



LABOUR MARKET
INTELLIGENCE PARTNERSHIP

Public attitudes to work in South Africa: a missing link

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OUTLINE

1

Introduction

2

The LMIP research

3

Research methods

4

Highlights of study findings

5

Implications for skills planning

1. INTRODUCTION

- ❖ Skills planning discourses assume a passive public.
- ❖ Personal decisions influence the success of interventions aimed at correcting labour market imbalances and mismatches.
- ❖ **A deeper understanding of public perceptions regarding the labour market is key to formulating tailored employment and skills-development interventions.**
- ❖ Limited understanding of public attitudes:
 - about work
 - Lack of data providing comprehensive and longitudinal information on public perceptions about the labour market.
- ❖ Structural inequality - most pressing development challenge.
- ❖ Multi-layered struggle in the world of work :
 - Working age population struggles to obtain paid work;
 - In intensifying struggle for fair working conditions and remuneration in the workplace.

2. THE LMIP RESEARCH

- ❖ Initiated a survey with specific questions about social attitudes to the labour market:
 - Examined public attitudes to work to gain a deeper understanding of work values, preferences and experiences, and work seeking behaviour.
 - Applied segmented labour market theory to understand work seeker and worker labour market behaviour.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

- ❖ Questions were fielded through the HSRC's *South African Social Attitudes Survey* in 2013.
- ❖ Face to face household study.
- ❖ Data was collected from a nationally representative sample of South Africans aged 18 and above (2 884).

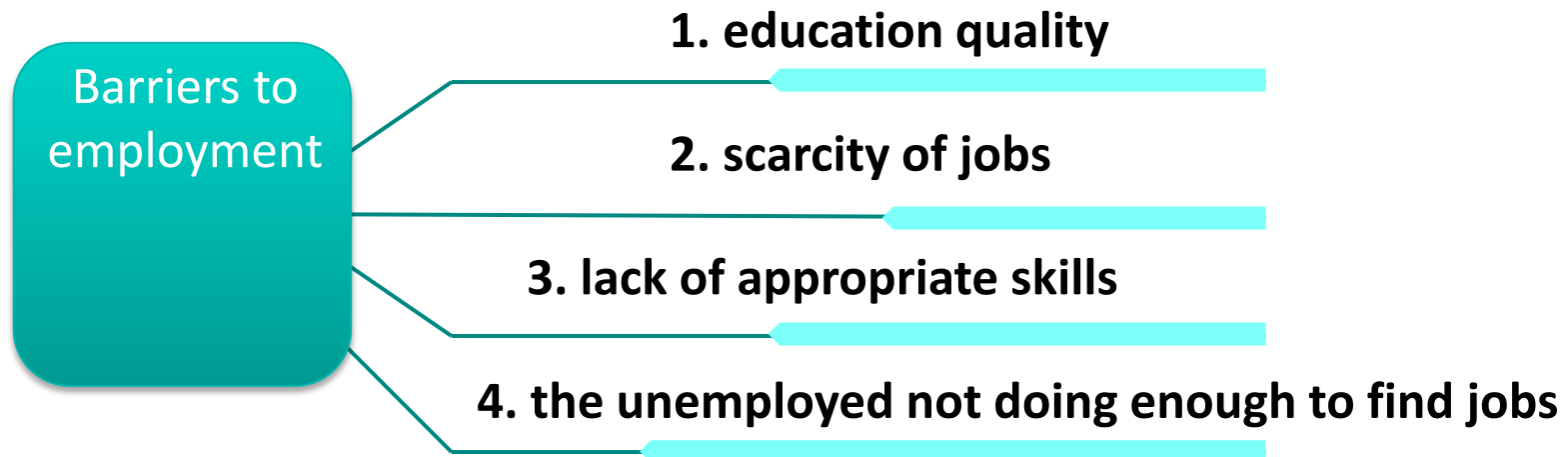


- ❖ The sample included
 - employed (30%)
 - unemployed (37%)
 - inactive in the labour market (33%)

GENERAL ATTITUDES TO WORK

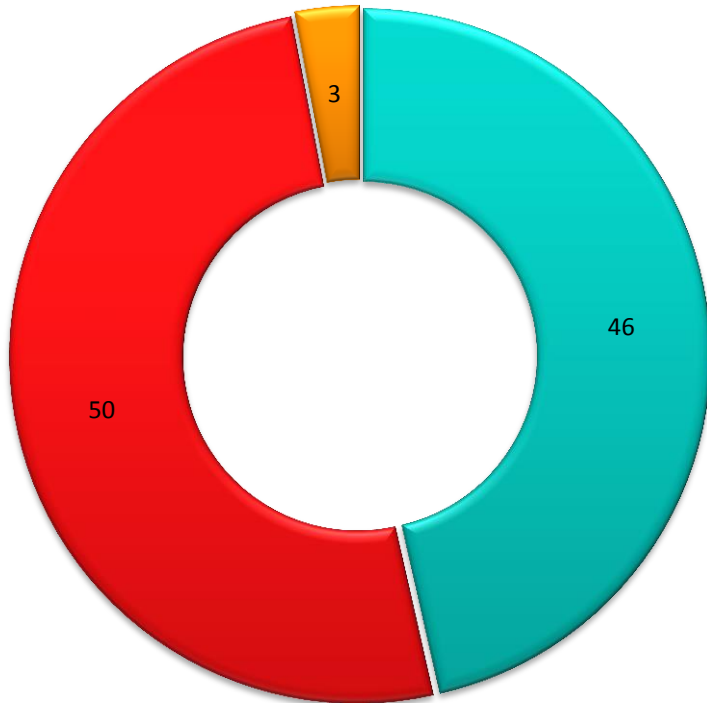
4.1. What does the public perceive as barriers to employment?

Asked to provide their own reasons for unemployment, the four most commonly identified barriers were:



- The youth were most likely to voice concerns about quality of education.
- Different demographic groups have clear views on where they may be disadvantaged within the labour market.

b) Individual, societal or fatalistic explanations of unemployment?



■ Individualistic ■ Societal ■ Fatalistic

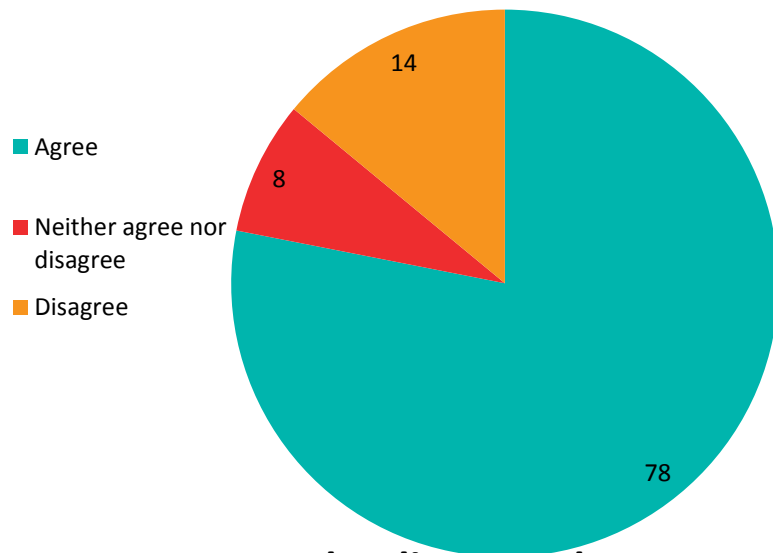
“We have skills but no paper qualifications ”.
“No job opportunities for people with my skills...I used to work in the mines”
“Employers are seeking well educated people”

“They only employ their relatives”; “we do not have money for bribes”; “we do not have money to buy jobs”,
“everywhere you go, you get asked to pay something to get a job”.

“Nowadays kids do not want to get education”, “the youth is not interested in education”; “people do not want to work”; “they are lazy...”; “ they are choosy”;
“they expect hand-outs from the government”; “it is easier to get a social grant than to work these days”;
“lack interest to look for and to keep jobs”.

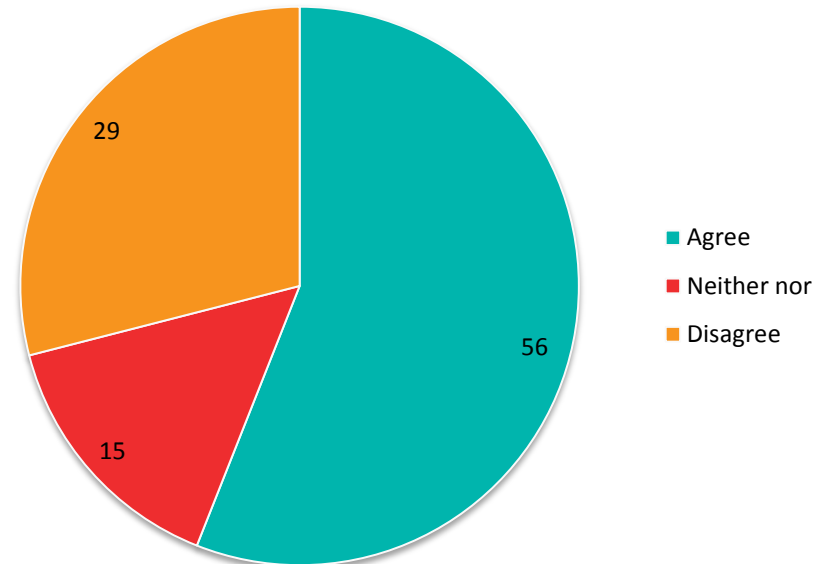
4.2. What are public views on social and economic mobility?

Being more qualified improves one's chances of getting employment



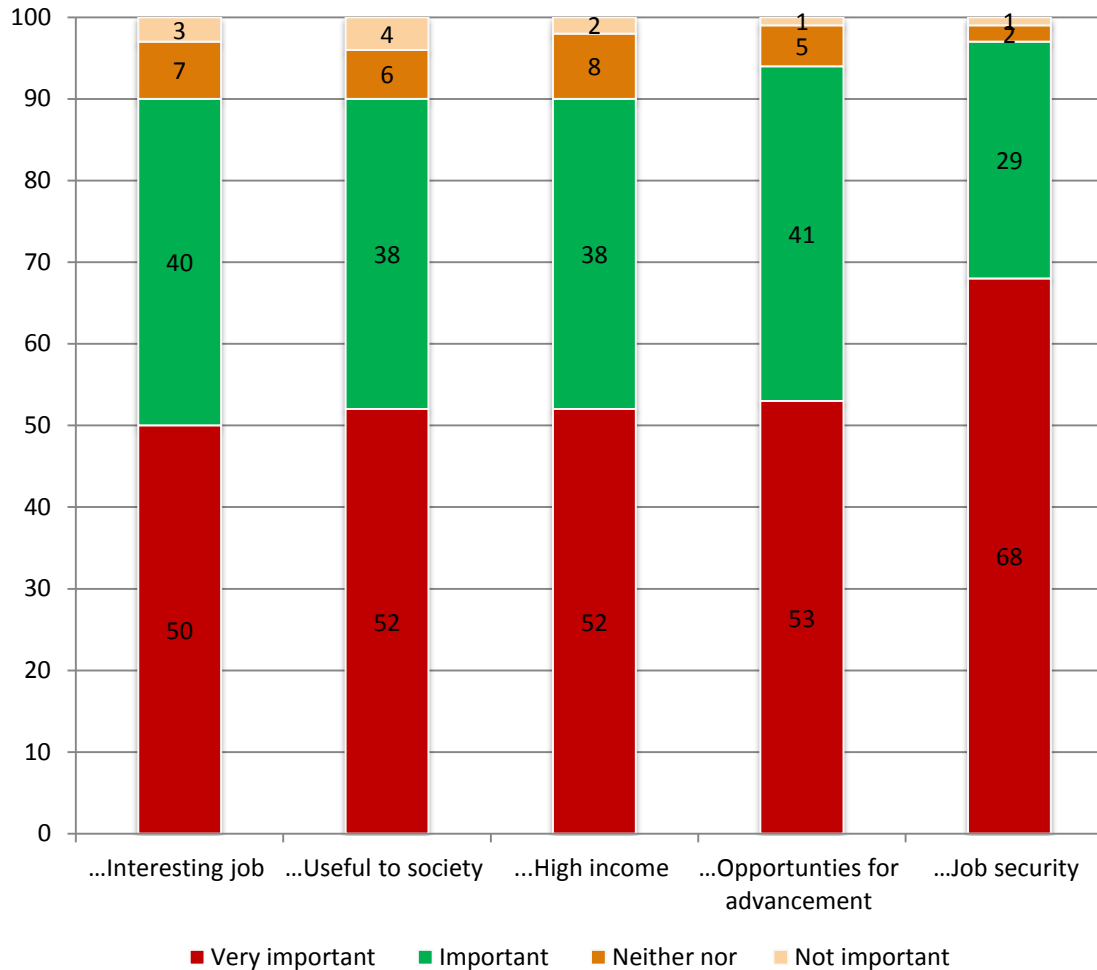
Agree nett: No schooling, youth, unemployed and economically inactive, rural formal areas, low LSM, Black Africans

The children of a professional worker and a factory worker have an equal chance of getting ahead in life



Agree nett : Med.LSM, primary school, no schooling, traditional authority residents, Black Africans, 16-25, 65 and above.

4.3. What does the public consider as an important attribute of a job?

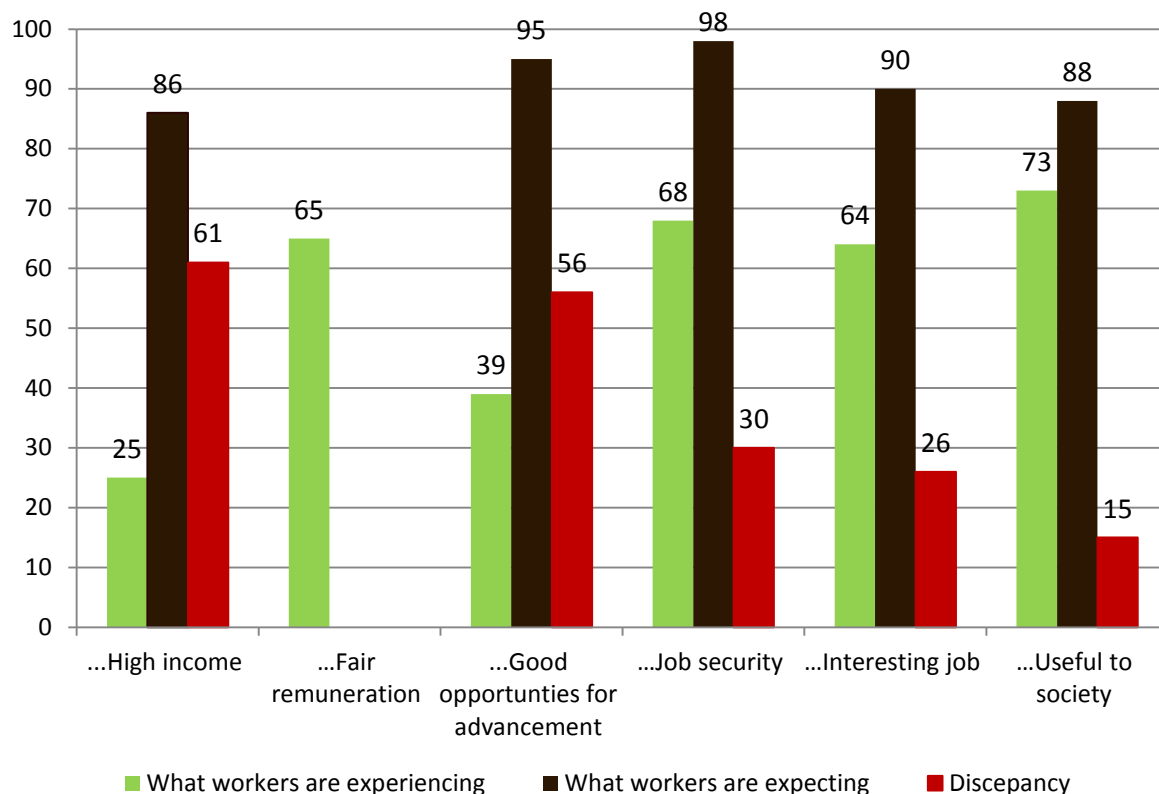


- Workers indicated all work aspects as important for a decent job.
- Job security is most frequently identified as important

ATTITUDES OF THE EMPLOYED TO THE LABOUR MARKET

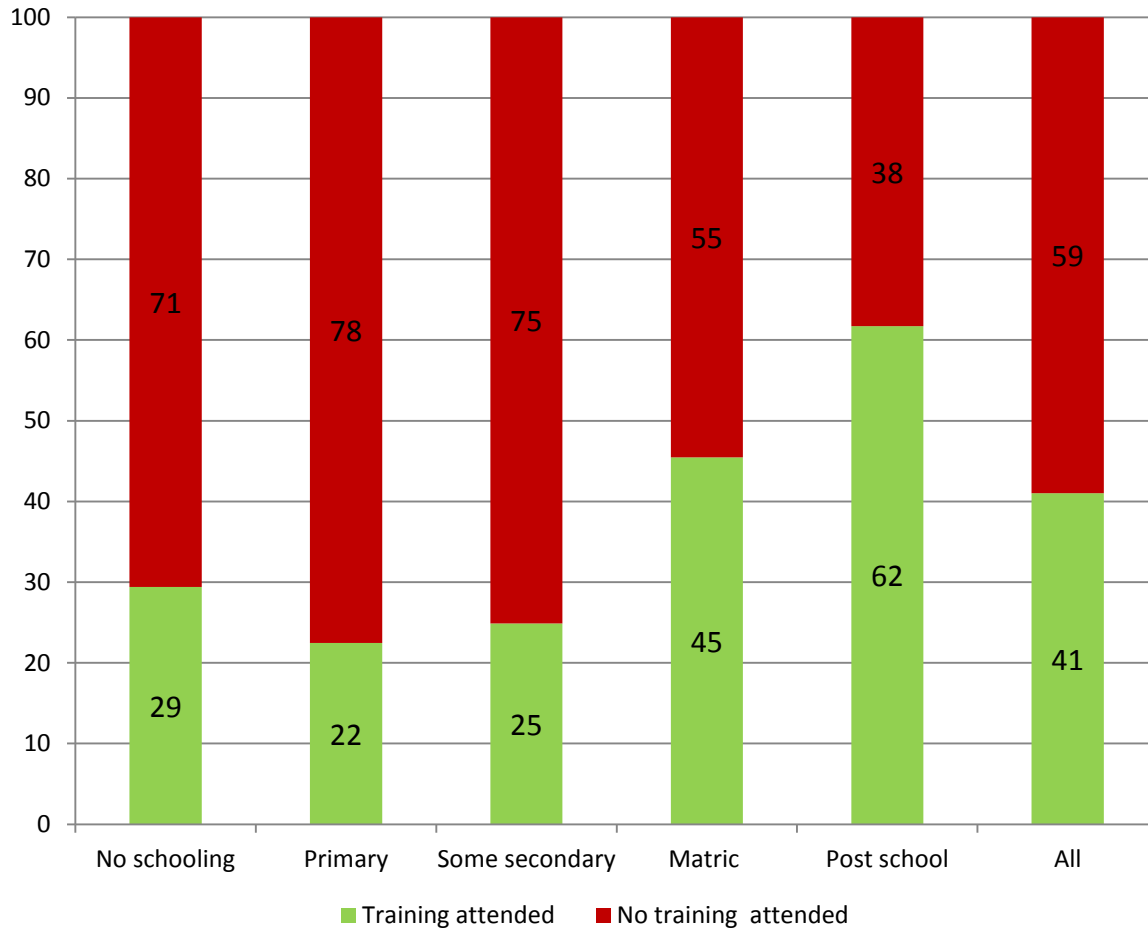
4.4. To what extent do the job attributes that workers value exist in their jobs?

Comparing what workers expect, and experience at work



- The discrepancies are most extreme in relation to the reality of attaining a high income and good prospects for job promotion and advancement.

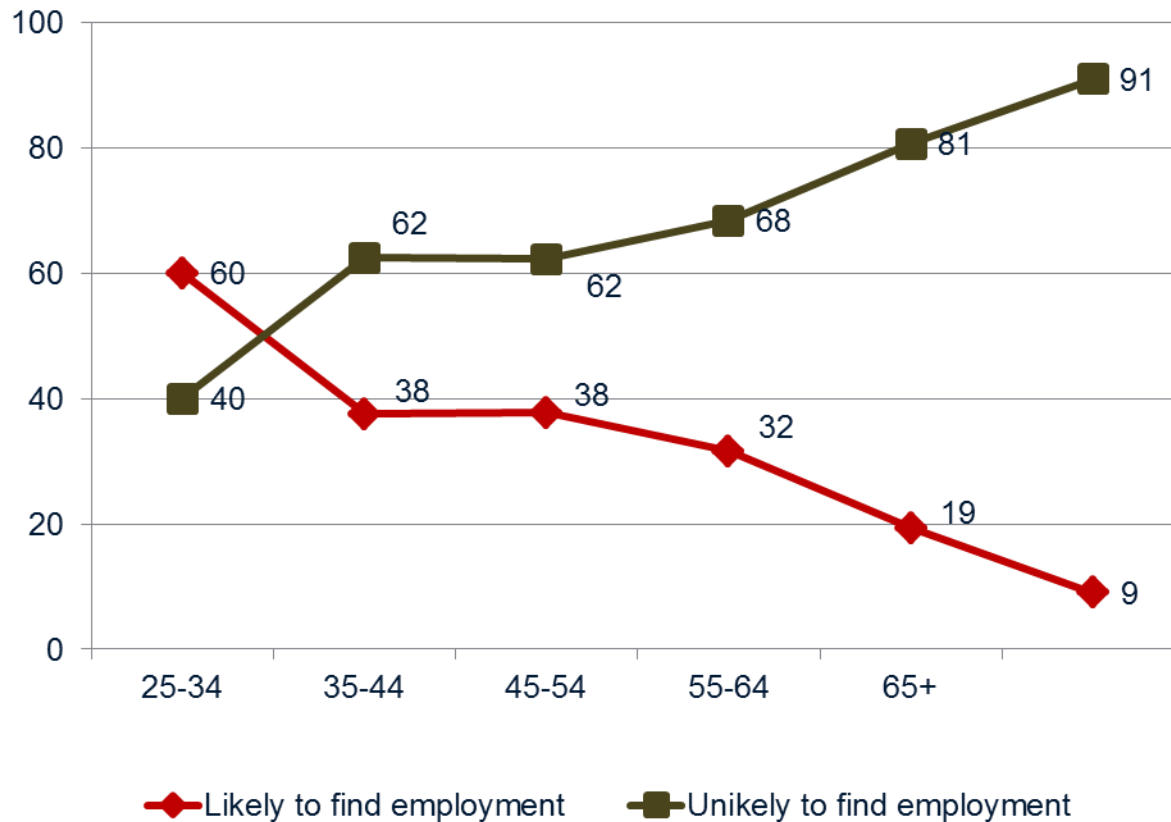
4.6. Who is receiving workplace training?



- Only 59% reported workplace training.
- Workers with tertiary education were three times more likely to attend training.

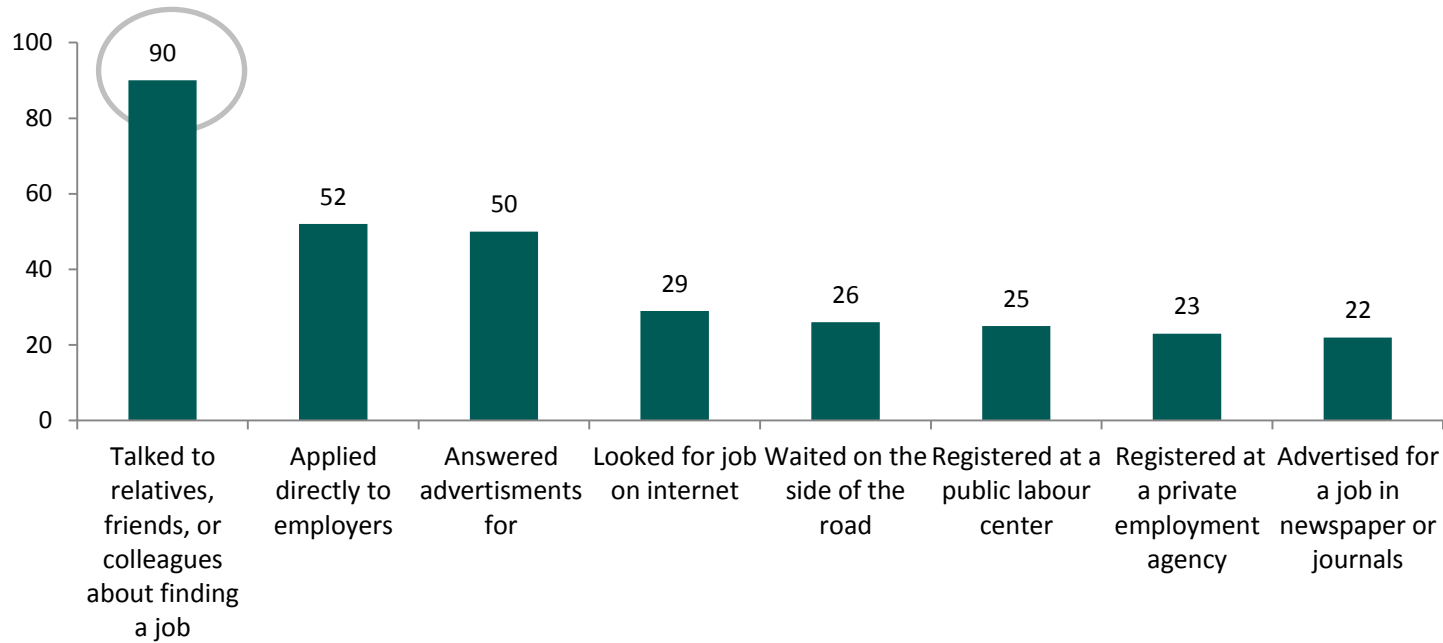
ATTITUDES OF THE UNEMPLOYED

4.7. What is their outlook about employment prospects?



- General low levels of optimism -60% amongst the unemployed.
- The unemployed youth hold a very positive outlook.
- These views drastically alter during their mid-20s.
- 16s of optimism are closely related to the level of education completed.

4.8. How are the unemployed looking for work?



- Social networks emerged as the most common method of seeking employment.
- Internet use is more prominent amongst the middle to upper social classes.
- The more affluent use a combination of methods to search for employment.
- Few had searched for jobs on the Internet, registered at the Department of Labour's labour centres or with a private agency, or had waited by the roadside.

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR SKILLS PLANNING

Education remains an important currency in the labour market

⇒ The public strongly believes that education is central to positive labour market outcomes and improved labour force participation – a good basis for government efforts to improve quality and reach of education.

There is a need to strengthen targeted interventions focused at vulnerable labour market participants with low education and skills levels

⇒ on-the-job training and vocational training to upgrade skills and boost overall human capital is required.

The use of social networks shows that formal structures for job seeking are not efficient

⇒ Methods of job seeking used by different sub-groupings, particularly the poorly educated segments of our communities, need to be taken into consideration and more platforms that break down literacy and language barriers are required.

6. WAY FORWARD



❖ There is a need for:

=> A systematic and methodologically sound structure to study changing work attitudes, values and behaviour patterns of South Africans .

=> Supplementing existing labour market macro-datasets with a better understanding of human and social behaviour dynamics.