

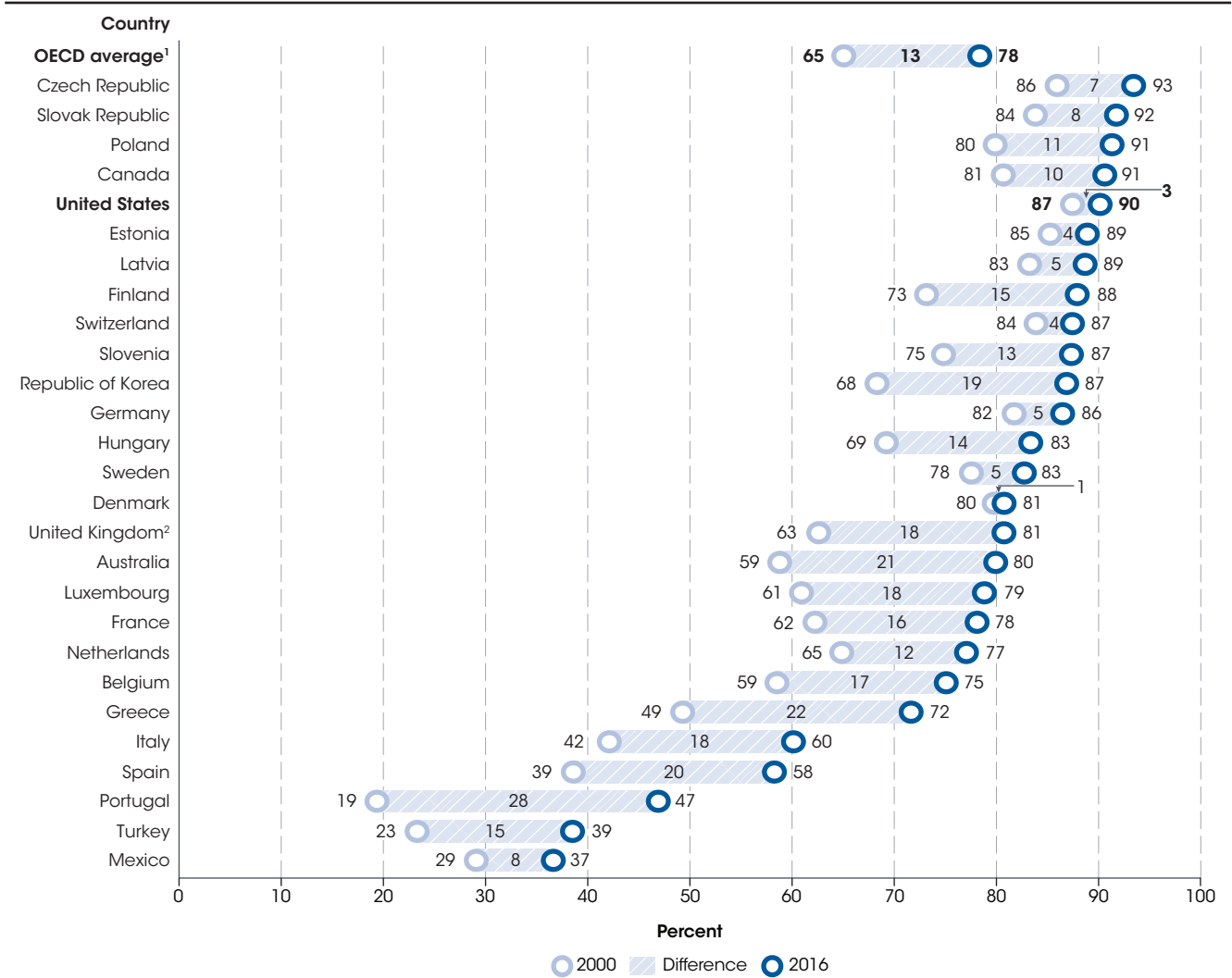
International Educational Attainment

Across OECD countries, the average percentage of the adult population with any postsecondary degree was 36 percent in 2016, an increase of 14 percentage points from 2000. During the same period, the percentage of U.S. adults with any postsecondary degree increased 9 percentage points to 46 percent.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is an organization of 35 countries 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*.¹ Among the 32 countries² for which the OECD reported 2016 data, the percentages of the adult populations (ages 25 to 64) who had completed high school ranged from under 40 percent in Mexico and Turkey to 90 percent or more in the United States,

Canada, Poland, the Slovak Republic, and the Czech Republic.³ Nineteen countries reported that more than 80 percent of their adult populations had completed high school in 2016. Additionally, of the 33 countries⁴ for which the OECD reported 2016 data on postsecondary attainment rates, the percentages of adults earning any postsecondary degree⁵ ranged from under 20 percent in Mexico, Italy, and Turkey to more than 50 percent in Japan and Canada. Twenty-three countries reported that more than 30 percent of their adult populations had earned any postsecondary degree in 2016.

Figure 1. Percentage of the population 25 to 64 years old who had completed high school in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries: 2000 and 2016



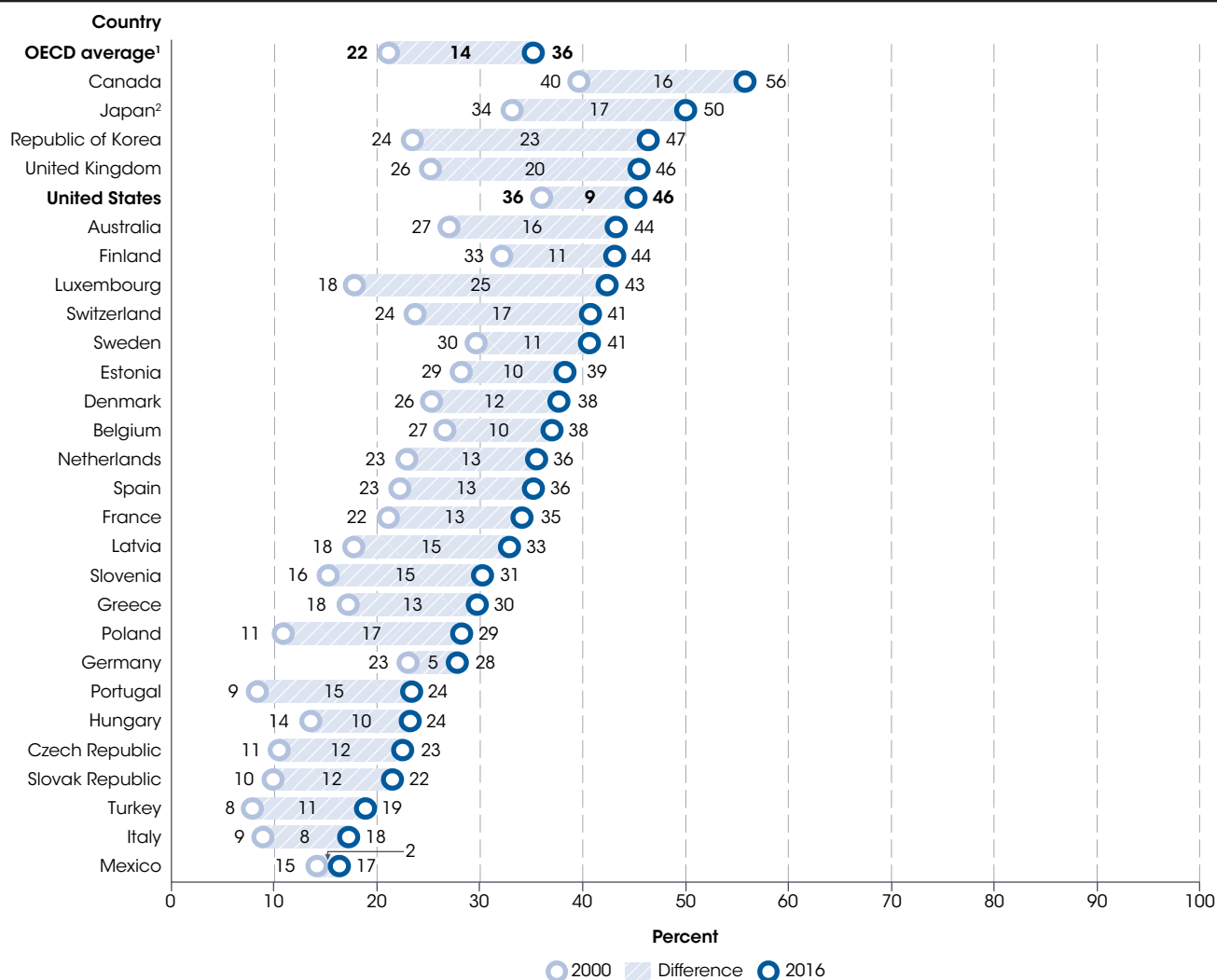
¹ Refers to the mean of the data values for all reporting OECD countries, to which each country reporting data contributes equally. The average includes all current OECD countries for which a given year's data are available, even if they were not members of the OECD in that year. Countries not shown in this figure may be included in the OECD average.

² Data include some persons who have 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.
 NOTE: Of the 35 OECD countries, 27 are included in this figure. Austria, Chile, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, and Norway are excluded because estimates are not available for these countries for either 2000 or 2016. The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) was revised in 2011. The previous version, ISCED 1997, was used to calculate all data for 2000. ISCED 2011 was used to calculate all data for 2016. Except where otherwise noted, data in this table refer to degrees classified under ISCED 2011 as completing level 3 (upper secondary education) or to comparable degrees under ISCED 1997. Some data have been revised from previously published figures. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded estimates.
 SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Online Education Database, retrieved September 28, 2017, from <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, table 603.10.

In each of the 27 countries⁶ for which the OECD reported data on high school completion rates in both 2000 and 2016, the percentage of 25- to 64-year-olds who had completed a high school education was higher in 2016 than in 2000. The OECD average percentage⁷ of the adult population with a high school education rose from 65 percent in 2000 to 78 percent in 2016. Meanwhile,

the percentage of adults in the United States who had completed high school rose from 87 to 90 percent during this period. For 25- to 34-year-olds, the OECD average percentage with a high school education rose from 75 to 84 percent during this period, while the corresponding percentage for U.S. 25- to 34-year-olds increased from 88 to 91 percent.

Figure 2. Percentage of the population 25 to 64 years old who had attained any postsecondary degree in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries: 2000 and 2016



¹ Refers to the mean of the 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 the OECD in that year. Countries not shown in this figure may be included in the OECD average.

² Data for both years include some upper secondary and postsecondary nontertiary awards (i.e., awards that are below the associate's degree level). NOTE: Of the 35 OECD countries, 28 are included in this figure. Austria, Chile, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, New Zealand, and Norway are excluded from this figure because data are not available for these countries for either 2000 or 2016. Data in this figure include all tertiary (postsecondary) degrees, which correspond to all degrees at the associate's level and above in the United States. The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) was revised in 2011. The previous version, ISCED 1997, was used to calculate all data for 2000. ISCED 2011 was used to calculate all data for 2016 and may not be directly comparable to ISCED 1997. 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 doctor's or equivalent degree). Some data have been revised from previously published figures. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded estimates.

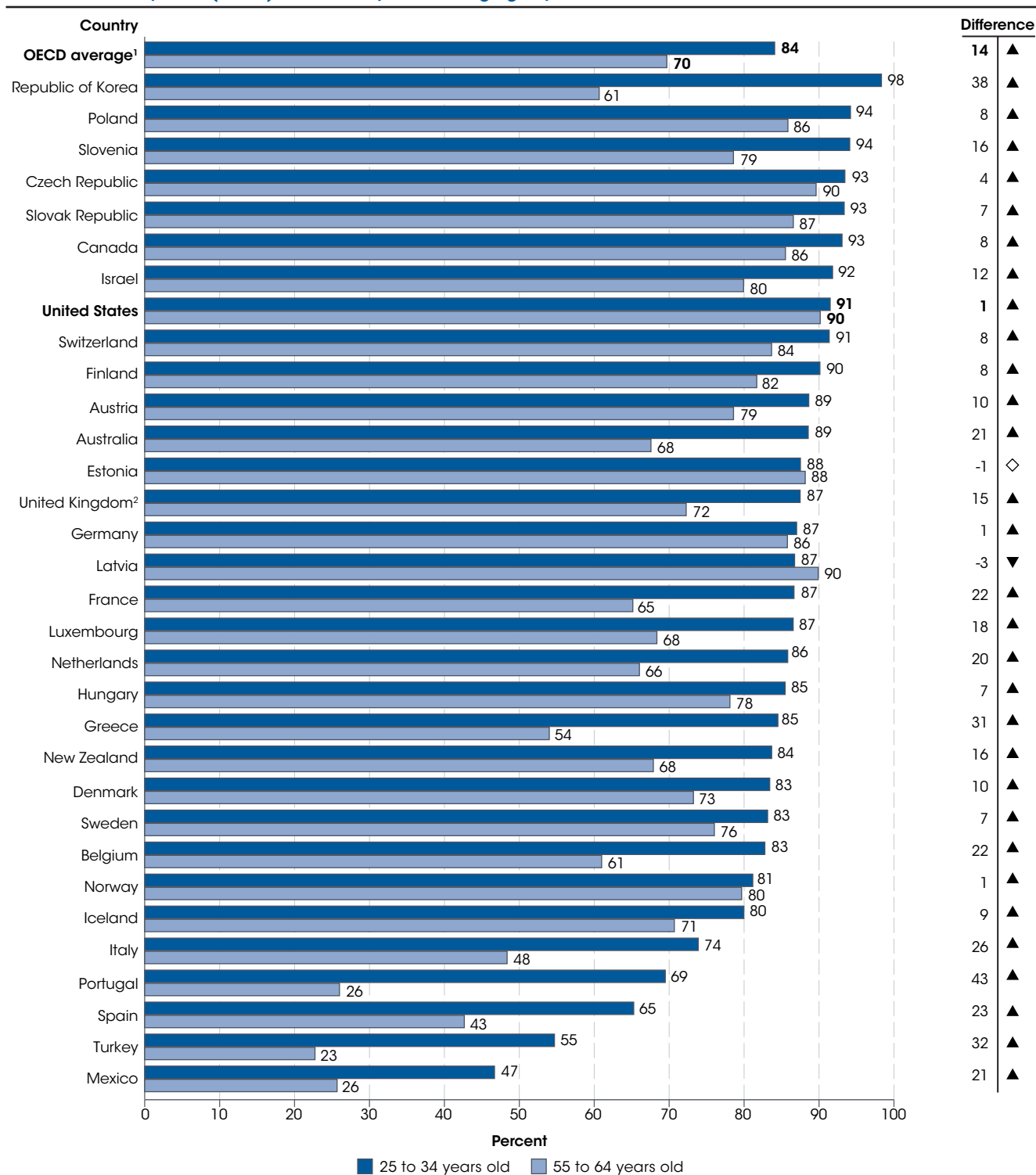
SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Online Education Database, retrieved October 20, 2017, from <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, table 603.20.

Similarly, in each of the 28 countries⁸ for which the OECD reported data on postsecondary attainment rates in both 2000 and 2016, the percentage of 25- to 64-year-olds who had earned any postsecondary degree was higher in 2016 than in 2000. During this period, the OECD average percentage of the adult population with any postsecondary degree increased by 14 percentage points to 36 percent in 2016, while the corresponding percentage for U.S. adults increased by 9 percentage points to 46 percent.

For 25- to 34-year-olds, the OECD average percentage with any postsecondary degree rose from 26 percent

in 2000 to 43 percent in 2016. The corresponding percentage for 25- to 34-year-olds in the United States rose from 38 to 48 percent. As a result of the relatively larger increases in postsecondary degree attainment among the 25- to 34-year-old populations in most OECD countries, the postsecondary attainment gap between the United States and the OECD average decreased between 2000 and 2016. In 2000, the rate of attainment of any postsecondary degree among 25- to 34-year-olds in the United States was 12 percentage points higher than the OECD average; by 2016, this gap had decreased to 4 percentage points.

Figure 3. Percentage of the population who had completed high school in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, by selected age groups: 2016



▲ 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 measurably different.

¹ Refers to the mean of the 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 the OECD in that year.

² Data include some persons who have 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.

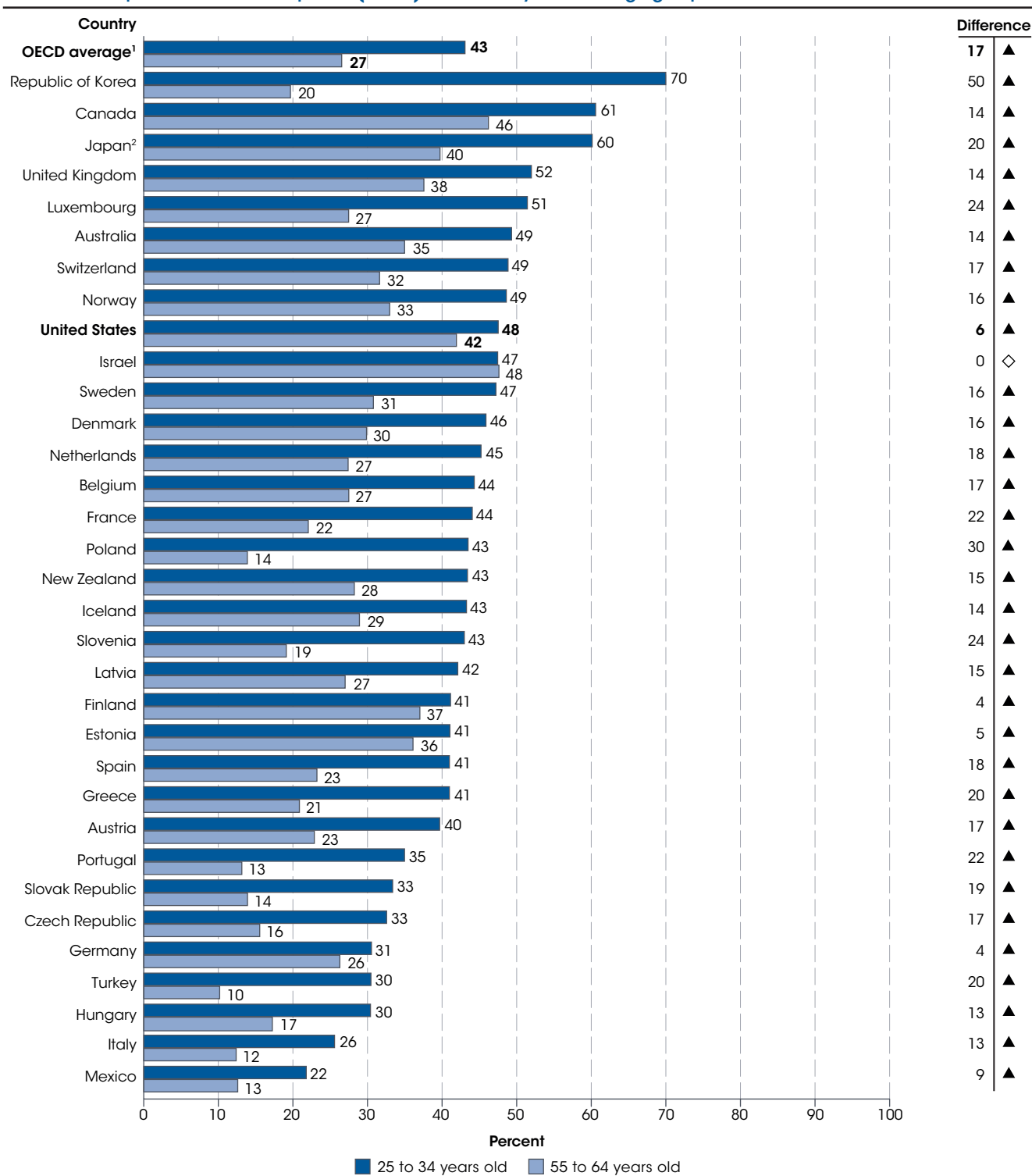
NOTE: Of the 35 OECD countries, 32 are included in this figure. Chile, Ireland, and Japan are excluded because 2016 data on high school completion rates are not available for these countries. Except where otherwise noted, data in this table refer to degrees classified under the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) 2011 as completing level 3 (upper secondary education). Some data have been revised from previously published figures. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded estimates.

SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Online Education Database, retrieved September 28, 2017, from <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, table 603.10.

In nearly all of the 32 countries for which the OECD reported 2016 data on high school completion rates, higher percentages of 25- to 34-year-olds than of 55- to 64-year-olds had completed high school. Across OECD countries, the average high school completion percentage was higher for 25- to 34-year-olds (84 percent) than for 55- to 64-year-olds (70 percent). The exceptions were Latvia, where the high school completion rate for 55- to 64-year-olds was 3 percentage points higher than the high school completion rate for 25- to 34-year-olds, and

Estonia, where the high school completion percentages for these two age groups were not measurably different from each other (both 88 percent). In 26 countries, including the United States, more than 80 percent of 25- to 34-year-olds had completed high school in 2016. In comparison, the percentage of 55- to 64-year-olds who had completed high school was more than 80 percent in 10 countries (Finland, Switzerland, Canada, Germany, Poland, the Slovak Republic, Estonia, the Czech Republic, Latvia, and the United States).

Figure 4. Percentage of the population who had attained any postsecondary degree in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, by selected age groups: 2016



▲ 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 percentages of 25- to 34-year-olds and 55- to 64-year-olds who had attained any postsecondary degree are not measurably different.

¹ Refers to the mean of the 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 the OECD in that year.

² Data include some upper secondary and postsecondary nontertiary awards (i.e., awards that are below the associate's degree level).

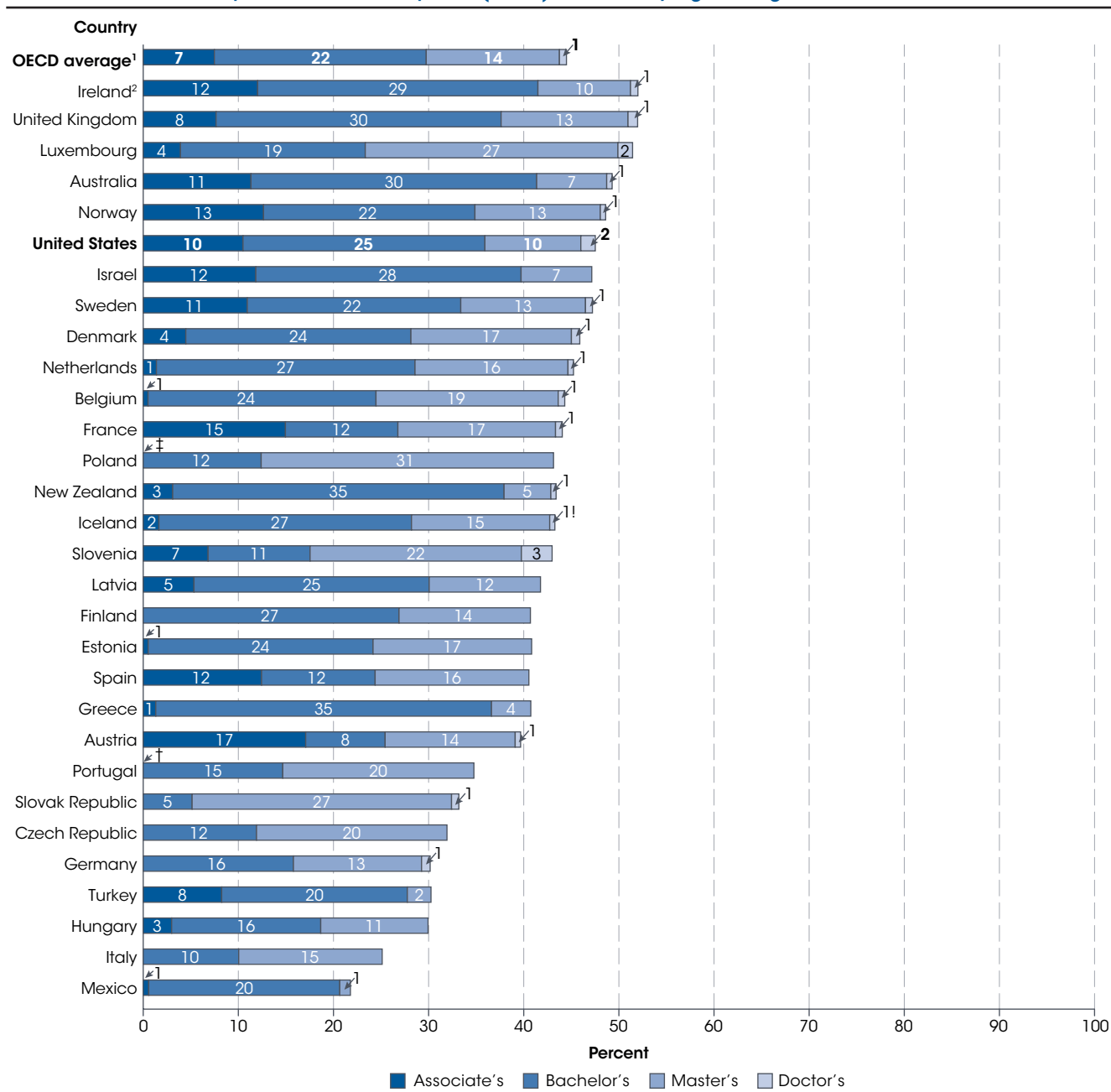
NOTE: Of the 35 OECD countries, 33 are included in this figure. Chile and Ireland are excluded from the figure because data are not available for these countries for 2016. All data in this figure were calculated using the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) 2011 classification of tertiary (postsecondary) degrees. 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 doctor's or equivalent degree). Some data have been revised from previously published figures. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded estimates.

SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Online Education Database, retrieved October 20, 2017, from <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, table 603.20.

Similarly, postsecondary attainment rates were higher among 25- to 34-year-olds than among 55- to 64-year-olds in nearly all of the 33 countries for which the OECD reported 2016 data. The exception was Israel, where the postsecondary degree attainment rates for 25- to 34-year-olds and 55- to 64-year-olds were not measurably different. Across OECD countries, on average, 43 percent of 25- to 34-year-olds had earned any postsecondary degree in 2016 compared with 27 percent of 55- to

64-year-olds. In the United States, 48 percent of 25- to 34-year-olds and 42 percent of 55- to 64-year-olds had earned any postsecondary degree. Canada (46 percent) and Israel (48 percent) were the only other countries where more than 40 percent of 55- to 64-year-olds had earned any postsecondary degree. In comparison, there were 23 countries in which more than 40 percent of 25- to 34-year-olds had earned any postsecondary degree.

Figure 5. Percentage of the population 25 to 34 years old who had attained a postsecondary degree in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, by highest degree attained: 2016



† Not applicable.

! Interpret data with caution. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.

‡ Reporting standards not met. Either there are too few cases for a reliable estimate or the coefficient of variation (CV) is 50 percent or greater.

¹ Refers to the mean of the 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 the OECD in that year. Countries not shown in this figure may be included in the OECD average.

² Data are from 2015.

NOTE: Of the 35 OECD countries, 30 are included in this figure. Data for Canada, Chile, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Switzerland are excluded from the figure because separate data are not available for all attainment levels. All data in this figure were calculated using the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) 2011 classification of tertiary (postsecondary) degrees. 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 (bachelor's or equivalent degree), level 7 (master's or equivalent degree), and level 8 (doctor's or equivalent degree). Categories not shown round to zero unless otherwise noted. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded estimates.

SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Online Education Database, retrieved October 20, 2017, from <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, table 603.30.

The percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds who had attained specific postsecondary degrees (e.g., associate's degrees, bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, and doctor's degrees) varied across OECD countries in 2016. Among the

30 countries⁹ for which the OECD reported 2016 data for all attainment levels, the percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds whose highest degree attained was an associate's degree ranged from less than 1 percent in

Italy, Finland, the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, Germany, Belgium, Estonia, and Mexico to 17 percent in Austria. The percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds whose highest degree attained was an associate's degree in the United States (10 percent) was higher than the OECD average (7 percent). Meanwhile, the percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds whose highest degree attained was a bachelor's degree ranged from 5 percent in the Slovak Republic to 35 percent in New Zealand and Greece, while the percentage whose highest degree attained was a master's degree ranged from about 1 percent in Mexico to 31 percent in Poland. In the United States, the percentage

of 25- to 34-year-olds whose highest degree attained was a bachelor's degree (25 percent) was higher than the OECD average (22 percent). In contrast, the percentage of U.S. 25- to 34-year-olds whose highest degree attained was a master's degree (10 percent) was lower than the OECD average (14 percent). The percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds attaining doctor's degrees did not vary as widely across OECD countries; with the exception of the United States and Luxembourg (both about 2 percent) and Slovenia (3 percent), all countries reported that 1 percent or less of 25- to 34-year-olds had attained this level of education.

Endnotes:

¹ 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 to calculate data for all years prior to 2014. ISCED 2011 was used to calculate data for 2014 and later years and may not be directly comparable to ISCED 1997.

² Chile, Ireland, and Japan are excluded because 2016 data on high school completion rates are not available for these countries.

³ Data in this section refer to degrees classified as ISCED 2011 level 3, which generally corresponds to high school completion in the United States, with some exceptions.

⁴ Chile and Ireland are excluded because 2016 data on postsecondary attainment rates are not available for these countries.

⁵ Postsecondary degrees correspond to all degrees at the associate's degree 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 doctor's or equivalent degree).

⁶ Austria, Chile, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, and Norway are excluded because data are not available for these countries for either 2000 or 2016.

⁷ Refers to the mean of the data values for all reporting Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (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 the OECD in that year. Countries excluded from analyses in this indicator may be included in the OECD average.

⁸ Austria, Chile, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, New Zealand, and Norway are excluded because data are not available for these countries for either 2000 or 2016.

⁹ Canada, Chile, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Switzerland are excluded from this analysis because separate data are not available for all attainment levels for these countries.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, tables 603.10, 603.20, and 603.30

Related indicators and resources: [Educational Attainment of Young Adults](#); [Education Expenditures by Country](#); [International Comparisons: Reading Literacy at Grade 4](#); [International Comparisons: Science, Reading, and Mathematics Literacy of 15-Year-Old Students](#); [International Comparisons: U.S. 4th-, 8th-, and 12th-Graders' Mathematics and Science Achievement](#)

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