

## Enrollment Rates by Country

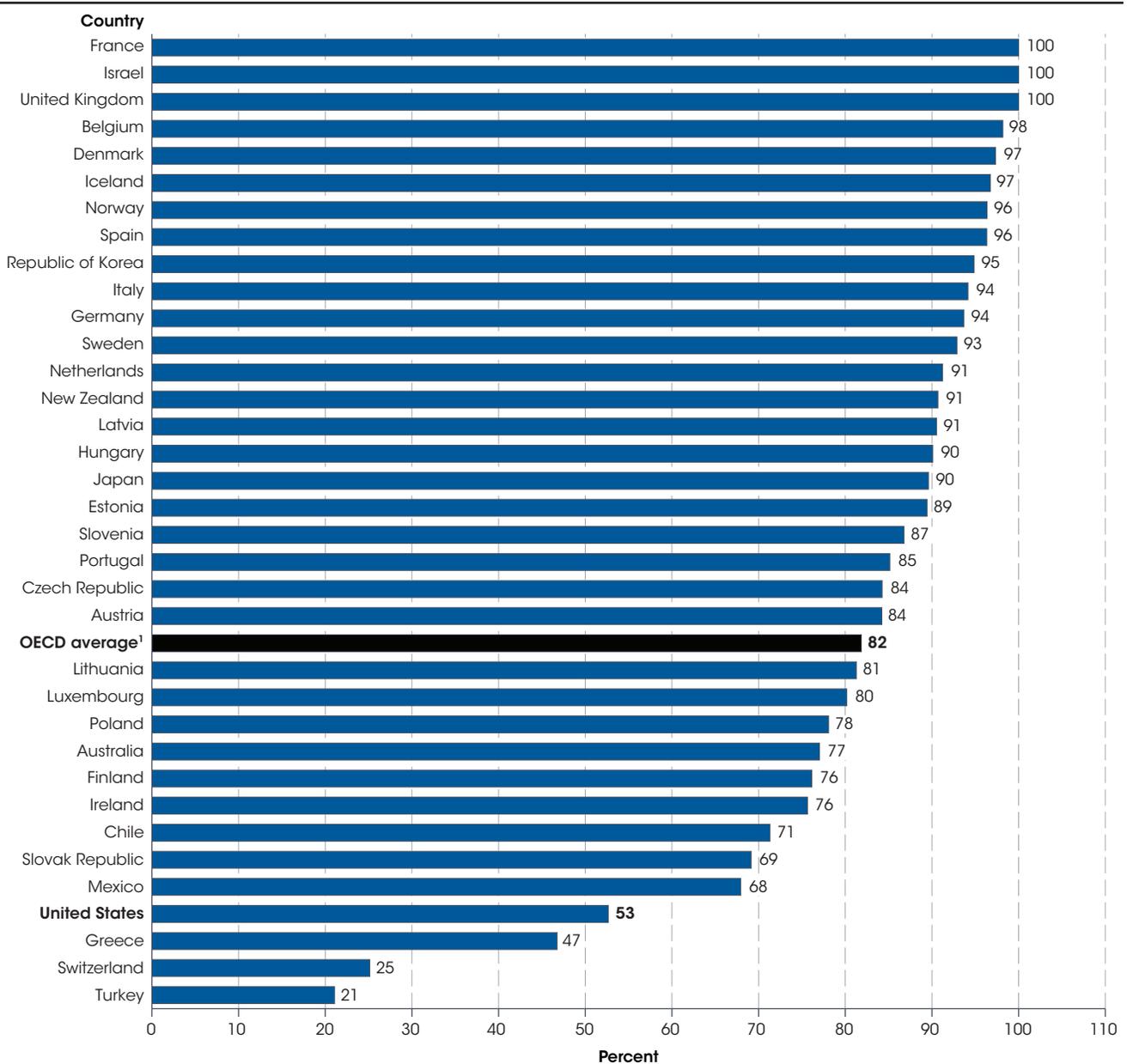
*In contrast to the near universal enrollment of 5- to 14-year-olds in all OECD countries, enrollment rates among 15- to 19-year-olds varied across OECD countries in 2016, ranging from 59 percent in Mexico to 94 percent in Lithuania. Some 83 percent of 15- to 19-year-olds in the United States were enrolled in school at any level, which was slightly lower than the OECD average of 85 percent.*

This indicator uses data from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to compare educational enrollment rates by age group across countries. The OECD is a group of 36 countries whose purpose is to promote trade and economic growth. The OECD also collects and publishes an array of data on its member countries.

Across OECD countries, students generally follow a similar pathway through the education system. Before beginning primary (elementary) education, children may spend a year or two enrolled in an early childhood education program. While a few countries begin compulsory education at

early childhood, compulsory education typically begins at age 5, 6, or 7 when students enroll in primary education.<sup>1</sup> Upon completion of primary education, students progress through lower secondary (middle school) and upper secondary (high school) education. Compulsory education typically ends during or at the completion of upper secondary education—around age 17 or 18 in the United States—after which time students may continue into either postsecondary nontertiary education (short career/technical educational programs) or tertiary education (postsecondary degree programs).<sup>2</sup> While the educational pathway is similar across OECD countries, enrollment rates differ across countries and across age groups.

Figure 1. Percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in school, by Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) country: 2016



<sup>1</sup> 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 OECD in that year.

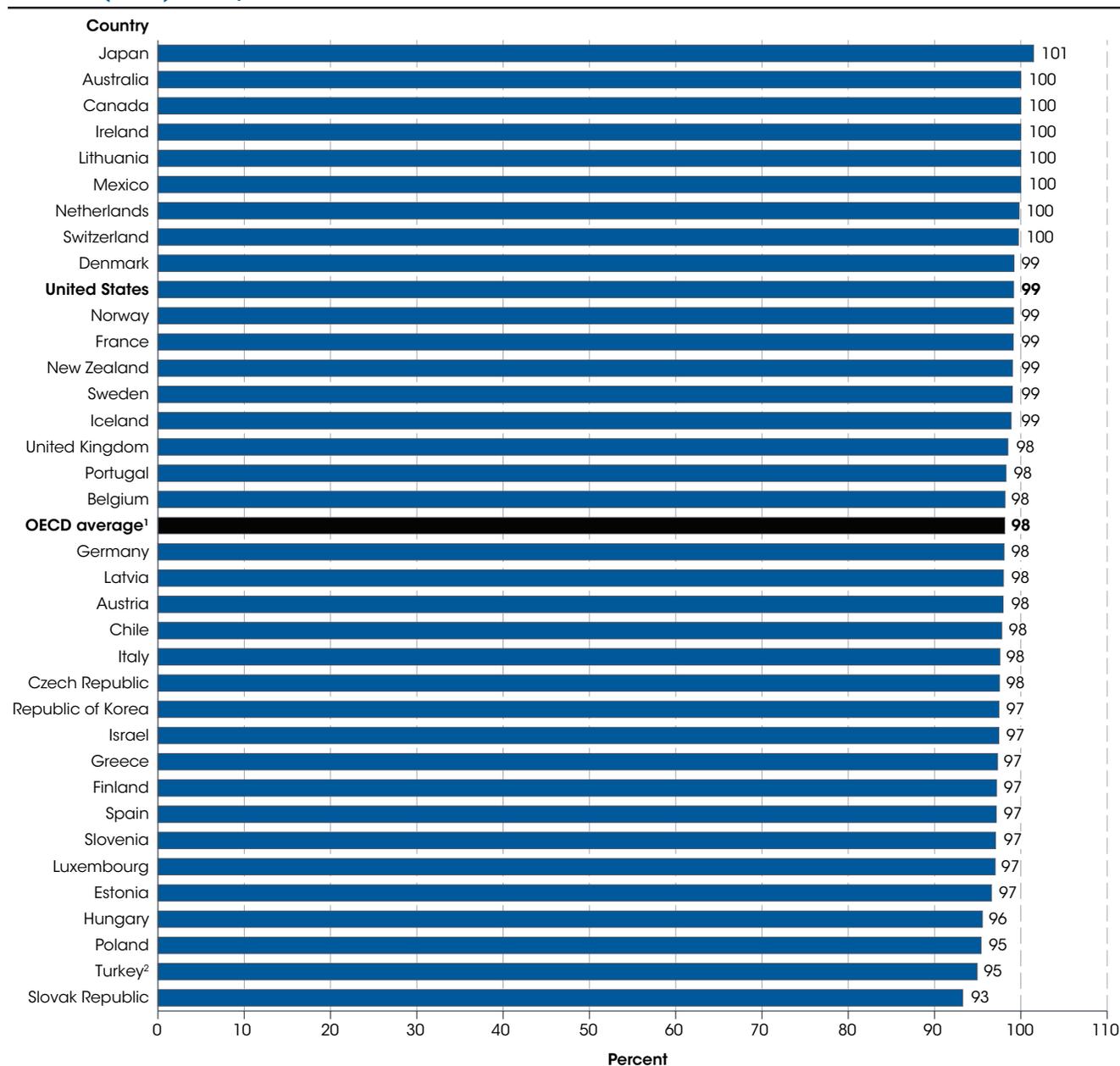
NOTE: Of the 36 OECD countries, 35 are included in this figure. Canada is excluded because the 2016 enrollment rate for 3- and 4-year-olds is not available. For each country, this figure shows the number of persons in each age group who are enrolled in that country as a percentage of that country's total population in the specified age group. Some of a country's population may be enrolled in a different country, and some persons enrolled in the country may be residents of a different country. Enrollment rates may be underestimated for countries that are net exporters of students and may be overestimated for countries that are net importers. If a country enrolls many residents of other countries, the total number of students enrolled may be larger than the country's total population in the specified age group. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Online Education Database, retrieved November 7, 2018, from <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, table 601.35.

In recent years, many OECD countries (although not the United States) have begun to offer early childhood education programs to all children for at least one or two years before the start of compulsory schooling.<sup>3</sup> As a result, 82 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds across OECD countries were enrolled in school at any level in 2016.<sup>4</sup> In comparison, only 53 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds in the United States were enrolled. These data on the percentages of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in school exclude child care programs that are not primarily designed to provide educational experiences, such as day care programs. Among the 35 countries<sup>5</sup> for which the OECD reported 2016 data, the percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled ranged from 21 percent in Turkey to 100 percent in France, Israel, and the United Kingdom. Twenty-two countries reported enrollment rates among 3- and 4-year-olds that were higher than the OECD average, while

13 countries reported enrollment rates lower than the OECD average. In 16 countries, at least 90 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds were enrolled.

In 2016, the United States had one of the lowest enrollment rates among 3- and 4-year-olds (53 percent) of any OECD country; only Greece, Switzerland, and Turkey reported lower enrollment rates (47, 25, and 21 percent, respectively). However, enrollment rates among 3- and 4-year-olds in the United States varied widely across states. For example, enrollment rates among 3-year-olds ranged from 14 percent in West Virginia to 55 percent in Connecticut and 75 percent in the District of Columbia in 2016; similarly, enrollment rates among 4-year-olds ranged from 39 percent in North Dakota to 80 percent in Connecticut and 89 percent in the District of Columbia.<sup>6</sup>

**Figure 2. Percentage of 5- to 14-year-olds enrolled in school, by Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) country: 2016**

<sup>1</sup> 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 OECD in that year.

<sup>2</sup> Includes 15- to 17-year-olds enrolled in primary education.

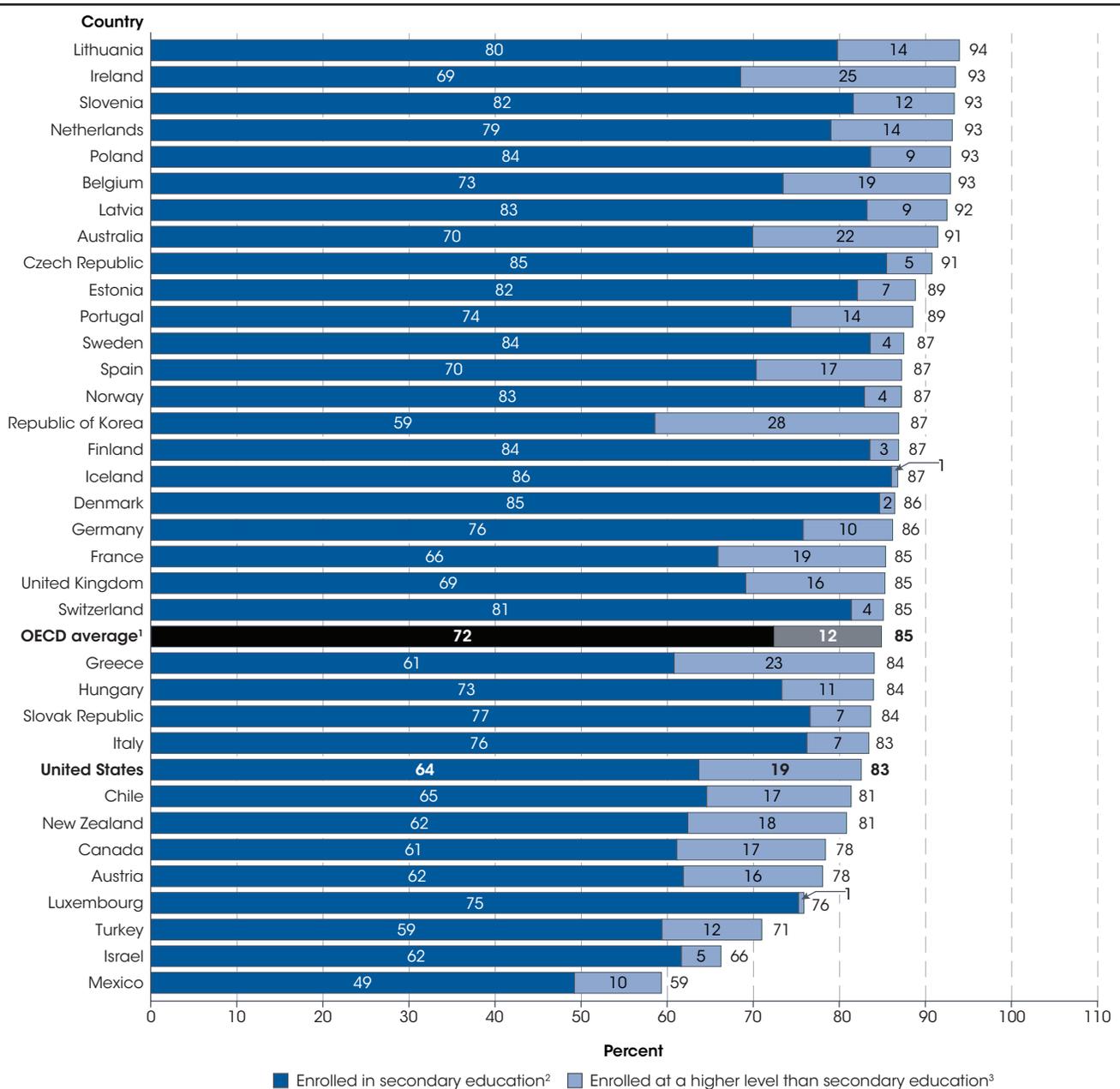
NOTE: All 36 OECD countries are included in this figure. For each country, this figure shows the number of persons in each age group who are enrolled in that country as a percentage of that country's total population in the specified age group. Some of a country's population may be enrolled in a different country, and some persons enrolled in the country may be residents of a different country. Enrollment rates may be underestimated for countries that are net exporters of students and may be overestimated for countries that are net importers. If a country enrolls many residents of other countries, the total number of students enrolled may be larger than the country's total population in the specified age group, resulting in enrollment estimates exceeding 100 percent. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Online Education Database, retrieved November 7, 2018, from <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, table 601.35.

Enrollment rates among 5- to 14-year-olds were similar across OECD countries.<sup>7</sup> In 2016, the percentage of 5- to 14-year-olds enrolled in school varied by only 8 percentage points across all 36 OECD countries—ranging from 93 percent in the Slovak Republic to 100 percent (or more) in Australia, Canada, Ireland, Lithuania, Mexico, and Japan.<sup>8</sup> Some 99 percent of 5- to 14-year-olds in

the United States were enrolled in school at any level, compared with an average enrollment rate of 98 percent for 5- to 14-year-olds in OECD countries. Enrollment among 5- to 14-year-olds in OECD countries is nearly universal due to compulsory schooling laws that cover primary and lower secondary education programs in all OECD countries.<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 3. Percentage of 15- to 19-year-olds enrolled in school, by Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) country and level of education: 2016**



<sup>1</sup> 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 OECD in that year.

<sup>2</sup> Refers to International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) 2011 level 2 (lower secondary education) and level 3 (upper secondary education). Secondary education generally corresponds to grades 7–12 in the United States.

<sup>3</sup> In general, 15- to 19-year-olds who are enrolled in school but not at the secondary level, are enrolled in shorter career/technical educational programs or in postsecondary degree programs. "Career/technical educational programs" refer to programs classified at ISCED 2011 level 4. ISCED 4 (postsecondary nontertiary education) typically corresponds to postsecondary vocational programs below the associate's degree level in the United States. "Postsecondary degree programs" refers to all postsecondary programs leading to associate's and higher degrees in the United States. "Postsecondary degree programs" include ISCED 2011 level 5 (corresponding to U.S. programs at the associate's degree level), level 6 (bachelor's or equivalent level), level 7 (master's or equivalent level), and level 8 (doctoral or equivalent level).

NOTE: Of the 36 OECD countries, 35 are included in this figure. Japan is excluded because 2016 enrollment rates for 15- to 19-year-olds are not available. For each country, this figure shows the number of persons in each age group who are enrolled in that country as a percentage of that country's total population in the specified age group. Some of a country's population may be enrolled in a different country, and some persons enrolled in the country may be residents of a different country. Enrollment rates may be underestimated for countries that are net exporters of students and may be overestimated for countries that are net importers. If a country enrolls many residents of other countries, the total number of students enrolled may be larger than the country's total population in the specified age group. Includes both full-time and part-time students. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Online Education Database, retrieved October 2, 2018, from <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, table 601.40.

In 2016, some 83 percent of 15- to 19-year-olds in the United States were enrolled in school at any level, which was slightly lower than the OECD average of 85 percent. In contrast to the near universal enrollment of 5- to 14-year-olds in all OECD countries, enrollment rates among 15- to 19-year-olds varied more widely across OECD countries. Among the 35 countries<sup>10</sup> for which the OECD reported 2016 data, the percentage of 15- to 19-year-olds enrolled in school at any level ranged from 59 percent in Mexico to 94 percent in Lithuania. Part of this variation can be attributed to the end of compulsory schooling and the transition of some students into the labor market.<sup>11</sup>

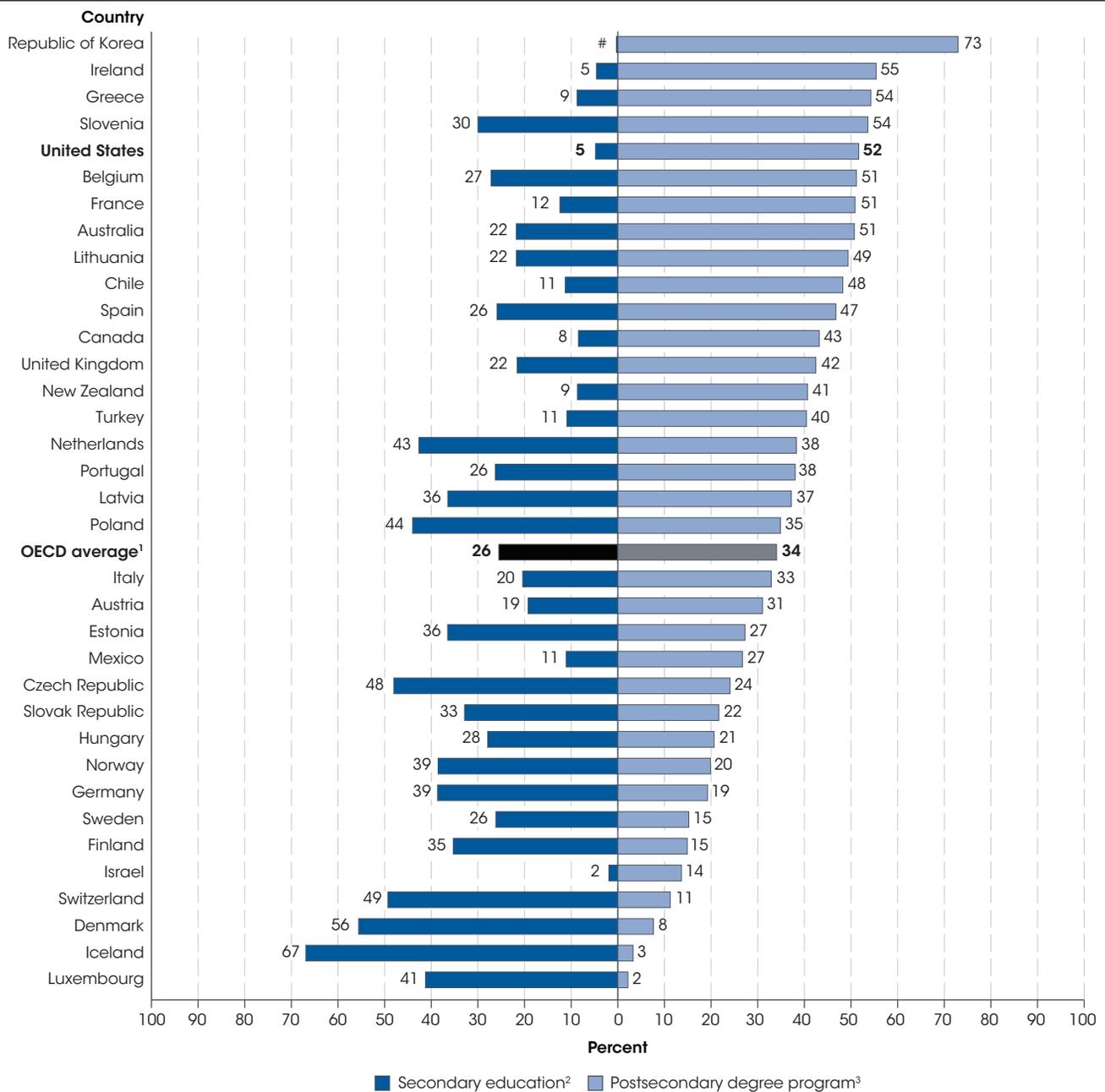
The 15- to 19-year-old age group spans the period during which students generally finish secondary education and potentially go on to more advanced schooling.<sup>12</sup> Among 15- to 19-year-olds who remain enrolled in school after completion of secondary education, some transition into a short career/technical educational program<sup>13</sup> while others pursue a postsecondary degree program (corresponding to an associate's or higher degree in the United States).<sup>14</sup> On average across OECD countries, 72 percent of 15- to 19-year-olds were enrolled in secondary education in 2016, while 12 percent were enrolled at a higher level than secondary. Across OECD countries, there were differences in the share of 15- to 19-year-olds enrolled in secondary school compared with the share enrolled in a higher level of education. For example, the percentage of 15- to 19-year-olds in the United States enrolled in secondary education (64 percent) was lower than the OECD average

(72 percent), while the percentage enrolled in a short career/technical educational program or a postsecondary degree program in the United States (19 percent) was higher than the OECD average (12 percent). In all OECD countries, higher percentages of 15- to 19-year-olds were enrolled in secondary school than in other levels of education.

In the United States, it is more common for 15- to 19-year-olds to transition into a postsecondary degree program after secondary school than into a short career/technical educational program; only 1 percent of 18-year-olds and 2 percent of 19-year-olds in the United States were enrolled in a short career/technical educational program in 2016.<sup>15</sup>

The specific age at which students make the transition from secondary school to a postsecondary degree program differs by country.<sup>16</sup> In all OECD countries, a majority of 15-year-olds, 16-year-olds, and 17-year-olds were enrolled in secondary school in 2016. On the other hand, 29 countries reported that the percentage of 18-year-olds enrolled in secondary school was higher than the percentage enrolled in a postsecondary degree program, and 14 countries reported that the percentage of 19-year-olds enrolled in secondary school was higher than the percentage enrolled in a postsecondary degree program. In the United States, 100 percent of 15-year-olds were enrolled in secondary school in 2016. In contrast, 30 percent of 18-year-olds and 5 percent of 19-year-olds were enrolled in secondary school.

**Figure 4. Percentage of 19-year-olds enrolled in secondary education and postsecondary degree programs, by Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) country: 2016**



# Rounds to zero.

<sup>1</sup> 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 OECD in that year.

<sup>2</sup> Refers to International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) 2011 level 2 (lower secondary education) and level 3 (upper secondary education). Secondary education generally corresponds to grades 7-12 in the United States.

<sup>3</sup> Corresponds to all postsecondary programs leading to associate's and higher degrees in the United States. Includes ISCED 2011 level 5 (corresponding to U.S. programs at the associate's degree level), level 6 (bachelor's or equivalent level), level 7 (master's or equivalent level), and level 8 (doctoral or equivalent level). Enrollment rates may not be directly comparable across countries due to differing definitions of postsecondary education and the age at which it begins.

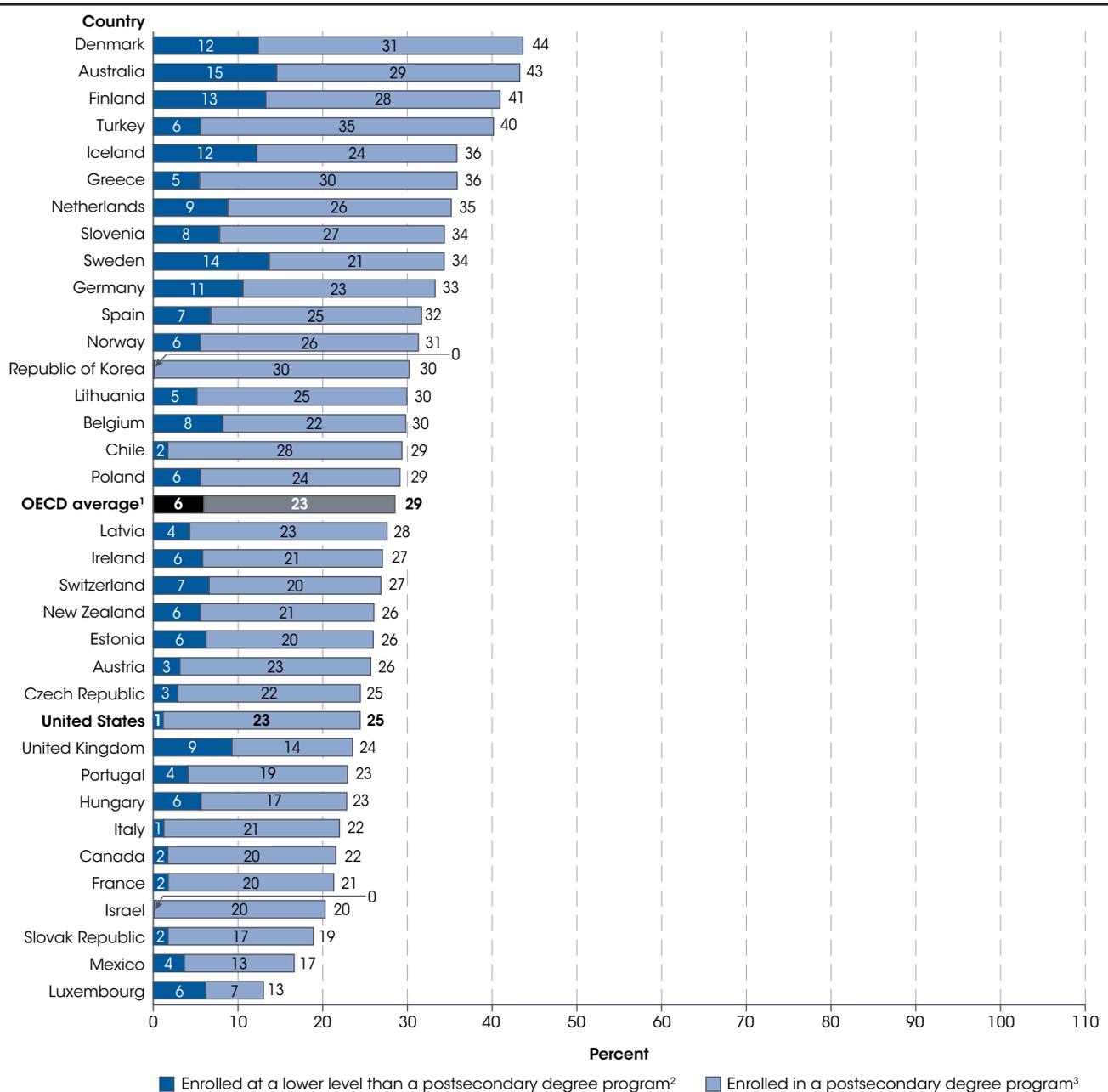
NOTE: Of the 36 OECD countries, 35 are included in this figure. Japan is excluded because 2016 enrollment rates for 15- to 19-year-olds are not available. For each country, this figure shows the number of persons in each age group who are enrolled in that country as a percentage of that country's total population in the specified age group. Some of a country's population may be enrolled in a different country, and some persons enrolled in the country may be residents of a different country. Enrollment rates may be underestimated for countries that are net exporters of students and may be overestimated for countries that are net importers. If a country enrolls many residents of other countries, the total number of students enrolled may be larger than the country's total population in the specified age group. Includes both full-time and part-time students. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Online Education Database, retrieved October 2, 2018, from <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, table 601.40.

Since pursuing a postsecondary degree program is the most prevalent educational pathway in the United States among those who remain enrolled in education after secondary school, the next portion of this indicator examines how the transition from secondary school to a postsecondary degree program in the United States compares with other OECD countries. Examining enrollment rates of 19-year-olds draws out differences in the typical age students transition from secondary school to a postsecondary degree program across countries. As previously noted, 14 countries reported that a higher percentage of 19-year-olds were enrolled in secondary school than in a postsecondary degree program in

2016. In contrast, 21 countries—including the United States—reported having a higher percentage of 19-year-olds enrolled in a postsecondary degree program than in secondary school. In the United States, 52 percent of 19-year-olds were enrolled in a postsecondary degree program, whereas 5 percent were enrolled in secondary school. The percentage of 19-year-olds enrolled in secondary school in the United States was 21 percentage points lower than the OECD average (5 vs. 26 percent), but the percentage of 19-year-olds enrolled in a postsecondary degree program in the United States was 18 percentage points higher than the OECD average (52 vs. 34 percent).

Figure 5. Percentage of 20- to 29-year-olds enrolled in school, by Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) country and level of education: 2016



# Rounds to zero.

<sup>1</sup> 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 OECD in that year.

<sup>2</sup> In general, 20- to 29-year-olds who are enrolled in school but not in a postsecondary degree program are enrolled in a shorter career/technical educational program or in secondary education. "Career/technical educational programs" refer to programs classified at International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) 2011 level 4. ISCED 4 (postsecondary nontertiary education) typically corresponds to postsecondary vocational programs below the associate's degree level in the United States. "Secondary education" refers to ISCED 2011 level 2 (lower secondary education) and level 3 (upper secondary education) and generally corresponds to grades 7-12 in the United States.

<sup>3</sup> Corresponds to all postsecondary programs leading to associate's and higher degrees in the United States. Includes ISCED 2011 level 5 (corresponding to U.S. programs at the associate's degree level), level 6 (bachelor's or equivalent level), level 7 (master's or equivalent level), and level 8 (doctoral or equivalent level). Enrollment rates may not be directly comparable across countries due to differing definitions of postsecondary education and the age at which it begins.

NOTE: Of the 36 OECD countries, 35 are included in this figure. Japan is excluded because 2016 enrollment rates for 20- to 29-year-olds are not available. For each country, this figure shows the number of persons in each age group who are enrolled in that country as a percentage of that country's total population in the specified age group. Some of a country's population may be enrolled in a different country, and some persons enrolled in the country may be residents of a different country. Enrollment rates may be underestimated for countries that are net exporters of students and may be overestimated for countries that are net importers. If a country enrolls many residents of other countries, the total number of students enrolled may be larger than the country's total population in the specified age group. Includes both full-time and part-time students. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Online Education Database, retrieved October 2, 2018, from <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, table 601.40.

In 2016, some 25 percent of 20- to 29-year-olds in the United States were enrolled in school at any level, which was lower than the OECD average of 29 percent. Among the 35 countries<sup>17</sup> for which the OECD reported 2016 data, the percentage of 20- to 29-year-olds enrolled in school ranged from 13 percent in Luxembourg to 44 percent in Denmark. Fourteen countries reported that 30 percent or more of 20- to 29-year-olds were enrolled in school in 2016, and four countries (Denmark, Australia, Finland, and Turkey) reported that 40 percent or more of 20- to 29-year-olds were enrolled.

The 20- to 29-year-old age group spans the period during which students generally persist through (and potentially

complete) a postsecondary degree program. In all OECD countries, higher percentages of 20- to 29-year-olds were enrolled in a postsecondary degree program in 2016 than were enrolled in other levels of education. In the United States, 23 percent of 20- to 29-year-olds were enrolled in postsecondary degree programs in 2016. There were several countries, however, that had relatively large shares of 20- to 29-year-olds enrolled in a lower level than a postsecondary degree program. For example, 15 percent of 20- to 29-year-olds in Australia and 14 percent of 20- to 29-year-olds in Sweden were enrolled in a lower level than a postsecondary degree program.

### Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> OECD. (2018). *Education at a Glance 2018: OECD Indicators*. Paris: OECD Publishing. [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2018\\_eag-2018-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2018_eag-2018-en).

<sup>2</sup> OECD. (2018). *Education at a Glance 2018: OECD Indicators*. Paris: OECD Publishing. [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2018\\_eag-2018-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2018_eag-2018-en).

<sup>3</sup> OECD. (2018). *Education at a Glance 2018: OECD Indicators*. Paris: OECD Publishing. [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2018\\_eag-2018-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2018_eag-2018-en).

<sup>4</sup> While these enrollment rates include 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in school at any level, 3- and 4-year-olds across OECD countries are generally enrolled in programs classified by the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) 2011 as ISCED 0 (early childhood education). In the United States, ISCED 0 programs are commonly referred to as preprimary school, preschool, nursery school, or prekindergarten. Child care programs that are not primarily designed to provide educational experiences, such as day care programs, are not included in ISCED 0.

<sup>5</sup> Canada is excluded because 2016 data on the enrollment rate of 3- and 4-year-olds are not available.

<sup>6</sup> OECD. (2018). *Education at a Glance 2018: Subnational Supplement*. [https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/annualreports/oecd/tables\\_2018/tabnB2.1\\_usa.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/annualreports/oecd/tables_2018/tabnB2.1_usa.asp).

<sup>7</sup> While enrollment rates include 5- to 14-year-olds enrolled in school at any level, students of this age group across OECD countries are generally enrolled in programs classified as ISCED 1 (primary education or elementary school) or ISCED 2 (lower secondary education or middle school). In the United States, ISCED 1 corresponds to grades 1–6 and ISCED 2 corresponds to grades 7–9.

<sup>8</sup> Some of a country's population may be enrolled in a different country, and some persons enrolled in the country may be residents of a different country. Enrollment rates may be underestimated for countries such as Luxembourg that are net

exporters of students and may be overestimated for countries that are net importers. If a country enrolls many residents of other countries, the country's total population in the specified age group can be smaller than the total number enrolled, resulting in enrollment estimates exceeding 100 percent.

<sup>9</sup> OECD. (2018). *Education at a Glance 2018: OECD Indicators*. Paris: OECD Publishing. [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2018\\_eag-2018-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2018_eag-2018-en).

<sup>10</sup> Japan is excluded because 2016 data on enrollment rates of 15- to 19-year-olds are not available.

<sup>11</sup> OECD. (2018). *Education at a Glance 2018: OECD Indicators*. Paris: OECD Publishing. [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2018\\_eag-2018-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2018_eag-2018-en).

<sup>12</sup> Secondary school includes programs classified as ISCED 2 (lower secondary education or middle school) and ISCED 3 (upper secondary education or high school). Secondary education generally corresponds to grades 7–12 in the United States.

<sup>13</sup> Refers to programs classified at ISCED level 4. ISCED 4 (postsecondary nontertiary education) typically corresponds to postsecondary vocational programs below the associate's degree level in the United States.

<sup>14</sup> Includes all postsecondary programs leading to associate's and higher degrees in the United States. Postsecondary degree programs include ISCED 2011 level 5 (corresponding to U.S. programs at the associate's degree level), level 6 (bachelor's or equivalent level), level 7 (master's or equivalent level), and level 8 (doctoral or equivalent level).

<sup>15</sup> OECD. (2018). *Education at a Glance 2018: OECD Indicators*. Paris: OECD Publishing. [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2018\\_eag-2018-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2018_eag-2018-en).

<sup>16</sup> OECD. (2018). *Education at a Glance 2018: OECD Indicators*. Paris: OECD Publishing. [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2018\\_eag-2018-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2018_eag-2018-en).

<sup>17</sup> Japan is excluded because 2016 data on enrollment rates of 20- to 29-year-olds are not available.

**Reference tables:** *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, tables 601.35 and 601.40

**Related indicators and resources:** [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](#); [International Educational Attainment](#); [Postbaccalaureate Enrollment](#); [Preschool and Kindergarten Enrollment](#); [Private School Enrollment](#); [Public School Enrollment](#); [Undergraduate Enrollment](#)

**Glossary:** Elementary school; Enrollment; International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED); Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); Postsecondary education; Preschool; Secondary school