

International Educational Attainment

Across OECD countries, the average percentage of 25- to 64-year-olds with any postsecondary degree increased from 32 percent as of 2012 to 41 percent as of 2022. In the United States, during the same period, the percentage increased from 43 to 50 percent.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is a group of 38 countries¹ (as of 2022) whose purpose is to promote trade and economic growth. The OECD also collects and publishes an array of data on its member countries. This indicator uses OECD data to compare educational attainment across countries using two measures: high school completion and attainment of any postsecondary degree.^{2,3,4} It focuses on how the United States compared with other OECD countries, both in terms of its educational attainment rates as of 2022 and changes in the rates since 2012.⁵ In this indicator, for the United States, “high school completion” refers to individuals who have been awarded a high school diploma or an equivalent credential, such as the GED.⁶ Also, “attainment of any postsecondary degree” refers to individuals who have been awarded an associate’s or higher degree.⁷

Overall Educational Attainment Rates

Among the 36 countries⁸ for which the OECD reported 2022 data on high school completion rates, the percentage of 25- to 64-year-olds who had completed high school was

- 80 percent on average across OECD countries;
- lowest in Mexico (44 percent);
- highest in the Czech Republic (94 percent); and
- 92 percent in the United States (higher than 30 countries).

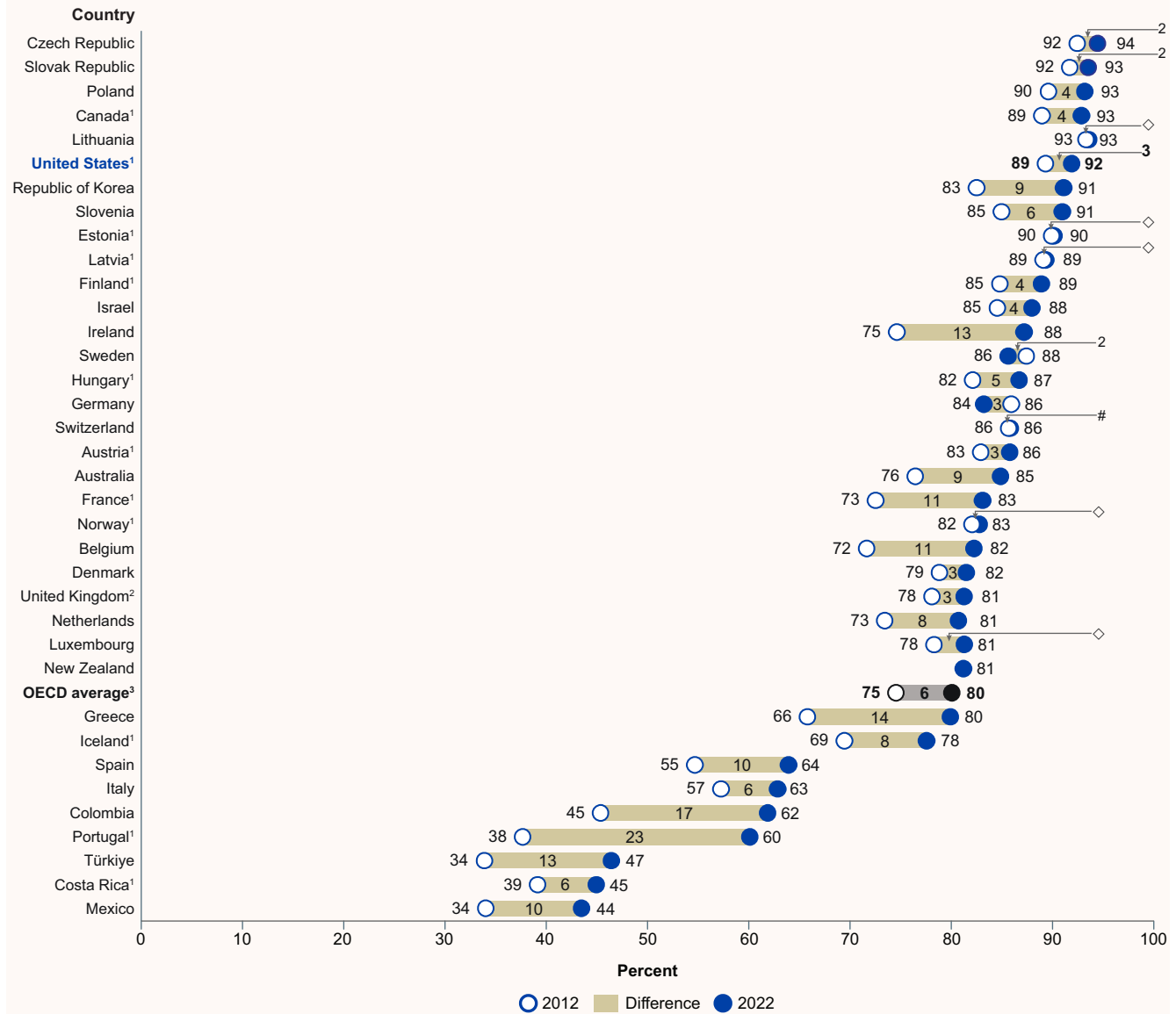
Additionally, among the 37 countries⁹ for which the OECD reported 2022 data on postsecondary attainment rates, the percentage of 25- to 64-year-olds who had earned any postsecondary degree was

- 41 percent on average across OECD countries;
- lowest in Italy (20 percent);
- highest in Canada (63 percent); and
- 50 percent in the United States (higher than 28 countries).

High School Completion Rates Across OECD Countries

FIGURE 1.

Percentage of the population 25 to 64 years old who had completed high school, by Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) country: 2012 and 2022



Rounds to zero.

◇ No measurable difference.

¹ The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) was revised in 2011. Although data for 2012 were originally calculated using the 1997 version of ISCED, the footnoted countries revised their 2012 data to align with the 2011 version of ISCED.

² Data include some persons who completed a sufficient number of certain types of programs, any one of which individually would be classified as a program that only partially completes the high school (or upper secondary) level of education.

³ The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) average refers to the mean of data values for all reporting OECD countries, to which each country reporting data contributes equally. The average includes all current OECD countries for which a given year's data are available, even if they were not members of OECD in that year.

NOTE: Of the 38 OECD countries, 36 are included in this figure. Data for New Zealand are available only for 2022. Chile and Japan are excluded because data are not available for these countries for 2012 and 2022. Data in this figure refer to degrees classified under ISCED 2011 as completing level 3 (upper secondary education) or to comparable degrees under ISCED 1997. In the United States, "high school completion" refers to individuals who have been awarded a high school diploma or an equivalent credential, such as the GED. ISCED 2011 was used to calculate data for 2022 for all countries. Some data have been revised from previously published figures. Figures are plotted based on unrounded data. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding in the data labels.

SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Online Education Database. Retrieved October 19, 2023, from <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>. See *Digest of Education Statistics* 2023, table 603.10.

In 33 of the 35 countries¹⁰ for which the OECD reported data on high school completion rates in both 2012 and 2022, the percentage of 25- to 64-year-olds who had completed high school as of 2022 was either higher than or not measurably different from the percentage as of 2012. The two exceptions were Germany and Sweden. During this period,

- the OECD average percentage¹¹ who had completed high school increased from 75 to 80 percent; and
- the corresponding percentage for the United States increased from 89 to 92 percent.

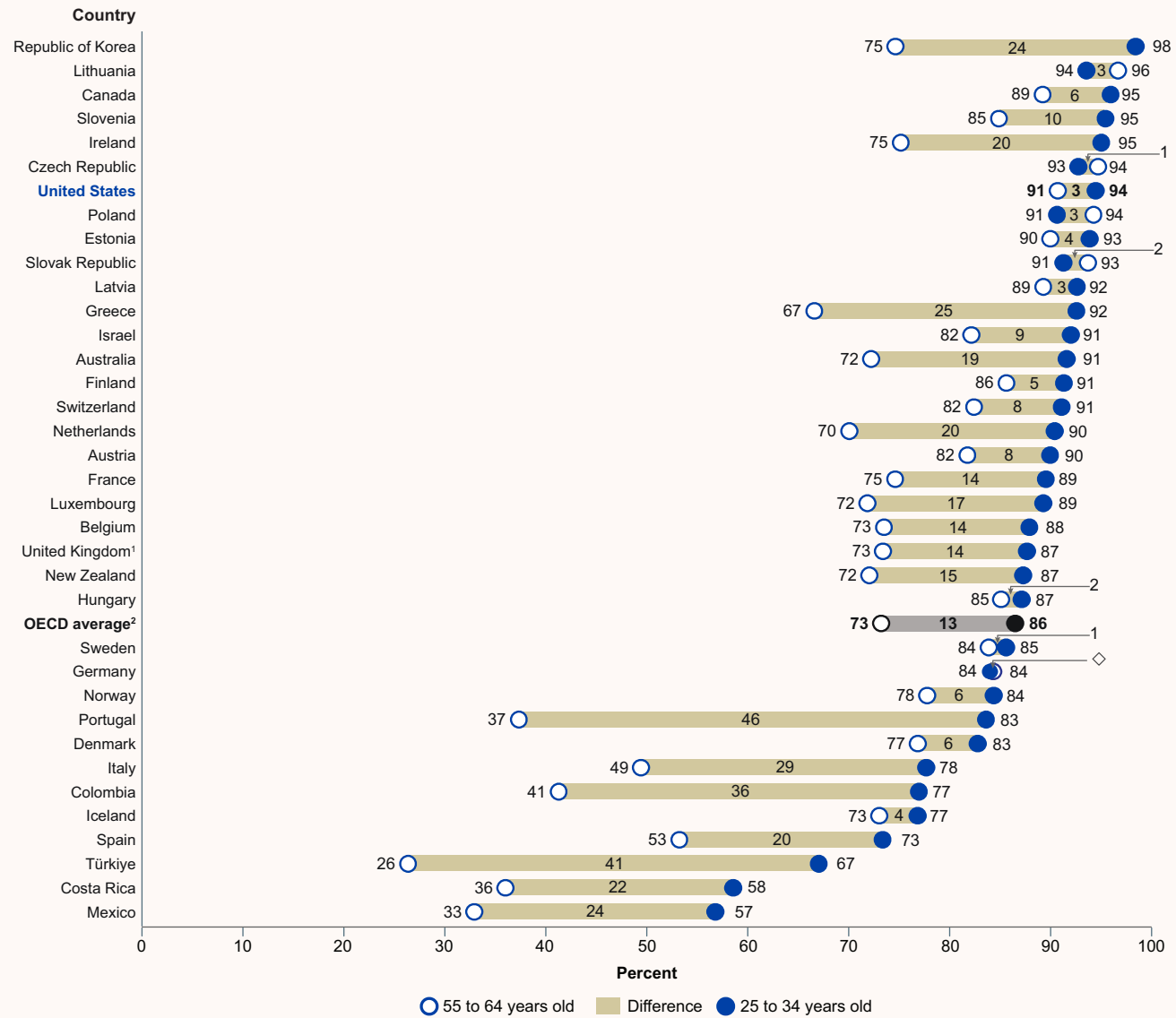
The age group whose educational attainment is likely to reflect more recent shifts in educational and economic systems is 25- to 34-year-olds. For this age group, during the period between 2012 and 2022,

- the OECD average percentage who had completed high school increased from 81 to 86 percent; and
- the corresponding percentage for the United States increased from 89 to 94 percent.

The difference in high school completion rates between the United States and the OECD average as of 2022 was not measurably different from the difference as of 2012 (8 percentage points in both years).

FIGURE 2.

Percentage of the population who had completed high school, by Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) country and selected age groups: 2022



◇ No measurable difference.

¹ Data include some persons who completed a sufficient number of certain types of programs, any one of which individually would be classified as a program that only partially completes the high school (or upper secondary) level of education.

² The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) average refers to the mean of data values for all reporting OECD countries, to which each country reporting data contributes equally. The average includes all current OECD countries for which a given year's data are available, even if they were not members of OECD in that year.

NOTE: Of the 38 OECD countries, 36 are included in this figure. Chile and Japan are excluded because 2022 data are not available for these countries. Data in this figure refer to degrees classified under the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) 2011 as completing level 3 (upper secondary education). In the United States, "high school completion" refers to individuals who have been awarded a high school diploma or an equivalent credential, such as the GED. Figures are plotted based on unrounded data. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding in the data labels.

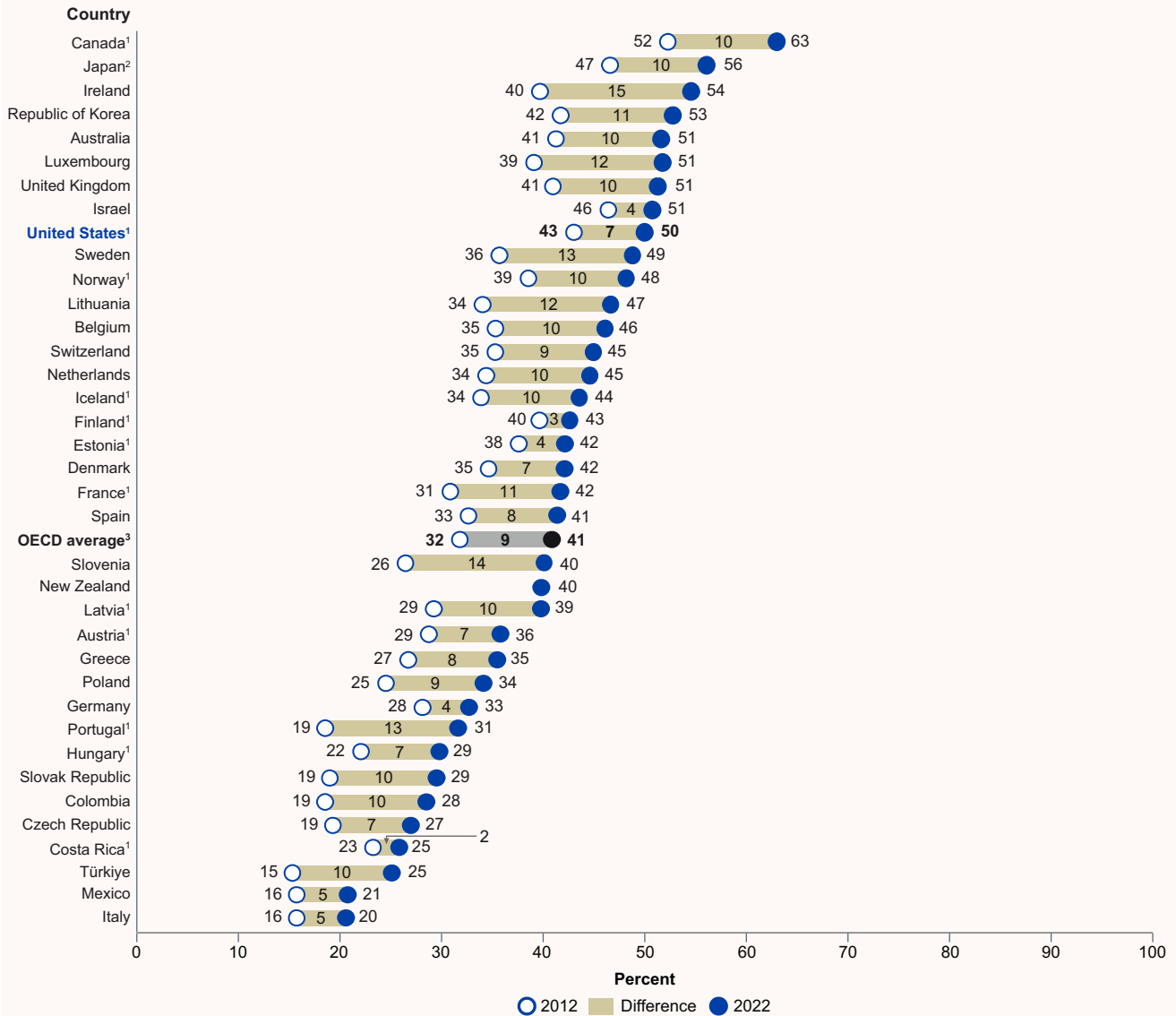
SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Online Education Database. Retrieved October 19, 2023, from <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2023*, table 603.10.

Across the 36 OECD countries for which the OECD reported 2022 data on high school completion rates, the average high school completion percentage was higher for 25- to 34-year-olds (86 percent) than for 55- to 64-year-olds (73 percent). More specifically, in 32 of these countries, the percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds who had completed high school was either higher than or not measurably different from the percentage of 55- to 64-year-olds who had completed high school. The four exceptions were the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. In 29 countries, including the United States, over 80 percent of the younger age group had completed high school. In comparison, the percentage of the older age group who had completed high school was over 80 percent in 16 countries, including the United States.

Postsecondary Attainment Rates Across OECD Countries

FIGURE 3.

Percentage of the population 25 to 64 years old who had attained any postsecondary degree, by Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) country: 2012 and 2022



¹ The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) was revised in 2011. Although data for 2012 were originally calculated using the 1997 version of ISCED, the footnoted countries revised their 2012 data to align with the 2011 version of ISCED.

² Data include some postsecondary nondegree programs (i.e., awards that are below the associate's degree level).

³ The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) average refers to the mean of data values for all reporting OECD countries, to which each country reporting data contributes equally. The average includes all current OECD countries for which a given year's data are available, even if they were not members of OECD in that year.

NOTE: Of the 38 OECD countries, 37 are included in this figure. Data for New Zealand are available only for 2022. Chile is excluded because data are not available for 2012 and 2022. Data in this figure refer to degrees classified under ISCED 2011 as tertiary (postsecondary) degrees, which correspond to all degrees at the associate's level and above in the United States. Under ISCED 2011, tertiary degrees are classified at the following levels: level 5 (corresponding to an associate's degree in the United States), level 6 (a bachelor's or equivalent degree), level 7 (a master's or equivalent degree), and level 8 (a doctoral or equivalent degree). ISCED 2011 was used to calculate data for 2022 for all countries. Some data have been revised from previously published figures. Figures are plotted based on unrounded data. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding in the data labels.

SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Online Education Database. Retrieved October 19, 2023, from <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2023*, table 603.20.

In each of the 36 countries¹² for which the OECD reported data on postsecondary attainment rates in both 2012 and 2022, the percentage of 25- to 64-year-olds who had earned any postsecondary degree was higher as of 2022 than as of 2012. During this period, these percentages increased

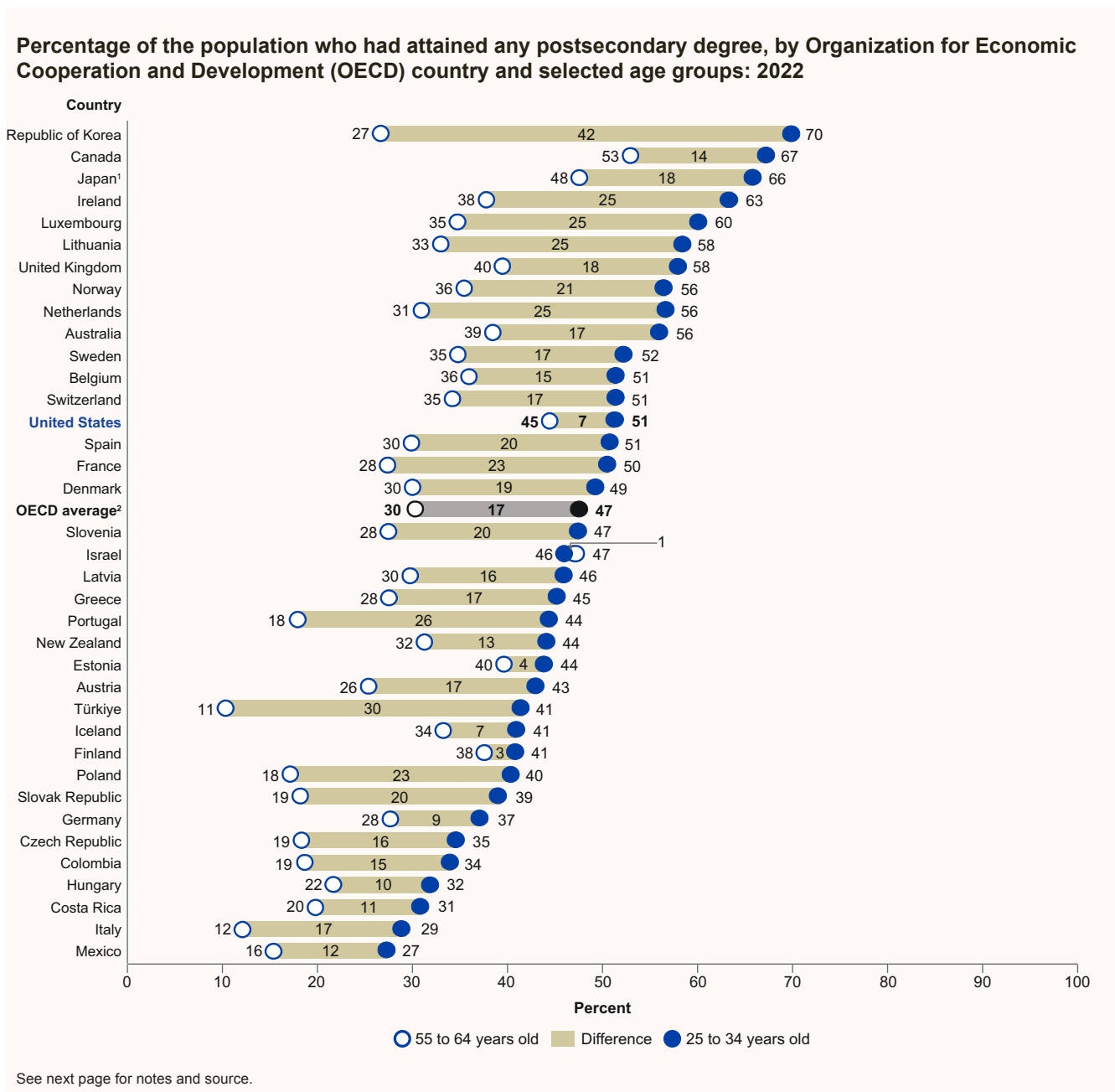
- from 32 to 41 percent across OECD countries on average; and
- from 43 to 50 percent in the United States.

Between 2012 and 2022, the percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds who had earned any postsecondary degree also increased

- from 39 to 47 percent across OECD countries on average; and
- from 44 to 51 percent in the United States.

The difference between the United States and the OECD average in postsecondary attainment for 25- to 34-year-olds as of 2022 (4 percentage points) was not measurably different from the difference as of 2012.

FIGURE 4.



¹ Data include some postsecondary nondegree programs (i.e., awards that are below the associate's degree level).

² The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) average refers to the mean of data values for all reporting OECD countries, to which each country reporting data contributes equally. The average includes all current OECD countries for which a given year's data are available, even if they were not members of OECD in that year.

NOTE: Of the 38 OECD countries, 37 are included in this figure. Chile is excluded from the figure because data are not available for 2022. Data in this figure refer to degrees classified under the 2011 International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) as tertiary (postsecondary) degrees, which correspond to all degrees at the associate's level and above in the United States. Under ISCED 2011, tertiary degrees are classified at the following levels: level 5 (corresponding to an associate's degree in the United States), level 6 (a bachelor's or equivalent degree), level 7 (a master's or equivalent degree), and level 8 (a doctoral or equivalent degree). Figures are plotted based on unrounded data. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding in the data labels.

SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Online Education Database. Retrieved October 19, 2023, from <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2023*, table 603.20.

Postsecondary attainment rates were higher among 25- to 34-year-olds than among 55- to 64-year-olds in 36 of the 37 countries for which the OECD reported 2022 data on postsecondary attainment rates. The one exception to this pattern was Israel, where attainment rates were lower among 25- to 34-year-olds than among 55- to 64-year-olds.

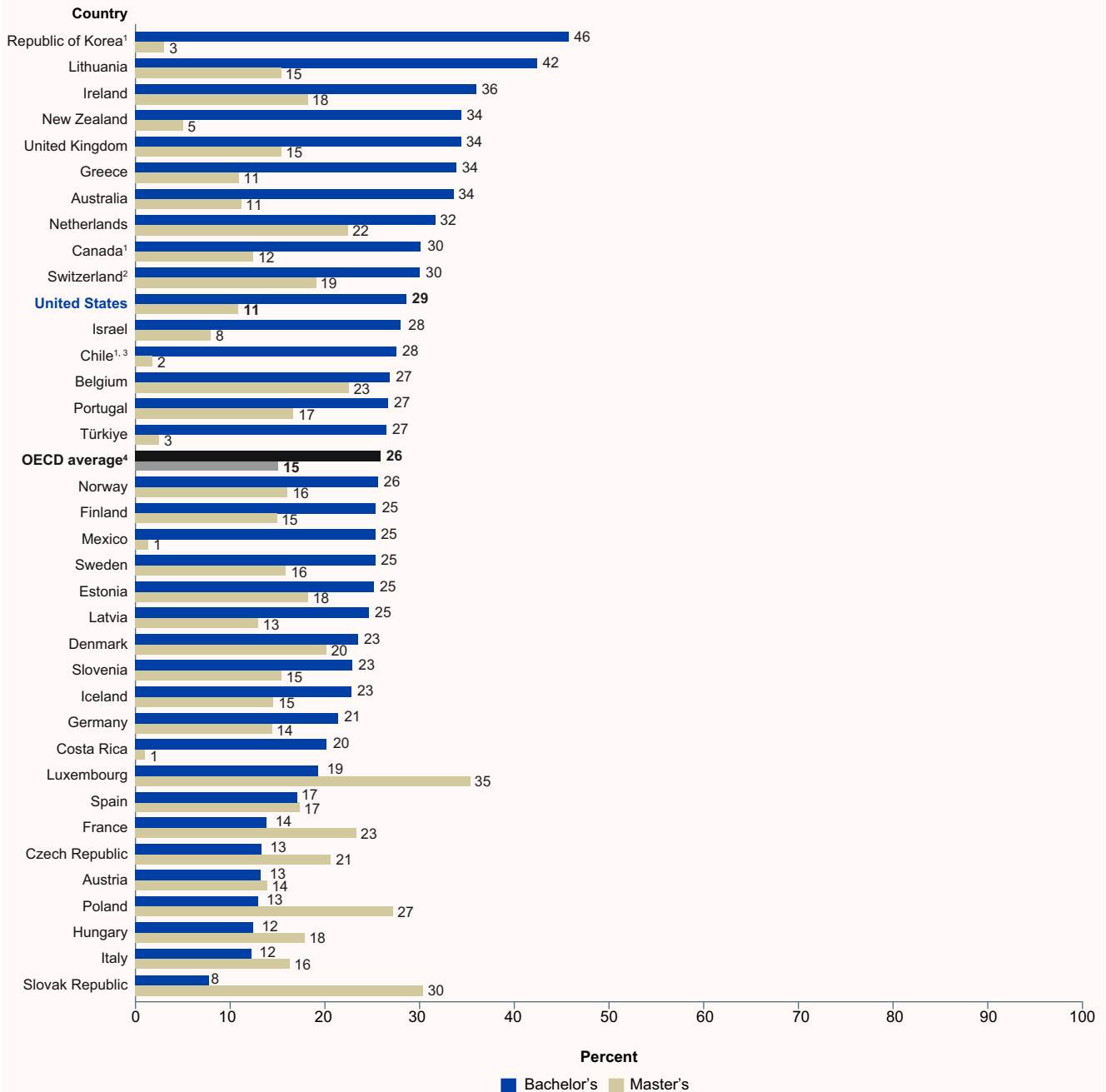
Postsecondary attainment rates for the younger age group compared with the older age group were

- 47 vs. 30 percent across OECD countries on average; and
- 51 vs. 45 percent in the United States.

Canada, Israel, Japan, and the United States were the only countries in which more than 40 percent of those in the older age group had earned any postsecondary degree. In comparison, there were 26 countries in which more than 40 percent of those in the younger age group had earned any postsecondary degree.¹³

FIGURE 5.

Percentage of the population 25 to 34 years old who had attained a bachelor’s degree or master’s degree as their highest degree, by Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) country and highest degree attained: 2022



¹ Doctoral or equivalent degree data are included in master's or equivalent degree.

² Associate's degree data are included in bachelor's or equivalent degree and master's or equivalent degree.

³ Data are from 2020.

⁴ The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) average refers to the mean of data values for all reporting OECD countries, to which each country reporting data contributes equally. The average includes all current OECD countries for which a given year's data are available, even if they were not members of OECD in that year.

NOTE: Of all 38 OECD countries, 36 are included in this figure. Data for Colombia and Japan are excluded because data on master's degree attainment are not available for these countries. Data in this figure refer to degrees classified under the 2011 International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) as tertiary (postsecondary) degrees, which correspond to all degrees at the associate's level and above in the United States. Under ISCED 2011, tertiary degrees are classified at the following levels: level 6 (bachelor's or equivalent degree) and level 7 (a master's or equivalent degree). Figures are plotted based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Online Education Database. Retrieved September 27, 2023, from <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2023*, table 603.30.

Considering the highest degree attained by 25- to 34-year-olds in 2022,

- the percentage who had earned a bachelor's degree as their highest degree ranged from 8 percent in the Slovak Republic to 46 percent in the Republic of Korea;¹⁴ and
- the percentage who had earned a master's degree as their highest degree ranged from 1 percent in Costa Rica and Mexico to 35 percent in Luxembourg.

In the United States, the percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds who had earned a bachelor's degree as their highest degree was higher than the OECD average (29 vs. 26 percent), while the percentage who had earned a master's degree as their highest degree was lower than the OECD average (11 vs. 15 percent). Additionally, 10 percent of U.S. 25- to 34-year-olds had earned an associate's degree as their highest degree and 2 percent had earned a doctoral degree as their highest degree as of 2022, percentages that were both higher than the corresponding OECD averages (8 and 1 percent, respectively).

Endnotes:

¹ Although data for Brazil, Bulgaria, Croatia, Peru, and Romania are not currently reported in this indicator, as of June 2022 these countries have adopted accession roadmaps to become OECD members. For more information on the OECD accession process, see <https://www.oecd.org/about/members-and-partners/>.

² For general technical notes related to data analysis, data interpretation, rounding, and other considerations, please refer to the *Reader's Guide*.

³ Attainment data in this indicator refer to comparable levels of degrees, as classified by the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). ISCED was revised in 2011. The previous version, ISCED 1997, was used for all years prior to 2015, unless a country revised its historical data to align with the 2011 version of ISCED. Data using the ISCED 2011 classification may not be directly comparable to data using the ISCED 1997 classification. For additional information, please see <https://www.oecd.org/education/isced-2011-operational-manual-9789264228368-en.htm>.

⁴ Attainment rates refer to the percentage of the population who had completed a certain level of education by the year of data collection, rather than the percentage who completed education in a particular year only. For more information on how OECD defines educational attainment and what data are available, see https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-attainment/indicator-group/english_025421e5-en.

⁵ Throughout this indicator, data are reported for all current Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries as of 2022 for which a given year's data are available, even if they were not members of the OECD in that year.

⁶ In this indicator, data on high school completion refer to degrees classified as ISCED 2011 level 3, which generally corresponds to high school completion in the United States, with some exceptions.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2023*, tables 603.10, 603.20, and 603.30; *Digest of Education Statistics 2022*, tables 603.10 and 603.20; *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, tables 603.10 and 603.20; *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, tables 603.10 and 603.20; *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, tables 603.10 and 603.20; *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, tables 603.10 and 603.20

Related indicators and resources: [Educational Attainment of Young Adults](#); [Education Expenditures by Country](#); [International Comparisons: Mathematics and Science Achievement at Grades 4 and 8](#); [International Comparisons: Reading Literacy at Grade 4](#); [International Comparisons: Reading, Mathematics, and Science Literacy of 15-Year-Old Students](#)

⁷ Under ISCED 2011, postsecondary, or tertiary, degrees are classified at the following levels: level 5 (corresponding to an associate's degree in the United States), level 6 (a bachelor's or equivalent degree), level 7 (a master's or equivalent degree), and level 8 (a doctoral or equivalent degree). The structure of education differs across countries and not all countries have significant numbers of awards at each of these degree levels.

⁸ Chile and Japan are excluded because 2022 data on their high school completion rates are not available.

⁹ Chile is excluded because 2022 data on its postsecondary attainment rates are not available.

¹⁰ New Zealand is excluded because data are not available for 2012. Chile and Japan are excluded because data are not available for these countries for 2012 and 2022.

¹¹ Throughout this indicator, the "OECD average" refers to the mean of the data values for all reporting OECD countries as of 2022, to which each country reporting data contributes equally. Countries whose data are not available for a given year are not included in the OECD average for that year.

¹² New Zealand is excluded because data are not available for 2012. Chile is excluded because data are not available for 2012 and 2022.

¹³ This count of 26 countries excludes Finland, Iceland, and Poland, whose postsecondary degree attainment rates for 25- to 34-year-olds were not measurably different from 40 percent.

¹⁴ The bachelor's degree attainment rate for Japan was reported to be 48 percent, but it includes master's or equivalent degree and doctoral or equivalent degree.

Glossary: [Associate's degree](#); [Bachelor's degree](#); [Doctor's degree](#); [Educational attainment](#); [High school completer](#); [International Standard Classification of Education \(ISCED\)](#); [Master's degree](#); [Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development \(OECD\)](#); [Postsecondary education](#)