

latest results show a curbing in the trend. Scores in mathematics and reading improved significantly in the last round, but are still lower than scores in 2003.

Sweden also does a comparatively good job of developing the skills of its adults. Average PIAAC scores in both literacy and numeracy are significantly above OECD average. Moreover, only 6.4% of the adult population report no prior experience with computers or lack basic computer skills. In contrast, 44% of the population score at the highest levels in a technology-rich environment in PIAAC and there is a strong culture of adult education in Sweden, which is encouraging in light of the expected change in the skills need in labour markets. Sweden has also one of the smallest gender gaps in earnings in among OECD countries and tertiary-educated adults enjoy high employment.

Despite Sweden's success in many areas, there still room for improvement. First, the gap in skills proficiency scores between advantaged and disadvantaged students in Sweden is increasing and is wider than the OECD average. PISA results show, for example, that while in 2006 a socio-economically advantaged student scored 37 points higher in science than a disadvantaged student, the difference had increased to 44 points in 2015. Reversing this trend will require systematic efforts to improve the governance and

funding of the education system and to strengthen the quality of teaching, especially in remote areas and in schools with high share of immigrants. Sweden has taken important steps to deal with some of these challenges. Initiatives like the "Teacher Salary Boost" programme and new efforts to better integrate immigrants certainly go in the right direction.

Second, Sweden can improve the alignment of its adults' skills with labour market needs. Roughly 40% of employers report hiring difficulties and there is evidence of mismatches in the labour market. For example, 25% of foreign-born adults in Sweden with a university level qualification work in a job requiring only an upper secondary degree or lower compared to 7% among native-born adults.

Finally, Sweden could also improve the intensity of skills use. Skills use at work is not improving in Sweden. Therefore, the adoption of high-performance workplace practices, which are found to stimulate skills use in the workplace, should be further encouraged.

Sweden could benefit from a renewal of its strategic vision for the future to ensure that all of its people have the skills to respond to the challenges and opportunities of a complex and rapidly changing world. A whole-of government approach is needed to achieve this aim.

Key recommendations for improving the performance of countries' skills system

Developing relevant skills over the life course: Making skills systems responsive

- Making each stage of learning a foundation for success in the next
- Enabling policies to support learning in adulthood
- Supporting teachers to become lifelong learners
- Financing adult learning
- Harnessing the power of technology as a tool for learning

Using skills effectively in work and society: Making the most of everyone's potential

- Make full use of everyone's skills
- Making the most of migrants' skills
- Activating skills to build more inclusive and cohesive societies
- Making intensive use of skills in work
- Aligning skills with the needs of the economy and society
- Aligning skills policies with industrial and innovation policies

Strengthening the governance of skills systems: Tackling increased complexity

- Promoting co-ordination, co-operation and collaboration across the whole of government
- Engaging stakeholders throughout the policy cycle
- Building integrated information systems
- Aligning and co-ordinating financing arrangements

Further reading

- OECD (2019), *OECD Skills Strategy 2019: Skills to shape a better future*, OECD Publishing, Paris, [//doi.org/10.1787/9789264313835-en](https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264313835-en).
- OECD (2019), *OECD Skills Outlook 2019: Thriving in a Digital World*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/df80bc12-en>.
- OECD (2019), *OECD Economic Surveys: Sweden 2019*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/c510039b-en>.
- OECD (forthcoming), *Strengthening the Governance of Skills Systems*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

Contact

Ricardo Espinoza, Policy Analyst, OECD Centre for Skills: ricardo.espinoza@oecd.org

For more information on OECD National Skills Strategy projects, contact

Montserrat Gomendio, Head of the OECD Centre for Skills: montserrat.gomendio@oecd.org
 Andrew Bell, Head, National Skills Strategy projects: andrew.bell@oecd.org