

CO10: Gender differences in university graduates by fields of study

Definitions and methodology

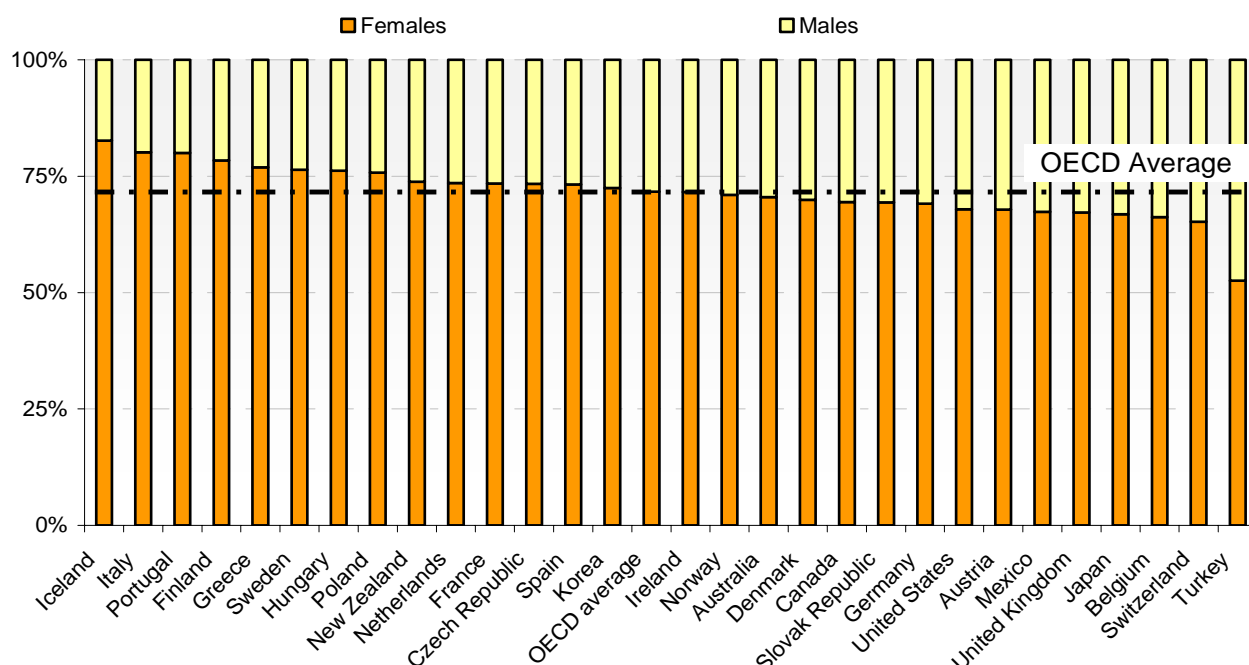
This indicator provides information on the subjects that male and female students tend to study at university by looking at graduation rates by subject and gender. This gives us an insight into what skills and expertise men and women then bring to the market and how subjects studied at university affect future career and family income patterns.

Data on graduates by field of study are collected through the joint UNESCO, OECD and EUROSTAT (UOE) annual data collection on education systems. Graduates are classified as having successfully followed and completed a university programme and graduated in the specified year; this is then further disaggregated by gender and subject.

Chart 10.1 shows the predominance of female graduates in humanities, art and education subjects. Included within this category are courses in fine arts, performing arts, graphic and audio arts e.g. photography, foreign languages, linguistics and literature, history and archaeology. Some prospective careers stemming from these degrees would include schoolteachers, interpreters and archaeologists.

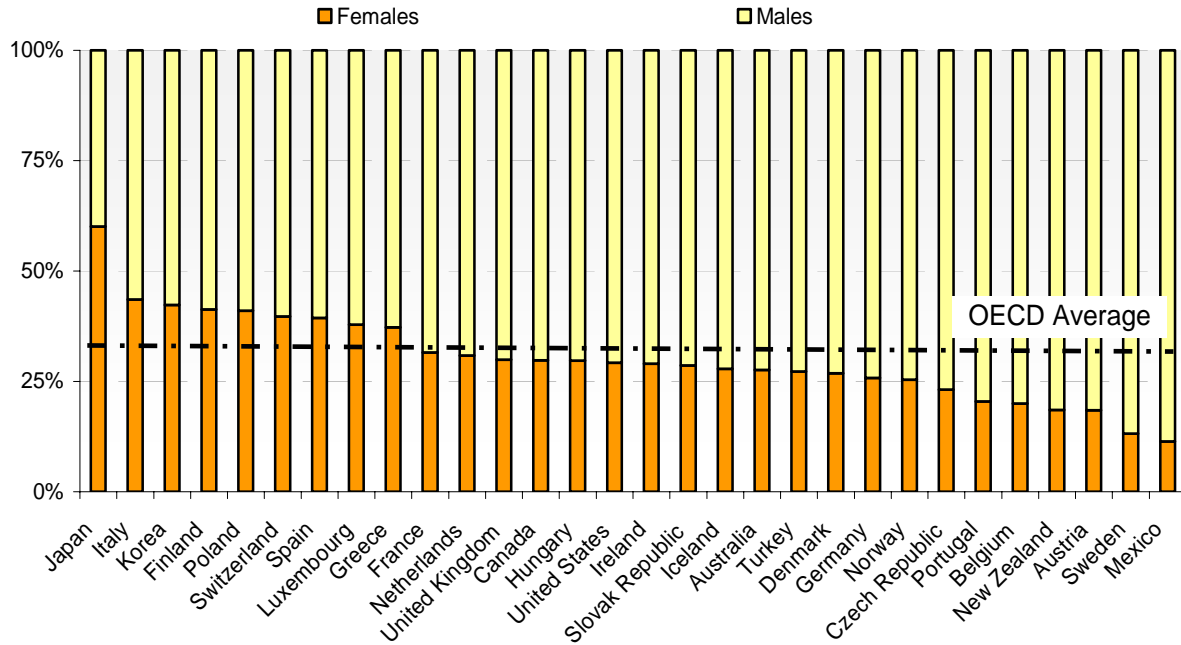
Conversely, mathematics and computing are predominately studied successfully by male students (Chart CO10.2). Courses in this area would include statistics, actuarial science, computer programming, data processing and software development. Prospective careers would be found in hi-tech, the financial sector and insurance.

Chart CO10.1: Percentage of university graduates awarded humanities, arts and education qualifications, by gender (2004)



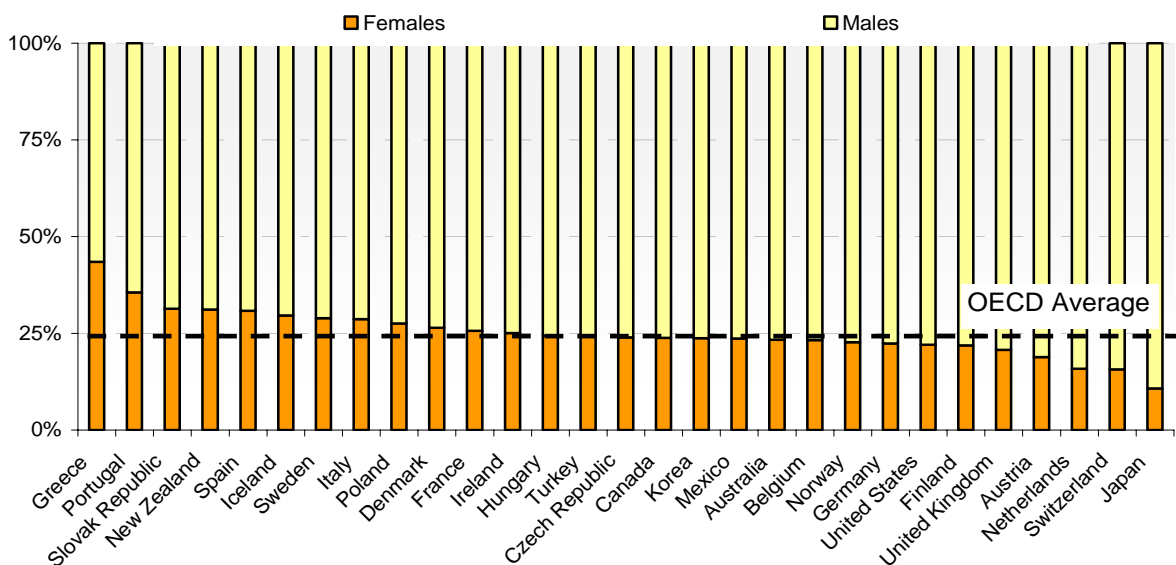
Other relevant indicators: Employment profiles over the life course (LMF4); Male and female earnings in family income of couple families (LMF6); Gender neutrality in tax/benefit systems (PF4); Educational attainment by gender and average years spent in formal education (CO9); and, Literacy scores by gender at age 15 (CO12).

Chart CO10.2: Percentage of university graduates receiving mathematics and computing qualifications, by gender (2004)



Another field of study dominated by male students is engineering, manufacturing and construction. This field encompasses a diverse range of subjects and thereby offers multiple job opportunities. Students study a range of courses including telecommunications, chemical engineering, food and drink processing, mining and extraction, architecture and construction. On average, female graduates account for only 25% of all graduates in these subjects, see Chart 10.3 for details.

Chart CO10.3: Percentage of university graduates receiving engineering, manufacturing and construction qualifications, by gender (2004)



Comparability and Data issues

In this area, there should not be any major issue with cross-national comparability of data. There are detailed instructions within the UOE manual guiding national correspondents on the mapping of subjects and fields of study. Nevertheless, occasionally there may be some cross-country differentiation regarding the classification of educational programmes.

Sources and further reading: *OECD Education Database* and *OECD Education at a Glance 2006*. For details on country's mapping of national programmes to the International Standard Classification of Educational programmes (ISCED) please refer to Annex 3 of *OECD Education at a Glance 2006* (www.oecd.org/edu/eag2006).

