

Precarious Work and the Gendered Individualisation of Risk in the South African Manufacturing Sector, 2002–2017

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ABSTRACT

Against the backdrop of workplace restructuring globally, post-apartheid South Africa is experiencing consistently high levels of unemployment, the deterioration of employment security and limited improvements in earnings. This article investigates the changing nature of labour-intensive production in the South African labour market and the gendered individualisation of risk associated with precarious or non-standard forms of employment. The article expands on the critical theoretical narrative about the challenges of labour under neo-liberalism by applying a gendered political economy analysis to the experiences of precariousness among workers in the South African manufacturing sector. By focusing on the interconnections between gender and political economy, this article delinks questions about the crisis of labour from a narrow focus on skills and refocuses our understanding in terms of the structural determinants of vulnerabilities in the labour market. The article argues that the gender composition of informal and precarious work in the post-apartheid labour market has significant implications for addressing the persistent racialised and gendered inequalities in the South African economy.

KEYWORDS

labour market restructuring; informal employment; precarious work; gender

JEL CLASSIFICATION

J21; J30; J71; J80

Introduction

As most countries in the world grapple with the economic devastation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the role of employment in contributing to economic progress and social reproduction has been thrown into sharp relief. With companies such as Amazon and Walmart recording record profits by offloading the risks of production onto workers, the sustainability of the precarious employment model is now receiving renewed attention (Kinder and Stateler, 2020; Kinder, Stateler and Du, 2020).

While the ongoing pandemic is shining a new light on the social compact between labour and capital, the rise of precarious employment is not new. Non-standard, informal and precarious work has been on the rise for the last two decades (ILO, 2012).¹ The proliferation of low-paid, unstable and otherwise insecure employment has given rise to literature centred on the growing precariousness of work in a number of different contexts (Kalleberg and Vallas, 2018). Much of

¹ Definitions for non-standard, informal and precarious employment are outlined in the following section.

this literature approaches informal and precarious employment in comparison to the standard employment relationship and the regulatory frameworks that characterised employment in industrialised countries in the late twentieth century. However, under neo-liberalism, non-standard, informal and precarious employment has become a widespread phenomenon in both relatively advanced and developing countries.

According to the ILO (2018), 61.2 per cent of the world's workers work in informal jobs. Furthermore, in many countries the rise of non-standard, informal and precarious work has become synonymous with a decrease in the benefits of employment and reductions in social welfare (ILO, 2016; Hurtado, Hessel and Avendano, 2017). Additionally, male and female workers experience precarious work differently. Gendered differences in exposure and vulnerability to precarious employment are often the direct result of unfavourable terms of inclusion, the risk of exclusion from the labour market and the unequal burden of social reproduction activities in the household (Carr and Chen, 2004; Moussie and Alfers, 2018). Thus, the gendered differences in workers' experiences with informality are not simply the result of increasing levels of unemployment or a shortage of skills, but also reflect the deliberate exclusion of women from development through the deterioration of remuneration and employment security by way of economic and labour market restructuring.

Against this backdrop, this article aims to contribute an empirical basis for the growing informalisation and precariousness of work in the South African labour market. The article investigates the trends in non-standard, informal and precarious employment among male and female workers in the South African manufacturing sector, as this remains the sector for which policy holds out much hope for job creation.

The findings presented in this article build on recent discussions about employment discrimination and widening inequality in the post-apartheid labour market, despite seemingly progressive labour-related legislation (Fredericks and Yu, 2018; Mosoetsa and Francis, 2019; Webster and Francis, 2019, Mosomi and Wittenberg, 2020). The article shows that the changes that have taken place in the South African labour market have reproduced rather than challenged the gendered and racialised legacies of the apartheid regime.

Defining the Concepts: Informality vs. Precarity

Originally, the concept of the "informal sector" was used to establish a dichotomy between self-employment and wage employment (Hart, 1973; Arnold and Bongiovi, 2013; Webster, Britwum and Bhowmik, 2017). In 2002, the International Labour Conference (ILC) expanded this definition by proposing the term "informal economy" instead of "informal sector", taking into account all activities not sufficiently covered by traditional work arrangements (ILO, 2013a). In 2003, the 17th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) further broadened this definition by endorsing a job-based concept of informality that took into account informal employment outside of informal sector enterprises (Chen, 2012). Based on this definition, workers would be considered to be in informal jobs if their work arrangements were, by law or practice, not subject to national labour laws, income tax, social protection or entitlement to the benefits of employment (Hussmans, 2004). Informal economy now comprises both the informal sector and all forms of work without the regulatory frameworks and/or the social protections of the standard employment relationship (Arnold and Bongiovi, 2013; Webster, Joynt and Sefalafala, 2016).

Similarly, non-standard and precarious work have largely been defined as work for remuneration characterised by uncertainty, insecurity, risk, instability, low wages, limited social benefits and reduced access to legislative entitlements (Kalleberg, 2009; Arnold and Bongiovi,

2013; ILO, 2011, 2016; Mosoetsa, Stillerman and Tilly, 2016). Standing (2014: 16) further elaborates this definition, arguing that the “precariat” are those people who live “through insecure jobs interspersed with periods of unemployment or labour-force withdrawal (misnamed as ‘economic inactivity’) and living insecurely with uncertain access to housing and public resources”.

This ongoing casualisation and informalisation of employment has significant implications for the livelihoods of workers within and outside of the workplace. It has intensified the traditional challenges facing labour under capitalism, including poor working conditions, low wages and constraints on workers’ ability to organise. Furthermore, the implications of precarious work are not only restricted to the workplace. Rather, it has been argued that precarity also has consequences for notions of citizenship, and places constraints on redistributive social policies and rights which, *inter alia*, include: individual health and well-being, family formation and, more broadly, social life (Hart, 2004; Razavi and Pearson, 2004; Standing, 2014; Kalleberg and Vallas, 2018).

According to the ILO (2018), emerging market and developing economies represent 93 per cent of the world’s informal employment. In southern Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, southeast Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean, non-agricultural informal employment comprises 77.6 per cent, 76.8 per cent, 63.9 per cent and 49.0 per cent, respectively, of total employment. In northern Africa, non-agricultural informal employment accounts for 56.3 per cent of total employment (ILO, 2018). Therefore, the growth and forms of precarious employment in the Global South provide an opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of labour market restructuring globally.

Labour Market Restructuring and the Crisis of Employment in Post-apartheid South Africa

While there have been significant political gains since the fall of the apartheid regime, the post-apartheid labour market has been characterised by consistently high levels of unemployment and the persistence of inequality (Liebbrandt, Levinsohn and McCrary, 2005; Von Holdt and Webster 2008; Liebbrandt et al., 2010). Evidence suggests that in the post-apartheid period, a significant number of South Africans are either unemployed or are employed in low-wage, informal and precarious jobs (Stats SA, 1998, 2020; Valodia et al., 2006; Muller, 2009; Festus et al., 2015).

Further, while studies that define informality using the enterprise-based approach have shown that informal employment in South Africa has been relatively low compared to global standards (Heintz and Posel, 2008; Rogan and Skinner, 2018), those that employ the broader, employment-based definition indicate that informal employment may be more prominent in the South African labour market than earlier studies have suggested. According to Valodia et al. (2006), the South African labour market has not been shielded from the global trend of workplace restructuring. Several scholars argue that this has facilitated the casualisation and/or externalisation of labour into informal and precarious jobs that are unregulated and lack the social protections necessary for the social reproduction of labour (Valodia et al., 2006; Von Holdt and Webster, 2008). As a result, a large proportion of the South African labour force is employed in the informal economy (Valodia et al., 2006).

It is relatively well-documented that a large number of South African workers are employed in non-standard and flexible work arrangements through third-party employers, such as temporary employment service (TES) agencies or labour brokers (Bhorat, Cassim and Yu, 2016; Oosthuizen, 2006). In 2014, following an extensive four-year collective bargaining process, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) won a legislative amendment of Section 198 of the Labour Relations Act (LRA) that would regulate the use of temporary employment services. The amendment limited employment through TES agencies to a period not exceeding three consecutive

months. Furthermore, it stated that employees not performing a temporary service would be absorbed on a permanent basis and that, following the three-month period, the client company would be deemed as the main employer (RSA, 2014).

However, since the LRA amendment, employers have developed new ways to continue employing workers on a temporary basis – for example, by identifying labour brokers as “service providers” and claiming that the Section 198 amendment does not apply to them, or by employing workers on perpetual fixed-term contracts.² Von Holdt and Webster (2008) suggest that the growing precariousness of work in the post-apartheid labour market can be explained by the replacement of stable, full-time jobs with low-wage, unstable and insecure jobs in the informal economy. Moreover, through the informalisation and casualisation of work, South African employers have engaged in a process of “unmaking and remaking” the working class, placing workers in a position of weakened power at a time when unemployment is rising and the benefits of employment continue to fall (Von Holdt and Webster, 2008).

At the same time, Di Paola and Pons-Vignon (2013) argue that, combined with the ongoing crisis of unemployment in South Africa, there has been an increase in the commodification of basic services, such as healthcare and transport, which has forced workers into a “reproductive squeeze”: workers requiring more cash for the social reproduction of labour at the same time as the benefits associated with employment are declining. In accordance with these trends, Liebbrandt et al. (2005) show a significant decrease in real incomes in the post-apartheid period: for the period 1995 to 2000, real incomes, for both men and women, fell by 40 per cent. Furthermore, while income poverty decreased between 1993 and 2008, mostly because of large increases in social grants, they argue that inequality has persisted well into the 2000s.

Posel and Rogan (2012) show that gender differences in the incidence of poverty have also increased in the post-apartheid period. They found that between 1997 and 2006 women were increasingly more likely to be living in households below the poverty line relative to men. Moreover, compared to men, women are more likely to be in vulnerable jobs lacking legal and social protections (Muller, 2009; Mosomi and Wittenberg, 2020). For the period 2009–2016, Fredericks and Yu (2018) found greater labour market participation among men compared to women. Hence, it has been argued that the neo-liberal restructuring of labour markets in the post-apartheid period has perpetuated inequality between labour groups and has increased the requirement for social welfare (Roderik, 1997, as cited in Webster and Adler, 1999).

Theoretical Framework

This article uses a gendered political economy (GPE) approach to examine the nature and extent of precarity in the post-apartheid labour market. GPE explores how women and men are located, structurally and historically, within processes of production, distribution and accumulation (Rai, 2013). Its approach is that conventional theories are inadequate for addressing the multiple issues facing society because they tend to neglect the gender biases implicit in mainstream theoretical and methodological approaches. Moreover, neglecting the linkages between gender and political economy places limitations on the state’s capacity for addressing the challenges faced by those working within it (Rai, 2013).

GPE emerged in economics in the 1990s with the aim of understanding the gendered

² According to Theron (2014), since Section 198 of the LRA does not specify what constitutes “temporary” in “temporary employment services”, it is easy for labour brokers to seemingly transform their operations into other forms of externalised work to which the LRA does not apply.

structures in the economy and women's subordination within them (Becchio, 2020). In contrast to feminist political economy, which poses a more radical challenge to rethink mainstream notions of scientific inquiry in order to eradicate the androcentrism inherent in economic science, gendered political economy asserts the potential to expand mainstream analyses to include the realities of the social system. As such, early GPE scholarship challenged persistent gender inequalities in the economy by documenting the dynamics of women's participation in the paid labour market (Jacobsen, 2020). Based on this approach, Becchio (2020) identifies three key conceptual starting points for approaching gender in political economy. These include: the analysis of households, markets and states as gendered structures; the division of labour between the productive and reproductive spheres as central to economic analysis; and the adoption of international comparative research to replace the category of development (Becchio, 2020).

This study provides an empirical basis for the GPE framework based on the experiences of workers in the South African labour market. GPE is operationalised by analysing the post-apartheid labour market as a gendered structure and highlighting the interconnections between gender and persistent inequalities in the South African economy. The phrase "gendered individualisation of risk" is used throughout the analysis to describe the extent to which labour market restructuring has allowed capital to transfer its economic risks onto workers, and the role that gender plays in determining workers' vulnerabilities to the impacts of the growing precariousness of work in the post-apartheid labour market.

According to Lund and Srinivas (2000), men and women experience different types of risks in different sectors and at different stages of their life cycles, based on their work status and the regulatory conditions within which they are employed. As such, there are common risks that women workers are likely to experience. These include ill health, reproductive and childrearing risks, death or disability, loss of assets and increased expenditure on social events (such as cultural and religious events) (Lund and Srinivas, 2000; Carr and Chen, 2004). Studies also show that the risks of precarious work are not limited to the labour market. For most women, workplace issues and household issues are often inseparable. According to Benya (2016), in a situation where everyday human practices – such as the necessary labour of feeding people, taking care of the ill, taking care of the family, keeping safe and warm, and maintaining a sustainable environment – are not provided for publicly, the burden often falls on women to provide such services. As a result, women will either outsource these services, if they can afford to, or withdraw from the labour market in order to care for children and adult dependents in the family.

Thus, based on this approach, the gendered individualisation of risk will be assessed based on the increased social and economic costs of labouring in the informal economy without legal or social protections. Potential risks include: poor health or illness, deprivation of basic human needs, loss of income, reduced quality of care, loss of time, alienation, and other risks related to social well-being, and the impact of precariousness on the livelihoods of workers in the South African manufacturing sector.

Statistical Definitions, Data and Methods

Measuring non-standard, informal and precarious work

The analysis in this article is based primarily on the bi-annual Labour Force Surveys (LFSs) from 2002 to 2006 and the Quarterly Labour Force Surveys (QLFSs) from 2009 to 2017. These nationally representative household surveys, conducted by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), were introduced in 2000 to collect detailed information on the labour market (that is, labour market

participation, employment and unemployment) and other information pertaining to the demographic and household-level characteristics of approximately 30 000 households across the country (Wills, 2009; Magidimisha and Gordon, 2015; World Bank, 2019). Moreover, the LFSs are able to collect information on informal sector employment, as well as non-standard, informal and precarious employment, based on the expanded definition adopted by the 17th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (Husmanns, 2004).

According to Wills (2009), the South African LFSs are an improvement on the erstwhile October Household Surveys, because they collect more comprehensive information on informal employment. For example, unlike the October Household Surveys, LFSs ask questions that capture information on the diverse range of informality that exists within the labour market, including survivalist activities such as subsistence farming (Wills, 2009). However, there are certain limitations to the use of LFSs as a source of data to measure non-standard, informal and precarious employment. Husmanns (2004) argues that LFSs only collect information on an individual's primary job and do not collect information on secondary jobs. Thus, the scope and scale of informal employment will most likely be underestimated (Wills, 2009). Furthermore, since some informal economy activities may take place seasonally, the short reference period of LFSs may not reflect the informal activities for the entire year (Husmanns, 2004).³ Moreover, undocumented or unauthorised migrant workers are often undercounted in the LFSs because fear of repercussion by authorities suppresses reporting of individual characteristics and labour market activities (Wills, 2009).

In defining informal sector employment, the LFSs used a direct, "one-shot" question which asked participants whether the organisation for which they worked was in the formal or informal sector. The LFS defined formal sector employment as work arrangements where "the employer (institution, business or private individual) [was] registered to perform the activity", and informal sector employment as work arrangements "where the employer [was] not registered", (Stats SA, 2002, 2004, 2006). The LFSs also asked whether the business where the participant worked was registered for income tax and value added tax (VAT) (Stats SA, 2002, 2004, 2006). However, responses to this question may not give reliable estimates for the scope of informal and precarious work in the South African labour market as workers may not be aware of the registration status of their employer (Yu, 2012). Moreover, the registration of an enterprise does not guarantee workers access to social protections (Muller, 2003).

The current QLFS no longer has a direct question on whether participants believe the business for which they work is in the informal or formal sector (Budlender, 2011). Rather, Statistics South Africa has adopted two new methods for identifying informal employment. In the first method, employees are considered to be in the informal sector if income tax is not deducted from their wages and the number of individuals employed by the enterprise does not exceed five, while informal self-employment is characterised by whether the enterprise is registered for income tax and/or VAT (Yu, 2012). The second approach classifies informal employees in broader terms: as those working in the informal sector and those displaying precarious and informal characteristics, endorsed by the 17th ICLS, but working in what is traditionally regarded as the formal sector and in private households (Yu, 2012). Both the LFSs and QLFSs include questions that ask employees if they have a written contract, the duration of their contract, who pays their salaries or wages and whether or not their employer contributes to a pension fund, medical aid fund or Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) (Muller, 2003).

³ That is, since the LFS only took place twice annually, data would not be fully representative of the situation of seasonal workers who may have been unemployed at times when the data was collected.

Some scholars propose that the differences between the formal and informal sector are not as clear-cut as they may seem. While the enterprise approach illustrates some of the major differences between the formal and informal sector, Chen (2012) argues that it is rare that informal sector enterprises operate in complete isolation from the formal sector.

In light of the adaptability of the methods discussed in this section, and despite limitations, most analysis of the informal economy makes use of LFSs and QLFSs to measure informality. Thus, the terms non-standard, informal and precarious employment are used in this study with the intention of capturing the socio-economic and structural implications of the changing nature of work in the post-apartheid labour market. To this end, estimates in this article are based on Statistics South Africa's operationalisation of the ILO definitions discussed above. These include, inter alia, characteristics such as part-time, temporary, casual and non-unionised work, as well as employment lacking social protections such as access to medical aid, pension fund and unemployment benefits.

Assessing the implications of precarious work

This study combined survey-based quantitative research with a qualitative methodology to assess the experiences of workers in the post-apartheid manufacturing sector. The study used the bi-annual Labour Force Surveys from 2002 to 2006 and the Quarterly Labour Force Surveys (QLFS) from 2009 to 2017 to analyse the gendered trends in precarious/non-standard employment in the manufacturing sector. Since such nationally representative data is collected annually, it was suitable for determining how work had changed over the period. In addition, the data provides the necessary information on part-time, temporary, casual and non-unionised work as well as employment lacking social protections such as access to medical aid, pension and unemployment insurance, and helped to identify the gender differences in precarious employment in the manufacturing sector.

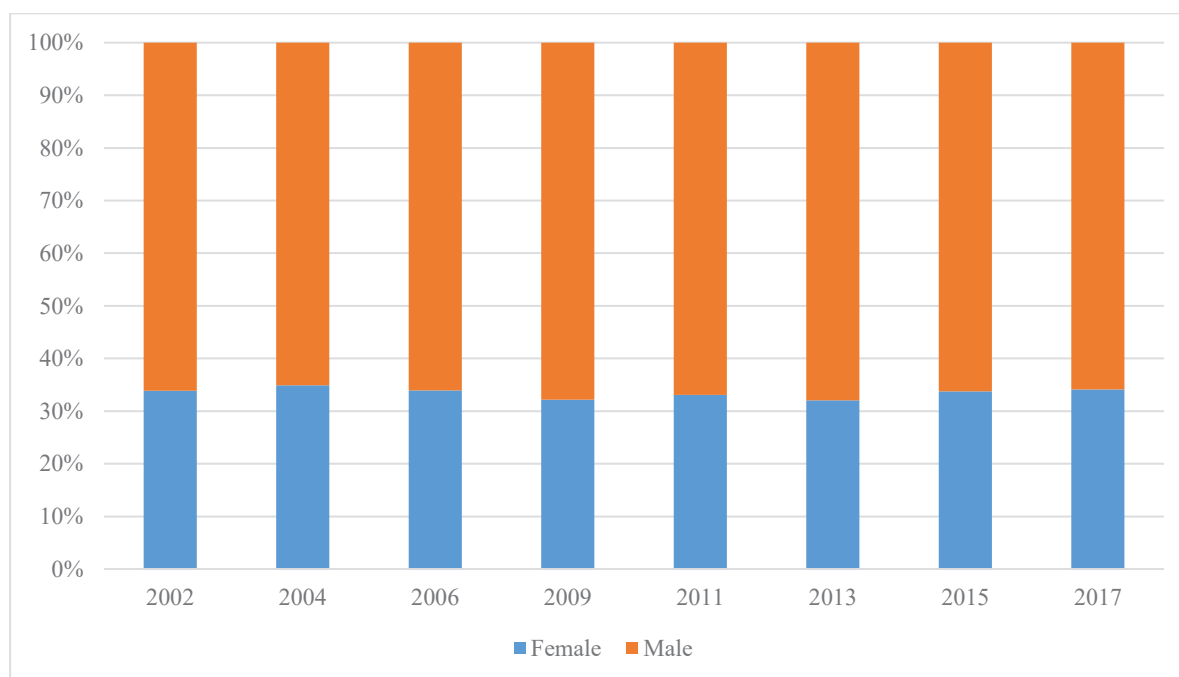
The qualitative aspect of the research was conducted in 2019 and involved a case study of workers from four component-producing firms that supply to a leading automotive manufacturer in the Eastern Cape province. The qualitative case study complemented the broad statistical analysis by exploring the lived reality of how precarious work is experienced, which could not be measured using quantitative data alone. The sampling method used to determine the interview participants for the qualitative case study was based on purposive selection. According to Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016), purposive sampling is a non-random selection of participants based on the qualities they possess.

I identified this group of workers through ongoing engagement and work with the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA). As such, the workers who participated in this study were also members and/or shop stewards of the union and were engaged in active struggles with their employers to negate the encroachment of flexibilisation at their respective firms. Each of the interview participants had been employed at their respective firms for over ten years and they were all equipped to discuss the ways in which they had experienced work change since they had held several identities at their workplace – for example as casual/temporary workers or as part-time or full-time shop stewards at the firm. The qualitative case study helped to reveal the grounded realities of the growing precariousness of work in the South African manufacturing sector by illustrating the experiences and outcomes of these work arrangements on workers' lives within and outside the workplace.

Findings

Employment trends in the manufacturing sector by gender

Figure 1 illustrates the gendered structure of total employment in the South African manufacturing sector. The data shows that, throughout the post-apartheid period, the share of male employment in the manufacturing sector has been significantly higher than the share of female employment. Between 2002 and 2017, men accounted for between 65 per cent and 68 per cent of the sector's workforce. Throughout the post-apartheid period, the sector has, therefore, remained untransformed in terms of the gender composition of its workforce.



Source: Own calculations from the 2002–2006 (September) bi-annual Labour Force Surveys and the 2009–2017 (third quarter) Quarterly Labour Force Surveys. The data is weighted.

Figure 1. Percentage of all employees in the manufacturing sector, by gender (2002–2017)

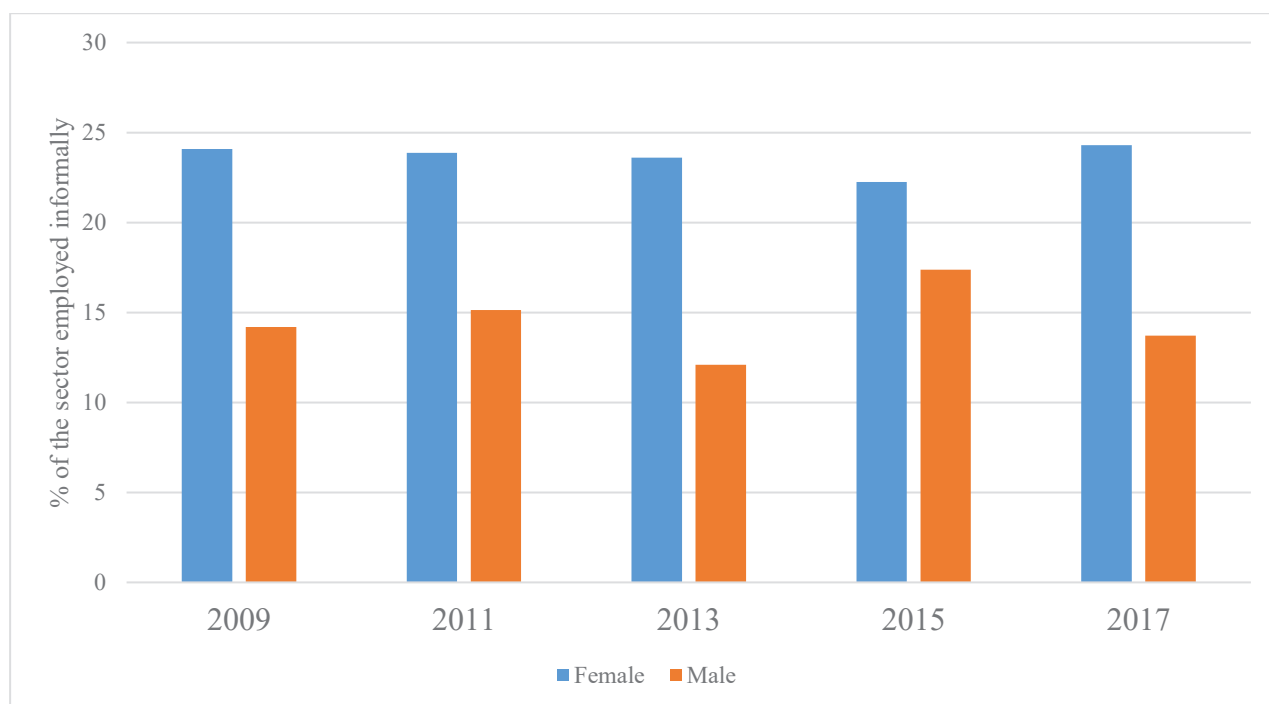
Trends in informal employment in the manufacturing sector (2009–2017)⁴

Figure 2 illustrates the gendered structure of informal employment in the South African manufacturing sector. In 2009, 24.08 per cent of female workers in the manufacturing sector were informally employed,⁵ compared to 14.19 per cent of male workers. Similarly, in 2017, 24.29 per cent of female workers in the manufacturing sector were informally employed compared to 13.72

⁴ Due to the incompatibility of the data sources (LFSs and QLFSs) for measuring informal employment for the period, this analysis is based on data from the QLFSs alone. However, the LFSs and QLFSs are compatible for measuring non-standard employment for the period. The following section makes use of both data sources to analyse the trends in non-standard employment in the post-apartheid period by sector.

⁵As mentioned, this study uses the ILO and Statistics South Africa definitions of informal employment – that is, employment lacking legal and/or social protections such as a formal written contract of employment, pension fund, UIF, medical aid contributions and so on.

per cent of male workers in the sector. This indicates that women in the manufacturing sector are (consistently) more likely to be in informal employment, compared to their male counterparts.



Source: Own calculations from the 2009–2017 (third quarter) Quarterly Labour Force Surveys. The data is weighted.

Figure 2. Percentage of employees in the manufacturing sector who are informally employed or employed in the informal sector, by gender (2009–2017)

Trends in non-standard manufacturing employment (2002–2017)

As previously mentioned, studies suggest that a large number of South African workers are employed through labour brokers (Bhorat, Cassim and Yu, 2016; Bhorat, Lilenstein et al., 2016). However, while some scholars have measured trends in outsourcing in the South African labour market, it is not possible to derive estimates for these trends in the manufacturing sector. Thus, for the purposes of this study, non-standard employment is measured by characteristics such as part-time, temporary and casual work arrangements.⁶ While the previous section considered all types of informal employment (including self-employment in the informal sector), the analysis here is narrower and will consider the trends in non-standard employment in relation to employees only. The assumption is that employees in these types of work arrangements are less likely to be made permanent and are more vulnerable to the experiences of precarity, within and outside the workplace.

⁶ Both the LFSs and QLFSs had a question relating to the duration of the contract or agreement for the main work activity in which participants had been engaged. The LFSs asked participants if their work was permanent, fixed period, temporary, casual or seasonal in nature. Participants could also respond if they did not know the duration of their agreement (Stats SA, 2002, 2004, 2006). In contrast, the QLFSs simply asked participants if their contract or agreement was of a limited duration, permanent nature or an unspecified nature. The QLFSs did not capture information on categories such as temporary, casual or seasonal wage work (Stats SA, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017).

Tables 1 and 2 present an analysis of the incidence of, and gendered trends in, the characteristics of non-standard employment among male and female workers in the manufacturing sector. The data indicates that, for both men and women in the sector, non-standard employment has increased in the post-apartheid period. For the period 2002–2017, male and female workers experienced increases in fixed-term/limited duration contracts of 6.23 and 7.68 percentage points respectively. Over the same period, the data reflects that both men and women in the sector have experienced a decrease in full-time, stable jobs. For example, Table 1 shows that in 2017 73.65 per cent of male workers in the sector were permanent, compared to 80.79 per cent in 2002, a 7.14 percentage point decrease in permanent employment for men in the South African manufacturing sector over the period. Unlike the original LFSs, the QLFSs do not capture information on categories such as temporary, casual and seasonal wage work. However, between 2002 and 2006, data from the LFSs indicate that until the mid-2000s, there also appeared to be a growing trend in non-standard employment. Table 1 indicates that in 2002, only 4.84 per cent of male employees in the sector were casual workers, compared to 8.78 per cent in 2006.

Table 1. Percentage of male employees in the manufacturing sector by contract duration (2002–2017)

	2002	2004	2006	2009	2011	2013	2015	2017	Change
									Percentage point change
Permanent	80.79 (1.19)	81.33 (1.22)	76.04 (1.45)	77.04 (1.26)	76.52 (1.32)	74.79 (1.46)	72.35 (1.37)	73.65 (1.42)	-7.14
Fixed period contract/ limited duration	5.77 (0.67)	4.61 (0.66)	5.73 (0.76)	10.63 (0.94)	10.42 (0.96)	12.44 (0.99)	10.97 (0.96)	12.00 (1.08)	6.23
Temporary	8.35 (0.87)	8.10 (0.79)	9.17 (0.91)	-	-	-	-	-	0.82
Casual	4.84 (0.68)	5.75 (0.79)	8.78 (1.07)	-	-	-	-	-	3.94
Seasonal	0.05 (0.04)	0.17 (0.07)	0.14 (0.06)	-	-	-	-	-	0.09
Unspecified	0.00 (0.00)	-	-	12.33 (0.96)	13.05 (1.03)	12.77 (1.23)	16.68 (1.14)	14.35 (1.09)	14.35
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	0

Source: Own calculations from the 2002–2006 (September) bi-annual Labour Force Surveys and the 2009–2017 (third quarter) Quarterly Labour Force Surveys

Note: The data is weighted.

Table 2 examines the effect that labour market restructuring has had on women in the manufacturing sector. The data reflects that there has been an increase in non-standard employment in the form of fixed-term/limited duration contracts for women workers in the sector.

As noted above, for the period 2002–2017, there has been a 7.68 percentage point increase in non-standard employment for women at the same time that full-time, stable employment has decreased by 10.1 percentage points. In 2017, 73.04 per cent of women workers in the sector were employed on permanent contracts, compared to 83.14 per cent in 2002.

While the QLFs do not provide information on temporary, casual and seasonal wage workers for the sector, it is clear from the original LFSs that, through the mid-2000s, casualisation of these forms was on the rise. In 2002, only 7.81 per cent of female employees in the manufacturing sector were temporary. However, by 2006, this number had risen slightly to 9.67 per cent of the female manufacturing workforce. For the same period, casual workers also increased in the sector. In 2002, only 4.89 per cent of female employees in the manufacturing sector were casual workers. By 2006, 10.73 per cent of female employees were casual.

Table 2. Percentage of female employees in the manufacturing sector by contract duration (2002–2017)

	2002	2004	2006	2009	2011	2013	2015	2017	Change
									Percentage point change
Permanent	83.14 (1.29)	81.11 (1.61)	73.08 (2.15)	71.99 (1.87)	71.25 (1.94)	72.30 (2.02)	66.29 (2.00)	73.04 (2.01)	-10.1
Fixed period contract/ limited duration	3.22 (0.59)	2.74 (0.61)	5.51 (1.10)	14.33 (1.56)	15.83 (1.57)	14.77 (1.58)	13.95 (1.45)	10.90 (1.40)	7.68
Temporary	7.81 (0.92)	9.71 (1.26)	9.67 (1.28)	-	-	-	-	-	1.86
Casual	4.89 (0.73)	5.52 (0.90)	10.73 (1.59)	-	-	-	-	-	5.84
Seasonal	0.21 (0.13)	0.79 (0.19)	0.69 (0.22)	-	-	-	-	-	0.48
Unspecified	0.33 (0.17)	-	-	13.68 (1.34)	12.92 (1.40)	12.93 (1.42)	19.76 (1.68)	16.07 (1.66)	15.74
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	0

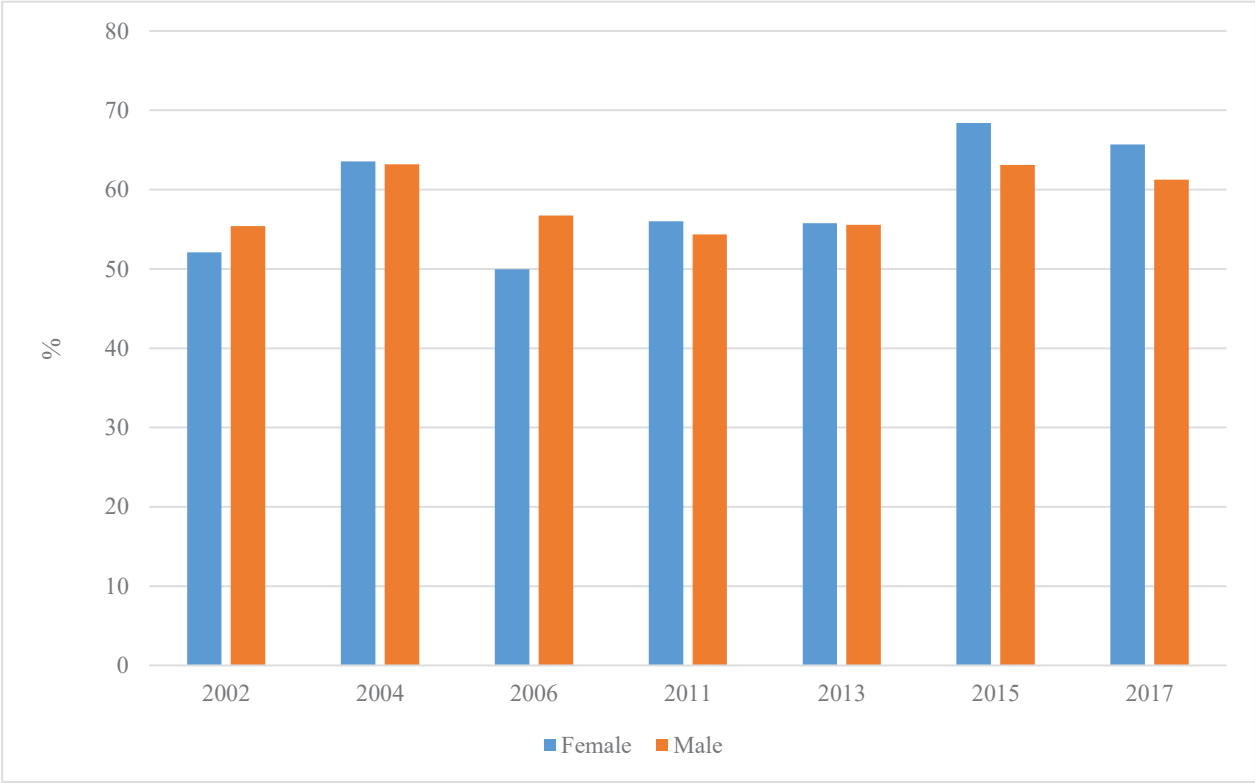
Source: Own calculations from the 2002–2006 (September) bi-annual Labour Force Surveys and the 2009–2017 (third quarter) Quarterly Labour Force Surveys

Notes: The data is weighted. Standard errors in parentheses.

Union density in the manufacturing sector

Figure 3 presents the percentage of employees in the manufacturing sector without union membership. The data indicates that, in the post-apartheid period, union density decreased for both women and men in the sector. The percentage of female employees in the sector who are not unionised increased from 52.11 per cent in 2002 to 65.70 per cent in 2017. Similarly, the percentage

of male employees in the sector who are not unionised increased from 55.42 per cent in 2002 to 61.25 per cent in 2017.⁷



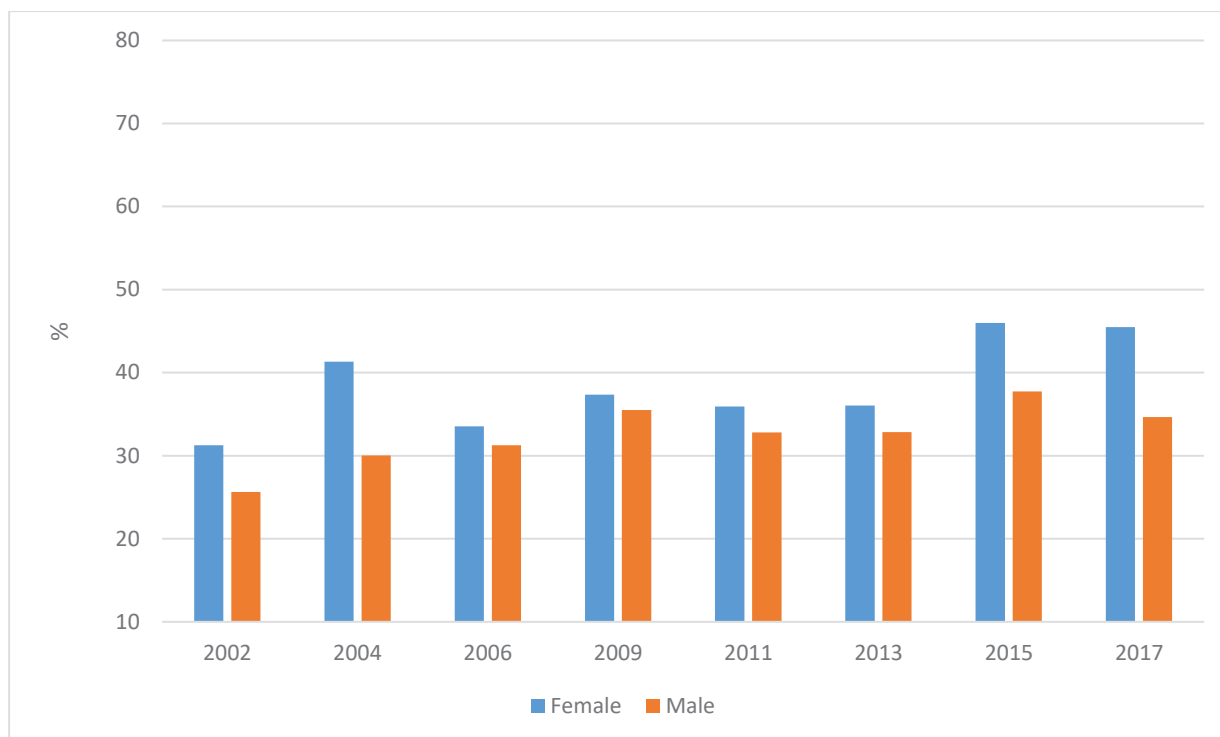
Source: Own calculations from the 2002–2006 (September) bi-annual Labour Force Surveys and the 2009–2017 (third quarters) Quarterly Labour Force Surveys. The data is weighted.

Figure 3. Percentage of employees in the manufacturing sector not unionised, by gender, 2002–2017

Pension contributions among manufacturing employees

Figure 4 shows that the percentage of employees in the manufacturing sector who do not receive a pension/retirement fund contribution from their employer has increased throughout the post-apartheid period. In 2002, 31.26 per cent of females in the manufacturing sector were without a pension/retirement fund, compared to 25.62 per cent of males. By 2017, 45.48 per cent of female employees in the sector were without a pension fund. Similarly, the percentage of male employees in the sector who did not receive a pension/retirement fund contribution from their employer also grew. In 2017, 34.66 per cent of males in the sector did not receive an employer pension contribution. The data suggests that, throughout the period, women in the sector have been less likely to receive a pension fund contribution from their employer than their male counterparts. Moreover, for the period 2002–2017, gender differences in workers’ access to pension fund contributions have widened.

⁷ The 2009 QLFS did not include a question about whether or not workers were unionised.



Source: Own calculations from the 2002–2006 (September) bi-annual Labour Force Surveys and the 2009–2017 (third quarter) Quarterly Labour Force Surveys.

Figure 4. Percentage of employees in the manufacturing sector without pension contributions, by gender (2002–2017)

Employer contributions to medical aid

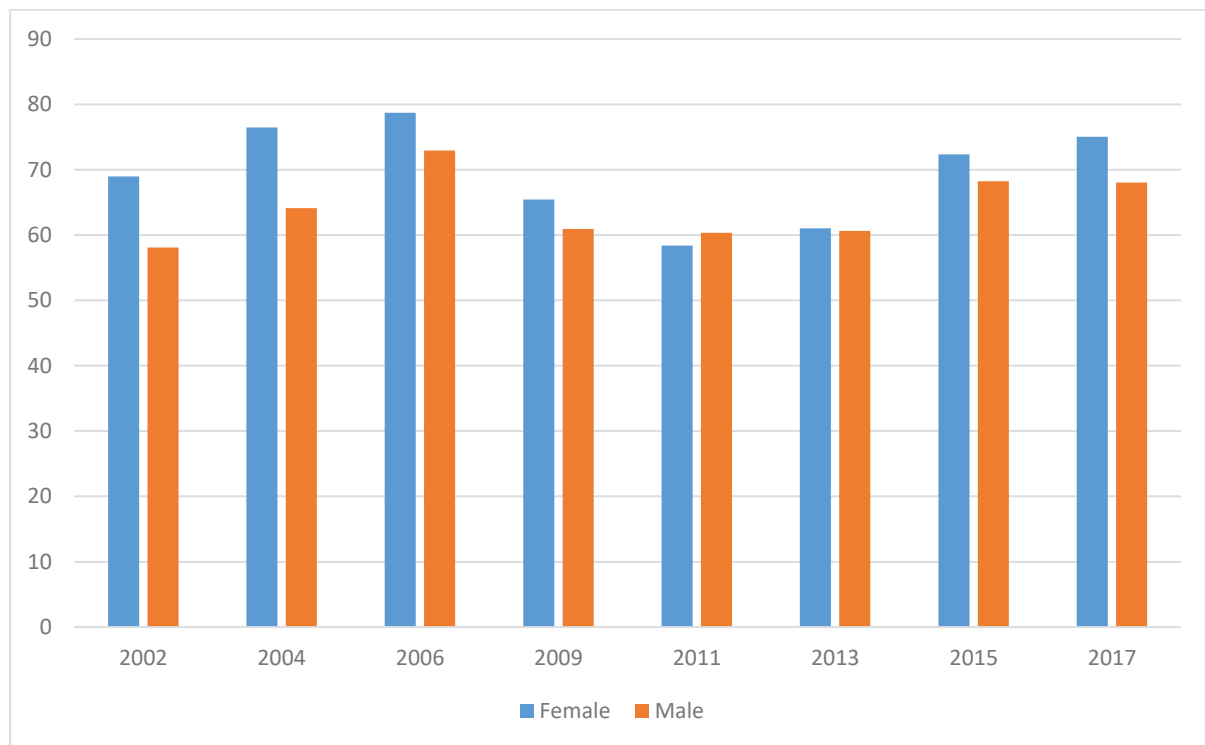
Figure 5 (on the next page) shows that, for the period 2002–2017, the percentage of employees in the manufacturing sector who did not receive a medical aid contribution from their employer has increased. In 2002, 68.96 per cent of females in the manufacturing sector did not receive a medical aid contribution from their employer, compared to 58.1 per cent of males. By 2017, 75.04 per cent of female employees in the sector did not have a medical aid contribution. Similarly, the percentage of male employees in the sector who did not receive a medical aid contribution from their employer also grew. In 2017, 68.05 per cent of males in the manufacturing sector did not have a medical aid contribution.

Gendered differences in workers' exposure and vulnerability to precarious work

Generally, women are suffering ... are not treated the same. The same applies to this company. It's no different, you see. They are not equal to the male counterparts, in everything, including opportunities (Interviewee 12).

To complement the broad quantitative analysis, this study has adopted a qualitative approach to explore the gendered individualisation of risk among workers of the South African automotive industry. Using the GPE framework, this section contributes towards broadening analyses on the

growing precariousness of work by illustrating the role that gender plays in determining workers' vulnerability and exposure to precarious work in the post-apartheid labour market.



Source: Own calculations from the 2002–2006 (September) bi-annual Labour Force Surveys and the 2009–2017 (third quarter) Quarterly Labour Force Surveys. The data is weighted.

Figure 5. Percentage of employees in the manufacturing sector without medical aid, by gender (2002–2017)

As mentioned above, the qualitative aspect of this study involved in-depth interviews with workers from four Eastern Cape automotive component manufacturing firms, and sought to uncover the lived reality of precarious work among workers of the South African labour market. The findings reveal that, in the South African automotive component industry, women are more vulnerable to precarious work compared to men. Moreover, workplace structures reproduce the realities of the social system – the dynamics of power, and the intersections of race, class and gender in the economy.

While the LFSs do not provide information on the individual tasks performed by workers in each industry, interviews revealed that women were less likely to be employed in high-paying permanent jobs in the automotive industry compared to men. At the same time, work in the industry continued to be valued based on the physical and biological differences between the sexes such as muscular strength and the ability to give birth, with men more likely to be employed in “heavy duties” (which tended to be permanent) and women more likely to be employed in “light duties” (which tended to be temporary). For example, at one firm, out of the roughly four hundred tow motor or forklift drivers employed, only two were women. Further, participants explained that in some instances supervisors would request only male employees, because:

Females, they will get pregnant and then after that they will request to be put in a place whereby there's light duties (Interviewee 4).

As a result, most women workers tended to be logisticians or material handlers. Thus, in some cases, the composition of certain jobs in the industry may be linked to clear forms of gender discrimination in the workplace.

In line with Lund and Srinivas (2000), the qualitative case study revealed that women and men experienced different types of risks in the labour market, including ill health, reproductive and child-rearing risks, unfavourable terms of inclusion and the risk of exclusion from the labour market. One shop steward explains:

I had a female who was working three-shifts pattern. She was pregnant. She was almost seven months pregnant and the doctor gave this lady that you cannot work afternoon shift and night shift, because you are going to be exposed on cold. So, when the lady approached the company, the company they did not want to assist. You see? But this is not a difficult exercise. It's only that HR must read the doctor's sick note and see to it where she can place this woman. You see? It's a matter of that they are reluctant at times to do that, or feeling lazy to do that. So these things are [a] reality ... At times you will be facing the issue of a gender (Interviewee 4).

Therefore, with no maternity benefits, female temporary workers are faced with the false choice of either continuing to work despite severe health risks or staying at home and foregoing future earnings from the job.

The qualitative case study also revealed that gender remains a key determinant of vulnerability beyond the workplace. In a situation where the conditions for the social reproduction of labour are not adequately provided publicly or by the job, the burden often falls on women to provide such services (Benya, 2015). As a result, interviews revealed that there had been an increase in the number of women "exiting" the workforce to care for their families. This is illustrated by the following quote:

We have also experienced that, as a result of the little that [women] are earning, some of them they don't make it that long there ... Because they do not have only a responsibility of working there. ... on the other side, they will have to take care of the household issues ... So, they've got those responsibilities and the pressure that they are getting as a result of being in the first place female colleagues, and the way they are treated around by supervisors (Interviewee 10).

These findings illustrate that the growing precariousness of work in the post-apartheid labour market has not been gender neutral. Rather, based on their work status and the regulatory conditions within which they are employed, women are more vulnerable to the experiences and consequences of precarious work compared to men in the South African automotive industry. This has led to the worsening disempowerment and marginalisation of women in the post-apartheid labour market (Van der Westhuizen, 2005).

Conclusion

Despite achieving a number of important freedoms at the end of the apartheid regime, the "liberating" and "stable" employment that many South Africans fought for has not been realised (Pons-Vignon, 2015). Instead, the analysis in this article has shown that progress towards undoing the imprint of the apartheid era on the labour market has stalled or reversed. Moreover, it has

demonstrated that the crisis of employment is not simply a matter of a lack of jobs, but also has to do with the types of jobs available and the kind of life they are supposed to enable (Barchiesi, 2011).

In support of Von Holdt and Webster's (2008) theory of a shrinking core of full-time, stable jobs in the post-apartheid labour market, the data presented in this article shows that, in the South African manufacturing sector, there has been an increase in the incidence of non-standard employment in the form of fixed-term/limited duration, casual and temporary jobs outside of informal sector enterprises. For the period 2002–2017, the number of employees in the manufacturing sector without legal and social protections such as a trade union membership and pension fund or medical aid contributions attached to their employment have increased among both male and female employees.

In addition, by taking into account the experiences of informal wage workers outside of informal sector enterprises, this article highlights other lines of differentiation that better explain the scope of informality in the South African labour market. In terms of the implications of precarious work for the livelihoods of workers, then, overall reductions in legal and social protections have exacerbated the struggles of workers. In particular, decreasing social protection or entitlements to the benefits of employment have had a negative impact on the already low wages that informal and precarious workers earn. Workers are increasingly being forced into an economic position which makes it almost impossible for them survive.

The article's main contribution is the empirical finding that there is a link between the trends in precarious employment and gender. While there has been an increase in female labour force participation (both globally and in South Africa), the South African manufacturing sector remains disproportionately male in terms of its gender composition. Using the GPE framework, the data confirms that gender is associated with a higher level of vulnerability to precarious work. Women are more likely to be employed without adequate work-based legal or social protections compared to their male counterparts. Further, by investigating the gendered individualisation of risk associated with precarious work in the post-apartheid period, this article contributes towards broadening analyses of the extent and depths of precarity in the South African labour market. A gender perspective suggests that not only is precarious work a means by which capital can transfer the risks of the production process to labour, but, in the post-apartheid period, capital has effectively transferred its economic risks onto women workers in particular.

Much research has focused on determining the scope and parameters of the informal economy. However, very little research has explored informal and precarious work from a policy perspective. There is, therefore, need for research that interrogates the role that labour legislation has played in the expansion of precarious work in South Africa. This should focus not only on the implications of regulatory histories on employment, but also interrogate the constraints and possibilities of extending legal and social protections to non-standard, informal and precarious workers, today.

Finally, in the context of the current global health and economic crisis, the analysis presented in this article highlights the need for a new social compact, one that recognises the large numbers of women and men in the informal economy. Based on this approach, policies aimed at protecting workers' rights and extending social protections to the working poor, who have historically been excluded from work-based legal and social protections, will be crucial in the fight against poverty and inequality in the post-COVID-19 economic recovery. Moreover, the recent rise in critiques about mainstream development approaches and practices suggests a need for further exploration on the kinds of alternatives that may better lead to a fairer, just and sustainable global economy.

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