

TERTIARY ATTAINMENT

The share of the population that has attained qualifications at the tertiary level is a key indicator of how well countries are placed to profit from technological and scientific progress. Differences between tertiary attainment of younger and older age groups is a measure of progress in the provision of higher education.

Definition

For each age group shown, those who have completed tertiary education are shown as a percentage of all persons in that age group. Tertiary education includes both tertiary-type “A programmes”, which are largely theoretically-based and designed to provide qualifications for entry to advanced research programmes and professions with high skill requirements, as well as tertiary-type “B programmes” which are classified at the same level of competencies as tertiary-type A programmes but are more occupationally-oriented and lead to direct labour

Long-term trends

OECD countries and the Russian Federation have seen significant increases in the proportion of the adult population attaining tertiary education over the last decades. In 2004, for the 25-64 year-old population, 15 countries out of 30 are grouped together within a range of 10 points between 23 and 33% of the population having attained the tertiary level. Three countries are performing remarkably high: Canada, the Russian Federation and the United States. Conversely, three countries are significantly below this average percentage in tertiary attainment where less than 12% of the population attain tertiary qualifications: Brazil, Italy and Turkey.

In the youngest age group, 25 to 34 years old, the OECD country mean for tertiary attainment increased from 20 to 31% between 1991 and 2004. In four countries – Canada, Japan, Korea and the Russian Federation – over 45% of this age group in 2004 obtained a tertiary qualification.

An indication of longer term trends can be obtained by comparing the current attainment levels of younger and older age cohorts. For instance, comparing the tertiary attainment levels of 25-34 year olds with those of 55-64 year olds indicates that in Korea, there has been an increase in tertiary attainment over the past 30 years of nearly 40 percentage points, some 26 percentage points higher than the OECD average increase over this period. In contrast, some OECD countries (the Czech Republic and Germany) have only seen increases of less than 3 percentage points over the same period.

market access. The tertiary attainment profiles are based on the percentage of the population aged 25 to 64 that has completed that level of education.

Comparability

The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-97) is used to define the levels of education. See the *OECD Handbook for Internationally Comparative Education Statistics* for a description of ISCED-97 education programmes and attainment levels and their mappings for each country.

Source

- OECD (2006), *Education at a Glance*, OECD, Paris.

Further information

Analytical publications

- Blöndal, S., S. Field and N. Girouard (2002), “Investment in Human Capital through Upper-Secondary and Tertiary Education”, *OECD Economic Studies*, No. 34, 2002/I, OECD, Paris.
- OECD (2006), *Reviews of National Policies for Education*, OECD, Paris.

Methodological publications

- OECD (2004), *OECD Handbook for Internationally Comparative Education Statistics: Concepts, Standards, Definitions and Classifications*, OECD, Paris.

Websites

- OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI), www.oecd.org/edu/ceeri.
- OECD Education at a Glance, www.oecd.org/edu/eag2006.

Tertiary attainment for age group 25-64

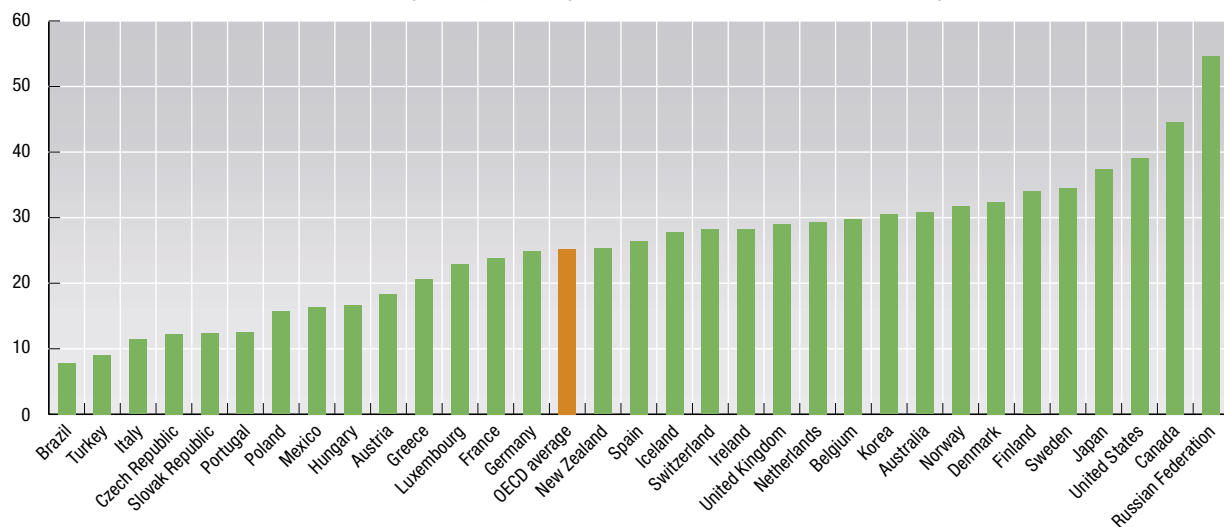
As a percentage of the population of that age group

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Australia	21.8	..	22.5	23.1	24.3	24.8	24.3	25.4	26.7	27.5	29.0	30.8	31.3	30.8
Austria	6.7	6.9	..	7.7	7.9	8.1	10.6	10.9	10.9	13.9	14.1	14.5	14.5	18.3
Belgium	19.6	20.2	..	22.3	24.6	23.9	25.1	25.3	26.7	27.1	27.6	28.1	29.0	29.8
Canada	29.9	30.8	..	34.2	34.9	35.6	37.3	38.1	39.2	40.0	41.6	42.6	44.0	44.6
Czech Republic	..	..	..	10.1	10.6	10.4	10.6	10.4	10.8	11.0	11.1	11.9	12.0	12.3
Denmark	18.3	19.2	..	19.6	20.4	20.9	..	25.4	26.5	25.8	26.5	27.4	31.9	32.4
Finland	25.0	25.9	..	26.8	27.7	28.4	29.4	30.2	31.3	32.0	32.3	32.6	33.3	34.0
France	15.2	16.0	17.1	17.8	18.6	19.2	20.0	20.6	21.5	22.0	23.0	24.0	23.4	23.9
Germany	20.5	20.1	..	20.4	22.2	21.8	22.6	23.0	22.9	23.5	23.2	23.4	24.0	24.9
Greece	..	..	..	17.9	17.4	18.9	15.5	16.8	17.5	17.6	17.8	18.3	18.3	20.6
Hungary	..	..	..	..	..	13.4	12.2	13.2	13.5	14.0	14.0	14.2	15.4	16.7
Iceland	..	..	..	..	..	20.8	20.9	21.0	22.4	23.2	24.6	26.3	26.3	27.8
Ireland	15.9	17.0	..	18.6	19.9	22.6	22.8	21.1	20.5	21.8	23.7	25.4	26.3	28.3
Italy	6.1	6.4	..	7.5	7.9	8.1	..	8.6	9.3	9.4	10.0	10.4	10.4	11.4
Japan	..	..	..	..	..	..	30.4	30.4	31.6	33.4	33.8	36.3	37.4	37.4
Korea	14.4	16.1	17.5	17.8	18.6	19.6	19.8	22.5	23.1	23.9	25.0	26.0	29.5	30.5
Luxembourg	..	..	..	..	18.1	19.0	..	..	18.3	18.3	18.1	18.6	14.9	22.9
Mexico	..	..	..	..	11.9	13.2	13.8	13.6	13.4	14.6	15.0	15.3	15.4	16.4
Netherlands	19.6	20.9	..	21.4	22.0	22.5	..	24.2	22.6	23.4	23.2	24.4	24.4	29.3
New Zealand	22.9	23.6	..	23.2	25.3	..	25.8	26.6	27.0	28.0	29.2	29.8	30.9	25.3
Norway	24.8	25.3	..	27.4	28.6	26.9	25.8	27.4	27.5	28.4	30.2	31.0	31.0	31.8
Poland	..	..	..	..	9.9	..	10.2	10.9	11.3	11.4	11.9	12.6	14.2	15.7
Portugal	6.7	..	..	10.7	11.0	10.9	..	8.3	8.7	8.9	9.1	9.3	10.8	12.5
Slovak Republic	..	..	..	11.3	11.1	11.5	10.5	10.3	10.1	10.4	10.9	11.0	11.8	12.4
Spain	9.9	13.1	..	15.0	16.1	17.5	18.6	19.7	21.0	22.6	23.6	24.4	25.2	26.4
Sweden	25.2	25.8	..	27.0	28.3	27.4	27.5	28.0	28.7	30.1	31.6	32.6	33.4	34.5
Switzerland	20.3	21.0	..	21.4	21.1	21.9	22.2	22.9	23.6	24.2	25.4	25.2	27.0	28.2
Turkey	6.3	4.8	..	7.0	8.4	..	7.6	7.5	8.1	8.3	8.4	9.1	9.7	9.1
United Kingdom	16.3	18.5	..	21.3	21.9	22.3	22.7	23.7	24.8	25.7	26.1	26.9	28.0	29.0
United States	30.1	30.2	..	32.2	33.3	33.9	34.1	34.9	35.8	36.5	37.3	38.1	38.4	39.1
OECD average	17.9	19.0	..	19.2	19.3	20.1	20.8	20.7	21.2	21.9	22.6	23.4	24.1	25.2
Brazil	7.8
Russian Federation	54.6

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Tertiary attainment for age group 25-64


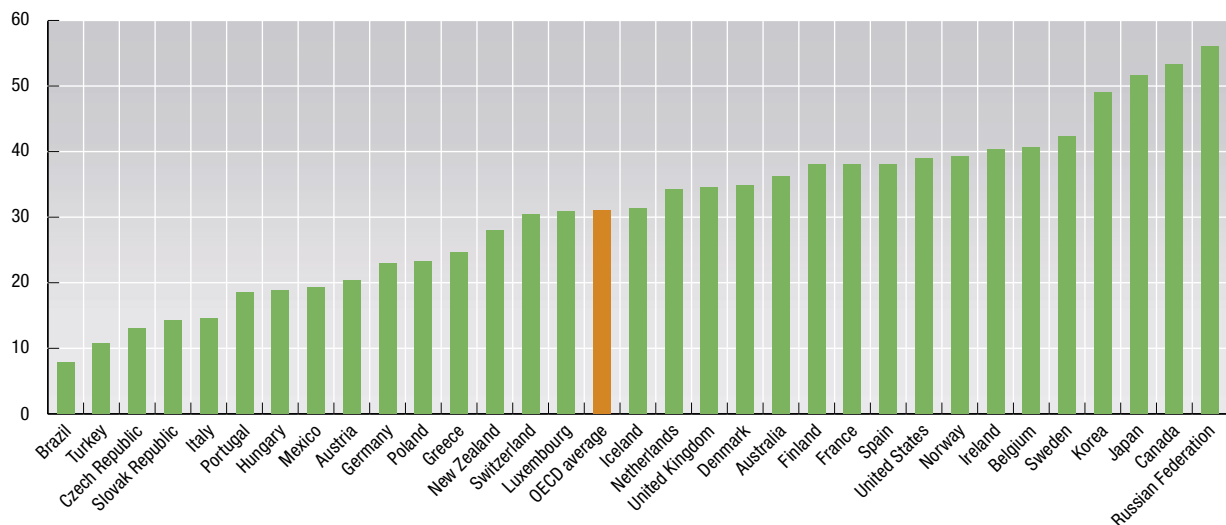

As a percentage of the population of that age group, 2004 or latest available year



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Tertiary attainment for age group 25-34
As a percentage of the population of that age group

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Australia	22.8	..	22.8	23.6	24.7	25.3	25.7	28.1	29.0	31.4	33.5	35.8	36.3	36.2
Austria	7.9	7.9	..	8.8	8.7	9.2	12.4	12.5	12.7	15.0	14.3	14.8	15.4	20.3
Belgium	26.8	27.2	..	30.0	32.9	32.2	33.1	33.8	34.4	36.0	37.5	37.6	38.9	40.7
Canada	32.9	34.2	..	37.8	39.3	40.6	44.1	45.5	46.8	48.3	50.5	51.2	52.8	53.3
Czech Republic	..	..	..	12.5	11.8	11.2	10.9	10.5	10.9	11.2	11.3	12.3	12.1	13.0
Denmark	18.7	19.5	..	19.7	20.3	20.7	..	26.8	28.6	29.3	29.1	30.6	35.1	34.9
Finland	33.3	33.5	..	34.1	35.0	35.2	36.4	36.0	37.4	37.6	38.2	39.2	39.8	38.0
France	20.1	21.6	23.1	24.3	25.4	26.0	27.8	29.6	30.9	32.4	34.2	36.1	37.4	38.1
Germany	19.6	18.8	..	18.7	20.8	20.3	21.0	21.5	21.5	22.3	21.8	21.7	21.8	22.9
Greece	..	..	..	25.0	26.0	28.2	22.3	24.3	24.6	24.3	24.0	24.1	23.7	24.6
Hungary	..	..	..	..	..	14.3	12.4	13.9	13.7	14.7	14.8	15.0	16.8	18.9
Iceland	..	..	..	..	..	23.7	23.0	24.2	27.6	27.8	26.5	29.1	29.1	31.3
Ireland	19.7	21.2	..	24.4	27.2	31.3	32.5	29.5	28.1	30.3	33.4	36.3	37.1	40.4
Italy	6.6	6.8	..	7.9	8.2	8.3	..	9.0	10.0	10.4	11.8	12.5	12.5	14.6
Japan	..	..	..	..	..	..	45.2	45.4	45.1	47.2	47.7	50.3	51.6	51.6
Korea	21.0	23.9	26.8	27.7	29.2	30.6	30.9	33.8	34.8	36.9	39.2	41.2	46.6	49.1
Luxembourg	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	21.2	22.9	23.4	22.6	18.7	30.9
Mexico	..	..	..	..	16.3	17.1	17.3	16.7	16.6	17.4	18.0	18.4	18.7	19.3
Netherlands	22.2	23.6	..	23.9	24.5	25.1	..	27.5	25.1	26.6	26.5	27.7	27.7	34.2
New Zealand	23.2	23.2	..	21.1	24.2	..	25.4	26.4	26.0	27.2	28.5	29.3	32.4	28.0
Norway	27.1	28.2	..	30.7	32.1	30.0	29.9	32.8	34.7	34.9	37.9	39.7	39.8	39.2
Poland	..	..	..	..	9.9	..	10.3	11.8	12.3	14.2	15.2	16.8	20.4	23.2
Portugal	8.5	..	..	13.2	13.5	14.4	..	11.5	12.2	13.0	14.0	15.0	16.3	18.6
Slovak Republic	..	..	..	12.5	11.6	12.4	10.4	11.3	11.1	11.2	11.9	11.9	13.2	14.3
Spain	16.3	22.5	..	25.2	26.6	28.6	30.3	32.0	33.5	34.1	35.5	36.7	37.5	38.1
Sweden	27.0	26.5	..	27.3	28.6	28.4	29.3	30.7	31.7	33.6	36.9	39.2	40.4	42.3
Switzerland	21.3	21.3	..	22.0	21.5	22.5	24.7	25.0	25.9	25.6	25.6	26.5	29.4	30.4
Turkey	6.1	5.6	..	6.6	7.5	..	7.3	7.8	8.7	8.9	9.1	10.5	11.4	10.8
United Kingdom	18.5	20.6	..	23.1	23.3	24.3	24.7	25.9	27.3	28.6	29.5	31.2	33.1	34.6
United States	30.2	30.2	..	32.0	33.6	35.2	35.7	36.2	37.4	38.1	39.1	39.3	38.7	39.0
OECD average	20.5	21.9	..	22.2	22.4	23.8	24.9	24.8	25.3	26.4	27.3	28.4	29.5	31.0
Brazil	7.9
Russian Federation	56.1

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Tertiary attainment for age group 25-34
As a percentage of the population of that age group, 2004 or latest available year

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Tertiary attainment for age group 55-64

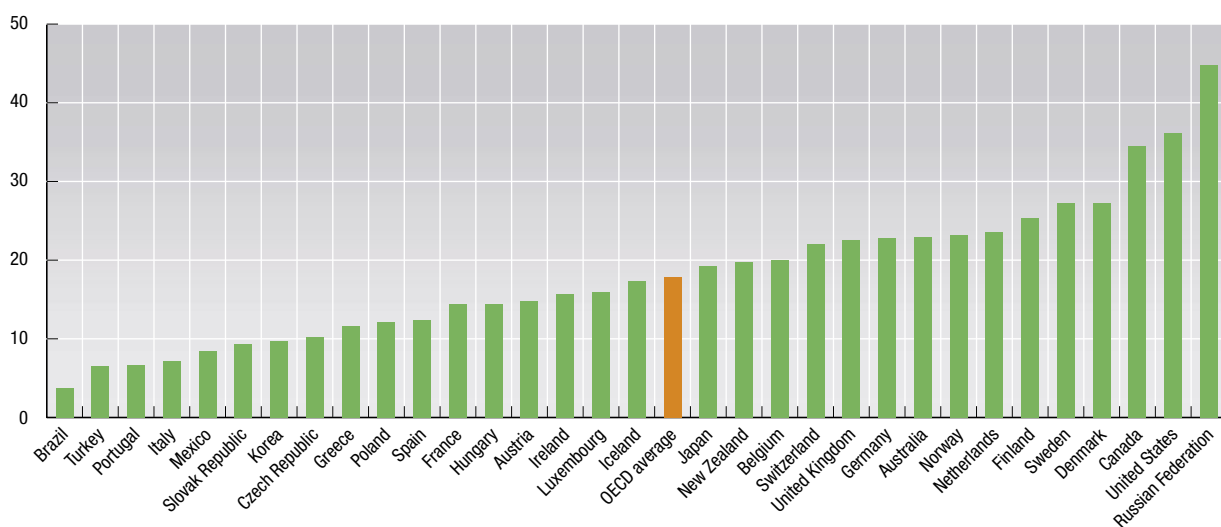
As a percentage of the population of that age group

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Australia	13.4	..	13.5	14.7	17.2	16.9	17.1	17.0	17.5	19.1	21.1	22.5	23.3	23.0
Austria	3.8	3.3	..	3.6	4.2	4.7	6.3	6.5	6.5	9.9	10.6	11.0	11.3	14.8
Belgium	8.6	9.2	..	11.1	13.1	12.7	13.7	13.8	15.7	16.8	17.1	18.2	18.9	20.0
Canada	18.8	19.2	..	23.0	23.6	25.1	24.3	25.7	27.4	28.3	30.1	32.1	33.8	34.5
Czech Republic	..	..	..	7.6	8.3	7.5	7.9	8.5	9.4	9.1	9.3	10.6	10.3	10.2
Denmark	11.9	12.6	..	13.2	13.8	14.3	..	19.3	19.0	18.2	20.2	24.2	25.9	27.3
Finland	12.2	12.8	..	13.9	15.5	17.0	17.9	19.3	20.7	22.7	23.4	23.4	24.2	25.4
France	6.6	7.3	7.9	8.4	8.9	9.6	10.5	11.2	12.4	13.3	14.1	15.2	13.9	14.4
Germany	16.0	15.7	..	16.5	17.5	17.5	18.4	19.3	19.4	20.2	20.2	20.6	21.6	22.8
Greece	..	..	..	9.1	7.8	8.4	7.5	7.8	8.4	8.5	9.0	9.7	10.6	11.6
Hungary	..	..	..	..	..	8.9	8.5	10.2	11.2	11.8	11.5	12.6	13.8	14.4
Iceland	..	..	..	..	..	9.5	11.6	10.8	11.3	13.5	14.8	16.7	..	17.4
Ireland	9.6	10.4	..	11.3	11.0	12.6	12.5	11.4	12.6	13.3	13.5	14.4	15.0	15.7
Italy	3.3	3.5	..	4.2	4.4	4.6	..	4.8	5.5	5.5	6.2	6.7	..	7.2
Japan	..	..	..	..	..	..	13.7	13.2	14.3	15.1	15.1	18.0	19.2	19.2
Korea	5.8	5.9	6.7	6.7	6.8	6.8	6.5	8.3	8.5	8.6	8.9	9.1	9.5	9.7
Luxembourg	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	12.0	13.0	13.5	14.4	10.6	15.9
Mexico	..	..	..	..	4.4	4.6	5.7	4.9	5.7	7.0	7.2	7.2	7.6	8.5
Netherlands	12.2	13.2	..	14.4	14.2	15.6	..	16.9	16.9	17.7	17.4	18.8	..	23.6
New Zealand	..	17.1	..	17.9	21.1	..	21.2	23.1	23.1	24.2	24.1	26.2	27.4	19.7
Norway	14.0	14.2	..	17.7	18.0	16.9	17.5	18.9	18.8	20.4	21.5	21.7	21.7	23.2
Poland	..	..	..	..	8.2	..	9.1	9.9	10.4	9.9	10.2	10.5	11.1	12.2
Portugal	3.4	..	..	5.6	5.9	6.2	..	4.7	4.5	4.7	4.9	4.6	5.6	6.7
Slovak Republic	..	..	..	7.0	7.5	7.2	6.1	6.7	6.9	7.8	8.6	8.6	8.9	9.3
Spain	4.2	5.2	..	5.6	6.0	7.1	7.6	8.1	8.7	9.7	10.3	10.5	11.0	12.4
Sweden	15.5	16.5	..	19.4	20.2	18.5	19.3	19.9	21.3	23.0	24.4	25.2	26.3	27.3
Switzerland	15.5	17.0	..	16.9	17.4	16.8	16.5	18.0	17.8	18.3	20.2	21.3	21.9	22.0
Turkey	4.6	1.7	..	4.3	5.9	..	4.6	4.5	5.3	5.9	5.9	6.3	7.3	6.6
United Kingdom	10.9	13.6	..	15.5	16.2	16.9	16.3	17.2	18.5	18.9	19.1	19.8	20.8	22.6
United States	21.9	21.9	..	23.6	24.3	25.6	26.2	27.2	28.0	29.7	30.6	33.2	34.7	36.2
OECD average	10.6	11.6	..	12.1	12.4	12.5	13.1	13.4	13.9	14.8	15.4	16.4	17.3	17.8
Brazil	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	3.7
Russian Federation	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	44.8

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/256248743228>

Tertiary attainment for age group 55-64

As a percentage of the population of that age group, 2004 or latest available year



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