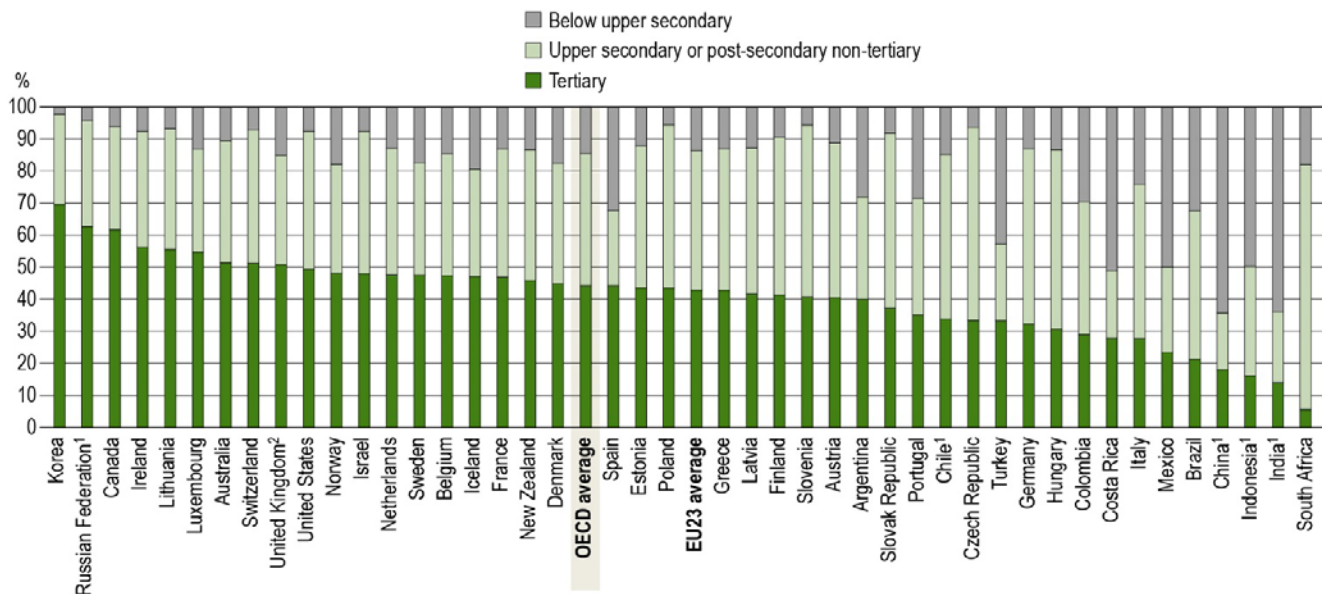


Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators (OECD, 2019^[1]) is the authoritative source for information on the state of education around the world. It provides data on the structure, finances and performance of education systems in OECD and partner countries.

South Africa

- **Tertiary attainment in South Africa is the lowest across all OECD and partner countries**, with the majority of the population having an upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary qualification as their highest level of education.
- **More adults are attaining upper secondary education in South Africa than a decade ago.** The share of young adults without upper secondary education dropped from 27% in 2008 to 18% in 2018.
- **Those with an upper secondary qualification are less likely to be employed and are more at risk of being neither employed nor in education or training at a young age than those with a tertiary degree.**
- While tertiary education is not widespread in South Africa, the country spends a **larger share of its wealth on the public funding of primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education** than most OECD and partner countries.

Figure 1. Educational attainment of 25-34 year-olds (2018)



1. Year of reference differs from 2018. Refer to Table A1.1 for more details.

2. Data for upper secondary attainment include completion of a sufficient volume and standard of programmes that would be classified individually as completion of intermediate upper secondary programmes (13% of adults aged 25-64 are in this group).

Countries are ranked in descending order of the percentage of tertiary-educated 25-34 year-olds.

Source: OECD (2019), *Education at a Glance Database*, <http://stats.oecd.org>. See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/f8d7880d-en>).

More adults are attaining and upper secondary education, but tertiary attainment is the lowest among G20 countries

- Educational attainment is still low in South Africa. In 2018, over half (59%) of 25-64 year-olds in South Africa had attained an upper secondary education as the highest level achieved, well above the G20 average of 32% and the OECD average of 38%, while 26% had not attained upper secondary education. However, attainment has been increasing, particularly since the implementation of the South African School Act in 1996 making education compulsory for children aged 7 to 15. Between 2008 and 2018, the share of young adults (25-34 year olds) without upper secondary education fell from 27% to 18%, with 77% of young adults having an upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary qualification in 2018 (Figure 1).
- Tertiary qualifications are less common in South Africa. Only 7% of adults have a tertiary education, the lowest among all OECD and partner countries. Tertiary attainment is equally low among younger adults: only 6% of 25-34 year-olds were tertiary educated, also the lowest across OECD and partner countries and well below the G20 average of 38%.
- South Africa is one of the few OECD and partner countries with more young women attaining an upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary qualification as their highest level than men: 79% of women and 74% of men attained this level in 2018, the largest difference among all OECD and partner countries favouring women. In contrast, the gender gap in tertiary attainment was smaller at 1 percentage point: 6% for young women and 5% for young men.
- South Africa is a popular destination among students from neighbouring countries in Africa. Out of about 45 000 foreign students enrolled in its tertiary institutions (4% of the total tertiary student population), 81% were from Africa and more than half of these students were from neighbouring countries.
- For every hundred national tertiary students in South Africa, four are enrolled abroad. About half of them study in English-speaking countries: Australia (8%), the United Kingdom (17%) and the United States (23%).

Young South Africans with upper secondary education are over twice as likely to be neither in employment nor in education or training than those with a tertiary education

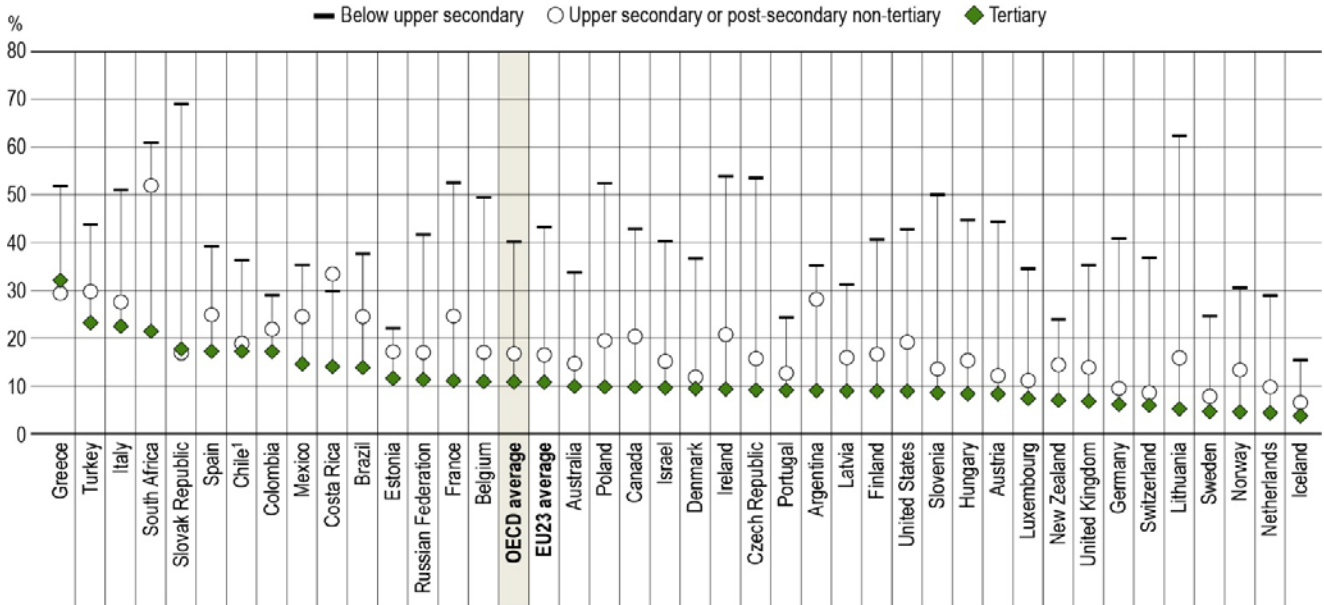
- Tertiary education pays off in South Africa. The employment rate among 25-64 year-olds with a tertiary qualification was 85%, 30 percentage points higher than for those with only upper secondary qualification.
- The risk of becoming neither employed nor in education or training (NEET) falls significantly with higher educational attainment. About 21% of tertiary-educated 25-29 year-olds in South Africa were NEET in 2018, compared to about 52% among those with an upper secondary qualification. Furthermore, over 60% of those without upper secondary education were NEET (Figure 2).
- Despite the employment advantages higher education brings, most young people leave the education system before the age 25 in South Africa. About 69% of 20-24 year-olds were not in education in 2018 (OECD average: 55%) and South Africa had the highest share of NEETs aged 20-24 (48.6%) among OECD and partner countries.

South Africa spends an above-average share of its wealth on the public funding of non-tertiary education, largely through regional governments

- In 2016, public funding of primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education amounted to 4.1% of South Africa's gross domestic product (GDP), higher than the OECD average of 3.1%. However public funding of tertiary education amounted to 0.6% of GDP, below the OECD average of 0.9%.
- The source of public funding differs by levels of education. The great majority (94%) of public funding of primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education were delivered through regional

governments in 2017 in South Africa. In contrast, 100% of public funding of tertiary education came from central government.

Figure 2. Percentage of NEETs among 25-29 year-olds, by educational attainment (2018)



Note: NEET refers to young people neither employed nor in education or training.

1. Year of reference differs from 2018. Refer to Table A2.1 for more details.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the percentage of NEETs among tertiary-educated 25-29 year-olds.


Source: OECD (2019), Education at a Glance Database, <http://stats.oecd.org>. See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/f8d7880d-en>).

References

OECD (2019), *Education at a Glance 2019: OECD indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/f8d7880d-en>.

[1]

For more information on Education at a Glance 2019 and to access the full set of Indicators, visit www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance-19991487.htm.

Updated data can be found on line at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-data-en> and by following the **StatLinks**  under the tables and charts in the publication.

Explore, compare and visualise more data and analysis using: 

<http://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=ZAF&treshold=10&topic=EO>.

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On 25 May 2018, the OECD Council invited Colombia to become a Member. While Colombia is included in the OECD averages reported in this note, at the time of its preparation, Colombia was in the process of completing its domestic procedures for ratification and the deposit of Colombia's instrument of accession to the OECD Convention was pending.

Note regarding data from Israel

The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and are under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

Key Facts for South Africa in Education at a Glance 2019

Source	Main topics in <i>Education at a Glance</i>	South Africa		OECD average		G20 average	
Tertiary education							
Educational attainment of 25-64 year-olds							
2018							
Table A1.1	Short-cycle tertiary	1%		7%		9%	
	Bachelor's or equivalent	5%		17%		16%	
	Master's or equivalent	1%		13%		7%	
	Doctoral or equivalent	**		1%		**	
Tertiary attainment of 25-34 year-olds, by gender							
2008 2018 2008 2018 2008 2018							
Table A1.2	Men	**	5%	31%	38%	**	35%
	Women	4%	6%	40%	51%	**	41%
	Total	3%	6%	35%	44%	**	38%
Employment rate of 25-64 year-olds, by educational attainment							
2018							
Table A3.1	Short-cycle tertiary	80%		82%		**	
	Bachelor's or equivalent	85%		84%		**	
	Master's or equivalent	88%		88%		**	
	Doctoral or equivalent	**		92%		**	
	All tertiary levels of education	85%		85%		**	
Upper secondary and Vocational education and training (VET)							
Share of 25-34 year-olds with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education							
2018							
Table A1.2	Share of 25-34 year-olds with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education	77%		41%		37%	
Employment, unemployment and inactivity rates of 25-34 year-olds, with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education							
2018							
Table A3.3	Employment rate	49%		78%		**	
	Unemployment rate	35%		7%		**	
	Inactivity rate	24%		16%		**	
Early childhood education and care (ECEC)							
Enrolment rate of 3-5 year-olds in education							
2017							
Table B2.2	ECEC and primary education	**		87%		**	
Share of children enrolled in private institutions							
2017							
Table B2.3	at pre-primary level (ISCED 02)	7%		34%		42%	
Financial resources invested in education							
Total expenditure on educational institutions, by level of education							
2016							
Table C1.1 and C2.1		USD/student ¹	% GDP	USD/student ¹	% GDP	USD/student ¹	% GDP
	Primary	**	**	USD 8 470	1.5%	**	**
	Lower secondary	**	**	USD 9 884	0.9%	**	**
	Upper secondary	**	**	USD 10 368	2%	**	**
	Tertiary (including R&D)	**	**	USD 15 556	1.5%	**	**
Teachers, the learning environment and the organisation of schools							
Share of female teachers, in public and private institutions							
2017							
Table D5.2	Primary	**		83%		87%	
	Lower secondary	**		69%		72%	
Average class size by level of education							
2017							
Table D2.1	Primary	**		21		20	
	Lower secondary	**		23		21	

The reference year is the year cited or the latest year for which data are available.

1. Values reported in equivalent US dollars (USD) have been converted using purchasing power parities (PPPs) for GDP

** Please refer to the source table for details on these data.

Cut-off date for the data: 19 July 2019. Any updates on data can be found on line at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-data-en>.