

A person wearing a bright yellow hoodie, blue jeans, and red sneakers is walking on a paved surface. They are holding a smartphone in their right hand and looking at the screen. The background is a blurred asphalt road.

# **Covid-19 impact on internal migration, labour markets and urbanization: South Africa case study**

**South Africa Quantitative Results Report  
December 2023**



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‘COVID-19 in South Africa can be said to be a particularly urban disease’ (Haferburg et al., 2022)<sup>1</sup>

‘South Africa arguably implemented some of the strictest Covid-19 restrictions worldwide in the earlier stages of the pandemic in an effort to contain the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus’ (Presidency of South Africa, 2021).<sup>2</sup>

## **1 Introduction**

The COVID-19 pandemic created large-scale distress and disruption of the labour market that resulted in economic turmoil throughout the world and in most economies. Lockdowns and shutdown of economic activities caused loss of income for many migrant workers and were especially difficult for those whose livelihoods depend on daily wages and employment and self-employment in the informal economy. In South Africa, considerable attention has been paid to the social and economic consequences of the pandemic for international migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees in the country.<sup>3</sup> Research has shed light on issues such as the disruptive impact of pandemic-related unemployment and income shocks;<sup>4</sup> mobility constraints and return migration to countries of origin;<sup>5</sup> pandemic precarity and increased food insecurity;<sup>6</sup> the shift from cross-border informal to digital remittance channels;<sup>7</sup> and the exclusion of migrants from government pandemic relief measures.<sup>8</sup> In sharp contrast to the growing body of research on the plight of international migrants during the pandemic, there has been very little research to date on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the millions of internal migrants in South African cities.

The report presents the results of a SAMP survey of migrant households in the South African cities of Cape Town and Johannesburg conducted in 2023 in partnership with the KNOMAD program. The KNOMAD thematic working group (TWG) on Internal Migration and Urbanization has implemented an international comparative research project on the Impact of Covid19 on Internal Migration, Labor Markets and Urbanization. The countries covered by the project include India, Iran, Nigeria, and South Africa. The primary objective of the research program was to identify the impact of the pandemic on internal migrants, migration patterns, and urbanization during and after the pandemic through cross-national comparisons. By gathering country- and city-specific data, the program aimed to stimulate informed debate among policymakers, their development partners, and civil society on what local and central governments can do to improve the livelihoods of internal migrants in the event of future external shocks.

The scope of work in the South Africa case study included the following:

- A contextual desktop review of research and data on the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa and identify research and information gaps in relation to internal migration dynamics and pandemic impacts on the labour market, rural-urban migration, inter-provincial and inter-city migration, migrant livelihoods in urban and rural areas, migrant remittances and livelihoods, and employment conditions in the formal and informal sectors;
- Audit of central and local government policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic during successive waves of the pandemic, and how these were implemented in two major South African cities;
- Analyse the evidence for labour market, urbanization and mobility disruption during the pandemic and assess the extent of return migration to places of origin (and return to the cities) as strategic migrant responses to the pandemic;
- Document the livelihood, food insecurity, and other challenges on internal migrants by the pandemic through surveys of a representative sample of migrant households in Cape Town and Johannesburg.

To contextualize the research findings, the next section of the report reviews the course of the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa, the mitigation policies implemented by the South African national government, and the economic impact of these policies on the residents of the low-income townships and informal settlements in the two cities, where the majority of internal migrants reside. Section 3 presents the survey methodology, and Section 4 presents the results and discussion of the findings. Section 4 presents the policy implications and recommendations.

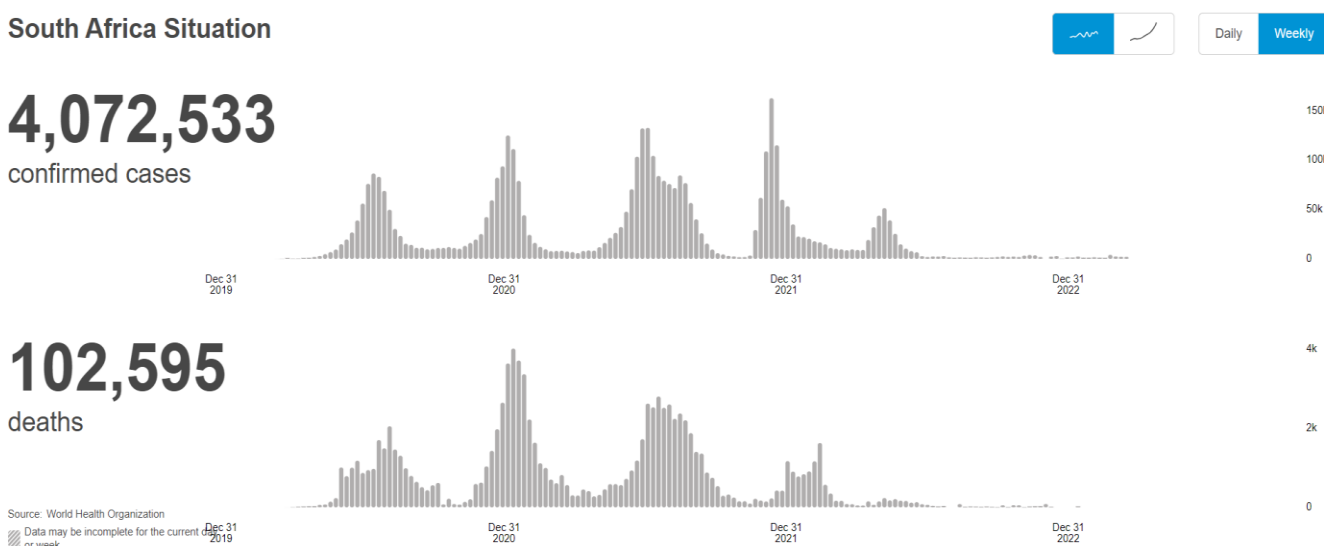
## **2 South Africa’s COVID-19 Pandemic**

### **2.1 Waves of COVID-19**

The first confirmed case of COVID-19 in South Africa was on 5 March 2020 when a South African tourist returning from a vacation in Italy tested positive for SARS-CoV-2. Notwithstanding a 35-day nationwide lockdown from 26 March 2020, and continuing restrictions on mobility and social gatherings for the remainder of 2020, the virus spread exponentially peaking at over 12,000 new cases per day in mid-June.<sup>9</sup> By 30 September 2020, a total of 674,339 confirmed cases and 16,734 mortality cases had been recorded. A second pandemic wave began in December 2020, peaking at over 20,000 new cases per day in early 2021. In total, the country has experienced five waves of COVID-19 infection (Figure 1). By October 1, 2023, the country had recorded 4,072,533 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 102,595 deaths, making it the worst affected country in Africa. On 1 August 2022, for example, South Africa (with 4.4% of Africa's population) accounted for 37% of COVID-19 cases and 42% of COVID-19 deaths recorded on the continent.<sup>10</sup> Infection and mortality figures are widely regarded as under-counts. In Gauteng, for example, the

calculated number of SARS-CoV-2 infections from a seroprevalence study was 7.8-fold greater than the recorded number of COVID-19 cases.<sup>11</sup> Excess deaths during the first four waves of COVID-19 are estimated at almost 300,000, which would bring total COVID-related mortality in South Africa to more than 400,000 (Table 1).

**Figure 1: Daily Confirmed Coronavirus Cases and Deaths in South Africa, 2020-2022**



Source : <https://covid19.who.int/region/afro/country/za>

**Table 1: Confirmed COVID-19 Deaths and Excess Natural Deaths**

	No. of reported COVID-19 deaths	No. of excess natural deaths	Ratio of reported to excess deaths (%)
Wave 1	18,457	48,857	38%
Wave 2	33,128	108,061	31%
Wave 3	36,268	116,343	31%
Wave 4	5,333	22,483	24%
Total	93,186	295,135	31%

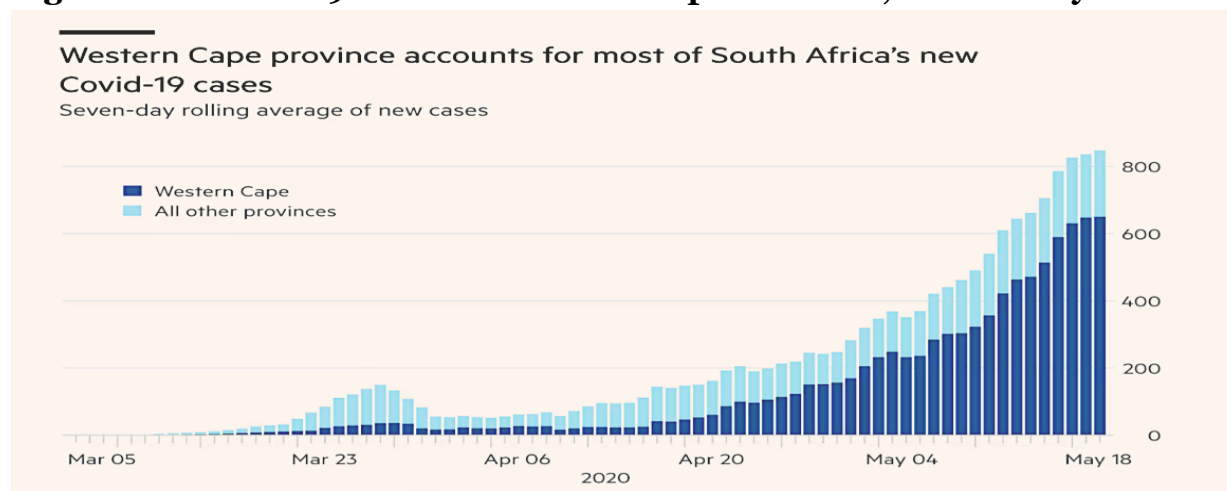
Source: Bradshaw et al. (2022)<sup>12</sup>

Two of the most heavily affected regions of the country were Gauteng (capital Johannesburg) and Western Cape (capital Cape Town). In the early weeks of the pandemic, the Western Cape was at the epicentre with two-thirds of new cases of COVID-19 nationwide (Figure 2). By July 2020, Gauteng had rapidly emerged as the national pandemic hotspot (Figure 3). Seroprevalence surveys in Gauteng (with a population of 16 million) found that 19% of the population was seropositive for SARS-CoV-2 in January



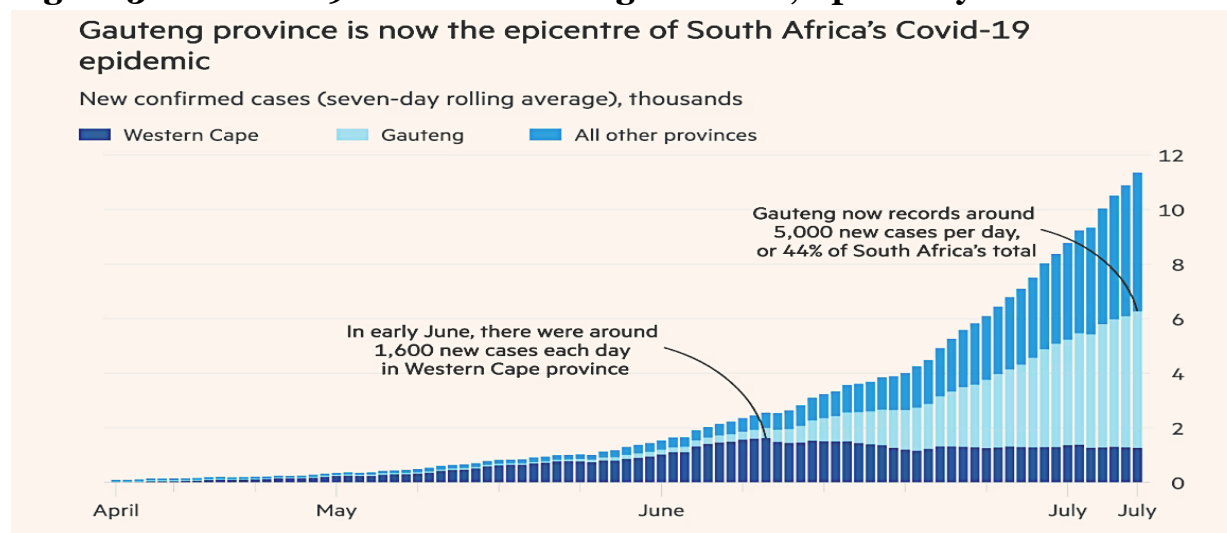
2021.<sup>13</sup> By November 2021, this had increased to 68% for the two-thirds share of the population who had not received a COVID-19 vaccine. Seroprevalence of SARS-CoV-2 in the city of Cape Town increased from 39% in July 2020 to 68% in November 2021, and only 10% of the seropositive individuals had a positive SARS-CoV-2 test on record.<sup>14</sup>

**Figure 2: COVID-19 Cases in Western Cape Province, March-May 2020**



Source : <https://www.ft.com/content/857ab038-01f6-4ddd-9009-107e679ffb67>

**Figure 3: COVID-19 Cases in Gauteng Province, April-July 2020**

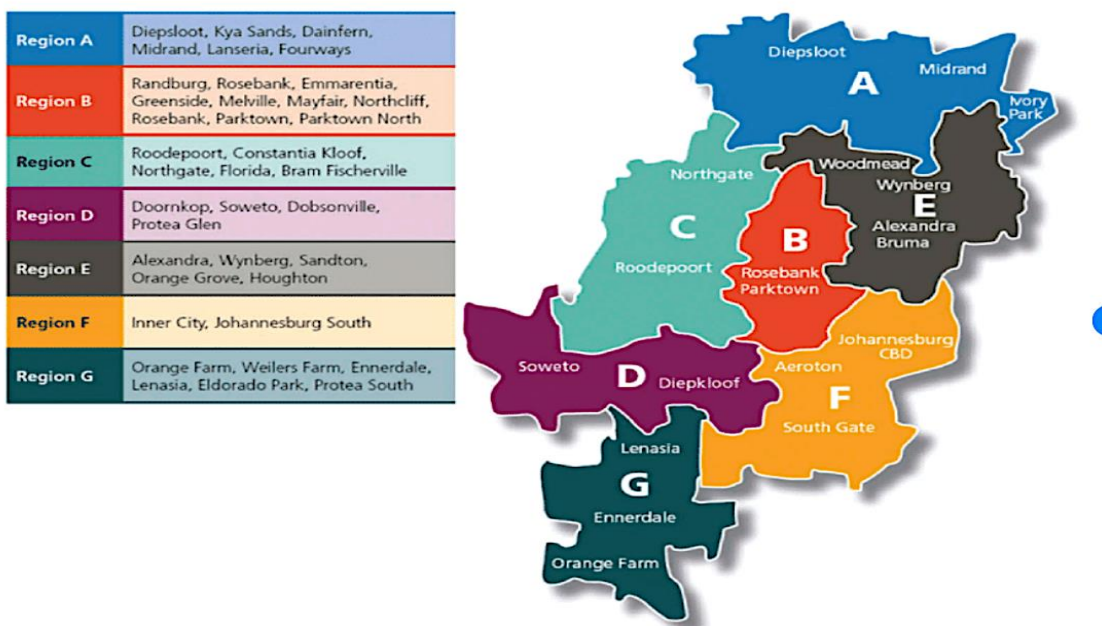


Source : <https://www.ft.com/content/857ab038-01f6-4ddd-9009-107e679ffb67>

The spread of the virus was spatially uneven, with some residential neighbourhoods more severely affected than others. In Gauteng and Johannesburg, an uneven spatial distribution of seroprevalence and COVID-19 mortality has been documented.<sup>15</sup> For example, in November 2020, seroprevalence ranged from 5.5% to 43.2% in the 26 subdistricts of the province.<sup>16</sup> Johannesburg's overall seroprevalence was 24%, with a range in the seven subdistricts of the city of 15.1% to 43.2% (Table 2). The total number

of cases was 24.2 per thousand with a range of 12.5 per thousand (District G) to 40.3 per thousand (District B) (Figure 4). However, District A (which includes the informal settlements of Diepsloot and Ivory Park) had the highest number of cases (more than 336,000), proportion of cases (43%), and cases per 1,000 (431.6).

**Figure 4: Johannesburg Sub-Districts**



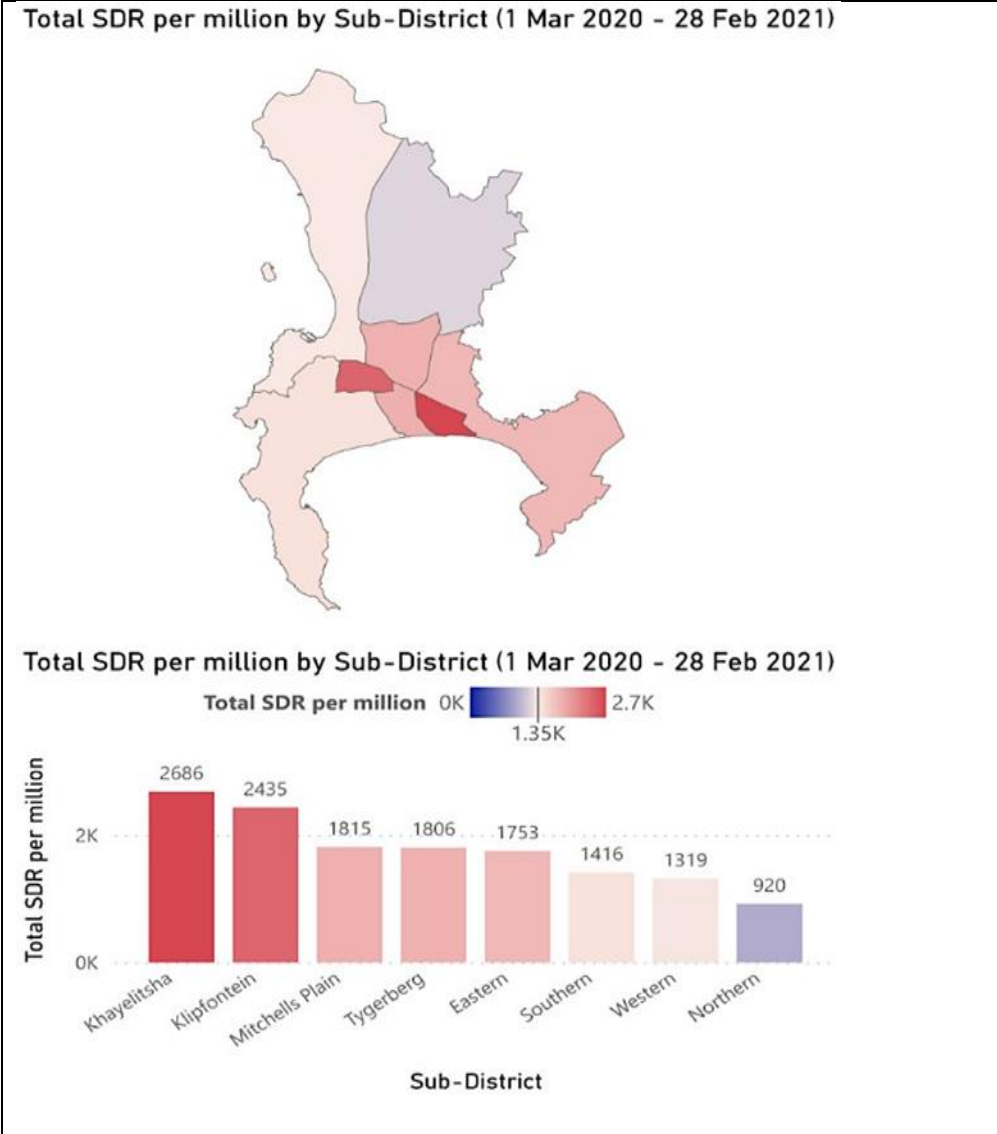
Map of Johannesburg showing the 7 regions of the city. Source: <http://www.pikitup.co.za/contact-us/>

**Table 2: COVID-19 Cases and Seroprevalence in Johannesburg Sub-Districts, November 2020**

Sub-District	Population	COVID-19 Cases*	Cases Per 1,000	Sero-prevalence (%)	Est.SARS-CoV-2 Infections Based on Sero-prevalence	Est. Cases Per 1,000 Based on Sero-prevalence
A	779,519	15,852	20.3	43.2	336,424	431.6
B	435,241	17,559	40.3	29.2	126,945	291.7
C	799,980	17,396	21.7	18.6	148,901	186.1
D	1,396,243	27,754	19.9	23.3	324,944	232.7
E	601,433	22,757	37.8	28.4	170,777	284.0
F	751,484	23,751	31.6	25.5	191,507	254.8
G	842,339	10,516	12.5	15.1	126,880	150.6
Total	5,606,238	135,585	24.2	25.6	1,436,671	256.3

Source: Mutevedzi et al. (2022)<sup>17</sup>

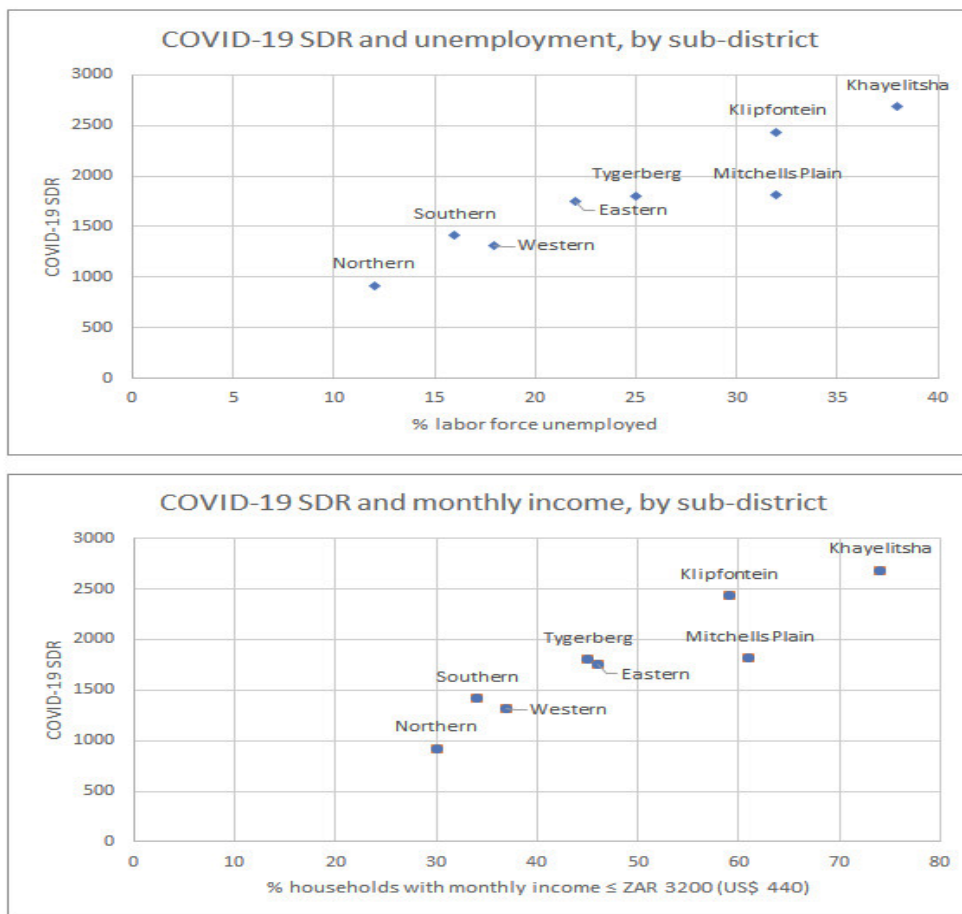
**Figure 4: COVID-19 Standardized Death Rates in Cape Town Sub-Districts**



Source: Hussy et al. (2021)<sup>18</sup>

In Cape Town, the COVID-19 standardized death rate (SDR) varied considerably between the eight subdistricts of the city from a low of 920 per million in the wealthier Northern Suburbs to a high of 2,686 per million in low-income Khayelitsha (Figure 4).<sup>19</sup> Further, there was a linear positive relationship between the increase of the SDR of COVID-19 in a subdistrict and (a) the percentage of unemployment and (b) the percentage of low-income households in that subdistrict (Figure 5). Another sample survey found that seropositivity was significantly associated with living in informal housing, residing in a subdistrict with low income-per household, and having a low-earning occupation.<sup>20</sup>

**Figure 5: COVID-19 Standardized Death Rates by Sub-District Unemployment and Monthly Income**



Source: Hussy et al. (2021)<sup>21</sup>

In conclusion, South Africa’s COVID-19 pandemic was a largely urban phenomenon. Second, the cities of Cape Town and Johannesburg were at the geographical epicentre of the pandemic. Third, within both cities there has been considerable spatial variation in COVID-19 cases and seroprevalence with the highest incidence in subdistricts with low-income residential neighbourhoods. Although the South African government formulated a national response to the imminent pandemic, its implementation and enforcement were uneven and focused largely on these urban neighbourhoods commonly known as townships and informal settlements.

## 2.2 Pandemic Control and Mitigation

Eleven days after the first diagnosed case of COVID-19, on 26 March 2020, the South African government declared a national state of disaster under the Disaster Management Act of 2002.<sup>22</sup> The state of disaster remained in effect for two years until April 2022. An interministerial National Coronavirus Command Council (NCCC) was constituted in the Presidency to plan and coordinate the policy response to the looming threat of COVID-

19.<sup>23</sup> Many of the NCCCs public health decisions were influenced by advisories from the Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) on COVID-19 in the national Department of Health.

The country's nine provincial governments and municipal governments throughout the country were charged with implementing the policies and regulations promulgated by the NCCC.<sup>24</sup> Other voices – including those of parliament, trade unions, civil society organizations, and NGOs – were not consulted on 'what was practical and implementable, coherent and aligned.'<sup>25</sup> One commentator has criticized the MAC and the NCCC for uncritically imposing a Euro-American model of pandemic control and mitigation on the South African population.<sup>26</sup> However, the Chair of the MAC has noted that the policy response to COVID-19 – including a 'stringent stay-at-home order and lockdown' – owed more to the Chinese lockdown model.<sup>27</sup>

Table 3 provides a detailed timeline of the actions taken by the government in 2020 in response to the arrival of SARS-CoV-2 in the country. On 26 March, a strict national lockdown and stay-at-home order came into effect. The lockdown remained in force for the next 35 days. Thereafter, it was gradually relaxed, although many of the prohibitions on individual and group behavior remained intact. In addition to the sweeping stay-at-home order, there was a complete ban on all non-essential international, cross-border, and interprovincial travel during the initial lockdown. Most businesses, government offices, and shops throughout the country were ordered to close. Essential services, such as hospitals and supermarkets, remained open, but only essential workers in health, security services, food delivery, and municipal services remained at work. None of the activities in the country's massive informal economy were initially deemed 'essential' despite their importance as a supplier of affordable food and other necessities to low-income households.<sup>28</sup>

On 1 May 2020, a new lockdown classification came into effect ranging from total lockdown (renamed Alert Level 5) to a minimal restriction level (Alert Level 1). Level 5 lockdown was immediately downgraded to Level 4. Some aspects of the national lockdown were relaxed, but most, including restrictions on personal mobility, remained in place. Travel between provinces continued to be prohibited apart from the movement of commodities and for special events such as funerals. Public transport was allowed to operate, but with restrictions on the number of passengers and strict hygiene requirements. Gatherings, except for meetings at work and funerals, were still not allowed. Closure of specific social spaces and social, cultural, and religious gatherings continued. Schools, colleges, and universities remained closed. A controversial ban on the sale of cigarettes and alcohol remained in place.

**Table 3: Timeline of COVID-19 Lockdown in South Africa, 2020-2021**

Date	Level	Description of restrictions
March 27, 2020 - initially for 3 weeks, extended for two further weeks	Alert level 5	Only essential services and businesses are operating. No alcohol or cigarette sales are permitted, and citizens may not travel or attend any form of gathering
May 1, 2020	Alert level 4	Borders remain closed. No travel between provinces, except transportation of goods and under exceptional circumstances. Public transport capacity limitations. Range of goods allowed to be sold widened. Restrictions remain in place in certain sectors such as bars, conference and convention centers, and entertainment venues. No gatherings allowed.
June 1, 2020	Alert level 3	Opening of most economic sectors subject to health protocols and social distancing. High-risk activities remain prohibited. These include: restaurants, bars, and taverns (except for delivery or collection of food); accommodation and domestic air travel (except for business travel); conferences, events, entertainment, and sporting activities; and personal care services, including hairdressing and beauty services
July 12, 2020	Alert level 3.	Restrictions adjusted to ban alcohol sales to alleviate pressure on the healthcare system. A 9pm to 4am curfew is also introduced, and family visits are prohibited
August 18, 2020	Alert level 2	Inter-provincial travel restrictions lifted. Ban on alcohol and tobacco products lifted. Family visits allowed. Gyms reopened. Gatherings limited to 50 people. Curfew between 10pm and 4am
September 20, 2020	Alert level 1	Most normal activity can resume, with precautions and health guidelines followed at all times.
November 11, 2020	Alert level 1.	Relaxation of international travel and alcohol trading restrictions eased
December 28, 2020	Alert level 3.	Curfew extended from 9pm to 6am; non-essential establishments to close by 8pm; masks mandatory in public; alcohol sale banned; 22 additional hotspot areas declared—beaches, parks and pools in hotspot areas to be closed. Limitations on gathering numbers
March 1, 2021	Alert level 1.	Most normal activity can resume, with precautions and health guidelines followed at all times. Limitations on gatherings. Curfew 12am – 4am
May 31, 2021	Alert level 2.	Curfew adjusted to 11pm to 4am. Non-essential establishments to close by 10pm. Gatherings limited to a maximum of 100 people indoors and 250 people

Source: Asmal and Rooney (2021)<sup>29</sup>

The borders continued to be closed to international travel, except for transportation of essential goods and services. Travel between provinces was still prohibited except for special events such as funerals. Public transport was allowed to function, but with restrictions on the number of passengers and strict load and hygiene requirements. All gatherings, except for work and funerals, were still prohibited. Restaurants, bars, cafes, and recreational parks and facilities remained closed. Sales of alcohol and cigarettes continued to be prohibited. The national stay-at-home order remained in place, although outside exercise was allowed for 3 hours per day not more than 5 km from the place of residence. On 1 June 2020, 56 days after the imposition of the hard lockdown, the government announced a further relaxation to Level 3.

From 1 June 2020, most workers were allowed to return to work if they still had jobs and their employers followed public health guidelines. Employees who did not need to be at work were urged to continue to work from home. Gatherings remained banned, except for funerals and workplace meetings. Entertainment, cultural, recreational, and sporting venues remained closed. The sale of alcohol was allowed for home consumption, for restricted hours, and on specified days. Sale of tobacco products continued to be banned. Between June and December, the national lockdown progressively moved from Level 3 to Level 1. However, in December 2020, South Africa experienced a second wave of COVID-19, and Level 3 was reimposed at the end of December. At that point, South Africa had more than one million confirmed cases and more than 28,000 deaths from COVID-19.

Subsequent evaluations of the government's COVID-19 response have labelled it as 'a series of trade-offs', 'uneven', and 'troubled.'<sup>30</sup> The stated reasons for scepticism include the following: (a) it was nearly impossible for citizens in low-income neighbourhoods and overcrowded informal settlements without savings or income, access to PPE, and accessible food sources to comply with stay-at-home and social distancing orders<sup>31</sup>; (b) the public health response to the pandemic was driven by medical professionals and scientists in the MAC who only belatedly took account of the likely catastrophic economic and social consequences of a hard lockdown for poor households and communities<sup>32</sup>; (c) the petty regulation of behaviours (such as bans on cigarettes, types of clothing, and particular foods) led to a loss of public confidence and charges that the government seemed more interested in controlling citizens than alleviating their suffering,<sup>33</sup> and (d) the enforcement of the lockdown was highly militaristic and led to many human rights violations.<sup>34</sup>

On the eve of the lockdown in March 2020, the South African Minister of Police described it as a 'war against a common enemy, the coronavirus. Whoever breaks the law and chooses to join the enemy against the citizens, will face the full might of the law and police will decisively make sure that we defend the people of South Africa.'<sup>35</sup> More than 24,000 armed police officers from the South African Police Services (SAPS) were mobilized to enforce the lockdown regulations, augmented by municipal police departments and troops from the South African National Defence Force (SANDF).<sup>36</sup> As Kriegler et al. (2022: 241) note, lockdown enforcement by armed police and the army resulted in 'a dramatic expansion of police duties, surveillance, and visibility.'<sup>37</sup> Breach of lockdown regulations was a criminal offence punishable by fine or up to 6 months imprisonment. The dissemination of 'fake news' about the pandemic was also punishable. The police interpreted their enforcement role as if it were a conventional crime-fighting operation, seeing large sections of the South African population as 'potentially criminal (who) should be targets of aggressive forms of policing.'<sup>38</sup> On-the-ground enforcement by the police and the army focused on informal settlements and other overcrowded low-income

neighbourhoods.<sup>39</sup> Apprehensions for breach of lockdown reached 300,000 by June 2020, more than in any other country worldwide. By April 2021, the total number of arrests exceeded 400,000. Most received fines, but more than 20,000 cases ended up in the courts.

### **2.3 Labour Market Impacts of COVID-19**

South Africa experienced a sharp contraction in economic activity in the second quarter of 2020. Real GDP fell by 17.8% year-on-year. The declines were especially pronounced in the construction, manufacturing, mining, transport, tourism, and trade sectors, and the economic and labour market impact of rolling lockdowns was particularly devastating for poorer urban communities. An estimated 15% of the workforce lost their jobs and one third lost their earnings through temporary layoffs during the Level 5 lockdown. Statistics South Africa estimates that 2.2 million jobs were lost between April and June 2020 compared to the same period in 2019, mainly in services, hospitality, manufacturing, construction, and finance.<sup>40</sup> In April 2020, a survey of over 700 businesses found that only 10% were operating at full capacity, 40% were operating at partial capacity, 48% had closed temporarily, and about 2% had closed permanently.<sup>41</sup> Sectorally, the number of domestic workers in private households decreased by 311,000, while the agricultural sector shed 66,000 jobs. Almost 30% of informal jobs were lost, compared to 8% of formal sector jobs (giving an overall decline of 13%). This means that nearly 1.5 million informal jobs and 840,000 formal jobs were lost in the early months of the pandemic. Other sources estimate that up to 3 million formal and informal jobs were lost between February and April 2020.<sup>42</sup>

Some sectors of the economy were hardest hit by job loss. Of the 13 sectors listed in Figure 7, only ICT experienced significant employment growth during 2020. The sectors with the largest percentage drop in employment included commercial agriculture (17%), tourism (14%), services (11%), and construction (9%). The largest absolute changes in employment occurred in financial and business services (166,000), tourism (123,000), other services (107,000), and manufacturing (84,000). By the end of 2020, despite two quarters of employment growth, the number of employed had fallen by nearly 1.5 million from pre-pandemic levels, and the wages of workers who still had jobs had fallen by 10-15%.<sup>43</sup> The distribution of job loss was heavily skewed toward vulnerable groups including youth, those with lower levels of formal education, lower-skilled workers, union non-members, and informal sector workers.<sup>44</sup>

Lockdown policies ‘significantly reduced employment probabilities for every level but these effects were driven by negative employment effects in the informal sector.’<sup>45</sup> When the lockdown was first imposed, informal enterprises in South African cities were forced to suspend all operations despite their central importance for livelihoods in poorer



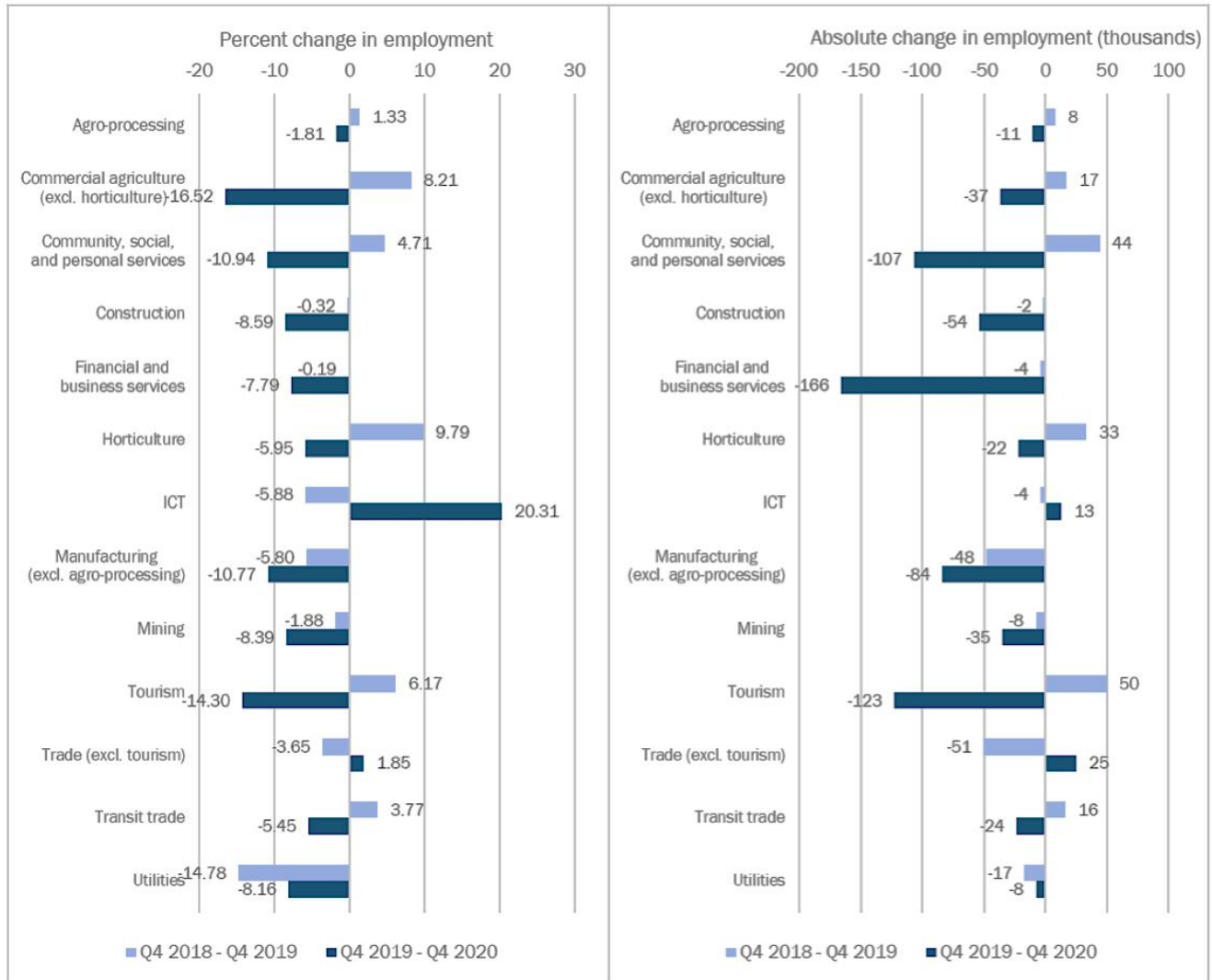
communities.<sup>46</sup> After two weeks of lockdown, only food vendors were allowed to resume operations, but they could only sell uncooked food and had a municipal permit. However, food vendors faced numerous challenges, including problems in getting permits and the lack of information on where to access them.<sup>47</sup> When vendors went to municipal offices to get permits, many found that there was no system in place to issue permits. Other offices made unreasonable and obstructive demands.<sup>48</sup> Additional difficulties included the closure of fresh-produce wholesale markets, transportation problems, and the confiscation of stock by the police.

The negative consequences of the disruption and downsizing of the informal sector for lower-income households have been identified as: (a) consumers having to pay higher prices for goods they would normally purchase for much less through the informal sector; (b) consumers being forced to travel (at extra cost) to a supermarket instead of conveniently obtaining food closer to home through the informal sector; (c) workers being unable to purchase hot meals from street vendors; (d) fresh produce markets, producers, and the like experiencing a knock-on sales and income effect; (e) thousands households reliant on the informal sector as their main or sole source of income no longer earning any income; and (f) reducing household purchasing power, thus undermining their food security.<sup>49</sup>

The total number jobs in the informal economy decreased by an estimated 25% in the early months of the pandemic, translating to a net loss of over 800,000 jobs.<sup>50</sup> Of the nearly 2.2 million net jobs lost by the second quarter of 2020, 1.5 million were informal. By the third quarter, 1.2 million of the 1.7 million lost jobs were informal. During the final quarter of the year, 860,000 of the 1.4 million lost jobs were informal.<sup>51</sup> Women in the informal economy saw a decrease of 49% in the typical hours worked in the early months of the pandemic, while men in informal employment saw a 25% decrease in typical hours. Among informal self-employed who continued to work, average earnings decreased by 27% and typical earnings by 60%.

A major longer-term consequence of the pandemic has been the widening of already high levels of inequality. As the World Bank observes, ‘more worrying in a country that is already the most unequal in the world is the differential impact of the crisis on the poorer half of the population. Most notably, the differential sector and occupational effects of the lockdown and demand contractions have translated into greater job losses among poorer workers than among those who are better off.’<sup>52</sup> Among low-wage workers in the bottom quintile, employment declined by 35% between the first and second quarters (Figure 9). For those in the top income quintile, the fall was less than 10%. Low-wage workers therefore suffered four times more job loss than high-wage workers.

### **Figure 6: Changes in Sectoral Employment in 2020**



Source: Asmal and Rooney (2021)<sup>53</sup>

**Figure 7: Pandemic-Related Job Losses in South Africa**

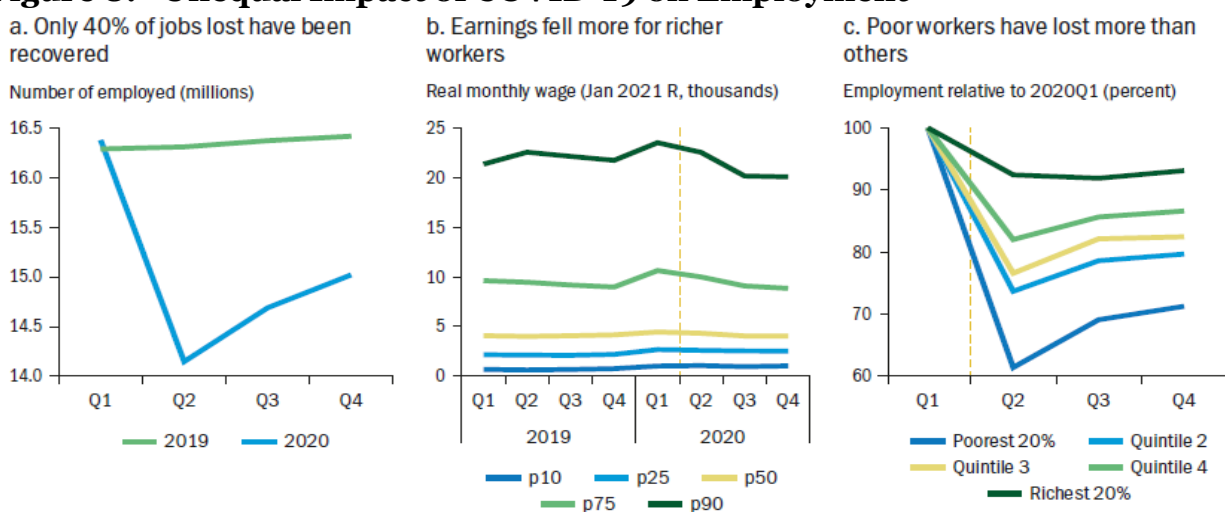


Source: Rogan and Skinner (2022)<sup>54</sup>

A government-funded assessment of the impact of the pandemic identifies six population groups whose vulnerability was related to income and the labour market:

- people whose wages were below the national minimum wage (ZAR20/hour);
- those whose incomes were below the food poverty line;
- workers in low-skilled occupations;
- informal workers;
- people who have less than a secondary level of education; and
- the unemployed.<sup>55</sup>

**Figure 8: Unequal Impact of COVID-19 on Employment**



Source: Vogel et al. (2021)<sup>56</sup>

Vulnerable individuals were more likely to be young, black South Africans, and women who faced higher levels of labour market vulnerability than men. The assessment does not mention whether internal migrants were a vulnerable group. A decomposition analysis has shown that vulnerability to COVID-19 was more concentrated among the poor. Higher income and education significantly lowered socioeconomic-related COVID-19 vulnerability.<sup>57</sup> Living in an urban region, being Black, and old all impacted on increasing socioeconomic-related COVID-19 vulnerability. Several studies have shown that vulnerability to COVID-19 had a strong gender dimension, deepening inequality between men and women in low-income communities.<sup>58</sup> Women also accounted for two-thirds of the net job losses between February and April 2020.<sup>59</sup> Tracking gendered employment trends in 2020 and 2021, one longitudinal study concluded that there was considerable churning in the labour market throughout 2020. However, when jobs were lost, women were more likely to lose, and where jobs were gained, women were less likely to benefit.<sup>60</sup> More specifically:

- Only 70% of women who were employed in February 2020 were still employed in April 2020; for men, the corresponding figure was 80%.
- Of those women who were employed in February 2020, 70% still had employment in January 2021. For men, the corresponding figure was 78%.
- Of these women, only 47% were in stable employment. For men, the figure was 61%.
- Of women who were not employed in February 2020, 19% had employment in January 2021, with the corresponding figure for men 31%.
- Of these women, 70% were unemployed throughout 2020. For men, the corresponding figure was 56%.

**Table 4: Gendered Labour Market Trends**

	Women	Men
<i>Of those employed in February 2020</i>		
% with employment in January 2021	69.5	77.7
% without employment in January 2021	30.5	22.3
<i>Of those not employed in February 2020</i>		
% with employment in January 2021	19.0	31.3
% without employment in January 2021	81.0	68.7
% of all adults with employment in all waves Feb 2020 – Jan 2021	21.0	37.1
as proportion of those employed in Feb 2020	46.5	61.2
% of all adults without employment in all waves Feb 2020 – Jan 2021	38.2	21.9
as proportion of those employed in Feb 2020	69.6	55.6

Source: Casale and Shepherd (2021)<sup>61</sup>

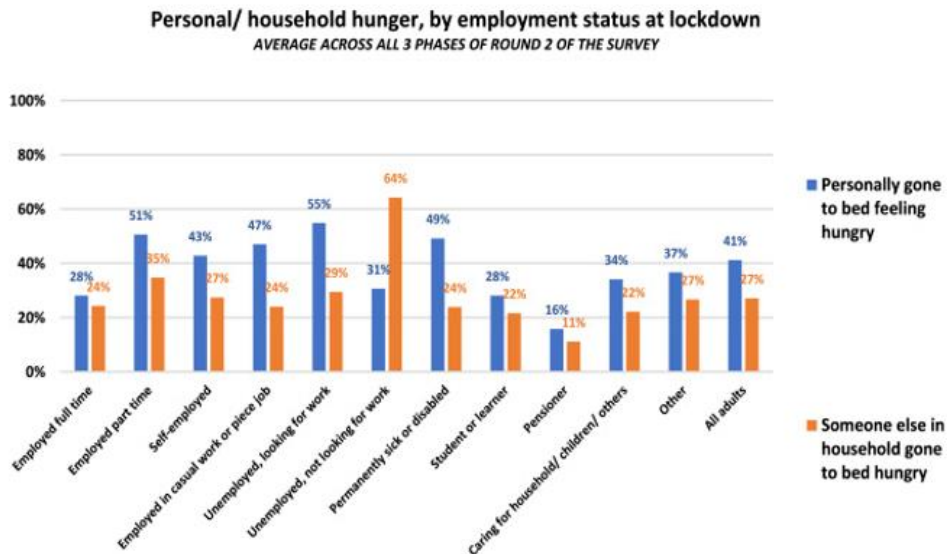
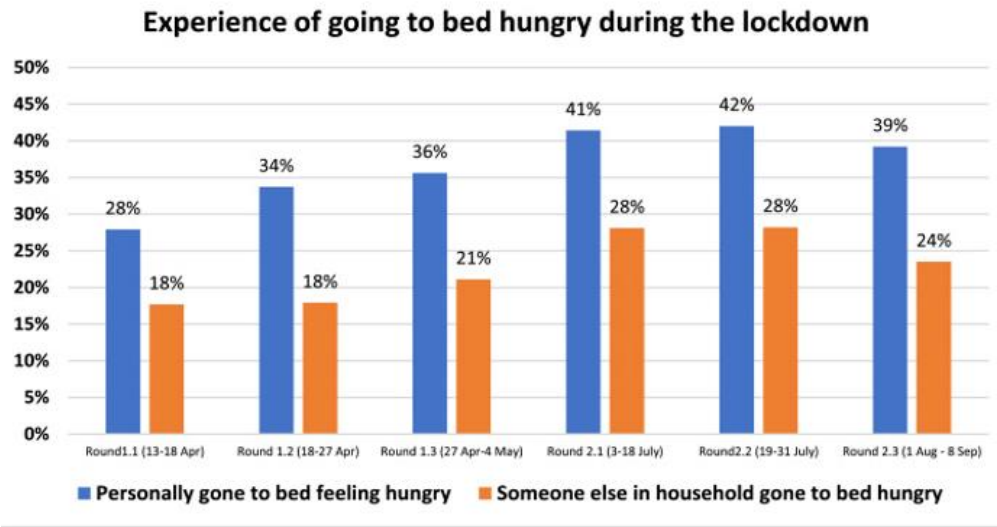
The economic disruptions of COVID-19 had a significant deleterious impact on household income and livelihoods in low-income neighbourhoods in urban areas. A major consequence was a significant increase in the levels of urban food insecurity. One study found an ‘unprecedented rise in hunger’ through several rounds of an online survey conducted in 2020 and 2021.<sup>62</sup> As Figure 10 shows, the proportion of respondents who reported going to bed hungry increased from 28% in the early weeks of the lockdown to 42% by mid-2020. The food insecurity of household members was related to employment status, with a high of 55% for the unemployed and a low of 28% for those in full-time employment. A telephone survey tracked household food insecurity across five survey waves from April 2020 to May 2021. The proportion of respondents who reported that their household had run out of food money in the previous month was 47% in April 2020 and 35% in April 2021.<sup>63</sup>

In Gauteng, almost a third (30%) of the population saw their salary and working hours reduced during the pandemic in 2020, and almost 20% lost a job at some point during the pandemic. Thirty percent of those in the lowest income bracket lost a job, compared to only 6% in the highest bracket. One in ten respondents closed a business in the pandemic. There was little difference between men and women in terms of salary and

reduced working hours, lost jobs, and closed businesses. But by late 2021, 49% of men and only 37% of women who had lost jobs or closed businesses were working.

According to the Gauteng City Region Observatory (GCRO), the COVID-19 pandemic had a devastating impact on households and the economy of Johannesburg. Half of the respondents in the GCRO 2020/21 Quality of Life Survey had their salary and working hours reduced or lost their job, and one in ten had to close a business. In total, 30% had a reduction in their salary and working hours and six of the nine municipalities reported rates between 30% and 32%. About 20% of the respondents lost their job, two percentage points above the provincial average. The percentage of people who had lost a job in 2020 ranged from 13% to 25% in the various municipalities. Figure 11 shows the geography of the economic impacts of the pandemic at the municipal level in Gauteng in terms of lost jobs and reduced salaries and working hours. Johannesburg is at the centre of each map where the most intense impacts were felt. A study of informal settlements in neighbouring Tshwane found that there were space constraints on social distancing, overburdened infrastructure, lack of savings, loss of income and food shortage, hunger and diseases, anxiety and depression, and poor access to education. <sup>64</sup>

**Figure 9: Levels of Hunger During COVID-19 Lockdown**



Source: Hart et al. (2021) <sup>65</sup>

In the second quarter of 2020, the Western Cape economy significantly contracted quarter-on-quarter.<sup>66</sup> Figure 12 shows that before the pandemic, the GDP growth rate was low and declining.<sup>67</sup> However, there was a sharp decrease of 6% in 2020, before rebounding in 2021. GDP per capita was significantly lower in 2020 and 2021 with a 7% drop in 2020. The growth rates of GFCF and consumption spending were minus 16% and minus 6.5% respectively. The labour force participation rate declined from 67% in 2019 to 55% in 2020, and the number of jobs fell from 2.52 million to 2.18 million (Figure 13). In Cape Town, formal sector job losses numbered 174,000. The informal sector was especially hit by the pandemic lockdown, as one study concluded: ‘Survivalist livelihood strategies were undermined by the economic disruption to the informal sector, while the

co-variate nature of the shock rendered social networks and informal insurance mechanisms ineffective, causing households to liquidate savings, default on insurance payments, and deepen their reliance on government grants.’<sup>68</sup>

Sectors of the Cape Town informal economy are highly dependent on the tourism market for customers and income. Therefore, the ban on international and national travel deprived informal traders of a market for several months in 2020.<sup>69</sup> A survey of informal traders in the Cape Town found that businesses closed from one to five months in 2020 leading to inventory loss, lack of income, depletion of savings, layoffs, and food shortages.<sup>70</sup> Average monthly profit halved compared to before the pandemic. Additionally, the impact of the shutdown on highly vulnerable day labourers was ‘nothing short of catastrophic.’<sup>71</sup> The pandemic left thousands of day labourers facing ‘the real prospect of economic hardship and starvation and a desperate need for help.’

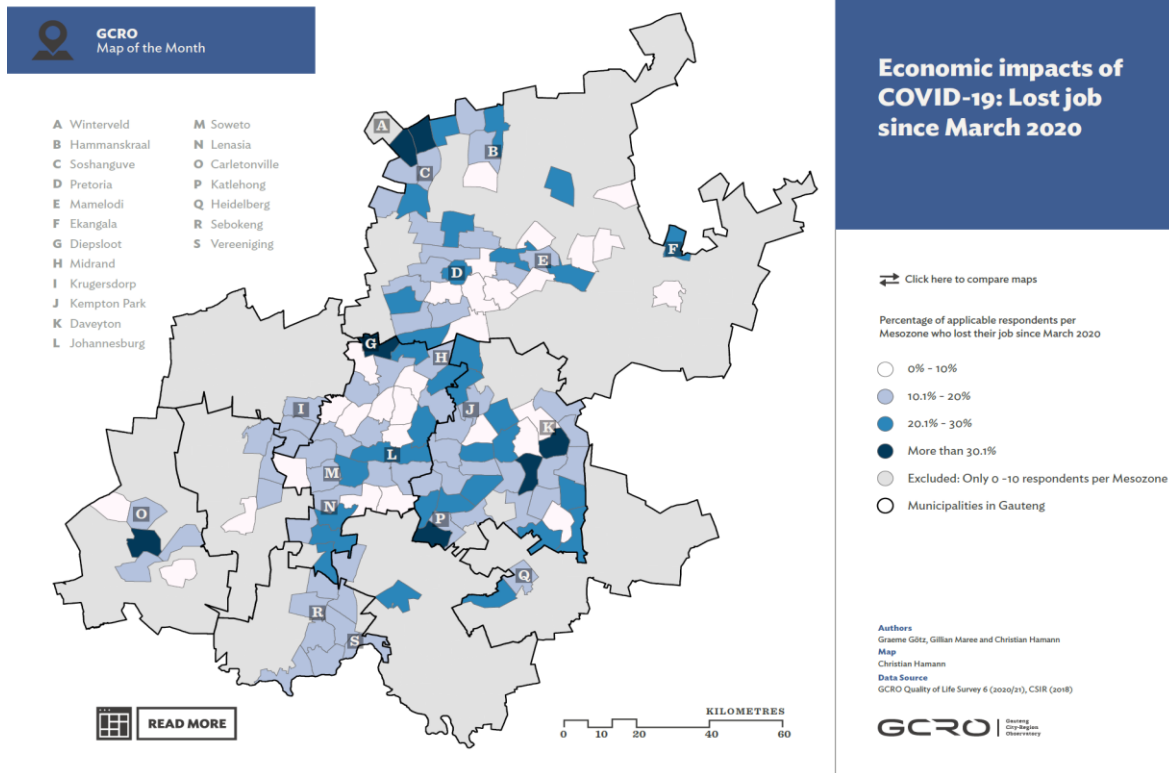
Table 5 shows that at the onset of the pandemic, the highest proportion below the food poverty line were black African (90%), female (62%) and in the 18-34 age group (46%). The highest proportion of low-wage workers were in the 35-54 age group (45%), African/black (82%), female (55%), and urban (57%). Low-skilled workers were predominantly black African (88%), female (68%), urban (53%) and aged 35-54 (46%). Informal sector workers were principally black African (82%), urban (60%), male (59%), and aged 35-54 (46%). Finally, the unemployed included a large number of black Africans (83%), females (57%), urban (52%) and youth below the age of 35 (56%).

**Table 5: Demographic Characteristics of Vulnerable Populations<sup>72</sup>**

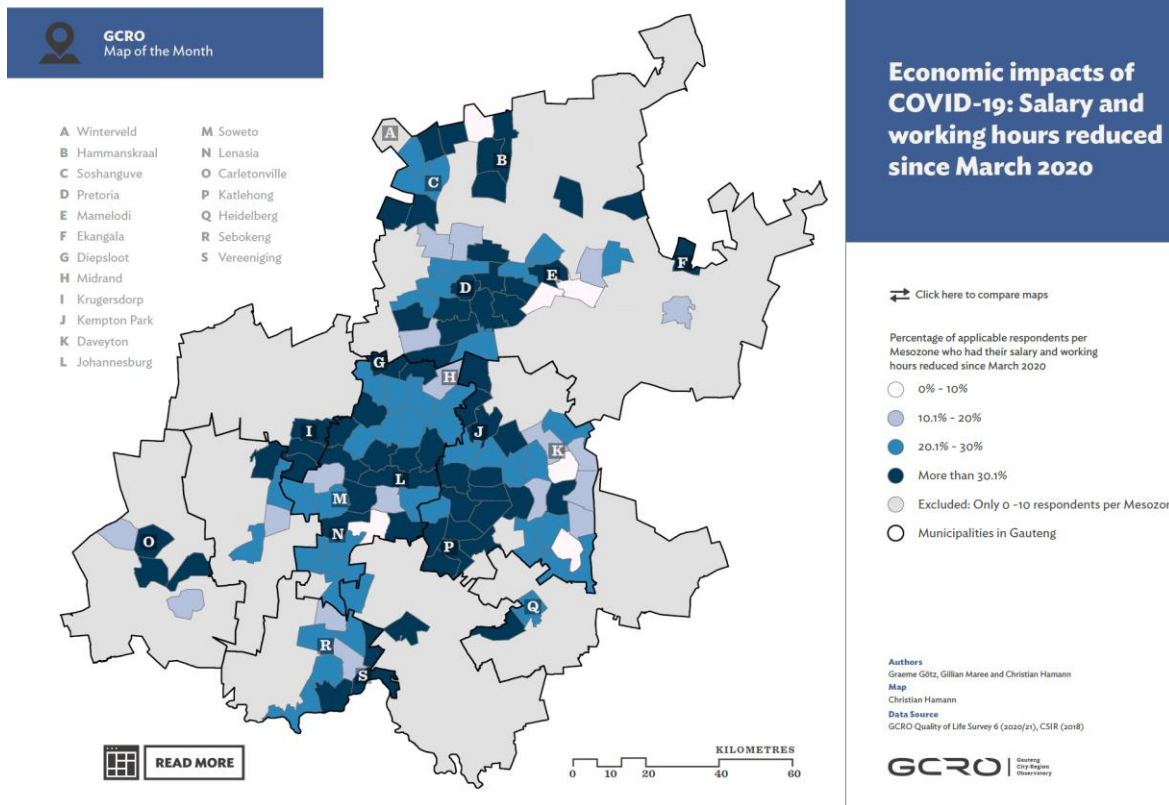
	Low wages (<NMW)	Below food poverty line	Low-skilled workers	Informal workers	< Completed secondary	Unemployed (broad)	All
<b>Total</b>	<b>32.2</b>	<b>30.3</b>	<b>20.5</b>	<b>28.2</b>	<b>50.0</b>	<b>32.2</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Age group</b>							
18-34	43.4	46.2	39.7	44.9	32.9	55.5	42.9
35-54	44.7	37.7	45.8	45.6	39.2	37.6	36.9
55-64	12.0	16.1	14.5	9.6	27.9	6.9	20.2
<b>Population Group</b>							
African/Black	81.6	89.7	88.2	81.8	83.5	87.6	78.6
Coloured	10.2	7.0	11.6	9.7	11.2	8.7	9.2
Indian/Asian	2.8	1.4	0.0	3.3	1.0	1.3	2.4
White	5.4	1.9	0.2	5.2	4.3	2.4	9.7
<b>Sex</b>							
Male	44.9	38.0	32.3	59.1	47	42.7	46.9
Female	55.1	62.0	67.7	40.9	53	57.3	53.1
<b>Geographic Area</b>							
Urban	57.5	48.7	52.7	60	51.9	52.0	59.6
Rural	42.5	51.4	47.3	40	48.1	48.0	40.4

Personal Grant Receipt							
Any grant	31.7	43.3	31.8	27.5	43.9	38.8	33.9
Child support	18.2	21.8	18.9	12.2	14.5	20.1	12.6
Old-age Pension	2.6	7.2	1.6	1.7	16.3	1.8	9.7
COVID-19 grant	8.1	11.3	7.5	9.1	8.9	12.5	7.6

**Figure 10: Geography of Pandemic Economic Impacts in Gauteng**

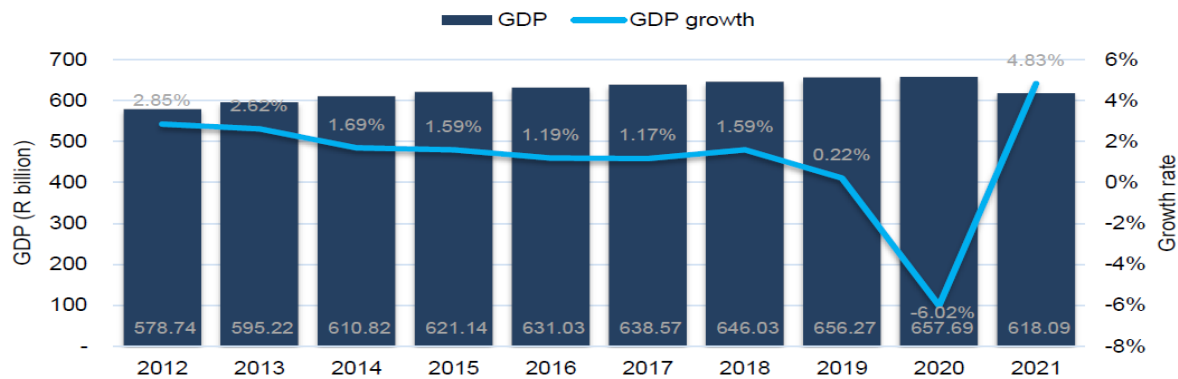


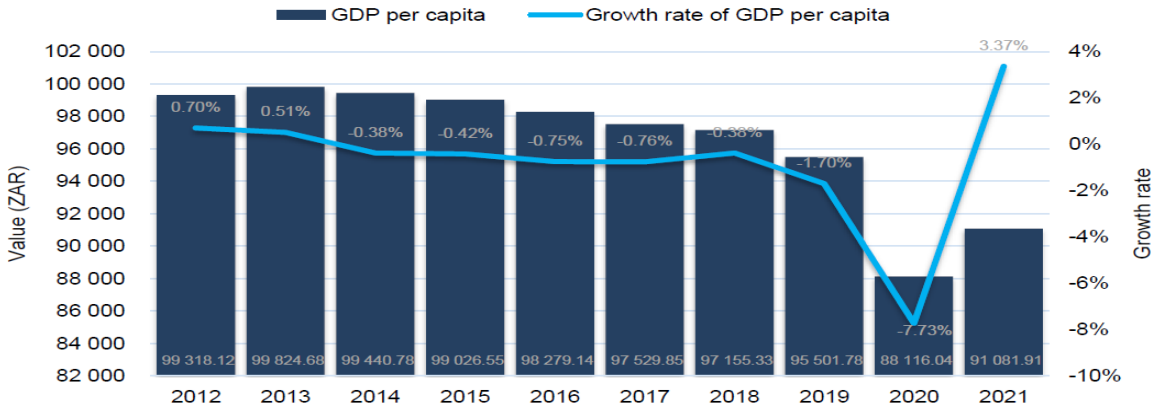




Source: <https://www.gcro.ac.za/outputs/map-of-the-month/detail/economic-impacts-covid-19/>

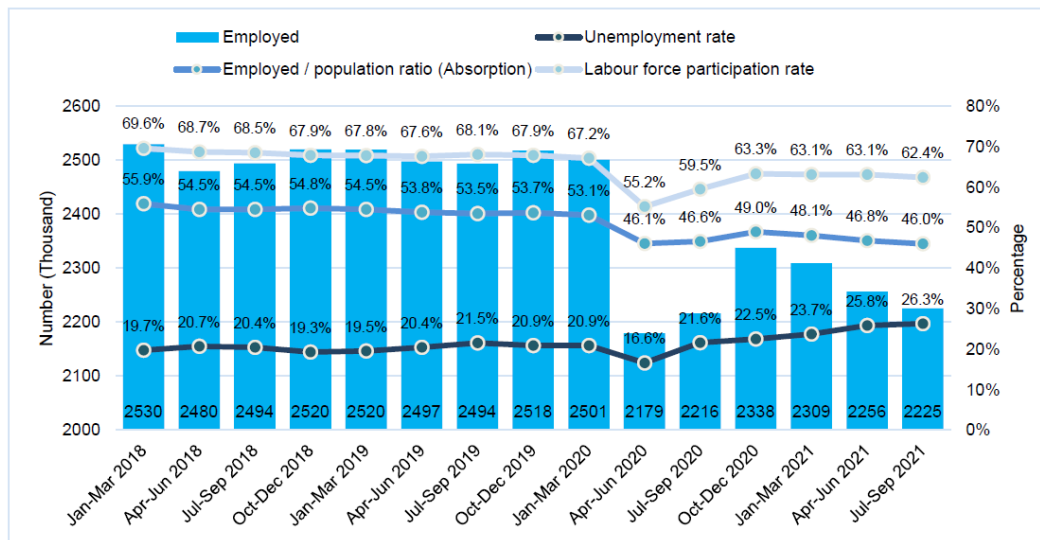
**Figure 11: GDP and GDP Growth in Western Cape, 2012-2021**





Source: Wesgro (2022).<sup>73</sup>

**Figure 12: Labour Market Participation in Western Province, 2018-2021**



Source: Wesgro (2022).<sup>74</sup>

## 2.4 COVID-19 Pandemic Relief

The lockdown caused enormous economic and social distress in poor households below the food poverty line, and with low-wage, low-skilled, and informal workers, as well as the unemployed.<sup>75</sup> The initial response to increasing food insecurity was a food parcel distribution programme aimed at an initial 250,000 low-income households. However, the target was never reached as the programme was undermined by local delays and corruption, and eventually abandoned.<sup>76</sup> In cities like Cape Town, civil society organizations were more effective in rolling out emergency food relief.<sup>77</sup> On 21 April 2020, three weeks into the lockdown, government announced it was allocating ZAR500 billion for pandemic relief and economic support package. This included ZAR370 billion to businesses in the form of loan guarantees, tax and payment deferrals and holidays, and

wage subsidies. Only 10% of the pandemic relief funding was directed to new and existing social protection programmes. The breakdown of allocations was as follows:

- ZAR 200 billion for loan guarantees to businesses;
- ZAR 100 billion to protect and create jobs;
- ZAR 70 billion for tax and payment deferrals and holidays to businesses;
- ZAR 50 billion towards increased social grants;
- ZAR40 billion towards a COVID-19 employment relief scheme for employees;
- ZAR20 billion to support the health budget;
- ZAR20 billion for municipalities for emergency water supplies, sanitation of public transport, food, and shelter for the homeless.

The government implemented three forms of cash assistance to individuals and households: (a) a special COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress (SRD) Grant, (b) a Temporary Employer-Employee Relief Scheme (TERS) and (c) additional benefits to existing social grants (Table 6).

**Table 6: Types of COVID-19 Relief Grants**

Grant	Pre-COVID-19 amount (rand per grant per month)	Absolute (rand per grant per month, unless indicated otherwise) and relative (%) increase		COVID-19 amount (rand per grant per month, unless indicated otherwise)	
		May	June-October	May	June-October
Older persons grant	1,860	250 (13.4%)	250 (13.4%)	2,110	2,110
War veterans grant	1,880	250 (13.3%)	250 (13.3%)	2,130	2,130
Disability grant	1,860	250 (13.4%)	250 (13.4%)	2,110	2,110
Care dependency grant	860	250 (13.4%)	250 (13.4%)	2,110	2,110
Foster child grant	1,040	250 (24.0%)	250 (24.0%)	1,290	1,290
Child support grant	440	300 (68.2%)	500 per caregiver	740	440 per grant + 500 per caregiver
COVID-19 social relief distress grant	NA	NA	NA	350	350

Source: Presidency of South Africa (2021) <sup>78</sup>

The SRD grant was intended for unemployed individuals in poor households. As many as 10 million individuals were eligible for the ZAR350 (USD19) per person per month grant. By June 2020, 6.5 million applications had been received and 4.3 million were

approved.<sup>79</sup> However, only 600,000 grants had been paid out. By December 2020, the approved number had risen to 5.25 million. Around 60% of the rejected applicants were eligible for the grant, leading one study to include that the SRD was poorly targeted and ‘beleaguered by both errors of inclusion and errors of exclusion.’<sup>80</sup>

Before the pandemic, the government had provided 18 million social grants every month, of which the child support grant (CSG) was the most important. A total of ZAR400 per month was paid to caregivers for each child in a family. In May 2020, a top-up to the existing social grants was introduced. Child support grants were topped up by an additional ZAR300 per child for the month of May, and by ZAR500 per caregiver (regardless of the number of children) from June to October 2020. There were 7.2 million beneficiaries of the top-up CSG (Table 7). Other grant benefits were topped up by an additional ZAR250 per month for six months.

The TERS was a wage subsidy scheme designed to support firms and workers in the formal sector. The policy targeted workers due to income loss because of full or partial closure of their employer’s operations.<sup>81</sup> Pandemic benefits ranged from 38% to 60% of a worker’s wage subject to lower and upper limits of ZAR 3,500 and ZAR 6,730 respectively. Government used existing structures, databases, and legislation to roll out the benefits. Around 1.8 million workers benefitted during the initial lockdown. The TERS was extended and revised as the pandemic progressed, and by 2022, nearly 6 million workers accessed the programme. Because the policy and its mode of implementation were limited to registered employees in the formal sector, few individuals who worked informally benefitted.

The government also provided financial support for SMMEs through grants, loans, and debt restructuring as part of the ZAR500 billion relief packages. Support was restricted to 100% owned businesses by citizens whose employees were at least 70% South African. ZAR500 million was allocated to small businesses to assist with payroll, rent, and utilities, but disbursed in the form of a few large loans to a small number of applicants. A Township and Rural Enterprise Programme (TERP) was later launched to provide a loan and grant package of up to ZAR10,000. In September 2020, a grant of ZAR1,000 was added for fruit and vegetable vendors. To qualify for TERP funding, enterprises had to be registered with the Companies Intellectual Property Commission, the South African Revenue Service, and the Unemployment Insurance Fund, which effectively excluded most informal enterprises.

**Table 7: Timeline and Expenditure on Pandemic Social Grants, 2020**

	July	August	September	October	November	December
Child support						
Beneficiary	7,176,924	7,201,867	7,215,275	7,227,030		

Top-up value per beneficiary	500	500	500	500		
Expenditure (Rm)	3,588	3,601	3,608	3,614		
Old age, including war veterans						
Beneficiary	3,695,946	3,697,156	3,697,549	3,705,893		
Top-up value per beneficiary	250	250	250	250		
Expenditure (Rm)	924	924	924	926		
Disability						
Beneficiary	1,064,944	1,060,392	1,056,921	1,053,996		
Top-up value per beneficiary	250	250	250	250		
Expenditure (Rm)	266	265	264	263		
Foster Care						
Beneficiary	361,175	359,852	370,005	373,528		
Top-up value per beneficiary	250	250	250	250		
Expenditure (Rm)	90	90	93	93		
Care dependency						
Beneficiary	157,157	157,056	157,260	157,542		
Top-up value per beneficiary	250	250	250	250		
Expenditure (Rm)	39	39	39	39		
Social relief of distress						
Paid recipients	5,565,222	5,962,787	6,023,725	6,115,659	5,943,494	5,225,609
Value per beneficiary	350	350	350	350	350	350
Cost based on paid recipients (Rm)	1,948	2,087	2,108	2,140	2,080	1,839
<b>TOTAL (Rm)</b>	<b>6,856.10</b>	<b>7,006.50</b>	<b>7,036.40</b>	<b>7,076.70</b>	<b>2,080.20</b>	<b>1,839.50</b>

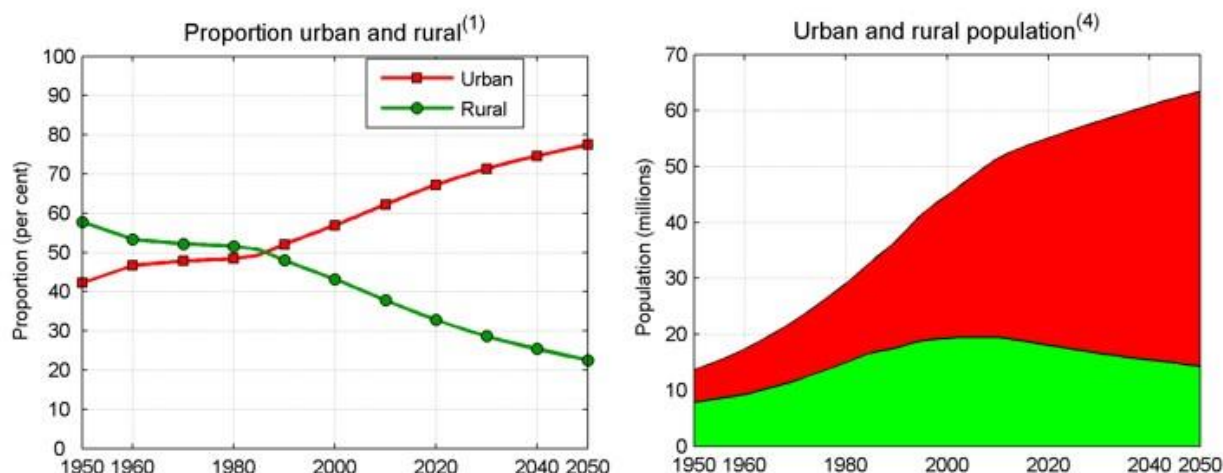
Source: van Seventer et al. (2021)<sup>82</sup>

### 3 Internal Migration Trends and COVID-19 Impacts

#### 3.1 Internal Migration Volume and Trends

South Africa is one of the most urbanized countries in Africa, with almost 70% of the population of 62 million living in cities and towns (Figure 14). This percentage is projected to reach 80% by 2050. At the same time, many urban dwellers (and particularly first-generation internal migrants) maintain close connections with rural homes where members of immediate and extended families (particularly the young and elderly) reside.<sup>83</sup>

**Figure 13: Urban and Rural Population of South Africa, 1950-2050**



Source: <https://businesstech.co.za/news/trending/62749/sa-population-flocking-to-cities/>

**Table 8: Internal Migration Estimates for Gauteng and Western Province, 2006-2021**

	Gauteng	Western Cape	Totals
<b>2006-2011</b>			
In-Migrants	1,382,128	420,480	1,802,608
Out-Migrants	424,150	144,253	568,403
Net Migration	957,978	276,227	1,234,205
<b>2011-2016</b>			
In-Migrants	1,519,244	458,270	1,977,514
Out-Migrants	505,574	160,673	666,247
Net Migration	1,013,670	298,047	1,311,267
<b>2016-2021</b>			
In-Migrants	1,643,590	493,621	2,137,211
Out-Migrants	574,705	177,313	752,018
Net Migration	1,068,885	316,308	1,385,193
<b>2006-2021 (Total)</b>			
In-Migrants	4,544,962	1,372,371	5,917,333
Out-Migrants	1,504,429	482,239	1,986,668
Net Migration	3,040,533	890,132	3,930,665

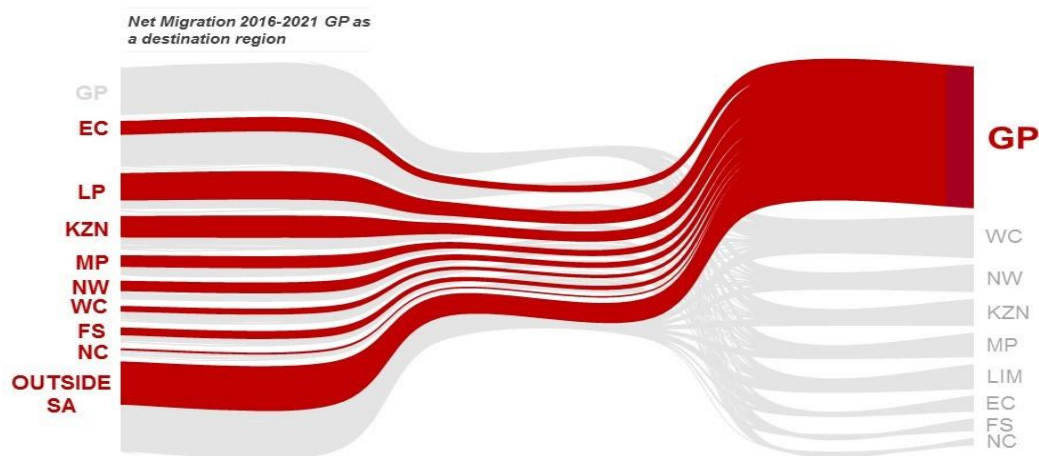
Source: Statistics South Africa (2023)<sup>84</sup>

Gauteng and Western Province are the major destinations for interprovincial and internal migrants (Figure 15). Table 8 shows Statistics South Africa data for patterns of in-migration and out-migration to and from the two provinces at five-year intervals for the period 2006 to 2021. Gauteng had approximately 4.5 million in-migrants and 1.5 million out-migrants for a net migration of around 3 million. The equivalent figures for Western

Province were 1.4 million, 480,000 and 890,00. Combined, the two provinces have experienced in-migration of 5.9 million, out migration of 2 million for a net gain of 3.9 million migrants. Figures for Census 2022 released in October 2023, confirm that the Eastern Cape remains the major source area for migrants to the Western Cape and a significant source for Gauteng (Table 9).

**Figure 14: Inter-Provincial Migration to Gauteng (GP) and Western Cape, 2016-2021**

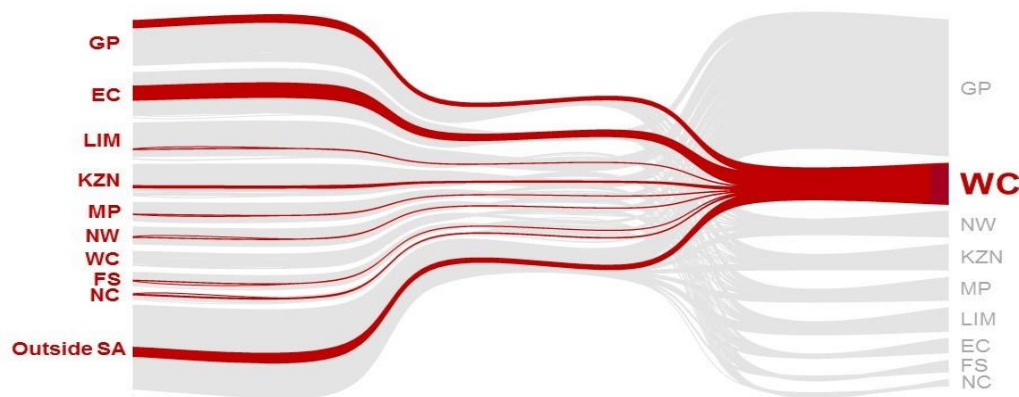
**GAUTENG RECEIVES THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF IN-MIGRANTS FOR THE PERIOD 2016 TO 2021** *The economic strength of Gauteng influences its attractiveness to migrants*



THE SOUTH AFRICA I KNOW, THE HOME I UNDERSTAND

**WESTERN CAPE RECEIVES THE SECOND HIGHEST NUMBER OF IN-MIGRANTS FOR PERIOD 2016 to 2021.** *Opportunities of employment, study and quality of life play an important role amongst the push pull factors between EC and WC*

*Net Migration 2016-2021 WC as a destination region*



THE SOUTH AFRICA I KNOW, THE HOME I UNDERSTAND

Source: <https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=11331>

**Table 9: Inter-Provincial Migrants in 2022**

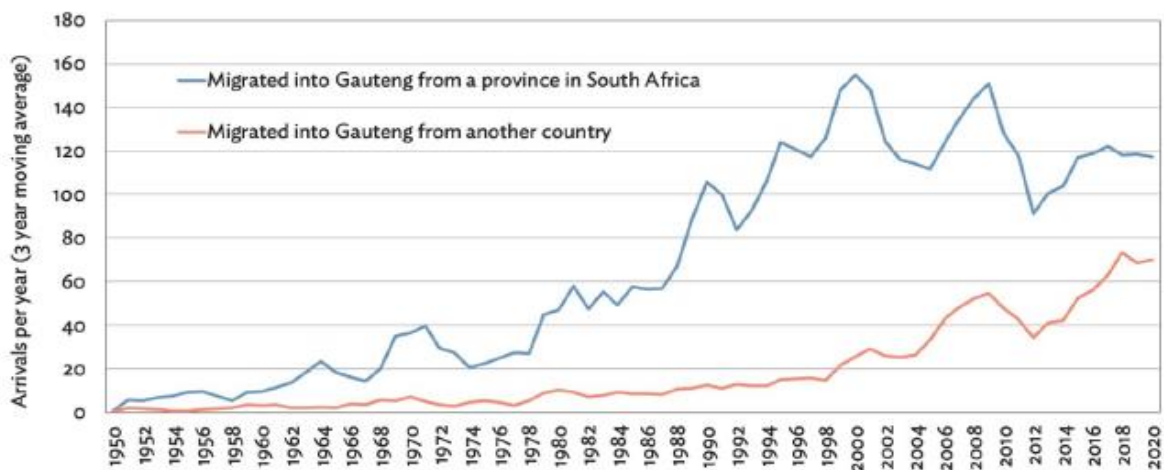
Origins:	Destination:		Destination:	
	Western Cape	%	Gauteng	%
Western Cape			98,519	2.5
Eastern Cape	1,134,674	67.8	495,494	12.4
Gauteng	241,313	14.4		
Kwazulu-Natal	89,660	5.4	738,399	18.5
Northern Cape	76,481	4.6	64,947	1.6
Free State	60,247	3.6	342,952	8.6
North West	26,411	1.6	375,556	9.4
Mpumalanga	24,395	1.5	501,190	12.5
Limpopo	21,591	1.3	1,378,304	34.5
Total Migrants	1,674,772		3,995,361	

Source: Statistics South Africa (2023)<sup>85</sup>

### 3.2 Pre-Pandemic Migration Profile

Existing data provide an, albeit incomplete, profile of the pre-pandemic migrant population in Gauteng (and Johannesburg) and the Western Cape (and Cape Town). First, regarding the timing of first migration, Figure 16 provides a timeline of year of arrival of inter-provincial migrants between 1990 and 2020 showing (a) a dramatic increase in in-migration after the collapse of apartheid influx controls in the 1980s; and (b) a slowing rate of growth in in-migration after 2000. Similar data are not available for Cape Town.

**Figure 15: Year of Arrival of Migrants in Johannesburg, 1990-2020**



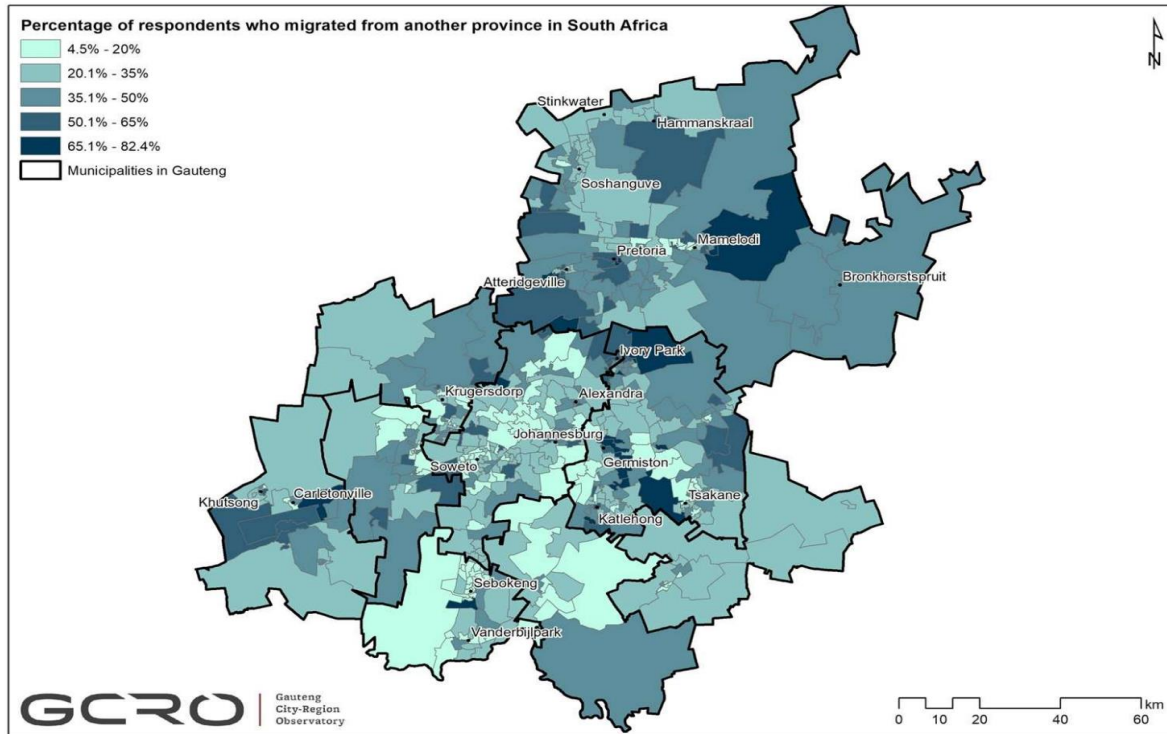
Source: de Kadt et al. (2021)<sup>86</sup>



Second, in relation to the geography of migration, Figure 17 shows that the proportion of migrants in different Gauteng municipalities varies considerably. The highest proportion of migrants are in low-income townships and informal settlements. Within Johannesburg, there is a distinction between higher-income areas in the northern half of the city (less than 20%) and low-income areas in the southern half (20-50%). Third, in terms of the age profile of in-migrants, Figure 18 from the 2011 Census compares the migrant and non-migrant populations and shows that the non-migrant is more youthful while the migrant population is more heavily concentrated in the 20-39 age range.

Table 10 provides a demographic profile of three types of migrant individual in the Western Cape and Gauteng in 2011: intra-provincial and long- and short-term inter-provincial. In both provinces, short-term interprovincial migrants tend to be younger than the other two groups. Except for intraprovincial migrants in Western Province, all other categories contained more male than female migrants. Consistent with their younger age profile, short-term interprovincial migrants were more likely to be single and in single-person households. The educational profile of the three groups was similar with 40-50% in each category failing to finish high school. In all six cases, migrant status was related to income. As income increased, the proportion of all types of migrants decreased. For example, the proportion of short-term temporary migrants in the lowest income quintile was 32-33% compared to 17-18% in the highest income profile.

**Figure 16: Spatial Distribution of Inter-Provincial Migrants in Gauteng, 2021**

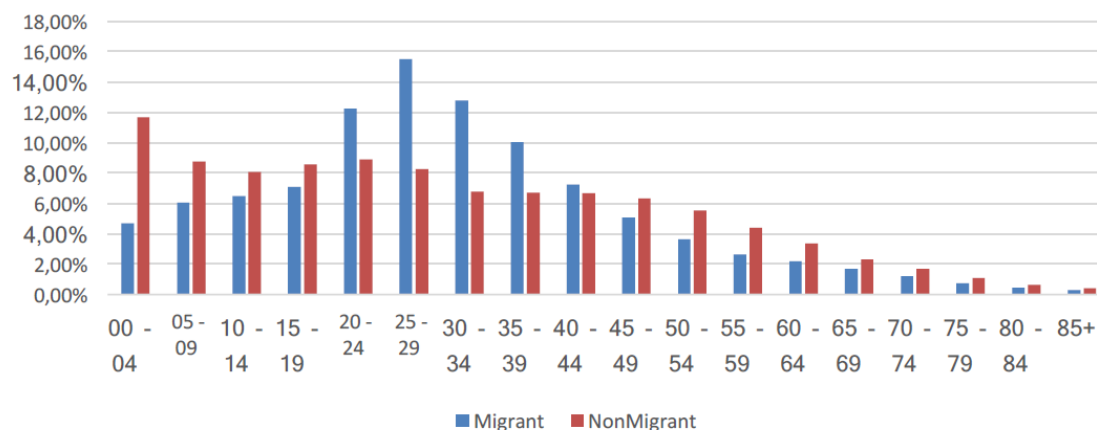


Source: <https://www.gcro.ac.za/outputs/map-of-the-month/detail/economic-impacts-covid-19/>

Before the pandemic, an estimated 24 million people, or two-thirds of the adult population, send, receive, or both send and receive domestic remittances.<sup>87</sup> The total volume of domestic remittances was estimated at between \$11 billion and \$13 billion. The supermarket chain, Shoprite, was the first to introduce money transfer at its Money Market counters in 2006. With more than 950 supermarket locations, the service has a broad coverage in urban and rural areas. The launch of a simple, counter-based, cash-in, cash-out service at a low flat rate attracted migrants who were not regular users of the formal banking system. In the decade that followed, there was a flood of new offerings by retailers, banks, and mobile operators (Figures 19). Most major banks now allow account holders to send money to a mobile wallet that the recipient can access from an ATM. These include FNB's eWallet, Absa's CashSend, Standard Bank's Instant Money, and Nedbank's Send-iMali. Digital remittance providers include MTN Mobile Money, WChat Wallet, and MobiCash. Vodacom's M-Pesa, which is a major digital remittance player in other African countries, started in South Africa in 2010 and exited in 2016.<sup>88</sup>

**Figure 17: Migrant Status by Age in Western Province, 2011**

### Migrant Status by Age 2011



Source: Dinbabo et al. (2016)<sup>89</sup>

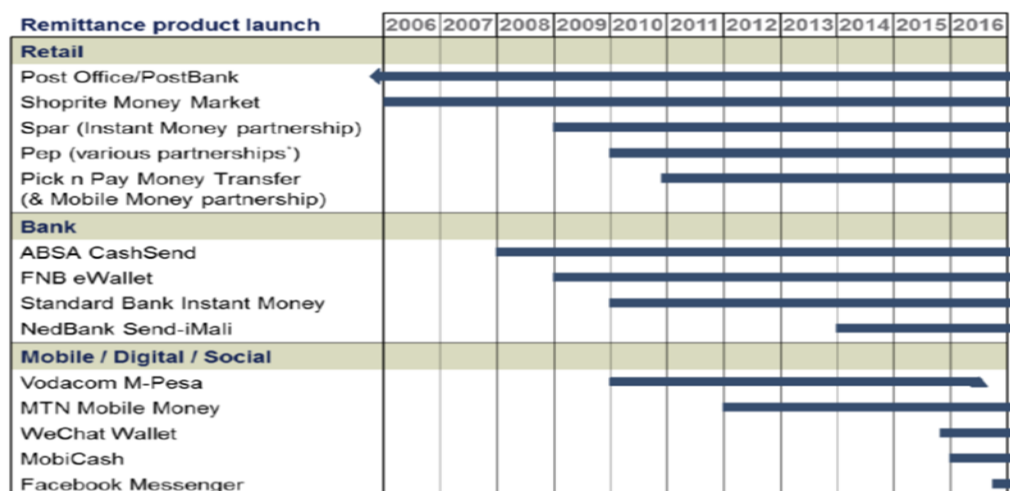
**Table 10: Demographic Profile of Types of Internal Migrants, 2011**

	Western Cape			Gauteng		
	Intra-Provincial	Long term Inter-Provincial	Short term Inter-Provincial	Intra-Provincial	Long term Inter-Provincial	Short term Inter-Provincial
<b>Age cohort</b>						
15-24 years	22.6	21.0	34.5	21.8	20.5	37.0
25-34 years	33.6	42.3	36.0	37.4	45.4	39.5
35-44 years	24.4	20.5	16.4	24.4	21.1	14.6
45-54 years	12.6	9.8	7.6	11.2	9.0	6.1
55-64 years	6.9	6.4	5.5	5.3	4.1	2.8
<i>Mean (years)</i>	<i>34.1</i>	<i>33.1</i>	<i>30.9</i>	<i>33.5</i>	<i>32.3</i>	<i>29.4</i>
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	48.6	52.2	52.3	50.4	54.6	52.9
Female	51.4	47.8	47.7	49.6	45.4	47.1
<b>Race</b>						
African	31.4	68.9	60.6	68.7	81.3	80.1
Coloured	37.7	6.9	8.0	3.1	1.9	2.2
Indian	1.4	1.5	2.0	3.4	4.4	4.1
White	27.2	21.8	27.5	24.0	12.0	13.1
Other	2.2	0.1	1.9	0.8	0.4	0.6
<b>Marital status</b>						
Married or lived together	57.7	51.3	45.4	56.9	49.9	42.0
Never married	36.2	44.8	50.1	38.1	46.6	54.8
Other	6.0	4.0	4.5	5.0	3.5	3.2
<b>Educational attainment</b>						
None	1.4	1.6	1.6	1.8	2.2	1.7
Incomplete primary	5.5	6.1	5.4	4.1	4.5	3.6
Incomplete secondary	38.5	46.7	40.8	32.6	38.0	33.3

Matric	32.1	29.0	31.2	34.6	36.0	39.8
Matric + Cert. / Dip.	6.7	4.5	5.9	8.8	6.8	7.5
Degree	15.3	11.7	14.7	17.4	12.2	13.7
Other/Unspecified	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.4	0.4
<b>Area type</b>						
Urban	94.0	95.1	90.5	97.7	97.2	97.0
Rural	6.0	4.9	9.6	2.3	2.8	3.0
<b>Household size</b>						
One person	8.5	16.3	16.7	13.2	18.9	21.3
Two to three persons	40.8	41.4	46.5	43.9	40.4	46.6
Four to five persons	34.7	30.4	25.6	31.0	27.8	22.4
More than 5 persons	16.0	12.0	11.2	11.9	12.9	9.7
<i>Mean household size</i>	<i>3.8</i>	<i>3.4</i>	<i>3.2</i>	<i>3.4</i>	<i>3.3</i>	<i>3.0</i>
<b>Income quintile</b>						
Quintile1	12.9	18.9	16.8	13.2	16.7	18.3
Quintile2	11.5	15.4	11.0	8.6	11.1	8.5
Quintile3	19.2	22.7	21.5	15.9	20.8	20.6
Quintile4	19.7	16.5	17.8	20.1	20.7	20.7
Quintile5	36.8	26.5	32.9	42.2	30.7	31.9

Source: Kleinhans and Yu (2020)<sup>90</sup>

**Figure 18: Remittance Service Providers in South Africa**



	Bank	Retail	Mobile/Digital	Money transfer org.	Cash / goods
Leading providers					
Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Send money by SMS to any cell phone using ATM, online, or mobile banking, or</li> <li>Account transfers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Send money from a retail store to a recipient who retrieves funds at another location</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Send money by phone; utilize agent networks to cash in/cash out</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traditional brick and mortar money transfer operators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People bring cash and/or goods to family and friends on visits</li> </ul>
Market share	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>50%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>20%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&lt;5%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>25-30%</li> </ul>
Typical cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>R8-10 per transfer</li> <li>Account fees vary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>R10</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Free to R10</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Free (not common to hire couriers)</li> </ul>
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low cost</li> <li>Integration with other banking services/ mobile apps</li> <li>Recipients not need accounts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low cost</li> <li>Accessible footprint</li> <li>No bank account needed and additional financial services offered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low cost</li> <li>Convenience due to high penetration of mobile phones</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accessible storefront network</li> <li>No account needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Universally accepted</li> </ul>
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not interoperable across banks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requires cash out in stores, often with queues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited agent networks for cash in/cash out and payment options</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High cost</li> <li>Geared to international senders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Risk of loss or theft</li> <li>Transfers are limited by visit frequency</li> </ul>

Source: Technoserve (2016)<sup>91</sup>

### 3.3 COVID-19 Pandemic and Internal Migration

The impacts of the pandemic on internal migration have not received much attention to date.<sup>92</sup> A few studies have demonstrated that the pandemic vulnerability and impacts differed between urban and rural areas, but do not directly address the consequences for rural-urban migrants per se.<sup>93</sup> Recent surveys of the economic impact of COVID-19 in South Africa do not capture the socioeconomic conditions and specific experiences and challenges of internal migrants during successive waves of the pandemic.<sup>94</sup> There is therefore a sizable knowledge gap surrounding the impacts of COVID-19 on the country's large internal migrant population, which this project aims to address. Our desktop review found a small number of case studies focused on internal migrants conducted during the early months of the pandemic.

- Statistics South Africa conducted a nonprobability sample survey in July 2020 which captured 1,300 South African-born migrants.<sup>95</sup> Findings included: (a) 6% changed their provincial residence during the national lockdown, most moving in the period between the announcement and the start of the lockdown; (b) 12% travelled across provincial boundaries after the start of the national lockdown, despite a general prohibition on interprovincial travel. More than 40% of these crossed provincial boundaries to attend funerals or to provide essential services (both allowable reasons for travel); and (c) 18% of migrants remitted during lockdown. About one-third of these remitted a smaller amount than usual.
- A study of a rural community in the rural northeast of the country reported that: (a) the share of rural residents initiating a migration move decreased by 11% between 2019 and 2020; (b) the share of temporary migrants returning to the community

increased from 8% to 13%; (c) three-quarters of these return migrants who were employed in 2019 were no longer employed in 2020; (d) local job losses were highest among those employed in construction, domestic work, and unskilled work. Among migrants, retail workers, skilled workers, and drivers had the highest job loss; (d) of the return migrants, 49% had lost their job, 25% were on unpaid leave, and 18% experienced reduced pay; (e) the proportion of migrants remitting money or goods declined from 45% to 32%; and (f) continuously employed migrants had five times higher odds of continuing to remit than those who were unemployed.<sup>96</sup>

- A rapid mobile survey used telephone interviews to survey a sample of 7,074 adults nationwide in May and June 2020. The report on ‘moving during times of crisis’ addresses whether adults moved to a different household at two critical stages of the initial South African lockdown: when the lockdown was first announced in March (and did this involve an inter-provincial move); and second, at the end of the Level 5 lockdown in May 2020. The total number of ‘movers’ was 5.41 million or approximately 16% of all 18-year-olds and older. The study identified three subgroups: (a) adults who moved in anticipation, or at the start, of the lockdown and who did not move again (2.71 million or 8% of adults). Approximately half of these moves (51%) were interprovincial (1.9 million adults); (b) adults who only moved in May (1.69 million or 5% of adults); and (c) ‘doublemovers’ who moved in both March and May (1 million or 3% of adults) (Table 11).

**Table 11: Extent of Mobility in March and May 2020**

	No.	% of adult population
All adult movers (moved in March and/or in May)	5,407,000	15.5
Moved in March only	2,709,000	7.8
Moved in May only	1,693,000	4.9
Moved in both March and May	1,005,000	2.9
Share of all March moves that were inter-provincial	1,904,000	51.3

Source: Posel and Casel (2021)<sup>97</sup>

- The individual characteristics of the movers and non-movers were as follows (Table 12): (a) 54% of the movers were between 30 and 59 years old. Youth aged 18-29 constituted 37% of movers; (b) while both males and females were movers, males were more likely to be movers than females (55% versus 45%) and even more likely to be double movers (57% versus 43%); (c) the vast majority of all categories of movers were black Africans; (d) 61% of movers were employed pre-pandemic, while only 51% were employed in May 2020. The proportion of double movers was similar for those

employed in February and May 2020; and (e) only 15% of the movers were in receipt of social grants.

**Table 12: Individual and Household Characteristics of Movers and Non-Movers, March-May 2020**

Individuals	Moved (%)	Moved in March Only (%)	Moved in May Only (%)	Double-Movers (%)	Non-Movers (%)
<b>Age</b>					
18-29 years	36.7	39.8	33.5	33.8	28.4
30-59 years	54.1	51.3	54.2	61.5	56.3
60 and older	9.2	9.0	12.3	4.7	15.3
<b>Sex</b>					
Female	45.2	46.4	44.5	42.9	54.9
Male	54.8	53.6	55.5	57.1	45.1
<b>Race</b>					
African	81.4	83.4	74.6	87.5	77.4
Coloured	9.5	5.1	18.2	6.3	9.7
Indian	1.5	2.6	0.6	0.0	2.7
White	7.7	8.9	6.5	6.2	10.2
<b>Employment</b>					
Employed in February	60.8	57.9	61.4	67.6	50.4
Employed in April	51.3	50.3	45.5	63.9	42.7
<b>Social Grants</b>					
Social grant recipient	14.9	17.3	12.1	13.1	18.2
N	984	496	286	202	5,954
<b>Households</b>					
Average Size	4.8	4.8	5.0	4.7	5.1
Children in Household (%Yes)	59.8	54.6	71.1	54.8	68.8
<b>Location</b>					
Urban	81.2	81.5	81.8	79.4	82.6
Rural	18.8	18.5	18.2	20.6	17.4
<b>Dwelling</b>					
Formal	75.3	84.4	64.8	67.9	80.1
Informal	16.5	9.2	29.0	15.2	10.2
Traditional	6.4	5.2	5.2	12.1	8.7

Source: Posel and Casel (2021) <sup>98</sup>

Using data from the 2011 census, a recent study distinguished between three different types of migrants and constructed an employment profile for each group in the Western Cape and Gauteng). These include intra-provincial migrants, long-term interprovincial migrants (who migrated between 2004 and 2007) and short-term interprovincial migrants (who migrated between 2008 and 2011). In both provinces, intra-provincial migrants have a higher skills profile than interprovincial migrants. Of the latter two groups, short-term migrants tend to have lower skill levels. Interprovincial migrants tend

to have a stronger presence in sectors such as construction and domestic work in private households, as well as in informal employment. In each of these sectors, longer-term migrants are better represented than short-term migrants, suggesting that employment access improves with the length of time in the city.

**Table 13: Labour Market Characteristics of Internal Migrants, 2011**

	Western Cape			Gauteng		
	Intra-Provincial	Long term Inter-Provincial	Short term Inter-Provincial	Intra-Provincial	Long term Inter-Provincial	Short term Inter-Provincial
<b>Occupation</b>						
Senior legislators	12.8	9.8	11.5	11.9	9.7	10.3
Professionals	9.7	7.3	9.5	11.5	9.0	10.1
Technical associates	10.8	7.8	9.2	10.0	7.9	9.0
Clerks	14.8	11.5	12.4	14.8	13.3	13.8
Service workers	16.2	17.4	17.2	17.0	18.9	18.0
Skilled agriculture	0.9	0.5	0.7	0.4	0.3	0.4
Craft and related	10.2	12.0	10.2	10.4	12.2	11.3
Plant and machinery	5.0	5.9	5.5	4.7	5.9	5.5
Elementary job	13.1	19.0	17.0	10.8	12.9	12.4
Domestic workers	6.6	8.7	6.7	8.6	9.9	9.2
Other	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Skill Level</b>						
Skilled	33.3	24.9	30.2	33.3	26.7	29.4
Semi-skilled	47.0	47.4	46.0	47.3	50.6	49.0
Unskilled	19.7	27.7	23.8	19.4	22.8	21.6
<b>Industry</b>						
Agriculture, hunting	4.0	4.7	5.4	1.4	1.6	1.7
Mining and quarrying	0.3	0.3	0.5	1.2	1.2	1.6
Manufacturing	10.4	10.2	9.6	9.5	10.6	10.3
Electricity, water, gas	0.8	0.9	0.7	0.9	0.9	1.0
Construction	6.8	10.0	8.7	7.3	8.6	8.2
Wholesale and retail	19.4	19.4	19.1	17.2	17.7	16.9
Transport and storage	6.8	5.9	6.1	7.1	7.4	7.1
Financial intermediary	19.9	19.9	20.9	23.3	21.4	22.0
CSP services	24.0	18.5	20.7	21.8	19.0	20.4
Private household	7.6	10.2	8.4	10.2	11.5	10.9
Other	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
<b>Sector</b>						
Formal	79.2	76.1	77.2	77.1	76.2	75.9
Informal	9.7	10.5	10.5	8.0	9.2	8.9
Other/Unspecified	11.2	13.4	12.2	14.8	14.6	15.3

Source: Kleinhans and Yu (2020)<sup>99</sup>

## 4 KNOMAD-SAMP Survey Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Methodology



The survey was conducted in the two major South African cities of Cape Town and Johannesburg. Although migrants from every ethnic and language group can be found in both cities, for the purposes of this study we focused on the Eastern Cape Province which, as we have seen, is a major migration source for both cities. Because Eastern Cape migrants reside in suburbs, townships, and informal settlements in both cities, we decided not to sample one area or community in each city, but to target a variety of different types of settlement.

In the largest settlements known to house many Eastern Cape migrants we aimed to target 150-200 households. In other areas of both cities, we targeted 50-100 households. In all, we sampled migrants in 9 different areas in both cities. Because there was no sampling frame and we only wished to interview migrants from the Eastern Cape, we elected to use a random sampling approach. In each of the survey sites, we chose a starting point, usually a street on the edge of the settlement and assigned numbers to the first six households on the street. We then rolled a dice to determine the location of the first household to be selected into the sample. Thereafter, we would throw the dice to determine the selection of the second household for interview, repeating the process until a sufficient sample size was reached. If a selected household was not from the Eastern Cape, we would interview the next household from the Eastern Cape on that street.

The breakdown of households by sample area of each city is shown in Table 14. In each area we sought to maintain two thirds: one third balance between migrants that had come to the city after 2010 and those that had come before 2020. In the final sample, the ratio was 65% (post 2010) and 35% (pre-2010). Surveys were loaded onto tablets supplied by the University of the Western Cape and administered to a migrant head of household or their representative. The final sample used in the sections that follow comprises 1,733 completed household surveys (Johannesburg N = 892, Cape Town N = 841).

**Table 14: Distribution of Sample in Cape Town and Johannesburg**

	N	%
Cape Town		
Langa	143	8.3
Dunoon	122	7.0
Nyanga	96	5.5
Joe Slovo	96	5.5
Gugulethu	88	5.1
Imizamo Yethu	81	4.7
Khayelitsha	75	4.3
Delft	60	3.5
Phillipi	55	3.2
Other	2	0.1
	818	100.0

Johannesburg		
Thembisa	191	11.0
Alexandra Park	151	8.7
Orange Farm	121	7.0
Tshepisoong	93	5.4
Soweto	84	4.8
Cosmo City	82	4.7
Randburg	65	3.7
Benoni	56	3.2
Edenvale	48	2.8
Other	24	1.5
	898	100.0

## 4.2 Migrant Profile

The migrant survey respondents were 54% male and 46% female which is indicative of the fact that migration flows from the Eastern Cape have become much more feminized since the end of apartheid and comprise roughly equal numbers of men and women (Table 15).<sup>100</sup> The survey sample was dominated by individuals of working age in the age range 30-50 (62% of the total). A further 28% were youth under the age of 30. Only a few migrants (12% of the total) were over the age of 50 with just 2% over the age of 60. Despite the relatively mature age profile of the sample, two-thirds were unmarried with only 17% married and another 8% co-habiting. Almost all the migrants had some level of schooling with 70% having attended and 41% having completed high school. Post-secondary education was relatively rare, although 8% had some tertiary education. The relatively low levels of educational achievement were reflected in the occupational profile of the sample. Nearly three-quarters of the sample were unemployed immediately before migrating while another 14% were scholars/students. No job category had more than 4% of the sample.

**Table 15: Demographic Profile of Internal Migrant Population**

<b>Sex</b>	<b>%</b>
Male	53.9
Female	46.1
<b>Age</b>	<b>%</b>
<20	0.1
20-29	27.3
30-39	40.5
40-49	20.1
50-59	9.4
60+	2.2
<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>%</b>
Unmarried	65.0

Married	16.6
Living together/cohabiting	8.3
Divorced	3.4
Widowed	2.7
Separated	2.5
Abandoned	0.9
<b>Highest Education</b>	<b>%</b>
No formal schooling	1.0
Some primary school	4.3
Primary completed	4.1
Some high school	28.9
High school completed	41.2
Post-secondary qualification	12.2
Some university	4.3
University completed	3.6
Post-graduate	0.4
<b>Occupation Before Migrating</b>	<b>%</b>
Unemployed/jobseeker	72.7
Scholar/student	13.6
Agricultural worker/farmer	3.1
Domestic worker	2.0
Office worker	1.2
Manual worker unskilled	1.2
Manual worker skilled	1.2
Hotel/restaurant worker	0.6
Teacher	0.5
Informal sector employee	0.5
Military/police/security	0.5
Informal sector business operator	0.4
Formal sector business owner	0.4
Mineworker	0.4
Professional	0.2
Health worker	0.2
Other	1.4
Total	100.0

Only 17% of the migrant households surveyed in Cape Town and Johannesburg consisted of nuclear families with a wife/female partner and husband/male partner living in the same household (Table 16). Another 10% were extended family households with other relatives and non-relatives present. Over 70% of the households (including single-person households) were headed either by a single male (35%) or single female (38%). These patterns are broadly consistent with studies that show that conventional nuclear households are the exception in South African cities.<sup>101</sup> The survey captured households

living in various types of accommodation including shacks in informal settlements (30%), brick houses in township areas (27%), and flats (11%) (Table 17). Smaller or single-person households living in rooms of various types were also captured (20%).

**Table 16: Migrant Household Type**

	N	%
Female centered (No husband/male partner in household, may include relatives, children, friends)	663	38.3
Male centered (No wife/female partner in household, may include relatives, children, friends)	600	34.6
Nuclear (Husband/male partner and wife/female partner with or without children)	299	17.3
Extended (Husband/male partner and wife/female partner and children and relatives)	168	9.7
Under 18-headed household (head is 17-year-old or less)	3	0.1
Total	1,733	100.0

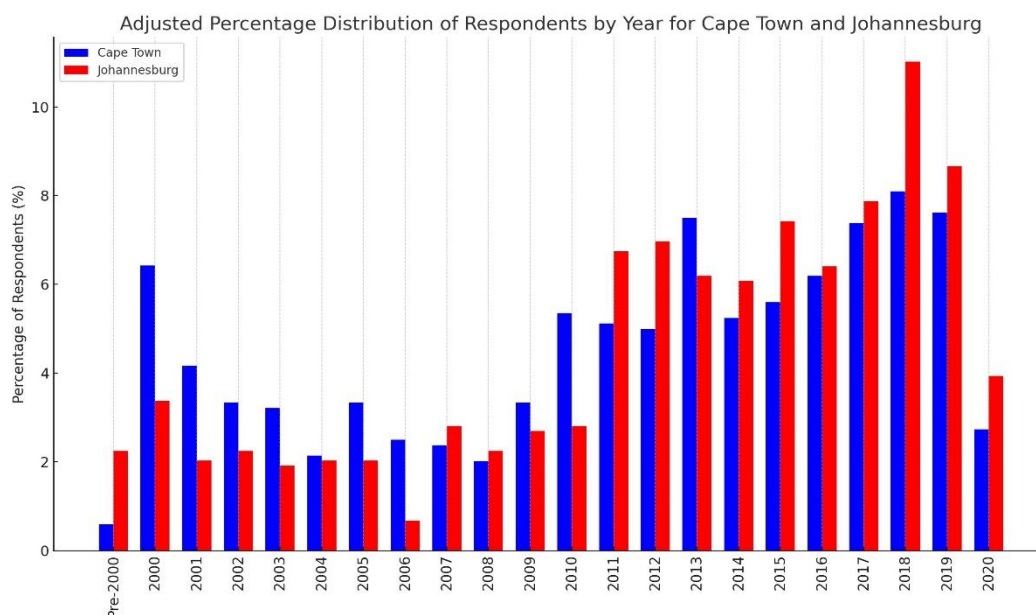
**Table 17: Migrant Housing Type**

	N	%
Informal hut/shack	525	30.3
House	469	27.1
Room in backyard	216	12.5
Flat	186	10.7
Room in house	120	6.9
Traditional dwelling/homestead	61	3.5
Room in flat	37	2.1
Hostel/compound	83	4.8
Town house	20	1.2
Hotel/boarding house	12	0.7
Mobile home	1	0.1
Other	3	0.2
Total	1,733	100.0

### 4.3 Migration Motives and Behaviours

Most of the migrants captured by the survey had migrated for the first time to Cape Town and Johannesburg in recent years (Table 18). Nearly 40% had migrated in or after 2015 and another 28% had migrated between 2010 and 2014. Very few were long-term migrants who had been in the cities for more than 20 years. When taken with the age profile of the sample, this suggests that older migrants tend to return to the Eastern Cape once they have retired or are no longer economically productive.

**Figure 19: Year of Migration from Eastern Cape**



The respondents were questioned on why they left their home area in the Eastern Cape and what it was about Cape Town and Johannesburg that made them attractive destinations (Table 18). Poverty and the depressed state of the Eastern Cape were paramount in their decision making. More than 90% agreed that the main reason for leaving was the economic survival of their family. Unemployment was a key reason for migrating for 88% of respondents, while two thirds had left to find employment elsewhere at the instigation of their family. More than 60% agreed that hunger and food insecurity in the home was also important. However, only a quarter said that this was because the crops failed, or they had insufficient land. Just 13% cited climate change as a reason for leaving. Other important push factors included unhappiness with education quality (41%) and healthcare facilities (38%) in the Eastern Cape.

**Table 18: Reasons for Migration from Eastern Cape**

	Yes (%)	No (%)	Neither (%)	Don't Know (%)
<i>Reasons for Leaving the Eastern Cape</i>				
My family needed more money just to survive	93.8	4.7	1.3	0.1
I was unemployed and unable to find a job at home	87.6	10.3	1.7	0.4
My family said I should leave and come here to work	67.7	29.7	2.4	0.2
We did not have enough food to eat at home	62.3	32.9	4.4	0.4
I was unhappy with the schools	41.1	55.0	3.7	0.2
I was unhappy with the hospitals and clinics	38.1	58.6	3.1	0.2

My job did not suit my qualifications and experience	29.2	65.0	4.5	1.3
We had a farm but our crops failed	25.2	70.1	4.5	0.2
We had no land/not enough land	23.5	69.5	6.6	0.3
There was too much crime/insecurity	15.2	78.9	5.7	0.2
I left my home area because of climate change	12.7	81.6	4.5	1.3
<i>Reasons for Migrating to Cape Town or Johannesburg</i>				
I heard there were good jobs available here	94.9	3.8	1.3	0.1
I needed to earn money just to survive	92.2	6.5	1.2	0.0
I wanted to earn money to send back home	88.5	9.3	2.1	0.2
I had relatives living in this city	84.3	15.1	0.6	-
I wanted my children to have a better life	73.8	20.8	4.5	0.9
I came here because the hospitals and clinics are good	73.8	20.8	4.6	0.9
I had friends living in this city	60.8	38.6	0.6	-
I came here because of the social life/entertainment	44.9	51.1	3.8	0.2
I wanted to establish an informal business here	41.9	51.9	6.0	0.2
I came here because the schools are good	39.9	58.6	1.3	0.2
I came here because the housing is good	33.4	60.9	4.6	1.2

The primary attraction of both Cape Town and Johannesburg was also economic. For example, over 90% of respondents were drawn by the prospect of finding a good job and earning money to survive in the two cities. Nearly 90% were attracted by the prospect of earning income to remit to family in the Eastern Cape. The centrality of social networks in decisions about migration destination is demonstrated by those who had relatives (84%) or friends (61%) already living in Cape Town and Johannesburg. The quality of medical care was a draw for 74% of the respondents. Interestingly, only 43% of the migrants had come direct from their home area in the Eastern Cape (Table 19). Almost 60% had prior experience in other urban centres in the Western Cape and other provinces. Additionally, as many as 21% had also lived in the other study city than the one where they were now residing.

**Table 19: Prior Residence in Other Urban Centres**

	N	%
None	743	42.9
Johannesburg or Cape Town	356	20.5
Umtata, Eastern Province	250	14.4
East London, Eastern Province	202	11.7
Port Elizabeth, Eastern Province	177	10.2
Pretoria, Gauteng	107	6.2
Durban, KwaZulu Natal	91	5.3
Bloemfontein, Free State	46	2.7
Others	66	3.8

The other key finding about migrant behaviour is that most engage in circular migration. Only 10% had yet to return to their home area after leaving (Table 20). Two thirds (68%) said they returned home annually and 21% said they returned home several times a year. Thus, despite the lack of jobs and income-earning opportunities in the Eastern Cape, migrants from that region maintain close social and economic ties through personal visits to family and remittances.

**Table 20: Frequency of Return to the Eastern Cape**

	N	%
Once a year	1175	67.8
Several times a year	369	21.3
Monthly	11	0.6
Never	178	10.3

Despite the many challenges of urban life, migrants expressed a strong preference for Cape Town and Johannesburg over their home area in the Eastern Cape. Asked to compare the two across 20 different indicators, only five were seen as better in their home area (people assisting those in need, housing affordability, attitudes to international migrants (‘foreigners’), personal safety, and levels of crime and violence) (Table 21). The two cities were viewed more positively than the Eastern Cape on every other indicator. Livelihood opportunities such as the availability of good jobs, the chance to earn income, wages, and shopping, were all rated better in Cape Town and Johannesburg by over 95% of migrants. Other economic areas seen as significantly better in the cities included transportation, poverty and inequality, services, hunger and the price of food. Other indicators that were rated more positively included entertainment, social life, and police protection.

**Table 21: Comparison of Destination Cities with Home Areas**

	Better in This City (%)	Better in Home Area (%)
Opportunities to earn income	99.2	0.8
Availability of good jobs	98.7	1.3
Wages	98.6	1.4
Shops	97.7	2.3
Transportation	94.9	5.1
Entertainment	94.5	5.5
Poverty	83.0	17.0
Price of food	81.5	18.5
Social life	80.2	19.8
Hunger	79.7	20.3
Services (water, electricity)	78.2	21.8
Inequality	61.6	38.4

Police protection	59.3	40.7
Cost of living	56.9	43.1
Friendliness of people	50.2	49.8
People helping those in need	43.9	56.1
Affordable housing	39.5	60.5
Attitudes to foreigners	34.7	65.3
Personal safety	29.6	70.4
Crime/violence	12.3	87.7

#### 4.4 Pandemic Return Migration

When COVID-19 and the hard lockdown were imposed in March 2020, 94% of the survey respondents were living in Cape Town or Johannesburg. Only 6% were therefore in the Eastern Cape at the time. During the lockdown in 2020, only 14% of the respondents returned to the Eastern Cape. There was no mass exodus from the two cities as happened in other countries which may be a testament to the effectiveness of the policing of inter-provincial mobility and movement controls. Most migrants clearly elected or were forced to remain in the cities, but it is important to establish the rationale for departing amongst the small group that did return home. To be with family was easily the most important (mentioned by 69% of those who returned), followed by fearing catching COVID-19 (20%) (Table 22). Economic hardship did not prompt a significant level of return other than for the small number citing unemployment or job loss and/or having no income. A limited number engaged in income-generating activity while home, but the majority did nothing by way of gainful economic activity. Around 90% stayed home for a month or less which suggests they returned as soon as the initial lockdown in April was relaxed or, in the case of 32%, even sooner.

**Table 22: Return Migration to Eastern Cape During Lockdown**

	N	%
<i>Reasons for Return</i>		
To be with family	163	69.4
Scared of catching COVID	47	20.0
Look after sick relatives	27	11.5
Unemployment/lost my job	18	6.0
No income	10	3.4
No food to eat	3	1.3
No housing/shelter	2	0.9
Total	298	100.0
<i>Length of Time Away</i>		
1-2 weeks	60	32.4
3-4 weeks	108	58.4
>6 months	17	9.2



Total	185	100.0
<i>Economic Activities While Home</i>		
None	169	64.0
Farming	47	17.8
Look for work	22	8.3
Employed full-time	8	3.0
Bought and sold goods	7	2.7
Employed part-time	2	0.8
Other	9	3.4
Total	264	100.0

Most returnees travelled home by bus (43%) or minibus taxi (36%) following their normal pre-pandemic practice (Table 23). Public transportation was deemed an essential through much of the lockdown although with strict limits on service frequency and carrying capacity. Migrants utilizing this form of travel were less likely to be turned back or arrested by the police or army at roadblocks, unlike the occupants of private vehicles. However, because public transportation carried a significantly higher risk of catching COVID-19, reliance on private vehicles for transport home did increase from 8% in normal times to 17% during the lockdown.

**Table 23: Mode of Transportation to Eastern Cape**

	Lockdown		Normal	
	N	%	N	%
Bus	112	42.9	747	48.6
Taxi	93	35.6	661	43.0
Private vehicle	43	16.5	128	8.3
Hitch-hiked	9	3.4		
Train	2	0.8	1	0.1
Fly	2	0.8		
Total	261	100.0	1,537	100.0

#### 4.5 Impact of COVID-19 on Migrant Health and Education

Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about the impact of COVID-19 on themselves, their households, and their communities or neighbourhoods in the city. These statements were of three types: (a) health-related impacts; (b) economic impacts; and (c) governance impacts. Three health-related assertions are shown in Table 24. The survey categories ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ and ‘strongly disagree’ and ‘disagree’ are binned into single ‘agree’ and ‘disagree’ categories respectively. The economic, social, and psychological impact of the pandemic is captured by the 88% of migrants who agreed that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a very negative effect on their life. Healthwise, over 71% of migrants recalled that many people in their

neighbourhood got COVID-19 and 65% that many had passed away. These statements confirm that migrants were on the frontline of exposure to COVID-19 and vulnerability to its devastating health impacts which saw over 300,000 people die nationwide.

**Table 24: Health Impacts of COVID-19**

	Agree %	Disagree %	Neither %
COVID-19 has had a very negative effect on my life	87.9	6.0	6.0
Many people in my neighbourhood or community got sick with COVID-19	71.1	25.0	3.9
Many people in my neighbourhood or community died because of COVID-19	65.1	29.0	5.9

As many as 15% of the migrant sample had tested positive for COVID-19 and 13% had household members who had tested positive (Table 25). It is quite likely that this underestimates the true extent of infection, given the evidence from seroprevalence studies of considerable asymptomatic spread in South Africa.<sup>102</sup> For example, a national household population SARS-CoV-2 serosurvey in people 12 years and older in South Africa in late 2020 found rates of seropositivity of 41% in Western Province, 36% in Gauteng, and 51% in the Eastern Cape.<sup>103</sup> Although COVID-19 in South Africa has been characterised as an urban disease, as many as 18% of migrants had family members in the more rural Eastern Cape who had tested positive for COVID-19. By the time of the survey in 2022, the vaccination rate amongst the migrant sample was over 70%.

**Table 25: Health Impact of COVID-19 on Migrants**

<i>Migrants with COVID-19 (%)</i>	
Yes	15.1
No	84.9
<i>Household member(s) with COVID-19 (%)</i>	
Yes	12.5
No	87.5
<i>Family members in Eastern Cape with COVID-19 (%)</i>	
Yes	18.1
No	81.9
<i>Vaccination status of migrants (%)</i>	
Two or more doses	60.0
One dose	40.0
<i>Medical treatment for COVID-19 (%)</i>	
Government clinic	13.1
Government hospital	6.0
Private doctor	1.4
Traditional healer	1.4
Private hospital	0.6

Religious healer	0.1
<i>Psychological impact of COVID-19 pandemic (%)</i>	
Worry/anxiety	17.1
Depression	1.7
Loneliness	1.4
Anger	1.0
Hopelessness	0.9
Irritability	0.8

South Africa has a two-tiered and extremely unequal public and private healthcare system. The bulk of the population (around 70%) relies on government-funded clinics and hospitals, while the other 30% depends on the private sector which is funded through individual contributions to medical aid schemes or health insurance. The COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately affected under-resourced government health clinics and hospitals. They were also the facilities that migrants relied on for COVID-19 treatment. Almost all of the migrants and household members who were aware of their COVID status had received treatment at a government clinic or hospital. The primary psychological toll of the pandemic was worry and anxiety (experienced by nearly 20% of the sample).

The pandemic also had a considerable negative impact on the children of migrants. A total of 44% of the respondents had children in school, most (65%) with them in the city and the rest living with relatives in the Eastern Cape (Table 26). One quarter felt that school closures during the lockdown meant their children's education had 'fallen behind.' Others referenced the difficulties teaching them at home and not being able to access remote learning.

**Table 26: Educational Impact of COVID-19 on Migrant Children**

<i>Children in school (%)</i>	
No	56.4
Yes	43.6
<i>Location of school (%)</i>	
This city	64.7
Eastern Cape	30.4
Both	4.1
Other	0.8
<i>Educational challenges (%)</i>	
The schools were closed so they fell behind	24.9
Teaching them at home was very difficult	10.7
We were not able to access remote learning	1.9
They did not complete their grade	1.1
They dropped out of school	0.5
The teachers and pupils were sick with COVID	0.4

#### 4.6 Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Migrants

In this section of the survey, the respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about the economic impact of COVID-19 on themselves, their families and their communities or neighbourhoods in the city. The devastating impact of the pandemic was clear from the responses. For example, 94% agreed that the lockdown had caused great hardship for the city's population and 91% that the pandemic had caused significant economic hardship for the migrant and their family (Table 27). One of the main impacts felt by migrants was related to increased food insecurity, with 88% agreeing that food had become more expensive and 86% that it was more difficult to access food during the pandemic. Up to 81% said that the economic conditions of the household were worse than before the pandemic. An obvious indicator of the economic hardships experienced in the city was that over two-thirds of households had reduced their remittances to the Eastern Cape.

**Table 27: Economic Impacts of COVID-19**

	Agree %	Disagree %	Neither %
The lockdown and stay at home order caused great hardship to people	94.1	3.9	2.0
The pandemic has caused great economic hardship for my family and I	90.7	5.2	4.1
Food became much more expensive during the pandemic	88.4	8.8	2.8
It was more difficult for my household to access food during the pandemic	85.9	8.7	5.4
The economic conditions of my household are worse now than before COVID-19 came	80.8	12.6	6.5
I sent less money home to the Eastern Cape because of the pandemic	69.5	11.0	19.5

Despite the economic difficulties caused by the pandemic, many migrants continue to send funds to the Eastern Cape. Most remittances flow through formal channels, with 50% of the respondents relying on banks, followed by 33% who use local money transfer companies (Table 28). In contrast to international migrants, digital remitting has not progressed much to date, with only 4% of internal migrants surveyed using such platforms as their main means of transfer. The average amount remitted per month varies considerably, with around 60% remitting less than ZAR1,000 per month and only 4% remitting more than ZAR2,000 per month on average (Table 29). Almost 60% are now remitting less than before the pandemic, compared to only 7% who were remitting more than before (Table 30).

**Table 28: Main Remittance Channels Used by Migrants**

	%
Bank	49.7
Local money transfer (e.g. Shoprite, PEP, Paise)	33.1
I take it myself	5.9
I use the internet/mobile phone (e.g. MTN Mobile Money)	4.4
A friend or relative takes it for me	3.1
I use the post office	2.3
A bus or taxi driver takes it for me	1.6
Other	0.1

**Table 29: Average Monthly Remittance to Eastern Cape**

South African Rand (ZAR)	%
Less than R100	0.3
R101 - R500	20.5
R501 - R1,000	40.1
R1,001 – R1,500	23.8
R1,501 – R2,000	10.8
R2,001 – R2,500	3.2
R2,501 +	1.0

**Table 30: Comparison of Current with Pre-Pandemic Remitting**

	%
Much less	27.1
Less	29.1
The same amount	32.2
More	4.7
Much more now	4.6
Do not know	2.3

Comparing current with pre-pandemic income, 33% of those surveyed indicated that it had declined, with 13% noting that it had declined by more than 50% (Table 31). Only 16% said that their income had increased, most by less than 25%. These figures are broadly consistent with data on the employment impact of the pandemic with 27% of migrants losing their jobs during 2020 (Table 32). The primary reasons for job loss were retrenchments (39% of those who lost jobs) and business closures (36%). Nearly 17% of those who lost jobs were victims of the shuttering of informal sector operations by government. Virtually all of those who became unemployed were out of work for more than one month with two-thirds being unemployed for more than 4 months and 33% for more than six months.

**Table 31: Comparison of Current and Pre-Pandemic Income**

	N	%
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Decreased by 50% (more than half)	232	13.4
Decreased by 25% (a quarter)	150	8.7
Decreased by 10% (small amount)	165	9.5
Stayed the same	916	52.9
Increased by 10% (small amount)	157	9.1
Increased by 25% (a quarter)	71	4.1
Increased by 50% (a half)	33	1.9
Increased by 100% or more (doubled)	9	0.5

**Table 32: Migrant Unemployment during 2020**

	%	
Loss of employment in 2020		
Yes	468	27.0
No	1,265	73.0
Main reason for losing job		
Employer retrenched employees	182	38.9
Employer closed their business	170	36.3
Not permitted to operate my informal business	77	16.5
Became ill with COVID-19	16	3.4
Household members became ill with COVID-19	7	1.5
Because I returned home	4	0.9
Other	12	2.6
Length of Unemployment		
More than 6 months	158	34.3
4-6 months	150	32.5
1-3 months	153	33.2
<1 month	0.0	0.0

Recovery from the pandemic economic shock has been slow. At the time of the survey in 2023, only 60% of migrant households were receiving income from wage work, with another 13% deriving income from casual labour (Table 33). Wage work constituted nearly 80% of the total income earned by this sample of migrant households. The proportion of households receiving income from an informal sector enterprise was minimal, which suggests that the sector was still reeling from the effects of the pandemic. Social grants were the only other significant source of income with 12% receiving child support grants and 6% other forms of cash grant.

**Table 33: Sources of Household Income**

Income categories	No of Households	% of Households	Average Monthly Amount (ZAR)	Overall Income Share (%)
Wage work	1,034	59.7	6,594	79.0
Casual work	225	13.0	3,085	8.0

Child support grant(s)	205	11.8	791	1.9
Income from informal business	136	7.8	2,521	4.0
Remittances	99	5.7	2,676	3.1
Other cash grant	96	5.5	976	1.1
Gifts	45	2.6	1,145	0.6
Income from formal business	15	0.9	5,292	0.9
Loans/Borrowing	10	0.6	995	0.1
Begging	3	0.2	700	0.0
Other	40	2.3	2,848	1.3

Finally, the bulk of migrant household expenditure is on daily necessities. As much as 44% of total expenditure is on food and groceries (Table 34). Not only is this an indicator of the high levels of income deprivation, but it also suggests that the pandemic hardships which most households reference are fundamentally about the rising cost of food and heightened food insecurity. A further 19% of the total monthly spend is on housing and a further 10% on transportation. Only 23% of households are able to save anything and few have disposable income once food, housing, transportation, utilities, and education are paid for.

**Table 34: Migrant Household Monthly Expenditures**

Expense categories	No of Households	% of Households	Average Monthly Amount (ZAR)	Overall Expense Share %
Food and Groceries	1,686	97.3	1,470	44.0
Transportation	793	45.8	684	9.6
Utilities	768	44.3	349	4.8
Housing	735	42.4	1,451	18.9
Savings	397	22.9	1,193	8.4
Cellphones	378	21.8	278	1.9
Clothes and shoes	366	21.1	1,105	7.2
Alcohol	353	20.4	530	3.3
Education	259	14.9	872	4.0
Burial society	224	12.9	282	1.1
Entertainment	217	12.5	384	1.5
Insurance	200	11.5	379	1.3
Medical expenses	149	8.6	506	1.3
Cigarettes, tobacco	135	7.8	205	0.5
Stokvel	132	7.6	1,118	2.6
Fuel	120	6.9	548	1.2
Church	73	4.2	237	0.3
Furniture, appliances	68	3.9	1,343	1.6
Repayment of loans	66	3.8	910	1.1
Building materials	48	2.8	3,145	2.7

Lottery	28	1.6	102	0.1
Special events	19	1.1	950	0.3
Gifts, donations	19	1.1	338	0.1
Security/protection	9	0.5	787	0.1
Other expenses	24	1.4	1,310	0.6

**4.7 Migrant Access to Pandemic Relief**

Earlier sections of the report detailed the challenges and problems of the government efforts to mitigate the worst economic and social effects of its own stringent lockdown response to COVID-19. In this final section of the report, we therefore address how government pandemic relief policies were perceived and experienced by migrant households in the two cities. Over 90% of respondents felt that the pandemic lockdown imposed by government went on for too long (Table 35). At a more general level, nearly 60% thought that government policies towards COVID-19 were not effective in achieving their stated goals. As a result, and a clear sign of their desperation, 56% said they had disobeyed the lockdown and a third had specifically done so because they had to access food to eat. Although civil disobedience was widespread, and mass arrests and fines were commonplace across the two cities, only 14% of those surveyed reported being arrested or fined for breach of regulations.

**Table 35: Migration Attitudes to Pandemic Policy**

	Agree %	Disagree %	Neither %
The lockdown went on for much too long	92.9	4.8	2.3
Government policies towards COVID-19 were not effective	57.9	31.1	11.0
Many people in my neighbourhood/community did not obey the lockdown	55.9	34.3	9.8
We were forced to disobey the lockdown to get food to eat	35.4	54.9	9.8
I or members of my family were arrested/fined for not staying at home during the lockdown	13.6	81.1	5.4

As indicated above, pandemic relief measures for households in straitened circumstances were constrained by logistical and other obstacles, so that they were unable to reach most of the needy households. Therefore, 55% of the migrants surveyed reported that they had not received any assistance (Table 36). Government food packages reached only 4% of migrant households before the programme was abandoned. Those households in receipt of child grants saw a temporary increase in the payout in 2020. However, only 14% of households ever received a special COVID-19 grant. Civil society has been praised for picking up the government slack, but the proportion of these migrant households receiving assistance from non-governmental sources was very small, with self-help groups such as savings clubs being somewhat more active and helpful.



**Table 36: Access to Pandemic Relief Measures**

	%
No help	55.6
COVID-19 Grant from Government	14.3
Increase in Government Child Grant	6.9
Cash from a savings club	3.9
Government food package	3.5
Cash/food from a church	1.2
Cash/food from an NGO or charity	0.8
Cash/food from a political party	0.2

\*Multiple response

Due to the difficulties of survival during the pandemic, few migrant households had the resources to spend on protection and treatment. Almost half had spent nothing, while most of the others had incurred expenses of less than ZAR1,000 on protection and treatment since the beginning of the pandemic (Table 37).

**Table 37: Expenditure on COVID-19 Protection and Treatment**

Amount	%
Nothing	22.0
<ZAR500	48.9
R501-R1000	12.2
R1000-R5000	8.2
R5000-R10000	1.6
>R10000	16.9

The questionnaire asked the respondents what kind of help they would like from the government in the event of another pandemic (Table 38). There was no majority support for any of the proposals, with most garnering 30-40% assent. Money for food and housing was rated highest (41%), which may well reflect a lack of confidence in government's ability to deliver. Wage and health insurance also commanded a degree of support, although only 36% were willing to enrol in a programme that docked pay so that they were protected during another lockdown.

**Table 38: Types of Assistance Wanted in a Future Pandemic**

Type of assistance	%
Money for housing and food during the lockdown	40.9
Wage insurance (your monthly wage during the lockdown)	38.1
Health insurance in case I fall sick	35.9
Transport money and two-months' salary to return to my family	28.1

Very few of the migrants surveyed planned to return to the Eastern Cape in the foreseeable future. Only 2% said that they would leave within the next year and 13% within the next

five years (Table 39). Almost half (47%) intended to stay for more than 10 years, but only 23% saw Johannesburg and Cape Town as their permanent home. Eighty percent said they would return to the Eastern Cape if and when they left the city. These migration intentions indicate, first, that the pandemic has not precipitated significant return migration to the Eastern Cape, and second, that any lessons learnt about how to better respond to future pandemics are going to continue to be of relevance to internal migrants in the two cities.

**Table 39: Intended Length of Future Residence in City**

Period	%	%
Less than 1 Year	28	1.5
1-5 years	191	10.3
6-10 years	311	16.8
>10 years	925	50.0
Always/permanently	394	21.3

## 5 Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic constituted an unprecedented shock and challenge to the normal functioning of South African society. South Africa is one of the most heavily urbanized countries in Africa and also one of the most unequal. Both factors shaped the particular trajectory of the pandemic and many of its social and economic impacts. While residents of high- and middle-income neighbourhoods in the country's cities were able to protect themselves from the virus by hunkering in their single-family houses and mansions, rapidly shift to working and educating from home, fire their domestic workers who commute to work from COVID-19 hotspots, continue to access private healthcare, drive cars to buy food in supermarkets, and draw on their savings to tide them over, the reality of the pandemic for the residents of informal settlements and townships of over-crowded low-income informal settlements and townships with high rates of unemployment and underemployment, over-crowded living conditions, reliance on public transport and without ready access to PPE and food outlets was very different. Impose and enforce blanket lockdowns and mobility restrictions in entire cities with military precision, as the South African government did, and the implications and impacts were inevitably very different for the two populations.

At the same time, it is important not to treat the latter group as homogeneous and undifferentiated. The large and growing research literature on the South African pandemic (much of which is summarized in this report) has increasingly demonstrated that pandemic precarity and its impact on the country's urban poor were segmented according to age, gender, employment, job sector, income, and, especially, race and class. There is also evidence that the pandemic experience of international migrants in South

Africa was worse than that of many local residents, at least partially because they were employed in sectors that saw the highest layoff rates and were denied access to the same government relief measures as citizens. What research has largely overlooked to date is the reality that the country's major cities host even larger numbers of internal migrants from some of the country's poorest provinces. Therefore, this study and report focused their attention on the neglected question of how internal migrants in cities were affected by the pandemic and with what immediate and longer-term consequences for urban and rural livelihoods.

Therefore, this is the first systematic examination of the relationship between internal migration, urbanisation, and COVID-19 in South Africa. Survey data do not claim to be nationally representative or generalisable to all urban centres, but they provide new information on the relationship between COVID-19 and internal migration in the country's two main migrant destinations (Cape Town and Johannesburg) and between migrants from one of the main origin areas for internal migration, the Eastern Cape. Section 2 of the Report provides background details on the course of the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa and the draconian policy response of the national government in its efforts to control and mitigate the pandemic. Rolling national lockdowns and their militaristic enforcement did not have the desired effect, largely because they were fundamentally flawed and unenforceable. The lockdowns blanketed the entire country, while their impact was spatially variable, hitting the livelihoods of the urban poor, including most migrants, the hardest, and leaving a legacy from which they are yet to fully recover.

Section 3 of the Report provides a justification for the geographical focus of the study by demonstrating how the main flows of interprovincial migration in South Africa are from the predominantly rural eastern Cape towards the metropolitan centres of Johannesburg and Cape Town. The section also provides a baseline demographic and socioeconomic profile of the internal migrant population in the two cities and their host provinces. Between 2006 and 2021, the provinces of Gauteng and Western Province experienced in-migration from other provinces of 5.92 million and out-migration of 1.99 million for a net gain of 3.93 million. In other words, there were almost 4 million internal migrants directly affected by the pandemic in these two provinces. Initial data from the 2022 Census shows that there was a sub-population of 1.63 million migrants from the Eastern Cape in the two provinces.

We draw five main conclusions from this survey of more than 1,700 internal migrants from the Eastern Cape. First, migrants from the Eastern Cape leave for the two cities due to the lack of economic opportunities in that region and the prospect of working and earning income in the main centres of productive activity in the country. On every economic indicator, migrants rated Cape Town and Johannesburg as better than their

home area in the Eastern Cape. The only indicators in which the Eastern Cape scored significantly better were personal safety and the risk of crime and violence.

Second, despite relocation to the two cities, migrants retain strong social and economic ties with family members 'left behind' in the Eastern Cape. More than 90% of migrants return to their home area at least once per year or more often. Almost 80% said they intended to eventually return to the Eastern Cape, likely in retirement. Therefore, South Africa's internal migrants are integrated into what are commonly known as 'stretched' or 'translocal' spatially, and almost 90% indicated that a major reason for migrating was to earn income to send back home. At the time of the survey, most migrants were remitting funds monthly, although the amounts remitted had declined since before the pandemic. Nearly 60% were remitting less than before, and nearly 30% much less than before. In essence, this means that the economic and livelihood impact of the pandemic shock reverberated far beyond Cape Town and Johannesburg to distant rural communities in the Eastern Cape.

Third, in countries such as India, the advent of COVID-19 precipitated mass movement of migrants from cities to the countryside.<sup>104</sup> This survey provides no evidence that a similar phenomenon occurred in South Africa. Only 14% of the respondents in Cape Town and Johannesburg returned to the Eastern Cape during the lockdown, most electing to remain in the cities either by choice or because of the effectiveness of the policing of inter-provincial mobility and movement controls. The small group that did return home went for non-economic reasons to be with family, to look after sick relatives, to attend funerals, or because they were afraid of catching COVID-19.

Fourth, the pandemic lockdown clearly and unequivocally caused significant economic disruption and hardship for migrant households in both cities. Nearly 30% of the respondents lost their jobs and remained out of work for many months. One third indicated that their prepandemic income had declined, with 13% estimating that it had declined by more than 50%. However, even those who retained or regained their jobs were among the 90% who agreed that the pandemic had caused great economic hardship for the household and the 80% who said that the economic conditions of the household were worse now than before the pandemic. One of the primary reasons appears to have been the rising cost of living and the price of food. At the time of the survey, an average of 44% of the total household income was spent on food and groceries. During the course of the April 2020 lockdown, the government realised that pandemic relief measures were increasingly necessary and announced a massive financial package that was primarily targeted at business. However, various social protection programmes were introduced to put a little more money in the hands of poor households.

Finally, nearly 60% of those surveyed said they had received no food or financial help from the government during the pandemic. This raises the question of the adequacy and reach of pandemic relief for migrants and, more broadly, the attitudes of migrants towards government policies toward COVID-19. Migrants generally criticised the pandemic response. More than 90% said that the lockdown lasted too long and nearly 60% said that many people in their community disobeyed the lockdown. A similar number said they were forced to disobey the lockdown to access food. Negative perceptions of government policy raise the obvious question of what lessons have been learnt and how a more effective management and policy planning response could be put in place to deal with future shocks of this nature to the lives and livelihoods of South African residents in general and internal migrants in particular.

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