Challenging Social Inequality Through Career Guidance

INSIGHTS FROM INTERNATIONAL DATA AND PRACTICE

OECD

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Foreword

When it comes to preparation for adult life, education works. It has long been clear that greater levels of academic success are strongly related to higher wages and lower rates of unemployment. But this relationship is complex. As this paper shows, the investments of time and energy that students put into their studies can be expected to benefit them in different ways depending on their personal characteristics. Some groups of students face more barriers than others in achieving their goals when they embark on their working lives, even if they leave education with the same levels of qualifications as their more fortunate peers.

How school systems can address this form of inequality is at the heart of this study. It presents new analysis of data from the OECD Programme for International Assessment of Adult Skills (PIAAC) to illustrate the ways that social background, gender and migrant status shape the outcomes of young workers. Although circumstances can vary, overwhelmingly it is young people from lower socio economic backgrounds, of foreign birth and girls who are at greatest risk of poorer outcomes.

Societies turn to guidance systems to help students plan for their working life, gaining the knowledge, experience and skills that will help them to activate their human capital in ways which will maximise their chances of fulfilling their career ambitions. Unfortunately, as new analysis of data from the 2018 round of the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) shows, students who face the greatest risks of poorer transitions into the early labour market are less likely to engage in career development throughout their time at school and very often demonstrate the most worrying levels of career preparation.

Educational jurisdictions can act to create a fairer playing field and this paper includes multiple examples of ways in which guidance systems are actively addressing the additional barriers that can be expected to prevent good transitions. Included within them is the Canadian province of New Brunswick which created an innovative career education framework in partnership with the OECD that takes an active, systematic and evidence-driven approach to build equity into guidance. Such additional barriers are real and not difficult to understand. The children of parents who did not attend university or who are not routinely involved in managing hiring processes will have less family-based knowledge to draw upon as they apply for tertiary education or employment. Girls interested in working in professions where their gender is a minority are right to ask whether the working environments which they can anticipate will be fully supportive to female workers or hostile to their interests. Young people from migrant backgrounds can be expected to have less understanding of programmes of vocational education and training work which vary considerably in format and reputation between countries.

In spite of being more highly educated that any generation in history, the challenges that young people face in the competition for work are still substantial. In many countries, there is need for more strategic approaches to career guidance. In the first phase of the OECD's work on teenage career readiness, analysis of longitudinal datasets in multiple countries revealed strong relations between teenage career development and better employment outcomes, linked to the ways in which students explore, experience and think about their possible futures in work. That analysis-built understanding of how guidance systems can become more effective in their provision. The current paper builds on the analysis to show that it is also possible to achieve more equitable provision. It broadens our understanding of how our school

systems can respond to social inequalities. We know that education works, but some need more help than others in converting their human capital into successful employment. By addressing additional predictable barriers, guidance systems take an important step towards offering truly personalised support for all students. By so doing, it opens the way to a more efficient flow of interests and abilities into the labour market, creating new opportunities to address the rampant skills shortages that hamper the efficient growth of societies and economies.

This paper was drafted by Shinyoung Jeon, Anthony Mann, Vanessa Denis (all OECD) and Tristram Hooley (Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences and the University of Derby, UK). The authors would like to thank Dongwook Choi for preparing the paper for publication and OECD colleagues for reviewing drafts of this paper: Alison Burke, Lucie Cerna, Young Chang, Marta Encinas-Martin and Samo Varsik. Many thanks to Eda Cabbar for her communications co-ordination. They are also grateful to the International Centre for Guidance Studies (University of Derby) and to Tricia Berry (Department for Education and Early Childhood Development, New Brunswick, Canada) and Matt Diemer (University of Michigan) for their comments on the draft paper.

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Director for Education and Skills

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Table of contents

Foreword 3

Executive Summary 9

1. Inequality in the transition from education to work 11
1.1. Introduction 12
1.2. Inequalities in the transition from education to work 14
1.3. Career guidance in the transition from education to work 15
1.4. Analysis of inequality in the early career experiences of young adults and the teenage career readiness and guidance 20
References 24
Notes 29

2. Inequality and career guidance by socio-economic status 30
2.1. Inequalities by SES in the early career experience of young adults 31
2.2. Teenage career readiness by SES 37
2.3. How Career guidance can address inequalities by SES 57
2.4. The role of career guidance in addressing social inequalities 58
References 65
Notes 70

3. Inequality and career guidance by gender 71
3.1. Gender inequalities in the early career experience of young adults 72
3.2. Teenage career readiness by gender 85
3.3. How career guidance can address inequalities by gender, sexuality and gender identity 98
References 104
Notes 109

4. Inequality and career guidance by migrant background 110
4.1. Inequalities by migrant background in the early career experience of young adults 111
4.2. Teenage career readiness by migrant background 119
4.3. How career guidance can address inequalities by migrant background and ethnicity 127
References 133
Notes 138

5. Addressing inequalities through a career development framework 139
5.1. The role of career guidance in addressing social inequalities 140
5.2. Career Development Frameworks 141

5.3. Addressing social inequalities within the New Brunswick Career Education Framework 143
References 152
Notes 155

6. Conclusion: addressing social inequalities through career development 156
References 160

FIGURES

Figure 1.1. Summary of how inequalities shape the school-age career development and ultimate transitions of young people, as presented in Chapters 2-4 22
Figure 2.1. Even with the same education and skills level, young people with low parent education are more likely to be NEET than those with high parent education 31
Figure 2.2. Young adults with low SES tend to be under-represented in the service sector 32
Figure 2.3. Young adults (16-24) with low SES tend to be under-represented in high-skilled occupations 33
Figure 2.4. Even among those with the same education level, labour market segregation by SES is clear 34
Figure 2.5. Young adults with high SES tend to earn high wages compared to those with low SES, even with education and skills being equal 36
Figure 2.6. Students with high SES are more likely to participate in career development activities, even when controlling for gender, migrant status, reading performance, and VET orientation 38
Figure 2.7. On average across the OECD, students in disadvantaged schools have less access to guidance counsellors 39
Figure 2.8. Disadvantaged students rely more on schools for career-related skills than advantaged ones 40
Figure 2.9. Students with high SES are significantly more likely to undertake an internship, after controlling for gender, migrant status, reading score, and VET orientation 41
Figure 2.10. In most OECD countries with available data, socially disadvantaged students do less volunteer work and more paid work than socially advantaged students 42
Figure 2.11. Disadvantaged students tend to be uncertain about their future careers more than advantaged students 44
Figure 2.12. Even when controlling for educational pathway (VET v. general), gender, migrant status and reading score, socially disadvantaged students are more likely than advantaged students to be uncertain about their future career 45
Figure 2.13. Even among similarly performing students, socially disadvantaged students are less likely than advantaged students to expect to work in high-skilled occupations 46
Figure 2.14. High performing socially disadvantaged students are less likely to expect to complete tertiary education 47
Figure 2.15. Socially disadvantaged students are more likely to be misaligned their career expectations and education plans 48
Figure 2.16. Compared to similarly performing socially advantaged students, disadvantaged students are more likely to express career and education expectations that are not aligned 49
Figure 2.17. Even when controlling for reading score and other characteristics, socially disadvantaged students are more likely than advantaged students to be misaligned in their career expectation 50
Figure 2.18. Socially advantaged students are more likely to expect to work in popular jobs than disadvantaged students with similar academic performance 51
Figure 2.19. Even among similarly performing students, career expectation among socially advantaged students is more concentrated than disadvantaged students 52
Figure 2.20. Socially disadvantaged students are more likely to expect to work in skilled trades 53
Figure 2.21. Among high performers disadvantaged boys show the lowest career concentration while among low performers advantaged boys show the lowest concentration 54
Figure 2.22. Parent occupation and gender have different effects on career expectation for science or engineering occupations across countries 55
Figure 2.23. Effect of parent occupation on child's career expectation and by gender 56
Figure 3.1. Young women are more likely to be NEET than young men, even with equal levels of education and skills 73
Figure 3.2. Young men and young women with similar levels of educational attainment can expect different outcomes in the labour market 74

Figure 3.3. Having the same educational attainment and the same number of children, fewer young women tend to be employed than young men 75
Figure 3.4. Distribution of employment by aggregate sectors differ by gender, 2019 76
Figure 3.5. Labour market segregation by gender is clear even among those with similar levels of education 77
Figure 3.6. Occupational distribution of young people (15-29) by gender, EU-27 78
Figure 3.7. Young women tend to work in managerial or professional occupations more than young men in most OECD countries 78
Figure 3.8. Young women are under-represented in STEM jobs 79
Figure 3.9. Even after controlling for education and skills, young men are more likely to earn high wages compared to young women 81
Figure 3.10. Even after controlling for education and skills levels, young men are significantly more likely to work full-time than young women 81
Figure 3.11. Even after controlling for academic performance and education pathway (VET v. general), boys participate more than girls in external career activities that involve employers 86
Figure 3.12. Boys are significantly more likely to do an internship, after controlling for SES, migrant status, reading score, and VET orientation 86
Figure 3.13. Boys tend to experience working more than girls 87
Figure 3.14. Boys tend to be more uncertain than girls about their occupational plans across OECD countries 89
Figure 3.15. Even when controlling for socioeconomic status, migrant background, reading score and VET, boys are more likely than girls to be uncertain about their occupational plans 90
Figure 3.16. Among high performing students, girls are more likely to expect to become managers or professionals (ISCO major categories 1 and 2) 91
Figure 3.17. Girls are more likely to expect to complete tertiary education, even after controlling for other factors 92
Figure 3.18. Boys are more likely to express career misalignment compared to girls, even among similarly performing students 93
Figure 3.19. Even when controlling for VET and other characteristics, boys are more likely than girls to be misaligned in their career expectation 94
Figure 3.20. Girls have more concentrated career expectations than similarly performing boys 95
Figure 3.21. Girls' occupational expectation is highly concentrated in professional occupations 95
Figure 3.22. Top-performing girls in science or math are less likely to expect to work as science and engineering professionals but more likely as health professionals than top-performing boys 96
Figure 3.23. Girls tend to be less interested in the skilled trades than boys 97
Figure 4.1. Foreign-born young people tend to be more likely to be NEET 112
Figure 4.2. Employment rates between foreign-born and native-born young adults vary by education level 113
Figure 4.3. Similar level qualification leads into different employment outcomes, UK 114
Figure 4.4. Attrition rates in employment differ by ethnicity, UK 115
Figure 4.5. Occupational distribution of young people (15-29) by migrant status, EU-27 116
Figure 4.6. Foreign-born young adults are less likely to earn high wages, compared to similarly qualified and educated native-born young adults 117
Figure 4.7. Earning gap between different ethnic groups increases over time, UK 118
Figure 4.8. Foreign-born students are more likely to participate in research-oriented career exploring activities but less likely to participate in activities that connect them directly with people in work 120
Figure 4.9. Country variation is significant in the probability of foreign-born students to do an internship compared to native-born students 121
Figure 4.10. While evidence is mixed in terms of experiencing activities by migrant status, in some countries native-born students do career experiencing activities significantly more than foreign-born students 122
Figure 4.11. In several countries, more foreign-born students are uncertain about their future kind of job at around age 30 compared to native-born students 123
Figure 4.12. When controlling for VET and other characteristics, in more countries native-born students are less likely than foreign-born students to be uncertain about their future career 124
Figure 4.13. Foreign-born students are more likely to be ambitious about their future careers 125
Figure 4.14. Foreign-born students are more likely to expect to work in popular jobs than native-born students with similar academic performance 126
Figure 4.15. Foreign-born students tend to be less interested in skilled trades 127
Figure 5.1. New Brunswick Career Education Framework: Response to Intervention model 148

TABLES

Table 5.1. OECD Career Readiness Indicators 142
Table 5.2. New Brunswick Career Development Framework: Big ideas and related outcome areas 143
Table 5.3. How the New Brunswick Career Education Framework integrates OECD career readiness indicators 144
Table 5.4. Accessing additional support through the New Brunswick Career Education Framework 148

BOXES

Box 1.1. Data and methodology used in this paper 14
Box 1.2. Teenage career readiness and initial labour market outcomes 23
Box 2.1. Class ceilings: Class-based inequalities in the workplace 35
Box 2.2. Interactions between gender and SES in career concentration 54
Box 3.1. Inequality in education and employment linked to sexuality and gender identity 82
Box 4.1. Different education and employment outcomes by ethnicity in the UK 114

Executive Summary

The focus of this paper is on how social inequalities shape the career development and transitions of young people. It asks how schools guidance systems can best respond to circumstances where evidence is strong that definable groups of students with shared characteristics face greater barriers than peers in successfully progressing through education into employment. In exploring the conversion of qualifications, skills and experience into employment, the paper draws on a capitals-based conceptual model. In the competition for employment, relative success is widely understood in terms of the comparative human capital, social capital and cultural capital possessed by individuals in relation to their career ambitions. Across these three fields, guidance systems have important roles to play. They can encourage and enable students to make good investment choices in their education and training, optimising their future relevance. They can also help students to build such human capital through relevant work-based experience by means of internships or volunteering in the community. Through such means students can also build social capital, engaging with people working in professions of interest well placed to provide trusted advice and practical support to career progression. In-school programmes of career talks and job fairs can both enable such engagement and help students to build understanding of different work cultures and the progression pathways most valued by employers, underpinning an assured understanding of distinct social and cultural norms (cultural capital). Through these means, students can be seen to form the sense of personal agency that allows informed and confident progression through education into desirable employment.

The paper focuses on three primary areas where social inequalities can distort the career success of young people: their socio-economic background (SES), gender and migrant status. These forms of inequality are focused on over three dedicated chapters with the discussion of gender also highlighting evidence of additional labour market barriers linked to sexual orientation and gender identity and the chapter on migrant status also drawing on wider evidence related to ethnic identity.

Each of the three chapters takes the same form. They initially present new evidence from analysis of the OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) to test, having controlled for academic achievement, skills and other factors that influence labour market success, whether SES, gender and migrant status can be seen to shape the employment outcomes of young adults. The analysis finds considerable evidence, commonly aligned with wider research literature, that this is the case. The three forms of inequality can be seen to shape, if in different ways, the likelihood of young adults becoming NEET (Not in Education Employment or Training), patterns of segregation within the labour market when in employment as well as indicators of job quality, including salary levels. While individual circumstance will vary, it is students from low SES backgrounds, women and young adults from migrant backgrounds who can often expect poorer labour market outcomes than would be expected, given their academic achievement, skills levels and other factors. While guidance systems have limited capacity to resolve such inequalities, they can and should address the additional barriers to progression that these barriers present to students.

Secondly, each chapter explores whether patterns of teenage career development can also be seen to be shaped by such characteristics. Drawing on data from participating OECD countries in the 2018 round of the PISA, the study again finds strong patterns in student engagement in career development. Students

from low SES backgrounds for example, are substantially more likely to underestimate the need for tertiary education to secure their career objectives, they are also less likely to engage in school-managed career development activities (CDA) than their high SES peers. Both girls and migrant students are less likely than peers to engage in those forms of CDA that are most strongly associated in longitudinal evidence with better employment outcomes: activities which bring them into direct contact with employers and people in work. While both groups tend to be more ambitious for their futures than boys and native-born students, the career plans of both groups are more highly concentrated around a small number of potential future jobs, indicating the need for greater career exploration.

Finally, each chapter presents examples of practice from around the world that illustrate ways in which guidance systems can address such additional barriers preventing optimal progression within the labour market through career guidance. Examples cluster around four thematic areas:

1. Intensified support for disadvantaged groups through targeted provision, exemplified by initiatives such as the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools program in Ireland.
2. Enhancement of the professional capacity of guidance practitioners to understand and respond to inequalities, as demonstrated by the BREAK! Project in Estonia, Iceland, and Lithuania.
3. Building social capital by facilitating connections between students from disadvantaged backgrounds and professionals in their desired fields, such as through online tools to ease engagement with employers and people in work.
4. Encouraging critical understanding of personal relationships with the labour market to empower students to challenge inequalities and make informed career decisions through critical exploration of patterns of advantage and disadvantage within the labour market.

The paper then presents a newly developed model for comprehensively addressing social inequalities within K-12 career guidance. The New Brunswick Career Education Framework was developed in partnership with the OECD. It draws upon available empirical data to articulate career development journeys designed to provide support for students across the four thematic areas detailed above. It is also predicated on the basis that different students may require more intense support from guidance systems depending on the resources accessible through non-school sources and the character of their career ambitions. The paper concludes with a summarising conclusion which points the way towards enabling more personalised guidance for young people while challenging social inequalities and highlighting need for additional research in the field.

1. Inequality in the transition from education to work

This introductory chapter explores how structural inequalities shape the transitions from school to work of young people with different characteristics and why inequalities are of relevance to the work of career guidance practitioners.

1.1. Introduction

Career guidance is widely recognised as an essential tool in the transitions of young people through education into employment (Cedefop, 2021[1]). The common aim of career guidance systems is to help young people to make informed decisions about their choices in education and training in order to enable smoother transitions into fulfilling and sustainable employment. International interest in career guidance grew in the wake of the Global Financial Crisis and the spikes in youth unemployment it produced, and was renewed again in recent years among policy makers and practitioners during the COVID-19 pandemic and a growing recognition that in many countries young people continued to struggle in the early labour market in spite of unprecedented levels of academic achievement. In response to this growing interest, the OECD launched Career Readiness project for young people. Through 2020-22, the project laid the foundation for rebuilding this important dialogue on career guidance by distilling key indicators of teenage career readiness (OECD, 2021[2]) through analysis of longitudinal datasets in multiple countries. It also collected practices in career guidance which align with empirical evidence, identifying characteristics of more effective career guidance. This paper contributes to the second phase of the project (2022-24), which explores the importance of career development in relation to student demographic characteristics, strategically important economic areas ('green' jobs), and the use of digital technologies in guidance while providing countries with policy advice to enhance national practice.

This paper focuses on how school-level career guidance systems can respond to structural inequalities facing young people. It aims to provide educational jurisdictions and the wider career guidance community with new insights into how social inequalities influence the outcomes of young people as they transition from education to work, shape participation in career guidance activities and can most effectively be addressed through guidance provision. It draws on new analysis of the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) data as well as national statistics. The paper builds moreover on the OECD Career Readiness Indicators (Covacevich et al., 2021[3]) to review the impact of structural inequalities on the education-to-work transitions and the need for, and provision of, school-age career guidance. Consequently, the paper identifies a range of career guidance interventions that can be expected to mitigate the negative impact of inequalities on students' transition outcomes, enabling fairer access to economic opportunities and stronger psychological preparation for transitions. The paper concludes by reviewing how the new Career Education Framework in New Brunswick (Canada) articulates means by which education systems can systematically address inequalities as they support youth in their transitions to work.

This first chapter introduces the concepts and contexts of structural inequalities, theories of change and the practical delivery of career guidance in terms of the transition from school to work, and answers why inequality matters in the delivery of career guidance.

Chapter two, three and four discuss first how early labour market experiences are shaped by inequalities linked to young adults' characteristics in three areas: socio-economic status (Chapter 2), gender/sexuality (Chapter 3) and migrant background/ethnicity (Chapter 4). Within the analysis, greater challenges are identified for some youth (sharing distinct characteristics) more than others in successfully activating their accumulated human capital within the labour market. The chapters analyse the early labour market outcomes of young adults demonstrating comparable levels of educational success in relation to the different forms of employment outcomes against each of the three characteristics: rates at which young adults are Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET), patterns in labour market segmentation and job quality (earnings, job satisfaction, type of work contract, and qualification and field of study mismatch). Through this analysis, additional obstacles facing discrete groups of young people in achieving effective transitions into the labour market are highlighted. The three chapters then discuss how each characteristic of inequality relates to the career development of students within school either helping or hindering their capacity to convert human capital into successful employment. Finally, the chapters look at how career

guidance, drawing on current examples of practice, can respond to the challenges of inequalities in student progression towards employment. In this, they cluster examples of practice around four thematic areas which cut across the different forms of inequality:

- intensity of support;
- professional capacity and targeted provision;
- social capital: and,
- critical understanding of personal relations within the labour market.

Chapter 5 concludes the paper by setting out the primary elements of a K-12 career education framework recently developed by the Canadian province of New Brunswick in collaboration with the OECD. The framework acknowledges the different ways in which inequalities can hinder youth in their transition to work and describes means by which guidance professionals can assess the need for greater intervention to effectively support individual students. The framework provides a model of practice which aligns with the findings of this paper and that could be used by policy makers in other jurisdictions, practitioners and other stakeholders. The chapter concludes by highlighting priorities for further research.

Box 1.1. Data and methodology used in this paper

This paper includes analysis of data from the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) to gain insight into structural inequalities. PISA surveys (from 79 countries and economic areas in 2018) review the educational experiences and progress of nationally representative samples of students at the age of 15-16 years while PIAAC looks at the experiences of adults (in 40 countries) and assesses how they make use of their qualifications and skills in the labour market. This paper also includes the analysis of follow-up surveys of Australian students who participated in PISA 2003 through the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) in 2013. Data and methodology in this paper follow earlier OECD work (Covacevich et al., 2021[3]).

Results are reported in percentage, percentage point difference or odds ratio. Odds ratios reflect the relative likelihood of an event occurring for a particular group relative to a reference group. An odds ratio of 1 represents equal chances of an event occurring for a particular group compared to the reference group. A value below 1 indicates that there is less chance of an event occurring for a particular group compared to the reference group, and value greater than 1 represents greater chances. Odds ratios are adjusted for control variables. In the case of PISA data, these relate to gender, the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS), academic achievement in reading, migrant status, and programme orientation (vocational education and training versus general programme). In the interest of identifying promising practices that may foster labour market outcomes, this paper reports results that are significant up to the 10% level of significance, unless otherwise stated.[1] This liberal significance criterion is in line with much of the academic literature and earlier OECD work in this field.

A teenage student's socio-economic status (SES) is assessed by the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) (OECD, 2019[4]). For young adults using PIAAC data, the level of educational attainment achieved by the parents of the participants in the Survey was used as proxy to indicate young adults' SES (OECD, 2016[5]). Migrant status is estimated by the birthplace of respondents – foreign-born (different from the country where the PISA or PIAAC test was undertaken) versus native-born.

Source: (Covacevich et al., 2021[6]; OECD, 2019[4]; 2016[5])

1.2. Inequalities in the transition from education to work

Structural inequality is a condition where a definable group of people with shared personal characteristics systematically face additional barriers in achieving social and particularly economic goals leading to disparities in outcomes which cannot be explained by variation in individual ability. Such inequality is a barrier that many young people are faced with when transitioning from education to work. In one's career, two aspects play a key role: firstly, one's individual effort as captured through educational attainments, skills or experiences, and secondly, structural factors that cannot be changed by one's effort such as age, gender and sexuality, socio-economic background (SES), ethnicity or migrant background. While the former explains a significant part of labour market outcomes, it does not so completely. The latter serve to shape and often sharply constrain the career development and employment outcomes of individuals (Lehmann, 2005[7]; OECD, 2016[5]; 2019[8]).

Structural inequality becomes most apparent when young people with the same educational attainment or skills at similar levels end up with different labour market outcomes. This is what Chapters 2, 3 and 4 show. For those who are placed at a disadvantage due to their socio-economic background, gender, sexuality,

migrant background or ethnicity, the playing field is not equal. This inequality is perpetuated and reinforced by unequal opportunities and their consequences and further rooted in institutions, systems, societies and histories (Alcorn, 2016[9]). The ambitions and resources of students are highly personalised, and so inequalities can work in diverse ways. The gender of a young woman for example might accentuate progression towards careers in nursing or teaching, but serve to hinder progression towards careers in information technology. For career guidance, and other interventions seeking to address inequalities and to fairly activate human capital in the labour market, this complex interplay between the individual and the structures in which they are developing their career creates challenges. By implication for the guidance community, it is clear that a one-size approach to provision will not fit all. The characteristics of young people are multifaceted and inequalities can be seen to build upon each other to increase disadvantage: a migrant-born girl from a low SES background for example can often expect greater challenges in achieving specific employment ambitions, linked to different aspects of her background, to a native-born girl from a high SES background. However, in order to simplify understanding of available data, a limited emphasis has been placed in this study on such intersectionality. This is an aspect of inequalities and guidance that would benefit from greater future study (Center for Intersectional Justice, 2020[10]; Council of Europe, 2022[11]).

1.3. Career guidance in the transition from education to work

Career guidance[2] includes services and activities intended to assist individuals to make educational, training and occupational choices, to prepare well for their transitions into the labour market and to manage their careers (Musset and Mytna Kurekova, 2018[12]; OECD, 2004[13]). It is also commonly designed to help in the efficient functioning of education and the labour markets and to contribute to a range of social policy goals, including social mobility and equity. Empirical evidence points towards career guidance services – in school and outside – having a formative influence on students' understanding of themselves and the world of work, and can often improve educational, social and economic outcomes (Hughes et al., 2016[14]) As young people stay in education and training longer and as the labour market becomes more complex leading to increased decision-making in more difficult circumstances, the case for career guidance grows (Cedefop, 2021[1]; Musset and Mytna Kurekova, 2018[12]). Career guidance can offer students not only current and projected labour market information but also useful perspectives, resources and tools that they can use to better understand, match and activate their emerging interests and skills to the labour market opportunities.

In secondary education, career development activities are commonly designed to help young people explore their career ambitions, to develop the skills required to begin managing their career journeys and to gain first-hand experience of the working world. Career development activities include a wide range of interventions that are commonly studied in isolation, but typically delivered in combination: career counselling, career exploration, work-related learning, work-based learning, mentoring, career management skills, recruitment skills (Covacevich et al., 2021[6]). Effective career guidance encourages students to reflect on who they are and who they want to become, and to think critically about the relationships between their educational choices and future life.

1.3.1. Career guidance can strengthen the capacity to aspire in the context of social stratification and structural inequalities

International evidence of social inequalities shaping labour market participation is widespread. It is easier for people sharing specific characteristics to achieve certain economic and social outcomes than others. For example, in the UK, power structures are dominated by a narrow section of the population who are educated privately or graduate from just two universities among the more than 160 institutions of higher education in the country. Looking at who occupies the most senior positions across a range of professions

(including the law, business, national and local government, politics and sport), the UK Social Mobility Commission finds that 39% of such elites attended private fee-paying schools, more than five times as many as the population at large (7%) (Sutton Trust/Social Mobility Commission, 2019[15]). From another perspective, gay men in the UK are significantly less likely than comparable heterosexual men to be in the high-level managerial positions that come with higher status and pay – this "gay glass ceiling" is stronger for racial minorities than for white people (Aksoy et al., 2018[16]).

The OECD indicators on women in politics and businesses also show that less than a third of those people occupying positions of political power are women (35% of ministers and 32% of all parliamentarians) on average across OECD countries in 2021 (OECD, 2022[17]) and that women make up only 16% of board members in the top 500 multinational enterprises in 2020 (OECD, 2020[18]). In the US, women are less likely to be in the top corporate positions (26% of C-suite in 2022) and promoted. A recent McKinsey study of 333 participating organisations for example, found that for every 100 men promoted from entry-level roles to manager positions, only 87 women (only 82 women of colour) are promoted (Krivkovich et al., 2022[19]). McKinsey finds moreover that LGBTQ+ men and women are generally underrepresented in the management pipeline compared to its population estimation with LGBTQ+ women experiencing greater underrepresentation than male peers (Ellsworth, Mendy and Sullivan, 2020[20]).

Kearney and Levine (2016[21]) argue that such established inequality might discourage human capital investment: due to a heightened sense of economic and social marginalisation, an adolescent at the bottom of the income distribution or with other disadvantaged backgrounds may not see as much value in investing in his or her human capital as would a more advantaged peer. By way of illustration, US data show that geographic areas with higher levels of income inequality have lower high school completion rates, and the perceived return of schooling was lower among low-SES children, especially in high-inequality states. The study highlights the role of one's relative position in society in determining individuals' attitudes and behaviours towards their careers and related choices (Kearney and Levine, 2016[21]).

In this context, Indian sociologist Arjun Appadurai (2004[22]) argues that strengthening the 'capacity to aspire' or 'navigational capacity' of young people can be expected to help them to contest and alter the conditions of inequality. According to Appadurai (see also, (Archer, 2014[23]; St Clair, Kintrea and Houston, 2014[24]), young people from low-income backgrounds do not lack ambition for themselves, but systematically face greater challenges than high-income peers in accessing resources which will allow their ambitions to be fulfilled. Past structural inequalities can conflict with an individual's future career development plans and there is a need to create and enable a culture of aspiration through providing more equal access to resources that support progression (capacity building) such as through career guidance. The concept of capacity to aspire highlights the importance of social relationships in enabling access to economic opportunities and bears close relation to the idea of critical consciousness defined by Blustein (2019[25]) as the capacity to reflect on, and commitment to address, the causes of social inequality (see also (Diemer and Blustein, 2006[26]).

Earlier OECD work and other national studies show that career ambitions are heavily influenced by student socio-economic status, gender and migrant background (Musset and Mytna Kurekova, 2018[12]). Moreover, studies point out that many young people, particularly from the most socially disadvantaged backgrounds, are confused about what they need to do to secure their job ambitions. In many cases, teenagers from lower socio-economic backgrounds underestimate their own academic abilities, show poor awareness of educational pathways and suffer negative academic consequences linked to lower-than-expected aspirations (Mann et al., 2020[27]). Consequently, what teenagers think about their working futures matters to their adult outcomes. It shapes the way that they perceive their daily classroom experiences and provides a compass for how education, skills and qualifications are mustered to access personally satisfying adult employment. Earlier longitudinal studies have shown that teenage students who express clear occupational expectations, hold high ambitions for themselves, understand how education can help them achieve their aspirations, and plan on securing the education necessary to achieve their career goals go on to engage more successfully in work than comparable peers (Covacevich et al., 2021[3]). The

opposite is also the case: young adults who demonstrated incomplete or confused thinking about the labour market as teenagers and who felt that their education was a waste of time can be expected to work and earn less than peers with similar backgrounds and qualifications (Mann, Denis and Percy, 2020[28]).

Career guidance has long been viewed as having the potential to ameliorate social inequalities. Indeed, it can be argued that this commitment to addressing inequalities goes back to the origins of the field in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century where it was viewed as a technique that could support the fair and efficient functioning of a society that was in huge industrial, technological and geographical turmoil (Zytowski, 2001[29]). Ever since, the claim that career guidance can help level the playing field by providing individuals with knowledge and contacts that transcend their social background has been repeatedly made (Hansen, 2003[30]; Hooley, Matheson and Watts, 2014[31]). Most recently a movement of scholars has argued that, if properly conceptualised, constituted and delivered, career guidance can be an active and positive force for social justice (Arthur, 2014[32]; Hooley and Sultana, 2016[33]; Hooley, Sultana and Thomsen, 2017[34]).

It is important however, to recognise that while much evidence points towards career guidance as a force for social equity, this is not necessarily the case. Policymakers and providers have choices to make about the orientation that career guidance has in relation to society. As Watts (1996/2014[35]) notes career guidance can be used as a form of social reproduction and control, which "habituates entrants to the workforce, gatekeeps access to opportunities and cools out excessive ambition" (p.173). Consequently, career guidance can be viewed as a contested arena in which decisions around its design and delivery will influence the extent to which it can be expected to exacerbate or reduce social inequalities. While empirical studies have found that guidance interventions can serve to reduce inequalities among young people transitioning into the labour market (Lee et al., 2021[36]; Mann, Percy and Kashefpakdel, 2018[37]; Percy and Kashefpakdel, 2019[38]), this result is not always reported (Hatcher and Le Gallais, 2008[39]; Percy and Kashefpakdel, 2019[38]). This is particularly the case when career guidance is uncritically used as a tool to track young people into either academic or vocational tracks (Romito, 2019[40]). Questions consequently remain as to what more equitable career guidance should look like and how it can best be organised in ways that recognise the diverse experiences of young people and particularly speak to the challenges that they face.

1.3.2. Conceptualising the role of inequality in career development: how career guidance can help in the accumulation of human, social, cultural capital relevant to progression

In making sense of the capacity of guidance systems to address structural inequalities, this paper draws on capitals analysis. This is a commonly used means of understanding the factors influencing comparative outcomes in the labour market. Conceptualised in different forms, studies by Brown (2020[41]) and Tomlinson (2022[42]; 2013[43]) among others focus particularly on three intertwined aspects of resource that individuals draw upon in the competition for work. Each has implications for the design and delivery of career guidance systems and a growing literature has made use of these aspects of capital development to analyse the capacity of guidance systems to better enable successful transitions for young people from education into employment (Jones, Mann and Morris, 2016[44]; Lehmann, 2005[7]; Mann, Denis and Percy, 2020[28]; Norris, 2011[45]; Raffo and Reeves, 2000[46]; Stanley and Mann, 2014[47]). Theories related to capitals development make it easier for analysts to assess the value of different forms of career development within education and compare provision available to different groups of students.

Human capital is understood as the collection of knowledge, skills (often codified as qualifications) and work-related experience that an individual possesses (Brown, Lauder and Cheung, 2020[48]; Keeley, 2007[49]). Here, it is the role of school systems to help students to structure their accumulating knowledge, skills and qualifications in ways that will relate to potential successful futures in work. Analysis of PISA 2018 highlights ways in which guidance can enhance the accumulation of human capital within formative

education. The international study shows that disadvantaged youth are routinely more likely to demonstrate uncertainty or confusion in their career thinking at age 15-16, making educational choices more difficult. They are also more likely to express lower ambitions (in terms of progression to tertiary education or professional occupations) than higher SES peers with the same levels of academic ability as captured by the PISA assessments (Mann et al., 2020[27]). However, PISA also shows that participation in a range of guidance activities can be seen to reduce such uncertainty and confusion (Covacevich et al., 2021[3]). School systems have the capacity to assess the career thinking of students and provide greater input should detrimental thinking be apparent, enabling more confident subject selection and understanding of post-secondary pathways. Schools also have scope to support students in accessing work-related experiences, which represent an additional means of accumulating human capital that is helpful in career advancement (Madgavkar, 2022[50]) and which is frequently inaccessible to young people, notably girls (Mann and Kashefpakdel, 2014[51]; OECD, 2021[2]).

Social capital relates to the networks of people with which an individual comes into contact (Halpern, 2004[52]; Lin, 2012[53]). As a concept, social capital has commonly been drawn on to identify how individuals gain access to resources of use in their transitions into and within employment (Granovetter, 1973[54]; Lin, 2012[53]). Such value can take different forms which relate in different ways to guidance provision. Social relations frequently enable access to experiences, information and active support of long-term value. Analysis of PISA data for example highlights the ways in which the career aspirations of teenagers are shaped by their family backgrounds (Musset and Mytna Kurekova, 2018[12]). Moreover, the influence of family relations is particularly strong in studies of how students access workplace experiences, such as internships (Hatcher and Le Gallais, 2008[39]). In some countries for example, university candidates must demonstrate first-hand experience of medical-related workplaces to secure access to degrees in medicine. As studies from the UK show, such experiences are much more difficult to source in the absence of strong family-based networks which in turn reflect SES background (Jones et al., 2018[55]). Through contacts with people in work, students can also gain recommendations and, at times, employment after completing secondary education. As first conceptualised by Granovetter as the 'strength of weak ties' (1973[54]), social capital also provides access to trusted information (often unavailable outside of immediate social circles) which can be linked to more attractive employment outcomes (Franzen and Hangartner, 2006[56]). Through personal encounters, individuals gain access to new information (and support) which have been seen to be helpful in self-conceptions and understanding of whether potential career pathways would be attractive and suitable for them as individuals (Jones, Mann and Morris, 2016[44]; Mann and Percy, 2014[57]; Rennison et al., 2005[58]). US sociologist Nan Lin has demonstrated that the value of such networks tends to be greater if an individual's contact occupies a higher social and economic position within society (Lin, 2012[53]). Looked at from a perspective of social mobility, students from more disadvantaged backgrounds can be understood to have less access to higher status individuals who are able and willing to share career insights and work-related opportunities (Mann, Percy and Kashefpakdel, 2018[37]). As UK empirical studies show, the small minority of students who attend fee-paying schools systematically engage more frequently with people in work relevant to their career development and assess their interactions to be of greater value than is the case with more disadvantaged peers (Mann, 2016[59]; Mann and Kashefpakdel, 2014[51]).

If human capital refers to what an individual knows and social capital to who they know, *cultural capital* is a term used broadly to refer to what they think about themselves and their possible future within society. In relation to career development, the aspirations that children come to see as desirable and possible in light of their social circumstances can be seen as a form of cultural capital (Archer, 2014[23]). Such assumptions and expectations are heavily shaped by social class, gender and ethnicity as students and their families develop understanding of what possibilities and pathways are open to them and believing that they have the capacity and right to navigate them. Consequently, cultural capital can be seen as being strongly influenced by the social relations surrounding an individual student which individually and cumulatively serve to shape social norms about what is 'reasonable' for different students to aspire to in gendered and social terms, serving to constrain career ambitions. Within sociology, such understanding of how individuals navigated the structures of education and employment have been heavily influenced by

the works of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1987[60]; 2018[61]). Notably, Bourdieu's focus on the importance of distinctive socially inherited and (at times) unconsciously acquired attitudes and dispositions has been used to make sense of the ways in which a wide range of circumstances linked to social class, gender and ethnicity have been seen to influence personal behaviour and economic outcomes (Archer and Francis, 2007[62]; Friedman and Laurison, 2020[63]; Lehmann, 2005[7]; Stanley and Mann, 2014[47]). In terms of career development, such influences can be seen to shape the individual know-how needed to succeed within a profession and is often discussed in terms of understanding of the 'rules of the game' which underpin personal confidence and integration into particular forms of education and fields of employment (Archer, 2014[23]; Brown, 2020[41]; Clark and Zukas, 2013[64]; Reay, 2017[65]). In this way, it includes understanding of how systems of education and training actually work – and can be best exploited for personal advantage – so reinforcing a confident sense of personal agency. PISA data show that disadvantaged students who plan on working in a professional occupation are very commonly more likely to underestimate the levels of education required, speaking to a confusion about the role of education and training in enabling progression towards desired futures in work (Covacevich et al., 2021[6]; Mann et al., 2020[27]). As PISA also shows, lower levels of such career uncertainty and confusion are linked statistically to participation in career development activities (Covacevich et al., 2021[3]).

Collectively, the three concepts provide a mechanism for assessing and addressing the differing capacities of young people to progress effectively through education and into employment (Stanley and Mann, 2014[47]). A recent survey by Skills Development Scotland shows for example that the three most cited barriers identified by school-leavers related to successful career progression relate respectively to cultural, human and social capital: i) not having enough confidence in myself (47%), not enough work experience (44%) and not knowing the right people (38%) (SDS Evaluation and Research Team, 2023[66]). Guidance activities can be expected to have the potential to address these needs in a multi-faceted fashion:

> *Through [school-mediated] employer engagement activities, a teenager may make the contacts needed to be offered a job (social capital … as access to employment) while simultaneously acquiring the expertise or ability to make them employable in that role (human capital … as skills development). Or, to give another example, a young adult may report maturing and becoming more assured about themself (cultural capital … as enhanced personal confidence) as a result of trusted information from employers (social capital … as authentic guidance) (Jones, Mann and Morris, 2016[44]).*

Within education systems there is evidence that the capacity of schools to develop human, social and cultural capital through career guidance interventions varies, with studies particularly noting variation by socio-economic status (Mann et al., 2020[27]; Mann and Kashefpakdel, 2014[51]). Ashton and Ashton illustrate the expected impact in the field of the performing arts from a UK perspective (2022[67]). Fee-paying secondary schools provide considerably greater opportunity than state schools for students to develop skills in industry-standard facilities working closely with professionals from related vocational areas, optimising skill development, social networks and vocational understanding. Such provision is seen by Ashton and Ashton as an explanatory factor in a growing domination of the performing arts by individuals from a narrow social background (2022[67]).

The development of human, social and cultural capitals is heavily shaped by personal background and is unequally distributed across populations of young people (Norris, 2011[45]). Unequal distribution of these capitals across young people results in disparity in choices, opportunities, sources of support and employment outcomes. A primary objective of effective guidance programmes will be to build equal and fair access to such resource building, providing greater support to those in greater need based on their personal circumstances and aspirations. In this paper, focus is not devoted to a further important capital: economic or finance capital. While family wealth does influence access to guidance-related opportunities outside of the classroom (Norris, 2011[45]), this paper specifically focuses on the capitals that school-based interventions have the potential to develop.

1.3.3. Career guidance as a means to enhancing student outcomes in employment

While it has long been agreed that guidance should form a mandatory element of secondary school provision, there has been a need to strengthen the supporting evidence base that supports and particularly to clearly demonstrate its impacts on educational and labour market outcomes through experimental and quasi-experimental studies (Hughes et al., 2016[14]). The OECD Career Readiness project has made a substantial contribution to filling this evidence gap by looking at long-term employment impacts typically at age 25 linked to career-related activities, experiences and attitudes at around age 15 by reviewing academic literature and undertaking new analysis of longitudinal datasets in ten countries (OECD, 2021[2]).

These studies show a strong pattern of statistically significant relationships between the character of teenage career development and better than expected employment outcomes (lower rates of young adults not being in education, employment or training, higher wages and/or greater job satisfaction) in relation to three clusters: how students explore, experience and think about their potential future in work (Covacevich et al., 2021[3]; Covacevich et al., 2021[6]; Mann, Denis and Percy, 2020[28]). While prior to Covacevich et al. (2021[3]), evidence had existed in the academic literature to show strong relations between teenage work-related experiences and thinking and better outcomes, the OECD analysis provided important new evidence of the link with participation in Career Development Activities (CDA) as forms of career exploration. This paper draws on the OECD Career Readiness Indicators (described in detail in Box 1.2) identified within this longitudinal analysis. The paper focuses particularly on those forms of guidance that are most commonly and easily delivered within schools. It explores the extent to which participation in such CDA are shaped by inequalities.

1.4. Analysis of inequality in the early career experiences of young adults and the teenage career readiness and guidance

One challenge facing analysts seeking to make sense of the ways in which inequalities influence the employment outcomes of young people relates to the ways in which they can be seen to shape the academic success with which students approach the labour market. It is widely accepted that forms of inequality influence the educational achievement of students (OECD, 2019[8]). For instance, PISA 2018 shows that on average across OECD countries, a student's economic, social and cultural status explains 12% variance in student reading performance (14% in mathematics, 13% in science). A student from the bottom 25% in terms of SES is five times more likely than a student from the top 25% to be a low performer (OECD, 2019[4]). However, the extent to which one's SES affects these outcomes varies across countries, ranging from 6% to 19% (OECD, 2019[4]).

There is also potential for engagement in career guidance to influence the educational success of young people. A review of experimental and quasi-experimental studies by Hughes et al. (2016[14]) finds that 60% of 67 evaluations in studies provided 'largely positive' findings evidencing improvements in educational outcomes linked to student participation in career development activities. Consequently, the risk exists that such participation will influence academic achievement, notably if it is patterned by social background, gender or migrant status, which will in turn influence employment outcomes that are linked to educational success. This paper responds to this potential risk through by comparing the vocational fortunes only of comparable students. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 each begin by looking at how inequalities in terms of gender, socio-economic status and migrant background/ethnicity are visible when comparing the early labour market outcomes of students possessing *similar* levels of education and qualifications. In this it should be noted, scope exists for further study of the ways in which guidance might address student academic success, building on existing research literature (Hughes et al., 2016[14]).

Looking at comparable groups of young adults, inequalities are then explored in relation to a range of labour market outcomes: similarly qualified cohorts of young adults can face very different levels of

unemployment, earnings, skills mismatch, job satisfaction and opportunity to work across the labour market (segmentation). In the analysis that follows, PIAAC data is reviewed against each of these indicators of career success.

Analysis of early labour market outcomes shows that commonly those young people who face social disadvantages – whether that be in terms of SES, gender, migrant backgrounds – face greater challenges in accessing employment and higher quality jobs. Young adults with certain disadvantages are often disproportionally represented in certain labour market segments or in other ways share poorer employment outcomes. Evidence presented in this paper confirms that this is true even when controlling for academic ability and qualifications (Figure 1.1). Such impacts can be long lasting. Experiences of unemployment or economic inactivity among female youth, migrant youth and youth from low SES backgrounds have an effect on later labour market outcomes (Bell and Blanchflower, 2011[68]; Dietrich and Möller, 2015[69]). Even if initial labour market outcomes were similar or even better, the outcomes of disadvantaged groups tend to become poorer than those of advantaged groups over time (Box 1.2).

Patterns in later outcomes provide insights of value to professionals working in teenage career development. PISA data also show that inequalities are frequently apparent in the character of such development. Socio-economically disadvantaged students for example, are commonly less certain and less ambitious about their future careers and demonstrate poorer understanding of the labour market and its relation to education. While it should be expected that such groups would typically receive greater levels of guidance than their more advantaged peers, frequently this is not the case. Although girls are more certain, ambitious and aligned in their educational and career planning than boys, their career aspirations are more concentrated, and they are less likely to receive employer-involved career guidance. Foreign-born students too, are more ambitious than their native-born peers, but they commonly receive less career guidance than native-born students (Figure 1.1).

However, many career guidance systems recognise the need for greater support focused on students facing greater challenges. In doing so, it is important for career guidance policy makers and practitioners to understand the linkages between structural inequalities, young people's career development and career readiness, and the labour market needs and outcomes. It is particularly important to recognise that challenges for individuals in their education-to-work transitions can differ substantially (Alcorn, 2016[9]). If guidance systems are to address inequalities in a systematic fashion, provision cannot be based on a one-size-fits-all model.

Figure 1.1. Summary of how inequalities shape the school-age career development and ultimate transitions of young people, as presented in Chapters 2-4

▲	Higher than the reference group, positive result
▼	Lower than the reference group, positive result
▽	Less clear, but generally lower than the reference group, positive result
▲	Higher than the reference group, negative result
▼	Lower than the reference group, negative result
△	Less clear, but generally higher than the reference group, negative result
▽	Less clear, but generally lower than the reference group, negative result

	Low SES, in reference to high SES	**Girls**, in reference to boys	**Foreign-born**, in reference to native-born
Career uncertainty	△	▼	△
Career ambition	▼	▲	▲
Career misalignment	▲	▼	▽
Career concentration	▼	▲	▲
Access to CDA	▼	▼(employer-involved CDA only)	▼
Transition to higher education	▼	▲	▽
NEET	▲	▲	△
Labour market segregation	Agriculture/manufacture/construction sectors Mid to low-skilled occupations	Health/welfare education sectors Service and sales; clerk support; professional occupations	Often low-skilled and low-waged occupations, especially among low-educated.
Job quality	▽ Lower access to high-paying/quality jobs	▼	▽

Box 1.2. Teenage career readiness and initial labour market outcomes

OECD Career Readiness Indicators

Based on the analysis of longitudinal datasets in 10 countries, the OECD Career Readiness project confirmed 11 indicators (and three additional predictors where data results were less conclusive) of better employment outcomes linked to different aspects of teenage career development. The analysis, having controlled for a range of factors that typically influence employment outcomes including academic achievement, gender, socio-economic background, and migrant status, explored whether the character of teenage career development, typically at age 15 could be statistically related to better outcomes (in terms of likelihood of being NEET, earnings and job satisfaction) commonly at the age of 25. Analysis was undertaken using existing longitudinal datasets in Australia, Canada, the People's Republic of China, Denmark, Germany, Korea, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States and Uruguay. Due to variation in the questions asked in surveys, analysis of different forms of career development was not possible in every dataset. New evidence was integrated into the existing research literature. Confirmed indicators group into three clusters linked to how students explore, experience and think about their potential futures in work.

- **Career exploration** includes participation in
  - (1) ***career conversations*** with teachers, family members and friends.
  - (2) ***career talks or job fairs.***
  - (3) ***workplace visits or job shadowing.***
  - (4) ***application and interview skills development activities.***
  - (5) ***occupationally-focused short programmes*** **(career pathways)**.

  In addition, some evidence was identified of the long-term impact of *school-based career reflection activities* (activities designed by, and delivered with, schools to help young people in secondary education visualise and plan their futures, such as career questionnaires and career classes).
- **Career experience** includes participation in
  - (6) ***part-time work.***
  - (7) ***volunteering***.

  In addition, some evidence was identified of *work placements* being linked to better outcomes.
- **Career thinking** includes:
  - (8) ***Career certainty,*** being the ability as a teenager to name an expected adult occupation.
  - (9) ***Career ambition,*** being the expectation of working in a job classified as high-skilled jobs (major categories 1 and 2 of the International Standardised Classification of Occupations).
  - (10) ***Career alignment*** refers to young people having educational plans that are aligned with their occupational ambitions, typically assessed in terms of whether students planning on working in high-skilled jobs (major categories 1 and 2 of the International Standardised Classification of Occupations) express the intention to pursue tertiary education.

- (11) ***Instrumental motivation towards school*** refers to the belief of students that engagement in education will be beneficial for their employment outcomes.

In addition, some evidence was identified linked to the *concentration of career expectations* of young people (the share of students expecting to work in one of ten most popular jobs by the age of 30).

Source: (Blossfeld and Blossfeld, 2021[70]; Covacevich et al., 2021[6]; Hughes et al., 2016[14]; Mann, Denis and Percy, 2020[28]; OECD, 2021[2])

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Notes

[1] If the probability of the observed correlation in the analysis (i.e., p-value) is less than 0.1 then the null hypothesis (i.e., the respective correlations are not statistically significant from either zero or between estimates), is rejected, meaning statistically significant at p-value lower than 0.1 (10%).

[2] Career guidance struggles from difficulty and variation in descriptions and definitions. This paper chooses to follow previous OECD work, as well as recent analytical work, on this topic, and covers the following four main elements: career education, career information, individual career counselling and direct contact with the world of work (Musset and Mytna Kurekova, 2018[12])**.**

- Career education in which students learn about the world of work and develop career management skills through classroom teaching, and through other activities.
- Career information on courses and occupations, learning and career opportunities, progression routes and choices, as well as information on where to find help and advice, and how to access it.
- Individual career counselling on a one-to-one basis, providing specific advice on career decisions; either pro-actively (mandatory interviews for all) or reactively (on demand). Advice can be general or targeted. Counselling includes activities that help young people to gather, understand and interpret information and apply it to their own situation, as well as impartial guidance and specialist support to help young people to understand themselves and their needs confront barriers, resolve conflicts, develop new perspectives and make progress.
- Direct contact with the world of work to give young people first-hand insights into, and experiences of, the labour market in order to raise, broaden and inform career aspirations.

2. Inequality and career guidance by socio-economic status

This chapter first presents data on how socio-economic status (SES) shapes both the labour market outcomes of similarly qualified young adults and how it is related to teenage career thinking, exploration, and experience. It draws on relevant academic literature and makes extensive use of OECD PISA and PIAAC data and OECD career readiness indicators. The chapter then looks at ways in which career guidance can address inequalities related to SES, presenting illustrative examples of practice and discusses the characteristics of effective career guidance provision in this regard.

2.1. Inequalities by SES in the early career experience of young adults

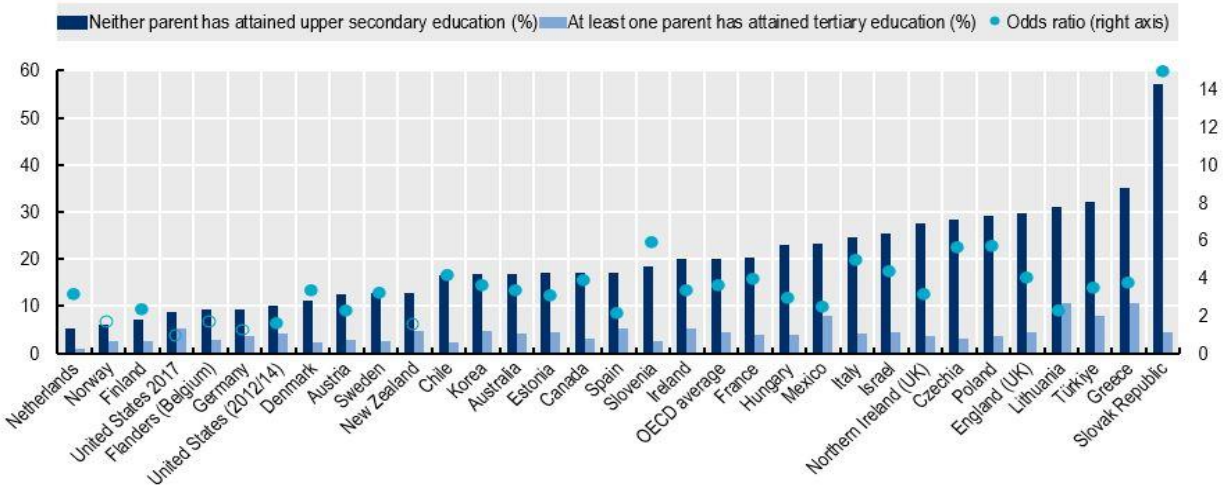
The socio-economic status (SES) of a young person is largely defined by the education, occupation, earnings and possessions of their parents. It is a key factor in measuring structural inequalities and intergenerational mobility. Students with low-educated and low-income parents tend to struggle more in their transitions into adult employment even if their educational attainment or academic performance is similar to that of their more advantaged counterparts. Moreover, analysis shows that once in employment, workers from low SES backgrounds can often earn substantially less than high SES peers doing the same job (Social Mobility Foundation, 2022[1]) This chapter reviews international evidence on how SES can be seen to shape the early labour market experiences of young people, using PIAAC data. It then explores how teenage career development relates to social background based on PISA data. The analysis highlights common additional challenges faced by young people and guidance systems in ensuring more equitable outcomes. Finally in light of these findings, the chapter reviews ways in which guidance systems in different countries respond to such barriers to progression and the more effective and equitable activation of accumulated human capital in the labour market.

2.1.1. Labour market engagement and socio-economic status: risk of being Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET)

Young adults (aged 16-34) with the same education and skills levels but with low parental education are considerably more likely to be not in education, employment nor training (NEET) than those with a high parental education in all countries participating in PIAAC (Figure 2.1). Even with skills, education attainment, gender and migrant status being equal, young people with parents who have not attained upper secondary education have 3.5 times the odds[1] of being NEET than those with at least one parent who has attained tertiary education. The Slovak Republic stands out in that those with low parental education are 15 times more likely to be NEET, compared to their counterparts even with the same skills and educational attainment.

Figure 2.1. Even with the same education and skills level, young people with low parent education are more likely to be NEET than those with high parent education

Percentage of young people (16-34) who are NEET by parent education

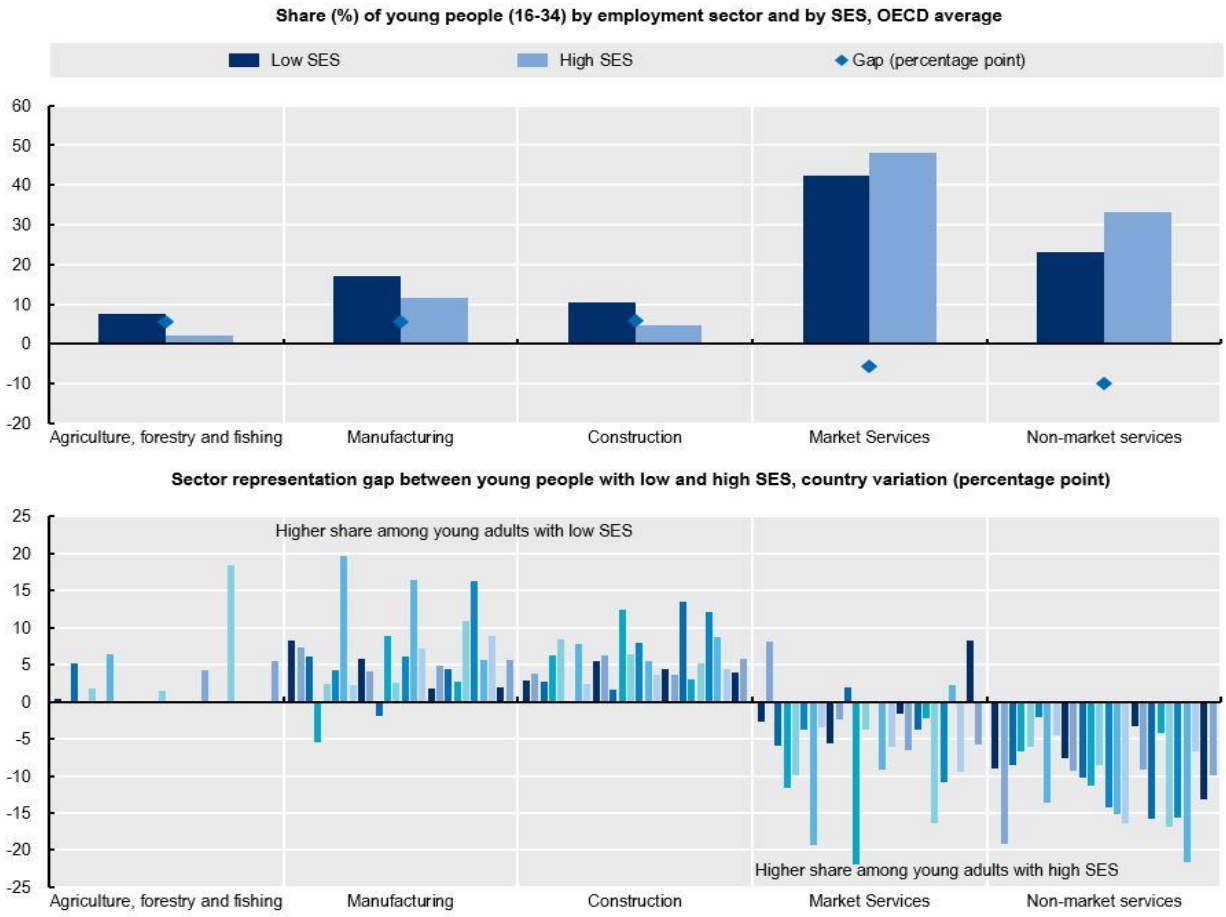


Note: Countries with a missing value or a small sample size are omitted. Statistically significant (p<0.1) differences and odds ratios are presented in a filled marker. The odds ratios are relative likelihood of young adults with low SES being NEET in reference to those with high SES and take into account the effect of level of education, literacy score, gender and place of birth.
Source: OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) (2012, 2015, 2018).

2.1.2. Labour market segmentation is apparent by young workers' socio-economic status

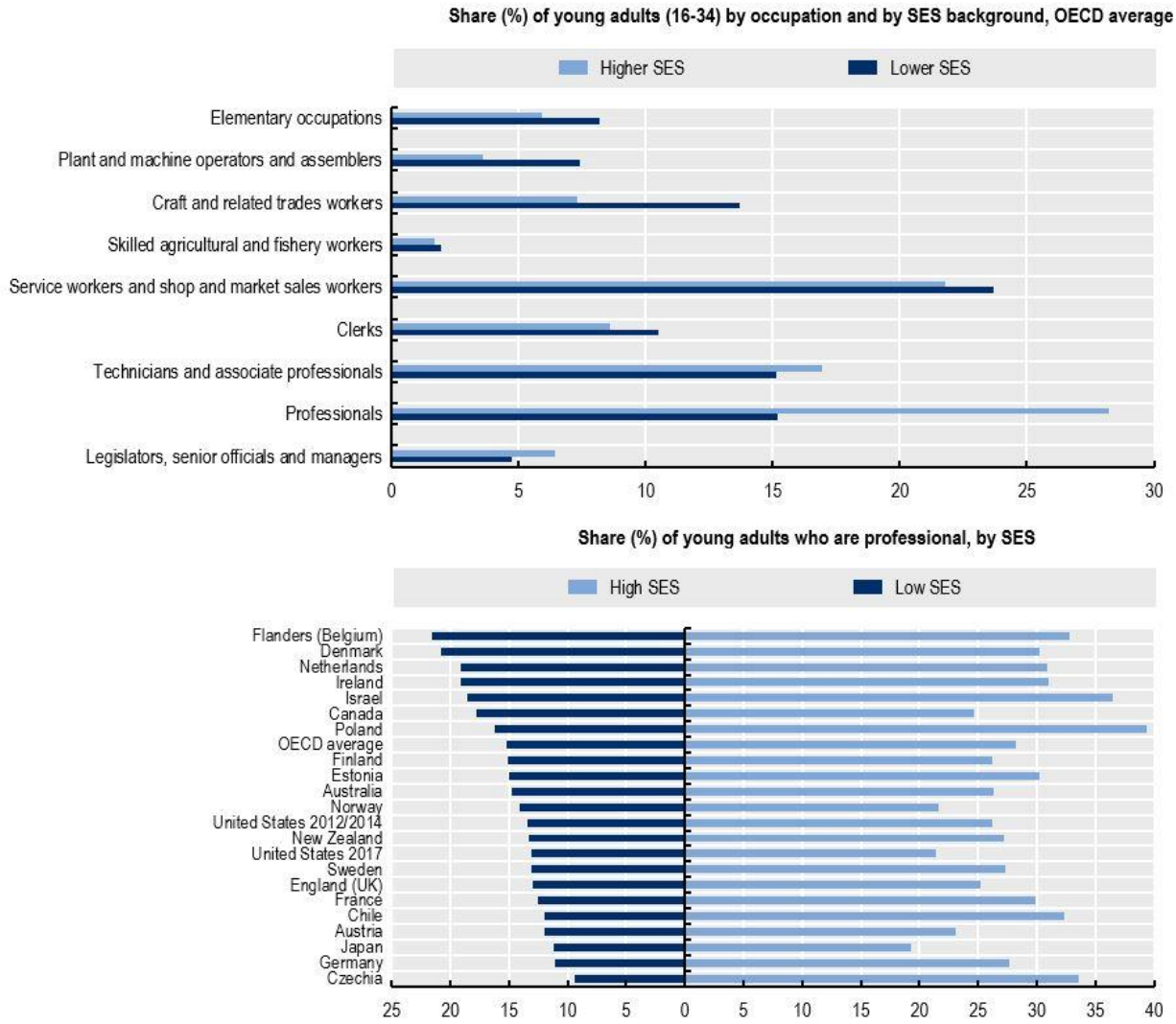
When in work, young adults from disadvantaged backgrounds are disproportionally represented in certain labour market segments. Those from the low SES (neither parent has attained upper secondary) tend to work in agriculture, manufacturing and construction more than those from high SES (at least one parent has attained tertiary). Based on PIAAC, on average across OECD countries that have available data, disadvantaged young adults are about 6 percentage point more likely to work in these sectors than advantaged young adults. By contrast, socially advantaged young adults work more commonly in the service sector (such as trade, transportation, accommodation, public administration, or social services) than their disadvantaged peers (Figure 2.2). Young adults with high SES backgrounds tend to work in high-skilled service occupations such as managerial or professional occupations, more than those from low SES backgrounds. In particular, professional occupations show the largest gap: 15% of young adults from low SES work as a professional compared to 28% from high SES (Figure 2.3). This disparity by SES across sectors and occupations are related to pay gaps and different working conditions.

Figure 2.2. Young adults with low SES tend to be under-represented in the service sector



Note: Low SES refers to those whose neither parent has attained upper secondary. High SES refers to those whose at least one parent has attained tertiary. Service sectors include market services such as Trade; Transportation; Accommodation and food; and Business and administrative services; and Non-market services such as Public administration; Community, Social and other services and activities.
Source: OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) (2012, 2015, 2018). In Panel B, data relates (in order from left to right) to Australia, Austria, Canada, Chile, Denmark, England (UK), Estonia, Finland, Flanders (Belgium), France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Korea, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Northern Ireland (UK), Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United States (2012/14), The OECD average is given in the final bar.

Figure 2.3. Young adults (16-24) with low SES tend to be under-represented in high-skilled occupations

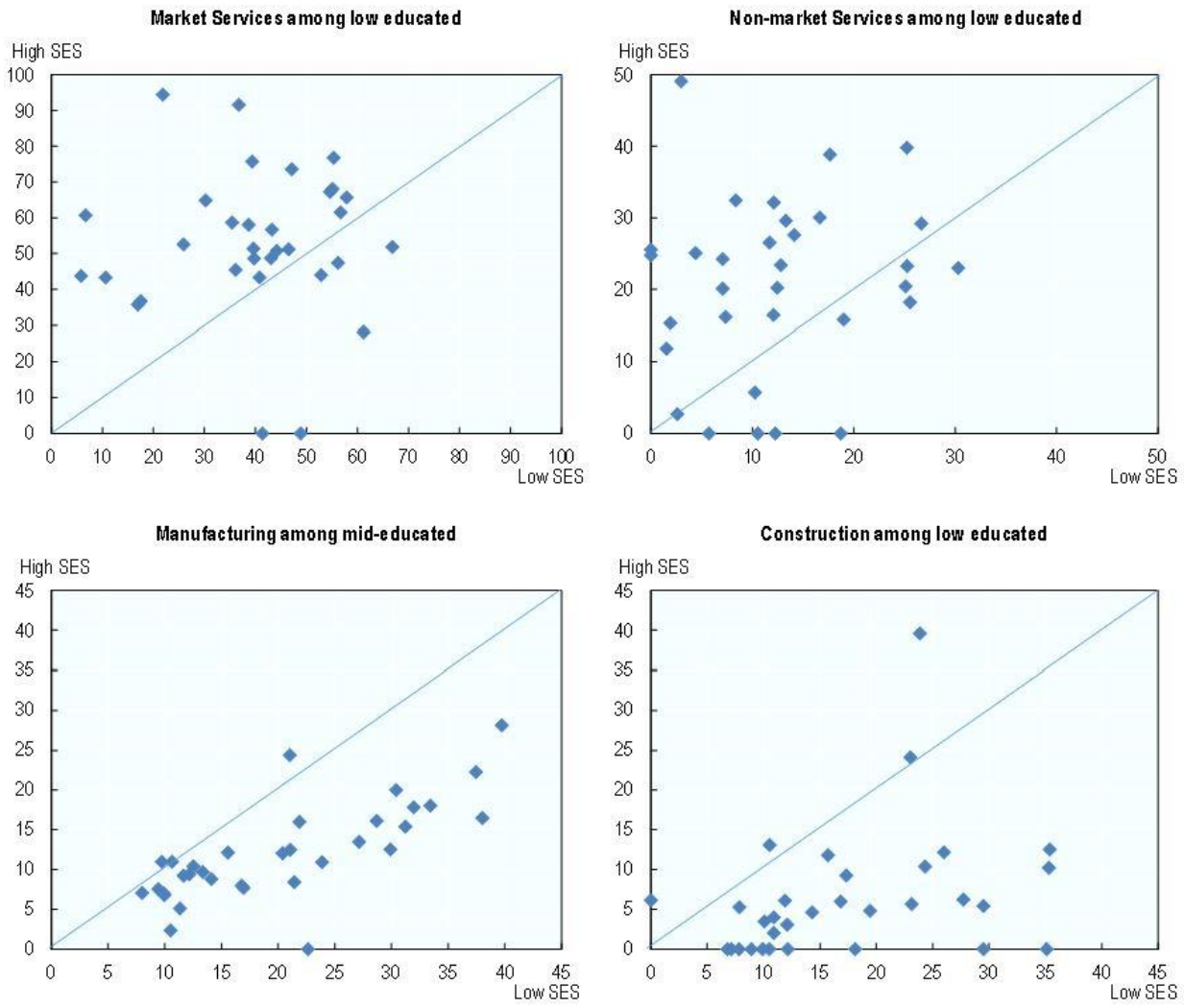


Source: Low SES refers to those whose at least one parent has attained secondary and post-secondary, non-tertiary. High SES refers to those whose at least one parent has attained tertiary.
Source: OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) (2012, 2015, 2018).

While it might be assumed that adults going into the labour market from high SES backgrounds will be more likely to do so with higher levels of academic qualifications, this factor cannot explain the variations in sectoral participation within the labour market. Among young people with the same level of education, labour market segregation by SES is still clear. For example, low educated (primary educated and below) young people from high SES backgrounds are more likely than those from low SES backgrounds to work in service industries, whereas young people from low SES backgrounds are more likely to work in the manufacturing and construction sectors (Figure 2.4). However, among high-educated (tertiary education) young people, the difference of their share by employment sector was relatively small between those from low and high SES backgrounds. Yet, even with the same level of education, young adults with high SES tend to be more likely to work in high-skilled sectors more than those with low SES.

Figure 2.4. Even among those with the same education level, labour market segregation by SES is clear

Share (%) of young people (16-34) who are from high SES (Y-axis) and from low SES (X-axis) by employment sector and by education level, OECD countries



Note: Low SES refers to those whose neither parent has attained upper secondary. High SES refers to those whose at least one parent has attained tertiary. Service sectors include market services such as Trade; Transportation; Accommodation and food; and Business and administrative services; and Non-market services such as Public administration; Community, Social and other services and activities. Low-educated refers to primary education and below, mid-educated refers to secondary education and high-educated refers to tertiary education.
Source: OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) (2012, 2015, 2018).

While there are several factors that explain the distribution of young people across sectors and occupations, one of them is parental occupation. For example, a study using data related to tertiary-educated males in Sweden 1985-2005 found that having parents in senior positions in the same organisation increased the likelihood of internal promotion and having family members in elite positions (top earners) increased the chance of elite entry in general (Bihagen et al., 2017[2]). Other studies also show that socially advantaged students have better labour market outcomes regardless of their educational performance. Such students appear to be, to some extent, protected from downward mobility even when, based on their educational achievement, it would be predicted that they would occupy a lower socio-

economic position (McKnight, 2015[3]) (also see Box 2.1 for 'class ceiling' (Friedman and Laurison, 2020[4])).

Box 2.1. Class ceilings: Class-based inequalities in the workplace

In their study of inequality, Friedman and Laurison (2020[4]) draw on the concept of a 'class ceiling', i.e. class-based gaps in access to elite professions (such as managers, lawyers, doctors and other professional occupations) and pay within those professions that are linked to SES. According to the authors, this class ceiling describes frequently found limits on the career advancement of individuals from working-class backgrounds. Elite occupations are dominated by workers from privileged families and those inequalities cannot be fully explained by ability. Even when holding constant educational attainment including attendance at elite schools, people from working-class backgrounds are still less likely than people from privileged backgrounds to work in elite occupations.

Using 2013-16 UK Labour Force Surveys, the authors find that, in elite occupations, people from working-class origins earn 16% less than peers from more privileged backgrounds and that such class-based gaps are multiplied for women and for workers from ethnic minorities. Women from working-class backgrounds in such professions earn on average GBP 7 500 less than women from privileged class backgrounds, and GBP 19 000 less than men from privileged class backgrounds. That gap is even larger (GBP 20 000) when comparing Black British women from working-class backgrounds to White British men from privileged backgrounds. These pay gaps are much larger in some technical fields than in professional or business fields. The authors argue such gaps are primarily a function of workers' educational credentials (attending more prestigious schools) and the sorting of workers into different firms and fields (higher-paying fields, larger firms, and locations with higher salaries). Taken together, however, those factors still explain only half the class-based gap in elite workers' pay.

Based on in-depth interviews, they further explain class-based variations in terms of cultural fit, cultural affinity, and personal confidence. The higher level of confidence among workers from privileged backgrounds compared to those from working-class backgrounds is conceived in terms of economic, social, and cultural capital. Elite workers from privileged backgrounds are seen as being able to take greater risks, more willing to demand work-related opportunities and to assert themselves more in professional settings, all factors associated with higher levels of career advancement and salaries. Due to their more limited economic, social, and cultural capital, elite workers from working-class backgrounds struggle to achieve the same level of professional success as their more privileged peers.

Similarly, the UK Sutton Trust and Social Mobility Commission (2019[5]) have explored the dominance of a wide range of high social status professions in the UK by people who were educated privately. They find that while only 7% of Britons attend private schools, on average 39% of individuals across a range of elite professional categories (e.g., 29% of members of parliament, 53% of CEOs of large companies, 44% of newspaper columnists, 59% of permanent secretaries (senior civil servants) and 66% of senior judges, and 42% of winners of British Academy of Film and Television Arts winners) attended fee-paying schools.

Source: The Class Ceiling: Why it Pays to be Privileged (Friedman and Laurison, 2020[4]); Sutton Trust/Social Mobility Commission (2019[5]). See also: (Social Mobility Foundation, 2022[1]).

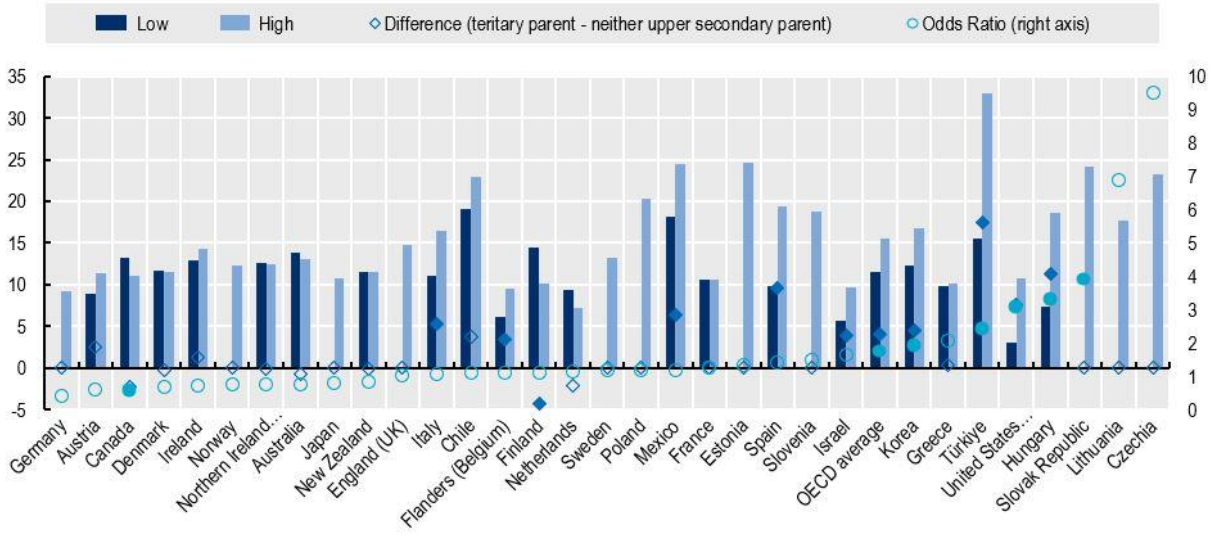
2.1.3. The relationship between SES and job quality

High-level SES is frequently associated with better access to high-paying and high-quality jobs. According to PIAAC analysis, young adults with at least one parent who has attained tertiary education in OECD countries are 1.8 times more likely to earn wages in the top quartile compared to those whose parents

have not attained upper secondary education, even when controlling for the education, skills, gender and migrant status of the young adult (Figure 2.5). In a regression analysis of wage penalty across OECD countries controlling for gender, migrant status, age and other variables (a result of pooled OECD data using PIAAC), respondents whose parents had not attained upper secondary education earn 6% less, and those with at least one parent who has attained upper secondary education earn 4% less, in reference to young adults with at least one parent who had attained tertiary education – this result is statistically significant after controls are applied for gender, educational attainment, literacy score and place of birth. However, only six countries have statistically significant results. In five, young adults with high parent education are more likely to earn high wages: Korea (an odds ratio of 1.9), Türkiye (2.4), United States 2012/14 (3.1), Hungary (3.3) and Slovak Republic (3.9). In Canada, young adults with high parent education are less likely to earn high wages (odds ratio 0.6).

Figure 2.5. Young adults with high SES tend to earn high wages compared to those with low SES, even with education and skills being equal

Percentage of young adults (16-34) earning in the top quartile of workers' wages, by parent education



Note: Differences are the unadjusted differences between the two percentages for each contrast category. The odds ratios refer to relative likelihood of young adults with at least one parent who has attained tertiary level education to earn a wage within the top quartile, compared to young adults neither of whose parents attained upper secondary education. The odds ratios adjust for the effects of gender, educational attainment, literacy score and place of birth. Statistically significant (p-value<0.1) differences and odds ratios are presented in a filled marker.
Source: OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) (2012, 2015, 2018).

National studies provide comparable results. A study using an Italian longitudinal dataset[2] indicates that an additional year of parental education increases the weekly wages of their son(s) by 12% after twenty years of experience in work – this effect holds irrespective of children's education level (Michele and Francesco, 2015[6]). In the UK, tertiary graduates who were eligible for free school meals (an indication of parental SES) earn less than similarly qualified peers and this gap increases from 10% one year after graduation to 12% five years after university graduation (Hubble, Bolton and Lewis, 2021[7]).

Job satisfaction is a further important aspect of a young person's progression in work, and may be affected by qualification mismatches and working conditions, in particular earnings (OECD, 2016[8]; 2013[9]). However, when it comes to job satisfaction by SES controlling for wage and qualification mismatch in addition to gender, migrant status, skills and education, analysis of PIAAC data reveals no evidence of difference.

However, using PIAAC data and controlling for gender, migrant status, skills and education, young adults (ages 16-34) who have at least one parent with tertiary education attainment (high SES) are significantly more likely to have an indefinite work contract than their peers who have neither parent with upper secondary education (low SES) in Hungary (odds ratio 2.1), Korea, the Slovak Republic (1.7), Canada (1.6), Austria/Flanders (Belgium) (1.5), Estonia/ France/ Sweden (1.4), Denmark (1.3). However, Türkiye (0.4) and the US 2012/2014 (0.8) show the opposite.

Qualification mismatches (over- or under-qualified to their job) may affect job satisfaction at work and, ultimately, productivity and wages (OECD, 2016[8]; 2013[9]). For example, overqualified workers with higher skills represent a productivity loss and inefficiencies to economies as they would presumably have the capacity to occupy jobs that require more skills than their current job (LaRochelle-Côté and Hango, 2016[10]). Analysis of PIAAC data, shows limited evidence of qualification and field mismatches by SES. Among five countries in PIAAC that have a statistically significant result for the odds of young people with qualification mismatch (over- or under-qualified to their job), those who have at least one parent with tertiary education attainment (high SES) are less likely to have qualification mismatch than those who have neither parent with upper secondary education (low SES) in Chile (odds ratio 0.7), Hungary (0.6), Türkiye (0.5) and the United States (0.6). In the Netherlands however, the opposite is the case: young adults with at least one parent with tertiary education attainment are more likely to have qualification mismatch than those who have no parent with upper secondary education.

A further study of Canadian PIAAC data (LaRochelle-Côté and Hango, 2016[10]) found no statistically significant results linked qualification mismatch and SES among workers aged 25-64 with a university degree. However, having a parent with high school diploma tends to link with higher probability of being overqualified.

Turning to mismatch by field of study and employment, analysis of PIAAC data finds that young adults with at least one parent with tertiary education attainment (high SES) are less likely to have field mismatch in four countries: Israel (odds ratio 0.5), Italy (0.4), Poland (0.5), and the US 2017 (0.4). Here coming from a high SES background is statistically associated with greater likelihood of working in a profession linked to the primary focus of education and training.

Consequently, the socio-economic background of a young person can be seen to shape in important ways how they engage with the labour market. On average across participating OECD countries, young people from more socially disadvantaged backgrounds are much more likely to experience NEET status than their more advantaged peers. When working, patterns of concentration are also linked to socio-economic background. In some countries, lower wages and greater skills mismatch can also be linked to family background. In all cases, these patterns of disadvantage are apparent even after taking account of educational levels and other personal characteristics. National longitudinal studies also reveal that parental advantage influences the progression of their children, notably into higher paying and higher status employment. The evidence speaks to young people from more disadvantaged social backgrounds often facing additional barriers in converting the human capital (as codified in academic qualifications) into successful employment. For educational systems, career guidance is a primary mechanism that is used to support young people in such an activation. However as discussed below, PISA data show that often young people from more disadvantaged backgrounds engage less in career development activities than their high SES peers.

2.2. Teenage career readiness by SES

While international data show that young adults from more disadvantaged backgrounds can expect to face additional challenges in the labour market, it also allows for comparisons of teenage career readiness linked to SES. OECD career readiness indicators (see Box 1.3) identify 11 primary (and three partial) forms of teenage career development that are commonly predictive of better labour market outcomes in

adulthood. As noted, the indicators cluster around three forms of development: career-related exploration, experiences and thinking which are related to potential futures in work. Collectively, they describe the readiness of a student to transition from secondary education into the labour market. From a school's perspective, career development activities (CDA) relate to specific forms of guidance that are routinely delivered to enable career progression.

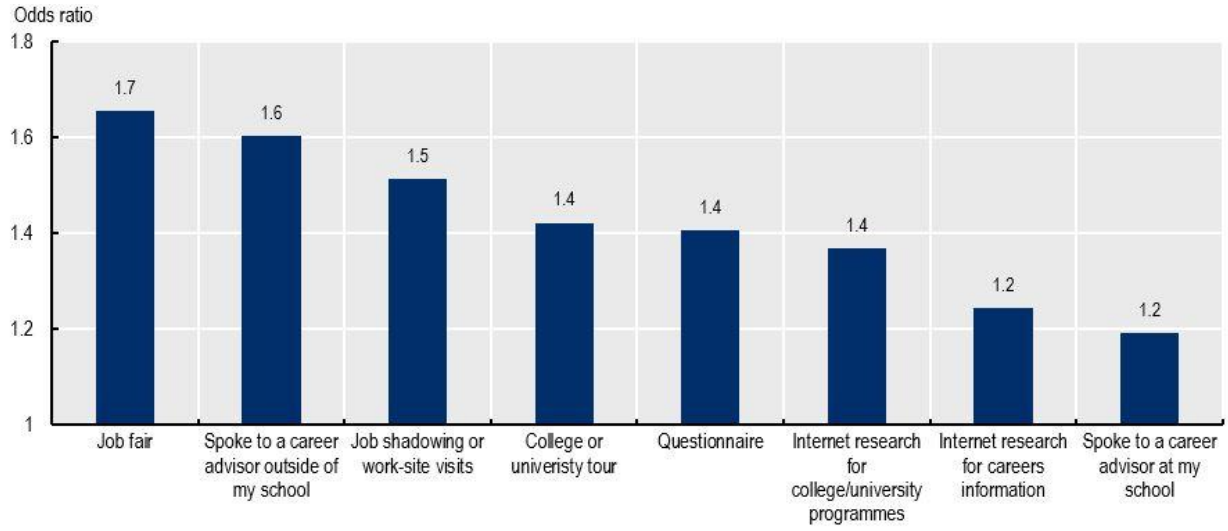
Across many OECD countries, access to CDA differs by SES. Socioeconomically disadvantaged students (the bottom quarter of the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status, see Box 1.3) are significantly less likely than the most advantaged quartile of students to participate in all types of CDA linked to exploring and experiencing potential futures in work. In terms of career thinking, students from low SES backgrounds tend to be more uncertain about their future careers than similarly performing students from high SES backgrounds. Disadvantaged students are less commonly ambitious for their futures in employment and education. Career misalignment is also more common among them. This section also shows that a parent's occupation is related to higher odds of teenagers expecting the same occupation for their own future careers – and thus more likely to lead them to work in that occupation as a young adult – with other factors being equal. The section also includes an analysis of intersectionality in terms of SES and gender.

2.2.1. Exploration of potential futures in work

Students from high SES backgrounds are significantly more likely to participate in forms of career development that allow them to explore potential futures in work. On average across OECD countries for which data is available, students from top SES quartile are from 1.2 to 1.7 times more likely than students from bottom quartile to undertake an exploring activity such as participating in job shadowing, work-site visits, job fairs or college tours (Figure 2.6).

Figure 2.6. Students with high SES are more likely to participate in career development activities, even when controlling for gender, migrant status, reading performance, and VET orientation

Odds ratio of students with high SES (top quarter) in reference to low SES (bottom quartile), OECD average



Note: Odds ratios are adjusted for gender, migrant status, reading performance, and VET orientation. Only statistically significant results are presented (see Box 1.1 about the significance level). Average of participating OECD countries: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Korea, Lithuania, New Zealand, Poland, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain and the United Kingdom.
Source: PISA 2018 (OECD, 2019[11]).

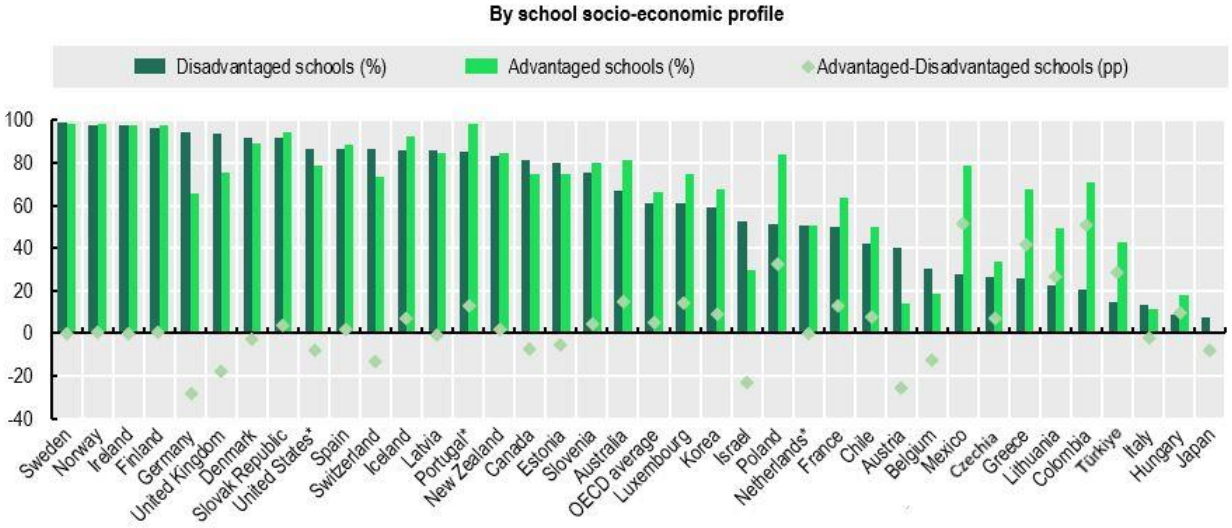
Such variations are particularly important with regard to participation in exploration activities identified as career readiness indicators, where longitudinal analysis commonly predicts better later employment outcomes (Covacevich et al., 2021[12]). These include participation in *job fairs* and *job shadowing/worksite visits*, both of which are identified as indicators. This is not to say that other forms of CDA assessed in PISA 2018 might not be related to be better outcomes. Rather, longitudinal data is not sufficiently available to assess relationships with better outcomes. Such data do however, identify three other forms of career development as being commonly linked to greater success in the labour market. Analysis of PISA 2018 data from 21 countries, including 14 OECD countries, shows that more socially advantaged students are consistently more likely than disadvantaged peers to have taken part in a *career conversation* about a job they would like to do after finishing education. On average, 86.8% of OECD students from the most advantaged quartile agreed that they had engaged in such a discussion, compared to 78.6% of their most disadvantaged peers. The gap between the two groups is more than 10 percentage points in Australia, Canada, Lithuania, Slovak Republic, United States, Brazil, Bulgaria and Serbia. In none of the participating countries was the opposite the case. A further indicator relates to participation in school classes where a student is taught to *create a CV or résumé and/or participate in interview skills development*. While PISA 2018 did not collect data on participation in such classes, the study did ask students if they knew how to prepare for an interview or to create a résumé. Here, no strong patterns by SES were observable. A final indicator relates to teenage participation in occupationally focused short programmes or career pathways. Here, no PISA data are available for comparison.

School composition by SES and teenage career development

Looked at from another perspective, PISA data also show that across the OECD it is more common for students who attend schools with fellow students from high SES backgrounds to have access to career counsellors within their school (OECD, 2019[11]) (Figure 2.7).

Figure 2.7. On average across the OECD, students in disadvantaged schools have less access to guidance counsellors

Percentage of students in schools that provide access to career counsellors within school

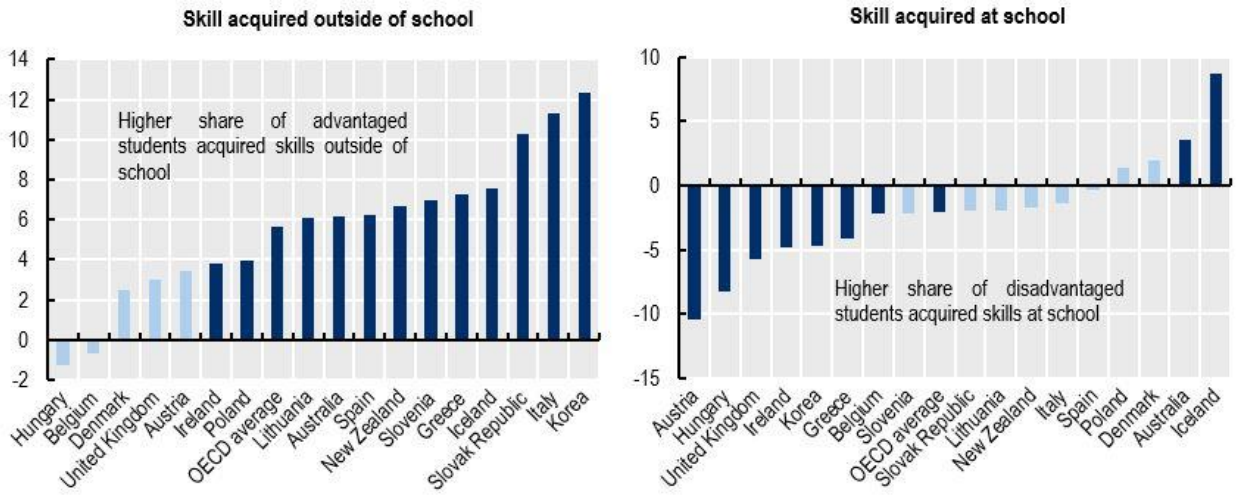


Note: The graph refers to the percentage of students in schools where one or more specific career guidance counsellors are employed at school or regularly visit the school. The diamonds illustrated the percentage point (ppt) difference between disadvantaged and advantaged schools.
The graph refers to the percentage of students in schools where one or more specific career guidance counsellors are employed at school or regularly visit the school. The diamonds illustrated the percentage point (ppt) difference between disadvantaged and advantaged schools.
Source: PISA 2018 (Mann et al., 2020[13]; OECD, 2019[11]).

Students were also asked in PISA 2018 whether they have access to information about financing of university studies and, if so, whether the information was provided at school or outside of school. Disadvantaged students were found to be more likely than their advantaged peers to rely on their schools for such information (Figure 2.8). This is particularly important as studies show that access to such information can have a considerable effect on the likelihood of young people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds progressing to university (Dinkelman and C., 2014[14]; O'Connor, Hammack and Scott, 2010[15]). Whereas it is socially advantaged students who are consistently more likely than their disadvantaged peers to access information outside of school, no such pattern is observed in relation to other activities undertaken within school. This finding suggests that schools can play an important role in levelling the playing field across social backgrounds and addressing systemic inequalities in access to reliable information and skills (Mann et al., 2020[13]).

Figure 2.8. Disadvantaged students rely more on schools for career-related skills than advantaged ones

Percentage point difference between advantaged students and disadvantaged students who reported knowing how to find information about student financing



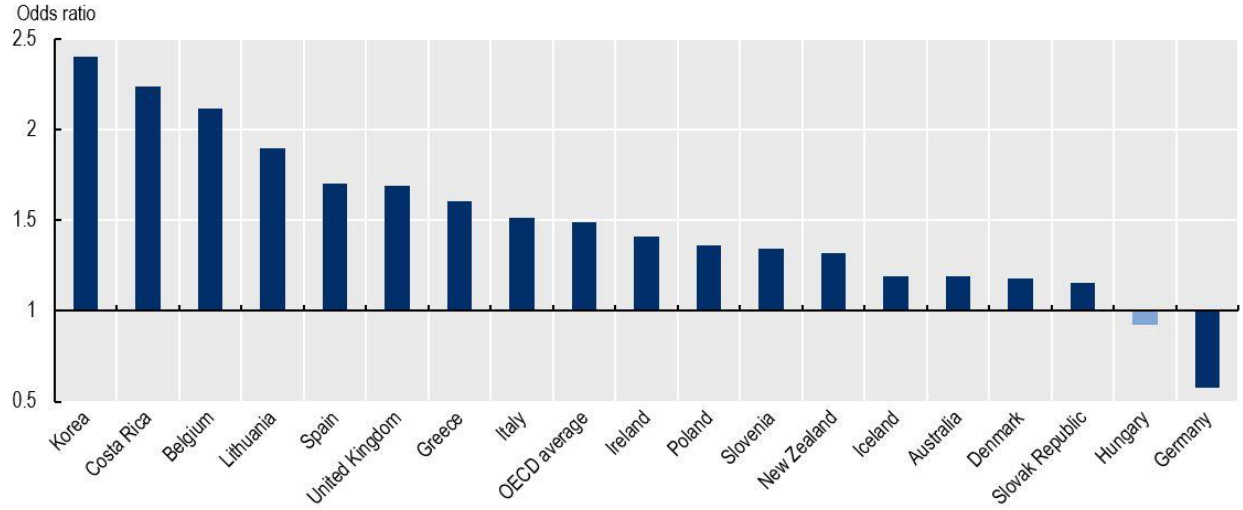
Note: Student financing refers to student loans or grants; based on students' reports. Darker colour bars are statistically significant (p-value<0.1).
Source: PISA 2018 Results (Volume II) (OECD, 2019[11]).

2.2.2. Experiencing potential futures in work

Similar to exploring activities, students from high SES backgrounds are significantly more likely to participate in activities that allow them to experience potential futures in work which are typically open to influence through schools (internships, volunteering), but less likely to work part-time. On average across OECD countries, students from the top quartile by SES are 1.5 times more likely than students from the bottom quartile to undertake an internship (Figure 2.9). Germany is an exception where socially advantaged students have lower odds of doing an internship (0.6 times), compared to disadvantaged ones.

Figure 2.9. Students with high SES are significantly more likely to undertake an internship, after controlling for gender, migrant status, reading score, and VET orientation

Odds ratio of students with high SES (top quartile) doing an internship in reference to low SES (bottom quartile), by country

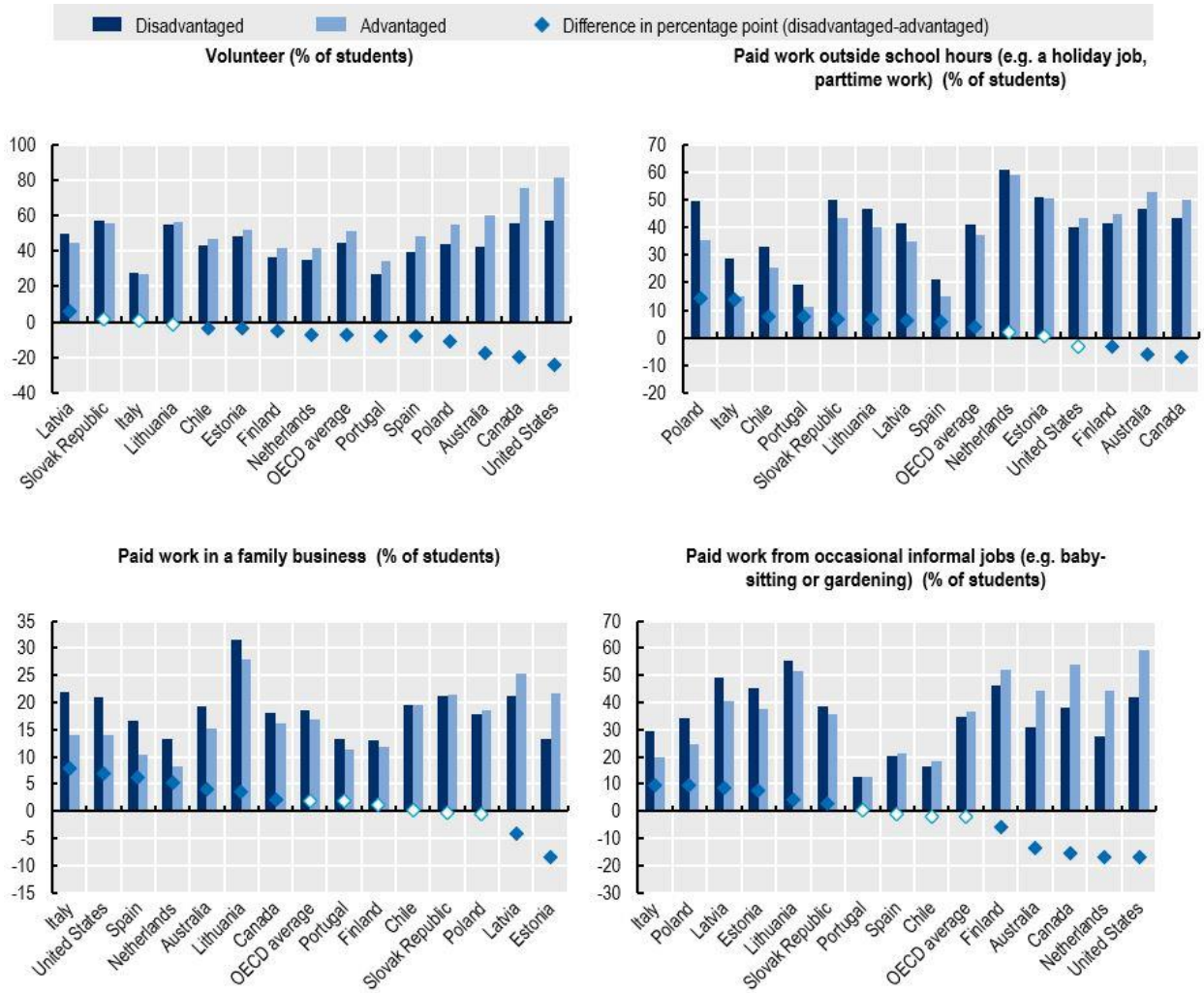


Note: Statistically significant results are presented in a darker colour. Odds ratios are adjusted for gender, migrant status, reading performance, and VET orientation. See Box 1.1 for further details in relation to significance levels.
Source: PISA 2018 (OECD, 2019[11]).

In most OECD countries with available data, socially disadvantaged students are less likely to undertake volunteer work, but more likely to experience paid part-time work than advantaged students (Figure 2.10). This might be because of economic needs of disadvantaged students. In Finland, Australia and Canada, advantaged students are more likely to do paid work outside school hours or from occasional informal jobs relative to disadvantaged students. In the Netherlands and the US, advantaged students engage in occasional informal part-time employment at 17 percentage points more often than their disadvantaged peers. As Covacevich et al. (2021[12]) summarises, evidence from multiple longitudinal datasets routinely points towards students gaining long-term employment benefits in comparison to similar students who did not combine secondary education with forms of part-time employment. Consequently, teenage part-time working can serve to compensate for social disadvantage. However, more focused studies suggest such exposure to the labour market may limit opportunities for career exploration. For example Fullarton (1999[16]) shows that while students who had both worked part-time and undertaken a short work placement (a form of internship) through their school felt that the two experiences had helped them equally in developing work-related skills and growing their personal confidence, part-time employment was perceived to have provided much lower insight into careers of long-term interest.

Figure 2.10. In most OECD countries with available data, socially disadvantaged students do less volunteer work and more paid work than socially advantaged students

Share of students who agree the following statements



Note: Statistically significant differences are presented in a filled marker. Odds ratios are adjusted for gender, migrant status, reading performance, and VET orientation. See Box 1.1 for further details in relation to significance levels.

2.2.3. Thinking about future careers

Analysis of longitudinal datasets by the OECD and other researchers shows frequent statistically significant relationships exist between forms of teenage career thinking and better than expected adult employment outcomes. In particular, career certainty, ambition, alignment and instrumental motivation tend to be strongly associated with better outcomes while the link with career concentration is weaker (Covacevich et al., 2021[12]; 2021[17]).

Career uncertainty by SES

Although the evidence on career uncertainty by SES from the PISA 2018 study is not entirely clear, data from several countries points towards a gap in career uncertainty by SES. On average, students from the lowest SES quartile are more likely to be uncertain about their occupational plans than peers from the most advantaged quartile (on average across OECD countries, 23.2% of the former can be classified as

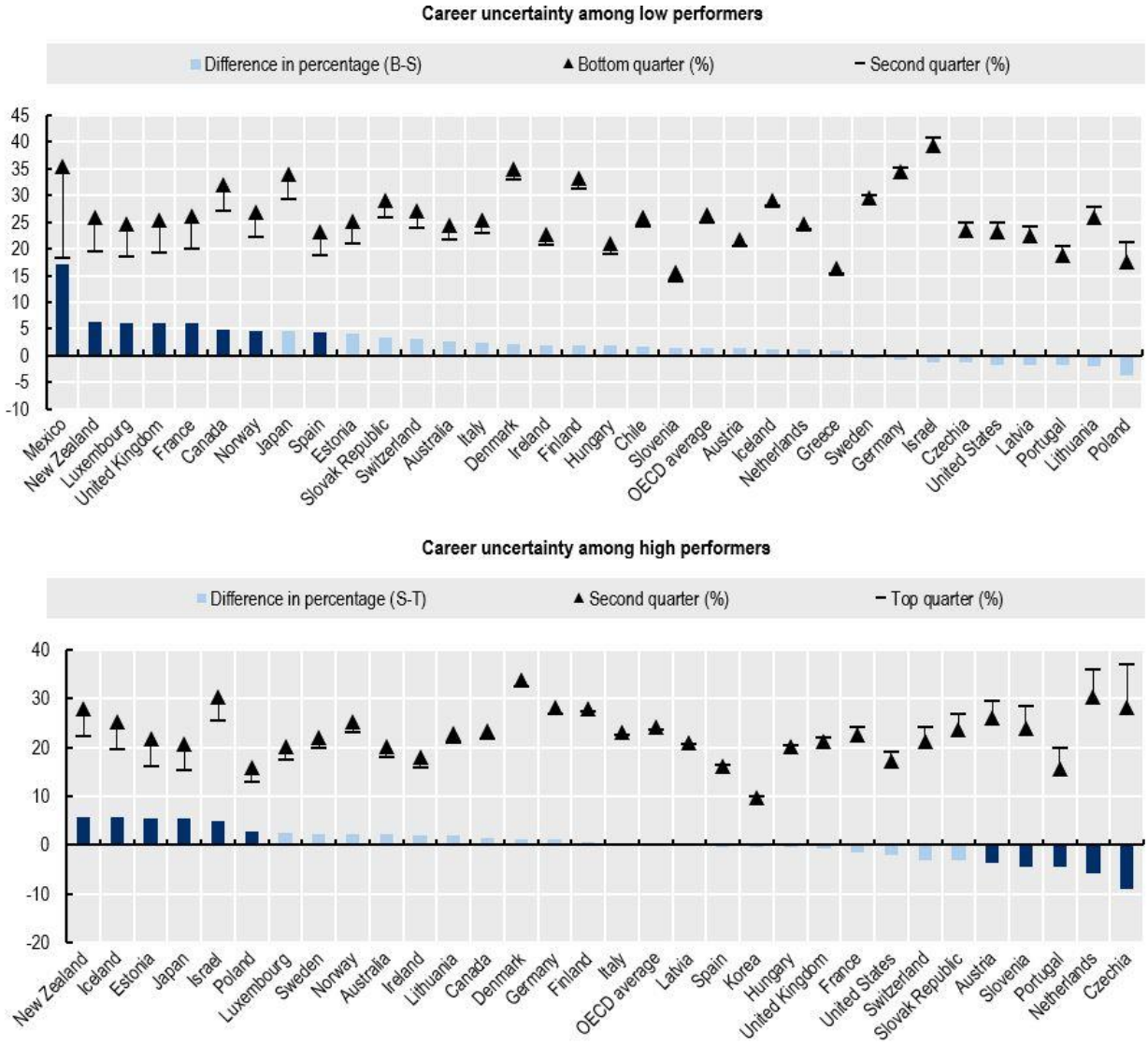
uncertain, compared to 21.4% of the latter). However, it appears that results are shaped to an extent by levels of academic achievement, with lower achievers on average more likely to be uncertain (26.5%) than higher achievers (22.6%). Among low academic performers in eight OECD countries with a statistically significant results (see Box 1.1), more students from a lower SES (bottom quartile) were uncertain about their future careers compared to those at a higher SES (second quartile). The gap was particularly high in Mexico among low performers (17 pp).

In contrast, among high performers, among twelve countries with a statistically significant result, the results were mixed. In New Zealand, Iceland, Estonia, Japan, Israel and Poland, more students from a lower SES (second quartile as the numbers of high performing low SES students were comparatively few among the top quartile of academic achievers) were uncertain about their future careers compared to those at the higher SES (top quartile). In Austria, Slovenia, Portugal, Netherlands, and Czechia, the opposite is the case (Figure 2.11).

This lack of clear results may be due to the fact that often few students from higher SES are observed among low performers and few students from lower SES among high performers. When controlling for VET, gender, migrant status and reading score, socially disadvantaged students in 13 countries are more likely than advantaged students to be uncertain about their future career (Figure 2.12). In this example, comparisons are made between the highest and second highest SES quartiles as the numbers of lower SES students who performed at the highest levels on the PISA assessment were insufficient to allow comparisons to be made.

Figure 2.11. Disadvantaged students tend to be uncertain about their future careers more than advantaged students

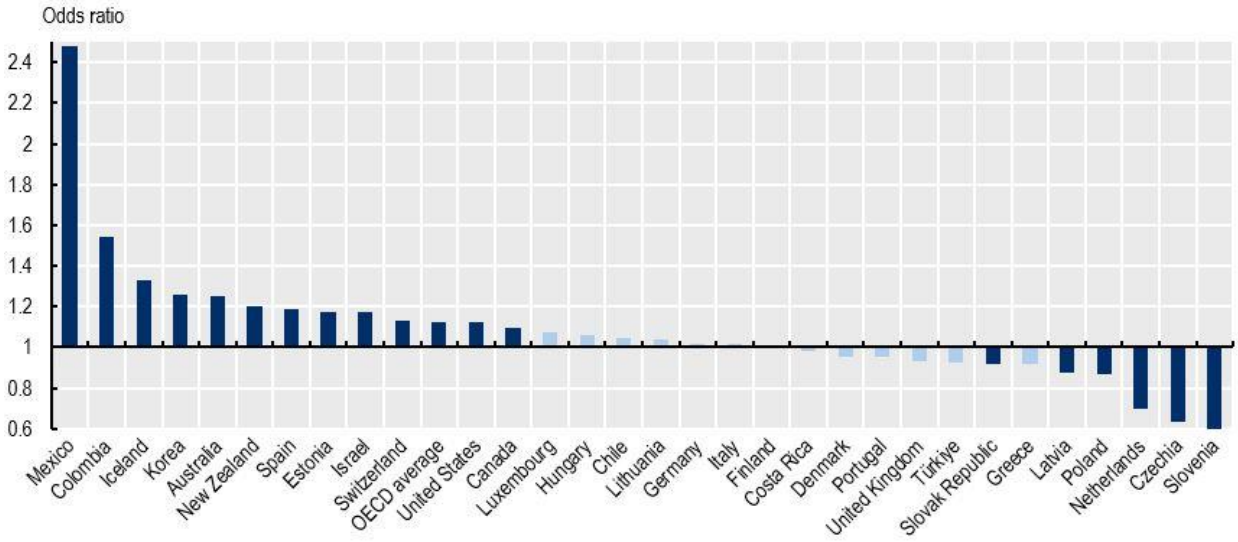
Percentage of students in PISA 2018 who have no clear idea about their future job, by socio-economic status



Note: Statistically significant (p<0.1) differences are presented in darker colour. High-performing students refer to those who have attained at least minimum proficiency (Level 2) in the three core PISA subjects and are high performers (Level 4) in at least one subject.
Source: PISA 2018 (OECD, 2019[11]).

Figure 2.12. Even when controlling for educational pathway (VET v. general), gender, migrant status and reading score, socially disadvantaged students are more likely than advantaged students to be uncertain about their future career

Relative likelihood of disadvantaged students to be uncertain about their careers at age 30 in reference to advantaged ones



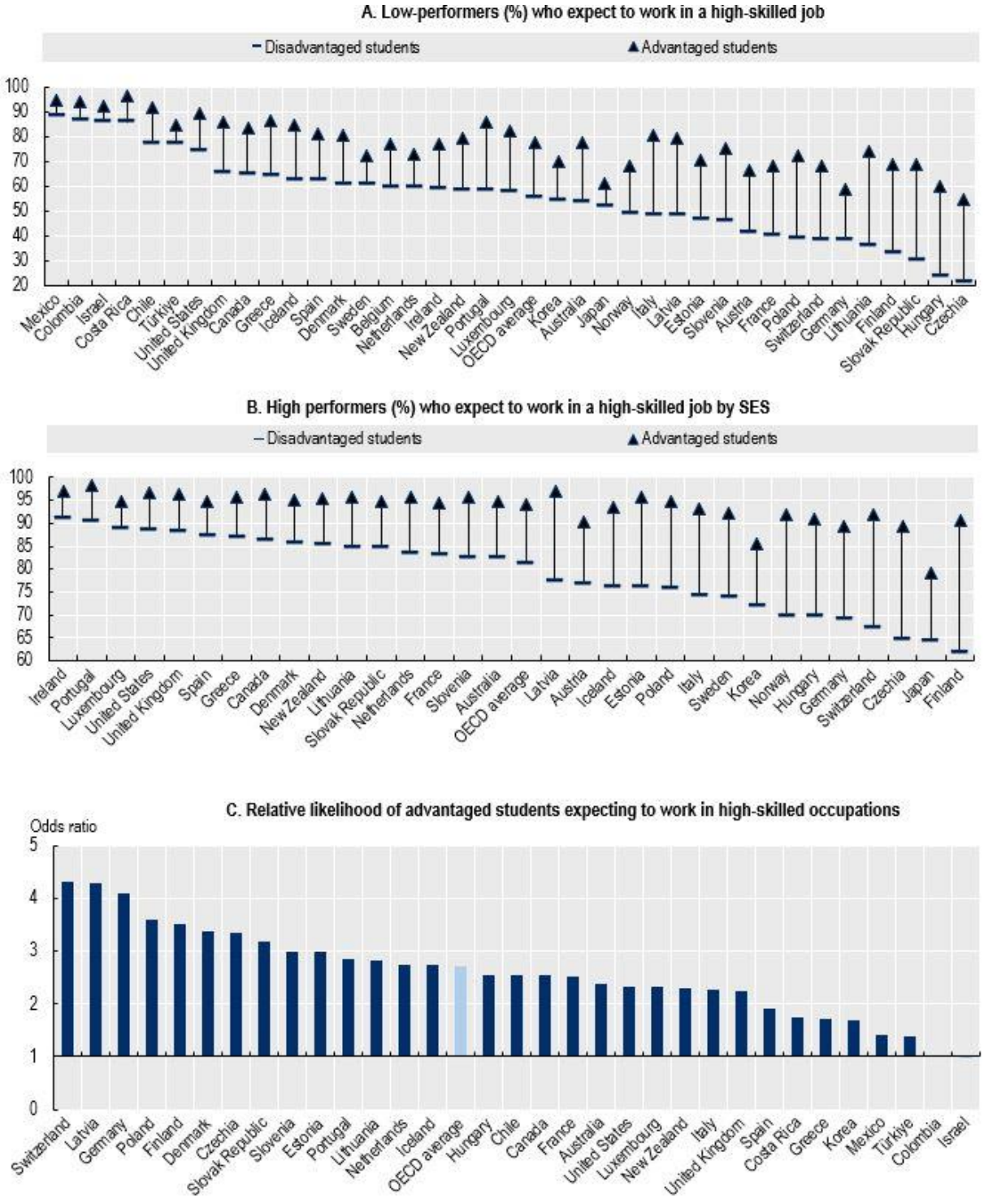
Note: Countries with a statistically significant result (at p-value < 0.1) are in dark colour. Odds ratios are adjusted for gender, migrant status, reading score and VET orientation. See Box 1.1 for further details in relation to significance levels.
Source: PISA 2018 (OECD, 2019[11]).

Career ambition by SES

PISA analysis shows that SES strongly influences young people's career ambitions. For example, high SES students are significantly more likely to expect to work as professionals, and low SES students are significantly more likely to expect to be technicians (Musset and Mytna Kurekova, 2018[18]). Even among similarly performing students, socially disadvantaged students (bottom quartile SES) are less likely than advantaged students (top quartile SES) to expect to work in high-skilled occupations and more likely to expect to work in medium- and low-skilled occupations (Figure 2.13, Panel A/B) (Mann et al., 2020[13]).

Further controlling for gender, migrant status, type of school, programme orientation (vocational) and reading scores, socially advantaged students are more likely to expect to work in high-skilled occupations, which usually results in higher wages and higher social status compared to other jobs. This is the case for all OECD countries, except Colombia and Israel. In Switzerland, Germany and Latvia, socially advantaged students are four times more likely than disadvantaged students to expect to work in high-skilled occupations (Figure 2.13, Panel C).

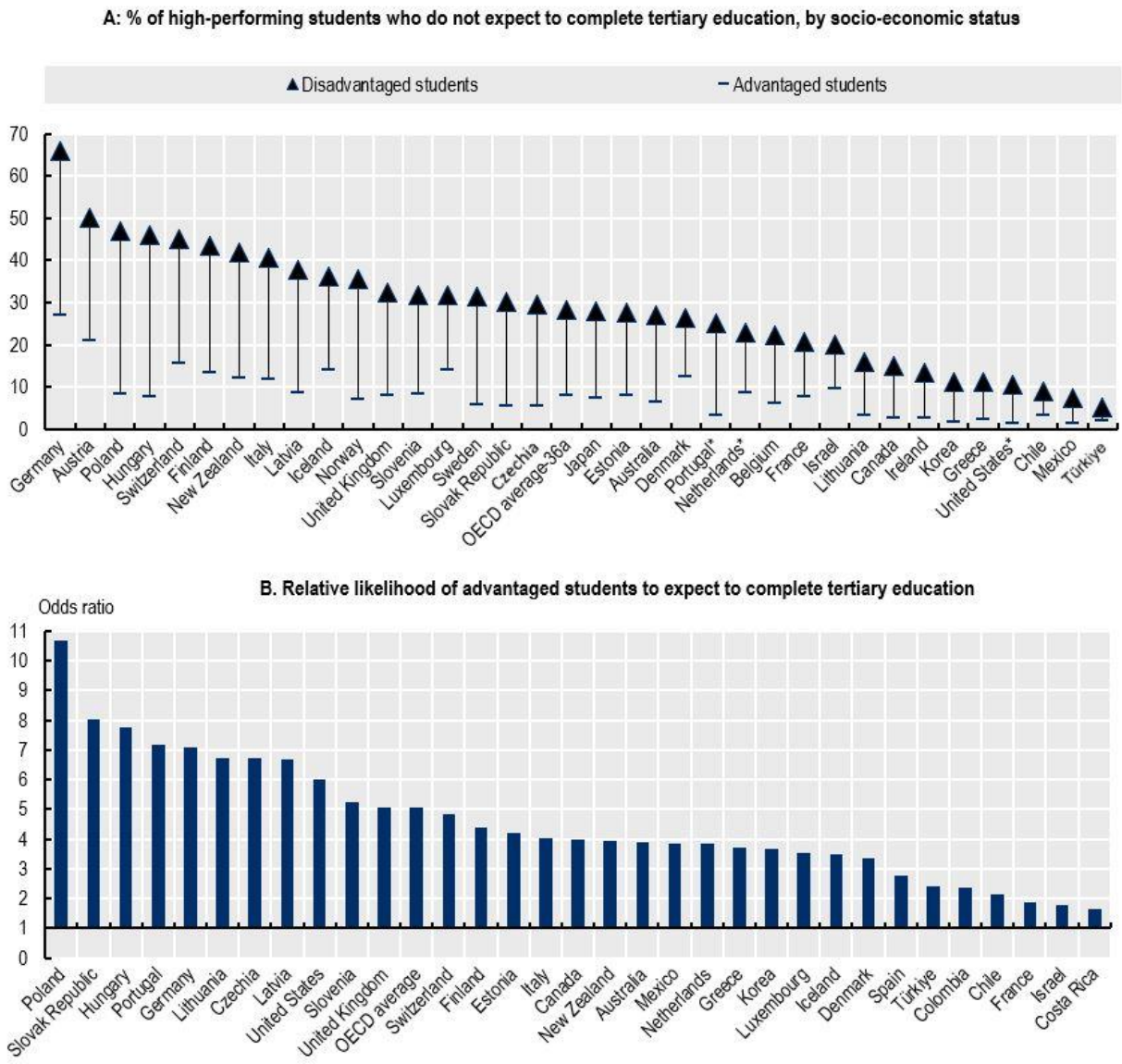
Figure 2.13. Even among similarly performing students, socially disadvantaged students are less likely than advantaged students to expect to work in high-skilled occupations



Note: High-skilled jobs include ISCO 1-3: managers; professionals; and technicians and associate professionals, respectively. Only statistically significant differences (p-value<0.1) between two groups (advantaged and disadvantaged) are shown in Panel A/B. High-performing students refer to those who have attained at least minimum proficiency (Level 2) in the three core PISA subjects and are high performers (Level 4) in at least one subject. In Panel C, statistically significant results (p-value<0.1) are in dark colour. Odds ratios are adjusted for gender, migrant status, reading performance, and VET orientation. See Box 1.1 for further details in relation to significance levels.
Source: PISA 2018 (OECD, 2019[11]).

In addition, high performing socially disadvantaged students are almost twice as likely to not expect to complete tertiary education, compared to advantaged students (Figure 2.14, Panel A). Even after controlling for gender, migrant status, type of school, programme orientation (vocational) and reading scores, socially advantaged students are more likely to expect to complete tertiary education. This is the case for all OECD countries: on average socially advantaged students are 5 times more ambitious in this regard. In Poland, advantaged students are 10.7 times more ambitious.

Figure 2.14. High performing socially disadvantaged students are less likely to expect to complete tertiary education



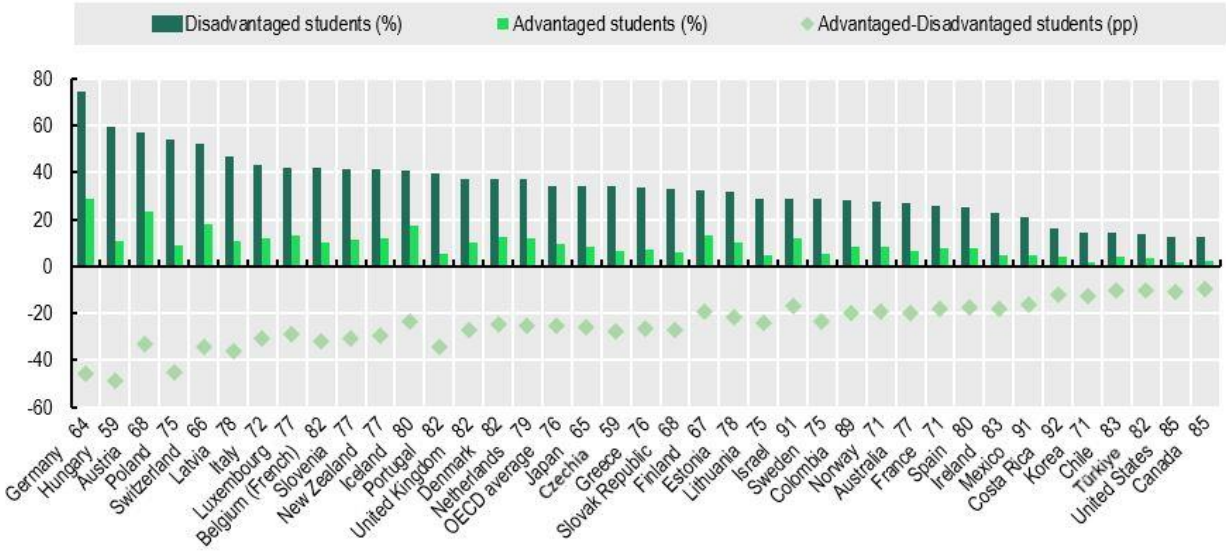
Note: High-performing students refer to those who have attained at least minimum proficiency (Level 2) in the three core PISA subjects and are high performers (Level 4) in at least one subject. Only statistically significant differences between two groups (girls and boys are shown in Panel A/B. In Panel C) are reported in the figures (see Box 1.1 for how statistical significance is measured). Disadvantaged/advantaged students refer to the bottom/top quartile in the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS). Odds ratios are adjusted for gender, migrant status, reading performance, and VET orientation. See Box 1.1 for further details in relation to significance levels.
Source: PISA 2018 (OECD, 2019[11]).

Career misalignment by SES: students expecting to work in an ISCO 1 or 2 occupation, but not planning on pursuing tertiary education

Socially disadvantaged students often misalign their career expectations with their education plans. In OECD analysis, misalignment is identified where students expect to undertake a managerial or professional job (major categories 1 and 2 in the International Standardised Classification of Occupations), but do not intend to pursue the tertiary education which is commonly required to access such employment. On average across the OECD countries in PISA 2018, more than one in three of the most socially disadvantaged quartile of students could be categorised as misaligned in their aspirations, compared to one in ten of the most advantaged quartile of students (Figure 2.15). This pattern is evident when comparing the career plans of both high performing and low performing students from high and low social backgrounds (Figure 2.16). Such patterns in misalignment are found in all OECD countries.

Figure 2.15. Socially disadvantaged students are more likely to be misaligned their career expectations and education plans

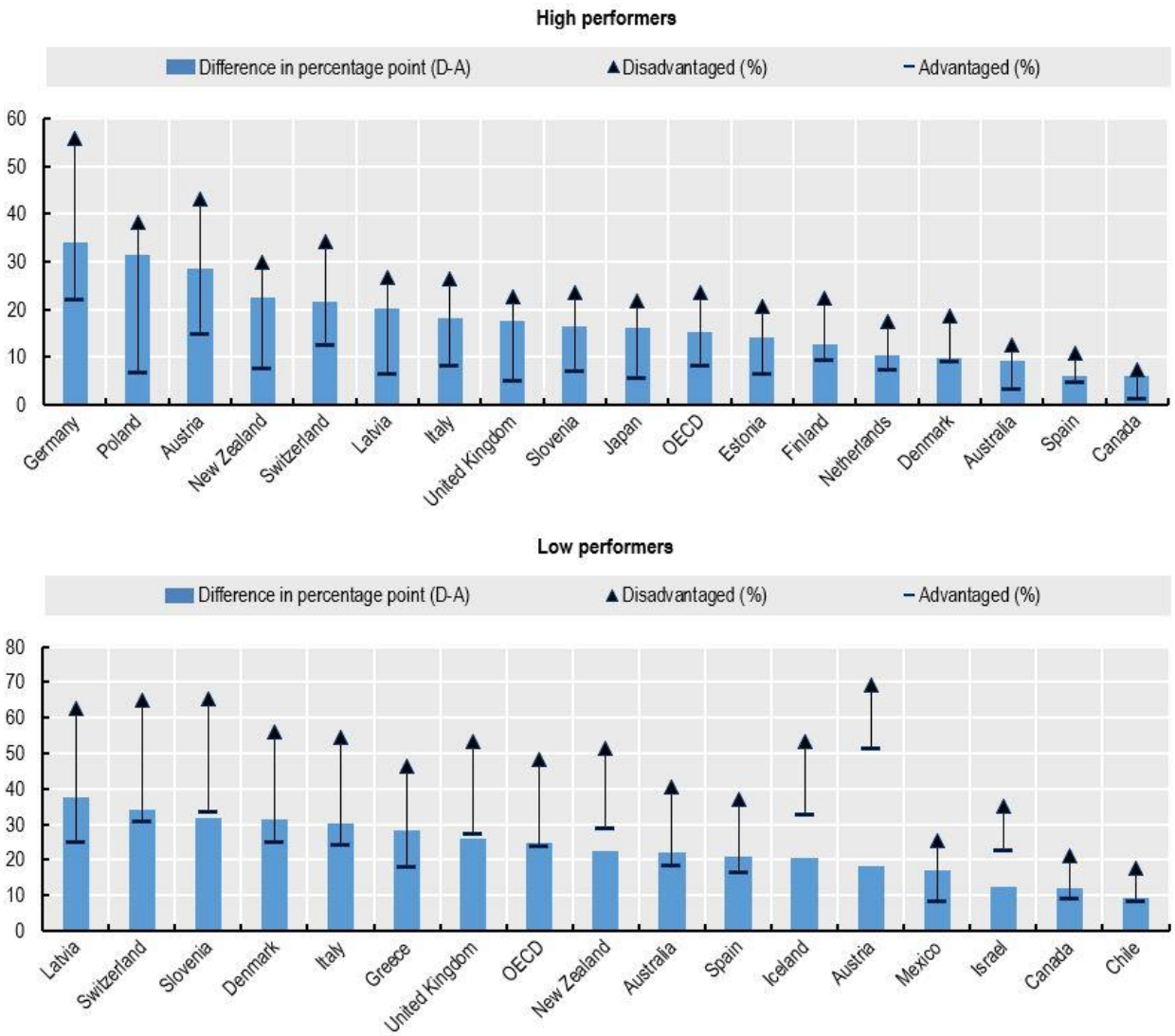
Percentage of students who do not expect to complete a tertiary degree amongst those who expect to work in a high-skilled occupation (ISCO major groups 1 and 2)



Note: The percentage of students who expect to work in a high-skilled occupation by the age of 30 is shown next to the country/economy name. Disadvantaged/advantaged students refer to the bottom/top quartile in the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) (see Box 1.1 for more details).
Source: PISA 2018 Results (Volume II): Where All Students Can Succeed (OECD, 2019[11]).

Figure 2.16. Compared to similarly performing socially advantaged students, disadvantaged students are more likely to express career and education expectations that are not aligned

Percentage of students who do not expect to complete a tertiary degree amongst those who expect to work in a high-skilled occupation, 2018



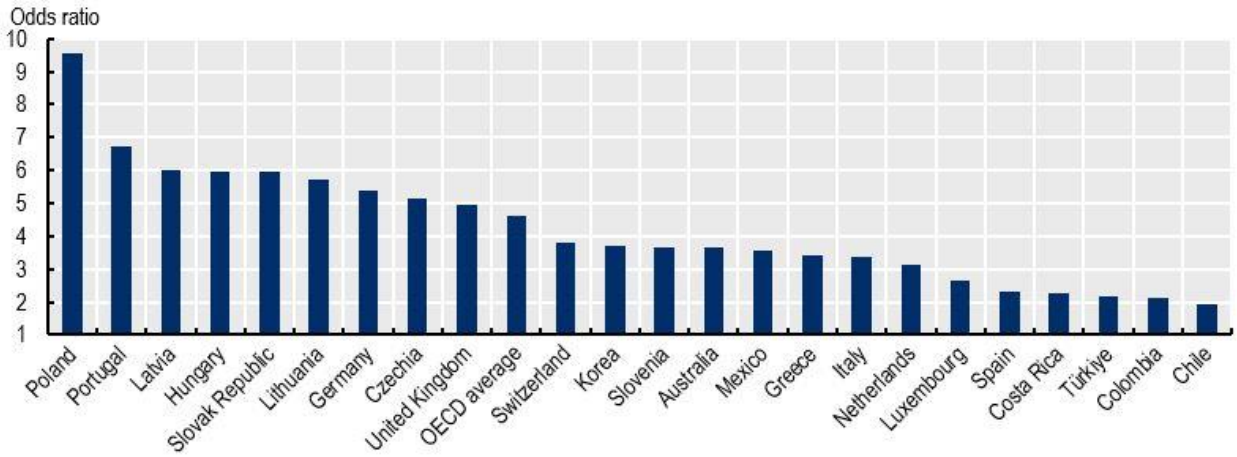
Note: High-performing students refer to those who have attained at least minimum proficiency (Level 2) in the three core PISA subjects and are high performers (Level 4) in at least one subject. Countries with missing values or statistically insignificant difference were omitted (see Box 1.1 for how statistical significance is measured). Disadvantaged/advantaged students refer to the bottom/top quartile in the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) (see Box 1.1 for more details).
Source: PISA 2018 (OECD, 2019[11]).

Controlling for educational pathway and other characteristics (gender, migrant status, school type, reading score), disadvantaged students across the OECD are 4.6 times more likely than advantaged students to be misaligned in their career expectations. In Poland, the likelihood goes up to 9.6 times. This is a strong result even among countries with strong systems of vocational education and training: in Germany, disadvantaged students are 5.4 times more likely than advantaged students to be misaligned in their career expectations; in Switzerland, 3.8 times more likely (Figure 2.17). This may be related to the fact that these countries offer pathways towards high-skilled occupations without going through tertiary education, either

through direct access to examinations (e.g., in Germany, Master craftsperson examination, ISCED 5-6) or by recognising work experience.

Figure 2.17. Even when controlling for reading score and other characteristics, socially disadvantaged students are more likely than advantaged students to be misaligned in their career expectation

Relative likelihood of disadvantaged students being misaligned in their career plans in reference to advantaged students



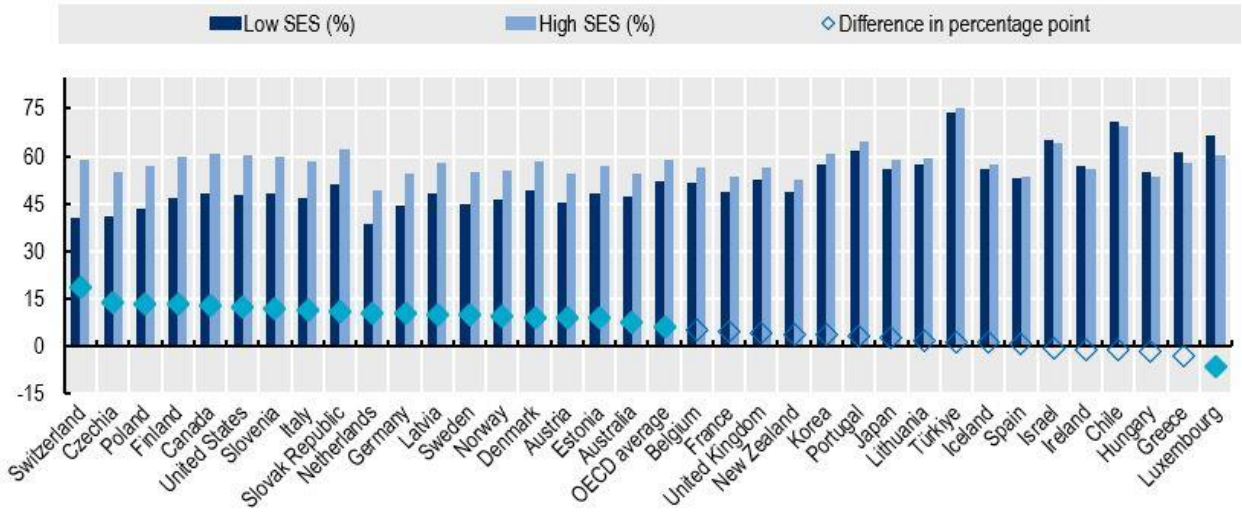
Note: Students are identified as misaligned where their occupational expectation relates to an ISCO 1 or 2 major category occupation, but they do not intend to pursue tertiary education. Odds ratios are adjusted for gender, migrant status, reading performance and VET orientation. All presented results are statistically significant (at p-value < 0.1) (see Box 1.1). Disadvantaged/advantaged students refer to the bottom/top quartile in the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS). See Box 1.1 for further details in relation to significance levels.
Source: PISA 2018 (OECD, 2019[11]).

Career concentration by SES

While currently research literature is limited, studies of career concentration among teenagers – where the occupational expectations expressed by young people are less varied – tend to show associations with poorer ultimate employment outcomes (Covacevich et al., 2021[12]). Career concentration is usually higher among students from high SES backgrounds compared to disadvantaged students. On OECD average, advantaged students more frequently expect to work in one of ten most popular choices of future occupation by the age of 30 by peers of their gender. Such expectations often focus on the professions, such as doctors, teachers, lawyers and engineers. In the 2018 PISA, 59% of high-performing advantaged students and 52% of high-performing disadvantaged students from 31 OECD countries indicated that they planned to work in one of the most ten popular occupational choices in their country (among low-performing students, 53% vs 49%). In the Czechia and Switzerland, high-performing advantaged students are 14 and 19 percentage points respectively more likely than similarly performing disadvantaged students to expect to work in popular occupations (Figure 2.18).

Figure 2.18. Socially advantaged students are more likely to expect to work in popular jobs than disadvantaged students with similar academic performance

Percentage of high performers expecting to work in the 10 most popular occupations in their country

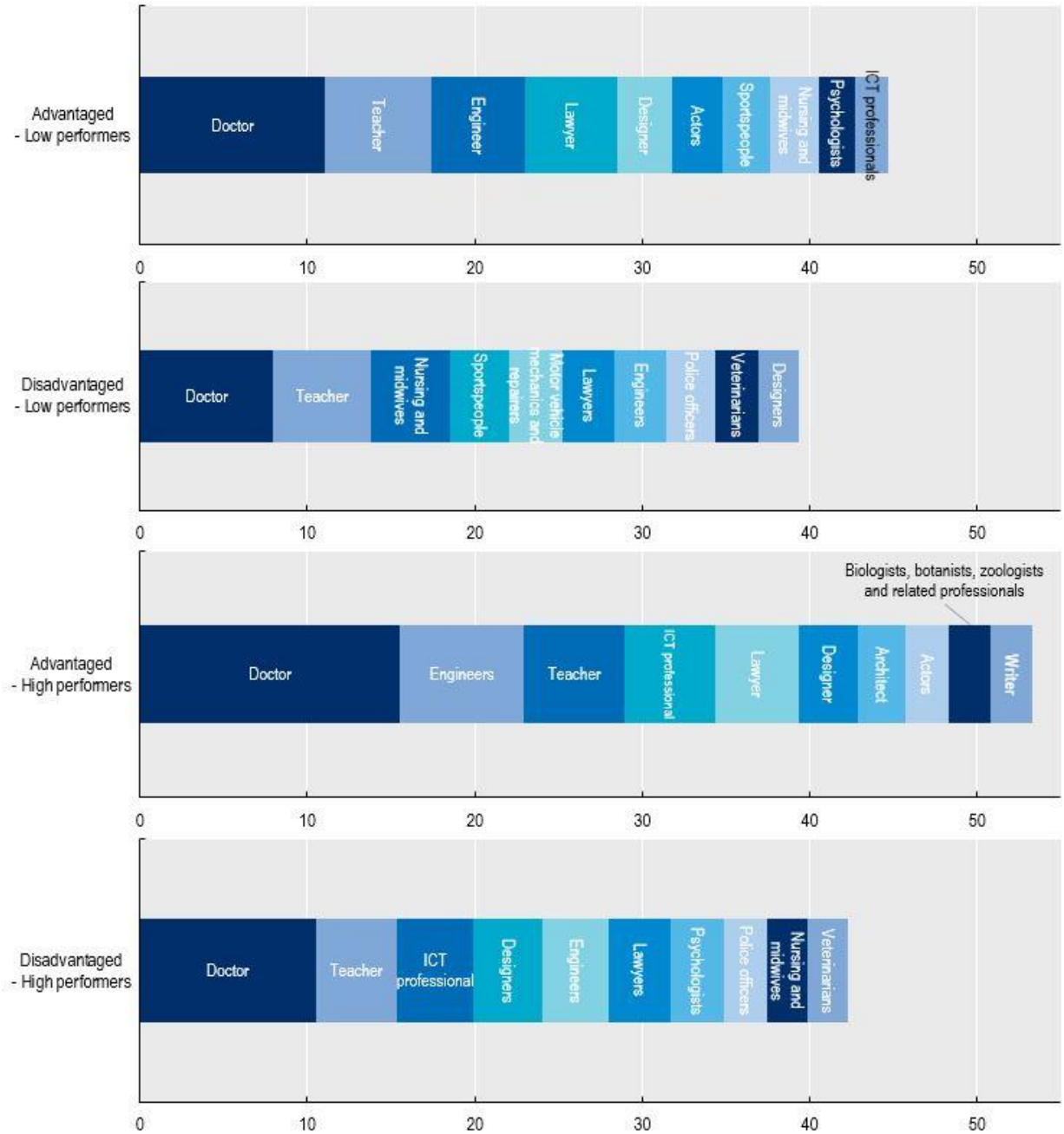


Note: Statistically significant results (p-value<0.1) are presented in a filler marker (see Box 1.1 about the significance level).
Source: PISA 2018 (OECD, 2019[11]).

Based on combined data from 31 OECD countries in PISA 2018, 53% of high-performing socially advantaged students and 42% high-performing disadvantaged students expect to work in the most popular occupations identified across these 31 OECD countries. Doctors and teachers were the two most popular occupations both among disadvantaged and advantaged students (except high-performing advantaged students whose second most popular job was engineers). Among low-performers, fewer students expect to work in the top 10 popular occupations compared to high-performers: 45% of advantaged students and 40% of disadvantaged students (Figure 2.19).

Figure 2.19. Even among similarly performing students, career expectation among socially advantaged students is more concentrated than disadvantaged students

Percentage of students expecting to work in the 10 most popular occupations in OECD, by SES and performance



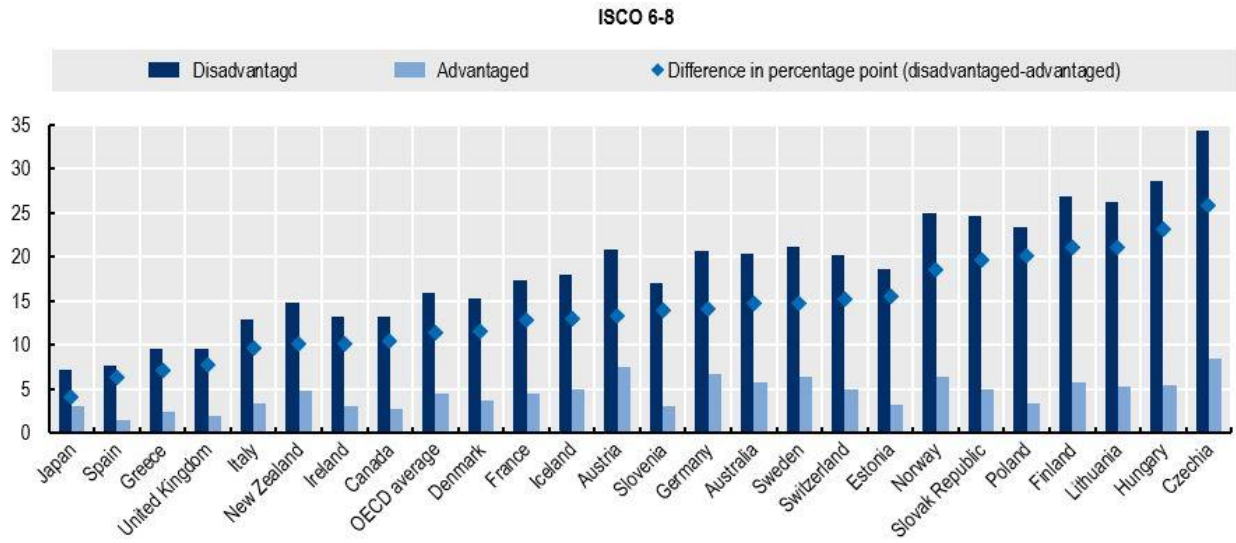
Note: Based on OECD pooled data in PISA 2018.
Source: PISA 2018 (OECD, 2019[11]).

The occupational expectations of socially disadvantaged students are particularly pronounced with regard to skilled and semi-skilled occupations, typically entered through vocational education and training programmes, such as skilled agricultural and fishery workers, craft and related trades workers, or plant and machine operators and assemblers (ISCO major categories 6-8). More disadvantaged students tend

to anticipate working in these occupations than their advantaged peers. Across OECD countries, disadvantaged students are 11 percentage points more likely than advantaged students to expect to work in the skilled trades (Figure 2.20). Czechia shows a 26 percentage point difference, followed by Hungary (23 percentage point), Lithuania and Finland (21 pp). Looking at only craft and related trades (ISCO 7), only two countries have available data: Austria (11pp) and Czechia (22pp) – in all other OECD countries, there were too few observations to provide reliable estimates (i.e., there were fewer than 30 students or fewer than 5 schools with valid data). This means that the level of interest among socially advantaged students in these trades is so low that meaningful statistical analysis becomes difficult.

Figure 2.20. Socially disadvantaged students are more likely to expect to work in skilled trades

Percentage of 15-year-old students who expect to work in skilled trades (ISCO 6, 7 and 8)



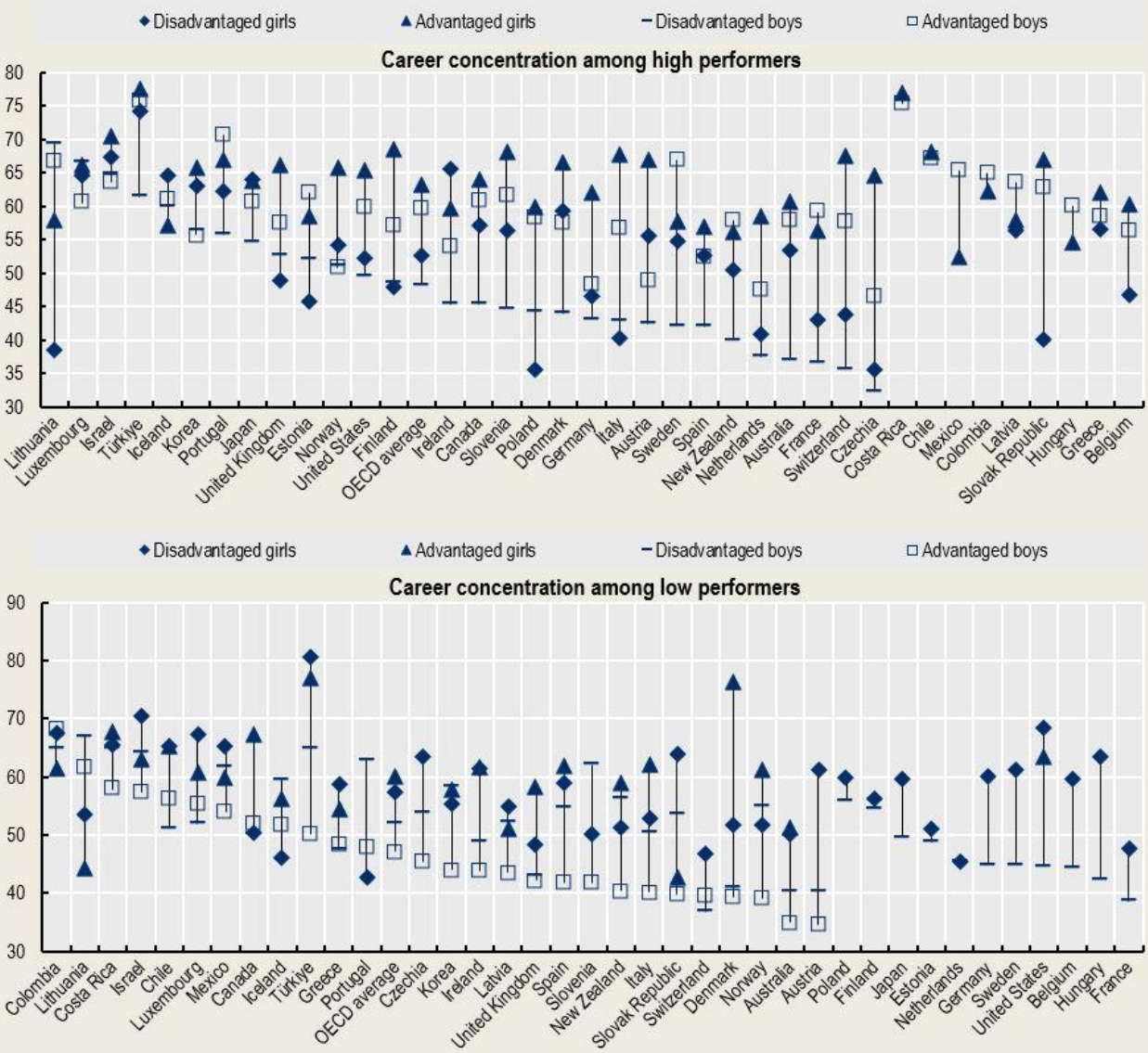
Note: ISCO 6 refer to skilled agricultural and fishery workers, ISCO 7 refer to craft and related trades workers, and ISCO 8 refer to plant and machine operators and assemblers.
Source: All results are statically significant (see Box 1.1 about the significance level).

Box 2.2. Interactions between gender and SES in career concentration

Teenage career expectation differs by gender as well as by SES. Putting gender and SES together, a form of intersectionality, socially advantaged girls tend to have the highest career concentration regardless of academic performance. Among high performers, disadvantaged boys show the lowest levels of career concentration, while among low performers, socially advantaged boys show the lowest concentration (Figure 2.21).

Figure 2.21. Among high performers disadvantaged boys show the lowest career concentration while among low performers advantaged boys show the lowest concentration

Percentage of high performers expecting to work in the 10 most popular occupations in their country

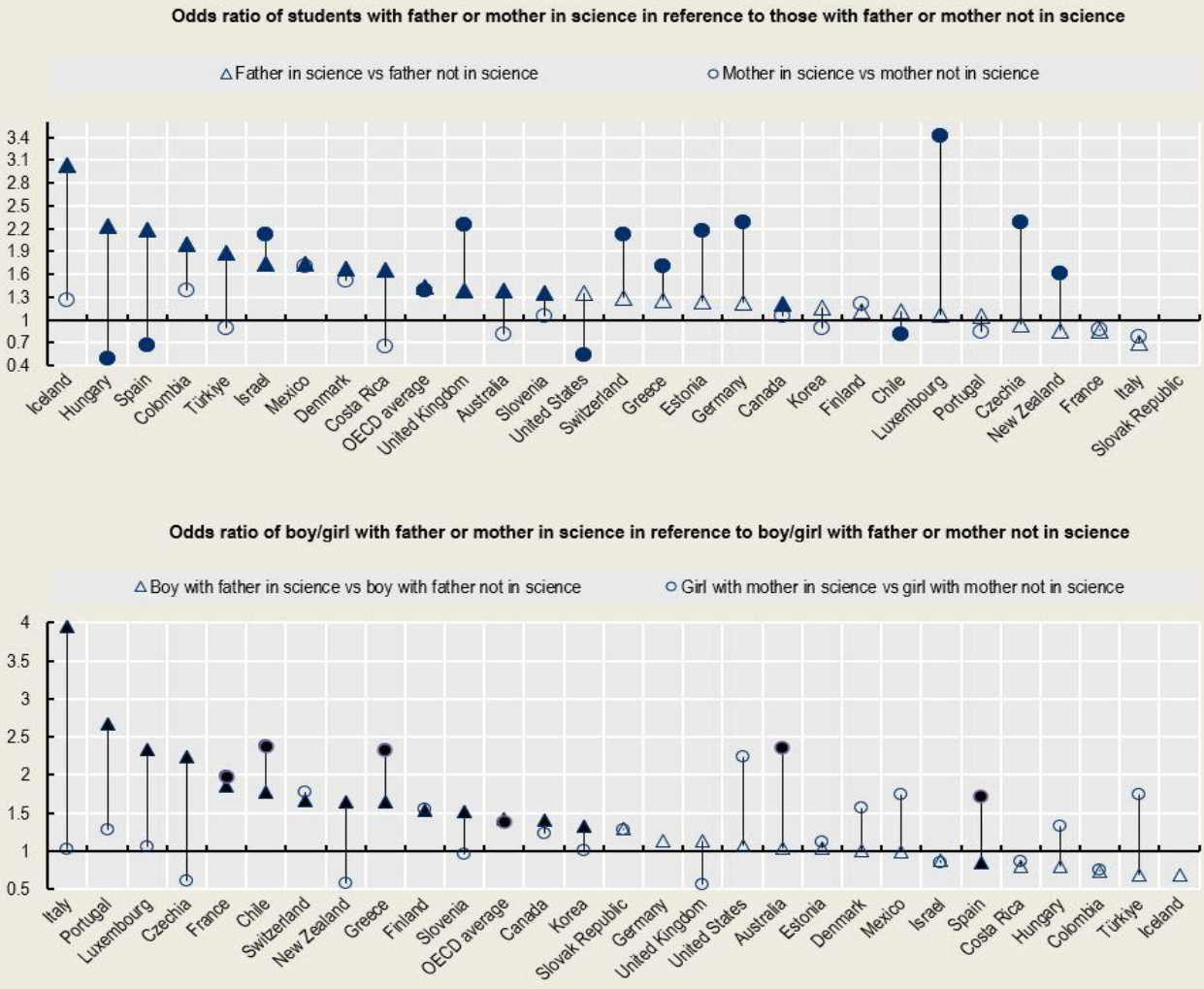


Note: Each panel is sorted by the group with the lowest career concentration on OECD average.
Source: PISA 2018 (OECD, 2019[11]).

Analysis of PISA 2018 data reveals patterns across many countries in relation to the likelihood of children seeking to follow in the footsteps of their mothers and particularly of their fathers. On average across OECD, having a parent working in science or engineering yields 1.4 times more odds of expecting a similar career, compared to not having one, when controlling for gender, SES, academic performance and other variables. Students with a father working in science have significantly higher odds in 13 OECD countries, for example in Iceland (odds ratio 3), Hungary, Spain (2.2), Colombia (2) and Türkiye (1.9). Students with a mother working in science have higher odds in Luxembourg (3.4) and Czechia/Germany/the UK (2.3). In 15 OECD countries, boys with a father in science are more likely to expect to work in the same field in Italy (4), Portugal (2.7), Luxembourg (2.3); girls with a mother in science are more likely to aspire to the same profession in Australia (2.4), Chile (2.4), Greece (2.3) and Spain (1.7), for example (Figure 2.22).

Figure 2.22. Parent occupation and gender have different effects on career expectation for science or engineering occupations across countries

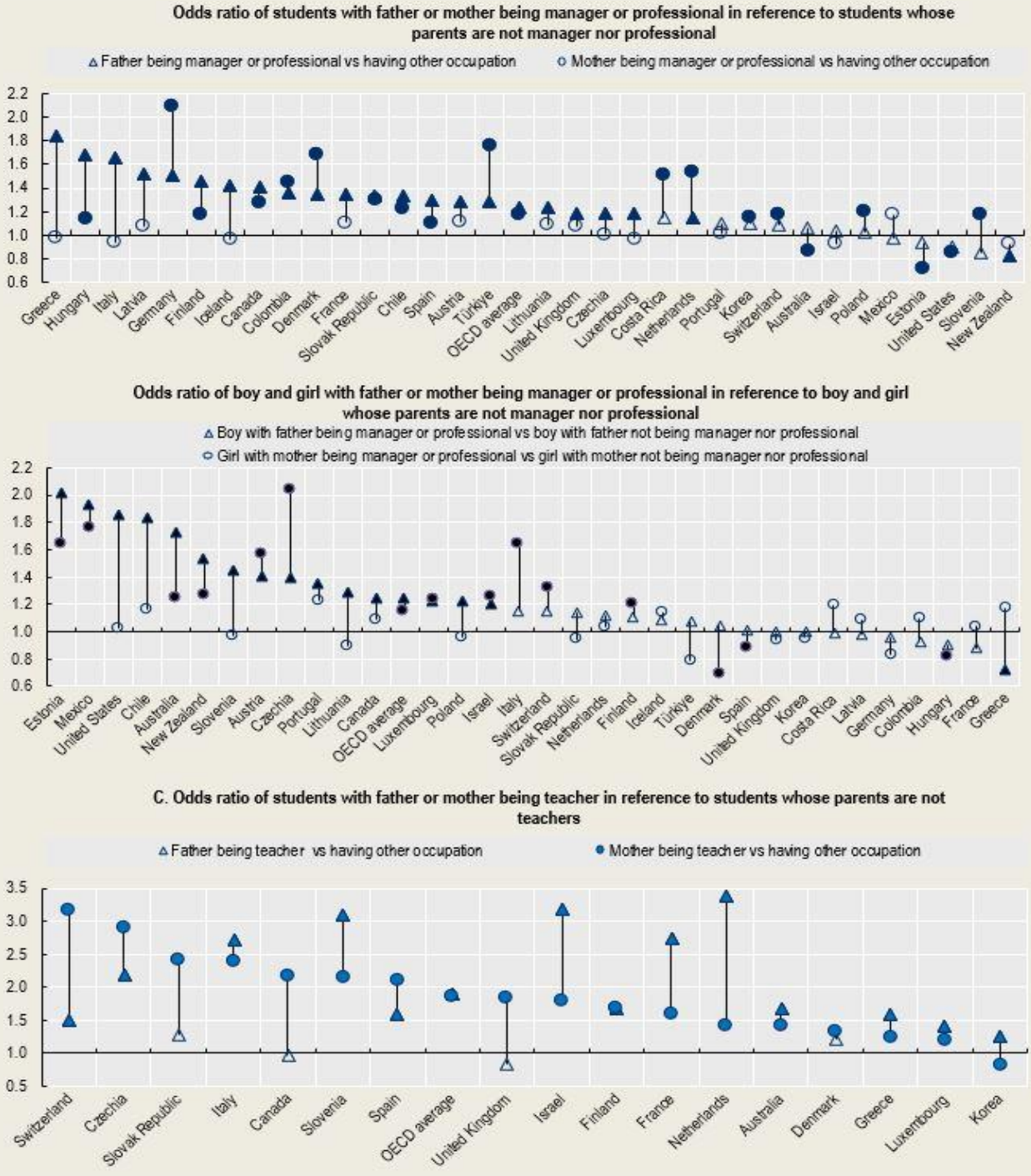
Odds ratio of 15-year-old student expecting a career in science or engineering at age 30



Note: Statistically significant results are in filled marker (see Box 1.1 about the significance level). The odds ratios are adjusted for gender, career guidance provided in school, SES (no issue with collinearity between SES and parent occupation), migrant status and math/reading/science scores.
Source: PISA 2018 (OECD, 2019[11]).

Figure 2.23. Effect of parent occupation on child's career expectation and by gender

Likelihood (odds ratio) of 15-year-old student expecting the same occupation at age 30 as undertaken by their parents



Note: Statistically significant results are in filled marker (see Box 1.1 about the significance level). The odds ratios are adjusted for gender, career guidance provided in school, SES (no issue with collinearity between SES and parent occupation), migrant status and math/reading/science scores.
Source: PISA 2018 (OECD, 2019[11]).

2.3. How Career guidance can address inequalities by SES

At the start of this chapter, PIAAC data were reviewed to explore patterns of employment success that link with the social background of young adults. After controlling for academic achievement, it was observed that, on average across OECD countries, young adults from socially disadvantaged backgrounds were more likely than comparably qualified peers from high SES backgrounds to be:

- not in education, employment and training (NEET);
- concentrated in lower skill occupational areas; and
- earning less.

Overall, they can be seen to be less successful than high SES peers in activating their qualifications within the labour market. As described in chapter one of this paper, such activation is commonly explained by labour market researchers in terms of varying capacities and resources that individuals draw upon in the competition for work (human, social and cultural capital) which are open to influence within educational provision, notably forms of career development.

Reviewing data from PISA 2018 highlights several ways in which socio-economic status relates to career development. After controlling for academic achievement and other characteristics that typically shape adult employment outcomes, young people from disadvantaged social backgrounds are on average:

- less likely to participate in school-delivered career development activities, including activities that engage employers;
- more likely to be uncertain about their occupational expectations;
- less likely to be ambitious for their educational and professional futures; and
- more likely to be confused about the levels of education required to achieve their ambitions (misalignment).

This matters because such patterns of career development are commonly associated in analysis of longitudinal data with poorer employment outcomes than expected in young adulthood (Covacevich et al., 2021[12]). In addition, low SES students typically gain less experience of the labour market through volunteering and undertaking work placements (internships) while in school, a further predictor of better transitions (Covacevich et al., 2021[12]). However, they are more likely to work part-time than high SES peers. Finally, PISA data show that when it comes to some important aspects of career development, such as finding out information on the financing of tertiary education, disadvantaged students are more dependent on their schools for support than their more advantaged peers.

In keeping with other research studies consequently, PISA shows that often those who can be seen as being in greatest need of guidance as they face additional barriers in activating their educational attainment in the labour market, are the least likely to be able to access it (Dockery et al., 2022[19]; Romito, 2019[20]). In terms of social inequalities, this is the case for both low and high performing low SES students. Low SES students can often be expected to seek employment earlier than high SES peers, especially if they are lower achieving academically, and so must depend more on support from their secondary schools to prepare for their working lives. High achieving low SES students also require greater, and specific forms of, school support, notably where they compete for access to post-secondary opportunities with high SES peers who are better placed to draw upon family-based resources linked to tertiary programmes and employment that can be highly competitive to enter.

In terms of capitals theory, the teenage career development of young people from low SES backgrounds can be seen to hinder the activation of knowledge and skills developed within schooling. Low SES students for example, demonstrate greater levels of confusion (uncertainty and misalignment) about their career plans (cultural capital) and engage with people in work through their schools less frequently than high SES peers (social capital). While greater experience of part-time working speaks to growing human capital, as

Fullarton shows (1999[16]), it is less likely to be in fields related to students' areas of career interest than work placements or volunteering opportunities where low SES students on average participate less frequently than high SES students. Such disadvantages are compounded as studies show that low SES young people typically have fewer home-based social resources to draw upon in their career development (McDonald et al., 2007[21]; Richards et al., 2016[22]).

Consequently, effective guidance systems will actively seek to enhance the career exploration of young people from low SES backgrounds by enabling greater access to information, experiences and resources that will serve to close the gap with their more advantaged peers. Effective systems will help young people to engage more deeply with broader social networks. If students can be encouraged and enabled to take up opportunities to use career guidance, to develop their career thinking, engage with a wider range of occupations and develop more ambitious and informed plans for their futures, it can be expected that these changes will flow into longer term changes in the number of students who are NEET, the proportion who enter the professions and those who go on to access decent work, achieve good salaries and well-being. While such interventions cannot be expected to undo all the inequalities that exist in school-to-work transitions, longitudinal analyses indicate that they will contribute to fairer progressions into the labour market.

2.4. The role of career guidance in addressing social inequalities

In light of the capitals analyses as discussed in Chapter One of this paper, this section explores a range of different career guidance approaches that have been used to ameliorate socio-economic disadvantage. Socio-economic status is strongly intertwined with both young people's career aspirations and the opportunity structure in which they are pursuing these aspirations (Roberts, 2009[23]). Consequently, it is important that career guidance is organised in ways that empower young people and allow them to explore and expand the realms of the possible. This is particularly the case as learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds have been found, as illustrated in this paper, to have lower career awareness and a greater need for career guidance [see also: (Tebele, Nel and Dlamini, 2015[24])].

The case studies, examples and evidence identified have been grouped under four main categories which provide a structure for consideration by policymakers and practitioners as they develop new interventions to address SES disadvantage. Firstly, career guidance interventions are discussed which ***provide more intensive support*** to those from lower SES backgrounds. Secondly, it explores interventions which ***develop professional capacity and provide dedicated resources*** to address the issues raised in this chapter. Thirdly, it examines interventions which actively ***build social capital***, and finally reviews interventions designed to ***develop a critical understanding of personal relationships with the labour market***. While it is rare for such practice examples to have been fully evaluated with regard to outcomes for students from different social backgrounds, such provision fits with a model of change that addresses forms of comparative disadvantage identified in large datasets.

2.4.1. Providing more intense support

As analysis of PISA 2018 data shows, low SES students can be expected to experience lower levels of career development than their high SES peers. Consequently, a first step for national career guidance systems is to ensure that no barriers in the design and delivery of guidance systems systematically prevent all students from benefiting from provision. However, recognition of the different needs of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds does result in career guidance services in some countries being more strongly targeted towards these students. This is done on the basis that directing additional support to those students who most need it increases the chance of ameliorating socio-economic disadvantage. Yet, this is not always the case and on average across OECD countries for which data is available, routinely

low SES students can expect to participate less in important career development activities than their high SES peers.

Enhancing participation in career development activities

As noted, analysis of PISA 2018 data highlights strong relationships between the engagement of students in career development activities by the age of 15 and patterns of career thinking that are associated with more positive employment outcomes (Covacevich et al., 2021[12]). For example, lower levels of career uncertainty are significantly associated with participation in a range of different guidance activities, including speaking with career advisors, completing career questionnaires, attending job fairs, job shadowing or worksite visits, participating in internships, part-time employment and volunteer work. The analysis also shows significant relationships between such engagement in higher levels of career ambition and lower levels of career misalignment (Covacevich et al., 2021[12]).

In recent analysis from **Korea**, Lee et al. find a similar pattern (2021[25]): when students receive more career education, the link between competence in career management and social background weakens. By beginning guidance activities for all students at an earlier age and focusing on the development of individuals' capabilities to understand the possibilities available to them, as Skovhus finds from a **Danish** study at lower secondary level (2016[26]), the capacity of low SES students to take greater agency over their career journeys can be expected to grow. By implication, as discussed below, schools serving low SES student populations require greater levels of resourcing to support richer diets of career guidance.

Longitudinal studies that explore the capacity of school-mediated career guidance programmes to provide long-term compensatory effects for students facing social disadvantage are rare. However, analysis of the **UK** British Cohort Study (BCS) by Mann, Percy and Kashefpakdel (2018[27]) does provide an illustration of such an impact. Analysis of the BCS shows that 16-year-olds who agree that they knew someone who could help them get a job after leaving education (who were predominantly drawn from more advantaged social backgrounds) went on to earn 4% more than comparable peers at age 26. The study also shows that students who engaged in multiple ***career talks with guest speakers*** could expect to earn more than comparable peers at age 26. The wage premiums linked to such school-mediated career guidance provision were greatest (8.5%) for young people (commonly from low SES backgrounds) who as students stated that they knew no one who could help them get a job on leaving education, illustrating a compensatory effect.

In Canada, recent analysis of a long-term randomised control trial where high school students engaged in a four-year programme of additional support in their career development and planning for higher education provides potentially the strongest evidence yet of long-term benefits linked to a specific programme of career guidance intervention. While the analysis has yet to appear in the peer-review literature, building as it does on other public evaluations, the new results have been met with considerable interest. The ***Explore Your Horizons*** programme was conducted in 30 New Brunswick high schools and involved over 4 000 students who were randomly assigned to two groups. A first group participated in 20 after-school workshops designed to help them understand the importance of career planning, explore educational and career options, and transition from high school to tertiary education. The workshops actively engaged parents, included a focus on resilient life skills and engaged post-secondary students. The high school students also had access to media materials about career planning. A second group simply received additional financial support on enrolment in tertiary education. Following the students up to age 29, significant positive results were identified in relation to tertiary enrolment, graduation rates and average earnings of the first group. That group was divided moreover into two halves based on parental income. Linked to the intervention, the enrolment rates of higher income students were seen to drop a little, while that of lower income students rose significantly, leading to a substantial decrease in the gap between the two groups in enrolment in four-year programmes of tertiary education (Renée, 2023[28]). See also: (Renée, 2023[28]; Social Research and Demonstration Corporation, 2009[29]). The study suggests that the

intervention provides socially disadvantaged students (and their families) with new and additional sources of information to allow for confident decision-making to take place within an extended and appropriate format.

Preferential funding for schools serving low SES populations

In the **United States**, the federal government makes available additional funding to support low-income students in low-income schools through what is known as Title One funding. This additional resource can be used to support both student teaching and career development. Schools are eligible to use funding to support initiatives such as the development of student career portfolios, engage in job shadowing and work placements, if such activities are consistent with a school's needs and schoolwide plan (Education[30]).

In **Ireland**, schools serving more disadvantaged students can expect greater financial resources linked to the delivery of career guidance. Within the ***Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) programme***, eligible secondary schools receive funding to provide for 44 hours of weekly dedicated staff time to support guidance activities. By contrast, funding for more advantaged schools amounts to 18 hours per week. DEIS schools are expected to use the funding to provide greater levels of guidance to students, including more 1-2-1 interactions with guidance counsellors, greater engagement with employers and tertiary institutions, greater integration of career learning within academic subjects and engagement of families (OECD, 2023[31]).

Countries have also developed programmes focused in specific geographic areas marked by high levels of social disadvantage. In **England**, following the 2012 Olympics a career development intervention was developed as part of a local community development programme (Dodd and Hooley, 2016[32]). The ***Legacy Careers Project*** provided career learning experiences and employer engagement opportunities for learners at schools with high concentrations of low socio-economic learners in East London. The programme was organised as a team-based business competition supported by (older) peer mentors and with employers engaged in judging the end results. The programme's evaluation reported that it enabled young people to better understand their career options at the time they are making their academic and career choices and equipped them with information, confidence and motivation relevant to career planning and management.

In **Australia**, the national government provides funding (AUS$38.2M, 2021-24) to the Smith Family Foundation to provide greater career guidance support, commonly enriched through employer engagement, to 76 000 socially disadvantaged students through the ***Growing Careers Project***. The Foundation also connects disadvantaged students in Years 9 to 11 with adult mentors who provide advice and help them explore post-school options through its ***itrack*** programme (Family[33]). In longitudinal analyses that follow young people out of secondary education, the Smith Family finds that key factors that influence more successful transitions include better career management skills, stronger supportive adult social networks and greater workplace experience, through part-time working or internships (Smith Family, 2023[34]).

2.4.2. Developing professional capacity and providing dedicated resources

Career guidance interventions are delivered by professionals drawn from a range of backgrounds including both full career guidance professionals and teachers, social workers and other related professions for whom the delivery of career guidance is likely to be only a small part of their job. This section describes interventions that have been developed to support professionals to have a greater impact on the careers of those from low SES.

School-based career development programmes

Career development operates through the interaction between structural and individual factors. Career guidance can work on increasing an individual's capacity to succeed in the labour market, particularly through providing them with information, experiences and feedback that can increase their knowledge, skills and other personal attributes. These individual capacities that better allow young people to navigate the labour market can collectively be described as 'career management skills' (the skills that an individual needs to find out about, develop and manage their career) and 'employability skills' (the skills that an individual needs to gain and succeed in work) and the interventions which are designed to increase these skills are often described as 'career education'.

In the **United States**, **Canada** and other countries, ***career pathway programmes*** and ***programmes of cooperative education*** are rich in work-based learning, enabling student engagement with professionals and workplaces relevant to emerging career aspirations (Covacevich et al., 2021[12]; Mann, Denis and Percy, 2020[35]). While students complete their general high school diploma and keep their post-secondary options open, they have opportunity to pursue vocational interests which allow them to develop skills, social contacts and familiarity with occupational cultures that allow for smoother transitions into employment. Such programmes are commonly linked with better employment outcomes than would otherwise be expected of students with similar levels of academic achievement and background (Covacevich et al., 2021[12]). Moreover, studies of longitudinal data suggest that they provide particularly beneficial outcomes for more socially disadvantaged students (Dougherty, 2018[36]; Neumark and Rothstein, 2005[37]).

In **Finland,** the ***School-to-Work Group Method*** was introduced to prepare young people to first find and then stay in employment (Mann, Denis and Percy, 2020[35]). The programme was organised as a twenty-hour programme delivered over five days in the final year of secondary education and jointly taught by a vocational school teacher and a representative of the local public employment service. Working to a standardised curriculum, young people are encouraged to reflect on their own experiences of work and desires for employment through individual research, collaborative working with student peers and practical exercises related to the process of finding employment and socialisation within a new organisation. A randomised control trial followed 334 students involved in the programme and demonstrated that significant benefits accrued to participants on the Group Method programme, including a greater likelihood of being in employment and in a job that was linked to their educational qualifications and aligned with their career ambitions (Koivisto, Vuori and Nykyri, 2007[38]).

2.4.3. Building social capital with families and the world of work

Career guidance plays an important intermediary role in young people's transitions to further learning and work. Young people who come from higher socio-economic backgrounds, with correspondingly high levels of cultural capital, are likely to find it easier to transition to a variety of post-secondary outcomes (Forster and van de Werfhorst, 2019[39]). Parental knowledge and contacts can help to smooth young people's transition (Mann, Percy and Kashefpakdel, 2018[27]) and support the development of an informal network of individuals who can support the career progression of an individual (McDonald et al., 2007[21]), but for those young people who do not have access to social and cultural capital that can support them to make advantageous transitions, career guidance can play a compensatory role (Mann, Percy and Kashefpakdel, 2018[27]).

Leveraging institutional social capital

Studies from the UK show that students attending fee-paying or selective schools can routinely expect richer provision of guidance than students attending non-selective state schools (Mann et al., 2016[40]; Mann and Kashefpakdel, 2014[41]). Private schools typically enable career development by engaging with

parents and alumni employed in highly competitive occupations to which many students aspire (Huddleston, Mann and Dawkins, 2014[42]).

Where career guidance brokers access to opportunities, it recognises that career knowledge, insight, contacts and opportunities are effectively hoarded by people in higher socio-economic groups. Consequently, there is a need to put in place systems that gather information and contacts and connect them with young people who do not have easy access to them. **UK** programmes such as ***Inspiring the Future*** and ***Speakers for Schools*** which connect schools with workplace volunteers and with elite public figures respectively have been restricted to publicly-funded educational institutions as a means of democratising access to desirable social contacts. In such a way, institutional social capital can be leveraged to the advantage of students lacking appropriate networks within their social networks.

In **New Zealand,** many schools participate in ***SpeedMeet*** (OECD, 2022[43]) events where final year secondary school students are given the opportunity to meet with many potential employers. Over an hour, employers seeking to recruit to jobs and apprenticeships have short meetings with students individually within a carousel format. If after the event, both the employer and student wish to continue the discussion, contact details are exchanged.

In **Japan,** schools have a key role in facilitating young people's entry into the labour market through school ***mediated job-search systems*** (Furuya, 2020[44]). Job placement teachers are involved in preparing and screening students for applying for jobs. Students are encouraged to only apply for one (suitable) job at a time, and the level of trust between employers and schools is sufficient to mean that employers will normally accept the student who is put forward by the school. This unusually close relationship between education and employers – a form of social capital - has its challenges, particularly in the way that it places a lot of power in the hands of the teachers and can reduce the agency of students and lead to stereotyping around suitable roles for students. However, it also creates a meritocratic mechanism which has been shown to increase the chances of finding a relatively stable and high status job for high school graduates from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

The kind of approach that is used in Japan is atypical. It is far more common for brokerage activities to be focused on enabling access to career development opportunities and pathways, than to actual jobs. In the **United States** for example, Chicago Public Schools sources ***job shadowing placements*** (OECD, 2022[45]) and organises programmes of ***career talks with guest speakers*** (OECD, 2022[46]) to broaden access to important development opportunities across the city. In another example from England, researchers looked at the use of ***short work experience placements*** to help students aged 14-16 in their career development (Hatcher and Le Gallais, 2008[47]). The analysis was based on detailed review of practice in five secondary schools and shows that when students and their parents are left to identify and set up work experience alone, there is a significant risk of social reproduction. In effect, work experience can accelerate social reproduction by channelling poorer children into lower status placements and richer children into higher status placements. However, where schools were more purposeful in the allocation of placements and actively brokered access to opportunities, they were able to challenge students' assumptions about appropriate placements and address the limitations of their social networks, so compensating for socio-economic disadvantage.

A study of a ***magnet school partnership programme*** in the USA looked at how schools can support progression to post-secondary education in socio-economically deprived schools by building a partnerships network (Duncheon and Relles, 2019[48]). The school actively built relationships with post-secondary providers in the area, providers of support such as social work services, community health organisations, and college access programmes, so that it had a bank of college-relevant social capital that it could broker access to. The study found that students were able to access the social capital which the school was collecting and storing, to confirm and validate information and sources of support and to refer students into more intensive forms of support. As well as offering advantages for students in helping them

to access support and transition, the programme also provided organisational value as it gave the school access to partners who could collaborate around both this and other issues.

Taking advantage of technological developments, schools in many countries are introducing online means of connecting students with workplace opportunities and people in work well placed to offer advice and guidance. In **Finland**, ***Virtual TET*** (OECD, 2023[49]) is a one-week period of familiarisation with working life where students combine exploration of vocational sectors and workplaces while undertaking work assignments. In **France, *JobIRL*** (OECD, 2023[50]) allows students to communicate directly with mentors to explore their career ambitions. While evaluations of such online provision are currently limited, such initiatives open up the possibility of students gaining access to experiences and sources of advice not easily found within immediate social circles or geographic locations.

Facilitating students to make use of family support

Families are critical in framing and supporting young people's transitions and careers (Archer et al., 2012[51]; Palos and Drobot, 2010[52]). While poorer families typically have less social and cultural capital which can be harnessed to support young people's career development towards certain occupations, all families can provide resources of value. One role that career guidance interventions can play is supporting families to further help their children.

In **Scotland**, Skills Development Scotland recognised that its careers advisers often struggled to work effectively with the parents and families of some of the most disadvantaged young people (Cameron and Edwards, 2021[53]). As a result, the organisation developed the ***Engaging Families*** programme, a professional development intervention for the organisation's staff to increase their capacity to work with families. The programme brought together experts and practitioners for open and creative discussions about how to work with families. Critical to the programme's success was the opportunity for practitioners to hear directly from parents and parental representatives about how to best engage parents. The programme also identified examples of good practice like the ***Discover and Connect*** programmes which had successfully engaged parents in a specific area, but the impact of which remained confined to local areas. *Engaging Families* represents a serious attempt to shift practice around career guidance work with families at a national level through professional development.

The ***Parents Turn*** intervention in the **Netherlands** brought parents and their children together in a series of four twilight sessions after school (Oomen, 2018[54]). The purpose of these sessions was to support both parents and children to learn about post-secondary options, particularly higher education, together. The findings of a robust evaluation of the programme suggested that a school-initiated career intervention involving parents can build and enhance parents' capacity to be involved in and support the career development of their child. The argument is made that increasing this kind of parental support can make a contribution to social justice by educating and empowering parents to support their children.

In **France**, researchers found that a programme of ***career discussions between parents and school staff*** was able to reduce dropout and grade repetition by 25-40% (Goux, Gurgand and Maurin, 2017[55]). In this intervention, school principals selected the 25% of students who were most likely to drop out and invited them to attend two collective meetings during the second term. During those meetings, principals discuss the aspirations of the family and the child and relate them to the academic performance of the child. This discussion enabled the school to stimulate career thinking and provide feedback on the realism of aspirations, based on current performance. This resulted in improved relations between families and schools, increased engagement from the students and more career focused educational choice making, as well as reducing drop out.

2.4.4. Developing critical understanding of personal relationships to the labour market

Analysis of PISA 2018 shows that low SES students are more likely to demonstrate uncertainty and confusion in their career planning. Staying in education longer than ever before and faced with growing numbers of post-secondary choices, young people require support to develop a confident ability to navigate their way through education and training to secure desirable and achievable employment. As PISA also illustrates, low SES students are more likely to seek such support from their school, rather than from outside of school, such as within their homes.

It is also clear that the labour markets that they are going to be entering often value social and cultural capital as much as meritocratic rationalities. Given this, it is important that career guidance helps to prepare young people to think critically about, strategise, manage and even change the imperfect world within which they will be pursuing their careers. Careers education provides an ideal space for this kind of critical examination of the post-school world.

Beginning young

In many jurisdictions, career guidance is left until secondary school and often concentrated in the years linked to key decision-making points and immediate entry to the labour market. However, considerable evidence suggests that young people develop their career identities, aspirations and career thinking early in life (OECD, 2021[56]; Watson and McMahon, 2020[57]) and that early aspirations are influenced by socio-economic status (Chambers et al., 2018[58]). Where young people from low SES backgrounds plan on entering ISCO major category 1 and 2 professions for example, but do not have access to guidance emanating from family networks, they can be expected to require greater support from their schools than comparable peers from high SES backgrounds (Tebele, Nel and Dlamini, 2015[24]). As the UCAS study (2021[59]) of 27 000 UK university students shows for example, the age at which young people begin thinking about higher education varies with more advantaged students more likely to begin considering it as an option during primary school. This creates a strong rationale for starting institutional career education and guidance early to disrupt the process of social and occupational reproduction that may be locked in by the later years of secondary school. By consequence, a growing number of countries have recently introduced policies aimed at increasing primary-age participation in guidance, including Australia (Australian Government[60]), Canada (New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2023[61]) and the UK (Department for Education, 2023[62]).

In **Australia,** the ***Little Ripples*** programme has developed a series of activities and resources to help develop the career thinking of children from the first years of primary education (Australian Government[60]). The scheme takes a twin track approach by producing resources for both primary school teachers and for parents. Resources include conversation cards, activity sheets, posters and e-books. Teachers and parents are encouraged to talk about careers with children and encourage them to begin thinking broadly about their futures.

Primary Futures is a programme with a similar aim in the **UK** and **New Zealand** (Inspiring the Future[63]) (OECD, 2021[64]). ***Primary Futures*** connects primary schools with employers and working people who are willing to engage with a school (either physically or virtually (OECD, 2023[65]) and talk to children about their working lives. This is supported with video resources, lesson plans and other tools. The programme draws on evidence which demonstrates that early careers interventions increases motivation and attainment by helping children see the relevance of learning, build positive attitudes towards school, and provide children with access to role models beyond their immediate family and community (Hughes et al., 2021[66]; Kashefpakdel, Rehill and Hughes, 2018[67]; Percy, Amegah and Chambers, 2021[68]).

Whereas ***Little Ripples*** and ***Primary Futures*** focus on engaging primary school aged children in thinking about different occupations, a programme from **Sweden** called ***Welcome to the university!*** focuses on

higher education (Ahlroos, 2021[69]). This programme seeks to break the cycle of reproduction which sees the children of higher educated parents following their parents into university, while other children are less likely to make this choice. As analysis of PISA 2018 demonstrates, a comparison of high and low SES students who performed at the highest level on the PISA science assessment shows that high SES students across OECD countries are twice as likely as low SES students to agree that they expected to pursue tertiary education (Mann et al., 2020[13]). ***Welcome to the university!*** seeks to counteract this pattern by raising the idea of higher education early on in compulsory schooling to demystify university education. The Swedish Council for Higher Education has created pedagogical lesson materials for primary school grades three to six (age 9 – 12). It consists of a short, animated film, an accompanying lesson guide and exercises. The lesson can be given by a guidance counsellor or by a teacher and may be followed by a visit to a university, or by staff or students from the university visiting the schools.

Raising and broadening aspirations

OECD analysis of PISA datasets shows that teenage occupational and educational aspirations are commonly highly concentrated and heavily focused on professional careers (ISCO major category 2). As discussed above, social background plays an important role in shaping such ambitions with high achieving low SES students being much less likely to plan on working in a managerial or professional occupation and/or continuing to tertiary education (Mann et al., 2020[13]; Musset and Mytna Kurekova, 2018[18]). Guyon and Huillery's study (2021[70]) of French students aged 14 in 59 secondary schools finds further evidence of high achieving low SES students commonly expressing considerably lower educational ambitions than comparable high SES peers. The study concludes that students frequently lack awareness of potential post-secondary education options and routinely underestimate their current and future academic ability relative to their equally high achieving classmates. As other studies, Guyon and Huillery (2021[70]), and Schoon and Polek (2011[71]) find that low aspirations are associated with poorer ultimate academic outcomes, and conclude that greater guidance, including engagement with role models can be expected to reduce the gap between ability and ambition. Analysis of PISA data show very strong correlations (p value of 1%) between higher levels of career ambition and ***talking with someone about a job of interest***, completion of ***career questionnaires*** and undertaking ***internet research*** and with ***speaking with a guidance councillor*** (p value of 5%). Such patterns of curiosity and exploration can be encouraged and enabled by school systems (Covacevich et al., 2021[12]).

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Notes

[1] This paper uses *odds ratio*, which reflects the relative likelihood of an event occurring for a particular group relative to a reference group. For example, if the coefficient of odds ratio of women to be NEET relative to men is 3, this means that women are 3 times more likely to be NEET than men.

[2] The data is AD-SILC, which is merged Italian National Social Security Institute (INPS) data with the Italian version of the 2005 EU-SILC (European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions).

3. Inequality and career guidance by gender

This chapter first presents how the early labour market outcomes of young adults and the career development of teenagers are shaped by gender and LGBTQ+ identities. It draws on relevant academic literature and makes extensive use of OECD PISA and PIAAC data and OECD career readiness indicators. The chapter then looks at ways in which career guidance can address inequalities related to gender and LGBTQ+ identities, presenting illustrative examples of practice and discusses the characteristics of effective career guidance provision in this regard.

3.1. Gender inequalities in the early career experience of young adults

Gender is a key factor that defines structural inequality (Encinas-Martín and Cherian, 2023[1]; OECD, 2015[2]). While the effects of gender on progression within the labour market effects both women and men in ways which are negative to individuals, the primary focus of this chapter is on the experience of girls and women who disproportionately face greater barriers in accessing higher quality employment. Even when controlling for education and skills, young women are less likely to transition into work and succeed in employment. Women remain overrepresented in service sectors, in particular health, social and education sectors and underrepresented in STEM sectors, even with all other factors being equal. This chapter reviews international evidence using PIAAC data on how gender can be seen to shape the early labour market experiences of young women and men; explores how teenage career development is influenced by gender based on PISA data; and reviews the ways in which guidance systems in different countries can respond to additional barriers to progression linked to gender. The chapter also addresses inequalities within the labour market, and responses to them within career guidance provision, linked to the sexuality and gender identity.

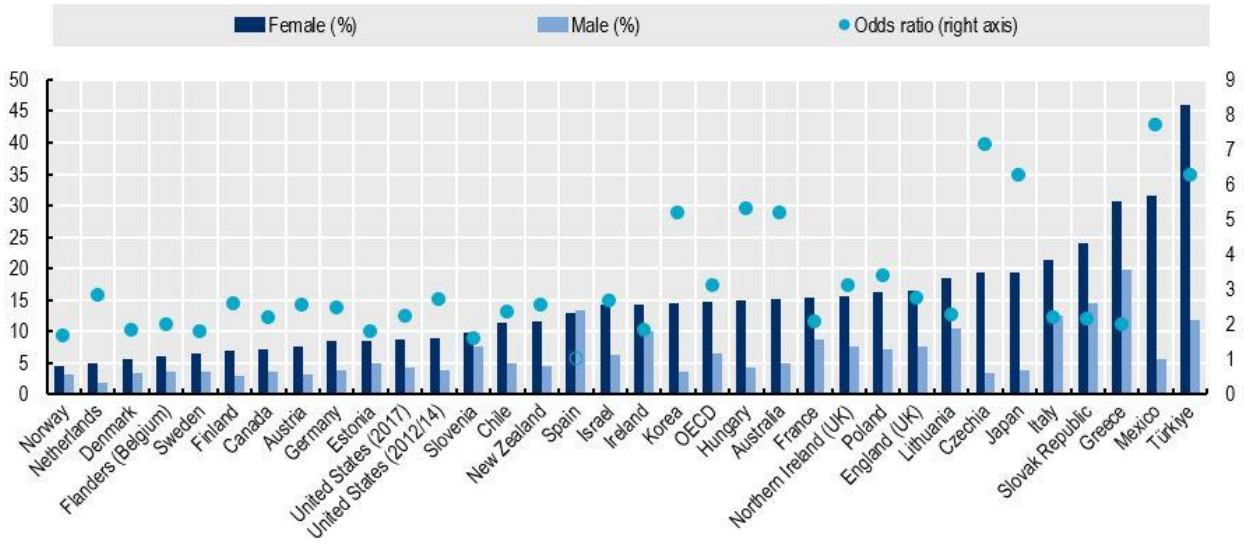
3.1.1. Employment outcomes by gender

Young women often face challenges, barriers, and discouragement in participating the labour market. Even though on average young women tend to perform increasingly better academically than young men (Encinas-Martín and Cherian, 2023[1]; OECD, 2015[2]), they are more likely to be NEET as young adults than their male peers. This is the case in all OECD countries with available data, except Spain, using 2012, 2015 and 2018 PIAAC data. Controlling for education, skills, migrant status and parental occupation, the odds of 16–34-year-old women being NEET is on average three times greater than their male counterparts across OECD countries for which data are available. In Mexico and Czechia, young women are 7 times more likely to be NEET than young males with similar levels of education and skills (Figure 3.1).

In many OECD countries, young women are less likely to be employed than young men across all levels of educational attainment. However, the higher the education level that women possess, the higher the average employment rate and the lower the gender gap in employment (Figure 3.2). That is, higher levels of education help to reduce the gap, but do not fully remove the inequality observed.

Figure 3.1. Young women are more likely to be NEET than young men, even with equal levels of education and skills

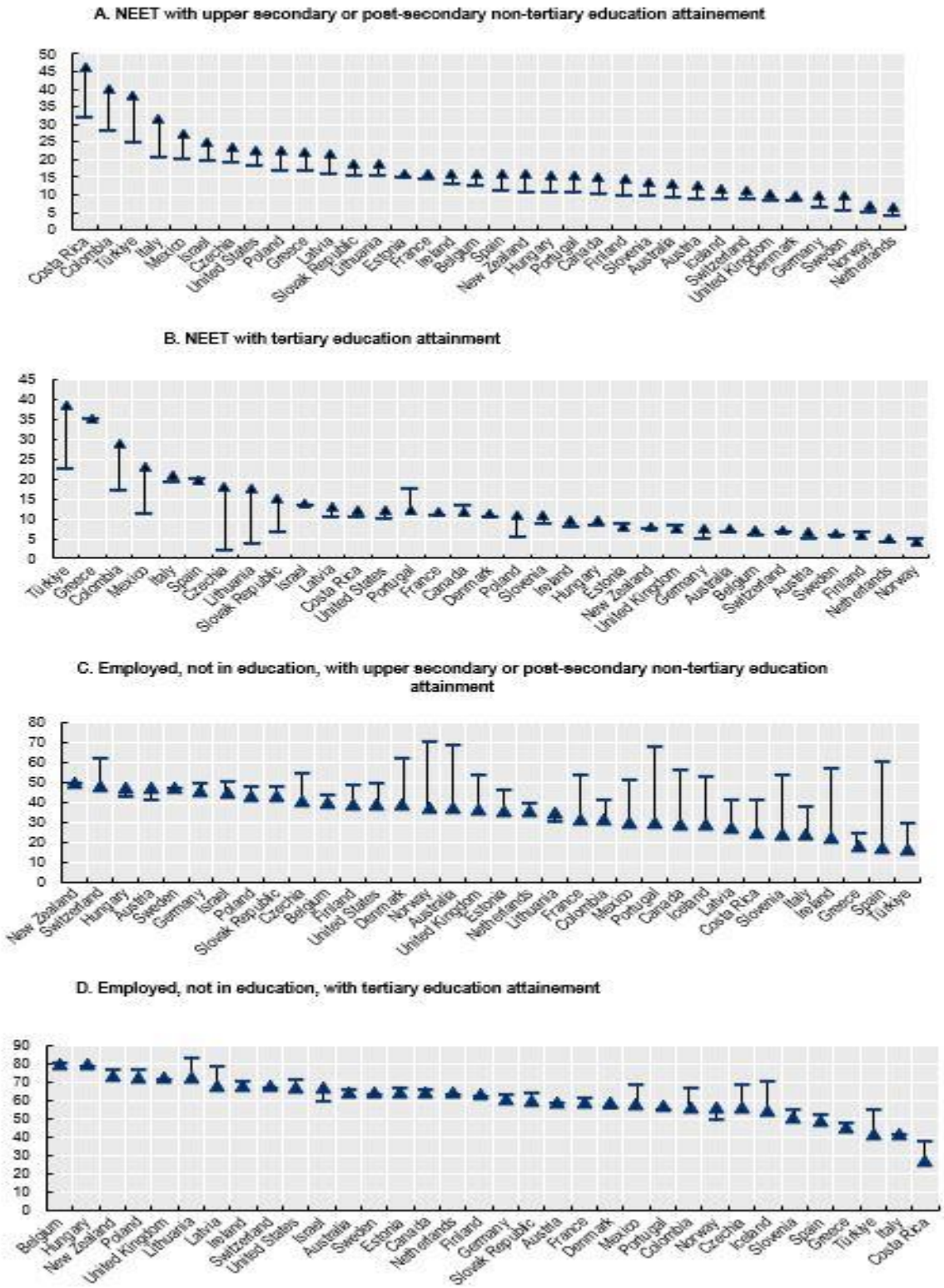
Percentage of young people (16-34) in NEET by gender and young women's probability of being NEET compared to young men (odds ratio)



Note: Countries with a missing value or a small sample size are omitted. Odds ratios are adjusted for educational attainment, literacy score, migrant status and parent education. Statistically significant (p<0.1) odds ratios are presented in a filled marker.
Source: OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) (2012, 2015, 2018).

Figure 3.2. Young men and young women with similar levels of educational attainment can expect different outcomes in the labour market

Percentage of 15-29-year-olds by employment status, by gender and by education and employment status, 2021

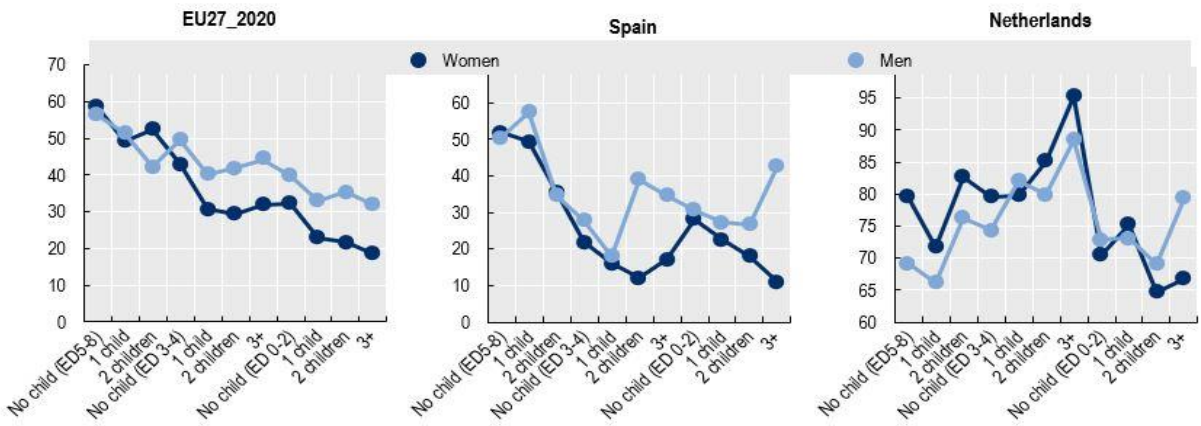


Source: OECD (2022), OECD Education Statistics, https://stats.oecd.org/BrandedView.aspx?oecd_bv_id=edu-data-en&doi=f36b1100-en

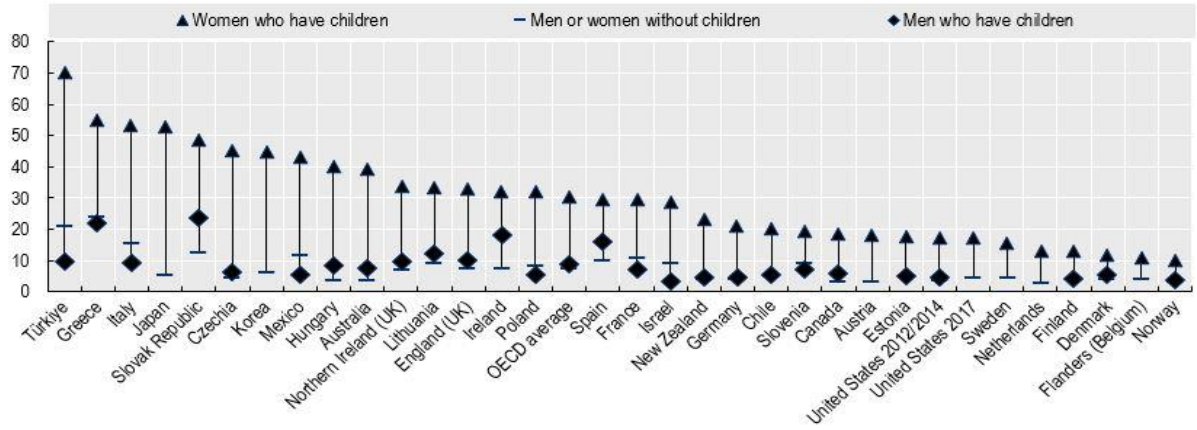
High NEET and low employment rates among young women are related in part to marriage and having children although variation across countries is significant, reflecting access to childcare and the division of childcare responsibilities between couples. Based on EU LFS data, the lower the educational attainment and the more children to take care of, the lower the female employment rates. For example, in EU-27 countries, young women and men with tertiary education and no children show comparable levels of employment at 59% and 57% respectively. For those with lower levels of educational attainment and higher number of children, the rate goes down for both genders but much more so for women: to 19% and 31% respectively for women and men with below secondary education and more than three children. In Italy and Spain, young women have consistently lower employment rates than young men with the same educational level and the same number of children. In the Netherlands, where women have a relatively high share of part-time employment, young women are often more likely than men to be in employment. However, low-educated young women with multiple children have the lowest employment rates among compared groups, lower than low-educated young men with multiple children (Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3. Having the same educational attainment and the same number of children, fewer young women tend to be employed than young men

A. Employment (%) of young adults (18-24) by educational attainment and the number of children, by gender, EU-LFS 2021



B. NEET (%) of young adults (20-34), by gender and whether having children, PIAAC

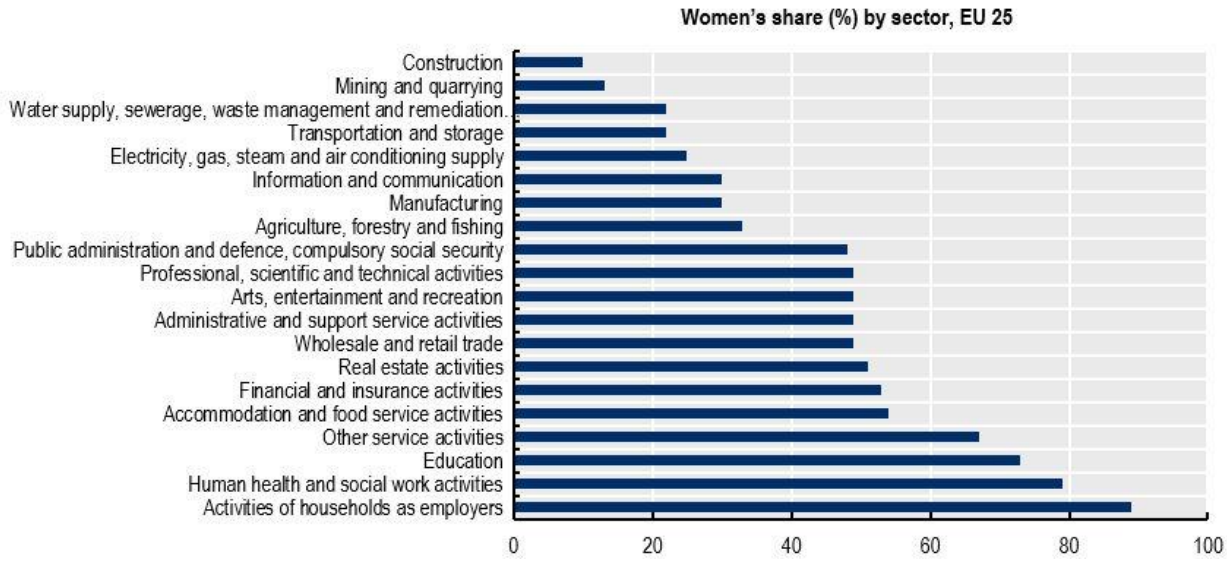


Note: ED 5-8 refers to tertiary education. ED 3-4 refers to secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education. ED 0-2 refers to below secondary education.
Source: Eurostat (2022), ESTAT:LFST_HHEREDCH

3.1.2. Labour market segmentation by gender

When in work, women and men tend to work in different sectors and occupations. Women in most OECD countries are more likely than men to work in service sectors such as trade, transportation, accommodation and food, business and administrative services, public administration and social services; by contrast, men are more likely to work in industry than women (Figure 3.4, Panel A). Among EU-25 countries, women are over-represented in household activities (89%), health and social work (79%) and education (73%) whereas they are under-represented in construction (10%), mining (13%), water and waste management (22%) (Figure 3.4). Even among individuals with the same level of educational attainment, labour market segmentation by gender shows a clear pattern (Figure 3.5). This gender disparity across sectors and occupations are related to gender pay gap and different working conditions, including time flexibility (Eurofound and European Commission Joint Research Centre, 2021[3]).

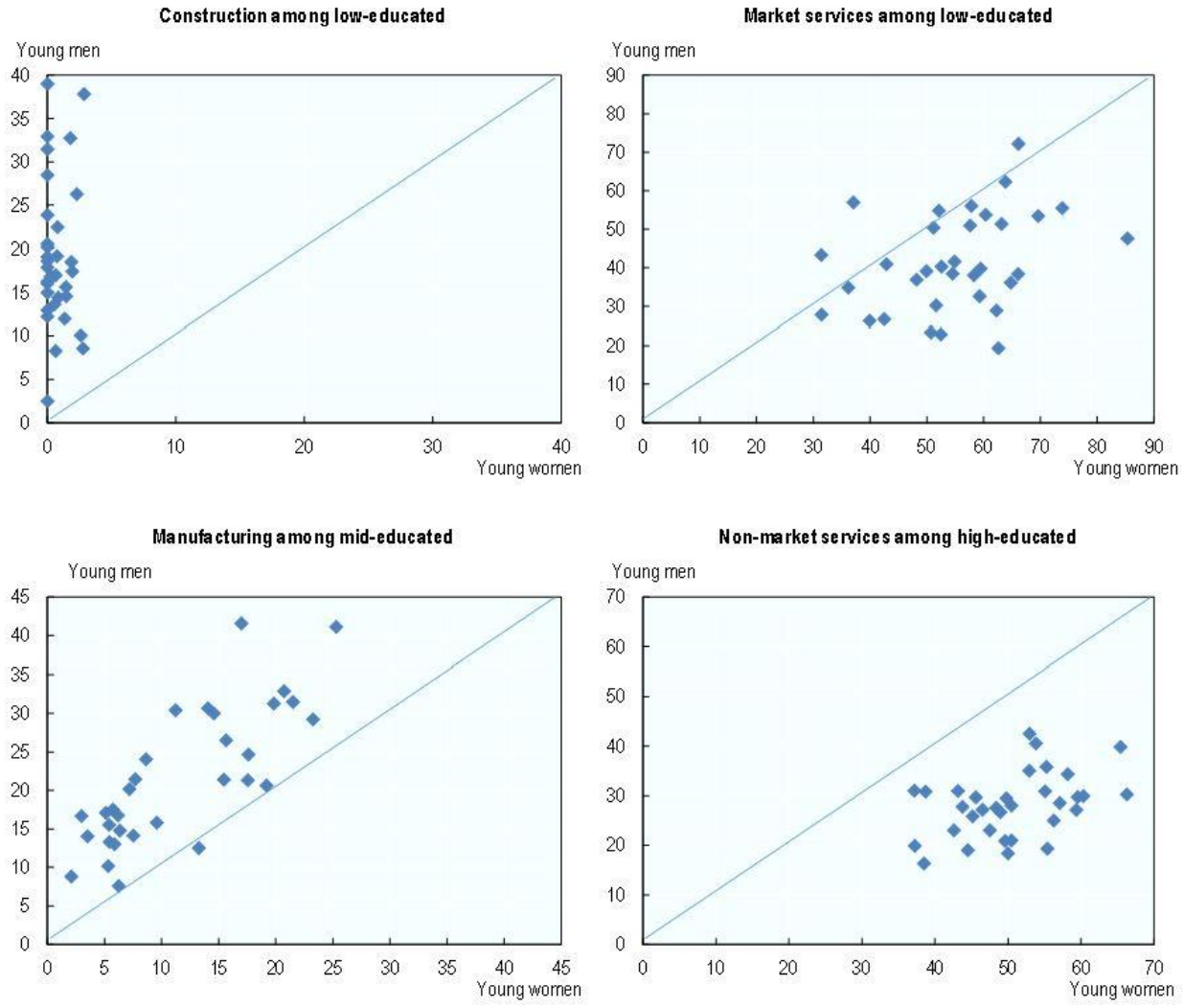
Figure 3.4. Distribution of employment by aggregate sectors differ by gender, 2019



Source: OECD (2022) https://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?queryid=54755; Eurofound and European Commission Joint Research Centre (2021[113]) https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef21009en.pdf Eurostat LFSA_EGAISEDM

Figure 3.5. Labour market segregation by gender is clear even among those with similar levels of education

Share (%) of young people (16-34) by employment sector and by gender, OECD countries

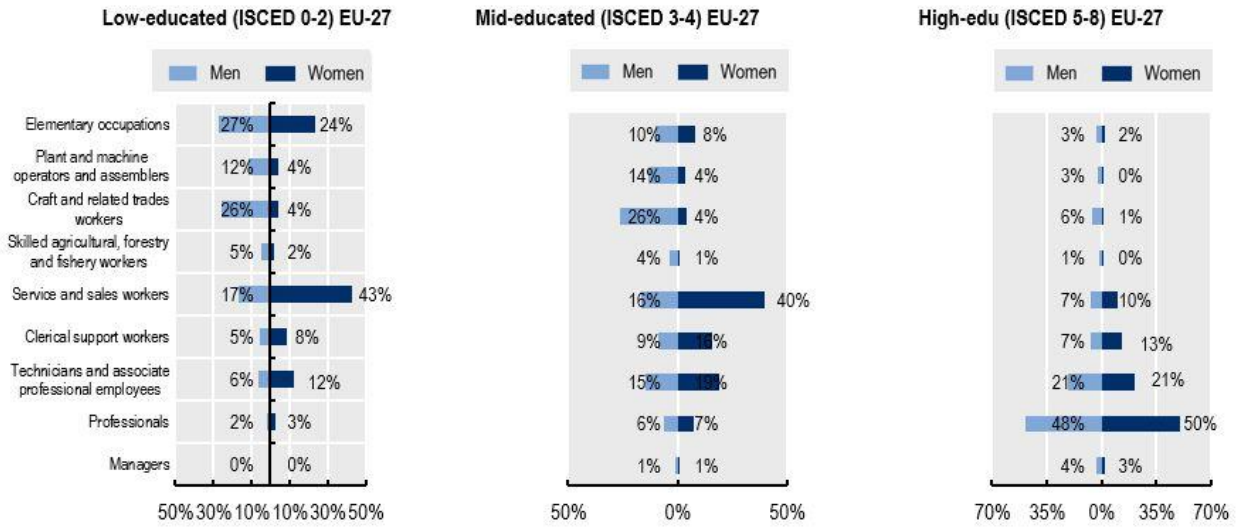


Note: Market services include Trade; Transportation; Accommodation and food; and Business and administrative services; and Non-market services include Public administration; Community, Social and other services and activities. Low-educated refers to primary education and below, mid-educated refers to secondary education and high-educated refers to tertiary education.
Source: OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) (2012, 2015, 2018).

Patterns of labour market segmentation appear early in the labour market. EU-27 data show gender disparities across occupations and educational attainment. Among the low-educated, while young men (15-29) are relatively more concentrated among Plant and machinery operators (12% vs 4% of young women) and Craft and related trades (26% vs 4% of young women), young women are more concentrated in Service and sales (43% vs 17% of young men) and Technicians and associate professional work (12% vs 6% of young men). Mid-educated young adults show a similar pattern as low-educated ones. Among high-educated, young women are more represented in Clerical support (13% vs 7% of young men) and marginally so as Professionals (50% vs 48% of young men) (Figure 3.6).

Figure 3.6. Occupational distribution of young people (15-29) by gender, EU-27

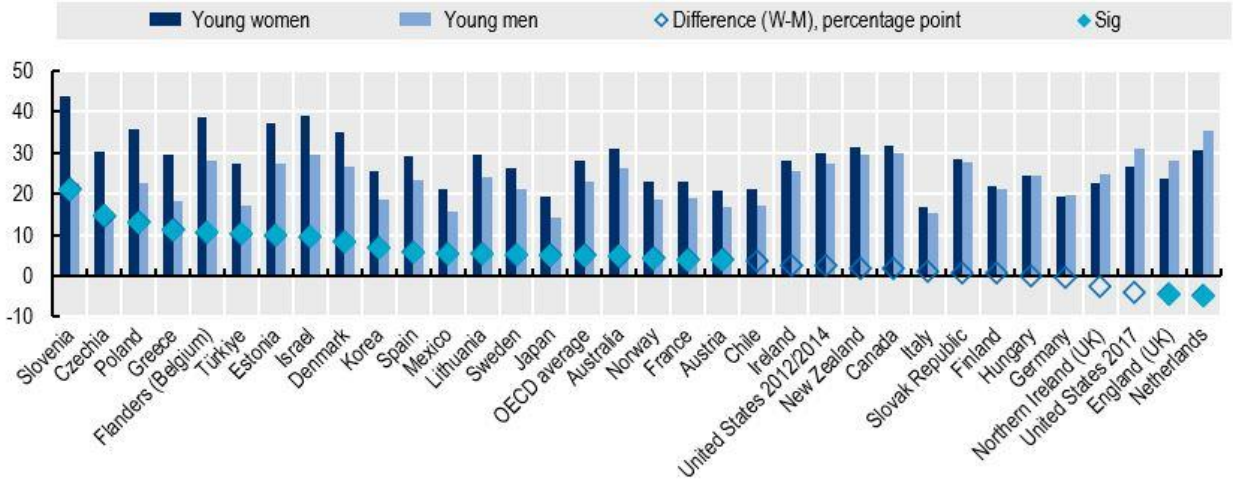
Percentage of employment by educational attainment, gender, and occupation, 2021



Note: Low-educated refers to primary education and below, mid-educated refers to secondary education and high-educated refers to tertiary education.
Source: Eurostat (2022), ESTAT:LFSA_EGAISEDM, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/lfsa_egaisedm/default/table?lang=en.

Figure 3.7. Young women tend to work in managerial or professional occupations more than young men in most OECD countries

Percentage of young adults (16-34) working in managerial or professional occupations (ISCO 1-2) by gender

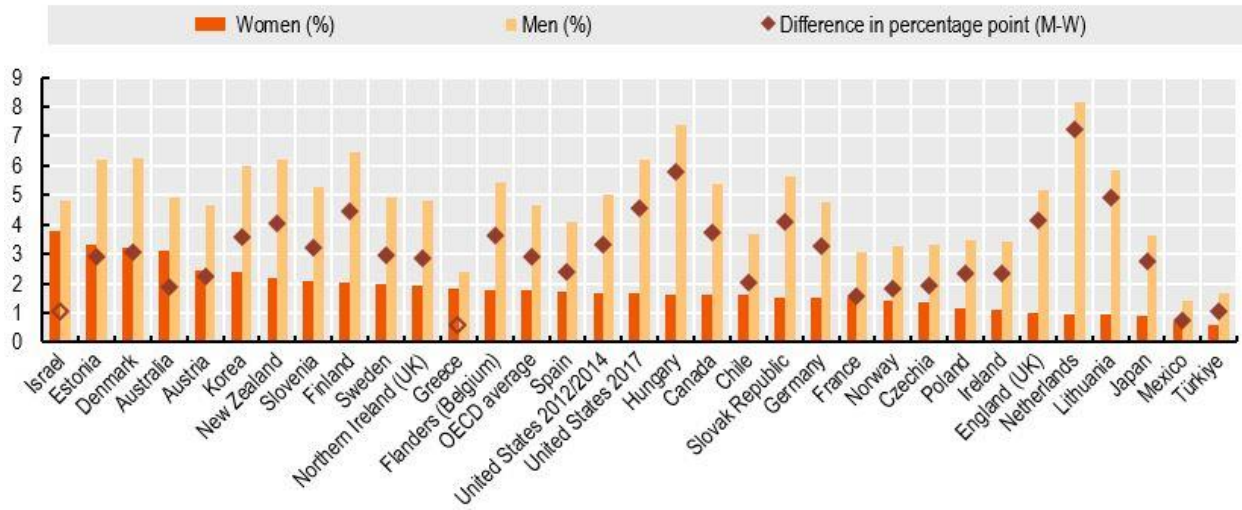


Source: OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) (2012, 2015, 2018). Statistically significant (p<0.1) odds ratios are presented in a filled marker. Odds ratios are adjusted for educational attainment, literacy score, migrant status and parent education (see Box 1.1 about the significance level).

In particular, young women (16-34) are less likely to work in careers linked to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM): on average in PIAAC (2012, 2015 and 2018), only 1.8% of young women work in a STEM job compared to 4.6% of young men, although this is a higher proportion than in the case of workers over 35 years old. In the Netherlands, less than 1% of young women worked in STEM occupations whereas more than 7% of young men do so. Similarly, Hungary, Lithuania and the US showed 5-6 pp gap between young men and women (Figure 3.8). These international data are in line with national data. According to the US census, only 27% of STEM workers were women in 2019 (Martinez and Christnacht, 2021[4]). Young women with postsecondary credentials are less likely than young men with the same qualification to work in STEM: for example, in Canada, based on the 2006 and 2016 longitudinal census (which link individuals across the two census years), male STEM graduates were more likely than female STEM graduates to be employed in a STEM occupation (Frank, 2019[5]).

Figure 3.8. Young women are under-represented in STEM jobs

Percentage of young adults (16-34) who work in a STEM occupation



Note: STEM jobs refer to ISCO-08 code 21 (Science and Engineering Professionals) and 25 (Information and Communications Technology Professionals). Countries with a missing value or a small sample size are omitted. Differences are statistically significant (p-value<0.1), except Israel and Greece. Differences of percentages between the two categories are unadjusted. Statistically significant difference is in filled marker (see Box 1.1 about the significance level).
Source: OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) (2012, 2015, 2018)

3.1.3. Job quality by gender

When in work, in general young women are more likely to have a lower wage and a less secure job, to work part time, and be less satisfied with their job, compared to young men with similar levels of education and skills. Women tend to earn less than men across all levels of educational attainment and OECD countries (OECD, 2021[6]). As of 2021, the gender wage gap across OECD countries comparing median incomes of women and men working in a full-time job was 11.9%, meaning that for every 100 euros a typical man earns, a woman earns 88 euros (OECD[7]). Young women (age 16-34) are less likely to earn high wages compared to young men. On average across countries with available data, young men are almost twice more likely to earn wages in the top quartile compared to young women, even after considering education, skills, migrant status and parental education. This varies from 1.4 times in England (UK) to 4.2 times in Estonia (Figure 3.9) among statistically significant results. In a regression analysis of such wage penalties using pooled PIAAC data and controlling for SES, migrant status, age and other variables, women earn 10% less in reference to men. While in PIAAC more young men reported being satisfied at work than young women, this variation

is no longer apparent after controlling for wage and qualification mismatch as well as parental education, migrant status, skills and education, with the exception of Austria and Sweden.

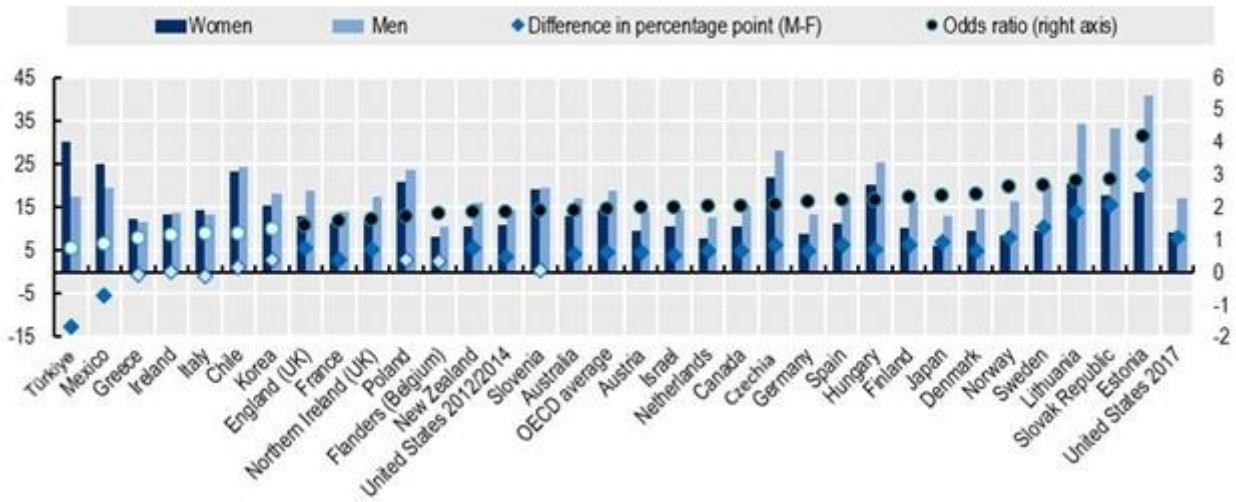
The capacity of gender to shape labour market inequalities in relation to STEM jobs can also been seen in the quality of employment. Women working in STEM professions in Canada for example are more likely to be in lower paying jobs than their male counterparts (Frank, 2019[5]). There are significantly and persistently lower wages for Canadian women compared to men, even when controlling for human capital, SES and a range of other factors based on the same data from the 2006 and 2016 censuses (Gupta, Singh and Balcom, 2022[8]). In Canada, women with STEM credentials are also less likely than their male counterparts to persist in STEM occupations: 35% of female STEM graduates who were employed in a STEM occupation in 2006 had moved to a non-STEM occupation by 2016, compared with 26% for males. The perceived treatment of women within hiring processes and promotion opportunities in STEM jobs have also been seen in studies to differ by gender. According to a survey of 4 914 US adults working in STEM, men in STEM jobs reported that women are usually treated fairly in terms of hiring and promotion. However, survey data paints a different picture: whereas 82% of men agreed that they had been treated fairly in hiring process, 76% of women agree; and, while 78% of men agreed that they had been treated fairly in promotion opportunities, this applied to 63% of female respondents (Funk and Parker, 2018[9]). The authors find discrimination in recruitment, hiring and promotions as a major reason behind lack of gender diversity in STEM.

Looking at the quality of employment more generally, young men are significantly more likely to have indefinite work contracts than young women in Chile (odds ratio 2.0), Czechia (1.9), Greece/Korea (1.6), Norway/Sweden (1.5), Finland/Hungary/Japan/Poland/Slovak Republic (1.4), and France/Mexico/Netherlands/Türkiye (1.3). Austria is an exception (0.8). Again, this is the result using PIAAC and controlling for parental education, migrant status, skills and education. Moreover, working hours show a clear trend that young men are significantly more likely to work full time than young women in all PIAAC participating OECD countries. On average across OECD, young men are 2.9 times more likely to work full time than young women (Figure 3.10).

The degree of qualification mismatch – where an individual possesses an educational attainment that is higher or lower than required by their job - is not significantly different by gender in most countries in PIAAC, even when controlling for parent education, migrant status, skills and education. Only three countries have a statistically significant result in terms of the likelihood of qualification mismatch among young women and men (ages 16-34). Young men in Germany have lower odds (0.8) of having qualification mismatch compared to young women. However, young men in Japan and Lithuania are more likely than young women to experience qualification mismatch (1.3 and 1.5 respectively).

Figure 3.9. Even after controlling for education and skills, young men are more likely to earn high wages compared to young women

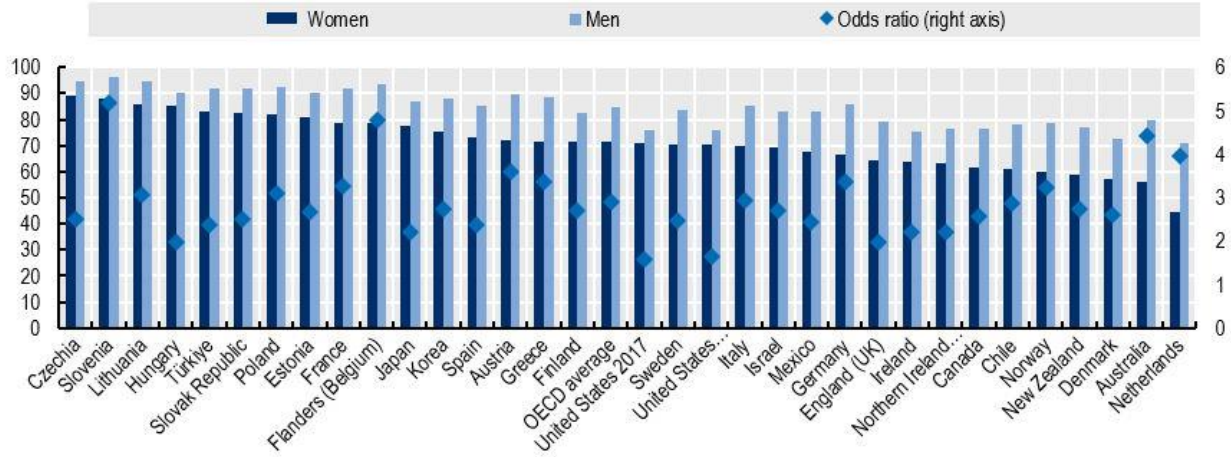
Percentage of young adults (16-34) with wage at top quartile and young men's probability of earning top quartile wage compared to young women



Note: The odds ratios are adjusted for education, literacy score, parental education and place of birth. Statistically significant (p<0.1) differences and odds ratios are presented in a filled marker. Odds ratios are adjusted for educational attainment, literacy score, migrant status and parent education (see Box 1.1 about the significance level).
Source: OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) (2012, 2015, 2018).

Figure 3.10. Even after controlling for education and skills levels, young men are significantly more likely to work full-time than young women

Percentage of employed young adults (16-34) working full time (30 hours and more a week), by gender



Note: All results of odds ratio are statistically significant (p<0.1). Odds ratios are adjusted for educational attainment, literacy score, migrant status and parent education (see Box 1.1 about the significance level).
Source: OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) (2012, 2015, 2018)

Box 3.1. Inequality in education and employment linked to sexuality and gender identity

A small but significant percentage of students do not identify with traditional definitions of heterosexual male or female. The share of people identifying themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or questioning), intersex and gender fluid (LGBTQI+) is on the rise in nearly all countries where data is available, and this trend is likely to continue, driven by younger cohorts. In 2017, while 1.4% of US respondents in national surveys born before 1945 identified as LGBTQI+, this share was 8.2% among millennials (OECD, 2019[10]). In the UK, according to the Office of National Statistics, an estimated 3.1% of people aged 16 and over were LGB (lesbian, gay or bisexual) in 2020, an increase from 2.7% in 2019 and almost double the percentage from 2014 (1.6%). Young people aged 16 to 24 are the most likely to identify as LGB: (8.0%) in 2020 (4.5% for those aged 25-34) reflecting an increasing trend for this age group since 2014 (2.8%) (ONS, 2022[11]). Young women (9.8%) are more likely to identify as LGB than young men (6.4%) in 2020 (ONS, 2022[11]).

LGBTQI+ students can experience greater degrees of discrimination, violence, isolation and lack of sense of belonging in schools which affect their educational attainment and opportunities in later life (McBrien, Rutigliano and Sticca, 2022[12]; OECD, 2023[13]; 2020[14]). Negative social judgments can limit a person's potential in school and society. Studies show that students with a non-conforming gender identity or sexual orientation suffer from multiple forms of discrimination which often have impact on their health and educational outcomes. For example, in an EU survey of 140 000 LGBTQI+ people, the majority of respondents aged 15 to 17 reported having experienced discrimination in some area of life (53%). Out of those respondents, 45% felt discriminated against at school while 37% of respondents reported almost never opening up about being LGBTIQ+ (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2020[15]).[1] In a UK survey of 733 trans people conducted by the polling firm YouGov, one in seven trans university students (14%) reported that they had considered dropping out or had dropped out because of experiencing harassment or discrimination from students and staff during the preceding year (Bachmann and Gooch, 2018[16]) (see Table 3.1 for details).

Research on academic achievement and attainment of LGBTQI+ students is mixed. Additional data is necessary to assess the relationships between sexual orientation and gender identity with academic outcomes. While research suggests that some LGBTQI+ students, such as gay men, tend to have better results, data on dropout rates, grade repetitions and absenteeism, among other elements, would help capture a more complete picture of the situation (McBrien, Rutigliano and Sticca, 2022[12]).

Smooth education-to-work transition for some youth is life-critical. At the entry into the labour market, young LGBTQI+ face specific challenges in addition to other factors. These include homophobic, biphobic and transphobic discrimination, and a lack of support and inclusion in education, training and work. While studies and data in this area are rare, especially for young people, they all point towards similar challenges of youth entering and progressing in work.

A small, qualitative study on a group of 12 young LGBTQI+ NEET in the UK reveals LGBTQI-specific challenges (Bradlow et al., 2020[17]). Bullying and non-inclusive school environments served to limit engagement with school and can lead these young people to change their future plans – in school, isolation resulting from a non-inclusive learning environment, homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying and a lack of LGBT-specific support, had a negative impact on participants' mental health, their ability to engage in education, and their plans to continue in post-16 education (Bradlow et al., 2020[17]). The transition from school to tertiary education posed a particular challenge for some of these young people with some leaving education altogether. At university, experiences of discrimination and a lack of support impacted on the students' ability to complete their studies. Most of the LGBTQI+ young people in the survey were not aware of how to access suitable apprenticeships. The small number of participants who had accessed apprenticeships faced LGBTQI-specific challenges during their time

there or struggled to find suitable work after completing them. Once out of education, employment and training, LGBTQI+ young people face significant barriers to re-entry (Bradlow et al., 2020[17]).

According to the US National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health 2020[2] 70% of those aged 18-24 were employed. Among employed youth, 35% reported facing workplace discrimination such as losing out on a promotion or being fired from a job (Trevor Project, 2021[18]). A similar survey in the UK[3] (but not limited to youth) reveals that one in five LGBT people (18%) looking for work felt that they had faced discrimination trying to get a job because of who they are (Bachmann and Gooch, 2018[19]). 60% of 18-24-year-old respondents reported that they had hidden or disguised that they are LGBT at work because they were afraid of discrimination (Bachmann and Gooch, 2018[19]).

The US longitudinal 'Growing Up Today Study' began in 1996 and followed a cohort composed of 9 914 participants who were 18-32 years-olds at the most recent follow-up questionnaire. The study found that sexual minority women and men were about twice as likely as their respective heterosexual counterparts to have been unemployed (Charlton et al., 2018[20]).

Job quality by sexuality

Studies generally point to negative impacts on wages for gay men and trans women (Waite, Ecker and Ross, 2019[21]). Gay men are found to earn less than comparably skilled and experienced heterosexual men. For lesbians, the patterns are ambiguous: in some countries they have been found to earn less than their heterosexual counterparts, while in others they earn the same or more (Drydakis, 2014[22]). Studies find that gay men earn from 4-5% less than heterosexual men in the Netherlands, France, Greece, and the UK to 12-16% less in Canada, Sweden, and the US (Drydakis, 2014[22]). The earnings differences between lesbians and heterosexual women of comparable education, skills, and experience range from wage penalties to wage premiums: lesbian employees earn 28% less than their female heterosexual counterparts in Australia and 8% less in Greece, while in France and Sweden they earn the same as heterosexual women, and they earn 3% more in the Netherlands, 8% more in the UK, 11% more in Germany, 15% more in Canada, and 20% more in the US.

Using US data collected in 2004-05, Schilt and Wiswall (2008[23]) found that after their transitions, earnings for female-to-male workers increase slightly following their transitions, while average earnings for male-to-female workers fall by 32% (their mean age is 40) – with controls for education and job type. Qualitative evidence also suggests that becoming a man often brings an increase in respect and authority (and the other way round for women) (Schilt and Wiswall, 2008[23]). Geijtenbeek and Plug found, based on Dutch data, a 23% of reduction in annual earnings (2015[24]). Given that transgender people have the same human capital after their transitions, their workplace experiences also shed light on the gender issue in shaping workplace outcomes.

Among scarce studies on the job satisfaction of LGBTQI+ compared to their counterparts with similar characteristics, the results are mixed. An UK National Health Service Employee Engagement Survey found that LGBT+ identifying employees are significantly more likely to be satisfied with their job (60%) than their heterosexual counterparts (53%). However, in this survey as well, workplace discrimination was an issue among some employees: three in ten sexual minority respondents reported having been bullied in their workplace in the prior six months, and among LGBT+ respondents who were bullied, slightly less than half are open about their sexuality. On the other hand, 26% of LGBT+ respondents who were open about their sexuality at work reported having been bullied in the prior six months (Einarsdottir et al., 2020[25]).

A study utilising data from the 2008-10 Athens Area Study in Greece (Drydakis, 2014[26]) found that gay males (4% of the sample) and lesbians (0.5% of the sample) were found to be less satisfied than their heterosexual counterparts, according to all job satisfaction measures considered: satisfaction with total pay, promotion prospects, respect received from one's supervisor, and total job satisfaction. This is a

result controlling for qualification, basic skills, work experience, job type, wage and other characteristics. Moreover, gay men and lesbians whose orientation was known at their workplace had higher job satisfaction than those who had not disclosed their orientation. Furthermore, gay males and lesbians were found to become more satisfied with their jobs with time after disclosing their sexual orientation.

Dichotomic approaches in analysing inequality, as done above, however do not work well for sexuality, especially for transgender people. Using longitudinal data (2012-15) collected through trans associations in the UK, Drydakis found that transgender employees experience higher job satisfaction, mental health and life satisfaction after sex reassignment surgery than before, even after controlling for age, work experience, education level, ethnicity and job type[4] – for them, their gender transition entails positive personal and workplace advancements (2017[27]).

The above-mentioned US survey (Trevor Project, 2021[18]) suggests that experiencing LGBTQ-based discrimination in the workplace was associated with greater risk of a past-year suicide attempt (twice the odds than those not experiencing discrimination), while being employed in a workplace that is LGBTQ-affirming was associated with lower rates of a past-year suicide attempt. However, LGBTQ people face difficulty in accessing support services: 28% of respondents who had accessed or tried to access mental health services in the 12 months preceding the above-mentioned UK survey reported difficulty: even when mental health services were accessed, 22% of the respondents said they had had a negative experience (UK government, 2018[28]).

While studies and data with regards to sexuality among young people are historically rare, their availability is increasing. Studies highlight similar challenges of youth entering and progressing in work. In the US, among LGBTQ young employees (13-24), 35% experienced workplace discrimination. Studies suggest workplace discrimination against LGBTQI+ people, including lack of opportunities for advancement and harassment. While the evidence is mixed, gay men and trans women tend to incur pay penalties in comparison to their heterosexual counterparts with similar education, skills and work experience. While evidence on job satisfaction is mixed, LGBTQI+ people have greater risk of a past-year suicide attempt due to workplace discrimination and difficulty in accessing mental health services.

This review of the early labour market experiences illustrates the heavy influence that gender has in shaping early experiences of employment. It also shows (Box 3.1) that sexual orientation and gender identity are also important factors shaping workplace experiences. While the groups are very different and cannot be conflated, the review reveals common additional challenges in labour market integration, notably including the possibility that specific workplaces might be expected to represent, to varying degrees, more hostile environments in terms of accessing employment, opportunities for progression and general well-being.

While women on average approach the labour market with more years of education and training and higher levels of qualifications than men (OECD, 2015[2]), they are routinely more likely to experience NEET status. When in work, gender segmentation is widespread, and evidence shows that commonly women experience poorer job quality than men, particularly with regard to pay, even when comparing women and men with similar levels of education and training. The example of employment in the STEM professions highlights moreover higher rates of attrition for women and points towards perceptions of discrimination.

For women, the accumulated data highlight a number of additional barriers to labour market success. Such challenges go beyond the provision of affordable childcare and the distribution of childcare responsibilities between parents of different genders. Indeed, data from the UK and Sweden show the existence of the gender wage gap from the first year after leaving education (HESA, 2023[29]; Offical Statistics Sweden[30]). In spite of higher levels of human capital, women face greater obstacles in converting education and skills into equitable labour market rewards. In important part, this relates to depth of labour market segmentation witnessed across OECD countries. Segmentation serves to increase barriers to certain professions. This pattern works in both directions, just as women are underrepresented in STEM professions, men are less

likely to work in education and healthcare occupations. While negative consequences are greater on average for women, in terms of pay and job quality, for both genders, segmentation serves to restrict access to the range of professions that individual young people may find personally fulfilling.

Turning to LGBTQI+ youth, a key concern relates to the importance of finding a workplace that allows for the pursuit of a fulfilling career in a safe and respectful environment. Here, it is particularly important to provide young people with the opportunity to confidently investigate for themselves whether specific occupations and workplaces will provide such an environment.

Consequently, it is a role of career guidance systems to acknowledge and respond to the influence of gender, sexuality and gender identity in accessing labour market opportunities to prepare young people effectively for the breadth of employment opportunities which are ostensibly open to them. In such a way, while individual students can be better supported in the search for fulfilling employment, societies and employers gain by increasing access to skilled and motivated potential workers.

3.2. Teenage career readiness by gender

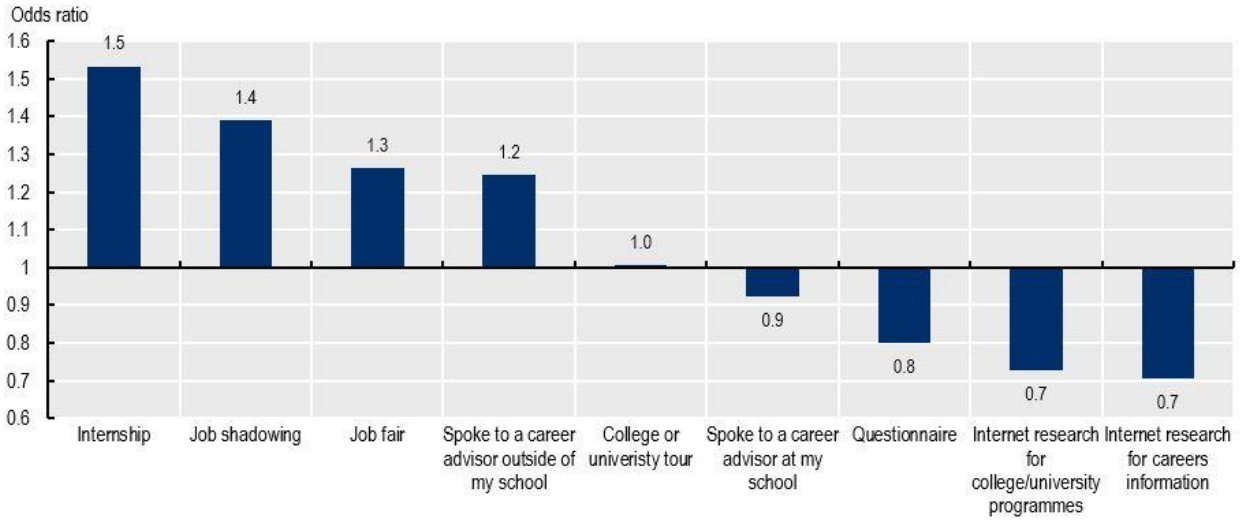
This section explores how gender shapes teenage participation in career development. It focuses in particular on participation levels across the OECD teenage career readiness indicators (which longitudinal analyses commonly relate to better labour market outcomes – see Box 1.3) by gender, controlling for socio-economic status, migrant background, academic performance, and programme orientation. It shows for example that boys are consistently more likely than girls to undertake important career development activities which bring them into first hand contact with employers, providing opportunities to explore and experience potential futures in employment even after such statistical controls are put in place. In terms of career thinking, girls generally have higher ambitions for their careers, compared to boys, yet they focus on a narrower group of occupations. Boys tend to be more uncertain about their future careers and the careers they are aiming for are not often aligned with their educational plans. This section also provides new insight into the importance of early career thinking, showing that secondary school students who express occupational expectations are statistically more likely to end up working in those occupations, with other factors being equal, in adulthood. This is an effect that is stronger among boys than girls.

3.2.1. Exploring and experiencing potential future careers

Analysis of longitudinal data from ten countries highlights frequent statistically significant connections between the extent to which teenagers explore and experience potential futures in work and later employment outcomes as adults (Covacevich et al., 2021[31]). Breaking down participation levels in such predictors by gender (after controlling for other factors that might influence participation such as SES, migrant status, academic ability and whether programmes are vocational or general in focus) shows some strong patterns.

For example, boys are more likely to gain direct experience of workplaces and engage with people in work through means which are commonly linked to better adult employment outcomes (Covacevich et al., 2021[31]): part-time employment (save for the most occasional and informal employment), volunteering and internships (Figure 3.13). Boys are also more likely than girls to participate in career exploring activities which are predictive of better outcomes that involve employers such as job shadowing (OECD, 2022[32]) or attending a work-site visit and job fair (Figure 3.11). In contrast, girls are on average more likely to engage in home-based or classroom-based exploration activities for which longitudinal evidence of long-term positive impacts on employment outcomes is weaker (Covacevich et al., 2021[31]).

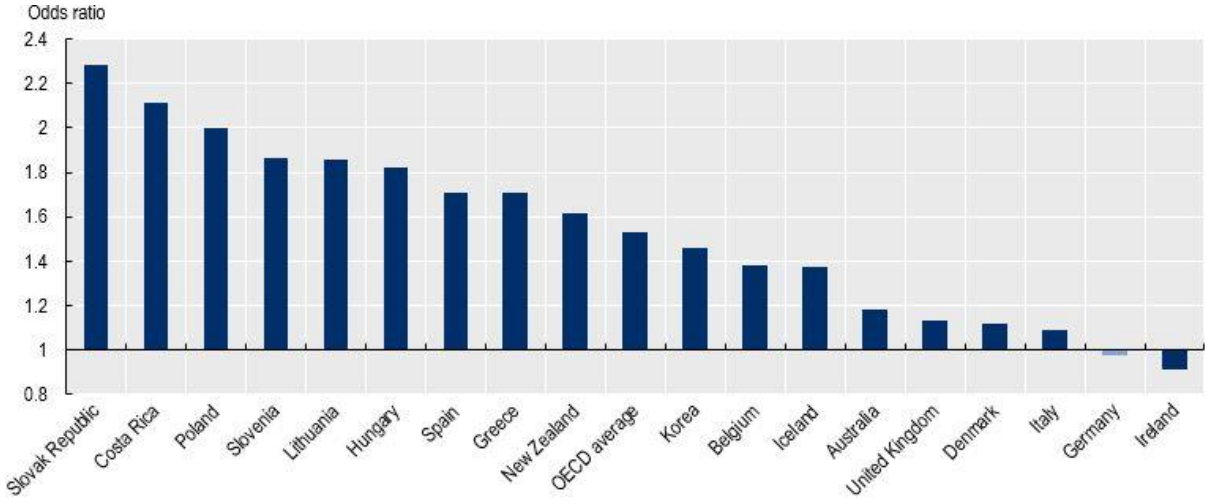
Figure 3.11. Even after controlling for academic performance and education pathway (VET v. general), boys participate more than girls in external career activities that involve employers



Note: Odds ratios are adjusted for SES, migrant status, reading performance, VET orientation. Only statistically significant results are presented (see Box 1.1 about the significance level).
Source: PISA 2018 (OECD, 2019[33]).

Figure 3.12. Boys are significantly more likely to do an internship, after controlling for SES, migrant status, reading score, and VET orientation

Odds ratio of boys doing an internship in reference to girls, by country

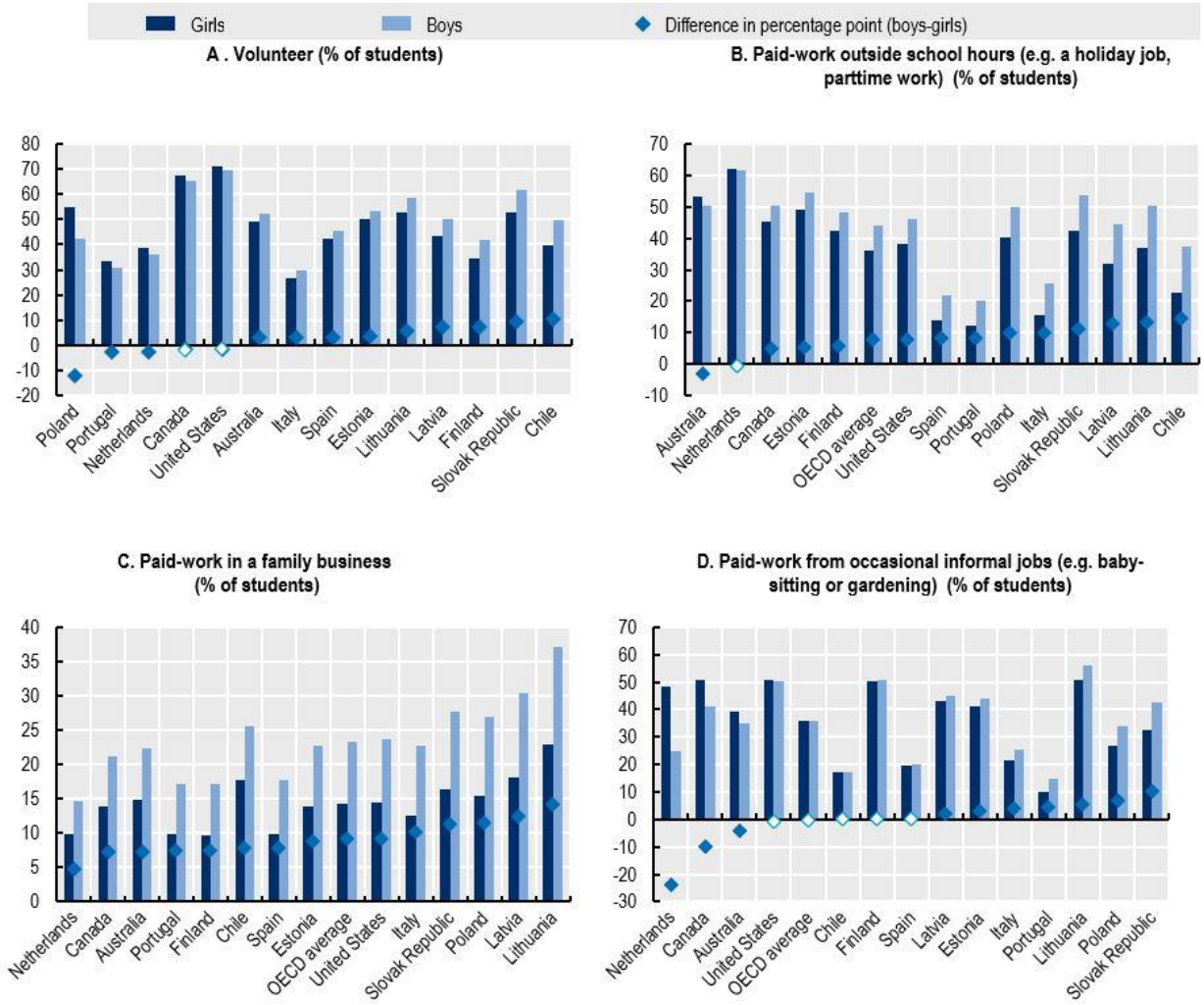


Note: Statistically significant results are presented in a darker colour. Odds ratios are adjusted for SES, migrant status, reading performance, VET orientation (see Box 1.1 about the significance level).
Source: PISA 2018 (OECD, 2019[33]).

Boys also tend to engage more in volunteer work and paid employment than girls (Figure 3.13). Across OECD countries that have available data, PISA 2018 data show that girls were less likely to work outside school hours (e.g., a holiday job, part-time work) or work in a family business than boys with about 8-9 pp difference. However, gender differences are much weaker in the case of occasional informal jobs, with Canada, the Netherlands, and Australia having a significantly higher share among girls.

Figure 3.13. Boys tend to experience working more than girls

Share of students with experience of the following activities



Note: Statistically significant differences are presented in a filled marker. Odds ratios are adjusted for SES, migrant status, reading performance, VET orientation (see Box 1.1 about the significance level).
Source: PISA 2018 (OECD, 2019[33]).

In contrast, girls are more likely than boys to engage in career development activities that allow them to explore potential futures in work through their schools or from home such as completing a career questionnaire or using the internet for research. Here, statistical associations with better ultimate employment outcomes are weaker than is the case with activities that engage young people directly with people in work (Covacevich et al., 2021[31]). However, in general girls do have an advantage with regard to one further element of career exploration that is linked strongly with better outcomes. Descriptive analysis of PISA 2018 data shows too that girls (86.1%) are more likely than boys (79.6%) to have engaged in a career conversation about a job that they were interested in undertaking after they had left education. In none of the 14 OECD countries for which data is available was it more likely for boys to have taken part in such a conversation (OECD, 2021[34]).

3.2.2. Thinking about future careers

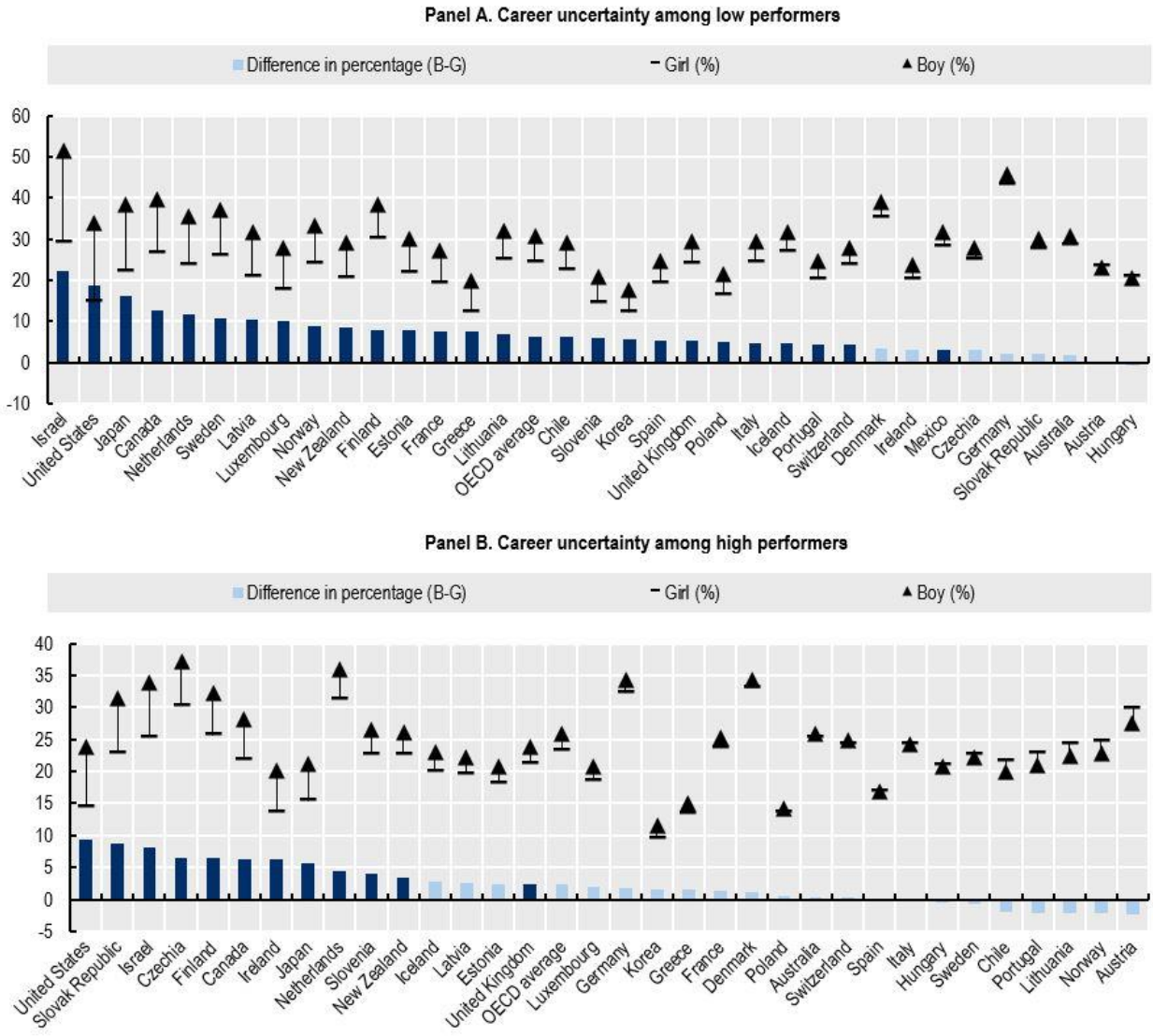
Longitudinal studies in multiple countries have found significant relationships between how young people think about their futures in work and actual employment outcomes. Where teenagers express uncertainty or confusion about their occupational ambitions and how they can be achieved, analyses commonly suggest that individuals can expect to face greater barriers in finding well-paying, satisfying employment (Covacevich et al., 2021[31]; 2021[35]; Mann, Denis and Percy, 2020[36]). Analysis of PISA data shows that such teenage attitudes are highly shaped by gender.

Career uncertainty by gender

In most OECD countries, teenage boys are more likely than girls to have no clear idea about their future job. While Denmark and Germany show a high level of teenage career uncertainty overall, there is no significant difference between girls and boys. In the United States, the overall career uncertainty was relatively low, but the gender gap was relatively large, with boys demonstrating 19 pp higher levels of uncertainty among low performers and 9 pp higher among high performers than girls (Figure 3.14). Even when controlling for educational pathway (VET v. general education) and other characteristics, boys are more likely than girls to be uncertain about their future career in most countries (Figure 3.15). Greater male uncertainty is particularly high among low performers who can be expected to leave education earlier with boys being 6 pp more likely than girls to have no clear idea about their future careers. On average across the OECD, nearly one-third of low performing boys (30.9%) can be designated as uncertain about their occupational plans.

Figure 3.14. Boys tend to be more uncertain than girls about their occupational plans across OECD countries

Percentage of students in PISA 2018 who have no clear idea about their future job, by gender

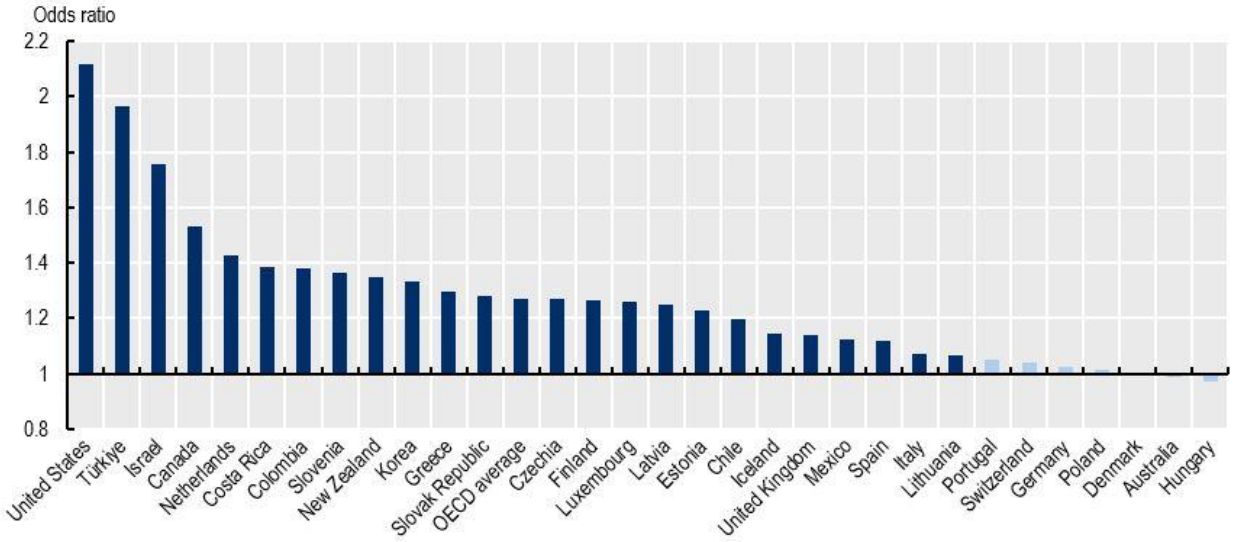


Note: Statistically significant (p<0.1) differences are presented in darker colour (see Box 1.1 about the significance level). High performers refer to those who have attained at least minimum proficiency (Level 2) in the three core PISA subjects and are high performers (Level 4) in at least one subject

Source: PISA 2018 (OECD, 2019[33]).

Figure 3.15. Even when controlling for socioeconomic status, migrant background, reading score and VET, boys are more likely than girls to be uncertain about their occupational plans

Probability of boys to be uncertain about their careers at age 30 in reference to girls

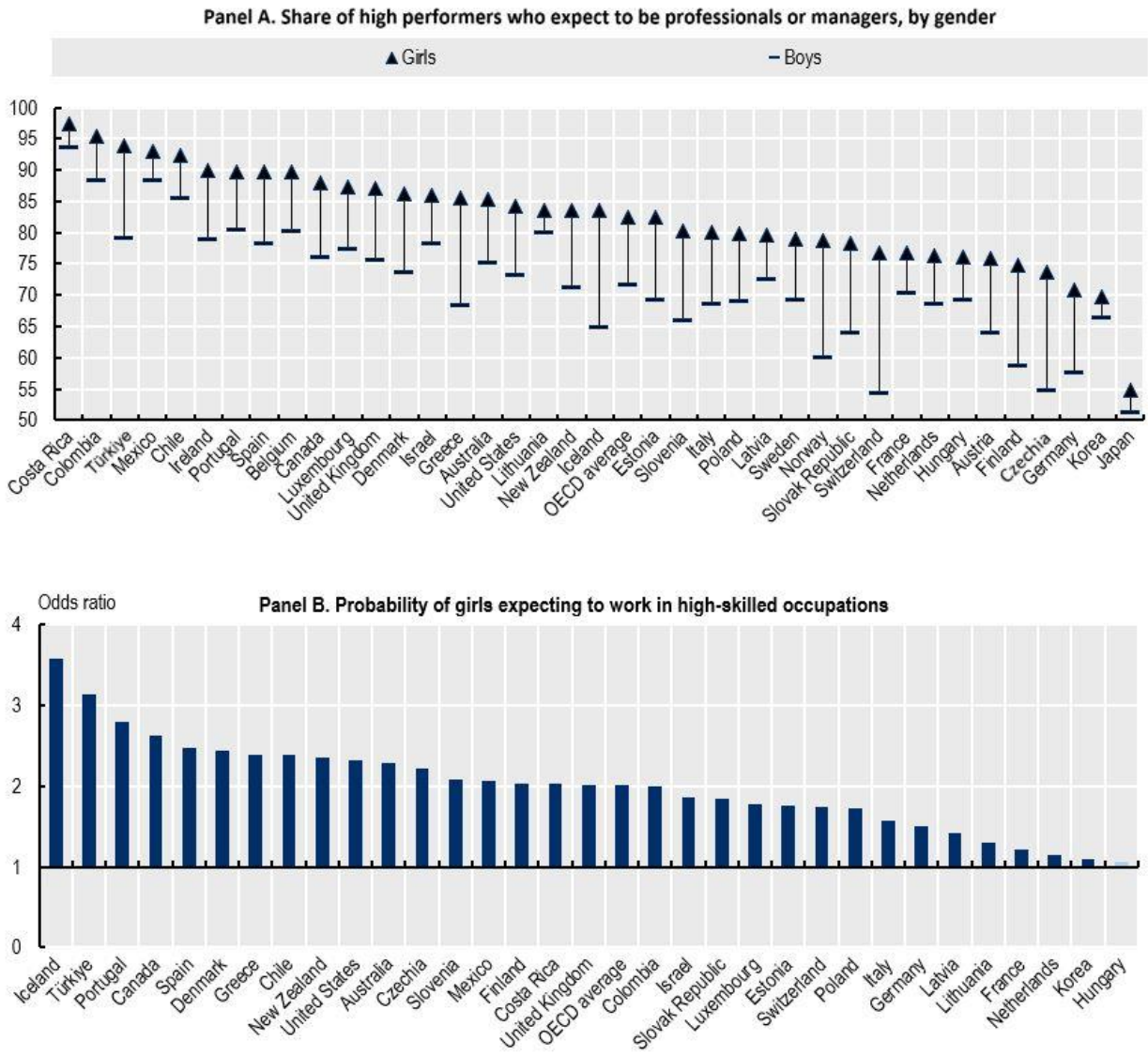


Note: Countries with a statistically significant result (at p-value < 0.1) are in dark colour. Odds ratios are adjusted for SES, migrant status, reading performance, VET orientation. (see Box 1.1 about the significance level).
Source: PISA 2018 (OECD, 2019[33]).

Career ambition by gender

Longitudinal analyses also commonly find significant relationships between what are categorised as higher levels of teenage career ambition and ultimate employment success (Covacevich et al., 2021[31]). Even when boys and girls demonstrate similar levels of proficiency in the PISA academic assessments, their career expectations differ markedly. In all OECD countries, among high performers, more girls expect to work in managerial or professional level careers (classified as ISCO major categories 1 and 2) than boys (Figure 3.16, Panel A). On average across OECD countries, 11 pp and 7 pp more high-performing girls expect to be professionals or managers than boys. When controlling for SES, migrant status, type of school, programme orientation (vocational v. general education) and reading scores, girls are still more likely to expect to work in high-skilled occupations. This is the case for all OECD countries, except Hungary. On average across the OECD, girls are two times more likely than boys to be categorised as expressing high levels of ambition in their future work expectations.

Figure 3.16. Among high performing students, girls are more likely to expect to become managers or professionals (ISCO major categories 1 and 2)



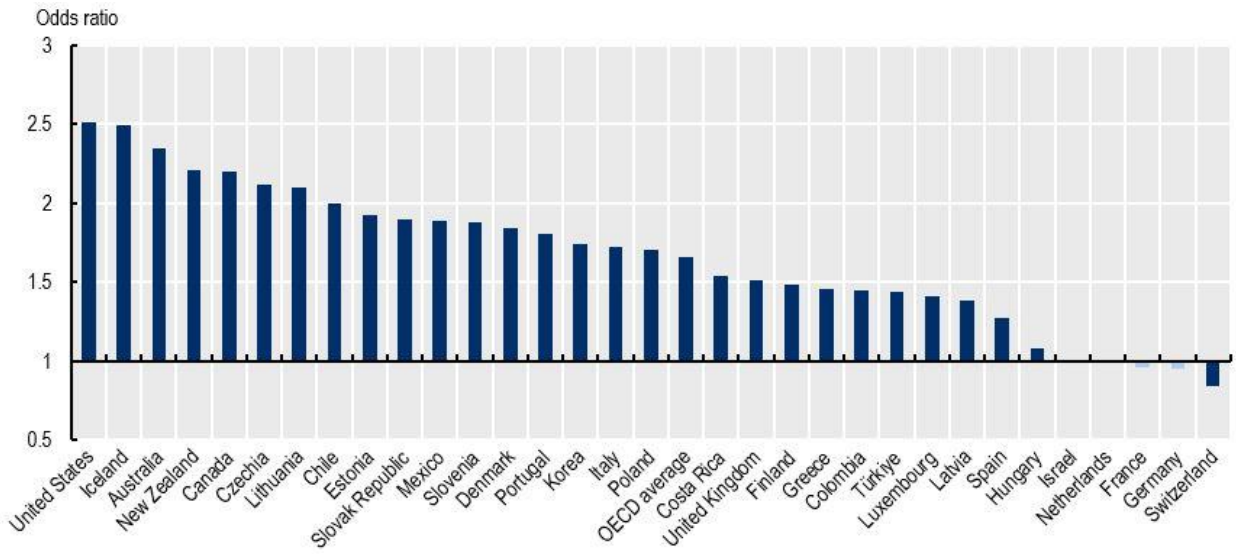
Note: High-performing students are those who have attained at least minimum proficiency (Level 2) in the three core PISA subjects and are high performers (Level 4) in at least one subject. In Panel B, odds ratios are adjusted by SES, migrant status, type of school, programme orientation (vocational) and reading scores. Statistically significant results (p-value<0.1) are in darker colour (see Box 1.1 about the significance level).
Source: PISA 2018 (OECD, 2019[33]).

The overall share of students who expect managerial or professional careers in 2018 has increased compared to 2000 among both high-performing and low-performing boys and especially girls. Among 31 OECD countries with available data, only 5 countries saw a higher increase among high-performing boys than comparable girls: France, Hungary, Italy, Latvia and Poland.

Drawing on PISA 2018 data, girls are also on average 1.6 times more likely than boys across OECD countries to expect to complete tertiary education (Figure 3.17), even after controlling for SES, migrant status, type of school, programme orientation (vocational v. general education) and reading scores. This is the case for all OECD countries, except Israel, the Netherlands, France, Germany and Switzerland.

Figure 3.17. Girls are more likely to expect to complete tertiary education, even after controlling for other factors

Probability of girls expecting to complete tertiary education in reference to boys



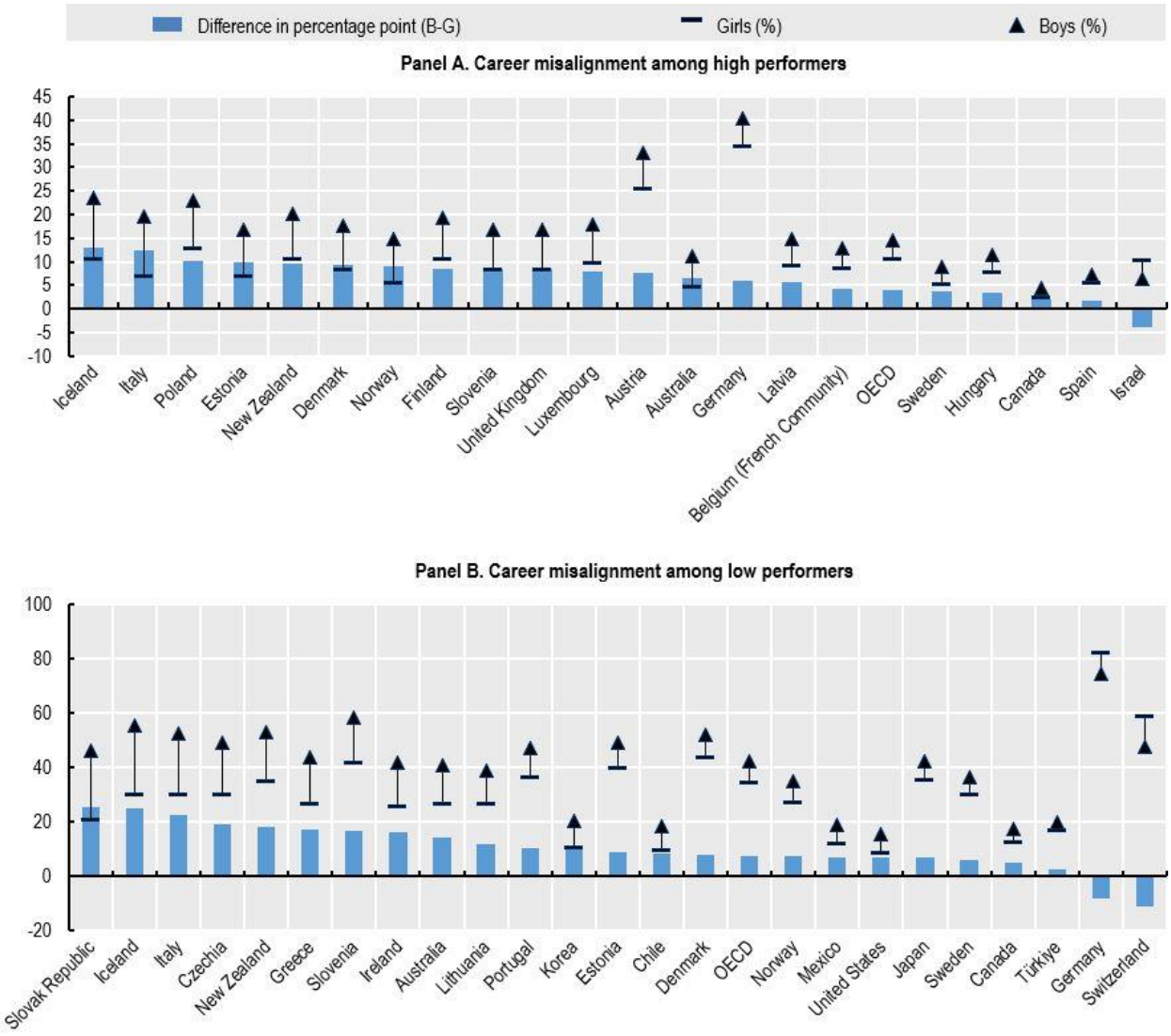
Note: Odds ratios are adjusted by SES, migrant status, type of school, programme orientation (vocational) and reading scores. Statistically significant results (p-value<0.1) are in darker colour (see Box 1.1 about the significance level).
Source: PISA 2018 (OECD, 2019[33]).

Career misalignment by gender

When students anticipate working in a profession that typically requires a university-level qualification, but do not expect to proceed to tertiary education, they are designated by analysts to be misaligned in their ambitions, a phenomenon that is commonly associated with worse adult employment outcomes than would otherwise be expected (Covacevich et al., 2021[31]). PISA data show that boys are more likely to be categorised as exhibiting career misalignment compared to similarly performing girls. This variation is greater among low performers than high performers. Among high performers, on average across OECD countries with available data, boys are 4 pp more likely than girls to be misaligned. Among low performers, boys are 8 pp more likely than girls to be misaligned (Figure 3.18). Over 40% of low performing boys can be categorised as misaligned, in that they anticipate working in a career that commonly requires a post-secondary qualification, but do not expect to attend tertiary education.

Figure 3.18. Boys are more likely to express career misalignment compared to girls, even among similarly performing students

Percentage of students whose education and career expectations are not aligned

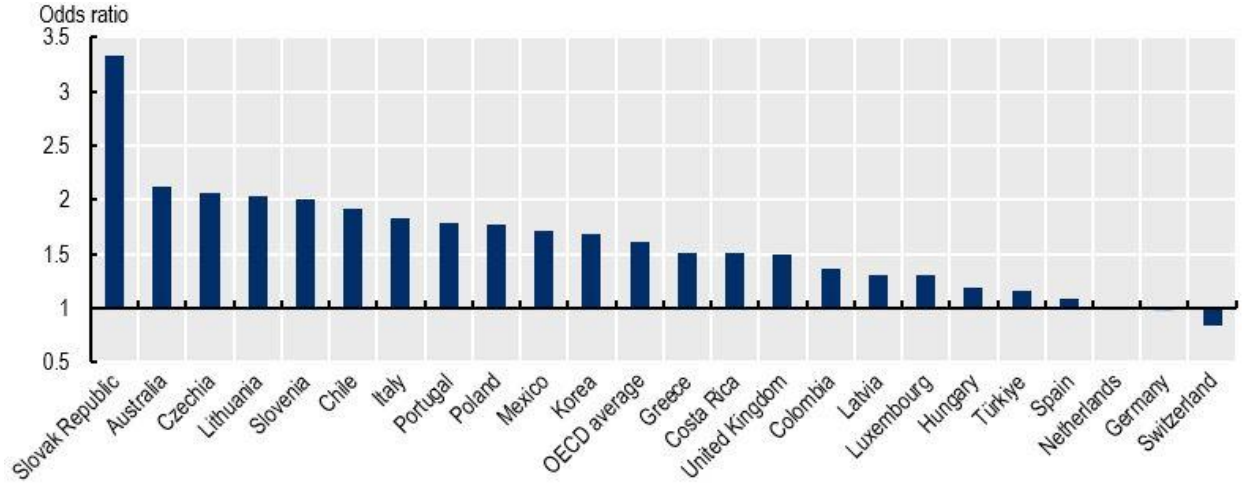


Note: Countries with missing values or statistically insignificant difference were omitted (see Box 1.1 about the significance level).
Source: PISA 2018 (OECD, 2019[33]).

Controlling for VET and other characteristics (SES, migrant status, school type, reading score), boys are 1.6 times more likely than girls to be misaligned in their occupational and educational expectations. Only in the Netherlands and Germany is there no evidence of boys being more likely than girls to be misaligned, while in other countries boys are more likely to be so. Exceptionally, in Switzerland boys are less likely to be misaligned than girls (Figure 3.19).

Figure 3.19. Even when controlling for VET and other characteristics, boys are more likely than girls to be misaligned in their career expectation

Probability of boys being misaligned in their career expectation in reference to girls



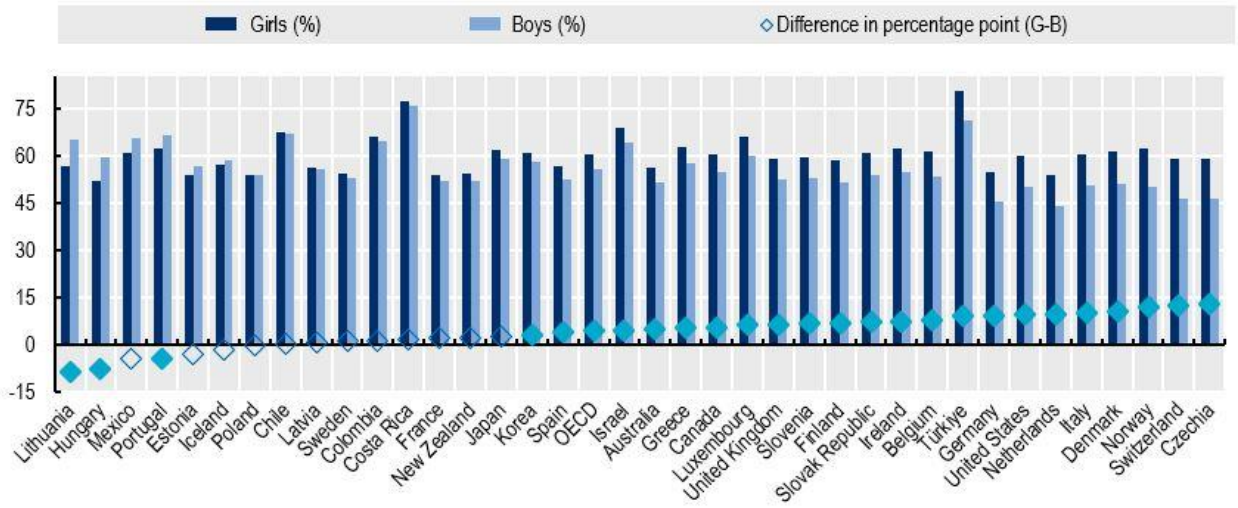
Note: Countries with a statistically significant result (at p-value < 0.1) are in dark colour. Odds ratios are adjusted for SES, migrant status, reading performance, VET orientation.
Source: PISA 2018 (OECD, 2019[33]).

Career concentration by gender

The high level of student interest in ISCO major categories 1 (Managers) and 2 (Professionals) speak to a narrowness of career aspirations. Such concentration of ambitions indicates a poor reflection of actual patterns of labour market demand and has been associated in a small number of longitudinal studies with poorer ultimate employment outcomes, it being theorised that lower levels of originality in occupational expectations may reflect shallower levels of career exploration by students (Covacevich et al., 2021[31]). On average across the OECD, more girls than boys expect to work in one of ten most popular jobs named by peers of their gender by the age of 30. In the 2018 PISA, 56% of high-performing boys and 60% of high-performing girls from 31 OECD countries chose one of the 10 most popular choices by their fellow boys or girls within their expected job at the age of 30. In the Czechia and Switzerland, high-performing girls are 13 pp more likely than similarly performing boys to expect to work in such popular occupations (Figure 3.20) The gap is larger than among low performers: girls are 7 pp more concentrated than boys in 10 popular occupations.

Figure 3.20. Girls have more concentrated career expectations than similarly performing boys

Percentage of high performers expecting to work in the 10 most popular occupations in their country

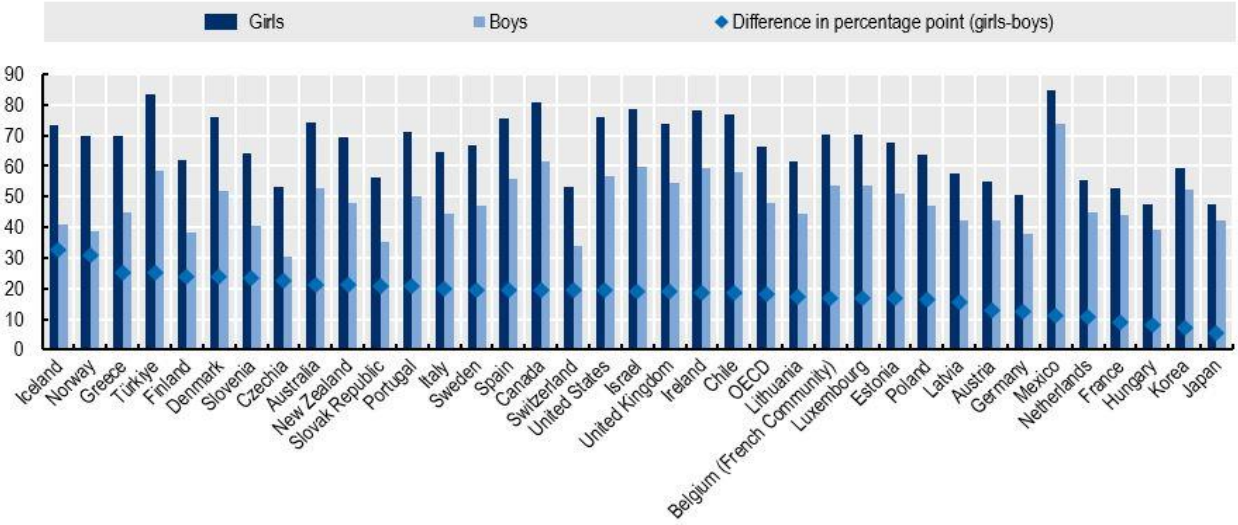


Note: Statistically significant differences (p-value<0.1) are in darker colour (see Box 1.1 about the significance level).
Source: PISA 2018 (OECD, 2019[33]).

Career expectation is highly concentrated in professional occupations (ISCO 2), especially among girls. This occupational category includes scientists, engineers, architects, designers, veterinarians, doctors, nurses and other health professionals, teachers, academics, accountants, ICT professionals, lawyers, authors and artists. On average, 66% of girls in OECD countries (who expressed an occupational expectation) expect to work in professional occupations at the age 30 compared to 48% of boys. In Canada, Mexico and Türkiye more than 80% of girls plan on working as a professional. In Iceland, the gap between girls and boys is largest at 33 percentage points (Figure 3.21).

Figure 3.21. Girls' occupational expectation is highly concentrated in professional occupations

Percentage of girls and boys who expect to work in professional occupations (ISCO 2) at the age 30



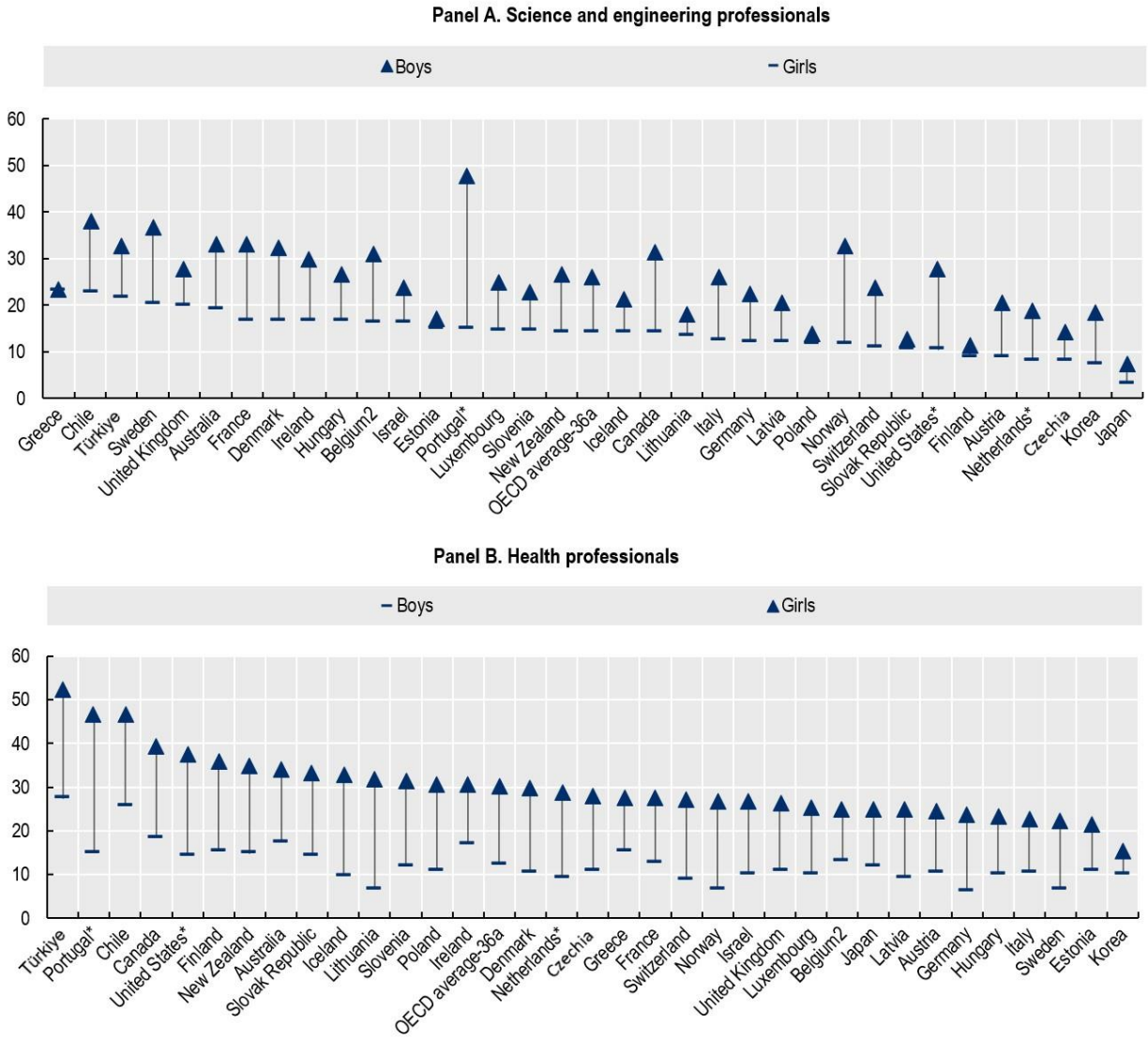
Note: Statistically significant differences are in darker colour (see Box 1.1 about the significance level).
Source: PISA 2018 (OECD, 2019[33]).

Girls are less likely to expect to work in STEM occupations

Even among top performers in science or mathematics, girls are less likely to anticipate working as science and engineering professionals than boys (Figure 3.22). Fewer girls expect to pursue STEM careers, such as becoming an engineer or a computer scientist, but more girls expect work in health or as teaching professionals.

Figure 3.22. Top-performing girls in science or math are less likely to expect to work as science and engineering professionals but more likely as health professionals than top-performing boys

Percentage of top performers in science or mathematics who expect to work as professionals when they are 30



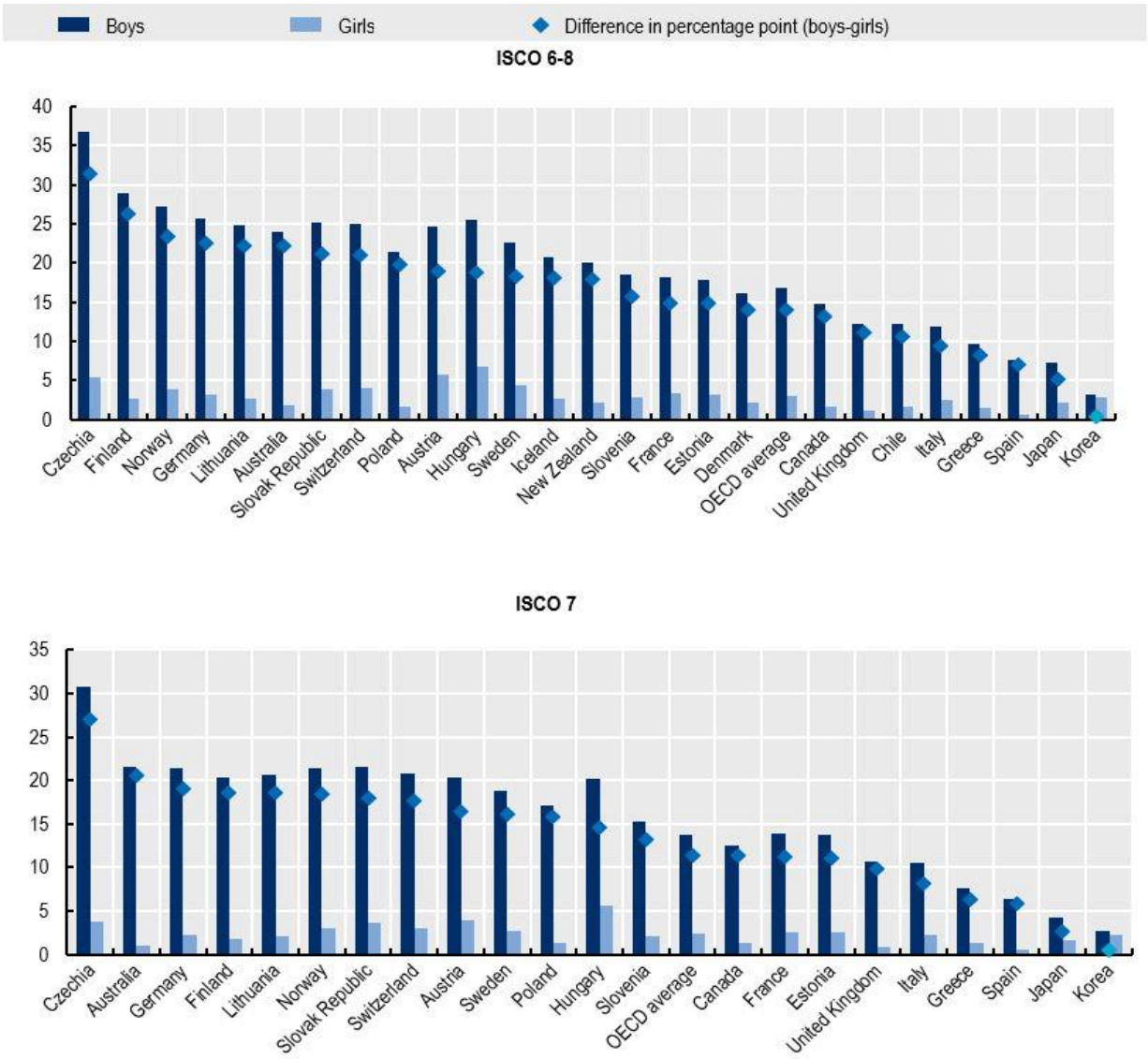
Note: In this figure, top performers refer to students who achieve at least Level 2 in all three core domains and at Level 5 in mathematics and/or science. Data in countries with star sign (*) did not meet the PISA technical standards but were accepted as largely comparable.
Source: PISA 2018 Results (Volume II): Where All Students Can Succeed (OECD, 2019[33]).

Girls less commonly expect to work in skilled trades

Across the OECD, comparatively few girls expect to work in skilled and semi-skilled occupations (ISCO major categories 6, 7 and 8), typically entered through vocational education and training programmes, such as skilled agricultural and fishery workers, craft and related trades workers, or plant and machine operators and assemblers. Girls tend to be less likely than boys to anticipate working in these occupations. Across OECD countries, by 14 percentage points boys are more likely than girls to expect to work in the skilled trades. Czechia shows a 32 percentage point difference, followed by Finland (26 pp), Norway/Germany (23 pp), Lithuania/Australia (22), Slovak Republic/ Switzerland (21 pp). Looking at only craft and related trades (ISCO 7), the picture remains the same. Boys are considerably more likely than girls to expect to work in these occupations (Figure 3.23).

Figure 3.23. Girls tend to be less interested in the skilled trades than boys

Percentage of 15-year-old students who expect to work in skilled trades (ISCO 6, 7 and 8)



Note: ISCO 6 refer to skilled agricultural and fishery workers, ISCO 7 refer to craft and related trades workers, and ISCO 8 refer to plant and machine operators and assemblers.
Source: Statically significant results are in filled markers or in darker colour (see Box 1.1 about the significance level).

3.3. How career guidance can address inequalities by gender, sexuality and gender identity

At the start of this chapter, PIAAC data were reviewed to explore patterns of employment success that link with the gender of young adults. Having taken into account academic achievement, SES and other characteristics, the analysis highlights a range of disadvantages that are commonly (if with some country exceptions) experienced by young women in relation to comparable qualified male peers. These included the fact that in comparison to young men, young women are:

- More likely to be not in education, employment, or training (NEET);
- Concentrated in differently occupational areas, including being less likely to be in some higher paying sectors such as STEM;
- More likely to earn less; and,
- Less likely to work full-time.

Overall, they can be seen to be less successful than male peers in activating their academic abilities and achievements within the labour market. Such disadvantage stems from a range of factors over which guidance systems have varying potential influence: strong historic patterns of gender-based segregation in post-secondary education and training and labour market participation; greater vulnerability to precarious employment; gendered expectations in child rearing and national and organisational maternity and paternity policies; discrimination (Bimrose, 2008[37]; Das and Kotikula, 2019[38]; Hegewisch and Gornick, 2012[39]; Stamarski and Son Hing, 2015[40]). Such challenges provide an important context for other associated issues, such as gendered aspirations and career interests (Hur, Andrzejewski and Marghitu, 2017[41]; Mann et al., 2020[42]; Wong and Kemp, 2018[43]). Of particular importance to this paper are gendered patterns of labour market segmentation which relate in part to career choice (Schoon and Eccles, 2014[44]). For example, the UK Millennium Cohort Study of 7 700 teenagers aged 14 found that in general girls aspire to work in professions which pay on average 27% less than those aspired to by boys in spite of the fact that girls express a greater expectation of continuing to higher education (Centre for Longitudinal Studies, 2018[45]).

The chapter has also presented research and data on the impact of sexuality and gender identity on career development. While the evidence is much more emergent than the comparable evidence that exists around the gender and the labour market, there is nonetheless, good evidence suggesting that sexuality and gender identity interact with labour market and career success in a variety of ways (Prince, 2012[46]; Waite, Ecker and Ross, 2019[21]) As with gender, sexuality and gender identity impact on young people's career development in ways that are simultaneously structural and psychological. While gender and sexuality raise different issues and therefore call for different kinds of responses from career guidance, there are strong overlaps and similarities between them. Therefore, while this section will focus primarily on gender, it will also address the role of career guidance in supporting young LGBTQI+ people to build successful careers. It is a strong implication of this review that both sexuality and the intersection between sexuality and gender are areas that would merit further research in the future. No PISA data on the experiences and attitudes of LGBTQI+ students is currently available.

Data from PISA 2018 does highlight several ways in which gender relates to career guidance. Looking at data across a range of OECD countries shows that:

- girls are more likely than boys to participate in a range of school-based or home-based career exploration activities;
- boys are more likely than girls to take part in career development activities that involve first-hand interaction with people in work, both in and out of school;

- girls are more likely to demonstrate narrower career expectations, focusing strongly on possible future careers in the professions (ISCO 2); they are less likely to express interest in STEM profession or skilled employment than boys; and.
- Boys are more likely to demonstrate uncertainty and confusion (as shown in patterns of career misalignment) than girls; they also express lower levels of occupational and educational ambition.

There is a wide range of research and practice that has explored how career guidance can help to address gender and, to a much less extent sexuality or gender-identity based inequalities. Indeed, governments often look to career guidance as a key element in addressing gender inequalities in the education system and labour market (Schulstok and Wikstrand, 2020[47]). In some cases, such work is about targeting additional services to girls and women and to LGBTQI+ people, but in others gender inequality is addressed with broader interventions which are targeted towards the whole cohort. The argument for such broader interventions is twofold, firstly gender and sexuality are characteristics that are possessed by all people. In light of this, it is important for people to consider how their gender and sexuality can either benefit or impede them in the labour market. They should also reflect on how this awareness can be expected to influence their interactions with others, including their willingness to challenge sexism and homophobia, even if it does not directly impact them. Secondly, the fact that gender and sexuality structure contemporary careers is not just a problem for women, gay and trans people, occupational segregation and stereotyping also channel men and heterosexual people into some careers and away from others. All of these social and cultural structures mitigate against both individuals finding occupations that best reflect their interests and abilities and against the fair and efficient distribution of human resources in society and the economy.

Career guidance offers a mechanism which can be used to encourage individuals to reflect on these issues and provide feedback into sexist and homophobic systems. As has already been argued in this paper, access to career guidance and to some kinds of career guidance activities, such as work experience placements, are not equally distributed, but as with the discussion in the previous chapter, it is important not simply to argue in this context that *more career guidance* is sufficient, but to develop forms of career guidance that actively address forms of gender- and sexuality-based inequalities.

In the previous chapter on how career guidance can respond to inequalities linked to the socio-economic status of young people, four main approaches were introduced: *provide more intensive support; develop professional capacity and provide dedicated resources; build social capital*; and *develop a critical understanding of personal relationships with the labour market*. These categories are drawn on again to group the range of interventions that have been identified to support young people to deal with inequalities based on gender or sexuality.

3.3.1. Providing more intense support

As discussed elsewhere in this paper, providing greater levels of career development to both girls and boys can be expected to be of value to students. For boys, a strong pattern in the PISA data relates to the higher level of uncertainty and confusion in career plans and how education provision can enable them. Analysis of PISA 2018 reveals statistically significant relationships between a range of guidance activities (speaking with career advisors, speaking to someone about a job of interest, completing career questionnaires, using the interest to research careers, participating in job fairs, job shadowing, internships, part-time working and volunteering) linked to exploration and experience of labour markets and clearer career thinking (Covacevich et al., 2021[31]). Greater levels of guidance provision can be expected to enhance the critical engagement of all young people with career thinking with the greatest benefits to be anticipated by boys. (See Chapter two for greater discussion of guidance interventions to enhance the career thinking of young people).

Another important strategy is providing young people with access to real experiences which give them insights into possible futures. As discussed in the previous chapter on socio-economic status, there are

potential dangers with any experiential learning as it runs the risk of channelling students into careers which align with societal expectations rather than deep personal reflection, which can result in social reproduction. However, it is possible to organise experiences of work in ways that challenge social reproduction and encourage people to encounter careers that they may not have considered.

In the **USA** the ***Computer Science for all Girls*** programme was designed to engage young women in computing (Hur, Andrzejewski and Marghitu, 2017[41]). The programme was run by a university and recruited middle- and high-school girls with an interest in computer science to attend a one-week summer school. The aim of the programme was to encourage young women to pursue their interest in computer science into higher education and a career. The summer school consisted of a series of experiential learning activities designed to give participants insights into computer science. This was then supplemented by talks from female computer scientists who discussed their career and work in computer science. The evaluation found that the summer school increased students' knowledge about computer science and interest in related careers, but that alone it was unlikely to be sufficient to change career trajectories. Consequently, it was recommended that schools increase the intensity of this kind of experiential learning for girls.

In **Germany** the ***girls' days*** and ***boys' days*** initiatives encourage young people (between the ages of 10 and 18) to try out careers that are usually associated with the opposite gender (OECD, 2023[48]). The initiative is funded by the federal government and delivered by a non-governmental organisation which works with schools, employers, trade unions and other labour market organisations. Schools begin the process by encouraging students to look at different careers and discuss gendered stereotypes associated with each of them. The students then choose to access a short placement (usually one day) to investigate a possible apprenticeship or occupational area. The connection with employers is brokered through a website which helps to match students with willing employers. Universities have also engaged with the programme and encourage students to consider atypical higher education pathways as well. The key to the job shadowing day is that it encourages mutual learning with both young people and employers potentially having some of their assumptions challenged. The evaluation of Girls' Day held in 2018 showed that 38% of participating enterprises received internship or apprenticeship enquiries from under-represented individuals immediately following the event. Additionally, for more than one in five employers, Girls' Day led to the employment of a female candidate. The programme which has now been adopted across many other countries, fits into a broader framework of mentoring and awareness raising initiatives funded by the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research called ***GO MINT*** which focus on engaging young women in science, engineering and mathematics related careers (Hutchinson, 2014[49]; OECD, 2015[2]).

Girls' and Boys' days are especially important models of intervention because they offer young people the chance to see for themselves whether they could imagine themselves working in a field which is not a social norm and which may be perceived as a hostile environment for someone of their gender. Further international studies suggest opportunities for students to engage in such critical exploration are commonly modest. A review of 10 256 work placements in the UK by Francis et al. (2005[50]) found that very few girls participated in placements related to engineering, IT and plumbing and very few boys undertook placements in childcare. However, when a sample of 520 students from 20 schools were asked whether they would have liked to try a non-traditional work experience placement, 36% of girls said yes and a further 33% were undecided; 14% boys also said yes and 38% were undecided. Further studies suggest such levels of interest are not unusual. A 2017 UK study of 1 740 young adults aged 19-24 found comparable levels of interest in non-traditional placements: 16% of young men and 25% of young women agreed that they would have welcomed more help from their secondary school in understanding "how common it is to do a job which people of your gender don't normally do" (Mann et al., 2016[51]). An OECD study of career development in Virginia found similar results: 44% of 1 100 young adults aged 19-26 (40% of young men and 49% of young women) agreed that they would have welcomed *a lot* more help from their school in understanding "how to get a job which people of your gender or background don't normally do"

(OECD, 2023[52]). While interest is clear in experiencing professions in which their gender is under-represented, students found it difficult to turn interest into reality. This may relate to the strength of social assumptions, the unwillingness of employers to accept atypical students and/or the risk aversion of students who typically are presented with a single opportunity to gain first-hand experience of work while still in education. Such barriers are addressed in programmes discussed below.

Career guidance interventions should actively seek to build the confidence and self-efficacy of young women by helping them to see that they have the capacity to manage and develop their careers (Bimrose, 2020[53]). Indeed, Borgonovi argues that differential levels of self-efficacy explain a great deal of the difference in outcomes in traditionally male dominated subjects like mathematics (2014[54]). In other words, it is not enough to improve the academic performance of young women in male dominated subjects. There is also a need to improve their self-efficacy in these subjects. Closely linked to this are perceptions about the attractiveness and viability of various career paths, particularly those associated with male dominated school subjects such as science and mathematics (Hutchinson, 2014[49]).

In the **USA,** a nine-week ***STEM and career decision-making self-efficacy*** intervention was trialled with high school girls (Falco and Summers, 2017[55]). The intervention consisted of nine 50-min group career counselling sessions designed to improve career decision self-efficacy and STEM self-efficacy. These included a mix of didactic and experiential activities and discussions as well as discussion of the sociocultural issues that facilitate and hinder girls from engaging in STEM careers. Sessions focused on raising awareness of STEM careers and discussing the issues that women might experience in these careers, developing a growth mindset, exploring their own experiences of achieving mastery, dealing with anxiety, identifying role models, affirming strengths and developing goals and plans. The intervention was robustly evaluated and found to lead to a significant improvement in career decision self-efficacy and STEM self-efficacy after three months, in comparison with a control group.

3.3.2. Developing professional capacity and providing dedicated resources

To deliver meaningful career guidance interventions to challenge sexism and homophobia, there is a need to build the capabilities of careers professionals. This includes helping professionals to understand the issues experienced by people because of their gender, sexual orientation or gender identity and develop new ethical approaches which address these issues and consider how this will be operationalised in practice (Bimrose, 2004[56]). In general, these issues are dealt with briefly at best in training and often viewed as a special case, rather than as the experience of more than half of the population (Schulstok and Wikstrand, 2020[47]).

A joint **Estonia/Iceland/Lithuania** project has developed a handbook for career guidance counsellors to help them to address gender stereotypes (Kinkar et al., 2019[57]). The ***BREAK!*** project was funded by the European Union and focuses on how career guidance counsellors can disrupt gendered career outcomes by building young people's career management skills and engaging them in discussion about the character of the labour market. The handbook makes use of relevant media, for example TV shows to provide relatable scenarios that students can discuss and reflect on. It then provides a series of practical ideas, activities and discussions for career guidance counsellors to run with groups of students to help them to reflect on the issues. The ***BREAK!*** programme encourages and enables students to reflect critically on how gender shapes labour market participation, providing a theoretical overview of the nature of gender stereotypes as well as practical support to students.

In **Australia**, careers practitioners have developed a workshop for fellow career counsellors. The workshop is designed to delve deeper into **gender considerations** and to explore how gender is addressed within the field of career counselling, fostering a deeper understanding of how gender is integrated into career practice (Franklin and Gilpatrick, 2022[58]). Participating practitioners are invited to reflect on how gender has shaped their experience, provided with an introduction to key terms such as 'gender' and 'identity', introduced to key statistics, research, data and theories which explore how career and gender interact and

provided with examples of how these issues have addressed in practice. The aim of the workshop is to demystify what may be perceived as a challenging issue and to provide career practitioners with a range of tools to address this in practice.

In the **USA**, an intervention to ***prepare school counsellors to support LGBTQI+ youth*** was developed and tested (Kull, Kosciw and Greytak, 2016[59]). Research suggested that very few counsellors had received any training in supporting LGBTQI+ young people. The training provided information and insights for school counsellors on LGBTQI+ issues and experiences and offered practical strategies to deal with these. The evaluation of the intervention found that it had led to significant improvements in counsellors' confidence in dealing with these issues and likelihood of reporting LGTB support practices.

3.3.3. Building social capital with families and the world of work

Career guidance has an important role to play in connecting young people with employers and other key informants and sources of career support (Cedefop, 2021[60]). Providing young people with new social capital can have indirect effects. For example, it can provide access to new and useful information, while also building confidence and understanding over time. New social capital can also lead to more direct effects, such as enabling access to work placements or ultimate employment (Jones, Mann and Morris, 2016[61]; Stanley and Mann, 2014[62]).

In some countries, programmes are in place to make it easier for students to interact directly with people whose gender is under-represented in their profession. This is an objective of the programme of ***career talks*** at Colegio Legamar (OECD, 2013[63]) and career talks by video within the *Empresas que inspiran* programme overseen by the Bertelsmann Foundation (Bertelsmann[64]) both in **Spain**. The ***Inspiring Women*** programme in the **UK** makes it easy for primary and secondary schools to connect with thousands of women who are willing to share their work-related experiences with students through classroom presentations (Inspiring the Future, 2023[65]). Within such initiatives, a primary aim is to help young people consider non-traditional occupations as 'thinkable' for someone like them. As Williams et al. argues (2019[66]), following a review of male progression into the nursing profession, interest in nursing as a career will be "guided by common, public perceptions and stereotypes of nursing unless more direct experience or personal knowledge is readily available to the individual."

In **Spain** a ***group mentoring initiative led by a female STEM role model*** was established to address concerns about girls disengaging from science at a young age (Guenaga et al., 2022[67]). The intervention was provided to students between the ages of 10 and 12 years old and comprised of six sessions. The evaluation suggests that the programme had an impact on the students' attitudes towards technology, increased the number of female STEM references they knew, and improved their opinions of vocations and professions related to science and technology. The impact was greater among girls, although in aspects such as attitudes towards technology, the female participants still demonstrated lower values than boys. However, the programme did not improve the stereotypes that the young participants had about mathematical self-efficacy, leading the evaluators to conclude that addressing these issues needs to start earlier and include multiple interventions.

3.3.4. Developing critical understanding of personal relationships to the labour market

Career guidance can act on the dispositions, understandings, and expectations of the individual (Schulstok and Wikstrand, 2020[47]). From the earliest years (OECD, 2021[68]), gender is an important factor in career decision making, and as they grow older, young people internalise ideas about the labour market that are infused with the gendered nature of society (Gottfredson, 2005[69]). Historically, the provision of career information has often reinforced career stereotypes, for example by providing pictures that implicitly communicate how occupations are segregated by gender (Kinkar et al., 2019[57]). Such dispositions or

assumptions can be conceived as forms of cultural capital which serve to shape the economic and social progression of individuals (Archer, 2015[70]). Given this therefore, career guidance has an important role to play in challenging these assumptions and internalised stereotypes, by helping young people to see other possibilities and to subject their assumptions to greater scrutiny.

In the **UK** and **New Zealand**, a strong focus of the *Primary Futures* campaign (OECD, 2021[71]) has been to provide primary age children with the opportunity to meet with women working in professions where their gender is historically under-represented. Captured in a short video, *Redraw the Balance*, which has been viewed millions of time online and remade in many different countries, the programme encourages schools to ask children to draw people who would work in professions such as a fire fighter, police officer, surgeon and fighter pilot. The children, commonly in the first years of education, are then asked if they would like to meet these people and find that, in contrast to their pictures which predominantly describe men working in such roles, it is women who are working in these roles and who have come to their schools to speak about their working lives. This intervention at a young age presents children with evidence that is difficult to ignore that will challenge societal assumptions about labour market segmentation. For girls in particular, the intervention challenges processes of circumscription which can lead them to rule out potential careers from a young age (Gottfredson, 2005[69]).

As noted earlier, the ***BREAK!*** programme (**Estonia/Iceland/Lithuania**) is designed to develop older students' critical understanding of labour market segmentation. Here, the focus is more on the realities of how gender shapes the working world, encouraging a thoughtful consideration of why such structures exist and their implications for students as individuals. Other countries have also tried to address stereotypes by running large scale public information campaigns which seek to raise awareness about occupations whilst tackling gendered assumptions. A good example is the ***Women building Australia*** campaign (Australia, 2023[72]). This campaign is jointly run by the Master Builders Association and the Australian government and aims to attract and support women to succeed in the building and construction industry. In addition to a website and other publicity and information resources, the programme also includes a strong focus on engaging young women through careers fairs and then mentoring and supporting them during their early career.

There are also a wide range of similar public information campaigns targeted at young men to encourage them to consider gender atypical careers (Mann, Denis and Percy, 2020[36]). In the **USA,** there is the ***Are you man enough to be a nurse?*** campaign (Minority Nurse, 2023[73]). The campaign used pictures of male nurses, disseminated through posters and social media, to encourage young men to consider going into a historically female profession. This was supported through dedicated training scholarships and action with employers to change the assumptions which inform recruitment practice. It was further supported through the provision of resources and information for guidance counsellors. A similar campaign was also run in the **Republic of Ireland** to encourage ***Males into primary teaching*** (Primary Education Committee, 2006[74])**.** The role of guidance counsellors was singled out in policy commentary on this campaign, amidst concern that guidance counsellors were disproportionately directing high achieving young men away from employment opportunities in primary education and the career guidance professional association was tasked with addressing this.

In **Sweden,** legislation on gender equality gives schools a responsibility to provide career guidance for pupils and to make sure that children's vocational and educational choices are not affected by '*gender, social background or culture*' (Schulstok and Wikstrand, 2020[47]). This has led to the development of ***norm criticism*** as an approach which encourages young people to take a critical perspective on what is taken for granted in their day-to-day life. Norm criticism is an approach to the development of critical consciousness and is particularly focused on identifying and questioning social norms. In Sweden, it has been found to be a helpful framework for encouraging teachers, career guidance professionals and students to re-examine their assumptions in relation to both gender and sexuality (Wikstrand, 2019[75]). Through norm criticism, participants are encouraged to challenge what is taken for granted, see themselves in context, become aware of norms and reflect on their own position in relation to norms as

part of considering what can be changed. For example, this might include questioning their own assumptions about what constitutes a 'good' career, how work and family life can be combined as well as challenging the gender segregation of the labour market.

Similar approaches have also been used to engage LGBTQI+ people in careers (Baker, 2022[76]). For example, the **British Army** ran its ***This is belonging*** campaign targeted at a range of non-traditional groups. This included handing out 'rainbow camo cream' at London Pride, the creation of a video entitled '*can I be gay in the army?*' along with associated social media and careers materials. The campaign was designed to tackle deep seated concerns within the gay community as to whether the military offered a viable environment for LGBTQI+ people to develop their careers. The aim was to send out a clear message that the army was inclusive and supportive to a wide range of different (non-traditional) recruits. Also in the **UK**, the campaigning group Stonewall has established ***Stonewall Young Futures*** a careers information hub for young LGBTQI+ people (Stonewall, 2023[77]).

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Notes

[1] The EU-LGBTI II Survey was conducted online between 27 May and 22 July 2019. It collected information from 139,799 LGBTI respondents, including 137,508 from respondents living in the 28 EU Member States. The EU-28 sample is composed of 42 % gay males, 20 % bisexual women, 16 % lesbian women, 14 % trans persons, 7 % bisexual males and 1 % intersex persons. In Estonia and Lithuania, bisexual women form the largest categories. In Finland, trans respondents do so. Respondents aged 15 to 17 years constitute a seventh of the sample.

[2] Data was collected from an online survey conducted between December 2019 and March 2020 of 40,001 LGBTQ youth recruited via targeted ads on social media.

[3] Administered by YouGov on behalf of Stonewall. Participants were recruited through the YouGov panel and via an open recruitment that was circulated through a wide range of organisations, community groups and individuals. The overall sample size of participants who were employed is 3 213: 49% of employed respondents were from England, 26% from Wales and 25% from Scotland; 53% were male, 40% female and 6% described their gender in a different way; 63% were gay or lesbian, 28% bisexual, 7% used a different term to describe their sexual orientation and 2% were straight; 11% said they identified as trans; 6% were black, Asian or minority ethnic. The figures were weighted by region and age.

[4] The mean age is 35 and 36 years among women-to-men and men-to-women respectively, 43 and 67% hold a higher education degree, 59 and 78% are white colour employees. The survey participants had the surgery during the data gathering period and they had not changed jobs during the data gathering period.

4. Inequality and career guidance by migrant background

This chapter first presents how migrant background influences the labour market outcomes of young adults and shapes the teenage career thinking, exploration, and experience of students. It draws on relevant academic literature and makes extensive use of OECD PISA and PIAAC data and OECD career readiness indicators. The chapter then looks at how career guidance can prepare such young people for the modern labour market and how it can address inequalities related to migrant background, and to a lesser extent ethnicity, in its provision. It presents illustrative examples of practice and discusses the characteristics of effective career guidance provision in this regard.

4.1. Inequalities by migrant background in the early career experience of young adults

'Migrants' have a broad range of backgrounds. Country of birth, nationality, race and ethnicity as well as year of entry, parents' country of birth and language spoken at home, and a mix of all these elements may influence students' education and labour market outcomes. Inequality can be seen to work in different ways in relation to young people with migrant origins in different originating countries within each of these categories. In OECD PISA, 'immigrant students' include first- and second- generation immigrant students whose parents were foreign-born. First-generation students who are foreign-born with foreign-born parents range up to 25% of students in Luxembourg with an OECD average of 5% in PISA 2018 (OECD, 2019[1]). For simplicity of comparison, this chapter largely focuses on foreign-born versus native-born young people. However, the paper does discuss race and ethnicity wherever evidence is available by the level of educational attainment or skills to allow reasonable comparisons to be undertaken. It recognises however that the experiences of specific minority groups often vary considerably.

Foreign-born young adults are more likely than their native-born peers to be in NEET when controlling for other factors that commonly influence employment outcomes. Even with the same level of qualification, young people from ethnic monitories are on average less likely to be employed and more likely to be unemployed or inactive. EU data confirm that fewer low-educated, foreign-born young adults tend to be employed than similarly educated native-born counterparts. However, among high-educated, foreign-born young adults, more tend to be employed than native-born counterparts with the same level of education. While PIAAC data cannot confirm a wage difference between foreign-born and native-born young adults, a UK study found that graduate men from all ethnic minority groups have lower earnings than white male British graduates, even after controlling for education and other various demographic characteristics (See Box 4.1).

4.1.1. Employment outcomes by migrant backgrounds

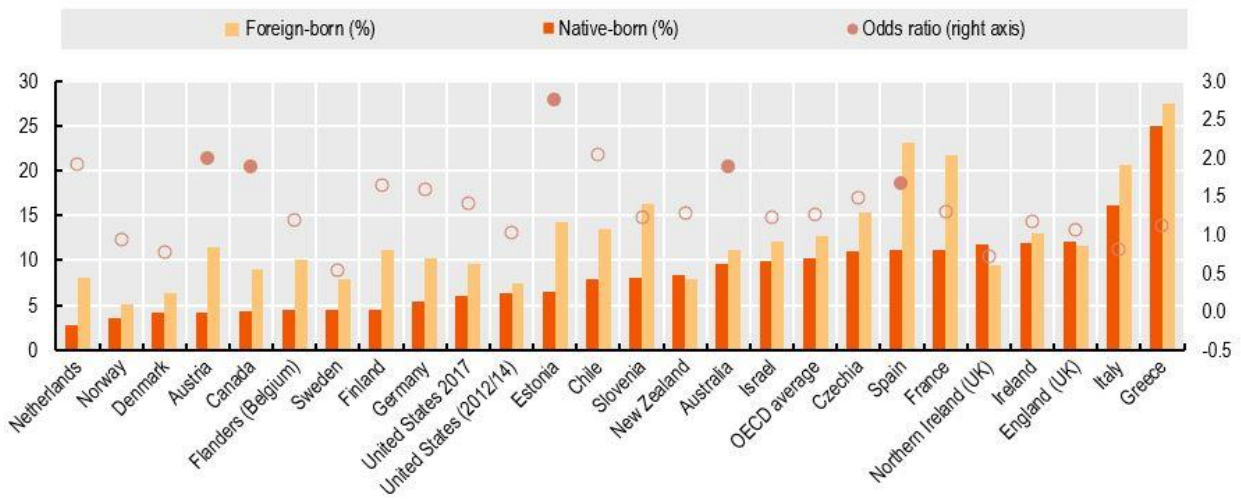
Employment outcomes tend to differ by whether a student is native or foreign born, even with the same prior level of education and skills. Across all countries, foreign-born young adults (16-34) are more likely to be NEET than native-born young adults (Figure 4.1). Across OECD countries, foreign-born young adults are 1.3 times more likely than native born peers to be in NEET when controlling for education, skills, gender and parental education, though this is not statistically significant. Only five countries have a statistically significant result, among which the share of foreign-born NEET ranges from 4% in Austria and Canada to 10% in Australia and 11% in Spain. In these countries, the odds of foreign-born adults being in NEET – after controlling for education, skills and gender and parent education – was twice as high as native born in Austria, 1.9 times in Canada, 1.9 in Australia, 1.7 in Spain, and 2.7 in Estonia.

A higher likelihood of being NEET among foreign-born adults is in line with reported challenges facing foreign-born youth in their transition to work. Even if they have the same qualifications as native-born youth, which signal their level of academic knowledge and practical skills, labour market outcomes and success in apprenticeship and university applications may differ (Drydakis, 2017[2]; Jeon, 2019[3]). Experimental studies have been undertaken in many OECD countries to explore whether individuals from migrant backgrounds and members of ethnic and racial minority groups face discrimination in the labour market. Such 'correspondence tests' take the form of fictitious applications being made for jobs by similarly qualified and experienced candidates. In a meta-analysis of 738 'correspondence tests' in 43 separate studies by Zschirnt and Ruedin, systematic evidence of discrimination is revealed with minority candidates needing to send around 50% more applications to be invited for interview than candidates from the majority population. Even when applicants are born in the host country, such patterns of discrimination are evident (2016[4]).

Studies in Greece and Sweden found that both non-natives and natives with an ethnic-minority background face comparable occupational access constraints and are effectively sorted into lower paid vacancies (Bursell and Bygren, 2023[5]; Drydakis, 2017[2]). A similar meta-analysis of 28 correspondence studies in the US by Quillian et al. (2017[6]) finds that on average White Americans received 36% more calls for interview than comparable African Americans and 24% more than Latino Americans. The study found that while evidence of such discrimination against African Americans had stayed at the same rates since 1989, that experienced by Latinos had reduced. Other meta-analyses of correspondence studies undertaken in multiple countries in Europe and North America also find that evidence of discrimination varies across minority groups. Lippens, Vermeiren and Baert (2023[7]) finds that migrants from Arabic backgrounds are 'severely discriminated against in the hiring process', but identifies weaker evidence of discrimination faced by White European migrants. Consequently, it can be expected that while all migrants will face additional barriers in understanding education and training systems and labour markets in a host country (Jeon, 2019[3]), further barriers may be apparent linked to patterns of discrimination.

Figure 4.1. Foreign-born young people tend to be more likely to be NEET

Percentage of NEET among young people (15-34) and their probability of being NEET by migrant status

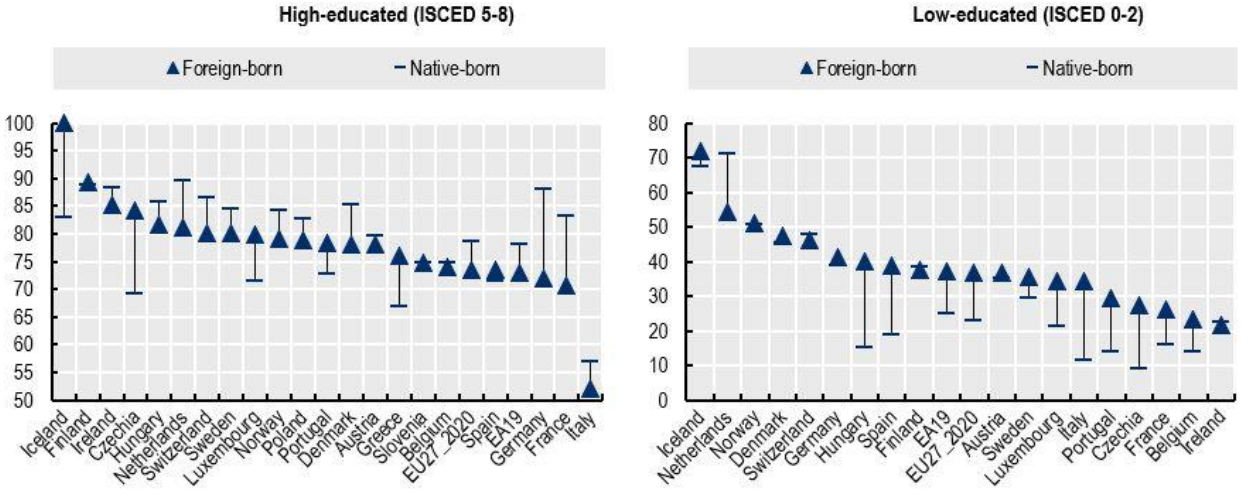


Note: Countries with a missing value or a small sample size are omitted. Parent education is categorised 'low' when neither parent has attained upper secondary, and 'high' when at least one parent has attained tertiary. Statistically significant (at p-value<0.1) differences and odds ratios are presented in a filled marker. Differences are the unadjusted differences between the two percentages for each contrast category. The odds ratios take into account the effect of education and literacy score in addition to gender and parent education.
Source: OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) (2012, 2015, 2018).

In EU countries, similar levels of education attainment also lead to different employment rates between foreign-born and native-born inhabitants. However, outcomes reflect different levels of attainment. For example, in the EU-27 countries in 2020 among low-educated young adults (15-29), lower proportions of foreign-born young adults tend to be employed than native-born counterparts. In contrast, among high-educated young adults, more foreign-born people tend to be employed than their native-born counterparts (Figure 4.2). Across all education levels, foreign-born men on average have the highest employment rates among compared groups across the matrix of gender-migrant status.

Figure 4.2. Employment rates between foreign-born and native-born young adults vary by education level

Employment (%) by migrant status, 2022 Q2



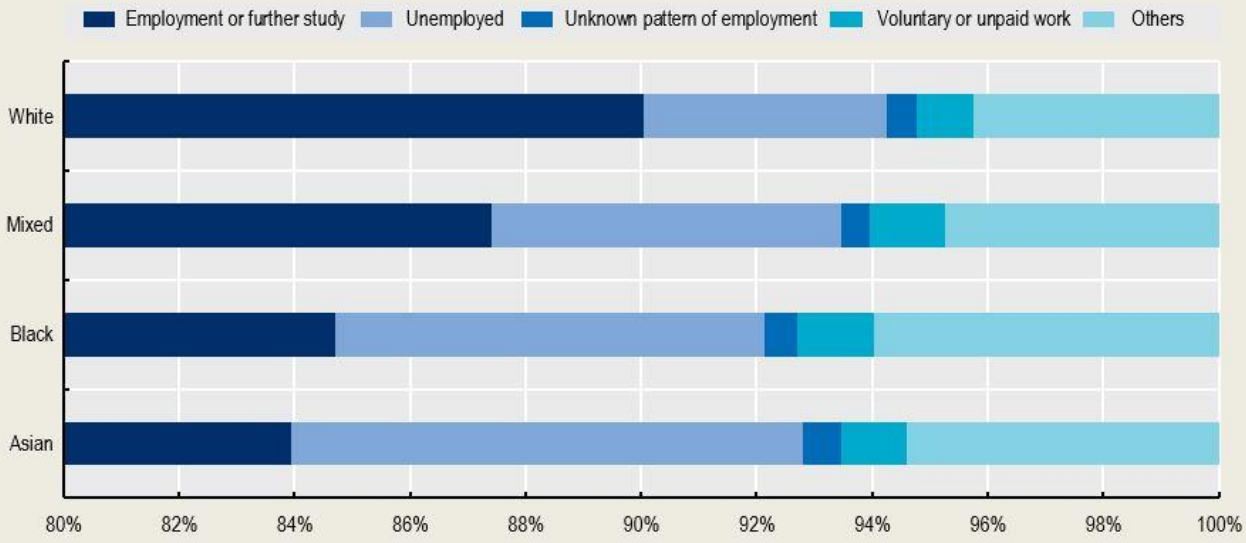
Note: Hungary is 2022Q1 data. High-educated (ISCED 5-8) refers to tertiary educated. Low-educated (ISCED 0-2) refers to below upper secondary education.
Source: Eurostat (2022), LFSQ_ERGANEDM
https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/LFSQ_ERGANEDM__custom_3953450/default/table?lang=en

Box 4.1. Different education and employment outcomes by ethnicity in the UK

While overlaps are common, migrant background is a different social identity category than race/ethnicity. In some countries, relevant data are available to help understand the experiences of minority groups in the labour market. Data from the UK for example clearly show that race or ethnicity plays a role in education-to-work transitions: among higher education graduates, White graduates were least likely to be unemployed and more likely than other ethnic groups to have transitioned to employment or further study 15 months after graduation (Hubble, Bolton and Lewis, 2021[8]) (Figure 4.3). This gap increases with time following graduation: attrition rates in employment among White graduates are the lowest among compared groups (Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.3. Similar level qualification leads into different employment outcomes, UK

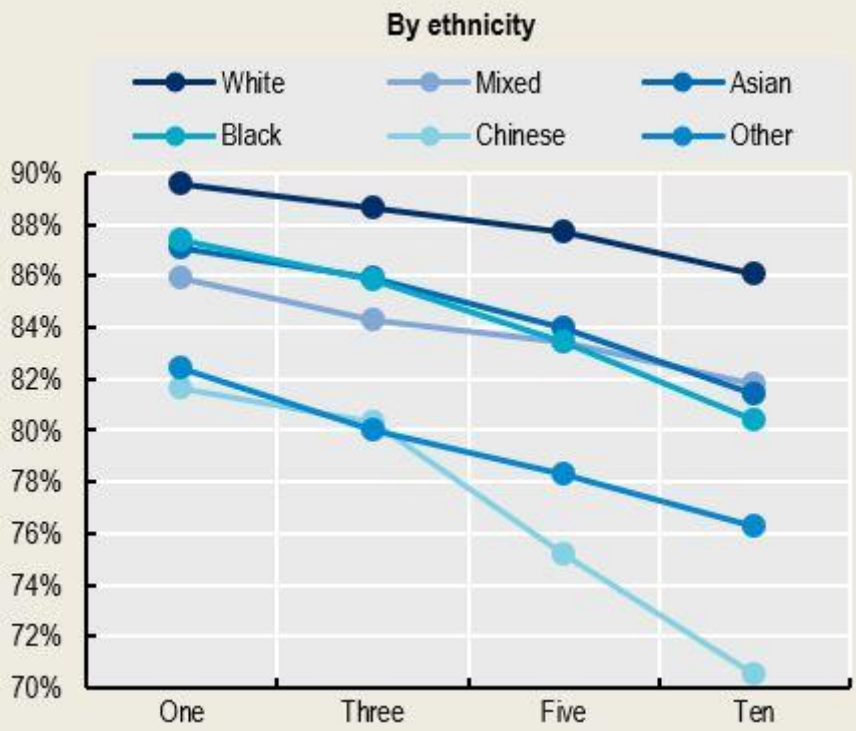
Share of higher education graduates by activity 15 months after graduation, 2019/20 cohort



Note: Others include travel, caring for someone, retired or unknown pattern of further study. Graduate Outcomes survey data covers UK higher education providers (HEPs) and further education colleges (FECs) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Data is collected approximately 15 months after higher education course completion.
Source: Graduate Outcomes open data repository, https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/graduates/releases

Figure 4.4. Attrition rates in employment differ by ethnicity, UK

Sustained employment and/or further study (%) in 2018/19 by years after graduation from higher education and by ethnicity



Source: Graduate outcomes (LEO): outcomes in 2018 to 2019, DfE in (Hubble, Bolton and Lewis, 2021[57]).

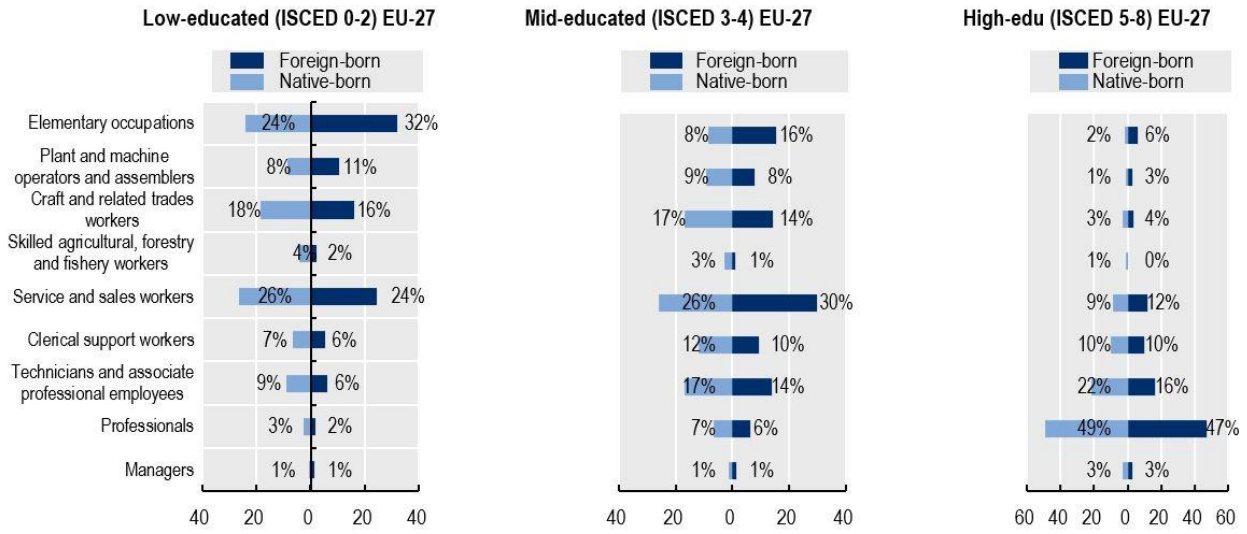
Studies of US datasets provide comparable results. After controlling for level of education, statistically significant variations are apparent in the employment outcomes of young adults in relation to their ethnic backgrounds with Black, Native American and Hispanic people experiencing the greatest disadvantages (Brown, Lauder and Cheung, 2020[9]; Dozier, 2010[10]; Grodksy and Pager, 2001[11]; Miller, 2020[12]; Wilson and Darity, 2022[13]).

4.1.2. Labour market segmentation by migrant backgrounds

In addition to gender and SES, country of birth is a factor in labour market segmentation. EU-27 data show that across all educational attainment levels, foreign-born young adults (15-29) are overrepresented in low-skilled and low-waged employment such as elementary occupations. Among the low-educated, 32% of foreign-born young adults work in elementary occupations compared to 24% of their native-born peers; among mid-educated, 16% compared to 8%; among high-educated 6% compared to 2%. Services and sales (ISCO 5) and Craft and related trades (ISCO 7) are relatively common among low- and mid-educated young workers for both foreign- and native-born (Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5. Occupational distribution of young people (15-29) by migrant status, EU-27

Percentage of employment by educational attainment, migrant status and occupation, 2021



Source: Eurostat (2022), ESTAT:LFSA_EGAISEDM, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/lfsa_egaisedm/default/table?lang=en

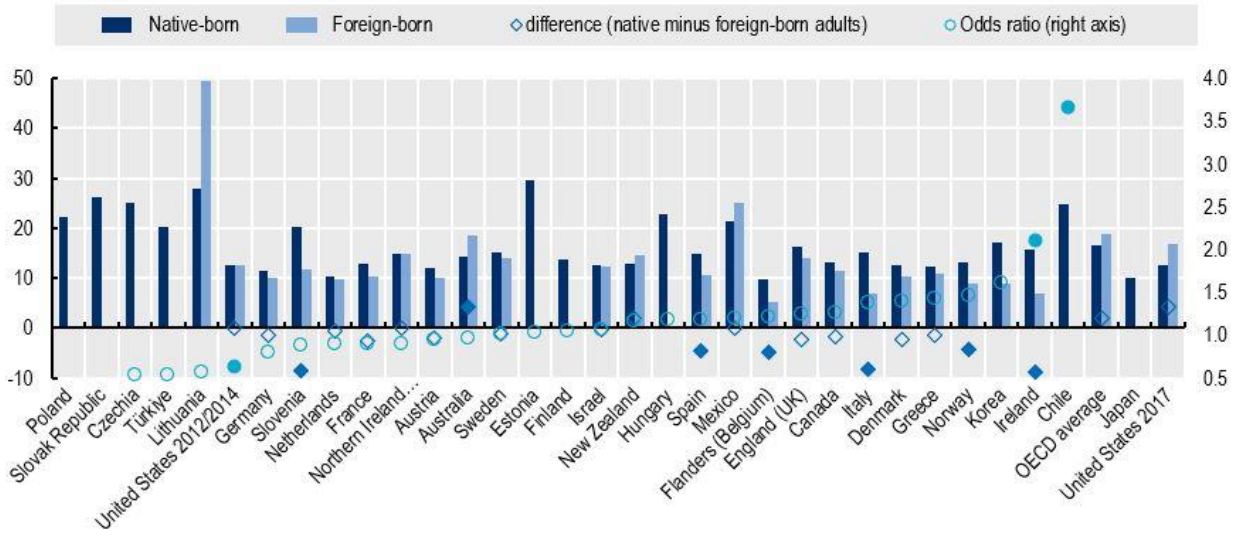
Foreign-born individuals are more likely to work in their host country's high-tech sectors, which may demand relatively less cultural familiarity and linguistic skills that migrants can face greater challenges accumulating, but demand relatively more technical or innovative skills where they can have comparative advantages. This is the case in countries with high shares of immigrants and that are considered relatively welcoming for immigrants. For example, Fassio and Igna (2022[14]) analyse the career paths of young foreign-born university graduates (3 780) in Sweden after graduation during the period of 2000-14 and find that foreign graduates are more likely than Swedish ones to work in high-tech sectors, both in manufacturing and services, and in expanding industries because of their stronger need for new hires.[1] In this relationship, foreign students from more culturally distant locations are more likely to work in high-tech or in expanding sectors (Fassio and Igna, 2022[14]). Similarly in the United States, Chiswick and Taengnoi (2007[15]) find that high-skilled immigrants whose native language is culturally distant from English have a greater propensity to be employed in occupations in which communication skills are less important, such as computer scientists and engineers; similar results are also found in Australia (Crown, Faggian and Corcoran, 2020[16]).

4.1.3. Job quality by migrant backgrounds

For countries with available data, foreign-born young adults are less likely to earn high wages than native-born young adults. Looking at top-quartile wage earners, in Slovenia, Spain, Flanders, Italy, Norway and Ireland, foreign-born young adults are significantly less likely to earn in the top-quartile of earners than their native-born counterparts (Figure 4.6). When controlling for education, skills, gender and parental education, in Ireland, native-born young adults are 2.1 times more likely to earn high wages compared to foreign-born peers. This is the opposite however in the US 2012/14 where foreign-born young adults are less likely to earn high wages (odds ratio 0.6). In a regression analysis of wage penalties controlling for education level, SES, gender, age and other variables, foreign-born individuals earn 1.5% less in reference to native-born individuals (a result of pooled OECD data using PIAAC).

Figure 4.6. Foreign-born young adults are less likely to earn high wages, compared to similarly qualified and educated native-born young adults

Percentage of young adults (16-34) with wage at top quartile and the likelihood of native born to earn top-quartile wage in reference to foreign born

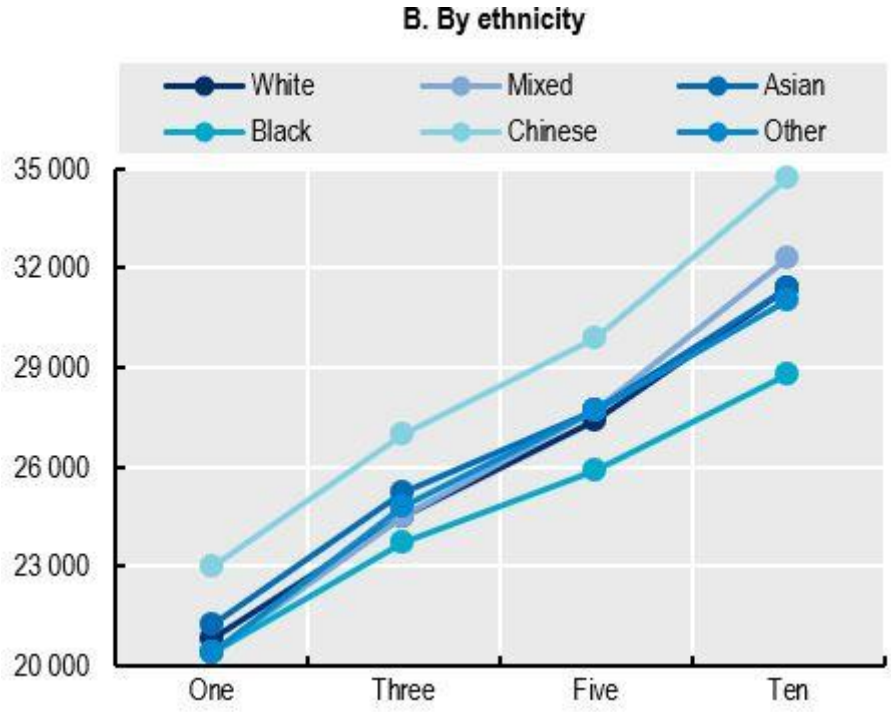


Note: Differences are the unadjusted differences between the two percentages for each contrast category. The odds ratios take into account the effect of education and literacy score in addition to gender and parental education. Statistically significant (p<0.1) differences and odds ratios are presented in a filled marker.
Source: OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) (2012, 2015, 2018).

Turning to ethnicity, analysis of the UK Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) dataset which links school-related data with labour market data, earning gaps increase over time between university graduates from different ethnic backgrounds. Drawing on LEO 2018-19 data, researchers find that while non-White groups tend to cluster around earnings results similar to White graduates, two groups are outliers: young people of Chinese origin who demonstrate the highest average earnings, and Black graduates whose earnings are the lowest. An initial 13% gap between Black graduates and Chinese graduates after one year of graduation increases to 20% ten years after graduation (Figure 4.7). A UK study using LEO also found that, after controlling for prior education attainment and a host of other background characteristics including region dummies, university, subject choice, socio-economic background, language, school-type, attainment through national school age testing and other various demographic characteristics, graduate men from all ethnic minority groups (2002-07 cohort) have lower earnings than male white British graduates (Dearden, Britton and Waltmann, 2021[17]).

Figure 4.7. Earning gap between different ethnic groups increases over time, UK

Median earnings of higher education graduates, 2018/19 in GBP, UK



Source: Graduate outcomes (LEO): outcomes in 2018 to 2019, DfE, in (Hubble, Bolton and Lewis, 2021[8]).

Looking at other aspects of job quality, using PIAAC and controlling for parental education, gender, skills and education, native-born young adults are more likely to have indefinite work contracts than foreign-born peers, in the Netherlands (odds ratio 2.2), Slovenia (2.5) and Spain (1.8). However, in Israel the opposite is the case (0.5). Among four countries with significant results, native-born young adults are less likely to work full time (30 hours and more a week) than foreign born in Chile/Estonia (odds ratio 0.2) and Israel (0.6) while Sweden was the opposite (1.6). The United States show different results by the year of survey: 2012/2014 (0.7) and 2017 (1.6).

PIAAC data also allow for analysis of whether young adults are working at levels in the labour market aligned with their qualifications. While there are multiple factors regarding overqualification[2] and these vary across countries, in most countries with a sizeable immigrant population country of birth is often a factor behind overqualification. Among seven countries in PIAAC that have a statistically significant result, native-born young people have lower odds of having qualification mismatch than foreign-born young people in: Austria (odds ratio 0.5), Denmark (0.4), Finland (0.5), France (0.4), Norway (0.7), Sweden (0.4). Only in Czechia (3.0) are native-born are more likely to have qualification mismatch than their foreign-born peers. In Norway and Sweden, the share of overqualified workers is at least three times higher among foreign-born adults as among the native-born population (OECD, 2022[18]).

In terms of ethnicity, about 40% of Black African people and 39% of people from the Bangladeshi ethnic group in the UK are overqualified for their roles in the workplace, compared with 25% of White workers (Hubble, Bolton and Lewis, 2021[8]). Other studies in Sweden also confirm that over-qualification is associated with ethnic minorities and 'fields at risk' such as humanities, law and social work. Unsurprisingly, this also decreases the chances of upward mobility in the labour market (Nordlund, 2018[19]). Such over-qualification compared to native peers has been related to patterns of discrimination. As mentioned above, experimental correspondence studies in several countries reveal the existence of discrimination in

application processes due to the applicant's nationality, place of birth or ethnicity; (Alan and Ertac, 2018[20]; Bursell and Bygren, 2023[5]; Drydakis, 2017[2]; Jeon, 2019[3]).

Six out of the OECD countries which participated in PIAAC have a statistically significant result for the likelihood of young people being satisfied with their job by migrant status, controlling for gender, parent education, skills and education. Native-born young people have higher odds of being satisfied than foreign-born young people in Austria (odds of 1.7), Denmark (1.5), Ireland (1.5), Italy (2.7), the Netherlands (2.2). The United States were an exception, but the results were mixed: 0.5 (in 2012/14, statistically significant) and 1.2 (in 2017, not significant).

On average, foreign-born young people are 1.3 times more likely than native-born peers to be in NEET when controlling for education, skills, and other factors. The level of education plays an important role here: while among low-educated, foreign-born young adults tend to be less employed than similarly educated native-born counterparts and more concentrated in low-paying sectors, high-educated ones tend to be employed relatively more than native-born counterparts with the same level of education. Patterns of over-qualification are apparent linked to migrant backgrounds even after controlling for skills and educational levels. Foreign-born students are also less likely than native-born peers to earn high salaries. The evidence speaks to foreign-born young people often facing additional barriers in converting the human capital into better employment. However, the character of disadvantage encountered often varies by the migrant or ethnic background of the young person.

4.2. Teenage career readiness by migrant background

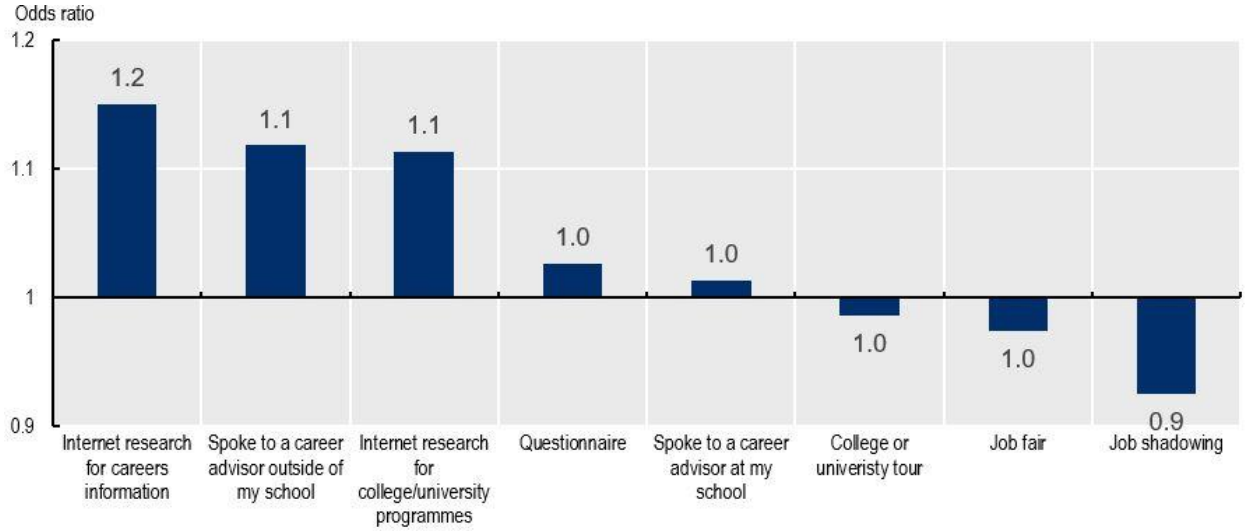
Reviewing PISA data, foreign-born students tend to be more uncertain about their future careers than similarly performing native-born students in several OECD countries. When describing an occupational expectation, they are more likely to expect to work in high skilled careers than their similarly performing counterparts. Although there is no clear pattern of career misalignment by migrant background, native-born students are in many countries more likely than similarly performing foreign-born students to expect to work in a high-skilled occupation and not expect to complete a tertiary education. Career concentration is higher among foreign-born students, based on combined data from 31 OECD countries. Native-born students tend to participate more in each of the career development activities (CDA) for which data are available in PISA than foreign-born students – the gap is particularly large for internships.

4.2.1. Exploration of potential futures in work

In terms of the participation in career development activities which enable students to explore potential futures in work. foreign-born students tend to participate more in each research-oriented exploring activities (PISA 2018) than native-born students. For example, foreign-born students are 1.2 times more likely than native-born students to have researched the Internet for careers information. However like girls in comparison to boys, they are less likely than native-born students to participate in job shadowing/worksite visits or job fairs (Figure 4.8), activities that bring them into direct contact with people in work and which have been seen in longitudinal analysis to be particularly associated with better long-term employment outcomes (Covacevich et al., 2021[21]). Compared to SES and gender, the role of migrant status in shaping the engagement of young people in career development activities is more limited, but still statistically significant.

Figure 4.8. Foreign-born students are more likely to participate in research-oriented career exploring activities but less likely to participate in activities that connect them directly with people in work

Odds ratio of foreign-born students in reference to native-born students, OECD average



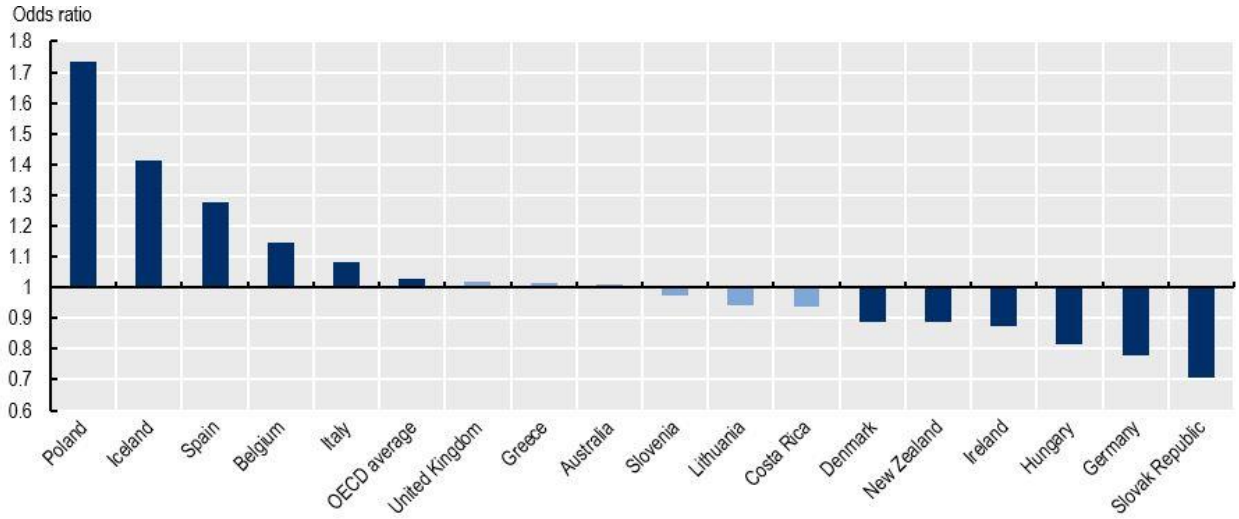
Note: Odds ratios are adjusted for gender, SES, reading performance and VET orientation. All results are statistically significant (p value<0.1) (see Box 1.1 about the significance level).
Source: PISA 2018 (OECD, 2019[1]).

4.2.2. Experiencing potential futures in work

Multiple longitudinal analyses indicate that students who gain experience of the working world while still in education can expect to gain enhanced employment outcomes in their mid-twenties (Covacevich et al., 2021[21]). On average across the OECD, there is little difference in the internship experience, however the country variation is significant. With controls in place, including programme orientation (general or vocational education and training), foreign-born students have higher odds of doing an internship in Poland (1.7 times), Iceland (1.4), Spain (1.3) and Belgium (1.2) than native-born students. However, they are less likely than native-born students to do so in Denmark/New Zealand (0.89), Ireland (0.87), Hungary (0.82), Germany (0.78), Slovak Republic (0.71) – countries that have a relatively strong vocational education and training system.

Figure 4.9. Country variation is significant in the probability of foreign-born students to do an internship compared to native-born students

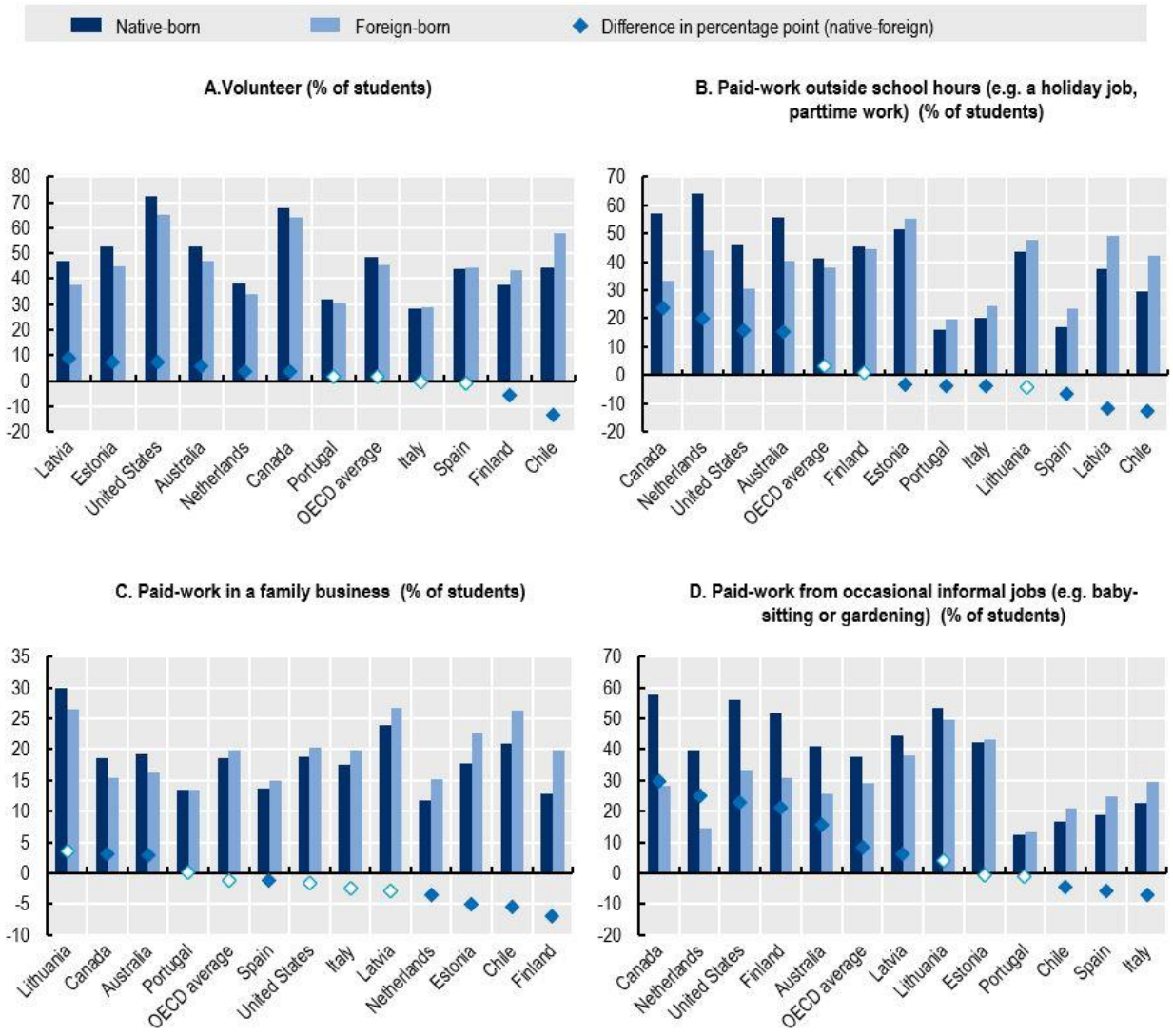
Odds ratio of foreign-born students doing an internship in reference to native-born students, by country



Note: Statistically significant results are presented in a darker colour. Odds ratios are adjusted for gender, SES, reading performance and VET orientation (see Box 1.1 about the significance level).
Source: PISA 2018 (OECD, 2019[1]).

Among countries that have available data, more native-born students tend to have greater volunteer experience and paid-work from occasional informal jobs than foreign-born students. For paid work outside school hours and in a family business, there is no clear pattern across countries. In Canada, the Netherlands, the US and Australia, native-born students experience both more formal paid work outside school hours and from occasional informal jobs significantly more than foreign-born students (ranging from 15 to 30 percentage point difference) (Figure 4.10). Elsewhere however, participation rates are more equal or foreign-born youth are more likely to engage in such workplace experiences.

Figure 4.10. While evidence is mixed in terms of experiencing activities by migrant status, in some countries native-born students do career experiencing activities significantly more than foreign-born students



Note: Statistically significant results are presented in a darker colour (see Box 1.1 about the significance level).
Source: PISA 2018 (OECD, 2019[1]).

4.2.3. Thinking about their future careers

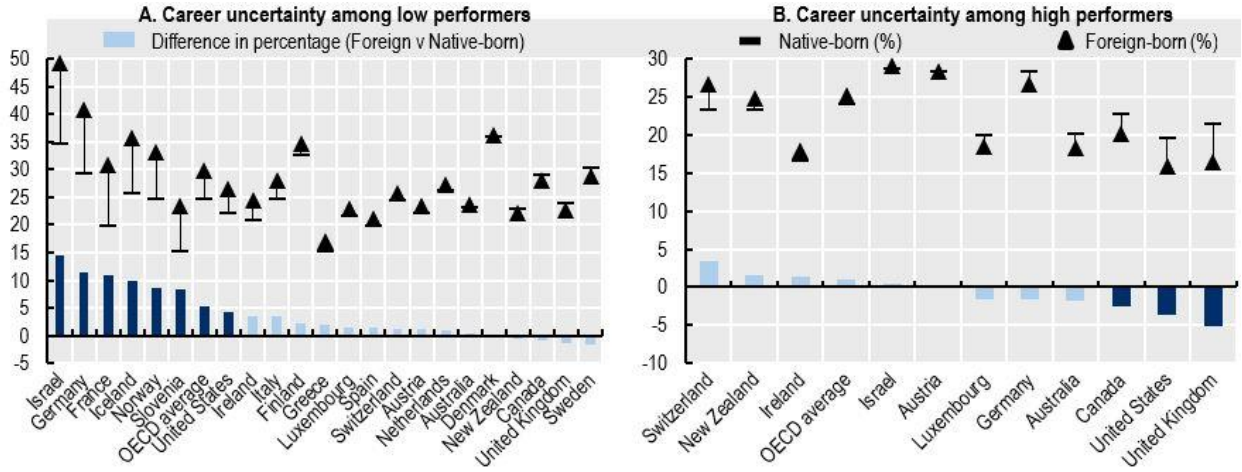
Career uncertainty by migrant background

Data relating to levels of career certainty – a factor associated with better employment outcomes in multiple national longitudinal studies (Covacevich et al., 2021[21]) - by migrant status is mixed. In several countries, among low academic performers, foreign-born students are more likely to be uncertain about their future job than native-born students. This is the case for seven countries that have a statistically significant difference between these two groups, including Israel (15 percentage points), Germany (11), France (11), Iceland (10), Norway (9), Slovenia (8) and the United States (4), after controlling for gender, SES, reading score and education pathway (general v. VET orientation). In other countries with a relatively high numbers of immigrant students including Australia, Canada, Austria, United Kingdom and Netherlands (OECD,

2019[1]), the difference was not statistically significant. Among high performers, Canada, the UK and the US show a slightly higher share of native-born students who are uncertain about their future job, compared to their foreign-born peers (Figure 4.11). When controlling for VET and other characteristics, native-born students are less likely than foreign-born students to be uncertain about their future career in more countries (Figure 4.12)

Figure 4.11. In several countries, more foreign-born students are uncertain about their future kind of job at around age 30 compared to native-born students

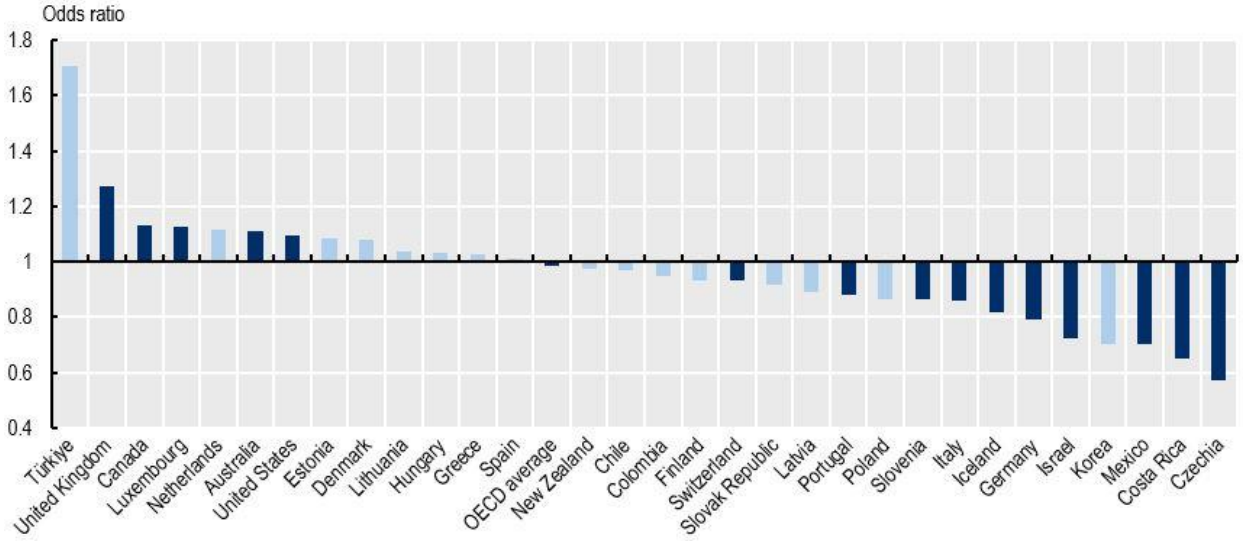
Percentage of students in PISA 2018 who have no clear idea about their future job, by migrant backgrounds



Note: Statistically significant (p<0.1) differences (see Box 1.1 about the significance level) are presented in darker colour. High performers refer to those who have attained at least minimum proficiency (Level 2) in the three core PISA subjects and are high performers (Level 4) in at least one subject.
Source: PISA 2018 (OECD, 2019[1]).

Figure 4.12. When controlling for VET and other characteristics, in more countries native-born students are less likely than foreign-born students to be uncertain about their future career

Probability of native-born students being uncertain about their occupational expectations in reference to foreign-born students

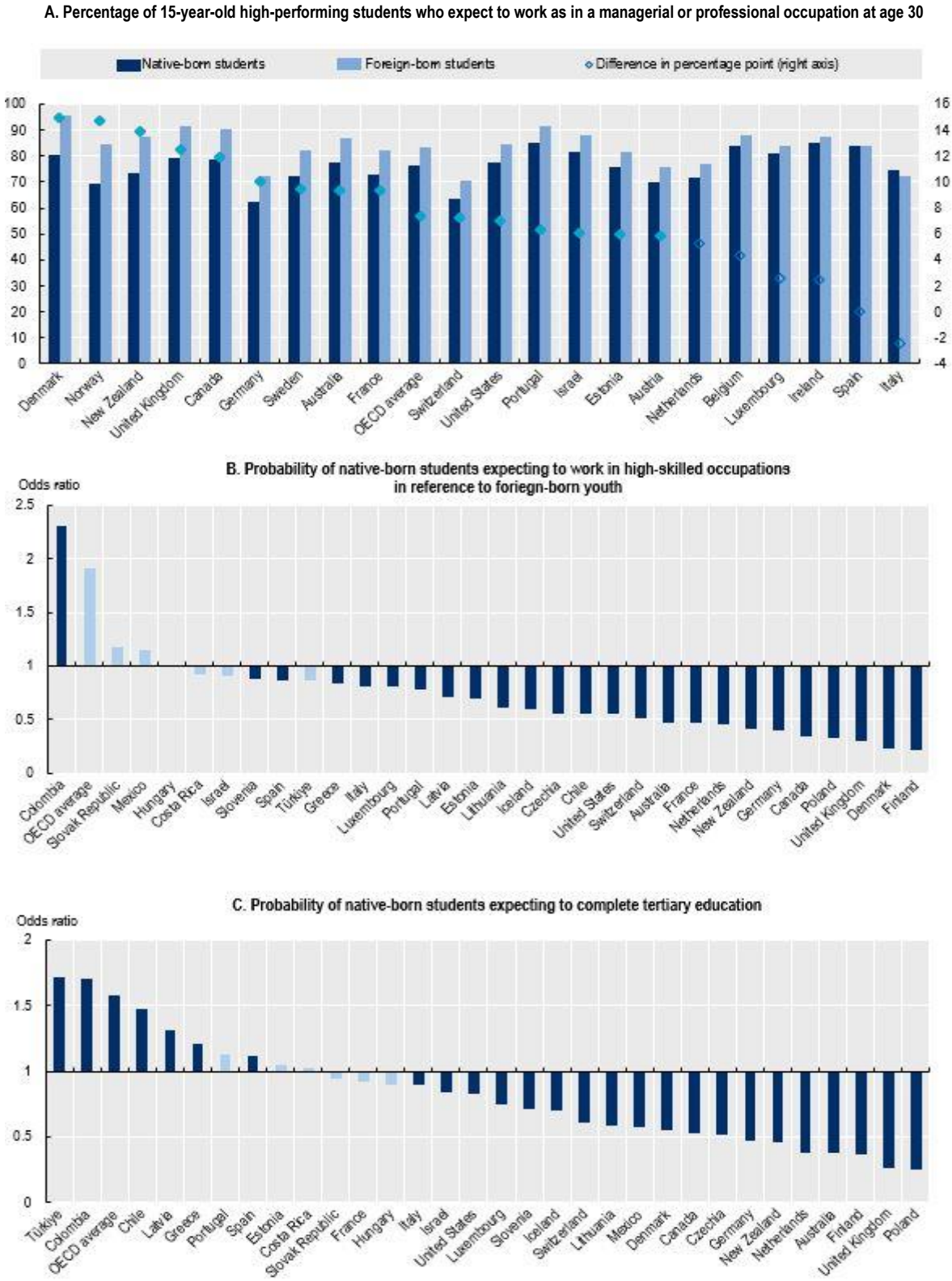


Note: Countries with a statistically significant result (at p-value < 0.1) are in dark colour (see Box 1.1 about the significance level). Odds ratios are adjusted for gender, SES, reading score, school type and VET orientation.
Source: PISA 2018 (OECD, 2019[1]).

Career ambition by migrant background

In many countries, in spite of the fact that their older peers tend to be less likely to work in the highest paying employment, foreign-born students are significantly more ambitious about their future job compared to native-born students. Such ambition is associated in many national longitudinal datasets with better ultimate employment outcomes (Covacevich et al., 2021[21]). This holds the same for both high and low-performing students. For example, among high-performing students, on average across OECD countries, foreign-born students are more than 7 percentage points more likely than native-born peers to expect to work as a manager or professional (ISCO major categories 1 and 2). In Denmark and Norway, high-performing foreign-born students are about 15 pp more likely to express such high occupational ambitions than their native-born counterparts. Other countries with a high level of immigrant students also have more than the OECD average in the difference: New Zealand (14 pp), the UK (13), Canada (12), Germany (10), Sweden (9), Australia (9) and France (9) (Figure 4.13, Panel A). While the career plans of young people in general are strongly focused on managerial and professional occupations, this is especially pronounced in case of foreign-born students with 80% or more of students (who express an occupational expectation) anticipating working in such employment. Even after controlling for SES, gender, type of school, programme orientation (general v. vocational education) and reading scores, native-born students are less likely to expect to work in high-skilled occupations in most OECD countries (Figure 4.13, Panel B). Likewise, in a greater number of countries, foreign-born students are more likely to expect to complete tertiary education (Figure 4.13, Panel C). Because of their high levels of interest in employment in ISCO 1 and 2 occupations and strong desire to attend tertiary education, students from migrant backgrounds tend to be less likely to be misaligned in their educational and employment plans than native-born peers.

Figure 4.13. Foreign-born students are more likely to be ambitious about their future careers



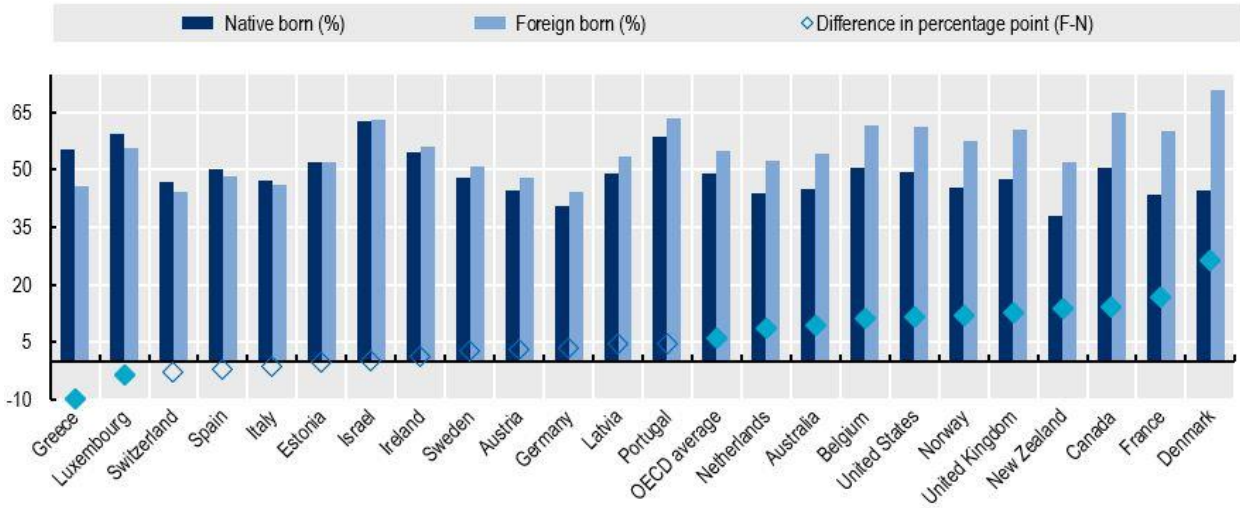
Note: Odds ratios are adjusted for gender, SES, reading score, school type and VET orientation. Statically significant results are in filled markers or in darker colour (see Box 1.1 about the significance level).
Source: PISA 2018 (OECD, 2019[1]).

Career concentration by migrant background

Teenage career concentration – which in the small number of relevant longitudinal studies available tends to be associated with worse than expected employment outcomes (Covacevich et al., 2021[21]) - is usually higher among foreign-born students compared to native-born students. In PISA 2018, among high-performing students, 55% of foreign-born students and 49% of native-born students (expressing an occupational expectation) from 24 OECD countries on average expect to work in one of ten most popular occupations in their country for their gender by the age of 30 (among low-performing students, 53% vs 49%). In Denmark, France and Canada, high-performing foreign-born students are 26, 17 and 14 pp, respectively, more likely than similarly performing native-born students to expect to work in a popular occupation (Figure 4.14).

Figure 4.14. Foreign-born students are more likely to expect to work in popular jobs than native-born students with similar academic performance

Percentage of high performers expecting to work in the 10 most popular occupations in their country



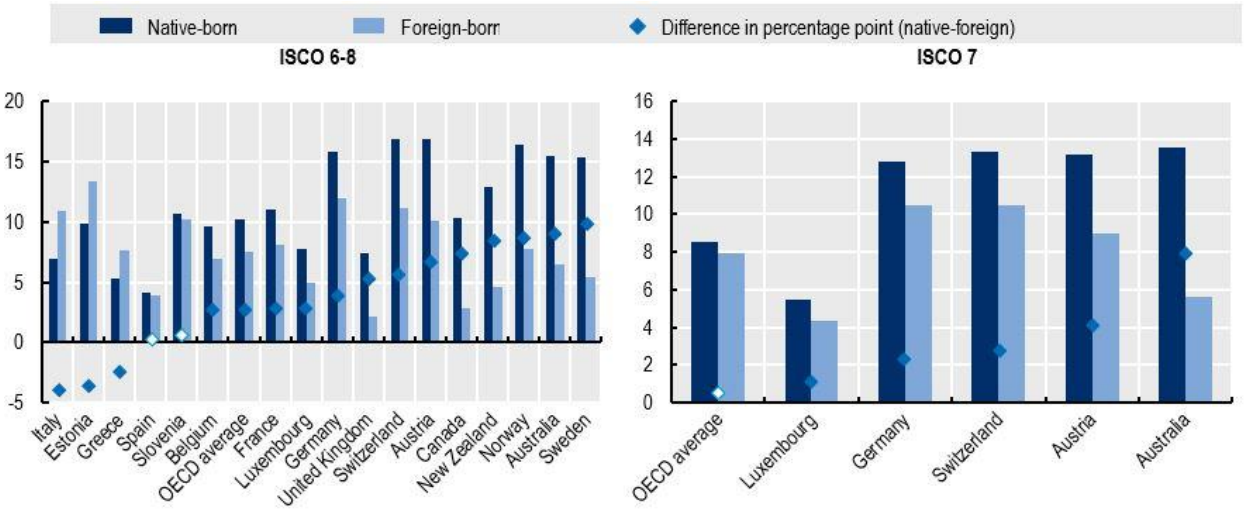
Source: PISA 2018 (OECD, 2019[1]).

Foreign-born students are much less likely than native-born peers to expect to work in skilled and semi-skilled occupations, typically entered through vocational education and training programmes, such as skilled agricultural and fishery workers (ISCO major category 6), craft and related trades workers (ISCO major category 7), or plant and machine operators and assemblers (ISCO major category 8). Across OECD countries that have available data, native-born students are 3 percentage points (pp) more likely than foreign-born students to expect to work in these professions. Sweden shows almost 10 pp difference, followed by Australia, Norway (both 9 pp), New Zealand and Canada (both 8 pp).

Looking at only Craft and related trades (ISCO major category 7), in all five countries with available data, more native-born students expect to work in these occupations than foreign-born peers. These five countries have a relatively high share of first-generation students (who are foreign-born and have foreign-born parents) from 6.5% (Germany) to 24.5% (Luxembourg). In all other OECD countries, there were too few observations to provide reliable estimates (i.e., there were fewer than 30 students or fewer than 5 schools with valid data). This means that the level of interest among foreign-born students in these trades may be too low to allow for meaningful analysis, although this may be different when including students with foreign-born parents.

Figure 4.15. Foreign-born students tend to be less interested in skilled trades

Percentage of 15-year-old students who expect to work in skilled trades (ISCO 6, 7 and 8)



Note: ISCO 6 refer to skilled agricultural and fishery workers, ISCO 7 refer to craft and related trades workers, and ISCO 8 refer to plant and machine operators and assemblers.
Source: Statically significant results are in filled markers or in darker colour (see Box 1.1 about the significance level).

4.3. How career guidance can address inequalities by migrant background and ethnicity

While the experiences of different minority groups vary considerably, analysis of correspondence tests shows systematic evidence of discrimination against people from migrant backgrounds and ethnic minorities. PIAAC data also show that patterns of employment in the early labour market are linked to the migrant status of young adults. As with the socio-economic background and gender of individuals, young people from migrant backgrounds can be seen to face additional barriers in turning their academic achievements into labour market successes. Notably, young adults from migrant backgrounds are:

- more likely to be not in education, employment, or training (NEET);
- more concentrated in elementary and service professions, notably if low or mid-educated; and,
- less likely to earn high wages and to be overqualified for their job.

PIAAC does not include data on the ethnicity of respondents. However, the chapter also draws on a number of longitudinal studies to illustrate the impact that ethnicity can be seen to have on the long-term employment prospects of young adults. Controlling for academic achievement and a range of other social and demographic characteristics, variations in outcomes are also identified with many, but not all ethnic groups being seen to experience significantly worse outcomes than native populations.

It is important not to collapse the experience of new migrants and settled minority ethnic communities. Indeed, within both migrant and settled minority ethnic communities there are substantial differences in culture, religion, employment, skill level and access to financial, social and cultural capital which inevitably impact on young people's understanding of careers and their initial transitions to the labour market. Such differences are both individual, with more and less advantaged people in all communities, but also patterned by ethnic and migrant groups (Catney, 2015[22]; Flores et al., 2006[23]). Furthermore there is also considerable evidence of intersectionality with the other issues already discussed in this paper, socio-economic disadvantage, gender and sexuality, combining with ethnicity and migrant status to further shape

career outcomes (Arifeen and Syed, 2020[24]; London Development Agency, 2008[25]; Semu, 2020[26]). Despite this, and as the data already presented in this chapter shows, there are a range of structural barriers that shape career outcomes that are associated with being outside of the native-born ethnic majority.

Analysis of PISA 2018 data highlights several ways in which migrant status relates to engagement in career guidance. Looking at data across a range of OECD countries shows that:

- while migrant students on average undertake greater internet research than native students, they are less likely to participate in more important career exploration activities such as job shadowing/workplace visits and job fairs;
- the extent of first-hand experiences of the workplace (through internships, volunteering or part-time working) varies considerably by country;
- migrant students are on average more ambitious than native-born peers, being typically more likely to expect to work as managers or professionals and to attend tertiary education;
- the occupational plans of migrant students are commonly more concentrated than those of native-born peers; and,
- migrant students are much less likely to plan on entering skilled trades and related professions that are typically accessed through programmes of vocational education and training.

Consequently, effective career guidance systems will seek to broaden the career plans of young people from migrant backgrounds, support the development of social capital through guidance activities that allow students to engage with people in relevant work directly and adapt to the specific and sometimes very different needs of migrant and ethnic groups. As in previous chapters, examples of practice identified have been organised under four main categories: *providing more intensive support; developing professional capacity and resources; building social capital; and developing critical understanding.*

Societies turn to career guidance systems to help students to relate labour market opportunities to their interests and abilities. In the case of many students from ethnic minorities and from migrant backgrounds, evidence exists of additional barriers hindering the transformation of accumulated human capital into successful employment outcomes in comparison to young people from dominant ethnic groups and host country communities (Brown, Lauder and Cheung, 2020[9]; Gaddis, 2015[27]; Punch, 2015[28]; van Zenderen and Lamy, 2011[29]; Zwysen and Longhi, 2018[30]). In the case of migrant students, it is often likely to be the case that family and other close contacts will have a more partial understanding of the labour market, than those from native-born backgrounds. As well as lower levels of familiarity with education and training systems, the parents of young migrants may be disadvantaged by lack of fluency in the language of the host country. Discussions of the role of career guidance with migrants have emphasised its capacity to address these kinds of informational and cultural asymmetries. However, evidence of systemic discrimination within the labour markets has driven strong interest in the means by which guidance systems can help young people objectivise and make sense of additional challenges encountered, focusing on the need to build critical consciousness and addressing the structural inequalities that exist within society (Bimrose and McNair, 2011[31]; Cadenas et al., 2020[32]; Diemer, 2009[33]; Sultana, 2022[34]; Vehviläinen and Souto, 2022[35]).

Similar arguments are also made about career guidance with ethnic minorities, again highlighting the twin issues of ameliorating existing social disadvantage and actively challenging systemic issues (Souto and Sotkasiira, 2022[36]). This discussion suggests that once again while more career guidance is generally a good thing, the nature of this career guidance also matters, both in terms of its effectiveness and in terms of the kinds of policy aims that it is capable of serving. The remainder of this chapter will focus on examples of career guidance practice which are designed to address the experiences of young people from migrant and minority ethnicity backgrounds.

4.3.1. Providing more intense support

The heterogeneous nature of migrant experiences and young people from minority ethnic backgrounds means that it is often important to provide more intensive and personalised forms of support than are generally available.

In **Ireland**, the formula within the **Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools** (DEIS) programme discussed in Chapter two of this which determines the level of funding which underpins career guidance in schools is primarily determined by a formula assessing the relative affluence of an area, but which also takes account of the numbers of students from Traveller and Roma backgrounds and of refugees within the school population (OECD[37]). The application of the formula results in considerably greater resources being made available to schools serving such students.

An ***existential career guidance*** intervention has been trialled in **Denmark** to support refugees and migrants aged 15-24 (Petersen et al., 2022[38]). The intervention was delivered as ten 2½-hour sessions, once a week, for 10 weeks alongside a language development programme. Through this career counselling, participants were encouraged to reflect on their life goals, their current biography, their values and interests and to make plans for their future. The approach was designed to support young migrants and refugees to adapt to a new life in Denmark and deal with feelings of alienation, identity confusion and loss of meaning. An evaluation of the intervention suggests that it supports the participants to develop a (stronger) sense of belonging and being understood and respected. It also supports participants to improve their language skills and articulate, and begin processes of exploration of, career ambitions for their lives in Denmark.

A similar approach was used in **Italy** where a seven-week programme called the ***career guidance pathway*** was offered to unaccompanied young migrants (Magnano and Zammitti, 2019[39]). Through a series of weekly two-to-three-and-a-half hour sessions the young migrants were engaged in a mix of one-to-one counselling and small group work. The intervention encouraged them to reflect on their culture and history and to consider how their strengths and personal resources might be redeployed within the context of the Italian labour market. The evaluation showed that the intervention resulted in increased knowledge of the Italian labour market, development of professional interests, and greater understanding of the concept of decent work. They also supported young people to make transitions into the workplace, via accessing apprenticeships and other programmes.

4.3.2. Developing professional capacity and providing dedicated resources

Many migrants experience difficulty in understanding the opportunity structure of their new country. Career information has an important role to play in this, but it can be challenging to access for reasons of language, culture or technology. Addressing this and ensuring that migrants can access high quality information about the local labour market is therefore an important aspect of supporting migrant youth.

In some countries, migrants and refugees are able to access a wide range of career guidance services (Jeon, 2019[3]). For example, in **Germany**, migrants have access to all career guidance provisions, which are generally well developed (Jenschke, Schober and Langner, 2014[40]). This includes access to career guidance in compulsory school and in transitional programmes. This often includes company visits, internships, vocational workshops and tailored occupational information. Germany also offers targeted services such as the ***Youth Migration Services*** (Jugendmigrationsdienste) which support the integration of young migrants into education, employment and society. However, this kind of comprehensive career guidance support is not always the case.

In **Sweden**, ***multi-lingual, online career guides*** on different occupations help refugees assess their own skills and qualifications against different occupations (OECD, 2016[41]). The guides were developed together with employers' organisations, and counsellors from public employment services can assist refugees in using the guides. Such resources are also of relevance to migrant parents and their children

with weak Swedish and in part serve to broaden the basis for career thinking. Sweden also uses World Skills Sweden as a tool to increase attractiveness of VET, including informing migrants (and their parents) about the value of VET. While such provision was designed in light of the needs of adults seeking to adapt to a new country and labour market, it also provides resources of use of school-age students and their family members.

In the same fashion, provincial and district commissions in **Türkiye** have been established to ***increase understanding of VET*** amongst Syrian migrants (Jeon, 2019[3]). These commissions carry out activities to increase the awareness of Syrian students and their parents of VET and Vocational Education Centres via brochures and posters prepared by the Ministry of National Education in addition to television and radio programmes. The activities also include visits to refugee camps or refugee families and assistance with skills assessments and preparatory education, including language training.

4.3.3. Building social capital with families and the world of work

Building career relevant social capital is one of the key challenges for young people who are outside of the native-born ethnic majority. So, a wide variety of career guidance interventions focus on how young people can make the most of the social capital they do have, whilst also building new social capital.

Working with families

Family is an important part of all young people's career building. For those from migrant and minority ethnic communities, family is often particularly important. PISA 2018 data show for example that while on average 20% of foreign-born students within OECD countries agree that the expectations of their parents/guardians are 'very important' in their career planning, this applies to only 13% of their native-born peers. Career practitioners have developed approaches to working with families to better support students. In **New Zealand**, schools are strongly encouraged to work with the families and community organisations of Māori students, helping students to explore ways in which they can develop career ambitions with the support of these important social networks (Ministry of Education, 2009[42]; New Zealand Government, 2021[43])

In the **UK,** a project developed a ***Muslim girls careers education pack*** to address a series of issues that were being reported by Muslim girls (Barket and Irving, 2005[44]). These included the fact that existing career education was often based on the perspectives of the ethnic majority and failed to recognise the importance of faith and community to career decision making. The project involved Muslim girls and their families and communities to develop a new careers education pack. A key element of this was the development of a 'Careers guide for Muslim parents and family'. An evaluation of the programme found that Muslim girls responded very positively and found the opportunity to talk openly about issues in their faith, family and community were very helpful in their career development.

In the **USA**, ***Latino Family Night*** is an intervention designed to engage parents of Latino students with the school and in providing educational and career support to their children (Gonzalez et al., 2013[45]). The Latino Family Night is promoted with bilingual written invitations and assurance of translation services at the event, individual phone calls from school counsellors or teachers to parents encouraging their attendance, and follow-up encouragement, ideally from someone within the Latino community. At the event, parents have the opportunity to learn about educational and labour market opportunities and to discuss the role that they can play in supporting their children to achieve a positive outcome. The event can also be used to facilitate ongoing partnership between schools and families to support the progression of young people.

Building bonding social capital

Young people from migrant and minority ethnic backgrounds often have a strong attachment to the communities from which they come. The existence of this strong bonding social capital offers students a

resource that can be harnessed for their career building. A range of career guidance interventions seek to leverage the community to support the career development of the young people who they are working with.

Research in the **USA** argues that career guidance should be informed by a ***Community Cultural Wealth*** approach (Purgason, Honer and Gaul, 2020[46]). Community Cultural Wealth focuses on the strengths that students bring into the classroom, particularly highlighting the aspirational, familial, linguistic, navigational, resistant, and social capital that young people from migrant and minority ethnic backgrounds can draw from their community. This might include involving families in discussions about career decision making, recognising the career value of second languages that the student speaks, helping students to connect to, and draw on, the support of their own community, for example helping them to access community mentors and finding ways to support students to resist racist or anti-migrant policies and practices. The active decision to construct the student's background as a source of strength and resource, rather than as a deficit is a key decision. This places responsibility on guidance counsellors to build their understanding of students' culture and to take care to discuss and represent it positively.

Also in the **USA,** the ***Black Achievers programme*** identifies Black students with the capability to attend tertiary education and provides them with a programme of support which includes both academic and career development activities (Moore-Thomas and Day-Vines, 2010[47]). At the heart of this is a mentoring relationship with a successful Black person from the world of work, who provides them with a role model and personalised support over an extended period. Guidance counsellors are encouraged to recognise the value of these kind of community-based programmes and engage students with them. A small number of other studies have explored mentoring relationships wherein the mentor and mentee share an identity linked to migrant background or ethnicity and found a basis for additional benefits accruing to the mentee involved (Ensher and Murphy, 1997[48]; Kricorian et al., 2020[49]), potentially due to the greater credibility with which the mentor is viewed (Linnehan, 2004[50]).

In the **UK,** the ***Afghanistan and Central Asian Association (ACAA)*** is an association established by community members to help migrants to access employment, career development and social justice (Frigerio and Nasimi, 2019[51]). Alongside career and employment support, the association also helps new migrants to access language support, engage with the education system, deal with employment issues and access legal support. The ACAA provides advice and support to students primarily through a supplemental school that operates alongside secondary education.

Developing bringing social capital

Other interventions support young people to make contacts beyond their immediate community by building solidarity and supporting integration. Such projects are seeking to expand young people's social capital beyond their immediate context and community and help them to access some of the social capital that is available to native born and majority ethic students.

The ***LEAP-Macquarie Mentoring programme*** in **Australia** provides a good example of the development of bridging social capital to aid the career development of young migrants (Singh and Tregale, 2015[52]). The programme links high school students from refugee backgrounds with university students who serve as their mentors. The programme includes a university campus visit and on-campus activities for mentees' parents and/or caregivers, with the mentoring relationship lasting 11 weeks. The programme's evaluation found benefits for both mentors and mentees. For mentees, it increased their motivation and their interest in higher education and helped them to make a smoother personal, social, and academic transition from high school to university. It also provided them with more clarity about their future plans. For mentors, it provided insights into the experience of migrants, increased their academic skills and supported them to develop more ideas about their future.

The ***Godparents for Unaccompanied Refugee Minors programme*** in **Austria** assigns an Austrian volunteer, or volunteer family, to unaccompanied refugee minors (Raithelhuber, 2021[53]). The role of these 'godparents' is to support young migrants to orientate themselves to Austrian society and to provide them

with solidarity, fellowship and support. The mentoring role is informal and typically involves meeting together, often over dinner, a couple of times a week. The mentors provide the mentees with help and advice of the kind that might be usually provided by family members. An evaluation found that this relationship helped young people to build social contacts, enhance their communication skills, connect to the education system and other institutions and access emotional and psychosocial support that helped them to make a successful transition to adulthood.

Other programmes are designed to broaden the social capital of ethnic minority students by bringing them into contact with adults well positioned to provide advice and insights of value to transitions. In **Australia** is the ***Mimili-UniSA Partnership*** which is focused on giving indigenous students an extended experience of higher education (Thomas et al., 2014[54]). In the **United Kingdom**, some schools, such as Addey Stanhope School in London, mark Black History Month by inviting ***guest speakers*** from ethnic minorities to speak with students about their career paths (OECD, 2022[55]).

4.3.4. Developing critical understanding of personal relationships to the labour market

Young people from migrant and minority ethnic backgrounds are often very aware of the challenges that they may face in attempting to succeed in society. Such awareness can undermine the self-efficacy of students. Career guidance is designed to foster agency and to help young people not to become fatalistic in the face of such challenges (Gushue et al., 2006[56]). A critical approach can help young people to better understand the challenges that they face and strategies to deal with these challenges, including by contesting them.

Critical consciousness

Over recent years, a series of longitudinal studies have examined relationships between young people of colour's awareness of societal inequalities, a sense of efficacy to work against such forces and better ultimate individual employment outcomes (Herberle, Rapa and Farago, 2020[57]). Building on initial analysis of the US National Educational Longitudinal Survey of 1988 by Diemer (2009[58]) drawing on the work of Brazilian theorist Paulo Freire and US psychologist David Blustein, such studies explore the critical consciousness of students and provide new means of addressing inequalities faced by youth facing additional barriers to succeed in working life. While the approach has been applied to all marginalised youth, the focus of research has been particularly on students from minority ethnic groups. In the longitudinal analyses of Diemer (2009[33]), US students of colour who expressed a strong awareness of inequalities and a commitment to address them were found to be more likely to articulate greater occupational ambitions (in terms of occupational prestige) and subsequently more likely to achieve higher levels of occupational attainment (in terms of occupational prestige and earnings) at age 26 than comparable peers (Diemer, 2009[58]). Such critically conscious students are also seen to experience a range of other positive outcomes in teenage career development (such as greater clarity in vocational identity and clearer recognition of the importance of work in adult life (Diemer and Blustein, 2006[59]); education (for example, school engagement (Luginbuhl, McWhirter and Mcwhirter, 2016[60])); as well as within early adulthood, including career-related, civic, social–emotional, and academic outcomes (Mann, Denis and Percy, 2020[61]).

Studies which explore critical consciousness tend to take an intersectional approach focusing on low-income, low-SES students of colour. Studies typically explore the extent to which teenagers from ethnic minority backgrounds express understanding of patterns of inequalities, prejudices and discriminations within society, including the labour market, based on discussions with teachers, relatives and acquaintances and participate in activities designed to challenge inequalities (forms of social capital). A critical teenage understanding of work in the context of social organisation consequently provides a foundation for more informed and ultimately more productive decision-making and accumulation of skills,

experience and qualifications. As Herberle, Rapa and Farago note, the evidence on critical consciousness interventions within guidance remains emergent, with a need for more robust evaluations of their impact (2020[57]).

The **Ethnographies of Work** programme (OECD, 2022[62]) designed by Guttman Community College in New York State (**United States**) provides a model of the ways in which the insights of critical consciousness research can be integrated into provision. The college primarily serves students from ethnic minority and low-income backgrounds. The Ethnographies of Work programme is delivered over two years. It combines academic study on the character of contemporary work, career exploration through direct interactions with people undertaking employment of interest and a work placement designed to build student understanding of occupational culture though ethnographic research. The programme is explicitly designed to develop both the critical awareness of labour market segmentation and operation and the social capital of students whose family-based networks are commonly narrow and limited with regard to the professional occupations sought by students (Mann, Denis and Percy, 2020[61]).

In **Finland, *intersectional and anti-racist*** practitioners have developed a range of strategies that they can use when working with migrant youth to support them to develop a critical understanding of power structures as they develop their careers (Souto and Sotkasiira, 2022[36]). These include challenging normative categories such as 'migrants' and focusing on intersectional identities, attending to racialised hierarchies, advocating for minority rights and shifting the location of guidance into community spaces. Critically these practitioners are also involved in a range of advocacy work, representing the needs and desires of their clients into hierarchical social, education and employment systems where migrant and ethnic minority voices often struggle to be heard.

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Notes

[1] The study controls for several factors that are likely to influence the career of graduates, such as the scientific discipline in which they graduated, the specific university from which they earned their tertiary degree, the level of education (bachelor, master or Ph.D.) and some additional individual factors such as the broad geographical area of origin, age and gender, and family conditions (such as being married or having children) as well as the occupational differentiation within each industrial sector. In order to check that the main results were not driven by foreign graduates employed in occupations for which they were over-qualified, the study restricted its sample to graduates employed as professionals or technicians using the ISCO-08 (SSYK) classification.

[2] Age is another factor that plays a role in overqualification: young people lacking work experience are more likely to accept jobs below their qualification level to enter the labour market. Gender, parental educational attainment, field of study, whether individuals work for the public sector and contract type may also influence the likelihood of being overqualified (OECD, 2022[18])

5. Addressing inequalities through a career development framework

This chapter reviews a career development framework explicitly designed to address inequalities in assisting youth in their career development within primary and secondary education and their transitions to work. The framework has been developed by the Canadian province of New Brunswick in collaboration with the OECD and provides a model for use by practitioners and other stakeholders in addressing the role that inequalities can be expected to play in hindering the development of students through the different stages of their schooling.

5.1. The role of career guidance in addressing social inequalities

This paper explores the extent to which social inequalities impact on the transitions of young people into employment and how they shape participation in career development activities undertaken as secondary school students. It assesses the impact of inequalities by analysis of OECD PIAAC data, exploring the transitions of similarly qualified young people into employment, controlling statistically for other factors that typically shape the success of transitions in order to isolate the impact of socio-economic status, gender and migrant status on employment outcomes. In this analysis, the paper also draws on wider studies, including those that explore variations in outcomes linked to ethnicity, sexuality and gender identity. Within this data review, it is possible to identify a range of negative aspects of early labour market experiences that point towards students sharing specific characteristics facing additional barriers in transforming their accumulated human capital into economic success. Across a range of indicators including NEET rates, labour market segmentation, earnings and other forms of job quality, disadvantage can be identified.

Governments turn to career guidance to support students as they make decisions about their career plans and the investment that they make in education and training to achieve their ambitions. Additionally, educational institutions, to varying degrees across countries, provide students with support to navigate their transitions. Through interventions linked to recruitment skills or understanding of how the labour market operates, students are provided with knowledge and skills designed to enable the successful activation of human capital in the labour market.

However, data from PISA 2018 illustrates strong patterns in the engagement of young people in career development activities. Most strikingly, routinely across OECD countries it is low SES students, who can often expect to leave education early and possess weaker family-based resources linked to transitions, who can expect to engage less in career development by the age of 15 than their high SES peers. Patterns of disadvantage are also apparent in relation to gender and migrant status. Both girls and students from migrant backgrounds for example commonly engage less frequently than boys in development activities with employers and people in work (Covacevich et al., 2021[1]).

Such patterns of engagement in career development activities at age 15 are significant because OECD analysis of longitudinal datasets in 10 countries has revealed strong links between teenage participation in activities where they explore and experience potential futures in work and better employment outcomes at the age of 25. Notable within these career readiness indicators are activities that bring students into direct contact with workplaces, employers and people in work. The analysis also shows that teenage attitudes about their futures in work can also be related to better outcomes. Students who actively engage in processes of career exploration and reflection can be expected to be better placed to turn their human capital into employment that pays more and is more personally satisfying (Covacevich et al., 2021[1]).

The analysis in this paper draws links between patterns of disadvantage in engagement in the adult labour market and within teenage career development provision to identify a range of interventions that can be expected to address the power that social inequalities possess in shaping individual transitions. Such responses cluster around four themes which can be seen, to differing degrees, to be relevant to each of the three aspects of inequality reviewed in this paper:

- Providing more intensive support
- Developing professional capacity and providing dedicated resources
- Building social capital with families and the world of work
- Developing critical understanding of personal relationships to the labour market

Within this paper, examples of current and recent practice from OECD countries are drawn upon to illustrate how inequalities are being addressed in ways that can be expected to reduce the influence of personal characteristics on employment outcomes. In this, it cannot be expected that enhanced guidance systems will remove all barriers preventing equitable, meritocratic entry into labour markets which provide very different rewards for workers. As noted in this paper, exceptionally strong evidence exists of discrimination within recruitment. Moreover, this paper recognises (if it does not explore) that families and institutions have very different access to financial resources that impact on career development. As Ashton and Ashton illustrate by way of example (2022[2]), UK private fee-paying schools have invested heavily in resources linked to the performing arts in recent years, providing substantial advantages to students seeking professions in these fields.

It is clear that guidance systems in nearly all countries can do better in recognising and addressing inequalities within the design and delivery of guidance systems. The interventions discussed in each of the chapters provide numerous examples of practice that can be employed by countries, but so far the paper has not tried to provide a framework for policy in this area. This final chapter looks at how the Canadian province of New Brunswick has developed a framework for policy and practice which may be inspirational to other countries. The province is actively seeking to address inequalities as a core part of the provincial Career Education Framework which now underpins careers work in all schools.

5.2. Career Development Frameworks

Over the last generation, many numbers of countries have sought to articulate their expectations of student career development within schooling. In the 1990s, the United States and Canada led innovation in developing career development frameworks to guide the work in its schools (Hooley et al., 2013[3]; NCDA, 2004[4]). In this wake, frameworks were launched in Australia (MCEECDYA, 2010[5]) (updated in 2022 (National Careers Institute, 2022[6]), England (LSIS, 2013[7]) and (CDI, 2021[8]), Ireland (NCGE, 2017[9]), Scotland (Education Scotland, Skills Development Scotland and the Scottish Government, 2015[10]), Norway (Bakke et al., 2021[11]) and Malta (Gravina and Camilleri, 2020[12]). These frameworks are typically developed in consultation with professionals working in the field. They commonly have a strong emphasis on the development of career development skills, typically expressed as competencies ("I know how to…") that reflect increasingly sophisticated understandings of self and society as students grow older.

Some frameworks go into great detail about their expectations. The first Australian framework for example included 328 competencies, each of which was linked to between 8 and 17 'performance indicators' which school staff were expected to adjust to local contexts (Hooley et al., 2013[3]). The Canadian Blueprint for Life/Word Design included a 391-page overview document (Haché, Redekopp and Jarvis, 2006[13]) alongside a 243-page implementation guide (Haché and Schiffart, 2002[14]). In Canada, over time, and perhaps in part because of the complexity of the framework, use of the framework has fallen into disuse.

A major concern raised with regard to the development of frameworks, such as the Canadian Blueprint, relates to the weakness of research evidence on which frameworks have been built. As Hooley et al. note (2013[3]), initial career development frameworks could not "claim to be based on an empirically demonstrated analysis of the elements that lead an individual to career success." At their time of production, such data was limited. This situation however has changed in recent years.

5.2.1. About the New Brunswick Career Development Framework

The New Brunswick Career Development Framework was published in 2023 as a collaboration between the New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the OECD Career Readiness team. The Framework was adopted following extensive consultation and applies to all Anglophone and Francophone schools within the province. It was developed in light of five important

developments which have accentuated the importance of career development within education and cast new light on the core characteristics of more effective delivery (New Brunswick Department of Education, 2023[15]). In an accompanying Rationale document, these trends are described as follows:

1. increasing participation rates of young people in upper secondary and tertiary education have led to the need for greater student decision-making about investments in education and training;
2. continued evidence of young people, notably Indigenous students, students with disabilities, students from lower SES backgrounds and students from migrant backgrounds, facing challenges in their transitions into desirable work in spite of growing levels of academic achievement;
3. challenges to effective career decision-making have increased as labour markets have become more dynamic due to the automation and digitalisation of occupations, employment becoming more precarious and demand for skills changes in light of climate change;
4. international practice has developed in the adoption of career development frameworks;
5. substantial new analysis of longitudinal data evidencing better employment outcomes linked to participation in school-age career development has become available (2023[15]).

Structure of the Framework

The New Brunswick Framework draws heavily on the OECD's 2021 review of longitudinal datasets in 10 countries, including Canada.[1] This analysis explored statistical relationships between teenage participation in career development, typically at age 15, and employment outcomes, typically at age 25 (lower rates of young people Not being in Education, Employment or Training [NEET], higher wages and/or greater job satisfaction). It confirmed 11 Career Readiness Indicators of better employment outcomes linked to teenage career development after account was taken of a range of other factors that influence outcomes, including gender, SES, migrant status/ethnicity and education achievement (see Table 5.1). The indicators cluster into three fields: exploring, experiencing and thinking about potential futures in work (Covacevich et al., 2021[1]).

Table 5.1. OECD Career Readiness Indicators

Exploring potential futures in work	Predictors include: • Participating in career conversations • Participating in career talks or job fairs • Participating in workplace visits or job shadowing • Participating in application and interview skills development activities • Participating in occupationally-focused short programmes (Career Pathways)
Experiencing potential futures in work	Predictors include: • Engaging in part-time work • Engaging in volunteering
Thinking about potential futures in work	Predictors include: • Career certainty, being the ability at 15 to name an adult occupational expectation • Career ambition, being the identification of an occupational expectation within major categories 1 and 2 of the International Standardised Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08) • Career alignment, being the identification of educational plans that align with typical entry requirements of occupational expectation • Instrumental motivation towards school, being the belief that engagement with schooling will enhancement employer prospects

Source: (Covacevich et al., 2021[1])

The New Brunswick Framework adopts this same structure. The Framework is arranged around how students explore, experience and think about their potential futures in work ('three Big Ideas') and clusters related outcome areas with corresponding career development items describing specific student-centred activities, attitudes and experiences for each of five stages of education along a continuum, beginning with Early Childhood Education and ending with Grade 12:

- Early Childhood Education (ages 2 to 5)
- Grades K-2: Primary Block (ages 5 to 8)
- Grades 3-5: Elementary Block (ages 8 to 11)
- Grades 6-8: Middle Block (ages 11 to 14)
- Grades 9-12: High School Block (ages 14-18)

Table 5.2. New Brunswick Career Development Framework: Big ideas and related outcome areas

Thinking about my potential career pathway: developing an informed vision for the future linked to my interests, preferences, values and abilities • Developing an informed pathway plan for my future • Understanding how my learning can help secure a desirable career pathway • Understanding that global competencies will help me achieve my preferred future • Developing an informed career pathway with labour market information • Recognising how career development/transition planning supports positive mental health • Understanding how access to desirable work is not always fair and equitable • Understanding that I am influenced in my choices by who I see represented in various career pathways • Understanding that there are additional supports available to help me achieve my preferred career pathway
Exploring my potential career pathway: critically investigating the labour market and career pathways that I can expect to find most fulfilling • Interacting with school counsellors around career guidance • Making career connections when visiting locations outside of the school • Developing the knowledge and skills needed to access work • Understanding the benefits of engaging in work-integrated learning (e.g. Coop, apprenticeships, internships) • Engaging in career conversations • Understanding the realities and possibilities of standard and non-standard employment • Making use of online tools in career development • Understanding the range of post-secondary pathway education/training/community opportunities • Planning for transition in early learning, school and beyond
Experiencing my potential career pathway: learning about career pathways of interest by engaging in frequent and ongoing career-connected experiential learning • Engaging in authentic career-connected experiences • Exploring the realities and possibilities of working (paid/unpaid) alongside education • Exploring the possibility of volunteering alongside education

5.3. Addressing social inequalities within the New Brunswick Career Education Framework

5.3.1. Providing more intense support

While the Framework does not explicitly discuss matters of student and school funding, it does point strongly towards the need for targeted provision that will build on a universal shared entitlement to address additional barriers faced by students with shared characteristics. Indeed, the framework is located within a wider approach to educational development that adopts Universal Design for Learning principles which

assume that the needs of individual learners will differ and variation in practice is likely to be required to ensure equitable outcomes for learners (New Brunswick Education and Early Child Development[16])

Ensuring a firm foundation of career guidance for all students

The Framework integrates the OECD career readiness indicators to ensure that universal foundational provision incorporates those aspects of guidance that can be most confidently expected to provide students with effective career development. As noted above, data from PISA 2018 highlights the fact that many students fail to engage in important career development activities by the age of 15. Disadvantage is apparent with regard to each of three primary aspects of inequality considered within this paper, most notably in relation to student socio-economic status (SES). The New Brunswick Framework articulates a clear expectation that all students will engage in a firm foundation of guidance and so provides a mechanism for measuring actual participation levels by student characteristics.

Table 5.3. How the New Brunswick Career Education Framework integrates OECD career readiness indicators

Exploring the future	Career Education Framework: career development item
Career conversations	• I have talked to family, friends and school staff about specific career pathways of interest (Grades 3-5) • I regularly talk to family, friends, mentors and school staff about my career pathway plans (Grades 6-12) • I have discussed with family, friends, mentors and school staff how I plan to achieve my preferred career pathway (Grades 9-12) • I have discussed my [career] plan in detail with people I trust (i.e. family, school staff, elders) each year (Grades 9-12)
Career talks or job fairs	• I have heard from a diverse range of people (including people underrepresented in their career pathway) about different post-secondary pathways (Grades 3-5) • I have heard from a diverse range of people in various career pathways (including people underrepresented in their career pathway) about what their careers are like, and options for following that career pathway (Grades 6-8) • I have heard from people who spoke about different post-secondary education and training options (apprenticeships, gap year, university, college, community opportunities) (Grades 6-12) • I have been able to speak with people working in careers that I am most interested in to learn about my options in pursuing my career pathway (Grades 9-12)
Workplace visits or job shadowing	• I have visited a location outside of my school and have learned what activities people do there (Grades K-2) • I have visited one or more locations outside of my school and discussed the different activities people do there (Grades 3-5) • I have visited several locations outside of my school to discuss the different activities people do there *and* I have considered if any of the activities people do there are of interest to me (Grades 6-8) • I have visited several locations outside of my school where people do activities that are of interest to me (Grades 9-12) • I have observed the roles and responsibilities of a range of people in the activities they do *and* I have reflected on this in pursuing my career pathway (Grades 9-12)
Application and interview skills development	• I understand that people share their strengths and abilities to access work (Grades K-2) • I understand that people need specific knowledge and skills to access work (Grades 3-5) • I have learned what a resumé and cover letter are and their purpose (Grades 6-8) • I have learned what a job interview is and its purpose (Grades 6-8)

	• I have created a resumé and cover letter (Grades 9-12) • I have practiced the skills of relational networking (i.e. information interviews) as a way of accessing work (Grades 9-12) • I have participated in a real or mock job interview (Grades 9-12)
Occupationally-focused short programmes (Career Pathways)	• I understand that it is helpful to learn something by doing it (Grades K-2) • I can describe how it is helpful to learn something by doing it (Grades 3-5) • I have learned about a variety of work-integrated learning opportunities available in school and post-secondary (Grades 6-8) • I understand how work-integrated learning can help me prepare for my preferred career pathway (Grades 6-8) • I understand the benefits of work-integrated learning in helping me to prepare for my preferred career pathway (Grades 9-12) • I have considered work-integrated learning in my career/life plan, if available (Grades 9-12) • I have evaluated and compared career pathway opportunities based on the availability of work-integrated learning (Grades 9-12)
Experiencing the future	**Career Education Framework: item**
Engaging in part-time work	• I have learned about working (paid/unpaid) *and* I have learned about the benefits of working (paid/unpaid) (Grades K-2) • I have learned how work can be paid or unpaid (caring roles within families/communities) (Grades 3-5) • I have learned about how people find work (Grades 3-5) • I have discussed what people can learn when they are working (Grades 3-5) • I have learned about the types of work that are available to someone my age (Grades 6-8) • I have learned how working can help me in career pathways and transitions (Grades 6-8) • I have learned how I can find work now and in the future (Grades 6-8) • I have learned how to find part-time and/or summer work (Grades 9-12) • I have learned how working part-time or in the summer can help me to understand career pathways and my plans for the future (Grades 9-12) • I have learned about work/life balance (Grades 9-12)
Engaging in volunteering	• I have learned about volunteering *and* I have learned about the benefits of volunteering (Grade K-5) • I have discussed ways that I can volunteer (Grades 3-5) • I have learned how to find ways to volunteer (Grades 6-12) • I have learned how volunteering can help me to make career pathway decisions (Grades 6-8) • I have learned how volunteering can help me to understand career pathways and my plans for the future (Grades 9-12)
Thinking about the future	**Career Education Framework: item**
Career certainty	• I am pursuing interests, passions and strengths (Early Childhood Education) • I can tell you about some of the different roles that adults do at work, at home, and in my community, and whether I would like to do them (Grades K-2) • I have discussed the things I most like to do, and not to do, and explored the ways in which I might prefer different types of career pathways when I am older (Grades 3-5) • I understand why some people might like some roles more than others (Grades 3-5) • I understand that different people tend to find satisfaction and do better in different types of career pathways than other people (Grades 6-8) • I have reflected on my own personal preferences and discussed the results with school staff (Grades 6-8) • I have learned about potential career pathways and roles that I might find most fulfilling considering my developing interests, preferences, values, and abilities (Grades 6-8) • I can explain why I would find some career pathways more fulfilling than others

	(Grades 9-12) • I have investigated whether someone with my personal preferences is likely to find satisfaction in the career pathway I am interested in (Grades 9-12) • I have a career pathway plan (including back-up plans) (Grades 9-12) • I can explain why it would be necessary to adjust my career pathway plan (Grades 9-12)
Career ambition	• I have learned that careers can be done by all different people (Grades K-2) • I have learned that there are different types of post-secondary pathway education/training/community opportunities (Grades K-2) • I have identified people who are underrepresented in various pathways (Grades 3-5) • I have heard from a diverse range of people (including people underrepresented in their career pathway) about different post-secondary pathways (Grades 3-5) • I have learned about post-secondary education and training options for my preferred career pathway (Grades 6-8) • I have learned that I can be successful in a career pathway even if people like me are underrepresented (Grades 6-8) • I have visited/explored specific post-secondary education and training institutions and/or opportunities that support my career pathway plan (Grades 9-12) • I have been able to speak with people working in careers that I am most interested in to learn more about my options in pursuing my preferred career pathway (Grades 9-12) • I understand that I can seriously considered pursuing a career pathway where people like me are underrepresented (Grades 9-12)
Career alignment	• I can explain how what I am learning in school is important in preparing for the future (Grades 3-5) • I understand the connection between what I am learning in (and out of) school and how it helps in achieving my career pathway plans (Grades 6-8) • I am familiar with a variety of post-secondary learning options and the differences between them (Grades 6-8) • I understand how to use labour market information to explore career pathways (Grades 6-8) • I have started to develop a plan for post-secondary (Grades 6-8) • I understand the skills, strengths, experiences and qualifications that will be required of me if I am to progress towards career pathways of interest (Grades 9-12) • I can explain the connection between what I am learning in (and out of) school and how it can help me achieve my career pathway plans (Grades 9-12) • I can evaluate how I am doing in developing the skills, strengths, experiences and qualifications required of me if I am to progress towards career pathways of interest (Grades 9-12) • I have shared my goals with school staff (Grades 9-12) • I have a career pathway plan (including back-up plan) (Grades 9-12) • I have developed a plan, including specific resources and supports needed for post-secondary life (Grades 9-12) • I have considered relevant post-secondary learning options by visiting websites/locations/campuses (Grades 9-12) • I have discussed my plan in detail with people I trust (i.e. family, school staff, elders) each year • I can explain to school staff how labour market information has informed my career pathway plans (Grades 9-12)
Instrumental motivation	• I can tell you how learning is important in preparing for the future (Grades K-2) • I can explain how what I am learning in school is important in preparing for the future (Grades 3-5) • I understand the connection between what I am learning in (and out of) school and how it helps in achieving my career pathway plans (Grades 6-8)

	• I can explain the connection between what I am learning in (and out of) school and how it can help me achieve my career pathway plans (Grades 9-12)

In keeping with the approaches behind the development of the OECD career readiness indicators, the New Brunswick Framework explicitly aims to encourage forms of the human, social and cultural capital that shape access to employment opportunities (Brown, Hooley and Wond, 2020[17]; Jones, Mann and Morris, 2016[18]; Tomlinson et al., 2022[19]; 2013[20]). In the development of *human capital*, students are encouraged from an early age to reflect on the relationship between their choices and investments in their education and progression towards parts of the labour market which they perceive to be more fulfilling. More than that, students are encouraged and supported to consider gaining first-hand experience of work through career-connected learning, part-time working and volunteering. Importantly, the framework encourages them to reflect upon the insights and skills developed in work and how they may relate to their own futures.

Workplace experiences provide ample opportunity for the development of *social capital*, both in terms of access to trusted information about the operation of the labour market, its opportunities and challenges and with regard to practical support such as recommendations, references and offers of employment after the completion of secondary education. Combined with workplace experience, the Framework assumes that students will come into regular contact with people in work through workplace visits, but also through other means (such as career talks and job fairs) where students have opportunity initially to hear from and then to engage with people in work about their jobs and careers.

Within the Framework, a strong focus is on encouraging students to discuss and reflect what they have learned from their experiences. Here opportunity exists to develop *cultural capital*, being the understanding of how different parts of the labour market operate, their cultures and the vocational identities which they most value. Through this process, young people can gain confidence in their sense of agency through education and towards careers of interest (Jones, Mann and Morris, 2016[18]; Stanley and Mann, 2014[21]).

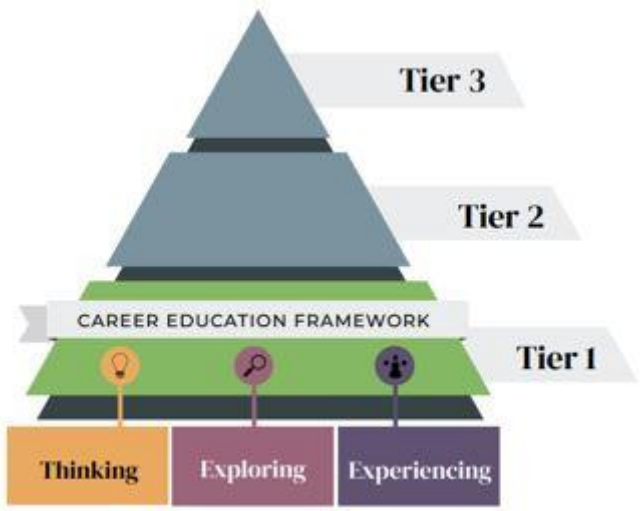
5.3.2. Developing professional capacity and providing dedicated resources

In Canada at a national level, the Council of Ministers of Education have adopted a framework for student transitions based on 11 benchmarks for policies, programmes and implementation strategies that include an explicit recognition of the need for provinces to address social inequalities. Benchmark 4 of the framework states:

> *Policy and programming recognise, and are tailored to, the diverse and specific needs of students: Services and programming to support transitions are tailored to individual student needs and interests. Student diversity is considered, programs are respectful of cultural perspectives (e.g., the Indigenization of curriculum), address attitudinal barriers that implicitly or explicitly limit career choice (e.g., young women's entry into STEM careers). Wraparound supports (e.g., supports that are community-based, culturally relevant, individualized, strength-based, and family-centered) are made available to disadvantaged/marginalised groups (e.g., Indigenous youth, immigrant youth, low-income students, and learners with a disability). Career-education programming actively seeks to challenge stereotypes and raise aspirations among disadvantaged and under-represented groups* (CMEC, 2017[22]).

The New Brunswick Career Education Framework aligns with this federal approach and sits within a family of provincial policies which also explicitly recognise that discrete groups of students should anticipate greater levels of support. The New Brunswick Framework includes a number of items that prompt guidance counsellors, teaching staff, students and their families to consider whether individual students may be in need of additional support. In this, the province draws upon an adaptation of a Response to Intervention model (McIntosh et al., 2011[23]) used widely across educational provision to identify students in greater academic need. The model is based upon three categories of intervention: interventions aimed at *all* students (Tier 1), interventions aimed at *some* students in small groups, for example a group working on the development of social and emotional competencies (Tier 2), and interventions aimed at a *few* students delivered on an individual basis, perhaps through one-to-one counselling (Tier 3).

Figure 5.1. New Brunswick Career Education Framework: Response to Intervention model



In this, the New Brunswick model follows in the steps of the Irish School Guidance Framework (NCGE, 2017[9]) which uses the same approach to highlight the need for stronger interventions for certain groups of students primarily linked to age (i.e. key transition points) and psychological well-being. As discussed below, the New Brunswick model however goes further to explicitly address structural inequalities within the Framework, enabling and encouraging access to enhanced provision. A specific outcome area of the Framework addresses potential need in relation to named potential barriers.

Table 5.4. Accessing additional support through the New Brunswick Career Education Framework

Outcome area: Understanding that there are additional supports available to help me achieve my preferred career pathway
• I understand that there are a variety of supports and/or services available to help people overcome career-related barriers to achieve their preferred career pathways (e.g., disability organizations, multicultural organizations, 2SLGBTQ+ organizations, etc.) (Grades 3-5) • I have learned about a variety of supports and/or services available to help people overcome career-related barriers to achieve their preferred career pathways (e.g., disability organizations, multicultural organizations, 2SLGBTQ+ organizations, etc.) (Grades 6-8) • I know how to access a variety of supports and/ or services available to help me and/ or others overcome career-related barriers to achieve preferred career pathways (e.g., disability organizations, multicultural organizations, 2SLGBTQ+ organizations, etc.) (Grades 9-12)

In order to facilitate Tier 2 and 3 support for students, New Brunswick is developing a range of resources within its Hopeful Transitions programme (New Brunswick Education and Early Childhood Development[24]). Hopeful Transitions represents an approach to guidance that explicitly aims to identify and interrupt inequities to provide greater opportunity and agency for all. It recognises that students can

be marginalised for multiple reasons and that their disadvantages (such as language, ethnicity, gender identity, socio-economic background, mental health, physical challenges) may be hidden. Consequently, the educational community is strongly encouraged and enabled to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach and recognise that transition planning is as unique to each learner as it is student-centred. Hopeful Transitions includes an online tool (currently in development) that supports the facilitation of transition planning for each learner across grades 6-12 based on the Response to Intervention model through resources, lessons, activities, interventions, checklists, and guides.

In addition to including a dedicated outcome area related to student understanding of additional supports available to help in the achievement of preferred career pathways, the New Brunswick Career Education Framework includes a number of other items that link directly to the barriers identified in quantitative analysis of early labour market outcomes and career development reviewed earlier in this paper linked to student socio-economic status (SES), gender and migrant background/ethnicity.

For example, New Brunswick students can expect considerable practical support as they prepare to enter the labour market and attempt to exchange accumulated knowledge and skills for desirable paid employment. Students are required to complete and discuss a detailed Career Life Plan with their school and family, identifying 'specific resources and supports needed for post-secondary life' (Grades 9-12). They are provided moreover with opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills needed to access work, including the creation of a resumé and cover letter, participation in a real or mock job interview and opportunity to practice networking skills.

5.3.3. Building social capital with families and the World of Work

The nurturing and recognition of social capital is also built into the New Brunswick Framework. As early as Grades K-2 for example, it is anticipated that students 'can name people whom I can count on when I need help.' From this age onwards, it is expected that students will seek out, connect with and understand the value of people who can provide practical support, whether in terms of accessing information and experiences or providing encouragement and emotional support.

Leveraging institutional social capital

The New Brunswick Framework assumes that school counsellors will play an important role in student career development. From the ages of 5 to 8, it is expected that students will 'have heard from a school counsellor about future career pathways' and that counsellors will help older students to plan effectively for their futures (Grades 6-12). While in some school systems it will be taken for granted that students interact with counsellors, this is not always the case. PISA 2018 shows that on average across 18 OECD countries for which data are available only 57% of students by the age of 15 had spoken to a career advisor whether in or out of school. The New Brunswick Framework anticipates that student career development is not just the responsibility of the career guidance practitioner, but that the wider school community will provide resources of value to individual students. Students are expected to talk with school staff about the world of work (from Grades K-2) with discussions becoming more focused and practical over time. In such a way, the Framework foregrounds the school as a resource for students who may lack family and community-based support of relevance to individual career development and transition.

Building social capital through career-connected learning

The role of the school is particularly important in enabling connections between students and people in work. In New Brunswick, career-connected learning provides students from Grades K-2 with the opportunity to engage in 'real-world authentic experiences' such as visiting workplaces and (from Grades 6-8) participating in experiential learning opportunities. Beginning in Grades 3-5, it is expected that students will have heard from a 'diverse range of people (including people underrepresented in their career

pathway) about different post-secondary pathways'. By Grades 9-12, students are expected to 'have been able to speak with people working in careers that I am most interested in to learn more about my options in pursuing my preferred career pathway.' Through such experiences, it is anticipated that students will by Grades 6-8 have 'made a connection with someone that I can learn from that shares my interests/passions (i.e. a respected knowledge holder'). In this way, New Brunswick schools challenge the serendipity of family-based social networks and support the building of students' social capital through educational institutions in ways that explicitly inform and enable successful transitions (Jones et al., 2018[25]).

Valuing family and community resources

While the primary institution referenced in the New Brunswick framework is the school, the document also highlights the importance of family. Students are expected to have talked to their families about their potential futures in work from a young age, initially simply discussing the variety of career pathways (Grades K-2), moving onto specific career pathways of interest (Grades 3-5) and then plans for the future and how they will be achieved (Grades 6-12). Such an expectation, within a province with a large Indigenous population, explicitly extends beyond immediate family relations to include elders within the community. The Framework also encourages students to reflect on their roles within the family as they contemplate their future plans. From Grades 3-5, the Framework expects students to learn how engaging in and contributing to family activities can be part of preparing for future career pathways, notably by helping students to reflect upon their interests and passions and to draw upon family-based experience as they prepare for their transitions out of secondary education.

5.3.4. Developing critical understanding of personal relationships to the labour market

Beginning young

Studies show that children develop career-related assumptions from a young age, linked notably to gender and SES, strongly shaping young people's perceptions of what is possible for them to consider in terms of career ambition (Chambers et al., 2018[26]; Gottfredson, 2005[27]; OECD, 2021[28]). In relation, longitudinal data show that how young people think about their futures in work is positively associated with better employment outcomes (Covacevich et al., 2021[1]) Consequently, while the New Brunswick framework begins in Early Childhood Education, at this stage the emphasis is not on career development *per se*. Rather, it focuses on the underlying competencies that enable a sense of curiosity, social engagement and decision-making that will ultimately shape career development. From Grades K-2 (ages 5 to 8), expectations are articulated primarily in terms of supporting a growing curiosity about the adult world of work and its relation to education. Career development items include for example:

- I can tell you about some of the different roles that adults do at work, at home, and in my community, and whether I would like to do them
- I can tell you how learning is important for the future
- I can identify skills that will be helpful in life and work
- I have discussed problems that different careers help to solve
- I can imagine how career pathways may change in the future
- I understand that people work in different ways (e.g. permanent/full-time, seasonal, self-employment, on call, temporary employment
- I have learned how to access and use digital technologies to explore career pathways
- I have learned that there are different types of post-secondary education/training/community opportunities

As noted elsewhere in this chapter, the framework also includes expectations that students at this age will begin their first-hand exploration of the working world through a 'real-world authentic experience (e.g. visiting a workplace'). By beginning such career exploration at a young age, opportunity exists to help all students to extend their conceptions of what might be thinkable for themselves in terms of future employment while actively enabling them to see links between how they engage in education with access to imagined futures.

Developing critical perspectives on education-to-work transitions

In providing students with a realistic understanding of the labour market, the Framework is designed moreover to underpin psychological resiliency within transitions (Koivisto, Vuori and Nykyri, 2007[29]) In the Framework's supporting rationale document, attention is drawn to growing concern over poor mental health among young people which both contributes to poor outcomes and can be a result of them (New Brunswick Department of Education, 2023[15]). Drawing on conceptions of critical consciousness, the framework anticipates that students will leave education and go into the labour market with their eyes open to its challenges as well as its opportunities, particularly with regard to social inequalities and so enabling individual students to become better equipped to deal with its economic and psychological challenges (Diemer, 2009[30])

Students for example are expected to learn about how the structure of labour market can work against good transitions for many young people in spite of their own best intentions:

- I have learned why it might be harder for some people to secure their desired careers (Grades 6-8)
- I can explain why some people might face additional barriers in securing their desired career pathways (Grades 9-12)

In addition, students are expected to be critical in their understanding of how the operation of the labour market influences individual experiences, but also to identify resources that can be of value to smoother transitions. These competencies encourage learners to think about the diversity of experiences that people have in the labour market and open the door for non-normative conceptions of success. They also encourage learners to think beyond individual approaches to career development and consider the possibility of changing their career environment:

- I have learned that not everybody works in a full-time permanent job and that people are working in different ways because they want to or because they have no choice (Grandes 6-8)
- I have learned that there are protections that exist to ensure workplaces are free from discrimination (Grades 6-8)
- I have shared my ideas on how inequities may be solved (Grades 6-8)
- I can identify how individual and collective actions can help create a fairer working world (including the role of labour unions) (Grades 9-12)
- I have learned about the legislative protections that exist to ensure employment processes (recruitment, promotion, assignment, and termination) are free from discrimination (Grade 9-12)

Raising and broadening aspirations

An important responsibility of the school as articulated in the framework is to enable students to engage with the wider community in the context of career exploration. From Grades K-2, students are encouraged to engage people around them in conversations about the world of work and their own plans, so building their access to sources of new and trusted information about the world of work. They are also expected from this early age to have 'visited a location outside of my school and have learned what activities people do there' and to have visited a workplace. As students grow older, they are expected to have visited

multiple worksites and to have actively reflected on whether the activities they observe are of personal interest. Importantly, the framework requires schools to enable students to hear from 'a diverse range of people' in work and post-secondary education and training. Students are also expected to reflect on the range of pathways open to them, including self-employment and work-integrated learning opportunities that can lead to employment in the skilled trades. Through such interactions, students can be expected to raise and broaden their interests in future careers (Rehill, Kashefpakdel and Mann, 2017[31]; Rehill, Kashefpakdel and Mann, 2017[32]; OECD, 2023[33]) with benefits likely to be greatest for low SES students (Mann, Percy and Kashefpakdel, 2018[34]).

Challenging the internalisation of stereotypes

Stereotypical thinking about the sorts of employment that are appropriate for different types of people to undertake serves to restrict the opportunities open to young people and begins very young (Chambers et al., 2018[26]). Consequently, children in New Brunswick are expected to begin developing the 'capacity to ask critical questions in relation to stereotypes represented in popular culture' from Early Childhood. The Framework encourages students to discuss and ask critical questions about why certain groups are underrepresented in different career pathways. New Brunswick expects students from Grades 3-5 to participate in career events where they hear from people underrepresented in their career pathway. Importantly, the document expects students by Grade 9-12 to 'have had a chance to speak with people like me who are underrepresented in their profession about their experiences.' In such a way, students are given the opportunity to explore whether workplaces may be hostile to someone of their characteristics and how barriers to progression can be overcome.

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Notes

[1] In Canada, researchers at the University of Quebec reviewed the Youth in Transition Survey which initially collected data from young people at age 15 in 2000 and then collected data on their outcomes (having taken into account control variables) at ages 25 and 30 (Covacevich et al., 2021[1])

6. Conclusion: addressing social inequalities through career development

This chapter briefly summarises the paper's conclusions. It highlights the main findings from new analysis of OECD PIAAC data and PISA data related to the role that social inequalities play both in shaping early labour market outcomes of comparatively educated young adults and in influencing engagement in teenage career development. The chapter concludes by highlighting forms of practice that can be expected to respond effectively to social inequalities and priorities for future research in the field.

The subject of this paper is the delivery of career education and guidance for young people in primary and particularly secondary education in the context of structural, societal inequalities. The paper first seeks to establish whether and how social inequalities can be seen to shape the employment outcomes of young adults. It does so by focusing on three primary aspects of inequality where international data on labour market outcomes is particularly strong due to the OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC). The PIAAC datasets allows analysis of the role that social and economic background, gender and migrant status play in shaping the economic success of young adults with comparable skills (as revealed by the PIAAC reading assessment) and similar levels of academic qualifications. By comparing the experiences of young adults demonstrating comparable levels of human capital, the force of social inequalities is revealed. In this approach, the paper also draws upon insights from non-OECD labour market analyses linked to sexuality, gender identity and ethnicity.

The PIAAC analysis finds that the social and economic status (SES), gender and migrant background of young adults of comparable academic achievement does significantly shape their employment outcomes in consistent ways. Young adults from low SES backgrounds, young women and foreign-born young people can all expect to experience disadvantage in terms of participation in education, employment and training (i.e., effective unemployment), earnings and disadvantageous patterns of occupational segmentation in comparison to more advantaged peer groups.

In light of these findings, the objective of the paper is to identify practical means by which education systems can harness guidance interventions to respond to such inequalities. The paper approaches this task by drawing on capitals analysis – a means of conceptualising factors that shape success in the world of work. Students of labour markets commonly turn to assessments of the human, social and cultural of individuals to understand relative success in the labour market. Relationships are observed between vocational success and the level and character of qualifications and experience that potential workers possess (human capital), the availability of social contacts who can directly or indirectly facilitate access to employment (social capital) and the attitudes, assumptions and personal confidence which influence an individual's ability to successfully enter and thrive within different employment fields (cultural capital).

Career guidance systems have important parts to play in developing the human, social and cultural capital of students as they progress through education and into employment. Effective guidance systems are designed to help students make good study choices and to gain work-related experience while still in education (human capital), to develop relations with people in work well placed to provide authentic and useful advice and other forms of support linked to vocational ambitions (social capital) and to ensure that young people leave education with a confident understanding of themselves, their career ambitions and what they need to do in order to achieve them within an emerging sense of vocational identity (cultural capital). In essence, effective guidance systems will provide students with the support they need to accumulate resources that will enable progression towards fulfilling employment and equip them, notably through direct engagements with the world of work, with social contacts, vocational knowledge and personal confidence to successfully activate their human capital in the labour market after leaving education (Brown, Hooley and Wond, 2020[1]; Jones, Mann and Morris, 2016[2]; Stanley and Mann, 2014[3]; Tomlinson et al., 2022[4]; 2013[5]).

This paper does not suggest that reform of guidance systems will remove inequalities within the labour market (as noted in chapter four for example, evidence of discrimination within recruitment is plentiful), but that guidance systems if strategically designed, in light of the best available evidence, will be better placed to respond productively to the challenge by addressing predictable barriers preventing confident career development and progression. The scale of the challenge is considerable. As analysis of PISA 2018 shows for example, high achieving OECD students from high SES backgrounds are twice as likely at the age of 15 as their high achieving peers from low SES backgrounds to express an intention to pursue tertiary education (Mann et al., 2020[6]). The dataset also shows that boys are six times more likely to plan on pursuing a profession in the skilled trades (ISCO major category 7) than girls. In only five OECD countries

is it possible to identify meaningful numbers of students from migrant backgrounds who plan on working in the same field (Mann, Denis and Percy, 2020[7]).

In this light, it would be hoped that guidance systems would recognise the additional barriers preventing coherent groups within society from achieving their career ambitions. Analysis of OECD 2018 PISA data shows that this is often not the case. Looking across data from available OECD countries, it is evident that students from low SES backgrounds routinely engage less frequently in career development activities than their high SES peers. This is a particular concern as low SES students can be expected to leave education earlier than high SES students, demonstrating a more urgent need for effective guidance. Female students also face important disadvantages, in comparison to boys, in accessing career development opportunities within school. On average, they are much less likely to participate in those guidance activities that are most strong linked in longitudinal research with better adult employment outcomes: activities that engage them directly with employers and people in work, such as job shadowing, workplace visits, job fairs and internships. In some countries, young people from migrant backgrounds can also be seen to face patterns of disadvantage in accessing career development activities, but here the extent of disadvantage tends to be weaker.

In light of analysis from PIAAC, PISA and related datasets, the paper argues that guidance systems should respond to inequalities by addressing predictable additional barriers that can prevent student development of career-related human, social and cultural capital while in education in four primary ways – with examples of practice from multiple countries illustrating potential approaches. Effective systems will acknowledge the existence of additional barriers which hinder some students from successfully accumulating and activating human capital in the labour market. A first approach to addressing inequalities is through providing more intense support to address the needs of coherent groups of students. Existing analysis from PISA 2018 shows that in many jurisdictions, such students are less likely than comparatively more advantaged peers to access such provision. In PISA 2022, for the first time, details are available from all participating countries and economic areas on how current participation rates in career development activities vary by SES, gender and migrant status. In response, countries have funded targeted provision to enhance guidance received by comparatively disadvantaged groups. A notable example is from Ireland, where the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools programme ensures that schools based in areas characterised by greater levels of poverty and refugees receive twice the funding as schools in more advantaged areas to support guidance activities (OECD, 2023[8]).

Secondly, it is argued that there is need to develop the professional capacity of the guidance workforce and provide dedicated resources to enhance provision. In many countries, inequality is addressed to only a very limited extent within professional training programmes and opportunity exists to enhance the informed confidence of guidance practitioners in understanding and responding to the consequences of inequalities hampering the career development of young people. The BREAK! Project developed in Estonia, Iceland and Lithuania (and funded by the European Union) for example, provides counsellors with tools and approaches to help students make sense of, and respond to, gender inequalities within the labour market (Kinkar et al., 2019[9]).

Thirdly, the papers recommends that guidance systems work to build the social capital of groups facing disadvantage. Examples include programmes to help female students engage with women working in professions linked to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics and to facilitate connections between students from refugee backgrounds with working people and employers (Jeon, 2019[10]). Finally, the paper argues that it is essential for guidance systems to encourage and enable students to develop a critical understanding of their personal relationships with the labour market. In situations where patterns of inequality may be oblique and concerns over the potential hostility of workplaces reasonable, it is important for students to be helped to make sense of the patterns of disadvantage witnessed. As longitudinal studies of critical consciousness illustrate (Diemer, 2009[11]), students who understand that social inequalities may be to their personal disadvantage and demonstrate some commitment to challenging such inequalities through engagement in public life can be expected to achieve better employment outcomes and go into

working life with better mental health than comparable peers. This second outcome is particularly important given that students lacking a critical perspective on social inequalities can be more expected to blame themselves fully for poorer outcomes than they anticipated. The BREAK! Project provides a good example of a guidance programme designed to instil critical thinking on career development among young people.

While discussions of social inequalities focus on strong patterns of disadvantage linked to identifiable and coherent groups of young people – here, students from low SES backgrounds, young women and foreign-born students, their analysis helps to enable progression towards higher quality guidance for all students. While girls considering professions linked to the STEM subjects or the skilled trades can be expected to face additional barriers in accessing their career ambitions, in ways that are somewhat similar, the same can be said for boys hoping to work in nursing or childcare. Societal norms can help dissuade individual students from considering and then exploring potential futures in work that are seen as non-traditional. As noted in this paper, statistical analysis of PISA data shows that parental occupation is strongly predictive of teenage career ambitions. Where students seek to understand careers which are not well understood within their family networks, additional barriers will exist. Here, considerable opportunity exists to support career exploration through use of digital technologies.

For many jurisdictions, an important priority is to integrate acknowledgement of, and responses to, social inequalities within provision. The New Brunswick Career Education Framework represents an important new approach within career guidance to address inequalities systematically (New Brunswick Department of Education, 2023[12]). It recognises that young people come into education systems with very different access to privately derived information, resources and experiences of relevance to progress into personally desirable employment. The Framework positions schools as institutions which can serve to compensate for such comparative deficiencies. Further analysis of such interventions is desirable in building a robust platform of scientific evidence to assess the capacity of educational institutions to respond to social inequalities.

This paper raises important further research questions for consideration. There is a need to return to longitudinal and other large datasets to explore how different groups of students respond to career development activities. Building on the analysis of the British Cohort Study by Mann, Percy and Kashefpakdel (2018[13]) and a range of qualitative studies such as those of Rehill, Kashefpakdel and Mann (2017[14]), scope exists to explore in more detail the compensatory effect that school-mediated interventions can have on students experiencing disadvantage and address a fundamental question: how much is enough to compensate for disadvantage? Opportunity exists moreover to broaden and deepen analysis, focusing in greater depth on other groups of students with shared characteristics who face additional barriers in converting human capital into successful employment. Notably, as this paper suggests, ethnic and religious minorities and LGBTQI+ youth demand greater attention as do students with learning and physical disabilities. Inequalities are also often faced by students living in the most rural areas. In this, questions of intersectionality are both important and challenging. Notably, they present challenges to studies using datasets to identify sufficient numbers of such students to follow through interventions into possible outcomes. Hence, the need to build a strong base of qualitative studies, valuing the individual experiences of students alongside large quantitative, longitudinal datasets.

Finally, this paper does not explore the capacity of career guidance to influence the academic success of young people. As literature reviews (Hughes et al., 2016[15]) have confirmed, evidence from experimental and quasi-experimental studies show relationships can very often be found between participation in guidance activities and greater educational achievement. Such studies suggest that students gain in motivation after engagement in guidance, drawing stronger links between their engagement in education and imagined futures in work by providing new sources of information and encouragement. In such a way, guidance systems can be seen to address inequalities in a further important, but different, means than that addressed in this working paper.

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Challenging Social Inequality Through Career Guidance

INSIGHTS FROM INTERNATIONAL DATA AND PRACTICE

This report explores how school-level career guidance systems can more effectively respond to social inequalities. It draws on new analysis of PISA and PIAAC data and builds on the OECD Career Readiness Indicators to review the impact of inequalities related primarily to socio-economic background, gender and migrant status/ethnicity on the character of education-to-work transitions. The data analysis identifies additional barriers facing certain demographic groups in converting human capital into successful employment. It also finds that teenage access to career development is strongly patterned by the demographic characteristics of students. Consequently, the report highlights a range of career guidance interventions that can be expected to mitigate the negative impact of inequalities on student outcomes, enabling fairer access to economic opportunities. The report concludes by reviewing how the innovative new Career Education Framework in New Brunswick (Canada) systematically addresses inequalities within K-12 provision.

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