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Twenty Years - A Labour Perspective



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Women and gender relations in the South African labour market: A 20 year review

By Liesl Orr and Tanya van Meelis

INTRODUCTION

Despite the enormous contribution that women make to economies, communities and families throughout the world, they still experience the deepest levels of poverty, oppression and exploitation. Women have borne the brunt of the social costs of changes in the world economy, such as neo-liberal globalisation, casualisation, public sector cutbacks, work restructuring and deregulation.

In 2004, a decade after the dawn of democracy in South Africa, women continued to have lower incomes, higher unemployment and less access to assets than men (Makgetla, 2004a). This is still the case twenty years after the establishment of the first democratic government. Makgetla also highlighted the fact that *"racial differences were larger than gender inequalities within racial groups"* which means that *"...we can only understand the position of women in the economy ... if we also take race into account"*. In fact, these racial differences are largely reflective of class differences, because for many years in South Africa, race has been inextricably linked to class. While this is changing, it is still largely the case. Similarly, much of the change that has taken place for women, has been shaped by class. Thus, while there has been a significant increase in women in management positions, there are still far higher numbers of working class African women earning poverty wages.

The South African reality remains shaped by the mutually reinforcing relationship between race, class and gender. African women in particular continue to experience the highest levels of unemployment, and where they are employed they receive the lowest incomes, and remain concentrated in the lowest status and most insecure occupations.

This paper reflects on the position of women in the South African labour market, looking in particular at employment, unemployment and income inequality. We also reflect, in brief, on the impact of HIV and AIDS on women and gender relations in South Africa, given the significance of this epidemic for the lives and well-being of women, as well as their economic position.

The paper begins by briefly reflecting on the structural factors determining the position of women in the economy. It then outlines the position of women compared to men, looking at trends over time. It concludes with some suggested areas requiring intervention and transformation.

In sum, the key features of the last twenty years, in relation to women and the labour market, are as follows:

- Women's share of employment has risen, but men still form the majority of the employed;
- African women and black women in general are least likely, of all women and men, to be in paid employment;
- They are most likely to be counted as "economically inactive" meaning that they have never had a paid income of their own, nor are they seeking one;

- The growth in employment has not kept up at all with the growth in those wanting employment;
- The growth in women's employment has not reflected an improvement in the quality of jobs and the economic position of women;
- The new areas of employment for women have tended to be insecure, with increased flexibility, low pay and low status, thus the 'feminisation' of work has been accompanied by declining quality of jobs, pay and working conditions;
- Unemployment remains high for women, young African women in particular, in fact there was an *increase* in unemployment rates in the first decade of democracy, and while this has since tapered off, there are still not enough new jobs being created to make much of a dent in the levels of unemployment;
- African women are still clustered within the lowest income groups; and
- Women in general, and African women particularly, continue to occupy jobs associated with "women's work" and the gendered division of labour in the home such as domestic work, cleaning, nursing and teaching.

THE FEMINISATION OF LABOUR

"Gender outcomes in labour markets do not reflect natural or objective differences between men and women, but rather reflect the outcome of discrimination and disadvantage...." (Standing, 1999:1).

Between 1995 and 2005, women accounted for almost 58% of the growth in the labour force, while men accounted for 42.3% (DoL, 2006:5). However, the labour force includes both the unemployed and employed. Although high levels of unemployment and poverty remain, there have been increases in women's paid employment.

However, this has largely been reflective of a decline in the quality of jobs. In fact, rather than signalling an improvement in gender relations for women, with greater access to paid employment, in many ways this shows a continuation of existing inequality, where women are drawn into jobs where pay and status are low. The growth in employment in the South African labour market has largely been in sectors with greater insecurity and lower pay, such as retail and trade, where women predominate. Globally, there has been a "feminisation of employment" which might at face-value be hailed as an advance, but in reality is characterised by increasing flexibility (in favour of employers), low pay and poor working conditions.

"The term 'feminisation' was intended to capture the double meaning and the sense of irony that after generations of efforts to integrate women into regular wage labour as equals, the convergence that was the essence of the original hypothesis has been toward the type of employment and labour force participation patterns associated with women" (Standing, 1999:1).

The concept of "feminisation of labour" is thus used to describe the growth in women's employment over the last few decades, which has simultaneously been accompanied by a declining quality of jobs. But it is also intended to illustrate that the growth in women's employment has been into jobs that are associated with traditional notions of "feminine work".

"More women participate in paid employment than at any other time in history. The entry of women into the labour force has meant that, in many cases, the economic opportunities available to them have grown. However, equality of opportunity remains elusive. Sex segmentation of labour markets is endemic,

with women concentrated in lower quality, irregular and informal employment. Economic stabilisation programmes and the process of global integration have frequently squeezed household incomes, pushing women to enter the paid labour force. At the same time, economic reforms have intensified demands on women's unpaid work, creating a situation in which increasing the supply of women's labour is a central strategy by which families cope with fundamental economic change. At a basic level, women's employment, paid and unpaid, may be the single most important factor for keeping many households out of poverty" (Heintz, 2006:9).

Casale (2004:1) shows that similar to the world-wide trend of feminisation of the labour force, in South Africa this has not challenged gender inequalities. Furthermore, the growth in women's labour force participation has largely been characterised by increased unemployment of women.

"... the rise in the labour force participation of women in South Africa has translated mainly into an increase in unemployment. Nonetheless, there has also been some increase in employment among women over the same period. ... [T]he nature of the feminisation of the labour market in South Africa has been such that the disadvantaged position of women in the labour market relative to that of men has not been fundamentally challenged. Women continue to be over-represented in low-income, less secure employment. Where there has been some opportunity for advancement over the period, white women seem to have been the main beneficiaries." (Casale, 2004:1)

But why is the impact of economic policies and changes in the labour market different for women and men? The reason for this is because women are structurally in a different position from men in the economy, because:

- Work that women do is unpaid and unrecognised;
- Much of women's paid work is outside of the formal economy;
- Women are concentrated in particular sectors; and
- Women's paid work is less valued

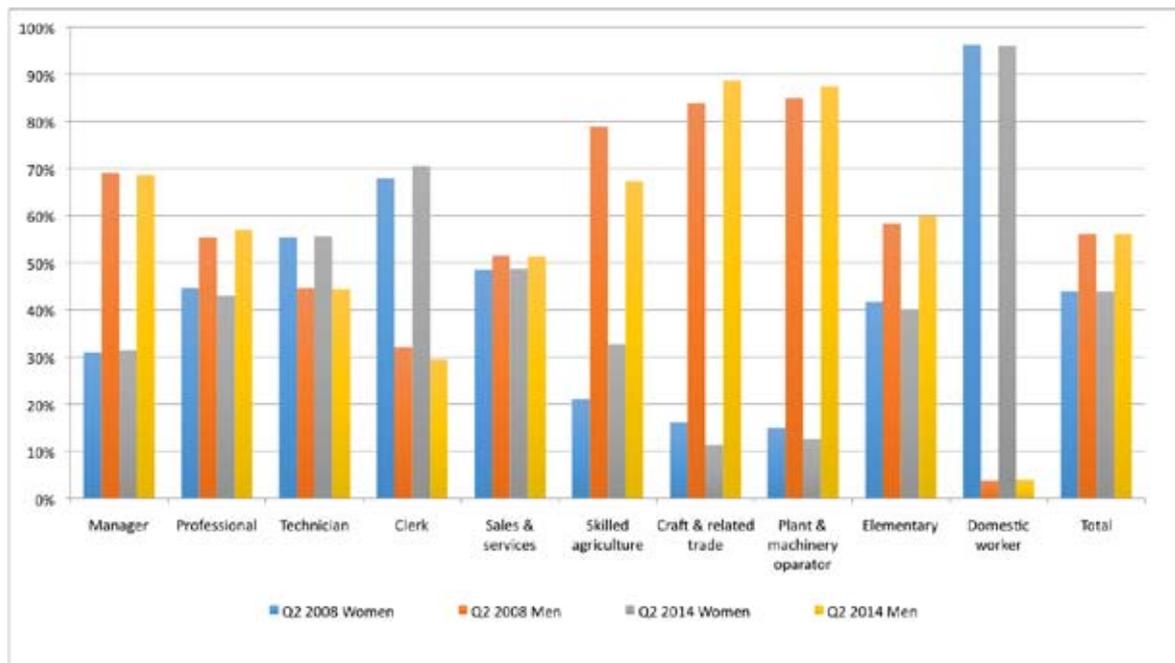
Gender division of labour

There is a gender division of labour in paid employment and in unpaid household work. Much of the work that women do (both paid and unpaid) tends to be invisible and assumed to be 'natural' rather than requiring particular skills, and therefore of little value.

Most of the tasks and occupations undertaken by women are located within the household and the service sector and are not viewed as productive. The paid work in which women predominate often do not 'produce' specific, tangible and measurable 'products' (e.g. cleaners, domestic workers, nurses and teachers). These jobs often involve a reproductive, caring aspect.

"There is a mutually reinforcing relationship between the subordinate status of women, which influences how their work is regarded, and the fact that lower-status occupations are reserved for lower-status workers, i.e. women" (Orr, 1998:4).

Figure 1: Occupation by Gender in 2008 and 2014



Source: QLFS Q2 2008 and QLFS Q2 2014

Figure 1 above shows that women are most likely to be domestic workers, clerks and sales and services workers. When we also apply racial disaggregation, black women are predominantly found in domestic work and cleaning, contrasted with white men who are largely in management and professional occupations. Black men tend to predominate in manufacturing, in artisanal and elementary occupations. Where black women are in professional occupations they tend to be in teaching, social work and administrative work (Gender statistics, Stats SA 2011).

Unpaid reproductive labour

Women perform the vast majority of unpaid reproductive labour in South Africa. Reproductive labour is the work necessary to maintain society and reproduce future generations. This includes childcare, home-based health care, informal education, household production and maintenance, and taking care of the sick and elderly.

"Most reproductive labour is unpaid labour and the goods and services produced are not sold in a marketplace to earn a profit, but instead they are consumed directly within a household or community" (Orr, Heintz and Tregenna, 1998:1).

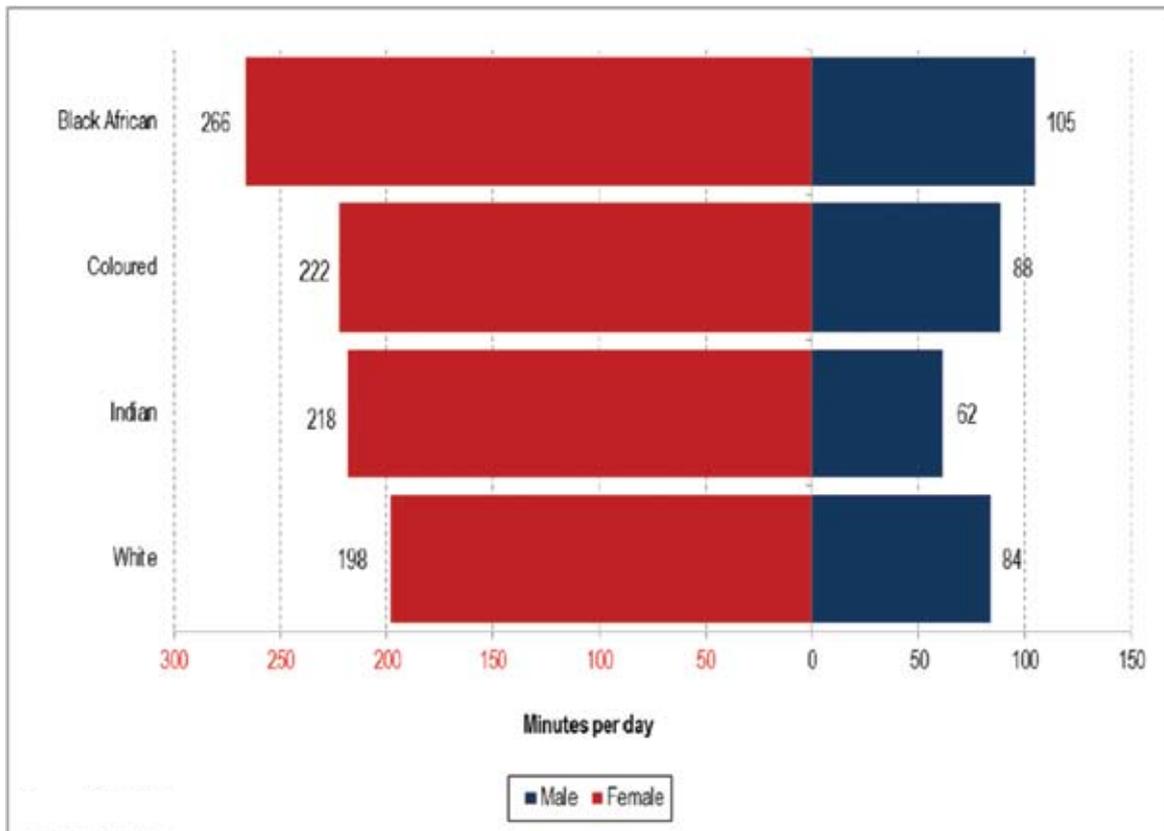
There are important economic outcomes that arise from the fact that women are largely responsible for performing reproductive labour. Firstly, since the work is unpaid, women are dependent on another source of income in order to live (Orr, Heintz and Tregenna, 1998:1). Often this source of income is a man who is in paid employment in the formal economy, although the source of income may also be through social grants. This dependence on transfers of income clearly places women at economic risk. It may also keep women in abusive and threatening situations to maintain an income source (Orr, Heintz and Tregenna, 1998:2).

Furthermore, the costs associated with household labour are an additional burden to women. Where there is not sufficient income for various household services, women are forced to provide them through their own labour, for instance, walking to fetch wood and water, where this is not easily accessible.

Responsibility for unpaid reproductive labour also places constraints on women’s ability to access formal employment, since most jobs do not make provision for childcare and other household care responsibilities.

Figure 2 demonstrates visibly the gender division of labour that exists in homes, where even when women are in paid employment, they still have by far the greater share of responsibility for household labour compared to employed men. Of course, women who are not in paid employment spend even more time on household labour.

Figure 2: Mean minutes per day spent on unpaid housework, care of others and collecting fuel and water among employed women and men in each population group, 2010



Source: Time Use Survey (2010) in Gender Statistics in SA, 2001-2011 (2011) Stats SA

Figure 2 shows that employed women from all groups are more likely to spend more time doing unpaid housework, caring for others and collecting fuel and water than their employed male counterparts.

Among women, employed black African women spend the most time (266 minutes) doing unpaid housework, while employed white women spend the least amount of time (198 minutes).

Although employed men in all population groups spend substantially less time doing unpaid household work than all employed women, employed black African men spend more time on this work than employed coloured, Indian/Asian and white men. In 2010, employed black African men spent on average 20 more minutes doing unpaid housework than coloured and white men and 44 minutes more than Indian/Asian men (Gender Statistics in SA, Stats SA, 2011).

Labour market segmentation

The concept of labour market segmentation helps to explain the position of women in the labour market.

The South African labour market can be divided into three broad segments: the primary labour market, the secondary labour market and non-market labour (Makgetla, 2004b).

The primary labour market is composed of professionals and management, who are the most highly paid and skilled section of the labour market, and is predominantly comprised of white males.

The secondary labour market contains production workers, low-paid service workers and agricultural labour. These are predominately lower-paid black male workers in mining and manufacturing, with black women workers mainly located in agriculture and paid domestic work. This segment receives low wages and experiences high levels of unemployment. There are high levels of unionisation in manufacturing and mining (where black men predominate), whereas in the agricultural and domestic sectors where women are in the majority unionisation rates are extremely low.

The non-market segment (which is the informal/unpaid labour market) includes informal sector workers, subsistence agricultural labour and unpaid domestic and family labour. Economic opportunities within the informal economy are characterised by unstable employment, low pay and great insecurity. Workers in the informal economy do not have access to legal protection and regulation of employment conditions. There is weak organisation and collective action within the informal economy. However, for street traders in particular, there is growing organisation (but with numerous challenges and obstacles).

A number of women try to make a living through the informal economy (given low levels of formal employment), which also has an impact on the quality of their lives. The informal economy is more accurately described as the subsistence or survivalist economy. It is difficult to obtain accurate statistics on the informal economy (because it is by its very nature unregulated and invisible and definitions of what constitutes informal work differ). Taking note of the limitations of data, in 2014 women were found to make up around 40% of the informal economy (Stats SA: 2014).

Women most certainly form the majority of the unpaid labour market segment and of the subsistence/survivalist economy.

There are massive differences in wages and other employment related benefits between women and men, associated with the gender division of labour and segmentation of the labour market, emphasising the extent to which women's work is under-valued.

A REVIEW OF WOMEN'S POSITION IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN LABOUR MARKET

This section reviews the available data pointing to the position of women in the labour market. Where possible, we provide data disaggregated by race, given that in most instances the differences between women across different racial groups are even starker than the gender differences within racial groups. For example, the difference between black African women and white women is far greater than the difference between black African women and men. Of course, the difference between black African women and white men is the most glaring of all.

The four Censuses that have been conducted during the twenty years of democracy show that the South African population continues to have slightly more women than men. On average, the population consists of 48.2% of men and 51.7% of women (Census, Stats SA 2011).

Table 1: Population by Gender 1996-2011

Percentage of Women and Men in the Population According to Census		
	Women	Men
Census 1996	51.9	48.1
Census 2001	52.2	47.8
Census 2007	51.7	48.3
Census 2011	51.3	48.7

Source: Census 2011

Comparison of employment/unemployment data over a period of 20 years poses challenges as the data is not completely reliable and is not fully comparable over time. Survey methodologies changed from the October Household Survey (until 1999) to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey. Makgetla (2004a:2) explains that the main concern is that they redefined unpaid labour to include subsistence farming and working in a family enterprise as employment. (OHS had not included this as employment whereas QLFS shifted to categorising it as informal employment.) This change in categorisation accounted for a significant increase in employment between 1997 and 2002 (Makgetla, 2004a). In fact, Makgetla (citing Devey et al, 2002) argues that: "The inclusion of subsistence farming alone as 'employment' accounted for 20% of reported employment growth between 1997 and 2002" (2004a:2).

Makgetla (2004a) also points out how the narrow definition of unemployment creates a gender bias. A person is defined as unemployed in South Africa if he or she is actively seeking work. However, women may be engaged in subsistence activities, or working in family enterprises and therefore not be actively seeking work. They are in fact discouraged from seeking jobs, but would take a paying job if offered one.

As a result of these factors, the data on black women is particularly affected. It is likely that the extent of unemployment and underemployment of black women is underestimated as a result. It also means that what may appear to be an increase in employment of black African women is in fact the result of the changes in the definition of what constitutes paid work under the QLFS. In other words, this increase in paid employment does not necessarily reflect an actual growth in employment, or a real change in women's work status. What it does reflect is a changed perception of women's participation in the economy and a broadened definition of employment, in particular through the inclusion of subsistence labour and informal survivalist activities into the definition of employment. Whilst on the one hand, this improves the recognition of women's contribution to the economy as a whole; on the other hand, it has the damaging effect of creating the impression that this constitutes quality, paid employment.

Employment and Unemployment

"The feminisation of unemployment, and the relatively smaller increase in the demand for female labour in the formal sector, would seem to indicate that a greater number of women are looking for employment principally because they are being pushed, rather than pulled, into the labour market" (Casale and Posel, 2002:3).

The unemployment rate for women has been higher than that of men – whether using the narrow definition of employment or the expanded definition of employment. Across all racial groups unemployment was higher for women than men. However, race also plays a significant role and unemployment among Africans was significantly higher than any other racial group. In taking these racial differences into account when doing our gender analysis, it is evident that African women experienced the highest rates of unemployment in 1995, 2005 and 2014 – regardless of whether the narrow or broad definitions of unemployment are used.

In 2003 the unemployment rate for African women was 55% (almost 10 times that of white men, and more than 5 times that of white women). This had increased from a 47% unemployment rate for African women in 1995.

Unemployment was even higher for young people, with young African women (those under the age of 30 years) facing an unemployment rate of 75% in 2003 (Makgetla, 2004a). They constituted 17% of the labour force, but only 31% of the employed in 2003 (Makgetla, 2004a).

Table 2 : Employment status by gender 1995, 2005 and 2014¹

	1995		2005		2014	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Employed	39%	61%	43%	57%	44%	56%
Narrow Unemployed	55%	45%	54%	46%	49%	51%
Broad Unemployed	58%	42%	59%	41%	51%	49%
Share of narrow labour force	42%	58%	46%	54%	45%	55%
Share of broad labour force	45%	55%	49%	51%	46%	54%

Source: DOL (2006) *Women in the South African Labour Market 1995-2005*; Stats SA QLFS Q2 2014

Table 3: Unemployment and Labour force participation rates 1995, 2005 and 2014

	1995		2005		2014	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Narrow Unemployment rate	23%	14%	32%	23%	28%	24%
Broad Unemployment rate	40%	24%	47%	31%	42%	34%
Labour force participation rate	49%	66%	64%	72%	61%	72%
Labour force absorption rate	30%	51%	33%	49%	37%	49%

Source: DOL (2006) *Women in the South African Labour Market 1995-2005*; Stats SA QLFS Q2 2014; OHS 1995, LFS 2007

Table 2 and **3** above show the following trends between 1995 and 2014 (bearing in mind that disaggregation of these figures by race would show far higher levels of unemployment for black African women):

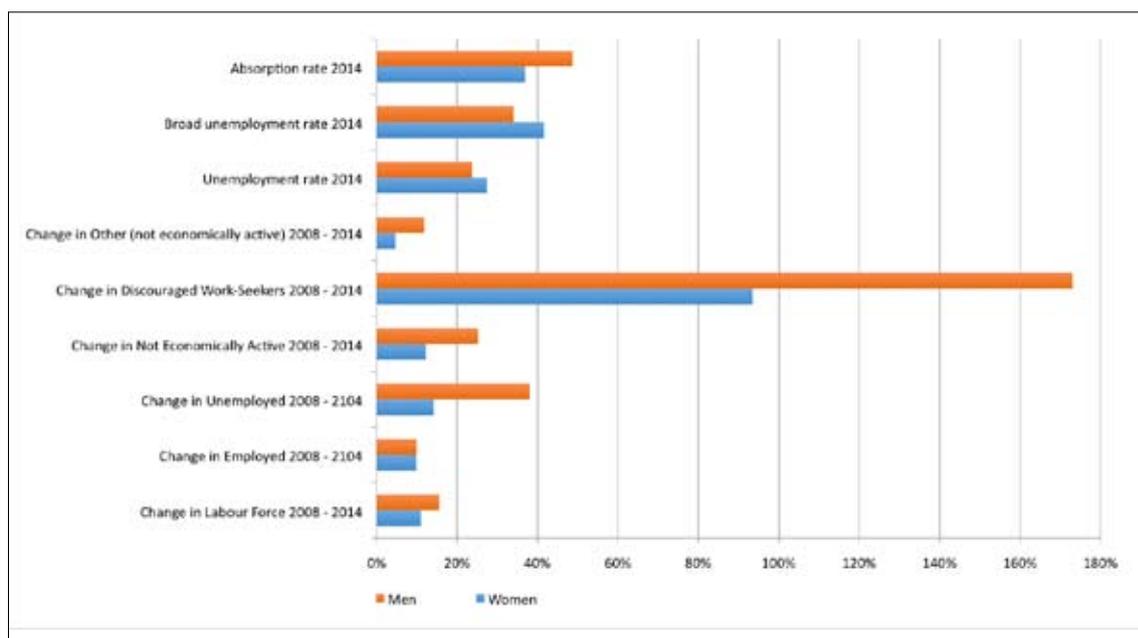
- The proportion of women in employment compared to men increased from 39% in 1995 to 44% in 2014. While this shows a closing of the gender gap, when we look more closely at what type of employment women have been able to access, the picture is more bleak (this is discussed further elsewhere in this chapter). We should also note that some of this “increase” is the result of the inclusion of informal and subsistence activities as “work”;
- The proportion of women making up the unemployed compared to men has decreased from 55% in 1995 to 49% in 2014 (narrow unemployment) and from 58% to 51% (broad unemployment) due to significant job losses in sectors employing predominantly men;
- However, the unemployment rate for women (see **Table 3**) has increased from 23% in 1995, to 32% in 2005 and 28% in 2014. The unemployment rate has also gone up for men from 14% in 1995 to 24% in 2014 (and even more so when including discouraged workseekers);

¹ This includes discouraged work seekers.

- This shows that while more women are entering the labour force (as demonstrated by the growth in women's share of the labour force from 42% to 46% and the increase in the labour force participation rate from 49% in 1995 to 64% in 2005), not enough new jobs are being created; and also that jobs are being lost faster than they are being created; and
- The fact that the labour absorption rate is so low for women, (37% compared to 49% for men) means that the labour market is not able to absorb the growth in the working age population adequately.

The following section examines changes in women's economic status between 2008 and 2014 more closely.

Figure 3: Changes in Labour Force Characteristics by Gender between 2008 and 2014



Source: QLFS Q2 2008 and QLFS Q2 2014

When we examine broader labour force characteristics between 2008 and 2014 some interesting trends emerge (as shown in Figure 3 above, and Table 4 below):

- The labour force for women increased by 11% while employment only increased by 10% and unemployment increased by 14%. Essentially this means that not all women who entered the labour force (through a growing population as a key reason) were able to obtain employment. In other words, the increase in employment has not been sufficient to keep up with the increase in those who want employment;
- For men, the increase in the labour force was even greater (at 16%) and the increase in unemployment for men was a massive 38% (from 1,9 to 2,6 million), while employment grew by 10%. Nevertheless, the proportion and the actual number of the unemployed and not economically active were far higher for women than men to start with (relative to the employed);
- The absorption rate for women (employment as a percentage of the working age population) reflects this because it dropped from 38% in 2008 to 37% in 2014. This absorption rate shows the exclusion of women from the labour market because it is significantly lower than that of men which was 53% in 2008 and 49% in 2014;
- The number of women who are discouraged work-seekers rose significantly to almost 1,3 million in 2014. This is nearly double the amount that existed in 2008 (a 94% increase). When taking discouraged worker-seekers into account, the broad definition of unemployment for

women rose from 35% to 42% between 2008 and 2014 and

- The number of discouraged work-seekers who are men rose quite dramatically by 174% to just over 1,1 million (thereby narrowing the gap between women and men, but still with a larger number of discouraged work-seekers amongst women).

While the data also shows that unemployment among women is higher than unemployment among men this occurs among both youth and adults. The data shows that narrow unemployment among men was 21% in 2008 while it was 27% among women. Unemployment was much higher for young people in 2008 but it was particularly high for young women at 38%. In comparison unemployment for young men was 28%.

Table 4: Labour force (15 – 64 years) characteristics by sex in Q2 2008 and Q2 2014

		Q2 2008	Q2 2014	Change	
		Thousand	Thousand	Percentage	Actual
Both sexes	Labour Force	17,844	20,248	13%	2,404
	Employed	13,729	15,094	10%	1,365
	Unemployed	4,114	5,154	25%	1,040
	Not economically active	12,861	15,084	17%	2,223
	Discouraged work-seekers	1,079	2,419	124%	1,340
	Other (not economically active)	11,783	12,665	7%	882
	Unemployment rate	23.1%	25.5%		
	Broad unemployment rate	29.1%	37.4%		
	Absorption rate	44.7%	42.7%		
Women	Labour Force	8,237	9,145	11%	908
	Employed	6,033	6,629	10%	596
	Unemployed	2,204	2,516	14%	312
	Not economically active	7,846	8,805	12%	959
	Discouraged work-seekers	663	1,283	94%	620
	Other (not economically active)	7,183	7,522	5%	339
	Unemployment rate	26.8%	27.5%		
	Broad unemployment rate	34.8%	41.5%		
	Absorption rate	37.5%	36.9%		
Men	Labour Force	9,606	11,103	16%	1,497
	Employed	7,696	8,465	10%	769
	Unemployed	1,910	2,638	38%	728
	Not economically active	5,015	6,279	25%	1,264
	Discouraged work-seekers	416	1,136	173%	720
	Other (not economically active)	4,599	5,143	12%	544
	Unemployment rate	19.9%	23.8%		
	Broad unemployment rate	24.2%	34.0%		
	Absorption rate	52.6%	48.7%		

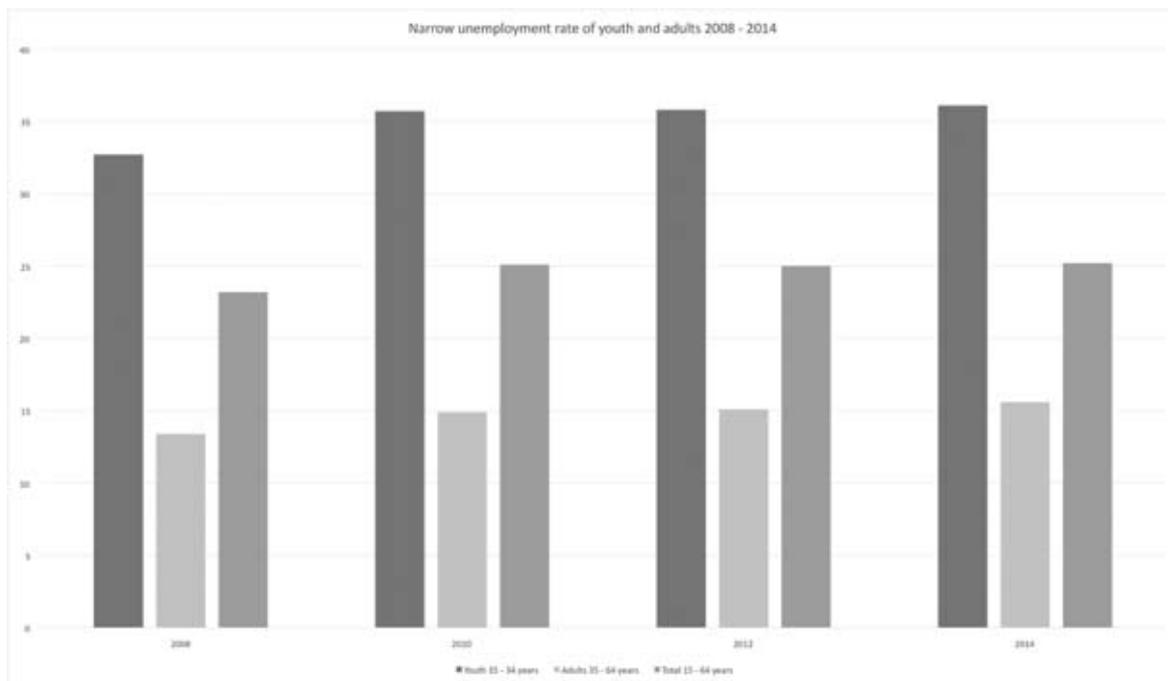
Source: QLFS Q2 2008 and QLFS Q2 2014

By 2014 narrow unemployment had increased for both men and women², but it remained higher for women at 27% while it was 24% for men. Young women still experienced the highest levels of narrow unemployment in 2014 with 40% unemployment compared to 33% unemployment for young men, 17% unemployment in adult women and 15% unemployment in adult men.

What is of concern is that unemployment across all categories is rising. However, women remain the more vulnerable group and young women the most vulnerable group.

The youth unemployment rates are substantially higher than those of adults. Over the period 2008 to 2014 the unemployment rate increased for both youth and adults (See Figure 4 below). It is important to note that the unemployment rate examined below only includes those who have actively looked for work and does not include discouraged work-seekers.

Figure 4: Narrow unemployment by Age



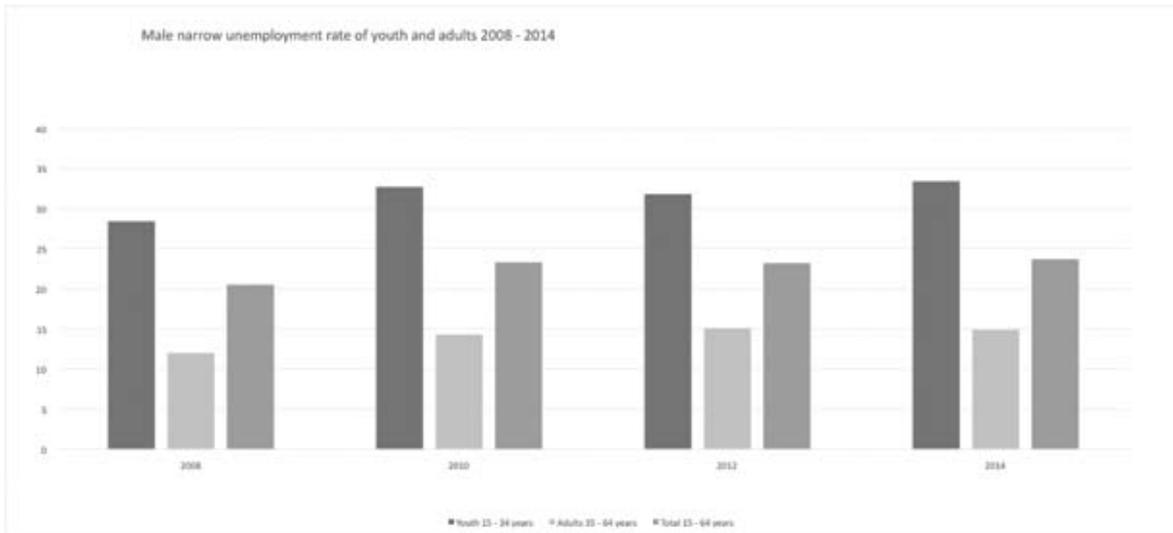
Source: Statistics SA South African Labour Market: Youth Q1: 2008 to Q1 2014

Figure 5 below compares the narrow unemployment rate for young men and adult men, showing that, while both showed a steady increase over time, the unemployment rate for young men went up by a fairly large margin between 2008 and 2010.

The unemployment rate for adult women remained fairly steady, whereas it increased to just over 40% for young adult women in 2012 (see figure 6). Furthermore, the difference between young and older women is particularly stark (more than double).

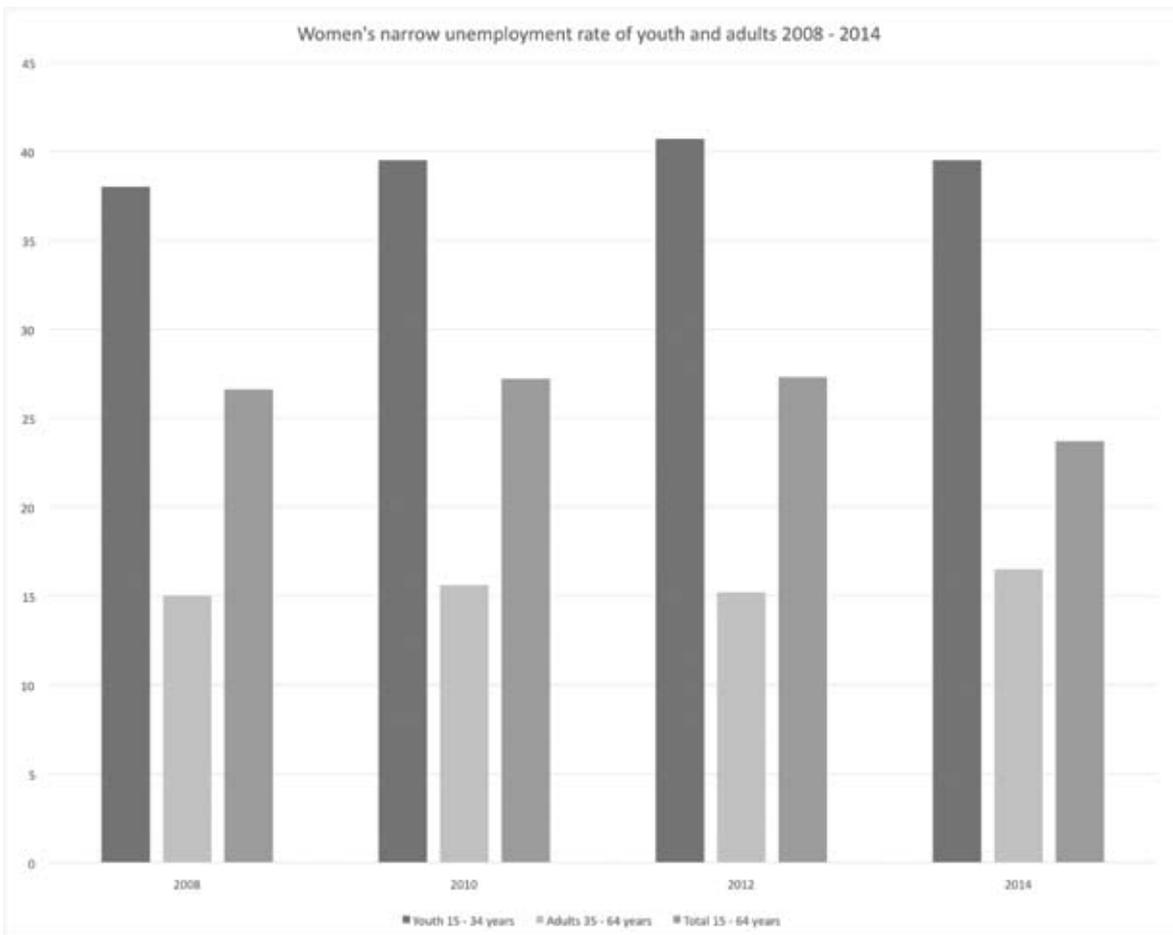
² This includes discouraged work seekers as part of the labour force.

Figure 5: Narrow unemployment for men by age



Source: Statistics SA South African Labour Market: Youth Q1: 2008 to Q1 2014 Figure 10

Figure 6: Narrow unemployment for women by age



Source: Statistics SA South African Labour Market: Youth Q1: 2008 to Q1 2014 Figure 10

In 2014 the NEET rate (not in employment and not in education or training) was 35% for young women (aged 15 – 24 years) and 30% for young men in South Africa.

Table 5: Distribution of youth (15 – 34 years) by employment status of household members 2008, 2014

Labour market status	2008	2011
	Thousand	
No one employed	4 271	5 188
1 person employed	7 043	7 743
2 people employed	4 522	4 618
3 people employed	1 560	1 381
4 people employed	590	438
5 people employed	139	104
6 people employed	67	26
7 people employed	11	0
8 people employed	6	7
Youth aged 13 – 34 years	18 209	19 504
% no one employed	23.5	26.6

Source: Statistics South Africa, South African Labour Market: Youth Q1: 2008 to Q1: 2014

South African youth are at a disadvantage when living in a household where no one is employed as labour markets are accessed through existing networks. The table below shows that the number of youth living in households where no one was employed has increased from 2008. Of the 19 and a half million youth in SA in 2014, 27% live in households where no one is employed. This has increased from 24% in 2008.

Table 6: Youth (15 – 34 years) living in households in which no one is employed by sex and population group

	2008	2014	2008	2014
	Thousand		Percentage share	
Male youth	1 984	2 560	46.5	49.3
Female youth	2 287	2 628	53.5	50.7
Total	4 271	5 188	100	100
Black African	4 033	4 853	94.4	93.6
Coloured	152	234	3.6	4.5
Indian/Asian	28	15	0.7	0.3
White	57	86	1.3	1.6
Total	4 271	5 188	100	100

Source: Statistics South Africa, South African Labour Market: Youth Q1: 2008 to Q1: 2014

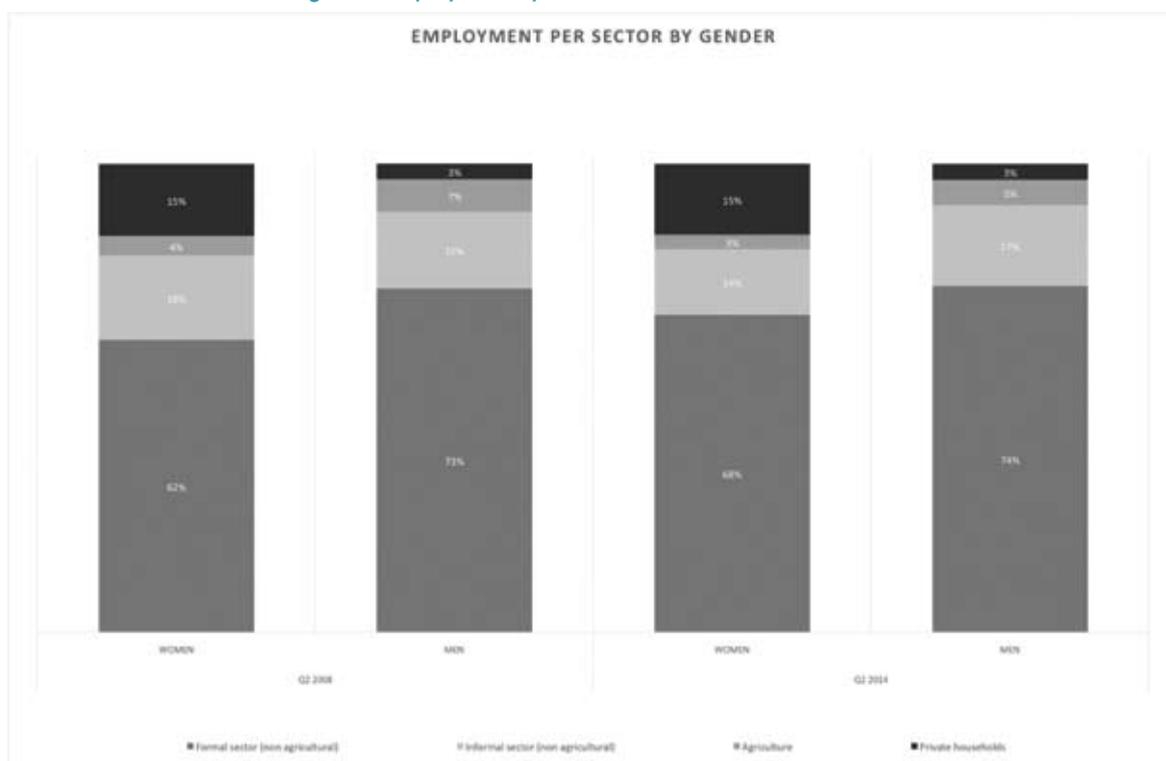
An analysis of race and gender shows that the share of young women who lived in households where no one was employed declined from 54% in 2008 to 51% in 2014. The highest proportion of young people living in households with no one employed are black Africans (see Table 6 below).

Changes in Employment by Sector

The share of women in formal sector employment as a percentage of total employment per gender rose from 62% to 68% (as shown in **Figure 7** below). This had seen a relative drop in women's employment in the informal sector (non-agricultural) and agriculture. However, when the data is disaggregated by race and gender, we can see that African women are least likely to have formal jobs, and more likely to be in informal employment or domestic work. It is interesting to note that the changes in the relative composition of the sectors are reflected by the changes in the actual numbers between 2008 and 2014:

- Of women who were employed – more women were employed in the formal sector. The actual numbers of women employed in the formal sector also grew by 728 000;
- Women's employment declined in the informal sector by 1 61 000 and this is also reflected in their declining share in informal sector employment from 18% to 14% of the total employment of women;
- The number of women employed in agriculture decreased by 46 000 and their relative share of employment in agriculture also declined from 4% to 3% of the total employment of women;
- An extra 76 000 women entered work in private households (i.e. as domestic workers) but because the number of women working in this sector is so large (1 million in 2014) the percentage of women working in the sector remained around 15% of the total in women's employment with rounding.

Figure 7: Employment by Sector and Gender 2008 and 2014

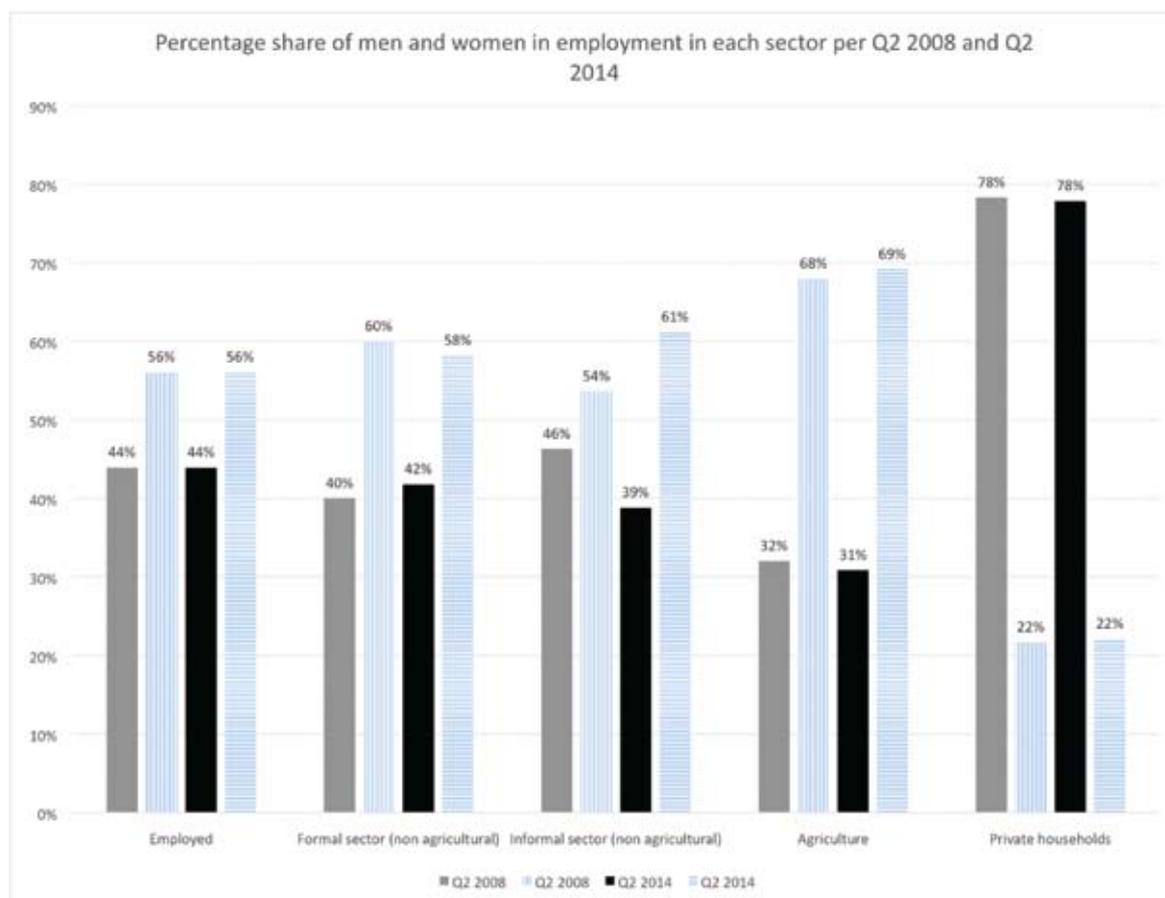


Source: QLFS Q2 2008 and QLFS Q2 2014

An analysis of the gender division of labour within each sector shows that:

- The only area of work dominated by women is “private households” where 78% of workers are women. This makes up 15% of women’s total employment. This sector is dominated by domestic work;
- The smallest sector accounting for women’s employment is agriculture (3% of women’s employment in 2014); where 1 in 3 agricultural workers are women;
- The share of women workers in the informal sector has decreased relative to male workers (women in the informal economy went from 46-39% compared to an increase from 54-61% for men) and
- Women’s share of formal sector employment increased relative to that of men (from 40-42%). Formal employment as a share of women’s total employment has increased by 4% (from 62-68%) whilst for men it has increased by 1% (from 73-74%).

Figure 8: Percentage share of employment by gender and sector, 2008 and 2014

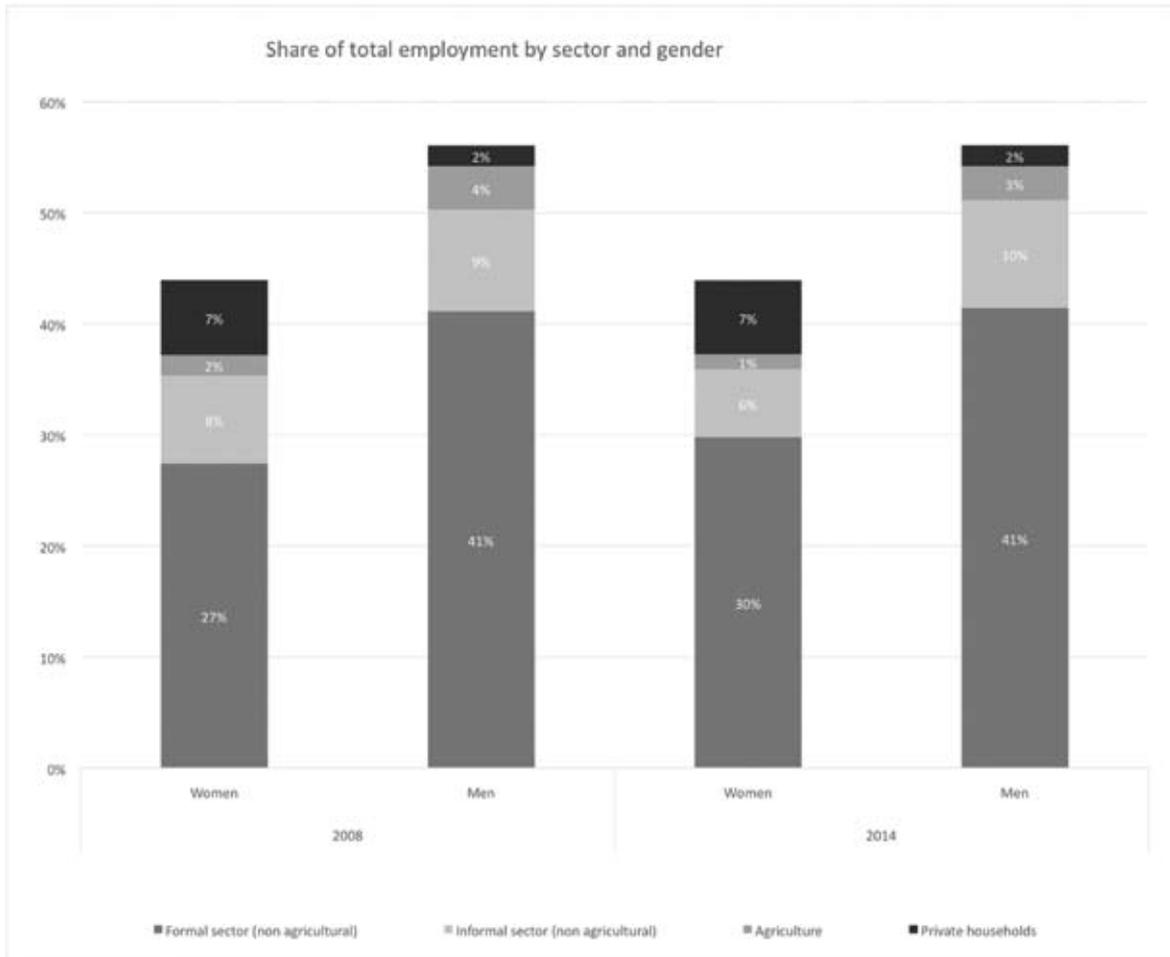


Source: QLFS Q2 2008 and QLFS Q2 2014

The graph below (Figure 8) shows how men and women have fared in the sector restructuring that has taken place among those who have been employed between 2008 and 2014:

- Employment increased for both men and women;
- Women’s share of total employment increased in the formal sector and decreased in the informal sector and agriculture; and
- Men’s share of employment in the informal sector grew as they lost jobs in agriculture and gained jobs in the informal sector.

Figure 9: Share of total employment by sector and gender, 2008 and 2014



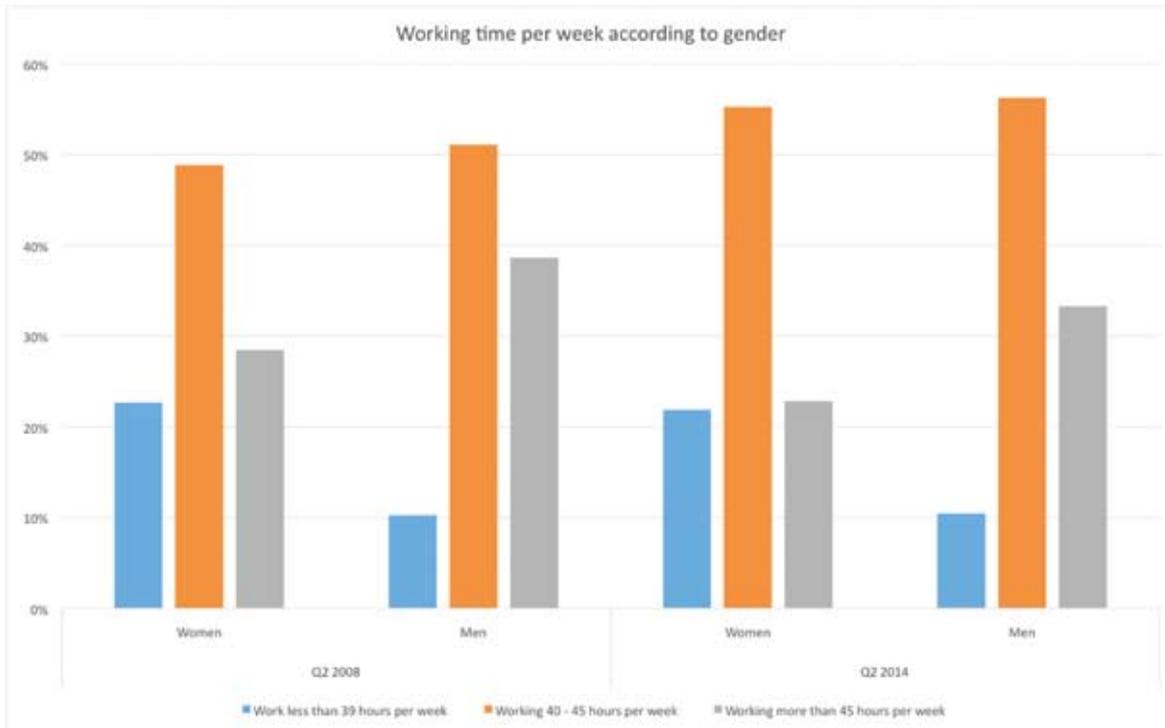
Source: QLFS Q2 2008 and QLFS Q2 2014

Income and the gender pay gap

Globally the gender pay gap is estimated to be 22.9%, meaning that women earn 77.1% what men earn (ILO, 2013:12). The size of the gender pay gap varies by sector, occupation, by country and over time. It is usually smaller in the public sector compared to the private sector. The pay gap tends to be highest in countries where part-time employment predominates and this is where women tend to be over-represented (ILO, 2013:13).

This was found to be true in South Africa, where women work fewer hours than men (in paid work) as shown in Figure 10. This is not by choice, but rather because of the nature of jobs where women predominate in the service and retail sectors which tend to be characterised by flexible and seasonal hours.

Figure 10: Working time by gender



Source: QLFS Q2 2008 and QLFS Q2 2014

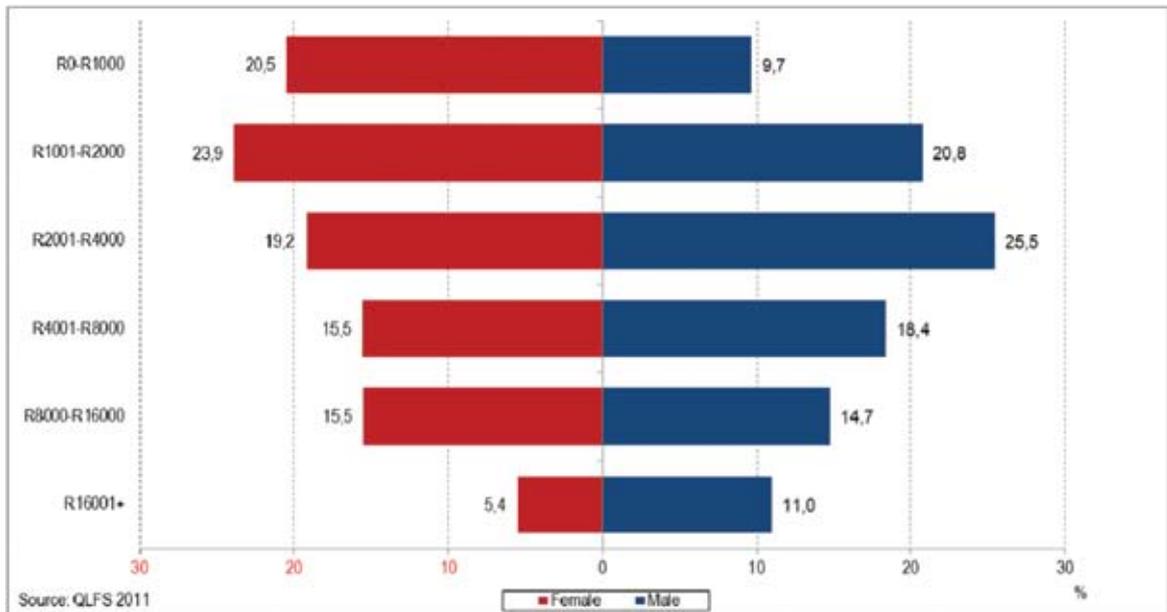
In 2003, almost two thirds of African women earned under R1 000 per month, compared to only 3% of white men. According to Makgetla (2004:2) this had remained largely unchanged since 1995. Differences in income reflected occupational segmentation, with women concentrated in lower paid industries and occupations.

In 2003, 5% of African women were employed as managers and senior professionals, contrasted with 29% of white women, and 43% of white men. 25% of African women were employed as domestic workers, and 27% were elementary (so-called “unskilled”) workers (Makgetla, 2004:3).

In 2003, half of all women were employed in domestic and sales work.

Casale and Posel (2011) found that there is a significant gender wage gap between unionised workers. There is generally and universally a pay premium that comes with union membership, meaning that union members generally earn more than non-unionised workers. This is also the case for South African union members, and even for women union members. However, the gap between unionised women and men is actually greater than that between non-unionised men and women. Casale and Posel (2011) explain this in terms of the crowding of unionised women in particular occupations that are less well paid than the occupations where men predominate.

Figure 11: Percentage distribution of employed women and men aged 15–64 years by earnings, 2011



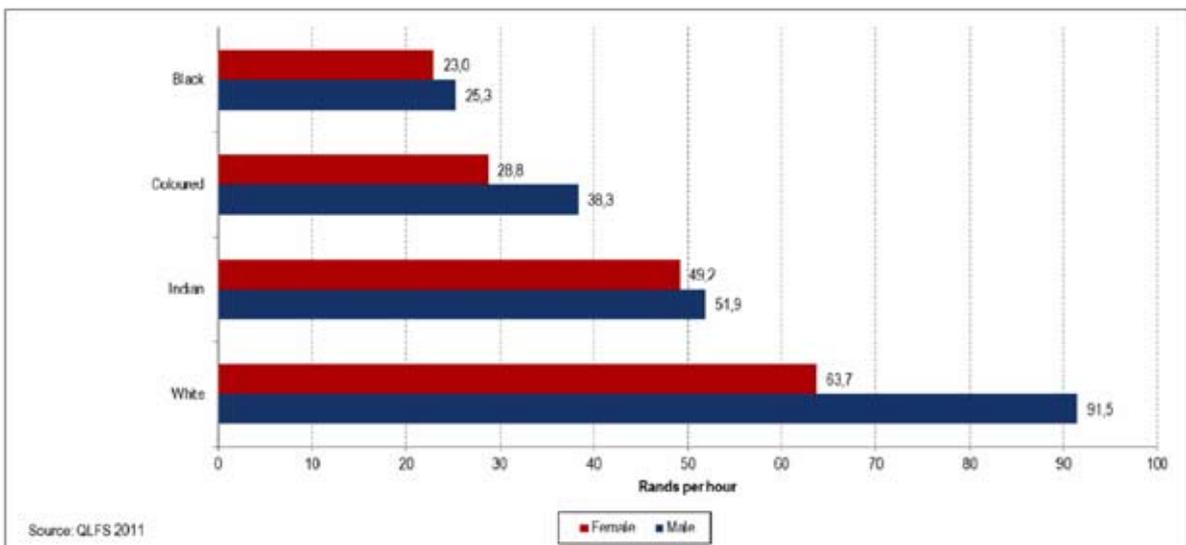
Source: Gender Statistics in SA (2011) Stats SA

Figure 11 reveals pronounced gender disparities in the earnings of women and men in paid employment in 2011.

Women are more likely than men to be found in the lower earning categories. The proportion of women who earned R1 000 or less per month (20.5%) was double the proportion of men (9.7%) who earned at the lowest level. An additional 23.9% of women and 20.8% of men earn between R1 000 and R2 000 per month.

In contrast, men are more likely than women to be found in the top earning categories. The proportion of men is about twice that of women among those who earn R16 000 or more per month.

Figure 12: Mean hourly earnings by sex and race, 2011



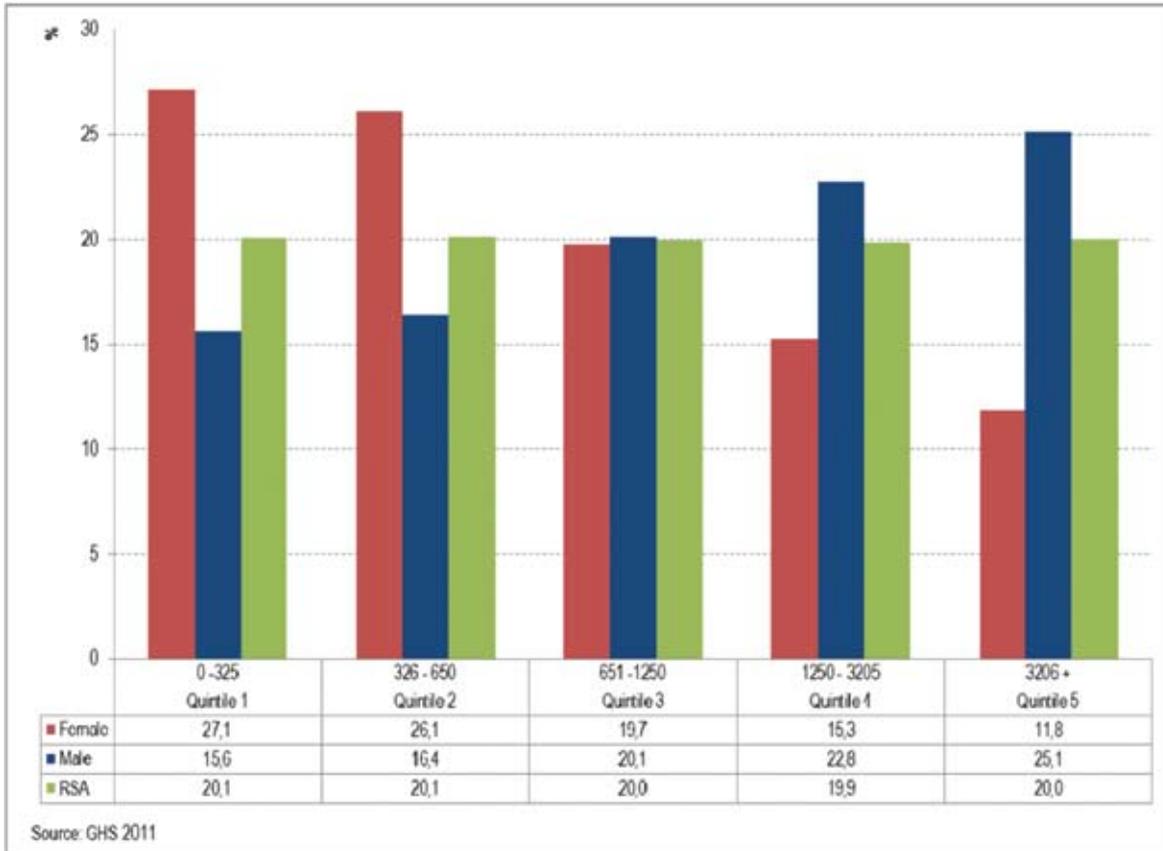
Source: Gender Statistics in SA (2011) Stats SA

Figure 12 shows that mean hourly earnings are higher for men than women across all population groups. The male - female differential is largest for white employees, followed by coloured employees. The male - female gap is relatively small for the black African and Indian/Asian population groups.

White male employees earn four times as much per hour, on average, as black African women, while white women earn almost three times as much per hour, on average, as black African women.

Figure 13 below reflects gender disparities in household income. It shows that women are far more likely to be in poorer households, whereas men are more likely to be in households where the income is R3 206 and more per month.

Figure 13: Household income quintiles by sex, 2011



Source: Gender Statistics in SA (2011) Stats SA

Women are more likely than men to be found in households with the lowest incomes (under R650). A combined 53.2% of women are found in the first two quintiles (under R650) as opposed to 32% of men. In other words, women are almost twice as likely to be in the bottom quintiles.

Table 7: Trade union membership by race and gender 2001, 2011 and 2014

Trade union membership	Black African		Coloured		Indian/Asian		White	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
2001	36.8	38.2	29.7	33.3	28.7	26.3	30.2	25.4
2011	32.7	35.0	30.8	30.2	27.0	28.9	24.6	21.6
2014	34.3	28.2	29.5	26.3	22.3	26.5	29.2	23.4

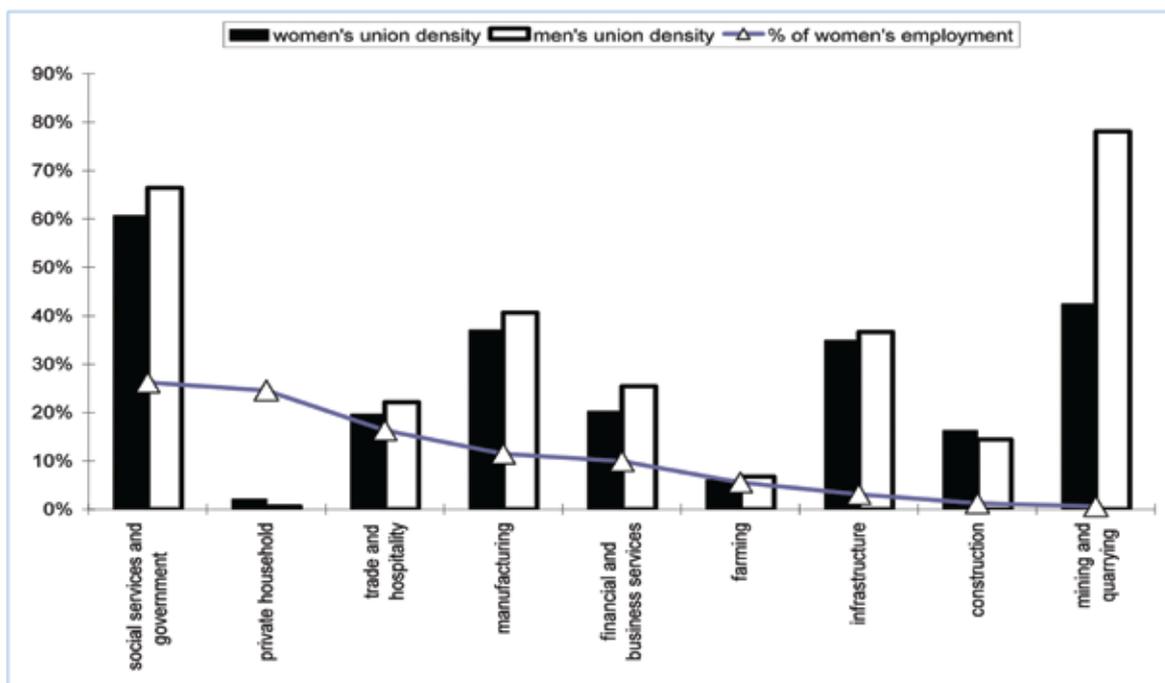
Source: Gender Statistics in SA (2011) and QLFS Q2 (2014)

The opposite pattern is found in the highest income quintiles. Men are more than twice as likely as women to be living in households where the household income is R3 206 or more per month.

Gender and Trade union density

Women are somewhat less likely than men to belong to trade unions. Union density is slightly lower for women than men across sectors. Moreover, women tend to work in sectors that are less organised, such as retail and domestic work. In 2003, only 28% of women in formal employment (including domestic work) belonged to a union, compared to 36% of men (Makgetla, 2004a: 11).

Figure 14: Union membership by industry and gender, 2003



Source: Makgetla (2004a) [Note: Excludes the self-employed. Source: Calculated from, Statistics South Africa. Labour Force Survey September 2003. Pretoria. Database on CD-Rom.]

Overall union density was 36% in 2001 and declined to 32% in 2012 (Stats SA LFS 2001 and QLFS 2012). Trade union membership fell from 3,5 million in 2006 to around 3,3 million. It is not clear whether this loss of trade union membership reflects dissatisfaction with trade unions, or whether it results from job losses and growth in industries that are poorly unionised (or a combination of both). The data reflects that union density has increased significantly in the

Table 8: Trade union membership 2014

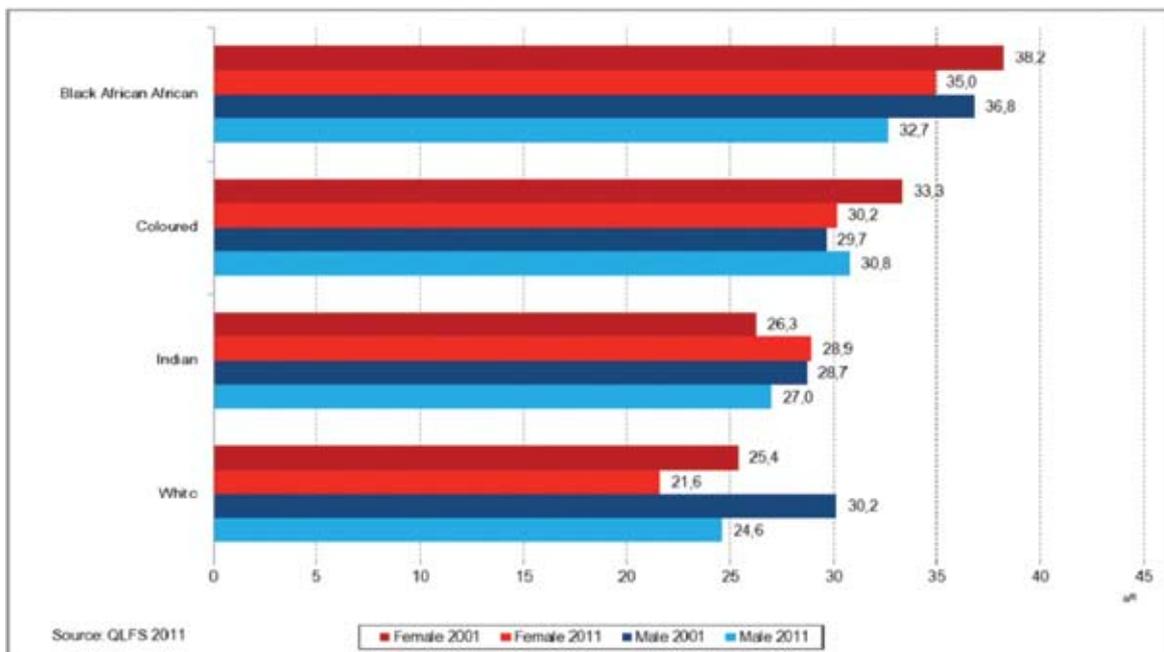
Trade union membership	Black African		Coloured		Indian/Asian		White	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Yes	34.3	28.2	29.5	26.3	22.3	26.5	29.2	23.4
No	62.7	69.7	66.9	69.6	75	71.1	67.2	75.1
Do not know	2.9	2.1	3.6	4.1	2.7	2.5	3.6	1.5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N=	6505	6284	1417	1350	296	204	975	925

Source: Stats SA QLFS Q2 (2014)

public sector, while it has declined in the private sector (where significant job losses have taken place). Either way, the overall decline in density still reflects that unions are not managing to organise in new sectors in response to the loss of membership in traditional sectors. This means that unions are not maintaining (nor expanding) their representivity across the economy.

What is of great concern is that union membership has declined for women (and men) overall, as shown below. For black African women, union membership fell by 10 percentage points between 2001 and 2014. Trade union membership for black African women was 38.2% in 2001, dropping to 35% in 2011, and decreasing even further to 28.2% in 2014. Trade union membership has also declined for black African men during this period (by 2,5 percentage points, from 36.8% to 34.3%) but not as dramatically as for black African women.

Figure 15: Percentage of non-domestic employees aged 15 years and above who are trade union members in each population group by gender, 2001 and 2011



Source: Gender Statistics in SA, Stats SA (2011)

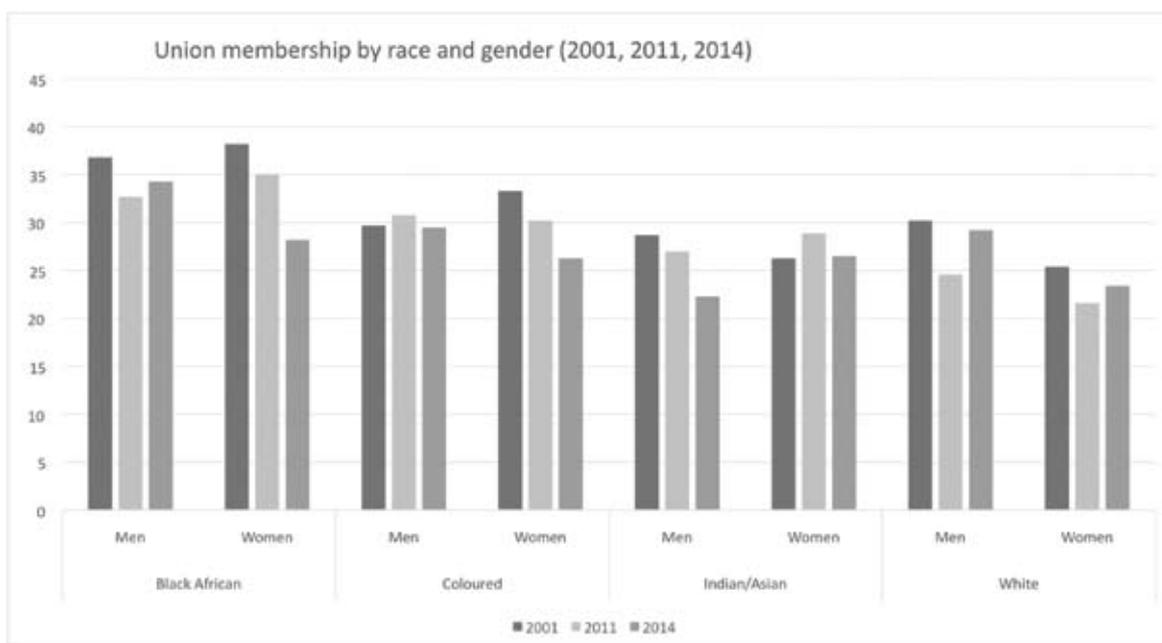
Figure 15 shows that in 2011, a higher proportion of women workers than men workers were unionised among the black African and Indian/Asian population groups. Among white workers, more men than women were union members, while among coloured workers there was little difference between women and men.

The graph above also shows that there was a decrease between 2001 and 2011 in trade union membership among women for all groups except for the Indian/Asian group. Membership increased to 28.9% in 2011 from 26.3% in 2001 for Indian/Asian women.

For men there was also a decrease in membership in all groups, except coloured men. Among coloured men, there was a small increase to 30.8% in 2011 compared to 29.7% in 2001. The decrease in trade union membership was largest for white men, where the membership rate for 2011 fell to 24.6% from 30.2% in 2001.

In 2011, for both women and men, the trade union membership rate is highest among black African employees and lowest among white employees.

Figure 16: Union membership by race and gender in 2001, 2011 and 2014



Source: Gender Statistics in SA (Stats SA 2011) and LFS Q2 (Stats SA 2014)

Table 8 above shows that in 2014, women were less likely to be union members than men, except amongst the Indian/Asian group. Union membership was highest amongst African males (34.3%) and coloured males (29.5%) and lowest amongst Indian males (22.3%) and white females (23.4%).

The impact of HIV and AIDS on gender dynamics in the workforce

The following quotation from an ILO report on the labour market implications of HIV/AIDS summarises some key concerns:

"From the standpoint of its economic impact, HIV/AIDS has become a major threat to employment objectives ... The loss of workers and work-days due to AIDS-related illnesses or the demands of caring can result in significant declines in productivity, loss of earning, and attrition in skills and experience. HIV/AIDS is changing the age and sex distribution of the labour force, and increasing the number of women, children and the elderly facing economic uncertainty. The vulnerability of women to HIV infection, as compared with men, increases existing gender inequalities. The early entry of orphans into the labour force exacerbates the worst forms of child labour, and the epidemic is forcing older persons back into the workforce due to economic need. The epidemic also strikes hard at the poor who can least afford treatment and care, thereby increasing existing problems of poverty and inadequate social protection" (ILO, 2002:4).

A further important concern is the discrimination against people and workers who are HIV positive (ILO, 2002:4).

There are significant factors particular to South Africa that have made the impact and experience of HIV/AIDS even more severe. The unemployment rate in South Africa is incredibly high, combined with extremely high HIV prevalence rates, and the legacy of the Apartheid health system. This has been compounded many times over by the South Africa government's history of denialism around HIV/

AIDS (under Thabo Mbeki) and the resultant failure to distribute anti-retroviral treatment. The massive roll-out of an anti-retroviral programme has certainly resulted in increased life expectancy rates.

Levinsohn, et al (2011:1) found that "being HIV-positive is associated with a 6 to 7 percentage point increase in the likelihood of being unemployed. South Africans with less than a high school education are 10 to 11 percentage points more likely to be unemployed if they are HIV-positive. Despite high unemployment rates, being HIV-positive confers a disadvantage and reinforces existing inequalities in South Africa".

Life expectancy among Africans was 60 years for males and 67 years for women in 1990 (Presidential Twenty Year Review, 2014). In contrast, life expectancy for white South Africans was 69 years for men and 76 years for women. Between 1994 and 2005 this deteriorated further as the HIV/AIDS pandemic spread. The average life expectancy (for all South Africans) improved from 51.6 years in 2005 to 59.6 years in 2013. However, at the same time maternal mortality increased significantly from 150 per 100 000 live births in 1995 to 269 in 2010 (Presidency, 2014:175).

A review of gender transformation in key areas by Bornman, et al (2013) argued that in relation to gendered health, the increased maternal mortality rate is of great concern, but is receiving inadequate government attention: "The president made much of progress in relation to life expectancy, highlighting that it increased from 56 years in 2009 to 60 years in 2011, but it is unclear how this improvement relates to South Africa's worsening maternal mortality rate. The maternal mortality ratio (Millennium Development Goal Five) worsened to an estimated level of 333 per 100,000 live births in 2009".

CONCLUSION

While there have been some positive changes in the position of women in the economy, the position of African women in particular remains one of subordination.

There has been an increase in women's participation in paid employment in South Africa and globally, but this has tended to be in low-paid, low status and insecure employment. It has also not been accompanied by a significant decrease in time spent on unpaid labour by women. Furthermore, some of this increase is due to a change in measurement and definition in what constitutes employment rather than an actual change in employment levels.

Moreover, gender pay disparities have barely improved.

While there has been a significant focus on legislation to bring about gender equality, this alone will not do much to transform unequal gender relations and the economic reality faced by the majority. As Makgetla argues, more fundamental economic transformation is required:

"Ultimately, women cannot be empowered unless the economy as a whole is restructured toward more equitable employment-creating growth. Given the inherited economic structure, anti-discrimination legislation necessarily ends up benefitting only the small high-level group" (Makgetla, 2004a:13).

There is a need for a focus on employment creation (and improvement in the quality of jobs) whilst simultaneously improving action to redistribute wealth and socialise reproductive labour. In other words, there is a need to increasingly transfer the cost and burden of reproductive labour away from women in households to the state and communities.

This requires improved resourcing and provision of basic needs and services, expansion of childcare and education for the poor, and improved access to assets for working class women.

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DEFINITIONS

- The *employed* refers to all persons aged 15 to 65 who did any work or who did not work but had a job or business in the seven days prior to the survey interview
- The *unemployed* are persons aged 15 to 65 who did not have a job or business in the seven days prior to the survey interview but had looked for work or taken steps to start a business in the four weeks prior to the interview and were able to take up work within two weeks of the interview
- *Discouraged work-seekers* are persons who want to work and are available to work but who say that they are not actively looking for work
- In terms of rates, measured as a percentage, the LFS records the following principle rates:
- The *labour force* is the sum of employed and unemployed persons
- The *not economically active* refers to those not in the labour force - those neither employed nor unemployed
- The *population of working age* - all persons aged 15 to 65 inclusive at the time of the survey
- The *unemployment rate* - the number of unemployed persons expressed as a percentage of the labour force
- The *labour force participation rate* - the number of persons in the labour force expressed as a percentage of the population aged 15 to 65
- The *labour absorption rate* is the percentage of the population of working age who were employed



Labour Research Service
PO Box 376, Woodstock, 7915, South Africa
Telephone: +27 (0)21 447 1677
Facsimile: +27 (0)21 447 9244
Email: lrs@lrs.org.za
Web: www.lrs.org.za