

How many young people enter tertiary education?

- Some 58% of young adults in OECD countries are expected to enter university-level programmes over their lifetimes; however less than 3% are expected to enter advanced research programmes.
- Social sciences, business and law are the most popular fields of university-level study in almost all countries.
- Entry rates into university-level programmes are still higher for women (65%) than for men (52%) on average among OECD countries. But in advanced research programmes the gender gap almost disappears.

Significance

This section shows how many students are expected to enter a specific type of tertiary education during their lifetimes. It also sheds light on the accessibility and perceived value of tertiary programmes, and provides some indication of the degree to which a population is acquiring the high-level skills and knowledge valued by today's labour market. High entry and enrolment rates in tertiary education imply that a highly educated labour force is being developed and maintained.

Findings

An estimated 58% of young adults in OECD countries will enter university level programmes during their lifetimes if current patterns of entry continue. In several countries, at least 70% of young adults are expected to enter these programmes, while less than 35% are expected to do so in Belgium, Luxembourg and Mexico. This is also true of China and Indonesia among other G20 countries.

However, the number of entrants is somewhat different if international students who come to a country to study are excluded. In Australia, there is a 26 percentage point drop. However, in Poland and Slovenia the entry rate remains at around 70%.

Less than 3% of today's young adults in OECD countries are expected to enter advanced research programmes during their lifetimes. The proportions range from 1% or less in Chile, Japan, Luxembourg and Mexico (as well as Argentina and Indonesia among other G20 countries), to around 5% in Germany and Switzerland.

It is estimated that 18% of today's young adults (20% of women and 17% of men) will enter vocational programmes over their lifetimes. Proportions range from less than 5% in Iceland, Indonesia, Mexico, Poland and the Slovak Republic, to more than 35% in Belgium, Korea and New Zealand, and above 50% in Argentina and Chile.

On average among OECD countries, 82% of first-time entrants into university-level programmes and 58% of first-

time entrants into vocationally-oriented programmes in 2012 were under 25 years of age. In addition, 57% of students who entered advanced research programmes in 2012 were under 30 years of age.

The most popular fields of study chosen by new entrants into tertiary programmes are social sciences, business and law in all countries except Finland, Korea and Saudi Arabia.

Trends

The proportion of students entering university-level education increased by more than 20 percentage points, on average in OECD countries between 1995 and 2012. There has been a marked decrease of 4 percentage points since 2010, probably caused by the financial crisis. The overall increase since 1995 was due to the increased accessibility of tertiary education in many countries, but also because of structural changes in the education systems of some countries. Entry rates for tertiary programmes have also increased because the source of applicants has expanded to include many more international and older students.

Definitions

Data refer to the academic year 2011-12 and are based on the UOE data collection on education statistics administered by the OECD in 2013. Data on trends in entry rates for the years 1995, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004 are based on a special survey carried out in OECD countries in January 2007. Data on the impact of international students on tertiary entry rates are based on a special survey carried out by the OECD in December 2013. The net entry rate for a specific age is obtained by dividing the number of entrants of that age to each type of tertiary education by the total population in the corresponding age group.

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 C3).

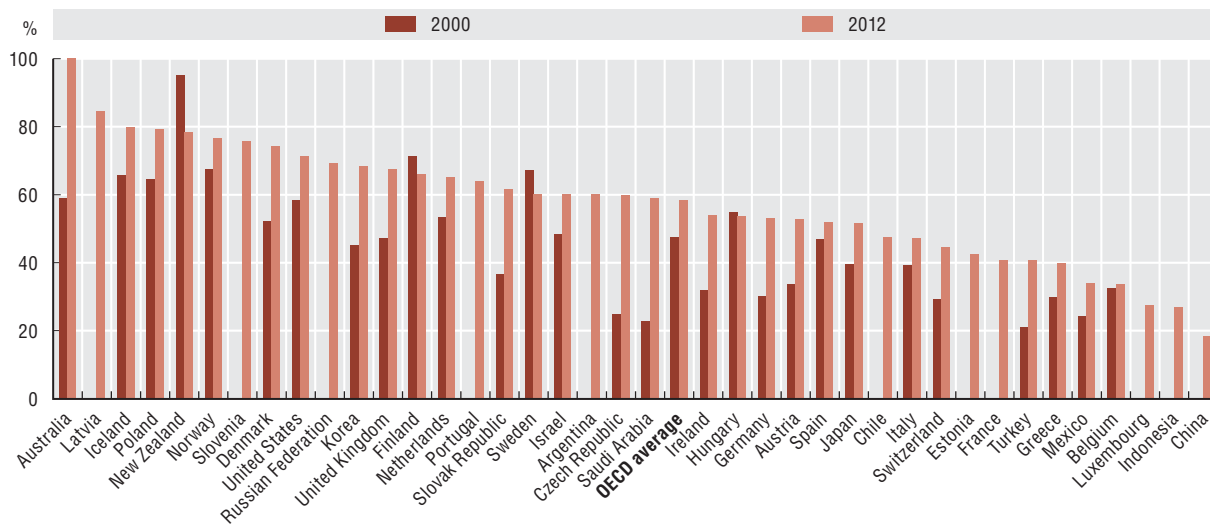
Areas covered include:

- Entry rates by level of education.
- Age of new entrants in tertiary education.
- Distribution of new entrants by age and gender.

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Figure 2.1. **Entry rates into university-level education (2000, 2012)**

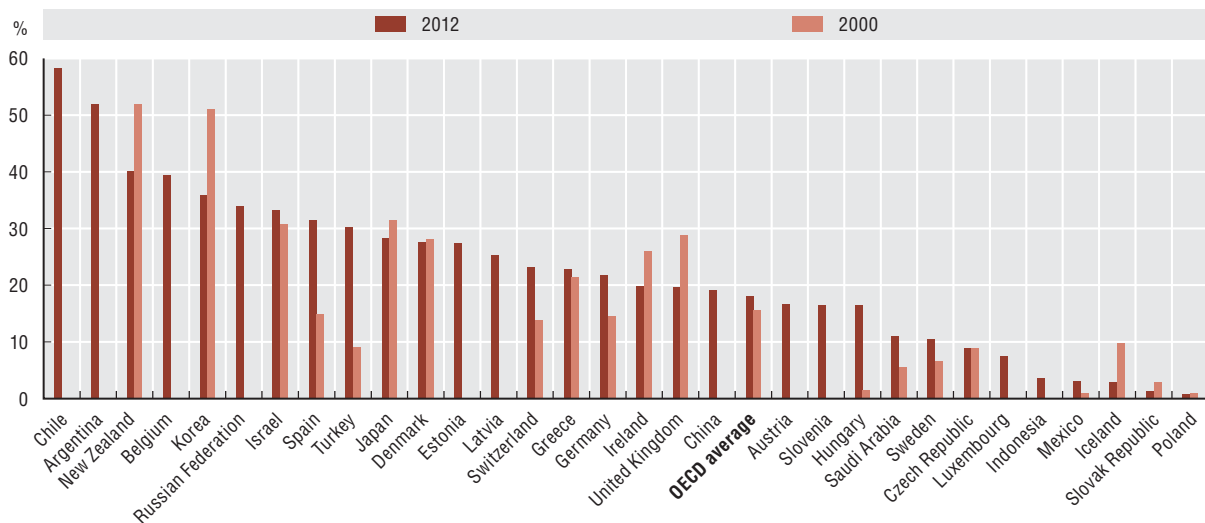
This figure shows the growth – or otherwise – in the percentage of young people entering university-level education. Entry rates have risen in most OECD countries.



Source: OECD (2014), Education at a Glance 2014, Chart C3.2., available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933118599>.

Figure 2.2. **Entry rates into vocationally-oriented tertiary education (2000, 2012)**

This figure shows the percentage of young people entering vocationally-oriented tertiary education



Source: OECD (2014), Education at a Glance 2014, Chart C3.2., available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933118599>.



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