

### Education and learning for adults

- More than 50% of adults participate in adult education in a given year, among countries with available data.
- On average, 30% of adults with low literacy levels participate in adult education, compared to 74% of highly-literate adults.
- Participation in adult education is most common among younger adults and declines steadily among older adults.
- For teachers, professional development is compulsory at every level in about three-quarters of OECD and partner countries.

#### Significance

Adult learning can play an important role in helping adults to develop and maintain key skills, as well as acquire new knowledge and skills, throughout life. It is crucial to provide, and ensure access to, organised learning opportunities for adults beyond initial formal education, especially for workers who need to adapt to changes throughout their careers. Lifelong learning can also contribute to non-economic goals, such as personal fulfilment, improved health, civic participation and social inclusion. This section looks at the participation levels of adults in formal and non-formal education, using the Survey of Adult Skills, which covers 24 countries. There is a clear relationship between participation in organised adult learning and the average level of key skills in a given country.

#### Findings

Some 51% of 25-64 year-olds participated in adult education in the previous year, on average. This ranges from above 60% in Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden to below 25%, in Italy and the Russian Federation.

Participation in adult education in all countries is strongly related to skill level and educational attainment. A highly-literate adult is almost 2.5 times more likely to participate in education than an adult with a low level of literacy. This difference is even greater when including education, as a highly-literate tertiary graduate is almost 4 times more likely to take part in adult education than a low-educated, low-literate adult. Participation rates are also affected by parents' education, with 68% of adults with at least one tertiary-educated parent taking part in adult learning, compared with 40% of adults with parents who did not complete upper secondary education, on average.

Younger adults are more likely to participate in adult education than older adults. The average participation rate among 25-34 year-olds is 62%, while it only reaches 34% among 55-64 year-olds. This is possibly because of older people being outside the workforce, low employer invest-

ment in older workers and fewer incentives for older workers to improve their skills.

About 25% of adults are interested in taking part in adult learning but are not able to do so. This varies from more than 33% in Denmark, Korea and the United States, to less than 15% in Poland, the Russian Federation and the Slovak Republic. The two main reasons for not being able to take part are work and family responsibilities.

Professional development for teachers is also important, and is compulsory in 25 of the 33 countries with available data. A lifelong learning approach to teacher development is essential, considering that expectations of staff may change over time. For example, the growing diversity of learners, the greater integration of children and students with special needs, and the increasing use of information and communication technologies all demand that teachers continuously upgrade their skills. High-quality professional development can also help keep teachers in the profession.

#### Definitions

Adult education refers to formal and/or non-formal education and training. Data on skills are based on the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) 2012. Data on teacher learning are from the 2013 OECD-INES Survey on developing teachers' knowledge and skills and refer to the school year 2012-13.

Information on data for Israel:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932315602>.

#### Going further

For additional material, notes and a full explanation of sourcing and methodologies, see *Education at a Glance 2014* (Indicator C6 and D7).

Areas covered include:

- Adult education by age, educational attainment and skill level.
- Professional development for teachers.

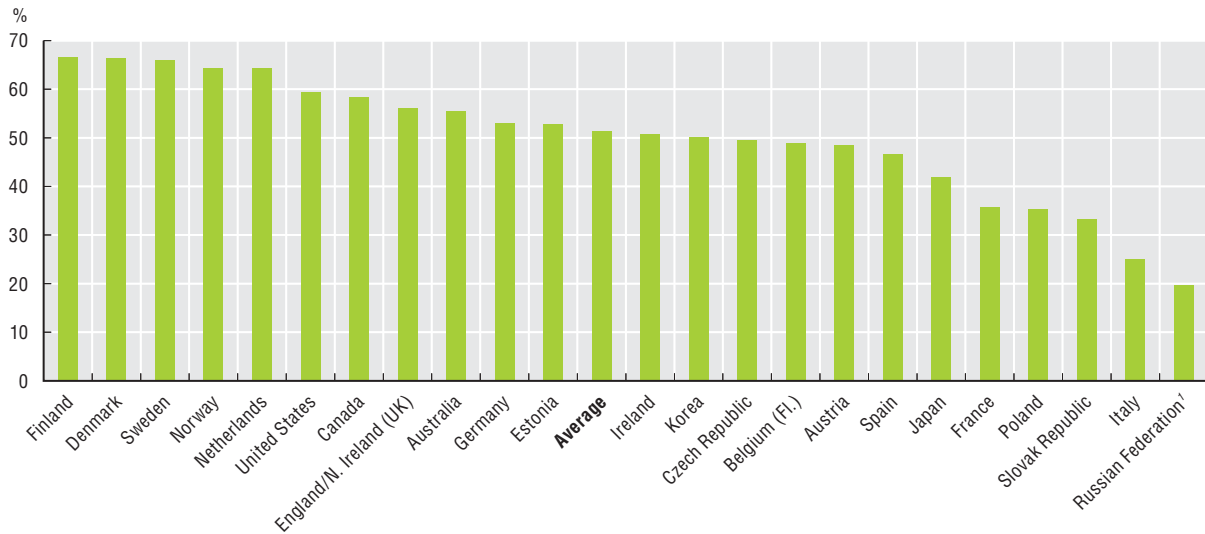
#### Further reading from OECD

OECD (2014), *TALIS 2013 Results: An International Perspective on Teaching and Learning*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264196261-en>.

OECD *Reviews of Vocational Education and Training* (series).

Figure 6.11. **Participation in adult learning, 2012**

This figure shows the percentage 25-64 year-olds who participated in adult education.

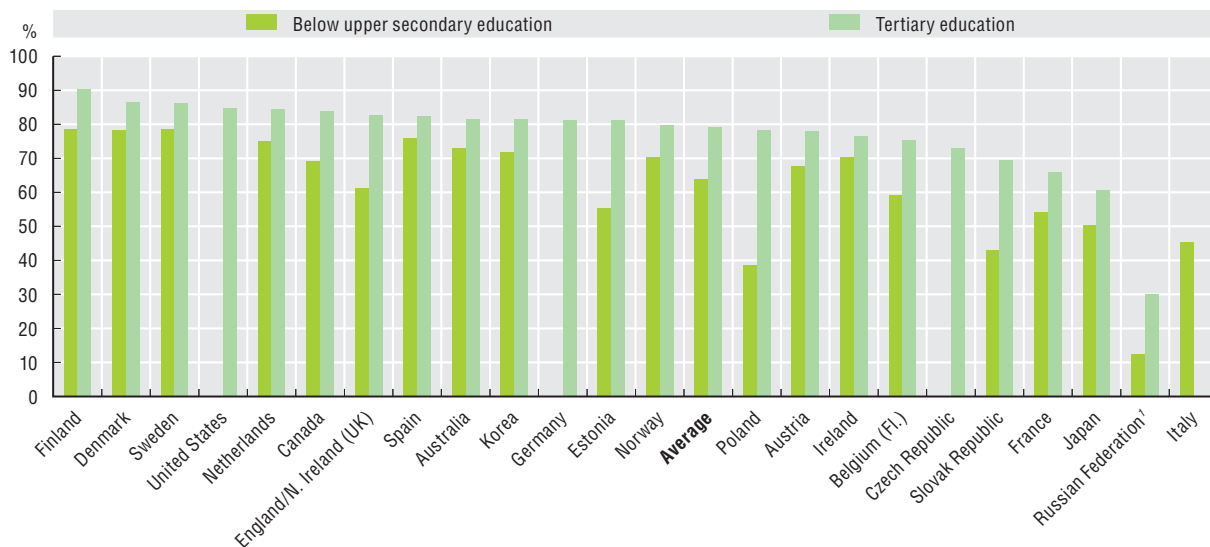


1. Data do not include Moscow municipal area.

Source: OECD (2014), *Education at a Glance 2014*, Chart C6.1, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933119207>.

Figure 6.12. **Participation in adult learning, by parents' level of education, 2012**

This figure shows the percentage of adults with at least one tertiary-educated parent participating in adult education, compared to those with parents who did not complete upper secondary education.



1. Data do not include Moscow municipal area.

Source: OECD (2014), *Education at a Glance 2014*, Chart C6.4, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933119264>.





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