

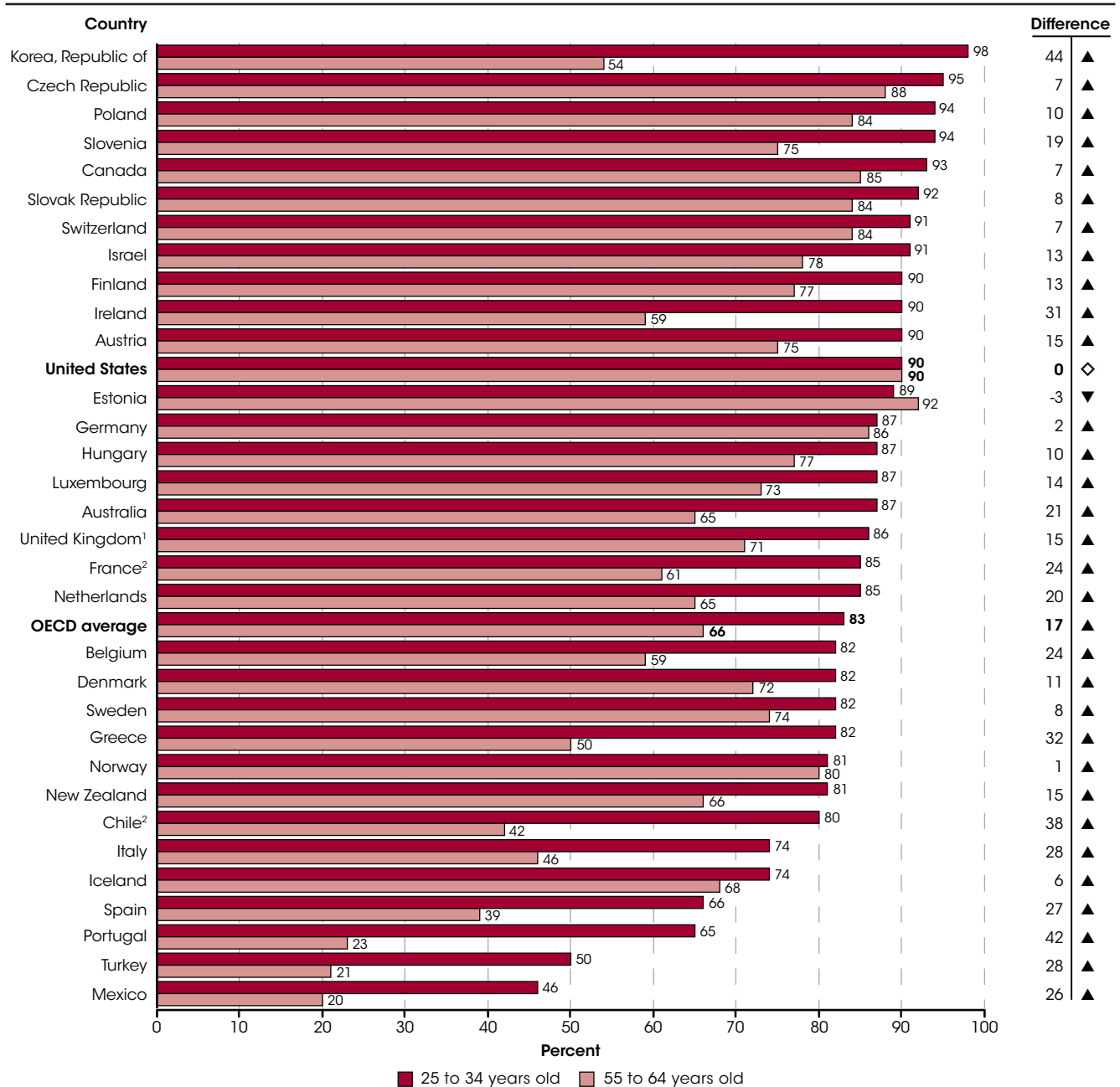
## International Educational Attainment

*The OECD average percentage of the adult population with a postsecondary degree increased by 11 percentage points between 2001 and 2014, from 22 to 33 percent. During the same period, the percentage of U.S. adults with a postsecondary degree increased by 7 percentage points, from 37 to 44 percent.*

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is an organization of 34 countries whose purpose is to promote trade and economic growth. In 2014, some 17 out of 33 countries<sup>1</sup> belonging to the OECD reported that more than 80 percent of their adult populations (ages 25 to 64) had completed high school.<sup>2,3</sup> Among OECD countries, the percentages of high school completers ranged from under 45 percent in Mexico, Turkey, and Portugal to over 90 percent in Poland, the Slovak Republic, Estonia, and the Czech Republic. Additionally, 20 out of 33 OECD countries reported that more than 30 percent of their adult populations had earned postsecondary degrees.<sup>4</sup> The percentages of adults earning a postsecondary degree ranged from under 20 percent in Turkey, Italy, and Mexico to 45 percent or more in Luxembourg, Israel, and Canada.

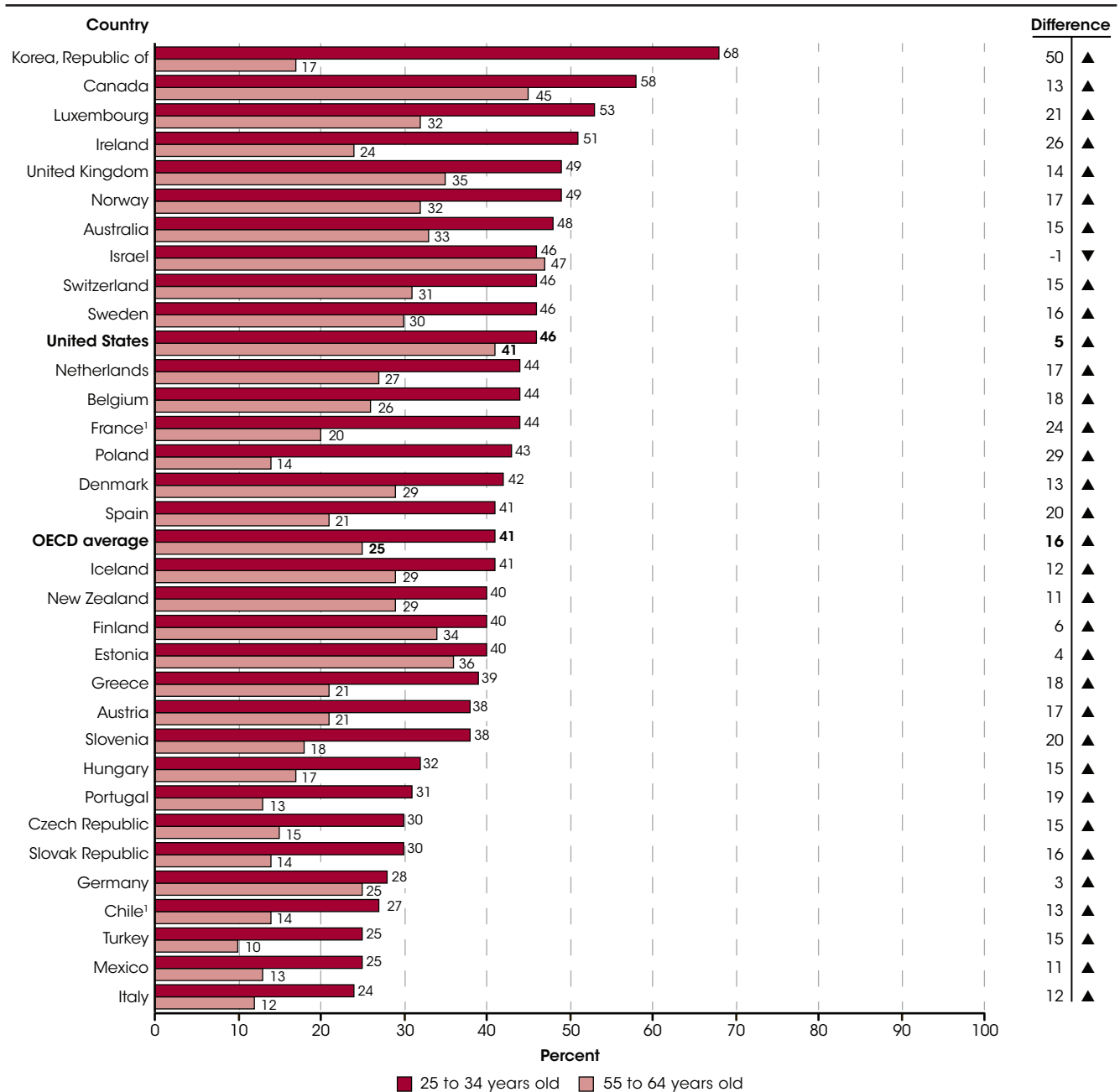
In most OECD countries, except for the United States and Estonia, higher percentages of the youngest adult age group surveyed (those ages 25 to 34) than of the oldest adult age group (ages 55 to 64) had completed high school in 2014. Across OECD countries, the average percentage of those completing high school was higher for 25- to 34-year-olds (83 percent) than for 55- to 64-year-olds (66 percent). The United States was the only country in which the high school completion percentages were not measurably different between the youngest and oldest age groups; the rates for both age groups were 90 percent. In Estonia, a lower percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds (89 percent) than of 55- to 64-year-olds (92 percent) had completed high school. Over 80 percent of 55- to 64-year-olds had completed high school in six other countries: Poland, Switzerland, the Slovak Republic, Canada, Germany, and the Czech Republic.

Figure 1. Percentage of the population that had completed high school in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, by selected age groups: 2014



▲ The percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds who had completed high school is higher than the percentage of 55- to 64-year-olds who had completed high school.  
▼ The percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds who had completed high school is lower than the percentage of 55- to 64-year-olds who had completed high school.  
◇ The percentages of 25- to 34-year-olds and 55- to 64-year-olds who had completed high school are not significantly different.  
<sup>1</sup> Data include some persons (18 percent of the total) who have completed a sufficient volume and standard 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.  
<sup>2</sup> Data from 2013 reported for 2014.  
NOTE: Data not available for Japan. The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) was most recently revised in 2011. Data in this figure refer to degrees classified as ISCED level 3, which corresponds to high school completion in the United States. The OECD average refers to the mean of the data values for all reporting OECD countries, to which each country reporting data contributes equally. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded estimates.  
SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *Education at a Glance, 2015*. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, table 603.10.

Figure 2. Percentage of the population with a postsecondary degree in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, by selected age groups: 2014

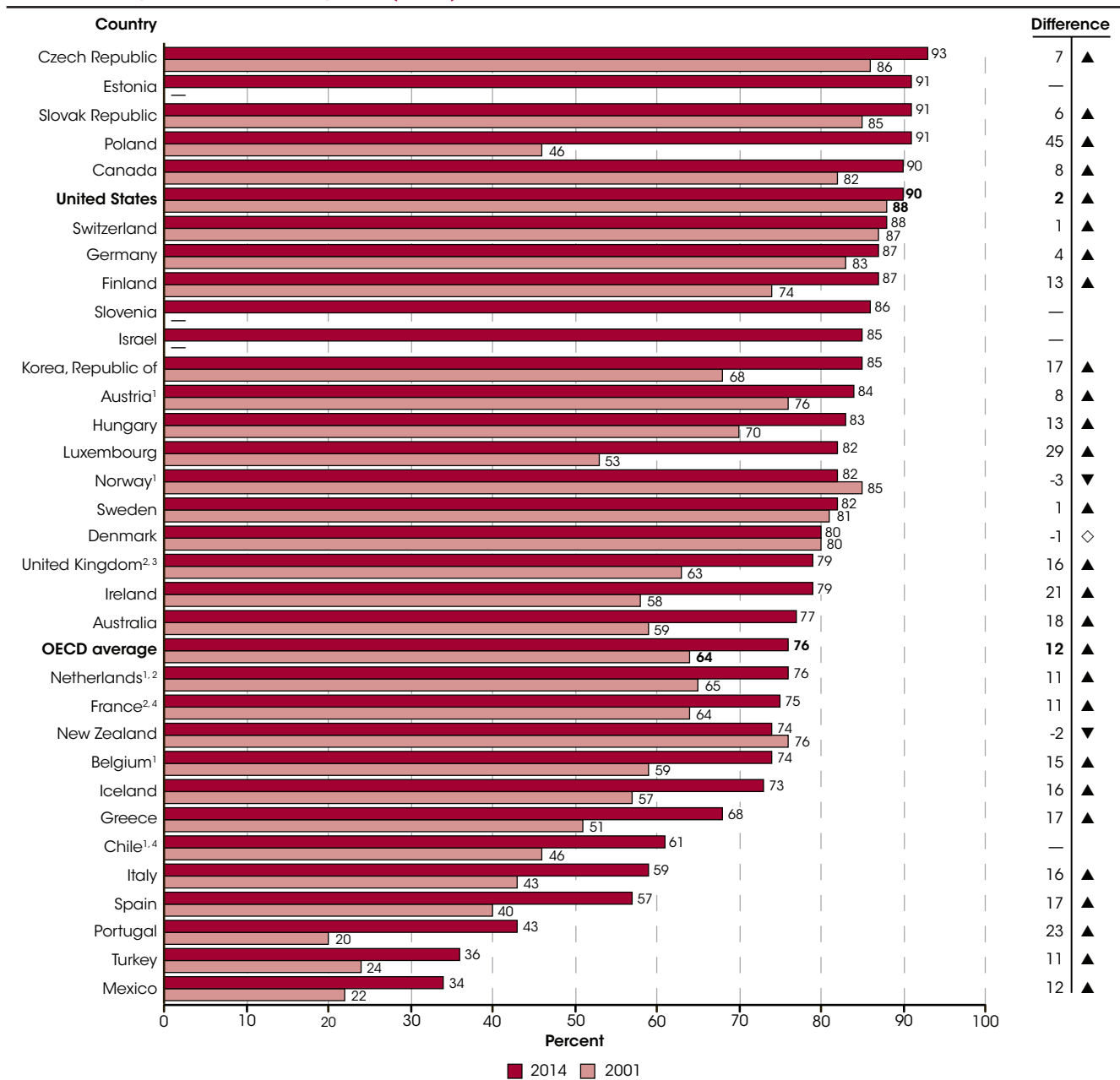


▲ The percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds with any postsecondary degree is higher than the percentage of 55- to 64-year-olds with any postsecondary degree.  
▼ The percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds with any postsecondary degree is lower than the percentage of 55- to 64-year-olds with any postsecondary degree.  
<sup>1</sup> Data from 2013 reported for 2014.  
NOTE: Data in this figure include all postsecondary degrees, which correspond to degrees at the associate's level and above in the United States. The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) was most recently revised in 2011. Under ISCED 2011, postsecondary 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). 2014 estimates for Japan are excluded from the figure because data for postsecondary degree completion rates excluded short-cycle tertiary education, which corresponds to the associate's degree in the United States. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded estimates.  
SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *Education at a Glance, 2015*. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, table 603.20.

The same general pattern of higher percentages of the youngest age groups attaining higher levels of education also applied to the attainment of postsecondary degrees in 2014. In all OECD countries except Israel, a higher percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds than of 55- to 64-year-olds had earned a postsecondary degree in 2014. Across OECD countries, 41 percent of 25- to 34-year-olds had

earned a postsecondary degree in 2014, compared with 25 percent of 55- to 64-year-olds. In the United States, 46 percent of 25- to 34-year-olds and 41 percent of 55- to 64-year-olds had earned a postsecondary degree. Forty percent or more of 55- to 64-year-olds had earned a postsecondary degree in two other countries: Canada and Israel.

Figure 3. Percentage of the population 25 to 64 years old that had completed high school in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries: 2001 and 2014



▲ The 2014 percentage is higher than the 2001 percentage.  
▼ The 2014 percentage is lower than the 2001 percentage.  
◇ The 2014 and 2001 percentages are not significantly different.  
— Not available.

<sup>1</sup> Data from 2000 reported for 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Data in 2001 include some short secondary (ISCED 3C) programs.

<sup>3</sup> Data for 2014 include some persons (18 percent of the total) who have completed a sufficient volume and standard 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.

<sup>4</sup> Data from 2013 reported for 2014.

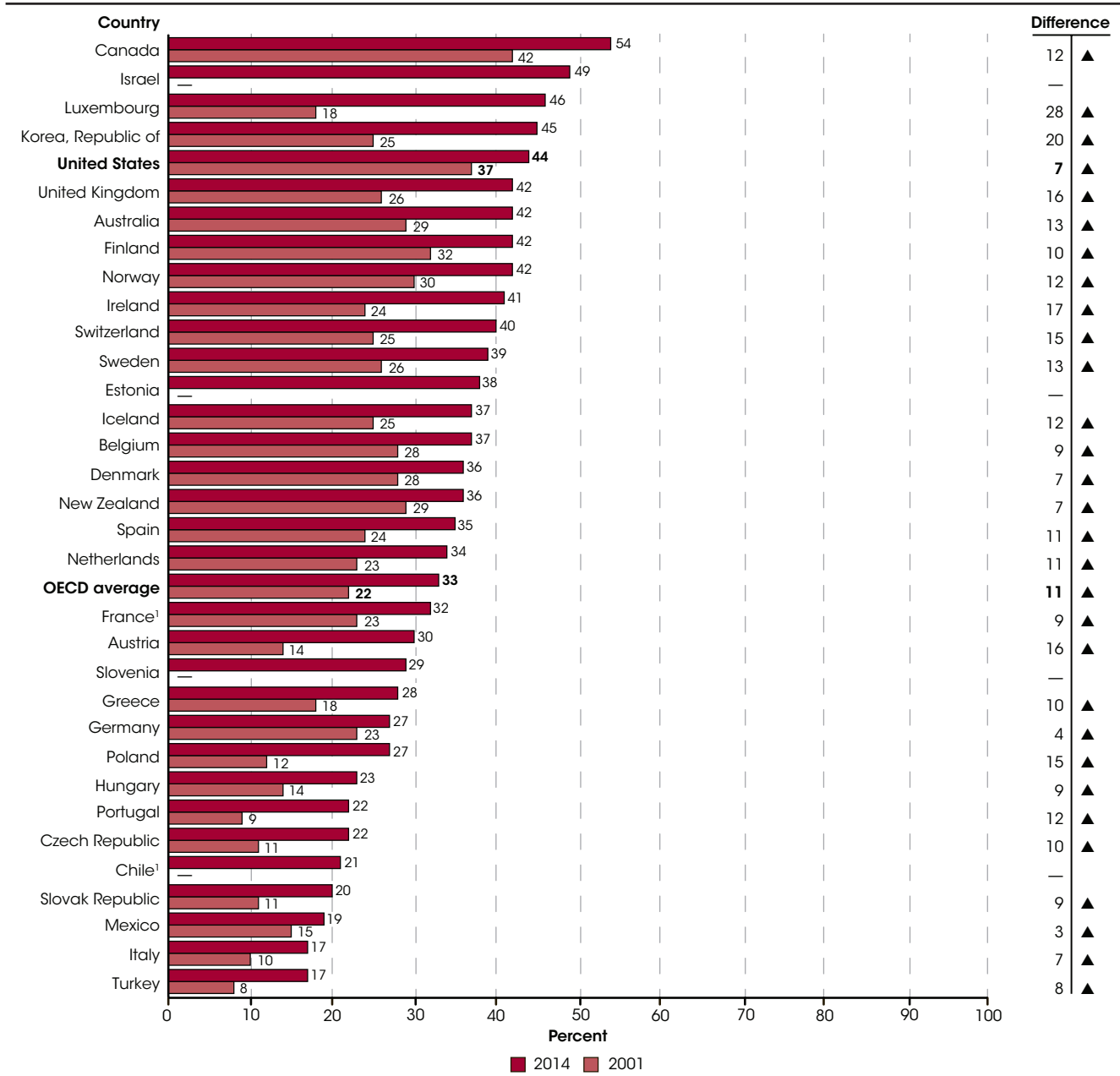
NOTE: Data not available for Japan in 2014. The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) was most recently revised in 2011. The previous version, ISCED 1997, was used to calculate all data for 2012 and earlier years. For OECD countries, data for 2014 were calculated using ISCED 2011 and may not be comparable to data for earlier years. Data in this figure refer to degrees classified as ISCED level 3, which corresponds to high school completion in the United States, with the following exceptions: Programs classified under ISCED 1997 as level 3C short programs do not correspond to high school completion; these short programs are excluded from this table except where otherwise noted. Programs classified under ISCED 2011 as only partially completing level 3 are also excluded except where otherwise noted. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded estimates.

SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *Education at a Glance, 2003 and 2015*. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, table 603.10.

The percentage of 25- to 64-year-olds who had completed a high school education was higher in 2014 than in 2001 in each OECD country with reported data, with the exceptions of New Zealand and Norway, where high school completion rates in 2014 were between 2 and 3 percentage points lower than they were in 2001, and Denmark, where high school completion rates were not measurably different between the two years.<sup>5</sup> The OECD average percentage of the adult population completing a high school education increased by 12 percentage

points, from 64 percent in 2001 to 76 percent in 2014. The percentage of adults in the United States who had completed high school increased from 88 to 90 percent during this period. For 25- to 34-year-olds, the OECD average percentage with a high school education was 9 percentage points higher in 2014 (83 percent) than in 2001 (74 percent), while the percentage of U.S. young adults with a high school education was 2 percentage points higher (90 vs. 88 percent).

Figure 4. Percentage of the population 25 to 64 years old with a postsecondary degree in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries: 2001 and 2014



▲ The 2014 percentage is higher than the 2001 percentage.

— Not available.

<sup>1</sup> Data from 2013 reported for 2014.

NOTE: Data in this figure include all postsecondary degrees, which correspond to degrees at the associate's level and above in the United States. The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) was most recently revised in 2011. The previous version, ISCED 1997, was used to calculate all data for 2013 and earlier years. For OECD countries, data for 2014 were calculated using ISCED 2011 and may not be comparable to data for earlier years. Under ISCED 2011, postsecondary 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). 2014 estimates for Japan are excluded from the figure because data for postsecondary degree completion rates excluded short-cycle tertiary education, which corresponds to the associate's degree in the United States. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded estimates.

SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *Education at a Glance, 2003 and 2015*. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, table 603.20.

All countries with data reported that the percentages of 25- to 64-year-olds who had earned a postsecondary degree were higher in 2014 than in 2001. The OECD average percentage of the adult population with a postsecondary degree increased by 11 percentage points between 2001 and 2014, from 22 to 33 percent. During the same period, the percentage of U.S. adults with a postsecondary degree increased by 7 percentage points, from 37 to 44 percent.

For 25- to 34-year-olds, the OECD average percentage with a postsecondary degree rose from 28 percent in 2001 to 41 percent in 2014, an increase of 13 percentage

points. The comparable percentage for young adults in the United States increased by 7 percentage points, from 39 to 46 percent. As a result of the relatively larger increases in postsecondary degree attainment among young adult populations in several other OECD countries, the gap in attainment at this level of education between the U.S. and the OECD average percentages decreased between 2001 and 2014. In 2001, the rate of attainment of a postsecondary degree among 25- to 34-year-olds in the United States was 11 percentage points higher than the OECD average; by 2014, this difference had decreased to 5 percentage points.

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**Endnotes:**

<sup>1</sup> In 2014, Japan did not report data on high school completion rates. In addition, data for Japan's postsecondary degree completion rates excluded short-cycle tertiary education, which corresponds to the associate's degree in the United States. Due to these limitations, estimates for Japan are excluded from the indicator.

<sup>2</sup> Attainment data in this indicator refer to comparable levels of degrees, as classified by the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). ISCED was most recently revised in 2011. The previous version, ISCED 1997, was used to calculate all data for 2013 and earlier years. For OECD countries, data for 2014 were calculated using ISCED 2011 and may not be comparable to data for earlier years.

<sup>3</sup> Data in this section refer to degrees classified as ISCED level 3, which corresponds to high school completion in

the United States, with the following exceptions: Programs classified under ISCED 1997 as level 3C short programs do not correspond to high school completion; these short programs are excluded from this section except for France and the United Kingdom. Programs classified under ISCED 2011 as only partially completing level 3 are also excluded except for the United Kingdom.

<sup>4</sup> Here, postsecondary degrees are those that correspond to the associate's or higher level in the United States. Under ISCED 2011, postsecondary 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).

<sup>5</sup> In 2001, Estonia, Slovenia, and Israel did not report data on high school completion rates.

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**Reference tables:** *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, tables 603.10 and 603.20

**Related indicators:** Educational Attainment of Young Adults, Education Expenditures by Country, International Assessments, Trends in Employment Rates by Educational Attainment [*The Condition of Education 2013 Spotlight*]

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**Glossary:** Educational attainment, High school completer, International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Postsecondary education