

In 2006, half of the labour force in OECD countries had an upper secondary education. In the knowledge based economy, the demand for skills is increasing and a high school diploma has become the minimum level to fully participate in the job market and a prerequisite for higher education. Nevertheless, almost one-fourth of the OECD labour force in 2006 had received only a basic education (lower than upper secondary school). This is a result of different patterns among countries. In 2006 Portugal was the country with the highest proportion of people with only basic education attainment (around 70%), while in the Czech Republic this proportion was below 10% (Figure 32.1).

A well-educated population is a key factor for the social and economic well-being of a region. Education provides individuals with knowledge and competencies to participate effectively in a society and to break the heredity of disadvantage. The proportion of people in a region or a country with a certain level of education gives a measure of the current stock of human capital. Therefore, large regional differences in the education attainment within a country suggest disparities in the access to education; these disparities will in turn reduce the development of a country.

Regional disparities in the level of education within countries remain high in many OECD countries. In 2006 the range of regional variation in the proportion of adults with only basic education attainment was higher than 20 points in Mexico, Spain, Greece, Portugal, France and Italy. The same countries showed a higher than the OECD average proportion of adults with only basic education (more than 28% as compared to 24% on OECD average) (Figure 32.3).

Similarly the proportion of people with at most upper secondary education varied in 2006 between 79% in the Slovak Republic to 11% in Portugal. Eastern European countries and Austria displayed the highest proportion of inhabitants with at most an upper secondary education attainment. Regional variation within the same country was highest in Australia (37 percentage points between New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory), followed by the United States and France (both at 24 percentage points each) (Figure 32.4).

While the range shows the difference between the regions with the highest and the lowest proportion of adults with a certain level of education attainment, the Gini index measures the regional disparities among all regions within a country. According to this index, Korea had the highest regional disparity in basic education attainment followed by the Czech Republic and Greece. Portugal and Belgium were the countries with the highest inequality in the upper secondary education attainment (Figure 32.2). In one-third of OECD coun-

tries, regional disparities in the education attainment narrowed thanks to an improvement of the education attainments in the least favored regions, between 1999 and 2006.

Definition

The education attainment rate is defined as the proportion of labour force with a certain level of education. The international standard classification for education (ISCED 97) is used to define the levels of education. Pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education comprises the 3 lowest ISCED levels: 0, 1 and 2. For simplicity, here it is referred as basic education or lower upper secondary education (mostly equivalent to high school diploma). Upper secondary education comprises the ISCED levels 3-4, while tertiary education the levels 5-6.

The Gini index is a measure of inequality among all regions of a given country (see Annex C for the formula). The index takes on values between 0 and 1, with zero interpreted as no disparity. It assigns equal weight to each region regardless of its size; therefore differences in the value of the index among countries may be partially due to differences in the average size of regions in each country.

Source

OECD Regional Database, <http://dotstat/wbos/>, theme: Regional Statistics.

See Annex B for data sources and country related metadata.

Reference years and territorial level

2006; TL2

No regional data available for Iceland, Japan and Turkey.

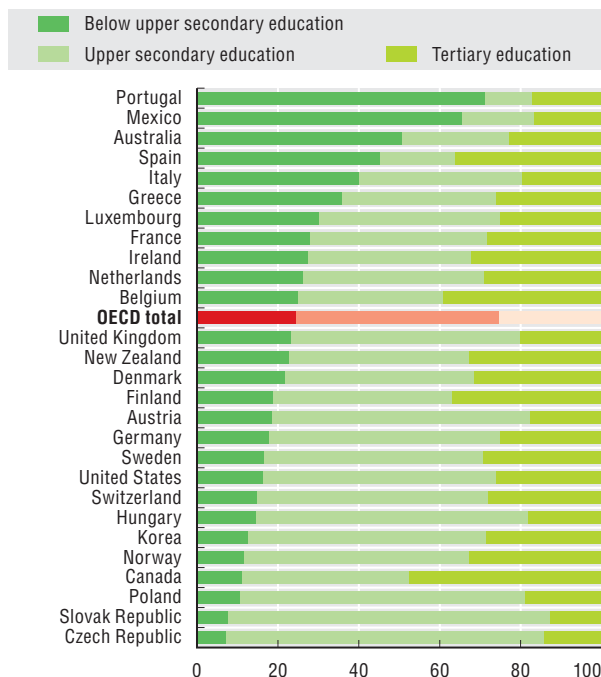
Last available year for Australia and Mexico 2005.

Figure notes

Figures 32.1 and 32.4: Below upper secondary education includes pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education (ISCED levels 0-2); upper secondary education comprises the ISCED levels 3-4 and tertiary education the ISCED levels 5-6.

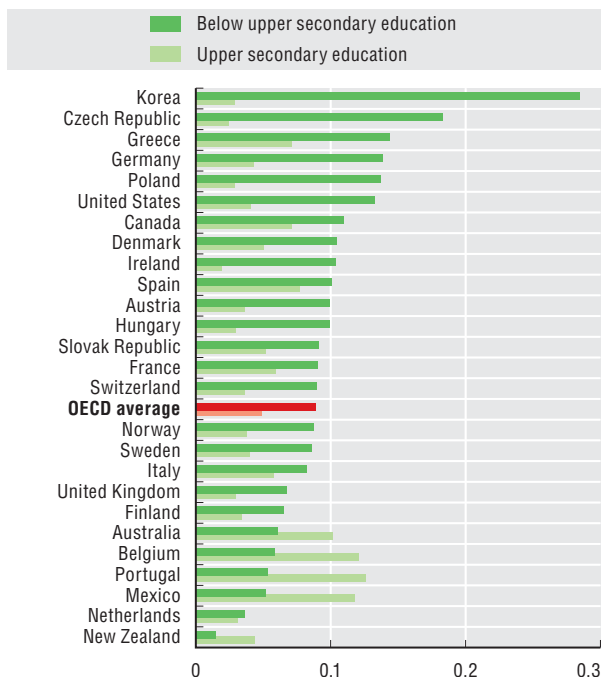
32.1 Labour force by educational attainment, 2006

One-fourth of the OECD labour force has received only basic education.



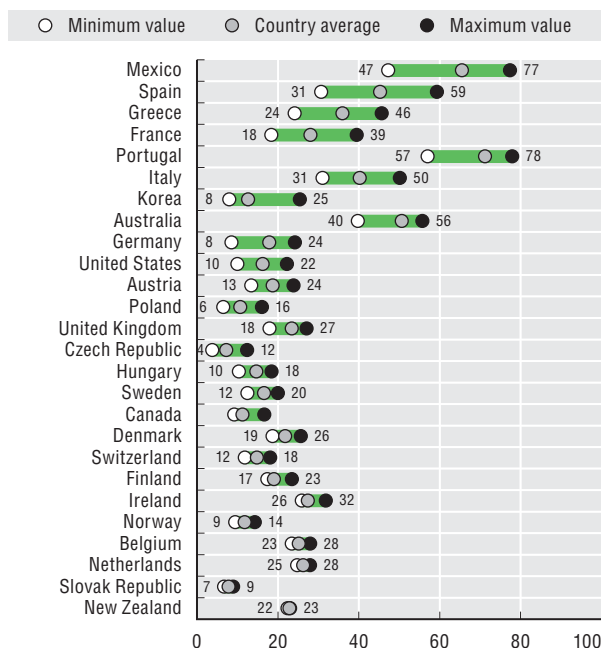
32.2 Gini index of education attainment in TL2 regions, 2006

Large regional differences in educational attainments suggest disparities in the access to education.



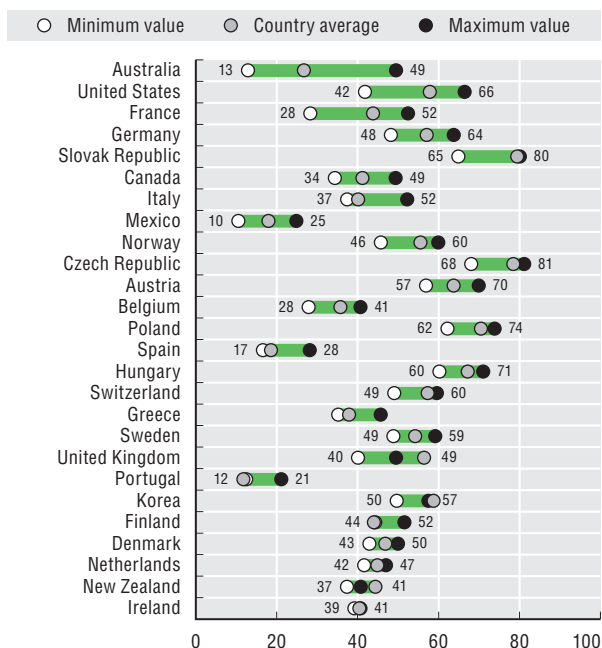
32.3 Range in TL2 regional basic education attainment, 2006

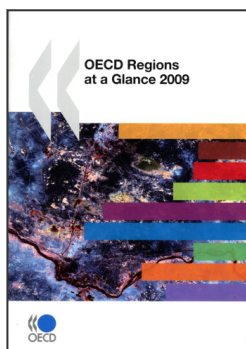
Mexico and Spain display the largest regional disparities in access to primary education.



32.4 Range in TL2 regional upper secondary education attainment, 2006

Australia and the US display the largest regional differences in access to secondary education.





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