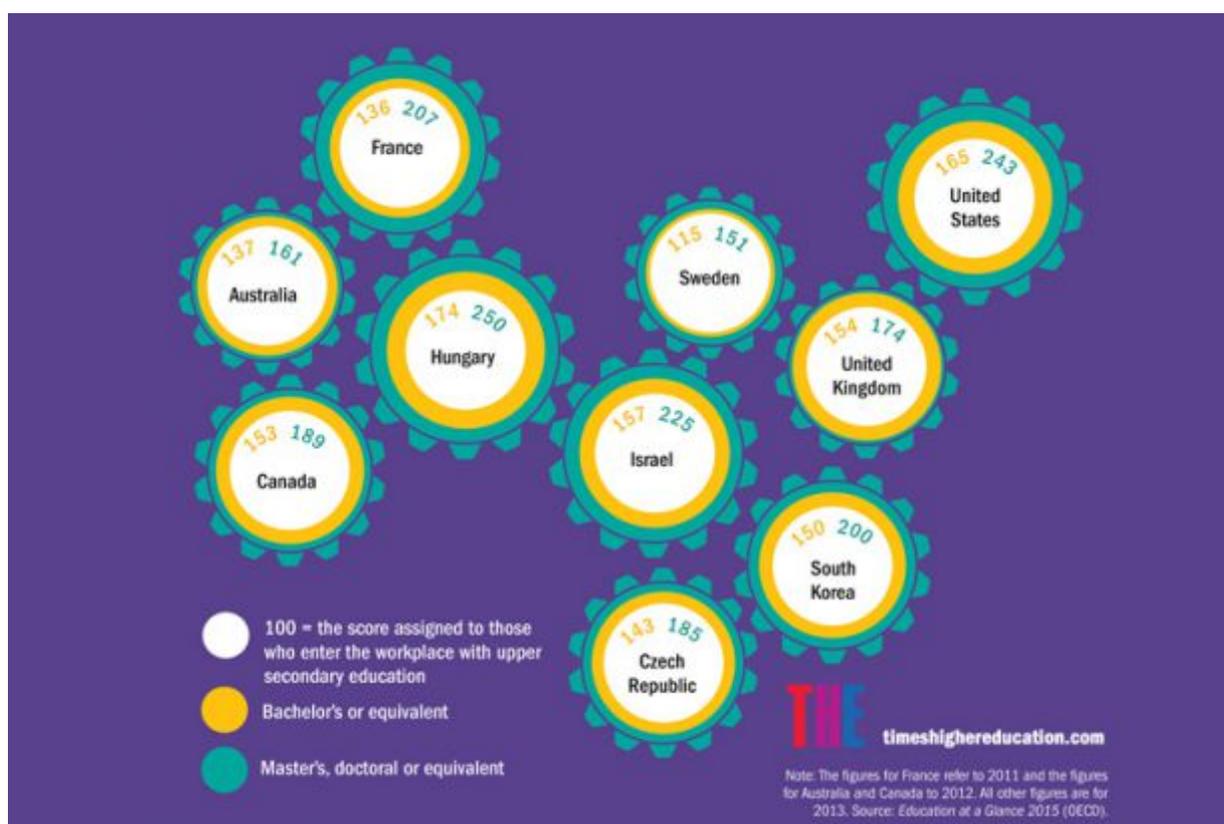


# To learn, not divide

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• By Danny Dorling

Your graph “[Relative earnings by educational attainment](#)” (News, 14 January) showed that graduates with one degree in the UK earned, on average, 54 per cent more than people living here with A levels but no first degree. In comparison, you showed that in Sweden the equivalent inequality was 15 per cent, and in France it was 36 per cent. No figures were

given for other Western European countries, although they all have lower levels of overall income inequality as compared with the UK.

These inequalities show what we are prepared to tolerate and impose on others, not the benefits of a university education. They show how cohesive or divided our different societies have become. It is very unlikely that the UK's 54 per cent "premium" will be sustained now that half of young women in England study at university. The proportion of the entire UK population aged 16 to 64 holding a university degree has been rising by more than 1 per cent a year since 2011, exceeding 28 per cent by 2015, and it is still rising rapidly, which is good news.

Hopefully it will not take all these well educated people long to work out that the 54 per cent inequality cannot be sustained. In all other Western European countries, standards of living are higher for both graduates and non-graduates. I don't think we look enviously at Hungary, where graduates with a university degree are paid, on average, 74 per cent more than their fellow citizens and those with more degrees are paid 2.5 times as much. A university education should help to decrease stupidity; it should not be about becoming greedier and making the society you live in become even more divided than it already is.

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