



UNDERSTANDING GENDER INEQUALITY



INCLUSIVE SOCIETY INSTITUTE

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March 2023

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

South Africa is the most unequal country on Earth.¹ Its inequality is profoundly gendered. Women represent slightly more than half (51%) of the South African population,² and more than 40% of the country's homes are headed by women.³ Still, their share in household income and expenditure is significantly lower than that of men. Although women's participation in labour has expanded since 1994, they continue to fair poorer than men in employment, earnings, and job security. In 2022, women were 18% less likely to participate in the labour market, and 9% more likely to be unemployed (see Figure 7). This is exacerbated by the concentration of women in informal, precarious labour, that presents limited opportunity for social and economic mobility.

Women represent most of the workforce in only two industries: private households and community and social services (see Figure 11). The undervaluing of care work – often understood as 'women's work' – pervades both private domestic spaces and the public care economy. South African women spend eight times the amount of time on unpaid domestic and care work than men.⁴ Because of women's disproportionate caregiving role in families, and their impact in safeguarding household wellbeing, women's poorer labour market outcomes have extraordinary ripple effects. Affecting the nation, the future chances of children, and intergenerational cycles of poverty. Underlying gender inequality are complex dynamics around family formation, childcare and financial responsibility, as well as questions surrounding women's wider participation in education and labour markets.

This transdisciplinary report explores the roots and effects of South Africa's gender inequality, with a particular focus on care and families. The report discusses changes in South African household structure over time, including declining marriage rates, and rising numbers of women-headed households. These changes have increased the number of impoverished homes in South Africa and forced women to juggle their unpaid care work with paid work to make ends meet – reducing their ability to give freely and fully to both. The role of caregiving and care receiving for men and women is different, yet it is precisely that difference, which indicates gendered inequalities in *paid* care work and the undervaluing and lack of recognition of *unpaid* care work. For example, as industries which traditionally employ men have downsized resulting in greater rates of male unemployment and a narrowing gender gap in unemployment, there has been an increase of jobs in feminised care roles. Where men take up these new work opportunities, they experience a 'glass escalator' in their advancement to senior and more managerial roles. Thus, unequal outcomes result from men and women's participation in care work, with patriarchy, the underlying system that privileges men, remaining in place. During the HIV/Aids epidemic and Covid-19 pandemic, men's relationship to caregiving and care receiving changed. This suggests that gender arrangements during times of crisis might encourage more fluid, flexible gendered care regimes.

The recommendations stemming from this report (see Figure 15) are neither new nor novel, but they accurately display where South Africa sits in its trajectory toward a gender-equal society. The foundational recommendations relate to the value and visibility of care work specifically and the care economy more generally. It also suggests increased accountability for South Africa's poor policing of gender-based violence, and an introduction of a rebate or financial incentive for businesses and industries that employ more women, while providing appropriate childcare and parental leave policies.

¹ Oxfam, "Inequality Kills: The Unparalleled Action Needed to Combat Inequality in the Wake of Covid-19," 2022, <https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/bitstreamhandle/10546/621341/bp-inequality-kills-170122-summ-en.pdf>.

² Statistics South Africa, "Mid-Year Population Estimates," 2021, <https://www.gov.za/about-sa/south-african-people>.

³ StatsSA, "General Household Survey," 2021, <https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=15482>.

⁴ Wessel Van Den Berg, "South African Men's Engagement in a Feminist Ethic of Care: An Extended Case Study" (Thesis, Stellenbosch : Stellenbosch University, 2022), <https://scholar.sun.ac.za:443/handle/10019.1/125005>.



Despite the well-researched and thought-through National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence & Femicide: 2020-2030,⁵ much more needs to be done. This report recognises the structural inequities, discrimination, and targeted violence borne by trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming South Africans, but limitations of scope and data have meant that this report focuses largely on the experiences of cisgender women and men.

⁵ South African Government, "National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence & Femicide" (Pretoria: Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, May 2020), <https://www.justice.gov.za/vg/gbv/nsp-gbv-final-doc-04-05.pdf>.



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DEFINITION OF TERMS

Term	Definition
Family	Following Hall and Richter ⁶ we argue that “families are not just about biological relationships, and parenting is not simply about reproduction: the family serves a social function as ‘one of the great, enduring institutions of organised human life’”. Hence we refer to families as a network of kin relationships that might reside within a single or multiple households. A family might be tied together through blood, marriage or co-residence, and the organisation of families and households might change according to social, economic and political factors.
Gender	Gender is the socially determined rather than biologically determined notion of ‘femininity’ (what it means to be a woman) and ‘masculinity’ (what it means to be a man). Gender is an identity that is learnt through socialisation and changes across time and place and in different cultures. Although it is a social construct, it has real-life consequences as it is lived as real. Gender is relational, and in a patriarchal society this relationship is unequal. Gender is based on a complementary and hierarchical relationship of patriarchal domination and subordination; thus it delineates power and influence. “In personal or individual terms, gender refers to the specific roles, personality traits, attitudes, behaviours and dress that individuals use to express their personal gender identity, and this is influenced both by social ideas of gender, and personal feelings about oneself and how one wants to be and be seen in the world. For this reason, even though society tells us that there are only two genders, there are in fact many different ways to express one’s gender that fall between or outside of man/boy and woman/girl”. ⁷
Cisgender	This term refers to people whose gender expressions and gender identities fits the sex they were assigned at birth.
Transgender	“This term can refer to trans men and trans women specifically. It can also be an umbrella term for all people whose gender identity or gender expression differs from the social expectations for the sex they were born with”. ⁸
Non-binary	People whose gender identity is neither male nor female and do not confirm to the ascribed gender binary. Also known as gender queer folks who use they/them as pronouns.

⁶ Katharine Hall and Linda Richter, “Introduction: Children, Families and the State,” in *South African Child Gauge 2018*, Hall K, Richter L, Mokomane Z & Lake L (Eds) (Cape Town: Children’s Institute, University of Cape Town, 2018), 22–32, http://www.ci.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/image_tool/images/367/Child_Gauge/South_African_Child_Gauge_2018/Chapters/introduction%20-%20children%2C%20families%20and%20the%20state.pdf.

⁷ Talia Meer, *All the (Tricky) Words: A Glossary of Terms on Sex, Gender and Violence* (Gender, Health and Justice Research Unit. University of Cape Town, 2014), <https://open.uct.ac.za/handle/11427/8921>.

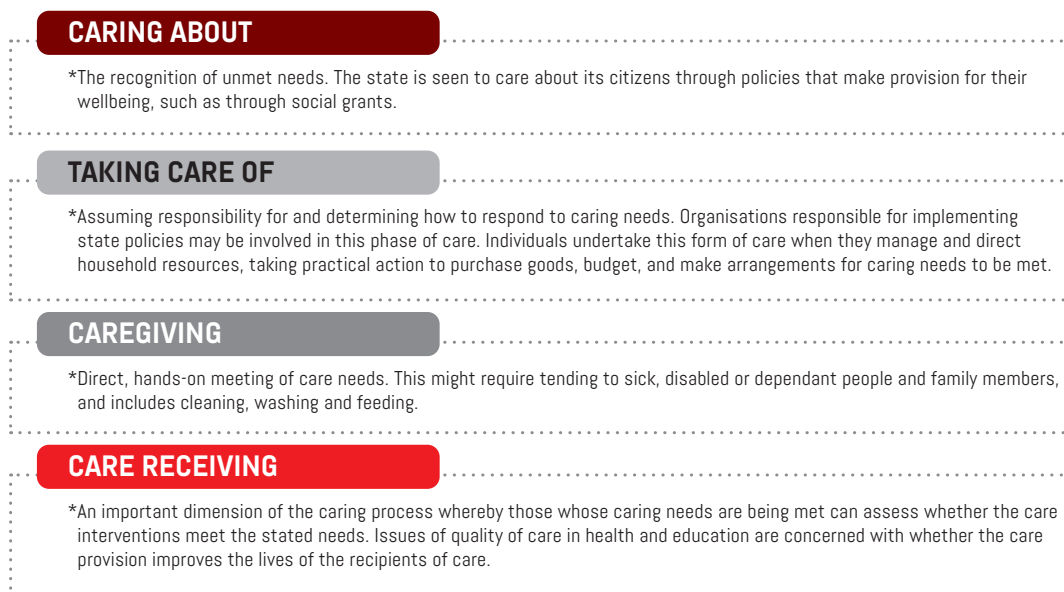
⁸ Meer, 2014.

INTRODUCTION

Prior reports published by the Inclusive Society Institute (ISI) have revealed the profoundly gendered nature of South Africa's inequality. To further explore this, we have drawn on a framework of care used to discuss 'The State of South African Fathers',⁹ 'Children, Families and the State',¹⁰ and gendered perspectives of 'Care in Context'.¹¹ **In this way we situate our discussion of gender inequality in relation to families.** We link the unpaid care work that ensures the wellbeing of families, to continuing forms of gender discrimination inside and outside the home, with the undervaluing of both care and those most closely associated with it.

In this report, we use Tronto's **"interconnected caring phases"** to discuss different aspects of the work involved in caring processes (Figure 1).¹² While seemingly interchangeable, the terms and definitions described help to separate out the different phases and forms of caring and we use this language throughout for clarity.

Figure 1: Framing care and caring¹³



The gendered nature of care and caring work makes women disproportionately responsible for care, an association that diminishes their social power given the undervaluing of care work generally. For example, by June 2020, two months into the Covid-19 lockdown, women were more than twice as likely as men to be taking care of children, preventing them from going to, or looking for, work.¹⁴ Gendered and unequal patterns of giving, receiving, and seeking household care are significant features of South Africa's inequality, both reflecting and reproducing larger structural inequities. Understanding care as a lever that drives and entrenches gender inequality helps illuminate women, girls, and other marginalised identities' systematic disadvantage, from a transdisciplinary perspective.

⁹ "State of South African Fathers Report" (Cape Town/Stellenbosch: Sonke Gender Justice, Human Sciences Research Council, & Stellenbosch University., 2021), <https://www0.sun.ac.za/psychology/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/STATE-OF-SOUTH-AFRICAS-FATHERS-SOSAF-2021-REPORT.pdf>.

¹⁰ Katharine Hall, Z Mokomane, and L Lake, "Child Gage 2018: Children, Families and the State | Children's Institute," Childrens Institute, 2018, <http://www.ci.uct.ac.za/ci/child-gauge/2018>.

¹¹ V Reddy et al., eds., *Care in Context: Transnational Gender Perspectives – The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2014), <https://www.hsrcpress.ac.za/books/care-in-context>.

¹² Joan Tronto, *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care*, 1st edition (London: Routledge, 1993), <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/104324/9781003070672/moral-boundaries-joan-tronto>.

¹³ Tronto.

¹⁴ Nic Spaull et al., "NIDS-CRAM Synthesis Report Wave," *Working Paper Series*, 2020, 17.



Focusing on families and the caregiving role

One of the core intuitions of feminist theory has been to argue that what happens in the private sphere of the home has public and political implications, and vice versa. In this report, which aims to unpack the gender dimensions of inequality in South Africa, we have chosen to focus specifically on the roles that women and men play in families – whether their own or others. Because families remain the primary providers of care in society, caring patterns within the home have profound effects on the education, health, and economic participation of their members. In other words, structural gender inequality lands heavily on families, and can also be reproduced there. At the same time, more just, equitable caring relations are central to redressing inequality and furthering human flourishing. Care is central to maintaining, repairing, and ensuring the wellbeing of all who live in our country.

Care is also central to social and economic development and yet the cost of caregiving is largely invisible to policymakers and planners, and unaccounted for in measures of GDP.¹⁵ Because women are more likely to invest higher shares of their income in the wellbeing of their families, and because of their caregiving roles, investing in women's empowerment and increasing their labour force participation is also an investment in the next generation and in today's economy. It is for this reason that care ethics is increasingly being used to speak about and action our moral and political obligation to reduce gender inequality in our homes, communities and socio-political contexts.

"Care is a way of framing political issues that makes their impact and concern with human lives direct and immediate. Within the care framework political issues can make sense and connect to each other. Under these conditions political involvement increases dramatically". Tronto (1993: 177)

By placing care within the family at the centre of experiences of gender injustice and inequality, we also shine a light on intimate, interpersonal relations. While South African households are by no means homogenous, in many we find men and women along with children and older people. High levels of violence, crime and victimisation within families require further examination of where the care and caregiving systems in families have become dysfunctional.

Caring processes also show up the uneven way financial and decision-making powers are spread across families and between men and women. Power at the level of the family influences:

- Who or what is cared about, and how caring needs are met
- Where the resources for care are procured and how they are shared
- What support for care exists and who is responsible for care

This report begins with the foundational policy context. It is meant to provide orientation to where gender inequality sits within the policy environment but we focus much more on the lived experience and reality of gender inequality in this report (rather than stated policy intentions). We then describe how South African families are composed, and how historical and current changes in the political environment have changed family power dynamics. Next, we explore care and caring in South Africa, followed by two sections that focus on women's and men's caregiving roles and responsibilities in their families, respectively. The following section pulls together how this nexus of gender and family contribute to South Africa's high gender-based violence and violence against women and children (VAWC), proposing that care, or the lack thereof, has a material influence on gender-based violence and experiences of masculinity and femininity. We conclude with a section that focuses on pragmatic and achievable recommendations for South Africa as it tries to shift itself to a more gender equal world. Figure 2 shows the structure of this report.

¹⁵Leila Patel et al., "The Gender Dynamics of the Child Support Grant in Doornkop, Soweto," CSDA Research Report (University of Johannesburg: CSDA, 2012), <http://www.childwatch.uio.no/publications/research-reports/gender-dynamics-and-child-support.pdf>.

Figure 2: Structure of report



GENDER-EQUITY POLICY CONTEXT

Given the global impetus to improve gender equity, there are hundreds, if not thousands, of gender-related policies in place from a global, country, funder and local perspective. This section provides a brief overview of the material - global and South African-specific policy environment - which we use to guide our analysis of how South Africa is performing against its own, and the global, gender-equity targets.

Global gender-equality policies

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) stipulates that there can be no discrimination on the basis of gender, including that there should be equality in how men and women are paid for the same job.¹⁶ Although a milestone for the human race, in 1948 there were still many countries (across the high- and low-income spectrum) which did not afford women the right to vote - a most basic of human rights. South Africa was one of the last to introduce full voting rights for all women, which only happened at the dawn of its democracy in 1994.

In 2000, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were introduced, which provided eight goals for which the 189 United Nations (UN) member states would work towards achieving by 2015.¹⁷ Goal 3 was to 'empower women and promote gender equality'. At the end of the MDG period, research found that many low-income countries (LICs) and middle-income countries (MICs) had achieved the goals focused on improving access to education for girls.¹⁸ Women's participation in the labour force (excluding the agricultural economy) also showed growth from 35% in 1990 to 41% in 2015. Furthermore, the proportion of women who were working in vulnerable employment decreased by 13% between 1990 and 2015. Politically, women also saw progress in their representation in parliament/government- but despite a doubling, women still only made up one in five members of government.¹⁹

Despite this progress, there was still more to be done and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) replaced the MDGs from 2016.²⁰ The SDGs timeframe for achievement was 2016-2030, and there are 17 goals - more than double those in the MDGs. Goal 5 is the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all girls and women. There are nine goals under Goal 5, shown in Box 1. We have emboldened the goals to which this report speaks directly.

Box 1: SDG 5: Goals



- 5.1 **End all forms of discrimination** against all women and girls everywhere
- 5.2 **Eliminate all forms of violence** against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation
- 5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation
- 5.4 **Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work** through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate

¹⁶ United Nations General Assembly, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (Paris: United Nations, 1948), <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.

¹⁷ United Nations, "The Millennium Development Goals Report: 2015" (Geneva: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, May 15, 2017), <https://www.mdgmonitor.org/millennium-development-goals/>.

¹⁸ United Nations.

¹⁹ United Nations.

²⁰ "United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda," United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, accessed February 17, 2023, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda-retired/>.

- 5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life
- 5.6 **Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights** as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences
- 5.7 Undertake reforms to give **women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property**, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws
- 5.8 Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women
- 5.9 Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels

Lastly, since 2006, the World Economic Forum (WEF) put indicators in place to measure progress towards closing the gender gap (Figure 3).²¹ This index tracks global progress towards gender equity and is the longest-standing of its kind. The indicators are tracked annually, and the latest report (July 2022) states that at the current pace of change, it will take another 132 years to reach gender parity.²² The top 10 countries with the best performance feature two sub-Saharan African countries – Rwanda, an LIC at sixth place, and Namibia, an upper middle-income country (UMIC), in eighth place. This provides evidence that a country's economic status should not be an inhibitor for progress on gender.

Figure 3: World Economic Forum gender gap indicators



Source: World Economic Forum²³

²¹ World Economic Forum, "Global Gender Gap Report: 2022," Insight Report (Geneva: World Economic Forum, July 2022), https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2022.pdf.

²² World Economic Forum.

²³ World Economic Forum.



South African gender-equality policy

South Africa subscribes to the above WEF global policies, and as such has created local policies to support implementation and achievement of the policy goals.

South Africa's own constitution upholds the right to equality for all persons, irrespective of gender, race, religion or sexual orientation. This has created a human-rights-based legal system that is able to redress and act on gender inequality in the country.

In 2020, the National Strategic Plan (NSP) on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide was launched. In the foreword by President Cyril Ramaphosa, it states that South Africa is one of the most dangerous places in the world to be as a woman.²⁴ This was further exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, with both services for those affected by GBV curtailed by the lockdown restrictions and an increase in GBV incidents as a result of the 'stay-in-place' orders that kept women in unsafe homes.²⁵

The NSP mentions a long list of national policies that are all related to gender equality in some way²⁶:

National Development Plan (NDP) Vision 2030; National Gender Policy Framework; National Sexual Assault Policy (Department of Health); National Contraception Policy; Guidelines Within a Reproductive Health Framework Strategy (2001); White Paper on Population Policy 1998; A Comprehensive Primary Health Care Package for South Africa (2001); National Youth Policy; National Strategic Plan for HIV, STIs and TB for South Africa (2012-2016); White Paper on Social Welfare Services; Strategy for the Engagement of Men and Boys in Prevention of Gender-Based Violence (2009); Department of Social Development, Policy on Funding Non-Governmental Organisations for the Provision of Welfare and Community Development Services (2013); White Paper on Families in South Africa (2012); Social Development Guidelines on Services for Victims of Domestic Violence (2010); Guidelines on Services for Victims of Sexual Offences (2010); Integrated Social Crime Prevention Strategy (ISCPS): White Paper on Safety and Security (WPSS, 2016).

Without going into each one, it is clear that gender has been top of South Africa's agenda, and at the same time, progress has been undeniably slow. The sheer number of policies, now culminating in the 2020 NSP showcase South Africa's ability to write excellent policy, while simultaneously being unable to implement or execute these policies effectively.

Therefore, as we delve into the literature, we are mindful of the strong legal and policy environment in South Africa and how that might be leveraged to effect change – it is the 'wicked problem' South Africa has been struggling with for decades.

²⁴ South African Government, "National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence & Femicide."

²⁵ Kate Power, "The COVID-19 Pandemic Has Increased the Care Burden of Women and Families," *Sustainability: Science, Practice and Policy* 17, no. S1 (December 31, 2020): 67–73, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15487733.2020.1776561>.

²⁶ South African Government, "National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence & Femicide."

SOUTH AFRICAN FAMILIES

In this section, we outline some of the major trends in the composition and functioning of South African families. The intention of this section is to orient the reader to how the nature of families has changed, providing some background to how gender norms are seeded within the family.

At their best and with sufficient support, families can be adaptive, responding to changing needs and finding creative ways to best care for their members. Under enduring and prolonged conditions of hardship, and without sufficient support, the positive caregiving functions of families can be eroded, showing up care deficits in the form of malnourishment, violence, and entrenched inequalities. Families are also ideological spaces in which there is contestation and negotiation around gender and age hierarchies, roles and responsibilities, social and cultural norms and practices that inform ideas about marriage and procreation.

Families are a primary means of socialising youth into what is 'right' and 'acceptable' - and for the purposes of this report, are a key site where gender-related norms are learned. Therefore, **where families are the main providers of care, they should be the key target of gender-related interventions.**

Family composition

In South Africa, families do not always live in the same household. The definition of families offered in the revised White Paper on Families is inclusive of multiple family forms and defines a family as: “a societal group that is related by blood (kinship); adoption; foster care; or the ties of marriage (civil, customary or religious), civil union or cohabitation; and goes beyond a particular physical residence”.²⁷ Families are not homogenous, nor are they necessarily ‘nuclear’. This is particularly true in South Africa, with its history of forced migration, which meant that families were spread across diverse geographical areas. The disruption of family life has been identified as the most enduring consequence of colonial and apartheid policies and strategies.²⁸ As such, movement to and from urban areas has continued post-apartheid, both for labour migration and job-seeking, with grandparents (mostly grandmothers) remaining important sources of childcare support for working-age adults. A third of South African households are extended beyond biological parents and their children (the so-called nuclear family) and might include aunts, uncles, cousins, in-laws and grandparents.²⁹ Table 1 shows the variety of household types in which children reside. Distinct racial patterns make clear the legacy of apartheid on family and household dynamics. Nuclear families are most common among White and Indian/Asian families. African and Coloured children are more likely to reside in extended households.

²⁷ Department of Social Development, “Revised White Paper on Families in South Africa,” 2021.

²⁸ Debbie Budlender and Francie Lund, “South Africa: A Legacy of Family Disruption,” *Development and Change* 42, no. 4 (2011): 925–46.

²⁹ Statistics South Africa, “General Household Survey: 2021.”



Table 1: Household types with children³⁰

Household type	Share of all children	African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White
Nuclear (spouse/partner couple with their own children and no other members)	25%	21%	27%	61%	67%
Lone parent (single parent with own children and no other members)	10%	11%	6%	3%	6%
Extended (not nuclear or lone parent, but all members are related)	62%	66%	50%	35%	23%
Composite (not nuclear or lone parent, and some members are not related)	2%	2%	7%	1%	4%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Hall and Posel (2019)

The role of labour migration in family composition

Under apartheid legislation, access to White urban areas was restricted for Black South Africans who were instead removed to 'reserves' or apartheid 'homelands', which functioned as labour reservoirs for the White-ruled state. Apartheid laws limiting Black mobility and related flows of migrant workers and job-seekers, have contributed to a long history of separation between parents and their children, producing many severed and stretched households across South Africa.³¹

Black men travelled from the country's 'homelands' to work in urban areas and were mandated to leave their families behind.³² These migrant men were not only wage labourers for a racist capitalist system; they were also often patriarchs and proprietors of rural homesteads, and involved, through remittances and trips home, in maintaining rural homes in partnership with wives and relatives.³³

Political turbulence and high rates of mobility affected women as well, with many moving between rural areas where pre-existing gender norms meant women were solely responsible for childrearing,³⁴ to urban areas in search of remittances, where laws prevented them from settling.³⁵

³⁰ Hall and Posel, "Fragmenting the Family? The Complexity of Household Migration Strategies in Post-Apartheid South Africa."

³¹ R Bray, "Predicting the Social Consequences of Orphanhood in South Africa," *African Journal of AIDS Research* 2, no. 1 (2003): 39–55; P Henderson, "AIDS, Metaphor and Ritual: The Crafting of Care in Rural South African Childhoods," *Childhood* 20, no. 1 (2012): 9–12.

³² L Richter and R Morrel, *Baba: Men and Fatherhood in South Africa* (Human Sciences Research Council, 2006).

³³ TD Moodie and V Ndashe, *Going for Gold: Men, Mines, and Migration*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

³⁴ Richter and Morrel, *Baba: Men and Fatherhood in South Africa*.

³⁵ Deborah Posel, "State, Power and Gender: Conflict over the Registration of African Customary Marriage in South Africa c. 1910–1970," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 8, no. 3 (1995): 223–56, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6443.1995.tb00088.x>.

In the post-apartheid period, women-centred homes have been further entrenched.³⁶ This has put survival of households with children under threat, given that women-headed homes tend to be more impoverished (see Figure 5). Poverty and hardships are disproportionately spread across geographical areas: there are more female headed-households, who are most vulnerable to poverty, located in rural areas. Large-scale migration to urban areas in search of work has forced mothers to separate from their children. Grandmothers have become the primary caregivers for children remaining in rural areas.³⁷ These mothers were often employed (formally or informally) in domestic service, looking after other people's homes and children.³⁸ This further cemented the perception of women as carers.

Culture, tradition and changes in marriage trends and women-headed households

In many south African cultures and customs, cultural norms and practices require the payment of 'lobola' (or a 'bride price') to get married.³⁹ The practice entails the giving of gifts (usually money or livestock) by the groom's family to the parents of a bride-to-be.⁴⁰ Lobola has been thought of as a way to ensure patrilineal (fatherly) ties and allow formal recognition and provision of intergenerational care and support.

It is worthwhile to mention that the concept of lobola has come under criticism.⁴¹ Many scholars have questioned its relationship to gender-based violence because of its (incorrect) perception as an exchange of 'ownership' of a woman, from her family to her husband.⁴² This misinterpretation of having 'paid for' ownership has led to men believing they may do as they please to that which they own.⁴³ Even more worrying is the normalisation of abuse during marriage by women themselves who believe it acceptable for a man to beat his wife if he has paid lobola.⁴⁴

The reality of South Africa's unemployment rate, coupled with the financial implications of lobola (where it is more recently being commercialised resulting in higher associated costs)⁴⁵ has contributed to the sharp decline in marriage (Figure 4).⁴⁶ However, this trend is not entirely new, and as early as the late 1930s, marriage rates in urban Black communities had started to decline in South Africa.⁴⁷

Without the formal process of marriage and/or lobola, the responsibility for caregiving and providing for children often fall to women (who become de facto single parents). This has contributed to the high number of women-headed households (WHH) in South Africa.⁴⁸

³⁶ C Walker, "Conceptualising Motherhood in Twentieth Century South Africa," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21, no. 3 (1995): 414–37.

³⁷ Elena Moore, "Transmission and Change in South African Motherhood: Black Mothers in Three-Generational Cape Town Families," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 39, no. 1 (March 1, 2013): 151–70, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070.2013.76471>

³⁸ International Labour Organization, "Rural-Urban Migrants Employed in Domestic Work: Issues and Challenges" (Briefing note 5, Tanzania, May 2013), https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---africa/---ro-abidjan/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_214732.pdf.

³⁹ Christie Sennott, Sangeetha Madhavan, and Youngeun Nam, "Modernizing Marriage: Balancing the Benefits and Liabilities of Bridewealth in Rural South Africa," *Qualitative Sociology* 44, no. 1 (March 1, 2021): 55–75, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-020-09457-w>.

⁴⁰ The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, "Gender Based Violence in South Africa - A Brief Review" (CSVR, April 2016), <https://www.csvr.org.za/pdf/Gender%20Based%20Violence%20in%20South%20Africa%20-%20A%20Brief%20Review.pdf>.

⁴¹ John Chitakure, "Bride Wealth in Southern Africa: Origin, Functions, Rights, and Gender-Based Violence," in *Lobola (Bridewealth) in Contemporary Southern Africa: Implications for Gender Equality*, ed. Lovemore Togarasei and Ezra Chitando (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021), 45–62, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-59523-4_4.

⁴² Malesela Edward Montle and Heritage Moleke, "Exploring the Commercialisation of Lobola in South Africa," *Journal of Archaeology of Egypt / Egyptology* 18, no. 17 (October 20, 2021): 587–606; Sennott, Madhavan, and Nam, "Modernizing Marriage."

⁴³ Chitakure, "Bride Wealth in Southern Africa."

⁴⁴ The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, "Gender Based Violence in South Africa - A Brief Review.Pdf."

⁴⁵ Montle and Moleke, "Exploring the Commercialisation of Lobola in South Africa."

⁴⁶ J Ferguson, "Declarations of Dependence: Labour, Personhood and Welfare in Southern Africa," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19, no. 2 (2013): 223–42.

⁴⁷ Posel, "State, Power and Gender."

⁴⁸ Chijioke Nwosu and Catherine Ndinda, "Female Household Headship and Poverty in South Africa: An Employment-Based Analysis," Working paper (Economic Research South Africa, August 1, 2018).



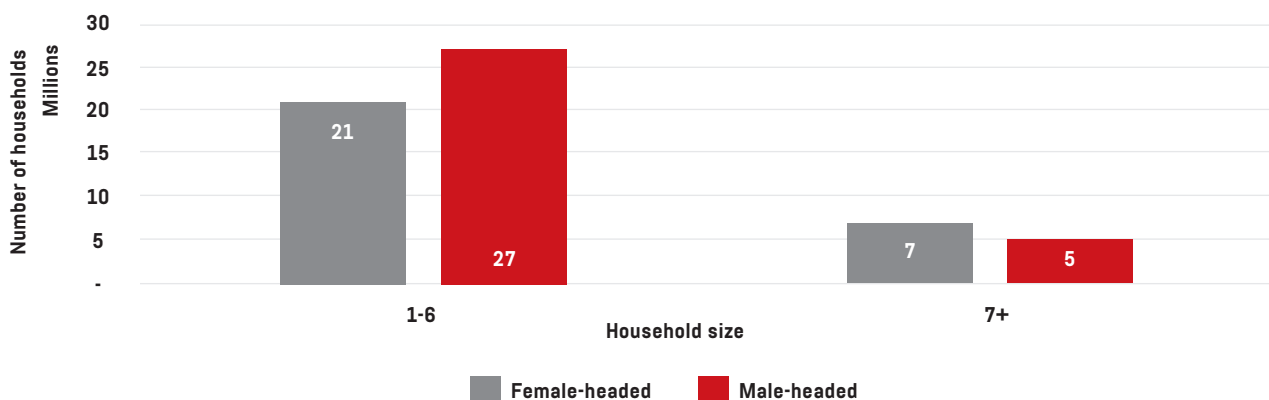
Figure 4: Number of civil marriages by year 2011-2020⁴⁹



Source: Marriages and divorces (2020). Statistics South Africa

The rate of WHH has been increasing since 1995.⁵⁰ WHH in South Africa have been shown to be more impoverished than male-headed households (MHH),⁵¹ with some statistics showing that WHH are up to 40% more impoverished than their male-headed counterparts.⁵² This is related to two main factors: firstly WHH often have more dependents, requiring whatever income there is to go further (Figure 6).⁵³ MHH are in the majority for household sizes of one to six people, but if the household size is greater than six, it is more likely to be women-headed.⁵⁴ Secondly, in WHH, women tend to be the only source of income – creating an imbalance between income and expenditure.

Figure 5: Household head by household size



Source: Own analysis of StatsSA General Household Survey 2021 data

⁴⁹ Statistics South Africa, "Marriages and Divorce," Statistical release (Pretoria: Statistics South Africa, 2020).

⁵⁰ Nwosu and Ndinda, "Female Household Headship and Poverty in South Africa."

⁵¹ Nwosu and Ndinda.

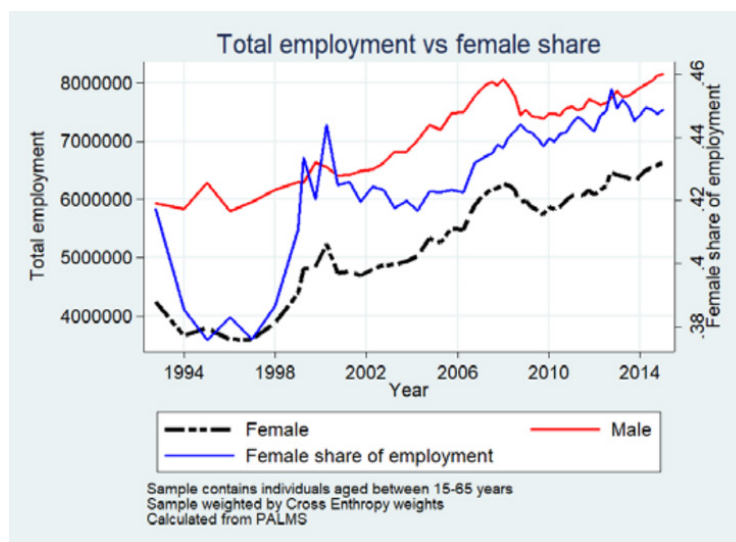
⁵² Nikayla Naidu, "Resonance FM: Poverty and the Dire State of Women in South Africa," SPII, September 10, 2021, <https://spii.org.za/poverty-and-the-dire-state-of-women-in-south-africa/>.

⁵³ Nwosu and Ndinda, "Female Household Headship and Poverty in South Africa."

⁵⁴ Statistics South Africa, "General Household Survey: 2021."

As women have become more responsible for financial provision due to this decline in marriage and increased dependents, their entry into the labour force has begun to climb. Figure 7 shows how the decline in marriage rate from 2011 dovetails with the increasing share of women as a proportion of the labour force in South Africa and how, between 1995-2015, the number of employed women continued to rise.⁵⁵

Figure 6: Women's employment in post-apartheid South Africa (total and as a share of total)⁵⁶



Source: Msomi (2019). "Distributional changes in the gender wage gap in the post-apartheid South African labour market"

However, unemployment across genders remains unacceptably high in South Africa. Despite this, the unemployed have – until very recently – received almost no support, from the Government nor private schemes.

Social grants as a major source of household income

The final trend related to the composition and dynamics within families relates to the introduction and expansion of South Africa's social grant system. Half of South African households depend primarily on their social grant-recipients.⁵⁷ Whether it be the older person's grant (because women live longer) or child support grant (because of women's caregiving responsibilities), women tend to be the primary grant beneficiaries.⁵⁸ The post-apartheid shift in household income, away from migrant remittances towards social grants, has translated into a shift in many South African homes, in which women – as recipients of child support grants and pensions⁵⁹ – are increasingly central to domestic economies.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Jacqueline Mosomi, "Distributional Changes in the Gender Wage Gap in the Post-Apartheid South African Labour Market" (UNU-WIDER, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.35188/UNU-WIDER/2019/651-7>.

⁵⁶ Mosomi.

⁵⁷ Statistics South Africa, "General Household Survey: 2021."

⁵⁸ Kate Ambler, "Bargaining with Grandma: The Impact of the South African Pension on Household Decision-Making," *Journal of Human Resources* 51, no. 4 (October 2, 2016): 900–932, <https://doi.org/10.3368/jhr.51.4.0314-6265R1>.

⁵⁹ Patel et al., "The Gender Dynamics of the Child Support Grant in Doornkop, Soweto."

⁶⁰ L Bank, "Living Together, Moving Apart: Home-Made Agendas, Identity Politics and Urban-Rural Linkages in the Eastern Cape, South Africa," *African Studies* 19, no. 1 (2001).



In some households, grandmothers have replaced wage-earning men as economic lynchpins. These 'granny-focal' domestic arrangements are further necessitated by a frequently missing middle generation, some of whom have been lost to AIDS and others to the perpetual search for work in cities and neighbouring countries.⁶¹ **In South Africa, nearly 5% of homes are skip-generation homes, where grandparents (and mostly grandmothers) care for grandchildren.**

The South African social grants system has supported women in their care for families but has further entrenched gendered norms that associate women with care.⁶² While elderly women receiving the older person's grant have some 'bargaining power',⁶³ there are also strong intergenerational tensions in families with young under or unemployed persons which keep these women, whether as mothers or grandmothers, in a subservient role.⁶⁴

In Bangladesh, an LMIC, studies conducted on farmworkers have shown that women with a higher education status or who brought in higher income had more decision-making power.⁶⁵ However, in South Africa, where the increased income is coming from grants rather than educational attainment or gainful employment, these same changes in decision-making power are not evident. In South Africa, women's primary grant status coupled with advances in women's socio-economic, political representation and educational status have not impacted entrenched gender norms or high rates of gender-based violence in ways one might have expected.⁶⁶ Part of this story, relates to the caregiver roles women have been thrust into, and that men in particular, have sought to maintain.

This combination of declining marriage rates, rising unemployment and mass distribution of social grants, have meant that men are increasingly peripheral to the South African family.⁶⁷

⁶¹ E Schatz and C Ogunmefun, "Caring and Contributing: The Role of Older Women in Rural South African Multi-Generational Households in the HIV/AIDS Era," *World Development* 35, no. 8 (2007): 1390–1403.

⁶² Kirsty Button and Thobani Ncapai, "Conflict and Negotiation in Intergenerational Care: Older Women's Experiences of Caring with the Old Age Grant in South Africa," *Critical Social Policy* 39, no. 4 (November 1, 2019): 560–81, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018319867594>.

⁶³ Ambler, "Bargaining with Grandma."

⁶⁴ Button and Ncapai, "Conflict and Negotiation in Intergenerational Care."

⁶⁵ P. K. Roy et al., "Contribution of Women to Household Income and Decision Making in Some Selected Areas of Mymensingh in Bangladesh," *Progressive Agriculture* 28, no. 2 (August 9, 2017): 120–29, <https://doi.org/10.3329/pa.v28i2.33473>.

⁶⁶ Sarah Mosoetsa, *Eating from One Pot: The Dynamics of Survival in Poor South African Households* (Wits University Press, 2011), <https://doi.org/10.18772/12011045331>. *The Dynamics of Survival in Poor South African Households*. Wits University Press, 2011. <https://doi.org/10.18772/12011045331>.

⁶⁷ H White, "A Post-Fordist Ethnicity: Insecurity, Authority, and Identity in South Africa," *Anthropological Quarterly* 85, no. 2 (2012): 397–427.

WOMEN AS CAREGIVERS AND CARE RECEIVERS

In this section, we unpack women's caregiving roles in families. The systemic undervaluing of caregiving (whether paid or unpaid) is a global phenomenon, and the impact is seen in employment opportunities and associated pay.

The position of women as caregivers who do the physical labour of caring – including washing, dressing, lifting, carrying, feeding – and the emotional labour of caring about and taking care of others, has commanded the most attention.⁶⁸ The road to becoming a caregiver within the family often starts in girlhood, where girls are more likely to be asked to assist their mothers or female relatives with household tasks, even if that requires missing or dropping out of school.⁶⁹

Unpaid care work and its relationship to gainful employment

Unpaid care work refers to all unpaid services provided within a household for its members, including care of persons, housework, and voluntary community work.⁷⁰ These activities are considered work, because theoretically one could pay a third person to perform them. Care work (whether paid or unpaid) has been shown to improve wellbeing and contribute to economic growth in a country.⁷¹ The answer is not to rid the world of unpaid care work but rather to democratise responsibility for it; unpaid work plays an instrumental role in family wellbeing and social and economic development.⁷² It is sometimes termed 'social reproduction' because this care has such a profound impact on emotional, psychosocial and cognitive development of the population.⁷³

Globally, research has shown that women are responsible for 2-10 times more unpaid care work than men.⁷⁴ This has been given as a primary driver for women's suboptimal access to, and participation in, the labour force.⁷⁵ It is most often referred to as the 'care economy', but some also refer to it as the 'core economy' or the 'reproductive economy'. Whichever name, the purpose is to illustrate that whether this work is unpaid or not, it is still work.⁷⁶

Despite this unpaid care work burden, there have been significant gains in growing women's education and labour participation since the early 1990s. But, women continue to fare worse than men in the South African labour market. Figure 7 shows the employment absorption rate by gender, which represents the number of people employed divided by the total population. It is a good measure because it shows movement in the labour market adjusted for population growth. **Female employment absorption is consistently 10% lower than male employment absorption.** Not only this, but in periods of negative economic shocks, females are more likely to lose jobs than males. Female employment decreased 14.7% in Wave 1 (April-June 2020) of Covid-19 compared to a 12.7% decrease for males.⁷⁷

⁶⁸ Tronto, *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care*.

⁶⁹ Akanksha A. Marphatia and Rachel Moussié, "A Question of Gender Justice: Exploring the Linkages between Women's Unpaid Care Work, Education, and Gender Equality," *International Journal of Educational Development*, Gender Justice, Education and International Development: Theory, Policy and Practice, 33, no. 6 (November 1, 2013): 585–94, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijeducdev.2013.05.005>; Nwosu and Ndinda, "Female Household Headship and Poverty in South Africa."

⁷⁰ Diane Elson, "Recognize, Reduce, and Redistribute Unpaid Care Work: How to Close the Gender Gap," *New Labor Forum* 26, no. 2 (May 1, 2017): 52–61, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1095796017700135>.

⁷¹ UNRISD, "Why Care Matters for Social Development," Policy brief, UNRISD Research and Policy Brief (UNRISD), accessed February 8, 2023, <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/113201/RPB9e.pdf>.

⁷² Joseph E. Stiglitz, Amartya Sen, and Jean-Paul Fitoussi, "Report by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress," n.d., <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/8131721/8131772/Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi-Commission-report.pdf>.

⁷³ Marphatia and Moussié, "A Question of Gender Justice."

⁷⁴ Gaëlle Ferrant, Luca Maria Pesando, and Keiko Nowacka, "Unpaid Care Work: The Missing Link in the Analysis of Gender Gaps in Labour Outcomes," Issue Paper (OECD Development, December 2014), https://www.fearlessgirl.us/wp-content/uploads/Unpaid_care_work.pdf.

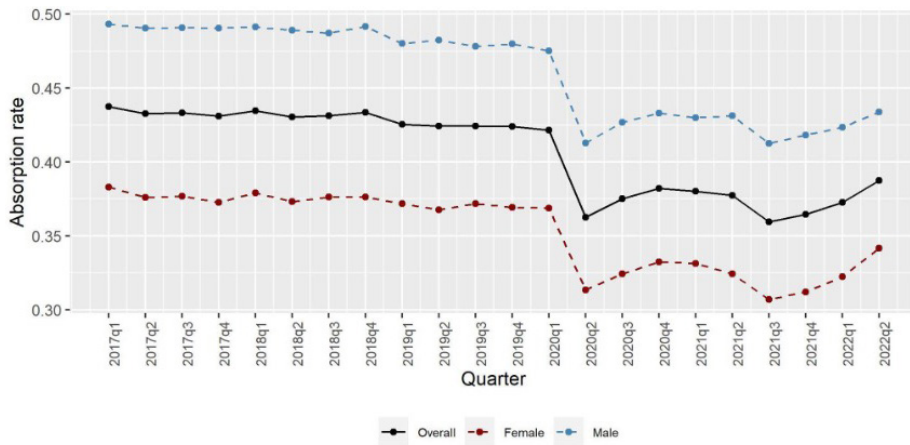
⁷⁵ Gaëlle Ferrant, Luca Maria Pesando, and Keiko Nowacka.

⁷⁶ Power, "The COVID-19 Pandemic Has Increased the Care Burden of Women and Families."

⁷⁷ Statistics South Africa, "Quarterly Labour Force Survey 2022 Q2," 2022, <https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0211/P02112ndQuarter2022.pdf>.



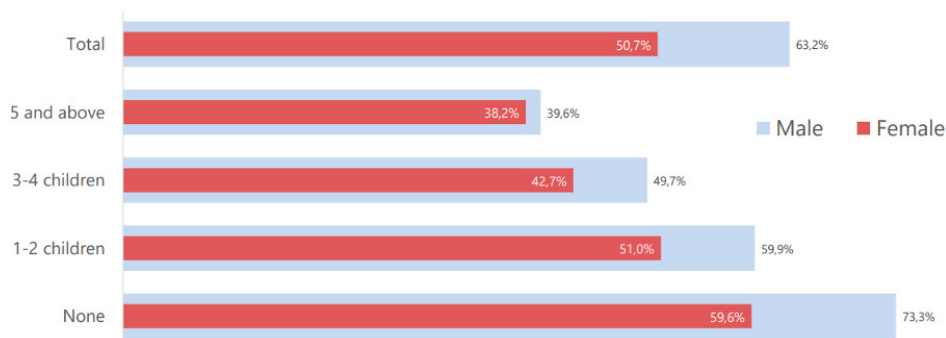
Figure 7: Employment absorption by gender



Source: Own analysis of StatsSA QLFS data 2017 Q1-2022 Q2

This can be partially explained by maternity, domestic, and childcare responsibilities (i.e. unpaid care work) forcing women to opt out of the workforce. For example, several American studies showed that there was an inverse relationship between the care economy and labour workforce participation for women (i.e. if women were performing unpaid care work, they were less likely to be in the paid economy), but this did not hold true for men. Looking at the South African case, we see in Figure 8 that labour force participation decreases as the number of children in the household increases. It also shows the disproportionate burden of childcare carried by women compared to men.

Figure 8: Labour force participation rate by sex and presence of children 2022⁷⁸



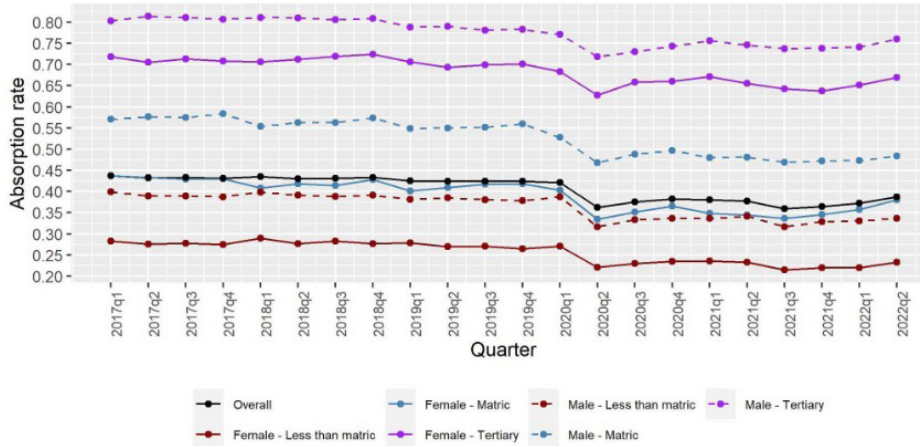
Source: Statistics South Africa (2022)

This effect is despite women being more educationally qualified than men. In the second quarter of 2022, 13.2% of women had tertiary qualifications compared to 11.2% of men, and 46.7% had completed secondary education compared to 43.5%.⁷⁹ Yet despite being more qualified, women fare worse than men in the labour market as shown by the persistent gaps in absorption rate between genders even when accounting for education status (Figure 9).

⁷⁸ Risenga Maluleke, "Gender Series Volume IX: Women Empowerment, 2017-2022" (Pretoria, 2022), https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/Report-03-10-26/WE_Gender%20Presentation%2018-10_22_%20Final%20for%20SG%20.pdf.

⁷⁹ Statistics South Africa, "Quarterly Labour Force Survey 2022 Q2."

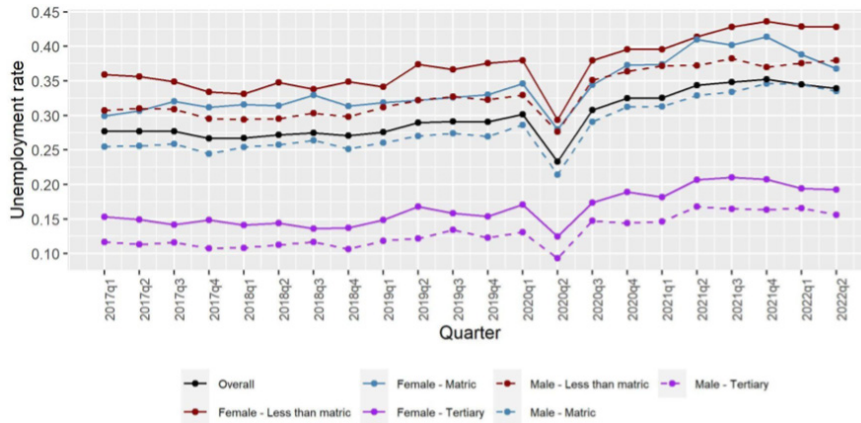
Figure 9: Employment absorption by gender and education status



Source: Own analysis of StatsSA QLFS data 2017 Q1-2022 Q2

While these effects are certainly present, even for women who opt into the workforce and are actively seeking work, women experience worse employment outcomes than men with the same qualification.⁸⁰ **This is evidenced in Figure 10 where the rate of unemployment by gender and education status on a quarterly basis is more pronounced in women, showing the precarity of the work women are more likely to be employed in.**

Figure 10: Unemployment rate by gender and education status



Source: Own analysis of StatsSA QLFS data 2017 Q1-2022 Q2

⁸⁰ Statistics South Africa.



The type of paid work performed by women

Women are not only less likely to be employed than men, they are also concentrated in low-skilled and less secure positions.⁸¹ Drawing on 2012-2019 data, South African research suggests that women earn between 18% and 23% less than men, controlling for key explanatory factors such as age, experience, province, occupation, education level, degree of employment formality, type of contract and employer type, and accounting for maternity leave.⁸² **The gender pay gap is estimated to have widened from 29% before March 2020 to 43% in June 2020.**⁸³ This gap is largely constant across incomes but widened substantially for quintiles one and two during the early months of the pandemic. This could potentially be explained by the higher burden of childcare for women, resulting in fewer working hours than for men.

Gender norms link ideas of womanhood to caregiving and hence, women are disproportionately represented in caring professions in the labour market, which continue to be poorly paid. This is exacerbated by the concentration of women in informal, precarious labour, that often demands limited formal qualifications and, as such, presents limited opportunity for social and economic mobility. Women are only overrepresented in two industries: private households, and community social and personal services (Figure 11).⁸⁴ On the other hand, men are overrepresented in occupations such as mining, transport, and construction that often require extensive periods of absence from family life.

Figure 11: Gender representations by industry



Source: Own analysis of StatsSA General Household Survey 2021 data

⁸¹ Statistics South Africa.

⁸² Statistics South Africa.

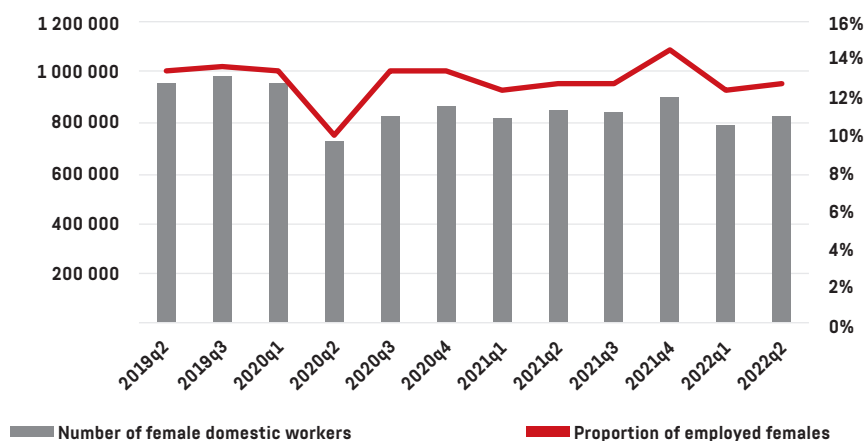
⁸³ Statistics South Africa, "Media Release QLFS Q4 2022," accessed March 11, 2023, <https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0211/Media%20release%20QLFS%20Q4%202022.pdf>.

⁸⁴ Statistics South Africa, "General Household Survey: 2021."

One of the more researched areas is on domestic workers, who often perform more than just cleaning roles. They are surrogate parents and carers to unwell children or adults in the home. The fairly recent shift has been to talk about decent work and a living wage, recognising that this work done by domestic workers supports the broader economy in a range of direct and indirect ways.⁸⁵ By remunerating this work better, it also supports the acknowledgement of the unpaid care economy as valuable and economically important.

As seen in Figure 12, female domestic workers account for almost one million jobs and approximately one in seven employed women is a domestic worker.⁸⁶

Figure 12: Female domestic workers in South Africa



Source: Own analysis of StatsSA QLFS data 2017 Q1-2022 Q2

The mental, physical, and emotional toll of unpaid care work amid paid work

In discussions of the unequal, gendered distribution of caregiving, the additional burdens and occupational stresses endured by women is often emphasised.⁸⁷ The disproportionate expectation placed on women to conduct unpaid care work has been shown to have a negative impact on mental health and quality of life, evidenced through measuring cortisol (the primary stress hormone) levels.⁸⁸ The socioeconomic position of carers has warranted particular attention, with numerous authors citing the compounding pressures falling on poor women, who are often not only caregivers in their own homes, but in the homes of others too.⁸⁹ Research has shown that women suffer emotional, physical and financial burdens as a consequence of caregiving. Carers endure stress and stigma, poor health, a crippling lack of support, and desperate poverty.

⁸⁵ Maybud, Susan, "Women and the Future of Work – Taking Care of the Caregivers," Gender, Equality and Diversity Branch (International Labour Organization, 2015), http://oit.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms_351297.pdf.

⁸⁶ Statistics South Africa, "Quarterly Labour Force Survey 2022 Q2."

⁸⁷ Elson, "Recognize, Reduce, and Redistribute Unpaid Care Work"; Gaëlle Ferrant, Luca Maria Pesando, and Keiko Nowacka, "Unpaid Care Work: The Missing Link in the Analysis of Gender Gaps in Labour Outcomes."

⁸⁸ Soraya Seedat and Marta Rondon, "Women's Wellbeing and the Burden of Unpaid Work," *BMJ* 374 (August 31, 2021): n1972, <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n1972>.

⁸⁹ Marphatia and Moussié, "A Question of Gender Justice."



Gender norms are inherent to the reason women are unable to access the labour market; it is women's caring labour that goes unpaid and unrecognised that hinders women's economic participation.⁹⁰ Termed 'the second shift' (and more recently 'the third shift') women's unpaid care labour is performed in addition to their paid labour, often taking place outside employment hours on week days and weekends.⁹¹ The care work itself, and the expectation that this will be fulfilled by women, prevents them from working as long hours, or taking full-time roles, often in such a way that supports men to do exactly that which illustrates that unpaid care work is critical to family flourishing.⁹² Because the caregiving burden is large, to achieve gender justice it must be shared. However, the paid labour market often rewards those who negate their caregiving responsibilities, hindering equal distribution.⁹³

The Covid-19 pandemic has offered an opportunity to again bring to the light the disparities in expectations. Research shows that it was women who bore the brunt of childcare and job losses, during the lockdowns.⁹⁴ Despite faring worse in the labour market, women were less likely than men to benefit from the Covid-19 Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant or the Temporary Employee Relief Scheme (TERS), designed as a safety net for unemployed and furloughed workers.⁹⁵ Far more women than men in the NIDS-CRAM surveys cited childcare responsibilities as a barrier to participating in the labour market.⁹⁶

There is urgent pressure from global bodies such as the United Nations for immediate action to prevent the fall-out from unequal caregiving responsibilities from becoming embedded, 'post-pandemic'.⁹⁷ A common solution presented to the issue of invisible care work is for this work to be made visible in a way that shows the direct link between unpaid care work and a growing economy.⁹⁸ However, there are no countries in the world where this has been implemented, highlighting both the difficulties of measuring and quantifying this labour, but also the degree to which care and the labour it entails is part and parcel of human flourishing.

⁹⁰ Nancy Fraser, "Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition, Participation" (SSOAR, 1998), <https://nbnresolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-126247>.

⁹¹ Arlie Hochschild and Anne Machung, *The Second Shift: Working Families and the Revolution at Home* (Penguin, 2012).

⁹² Elson, "Recognize, Reduce, and Redistribute Unpaid Care Work."

⁹³ Mandy Long, "Gender Justice and Fraser's Universal Caregiver." (Georgia State University, 2016), https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1188&context=philosophy_theses; Nancy Fraser, "Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition, Participation."

⁹⁴ Power, "The COVID-19 Pandemic Has Increased the Care Burden of Women and Families"; Seedat and Rondon, "Women's Wellbeing and the Burden of Unpaid Work."

⁹⁵ N. Spaul et al., "Synthesis Report Wave 5" (NIDS-CRAM, 2021), <https://cramsurvey.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/1.-Spaul-N.-Daniels-R.-C-et-al.-2021-NIDS-CRAM-Wave-5-Synthesis-Report.pdf>.

⁹⁶ Spaul et al., "NIDS-CRAM Synthesis Report Wave."

⁹⁷ UN United Nations Women, "COVID-19 and the Care Economy: Immediate Action and Structural Transformation for a Gender-Responsive Recovery," July 30, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.18356/3bd8b996-en>.

⁹⁸ Rania Antonopoulos, "The Unpaid Care Work-Paid Work Connection," SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY, July 25, 2008), <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1176661>.

MEN AS CAREGIVERS AND CARE RECEIVERS

In this section, we unpack disputes around men's caregiving roles in families and employment. Can men care? We also discuss the way an undermining of care affects men's work opportunities, gender stereotypes and family-life.

Gender is relational, and care is relational, meaning that women's strong association with caring is inversely related to men's association with care. In times of crisis, for example during the HIV/Aids epidemic and Covid-19 pandemic, men's relationship to caregiving and care receiving changed. Men's willingness to engage in care work could be parcelled with broader movements to increase the value and visibility of care that could in turn, potentially improve the status of women and feminised care work. However, there must be a simultaneous willingness to address the link between gender and care so that binary positions are not merely repackaged, as the 'glass escalator' for men and 'glass ceiling' for women examples illustrate poignantly below and in Figure 13.

Men's employment in the care sector

The gendering of care work means that where men do participate in paid care work, they are more likely to do higher-order care; the work of 'caring about' and 'taking care of', as opposed to caregiving and care receiving (see Figure 1).⁹⁹ This more abstract talking about and planning for care is associated with men as a socially determined rather than biologically determined construction of masculinity that aligns to gendered notions of power, strength, and male breadwinning status.¹⁰⁰

Few men work in the care professions as nurses, counsellors and therapists, nannies, or social workers, where women are overrepresented (Figure 11). However, the international literature shows that in cases where they do, **they earn more than women, and are often promoted at a faster pace and placed more frequently in senior and managerial roles - a phenomenon known as the 'glass escalator'**.¹⁰¹ Figure 13 presents this phenomenon graphically showing **the upward job mobility of men in industries and roles traditionally dominated by women**. In theory, increasing the number of men in industries and professions traditionally dominated by women should be a tool to reduce inequality. However, when men enter these fields, they are often promoted significantly faster than women. Rather than reducing gender inequality, it increases it.¹⁰² **This is because the structural inequalities that favour men are merely reproduced and not transformed through men's role in caring professions.** Thus, while women are understood to reach a 'glass ceiling' that prevents their upward job mobility, where the opposite phenomenon is associated with men's employment in fields traditionally dominated by women, it is the unequal basis of the gender order that promotes men at a faster rate than women. Masculine identities or the norms associated with what it means to be a man are at stake when men participate in feminised work, so despite their structural advantage, few men enter these professions.¹⁰³

⁹⁹Tronto, *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care*.

¹⁰⁰Ana Jordan, "Masculinizing Care? Gender, Ethics of Care, and Fathers' Rights Groups," *Men and Masculinities* 23, no. 1 (April 1, 2020): 20–41, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X18776364>.

¹⁰¹MJanette S. Dill, Kim Price-Glynn, and Carter Rakovski, "Does the 'Glass Escalator' Compensate for the Devaluation of Care Work Occupations?: The Careers of Men in Low- and Middle-Skill Health Care Jobs," *Gender & Society* 30, no. 2 (April 1, 2016): 334–60, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243215624656>.

¹⁰²Mia Hultin, "Some Take the Glass Escalator, Some Hit the Glass Ceiling?: Career Consequences of Occupational Sex Segregation," *Work and Occupations* 30, no. 1 (February 1, 2003): 30–61, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0730888402239326>.

¹⁰³ Jordan, "Masculinizing Care?"



Figure 13: Infographic of the 'glass escalator' in men's occupation of female caring jobs



Information Source: Hultin, Mia. "Some take the glass escalator, some hit the glass ceiling? Career consequences of occupational sex segregation." *Work and occupations* 30.1 (2003): 30-61.

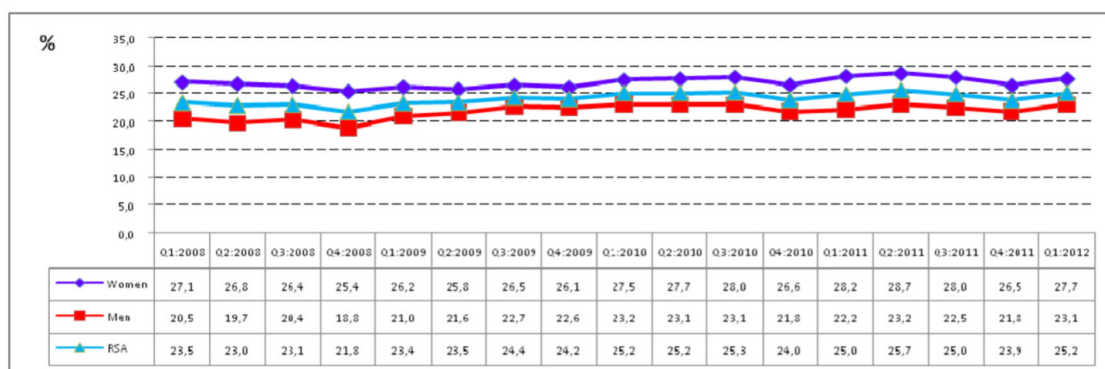
Source: Own representation based on Hultin (2003)

Loss of 'breadwinner' status

Earlier, we described a new domestic terrain in South Africa: the role of adult men in domestic life has declined and marriage has rapidly disintegrated. Under apartheid migrant labour, absent men were still able to appropriate women-headed households under their name through the circulation of bride wealth.¹⁰⁴ The more recent decline of wage labour has meant that many men can no longer afford bride price, nor can they contribute wages to build the family homestead. As a result, many men no longer have access to the means they had historically, to be incorporated into such kinship arrangements.

¹⁰⁴ White, "A Post-Fordist Ethnicity: Insecurity, Authority, and Identity in South Africa."

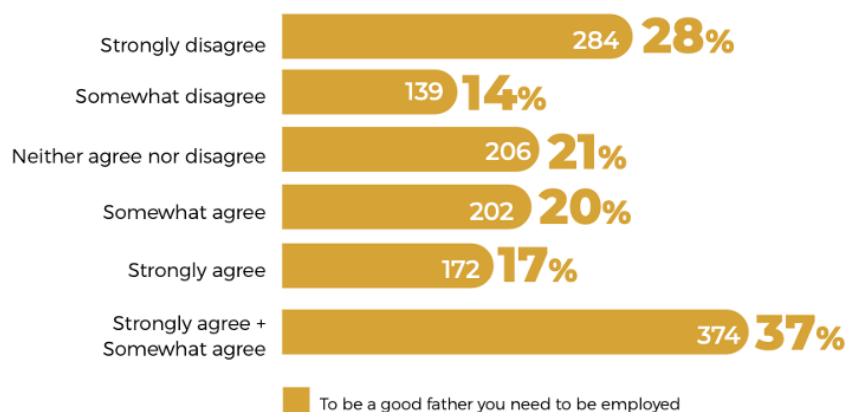
Figure 14: Unemployment rate by sex¹⁰⁵



Source: Statistics South Africa (2012)

As shown in Figure 14, in the period from the first quarter of 2008 to the first quarter of 2012, female unemployment rates were, on average, 24% higher than male unemployment rates. However, in the period starting 2017 Q1 and ending 2022 Q2, female unemployment rates were 13.5% higher than male on average (own analysis, based on StatsSA QLFS 2017 Q1-2022 Q2). Over the same comparison period, male unemployment rates increased from, on average, 22% to 28%. Overall, this means that the shape of unemployment has changed and the gender gap in unemployment is narrowing, with more men unemployed now than in the past. Where men's contribution to care is through the provision of wage labour, then we can deduce a renegotiation of breadwinner status. The erosion of this status has important socio-economic and political consequences, and could potentially allow for renegotiation of male gender norms.

Figure 15: SASOF 2021 survey participants' perceptions of fatherhood and employment¹⁰⁶



Source: State of South African Fathers Report (2021: 113)

¹⁰⁵ Statistics South Africa, "Quarterly Labour Force Survey," 2012, <https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0211/P02111stQuarter2012.pdf>.

¹⁰⁶ "State of South African Fathers Report."

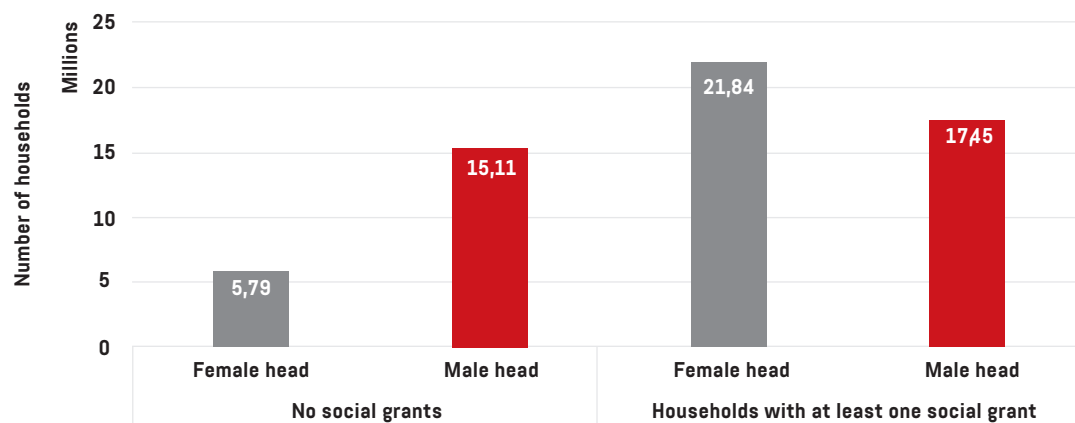
Figure 15 shows ambivalence amongst the 1377 survey respondents regarding the idea that you need to be employed to be a good father. 55% neither agreed nor disagreed or somewhat agreed and somewhat disagreed, suggesting that gendered norms might be changing given the reality of low employment chances. Persistent and deepening unemployment since democracy, combined with an absence of social security for the jobless, has further eroded possibilities for the archetypal male breadwinner. While democracy has legally and politically incorporated Black South Africans into the economy, jobs have become scarcer. Plummeting employment opportunities, particularly in the industrial economy, have made it increasingly difficult for men to fulfil their gender-normative role of 'breadwinner', one such manifestation being the ability to pay lobola.¹⁰⁷

Male-headed households, social grants and extended family forms

Constructions of masculinity mean that men are seldom associated with the hands-on caring work of caregivers, and because of the associations of powerlessness with care receivers, they are also seldom the receivers of care, either in the form of social grants or as healthcare recipients.¹⁰⁸

Male-headed households make up 54% of the total households as compared to 46% in WHH. If you control for income, using the proxy of whether someone in those households is receiving any kind of social grant from the Government, the picture shifts (Figure 16). Households where no social grants are received were predominantly MHH (74%), whereas 56% of the households where at least one social grant is received, are WHH.¹⁰⁹

Figure 16: Household heads by income proxy



Source: Own analysis of StatsSA General Household Survey 2021 data

The trend of women being primary recipients of social grants shifted during the Covid-19 pandemic. Income support in the form of both the Social Relief of Distress Grant (SRDG) and the Unemployment Insurance Fund - Temporary Employer/Employee Relief Scheme (UIF-TERS) went primarily to men.¹¹⁰ The SRD Grant was implemented in response to the loss of jobs and income for millions of South Africans during lockdown. To be eligible, one needed to be unemployed and not in receipt of other social grants. This meant that women (who are the principal receivers of the child support grant (CSG) on behalf of their children) were denied this type of state support.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Ferguson, "Declarations of Dependence: Labour, Personhood and Welfare in Southern Africa."

¹⁰⁸ Will H Courtenay, "Constructions of Masculinity and Their Influence on Men's Well-Being: A Theory of Gender and Health," *Social Science & Medicine* 50, no. 10 (May 16, 2000): 1385–1401, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-9536\(99\)00390-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-9536(99)00390-1).

¹⁰⁹ Statistics South Africa, "General Household Survey: 2021."

¹¹⁰ Daniela Casale and Debra Shepherd, "The Gendered Effects of the COVID-19 Crisis and Ongoing Lockdown in South Africa: Evidence from NIDS-CRAM Waves 1 - 5," National Income Dynamics Study (NIDS) – Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey (CRAM), National Income Dynamics Study (NIDS) – Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey (CRAM), July 8, 2021.

¹¹¹ Nic Spaull Posel Daniela Casale and Dorrit, "Maverick Citizen: Op-Ed: Covid-19: Women Are Bearing More Costs and Receiving Fewer Benefits," Daily Maverick, July 17, 2020, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-07-17-covid-19-women-are-bearing-more-costs-and-receiving-fewer-benefits/>.

Entrenched gender norms further penalise women for their role in direct care through government provision of the CSG as a grant for children that is only meant to be administered by the grant recipient. Thus, it makes invisible caregivers' needs, and the work it takes to do care for young children by making zero provisions for the caregiver themselves. Hence during Covid-19 women were triply denied available forms of support because women's receipt of this grant on behalf of their children made them ineligible to receive the covid relief grants. On top of which, because women sustained the greatest job losses during covid, this unequal pattern reinforced the gender-differentiated effects of the pandemic and increased overall gender inequality in South Africa.¹¹²

A rapid assessment of the Covid-19 SRD Grant found that almost all male survey respondents used the grant to purchase food, which was unsurprising given that many households ran out of food. 53% stated that whatever was bought went toward household consumption.¹¹³ This alerts us to the fact that men can and do perform caregiving roles in households. However, given that 39% of men were not living with children during Covid-19, the potential reach of this grant was limited by men's primary receipt of it.¹¹⁴

Studies of caregiving and care receiving in the context of HIV/Aids in South Africa have critiqued the sexgender binary by foregrounding the "relationality of care and the inevitability and value of human interdependencies".¹¹⁵ These studies have shown that in the face of immense needs for care within communities, family boundaries and parenting practices were redrawn, as seen in the phenomenon of child-headed households, and grandmother-headed households.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, studies found that voluntary caregiving was performed by men, who understood and explained their caregiving practices as mothering.¹¹⁷ This idea was upheld by caregivers without biological ties to the care receivers.¹¹⁸ This is significant given the importance of and reliance on informal means of community-based caregiving in meeting the caring burden generated by HIV/Aids.¹¹⁹ Gender fluidity encourages the adoption of more permissible and flexible caring arrangements.

Overall, complex arrangements of gender and care require that we pay careful attention to the gendered norms and behaviours that are determining who cares for whom, in what ways, and the resultant economies of care. As important are those social determinants of care, which challenge and destabilise gender associations, especially in the case of gender non-binary, trans and queer folks. Additionally, as shown in the section above, healthcare crises may force a reappraising of gendered norms and caring roles, but whether long-term positive shifts in men's relationships elevate the status of care, is yet to be shown.

¹¹² Casale and Shepherd, "The Gendered Effects of the COVID-19 Crisis and Ongoing Lockdown in South Africa: Evidence from NIDS-CRAM Waves 1 - 5."

¹¹³ Department of Social Development, "THE RAPID ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION AND UTILISATION OF THE SPECIAL COVID-19 SRD GRANT," July 2021, <https://www.dsd.gov.za/index.php/component/jdownloads/?task=download.send&id=316:the-rapid-assessment-of-the-implementation-and-utilisation-of-the-special-covid-19-srd-grant&catid=7&m=0&Itemid=101>.

¹¹⁴ Spaul et al., "NIDS-CRAM Synthesis Report Wave."

¹¹⁵ Reddy et al., *Care in Context*. P.100

¹¹⁶ Henderson, "AIDS, Metaphor and Ritual: The Crafting of Care in Rural South African Childhoods."

¹¹⁷ Thenjiwe Meyiwa, "Constructing an Alternative Family Unit: Families Living with HIV/AIDS Redefine African Traditional Parenting Patterns," *Social Dynamics* 37, no. 1 (March 1, 2011): 165–77, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02533952.2010.544119>.

¹¹⁸ Meyiwa.

¹¹⁹ Reddy et al., *Care in Context*.



PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence (GBV) is rooted in patriarchal power imbalances and carried out with the intention to humiliate and make a person or group of people feel inferior and/or subordinate because of their gender.¹²⁰ **Normative role expectations associated with each gender, as well as the unequal power relationships between genders, mean that gender inequalities underlie GBV.**¹²¹ Also, because GBV intersects with norms governing sexuality, other marginalised populations such as sex workers, gender minorities and queer communities are also targets of GBV.

This type of violence, which is influenced by social structures, cultural practices and the norms and values that govern society, mean that local inflections of this global phenomena give rise to situated forms of GBV.¹²² In South Africa, for example, ongoing legacies of racism, dispossession, and enduring structural and interpersonal violence, have resulted in rates of **femicide (which is the intentional murder of women because they are women) being five times higher than the global average.**¹²³ The various forms of GBV most often noted in South Africa include: femicide, domestic violence, sexual violence, physical violence, emotional violence, and economic violence.¹²⁴ Examples of this violence include human trafficking, mutilation, rape, forced or child marriages, and even accepted customary practices like the bride abduction practice of *ukuthwala*,¹²⁵ and medicalised forms of obstetric violence during labour and delivery.¹²⁶

"GBV cannot be attributed to a single factor, but an interplay of ... gender inequalities between men and women, social constructions of hegemonic masculinities, social perceptions of what it means to be a man, normalisation of violence, and cultural practices". Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation CSVr (2016: 2)

Violence against women occurs in critical sexual and reproductive healthcare services, and includes psychological dimensions of violence, for example the threat of violence, reproductive coercion and the denial of freedom and autonomy.¹²⁷ This means that GBV is not only rooted in gender inequality, but is also a driver of gender inequality as it targets women (and minorities) *because* they are women (and minorities). Not only does GBV have negative health effects, but even the institutions women approach for sexual and reproductive healthcare are implicated in its continuation.

¹²⁰ Abeda Sultana, "Patriarchy and Women's Subordination: A Theoretical Analysis," *Arts Faculty Journal*, 2010, 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.3329/afj.v4i0.12929>.

¹²¹ United Nations Population Fund, "Addressing Violence against Women and Girls in Sexual and Reproductive Health Services" (United Nations Population Fund, January 1, 2010), <https://www.unfpa.org/publications/addressing-violence-against-women-and-girls-sexual-and-reproductive-health-services>.

¹²² The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, "Gender Based Violence in South Africa - A Brief Review.Pdf."

¹²³ World Health Organization, *Global and Regional Estimates of Violence against Women: Prevalence and Health Effects of Intimate Partner Violence and Non-Partner Sexual Violence* (World Health Organization, 2013), <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/85239>.

¹²⁴ South African Government, "National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence & Femicide."

¹²⁵ Nyasha Karimakwenda, "Rethinking Ukuthwala, the South African 'bride Abduction' Custom," *The Conversation*, September 12, 2021, <http://theconversation.com/rethinking-ukuthwala-the-south-african-bride-abduction-custom-165496>.

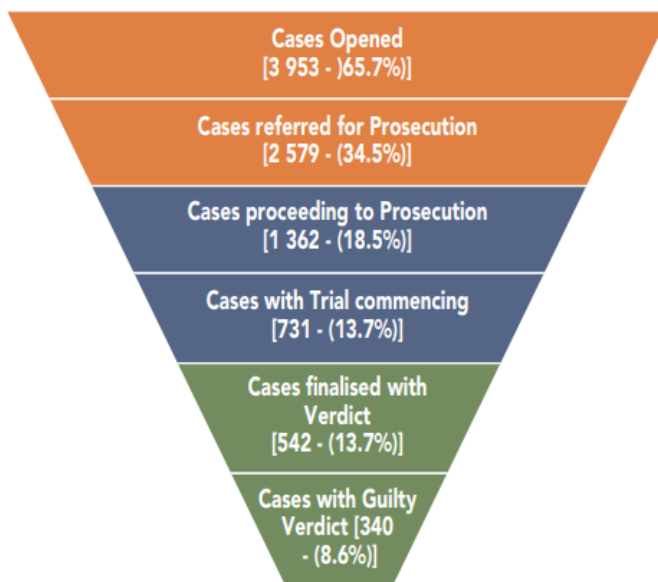
¹²⁶ Nonkululeko Mbuli Görgens Rumbi Goredema, "The Dark Side of Birth – Obstetric Violence Is a Form of GBV," *Health-e News*, December 28, 2021, <https://health-e.org.za/2021/12/28/the-dark-side-of-birth-obstetric-violence-is-a-form-of-gbv/>.

¹²⁷ United Nations Population Fund, "Addressing Violence against Women and Girls in Sexual and Reproductive Health Services."

More than a third of women and girls experience intimate-partner physical or sexual violence in their lifetime.¹²⁸ It is often in their homes, and within their families. This is in stark contrast to the situation for men, who in general, are more likely to be attacked by a stranger or acquaintance.¹²⁹ GBV poses an enormous obstacle to the eradication of all forms of discrimination against women and girls and gender non-conforming persons. GBV undermines the health, dignity, security, and wellbeing of its victims, and is perpetuated within a culture of silence and denial.

Less than 10% of rape cases opened in South Africa land in a guilty verdict (Figure 14). This is not due to untruthful accusations, but rather as a result of the severely underperforming police sector and how gender norms imbued the policing sector.¹³⁰

Figure 17: Attrition of rape cases in South Africa¹³¹



Source: RAPSSA study, National Strategic Plan on gender-based violence & femicide (2020)

¹²⁸ World Health Organization, "Violence against Women. Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence against Women," 2014, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>.

¹²⁹ World Health Organization, *Global and Regional Estimates of Violence against Women*.

¹³⁰ South African Government, "National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence & Femicide."

¹³¹ South African Government.



THE ROAD TO A MORE GENDER-EQUAL SOUTH AFRICA

"... the stability and cohesiveness of communities and societies largely rest on the strength of the family ... the very achievement of development goals depends on how well families are empowered to contribute to the achievement of those goals. Thus, policies focusing on improving the wellbeing of families are certain to benefit development."
Richardson (2018: 5)

Families are recognised by human rights agencies and watchdogs as key partners in realising the sustainable development goals.¹³² The family is the primary level of socialisation where children learn the norms and standards of society. As such they are key to ensuring and promoting human rights, equality and dignity.

In a recent publication, Cecile Jackson (2014) explores the feminisation of kinship under modernity.¹³³ She emphasises that one should not assume that gender equality is a linear binary and

that each move shifts a country or policy to either a more or less gender-equal pole. Instead, she implores people to understand that gender roles and norms are constantly reformed and reconfigured, over generations, and are influenced by who holds power in these generational moments.¹³⁴ So it is important to consider power in its societal and individual manifestation when reviewing progress towards gender equality.

In Figure 18 below, we list some key pragmatic recommendations that the findings in this report support. Please note the following: **Recommendations in red** focus on the sections on men and women as caregivers and care receivers. **Recommendations in dark red** focus on the interrelatedness of care and gender where care is an axis of gender inequality. **Recommendations in grey** focus on government and community interventions to decrease gender inequality and violence against women and children. **Recommendations in light grey** focus on overarching, systemic approaches to dismantling gender inequality.

There are many other recommendations cited in South Africa's National Strategic Plan (NSP) on Gender-Based Violence & Femicide.

¹³² Dominic Richardson, "Key Findings on Families, Family Policy and the Sustainable Development Goals: Synthesis Report" (Florence: UNICEF Office of Research, 2018), https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/Families_and_SDGs_Synthesis_Report.pdf.

¹³³ Cecile Jackson, "Modernity and Matrilocality: The Feminization of Kinship?," *Development and Change* 46 (December 1, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.1111/dech.12141>.

¹³⁴ Jackson.

Figure 18: Recommendations arising from this research report



We recognise that recommendations are often insufficient unless they are paired with real-life examples of how to implement these on the ground. As such, we offer suggestions for how to fulfil these recommendations according to the colour coded key provided above.



Red: Incentivising fatherhood begins with encouraging men's participation in maternity care – providing men's only antenatal support groups where men can speak about what it means to become a father. Making allowances at clinics for men's participation requires having additional seating in consultation rooms, providing armchairs in labour delivery rooms and having family suites available in public facilities that have additional charges attached. It requires that men be provided entitlements to leave during the pregnancy phase to attend clinic appointments, and in addition to the 10 days paternity leave, have a parental leave policy that either fathers or mothers or both can take. Childcare facilities in workspaces also allow for more men to be active caregivers for children. Workplaces and leisure centres should be able to receive special subsidies from the State to make spatial and material provision for breastfeeding and baby feeding rooms.

Dark red: The invisibility of the care economy is problematic for the nation, individuals and families who bear the brunt of societies caring needs. We need feminist economists in government who can measure the cost of care in terms of GDP. Governments need to understand and make visible the impact of care through a set of indicators that includes time and money spent on care, and potentially supports the work of caring through tax rebates in much the same way as donations to charity are. Greater appreciation of the work of care to ensure the repair, flourishing and ongoing wellbeing of society will go some way towards equalising the power relations that underpin care work. As the social value of care increases, we can expect greater participation in and recognition of the fundamental importance of care.

Grey: Although South Africa has signed various treaties to protect the rights of women and girls there has been little enforcement of these declarations.¹³⁵ Increased accountability for transgressions of these protocols is needed to ensure greater safety and protection of South African women, children, and vulnerable populations. The police need to receive greater rewards for the capturing and prosecution of perpetrators of rape and sexual violence. Investigation of such cases should be expediated and the secondary victimisation of survivors when they go to the police to report such cases needs to be immediately addressed through behavioural change training programmes. Furthermore, community redress of harmful cultural practices cannot occur in a vacuum as it is system wide. Religious beliefs, social norms and entrenched cultural practices will not change overnight. Robust engagement needs to occur between different stakeholders and individuals need to tell their stories and trust the mechanisms that safeguard the private airing of grievances arising from harms.

Light grey: Feminism is a social movement for the liberation from patriarchy and understands that patriarchy can be harmful to both men and women. While patriarchal norms retain men's privilege and power (for example by excusing them from caring labour), it also locks in place harmful norms and behaviours that have detrimental effects on men's health (for example by being gendered to participate in life-threatening activities) and their personal relationships (for example by having to be the disciplinarian within families). It has been claimed that men's care interactions with children can move fathering beyond patriarchy and can positively influence democratic citizenship.¹³⁶ This is important as it is supported by evidence that paternal involvement in childcare makes men more aware of the effort required to care and more likely to extend their participation in care for children to care more broadly, for extended family member and into society.

¹³⁵ The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, "Gender Based Violence in South Africa - A Brief Review.Pdf."

¹³⁶ Van Den Berg, "South African Men's Engagement in a Feminist Ethic of Care."

NOTES





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