

# South Africa

## The output of educational institutions and the impact of learning

- Upper secondary attainment is often seen as a minimum qualification for successful labour market participation. Although the general increase in educational attainment has seen a parallel decline in the share of 25-34 year-olds without upper secondary attainment, 14% of young adults across the OECD still left school without an upper secondary qualification. In South Africa, the share is 46%, which is higher than the OECD average.
- Higher educational attainment is often associated with better employment prospects and South Africa is no exception. In 2020 the employment rate among 25-34 year-olds with tertiary education in South Africa was 29 percentage points higher than among those with below upper secondary attainment and 19 percentage points higher than among those with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment. On average across OECD countries, the employment rate among 25-34 year-olds with a tertiary qualification was 26 percentage points higher than among those with below upper secondary attainment and 8 percentage points higher than among those with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment. While the positive link between educational attainment and employment rates holds for both men and for women across the OECD, it is particularly strong for women. In South Africa, 26% of women with below upper secondary attainment were employed in 2020, compared to 61% of those with tertiary attainment. In contrast, the figures were 41% and 67% for men.
- Across the OECD, the labour market benefits of tertiary attainment have proved especially strong during economic crises. This was also the case during the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa. Between 2019 and 2020, unemployment for 25-34 year-old workers with below upper secondary attainment increased by 1.8 percentage points, by 1.7 percentage points for workers with upper secondary attainment and by 2.3 percentage points for workers with tertiary attainment.

## Access to education, participation and progress

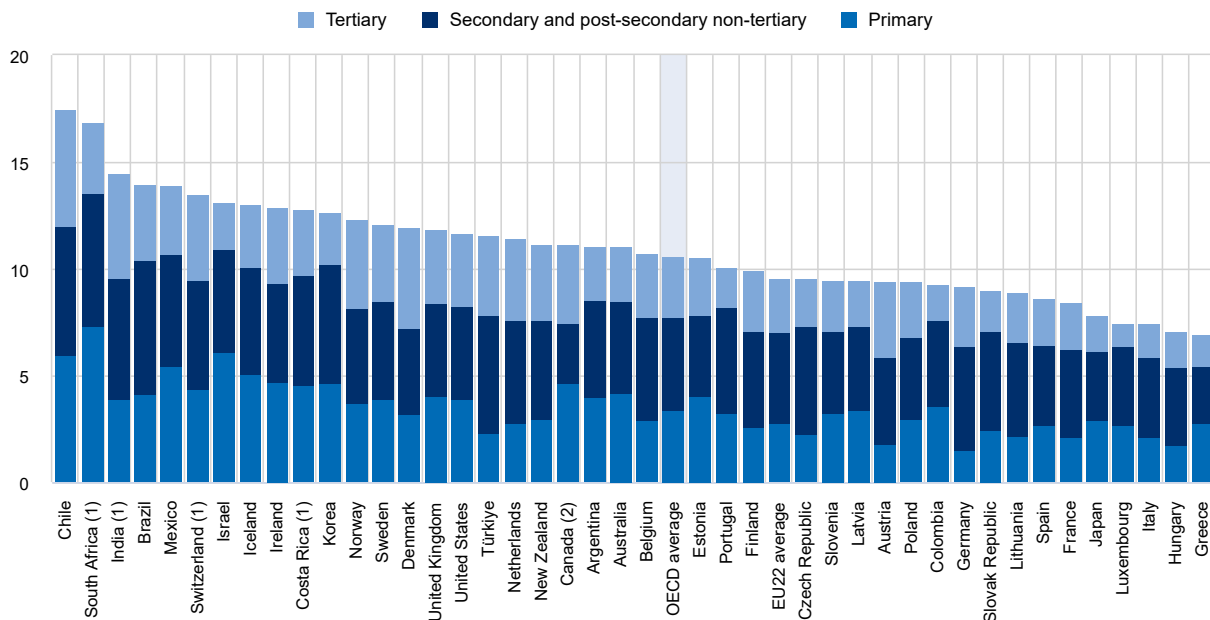
- Compulsory education begins at the age of 7 and ends at the age of 15 in South Africa. The range of ages for which at least 90% of the population are enrolled is shorter than the period of compulsory education and goes from the age of 1 to the age of 14. This differs from most OECD countries, where more than 90% of the population are enrolled for longer than the period of compulsory education.
- In South Africa, 43% of 18-24 year-olds are still in full- or part-time education or training at either upper secondary or tertiary level (significantly below the OECD average of 54%). A subset of these students (1% of 18-24 year-olds) combine their education or training with some form of employment in South Africa, compared to 17% on average across the OECD.

## Financial resources invested in education

- Public spending on primary to tertiary education was 16.9% of total government expenditure in South Africa (Figure 1), higher than the OECD average (10.6%). Also, relative to GDP, public spending on primary to tertiary education (6.7%) is higher than the OECD average (4.4%).

**Figure 1. Composition of total public expenditure on education as a percentage of total government expenditure (2019)**

Primary to tertiary education (including R&D), in per cent



1. Year of reference differs from 2019. Refer to the source table for more details.

2. Primary education includes pre-primary programmes.

Countries are ranked in descending order of total public expenditure on education as a percentage of total government expenditure.

**Source:** OECD/UIS/Eurostat (2022), Table C4.1. See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes ([https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2022\\_X3-C.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2022_X3-C.pdf)).

## Focus on tertiary education

- Among 25-64 year-olds in South Africa, short-cycle tertiary qualifications are the most common tertiary attainment at 8% of the population followed by bachelor's degrees at 7% and master's and doctoral degrees with 1%. This is different from the OECD average, where bachelor's degrees are most common (19%), followed by master's degrees (14%) and short cycle tertiary qualifications (7%).

## References

OECD (2022), *Education at a Glance 2022: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>.


OECD (2022), “Regional education”, *OECD Regional Statistics (database)*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/213e806c-en>.

## More information

**For more information on Education at a Glance 2022 and to access the full set of Indicators, see:** <https://doi.org/10.1787/3197152b-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/EAG2022\\_Annex3.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2022_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, 2022). 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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<https://gpseducation.oecd.org/>

The data on educational responses during COVID-19 were collected and processed by the OECD based on the Joint Survey on 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.

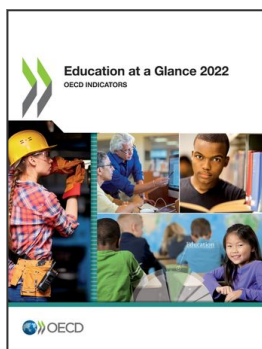
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**From:**  
**Education at a Glance 2022**  
OECD Indicators

**Access the complete publication at:**  
<https://doi.org/10.1787/3197152b-en>

**Please cite this chapter as:**

OECD (2022), "South Africa", in *Education at a Glance 2022: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/8e9ec00d-en>

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