

Adult learning, literacy and life skills

Australian Bureau of Statistics

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What we will cover

- **Main sources, concepts, methods**
- **Adult literacy and learning research themes**
 - Economic context to literacy & learning
 - What influences people to keep learning?
 - Skill development and skill loss
 - Links between parents' and children's literacy & learning
- **Adult learning**
 - Formal, non-formal, informal learning
- **Work-related training**
- **Future directions**

Main data sources

- **2006 Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALLS)**
 - 1994-1998 International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS)
- **2006-07 Adult Learning Survey**
 - International Adult Education Survey
- **2005 Survey of Education and Training (SET)**

IALS and ALLS internationally and in Australia

- First large-scale survey of adult literacy was IALS, conducted in Australia as the Survey of Aspects of Literacy
- First wave of conducted in six countries including US, Canada and Norway
- Second wave includes Australia, NZ and Korea
- Final enumeration completed in Australia and results soon to be released (Nov 28)
- Comparative results to be released late 2008



Methodology and content of ALLS

- Sample of people aged 15-74
- Included:
 - Background questionnaire
 - Objective skills testing component

Skill domains assessed:


- Prose Literacy
- Document Literacy
- Numeracy
- Problem solving

- Health literacy – derived

Methodology

- Sample of people aged 15-74
- Included:
 - Background questionnaire
 - Objective skills testing component

Skill domains assessed:

- **Prose Literacy**
 - **Document Literacy**
 - Numeracy – replaced quantitative literacy
 - Problem solving
 - Health literacy – derived
- 2 comparable domains*
- 

Prose literacy self rating, by skill level, 15-74 year olds, Australia: IALS

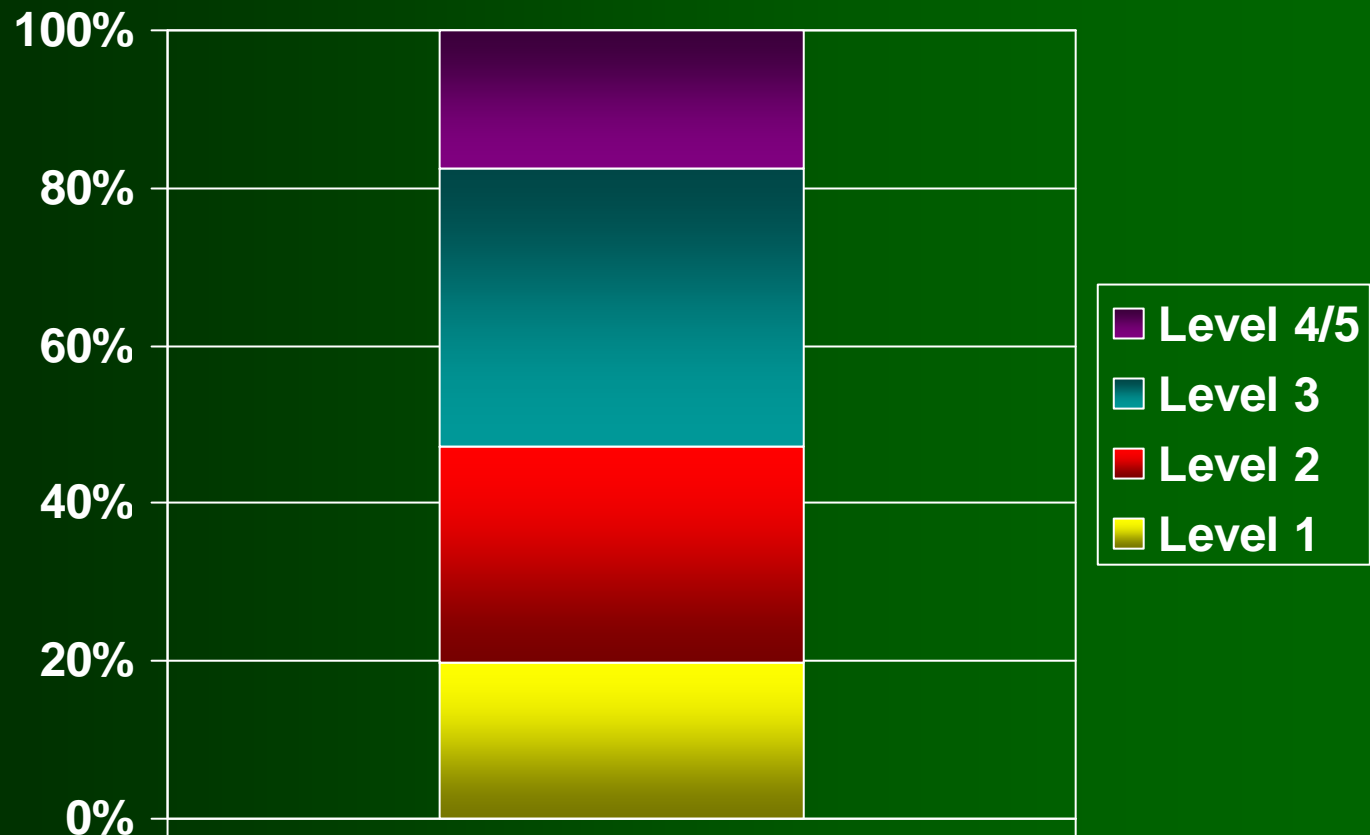


Literacy

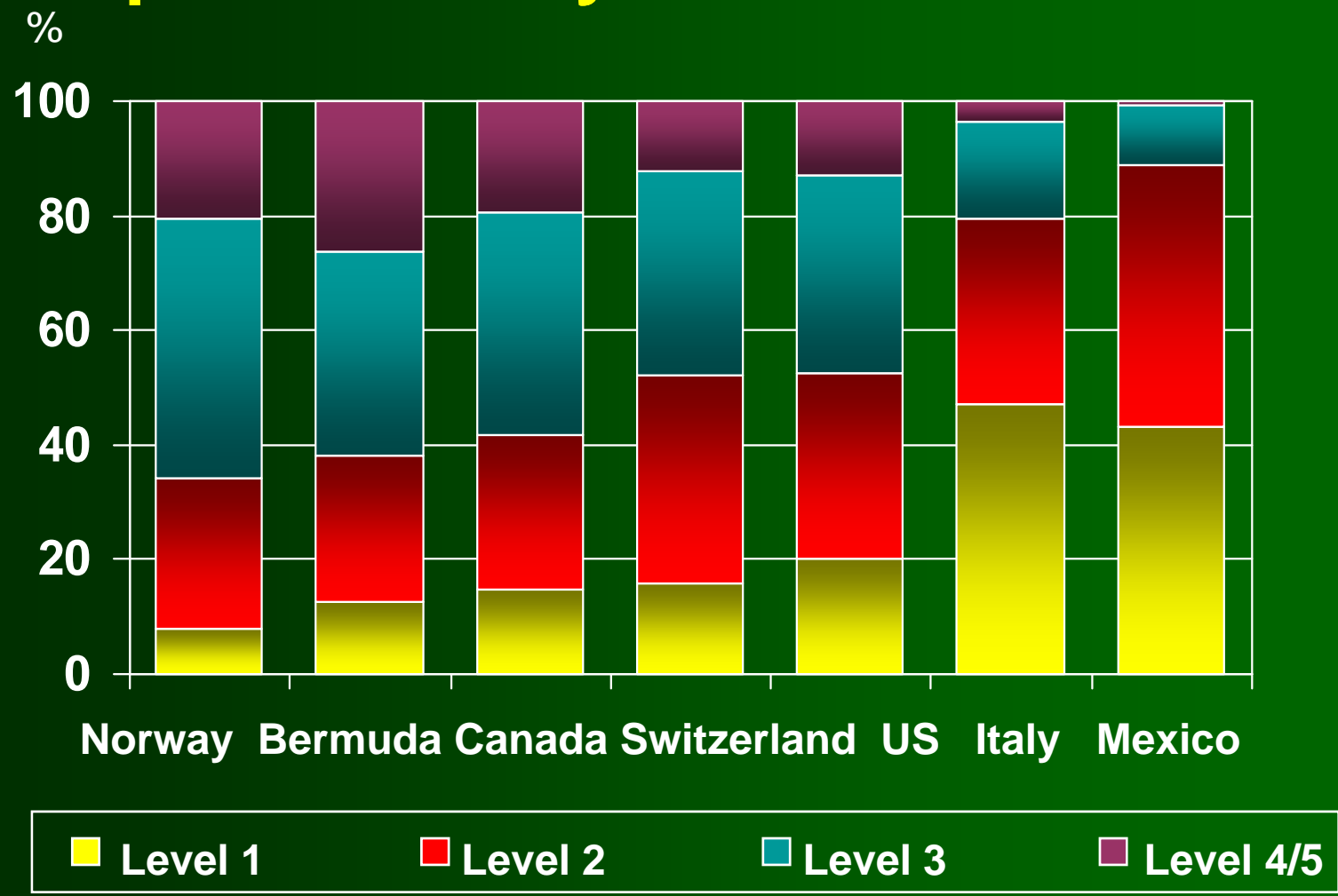
- International definition of literacy is:
 - 'Using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals and to develop one's knowledge and potential'
- In ALLS, literacy is assessed in the official language (English)



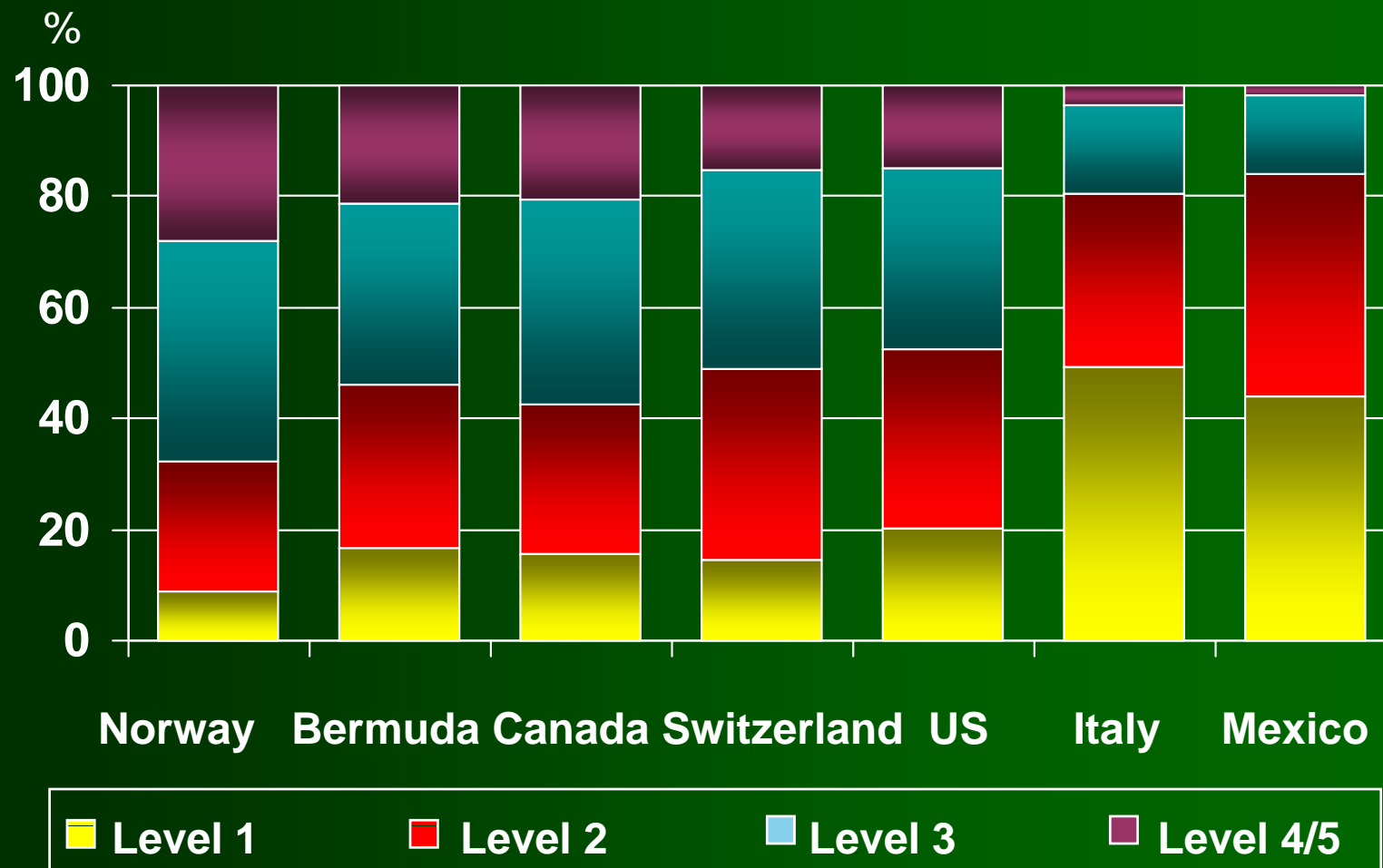
Per cent of Australian adult population aged 15-74 at each prose literacy level: IALS



Per cent of adult population at prose literacy levels 1-5: ALLS



Per cent of adult population at document literacy levels 1-5: ALLS



Importance of literacy to productivity

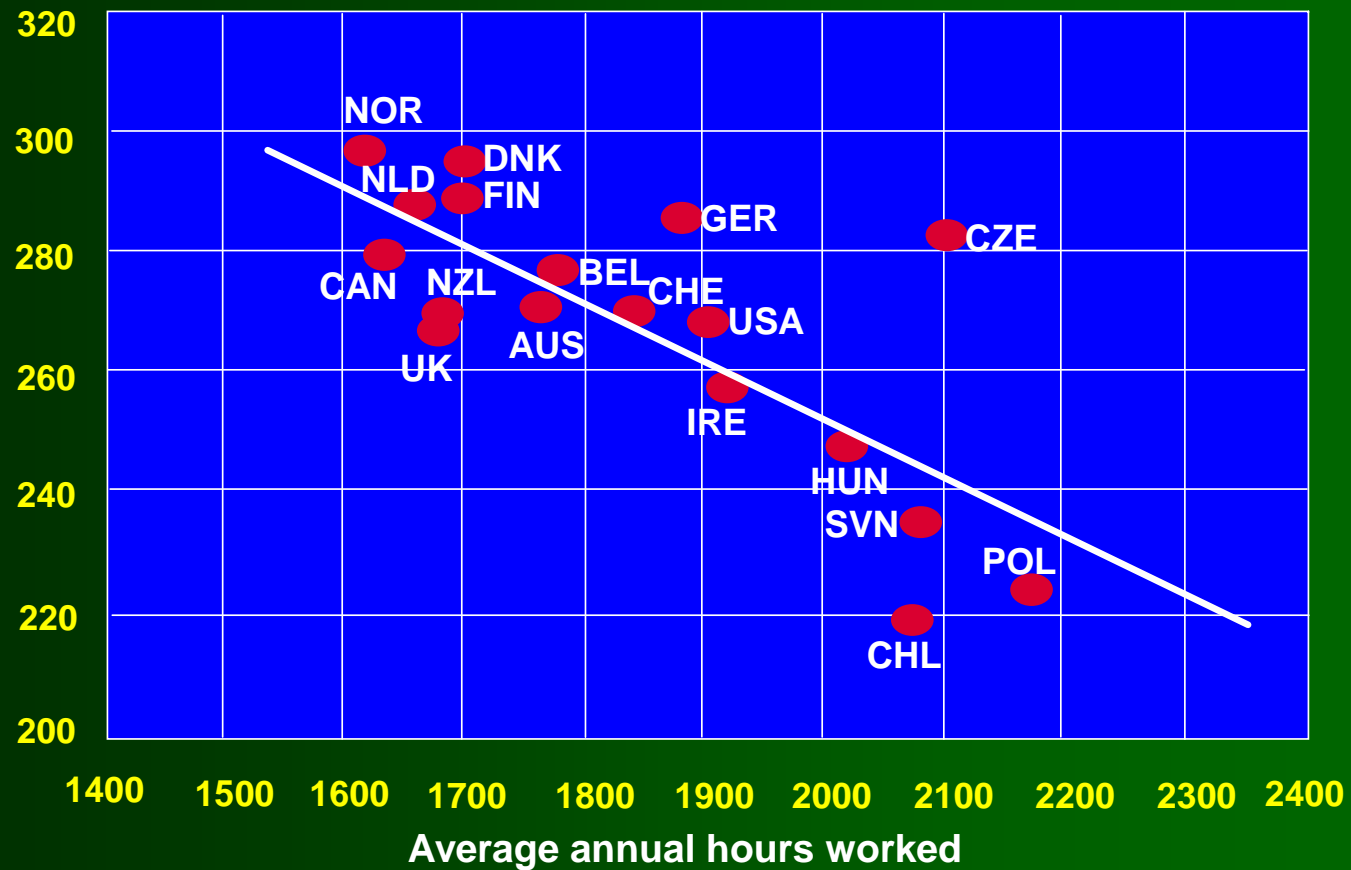
- An increase of 1% in a country's literacy scores relative to the international average is associated with a 1.5% rise in GDP per capita.
- Raising literacy and numeracy scores for people at the bottom of the skills distribution is more important than producing highly skilled graduates.

Coulombe et al, 2004



Annual hours worked per person in employment by mean document literacy proficiency: IALS

Mean literacy
scores

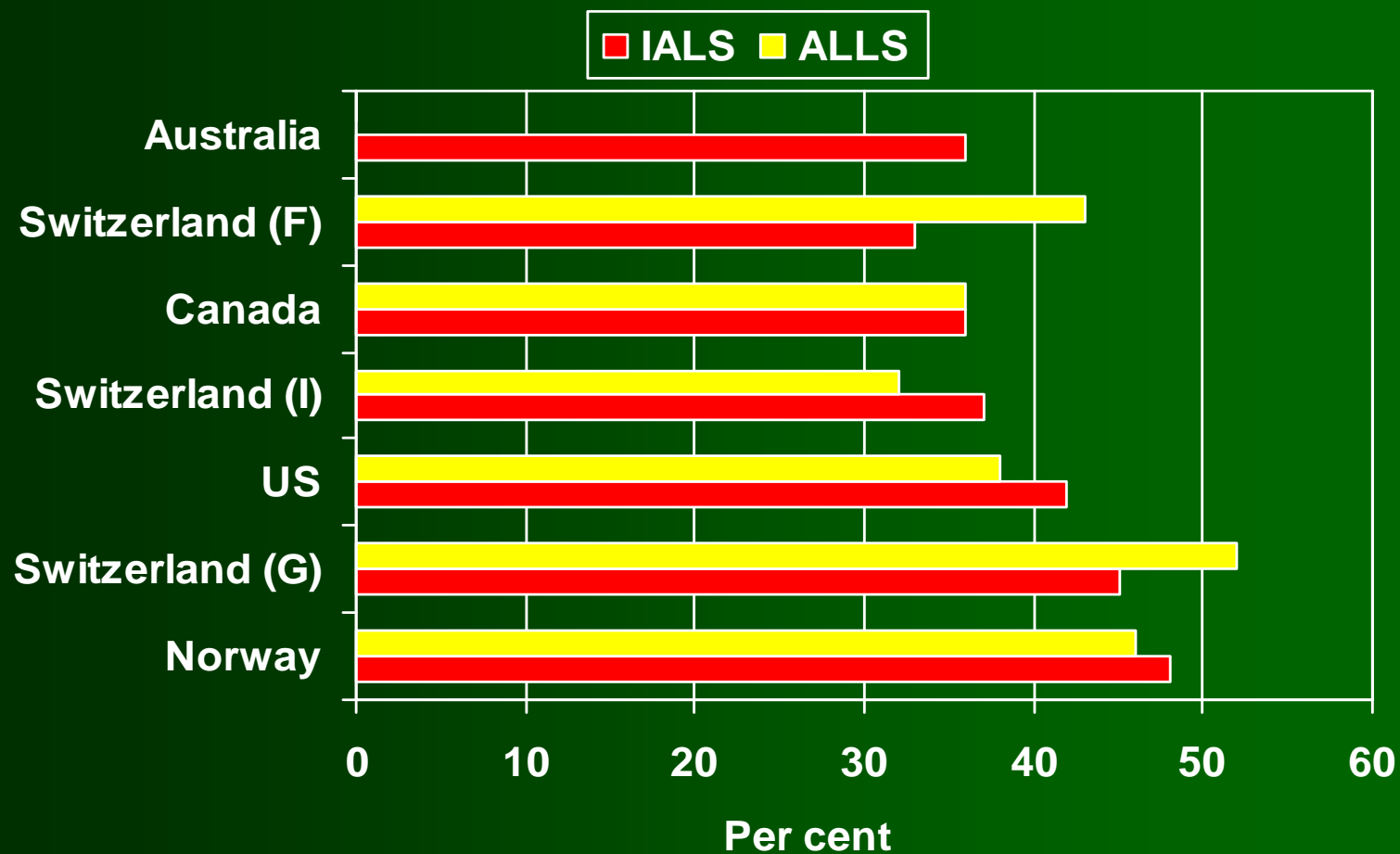


Adult learning

- ***Formal learning:*** institutionalised, structured and leads to qualification
- ***Non-formal learning:*** structured but not always institutionalised, does not lead to qualification
- ***Informal learning:*** learning from daily activities related to work, family, community or leisure
- Formal and non-formal learning together constitute adult learning, with the emphasis on ***organised*** courses
 - Reference period over last 12 months



Participation in adult learning: IALS and ALLS comparison



Rubenson et al, 2007

Motivation to learn

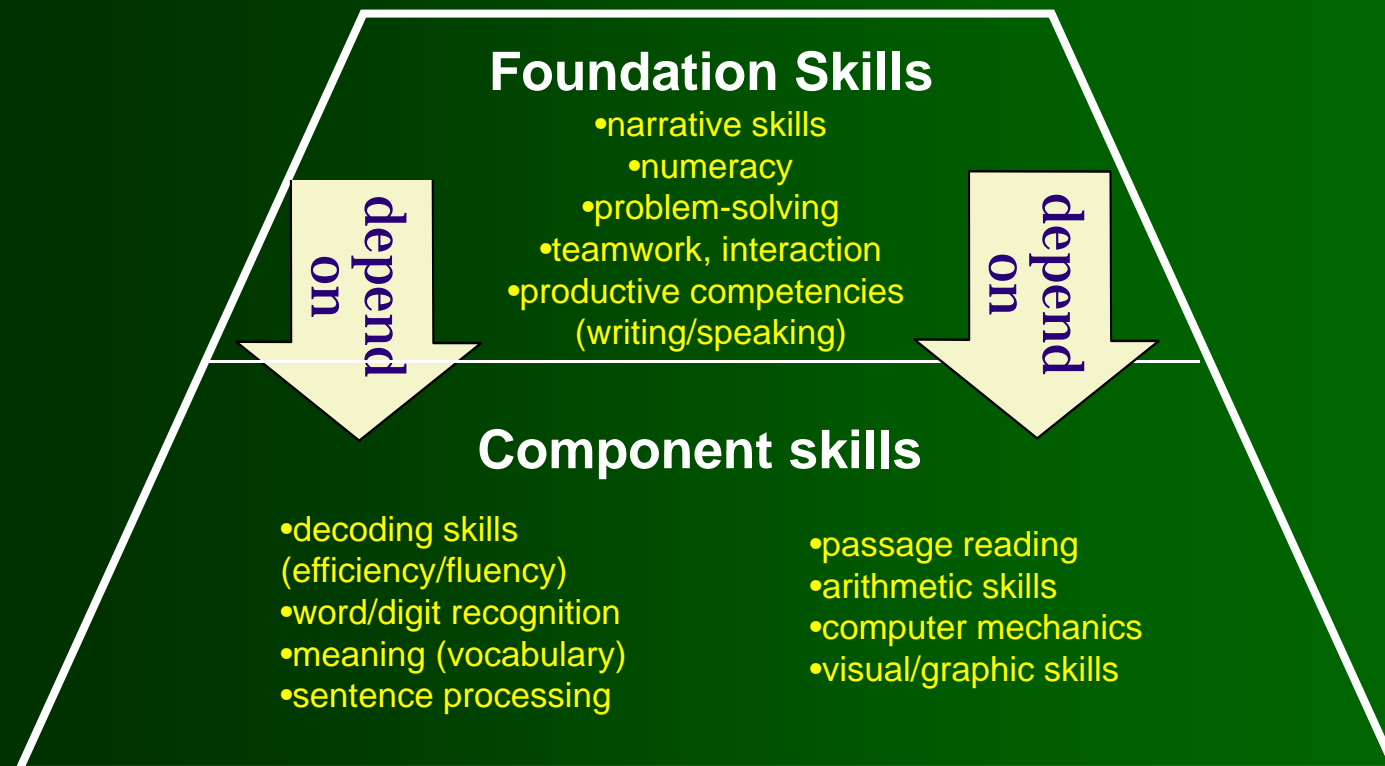


A National Marketing Strategy for VET, ANTA 2000

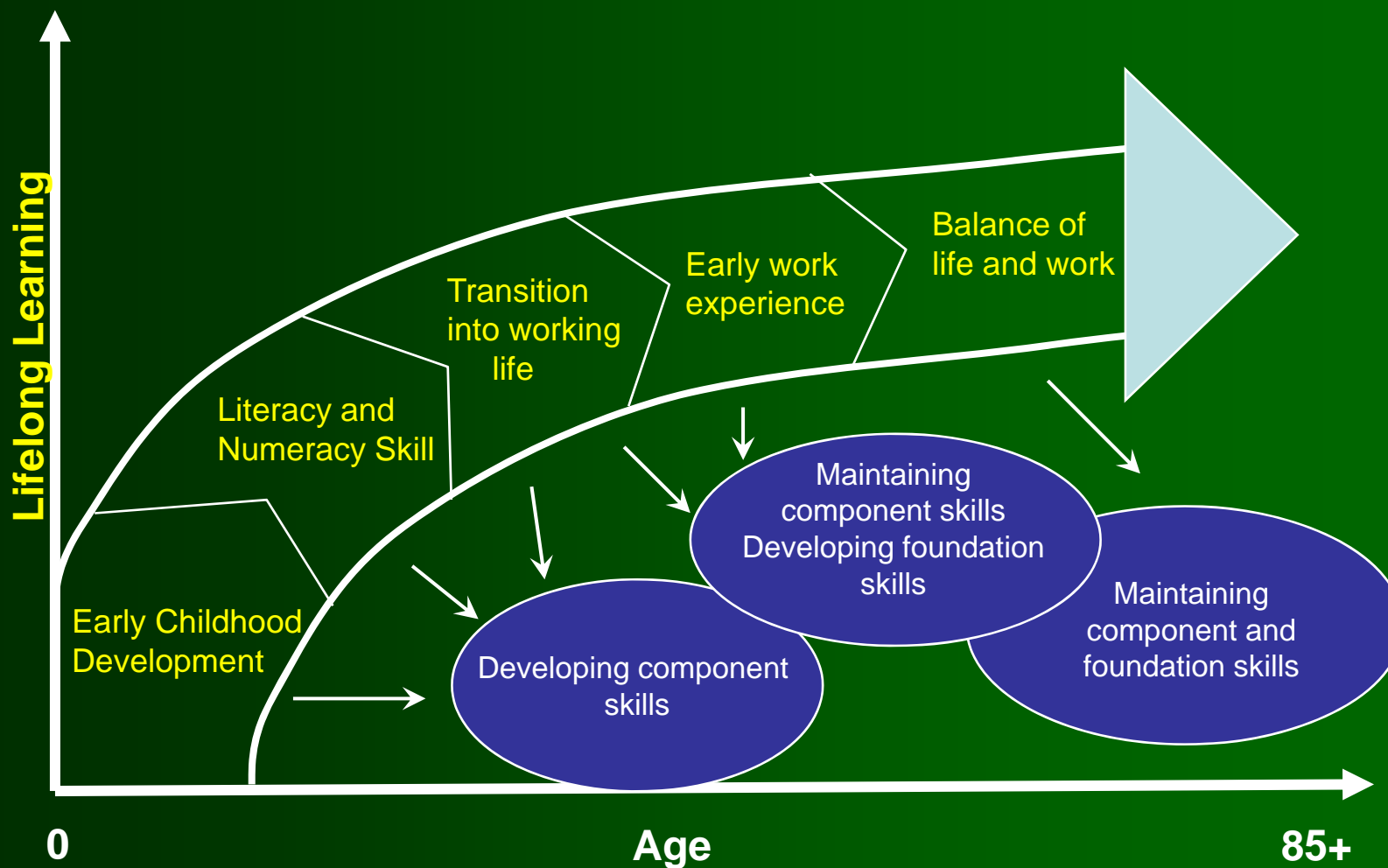
What influences people to keep learning?

- **Poor development of literacy skills**
- **Skill loss in later life**
- **Parental attainment and involvement in learning**
- **Financial support for continued learning**

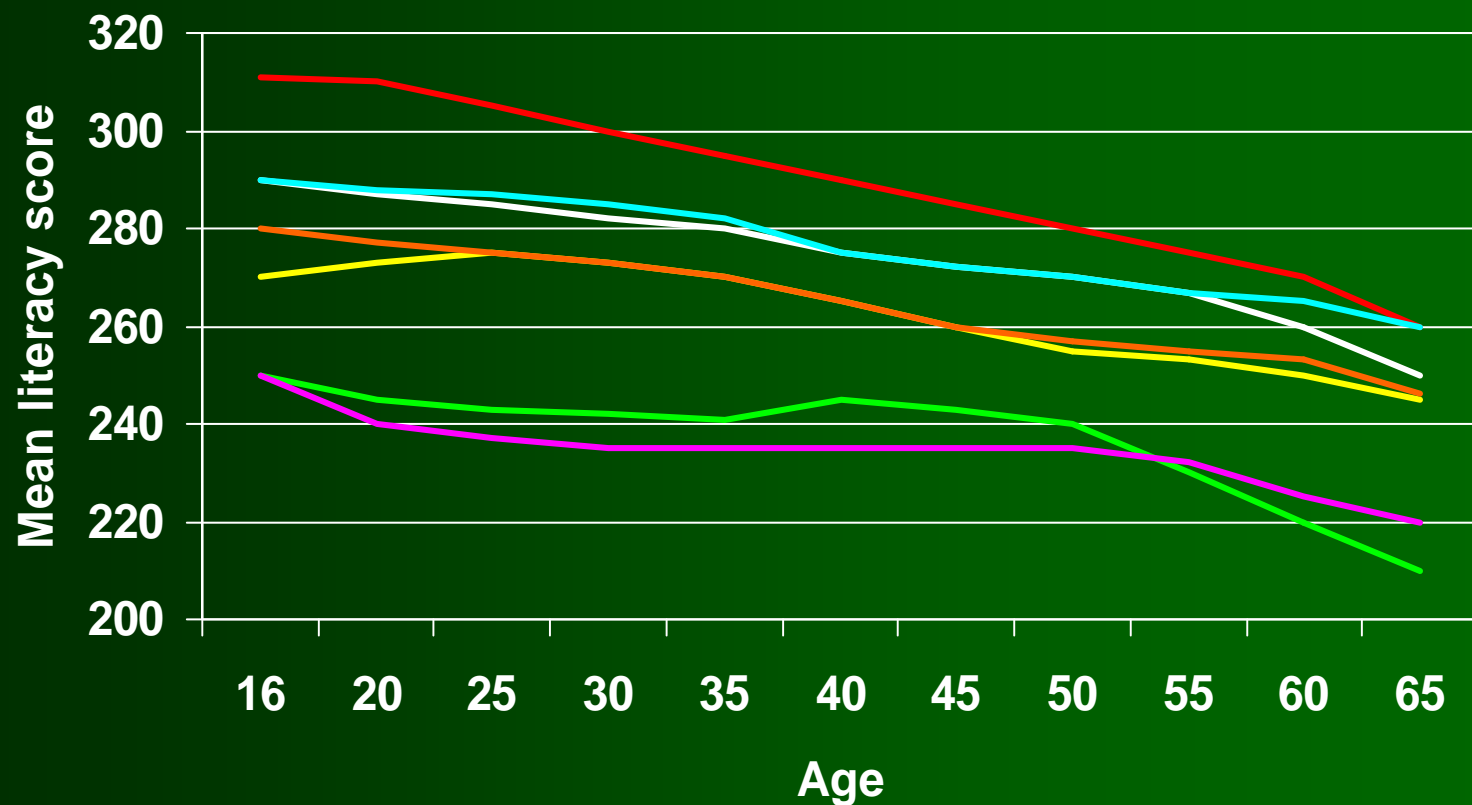
Skill supply chain



The life cycle approach to literacy and learning

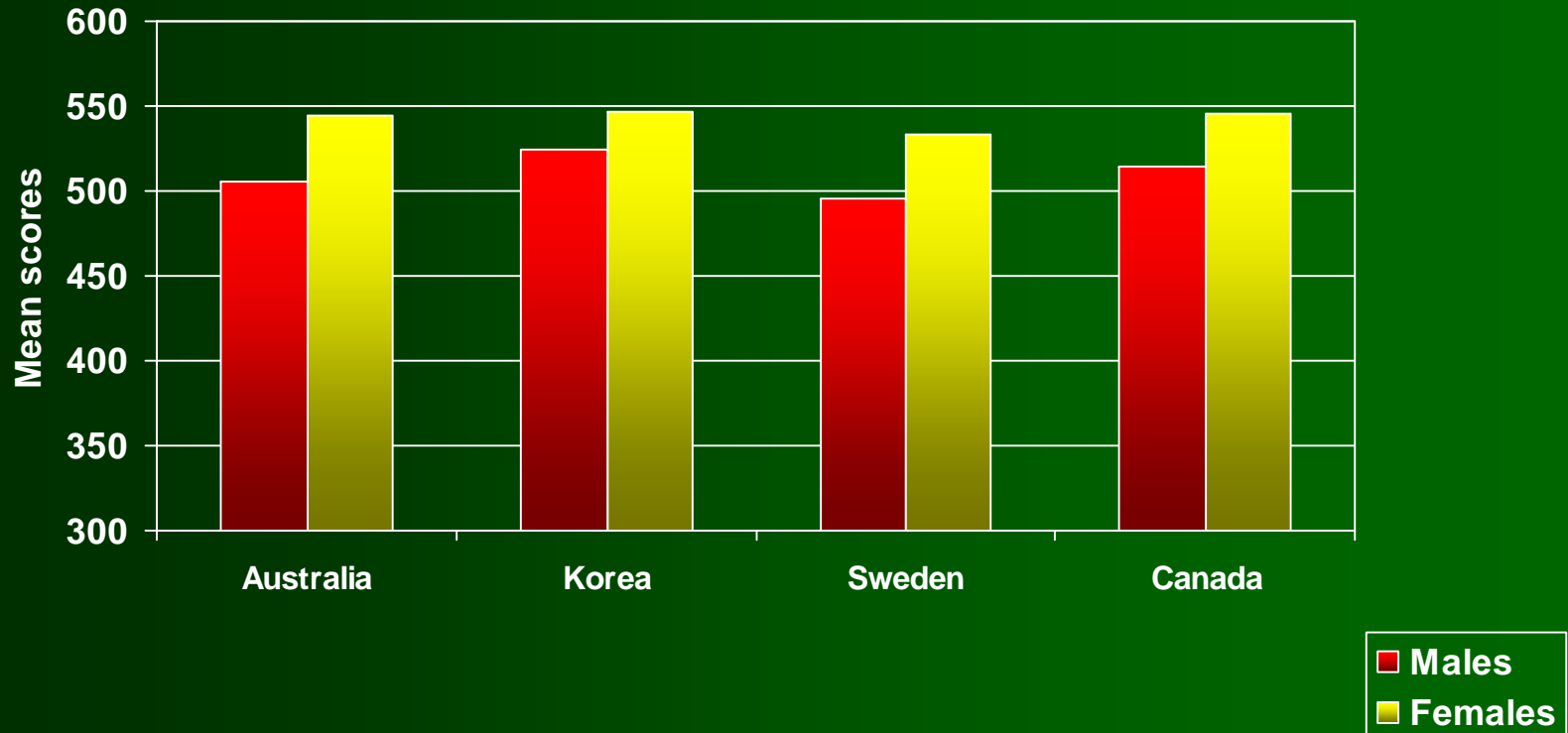


Skills-age profiles of adults controlling for length of time in education (document scale): ALLS

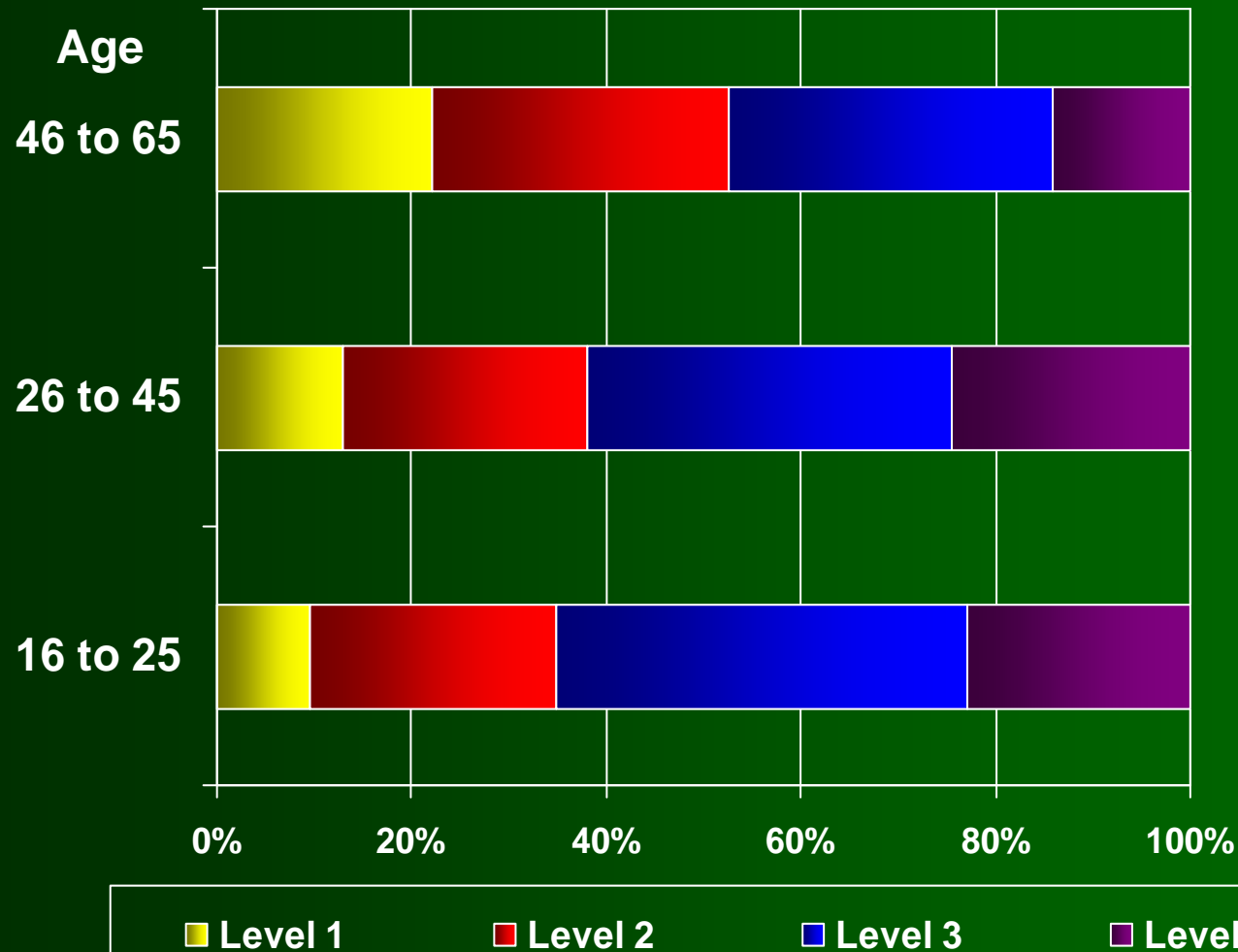


— Norway	— Canada	— Mexico	— Switzerland
— Bermuda	— Italy	— United States	

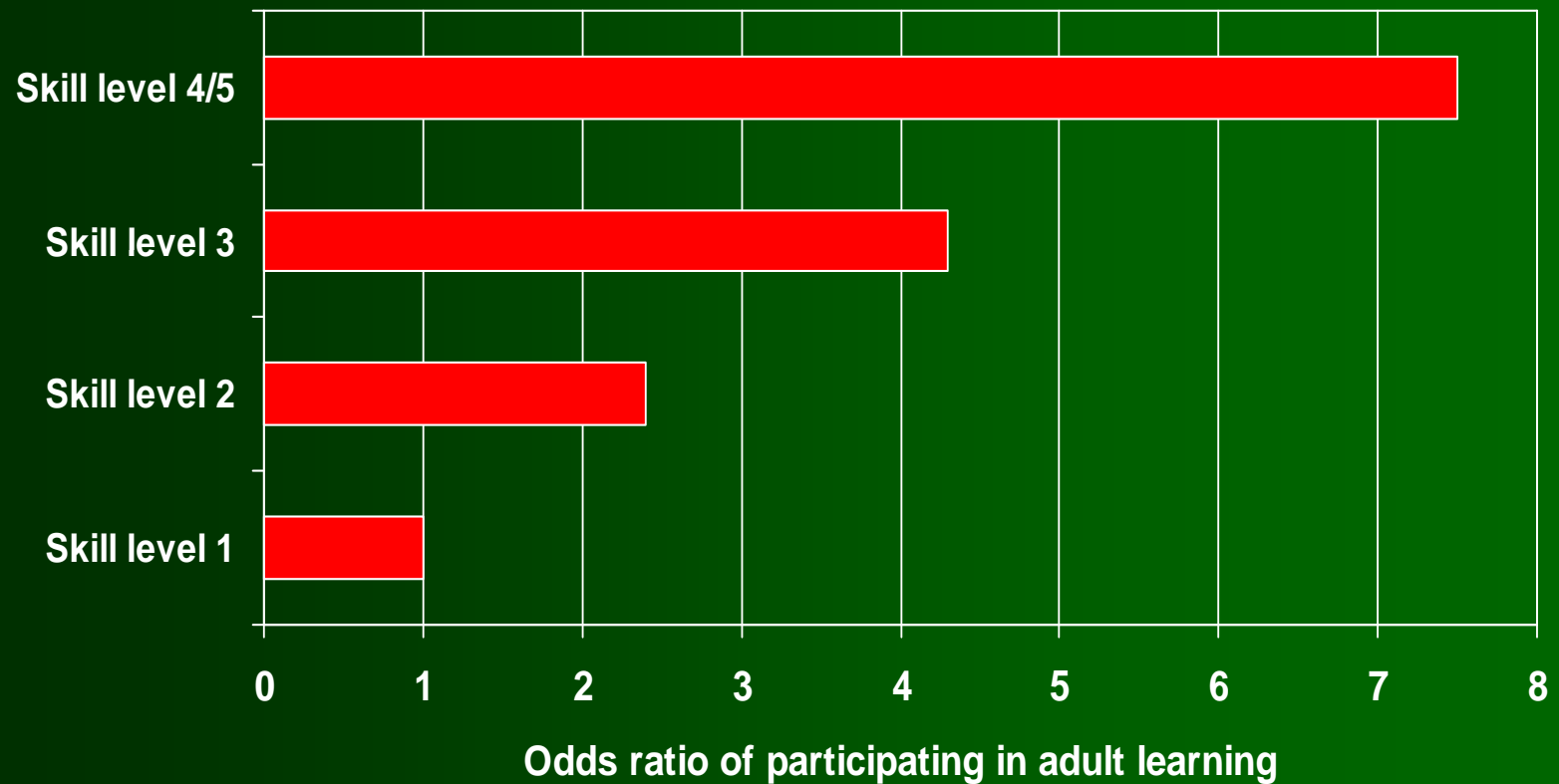
Reading literacy of 15 year olds: international comparisons, PISA, 2003



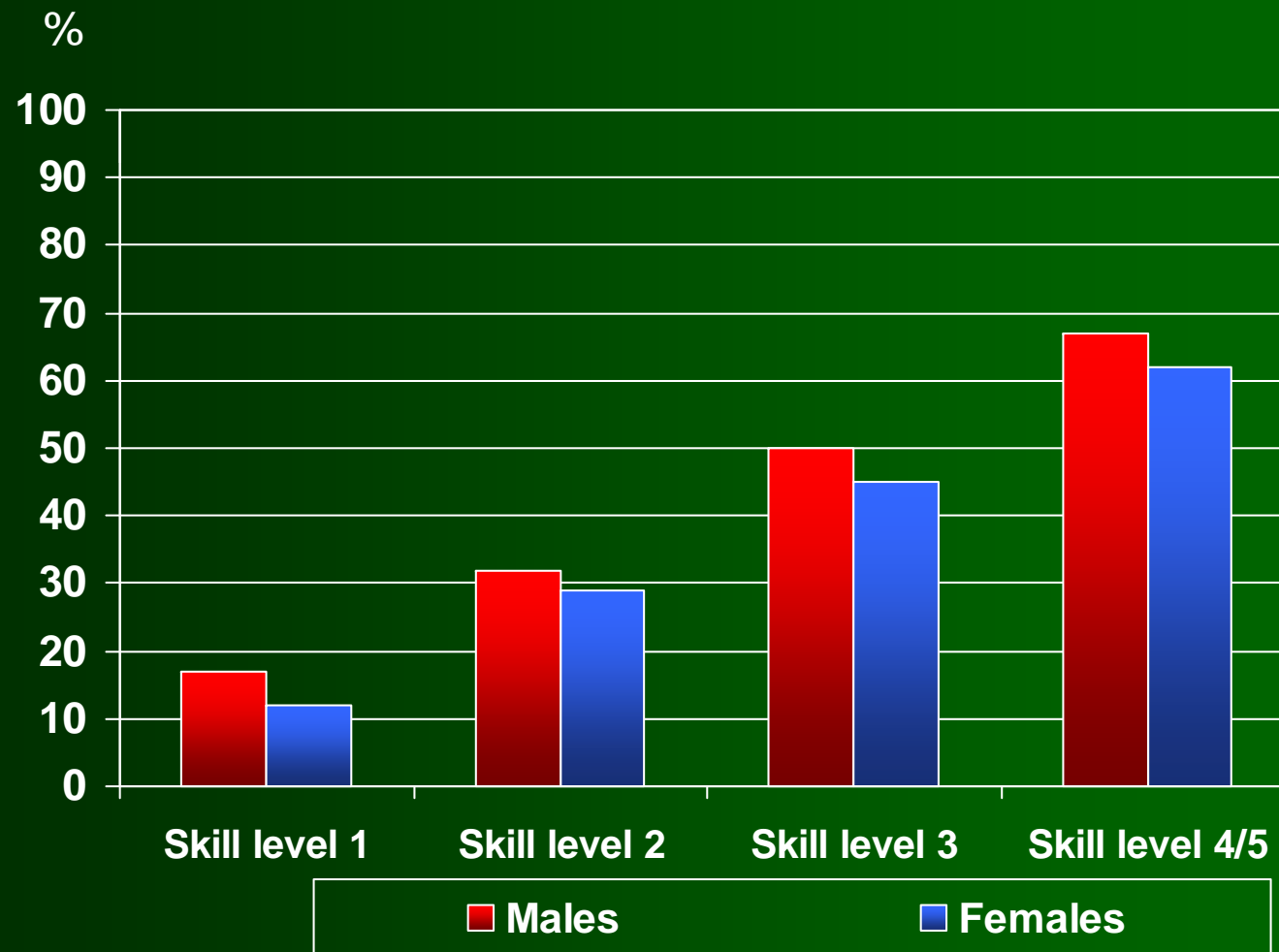
Per cent of adult population at each document literacy level by age, Canada: ALLS



Likelihood of participating in adult learning by document literacy level, Canada: ALLS



Skill levels of 15-74 year olds, by whether participated in education or training: IALS

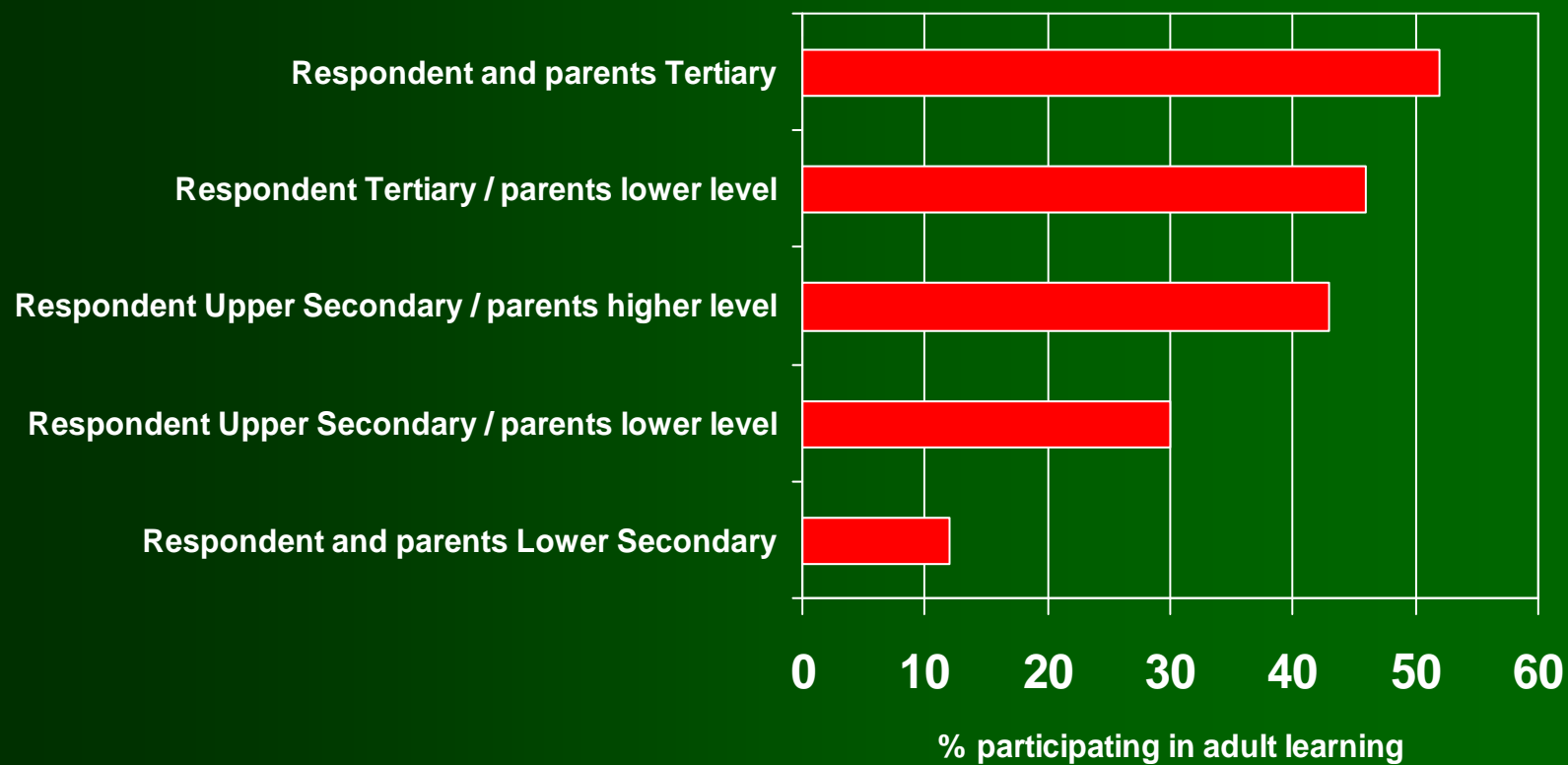


Links between parents' and children's learning



- There is a strong link between people's literacy skills and the literacy culture in which they grow up.
- Both adult literacy and learning, and their achievement of educational goals is often mediated by parental values, aspirations and own educational levels.

Intergenerational effects of education on adult learning in Canada: ALLS



Rubenson et al, 2007

Adult Learning Survey



- conducted in 2006-07 as part of the Multi-Purpose Household Survey
- people aged 25-64
- conducted using phone interviewing
- publication due for release late December this year
- Based on the European Union Adult Education Survey
- Provides internationally comparable data

Adult Learning Survey

- collects information on formal, non-formal and informal learning as well as obstacles to learning and sources of learning opportunities
- Within the same questionnaire, information on ICT, income, educational attainment and labour force were collected



International Context to the Adult Learning Survey

- 1996 the “Year of Lifelong Learning”
- European Council of Luxembourg - Lifelong learning became the key objective of the European employment strategy

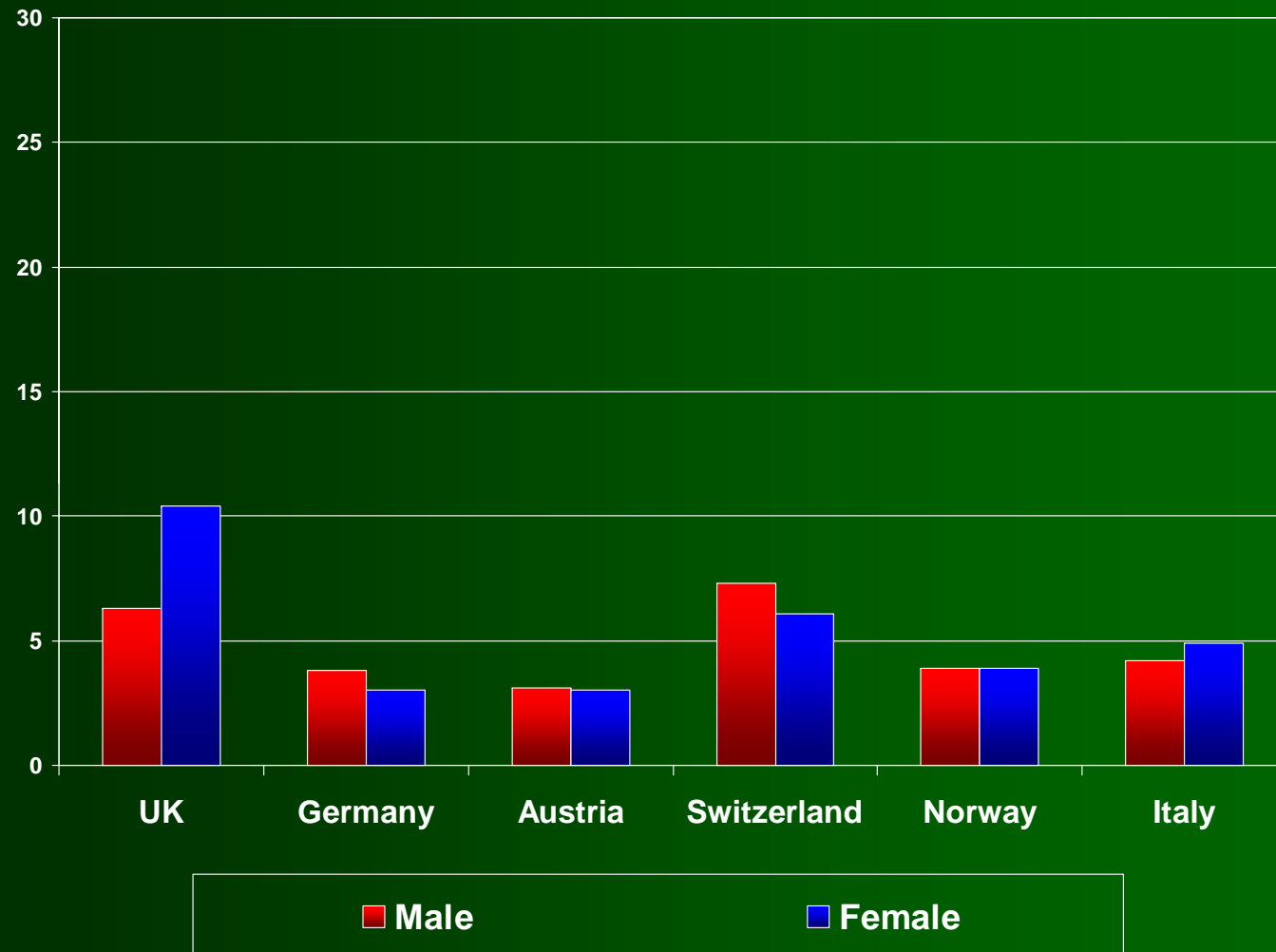
Lifelong learning



- Lifelong learning is defined as "all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence, within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective."

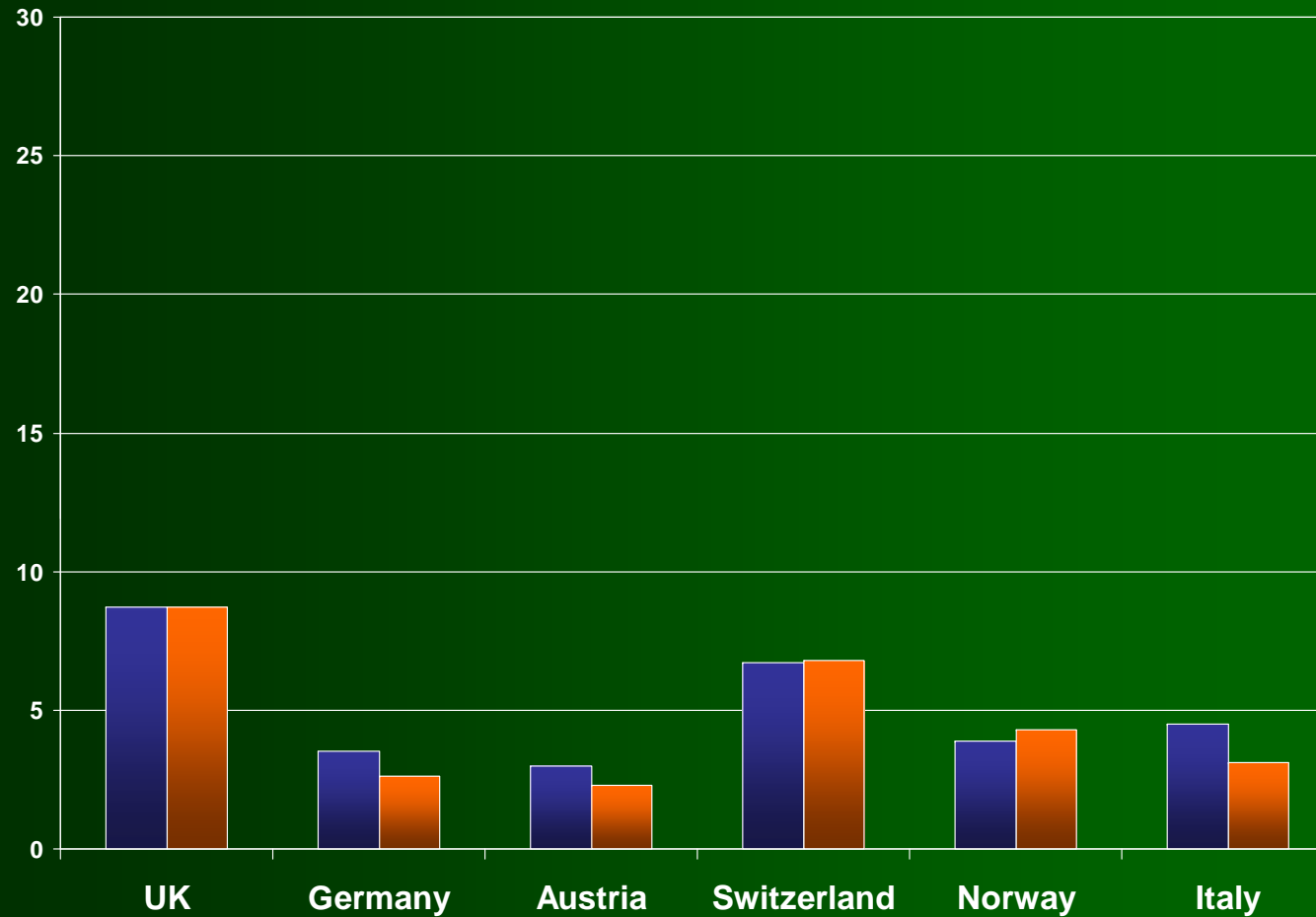
Participation in formal learning by sex

Per cent



Participation of all persons and employed persons in formal learning

Per cent

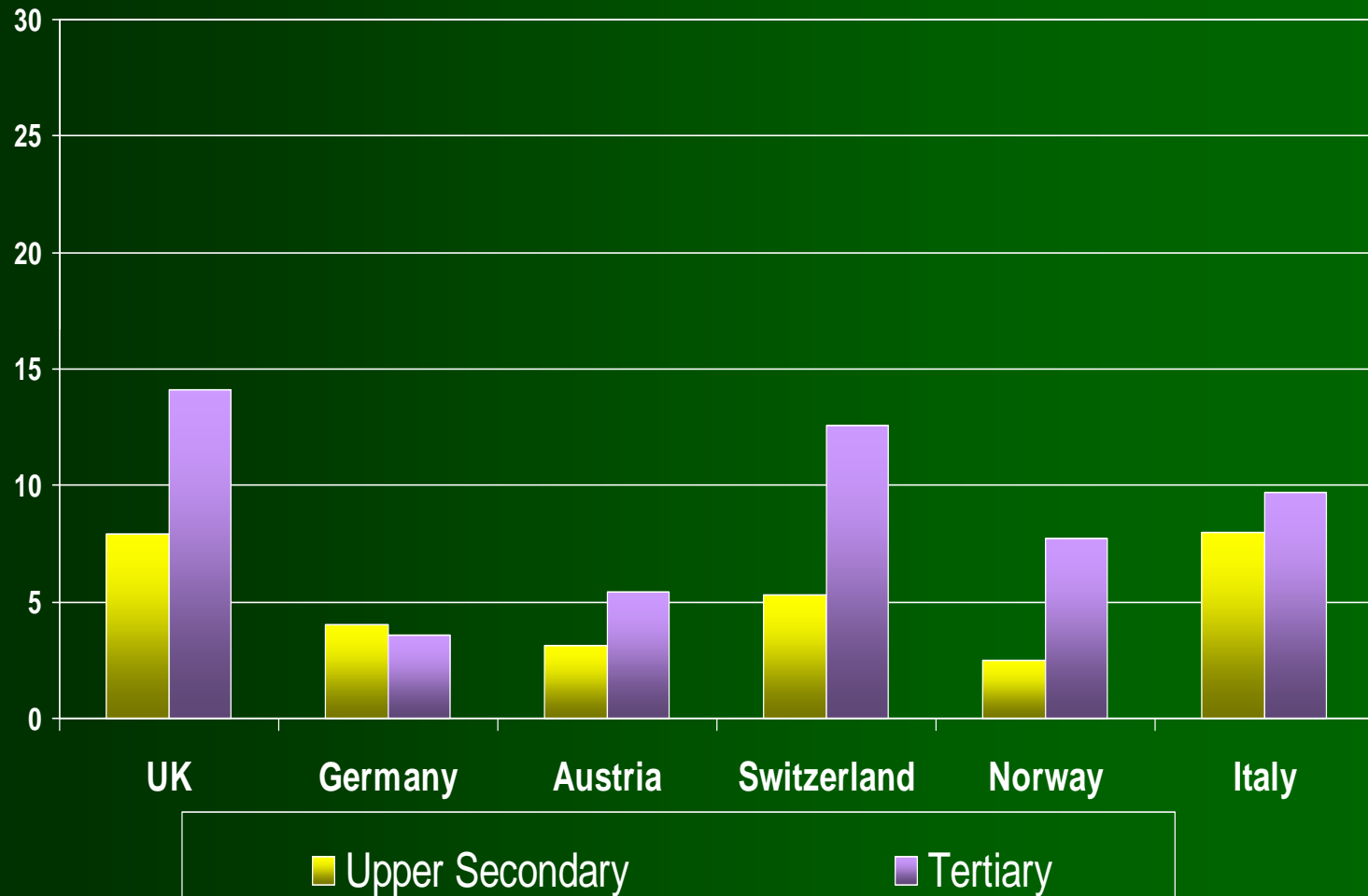


■ Total Population

■ Employed Population

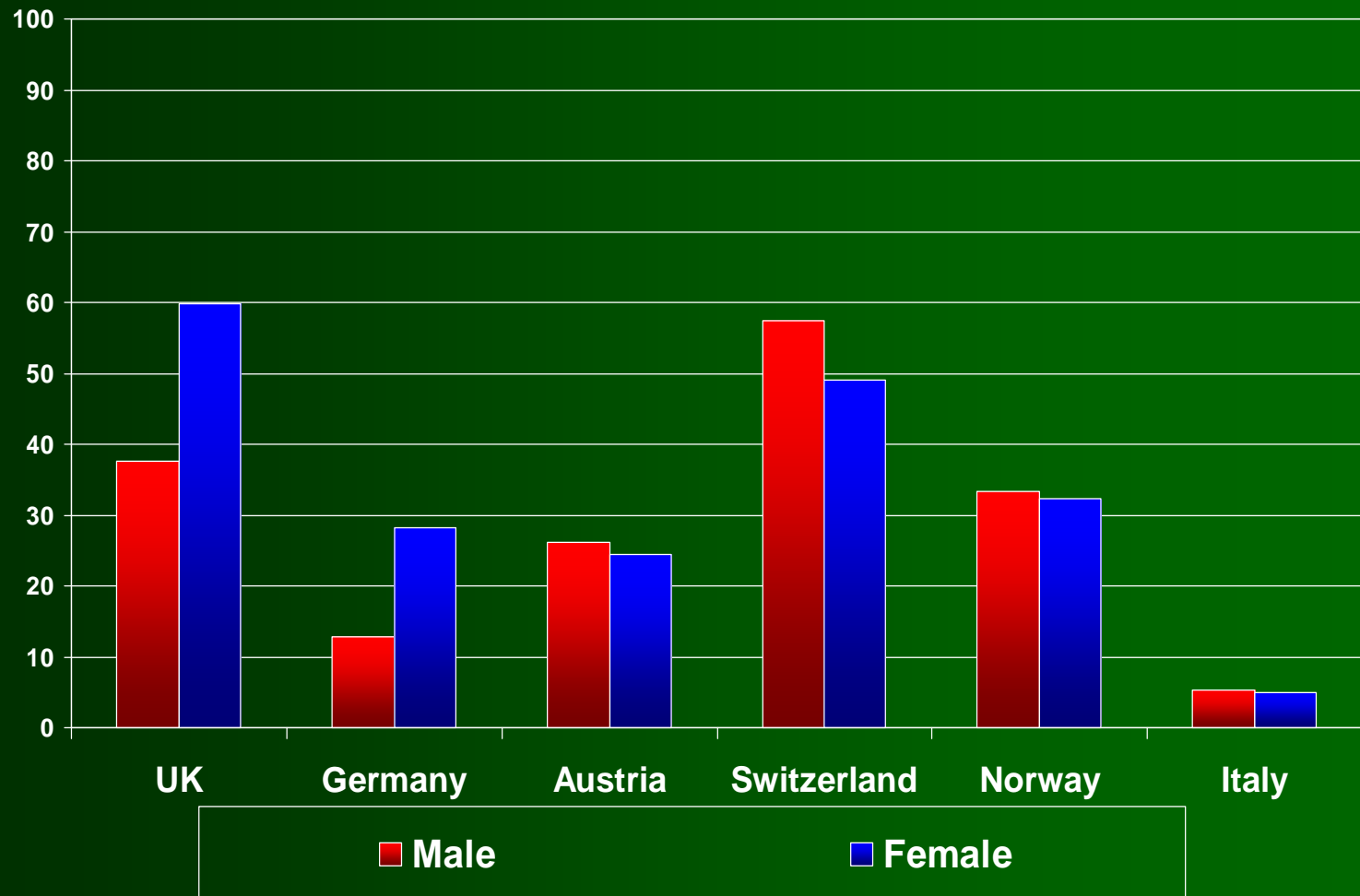
Participation of all persons in formal learning by attainment

Per cent



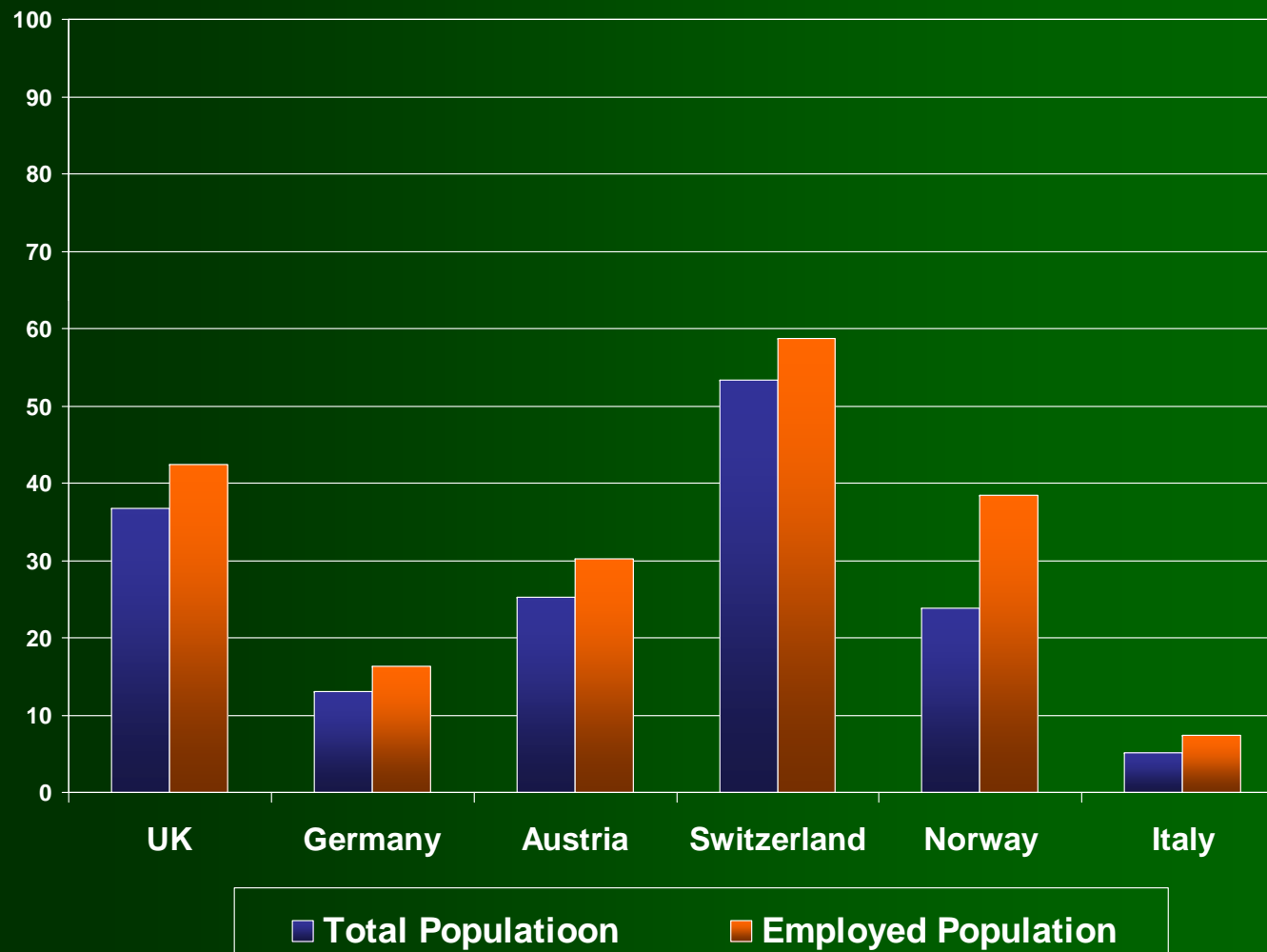
Participation in non-formal learning by sex

Per cent



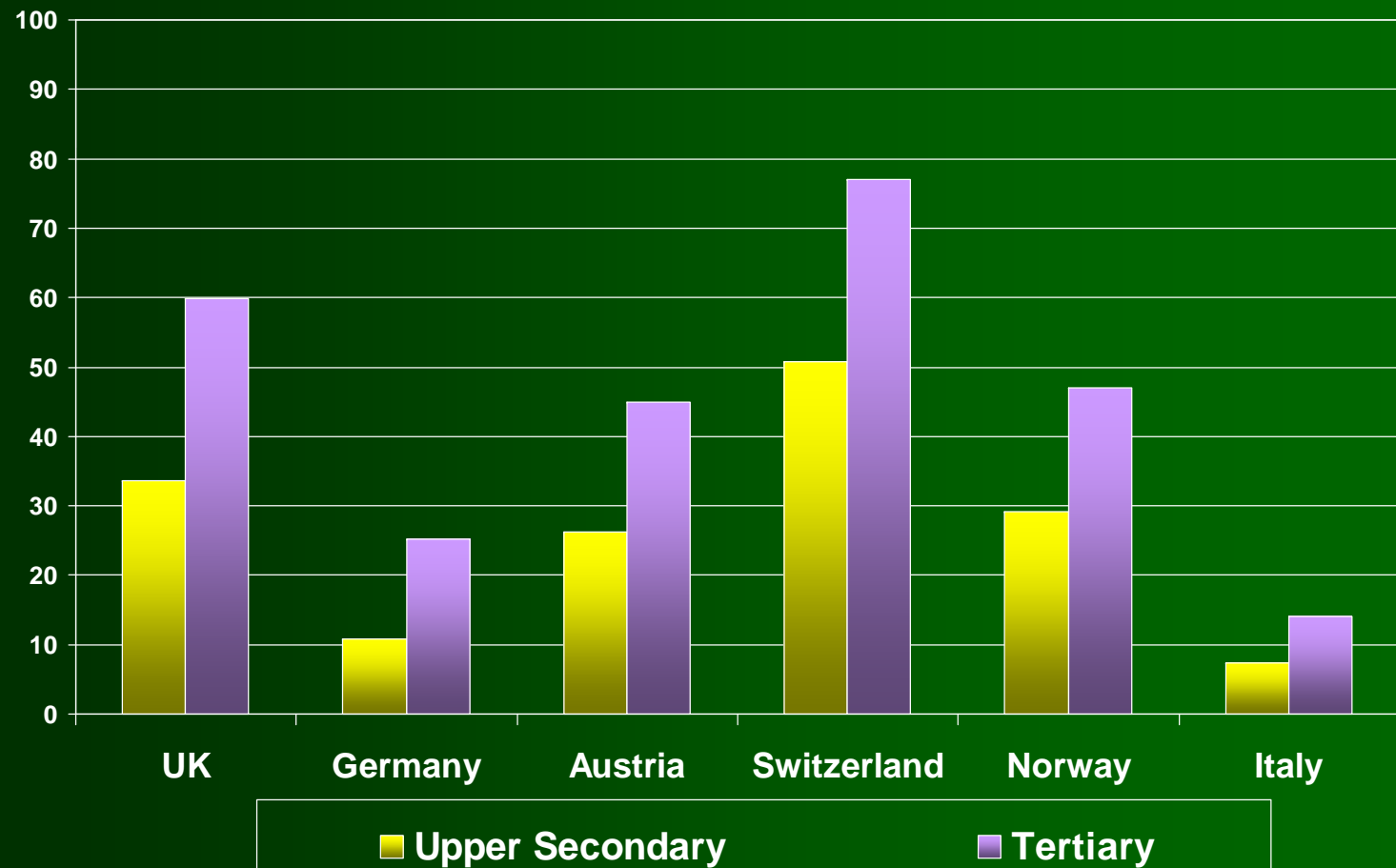
Participation of all persons and employed persons in non-formal learning

Per cent



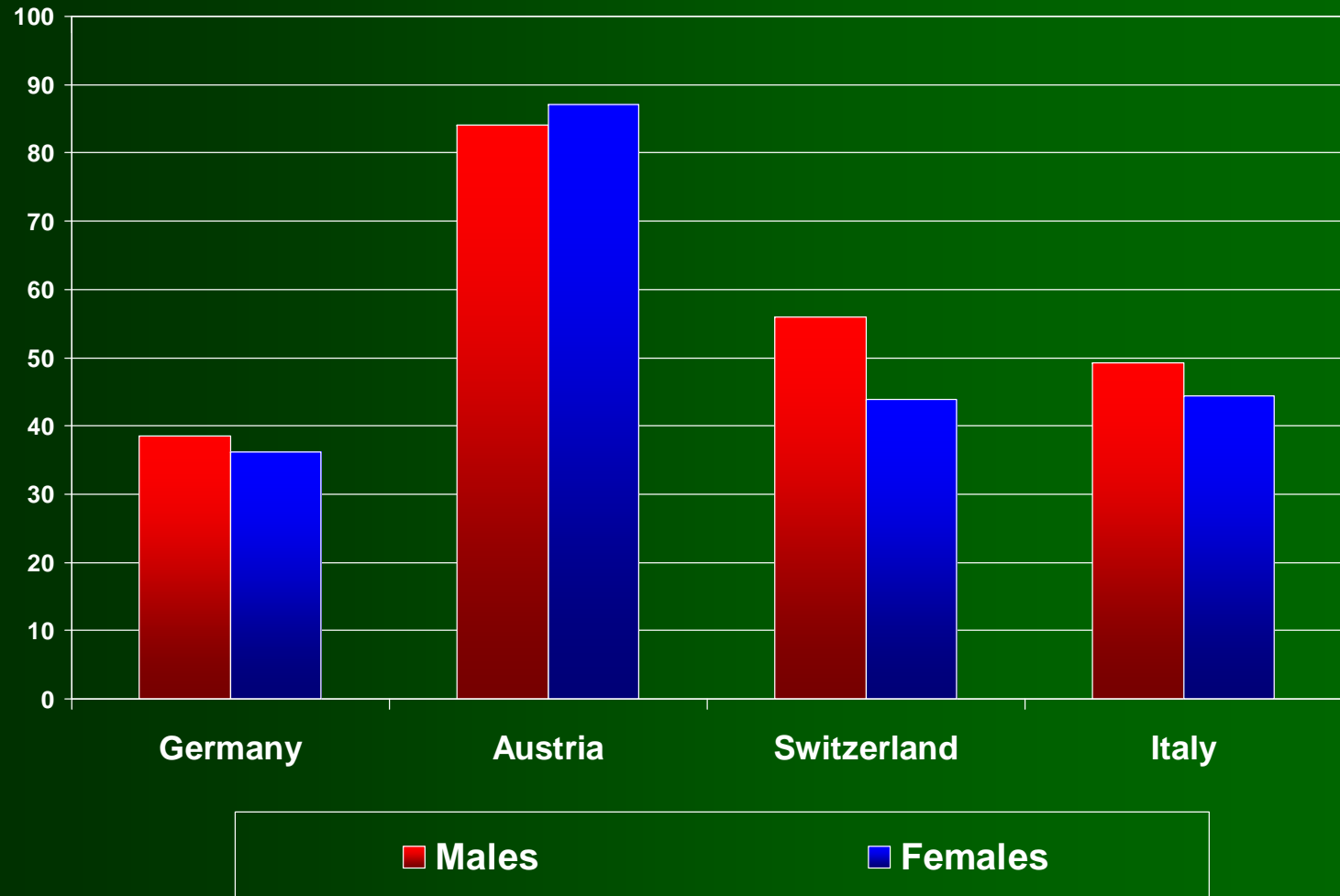
Participation of all persons in non-formal learning by attainment

Per cent



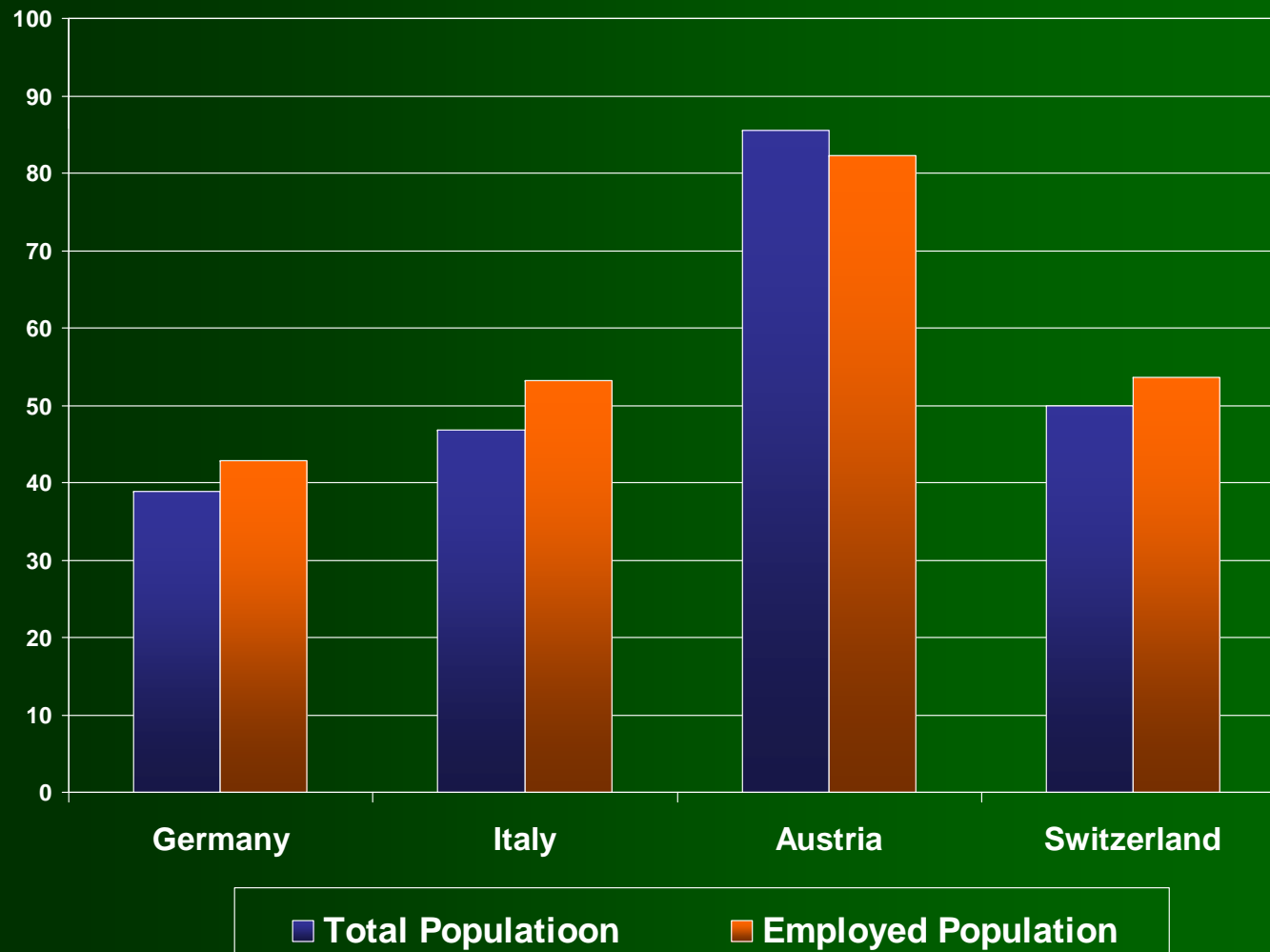
Participation in informal learning by sex

Per cent



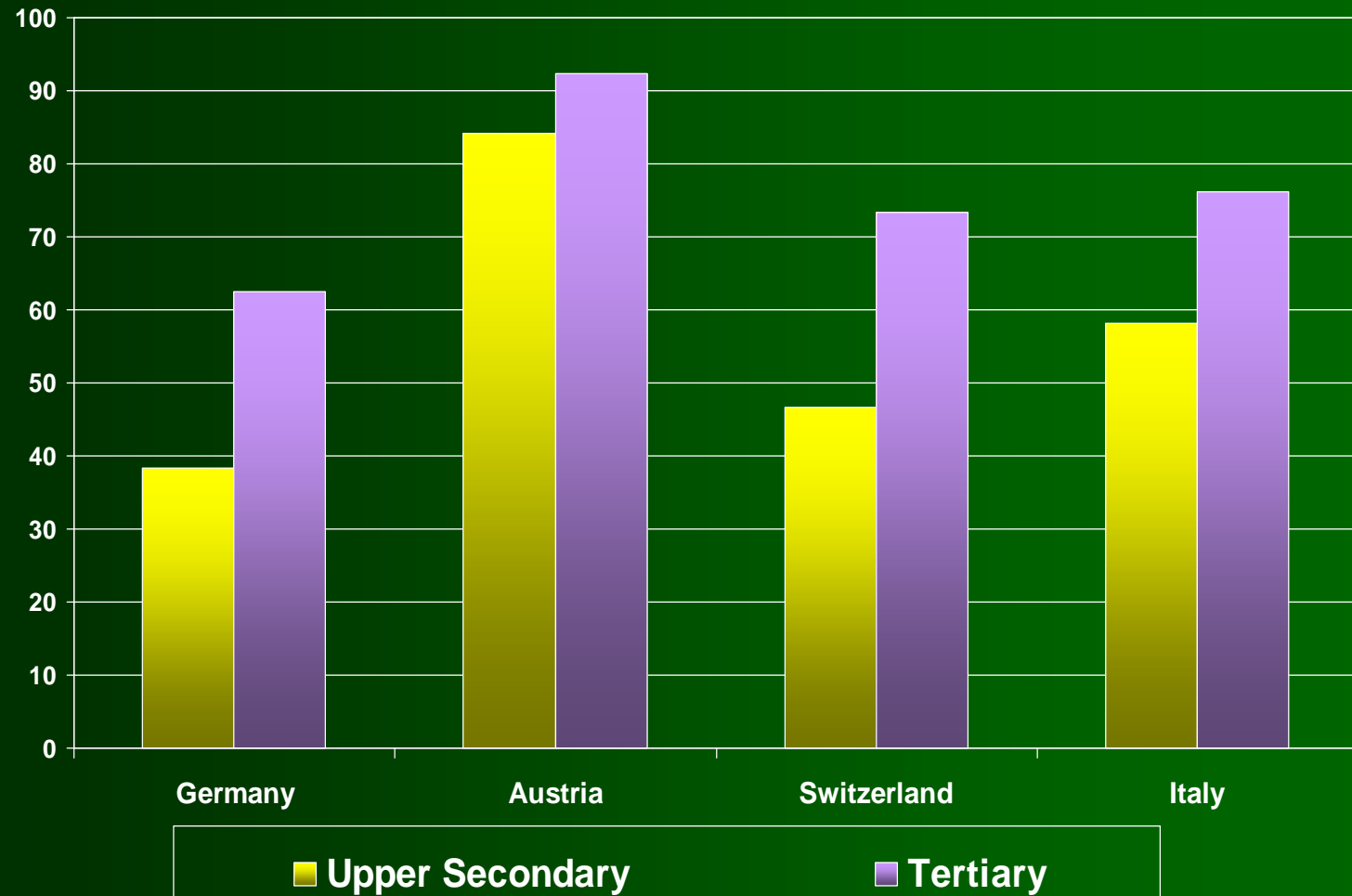
Participation of all persons and employed persons in informal learning

Per cent



Participation of all persons in informal learning by attainment

Per cent



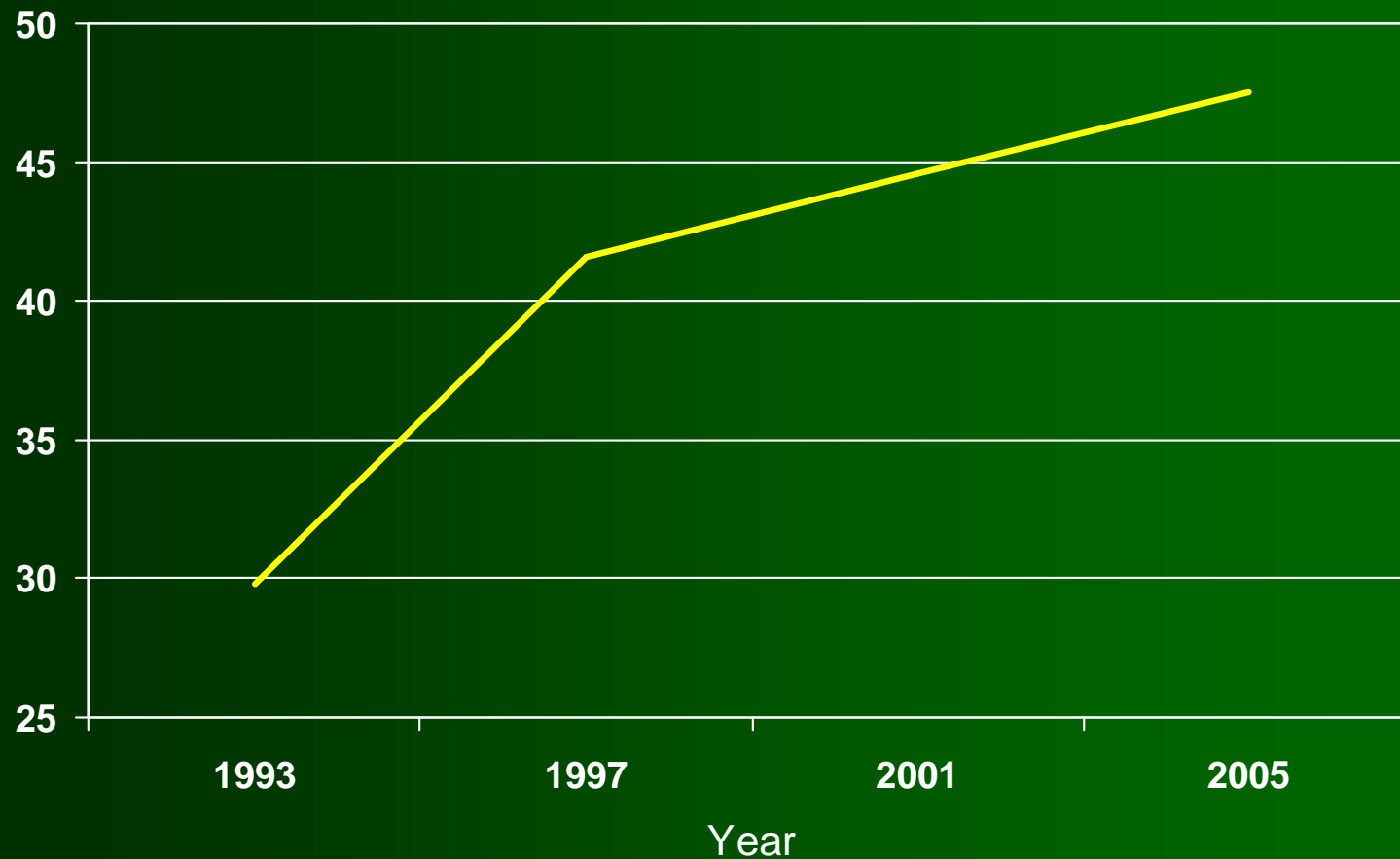
Survey of Education and Training (SET)

- collected every 4 years since 1989
- detailed education information
- personal interviews
- next SET will be in 2009
- **Publication:
Education and
Training Experience,
Australia (6278.0)**



People aged 15-64 who completed work-related training in last 12 months

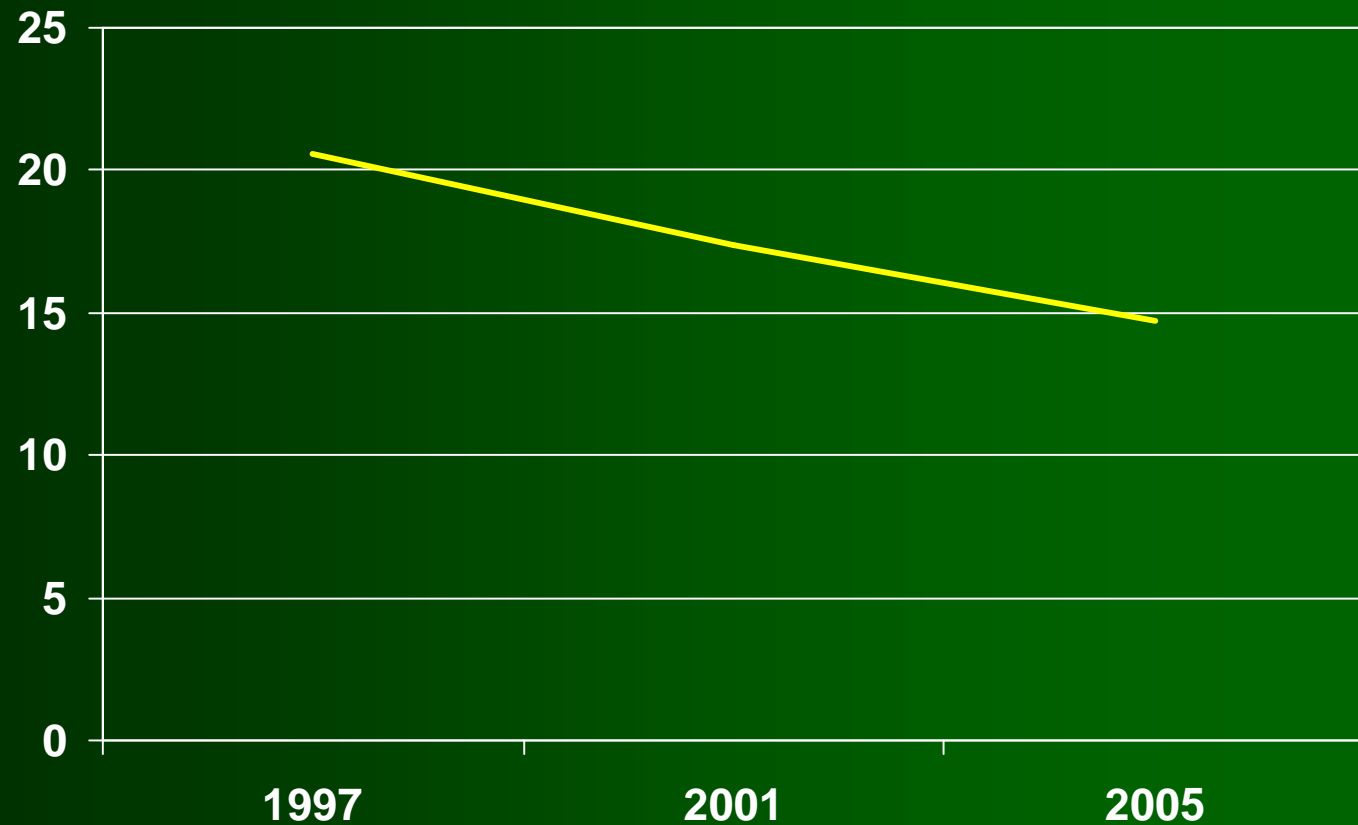
Per cent



— Completed at least one training course

Mean hours: completed training courses in last 12 months by wage and salary earners

Per cent



— Mean training hours

Future projects

- Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)
- Health Literacy report for Australia
- Small Area estimation of literacy levels

Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)

- identify and measure differences between individuals and countries in competencies believed to underlie both personal and societal success
- assess the impact of these competencies on social and economic outcomes at individual and aggregate levels
- gauge the performance of education and training systems in generating required competencies
- help to clarify the policy that could contribute to enhancing competencies

Health Literacy

- the ability of individuals to access and use health information to make appropriate health decisions and maintain basic health
- A report on Health Literacy in Australia will be released mid 2008 by the ABS

Per cent of people aged 16-65 at health literacy level: Canada & U.S

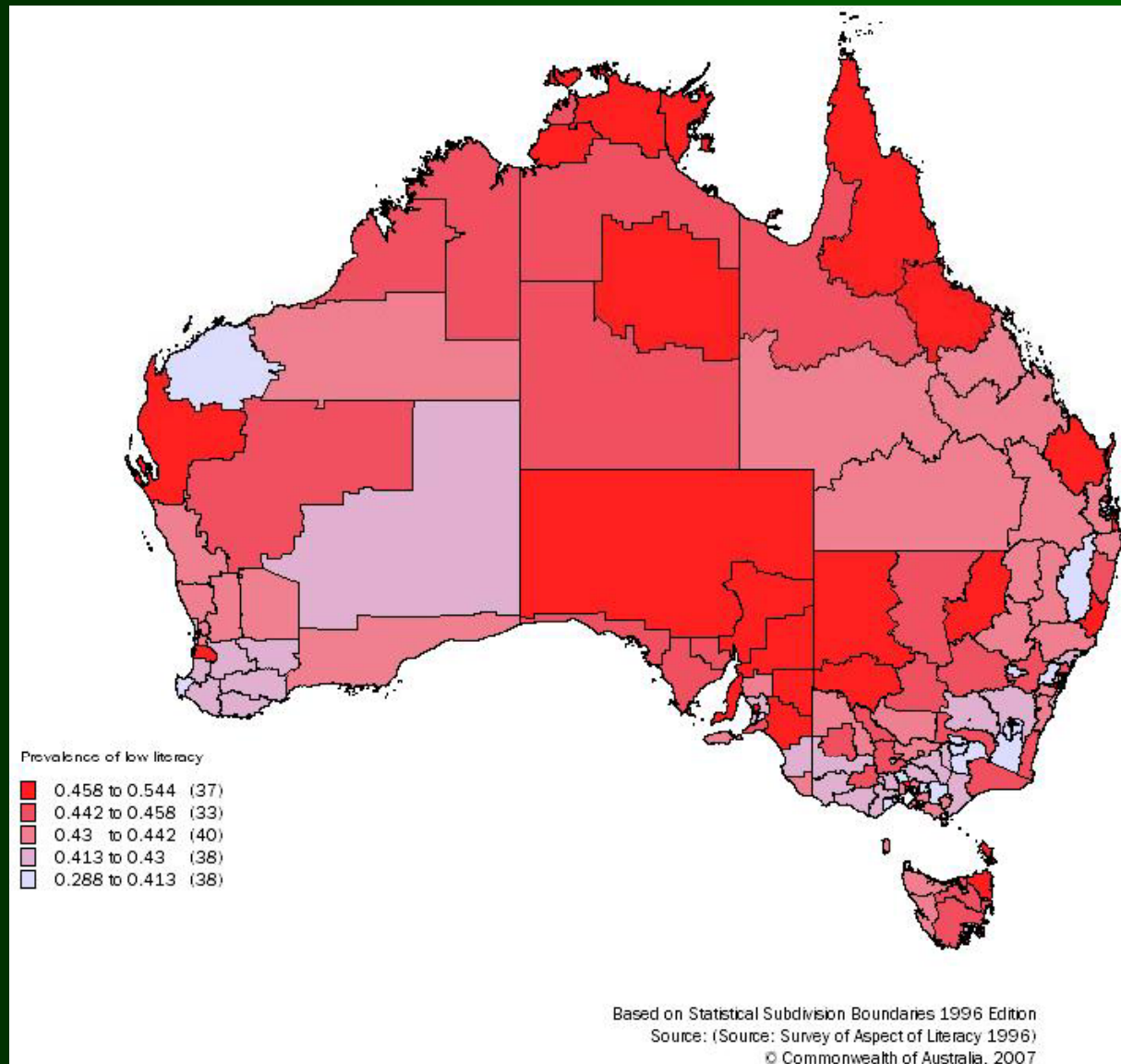
Per cent



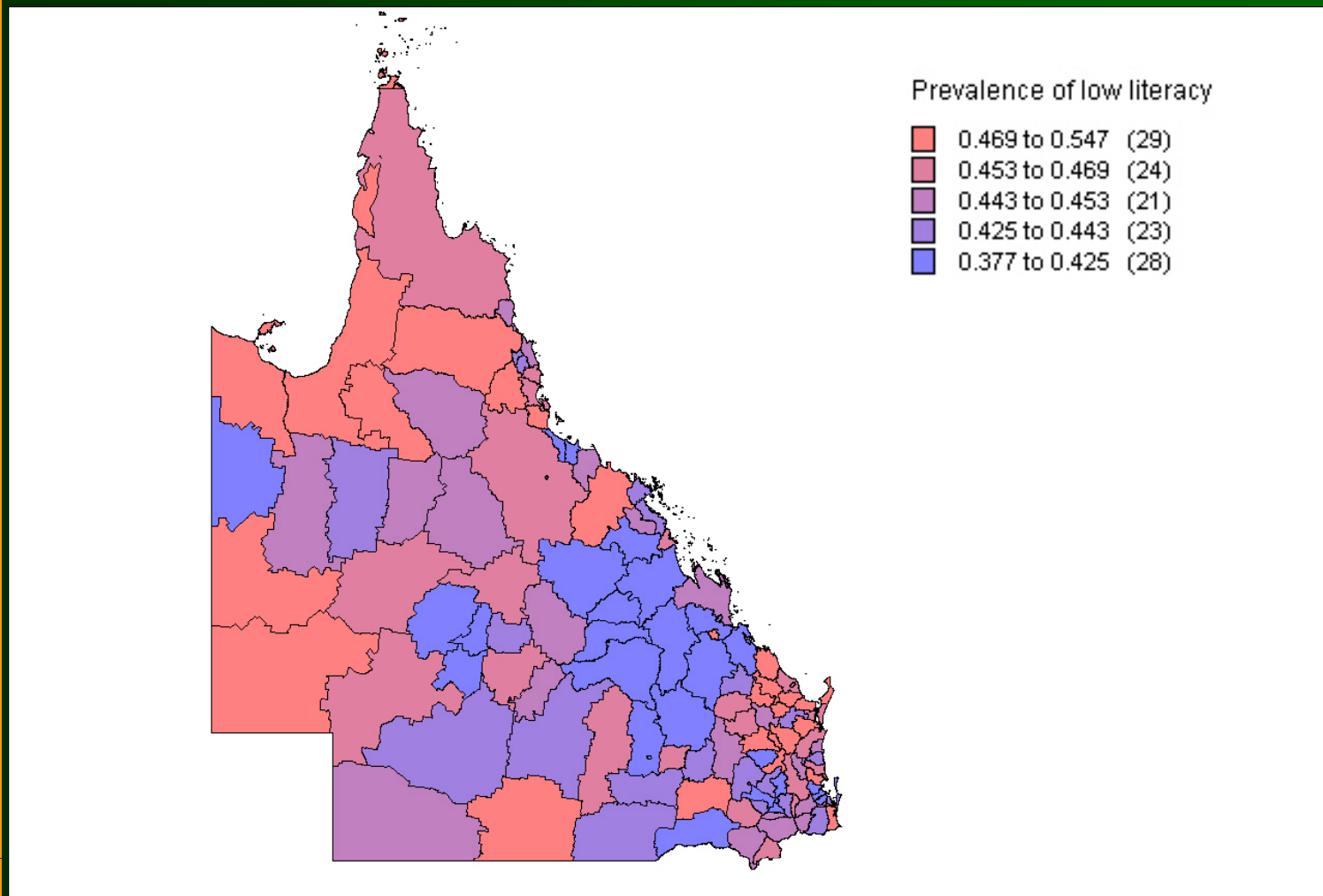
■ Canada

■ US

Prevalence of low literacy scores, SSD: Australia



Prevalence of low literacy scores, LGA: Qld



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Main references

- ‘Adult Learning in Canada: A Comparative Perspective’ *Rubenson et al, 2007*
- ‘Gaining and Losing Literacy Skills over the Lifecourse’ *Willms and Murray, 2007*
- ‘Literacy scores, human capital and growth across fourteen OECD countries’ *Coulombe et al, 2004*
- ‘Restoring our Edge in Education’ *Business Council of Australia, 2007*
- ‘Learning a Living: First results of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey’ *OECD, 2005*
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- 'Task Force on Adult Education Survey: Mandate' *Eurostat, 2005*
- *European Commission* website
<http://ec.europa.eu/index_en.htm>
- 'Classification of Learning Activities' *European Commission, 2006*
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- 'Education and Training Experience' *ABS, 2006*