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# FACT SHEET

## Gender Parity in Post-School Education and Training Opportunities: Access and Completion

Authors: Mamphokhu Khuluvhe and Edzani Netshifhefhe



higher education  
& training

Department:  
Higher Education and Training  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Department of Higher Education and Training

123 Francis Baard Street  
Pretoria  
South Africa

Private Bag X174  
Pretoria  
0001

Tel.: 0800 87 22 22

[www.dhet.gov.za](http://www.dhet.gov.za)

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Enquiries:

Tel.: 012 312 5465/5673

Fax: 086 457 0289

Email: [Khuluvhe.m@dhet.gov.za](mailto:Khuluvhe.m@dhet.gov.za) / [netshifhefhe.e@dhet.gov.za](mailto:netshifhefhe.e@dhet.gov.za)

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## 1 BACKGROUND

South Africa is lauded for having one of the most progressive Constitutions in the world; one in which women's human rights are linked to their socio-economic rights. The right to equality is provided in Section 9 of the Bill of Rights in chapter two of the Constitution and it states that no person may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth<sup>1</sup>. The role of women in society must be equally respected, protected and rewarded, and their participation in economic life must also be valued.

The latest quarterly labour force data released by Statistics South Africa indicate that although strides have been made in the economic emancipation of women in society, women still constitute less than 46% of South Africa's economic active population nationally and that unemployment among women is at 38%, which is higher than the national unemployment figure of 35%<sup>2</sup>.

In South Africa, education has long been recognised as a way of promoting equality of opportunities in society, more generally. The Post-School Education and Training (PSET) system, as envisaged in the White Paper for PSET, is expected to be equitable, accessible, and affordable to all sections of the population<sup>3</sup>. South Africa also has binding international obligations in the field of human rights which promote equality and prohibit unfair discrimination. Among these obligations are the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 which calls for inclusive and quality equitable education for all, and Goal 5 which aims to achieve gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls.

This Fact Sheet monitors access and completion in PSET in terms of gender. It uses the Gender Parity Index (GPI) to measure relative access to post-school education and training opportunities of males and females. GPI is often used internationally to compare relative access to education between males and females across various countries. Such comparisons serve as a barometer for how countries perform in terms of equity and transformation and speak to the proportional representation of historically and currently disadvantaged groups within all levels of the education system.

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<sup>1</sup> Republic of South Africa (1996). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. The Bill of Rights in chapter two of the Constitution.

<sup>2</sup> Statistics South Africa (2022). Quarterly Labour Force Survey (4<sup>th</sup> Quarter, 2021).

<sup>3</sup> Department of Higher Education and Training (2013). White Paper for Post-School Education and Training. Building and Expanded, Effective and Integrated Post-School System. Republic of South Africa

## **2 PURPOSE**

This fact sheet provides a comparative analysis of the gender profile of students in the PSET system, with a specific focus on access and completion. It uses the GPI to measure progress towards gender parity in PSET participation and completion.

## **3 TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

### **3.1 Gross enrolment ratio (GER)**

The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) is a measure of access. It usually shows enrolment relative to the population in a core age group, even if those enrolled do not all fall into that age group. For instance, the GER for public universities shows their enrolment as a percentage of the age group 20 to 24 in the population in that year, though university students may be younger than 20 or older than 24. The GER for TVET colleges and private colleges is based on the 16-20 year age group, while that for CET colleges is based on 15-35 year age group.

### **3.2 Gender Parity Index**

Generally, the gender parity index (GPI) is used as a measure of gender equity for participation in education. It is represented by the ratio of the female GER to the male GER. A GPI value of 1 indicates parity between males and females, a value less than 1 indicates disparity in favour of males, and a value greater than 1 indicates disparity in favour of the females (UNESCO, 2009)<sup>4</sup>.

However, it is possible to calculate GPI, not only for enrolment, but also for other indicators using a similar ratio. This fact sheet therefore also explores GPI for the completion rate, unemployment rate and employment rate.

## **4 OVERVIEW OF GENDER PARITY IN PSET INSTITUTIONS**

Table 1 shows the GPI for enrolment and completion in selected types of PSET institutions in 2020. GPI for enrolment was higher for females in all three PSET institutional types (namely, Higher Education Institutions, TVET Colleges and CETCs), while that for completion either favoured females or showed gender parity.

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<sup>4</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2009). Education Indicators Technical Guidelines.

**Table 1: Gender Parity Index for enrolment and completion by institution type, 2020**

Institution	GPI: Enrolment	GPI: completion
HEIs (public and private)	1.56	1.12
TVET colleges	1.57	1.00
CET colleges	2.18	1.21

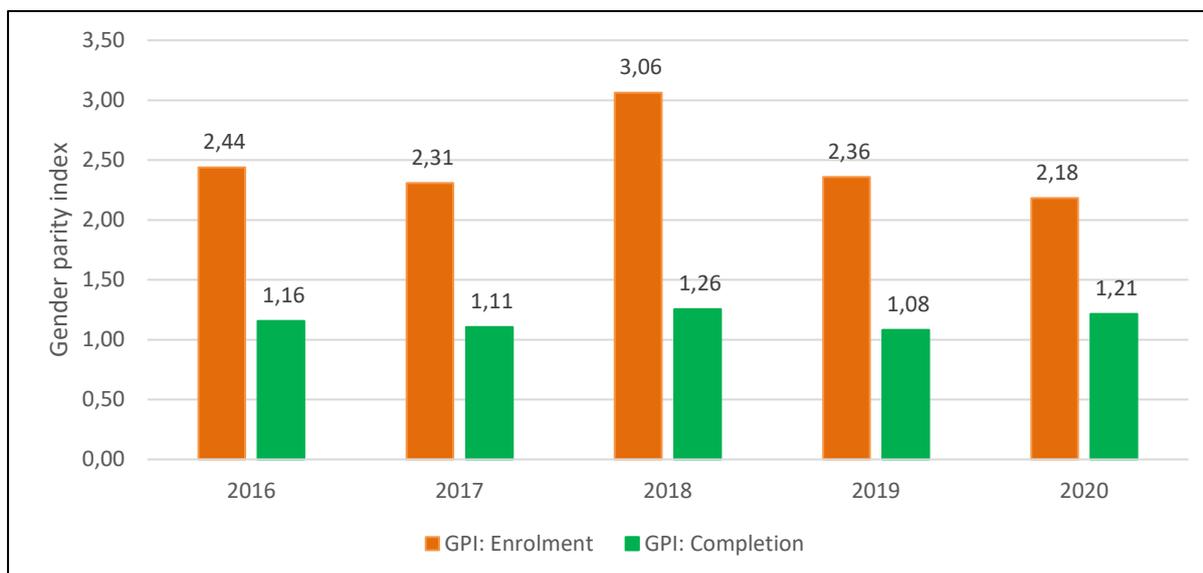
Sources: Own calculations based on:

DHET Statistics on Post-School Education and Training 2020 and  
 Statistics South Africa Mid-Year Population Estimates 2021

## 5 GENDER PARITY INDEX IN COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND TRAINING (CET) COLLEGES

Figure 1 shows the GPI for enrolment and completion in CET colleges from 2016 to 2020. It reveals that GPI for both enrolment and completion in CETCs favours females and has done so consistently over the past 5 years. The gender parity for enrolment stood at 2.18 in 2020, while that for completion was about 1.2, indicating that while the female participation rate in CETCs was considerably higher than that of males, their completion rate, was not significantly higher than that of males.

**Figure 1: Gender Parity Index for enrolment and completion in CET colleges, 2016-2020**



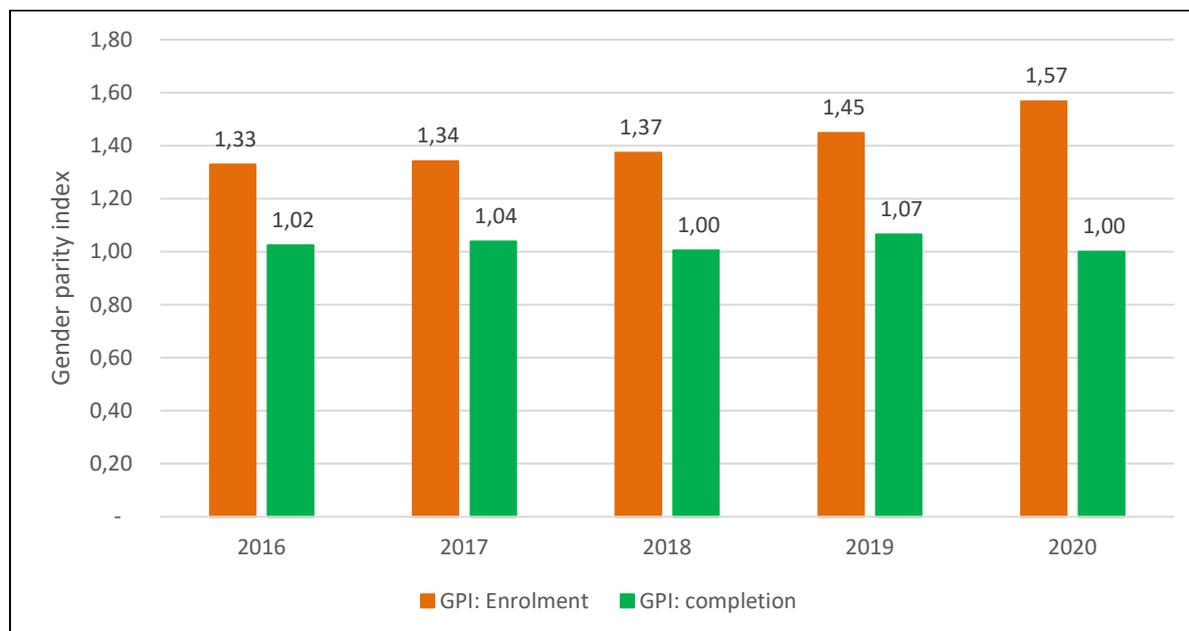
Sources: Own calculations based on:

DHET Statistics on Post-School Education and Training 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020  
 Statistics South Africa Mid-Year Population Estimates 2020

## 6 GENDER PARITY INDEX IN TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (TVET) COLLEGES

Figure 2 shows the GPI for enrolment and completion in TVET colleges from 2016 to 2020. It reveals that the female participation rate in TVET Colleges consistently exceeded that of males over the past five years, while the GPI for completion fluctuated between 2016 and 2020.

**Figure 2: Gender Parity Index for enrolment and completion in TVET colleges, 2016-2020**



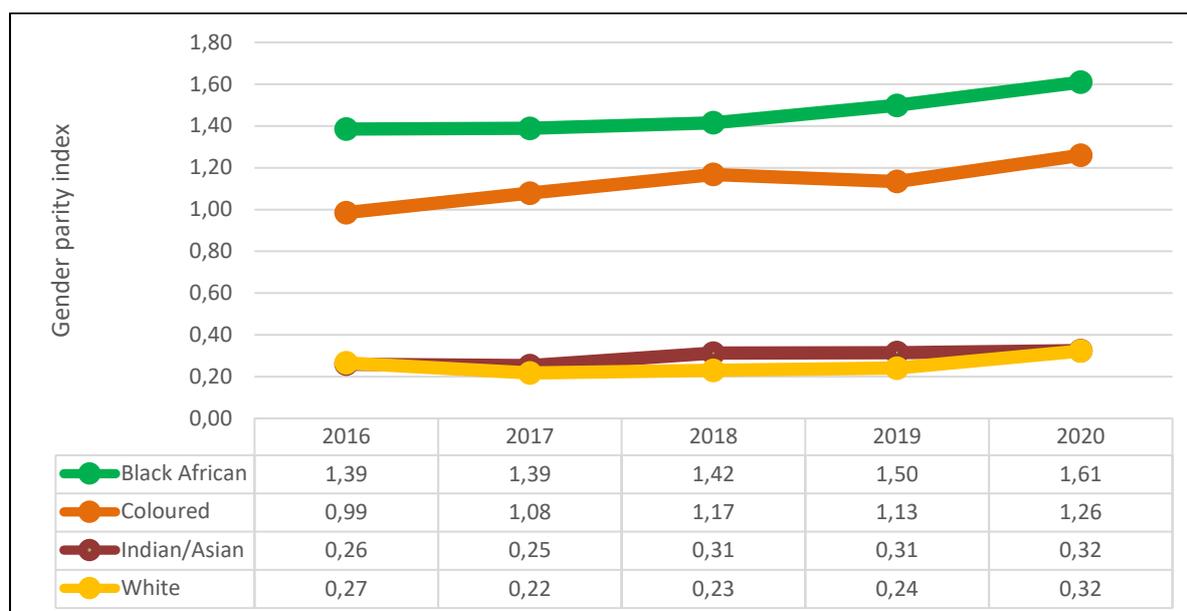
Sources: Own calculations based on:

DHET Statistics on Post-School Education and Training 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020

Statistics South Africa Mid-Year Population Estimates 2020

Figure 3 shows that higher levels of female participation in TVET Colleges is largely due to the extraordinarily high levels of participation by African females, as opposed to that by females from other race groups. In contrast, female participation rates in TVET Colleges were lower among Indian/Asian and White population groups.

**Figure 3: Gender Parity Index for enrolment in TVET colleges by population group, 2016-2020**



Sources: Own calculations based on:

DHET Statistics on Post-School Education and Training 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020  
 Statistics South Africa Mid-Year Population Estimates 2020

The GPI for completion by vocational field, 2020 is presented in Table 2. There was disparity in completion in favour of the females for business/commerce with a GPI of 1.01 and parity in completion in engineering studies. It is encouraging to see more women completing their studies in vocational field that are traditionally male dominated.

**Table 2: Gender Parity Index for completion in TVET colleges by vocational field, 2020**

Vocational field	GPI
Business/commerce	1.01
Engineering	1.00

Sources: DHET TVETMIS 2020 (Own calculations)

Note: GPI for completion is the ratio of female completion rate to male completion rate. A GPI of 1 indicates parity in completion. A GPI above 1 indicates higher female completion. A GPI less than 1 indicates higher male completion.

## 7 UNIVERSITIES (PUBLIC AND PRIVATE)

Table 3 depicts the trends in GPI for enrolment in public and private HEIs for the period 2016 to 2020. It shows that female participation rates in both public and private HEIs were significantly higher than that of males over the 5-year period under review. The GPI increased from 1.38 in 2016 to 1.56 in 2020. The GPI for public HEIs was higher than then GPI for private HEIs in the period under review.

**Table 3: Trends in Gender Parity Index for enrolment: public and private universities, 2016-2020**

Year	Public HEIs	Private HEIs	Total
2016	1.41	1.26	<b>1.38</b>
2017	1.43	1.38	<b>1.42</b>
2018	1.46	1.41	<b>1.45</b>
2019	1.49	1.43	<b>1.48</b>
2020	1.57	1.53	<b>1.56</b>

Sources: Own calculations based on:

DHET Statistics on Post-School Education and Training 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020

Statistics South Africa Mid-Year Population Estimates 2020

DHET Annual report submitted by PHEIs for the 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 year of reporting

Table 4 shows that the GPI favoured female participation rates at HEIs irrespective of the race of females. This was unlike the case with TVET colleges, where race was a factor in GPI rates. In HEIs, the GPI was highest among the coloured students (1.77) and lowest among white students (1.35) in 2020.

**Table 4: Gender Parity Index for enrolment in public and private universities by population group, 2016-2020**

Year	Black African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White	Total
2016	1.39	1.59	1.56	1.26	1.38
2017	1.44	1.66	1.59	1.27	1.42
2018	1.47	1.68	1.61	1.30	1.45
2019	1.50	1.69	1.61	1.32	1.48
2020	1.59	1.77	1.63	1.35	1.56

Sources: Own calculations based on:

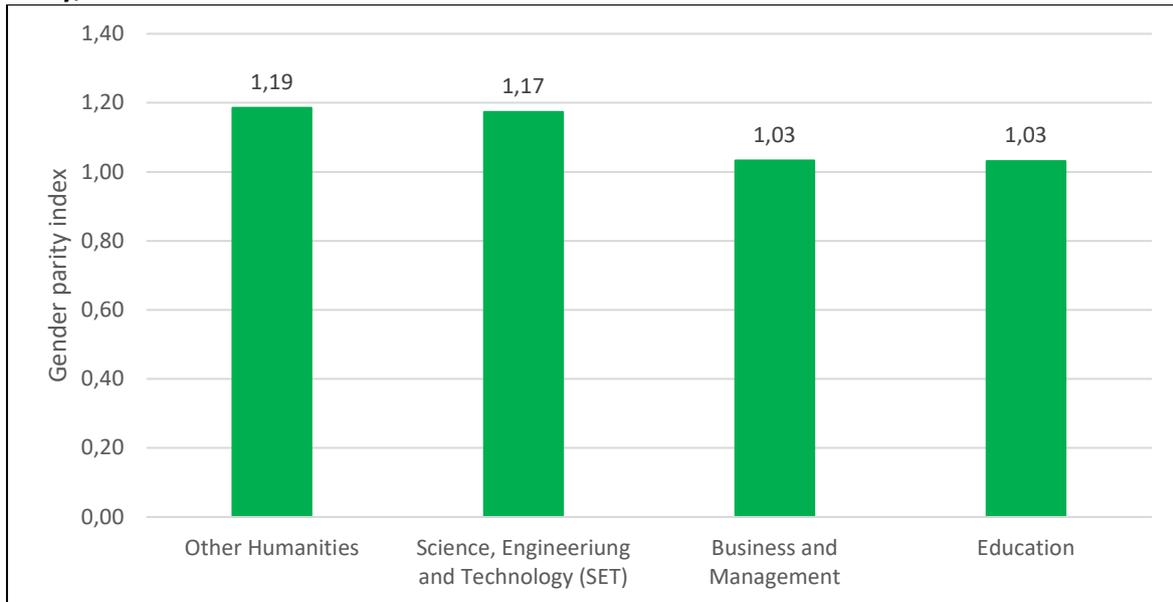
DHET Statistics on Post-School Education and Training 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020

Statistics South Africa Mid-Year Population Estimates 2020

DHET Annual report submitted by PHEIs for the 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 year of reporting

As indicated in Table 1, graduation rates for females were higher than graduation rates for males in 2020 in all three PSET institutional types. Figure 4 presents the GPI for completion (graduation) in public HEIs (universities) by field of study. It indicates that there was disparity in graduation in favour of the females for all the different fields of study in universities. The GPI for other humanities was 1.19, followed by SET (1.17) and business management and education both at 1.03.

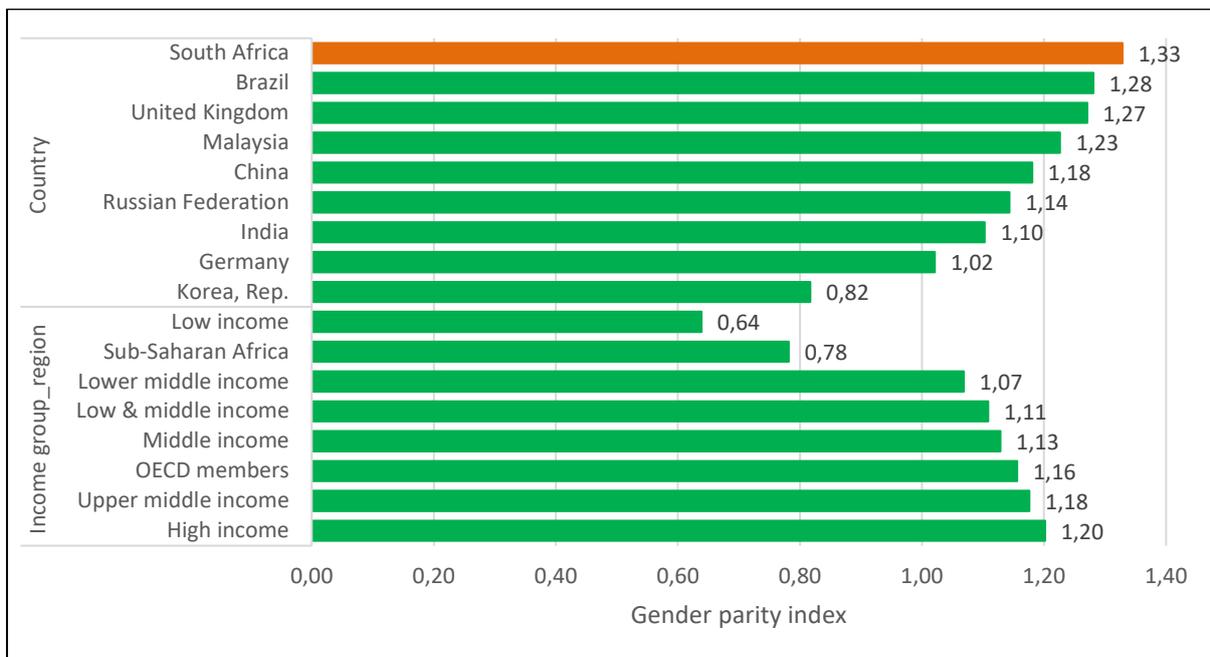
**Figure 4: Gender Parity Index for completion (graduation) in public HEIs (universities) by field of study,2020**



Sources: DHET Statistics on Post-School Education and Training 2020 (Own calculations)

Figure 5 shows the comparison of South Africa’s GPI for gross tertiary enrolment with other countries and averages of selected regions for the year 2019. It indicates that, in 2019, South Africa’s GPI for tertiary enrolment was the highest in the world. The GPI for South Africa stood at 1.33 compared Brazil (1.28), United Kingdom (1.27), High income countries (1.20), OECD members (1.16) and Sub-Saharan Africa (0.78).

**Figure 5: Gender Parity Index (GPI) for gross tertiary enrolment by country,2019**



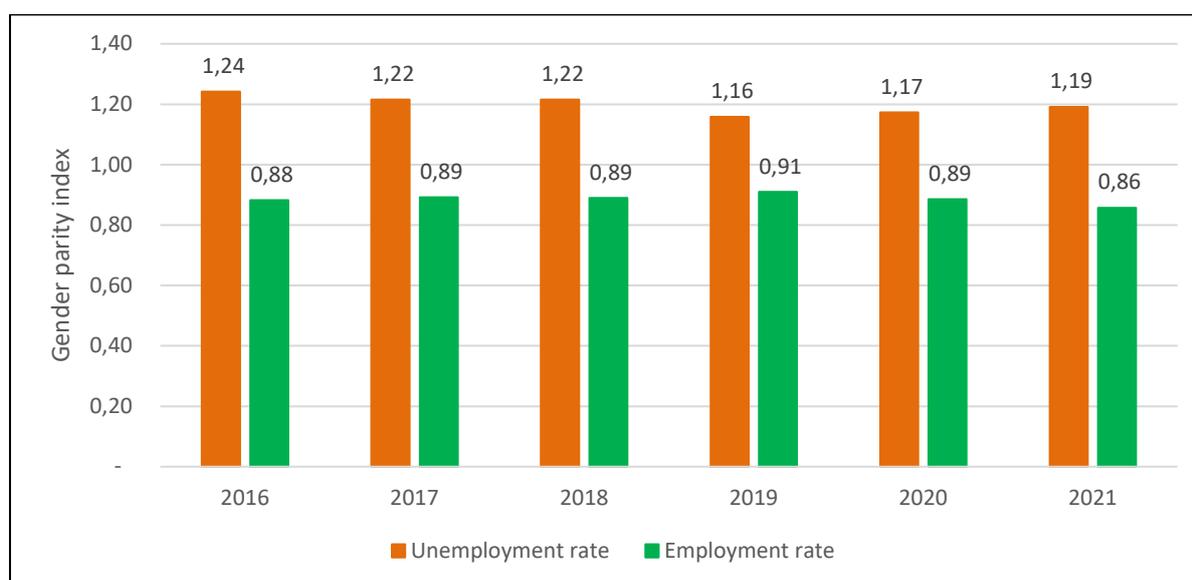
Source: World Bank 2022

Note 1: The countries included in this Figure were selected based on the availability of latest data.

## 8 EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Figure 6 shows that although there are more females than males participating and completing their qualifications in the PSET system, there were more unemployed females than males in Q3 2016 to Q3 2021. The gender parity index for unemployment was 1.19 in 2021, indicating higher female unemployment rate compared to males, while the gender parity index for employment was 0.86 indicating a high employment rate for the males than females. The disparity in employment in favour of the males was narrowing before COVID-19 and then started widening in 2020, the same picture was observed for the disparity in employment in favour of the males.

**Figure 6: Gender Parity Index (GPI) by employment status 2021**



Source: Statistics South Africa Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS Trends 2008-2021Q3) (Own calculations)

## 9 CONCLUSION

The fact sheet shows that South Africa continues to soar high in terms of female representation in the post-school education institutions. The GPI is in favour of females in both access (enrolment) and success (completion or graduation) even among field of studies that were previously male dominated. The GPI for gross tertiary enrolment has also remained the highest in the world. Although participation rates of females in the PSET system far exceed that of their male counterparts, gender remains a matter of deep concern in South Africa. With South Africa leading the world on incidents of gender-based violence (including that at PSET institutions), and with the labour market favouring male employment over females, much needs to be done to achieve a non-sexist society.