

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the labour market and in life, education is worth the effort...

On average, over 80% of tertiary-educated adults are employed, compared with over 70% of people with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education, and less than 60% of adults without upper secondary education. Tertiary-educated adults also earn about 60% more, on average, than adults with upper secondary as their highest level of educational attainment. In general, employment rates and earnings increase as an adult's level of education and skills increases; but the labour market still regards a diploma or degree as the primary indication of a worker's skills.

No doubt with these advantages in mind, increasing numbers of young adults in OECD countries are pursuing tertiary education. On average across the OECD countries and sub-national entities that participated in the Survey of Adult Skills, a product of the OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), in 2012, 22% of 25-34 year-old non-students – and in Korea, 47% of this group – have attained tertiary education even though their parents had not. These “first generation tertiary-educated adults” and the tertiary-educated adults whose parents had also completed tertiary education share similar employment rates and pursue similar fields of study. This suggests that being the first in a family to attain tertiary education is in no way a disadvantage.

Data also show that although the entry rate into bachelor's degree programmes is much higher than the entry rate into master's or doctoral programmes, there are more opportunities in the labour market – and higher earnings – for adults with a master's degree than for those with only a bachelor's degree. Employed adults with a bachelor's or equivalent degree earn about 60% more than employed adults with upper secondary education, but those with a master's, doctoral or equivalent degree earn more than twice as much.

But the benefits of education are not only financial. Adults with higher educational attainment are more likely to report that they are in good health, that they participate in volunteer activities, that they trust others, and that they feel they have a say in government. In other words, more highly educated adults tend to be more engaged in the world around them.

...although inequities persist

Despite narrowing – or even inverted – gender gaps in educational attainment, women are still under-represented in certain fields of education, such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Young women are also less likely than young men to be employed, although the gender gap in employment is much narrower among tertiary-educated young adults than among those with lower educational attainment.

The data also show that the strongest influence on earnings is an adult's own educational attainment. Adults with tertiary education are 23 percentage points more likely to be among the 25% highest paid adults (in monthly earnings) compared with adults whose highest level of attainment is upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education.

Between 2010 and 2012, public spending on education fell in many OECD countries

The education sector felt a delayed reaction to the global economic crisis of 2008. Between 2010 and 2012, as GDP began to rise following the slowdown, public expenditure on educational institutions fell in more than one in three OECD countries.

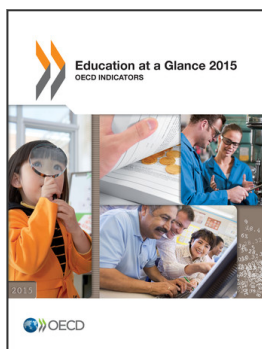
The economic downturn of 2008 also had a direct impact on primary and secondary teachers' salaries. In the years immediately following the crisis, even though some countries had already begun a slow recovery, teachers' salaries were frozen or cut, such that the number of countries showing an increase in salaries, in real terms, between 2008 and 2013 shrank to about one in two OECD countries. These trends did nothing to narrow the considerable pay gap between teachers and other similarly educated workers. On average across OECD countries, pre-primary

and primary teachers earn 78% of the salary of a similarly educated, full-time, full-year worker, lower secondary teachers are paid 80% and upper secondary teachers are paid 82% of that benchmark salary. These uncompetitive salaries will make it that much harder to attract the best candidates to the teaching profession.

Cuts in funding could also threaten professional development activities for teachers. PISA data reveal that, despite increasing investment in information and communication technologies (ICT) for schools, teachers are not using these tools systematically. Indeed, teachers who participated in the 2013 OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) reported that one of the areas in which they most need professional development is developing ICT skills for teaching.

Other findings

- In 2012, OECD countries spent an average of 5.3% of their GDP on educational institutions from primary to tertiary education; 11 countries with available data spent more than 6% of their GDP.
- Education is mostly publicly funded, but tertiary institutions obtain the largest proportion of funds from private sources. Between 2000 and 2012, the average share of public funding for tertiary institutions decreased from 69% in 2000, to 64% in 2012.
- Early childhood education is particularly beneficial for students with an immigrant background.
- In all countries and economies that participated in the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2012, the gender gap in reading performance is narrower in digital reading than in print reading. Girls outperform boys in digital reading by an average of 26 score points, compared to an average of 38 score points – the equivalent of nearly one year of schooling – in print reading.
- Some 77% of adults with a vocational upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary qualification are employed – a rate that is 7 percentage points higher than that among adults with a general upper secondary education as their highest qualification.
- One in five 20-24 year-olds is neither employed nor in education or training.
- About 57% of employed adults with good skills in information and communication technology and in problem solving participate in employer-sponsored formal and/or non-formal education; only 9% of adults who cannot use a computer and lack problem-solving skills participate in such programmes.
- Larger classes are correlated with less time spent on teaching and learning, and more time spent on keeping order in the classroom. One additional student added to an average-size class is associated with a 0.5 percentage-point decrease in time spent on teaching and learning activities.
- The teaching force across OECD countries is ageing: in 2013, 36% of secondary school teachers were at least 50 years old. This proportion rose by 3 percentage points between 2005 and 2013, on average among countries with comparable data.



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