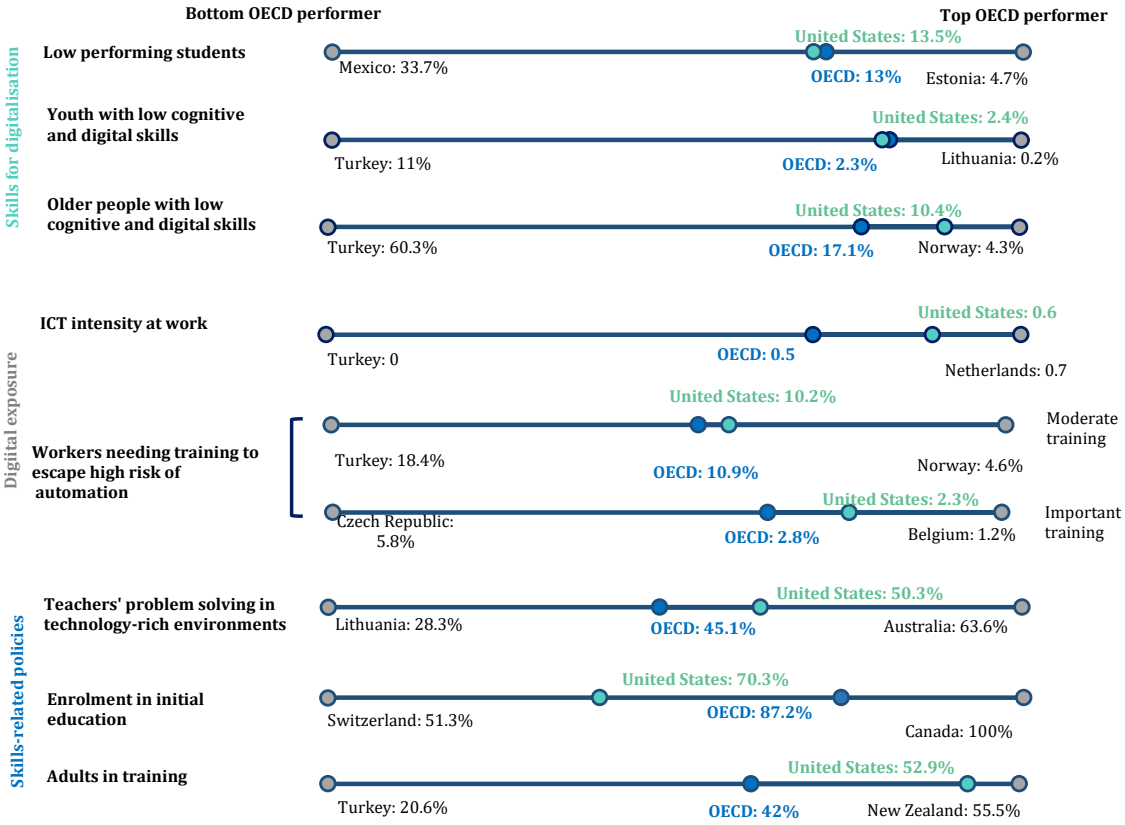
OECD Skills Outlook 2019

Thriving in a Digital World

How do the United States compare?

Skills Outlook Scoreboard – Thriving in a digital world



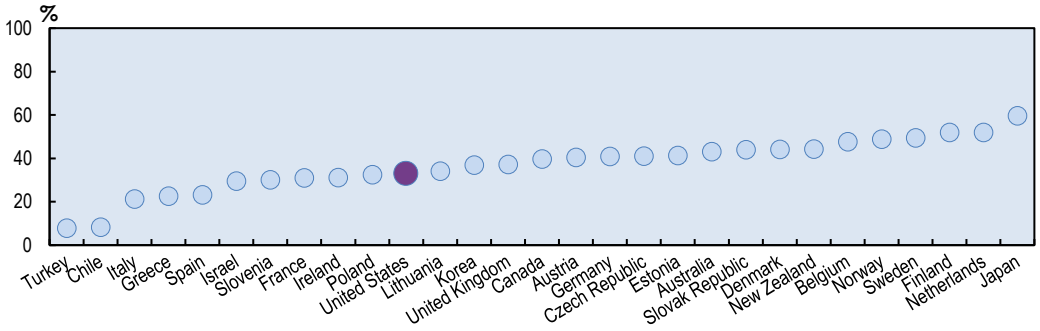
Note: How to read the data? Low performing students: Percentage of students scoring strictly below Level 2 in PISA (reading, mathematics, science), 2015. Youth with low cognitive and digital skills: Percentage of 16-29 scoring below Level 1 (inclusive) in literacy and numeracy and having no computer experience or having failed ICT core, 2012, 2015. Older people with low cognitive and digital skills: Percentage of 55-65 scoring below Level 1 (inclusive) in literacy and numeracy and having no computer experience or having failed ICT core, 2012, 2015. ICT intensity at work: Median intensity of ICT use across all workers (0-1). Workers needing training to escape high risk of automation: Percentage of employment in occupations at high risk of automation requiring moderate (up to 1 year) or important (up to 3 years) training needs to transition to occupations at low or medium risk of automation (upper bound). Teachers' problem solving in technology-rich environments: Percentage of teachers scoring at least Level 2 (inclusive) in problem solving in technology-rich environments. Enrolment in initial education: Enrolment rates at the age 3 (early childhood education and pre-primary education) and at age 5-15. Adults in training: Percentage of adults participating in non-formal and informal learning over the past 12 months (PIAAC).
Source: Skills Outlook 2019: Thriving in a digital world. https://doi.org/10.1787/df80bc12-en

The Skills Outlook Scoreboard assesses the extent to which the United States are able to make the most of digitalisation. The United States' performance is measured along 3 main dimensions: Skills for digitalisation, Digital exposure and Skills-related policy effort.

The Scoreboard shows that, the United States have an average level of skill proficiency relative to other OECD countries but the share of young people lacking basic skills is high. American workers are using ICTs and performing non-routine tasks in their jobs quite intensively. In the United States, according to OECD estimates, 10.2% of workers are in occupations at high risk of automation and would need moderate training to transit to safer occupations with low or medium risk of automation. Another 2.3% would need important training to avoid the risk of automation. Teachers in the United States, despite reporting slightly higher training needs than other high-skilled workers, are well prepared: 50% of them are top performers in problem solving in technology-rich environments.

Individuals with a well-rounded set of skills are more likely to be able to adapt if digitalisation transforms their job content or everyday activities

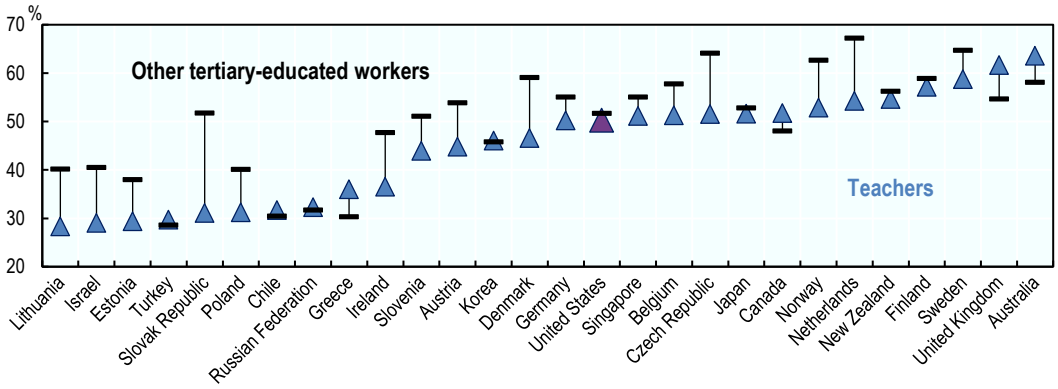
Percentage of 16-65 scoring at least Level 3 (inclusive) in literacy and numeracy



A good level of skills allows people to unlock all the benefits of Internet use. In the United States, however, less than 1 in 3 of the individuals aged 16-65 have a good level of literacy and numeracy skills (i.e. score at least Level 3 in PIAAC literacy and numeracy tests).

Teachers are generally less likely to be top performers in problem-solving skills

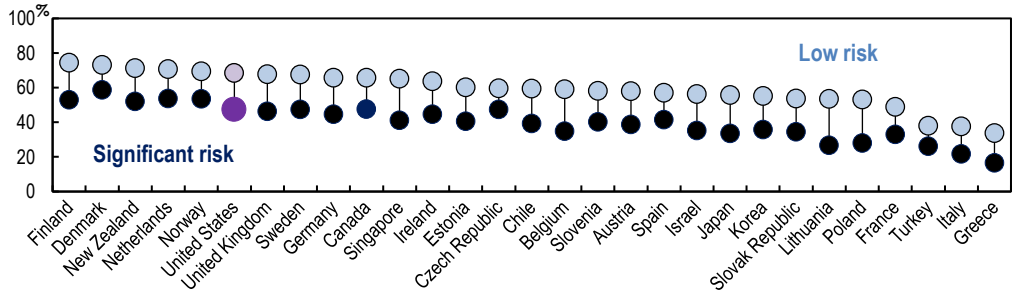
Share of top performing teachers and tertiary-educated workers in problem solving in technology-rich environments, by country



While in some OECD countries teachers are less likely to have higher skills in problem solving in technology-rich environments than other high-skilled workers, teachers in the United States are on par with other tertiary-educated workers. Additional evidence also shows that teachers' use of technology is on par with that of other high-skilled workers.

Workers more exposed to the risk of automation are less likely to participate in training

Share of workers participating in adult learning (in the last 12 months)



In the United States, the participation of workers in Adult Learning is well above the OECD average. Yet, workers more exposed to the risk of automation and the low-skilled participate less in training than workers at low-risk of automation and high-skilled workers.

Source: Skills Outlook 2019: Thriving in a digital world. https://doi.org/10.1787/df80bc12-en

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