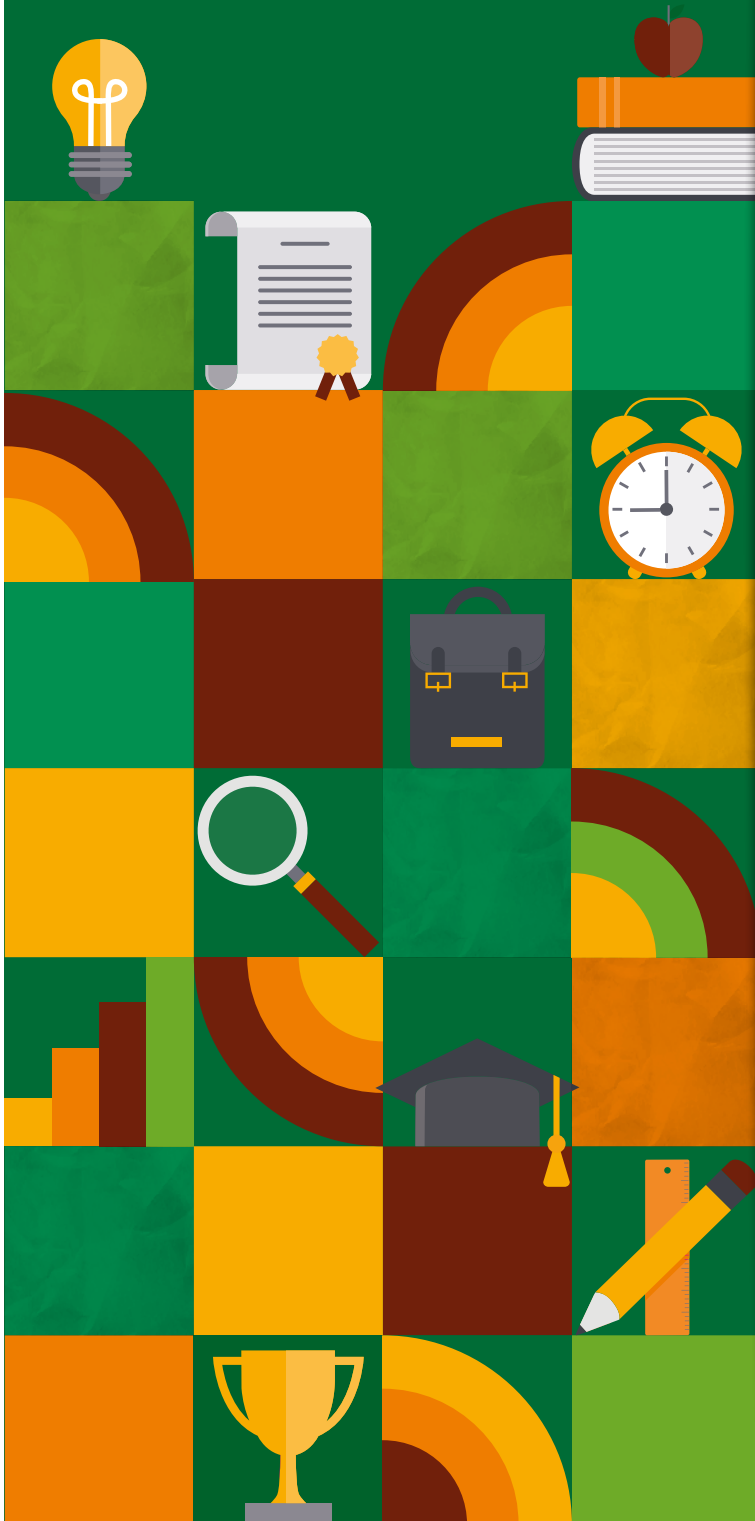


2023

FACT SHEET



HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA



BACKGROUND

The information presented in this Fact Sheet is intended to draw the attention of policymakers to the progress the South African education system has made in terms of the highest levels of educational attainment (HLEA) of the population, including its workforce. It provides signals on how best to balance the provisioning of education at distinct levels of the system and seeks to provide answers to the following research questions:

- What is the highest level of educational attainment of South Africa's population, including its workforce?
- What is the profile of those who completed education at numerous levels, disaggregated by race, gender and age?
- How does South Africa compare internationally, in terms of the achievement of literacy and those who have completed degrees?



higher education
& training

Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

ADULTS

'Adults' in this Fact Sheet refers to individuals who are 25–64 years old. This age group was selected, as it is within this age range that an individual has at least completed their first school qualification or highest post-school qualification.

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The highest level of educational attainment refers to the highest grade completed at school and/or the highest post-school qualification obtained.

TERTIARY EDUCATION

Tertiary education refers to the following qualifications:

- an undergraduate degree;
- a postgraduate degree;
- a diploma;
- a higher certificate (upon completion of matric); and
- an advanced diploma or advanced certificate.

EMPLOYED

'Employed' refers to persons aged 15–64 years who did any work for at least one hour during the reference week.

UNEMPLOYED

There are two definitions of the unemployed: the official definition and the expanded definition.

- a. According to the official definition, unemployed persons are those aged 15–64 years who:
 - i. were not employed in the reference week; and
 - ii. actively looked for work or tried to start a business in the four weeks preceding the survey interview; and










- iii. were available for work, i.e., would have been able to start work or a business in the reference week; or
 - iv. had not actively looked for work in the past four weeks but had a job or business to start at a definite date in the future, and were available.
- b. Based on the expanded definition, unemployed persons are those aged 15–64 years who:
- i. fall under official unemployment (searched and available); and
 - ii. were available to work but were discouraged work-seekers or had other reasons for not searching for work.



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Table 1 presents the numbers and shares of persons in the population aged 25–64 years by highest level of educational attainment for the periods 2014:Q3 and 2022:Q3. The highest levels of educational attainment at key levels in South Africa has improved significantly over the past decade. For example, the proportion of the 25–64-year-old population that had matric as the highest level of educational attainment increased from 27.4% in 2014 to 33.2% in 2022. In 2022, about one-third of South Africans aged 25–64 years had Grade 12 as their highest level of educational attainment; about 7.0% of South Africans aged 25–64 years had a degree as their highest level of educational attainment, while 5.7% of this age group had a diploma as their highest level of educational attainment. The highest proportion of the population aged 25–64 years (37.0%) had some secondary education as their highest level of educational attainment, while 10.5% of persons in this age group had primary education or less than primary as their highest level of educational attainment.

TABLE 1: Number and share of persons in the population aged 25–64 years, by highest level of educational attainment, 2014:Q3 and 2022:Q3.

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	2014:Q3		2022:Q3	
	'000'	Share	'000'	Share
 No schooling	1 118	4.4%	674	2.2%
 Less than primary	2 526	10.0%	1 976	6.6%
 Primary	1 234	4.9%	1 164	3.9%
 Some Secondary	9 527	37.8%	11 139	37.0%
 Secondary (Grade 12 or equivalent)	6 915	27.4%	10 003	33.2%
 Certificate	784	3.1%	907	3.0%
 Diploma	1 539	6.1%	1 702	5.7%
 Degree	1 310	5.2%	2 112	7.0%
 Other	271	1.1%	416	1.4%
TOTAL	25 224	100.0%	30 095	100.0%

Source: Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) 2014:Q3 and 2022:Q3 (Nesstar, accessed 4 May 2023)

Note 1: 'No schooling' includes the following categories: No schooling and Grade R/0.

Note 2: 'Less than primary' completed includes the following categories: Grade 1/Sub A/Class 1; Grade 2/Sub B/Class 2; Grade 3/Standard 1/AET 1 (KHARI RI GUDE, SANLI); Grade 4/Standard 2; Grade 5/Standard 3/AET 2; Grade 6/Standard 4.

Note 3: 'Primary' completed refers to Grade 7/Standard 5/AET 3.

Note 4: 'Some secondary' completed includes the following categories: Grade 8/Standard 6/Form 1; Grade 9/Standard 7/Form 2/AET 4; Grade 10/Standard 8/Form 3; Grade 11/Standard 9/Form 4; NTC 1/N1/NC (v) Level 2; NTC 2/N2/NC (v) Level 3; Certificate with less than Grade 12/Std 10; and Diploma with less than Grade 12/Std 10.

Note 5: 'Secondary' completed includes the following categories: Grade 12/Standard 10/Form 5/Matric (No Exemption); Grade 12/Standard 10/Form 5/Matric (Exemption/Bachelor's pass); and NTC 3/N3/NC (v) Level 4.

Note 6: 'Certificate' includes the following categories: N4/NTC 4; N5/NTC 5; N6/NTC 6; and Certificate with Grade 12/Std 10.










Note 7: 'Diploma' includes the following categories: Diploma with Grade 12/Std 10 and Higher Diploma.

Note 8: 'Degree' includes the following categories: Post Higher Diploma (Master's, Doctoral Diploma); Bachelor's degree; Bachelor's degree and Postgraduate Diploma; Honours degree and Higher degree (Master's/PhD).

Note 9: 'Other' includes the following categories: Other and Do not know.










Table 2 presents the distribution of the highest level of educational attainment of persons in the population aged 25–64 years by gender from 2014:Q3 to 2022:Q3 (see p. 6). In general, females in the 25–64-year age group tended to have a higher level of educational attainment than males. In 2022, 7.7% of females in the 25–64-year age group had a degree as the highest level of educational attainment compared with 6.3% of males. A similar situation prevailed with diplomas. On the other hand, a higher proportion of females had no schooling in 2022 (2.7%), compared with males (1.8%). Notably, however, the proportion of females with no schooling almost halved since 2014.

TABLE 2: Number and share of persons in the population aged 25–64 years by highest level of educational attainment and gender, 2014:Q3 and 2022:Q3.

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	2014:Q3				
	Male		Female		Total
	'000'	Share	'000'	Share	'000'
 No schooling	478	3.9%	640	5.0%	1 118
 Less than primary	1 253	10.2%	1 274	9.9%	2 526
 Primary	579	4.7%	655	5.1%	1 234
 Some secondary	4 656	37.8%	4 871	37.7%	9 527
 Secondary (Grade 12 or equivalent)	3 428	27.8%	3 487	27.0%	6 915
 Certificate	411	3.3%	374	2.9%	784
 Diploma	695	5.6%	844	6.5%	1 539
 Degree	668	5.4%	641	5.0%	1 310
 Other	143	1.2%	128	1.0%	271
TOTAL	12 312	100.0%	12 913	100.0%	25 224

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

2022:Q3

	Male		Female		Total '000'
	'000'	Share	'000'	Share	
 No schooling	267	1.8%	407	2.7%	674
 Less than primary	1 034	7.0%	942	6.2%	1 976
 Primary	628	4.2%	536	3.5%	1 164
 Some secondary	5 529	37.2%	5 610	36.9%	11 139
 Secondary (Grade 12 or equivalent)	4 995	33.6%	5 008	32.9%	10 003
 Certificate	452	3.0%	459	3.0%	907
 Diploma	773	5.2%	930	6.1%	1 702
 Degree	940	6.3%	1 172	7.7%	2 112
 Other	254	1.7%	162	1.1%	416
TOTAL	14 872	100.0%	15 223	100.0%	30 095

Source: Stats SA QLFS 2014:Q3 and 2022:Q3 (Nesstar, accessed 4 May 2023)

Note 1: 'No schooling' includes the following categories: No schooling and Grade R/0.

Note 2: 'Less than primary' completed includes the following categories: Grade 1/Sub A/Class 1; Grade 2/Sub B/Class 2; Grade 3/Standard 1/AET 1 (KHARI RI GUDE, SANLI); Grade 4/Standard 2; Grade 5/Standard 3/AET 2; Grade 6/Standard 4.

Note 3: 'Primary' completed refers to Grade 7/Standard 5/AET 3.

Note 4: 'Some secondary' completed includes the following categories: Grade 8/Standard 6/Form 1; Grade 9/Standard 7/Form 2/AET 4; Grade 10/Standard 8/Form 3; Grade 11/Standard 9/Form 4; NTC 1/N1/NC (v) Level 2; NTC 2/N2/NC (v) Level 3; Certificate with less than Grade 12/Std 10; and Diploma with less than Grade 12/Std 10.

Note 5: 'Secondary' completed includes the following categories: Grade 12/Standard 10/Form 5/Matric (No Exemption); Grade 12/Standard 10/Form 5/Matric (Exemption/Bachelor's pass); and NTC 3/N3/NC (v) Level 4.

Note 6: 'Certificate' includes the following categories: N4/NTC 4; N5/NTC 5; N6/NTC 6; and Certificate with Grade 12/Std 10.










Note 7: 'Diploma' includes the following categories: Diploma with Grade 12/Std 10 and Higher Diploma.

Note 8: 'Degree' includes the following categories: Post Higher Diploma (Master's, Doctoral Diploma); Bachelor's degree; Bachelor's degree and Postgraduate Diploma; Honours degree and Higher degree (Master's/PhD).

Note 9: 'Other' includes the following categories: Other and Do not know.










Table 3 presents the highest level of educational attainment of persons in the population aged 25–34 years by race from 2014:Q3 to 2022:Q3. According to the table, Black Africans and Coloureds (see p. 8) had the lowest levels of educational attainment. Whites (see p. 9), on the other hand, had the highest levels of educational attainment, followed by Indians/Asians (see p. 8). Apartheid legacies and demographics are possible explanations for the higher proportion of Whites with a degree. In 2022, roughly 25% of Whites had a degree, while 5.1% of Coloureds and 4.9% of Black Africans had a degree. In 2022, the number of persons with no schooling was highest in the Black African population and lowest among Indians/Asians. However, in the last eight years, the number of Black Africans with no schooling showed a substantial drop, while the number of degree-holders almost doubled.

TABLE 3: Number and share of persons in the population aged 25–64 years by highest level of educational attainment and race, 2014:Q3 and 2022:Q3.

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	BLACK AFRICAN			
	2014:Q3		2022:Q3	
	'000'	Share	'000'	Share
 No schooling	1 062	5.4%	633	2.6%
 Less than primary	2 255	11.5%	1 755	7.3%
 Primary	1 061	5.4%	911	4.1%
 Some secondary	7 894	40.3%	9 537	39.3%
 Secondary (Grade 12 or equivalent)	4 933	25.2%	7 867	32.4%
 Certificate	590	3.0%	733	3.0%
 Diploma	953	4.9%	1 200	4.9%
 Degree	612	3.1%	1 191	4.9%
 Other	209	1.1%	329	1.4%
TOTAL	19 568	100.0%	24 256	100.0%










HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

COLOURED

	2014:Q3		2022:Q3	
	'000'	Share	'000'	Share
 No schooling	43	1.8%	36	1.3%
 Less than primary	234	9.7%	178	6.6%
 Primary	159	6.6%	151	5.6%
 Some secondary	1 040	43.1%	1 162	43.1%
 Secondary (Grade 12 or equivalent)	647	26.8%	802	29.8%
 Certificate	52	2.2%	57	2.1%
 Diploma	126	5.2%	110	4.1%
 Degree	82	3.4%	139	5.1%
 Other	31	1.3%	59	2.2%
TOTAL	2 414	100.0%	2 693	100.0%










HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

INDIAN/ASIAN

	2014:Q3		2022:Q3	
	'000'	Share	'000'	Share
 No schooling	10	1.3%	2	0.2%
 Less than primary	16	2.1%	19	2.3%
 Primary	12	1.6%	8	1.0%
 Some secondary	189	25.1%	161	19.1%
 Secondary (Grade 12 or equivalent)	321	42.6%	334	39.5%
 Certificate	16	2.1%	19	2.3%
 Diploma	73	9.7%	85	10.1%
 Degree	111	14.7%	205	24.3%
 Other	7	0.9%	10	1.2%
TOTAL	754	100.0%	845	100.0%

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

WHITE

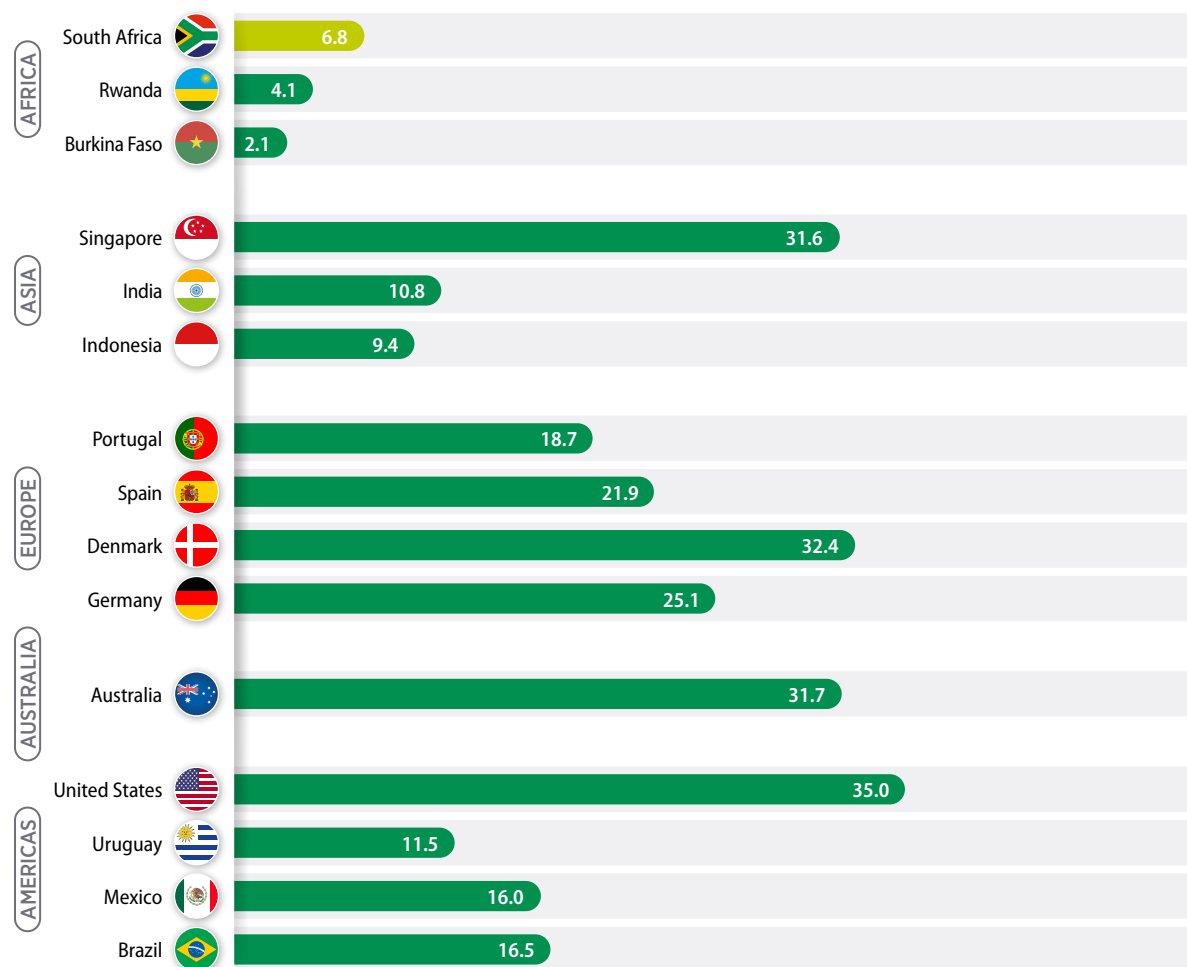
	2014:Q3		2022:Q3	
	'000'	Share	'000'	Share
 No schooling	3	0.1%	3	0.1%
 Less than primary	22	0.9%	4	0.2%
 Primary	3	0.1%	14	0.6%
 Some Secondary	404	16.2%	280	12.2%
 Secondary (Grade 12 or equivalent)	1 014	40.8%	999	43.4%
 Certificate	126	5.1%	98	4.3%
 Diploma	387	15.6%	307	13.4%
 Degree	505	20.3%	577	25.1%
 Other	24	1.0%	18	0.8%
TOTAL	2 487	100.0%	2 301	100.0%

Source: Stats SA QLFS 2014:Q3 and 2022:Q3 (Nesstar, accessed 8 May 2023)

- Note 1: 'No schooling' includes the following categories: No schooling and Grade R/0.
- Note 2: 'Less than primary' completed includes the following categories: Grade 1/Sub A/Class 1; Grade 2/Sub B/Class 2; Grade 3/Standard 1/AET 1 (KHARI RI GUDE, SANLI); Grade 4/Standard 2; Grade 5/Standard 3/AET 2; Grade 6/Standard 4.
- Note 3: 'Primary' completed refers to Grade 7/Standard 5/AET 3.
- Note 4: 'Some secondary' completed includes the following categories: Grade 8/Standard 6/Form 1; Grade 9/Standard 7/Form 2/AET 4; Grade 10/Standard 8/Form 3; Grade 11/Standard 9/Form 4; NTC 1/N1/NC (v) Level 2; NTC 2/N2/NC (v) Level 3; Certificate with less than Grade 12/Std 10; and Diploma with less than Grade 12/Std 10.
- Note 5: 'Secondary' completed includes the following categories: Grade 12/Standard 10/Form 5/Matric (No Exemption); Grade 12/Standard 10/Form 5/Matric (Exemption/Bachelor's pass); and NTC 3/N3/NC (v) Level 4.
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- Note 8: 'Degree' includes the following categories: Post Higher Diploma (Master's, Doctoral Diploma); Bachelor's degree; Bachelor's degree and Postgraduate Diploma; Honours degree and Higher degree (Master's/PhD).
- Note 9: 'Other' includes the following categories: Other and Do not know.

Figure 1 compares Bachelor's degree-holders to the general population across a range of countries, using data calculated and obtained from the World Bank. The proportion of South Africans aged 25 and above who had a degree in 2018 (6.8%) was very low compared with many countries. South Africa's performance was significantly poorer than that of multiple countries in Europe, Asia and the Americas. Even though South Africa performed better compared with Rwanda (4.1%) and Burkina Faso (2.1%), it had a lower performance compared with Singapore (31.6%), Brazil (16.5%) and Denmark (32.4%), some of which have a similar gross domestic product (GDP) to South Africa.

FIGURE 1: Percentage of population aged 25 years and above with at least a completed bachelor's or equivalent degree (ISCED 6 or higher) – total, 2018.

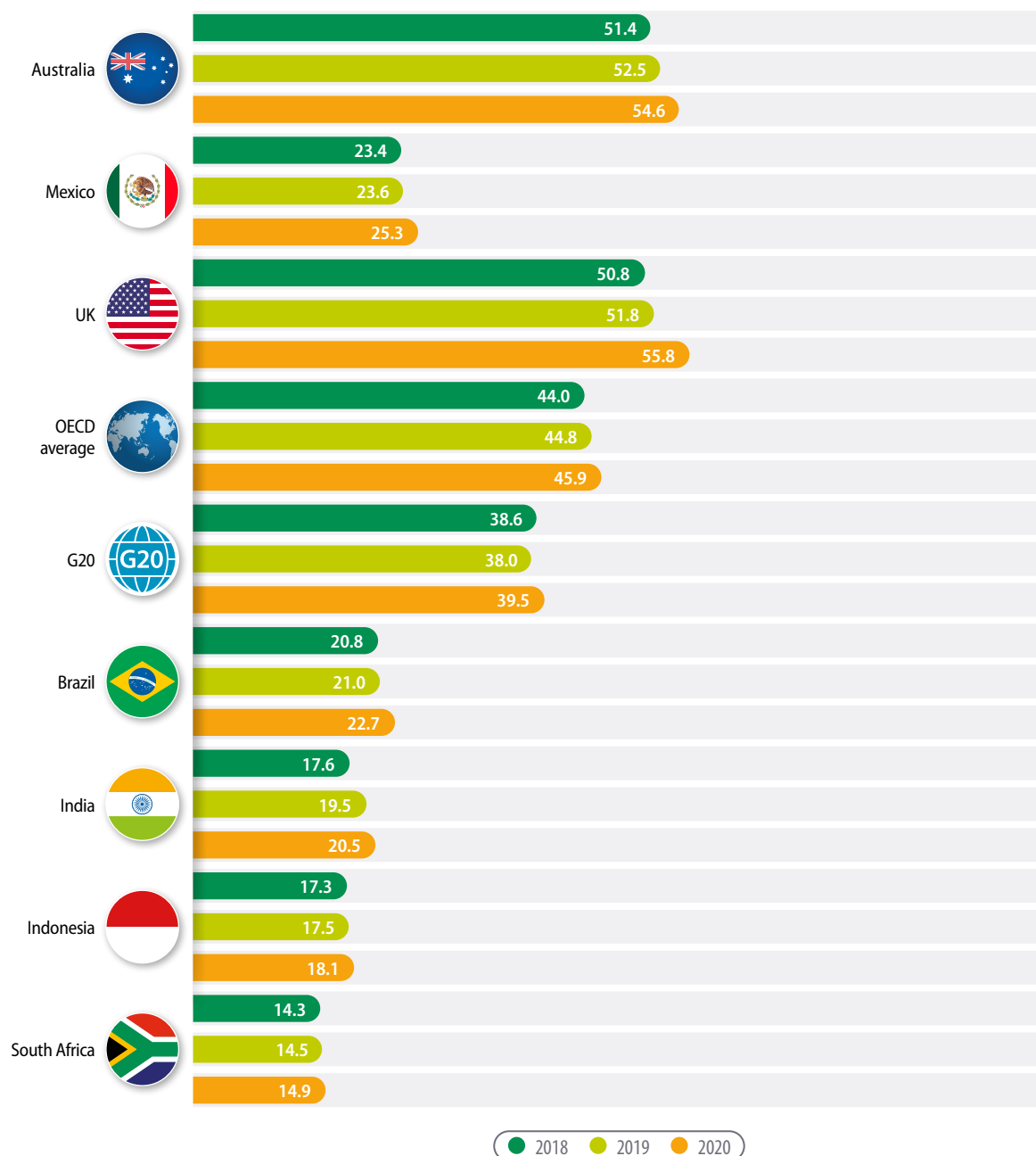


Sources: World Bank (accessed 11 May 2023) and Labour Market Dynamics 2018 (Nesstar, accessed 11 May 2023)

Note: The proportions for all other countries were obtained from the World Bank, while proportions for South Africa were calculated using data from Stats SA.

Figure 2 illustrates the proportion of 25–34-year-olds in the South African population with tertiary education, expressed as a percentage of the total number of people in the same age range, compared with chosen nations throughout the world. The percentage of South Africans in this age group that completed tertiary education stood at 14.3%, 14.5% and 14.9% in 2018, 2019 and 2020, respectively. In all three years, South Africa, Indonesia, India, Brazil and Mexico all performed lower than the OECD averages of 44.0% in 2018, 44.8% in 2019 and 45.9% in 2020, with South Africa being the lowest performing country.




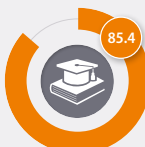









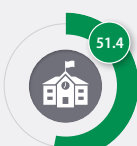







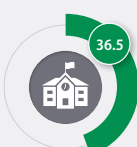


FIGURE 2: Percentage of population aged 25–34 years with tertiary education, 2018–2020.



Source: OECD.Stat (extracted 12 May 2023)

Table 4 shows the highest level of educational attainment of the employed across a number of countries. In South Africa, the percentages of people employed who had below upper-secondary education (36.5%); upper-secondary, non-tertiary education (47.0%); and tertiary (75.3%) educational qualifications remained significantly lower than the averages for the OECD, Brazil, Indonesia, Italy and Mexico. Employed people (as a fraction of 25–64-year-olds) increased substantially as the educational levels acquired gradually became higher throughout all the countries and the OECD region.

TABLE 4: Employment by education level across countries, as percentage (%) of 25–64-year-olds, 2021.

COUNTRY/REGION	Below upper-secondary	Upper-secondary, non-tertiary	Tertiary
 OECD AVERAGE	 57.8	 75.3	 85.4
 BRAZIL	 55.0	 67.6	 80.5
 INDONESIA	 72.8	 72.6	 80.9
 ITALY	 51.4	 70.3	 82.1
 MEXICO	 63.5	 69.3	 78.1
 SOUTH AFRICA	 36.5	 47.0	 75.3










Sources: OECD (2022), *Employment by education level* (indicator). Available <https://data.oecd.org/emp/employment-by-education-level.htm> (Accessed 23 June 2022); Own calculations based on Stats SA QLFS 2021:Q1 and 2021:Q4 (Nesstar, accessed 23 August 2023)

Note 1: The proportions for all other countries were obtained from the OECD, while proportions for South Africa were calculated using data from Stats SA.

Note 2: The values for 2021 were based on the average of the four quarters in 2021.

According to Table 5, the highest level of educational attainment of the workforce has improved significantly since 2014. It shows that, in 2022, 66.0% of the employed persons aged 25–64 years had some secondary and secondary (Grade 12 or equivalent) as their highest level of educational attainment, while 12% of the workforce had a degree. Over the course of eight years, the percentage of employed persons with a degree climbed noticeably, rising from 8.0% (1 114) to 12.0% (1701). Compared with the general population, the workforce had a larger percentage of people with a degree (12.0%) than did the general population (7.0%) See Table 1.

TABLE 5: Number and share of persons aged 25–64 years who were employed (official definition) by highest level of educational attainment, 2014:Q3 and 2022:Q3.










HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	2014:Q3		2022:Q3	
	Number employed '000'	Share	Number employed '000'	Share
 No schooling	378	2.7%	151	1.0%
 Less than primary	1 003	7.2%	650	4.0%
 Primary	561	4.0%	427	3.0%
 Some secondary	4 603	33.2%	4 401	30.0%
 Secondary (Grade 12 or equivalent)	4 243	30.6%	5 339	36.0%
 Certificate	546	3.9%	576	4.0%
 Diploma	1 250	9.0%	1 234	8.0%
 Degree	1 114	8.0%	1 701	12.0%
 Other	167	1.2%	221	2.0%
TOTAL	13 865	100.0%	14 700	100%

Source: Stats SA QLFS 2014:Q3 and 2022:Q3 (Nesstar, accessed 4 May 2023)

- Note 1: 'No schooling' includes the following categories: No schooling and Grade R/0.
- Note 2: 'Less than primary' completed includes the following categories: Grade 1/Sub A/Class 1; Grade 2/Sub B/Class 2; Grade 3/Standard 1/AET 1 (KHARI RI GUDE, SANLI); Grade 4/Standard 2; Grade 5/Standard 3/AET 2; Grade 6/Standard 4.
- Note 3: 'Primary' completed refers to Grade 7/Standard 5/AET 3.
- Note 4: 'Some secondary' completed includes the following categories: Grade 8/Standard 6/Form 1; Grade 9/Standard 7/Form 2/AET 4; Grade 10/Standard 8/Form 3; Grade 11/Standard 9/Form 4; NTC 1/N1/NC (v) Level 2; NTC 2/N2/NC (v) Level 3; Certificate with less than Grade 12/Std 10; and Diploma with less than Grade 12/Std 10.
- Note 5: 'Secondary' completed includes the following categories: Grade 12/Standard 10/Form 5/Matric (No Exemption); Grade 12/Standard 10/Form 5/Matric (Exemption/Bachelor's pass); and NTC 3/N3/NC (v) Level 4.
- Note 6: 'Certificate' includes the following categories: N4/NTC 4; N5/NTC 5; N6/NTC 6; and Certificate with Grade 12/Std 10.
- Note 7: 'Diploma' includes the following categories: Diploma with Grade 12/Std 10 and Higher Diploma.
- Note 8: 'Degree' includes the following categories: Post Higher Diploma (Master's, Doctoral Diploma); Bachelor's degree; Bachelor's degree and Postgraduate Diploma; Honours degree and Higher degree (Master's/PhD).
- Note 9: 'Other' includes the following categories: Other and Do not know.

Table 6 provides statistics on the highest level of educational attainment of unemployed persons. It shows that the highest level of educational attainment among the unemployed has increased over the past eight years. For example, the majority of people aged 25–64 years who were unemployed in 2022 had some secondary as their highest level of education. Over one-third of unemployed persons had secondary education (matric) as their highest level of educational attainment in 2022. Not surprisingly, a very small proportion of the unemployed had a degree in 2022 (2.9%).

TABLE 6: Number and share of persons aged 25–64 years who were unemployed (official definition) by highest level of educational attainment, 2014:Q3 and 2022:Q3.

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	2014:Q3			2022:Q3		
	Number employed '000'	Share	Unemployment rate	Number employed '000'	Share	Unemployment rate
 No schooling	73	1.9%	16.2%	48	0.8%	24.1%
 Less than primary	283	7.4%	22.0%	301	4.9%	31.6%
 Primary	164	4.3%	22.6%	202	3.3%	32.2%
 Some secondary	1 878	49.0%	29.0%	2 820	45.8%	39.1%
 Secondary (Grade 12 or equivalent)	1 114	29.1%	20.8%	2 126	34.6%	28.5%
 Certificate	119	3.1%	17.9%	196	3.2%	25.4%
 Diploma	123	3.2%	9.0%	235	3.8%	16.0%
 Degree	51	1.3%	4.4%	178	2.9%	9.5%
 Other	25	0.7%	13.2%	46	0.7%	17.2%
TOTAL	3 831	100.0%	21.6%	6 153	100.0%	29.5%

Source: Stats SA QLFS 2014:Q3 and 2022:Q3 (Nesstar, accessed 4 May 2023)

Note 1: 'No schooling' includes the following categories: No schooling and Grade R/0.

Note 2: 'Less than primary' completed includes the following categories: Grade 1/Sub A/Class 1; Grade 2/Sub B/Class 2; Grade 3/Standard 1/AET 1 (KHARI RI GUDE, SANLI); Grade 4/Standard 2; Grade 5/Standard 3/AET 2; Grade 6/Standard 4.

Note 3: 'Primary' completed refers to Grade 7/Standard 5/AET 3.

Note 4: 'Some secondary' completed includes the following categories: Grade 8/Standard 6/Form 1; Grade 9/Standard 7/Form 2/AET 4; Grade 10/Standard 8/Form 3; Grade 11/Standard 9/Form 4; NTC 1/N1/NC (v) Level 2; NTC 2/N2/NC (v) Level 3; Certificate with less than Grade 12/Std 10; and Diploma with less than Grade 12/Std 10.

Note 5: 'Secondary' completed includes the following categories: Grade 12/Standard 10/Form 5/Matric (No Exemption); Grade 12/Standard 10/Form 5/Matric (Exemption/Bachelor's pass); and NTC 3/N3/NC (v) Level 4.

Note 6: 'Certificate' includes the following categories: N4/NTC 4; N5/NTC 5; N6/NTC 6; and Certificate with Grade 12/Std 10.

Note 7: 'Diploma' includes the following categories: Diploma with Grade 12/Std 10 and Higher Diploma.

Note 8: 'Degree' includes the following categories: Post Higher Diploma (Master's, Doctoral Diploma); Bachelor's degree; Bachelor's degree and Postgraduate Diploma; Honours degree and Higher degree (Master's/PhD).

Note 9: 'Other' includes the following categories: Other and Do not know.



CONCLUSION

The data in this Fact Sheet demonstrates that the highest level of educational attainment of South Africans aged 25–64 years has risen significantly over the past eight years. For example, the proportion of people who had a degree as their highest level of educational attainment increased from 5.2% in 2014 to 7.0% in 2022, while those with secondary education as their highest level of educational attainment increased from 27.4% in 2014 to 33.2% in 2022. However, racial disparities therein continue to reflect historical legacies, with Whites continuing to have significantly higher levels of educational attainment compared with Black Africans and Coloureds. Moreover, a larger share of females appeared to have a degree as their highest level of educational attainment compared with males in the same year.

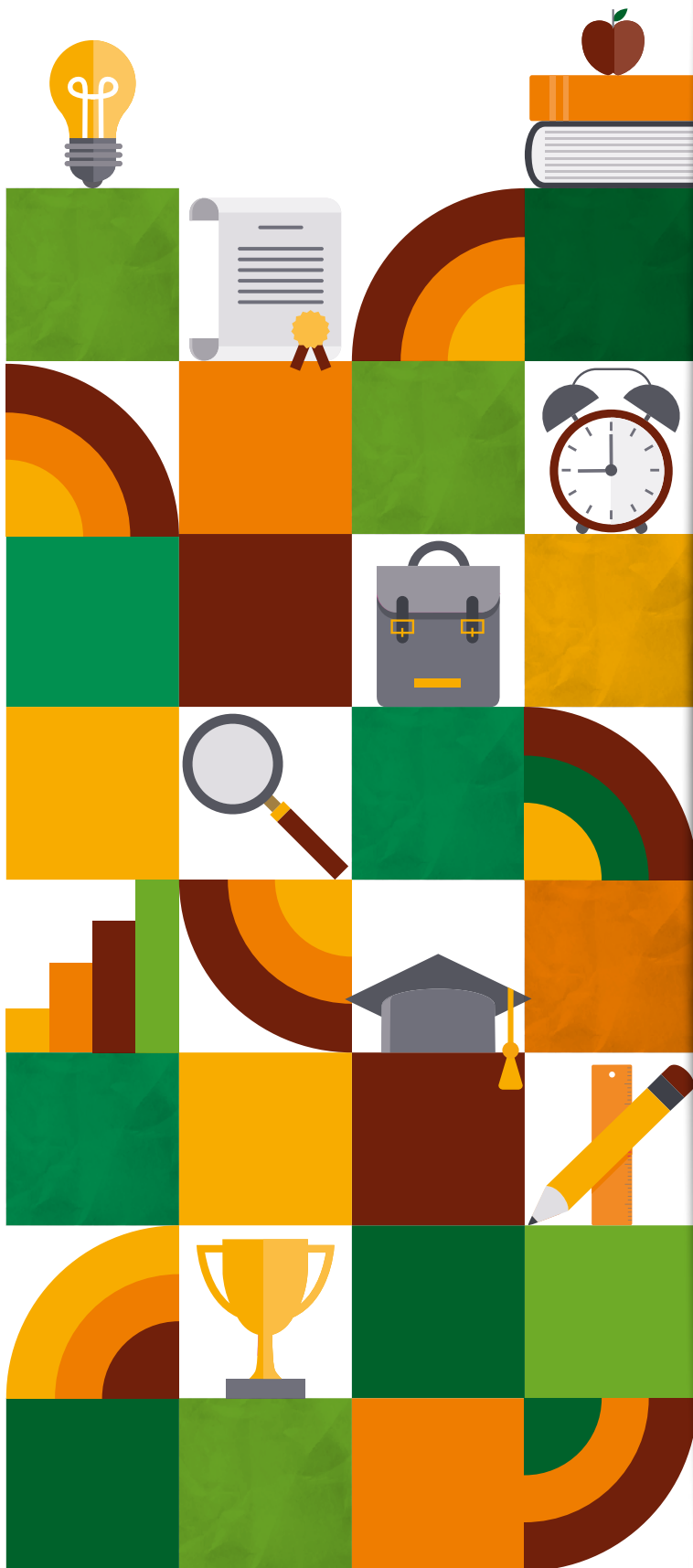
Despite South Africa's improved performance with regards to its highest level of educational attainment, it performs relatively poorer compared with many other countries. According to a global comparative analysis based on the percentage of the population aged 25 and older having at least a finished bachelor's or equivalent degree (ISCED 6) or above, South Africa's performance was significantly worse than that of several nations in Europe, Asia and the Americas, namely, Singapore (31.6%), Portugal (18.7%) and Denmark (32.4%), all of which have GDPs that are comparable with South Africa's.

The workforce had a larger proportion of people with a bachelor's degree (12.0%) than the general population (7.0%). In the case of unemployed persons, the majority had some secondary as their highest level of educational attainment. Although there was a substantial rise in the unemployment rate for persons with degrees from 4.4% in 2014 to 9.5% in 2022, the percentage is relatively lower when compared with other lower educational attainment levels. This could suggest that higher education levels generally correlate with higher employment rates. Therefore, the results of this study suggest that the government should intensify policy measures so the majority of the work force can improve their educational attainment levels in order to, in turn, improve their prospects for job security and earnings.



RESULTS

The results of this study therefore suggest that the government should intensify policy measures so the majority of the work force can improve their educational attainment levels in order to, in turn, improve their prospects for both job security and earnings.



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