

ADULT SECONDARY (TERTIARY) SCHOOLING ATTAINMENT LEVEL		
Education	Education level	Core indicator

1. INDICATOR

- (a) **Name:** Adult Secondary (Tertiary) Schooling Attainment Level.
- (b) **Brief Definition:** Adult Secondary Schooling Attainment Level is defined as the proportion of the population of working age (25-64 years) which has completed at least (upper) secondary education. Adult Tertiary Schooling Attainment Level is defined as the proportion of the population of working age (25-64 years) which has completed at least the first stage (as defined by the International Standard Classification of Education or ISCED) tertiary education.
- (c) **Unit of Measurement:** expressed as a percentage (%).
- (d) **Placement in the CSD Indicator Set:** Education/Education Level.

2. POLICY RELEVANCE

- (a) **Purpose:** These indicators provide measures of the quality of the human capital stock within the adult population of approximately working age. For instance, those who have completed upper secondary education can be expected either to have an adequate set of skills relevant to the labour market or to have demonstrated the ability to acquire such skills. The indicator corresponding to secondary attainment can be made more dynamic by presenting the results in 10-year age bands (25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64) in order to give an indication of changes over time in actual secondary education completion rates. Nevertheless, one should not assume that differences between age groups correspond to progress over time, because individuals are not always necessarily schooled at the “appropriate” age, especially in developing countries. This may even underestimate progress if older cohorts have returned to school in recent years, which seems plausible.
- (b) **Relevance to Sustainable/Unsustainable Development:** Education is a process by which human beings reach their fullest potential. It is critical for promoting and communicating sustainable development and improving the capacity of people to address environment and development issues. It facilitates the achievement of environmental and ethical awareness, values, and skills consistent with sustainable development and effective public participation in decision-making.
- (c) **International Conventions and Agreements:** None.
- (d) **International Targets/Recommended Standards:** International agreements do not establish specific national or global targets for this indicator.

(e) **Linkages to Other Indicators:** Education is closely linked to indicators reflecting basic needs such as literacy, capacity-building, information and communications and the role of major groups. These indicators also give a broad measure of the quality of the human capital stock within countries (and hence, an indication of the potential for future sustained development).

3. METHODOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION

(a) **Underlying Definitions and Concepts:** The *International Standard Classification of Education* (1997) defines levels of education (pre-primary, primary, lower secondary, upper secondary etc.) in an internationally comparable manner.

(b) **Measurement Methods:** To calculate the adult secondary education attainment level, divide the number of adults aged 25-64 years who have completed at least upper secondary education by the corresponding total population aged 25-64 years and multiply by 100. To calculate the adult tertiary education attainment level, divide the number of adults aged 25-64 years who have completed at least first stage (as defined by the International Standard Classification of Education or ISCED) tertiary education by the corresponding total population aged 25-64 years and multiply by 100.

(c) **Limitations of the Indicator:**

Schooling attainment levels are mostly based on self-declaration or declaration of the head of household, which may give rise to concerns about data reliability and consequently comparability, especially for females in many developing countries. Some countries determine completion of upper secondary (or tertiary) education by making inference using data on the number of years of schooling received rather than qualifications obtained. In some cases, the available data only indicate whether an individual has studied at the upper secondary (or tertiary) level as opposed to having completed upper secondary (or tertiary) education.

(d) **Status of the methodology:**

These indicators have the status of an international recommendation since the basic data elements to derive them are included in the *Revised Recommendation concerning the International Standardization of Education Statistics* adopted by the UNESCO General Conference at its twentieth session, Paris, 1978. In the latest revised Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses in 1999, the concerned UN agencies co-operated with international experts in upgrading the methodology used in collecting statistics on literacy and educational characteristics.

(e) **Alternative Definitions:**

Where relatively small numbers of the population have completed upper secondary education, alternative indicators are either the Adult Primary Education Attainment Level (although this may be closely correlated with the Adult Literacy Rate) or the Adult Lower Secondary Education Attainment Level.

4. ASSESSMENT OF DATA

(a) **Data Needed to Compile the Indicator:** Data on the number of people of the relevant age (recommended to be 25-64) who have completed at least upper secondary (or tertiary) education and the corresponding population of the same age.

(b) **National and International Data Availability and Sources:** Data are usually collected during national population censuses, or during household surveys such as Labour Force Surveys. Official statistics exist for many countries in the world but are often out-of-date due to censuses taking place every ten years and late census data release. For sound measurement, the ratio must be supported by consistent data by gender and age-group.

(c) **Data References:** The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) web site: <http://www.uis.unesco.org>

5. AGENCIES INVOLVED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDICATOR

(a) **Lead Agency:** The lead agency is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The contact point is the Director, UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS); e-mail: uis@unesco.org and fax (1-514) 343-5740.

(b) **Other Organizations:** The International Labour Organization (ILO) also collects statistics on educational attainment from national Labour Force Surveys and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) publishes such data.

6. REFERENCES

(a) **Readings:**

UNESCO, World Education Report, 1995, 1998.

UNESCO, Statistics of Education in Developing Countries: an Introduction to their Collection and Analysis, 1983.

(b) **Internet site:** <http://www.uis.unesco.org>