

# Unemployment and children's well-being: A statistical exploration

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## Introduction

### Background

This paper has been prepared as input for a seminar organised by the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) and the Children's Institute of the University of Cape Town. The overall aim of the seminar is to discuss and identify research gaps in relation to the interface between unemployment and child wellbeing in South Africa. This paper was commissioned to provide an overview of the situation of children with respect to unemployment based on available sources.

Common-sense tells us that whether or not members of a household are employed will have a significant influence over the well-being of household members. This is so because most employment in South Africa is done for payment, and payment brings money into the household. Some or all of this money is then likely to be spent to the benefit of household members, including those who did not themselves earn the money. South African law prohibits virtually all employment for children under the age of 15 years, and places restrictions on employment of children aged 15-17 years. We therefore expect (and want) the majority of children to be among the non-earners who will benefit from the earnings of adult members of the household.

Income from employment is not the only source of money for households. In particular, South Africa has a well-developed social security system which delivers grants to a substantial percentage of the population. Research has shown that these grants assist in lifting households out of deep poverty. Research has also shown that even where the grant such as the old age pension is not paid to or for a child, some of the money is often used to the benefit of children in the household. These grants are, however, directed only at individuals with particular characteristics and thus do not reach all households that are poor. The grants are also limited in size. In particular, the grants targeted at children and their caregivers are much lower than even people working in the informal economy are likely to earn.

The brief for the paper suggested that it should include a review of currently available evidence as well as analysis of relevant data from household surveys and other sources deemed appropriate. The paper focuses on the second aspect – analysis of relevant data – as there does not seem to be much evidence other than this. The brief also suggested the possibility of exploring patterns over time. Unfortunately the main data source which is useful for exploring the link between unemployment and child wellbeing, namely the general household survey (GHS), has only been implemented since 2002 and the latest data available

are for 2004. Exploration of patterns over this short time period did not seem worthwhile. Findings from exploration of patterns over a longer time period using other data sources (such as the October household surveys) would have been affected by changes in methods, especially the significant changes in relation to measuring labour market status. The paper thus provides a snapshot of the situation as at June 2004.

### **Data sources and definition of concepts**

The main data source used for the paper is the GHS conducted by Statistics South Africa (StatsSA) in June 2004. This source is used as it provides more information about family relationships and general individual and household circumstances than other sources and also collects information on the labour market situation of all household members aged 15 years and above. Like the labour force survey (LFS), the sample size for the GHS is approximately 30 000 households distributed across all nine provinces of the country and across rural and urban areas. Stats SA provides weights together with the raw data which allow production of estimates which represent the population as a whole. The mid-year population estimates on which the weights are based have been criticised for inconsistencies, in particular in relation to young ages (Dorrington & Kramer, 2005). The extent of the inaccuracies should not, however, materially affect the broad patterns investigated in this paper.

The LFS focuses on labour market issues. The GHS includes the same main questions relating to labour market participation as the LFS. However, perhaps because the enumerators are not trained to prompt for labour market activity to the same extent, the GHS yields somewhat lower levels of labour market participation than the LFS.

The two key indicators used in this paper are the unemployment rate and the employment rate. Three categories are described to describe labour market engagement, namely a person can be:

- Employed, which is defined as having engaged in some ‘economic’ activity over the previous seven days;
- Unemployed, which is defined as not having engaged in any economic activity over the previous seven days, but wanting to work, being available for work, and having taken active steps to find work;
- Not economically active, which is defined as not having engaged in any economic activity and either not wanting work, or not being available for work or not having taken active steps to find it.

The **unemployment rate** is obtained by dividing the number of unemployed people by the sum of all those employed and unemployed. The **employment rate** is obtained by dividing the number of employed people by the total number of people in the relevant age group, including those not economically active.

The definition of unemployment used above is the ‘official’ one used by Stats SA since the late 1990s. An alternative ‘expanded’ definition of unemployment relaxes the requirement that an unemployed person must have taken active steps to find work. This is done in recognition of the fact that many people who might want work may not look for it because they have become ‘discouraged – they know that there is no work available, and they are unwilling to spend time and energy on a fruitless task. Using the official rather than expanded definition of unemployment tends to reduce the female rate of unemployment more than the male rate.

The paper reports only on the official rate so as to simplify what is already complicated analysis. In addition, we argue that if we are interested in poverty alleviation and children's well-being, we should be more interested in the employment rate than the unemployment rate as we are primarily interested in how many earned incomes the child might benefit from. Those who are not economically active, like the unemployed, do not contribute earned income, yet they are not captured in the unemployment rate. Many of the tables which follow include both the unemployment and employment rates, but the analysis focuses on the latter. The paper thus implicitly focuses on 'lack of employment' rather than the standard labour market concept of 'unemployment'.

Table 1<sup>1</sup> compares the unemployment and employment rates recorded by the GHS and LFS. The table includes two sets of estimates for the LFS. The first set is for the age group 15-65 years. This is the age group which Stats SA uses in its standard labour force statistics. The other set matches the age group used for most of this paper, i.e. all people 18 years and above, so as to exclude children. The change in age group makes very little difference to the LFS estimates. Both LFS sets record lower unemployment rates than produced by the GHS as well as lower employment rates. This pattern holds for both male and female. More detailed analysis reveals that the discrepancy between the GHS and LFS primarily affects the African population. The overall pattern suggests less efficient 'capture' of economic activity in the GHS than in the LFS.

**Table 1. Unemployment and employment rates by data source and age group**

	GHS 18+ years			LFS 15-65 years			LFS 18+ years		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Unemployment	25.4%	33.8%	29.1%	23.1%	30.2%	26.2%	22.6%	29.8%	25.8%
Employment	48.9%	31.0%	39.4%				50.5%	32.8%	41.2%

Table 2 on the next page explores the source of the 'undercount' in the GHS by comparing economic participation recorded in the GHS and LFS for each of the detailed activities which are prompted for to determine whether a person is employed or not. The comparison suggests that undercounting occurs primarily in respect of engagement in one's own business (including in the informal sector), work as a wage employee, and work on the household plot. The differences for each of these categories are relatively small and should not materially affect the analysis in the paper at the level of broad patterns. The undercount of employment does, however, add to the need to be cautious in over-interpreting small differences in various distributions in later tables.

**Table 2. Percentage of population 18+ years participating in economic activities**

	GHS 2004	LFS Sept 2004
Work in own business	5.8	6.6
Paid worker non-domestic	28.6	29.3
Paid domestic work	3.8	3.7
Unpaid family	0.2	0.3
Work on own farm or plot	0.8	1.2
Construction on own home	0.1	0.1
Catch food	0.0	0.0

<sup>1</sup> In this and other tables the small numbers with sex and other defining characteristics unspecified are omitted from the disaggregated tables and rows but included in the totals.

# Findings

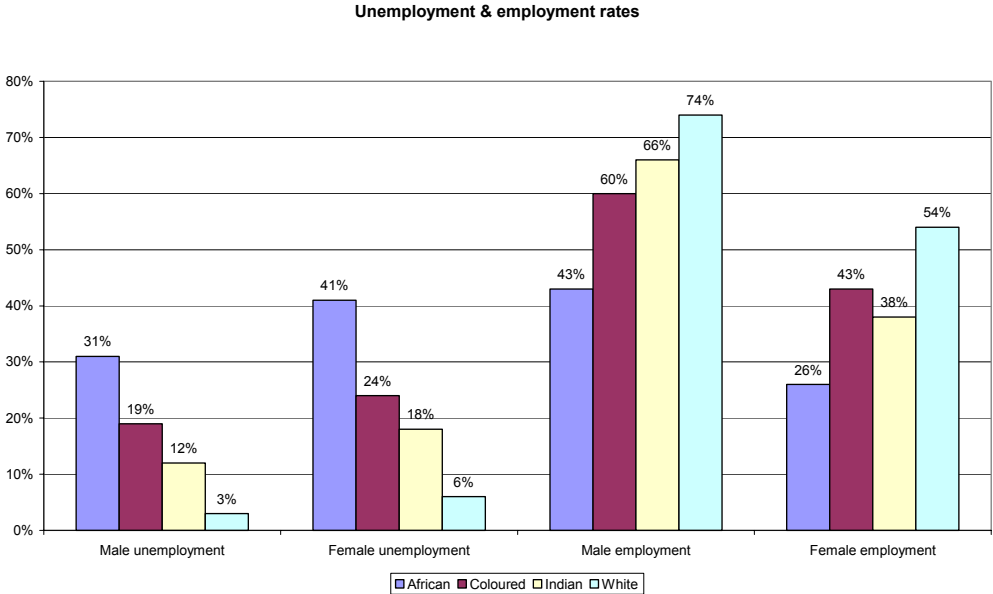
## National patterns of employment and unemployment

Table 3 gives the unemployment and employment rates for men and women of the different population groups. It confirms, as expected, that unemployment rates are much higher for Africans than for the other groups, while employment rates are much lower. Further, the female unemployment rate is higher than that for males across all groups, while the employment rate is higher. The gender gap in terms of the employment rate is particularly marked among Africans, where only about a quarter (26%) of women are employed, compared to 43% of African men, and nearly three-quarters (74%) of white men.

**Table 3. Unemployment and employment rates by population group, 18+ years**

	Unemployment rate			Employment rate		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
African	31%	41%	36%	43%	26%	34%
Coloured	19%	24%	21%	60%	43%	51%
Indian	12%	18%	14%	66%	38%	52%
White	3%	6%	4%	74%	54%	64%

The chart below shows both the gender and race patterns. It also shows how unemployment rates change in the opposite direction to employment rates.



Employment includes both paid work and unpaid production of goods. In particular, it includes work as an unpaid contributor to the family business and subsistence work. This type of work contributes to the alleviation of poverty and can contribute to children’s well-being insofar as it decreases the need to purchase the goods produced. In the South African context, there are few, if any, families that are largely self-sufficient, and unpaid employment is thus of limited benefit. Examination of the GHS data suggests that 2,1% of employed men and 2,4% of employed women do not receive any monetary remuneration. These small percentages should not affect the overall patterns significantly. Nevertheless, they suggest that some of the patterns shown below may be over-optimistic.

## Patterns in respect of unpaid care work

The presence of children in a household tends to generate work. In particular, it generates unpaid care work in the form of child care and the extra cooking, cleaning and other housework generated by children.

Table 4, drawn from the national time use survey of 2002, shows the number of minutes spent per day by male and female respondents in different employment categories. Activities are divided into three groups. SNA production corresponds primarily to activities which classify a person as employed. Non-SNA production corresponds primarily to unpaid care work. Non-productive corresponds to all activities which one cannot pay another person to do for one, such as sleeping, eating, socialising and learning. The table confirms, as expected, that employed people do more SNA production than other groups. It confirms further that female respondents do significantly more unpaid care work than male respondents in all categories. The ratio between the time spent by female and male respondents on unpaid care work remains fairly constant across the employment categories.

**Table 4. Engagement in economic and other activities by employment status**

Activity	Employed		Unemployed		Not econ active	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
SNA production	328	260	121	46	42	28
Non-SNA production	82	210	119	349	78	203
Non-productive	1029	969	1200	1045	1320	1208
Total	1439	1438	1440	1440	1439	1439

Source: Budlender et al, 2001: 39

Table 5 focuses in on the time spent on child care. It compares the time spent by male and female respondents on this activity in terms of whether they have any children and, if so, whether these children are living in the same household. Women with children living with them spend over an hour per day on average on child care. Men with children living with them spend less time on child care than women with no children of their own. These patterns are likely to have an impact on the time available for men and women for economic work.

**Table 5. Mean minutes per day spent on child care by relationship to children**

Children under 18	Male	Female
None	2	9
Yes, but not living in household	2	14
Yes, and living in household	6	64

Source: Budlender et al, 2001: 68

## Employment and unemployment among children and youth

As noted above, most of the analysis which follows focuses on employment or the lack of it among adults. The GHS only poses the questions relating to employment in respect of household members aged 15 years and above. The GHS of 2004 gives an estimate of 48 627 boys and 14 194 girls aged 15-17 who are employed, and 34 196 boys and 32 748 girls who are unemployed i.e. wanting to and looking for work. This yields employment rates of 3% and 1% respectively, and unemployment rates of 47% and 70% respectively. Ideally one would not want children to be either working or looking for work. The fact that some children are in this position almost certainly reflects lack of income and employment among adults who might otherwise support them. 81% of employed children found in the GFH are African. Half

(50%) are recorded in the Eastern Cape, although this province accounts for only 17% of all children in this age group.

Table 6 confirms that the unemployment rate is substantially higher among young adults (18-29 years) than among older adults (30 years). Conversely, the employment rates are substantially lower. These estimates give an indication of the future which today's children face in respect of their own employment prospects.

**Table 6. Unemployment and employment rates among youth and older adults**

	18-29 years			30+ years		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Unemployment rate	41%	53%	46%	17%	23%	20%
Employment rate	34%	21%	28%	59%	36%	47%

### Employment and underemployment in poor households

The main reason for an interest in unemployment and its impact on children is the concern that if children do not have access to employed adults, they are more likely to live in poverty. Employment is not the only source of income, especially in a country such as South Africa which has an established grant system. Nevertheless, Table 7 confirms the strong link between employment and lack of poverty. For the purpose of this table, a household is defined as poor if it reports monthly expenditure of under R1 200. Table 7 suggests that in poor households the unemployment rate is more than double that in non-poor households. For women the employment rate in poor households is half that in non-poor households. For men, the relative position of poor compared to not poor is slightly better than for women, but there is still a very marked difference. Employment is thus confirmed as a key factor in avoiding poverty.

**Table 7. Unemployment and employment rates in poor and non-poor households**

	Unemployment rate			Employment rate		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Poor	36%	46%	40%	38%	22%	29%
Non-poor	15%	21%	17%	63%	44%	54%

Income and expenditure are not the only measures of poverty. Another more concrete measure is hunger. The GHS asks for each household how often its child members experience hunger. The options provided are 'never', 'seldom', 'sometimes', 'often' and 'always'. Table 8 on the next page confirms a fairly strong, but not exact, relationship between the expenditure and food measures of poverty. The table includes only those households which contain children and for which a response to the child hunger question was provided. 91% of non-poor households were said never to experience child hunger, compared to 64% of poor households.

**Table 8. Experience of child hunger in poor and non-poor households**

Regularity of hunger	Non-poor	Poor	Total
Never	91%	64%	74%
Seldom	3%	7%	5%
Sometimes	6%	22%	16%
Often	1%	5%	3%
Always	0%	3%	2%

For the purposes of Table 9 we classify households which report that children went hungry ‘sometimes’, ‘often’ or ‘always’ as child hunger households, and the remainder (including households with no children) as households with no child hunger. The table confirms, as expected, that unemployment rates are much higher in households experiencing child hunger while employment rates in this households are much lower than in other households.

**Table 9. Unemployment and employment in households by experience of child hunger**

	Unemployment rate			Employment rate		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
No child hunger	22%	30%	26%	53%	34%	43%
Child hunger	52%	56%	54%	23%	17%	19%

**Employment and underemployment in households containing children**

Table 10 refines Table 3 above by focusing only on households that contain at least one child. The overall result is that the unemployment rates fall slightly while employment rates remain constant for men and increase slightly for women. Among Africans there is a stronger increase in unemployment rates, especially among men, and a decrease in employment rates for both women and men, but more marked for men than for women. The increase in unemployment rates could indicate a greater likelihood that adults in households with children need and want work. The fact that the employment rate decreases more sharply for African men than women suggests that the main factor at work is not women’s withdrawal from the labour market to look after their children.

**Table 10. Unemployment and employment rates in households containing children**

	Unemployment rate			Employment rate		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Total	29%	38%	34%	43%	28%	34%
African	37%	44%	41%	35%	23%	28%

**Employment status of mothers living with their children**

The GHS asks for each individual whether their mother and father are alive and, if so, whether they are a member of the same household and what their ‘member number’ is. Using these data we can establish which women are living with at least one of their children, and investigate the employment status of these women. As discussed further below, the employment statistics in this section include people under 18 years where they are mothers living with their children.

Table 11 shows that 84% of children aged 0-5 years were reported to be living with their biological mothers, compared to 71% of older children. In both age groups a smaller proportion of African children were living with their mothers than children from other population groups. Nevertheless, the absolute number of African children in this situation far outnumbered those in other population groups. Overall, a total of 13,6 million children were living with their biological mothers.

**Table 11. Children with resident mothers by age and population group**

<i>Population group</i>	<b>0-5 years</b>		<b>6-17 years</b>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>% of total</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>% of total</i>
African	3976124	82%	6896415	68%
Coloured	500665	94%	821170	82%
Indian	121421	99%	176131	94%
White	424184	98%	627827	94%
Other	1212	78%	5132	71%
Total	5023607	84%	8526676	71%

Some of these mothers are obviously living with more than one of their biological children. The number of mothers living with their children is thus smaller than the number of children living with their mothers.<sup>2</sup>

Table 12 shows a total of 7,2 million mothers living with at least one of their biological children. Some African women are recorded as living with as many as eight biological children. In contrast, close on half (47%) of all these mothers have only one biological child living with them. These patterns are relevant for two reasons. Firstly, the presence of several children could place more of a burden on the mother in terms of unpaid care work and thus limit the opportunities for paid employment. Secondly, and in contrast, the presence of several children increases the dependency rate and thus the need for additional income.

**Table 12. Resident mothers by population group and number of resident children**

<b>Number of children</b>	<b>African</b>	<b>Coloured</b>	<b>Indian</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Total</b>
1	2734450	328731	87512	273918	3426490
2	1640114	242840	65036	261407	2210596
3	770141	123480	20581	75554	989756
4	360823	26750	2898	6541	397255
5	130147	6664	895	0	137705
6	53318	693	0	0	54011
7	14141	0	0	0	14141
8	3215	0	0	0	3215
Total	5706349	729157	176921	617420	7233169

Table 13 on the next page shows that overall mothers with resident children have an average of 1,9 children living with them. The table provides separate estimates for the younger age group (0-5 years) and older children (6-17) on the assumption that having very young children might have more impact on the activities of the mother than having older children. (The means for the two age groups sum to more than the overall mean as the sub-group means exclude those without children in a particular age group. Only those mothers with at least one child in each of the age groups will be included in the denominator for both means.) There is no difference in the mean number of children in the younger age group across the four population groups. African women, followed by coloured, are more likely to have a greater number of older children living with them. This reflects the likelihood of larger family sizes among black households.

<sup>2</sup> 18 (unweighted) of the resident mothers identified in the dataset were recorded as male and thus excluded from further analysis. A further 13 (unweighted) mothers could not be found at all in the database recording employment status.



**Table 13. Mean number of resident children by age group**

Population group	Total	0-5 years	6-17 years
African	1.9	0.7	1.2
Coloured	1.8	0.7	1.1
Indian	1.7	0.7	1.0
White	1.7	0.7	1.0
Total	1.9	0.7	1.2

Table 14 shows the patterns in terms of the unemployment rate of resident mothers as the number of children of different ages increases. If one focuses on the total number of children, the unemployment rate is relatively high among those with one child, decreases as the number increases, and then perhaps rises again when the number of children exceeds four. However, the rates for women with large numbers of children should be treated with scepticism as the sample size is small.<sup>3</sup> Among those with young children, the unemployment rate is uniformly very high, suggesting that many of these mothers want to work but can't find work. Among those with older children, the rate tends to be lower and hovers between 29% and 32%. There are thus no clear patterns in respect of unemployment rate and the number of children. This could be the result of several different opposing trends, such as the greater need for unpaid care work when there are children at the same time as the greater need to earn money. The pattern also partly reflects the overall higher unemployment rate among younger people (see above) in that that mothers of younger children tend to be younger than mothers of older children.

**Table 14. Unemployment rate of resident mothers by age group of child/ren**

Number of children	Total	0-5 years	6-17 years
0		27%	49%
1	37%	42%	29%
2	32%	43%	28%
3	32%	43%	32%
4	34%	0%	29%
5	36%		27%
6	40%		68%
7	44%		-
8	-		
Total	35%	35%	35%

Table 15 on the next page records the employment rate for the different groupings of resident mothers. The pattern for all resident mothers is the mirror opposite of that in respect of the unemployment rate, but more pronounced. The employment rate increases sharply as the number of children increases from one to two, but then declines again with every extra child. For those with young children, the pattern is a consistent decrease. For those with older children there is a minimal increase from one to two children, and then a consistent decrease in the employment rate. These patterns suggest that the unpaid care work burden of extra children might be affecting mothers' engagement with the labour market. The patterns are also partly a reflection of the fact that African women tend to have more children, and employment rates among African women tend to be lower than for other women.

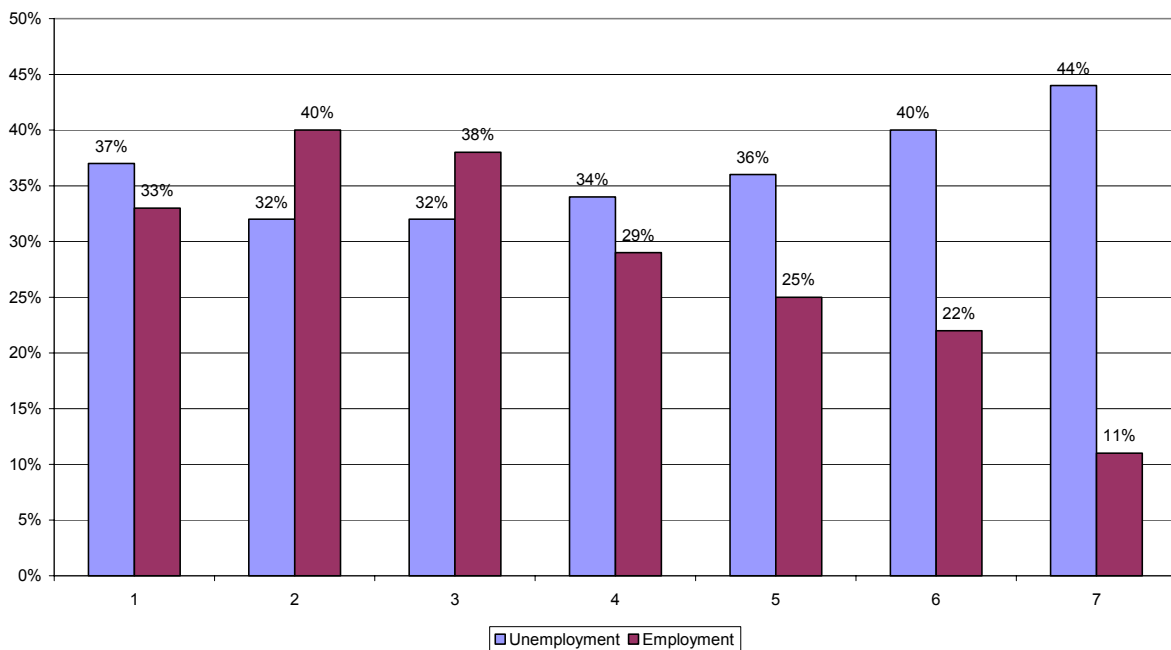
<sup>3</sup> A dash indicates that the sample size is extremely small.

**Table 15. Employment rate of resident mothers by age group of child/ren**

Number of children	Total	0-5 years	6-17 years
0		44%	24%
1	33%	30%	42%
2	40%	27%	43%
3	38%	21%	35%
4	29%	22%	28%
5	25%		26%
6	22%		14%
7	11%		-
8	12%		
Total	36%	36%	36%

The chart below summarises the overall patterns reflected in the above two tables about the relationship between the number of children and the unemployment and employment rates among adults. It confirms that the pattern in respect of households with one child differs from that for households with two or more children.

**Unemployment & employment by number of children**



The above patterns could be complicated by the fact that older women are likely to have more children than younger ones, and age as well as other factors affects labour market engagement. Table 16 on the next page reveals that 91% of the resident mothers are under age 50, with close on two-thirds in the age range 20-30 years.

**Table 16. Age of resident mothers**

Age group	Number	Percent
15-19	238180	3%
20-29	2246011	31%
30-39	2469684	34%
40-49	1623976	22%
50+	654936	9%
Unspecified	383	0%
Total	7233169	100%

Table 17 compares the unemployment and employment rates of resident mothers with those of other women in the same age group. The unemployment rate is generally higher among the resident mothers than among other women except for the very young age group. The pattern is most pronounced in the 20-29 year age group. The employment rate is generally lower among the resident mothers than among other women, except for the very young age group and the women over 50 years of age. It is difficult to know which different forces produce these patterns. It could be that the younger mothers need work because of the extra mouths to feed, but are less able to find work because of the constraints imposed by mothering.

**Table 17. Unemployment and employment among women by residence with children**

Age group	Resident mothers		Other women	
	Unemployment rate	Employment rate	Unemployment rate	Employment rate
15-19	68%	5%	72%	2%
20-29	55%	22%	49%	28%
30-39	31%	44%	30%	51%
40-49	21%	48%	17%	52%
50+	15%	32%	8%	18%

One of the other possible reasons for resident mothers not being employed involves the 'supply' issue of these women maybe not wanting to do 'economic' work, perhaps because of the extent of the unpaid care work they are responsible for. Table 18 on the next page tabulates the reasons provided in the GHS as to why resident mothers recorded as not economically active were not working. For close on two-fifths (38%) the reason is that they could not find work, or could not find suitable work. In effect, these women are unemployed rather than not economically active. The ones who give the reason as being that they are seasonal workers or that they were retrenched could be added to this category. Just over a quarter (27%) give the reason that they are a full-time homemaker. These are the ones who might feel that their unpaid care work does not allow them to work.

**Table 18. Reasons that not economically active resident mothers are not working**

Reason	Number	Percent
Scholar/student	223405	7%
Homemaker	889970	27%
Retired	14408	0%
Illness, disability, etc	323708	10%
Too young/too old	164237	5%
Seasonal worker	19331	1%
Lack of skills	127720	4%
Can't find work	1173941	36%
Can't find suitable work	50248	2%
Contract worker	797	0%
Retrenched	13984	0%
Other	290046	9%
Unspecified	11943	0%
Total	3303737	100

### Employment status of fathers living with their children

Table 19 corresponds to Table 11 above, except that this time it shows the number of younger and older children who have their biological fathers living with them. Comparison of the two tables confirms that children are far less likely to be living with their biological fathers than to be living with their biological mothers. Overall, 6,9 million children are recorded as living with their biological fathers compared to 13,6 million living with their biological mothers.

**Table 19. Children with resident fathers by age and population group**

	0-5 years		6-17 years	
	Number	% of total	Number	% of total
African	1583570	33%	3273950	32%
Coloured	293076	55%	544009	54%
Indian	109432	89%	162578	87%
White	404020	93%	542354	82%
Other	348	22%	3458	48%
Total	2390447	40%	4526350	37%

As with mothers, the likelihood of the father being present decreases with the age of the child, but in a far less noticeable way than for mothers. As with mothers, African children, followed by coloured children, are far less likely than those from other population groups to be living with their biological fathers. The difference between the population groups is more marked for fathers than mothers and almost certainly reflects the greater likelihood that African and coloured children are born outside marriage, as well as the legacy of migrant labour. For the purposes of this study, it means that these children are less likely to benefit from the employment of their fathers if the fathers are fortunate enough to be employed.

Unfortunately the GHS does not allow us to identify non-resident fathers, their employment status, and whether they pay maintenance to the mother or other caregiver for the child. It is, however, well-known that only a small proportion of non-resident fathers pay maintenance and, when they do, the amounts paid are usually very small. We might expect approximately half of all fathers to pay maintenance on the basis that approximately half of all adult men are employed. This would be a very optimistic assumption as the failings of the maintenance

system even in respect of employed fathers are well-known. Non-resident fathers who do pay maintenance tend to pay only a tiny proportion of their income. Thus a 2004 survey among 180 women, 20 in each of the nine provinces, collecting maintenance found that the median amount of maintenance awarded per child was R200 per month and the mean R226 (Commission on Gender Equality, March 2004: 51). The employment status of non-resident fathers should thus be regarded as providing potential, but unlikely, benefit to the child unless the private maintenance system is vastly improved.

Returning to the resident fathers, we now examine the number of children that these fathers are living with and their employment status.<sup>4</sup> Table 20 reveals that 42% of the resident fathers are living with only one child, and a further 49% with only two or three children. This further limits the reach of fathers' employment.

**Table 20. Resident fathers by population group and number of resident children**

Number	African	Coloured	Indian	White	Total
1	970796	173465	78008	231580	1454165
2	712846	158198	60018	236956	1169216
3	365784	84755	18795	72473	541806
4	179899	16758	3616	5856	206129
5	73269	3562	176	0	77007
6	28650	543	0	0	29193
7	12026	0	0	0	12026
8	2145	0	0	0	2145
9	327	0	0	0	327
Total	2345741	437280	160613	546865	3492014

Table 21 gives an overall average number of children per resident father ranging from 1,7 for Indian and white fathers to 2,1 for African fathers. As with mothers, the average number of young children is 0,7 across all population groups, while there are differences across population groups in respect of older children.

**Table 21. Mean number of resident children by age group and population group**

Population group	Total	0-5 years	6-17 years
African	2.1	0.7	1.4
Coloured	1.9	0.7	1.2
Indian	1.7	0.7	1.0
White	1.7	0.7	1.0
Total	2.0	0.7	1.3

The overall unemployment rate for the resident fathers is 13% while the overall employment rate is 72%. Table 22 on the next page does not show any clear pattern in respect of the unemployment rate as the total number of resident children increases. There does seem to be some increase in the rate with increasing numbers of children, but this pattern is most marked when the number of children is more than three, which applies to a relatively small number of cases. There is very little change in unemployment rates with changes in the number of young children, including no difference between fathers with no young children and those who have some. This pattern is very different to that for resident mothers. There is also little variation in

<sup>4</sup> Again, there are some errors in the database in that 3 (unweighted) of the identified fathers are female and 13 cannot be found at all in the dataset with information about labour market status.

the rate with changes in the number of older children for the first few such children. These patterns confirm the hypothesis that the presence of children is likely to have a far greater effect on mothers' availability for and engagement in economic work than on fathers'.

**Table 22. Unemployment rate of resident fathers by number of children**

Number of children	Total	0-5 years	6-12 years
0		13%	13%
1	15%	13%	13%
2	11%	12%	12%
3	11%	11%	15%
4	18%	-	18%
5	23%		19%
6	23%		25%
7	6%		
8	25%		
9	-		

Table 23 shows the pattern in respect of employment rates. Here, as with mothers, the pattern as one moves from one to two children is different to the pattern as the number increases beyond that. The pattern of an initial increase followed by a consistent decrease is the same as for women, although the rates are much higher for fathers than for mothers. There is no clear pattern in respect of the numbers of younger children except that those with some young children are more likely than those with none to be employed. The opposite pattern holds in respect of fathers with older children where the rate decreases as the number of children increases.

**Table 23. Employment rate of resident fathers by number of children**

Number of children	Total	0-5 years	6-12 years
0		67%	78%
1	70%	75%	71%
2	76%	78%	73%
3	75%	71%	65%
4	64%	-	58%
5	57%		58%
6	54%		54%
7	58%		-
8	67%		-
9	-		

As with mothers, we investigate the age patterns among resident fathers as this could affect their employment status. Comparison of Table 24 with Table 16 reveals that fathers tend to be older than mothers. Thus 21% of resident fathers are 50 years or older, compared to only 9% of resident mothers. A total of 6% of the fathers are 60 years or older, and some of these might be expected to have left the labour market.

**Table 24. Age distribution of resident fathers**

Age group	Number	Distribution
15-19	4773	0%
20-29	386769	11%
30-39	1248028	36%
40-49	1113094	32%
50+	739168	21%
Unspecified	182	0%
Total	3492014	100%

Table 25 reveals that, in contrast to resident mothers and other women, the unemployment rate among resident fathers is lower than among other men of the same age group. This could partly reflect the fact that African men – who are more likely to be unemployed – are less likely to be living with their children. The employment rate is noticeably higher for resident fathers than for other men across all age groups. This is again a very different pattern to the one found among women.

**Table 25. Unemployment and employment among men by resident with children**

Age group	Resident fathers		Other men	
	Unemployment rate	Employment rate	Unemployment rate	Employment rate
15-19	42%	31%	52%	5%
20-29	19%	72%	43%	37%
30-39	11%	81%	27%	59%
40-49	14%	75%	19%	63%
50+	12%	52%	11%	36%
Total	13%	72%	32%	36%

Table 26 confirms, as expected, that only a tiny proportion (1%) of resident fathers who are not economically active are said not to be working because they are homemakers. Just over a quarter (27%) could be regarded as unemployed as inability to find (suitable) work is provided as their reason for not working. There are nearly a quarter (24%) for whom the reason is that they are too old (or, unlikely, young), confirming the age patterns described above. Finally, close on a third (30%) are said not to be working on account of illness or disability. This difference from the female pattern could be partly explained by some men being at home, rather than elsewhere, because they are ill or disabled and need care. It could also be related to the age differences between resident mothers and fathers.

**Table 26. Reason that not economically active resident fathers are not working**

Reason	Number	Percent
Scholar/student	1208	0%
Homemaker	5033	1%
Retired	26285	4%
Illness, disability, etc	179220	30%
Too young/too old	140306	24%
Seasonal worker	4417	1%
Lack of skills	15820	3%
Can't find work	157904	26%
Can't find suitable work	7372	1%
Contract worker	2010	0%
Retrenched	33715	6%
Other	17983	3%
Unspecified	5379	1%
Total	596651	100%

### From the child's perspective

The previous sections looked at the situation of resident mothers and fathers. This section takes the perspective of the children, and investigates whether they are living with employed parents or more generally with adults who are employed.

Table 27 reveals that 42% of the total of 18 million children in the country had an employed parent living with them in June 2004, and 59% had an employed adult (whether a parent or someone else) living with them. The table and chart show that the likelihood that a child was living with an employed adult varied enormously across the provinces. Western Cape children were the most likely to live with employed parents (70%) or any employed adult (86%). Children in Limpopo were least likely to do so in that only 29% lived with an employed parent and only 42% lived with at least one employed adult.

**Table 27. Presence of employed parents and adults by province**

Province	Total children	Employed parent	% of total	Employed adult	% of total
Western Cape	1558708	1096841	70%	1340206	86%
Eastern Cape	3215847	1022542	32%	1596851	50%
Northern Cape	337192	160903	48%	228234	68%
Free State	1063842	509765	48%	715180	67%
KwaZulu-Natal	3792375	1355458	36%	2019766	53%
North West	1488645	523625	35%	798919	54%
Gauteng	2641736	1666038	63%	2067075	78%
Mpumalanga	1307864	562842	43%	863898	66%
Limpopo	2615606	749652	29%	1090242	42%
Total	18021815	7647665	42%	10720371	59%



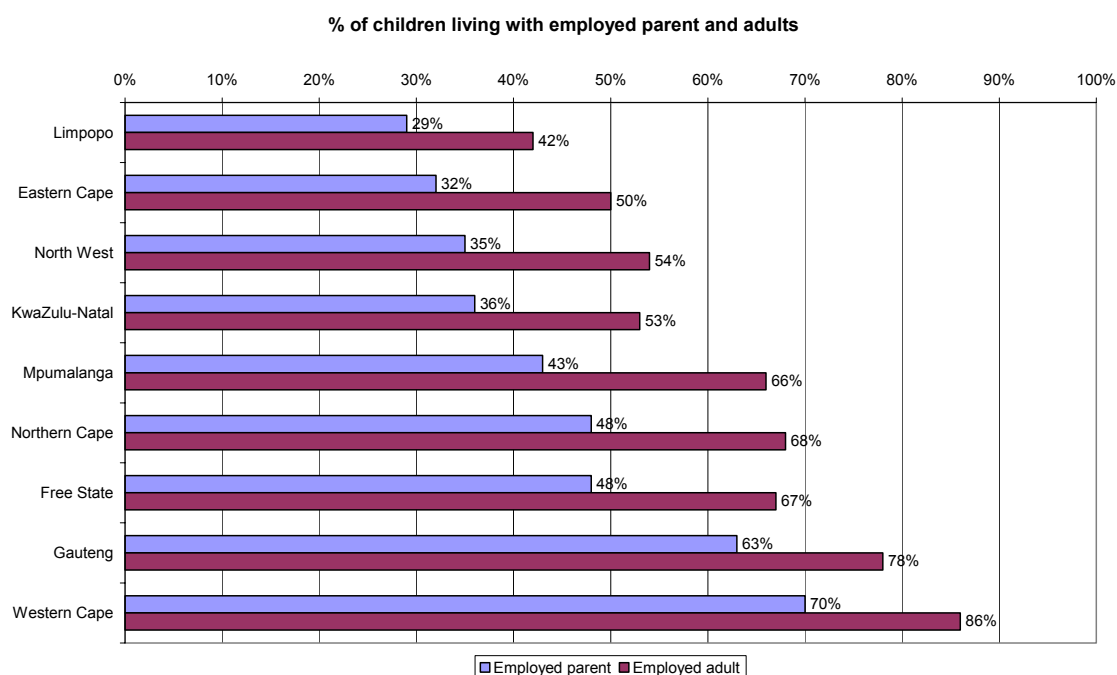


Table 28 suggests that there is only a small difference in the likelihood that older and younger children will have access to an employed parent or adult. The likelihood of both employed parents and employed adults being present is slightly greater for younger than older children. The difference is greater in respect of access to employed adults in general than in terms of access to an employed parent.

**Table 28. Presence of employed parents and adults by age of child**

	Employed parent	Employed adult
Total	42%	59%
0-5 years	43%	62%
6-17 years	42%	58%

Table 29 shows that the overwhelming majority of white and Indian children are living with an employed adult, and most are also living with an employed parent. In contrast, only just over a third (35%) of African children are living with an employed parent and only just over half (54%) are living with an employed adult.

**Table 29. Presence of employed parents and adults by population group**

Population group	Employed parent	Employed adult
African	35%	54%
Coloured	65%	83%
Indian	87%	92%
White	94%	97%
Total	42%	59%

### Impact of the number of employed adults

This section takes the analysis further by investigating whether and to what extent the number of employed adults in a household influences a range of possible indicators of well-being. The

GHS records as many as seven employed adults in some households, but most households have far fewer. The analysis therefore distinguishes between households with no, one, two and three or more employed adults.

Table 30 compares the situation of households with and without children in relation to their access to employed adults. It suggests that households with children are more likely than others not to have any employed adults, but also more likely than households without children to have more than one adult. This suggests that, once again, there are several factors at play in determining the patterns. The rest of the analysis focuses only on households containing children.

**Table 30. Households by number of employed adults and presence of children**

Employed adults	No children	Children	Total
0	30%	37%	34%
1	53%	39%	45%
2	14%	20%	18%
3+	3%	4%	4%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Table 31 investigates whether the number of employed adults affects the likelihood of school attendance. It provides very little evidence of any such effect. Children who are beyond the age at which schooling is compulsory and who live in households with many employed adults seem, in fact, slightly less likely to attend school than those with fewer employed adults in their household. This counter-intuitive pattern may reflect the fact that households with many employed adults are likely to be larger overall, and large households predominate among the poor.

**Table 31. Percentage of children attending school by number of employed adults**

Employed adults	6-17 years	6-14 years	15-17 years
0	95%	96%	91%
1	96%	97%	91%
2	96%	97%	92%
3+	95%	98%	86%
Total	95%	97%	91%

Table 32 suggests that there could be further differences based on whether the employed adults are male or female. The table compares school attendance levels of children aged 6-17 years in households in which there are two employed men, those in which there are two employed women, and those in which there is one employed man and one employed women. The analysis is restricted to households with two employed adults so as to limit the influence of confounding factors. It seems that children in households with a male-female employed pair and those with two employed women are likely to fare better than those with two employed men. This pattern exists despite the fact that women are likely to earn less than men, and thus a household with two male employed can be expected to be wealthier than one with two female employed. The differences between the percentages are not very large.

**Table 32. Percentage of children attending school by sex of employed adults in households with two employed adults**

	<b>% School</b>
2 men employed	92%
1 man, 1 women employed	97%
2 women employed	96%
Total	96%

Unfortunately, the number of households and children decreases each time we pursue the analysis further in this way. This restricts the fruitfulness of taking the analysis further with this dataset. Thus 1,46 million households have exactly two employed adults, of which 82% have a male-female pair, and only 9% each have two women and two men employed. These households contain a total of 3,2 million children, of whom 88 are in the male-female pair households, 10% in the households with two employed men and 12% in the households with two employed women.

This type of analysis is not taken further in this paper as many of the tables which follow use a subset of children which decreases the numbers involved even further. Table 32 suggests that this would be a fruitful area for further research. However, the table should not make us jump too quickly to conclusions about the greater altruism of women, or their greater concern for children's well-being. For example, Table 33 on the next page shows a much higher level of reported hunger in households with two women employed than in those with two men employed or with a male-female pair employed. This pattern could, though, partly be a result of greater awareness of women of child hunger if the household informant in the households with two women employed tended to be female.

**Table 33. Presence of hunger among children in households with two employed adults**

	<b>% with child hunger</b>
2 men employed	15%
1 man, 1 women employed	7%
2 women employed	21%
Total	9%

Returning to school attendance, Table 36 suggests that lack of money for fees is more likely to be given as a reason for not attending school as the number of employed adults in the household decreases.

**Table 34. Lack of money for fees as reason for not attending school by number of employed adults**

<b>Employed adults</b>	<b>%</b>
0	30%
1	23%
2	21%
3	24%
Total	26%

Table 35 suggests that, for those children who attend school, there is more likely to be reporting of the problem of fees being too high as the number of employed adults in the household decreases. Again the differences are relatively small.

**Table 35. Too high fees among children attending school by number of employed adults**

Employed adults	% reporting fees too high
0	16%
1	13%
2	12%
3	12%
Total	14%

Table 36 suggests that among those repeating a grade, the lack of money for fees is more likely to be offered as a reason as the number of employed adults in the household decreases.

**Table 36. No money for fees as reason for repeating grade by number of employed adults**

Employed adults	% giving fees as reason
0	8%
1	7%
2	4%
3	5%
Total	7%

Table 37 suggests fairly good targeting of the school feeding scheme as the likelihood of a schoolgoing child benefiting from the programme tends to increase with a decrease in the number of employed adults. The reverse of the pattern for those in household with three or more employed adults might again reflect the predominance of large households among the poor noted above.

**Table 37. Access to school feeding scheme by number of employed adults**

Employed adults	% benefiting from school feeding
0	54%
1	43%
2	31%
3	42%
Total	46%

Table 38 shows attendance at preschool (defined to include day care, crèche and pre-primary) for children aged less than 6 years by the number of employed adults in the household. (The data suggest that significant numbers of children aged six and seven years are attending preschool. They are excluded from the analysis as the reason for not attending could be attendance at school rather than lack of income to pay for preschool.) The table suggests, as expected, that preschool attendance increases as the number of employed adults increases. This can be explained both by increased income and thus ability to pay fees, and by the need to have other people care for the child if adults are doing economic work.

**Table 38. Preschool attendance of children aged under 6 by number of employed adults**

<b>Employed adults</b>	<b>% preschool</b>
0	11%
1	17%
2	26%
3	18%
Total	17%

Table 39 suggests that children living in households with no employed adults are less likely to be reported to have suffered from illness or injury over the past 12 months than those living in households with employed adults. This finding must be treated with caution as it is often found that those who are more disadvantaged are less likely to report illness of the same severity than those who are advantaged. Again, there is some reversal of the trend where there are three or more employed adults.

**Table 39. Illness or injury over past 12 months by number of employed adults**

<b>Employed adults</b>	<b>% ill or injured</b>
0	7%
1	10%
2	11%
3	9%
Total	9%

Table 40 on the suggests that, among those children reported to have suffered from illness or injury, the likelihood of consulting with a health worker increases with the number of employed adults. This could indicate the ability to pay fees, travel and other costs associated with seeking assistance.

**Table 40. Consultation of ill and injured with health workers by number of employed adults**

<b>Number of employed adults</b>	<b>% consulting</b>
0	83%
1	86%
2	89%
3	85%
Total	85%

Table 41 shows that expense is more likely to be given as a reason for not consulting with a health worker when children are ill or injured as the number of employed adults in the household decreases.

**Table 41. Expense as a reason for not consulting by number of employed adults**

<b>Number of employed adults</b>	<b>% too expensive</b>
0	26%
1	15%
2	12%
3	16%
Total	19%

Table 42 suggests (but with very small differences) that children living in households with no employed adults and those in households with three or more employed adults are more likely to access welfare services than those with one or two employed adults in the household. The pattern is positive in terms of welfare services targeting those children who are likely to need them most.

**Table 42. Accessing welfare services by number of employed adults**

Employed adults	% accessing welfare
0	3%
1	2%
2	1%
3	3%
Total	2%

Table 43 suggests that there is no relationship between the likelihood that a child will be disabled and the number of employed adults in the household. Overall, only 1% of children are reported to be disabled.

**Table 43. Disability by number of employed adults**

Employed adults	% disabled
0	1%
1	1%
2	1%
3	0%
Total	1%

**Access to household services**

The set of tables above compares the situation of children in households with varying numbers of employed adults. Table 44 focuses on households which include at least one child and compares the situation of households with varying numbers of employed adults in respect of access to various services and assets. The table suggests that the likelihood of the household having piped water on site and using electricity as the main fuel for cooking increases as the number of employed adults increases. The likelihood that a household owns books also increases as the number of employed adults increases.

**Table 44. Access to services and assets by number of employed adults**

	0 employed	1 employed	2 employed	3 employed	Total
Piped water on site	43%	68%	83%	78%	62%
Electricity for cooking	33%	59%	80%	71%	54%
Possession of books	60%	72%	83%	81%	70%

## Conclusion

This paper has, as expected, showed that the presence of employed adults in a household is likely to improve the well-being of children as measured along a range of axes. It has showed that children in different categories (race, age, etc) differ in the likelihood that they will have access to employed adults in this way. Further analysis would almost certainly reveal that the extent of the benefit would differ across groups, for example because of the different mean incomes of employed adults from different race groups. The discussion in respect of the impact of male vs female earners points to the possibilities in this type of analysis.

The paper has only scratched the surface of the possibilities for analysing the impact of access to employed adults for children. The possibilities in the existing data are far from exhausted. However, there are also many challenges. One challenge is the limited size of the database when one focuses down on particular groups. A second challenge is the large number of confounding variables. Among these are the size of the household, the number of earners per resident, the sex and age of the earners, and the type and level of remuneration of the employment. Before spending long hours in complicated analysis, more thought is needed as to which types of analysis will be most useful for informing policy rather than simply for academic interest.

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