

### 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 the 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 (China, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia and Thailand), due to limited data availability, data are presented for 25+ year-olds, rather than 25-64 year olds.
- *The percentage of the 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 (China, Malaysia, Mongolia and Thailand), data are presented for 25+ year-olds rather than 25-64 year-olds.

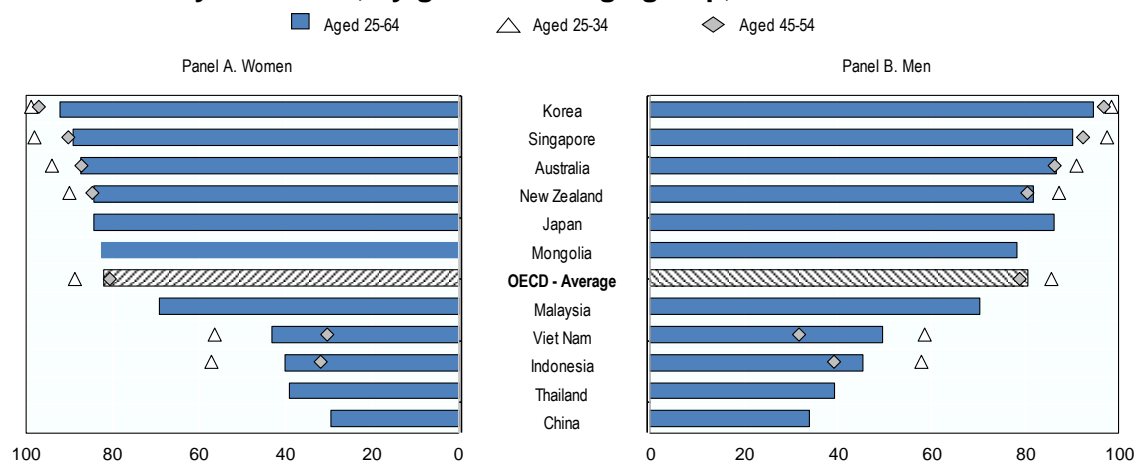
#### *Key findings*

Educational attainment differs considerably across the covered Asia/Pacific countries. Starting with the attainment of at least upper secondary education, Chart CO3.1.A shows that there are large differences across countries (Chart CO3.1.A). In Korea, for example, 95% of men aged 25-64 and 92% of women aged 25-64 have successfully completed at least upper secondary education, whereas in China these rates are 34% and 30%, respectively. However, where available, data suggest that all countries included here have made 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. Viet Nam and Indonesia 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 Indonesia, the share of 25–34-year-old men who have attained at least upper secondary education (58%) is about 19 percentage points higher than the share of 45-54-year-old men (39%).

<i>Other relevant indicators:</i> 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 the covered Asia/Pacific countries except Australia, Mongolia and New Zealand. This gender gap disappears or even reverses for the majority of countries at hand when considering only the younger cohorts (Chart CO3.1.A). However, according to the available data, the gender gap in the share of the population that has attained at least upper secondary education is quite small—less than about 5%—in all countries and across all age groups.

**Chart CO3.1.A. Percentage of population that has attained at least upper secondary education, by gender and age group, 2024 or latest available**



Note: Data for China, Japan, and Viet Nam refer to 2020, Indonesia and Malaysia to 2022, and Mongolia to 2023. Data for China, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia and Thailand refer to 25 and over. Education and qualifications are classified based on ISCED 2011.

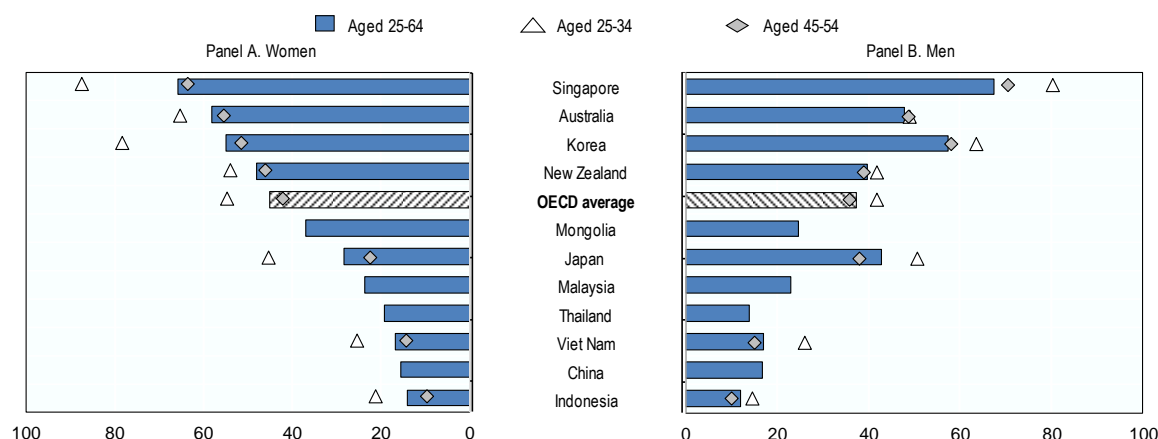
Sources: [Australia, Indonesia, Korea, New Zealand, and OECD average: OECD \(2025\), Education at a Glance 2025: OECD Indicators](#); [China, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia and Thailand: UNESCO Institute for Statistics](#); [Singapore: Department of Statistics \(2024\), Singapore Residents Aged 25 Years & Over By Highest Qualification Attained, Sex And Age Group](#). 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), Australia (46% for men and 57% for women) and Korea (57% for men and 55% for women), while the lowest are in China (17% for men and 15% for women) and in Indonesia (12% for men and 14% for women). Attainment rates are also 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 Japan and Viet Nam, where the share of men aged 25-34 who have attained tertiary education is about 13 and 11 percentage points higher than the share of men aged 45-54 respectively. For young women, gains are largest in Korea and Singapore, where the share of women aged 25-34 years who have attained tertiary-level qualifications is 27 and 24 percentage points higher than the share of 45-54-year-old women, respectively.

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 of the 25-64 year-old age group is small at less than 2 percentage points. In other countries (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 Australia (16 percentage points), Korea (15 percentage points), and New Zealand (12 percentage points).

**Chart CO3.1.B. Percentage of population that has attained tertiary education, by gender and age group, 2024 or latest available**



Note: Data for China and Viet Nam refer to 2020, Indonesia and Malaysia to 2022, and Mongolia to 2023. Data for China, Malaysia, Mongolia and Thailand refer to age 25 and over. Education and qualifications are generally classified based on ISCED 2011. However, tertiary education is defined differently across countries: in Singapore it includes diploma, professional qualification, and university and above; in Japan it also covers some upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary programmes (less than 5% of adults); in Malaysia, Mongolia, Thailand, and Indonesia it includes post-secondary education; and in Vietnam it refers to bachelor's degree and higher.

Sources: [Australia, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, and OECD average: OECD \(2025\), Education at a Glance 2025: OECD Indicators](#); [China, Malaysia, Mongolia and Thailand: UNESCO Institute for Statistics](#); [Singapore: Department of Statistics \(2024\), Singapore Residents Aged 25 Years & Over By Highest Qualification Attained, Sex And Age Group](#); 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 were taken from [OECD Education at a Glance 2025: 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 China, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, and Thailand, which are taken from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) database on educational attainment. The data for Singapore and Viet Nam are from National Statistics. It should be noted that the UIS data for China, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, and Thailand 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 2025: OECD Indicators](#) and the accompanying notes in [Education at a Glance 2025 Sources, Methodologies and Technical Notes](#) and the metadata available on the [UIS.Stat](#) UNESCO data warehouse.

*Sources and further reading:* OECD (2025), *Education at a Glance 2025: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/1c0d9c79-en>.