EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND STUDENT PERFORMANCE

The **level of education** of the population gives an indication of its stock and quality of human resources. A higher stock and quality of human resources may mean higher labour productivity and hence a higher income-generating capacity. The average number of years spent in education among the working-age population is the most readily available and cross-nationally comparable measure of educational attainment across the Asia/Pacific region.

The United Nation Sustainable Development Goal 4.1 targets to ensure all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education (12 years) leading to relevant and effective outcomes by 2030. However, on average, the population over 25 years of age in Asia/Pacific economies has been in education for almost nine years with large cross-national differences (Figure 4.9). The population over 25 in Australia, Japan, and New Zealand spent more years in education than the OECD average (12 years), while in some countries – Bhutan, Cambodia, Myanmar, Lao PDR, Nepal, Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste – the number of years spent in education is below five years on average. **Trends over the past decade**, suggest that the average years of schooling of those aged 25 and over increased across both OECD and Asia/Pacific economies (Figure 4.10), Especially, Indonesia, the Maldives, Nepal, and Singapore are rapidly increasing the average level of educational attainment.

There is a **gender gap in educational attainment** in Asia/Pacific economies in favour of men. Men over 25 in Asia/Pacific economies have spent on average 0.7 years more in education than women: this gender gap in mean years of schooling is significantly wider in Bhutan (2.1 years), India (3.4 years) and Nepal (2.8 years). Over the 2005-2017 period, many countries – China, Lao PDR, Malaysia, the Maldives and Singapore – have been closing the gender gap in mean years of schooling, while the gender gap increased in Bangladesh, Mongolia, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

Future educational attainment levels in the Asia/Pacific region may well increase further relative to the OECD. Students from Singapore and large Chinese cities outscored students from OECD countries in mathematics and reading competency tests of the 2015 **OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)** (Figure 4.11). However, the performance of students in Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, and Thailand was comparable with their peers in Colombia and Mexico, but lagged behind the OECD average.

Definition and measurement

Mean years of schooling measure average number of years of education received by people ages 25 and older, converted from education attainment levels using official durations of each level (UNDP 2018). Data on the average years of education is taken from Human Development Indices and Indicators based on UNESCO institute for Statistics (2018), Barro and Lee (2016), ICF Macro Demographic and Health surveys, UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys and OECD Education at a Glance(2017). The OECD programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) data was taken from the OECD PISA 2015 Database.

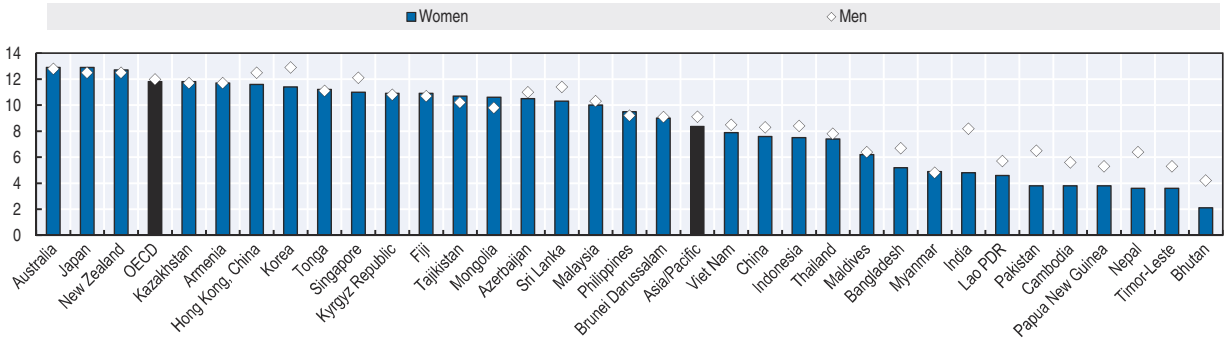
Figure note

UNESCO (2017), Unpacking Sustainable Development Goal 4 Education 2030 Guide, Paris, *http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002463/246300E.pdf*.

UNDP (2018), Human Development Indices and Indicators 2018 Statistical Update, New York, United States, *http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi*.

Figure 4.9. **On average those 25 years and older in the Asia/Pacific region have 9 years of school education**

Mean years of schooling, people aged 25 and older, 2017 or the most recent year available

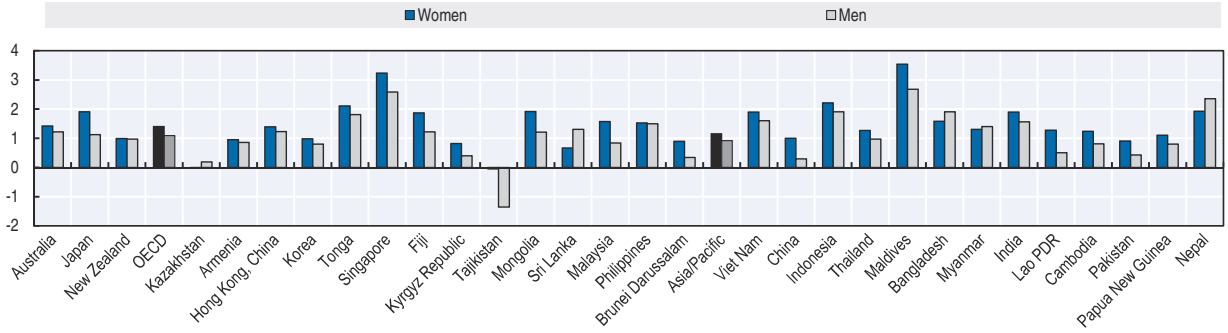


Source: UNDP (2018), Human Development data.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933900154

Figure 4.10. **The average years in schooling increased across the Asia/Pacific region over the past decade**

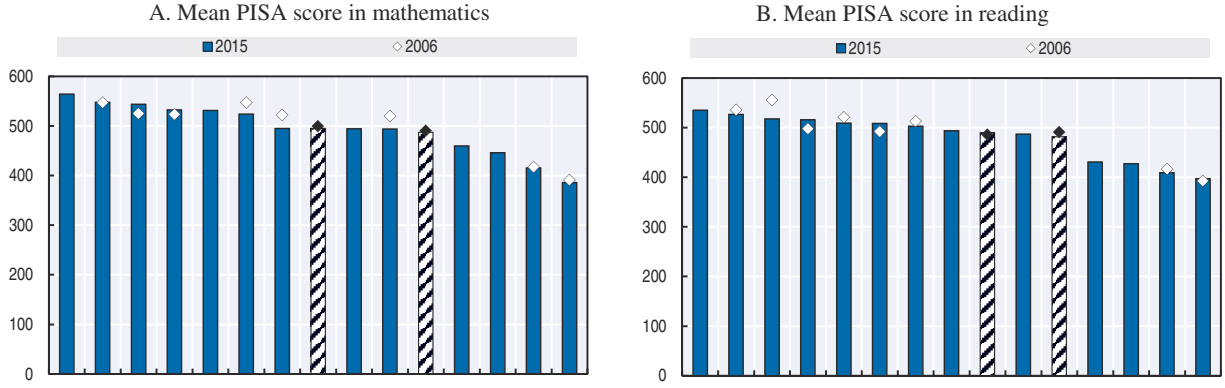
Change in mean years of total schooling (2005-17)



Source: UNDP (2018), Human Development data, Barro and Lee (2010).

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933900173

Figure 4.11. **Students in the some Asia/Pacific cities outscored students from the OECD**



Note: B-S-J-G (China) refers to the four PISA participating China provinces: Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu, and Guangdong.
Source: OECD (2006, 2015), Program for International Student Assessment (PISA).

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933900192

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