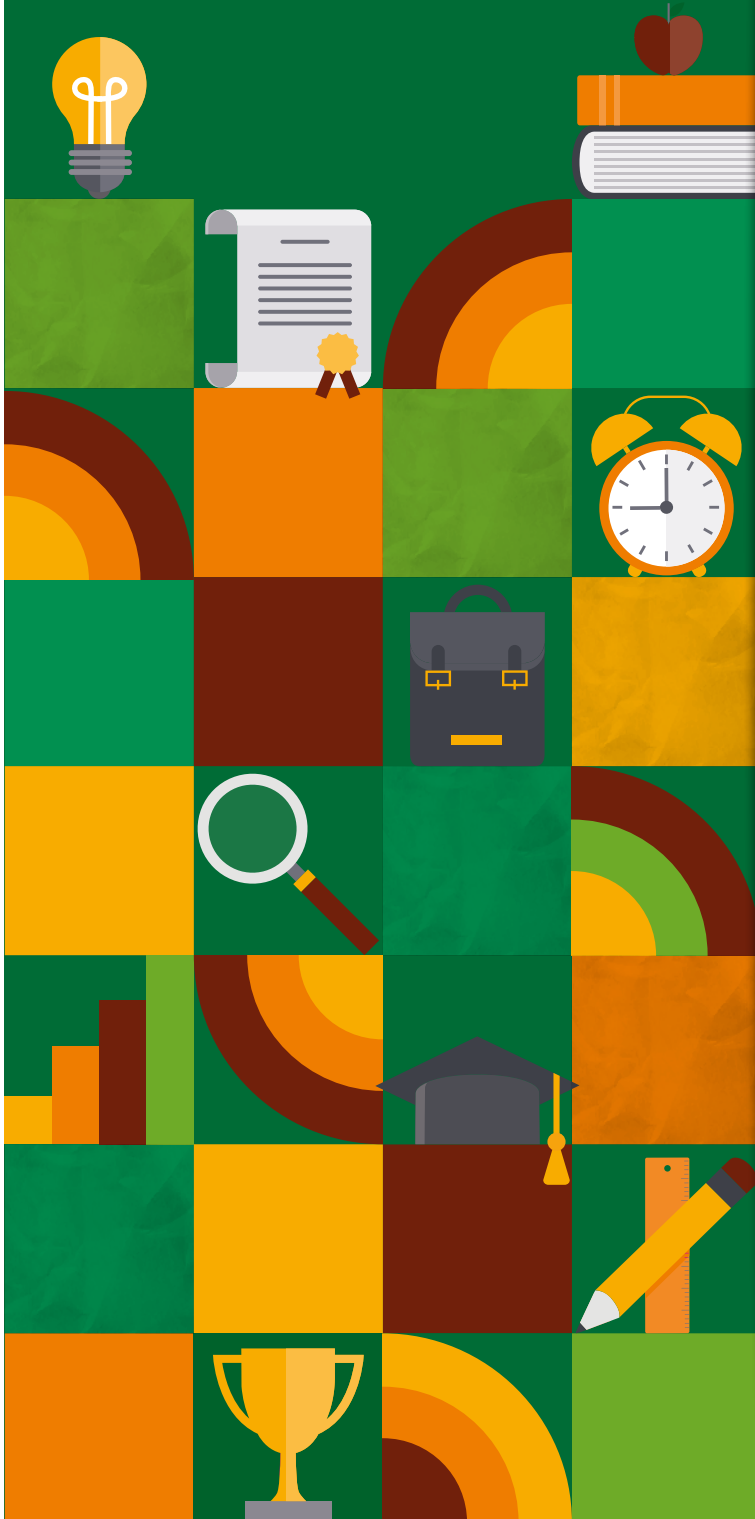


MARCH 2024

FACT SHEET



HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA



BACKGROUND

This Fact Sheet draws the attention of policymakers and other stakeholders to the progress made by South Africans in terms of their highest levels of educational attainment (HLEA). 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 different levels, disaggregated by race, gender and age?
- How does South Africa compare internationally, in terms of highest level of educational attainment?



higher education
& training

Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

2.1. ADULT

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

2.2. HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

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

2.3. 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.

2.4. EMPLOYED

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

2.5. 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

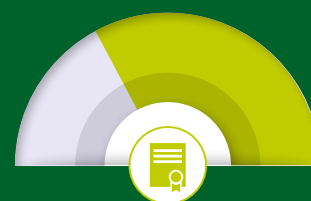
- iv. had not actively looked for work in the past four weeks but had a job or business to start at a definite date in the future and were available.
- b. Based on the expanded definition, unemployed persons are those aged 15–64 years who:
 - i. fall under official unemployment (searched and available);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



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

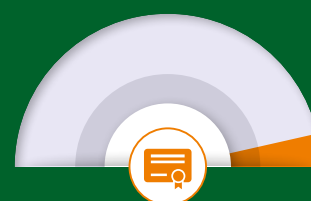
Table 1 below presents the numbers and shares of persons in the population aged 25–64 years by HLEA for the periods 2015:Q3 to 2023:Q3. The HLEA at key levels in South Africa has improved significantly over the past eight years. For example, the proportion of the 25–64-year-old population that had secondary (Grade 12 or equivalent) as the HLEA increased from 27.4% in 2015 to 33.0% in 2023 and persons with the certificates in 2023 of the 25–64-year-old group had about 3.3%. In 2023, about 6.0% of South Africans aged 25–64 years had a diploma as their HLEA, while 7.3% of this age group had a degree as their HLEA. The largest proportion of the population aged 25–64 years (36.7%) had some secondary education as their HLEA, while 12.4% of persons in this age group had primary education or less than primary as their HLEA.

HLEA OF SOUTH AFRICANS AGED 25–64 YEARS, 2023



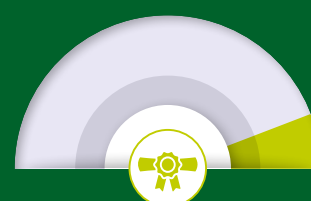
33.0%

Grade 12



3.3%

Certificates



6.0%










Diploma



7.3%

Degree

TABLE 1: Number and share of persons in the population aged 25–64 years by highest level of educational attainment, 2015:Q3 and 2023:Q3.

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	2015:Q3		2023:Q3	
	'000'	Share (%)	'000'	Share (%)
 No schooling	1 095	4.2%	717	2.3%
 Less than primary	2 698	10.4%	1 895	6.2%
 Primary	1 315	5.1%	1 193	3.9%
 Some secondary	9 548	37.0%	11 249	36.7%
 Secondary (Grade 12 or equivalent)	7 075	27.4%	10 108	33.0%
 Certificate	768	3.0%	1 024	3.3%
 Diploma	1 520	5.9%	1 851	6.0%
 Degree	1 525	6.0%	2 235	7.3%
 Other	275	1.1%	376	1.2%
TOTAL	25 818	100.0%	30 647	100.0%

Source: Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) 2015:Q3 and 2023:Q3 (Nesstar, accessed 17 January 2024).

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 below presents the distribution of the HLEA of persons in the population aged 25–64 years by gender, from 2015:Q3 to 2023:Q3 (see p. 6). In general, the proportion of females in the 25–64-year age group tended to have a higher level of educational attainment than males. In 2023, 8.1% of females in this age group had a degree as their HLEA compared with 6.5% of males. A similar situation prevailed with diplomas. On the other hand, a higher proportion of females had no schooling in 2023 (2.4%), compared with males (2.2%). Notably, however, the proportion of females with no schooling more than halved since 2015. A startling observation, though, is that 3.3% of females had a certificate as their HLEA in 2023 compared with only 3.4% of males, resulting in slightly more females having a post-school qualification compared with males.

TABLE 2: Number and share of persons in the population aged 25–64-years by HLEA and gender, 2015:Q3 and 2023:Q3.

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF THE EMPLOYED	2015:Q3				
	MALE		FEMALE		TOTAL
	'000'	Share (%)	'000'	Share (%)	'000'
 No schooling	450	3.6%	645	4.9%	1 095
 Less than primary	1 378	10.9%	1 320	10.0%	2 698
 Primary	636	5.1%	679	5.2%	1 315
 Some secondary	4 711	37.3%	4 838	36.7%	9 548
 Secondary (Grade 12 or equivalent)	3 540	28.0%	3 535	26.8%	7 075
 Certificate	367	2.9%	401	3.0%	768
 Diploma	648	5.1%	872	6.6%	1 520
 Degree	756	6.0%	769	5.8%	1 525
 Other	151	1.2%	124	0.9%	275
TOTAL	12 636	100.0%	13 182	100.0%	25 818

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF THE EMPLOYED

2023:Q3

	MALE		FEMALE		TOTAL
	'000'	Share (%)	'000'	Share (%)	'000'
 No schooling	339	2.2%	378	2.4%	717
 Less than primary	998	6.6%	897	5.8%	1 895
 Primary	626	4.1%	566	3.7%	1 193
 Some secondary	5 617	37.1%	5 632	36.5%	11 249
 Secondary (Grade 12 or equivalent)	5 072	33.5%	5 036	32.5%	10 108
 Certificate	511	3.4%	513	3.3%	1 024
 Diploma	807	5.3%	1 044	6.7%	1 851
 Degree	986	6.5%	1 249	8.1%	2 235
 Other	201	1.3%	175	1.1%	376
TOTAL	15 157	100.0%	15 490	100.0%	30 647

Source: Stats SA QLFS 2015:Q3 and 2023:Q3 (Nesstar, accessed 17 January 2024).

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 HLEA of persons in the population aged 25–64 years by race, from 2015:Q3 to 2023: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 2023, 28.6% of Whites had a degree, while 4.8% of Coloureds and 5.2% of Black Africans had a degree. In 2023, the proportion of persons with no schooling was highest in the Black African population and lowest among Whites. However, in the last eight years, the proportion of Black Africans with no schooling dropped substantially. Although the proportion of Black Africans with a degree increased by less than 2.0% over the past eight years, the actual number of Black Africans with degrees almost doubled over this period.

TABLE 3: Number and share of persons in the population aged 25–64-years by HLEA and race, 2015:Q3 and 2023:Q3.

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF THE EMPLOYED	BLACK AFRICAN			
	2015:Q3		2023:Q3	
	'000'	Share (%)	'000'	Share (%)
 No schooling	1 020	5.1%	669	2.7%
 Less than primary	2 404	11.9%	1 696	6.8%
 Primary	1 108	5.5%	1 060	4.3%
 Some secondary	8 039	39.9%	9 747	39.3%
 Secondary (Grade 12 or equivalent)	5 070	25.2%	7 948	32.0%
 Certificate	580	2.9%	811	3.3%
 Diploma	971	4.8%	1 310	5.3%
 Degree	724	3.6%	1 283	5.2%
 Other	215	1.1%	278	1.1%
TOTAL	20 132	100.0%	24 802	100.0%










HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF THE EMPLOYED

COLOURED










	2015:Q3		2023:Q3	
	'000'	Share (%)	'000'	Share (%)
 No schooling	59	2.4%	34	1.2%
 Less than primary	251	10.2%	179	6.6%
 Primary	179	7.3%	125	4.6%
 Some secondary	1 039	42.4%	1 119	41.1%
 Secondary (Grade 12 or equivalent)	635	25.9%	880	32.3%
 Certificate	54	2.2%	60	2.2%
 Diploma	115	4.7%	144	5.3%
 Degree	88	3.6%	127	4.8%
 Other	30	1.2%	53	1.9%
TOTAL	2 451	100.0%	2 721	100.0%

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF THE EMPLOYED

INDIAN/ASIAN

	2015:Q3		2023:Q3	
	'000'	Share (%)	'000'	Share (%)
 No schooling	5	0.6%	5	0.6%
 Less than primary	30	3.9%	13	1.5%
 Primary	20	2.6%	4	0.5%
 Some secondary	150	19.6%	144	16.9%
 Secondary (Grade 12 or equivalent)	355	46.2%	399	46.7%
 Certificate	15	1.9%	12	1.4%
 Diploma	77	10.0%	76	8.9%
 Degree	111	14.5%	176	20.6%
 Other	6	0.8%	25	2.9%
TOTAL	768	100.0%	853	100.0%

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF THE EMPLOYED

	WHITE			
	2015:Q3		2023:Q3	
	'000'	Share (%)	'000'	Share (%)
 No schooling	11	0.4%	10	0.4%
 Less than primary	13	0.5%	7	0.3%
 Primary	8	0.3%	3	0.1%
 Some secondary	320	13.0%	239	10.5%
 Secondary (Grade 12 or equivalent)	1 014	41.1%	882	38.8%
 Certificate	119	4.8%	140	6.2%
 Diploma	357	14.5%	320	14.1%
 Degree	602	24.4%	650	28.6%
 Other	23	0.9%	21	0.9%
TOTAL	2 466	100.0%	2 271	100.0%

Source: Stats SA QLFS 2015:Q3 and 2023:Q3 (Nesstar, accessed 17 January 2024).

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.

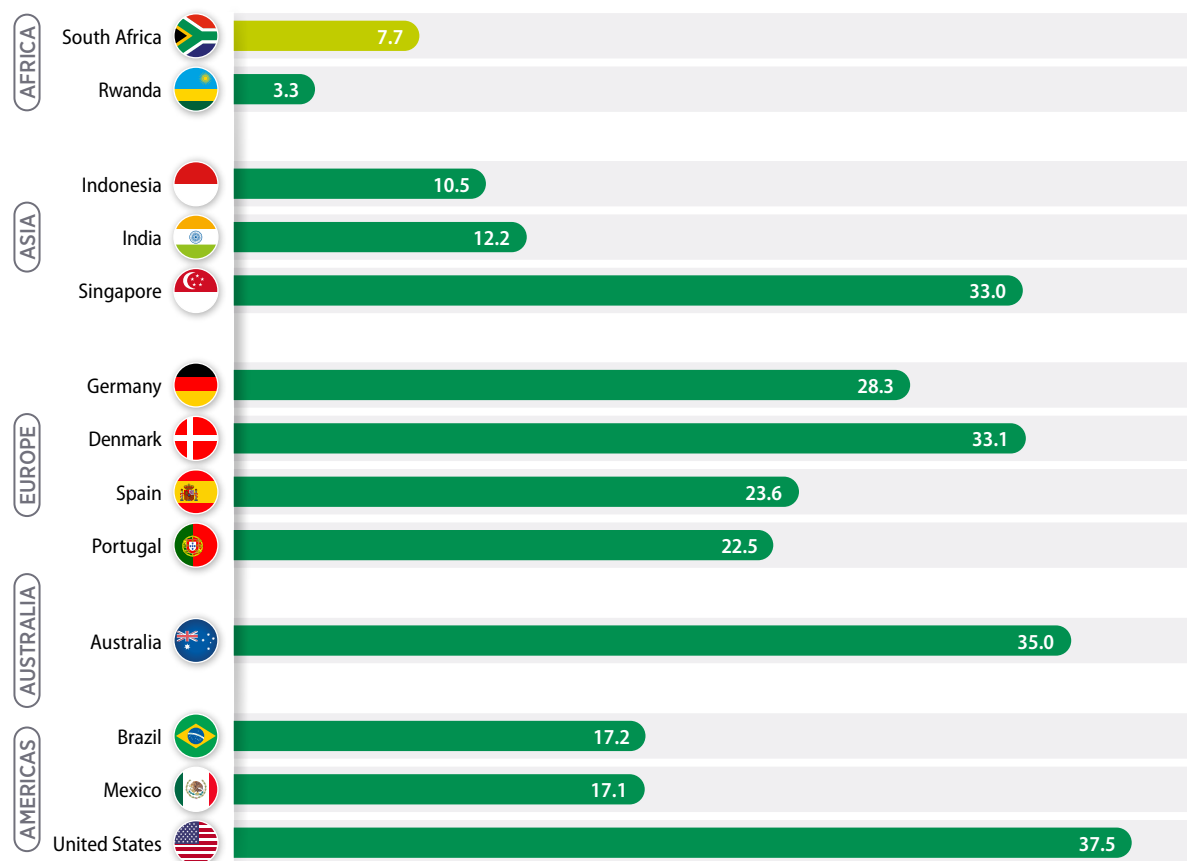
Note 7: 'Diploma' includes the following categories: Diploma with Grade 12/Std 10 and Higher Diploma.

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.

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 2020 (7.7%), is very low when compared with other 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 (3.3%), it had a lower performance compared with Singapore (33.0%), Brazil (17.2%) and Denmark (33.1%), 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, 2020.

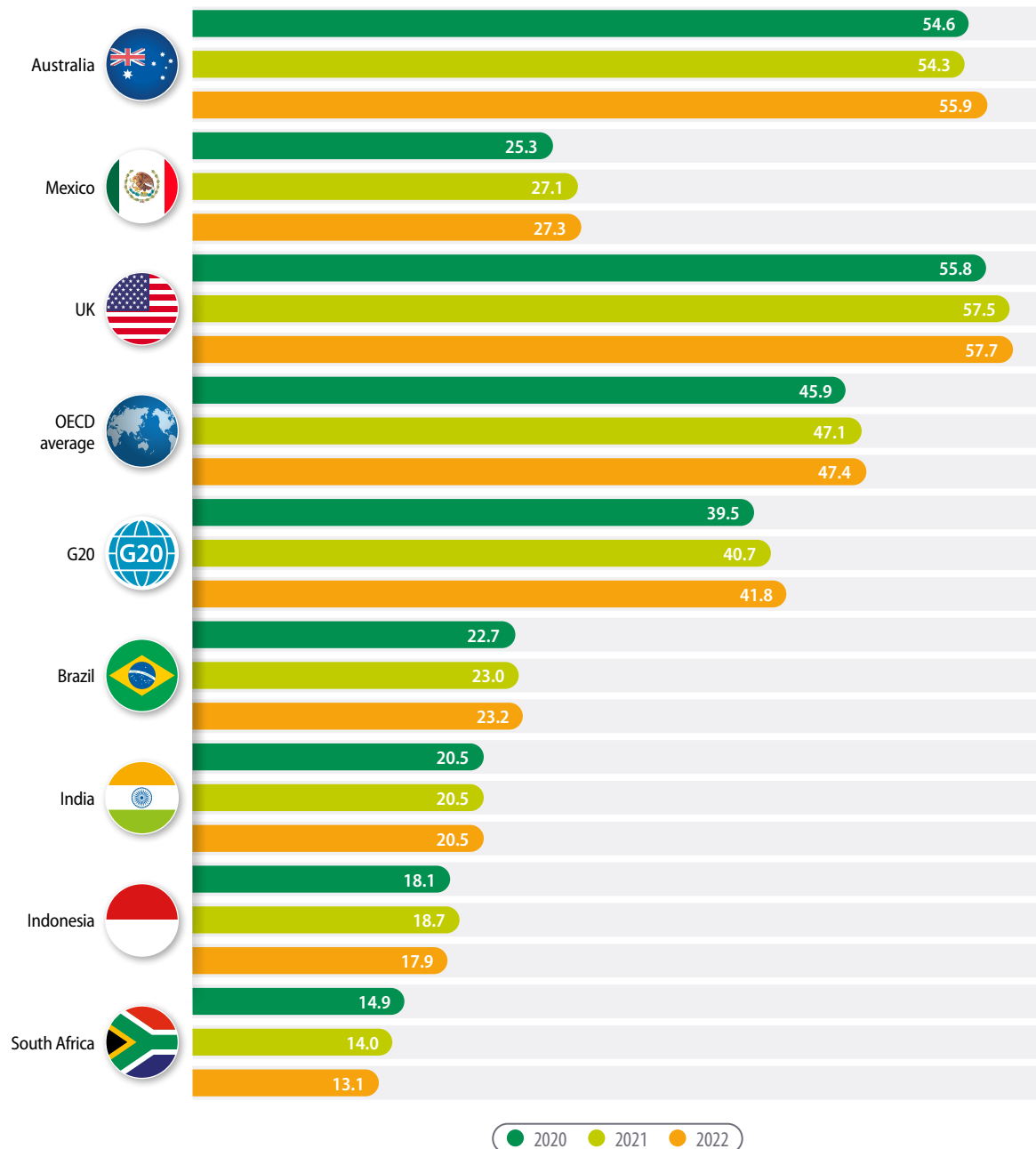


Sources: World Bank (accessed 18 January 2024) and (Nesstar Downloaded 18 January 2024)

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 14.9%, 14.0% and 13.1% in 2020, 2021 and 2022, respectively. In all three years, South Africa, Indonesia, India, Brazil and Mexico all performed lower than the OECD averages of 45.9% in 2020, 47.1% in 2021 and 47.4% in 2022, with South Africa being the lowest performing country.



















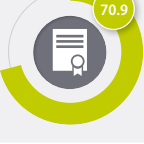





FIGURE 2: Percentage of population aged 25–34 years with tertiary education, 2020–2022



Source: OECD. Stat (Extracted 23 January 2024)

Table 4 shows the employment rate by HLEA of persons across several countries. In South Africa, the percentages of employed people who had below upper-secondary education (44.7%); upper-secondary, non-tertiary education (55.4%) 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 education levels acquired gradually became higher throughout all the countries and the OECD region.

TABLE 4: Employment by HLEA across countries as percentage (%) of 25–64-year-olds, 2022

COUNTRY/REGION	Below upper-secondary	Upper-secondary, non-tertiary	Tertiary
 OECD AVERAGE	 59.4	 76.8	 86.4
 BRAZIL	 55.0	 67.6	 80.5
 INDONESIA	 74.7	 72.9	 81.1
 ITALY	 53.3	 72.3	 83.4
 MEXICO	 65.4	 70.9	 80.2
 SOUTH AFRICA	 44.7	 55.4	 75.3










Source: OECD (2024), *Employment by education level (indicator)*. Available <https://data.oecd.org/emp/employment-by-education-level.htm> (Accessed 23 January 2024)

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 2022 were based on the average of the four quarters in 2022.

According to Table 5, the HLEA of the South African workforce has improved significantly since 2015. It indicates that, in 2023, almost two-thirds of employed persons aged 25–64 had some secondary and secondary (Grade 12 or equivalent) as their HLEA, while 11.8% of the workforce had a degree. Over the course of eight years, the percentage of persons employed with a degree climbed noticeably, rising from 9.1% (1 314) to 11.8% (1 847). Compared with the general population, the workforce had a larger percentage of people with a degree (11.8%) than did the general population (7.3%) (See Table 1).

TABLE 5: Number and share of persons aged 25–64 who were employed (official definition) by HLEA, 2015:Q3 and 2023:Q3.

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ATTAINMENT	2015:Q3		2023:Q3	
	Number employed '000'	Share (%)	Number employed '000'	Share (%)
 No schooling	378	2.6%	186	1.2%
 Less than primary	1 156	8.0%	651	4.2%
 Primary	636	4.4%	458	2.9%
 Some secondary	4 696	32.5%	4 766	30.6%
 Secondary (Grade 12 or equivalent)	4 353	30.1%	5 494	35.2%
 Certificate	512	3.5%	631	4.0%
 Diploma	1 220	8.4%	1 344	8.6%
 Degree	1 314	9.1%	1 847	11.8%
 Other	180	1.2%	217	1.4%
TOTAL	14 446	100.0%	15 595	100.0%

Source: Stats SA QLFS 2015:Q3 and 2023:Q3 (Nesstar, accessed 17 January 2024).

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 HLEA of unemployed persons. It shows that the HLEA among the unemployed has increased over the past eight years. For example, the share of the unemployed who had matric (secondary completed) as their HLEA increased from 31.1% in 2015 to 35.3% in 2023. Similarly, those who had a degree as their HLEA increased from 1.4% in 2015 to 2.4% in 2023. Over one-third of unemployed persons had secondary education (matric) as their HLEA in 2023. Not surprisingly, a very small proportion of the unemployed had a degree in 2023 (2.4%).

TABLE 6: Number and share of persons aged 25–64 years who were unemployed (official definition), by HLEA, 2015:Q3 and 2023:Q3.

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ATTAINMENT	2015:Q3			2023:Q3		
	Number unemployed '000'	Share (%)	Unemployment rate	Number unemployed '000'	Share (%)	Unemployment rate
 No schooling	85	2.1%	18.4%	62	1.0%	25.2%
 Less than primary	254	6.3%	18.0%	267	4.3%	29.1%
 Primary	197	4.9%	23.6%	239	3.8%	34.3%
 Some secondary	1 919	47.5%	29.0%	2 827	45.1%	37.2%
 Secondary (Grade 12 or equivalent)	1 257	31.1%	22.4%	2 208	35.3%	28.7%
 Certificate	129	3.2%	20.2%	225	3.6%	26.3%
 Diploma	124	3.1%	9.2%	247	3.9%	15.5%
 Degree	56	1.4%	4.1%	149	2.4%	7.5%
 Other	17	0.4%	8.5%	38	0.6%	15.0%
TOTAL	4 039	100.0%	21.8%	6 263	100.0%	28.7%

Source: Stats SA QLFS 2015:Q3 and 2023:Q3 (Nesstar, accessed 17 January 2024).

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).

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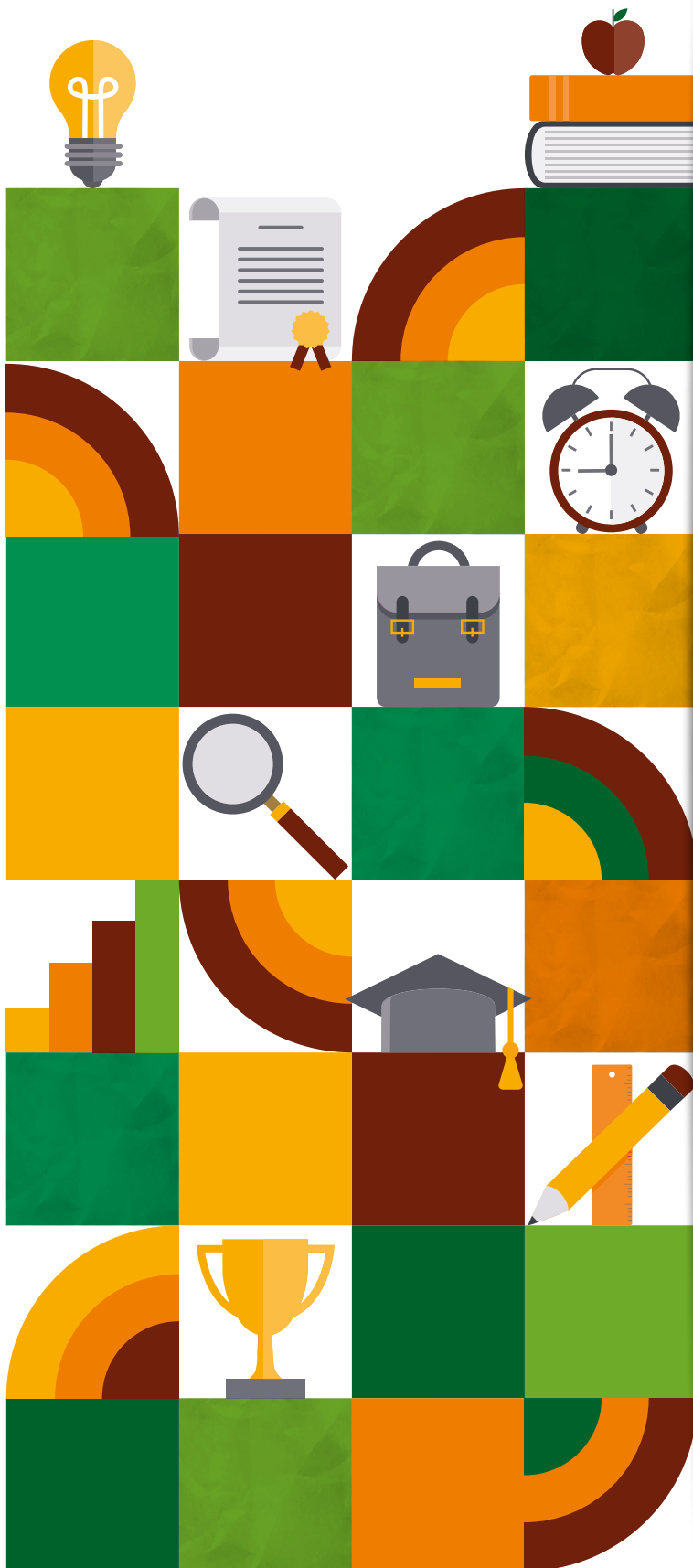


CONCLUSION

The data in this Fact Sheet demonstrates that the HLEA of South Africans aged 25–64 has risen significantly over the past eight years. For example, the proportion of people in this age group who had a degree as their HLEA increased from 6.0% in 2015 to 7.3% in 2023, while those with secondary education as their HLEA increased from 27.4% in 2015 to 33.0% in 2023. 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 HLEA compared with males in the same year.

Despite South Africa's improved performance with regards to its HLEA, 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 (7.7%) was significantly lower than that of several nations in Europe, Asia and the Americas, namely, Singapore (33.0%), Portugal (22.5%) and Denmark (33.1%), all of which have GDPs that are comparable with South Africa's.

The workforce had a larger proportion of South Africans with a Bachelor's degree (11.8%) than the general population (7.3%). In the case of unemployed persons, the majority had some secondary as their HLEA. Although there was a substantial rise in the unemployment rate for persons with degrees from 4.1% in 2015 to 7.5% in 2023, the percentage is relatively lower when compared with other lower educational attainment levels. This could suggest that higher educational levels generally correlate with higher employment rates. 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 employment.



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© Published by:

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Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) (2024). *Highest Level of Educational Attainment in South Africa*. Department of Higher Education and Training, Pretoria.

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