

Education

Over the last 15 years, within-country differences in educational attainment have decreased due to an improvement in the most lagging regions.

Human capital is an essential driver of both social and economic well-being. Education equips individuals with the tools to adapt to technological change and to the rapidly evolving needs of the labour market. Beyond the acquisition of knowledge and competences, education fosters socialisation and social integration.

Around 79% of the adult population in OECD regions had at least upper secondary education in 2017, with large educational differences across regions. In six OECD countries, the difference between the regions with the highest and lowest value in the share of the workforce with at least upper secondary education is even above 20 percentage points (9; Australia and Slovenia 2010 Figure 2.1). In Ankara (Turkey) and the Basque Country (Spain), this share is over 28 percentage points higher than in Eastern Anatolia - East (Turkey) and Extremadura (Spain), respectively. Among non-OECD countries, Colombia, South Africa, Romania and Tunisia also show large spatial variation in the proportion of people who have completed at least upper secondary education. The average educational attainment rate of the adult population is often highest in capital regions.

Within countries, regional differences in the educational attainment of the workforce have changed remarkably since 2000 (Figure 2.2). In most OECD countries, regional gaps have decreased, due to improvements in regions whose workforce has a relatively low education level compared with other areas. France, Canada and Greece have experienced the largest decreases in these spatial gaps, which amount to a reduction in regional disparities of 15.8, 8.5 and 7.8 percentage points, respectively. In contrast, several countries have experienced an increase in regional differences. For example, in New Zealand and Spain, the differences between the highest and the lowest regional proportion of the workforce with at least upper secondary education increased by seven and three percentage points respectively, as the better performing regions were able to continue increasing their share of highly educated individuals. Across the non-OECD countries considered, the share of the workforce with at least upper secondary education also increased everywhere except for Bulgaria, where regional differences in educational attainment

remained stable. Similar to OECD countries, in Colombia and the Russian Federation, the narrowing of such differences was mainly driven by large improvements in the regions that originally showed the lowest levels of educational attainment.

Definition

At least upper secondary education includes high schools, lyceums, vocational schools and preparatory school programmes (ISCED 3 and 4) up to Doctoral or equivalent degree (ISCED 8).

Source

OECD (2018), OECD Regional Statistics (database), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/region-data-en>.

See Annex B for data sources and country-related metadata.

Reference years and territorial level

2000 2017; TL2. Due to difference in methodology, data for Mexico and Japan are not presented.

Further information

OECD (2017), Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en>.

OECD Regional Well-Being: www.oecdregionalwellbeing.org.

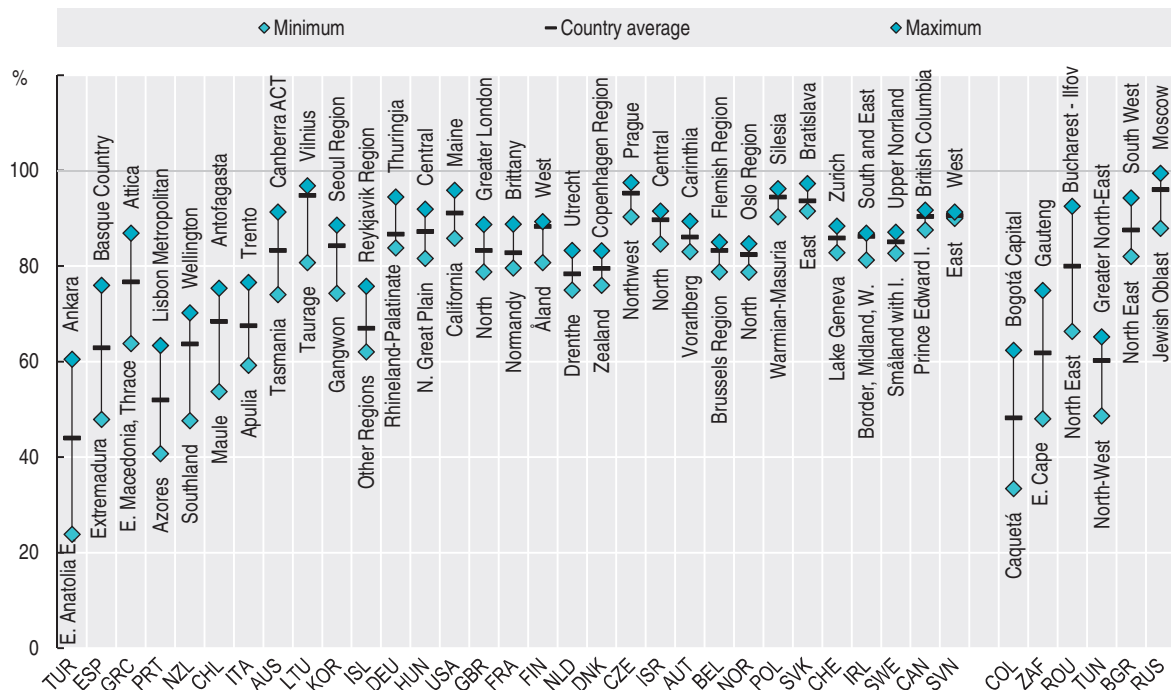
Figure notes

2.1: Latest available year 2017; Canada, Colombia, Israel, Korea, New Zealand and United States 2016; Australia, Chile, Russian Federation and South Africa 2015; Tunisia 2014; Iceland 2012. Japan is not included due to lack of recent data.

2.2: First year available 2000; Switzerland 2001; South Africa 2002; Iceland 2003; Colombia, Finland and Italy 2005; Turkey 2006; Denmark 2007; Chile 2009; Australia and Slovenia 2010.

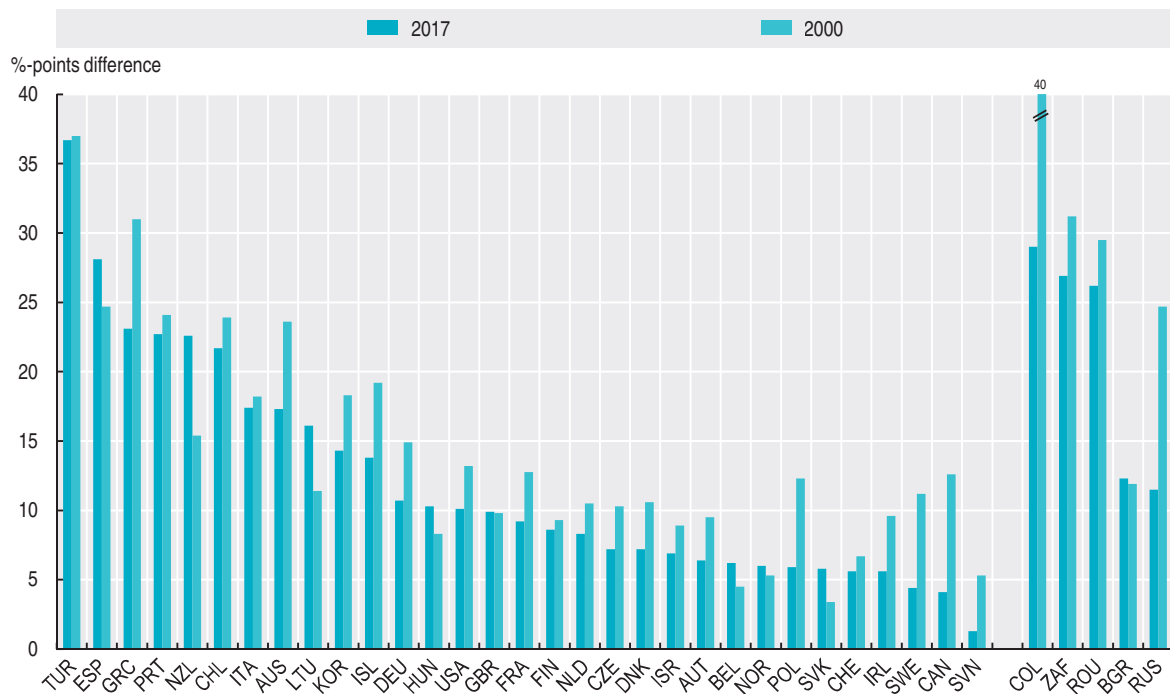
2.1. Regional variation in the % of the labour force with at least secondary education, 2017

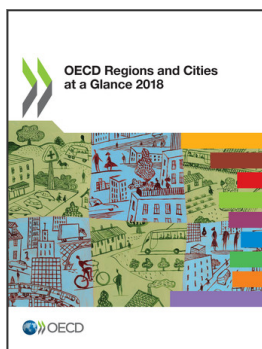
Labour force 15 years old or older, large regions (TL2)

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933816991>

2.2. Gap between highest and lowest regional % of labour force with at least secondary education

Labour force 15 years old or older, large regions (TL2)

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933817010>



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