

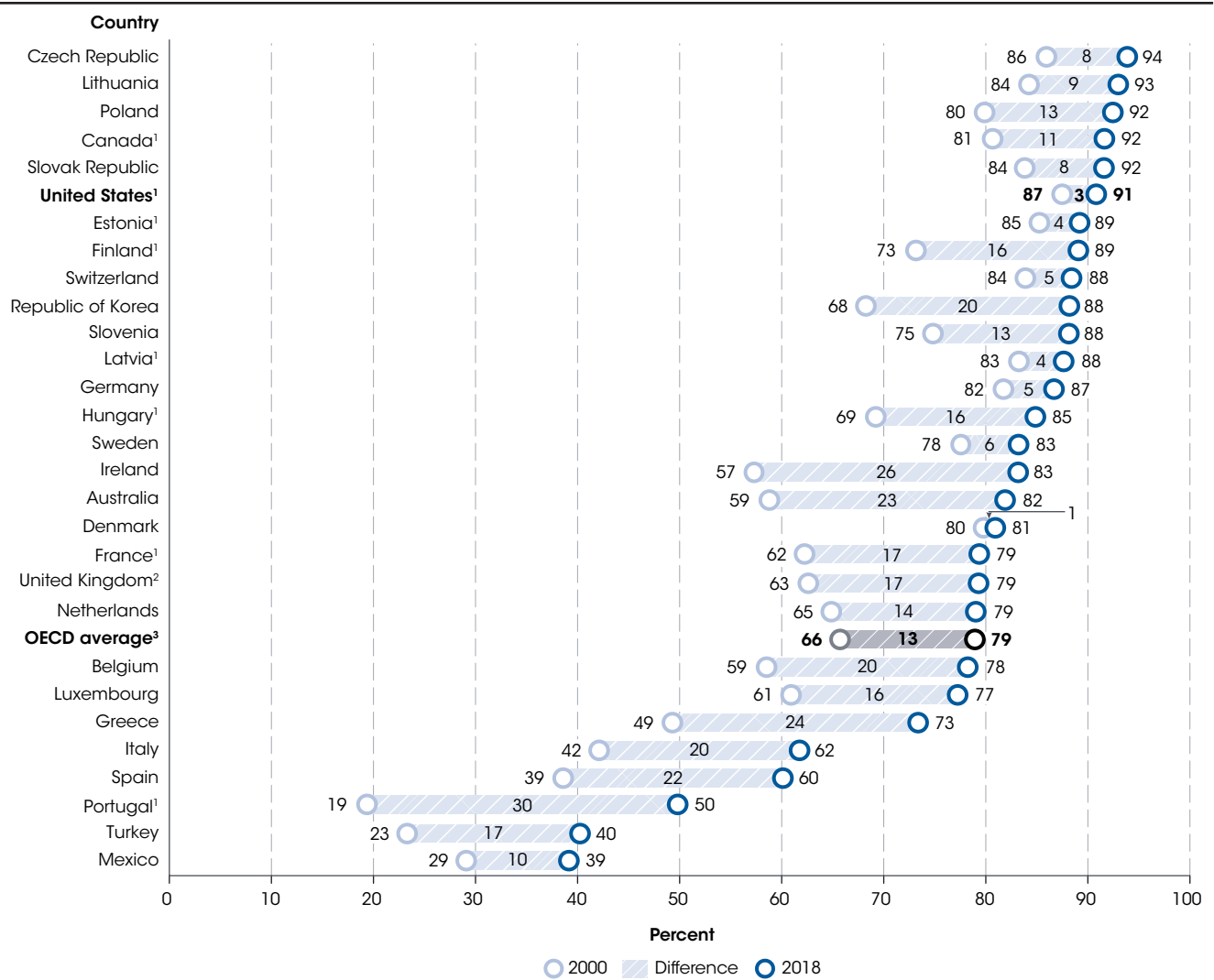
International Educational Attainment

Across OECD countries, the average percentage of 25- to 64-year-olds with any postsecondary degree was 37 percent in 2018, an increase of 15 percentage points from 2000. During the same period, the percentage of U.S. 25- to 64-year-olds with any postsecondary degree increased 11 percentage points to 47 percent.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is a group of 37 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 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. “Attainment of any postsecondary degree” refers to individuals who have been awarded an associate’s or higher degree.²

Among the 34 countries³ for which the OECD reported 2018 data on high school completion rates, the percentages of 25- to 64-year-olds who had completed high school ranged from less than 40 percent in Mexico to more than 90 percent in the United States, the Slovak Republic, Canada, Poland, Lithuania, and the Czech Republic.⁴ Twenty-one countries reported that more than 80 percent had completed high school as of 2018. Additionally, among the 35 countries⁵ for which the OECD reported 2018 data on postsecondary attainment rates, the percentages earning any postsecondary degree ranged from less than 20 percent in Mexico and Italy to more than 50 percent in Japan and Canada. Twenty-six countries reported that more than 30 percent in this age range had earned any postsecondary degree as of 2018.

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 2018



¹ The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) was revised in 2011. Although data for 2000 were originally calculated using the 1997 version of ISCED, the footnoted countries revised their 2000 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 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 not shown in this figure may be included in the OECD average.

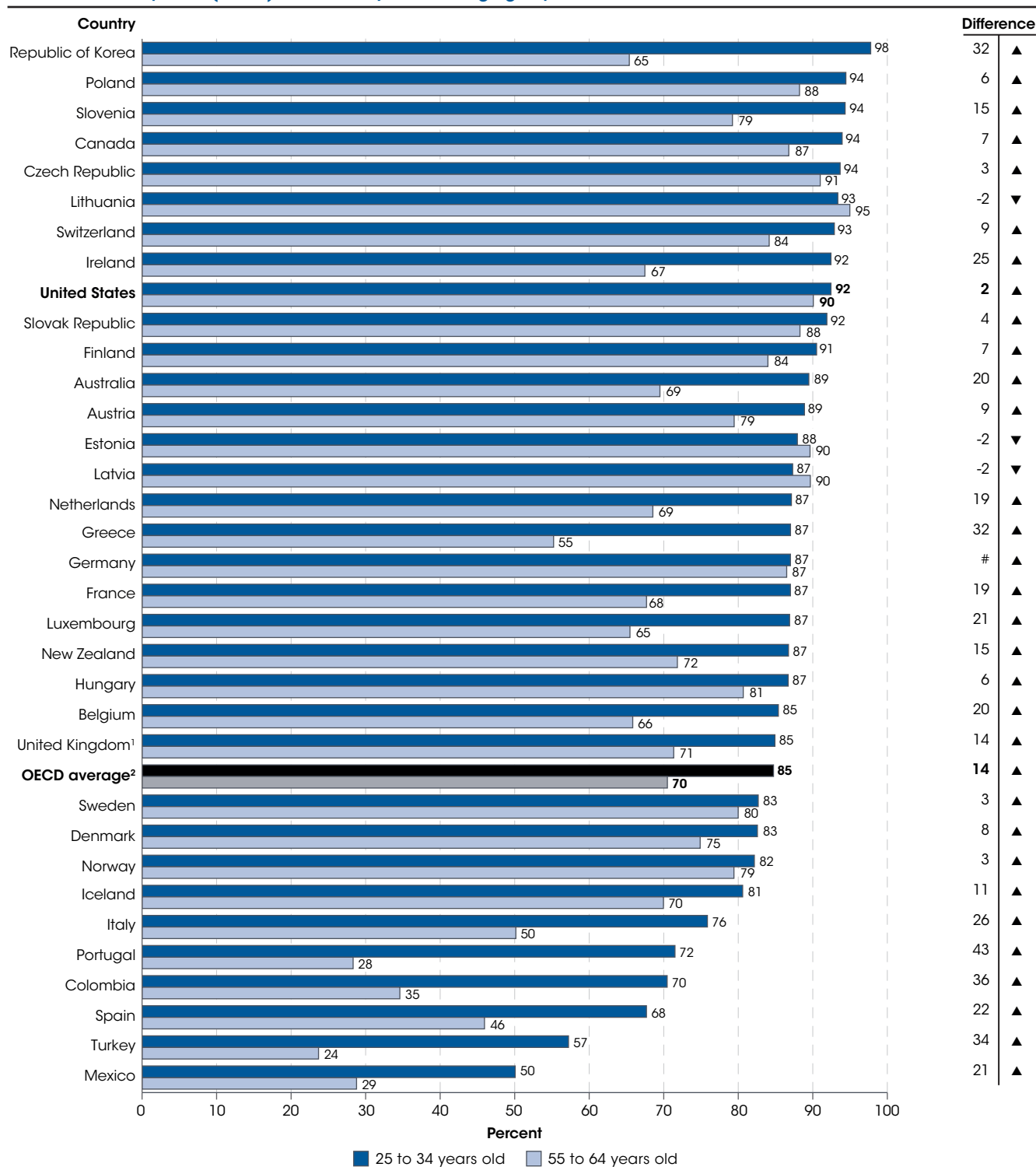
NOTE: Of the 37 OECD countries, 29 are included in this figure. Austria, Chile, Colombia, Iceland, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, and Norway are excluded because data are not available for these countries for either 2000 or 2018. Data in this figure refer to degrees classified under ISCED 2011 as completing 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 2018 for all countries. Some data have been revised from previously published figures. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Online Education Database, retrieved September 23, 2019, from <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, table 603.10.

In each of the 29 countries⁶ for which the OECD reported data on high school completion rates in both 2000 and 2018, the percentage of 25- to 64-year-olds who had completed high school was higher in 2018 than in 2000. The OECD average percentage⁷ of those with a high school education rose from 66 percent in 2000 to 79 percent in 2018. Meanwhile, in the United States the percentage who had completed high school rose from 87 to 91 percent during this period.

For 25- to 34-year-olds, the OECD average percentage who had completed high school rose from 76 to 85 percent between 2000 and 2018, while the corresponding percentage for the United States increased from 88 to 92 percent. The high school completion gap between the United States and the OECD average was narrower in 2018 than in 2000 in this age group. In 2018, the rate of high school completion in this age group in the United States was 8 percentage points higher than the OECD average, while the gap in 2000 was 12 percentage points.

Figure 2. Percentage of the population who had completed high school in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, by selected age groups: 2018

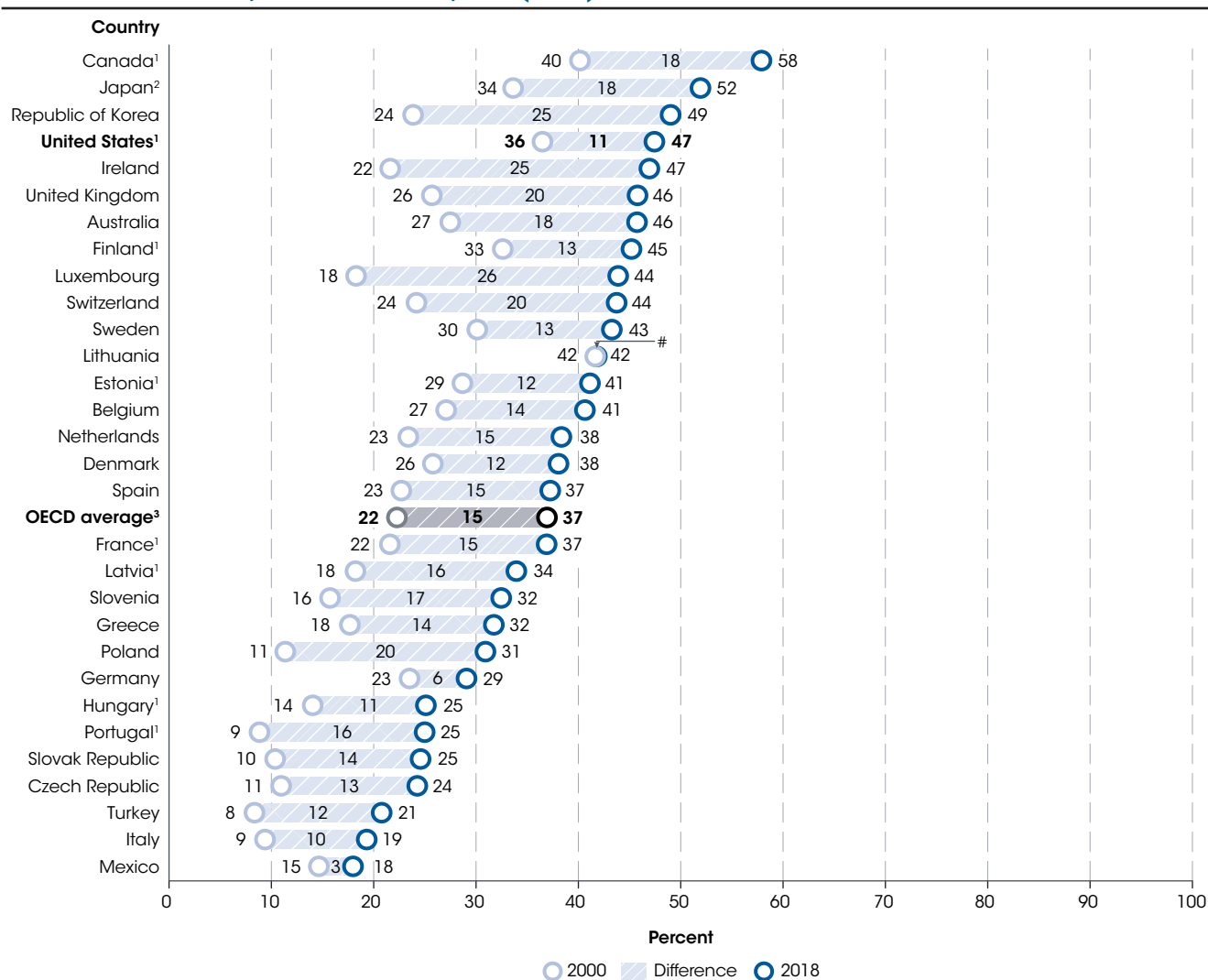


▲ The percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds who had completed high school is higher than the percentage of 55- to 64-year-olds who had completed high school.
▼ The percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds who had completed high school is lower than the percentage of 55- to 64-year-olds who had completed high school.
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 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 not shown in this figure may be included in the OECD average.
NOTE: Of the 37 OECD countries, 34 are included in this figure. Chile, Israel, and Japan are excluded because 2018 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. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.
SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Online Education Database, retrieved September 23, 2019, from <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, table 603.10.

In 31 of the 34 countries for which the OECD reported 2018 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.⁸ Across OECD countries, the average high school completion percentage was higher for younger ages (85 percent) than for older ages (70 percent). The three exceptions were Latvia, Estonia,

and Lithuania. In 28 countries, including the United States, 80 percent or more of the younger age group had completed high school in 2018. In comparison, the percentage of the older age group who had completed high school was 80 percent or more in only 13 countries, including the United States.

Figure 3. 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 2018



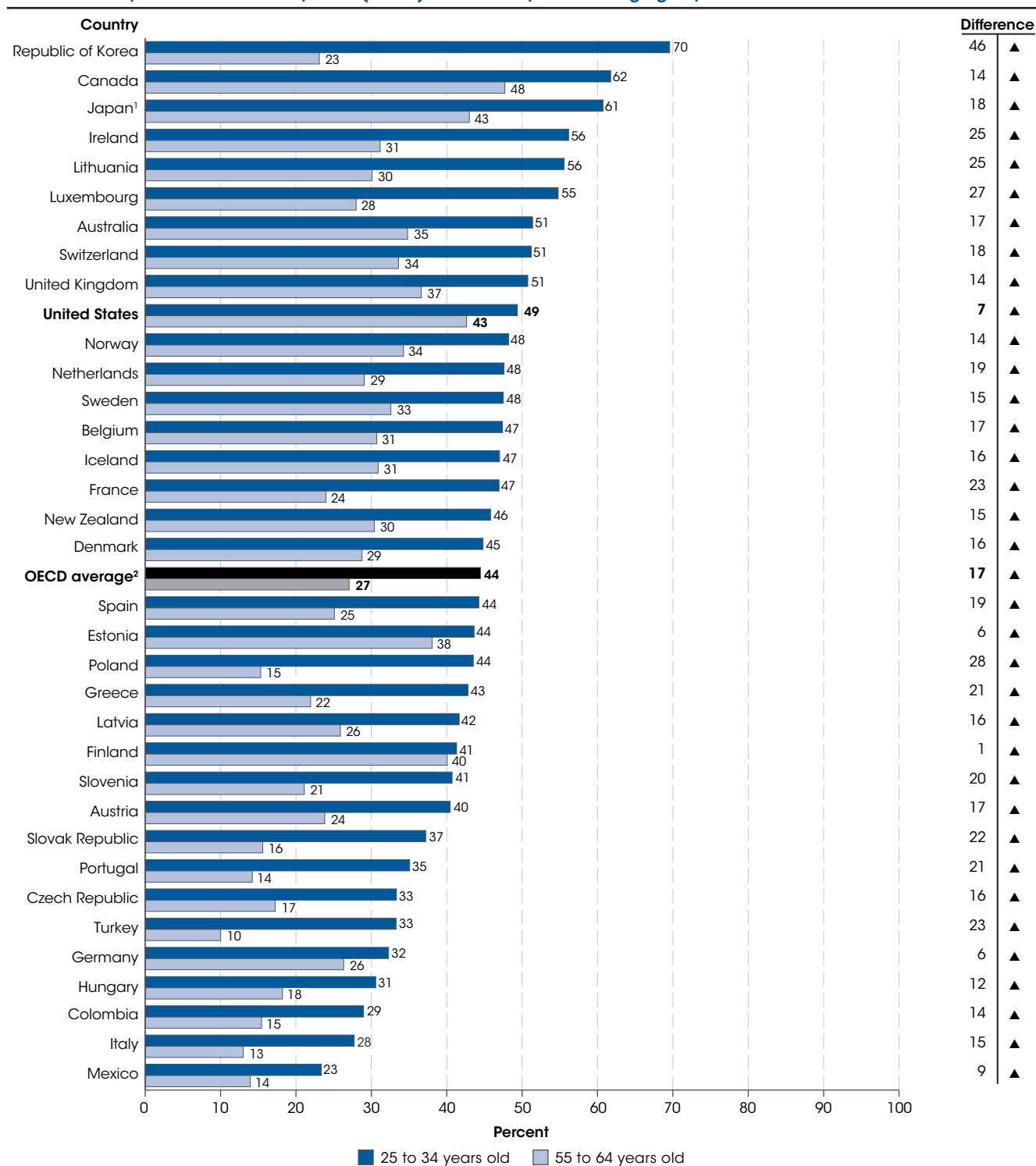
Rounds to zero.
¹ The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) was revised in 2011. Although data for 2000 were originally calculated using the 1997 version of ISCED, the footnoted countries revised their 2000 data to align with the 2011 version of ISCED.
² Data for both years include some postsecondary nontertiary awards (i.e., awards that are below the associate's degree level).
³ 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 not shown in this figure may be included in the OECD average.
 NOTE: Of the 37 OECD countries, 30 are included in this figure. Austria, Chile, Colombia, Iceland, Israel, New Zealand, and Norway are excluded from this figure because data are not available for these countries for either 2000 or 2018. 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. 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 2018 for all countries. Some data have been revised from previously published figures. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.
 SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Online Education Database, retrieved September 23, 2019, from <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, table 603.20.

In 29 of the 30 countries⁹ for which the OECD reported data on postsecondary attainment rates in both 2000 and 2018, the percentage of 25- to 64-year-olds who had earned any postsecondary degree was higher in 2018 than in 2000. Lithuania was the only country that did not follow this pattern. During this period, the OECD average percentage of those with any postsecondary degree increased by 15 percentage points to 37 percent in 2018, while the corresponding percentage for the United States increased by 11 percentage points to 47 percent.

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

in 2000 to 44 percent in 2018. The corresponding percentage for this age group in the United States rose from 38 to 49 percent. The postsecondary attainment gap between the United States and the OECD average narrowed in this age group between 2000 and 2018 as a result of the relatively larger increases in postsecondary degree attainment across the OECD countries. The postsecondary attainment rate in this age group in the United States was 12 percentage points higher than the OECD average in 2000; by 2018, this gap had decreased to 5 percentage points.

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: 2018

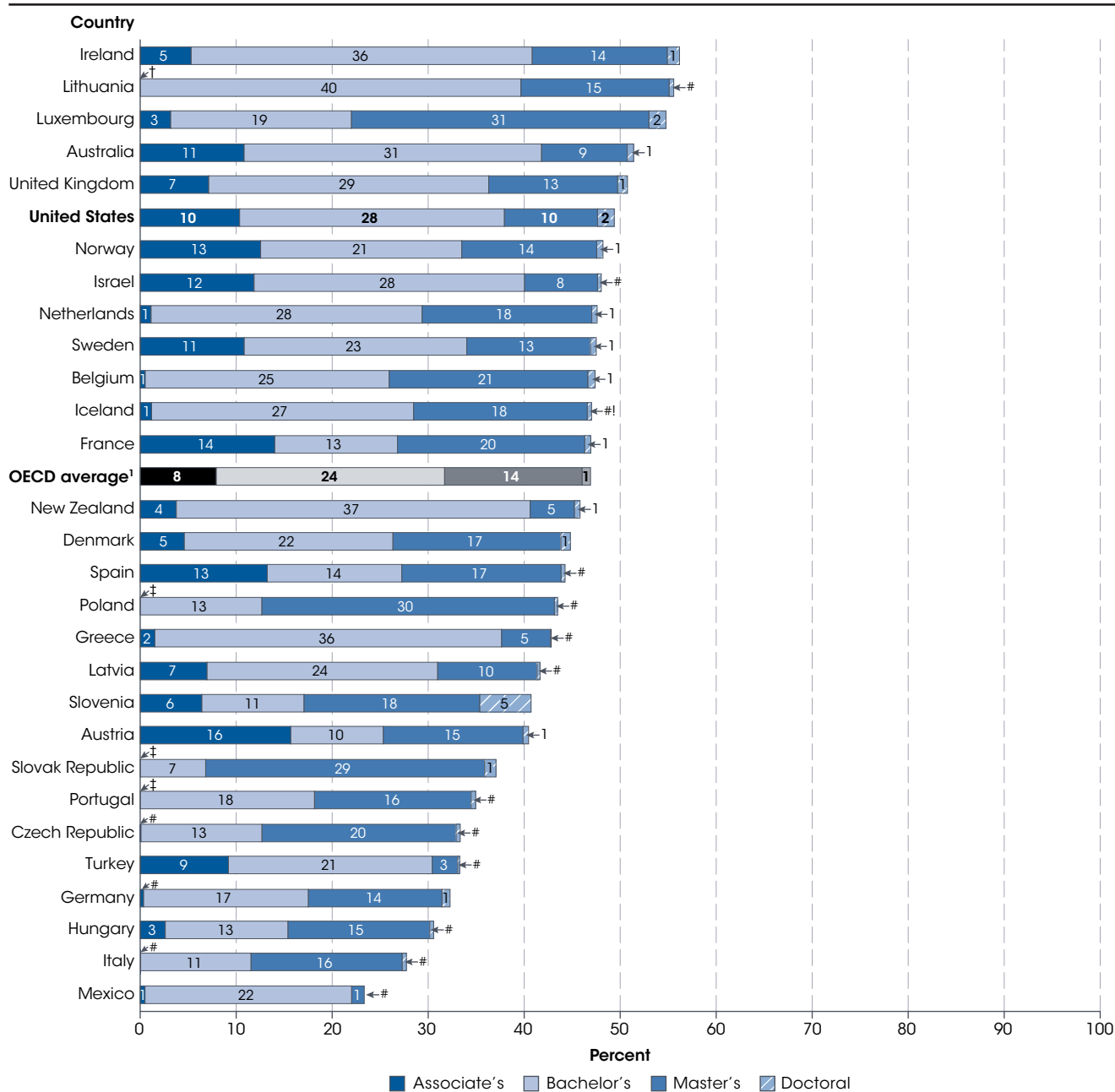


▲ The percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds with any postsecondary degree is higher than the percentage of 55- to 64-year-olds with any postsecondary degree.
¹ Data include some postsecondary nontertiary awards (i.e., awards that are below the associate's degree level).
² Refers to the mean of the data values 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 not shown in this figure may be included in the OECD average.
 NOTE: Of the 37 OECD countries, 35 are included in this figure. Chile and Israel are excluded from the figure because data are not available for 2018. 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 doctoral or equivalent degree). Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.
 SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Online Education Database, retrieved September 23, 2019, from <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, table 603.20.

Postsecondary attainment rates were higher among 25- to 34-year-olds than among 55- to 64-year-olds in all 35 countries for which the OECD reported 2018 data on postsecondary attainment rates. The OECD average percentage of the younger ages who had earned any postsecondary degree (44 percent) was higher than the corresponding percentage of the older ages (27 percent). In the United States, 49 percent of the younger age group

had earned any postsecondary degree compared with 43 percent of the older age group. Finland (40 percent), Japan (43 percent), and Canada (48 percent) were the only other countries where 40 percent or more of the older age group had earned any postsecondary degree. In comparison, there were 24 countries in which 40 percent or more of the younger age group 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: 2018



† Not applicable.

Rounds to zero.

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

‡ Reporting standards not met.

¹ 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 not shown in this figure may be included in the OECD average.

NOTE: Of the 37 OECD countries, 29 are included in this figure. Data for Canada, Chile, Colombia, Estonia, Finland, 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 (a bachelor's or equivalent degree), level 7 (a master's or equivalent degree), and level 8 (a doctoral or equivalent degree). Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Online Education Database, retrieved September 23, 2019, from <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, 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 doctoral degrees) varied across OECD countries in 2018. Among the 29 countries¹⁰ for which the OECD reported 2018 data for all attainment levels, the percentage of those whose highest degree attained was an associate's degree ranged from less than 1 percent in Italy, the Czech Republic, Germany, Mexico, and Belgium to 16 percent in Austria. The percentage of those whose highest degree attained was an associate's degree in the United States (10 percent) was higher than the OECD average (8 percent). The percentage of this age group whose highest degree attained was a bachelor's degree ranged from 7 percent in the Slovak Republic to 40 percent in Lithuania. In the United

States, the percentage of those whose highest degree attained was a bachelor's degree (28 percent) was higher than the OECD average (24 percent). The percentage of those whose highest degree attained was a master's degree ranged from 1 percent in Mexico to 31 percent in Luxembourg. The percentage of this age group in the United States whose highest degree attained was a master's degree (10 percent) was lower than the OECD average (14 percent). Finally, the percentage in this age group who attained a doctoral degree did not vary as widely across OECD countries: with the exception of Ireland (just above 1 percent), the United States and Luxembourg (both 2 percent), and Slovenia (5 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 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). The structure of education differs across countries and not all countries have significant numbers of awards at each of these degree levels.

³ Chile, Israel, and Japan are excluded because 2018 data on high school completion rates are not available for these countries.

⁴ 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.

⁵ Chile and Israel are excluded because 2018 data on postsecondary attainment rates are not available.

⁶ Austria, Chile, Colombia, Iceland, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, and Norway are excluded because data are not available for these countries for either 2000 or 2018.

⁷ Throughout this indicator, the "OECD average" 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 In Germany, the difference was less than 1 percent.

⁹ Austria, Chile, Colombia, Iceland, Israel, New Zealand, and Norway are excluded because data are not available for these countries for either 2000 or 2018.

¹⁰ Canada, Chile, Colombia, Estonia, Finland, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Switzerland are excluded from this analysis because separate 2018 data are not available for these countries at all attainment levels.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, 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: Reading, Mathematics, and Science 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; Doctoral 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