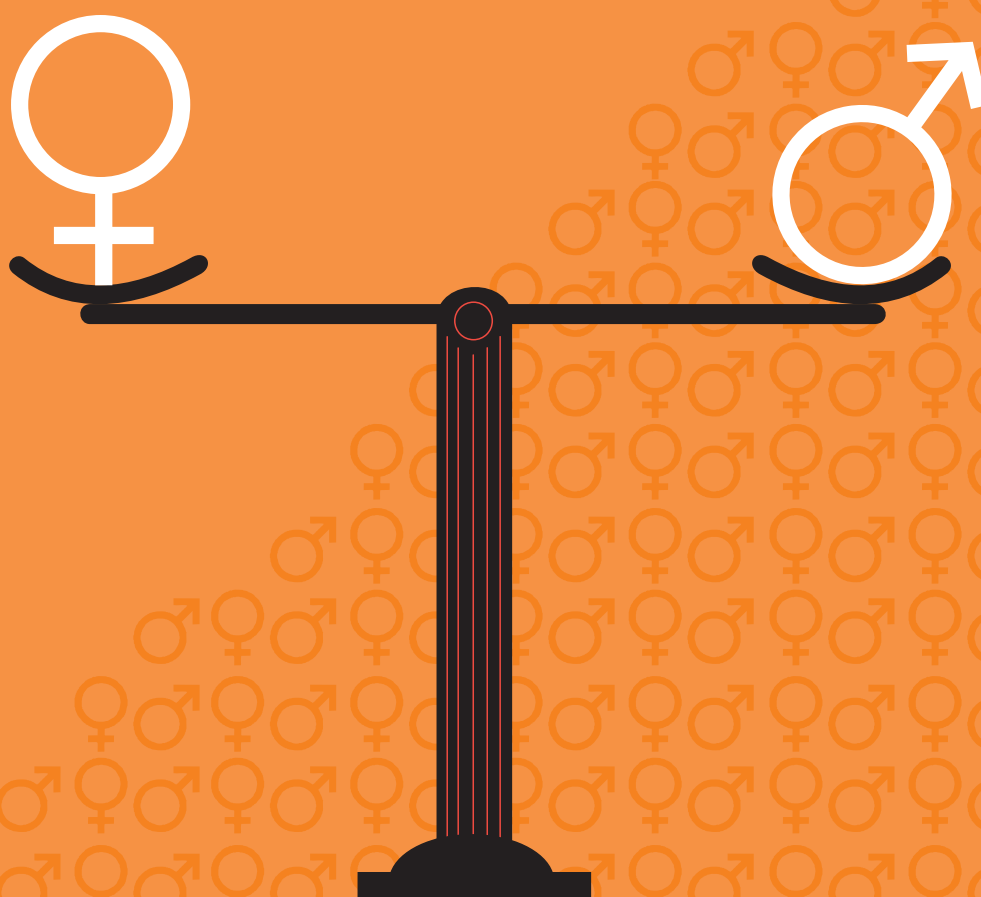


Gender Series Volume XI:

Women Empowerment, 2014-2024

Report number: 03-10-26



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Statistician-General

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|----------|--|
| AU | African Union |
| BPFA | Beijing Platform for Action |
| CEDAW | Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women |
| CIGF | Country Indicator Gender Framework |
| CJS | Criminal Justice System |
| CSOs | Civil Society Organisations |
| DPSA | Department of Public Service and Administration |
| EC | Eastern Cape |
| FS | Free State |
| GBV | Gender-based Violence |
| GESF | Gender Equality Strategic Framework |
| GEWE | Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy |
| GHS | General Household Survey |
| GP | Gauteng |
| GPR | Gender Parity Ratio |
| GPSJS | Governance, Public Safety and Justice Survey |
| GRPBMEAF | Gender-Responsive Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring, Evaluation and Auditing Framework |
| IEC | Independent Electoral Commission of South Africa |
| IIF | Integrated Indicator Framework |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| KZN | KwaZulu-Natal |
| LFPR | Labour Force Participation Rate |
| LP | Limpopo |
| MMS | Middle Management Service |
| MP | Mpumalanga |
| MYPE | Mid-year Population Estimates |
| NC | Northern Cape |
| NCOP | National Council of Provinces |
| NDP | National Development Plan |
| NGO | Non-governmental organisation |
| NPA | National Prosecuting Authority |
| NPF | National Policy Framework |
| NSC | National Senior Certificate |
| NW | North West |
| QLFS | Quarterly Labour Force Survey |
| SADC | Southern African Development Community |
| SAPS | South African Police Service |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| SMS | Senior Management Service |
| Stats SA | Statistics South Africa |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| VAW | Violence Against Women |
| VAWC | Violence Against Women and Children |
| VAWG | Violence Against Women and Girls |
| WHO | World Health Organization |
| WC | Western Cape |

DEFINITIONS

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Adults: | Persons aged 35–64. |
| Children: | Persons aged 17 and younger. |
| Discouraged work-seeker: | A person who was not employed during the reference period, wanted to work, was available to work/start a business but did not take active steps to find work during the last four weeks, provided that the main reason given for not seeking work was any of the following: no jobs available in the area; unable to find work requiring his/her skills; lost hope of finding any kind of work. |
| Employed persons: | Those aged 15–64 who, during the reference week, did any work for at least one hour, or had a job or business but were not at work (temporarily absent). |
| Employed rate: | Share of the labour force that is employed. |
| Gender | Conception of a person as male or female, with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones. |
| Gender equality: | Refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same, but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. ¹ |
| Gender parity ratio (GPR): | Is calculated as the proportion of the number of females by the number of males. Although these ratios are usually designed to measure the relative access to education of males and females, the ratios can be generally applied to calculate gender disparities or gaps on different socioeconomic indicators. |
| Geo-type: | Census 2011 definitions for urban and rural have been applied. According to Stats SA, an urban area is defined as a continuously built- up area with characteristics such as type of economic activity and land use. Cities, towns, townships, suburbs, etc. are typical urban areas. |
| Household | A person or a group of persons who occupy a common dwelling unit (or part of it) and stayed for an average of four nights per week for the past four weeks. |
| Head of the household: | A person recognised as such by the household and in most cases the key decision-maker, or the person who owns or rents the dwelling, or the person who is the main breadwinner. |
| Inactivity rate: | The proportion of the working age population who are not active in the labour market. |

| | |
|---|--|
| Informal sector: | The informal sector has the following two components: |
| (1) | Employees working in establishments that employ fewer than five employees, who do not deduct income tax from their salaries/wages; and |
| (2) | Employers, own-account workers and persons helping unpaid in their household business who are not registered for either income tax or value added tax. |
| Labour force: | Comprises all persons who are employed plus all unemployed persons. |
| Labour force participation rate: | The proportion of the working-age population that is either employed or unemployed. |
| Long-term unemployment: | Persons in long-term unemployment are those individuals among the unemployed who were without work and trying to find a job or start a business for one year or more. |
| Not economically active: | Persons aged 15–64 who are neither employed nor unemployed in the reference week. |
| Persons in underemployment: | Employed persons who were willing and available to work additional hours, and whose total number of hours actually worked during the reference period were below 35 hours per week. |
| Rural area | Is defined as any area that is not classified as urban. Rural areas may comprise one or more of the following: tribal areas, commercial farms and rural formal areas. |
| Short-term unemployment | Persons in short-term unemployment are those individuals among the unemployed who were without work and trying to find a job or start a business for less than a year. |
| Unemployment rate: | The proportion of the labour force that is unemployed. |
| Urban area | Is one which was proclaimed or classified as such (i.e. in an urban municipality under the old demarcation), or classified as such during census demarcation by Stats SA, based on its observation of aerial photographs or other information. |
| Working-age population: | Comprises all persons aged 15–64. |
| Youth: | Persons aged 15–34. |

Derived Concepts:

Urban and rural were derived using settlement type classification according to the characteristics of a residential population in terms of urban and rural, degree of planned and unplanned (in the case of urban) and jurisdiction (in the case of rural). The four broad settlement types found in South Africa are:

- a) formal urban areas
- b) informal urban areas
- c) commercial farms
- d) tribal areas and rural informal settlements

Using the settlement type criteria, areas that are comprised of formal and informal urban areas are designated as urban. All other areas are designated as rural. Rural areas comprise commercial farms and tribal areas.

FOREWORD

This report forms part of a series of gender publications and is a sequel to the thematic report focusing on gender disparities in women empowerment, published in 2022. It contains indicators on trends and patterns related to women empowerment, including an analysis of economic, social and political domains related to gender. The release of the report coincides with Women month, taking place under the theme: “Celebrating 30 Years of Democracy Towards Women’s Development.” Women’s Month honours the contributions made by women over the years in the fight against discrimination, exploitation, and subordination and celebrates the progress and the accomplishments made by our nation’s women over the course of the last thirty years of democracy.

A number of indicators profiled in the report are also critical for the evaluation of progress and monitoring of the National Development Plan (NDP) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targets. Information about indicators identified in the report will inform policymakers and the general public on progress, challenges and how these need to be incorporated into South Africa’s development agenda.

An analysis of the economic domain indicates a steady increase in women’s share in the working-age population over the last ten years. Despite the number of females in the workforce still exceeding that of males, males continue to participate in the labour market at a higher rate than their female counterparts. The participation rates of both males and females increased over the ten years from 63,9% in 2014 to 65,6% in 2024 for males while females’ participation rates ‘increased from 50,9% in 2014 to 55,8% in 2024. Analysis of the median earnings revealed that females’ median earnings were 80,0% of males’ median earnings in 2022.

Women’s safety is closely linked to their empowerment. When women feel safe in public spaces, they can participate fully in the workforce, leading to increased economic growth and stability in 2023/24. Nationally, 18,3% of males reported feeling unsafe compared to 20,8% of females when asked about their feeling of safety when walking in their neighbourhood alone during the day. Western Cape, Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal reported the highest proportions of individuals who felt unsafe to walk alone in their area during day.

Women’s equal participation and leadership in political and public life is an important dimension of the empowerment of women and essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Leadership positions presented in this report include SMS and MMS positions in the Public Service as well as the representation of men and women in the judicial system parliament, cabinet, provincial legislature and mayoral positions. In the public sector, men hold the majority of senior management posts (SMS) and middle management positions (MMS). Females who were younger (≤ 35 years old) were more likely to have MMS and SMS positions compared to their male counterparts.

30 years after democracy, males continue to dominate political executive positions however, the parliament observed an increased representation of women from 33,0% in 2004 to 42,8% in 2024; women in the NCOP increased from 41,0% in 2004 to 44,4% in 2024 and women in cabinet also increased from 42,0% in 2004 to 43,8% in 2024. However, although the cabinet reached parity in 2019, there was a decline in the representation of women in cabinet to 43,8% in 2024.



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Statistician-General

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In April 2024, South Africa marked 30 years since the onset of freedom and democracy in 1994. To commemorate this milestone, government conducted a 30-Year Review of South Africa's Democracy 1994-2024 aimed at fostering national reflection on the journey thus far and drawing lessons to inform a roadmap for South Africa's future. The thirty-year evaluation of South Africa's democracy falls within the same time frame as the Beijing+30 review which assesses the commitments of the global agenda for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

Women Empowerment and Gender Equality became one of the commitments that the South African government made to enacting progressive laws and promoting human rights, which are highly influenced by the ideals of gender equality and women's emancipation and empowerment. These include ratifying CEDAW; Adopting the Beijing Platform for Action; Signatory to the SADC Declaration on Gender, and the Addendum on Violence against Women; The National Development Plan, The SA Constitution which prohibits any form of discrimination on the basis of gender, sexual orientation or marital status, amongst others.

Women empowerment has various definitions but can be summarised as the ability of women to have the power to make choices and control decisions and resources that determine their quality of life. The empowerment of women is a crucial tool through which the reduction of poverty, achieving and advancing the rights of women, gender equity, prosperity, and inclusive growth can be realised. Enabling elements of empowerment include increasing participation of women in education and the labour market implementing the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. Empowerment of women is also a cornerstone of the National Strategic Plan of Gender-Based Violence and Femicide, which argues that if women's economic situations are improved their susceptibility to abuse and violence becomes less.

South Africa has subscribed to a number of frameworks that are aimed at improving the quality of life for women. Nationally, women's empowerment has found its expression in the National Development Plan (NDP 2030), a blueprint of the country's developmental agenda. South Africa signed the declaration on Sustainable Development Goals (Agenda 2030), founded on the premise of "leaving no one behind", including addressing issues that affect women, particularly those that serve as impediments to them realising their full potential. The SDG 2030 agenda has economic empowerment of women at its core, with goal 5 primarily focusing on "Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls." This goal provides an opportunity to reassess the critical role of women in societal transformations.¹ To address the triple challenge of poverty, inequality and unemployment in South Africa, the government has committed to the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (ERRP), which includes the economic empowerment of women, the youth and persons with disabilities. At local government level, government has introduced the District Development Model (DDM) which is centred on empowering the marginalised population by advocating for integrated government coordination in addressing economic, environmental and social challenges over a prolonged period which transcend municipal, provincial and national election cycles.

Notwithstanding the barriers experienced by women in different socio-economic domains, some significant strides have been achieved in other domains such as education, where gender parity is reached and in closing the gender gap in rates of adult literacy. In terms of representation in decision-making positions, significant progress has been made in reaching gender equity in the public sector. For example, in 2019, females in senior management accounted for 42,4%, and those in middle management positions accounted for 45,2% which increased to 45,2% for senior management accounted and 41,6 % for middle management positions in 2024.

¹ UN Women handbook, 2017.

This thematic report will seek to unravel gender disparities in empowerment. It is the fourth report in a series of empowerment reports that have been published. The report will focus on three dimensions of empowerment, i.e. economic, social and political empowerment to determine the extent of progress that has been made using various data sources².

1.2 Legislative environment on women's empowerment

This section describes the legislative framework, policies, and measures implemented in South Africa that address women's empowerment and the movement toward gender equality. Through these agreements, women empowerment is regarded as central to realising men and women's rights and a way to achieve broader development goals such as economic growth, poverty reduction, health, education and welfare. The agreements also promote gender mainstreaming and regards it as a priority in measuring and tracking changes in levels of empowerment between women and men.

1.2.1 International Context

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

South Africa is a signatory to several international and regional agreements that have resulted in specific gendered obligations. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) initiated a move to focus on women empowerment, among others, and countries are required to eliminate discrimination against women and girls in all areas and promote women and girls' equal rights.

The Convention provides the basis for realising equality between women and men by ensuring women's equal access to and equal opportunities in political and public life, including the right to vote and to stand for election as well as education, health and employment. State parties agree to take all appropriate measures, including legislation and temporary special measures, so that women can enjoy all their human rights and fundamental freedoms. Countries that ratified or acceded to the Convention are legally bound to put its provisions into practice. They are also committed to submitting national reports on measures they have taken to comply with their treaty obligations at least every four years.

The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA)

The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) is one of the most important commitments to gender equality ratified by countries in driving significant global progress, especially in developing countries.³ It affirmed an agenda for women empowerment and enabled the development of action plans and strategies currently integrated in national plans and policies. The BPfA also emphasised on the generation and dissemination of gender-disaggregated data and information to improve planning and evaluation of gender programmes and policies. The BPfA's key priorities flagged during the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, include:

- **women and poverty** – eliminate and address the needs of women in poverty.
- **violence against women** – prevent and eliminate violence against women by ensuring equality under the law and practice.
- **women and the economy** – promote women's economic rights, access to employment, including control over economic resources by harmonising work and family responsibilities for women and men.
- **women in power and decision-making roles** – increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and political leadership.

² Kidder, T & Smyth, I.

³ United Nations 1995. Beijing declaration and Platform for Action. Available from <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf>

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The SDGs are a global call to action to end poverty, protect the earth's environment and climate, and ensure that persons everywhere can enjoy peace and prosperity. Goal 5 of the SDGs seeks to achieve gender equality by 2030 and to end all forms of discrimination and violence against all women and girls everywhere, whilst also recognising and valuing unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies, as well as ensuring women's full participation and equal opportunities for leadership in political, economic and public life.

1.2.2 Regional context

Gender Equality and Agenda 2063

Gender equality is prioritised in Agenda 2063 as a key component of Africa's future. Aspiration 6 and Goal 17 of the Agenda are most focused on achieving comprehensive gender equality to support persons-driven development in Africa. Agenda 2063 emphasises two major priority areas to do this: eradicating violence and discrimination against women and girls; and empowering women and girls. The short-term plan for Agenda 2063 (2013–2023) prioritises economic rights, political participation and representation, women's and girls' empowerment, reducing levels of gender-based violence and discrimination against women and girls, reducing all harmful social norms and customary practices, and eliminating barriers to quality education, health and social services.

The Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Strategy

The Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Strategy 2018–2028 of the African Union (AU) is a multisectoral strategy that seeks to eliminate or reduce the main barriers to gender equality and women's empowerment. The GEWE Strategy is a blueprint for enhancing women's agency in Africa and ensuring that, through effective execution of legislation and sufficient financing of gender equality work, women's voices are amplified, and their concerns are effectively addressed. The strategy has four pillars summarised as follows: The primary goal of Pillar 1 is to maximize opportunities, results, and e-tech dividends. It recommends giving women access to high-quality education and control over resources that may be used for production if they are to be economically empowered and effectively contribute to sustainable development. The GEWE strategy proposes to support and lobby e-Tech firms and financial institutions to fund start-ups and innovation hubs that promote and increase women and girls' equal and effective participation in the technology space.

Pillar 2 is concerned with resilience, dignity, and security. It acknowledges that violence against women and harmful traditional practices like early marriage and female genital mutilation compromise their rights to dignity, security and bodily and psychological integrity. The GEWE Strategy aims to end violence against women and girls (VAWG) and provide funding for initiatives to sanction VAWG.

Pillar 3 highlights the need for effective laws, policies and institutions to promote and protect women's rights.

Pillar 4 is concerned with voice, visibility, and leadership and acknowledges that in order for women to have a voice, they must be equally represented in all decision-making processes and be able to participate effectively, which requires the elimination of all barriers.

1.2.3 National Context

The South African post-apartheid government introduced many policies that target gender equality in the country. The following legislative frameworks and policies were passed post-1994 to improve the living conditions of women and to create a peaceful gender balance within South African society.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 states that all South African citizens have a right to be affirmed and enriched with democratic values of human dignity and equality. Given these human rights values, all citizens, including responsible government officials, must comply with such values and uplift the living conditions of their citizens.

The Employment Equity Act, Act No. 55 of 1998 was established to promote equal opportunity and fair labour practice in the workplace through the elimination of unfair discrimination and implementing of affirmative action measures to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups, to ensure their equitable representation in all occupational categories and levels in the workforce.

The Gender Equality Strategic Framework (GESF) for Public Service came into effect in 2009. The framework is premised on the promotion and protection of human dignity and human rights of women, including women with disabilities. All government departments must include the following eight principles in their departmental action plans towards achieving women's empowerment and gender equality within the public service workplace:

- transformation for non-sexism.
- establishing a policy environment on women empowerment and gender equality.
- meeting equity targets by ensuring women's full participation and decision-making by employing 50% women at all levels of the SMS.
- creating an enabling environment.
- gender mainstreaming in all work of the department.
- empowerment through capacity development for women's advancement and gender equality.
- providing adequate resources for advancing gender equality.
- accountability, monitoring and evaluation.

Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill, 2013

The bill establishes a legislative framework for the empowerment of women and enables the representation of women in decision-making positions and structures by ensuring that all government departments and private companies fill a minimum of 50% of all senior and top management positions with women. The bill calls for all government departments and private companies to comply with gender transformation in the country. It emphasises access to opportunities and issues of education and training for women.

Advancing Gender Responsive Budgeting in South Africa

In 2019, the Cabinet approved the Gender Responsive Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring, Evaluation and Auditing Framework (GRPBMEAF). This framework aims to introduce a gender lens gradually and systematically within the overall management of public finances. Therefore, gender-specific analysis and instruments are to be integrated at all stages of the budget cycle planning and fiscal strategy, budget preparation, budget execution, review, and external control.

The National Council on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide Bill

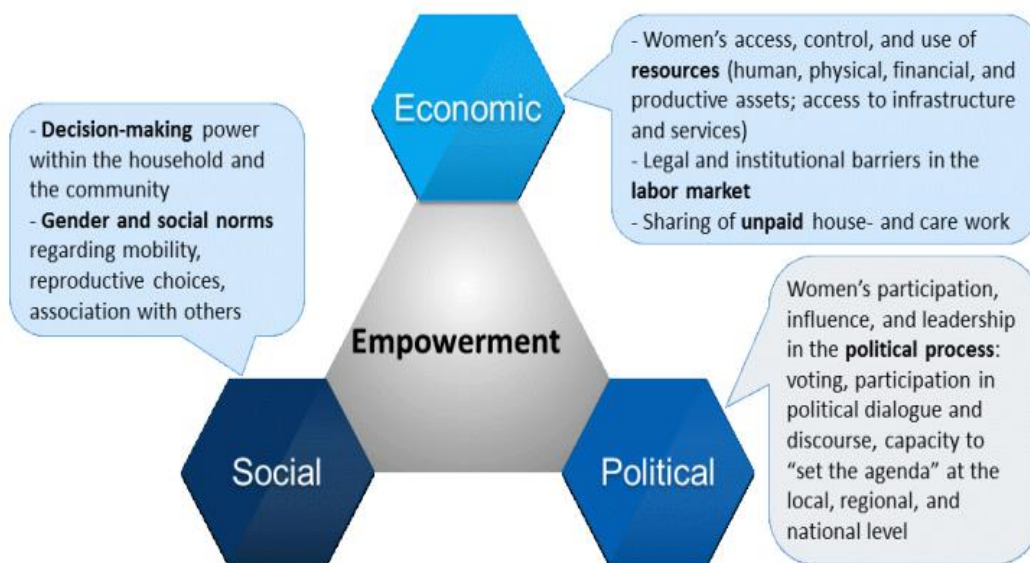
The National Council on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide Bill was signed into law on 24 May 2024. This landmark legislation is a critical step forward in ensuring the safety and protection of women and children from abuse and violence.

1.3 Objective of the report

The purpose of this report is to provide analysis relating to gender disparities, trends and patterns in women empowerment, including an in-depth analysis of economic, social and political domains to ascertain progress toward gender equality, as illustrated in the framework of women empowerment in Figure 1.1. The report objectives are, therefore to:

- determine gender differences in women empowerment using secondary data from Stats SA and administrative data gathered from other sources; and
- analyse the progress made towards gender equality with regard to economic, social and political indicators.

Figure 1.1 - The framework of women empowerment



Source: Kidder, T & Smyth, I., 2017

In this report women's empowerment is conceptualised under three domains economic, social and political. Economic empowerment entails having control over finances and family resources, owning property, having access to markets, having employment opportunities, and being represented in positions of economic decision-making. Economic empowerment therefore enables women to have equal opportunities to enter the workforce, become financially independent, and rise to positions of economic power. Economic empowerment indicators will analyse how women fare in the labour market, their poverty status, ownership of resources and their earnings.

For women to be socially empowered, they must be free from discrimination, be protected from sexual and domestic violence, have access to family planning services, be more visible in public places, and see a change in the cultural norms that still view women as inferior to men. Social empowerment also includes providing women with education opportunities to better their lives. Social empowerment indicators will assess representation in decision-making positions, and perceptions of social gender norms.

Political empowerment involves having the right vote, increasing the representation of women in politics, and representation in local, provincial and national governments. Participation in the political processes and voting enable women to support the policies and causes they believe in. Political empowerment indicators will assess representation of women in national, provincial and local government positions and the electoral processes.

1.4 Data sources

The main data sources for the report are the surveys conducted by Statistics South Africa, which include:

- Mid-Year Population Estimates (MYPE)
- General Household Survey (GHS) is an annual household survey which measures the living circumstances of South African households. The GHS collects data on education, health, and social development, housing, households' access to services and facilities, food security, and agriculture.
- Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) is a household-based sample survey that collects data on the labour market activities of individuals aged 15 or older who live in South Africa
- Non-Financial Census of Municipalities (NFCM) collects data on selected aspects of service delivery, including water, electricity, solid waste management, sewerage and sanitation, amongst others from the municipalities.
- Governance, Public Safety and Justice Survey (GPSJS) is a countrywide household-based survey and the objectives of the survey are to provide information on the perceptions about citizen interaction, trust in public institutions, government's performance and effectiveness, experience of corruption, general individual perceptions and household and individual perceptions and experience of crime.

One of the major challenges in monitoring progress towards attaining gender equity is the lack of data. Even as the official supplier of statistics in South Africa, Stats SA cannot produce all data required to measure gender-related indicators. Therefore, this report also used administrative sources of data analysis. Government departments collect a large amount of data as a part of their day-to-day administration. Administrative records contain a wide variety of data covering different socio-economic and demographic information, which is usually required to complete processes such as providing goods and services. Administrative sources of data used in this report were obtained from the following departments and Institutions:

- Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC);
- Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA),
- Gender Links
- Finmark Trust
- Department of International Relations & Cooperation
- Department of Justice and Constitutional Development

1.5 Layout of the report

- Chapter 1: Covers the introduction and briefly discusses the concept of women empowerment and the related legal and policy framework on women empowerment in South Africa. This chapter also seeks to establish the rationale for producing the report and describes the data sources used.
- Chapter 2: Presents the selected demographic indicators that will assist in indirectly measuring the influence of social institutions on gender equality, including the progress of women empowerment and their control over material resources.
- Chapter 3: Looks at women's participation in the South African labour market by focusing on the working-age population and gender trends in labour force participation, analysis on trends in employment gender disparities, and trends in unemployment. The analysis also looks at economic empowerment and resource equity for males and females, particularly social grants, access to communication and asset ownership.
- Chapter 4: Examines social empowerment from perceptions of social gender norms and ascertains gender equality in government decision-making using the Governance, Public Safety and Justice Survey (GPSJS), and administrative data.
- Chapter 5: Analyses data sourced from the Non-financial census of municipalities and administrative data from relevant government entities. Indicators in this section focus on representation in political decision-making positions and involvement of women in electoral processes.
- Chapter 6: Concludes the report by providing a summary of key findings.

1.6 Limitations of the study

Since the analysis largely relies on sample surveys and a weighting process to extrapolate sample estimates to population estimates, the absolute number of cases does not always correspond with census or administrative data sources. In addition, due to the sample sizes of the surveys, disaggregation of indicators by sex and municipality may not be possible.

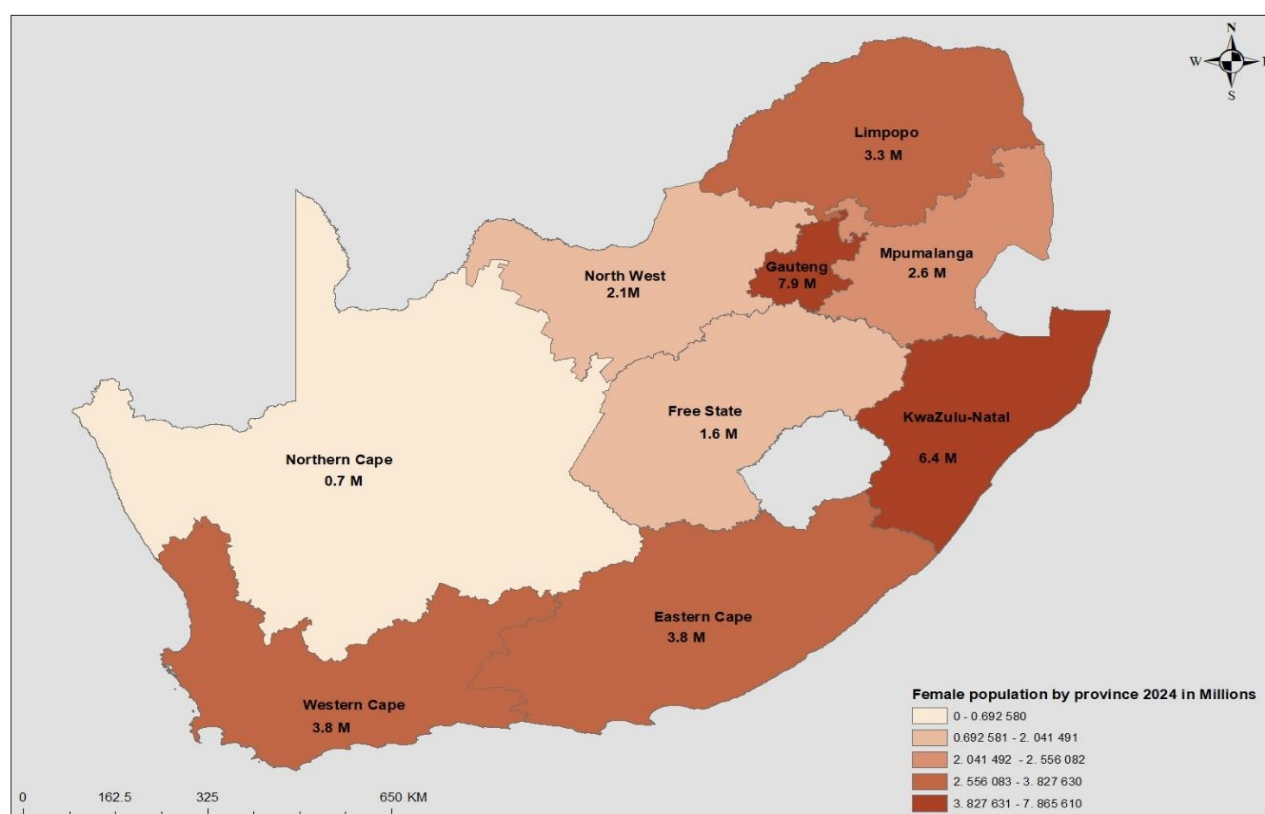
CHAPTER 2: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

2.1 Background

Demographic information is important in providing a broad understanding of the different characteristics of the population, which include but are not limited to sex, age and population group. More insight provided by the demographic profile will assist in indirectly measuring the influence of social institutions on gender equality, including the progress of women's autonomy, empowerment and control over material resources. This chapter also provides basic information about the number of households headed by females.

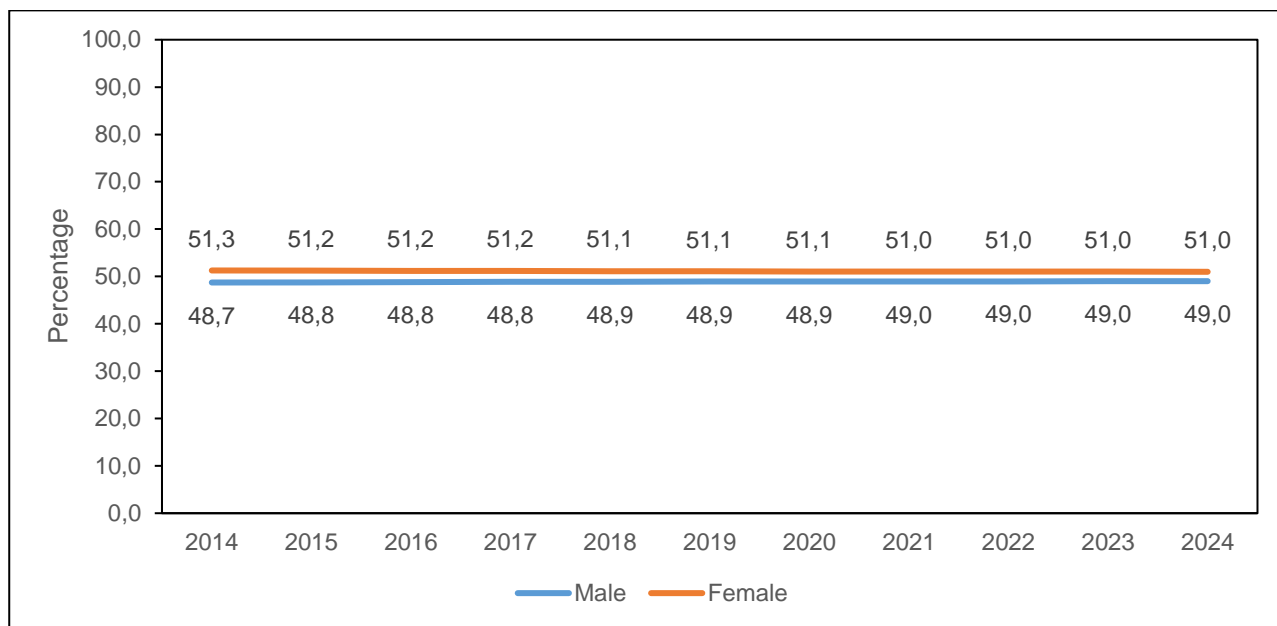
2.2 Basic demographics of the population

Map 2.1 - Female population by province, 2024



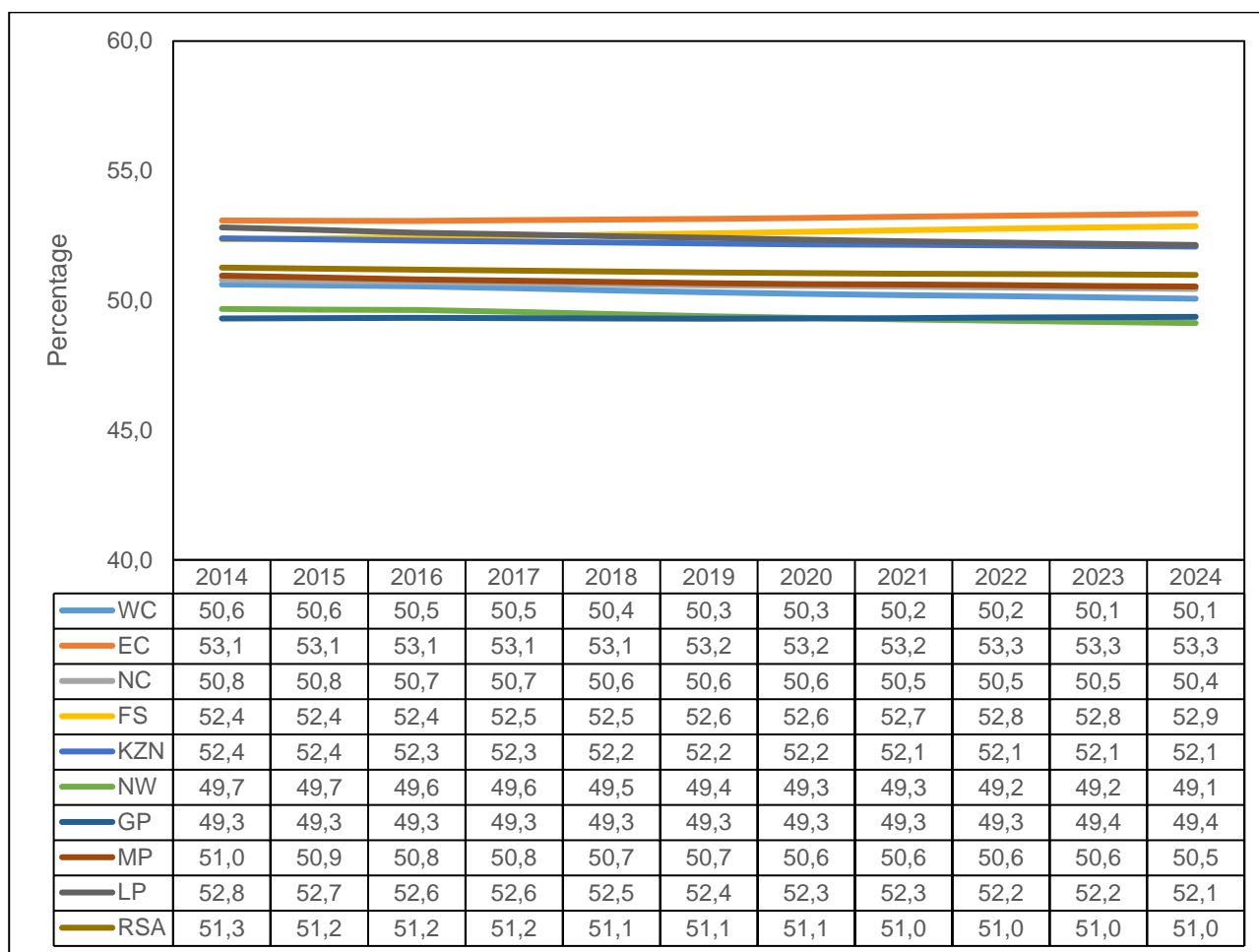
Source: MYPE 2024

Map 2.1 shows the female population by province in 2024. The Mid-Year Population Estimates 2024 estimated the South African population at 63,0 million persons, with the female population accounting for 51,0% (approximately 32,1 million) of the population. Gauteng had the largest share of the female population, with approximately 7,9 million persons (24,5%), followed by KwaZulu-Natal with an estimated 6,4 million persons (20,0%) living in the province. Northern Cape remains the province with the smallest share of the female population with 693 000 persons (2,2%).

Figure 2.1 - The percentage share of the total population by sex, 2014–2024

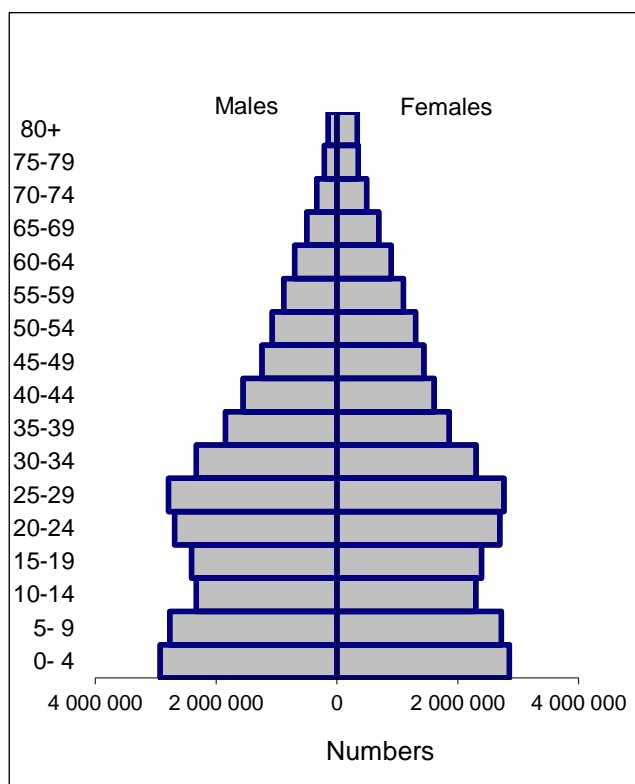
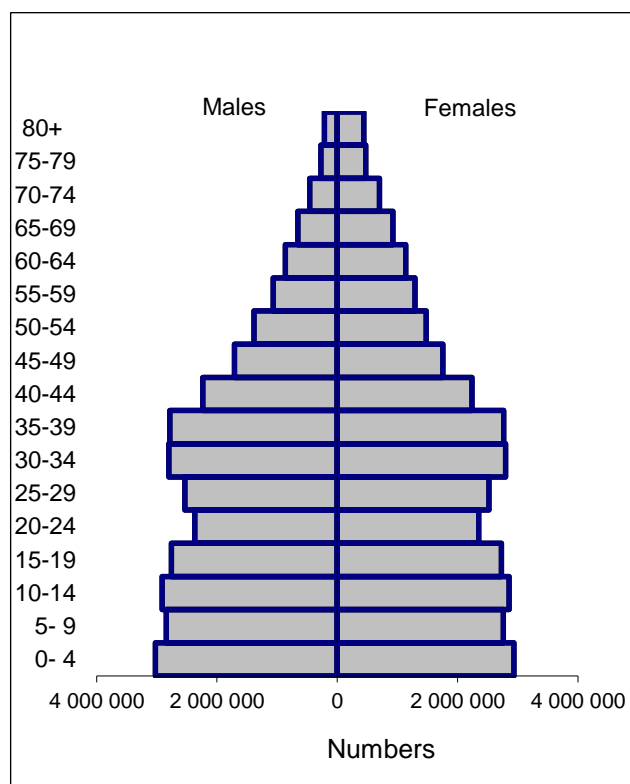
Source: MYPE 2014-2024

Figure 2.1 shows the percentage share of the overall population by sex over a ten-year period. Compared to their male counterparts, women reported the largest percentage share of the population across all years. Both the female and male population remained stable over the ten-year period between 2014 and 2024, (51,0% and 49,0%), respectively.

Figure 2.2 - Percentage of females as a share of the total population by province, 2014–2024

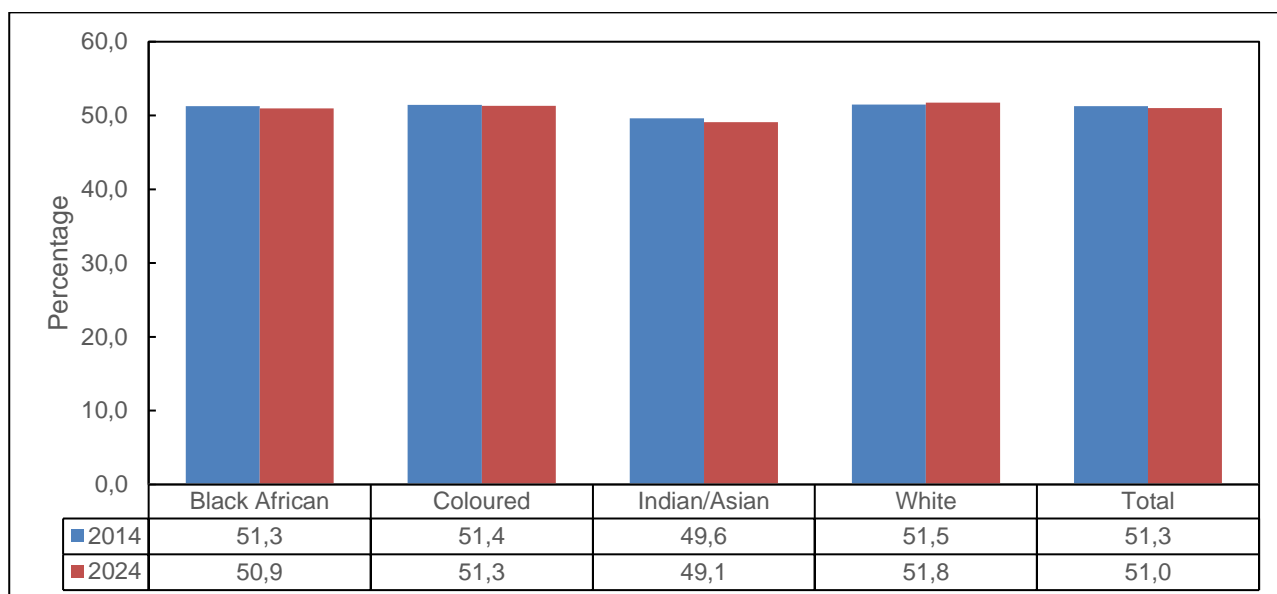
Source: MYPE 2014-2024

Figure 2.2 demonstrates the percentage of females as a share of the total population by province between 2014 and 2024. Nationally, percentage share of female declined from 51,3% in 2014 to 51,0% in 2024. North West and Gauteng provinces had the lowest share of the female population in 2024, both below 50%. Free State province showed the highest increase of 0,5 percentage point for female population compared to other provinces in the reported period.

Figure 2.3a - Distribution of population by age group and sex, 2014**Figure 2.3b - Distribution of population by age group and sex, 2024**

Source: MYPE 2014 and 2024

Figures 2.3a and 2.3b show the population distribution by sex and age group, in 2014 and 2024. Results indicate that South Africa has a youthful population, with a significant youth bulge aged 20-34 in 2014 and 25-39 in 2024. The proportion of females increased from 28,1 million in 2014 to 32,1 million in 2024. In 2024, the highest numbers of both males and females were those in the 0–4 and 10–14 age groups. Both males and females aged 20–24 showed the highest decrease in population between the years 2014 and 2024. The pyramid also shows that men outnumber women from ages 0 to 34 in 2014 while in 2024 it was 0 to 39 years. The pyramid also shows that in 2024, the population of those 80 years and older increased compared to 2014, with females recording the biggest increase.

Figure 2.4 - Percentage distribution of females by population group, 2014 and 2024

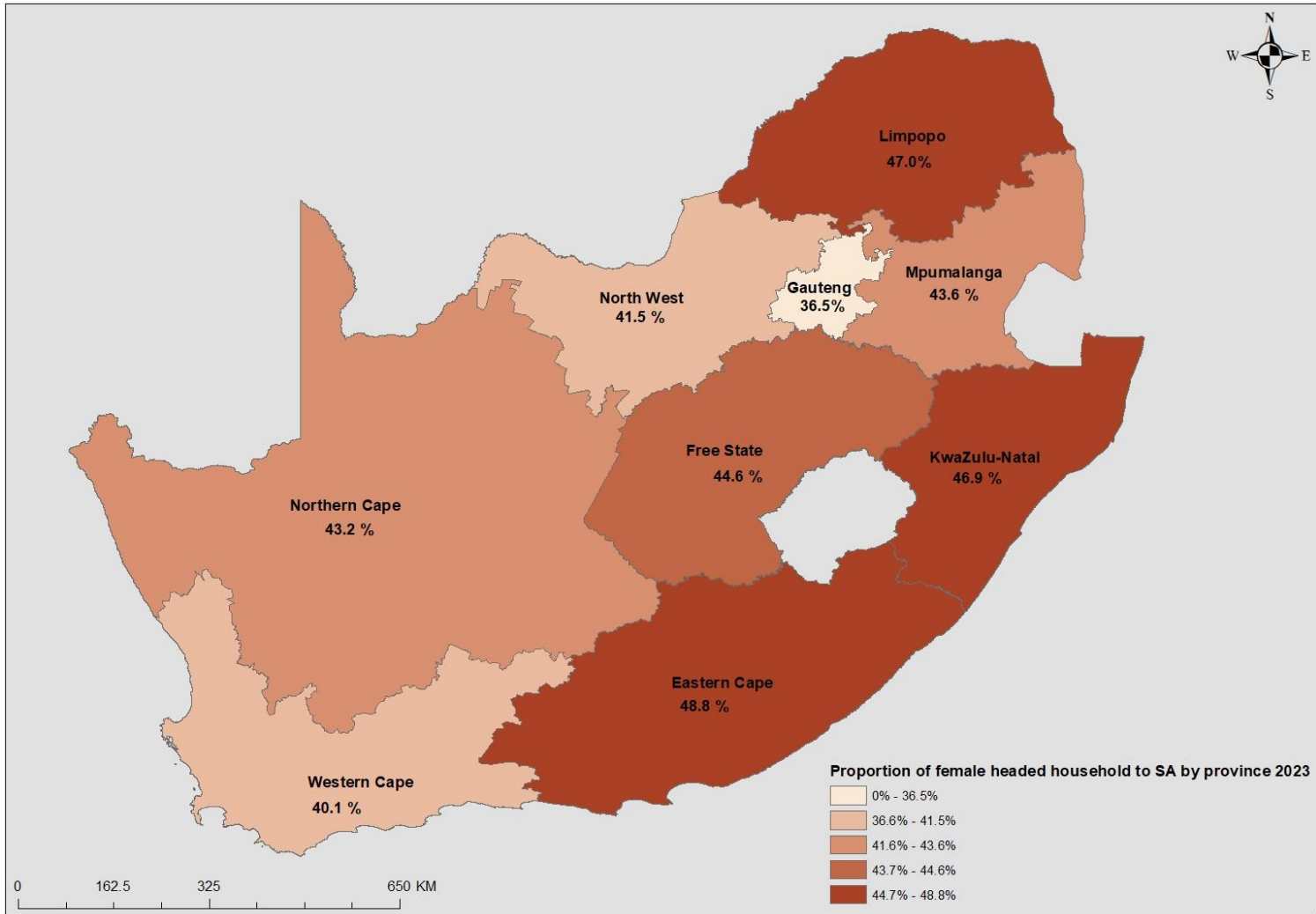
Source: MYPE 2024

Figure 2.4 shows the distribution of females by population group in 2014 and 2024. The whites were the only population group that showed a positive increase of 0,3 percentage points in the female population (from 51,5% in 2014 to 51,8% in 2024), while the other population groups recorded a decline in the proportion of females for the reporting period. The black African and Indian/Asian populations recorded a percentage lower than the national average in 2024 (50,9% and 49,1%, respectively).

2.3 Characteristics of households

Much of the interest in household headship arises because of perceived differences between female-headed households and male-headed households. Worldwide female-headed households have become a cause for concern and are perceived as vulnerable. Thus, it is important to analyse this vulnerable group to understand the dynamics.

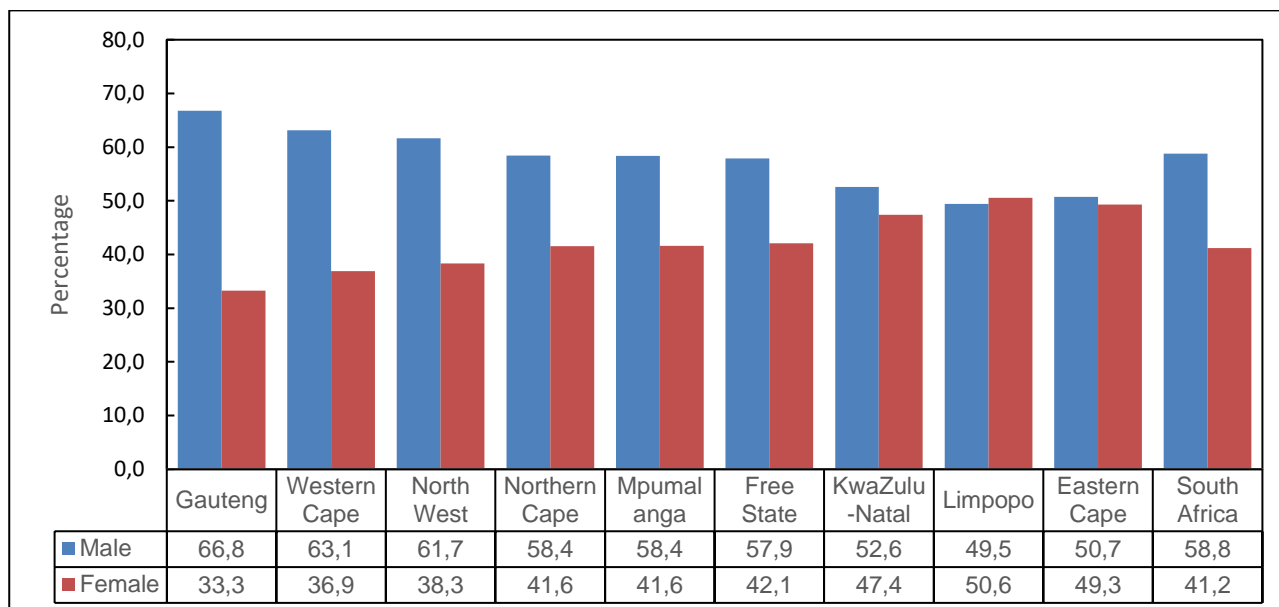
Map 2.2 - Female-headed households by province, 2023



Source: GHS 2023

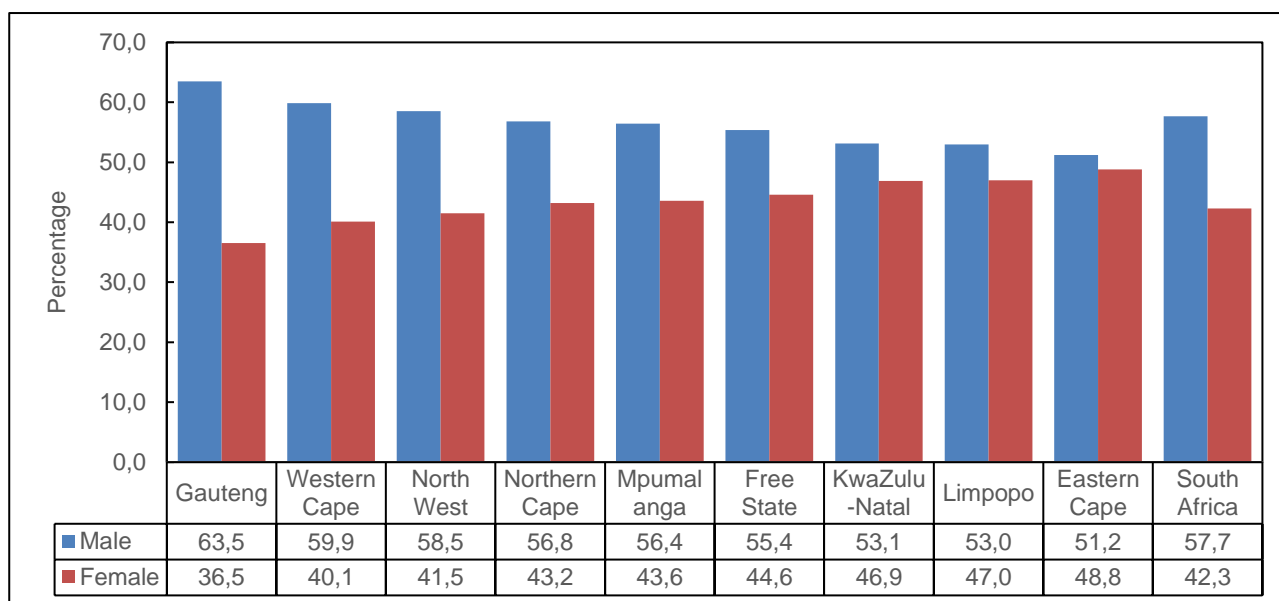
According to the GHS, there were 19,0 million households in South Africa in 2023, and 8,0 million (42,3%) were headed by females. Looking at the provincial distribution, Female-headed households were most common in provinces with large rural areas such as Eastern Cape (48,8%), Limpopo (47,0%), and KwaZulu-Natal (46,9%), and least common in Gauteng (36,5%).

Figure 2.5a - Proportion of female-headed households to SA by province, 2014



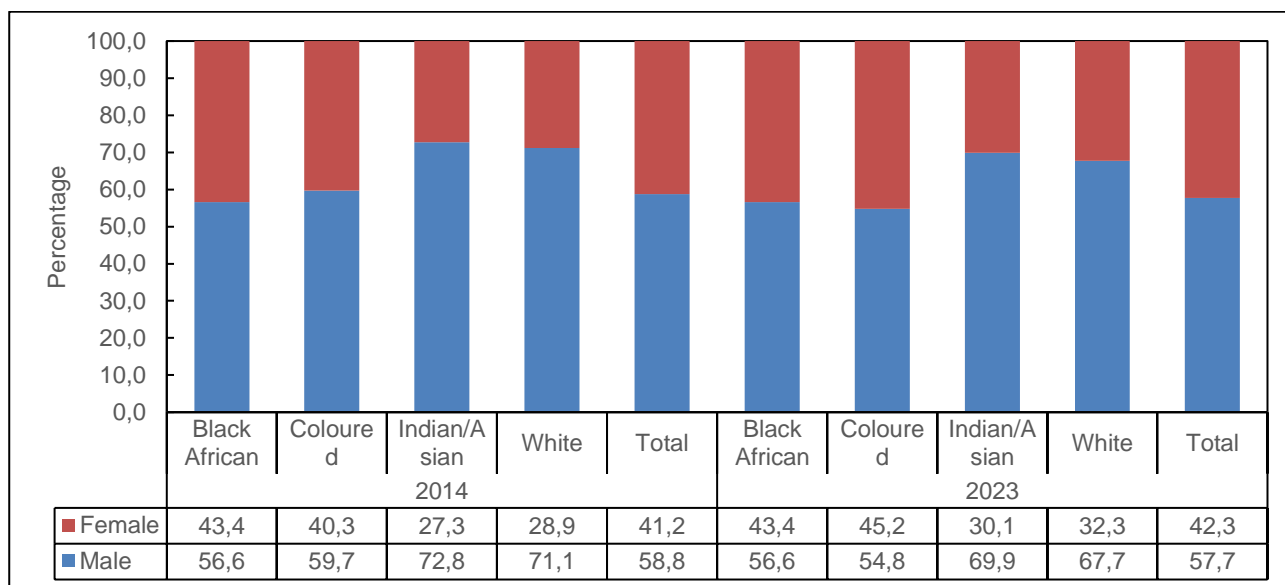
Source: GHS 2014

Figure 2.5b - Proportion of female-headed households to SA by province, 2023



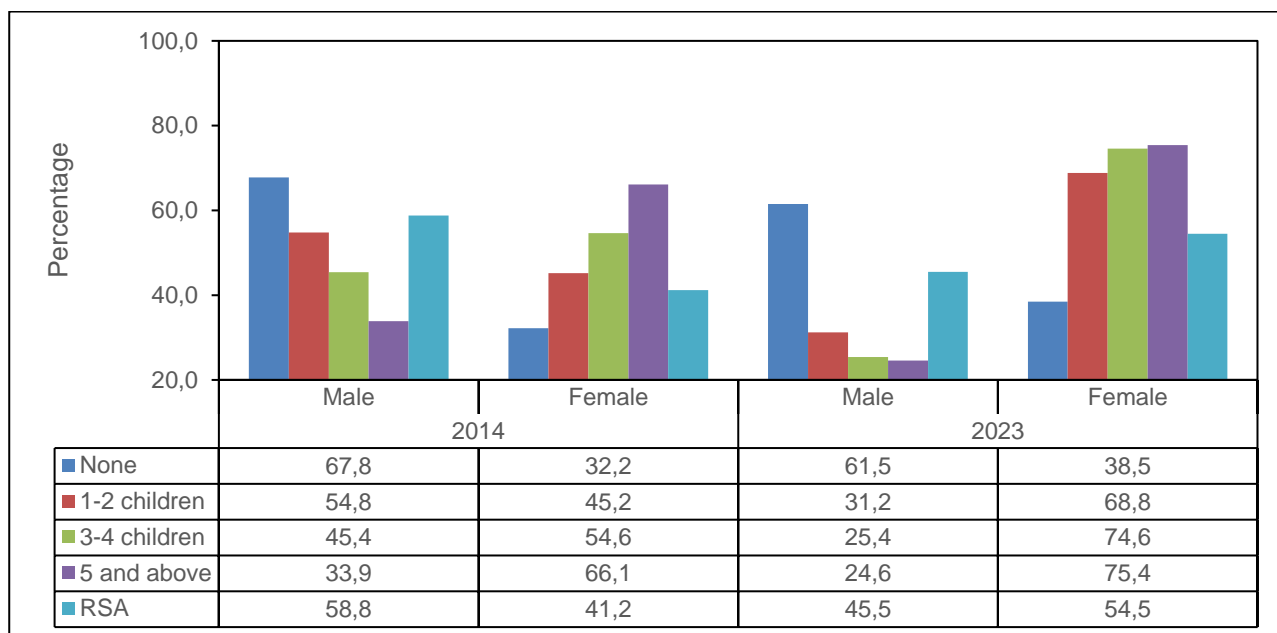
Source: GHS 2023

Understanding the composition households is important in gender analysis. Figures 2.5a and 2.5b above, show that a sizeable number of households in South Africa were headed by males between 2014 and 2023. In 2014, analysis revealed that more than four-tenths (41,2%) of the households in South Africa were headed by females, which increased by 1,1 percentage point to 42,3% in 2023. Provincial analysis revealed that Gauteng, Western Cape, North West, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape and Free State recorded an increase in the in female-headed households for the reporting period. On the contrary, Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape were the only provinces that showed a decrease in female-headed households for the reporting period. In 2023, female-headed households were most common in provinces with large rural areas such as Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Free State and Mpumalanga.

Figure 2.6 - Proportion of female-headed households to SA by population group, 2014 and 2023

Source: GHS 2023

Figure 2.6 depicts the proportion of female-headed households to SA by population group. The analysis revealed that across all population groups, majority of households were headed by males. In 2023, the coloured population group had the highest proportion of female-headed households, increasing by 4,9 percentage points (from 40,3% in 2014 to 45,2% in 2023). All four population groups showed an increase in the proportion of female-headed households except among the black Africans where they were constant for the reference period.

Figure 2.7 - Proportion of female-headed households without an employed household member by the presence of children, 2014 and 2023

Source: GHS 2014 & 2023

Figure 2.7 shows the proportion of female-headed households without an employed household member by presence of children in 2014 and 2023. In 2014, the percentage of male-headed households without an employed member were higher than that of females, the opposite is observed in 2023. The percentage of

female-headed households without an employed member increased from 41,2% in 2014 to 54,5% in 2023. The percentage of female-headed households without an employed household member increased along with the number of children, with the highest percentage being observed among those who had five or more children for both years (66,1 in 2014 and 75,4% in 2023). The proportion of male-headed households without an employed household member was higher than their female counterparts for households with no children for both years, even though there was a decline of 6,3 percentage points.

2.4 Conclusion

According to the 2024 Mid-year Population Estimates (MYPE), the female population in South Africa was estimated at 32,1 million (51,0%). Females reported the highest percentage share of the overall population compared to their male counterparts for all the years. The white population is the only population group that showed a positive increase in the female population, while the other population groups recorded a decline in their female populations for the reporting period.

In 2023, there were 19,0 million households in South Africa and 8,0 million (42,3%) were headed by females. In 2023, female-headed households were most common in provinces with large rural areas such as Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Free State and Mpumalanga.

CHAPTER 3: ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

3.1 Background

Economic empowerment is regarded as a powerful tool against poverty⁴. Employment or running a business provides individuals with a strong sense of economic independence, enabling them to contribute to their household's welfare. Gender equality is both a human right and a prerequisite for achieving inclusive and prosperous societies and economies. Therefore, the participation of females in the economy is vital as it gives them access and control over resources and enables them to earn income to support their households. However, some 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 growth⁵.

However, more often, 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 work, such as being caretakers and providers of household work. South Africa has policies in place designed to ensure that women and men have equal rights and opportunities. With all the policies developed to try and close the gender gap, the country still experiences gender disparities in employment.

The chapter provides key indicators that inform progress on market participation in the development and economic empowerment context of women. The information provided in this section is mainly informed by the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS), which is a key measurement tool for monitoring gender equality as it provides information on employment, unemployment, reasons for economic inactivity and other labour-related information. The data from QLFS Q2 of 2014 and 2024 will be used for analysis. This analysis is taken further by linking economic participation and resource equity. The resources discussed in this chapter include social grants, access to communication and asset ownership.

3.2 The working-age population

The working-age population comprises all persons aged 15 and above. For reporting purposes, the working-age population will be those persons aged 15–64. The indicator is used to measure the share of the working-age population in the total population and how it varies over time. However, not everyone who is part of the working-age population is actively engaged in the labour market; some are employed, unemployed, or out of the labour force.

⁴ Elliott, C.M. 2008. *Global empowerment of women: Responses to globalization and politicized religions*. Routledge, New York.

⁵ Abu-Ghaida, Dina, & Stephan Klasen. 2004. "The Costs of Missing the Millennium Development Goal on Gender Equity."

Table 3.1 - Working-age population by sex and province, 2014 and 2024

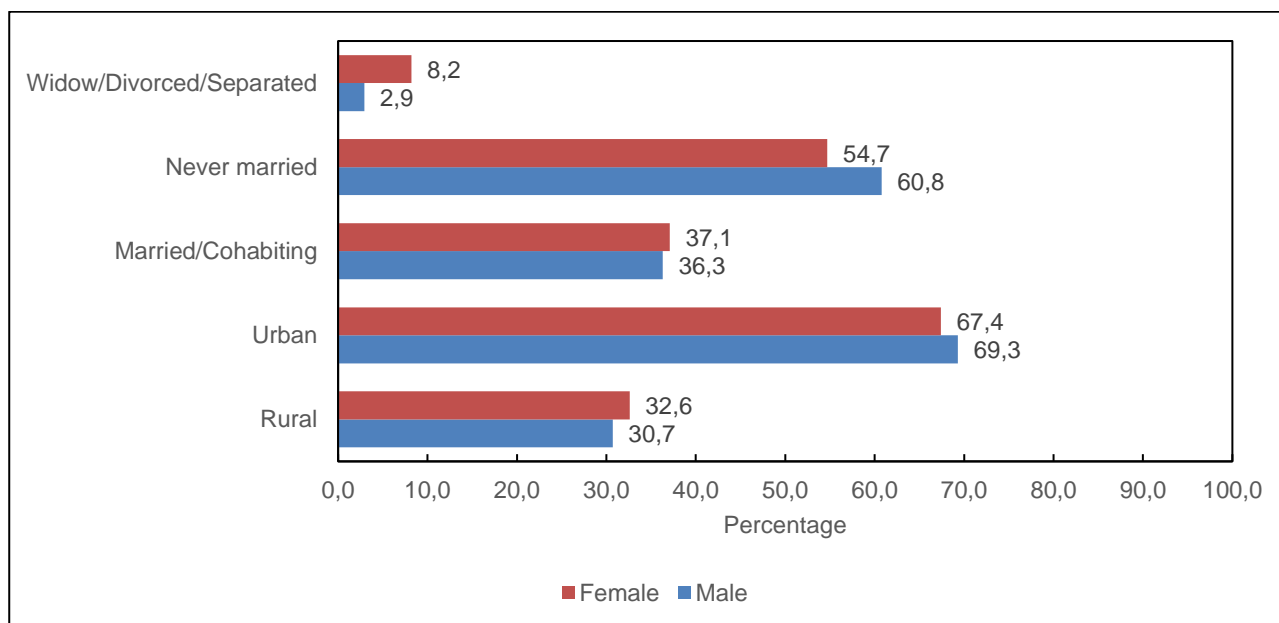
| Province | 2014 | | | | | | 2024 | | | | | |
|---------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| | Male | | Female | | Both sexes | | Male | | Female | | Both sexes | |
| | N('000) | % | N('000) | % | N('000) | % | N('000) | % | N('000) | % | N('000) | % |
| Western Cape | 2 038 | 48,8 | 2 138 | 51,2 | 4 176 | 100,0 | 2 451 | 48,5 | 2 603 | 51,5 | 5 054 | 100,0 |
| Eastern Cape | 1 929 | 47,4 | 2 144 | 52,6 | 4 073 | 100,0 | 2 283 | 50,1 | 2 270 | 49,9 | 4 553 | 100,0 |
| Northern Cape | 363 | 48,0 | 393 | 52,0 | 756 | 100,0 | 419 | 49,9 | 421 | 50,1 | 840 | 100,0 |
| Free State | 928 | 50,0 | 927 | 50,0 | 1 855 | 100,0 | 947 | 48,8 | 992 | 51,2 | 1 939 | 100,0 |
| KwaZulu-Natal | 3 178 | 48,2 | 3 418 | 51,8 | 6 596 | 100,0 | 3 641 | 47,7 | 3 991 | 52,3 | 7 633 | 100,0 |
| North West | 1 169 | 49,2 | 1 209 | 50,8 | 2 378 | 100,0 | 1 409 | 50,3 | 1 389 | 49,6 | 2 799 | 100,0 |
| Gauteng | 4 753 | 51,1 | 4 551 | 48,9 | 9 304 | 100,0 | 5 799 | 51,4 | 5 475 | 48,6 | 11 275 | 100,0 |
| Mpumalanga | 1 348 | 50,0 | 1 348 | 50,0 | 2 696 | 100,0 | 1 595 | 50,3 | 1 573 | 49,7 | 3 168 | 100,0 |
| Limpopo | 1 675 | 47,9 | 1 822 | 52,1 | 3 497 | 100,0 | 1 956 | 48,5 | 2 081 | 51,6 | 4 036 | 100,0 |
| RSA | 17 382 | 49,2 | 17 950 | 50,8 | 35 332 | 100,0 | 20 501 | 49,6 | 20 795 | 50,4 | 41 296 | 100,0 |

Source: QLFS Q2: 2014 & 2024

Changes in the size of the working-age population have a bearing on the labour market and the economy⁶. An increasing working-age population provides employment and economic growth opportunities while simultaneously creating challenges for job creation and absorption of new entrants. Table 3.1 above, shows the distribution of the working-age population between 2014 and 2024. During the ten years, the working-age population in South Africa increased by almost six million from 35,3 million in 2014 to 41,3 million in 2024. Provincial distributions showed that Gauteng had the highest number of the working-age population, followed by KwaZulu-Natal, Western Cape and the least was Northern Cape, for both years. There were no significant gender differences in the distribution of the working-age population across provinces between 2014 and 2024. The proportion of working-age males increased from 49,2% to 49,6% while females of working-age decreased from 50,8% to 50,4% in the reported period.

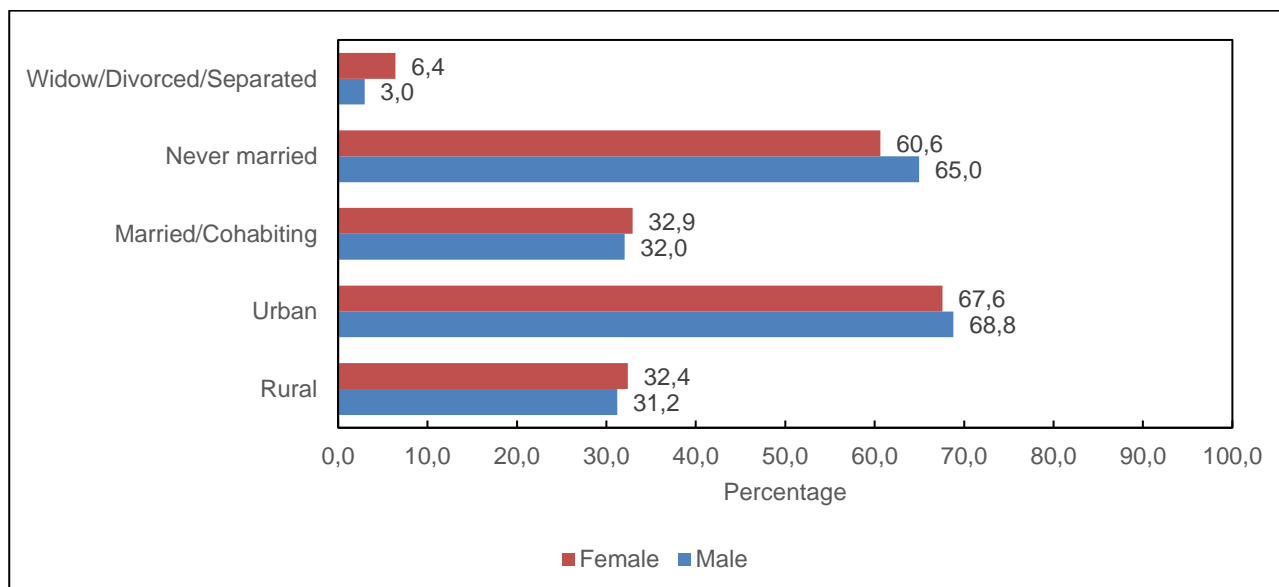
⁶ International Labour Organization, 2013.

Figure 3.1a - Percentage distribution of the working-age population by sex, geo-type and marital status, 2014



Source: QLFS Q2: 2014

Figure 3.1b - Percentage distribution of the working-age population by sex, geo-type and marital status, 2024



Source: QLFS Q2: 2024

Figures 3.1a and 3.1b show the working-age population by sex, geo-type and marital status between 2014 and 2024. The migration of persons to urban areas is mainly influenced by economic opportunities, access to basic services and better living conditions. The working-age population in rural areas were largely females, whilst the working-age population in urban areas were largely males. The working-age population for females in urban areas slightly increased by 0,2 percentage point (from 67,4% in 2014 to 67,6% in 2024) during the period. On the contrary, the working-age males in urban areas decreased by 0,5 percentage point (from 69,3% in 2014 to 68,8% in 2024). Regarding marital status, the proportion of working-age males and females who were never married increased by 4,2 and 5,9 percentage points respectively. Contrary, a decline was observed among the married/cohabitating irrespective of sex.

Figure 3.2a - Percentage distribution of the working-age population by sex and presence of children in the household, 2014

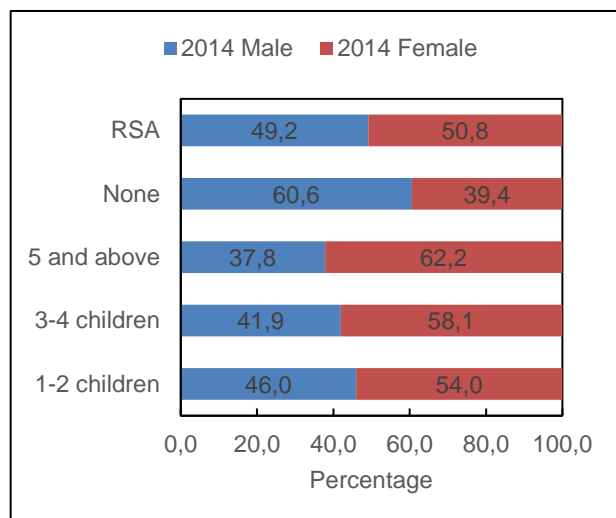
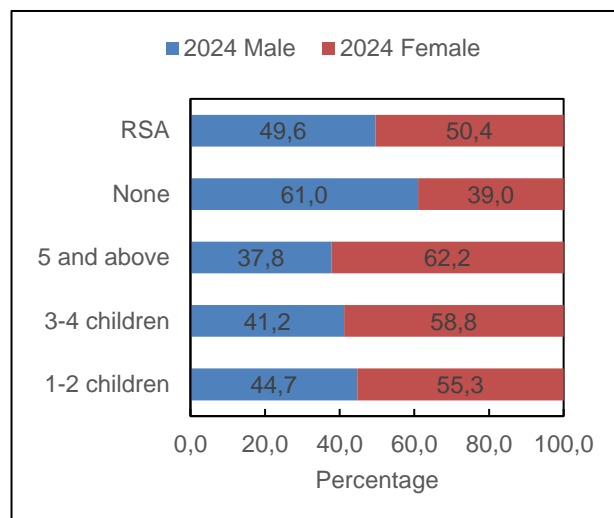


Figure 3.2b - Percentage distribution of the working-age population by sex and presence of children in the household, 2024



Source: QLFS Q2: 2014 & 2024

Children are classified as persons younger than 18 years. Figures 3.2a and 3.2b above, show the share of the working-age population living with children in their households, by sex. These figures indicate that among the working-age population, working-age females living with children had a higher share than their male counterparts. In 2024, 55,3% of the working-age females lived with a child or two and 62,2% lived with five or more children. On the other hand, working-age males commonly resided in households with no children at 60,6% in 2014 and 61,0% in 2024.

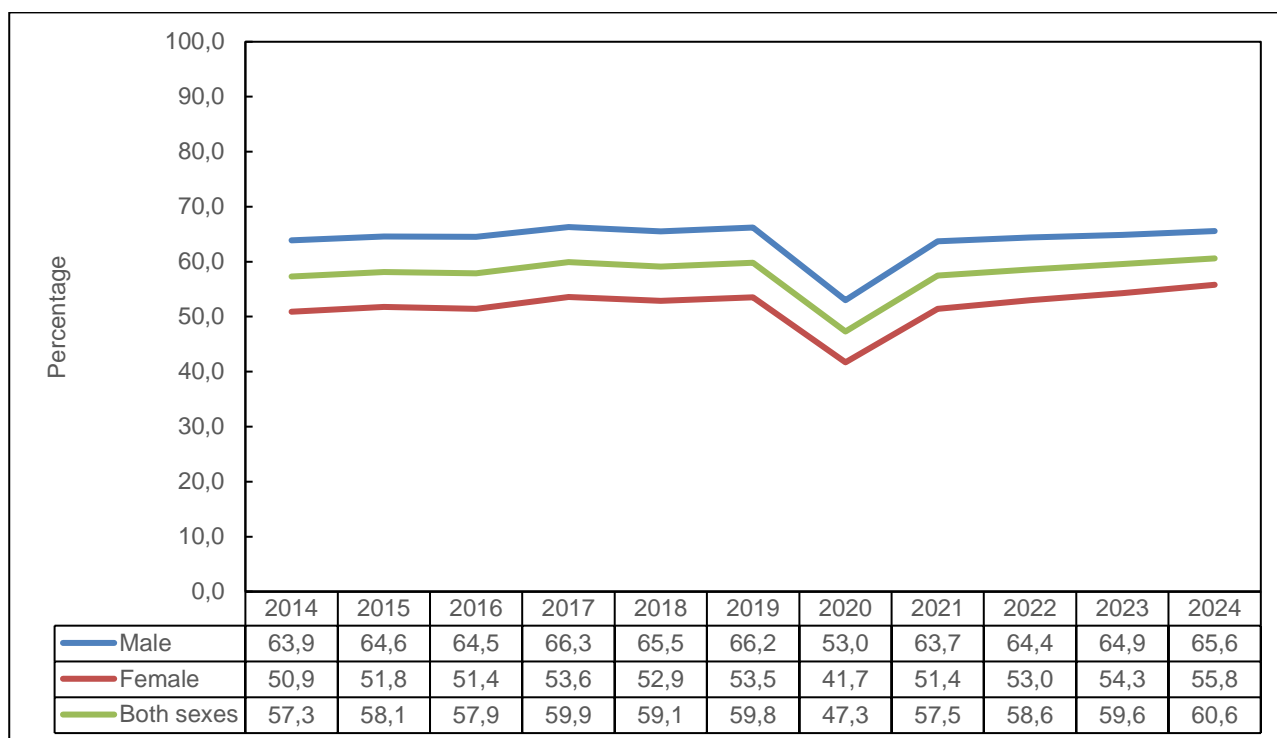
3.3 Labour force participation

The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines the labour force participation rate (LFPR) as the measure of the proportion of a country's working-age population that is engaged in the labour market, either by actively working or looking for work. Labour force participation contributes to economic growth and sustainable development, and limited growth in the population of economically active individuals can negatively affect long term economic growth, unless there are increases in labour participation⁷.

Labour force participation is influenced by many factors. These factors include variations in sex, population group, educational attainment, household structure and the geographic areas of the country including urban/non-urban settings. From a gender perspective, the LFPR assesses whether there is equitable access to the labour market for females in comparison to males. It 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 poverty⁸. This section examines gender disparities in labour force participation.

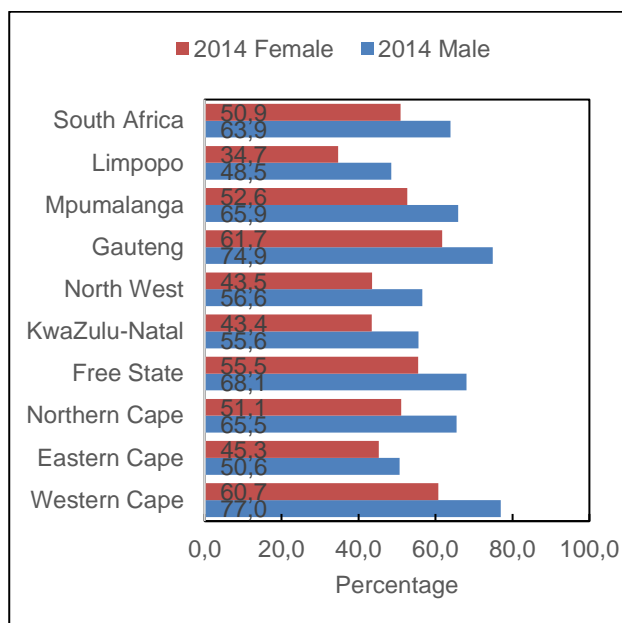
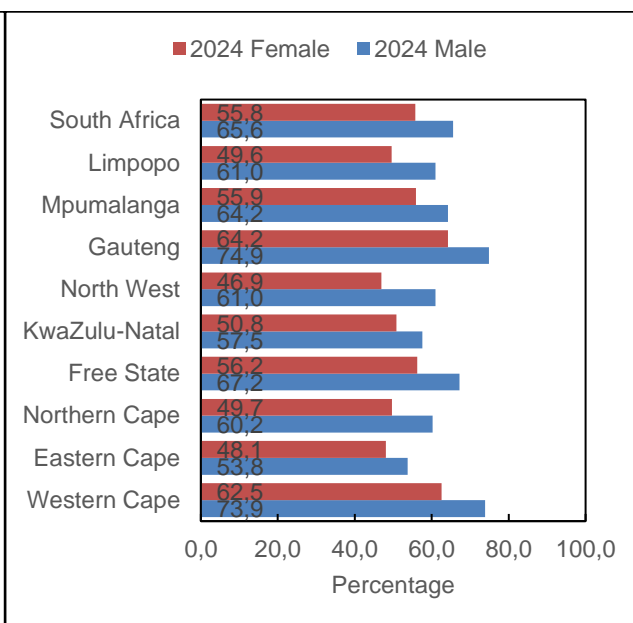
⁷ Daly, K. 2007. "Gender Inequality, Growth and Global Ageing," Global Economics Paper.

⁸ Bravo, D. & Contreras, D. 2004. Income distribution 1190-1996: Analysis of the impacts of the labour markets and social policies, reforms and social review, 99-128.

Figure 3.3 - Labour force participation rate by sex, 2014–2024

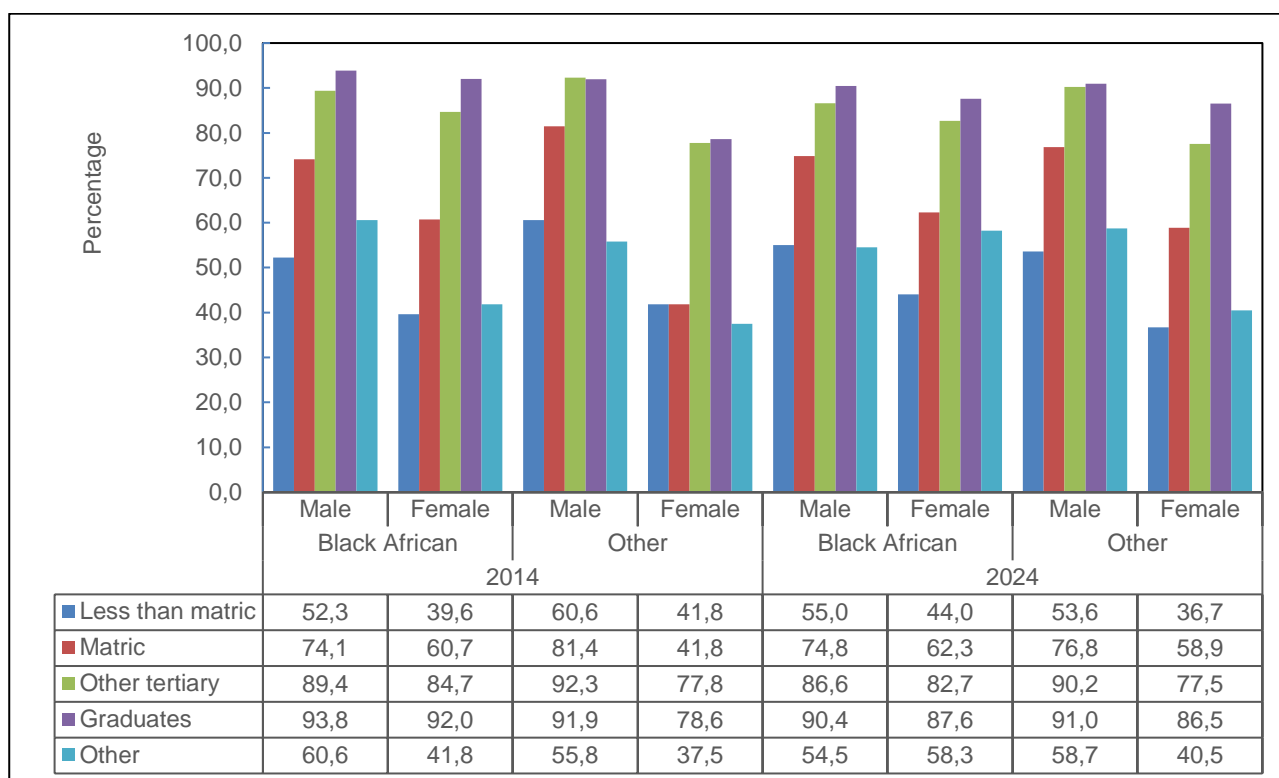
Source: QLFS Q2: 2014 – 2024

Figure 3.3 shows the labour force participation rate by sex as the proxy to determine the size of the South African economy's productive potential. There was fluctuation in labour force participation rates in the reporting period, nationally participation rates increased from 57,3% in 2014 to 60,6% in 2024. Gender disparities indicated that the labour force participation rates of males were higher than that of females and national average throughout the reported period. The labour force participation rate for males increased (from 63,9% in 2014 to 65,6% in 2024) while female participation rate increased from (50,9% in 2014 to 55,8% in 2024). The gap between male and female participation rates narrowed over the years, from 13,0% in 2014 to 9,8% in 2024.

Figure 3.4a - Labour force participation rate by sex and province, 2014**Figure 3.4b - Labour force participation rate by sex and province, 2024**

Source: QLFS Q2: 2014 & 2024

Figures 3.4a and 3.4b show the provincial distribution of labour force participation rates by sex between 2014 and 2024. Gender analysis revealed that the higher labour force participation rates were observed among males for both years. Provincial analysis showed that Western Cape reported the highest labour force participation (77,0% for males and 60,7% for females) in 2014. In 2024, the lowest labour participation rate for males was observed in Eastern Cape (53,8%) while for females, the lowest labour participation rate was in North West (46,9%). An increase in the participation rates was reflected among the males in most provinces, except for Western Cape, Northern Cape, Free State and Mpumalanga where the contrary was observed. Northern Cape was the only province that recorded a decrease in LFPR for both males and females between 2014 and 2024. For the reference period, Limpopo recorded the largest increase of LFPR for both males and females (12,5% and 15,0% respectively).

Figure 3.5 - Labour force participation rate by sex, population group and educational attainment, 2014 and 2024

Source: QLFS Q2: 2014 and 2024

Figure 3.5 above, shows labour force participation rates by sex, population group and educational attainment. For this report, the category 'other population groups' comprise whites, coloureds and Indian/Asian population groups. Notably, a positive relationship between educational attainment and the labour force participation rate was observed for all population groups and sexes.

Participation rates for both males and females in the black African and 'other population groups' who attained other tertiary education declined over the reference period. Amongst black African females, the participation rates increased for all educational levels except for graduates that slightly declined by 4,4 percentage points (from 92,0% in 2014 to 87,6% in 2024). Those with other tertiary slightly declined by 2,0 percentage points (from 84,7% in 2014 to 82,7% in 2024). Those who were graduates and other tertiary had the highest LFPR compared to those with less than matric or matric; the pattern was similar for both years of reporting.

Table 3.2 - Labour force participation rate by sex and the presence of children in the household, 2014 and 2024

| | 2014 | | | 2024 | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| | % | | | | | |
| Presence of children | | | | | | |
| None | 75,2 | 62,1 | 70,0 | 73,3 | 63,3 | 69,4 |
| 1-2 Children | 62,3 | 52,5 | 57,0 | 63,3 | 56,3 | 59,4 |
| 3-4 Children | 50,6 | 42,3 | 45,7 | 54,1 | 49,5 | 51,4 |
| 5 and above | 37,1 | 35,5 | 36,1 | 42,0 | 40,2 | 40,9 |
| Total | 63,9 | 50,9 | 57,3 | 65,6 | 55,8 | 60,6 |

Source: QLFS Q2: 2014 & 2024

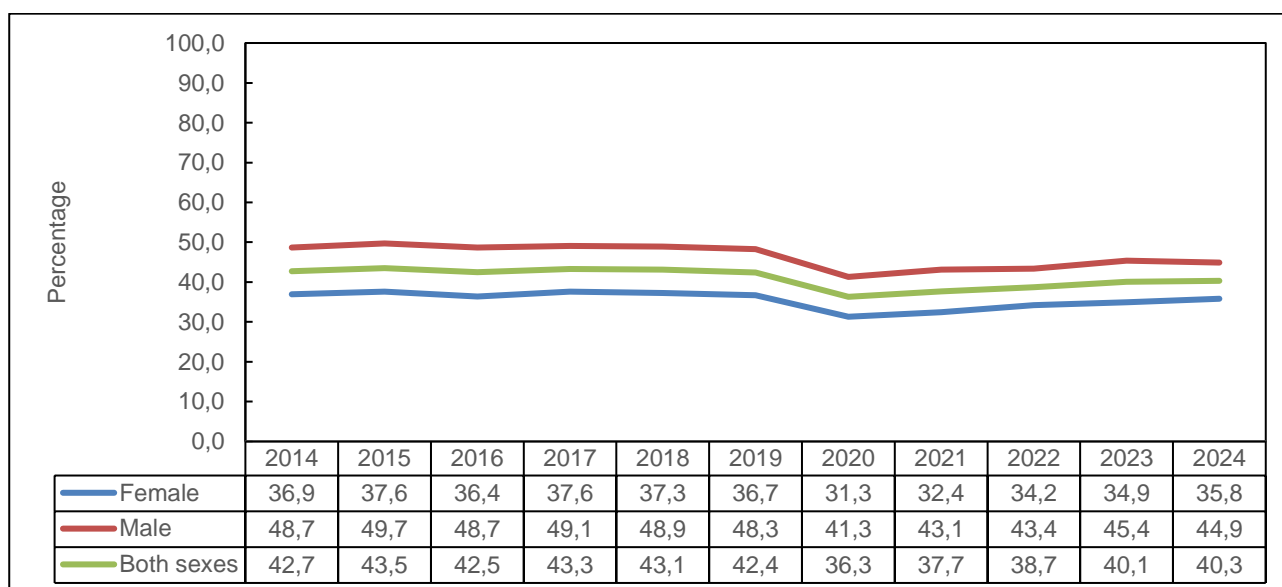
Studies have shown that women are faced with many responsibilities in their respective households which hinder them from actively participating in the labour force, such as childbearing, lack of affordable childcare, gender roles and work family balance⁹. Table 3.2 above, shows the labour force participation rates by sex and the presence of children in the household in 2014 and 2024. An analysis revealed a linear relationship between the number of children in the household and participation rates irrespective of sex.

Notably, participation rates were higher where there were no children in the household and more commonly so for males than their female counterparts. Participation rates in 2024 were lowest among males and females who lived with five or more children at 42,0% and 40,2% respectively, while those with no children reported higher participation rates.

3.4 Levels of employment and employment rate

Employment is defined as work done by persons aged 15–64 who, during the reference week, did any work for at least one hour, or had a job or business but were not at work (i.e. were temporarily absent). This section of the chapter presents an overview of gender disparities in relation to employment.

Figure 3.6 - Employment rate by sex, 2014–2024



Source: QLFS Q2: 2014 - 2024

The employment rate measures the number of persons who have jobs as a percentage of the working age population. Figure 3.6 above, shows a trend analysis of employment rates in South Africa between second quarters of 2014 to 2024. Nationally, employment rates have declined from 42,7% in 2014 to 40,3% in 2024, with the lowest rate recorded in 2020. The male employment rates were generally higher than that of females during the reported period. The employment rate of males declined from 48,7 % in 2014 to 44,9% in 2024, while the females declined marginally by 1,1 percentage points from 36,9% in 2014 to 35,8% in 2024. The employment rate for males reached its peak in 2015 at 49,7% with the lowest rate being reported in 2020 at 41,3%; for females the highest rate was 37,6% in 2015 and 2017 with the lowest reported in 31,3% in 2020.

⁹ World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends for Women, 2017.

Table 3.3 - Level of employment by sex and age group, 2014 and 2024

| Age group | 2014 | | | 2024 | | |
|------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| | Male | Female | Both sexes | Male | Female | Both sexes |
| | N' (000) | | | | | |
| 15–24 yrs | 749 | 535 | 1 284 | 645 | 444 | 1 089 |
| 25–34 yrs | 2 748 | 1 981 | 4 729 | 2 608 | 2 022 | 4 630 |
| 35–44 yrs | 2 614 | 2 043 | 4 657 | 2 885 | 2 283 | 5 169 |
| 45–54 yrs | 1 594 | 1 467 | 3 061 | 2 167 | 1 897 | 4 065 |
| 55–64 yrs | 760 | 604 | 1 363 | 899 | 802 | 1 701 |
| RSA | 8 465 | 6 629 | 15 094 | 9 204 | 7 448 | 16 652 |

Source: QLFS Q2: 2014 & 2024

Table 3.3 above, shows the level of employment by sex and age group between 2014 and 2024. Overall, there was an increase of 739 000 and 819 000 for employed males and females respectively, with the 45–54 age group increasing by over a million. Within each age group, fewer females than males were employed for the reported period. In 2014, males had the highest levels of employment in the 25–34 age cohort while females reported high levels in the 35–44 age cohort. In contrast, the 35–44 age cohort were the most likely to be employed in 2024, for both sexes. The 15–24 age group employment levels declined by 195 000, while the 25–34 age group declined by 99 000 in the reported period.

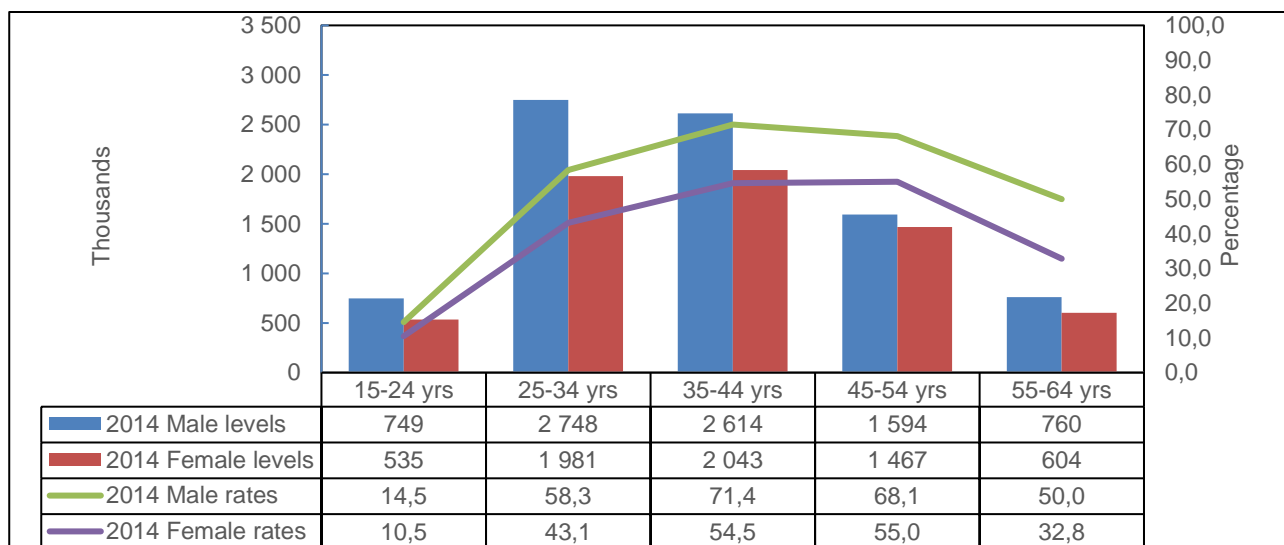
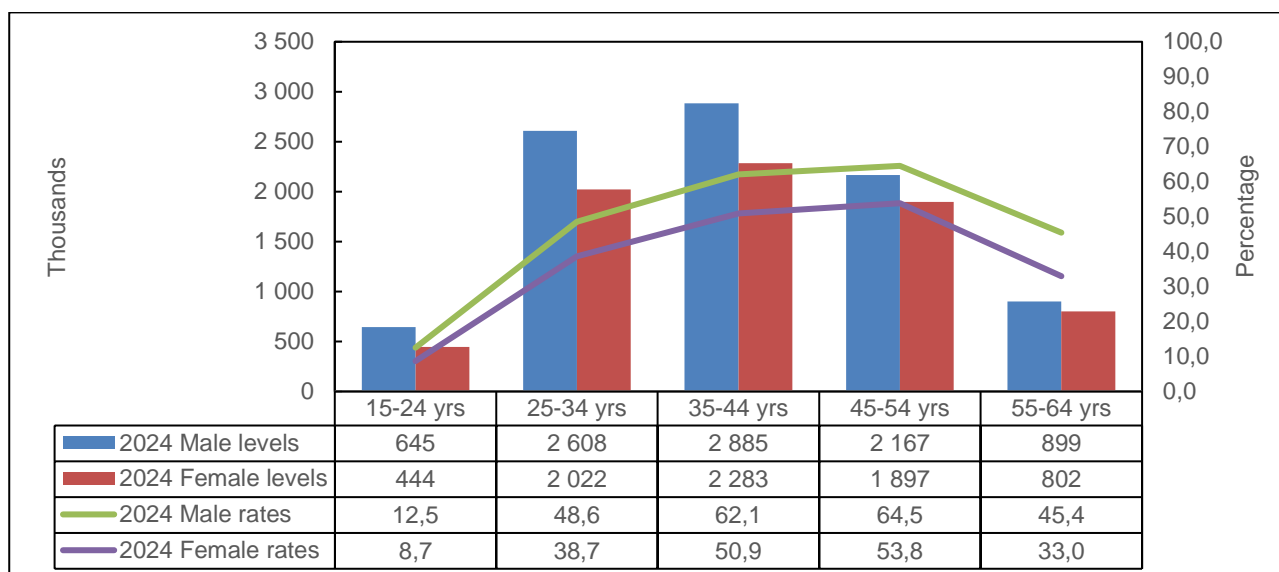
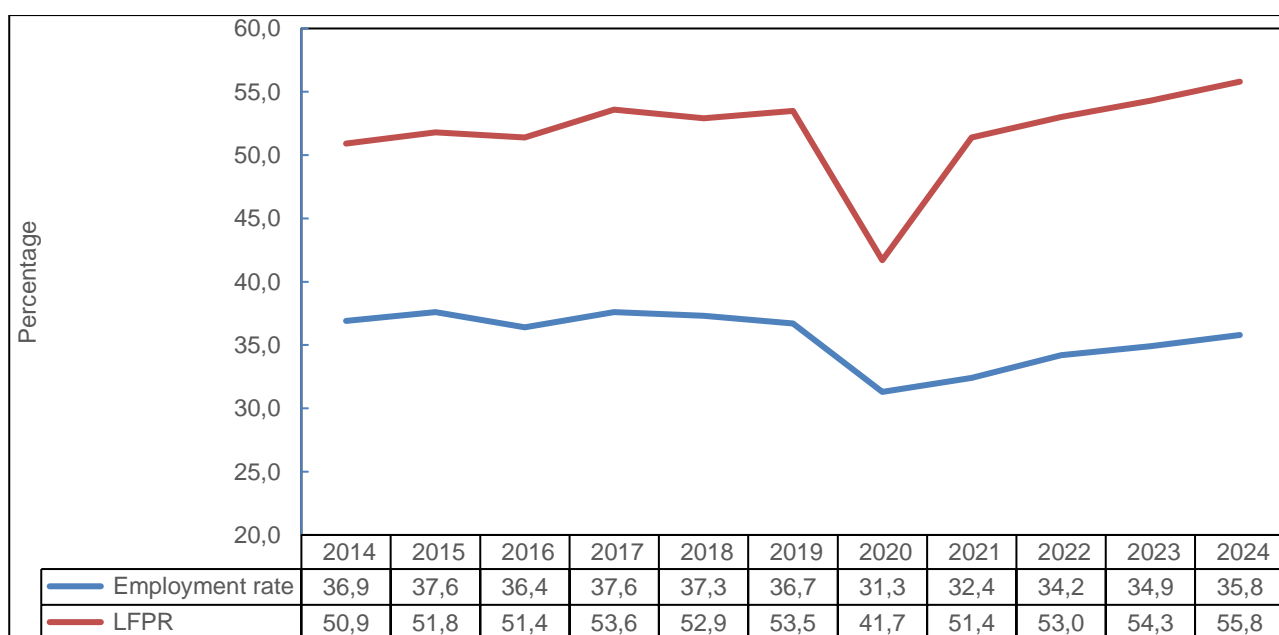
Figure 3.7a - Employment rate in relation to levels of employment by sex and age group, 2014

Figure 3.7b - Employment rate in relation to levels of employment by sex and age group, 2024

Source: QLFS Q2: 2014 & 2024

Figures 3.7a and 3.7b above, illustrates the employment rates in relation to levels of employment classified by sex and age group. Between 2014 and 2024, levels of employment for both males and females increased while their employment rates decreased. These findings suggest that job creation in the country is not expanding at the same rate as the population growth, regardless of sex.

Figures also show that since 2014, the employment rate for males has been consistently higher than that of females in all age groups. However, trends in the employment rate for males and females shows a similar decreasing pattern. For 2024, the employment rate for females and males peaked at 45–54 years and gradually declined thereafter. The 15-24 cohort had the lowest employment rates in the reported period, for both sexes.

Figure 3.8 - Female employment and labour force participation rate, 2014–2024

Source: QLFS Q2:2014-2024

Figure 3.8 shows the female absorption rate and labour force participation rate from 2014 to 2024. Absorption rate is the proportion of the working-age population that is employed. The labour force participation rate for females increased from 50,9% to 55,8% over a ten-year period. The employment rate for females remained below 40,0%, declining by 1,1 percentage points from 36,9% in the second quarter of 2014 to 35,8% in the second quarter of 2024. The gap between the absorption rate and LFPR grew from 14,0 percentage points in 2014 to 20,0 percentage points in 2024. As this gap continues to grow, it suggests that a larger proportion of those entering the labour market are facing unemployment.

Table 3.4 - Share in employment levels of individuals with tertiary qualification by sex and field of study, 2014 and 2024

| Field of study | 2014 | | | | | | 2024 | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| | Male | | Female | | Both sexes | | Male | | Female | | Both sexes | |
| | N' (000) | % | N' (000) | % | N' (000) | GPR | N' (000) | % | N' (000) | % | N' (000) | GPR |
| Agriculture/other | 118 | 50,4 | 116 | 49,6 | 234 | 0,98 | 52 | 43,8 | 67 | 56,2 | 119 | 1,28 |
| Arts and education/tourism | 31 | 34,5 | 58 | 65,5 | 89 | 1,90 | 26 | 27,6 | 69 | 72,4 | 95 | 2,62 |
| Economic and management science | 155 | 46,0 | 182 | 54,0 | 337 | 1,18 | 124 | 40,6 | 181 | 59,4 | 304 | 1,46 |
| Physical and mathematical/engineering | 300 | 77,8 | 85 | 22,2 | 385 | 0,28 | 205 | 70,4 | 86 | 29,6 | 292 | 0,42 |
| Social studies/health sciences | 196 | 50,1 | 195 | 49,9 | 392 | 1,00 | 138 | 44,1 | 175 | 55,9 | 313 | 1,27 |
| RSA | 799 | 55,6 | 637 | 44,4 | 1 436 | 0,80 | 546 | 48,6 | 578 | 51,4 | 1 123 | 1,06 |

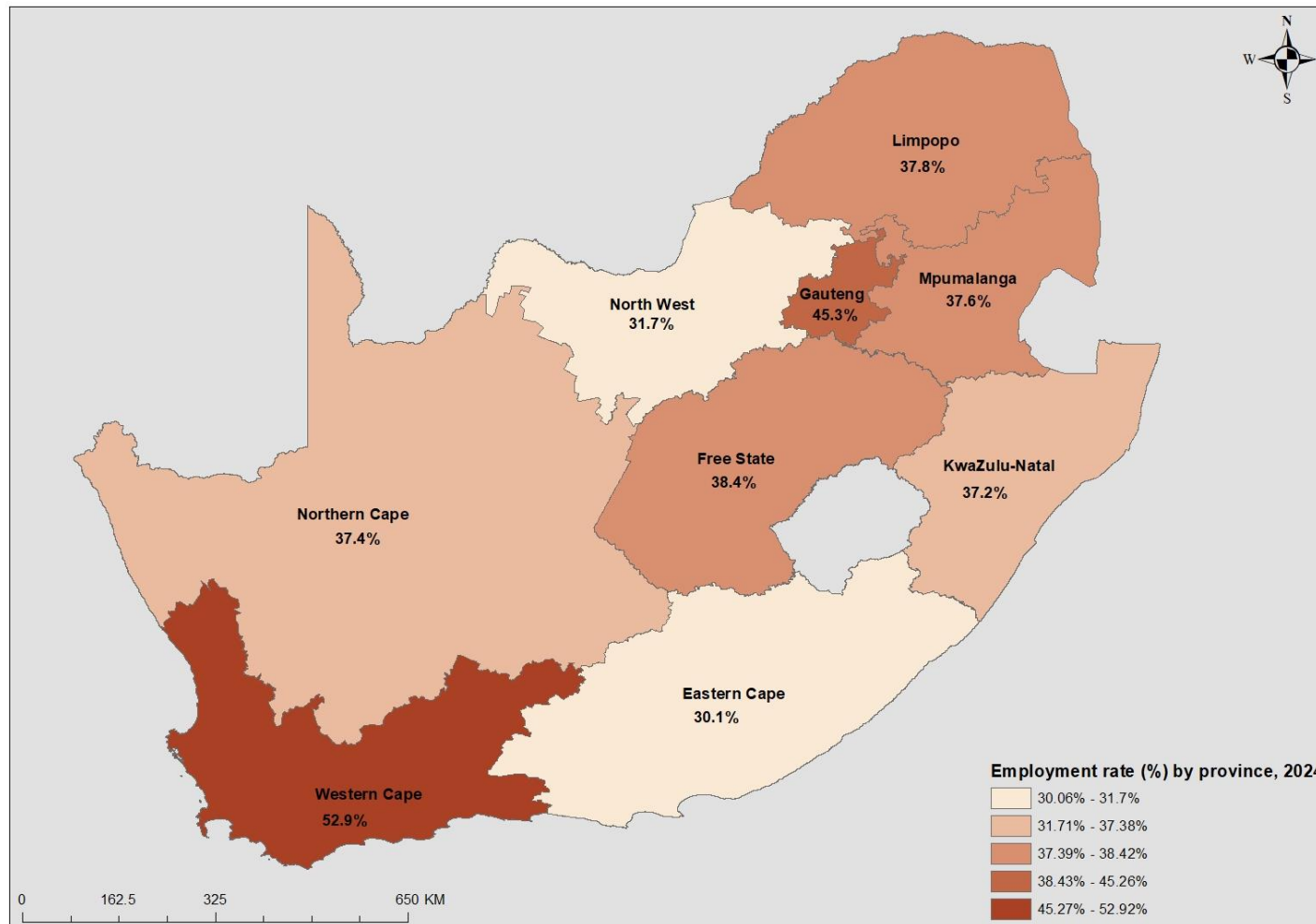
Source: QLFS Q2: 2014 & 2024.

A gender parity ratio (GPR) is a measure of gender equality, i.e. a GPR of 1,0 represents parity (equality), a GPR below 1,0 shows a disparity or a gender gap in favour of males, whereas a GPR of greater than 1,0 shows disparities in favour of females¹⁰.

Table 3.4 shows the share in the employment levels of males and females with tertiary qualifications by field of study, in 2014 and 2024. Approximately, 7 in 10 males who were employed with a tertiary education in physics/mathematics or engineering field (77,8% in 2014 and 70,4% in 2024), with a gender parity ratio of 0,28 and 0,42, respectively. There was a 7,4 percentage points increase in the number of employed females with a tertiary qualification in the physical/mathematics and engineering field (from 22,2% in 2014 to 29,6% in 2024).

Although the number of employed persons in the agriculture/other field declined in the reported period, the gender parity ratio changed from 0,98 in 2014 to 1,28 in 2024, meaning more females than males were in the agriculture field. In addition, employed individuals qualified in Arts and Economic and management sciences fields were more likely to be females in 2024, showing a gender parity ratio of 2,62 and 1,46, respectively.

¹⁰ Global Gender Parity Report, 2023.

Map 3.1 - Employment rates by province: 2024

Source: QLFS Q2: 2024

Map 3.1 displays employment rates by province in 2024. Western Cape had the highest employment rate of 52,9%, followed by Gauteng and Free State at 45,3% and 38,4%, respectively. The provinces with the lowest employment rates were Eastern Cape (30,1%), followed by North West (31,7%).

Table 3.5 - Employment rates by sex and geo-type, 2014 & 2024

| Geo type | 2014 | | | 2024 | | |
|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Male | Female | Both sexes | Male | Female | Both sexes |
| | % | | | | | |
| Rural | 34,8 | 25,6 | 30,0 | 33,6 | 26,1 | 29,7 |
| Urban | 54,9 | 42,4 | 48,6 | 50,0 | 40,5 | 45,3 |
| RSA | 48,7 | 36,9 | 42,7 | 44,9 | 35,8 | 40,3 |

Source: QLFS Q2: 2014 & 2024

Table 3.5 shows the employment rate by sex and geo-type for 2014 and 2024. During this period, males were more likely to be employed than females, irrespective of the geographical area. Overall, there was a 0,3 percentage points decrease in the employment rate of those residing in rural areas (from 30,0% in 2014 to 29,7% in 2024) while those in urban areas recorded a decline of 3,3 percentage points (from 48,6% in 2014 to 45,3% in 2024). The males residing in urban areas recorded a 4,9 percentage points decline (from 54,9% in 2014 to 50,0% in 2024) while their female counterparts recorded a 1,9 percentage points decline (from 42,4% in 2014 to 40,5% in 2024) for the reference period. Although the employment rate of rural females increased slightly compared to that of their male counterparts (0,5 percentage points and 1,2 percentage points, respectively), females residing in rural areas remained less likely to be employed in the reported period.

Table 3.6 - Percentage share in employment by sex and occupation, 2014 & 2024

| Occupation | 2014 | | 2024 | |
|------------------------------|------|--------|------|--------|
| | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| | % | | | |
| Clerk | 29,5 | 70,5 | 28,5 | 71,5 |
| Craft and related trade | 88,7 | 11,3 | 86,2 | 13,8 |
| Domestic worker | 4,0 | 96,0 | 4,3 | 95,7 |
| Elementary | 59,9 | 40,1 | 58,3 | 41,7 |
| Manager | 68,6 | 31,4 | 63,3 | 36,7 |
| Plant and machinery operator | 87,4 | 12,6 | 88,1 | 11,9 |
| Professional | 57,1 | 42,9 | 49,6 | 50,4 |
| Sales and services | 51,3 | 48,7 | 53,3 | 46,7 |
| Skilled agriculture | 67,1 | 32,9 | 74,9 | 25,1 |
| Technician | 44,4 | 55,6 | 43,4 | 56,6 |

Source: QLFS Q2: 2014 & 2024

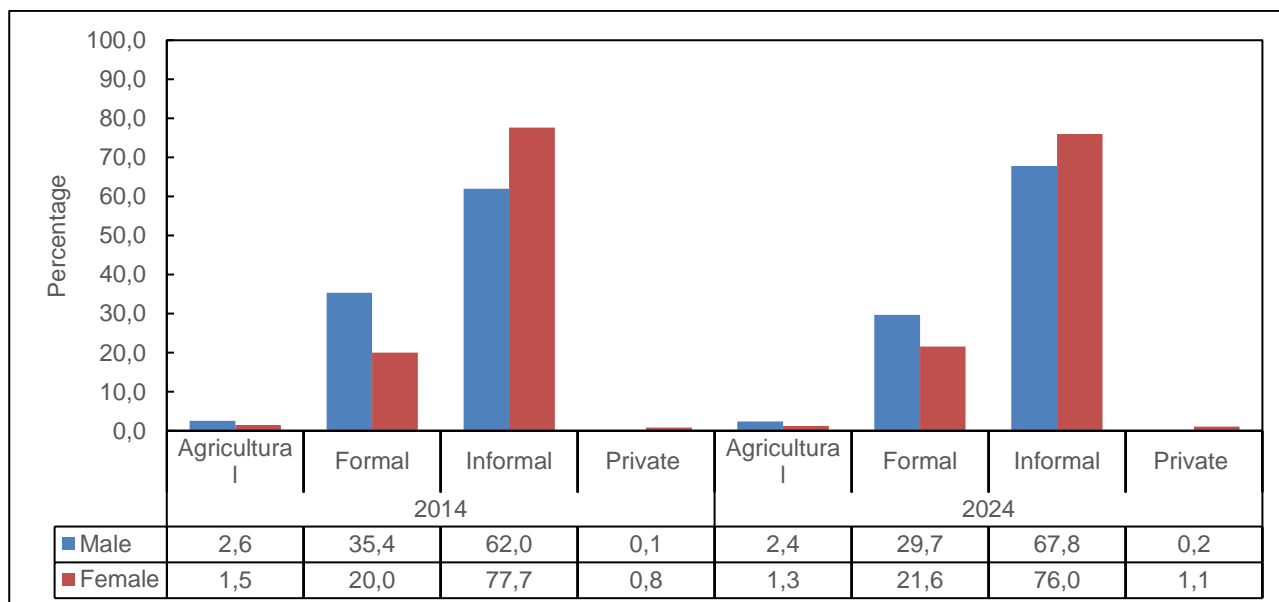
Table 3.6 shows the percentage distribution of occupational categories of males and females for 2014 and 2024. There seems to be a similar pattern in the percentage share between 2014 and 2024, with domestic work, clerical and technician occupations being dominated by women, while the males dominated the craft and related trade, plant and machinery operating. Working as domestic workers was a more common occupation among females than males, with a 0,3 percentage points decrease (from 96,0% in 2014 to 95,7% in 2024) in the reported period. The second most common occupation for employed females was working as a clerk, for both 2014 and 2024.

For the reference period, there has been a 7,8 percentage points decline in the percentage share of females in skilled agriculture (from 32,9% in 2014 to 25,1% in 2024). There was almost an equitable share between males and females employed in professional occupation in 2024.

3.5 Business enterprises

This section provides information about males and females running their own business enterprises, i.e. those who operate as employers and/or own-account workers. According to the QLFS, employers are defined as persons running a business and employing at least one person. Own-account workers, on the other hand, are individuals who run their businesses on their own (i.e. not employing anyone).

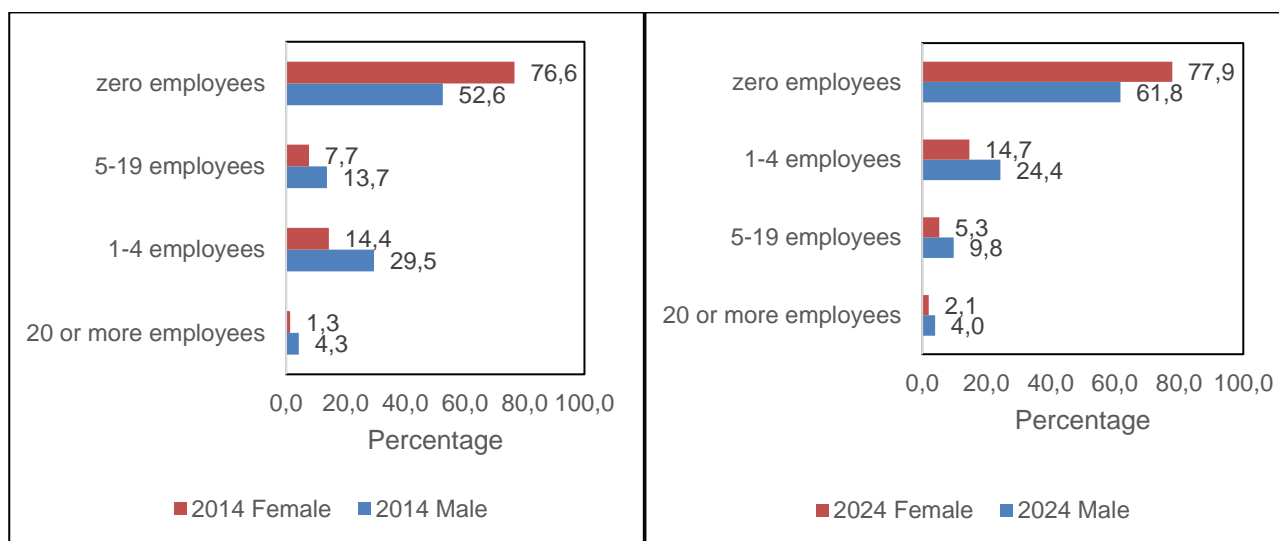
Figure 3.9 - Share of employers and own account by sex and sector, 2014 and 2024



Source: QLFS Q2: 2014 & 2024

Figure 3.9 above, shows the distribution of male and female business enterprises by sector between 2014 and 2024. It shows that employers and own-account workers generally dominated in the informal sector and were least prevalent in private households in the reported period.

The figure also shows that three out of four females (77,7% in 2014 and 76,0% in 2024) were operating businesses in the informal sector. The presence of males in the informal sector experienced a 5,8 percentage point increase over this period, while the females declined by 1,7 percentage points. The proportion of female-run businesses operating in the formal sector grew from 20,0% in 2014 to 21,6% in 2024, while their counterparts reported a decline of 5,7 percentage points in the same period. There was a marginal decline of 0,2 percentage point in the agricultural sector for both sexes.

Figure 3.10 - Share of employers and own account by sex and business size, 2014 and 2024

Source: QLFS Q2: 2014 & 2024

For the purpose of this report, the following analysis groups businesses into four categories, namely: i) Businesses, where employers are employing between 1–4 individuals are categorised as small-sized businesses; ii) Those employing between 5–19 individuals are referred to as medium-sized businesses; iii) Businesses employing 20 or more persons are labelled as large-sized businesses; while iv) Businesses employing zero employees are referred to as own-account workers/self-employed.

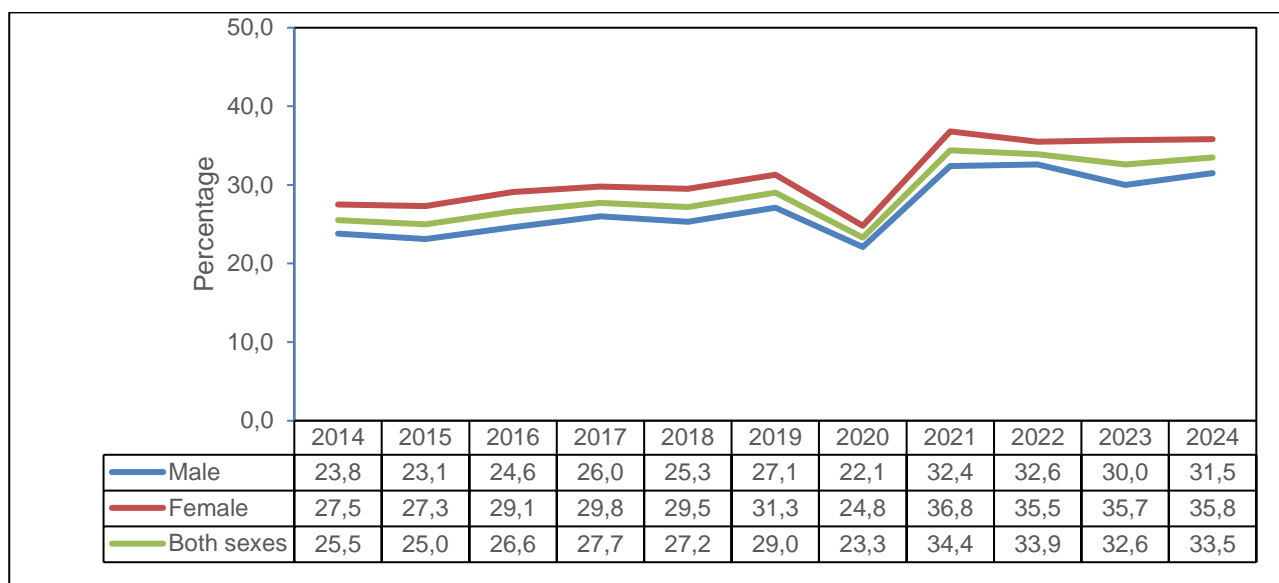
Figure 3.10 above, illustrates the distribution of business owners by the size of businesses over the period 2014 and 2024. Over the period, females were more likely to be own-account workers than their male counterparts. The proportion of female own-account workers with zero employees increased by 1,3 percentage points while that of their male counterparts increased by 9,2 percentage points in the reported period. Between 2014 and 2024, the percentage of females who reported to be employing 20 or more persons increased by 0,8 percentage points while their male counterparts declined by 0,3 percentage points. The results show a decline in the percentage shares amongst females owning small and medium-sized businesses.

3.6 Levels of unemployment and the unemployment rate

The National Development Plan (NDP) of the country outlines several key targets, including the elimination of poverty, the creation of jobs, and the reduction of unemployment¹¹. Decreasing levels of unemployment is particularly important because of their direct impact on reducing poverty, as it affects both men and women equally¹². Nonetheless, women tend to experience more of unemployment as opposed to men. This section explores gender differences in unemployment, focusing on various socio-demographic characteristics, duration of unemployment, types of job search methods as well as means of survival for the unemployed.

¹¹ South African National Development Plan: Vision for 2030. Retrieved from www.npconline.co.za/medialib/downloads/home/NPC%20National%20Development

¹² Frye, I. 2006. Poverty and unemployment in South Africa. NALEDI.

Figure 3.11 - Unemployment rate by sex, 2014 to 2024

Source: QLFS Q2:2014–2024

The unemployment rate represents the share of the labour force that is without work but available for and seeking employment. Figure 3.11 depicts the steady increase of national unemployment rates from 25,5% in 2014 to 33,5% in 2024. The gender gap in unemployment remained stable with female unemployment rates relatively higher than the national rates and their male counterparts for the reference period. Female unemployment rate increased from 27,5% in 2014 to 35,8% in 2024, while unemployment rates for males increased from 23,8% in 2014 to 31,5% in 2024.

Table 3.7 - Levels of unemployment and unemployment rate by sex and age group, 2014 and 2024

| Age group | 2014 | | | 2024 | | |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | Male | Female | Both sexes | Male | Female | Both sexes |
| | N'(000) | | | | | |
| 15–24 yrs | 704 | 674 | 1 378 | 864 | 827 | 1 691 |
| 25–34 yrs | 1 031 | 983 | 2 014 | 1 634 | 1 672 | 3 306 |
| 35–44 yrs | 541 | 592 | 1 134 | 1 025 | 1 057 | 2 082 |
| 45–54 yrs | 295 | 218 | 513 | 586 | 476 | 1 063 |
| 55–64 yrs | 66 | 49 | 115 | 128 | 115 | 242 |
| Total | 2 638 | 2 516 | 5 154 | 4 237 | 4 147 | 8 384 |
| Age group | % | | | | | |
| | Male | Female | Both sexes | Male | Female | Both sexes |
| | N'(000) | | | | | |
| 15–24 yrs | 48,4 | 55,7 | 51,8 | 57,3 | 65,1 | 60,8 |
| 25–34 yrs | 27,3 | 33,2 | 29,9 | 38,5 | 45,3 | 41,7 |
| 35–44 yrs | 17,2 | 22,5 | 19,6 | 26,2 | 31,6 | 28,7 |
| 45–54 yrs | 15,6 | 12,9 | 14,4 | 21,3 | 20,1 | 20,7 |
| 55–64 yrs | 8,0 | 7,6 | 7,8 | 12,4 | 12,5 | 12,5 |
| Total | 23,8 | 27,5 | 25,5 | 31,5 | 35,8 | 33,5 |

Source: QLFS Q2: 2014 & 2024

Table 3.7 demonstrates unemployment levels and the unemployment rate of males and females by different age categories, in 2014 and 2024. The table illustrates that during the reported period, the national unemployment level increased by 3,2 million.

Females were more likely to be unemployed as compared to their male counterpart, for the reporting period. The disparities amongst age groups shown an overall increase in unemployment levels across all age-groups over the reporting period. Males and females between the ages of 15–24 reported the highest unemployment rate compared to other age groups. Generally, the unemployment rate grew by 8,0 percentage points from 25,5% in 2014 to 33,5% in 2024, with youth (15–24 and 25–34 age groups) accounting for the largest part on unemployment compared to other age groups.

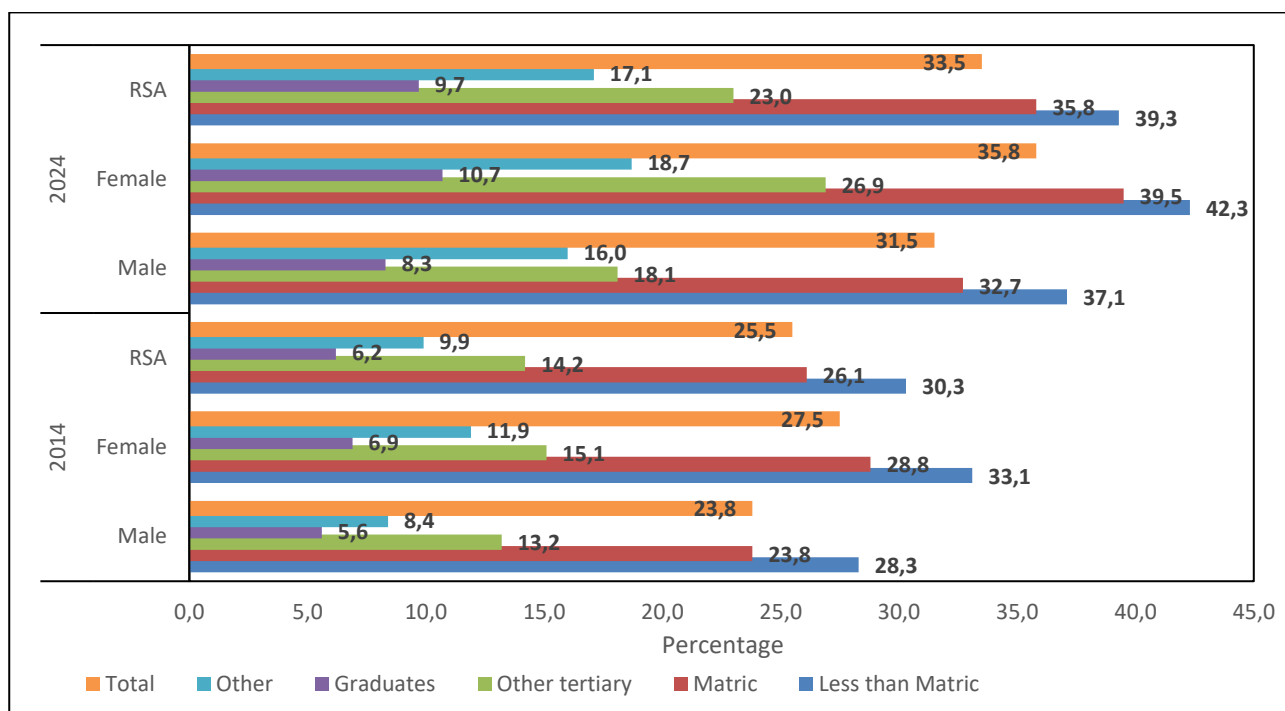
Table 3.8 - Unemployment rate by sex and province, 2014 and 2024

| Province | 2014 | | | 2024 | | |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Male | Female | Both sexes | Male | Female | Both sexes |
| | % | | | | | |
| Western Cape | 22,7 | 24,6 | 23,5 | 20,6 | 24,0 | 22,2 |
| Eastern Cape | 30,0 | 30,8 | 30,4 | 42,2 | 39,6 | 41,0 |
| Northern Cape | 28,0 | 37,4 | 32,3 | 28,5 | 36,2 | 32,0 |
| Free State | 32,3 | 38,3 | 35,0 | 33,8 | 41,9 | 37,6 |
| KwaZulu-Natal | 23,9 | 23,4 | 23,7 | 28,6 | 33,6 | 31,1 |
| North West | 23,7 | 28,9 | 26,0 | 36,3 | 47,8 | 41,3 |
| Gauteng | 22,2 | 27,6 | 24,6 | 33,1 | 37,5 | 35,1 |
| Mpumalanga | 25,6 | 34,3 | 29,5 | 35,4 | 39,6 | 37,4 |
| Limpopo | 15,0 | 17,2 | 15,9 | 29,0 | 34,2 | 31,4 |
| RSA | 23,8 | 27,5 | 25,5 | 31,5 | 35,8 | 33,5 |

Source: QLFS Q2: 2014 & 2024

Table 3.8 shows provincial variations in unemployment rates by sex in 2014 and 2024. Nationally, unemployment rates increased from 25,5% to 33,5% for the reference period. The provinces which recorded largest increase in the unemployment rate during the reported period were Limpopo, North West and Eastern Cape with 15,5, 15,3 and 10,6 percentage points respectively. Western Cape and Northern Cape are the only provinces to have shown a decrease in unemployment rates of 1,3 and 0,3 percentage points respectively, during the period.

Looking at the differences amongst the genders, Limpopo and North West provinces showed highest increase of unemployment rate for males by 14,0 and 12,6 percentage points respectively and unemployment rate for females increased by 17,0 and 18,9 percentage point respectively, over the same period. Northern Cape is the only province to have experienced the decline in unemployment rate for female with 1,8 percentage points. The provinces with the lowest unemployment rate for females in 2024 were Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo and the provinces with the lowest unemployment rates for males were Western Cape, Northern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal.

Figure 3.12 - Unemployment rate by sex and educational attainment, 2014 and 2024

Source: QLFS Q2: 2014–2024

Figure 3.12 depicts unemployment rates by sex and educational attainment for 2014 and 2024. Persons with higher educational attainments were less likely to be unemployed than those with less than matric. Nationally, the unemployment rate for those with other tertiary increased by 8,8 percentage points from 14,2% in 2014 to 23,0% in 2024, while unemployment rate for persons with less than matric increased by 9,0 percentage points during the same period. Graduates had the lowest unemployment rate in the reported period. The person with less than matric were more likely to be unemployed as compared to those who are graduates, irrespective of sex.

When looking at gender disparities, the unemployment rate for females with matric as the highest level of education increased by 10,7 percentage points from 28,8% in 2014 to 39,5% in 2024, while the rate for males with the highest level of education as matric increased by 8,9 percentage points from 23,8% in 2014 to 32,7% in 2024.

The unemployment rate for males with other tertiary qualifications increased by 4,9 percentage points from 13,2% in 2014 to 18,1% in 2024, the unemployment rate for females with other tertiary qualifications increased by 11,8 percentage points from 15,1% in 2014 to 26,9% in 2024.

Table 3.9 - Unemployment rate by sex and presence of children in the households, 2014 and 2024

| | 2014 | | | 2024 | | |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Male | Female | Both sexes | Male | Female | Both sexes |
| | % | | | | | |
| Children | | | | | | |
| None | 20,9 | 21,2 | 21,0 | 28,6 | 28,0 | 28,4 |
| 1-2 children | 23,7 | 27,3 | 25,5 | 32,0 | 35,3 | 33,7 |
| 3-4 children | 29,6 | 32,9 | 31,4 | 38,3 | 45,1 | 42,2 |
| 5 and above | 41,0 | 42,7 | 42,0 | 49,6 | 56,7 | 53,9 |
| Total | 23,8 | 27,5 | 25,5 | 31,5 | 35,8 | 33,5 |

Source: QLFS Q2: 2014 & 2024

Table 3.9 shows unemployment rates through a gender lens among households where there were children present. The findings showed that irrespective of gender, unemployment rates were higher in households with more children. The highest level of unemployment rates for both sexes was observed amongst the presence of five and above children with 42,0% in 2014 and 56,7% in 2024. When examining gender differences, women were generally more likely to be unemployed, regardless of the number of children living in the household, with unemployment rate increasing as the number of children increased.

Table 3.10 - Unemployment rate of persons with tertiary qualification by sex and field of study, 2014 and 2024

| Field of study | 2014 | | | 2024 | | |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Male | Female | Both sexes | Male | Female | Both sexes |
| | % | | | | | |
| Agriculture/Other | 10,1 | 16,3 | 13,3 | 14,5 | 26,3 | 21,6 |
| Arts and Education/Tourism/Hospitality | 13,0 | 15,7 | 14,8 | 22,5 | 25,4 | 24,6 |
| Economic and management sciences | 19,1 | 20,4 | 19,8 | 13,5 | 20,0 | 17,5 |
| Physical and Mathematical/ Engineering | 14,1 | 20,0 | 15,5 | 14,2 | 16,0 | 14,7 |
| Social studies/Health sciences | 13,6 | 12,3 | 13,0 | 12,7 | 21,0 | 17,5 |
| Total | 14,4 | 16,8 | 15,5 | 14,1 | 21,2 | 17,9 |

Source: QLFS Q2: 2014–2024

Unemployment persists as a problem despite a significant rise in the number of graduates over time, particularly for some graduate segments. In this context, graduates are regarded as persons with a tertiary qualification. The unemployment rates for male and female graduates by field of study between 2014 and 2024 are shown in table 3.10 above. Significant differences were seen in unemployment rates by field of study; the fields of arts, education, tourism, and hospitality exhibited the largest increase of 9,8 percentage points, while economic and management sciences and Physical and Mathematical/Engineering fields showing the decline of 2,3 and 0,8 percentage points, respectively. When examining gender differences, the unemployment rate for females in the physical, mathematics, and engineering sciences and economic and management sciences declined between 2014 and 2024.

Table 3.11 - Graduate unemployment rate by sex and age group, 2014 and 2024

| Age group | 2014 | | | 2024 | | |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|------------|
| | Male | Female | Both sexes | Male | Female | Both sexes |
| | % | | | | | |
| 15–4 yrs | 16,7 | 25,5 | 22,3 | 33,5 | 40,3 | 38,5 |
| 25–34 yrs | 9,8 | 8,1 | 9,0 | 14,5 | 18,9 | 17,1 |
| 35–44 yrs | 2,6 | 4,0 | 3,2 | 4,1 | 5,3 | 4,7 |
| 45–54 yrs | 5,5 | 5,2 | 5,3 | 6,0 | 2,8 | 4,3 |
| 55–64 yrs | 0,7 | 0,0 | 0,5 | 3,5 | 2,0 | 2,8 |
| Total | 5,6 | 6,9 | 6,2 | 8,3 | 10,7 | 9,7 |

Source: QLFS Q2: 2014 & 2024

The unemployment rates of graduates by sex and age groups are represented in table 3.11 in this context, graduates are referred to persons with a university degree. Nationally, 55,6% of the young graduates (15–34 years) were unemployed during 2024, an increase of 24,3 percentage points compared to 2014; this implies that the size of the graduate labour force increased over the period while they are not absorbed in the labour market.

The unemployment rate grew by 2,7 percentage points for male graduates between 2014 and 2024, while there was 3,8 percentage points increase for female graduates in the same period. There was a significant increase of unemployment in the 15–24 age group (16,8 percentage points for females and 14,8 percentage points for males), while unemployment for the older youth aged 25-34 increased from 9,0% in 2014 to 17,1% in 2024.

Figure 3.13a - Share of male and female duration in unemployment, 2014

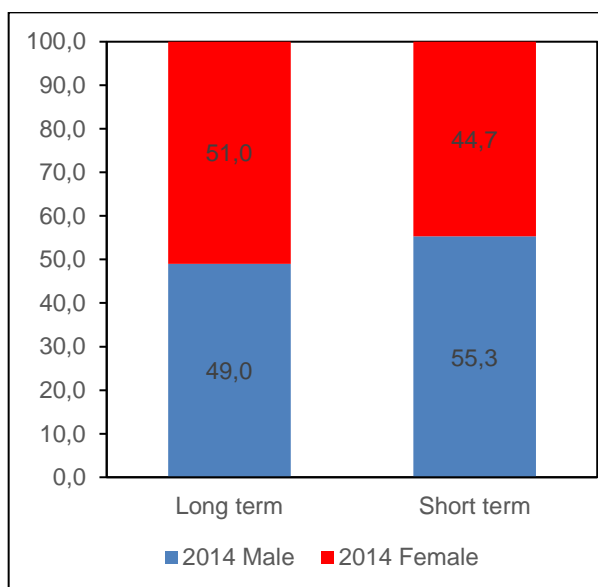
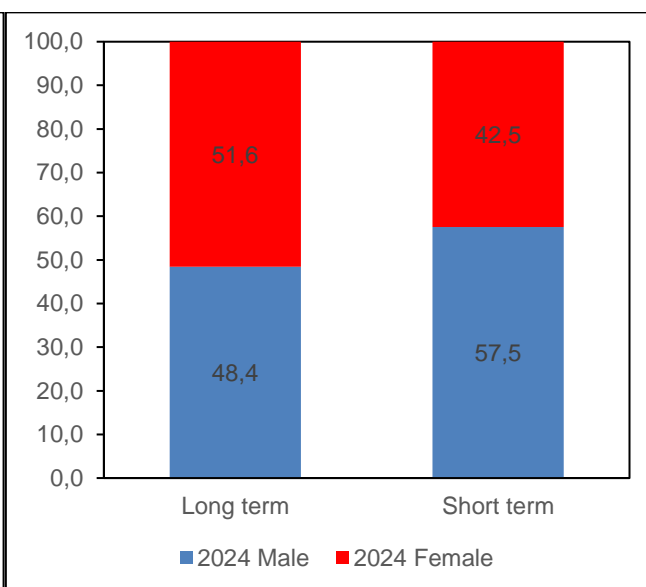


Figure 3.13b - Share of male and female duration in unemployment, 2024



Source: QLFS Q2: 2014 & 2024

Figures 3.13a and 3.13b above, illustrate percentage shares of males and females in the duration of unemployment for the ten years, i.e. short-term and long-term unemployment during 2014 and 2024. Persons who may have spent a long period out of the workforce are included in this measure, (e.g. to study), and have only recently returned to become job seekers. Compared to women (44,7% in 2014 and 42,5% in 2024), men were more likely to experience short-term unemployment in both years (55,3% in 2014 and 57,5% in 2024). Females experienced more of long-term in unemployment for both years (51,0% in 2014 and 51,6% in 2024) compared to their male counterparts.

Table 3.12 - Share of male and female duration in unemployment by geo-type, 2014 and 2024

| Unemployment duration | 2014 | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| | Male | | | | Female | | | | Both sexes | | | |
| | Rural | | Urban | | Rural | | Urban | | Rural | | Urban | |
| | N('000) | % | N('000) | % | N('000) | % | N('000) | % | N('000) | % | N('000) | % |
| Long term | 393 | 11,6 | 1 269 | 37,4 | 396 | 11,7 | 1 331 | 39,3 | 789 | 23,3 | 2 600 | 76,7 |
| Short term | 233 | 13,2 | 744 | 42,1 | 175 | 9,9 | 613 | 34,8 | 408 | 23,1 | 1 357 | 76,9 |
| Total | 625 | 12,1 | 2 013 | 39,1 | 571 | 11,1 | 1 945 | 37,7 | 1 197 | 23,2 | 3 957 | 76,8 |
| | 2024 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Long term | 900 | 14,1 | 2 187 | 34,3 | 976 | 15,3 | 2 321 | 36,4 | 1 876 | 29,4 | 4 508 | 70,6 |
| Short term | 400 | 20,0 | 750 | 37,5 | 306 | 15,3 | 544 | 27,2 | 706 | 35,3 | 1 294 | 64,7 |
| Total | 1 300 | 15,5 | 2 937 | 35,0 | 1 282 | 15,3 | 2 865 | 34,2 | 2 582 | 30,8 | 5 802 | 69,2 |

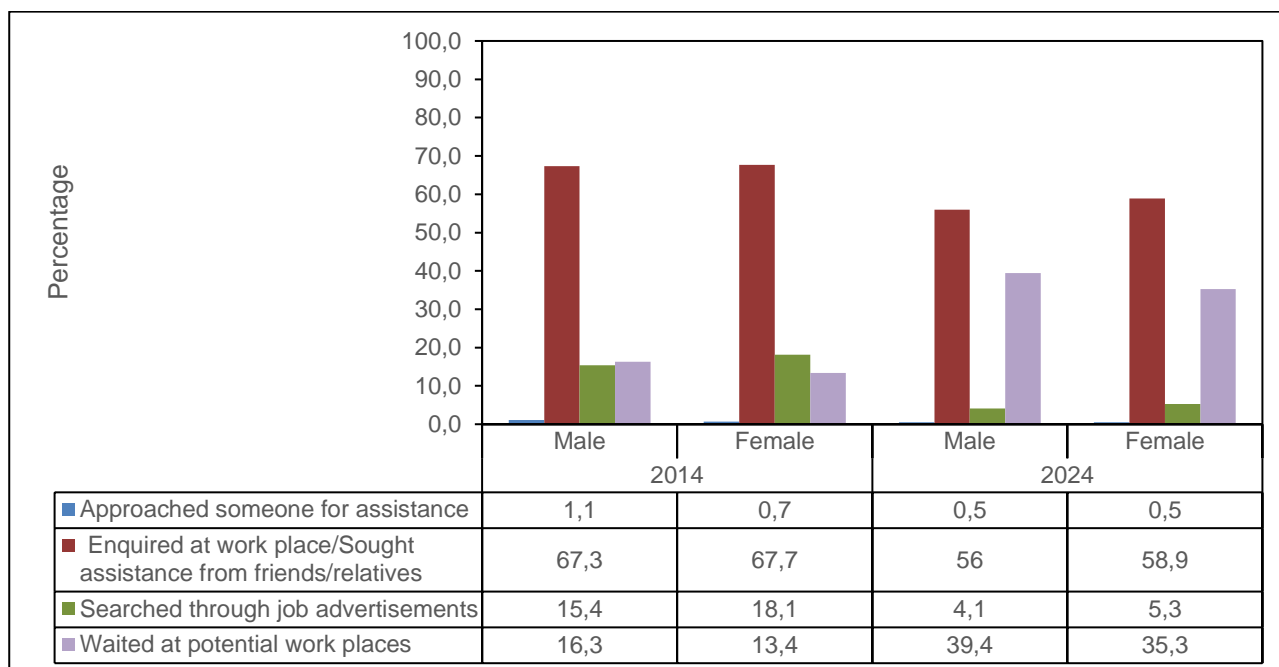
Source: QLFS Q2: 2014 & 2024

Many factors, including sex and educational attainment, as well as individuals who are new to the workforce or are returning for a variety of reasons, might affect how long someone is unemployed. e.g. (females after a period of nurturing/home-making). The results presented in table 3.12 above, talks to the duration of unemployment by sex and geo-type in 2014 and 2024. Urban areas accounted for the majority of those who were unemployed for a long term, accounting for 70,6% of cases in 2024. This pattern applied to both genders as well; persons who lived in urban areas were more likely than those who lived in rural areas to experience unemployment for long term period.

3.7 Job search methods and means of survival

An overview of job searches strategies and ways for unemployed persons to survive is given in this section. Understanding the degree to which men and women depend on government assistance, savings, and remittances is made possible by this approach.

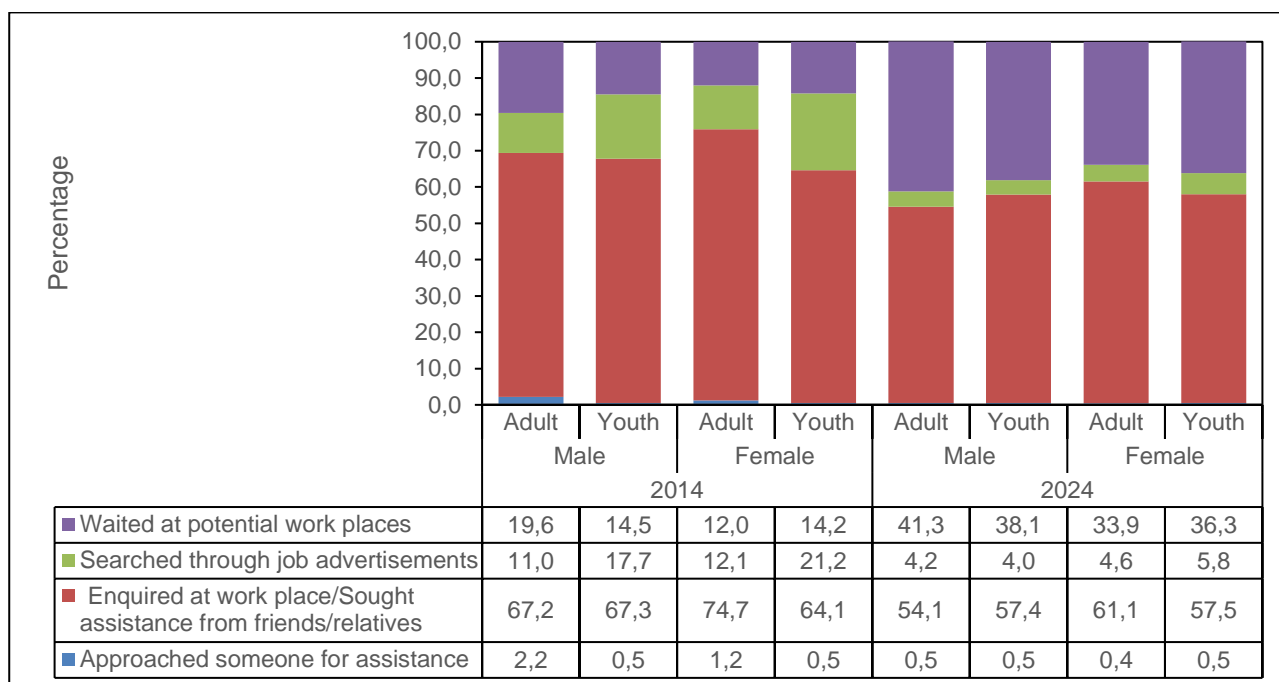
Figure 3.14 - Job search methods for the unemployed by sex, 2014 and 2024



Source: QLFS Q2: 2014 & 2024

When searching for work, persons use different methods. In this report, job search methods are grouped into four categories: a) searched through job advertisements – entailed looking through job advertisements in various forms of media such as newspapers and the Internet; b) approaching someone for assistance – includes seeking financial assistance or any means to start a business or looking for employment; c) enquiring at workplaces/asking for assistance from relatives or friends – including going to different companies, farms, or factories, and enquiring about vacancies or calling them to enquire; and d) waiting at potential workplaces - involves waiting or registering at employment agencies or trade unions and any other initiative taken to search for employment.

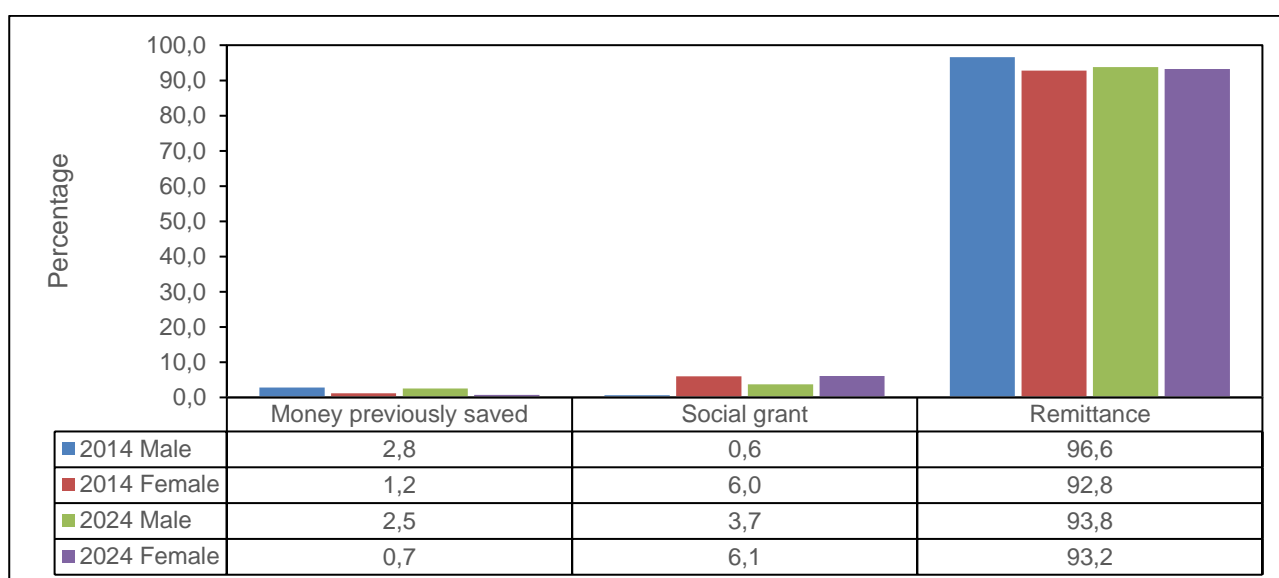
Figure 3.14 above, shows that when looking for job, most persons inquired at places of employment. The second most used job search method differs by the period. In 2014, searching through the job advertisements was reported to be the second method used for both genders while approaching someone for assistance was the least likely method used. However, in 2024, waiting at potential workplaces was the second method of job searching with males accounting for 39,4% and females 35,3%.

Figure 3.15 - Job search methods for the unemployed by sex and age group, 2014 and 2024

Source: QLFS Q2: 2014 & 2024

Figure 3.15 depicts the job search methods by youth and adult in the years 2014 and 2024. Youth are defined as persons between the ages 15–34. The pattern for job search methods was the same for both youth and adult job-seekers, as it reflects similar findings, as shown in Figure 3.14 where enquiring at workplaces/seeking help from friends/relatives was reported as the job search method used the most.

In 2014, gender differences were noted; a considerable proportion of male adult job seekers stated that waiting at possible places of employment was their second-most popular technique of looking for work, while female job seekers stated that looking through job adverts was their second-most popular method. There was a notable decline in the proportion of job seekers, both male and female, who perused job adverts in 2024.

Figure 3.16 - Means of survival for the unemployed by sex, 2014 and 2024

Source: QLFS Q2: 2014 & 2024

An examination of unemployed persons means of survival by gender is shown in Figure 3.16 above. This analysis focuses on three options commonly used as sources of income for the unemployed:

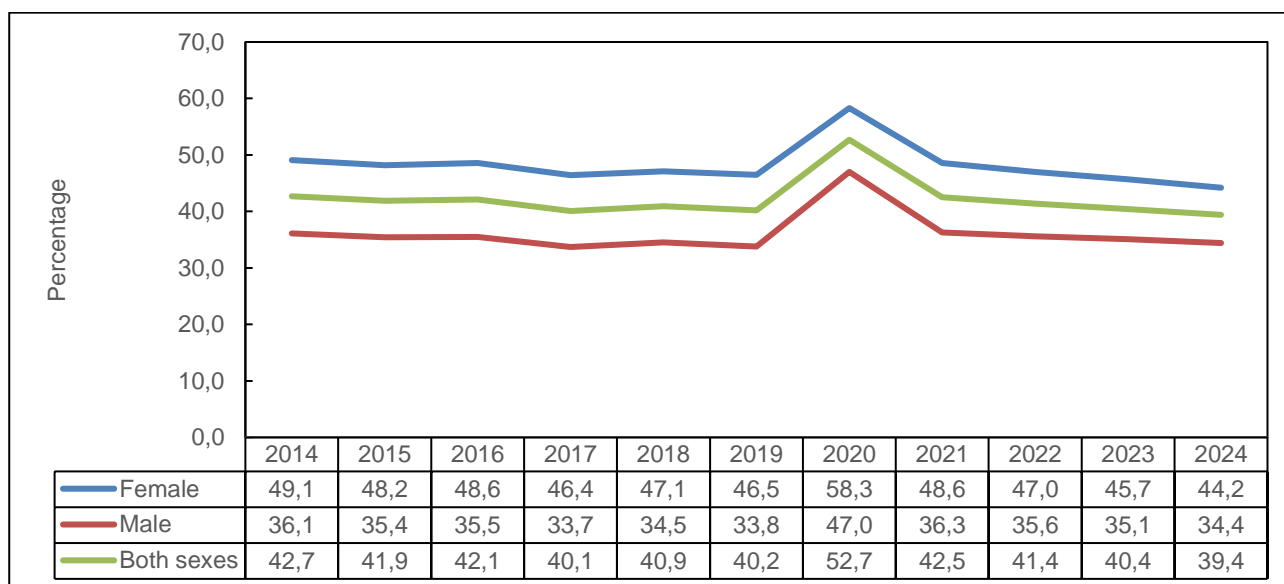
- (i) remittances – includes financial support from other persons either within or outside the household, by a church or a charity organisation;
- (ii) money previously earned – includes money from sources such as the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) and money from savings or previous earnings; and
- (iii) social grants – is money received through government social welfare systems such as old-age, disability, child support and foster care grants as well as any other social grants.

Remittances were the primary source of survival for over 90% of unemployed persons between 2014 and 2024; this applied to both males and females. During the reporting period, the proportion of females who were dependent on remittances for survival increased from 92,8% in 2014 to 93,2% in 2024, whilst the proportion of males declined (from 96,6% in 2014 to 93,8% in 2024). Additionally, the proportion of persons who made it through utilising money they had previously saved dropped by 0,5 percentage points (from 1,2% in 2014 to 0,7% in 2024) for females and 0,3 percentage points (from 2,8% in 2014 to 2,5% in 2024) for males. Males' reliance on social grants increased by 3,1 percentage points (from 0,6% in 2014 to 3,7% in 2024), while females increased by 0,1 percentage point (from 760% in 2014 to 56,1% in 2024).

3.8 Economic inactivity and discouraged work-seekers

According to the ILO, the economic inactivity rate is the proportion of the working-age population who are not in the labour force. Various reasons can categorise a person as economically inactive, such as being retired, a student, a homemaker or too ill to work, including discouragement. The section will explore gender differences in economic inactivity and look into reasons provided by males and females for such. As it is sometimes reported, predominantly rural provinces tend to have high rates of females who have given up looking for work.

Figure 3.17 - Economic inactivity rate by sex, 2014–2024



Source: QLFS Q2: 2014 & 2024

Figure 3.17 shows economic inactivity rate by sex from 2014 to 2024. Nationally, the economic inactivity rate declined by 3,3 percentage points during the reported period (from 42,7% in 2014 to 39,4% in 2024). Results show that the inactivity rate fluctuated between 2014 and 2024. There was a decrease of 10,2 percentage points in the inactivity rate (from 52,7% in 2020 to 42,5% in 2021). The declining pattern continued until 2024.

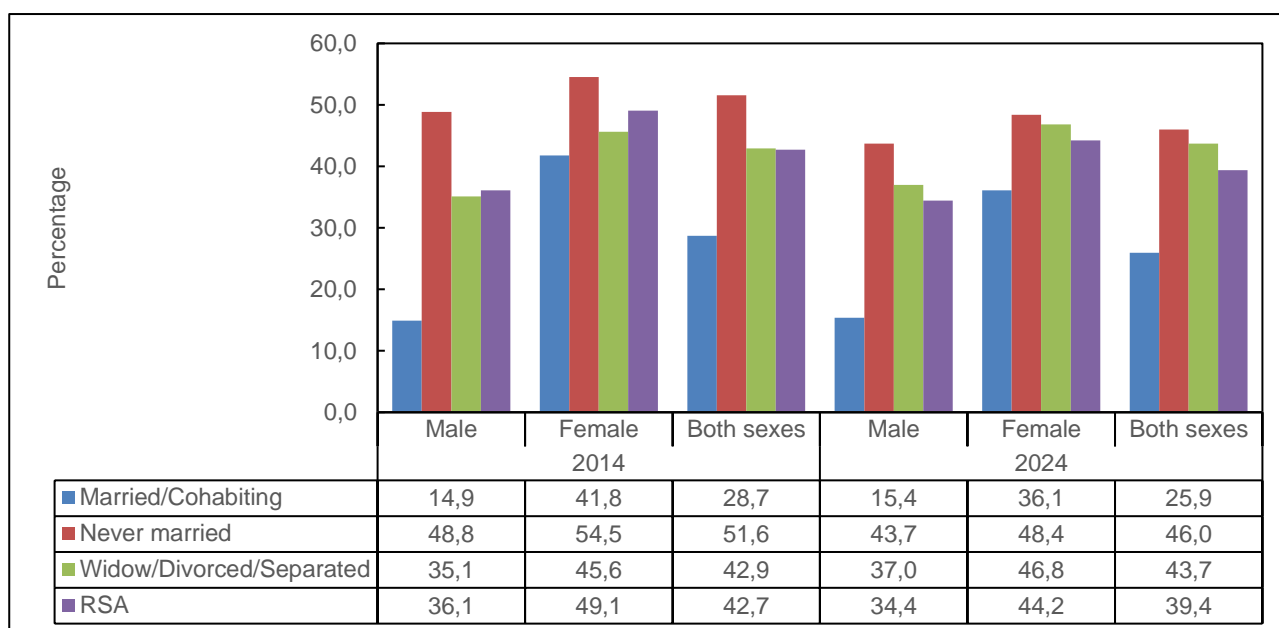
Gender disparities showed that females had comparatively higher economic inactivity rates than males in the reported period.

Table 3.13 - Economic inactivity rate by sex and age, 2014 and 2024

| Age group | 2014 | | | 2024 | | |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Male | Female | Both sexes | Male | Female | Both sexes |
| | % | | | | | |
| 15–24 yrs | 71,8 | 76,3 | 74,0 | 70,7 | 75,2 | 72,9 |
| 25–34 yrs | 19,8 | 35,5 | 27,5 | 21,0 | 29,4 | 25,1 |
| 35–44 yrs | 13,8 | 29,7 | 21,8 | 15,9 | 25,6 | 20,7 |
| 45–54 yrs | 19,3 | 36,9 | 28,6 | 18,0 | 32,7 | 25,5 |
| 55–64 yrs | 45,7 | 64,5 | 56,0 | 48,1 | 62,3 | 55,9 |
| Total | 36,1 | 49,1 | 42,7 | 34,4 | 44,2 | 39,4 |

Source: QLFS Q2: 2014 & 2024

Table 3.13 shows the economic inactivity rate of males and females for different age groups in 2014 and 2024. Results show that the economic inactivity rate was higher for females than their male counterparts for both years and all age groups. The table also shows that the economic inactivity rate was higher amongst the youth (aged 15–24) than in any other age group. The 55–64 age category also had a comparatively high economic inactivity rate, females reporting 62,3% compared to males reporting 48,1% in 2024. Generally, there was a decline in inactivity across all age groups between 2014 and 2024.

Figure 3.18 - Economic inactivity rate by sex and marital status, 2014 and 2024

Source: QLFS Q2: 2014 & 2024

Economically inactive persons are a highly diverse group, and marital status plays a big differentiating role. Figure 3.18 shows the distribution of males and females who are economically inactive by marital status. Analysis revealed that the economic inactivity rate was higher amongst females than their male counterparts in all categories for both years of reporting. The economic inactivity of both males and females who were never married declined.

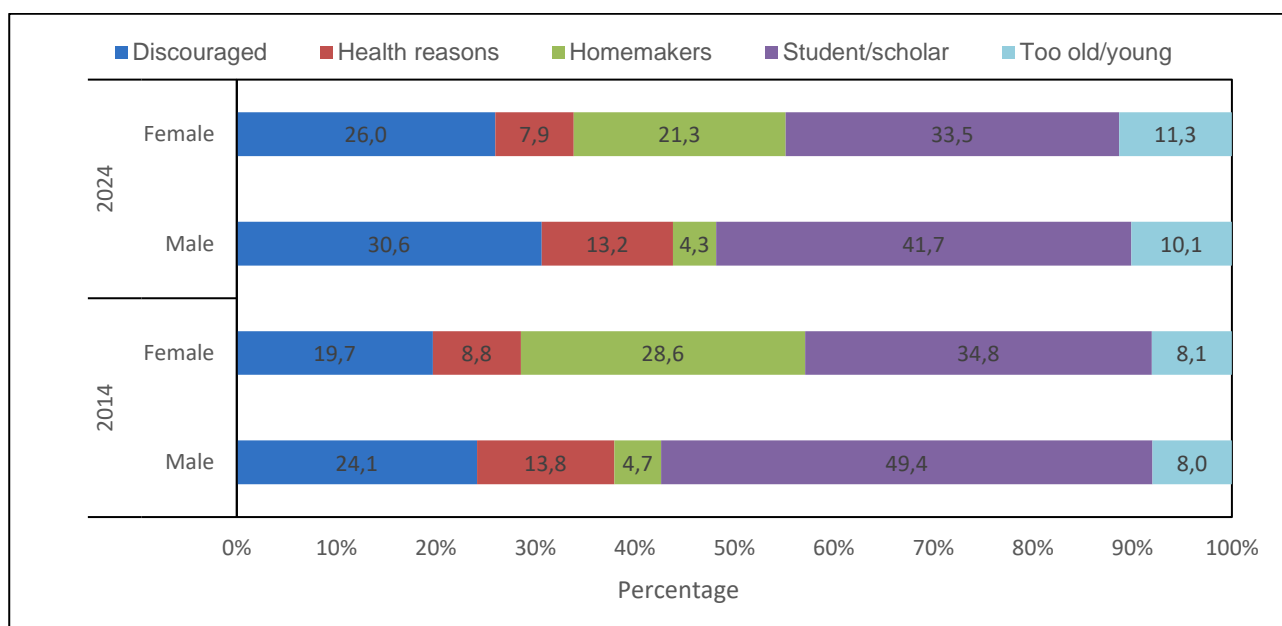
Additionally, the highest proportion of inactivity was among the group that had never been married in both 2014 and 2024. Economically inactive males who reported to be married/cohabiting had the lowest rates (with 14,9% in 2014 and 15,4% in 2024). Economically inactive females, who have never been married, recorded the highest inactivity rate at 54,5% in 2014 and 48,4% in 2024.

Table 3.14 - Economic inactivity rate by sex and presence of children in the household, 2014 and 2024

| Presence of children | 2014 | | | 2024 | | |
|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Male | Female | Both sexes | Male | Female | Both sexes |
| | % | | | | | |
| 1–2 children | 37,7 | 47,5 | 43,0 | 36,7 | 43,8 | 40,6 |
| 3–4 children | 49,4 | 57,7 | 54,3 | 45,9 | 50,5 | 48,6 |
| 5 and above | 62,9 | 64,5 | 63,9 | 58,0 | 59,8 | 59,1 |
| None | 24,8 | 37,9 | 30,0 | 26,7 | 36,7 | 30,6 |
| Total | 36,1 | 49,1 | 42,7 | 34,4 | 44,2 | 39,4 |

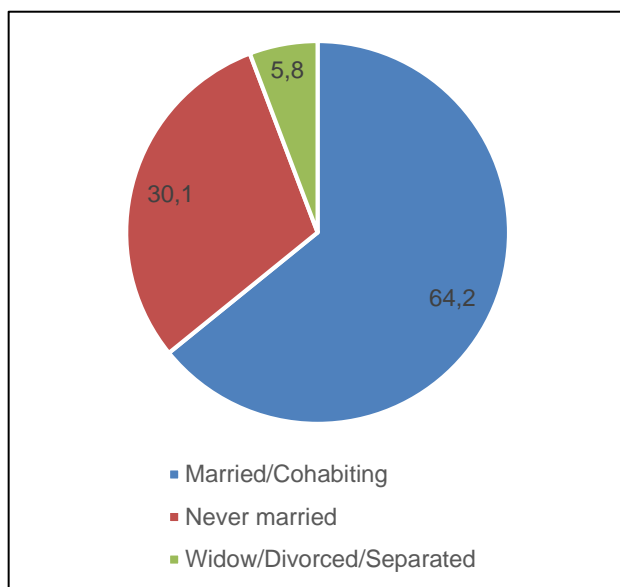
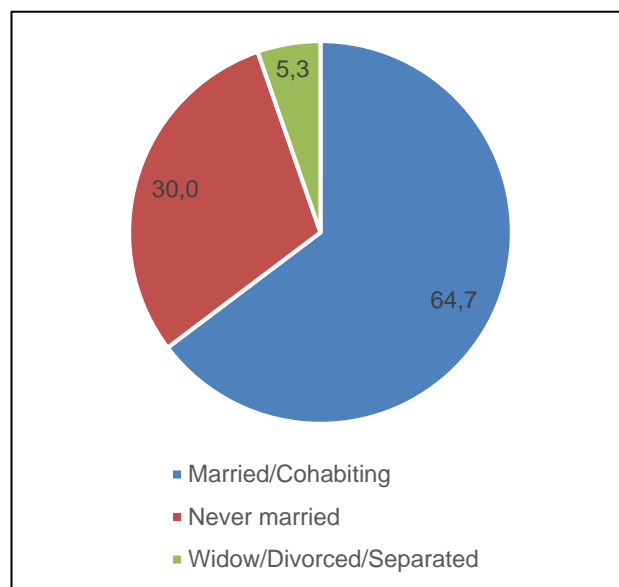
Source: QLFS Q2: 2014 & 2024

The presence of children in the household has an effect on the economic inactivity of females more than males. Females remain disproportionately responsible for unpaid care work including caring for children and household activities such as cooking and cleaning. Table 3.14 shows the economic inactivity rate by sex and the presence of children in the household. The highest level of inactivity for both sexes was observed amongst the presence of five and above children with 63,9 % in 2014 and 59,1% in 2024. Regardless of the number of children living in the household, women were generally more likely to be inactive, with inactivity rate increasing as the number of children increased.

Figure 3.19 - Percentage distribution of reasons for economic inactivity by sex, 2014 and 2024

Source: QLFS Q2: 2014 & 2024

Education attendance was among the main reasons for not participating in the labour market. According to figure 3.19, a sizable proportion of persons who cited being a student/scholar as the reason for economic inactivity between 2014 and 2024. The proportion of males who reported studying as the reason for economic inactivity was higher than that of their female counterparts. In 2014, discouragement was the second main reason for inactivity by males, while females reported to be homemakers. A change was noticeable in 2024, where the second reason for economic inactivity among both males and females was cited as discouraged. Among females, more than 20,0% (28,6% in 2014 and 21,3% in 2024) were homemakers. The percentage of males indicating that they were discouraged in looking for work increased from 24,1% in 2014 to 30,6% in 2024 whilst the proportion of females who cited being discouraged as a reason for inactivity increased from 19,7% in 2014 to 26,0% in 2024. Females were more likely to cite being homemakers as the reason for inactivity than males for both years.

Figure 3.20a - Female homemakers by marital status, 2014**Figure 3.20b - Female homemakers by marital status, 2024**

Source: QLFS Q2: 2014 & 2024

One of the major reasons indicated by females for economic inactivity was being homemakers. Figures 3.20a and 3.20b shows the distribution of female homemakers by marital status in 2014 and 2024. Analysis shows that a high percentage of female homemakers were married/cohabiting between 2014 and 2024. Economically inactive female homemakers who had never been married slightly decreased by 0,1 percentage point (from 30,1% in 2014 to 30,0% in 2024), while divorced homemakers declined by 0,5 percentage point (from 5,8% in 2014 to 5,3% in 2024).

Table 3.15 - Discouraged work-seekers by sex and province, 2014 and 2024

| Province | 2014 | | 2024 | |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| | % | | | |
| Western Cape | 47,2 | 52,8 | 45,4 | 54,6 |
| Eastern Cape | 54,5 | 45,5 | 56,2 | 43,8 |
| Northern Cape | 43,9 | 56,1 | 52,7 | 47,3 |
| Free State | 42,0 | 58,0 | 35,9 | 64,1 |
| KwaZulu-Natal | 45,9 | 54,1 | 47,1 | 52,9 |
| North West | 45,0 | 55,0 | 44,7 | 55,3 |
| Gauteng | 46,5 | 53,5 | 44,9 | 55,1 |
| Mpumalanga | 39,2 | 60,8 | 43,3 | 56,7 |
| Limpopo | 47,5 | 52,5 | 46,0 | 54,0 |
| RSA | 46,9 | 53,1 | 46,4 | 53,6 |

Source: QLFS Q2: 2014 & 2024

Discouraged work-seeker is a person who was not employed during the reference period, wanted to work, was available to work/start a business but did not take active steps to find work during the last four weeks, provided that the main reason given for not seeking work was any of the following: no jobs available in the area; unable to find work requiring his/her skills; lost hope of finding any kind of work. There are various reasons to have ceased to seek work such as no suitable available job in the area, lost hope of finding any kind of work and unable to find work requiring his/her skills.

According to Table 3.15, females were more likely to be discouraged than males within most provinces. In 2024, Eastern Cape and Northern Cape recorded a higher percentage of male discouraged work-seekers compared to females. Usually, the discouraged worker effect is associated with the phase of recession in the economy, primarily influencing discouragement¹³. This phase leads to limited job opportunities that affect the ability of one to be absorbed in the market. The percentage of male discouraged work-seekers decreased by 0,5 percentage points (from 46,9% in 2014 to 46,4% in 2024) while the opposite was observed for their female counterparts, increasing from 53,1% in 2014 to 53,6% in 2024.

Expanded unemployment

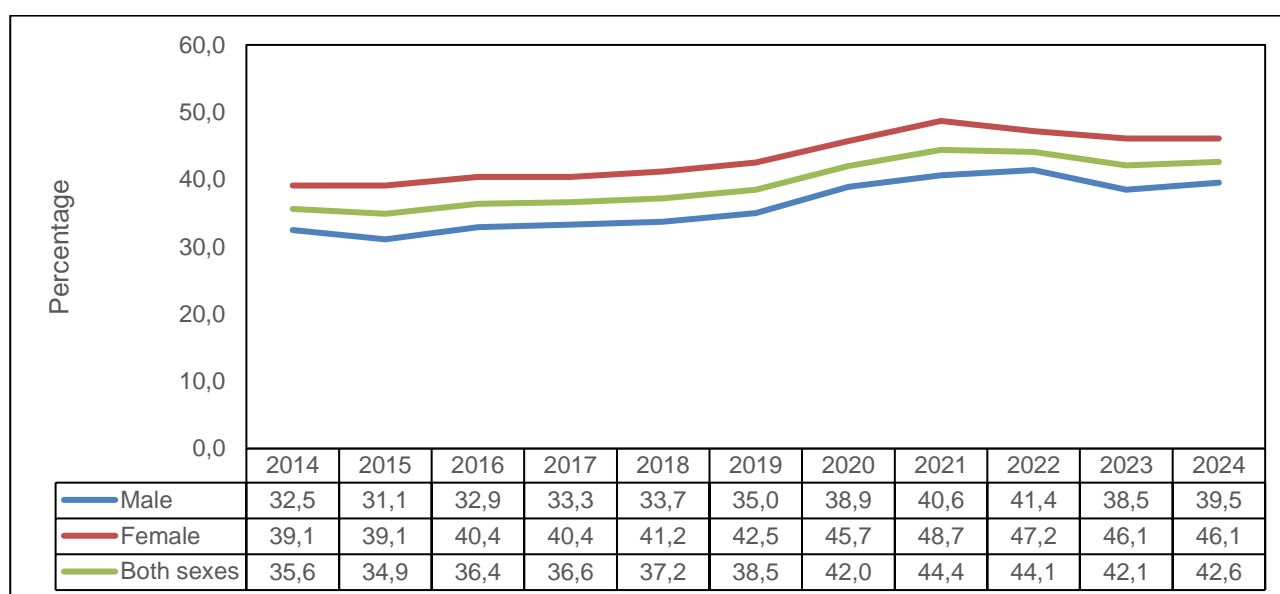
Unemployed persons according to the expanded definition are those (aged 15–64) who:

a) fall under official unemployment (searched and available); and

b) were available to work but are/or:

- discouraged work-seekers
- have other reasons for not searching

Figure 3.21 - Expanded unemployment rate by sex, 2014 and 2024



Source: QLFS Q2:2014 & 2024

Figure 3.21 shows the expanded unemployment rate by sex, from 2014 to 2024. Nationally, the unemployment rate increased by 7,0 percentage points (from 35,6 in 2014 to 42,6% in 2024). The unemployment rate increased between 2014 and 2022 then declined, from 44,1% in 2022 to 42,6% in 2024. Gender disparity persists throughout the reported period, with females reporting higher unemployment rates compared to the national and male unemployment rates. Both female and male unemployment rate increased by 7,0 percentage points in the reported period.

Table 3.16 - Expanded unemployment rate by sex, 2014 and 2024

| | 2014 | | | 2024 | | |
|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Male | Female | Both sexes | Male | Female | Both sexes |
| Youth | 43,8 | 52,5 | 47,8 | 52,2 | 60,1 | 56,0 |
| Adult | 21,3 | 26,5 | 23,7 | 29,3 | 34,7 | 31,9 |
| RSA | 32,5 | 39,1 | 35,6 | 39,5 | 46,1 | 42,7 |

Source: QLFS Q2:2014 & 2024

¹³ Benati, L. 2001. "Some Empirical Evidence on the 'Discouraged Worker' Effect." *Economics Letters* 70 (3): 387–95.

Table 3.16 shows the expanded unemployment rate by sex between adults and youth, in 2014 and 2024. Youth reported higher unemployment rates compared to adults, irrespective of sex. Male youth reported an unemployment rate of 52,2% in 2024 compared to male adults who reported 29,3%. Female youth reported an unemployment rate of 60,1% in 2024 compared to female adults reporting 34,7%.

Not in employment, education or training (NEET)

Some young persons have been disengaged from the labour market and they are also not building on their skills base through education and training – they are not in employment, education or training (NEET). The NEET rate serves as an important additional labour market indicator for young persons.

Table 3.17 - NEET rate by sex and age groups, 2014 and 2024

| Age group | 2014 | | | 2024 | | |
|------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| | Male | Female | Both sexes | Male | Female | Both sexes |
| | N'(000) | | | | | |
| 15–24 yrs | 1 528 | 1 779 | 3 307 | 1 742 | 1 872 | 3 613 |
| 25–34 yrs | 1 820 | 2 409 | 4 229 | 2 640 | 2 966 | 5 606 |
| 35–44 yrs | 1 030 | 1 676 | 2 706 | 1 752 | 2 173 | 3 926 |
| 45–54 yrs | 742 | 1 195 | 1 937 | 1 189 | 1 624 | 2 812 |
| 55–64 yrs | 757 | 1 229 | 1 985 | 1 079 | 1 630 | 2 709 |
| RSA | 5 876 | 8 288 | 14 164 | 8 402 | 10 264 | 18 666 |
| | % | | | | | |
| 15–24 yrs | 29,7 | 34,9 | 32,3 | 33,9 | 36,6 | 35,2 |
| 25–34 yrs | 38,6 | 52,4 | 45,4 | 49,2 | 56,7 | 52,9 |
| 35–44 yrs | 28,1 | 44,7 | 36,5 | 37,7 | 48,4 | 43,0 |
| 45–54 yrs | 31,7 | 44,8 | 38,7 | 35,4 | 46,1 | 40,9 |
| 55–64 yrs | 49,8 | 66,8 | 59,1 | 54,5 | 67,0 | 61,4 |
| RSA | 33,8 | 46,2 | 40,1 | 41,0 | 49,4 | 45,2 |

QLFS Q2:2014 & 2024

There were about 3,6 million young persons aged 15–24 in 2024, who were not in employment, education or training. The percentage of young persons aged 15–24 who were NEET increased by 2,9 percentage points from 32,3% in 2014 to 35,2% in 2024. Persons aged 25–34 had higher proportions in the reported period, increasing by 7,5 percentage points from 45,4% in 2014 to 52,9% in 2024. The NEET rate for females was higher than that of their male counterparts in both years. Nationally, the NEET rate for males increased by 7,2 percentage points, while for females the rate increased by 3,2 percentage points. In the 15-24 age group, the NEET rate for males was 33,9% and 36,6% for females in 2024.

3.9 Resource equity

The Sustainable Development Goal emphasizes the importance of expanding freedoms for all persons by eliminating discrimination against women; promoting gender equality; and increasing women's access to education, paid work, political representation and information and communication technologies (ICTs)²¹. SDG 5 indicators highlight the importance of access and use of enabling technology to facilitate economic empowerment, in particular, information and communications technology. Technology continues to play a vital role in informing and supporting the development of skills, accessing resources and enhancing women's participation across multiple sectors in society.

Access to the Internet further ensures that women that would not complete their studies previously, have an opportunity to enrol in online studies and can complete their studies. Access to the Internet helps young girls to get information and educate themselves with necessary information on women's rights at an early age. With this, young girls can access knowledge for advocacy and protection. For the groups that are in communities that silence minority voices, access to the Internet and social media enables those to share their voices and connect with like-minded individuals.

Empowering women through ICT means to provide economic power to reduce poverty, to develop new opportunity of distance learning and education, bring improvement in health of women, and finally to increase literacy rate among women¹⁴. Through Internet, television, radio and mobile phones women have access to information about all the real incidents happening in the world and learning skills to tackle situations; it is helping to bring leadership qualities in them.

Table 3.18 - Main source of income by sex of the household head, 2014 and 2023

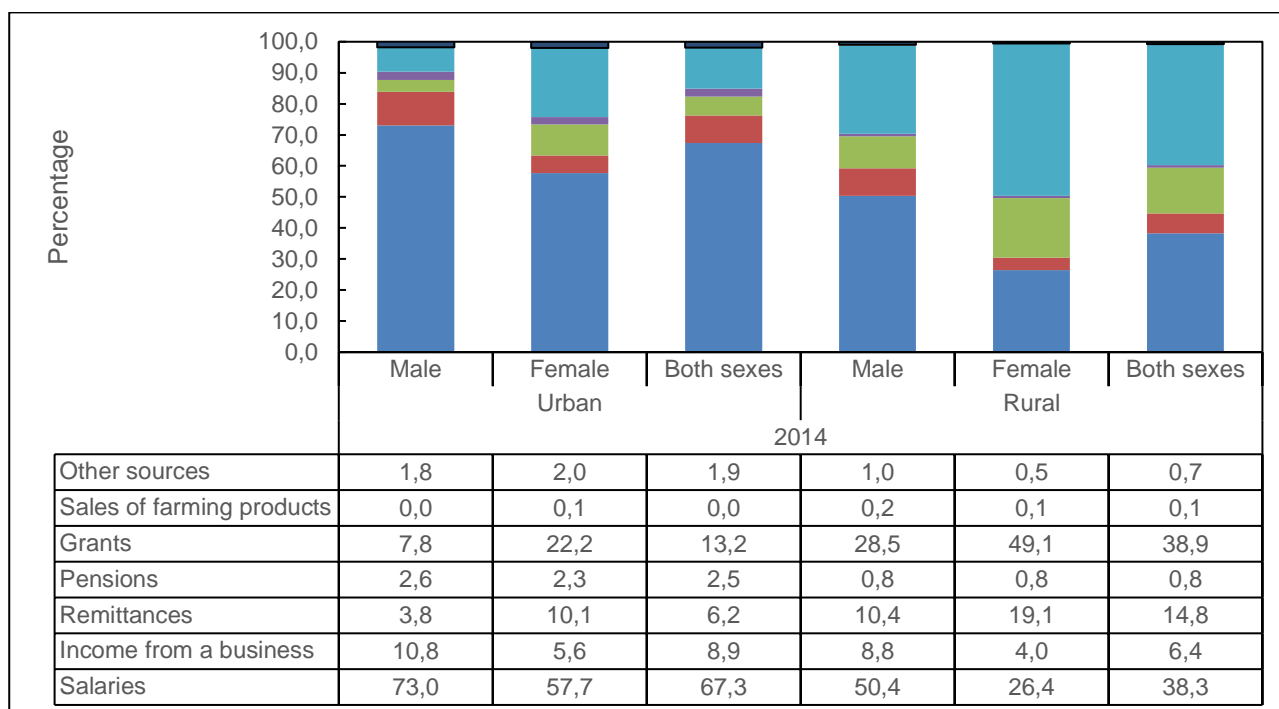
| Main source of income | 2014 | | | 2023 | | |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | Male | Female | Both sexes | Male | Female | Both sexes |
| | N ('000) | | | | | |
| Salaries | 11 200 | 5 376 | 16 576 | 13 090 | 7 403 | 20 490 |
| Income from a business | 1 718 | 589 | 2 307 | 2 521 | 825 | 3 346 |
| Remittances | 928 | 1 589 | 2 517 | 1 342 | 1 966 | 3 308 |
| Pensions | 357 | 205 | 562 | 635 | 485 | 1 121 |
| Grants | 2 211 | 3 811 | 6 022 | 3 623 | 5 000 | 8 623 |
| Sales of farming products and services | 13 | 9 | 21 | 19 | 11 | 29 |
| Other sources | 269 | 165 | 434 | 263 | 239 | 503 |
| Total | 16 700 | 11 740 | 28 440 | 21 490 | 15 930 | 37 420 |
| | % | | | | | |
| Salaries | 67,6 | 32,4 | 100,0 | 63,9 | 36,1 | 100,0 |
| Income from a business | 74,5 | 25,5 | 100,0 | 75,3 | 24,7 | 100,0 |
| Remittances | 36,9 | 63,1 | 100,0 | 40,6 | 59,4 | 100,0 |
| Pensions | 63,5 | 36,5 | 100,0 | 56,7 | 43,3 | 100,0 |
| Grants | 36,7 | 63,3 | 100,0 | 42,0 | 58,0 | 100,0 |
| Sales of farming products and services | 58,9 | 41,1 | 100,0 | 64,1 | 35,9 | 100,0 |
| Other sources | 62,0 | 38,0 | 100,0 | 52,4 | 47,6 | 100,0 |
| Total | 58,7 | 41,3 | 100,0 | 57,4 | 42,6 | 100,0 |

Source: GHS 2014 & 2023

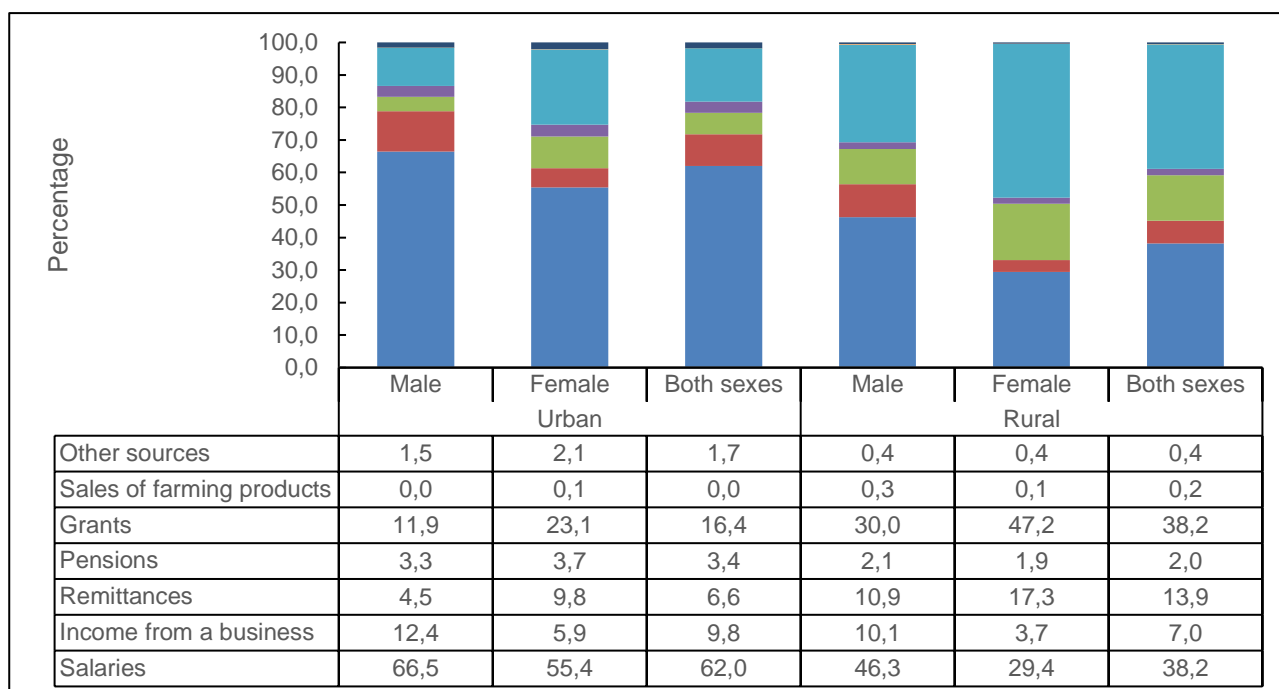
Table 3.18 illustrates the main source of income by sex of household head in 2014 and 2023. Majority of households reported salaries as their main source of income during the reported period, followed by those receiving grants. Female-headed households that reported salaries as main source increased from 32,4% in 2014 to 36,1% in 2023, while those receiving grants declined from 63,3% to 58,0% in the same period.

From 2014 to 2023, male-headed households that reported income from a business increased from 74,5% to 75,3%, while those with salaries/wages/commission declined from 67,6% to 63,9%. The male-headed receiving grants as a main source of income increased by 5,3 percentage points in the reported period.

¹⁴ Amarjeet, Amarjeet and Bhura, Pawan Kumar, A Study on Importance of ICT in Women Empowerment (January 31, 2019). IJAR&D, Volume 5, No. 1, January-June, 2019, Ninth Issue, 63-69, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4350435>

Figure 3.22a - Main source of income by sex of the household head and geo-type, 2014

Source: GHS 2014

Figure 3.22b - Main source of income by sex of the household head and geo-type, 2023

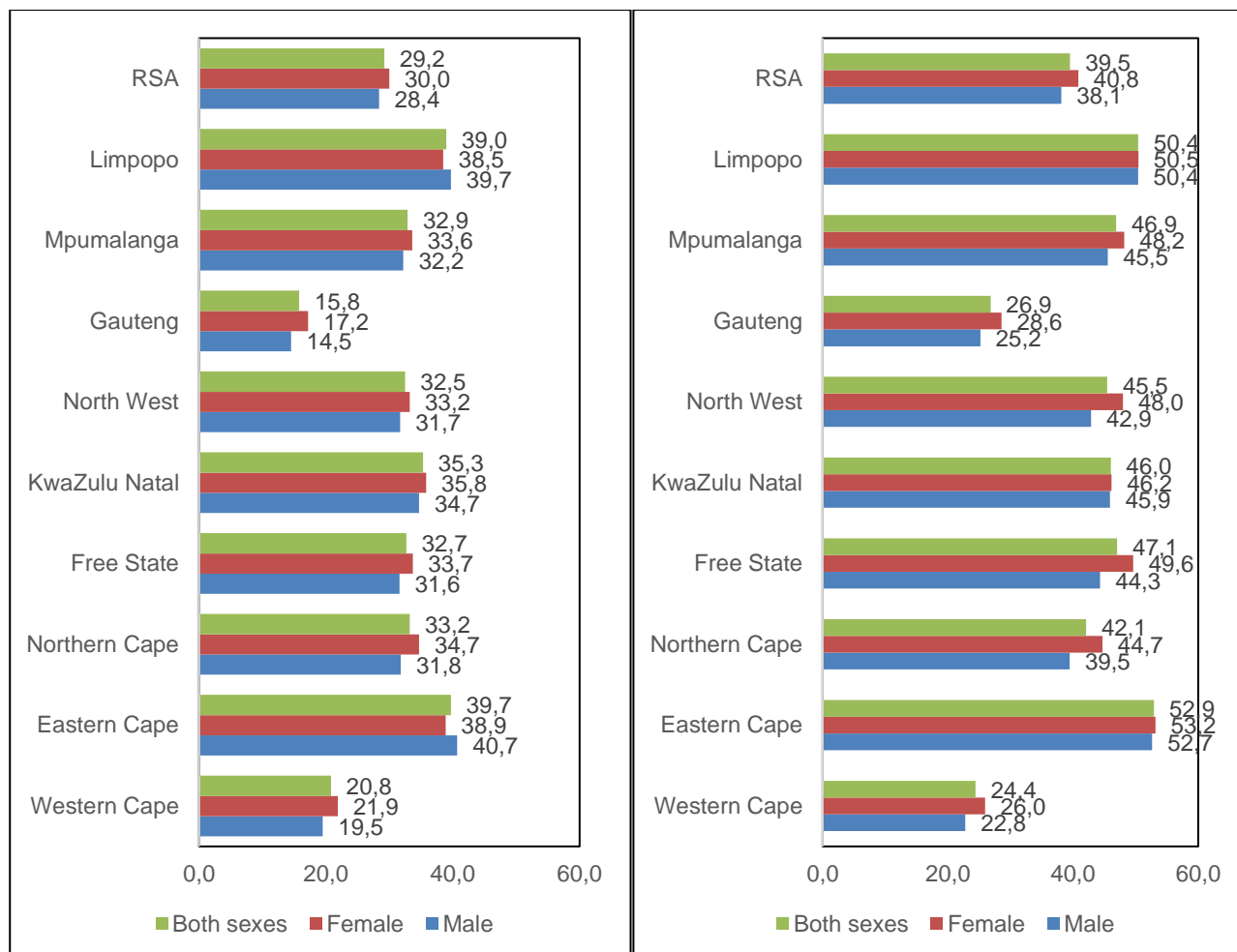
Source: GHS 2023

Figures 3.22a and 3.22b show the main source of income by the sex of the household head and geo-type in 2014 and 2023.

Analysis reveals that the proportion of individuals residing in urban areas receiving salaries as a main source of income has declined; with male-headed households declining by 6,5 percentage points (from 73,0% in 2014 to 66,5% in 2023) and female-headed households declining by 2,3 percentage points (from 57,7% in 2014 to 55,4% in 2023).

In 2023, 12,4% of males in urban areas depended on income from a business compared to 5,9% of their female counterparts, whereas in rural areas 10,1% of males were likely to be in business than 3,7% of females. Females were more likely to receive grants than their male counterparts irrespective of where they reside. However, compared to 23,1% of females in urban areas, 47,2% of rural women received grants in 2023.

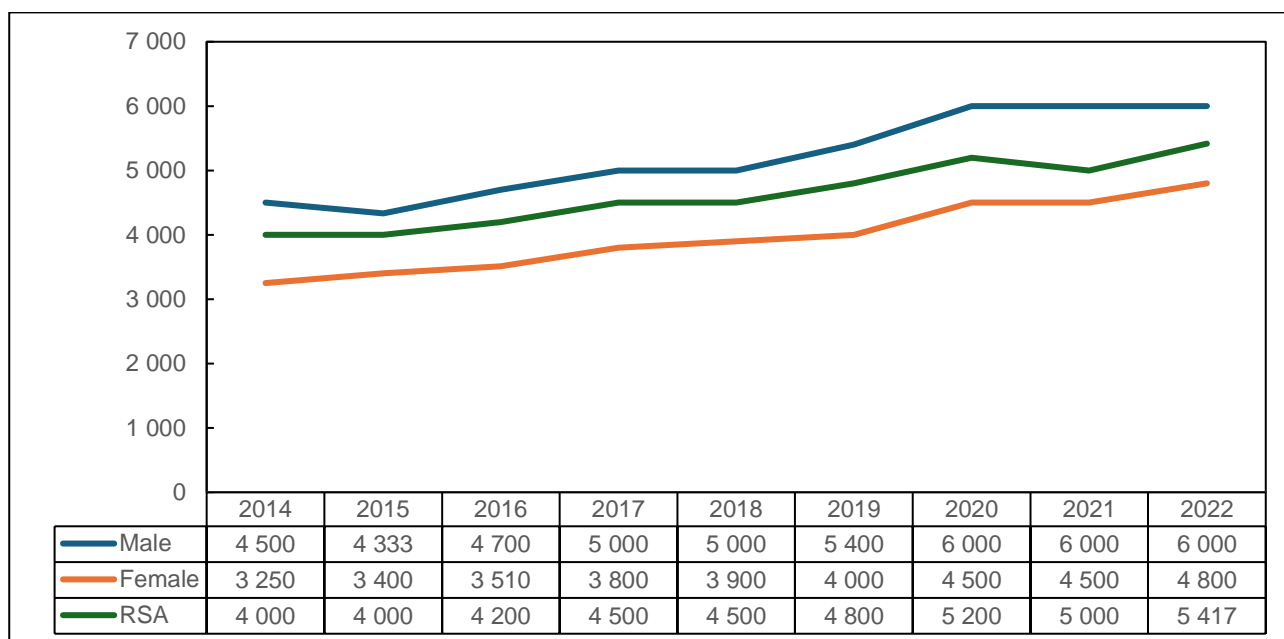
Figure 3.23 - Percentage distribution of social of grant recipients in relation to the total population by province, 2014 and 2023



Source: GHS 2014 & 2023

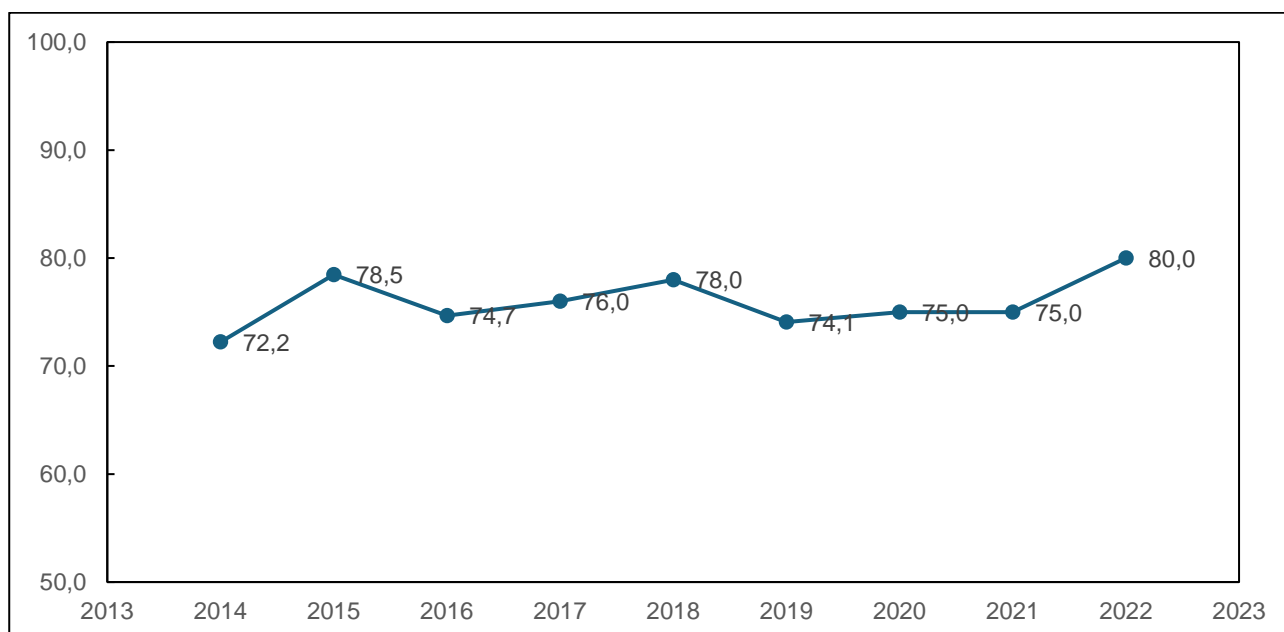
Figures 3.23 shows the distribution of social grant recipients among the nine provinces in relation to the total population in 2014 and 2023. The percentage of persons in South Africa who received social grants increased by 10,3 percentage points (from 29,2% in 2014 to 39,5% in 2023). For both years, individuals living in Eastern Cape (39,7% in 2014 and 52,9% in 2023) were most likely to receive grants, followed by Limpopo (39,0% in 2014 and 50,4% in 2023). Gauteng and Western Cape reported the lowest proportion of individuals receiving social grants in the reported period.

Between 2014 and 2023, the proportion of females who received grants increased by 10,8 percentage points while their male counterparts increased by 9,7 percentage points.

Figure 3.24 - Median monthly earnings of employees by sex, 2014–2022

Source: Monthly earnings in South Africa, 2017–2022

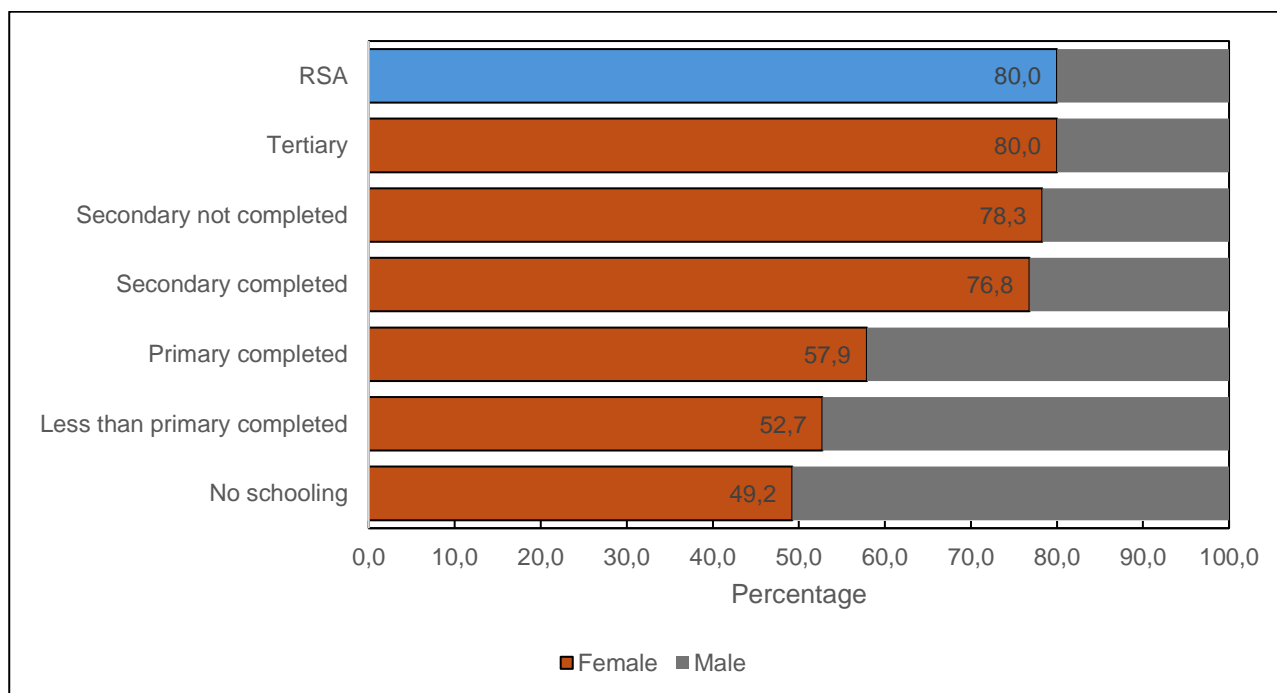
Figure 3.24 above, shows the median earnings of employees by sex from 2014 to 2022. In the reported period, the total median earnings increased from R4 000 to R5 417. Median earnings of males were continually higher than the earnings for females, with a gap of R1 250 in 2014 to R1 200 in 2022 between the sexes. Female median earnings increased from R3 250 in 2014 to R4 800 in 2022, while the male earnings increased from R4 500 to R6 000 in 2020 and has remained constant till 2022.

Figure 3.25 - Female monthly earnings as a percentage of male monthly earnings, 2014–2022

Source: Monthly earnings in South Africa, 2017–2022

Figure 3.25 shows the female median earnings as a percentage of male median earnings between 2014 and 2022. The female median earnings increased from 72,2% in 2014 to 80,0% in 2022 (an increase of 7,8 percentage points). In 2019, a declining trend in median female earnings was observed. Between 2020 and 2021 there was no change in the female median earnings, at 75,0% of male median earnings. There was no gender parity in the reported period.

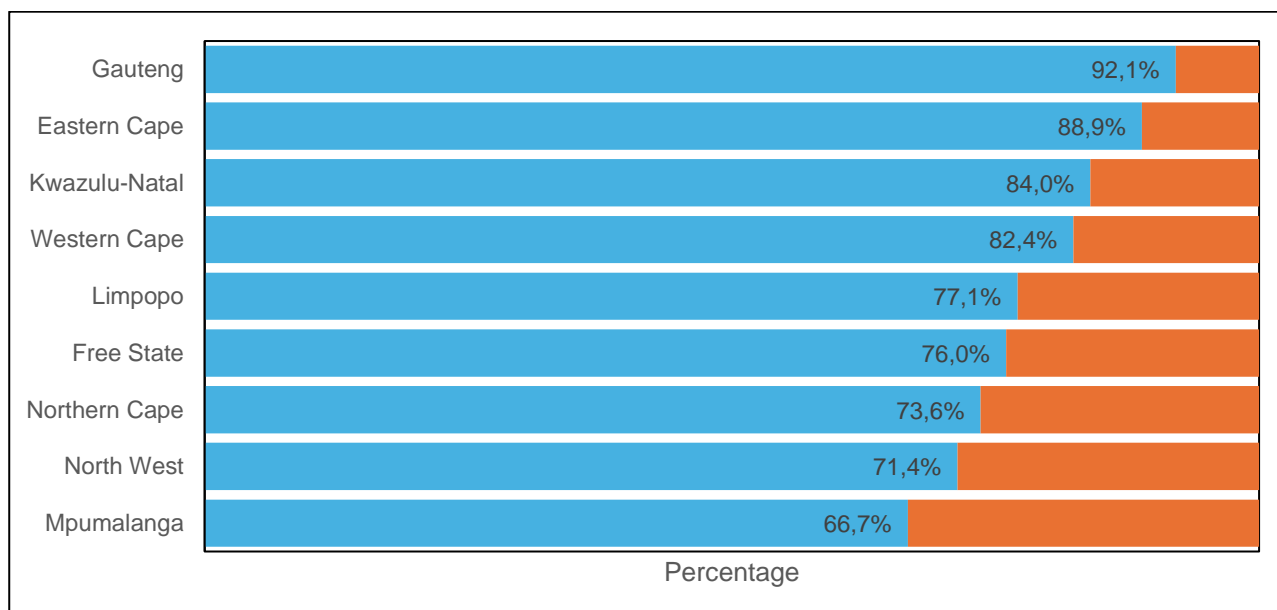
Figure 3.26 - Female median earnings as a percentage of male median earnings by level of education, 2022



Source: Monthly earnings in South Africa, 2017–2022

Figure 3.26 illustrates the female median earnings as a percentage of male median earnings by level of education in 2022. An analysis shows that a gender gap exists in earnings, irrespective of the level of education obtained. The female median earnings with a tertiary education were 80,0% of the male median monthly earnings, while the monthly earnings for secondary education not completed were 78,3%. Females with no schooling earned less than half of the male median earnings. Median earnings increased with the highest level of education obtained.

Figure 3.27 - Median female earnings as a percentage of median male earnings by province, 2022



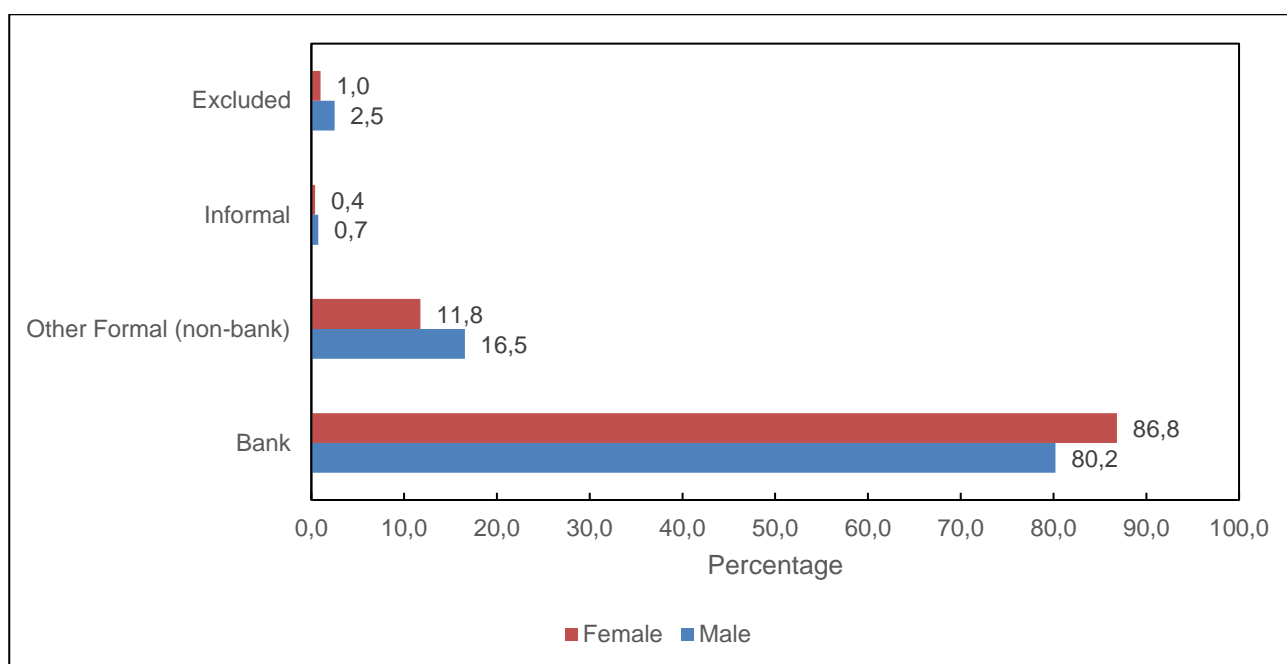
Source: Monthly earnings in South Africa, 2017–2022

Figure 3.27 shows the median female earnings as a percentage of median male earnings by province in 2022. Only four provinces reported percentages above the national percentage of 80%. Mpumalanga reported the highest gender pay gap, with females earning 66,7% of monthly earnings within the province, followed by North West at 71,4%. The lowest gender gap was reported in Gauteng at 92,1%, followed by Eastern Cape at 88,9% and KwaZulu-Natal at 84,0%.

Financial Inclusion

Financial inclusion is the state in which all individuals and small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) have access to and can effectively use a range of quality products and services offered by the regulated financial sector. Financial inclusion is a critical towards reducing inequality and improving the quality of life of marginalised groups as increasing access to and use of quality financial products and services is essential to inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction¹⁵.

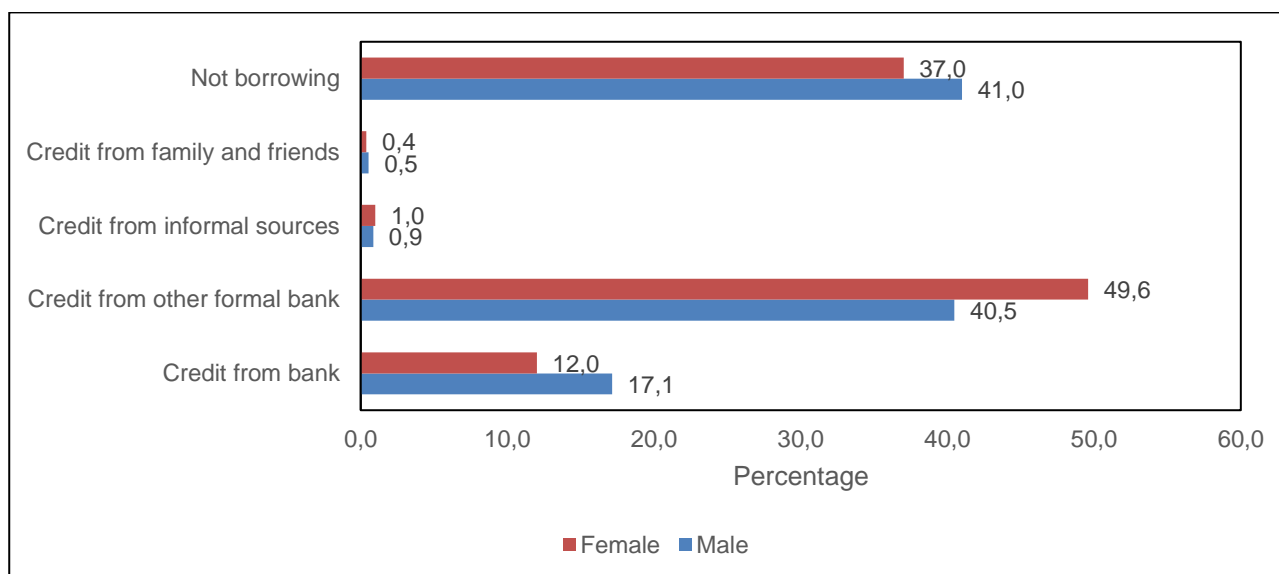
Figure 3.28 - Financial inclusion by sex, 2023



Source: Finscope Survey 2023

Figure 3.28 shows the level of financial inclusion by sex in 2023. Females reported a higher inclusion rate in formal banking (86,8%) compared to males (80,2%). However, males are more likely to use other formal financial services (16,5%) compared to females (11,8%). The percentage of individuals using informal financial services is low for both sexes, with females at 0,4% and males at 0,7%. The exclusion rate is higher for males (2,5%) compared to females (1,0%).

¹⁵Kyle Hooloway, Zahra Niazi & Rebecca Rouse (2017). Innovation for poverty action: Women's Economic Empowerment Through Financial Inclusion A Review of Existing Evidence and Remaining Knowledge Gaps.

Figure 3.29 - Credit activity by sex, 2023

Source: Finscope Survey 2023

Figure 3.29 shows the level of credit activity by sex in 2023. Females are more likely to obtain credit from other formal (non-bank) sources (49,6%) compared to males (40,5%). However, men are more likely to obtain credit from banks (17,1%) compared to females (12,0%). Both sexes have a low reliance on informal credit sources and credit from family and friends. The percentage of individuals not borrowing is higher for males (41,0%) compared to females (37,0%).

3.10 Food access and vulnerability to hunger

Table 3.19 - Proportion of households that are vulnerable to hunger, by province and sex of household head, 2014 & 2023

| Province | 2014 | | | 2023 | | |
|---------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Male | Female | Both sexes | Male | Female | Both sexes |
| Western Cape | 12,4 | 17,8 | 14,4 | 12,8 | 20,2 | 15,8 |
| Eastern Cape | 14,1 | 16,6 | 15,4 | 9,2 | 9,4 | 9,3 |
| Northern Cape | 16,4 | 20,3 | 18,0 | 17,5 | 31,0 | 23,3 |
| Free State | 9,5 | 12,5 | 10,7 | 12,5 | 12,9 | 12,7 |
| KwaZulu Natal | 12,5 | 17,6 | 14,9 | 17,8 | 23,8 | 20,6 |
| North West | 13,1 | 19,2 | 15,4 | 21,7 | 19,7 | 20,9 |
| Gauteng | 5,4 | 10,2 | 7,0 | 8,9 | 9,7 | 9,2 |
| Mpumalanga | 10,1 | 11,2 | 10,6 | 19,1 | 17,4 | 18,3 |
| Limpopo | 5,0 | 5,5 | 5,2 | 4,5 | 5,0 | 4,7 |
| South Africa | 9,6 | 13,7 | 11,3 | 12,5 | 15,0 | 13,5 |

Source: GHS 2014 & 2023

Table 3.19 above, shows the percentage of individuals living in households that are vulnerable to hunger by province and sex of the household head in 2014 and 2023.

The proportion of households vulnerable to hunger have increased from 11,3% in 2014 to 13,5% in 2023. Northern Cape, North West and KwaZulu-Natal reported the highest proportions of households that reported hunger in 2023, while Limpopo and Gauteng reported the lowest proportions. Female-headed households reported higher proportions of individuals experiencing hunger in 2023, except in North West and Mpumalanga provinces. Most female-headed households reported an increase in proportion of individuals experiencing hunger between 2014 and 2023, except in Gauteng, Limpopo and Eastern Cape.

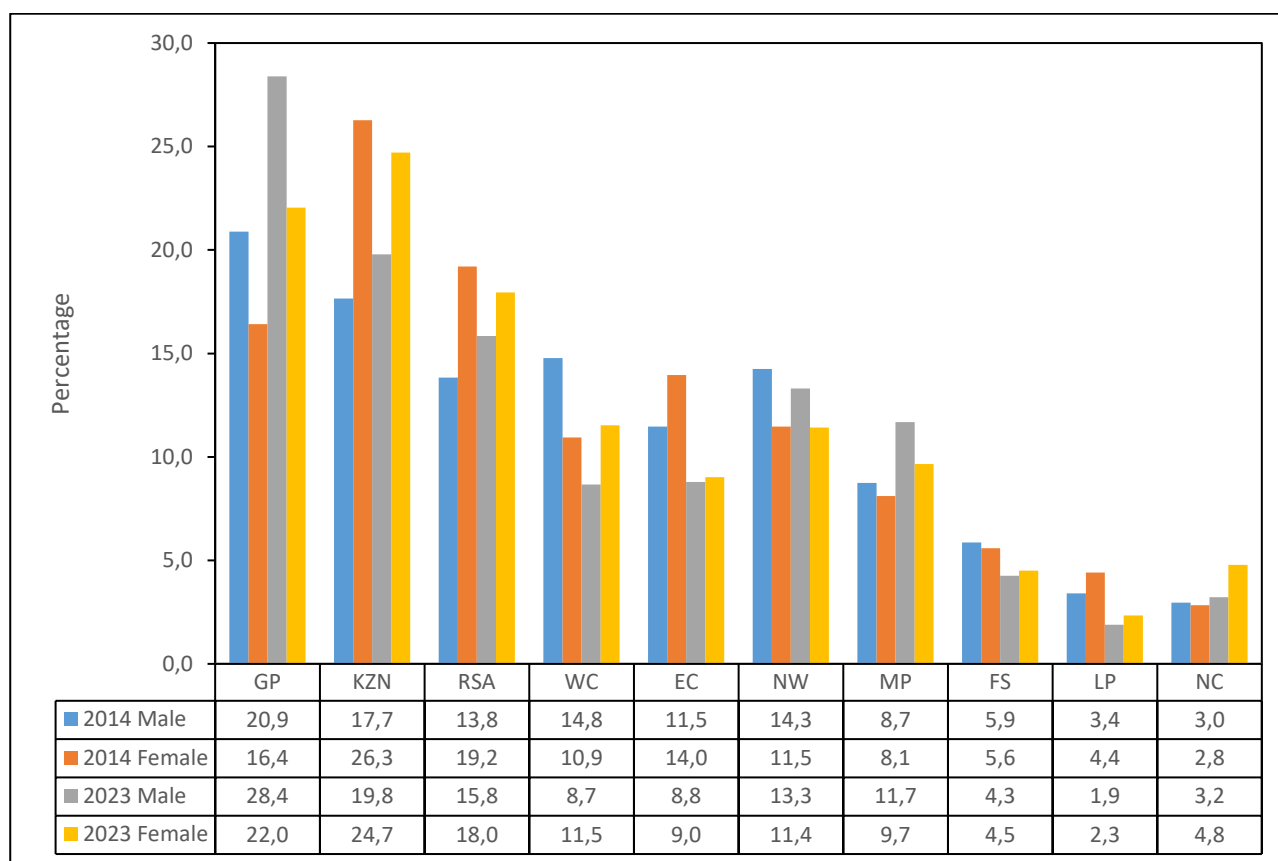
Table 3.20 - Distribution of households that reported to have skipped a meal by province, 2014 and 2023

| Province | 2014 | | 2023 | |
|---------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | N ('000) | % | N ('000) | % |
| Western Cape | 308 | 12,9 | 317 | 10,0 |
| Eastern Cape | 304 | 12,7 | 283 | 8,9 |
| Northern Cape | 69 | 2,9 | 125 | 3,9 |
| Free State | 137 | 5,7 | 139 | 4,4 |
| KwaZulu Natal | 524 | 21,9 | 700 | 22,0 |
| North West | 308 | 12,9 | 396 | 12,4 |
| Gauteng | 447 | 18,7 | 811 | 25,5 |
| Mpumalanga | 202 | 8,4 | 343 | 10,8 |
| Limpopo | 93 | 3,9 | 67 | 2,1 |
| South Africa | 2 391 | 100,0 | 3 180 | 100,0 |

Source: GHS 2014 & 2023

Table 3.20 shows the distribution of households who reported to have skipped a meal by province between 2014 and 2023. Nationally, the proportion of households who skipped a meal increased from 2,4 million in 2014 to 3,2 million in 2023. The highest percentage of households that reported to have skipped a meal were in Gauteng and KwaZulu Natal. Limpopo and Northern Cape had the lowest proportion of households that skipped a meal in both years.

Figure 3.30 - Percentage of households that reported to have skipped a meal by province and sex of the household head, 2014 and 2023



Source: GHS 2014 & 2023

Figure 3.30 shows the distribution of households who reported to have skipped a meal by province and sex of the household head between 2014 and 2023. Nationally, male-headed households who reportedly skipped a meal increased from 13,8% in 2014 to 15,8% in 2023, while the female-headed households declined from 19,2% to 18,0% in the same period. Provincial variations showed that the proportion of female-headed households that reportedly skipped a meal in Western Cape and Northern Cape increased between 2014 and 2023. Majority of the provinces reported an increase in the proportion of male-headed households that skipped a meal during the reported period.

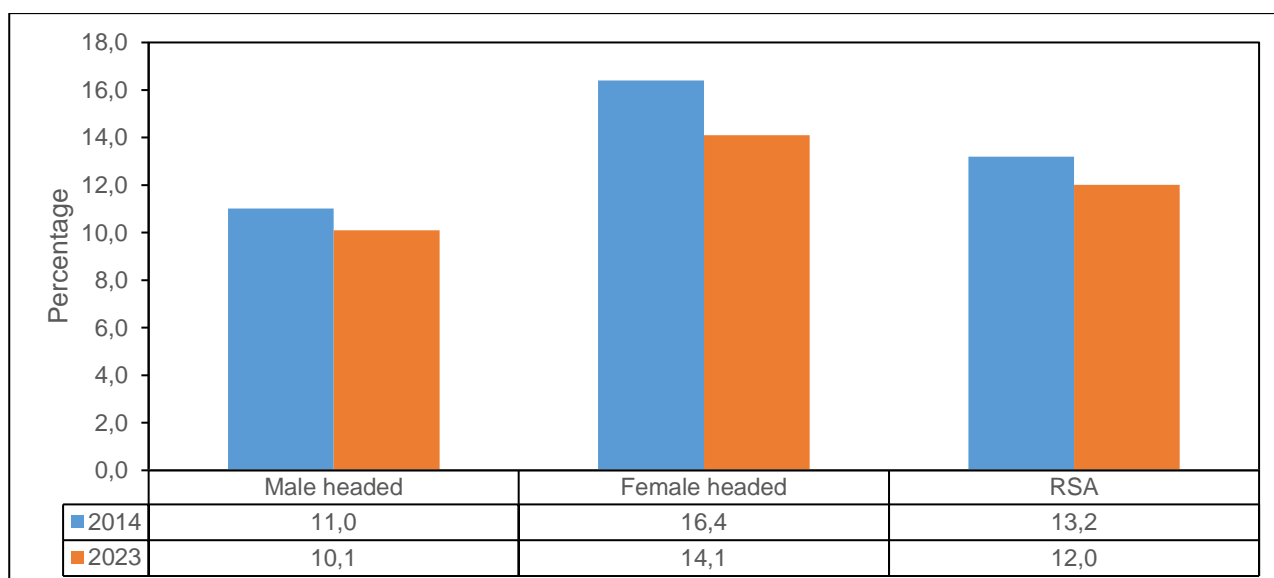
Table 3.21 - Dwelling ownership by type of dwelling and sex of household head, 2014 and 2023

| Type of dwelling | 2014 | | | 2023 | | | GPR | |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Male | Female | Both sexes | Male | Female | Both sexes | 2014 | 2023 |
| | N ('000) | | | | | | | |
| Formal dwelling | 4 221 | 3 465 | 7 686 | 5 512 | 4 793 | 10 305 | 0,82 | 0,87 |
| Informal dwelling | 435 | 255 | 690 | 609 | 353 | 962 | 0,58 | 0,58 |
| Traditional dwelling | 330 | 504 | 834 | 250 | 333 | 583 | 1,53 | 1,33 |
| Other dwelling | 9 | 5 | 14 | 7 | 8 | 15 | 0,59 | 1,15 |
| Total | 4 995 | 4 229 | 9 223 | 6 378 | 5 487 | 1 1865 | 0,85 | 0,86 |
| | % | | | | | | | |
| Formal dwelling | 54,9 | 45,1 | 100,0 | 53,5 | 46,5 | 100,0 | | |
| Informal dwelling | 63,1 | 36,9 | 100,0 | 63,3 | 36,7 | 100,0 | | |
| Traditional dwelling | 39,6 | 60,4 | 100,0 | 42,9 | 57,1 | 100,0 | | |
| Other dwelling | 62,9 | 37,1 | 100,0 | 46,5 | 53,5 | 100,0 | | |
| Total | 54,2 | 45,8 | 100,0 | 53,8 | 46,2 | 100,0 | | |

Source: GHS 2014 & 2023

Table 3.21 above, shows dwelling ownership by type of dwelling and sex of the household head for 2014 and 2023. Results show that the majority of households headed by males owned their dwellings compared to their female counterparts in the reported period.

The percentage of female-headed households who owned formal dwellings have increased from 45,1% in 2014 to 46,5% in 2023; while those owning informal dwellings decreased from 36,9% to 36,7%. The smallest gender gap was observed among those owning formal dwellings for both years (GPR = 0,82 and GPR = 0,87 respectively), indicating that male-headed households were more likely to stay in formal dwellings compared to females. The number of households who owned traditional homes declined in the period reported, irrespective of sex. The number of females owning traditional homes was higher than that of their male counterparts in both years (GPR = 1,53 in 2014 and GPR = 1,33 in 2023).

Figure 3.31 - Percentage distribution on households that received a government housing subsidy by sex of the household head, 2014 and 2023

Source: GHS 2014 and 2023

Figure 3.31 indicates that the percentage of households that received some form of government housing subsidy decreased by 1,2 percentage points from 13,2% in 2014 to 12,0% in 2023.

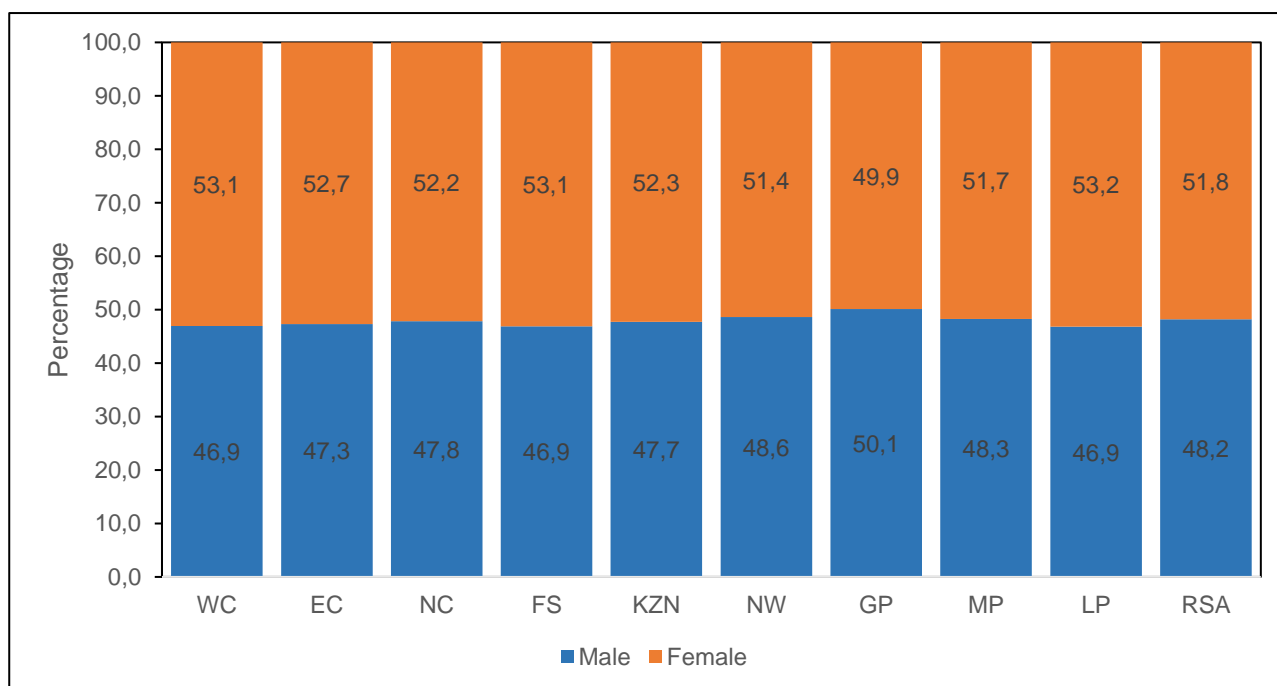
Female-headed households that received housing subsidy declined by 2,3 percentage points (from 16,4% in 2014 to 14,1% in 2023) while male-headed counterparts declined by 0,9 percentage points (11,0% in 2014 to 10,1% in 2023). Disparities amongst the sexes show that female-headed households received higher percentage of government subsidy compared to their male counterpart for the reference period. In 2023, female-headed households with government subsidy were four percentage points higher than male-headed households.

3.11 Cellphone and Internet usage

Indicator 5.b.1 of SDG 5 focuses on enhancing the use of enabling technology, in particular, information and communication technology (ICT), to promote the empowerment of women. The advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment depend heavily on modern technology.

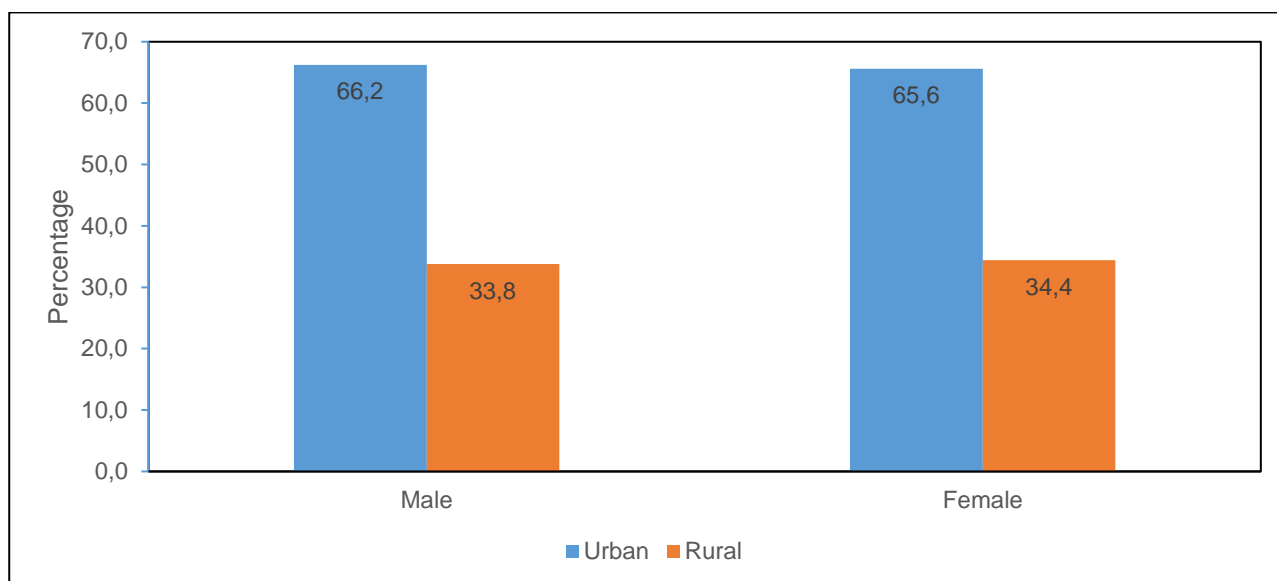
By giving women access to knowledge and general information, generating revenue, and expanding work opportunities, the Internet, digital platforms, mobile devices, and digital financial services present opportunities to close gender gaps. Nowadays, cellphones are used for various reasons such as access to information, virtual participation, learning and access to financial services, thus access and use is an important indicator of gender equality.

Figure 3.32 - Percentage of individuals with access to cellphones by sex and province, 2023



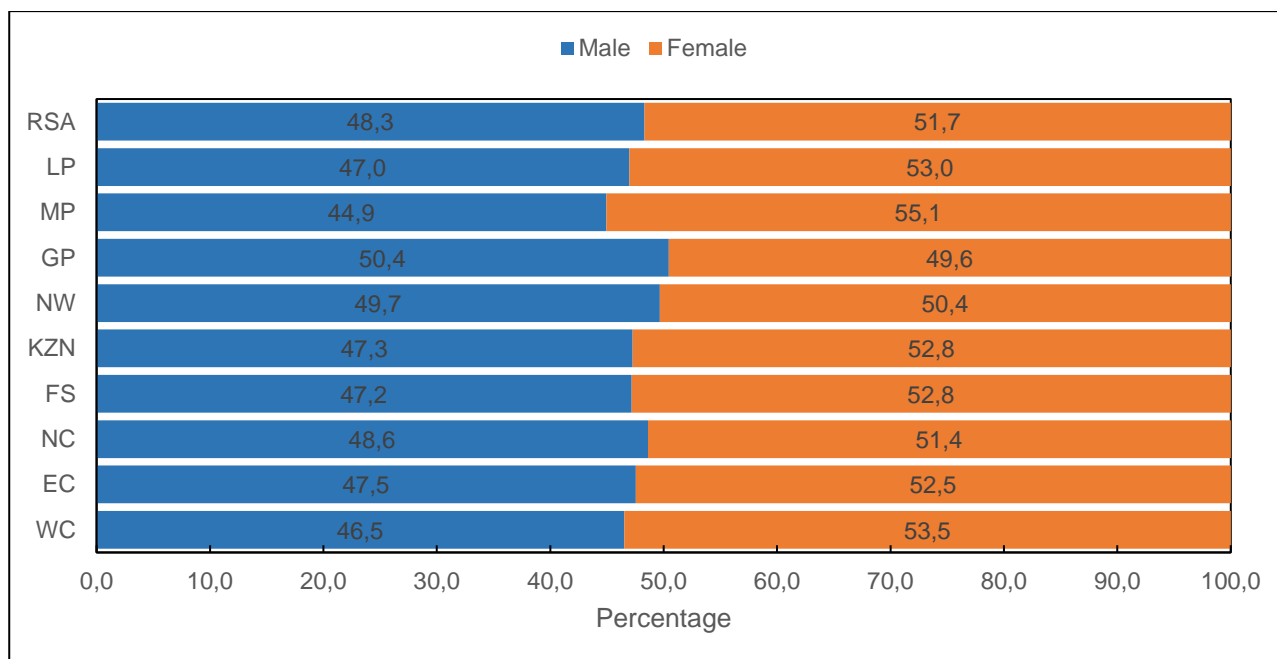
Source: GHS 2023

Figure 3.32 indicates cellphone usage by province and sex for the period of 2023. Overall, 51,8% of females had access to cellphone compared to 48,2% of their male counterparts. Looking at the provincial variations, females with higher proportion of those with access to cellphones were found in eight out of nine provinces. Gauteng was the only province where males who had access to cellphones were more (50,1%) compared to their female counterparts (49,9%).

Figure 3.33 - Percentage of individuals with access to cellphone by sex and geographic location, 2023

Source: GHS 2023

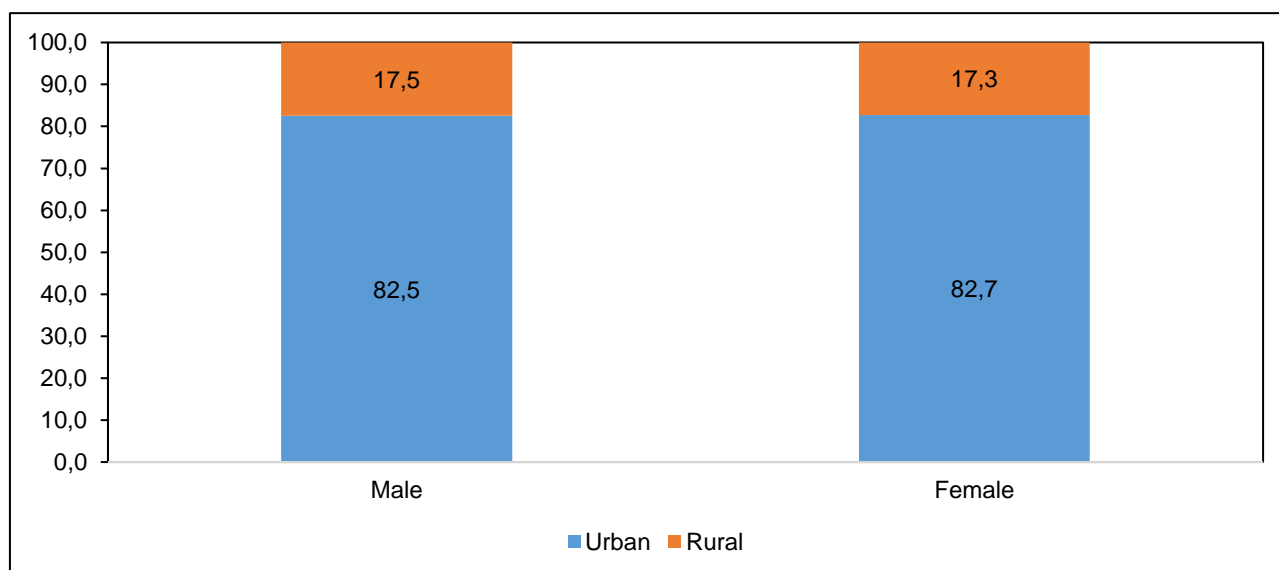
Figure 3.33 depicts access to cellphone by sex and geo-type for 2023. Cellphone access was higher in urban areas compared to rural areas, irrespective of sex. There was a slight difference in cellphone access between males and females in urban areas (66,2% and 65,6%) and rural areas (33,8% and 34,4%).

Figure 3.34 - Percentage of individuals with access to computer by province and sex, 2023

Source: GHS 2023

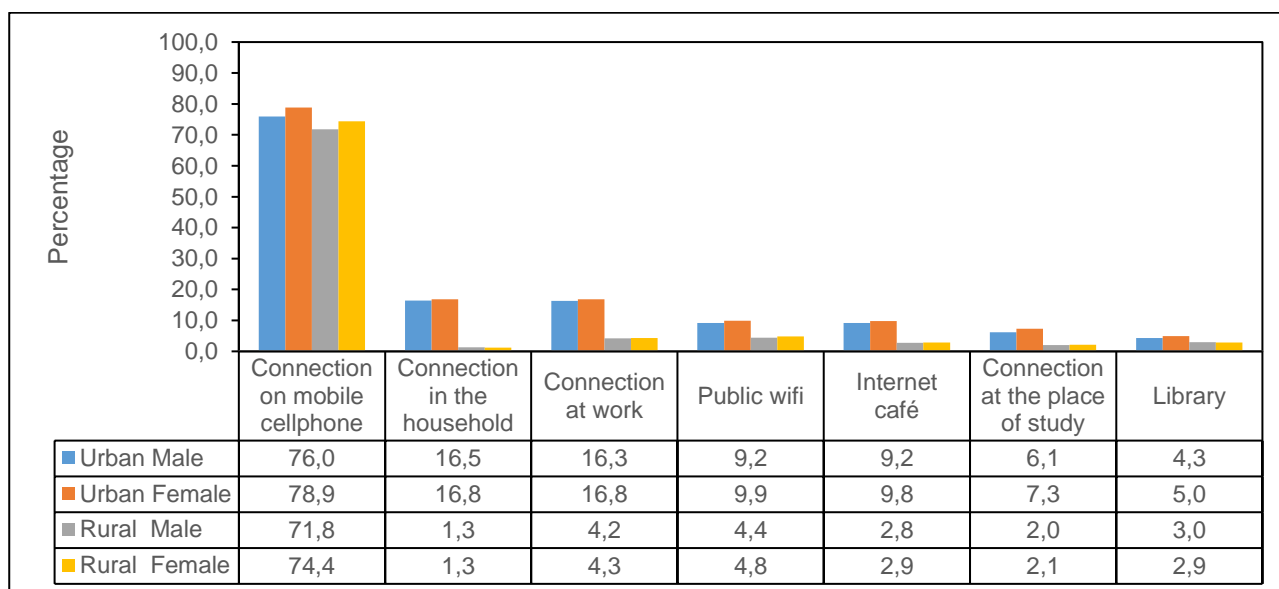
The percentage of individuals who used a computer in the year 2023 by province and sex are shown in the figure above.

Provincial disparities revealed that eight out of nine provinces recorded a higher percentage of females who indicated to have used a computer for the reference period compared to their male counterparts. Mpumalanga, Western Cape and Limpopo had the highest percentages of females who used computer (55,1%, 53,5% and 53,0% respectively). Gauteng was the only province where males reported a higher percentage compared to their female counterpart with access to computer (50,4% for males and 49,6% for females).

Figure 3.35 - Percentage of individuals with access to computer by sex and geographic location, 2023

Source: GHS 2023

Figure 3.35 shows the percentage of individuals who used a computer by sex and geo-type in 2023. An analysis shows that a greater proportion of individuals residing in urban areas have access to computers compared to those residing in rural areas, regardless of sex. When looking at geographical locations, there was a slight difference of about 0,2 percentage points between males and females both in urban and rural areas.

Figure 3.36 - Percentage distribution of individuals with access to the Internet by sex, type of Internet access and geo-type, 2023

Source: GHS 2023

Figure 3.36 shows the proportion of individuals with access to Internet by sex, type of Internet access and geo-type in 2023. The majority of females residing in urban areas indicated to have access to the Internet more than their male counterparts. Majority of individuals reported to have accessed Internet through cellphones, with females reporting slightly higher proportions than males. Generally, the usage of the Internet was more prevalent in urban areas than rural areas irrespective of the type of access. Approximately 17% of persons residing in urban areas indicated to have access to the Internet in the households compared to just less than 2% of those residing in rural areas, irrespective of sex.

3.12 Conclusion

A growing working-age population provides opportunities for employment and economic growth. The provincial analysis of the working-age population in South Africa was estimated to have increased by almost six million from 35,3 million in 2014 to 41,3 million in 2024. Gauteng, followed by KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape reported higher proportions of the country's working-age in the reported period.

Labour force participation rates have increased over the years. Despite females in the population exceeding males, their participation rates in the labour force remained lower at 55,8% in 2024 compared to 65,6% of males. A gendered perspective of labour market participation showed a positive relationship between the number of children in the household and participation rates, irrespective of sex. Participation rates in 2024 were lowest among males and females who lived with five or more children at 42,0% and 40,2% respectively. Persons without minor children reported the highest participation rates.

Nationally, the employment rate declined from 42,7% in 2014 to 40,3% in 2024; with male employment rate declining by 3,8 percentage points, while those of females declined marginally by 1,1 percentage points between 2014 and 2024. The male employment rates were higher than that of females during the reported period. The results indicate that the economy is not absorbing the growing population entering the labour market, regardless of sex. In 2024, female graduates in the field of Arts/education/hospitality and Economic & Management sciences showed gender parity ratios of 2,62 and 1,46 respectively.

When looking at type of occupations, working for households as domestic workers were more common among females than males in the reported period. The second most common occupation for employed females was working as a clerk. Females were less prevalent in occupations such as plant and machinery operators and craft and related trade. In terms of business ownership, three out of four females were operating businesses in the informal sector. The presence of males in the informal sector experienced a 5,8 percentage points increase during the reported period, while the females declined by 1,7 percentage points. The proportion of female-run businesses operating in the formal sector grew in the reported period.

Unemployment is widespread for both women and men. Overall, the unemployment rate grew by 8,0 percentage points from 25,5% in 2014 to 33,5% in 2024. Females reported higher unemployment rates than the national rate and their male counterparts. The youth (15-24 and 25-34 age groups) reported higher unemployment rates compared to other age groups, irrespective of sex. The presence of children indirectly contributes to unemployment, particularly amongst women. Unemployment rates in 2024 were highest among males and females with five or more children in the household, at 49,6% and 56,7% respectively. Remittance was the primary source of survival for over 90% of unemployed persons between 2014 and 2024; this applied to both male and female.

Resource equity as part of economic empowerment explored ownership of certain assets as a proxy of autonomy. More males reported salaries/wages/commission as their main source of income compared to females. The percentage of males and females who received social grants increased by 10,3 percentage points between 2014 and 2023.

Nationally, female-headed households reported vulnerability to hunger compared to male-headed households in the reported period; with female-headed households reporting hunger increasing from 13,7% in 2014 to 15,0% in 2023 and male-headed households increased from 9,6% in 2014 to 12,5% in 2023. The majority of females reported higher proportions in terms of access to cellphones in eight out of nine provinces. Nationally, majority of females indicated to have access to the Internet more than their male counterparts irrespective of where they reside. Generally, the usage of the Internet was more prevalent in urban areas than rural areas irrespective of the place of access. Access to the Internet through mobile/cellphone was more prevalent, irrespective of sex.

CHAPTER 4: SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT

4.1 Background

Empowerment of women is core to South Africa's processes of sustainable development, which includes leaving no one behind by addressing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and inequalities. Achieving women's empowerment depends on the interplay of several factors, such as addressing social discriminations that exist based on sex, disability, race, religion, and changing perceptions and gender norms that dictate women's role in society.

Social empowerment of women involves freedom of movement, economic security and stability, decision making, and free participation in a society with equal opportunities for advancement.²⁸ Therefore, advocacy of laws and regulations, discouragement of social norms about discriminatory gender roles and providing public infrastructure will go a long way toward making women's empowerment a reality.

This chapter will examine social empowerment from perceptions of social gender norms and ascertain gender equality in government's decision-making positions.

4.2 Decision-making roles

Gender parity in decision-making positions, both in government and the private sector, is important in women empowerment. This enables women to occupy positions of power, where they can effectively participate in planning, making decisions, recommending policies, and coordinating empowerment efforts.

Table 4.1 - Percentage distribution of females in senior (SMS) and middle (MMS) management positions in the public sector by sex and age-group, 2019 and 2023

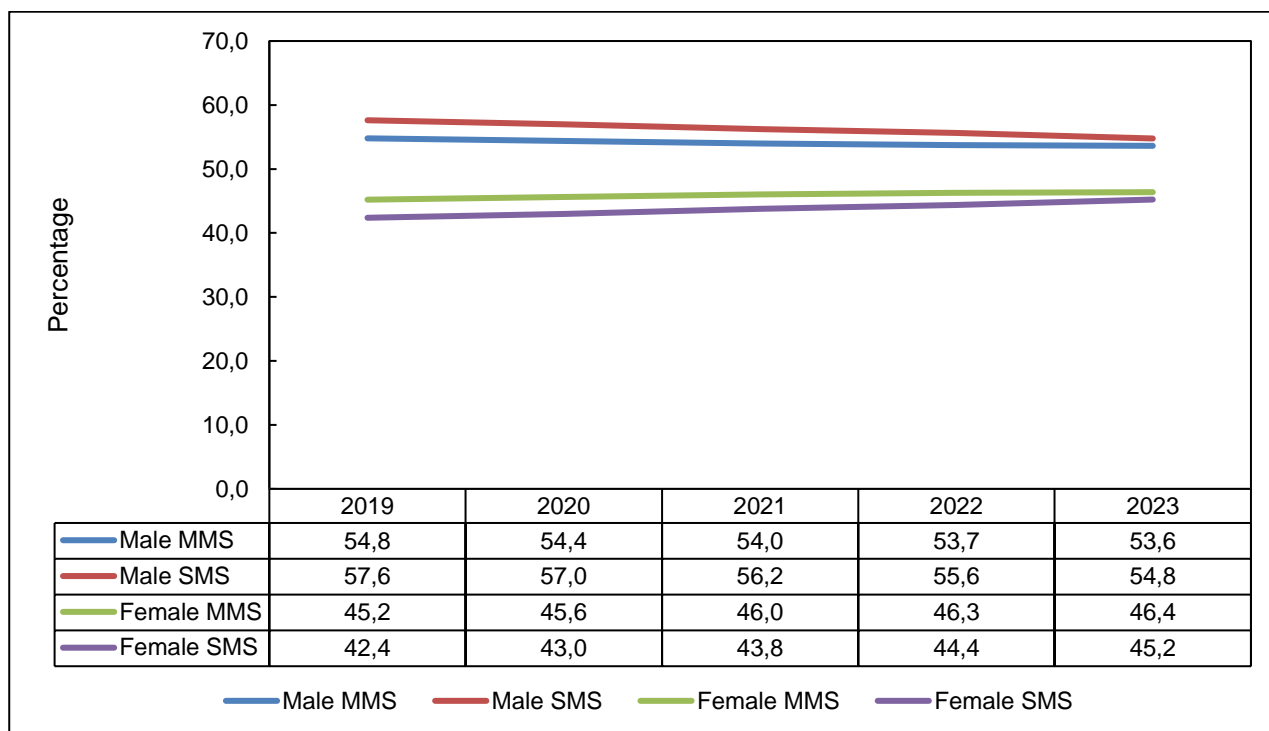
| Position and age group | | 2019 | | | | | | 2023 | | | | | |
|------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| | | Male | | Female | | Both sexes | | Male | | Female | | Both sexes | |
| | | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| MMS | <=35 | 915 | 9,4 | 1 061 | 13,2 | 1 976 | 11,1 | 472 | 4,9 | 651 | 7,9 | 1 123 | 6,3 |
| | 36-55 | 7 267 | 74,6 | 6 012 | 74,8 | 13 279 | 74,7 | 7 043 | 73,8 | 6 383 | 77,3 | 13 426 | 75,4 |
| | 56-65 | 1 555 | 16,0 | 959 | 11,9 | 2 514 | 14,1 | 025 | 21,2 | 1 220 | 14,8 | 3 245 | 18,2 |
| | 66+ | 7 | 0,1 | 7 | 0,1 | 14 | 0,1 | | 0,1 | 2 | 0,0 | 7 | 0,0 |
| | Total | 9 744 | 100,0 | 8 039 | 100,0 | 17 783 | 100,0 | 9 545 | 100,0 | 8 256 | 100,0 | 17 801 | 100,0 |
| SMS | <=35 | 126 | 2,2 | 141 | 3,4 | 267 | 2,7 | 53 | 1,0 | 64 | 1,5 | 117 | 1,3 |
| | 36-55 | 4 227 | 74,4 | 3 265 | 78,2 | 7 492 | 76,0 | 3 518 | 68,6 | 3 184 | 75,2 | 6 702 | 71,6 |
| | 56-65 | 1 291 | 22,7 | 762 | 18,2 | 2 053 | 20,8 | 1 523 | 29,7 | 964 | 22,8 | 2 487 | 26,6 |
| | 66+ | 35 | 0,6 | 9 | 0,2 | 44 | 0,4 | 31 | 0,6 | 20 | 0,5 | 51 | 0,5 |
| | Total | 5 679 | 100,0 | 4 177 | 100,0 | 9 856 | 100,0 | 5 125 | 100,0 | 4 232 | 100,0 | 9 357 | 100,0 |

Source: DPISA:2019–2023

Table 4.1 shows the age distribution of management positions in the public sector in 2019 and 2023. The results show that personnel were between the ages of 36–55, increased by 0,7 percentage points (74,7% in 2019 and 75,4% in 2023). From a gender analysis perspective, females in the youth age group (<=35 years) were more likely to hold MMS positions than their male counterparts for both 2019 and 2023, reporting higher proportions than their male counterparts.

Similarly, majority of SMS positions were occupied by those aged 36–55 years old for both sexes in both years, declining by 4,4 percentage points (from 76,0% in 2019 to 71,6% in 2023). Between 2019 and 2023, the proportion of both males and females in SMS positions in the age group 56–65 and 66+ increased while the other age groups decreased.

Figure 4.1 - Trend analysis of female share in senior (SMS) and middle (MMS) management positions in the public sector by sex, 2019 to 2023



Source: DPSA 2023

Since the government's promulgation of the Employment Equity Act of 1998, institutions are continuously striving for equitable representation of designated groups in various occupational categories. The act provides action plans for transformation and guidelines for building capacity in workplaces, including women's representation at senior management levels (set at 50,0%), and employment of persons with disabilities (2,0%).

Figure 4.1 shows the distribution of senior and middle management positions in the public sector from 2019 to 2023. Males occupy most senior management positions (SMS) in the public sector. Their composition ranged from 57,6% in 2019 to 54,8% in 2023, while their female counterparts occupied 42,4% in 2019 and slightly increased to 45,2% in 2023. A similar trend was observed among those occupying the middle management positions, with males having proportions above 50% in the reported period.

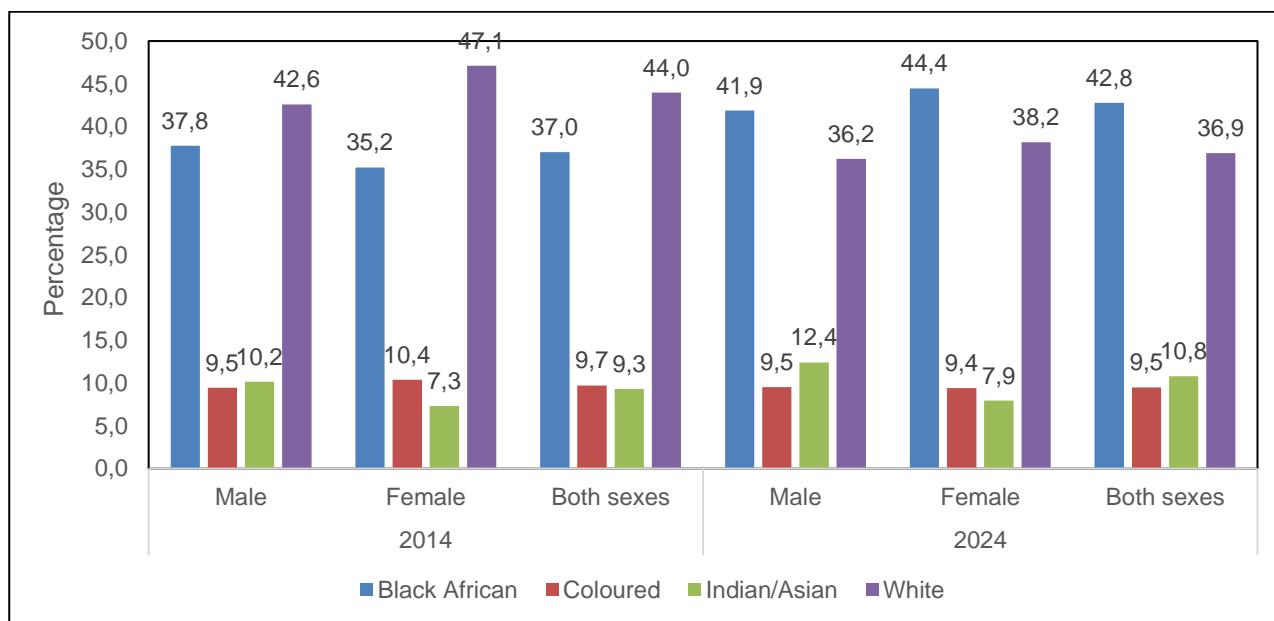
Table 4.2 - Percentage distribution of females in senior management positions in the South African Police Service by population group, 2023

| Rank | White | | Indian | | Coloured | | Black African | | RSA | | GPR |
|-------------------|-------|--------|--------|--------|----------|--------|---------------|--------|------|--------|------|
| | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | |
| Top management | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 13 | 12 | 14 | 12 | 0,86 |
| Senior management | 83 | 40 | 41 | 13 | 49 | 32 | 295 | 224 | 468 | 309 | 0,66 |

Source: SAPS 2023

Table 4.2 shows the percentage distribution of females in management positions in the police force by population group, in 2023. Senior management in this regard refers to major generals and brigadier. Generally, more males were employed in senior management positions than females, irrespective of population group.

The overall gender parity ratio for top management is 0,86 and senior management is 0,66, indicating that females still lag behind in terms of representation.

Figure 4.2 - Percentage distribution of top management positions in the private sector by sex and population group, 2014 and 2024

Source: QLFS Q2:2014 & 2024

Figures 4.2 above, shows the distribution of management positions in the private sector by sex and population group in 2014 and 2024. In 2014, a higher percentage of personnel occupying management positions in the private sector were white and black African males, and the same trend was observed among females. The figure highlights the improvement in the representation of black African managers in the sector for both sexes. Amongst females, the proportion of black African in top management positions increased from 35,2% to 44,4% in the reported period, while the Indian/Asian increased by 0,6 percentage points (from 7,3% in 2014 to 7,9% in 2024).

Table 4.3 - Percentage distribution of females in top management positions in the private sector by geographical type, 2014 and 2024

| Geo type | 2014 | | | | | | 2024 | | | | | |
|------------|--------------|-------------|-----------|------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| | Urban | | Rural | | Both sexes | | Urban | | Rural | | Both sexes | |
| | N('000) | % | N('000) | % | N('000) | % | N('000) | % | N('000) | % | N('000) | % |
| Male | 716 | 92,2 | 60 | 7,8 | 777 | 100,0 | 739 | 89,3 | 89 | 10,7 | 827 | 100,0 |
| Female | 320 | 95,5 | 15 | 4,5 | 335 | 100,0 | 413 | 90,9 | 42 | 9,1 | 455 | 100,0 |
| RSA | 1 036 | 93,2 | 76 | 6,8 | 1 111 | 100,0 | 1152 | 89,9 | 130 | 10,1 | 1282 | 100,0 |

Source: QLFS Q2 2014 & 2024

Table 4.3 above, shows the percentage distribution of females in top management positions in the private sector by geo-type for 2014 and 2024. Analysis showed that a slight decrease in representation of top management positions in the private sector occurred during the reporting period for urban areas while the opposite was observed in the rural areas.

Females in rural areas in top management increased by 4,6 percentage points, while males increased by 2,9 percentage points during the reported period. The majority of top management positions in the private sector were occupied by males both in rural and urban areas.

4.3 Feeling of safety and experience of crime

Violence against women (VAW) is one of the barriers to women's empowerment as it negatively affects their ability to choose and make decisions, especially if they constantly live in fear of violence either at home or at the workplace. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of attitudes about VAW is important when developing strategies for the prevention of violence. Violence negatively affects women's general well-being and prevents women from fully participating in society and the economy. It impacts their families, their community, and the country at large. It has tremendous costs, from greater strains on health care to legal expenses and losses in productivity. This section will use data from the GPSJS 2023/24.

Table 4.4 - Percentage of individuals who felt safe walking in their neighbourhood alone during the day, by province and sex 2023/24

| Province | Male | | | Female | | |
|---------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| | Safe | Unsafe | Total | Safe | Unsafe | Total |
| | N ('000) | | | | | |
| Western Cape | 1 741 | 801 | 2 543 | 1 810 | 1 046 | 2 857 |
| Eastern Cape | 1 725 | 299 | 2 024 | 1 851 | 385 | 2 235 |
| Northern Cape | 401 | 43 | 445 | 399 | 60 | 459 |
| Free State | 889 | 100 | 989 | 992 | 145 | 1 138 |
| KwaZulu-Natal | 3 147 | 671 | 3 818 | 3 464 | 826 | 4 291 |
| North West | 1 335 | 164 | 1 499 | 1 285 | 174 | 1 459 |
| Gauteng | 4 760 | 1 546 | 6 306 | 4 496 | 1 714 | 6 210 |
| Mpumalanga | 1 462 | 165 | 1 628 | 1 486 | 217 | 1 703 |
| Limpopo | 1 743 | 72 | 1 816 | 2 015 | 107 | 2 122 |
| RSA | 17 205 | 3 862 | 21 067 | 17 799 | 4 675 | 22 474 |
| | % | | | | | |
| Western Cape | 68,5 | 31,5 | 100,0 | 63,4 | 36,6 | 100,0 |
| Eastern Cape | 85,2 | 14,8 | 100,0 | 82,8 | 17,2 | 100,0 |
| Northern Cape | 90,2 | 9,8 | 100,0 | 86,9 | 13,1 | 100,0 |
| Free State | 89,9 | 10,1 | 100,0 | 87,2 | 12,8 | 100,0 |
| KwaZulu-Natal | 82,4 | 17,6 | 100,0 | 80,7 | 19,3 | 100,0 |
| North West | 89,0 | 11,0 | 100,0 | 88,1 | 11,9 | 100,0 |
| Gauteng | 75,5 | 24,5 | 100,0 | 72,4 | 27,6 | 100,0 |
| Mpumalanga | 89,8 | 10,2 | 100,0 | 87,2 | 12,8 | 100,0 |
| Limpopo | 96,0 | 4,0 | 100,0 | 94,9 | 5,1 | 100,0 |
| RSA | 81,7 | 18,3 | 100,0 | 79,2 | 20,8 | 100,0 |

Source: GPSJS 2023/24

Table 4.4 shows the percentage of individuals who felt safe walking in their neighbourhood alone during the day by sex and province, in 2023/24. Nationally, 18,3% of males reported feeling unsafe compared to 20,8% of females. Western Cape, Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal reported the highest proportions of individuals who felt unsafe to walk alone in their area during the day, while Limpopo reported the lowest proportion. Compared to males, females reported higher proportions of feeling unsafe when walking alone in their neighbourhoods.

Table 4.5 - Percentage of individuals who felt safe walking in their neighbourhood alone at night, by province and sex 2023/24

| Province | Male | | | Female | | |
|---------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| | Safe | Unsafe | Total | Safe | Unsafe | Total |
| | N ('000) | | | | | |
| Western Cape | 828 | 1 715 | 2 543 | 763 | 2 094 | 2 857 |
| Eastern Cape | 743 | 1 281 | 2 024 | 720 | 1 515 | 2 235 |
| Northern Cape | 175 | 270 | 445 | 148 | 312 | 459 |
| Free State | 384 | 605 | 989 | 378 | 760 | 1 138 |
| KwaZulu-Natal | 1327 | 2491 | 3 818 | 1453 | 2 838 | 4 291 |
| North West | 664 | 835 | 1 499 | 548 | 910 | 1 459 |
| Gauteng | 2122 | 4183 | 6 306 | 1 674 | 4 536 | 6 210 |
| Mpumalanga | 481 | 1146 | 1 628 | 360 | 1 343 | 1 703 |
| Limpopo | 1 128 | 687 | 1 816 | 1 279 | 843 | 2 122 |
| RSA | 7 852 | 13 215 | 21 067 | 7 323 | 15 151 | 22 474 |
| % | | | | | | |
| Western Cape | 32,6 | 67,4 | 100,0 | 26,7 | 73,3 | 100,0 |
| Eastern Cape | 36,7 | 63,3 | 100,0 | 32,2 | 67,8 | 100,0 |
| Northern Cape | 39,2 | 60,8 | 100,0 | 32,2 | 67,8 | 100,0 |
| Free State | 38,8 | 61,2 | 100,0 | 33,2 | 66,8 | 100,0 |
| KwaZulu-Natal | 34,7 | 65,3 | 100,0 | 33,9 | 66,1 | 100,0 |
| North West | 44,3 | 55,7 | 100,0 | 37,6 | 62,4 | 100,0 |
| Gauteng | 33,7 | 66,3 | 100,0 | 27,0 | 73,0 | 100,0 |
| Mpumalanga | 29,6 | 70,4 | 100,0 | 21,2 | 78,8 | 100,0 |
| Limpopo | 62,1 | 37,9 | 100,0 | 60,3 | 39,7 | 100,0 |
| RSA | 37,3 | 62,7 | 100,0 | 32,6 | 67,4 | 100,0 |

Source: GPSJS 2023/24

Table 4.5 shows the percentage of individuals who felt safe walking in their neighbourhood alone at night by sex and province, in 2023/24. Analysis shows that 62,7% of males and 67,4% of females felt unsafe walking alone in their neighbourhood at night. Limpopo reported lowest proportions of individuals who felt unsafe walking alone at night in their neighbourhoods, while Mpumalanga reported the highest proportions, irrespective of sex.

Table 4.6 - Percentage of individuals aged 16 years and above, who experienced various crimes, by sex 2019/2020 and 2023/24

| Experience of crime | 2019/20 | | | | | |
|---------------------|---------|---------|----------------|------|--------|--------------|
| | Male | Female | Both sexes | Male | Female | Both sexes |
| | N | | | % | | |
| Sexual offences | 8 629 | 22 557 | 31 186 | 27,7 | 72,3 | 100,0 |
| Assault | 154 027 | 70 409 | 224 436 | 68,6 | 31,4 | 100,0 |
| Hijacking | 55 958 | 28 859 | 84 817 | 66,0 | 34,0 | 100,0 |
| | 2023/24 | | | | | |
| | N | | | % | | |
| | | | | | | |
| Sexual offences | 4 608 | 47 274 | 51 882 | 8,9 | 91,1 | 100,0 |
| Assault | 194 261 | 100 677 | 294 938 | 65,9 | 34,1 | 100,0 |
| Hijacking | 49 537 | 31 209 | 80 746 | 61,3 | 38,7 | 100,0 |

Source: GPSJS 2019/20 and 2023/24

Table 4.6 shows the percentage of individuals aged 16 and above, who experienced various crimes by sex, in 2019/20 and 2023/24. The SDG target 5.2.1 aims at eliminating violence against women and girls, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation. Table 4.6 shows that there was an increase in the number of assault victims for individuals from the 2019/20 period to 2023/24. Experience of assault increased from 224 000 in 2019/20 to 295 000 in 2023/24. The number of victims of hijacking decreased between 2019/20 to 2023/24. There was an increase in the number of victims of sexual offence from 22 000 in 2019/20 to 47 000 in 2023/24. The percentage of males who experienced the three mentioned crimes decreased while their female counterparts experienced an increase.

4.4 Conclusion

The chapter explored social empowerment from the perceptions of social gender norms to ascertain gender equality, and understand the progress made in the public and private sectors in adhering to the Employment Equity Act. Males occupied most of senior management positions (SMS) and middle management positions (MMS) in the public sector from 2019 to 2023. A similar pattern was observed in the private sector. With regards of perceptions of safety, females reported the highest proportion regarding feeling unsafe while walking alone in their neighbourhoods during the day or night.

CHAPTER 5: POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT

5.1 Background

Global statistics show that women are under-represented as leaders, elected officials, and voters due to cultural and social norms which limits their participation in the political process. Increasing women's political participation and leadership are vital mechanisms that support women to realize their human rights and are also crucial for economic and social development around the world. Studies have found that longer exposure to women's political representation increases women's overall labour force participation, the share of public employment opportunities allocated to women, and women's access to public amenities, such as roads and health services. Women's equal political participation at all levels of government is recognized in international frameworks such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)¹⁶.

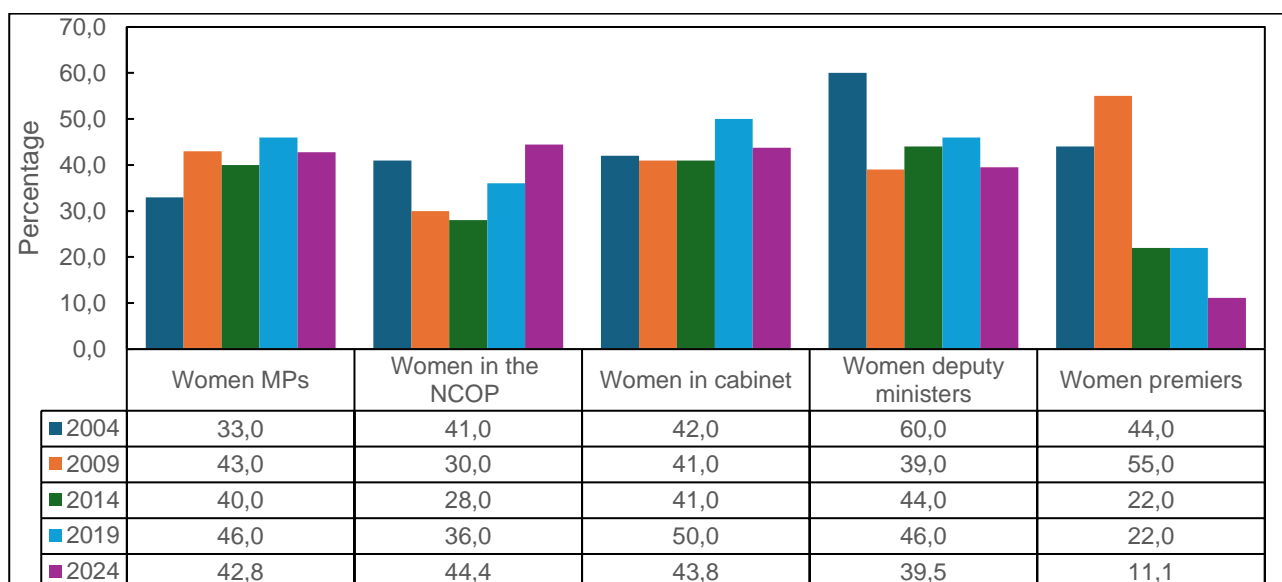
This section will focus on representations in political decision-making positions and involvement of women in electoral processes.

5.2 Decision-making positions

Women's participation in decision-making processes is critical when assessing women's economic empowerment, gender equity and other developmental goals¹⁷. There is representation of women in business leadership, gender gaps in political leadership continue to persist. Achieving gender equity in positions of decision-making – both in government and in the private sector – is crucial to providing women with responsibilities for planning, making decisions, recommending policies, and coordinating empowerment efforts. Research shows that this allocation of power and responsibility has been useful in initiating adjustments to laws and national plans to include gender equity¹⁸.

5.2.1 Decision-making positions at national level and provincial level

Figure 5.1 - Decision-making in political executive positions in South Africa by sex, 2004–2024



Source: Gender links, 2024

¹⁶ <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2023/in-full/gender-gaps-in-the-workforce/#gender-gaps-in-political-leadership>

¹⁷ IDEA (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance). 2005. *Women in parliament: Beyond numbers*. Stockholm, Sweden IDEA. <http://www.idea.int/publications/wip2/>.

¹⁸ Maaitah, A.I., Hadeel, A., Hmoud, O. & Muntaha, G. 2011. Arab women and political participation, *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 12,7-26

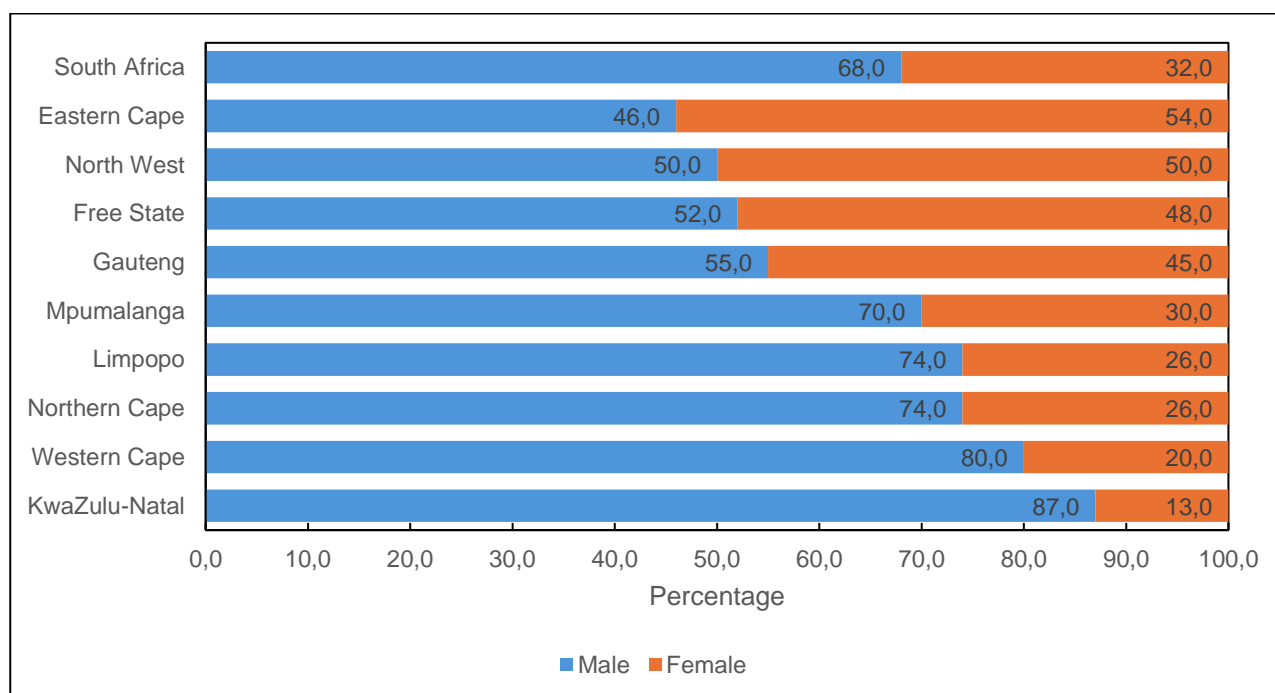
Figure 5.1 shows representation of women for decision-making in political executive positions in South Africa. From 2004 to 2024, males continue to dominate in government decision-making positions and the country has not reached parity in the decision making in political executive positions. An improvement was observed among the seats held by women in parliament (from 33,0% in 2004 to 42,8% in 2024); women in National Council of Provinces (NCOP) (from 41,0% in 2004 to 44,4% in 2024) and women in cabinet (42,0% to 43,8%). On the other hand, the women deputy ministers and women premiers recorded a decline in the number of seats occupied. Although the women deputy ministers and women premiers represented the largest proportion of women in 2004, they were the least represented in the seat of leadership in 2024 (at 39,5% and 11,1% respectively). The cabinet, which is the most senior level of the executive branch of the government of South Africa comprised of the President, Deputy President, and Ministers indicates parity in 2019, however it decreased in 2024.

The percentage share of deputy ministerial positions decreased between 2004 and 2009 (from 60,0% to 39,0% in 2009) and increased to 46,0% in 2019 and further declined to 39,5% in 2024. The NCOP is constitutionally mandated to ensure that provincial interests are taken into account in the national sphere of government through participation in the national legislative process, and by providing a national forum for consideration of issues affecting provinces. The percentage of women in the NCOP decreased from 41,0% in 2004 to 28,0% in 2014 and increased again to 44,4% in 2024. The Premier is the executive authority of a province and together with the executive council are responsible for implementing provincial legislation and any national legislation assigned to the provinces. The percentage of women premiers exceeded parity (55,0%) in 2009, however it started declining from 2014 and further decreased to 11,1% in 2024 by almost double.

5.2.2 Decision-making positions at the local level

Local government is the sphere of government closest to the persons and is responsible for providing basic services such as water, electricity and sanitation to communities across the country. The municipal elections take place every five years where mayors and councillors are elected. These members sit on the municipal council, which is the decision-making and political body directing the mandate of the municipality.

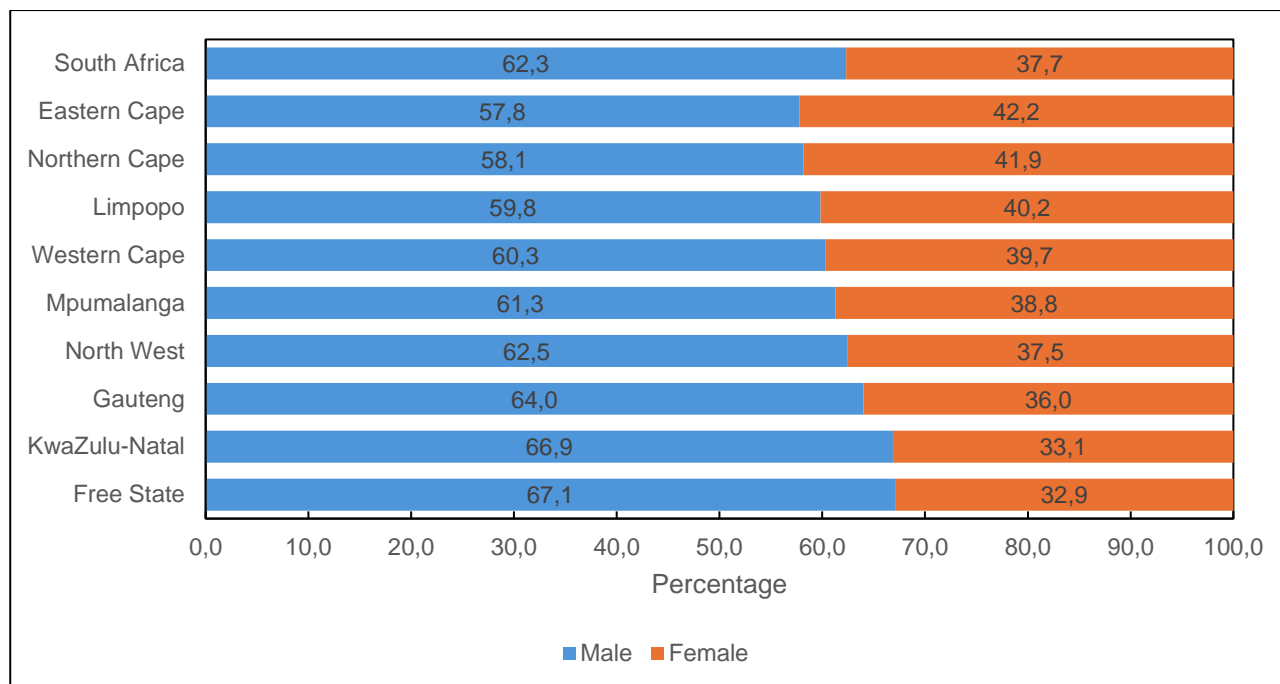
Figure 5.2 - Executive mayors and mayoral positions by sex and province, 2022



Source: Non-financial census of municipalities, 2022

Figure 5.2 shows the provincial distribution of mayoral positions in municipalities across the country in 2022. Nationally, males were more likely to hold mayoral positions than females (68,0% vs 32,0%). North West is the only municipality with parity regarding mayoral positions. Eastern Cape was the only province where the females occupied the highest proportions of mayoral positions compared to their male counterparts. The two provinces which had the lowest representation of female mayors were KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape.

Figure 5.3 - Full-time and part-time municipal councillors by sex and province, 2022

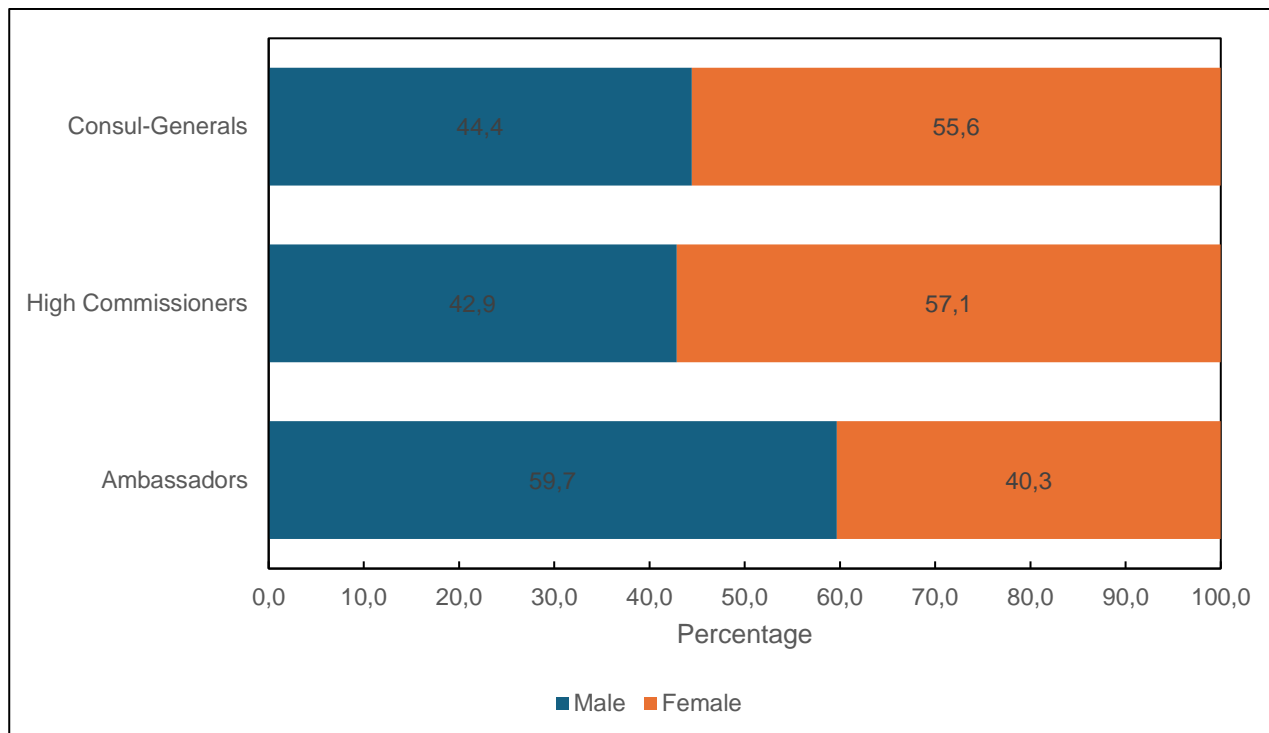


Source: Non-financial census of municipalities, 2022

Councillors are entrusted to work in local communities to address development and empowerment issues. This requires gender mainstreaming and sensitivity, i.e. being aware of the issues around gender, and ensuring that these are taken into consideration when drafting programmes and making decisions. Figure 5.3 shows the gender distribution of municipal councillors at local government in the nine provinces of South Africa in 2024. The majority of municipal councillors were males. Nationally, 37,7% of the municipal councillors were females. The two provinces that had the lowest representation of female councillors were Free State and KwaZulu-Natal at 32,9% and 33,1% respectively.

5.2.3 Decision-making positions at the embassies

Figure 5.4 - Diplomat positions by sex, 2023



Source: DIRCO 2023

Figure 5.4 shows the distribution of the diplomats by sex in 2023. A consul of the highest rank is termed a consul-general and is appointed to a consulate-general. The ambassador is a diplomatic agent of the highest rank accredited to a foreign government or sovereign as the resident representative of his or her own government or sovereign or appointed for a special and often temporary diplomatic assignment. A High Commissioner is a senior representative who is sent by one Commonwealth country to live in another in order to work as an ambassador. The analysis revealed that the majority of the ambassadors were males (59,7%) while the majority of the consul-generals and high commissioners were females.

Table 5.1 - Composition of judges by population group and sex, 2019 and 2023

| Population group | 2019 | | | | | |
|------------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|---------------|
| | Male | | Female | | Both sexes | Gender parity |
| | N | % | N | % | N | |
| Black African | 68 | 59,6 | 46 | 40,4 | 114 | 0,68 |
| Indian/Asian | 13 | 56,5 | 10 | 43,5 | 23 | 0,77 |
| Coloured | 16 | 59,3 | 11 | 40,7 | 27 | 0,69 |
| White | 55 | 67,1 | 27 | 32,9 | 82 | 0,49 |
| Total | 152 | 61,8 | 94 | 38,2 | 246 | 0,62 |
| Population group | 2023 | | | | | |
| | Male | | Female | | Both sexes | Gender parity |
| | N | % | N | % | N | |
| Black African | 62 | 51,7 | 58 | 48,3 | 120 | 0,94 |
| Indian/Asian | 16 | 50,0 | 16 | 50,0 | 32 | 1,00 |
| Coloured | 12 | 57,1 | 9 | 42,9 | 21 | 0,75 |
| White | 44 | 58,7 | 31 | 41,3 | 75 | 0,70 |
| Total | 134 | 54,0 | 114 | 46,0 | 248 | 0,85 |

Source: South African Judiciary Annual Report 2022/2023

A Judge is a presiding officer in a Superior Court and a Magistrate presides over matters in a Regional or District Magistrates' Court. Table 5.1 above, shows the composition of judges by population group and sex in 2019 and 2023. The analysis revealed that majority of the judges were males among all the four population groups for the reference period. In 2023, Indian/Asian was the only population group that reached parity.

Table 5.2 - Composition of magistrates by population group and sex, 2019 and 2023

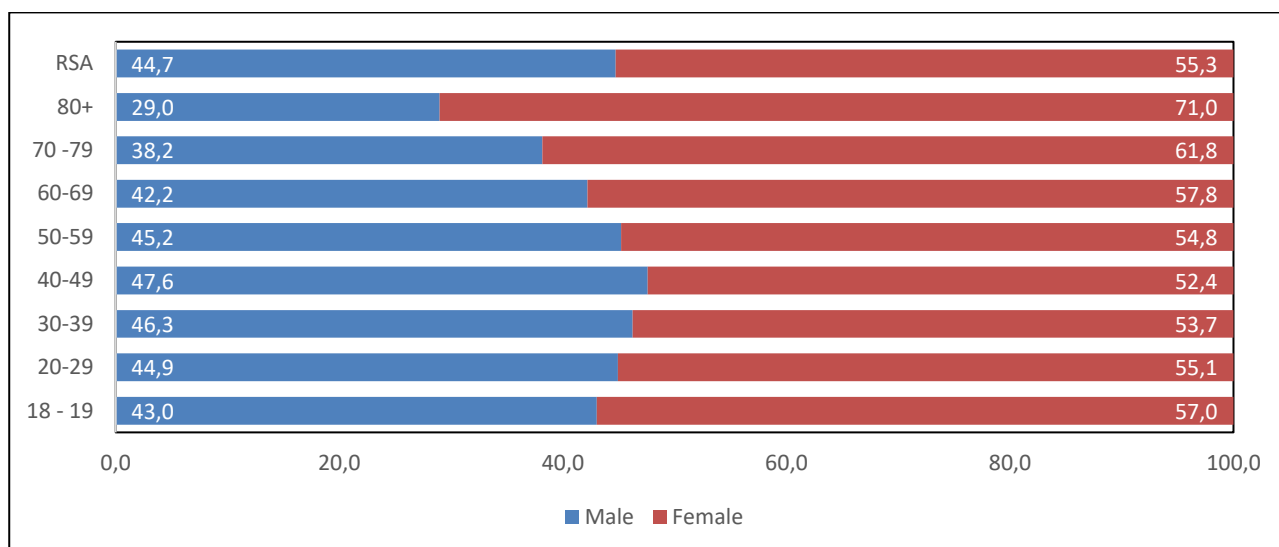
| Population group | 2019 | | | | | |
|------------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|--------------|---------------|
| | Male | | Female | | Both sexes | Gender parity |
| | N | % | N | % | N | |
| Black African | 416 | 50,1 | 415 | 49,9 | 831 | 1,00 |
| Indian/Asian | 79 | 40,5 | 116 | 59,5 | 195 | 1,47 |
| Coloured | 109 | 54,8 | 90 | 45,2 | 199 | 0,83 |
| White | 280 | 55,9 | 221 | 44,1 | 501 | 0,79 |
| Total | 884 | 51,2 | 842 | 48,8 | 1 726 | 0,95 |
| Population group | 2023 | | | | | |
| | Male | | Female | | Both sexes | Gender parity |
| | N | % | N | % | N | |
| Black African | 397 | 47,5 | 438 | 52,5 | 835 | 1,10 |
| Indian/Asian | 74 | 40,4 | 109 | 59,6 | 183 | 1,47 |
| Coloured | 106 | 50,7 | 103 | 49,3 | 209 | 0,97 |
| White | 209 | 49,2 | 216 | 50,8 | 425 | 1,03 |
| Total | 786 | 47,6 | 866 | 52,4 | 1 652 | 1,10 |

Source: South African Judiciary Annual Report 2022/2023

Magistrates make decisions in a Magistrates' Court, sometimes with the support of lay assessors. Table 5.2 above, shows the composition of Magistrates by population group and sex. In 2019, males were more likely to be Magistrates as compared to their female counterparts however, the inverse was observed in 2023. In 2023, black African, Indian/Asian and white females were more likely to be Magistrates, with a parity of 1,10, 1,47 and 1,03 respectively.

5.3 Voters' roll certified for national and provincial elections, 2024

Elections provide an opportunity for citizens to make their voice heard and give positive input on their issues and the quality of life they want. South Africa's electoral system requires all eligible voters to register as voters. After registering, a person's information appears on the voters' roll, which is used to plan elections and spot fraud because it indicates the expected number of voters in each voting district. According to the IEC, voter turnout refers to the proportion of eligible voters who cast a ballot in an election.

Figure 5.5 - Voters' roll by age group and sex in 2024

Source: IEC 2024

Figure 5.5 shows the voters' roll by age group and sex in 2024. In 2024, 27,6 million South Africans registered to vote. Nationally, voter registration was highest among female than males with (55,3% and 44,7% respectively). Females aged 80 and above represented the highest proportion of voter registration, whilst for the males aged 40-49 reported higher proportions.

5.4 Conclusion

Generally, results showed that there is a regression in the progress of women political representation as premiers and as mayors/councillors in the local government. In 2022, males were more likely to hold mayoral positions than females (68,0% vs 32,0%), while 37,7% of the municipal councillors were females.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The report analysed women empowerment from social, economic and political domains using secondary data from Stats SA, as well as administrative data obtained from external sources. The main objectives were to assess gender disparities and the development in gender equality in women empowerment over the period 2014 to 2024. The economic domain focused mainly on labour market participation and ownership of resources, and the social domain analysed disparities in representation in decision-making positions and experience of crime. The political domain analysed disparities in the electoral processes by analysing the voters' roll and representation in national, provincial and local government governance positions.

Economic domain

In terms of gender disparities in economic domain, there were no significant differences in the distribution of the working-age population across provinces in the reported period however, disparities were observed in the participation rates, employment rates, unemployment rates and inactivity rates. The findings indicated that males' participation rates and employment rates were higher than their female counterparts. During the past ten years, male and female participation rates increased by 1,7 (from 63,9% in 2014 to 65,6% in 2024) and 4,9 percentage points (from 50,9% in 2014 to 55,8% in 2024), respectively. Employment rate has decreased in the reported period, with male rates declining by 3,8 percentage points and their female counterparts declining by 1,1 percentage points.

Sector analysis showed that females were likely to be own-account workers in the informal sector while males were likely to be in the formal sector. A review of businesses by the size revealed that females were more likely to be own-account workers whilst males were more likely to own businesses that employed 20 or more persons. Between 2014 and 2024, the percentage of females who reported to be employing 20 or more persons increased by 0,8 percentage points while their male counterparts declined by 0,3 percentage points. The results show a decline in the percentage shares amongst females owning small and medium-sized businesses

Unemployment rate increased by 8,0 percentage points, increasing from 25,5% in 2014 to 33,5% in 2024. Female unemployment rates were higher than male unemployment rates in the reported period, and those aged between 15-34 reported the highest unemployment rates compared to other age groups. Persons with tertiary education attainment had lower unemployment rates compared to those without matric.

Economic inactivity has declined in the reported period; although females reported higher rates compared to males. Young persons aged 15–24 and older persons (55–64 years) experienced higher inactivity in both years. Persons living with five or more children in the households had the highest inactivity rates, regardless of sex. Amongst the reasons for economic inactivity in 2024, being a student was cited as the main reason, followed by discouragement for both sexes.

Looking at disparities in resource equity, the main source of income was salaries, followed by grants for both sexes. Males were more likely to receive income from business compared to females. Geographical differences showed that females residing in rural areas relied on grants, while those in urban areas showed salaries/wages as their main source of income. There was no parity in median earnings; males earned higher earnings than females from 2014 to 2022, female median earnings were found to be 80,0% of male median earnings. The female median earnings with a tertiary education were 80,0% of the male median monthly earnings, while the monthly earnings for secondary education not completed were 78,3%. Female-headed households that reported to have skipped a meal declined between 2014 and 2023, reporting lower proportions than their male counterparts.

In terms of dwelling ownership, the percentage of female-headed households who owned formal dwellings have increased from 45,1% in 2014 to 46,5% in 2023; while those owning informal dwellings decreased from 36,9% to 36,7%. Male-headed households were more likely to stay in formal dwellings compared to females. Disparities amongst the sexes show that more female-headed households received government housing subsidy compared to their male counterpart in 2023. In 2023, female-headed households with government subsidy were four percentage points higher than male-headed households. There were no significant differences in terms of cellphone access between male and females in 2023, with females outnumbering males in most provinces except Gauteng. Internet was predominantly accessible through cellphones and connection in the household in urban areas.

Social domain

Employment Equity Act calls for at least 50,0% of senior and top management positions to be held by women. Results show that men dominate in senior and middle management positions in the public sector from 2019 to 2023, although there has been an increase in women representation (increased from 41,6% in 2018 to 45,2% in 2023 for SMS). In 2014, a higher percentage of personnel occupying management positions in the private sector were white and black African males. Amongst females, the proportion of black African in top management positions increased from 35,2% to 44,4% in the reported period, while the other population groups recorded a decline.

Political domain

The political domain of women empowerment assessed women's participation in politics. Results showed that cabinet reached parity as 50,0% of the seats comprised of women in 2019, dropping to 43,8% in 2024. The percentage of women premiers exceeded parity (55,0%) in 2009, however it started declining from 2014 and further decreased to 11,1% in 2024. Males were more likely to occupy both executive mayoral and councillors' positions than females in local government representation in 2022. Nationally, voter registration in the 2024 general elections was high among female than males with (55,3% and 44,7% respectively). Females aged 80 and above represented the highest proportion of voter registration, whilst for the males aged 40–49 reported higher proportions

Conclusion

This report has highlighted that there are still gender disparities despite policies, frameworks and interventions aimed at achieving gender equality and addressing women empowerment. The main objectives of the report were to determine if there are gender differences and to analyse progress towards gender equality. Indicators of women empowerment showed gaps in favour of men for labour participation rates, employment rates and levels, and median earnings while females had higher unemployment and inactivity rates. Resources were also found to be unequal, with men owning more formal homes than women and women having lower median earnings than men.

Management positions in the public sector were still more likely to be held by males, although there has been progress towards female representation. Politically, there is significant progress towards gender equality in parliament with the women in parliament seats and cabinet positions having increased since 2004. However, at provincial and municipal level disparities in the decision-making positions as municipal and councillors are still dominated by males.

