



## EDUCATION AT A GLANCE 2016

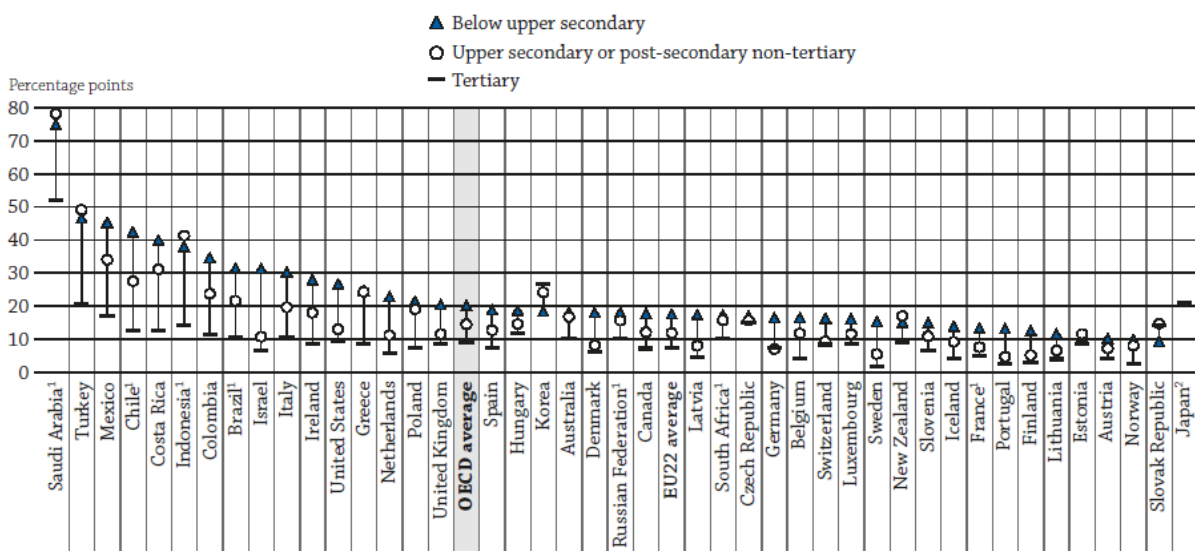
*Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators* is the authoritative source for information on the state of education around the world. It provides data on the structure, finances and performance of education systems in the 35 OECD countries and a number of partner countries.

The topics covered in this country note were selected according to data availability.

### South Africa

- As in most OECD and partner countries, women in South Africa are more likely than men to study education and health at the tertiary level. **Women also tend to be under-represented in traditionally male-dominated fields such as engineering, manufacturing and construction.**
- Employment rates in South Africa increase with the level of educational attainment. **Adults with at least a bachelor's level degree enjoy similar employment rates to the OECD average** of 82% but adults with only lower secondary education had an employment rate of 49% compared to an OECD average of 60%.
- Younger South Africans are attaining higher levels of education than their elders although the difference is very small at tertiary level. **More than twice as many young South Africans (35%) have completed upper secondary education than the older generation (15%).**
- Only a small proportion of upper secondary students enrol in vocational programmes**, suggesting a further area where the South African education system can foster future growth.
- South Africa spends significantly below the OECD average on each primary and secondary student in the public education system.** Expenditure per student is comparable to a country such as Colombia, however, which has a similar sized economy and population.

**Figure 1. Gender difference in employment rates, by educational attainment (2015)**  
25-64 year-olds, percentage-point difference (employment rate for men - employment rate for women)



1. Year of reference differs from 2015. Refer to the source table for more details.

2. Data for tertiary education include upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary programmes (less than 5% of the adults are under this group).

Countries are ranked in descending order of the differences in employment rates between male and female adults with below upper secondary education.

Source: OECD (2016), "Educational attainment and labour-force status", *Education at a Glance* (database), [http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?datasetcode=EAG\\_NEAC](http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?datasetcode=EAG_NEAC). See Annex 3 for notes ([www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance-19991487.htm](http://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance-19991487.htm)).

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933397067>

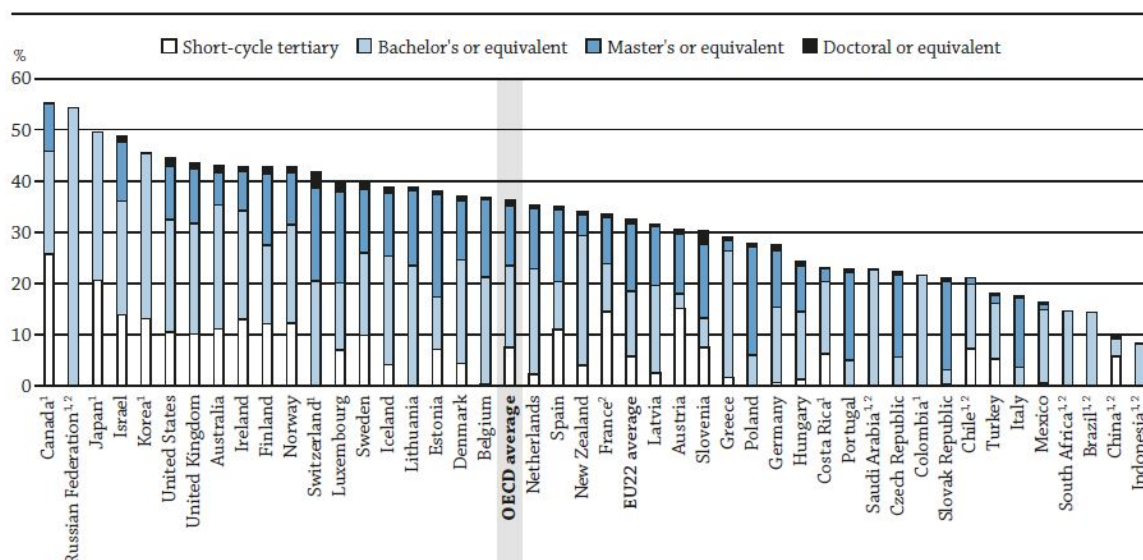
## Gender gaps in education and employment persist

- As in many other OECD and partner countries, South Africa has a definite gender imbalance in employment rates. Based on data from 2014, this discrepancy is found across all levels of educational attainment, although it decreases with higher levels of education attainment (Figure 1). The difference in employment rates between tertiary-educated men and women is 10 percentage points, compared to 16 percentage points for those who have completed upper secondary/post-secondary non tertiary levels of education, and 17 percentage points for individuals who have not attained upper secondary education.
- Women in South Africa are almost as highly educated, and in some instances more so, than their male counterparts. As of 2013, 61% of graduates from bachelor's or equivalent, programmes were women, which is higher than the 2014 G20 average of 55% and the 2014 OECD average of 58%. At master's and doctoral level women represent 49% and 43% of graduates respectively.
- There are also differences in the fields of study men and women choose at tertiary level. As of 2013, South African women were 3 times more likely than men to study education, and health and welfare. These ratios are consistent with the 2014 G20 averages for both fields of education. Women are quite under-represented in the fields of engineering, manufacturing and construction: men are over twice more likely to graduate, which is again consistent with the G20 average.

## Educational attainment is expanding among the youth though a large share of the population still does not reach upper secondary or tertiary education

- Young South Africans are attaining higher levels of education than their parents' generation. As of 2014, 35% of 25-34 year-olds had attained upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education as their highest level of attainment versus only 15% of 55-64 year olds. However, 51% of young South Africans still have not attained upper secondary education.
- As of 2014, 15% of South African 25-64 year-olds had attained a bachelor's degree or equivalent level of education (Figure 2) as their highest level of attainment. However compared to G20 or OECD average trends, different age groups in South Africa show very little difference in attainment rates at this level, suggesting that access to tertiary education has not increased significantly among the younger generations: 14% of 25-34 year-olds had a bachelor's degree, compared to 12% of 55-64 year-olds. Across OECD countries, 21% of 25-34 year olds had a bachelor's degree compared to 11% of 55-64 year olds.

Figure 2. Percentage of 25-64 year-olds with tertiary education, by level of tertiary education (2015)



1. Some levels of education are included in others. Refer to the source table for more details.

2. Reference year differs from 2015. Refer to the source table for more details.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the percentage of 25-64 year-olds with tertiary education, regardless of the level of tertiary attainment.

Source: OECD, Table A1.1. See Annex 3 for notes ([www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance-19991487.htm](http://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance-19991487.htm)).

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933396600>

- However, tertiary-educated adults have employment rates similar to the OECD average. The employment rate among South Africans with a bachelor's degree or equivalent was 81% in 2014, which is one percentage point below the OECD average.

## High-quality education needs sustainable funding

- South Africa's annual expenditure per student in the public system tends to be lower than EU or OECD countries on average. At the primary level, expenditure is USD 2 3661 per student compared to the OECD average of USD 8 477, and at the secondary level it is USD 2 513 per student, compared to the OECD average of USD 9 811. South Africa is more comparable to a country such as Colombia, which spends USD 2 074 per student at primary level and USD 2 835 at secondary level each year.

## Vocational education and training can provide more direct pathways into the labour market

- As of 2013, 12% of South African students in upper secondary education were enrolled in vocational programmes, which is low in comparison to the G20 average of 29%. In recent years, a number of countries have renewed interest in the development and promotion of vocational education and training (VET) programmes, as they can help students develop skills that they would otherwise lack, opening the door to future employment opportunities. Higher rates of VET enrolment could possibly help tackle youth unemployment rates in South Africa.

## Higher levels of education are linked to better social outcomes

- In South Africa, educational attainment seems to have a significant impact on life satisfaction for individuals aged 25-64. Of those who are educated at the tertiary level, 85% report that they are satisfied with their lives, which is comparable to the G20 average of 86%. However, for those with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education, only 52% of individuals surveyed reported being satisfied with their lives in contrast to the G20 average of 74%.

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### 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.

### References

OECD (2016), *Education at a Glance 2016: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2016-en>.

For more information on **Education at a Glance 2016** and to access the full set of Indicators, visit [www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance-19991487.htm](http://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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<sup>1</sup> Values reported in equivalent US dollars (USD) have been converted using purchasing power parities (PPPs).

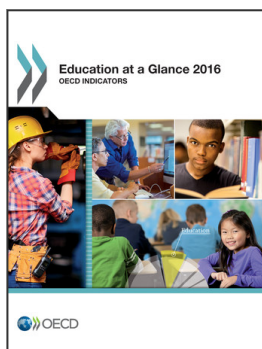
## Key Facts for South Africa in Education at a Glance 2016

| Source  | Main topics in Education at a Glance           | South Africa                   |                                     | OECD average                   |                                     |
|---|--|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Gender</b>   |  |                                |                                     |                                |                                     |
| <b>Employment rate of 25-64 year-olds, by educational attainment</b>  |  |                                |                                     |                                |                                     |
| 2015  |  |                                |                                     |                                |                                     |
|   |  | <b>Men</b>                     | <b>Women</b>                        | <b>Men</b>                     | <b>Women</b>                        |
| Chart A5.2.   | Below upper secondary                          | 55%                            | 37%                                 | 66%                            | 46%                                 |
|   | Upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary | 69%                            | 54%                                 | 81%                            | 67%                                 |
|   | Tertiary                                       | 86%                            | 76%                                 | 88%                            | 80%                                 |
| <b>Percentage of people not in employment, nor in education or training (NEET)</b>  |  |                                |                                     |                                |                                     |
| 2015  |  |                                |                                     |                                |                                     |
|   |  | <b>Men</b>                     | <b>Women</b>                        | <b>Men</b>                     | <b>Women</b>                        |
| Table C5.2  | 15-29 year-olds                                | **                             | **                                  | 12%                            | 17%                                 |
| <b>Percentage of female graduates, by tertiary levels of education</b>  |  |                                |                                     |                                |                                     |
| 2014  |  |                                |                                     |                                |                                     |
|   |  | <b>% Women</b>                 |                                     | <b>% Women</b>                 |                                     |
| Table A3.4  | Short-cycle tertiary                           | 62%                            |                                     | 56%                            |                                     |
|   | Bachelor's or equivalent                       | 61%                            |                                     | 58%                            |                                     |
|   | Master's or equivalent                         | 49%                            |                                     | 57%                            |                                     |
|   | Doctoral or equivalent                         | 43%                            |                                     | 47%                            |                                     |
| <b>Vocational Education and Training (VET)</b>  |  |                                |                                     |                                |                                     |
| <b>Distribution of enrolment, by programme orientation</b>  |  |                                |                                     |                                |                                     |
| 2014  |  |                                |                                     |                                |                                     |
|   |  | <b>General</b>                 | <b>Vocational</b>                   | <b>General</b>                 | <b>Vocational</b>                   |
| Table C1.3a   | Upper secondary education                      | 88%                            | 12%                                 | 56%                            | 44%                                 |
| <b>Financial Investment in Education</b>  |  |                                |                                     |                                |                                     |
| <b>Annual expenditure per student, by level of education (in equivalent USD, using PPPs)</b>                                |  |                                |                                     |                                |                                     |
| 2013  |  |                                |                                     |                                |                                     |
|   |  |                                |                                     |                                |                                     |
| Table B1.1  | Primary education                              | **                             |                                     | USD 8 477                      |                                     |
|   | Secondary education                            | USD 2 513                      |                                     | USD 9 811                      |                                     |
|   | Tertiary (including R&D activities)            | **                             |                                     | USD 15 772                     |                                     |
| <b>Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)</b>  |  |                                |                                     |                                |                                     |
| <b>Expenditure on all early childhood educational institutions</b>  |  |                                |                                     |                                |                                     |
| 2013  |  |                                |                                     |                                |                                     |
| Table C2.3  | As a percentage of GDP                         | **                             |                                     | 0.8%                           |                                     |
| <b>Teachers</b>   |  |                                |                                     |                                |                                     |
| <b>Ratio of students to teaching staff</b>  |  |                                |                                     |                                |                                     |
| 2014  |  |                                |                                     |                                |                                     |
|   |  |                                |                                     |                                |                                     |
| Table D2.2  | Primary education                              | **                             |                                     | 15 students per teacher        |                                     |
|   | Secondary education                            | **                             |                                     | 13 students per teacher        |                                     |
|   | Tertiary education                             | **                             |                                     | 17 students per teacher        |                                     |
| <b>Tertiary Education</b>   |  |                                |                                     |                                |                                     |
| <b>Percentage of adults who have attained tertiary education, by tertiary level of educational attainment and age group</b> |  |                                |                                     |                                |                                     |
| 2015  |  |                                |                                     |                                |                                     |
|   |  | <b>25-34 year-olds</b>         | <b>25-64 year-olds</b>              | <b>25-34 year-olds</b>         | <b>25-64 year-olds</b>              |
| Table A1.2  | Short-cycle tertiary                           | **                             | **                                  | 8%                             | 8%                                  |
|   | Bachelor's or equivalent                       | 14%                            | 15%                                 | 21%                            | 16%                                 |
|   | Master's or equivalent                         | **                             | **                                  | 14%                            | 11%                                 |
|   | Doctoral or equivalent                         | **                             | **                                  | 1%                             | 1%                                  |
| <b>Other: Education and Social Outcomes</b>   |  |                                |                                     |                                |                                     |
| <b>Life satisfaction today and in five years for 25-64 year-olds, by educational attainment<sup>1</sup></b>                 |  |                                |                                     |                                |                                     |
| 2015  |  |                                |                                     |                                |                                     |
|   |  | <b>Life satisfaction today</b> | <b>Life satisfaction in 5 years</b> | <b>Life satisfaction today</b> | <b>Life satisfaction in 5 years</b> |
| Table A8.3a   | Upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary | 52%                            | 94%                                 | 83%                            | 87%                                 |
|   | Tertiary                                       | 85%                            | 98%                                 | 92%                            | 94%                                 |

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

1. Educational attainment categories collected by Gallup World Poll may differ from ISCED-A 2011.

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



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