Labour Market Outcomes of Migrant Populations in South Africa, 2012 and 2017

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Background: Xenophobic violence in South Africa has been attributed to the perception that immigrants take jobs from South Africans; and that immigrants are sometimes viewed as competitors for resources. Literature indicates the notion of perceived labour market success of immigrants in South Africa. Furthermore, migration is an important phenomenon shaping the demographic profile of our country. During apartheid, migration in South Africa was associated with labour migration, which shaped the country's spatial and settlement patterns and primary livelihood strategies and had an impact on migration trends. Hence, migration and labour are intrinsically linked in South Africa. The paper focuses on predictors of employment and the decent work agenda. Focus on labour force participation is integral as it is the main route through which migrants improve their socioeconomic status. Ensuring access to decent work is one of the key channels to facilitate regular migration.

Data and methods: The Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) is a household-based, sample survey conducted by Stats SA. It collects data on the labour market activities of individuals aged 15 years and older who live in South Africa. A migration module is included every five years. Hence, the QLFS 2012 and 2017 was used.

Three populations were considered in the paper, non-movers, internal-migrants and immigrants. Ordinarily, the binary logistic regression model considers that the data is collected using simple random sampling where each sampling unit has the same probability of being chosen from the population. However, if the data is collected using complex survey sampling designs, binary logistic regression may lead to biased estimates of parameters and incorrect variance estimates. Many population-based surveys, such as the QLFS, are constructed using a complex sampling design. The samples are often obtained through complex designs, involving stratification, clustering, multistage sampling, unequal probability of selection of participants and responding rates. Using clustering, observations from the same

cluster are correlated and, in order to have unbiased estimators, sample weighting needs to be adjusted for this cluster effect. Therefore, complex design must be taken into account in the regression model in order to have reliable results. Further analysis was conducted using the International Labor Organization's Decent Work Framework, which considered eleven indicators.

Results: From the regression model on predictors of employment, immigrants are about two times more likely to be employed than internal-migrants and non-movers. Non-movers have the lowest odds of being employed. Despite immigrants being more likely to be employed than non-movers and internal-migrants, further research was undertaken to determine the types of work in which they participated and how their work fared within the Decent Work Framework. Decent work is central in efforts to reduce poverty and is a means for achieving equitable, inclusive and sustainable development. Irregular migration can be mitigated by labour migration policies and the decent work agenda. The rates and proportions in the framework indicate undesirable types of work that express lack of job security and stability as well as social security. From the eleven decent work indicators, immigrants had the highest proportion in eight out of eleven categories. Non-movers ranked the highest in only three categories, whilst internal-migrants did not exhibit the highest in any category. This indicates that whilst immigrants are more likely to be employed, they largely participate in employment that cannot be classified as decent work.

Figure 1: Summary of Decent Work indicators by migrant status, 2012 and 2017

Sub-Indicator	Non-movers		Internal-migrants		Immigrants	
	2012	2017	2012	2017	2012	2017
1. Unemployment rate	Red	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green
2. NEET Rate (15-24)	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Red	Red
3. Informal employment rate	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Red	Red
4. Proportion in unpaid employment	Red	Red	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow
5. Proportion working excessive hours	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red
6. Underemployment rate	Red	Red	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow
7. Proportion not entitled to maternity/ paternity leave	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Red	Red
8. Proportion with no employment contract	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Red	Red
9. Proportion not in permanent employment	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Red	Red
10. Proportion with employer not contributing to pension/ UIF	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Red	Red
11. Proportion with no trade union membership	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Red	Red

Policy implications: Decent work is central in efforts to reduce poverty and is a means for achieving equitable, inclusive and sustainable development. Irregular migration can be mitigated by labour migration policies and the decent work agenda. Whilst Sustainable Development Goal 8 (Decent work and economic growth) and the Global Compact for Migration, highlight the importance of Decent Work, immigrants still lag behind in this area. Hence, policy intervention and attention at this level is needed. Policy development on migrant rights, as well as tackling xenophobia is needed in South Africa.