

5. SPECIAL SECTION: EQUITY

Access to the labour market

- Women have higher tertiary attainment rates on average across OECD countries, but their employment rates are much lower than those of men.
- Younger people face higher risks of unemployment at all levels of education.
- Individuals with a vocational upper secondary education as their highest degree have higher employment rates than adults with a general upper secondary education.

Significance

This section looks at how gender, type of education and age can restrict or accelerate access to the labour market. The benefits of education on employability are indisputable. These benefits, however, are not equally shared between men and women, people with general education as opposed to vocational education or between young and senior adults. This is especially relevant in times of economic hardship as the impact of economic conditions on individuals' chances of being employed or unemployed varies significantly. Data on the relationship between educational attainment on employment and unemployment provide valuable information to policy makers seeking to understand and respond to challenging economic circumstances.

Findings

Women have higher tertiary attainment rates than men on average across OECD countries, but in most countries, the employment rates of highly-skilled women are still remarkably low. On average among OECD countries, 32% of 25-64 year-old women had successfully completed tertiary education in 2010, compared with 29% of men. The employment rate for women with tertiary education was still 9 percentage points lower than that of men, however. This gap is particularly large in Chile, the Czech Republic, Japan, Korea, Mexico and Turkey, where the difference reaches 29 percentage points. In the Nordic countries, where women's employment rates are highest, expansion of child-care services was implemented specifically to increase job opportunities for women. In Sweden, for example, the expansion of child care services during the 1970s is thought to have helped increase women's employment rates from 60% to over 80%. There are fewer women working full-time than men in most OECD countries. Although this rate increases with higher education levels, only 69% of tertiary-educated women work full-time compared with 84% of men, on average, across OECD countries.

Unemployment rates vary considerably, depending on the age group. Overall, unemployment rates among 55-64 year-olds are much lower than those for 25-34 year-olds. On average across OECD countries, 19.1% of 25-34 year-olds without upper secondary education are unemployed, while this

concerns only 8.8% of 55-64 olds. Unemployment is lower for people with tertiary education but there is still an age gap. For 55-64 year-olds with a tertiary education, the unemployment rate is 4%, while it is 6.5% for 25-34 year-olds.

Vocational education and training (VET) is generally geared towards giving students relevant labour market skills for a particular occupation or industry. Research has shown that investing in VET can yield good economic returns and countries with strong VET systems, like Germany, have been relatively successful in tackling youth unemployment. On average across OECD countries, 31% of the population has attained vocational upper secondary education. The average employment rate of these individuals is 75.5% which is 4.8 percentage points higher than those with general upper secondary education. This may be due to the fact that throughout the course of vocational education, individuals typically learn specific skills that are immediately needed in the labour market. By contrast, skills learned in general education at an upper secondary level might be less specific and have weaker links to the labour market. In addition, the inactivity rate is about 5 percentage points lower among 25-64 year-olds with a vocational education, compared with adults with a general education.

Definitions

The employment rate refers to the number of persons in employment as a percentage of the population of working age. The unemployment rate refers to unemployed persons as a percentage of the civil labour force. The unemployed are defined as people actively seeking employment and currently available to start work. The employed are defined as those who work for pay or profit for at least one hour a week, or who have a job but are temporarily not at work due to illness, leave or industrial action.

Information on data for Israel:
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932315602>.

Going further

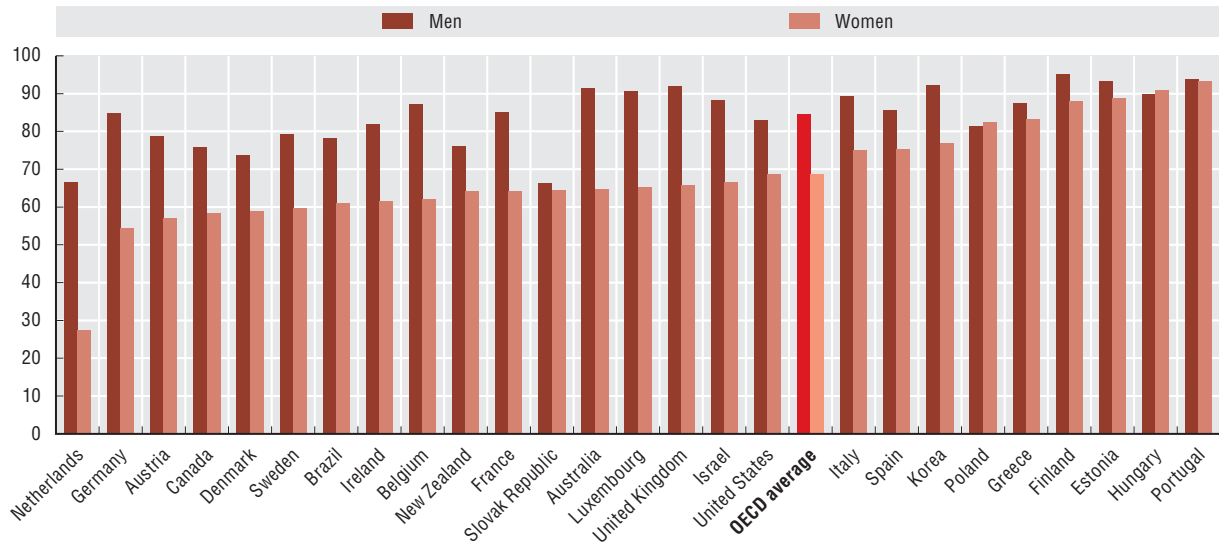
For additional material, notes and a full explanation of sourcing and methodologies, see *Education at a Glance 2012* (Indicator A7).

Areas covered include:

- Size and labour outcomes of vocational education and training by gender.
- Difference between employment rates of vocational and general education attainment by gender.

Figure 5.7. **Proportion of full-time earners among 25-64 year-old tertiary-educated individuals, by gender (2010 or latest available year)**

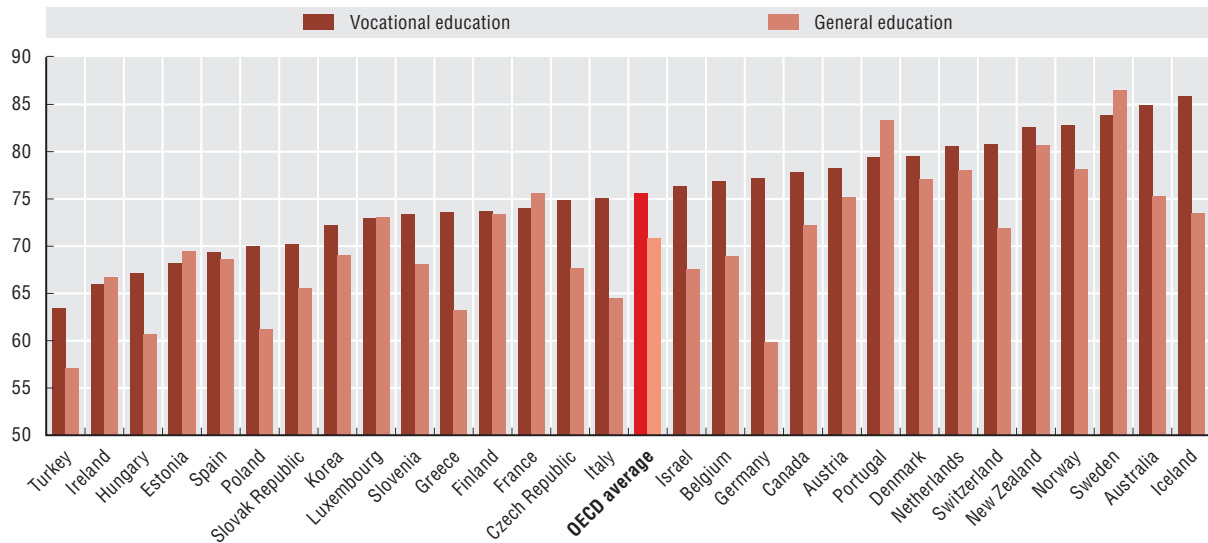
This figure compares the proportion of full-time workers among men and women with tertiary education. Only 69% of tertiary-educated women work on a full-time basis compared with 84% for men, on average, across OECD countries.



Source: OECD (2012), Education at a Glance 2012, Table A7.5, available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932665278>.

Figure 5.8. **Employment rates of people with vocational and general upper secondary education, 2010**

This figure compares the employment rates of individuals with vocational upper-secondary education and those with general upper-secondary education. People with a vocational upper secondary education tend to have higher employment rates than adults with a general upper secondary education.



Source: OECD (2012), Education at a Glance 2012, Table A7.6, available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932665297>.



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