

## 2. THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL BENEFITS OF EDUCATION

### What are the social benefits of education?

- Adults with higher levels of educational attainment are more likely to live longer, show higher levels of civic engagement and exhibit greater satisfaction with life.
- There is a clear positive relationship between education and life expectancy, although it is not as strong for women.
- There are significant differences in voting behaviour associated with educational attainment in most countries. On average, the gap in the voting rate between high- and low-educated adults is 14.8 percentage points. This gap is particularly wide among young adults with a difference of 26.8 percentage points.

#### Significance

Raising people's well-being and improving social cohesion are major concerns for OECD governments. There is general agreement on the important role that education and skills can play in attaining these outcomes, but far less certainty over how exactly this can be achieved. This section looks at the relationship between educational attainment and social measures of well-being in OECD countries. It focuses on three outcomes: life expectancy, voting and life satisfaction.

#### Findings

Education is an important predictor of life expectancy. Men with tertiary education can expect to live eight years longer than those who have not attained upper secondary education. The difference is four years among women, although on average they live longer than men overall. Differences in life expectancy are particularly large among men in central European countries. On average, a 30 year-old man with tertiary education in the Czech Republic can expect to live 17 years longer than a 30 year-old man who has not completed upper secondary education.

Voting behaviour is also associated with educational attainment in most countries. On average, the gap in voting rates between adults (25-64 year olds) with tertiary degrees and those not having reached upper-secondary education is 14.8 percentage points. This gap is considerably wider among younger adults aged 25-34, at 26.8 percentage points. For younger adults in Germany, this gap reaches 49.6 percentage points. Furthermore, students in grade 8 (approximately 14 years old), with higher levels of civic competencies show more supportive attitudes towards equal rights for ethnic minorities. In New Zealand, for

example, those with strong civic knowledge score an average 56.1 points on a scale measuring support for equal rights for ethnic minorities, while those with lower civic knowledge only score an average 45.6 points.

Finally, adults with higher levels of educational attainment are generally more likely than those with lower levels of attainment to engage in social activities and exhibit greater satisfaction with life.

#### Definitions

Developmental work for this indicator was carried out by INES Network on Labour Market, Economic and Social Outcomes of Learning in collaboration with the OECD's Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI). Calculations are based on data from the EUROSTAT Statistical Database, STATCAN's CANSIM Database for Canada, FitzGerald, Byre and Znyderl (2011) for Ireland, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (2010) for the United States, European Social Survey (ESS) 2008 and 010, General Social Survey (GSS) 2008 for Canada; Current Population Survey (CPS) 2008 for the United States; Estudo Eleitoral Brasileiro (ESEB) 2010 for Brazil.

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 A11).

Areas covered include:

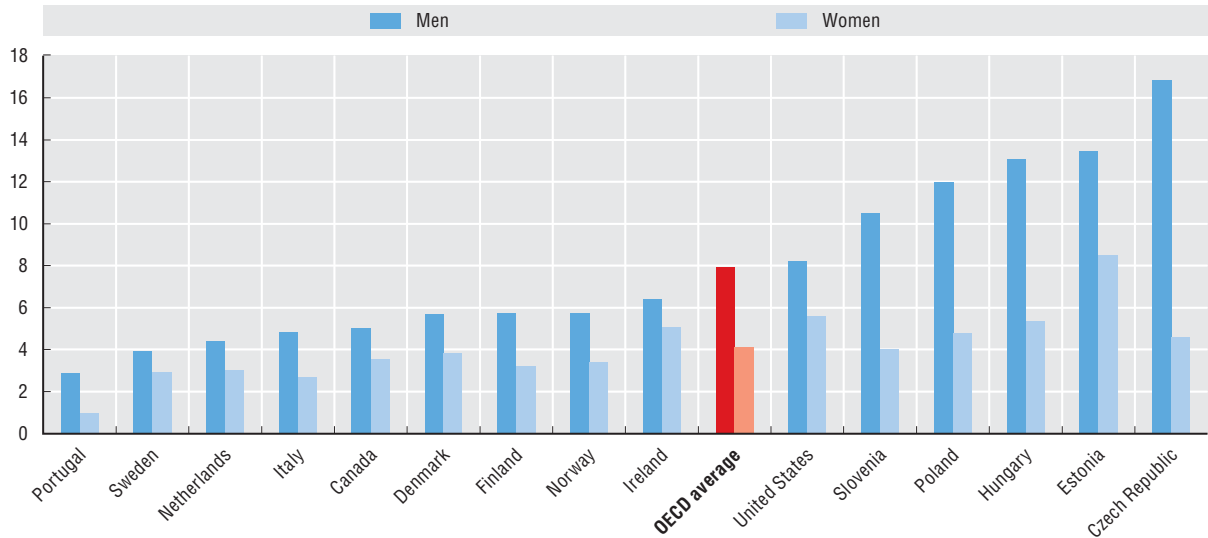
- Education level and life expectancy, voter turnout and engagement in social activities.
- Relationship between education level and civic behaviour.

#### Further reading from OECD

*Improving Health and Social Cohesion through Education* (2010).

Figure 2.9. **Life expectancy gaps between levels of education, by gender, 2010**

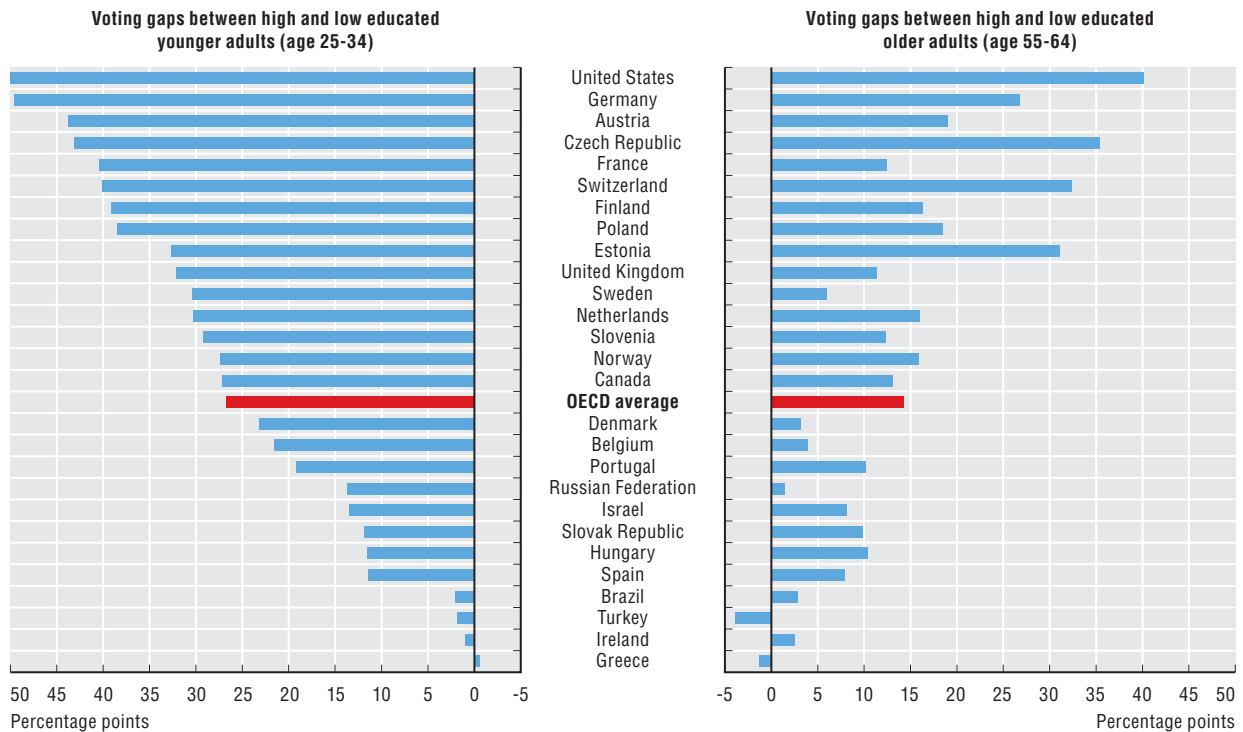
This figure shows the differences in expected years of life remaining at age 30 between high educated and low educated, by gender.



Source: OECD (2012), *Education at a Glance 2012*, Table A11.1, available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932665753>.

Figure 2.10. **Voting gaps between levels of education, by age group, 2010**

This figure shows the differences in electoral participation between people with high and low levels of education, at different ages. Countries with compulsory voting are included in the data, i.e. Belgium, Greece and Turkey.



Source: OECD (2012), *Education at a Glance 2012*, Table A11.2, available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932665772>.



**From:**  
**Education at a Glance 2012**  
Highlights

**Access the complete publication at:**  
[https://doi.org/10.1787/eag\\_highlights-2012-en](https://doi.org/10.1787/eag_highlights-2012-en)

**Please cite this chapter as:**

OECD (2012), "What are the social benefits of education?", in *Education at a Glance 2012: Highlights*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1787/eag\\_highlights-2012-14-en](https://doi.org/10.1787/eag_highlights-2012-14-en)

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