

TERTIARY ATTAINMENT

The share of the population that has attained qualifications at the tertiary level is a key indicator of how well countries are placed to profit from technological and scientific progress. The difference between tertiary attainment of younger and older age groups is a measure of progress in the attainment of higher education.

Definition

For each age group shown, those who have completed tertiary education are shown as a percentage of all persons in that age group. Tertiary education includes both tertiary-type “A programmes”, which are largely theoretically-based and designed to provide qualifications for entry to advanced research programmes and professions with high skill requirements, as well as tertiary-type “B programmes”

which are classified at the same level of competencies as tertiary-type A programmes but are more occupationally-oriented and lead to direct labour market access. The tertiary attainment profiles are based on the percentage of the population aged 25 to 64 that has completed that level of education.

Comparability

The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-97) is used to define the levels of education in a comparable way across countries. See the *OECD Handbook for Internationally Comparative Education Statistics* for a description of ISCED-97 education programmes and attainment levels and their mappings for each country.

Long-term trends

OECD countries have seen significant increases in the proportion of the adult population attaining tertiary education over the last decades. In 2006 for the 25-64 year-old population, 15 countries are grouped together within a range of 10 points between 25 and 35% of the population having attained the tertiary level. Three member countries are performing remarkably high: Canada, Japan and the United States. Conversely, two member countries are significantly below this average percentage in tertiary attainment where less than 13% of the population has attained tertiary qualifications: Italy and Turkey.

In the youngest age group, 25 to 34 years old, the OECD country average for tertiary attainment increased from 25 to 33% between 1997 and 2006. In three OECD countries – Canada, Japan and Korea – 50% or more of this age group had in 2006 obtained a tertiary qualification.

An indication of longer term trends can be obtained by comparing the current attainment levels of younger and older age cohorts. For instance, comparing the tertiary attainment levels of 25-34 year olds with those of 55-64 year olds indicates that in Korea, there has been an increase in tertiary attainment over the past 30 years of more than 40 percentage points, nearly 30 percentage points higher than the OECD average increase over this period. In contrast, some OECD countries have only seen marginal increases (USA) or even decreases (Germany) of over the same period.

Source

- OECD (2008), *Education at a Glance*, OECD, Paris.

Further information

Analytical publications

- Blöndal S., S. Field and N. Girouard (2002), *Investment in Human Capital Through Post-Compulsory Education and Training: Selected Efficiency and Equity Aspects*, OECD Economics Department Working Papers, No. 333, OECD, Paris.
- Blöndal, S., S. Field and N. Girouard (2002), “Investment in Human Capital through Upper-Secondary and Tertiary Education”, *OECD Economic Studies*, No. 34, 2002/I, OECD, Paris.
- Hansson, B. (2007), *Effects of Tertiary Expansion: Crowding-out Effects and Labour Market Matches for the Higher Educated*, OECD Education Working Papers, No. 10, OECD, Paris.
- OECD (2008), *Reviews of National Policies for Education*, OECD, Paris.
- OECD (2008), *Trends Shaping Education – 2008 Edition*, OECD, Paris.

Methodological publications

- OECD (2004), *OECD Handbook for Internationally Comparative Education Statistics: Concepts, Standards, Definitions and Classifications*, OECD, Paris.

Websites

- OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI), www.oecd.org/edu/ceri.
- OECD Education at a Glance, www.oecd.org/edu/eag2007.



Tertiary attainment for age group 25-64

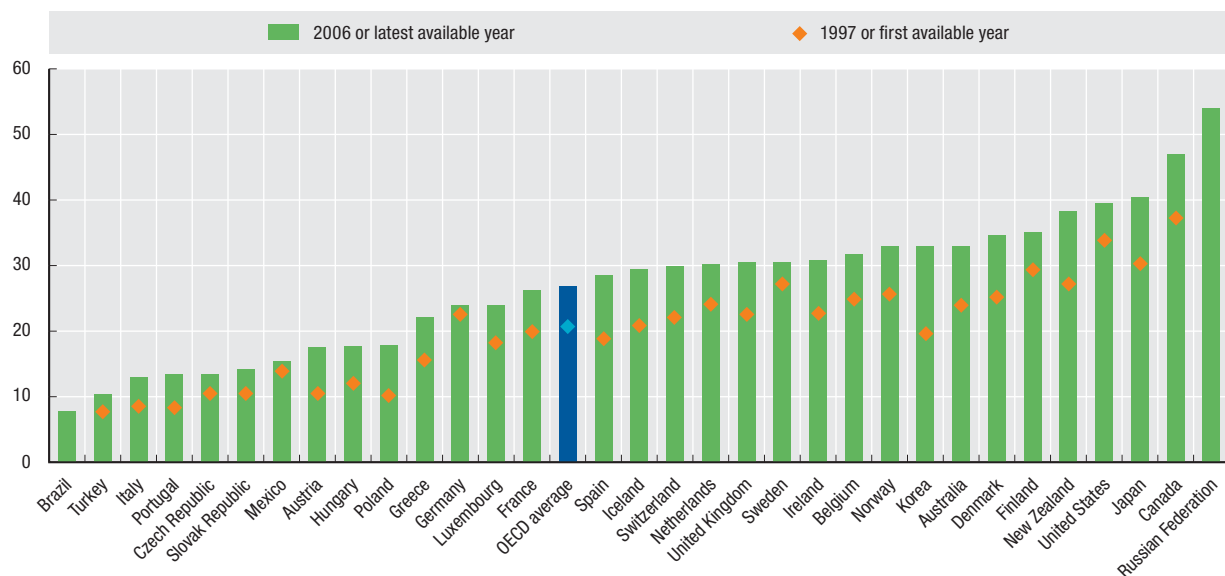
As a percentage of the population of that age group

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Australia	24.3	25.4	26.7	27.5	29.0	30.8	31.3	30.8	31.7	33.0
Austria	10.6	10.9	10.9	13.9	14.1	14.5	14.5	18.3	17.8	17.6
Belgium	25.1	25.3	26.7	27.1	27.6	28.1	29.0	30.4	31.0	31.8
Canada	37.3	38.1	39.2	40.0	41.6	42.6	44.0	44.6	46.1	47.0
Czech Republic	10.6	10.4	10.8	11.0	11.1	11.9	12.0	12.3	13.1	13.5
Denmark	..	25.4	26.5	26.2	28.4	29.6	31.9	32.9	33.5	34.7
Finland	29.4	30.2	31.3	32.0	32.3	32.6	33.3	34.2	34.6	35.1
France	20.0	20.6	21.5	22.0	23.0	24.0	23.9	24.5	25.4	26.2
Germany	22.6	23.0	22.9	23.5	23.2	23.4	24.0	24.9	24.6	23.9
Greece	15.5	16.8	17.4	17.5	17.9	18.6	19.2	21.2	21.3	22.2
Hungary	12.2	13.2	13.5	14.0	14.0	14.2	15.4	16.7	17.1	17.7
Iceland	20.9	21.0	22.4	23.2	24.6	25.6	28.9	29.1	30.5	29.5
Ireland	22.8	21.1	20.5	18.5	23.6	24.8	26.3	27.8	29.1	30.8
Italy	..	8.6	9.3	9.4	10.0	10.4	10.5	11.6	12.2	12.9
Japan	30.5	30.6	31.8	33.6	34.1	36.6	37.4	38.7	39.9	40.5
Korea	19.8	22.5	23.1	23.9	25.0	26.0	29.5	30.5	31.6	32.9
Luxembourg	..	..	18.3	18.3	18.1	18.6	14.3	23.7	26.5	24.0
Mexico	13.8	13.6	13.4	14.6	15.0	15.3	15.4	16.4	14.9	15.4
Netherlands	..	24.2	22.6	23.4	23.2	25.0	27.5	29.5	30.1	30.2
New Zealand	27.5	28.1	29.0	29.2	29.3	30.8	32.3	35.6	39.4	38.3
Norway	25.8	27.4	27.5	28.4	30.2	31.0	31.0	31.8	32.7	32.9
Poland	10.2	10.9	11.3	11.4	11.9	12.6	14.2	15.7	16.9	17.9
Portugal	..	8.3	8.7	8.9	9.1	9.3	10.8	12.5	12.8	13.5
Slovak Republic	10.5	10.3	10.1	10.4	10.9	11.0	11.8	12.4	13.7	14.2
Spain	18.6	19.7	21.0	22.6	23.6	24.4	25.2	26.4	28.2	28.5
Sweden	27.5	28.0	28.7	30.1	31.6	32.6	33.4	34.5	29.6	30.5
Switzerland	22.2	22.9	23.6	24.2	25.4	25.4	26.9	28.1	28.8	29.9
Turkey	7.6	7.5	8.1	8.3	8.4	9.1	9.7	9.1	9.7	10.4
United Kingdom	22.7	23.7	24.8	25.7	26.1	26.9	28.0	29.2	29.6	30.5
United States	34.1	34.9	35.8	36.5	37.3	38.1	38.4	39.1	39.0	39.5
OECD average	20.8	20.7	21.2	21.8	22.7	23.4	24.3	25.4	26.0	26.8
Brazil	7.8
Russian Federation	54.0

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Tertiary attainment for age group 25-64

As a percentage of the population of that age group




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TERTIARY ATTAINMENT

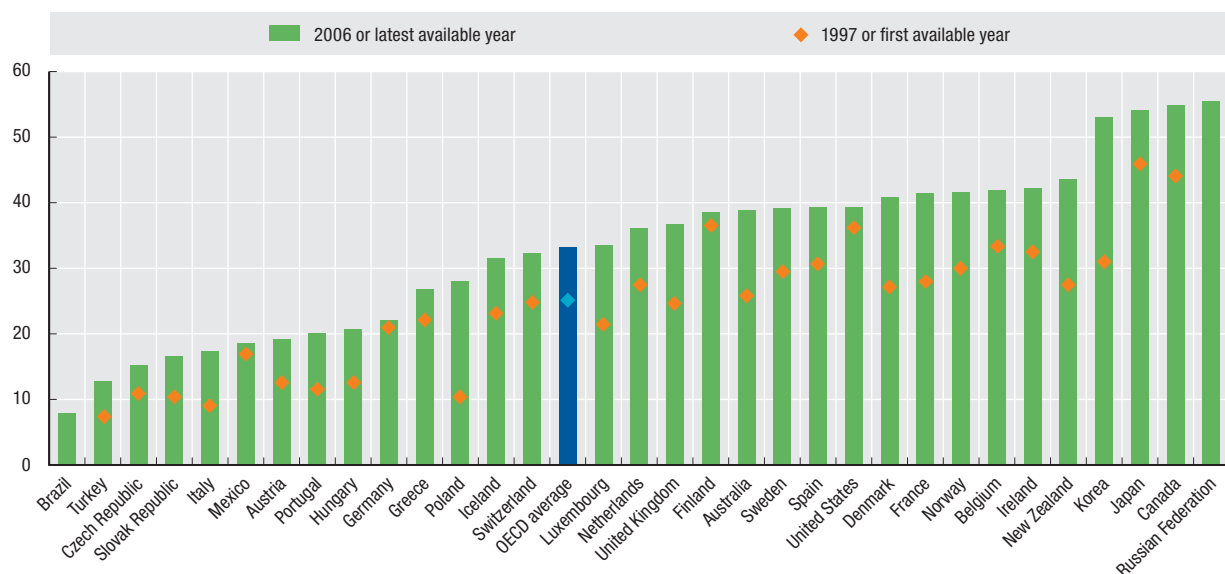

Tertiary attainment for age group 25-34

As a percentage of the population of that age group

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Australia	25.7	28.1	29.0	31.4	33.5	35.8	36.3	36.2	38.1	38.8
Austria	12.4	12.5	12.7	15.0	14.3	14.8	15.4	20.3	19.7	19.2
Belgium	33.1	33.8	34.4	36.0	37.5	37.6	38.9	40.7	40.6	41.9
Canada	44.1	45.5	46.8	48.3	50.5	51.2	52.8	53.3	53.8	54.8
Czech Republic	10.9	10.5	10.9	11.2	11.3	12.3	12.1	13.0	14.2	15.2
Denmark	..	26.8	28.6	28.9	31.1	32.3	35.1	37.6	39.8	40.8
Finland	36.4	36.0	37.4	37.6	38.2	39.2	37.9	38.2	37.5	38.5
France	27.8	29.6	30.9	32.4	34.2	36.1	37.9	38.4	39.8	41.4
Germany	21.0	21.5	21.5	22.3	21.8	21.7	21.8	22.9	22.5	22.0
Greece	22.3	23.7	23.9	23.6	23.3	23.4	23.7	25.3	25.4	26.7
Hungary	12.4	13.9	13.7	14.7	14.8	15.0	16.8	18.9	19.6	20.7
Iceland	23.0	24.2	27.6	27.8	26.5	28.1	32.8	33.3	35.8	31.5
Ireland	32.5	29.5	28.1	25.2	33.4	35.2	37.1	39.6	40.6	42.2
Italy	..	9.0	10.0	10.4	11.8	12.5	12.7	14.8	16.1	17.3
Japan	45.8	46.1	45.8	47.8	48.5	51.0	51.6	52.6	53.2	54.1
Korea	30.9	33.8	34.8	36.9	39.2	41.2	46.6	49.1	51.0	53.0
Luxembourg	..	..	21.2	22.9	23.4	22.6	18.8	32.4	37.0	33.5
Mexico	16.7	16.7	16.3	17.5	18.1	18.6	18.9	19.5	18.2	18.6
Netherlands	..	27.5	25.1	26.6	26.5	28.3	32.1	34.5	35.4	36.0
New Zealand	27.5	27.8	28.4	29.3	30.2	31.6	34.6	39.5	44.0	43.6
Norway	29.9	32.8	34.7	34.9	37.9	39.7	39.8	39.2	40.9	41.5
Poland	10.3	11.8	12.3	14.2	15.2	16.8	20.4	23.2	25.5	28.0
Portugal	..	11.5	12.2	13.0	14.0	15.0	16.3	18.6	19.1	20.0
Slovak Republic	10.4	11.3	11.1	11.2	11.9	11.9	13.2	14.3	16.3	16.6
Spain	30.3	32.0	33.5	34.1	35.5	36.7	37.5	38.1	39.7	39.2
Sweden	29.3	30.7	31.7	33.6	36.9	39.2	40.4	42.3	37.3	39.1
Switzerland	24.7	25.0	25.9	25.6	25.6	26.7	29.2	30.4	31.0	32.2
Turkey	7.3	7.8	8.7	8.9	9.1	10.5	11.4	10.8	11.8	12.8
United Kingdom	24.7	25.9	27.3	28.6	29.5	31.2	33.1	34.9	35.0	36.7
United States	35.7	36.2	37.4	38.1	39.1	39.3	38.7	39.0	39.2	39.2
OECD average	24.9	24.8	25.3	26.2	27.4	28.4	29.8	31.3	32.2	33.2
Brazil	7.9
Russian Federation	55.5

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Tertiary attainment for age group 25-34

As a percentage of the population of that age group


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Tertiary attainment for age group 55-64

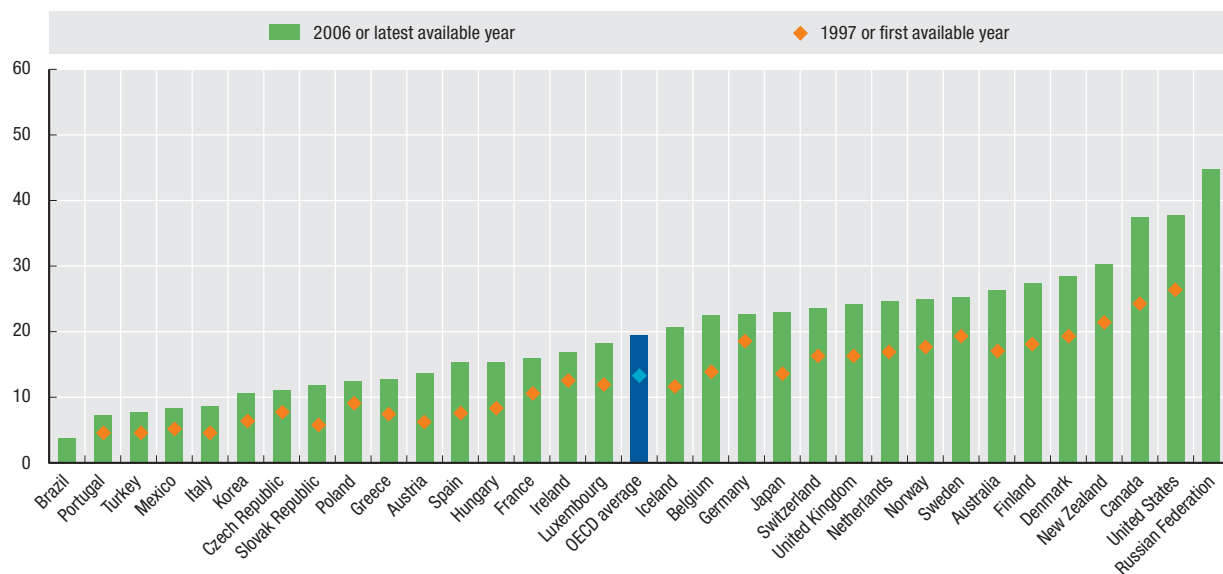
As a percentage of the population of that age group

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Australia	17.1	17.0	17.5	19.1	21.1	22.5	23.3	23.0	23.8	26.3
Austria	6.3	6.5	6.5	9.9	10.6	11.0	11.3	14.8	14.0	13.7
Belgium	13.7	13.8	15.7	16.8	17.1	18.2	18.9	20.0	21.9	22.5
Canada	24.3	25.7	27.4	28.3	30.1	32.1	33.8	34.5	36.3	37.4
Czech Republic	7.9	8.5	9.4	9.1	9.3	10.6	10.3	10.2	10.7	11.1
Denmark	..	19.3	19.0	18.9	22.2	24.2	25.9	26.8	27.3	28.5
Finland	17.9	19.3	20.7	22.7	23.4	23.4	25.0	25.7	26.5	27.3
France	10.5	11.2	12.4	13.3	14.1	15.2	14.0	14.8	16.1	16.0
Germany	18.4	19.3	19.4	20.2	20.2	20.6	21.6	22.8	22.9	22.7
Greece	7.5	7.8	8.1	8.3	8.8	10.1	11.2	12.2	11.9	12.7
Hungary	8.5	10.2	11.2	11.8	11.5	12.6	13.8	14.4	14.6	15.4
Iceland	11.6	10.8	11.3	13.5	14.8	16.9	16.5	18.4	20.5	20.7
Ireland	12.5	11.4	12.6	11.5	13.5	14.3	14.6	15.4	16.7	16.9
Italy	..	4.8	5.5	5.5	6.2	6.7	6.9	7.4	8.0	8.6
Japan	13.7	13.2	14.3	15.2	15.1	18.0	19.2	20.6	21.7	22.9
Korea	6.5	8.3	8.5	8.6	8.9	9.1	9.5	9.7	10.0	10.6
Luxembourg	..	..	12.0	13.0	13.5	14.4	10.2	15.8	18.6	18.2
Mexico	5.3	4.8	5.6	7.0	7.2	7.3	7.7	8.5	8.0	8.3
Netherlands	..	16.9	16.9	17.7	17.4	19.6	21.9	24.0	24.4	24.6
New Zealand	21.4	22.6	23.6	23.0	22.0	25.0	25.9	29.1	32.0	30.3
Norway	17.5	18.9	18.8	20.4	21.5	21.7	21.7	23.2	24.0	24.9
Poland	9.1	9.9	10.4	9.9	10.2	10.5	11.1	12.2	12.7	12.5
Portugal	..	4.7	4.5	4.7	4.9	4.6	5.6	6.7	7.4	7.3
Slovak Republic	6.1	6.7	6.9	7.8	8.6	8.6	8.9	9.3	10.5	11.8
Spain	7.6	8.1	8.7	9.7	10.3	10.5	11.0	12.4	14.5	15.3
Sweden	19.3	19.9	21.3	23.0	24.4	25.2	26.3	27.3	24.9	25.2
Switzerland	16.5	18.0	17.8	18.3	20.2	21.3	22.0	22.1	22.1	23.5
Turkey	4.6	4.5	5.3	5.9	5.9	6.3	7.3	6.6	7.2	7.7
United Kingdom	16.3	17.2	18.5	18.9	19.1	19.8	20.8	22.7	23.8	24.1
United States	26.2	27.2	28.0	29.7	30.6	33.2	34.7	36.2	36.9	37.7
OECD average	13.1	13.3	13.9	14.7	15.4	16.4	17.0	18.2	19.0	19.5
Brazil	3.7
Russian Federation	44.8

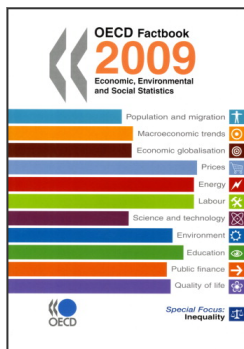
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Tertiary attainment for age group 55-64

As a percentage of the population of that age group



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