

1. EDUCATION LEVELS AND STUDENT NUMBERS

How many young people enter tertiary education?

This page includes revisions. Details available at: www.oecd.org/publishing/corrigenda.

- An average of 62% of today's young adults in OECD countries are expected to enter university-level programmes and 17% to enter vocationally oriented programmes over their lifetimes.
- In 2010, the expected rate of entry into university-level programmes was 25% higher for women than for men.
- Entry rates for university-level programmes increased by an average of nearly 25 percentage points across OECD countries between 1995 and 2010, while entry rates for vocationally oriented programmes remained stable.

Significance

This section shows how many students will enter a specific type of tertiary education programme 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 participation rates in tertiary education imply that a highly educated labour force is being developed and maintained.

Findings

It is estimated that 62% 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 in Belgium, China, Indonesia, Luxembourg and Mexico, not more than 35% are expected to do so.

The proportion of students entering vocationally-oriented programmes is generally smaller, mainly because these programmes are less developed in most OECD countries. In the countries for which data are available, an average of 17% of young adults is expected to enter these programmes, 19% of women and 16% of men. Proportions range from 3% or less in Italy, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal and the Slovak Republic; to 30% or more in Argentina, Belgium, Korea, and New Zealand; to more than 50% in Chile.

On average, in all OECD countries with comparable data, the proportion of young adults expected to enter university-level programmes increased by 15 percentage points between 2000 and 2010. In Australia, Austria, the Czech Republic, Iceland, Ireland, Korea, Saudi Arabia and the Slovak Republic, entry rates into these programmes increased by more than 20 percentage points between 2000 and 2010.

Only Finland, Hungary and New Zealand have experienced a decline in entry rates into these programmes. In Hungary, the decrease is counterbalanced by a significant increase in entry rates into vocationally oriented programmes during the same period. In New Zealand, the rise and fall of entry rates between 2000 and 2010 closely mirrors the rise and fall of the number of international students over the same period.

Traditionally, students enter academic programmes immediately after having completed upper secondary education, and this remains true in many countries. For example, in Belgium, Indonesia, Italy and Mexico more than 90% of all new entrants into tertiary education are under 25 years of age. In other countries, the transition from upper secondary to tertiary education may occur at a later age because of time spent in the labour force or the military.

Trends

The proportion of students entering university-level education increased by nearly 25 percentage points on average in OECD countries between 1995 and 2010. This rise is due to the increased accessibility of tertiary education in many countries, but also because of structural changes in the education systems of some countries.

Definitions

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. 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 2012* (Indicator C3).

Areas covered include:

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

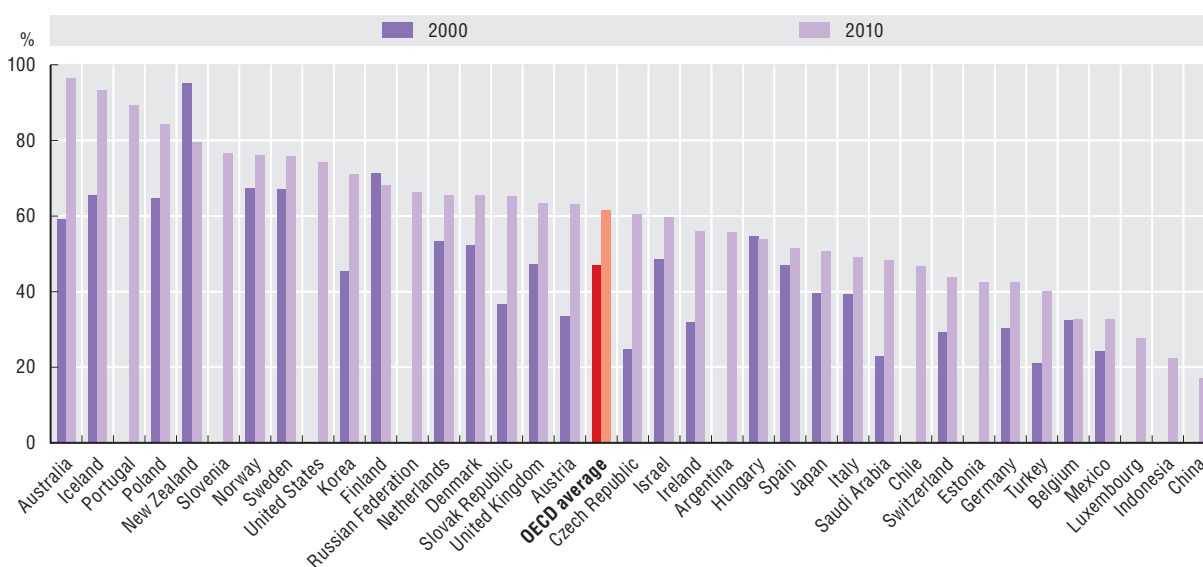
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Figure 1.7. **Entry rates into university-level education (2000, 2010)**

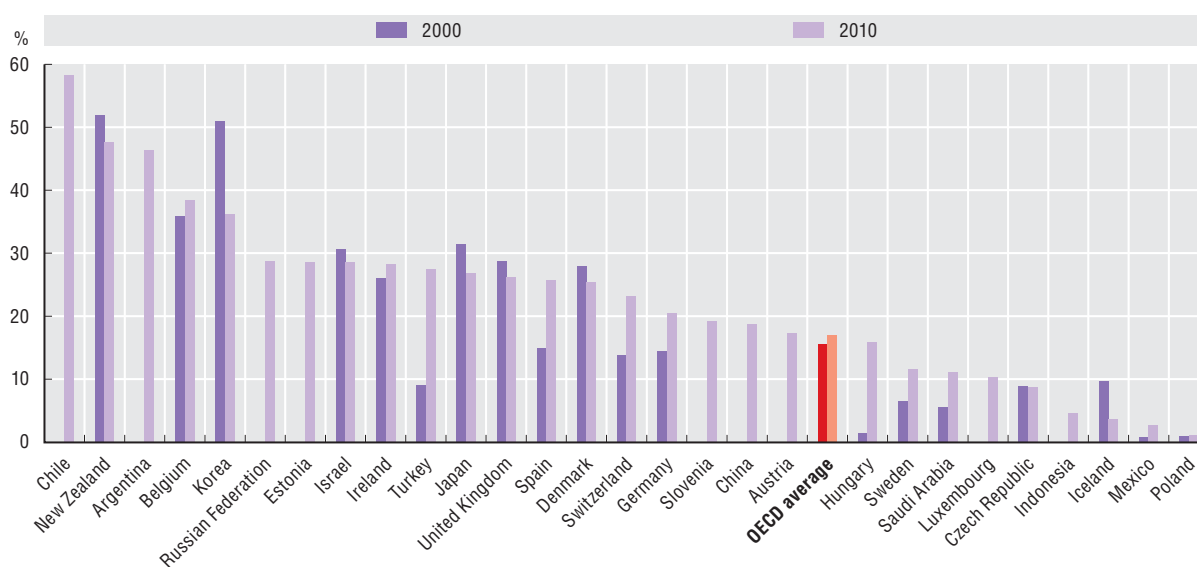
This figure shows the growth – or otherwise – in the percentage of young people entering university-level education. Entry rates have risen in most OECD countries.



Source: OECD (2012), *Education at a Glance 2012*, Table C3.3, available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932667140>.

Figure 1.8. **Entry rates into vocationally oriented tertiary education (2000, 2010)**

This figure shows the relative stability, in most OECD countries, in the percentage of young people entering vocationally oriented tertiary education.



Source: OECD (2012), *Education at a Glance 2012*, Table C3.3, available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932667140>.



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