

# 1. EDUCATION LEVELS AND STUDENT NUMBERS

## Who participates in education?

- In most OECD countries, virtually everyone has access to at least 13 years of formal education.
- In more than half of OECD countries, over 70% of 3-4 year-olds are enrolled in either pre-primary or primary programmes.
- From 1995 to 2009, enrolment rates for 20-29 year-olds increased by 8.2 percentage points.

### Significance

A well-educated population is essential for economic and social development; societies therefore have a real interest in ensuring that children and adults have access to a wide range of educational opportunities. This spread examines the evolution in access to education from 1995 to 2009, focusing on the number of young people who continue studying once compulsory education has ended.

### Findings

At least 90% of students are enrolled for a period of 14 or more years in Belgium, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain and Sweden. Enrolment rates exceed 90% during 11 years or less of education in Argentina, Chile, Korea, Mexico and the United States; in Brazil, Indonesia and Turkey, 90% of children have access to education during only 9 years or less. On average, a child is more likely to be enrolled in formal education at age 3 to 4 in the EU21 countries than in other OECD countries. In almost half of OECD countries, full enrolment (meaning more than 90% enrolment) begins between the ages of 5 and 7. However, in nearly two thirds of OECD countries, at least 70% of 3-4 year-olds are enrolled in either pre-primary or primary programmes (see Table C1.1 in *Education at a Glance 2011*).

The age at which compulsory education ends ranges from 14 years in Korea, Portugal, Slovenia and Turkey, to 18 years in Belgium, some provinces of Canada, Chile, Germany, Hungary and the Netherlands. In most OECD and other G20 countries, enrolment rates decline gradually during the last years of upper secondary education. More than 20% of 15-19 year-olds are not enrolled in education in Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, Chile, Indonesia, Israel, Mexico, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

Enrolment rates for 20-29 year-olds indicate mostly the number of people attending tertiary education. (Note, tertiary enrolment rates can also be influenced by the presence of high numbers of international students.) On average in OECD countries, 26% of this age group was

enrolled in education in 2009. Enrolment rates were 30% or more in Australia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, New Zealand, Poland, Slovenia and Sweden.

### Trends

Enrolment rates for 15-19 year-olds increased on average from 74% to 83% from 1995 to 2009. There has been growth, too, in enrolment for 20-29 year-olds, the age span during which most students are enrolled in tertiary education; between 1995 and 2009, their enrolment rates increased in nearly all OECD countries. Growth was at or above 10 percentage points in the Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary, Iceland, Korea, New Zealand, Poland and Sweden, and was particularly significant in the Czech Republic and Hungary, which were previously at the bottom of the scale of OECD countries but have since moved up to the middle. In around one-third of countries with available data, the enrolment rate for the two age groups has levelled off in the past five years. In upper secondary education, this may reflect the attainment of near-universal enrolment.

### Definitions

Data for the 2008-09 school year are based on the UOE data collection on education statistics, administered annually by the OECD. Except where otherwise noted, figures are based on head counts and do not distinguish between full-time and part-time study.

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

### Going further

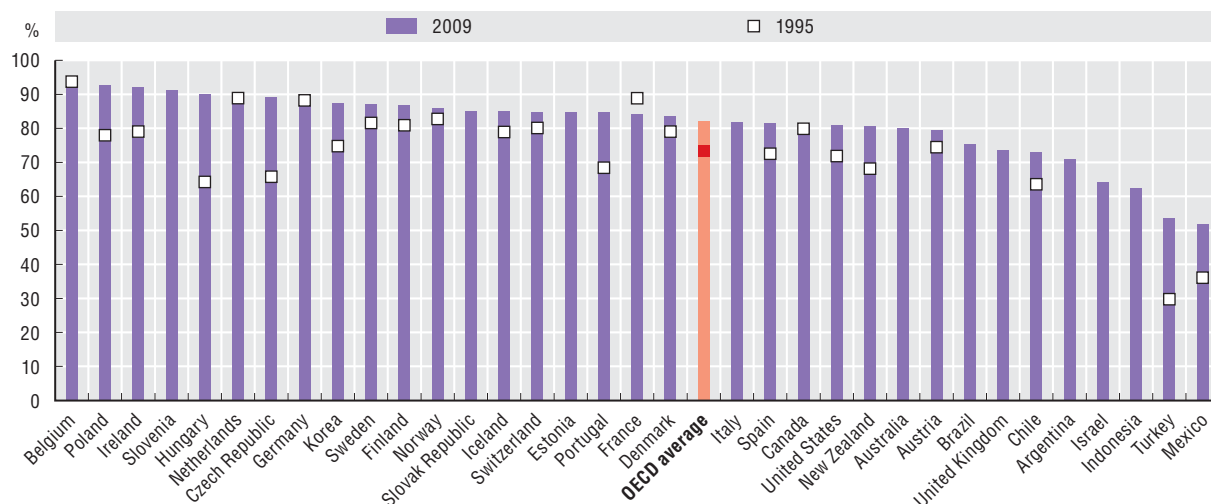
For additional material, notes and a full explanation of sourcing and methodologies, see *Education at a Glance 2011* (Indicator C1).

Areas covered include:

- Students in primary, secondary and tertiary education, by type of institution or mode of enrolment.
- Transition characteristics from age 15 to 20, by level of education.
- Education expectancy.

Figure 1.3. **Enrolment rates of 15-19 year-olds (1995, 2009)**

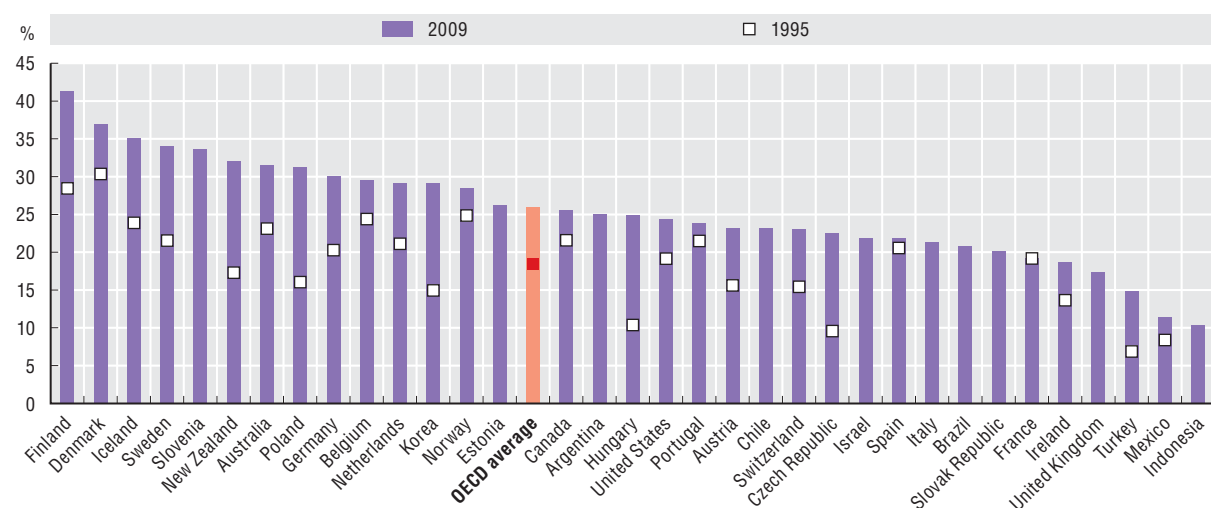
This figure shows the increase or decrease in the percentage of 15-19 year-olds enrolled in full-time and part-time education.



Source: OECD (2011), *Education at a Glance 2011*, Table C1.2, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932464296>.

Figure 1.4. **Enrolment rates of 20-29 year-olds (1995, 2009)**

This figure shows the increase or decrease in the percentage of 20-29 year-olds enrolled in full-time and part-time education.



Source: OECD (2011), *Education at a Glance 2011*, Table C1.2, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932464296>; Argentina and Indonesia: UNESCO Institute for Statistics.



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