

1. EDUCATION LEVELS AND STUDENT NUMBERS

How many young people finish secondary education?

- It is estimated that an average of 83% of today's young people in OECD countries will complete upper secondary education over their lifetimes, based on current patterns of graduation. For G20 countries, the level is 79%.
- Young women are now more likely than young men to graduate from upper secondary programmes in almost all OECD countries, a reversal of the historical pattern.
- Around 10% of upper secondary graduates in Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands and Norway are 25 or older while in Iceland the proportion is almost 20% and in Portugal it is almost 30%.

Significance

This section shows how many students are expected to finish secondary education. Upper secondary education aims to equip students with the basic skills and knowledge necessary to enter the labour market or tertiary education and to become engaged citizens. Graduating from upper secondary education has become increasingly important in all countries, as the skills needed in the labour market are becoming more knowledge-based and as workers are progressively required to adapt to the uncertainties of a rapidly changing global economy. Young people in OECD countries who do not finish secondary education face severe difficulties when it comes to finding work. Policy makers are examining ways to reduce the number of early school-leavers, defined as those students who do not complete their upper secondary education. Internationally comparable measures of how many students successfully complete upper secondary programmes – which also show how many students are not completing these programmes – can assist efforts to that end.

Findings

First-time upper secondary graduation rates equal or exceed 75% in 23 of 29 countries with available data. In Denmark, Finland, Germany, Japan, Korea, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia and the United Kingdom, graduation rates equal or exceed 90%. Graduation rates for women now average 86% compared with 79% for men.

On average across OECD countries, students graduate for the first time at upper secondary level at the age of 20. However, this age varies between countries: from 17 years-old in Israel, Turkey and the United States to 22 or older in Finland, Iceland, Norway and Portugal.

Traditionally, more men have graduated from pre-vocational and vocational programmes than women and this is still true today. On average, graduation rates from these pro-

grammes are higher for men than for women by 4 percentage points with a graduation rate of 49% for men compared with 45% for women. Yet, more young women are graduating from vocational programmes than ever before. In Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, China, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain, graduation rates for women are now higher than those for men.

Gender differences are also apparent in young people's choice of field of study when pursuing vocational education. Engineering, manufacturing and construction are by far the most popular fields of study for boys, as 49% of boys in vocational programmes at the upper secondary level choose these topics; this figure reaches 70% in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary and Norway. Girls on the other hand tend to be more dispersed among social sciences, business and law (26% all together), health and welfare (17%) and services (17%)

Trends

Since 1995, upper secondary graduation rates have increased by an average of eight percentage points among OECD countries with comparable data. The greatest increase occurred in Mexico, which showed an annual growth rate of 4% between 2000 and 2011.

Definitions

Data refer to the 2010-11 academic year and are based on the UOE data collection on education statistics administered by the OECD in 2012.

Data on trends in graduation rates at upper secondary level for the years 1995 and 2000 through 2004 are based on a special survey carried out in January 2007.

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 2013* (indicator A2).

Areas covered include:

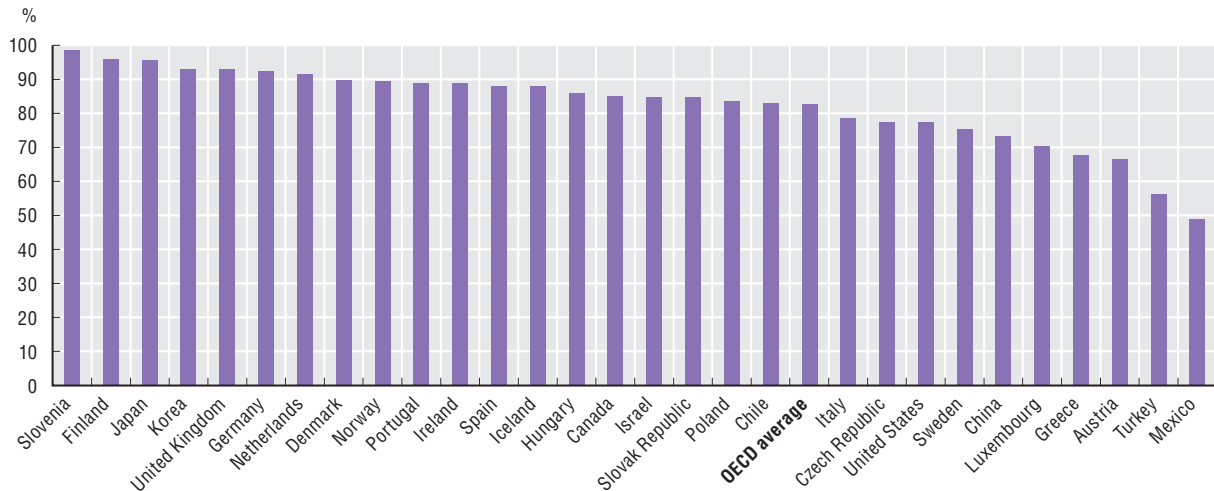
- Current upper secondary graduation rates and trends.

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Figure 1.7. **Upper secondary graduation rates, 2011**

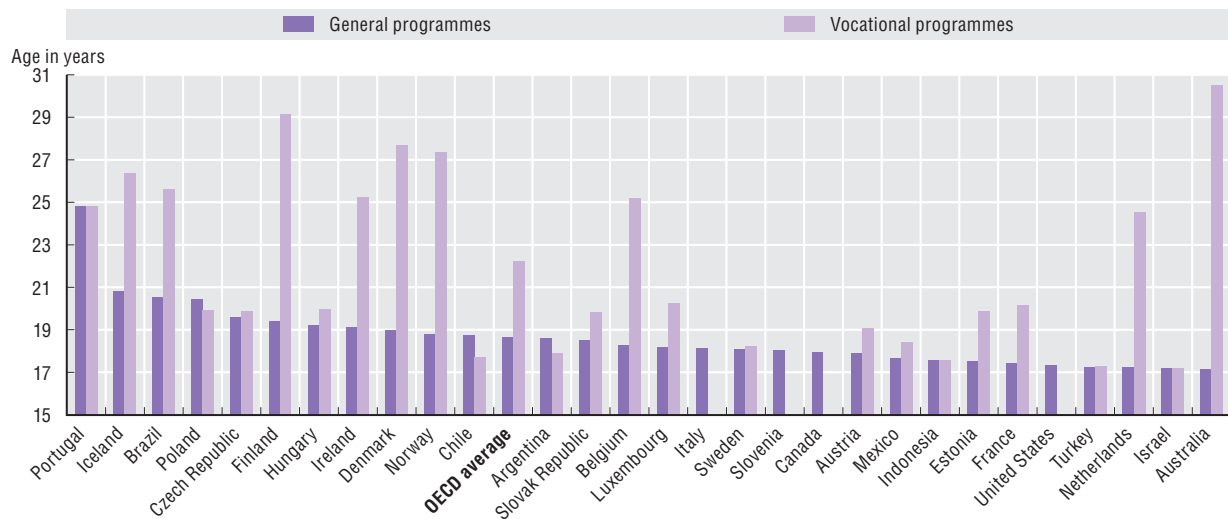
This figure shows the percentage of students who enter an upper secondary programme for the first time and who graduate from it in the amount of time normally allocated for completing the programme.



Source: OECD (2013), Education at a Glance 2013, Table A2.1a, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932848210>.

Figure 1.8. **Average age of upper secondary graduates, 2011**

This figure shows the average age of students who successfully complete an upper secondary programme.



Source: OECD (2013), Education at a Glance 2013, Chart A2.2, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932846329>.





2. HIGHER EDUCATION AND WORK

How many young people enter tertiary education?

How many young people graduate from tertiary education?

How many students fail to graduate?

How successful are students in moving from education to work?

How many students study abroad and where do they go?



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