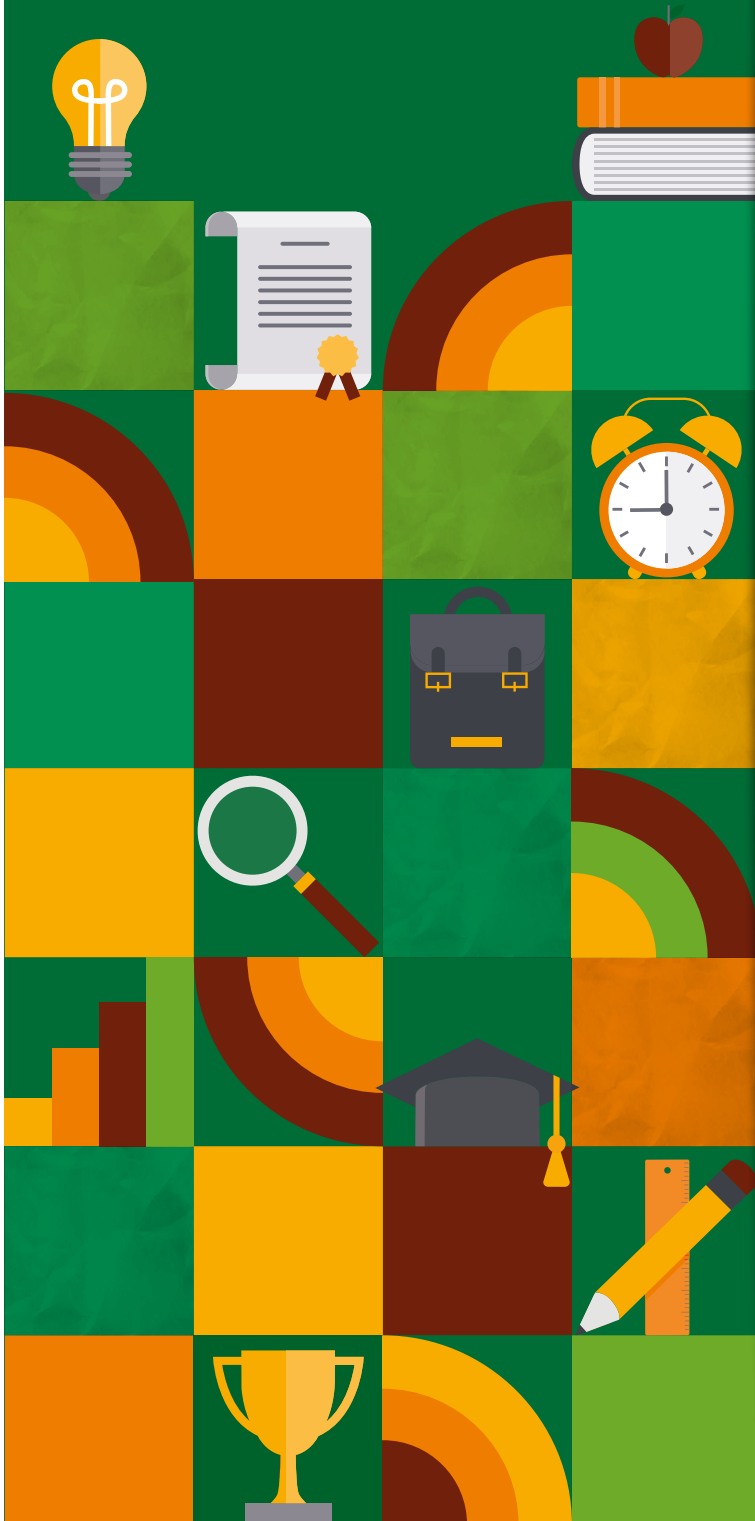


MARCH 2025

FACT SHEET



HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA



BACKGROUND

Educational attainment is a cornerstone of South Africa's development agenda, both as a measure of progress and as a pathway to addressing long-standing structural inequalities. As a nation emerging from the deeply unequal education and training system that prevailed under apartheid, South Africa finds its journey towards equity, inclusion and workforce development reflected in its Highest Level of Educational Attainment (HLEA). The HLEA provides a snapshot of the skills available within the population and serves as a benchmark for assessing the performance of the education and training system.

Increasingly, the HLEA is recognised as a crucial indicator for understanding a country's competitiveness in a globalised economy, where skills and innovation drive growth. Increasingly, too, it is appreciated that education's role extends beyond economic productivity—it is also central to improving life outcomes that range from employment prospects to health, and from empowered individual agency to greater social cohesion.

South Africa's education and training system has undergone major transformation over the years in striving to expand access and improve outcomes for all citizens. In 1994, only 1.7 million individuals



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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



PURPOSE

This Fact Sheet provides strategic insights into the progress South Africa has made in raising the HLEA among the country's population. It aims to guide policymakers, educationalists and other stakeholders in understanding key trends, identifying persistent disparities, and aligning education and training outcomes with national priorities as well as internationally recognised benchmarks. In particular, the Fact Sheet seeks to:

- examine the highest levels of educational attainment across South Africa's population, including its workforce, to assess progress in skills development;
- profile the demographic characteristics of people completing various education levels, with these characteristics disaggregated by race, gender and age to reveal notable patterns and inequities;
- evaluate South Africa's standing in international comparisons of educational attainment, thereby highlighting competitive strengths as well as areas for improvement; and
- provide actionable insights to balance education and training provisioning across various levels of the system in order to ensure inclusivity and alignment with the demands of both the national and global economy.

had attained post-matric qualifications, with disparities evident across population groups. Government interventions since then have sought to create an inclusive education and training system that supports both social mobility and workforce development. While these efforts have yielded measurable progress, challenges remain in addressing inequalities across socio-economic and demographic divides.

This Fact Sheet provides a comparative analysis of South Africa's HLEA. In examining trends in education and training outcomes across different demographics, it highlights areas of success as well as identifying persistent gaps. The evidence that emerges is intended to inform policymaking focused on aligning education and training outcomes with national development goals and ensuring South Africa's global competitiveness.



TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

3.1. ADULT

'Adult' in this Fact Sheet refers to individuals aged 25–64 years. This group was selected because it is within this age range that people are likely to have completed their schooling.

3.2. 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.

3.3. 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.

3.4. EMPLOYED

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

3.5. UNEMPLOYED

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

- 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.
- According to the expanded definition, unemployed persons are those aged 15–64 years who:
 - v. fall under official unemployment (sought and available); and
 - vi. were available to work but were discouraged work-seekers or had other reasons for not searching for work.



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Table 1 highlights significant progress in the educational attainment of South Africans aged 25–64 between 2016 and 2024. The share of individuals completing secondary education rose from 27.6% to 33.2%, and degree attainment increased from 5.8% to 7.1%. Meanwhile, the proportion of individuals with no schooling decreased from 3.8% (1.01 million people) to 2.1% (653 000), with the proportion of those with less than primary education falling from 9.8% (2.59 million) to 6.1% (1.89 million). These improvements reflect strides in access to and completion of basic education. However, 37.0% of the population still had not completed secondary education by 2024, highlighting persistent challenges in educational retention and progression.

This raises concerns about whether the outcomes of the Post-School Education and Training (PSET) system are adequate for meeting societal needs. While access to secondary and basic education has improved, the relatively low growth in tertiary attainment suggests potential barriers in transitioning to and succeeding in higher education. This misalignment may reflect inefficiencies within the PSET system, including challenges in regard to quality, relevance and support mechanisms. Addressing these factors is critical not only for expanding access to post-school education and training, but also for ensuring that educational attainment impacts positively on broader societal development.

TABLE 1: Number and share of persons in the population aged 25–64 years by highest level of educational attainment, 2016: Q3 and 2024: Q3

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ATTAINMENT	2016:Q3		2024:Q3	
	Number unemployed '000'	Share (%)	Number unemployed '000'	Share (%)
No schooling	1 008	3.8%	653	2.1%
Less than primary	2 596	9.8%	1 887	6.1%
Primary completed	1 352	5.1%	1 175	3.8%
Secondary not completed	10 203	38.6%	11 515	37.0%
Secondary completed	7 282	27.6%	10 356	33.2%
Certificate	999	3.8%	1 051	3.4%
Diploma	1 202	4.5%	1 851	5.9%
Degree	1 542	5.8%	2 206	7.1%
Other	245	0.9%	465	1.5%
TOTAL	26 438	100.0%	31 158	100.0%

Source: Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) 2016: Q3 and 2024: Q3 (Nesstar repository, data extracted on 13 November 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: 'Secondary not 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, 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 (Masters, Doctoral Diploma), Bachelor's degree, Bachelor's degree and postgraduate diploma, Honours degree and higher degree (Masters/PhD).
 Note 9: 'Other' includes the following categories: Other and Do not know.
 Note 10: Due to rounding, numbers do not necessarily add up to totals.










Table 2 highlights gender differences in educational attainment between 2016 and 2024. In 2024, the modal share of both males (37.8%) and females (36.2%) had not completed secondary education. However, females outperformed males in higher education, with 7.9% attaining a degree compared to 6.2% of males. The proportion of individuals with completed secondary education also grew for both genders, increasing by 5.3 percentage points for males and 6 percentage points for females. These trends reflect progress in closing the gender gap in education and training, albeit that the continued prevalence of low educational attainment for both genders points to broader systemic challenges.

TABLE 2: Number and share of persons in the population aged 25–64 years by HLEA and gender, 2016: Q3 and 2024: Q3

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF THE EMPLOYED	2016:Q3				
	MALE		FEMALE		TOTAL
	'000'	Share (%)	'000'	Share (%)	'000'
No schooling	445	3.4%	563	4.2%	1 008
Less than primary	1 294	10.0%	1 301	9.7%	2 596
Primary completed	668	5.1%	684	5.1%	1 352
Secondary not completed	5 014	38.7%	5 189	38.5%	10 203
Secondary completed	3 668	28.3%	3 625	26.9%	7 292
Certificate	458	3.5%	541	4.0%	999
Diploma	541	4.2%	661	4.9%	1 202
Degree	739	5.7%	803	6.0%	1 542
Other	145	1.1%	100	0.7%	245
TOTAL	12 971	100.0%	13 467	100.0%	26 438

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF THE EMPLOYED

2024:Q3

	MALE		FEMALE		TOTAL
	'000'	Share (%)	'000'	Share (%)	'000'
 No schooling	263	1.7%	389	2.5%	653
 Less than primary	1 015	6.6%	872	5.5%	1 887
 Primary completed	648	4.2%	527	3.3%	1 175
 Secondary not completed	5 826	37.8%	5 689	36.2%	11 515
 Secondary completed	5 184	33.6%	5 172	32.9%	10 356
 Certificate	471	3.1%	580	3.7%	1 051
 Diploma	795	5.2%	1 055	6.7%	1 851
 Degree	963	6.2%	1 242	7.9%	2 205
 Other	256	1.7%	209	1.3%	465
TOTAL	15 423	100.0%	15 735	100.0%	31 158

Source: Stats SA QLFS 2016: Q3 and 2024: Q3 (Nesstar repository, data extracted on 13 November 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: 'Secondary not 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, 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 (Masters, Doctoral Diploma), Bachelor's degree, Bachelor's degree and postgraduate diploma, Honours degree and higher degree (Masters/PhD).

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










Note 10: Due to rounding, numbers do not necessarily add up to totals.

Table 3 reveals stark racial disparities in educational attainment, despite some improvements over the eight-year period. Among Black Africans, the share of individuals with secondary education completed rose from 25.4% in 2016 to 32.1% in 2024, reflecting a notable improvement. Similarly, the proportion of Coloureds with secondary education completed increased from 26.6% to 33.2%. Degree attainment for Black Africans grew modestly from 3.8% to 5.0%, and for Coloureds, from 3.3% to 5.3%, indicating gradual progress in accessing higher education.

In contrast, Indian/Asian and White population groups started from a much higher baseline in 2016 and showed steady growth. The share of Indian/Asian individuals with a degree increased from 13.0% in 2016 to 19.7% in 2024, while Whites saw an increase from 23.6% to 27.9%. At the same time, secondary completion among Indian/Asian individuals improved from 47.3% to 49.1%.










Despite overall improvements, stark disparities remain. In 2024, 39.6% of Black Africans and 40.5% of Coloureds still had not completed secondary education, compared to only 10.8% of Whites and 17.4% of Indians/Asians. Additionally, Black Africans and Coloureds continue to face significant barriers in accessing and completing tertiary education, as evidenced by their lower proportions of degree-holders in comparison to Whites and Indians/Asians. These disparities reflect historical inequalities that persist in spite of progress, and highlight the need for targeted interventions to improve access to quality PSET pathways for marginalised groups.

TABLE 3: Number and share of persons in the population aged 25–64-years by HLEA and race, 2016: Q3 and 2024: Q3

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF THE EMPLOYED	BLACK AFRICAN			
	2016:Q3		2024:Q3	
	'000'	Share (%)	'000'	Share (%)
 No schooling	940	4.5%	619	2.4%
 Less than primary	2 350	11.3%	1 727	6.8%
 Primary completed	1 116	5.4%	1 006	4.0%
 Secondary not completed	8 577	41.4%	10 010	39.6%
 Secondary completed	5 270	25.4%	8 124	32.1%
 Certificate	721	3.5%	860	3.4%
 Diploma	784	3.8%	1 361	5.4%
 Degree	782	3.8%	1 265	5.0%
 Other	183	0.9%	336	1.3%
TOTAL	20 722	100.0%	25 309	100.0%










HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF THE EMPLOYED

COLOURED










	2016:Q3		2024:Q3	
	'000'	Share (%)	'000'	Share (%)
 No schooling	52	2.1%	22	0.8%
 Less than primary	222	8.9%	139	5.1%
 Primary completed	214	8.6%	149	5.4%
 Secondary not completed	1 068	42.9%	1 113	40.5%
 Secondary completed	661	26.6%	913	33.2%
 Certificate	68	2.7%	73	2.7%
 Diploma	88	3.5%	113	4.1%
 Degree	82	3.3%	145	5.3%
 Other	32	1.3%	80	2.9%
TOTAL	2 488	100.0%	2 748	100.0%

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF THE EMPLOYED

INDIAN/ASIAN

	2016:Q3		2024:Q3	
	'000'	Share (%)	'000'	Share (%)
 No schooling	8	1.0%	4	0.5%
 Less than primary	22	2.8%	9	1.0%
 Primary completed	16	2.0%	14	1.6%
 Secondary not completed	195	24.9%	150	17.4%
 Secondary completed	370	47.3%	422	49.1%
 Certificate	20	2.6%	24	2.8%
 Diploma	49	6.3%	57	6.6%
 Degree	102	13.0%	169	19.7%
 Other	2	0.3%	11	1.3%
TOTAL	782	100.0%	860	100.0%

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF THE EMPLOYED

	WHITE			
	2016:Q3		2024:Q3	
	'000'	Share (%)	'000'	Share (%)
 No schooling	8	0.3%	7	0.3%
 Less than primary	2	0.1%	12	0.5%
 Primary completed	7	0.3%	6	0.3%
 Secondary not completed	362	14.8%	243	10.8%
 Secondary completed	991	40.5%	897	40.0%
 Certificate	190	7.8%	94	4.2%
 Diploma	281	11.5%	319	14.2%
 Degree	577	23.6%	626	27.9%
 Other	28	1.1%	37	1.7%
TOTAL	2 446	100.0%	2 241	100.0%

Source: Stats SA QLFS 2016: Q3 and 2024: Q3 (Nesstar repository, data extracted on 13 November 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: 'Secondary not 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, Certificate with Grade 12/Std 10.

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

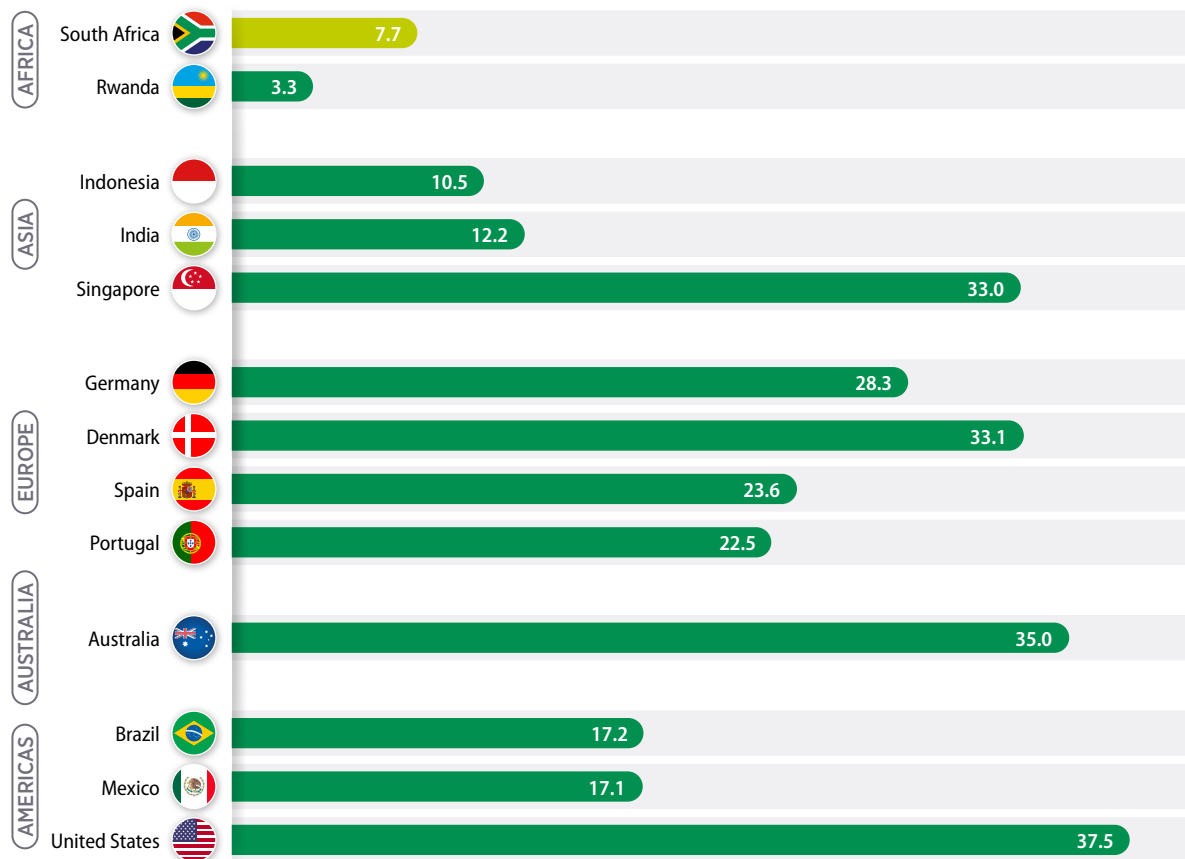
Note 8: 'Degree' includes the following categories: Post Higher Diploma (Masters, Doctoral Diploma), Bachelor's degree, Bachelor's degree and postgraduate diploma, Honours degree and higher degree (Masters/PhD).

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

Note 10: Due to rounding, numbers do not necessarily add up to totals.

Figure 1 compares the percentage of individuals aged 25 and above with at least a bachelor's degree in South Africa to other countries in 2020. South Africa's figure stood at 7.7%, significantly lower than that for Brazil (17.2%) and India (12.2%), as well as global leaders in Europe, Asia and the Americas. Although South Africa outperformed Rwanda (3.3%), its standing within BRICS and among other international peers underscores a pressing need for it to enhance the accessibility and quality of higher education in order to remain globally competitive.

FIGURE 1: Percentage of population aged 25 years and above with at least a completed bachelor's or equivalent degree (ISCED 6 or higher), 2020



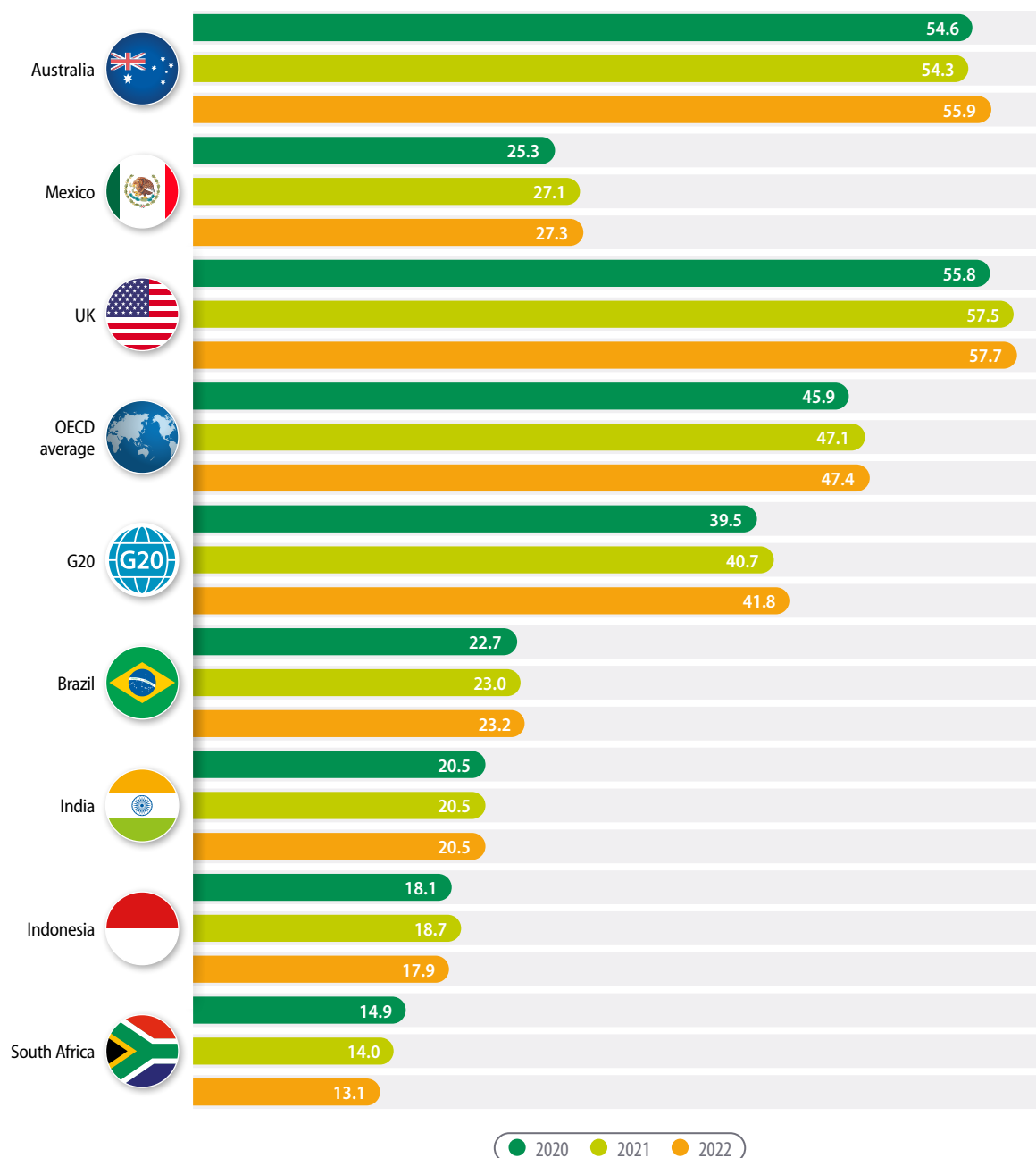
Sources: World Bank (accessed 18 January 2024)

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

Figure 2 highlights the percentage of South Africans aged 25–34 with tertiary education, a figure that declined from 14.9% in 2020 to 13.1% in 2022. This means that, of the estimated 10.5 million individuals in this age group, only about 1.6 million had completed tertiary education in 2022, which is of concern. In comparative terms, South Africa's tertiary attainment rate is starkly lower than that of emerging and developed countries. Brazil reported 23.2%, the G20, 41.8%, and India, 20.5% in 2022, while the OECD average was 47.4%. This positions South Africa among the lowest globally at 13.1%, highlighting significant challenges within its PSET system.

South Africa's limited public higher education and training capacity, in particular its constrained university space, prevents many eligible students, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds, from accessing higher education. Expanding access through infrastructure investments, new institutions, and online learning platforms, along with enhancing financial aid and academic support, is essential to address inequality, empower the youth, and close the gap with the country's global counterparts.

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



Source: OECD Stats (data extracted on 6 February 2025)

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

Table 4 examines the relationship between employment rates and educational attainment across selected countries in 2022. In South Africa, 75.3% of tertiary-educated individuals were employed, compared to the OECD average of 86.6%, highlighting a low absorption rate relative to other countries. The employment rate for those with below upper-secondary education was 44.7%, significantly lower than the averages in Indonesia (74.7%) and Brazil (58%). These figures again underscore the importance of expanding access to PSET opportunities and ensuring alignment with labour market demands to improve employment outcomes. While individuals with tertiary education have better employment prospects than those with lower education, South Africa’s tertiary-educated workforce still struggles to match the labour market demand.

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










COUNTRY/REGION	Below upper-secondary	Upper-secondary, non-tertiary	Tertiary
OECD average	59.6	77.2	86.6
Brazil	58.0	72.5	83.9
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 at: <https://data.oecd.org/emp/employment-by-education-level.htm> [Accessed 13 November 2024.]

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

Table 5 shows a shift in the employment landscape, with a growing share of employed individuals possessing higher education qualifications. The proportion of employed individuals with degrees rose from 8.9% in 2016 to 11.3% in 2024, reflecting an increasing supply of skilled labour. Simultaneously, employment among individuals with secondary education completed increased from 30.9% to 35.4%. In contrast, those with no schooling or less than primary education experienced declining employment shares, possibly due to structural changes in the economy favouring more skilled labour.

TABLE 5: Number and share of persons aged 25–64 who were employed (official definition) by HLEA, 2016Q3 and 2024Q3










HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ATTAINMENT	2016:Q3		2024:Q3	
	Number employed '000'	Share (%)	Number employed '000'	Share (%)
 No schooling	319	2.2%	173	1.1%
 Less than primary	1 083	7.4%	628	4.0%
 Primary completed	636	4.4%	492	3.1%
 Secondary not completed	4 959	34.0%	4 905	30.9%
 Secondary completed	4 496	30.9%	5 610	35.4%
 Certificate	701	4.8%	650	4.1%
 Diploma	951	6.5%	1 380	8.7%
 Degree	1 293	8.9%	1 785	11.3%
 Other	131	0.9%	236	1.5%
TOTAL	14 568	100.0%	15 861	100.0%

Source: Stats SA QLFS 2016: Q3 and 2024: Q3 (Nesstar repository, data extracted on 14 November 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: 'Secondary not 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 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 (Masters, Doctoral Diploma), Bachelor's degree, Bachelor's degree and postgraduate diploma, Honours degree and higher degree (Masters/PhD).
- Note 9: 'Other' includes the following categories: Other and Do not know.
- Note 10: Due to rounding, numbers do not necessarily add up to totals.

Table 6 highlights the relationship between unemployment and educational attainment. In 2024, individuals with secondary not completed as their HLEA accounted for the largest share of the unemployed (44.5%), in the context of an unemployment rate of 36.6%. The unemployment rate was lowest among degree-holders (7.9%) and diploma-holders (14.5%), underscoring the protective effect of PSET qualifications against unemployment. However, unemployment rates increased across all educational levels between 2016 and 2024, reflecting broader economic challenges and a need for policies that expand opportunities for all individuals.

TABLE 6: Number and share of persons aged 25-64 years who are unemployed (official definition), by highest level of educational attainment, 2016: Q3 and 2024: Q3.

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ATTAINMENT	2016:Q3			2024:Q3		
	Number unemployed '000'	Share (%)	Unemployment rate	Number unemployed '000'	Share (%)	Unemployment rate
 No schooling	78	1.8%	19.6%	56	0.9%	24.5%
 Less than primary	301	6.9%	21.8%	293	4.6%	31.8%
 Primary completed	166	3.8%	20.7%	224	3.5%	31.3%
 Secondary not completed	2 186	50.0%	30.6%	2 832	44.5%	36.6%
 Secondary completed	1 251	28.6%	21.8%	2 294	36.0%	29.0%
 Certificate	170	3.9%	19.5%	234	3.7%	26.5%
 Diploma	111	2.5%	10.5%	234	3.7%	14.5%
 Degree	87	2.0%	6.3%	154	2.4%	7.9%
 Other	26	0.6%	16.4%	44	0.7%	15.8%
TOTAL	4 376	100.0%	23.1%	6 367	100.0%	28.6%

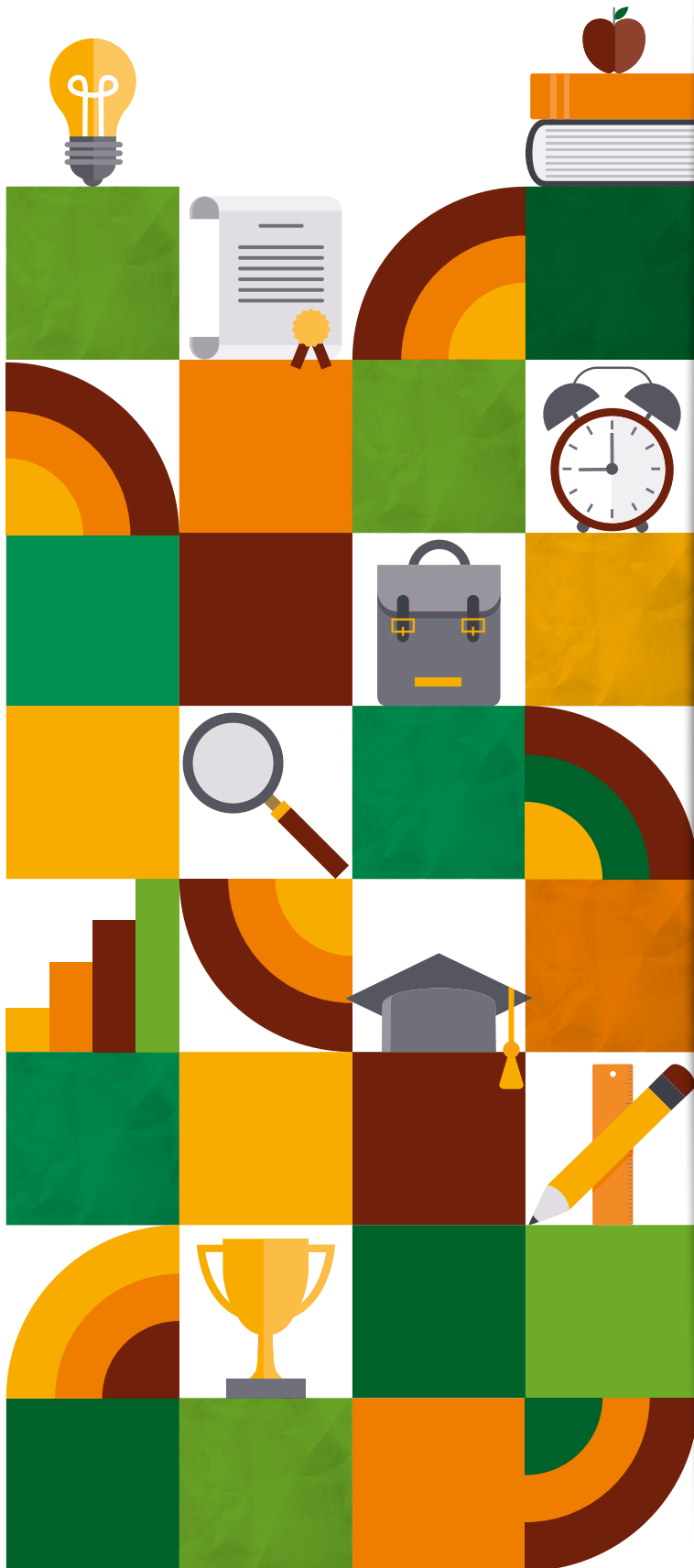
Source: Stats SA QLFS 2016: Q3 and 2024: Q3 (Nesstar repository, data extracted on 14 November 2024)

- 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.
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- Note 6: 'Certificate' includes the following categories: N4/NTC 4; N5/NTC 5; N6/NTC 6, 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 (Masters, Doctoral Diploma), Bachelor's degree, Bachelor's degree and postgraduate diploma, Honours degree and higher degree (Masters/PhD).
- Note 9: 'Other' includes the following categories: Other and Do not know.
- Note 10: Due to rounding, numbers do not necessarily add up to totals.



CONCLUSION

The analysis shows notable improvements in educational attainment among South Africans over the past eight years, particularly in secondary school completion and tertiary qualifications. However, persistent inequalities in educational access and attainment across racial groups remain a significant concern, with Black Africans and Coloureds disproportionately represented in lower education levels. International comparisons reveal that South Africa lags behind global and BRICS counterparts in tertiary education, a fact that highlights challenges in higher education access and completion. Employment outcomes are strongly correlated with educational attainment, which emphasises the importance of investing in education to improve workforce readiness and economic participation. Addressing these challenges will require targeted policies to expand equitable access and strengthen pathways to PSET and employment.



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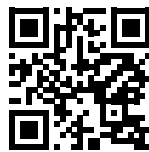
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Khuluvhe, M. and Gwantshu, W. (2025). *Highest level of educational attainment in South Africa*. Department of Higher Education and Training, Pretoria.

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