

### How many young people graduate from tertiary education?

- Some 39% of today's young adults in OECD countries are expected to complete university level education over their lifetimes, based on current patterns of graduation.
- About 11% of today's young adults in OECD countries are expected to complete vocationally-oriented education over their lifetimes.
- A student in an OECD country obtains his or her first university-level degree at the age of 27 on average.

#### Significance

Tertiary education rates indicate a country's capacity to equip future workers with specialised knowledge and skills. People have strong incentives to obtain a tertiary education in OECD countries, including higher salaries and better employment prospects. Tertiary education varies widely in structure and scope between countries, and graduation rates are influenced by the ease of access to these programmes, flexibility in completing them and the demand for higher skills in the labour market. Expanding access to and improving the quality of tertiary education are vital to knowledge-based economies, but these objectives are even more difficult to achieve when budgets are tight.

#### Findings

Some 39% of young people, on average across OECD countries with comparable data, will graduate from university level programmes during their lifetimes, based on current patterns of graduation. The proportion ranges from less than 25% in Chile, Hungary, Luxembourg and Mexico, to 50% or more in Australia, Iceland, New Zealand and Poland.

Students in OECD countries obtain their first university-level degree at the age of 27 on average, with ages ranging from less than 25 in Belgium, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom to more than 29 in Brazil, Finland, Iceland, Israel and Sweden.

Most graduates of tertiary education programmes are women, except at the doctoral level. An estimated 47% of women and 31% of men on average in OECD countries will complete university level education over their lifetimes, based on current patterns of graduation.

Some 1.6% of young people today are expected to complete advanced research programmes on average among OECD countries, up from 1.0% in 2000. Countries with the highest increase in graduation rates from advanced research programmes are the Czech Republic, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, New Zealand, Norway, the Slovak Republic and the United Kingdom, where graduation rates increased by at least 1 percentage point from 2000 to 2012.

International students represent a significant share of tertiary graduates in a number of countries. For example, when international students are excluded, first-degree tertiary graduation rates drop by 18 percentage points for Australia and 11 points for New Zealand.

#### Trends

University-level graduation rates have risen by 22 percentage points on average across OECD countries with available data over the past 17 years, while rates for vocationally oriented tertiary programmes have remained stable. Doctorates represent only a small proportion of tertiary programmes but the graduation rate has doubled over the same period, from 0.8% to 1.6%.

#### Definitions

Tertiary graduates are those who obtain a university degree, vocational qualifications, or advanced research degrees of doctorate standard. Net graduation rates represent the estimated percentage of an age group that will complete tertiary education over their lifetimes, based on current patterns of graduation.

Data are for the 2011-12 academic year and are based on the UOE data collection on education statistics administered by the OECD in 2012. Data on the impact of international students on tertiary graduation rates are based on a special survey conducted by the OECD in December 2013.

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 2014* (Indicator A3).

Areas covered include:

- Graduation rates by level of qualification, age, gender and field of study.

#### Further reading from OECD

*Higher Education Management and Policy* (journal).

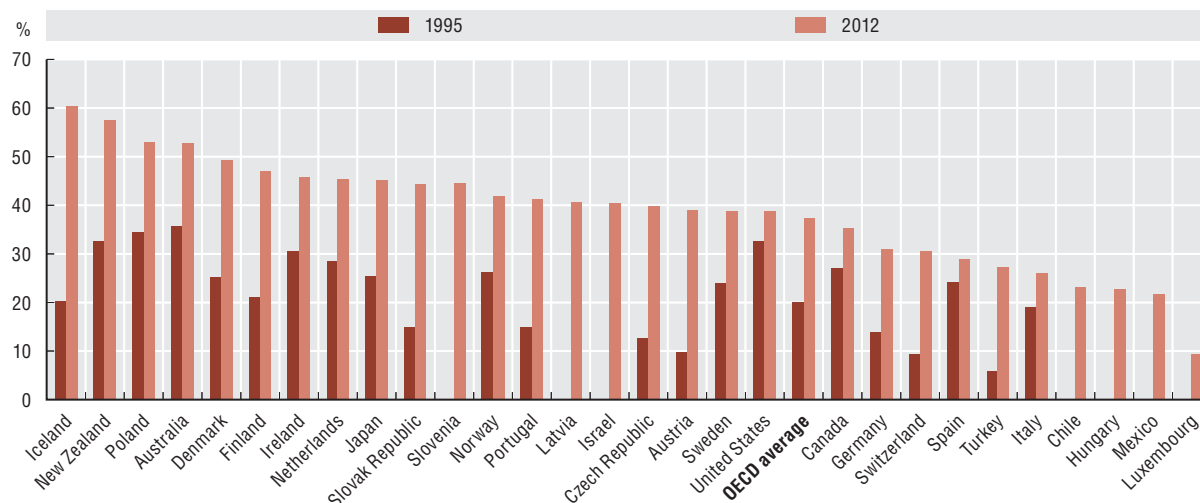
*OECD Reviews of Tertiary Education* (series of national reviews).

*OECD Reviews of Higher Education in Regional and City Development* (series).

## How many young people graduate from tertiary education?

Figure 2.3. **First-time graduation rates from university-level education (1995, 2012)**

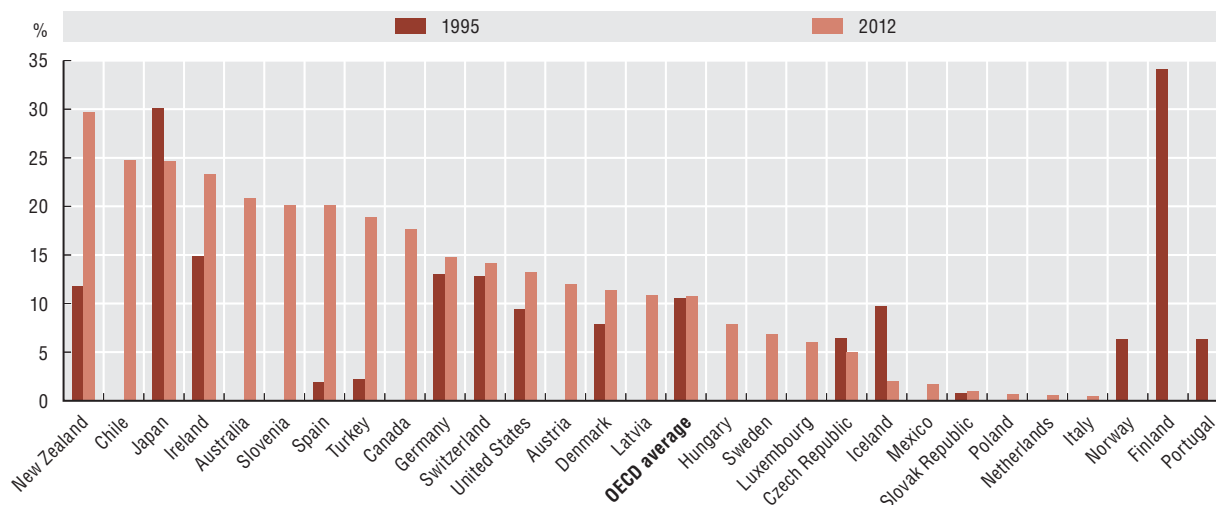
This figure shows the growth in the percentage of first-time graduates from university-level education.



Source: OECD (2014), Education at a Glance 2014, Chart A3.2, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933115483>.

Figure 2.4. **First-time graduation rates from vocationally oriented education (1995, 2012)**

This figure shows the growth or decline in the percentage of first-time graduates from vocationally oriented tertiary education.



Source: OECD (2014), Education at a Glance 2014, Chart A3.2, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933115483>.



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