South Africa - Country Brief
Global Talent Competitiveness Index (GTCI) 2025
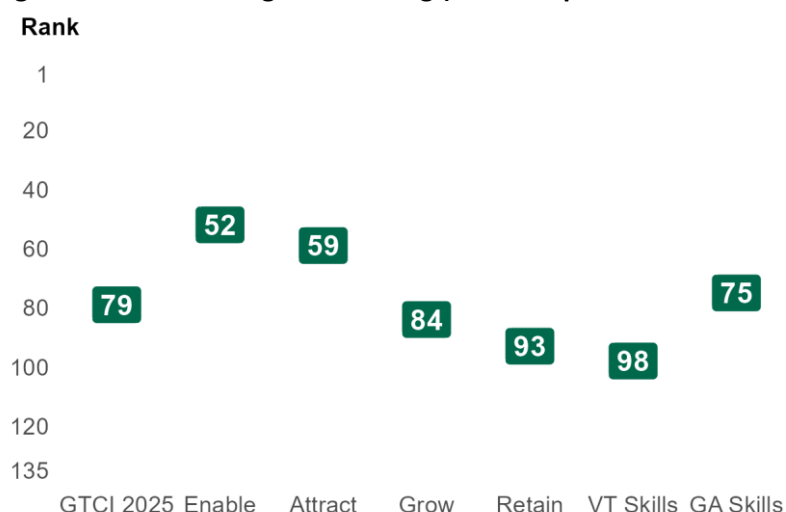
Total population:	64.01 million
GDP:	US$ 380.592 billion
GDP (PPP) per capita:	US$ 15,424
	(83 out of 135 countries)
Country income level:	Upper-middle income
GTCI 2025 ranking:	79 (out of 135)

Global GTCI position

In GTCI 2025, South Africa is ranked 79th out of a sample of 135 countries (Figure 1). When it comes to sub-pillars, the strongest showings of South Africa relate to Business and Labour Landscape, Internal Openness and Market Landscape, among others. Still, more could be done to improve the economy's performances in the Access to Growth Opportunities, Lifestyle and Employability sub-pillars.

Figure 1: South Africa global ranking (GTCI sample of 135 countries)

Note: VT Skills = Vocational and Technical Skills; GA Skills = Generalist Adaptive Skills.

Comparison with different groups of countries

South Africa is situated in Sub-Saharan Africa and is classified as Upper-middle income. Within its region, the country is ranked 3rd out of 31 countries (Table 1).

South Africa is ranked 23rd within the group of Upper-middle income countries (implying that 34 percent of countries rank lower).

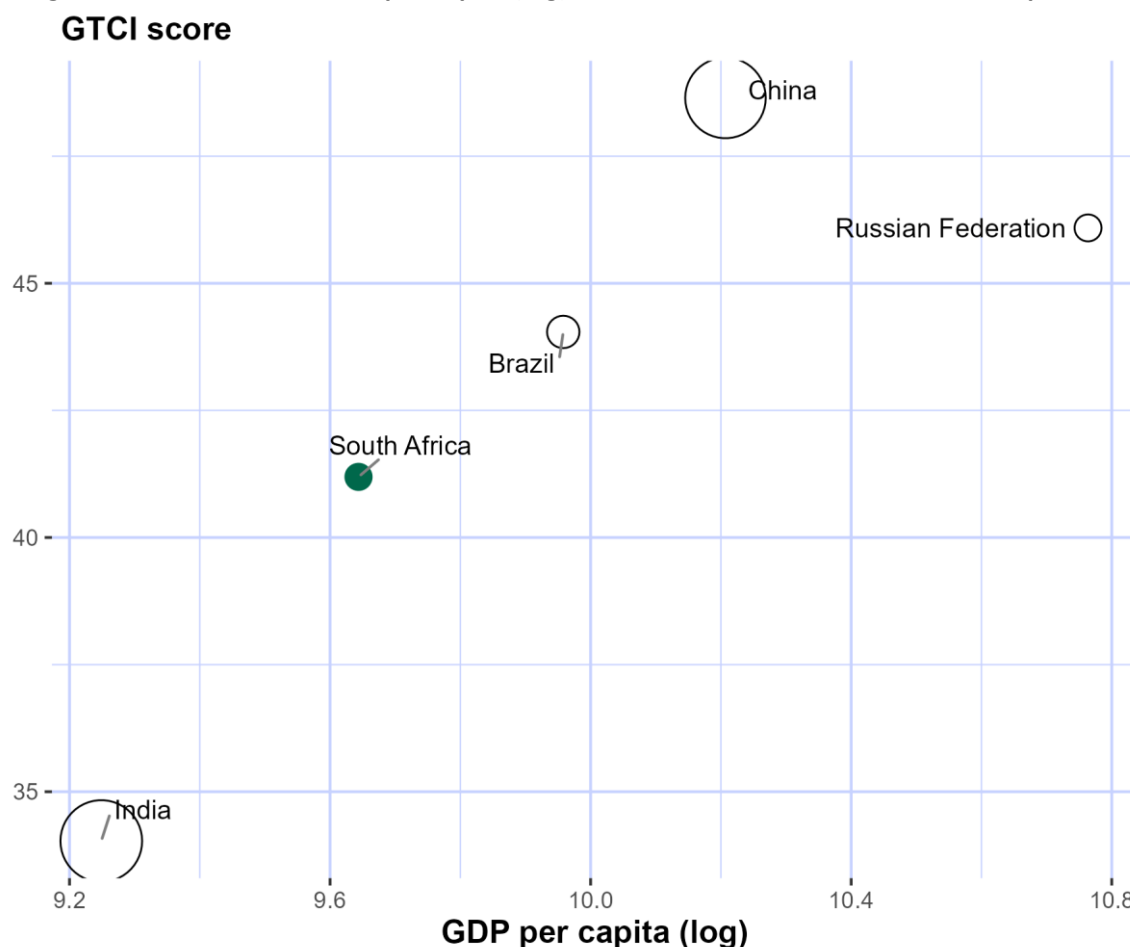**Table 1: South Africa performance vs. income groups and regions**

Comparison group	Top 3 scorers of the group	Score GAP: South Africa score minus group highest score	Share of countries in the group ranked below South Africa
Region			
Central and Southern Asia	Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan	-2.2	80%
Eastern, Southeastern Asia and Oceania	Singapore, Australia, New Zealand	-32.1	25%
Europe	Switzerland, Denmark, Finland	-31.9	0%
Latin America and the Caribbean	Chile, Uruguay, Costa Rica	-11.5	56%
Northern Africa and Western Asia	Israel, United Arab Emirates, Cyprus	-19.0	32%
Northern America	United States of America, Canada	-28.2	0%
Sub-Saharan Africa	Mauritius, Seychelles, South Africa	-8.5	90%
Income group			
High income	Singapore, Switzerland, Denmark	-32.1	2%
Upper-middle income	Georgia, Malaysia, Mauritius	-9.8	34%
Lower-middle income	Uzbekistan, Jordan, Philippines	-2.2	86%
Low income	Rwanda, Malawi, Gambia	7.3	100%

Comparison with group of competitors

South Africa's group of competitors is defined as 5 countries that are members of the BRICS: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa Figure 2 plots how South Africa fares against each competitor in terms of GTCI score and GDP per capita.

As can be seen, South Africa's GTCI score and GDP per capita are both lower than the corresponding medians of its group of competitors. Thus, the country's talent competitiveness is not in line with what would be expected given its income level.

Figure 2: GTCI score and GDP per capita (log) of South Africa and its identified competitors

Note: Bubble size indicates country population.

Performance against its income group and region

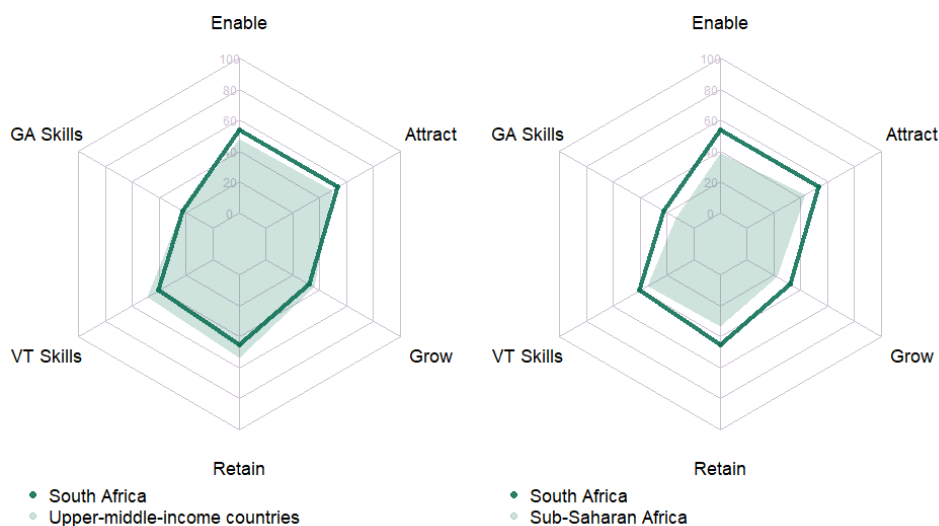*Upper-middle-income countries*
South Africa is ranked 23rd in the group of upper-middle-income countries (Figure 3, left panel). In terms of pillar performance, it has a higher score than the income group average in two of the six pillars: Enable and Attract. At the sub-pillar level, it outperforms upper-middle-income countries in seven of the fourteen sub-pillars: Regulatory Landscape, Market Landscape, Business Labour Landscape, External Openness, Internal Openness, Midlevel Skills and Talent Impact.

Sub-Saharan Africa
South Africa is ranked 3rd within Sub-Saharan Africa (Figure 3, right panel). It outperforms its region in each of the six pillars. With regard to sub-pillars, it outperforms the average in Sub-Saharan Africa in thirteen of the fourteen sub-pillars: Regulatory Landscape, Market Landscape, Business Labour Landscape, External Openness, Internal Openness, Formal Education, Lifelong Learning, Access Growth Opportunities, Sustainability, Lifestyle, Midlevel Skills, Highlevel Skills and Talent Impact.

Figure 3: South Africa pillar scores vs. averages of relevant income group and region

Note: VT Skills = Vocational and Technical Skills; GA Skills = Generalist Adaptive Skills.

Longer-term trends in talent competitiveness

Across all GTCI editions from 2015 to 2025, South Africa's ranking ranges from 51st to 79th place (see Figure 4). During GTCI 2020-GTCI 2025, South Africa ranks 72 out of a total 134 countries (on average), which is a decline from the average rank of 62 in GTCI 2015-GTCI 2019.

Figure 4: Evolution of GTCI rank for South Africa, 2015-2025

51 (out of 93)	57 (out of 109)	67 (out of 118)	63 (out of 119)	71 (out of 125)
GTCI 2014	GTCI 2015-16	GTCI 2017	GTCI 2018	GTCI 2019
70 (out of 132)	67 (out of 134)	77 (out of 133)	68 (out of 134)	79 (out of 135)
GTCI 2020	GTCI 2021	GTCI 2022	GTCI 2023	GTCI 2025

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