

5. SPECIAL SECTION: EQUITY

Access to lifelong learning

- More than 40% of adults participate in formal and/or non-formal education in a given year across OECD countries.
- Age and educational attainment both influence participation in adult learning.
- Employers invest more in non-formal education per participant for men than for women.

Significance

Investing in education and training after leaving initial education is essential for upgrading the skills of the labour force. Competition for skills is fierce, particularly in high-growth, high-technology markets. In order to meet the needs of a changing labour market, an ever-larger segment of the population must be able to adapt to changing technologies and to learn and apply new sets of skills. Increasing investment in adult learning and reducing inequity in participation are among the policy goals found in many OECD countries.

Findings

More than 40% of adults participate in formal and/or non-formal education in a given year across OECD countries. This proportion ranges from less than 15% in Greece and Hungary to more than 60% in New Zealand and Sweden.

Age and educational attainment both influence participation in adult learning. Participation in all types of adult learning – formal, non-formal and informal – tends to decline for older people in many OECD countries. Across OECD countries, 50% of 25-34 year-olds participate in formal and/or non-formal education compared with only 27% of 55-64 year-olds. The lowest overall participation rate, 14%, is found amongst the older cohort with a low level of education. The highest participation rate, 65%, is found amongst younger people with tertiary education.

Formal education delivered by educational institutions such as schools, colleges or universities, is provided to 8% of adults on average in OECD countries. Formal education is provided to 17% of 25-34 year-olds and 2% of 55-64 year-olds. Across OECD countries, a participant in non-formal education receives 76 hours of instruction annually. Four out of

five of these hours are job-related. In all OECD countries, the oldest cohort (55-64 year-olds) receives fewer hours of instruction in job-related non-formal education than average. The difference in instruction hours between the youngest and the oldest cohort amount to more than 30 hours in Belgium, Hungary, Korea and the United Kingdom.

Gender can also have an impact on access to non-formal education, as the annual investment per participant in employer-sponsored non-formal education is substantially higher for men than for women. The labour costs of working time devoted to non-formal education are higher for men in every country but the estimated total number of hours in employer-sponsored non-formal education is higher for women in the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Portugal and Spain.

Definitions

Data for non-European countries were calculated from country-specific household surveys (see Annex 3). Data for countries in the European Statistical System come from the pilot EU Adult Education Survey (AES). The EU AES was conducted by 29 countries in the EU, EFTA and candidate countries between 2005 and 2008. The EU AES is a pilot exercise using a common framework, including a standard questionnaire, tools and quality reporting.

Information on data for Israel:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932315602>.

Going further

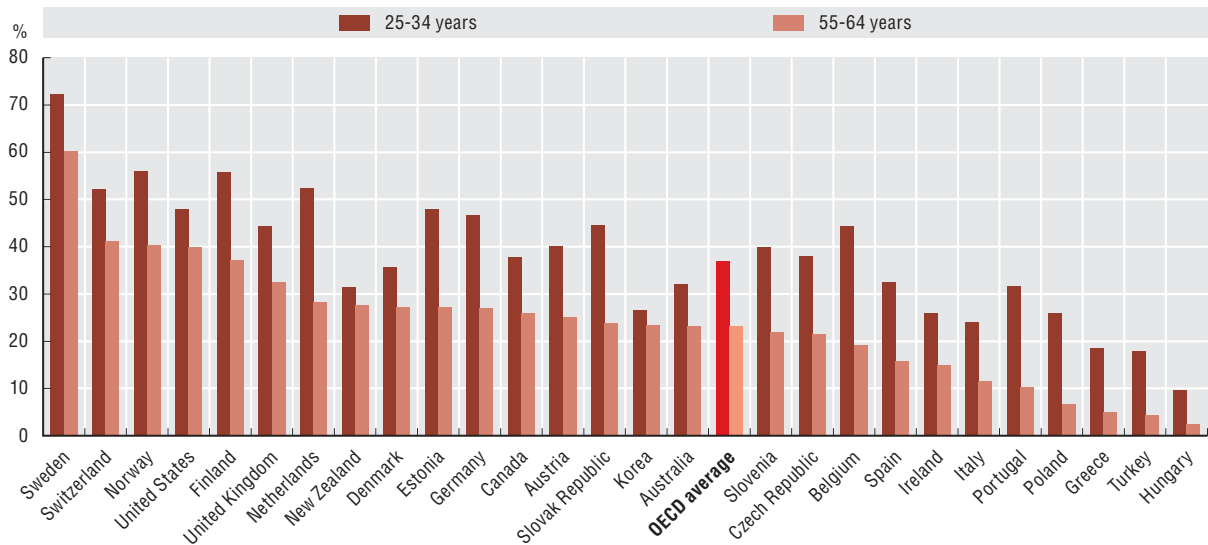
For additional material, notes and a full explanation of sourcing and methodologies, see *Education at a Glance 2012* (Indicator C6).

Areas covered include:

- Participation in non-formal education and adult learning by age group.
- Mean hours of job-related non-formal education by age group.

Figure 5.9. Participation in non-formal education, by age group, 2007

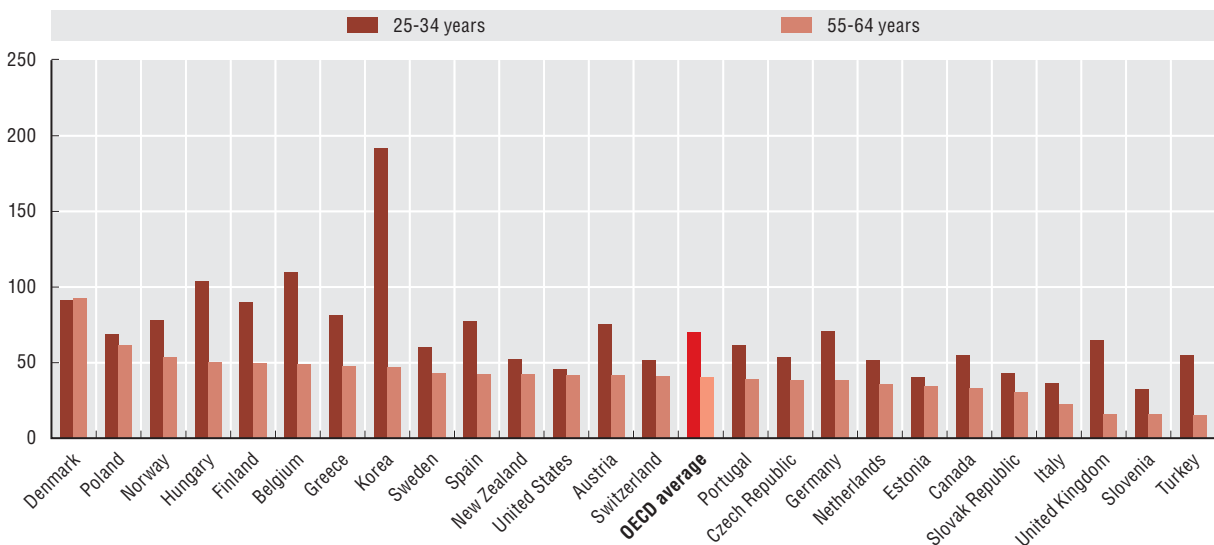
This figure compares the participation levels of 25-34 year-olds and 55-64 year-olds in non-formal education.



Source: OECD (2012), Education at a Glance 2012, Table C6.4a, available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932667672>.

Figure 5.10. Mean hours of job-related non-formal education by age group, 2007

This figure compares hours of job-related non-formal education received on average by 25-34 year-olds and 55-64 year-olds.



Source: OECD (2012), Education at a Glance 2012, Table C6.8, available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932667767>.



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