

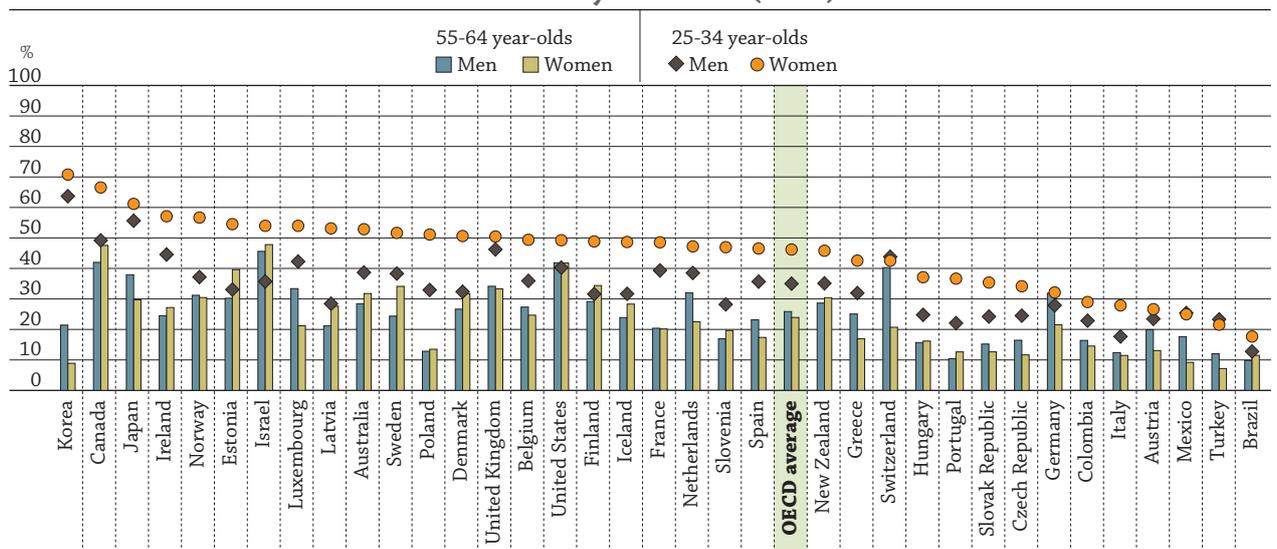
Education and employment – what are the gender differences?

- Among 25-34 year-olds, more women than men hold a tertiary qualification in 33 of the 36 countries for which data are comparable.
 - Gender differences still exist in certain fields, with more men studying science, computing and engineering, and with women dominating education and health and welfare.
 - Despite their higher educational attainment, young women still have lower employment rates than men, although the gender gap is much narrower for tertiary educated young women than for those with lower educational attainment.
 - Women with tertiary education earn about three-quarters of their male peers' earnings. Some of this may be due to the under-representation of women at the highest levels of tertiary education, as well as in some fields of education, which are highly rewarded by the labour market.

Among the younger generation, women have higher educational attainment than men.

Recognising the impact that education has on participation in labour markets, occupational mobility and quality of life, policy makers and educators emphasise the importance of reducing educational differences between men and women. All countries have increased the level of education of their whole population during the last four decades and this increase has been strongly driven by the increase in the proportion of women leaving education with a tertiary qualification. As a result, even where the proportion of men with tertiary qualifications is higher than that of women among 55-64 year-olds, this is no longer the case among 25-34 year-olds in 33 of the 36 countries for which data are comparable (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Percentage of 25-34 and 55-64 year-old men and women with tertiary education (2013)



Countries are ranked in descending order of the percentage of 25-34 year-old women with tertiary education.

Source: OECD (2015), Education at a Glance Interim Report: Update of Employment and Educational Attainment Indicators, Chapter 1 (www.oecd.org/edu/eag-interim-report.htm).



On average across OECD countries, among 55-64 year-olds, 26% of men and 24% of women attained a tertiary education compared with 35% of men and 46% of women among 25-34 year-olds. The most striking example is Korea, which has achieved an impressive increase in the proportion of men attaining tertiary education in recent decades, but an even more impressive increase among women. Only 9% of 55-64 year-old women have a tertiary qualification in Korea but this proportion reaches 71% among 25-34 year-old women, the highest level of tertiary attainment of all countries and all age groups.

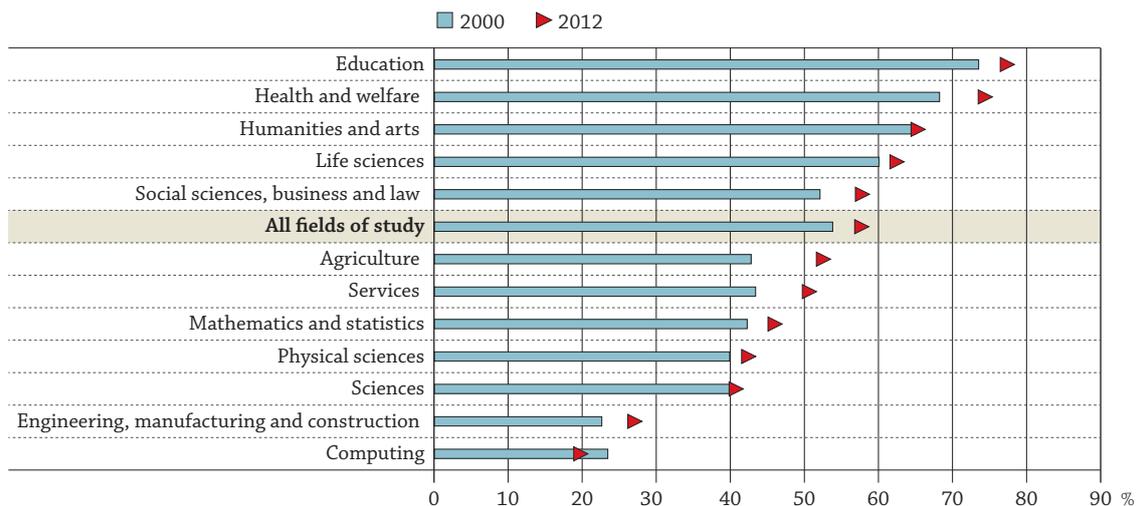
On average across OECD countries, only a minority of 15-year-old girls contemplate pursuing a career in engineering and computing. As a consequence, women are still under-represented in these fields at tertiary level.

Many countries have been successful in closing gender gaps in learning outcomes. But even when boys and girls are equally proficient in mathematics and science at age 15, their attitudes towards learning and aspirations for their future are markedly different – and that has a significant impact on their decision to pursue further education and on their choice of career (see the new OECD publication, *The ABC of Gender Equality in Education: Aptitude, Behaviour, Confidence*).

The OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) has consistently found that in general at age 15 girls have higher expectations for their careers than boys, but that on average across OECD countries, less than 5% of them are contemplating a career in engineering or computing. As a consequence, women are still under-represented in tertiary education in certain fields of study, such as mathematics and computer science (Figure 2). In 2012, in all countries except Argentina, Colombia, Italy and Luxembourg, fewer than 35% of all graduates in the fields of engineering, manufacturing and construction were women.

18.4
28
6%
100%
32
2014
28.32
2010

Figure 2. **Percentage of tertiary qualifications awarded to women in tertiary-type A and advanced research programmes, by field of education (2000, 2012)**



Fields of education are ranked in descending order of the percentage of tertiary degrees (tertiary-type A and advanced research programmes) awarded to women in 2012.

Source: OECD (2014), *Education at a Glance 2014: OECD Indicators*, Indicator A3 (www.oecd.org/edu/eag.htm).

Moreover, this situation has changed only slightly since 2000, despite many initiatives to promote gender equality in OECD countries and at the EU level. The proportion of women in these fields grew marginally from 23% in 2000 to 28% in 2012. The proportion of women in science is also low and has remained stable at 41% over the past decade.



2015
8.625

3236.5



In contrast, women are over-represented in some other fields of education, such as education and health and welfare. In every OECD country except Chile, Japan and Turkey, more than 70% of tertiary students who graduated from the field of education were women while, on average across OECD countries, 75% of the degrees awarded in the field of health and welfare also went to women.

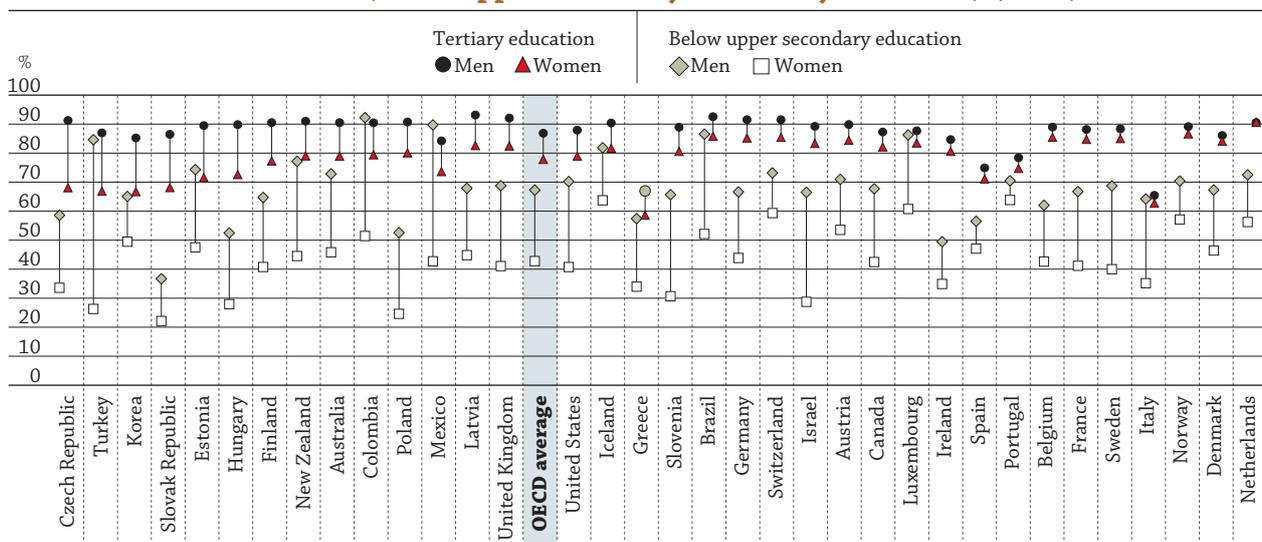
Despite their attainments, young women still have lower employment rates than men although the gender gap is more pronounced at lower levels of education.

As shown in Figure 1, 25-34 year-old women have higher educational attainment than men of the same age. However, young women in 2013 are still less likely than men to participate in the labour market and are also more likely to work part time. Even among those with a tertiary education, employment rates for men are still higher than for women, although the gap is much more pronounced at lower levels of education. On average among OECD countries, for 25-34 year-olds, the gap between the employment rates of men and women with below upper secondary educational attainment is 24 percentage points (67% for men and 43% for women), falling to 17 percentage points among individuals with upper secondary-education or post-secondary non-tertiary education (82% for men and 65% for women), and just 9 percentage points among tertiary educated men and women (87% for men and 78% for women).

In all OECD countries except Korea and the Slovak Republic, the gender gap in employment is smaller among 25-34 year-olds with tertiary education than among those who have not reached upper secondary education. The difference is particularly high in Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Slovenia and Turkey where the gap between the employment rates of men and women with below upper secondary education exceeds 33 percentage points. However, the employment gap in these countries is reduced by half or more among tertiary educated 25-34 year-olds (Figure 3).

According to the Survey of Adult Skills, a product of the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), inequalities in employment rates persist in many countries even among the most highly educated and skilled populations.

Figure 3. **Employment rates of 25-34 year-old men and women, according to their level of education (below upper secondary or tertiary education) (2013)**



Countries are ranked in descending order of the difference between employment rates of 25-34 year-old men and women with tertiary education.

Source: OECD (2015), Education at a Glance Interim Report: Update of Employment and Educational Attainment Indicators, Chapter 2 (www.oecd.org/edu/eag-interim-report.htm).



2015
18.4
2014 3.28
36.5 2015 32

Employed individuals are those who, during the survey reference week: 1) work for pay (employees) or profit (self-employed and unpaid family workers) for at least one hour; or 2) have a job but are temporarily not at work (through injury, illness, holiday, strike or lockout, educational or training leave, maternity or parental leave, etc.).

The **employment rate** refers to the number of persons in employment as a percentage of the working-age population (the number of employed people divided by the number of all working-age people). Employment rates by gender, age, educational attainment, programme orientation and age groups are calculated within each of these categories; for example the employment rate among women is calculated by dividing the number of employed women by the total number of working-age women.

201
18.4
2014 3.7
36.5 2015
2014 201

Even among tertiary educated adults, women earn less than men.

Not only women are less likely to be employed, when they do work they also tend to earn less than men. Globally, tertiary educated women earn less than tertiary educated men, even if the gap varies significantly between countries. For example, in Luxembourg, tertiary educated 35-44 year-old women earn almost 90% of the earnings of men. This is higher than in Hungary and the Slovak Republic where women earn less than 60% of what men with the same age and education level earn.

If these trends are consistent across the different age groups and levels of education, the gender gap in earnings should be interpreted with some caution. It is partly explained by the under-representation of women at the highest levels of tertiary education, as well as in some fields of education such as engineering, manufacturing and construction, which are highly rewarded by the labour market.

The bottom line: Over recent decades, significant progress has been made in improving the level of education of the whole population and in reducing the educational gender gap, although gender differences persist in certain fields of study. Although employment rates for tertiary educated men are still higher than those for tertiary educated women, the gender gap is much narrower than for those with lower levels of education. Moreover, in 2012, tertiary educated women's earnings were still lagging behind those of their male peers. Efforts should therefore be made to ensure a better gender balance in translating educational attainment into employment and earnings.

For more information

OECD (2015), *Education at a Glance Interim Report: Update of Employment and Educational Attainment Indicators*, OECD, Paris, www.oecd.org/edu/eag-interim-report.htm.

OECD (2015), *The ABC of Gender Equality in Education: Aptitude, Behaviour, Confidence*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264229945-en>.

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

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