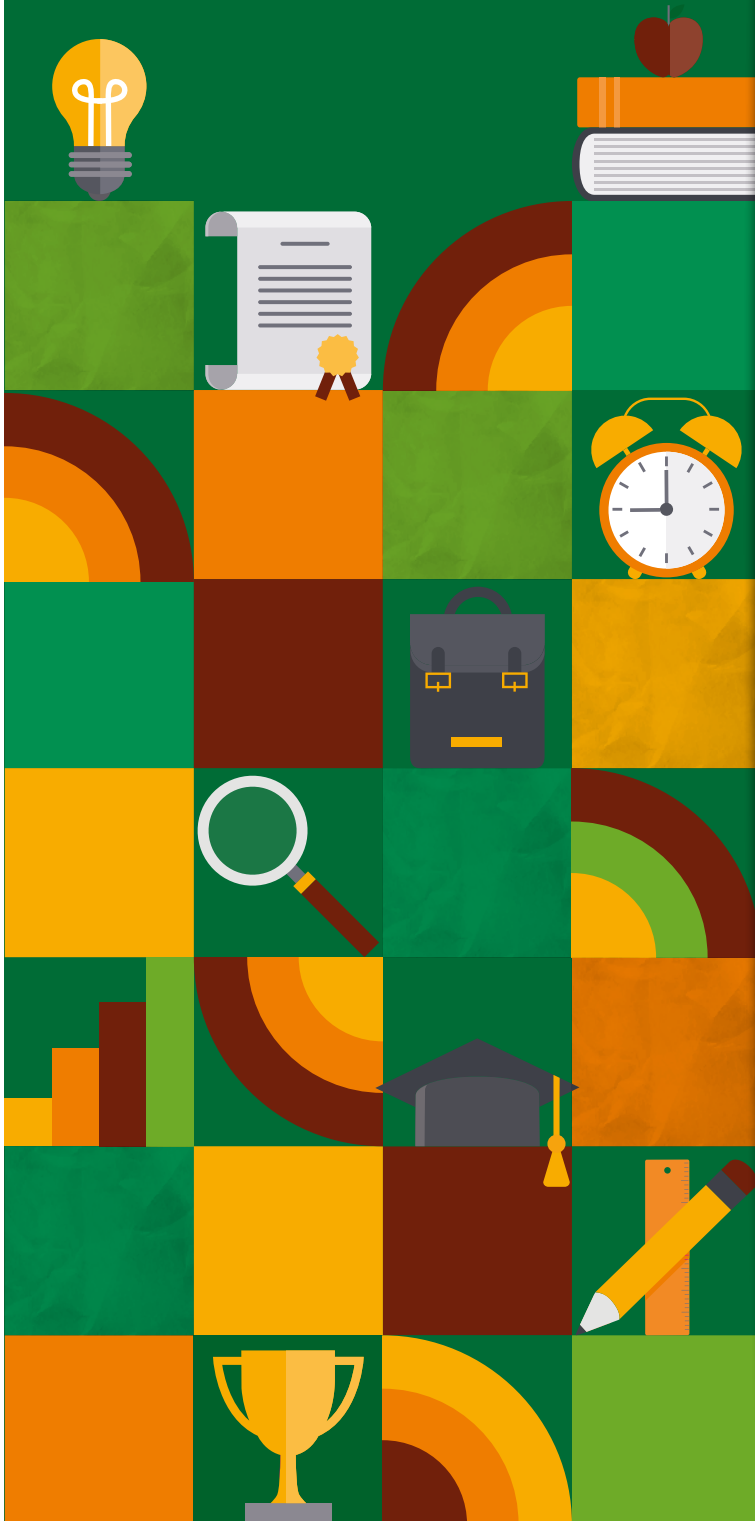


MARCH 2024

FACT SHEET



GENDER PARITY IN POST-SCHOOL EDUCATION AND TRAINING:

Access, Completion and
Labour Market Status



BACKGROUND

This Fact Sheet outlines access and completion in post-school education and training (PSET) institutions, as well as labour market status, in terms of gender. It uses the Gender Parity Index (GPI) to measure relative access to PSET opportunities of males and females. The 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.



higher education
& training

Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

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 within that age group. For instance, the GER for public universities shows enrolment as a percentage of the 20–24-year age group in the population in that year, though university students may be younger than 20 or older than 24. The GER for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges and private colleges is based on the 16–20-year age group, while that of Community Education and Training (CET) colleges is based on the 15–35-year age group.

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 females (UNESCO, 2009).¹

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



OVERVIEW OF THE GENDER PARITY IN PSET INSTITUTIONS

Table 1 shows the GPI for enrolment and completion in selected types of PSET institutions in 2021. As indicated, the GPI for enrolment and completion was in favour of females in all three types of PSET institutions, namely higher education institutions (HEIs), TVET colleges and CET colleges.

In 2021, the enrolment GPI for HEIs, TVET colleges and CET colleges was 1.56, 1.73 and 2.52 respectively, while the GPI for completion was 1.12, 1.09 and 1.18 respectively. Importantly, the enrolment GPI is so high, especially in CET colleges, that the problem of male marginalisation in the PSET sector could soon reach crisis proportions. It is therefore important to target male enrolment in PSET institutions.

TABLE 1: Gender Parity Index for enrolment and completion by institution type, 2021

INSTITUTION	GPI: ENROLMENT	GPI: COMPLETION
HEIs (public and private)	1.56	1.12
TVET colleges	1.73	1.09
CET colleges	2.52	1.18

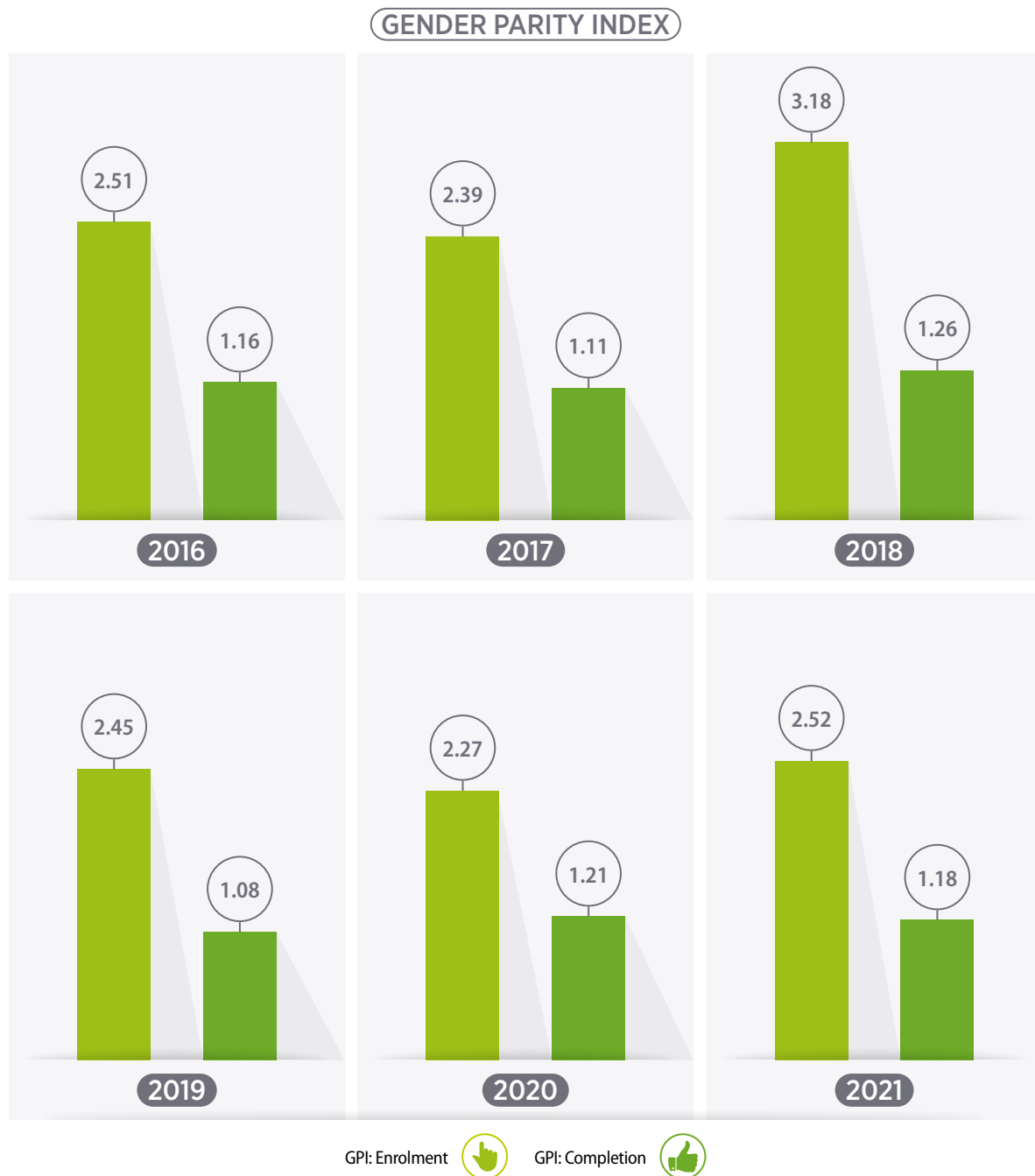
Sources: Own calculations based on DHET Statistics on Post-School Education and Training 2021, and Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) Mid-Year Population Estimates 2022



TRENDS IN THE GPI IN CET COLLEGES

Figure 1 shows the GPI for enrolment and completion in CET colleges from 2016 to 2021. Both the GPI for enrolment and completion fluctuated between 2016 and 2021. Nonetheless, trends in both enrolment and completions indicate higher female enrolment and completion rates. Disparity in favour of female students is likely to continue, given historical trends. This suggests that more needs to be done to attract more males to CET colleges.

FIGURE 1: Gender Parity Index for enrolment and completion in CET colleges, 2016–2021



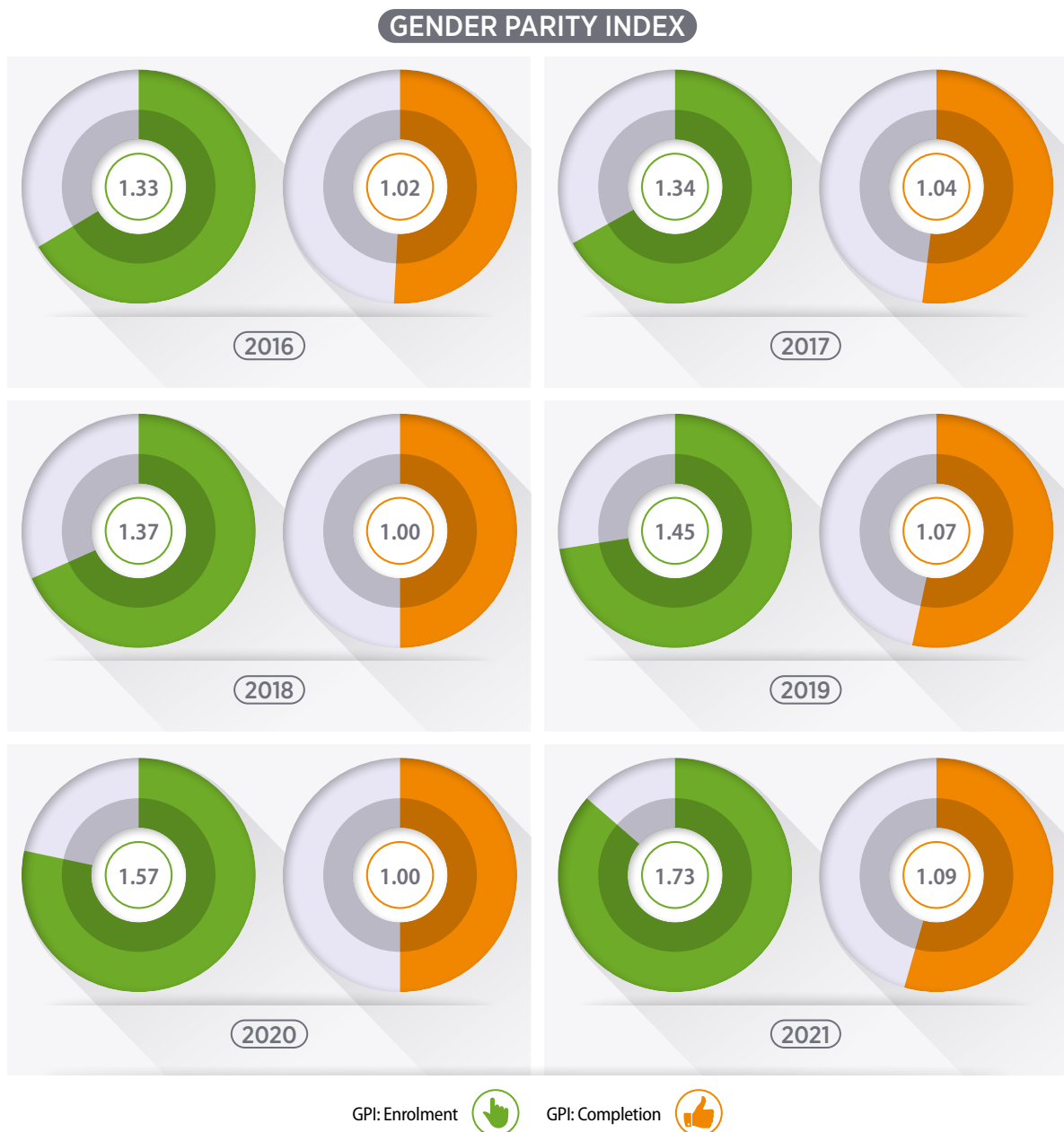
Sources: Own calculations based on DHET Statistics on Post-School Education and Training 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021; and Stats SA Mid-Year Population Estimates 2022



TRENDS IN THE GPI IN TVET COLLEGES

Figure 2 shows the GPI for enrolment and completion in TVET colleges from 2016 to 2021. The trend over this period indicates that the GPI for enrolment has generally been increasing since 2016. This is concerning, as it indicates that males are not participating in the TVET system to the same extent as females, suggesting a phenomenon of male alienation in the system. The GPI for completion fluctuated between parity in completion and disparity in favour of females in the same period.

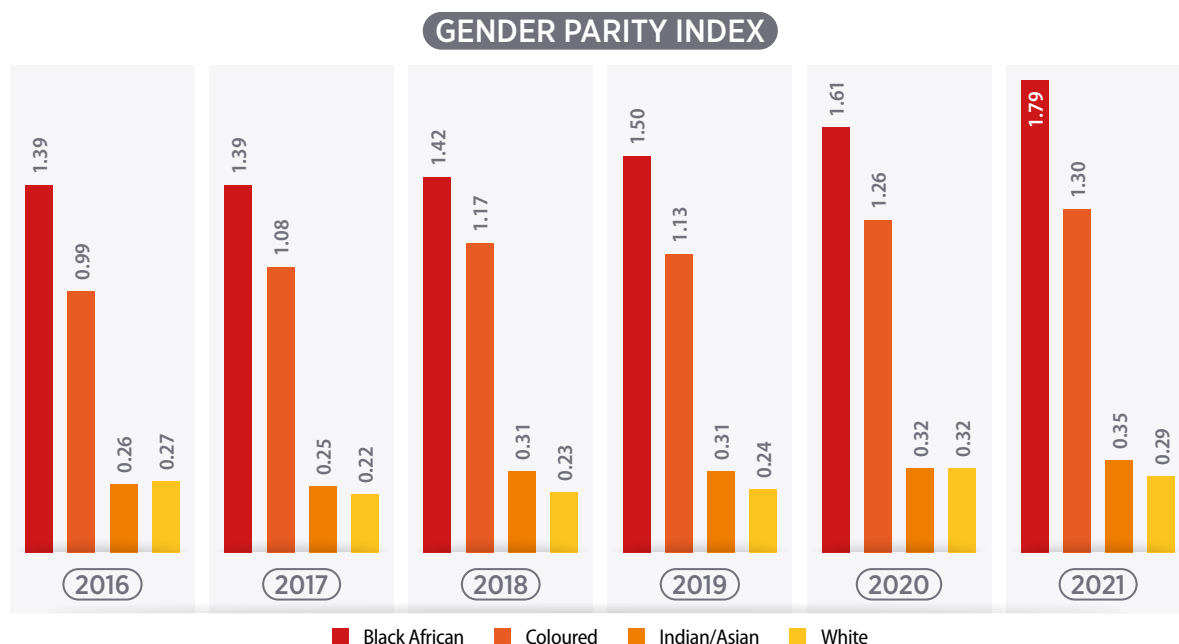
FIGURE 2: Gender Parity Index for enrolment and completion in TVET colleges, 2016–2021



Sources: Own calculations based on DHET Statistics on Post-School Education and Training 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021; and Stats SA Mid-Year Population Estimates 2022

Figure 3 shows the GPI for enrolment in TVET colleges by population group from 2016 to 2021. It shows that the high GPI levels for enrolment in TVET colleges was driven largely by the Black African and Coloured population groups. In contrast, the GPI for the White and Indian/Asian population groups reveal that male participation in TVET colleges was greater than female participation throughout the period under review. This observation demonstrates patterns of traditional male dominant participation in TVET colleges.



FIGURE 3: Gender Parity Index for enrolment in TVET colleges by population group, 2016–2021



Sources: Own calculations based on DHET Statistics on Post-School Education and Training 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021; and Stats SA Mid-Year Population Estimates 2022

The GPI for completion by vocational field during 2021 is presented in Table 2. There was disparity in favour of females for studies in both Business/Commerce and Engineering, with a GPI of 1.02 and 1.19, respectively, in 2021. It is encouraging to see more female graduates in Engineering, a field that is traditionally male-dominated.

TABLE 2: Gender Parity Index for completion in TVET colleges by vocational field, 2021

VOCATIONAL FIELD	GPI
 Business/Commerce	1.02
 Engineering	1.19

Sources: Own calculations based on DHET Technical and Vocational Education and Training Management Information System (TVETMIS) 2021

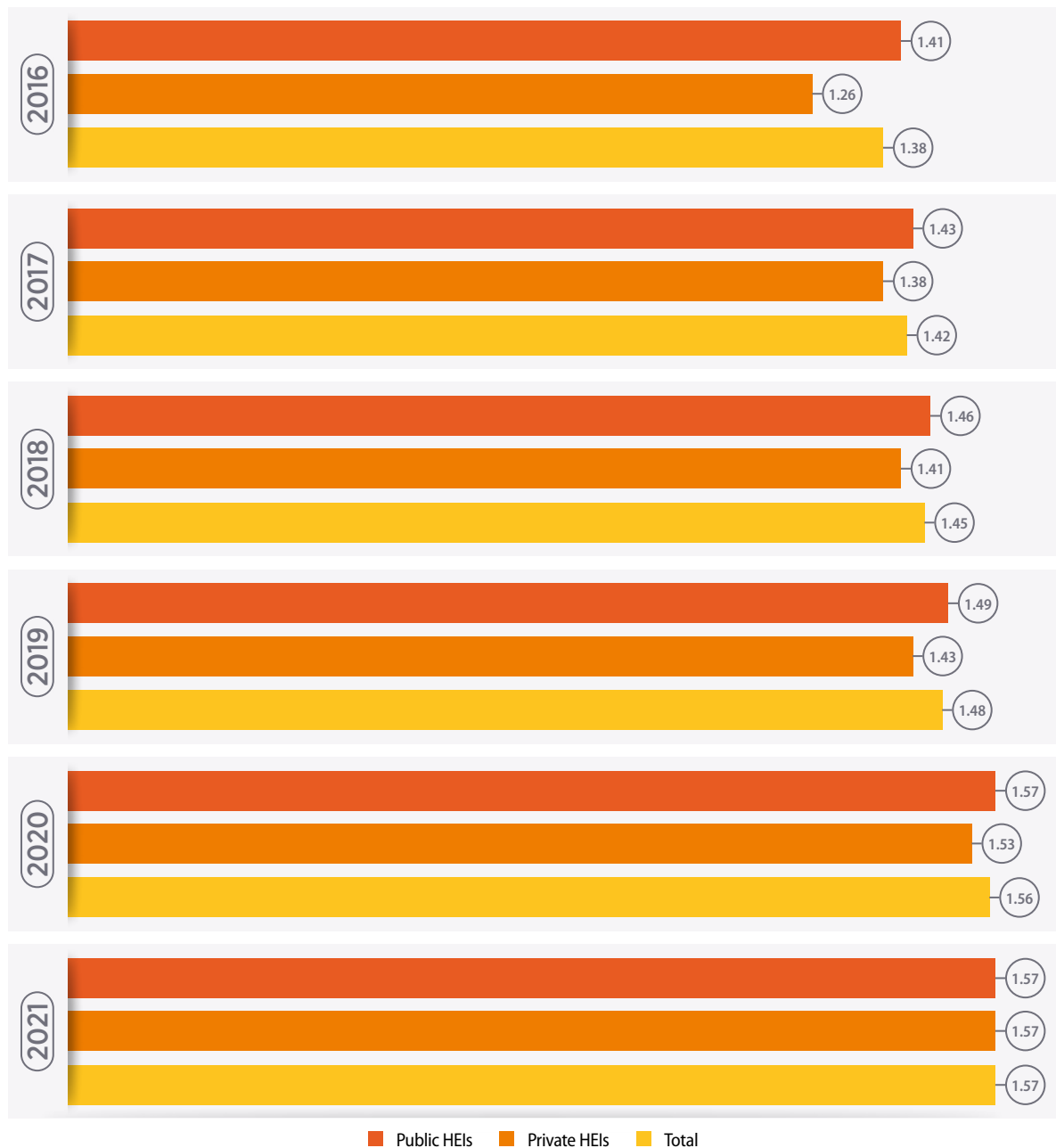
Note: The GPI for completion is the ratio of female completion rate to male completion rate. A GPI of 1 indicates parity in completion. A GPI above 1 indicates higher female completion. A GPI less than 1 indicates higher male completion.



HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS (UNIVERSITIES – PUBLIC AND PRIVATE)

Figure 4 shows trends in the GPI for enrolment in public and private HEIs for the period 2016 to 2021. More females than males participated in both public and private universities within this period, resulting in a GPI of 1.57 in 2021. Despite steady increases in the GPI at private universities since 2016, the index at public universities remained higher than at private universities over the period 2016 to 2020, and equal in 2021.

FIGURE 4: Trends in Gender Parity Index for enrolment: public and private universities, 2016–2021



Sources: Own calculations based on DHET Statistics on Post-School Education and Training 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021; Stats SA Mid-Year Population Estimates 2022; and DHET Annual Report submitted by private higher education institutions (PHEIs) for the 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 year of reporting

Figure 5 shows trends in the GPI according to population group in public and private HEIs from 2016 to 2021. Female participation consistently remained higher than male participation across all race groups for all the years in the period 2016 to 2021. To date, South Africa has done fairly well in terms of gender transformation in enrolment. However, the consistently high levels of GPI for enrolment in both public and private universities suggests that male estrangement and disengagement from the higher education sector is a matter of concern. As such, it is important to set targets for male enrolment at universities.

FIGURE 5: Gender Parity Index for enrolment in public and private universities by population group, 2016–2021



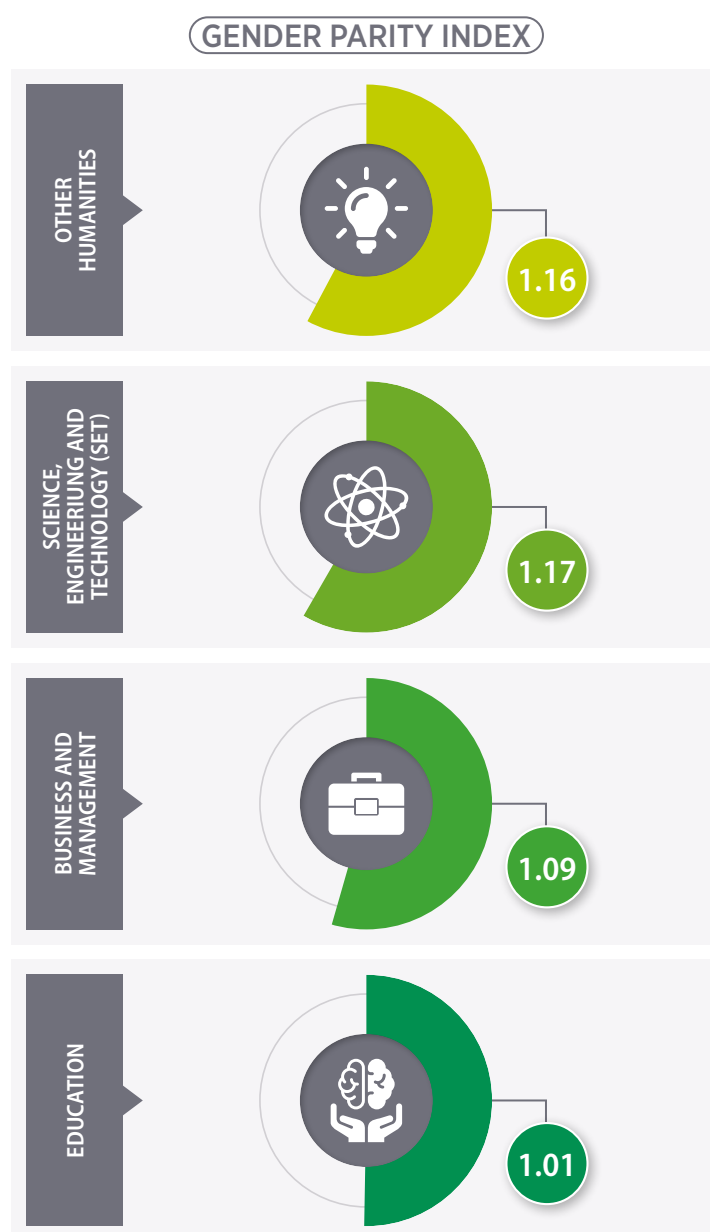
Sources: Own calculations based on DHET Statistics on Post-School Education and Training 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021; Stats SA Mid-Year Population Estimates 2022; and DHET Annual Report submitted by private higher education institutions (PHEIs) for the 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 year of reporting



FEMALE GRADUATION RATES WERE HIGHER THAN MALE GRADUATION RATES IN ALL FIELDS OF STUDY IN 2021, LEADING TO DISPARITY IN FAVOUR OF FEMALES.

Figure 6 presents trends in the GPI for graduation (completion) in public universities by field of study in 2021. Female graduation rates were higher than male graduation rates in all fields of study in 2021, leading to disparity in favour of females. The highest GPI was recorded for Science, Engineering and Technology (SET – 1.17), followed by Other Humanities (1.16), Business and Management (1.09), and Education (1.01). As with TVET colleges, more females than males graduated in fields that are traditionally male-dominated, like SET.

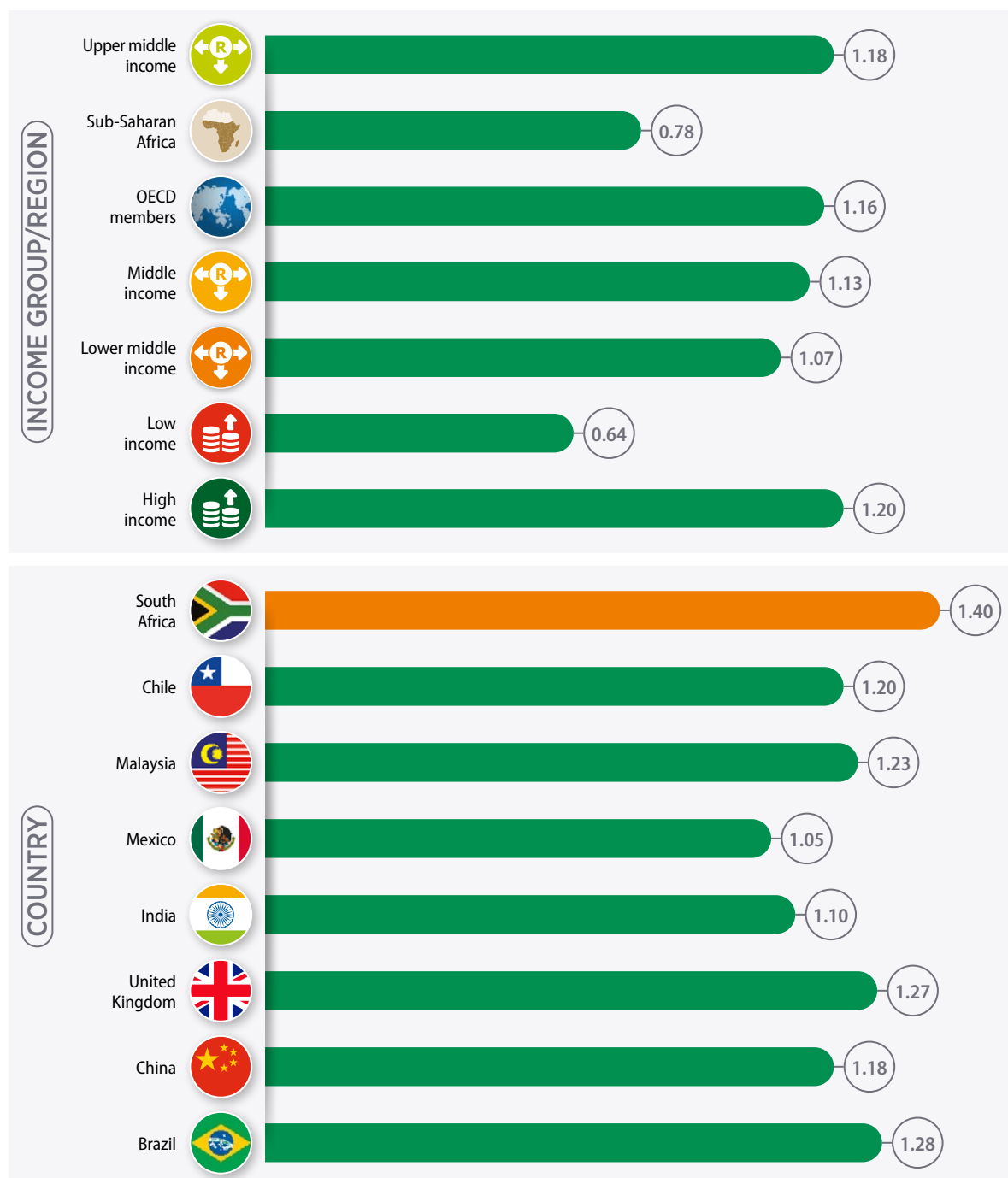
FIGURE 6: Gender Parity Index for completion (graduation) in public HEIs (universities) by field of study, 2021



Sources: Own calculations based on DHET Statistics on Post-School Education and Training 2021

Figure 7 shows the comparison of South Africa's GPI for gross tertiary enrolment with other countries, and averages of selected country groups or regions, for the year 2020. South Africa's GPI for tertiary education was among the highest in the world. In 2020, the GPI for South Africa stood at 1.40 compared with the averages for high-income countries (1.20), upper middle-income nations (1.18) and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) members (1.16). In addition, South Africa's GPI was higher than that of other BRICS countries and the United Kingdom.

FIGURE 7: Gender Parity Index for gross tertiary enrolment by country, 2020



Source: World Bank, 2023 (Accessed 23 May 2023)

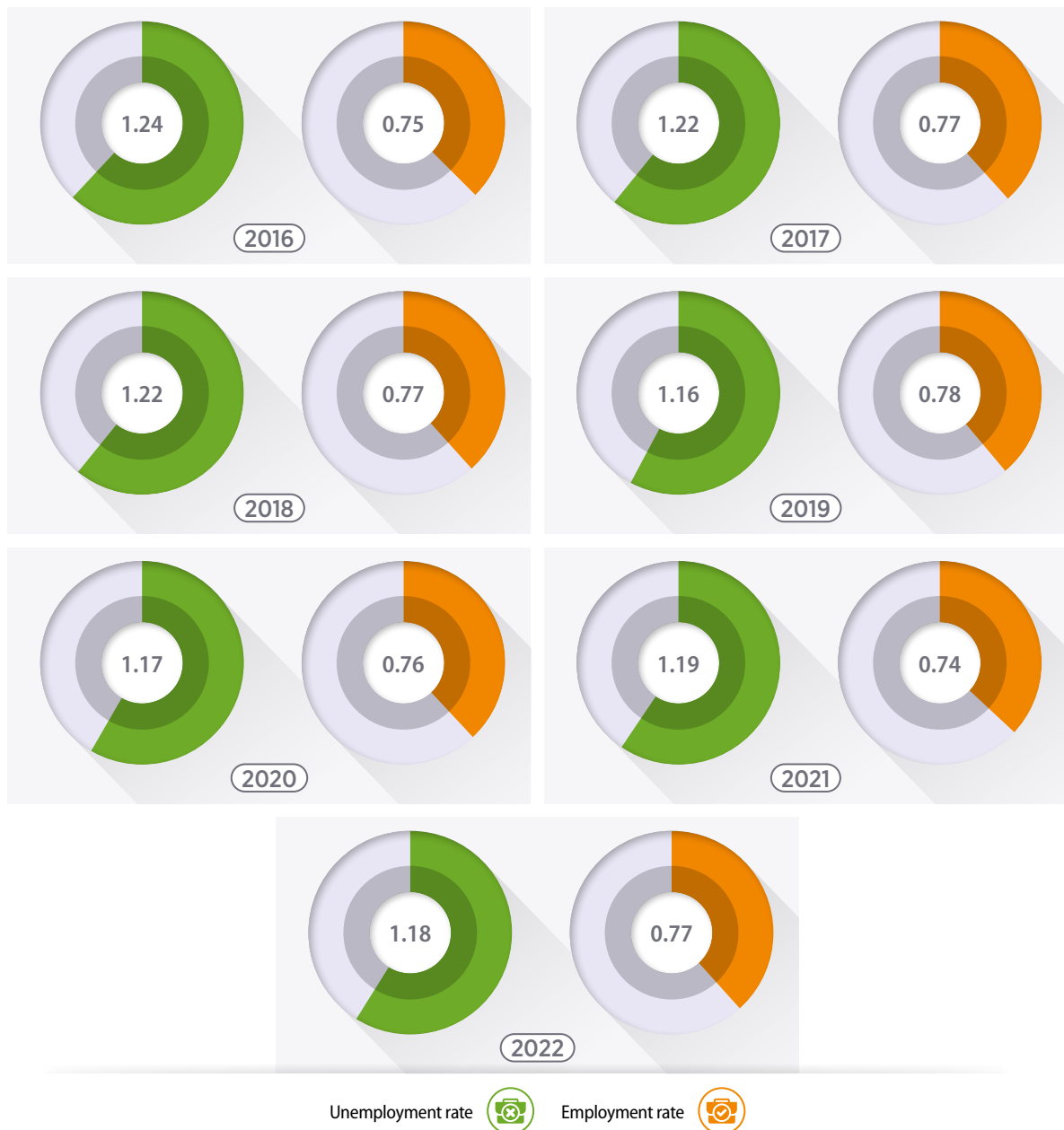
Note: Countries included in this table were selected based on the availability of latest data.



EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Figure 8 presents trends in the GPI for employment rate and unemployment rate from 2016 to 2022. Although more females than males participated in and completed their qualifications in the PSET system, there were more unemployed females than males from Q3 2016 to Q3 2022. The GPI for unemployment was 1.18 in 2022, indicating a higher female unemployment rate compared with males, while the GPI for employment was 0.77, indicating a higher employment rate for males than females. What is encouraging is that the gap in the disparity in employment in favour of males is slowly narrowing, while a similar trend is observed in terms of unemployment.

FIGURE 8: Gender Parity Index by employment and unemployment status, 2016–2022



Source: Own calculations based on Stats SA Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS Trends 2008–2022: Q3)



CONCLUSION

The findings in this Fact Sheet show that South Africa continues to soar in terms of female representation in PSET institutions in both access (enrolment) and success (completion), even among fields that are traditionally male-dominated, like SET. The GPI for tertiary enrolment has remained among the highest in the world. Although the participation rates of females in the PSET system far exceed that of their male counterparts, there is still disparity in favour of males in the labour market.

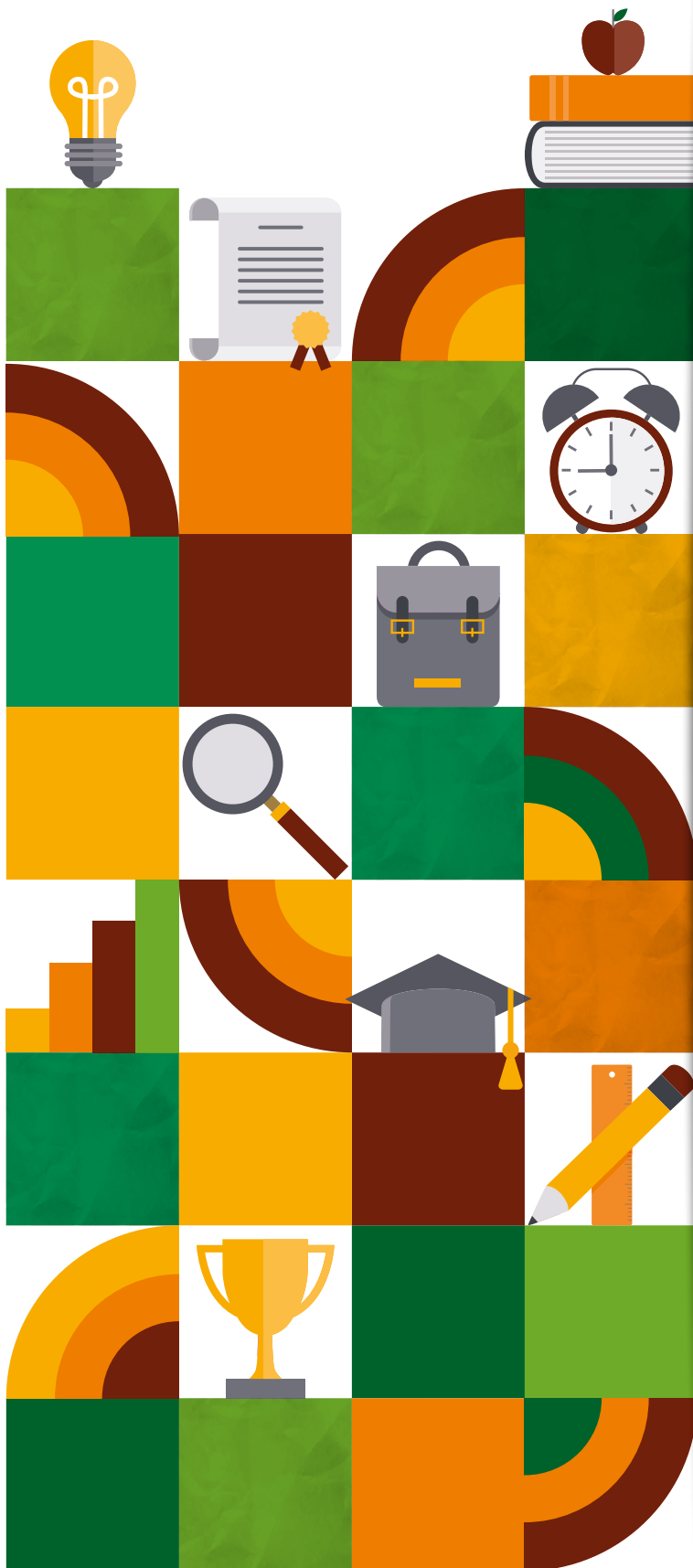
The high levels of female participation and completion in PSET institutions are commendable and reflect substantial progress towards gender equality. However, it is important to recognise that gender issues still persist in these institutions. The high levels of gender-based violence at PSET institutions stand in stark contrast to higher female participation rates at PSET institutions. Factors such as toxic masculinity, patriarchal attitudes, power imbalances and a culture of silence surrounding sexual violence may contribute to the prevalence of gender-based violence.

Moreover, the very high levels of GPI for enrolment and completion in PSET institutions suggest that male participation in PSET is at risk, and that male exclusion and alienation from PSET is slowly becoming a norm. This needs to be addressed, perhaps by targeting greater male enrolment in PSET institutions. According to UNESCO, all forms of discrimination based on gender are violations of human rights and impede the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



ENDNOTES

1. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2009). *Education Indicators Technical Guidelines*. Available: https://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/education-indicators-technical-guidelines-en_0.pdf



AUTHOR:

Mamphokhu Khuluvhe and
Edzani Netshifhefhe

© Published in 2024 by:

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

© Department of Higher Education and Training

The ideas, opinions, conclusions and policy recommendations expressed in this Fact Sheet are strictly those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). The DHET will not be liable for any incorrect data and for errors in conclusions, opinions and interpretations emanating from the information.

Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) (2024). *Gender Parity in Post-School Education and Training: Access, Completion and Labour Market Status*, Department of Higher Education and Training, Pretoria.

This report is available on the Department of Higher Education and Training's website:



www.dhet.gov.za

ENQUIRIES:

Tel.: 012 312 5465/5673
Fax: 086 457 0289
Email: khuluvhe.m@dhet.gov.za and
netshifhefhe.e@dhet.gov.za



higher education
& training

Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA