

Education provides individuals with knowledge and competencies to participate effectively in society and to break the cycle of disadvantage. Still, in 2008 one-fourth of the OECD population had only a basic education and in most of the regions in Mexico and Portugal, and in some regions in Chile and Spain, this proportion was as high as 50%.

Large regional differences in education attainment within a country are generally found in countries with a high proportion of adults with only basic education attainment. This is the case of France, Greece, Mexico, Portugal and Spain. However, in Germany, Korea and the United States the share of population with only basic education is lower than the OECD average, but regional differences are higher (Figure 24.1).

In the knowledge-based economy the demand for skills is increasing and a high school diploma has become the minimum level to participate in the job market. On average, 80% of an age cohort in 2008 is estimated to complete upper secondary education in OECD countries (*Education at a Glance 2010*). However, the number of young adults (aged 18-24) who have not completed upper secondary education and are not enrolled in training – the early school leavers – is high in some countries such as, Portugal, Spain and Turkey. Opportunities within countries also seem to be very different: the difference between regions in the share of early school leavers is high in Italy, Greece and the United Kingdom, besides Portugal, Spain and Turkey (Figure 24.2).

Regional inequalities in education attainment persist also for higher levels of education; the most in Canada (mostly due to the unequal distribution of population in the country), Chile, Portugal and Finland. The Gini index of regional labour force with at least upper education has decreased only in half of the OECD countries over the past ten years (Figure 24.3).

Educational attainment and graduation rates alone do not capture the quality of educational outcomes. Monitoring the outcomes of education in different regions can give insight of where/ how to intervene. Countries that have undertaken the OECD PISA survey at the regional level show that regional disparities in learning outcomes also persist in unitary educational systems (OECD PISA 2009 Results: Annex B2 – Results for regions within countries). Even when taking into account the different socio-economic backgrounds of students, the location of schools still matter: in the OECD area, students in city schools outperform rural areas by more than 20 score points, or the equivalent of almost one year of education (Figure 24.4).

### Source

OECD Regional Database: <http://stats.oecd.org/WBOS>.

See Annex B for data, source and country-related meta-data.

OECD PISA [www.oecd.org/edu/pisa/2009](http://www.oecd.org/edu/pisa/2009).

Early school leavers – Eurostat LFS.

### Definition

The educational attainment rate is defined as the proportion of labour force with a certain level of education. The international standard classification for education (ISCED 97) is used to define the levels of education. Pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education comprises the 3 lowest ISCED levels: 0, 1 and 2. For simplicity, here it is referred as basic education (or lower secondary education). Upper secondary education comprises ISCED levels 3-4, while tertiary education levels 5-6.

The population aged 18-24 that has at most attained a lower secondary diploma and is not following any training is defined as early school leavers.

The Gini index is a measure of inequality among all regions of a given country (see Annex C for the formula). The index takes on values between 0 and 1, with zero interpreted as no disparity. It assigns equal weight to each region regardless of its size; therefore differences in the value of the index among countries may be partially due to differences in the average size of regions in each country.

The OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) assesses 15-year-old students' ability to use their knowledge and skills.

### Reference years and territorial level

1999-2008; TL2.

Data for Iceland and Japan are not available at the regional level. In Turkey data available only for secondary education.

Data for Chile refer to tertiary educational attainment of population aged 15 and more.

### Further information

OECD (2010), *Education at a Glance 2010: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, DOI: 10.1787/eag-2010-en.

OECD (2010), *PISA 2009 Results: Overcoming Social Background: Equity in Learning Opportunities and Outcomes (Volume II)*, PISA, OECD Publishing, DOI: 10.1787/9789264091504-en.

### Figure notes

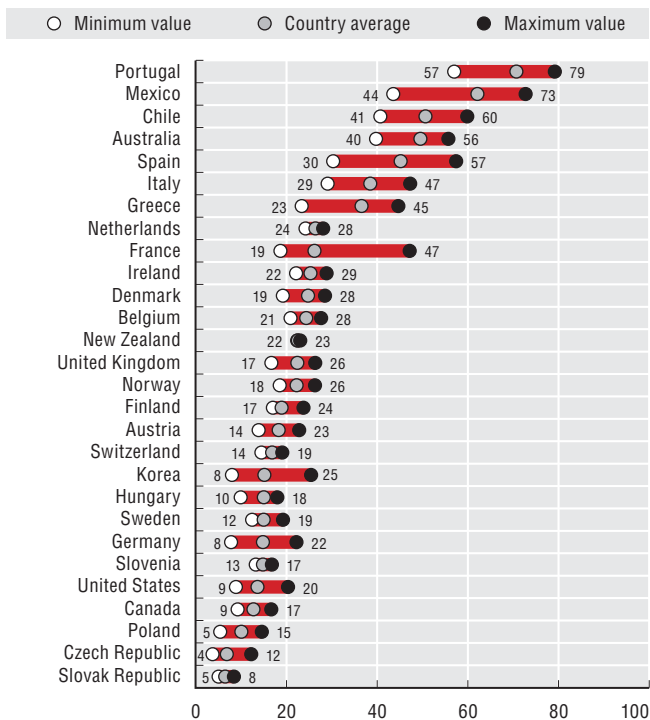
24.1: Countries ranked by average share of population with only basic education.

24.2: Only European countries (source own computations from Eurostat data). Range computed on available regional data.

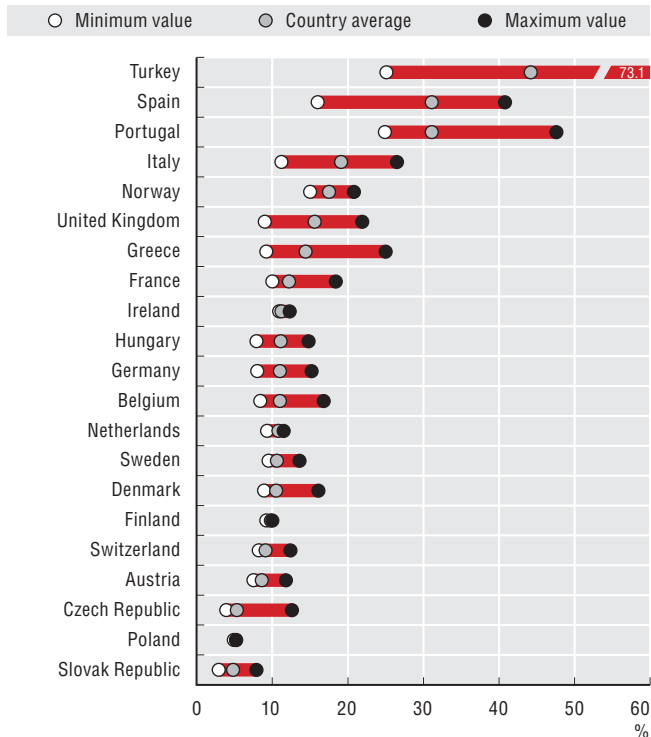
24.4 Source OECD PISA 2009 Database, Table II.2.6.

Information on data for Israel: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932315602>.

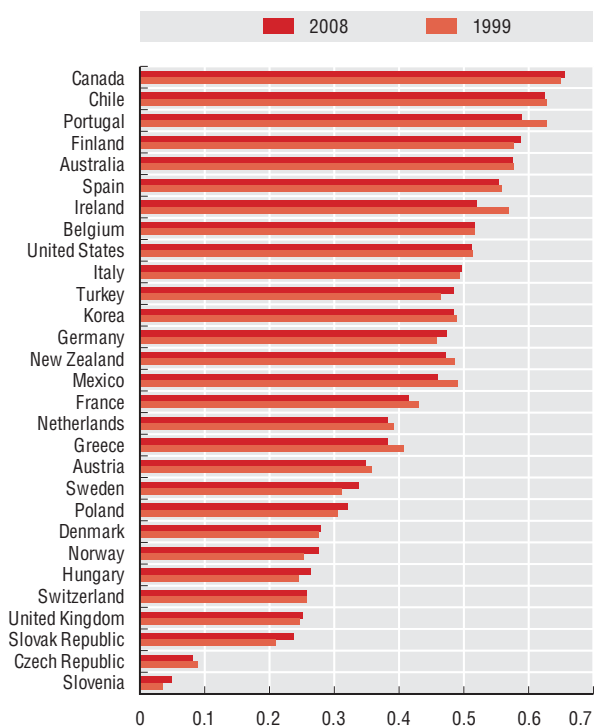
24.1. Range in TL2 regional education attainment: labour force with only basic education, 2008



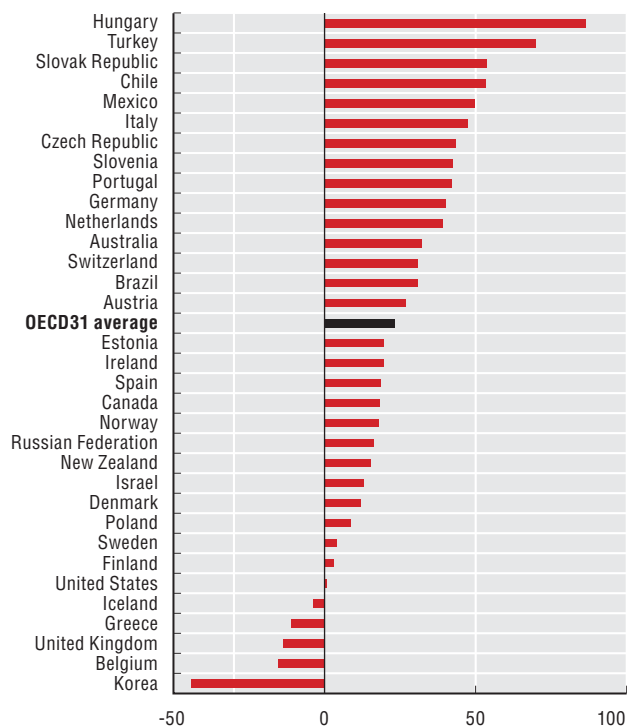
24.2. Regional range of early school leavers, TL2, 2009



24.3. Gini index of TL2 regional labour force with at least upper secondary education, 1999 and 2008



24.4. Score point difference in reading performance associated with being in a city school or rural school, after adjusting for socio-economic background, 2009



StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932439843>



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