



WEBINAR: EDUCATION AT A GLANCE 2014: KEY MESSAGES AND MAIN RESULTS¹

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HIGHLIGHTS

Background

Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators is the authoritative source for accurate and relevant information on the state of education around the world. Featuring more than 150 charts, 300 tables, and over 100 000 figures, it provides data on the structure, finances, and performance of education systems in the OECD's 34 member countries, as well as a number of partner countries.

It results from a long-standing, collaborative effort between OECD governments, the experts and institutions working within the framework of the OECD [Indicators of Education Systems](#) (INES) programme and the OECD Secretariat.

New developments and features of this edition are:

- new indicators on private institutions, on what it takes to become a teacher, and on the availability of, and participation in, professional development activities for teachers;
- data from the 2012 Survey of Adult Skills, on attainment, employment, intergenerational education mobility, earnings, and social outcomes related to skills proficiency;
- data from the 2013 [OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey](#) (TALIS) and the [2012 OECD Programme for International Student Assessment](#) (PISA) in several indicators;
- analysis of the impact of the recent economic crisis on the interplay among educational attainment, employment, earnings and public finance;
- more in-depth information related to upper secondary completion rates and the types and use of student loans;
- for the first time, data from Colombia and Latvia.

Key message #1: Education continues to expand, and the growth in participation and attainment did not slow during the economic downturn.

Over the past decades, all OECD countries have seen significant increases in the educational attainment of their populations. More people have benefited from education than ever before: tertiary education has expanded markedly and, for the first time, in 2012, one in three adults in OECD countries held a tertiary qualification. At the same time, upper secondary education has become almost universal in most OECD

1. Note: This paper 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.

The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

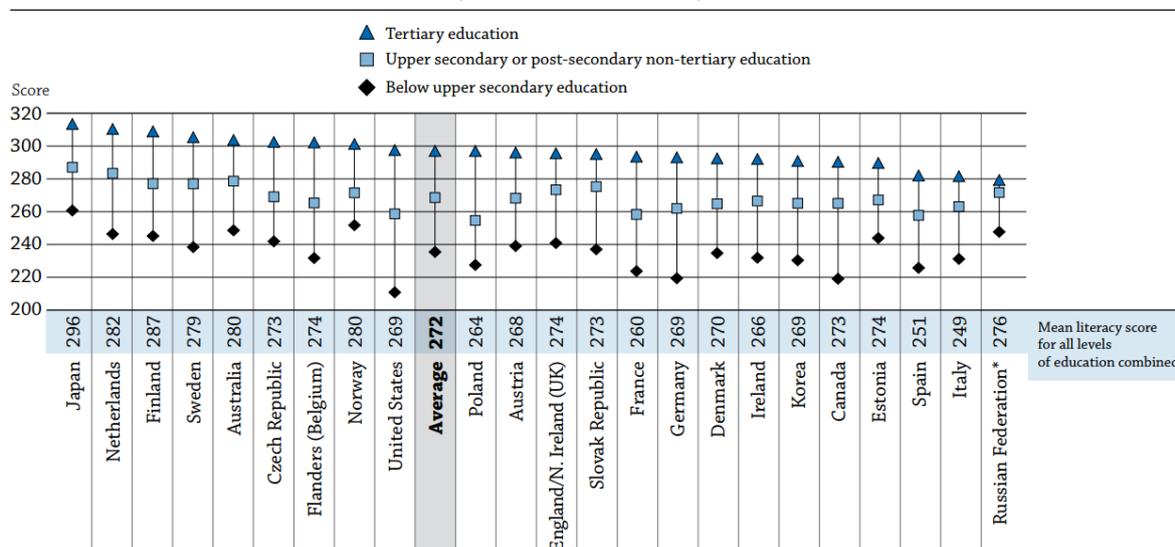
countries, and four out of five young people will complete upper secondary education in their lifetime. Since 2000, tertiary attainment rates have been increasing steadily in most OECD countries; upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary attainment levels have remained stable; and the proportion of people with below upper secondary education decreased in most OECD countries.

Close to 40% of 25-34 year-olds now have a tertiary education, 15 percentage points larger than 55-64 year-olds; and in many countries, this difference exceeds 20 percentage points. Importantly, the economic crisis did not slow this process of expansion; on the contrary, when scanty labour markets did not provide much of an alternative, many individuals used the low opportunity costs to invest in education with the aim of improving their chances for a better life. And in emerging economies, schooling is expanding – from a relatively narrow base – at a rate that surpasses that in the industrialised world.

Key message #2: Growth in educational attainment has resulted in a large increase in skills proficiency in societies; but across countries, there are large variations in the level of skills proficiency associated with a given level of education.

The data on skills show that, across the 24 OECD countries or subnational entities that participated in the Survey of Adult Skills, there is a 13 percentage-point increase, on average, between the share of older and younger adults scoring at the highest levels of literacy proficiency; in a number of countries, the share of younger adults with this level of literacy is 20 percentage points larger than the share of older adults. But the data also show that educational attainment and skills do not always align. Moreover, not all countries with the largest increase in educational attainment rates have the largest increase in the proportion of highly skilled adults. In fact, across countries, adults with similar levels of education can have very different levels of proficiency in skills – a fact that argues for a reconsideration of how we define educational qualifications.

Chart A1.4. Mean literacy score, by educational attainment (2012)
Survey of Adult Skills, 25-64 year-olds

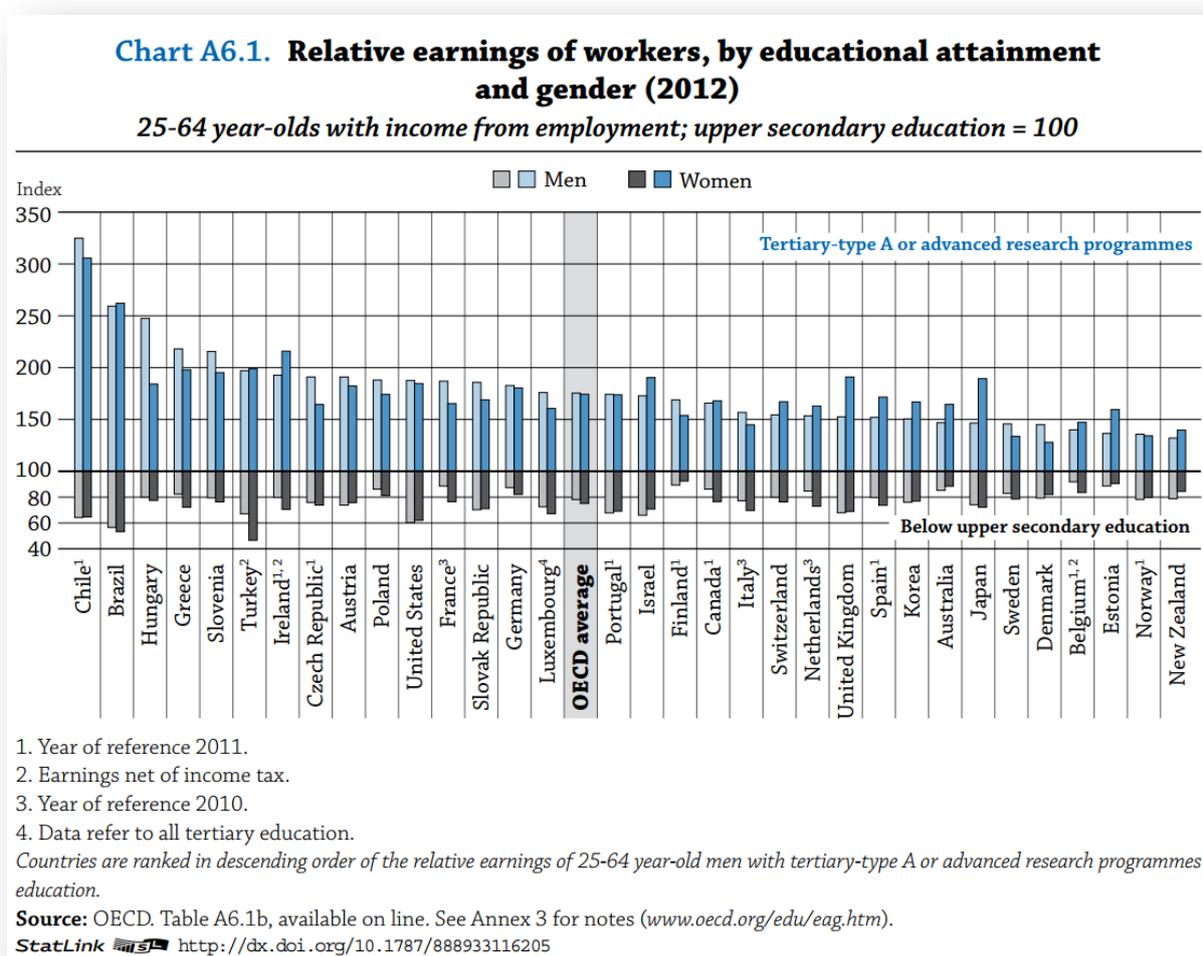


* See note on data for the Russian Federation in the Methodology section.
Countries are ranked in descending order of the mean literacy score of 25-64 year-olds with tertiary education.
Source: OECD, Table A1.9a (L). See Annex 3 for notes (www.oecd.org/edu/eag.htm).
StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933115008>

Key message #3: The expansion of education and skills has not resulted in more inclusive outcomes. Socio-economic divisions between the education “haves” and “have-nots” are deepening.

The expansion of education and the general increase in the level of skills available in the population should imply a growing and more highly skilled workforce. But we find that socio-economic divisions are deepening, because the impact that skills have on the life chances of individuals has increased considerably. Take the employment situation: on average, over 80% of tertiary-educated adults are employed compared to less than 60% of people with below upper secondary education. And the employment gap between these two groups is 30 or more percentage points in several countries. Our data reconfirm that the economic crisis hit young, low-educated adults hardest.

New data on earnings also point to a widening gap between the educational “haves” and “have-nots”: the relative income gap between mid-educated and high-educated adults also grew twice as much as the gap between mid-educated and low-educated adults between 2000 and 2012. This means that, in relative terms, mid-educated adults have moved closer in income to those with low levels of education, suggesting that the middle-classes are falling further behind.



The risks – and, in many instances, also the penalties – of low educational attainment and low skills pertain not only to income and employment, but to many other social outcomes as well. For example, there is a 23 percentage-point difference between the share of adults with high levels of education who report that they are in good health and the share of adults with low levels of education who report so. Levels of interpersonal trust, participation in volunteering activities, and the belief that an individual can have an impact on the

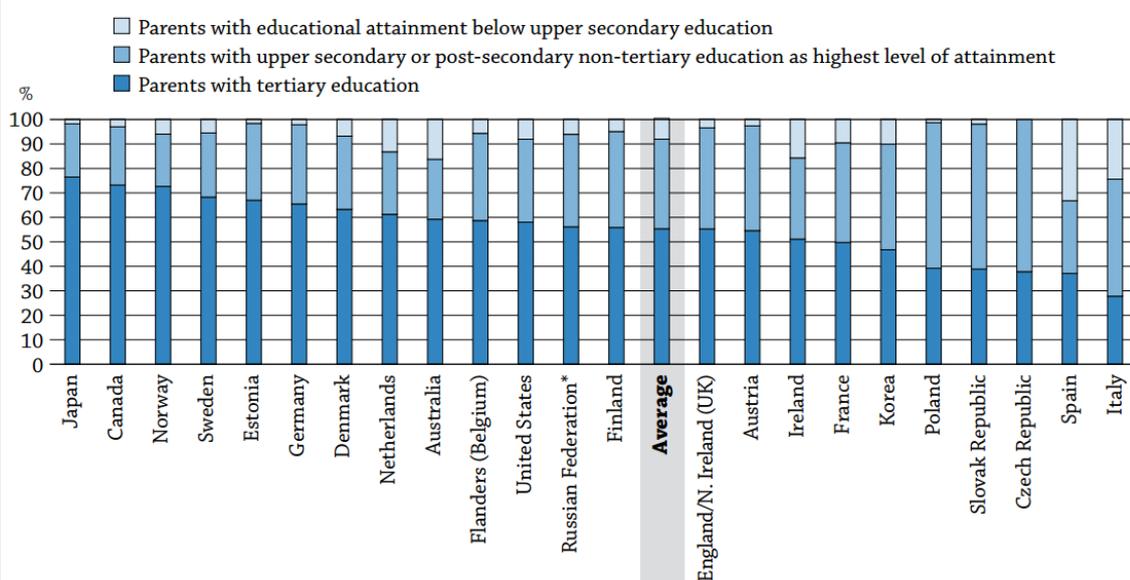
political process are all closely related to both education and skills levels. Thus, societies with large shares of low-skilled people risk deterioration in social cohesion and well-being.

Key message #4: Inequalities in educational outcomes are deepening, and the fact that children of low-educated parents are unlikely to pursue tertiary education means that there is not much scope for education-driven social mobility.

Education and skills have become increasingly important dimensions of social inequality. Education can lift people out of poverty and social exclusion, but in order to do so, educational attainment has to translate into social mobility. *Education at a Glance 2014* data shows that educational mobility has started to slow down in the industrialised world. The number of people with lower qualifications than their parents is 9% among 55-64 year-olds to 12% among 35-44 year-olds and 16% among 25-34 year-olds. At the same time, among the younger age group of 25-34 year-olds, where the tertiary attainment rate had risen to 43%, the impact of parents' educational background was just as strong: of adults with at least one tertiary-educated parent, 65% attained a tertiary qualification, while of the adults with low-educated parents only 23% did. These data suggest that the expansion in education has not translated into a more inclusive society.

Maybe the biggest threat to inclusive growth is the risk that social mobility could grind to a halt. Comparing our cross-sectional data over age groups seems to confirm that across OECD countries this risk is real. In other words, the benefits of the expansion in education were shared by the middle class, but did not trickle down to less-advantaged families. In relative terms, the children of low-educated families became increasingly excluded from the potential benefits that the expansion in education provided to most of the population.

Chart A4.1. Percentage of 20-34 year-olds in tertiary education, by parents' educational attainment (2012)



* See note on data for the Russian Federation in the *Methodology* section.
 Countries are ranked in descending order of the participation in tertiary education of 20-34 year-olds that have parents with tertiary attainment.
 Source: OECD, Table A4.1a. See Annex 3 for notes (www.oecd.org/edu/eag.htm).
 StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933115635>

Key message #5: In spite of the economic crisis, funding education remains a priority for OECD governments.

The global economic crisis that began in 2008 had – and is still having – major adverse effects on different sectors of the economy. With only 2008 to 2011 data, the full impact of the crisis on the funding of educational institutions cannot be assessed, but its first effects on the broader economy can already be observed.

Between 2008 and 2011, GDP (expressed in constant prices) fell in more than one-third of the countries with available data (15 out of 36), and by 5% or more in four countries: Greece, Iceland, Ireland and Slovenia. As more than three-quarters of education expenditure in most countries comes from public sources, how did the downturn in GDP growth affect public spending on education? Available figures show that the education sector was still relatively untouched by early budget cuts.

Since public budgets in most countries are approved many months before the funds are actually spent, there are certain built-in rigidities to the funding of education. Moreover, most governments try to protect education from dramatic reductions in public investment.

Among the 34 countries with available data for the 2008-11 period, only six countries cut (in real terms) public expenditure on educational institutions: Estonia, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, the Russian Federation and the United States. In these countries, this translated into a decrease in expenditure on educational institutions as a percentage of GDP (as the decrease in expenditure was larger than the decrease in GDP or as GDP increased at the same time). In all other countries, public expenditure on educational institutions increased, while GDP decreased in some of them. As a result, the share of GDP devoted to education continued to rise between 2008 and 2011. The exception to this trend is Poland, where GDP increased at a faster rate than public expenditure on educational institutions, resulting in a decrease of public expenditure on educational institutions as a percentage of GDP (Chart B2.3).

Reference:

OECD (2014), *Education at a Glance 2014: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2014-en>, <http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag.htm>

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