



SOUTH AFRICA'S REPORT
ON THE PROGRESS MADE ON THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
B+30
BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION
2019-2024

VERSION 1: 31 July 2024



**women, youth &
persons with disabilities**
Department:
Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



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INTRODUCTION

2024 marks thirty (30) years of democracy in South Africa since 1994 when the country held its first democratic elections following the era of apartheid and colonialism. The timing of the Beijing+30 review coincides with the thirty-year review of democracy in South Africa. The South African Government has undertaken a national thirty-year review process towards emerging with a set of priorities for the country going forward.

In 2012 South Africa adopted its National Development Plan: Vision 2030 which serves as a blueprint for development in the country towards 2030. This was set out in the country's five-year Medium Term Strategic Framework 2019-2024, which aligns itself with the five-year appraisal period on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) in the country and five years since South Africa undertook its previous appraisal, i.e. B+25 review covering the period 2014-2019. This report, the B+30, therefore, covers the period 2019-2024.

The country embarked on national elections on 29 May 2024 and the 7th Administration of Government has just come into place. It is an extremely exciting and historical moment in the country where no single political party has been given an outright majority to rule. A strong mandate has been given to the incoming administration by the general electorate, that all political parties must work collaboratively together to achieve the goals of a “truly democratic, non-racist, non-sexist and prosperous country” under a “Government of National Unity” (GNU). The GNU is made up of eleven (11) political parties, and the new Executive is made up of representatives of these parties in the GNU.

The people of South Africa have iterated very clearly their impatience for speedy implementation of the country's plans, programmes and strategies for a better life for all, addressing the persistent realities of unemployment, poverty and inequality. The 2024 election campaign illustrated that the [country's] top priorities are jobs, housing, water, roads,

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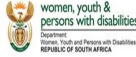
electricity, sanitation, crime, corruption, education, land and addressing inequality in society. A clear message is that the Constitution of the country remains a fundamental cornerstone in this regard.

The foundational principles¹ of the GNU include: (i) Respect for the Constitution, the Bill of Rights in its entirety, a united South Africa and the rule of law; (ii) Non-racialism and non-sexism; (iii) social justice, redress and equity, and the alleviation of poverty; (iv) human dignity and the progressive realisation of socio-economic rights; (v) nation-building, social cohesion and unity in diversity; (vi) peace, stability and safe communities, especially for women and children; (vii) accountability, transparency and community participation in government; (viii) evidence-based policy and decision-making; (ix) a professional, merit-based, non-partisan, developmental public service that puts people first; and (x) integrity, good governance and accountable leadership.

The GNU has identified the following priorities which the 7th administration should focus on: (i) rapid, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and job creation; (ii) creating a more just society by tackling poverty, spatial inequalities, food security and the high cost of living, providing a social safety net, improving access to and the quality of basic services, and protecting workers' rights; (iii) stabilising local government; (iv) investing in people through education, skills development and affordable health care; (v) building state capacity and creating a professional, merit-based, corruption-free and developmental public service; (vi) strengthening law enforcement to address crime, corruption and gender-based violence; (vii) strengthening the effectiveness of Parliament in respect of its legislative and oversight functions; (viii) strengthening social cohesion, nation-building and democratic participation and undertaking common programmes against racism, sexism, tribalism and other forms of

¹ South Africa, 14 June 2024: "Statement of Intent of the Government of National Unity 2024"

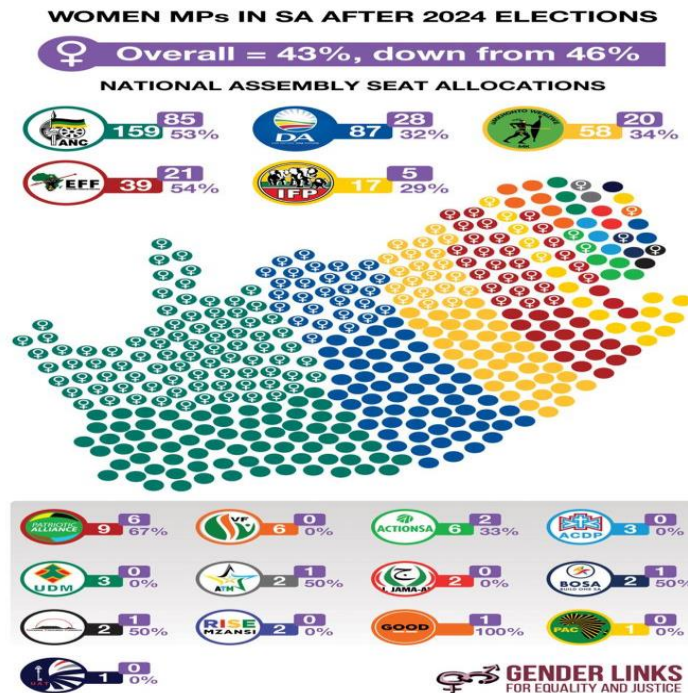
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intolerance; (ix) foreign policy based on human rights, solidarity, peaceful resolution of conflicts, multilateralism and a just, peaceful and equitable world.

The Government of National Unity has resolved to dedicate the next five years (2024 – 2029) to actions that will advance **three strategic priorities**. These are: to drive inclusive growth and job creation; to reduce poverty and tackle the high cost of living; and to build a capable, ethical and developmental state. Government of National Unity has decided to place inclusive economic growth at the centre of the national agenda.

Unfortunately, the 2024 National election has had a negative impact on the representation of women in political leadership positions. Overall, there is a regression in the progress South Africa has made over the past thirty years in the political representation of women – in the national parliament, provincial legislatures and at the executive / cabinet level.



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The diagrammatic representation above indicates that the representation of women holding seats in the National Parliament, following the 2024 National Elections, has decreased by 3 percentage points from the previous (6th) Parliament, i.e. in June 2024, of the 400 seats, only 171 are occupied by women. Notwithstanding this, the two most powerful positions in the National Assembly of National Speaker and Deputy Speaker are both women, with the National Speaker coming from the African National Congress political party and the Deputy Speaker from the Democratic Alliance political party.

Of the total of 75 Executive Members appointed in June 2024 by the President, 32 are women (i.e. 42.66%). There are 14 women (i.e. 43.75%) out of 32 Cabinet Ministers appointed, dropping from the 50% representation of women in the 6th Administration. There are 18 women (i.e. 41.86%) out of 43 Deputy Ministers. Despite this decrease in female representation from the previous administration, it must be noted that the President had a challenging task of putting together a Cabinet from across the many political parties making up the GNU. However, remarkably, the President ensured that many of these Women Ministers and Deputy Ministers are young women, and representative of the LGBTQIA+ sector.

In keeping with his commitment to representation of women in leadership positions, the President has appointed the female chief justice, justice Mandisa Maya who will officially assume her new role on September 1, 2024.

The overview of the National Thirty-Year (30) review indicated that South Africa was able to construct a society based on a constitution that guarantees political, social, economic and environmental rights. The commitment to a non-sexist society was written into the Constitution and the country has made advances in women's political, social and economic spheres as well as in attaining human rights and dignity, in particular women's rights and women's representation in parliament, government, the public service, and in the private sector.

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As part of the country's review process, the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, under the stewardship of the Minister in the Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, conducted a thirty (30) year review of women's empowerment and gender equality, and produced a comprehensive, evidence-based report.

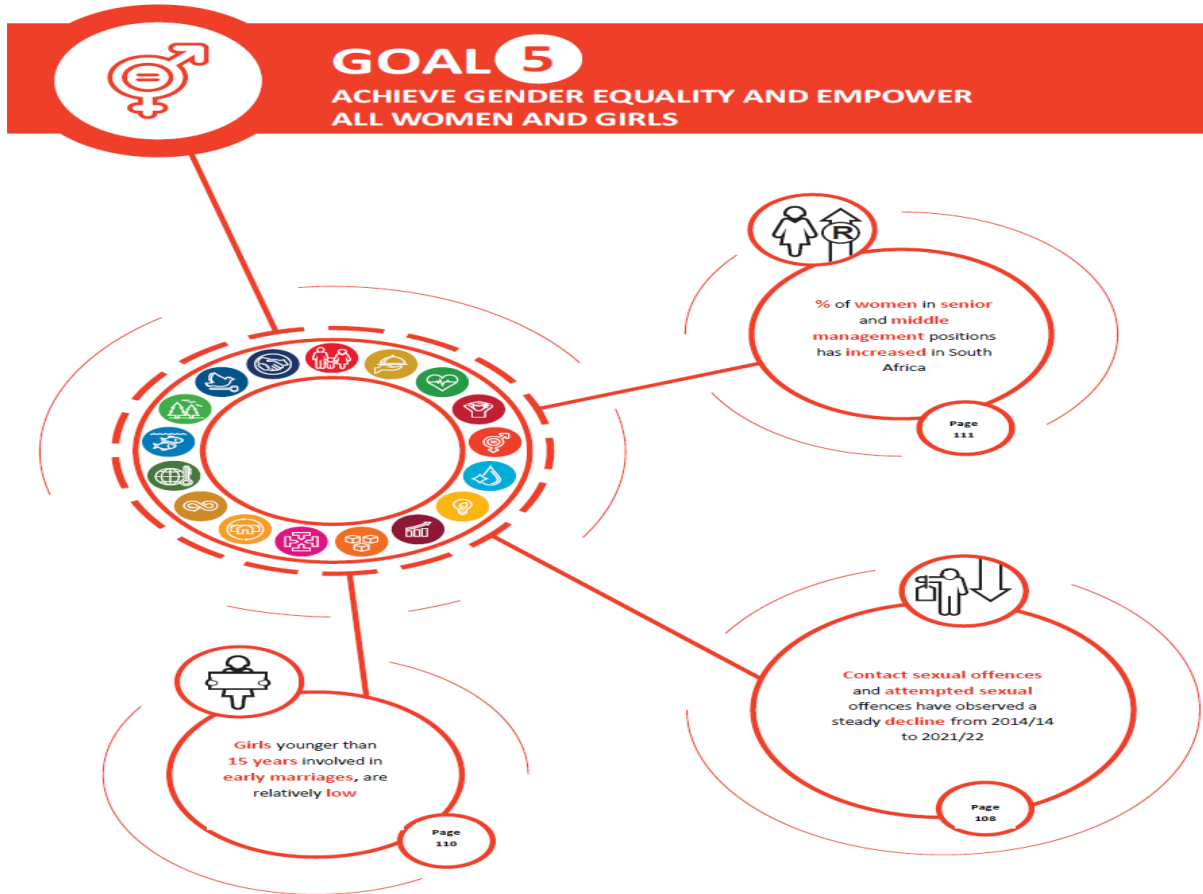
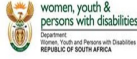
In addition, South Africa undertook an assessment of the implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and released its SDG Country Report: 2023, which included an assessment of the implementation of SDG 5 on women's empowerment and gender equality.

Thus the "Thirty (30) Year Review Report on Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality: 1994-2024"; the "Sustainable Development Goals Country Report: 2023"; "South Africa's Voluntary National Review Report: 2024 – A Progressive Approach to Human Development"; and "South Africa's 5th Periodic Report to CEDAW" have served as the base documents chiefly informing this Beijing+30 national review report. South Africa also developed the Country COVID-19 Report in 2021, which this B+30 Report also draws on. In addition, the Report draws on a number of other research publications which are detailed in the report as well as in the section on references at the end of the report.

The diagrammatic sketch below² highlights the overview of South Africa's progress made in terms of SDG 5 as reflected in the Country Report:2023.

² Stats SA, 2023, Pretoria: Sustainable Development Goals Country Report 2023 – South Africa

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Following the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and its Platform for Action in 1995, South Africa has periodically reported on the progress made in implementing the Platform for Action in the country, submitting its first report in 2000 (B+5), its 2nd in 2005 (B+10), the 3rd in 2010 (B+15), the 4th in 2015 (B+20), and the 5th in 2020 (B+25). This B+30 report is therefore building on the previous reports and provides an assessment of South Africa's progress in implementing the Platform for Action from 2019-2024.

This national review report responds to the issues raised in the Guidance Note provided by UN Women. The provides a detailed assessment the progress made in implementing the Platform for Action for the period 2019-2024, focuses on the priorities, achievements, challenges and gaps and highlights emerging priorities for the future. The report outlines the progress across the 12 Critical Areas of Concern of the

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Platform for Action. It is a detailed analysis of measures taken to advance women's empowerment and gender equality across the 12 critical areas with a focus on the period 2019-2024, under the following thematic areas: (i) Inclusive Development, Shared Prosperity and Decent Work; (ii) Poverty Eradication, Social Protection and Social Services; (iii) Freedom from Violence, Stigma and Stereotypes; (iv) Participation, Accountability and Gender-Responsive Institutions; (v) Peace and Inclusive Societies and Environmental Conservation, Protection and Rehabilitation.

The Report also highlights the implementation and monitoring of the Platform for Action, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on women's empowerment and gender equality and the other SDGs as related.

The Report highlights the progress on the availability of data disaggregated by sex and gender statistics.

The report has been developed in consultation with government departments and reflects official data and administrative data. The national level review process will continue over the next few months with the wide consultation with various role players in the country, including broad consultation with civil society and women across the provinces in the country, through a multi-stakeholder participation and the process of preparation of the final national report.

CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW OF GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

“Freedom cannot be achieved unless the women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression. All of us must take this on board, that the objectives will not have been realised unless we see in visible and practical terms that the condition of women of our country has radically changed for

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the better and they have been empowered to intervene in all aspect of life as equals with any other member of society” – President Nelson Mandela, May 24 1994³

South Africa is among those countries that have gender equality as a specific clause in the Bill of Rights enshrined in the Constitution (1996 section 9). In line with the Constitution, women and men have equal rights and access to opportunities; equality of opportunity to participate and contribute to various sectors and at various levels in every sector of the economy, politics, and society. This is also articulated in the raft of different laws making up the legislative framework governing the country. Thus, women in South Africa are guaranteed *de jure* equality – i.e. equality in law and equality before the law.

Gender equality not only encompasses the rights and access to opportunities but also the notion that women’s rights are human rights and that women should be respected for who they are. The notion of equality of opportunity, access and rights also requires that institutions in every sector are seen to comply with the constitutional prescripts for gender equality. The translation of these laws and rights in the country is intended to lead to the transformation of lives and livelihoods of all women and girls – in all their diversity – which is envisioned to achieve substantive or *de facto* equality for them.

Women historically have and continue to constitute a significant proportion of the South African population. Considering this, when the post-apartheid and democratic South African government assumed office in 1994, clear intent to transform historical gender imbalances was established. The system of racial and ethnic separation introduced in South Africa in 1948, known as Apartheid, was in many ways a gendered project. So pervasive was this structural dimension of the apartheid state that in 1996 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)

³ President Nelson Mandela, Inaugural speech, April 1994, from South Africa’s National Policy Framework for Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality, Prepared by The Office on the Status of Women

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had to take a gendered approach that required it to look at the way that apartheid society had located women and men in relation to all areas of their lives, such as the workplace, the domestic sphere and the civic life of the community⁴.

Women wrote their own history in the country in their struggles for liberation and freedom – both in the struggle against racial oppression and tyranny under colonialism and Apartheid, as well as in the struggle for their emancipation from subjugation and patriarchy. Women, mainly Black women, in the country, resisted and defied the racist and gendered agenda they were living under.

African women increasingly defiantly moved from rural areas to urban centres, despite Apartheid laws limiting their mobility. Many women strategically chose to organise across ethnic and racial lines. Their nationally and internationally resonant campaigns were collective organisation interventions that incrementally undermined pillars of apartheid, including the pass laws, educational and health-care inequities, police brutality, military conscription; junior legal status, disenfranchisement, and continued economic marginalisation.

In South Africa, women's empowerment therefore involves addressing the legacy of apartheid and transforming society, notably the way power is distributed among women, men,

⁴ According to Volume 4 of the final TRC report special hearings were held on children, youth and women. Volume 4 Chapter 10 is titled "How the Gender hearings came about" (p284 -318). In March 1996, as the Commission commenced its hearings, the Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALS) at the University of the Witwatersrand hosted a workshop entitled 'Gender and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission'. The workshop resulted in an in-depth submission that discussed ways in which the Commission might be missing some of the truth through a lack of sensitivity to gender issues. The submission used material from in-depth interviews with women leaders who had suffered gross human rights violations (p284). The TRC concluded that the relatively few women whose experiences are recorded must represent many, many more who did not want to present their own stories or were not able to do so for some reason. Nevertheless, the limited evidence available confirms the fact that women were active in all roles – as perpetrators, and in the full range of different primary and secondary victim roles. It also indicates ways in which women's experience of abuse might have differed from that of men (p318).

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institutions, and laws. It also involves confronting sexism, patriarchy, gender inequality, and systemic injustice.

When the post-apartheid South African government assumed office in 1994, a clear intent to transform these historical gender imbalances was committed to. The democratic government has since accomplished substantial success in both the structural establishment of women's institutions across all state functions, and in inserting gender equality principles into legislation. The Founding Provisions and the Bill of Rights, as enshrined in Chapters 1 and 2 of the Constitution of the Republic (Act 108 of 1996), establish the rights of women in South Africa.

Since 1994, Government has implemented a variety of laws to support women and increase their involvement in the economy's income-generating sectors. This includes the Employment Equity Act, 1998 (EEA); the Labour Relations Act, 1995 (LRA); the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, 1997 (BCEA); National Minimum Wage Act, 2018 (NMWA); Unemployment Insurance Act, 2001; Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act, 1993; amongst others. The Employment Equity Act of 1998 has facilitated equity in the labour market by promoting access to equal formal employment opportunities for women, where employers are required to ensure equitable representation of the designated groups (i.e. black people, women and persons with disabilities) in each occupational level of the workforce. Furthermore, labour laws and specific policies on maternity benefits and protection in the workplace have assisted young women of child-bearing age to retain their jobs, supporting their reproductive roles. More importantly, government has prioritized expanding access to basic services, political power, and other socio-economic opportunities for women.

In addition to legal protections, increased access to basic services such as water, electricity, housing, and free healthcare to the poor are some of the critical advances that have been made in achieving gender transformation. The government has progressively made available

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comprehensive social welfare provisions such as the child support grant, the care dependency grant, old-age pensions, and disability grants. Women are the greatest number of recipients of this social protection floor, resulting in alleviating poverty experienced by women.

Other socio-economic state provisions include more affordable, usable and responsive finances for women, development programmes to prepare women for positions on the boards of public and private entities, mobilization strategies for women farmers in agricultural cooperatives, and increased access by girls and women to primary, secondary and tertiary education.

Over the 30 years since 1994 the country has made enormous political, social and economic strides. There is, however, concern that the transformation agenda has not been realised materially and substantively for women and girls as was envisaged. Central to this concern are the continuing challenges and multiplicity of oppressions faced by South African women informed by their differently constructed subjective positions in relation to the political, economic, and social hegemony and power structures. Although the agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment in South Africa is advanced, efforts to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment through legislative and policy interventions have yet to substantially transform society and the economy.

Conditions and circumstances have changed significantly since 1994, however, more needs to be done to foster an environment that allows women to take control of their lives. Many women and girls continue to be constrained by their environment and by the pervasive patriarchy in society. There is a need to keep up the struggle against the significant gender inequities that are pervasive in our society.

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Women and girls continue to face persisting challenges of inequality, unemployment and poverty, which has been exacerbated by natural disasters such as drought, floods and negative impacts of climate change, and compounded by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on their lives and livelihoods. The COVID-19 pandemic had, and continues to have, disproportionate impacts on women and girls in South Africa. The pandemic exposed and heightened the already existing fault lines in the inequalities that women and girls face in the country. Over the past months, the impact of climate change is glaringly clear – with devastating impact on the lives and livelihoods of the women and girls, and their families, in the country. This is because of tremendous storms, heavy rains and flooding; severe drought; sudden heavy winds, including tornadoes; dangerous heat waves; and a severe water scarcity problem in the country.

One of the persisting challenges that women and girls continue to face in the country, and which has been declared as a second pandemic by His Excellency, President Cyril Ramaphosa in 2020, is that of gender-based violence and femicide. Gender based violence was exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown stages as women and girls were confined in spaces with their perpetrators. However there have been several strides made over the past five years in trying to combat this growing scourge and the collective efforts of society and communities working in partnership with government cannot be underscored enough.

South Africa also has a serious challenge with the high levels of teenage and early pregnancies, which was also exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, including issues of sexual and reproductive care and services. This issue is of serious concern in the current context of the country and government is undertaking measures to address this. In addition, the issue of period poverty experienced by indigent women and girls is also a matter of concern and government has put in place measures to address menstrual health, hygiene and human dignity related to this challenge. This also includes addressing the issue of sexual and reproductive

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health and rights of women and girls in the country, including the access to contraceptives, family planning and related services.

South Africa continues to respond to the HIV pandemic in the country through its comprehensive treatment and care programme, including an extremely huge Anti Retro Viral Treatment programme – the largest such programme in the world. Despite this, young women continue to remain highly vulnerable to HIV infections, particularly those in the age group 15-24 years.

Assessment of Progress on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

SNAPSHOT

<i>Critical gender equality and women's empowerment issues</i>	Dashboard key				
	Significant progress	Good progress	Moderate progress	Limited progress	No progress
Entrenching South Africa's vision and mandate for gender equality					
Formulating policies and legislation that are gender responsive					
Implementing policies and legislation for gender equality					
Overcoming the challenges of poverty for women					
Women's Representation at the political, leadership and local government level					
Women's Representation in the public sector					
Women's Representation in the private sector					
Promoting women's economic emancipation					
Social transformation and social justice: Women's access to services					
Social transformation and social justice: Women and social protection					

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Social transformation and social justice: Women's health and wellbeing		
Social transformation and social justice: Women education and skills Development		
Women and girl's right to be free of violence		
Promoting women's role in the environment / green economy		
Gender responsive policies, planning, research, budgeting, monitoring, evaluation and auditing across government		
Addressing Patriarchy, sex stereotyping and gendered roles and division of labour		
Addressing women's unequal share of unpaid care work and household responsibility in the GDP		

PART 11: OUTLINE OF THE NATIONAL B+30 REPORT

This section of South Africa's B+30 Report covers the 12 critical areas of concern contained in the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action. The Report highlights the progress made against these 12 Critical Areas of Concern which are clustered into 6 dimensions as prescribed in the UN Women B+30 Guidance Note, and which is aligned with the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The 6 broad dimensions or thematic areas include the following:

1. Inclusive development, shared prosperity, and decent work
2. Poverty eradication, social protection, and social services
3. Freedom from violence, stigma, and stereotypes
4. Participation, accountability, and gender-responsive institutions
5. Peaceful and inclusive societies
6. Environmental conservation, protection, and rehabilitation

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The approach adopted by South Africa in developing the National B+30 Review Report is also in line with the commitments made in the Political Declaration adopted in 2020 during the B+25 global appraisal and the 25th anniversary of the Platform for Action in March 2020. In this regard, the South African report highlights the series of additional cross-cutting measures aiming at accelerating the implementation of the BPfA over the past five years, namely: (i) review of progress on laws, policies and strategies; (ii) institutional mechanisms for gender equality; (iii) the transformation of discriminatory norms and gender stereotypes; (iv) investments to close resource gaps; (v) accountability for existing commitments; (vi) capacity building; (vii) data collection; and (viii) monitoring and evaluation.

SECTION 3

1. INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT, SHARED PROSPERITY AND DECENT WORK

This section focuses on providing progress made against the critical areas of concern in line with the Guidance note: (i) Critical Area of Concern A on Women and Poverty; (ii) Critical Area of Concern F on Women and the Economy; (iii) Critical Area of Concern I on Human Rights of Women; and (iv) Critical Area of Concern L on the Girl Child. It provides information on actions taken over the past five years to: (i) advance gender equality in the world of work (including informal and non-standard employment as well as entrepreneurship), (ii) recognize, reduce and/or redistribute unpaid care and domestic work, promote work-life and family balance and strengthen the rights of paid care workers;

- (I) ADVANCE GENDER EQUALITY IN THE WORLD OF WORK (INCLUDING INFORMAL AND NON-STANDARD EMPLOYMENT AS WELL AS ENTREPRENEURSHIP)

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South Africa's macroeconomic policy framework is aimed at transforming the entire country in an inclusive manner. Recurring priorities of these major policies include stabilisation of the macroeconomic environment through sound fiscal, monetary and regulatory instruments; sustained economic growth; employment creation and inclusive labour market; increase fixed investment; Infrastructure supporting economic performance and development in general; black economic empowerment to achieve inclusion; increased SMME contribution to economy and employment; growth of manufacturing and other priority sectors; increased and diversified export basket; R&D and technological innovation supporting economy and improved living standards.

The country's National Development Plan: Vision 2030 provides a long-term vision towards dealing with the challenges of unemployment, inequality and creating a more inclusive society.

Equal opportunity and equal treatment in the labour market are at the core of decent work. Studies have shown that women in South Africa still face additional challenges that hinder them from accessing employment. Once they are in employment, appointments to decision-making positions and jobs in certain sectors, or of certain characteristics, remain elusive. The slow pace in the advancement of women into strategic decision-making positions of our South African labour market, in particular, in the four upper echelons is reflected in the 2023-2024 Employment Equity Annual Report (24th Commission for Employment Equity (CEE) Report) released on 24th June 2024. The Employment Equity (EE) data in this 24th CEE Annual Report indicates that women account for 26.9% of positions in top management; 37,7% in senior management; and 48,1% in Professionally Qualified/ Middle management levels.

Basic standards and rights of employees in the workplace form an integral part of the Decent Work Agenda. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), decent work involves

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opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income; security in the workplace and social protection for families; better prospects for personal development and social integration; freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives; and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.

South Africa subscribes to the notion that the economic empowerment of women is essential to achieving women's rights and gender equality; ensuring women can equally participate in and benefit from decent work and social protection; access markets and have control over resources, their own time, lives, and bodies; and increased voice, agency, and meaningful participation in economic decision-making at all levels from the household to international institutions⁵. Thus, the country regards women's economic empowerment as a powerful tool against their poverty⁶.

Employment or running a business provides individuals with a strong sense of economic independence, enabling them to contribute to their household's welfare. Studies suggest that if there are existing gender gaps in accessing economic opportunities, the quality and quantity of the labour supply will be distorted and inefficient, negatively affecting productivity and economic growth. Therefore, the participation of females in the economy is vital as it gives them access and control over resources, including land, appropriate technology and essential support services, and enables them to earn income to support their households.

Research studies show that women experience barriers that restrict their participation in the labour market, particularly the traditional gendered roles that make women subservient to their male counterparts, for example, women are expected to engage in unpaid care work and domestic household work to a higher extent than that of their male family members, as a

⁵ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures#87144>

⁶ Elliott, C.M. 2008. Global empowerment of women: Responses to globalization and politicized religions. Routledge, New York.

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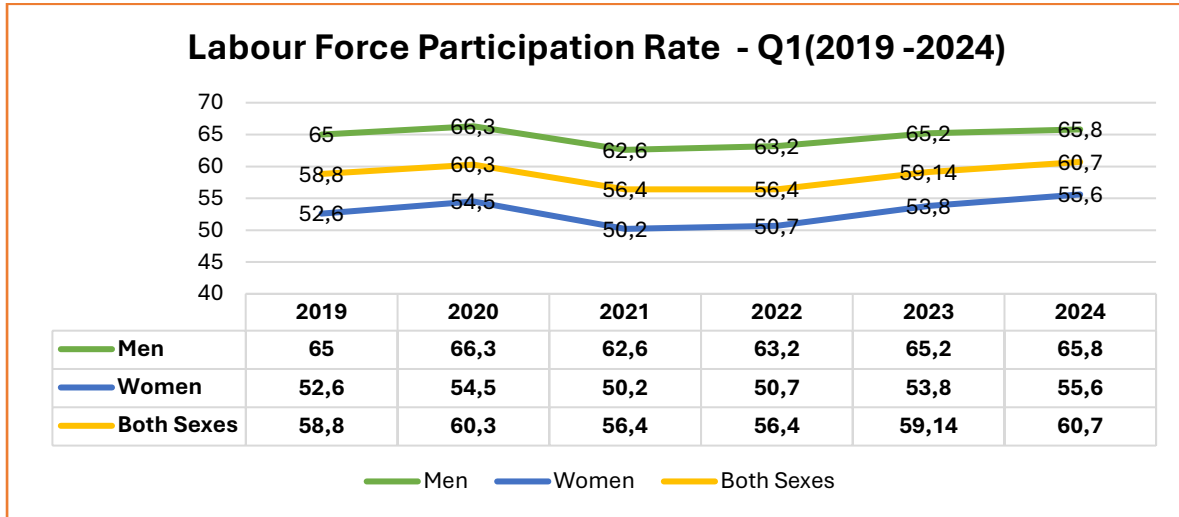
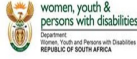
consequence of the stereotyped perspective of the gendered division of labour and reproductive role of women girls.

Since becoming a democratic nation, South Africa has put in place policies designed to ensure that women and men have equal rights and opportunities. This is *de jure* equality – or equality in the law. However, it has yet to be fully transformed into substantive or *de facto* equality for women. With all these mechanisms developed to try and close the gender gap, the country still experiences gender disparities in employment and in the economy. Women continue to be on the margins of mainstream economy, and remain entrenched in small, medium, micro and informal sectors. This is acutely demonstrated in the labour force participation rates between women and men in the South African economy.

Labour force participation contributes to economic growth and sustainable development. Therefore, limited growth in the population of economically active individuals can negatively affect long-term economic growth, unless there are increases in labour force participation. Many factors influence labour force participation, some of which are not easily measurable. These factors include variations in sex, population groupings, race, educational attainment, household structure and the geographic areas of the country, which include urban or rural settings.

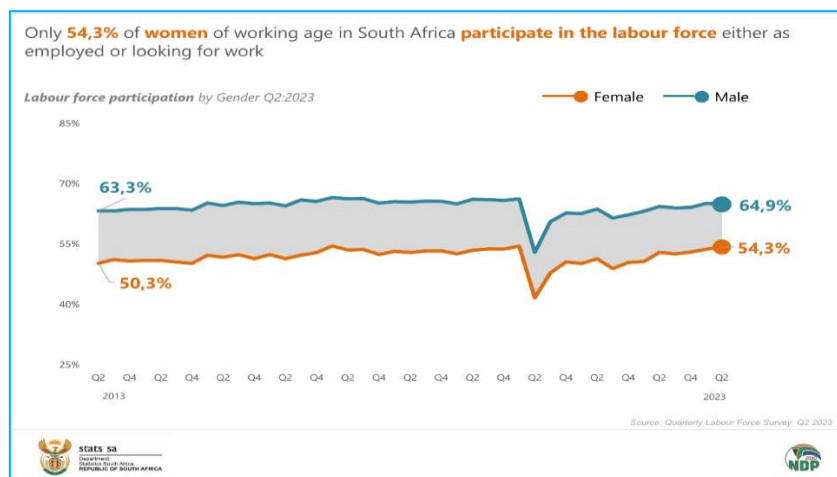
From a gender perspective, the labour force participation examines whether there is equitable access to the labour market for females in comparison to males. Measuring labour force participation is therefore essential for several reasons, for example, the participation of females in the economy is positively associated with earning income, better access to and control over resources, providing for their households and reducing poverty. The graph below provides the labour force participation trend by women in South Africa over the past five years.

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Source: Statistics SA, Quarterly Labour Force Survey, Q1:2024

It can be discerned from the above graph that, despite the labour force participation rates of both males and females having slightly increased over the past five years, the labour force participation rate of males has been consistently higher than that of females throughout the period. The challenge is that the gender gap between male and female participation rates have remained stable over the years – meaning that although more women have entered the labour market in South Africa, the inequality between men and women participating in the economy is not narrowing.



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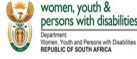
However, the labour market in South Africa remains more favourable to men than women, revealing large gender gaps in employment. The graph above depicts the trend from 2012 to 2023. This is not unique to South Africa. Globally, workplace disparities between men and women continue to exist. Labour-force participation rates amongst women remain lower than men and women are also less likely to find work than men. Women and young people fare worse in labour markets globally, often bearing the brunt of inequalities in labour markets. According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey for the second quarter of 2023, South Africa's labour force participation rate increased to 59,6% in the second quarter of 2023 from 58,6% recorded in the second quarter of 2022, an increase of 1 percentage point year-on-year. The labour force participation rate for women stood at 54,3% compared with 64,9% for men, a gap of 10,6 percentage points. Only 54,3% of women of working age in South Africa participate in the labour force either as employed or looking for work. The female labour force participation rate has seen an increase over 10 years by 4 percentage points from 50,3% in Q2:2013 to 54,3% in Q2:2023. However, women remain less likely to participate in the labour force compared to men⁷. In Q2:2023 the labour force participation rate was highest among South Africans aged 35 to 44 years (78,8%); young people aged 15-24 had the lowest labour force participation rate at 27,2%. The labour force participation rate for women was largest in the age group 35-44 at 72,7%; this, however, is 12 percentage points less than that of men in the same age group. Across all age groups, women are less likely to be in the labour force compared to men. The largest labour force participation gap was in the age group 45-54 at 15,5 percentage points. Female labour force participation showed an increase in all age groups between Q2:2022 and Q2:2023.⁸

Reducing levels of **unemployment** is particularly important because of their direct impact on reducing poverty, as it affects both men and women equally. However, the rate of

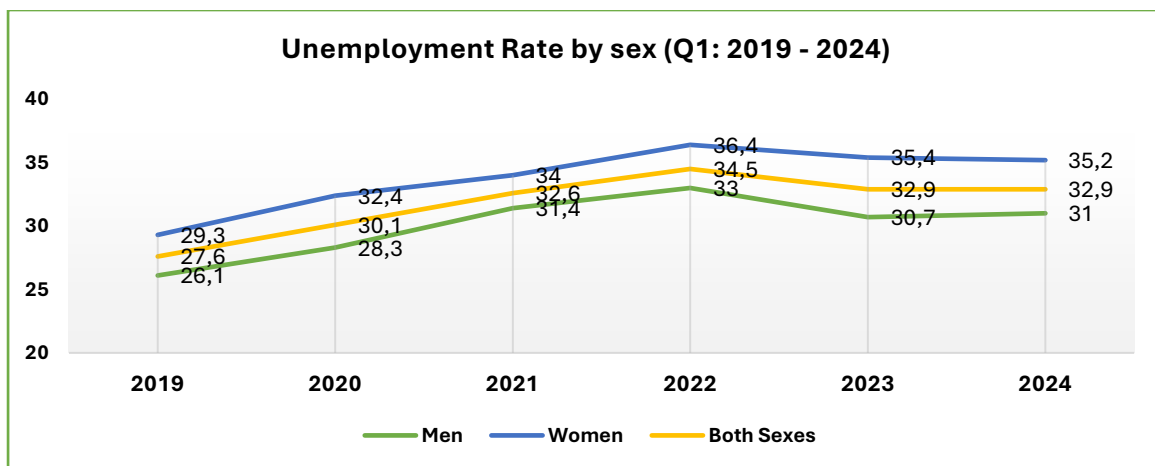
⁷ Statistics SA, Quarterly Labour Force Survey, Q1:2024

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unemployment tends to be higher for women than it is for men in South Africa⁹. This is demonstrated in the graph below which represents the share of the labour force that is without work but available for and seeking employment. Data from the Quarterly Labour Force surveys conducted by Statistics South Africa over the past five years shows that national unemployment rates increased from 27,6% in 2019 to 32,9% in 2024. The unemployment rates for women increased from 29,3% in 2019 to 35,2% in 2024. In this period, women’s unemployment rates have continuously remained higher than the national rates and those of their male counterparts¹⁰. Unemployment numbers for women remain higher than the national average, with 35,7% of South African women in the labour force currently without work and actively looking for work. This is an increase of 0,3 of a percentage point quarter-on-quarter, and 0,2 of a percentage point year-on-year. The burden of unemployment is more pronounced for women as the unemployment rate for men indicates a continued decline of 0,7 of a percentage point quarter-on-quarter, and 2,6 percentage points year-on-year. Black African women fare even worse with an unemployment rate of 39,8% in Q2:2023, which is higher than the national average and other population groups.



Source: Statistics SA, Quarterly Labour Force Survey, Q1:2024

⁹ Gender Series Volume IX: Women Empowerment, 2017–2022, Statistics South Africa (Report no. 03-10-26)

¹⁰ Quarterly Labour Force Survey, Quarter 1: 2024; Statistics South Africa, 2024.

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When women are employed, they are more likely to work in low-paying jobs in vulnerable conditions, and there is a slow improvement forecast for the future (ILO,2017). According to the ILO, ‘vulnerable employment is a combination of ‘own account work’ and ‘contributing family work’ or unpaid household member, both defined as employment statuses that are associated with ‘low levels of development and high levels of poverty’. More women than men work as unpaid household members and women are less likely to be employers. In Q2:2023, only 3,3% of women were employers compared to 7,5% of men¹¹.

Gender disparities in the labour market still exist and the light shown by these labour market estimates echoes the need to accelerate the enhancement of women’s overall participation in employment, access to more opportunities across economic sectors and addressing job gaps that go beyond unemployment. Work is the most effective economic empowerment strategy for women. Women’s labour market participation must consequently be increased. Improving gender equality has numerous positive effects on both individual persons and society.

Actions taken in the country to advance gender equality in the **world of work** were initiated from 1994 when the country became democratic. Discrimination and sexism in employment and the labour force is one of the challenges women faced and continue to experience to this day, albeit that women are increasingly represented within the economy.

Working class black African women remain the most discriminated against in terms of employment, occupational levels and unfair labour practices to date. This is compounded by unequal pay disparities.

¹¹ Stats SA, Quarterly Labour Force Survey, Q1:2024

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Many pieces of **legislation** and several **policies** have been enacted over the past 30 years to address employment and working conditions, employment equity, etc, and in instances of continuing discrimination, further amendments have been made. This is in recognition of equality under section 9 of the Constitution; Article 11 of CEDAW; and the various ILO Conventions, including the Convention of 1958 on Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) (C111); and the Convention of 1951 on Equal Remuneration (C100), among others.

It has been 26 years since the Employment Equity Act, no 55 of 1998 was put into effect in South Africa. The Employment Equity Act seeks to promote equal opportunities and fair labour practice in South Africa, with the primary goal to ensure workplace equality, and promoting equal opportunity and fair treatment in the workplace through the elimination of unfair discrimination. It also employs affirmative action policies to address the disadvantages in the workforce faced by specific groups, ensuring their fair representation at all occupational levels and categories. Through the implementation of this Act, South Africa has made significant progress on women's representation in the public sector, and albeit very gradually, within the private sector. The progress made in the public sector, in the three spheres of Government (i.e. the National; Provincial and Local Government) is clearly denoted by the employment equity data in the 24th CEE Annual Report, which shows that women representation in the Government at top management constitutes 35.4%; in senior management at 42,3%; and 56,0% at middle management level. Whereas in the Private sector, women only account for 25,8% in top management; 36,4% in senior management; and 42,3% in middle management level.

However, scholars have argued that the South Africa constitution emphasises exclusion, which in term means equality is grouped into different treatments. On the other hand, it is true that the formal attention of the Act addresses equity of women who are working in the public sector

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because they are employed on basis of formal permanent contracts and neglects those who are employed on informal contracts. For example, domestic workers without formal contract are not protected by the Act¹².

The implementation of this act often leads to legal challenges¹³ in the country. Thus, the Government of South Africa sought to amend the Act. The Employment Equity Amendment Act, 2020 was tabled in Parliament in June 2020 and published for public comment in February 2021 and public hearings were hosted by the Parliament on 13-15 April 2021¹⁴. Consultations were held with relevant stakeholders across all economic sectors to consult on sector specific numerical equity targets for designated groups i.e. Black people, women and persons with disabilities. These targets are intended to ensure the equitable representation of these targeted groups across all occupational levels of the workforce in the labour market. These consultations commenced by Government in June 2019 and concluded at the end of June 2021 with each of 18 identified economic sectors having been consulted separately¹⁵.

The Employment Equity Amendment Act, no 4 of 2022 was assented into law by the President on 6 April 2023, with the main objectives being to reduce the regulatory burden for small employers; to regulate the sector specific numerical equity targets; among others. Draft Regulations on the Amendment Act on proposed sector numerical targets were published for public comment in May 2023, and published for further comments again in February 2024 until May 2024 to enhance the consultative process on sectoral equity numerical targets.

¹² Budlender, D. 2002. Gender Equality and Social Dialogue in South Africa: In cooperation with Industrial and Employment Relations Department. Switzerland: Bureau for Gender Equality.

¹³ RSA: Commission for Employment Equity. 2024. 24th Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report: 2023/2024, Pretoria

¹⁴ RSA: Commission for Employment Equity. 2022. 21st Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report, 2020-2021, Pretoria

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The Commission for Employment (CEE) is a statutory body in South Africa established in terms of Section 28 of the Employment Equity Act, No 55 of 1998. One of its functions is to advise on Codes of Good Practice and regulations and policies related to the Act. It must also establish appropriate and well-researched norms and benchmarks for the setting of numerical goals in various sectors. The CEE's key strategic objective is in line with government's priority of expediting growth and transforming the economy to meet the objectives of the South African Constitution and to provide decent work in the country, to enforce employment equity compliance; to facilitate the empowerment of workers to enforce their rights; to empower employers to drive the transformative journey of the work force, among others.

In line with the government's priority of speeding up economic growth and transforming the economy to create decent work, the CEE embarked on various initiatives such as capacity building for trade unions on the Code of Good Practice on the Preparation, Implementation and Monitoring of the Employment Equity Plan (first held on 13 June 2023)¹⁶. Both employees and trade unions play a pivotal role in the workplace to monitor compliance with all labour laws, in particular, in the elimination of unfair discrimination and the transformation of the labour market in the country.

Also, in pursuance of the empowerment of employers, employees, trade unions and the public, to drive transformation, the CEE undertakes annual awareness campaigns on the EE Amendment Act, employment equity reporting and case law on unfair discrimination. In this regard, it has forged a relationship with the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) under the theme "Transformation-Makes Business Sense". In the financial year 2023/2024, the CEE conducted such workshops in July, August and September 2023 covering 17 towns across the 9 provinces in the country¹⁷.

¹⁶ RSA: Commission for Employment Equity. 2024. 24th Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report: 2023/2024, Pretoria

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Additionally, there has been a concerted effort to address the challenges faced by persons with disabilities in the workplace. The Commission on Employment Equity (CEE) is making a very determined effort through its extensive reporting on sectoral trends and challenges faced by persons with disabilities, with a focus on combating discrimination against this grouping, especially women with disabilities. The CEE is making a strong clarion call to employers to actively participate in creating more inclusive employment policies and practices to fight against discrimination in all its forms in the work environment¹⁸.

On 29 February 2024, the CEE also held a stakeholder engagement on employment of persons with disabilities given that there has not been a significant change in their employment¹⁹. The representation of this group remains at just over 1% over the past 25 years in both the private and public sectors. This has huge implications for the gainful employment of women with disabilities, given that they are the most disadvantaged within this sector. The key objective of this engagement was to address challenges faced by persons with disabilities in the process of their employment and retention in the labour market and to explore possible solutions in terms of policy and practice to prevent and eliminate potential barriers experienced. This engagement included stakeholders such as National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) Social Partners (i.e. Organised Business, Organised Labour, Community Constituency, and the Government Strategic Partners (such as the Commission for Gender Equality and Public Service Commission)), and various organisations of persons with disabilities among other role players. This engagement focused on the employment equity policy tools for the employment of persons with disabilities, including that of the Code of Good Practice and the Technical Assistance Guidelines, as well as case laws involving unfair discrimination and the employment of persons with disabilities in both the public and private sectors; as well as presentations by the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities; Business Unity South Africa; and Statistics South Africa, focusing on challenges

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and possible solutions for the employment of persons with disabilities in the private and public sectors as well as on the challenges experience in data collection.

Despite the Affirmative Action Policy that South adopted in 1998 to combat the legacy of apartheid and to promote the representation and inclusion of historically disadvantaged groups such as Blacks, women and persons with disabilities., in its Annual Report 2022-2023, the CEE noted with disappointment at the continued slow pace of change in the representation of designated groups at the top and senior levels of management and that there has been no material difference in the pace of transformation in the private sector.²⁰

There is a raft of other legislation and policies in place in South Africa to **promote worker's rights and empowerment** and aimed at transformation of the labour force and the economy. The Labour Relations Act, no 66 of 1995 prohibits both direct and indirect unfair discrimination and added the ground of family responsibility as a ground of discrimination. The issue of affirmative action adopted as a special measure to advance and promote women's rights, empowerment and advancement in the workforce continues to prevail, and is not regarded as unfair discrimination. This principle is corroborated as well by the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, no 75 of 1997 and the Employment Equity Act, no 55 of 1998 and as amended in 2017. The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, no 4 of 2000 further reinforced these principles adopted legally. Some of the basic rights gained since South Africa became a democracy, are that of **maternity and paternity benefits** (leave and pay); job security while on leave; **family leave**; the right to freedom of association and participation in trade unions; no dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy; disability or HIV/AIDS; and access to unemployment insurance, among others.

²⁰ RSA. Department of Labour and Employment, 2023, Pretoria: "23rd Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report 2022-2023"

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Thirty years into democracy and one of the areas where discrimination and inequality persists is that in the domestic work sector, where 90%²¹ of **domestic workers** are black, African females. These women are generally abused, violated, paid inadequately, treated badly and have no or little protection of their rights as workers. A most significant stride made is that of the protection of the domestic worker through the Sectoral Determination No 7: Domestic Worker Sector²² (under s51 (1) of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, no 75 of 1997), adopted on 15 August 2002. This guarantees domestic workers certain basic conditions of work, a minimum wage, and their access to UIF and sought to regulate this sector.

A persistent challenge for working women in South Africa is that of **sexual harassment at the workplace**. The South African Constitution protects the right to dignity, equality and fair labour practices in terms of the Bill of Rights, which includes the elimination, prevention, and management of all forms of harassment, including gender-based harassment in the workplace with the aim to create safe workplaces that are free of harassment.

Although sexual harassment in the workplace has been designated an unfair labour practice in the Labour Relations Act, no 66 of 1995, and regulated through a Code of Good Practice on Sexual Harassment (1998) and the Code of Good Practice on the Handling of Sexual Harassment Cases (2005), this is an on-going scourge in the workforce to date. The Employment Equity Act, no 55 of 1998 includes harassment as a form of unfair discrimination.

South Africa has ratified the ILO C190 on Eliminating Violence and Harassment in the World of Work. This is the first international treaty to recognise the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and sexual harassment. The Convention was adopted in June 2019 by the ILO and came into force on 25 June 2021.

²¹ According to the report produced by the ILO

²² Department of Labour: www.gov.za

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South Africa ratified the Convention and deposited it with the ILO on 29 November 2021, becoming the 10th member state of the ILO to do so.

This is significant for the country as ratification means that South Africa must put in place the necessary laws and policy measures to prevent and address violence and harassment in the world of work. This is an historic opportunity to shape a future of work based on dignity and respect for all. Discrimination, violence and harassment perpetuate inequalities in the world of work, and this is therefore of significant advancement for women in South Africa, including for the million or more women employed as domestic workers in private households.

A Draft Code on the Prevention and Elimination of Violence and Harassment in the World of Work was developed in June 2020 and published for public comment in the Government Gazette on 20 August 2020 until October 2020. In line with ILO C190, the Code of Good Practice on the Prevention and Elimination of Harassment in the workplace was published on 18 March 2022 in the Government Gazette (No 46056)²³. This Code replaced the 2005 Code of Good Practice on the Handling of Sexual Harassment, and covers other forms of harassment including physical, verbal and psychological harassment.

South Africa regards all forms of harassment as a form of unfair discrimination and constitutes a barrier to equity and equality in the workplace, which the Code addresses. It extends to hostile teasing, LGBTQIA+ phobic language, as well as workplace and cyber bullying, among others. It addresses critical issues related to the lived experiences of employees and lifts the plight of the LGBTQIA+ community in a significant way as well. Furthermore, this Code address some of the emerging trends of harassment that have occurred as a result of remote work, as a consequence of COVID-19 pandemic. The Code is ground-breaking as it offers a more

²³ RSA: Commission for Employment Equity, 2022. The 22nd Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report 2021-2022

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streamlined approach to the prevention and elimination of harassment in the workplace and empowers employees and employers to deal effectively with harassment in the workplace.

The Code of Good Practice is intended to address the prevention, elimination, and management of all forms of harassment in the workplace, and is guided by the ILO Convention 190 and its Recommendation concerning the Elimination of Violence and Harassment in the World of Work, 2019 (C190); the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention 111 of 1958 (C111); and the ILO Convention 151 relating to Occupational Health and Safety. It provides guidelines to employers and employees (including applicants for employment) on the prevention and elimination of all forms of harassment in the workplace. It identifies the steps that employers must take to eliminate harassment including the development and implementation of policies, practices and procedures that will lead to the creation of workplaces that are free of harassment and in which employers and employees respect one another's integrity, dignity, privacy, and their right to equality in the workplace.

The CEE undertook advocacy and capacity building initiatives on the elimination of harassment in the workplace to roll-out the implementation of the Code of Good Practice on the Prevention and Elimination of Harassment in the workplace (Harassment Code) published in March 2022. The Harassment Code recognises that both employers and employees, including trade unions have critical roles and responsibilities to fulfil in the prevention, elimination and management of the impact of all forms of harassment in the workplace. These workshops were conducted in May 2022²⁴.

The CEE undertook an awareness raising roadshow on the Harassment Code covering all nine provinces in August and September 2022²⁵, which included sharing case law on disputes covering various types of harassment, including sexual and gender-based harassment. The

²⁴ RSA: Commission for Employment Equity, 2023. The 23rd Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report 2022/23, Pretoria

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CEE has also called for all employers, in consultation with their employees and trade unions in their workplace, to develop and implement workplace harassment policies and practices that complies with the provisions of this Harassment Code, including in their orientation, training and educational programmes, the issues around the prevention and elimination of harassment in the workplace.

South Africa also ensures that no person may be discriminated against or dismissed on **account of pregnancy** (s9(3) and (4) of the Constitution). Pregnant employees are strongly protected under South African Law since 1994. There are no fewer than 6 pieces of legislation protecting pregnancy and post-pregnancy employees. On the issue of reproductive health, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, no 75 of 1997 prescribes safeguards in cases of pregnancy. It ensures that pregnant women, and nursing mothers, are protected against performing work that is hazardous to their health or that of the unborn child. The Code of Good Practice on the Protection of Employees during Pregnancy and after the Birth of a Child refers to s26 (1) of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, no 75 of 1997, which in turn protects breast-feeding mothers upon their return to work. This is further entrenched in the Labour Relations Act, no 66 of 1995 and the Employment Equity Act, no 55 of 1998. In the matter of **reproductive health and safety at the workplace**, the Occupational Health and Safety Act, no 85 of 1993 also comes into play.

Labour legislation in the country also heeds family responsibility, both as a criterion on which discrimination is prohibited as well as a factor to be considered in terms of regulations related to working times of employees. The Basic Conditions of Employment Act, no 75 of 1997 provides for three days **paid family responsibility leave** per annum, where the employee has worked for longer than four months and works at least four days per week. This leave is intended

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for time off to care for a sick child and on the death of a spouse / life partner, parent, grandparent, child, grandchild or sibling²⁶.

In a judgement handed down in the case of Van Wyk v Minister of Employment and Labour and others on 25 October 2023, the Gauteng High Court found that the **existing parental leave provisions are unconstitutional** as they unfairly discriminate between different categories of parents. When the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997 came into effect, biological mothers became entitled to four months' unpaid maternity leave and biological fathers to three paid days' paternity leave. The Gauteng High Court declared that all the current parental law provisions of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act no 75 of 1997 as well as the corresponding provisions of the Unemployment Insurance Fund Act of 2001 to be invalid²⁷.

According to Judge Roland Sutherland the existing provisions are unconstitutional as they unfairly discriminate between mothers and fathers. They also unfairly discriminate between one set of parents and another on the basis of whether their children were born of the mother, were conceived by surrogacy, or were adopted. The essence of the interim order was that four consecutive months' parental leave should be available to parents (mothers, fathers, adoptive parents, commissioning parents). The parents may decide between themselves how they would use the four-month period of leave available to them: One or other parent may take the whole of the period, or they may take turns at taking the leave. Both employers must be notified prior to the date of birth in writing. If a shared arrangement is chosen, the period or periods to be taken by each of the parents must be stipulated.

In South Africa, **wage discrimination** continues to be the biggest bane to the working woman. This form of inequality in the country has been overt and practiced indiscriminately and with

²⁶ Section 27 of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, no 75 of 1997

²⁷ <https://www.saflii.org/za/cases/ZAGPJHC/2023/1213.html>

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impunity, because the workforce is skewed towards men and lies fundamentally in the hands of men, mainly white males. Wage discrimination continues despite prohibition under the Labour Relations Act, no 66 of 1995 and the Wage Act, no 5 of 1957. However, both acts had little impact over the past two decades as they related only to minimum wages.

The ILO Equal Remuneration Convention 1951 (C 100), which South Africa ratified in 2000, obliges the state to give effect to the principle of equal pay for women and men workers for work of equal value. The Minister of Labour issued a Code of Good Practice on Equal Pay / Remuneration for Work of Equal Value on 1st June 2015, issued in line with s54 (1) of the Employment Act, no 55 of 1998, as amended. The Code promotes the elimination of unfair discrimination in respect of pay / remuneration by applying the principle of equal pay / remuneration for work of equal value. It was only on 1 August 2014 with the enactment of the amendments to the Employment Equity Act, No. 47 of 2013 that there is legal redress for equal pay for work of equal value. In practice nothing has really changed in this regard for women. This inequality persists to date.

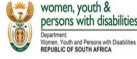
According to latest World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report, South African women receive between 23% and 35% less than men for the same work²⁸. The Labour Market Dynamic Report²⁹ shows that between 2017 and 2020, the total median earning increased by R500 from R3500 to R4000. Overall, the increase in median monthly earnings among males and females remained the same – at R500. Median earnings of males were continually higher than the median earnings for females with a gap of R1000 in 2022.

According to Statistics South Africa (2022), the median female earnings as a percentage of median male earnings fluctuated from 2017 to 2020. Women's median earnings were 77.8%

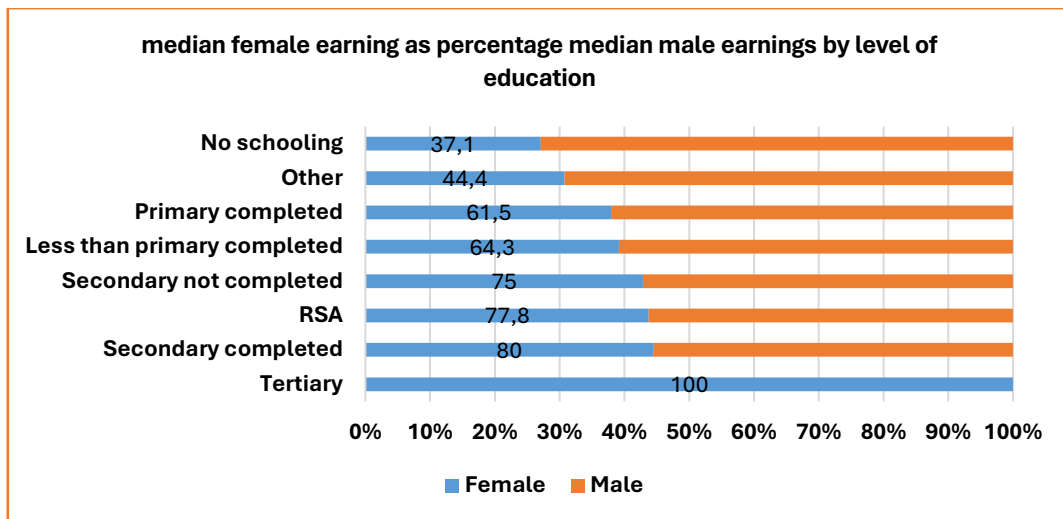
²⁸ World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report, 2023

²⁹ Labour market dynamics in South Africa, 2022 / Statistics South Africa

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of men’s earnings, which was below parity in 2020. The median is a widely used measure that best describes the distribution of earnings, as they are more stable over time. They accurately represent actual earnings in an occupation. The analysis of earnings highlights that a gender gap exists in earnings. The only median earnings that reached parity in 2020 were for tertiary education, while the median earnings for secondary education completed were slightly above that of South Africa by 2,2%³⁰.



Source: Labour Market Dynamics, 2020.

An overview of unfair discrimination involving equal pay for work of equal value – section 6(4) of the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 protects employees against unfair discrimination in respect of unequal terms and conditions of employment, as follows: “A difference in terms and conditions of employment between employees of the same employer performing the same or substantially the same work or work of equal value that is directly or indirectly based on any one or more of the grounds listed in subsection (i), is unfair discrimination”.

³⁰ Statistics South Africa: Gender Series Volume IX: Women Empowerment, 2017–2022 / , Pretoria; 2022

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From this provision, certain criteria can be identified that an employee must satisfy to be successful in a claim. In the first instance there must be a difference in terms and conditions of employment. Although this principle is generally referred to as the “equal pay” principle, the Act’s protection is broader in that it provides protection not only in respect of monetary compensation, but also in respect of other terms and conditions of employment, such as leave, overtime, work hours, notice periods. The second element that can be deduced is that the difference must occur between employees of the same employer performing the same or substantially the same work or work of equal value. This element requires that there must be a comparator. In other words, the employment conditions and the work of complainant, must be compared with those of at least one other employee of the same employer. Thirdly the difference in employment conditions must be on the grounds listed in Section 6 (1) of the Act such as race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language, birth, family responsibility, HIV status, and political opinion, or any arbitrary ground. In this regard, the Act prohibits discrimination that is unfair. However, a difference in conditions of employment is not automatically unfair. The Regulations in terms of the Act make provision for circumstances where an employer is permitted or justified to provide different conditions of employment – examples of justifications include experience, qualifications and seniority.

The CEE, together with the CCMA, also hosted a stakeholder engagement on equal pay /remuneration for work of equal value in May 2022 and on 23 November 2022, to engage stakeholders on assessing the impact of introduction of specific legal provisions of the principle of equal pay / remuneration for work of equal value in the South African Labour market since August 2014; to identify implementation challenges and proposed solutions for future improvements relating to legislation, policy and practice; as well as case law in relation to equal pay disputes handled by both the CCMA and the Labour Courts.

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Some key challenges emerging included: (i) Lack of access to information on salaries and benefits packages to enable gathering of evidence to support equal pay disputes; (ii) lack of transparency in job evaluation and grading systems; (iii) confidentiality clauses in employment contracts regarding sharing of information on salaries and benefits among employees; (iv) lack of knowledge and capacity of employees in the interpretation of the law; (v) market forces dictating the premiums to attract and retain critical skills; (vi) lack of compliance and enforcement; and (vii) insufficient awareness raising on employment equity and equal pay.

In order to address the identified challenges, the following key proposed solutions were identified: (i) possible amendments in the Labour Relations Act, Section 16 to enable employees / trade unions to access information on salaries and benefits structures to gather evidence for equal pay cases / disputes; (ii) possible review and amendment of Equal Pay Policies, including the Code of Good Practice on Equal Pay to encourage transparency and information sharing and benefits structures, job evaluations and grading systems; (iii) strengthening of compliance and enforcement; capacitation of stakeholders to better understand complexities of remuneration, grading systems, etc; (iv) capacity building / public awareness on employment equity and equal pay to enhance knowledge and interpretation of the law; and (v) frequent stakeholder engagements.

The CCMA often receives referrals from employees alleging unfair discrimination and equal pay discriminations. The table below reflects the referrals in terms of pay discriminations.

Equal Pay referrals	Referrals from 01 April 2021 to 31 January 2022	Equal Pay referrals from 01 April 2022 to 28 February 2023
Ground		Number of referrals
Equal pay for work of equal value - Age	6	13
Equal pay for work of equal value – Arbitrary ground	359	346
Equal pay for work of equal value - colour	1	2
Equal pay for work of equal value - disability	2	4
Equal pay for work of equal value - gender	6	3
Equal pay for work of equal value - race	10	11

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Equal pay for work of equal value - sex	2	1
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Source: Commission of Employment Equity Annual Reports: 2021/22 and 2022/2023

The table below shows the referrals in terms of unfair discrimination

Referrals from April 2021 to 31 January 2022	
Ground	Number of referrals
Prohibition of Unfair Discrimination - race	49
Prohibition of Unfair Discrimination - pregnancy	33
Prohibition of Unfair Discrimination - age	28
Prohibition of Unfair Discrimination – sexual orientation	2
Prohibition of Unfair Discrimination – marital status	1
Prohibition of Unfair Discrimination - disability	22
Prohibition of Unfair Discrimination - sex	7
Prohibition of Unfair Discrimination - gender	17
Sexual Harassment	80

Source: Commission of Employment Equity Annual Reports: 2021/22

On the matter of **skills and training**, the Labour Relation Act, no 66 of 1995 places an obligation on the employer to train and develop employees. The Employment Equity Act, no 55 of 1998 reinforces this principle with a special emphasis on training for people from designated groups, which includes women. The Skills Development Act, no 97 of 1998 and as amended; the Skills Development Levies Act, no 9 of 1999 and the Skills Development Amendment Act, no 37 of 2008 covers the issue of training and skills development, and effectively targets women in this regard.

In the early years following the advent of democracy, there was little to no **protection for domestic workers; farm workers; and casual, temporary and seasonal workers**. This category of people, where poor, black and African women were mainly confined, suffered tremendous discrimination, inequality and abuse at the hands of their employers, particularly white employers. Employment of female farm workers are often tied directly to their husband's employment with the farmer. Over the past few years, this category of women is enjoying a degree of extended protection offered by the Labour Relations Act, no 66 of 1995 and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, no 75 of 1997, as well as the Sectoral Determination 7: Domestic Workers and the Sectoral Determination 8: Farm Workers. Part-time workers tend

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in the main to be women, and previously did not qualify for rights and benefits because of this status. However, over the past 27 years, this issue has been addressed through the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, no 75 of 1997. Of relevance and importance is that with the introduction of the National Minimum Wage Act, No. 9 of 2018, both the women who work as domestic and farm workers, are now entitled to earn the same national minimum wage as their male counterparts as regulated by the Minister of Employment and Labour and adjusted annually.³¹

On the issue of the **promoting the economic empowerment of women in South Africa**, the National Development Plan: Vision 2030 (NDP) indicates that women make up a large percentage of the poor, particularly in rural areas, and therefore takes gender, race and geographic location as intersecting variables, into account, proposing a range of measures to advance women's equality. The NDP recommends that: (i) public employment should be expanded to provide work for the unemployed, with a specific focus on youth and women; (ii) the transformation of the economy should involve the active participation and empowerment of women. Although the country's institutional framework and its broad economic and social trends have contributed to gradual deracialisation, and to improve the lives of women, persisting discrimination, patriarchal attitudes and poor access by women to economic opportunities, persists – thus keeping women very much on the margins of mainstream economy.

South Africa has several measures put in place to address the economic empowerment of women, including laws such as the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act, no 53 of 2003, and related regulations: the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act 28 of 2002 and related Codes outlining quotas for women in the mining sector. Public Procurement Act 28 of 2024 etc.

³¹ National Minimum Wage rates of domestic and farm workers @ R27,58 per hour from 1 March 2024 as published in *Government Gazette* no.50073 dated 2 February 2024 page 4.

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These legislative and policy prescripts seek to: (i) entrenching the responsibility to align to BBBEEE policy to empower women, youth and person with disabilities, including by the SOCs; (ii) reflect performance on procurement from women-owned businesses and other designated sectors; (iii) supporting women owned enterprises including small and medium sized enterprises owned by other designated groups.

The just transition framework is a planning tool for achieving a just transition in South Africa, setting out the actions that the government and its social partners will take to achieve a just transition, and the outcomes to be realised in the short, medium, and long term.

The framework sets out the policy measures and undertakings by different social partners to minimise the social and economic impacts of the climate transition, and to improve the livelihoods of those most vulnerable to climate change.

Despite these positive measures, challenges do exist in implementation – for example: (i) limited spend by the SOCs to (qualifying small enterprises) and Exempted micro Enterprises of the women owned companies due to small size of the businesses and insufficient market players in the core business of the SOCs; (ii) sometimes the SOCs procurement spend on capital projects is too high to cater for small and medium sized companies including women owned companies which are mostly small and medium sized. Over the past five years, the threes SOCs reporting to the Department of Public Enterprises, i.e. Eskom, Safcol and Transnet expended more than R119 762 751 144 to support women owned companies through preferential procurement.³²

SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF INITIATIVES / ACTIONS

³² Input from DPE on the Thirtieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)- B+30

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(i) Government job creation program – Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP)

The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) is a key government initiative which contributes to Government's policy priorities in terms of decent work and sustainable livelihoods, education, health; rural development; food security and land reform; and the fight against crime and corruption. The EPWP is a nationwide Government programme to create work opportunities and income-support to poor and unemployed people through the delivery of public and community assets and services, thereby contributing towards development.

2024 marks 20 years anniversary for the EPWP, which is one of Government's flagship Public Employment Programmes. The EPWP is implemented within four sectors, namely, the Infrastructure Sector and the Non-State Sector coordinated by the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure; Social Sector coordinated by the Department of Social Development; and the Environment and Culture Sector coordinated by Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment³³.

Since its inception the programme has created more than 14 million work opportunities across all the EPWP Sectors through more than 300 public bodies and Non-Profit Organisations (NPO) implementing the EPWP. The work opportunities were created in sectors such as road constructions, road maintenance, construction of schools and clinics, provision of Early Childhood Development Services, environmental greening and clean-up projects, fire projects and removal of alien vegetation projects. These also include training and skilling in construction skills in painting, brick laying, carpentry, home community care skills and firefighting.

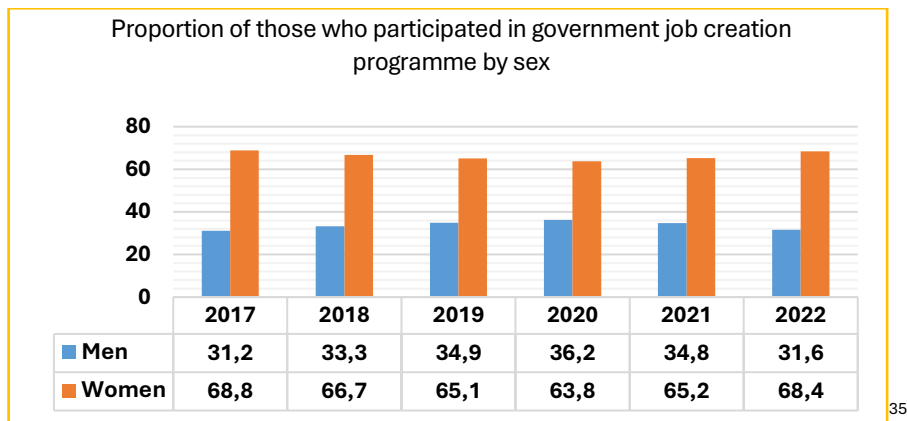
Majority of those who participated in EPWP, and other government job creation programmes were women compared to men. Over the period 2017–2022, the proportion of men who

³³ <https://www.thepresidency.gov.za/president-ramaphosa-officiate-20-years-celebration-expanded-public-works-programme>

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participated in EPWP and other government job creation programmes increased 0,4 percentage points from 31,2% to 31,6%, while women’s participation decreased by the same amount from 68,8% to 68,4%³⁴.



(ii) Women’s Economic Assembly (WECONA)

The Women’s Economic Assembly (WECONA) is an initiative, championed by the President of the Country, HE Cyril Ramaphosa, and led by the Minister in the Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities and is aimed to facilitate the participation of women-owned businesses in core areas of the economy.

The initiative was launched in 2021 to tackle inequality in key sectors of the economy. WECONA is a catalyst platform for women owned/managed/led businesses/enterprises, anchored on collaboration between Government, private sector, and civil society. It is an ongoing initiative aimed at encouraging women to be economically active with the objective to bring together private sector, government and civil society to drive change in the economic landscape. This initiative emphasizes the participation of women-owned enterprises on the

³⁴ Labour Market Dynamics in South Africa, 2022/ Statistics South Africa. Pretoria, 2022

³⁵ Ibid

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entire value chain to foster sustainable economic development. WECONA is aligned with the Pillar 5 of the National Strategic Plan on Gender Based Violence and Femicide that calls for “the need to create more economic opportunities for women who are vulnerable to abuse due to poverty, unemployment and social inequality.

Through WECONA, there have been transformational conversations with the industry associations and representatives to establish procurement targets to ensure women-owned businesses have increased levels of participation within business value chains by advocating for the implementation of 40% preferential public procurement for women-owned businesses. These dialogues have led to the implementation of game-changing initiatives in several sectors, including the financial industry and automotive sectors. WECONA seeks to connect and inspire innovation, thought leadership and action to transform value chain eco-systems, as well as to obtain a deep, common understanding and detailed articulation of sector specific value-chain eco-systems.

(iii) Support for women-owned businesses – 40% target for procurement spend

HE President Cyril Ramaphosa announced in 2020 the South African Government’s commitment to ensuring that 40% of all government procurement is set-aside for Women-Owned Businesses. The goal is for women to develop sustainable enterprises that contribute to the country’s gross domestic product, employment, equity and economic transformation to enable women to have equal access to and control over economic resources. Around 6 000 women-owned businesses were trained in essential business skills to apply for government tenders.

Government is also working to pilot the Women’s Empowerment Fund. This initiative will accelerate the financial inclusion of women, youth and people with disabilities across

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mainstream sectors of our economy.

The Industrial Development Corporation has earmarked approximately R9 billion to invest in women-led businesses to drive inclusive economic growth. In addition, in promoting the empowerment and participation of women in the construction and property value chain which are predominantly male dominated, approximately 5.5 billion of the human settlements development grant projects were awarded to women, youth and persons with disabilities owned companies. 64% of the grant budget set aside was allocated to women owned businesses, 34% to youth owned businesses and 1.6% to persons with disabilities businesses. (See Ministers Media Statement from DHS POE).

Other entities including the Public Investment Corporation and the National Empowerment Fund have also committed to establish special purpose vehicles to support women-owned businesses.

(iv) Manufacturing Support Programme

The Manufacturing Support Programme is an incentive designed to grow and develop the manufacturing sector through investment in new or expansion manufacturing projects that create and sustain employment, encourage transformation and promote localisation. The Programme is available to South African-registered entities engaged in manufacturing, and its objective include: (a) promote operational efficiency and competitiveness in new or expansion manufacturing projects; (b) encourage transformation through supporting enterprises owned by black persons, women, youth and persons with disabilities; (c) create and sustain employment; and (d) promote localisation using locally produced inputs/raw materials and machinery directly related to production. The objectives will be supported through the following components of the programme: (a) competitiveness improvements; (b) green technology and resource efficiency improvements; and (c) production capacity expansion or new projects. The

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Manufacturing Support Programme offers a reimbursable grant of up to twenty percent (20%) for projects. The maximum grant offering is R10 million over a two-year investment period with the last claim to be submitted within six (6) months after the final approved milestone. The Department of Trade, industry and Competition provides a thirty percent (30%) reimbursable grant for projects that are fifty one percent (51%) owned and controlled/managed by women, and/or Youth(s) and/or person(s) with disabilities. Between 2019 and 2022, approximately 139 women-owned enterprises operating in manufacturing, retail and services industries were supported and R1.1 billion was disbursed to fund these businesses. About 5 431 jobs were supported through these measures³⁶.

(v) Manufacture of Sanitary Towels in Qgeberha, Eastern Cape

The Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) has partnered with Metro Women Secondary Co-operative (MWSC) to support their Sanitary Towel Manufacturing Project, based in Qgeberha in the Eastern Cape Province. IDC's Corporate Social Investment (CSI) department is providing funding to enable the Nelson Mandela University Business School to provide business training and mentorship training for the co-operative. The co-operative group comprises 65 black women who are mainly over 35 years who are either unemployed or in temporary employment positions³⁷. Advancing inclusive economic activity and funding women entrepreneurs is core to the IDC's mandate. The Corporation is purposeful in supporting initiatives empowering women, especially young black women. This project empowers women by creating sustainable jobs for them and producing a product that will enable young girls and women to access much needed products. The Nelson Mandela University Business School assists the co-operative in enhancing their skills through training. The Business School has developed an integrated programme that aims to develop the business acumen of

³⁶ <http://www.thedtic.gov.za/r1-1-billion-disbursed-to-women-owned-enterprises-in-the-last-three-years/>

³⁷ <https://www.idc.co.za/empowering-women-in-the-community-for-sustainable-success/>

entrepreneurs and enterprises in the township, emerging and priority sectors of the economy, but to build resilience through business-to-business coaching initiatives.

(vi) Programmes in Mpumalanga Province

To afford women and girls an opportunity to be effective and be change-makers for climate adaptation and mitigation, a total of 2 993 women were trained on climate change initiatives and 450 greening jobs created. A total of 29 814 women subsistence farmers and smallholder farmers were supported with agricultural advice in food production. 17 653 smallholder women were supported with agricultural food production initiatives which included seedlings. 574 women were assisted to start food gardens. EPWP jobs were created through Phezukomkhono Mlimi, Fortune 40 and Agri-hub and 1 913 women benefited. A total of 3 085 women were supported in agri-business through marketing services and production economic services. A further 126 women were assisted in grain commodity, 132 in red meat commodity, 2 in citrus fruit commodity and 48 in agro-processing initiatives which included infrastructure, food safety (on Hazard Analysis & Critical Control Point) and value addition, and various workshops. Through the Masibuyele eSibayeni Programme 59 women were given livestock to start breeding. A total of 17 509.22 hectares for women were ploughed and planted for women.

Through the Premier's Youth Development Fund young entrepreneurs in the province are given businesses were funded in mining, farming, manufacturing, beauty and spa to the amount of R102 488 618.74. The total spent on women is 41%. In order to capacitate women in 6085 women benefitted from non-accredited agricultural skills programme while 964 benefited from formal skills programme in agriculture.

(vii) Creative Arts Programmes

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Through the creative arts programme a total of 2 689 females and 198 LGBTIQ+A people benefited from the Basetsana scriptwriting and directing workshop. 172 female Emerging Community DJs were supported with training and equipment to compete for the best 26 DJs prizes.

(ii) **RECOGNISE, REDUCE AND/OR REDISTRIBUTE UNPAID CARE AND DOMESTIC WORK, PROMOTE WORK-LIFE AND FAMILY BALANCE AND STRENGTHEN THE RIGHTS OF PAID CARE WORKERS**

Unpaid care work, an integral part of economic activity and personal well-being that largely falls on women, is systematically undervalued and invisible. It limits women's ability to pursue other interests, such as education and employment, and results in time poverty, poor health and reduced well-being which further entrenches women's unequal status in society.

Caring for children, collecting water, cooking, cleaning, laundry, ironing, and helping children with homework are just some of the activities done in a household to maintain the well-being of everyone. This is known as unpaid care work, an unrecognized and undervalued form of labour that is essential for households and even economies to function.

The burden of care work in households is primarily shouldered by girls and women, who are conditioned to do care work from a very young age. It is not only the length of time devoted to unpaid care that puts women at a disadvantage, but also the types of activities and nature of the tasks that create and enable further inequalities among women and between households.

South Africa conducted **time-use surveys** in 2000 (first) and 2010 (second). Unfortunately the next scheduled survey in 2016 was not conducted. However it is planned that such a survey will be conducted in the 2024/25 financial year. This means that official time-use data is only available from the 2010 report, and information from other household surveys conducted is inadequate to account for the time spent on performing unpaid activities such as household

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chores, the care of children, the sick and elderly, the burden of which unfortunately falls more on women than men.

Time use surveys are house-hold based surveys that measure and analyse time spent by women and men, girls and boys, rich and poor on different activities over a specified period. Unlike data from other surveys, time use data can be specific and comprehensive in revealing the details of a person's daily life. Time use statistics can paint a picture of how various activities are interrelated in the lives of the general population because of the way time use data are collected. Such activities include paid work, unpaid work, volunteer work, domestic work, leisure and personal activities. From this data, one can determine what activities are performed, how they are performed and how long it takes to perform such activities.

In general the responsibility of household work and caring for children and the elderly in South Africa lies with women more than it does with men. In contrast there are more men than women in paid work in the country. Because of this gender disparity, it is important to know the amount of time men and women in the country spend on household work and on caring for children and the elderly since this forms an essential part of gender analysis. The time use data can then be used in policy analysis in relation to economic and social policies such as those relating to employment and unemployment, services for children, the elderly and people with disabilities, and provision of basic household services such as electricity and water that obviate the need for mutual collection of fuel and water for household use.

Notwithstanding the lack of more recent data and information, the trends from the 2010 survey continues in the main to manifest in present day. Although there has been some progress in attitude shift particularly in men and boys towards equal sharing of these unpaid activities

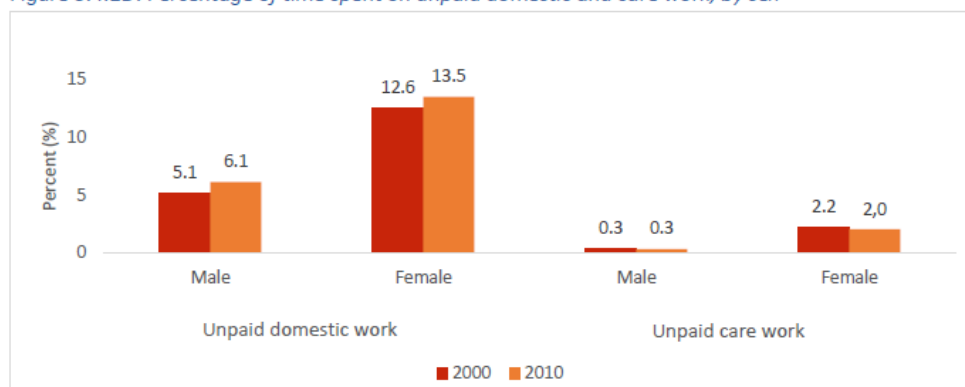
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mainly borne by women and girls, the gender disparities found in the data from the 2010 survey has not fundamentally narrowed or closed inequality gaps completely.

Indicator 5.4.1D: *Percentage of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex*

Figure 5.4.1D: Percentage of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex



Source: *Time Use Survey, Stats SA 2001 & 2011, Stats SA*

In 2000, women spent 2.5 times longer doing unpaid domestic work than men every day, and more than 7 times longer on unpaid care work. In 2010, women spent 2.2 times longer on unpaid domestic work than men, and 6.6 times longer on unpaid care work. There is a marginal decrease in the time spent by women doing unpaid domestic work and unpaid care work between 2000 and 2010.

In contrast, more men than women are in paid work in South Africa, and this trend is corroborated by the data provided earlier in this B+30 report, which suggests that not much has narrowed the gender disparity between sexes especially in addressing the gendered nature of unpaid care work.

The 2010 Time Use Report provides a clear picture of how South Africans use their time. For instance, the results show that there a large gender gap in terms of household maintenance activities where women spent 3 hours 15 minutes per day on such activities, this is 2.2 times what their male counterparts spent (1 hour 28 minutes) on the same activities.

The time spent on household maintenance and caring for others increased when people had their own children living with them in the same household. Women who had their children of less than 7 years of age living with them, spent more than 4 hours doing household activities

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and 1 hour 25 minutes caring for the children and other members of the household. Men in a similar situation spent 1 hour 16 minutes on household maintenance activities and 15 minutes on caring for children and other members of the household.

The patterns of time use highlighted in the 2010 Time Use Survey is that overall, the highest participation rates were observed for non-productive activities. The participation rate was 100% for both males and females for personal care. This is expected as this category includes sleeping and eating, and every person can be expected to spend some time on these activities each day. The next highest overall participation rate was for household maintenance. However, while this was also the second most common activity for female respondents, among men the participation rates for mass media use and social and cultural activities were higher than for household maintenance.

The participation rate of men exceeded that of women in 2 of the 3 SNA production activities and in 3 of the 4 non-productive activities, whilst women were more likely than men to participate in all non-SNA production activities. The difference in participation rates between men and women were substantial for 2 of the 3 non-SNA production activities, namely care of persons and household maintenance. The difference in participation rates in work establishments between men and women was also substantial.

On average people spent most of their time on non-productive activities, with more than half a day spent on personal care (754 minutes). The average time spent by men and women differed substantially for the following activities: household maintenance (women spent 107 more minutes than men) and work in establishments (men sent 54 more minutes than women).

Nearly all women and men (98.9% and 97.1% respectively) reported that they were involved in household maintenance activities. The participation rates were lower for care of persons and

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community services activities, but the largest gender difference was noted in the care giving activity, where the participation rate of women was more than 3 times than that of men.

In terms of the time spent on these activities, the largest gender gap was seen in household maintenance activity where women spent 3 hours 15 minutes, or 2.2 times what their male counterparts spent (1 hour 28 minutes). On average married women who did this activity spent more than 4 hours doing household work, while married men spent only just over one hour. Unemployed women who did this activity spent 4 hours 25 minutes doing household duties, which is almost 2 times what was spent by unemployed men.

The time spent by women on household maintenance and care-giving activities decreased when the household expenditure increased. The time spent on household maintenance and care increased when people had their own children living with them. Who in this regard, with children under the age of 7 years of age living with them, spent more than 4 hours doing household activities and 1 hour 25 minutes caring for the children and other members of the household. Men spent 1 hour 41 minutes on household maintenance activities if they did not live with their own children aged under 7 years.

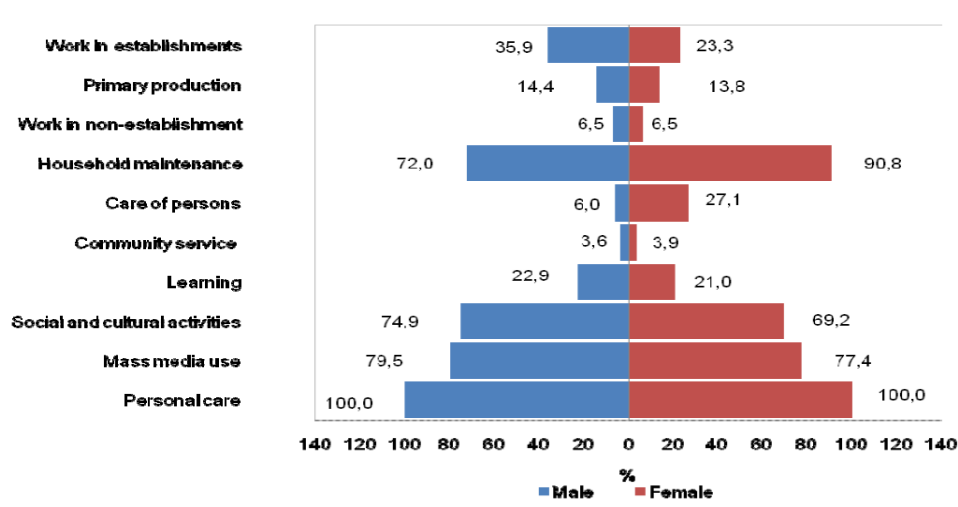
In contrast to non-SNA production, for most of SNA production, more males than females participated in a given activity and, among those who did each activity, tended to spend more time on average than their female counterparts. For both men and women, the longest times were recorded for wage and salary employment, where men spent 480 minutes or 8 hours compared to 445 minutes or 7 hours and 25 minutes spent by women. However, women were more than 2 and a half times more likely than men to report time spent on paid domestic work and unpaid employment in establishments. More than 3 times as many men than women indicated that they spent time seeking employment and, among those who did this activity, men

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spent an average of 223 minutes as compared to 183 minutes that women who did this activity spent.

The figure below shows the participation rates in ten major activities by sex from the 2010 time use survey



Source: TIME USE SURVEY 2010, STATS SA

Figure above shows the participation rate of men and women in SNA production, non-SNA production and non-productive activities. Overall, the highest participation rates were observed in non-productive activities. From the figure it can be discerned that household maintenance activity was the highest for women, while more men participated in activities related to mass media use and social and cultural activities, and this was higher than that spent by men on household maintenance.

Activity: South Africa participated in the UN Women-led programme: “Transformative approaches to recognize, reduce, and redistribute unpaid care work in women’s economic empowerment programming’ (**3R Programme**)” which was implemented in Rwanda, Senegal, and South Africa from 2021 to 2023. The overarching goal of the programme was to remove the structural barriers to women’s full and equal participation in the economy by

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recognizing, reducing, and redistributing unpaid care work. The programme targeted that national and local governments develop/strengthen laws, policies and services that recognize and address the disproportionate share of unpaid care work by women and girls; and that women's cooperatives and other organizations provide transformative care services in rural and/or urban areas to reduce and redistribute unpaid care work. If these 2 outcomes could be achieved, then it would lead to women's and girls' unpaid care work in South Africa being reduced, freeing up their time to equally contribute to and benefit from sustainable livelihoods. This would occur because structural gender inequalities that prevent women and girls from realizing their economic rights and empowerment were removed.

Under the '3R Programme', partnerships were enhanced with women's cooperatives and other women's rights organizations, traditional leaders, communities, men and boys, and the private and public sectors to address unequal power relations, systemic discrimination and harmful norms and practices that underpin inequities in care work across the 3 countries. An evaluation of the programme indicated that the 3R Programme specifically responded to the need and cause for more programmatic interventions on recognizing, reducing, and redistributing (3Rs) women's unpaid care and domestic work as well as overall time poverty. Though programme implementation largely failed in South Africa, its design clearly mapped out and actively involved participation of the programme participants, implementing partners and Government partners. With support from Global Affairs Canada, the 3R Programme successfully integrated a standalone care component into existing UN Women programmes on climate-resilient agriculture and rural women's economic empowerment in the three target countries. Using integration of Women's Empowerment Principles³⁸ as a leverage, the 3R Programme promoted positive transformations in relation to several key drivers for women's social and economic empowerment. By providing time saving technologies to women at grassroots level, the programme observed dramatic reallocation of women's and girls' time to support their

³⁸ The Women's Empowerment Principles are a tool meant to guide the private sector.

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economic empowerment and inclusion of women-owned enterprises into value chains. In Rwanda and Senegal programme implementation contributed to immediate improvement in early childhood development and the redeployment of time to achieve more active participation of women in the economy as one of the most effective strategies to remove disparities against women and achieving more inclusive economic growth (SDG 1 and SDG 10). Unfortunately, there was marginal impact in this regard in South Africa. The quality of the timesaving infrastructure and public services and capacity-building activities were high and relevant to women's interests and needs across the three countries. The training programmes were described as very effective by trainees in focus groups, but effectiveness could be improved through standardization, longer training duration, and better sequencing of training activities. The advocacy and policy interventions were positively applied at local levels but suffered from the short duration of the programme (18 months) at national levels to coordinate and advocate with Government and stakeholders that required more time to internalize the programme.

For South Africa, substantial implementation was registered by one implementing partner – Azali Health Care, specifically undertaking the following interventions: (i) Advocacy through Men's Parliament on laws and policies that seek to recognize, and reduce unpaid care works among men, women, boys, and girls for women's economic empowerment. Through this activity, the Programme engaged 134 stakeholders from national and provincial level; (ii) Strengthening the capacity of national and local authorities to develop and implement laws, policies and services that address unpaid care work through mapping of care services and evidence from commissioned studies to identify gaps in laws and policies related to unpaid care work; (iii) A total of 240 community members in Free State and Kwa Zulu Natal provinces participated in awareness meetings as well as being involved in male engagement strategy to strengthen the capacity of women's cooperatives and other organizations to effectively advocate for recognizing, reducing, and redistributing unpaid care work.

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Overall for South Africa, the 3R programme succeeded in implementing policy related work. The partnership with Azali Health Care allowed for greater reach to communities and platforms nationally to raise awareness on the 3Rs of unpaid care work and enable behaviour change among men and boys to act as HeForShe advocates.

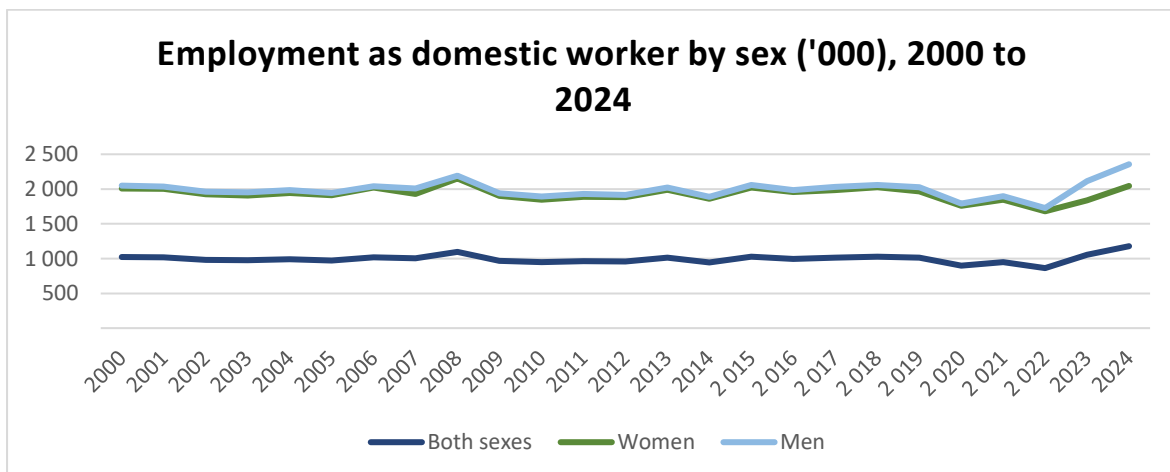
The overarching approach of the 3R Programme was specifically designed to identify and tackle some of the root causes of gender inequality. Its transformative nature lies in the attempt to question existing norms and dynamics that regulate unpaid care work and contribute to perpetuating gender inequalities. The recognition of unpaid care as a key obstacle to women's economic empowerment constitutes the innovative basis around which efforts to engage other actors to take responsibility for this work and redistribute it are conceived. To achieve its objectives, the programme strongly invested in participation and promoted the involvement of programme participants at all stages – especially those left behind.

Care work by Domestic workers: Thirty years into democracy, domestic workers in South Africa are still predominantly Black African women with lower levels of education. Unregistered domestic workers' jobs are increasingly at risk in South Africa as the economy and changes to wage regulations add increasing pressure on the households, or on the economic sector which typically makes use of their services³⁹.

The figure below shows the employment as domestic workers by sex: 2000 to 2022

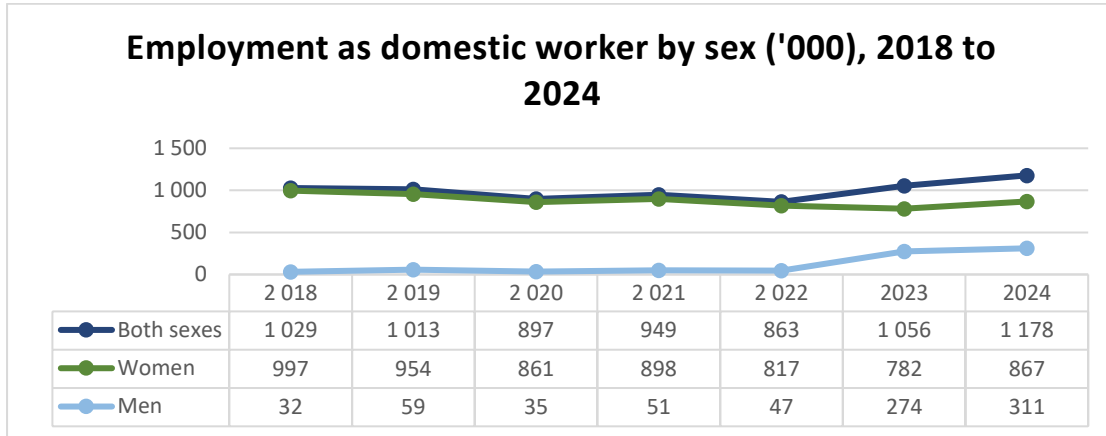
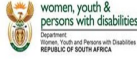
³⁹ Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities 2019. Report on the 25-year Review Of Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality in South Africa 1994–2019

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Source: Statistics South Africa - Quarterly Labour Force Survey, 2000 - 2024

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Source: Statistics South Africa - Quarterly Labour Force Survey, 2018 - 2024

Early childhood development as a measure to support child-care: Early childhood development (ECD) is a comprehensive approach to programmes and policies for children from birth to seven years of age. Its purpose is to protect the rights of children to develop their full cognitive, emotional, social and physical potential. The Department of Basic Education is responsible for children in grades R. The National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy is aimed at transforming early childhood development service delivery in South Africa, to address critical gaps and to ensure the provision of a comprehensive, universally available and equitable early childhood development services.

While the ECD programme is aimed at providing early childhood education, it is also an essential programme that has potential of reducing the burden of unpaid care work for women and girls and provide them with opportunity to focus on paid work and other activities.

(iii) ACTIONS TO REDUCE THE GENDER DIGITAL DIVIDE IN SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa’s National Development Plan: Vision 2030 recognises the significance of establishing knowledge societies in the country that affords everyone equal opportunities to

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learn and connect with others, making access to ICT crucial. To achieve sustainable and inclusive growth by 2030, South Africa must make investments in ICT networks. The National Development Plan endorses the target to achieve 100% broadband penetration by 2020 and envisions that the state would make greater use of ICT to communicate with and provide services to residents.

Science, technology, and innovation have become key drivers of economic growth and societal transformation, reshaping entire industries, creating new economic opportunities, and significantly advancing economic growth worldwide (Department of Science and Technology, 2019).

At the legislation and policy level the South African government has launched several initiatives to address the digital gap, including the National Integrated ICT Policy White Paper, which aims to promote universal access to affordable broadband, and the Digital Skills Hub, which provides training and support for digital skills development. The National Digital and Future Skills Strategy envisages a society of digitally skilled South Africans. The strategy recognises digital skills as one of the key skills sets required for the creation of new kinds of 21st century jobs. The Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (ERRP) for the South African Economy (2020) has identified ICT in general, and communications and digital economy, as key enablers for South Africa's economic reconstruction and recovery plan.

Women's access to ICT can greatly enhance their social, psychological, educational, technological, political, and economic well-being. Studies have shown that women and girls are disproportionately represented in the use and creation of technologies and often bear the brunt of its harmful effects. Digital technology gender disparities lead to exclusionary innovations, poor digital literacy among women, and high economic costs relating to unequal opportunities for women in the sector (UN, 2022).

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South Africa has several legislative and policy frameworks as well as sector programmes and interventions on technology and innovation. There is need to determine the extent of gender mainstreaming in these interventions in order to attain socio-economic empowerment of women in the sector with a focus on key gender gaps, access and participation, human endowments, and economic opportunities in the interventions.

Table showing Science, Technology and Innovation Legislation and Policies

Intervention	Description
2019 White Paper on Science, Technology, and Innovation	The White Paper sets long term policy direction for the South African government to ensure a growing role of the STI. South Africa should ensure that people are not left behind as society and the economy become more technologically driven. It builds on previous successes; embraces technological change for socio-economic and environmental impact. It emphasises inclusivity, transformation, and partnerships to address policy coherence, the development of human capabilities, knowledge expansion, innovation performance and increased investment, to enable all South Africans to enjoy the economic, socio-political, and intellectual benefits of STI.
2022-2032 Science, Technology, and Innovation Decadal Plan	The Decadal Plan has the following six STI priorities: Modernising key sectors of the economy: 1) Manufacturing, agriculture, and mining; 2) New sources of growth: The digital economy and circular economy; 3) Health innovation; 4) Energy innovation; 5) Innovation-enabled capable state and 6) Innovation in support of social progress. It highlights the need to mobilise knowledge research and innovation to support the development, testing and wide-scale diffusion of solutions to effect socio-technical system change.
Academy of Science of South Africa Act (No. 67 of 2001)	Establishes the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) to promote common ground in scientific thinking across all disciplines, including the physical, mathematical and life sciences, as well as the human, social and economic sciences; to encourage and promote innovative and independent scientific thinking; to promote the optimum intellectual development of all people; to advise and facilitate appropriate action in relation to the country's needs, opportunities and challenges; and to link South Africa with high-level scientific communities within the Southern African Development Community, the rest of Africa and internationally.
National Advisory Council on Innovation Act (No. 57 of 1997)	Establishes the National Advisory Council on Innovation to advise the minister responsible for science and technology and, through the minister, the Cabinet, on the role and contribution of science, mathematics, innovation, and technology in achieving national objectives.
Human Sciences Research Council Act (No. 17 of 2008)	Provides for the continued existence of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), which carries out research that generates critical and independent knowledge relative to all aspects of human and social development.
Technology Innovation Agency Act (No. 26 of 2008)	Establishes the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) to promote the development and exploitation of discoveries, inventions, innovations, and improvements in the public interest.
National Strategy for Mathematics, Science and Technology Education, 2001	The strategy was launched in pursuit of improving the quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics and Science with the goal to contribute to the skills deficits in the sectors of the economy that require competence in mathematical and scientific skills.

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Intervention	Description
State Information Technology Agency Act, 1998 (Act No. 88 of 1998).	To provide for the establishment of a company that will provide information technology, information systems and related services to, or on behalf of, participating departments and in regard to these services, act as an agent of the South African Government; and to provide for matters connected therewith.
Digital and Future Skills Strategy	The strategy addresses the need for mechanisms to foster digital skills development across South Africa, at early childhood development, schooling and post-school education and training levels, recognising that digital skills are necessary for economic growth, social development, and cultural enrichment across all sectors of our society and economy, based on strategy elements to be undertaken by government, in conjunction with a range of stakeholders
National Development Plan	The NDP highlights the centrality of science, technology, and innovation (STI) in sustainable socio-economic development and addressing societal challenges such as education, health, food security, water shortages and climate change, and in accelerating economic transformation in South Africa. It also acknowledges that the difference between countries that are able to tackle poverty effectively by growing and developing their economies and those that cannot is the extent of their ability to grasp and apply insights from STI and use them creatively.
South African National Space Agency Act, 2008	Establishes the South African National Space Agency (SANSA) to promote space science research, cooperation in space-related activities, and the creation of an environment conducive to industry's development of space technologies.
National Research Foundation Act, 1998	Establishes the National Research Foundation (NRF) to promote basic and applied research and human capital development in the various fields of science and technology and to coordinate the implementation of the DSI-led science engagement programme.
National Research and Development Strategy, 2002	The Strategy is based on three pillars: 1) Innovation 2) Science, engineering and technology human resources and transformation and 3) Creating an effective government S&T system. The strategy aims to give expression to the national goals of economic development and improvement of quality of life for all citizens.
National Nanotechnology Strategy, 2005	The vision of the strategy is to draw upon the existing strengths of the national system of innovation while addressing the need to enhance its research infrastructure and to create a workforce for advanced technology businesses that support the country's future competitiveness and enhanced quality of life.
Advanced Manufacturing Technology Strategy, 2006	The Strategy aims to develop a vision of the technological profile of the industrial sector as well as identify priority sectors which have the greatest potential for supporting relevant goals contained in the IMS and the NRDS. These goals include national and social goals such as job creation and equity. The strategy also aims to stimulate technological upgrading in industry, facilitate the flow of technological resources to industry through new knowledge networks to foster innovation and facilitate the building of an environment conducive to innovation, particularly through the supply of skilled manpower, technology infrastructure and funds.
Science Engagement Strategy, 2015	The strategy provides an overarching structure for advancing science promotion and engagement in South Africa, in pursuit of a society that understands and values science and technology and their critical role in national prosperity and sustainable development and engages critically in their development.
Innovation for Inclusive Development Strategy, 2018	The strategy seeks to redefine LED policy and practice in the country by placing innovation at the centre of development, in pursuit of local economies that can support inclusive development and increase the prosperity of marginalised people, with a particular focus on distressed municipalities
Broadcasting Act, 1999 (Act of 1999)	Among others, the Act looks at the training needs of previously disadvantaged groups, including women, children and the disabled.

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Source: DWYPD Report on Policy Assessment for Harnessing Technology and Innovation for the Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women, 2024⁴⁰

Even though girls outnumber males in literacy, numeracy, and writing skills, they lag in digital skills in South Africa. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, internet availability and demand have improved throughout the world. This was influenced by the quarantine conditions during lockdown, where technology was the means to communicate with the outside world from households to outside country borders. The Independent Communications Authority of South Africa reported that the national population coverage for 3G increased from 99,8% in 2020 to 99,9% in 2021; for 4G/LTE it increased from 96,4% in 2020 to 97,7% in 2021; and for 5G it increased from 0,7% in 2020 to 7,5% in 2021⁴¹.

This gender digital gap was focused on as a priority theme in the 67th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67) in 2023, which session South Africa served as the Commission Chair. As a follow-up to the country's participation in CSW67, it became essential that the country looks at how it would implement the Agreed Conclusions of the priority theme at the domestic level. It was important therefore to start by undertaking an assessment of existing policies in the science, technology, and innovation sectors from a gender perspective, which was conducted in 2023/24 financial year through the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities. The critical nature of this policy assessment was to identify ways in which science, technology and innovation can be harnessed for the socio-economic empowerment of women. The research employed the feminist critical policy analysis tool to review the legislative and policy frameworks in question, to analyse

⁴⁰ DWYPD Report on Policy Assessment for Harnessing Technology and Innovation for the Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women, 2024

⁴¹ Gender series volume X: Gender Disparities in Access to and Use of ICT in South Africa, 2016–2022 (Report No. 03-10-27)

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and expose gender inequalities and power relations that are embedded in each of the relevant policies, with the goal of rectifying gender biases in existing and future policies.

The research report titled: “Policy Assessment for Harnessing Technology and Innovation for the Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women” (DWYPD, 2024) covered gender in terms of gender and age (i.e. female - women and young women) and gender and disability (i.e. female – women- and young women with disabilities). It responded to the following issues: (i) current legislative and policy frameworks that guide South Africa on science, technology, and innovation; (ii) extent to which the current legislative and policy framework consider women, young women, and women with disabilities (access, participation, and economic empowerment); (iii) key enabling policy provisions that support access, participation and empowerment of women, in all their diversity; (iv) How have gender gaps changed over time and across diverse groups (women, young women, and women with disabilities) especially in the context of access, and participation; (v) barriers that constrain advancements in gender equality regarding technology and innovation; (vi) the pathways and priority areas where urgent actions are needed to support bridging key gender gaps; (vii) country specific needs, opportunities, specific drivers, and constraints to women accessing and benefitting equally from the advancement of technology and innovation; and (viii) practical recommendations that will provide an effective enabling environment to promote access, participation and socio-economic empowerment of women, young women, and women with disabilities.

Through this study, opportunities for mainstreaming gender into science, technology, and innovation for women’s socio-economic empowerment within the sector have been identified. The findings and recommendations of this study are anticipated to serve as a crucial resource for policymakers, government institutions, civil society organizations, and advocates for gender equality in South Africa to inform interventions that promote access,

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participation, and the economic empowerment of women in the technology and innovation sector.

The study assessed a total of 28 policies relevant to science, technology and Innovation, demonstrating how some policies are responsive to the needs and interest of women, including young women and those with disabilities while other policies were shown to be gender blind. The findings shows that the White Paper on Science, Technology, and Innovation (2019) is the most gender responsive policy. It recognizes the importance of harnessing technological change and innovation to achieve gender equality to empower women and girls. It includes measures, frameworks, and strategies aimed at achieving greater gender inclusion and addressing gender disparities in the field. It promotes greater gender inclusion and includes measures such as the STI Transformation Framework and the STI Gender Strategy. It also indicates that frameworks that address gender priorities and issues directly, tended to be the most gender responsive, for instance the National Strategic Plan for Ending Gender Based Violence (DWYPD, 2021) target specific areas of women's socio-economic empowerment across all sectors, including STI.

However other policy frameworks such as the Advanced Manufacturing Technology Strategy, 2006 (DSI) and the Science Engagement Strategy, 2015 (DSI) were assessed and found to be gender blind or gender non-responsive. The findings also revealed that there is a strong correlation between the level of the policy's responsiveness to gender and the length of time the policy has been in existence. Older policies scored poorly on the gender responsiveness analysis scale, and this shows that there is a need to review and amend some of these policies for alignment with recent developments and prescripts in the country.

The findings from interaction with different actors within the science, technology and innovation space revealed some challenges faced by women within the sector such as unequal

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participation and representation by women and girls across all levels of the science, technology, and innovation value chain; girls are lagging behind in the uptake of STEM subjects at school level; attitudinal barriers resulting in the negative socialization of girls with regard to STEM education and careers and others.

Challenges experienced by women and girls in the sector are rooted in structural issues related to gender stereotyping and harmful societal gender norms.⁴² A Stats SA publication focusing particularly on Information Technology and Communication (ICT), found that in South Africa, females are economically disadvantaged and have limited access to information and communication technology and that the ICT sector in particular, is one of the sectors where women are discriminated against, and inequalities persist (Stats-SA, 2022).

Government, going forward, will need to design and implement advocacy intervention and initiatives to dismantle these harmful beliefs; coordinate policy dialogues to promote the participation and benefit by women and girls in the sector and value chain; as well as challenging the status quo and reshape the environment to be fit for both women's and men's participation. On the policies that have been found to be gender non-responsive, advocate for the review of relevant legislative and policy frameworks for alignment and/or compliance with international and regional conventions, policies, laws, and commitments that safeguard women's rights.

In response to the accelerated technological advancements, in 2019 the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies was constituted to lead South Africa into the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR). To optimally leverage on the advantages and opportunities provided by the 4IR, the Department is prioritising the bridging of the digital divide between the digitally

⁴² DWYPD Report on Policy Assessment for Harnessing Technology and Innovation for the Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women, 2024

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empowered and the digitally deprived, to enable all citizens to have the opportunity to harness converging technologies for improved socio-economic growth and development. The Department has highlighted that the first step in this process includes the creation of digital policies and strategies that enable transformation (DCDT, 2020).

Legislation and policies have been put in place to address gender disparities but the exclusion of women and girls in the broader STI sector is still prevalent. For example, as part of the implementation of the National and Future Digital Skills Strategy of South Africa, 2020 an implementation programme for the national digital and future skills strategy for South Africa has been developed. In addition, the Education Department has developed policies to encourage STEM amongst girls as well as curriculum changes to include coding and robotics.

Some concrete measures taken to reduce the gender digital divide between boys and girls includes the programme by the Department of Basic Education in piloting robotics and coding in the school curriculum for grades 1-3 and 7, focusing on digital skills and competencies. This progressive addition to the country's education system represents a significant step towards preparing future generations for an evolving job market. Piloting of the Curriculum has commenced in 2023 across 200 schools for the Intermediate Phase, 1 000 schools in Grades 7 and 570 schools in Grades 8 and 9 in all nine (9) provinces in the country and 18 schools are monitored per year across provinces to track the pilot as well as to provide support to schools piloting the subject.

In a partnership with MTN SA Foundation and the Department of Basic Education in South Africa⁴³, a Pilot Coding and Robotics Centre was launched at the Letsibogo Girls High School in Soweto, Gauteng in March 2024. The Coding and Robotics Centre will pilot programmes using

⁴³ Novus Group – Press Bulletin, posted on <https://novuspressbulletin.co.za/blog/mtn-sa-foundation-and-department-of-basic-education-pilot-coding-on-07/03/2024>

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66 robotics kits, 10 laptops, and a router that caters to teaching nine classes. A set of competition kits will simultaneously be available for extra mural activities and future competitions. In addition to the coding and robotics resources, the Letsibogo Centre offers learning and teaching support material that vary from lesson plans, teacher workbooks, coding software, and assessment guidelines and textbooks. All teachers involved with the Letsibogo project have already undergone five days of immersive, in-person teacher training. This training equips teachers with the skills needed to effectively deliver the coding and robotics curriculum. All teacher training, which includes 12 months of ongoing online support, is supplied by the MTN SA Foundation's partner, Sifiso EdTech.

The Department of Basic Education and the Department of Science and Innovation, with support from tech giant, Siemens, has partnered with the UN Women and the Belgian government⁴⁴ in an initiative named the "African Girls Can Code Initiative" (AGCCI). In South Africa, the AGCCI is aligned to the country's goals of rolling out the coding and robotics curriculum across all public schools. One of the pillars of the AGCCI program is exposing girls to women who model well the role and leadership of women in STEM.

"We are excited to see the roll-out of AGCCI in South Africa because in this way we are actively contributing to encouraging a love for STEM in our girls and contributing to South Africa's future ICT leaders. It's one thing to talk about gender equality but it's even more encouraging to see big stakeholders throwing their weight behind empowering young women in the early stages to take up spaces that have been predominantly male dominated,"

Aleta Miller, Representative of UN Women in the South Africa Multi-Country Office

A Coding and Robotics boot camp was successfully hosted at the Cape Recife Special School in Gqeberha, Eastern Cape as part of the goal to help build digital skills amongst young women. 50 Grade 11 girl-learners from five provinces across South Africa attended the boot camp, which aimed to train girls and young women aged 17–25, setting them up for careers in the STE(A)M arena. Over the course of ten days, the girls were introduced to block coding and

⁴⁴ DBE WEBSITE downloaded on 24/07/2024 at 18:30

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programming robots; taught how to design websites and marketing material; and provided with soft skills training in communication, teamwork, problem-solving and conflict management. To enable continuity at schools after the boot camp, each learner received a laptop, sponsored by Siemens, to use for the next six months, after which it becomes the property of the school. What was most interesting about the boot camp was that the learners, having been introduced to social entrepreneurship, had to identify challenges that exist within their communities and come up with an innovative plan on how they could address them through their newly developed tech skills, whilst also profiting from the initiative. These plans were then presented by the learners to businesspeople during the closing ceremony to assess their viability. Through the six-month online mentorship programme that they have been signed up for, the girls are expected to refine their solutions and implement them in their communities.

In addition, 40 girls from public schools were empowered, inspired, and introduced to coding and robotics through the AGCCI programme over ten days, from 23 June – 04 July 2023, in Polokwane in Limpopo Province, South Africa.⁴⁵ The programme sharpened their design thinking, problem-solving, and soft skills such as communication and self-awareness, covered user interface/user experience, website development, mobile applications development, robotics, and programming.

Over and above the progress made in Coding and Robotics, the Department of Basic Education in South Africa takes an interest in other relevant skills and subjects to pursue progress in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). The first cohort of 13 Grade 12 learners wrote Marine Sciences for their 2021 National Senior Certificate examination. The intake in Marine Sciences

⁴⁵ Elizabeth Khumalo: "Empowering South African girls for the digital age", July 18, 2023

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has increased to more learners in Grades 10 and 11. The Department is collaborating with the Department of Transport in the country to finalise its Aviation curriculum to ensure that it is gender responsive, meaning that aircrew and ground crew such as Avionics Technicians, Air Traffic Controllers, and Maintenance Technicians, catering for professionals and commercially oriented courses for the ground staff who interface with the public at ticket counters and booking offices become career choices for young women as well.

In South Africa, there is also the initiative called Techno-Girls, an innovative programme for girls and young women who show an interest in STEM areas. The strategic imperative of the TechnoGirl Programme is to narrow the discrepancy in opportunities that still exist between men and women and impede social and economic transformation. This program enables girls to experience STEM careers and ultimately, make informed career choices. To date, over 16 000 girls have gone through the structured programme and, on average, 75% of the beneficiaries advance to register STEM careers. The programme is premised on the understanding that exposure to the public and private sector workplaces can significantly contribute towards motivating girls to take up STEM careers that are in demand and where women are under-represented. The programme is premised on (i) job-shadowing for girls from grades 8-11, selected from quintile 1 to 3 schools to expose girls to scarce careers in STEM fields; (ii) alumni empowerment for girls from Grade 12 where girls are supported to complete studies in STEM at post schooling institutions and assisted to access economic opportunities; and (iii) digital skills for unemployed youth focusing on 4IR training, including life skills training for the world of work; digital skills training; coding and robotics; job preparedness training and practical workplace experience and learning.

Furthermore, over the past years, the Gauteng Province has taken several actions to reduce the gender digital divide that exists by aiming to ensure equitable access to digital technologies and

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opportunities for women and girls in the province⁴⁶. These actions include: (i) Infrastructure Development and Expansion of Broadband Access to expand access to affordable and reliable broadband internet services in urban and rural areas. Gauteng was selected as a pilot province for the national broadband access by the South African Government and R200 million was allocated to support the rollout of 50,000 new broadband connections to homes in Gauteng townships. This was a step towards bridging the digital divide and greater accessibility to government services, such as e-learning, e-government, and e-health, by providing a range of online services for greater access to public services and provides convenience especially for women; (ii) Digital Skills Training and Digital Literacy programmes targeted at women and girls, focusing on basic computer skills, internet usage, and digital security. The province has collaborated with Microsoft to establish the provincial Center of Excellence. Through these programs, women, youth, and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMMEs) can develop their ICT skills and acquire the credentials needed to look for jobs and entrepreneurial possibilities in both the public and private sectors, as well ICT soft skills and cyber security education were offered and in which 186 women participated.

In South Africa, **digital gaps exist at the workplace**, both in the private sector / corporate world, and government sectors. Lack of digital literacy has contributed to digital exclusion, which in turn has resulted in employment exclusion for women and these are key human resources to improve capability and growth paths in the economic and government sectors (StasSA, 2022). A 2018 OECD study estimated the proportion of female ICT professionals in South Africa, to be only 32% (OECD, 2018). In 1994, women made up only 21% of STEM enrolments at universities. By 2024, this had increased to around 40%. In technical and vocational education, the percentage of female enrolments almost doubled from 15% in 1994 to 27% in 2024. However, some fields like engineering still see under 25% women (Moagi, B.K., Moswela, B.,

⁴⁶ Inputs from Gauteng Province - Thirtieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)- B+30

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and Mothibedi, G.F. 2018). According to Cloete (2015) and Auret & Britton (2012), the percentage of female academics in STEM fields at universities increased from 15% in 2000 to around 30% by 2010 but few have made it to full professor level. In 1994, less than 10% of South Africa's patent holders were women. By 2010 this rose to around 20%, showing more women innovating and commercializing ideas.

The share of women in STEM jobs increased from 20% in 1994 to approximately 35% by 2024, though predominately in lower-level roles. Few have made it to leadership and executive positions. Access to STEM opportunities for youth with disabilities has improved with dedicated training programs and assistive technologies. However, statistics are lacking, and participation is still marginal at an estimated 5-10%.

Table showing Percentage of women/girls/persons with disabilities in STEM fields in South Africa

Percentage of women/girls/persons with disabilities in STEM fields in South Africa				
Areas of access & Participation	1994		2024	
	Women	Person with disabilities	Women	Person with disabilities
University STEM Enrolments	21%	5%	40%	10%
Technical/Vocational Education	15%	2%	27%	5%
University STEM Academics	15%	1%	30%	3%
STEM Jobs	20%	1%	35%	3%
STEM Innovation (Patents)	Women Inventors less than 10%		Women Inventors less than 20%	

Source: UNESCO, 2024

The Table above illustrates the key trends in changing gender gaps in South Africa's STEM sector from 1994 to 2024 based on available statistical data and assumptions. It conveys that while disparities still exist, participation rates of women, girls and persons with disabilities have generally trended upward across different STEM domains over the past 30 years. Specifically, it shows the following: (i) improved access to and enrolment of women/girls in university and TVET STEM programmes; (ii) a gradual increase in the representation of women in STEM jobs and academia, though gaps persist; (iii) a rising share of women innovating and commercializing

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inventions through patents; (iv) limited data on persons with disabilities, but assumptions of low baseline numbers rising moderately; and (v) youth participation also rising but disproportionate to overall enrolment trends in some cases.

Access to a **mobile telephone** is explicitly acknowledged within SDG 5 (target 5b) which seeks to enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular ICT, to promote the empowerment of women. Mobile telephone ownership is one of the measures of economic progress, and when women invest in mobile telephones, their families and communities' benefit. The table below illustrates the number of persons in South Africa who owned mobile telephones by sex in 2019 and 2022. The percentage of persons who owned mobile telephones in 2022 increased by 1,3 percentage points (from 78,2% in 2019 to 79,5% in 2022). Women who owned mobile telephones increased from 79,7% in 2019 to 80,9% in 2022. Generally, the percentage of women who owned mobile telephones exceeded their male counterparts in the reference period.

Percentage of persons who own mobile telephones in South Africa by sex, 2019 & 2022						
Sex	N (000)					
	2019			2022		
	Access	No access	Total	Access	No access	Total
Male	17 385	5 314	22 699	18 835	5 338	24 174
Female	19 134	4 883	24 017	20 617	4 863	26 481
Both sexes	36 518	10 197	46 715	39 453	10 202	49 654
	Percentage (%)					
Male	76,6	23,4	100,0	77,9	22,1	100,0
Female	79,7	20,3	100,0	80,9	19,1	100,0
Both sexes	78,2	21,8	100,0	79,5	20,6	100,0

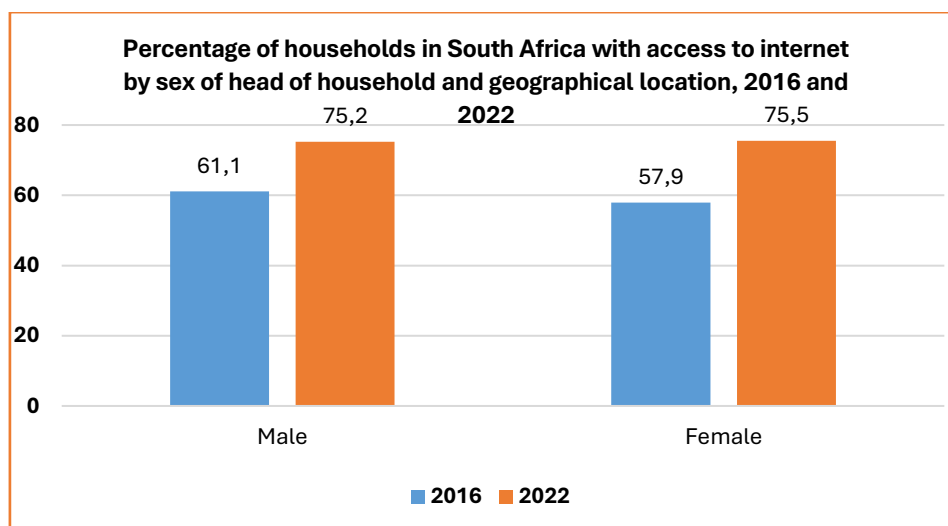
Source: General Household 2019 and 2022

In 2016, 9,4 million households (59,8%) in South Africa had **access to the Internet**. Among those, most male-headed households (61,1%) had internet connection while 57,9% of female-headed households had access to the internet. In 2022, a significant increase in internet connectivity was observed, where 75,2% of male-headed households and 75,5% of female-headed households had access to the internet. However, according to the data,

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females were more likely to reside in households with internet connection, slightly exceeding males in both years.



There is clearly an intersection between gender-based violence and STI/STEM. Anecdotal evidence suggests that high levels of GBV in South Africa negatively impact women's participation and retention in STEM/ STI fields. This has historically been a male-dominated sector and women and girls who have experienced GBV may find it discouraging or prohibitive to pursue STEM education and careers due to safety concerns or reduced confidence/self-esteem. There is need for universities and workplaces to have comprehensive, confidential support systems for GBV survivors to persist in STEM. The lack of support systems may force them to drop out of education/jobs, perpetuating underrepresentation. In addition, workplace cultures in male-dominated STEM sectors sometimes tolerate or enable sexism, harassment, and other forms of GBV, discouraging full participation and advancement of women. Reforms are needed to ensure dignity, protection, and inclusion. Technology innovations could help address and prevent GBV by developing solutions like early warning systems, self-defence devices, monitoring apps, comprehensive helplines etc. However, more efforts are needed to involve women meaningfully in designing such interventions.

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There is a lack of disaggregated data on GBV prevalence, reporting and support impacts policies aimed at creating an enabling environment for women in STEM to thrive free from violence and stigma. More consultation and research in this area is needed. South Africa has a Gender-Based Violence Command Centre but reporting technology and accessibility of services remains limited, especially for marginalised women, in rural areas. More needs to be done to leverage innovative solutions. Interventions combining STEM skills-building, gender-transformative education and GBV prevention can help establish enabling environments and empower individuals to challenge related societal issues.

In terms of **agriculture and science, technology and innovation**, the South African agricultural sector has recognized the importance of science and technology in enhancing productivity, sustainability, and competitiveness through various initiatives that aim to strengthen research capacity, promote technology transfer, and support the adoption of innovative practices by farmers across the country. There are several policy frameworks that influence and promote the utilization of science, technology, and innovation in the agriculture sector such as (i) White Paper on Science, Technology, and Innovation (2019); (ii) Biotechnology Strategy for South Africa (2001); (iii) National Policy on Comprehensive Producer Development Support (2018); (iv) Agricultural Research and Development Strategy (2008); (v) National Agricultural Research and Extension Strategy (2016); and (vi) Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Plan for the South African Agricultural and Forestry Sectors (2015).

The Department of Agriculture in South Africa recognizes the importance of **empowering women in agriculture** and is actively working to promote the adoption of appropriate technologies and provide targeted support to women farmers, especially in rural areas. By embracing science, technology, and innovation, the Department of Agriculture aims to enhance agricultural productivity, promote sustainable farming practices, and improve food security and rural livelihoods. The agricultural sector has undertaken several initiatives to promote and

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integrate science and technology into its operations and practices, including for women in agriculture as well as women small farmers. The country has programmes on smart agriculture using technology and innovations in the sector, also using various digital platforms and mobile applications to provide farmers with real-time information, advisories, and decision support tools and promoting climate-smart agricultural practices to enhance resilience to climate change.

The following are some of the ways in which **technology is empowering women in the agricultural sector**: (i) access to information and advisory services: In South Africa, the Department of Agriculture has developed mobile applications and digital platforms that provide agricultural information, weather forecasts, market prices, and advisory services to farmers, including women in rural areas. These digital tools help bridge the information gap and enable women farmers to access valuable knowledge, make informed decisions, and connect with extension services and support networks; (ii) capacity building and training: the Department of Agriculture, in collaboration with research institutions and NGOs in the country, organizes training programs and farmer field schools specifically tailored for women farmers, which equips women with practical skills and knowledge related to sustainable agricultural practices, precision farming techniques, value addition, and entrepreneurship. The use of audio-visual aids, demonstration plots, and hands-on training with modern technologies enhances the learning experience for women farmers; (iii) promoting participation in agricultural cooperatives and associations: The Department of Agriculture supports the formation and strengthening of women's agricultural cooperatives and associations, which provide a collective platform for accessing resources, technologies, and markets, and enables women farmers to share knowledge, access training on new technologies, and have a stronger voice in decision-making processes; (iv) targeted funding and support programs: The Department of Agriculture has specific funding and support programs targeted at women in agriculture, such as the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP) and the Ilima/Letsema Initiative,

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which provide financial assistance, inputs (e.g. seeds, fertilizers), and equipment to women farmers, enabling them to adopt new technologies and improve their agricultural operations; (v) promoting climate-smart and sustainable practices: the Department of Agriculture encourages the adoption of climate-smart and sustainable agricultural practices, such as conservation agriculture, agroforestry, and integrated pest management. practices normally labour-intensive but can be made more efficient and less physically demanding with the use of appropriate technologies, benefiting women farmers in rural areas; (vi) facilitating access to markets: the Department of Agriculture supports initiatives that help women farmers access markets and participate in value chains more effectively, which includes the use of digital platforms for marketing and e-commerce, as well as technologies for product processing, packaging, and quality control; (vii) partnerships and collaborations: the Department of Agriculture collaborates with NGOs, research institutions, and private sector organizations in the country to develop and disseminate appropriate technologies and support services tailored for women in rural areas, leveraging on these partnerships for expertise, resources, and networks to enhance the reach and impact of technology transfer and capacity-building initiatives for women farmers.

The **Department of Science and Innovation** (DSI) updated its policy on science, technology and innovation (STI) from 2019 to 2024 with the 2019 White Paper on STI and the 2022 Decadal Plan on STI. In both these policy documents, women's equality and the empowerment of women, youth and people with disabilities were stated as specific objectives. Specific targets for bursaries, research grants, and research chairs have been set and achieved. In terms of **Skills Development**, regarding quality education, training, and life-long learning for women and girls, the DSI provides postgraduate bursaries (honours, masters, and PhD) targeting women. The Annual Performance Plan, approved on March 25, 2024, stipulated that the target for women would be 55% for implementation by March 31, 2025. On **Economic Empowerment**, regarding women's entrepreneurship and enterprises, the DSI implemented its Preferential

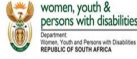
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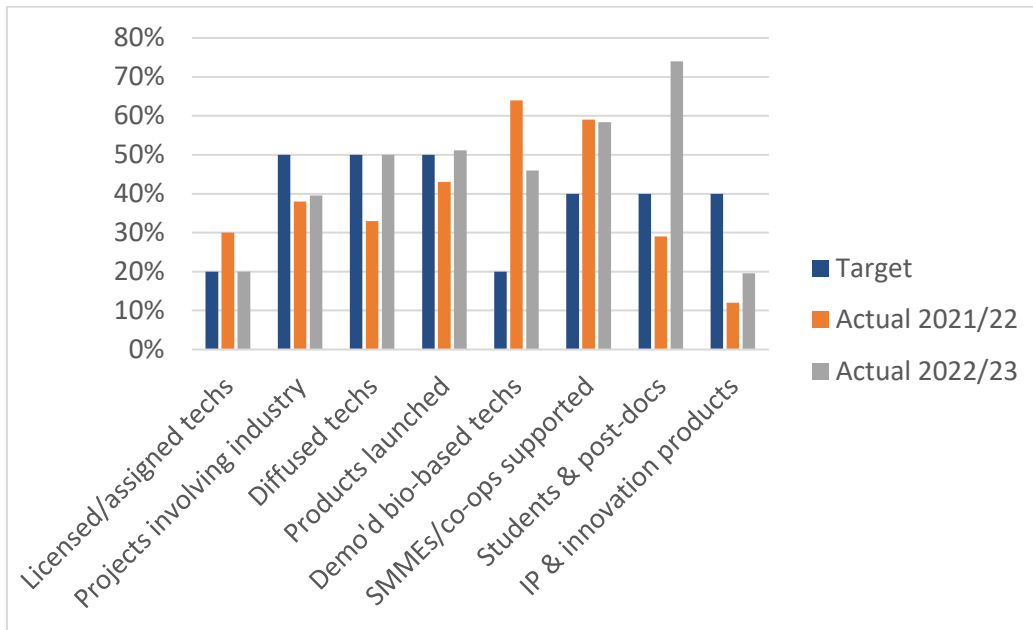
Procurement Policy to give preferential points to women-owned businesses. As a result, over R124 million worth of tenders were awarded to women and women-owned businesses from April 1, 2019, to March 31, 2024.

On work on **Digital focus**, in August of 2023, the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA), an entity of the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI), approved a dedicated programme to support women innovators- the Women Technology and Innovation Programme. The programme rests on five pillars: (i) Pillar 1: Supporting rural women and cooperatives through capacity building and technology development as innovators or licensees of innovation. In August 2024, the DSI-funded Call for Women in the Green Economy will be released. The Call will target three categories- women grassroots innovators in the green space (energy, building, water and sanitation, agriculture, etc.), women innovators with mature green technologies to be deployed in government departments for service delivery and women entrepreneurs who want to license technologies. A budget of R5m has been set aside for this Call; (ii) Pillar 2: Gendered Innovation- supporting investment managers through capacity building on gender innovation and assessing gender bias in investment opportunities. This will form part of staff professional development and be funded through SETA funding; (iii) Pillar 3: Move to market- an initiative to assist women innovators with high-tech solutions to reach targeted markets and find new markets. Ten women innovators supported through the Grassroots Innovation Programme and the Technology Acquisition and Deployment Fund are part of this cohort. A budget of R2,4m has been set aside to support twenty-four women from TIA's portfolio who have been selected and will receive a support package of R100 000 each for the following: Mentorship and coaching selected from TIA's Expert database; Training (commercialisation, IP, financial); Market access opportunities nationally and internationally; Networking and showcasing; Trade missions Technologies diffused for social impact—In March 2024, TIA funded a project with a budget of R700 000 to support 50 women entrepreneurs in mushroom production and new product development. Technologies that respond to women's

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challenges—TIA has funded several maternal and sanitary health technologies over the last five years. Examples are the Human Health Pasteurization project, reusable, biodegradable sanitary pads, and the Happy Pregnancy app. As part of its Annual Performance Plan, TIA sets targets to support women innovators in the various key performance areas (licenced/assigned tech, technologies diffused for social impact, projects involving industry, products launched, bio-based technologies demonstrated, SMMEs/cooperatives supported, students and postdocs in the innovation space, knowledge innovation products (IP, prototypes, demonstrations, etc.). TIA has achieved 6 out of the eight targets set for women innovators.



On behalf of the DSI, TIA hosts the Living Labs Programme. This programme provides innovation infrastructure and a structured innovation support programme in facilities based in township and rural communities. Thirteen Labs have been funded thus far. Some of the women's innovation-related initiatives are: (i) Rlabs- The R Labs Women provides women from marginalised communities with the opportunity to grow as a person as they pursue a journey of learning and growth in Entrepreneurship, ICT, Innovation and related Future Fit skills for the 4th Industrial Revolution. The support offered through Rlabs Women is entrepreneurship, investment, virtual reality, media and digital through the following programmes: Ignite

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bootcamp; Design my brand; Virtual Incubation Programme; Innovation Entrepreneurship Programme. Rlabs has invested R208 000 in 77 women entrepreneurs, who have raised R244 000 in capital; Rlabs launched Rlabs Ventures in 2023 to help women founders through venture capital funding. (ii) RevUp Women Initiative of AfriLabs (of which Rlabs is a member) has supported Ncinci Ndiqala, who raised \$10,000 through the RevUp Women programme; (iii) Innovate Durban- Sheshisa programme- 18 Women Founders have been selected for the programme and will receive the following: **SHeshisa** is a 6-month accelerator program launched in June 2024 that is sector agnostic, weekly sessions (online & in-person), accountability groups, mentorship, access to opportunities & events, female founder community. The Sheshisa targets for 2024 are 15 x female founders having completed the programme. 10 x female founders are adopting a digital tool to enhance their business. 15 x businesses with formalised financial processes. 15 x business brand development: establishment/improvement of brand, online presence, media strategy; 15 x businesses are adopting one new marketing channel; 15 x business testing their product & service with the market; 3 x businesses are applying for the **Standard Bank EmpowHER Pitch Day**; 3 x SHeshisa community events/impact projects completed; 8 x businesses have formed a partnership that benefits their business; (iii) MafiHub—The Women in STEMI (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Innovation) project has a profound mission: to extend the transformative power of STEM education and opportunities to the women of North West Province, particularly those hailing from disadvantaged backgrounds. Launched in August 2023, the programme targets specific initiatives for high school learners, graduates, SMMES, rural women, and women with disabilities.

The DSI and TIA are collaborating with the African Women Innovation and Entrepreneurship Forum (AWIEF) to support women innovators in various initiatives of AWIEF. A draft agreement is in place and expected to be signed in August 2024.



HEALTH and DIGITAL

Maternal Health Research: 2015 – 2023: The DSI-funded Maternal and Child Health (MCH) programme currently consists of three projects: the Tshwane Khulelwe project (Umbiflow project), which is currently undergoing clinical assessment; the uterine balloon tamponade project; and the Innovative Solutions to Support Community Healthcare project. The programme's focus is to support the development of solutions to reduce maternal and under-5 mortality.

UMBIFLOW: The primary objective of the Tshwane Khulelwe project was to evaluate the clinical significance and benefit of routine screening with Umbiflow, a portable umbilical artery Doppler device developed by the SAMRC and CSIR, of an unselected population in a low-resource PHC setting. The device is meant to assist in detecting fetuses at risk of stillbirth. The Umbiflow device, which the CSIR and the SAMRC jointly developed, is a hand-held device that enables Doppler technology to identify babies at risk of stillbirth in a primary health setting. Beginning in 2015, SHIP funded a study to determine whether a routine umbilical artery Doppler measurement, conducted using the Umbiflow system, could be used by midwives and nursing sisters at primary health centres and antenatal clinics in remote and low-resource settings to detect fetuses at risk of stillbirth. The initial group conducted in Mamelodi, Tshwane, and demonstrated that deployment of the device contributed to a 40% reduction in perinatal deaths in the study group and provided evidence of a previously undetected high prevalence of abnormal foetal development, absent end-diastolic flow (AEDF) in 10% of a pregnancy population that would have otherwise been classified as low-risk. This is 8-10 times higher than the prevalence previously recorded in high-income countries. This prevalence data provides strong evidence for implementing population screening. Funding has been secured from ELMA Philanthropies and the Clinton Health Access Initiative to determine the barriers to and solutions for scaling up Umbiflow screening nationally. This will assist in supporting the rollout of Umbiflow by the National

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Department of Health. Economic impact: An economic analysis demonstrated that Umbiflow is cost-effective compared with similar neonatal life-saving interventions, using the World Health Organization (WHO) recommendation to distinguish between non-cost-effective, cost-effective, and highly cost-effective interventions. The final report has been submitted, and the results have been prepared for publication. The clinical study has been expanded to 9 districts across South Africa, and the project has also secured funding from the WHO for an expanded study in Ghana, India, Kenya, and Rwanda. The funding has been allocated, and the protocol is currently going through the WHO's IRB. The BMGF has further facilitated contact with a study to be initiated in Pakistan, on which they have requested the inclusion of the Umbiflow technology. In November 2021, a technology licence agreement was concluded between the SAMRC, CSIR, and Lodox Systems (Pty) Ltd, a significant step towards realizing this device's potential impact. The project team recently approached the SAMRC to discuss the possibility of another study to evaluate the device's performance in pregnancy dating.

Uterine Balloon Tamponade: The uterine balloon tamponade was first approved for funding in 2016. The Ellavi (UBT) developed by Sinapi Biomedical for the treatment of post-partum haemorrhage received regulatory approvals in Kenya and Ghana in January 2020. The UBT was adopted by 31 South African hospitals in 2019 and is already being distributed to several LMICs in Africa (including Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana, Kenya, Ghana), South America (Puerto Rico, Brazil), and the Middle East (Kuwait). The WHO has planned a randomized control trial that includes the Sinapi Biomedical UBT in Vietnam in 2021. In 2020, Johnson and Johnson contacted Sinapi Biomedical for a partnership to Strengthen PPH management in various countries. This project has been a shining example of the potential impact of strategic alliances, as the project's success has been supported by SHIP, Grand Challenges Canada, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (through GHIA support), and USAID (PATH support). Sinapi has successfully raised CAD\$500,000 from GCC's Transition-to-scale

funding for the commercialization of UBT as a direct result of a submission by GHIA to the Innovation Marketplace. PATH has assisted with raising matching funding of around CAD\$300,000 for the GCC grant through its D3AWN DfID grant. The grant will be used to support high volume manufacturing capacity and related strategy, develop a detailed go-to-market plan for introduction of the Ellavi in Ghana and Kenya for both the public and private sector markets, support registration of the Ellavi in Ghana and Kenya, conduct implementation research to inform scale up in Ghana and Kenya, engage with critical stakeholders in focus countries and globally to raise awareness and generate demand, and advocate for the inclusion of the Ellavi in the UNICEF and UNFPA procurement channels. SHIP is also contributing some co-funding through an R330,000 grant for training healthcare practitioners on using UBT during the rollout process.

2. POVERTY ERADICATION, SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SOCIAL SERVICES

This section focuses on providing progress made against the critical areas of concern in line with the Guidance note: (i) Critical Area of Concern A on Women and Poverty; (ii) Critical Area of Concern B on Education and Training of Women; (iii) Critical Area of Concern C on Women and Health (iv) Critical Area of Concern I on Human Rights of Women; and (v) Critical Area of Concern L on the Girl Child.

It provides information on actions taken over the past five years to: (i) reduce / eradicate poverty among women and girls; (ii) to improve access to social protection for women and girls; (iii) provide gender-responsive social protection innovations during the COVID-19 pandemic; (iv) improve health outcomes for women and girls in the country; (v) improve education outcomes and skills for women and girls, including in sectors where they are underrepresented; and (vi) ensure that economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic

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closes gender gaps in poverty, unemployment, social protection, education, and health that the pandemic has exacerbated.

(I) Actions taken to reduce / eradicate poverty among women and girls

Reducing poverty and inequality is the overriding concern of South Africa's development policies and programs since the dawn of democracy in 1994. The poverty narrative in South Africa requires understanding of the interface between the triple challenge of poverty, high levels of unemployment and persistent increasing inequalities in the country. Poverty is mostly seen as income based.

Currently, the National Development Plan: Vision 2030 (NDP) is a plan for the country to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030. The guiding principle, as captured in the NDP, is that “no political democracy can survive and flourish if the mass of our people remains in poverty, without land, without tangible prospects for a better life. Attacking poverty and deprivation must be the priority of a democratic government” (NDP, 2012). The NDP posits that to raise the living standards to the minimum required level will involve various mechanisms, such as increasing employment, income, productivity as well as through social protection and quality public services.

In South Africa, poverty eradication is addressed by expanding employment opportunities, making life more affordable for low-income households, reducing vulnerability by increasing the asset base and strengthening social security and the social wage.

The National Development Plan (Vision 2023) acknowledges that many years into democracy, South Africa remains a highly unequal society where too many people live in poverty and too few are gainfully employed. The National Development Plan represents the broad objectives to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality. This commitment to poverty reduction by the

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Government of South Africa has been expressed in recent years through various national, provincial and local policy interventions. Different poverty intervention strategies continue to be implemented in the country. Despite the progress South Africa has made in gradually reducing poverty, the country is still ranked as the most unequal in the world.

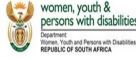
Many key factors such as race, unequal distribution of land, gender, and politics contribute to existing inequalities. Evidence from household surveys conducted in the country by Statistics South Africa points out that individuals living in households headed by females remain more vulnerable - with these households continuing to experience higher levels of poverty than male-headed households, regardless of the poverty line used. Individuals living in female-headed households also continue to account for shares in poverty that are larger than their share in the population.

Statistics on poverty trends in South Africa shows that there has been a decline in the percentage of persons living below poverty lines. Females remain more disadvantaged than males, consistently recording a higher headcount, gap and severity measures at each point in time. However, the gap between males and females is narrowing.

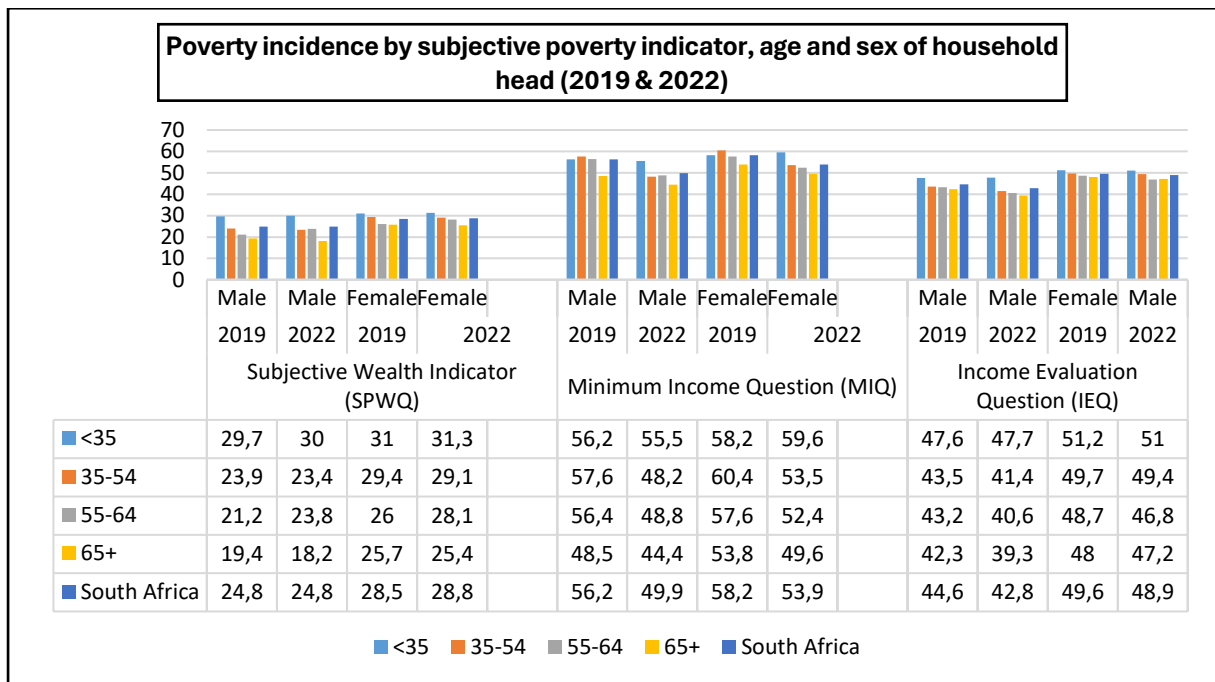
Findings from the General Household Survey on Subjective Poverty (Stats SA, 2024) depicts that across all poverty measures and age groups, female-headed households constantly reported highest incidence of poor households compared to male counterparts⁴⁷. Youth under the age of 35 years reported the highest incidence of poor households. This result could likely be attributed to the ongoing difficulty faced by younger generations in accessing the labour market and building their wealth profile.

⁴⁷ Subjective Poverty in South Africa: Findings from General Household Survey, 2019 & 2022; Statistics South Africa, 2024

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In 2022, across all the poverty measures and age groups, female-headed households consistently reported the highest incidence of poverty compared to their male counterparts. Across households headed by both sexes, the prevalence of poverty shows a declining pattern as you move up the age cohort hierarchy.



Anti-Poverty Programmes in the country

The anti-poverty programmes undertaken by Government since 1994 can be grouped into various categories of public expenditure such as:

Social assistance and grants: These are long- and medium-term cash transfers (e.g. including the Old Age, Disability, Child Support, Foster Care Grants and Grant-in-Aid)

The “Solar Mamas” Program - Empowerment of Rural Women, initiated by Government through the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, in partnership with the Energy & Water Sector Education Training Authority (EWSETA) and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry Ladies Organization in 2024, provides training for women,

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mainly young women, in solar technology. This program aims to empower women from rural and underserved communities by equipping them with skills in the installation, maintenance, and repair of solar panels and solar lighting systems. The initiative supports sustainable development and fosters economic independence. In May 2024, South Africa sent a total of 22 engineering students, its first cohort of young women from rural areas of South Africa to India for a training in panel manufacturing, and installation of the machineries in their communities. The Learnership programme provides theoretical and practical skills and is the result of one of the resolutions from the BRICS Women in Business meeting hosted on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit hosted by South Africa in 2023. The Learnership programme is supported by at least six other government ministries and parastatals in South Africa who pledged to open windows of opportunities for female learners to venture into business when they return to South Africa after their training. This training will equip them with the technical expertise needed to harness solar energy for the benefit of their communities and is part of South Africa's efforts in its Just Energy Transition process.

Fetsa Tlala Integrated Food Production Initiative: The program was approved by Cabinet in 2013 as the country's national food security programme. Fetsa Tlala is an integrated government framework that seeks to promote food nutrition security and to address structural causes of food insecurity, which continue to perpetuate inequality and social exclusion. The thrust of Fetsa Tlala is to produce enough food to meet the population's food needs now and in the future. The overarching goal of the initiative is to ensure food availability, thus contribute towards National Development Plan (NDP) goal of ending hunger. In 2021, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in Limpopo province provided progress on the implementation of the Fetsa Tlala initiative to promote adequate access to food. Through Fetsa Tlala beneficiaries obtain agricultural production inputs, technical advisory services and mechanization amongst others whose objective is to eradicate hunger at household level. Farmers were supported to plough 430 hectares at a cost of R470 000 using private service

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providers while 121 hectares ploughed using state tractors making a total 551 hectares. The province recorded high yield harvest by subsistence and small holder producers in Leolo in the Sekhukhune District through the help of Fetsa Tlala Department Initiative. Through this initiative subsistence and smallholder producers in the villages submitted their harvest to various milling companies. The results of this initiative saw the villages Moelakgopane, Dlamini, Hooperkranz, Ga-Kobe, Mohlake, Sekele, Ga-Moela producing 536 tons of maize while Hertfort harvested 473 tons maize.

South Africa has developed a **social protection system** based on the constitutional right, composed of three pillars: non-contributory schemes, including targeted social assistance and public employment programmes; mandatory social insurance, and voluntary insurance. South Africa has made notable progress by creating the South African Social Security Agency, expanding benefits to children; persons with disabilities and the elderly, and extending the Unemployment Insurance Fund to include domestic workers. Many beneficiaries of the social protection system in the country are women. The **Welfare to Work (W2W) programme**⁴⁸, initiated by the Department of Social Development, supports Child Support Grant caregivers, exiting foster care beneficiaries, survivors of gender-based violence, recovering substance abuse users, woman exiting victim empowerment shelters, beneficiaries exiting the child justice system, and all other beneficiaries to transit from welfare into the world of self-sustenance. 68 248 women participated in the programme through the following pillars: (i) skills development, where youth are taken through various accredited skills development programmes to facilitate mind-set shift, set participants on their career paths, as well as enhance their employability; (ii) enterprise development which link participants to self-employment opportunities (enterprises) and includes mainly women-owned cooperatives in various sectors such as clothing and textiles (focusing on production of school uniforms),

⁴⁸ Source DSD Inputs to the Thirtieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) - B+30

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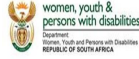
packaging and toilet paper manufacturing (including production of dignity packs), and hair salons; (iii) job placements which links participants to employment opportunities. The programme incubates individuals for a period of not more than three years and based on their assessment and educational profile, individuals are linked to education and training programmes that are aimed at ensuring that they are able to move themselves out of the social security system. A total of 155 578 women participated in income generating programmes⁴⁹. During the 2019-2023 Financial Years, 116 976 women participated in empowerment programmes and 27 363 women on child support grants were linked to economic opportunities. Entrepreneurial young women are assisted to start-up their business either through funding from the Department of Social Development or through partnerships established.

The South African Government is also implementing several different **poverty relief** programmes in the country, including activities under land care; food security, investing in culture, rural school-building, adult basic education and training, tourism development; coastal management; waste management; household nutrition projects; social rental housing; employment services and social plan information; social plan technical support facility; and local economic development which have benefitted women in the country.

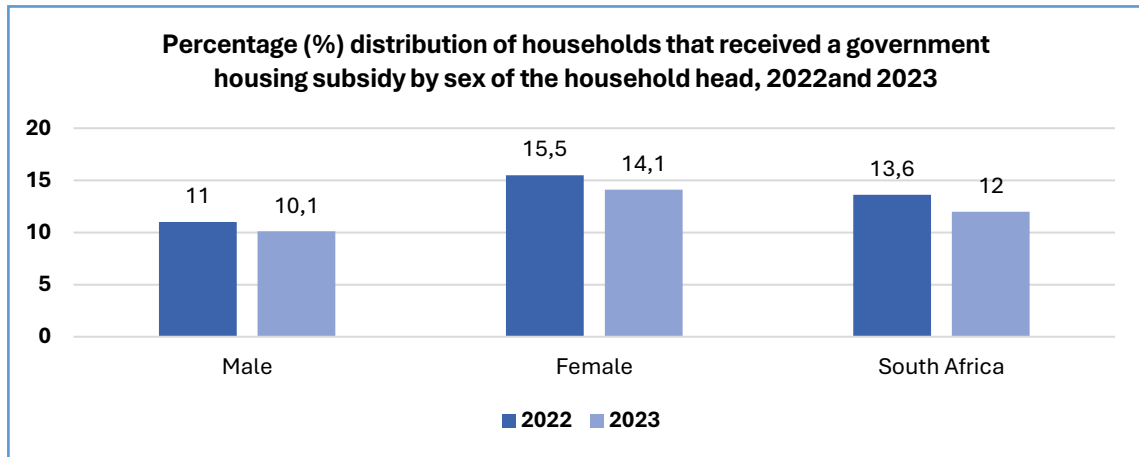
There are measures in place in South Africa to provide housing to those in need, called the RDP programme, among other government measures in place. In addition, Government also provides households with **housing subsidies** to assist people in obtaining and owning a house. The graph below shows the percentage of households that received some form of government housing subsidy in 2022 and 2023. A notably higher percentage of female-headed households (14,1%) than male-headed households (10,1%) received subsidies. This is in line with

⁴⁹ Source - DSD Inputs to the Thirtieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) - B+30

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government policies that give preference to households headed by individuals from vulnerable groups, including women, and individuals with disabilities.



South Africa has also made significant progress with the provision of an estimated 3.7 million housing opportunities provided to around 12.5 million people, along with further improvements in access to other basic services including adequate water, sanitation, electricity and refuse removal. Despite these gains, the country faces significant challenges to provide access to adequate housing to poor and vulnerable persons, especially black African women who live without access to basic services or economic opportunities to escape poverty (SAHRC Report, 2015:9). The graph indicates that more female headed households continue to receive government housing subsidies compared to male headed households.

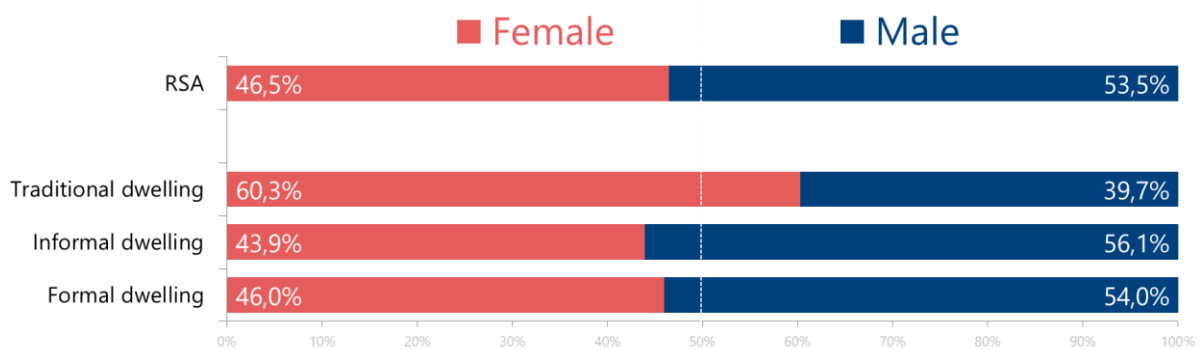
The South African Government have made major efforts to provide title deeds to female headed households over the years, and between 2022 -2024, 48% of female headed households have received title deeds meaning ownership of their houses / property. This is in recognition that the past oppressive policies hindered women from owning properties. Over and above, women with disabilities continues to receive more subsidies than the male counterparts. This includes increasing the housing subsidy quantum through policy intervention to ensure that persons with disabilities houses are bigger and meets the needs of

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persons with disabilities in line with the universal access and design principles⁵⁰.

Over half (53,5%) of households headed by males owned their dwellings in 2021. The proportion of female headed households who own traditional homes was higher than that of their male counterparts.



Source: Statistics South Africa - General Household Survey, 2021

(i) Actions taken to improve access to social protection for women and girls

The social assistance programme known as social grants is one of the South Africa's most effective and progressive **social protection** programmes. Nearly two-thirds of the South African population (64.0%) are covered, directly or indirectly, by the social assistance system, which makes transfers equivalent to 7.3% of households' expenditure nationally. Income-poor households are often unable to provide sufficient for members therefore, addressing income poverty and lack of basic needs remain critical as a pre-requisite for survival and development of communities.

⁵⁰ INPUTS FROM Department of Human Settlements - Inputs to the Thirtieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) - B+30

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The Social Assistance Act No. 13 of 2004, as amended, charges the national government with responsibility to provide social assistance. The primary aim of the social assistance programme is to provide financial assistance to poor and vulnerable persons who are unable to support themselves and to safeguard their livelihood. It lays the basis for the provision of the tax-financed social grants in South Africa. To this extent the country provides the most extensive system of unconditional cash transfers in the world, including grants for children, persons with disabilities, older people and recently, adult with insufficient means. Social grants include the Older Persons Grant; War Veterans Grant; Disability Grant; Child Support Grant including the child support grant Top Up; Care Dependency Grant; Foster Child Grant; Grant-in-Aid and the recently implemented COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress grant.

The social grant programme has grown over the years and the number of social grants paid out by government has increased from 12.02 million in 2006/07 financial year to over 19 million (permanent) social grants and nearly 8.5 million (temporary) COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress (R350 grant) in 2022/23 financial year. The total coverage of social grants by May 2024 was over 19.2 million with the Child Support Grant being the highest grant in payment (with 13 230 045 beneficiaries), and female beneficiaries making up 97.8% of this social support mechanism. Women beneficiaries of the old age grant is 63.6%.

Table showing Type of poverty alleviation grants by sex and number of recipients, as at end of February 2024

Grants Recipients by sex as at end of February 2024					
	Female (N)	%	Male (N)	%	Total
Care Dependency grant	158 859	96,3	6160	3,7	165 019
Child Support Grant	12 931 339	97,8	291 126	2,2	13 222 465
Disability Grant	518 494	49,4	531 305	50,6	1 049 799
Foster Care Grant	226 947	93,4	15 984	6,6	242 931
Grant in Aid	260 571	66,5	131 455	33,5	392 026

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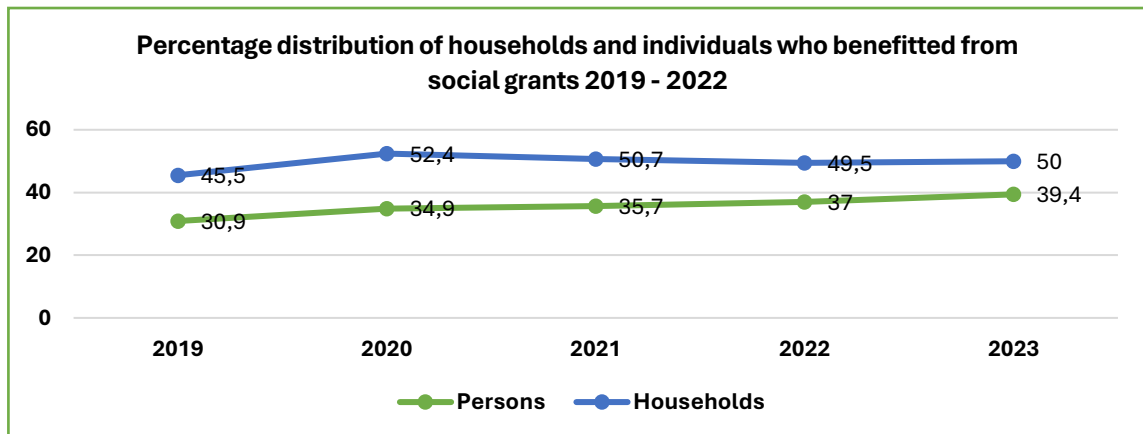


Old Age Grant	2 561 438	63,6	1 466 964	36,4	4 028 402
War veteran Grant	3	30,0	7	70,0	10
Total	16 657 651	87,2	2 443 001	12,8	19 100 652

SOURCE: Inputs from Department of Social Development

South Africa's social protection is based on a hybrid model of strategies that protects the vulnerable and those at risk, builds capabilities, and enhances economic inclusion throughout the various stages of life. The elements of the social wage include: (i) social security (social assistance and social insurance); (ii) social services (social welfare including grants and food parcels, Early Childhood Development, National Health Insurance, housing, free basic services, No Fee schools, Scholar Transport, School Nutrition, Sanitary Dignity and free condoms for both males and females); and (iii) public and social employment programmes.

The Child Support Grant has wide-reaching and positive impact on the lives of poor people, especially poor black African women. The threshold age for accessing these grants were raised to 18 years and the threshold for men was reduced to age sixty years (in line with that for women).





The percentage of individuals that benefited from social grants steadily increased from 30,9% in 2019 to approximately 39,4% between 2019 and 2023. This growth was tracked closely by that of households that received at least one social grant. The percentage of households that received at least one social grant increased relatively consistently from 45,5% in 2019 to 50% in 2023 due to the introduction of the Social Relief of Distress Grant (SRD) in 2020.

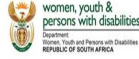
(ii) Actions taken to provide gender-responsive social protection innovations during the COVID-19 pandemic

Women in South Africa, similarly to the global occurrence, have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 crisis. During the various waves of the pandemic, there was widespread hunger and food insecurity, which affected women and their households to a much more devastating level than men and their households.

The COVID pandemic, and the subsequent negative impact on the poor exposed a major gap in the social protection system of the country and gave impetus to the introduction of unprecedented actions and income support to those who were hardest hit. This included measures such as **food parcel distributions** to poor and indigent households; as well as **financial support** through the **Top-Up of the Child Support Grant for 6 months, a special Covid Social Relief Distress Grant benefit per month for 6 months**, to cushion the unemployed working-age population, as well as a special arrangement through the **Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) called the UIF – Temporary Employment Relief Scheme (TERS)** for those who lost their jobs during the pandemic..

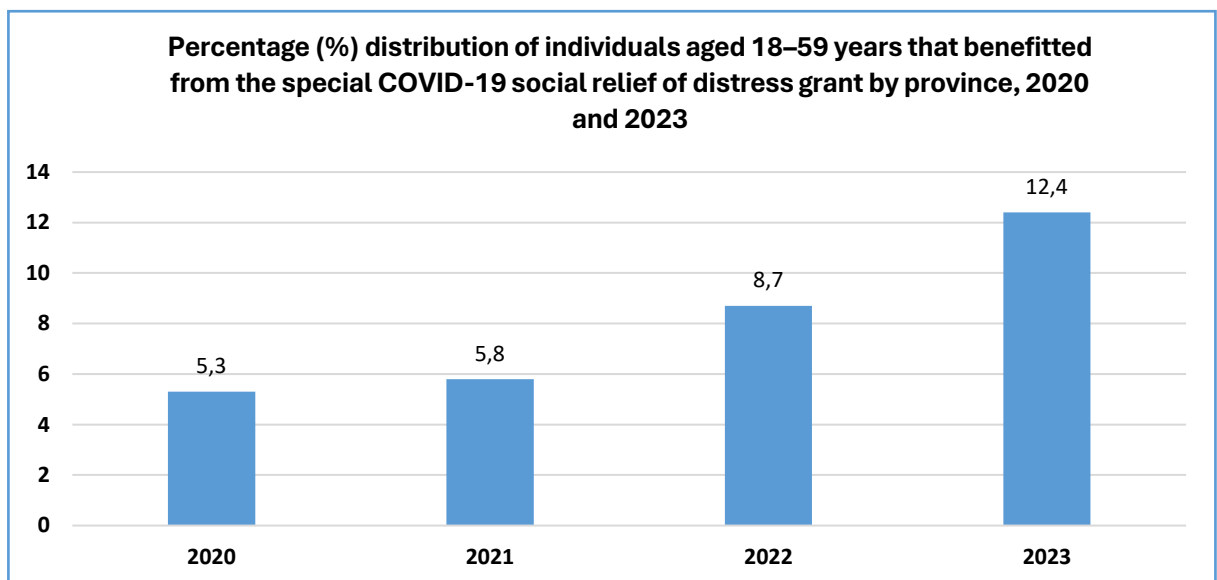
These interventions brought immediate relief to millions of unemployed adults, and families facing the brunt of hunger and poverty in the country, and kept many local economies afloat,

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greatly reducing the economic disaster that could have followed the devastating impact of the pandemic and the lockdowns that followed.

The **special Covid-19 Social Relief of Distress Grant (SRDG)** of R350 per month was introduced in 2020 to offset the impact of COVID-19. Since then, the percentage of individuals in the age group 18–59 years who received the grant has increased from 5,3% in 2020 to 12,4% in 2023.



The SRDG programme since its inception has been digitalized with all processes conducted electronically. Although introduced as a short-term measure for six months, it was later extended in various iterations due to its success in addressing poverty and is currently still in operation. The total coverage of beneficiaries by May 2024 was just over 8.8 million young persons who are unemployed.

The grant has been shown by multiple studies to be well targeted, and successful in reducing hunger, poverty and inequality while also improving the participation of beneficiaries in job

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search and other economic activity. Research⁵¹ indicates that the SRDG is mainly used to buy food, electricity, clothing and for transport, all of which support local economies. 80% of the beneficiaries surveyed reported that even though the grant was small, it made a positive difference in their lives as well as their households. Estimates suggest that it has reduced the number of people living in poverty by over 2 million, while staving off severe hunger among those individuals living below the poverty line.

Research has also pointed to the spillover effects of the grant, which has enabled individuals to search for formal and informal jobs, even without any additional services or conditions. In addition, the grant has stimulated local economic activity through the provision of capital and markets for small business. Importantly, it has also enhanced the agency of grant beneficiaries, by empowering them to contribute to household decision-making about spending priorities. These impacts have all contributed to economic growth and social stability, thus creating a virtuous economic cycle that exceeds its cost.

Research carried out in South Africa⁵² in 2020 – 2021 through the National Income Dynamic Studies – Corona Virus Survey (NIDS CRAM Survey) found that **women in the country were particularly hard hit**. Relative to men, they were much more impacted by jobs losses during the initial strict lockdown phase, and their recovery was slower as the economy reopened (Casale and Posel, 2020; Casale and Shepard 2020, 2021a). Despite these uneven effects in the labour market, women benefitted less than men from the COVID-specific government income support measures put in place to help cushion the blow to unemployed and furloughed workers. In addition to these gendered outcomes, there were also inequalities in the home. The time that women spent on childcare was found to be relatively more responsive to school closures and re-openings than the time men spent on childcare, with

⁵¹ DSD inputs - Thirtieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) B+30

⁵² NIDS CRAM Surveys in Waves 1-5 of the pandemic, 2020

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far more women than men citing childcare responsibilities as a constraint to their labour market activities (Casale and Shepard, 2020).

Government also implemented the COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress Grant (SRDG) for R350 a month. This special grant was announced in May 2020 and was targeted at the unemployed of working age who were not claiming from the UIF system or receiving any other social grant. This grant also shows **an under-representation of women in the disbursement of the SRDG**. By June 2020, the data indicates that of the approximately 2.5 million recipients of the grant, only 922 522 (i.e. 37.6%) were women. By January 2021, this figure has increased to around 5.4 million, but women still remained under-represented among the beneficiaries, with only 35.7% (or 1 909 754) of the recipients being women. This was similar by March 2021. The reason is that working-age women **could not hold this grant concurrently with the Child Support Grant**, where women make up the majority of recipients.

The eligibility criterion of the SRDG penalises unemployed women for also caring for their children. The Child Support Grant of R445 in 2020 (R460 in 2021), while paid out to the caregiver, is to support the child, and on its own is not even sufficient to raise one child above the 2020 food poverty line of R585 in South Africa. The **top-up to the CSG of R500 a month per caregiver**, rather than per child, in place from June to October 2020 would not have been sufficient to raise an (unemployed) mother with one child above the food poverty line, let alone a mother with more than one child (the typical household in South Africa has between 2 and 3 children). The dangers of tying women's access to social protection to their caregiving role became all the more evident in October 2020 when the CSG (and other grant) top-ups came to an end after 6 months, while the SRDG was extended by another 6 months to April 2021. Thus, fewer women received the SRDG because of the conditionality of the grant. The SRDG could not be held concurrently with another grant such as the Child-Support Grant, which meant that unemployed women were penalised if they were also main caregiver to a child. This gender bias

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in the design of the policy became a source of great contention following government's decision to suspend the top-ups to the Child Support Grant in October 2020 after 6 months, while extending the SRDG for a further 6 months until April 2021. Government has extended the COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress Grant (SRD Grant) until March 2025 while it considers social security policy reforms and a funding model

An important finding is that even though women accounted for the majority of the unemployed (or those not working) throughout the period, as well as the majority of the net job losses recorded between any two time periods, they were under-represented in the COVID-specific government income support provided for unemployed and furloughed workers. In each month for which the data were collected, only around 35%-39% of either Unemployment Insurance Fund – Temporary Employment Relief Scheme (UIF-TERS) beneficiaries or the COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress Grant (SRDG) recipients were women. That fewer women than men received the UIF-TERS is probably due to fewer women being (formally) employed and registered on the UIF system to begin with.

Income support for the unemployed

Data suggests that women have been over-represented among those who lost their jobs or who experienced reduce hours of work during the ongoing lockdown. However, they have been under-represented in income support for the unemployed workers.

The Unemployment Insurance Fund-Temporary Employer/Employee Relief Scheme (UIF-TERS) was introduced in April 2020 as a temporary relief scheme to support employers and employees unable to work because of business interruptions and lockdown restrictions. This scheme ran alongside the standard UIF scheme and was aimed at staving off mass retrenchments by allowing employers to temporarily claim benefits on behalf of their workers from the period starting 27 March 2020 (when the first lockdown was imposed) to March 2021.

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Although there were some challenges initially, government reports suggest that by the end of March 2021, payment has been made to 267 000 employers and to 5.4 million individual employees totalling to 58.7 billion rand.

The data shows the numbers of women and men who reported receiving UIF-TERS payments in June 2020, October 2020, January 2021 and March 2021. The number of UIF-TERS beneficiaries fell after June 2020 for both men and women, tracking the recovery in the job market. What is notable though is that a majority of the beneficiaries in each month are men. The share of UIF-TERS recipients in any one month who are women ranges from 34.5% to 39.5 over the period.

One of the reasons for this is that women are less likely than men to be (formally) employed and registered on the UIF system in the first place (Stats SA, Quarterly Labour Force Survey). In fact, the share of women who received ordinary UIF payments in any one month is similarly low – ranging from 30% to 45.3% over the period. The underrepresentation of women in UIF support is particularly stark when one compares these values to women's share of the broadly unemployed, which ranges from 57.3% to 60% over the period, or women's share in the net job losses compared to pre-COVID times, ranging from 57% in June 2020 to almost 100% in March 2021.

Table showing UIF / UIF-TERS for June 2020, October 2020, January 2021 and March 2021 for women beneficiaries

	June 2020	October 2020	January 2021	March 2021
Share of UIF-TERS recipients (%)	39.5	36.8	34.5	36.2
Share of UIF recipients (%)	44.5	40.2	45.3	30.0
Share labour force (%)	47.0	47.4	46.0	46.8
Share of employed (%)	44.4	44.9	43.5	44.5
Share of "not" working (%)	59.6	60.6	59.8	60.8
Share of broad unemployed (%)	57.3	60.0	58.0	58.9
Share of net job losses from Feb 2020 to . (%)	58.6	85.1	73.2	99.8
Received UIF-TERS: Women (number)	782 714	534 127	232 631	351 972

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Received UIF-TERS: Men (number)	1 198 041	916 469	441 592	619 520
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The most affected category of women was those employed as domestic workers in households, and who were unable to go to work because of the lockdown. Some were live-in helpers and care givers and thus were at the places of work during the lockdown itself. But for the many who fell outside of this group, their absence at work meant no income. Many domestic workers are not registered on the UIF system, so they failed to obtain this social protection floor of government, but those that were, were able to eventually also obtain this UIF-TERS assistance.

(iii) **Actions taken to improve health outcomes for women and girls in South Africa**

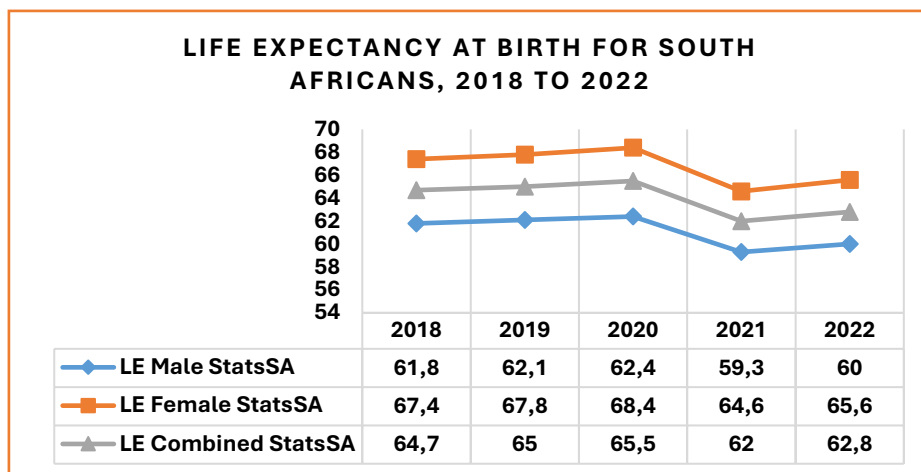
The South African government has put in place several transformative policies and legislations aimed at advancing women's empowerment and gender equality. As such, there has been some notable progress in some indicators suggesting improvement in the quality of life of women over the years. Overall, notwithstanding the impact of the various pandemics and disease outbreaks the country experienced over the 30 years under review, the health of South Africans is improving.

The **life expectancy** of South Africans at birth deteriorated between 1994 and 2006, reaching an all-time low of 54.5 years. This was associated with the rampant scourge of HIV/AIDS and the comorbidity of TB, including the more virulent strains of drug-resistant TB. Life expectancy started improving consistently from 2005 with the start of the antiretroviral treatment, reaching 65.5 years in 2020. This represents an increase of 10,9 years over 13 years.

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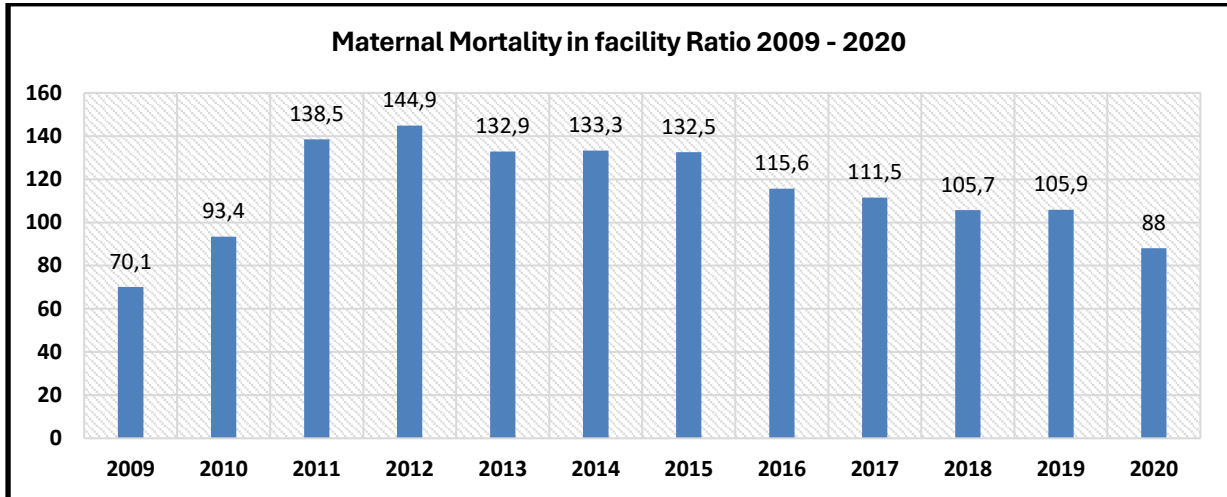


However, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, life expectancy dropped by 3.5 years to 62.0 years in 2021, but there has been a rebound in 2022, and total life expectancy slowly began improving again, reaching 62.8 years in 2022, compared to 62.0 years in 2021. Overall, males' life expectancy stood at 60.0 years in 2022, while life expectancy for women is 65.6 years. These milestones are a result of the successful implementation of programmes to fight HIV/AIDS and TB, as well as improvements in the socioeconomic conditions of South Africans, including the social safety net provided by the government to fight poverty and ameliorate poverty-related ill-health.



In terms of **improving Maternal Health** in the country, South Africa was the first African country to establish a National Committee of Confidential Enquiry into Maternal Deaths to investigate the causes of maternal deaths and provide recommendations for prevention. All maternal deaths in South Africa are notifiable. The Committee has proved to be very effective in carrying out its work, particularly in enhancing the investigation of maternal deaths. South Africa is experiencing a decrease in maternal mortality in facility ratio, as indicated by the graph below spanning 2009 – 2020.

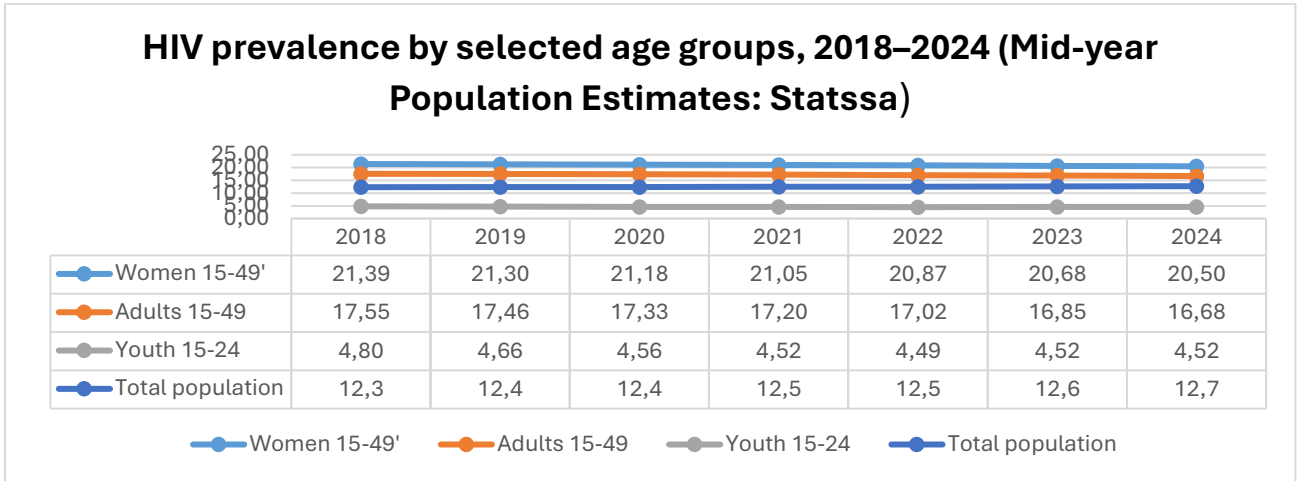
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On the issue of **HIV prevalence**, South Africa has made significant progress towards HIV control; however, the incidence remains high, especially among key populations, women and other priority populations. The HIV prevalence estimates for 2024 was 12,7% of the total population. A fifth of South African women in their reproductive ages (15–49 years) are HIV positive. HIV prevalence among the youth aged 15–24 has remained stable over time declining marginally in the most recent decade. The total number of persons living with HIV (PLHIV) in South Africa increased from an estimated 7,45 million in 2020 to 8,0 million by 2024.

Women continue to bear a disproportionate burden of the HIV epidemic. Approximately 20.50 of South African women aged between 15 and 49 years are HIV positive compared to.

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South Africa registered a decline in HIV prevalence in pregnant women from 27% in 2017 to 23.9% in 2022. Successes recorded in the prevention of vertical transmission in the NSP 2017-2022 include increasing the number of pregnant women living with HIV reporting already being on ART before their first antenatal visit from 52% in 2017 to 73% in 2021⁵⁴. This demonstrates the success of community mobilisation approaches and health facilities’ engagements to identify people who are infected with HIV before they visited antenatal care facilities⁵⁵.

In May 2024, HE Cyril Ramaphosa assented the **National Health Insurance Act**, No 20 of 2023 into law. South Africa is at the brink of effecting significant and much needed reforms to its health system financing mechanisms. The changes are based on the principles of ensuring the right to health for all, entrenching equity, social solidarity, and efficiency and effectiveness in the health system to realise universal health coverage. The phased implementation of the national health insurance (NHI) is intended to ensure integrated health financing mechanisms

⁵³ Statistics South Africa, 2024: Mid-year population estimates, 2024

⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵ Ibid

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that allow the NHI Fund to draw on the capacity of the public and private sectors to the benefit of all South Africans. The policy objective of the NHI is to ensure that everyone has access to appropriate, efficient, affordable and quality health services. To achieve universal health coverage, institutional and organisational reforms are required to address structural inefficiencies; ensure accountability for the quality of the health services rendered and ultimately, to improve health outcomes, particularly focusing on the poor, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups irrespective of their socio-economic status provided by accredited healthcare providers in both the public and private sectors. The national Department of Health has augmented, strengthened, and improved the NHI information systems capacity and has also established a patient registry through the deployment of the Health Patient Registration System at primary healthcare facilities and hospitals.

On the issue of **preventing and treating communicable and non-communicable diseases**, it must be noted that South Africa has a high burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases, many of which require dedicated and targeted prevention and treatment programmes. The comprehensive HIV and AIDS component of the district health programmes grant in the Communicable and Non-communicable Diseases programme is allocated an average of R25 billion per year over the medium term to fund the prevention and treatment of HIV and TB. These funds are expected to ensure that a targeted 7 million people per year receive antiretroviral treatment by 2025/26. During the COVID-19 pandemic, adherence to antiretroviral treatment decreased and the budget for this programme may need to be reviewed over the MTEF period as performance improves. Allocations of R10 million per year in 2023/24 and 2024/25 have been reprioritised to the Communicable Diseases subprogramme to provide for the COVID-19 vaccine no-fault compensation scheme, which was established by the Department of Health to provide compensation to individuals who suffered severe injury from adverse reactions to COVID-19 vaccinations. The large variability in spending across the

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Communicable and Non-communicable Diseases programme relates mostly to the large allocations for the COVID-19 vaccine programme, mainly from 2020/21 to 2022/23⁵⁶.

South Africa has in place a **National Strategic Plan (NSP) for HIV, TB and STIs 2023-2028**, which serves as a blueprint and roadmap to guide and inform the country's response to HIV, TB and STI epidemics. Through the implementation of the four previous NSPs, South Africa has made notable progress with respect to the HIV prevention and treatment programme, with over 5.7 million people on treatment. Of those on treatment and tested for viral load suppression, about 92% were virally suppressed, as of November 2022.

South Africa is implementing an **Integrated School Health Programme (ISHP)**, a joint venture between the Departments of Basic Education and the Department of Health. This is a programme that extends coverage of school health services to all learners in primary and secondary schools, and offers a comprehensive and integrated package of services, including sexual and reproductive health services for older learners. The health services package includes a large component of health education for each of the four school phases (such as how to lead a healthy lifestyle, and drug and substance abuse awareness), health screening (such as screening for vision, hearing, oral health and TB) and onsite services (such as deworming and immunisation). The ISHP services contribute to the health and well-being of learners by screening them for health barriers to learning.

South Africa also is implementing a **“Prevent, Avoid, Stop, Overcome and Protect Campaign” (PASOP)** as a call to all communities to join hands with government in the fight against HIV and AIDS, and TB. It is aimed at influencing people's behaviour and attitude around these diseases, to ensure that new HIV infections rates are reduced. The campaign calls on South Africans to: **P**revent new infections and transmissions; **A**void re-infections, deaths and mother-to-child

⁵⁶ South African yearbook, 2022/2023

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transmission; **Stop** risky behaviour and practices; **Overcome** living with HIV and the stigma; and **Protect** themselves, loved ones and others. The initiative targets all but with a distinct focus on lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender and intersex persons, men-sleeping-with-men, the youth, commercial sex workers, migrant workers, informal settlements, women and drug users. The campaign places high emphasis on the responsibility of self and non-stigmatisation.

Through a programme called **Higher Health**, the Department of Higher Education and Training, promotes the health and wellness of students and staff at public universities and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutes, to address numerous health-related concerns in the higher education sector. This includes implementing health education programmes, disease preventive measures, and offering support services to improve the general well-being of the educational community. The Department of Higher Education and Training, through Higher Health, has implemented comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education programs across universities and TVET colleges, to promote informed decision-making, reduce stigma, and improve health outcomes related to sexual health among women and girls in tertiary institutions, including those from marginalized and vulnerable communities.⁵⁷ The Department of Higher Education and Training has integrated funding for SRHR education programs and its HIV/AIDS programme into its annual budget. To this end R62, 4 million has been allocated over the next three years. There has been tremendous impact from this programme, with increased knowledge and awareness of sexual health issues among female students, evidenced by pre- and post-programme surveys showing significant knowledge gains; positive behavioral changes in attitudes towards safe sex practices and increased utilization of SRHR services on campuses; and reduced STI rates on campuses among students participating in SRH programs as evidence by data from health centers on campuses.

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[https://www.dhet.gov.za/Strategic%20Plans/Strategic%20Plans/DEPARTMENT%20OF%20HIGHER%20EDUCATION%20AND%20TRAINING%20APP%20for%202023-24%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.dhet.gov.za/Strategic%20Plans/Strategic%20Plans/DEPARTMENT%20OF%20HIGHER%20EDUCATION%20AND%20TRAINING%20APP%20for%202023-24%20(1).pdf)

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On the issue of **mental health of women** in tertiary institutions, the Department of Higher Education and Training, through its Higher Health programme enhances mental health support services for women and girls to address mental health challenges and promote well-being among female students. This is especially important for young women in tertiary institutions who are subjected to gender-based violence, sexual assault and cyber bullying and social media harassment, etc.

(iv) Actions taken to improve education outcomes and skills for women and girls, including in sectors where they are underrepresented

The National Development Plan: Vision 2023 asserts that “education, training and innovation are central to South Africa’s long-term development. They are core elements in eliminating poverty and reducing inequality and the foundation of an equal society. Education empowers people to define their identity, take control of their lives, raise healthy families, take part confidently in developing a just society, and play an effective role in the politics and governance of their communities”.

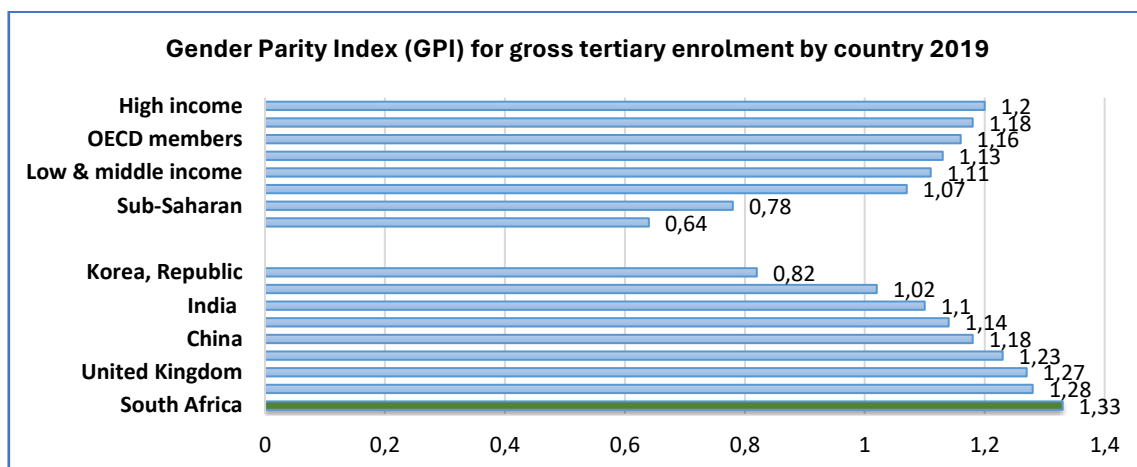
South Africa has made progress in introducing policies to facilitate gender equality and equity in education, since the dawn of democracy. There are, however, different opinions and perceptions on the impact of these policies and programmes. By 2009, South Africa succeeded in securing the universal enrolment of all children of primary school-going age, as well as gender parity, in schools across the country. Over the years, the number of women in education has been increasing, and they now represent a substantial portion of the student population in various fields of study.

The graph below shows the comparison of South Africa’s Gross Parity Index (GPI) for gross tertiary enrolment with other countries and averages of selected regions for the year 2019. It

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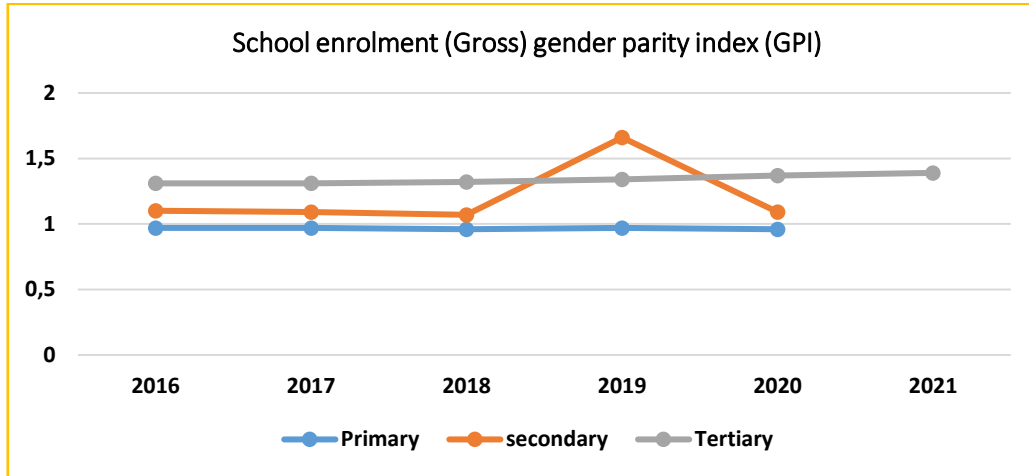
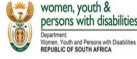
indicates that, in 2019, South Africa’s GPI for tertiary enrolment was the highest in the world. The GPI for South Africa stood at 1.33 compared to Brazil (at 1.28); United Kingdom (at 1.27); high income countries (at 1.20); OECD members (at 1.16) and Sub-Saharan Africa (at 0.78).



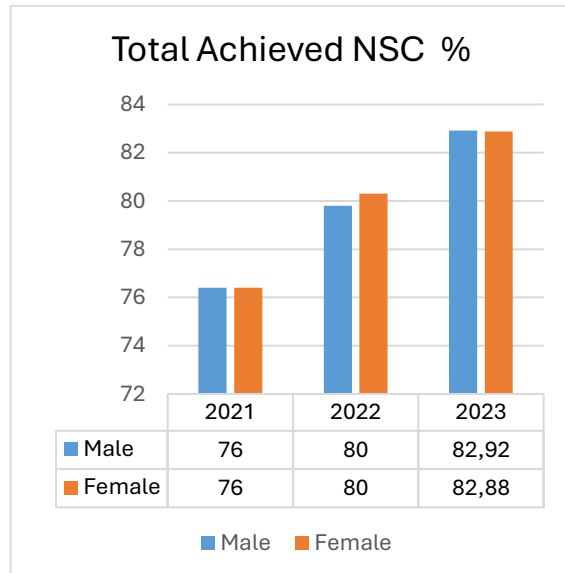
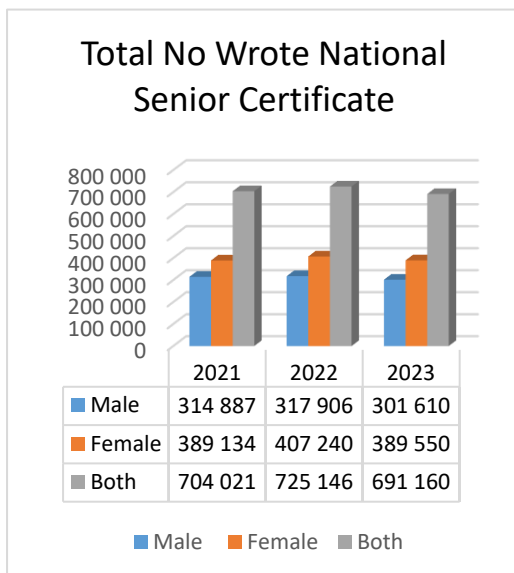
South Africa continues to show high female representation in education enrolment in its tertiary institutions. The GPI is in favour of females in both access (enrolment) and success (completion or graduation). The GPI for gross tertiary enrolment has also remained the highest in the world. Although participation rates of females in the post-school education and training system far exceed that of their male counterparts, gender inequality remains a matter of deep concern in South Africa.

The graph below shows GPI in primary and secondary schooling as well as at tertiary level.

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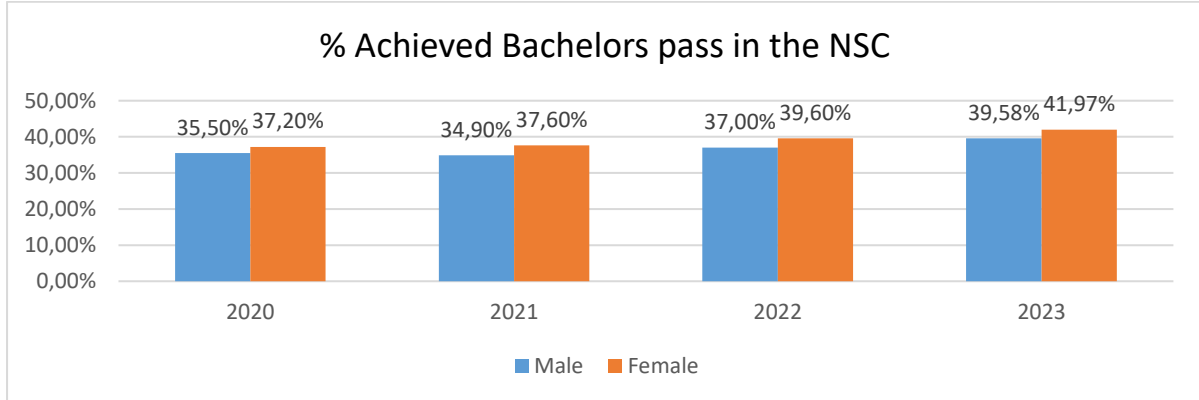
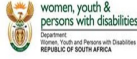


The National Senior Certificate results indicate that more females than males sit for the National Senior Certificate examinations annually over the past years. The trend analysis shows higher number of female learners who wrote National Senior Certificate, total number who achieved the NSC and also achieving bachelors in the NSC results compared to males. This shows that female learners are performing better compared to male learners⁵⁸.



⁵⁸ DBE National Senior Certificate 2023, Examination Report

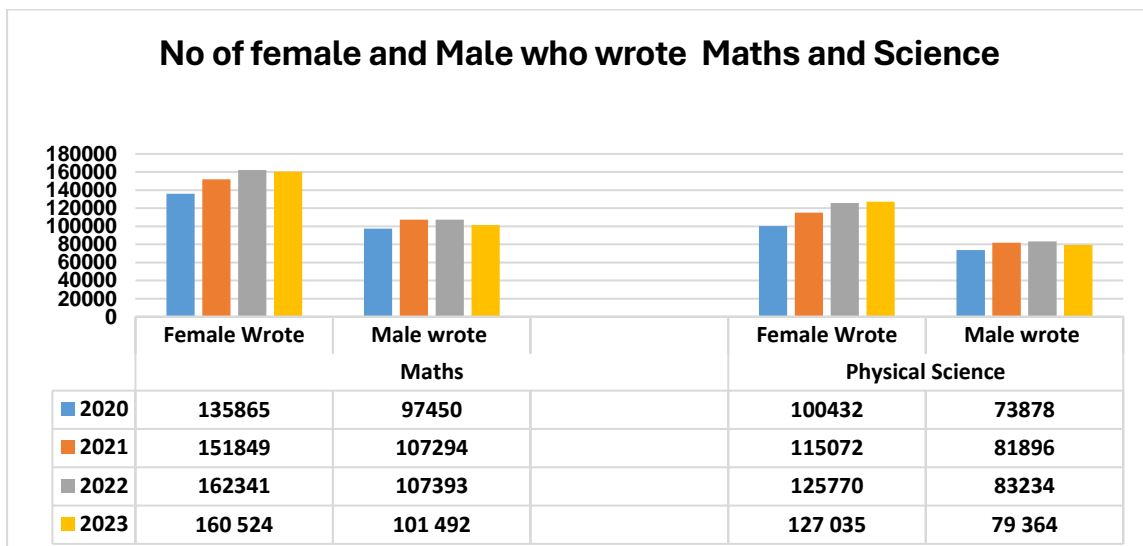
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Percentage bachelor Achievement in the National Senior Certificate				
Categories	2020	2021	2022	2023
Male	35.5%	34.9%	37.0%	39.58%
Female	37.2%	37.6%	39.6%	41.97%
% of bachelor passes	36.4%	36.4%	38.4%	40.93%

Enrolments and Performance in Mathematics and Physical Science

The graph below shows that higher number of female learners wrote both mathematics and physical science national senior certificate examination over the past three years.

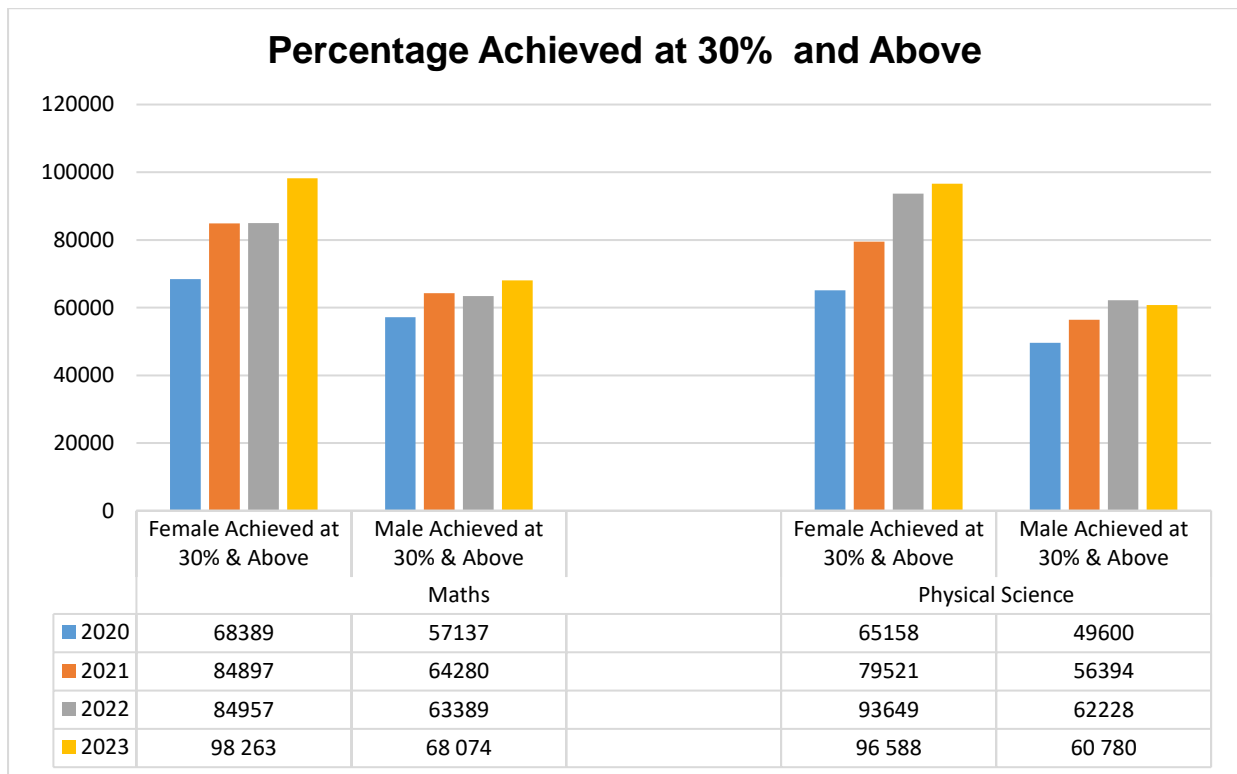


The graph below shows that a higher number of female learners achieved at 30% and above in both Mathematics and Physical Science over the past three years. The analysis of the graph illustrates that male learners performed better than female learners in Mathematics over the

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past three years, with a significant difference between their performances in Mathematics. The performance gap in Physical science have narrowed over the past three years with almost equal performance between male and female learners in the 2023 national senior certificate examinations.



Enrolment for females in public institutions of higher education / learning in South Africa in 2021 was 655 427, which was 242 999 higher when compared with that of males at 412 428. The undergraduate degree qualification saw the biggest gender discrepancy, with 147 234 more female students enrolling than male students. Female students made up a sizable portion of those enrolling in undergraduate certificates and diplomas, postgraduate below master’s level, master’s degrees, and Advanced Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate in Education. However, male enrolment in doctoral degrees was 767 more than female enrolment⁵⁹. There were more

⁵⁹ IBID

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females enrolled as compared to males in almost all fields of study except for the science, engineering and technology fields⁶⁰.

In 2021, of the 1 068 046 total enrolment in public institutions of higher education, 12 877 (i.e. 1.2%) students reported having a disability. More than half of them were females (i.e. 56.3% or 7 244), while 43.6% or 5 609 were males. The highest gender gap was found among students with hearing and physical disabilities, where 462 and 312 more females reported having these disabilities compared to their male counterparts⁶¹.

In 2021, almost two thirds of graduates were females (63.8% or 148 841), while 36.2% (84 367) were males. The number of female graduates were higher in almost all qualification types (except doctoral degrees), with the largest gender disparities observed for undergraduate degrees (27 903) and undergraduate certificates and diplomas (20 556). Male graduates for doctoral degrees outnumbered females by 287. However, a sizable portion of both male (i.e. 974) and female graduates (i.e. 814) obtained their doctoral degrees in the science, education and technology fields. Since 2015, the proportion of female doctoral graduates in the STEM fields has surpassed those of male graduates. There has also been an increase in the production of black doctoral graduates in STEM fields. Another positive development in the same domain has been the increase in the number of black doctoral graduates in STEM fields. From constituting about one-third of all doctoral graduates in 2010, the share of black doctoral students in STEM fields increased to 44% in 2020.

In every field of study, more women than men graduated, with notable differences in the Education and Other

⁶⁰ RSA: Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET): Statistics on Post-School Education and Training in South Africa: 2021

⁶¹ IBID

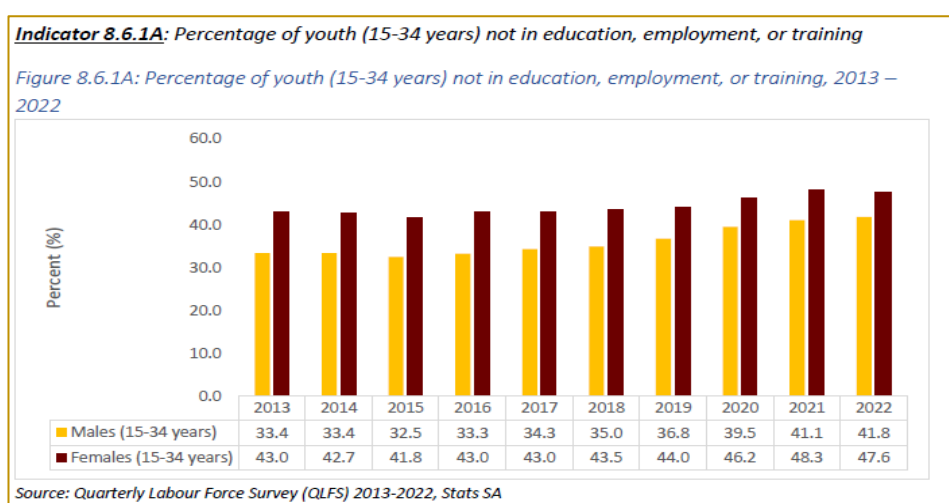
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In the humanities field of study, where 20 096 and 23 425 more females than males completed their degrees. It should also be noted that almost three quarters of graduates in the Education field of study were females (30 577 out of the overall total of 41 058), and almost 70% of the other Humanities graduates were also female (41 599 out of the overall total of 59 773). The female graduates in the SET field of study were 4 851 higher as compared to males.

There is also a gap between the graduation outputs and the labour market trends in South Africa, where there is higher unemployment rate of women – particularly noticeable in the science, engineering, mathematics and technology related employment. It is incumbent upon us to facilitate women graduates' employability by supporting and advocating for deliberate measures and interventions to increase the representation of women within different institutions. Pro-poor policies played a significant role in driving this change by reducing the opportunity cost of attending school. Core programmes supporting access have had success but face new challenges that require response and adaptation without eroding the progress achieved through them.

The graph below shows 15–34-year-olds not in education, employment or training.



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⁶²The Department of Higher Education and Training's implementation of various programmes aimed at developing future generations of academics and building staff capacity so that the gender gap among academic staff is gradually closing. The proportions of male and female researchers are approaching parity. The percentage of staff in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields has remained consistent over time, from 2010, at 51,5%, to 51,9% in 2021. This finding is, on reflection, not surprising. The percentage of staff in the STEM fields to increase significantly in relation to non-STEM (social sciences, humanities, education, economic and management sciences) staff, it would require many universities to change their organizational design, creating more medical schools, engineering faculties and larger science faculties. The envisaged establishment of the new University of Science and Technology in Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg, is an example of the type of intervention that is required.

Actions to increase women in leadership in the education sector has been put in place in the country, given that women leaders play a critical role in ensuring gender equity and access to executive and management positions in universities. South Africa has increased female representation across all funding instruments through the National Research Fund (NRF) from 39% to 45% in the 2018/2019 period. However, more efforts are needed to transform the country's research workforce. Universities South Africa (USAf) developed and implemented its Higher Educational Leadership and Management (HELM) programme in 2004 to advance management and leadership. Over the past two years, the notion of university leadership has expanded to include Heads of Academic Departments, Heads of Academic Schools, Deans, Deputies, and Administrative Leadership. To broaden participation and advance leadership in the sector, USAf has developed a Women in Leadership program to enable, empower, and advance women leadership.

⁶²

<https://www.dhet.gov.za/SiteAssets/Media%20Advisory%20and%20Statements%202023/Media%20Statement%20b%20STI%20occasion.pdf>

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The Department of Higher Education and Training is also launching the "New Generation of Academics Programme" to support staffing transformation and capacity needs at universities⁶³. The programme allows applicants to take up permanent lecturer positions, earn a full lecturer salary while studying for a master's or doctorate degree, or undertaking post-doctoral work with reduced teaching responsibilities. It also allows for the development of teaching and research abilities, mentorship, and international mobility experience. Successful applicants will participate in a 6-year development and induction programme, continuing as regular members of the academic staff. At least 80% of positions will be allocated to black and/or women South African citizens⁶⁴.

Concerning bursaries, the DSI exceeded its target for bursaries to PhD students, awarding 12 960 bursaries through the National Research Foundation for 2019-2024. Of these, 90% were South African students, 74% were black students, 56% were women (43% were black women), and 0,9% were people with disabilities. Similarly, for the same period, 32 210 pipeline students (BTech/honours + master's) were awarded bursaries – also exceeding the target set. Of the research students supported, 97% were South Africans, 87% were black, 62% were women (55% were black women), and 0,6% were people with disabilities. On December 12, 2024, the President announced the Presidential PhD Programme (PPP), an initiative aimed at exposing South African Ph. D.s to the best institutions' research and innovation platforms and expertise internationally. The PPP is to be funded by R1 billion from the National Skills Fund, and it needs to be leveraged by a factor of four to result in a total investment of R5 billion by 2030. Concerning emerging researchers: On the research grants awarded over the 2019-2024 period, preliminary data shows that the Department has supported 3,030 emerging researchers against the MTSF target of 3,000 by March 31, 2024.

⁶³ (www.ssauf.dhet.gov.za, n.d.)

⁶⁴ (<https://www.usaf.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Phase-5-nGAP-posts-allocated-to-Universities-002.pdf>).

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(Of the 3 030 emerging researchers supported, 2 528 are South Africans; 2287 are black; 1622 constitute women; 1 146 constitute black women; and 45 persons with disabilities.

In terms of addressing the high incidence of gender-based violence in tertiary institutions and on campuses, especially among young women, the Department of Education and Training has undertaken initiatives on prevention and support and taken a harsher stance on repercussions for those who violate and perpetrate gender-based violence. A Ministerial Task Team on GBV in Universities was set up and the implementation of the Policy Framework to address GBV in the entire PSET sector is being implemented. Approaches to combating gender-based violence in institutions include addressing intimate partner violence, dowry-related deaths, rape, cyber-bullying, physical assaults, and requests for sex in exchange for improved marks (sextortion), accommodation, and financial support. The root causes of such violence include stereotypes, gender norms, substance abuse, socio-economic inequalities, misuse of power, and stereotypes and general hate towards the LGBTQI+ community.

Some pro-poor interventions in the country in terms of the education sector include: (i) to promote school-attendance by poor and indigent girl learners in the country a **sanitary dignity programme** is being implemented by the Government of South Africa. This programme, instituted from the 2019/20 financial year, is intended to address period poverty in general and to ensure uninterrupted learning by girl learners so that they can receive equal education with boys. Apart from addressing menstrual health, this also extends to sexual and reproductive health rights for boys and girls, and water supply, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) matters in as far as girl learners are concerned. So far, more than 6 million girls per year since 2019 have been receiving these well needed menstrual products which are South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) approved for product safety. This is a funded mandate by Government since 2019 and continues to be so into the outer years. Government

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collaborates well with non-governmental stakeholders in complementing each another. Apart from the distribution of sanitary pads to learners, there is also an empowerment aspect in that policy dictates that local manufacturing must be encouraged through promoting women-, youth- and disability-owned and run enterprises in manufacturing and distribution of products to learners. A typical example of that is Lindiwe Pads, a Gauteng based women entrepreneur. She is a beneficiary of government procurement process and has been awarded contracts from some provinces and has expanded phenomenally as she is about to launch her new production facility in Midrand. Apart from her own innovation and resilience, Department of Women, Youth & Persons with Disabilities (DWYPD), Department of Trade, Industry and Completion (dtic), Department of Small Business Development (DSBD) and Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) have assisted the enterprise in different dimensions to succeed.

(ii) **The National School Nutrition Programme** implemented by the Government of South Africa has successfully fed over 9.6 million learners daily (school days) in over 21 000 public primary, secondary, and identified special schools. The South African government currently spends over R18 billion in nominal terms to feed learners, combating hunger on every school calendar day. This is a huge improvement from when the program covered over million learners in 18 000 schools in 2006; (iii) **Scholar transport** enhances access by ensuring accessibility and safety, which is invaluable, especially for learners who walk long distances. The programme requires more attention to safety, given poor vehicle quality, better allocation of scarce resources and broader coverage in isolated areas; (iv) **No-fee Schools Programme** has been implemented by the Government of South Africa, and the number of no-fee schools has grown significantly since the start of the programme, with 76% of learners exempted from paying fees by 2021, which is vital in removing costs as a barrier to attending school. Support to learners with special needs has been prioritized, with resources provided for learners, making it possible for them to learn; (v) Some forms of **school connectivity** have

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been extended to over 80% of schools in the country, but only 10% is suitable for teaching and learning because of the limited bandwidth provided. The priority now is to upgrade broadband technology on a significant scale to take advantage of online resources; (vi) **School infrastructure programmes** such as the Accelerated Schools Infrastructure Delivery Initiative have continuously built schools over the years as part of eradicating inappropriate school infrastructure. The SAFE programme, launched in 2018, identified 3,382 schools reliant on basic pit toilets, and by August 2023, about 2,871 sanitation projects had reached practical completion with the remaining set to be completed by the end of the 2023/24 financial year.

(v) Actions taken to ensure that economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic closes gender gaps in poverty, employment, social protection, education, and health that the pandemic exacerbated

With the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic, South Africa, as with many countries, entered a strict lockdown that severely limited economic activity. The Covid-19 pandemic deepened the economic crisis in South Africa, with the widespread contraction of the economy, loss of jobs, closure of firms and increased food insecurity among other impacts. It has had far-reaching effects and has negatively impacted the lives of vulnerable groups. Businesses were shut down temporarily, and there were widespread restrictions on travel and mobility, financial market turmoil, an erosion of confidence and heightened uncertainty.

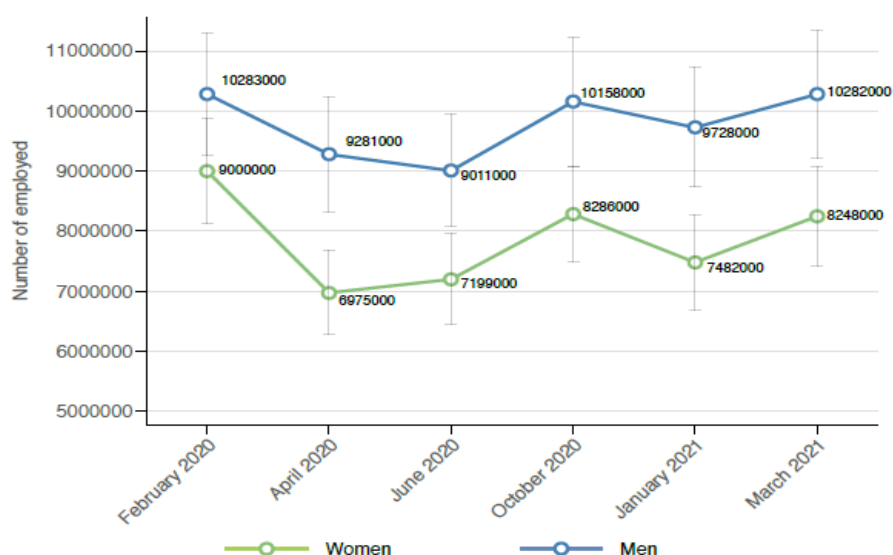
The magnitude of these impacts varied across the country, but, in general, they resulted in sharp contractions in output, household spending, corporate investment and international trade. South Africa's economy contracted by 6.3% in 2020 and proved to be more severe compared to average global contraction.

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The National Income Dynamics Study – Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey (NIDS-CRAM) survey undertaken in South Africa in 2020/2021 tracked gender differences in labour market outcomes and unpaid care work in the home, across all five waves of the pandemic and during South Africa’s ongoing lockdown. The timing of the waves looked at data across 6 time points which were February 2020 (pre-COVID), April 2020 (Level 5 Lockdown), June 2020 (Level 3 Lockdown), October 2020 (L1 lockdown), January 2021 (adjusted Level 3 Lockdown) and March 2021 (adjusted Level 1 lockdown)⁶⁵.

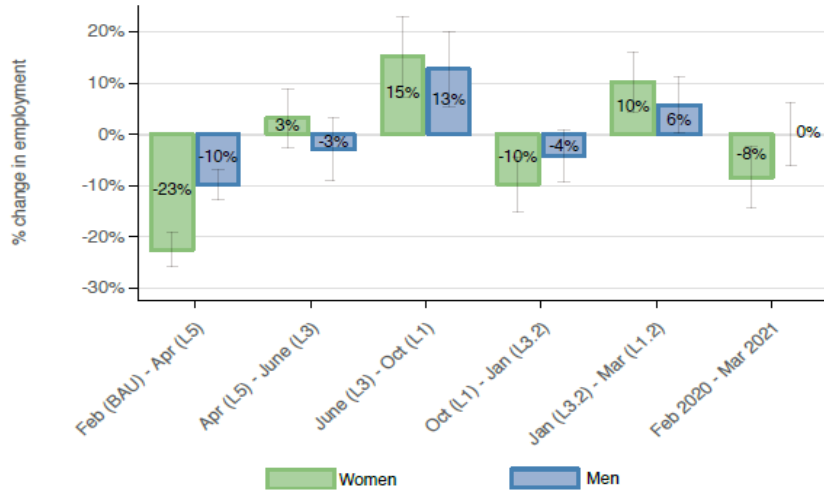
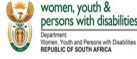
In terms of **the effect / impact on employment caused by the COVID-19 pandemic**, compared to pre-COVID times, women experienced much greater job losses than men during the first strict lockdown phase in April 2020. In total, among adults aged 18 years and older, about 2.9 million jobs were lost in that first phase, just under 2 million (or two-thirds) of which were accounted for by women (Casale and Posel, 2020)⁶⁶. The figure below shows levels of employment, and percentage changes between time points, February 2020 to March 2021.



⁶⁵ RSA: NIDS_CRAM 2021

⁶⁶ NIDS CRAM – Wave 5, The gendered effects of the Covid-19 crisis and ongoing lockdown in South Africa: Evidence from NIDS-CRAM Waves 1 - 5

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The figure above shows the percentage drop / gain in employment across the various points of reference during the 5 waves of the pandemic in South Africa. At the start of the strict lockdown in South Africa, in March-April 2020, employment for women dropped by 23% as compared to 10% for men.

However, despite the substantial recovery for both men and women, the data from NIDS-CRAM survey suggest the pace of recovery has been slower for women. In March 2021, women's employment remained 8.4% below its pre-COVID level, while men's employment appeared to be back at pre-COVID levels⁶⁷. Stated in terms of employment-to-population ratios, among those 18 years and older, women's employment rate was 46% in February 2020 and 43.8% in March 2021, while for men the employment rates in February 2020 and March 2021 were 59.3% and 60.2% respectively. This is suggesting uneven recovery for men and women. Also, an interesting finding from this study was that the presence of school-aged children in the household reduced the probability of employment. Interestingly, this was found among women, but no relationship was found with men. This is consistent with the finding in the survey which suggest school closure had affected women more than men.

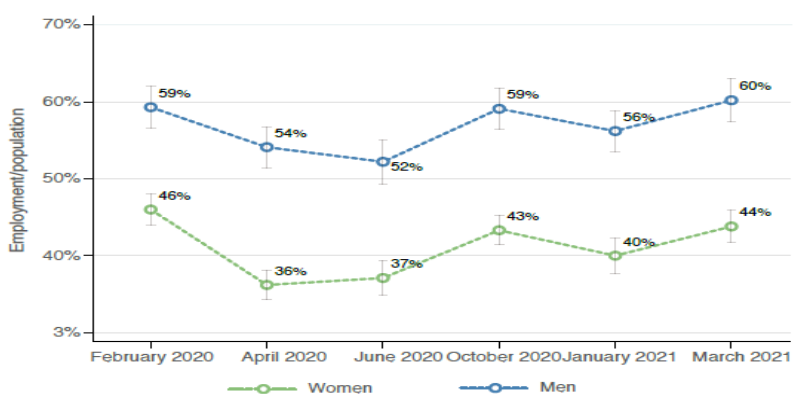
⁶⁷ NIDS CRAM -

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The survey also highlights that women were less likely to have retained or gained employment either initially or by January 2021, and less likely to have remained employed over the whole period, compared to men. “The fact that a large female penalty persists after controlling for various variables, suggests that a significant factor in who lost and who gained jobs over the period is likely the type of job men and women initially held, and the type of job that became available over the period”⁶⁸. Women were more likely to be in sectors that were hardest hit by the crises such as tourism, retail, hotel and domestic workers, and perhaps also less likely to be able to take up new opportunities available. Although the survey was not able to show this with the data obtained, even within sectors, women might be in more precarious employment relationships than men, making it easier for employers to reduce their employment when lockdown restrictions were imposed.

Figure showing Employment-to-population ratios, February 2020 to March 2021.



The data shows that in addition to experiencing greater job losses than men because of initial lockdown, employed women also saw much bigger declines in **mean hours worked during the pandemic** – in April 2020, as the “hard” lockdown was imposed. Between February and April 2020, mean hours worked per week among the employed fell by 35% for women (from 35.3 to 23 hours) and by 26% for men (from 38.8 to 28.8 hours). Part of this was being driven by the large increases in the number of people who reported having a job (or a job to return to) but

⁶⁸ NIDS GRAM

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working zero hours. This group of workers – termed **furloughed** – constituted 36% of employed women and 26% of employed men in April 2020.

As the economy started re-opening, mean hours worked among the employed recovered substantially, although with a small dip again in January 2021 when the stricter lockdown (adjusted Level 3) was imposed during the second wave of the pandemic. However, while the average hours worked per week by men appear to have recovered completely by March 2021, and may even exceed pre-COVID levels (mean hours worked per week were 30.2 for men in March 2021 compared to 38.8 in February 2020), women's hours remained below pre-COVID levels. At 33.4 hours a week, the mean hours worked by employed women in March 2021 are about 2 hours lower than the February 2021 level of 35.3⁶⁹.

The percentage of the employed who reported working zero hours (the furloughed workers in April 2020) was back down to the pre-COVID times, by March 2021, i.e. around 6 -7% for women and 3 -4% for men. This suggests that people either lost their jobs altogether, or if they managed to remain employed, they were back at work. For women, however, they were back at work, but working fewer hours on average compared to pre-COVID times. A reduction in hours worked could also relate to women's childcare constraints or to the type of work women do, which makes them more vulnerable to cutbacks in hours.

Mean earnings during the pandemic, among the employed, fluctuated considerably over the first year of the pandemic, with greater impact on the lower end of earnings, where jobs were more easily lost at this point. Casale and Posel, 2020⁷⁰ suggest that those that retained employment during this period are a more select sample of higher-earning individuals. However, after the first year of the pandemic, mean monthly (real) earnings among the employed appear to have settled at values quite close to their pre-pandemic levels. Women's

⁶⁹ NIDS CRAM

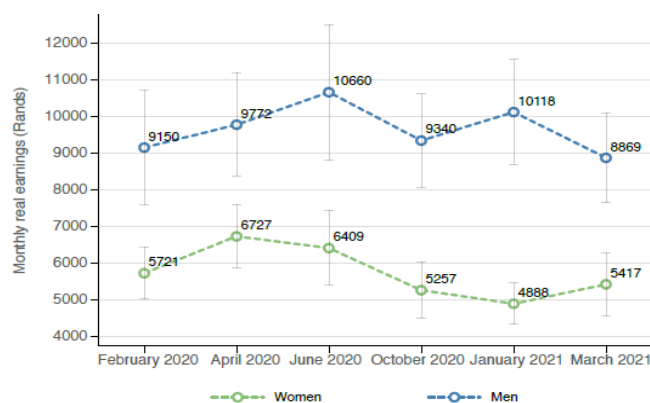
⁷⁰ *ibid*

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mean monthly earnings in March 2021 were down about 5% compared to February 2020, while men's were down roughly 3%.

The Figure below shows the average monthly earnings (real), and percentage changes between time points, February 2020 to March 2021 for men and women.



The figure above highlights the continuing gender gap in earnings between men and women from pre-COVID times to an increase in the gender gap, during the pandemic across all five waves in South Africa. The pandemic simply exacerbated the inequalities between women and men in the economy – demonstrating its gendered nature.

School closures and childcare constraints imposed by the pandemic had huge, gendered impacts in South Africa. The various lockdown levels and school closures affected childcare responsibilities in the home. The data from the first wave of NIDS-CRAM⁷¹ showed that in April 2020, under level 5 lockdown, when almost all externally-provided childcare was suspended and **domestic workers were unable to go to work**, the childcare burden in households increased substantially, and women took on more of this additional **unpaid care work** than men (Casale and Posel, 2020). This is unsurprising, given that women in South Africa are much more likely to live with children than men are, and that even where women and men do live with children, women spend a larger number of hours on childcare than men

⁷¹ NIDS CRAM – Wave 1 and Wave 5 reports

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(Budlender et al, 2011; Hatch and Posel 2018; Moore 2020; Posel and Grapsa 2017, Statistics South Africa, 2013, 2019).

In terms of **living arrangements during the pandemic**, across all five waves, women were consistently more likely to live with children than men. Roughly 75% of women and 60% of men reported living with at least one child aged to 0 to 17 years at the time of the interviews⁷², and about half of women and just over one-third of men reported living with at least one child aged 0 to 6 years specifically. The majority of both women and men living with children (around 90%) reported that at least one of these children was attending grades R to 12 pre-lockdown, suggesting that most households with children would have experienced a considerable increase in childcare work as a result of school closures.

In waves 2-5 (but not in wave 1 due to time constraints), individuals living with children aged 0 to 6 years were also asked if any of these children were in an **Early Childhood Development (ECD) centre or preschool** prior to the lockdown. In the region of 40% of men and women living with young children said at least one of these children had been attending an ECD centre/preschool before the crisis. When asked who was looking after these young children now at home, the data suggest women were much more likely to bear the brunt of ECD/preschool closures. Across waves 2-5, around two-thirds of women said they were looking after children themselves. For men, the comparable figures ranged from 14%-25% across the waves⁷³.

Table showing percentage of adults living with at least one child at the time of the interview in the survey

	WOMEN (%)	MEN (%)	WOMEN (%)	MEN (%)	WOMEN (%)	MEN (%)	WOMEN (%)	MEN (%)	WOMEN (%)	MEN (%)
	WAVE 1		WAVE 2		WAVE 3		WAVE 4		WAVE 5	
% living with at least 1 child (0-17 yrs)	74.1	60.8	74.7	59.3	75.3	60.5	75.0	59.4	73.7	58.2

⁷² IBID

⁷³ ibid

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% living with at least 1 child (0-6 yrs)	51.5	37.2	52.1	35.7	54.2	38.2	52.0	37.6	51.7	38.2
% living with at least 1 child attending school – pre-lockdown	88.2	88.2	86.4	87.4	90.4	89.8	91.3	89.1	91.5	89.1
% living with at least 1 child (0-6 yrs) attending an ECD centre / pre school pre-lockdown	-	-	37.5	37.8	39.2	38.1	40.4	37.9	45.6	46.6
% reporting child (0-6 yrs) to have attended an ECD centre/preschool in the past 7 days	-	-	13.7	11.7	45.1	54.0	20.6	23.6	55.6	64.1
% looking after these children (0-6 yrs) home from an ECD centre/preschool themselves	-	-	67.6	24.9	65.0	16.6	62.0	13.6	65.7	24.0

On the issue of **time spent on childcare during the pandemic**, the time use data collected in the NIDS-CRAM survey shows the gender gap in care work during the lockdown. In Wave 1, individuals living with children were asked if they had spent “more time than usual looking after children” during the April 2020 lockdown. The clear majority of men and women living with children said they were, and the rate was higher for women than for men, as expected (73% versus 66% respectively). When asked how much additional time was spent per day on childcare (nearly an hour, 1-2 hours, 3-4 hours, or over 4 hours more), 80% of women and 65% of men living with children reported that they spent over 4 hours more per day on childcare. Given that there would have been between 15 and 16 million children home from school or an ECD centre in April – for anywhere between 5 and 9 extra hours a day (Casale and Posel, 2020) of additional child care were experienced, with the burden mostly carried by women, especially given the large numbers of women-headed households in South Africa.

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Table showing Changes in time spent on childcare among adults living with children in Waves 1-5

	WOMEN (%)	MEN (%)	WOMEN (%)	MEN (%)	WOMEN (%)	MEN (%)	WOMEN (%)	MEN (%)	WOMEN (%)	MEN (%)
	WAVE 1 (April 2020)		WAVE 2 (June 2020)		WAVE 3 (October 2020)		WAVE 4 (January 2021)		WAVE 5 (March 2021)	
% reporting spending more hours (compared to pre-lockdown)	73.2%	66.1%	5.7%	5.5%	18.8%	31.8	51.1%	38.0%	34.7%	36.1%
% reporting over 4 more hours a day (conditional on spending more time on childcare)	79.5%	65.0								
Average increase			4.3	4.1	4.6	4.3	5.6	5.0	5.1	4.4
% reporting spending fewer hours (compared to previous time period in previous wave)			13.5%	18.5	67.2%	48.0%	32.5%	35.7%	44.4%	37.0%
Average decrease			5.1	5.8	7.7	7.3	4.6	4.7	5.3	4.9
% reporting spending same hours (compared to previous time period in previous wave)			80.7%	76.0	14.0%	20.2%*	16.4%	26.2%	20.9%	26.9%

As South Africa moved from L5 lockdown in April to L3 lockdown in June 2020, large parts of the economy reopened for work, but childcare facilities did not reopen at the same pace. Only Grades 7 and 12 were allowed back in June, affecting at most

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2 million children,¹⁴ and domestic/ childcare workers in private households could return to work in June (although many did not)¹⁵. Hence a decrease, albeit not very large, in hours spent on childcare in June 2020. Only 14% of women versus 19% of men said they spent fewer hours on childcare in June compared to April 2020. The majority said they spent the same amount of time on childcare, and around 6% (of men and women) said they were spending more hours on childcare in June. With the move from L3 lockdown in June 2020 to L1 lockdown in October 2020, there is a much greater change in childcare hours. Not only were restrictions around economic activity relaxed even further, but there was a staggered reopening of school grades during the course of July and August 2020, such that by the end of August 2020, all children were expected to be back at school. Of course, there may have been some who did not return at all, or if they did, they attended school on alternate weeks or days¹⁶.

By this stage ECD centres were also allowed to reopen, although given the burdensome regulations around reopening, many would have remained closed. Nonetheless, roughly 67% of women and 48% of men living with children reported that they spent fewer hours on childcare in October 2020 compared to June 2020. This gender difference in the reduction in childcare hours highlights how women were particularly affected by the school and ECD centre closures, as the reopening of these facilities (even if they were not back to running at full capacity) appears to have allowed women to cut back on childcare hours more than men.

A slightly larger percentage of women than men living with children said that childcare during the June 2020 lockdown affected their ability to work, work the same number of hours as before lockdown, or search for work. In contrast, a slightly larger percentage of men said it affected their health or wellbeing. Roughly twice as many

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women than men (3.2 million women versus 1.6 million men) said that looking after children in June prevented them from going to work or made work very difficult.

On the other hand, the pandemic has also created a **greater awareness around women's economic empowerment** and the underlying systemic, structural issues that affect women's economic progress such as unpaid care, informal labour, and social protection. The South African government mobilized unprecedented resources including the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (ERRP) to arrest further decline, stabilize the economy and create conditions for recovery through, among others, provision of relief for households and businesses. GDP recovered to its 2019 level in about 2 years (i.e. Q1 of 2022) and employment in 3 years (Quarter 3 of 2023)⁷⁴.

3. FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE, STIGMA AND STEREOTYPES

This section focuses on providing progress made against the critical areas of concern in line with the Guidance note: (i) Critical Area of Concern D on Violence against Women; (ii) Critical Area of Concern I on Human Rights of Women; (iii) Critical Area J on Women and the Media; and (iv) Critical Area of Concern L on the Girl Child.

It provides information on actions taken over the past five years to: (i) prioritize addressing the different forms of gender-based violence, and specific contexts or settings in South Africa; (ii) prioritize addressing gender-based violence; (iii) strategies the country used to prevent gender-based violence; (iv) prevent and respond to technology-facilitated gender-based violence; (v) measures by the country to resource women's organisations working to prevent and respond to GBV; (vi) address the portrayal of women and girls, discrimination and gender bias in the media, including social media; and (vii) measures by the country to

⁷⁴ Stats SA

specifically tailored to address violence against marginalised groups of women and girls.

(i) Forms of gender-based violence, and specific contexts or settings, South Africa prioritized for action

In late August-early September 2019, the scourge of gender-based violence and violence against women and children increased to the extent that the President of the Republic had to declare it “more than a national crisis”. The President gave his assurance to the country that government will intensify action against men who kill women and commit various forms of violence against women and girls, amid a spate of fatal attacks on women and girls in various parts of the country. There was much action taken since then, and the champion of the cause has been the President himself.

Some of the strategies that the country used in the last five years to advocate for the prevention of violence against women and girls centred on public awareness raising, changing attitudes and behaviours, undertaking national dialogues across the country, community level mobilization, working with men and boys especially in the religious and traditional leadership sectors and increasing media attention on the atrocities committed by gender-based violence.

The country has also focused on actions to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls facilitated by technology (online sexual harassment, online stalking, non-consensual sharing of intimate images).

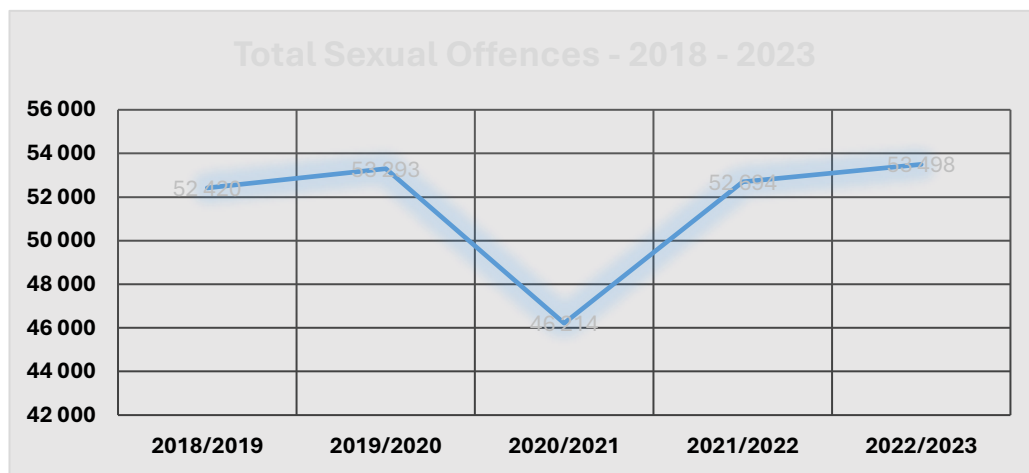
The South African Police Service provides data and statistics based on reported cases of different forms violence against women. The reported cases are recorded under sexual offences and involve a wide range of forced and unwanted sexual activity, including among

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others, fondling, kissing, rape, compelled rape, abduction, trafficking in person for sexual purposes and including attempted sexual offences. The victims are coerced/forced into sexual acts, through verbal or non-verbal threats or using substances, such as drugs or alcohol. Sexual offences do not always involve physical contact with the victim. Acts such as exhibitionism and the practice of gaining sexual pleasure from watching others when they are naked or engaged in sexual activity still count as unwanted sexual offences.

The graph below depicts a five-year trend on reported sexual offences cases. During the 2022/2023 reporting period, a total of 53 498 **sexual offences were registered**, representing an increase of 1,5% or 804 counts compared to the preceding financial year. While there is a decrease in the number of reported sexual offences cases during the 2020/2021 reporting period, data from the current reporting period depicts an increasing trend of reported cases over the past five years from 52 420 cases in 2018/2019 reporting period to 53 498 in 2022/2023 reporting period. This represents an increase by 1 078 cases.



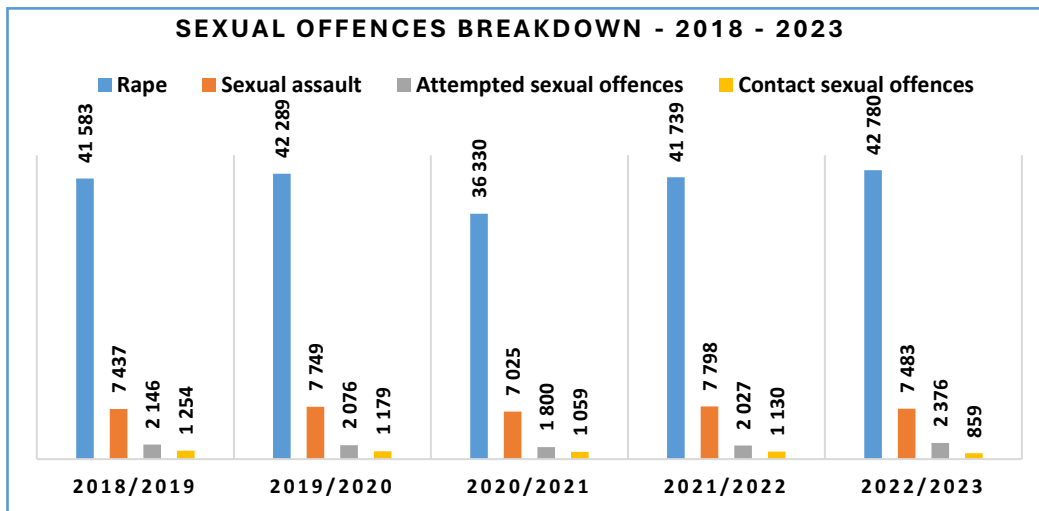
In South Africa, according to section 3 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act, no 32 of 2007, rape may be committed by either a man or a woman. Similarly, either a man or a woman may be the victim of rape. In terms of the Act,

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rape may also be committed by a person who is of the same gender as the victim. This means that persons of both genders may be perpetrators and victims of rape.

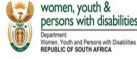
Unfortunately, in South Africa, rape is still the highest single contributor (80,0%) to the total sexual offences in the period under review. During the 2022/2023 financial year, a total of 42 780 counts of rape were reported, representing an increase of 2,5% or 1 041 counts compared to the preceding financial year. Increases in rape incidents were likewise recorded in 2018/2019, 2019/2020 and 2021/2022 financial years as illustrated in graph below. An analysis of rape trends in the past five years shows that rape incidents have essentially increased over the period, from 41 583 in 2018/2019 to 42 780 in 2022/2023.



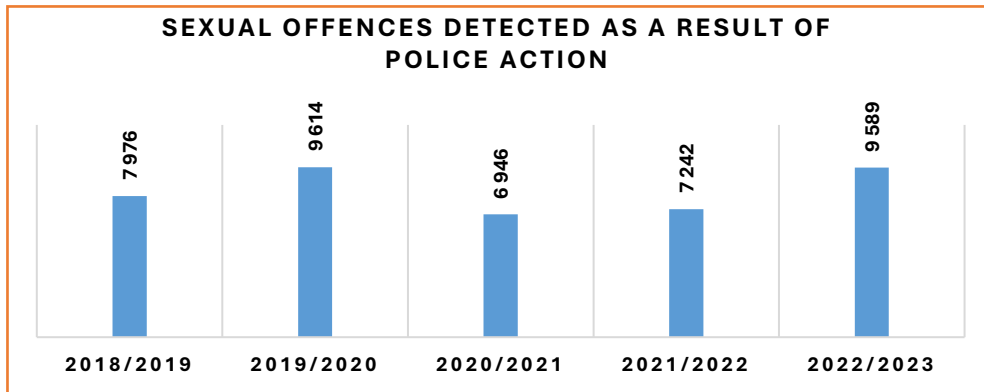
Source: SAPS Annual Crime Statistics Report 2018 - 2023

The bar graph below shows the number of **sexual offences detected as a result of police action**, with a total of 9 589 counts recorded during the 2022/2023 financial year, depicting an increase of 32,4% or 2 347 counts compared to the preceding year. A general downward trend was observed during the Covid 19 period (2020/2021 - 2021/2022) during which incidents of sexual offences detected because of police action went down. It must be noted that the number of sexual offences detected as a result of police action more than doubled

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from 4 720 counts in 2013/2014 to 9 589 counts in 2022/2023, an increase of 103,7% or 4 894 counts.



Source: SAPS Annual Crime Statistics Report 2018 - 2023



(ii) Actions prioritized by South Africa to address gender-based violence

In 2020, South Africa adopted a National Strategic Plan on Gender Based Violence and Femicide (2020 – 2030) (referred to as the NSP on GBVF) as a society-wide programme to end gender-based violence and femicide. The Plan is organized around six pillars, which are aimed at: (i) Accountability, coordination and leadership; (ii) prevention; (ii) strengthening the criminal justice response; (iv) providing support, care and healing to survivors; (v) Economic power; and (vi) research and evidence- based monitoring. The NSP on GBVF provides a multi-sectoral, coherent strategic policy and programming framework to ensure a coordinated national response to the crisis of GBVF by South Africa collectively.

The following actions were prioritised in line with the pillars of the NSP: (i) accountability has been strengthened across government system for implementation through institutionalisation of the NSP on GBVF and enforcement of compliance with monthly reporting by government departments to the President; (ii) establishment of an Inter-Ministerial Committee on GBVF which provides political guidance and oversight; (iii) GBVF Response Fund established and functional; (iv) END GBVF established and functional as a multi-sectoral structure driving collaborative implementation; (iv) ring-fenced funding for secretariat functions towards the establishment of a National Council on Gender Based Violence and Femicide since 2020 – R5 Million per financial year since 2020; (v) Parliamentary oversight framework in place; (vi) establishment and revitalisation of existing coordination structures at provincial, district and local levels established in some areas.

Critical priority actions taken in the last five years by South Africa to address GBVF **included strengthening of certain legislations** as well as **introducing new laws** to protect women and children from abuse and violence. In January 2022, the President assented to three pieces of legislation targeted at strengthening the country's response to the increasing scourge of GBVF:

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(i) the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act; (ii) the Criminal and Related Matters Amendment Act; and (iii) the Domestic Violence Amendment Act.

Notably, the National Council on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide Act was assented into law by the President on 24 May 2024. This landmark legislation is a critical step forward in ensuring the safety and protection of women and children from abuse and violence, as it seeks to facilitate the establishment of a National Council as a statutory body charged with providing strategic leadership in the fight against gender-based violence and femicide in South Africa. This multi-sectoral Council will draw on the expertise of all stakeholders, which includes government, civil society, labour, business/corporate South Africa, researchers, academics and others, to strengthen national efforts to combat gender-based violence, using a more inclusive, focused and better resourced approach

(iii) Strategies South Africa uses to prevent gender-based violence

Over the past five years, South Africa is implementing a comprehensive approach to GBVF prevention, including evidence-based social and behaviour change programmes. The country developed a Comprehensive National Prevention Strategy, which was adopted in xxx, as well as a National Integrated Prevention Strategy against Femicide, which was launched on 8 March 2022. There is also a comprehensive Implementation Framework developed for the NSP on GBVF and HIV&AIDS. The National Communication Strategy aligned to the NSP on GBVF has been finalized and adopted and a range of communication interventions are being implemented by various government departments and civil society organisations. The National School of Government is also running a basic 5-day online course for the Public Service that covers GBVF.

South Africa has also placed priority on **accelerating prosecution** on GBVF cases in the

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country. In terms of increased prosecution of perpetrators for rape and other forms of GBV by gender/sex, age and disability shows that: (i) conviction rate for femicide prosecutions increased by 16.63% in 2022/2023; and (ii) the total number of convictions for sexual offences in 2022/2023 increased by 1.68% as compared to 2021/2022 and the conviction rate was 74.80%⁷⁵. The table below shows Gender Based Violence and Femicide conviction rates from 2020 to 2023.

	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/23
Conviction rate in femicide prosecution	231 (94.3%)	396 (94.3%)	91.9% 475/517
Conviction rate in murder intimate partner femicide prosecution	190 (93.1%)	316 (93.8%)	92.2% 356/386
Conviction rate in sexual offences	4098 (75.2%)	3 379 (74.3%)	74.8% 3 460/4 627

Source:

The Gauteng Province reported that the conviction rate for sexual offence cases at their Thuthuzela Care Centres (TCCs) was 72%; with 18 accused convicted for 24 sexual offences (13 rape charges) against 5 victims under 18 years old and 13 victim 18 years old or older. Three (3) sentences of life imprisonment were imposed on 3 accused in 2 cases. Eighteen (18) femicide prosecutions were finalized with a 94.04% conviction rate, and nine (9) femicide prosecutions were finalized in the High Court with a 94.18% conviction rate.

Some additional **measures taken to address gender-based violence** include: (i) Dealing with **GBV at institutions of higher learning** where the country is implementing programs to prevent and respond to GBV to create safe and supportive environments free from violence and harassment for young women students; women academics and researchers; and women employed in these institutions. In this regard, in 2020, the Department of Higher Education and Training developed and published the Policy Framework to Address Gender-Based Violence in the Post-School Education and Training System, followed by protocols and directives on how

⁷⁵ Source – National Prosecution Authority Annual Report, 2022/2023

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to address different challenges and how particular stakeholders or partners should be involved in addressing or preventing GBV in the post-school education and training (PSET) system. During the past five years, the Department of Higher Education and Training has adopted a zero tolerance to sexual harassment in the place of work, irrespective of where the officials and students found themselves; appointed a Sexual Harassment Advisor and as a result, reported cases have been investigated and heard with speed, resulting in the immediate dismissal of those found guilty; (ii) establishment of a **GBVF Brigades programme** by the Gauteng Provincial Government to facilitate and strengthen survivor-focused, resourced, and coordinated response to GBV. To date the province has recruited, screened, and inducted 620 GBV Brigades who are frontline workers in their respective wards within their communities and who are expected to visit each household to educate and create awareness on the impact of gender-based violence; (iii) the **Green Doors initiative** by the Gauteng province, where these are safe sites that are situated within five kilometres from local police stations and offers victims of gender-based violence with services ranging from emotional containment, trauma debriefing and referral to the nearest police station to open a case. Green Doors are situated mainly in the vulnerable wards of Gauteng with a total of 66 green doors divided among them.

(iv) Actions taken by South Africa to prevent and respond to technology-facilitated gender-based violence (e.g. online sexual harassment, online stalking, non-consensual sharing of intimate images)

In South Africa, there are measures taken through **legislations and policies** to prevent and respond to technology-related gender-based violence. Freedom of expression is guaranteed in the Bill of Rights in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. According to Section 16 (1), “everyone has the right to freedom of expression, which includes: (a) freedom of the press and other media; (b) freedom to receive or impart information or ideas; (c) freedom of artistic creativity; (d) and academic freedom and freedom of scientific research. Accordingly, sub-section (2) states that the right in subsection (1) does not extend to (a)

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propaganda for war; (b) incitement of imminent violence; (c) or advocacy of hatred that is based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion, and that constitutes incitement to cause harm.

This is furthermore provided for in the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, 2000 (PEPUDA or the Equality Act, Act No. 4 of 2000) which is a comprehensive South African anti-discrimination law. It prohibits unfair discrimination and forbids hate speech and harassment. The protection of equality and non-discrimination embedded in this Act can be used by those who suffer cyber-harassment or any other forms of violence online that can limit freedom of expression and participation and digital equality.

Under the Domestic Violence Amendment Act, (Act No 14 of 2021) a victim of cyberstalking can apply to a court for an interim protection order even when the identity of the alleged stalker is unknown. The law also empowers the police to investigate a stalker to identify the perpetrator even before a victim launches an application for a protection order. The Act provides for recourse for victims of cyber harassment.

The Protection from Harassment Act 17 of 2011, is a specific legislation addressing sexual harassment and provides quick, easy and affordable civil remedy in the form of a protection order for harassment, including electronic stalking. The Act transcends beyond the physical aspect of harassment, to take into account digital and cyber harassment - mainly because of the increase of cell phone and internet users in South Africa. To apprehend offenders, electronic service providers can be forced to reveal details such as the name, email address or cell phone to which the IP address belongs. The Act provides recourse for both domestic and nondomestic relationships.

Cybercrimes Act (Act 19 of 2021) was enacted in 2021 to create offences which have a bearing on cybercrime; to criminalise the disclosure of data messages which are harmful and

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to provide for interim protection orders amongst others. This Act provides an opportunity to protect the dignity of women from practices such as gender trolling, threats and image based sexual abuse. It refers to online violence against a person or group of persons in general. Under part two on malicious communications, it explicitly denounces the disclosure of intimate images without the person's consent, defining an intimate image as the depiction of a person "which (i) (aa) is "nude, or the genital organs or anal region of [the person] is displayed, or if [the person] is a female person, transgender person or intersex person, their breasts, are displayed; or (bb) the covered genital or anal region of [the person], or if [the person] is a female person, transgender person or intersex person, their covered breasts, are displayed; and (ii) in respect of which [the person] so displayed retains a reasonable expectation of privacy at the time that the data message was made in a manner that (aa) violates or offends the sexual integrity or dignity of [the person]; or (bb) amounts to sexual exploitation". Any person who violates the act faces a fine, imprisonment of up to 15 years, or both.

The Films and Publications Amendment Act (Act 11 of 2019) gives sufficient agency to those who suffer from violence facilitated by or through ICTs. It criminalizes non-consensual intimate image distribution of a person's private sexual photograph/s or film/s with the intention of causing that individual harm. The Act compels ISPs to provide the Film and Publications Board and the South African Police Service with details about the perpetrator. The amendments prohibit the distribution of private sexual photographs and films, through any medium including the internet and social media, without the consent of the individual appearing in such photographs and films and if the distribution is made with the intention of causing that individual harm. The only circumstance under which such disclosure may be made is where it is necessary for the purposes of preventing, detecting or investigating crime. The Act introduces a new offence that any person who knowingly distributes private sexual photographs and films without the prior consent of the individual appearing in the films and

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photographs with the intention to cause such individual distress, will be guilty of an offence and liable upon conviction to a fine not exceeding ZAR 150 000 or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding two years or both. Where the individual is identified or identifiable in the photographs and films, this penalty increases to a ZAR 300 000 fine and/or imprisonment not exceeding four years.

Other measures are taken in South Africa to prevent and respond to cybercrime and provide cybersecurity. Cyberspace comes with new types of challenges to governments of the world and it, therefore, introduces a further dimension to national security. The cyberworld is a borderless platform that enables more sophisticated threats such as cybercrime, cyberterrorism, cyberwar and cyber-espionage. For this reason, cyberthreats need to be addressed at both the global and national levels. Such measures include: (i) The **National Cybersecurity Hub** is South Africa's National Computer Security Incident Response Team and strives to make cyberspace an environment where all South Africans can safely communicate, socialize, and transact in confidence. It offers alerts and warnings, announcements, security-related information dissemination, incident handling and incident response support as services to its constituents. These services can be categorized as proactive, reactive and social services. Incidents are logged via the National Cybersecurity Hub website and depending on their evaluation, they are timeously resolved or escalated to other agencies for further investigation; (ii) The Government of South Africa, in particular the Department of Social Development, has facilitated the development of the **Victim Empowerment Programme (VEP) Information Management System** for collecting data of all victims who access VEP services. This Information Management System enables the sector to track and report on victims within the service value chain; (iii) The Department of Social Development has also partnered with the Department of Communications and Digital Technology, in the country, on a **digital literacy programme targeting women in safe shelters** and those living in disadvantage communities. Training has been conducted across

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all nine provinces in the country on the safe use of technology, particularly cellular phones, by over 300 women, covering safety precautions and prevention of falling victims to online/technology related GBV including human trafficking as well as other crime perpetrators on social media platforms.

(v) **Measures taken by the country to resource women's organisations working to prevent and respond to GBV**

There are several measures taken by South Africa to resource NGOs, women's organisations and men's organisations working to prevent and respond to GBV.

The **GBVF Response Fund** launched by President Cyril Ramaphosa, together with the International Women's Forum of South Africa, in February 2021, as an urgent response measure to the pressing challenge of GBVF in the country at that time. Since then, the Fund has grown in stature and has achieved several milestones. The interventions identified by the fund are informed by affected stakeholders on the ground, and the Board of the Fund has representatives in terms of expertise, social demography and geography to provide the contextual understanding needed for effectively finding redress measures/programmes. The Fund has adopted a strategy of focusing on community-based organizations in identified, often under resourced GBVF hotspots. In addition to successful disbursement to grant partners, the fundraising efforts yielded relatively positive results, despite the backdrop of a tough economic climate. The fund raised over R200 million in donations since 2021. Implementation of funded projects commenced from February 2022. An amount of R69 million has been distributed to 110 CBOs and four intermediary organizations that provided capacity building and training to smaller CBOs was concluded in February 2023. Over 60% of this funding was allocated to CBOs in rural and peri urban areas in the informal

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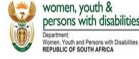
communities⁷⁶. Through the four intermediary organizations (Soul City Institute for Social Justice, Social Change Assistance Trust (SCAT), Sonke Gender Justice, and Mikhulu Trust), the Fund supported an additional 53 Community Based Organizations bringing the total number of CBO's supported to 163. The use of Intermediary partners as a modality to provide institutional strengthening support as well as technical assistance on GBVF programming, has yielded positive results especially in the areas of financial management, strategy, governance and monitoring, and evaluation.

Funding of non-profit organisations by the Gauteng province are providing services to GBV victims through empowerment programmes and psychosocial support to victims / survivors. These entail a basket of services, including also providing to the family of the victims/ survivors and addresses gender stereotypes within the communities. Victims that are within the safe shelters are encouraged to open cases with the police however it remains their choice to proceed with the legal process. Protection of victims of GBV remains a priority and is part of the services offered by shelters at no cost to the victims. The challenge remains in attempting to protect victims that are not willing to be accommodated in the shelter services.

Gauteng Provincial Government has been funding several shelters for victims of crime and violence across the province, and the bed occupancy in the shelters has never been to full capacity at any given time and there has never been a period a victim is turned away from the shelter due to unavailability of space. Should bed space be a challenge in one shelter then space is requested in other shelter within the province to accommodate the victim. The LGBTIQ+ communities are also included in the provision of services by the province and funded partners. The members of the LGBTIQ+ communities are accommodated in the existing shelters whenever they become victims of GBV. The shelters have established relationships on a pro-bona basis with legal firms and law clinics at the local universities e.g.

⁷⁶ GBVF Response Fund1 Annual Report 2022-23

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Wits Law School, for legal assistance to victims in the shelters as well as for court preparation process. Most of the beneficiaries of shelter services benefited from the skills development programmes offered by the province, including training opportunities such as beautician, and hospitality courses amongst other programmes, and once completed, the beneficiary will be assisted with starter packs to establish their own businesses. The province has also allocated specific funding to all shelters for skills development to be able to respond to the individual needs of the victims.

The province has appointed 30 GBV social workers who are providing long term psychosocial services, and this service is enhanced by non-profit organisations. The basket of services provided by the province and the funded NPOs within the Victim Empowerment Programmes include sheltering services; victim friendly rooms; awareness and prevention programmes; men empowerment programmes; human trafficking victim services; provisions of Thuthuzela Care Centers; services to LGBTIAQ+; psychosocial support services; skills development; and continuous capacity building of staff in the NPOs.

The table below reflects funding provided by the Gauteng Provincial Government made to NPOs over the past five years⁷⁷

2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023
R82 298.00	R116 142.00	R138 874.00	R148 875.00	R163 532.00

(vi) Actions taken to address the portrayal of women and girls, discrimination and gender bias in the media, including social media

⁷⁷ Inputs from Gauteng Province

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Prohibition against propaganda for war; incitement of imminent violence and advocacy of hatred that is based on identifiable group characteristics, and that constitutes incitement to cause harm. The Films and Publications Act prohibits distribution through any medium including the internet and social media, of any film, game or publication, which amounts to propaganda for war, incites imminent violence or advocates hate speech. The FPAA provides that any person who knowingly distributes in any medium, including the internet and social media, any such film, game or publication will be guilty of an offence. This includes a possible fine not exceeding ZAR 150 000 and/or imprisonment for a period not exceeding two years.

Step It Up for Gender Equality in South African Media project, in partnership with industry, civil society, government and regulatory bodies formulated the ‘Statement of Commitment for Gender Equality in the South African Media’, including commitments around the themes: “Gender Sensitive Reporting”, “Un-Stereotyping Entertainment and Storytelling” and “Creating a Safe and Equal Space ‘Behind the Scenes’” in 2020. In partnership with industry, civil society, government and regulatory bodies, the campaign aims to actively fight gender-based violence (GBV) and promote gender equality in SA by calling on the media and entertainment industry to uphold 3 key commitments: (i) Gender-sensitive reporting; (ii) Un-stereotyping entertainment and storytelling; and (iii) Creating an equal and safe space behind the scenes.

The Statement of Commitment for Gender Equality in South African Media is meant to be a document that motivates South African news and entertainment media to take on the roles and responsibilities that come with this influence. It is meant to guide the way for signatories to become a positive force in this country’s struggle with gender inequality and gender-based violence (GBV). The statement was developed as part of the Step It Up for Gender Equality in South African Media (Step It Up) project, an initiative started by UN Women South Africa and the Partnerships for Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls in Southern Africa Programme.

The Statement of Commitment forms part of the Step It Up project and was jointly drafted by media organizations and practitioners, the government institutions regulating the sector and civil society. It is directed at companies and individuals working in the South African news and entertainment broadcast media including radio, television and community radio.

The Statement of Commitment for Gender Equality in South African Media is a voluntary document intended to create awareness, self-accountability and a recognition of the responsibility held by the signing companies and individual practitioners.

(iv) Actions taken that are specifically tailored to address violence against marginalised groups of women and girls

(A) Women and girls with disabilities

Overall, while there have been efforts to improve the conditions for women and girls with disabilities in Gauteng, significant challenges remain, particularly in areas of economic empowerment, healthcare access, and protection from violence and abuse. Continued advocacy and targeted programs are essential to address these disparities and promote a more inclusive society.

Educational Access: Educational access for girls with disabilities has improved somewhat, with more inclusive education policies being promoted. The Learners Special Needs Schools (LSEN) has made specific reasonable accommodation for girl learners who are continuing to face obstacles in health care and quality education and related resources.

Violence and Abuse: There is a heightened risk of violence against women and girls with disabilities. Initiatives to protect and support survivors have been implemented, but challenges remain in providing comprehensive support and ensuring justice. Advocacy and support groups continue to push for better protection measures and legal frameworks to address these issues.

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Economic Empowerment: Efforts have been made to promote the economic empowerment of women with disabilities. Programs aimed at skills development, employment opportunities, and economic inclusion have been initiated. However, the unemployment rate for women with disabilities remains high, and recovery from economic downturns, such as those caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, has been slower for this group compared to others.

Health and Well-being: The health outcomes for women and girls with disabilities have seen mixed results. Access to healthcare services remains a significant issue, and the pandemic has further strained these resources. Efforts are being made to improve access to healthcare, but disparities persist, particularly in areas related to sexual and reproductive health.

(B) Older Women:

Over the past five years, the Gauteng Provincial Government has implemented several initiatives aimed at preventing discrimination and promoting the rights of older women:

- **Planning and Monitoring:** The Gauteng Provincial Government has streamlined the Older Persons issues into the planning cycle of all Departments. This was done to ensure that Older Persons matters are not left on the periphery on planners.
- **Legislation and Policy:** The GPG has been actively involved in promoting and implementing policies that supports the rights of older women. This includes aligning with national policies and international human rights standards to ensure comprehensive protections and support for older women. The Gauteng Older Persons Rights Strategy 2020 – 2025, is another effort to customize delivery of services to older persons that is province specific to older persons in Gauteng.
- **Combating Abuse and Neglect:** The province has strengthened measures to protect older women from abuse and neglect. This includes improving the reporting and response systems for elder abuse, increased public awareness campaigns about the rights and protection programmes led by the Department of Community Safety.

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- Intermediary services provided by the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development assured older women of their protection, when abuse cases (sexual, financial, physical and emotional) are brought to the court.
- Community Based Care and Support Services: The Department of Social Development has increased the provision of community-based care and support services to older women. This programme has exposed older persons to active aging activities (games, choirs) which have delayed onset of chronic disease, encouraged them to meet up with peers and discuss challenges that they encounter. The programme has also brought closer other health care services e.g. delivery of chronic medication, thereby cutting the waiting times in the health care facilities.
- Health Care and Support Services: Older Women access a range of services from the Department of Health, this focus on providing better access to health care, including mental health services, receiving chronic medication for non-communicable diseases (hypertension, diabetes etc) and communicable diseases, including ARVs.

(C) People with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities or expressions, or sex characteristics (LGBTIQA)

The Gauteng Office of the Premier initiated sensitization training with the Department of E-governance on 18 February focusing on sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics were unpacked and discussed. A Transgender Visibility Day was held 31st March. The province also developed a glossary of terms to assist in the understanding of the acronyms and explores pronounce used in the sector. The Gauteng Provincial Government conducted a study on the impact of poverty, unemployment and inequality on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) rights and wellbeing in Gauteng. Based on the recommendation of the study the following actions were undertaken: - awareness raising on the LGBTIQA+ community, an LGBTIQA+ desk in the province has been established, and

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development of the LGBTIQ+ pamphlet. LGBTIQ+ indicators are integrated into the Annual Performance Plans of GPG departments. Five hundred and fourteen (514) members of the LGBTIQ+ community were reached through the programme of no violence against women and children including 16 days of activism. 11 members of the LGBTIQ+ community accessed VEP services (excluding services rendered at shelters). In terms of care and services to families, 23 LGBTIQ+ beneficiaries were reached. Only 1 LGBTIQ+ beneficiary was reunited with family. 13 members of the LGBTIQ+ community were reached through childcare and protection services. 262 LGBTIQ+ beneficiaries received psycho-social support services. 29% of LGBTIQ+ beneficiaries reached through the awareness programs rolled out in institutions of higher learning.

In the reporting period under a research study on Contextualizing Femicide: Sex workers or gender-related femicide killings was conducted. A total of 500 women and members of the LGBTIQ+ community participated in the Basetsana Script writing. 2 LGBTIQ+A), were supported to access market opportunities to creatives in various subsectors. 40 LGBTIQ+A) participated in organised recreational programmes i.e. (Soccer, Netball, Skateboarding, Aerobics, Athletics, Rugby, Swimming, Basketball, and Chess), Golden Games (Ball Passing, Ball Throwing, Ball Kicking, & Ball Relay), and Indigenous Games (Dibeke, Diketo, Ncuva, Morabaraba, and Kgati).

4. PARTICIPATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE INSTITUTIONS

This section focuses on providing progress made against the critical areas of concern in line with the Guidance note: (i) Critical Area of Concern G on Women in Power and Decision-Making; (ii) Critical Area of Concern H on Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women; (iii) Critical Area of Concern I on Human Rights of Women; (iv) Critical Area of Concern J on Women and the Media; and (iv) Critical Area of Concern L on the Girl Child.

It provides information on actions taken over the past five years to: (i) promote women's participation in public life and decision-making; and (ii) increase women's access to expression and participation in decision-making in the media, including through information and communication technologies (ICT). The section also describes (iii) South Africa's current national women's machinery (government entity exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women) and describes the measures that South Africa has taken over the past five years to strengthen it. In addition, the section provides information on (iv) other mechanisms and tools South Africa has used over the past five years to mainstream gender equality across sectors (e.g. Gender Focal Points in the executive, legislature and judiciary; inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms; gender audits; consultations with women's organisations). This section concludes by providing information on (v) the national human rights institutions in South Africa and the measures taken to address violations of women's rights and promote gender equality.

(i) **Actions and measures to promote women's participation in public life and decision-making**

To achieve gender-parity within the political sphere, the public and private sectors, clear targets have been put in place in key areas of political and governance levels in South Africa

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to promote the advancement, representation and full participation of women in power structures and key decision-making levels.

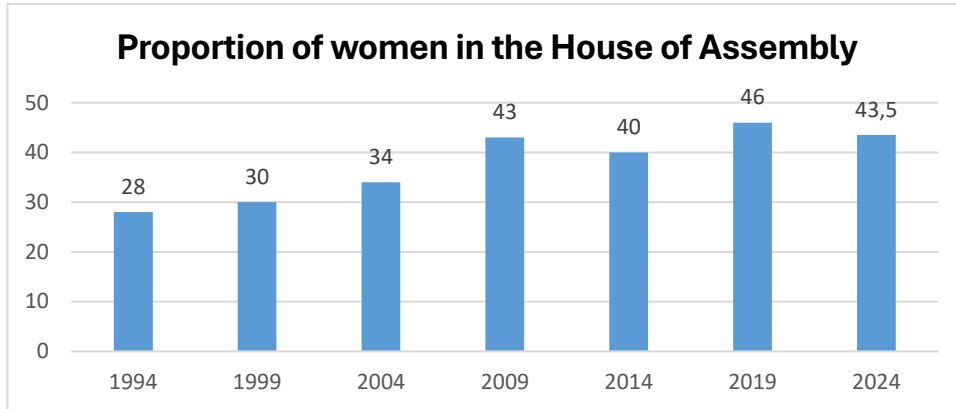
On the issue of **women's participation and representation in political levels**, the Electoral Code of Conduct of the South African Electoral Act (Act 73 of 1998) (Section 2) states that every registered party and every candidate must: (i) respect the right of women to communicate freely with parties and candidates; (ii) facilitate the full and equal participation of women in political activities; (iii) ensure the free access of women to all public political meetings, marches, demonstrations, rallies and other public political events; and (iv) take all reasonable steps to ensure that women are free to engage in any political activities.

South Africa signed and ratified the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development which requires States Parties to endeavour by 2015, at least fifty percent of decision-making positions in the public and private sectors are held by women including the use of affirmative action measures. South Africa has aligned itself to the **50/50 gender parity principle** for women at all political and decision-making levels in the country.

South Africa has made considerable success in advancing women's representation and gender equality across the state machinery. There has been a steady increase in the number of women elected as Speakers, Ministers, Deputy Ministers, Premiers, Members of Parliament, Mayors, Councillors, and Chairpersons of Portfolio Committees in the National and Provincial Legislatures.

The graph below shows the representation of women from 1994 to 2024.

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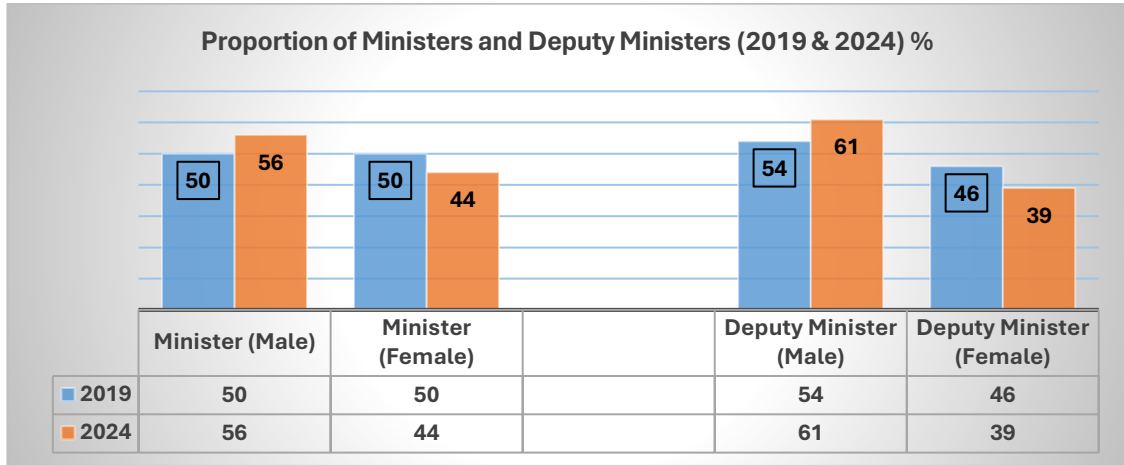
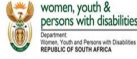


There has been a steady increase in the representation of women holding seats in National Parliament from 1994. Unfortunately following the 2024 elections, there is a 3% regression from 2019 in the representation of women holding seats. South Africa has 43.5% of seats in parliament taken up by women following the 2024 elections.

In terms of the representation of Ministers in the South African Cabinet, in 2019, South Africa had achieved 50% parity. Following the 2024 National Elections and the incoming 7th Administration, President Ramaphosa appointed 14 female and 18 male ministers – resulting in a decline in representation of women in Ministerial positions to 44% in 2024. The trend is similar for the representation of women as Deputy ministers who occupied 17 out of 44 Deputy Minister portfolios as of 2024 representing a decline from 46% in 2019 to 39% in 2024.

Sex	Ministers				Deputy Ministers			
	2019		2024		2019		2024	
	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)	4(%)
Male	14	50	18	56	20	54	27	61
Female	14	50	14	44	17	46	17	39
Total	28	100	32	100	37	100	44	100

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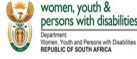


Women representation at local government increased from 19% in 1995 to 41% women overall following the 2016 local government elections. Following the 2016 Local Government Elections, overall, in the country there is a 39% representation of women as municipal mayors. As from 2021, three in every ten (31.9%) mayors are women.

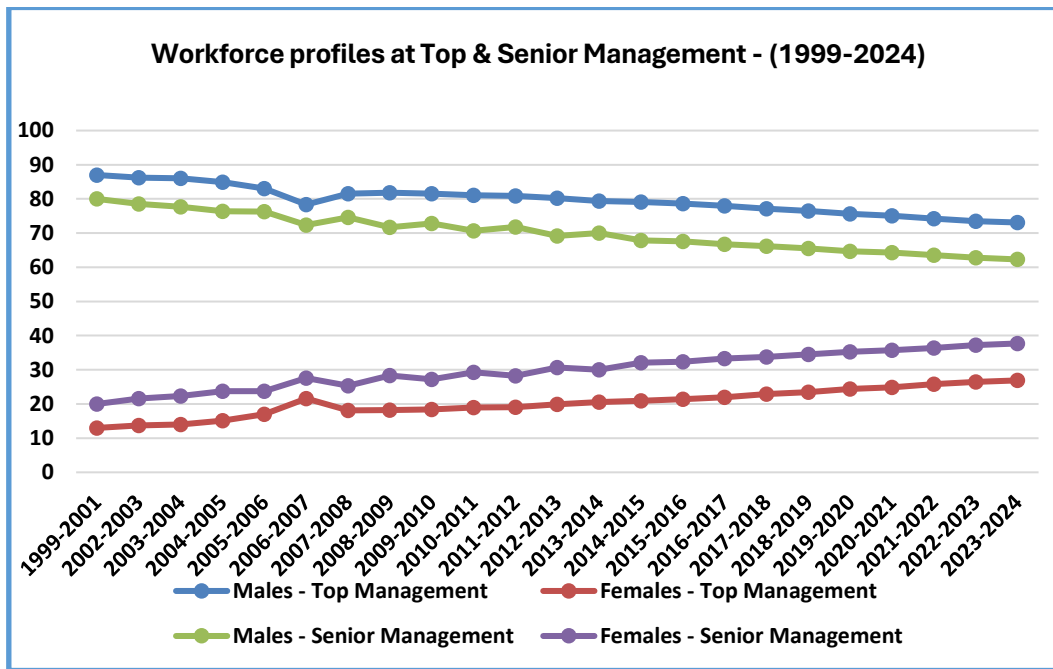
There has been a substantial increase in representation of women in the Judiciary in South Africa. As of 2023, women occupied 6 out of 9 court president positions which translate to 66,6%. The percentage of women judges increased from 38.5% in 2019 to 45,5% in 2023. For the first time in South Africa from September 2022 to 24th July 2024, the position of Deputy Chief Justice was occupied by a woman, Judge Mandisa Maya, who has since been appointed by the President on 24 July 2024, as the Chief Justice of South Africa – for the first time in the history of South Africa the highest ranking legal position in the country is held by a woman. At the magisterial level, there are approximately 960 (i.e. 51.3%) women magistrates out of 1 870 magistrates in South Africa, with most of them located as Regional Court Presidents.

Important strides have also been made in increasing the number of women in senior management positions in the public service, including as Directors-General and Heads of

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Departments in national and provincial departments. The graph below depicts the workforce profiles at top management and senior management level. The graph shows that the gap for male and female representation at Top Management and Senior Management level is narrowing albeit at a slow pace since 1999-2001 to date.



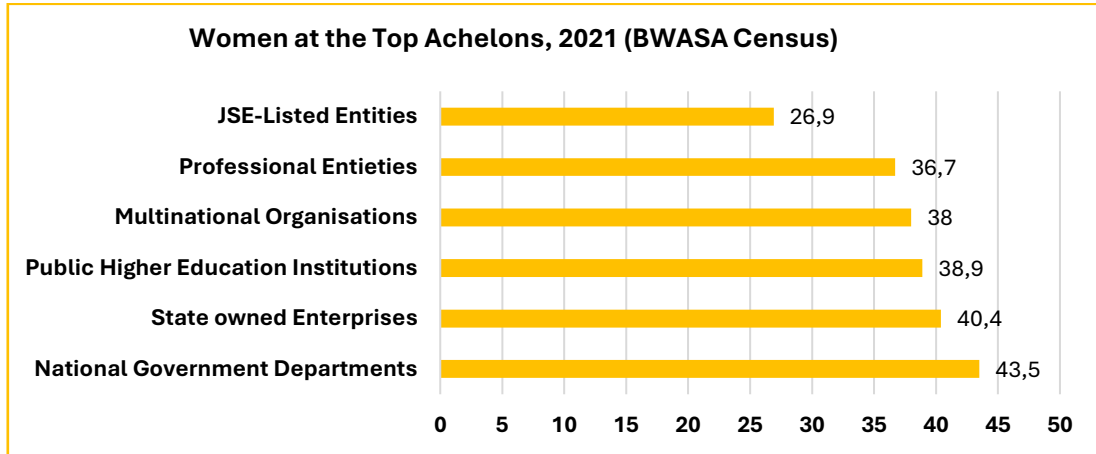
Source: Commission for Employment Equity Annual Reports (1999 – 2024)

South Africa has made inroads in increasing the number of women in management and decision-making positions in the private sector and state-owned enterprises, especially with respect to professional women, women CEOs, women on boards, women directors and women managers.

The graph below⁷⁸ shows women in the top echelons in 2021

⁷⁸ The Businesswomen's Association of South Africa (BWASA) - South African Women in Leadership Census Report 2021

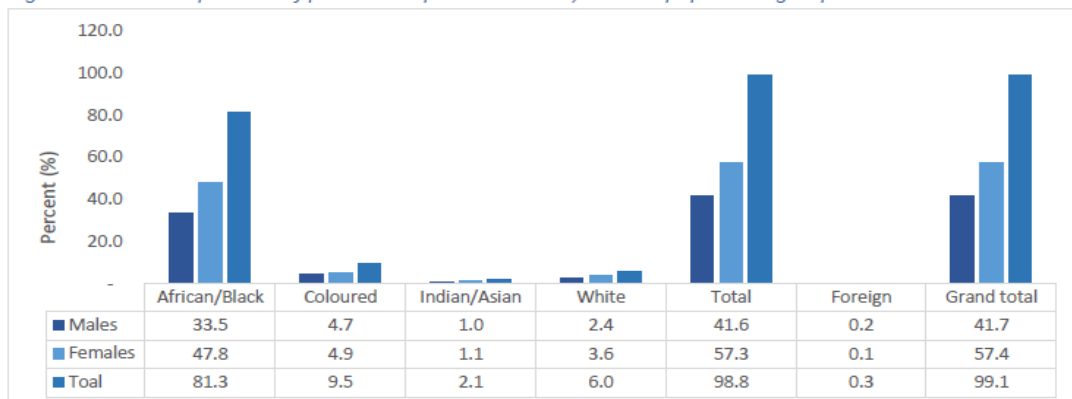
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In 2024, women comprised 26.9% of the top management level increasing from approximately 21.2% in 2018. However, the gap between women and men in managerial levels is still wide. The 2021 Business - Women’s Leadership Census conducted in South Africa shows that only 26.9% of directorship at the Johannesburg Stock Exchange-listed companies are taken by women. At the top leadership level of organizations, women account for only 11.8% of CEOs or chairpersons.

The figure below shows overall in the public service, females make up more than 50% of all employees, and are better represented than their male counterparts at 57.4% and 41.7% respectively.

Figure 16.7.1.1: Proportions of positions in public service by sex and population groups

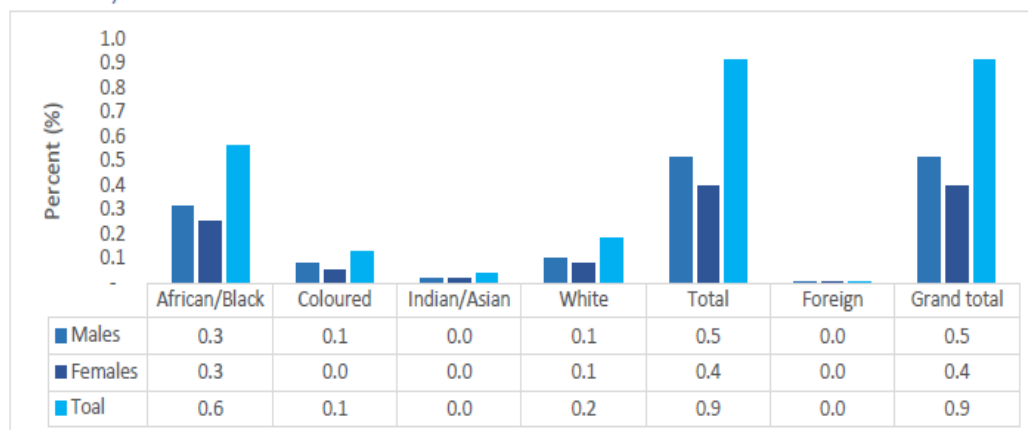


Source: Employment Equity Report 2022, DEL

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Figure 16.7.1.2: Proportions of positions in public service by sex and population groups (persons with disabilities)



Source: Employment Equity Report (2022), DEL

When looking at the representation of persons with disabilities in national and local institutions, males are much better represented than females, 51.0% and 40.0% respectively

- (ii) **South Africa's current national women's machinery (government entity exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women) and measures taken over the past five years to strengthen it.**

Following South Africa's participation in the 4th World Conference for Women in Beijing, China in 1995, and the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, in line with Critical Concern H1 of the Platform for Action, the South African Cabinet approved in 1996, the establishment of the Office on the Status of Women (OSW) in the Presidency – the highest nodal point of Government. Cabinet also approved the establishment of Gender Focal Points in all government departments at the national level; gender desks in some government departments at provincial levels; and provincial offices of the OSW in all Offices of the Premiers.

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In 1998 the OSW completed an audit of systems in place in national departments to facilitate effective gender mainstreaming. This process produced South Africa's National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality, adopted by the South African Cabinet in 2000 (hereinafter referred to as the National Gender Policy Framework). It is a framework for the coordination of structures within and outside Government which aim to achieve equality for women in all spheres of life. The National Gender Policy Framework outlines South Africa's vision for gender equality and sets out a plan for realising this ideal. It is not meant to be prescriptive for the various sectors of government. Instead, it details the overarching principles, which would be integrated by all sectors into their own sectoral policies, practices and programmes. The Framework establishes guidelines for South Africa as a nation to take action to remedy the historical legacy by defining new terms of reference for interacting with each other in both the private and public spheres, and by proposing and recommending an institutional framework that facilitates equal access to goods and services for both women and men.

The National Gender Policy Framework outlined the National Gender Machinery in the country as "an integrated package of structures". It comprised four arms: Government, Legislature, Commission for Gender Equality and Civil Society. The nodal or central point was the Office on the Status of Women located in the Presidency. It was established in 1997 and reported to the Minister in the Presidency. In 2009, following the national elections and the reconfiguration of Government, it evolved into the Ministry for Women, Children and People with Disabilities and reported to a Cabinet Minister for Women, Children and People with Disabilities and the concomitant Department. Hence it became a dedicated ministry. Following the 2014 national elections, the President announced a dedicated Ministry for Women located in the Presidency, under the stewardship of the Minister in the Presidency Responsible for Women. In May 2019, following the national elections, government reconfigured the state once again. Consequently, the President announced a Department of Women, Youth and Persons

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with Disabilities located in the Presidency, under the Minister in the Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities. She is now the head of the National Gender Machinery in the country.

Given the several evolutionary developments of the nodal structure heading the National Gender Machinery, vis a vis the National Policy outlines of the Machinery and its coordination, many challenges were experienced in its remaining effective. In 2018, a process was initiated to review the National Machinery and realign its coordination mechanism with the developments that have occurred over the past few years. A diagnostic Report on Reviewing and Strengthening the NGM was developed and consulted on, to redefine, realign and strengthen the National Gender Machinery in South Africa going forward.

According to the Framework, and until May 2009, the NGM consisted of the following institutions:

Government	Parliament
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Presidency • Office on the Status of Women (OSW) • Provincial Offices of the Status of Women • Gender Units in Line Departments • Gender Units in Local Government Structures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portfolio Committees (Including the Parliamentary Joint Committee on the Improvement of the Quality of Life and Status of Women) • Parliamentary Women’s Caucus • Steering Committee to Women’s Caucus • Provincial Women’s Caucus Group • Women’s Empowerment Unit • Cabinet • Government Departments
Independent Bodies	Civil Society
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitutional Court and Other Courts • Commission on Gender Equality • Public Service Commission • Human Rights Commission • SA Law Commission • Public Protector • Land Commission, Truth Commission, Youth Commission, and Independent Electoral Commission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-Governmental Organisations • Religious Bodies • Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (Contralesa) • The South African Local Government Association (SALGA)

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In May 2009 the JMC was subsequently replaced by the Portfolio Committee on Women, Children and Persons with Disability in Parliament, and a Select Committee on Women, Children and Disability in the National Council of Provinces. As a result of these and other developments in politics, government, and in societal behaviour, there were calls for a re-look at the model proposed by the National Gender Policy Framework.

South Africa's current national women's machinery: The **Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities:** On 25 June 2019 the President of the Republic signed a Proclamation to establish the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities (DWYPD), which is currently the principal coordinating structure of the NGM. The Ministry for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities is currently the principal institution of the NGM, while the DWYPD, under the stewardship of the Minister is the coordinating agent of the NGM. The mandate of the DWYPD includes championing the advancement of women's socio-economic empowerment and the promotion of gender equality. It is responsible for developing National Action Plans (NAP) or frameworks for mainstreaming gender within government structures and for the country as a whole; advancing women's empowerment and gender equality; as well as monitoring the implementation and progress in this regard.

Gender Focal Points (GFPs): According to the integrated approach adopted by the National Gender Policy Framework, each provincial and local GFP maintains the autonomy to determine its own programme towards gender equality, guided by the "generic" principles outlined in the Gender Policy Framework, and informed by the specific needs of the local contexts where they are located. More specifically, the National Gender Policy Framework determines that GFPs should be appointed at minimum Director level and located in the Offices of the Directors-General to enable effective gender mainstreaming of the department's programmes. The skills requirements commensurate with the position of the GFP in national departments are related

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to the key programme areas of policy, gender mainstreaming, advocacy, coordination and planning, liaison networking and capacity building.

At the Parliamentary level, the Portfolio Committee on Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities

has been established with its main functions including the provision of oversight on the progress on women's empowerment and gender equality, including holding the Executive to account on this function, monitoring of government departments and statutory bodies in relation to their role played in advancing women's empowerment and gender equality, considering and drafting legislation, and considering international treaties and agreements, amongst others (National Assembly, 2004, p. 249). Parliament views the Committees as one of the mechanisms required by the Constitution to ensure effect to the constitutional concept of participatory democracy by holding public hearings and affording the public the opportunity to contribute to their deliberations. **At the Parliamentary level, there is also a National Multi-Party Women's Caucus** comprised of all women Members of Parliament, across all political parties, in both Houses of Parliament. It has both a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, who are elected by the Caucus at the beginning of the Parliamentary term. The Caucus mandate is derived from Joint Rule 137 of Parliament, which states that the Multi Party Women's Caucus acts as an influencing advisory and consultative body.

The National Gender Machinery comprises independent Statutory bodies such as the **Commission for Gender Equality (CGE)**. The CGE is a state institution established by Chapter 9 of the Constitution to strengthen constitutional democracy. Like the Public Protector, the South African Human Rights Commission, the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities, the Auditor-General of South Africa, and the Independent Electoral Commission, the CGE is an independent body and subject only to the Constitution and the law. The obligation of the CGE is to strengthen constitutional democracy is focussed on the attainment of gender equality.

The fourth arm of the National Gender Machinery is Civil Society Sector. In line with the principles of participatory democracy and governance by citizens, as enshrined in the South African Constitutional Framework, civil society has a central responsibility of supporting democracy and ensuring accountability of the State to national policies and laws. The National Gender Policy Framework (2000, p. 32) states that the NGM “alone cannot shift public policy agendas for women without the participation of organisations of civil society. Strong women’s organisations are therefore an important part of effective national machinery. This implies that the institutions of the national machinery must have structures and mechanisms to facilitate close and effective relationships with organisations in civil society”. This arm of the NGM also includes other relevant civil society structures in respect of advancing the women’s agenda such as men’s organizations, religious and traditional leadership, faith-based organisations, private sector and business, labour, and other civil society-based organizations.

- (iii) Other mechanisms and tools South Africa used to mainstream gender equality across sectors (e.g. gender focal points in the executive, legislature or judiciary; inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms; gender audits; consultation with women’s organizations)**

The Government of South Africa adopted gender mainstreaming as the approach to its goal of women’s empowerment and gender equality in 1995. In this regard, gender mainstreaming has been implemented in the country since then, albeit to differing degrees of success and effectiveness. According to the National Gender Policy Framework of 2000, gender mainstreaming is the responsibility of every public servant, and towards meeting this goal, Government developed a Training Manual on Gender Mainstreaming in the Public Service. This training course is being run through the National School of Government, as the training arm of Government. In addition, Government approved a Gender Responsive Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring, Evaluation and Auditing (GRPBMEA) Framework in 2019 as an imperative in achieving the country’s constitutional vision of a non-sexist society through

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promoting gender mainstreaming using 10 pillars identified in the Framework. It is aimed at ensuring better outcomes for women and girls and more tangible gender impacts in South Africa. Gender-responsive budgeting is an important component of the GRPMBEA Framework and aims to bring gender mainstreaming into public finances, which eventually results in gender responsive budgets. The GRPBMEA Framework is a critical strategy in harnessing the gender dividend and ensuring a paradigm shift towards gender mainstreaming across the state machinery. Since the adoption of the Framework by Cabinet, the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities has conducted capacity building sessions with national, provincial and local level government on institutionalization and implementation of the Framework in line with its ten (10) implementation pillars. The importance of government departmental plans that prioritize women has been amplified through analysis of all Annual Performance Plans (APP) and Strategic Plans for their responsiveness to the priorities of women. Analysis has shown that over 50% of both national and provincial government's Annual Performance Plans are responsive to the priorities of Women. This analysis is being done on an annual basis and is yielding positive results in that there is ever increasing compliance by government departments to include issues of women into their planning and budgeting cycles. However, the responsiveness of the APPs and Strategic Plans alone is not sufficient to confirm the benefit of women from implementation of government programmes. In this regard, the DWYPD is also monitoring progress through the implementation of a Country Gender Indicator Framework and the Monitoring Reports on the Status of the Empowerment of Women have shown progress being made in implementation of the indicators and the benefits to women. However, there is still a need for accelerated implementation and performance delivery in this regard.

Government departments in South Africa also appoint Gender Focal Points to promote gender mainstreaming in the transformation programmes within the Departments. According

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to the Department of Public Service and Administration⁷⁹, most departments have Gender Focal Person at Deputy Director level who are also responsible for disability and youth programmes. Of the 108 departments that submitted their reports in 2022, only 47 departments (43.5%) indicated that they have an employee who deals only with Gender mainstreaming. Gender Focal Persons are at different levels either Assistant Directors or Deputy Directors. Only 13 departments out of 108 that reported in 2022 confirmed to have Gender Focal Persons at Director level. Of the 47 departments that confirmed that they have Gender Focal Persons in their departments, 13 departments confirmed to have had training on Gender Mainstreaming, 10 departments on Gender Responsive Budgeting, six on Work Life Balance, two on Legislative Mandate, five on Advocacy and three on International Treaties. Eight departments did not mention any training interventions undertaken. Thirty-Four (34) departments confirmed training employees on issues related to gender and gender equality.

The Government of South Africa is currently undertaking the processes towards enactment of legislation and the Promotion of Women's Rights, Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill (WEGE Bill) is in its initial stages of development. This Bill seeks to legislate issues of gender mainstreaming, gender responsive planning, gender responsive budgeting, women's socio-economic empowerment, among others. In this regard, the Bill also legislates for the appointment of gender focal points which will enforce compliance across government and other sectors of society in the future.

To also drive the issue of gender mainstreaming in government programmes, the Auditor-General of South Africa, has initiated through its auditing of government departments, the auditing of performance to determine compliance with the GRPBMEA Framework. In the auditing year, 2022/2023, the Auditor-General of South Africa, initiated this through the

⁷⁹ Public Service Women Management Week Report, 2022

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auditing of 5 centre of government departments such as National Treasury, Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation; the Department of Public Service and Administration; the Department of Cooperative Governance and the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities. It will continue to increase incrementally different departments in this regard in its auditing processes in the audit years following.

Gender responsive budgeting is also being rolled-out by the National Treasury in South Africa. This is outlined in detail later in this report.

The National School of Government, the training arm of the South African Government, ensures that it has a gender responsive curriculum as well as teaching materials across its various programmes. This ensures that gender perspectives are integrated into the learning experience and research focus areas. The NSG ensures the prescript of equality and non-discrimination under the law and access to justice through its provision of fair and non-discriminatory services and training to all public servants to inculcate the values and skills to promote inclusive and fair services to the citizens of South Africa. In this regard, it offers free courses such as “Know and Live your Constitution”; “Ethics for the Public Sector” and “Promoting anti-discrimination in the Public Sector”. In addition, the NSG ensures quality education, training and lifelong learning for women in the Public Service to contribute to overall societal advancement. In this regard, the NSG curriculum development intentionally focuses on inclusivity and foregrounds gender perspectives in its education, training and development offerings. The NSG offers the Gender Mainstreaming programme; Gender Based Violence Course and the Sexual Harassment Course; training programme on digital literacy and financial management where women are beneficiaries; also offers the gender responsive budgeting course to mainstream gender on various levels within the Public Sector through gender responsive planning and budgeting and introduces GRB as a planning tool to mainstream gender for gender equality and women’s empowerment. The NSG incorporates courses on gender studies and social norms change into

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its curriculum, challenging stereotypes for the promotion of positive social norms. The NSG fosters inclusive and sustainable development, advances gender equality and promotes human rights in the Public Service through a combination of research, policy advocacy, curriculum development, training programmes; case studies, and collaborative initiatives with stakeholders across sectors through hosting masterclasses. NSG offers leadership and development programmes for women, including skills-building workshops and networking events to empower women in pursuit of leadership roles. Training awarded to women in the Public Service over the past five years: total women trained = 115 299 in several courses within the Public Service.

(iv) National human rights institution and measures taken by South Africa to address violations of women's rights and promote gender equality

In South Africa there are a number of Human Rights Institutions established:

(A) The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) is an independent national human rights institution established to support constitutional democracy through promoting, protecting and monitoring the attainment of everyone's human rights in South Africa without fear, favour or prejudice. The mandate of the Commission is to: promote respect for human rights and a culture of human rights; promote the protection, development and attainment of human rights; monitor and assess the observance of human rights; investigate and report on the observance of human rights; take steps and secure appropriate redress where human rights have been violated; carry out research; educate; require relevant organs of state to provide the Commission with information on the measures that they have taken towards the realisation of the rights in the Bill of Rights concerning housing, health care, food, water, social security, education and the environment; and carry out the additional powers and functions prescribed by national legislation. The SAHRC plays a crucial role in promoting and protecting human rights across the country, including addressing violations of women's

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rights and promoting gender equality. Examples of measures that the SAHRC has taken to address violations of women's rights and promote gender equality include: (i) **Monitoring and Reporting:** The SAHRC monitors and investigates cases of human rights violations affecting women, including gender-based violence (GBV), discrimination, and socio-economic rights violations. It publishes reports and recommendations based on its findings, highlighting systemic issues and recommending measures to address gaps in protection and support for women; (ii) **Public Inquiries and Hearings:** The SAHRC conducts public inquiries and hearings to gather evidence, hear testimonies, and engage with stakeholders on issues affecting women's rights. These inquiries often focus on critical issues such as GBV, access to justice, healthcare, education, and economic empowerment; (iii) **Legal Interventions and Advocacy:** The SAHRC intervenes in legal cases and litigation involving violations of women's rights, either through direct legal representation or as amicus curiae (friend of the court). It advocates for legal reforms and policy changes to strengthen protections for women and promote gender equality within the legal framework; (iv) **Education and Awareness:** The SAHRC conducts public education campaigns and outreach programs to raise awareness about women's rights, gender equality, and the importance of respecting human rights. It provides training and capacity-building workshops for government officials, civil society organizations, and community leaders on gender equality and women's rights issues; (v) **Partnerships and Collaboration:** The SAHRC collaborates with other governmental and non-governmental entities, including women's rights organizations, to leverage resources and expertise in advancing women's rights. It participates in national and international forums to share best practices, exchange knowledge, and advocate for gender-responsive policies and programs; (vi) **Research and Policy Development:** The SAHRC conducts research and publishes reports on gender-related issues, providing evidence-based recommendations to policymakers, legislators, and government agencies. It engages in policy development processes to influence the adoption of gender-sensitive policies and laws that promote women's rights and gender equality; and **Monitoring Implementation of**

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Recommendations: The SAHRC monitors the implementation of its recommendations by government departments and agencies to ensure accountability and improve outcomes for women affected by rights violations. It assesses progress and challenges in addressing systemic barriers to gender equality, advocating for sustained efforts to achieve meaningful change. Through these measures, the South African Human Rights Commission, operating at the national level but with regional offices, contributes to promoting gender equality, protecting women's rights, and holding duty-bearers accountable for addressing violations and improving the well-being of women in the province.

Example of intervention by the South African Human Rights Commission

The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) intervened in the matter as a third-party intervener, or friend of the court on the Caster Semenya vs Switzerland case. This case follows rules by World Athletics to restrict testosterone levels in female runners competing in track events from 400m up to the mile. Semenya, and other athletes with DSD who have testosterone levels above the approved level, cannot compete in female track events without taking testosterone-reducing medication. The case before the Grand Chamber was referred by Switzerland after the judgment handed down by the ECHR in July 2023. The judgment found in favour of Semenya, indicating that her rights, as enshrined in the European Convention for Human Rights, to non-discrimination, respect for private life, and to an effective remedy had been violated. The case impacts on the duty of international sporting bodies to respect human rights, particularly the rights of women. <https://www.sahrc.org.za/index.php/sahrc-media/news-2/item/4013-media-statement-south-african-human-rights-commission-s-statement-on-the-caster-semenya-vs-switzerland-case>.

(B) **The Commission on Gender Equality (CGE)** is one of the institutions established in terms of Chapter 9 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996). In terms of

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section 187 of the Constitution, the mandate of the CGE is to contribute to strengthening and deepening constitutional democracy in South Africa through the promotion, protection, development, and attainment of gender equality. The powers and functions of the CGE are further outlined in the CGE Act 39 of 1996 as amended (“CGE Act”), which include monitoring and evaluating the policies and practices of government, the private sector and other organisations to ensure that they promote and protect gender equality; public education and information; reviewing existing and upcoming legislation from a gender perspective; investigating inequality; commissioning research and making recommendations to Parliament or other authorities; investigating complaints on any gender-related issue and monitoring and reporting on South Africa’s compliance with international conventions. The Commission is an independent, catalyst organisation for the development and attainment of gender equality. Section 187(2) grants the Commission “the power as regulated by national legislation, necessary to perform its functions, including the power to monitor, investigate, research, educate, lobby and advise and report on issues concerning gender equality”. Furthermore, the CGE has powers to review policies of public and private entities from a gender perspective and to ensure gender-aware and responsive policy making and practices. The CGE evaluates legislation, policies, practices and mechanisms and make recommendations to bring about continuous improvements to advance gender equality. This enables the CGE to influence legislative and policy changes which advance gender equality, whilst monitoring state compliance with national, international, and regional instruments promoting gender equality. The CGE promotes and protect gender equality through public awareness, education, and investigation, which is intended to lead to a more gender aware society, to contribute to change of behaviour and promote practices that promote social justice for victims of gender violations. These initiatives further promote gender responsive policies and practices and prevent systemic gender violations. Through executing its mandate, the CGE identifies and monitors key issues that impact on gender equality,

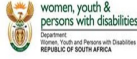
investigate, and evaluate issues that undermine the attainment of gender equality leading to improved policy responses and practices on substantive equality.

Practical example: Litigation on Redistribution Orders in Constitutional Court by the Commission for Gender Equality. In the recent decision of *EB (born S) v ER (born B) and others; KG v Minister of Home Affairs and others* [2023] ZACC 32, the Commission for Gender Equality ('CGE') successfully litigated on section 7(3) of the Divorce Act 70 of 1979 in the Constitutional Court. In its order, the court declared section 7(3) unconstitutional because it infringed the right to equality contained in section 9 of the Constitution for the Republic of South Africa, 1996. In 1984 the Matrimonial Property Act 88 of 1984 ('the MPA') introduced the accrual system into marriages out of community of property in South Africa. This system provided that upon the termination of such a marriage, either by divorce or the death of one spouse, the spouse whose estate had grown the least in value during the marriage had a claim against the other spouse, or their estate, for half of the difference between the accrual of the spouses' respective estates. Spouses already married out of community at the time of the passing of the MPA were given a two-year window period to include the accrual system into their marriage regimes, should they wish to. At the same time, section 7(3) of the Divorce Act 70 of 1979 was introduced. This section empowered a court granting a decree of divorce in a marriage out of community of property, and which marriage had been entered into prior to the MPA's commencement, to make an order that the assets of one spouse be transferred to the other spouse where it was just and equitable to do so. This is known as a 'redistribution order.' The CGE's litigation related to a wife who had married after the commencement of the MPA. Consequently, section 7(3) was not available to her as a remedy in her divorce proceedings because the marriage was concluded after the commencement of the MPA. At the Constitutional Court, it was argued that section 7(3) afforded a legal remedy to someone who had married before the commencement of the MPA, but not afterwards, and therefore infringed the right to equality in section 9 of the

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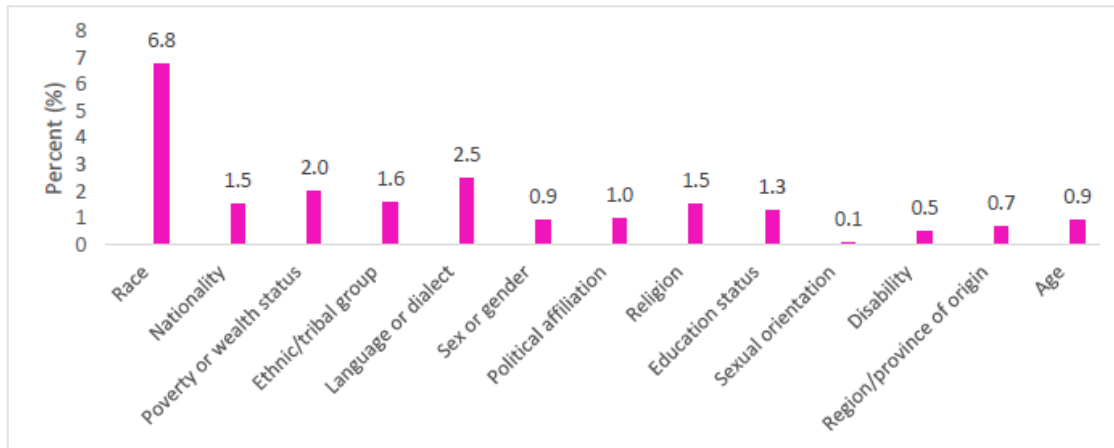
Constitution. In determining whether section 7(3) constituted unfair discrimination, the court began its analysis by noting that in South Africa today, the reality is that when marriages fail, the absence of a redistribution order often prejudiced women, a fact which the expert evidence before the court confirmed. Thus, although the differentiation was ostensibly based on the date of the marriage, the burden that the section indirectly created fell heavily on women, and the section therefore treated women in marriages out of community of property entered prior to the enactment of the PMA, differently to such marriages entered after the Act's commencement. While the differentiation is not directly based on gender, the practical effect of the section in the cases of such marriages was to further prejudice women and benefit men disproportionately. The section therefore indirectly discriminates against spouses on the grounds of gender. In determining whether such discrimination was nevertheless justifiable in terms of section 36 of the Constitution, the court noted that the primary argument for withholding the redistribution remedy to these spouses was because of the choice open to them to marry with the accrual system, a choice which spouses married out of community of property before the commencement of the Act did not have. However, the court said, although this was a legitimate government purpose, it could not on its own render discrimination based on gender to be fair. Valuing spousal choices and allowing redistribution orders were not necessary mutually exclusive, and many countries had adopted laws which gave effect to both. Finally, South Africa's international law obligations militated against accepting as fair a form of discrimination which continued to mainly prejudice women. The discrimination therefore was unfair. Therefore, having found section 7(3) infringed section 9(3) of the Constitution in that it indirectly unfairly discrimination since gender, the Constitutional Court confirmed the High Court declaration of constitutional invalidity. In its order, the court suspended its declaration for 24 months to enable Parliament to take steps to cure the constitutional defect. The judgment raises crucial issues regarding matrimonial property regimes in South Africa, the role of choice in contractual relationships between individuals in intimate relations, and the effect that these issues have on gender. The South



African Law Reform Commission has recently published its Discussion Paper on the Review of Aspects of Matrimonial Law, and the CGE intends commenting on the paper considering this judgment (<https://cge.org.za/cge-successfully-litigates-on-redistribution-orders-in-constitutional-court/>).

Indicator 10.3.1 *Proportion of population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed in the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law.*

Figure 10.3.1: Proportion of population reporting some type of discrimination



Source: GPSJS 2018/19, Stats SA

5. PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

This section focuses on providing progress made against the critical areas of concern in line with the Guidance note: (i) Critical Area of Concern E on Women and Armed Conflict; (ii) Critical Area of Concern I on Human Rights of Women; and (iii) Critical Area of Concern L on the Girl Child.

It provides information on actions taken over the past five years to: (i) build and sustain peace, promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and implement the

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women, peace and security agenda; (ii) increase the leadership, representation and participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, humanitarian action and crisis response, at decision-making levels in situations of armed and other conflicts, and in fragile or crisis settings; (iii) enhance judicial and non-judicial accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and violations of the human rights of women and girls in situations of armed and other conflicts or humanitarian action and crisis response; and (iv) eliminate discrimination against and violations of the rights of the girl child, including adolescent girls.

South Africa subscribes to the view that the experience of women in armed conflict is akin to their status in society. This is in line with paragraph 135 of the Beijing Platform for Action which notes: “[w]hile entire communities suffer the consequences of armed conflict and terrorism, women and girls are particularly affected because of their status in society and their sex”.

South Africa has actively participated in international platforms aimed at advancing the interests of women, including the historic 4th UN World Conference for Women in 1995 in Beijing China. Equally in May 2000, South Africa supported the first deliberations of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda in Windhoek, Namibia which gave birth to the Windhoek Declaration on Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations. In October 2000, South Africa was part of the successful and unanimous adoption of the historic UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR)1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Following this, South Africa also supported the additional 10 supplementary resolutions on WPS adopted by the UN Security Council. This placed South Africa at an optimum advantage in terms of adopting a high impact national action plan that is comprehensive and inclusive of all issues on the WPS Agenda⁸⁰.

⁸⁰ Republic of South Africa, 2020: National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security – 2020-2025 (Peace and Security for Women in all their Diversity), Pretoria

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UN SCR 1325 has over the years drawn international attention to the unrecognised and undervalued contribution of women in preventing war and in peacebuilding. The Resolution further stressed the importance of women's equal and full participation as active agents in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peacebuilding and peacekeeping. The changing nature of warfare, in which civilians are increasingly targeted, however, means that women and children, especially the girl-child, continue to be at the receiving end of armed conflict. One of the defining characteristics of contemporary armed conflict is the use of women's bodies as "weapons of war" through sexual violence and abuse. Notwithstanding this, women were and continue to be excluded from participation in peace processes⁸¹.

South Africa has always been committed to the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 in line with its own history, which illustrates the critical role women play in peace and security, conflict and post-conflict environments.

South Africa served as a non-permanent member on the UN Security Council from 2019-2021 and leveraged on this opportunity to consistently promote for the peaceful resolutions of conflicts through political dialogue. Furthermore, South Africa collaborated with other members of the Council in pursuance of the African Union's Agenda 2063 Aspiration Four, calling for a peaceful and secure Africa, advocating for the AU's flagship programme of "Silencing the Guns by 2020"⁸². Another key priority that informed South Africa's membership of the UN Security Council was to champion the WPS Agenda. During its Presidency, South Africa sponsored UNSC Resolution 2493 (adopted on 29 October 2019) on WPS⁸³ which calls for the accelerated, full and equal implementation of all four pillars of the WPS agenda comprising prevention, protection, participation and recovery and relief. South Africa aims to

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continue playing the role of bridge-builder to fulfil its obligations of maintaining international peace and security in line with the UN Charter.

(i) Actions to build and sustain peace, promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and implement the women, peace and security agenda

South Africa launched its first National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security (2020-2025) in March 2021. The development of the NAP responds to the UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions and heeds the call for Member States to develop and implement NAPs on WPS to ensure coordination and impact. The UNSCR 1325 encourages Member States to act to further women's political and civil society participation; the protection of women and girls; and gender training on a national level.

The fundamental principle of the National Action Plan on WPS in South Africa is that human security and state security are intrinsically linked. Meaning, there can never be human security without peaceful states, and there cannot be durable peace for states without the safety of their citizens. The NAP is anchored on four pillars of the WPS Agenda, namely: (i) participation; (ii) prevention; (iii) protection and (iv) relief and recovery.⁸⁴

Through these four pillars, the NAP highlights the importance of women's inclusion in peace processes as a matter of principle, and builds on the commitments contained in the Beijing Platform for Action. It provides policymakers and security actors with a set of tools to plan for large-scale, coordinated collaboration to support the strategic priority of creating a safe and peaceful South Africa, continent and world.

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It also provides concrete action steps to help the South African government and civil society to evolve out of conflict peacefully, through involvement of women as peace anchors in communities during localised conflicts such as service delivery protests, gang violence, student uprisings as well as the development and implementation of gender-responsive policies.

The wide range of options presented in the four pillars of the NAP is intended to help all stakeholders (both state and non-state actors) to more systematically and strategically implement the WPS Agenda. The NAP is a product of both government and civil society in South Africa. These combined and collective efforts yielded positive results, including: (i) fostering dialogue and a cooperative relationship and creating a clear policy framework; (ii) ensuring ownership and accountability as well as building capacity and expertise for participating institutions on WPS; (iii) raising awareness and opening space to discuss and exchange information, as well as holding seminars and training sessions on WPS issues.

South Africa is currently implementing the National Action Plan. The Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities; the Department of Defence; and the Department of International Relations and Cooperation are responsible for coordinating the implementation of the National Action Plan which involves multi sectoral stakeholders including government and civil society organizations. The implementation mechanisms build on the existing policies, structures and mechanisms, including those created during the development of the WPS NAP process.

South Africa is implementing programmes to achieve outcomes in all four pillars. Following the April 2023 baseline study⁸⁵ and several review meetings on the implementation of the WPS NAP, there has been noted progress with **sixty-seven percent (67%) of the targeted activities**

⁸⁵ Department of International Relations and Cooperation: Inputs on the progress made in implementing the BPfA to the National B+30 Report, received on 15 June 2024.

duly completed, with a considerable majority of the completed activities located in the participation pillar. This is due to the increase in the number of women in various political processes, including leadership positions in different spheres of government and the security sector.

Although there is no stipulated budget for WPS NAP implementation, a lesson learnt is for responsible entities to make financial resources available for advocacy, programmes, etc⁸⁶. Partnerships also foster the achievement of some indicators whether in training development, policy drafting etc.

In congruence with UNSCR 1325, the South African NAP is aimed at cultivating a safer and more equitable environment for women, girls, and gender non-conforming individuals, and is a product of years of commitment by government and civil society. The NAP aims to promote human security, social justice, and empower women's active engagement in peace initiatives, emphasizing their needs, perspectives and agency across diverse contexts. Through this agenda South Africa ensures the meaningful participation of women in peace processes, their protection in conflict situations, the prevention of gender-based violence, and the integration of gender perspectives in humanitarian efforts and post-conflict recovery.

- (ii) **Actions to increase the leadership, representation, and participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, humanitarian action and crisis response, at decision-making levels in situations of armed and other conflicts, and in fragile or crisis settings**

South Africa is recognised as one of the leading countries in the deployment of female peacekeepers to UN peace support operations. Approximately 16% of South African uniformed

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personnel deployed to UN peacekeeping operations, are women. Therefore, South Africa surpasses targets set in the UN’s Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy.

Table showing Percentage of South African women deployed in external peacekeeping missions 2017 - 2024

Year	% women deployed
2017/2018	16.91%
2018/2019	13,21%
2019/2020	13,89%
2020/2021	15,3%
2022/2023	18%
2023/2024	17%

South Africa also provides training for women locally and on the African Continent in conflict resolution, mediation, and negotiation. From 2021 to 2023 South Africa has trained 108 women.

Since 2015, South Africa has hosted the Gertrude Shope⁸⁷ Annual Dialogue Forum aimed at bringing together women peacebuilders and mediators from the country, the continent and globally, to discuss issues related to peacebuilding and development in Africa, as well as to share their experiences and best practices on peace and security initiatives.⁸⁸ This has been done in partnership with the Government of the Royal Kingdom of Norway.

“The richness of the diversity of the participants is also notable, coming as they do from civil society organisations; government officials, academia and ordinary citizens who are just simply

⁸⁷ Madame Gertrude Ntiti Shope played a pivotal role in the struggle against apartheid and the liberation of the South Africa people as well as her contribution to advancing the role of women in South Africa. Her revolutionary and gender activism in South Africa spanned sixty- odd years. She served as a MP in National Parliament following the advent of democracy in 1994 and also headed up the African National Congress (ANC) Women’s League between 1991 and 1993. It is in this honour that the Dialogue was established in her name. In 2020, she turned 95 years.

⁸⁸ RSA: Department of International Relations and Cooperation, 2020: Gertrude Shope Annual Dialogue Forum – Women in Conflict Resolution and Peace Building Publication, Pretoria

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interested in advancing the role of women in WPS. This multisectoral participation distinguishes the Dialogue and makes it unique in going beyond diplomats and officials in the composition of its participants. Inspired by the understanding that the durability of peace is also dependent on informed grassroots participation, in particular women, the Dialogue may be ahead of its time in also seeking to bridge the gap between those in the multilateral international or global sphere and those who are on the ground in communities where peace, in reality, is made and ultimately sustained” [Minister Naledi Pandor, 2020].⁸⁹

The Sixth Dialogue, held virtually in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, included Dr Naledi Pandor – South African Minister for International Relations and Cooperation; Ms Phumzile Mlambo Ngcuka – the Executive Director of UN Women; Ms Bineta Diop – the AU Special Envoy on Women and Peace; HE Marianne Hagan – State Secretary, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, among other esteemed speakers. It focused on two main themes: (i) Leadership Accountability for the Implementation of the WPS Agenda during COVID-19 pandemic and beyond; and (ii) The Role of Women in Silencing the Guns and Building Architectures for Peace during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

On 8th March 2024, South Africa (through the joint collaboration between the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Minister in the Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, and the Minister for Defence, in partnership with the Royal Kingdom of Norway, launched the Gertrude Shope Women Mediators Network with the intention that its eventual operationalisation will see more women as peacebuilders, negotiators and mediators in the field and participating in various negotiation tracks.

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(iii) Actions to eliminate discrimination against and violations of the rights of the girl child, including adolescent girls

The Customary Initiation Act, 2021 (Act No. 2 of 2021) commenced on 01 September 2021. The main purpose of this Act is to protect the lives of persons who attend customary initiation schools. This is done through the regulation of customary initiation schools and the establishment of oversight and coordinating structures at national and provincial level. Section 28 of the Act deals with, amongst others, consent to undergo initiation and certain prohibitions. As far as prohibitions are concerned, the Act contains cross-references to the Children's Act and therefore confirms, in section 28(4), that genital mutilation and circumcision of female initiates are prohibited and consent to undergo initiation will not be construed as consent to genital mutilation and female circumcision. As far as virginity testing is concerned, section 28(5) aligns the Act with section 12 of the Children's Act. Section 33 of the Customary Initiation Act, 2021, makes provision for offences. In respect of genital mutilation, the Act states in section 33(6)(c), that any offence relating to circumcision, genital mutilation and virginity testing must be dealt with in terms of the offence clause in the Children's Act.

Marriage age: *Development of the overarching policy on marriage, that is, The White Paper on Marriages in South Africa 2022. Initiating of the Marriage Bill 2023.* The White Paper on Marriages in South Africa was approved by Cabinet in March 2022. The paper clearly states that “No person under the age of 18 years will be permitted to marry”. This provision will give protection to minors under the age of 18 years. Subsequent to this, the Marriage Bill was developed and consulted with various stakeholders. This Bill is scheduled to be introduced in Parliament.

The Policy on the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy in Schools was launched in February 2022 and the drafting an implementation guide for the policy is in process. This is

supplemented by the Second Chance Matric Programme which provides support to learners who have not been able to meet the requirements of the national senior certificate.

GENERATION EQUALITY

South Africa hosted the first in-person Economic Rights and Justice Action Coalition of the Generation Equality Forum in May 2023. This engagement provided an ideal platform for all stakeholders in the Action Coalition to deliberate and share on best practices and challenges in terms of economic empowerment, gender-based violence, sexual health and reproductive rights and the care economy. South Africa was also able to showcase her localisation experience, the Women's Economic Assembly, which is a Presidential programme bringing together all stakeholders in society to unlock economic opportunities for South African women in business, enterprise and procurement, amongst others.

Also, in line with reporting obligations to multilateral institutions, South Africa has, 1) in May 2024, responded to the recommendations of the 5th Periodic Report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and 2) in July 2024, provided responses to the UNOHRC Joint Communication from Special Procedures on forced sterilisation of HIV positive women in SA.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION, PROTECTION AND REHABILITATION

This section focuses on providing progress made against the critical areas of concern in line with the Guidance note: (i) Critical Area of Concern I on Human Rights of Women; (ii) Critical Area of Concern K on Women and the Environment; and (iii) Critical Areas of Concern L on the Girl Child.

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It provides information on actions taken over the past five years to: (i) integrate gender perspectives and concerns into environmental policies, including climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation and land degradation; and (ii) integrate gender perspectives into policies and programmes for disaster risk reduction and building environmental and climate resilience.

(i) Actions to integrate gender perspectives and concerns into environmental policies, including climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation and land degradation

In South Africa, the National Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment has been proactive in mainstreaming gender into environmental-related policies and initiatives. The 2011 National Climate Change Response Strategy White Paper was a key instrument in paving the way for ensuring that the challenges that arise for women and girls, are specifically prioritized alongside other existing priority areas within the environmental sector ([DEA 2011](#)). This was followed by the National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy which was integrally gender sensitive / responsive as it aimed to “promote the participation of women; take gender differences in vulnerability to climate change into account; address the needs and priorities of both women and men; and to not exacerbate gender inequalities” for example ([DEA 2019](#)).

The following challenges existed in gender mainstreaming that South Africa has since sought to address through active gender mainstreaming initiatives: (i) ensuring that women and men participate equally in decision-making about policy and policy instruments aiming to improve the adaptation capacities of communities; (ii) ensuring that women and men participate equally in decision-making with regard to policy and policy instruments aiming to mitigate the risk of drastic climate change and destruction of ecosystems at all levels; and (iii) ensuring that all

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policies and policy measures take into consideration the gender impact of climate change (DEA 2016). Name this document

There have been legislative and implementation initiatives undertaken, as of 2020 to 2024, in relation to gender mainstreaming in climate change and major strides have been made over this period. The National Climate Change Bill of 2022 was developed and gazetted, which makes provision for provincial and local municipalities to develop and implement province-specific climate change strategies and response plans. Chapter 3 of the Bill specifically enables gender mainstreaming in climate change, through climate change needs and response plans. The National Climate Change Bill is currently in National Parliament.

The South African National Determined Contribution was updated in 2022 and recognizes that for transformation to occur, there is a crucial need to raise awareness of financial and technical support that is available for promoting the strengthening of gender integration into climate policies, including good practices to facilitate access to climate finance for grassroots women's organizations, indigenous peoples and local communities⁹⁰.

The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment also developed a Draft National Climate Change Gender Action Plan (GAP) in 2022, which aims to address the country's challenges related to gender-climate mainstreaming through. This is through six strategic actions namely to; (i) revise and clarify institutional arrangements for gender-climate mainstreaming; (ii) formalise relationships for sectoral gender mainstreaming across South Africa's National Gender Machinery; (iii) strengthen sectoral gender-climate policies; (iv) establish robust, participatory monitoring and evaluation frameworks for gender-climate mainstreaming; (v) align funding streams for gender-climate mainstreaming; and (vi) implement a gender awareness-raising and capacity-building programme.

⁹⁰ RSA: Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, 2024: Input to the Country B+30 Review Report

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These six actions will enable transformative change in the frameworks that underpin gender equality in South Africa. The GAP is structurally designed to facilitate the collaboration and partnership between the country's businesses, civil society, government and labour, thus addressing a key challenge the country experienced previously in effectively addressing, prioritizing and assessing gender mainstreaming efforts in all tiers of government, the private sector and civil society. The draft GAP is currently undergoing a nationwide stakeholder engagement process across all nine provinces in the country, to solicit inputs and raise public awareness of gender mainstreaming in climate change actions, in addition to sharing information on the country's progress on gender mainstreaming in climate change⁹¹.

Overall, South Africa's provincial environmental departments have collectively prioritized the following at provincial and local levels: (i) increasing the number of women beneficiaries and opportunities in environmental sector programmes; (ii) increasing the number of women in senior management positions and the skilling and upskilling of women professionals through skills development initiatives; (iii) increasing the number of women beneficiaries in environmental funding and job opportunities⁹².

This has taken the form of workshops, and working group meetings, such as Women in Environment forums, aimed at the empowerment of grassroots women participation by dissemination of information and skills on income generation. Projects such as renewable energy; greening; waste recycling and upcycling; sustainable agriculture; and other environmental sector-related initiatives, have been discussed in the 2024 Provincial Stakeholder Consultations on Draft National Climate Change Gender Action Plan⁹³.

⁹¹ RSA: Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, 2024: Input to the Country B+30 Review Report

⁹² RSA: Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment: Environment Sector Gender Q4 Annual Progress (2021/22 + 2023) and Environment Sector Gender Reports 2022/23 + 2023/24,

⁹³ RSA: Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, 2024: Input to the Country B+30 Review Report



The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment also has developed a Sector Gender Strategy and Implementation Plan. The implementation is monitored through the Sector Gender Coordinators Forum composed of the National, Provincial and Public Entities Coordinators. Quarterly reports are compiled and submitted to the Ministerial Technical Working Groups meetings. The Department has also taken the following steps to integrate gender perspectives and concerns into environmental policies in the country: (i) developed the Waste Sector Management Strategy; (ii) developed the Biodiversity Economy Strategy; and (iii) developed the Climate Change Response Strategy and Climate Action Plan.

(ii) Actions to integrate gender perspectives into policies and programmes for disaster risk reduction and building environmental and climate resilience

South Africa is building socially cohesive communities and neighbourhoods through interventions undertaken to facilitate implementation of the South African Climate Change Adaptation Strategy. The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment conducts risk and vulnerability assessments for identified human settlement priority areas in various provinces in the country.

SECTION FOUR: NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND PROCESSES

This section focuses on providing information on (i) the country's national strategy or action plan for gender equality, including its name, the period it covers, its priority, funding and alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the targets under SDG 5; (ii) the country's system for tracking the proportion of the national budget that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (gender responsive budgeting), including the approximate proportion of the national budget that is invested in this area; (iii) formal mechanisms in place for different stakeholders to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and

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the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; (iv) how stakeholders have contributed to the preparation of the present national report; and (v) the country's action plan and timeline for implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women as a state party to the Convention; the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review and other UN human rights mechanisms that address gender inequality / discrimination against women.

(v) South Africa's system for tracking the proportion of the national budget that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (gender-responsive budgeting), including the approximate proportion of the national budget that is invested in this area

There are developments internationally with regards to programmes such as gender, youth, climate change and research and development. Each one of these is important as the impact of neglecting them is far reaching. To fully address the challenges each one of these priorities present, there needs to be a process to gather data to quantify the extent of the interventions government is implementing in these areas. In terms of public finance management mechanisms South Africa has adopted expenditure tagging as a tool to identify, clarify, weight and mark relevant expenditures in government's budget system, enabling the estimation, monitoring and tracking of those expenditures by providing data on government's allocations or existing spending. The intention for information gathered through tagging is to inform policy discussions and to monitor implementation of policy imperatives. All the tagging projects above are in different stages of implementation. The tagging exercise introduced in previous budget cycles on gender responsiveness of budgets has not been fruitful, therefore, the National Treasury is undertaking a process to refine the objectives, assess capacity needs and raise awareness within government departments and entities to re-implement the tags in the subsequent budget cycles. For the 2024 MTEF process data will be collected for gender and climate priorities.

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In 2020/21, the National Treasury collaborated with the IMF on developing a Gender Responsive Budgeting Framework for South Africa. This was done in partnership with the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities and the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. The National Treasury has initiated the roll-out of the Guidelines since 2023/24 budgeting cycle and GRB is being piloted through the MTEC financial process of National Treasury in 10 departments within the Economic Cluster, including in the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities.

In the budget guidelines, the National Treasury has requested disaggregated data from departments, in compliance with the Gender Responsive Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring, Evaluation and Auditing Framework (2019). The data gathered only confirmed that a reform of this magnitude cannot be done through the guidelines alone. There is a knowledge gap that needs to be filled for the framework to achieve the desired outcome.

Phase 1 of the roadmap is underway and one of the key deliverables, being the GRB guideline, has been developed as the second deliverable in partnership with the IMF. The GRB guidelines are intended to equip public officials with knowledge on concepts, principles and tools needed to facilitate the translation of the national gender policy objectives, currently articulated in the National Development Plan and Medium-Term Strategic Framework, into concrete trackable programmes within the budget. A workshop on the GRB guidelines was held with national and provincial departments in April 2023.

One of the key recommendations arising from this process is the need for the establishment of a cross-departmental coordination structure between the National Treasury (NT), Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation and the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities. The Interdepartmental task team was inaugurated in March 2023. In addition, the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities was included in the Medium

Termm Expenditure Committee (MTEC) process for the first time in the 2023 Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) process through the technical and function groups meetings to observe and participate in the discussions and trade-off process, which informs recommendations to the Medium-Term Expenditure Committee, the Ministers Committee on the Budget and finally the Cabinet. An integral part of this reform is the collection of data to quantify how much is being allocated to gender priorities. It is for this reason the GRB task team has requested assistance for the development of a tagging or tracking system that will assist in reporting on programmes that prioritize gender equality. The pilot departments have been contacted and guided to populate required information.

SECTION FIVE: DATA AND STATISTICS

This section focuses on providing information on (i) the important areas in which the country has made most progress over the past five years in respect to gender statistics at the national level; (ii) the country's priorities over the next five years for strengthening national gender statistics; (iii) what gender-specific indicators prioritized in the country for monitoring progress on the SDGs; and (iv) routine data disaggregations provided for by major surveys in the country.

(i) Progress over the past five years on gender statistics at the national level

In 2021, an assessment of the gender statistics system in South Africa⁹⁴ was carried out in a collaborative partnership between UN Women and Statistics SA (Stats SA) to assess gender statistics data and capacity gaps in the country. This assessment was done under the UN Women's flagship gender data and statistics programme "Making Every Women and Girl Count" (Women Count), with the intention that the findings of the assessment will be used by

⁹⁴ RSA: Statistics SA, 2021. South Africa National Gender Statistics Assessment – Assessment of Gender Data and Capacity Gaps. December 2021. Pretoria

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Stats SA, the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities and other key role-players in support of further development of the gender statistical system in the country.

The main objectives of the assessment were: (i) identifying the extent to which gender issues and statistics have been integrated in the various ministries and government entities; (ii) reflecting on the gaps in the production, analysis, and in the use of gender statistics in Statistics South Africa and other ministries that produce gender data; (iii) identifying capacities and knowledge gaps among the producers, analysts, and the users of gender statistics; (iv) compiling a list of challenges and barriers that prevent the gender statistics system from functionally optimally; and (v) proposing policy recommendations and interventions on how to enhance the production and use of gender statistics.

The overarching findings from the Assessment⁹⁵ highlights that in relation to the environment of gender data production in South Africa, Stats SA is one of the main producers of sex disaggregated and gender data and statistical publications and dissemination.

In relation to gender data production and availability, even though Stats SA produce regular gender data and statistical reports, the assessment identified some surveys that have been conducted more than 5-10 years ago, and are essential for gender analysis in the country, and which need urgent financial support for a repeat data collection and production of current data points in their time series. These data collections include: (i) the Time Use survey; (ii) Income and Expenditure Survey (subsequently undertaken in 2022/23); (iii) Comprehensive School Safety and Violence Survey⁹⁶.

⁹⁵ RSA: Statistics SA, 2021. South Africa National Gender Statistics Assessment – Assessment of Gender Data and Capacity Gaps. December 2021. Pretoria

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In respect to capacity gaps, during the assessment, some problems were identified with data accessibility and therefore its limited uptake and use. Thus, recommendations emerging from the Assessment for processes going forward, include: (i) to improve the coordination of the production and use of gender statistics, it will be important to forge strong working relationships between the various gender data producers as well as between users and producers and the current SDG coordination structure could possibly be used for this purpose; (ii) advocacy for adequate financial resource allocation for the collection of the time use, poverty, and inequality as well as the school safety and violence surveys should continue; (iii) that a gender statistics capacity building strategy and programme for all three spheres of government be developed in partnership with the National School of Government in the country with a focus on topics covering data analysis and disaggregation; basic concepts relating to gender statistics; statistical coordinating mechanisms and tools to promote an effective and well-coordinated gender statistical system; collection of gender-specific information using surveys and administrative sources; production of specific gender indicators; ways of presenting gender information to users and gender data use for policy and strategy formulation.

In August 2023, South Africa hosted the 9th Global Forum on Gender Statistics under the Global Gender Statistics Programme and the guidance of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics. The forum was a partnership between the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), and Statistics South Africa and brought together producers and users of gender statistics from all over the world – from national and international statistical offices, other government agencies, international organizations, academia, civil society, and the donor community. The Forum focussed on: (i) ways to improve data/evidence on the growing challenges and opportunities offered by the care economy and its impact on gender equality; (ii) strategies on how to make the best out of existing data, including by mainstreaming a gender lens into existing data processes; and (iii) lessons and good practices in gender statistics from the African region. The Global Forum emerged with several recommendations including: (i) need

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to strengthen gender mainstreaming in all surveys and administrative data; (ii) different sources of data should be considered for producing gender statistics, including academic researchers; (iii) increased partnerships to augment gender statistics and build a common agenda; (iv) dissemination of information available on gender to inform policy and increase awareness – with emphasis on inclusion of data on the LGBTQI community; (v) data gaps in time use surveys could be addressed by considering including time use modules in other surveys; and (vi) need for further evidence-based research on sexual orientation and gender identity.

During these past years, Statistics South Africa also produced several publications which provides very useful data and information that informs evidence-based policy making and programming in the country. Stats SA is also conducting new surveys to produce national baseline information on specialized topics (e.g., time use, gender-based violence, asset ownership, poverty, disability). Furthermore, the data from the Census 2022 has been mined in respect of gendered implications and briefings highlighting such statistics and data are available on the Stats SA website.

In South Africa, data and statistics are available through various research studies, surveys etc. Stats SA produced knowledge products on gender statistics (e.g., user-friendly reports, policy briefs, research papers). The Commission for Gender Equality produces several user-friendly research and investigative reports and Policy Briefs. The Department of Women has produced research reports and policy briefs such as the Status of Women in the South African Economy (2015); GVB Report (2014); CEDAW 5th periodic report (2016); AU Women's Protocol Report – Initial Report 2004-2014; Gendered Analysis of Government's Incentive Schemes especially those Administered through the Dti (2018), among others. Stats SA – Gender series – Gender and Education (2015); Women and Public Transport (2017); Gender and the Economy (2016); Department of Labour (Commission on Employment Equity) – annual Employment Equity Reports – from 1996 to 2024; Department of Education Research Reports; Human Rights Commission Research and Investigative reports, among others. The Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

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produces several evaluation reports; the country 30 Year Review Report in 2023/24; the country COVID 19 Report in 2021 and 2022. South Africa also produced the 2023 SDG Country Report as well as the 2024 VNR Report.

(ii) South Africa's priorities over the next five years for strengthening national gender statistics

South Africa is focusing on strengthening national gender statistics over the next five years. In this regard, a country gender indicator framework has been developed. This framework will guide the process of gender responsive indicators being mainstreamed across government's M&E systems. This framework will work in tandem with the 2019 Cabinet approved Gender Responsive Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring, Evaluation and Auditing Framework which provides for a short-, medium- and long-term process of ensuring that targets, interventions, and indicators are included into all planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation. The Department of Women is fully involved in the government-wide process of ensuring that gender responsive targets and indicators are included in the Medium-Term Development Plan 2024-2029. This would also entail the inclusion of gender responsive targets and indicators into all 5-year Strategic Plans and Annual Performance Plans of Government Departments at all levels.

(i) Gender-specific indicators prioritised in South Africa for monitoring progress on the SDGs

The country has also defined a national set of indicators for monitoring progress on the SDGs, including gender specific indicators in all 17 SDGs. South Africa was one of the early supporters of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This Commitment is intertwined with its contribution to setting Africa's long-term development goals. South Africa emphasizes the significant convergence between the SDGs and its own National Development Plan: Vision 2030. Approximately 74% of the SDG targets are addressed through the National Development Plan: Vision 2030 and South Africa's sectoral policies and programmes address 19% of the remaining targets (Stats SA, 2019). Thus, the SDGs are seen as a potential to accelerate the realisation of the National Development Plan targets through policy coherence, increasing efficiencies and avoiding duplications.

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SDG 5 contains 9 targets with 14 corresponding indicators. South Africa is able to report on 6 of the 9 SDG targets, using 8 data sources. Apart from the standard SDG indicators, South Africa has provided two domesticated indicators. The table below illustrates the SDG indicators used in the measuring of SDG 5, including domesticated indicators devised through a round of technical and regional workshops held in South Africa.

Table 5.1 Targets for goal 5

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	
5.1	End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere
5.2	Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation
5.3	Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation
5.4	Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate
5.5	Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life
5.6	Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences
5.a	Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws
5.b	Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women
5.c	Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels

Gender responsive and gender specific targets in the 2023 SGD Reporting by South Africa

SDG	Indicator No ⁹⁷	Indicator
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⁹⁷ NB: Certain suffixes were introduced by Stats SA to differentiate amongst the different types and levels of indicators, for example: (i) an indicator number without a prefix (e.g. 1.1.1. and 1.a.2) indicates an unmodified SGD indicator; (ii) an indicator number followed by an upper-case D (e.g. 1.4.2D) refers to a domesticated indicator (a proxy to SDG); (iii) an indicator number followed by either an upper case A (e.g. 1.2.1A) or an upper case A combined with a number (e.g. 3.2.2A1) indicates an additional indicator that is supplementary where the SDG indicator is not sufficient or is not applicable to explain the situation in the country; (iv) an indicator number followed by a lower case letter (e.g. 15.9.1a) or a combination of upper and lower case letters (e.g. 16.1.3Da or 16.1.3A1a) refers to the disaggregated components of an indicator.

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1	1.1.1	Proportion of the population living below the international poverty line by sex, age, employment status and geographic location (urban/rural)
	1.2.1	Proportion of population living below the national poverty line, by sex and age
	1.2.2	Proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions
	1.3.1	Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems, by sex, distinguishing children, unemployed persons, older persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, new-borns, work-injury victims, the poor and the vulnerable
2	2.2.3	Prevalence of anaemia in women aged 15 to 49 years by pregnancy status
3	3.1.1	Maternal mortality ratio
	3.1.2	Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel
	3.1.2A	Percentage of mothers and children who receive post-natal care either at home or in a facility and within 6 days of delivery (1+visit)
	3.3.1	Number of new HIV infections per 1000 uninfected population, by sex, age, and key populations
	3.3.1A2	The number and percentage of people living with HIV exposed to antiretroviral treatment (ART) by sex and age
	3.7.1	Proportion of women of reproductive age (aged 15-49 years) who have their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods
	3.7.2	Adolescent birth rate (aged 10-14 years; aged 15-19 years) per 1000 women in that age group
	3.9.3	Mortality rate attributed to unintentional poisoning
	3.a.1	Age-standardised prevalence of current tobacco use among persons aged 15 years and older – by sex
4	4.1.1	Proportion of children and young people (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum, proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex
	4.1.2	Completion rate (primary education, lower secondary education, upper secondary education) – done by population group and sex
	4.2.2	Participation rate in organised learning (one year before the official primary entry age), by sex
	4.3.1	Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training, by sex, geographic type and disability status
	4.5.1	Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict affected, as data become available) for all education indicators where disaggregation is possible
	4.5.1A	Percentage of 7–18-year-olds with disabilities who are attending and are not attending an educational institution – done by sex
	4.6.1D	Proportion of the population in a given age group achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional (a) literacy; and (b) numeracy, by sex
	4.7.1	Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development, including gender equality and human rights, are mainstreamed at all levels in: (a) national education policies, (b) curricula, (c) teacher education and (d) student assessment
5	5.1.1	Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex
	5.2.1D	Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 18 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age
	5.2.2D	Number of individuals who were victims of sexual offence in the previous 12 months by type of sexual offence
	5.2.2A1	Incidence of human trafficking for sexual purposes brought to police attention

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	5.2.2A2	Number of GBV and non-GBV cases reported in the command centre for psychological support by province
	5.3.1	Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before the age 15 and before age 18
	5.3.1A	Percentage of early marriages experienced by girls before the age of 15 years
	5.4.1D	Percentage of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex
	5.5.1	Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliament and (b) local governments
	5.5.2	Proportion of women in managerial positions
	5.6.1D	Proportion of women aged 18-49 years who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care
	5.6.2	Number of countries with laws and regulations that guarantee full and equal access to women and men aged 15 years and older to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education
	5.a.1	(a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure
	5.a.2	Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control
	5.b.1	Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex
	5.c.1	Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment
8	8.3.1	Proportion of informal employment in total employment by sector and sex
	8.5.1D	Median monthly earnings of female and male employees by occupations
	8.5.2	Unemployment rate by sex, age, and persons with disabilities
	8.6.1	Percentage of youth (aged 15-24 years) not in education, employment, or training (NEET)
	8.6.1A	Percentage of youth (15-34 years) not in education, employment, or training
	8.7.1D	Proportion and number of children aged 7-17 years engaged in child labour by sex and age
	8.8.1	Fatal and non-fatal occupational injuries per 100 000 workers, by sex and migrant status
10	10.2.1	Proportion of people living below 50% of median income, by sex, age, and persons with disabilities
	10.3.2	Proportion of population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed in the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law.
	16.2.2D	Incidence of human trafficking for sexual purposes brought to police attention (per 100 000)
	16.7.1	Proportion of positions in national and local institutions, including (a) the legislatures; (b) the public service; and (c) the judiciary, compared to national distributions, by sex, age; persons with disabilities and population groups

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Table A: South Africa's progress towards achieving the SDGs



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4.5.2 Summary of Progress towards Goal 5

SDG Indicator Tracking table						
Target	Indicator	Unit of measure	Baseline value	2019 (or nearest year) value	Latest available value	Status
Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls						
Target 5.1	End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere					
5.1.1	Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex	<i>The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996</i> <i>Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act of 2000</i> <i>Employment Equity Act, 1998 (EEA)</i> <i>Labour Relations Act, 1995 (LRA)</i> <i>Marriage Act of 1961</i> <i>Recognition of Customary Marriages Act of 1998</i> <i>Civil Union of 2006</i>	x	x	x	
Target 5.2	Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation					
5.2.1D	Percentage of ever-partnered women and girls aged 18 years and older subjected to physical or sexual violence by any partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age	Physical	7,7 (2016)			
		Sexual	2,3 (2016)			
5.2.2D	Number of individuals who were victims of sexual offence in the previous 12 months by type of sexual offence.	Total Sexual Offences	51 895 (2015)	52 420 (2018)	46 214 (2020)	
		Rape	41 503 (2015)	41 583 (2018)	36 330 (2020)	
		Sexual Assault	6 212 (2015)	7 437 (2018)	7 025 (2020)	
		Attempted Sexual Offences	2 573 (2015)	2 146 (2018)	1 800 (2020)	
		Contact Sexual Offences	1 607 (2015)	1 254 (2018)	1 059 (2020)	
5.2.2A1	Incidence of human trafficking for sexual purposes brought to police attention	Number of incidents	12 (2015)	6 (2018)	6 (2020)	
		Incidents per 100 000 population	0,02 (2015)	0,01 (2018)	0,01 (2020)	
5.2.2A2	Number of GBV and non-GBV cases reported in the command centre for psychosocial support by province	GBV	2 207 (2019)	6 911 (2020)	4 261 (2021)	
		Non-GBV	4 659 (2019)	11 885 (2020)	5 290 (2021)	
		Referred	444 (2019)	1 024 (2020)	515 (2021)	
Target 5.3	Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation					
5.3.1	Proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18	before 15	0,9 (2016)			
		before 18	3,6 (2016)			
5.3.1A	Percentage of early marriages experienced by girls before the age of 15 years	Percentage	0,008 (2015)	0,016 (2018)	0,019 (2021)	
Target 5.4	Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate					
5.4.1D	Percentage of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex	Unpaid Domestic work	Male	5,1 (2000)	6,1 (2010)	
			Female	12,6 (2000)	13,5 (2010)	
		Unpaid care work	Male	0,3 (2000)	0,3 (2010)	
			Female	2,2 (2000)	2,0 (2010)	
Target 5.5	Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life					
5.5.1	Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments	National parliaments	42,4 (2009)	42,5 (2014)	44,6 (2019)	
		local governments	35,8 (2009)	38,9 (2014)	38,8 (2019)	
5.5.2	Proportion of women in managerial positions	South Africa	31,9 (2015)	30,4 (2018)	31,9 (2020)	
Target 5.6	Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences					

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SDG Indicator Tracking table						
Target	Indicator	Unit of measure	Baseline value	2019 (or nearest year) value	Latest available value	Status
5.6.1.D	Proportion of women aged 18–49 years who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care	South Africa	8,3 (2015)			
5.6.2	Number of countries with laws and regulations that guarantee full and equal access to women and men aged 15 years and older to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education	The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa No 108 of 1996 as amended in 2003	x	x	x	
		The Choice on Termination of Pregnancy (CToP) Act; No. 92 of 1996	x	x	x	
		The South African Children's Act (2005) (as amended by the Children's Amendment Act, No. 41 of 2007)	x	x	x	
		The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act (2007)	x	x	x	
		The South African Schools Act (1996)	x	x	x	
		The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (No. 4 of 2000)	x	x	x	
Target 5.a	Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws					
5.a.1	Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure	Male	52,0 (2016)			
		Female	34,0 (2016)			
		Other	14,0 (2016)			
5.a.2	Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control	The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996	x	x	x	
		Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act of 2000	x	x	x	
		Restitution of Land Rights Act 22 of 1994	x	x	x	
		Recognition of Customary Marriages Act 120 of 1998	x	x	x	
Target 5.b	Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women					
5.b.1	Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex	Male	64.0 (2017)	76.6 (2019)	77.9 (2022)	
		Female	66.6 (2017)	79.7 (2019)	80.9 (2022)	
		Total	65.4 (2017)	78.2 (2019)	79.5 (2022)	
Target 5.c	Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels					
5.c.1	Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment	Gender Responsive Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring, Evaluation and Auditing Framework (GRPBMEAF) (2019)	x	x	x	
		National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP on GBVF) (2020)	x	x	x	
		Country indicators for monitoring progress on the Empowerment and Advancement of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities (2020)	x	x	x	
		(National Development Plan (NDP) (2012)	x	x	x	

■ Progress

■ Stagnant/No change

■ No Progress

■ Insufficient/No data

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(ii) Routine data disaggregations provided for by major surveys in the country

South Africa collects disaggregated data routinely through major surveys which includes disaggregation by geographic location, income, sex, age, educational levels, literacy and numeracy levels, marital status, divorce, death, race, disability, migratory status, economic sectors, occupational levels and ranks, among others. The surveys that periodically collect such data include the following: General Household Surveys (annually) – Statistics SA; Quarterly Labour Force Surveys – Stats SA; Vulnerable Indicator Report (Social Profile of Vulnerable Groups such as women, children, elderly, youth and persons with disabilities) – Stats SA; Victims of Crime Survey (annually) – Stats SA; Demographic Health Survey (once every ten years) – Stats SA and Department of Health; Mid-Year Population Estimates (Annual) – Stats SA; Community Surveys (once every five years) – Stats SA; Vital Statistics – Public Higher Education (annual) – Council for Higher Education; Annual Report on Employment Equity - Commission on Employment Equity (Department of Labour); South African Women in Leadership Census (annual) – Business Women's Association of South Africa (BWASA), among others.

SECTION SIX: CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

In assessing progress on gender equality and women's empowerment in South Africa, it is critical to keep in mind the historical background to the status of women in the country, and to understand how the gendered colonial, segregationist and apartheid legacies created barriers for the achievement of gender equality. The struggles waged by women have resulted in important strides towards the national goal of a non-sexist society. This also ushered in the rights and freedoms of women which are firmly entrenched in the country's Constitution. The Beijing +30 report shows the progress made on women's empowerment and gender equality, characterized by government efforts to effect political, economic and social transformation and to overcome the barriers to gender equality and women's empowerment.

South Africa has progressive gender responsive legislation, including laws on termination of pregnancy, sexual orientation, the rights of women under customary law, rights of women workers; women's access to justice and protection against domestic violence, sexual offences, rape and harassment. However, a reflection on the past five years highlights that inadequate implementation of these legislation and policy frameworks have resulted in limited and uneven progress being made in some areas. A major challenge in realizing gender equality in South Africa lies in dismantling patriarchy and its

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effects; addressing and eliminating the high levels of violence against women and girls and high levels of gender-based violence and femicide; and in breaking the cycle of dependency of those women who continue to be marginalized and who remain vulnerable.

The nature of vulnerability that women face in 2024 is markedly different to the vulnerability women faced in 1994. It is therefore safe to say that the journey travelled for women's emancipation, empowerment and gender equality in South Africa has been a promising, but difficult one. However, it remains evident that when one compares the trends in progress over the years there is much to be proud of in the strides that have been made in realizing the rights of women in South Africa, and what needs to be accelerated to move nearer the goal of women's empowerment and gender equality in the future.

ANNEXURE 1

SUBMISSION TO REPRESENTED POLITICAL PARTIES ON THE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTIONS AND FUTURE GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

PREAMBLE (GENDER LINKS – www.genderlinks.co.za June 8th 2024)

We, a coalition of individual women and women's organisations from across South Africa, declare that women have been the majority of the electorate in South Africa throughout our thirty years of democracy, and account for 55.25% of the 27,672,264 registered voters in the 2024 elections. Women achieved the highest voter turnout, with almost 2 million more women voting than men, yet there has been a 3% decrease in women's representation in the National Assembly, from 46% to 43%.

As women, we continue to raise our voices during this watershed moment in the life of our country. The election result is an opportunity to reset and rejuvenate governance. The first sentence of South Africa's Constitution calls on us to recognise the injustices of our past, arising from *Apartheid's* oppression of people who were Black ('African, Indian and Coloured') while privileging those who were white. *Apartheid* spatial planning continues to trap the vast majority of SA's people in poverty and inequality, whilst a minority continues to own SA's land and wealth. These systemic and structural fault lines result in women bearing the brunt of precarious employment, unemployment and climate change. This seventh administration needs to ensure economic policy takes account of women's unpaid and invisible contributions to social reproduction.

The election results reflect the will of the people. The people, and women in particular, have provided a mandate for the sharing of power. SA's government of national unity must focus on implementing SA's Constitution, to transform people's lives, especially women and people

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who are marginalised for being poor, living in rural areas, having disabilities or for being LGBTQIA. The GNU must therefore be inclusive, adopt an intersectional approach, and prioritise the well-being of all, but particularly the well-being of women and gender non-conforming persons, people living in rural areas, children, the elderly and those with disabilities, as well as create an environment in which our youth can grow and participate to their full potential.

The political parties have been given a mandate to exercise leadership that is responsible, accountable and ethical, and that enables the country to move forward in a more united and reconciled way, in which the President and political parties put the citizens and country first. They are mandated not to regress on already hard-won rights, but to move us forward in ways that can translate the rights promised by our Constitution into improvements in our lived realities.

The majority voice of women must translate into equal opportunities for all and bold and ambitious, accelerated and transformative actions to ensure the enjoyment of human rights, development, and peace and security for women and girls in all our diversities.

Women of South Africa therefore declare that they will not tolerate:

1. Anyone or any party in the legislature and executive that has no respect for the rule of law, or promotes bigotry, including racism, sexism, ageism, homophobia or xenophobia. (See Constitution Article 2, Sec 9 Equality Clause)
2. Any party that has failed to declare its commitment to and respect for a constitutional democracy.
3. Any party that does not support the human security of all, and women's security in particular (1).

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4. Any party that tries to roll back gender equality gains, e.g. in the workplace, rural women's rights to land, and socio-economic rights, or attempts to introduce policy that is in any way sexist and patriarchal.
5. The continued exclusion of women from the economic landscape

Women therefore demand that the Government of National Unity:

1. Ensures that its members and public representatives deployed are based on upholding Constitutional values, principles, priorities and ethical behaviour; including transparency, accountability and public participation
2. Ensures that the incumbents of the next administration are competent, selected on merit, beyond reproach and inclusive of women and youth in strategic positions.
3. Ensures that the socio-economic commitments are gender sensitive, transformative and developmental, serving the needs of poor people and rural communities.
4. Ensures that the National Strategic Plan on Gender-based Violence and Femicide and the National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security are implemented and resourced.
5. Considers measures for socio-economic protection which should include the Universal Basic Income Grant as a form of solidarity economy, while at the same time urgently implementing inclusive economic growth measures that prioritise job creation towards productive self-reliance and active citizenry.
6. Commits to the equal representation of women in all their diversity in the National Assembly, Provincial legislatures, Cabinet, Executive Council, and the Presidency.
7. Ensures women's equal, effective, transformative participation in all structures and processes
8. Continues to give effect to SA's regional and international commitments to uphold a human-rights, rules-based system, focused on global peace and cooperation, in all multilateral and global institutions, including the International Court of Justice and International Criminal Court

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As women of South Africa, we have demonstrated a rich history of working across parties, as we effectively did as the Women's National Coalition in the run-up to the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994. Thirty years down the line we are recommitting to shaping the nature of democracy in our country. South African women contribute to families and society, including as workers, employers and job creators. The GNU can create an inclusive and growing economy if it recognises the value of this work to reproduce a society based on the wellbeing of all its people. We therefore appeal to our political parties to exercise the necessary maturity and vision to collectively lead our nation to peace, stability and prosperity for all.

We are supportive of the call to convene a Multi-stakeholder National Dialogue in the first quarter of the 7th Administration in 2024 as a constructive way of pulling the country together, collectively developing strategies to deal with South Africa's socio-economic and social cohesion challenges, and for ensuring that peace and stability prevail.

We make this submission, mindful that our own task is to hold those in power accountable for their decisions and omissions, and to organise ourselves into a women's movement that can support the continued pursuit of gender equality and human security for all.

1. *Human security is a human right; it refers to the security of people and communities, as opposed to the security of states. Human security recognises that there are several dimensions related to feeling safe, such as freedom from fear, freedom from want, and freedom from indignity.” <https://gppac.net/what-we-do/human-security>*

Comment on SA: Women demand voice in post election plans

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