

CO3.1: Educational attainment by gender

Definitions and methodology

This indicator measures the educational attainment of the adult population in terms of their successful completion of formal education programmes. Educational attainment is measured primarily through two main measures, both based on the [International Standard Classification of Education \(ISCED\) 2011](#) system for classifying educational programmes:

- *The percentage of population that has attained at least upper secondary education, by gender and age group*, that is, the percentage of the population that has attained qualifications corresponding to ISCED 2011 level 3 ('upper secondary education') or above. Where available, data are presented separately for men and women, and for three age groups: 25-64 year olds, 25-34 year olds (i.e. recent graduates) and 45-54 year olds (i.e. those who would have been recent graduates 20-30 years ago). For some countries (Japan, Malaysia and Mongolia), due to limited data availability, data are presented for 25+ year-olds, rather than 25-64 year olds.
- *The percentage of population that has attained tertiary education, by gender and age group*, that is, the percentage of the population that has attained any kind of tertiary qualification, including short-cycle tertiary and Bachelor's level qualifications (ISCED 2011 levels 5 and 6) and Master's or Doctoral level qualifications (ISCED 2011 levels 7 and 8). Data are again presented separately for men and women and for the age groups 25-64, 25-34 and 45-54, where available. Again, for some countries (Malaysia and Mongolia), data are presented for 25+ year-olds rather than 25-64 year-olds.

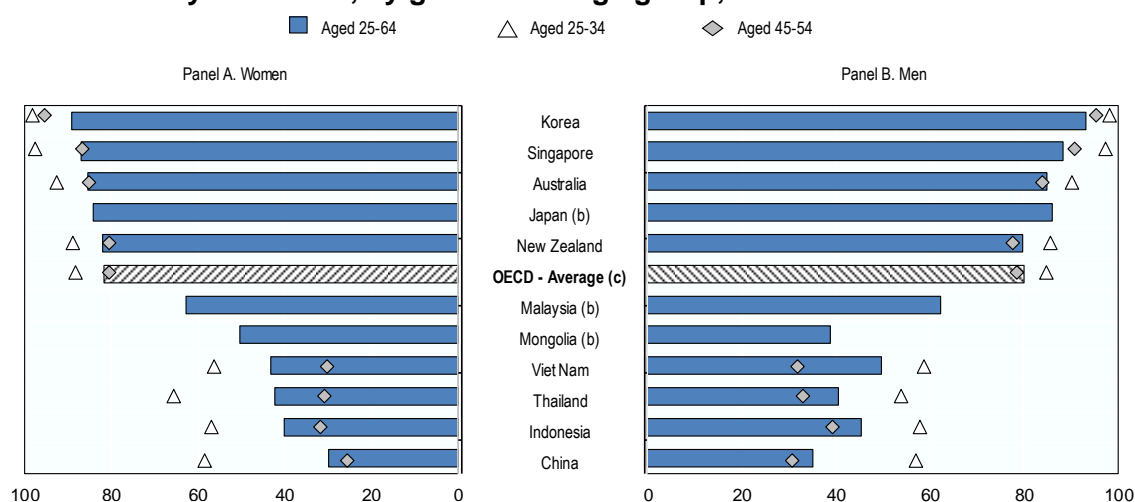
Key findings

Educational attainment differs considerably across the covered Asia/Pacific countries. Starting first with the attainment of at least upper secondary education, Chart CO3.1.A shows that there are large differences across countries in the share of the adult population that has attained education at least at the upper secondary level (Chart CO3.1.A). In Korea, for example, 93% of men aged 25-64 and 89% of women aged 25-64 have achieved at least upper secondary education, whereas in China these rates are 35% and 30%, respectively. However, where available, data suggest that all countries included here are making progress; comparing younger cohorts with their older counterparts, most countries have seen large increases in the share of the population attaining at least upper secondary education. China, Thailand and Viet Nam stand out in particular. In Viet Nam, the share of 25–34-year-old men who have attained at least upper secondary education (59%) is about 27 percentage points higher than the share of 45-54-year-old men (32%). In Thailand, the share of 25-34-year-old women who have attained at least upper secondary education (66%) is 35 percentage points higher than the share of 45-54-year-old women (31%).

Other relevant indicators: LMF1.6 Gender differences in employment outcomes; CO3.3 Literacy scores by gender at age 10; CO3.4 Literacy scores by gender at age 15; CO3.6 Proportion of immigrant students and their educational outcomes

Men are more likely than women to have attained at least upper secondary education across around half of the covered Asia/Pacific countries, included here. This gender gap disappears or even reverses for the majority of countries at hand when considering only the younger cohorts (Chart CO3.1.A). In Thailand, for example, the group of women aged 25-34 who have completed at least upper secondary education is more than twice as large as the group of women aged 45-54 who have attained education at least at the upper secondary level. Furthermore, the rate for women aged 25-34 (66%) is around 12 percentage points higher than that for men aged 25-34 (54%). In Mongolia, women over 25 are now about 12 percentage points more likely to have attained at least upper secondary education than men over 25.

Chart CO3.1.A. Percentage of population that has attained at least upper secondary education, by gender and age group, 2022 or latest available^a



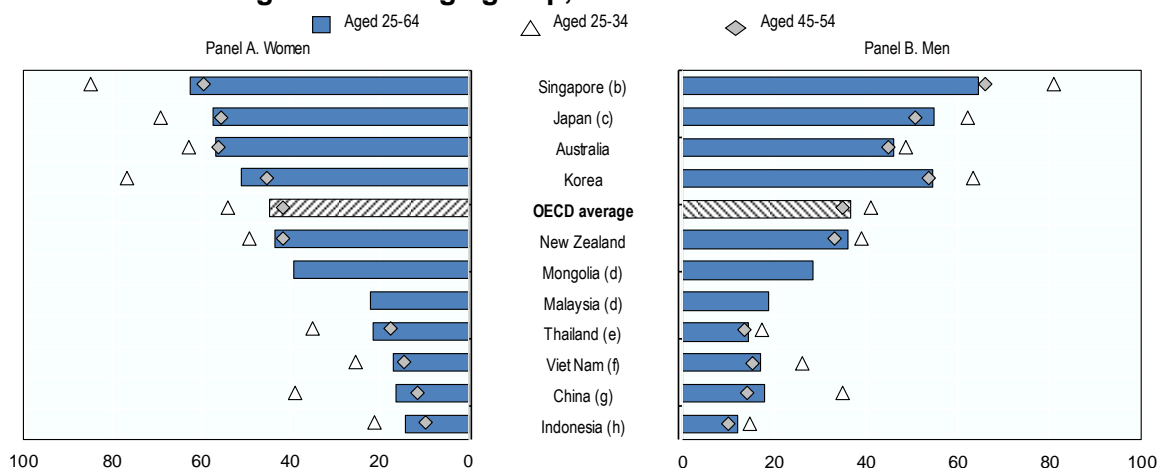
Note: Education and qualifications are classified based on ISCED 2011.
 a) Data for Thailand refers to 2021, China, Japan, Mongolia, and Viet Nam to 2020, and Malaysia to 2019.
 b) Data for Japan, Malaysia and Mongolia refers to 25 and over.
 c) The OECD average refers to the unweighted average across OECD member countries with available and comparable data. See OECD Family Database Indicator CO3.1 (<http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm>) for more detail.
 d) For China, data on 25-64 refers to 25 and over and 45-54 to ages 45 to 49.
 Sources: [Australia, Indonesia, Korea, and New Zealand: OECD \(2023\), Education at a Glance 2023: OECD Indicators](#); [Japan, Malaysia and Mongolia: UNESCO Institute for Statistics: OECD-34 average: OECD Family Database Indicator 3.1](#); [Singapore: Department of Statistics \(2023\). Singapore Residents Aged 25 Years & Over By Highest Qualification Attained, Sex And Age Group](#); China: China Population Census Yearbook 2020, Book2, Table 1-4 and Table 3-2; Thailand: Labour Force Survey (Quarter 3) 2021; Vietnam: VHLSS 2020.

Patterns and trends in the attainment of university- (or tertiary-) level qualifications are largely similar to those for upper secondary attainment (Chart CO3.1.B). Again, there are large differences across countries in the share of the population who have attained tertiary qualifications. For 25-64 year olds, the highest attainment rates are recorded in Singapore (65% for men and 63% for women), Japan (55% for men and 57% for women) and Australia (46% for men and 57% for women), while the lowest are in China (18% for men and 16% for women) and in Indonesia (12% for men and 14% for women). Attainment rates are also once much higher among younger cohorts, with all countries with available data seeing the share attaining tertiary education increase between the 45-54-year-old- and 25-34-year-old cohorts. Gains are especially large for young men in China and Singapore, where the share of men age 25-34 who have attained tertiary education are about 21 and 15 percentage points higher than the share of men age 45-54 respectively. For young women, gains are largest in China

and Korea, where the share of women aged 25-34 years who have attained tertiary-level qualifications are 28 and 31 percentage points higher than the share of 45-54-year-old women.

Gender differences in the attainment of tertiary education are more in favour of women across most countries (Chart CO3.1.B). In some of the covered Asia/Pacific countries, like China, Indonesia and Viet Nam, the gender difference between women and men from the overall 25-64 year-old age group is small at less than 2 percentage points. In others (Australia, New Zealand, Mongolia and Thailand), the gender educational attainment gap for the age group 25-64 is more than 5 percentage points in favour of women. The largest gender differences in tertiary attainment among 25-34 year olds in favour of women are in Korea (13 percentage points), New Zealand (10 percentage points), and especially Australia and Thailand, where the share of 25-34-year-old women who have attained tertiary education are over 14 percentage points higher than the share of men.

Chart CO3.1.B. **Percentage of population that has attained tertiary education, by gender and age group, 2022 or latest available^a**



Note: Education and qualifications are classified based on ISCED 2011

- a) Data for Thailand refers to 2021, China, Mongolia, and Viet Nam to 2020, and Malaysia to 2019.
- b) For Singapore, tertiary includes diploma and professional qualification, university and above.
- c) For Japan, data include some upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary programmes (less than 5% of the adults are under this group).
- d) For Malaysia and Mongolia, Data refers to 25 and over, and tertiary includes post-secondary education.
- e) For Thailand, Tertiary includes post-secondary education, bachelor degree, master degree and doctoral degree.
- f) For Vietnam, tertiary means bachelor and higher.
- g) For China, data on 25-64 refers to 25 and over and 45-54 to ages 45 to 49.
- h) For Indonesia, Tertiary includes post-secondary education, bachelor degree, master degree and doctoral degree.

Sources: [Australia, Indonesia, Japan, Korea and New Zealand: OECD \(2023\), Education at a Glance 2023: OECD Indicators](#); [Malaysia and Mongolia: UNESCO Institute for Statistics](#); [Singapore: Department of Statistics \(2023\), Singapore Residents Aged 25 Years & Over By Highest Qualification Attained, Sex And Age Group](#); China: China Population Census Yearbook 2020, Book2, Table 1-4 and Table 3-2; Thailand: Labour Force Survey (Quarter 3) 2021; Vietnam: VHLSS 2020.

Comparability and data issues

The data used in this indicator are collected from several different sources. For the OECD member countries plus Indonesia, data are taken from [OECD Education at a Glance 2023: OECD Indicators](#), which itself also usually extracts attainment data from national labour force surveys or household surveys. The exceptions are Japan's upper secondary data and data for Malaysia and Mongolia, which are taken from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) database on educational attainment. The data for Thailand are drawn from the Thai national labour force survey, while the data for China, Singapore, Viet Nam are from National Statistics. It should be noted that the UIS data for Japan, Malaysia and Mongolia refer to 25+ year olds, rather than 25-64 year olds.

Educational qualifications are classified using the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) 2011 classification system. There should be relatively few major comparability issues here as the ISCED 2011 classification system provides comprehensive guidelines and instructions on how to classify education programmes in a comparable manner across countries, though it remains possible on occasion that an education programme in one country could be classified differently in another. For more detail and notes for specific countries, see where relevant Indicator A.1 in [OECD Education at a Glance 2023: OECD Indicators](#) and the accompanying notes in [Education at a Glance 2023 Sources, Methodologies and Technical Notes](#) and the metadata available on the [UIS.Stat](#) UNESCO data warehouse.

Sources and further reading: OECD (2023), *Education at a Glance 2023: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/e13bef63-en>.