

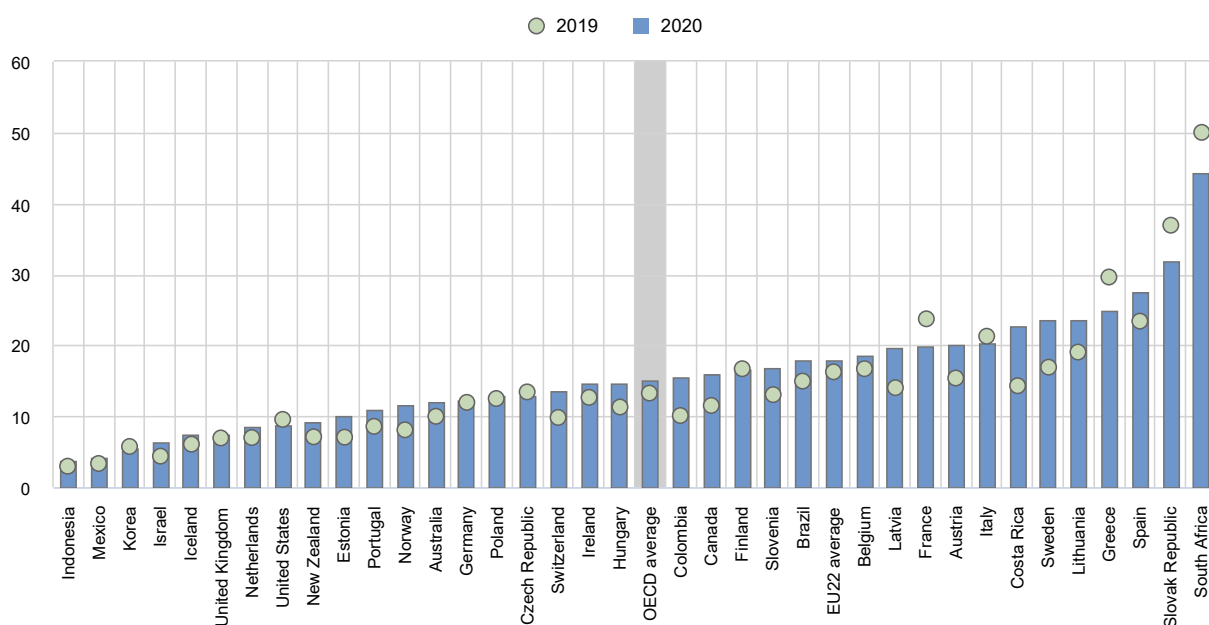
South Africa

Inequalities in education and outcomes

- Tertiary education has been expanding in the last decades, and, in 2020, 25-34 year-old women were more likely than men to achieve tertiary education in all OECD countries. In South Africa, 17% of 25-34 year-old women had a tertiary qualification in 2020 compared to 13% of their male peers, while on average across OECD countries the shares were 52% among young women and 39% among young men.
- International student mobility at the tertiary level has risen steadily reaching about 42 300 students in South Africa and representing 4% of tertiary students in 2018. The largest share of foreign tertiary students studying in South Africa comes from Zimbabwe. Students from low and lower-middle income countries are generally less likely to study abroad. However, in South Africa, they represented 73% of international students in 2018, compared to 29% in total across OECD countries.
- Young women are less likely to be employed than young men, particularly those with lower levels of education. Only 26% of 25-34 year-old women with below upper secondary attainment were employed in 2020 compared to 41% of men in South Africa. This gender difference is smaller than the average across OECD countries, where 43% of women and 69% of men with below upper secondary attainment are employed.
- The impact of the pandemic on the economy has raised concerns about the prospects of young adults, especially those leaving education earlier than others. In South Africa, the unemployment rate among 25-34 year-olds with below upper secondary attainment was 44.4% in 2020, a decrease of 6 percentage points from the previous year. In comparison, the average youth unemployment rate of 15.1% in 2020 across OECD countries represented an increase of 2 percentage points from 2019 (Figure 1).
- Despite the impact of the crisis on employment, the share of NEETs among 18-24 year-olds did not greatly increase in most OECD and partner countries during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. On average, the share of 18-24 year-old NEETs in OECD countries rose from 14.4% in 2019 to 16.1% in 2020. In South Africa, the share of 18-24 year-old NEETs was 43.8% in 2019, which increased to 45% in 2020.

Figure 1. Trends in unemployment rates of 25-34 year-olds with below upper secondary attainment (2019 and 2020)

In per cent



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Countries are ranked in ascending order of the unemployment rate of 25-34 year-olds with below upper secondary attainment in 2020.

Source: OECD (2021), Table A3.3. See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2021_Annex3_ChapterA.pdf).

Investing in education

- Annual public expenditure per student on educational institutions provides an indication of the public investment countries make on each student. In 2018, South Africa spent less on primary to tertiary educational institutions per full-time student than the OECD average, investing a total of USD 2 562 per student (in equivalent USD converted using PPPs for GDP) compared to USD 10 000 on average across OECD countries.
- The share of public expenditure devoted to educational institutions over the national wealth is higher in South Africa than on average among OECD countries. In 2018, public expenditure in South Africa reached 4.8% of its GDP on primary to tertiary educational institutions, which is 0.7 percentage points higher than the OECD average. Across levels of education, South Africa devoted a higher share of GDP than the OECD average at non-tertiary levels and a lower share at the tertiary level.

References

OECD (2021), *Education at a Glance 2021: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>.

OECD (2021), “Regional education”, *OECD Regional Statistics (database)*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/213e806c-en> (accessed on 27 July 2021).


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More information

For more information on Education at a Glance 2021 and to access the full set of indicators, see: <https://doi.org/10.1787/b35a14e5-en>

For more information on the methodology used during the data collection for each indicator, the references to the sources and the specific notes for each country, see Annex 3 (https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2021_Annex3.pdf).

For general information on the methodology, please refer to the OECD Handbook for Internationally Comparative Education Statistics: Concepts, Standards, Definitions and Classifications (<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264304444-en>).

Updated data can be found on line at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-data-en> and by following the StatLinks  under the tables and charts in the publication.

Data on subnational regions for selected indicators are available in the *OECD Regional Statistics (database)* (OECD, 2021). When interpreting the results on subnational entities, readers should take into account that the population size of subnational entities can vary widely within countries. For example, regional variation in enrolment may be influenced by students attending school in a different region from their area of residence, particularly at higher levels of education. Also, regional disparities tend to be higher when more subnational entities are used in the analysis.

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The data on educational responses during COVID-19 were collected and processed by the OECD based on the Survey on Joint National Responses to COVID-19 School Closures, a collaborative effort conducted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS); the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); the World Bank; and the OECD.

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