

CO3.2: Gender differences in university graduates by fields of study

Definitions and methodology

This indicator provides information on the subjects that male and female students tend to study at university by looking at the gender distribution of graduates in certain subjects. This gives an insight into the skills and expertise that men and women then bring to the labour market, and into how differences in subjects studied at university affect future career and family income patterns.

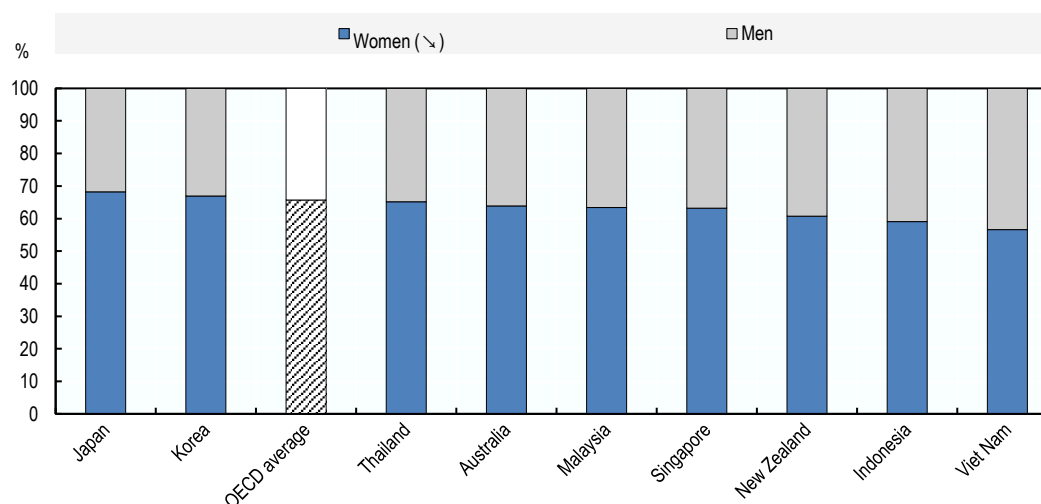
Data on graduates by field of study are collected through the joint UNESCO-OECD-Eurostat (UOE) annual data collection on education systems. Graduates are classified as having successfully followed and completed a university programme and graduated in the specified year; this is then further disaggregated by gender and subject.

Key findings

In Asia-Pacific countries, as also across all OECD countries, the majority of tertiary graduates in arts and humanities subjects are women (Chart CO3.2.A). Looking across the covered Asia-Pacific countries, women's shares of arts and humanities graduates ranges from around 57-59% in Indonesia and Viet Nam to 67-68% in Japan and Korea. In most but not all of the covered Asia-Pacific countries, women's shares of arts and humanities graduates are lower than the average for OECD countries (66%).

Chart CO3.2.A. Men's and women's shares of degrees awarded in humanities and arts subjects

Distribution (%) of tertiary degrees awarded in humanities and arts qualifications by sex, 2016



Note: Data for Malaysia refer to 2018. Qualifications classified under ISCED 11 levels 5-8, only.

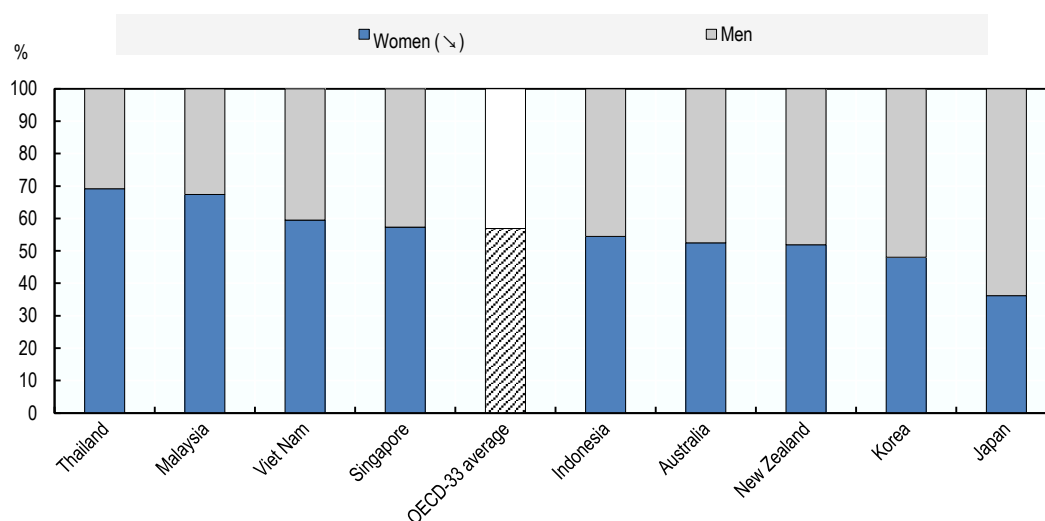
Sources: [Australia, Japan, Korea and New Zealand: OECD Education at a Glance 2018](#); [Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam: UNESCO UIS](#)

Other relevant indicators: Employment profiles over the life course (LMF1.4); Educational attainment by gender (CO3.1); and, Literacy scores by gender at age 15 (CO3.4).

In most of the covered Asia-Pacific countries, the majority of graduates in business, administration and law are also women (Chart CO3.2.B). In Australia, Indonesia and New Zealand, around 50-55% of graduates in business, administration and law are women; in Singapore and Viet Nam this rate reaches close to 60%, and in Malaysia and Thailand women make up over two-thirds (67-69%) of graduates in business, administration and law. The two main exceptions are Korea (48%) and especially Japan (36%), where women make up less than half of graduates in business, administration and law.

Chart CO3.2.B. Men's and women's shares of degrees awarded in business, administration and law

Distribution (%) of tertiary degrees awarded in business, administration and law by sex, 2016



Note: Data for Malaysia refer to 2018. Qualifications classified under ISCED 11 levels 5-8, only.

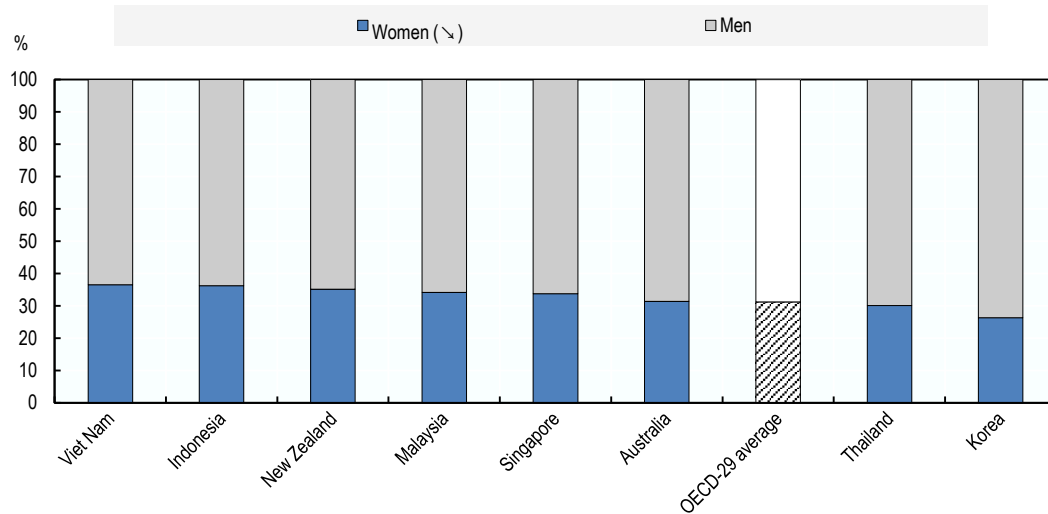
Sources: [Australia, Japan, Korea and New Zealand: OECD Education at a Glance 2018](#); [Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam: UNESCO UIS](#)

Across the covered Asia-Pacific countries, graduates science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects are less likely to be women (Chart CO3.2.C). Women's share of tertiary graduates in STEM varies slightly across the covered countries, but even in the countries with the highest women's shares (Indonesia and Viet Nam), women still make up only about 36-37% of STEM graduates. In Korea, women make up only a little over one-quarter (26%) of all graduates in STEM.

Comparability and data issues

There should be few major issues with the cross-national comparability of data in this area. The UOE data collection manual gives detailed instructions to national correspondents on the mapping of subjects and fields of study. For more details and notes for specific countries, see the notes for Indicator A.3 provided in OECD (2018) Education at a Glance 2018 Annex 3 (<http://www.oecd.org/edu/education-at-a-glance-19991487.htm>) and on UNESCO UIS.Stat (<http://data.uis.unesco.org/>).

Chart CO3.2.C. Men's and women's shares of degrees awarded in science, technology, engineering and mathematics
 Distribution (%) of tertiary degrees awarded in science, technology, engineering and mathematics by sex, 2016



Note: Data for Malaysia refer to 2018. Qualifications classified under ISCED 11 levels 5-8, only.

Sources: [Australia, Korea and New Zealand: OECD Education at a Glance 2018](#); [Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam: UNESCO UIS](#)

Sources and further reading: OECD Education Database and OECD (2018), Education at a Glance 2018: OECD Indicators, OECD Publishing, Paris. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en>; OECD (2017), The Pursuit of Gender Equality: An Uphill Battle, OECD Publishing, Paris. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264281318-en>