7.1 Digital inclusion

The Internet and connected devices have become a crucial part of most individuals' daily lives in OECD economies. Even so, there can be considerable differences in Internet uptake between different groups in society, linked primarily to age and education, often intertwined with income levels.

Individuals with higher levels of educational attainment are more likely to use the Internet. This may be partly because they are more likely to have experience of Internet use from their studies and subsequent careers, but could also be a function of a greater likelihood of having sufficient disposable income to afford fixed and mobile connectivity. In 2018, the proportion of individuals with tertiary education using the Internet was above 92% in all OECD countries except the United States (89%). The share was 83% in the Russian Federation and 77% in Indonesia, but was 95% in Brazil.

There are wider differences across countries in terms of the share of people with lower levels of educational attainment who use the Internet. The share of Internet users among individuals with low or no formal education ranges from over 90% in Iceland, Denmark, Norway and Luxembourg, to less than 40% in Greece, Colombia, Brazil and Indonesia. In Israel and Mexico, the difference in Internet uptake between high and low-education individuals was almost 50 percentage points. People with lower education are therefore a potential focus for strategies to foster digital inclusion.

These disparities are even greater among the 55-74 age group within which 88% of tertiary graduates are Internet users in the OECD, but only 44% of those with low or no formal education use the Internet on average. The difference between these two groups is very large in some countries, reaching over 70 percentage points in Poland and the Slovak Republic. Action to equip people in this age group with certain ICT skills may help to address some issues common among older generations. For instance, the ability to use email, online messaging or video calling may help to reduce the risk of loneliness in later life by making it easier to stay in touch with friends and family, and the ability to use online systems may make it easier to access health services (see page 2.8).

In 2018, Internet usage among women in OECD countries was equal to that among men, at 86% on average. The difference was most pronounced in Turkey, where Internet usage among women was around 14 percentage points below that of men. Large differences exist in the total share of women of different ages who use the Internet. On average, in the OECD area 97% of women aged 16-24 and 68% of women aged 55-74 use the Internet. Nevertheless, the share of women aged 55-74 is increasing quite steadily, rising from 61% on average just a year earlier in 2016. These age cohort trends suggest that the gap is likely to reduce considerably within a few years.

DID YOU KNOW?

There is very little disparity in Internet use among Nordic countries, where people of all ages, genders and education levels are highly likely to use the Internet.

Definitions

Internet users are individuals who accessed the Internet within the last three months prior to surveying. Different recall periods have been used for some countries (see chapter notes).

Tertiary level graduates are individuals that have obtained a degree at ISCED-2011 Levels 5 to 8 – consisting primarily of bachelor, masters, and doctoral degrees or equivalents.

Individuals with *low or no formal education* are those who have at most ISCED-2011 Level 1 (primary) or 2 (lower secondary) qualifications.

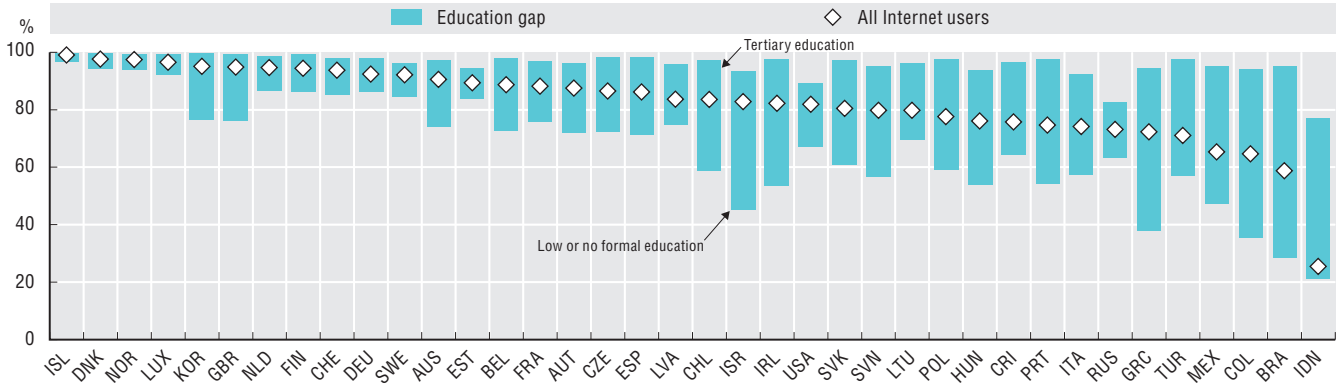
Measurability

In order to identify "Internet users", it is first necessary to define how recently an individual must have used the Internet in order to be counted. A recall period of three months (meaning the respondent should have used the Internet in the three months prior to being surveyed) is recommended. Nevertheless, some countries use longer recall periods or specify no recall period at all; such methodological differences impact the ability to make international comparisons.

These data are generally gathered through direct surveys of ICT use in households and by individuals, or the use of questions in broader household surveys such as Labour Force Surveys or general surveys of living conditions (e.g. in Italy and the United Kingdom). Not all OECD countries survey ICT usage by households and individuals. Furthermore, data availability for specific indicators also varies (see chapter notes). Surveys are undertaken on a multi-year or occasional basis in Australia, Canada, Chile, Israel and New Zealand, but take place annually in other countries. In the European Union, survey response is compulsory in only eight countries. Breakdowns of indicators by age or educational attainment groups may also raise issues about the robustness of information, especially for smaller countries, owing to sample size and survey design.

Gap in Internet use, by educational attainment, 2018

As a percentage of individuals in each category

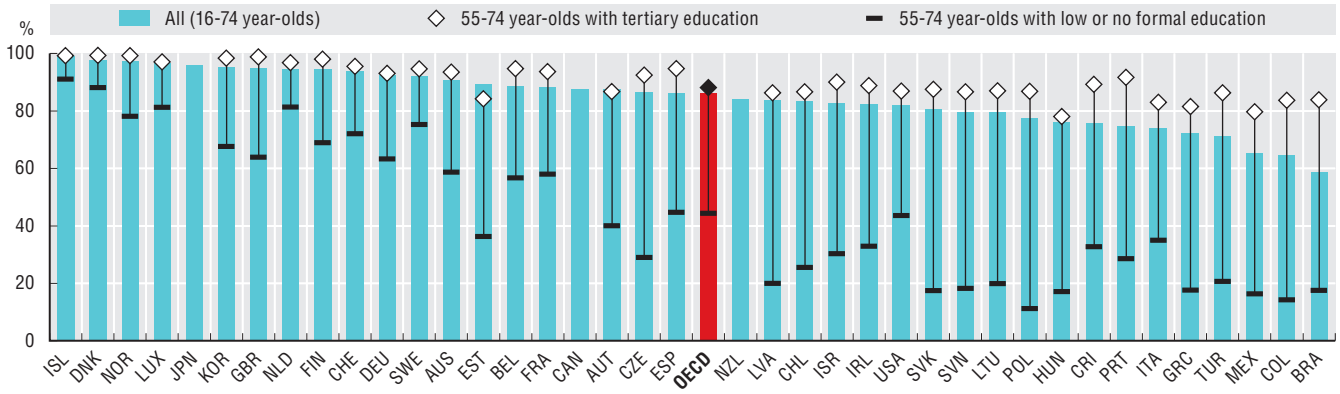


Source: OECD, ICT Access and Usage by Households and Individuals Database, http://oe.cd/hhind and ITU, World Telecommunication/ICT indicators Database, January 2019. See chapter notes. StatLink contains more data.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888933930820

Internet users, by age and educational attainment, 2018

As a percentage of individuals in each category

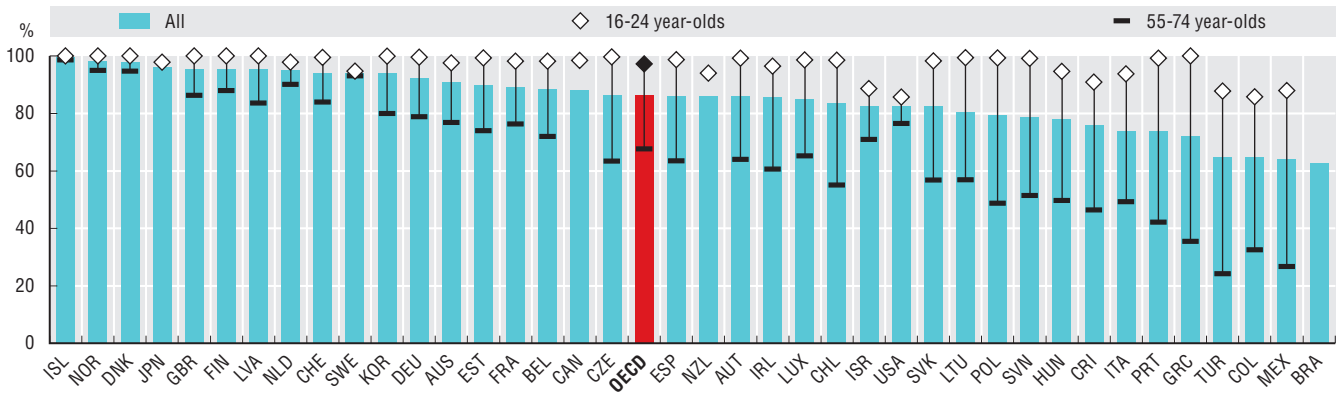


Source: OECD, based on Eurostat, Digital Economy and Society Statistics, Comprehensive Database, December 2018. See chapter notes. StatLink contains more data.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888933930839

Women Internet users, by age, 2018

As a percentage of individuals in each age group



Source: OECD, ICT Access and Usage by Households and Individuals Database, http://oe.cd/hhind, December 2018. See chapter notes.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888933930858

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