

Students with disabilities, learning difficulties and disadvantages

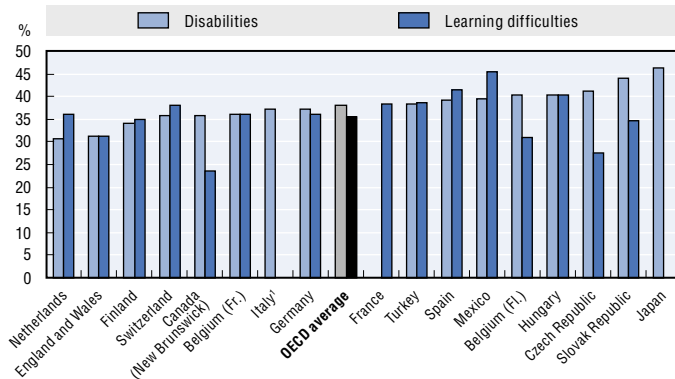
Did you know?

Most OECD countries provide additional resources to help students with *disabilities* and *learning difficulties* and those from *disadvantaged* families.

It appears that 50% more boys than girls receive help of this kind because of learning disabilities, and over twice as many boys as girls receive help because of learning difficulties – although statistics are available for only about half of all OECD countries.

In all the countries for which data are available, substantially less than half of the students receiving help for *disabilities* or *learning difficulties* are girls. For some countries or regions, the boy/girl disparities are particularly marked for students with *learning difficulties* (behavioural or emotional disorders and specific difficulties in learning) compared with students with *disabilities* (organic disorders).

Gender distribution of students in compulsory education receiving additional resources for disabilities and learning difficulties
Percentage of girls

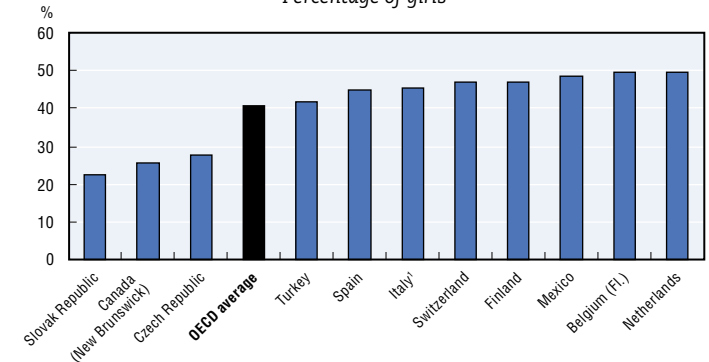


1. Data refer to primary and lower secondary education.

Factors associated with the risk of being *disadvantaged* include being born into immigrant families with poor knowledge of the host-country language and culture, or into families where the parents are themselves poorly educated. In Belgium (Flanders) and the Netherlands the percentages of disadvantaged boys and girls receiving additional resources in compulsory education are equal; in a number of other countries (or regions) where data are available they are only about 45/55 in favour of boys. The gender gap in favour of disadvantaged boys is most marked in the Slovak Republic, the Canadian province of New Brunswick and the Czech Republic.

Why do boys get more special help than girls? Is it a genuine need or do school administrators give more priority to the successful education of boys?

Gender distribution of disadvantaged students in compulsory education receiving additional resources
Percentage of girls



1. Data refer to primary and lower secondary education.

Source: OECD (2005), “Students with Disabilities, Learning Difficulties and Disadvantages. Statistics and Indicators”, OECD, Paris.

Student performance

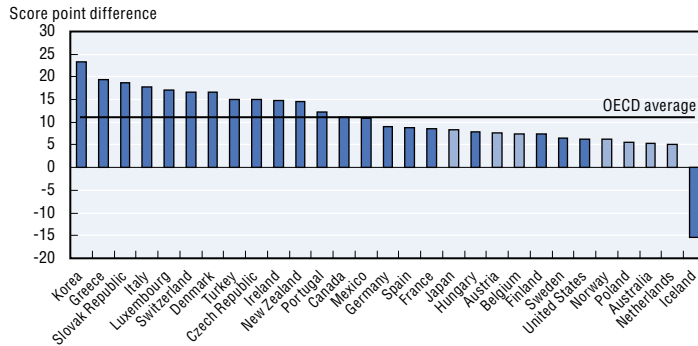
Did you know?

OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) assesses student knowledge and skills in mathematics, reading, and science at age 15.

In general, girls outperform boys in reading by a wide margin while boys outperform girls, by lesser margins, in mathematics and, even less in science.

The chart below shows the gender gaps for scores in mathematics, with in dark colour the significant differences between boys and girls.

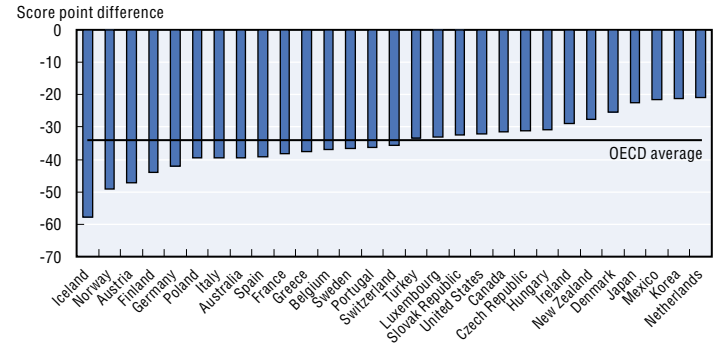
Gender differences (boys-girls) in student performance in mathematics in PISA 2003



Source: OECD (2004), *Learning for Tomorrow's World – First results from PISA 2003*, Table 2.5c, OECD, Paris.

In mathematics the boys score higher than the girls in the majority of the countries except in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway and Poland where the advantage for boys is not significant, and in Iceland where the girls outperform the boys.

Gender differences (boys-girls) in student performance in reading in PISA 2003



Source: OECD (2004), *Learning for Tomorrow's World - First results from PISA 2003*, Table 6.3, OECD, Paris.

In the reading assessment, however, the girls come out well ahead of the boys in all countries and the gender gaps were exceptionally large in Iceland, Norway, Austria and Finland as shown in the chart above.

Science shows the smallest average gender differences among all contents assessed. Statistically significant differences in favour of men are found in Canada, Denmark, Greece, Korea, Luxembourg, Mexico, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic and Switzerland. On the other hand, women in Finland and Iceland outperform men.

Further reading:

OECD (2004), *Learning for Tomorrow's World: First Results from PISA 2003*, OECD, Paris.

Tertiary education

Did you know?

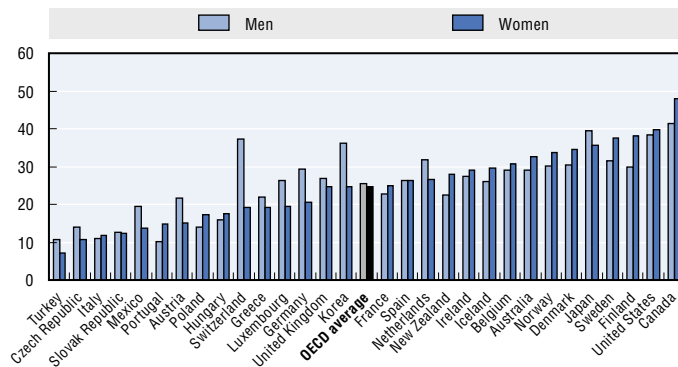
On average 33% of women aged 25 to 34 have tertiary education compared with 28% for men of the same age in OECD countries.

Even in the poorest parts of the world more than 60% of young girls usually attend primary school. In sub-Saharan Africa and in the Indian Sub-Continent only 3-4% of young women receive tertiary education.

Although tertiary education delays the start of paid employment, it substantially increases lifetime earnings and is a good investment both for the individual and for society.

In the OECD area, tertiary attainment rates for the population of working age range from below 12% in Turkey, the Czech Republic, Italy and the Slovak Republic to over 35% in Canada, the United States, Sweden and Japan. Female attainment rates exceed those for men in just over half of the countries with significantly higher rates in Canada, Finland, Sweden and New Zealand. By contrast, the number of men having attained a tertiary level of education is still substantially higher in Korea and Switzerland.

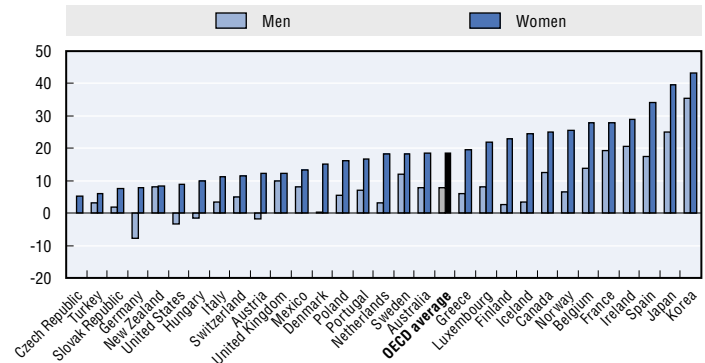
Percentage of men and women aged 25-64 with tertiary education
2004 or latest year available



The next chart shows that in general young people of both sexes are more likely than their parents to acquire tertiary education. The only exceptions are Austria, Germany, Hungary and the United States, where tertiary attainment rates for young men are below those for older men. The most striking feature however is the large difference between the age groups for women. The increase in the number of women attaining a tertiary level of education has been particularly marked in Japan, Korea and Spain where cultural attitudes about the role of women in society have probably undergone more profound changes than in other OECD countries.

Differences in tertiary attainment by people aged 25-34 and 55-64

Percentage of young people with tertiary education minus percentage of older people with tertiary education, 2004



Source: OECD Education database and Gender, Institutions and Development (GID) database.

Further reading:

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

University graduates by field of study

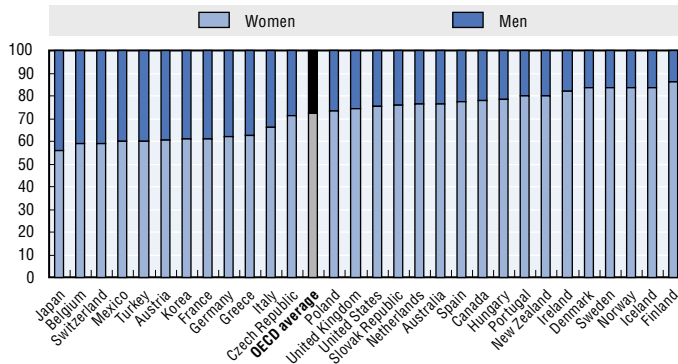
Did you know?

For all OECD countries taken together, *health and welfare* subjects are the most popular for women with *humanities, arts and education* a close second. For male graduates, subjects related to *engineering, manufacturing and construction* come first – just ahead of *mathematics and computer science*.

About an equal number of men and women opt for *life sciences, physical sciences and agriculture* and for *social sciences, business studies and law*.

There are large gender differences in the subjects that young men and women study at university. Female preference for health and welfare subjects is most marked in Nordic countries – Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark. In these countries less than 20% of graduates in these subjects are men. In Japan, Belgium and Switzerland, on the other hand, more than 40% of graduates in the “caring sciences” are men.

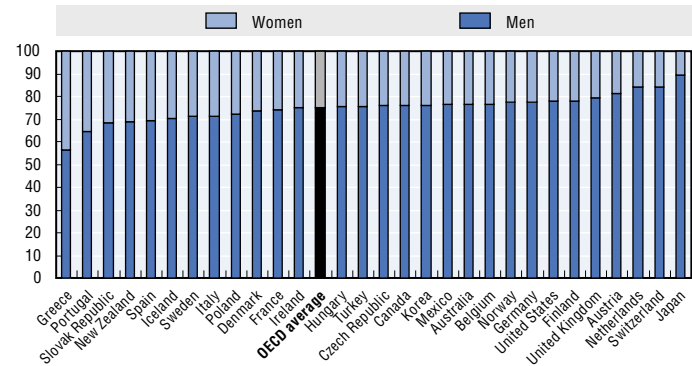
Percentage of university graduates in health and welfare subjects
2004 or latest year available



The gender gap is equally marked in subjects related to engineering, manufacturing and construction. Less than 20% of graduates in these topics are women in Japan, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Austria. The largest shares of women graduates in these subjects are in Greece and Portugal.

Such differences in subjects studied at university both reflect and influence different career choices, contributing to occupational segregation in the labour market.

Percentage of university graduates in engineering, manufacturing and construction subjects
2004 or latest year available



Source: OECD Education database and OECD (2006), *Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators*, OECD, Paris.

Further reading:

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