



Are girls getting smarter at the expense of boys?

The reversal of gender inequality in (tertiary) education

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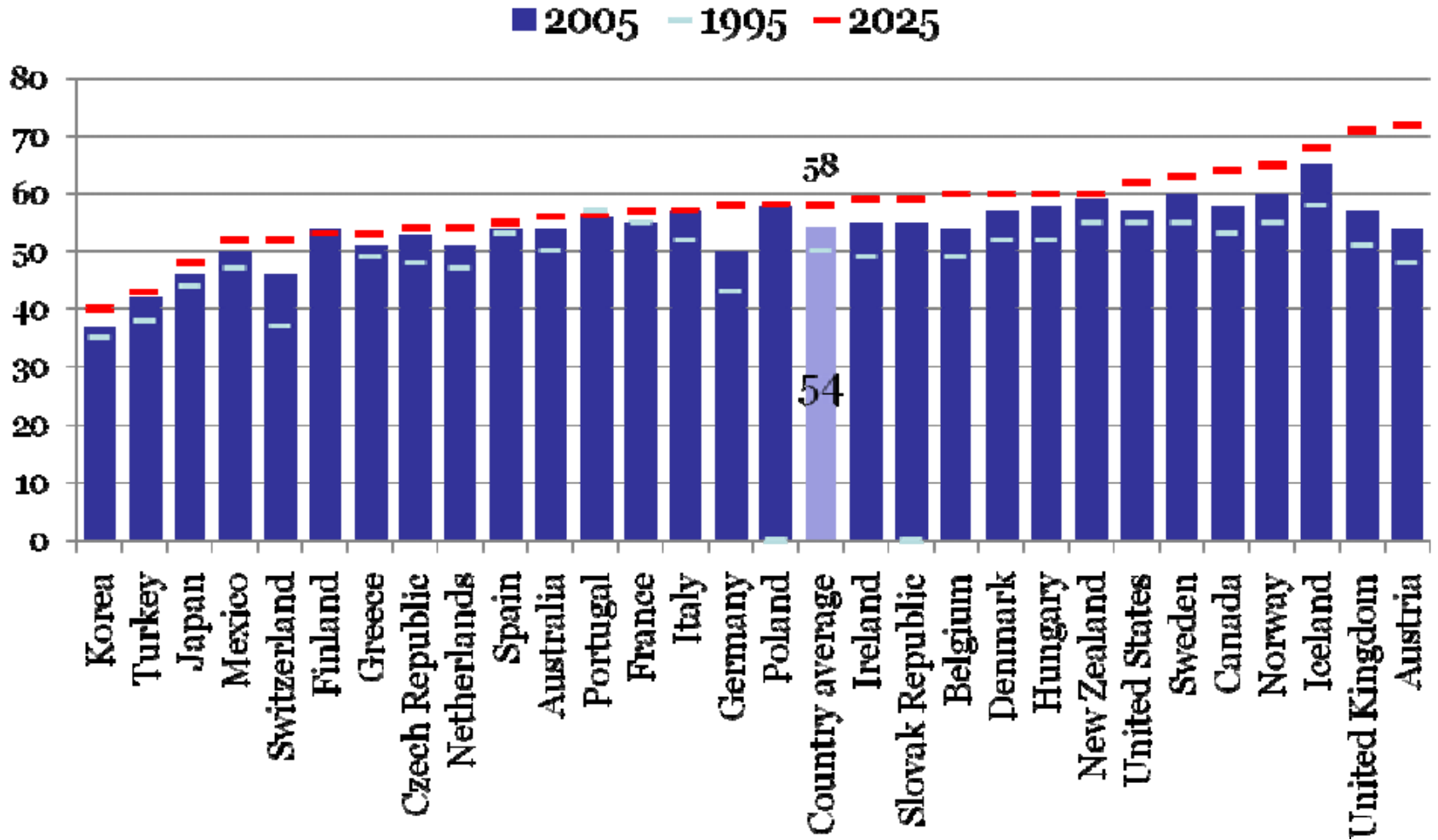
OECD

Centre for Educational Research
and Innovation (CERI)

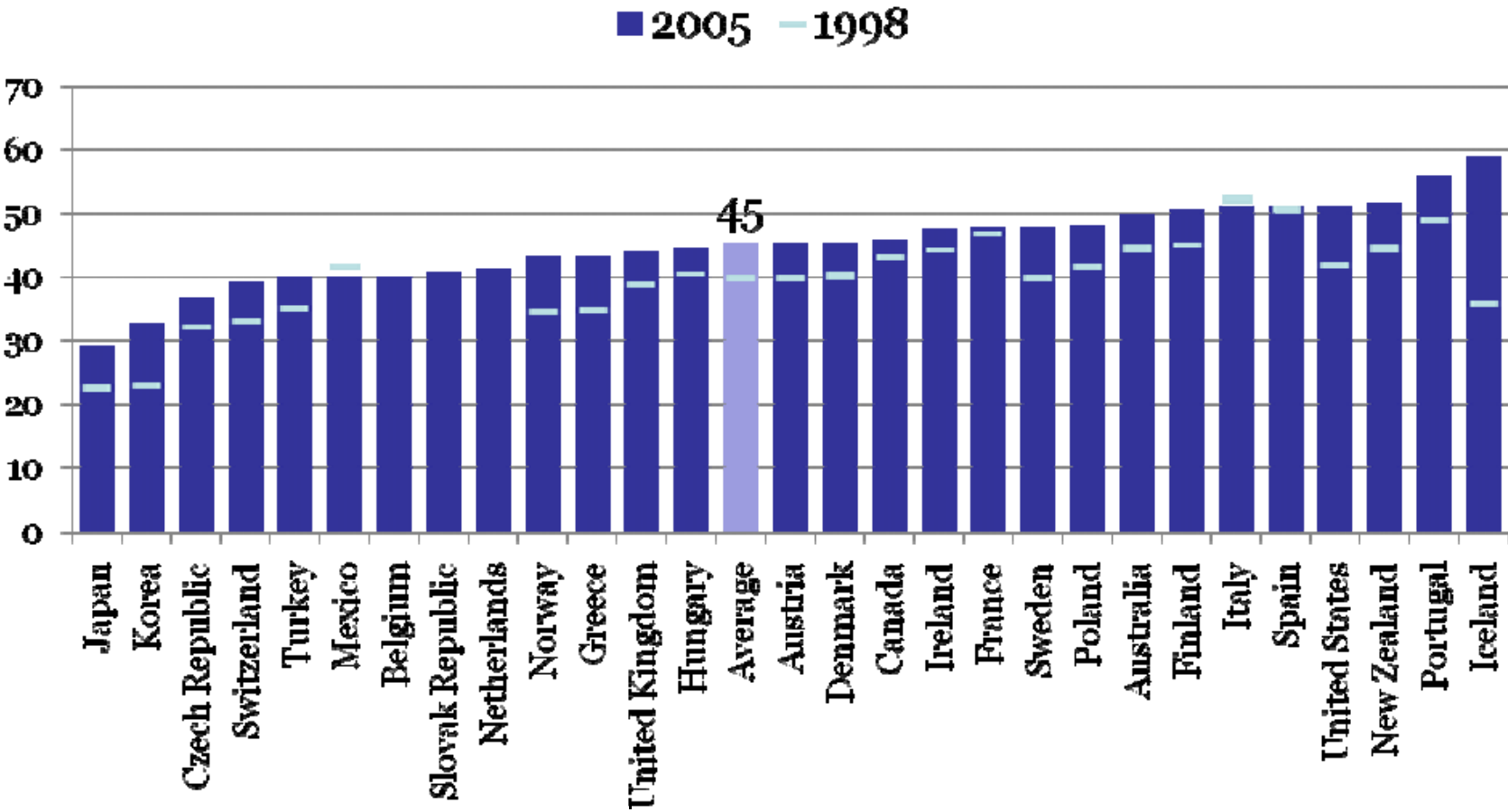
Outline

- The reversal of gender inequality in tertiary education
- Why did it happen?
- Should we care?

Share of females in tertiary education enrolments (%)

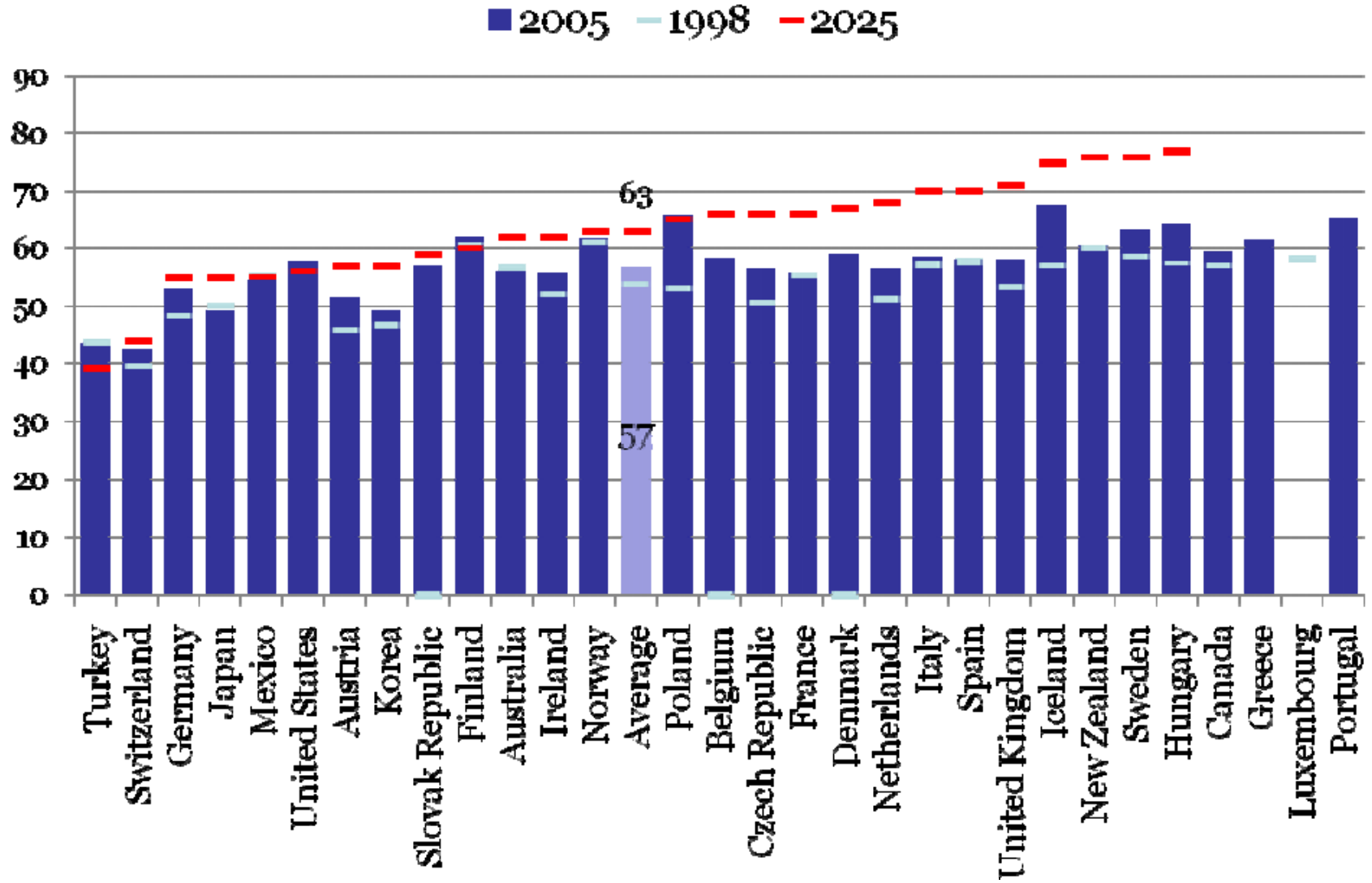


Share of female students at doctoral level (ISCED 6 = 3% of students on average)





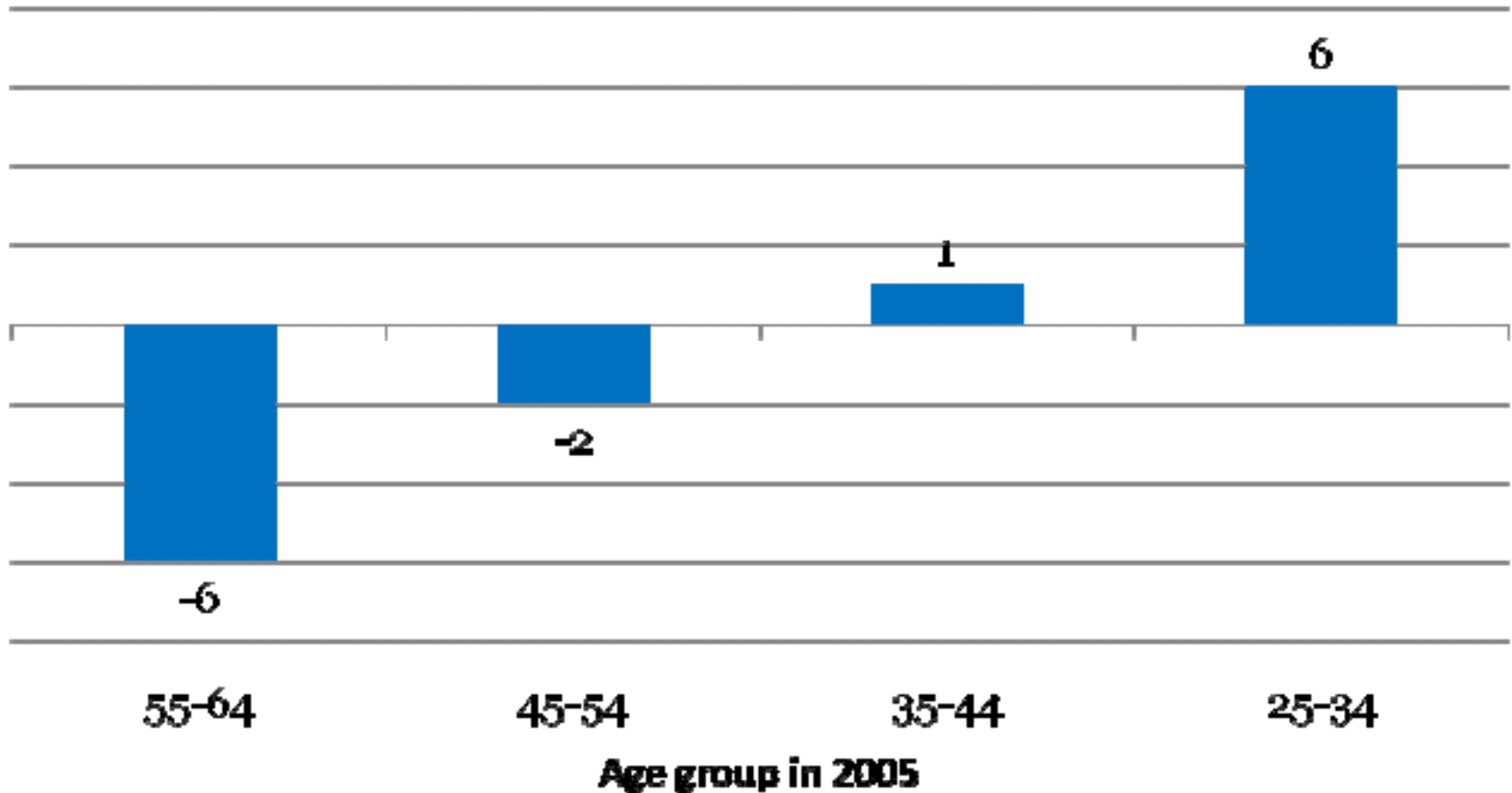
Share of tertiary degrees awarded to women



Gender gap in tertiary educational attainment (F-M) by age group

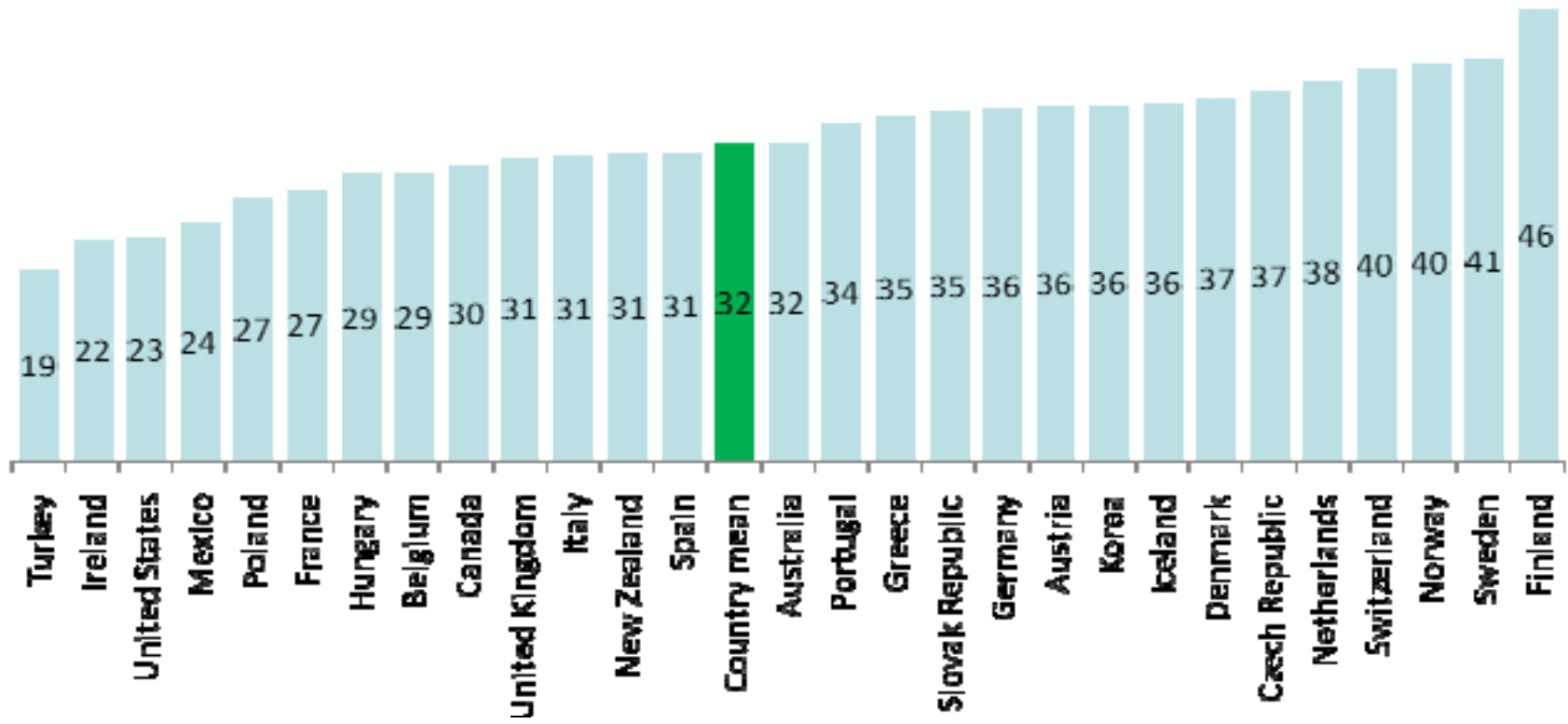
No gap in 2005; +18% for youngest cohort if strict projection; >10% ?

25-34: Finland (19%), Norway (15), Canada (13), Poland (11), Sweden, Belgium, Portugal, Spain (10)



Index of discipline-based segregation (23 discipline categories)

2005



QUESTION

Do you think that...

« it is too early to see the consequences of these changes but in 20-30 years a majority of women will earn more than men » ?

1) YES / 2) NO

WHY?

- 1) Why did women catch up (closing the gap)?
- 2) Why have they overtaken men (reversal of the gap)?

Demographic

Sociological

Economic

reasons

Educational

Biological (?)

PISA results

- PISA 2000:
 - Reading: +32 score points in 2000; +38 in 2006
 - Girls prefer collaborative; boys, competitive
- PISA 2003:
 - Mathematics: -11 score points (unchanged from 2000 to 2006)
 - Problem-solving: gap (+) in Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Indonesia and Thailand
- PISA 2006:
 - Science: -2 score points (overall few cases of statistically significant gap)
 - Bigger gap when computer-based assessment
 - Bigger differences within schools than nationally
 - Mixed picture for single-sex schools


QUESTION

Do you agree that...

the only reason to have a policy intervention is if there is a proven discrimination against one of the sexes?

1) YES / 2) NO

What social consequences?

- Is this educational trend likely to reverse?
- Will it reverse wage gender inequality? 
 - Probably not, as it depends on many other factors
 - Different distribution of wages?
- Will it have adverse demographic consequences?
 - The hypergamy argument

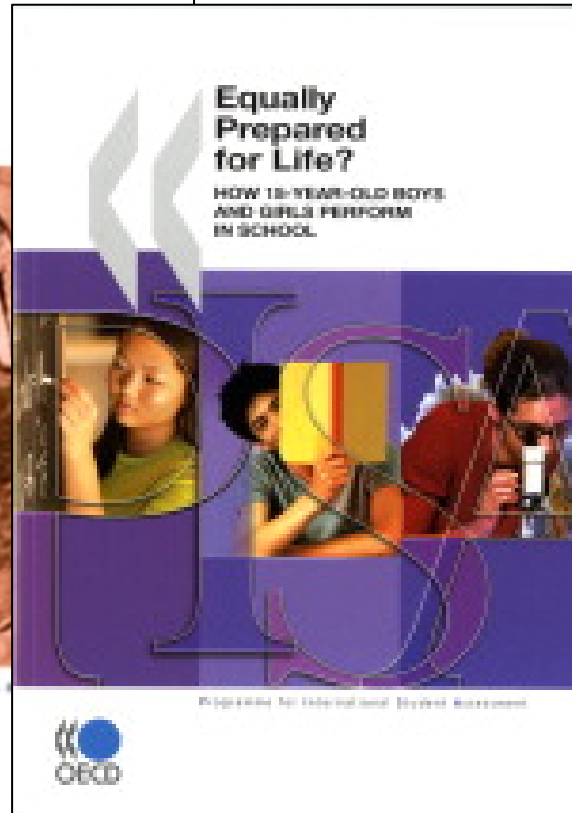
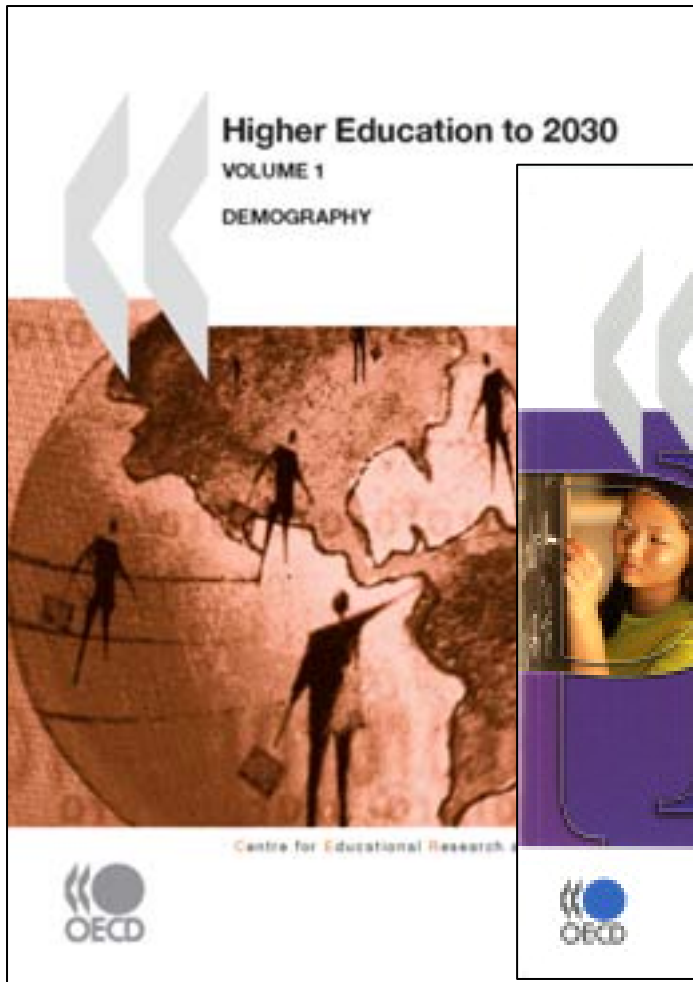
Should we care?

- The diversity argument
- The biological argument (special needs)
- What social consequences of new gender stratification and high rates of male dropouts?
- Precaution principle: a trend that will take a long time to reverse...
- And if there were discrimination? (equity)
- Policies targeting boys will also benefit girls if they reduce discipline-based segregation

Some OECD work on gender in education

www.oecd.org/edu/universityfutures/demography

Freely downloadable: Chapter 10 on gender inequality



www.pisa.oecd.org

Free PDF



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THANK YOU

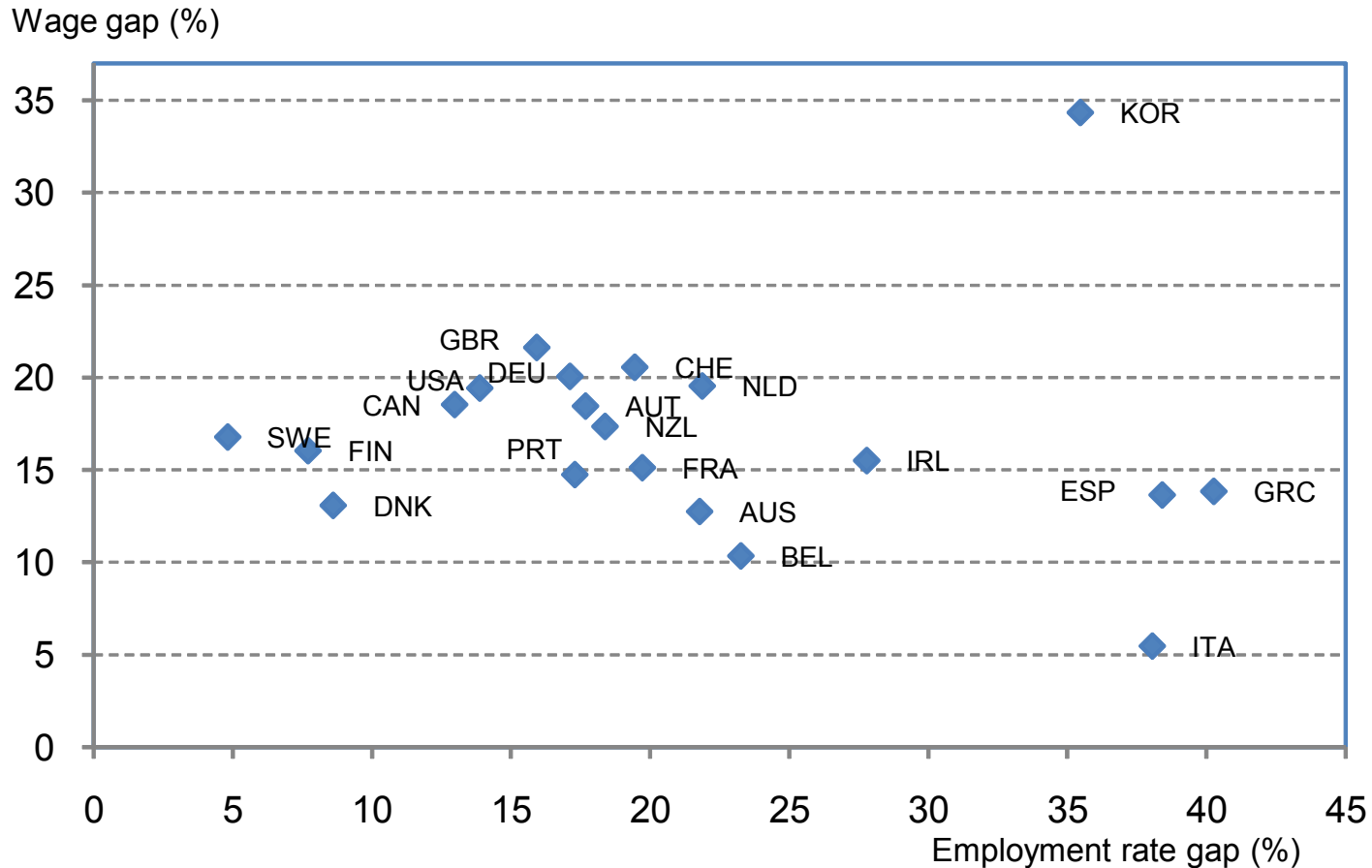
www.oecd.org/edu/universityfutures

www.oecd.org/edu/innovation

Gender gaps

Women earn on average 16% less than men and work 20% less

Gender wage gap and employment rate gap for prime age, 2001, percentages



Note: The gender employment gap is defined as the difference between male and female employment rates as a percentage of the male employment rate.

