

# 1. EDUCATION LEVELS AND STUDENT NUMBERS

## How much training are adults doing?

- There are large differences between countries in the time that workers spend in job training.
- Better-educated adults are more likely to participate in job training.
- In general, men do more training than women.

### Significance

Given ageing populations and the demand for different skills to cope with new technologies, globalisation and organisational changes, lifelong learning has become a necessity in OECD countries as workers strive to remain relevant in the labour force. This indicator examines the extent to which adults participate in non-formal job-related education and training (referred to subsequently as “job training”; see also “Definitions” below).

### Findings

There are significant differences between countries in the numbers of adults (25-64 year-olds) taking part in job training. More than 35% of adults in Denmark, Finland, Sweden and the United States had participated in some type of job training programme during the 12 months prior to the survey. By contrast, in Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal and Spain, the figure was less than 10%.

Adults with higher levels of education are more likely to participate in job training. Among the OECD countries surveyed, participation in job training is, on average, 14 percentage points higher among those who have completed tertiary education than among those who have completed only upper secondary education.

But even among individuals with similar levels of education, the number of hours spent in job training varies between countries. For those who have completed tertiary education, for example, the number of hours spent in job training ranges from fewer than 350 in Greece, Italy and the Netherlands to more than 1 000 hours in Denmark, Finland, France and Switzerland.

In all OECD countries, bar France, Finland and Hungary, employed men spend more hours in job training than employed women, although the difference between the genders is generally less than 100 hours. In Switzerland, however, the gap is almost 360 hours.

In most countries, participation in job training declines with age, although the extent of the decline varies among countries. In Austria, Belgium, France, Hungary and Spain, 55-64 year-olds spend one-quarter or less of the amount of time in job training than their younger peers. Only in the United States is there an increase in expected hours in job training among 35-54 year-olds as compared with younger adults. The fall-off in training as workers age may be due to older adults placing less value on investment in training and also to concerns among employers that their investment in training may not fully pay off if workers are nearing retirement.

### Definitions

Data for countries in the European statistical system come from the European Labour Force Survey *ad hoc* module “Lifelong Learning 2003.” “Non-formal education” is any organised and sustained educational activity that cannot be considered as formal education and does not lead to a qualification; “job-related” refers to education and training intended to help people in their work rather than their social or personal lives.

### Going further

For additional material, notes and a full explanation of sourcing and methodologies, see *Education at a Glance 2008* (Indicator C5).

Areas covered include:

- Participation in training by education attainment.
- Differences in duration of training by age group and by gender.

### Further reading from OECD

*Teaching, Learning and Assessment for Adults: Improving Foundation Skills* (2008).

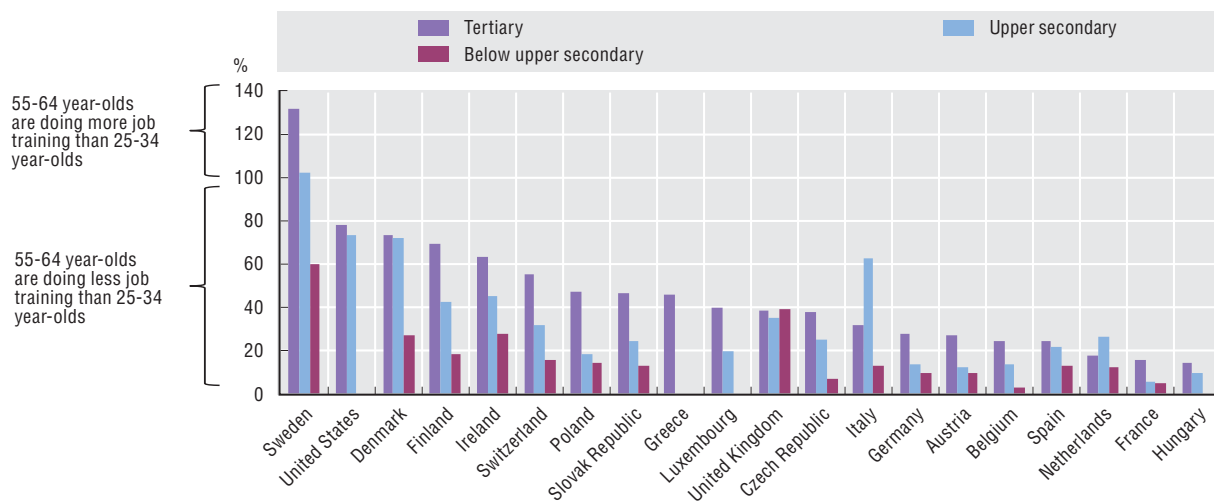
*Qualifications Systems: Bridges to Lifelong Learning* (2007).

*Promoting Adult Learning* (2005).

*Co-financing Lifelong Learning: Towards a Systemic Approach* (2004).

Figure 1.14. **Job training for 55-64 year-olds compared with 25-34 year-olds, 2003**

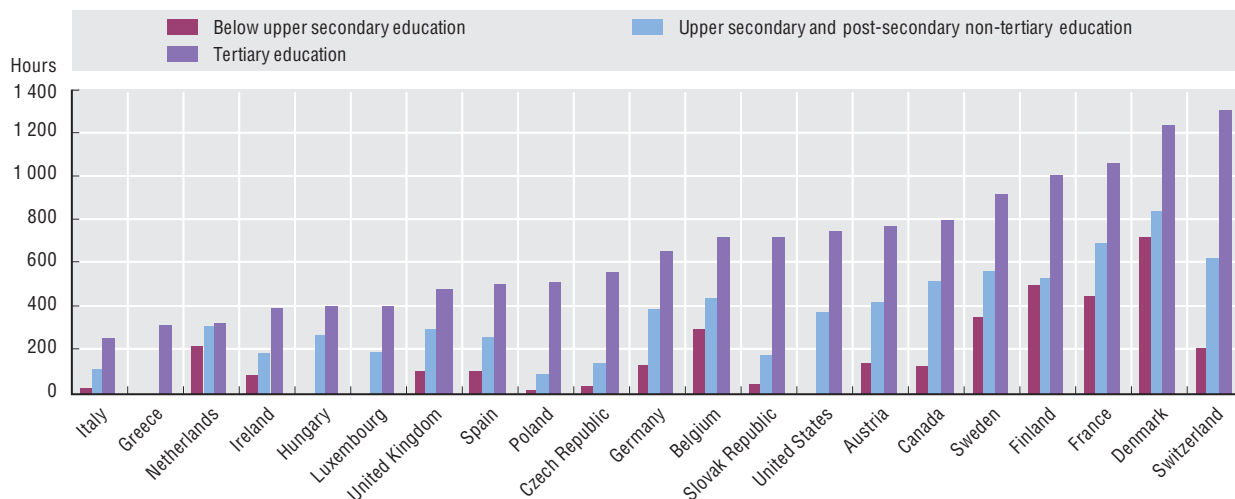
This figure shows the hours spent in job training by older workers as a percentage of the hours spent by younger workers, broken down by education levels. More highly educated workers do more training, but, with the exception of Sweden, the older age group always does less training than the younger group.



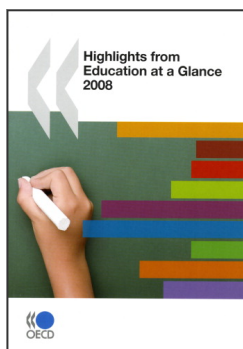
Source: OECD (2008), *Education at a Glance 2008*, Table C5.1b, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/402178012235>.

Figure 1.15. **Expected hours of job training for 25-64 year-olds by level of educational attainment, 2003**

This figure shows the number of hours of job training that 25-64 year-olds can expect to receive over the course of their career. Consistently, workers with higher levels of education receive more job training.



Source: OECD (2008), *Education at a Glance 2008*, Table C5.1a, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/402178012235>.



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