED fields used in this report.

**Levels of education:** See the *Reader's Guide* at the beginning of this publication for a presentation of all ISCED 2011 levels.

## Methodology

Educational attainment profiles are based on annual data on the percentage of the adult population (25-64 year-olds) in specific age groups who have successfully completed a specified level of education.

In OECD statistics, recognised qualifications from ISCED 2011 level 3 programmes that are not of sufficient duration for ISCED 2011 level 3 completion are classified at ISCED 2011 level 2 (see the *Reader's Guide*). Where countries have been able to demonstrate equivalencies in the labour-market value of attainment formally classified as the “completion of intermediate upper secondary programmes” – such as achieving five good General Certificates of Secondary Education (GCSEs) or equivalent in the United Kingdom (note that each GCSE is offered in a specific school subject) – and “full upper

secondary attainment”, attainment of these programmes is reported as ISCED 2011 level 3 completion in the tables that show three aggregate levels of educational attainment (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012<sup>[5]</sup>).

Most OECD countries include people without formal education under the international classification ISCED 2011 level 0. Averages for the category “less than primary educational attainment” are therefore likely to be influenced by this inclusion.

Category totals for fields of study may not be equivalent to the sum of the subcategories because some programmes cannot be classified into a specific subcategory, but are included in the total. In addition, data on humanities (except languages), social sciences, journalism and information refer to the field social of sciences, journalism and information only in Australia, Belgium, Costa Rica, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Spain and the United Kingdom.

Please see the *OECD Handbook for Internationally Comparative Education Statistics* (OECD, 2018<sup>[6]</sup>) for more information and Annex 3 for country-specific notes ([https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2022\\_X3-A.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2022_X3-A.pdf)).

## Source

Data on population and educational attainment for most countries are taken from OECD and Eurostat databases, which are compiled from National Labour Force Surveys by the OECD Labour Market, Economic and Social Outcomes of Learning (LSO) Network. Data on educational attainment for China, Indonesia and Saudi Arabia are taken from the International Labour Organization (ILO) database.

Data on subnational regions for selected indicators are available in the *OECD Regional Statistics Database* (OECD, 2022<sup>[7]</sup>).

## References

- Combes, P. and L. Gobillon (2015), “The empirics of agglomeration economies”, in *Handbook of Regional and Urban Economics*, Elsevier, <https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-444-59517-1.00005-2>. [4]
- OECD (2022), *Education at a Glance Database - Educational attainment and labour-force status*, [http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?datasetcode=EAG\\_NEAC](http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?datasetcode=EAG_NEAC) (accessed on 20 July 2022). [2]
- OECD (2022), *OECD Regional Database - Education*, [https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=REGION\\_EDUCAT](https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=REGION_EDUCAT) (accessed on 20 July 2022). [7]
- OECD (2019), *OECD Regional Outlook 2019: Leveraging Megatrends for Cities and Rural Areas*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264312838-en>. [3]
- OECD (2018), *OECD Handbook for Internationally Comparative Education Statistics: Concepts, Standards, Definitions and Classifications*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264304444-en>. [6]
- OECD (2016), *Education at a Glance 2016: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/eag-2016-en>. [1]
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2012), *International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) 2011*, UNESCO-UIS, Montreal, <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/international-standard-classification-of-education-isced-2011-en.pdf>. [5]



## Indicator A1 Tables

### Tables Indicator A1. To what level have adults studied?

<b>Table A1.1.</b>	Educational attainment of 25-64 year-olds (2021)
<b>Table A1.2.</b>	Trends in educational attainment of 25-34 year-olds, by gender (2011 and 2021)
<b>Table A1.3.</b>	Fields of study among tertiary-educated 25-64 year-olds (2021)

StatLink  <https://stat.link/yo13gb>

Cut-off date for the data: 17 June 2022. Any updates on data can be found on line at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-data-en>. More breakdowns can also be found at <http://stats.oecd.org/>, *Education at a Glance Database*.

Table A1.1. Educational attainment of 25-64 year-olds (2021)

Percentage of adults with a given level of education as the highest level attained

	Below upper secondary					Upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary		Tertiary				All levels of education
	Less than primary	Primary	Completion of intermediate lower secondary programmes	Lower secondary	Completion of intermediate upper secondary programmes	Upper secondary	Post-secondary non-tertiary	Short-cycle tertiary	Bachelor's or equivalent	Master's or equivalent	Doctoral or equivalent	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	
<b>OECD Countries</b>												
Australia	0	4	a	12	a	29	6	11	28	9	2	100
Austria	x(2)	1 <sup>d</sup>	a	13	a	48	3	15	5	14	1	100
Belgium	3	4	a	12	a	35	2	1	24	19	1	100
Canada	x(2)	2 <sup>d</sup>	a	5	a	21	10	26	24	11 <sup>d</sup>	x(10)	100
Chile <sup>1</sup>	6	4	a	19	a	41	a	10	19	2 <sup>d</sup>	x(10)	100
Colombia	x(4)	x(4)	a	33 <sup>d</sup>	5	31 <sup>d</sup>	x(6)	x(9)	22 <sup>d</sup>	x(9)	x(9)	100
Costa Rica	11	27	8	8	3	18	0	7	15	3	0	100
Czech Republic	0	0	a	5	a	68 <sup>d</sup>	x(6)	0	7	19	1	100
Denmark	x(2)	2 <sup>d</sup>	a	16	a	40	0	5	21	15	1	100
Estonia	0	0	a	10	a	39	9	6	14	21	1	100
Finland	x(2)	2 <sup>d</sup>	a	10	a	45	1	8	17	16	1	100
France	2	3	a	13	a	41	0	14	12	14	1	100
Germany	x(2)	4	a	10	a	41	13	1	18	11	2	100
Greece	1	10	a	9	2	34	9	1	25	8	1	100
Hungary	0	1	a	13	a	50	7	1	14	14	1	100
Iceland	x(2)	0 <sup>d</sup>	a	21	a	29	7	4	22	16	1	100
Ireland	0	3	a	9	a	18	15	9	29	14	1	100
Israel	3	3	a	6	a	38	a	11	24	13	1	100
Italy	1	5	a	32	a	41	2	0	5	14	1	100
Japan	x(6)	x(6)	a	x(6)	a	44 <sup>d</sup>	x(8)	21 <sup>d</sup>	34 <sup>d</sup>	x(9)	x(9)	100
Korea	x(2)	3 <sup>d</sup>	a	6	a	39	a	14	33	4 <sup>d</sup>	x(10)	100
Latvia	0	0	a	7	3	37	13	4	16	19	0	100
Lithuania	0	0	0	4	2	29	19	a	30	15	1	100
Luxembourg	2	6	a	11	a	28	2	4	15	29	2	100
Mexico	10	15	2	27	4	22	a	1	18	2	0	100
Netherlands	2	4	a	13	a	37	0	2	24	16	1	100
New Zealand	x(4)	x(4)	a	19 <sup>d</sup>	a	25	15	4	29	6	1	100
Norway	0	1	0	16	a	34	2	11	21	13	1	100
Poland	0	1	a	6	a	57	3	0	8	25	1	100
Portugal	1	21	a	19	a	27	1	0	9	21	1	100
Slovak Republic	0	1	0	6	0	63	2	0	4	23	1	100
Slovenia	0	0	a	8	a	51	a	8	9	18	5	100
Spain	2	5	a	29	a	23	0	12	11	16	1	100
Sweden	x(2)	3 <sup>d</sup>	a	10	3	30	8	10	19	16	2	100
Switzerland	0	1	a	11	a	42 <sup>d</sup>	x(6)	x(9,10,11)	24 <sup>d</sup>	18 <sup>d</sup>	3 <sup>d</sup>	100
Türkiye	5	35	a	16	a	20	a	7	16	2	0	100
United Kingdom	c	0	a	18	12	20	a	9	26	13	2	100
United States	1	2	a	5	a	41 <sup>d</sup>	x(6)	11	25	12	2	100
<b>OECD average</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>m</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>m</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>EU22 average</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>m</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>m</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Partners</b>												
Argentina	3	14	m	16	m	42	a	x(9)	23 <sup>d</sup>	x(9)	1	100
Brazil	11	17	a	14	a	38	a	x(9)	20 <sup>d</sup>	1	0	100
China <sup>1</sup>	2	17	a	44	a	18	0	10	8	1 <sup>d</sup>	x(10)	100
India <sup>1</sup>	35	12	a	30	a	8	1	x(9)	9 <sup>d</sup>	x(9)	4	100
Indonesia	11	27	a	19	a	30	a	3	5	5	0	100
Saudi Arabia	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
South Africa <sup>1</sup>	10	4	5	6	28	32	m	8	7	1 <sup>d</sup>	x(10)	100
<b>G20 average</b>	<b>m</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>m</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>m</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>m</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100</b>

**Note:** Totals might not add up to 100% for the averages because of missing data for some levels for some countries. In most countries data refer to ISCED 2011. For Argentina and India data refer to ISCED-97. See *Definitions* and *Methodology* sections for more information. Data and more breakdowns are available at <http://stats.oecd.org/>, *Education at a Glance Database*.

1. Year of reference differs from 2021: 2020 for Chile, China, India and South Africa.

**Source:** OECD/ILO/UIS (2022). See *Source* section for more information and Annex 3 for notes ([https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2022\\_X3-A.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2022_X3-A.pdf)).

Please refer to the *Reader's Guide* for information concerning symbols for missing data and abbreviations.

Table A1.2. Trends in educational attainment of 25-34 year-olds, by gender (2011 and 2021)

Percentage of 25-34 year-olds with a given level of education as the highest level attained

	Below upper secondary						Upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary						Tertiary					
	Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total	
	2011	2021	2011	2021	2011	2021	2011	2021	2011	2021	2011	2021	2011	2021	2011	2021	2011	2021
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)
<b>OECD</b>	<b>Countries</b>																	
Australia	17 <sup>b</sup>	10	14 <sup>b</sup>	8	16 <sup>b</sup>	9	44 <sup>b</sup>	43	35 <sup>b</sup>	30	40 <sup>b</sup>	37	38 <sup>b</sup>	46	51 <sup>b</sup>	62	45 <sup>b</sup>	54
Austria	11	11	13	10	12	11	57	51	49	43	53	47	32	38	37	47	35	42
Belgium	20 <sup>b</sup>	14	17 <sup>b</sup>	11	18 <sup>b</sup>	13	44 <sup>b</sup>	42	35 <sup>b</sup>	31	39 <sup>b</sup>	37	37 <sup>b</sup>	44	48 <sup>b</sup>	58	42 <sup>b</sup>	51
Canada	9	6	6	4	8	5	43	36	29	21	36	29	48	58	64	75	56	66
Chile <sup>1</sup>	23 <sup>b</sup>	14	23 <sup>b</sup>	11	23 <sup>b</sup>	12	55 <sup>b</sup>	49	54 <sup>b</sup>	45	54 <sup>b</sup>	47	22 <sup>b</sup>	37	23 <sup>b</sup>	44	22 <sup>b</sup>	41
Colombia	m	28	m	21	m	25	m	45	m	45	m	45	m	27	m	34	m	31
Costa Rica	57	49	52	41	54	45	19	24	21	26	20	25	24	28	28	33	26	30
Czech Republic	5 <sup>b</sup>	7	6 <sup>b</sup>	7	6 <sup>b</sup>	7	73 <sup>b</sup>	66	65 <sup>b</sup>	49	69 <sup>b</sup>	58	22 <sup>b</sup>	27	28 <sup>b</sup>	43	25 <sup>b</sup>	35
Denmark	23	19	16	13	19	16	46	40	37	29	42	35	31	41	47	58	39	49
Estonia	18	14	10	9	14	12	52	53	42	37	47	45	30	33	49	54	39	43
Finland	12	10 <sup>b</sup>	7	8 <sup>b</sup>	10	9 <sup>b</sup>	57	56 <sup>b</sup>	44	45 <sup>b</sup>	51	51 <sup>b</sup>	31	34 <sup>b</sup>	48	47 <sup>b</sup>	39	40 <sup>b</sup>
France	18	13	15	11	17	12	43	41	37	35	40	38	39	46	47	54	43	50
Germany	13 <sup>b</sup>	15	14 <sup>b</sup>	13	13 <sup>b</sup>	14	61 <sup>b</sup>	50	57 <sup>b</sup>	49	59 <sup>b</sup>	50	26 <sup>b</sup>	34	30 <sup>b</sup>	38	28 <sup>b</sup>	36
Greece	28 <sup>b</sup>	10	18 <sup>b</sup>	7	23 <sup>b</sup>	8	44 <sup>b</sup>	53	44 <sup>b</sup>	42	44 <sup>b</sup>	47	28 <sup>b</sup>	38	38 <sup>b</sup>	51	33 <sup>b</sup>	44
Hungary	13	14	13	13	13	13	65	59	53	48	59	54	23	27	34	39	28	33
Iceland	31	26	23	13	27	20	40	40	31	36	35	38	29	34	47	51	38	42
Ireland	18 <sup>b</sup>	6	12 <sup>b</sup>	4	15 <sup>b</sup>	5	42 <sup>b</sup>	35	33 <sup>b</sup>	28	37 <sup>b</sup>	32	40 <sup>b</sup>	59	54 <sup>b</sup>	67	47 <sup>b</sup>	63
Israel	13 <sup>b</sup>	10	8 <sup>b</sup>	7	10 <sup>b</sup>	9	50 <sup>b</sup>	55	40 <sup>b</sup>	36	45 <sup>b</sup>	45	38 <sup>b</sup>	35	52 <sup>b</sup>	57	45 <sup>b</sup>	46
Italy	32 <sup>b</sup>	26	25 <sup>b</sup>	20	29 <sup>b</sup>	23	51 <sup>b</sup>	52	49 <sup>b</sup>	45	50 <sup>b</sup>	49	16 <sup>b</sup>	22	26 <sup>b</sup>	34	21 <sup>b</sup>	28
Japan <sup>2</sup>	m	m	m	m	m	m	x(13)	x(14)	x(15)	x(16)	x(17)	x(18)	55 <sup>b, d</sup>	62 <sup>d</sup>	63 <sup>b, d</sup>	68 <sup>d</sup>	59 <sup>b, d</sup>	65 <sup>d</sup>
Korea	2 <sup>b</sup>	2	2 <sup>b</sup>	2	2 <sup>b</sup>	2	37 <sup>b</sup>	35	31 <sup>b</sup>	22	34 <sup>b</sup>	29	60 <sup>b</sup>	63	67 <sup>b</sup>	76	64 <sup>b</sup>	69
Latvia	23	13	11	8	17	11	53	50	43	37	48	44	24	36	46	55	35	46
Lithuania	13 <sup>b</sup>	10	8 <sup>b</sup>	4	10 <sup>b</sup>	7	48 <sup>b</sup>	42	35 <sup>b</sup>	28	41 <sup>b</sup>	35	40 <sup>b</sup>	48	57 <sup>b</sup>	68	48 <sup>b</sup>	57
Luxembourg	17 <sup>b</sup>	13	16 <sup>b</sup>	8	17 <sup>b</sup>	10	38 <sup>b</sup>	28	35 <sup>b</sup>	25	37 <sup>b</sup>	27	45 <sup>b</sup>	59	49 <sup>b</sup>	68	47 <sup>b</sup>	63
Mexico	60	44	60	44	60	44	21	29	21	28	21	29	18	26	19	28	19	27
Netherlands	21 <sup>b</sup>	12	16 <sup>b</sup>	9	18 <sup>b</sup>	10	44 <sup>b</sup>	38	40 <sup>b</sup>	31	42 <sup>b</sup>	34	36 <sup>b</sup>	51	44 <sup>b</sup>	60	40 <sup>b</sup>	56
New Zealand	21	15	19	12	20	13	m	44	m	38	m	41	m	41	m	50	m	45
Norway	18	19	14	15	16	17	42	35	31	21	37	28	39	46	55	65	47	55
Poland	7 <sup>b</sup>	9	5 <sup>b</sup>	5	6 <sup>b</sup>	7	62 <sup>b</sup>	59	48 <sup>b</sup>	45	55 <sup>b</sup>	52	31 <sup>b</sup>	31	47 <sup>b</sup>	50	39 <sup>b</sup>	41
Portugal	50	20	38	13	44	17	28	42	29	30	29	36	22	38	32	56	27	47
Slovak Republic	6 <sup>b</sup>	6	6 <sup>b</sup>	6	6 <sup>b</sup>	6	73 <sup>b</sup>	65	64 <sup>b</sup>	42	69 <sup>b</sup>	54	21 <sup>b</sup>	28	31 <sup>b</sup>	51	26 <sup>b</sup>	39
Slovenia	9 <sup>b</sup>	5	3 <sup>b</sup>	3	6 <sup>b</sup>	4	67 <sup>b</sup>	58	53 <sup>b</sup>	36	60 <sup>b</sup>	48	24 <sup>b</sup>	37	44 <sup>b</sup>	61	34 <sup>b</sup>	48
Spain	40	33	29	22	35	28	25	24	26	23	25	24	35	43	46	54	40	49
Sweden	10 <sup>b</sup>	18	8 <sup>b</sup>	14	9 <sup>b</sup>	16	54 <sup>b</sup>	42	42 <sup>b</sup>	28	48 <sup>b</sup>	35	35 <sup>b</sup>	41	51 <sup>b</sup>	58	43 <sup>b</sup>	49
Switzerland	11 <sup>b</sup>	8 <sup>b</sup>	13 <sup>b</sup>	8 <sup>b</sup>	12 <sup>b</sup>	8 <sup>b</sup>	50 <sup>b</sup>	42 <sup>b</sup>	49 <sup>b</sup>	37 <sup>b</sup>	50 <sup>b</sup>	40 <sup>b</sup>	38 <sup>b</sup>	50 <sup>b</sup>	38 <sup>b</sup>	54 <sup>b</sup>	38 <sup>b</sup>	52 <sup>b</sup>
Türkiye	52 <sup>b</sup>	35	62 <sup>b</sup>	37	57 <sup>b</sup>	36	28 <sup>b</sup>	27	21 <sup>b</sup>	21	25 <sup>b</sup>	24	20 <sup>b</sup>	38	18 <sup>b</sup>	42	19 <sup>b</sup>	40
United Kingdom <sup>3</sup>	16 <sup>b</sup>	15	16 <sup>b</sup>	9	16 <sup>b</sup>	12	39 <sup>b</sup>	31	36 <sup>b</sup>	30	37 <sup>b</sup>	30	45 <sup>b</sup>	54	48 <sup>b</sup>	61	47 <sup>b</sup>	57
United States	13	7	9	5	11	6	49	47	43	38	46	43	38	46	48	57	43	51
OECD average	21	16	17	12	19	14	47	44	40	35	44	39	33	41	43	53	38	47
EU22 average	19	14	14	10	16	12	51	48	44	37	48	42	30	39	42	53	36	46
<b>Partners</b>	<b>Countries</b>																	
Argentina	36	30	29	24	32	27	48	54	47	54	48	54	16	16	24	22	20	19
Brazil	47 <sup>b</sup>	32	40 <sup>b</sup>	25	43 <sup>b</sup>	29	42 <sup>b</sup>	48	46 <sup>b</sup>	49	44 <sup>b</sup>	48	11 <sup>b</sup>	20	15 <sup>b</sup>	26	13 <sup>b</sup>	23
China <sup>4</sup>	63	m	66	m	64	m	19	m	16	m	18	m	18	m	18	m	18	m
India <sup>1</sup>	58	61	70	70	64	66	26	16	18	12	22	14	16	23	12	19	14	21
Indonesia	57	42	61	43	59	42	34	43	28	36	31	39	9	16	11	22	10	19
Saudi Arabia	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
South Africa <sup>1</sup>	44	48	43	44	44	46	49	39	51	39	50	39	7	13	6	17	7	15
G20 average	34	26	33	24	33	25	40	39	35	34	38	37	28	36	33	44	31	40

**Note:** Totals might not add up to 100% for the averages because of missing data for some levels for some countries. The code "m" in columns for year 2011 represents that data refer to ISCED-97. Data in columns for year 2021 refer to ISCED 2011 for all countries except for Argentina and India. See *Definitions and Methodology* sections and Annex 3 for more information. Data and more breakdowns are available at <http://stats.oecd.org/>, *Education at a Glance Database*.

1. Year of reference differs from 2021: 2020 for Chile, India and South Africa.

2. Data for tertiary education include upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary programmes (less than 5% of adults are in this group).

3. 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 (9% of adults aged 25-34 are in this group).

4. Year of reference differs from 2011: 2010 for China.

**Source:** OECD/ILU/UIS (2022). See *Source* section for more information and Annex 3 for notes ([https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2022\\_X3-A.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2022_X3-A.pdf)).

Please refer to the *Reader's Guide* for information concerning symbols for missing data and abbreviations.

Table A1.3. Field of study among tertiary-educated 25-64 year-olds (2021)

Percentage of adults with tertiary attainment

	Education	Arts or humanities, social sciences, journalism and information			Business administration and law			Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics	Information and communication technologies (ICT)	Engineering, manufacturing and construction	Health and welfare			Other fields
		Arts	Humanities (except languages), social sciences, journalism and information	Total	Business and administration	Law	Total				Health (medical and dental)	Health (nursing and associate health fields)	Total	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)
<b>OECD</b>														
<b>Countries</b>														
Australia	10	x(4)	6	15	x(7)	x(7)	30	4	7	12	x(13)	x(13)	17	6
Austria	11	4	8	14	8	4	24	4	3	26	4	4	9	9
Belgium	11	x(4)	12	23	x(7)	x(7)	22	5	4	12	x(13)	x(13)	17	5
Canada	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Chile <sup>1</sup>	16	3	4	8	23	3	26	1	5	20	3	11	17	8
Colombia	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Costa Rica	20	x(4)	8	11	x(7)	x(7)	36	1	7	12	x(13)	x(13)	9	4
Czech Republic	16	4	24	23	11	5	0	6	6	21	5	7	16	10
Denmark	9	3	12	21	12	3	17	5	5	13	x(13)	x(13)	26	5
Estonia	17	4	8	15	21	4	25	5	4	21	x(13)	x(13)	9	3
Finland	6	4	8	16	21	2	23	4	7	19	2	10	17	8
France	5	x(4)	7	17	x(7)	x(7)	33	7	5	14	x(13)	x(13)	14	6
Germany	13	4	7	13	10	3	23	5	4	25	4	2	9	6
Greece	7	x(4)	12	26	x(7)	x(7)	17	7	5	14	x(13)	x(13)	12	13
Hungary	21	x(4)	17	22	x(7)	x(7)	16	3	6	16	x(13)	x(13)	8	8
Iceland <sup>1</sup>	18	x(4)	x(4)	23	x(7)	x(7)	23	4	4	10	x(13)	x(13)	13	4
Ireland	9	x(4)	4	10	x(7)	x(7)	26	7	8	10	x(13)	x(13)	12	18
Israel	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Italy	5	5	15	29	12	10	23	8	2	14	x(13)	x(13)	14	5
Japan	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Korea	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Latvia	14	3	18	24	21	7	28	3	4	13	5	2	8	6
Lithuania	9	3	15	20	21	x(7)	27	5	5	19	4	4	9	7
Luxembourg	10	x(4)	5	18	x(7)	x(7)	37	6	7	10	x(13)	x(13)	8	4
Mexico	14	3	9	13	25	9	34	3	7	15	5	5	10	4
Netherlands	11	4	12	18	23	4	28	5	5	12	4	7	16	7
New Zealand	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Norway	16	2	16	14	14	2	17	8	4	13	m	m	21	8
Poland	15	1	19	24	17	3	22	6	5	13	x(13)	x(13)	8	8
Portugal	16	x(4)	11	20	x(7)	x(7)	21	4	3	15	x(13)	x(13)	15	7
Slovak Republic	16	x(4)	15	20	x(7)	x(7)	13	6	4	18	x(13)	x(13)	14	9
Slovenia	13	2	13	17	10	4	25	4	3	20	x(13)	x(13)	9	7
Spain	11	x(4)	5	13	x(7)	x(7)	28	6	6	15	x(13)	x(13)	13	7
Sweden	15	3	11	16	12	3	16	5	4	20	4	10	19	5
Switzerland	8	3	7	12	25	3	29	5	5	19	3	9	15	8
Türkiye <sup>1</sup>	16	x(4)	x(4)	18	x(7)	x(7)	31	5	1	16	x(13)	x(13)	6	7
United Kingdom	5	x(4)	3	14	x(7)	x(7)	26	2	4	19	x(13)	x(13)	17	13
United States <sup>1,2</sup>	10	6	20	30	x(7)	x(7)	21	10	4	10	x(13)	x(13)	9	6
<b>OECD average</b>	12	m	11	18	m	m	24	5	5	16	m	m	13	7
<b>EU22 average</b>	12	m	12	19	m	m	22	5	5	16	m	m	13	7
<b>Partners</b>														
Argentina	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Brazil	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
China	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
India	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Indonesia	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Saudi Arabia	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
South Africa	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
<b>G20 average</b>	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m

**Note:** Category totals may not be equivalent to the sum of the subcategories because some programmes cannot be classified into a specific subcategory but are included in the total. In addition, data on humanities (except languages), social sciences, journalism and information might refer to the broad field social sciences, journalism and information only. See *Definitions* and *Methodology* sections for more information.

1. Year of reference differs from 2021: 2017 for Chile and the United States, 2016 for Iceland and Türkiye.

2. Data refer to bachelor's degree field, even for those with additional tertiary degrees.

**Source:** OECD/ILO/UIS (2022). See *Source* section for more information and Annex 3 for notes ([https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2022\\_X3-A.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2022_X3-A.pdf)).

Please refer to the *Reader's Guide* for information concerning symbols for missing data and abbreviations.



**From:**  
**Education at a Glance 2022**  
OECD Indicators

**Access the complete publication at:**  
<https://doi.org/10.1787/3197152b-en>

**Please cite this chapter as:**

OECD (2022), "To what level have adults studied?", in *Education at a Glance 2022: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/a8525f6b-en>

This work is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD member countries.

This document, as well as any data and map included herein, are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area. Extracts from publications may be subject to additional disclaimers, which are set out in the complete version of the publication, available at the link provided.

The use of this work, whether digital or print, is governed by the Terms and Conditions to be found at <http://www.oecd.org/termsandconditions>.