

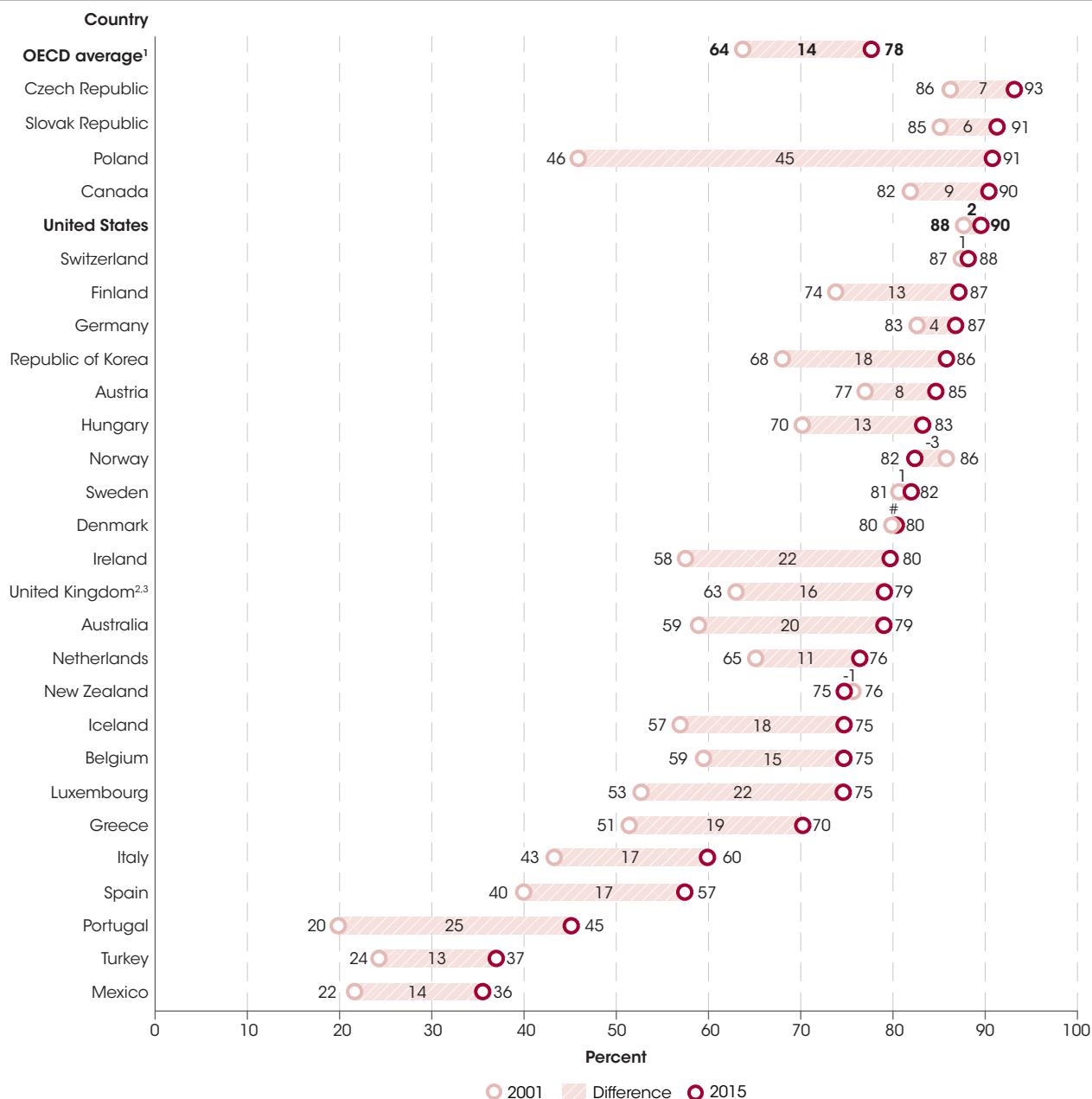
International Educational Attainment

Between 2001 and 2015, the OECD average percentage of the adult population with any postsecondary degree rose to 35 percent, an increase of 12 percentage points. During the same period, the percentage of U.S. adults with any postsecondary degree rose to 45 percent, an increase of 7 percentage points.

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 31 countries² that reported 2015 data to the OECD, 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 over 90 percent in Canada, Poland, Estonia, the Slovak Republic, and the Czech Republic.³ Seventeen countries reported that more than 80 percent of their adult populations had completed high school. Additionally, of the 31 OECD countries⁴ that reported 2015 data on postsecondary attainment rates, the percentages of adults earning any postsecondary degree⁵ ranged from under 20 percent in Mexico, Italy, and Turkey to 55 percent in Canada. Nineteen countries reported that more than 30 percent of their adult populations had earned any postsecondary degree.

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: 2001 and 2015



Rounds to zero.

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 OECD in that year.

² Data for 2001 include some short secondary (ISCED 3C) programs.

³ Data for 2015 include some persons 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.

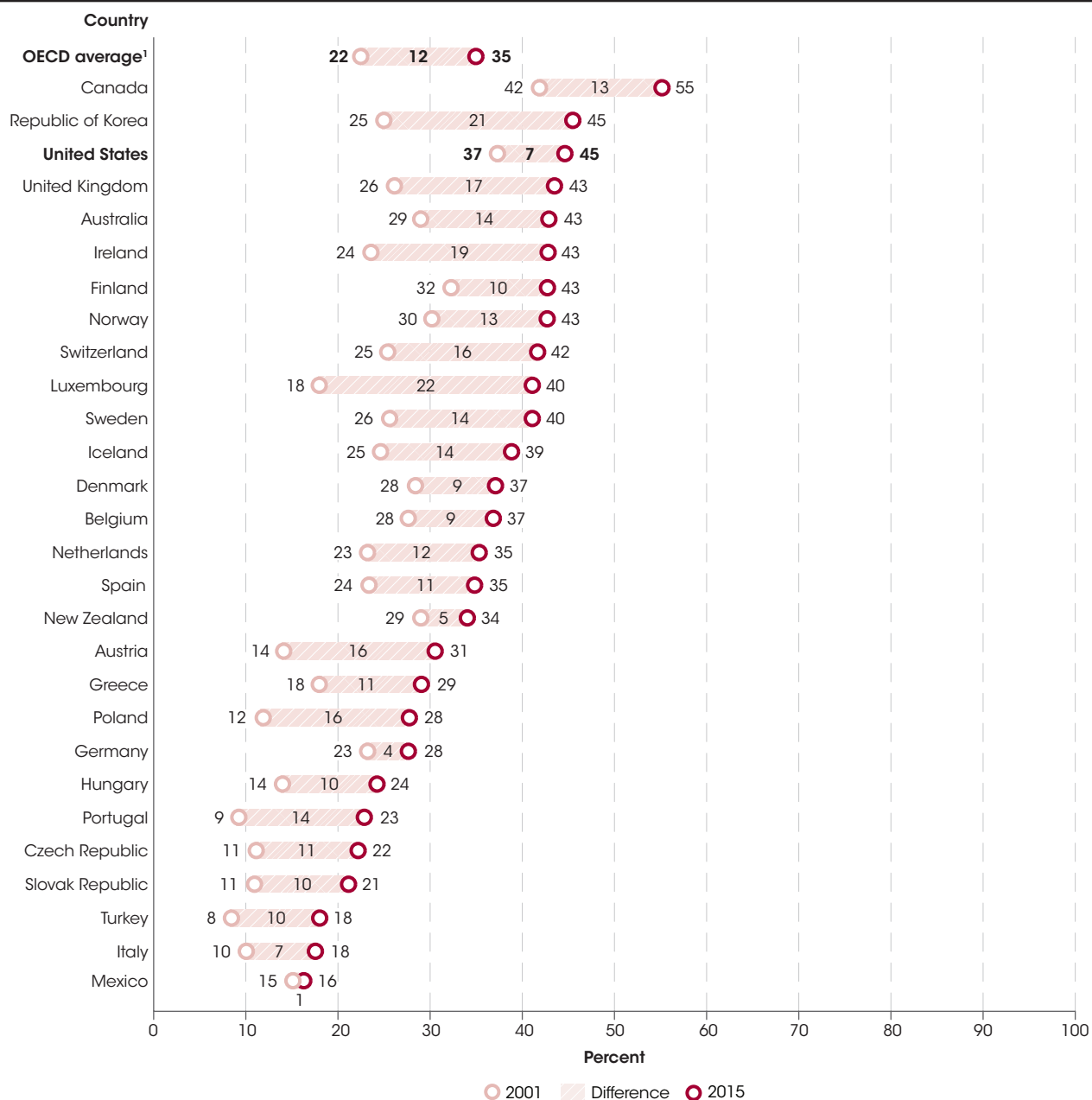
NOTE: Of the 35 OECD countries, 28 are included in this figure. Chile, Estonia, France, Israel, Japan, Latvia, and Slovenia are excluded from the figure because data are not available for these countries for either 2001 or 2015. The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) was revised in 2011. The previous version, ISCED 1997, was used to calculate all data for years prior to 2014. ISCED 2011 was used to calculate all data for 2014 and later years and may not be directly comparable to ISCED 1997. 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 analysis 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 2002* and Online Education Database, retrieved October 21, 2016, from <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 603.10.

In nearly all of the 28 OECD countries⁶ that reported data on high school completion rates in both 2001 and 2015, the percentage of 25- to 64-year-olds who had completed a high school education was higher in 2015 than in 2001. The exceptions were Norway, where the high school completion rate was 3 percentage points lower in 2015 than in 2001, and Denmark and New Zealand, where high school completion rates were not measurably different between the two years. The OECD average

percentage of the adult population with a high school education rose from 64 percent in 2001 to 78 percent in 2015. Meanwhile, the percentage of adults in the United States who had completed high school rose from 88 to 90 percent during this period. For 25- to 34-year-olds, the OECD average percentage with a high school education rose from 74 to 84 percent during this period, while the corresponding percentage for U.S. 25- to 34-year-olds increased from 88 to 90 percent.

Figure 2. Percentage of the population 25 to 64 years old with any postsecondary degree in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries: 2001 and 2015



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 OECD in that year.

NOTE: Of the 35 OECD countries, 28 are included in this figure. Chile, Estonia, France, Israel, Latvia, and Slovenia are excluded from the figure because data are not available for these countries for either 2001 or 2015. Data for Japan are excluded from the figure because Japan's postsecondary degree completion rates in 2015 include postsecondary non-higher-education. 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 years prior to 2014. ISCED 2011 was used to calculate all data for 2014 and later years 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 doctoral or equivalent degree). Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded estimates.

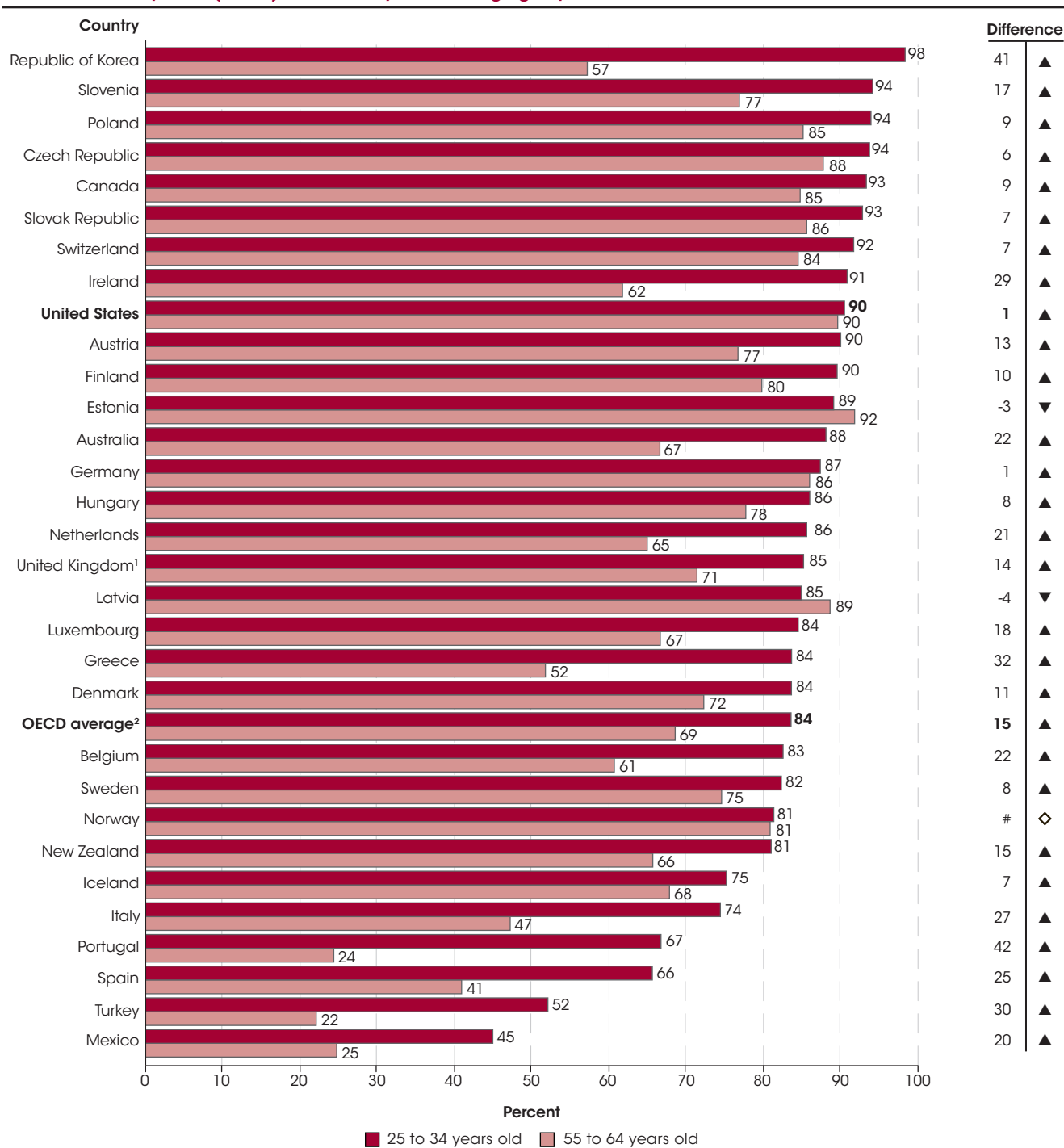
SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *Education at a Glance 2003* and *Education at a Glance 2016*; and Online Education Database, retrieved October 18, 2016, from <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 603.20.

In each of the 28 OECD countries⁷ that reported data on postsecondary attainment rates in both 2001 and 2015, the percentage of 25- to 64-year-olds who had earned any postsecondary degree was higher in 2015 than in 2001. During this period, the OECD average percentage of the adult population with any postsecondary degree increased by 12 percentage points to 35 percent in 2015, while the corresponding percentage for U.S. adults increased by 7 percentage points to 45 percent.

For 25- to 34-year-olds, the OECD average percentage with any postsecondary degree rose from 28 percent in

2001 to 42 percent in 2015. The corresponding percentage for 25- to 34-year-olds in the United States rose from 39 to 47 percent. As a result of the relatively larger increases in postsecondary degree attainment among the 25- to 34-year-old populations in several OECD countries, the attainment gap at this level of education between the U.S. and OECD average percentages decreased between 2001 and 2015. In 2001, the rate of attainment of any postsecondary degree among 25- to 34-year-olds in the United States was 11 percentage points higher than the OECD average; by 2015, 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: 2015



▲ 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.
 # Rounds to zero.

¹ Data for 2015 include some persons 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.

² 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 OECD in that year.

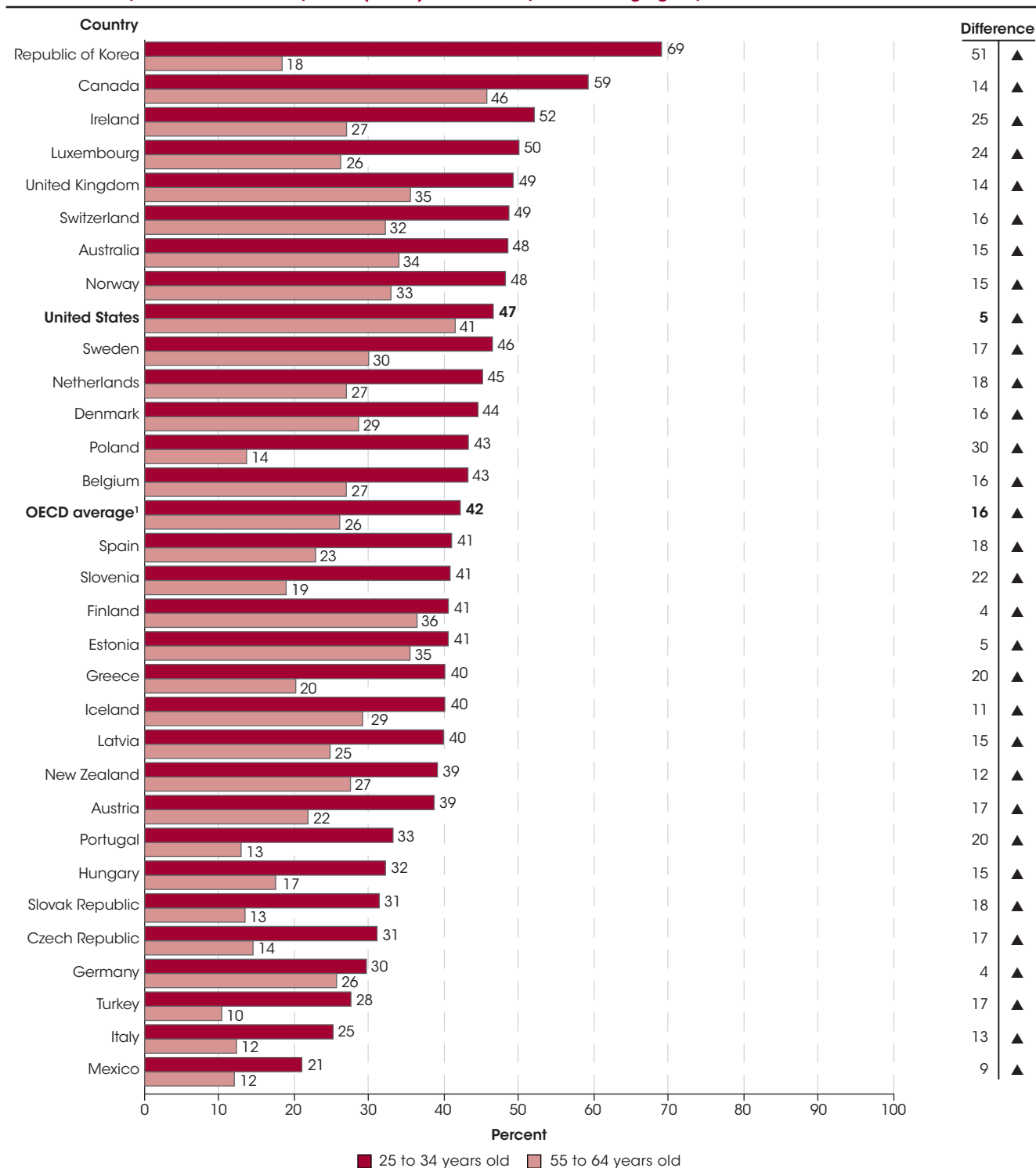
NOTE: Of the 35 OECD countries, 31 are included in this figure. Chile, France, and Japan are excluded from the figure because data are not available for these countries for 2015. Israel did report 2015 data, but did not report standard errors. Israel is excluded from the figure because tests of statistical significance for Israel's estimates cannot be performed without standard errors. Data in this figure refer to degrees classified as ISCED level 3, which corresponds to high school completion in the United States. 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), Online Education Database, retrieved October 21, 2016, from <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 603.10.

In nearly all of the 31 OECD countries that reported 2015 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 generally higher for 25- to 34-year-olds (84 percent) than for 55- to 64-year-olds (69 percent). The exceptions were Estonia and Latvia, where high school completion rates for 55- to 64-year-olds were 3 and 4 percentage points higher, respectively, than high school completion rates for 25- to 34-year-olds. In Norway, high school completion percentages of 25- to 34-year-olds and 55- to 64-year-olds were not measurably different from each other (both 81 percent). In 24 countries, including the United States, over 80 percent of 25- to 34-year-olds had completed high school in 2015. In comparison, the percentage of 55- to 64-year-olds who completed high school was more than 80 percent in only 10 countries (Norway, Switzerland, Canada, Poland, the Slovak Republic, Germany, the Czech Republic, Latvia, the United States, and Estonia).

The same general pattern of higher percentages of the youngest age group attaining a given level of education also applied to the attainment of postsecondary degrees in 2015. In all of the 31 OECD countries that reported 2015 data on postsecondary attainment rates, a higher percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds than of 55- to 64-year-olds had earned any postsecondary degree in 2015. Across OECD countries, 42 percent of 25- to 34-year-olds had earned any postsecondary degree in 2015 compared with 26 percent of 55- to 64-year-olds. In the United States, 47 percent of 25- to 34-year-olds and 41 percent of 55- to 64-year-olds had earned any postsecondary degree. Canada was the only other country where more than 40 percent of 55- to 64-year-olds had earned any postsecondary degree. In comparison, more than 40 percent of 25- to 34-year-olds had earned any postsecondary degree in 14 countries in 2015.

Figure 4. Percentage of the population who have attained any postsecondary degree in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, by selected age groups: 2015



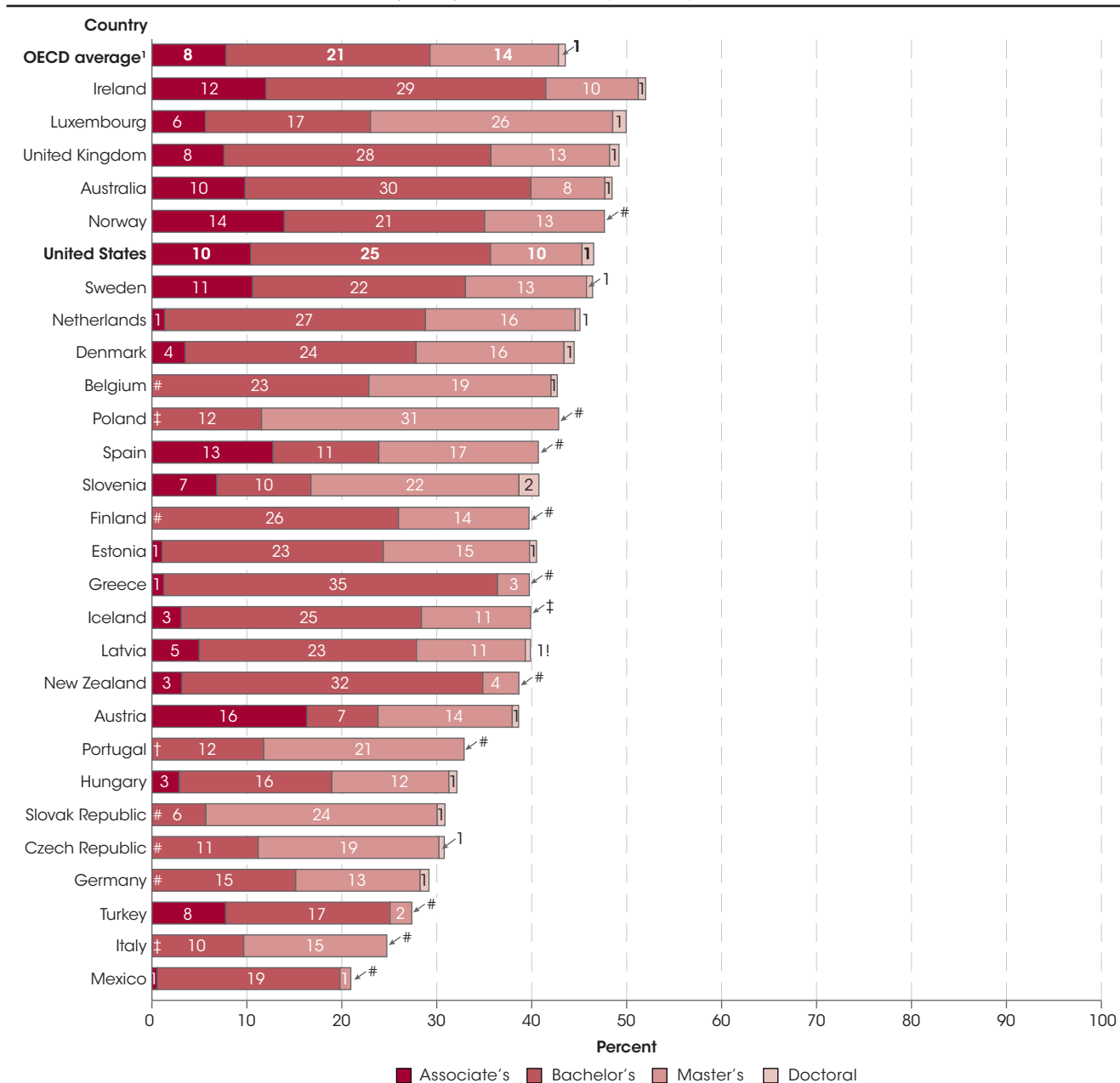
▲ The percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds with any postsecondary degree is higher than the percentage of 55- to 64-year-olds with any postsecondary degree.

¹ 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 OECD in that year.

NOTE: Of the 35 OECD countries, 31 are included in this figure. Chile and France are excluded from the figure because data are not available for these countries for 2015. Israel did report 2015 data, but did not report standard errors. Israel is excluded from the figure because tests of statistical significance for Israel's estimates cannot be performed without standard errors. Data for Japan are excluded from the figure because Japan's postsecondary degree completion rates in 2015 include postsecondary non-higher-education. All data in this figure were calculated using the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) 2011 classification of tertiary (postsecondary) degrees. Includes degrees at ISCED 2011 level 5 (short-cycle tertiary, which corresponds to the associate's degree in the United States), level 6 (bachelor's or equivalent degree), level 7 (master's or equivalent degree), and level 8 (doctoral or equivalent degree). Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded estimates.

SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *Education at a Glance 2016*; and Online Education Database, retrieved October 18, 2016, from <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 603.20.

Figure 5. Percentage of the population 25 to 34 years old with a postsecondary degree in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, by highest degree attained: 2015



† Not applicable.

Rounds to zero.

! Interpret data with caution. Country indicated that this value fell below a specified reliability threshold, which varies from country to country. (For more information, see <https://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/EAG2016-Annex3.pdf>.)

‡ Reporting standards not met (too few cases for a reliable estimate).

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 OECD in that year.

NOTE: Of the 35 OECD countries, 28 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. France is excluded because 2015 data are not available. Israel did report 2015 data, but did not report standard errors. Israel is excluded from the figure because tests of statistical significance for Israel's estimates cannot be performed without standard errors. All data in this figure were calculated using the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) 2011 classification of tertiary (postsecondary) degrees. Includes degrees at ISCED 2011 level 5 (short-cycle tertiary, which corresponds to the associate's degree in the United States), level 6 (bachelor's or equivalent degree), level 7 (master's or equivalent degree), and level 8 (doctoral or equivalent degree). Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded estimates.

SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *Education at a Glance 2016*; and Online Education Database, retrieved October 18, 2016, from <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 603.30.

The percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds who had attained specific postsecondary degrees⁸ (e.g., associate's degrees, bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, and doctoral degrees) varied across OECD countries in 2015. Among the 28 OECD countries⁹ that reported 2015 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 the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Belgium, the Slovak Republic, and Mexico to 16 percent in Austria. The percentage in the United States (10 percent) was slightly higher than the OECD average (8 percent). Meanwhile, the percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds whose highest degree attained was a bachelor's degree ranged from 6 percent in the

Slovak Republic to 35 percent in Greece, while the percentage whose highest degree attained was a master's degree ranged from 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 (21 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 doctoral degrees did not vary as widely across OECD countries; with the exception of Slovenia, all countries reported that less than 2 percent 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, France, and Japan are excluded because 2015 data on high school completion rates are not available for these countries. Israel did report 2015 data, but did not report standard errors. Tests of statistical significance for Israel's estimates cannot be performed without standard errors. Therefore, Israel is excluded from analysis throughout this indicator.

³ 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 except for in 2001 in the United Kingdom. Programs classified under ISCED 2011 as only partially completing level 3 are also excluded except for in 2015 in the United Kingdom.

⁴ Chile and France are excluded because 2015 data on postsecondary attainment rates are not available for these countries. Data for Japan are excluded because, unlike all other reporting countries, Japan's postsecondary degree completion rates in 2015 include postsecondary non-higher-education. Israel is excluded because it did not report standard errors.

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 doctoral or equivalent degree).

⁶ Chile, Estonia, France, Israel, Japan, Latvia, and Slovenia are excluded because data on high school completion rates are not available for these countries for either 2001 or 2015.

⁷ Chile, Estonia, France, Israel, Japan, Latvia, and Slovenia are excluded because data on postsecondary attainment rates are not available for these countries for either 2001 or 2015.

⁸ In 1999, European countries agreed to standardize the architecture of the European higher education system. Through the Bologna Process, they agreed to adopt a basic framework for three levels of higher education qualifications: bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, and doctoral degrees. ISCED 2011, which reflects this framework, allows for comparisons at the bachelor's and master's levels. Comparisons at these levels prior to ISCED 2011 should be made with caution since European countries had differing higher education frameworks.

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. France is excluded because 2015 data are not available. Israel is excluded because it did not report standard errors.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, 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: U.S. 4th-, 8th-, and 12th-Graders' Mathematics and Science Achievement; International Comparisons: Science, Reading, and Mathematics Literacy of 15-Year-Old Students; Trends in Employment Rates by Educational Attainment [*The Condition of Education 2013 Spotlight*]

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