

# Just transition in South Africa: the case for a gender just approach

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TOWARDS A JUST TRANSITION - THE ROLE OF INDUSTRIAL POLICY

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## Situational overview

- Women perform the bulk of the work that takes place globally, but remain under-represented in the economy
  - Women perform the bulk of care work, which goes unrecognised, but forms the foundation of the modern economy
    - i.e. women care for families, including children, the elderly and the sick
    - All of this takes away from the time women have to seek paid employment or start businesses
- This is a problem because just transition discussions focus on workers, among whom women are under-represented
  - E.g. 44% in Q3 2019 & Q3 2020, and 43% in Q3 2021
- Green economy said to provide an opportunity for addressing this under-representation, however, the gap remains
  - E.g. 11.5 million renewable energy jobs globally in 2019, only 32% held by women

# Why a gender just approach is necessary

## Women and climate change:

- Women are more likely to be harmed by the biophysical impacts of climate change
  - E.g. about 61% of those killed by cyclone Nargis in 08 were women, while about half a million women were affected by cyclone Idai
  - Studies show natural disasters decrease women's life expectancy (by killing more women, or killing more women at younger ages)
  - Also likely to lead to increased incidents of violence experienced by women and other marginalised groups (LGBTQ+)
    - Especially physical and sexual violence, and unsafe labour
- Biophysical impacts also increase the time women spend on care work and away from paid economic services
  - E.g. walking longer distances to get water

## Women within society:

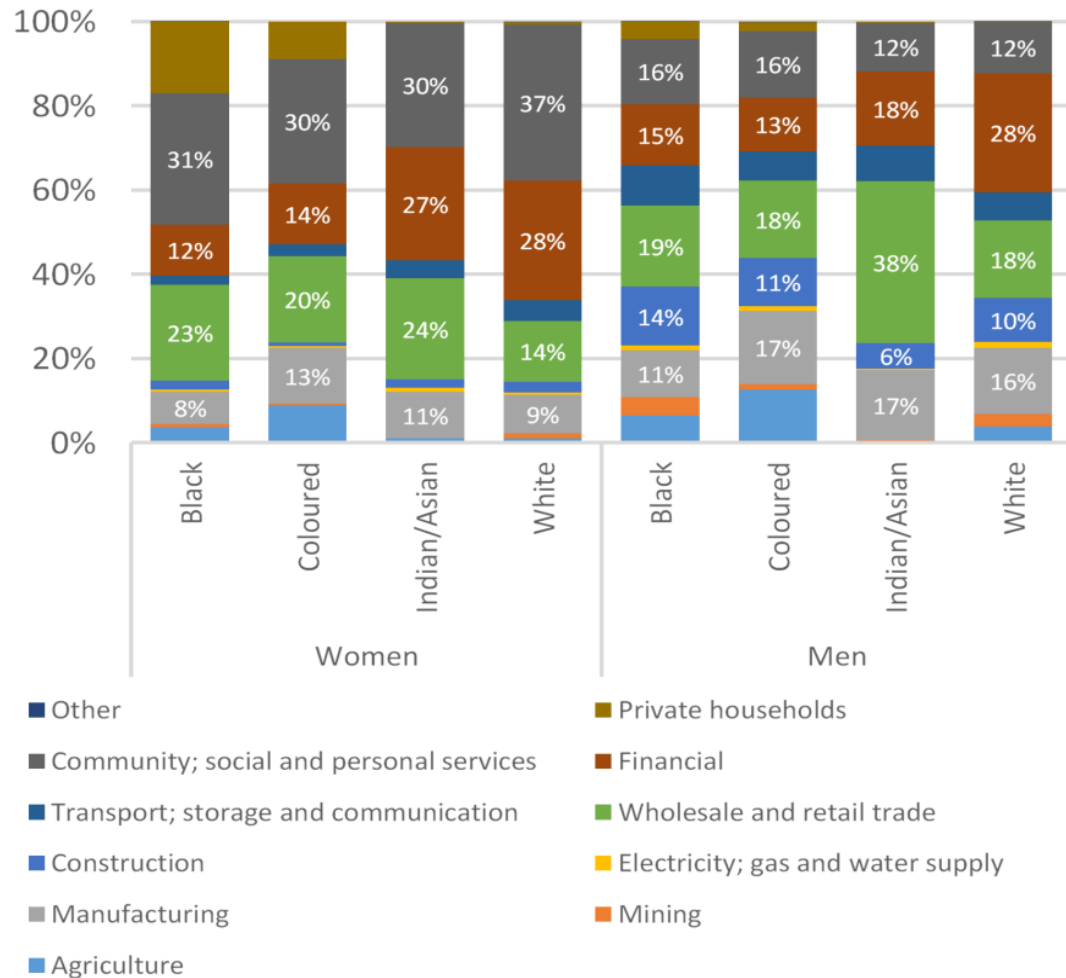
- The extractive economy has centred the idea of men as workers and women as caregivers
- Evident in the over-representation of women among care workers (in households and in paid employment)
- Significantly impacts on women's economic outcomes, including income, ownership of resources and decision-making power
  - E.g. about 50% of those in women-headed households depend on remittances and grants for income, compared to 23% for men-headed households
  - Increases to 53% for black women (disaggregated by gender and race)
  - 75% of those in men-headed households depended on salaries, businesses and pensions, compared to 48% for those in women-headed households
- These factors place women in a far more vulnerable position with no resources for adaptation or mitigation

# Women in the economy

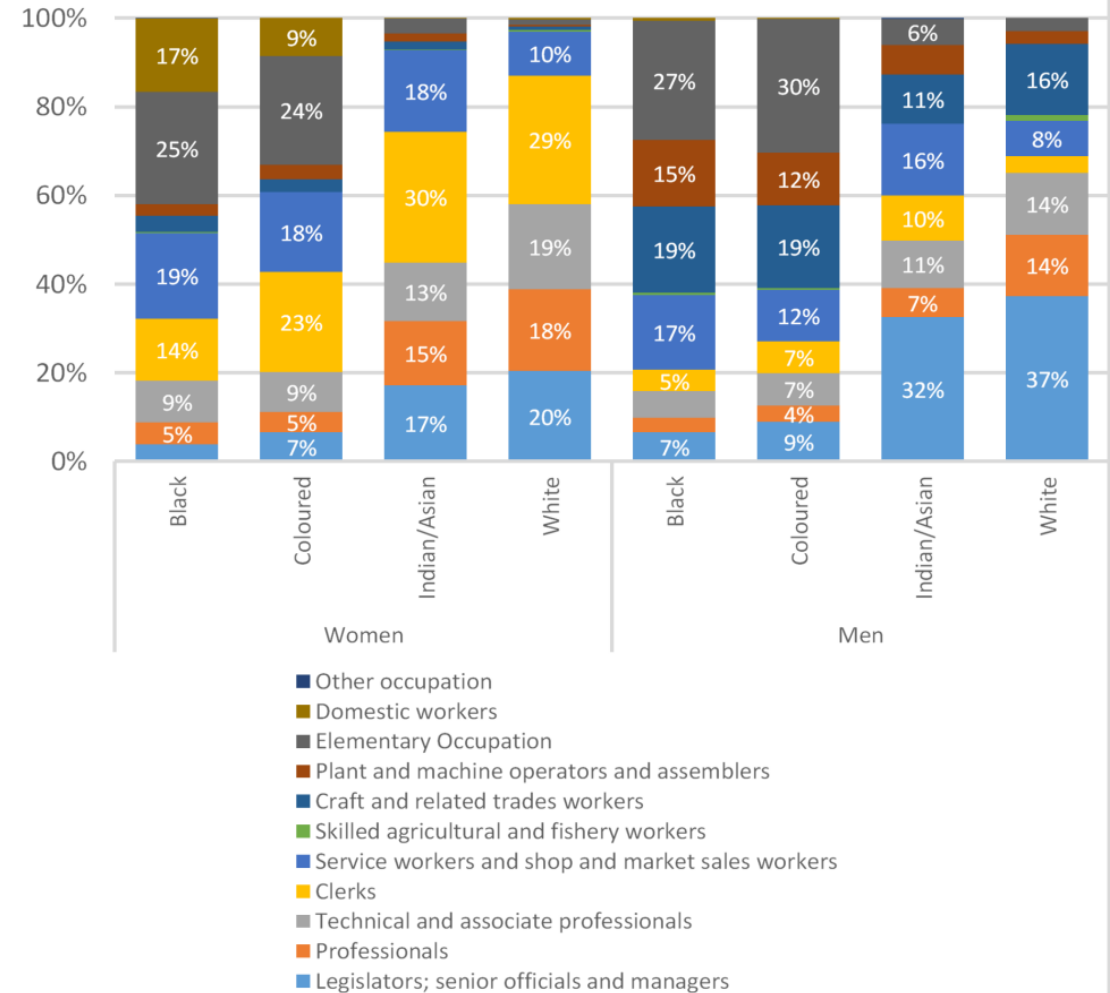
- Women cannot transition from jobs they don't have; nor can they get paid employment at the same level as men given their burden of unpaid care work
  - E.g. globally, only 2% of men aged 15-64 perform unpaid care work full-time, compared to about 25% of women
  - Disasters exacerbate differences in economic opportunity, as seen during COVID-19
    - E.g. women accounted for about 39% of employment prior to COVID, but accounted for 54% of job losses
- Still, care work cannot go undone given the spending gaps it closes in communities with regards to education, childcare, elderly care for instance
  - There are questions around how to account for/value that care work
    - this brings up the issue of what we consider economically valuable
- Importantly, employment alone does not eliminate vulnerability, rather should be accompanied by other protections (like written contracts, pension and UIF contribution etc.) not always available in care work
  - Black women are least likely to make UIF contributions (makes sense given their over-representation in informal care work within households – i.e. domestic workers)

# Women in the economy

Graph 1: Employment by industry, gender and race, 2019



Graph 2: Employment by occupation, gender and race, 2019



# The starting point for a gender just approach

- Women's economic exclusion is a structural problem that requires structural fixes
- This also means changing time-use patterns to give women more time for paid economic activity
  - This can be in the form of childcare for instance
  - Some studies show that access to childcare increases women's labour force participation by as much as 7%
    - Companies like Nestle already providing onsite childcare in SA
- Active steps much be taken to include women in technical fields (through training for instance)
  - Promote women already in technical fields
- Reframing of work in ways that do not conform to gender stereotypes, while also promoting the need for more men in the field of humanities

Thank you.



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