

International Educational Attainment

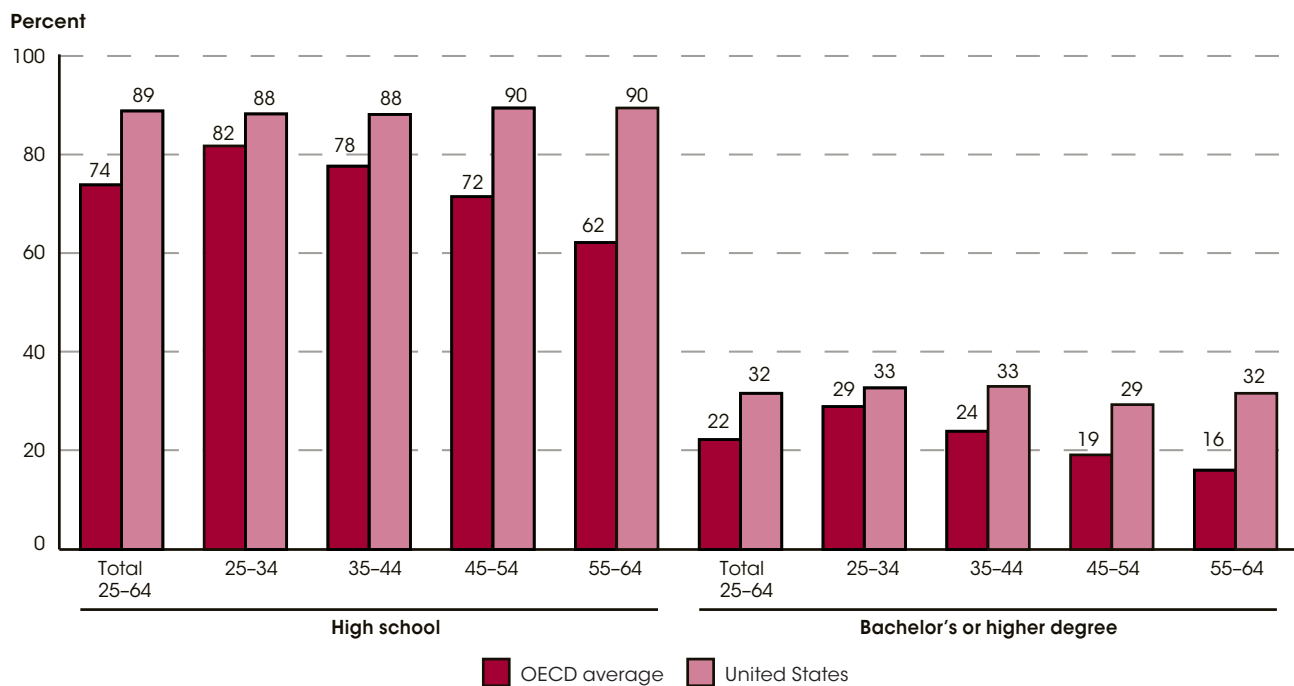
Across OECD countries, the percentage of 25- to 64-year-olds who had earned a college degree was higher in 2010 (22 percent) than in 2001 (15 percent). The percentage of the U.S. adult population with a bachelor's or higher degree was 32 percent in 2010, compared with 28 percent in 2001.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an organization of 34 countries whose purpose is to promote trade and economic growth. This indicator presents data on high school and bachelor's degree completion rates for the adult population (ages 25 to 64) of OECD member countries. Attainment data in this indicator refer to comparable levels of degrees, as classified by the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED).

In 2010, some 26 out of 33 OECD countries reported that 70 percent or more of their adult populations had

completed high school. Among all OECD countries, the percentages of high school completers ranged from under 40 percent in Turkey, Portugal, and Mexico, to over 90 percent in the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic. Additionally, some 21 OECD countries reported that 20 percent or more of their adult populations had completed a bachelor's or higher degree. Among all OECD countries, the percentages of bachelor's degree completers ranged from under 15 percent in Austria, Slovenia, Turkey, and Italy, to over 30 percent in Israel, the United States, and Norway.

Figure 1. Percentage of the population 25 to 64 years old in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries who attained selected levels of education, by age group: 2010



NOTE: Educational attainment data in this figure refer to degrees classified by the OECD as International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) level 3 for high school and level 5A or 6 for bachelor's or higher degree. The OECD average refers to the mean of the data values for all reporting OECD countries, to which each country reporting data contributes equally.
 SOURCE: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Education at a Glance*, 2002, 2007, and 2012. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2012*, tables 467 and 469.

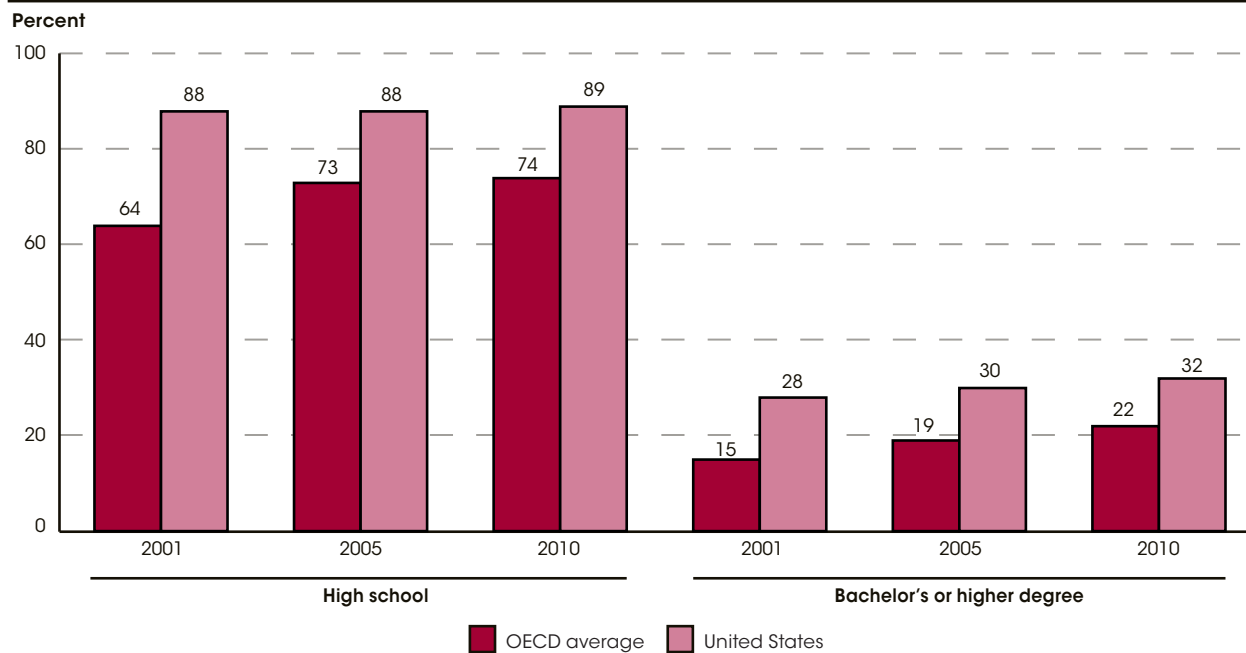
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In 2010, on average, higher percentages of the youngest age group had completed high school compared with the oldest age group in most OECD countries. For example, the average percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds completing high school across OECD countries was 20 percentage points higher than the average percentage of 55- to 64-year-olds completing high school (82 vs. 62 percent, respectively). The United States was one of two countries, along with Estonia, for which there was no measurable difference between the percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds completing high school and the percentage of 55- to 64-year-olds completing high school: in 2010, some 90 percent of both U.S. 25- to 34-year-olds and 55- to 64-year-olds had completed high school. The only other countries where 80 percent or more of 55- to 64-year-olds had completed high school were the Czech Republic,

Estonia, the Slovak Republic, Germany, Canada, and Switzerland.

The same general pattern of higher percentages of the youngest age groups attaining higher levels of education also applied to the attainment of bachelor's degrees in 2010. In all OECD countries, a higher percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds than of 55- to 64-year-olds had attained a bachelor's or higher degree in 2010. On average, 29 percent of 25- to 34-year-olds had a bachelor's degree in 2010, compared with 16 percent of 55- to 64-year-olds. In the United States, 33 percent of 25- to 34-year-olds and 32 percent of 55- to 64-year-olds had a bachelor's or higher degree. The United States was the only country where at least 30 percent of 55- to 64-year-olds had attained at least a bachelor's degree in 2010.

Figure 2. Percentage of the population 25 to 64 years old in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries who attained selected levels of education: Selected years, 2001, 2005, and 2010



NOTE: Educational attainment data in this figure refer to degrees classified by the OECD as International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) level 3 for high school and level 5A or 6 for bachelor's or higher degree. The OECD average refers to the mean of the data values for all reporting OECD countries, to which each country reporting data contributes equally.
 SOURCE: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Education at a Glance*, 2012. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2012*, tables 467 and 468.

Most OECD countries reported that the percentages of 25- to 64-year-olds who had completed a high school education or attained a bachelor's or higher degree were higher in 2010 than they were in 2001. Across OECD countries, the average percentage of the adult population completing a high school education increased 10 percentage points, from 64 percent in 2001 to 74 percent in 2010. The percentage of adults in the United States who had completed high school increased 1 percentage point during this period, from 88 to 89 percent. The OECD percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds with a high school education increased 8 percentage points, from 74 percent in 2001 to 82 percent in 2010. In comparison, there was

no measurable change in the percentage of U.S. young adults with a high school education (88 percent) during that period.

The OECD average percentage of the adult population with a bachelor's or higher degree increased 7 percentage points between 2001 and 2010, from 15 percent to 22 percent. During the same period, the percentage of U.S. adults with a bachelor's or higher degree increased 4 percentage points, from 28 percent to 32 percent. Similarly, the OECD percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds with a bachelor's or higher degree rose from 18 percent in 2001 to 29 percent in 2010, an increase of 11 percentage points. The comparable percentage for young adults in

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the United States increased 3 percentage points, from 30 percent to 33 percent. Thus, the relatively larger increases in the bachelor's or higher degree attainment rates for young adults in many OECD countries compared with the United States were reflected by a decreasing difference between OECD average and U.S. attainment rates.

In 2001, there was a 12 percentage point gap between the OECD average and the United States in the rate of attainment of a bachelor's or higher degree among 25- to 34-year-olds; by 2010, this gap had decreased to 4 percentage points.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2012*, tables 467, 468, 469

Glossary: Bachelor's degree, Educational attainment, High school completer, International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)