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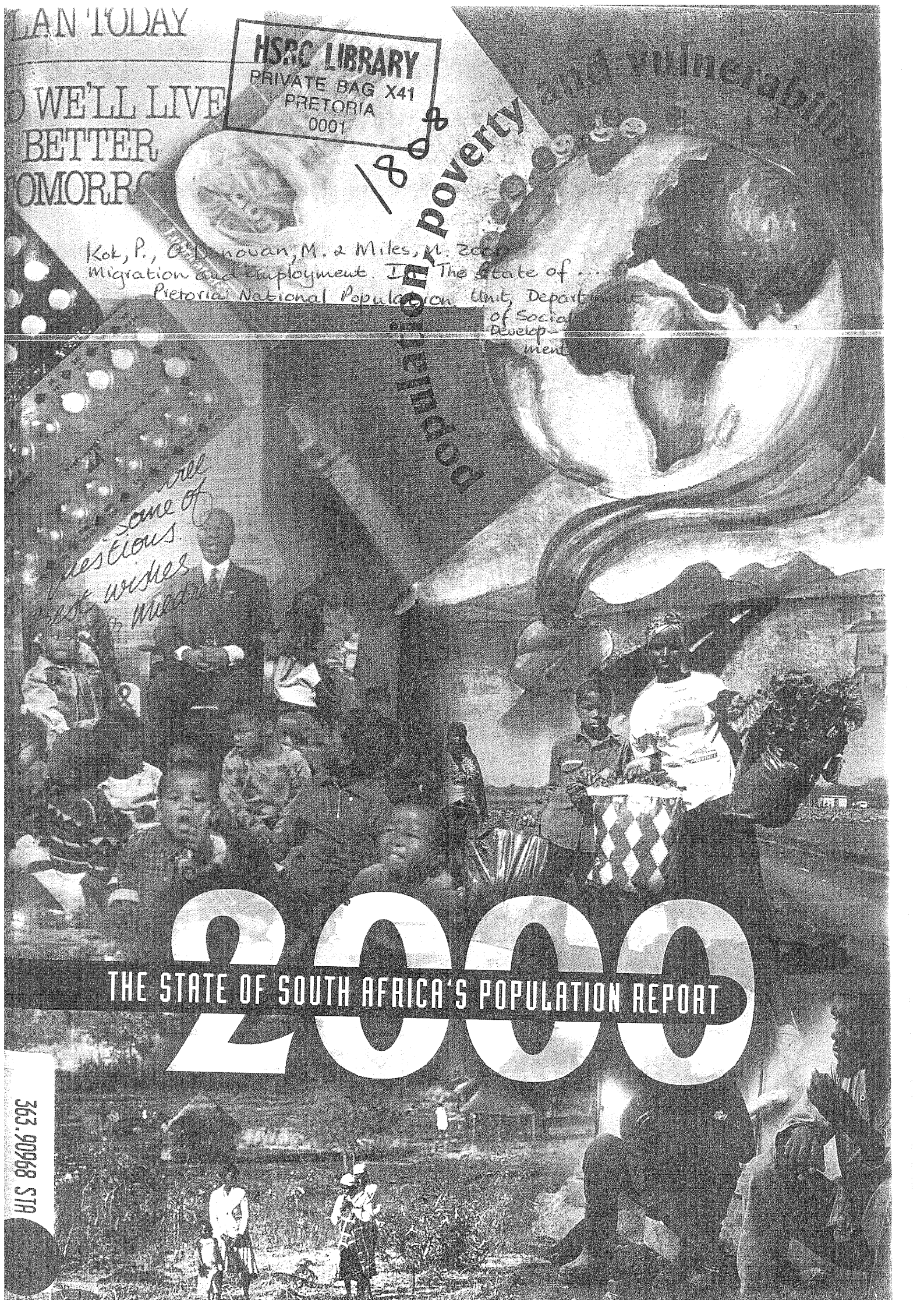
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Migration and employment. In The state of ...
Pretoria: National Population Unit, Department
of Social Development

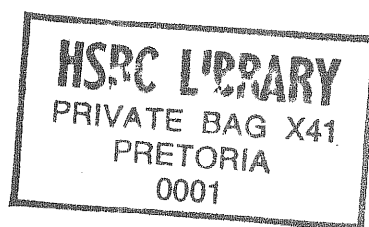
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THE STATE OF SOUTH AFRICA'S POPULATION REPORT

363.90968 STA





List of contributors

The following individuals (in alphabetical order) contributed to this report. However, views contained in this report are not necessarily those of any individual contributor. The contributions included the writing of chapters, data analyses, and technical reading and editing.

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DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

Migration is here defined as the movement of persons who changed their usual place of residence from one country to another, i.e. international migration, or from one magisterial district to another, i.e. internal migration, mainly in the five years preceding the census concerned.¹ *International* or *cross-border migration* consists of *immigration*, which involves a move into a country, and *emigration*, which indicates migratory moves from one country to another. *Internal migration* can entail either *in-migration*, which refers to moves *into* a specific part of the country from another part (of the same country), or *out-migration*, which indicates moves *from* a particular place to another.

Unemployment is defined here broadly to include those who are actively seeking work plus those who, while not actively seeking work, would accept it if it was offered.

The topics covered in this report are the distribution and mobility of the population (both within the country and across its borders), and the interrelationship between migration and (un)employment. The issues are presented and evaluated against the backdrop of the most recent official South African data (as obtained from Statistics South Africa, unless otherwise stated). International,

MIGRATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT

The phenomenon of migration of people and families has been with societies for as long as they have existed. Migrants who move both within and across the South African borders are a common occurrence. This phenomenon has tended to have tremendous impact on the population-resource balance in both historical net-sending and net-receiving areas such as, for example, the Gauteng and Northern Provinces, respectively. On the international front, and as South Africa deepens its activities in the global economic system, it has become both a magnet and a notable springboard for migrants. Since 1990 there has been evidence of a growing movement of foreign immigrants and refugees to South Africa. The immigrants have come primarily from South Africa's traditional labour supply areas of Southern Africa as well as from the rest of the continent, Asia and Eastern Europe. As a result, cross-border migration has become a contentious issue that has influenced the overall trend in immigration policy development since 1994 toward even greater control and restriction.

Migration is often associated with unemployment, and governments generally want to keep the unemployed from entering their areas of jurisdiction. Furthermore, migration policy tends to focus on controlling cross-border international movements, and therefore research often neglects the important issue of intra-national movements, called internal migration. The important point ensuing from this discussion is that the issue requiring attention is not the act of migration or its perceived consequences, but the circumstances which cause some people to remain immobile and others to move away and the consequences thereof.

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INTERNATIONAL/CROSS-BORDER MIGRATION

The reconfiguration of longstanding patterns of cross-border migration into South Africa began in the 1980s with an influx of an estimated 35 000 Mozambican refugees⁵ who were joined by an escalating number of migrants from other parts of the region and Africa. It is evident from media reports and sometimes even in official statements that this form of international migration is seen as problematic by many South Africans. Since 1994 the debates around immigration have been increasingly characterised by a powerful new xenophobic discourse, which has led to a conflation of the concepts immigrants and refugees to the extent that, for some, all immigrants became "illegal aliens".⁶

The number of unauthorised immigrants within South Africa is a source of considerable controversy. Although there is reason to treat statistical data on international migration with extreme caution, the data on documented immigration seems to indicate that there has been a general decline in the officially recorded migration to South Africa.⁷

As far as the number of *undocumented immigrants* is concerned, estimates range from about 2 million to as high as 8 million. However, it has been cautioned that "... we have too little knowledge to justify any precise estimates or assumptions."⁸ The situation is exacerbated by poor and often questionable data collection and monitoring systems. One measure of undocumented or illegal immigration is the extent of visa overstaying. Although over-stayers, i.e. visitors from abroad who stay on longer than their visas permit, are not necessarily an accurate indication of undocumented migrants, their numbers provide vaguely reliable figures on unauthorised residence from computerised records of legal entries and exits. Figure 1 reveals an exponential increase in the number of these immigrants in recent years. The implications are that, despite stringent measures by the government to prevent illegal entry into the country, the number of visitors disappearing into South African society upon arrival continues to increase.

SOME MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT MIGRATION

People generally migrate in an attempt to secure employment and other opportunities in another place where they think their chances to earn a decent income will be better, and to provide a better future for their families. The scarcity of employment opportunities in most areas results in migrants being perceived as taking over the jobs of the local citizens. Especially immigrants (i.e. migrants from other countries) are thus often viewed as a threat to their area of destination. The fact that these immigrants (whether documented or undocumented) generally contribute significantly to the development of the receiving area² is often not effectively recognised and/or communicated.

In-migration is sometimes also seen to be a problem for secondary reasons. Casual observers often view urbanisation (i.e. the increase of the population in urban areas) as a cause of unemployment. This happens despite evidence that it is often merely a case of rural unemployment being transferred to the cities and towns through out-migration from rural areas.³ Similarly, people often see squatting and informal settlement as being caused by rapid in-migration into urban areas. However, in reality the largest component of urban population growth in developing countries is usually a natural increase (the excess of births over deaths) of the urban

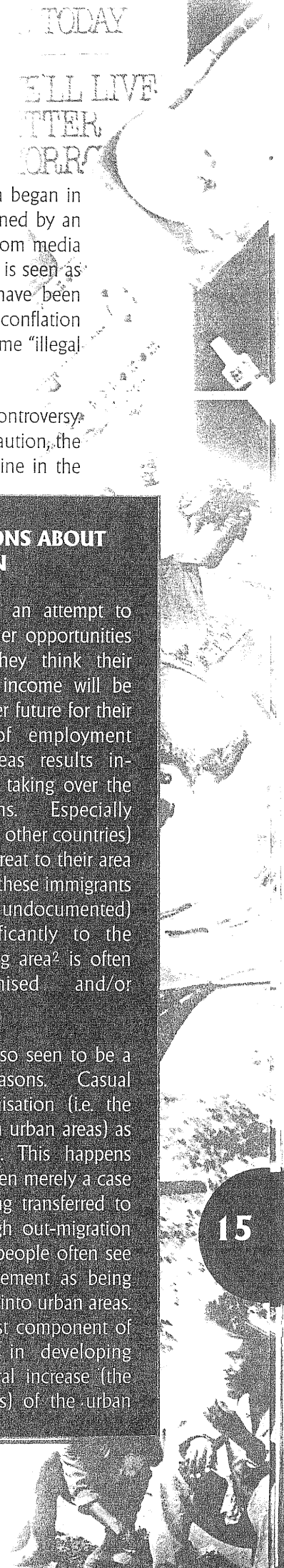
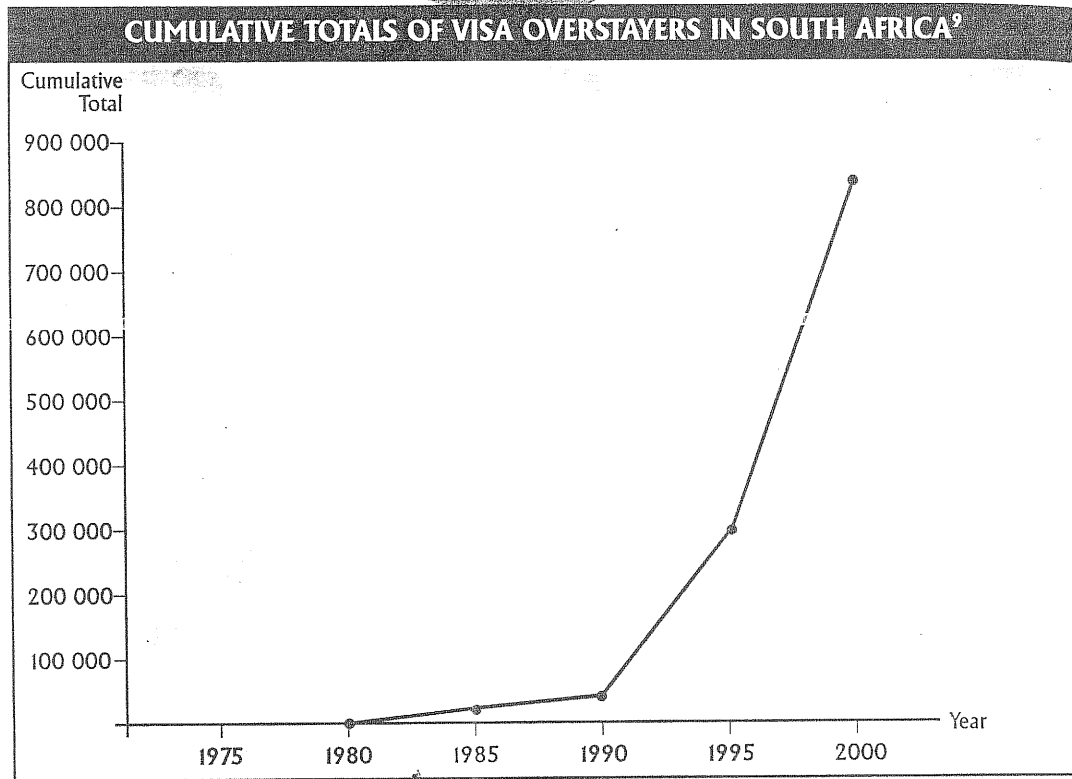


Figure 1:



PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE ROLE OF IMMIGRATION

Underpinning the post-apartheid restriction on immigration has been a xenophobic discourse that frames policy issues around the negative impact of immigrants. Central to this discourse is the idea that so-called illegal aliens cause crime, bring diseases, take jobs from South Africans, depress wages, consume social services and exacerbate unemployment. There is no scientific evidence to support such a view. In fact, a different picture emerges from a more in-depth analysis of the impact of migration. The Centre for Development and Enterprise concluded, on the basis of local and international evidence, that there is insufficient evidence to suggest that immigrants "steal" jobs from locals or that they are parasites on the host society's social services. In short, immigrants can contribute positively to the economy of the receiving country.¹¹

Overstaying is only one indicator of undocumented immigration. Illegal entry through South Africa's borders remains relatively easy. The most common form, despite its risks, is border jumping.¹⁰ However, in many ways undocumented migration into South Africa will become even more entrenched because of the stringent measures of control which have been taken since 1994.

Demographers, planners and policy makers increasingly agree that immigration policy cannot be based on the assumption that South Africa can function in isolation from its regional context. Whilst the adoption of a globalist position on migration by a single country puts that country at risk when other countries choose not to open their borders, one should note that South Africans have fairly free access to most other SADC countries. Our immigration policy should be informed by policy differences and convergences between countries in the region. Moreover, we have to realistically assess whether the growth objectives underpinning the envisaged SADC free trade protocol can be achieved, especially to the benefit of smaller entrepreneurs, when the movement of people is restricted. Furthermore, the "national interest", which seems to underpin South Africa's immigration policy, is an elusive concept that needs to be debated in the context of both globalization and the wider "regional interest".

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EMIGRATION

Emigration statistics from the perspective of the country of origin are generally not particularly reliable internationally. People departing from their country of citizenship are often reluctant to be classified officially as emigrants until such time as they have obtained at least permanent residence status in their country of destination. The only effective way to obtain reliable estimates of the extent of emigration is to bring into the equation the immigration statistics of the countries of destination as well. This is a difficult process and can usually only be done long after a particular emigration event occurred. The time lag and the anonymous nature of the information contained in official records often prevent the generation of accurate emigration statistics for particular time periods.

The official emigration statistics provided in the 1997 Annual Report of the Department of Home Affairs indicate that South Africa experienced a net loss of 15 600 people through international migration during the five-year period 1993 to 1997. This should be compared to the net *gain* of almost 31 300 during the preceding five years (1988-92), which included the high proportion of people returning from exile, which was especially prominent during 1990. A total net loss of almost 7 000 economically active persons through emigration occurred during the two-year period 1996 to 1997, and this certainly must have had some impact on the South African economy. The true nature of this impact becomes even clearer when one considers the fact that the country experienced a net loss of almost 2 700 professional people in that period, indicating that popular fears of a "brain drain" were not altogether unjustified. Basically the same trends as for 1996-97 continued into 1998 and the first half of 1999.¹²

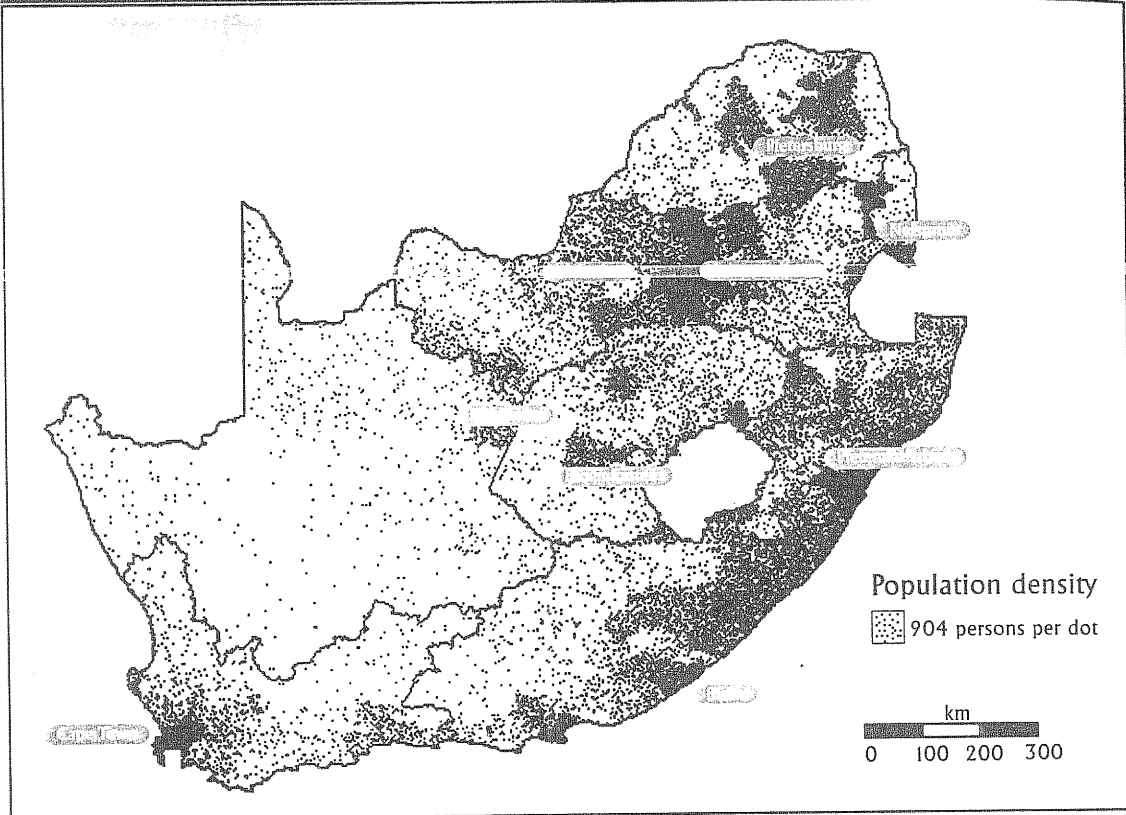
The statistics on officially declared emigration during most of the previous decade paint a rather bleak picture of South Africa's ability to attract and retain the highly skilled. This needs to be placed into a proper perspective, however. About 30% of those who emigrated during 1997 and 1998 had, in the first place, originated from countries abroad.¹³ Furthermore, any country undergoing a major political transition is likely to lose some of its professionals, who find it relatively easy to secure employment opportunities abroad when conditions are not perceived to be promising for career development in their home country.

INTERNAL MIGRATION

The manner in which settlements are placed in space is a dynamic reflection of the relationship and interaction between population, the environment (or natural resources) and development. Internal migration is a direct response to opportunities and hardships posed by this interaction, without the intervening factors associated with cross-border movements. South Africa's overall *population density* was approximately 33 persons per square kilometre in 1996, which made it the 66th least densely populated of 196 countries listed in the 1997 World Population Data Sheet.¹⁴ The country's population distribution is highly uneven, with densities varying significantly from one province to the next, and within the provinces themselves. The largest province (in terms of land area), the Northern Cape, had a population density of just more than 2 persons per square km in 1996, while Gauteng, the smallest province in area, accommodated 432 persons per square km at the time.¹⁵

Figure 2

DISTRIBUTION OF THE POPULATION (1996) - A DISTRICT-BASED PERSPECTIVE¹⁶



Particularly noticeable on any population density map of South Africa are the relatively high densities in the former homeland areas. This can be ascribed largely to past segregationist policies, especially influx control, which prevented the African population from migrating out of the homeland areas, and the implementation of group-areas legislation. The legacy of the apartheid era is that these areas still have some of the lowest levels of services, infrastructure and employment in the country. Despite major improvements during the past five years, the backlog is still formidable. The situation in these previously neglected areas creates a climate of particularly high levels of poverty and vulnerability.

Data on inter-provincial migration in South Africa between 1992 and 1996 indicate that the Eastern Cape, Gauteng and the Northern Province lost a large number of people through out-migration. At the same time, however, Gauteng was by far the most popular migration destination in the country, followed distantly by the Western Cape. The effect of these exchanges of people between provinces is that Gauteng experienced a net gain of more than a quarter of a million people (262 000) between 1992 and 1996, while the Eastern Cape had a net loss of more than 206 000 during the same period.

The migration of men from the periphery to the industries and mines under the system of labour migrancy in the context of past influx control legislation has skewed the demographic profile of the country. The age-gender profile of migrants shows that South African men were consistently more migratory than women in virtually all age categories. Another important feature of the age-gender profile of migrants is that people between the ages of 15 and 44 years are particularly inclined to migrate, with a peak around the age group 25 to 29 years. The implications are numerous. The youth form a vast majority of the South African population, and they are more mobile than people in higher age categories. This clearly has an effect on those areas that are subjected to persistently high levels of out-migration, namely the rural districts of the country's periphery. Young people leave

Figure 3

NET INTER-PROVINCIAL MIGRATION (1992-96)

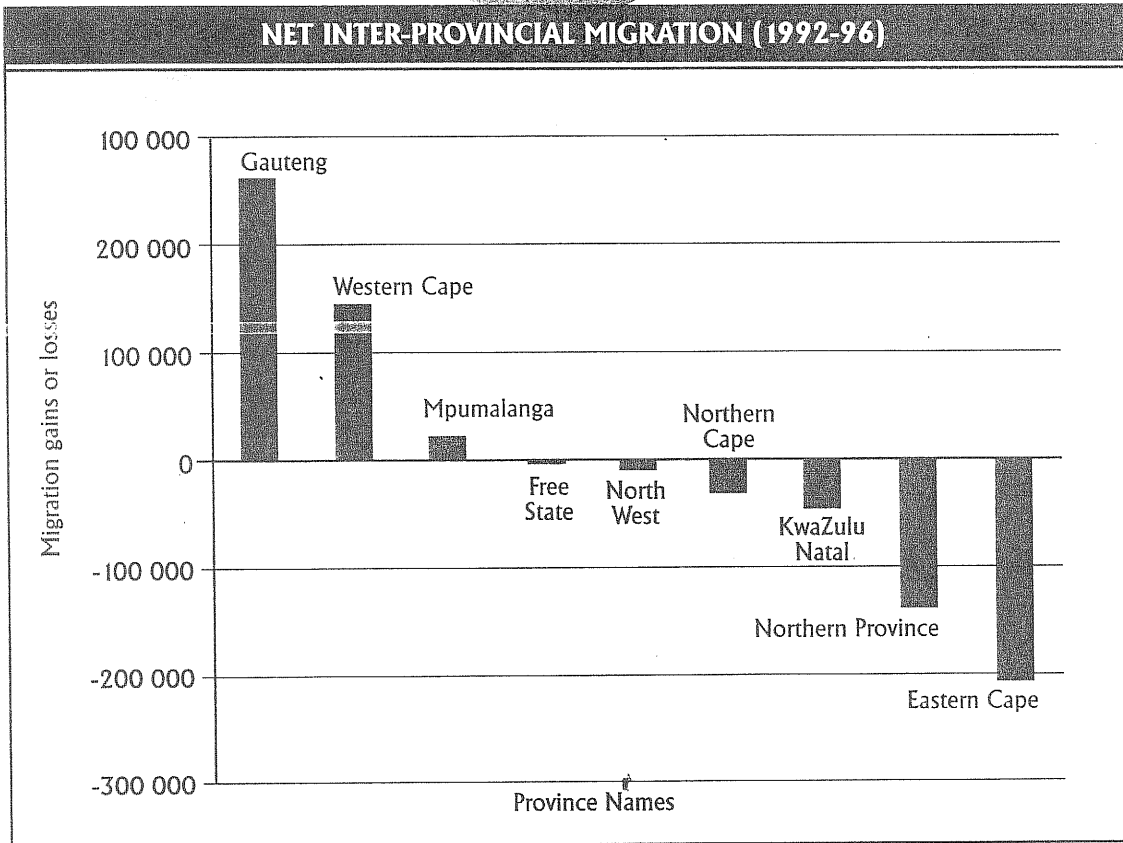
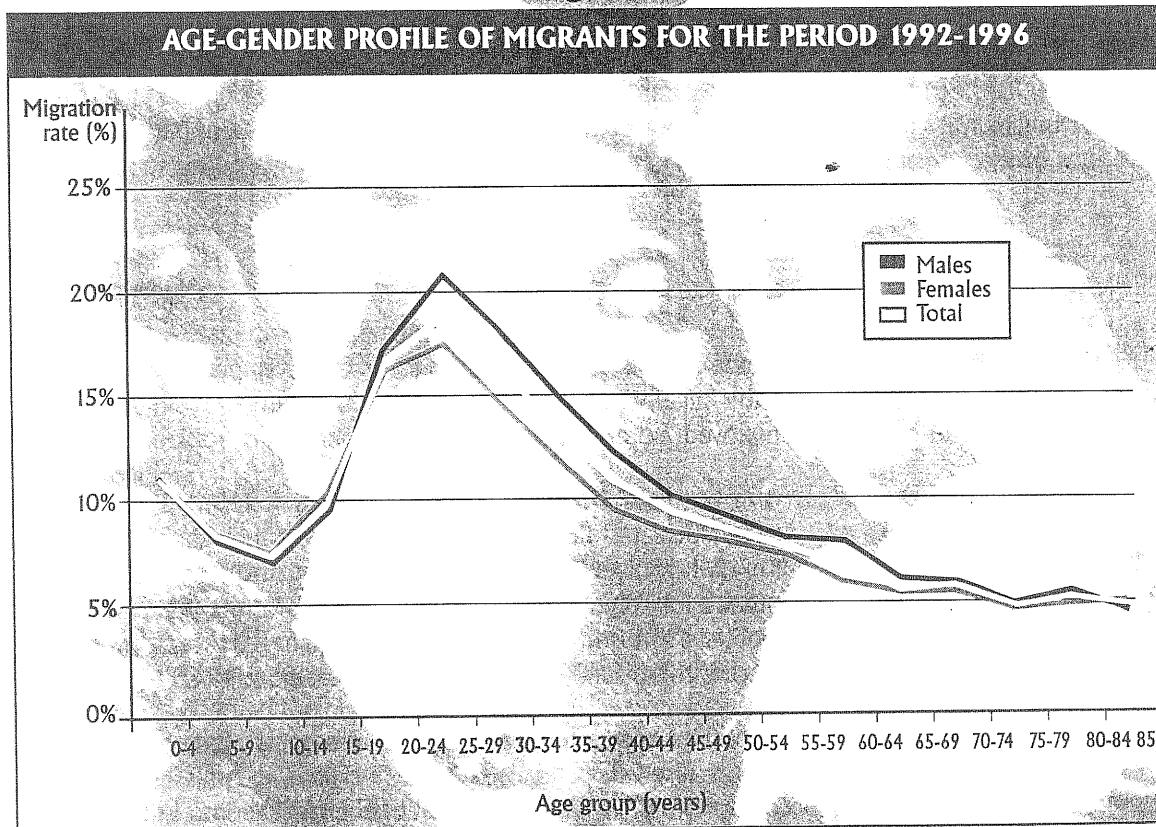


Figure 4

AGE-GENDER PROFILE OF MIGRANTS FOR THE PERIOD 1992-1996



these areas in large numbers. Another consequence is that women, who have tended to be the ones remaining behind, now outnumber men in almost all provinces, except Gauteng (where only 49% of the 1996 population were female). In practice this means that the rural areas are left with high proportions of *de facto* female-headed households.¹⁷ Apart from the obvious social implications such as family disintegration, this also has serious economic implications. Female-headed households in rural areas are often prone to poverty and vulnerability. It is doubted whether out-migration in search of better opportunities will ever be an option – or even a solution – for such poor households. In areas of high out-migration remittances sent back by migrants have increasingly become an important source of income for those left behind.

Indications are that the social networks now linking households will eventually eliminate the gender selectivity among migrants as they increasingly provide opportunities for women to migrate. Social networks are often seen as beneficial to all those involved,¹⁸ but the existence of networks per se does not guarantee that very poor people will actually benefit from them. In fact, the very poor (especially if they are female) may even suffer from greater immobility, as such networks may act as mechanisms of exclusion, preventing them from migrating.¹⁹

MIGRATION AND (UN)EMPLOYMENT

Declining employment opportunities in South Africa is a product of a number of factors including the sustained decline of the mining industry, the restructuring of the economy, and globalization which is associated with jobless growth and technology. The economic restructuring in question here centres around both the move to more capital-intensive production methods and the realignment of trade policies and state spending practices to make the country more competitive in global markets.

The employment market and the state of the economy

The upshot of these economic changes is that the modest growth experienced by the national economy has been accompanied by declining employment opportunities. Not only are employment opportunities not growing fast enough to accommodate an expanding population, but the number of jobs in the formal sector is also declining. These economic changes have served to exacerbate the already high unemployment levels.

Nevertheless, the economy has, on balance, maintained a positive growth rate. During 1995 economic growth reached a high for the previous decade at 3,5% per annum. The rate tapered off to about 1,5% in 1997 and 0,5% in 1998.²⁰ Despite the low economic growth rate and the decline in the number of employment opportunities, the average wage of those employed in the non-agricultural sectors has exceeded the inflation rate. This means that the economy is simultaneously shedding jobs and paying the employed more - a phenomenon popularised as "jobless growth".

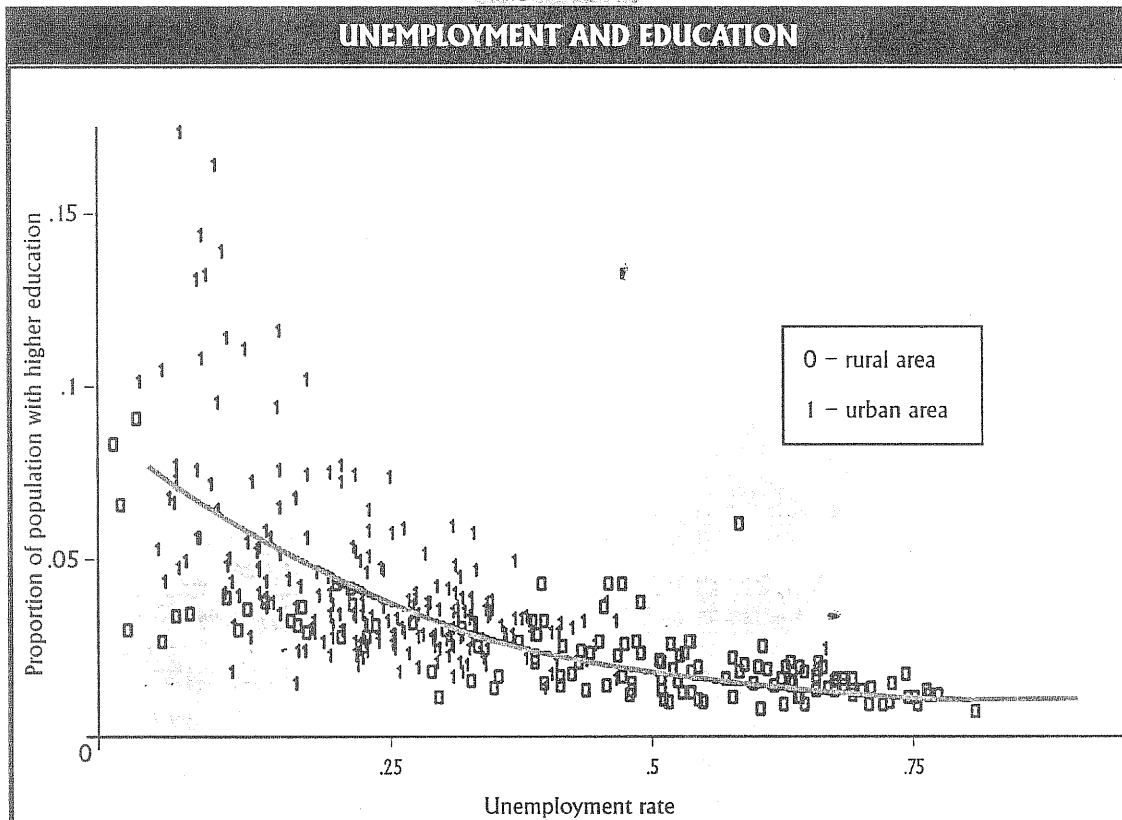
The 1998 Reserve Bank report suggests that those earning lower salaries were more likely to be retrenched, while people earning higher salaries (as a result of a shortage of their skills) were more likely to improve their earnings. This perspective is substantiated by a recent survey²¹, which suggests too that the trend is likely to continue for some time. It is predicted that, for the period 1998 to 2003 "... the vast majority of net job creation is in the professional and managerial categories, while job losses are likely to be experienced in the semi-skilled or unskilled category."²²

These economic changes have a profound effect on the employment prospects of the population in general, and on the youth and marginalised in particular. As semi-skilled and unskilled jobs are shed, employment prospects become more dependent on educational qualifications. In the process

those without education are increasingly marginalised with ever-diminishing prospects of being (re-) employed.

The economic activity profile derived from the 1996 census shows that unemployment rates peak at about the age of 25 years. At this age the unemployment rate reaches 37%. The lower unemployment rates for those younger than 25 years are due to high attendance rates at schools, universities, etc. Other things being equal, it would appear that the youth will bear the brunt of increased unemployment. When the job market is tight, prior work experience seems to count for more: the 1997 October Household Survey shows that over one-third of the unemployed had been so for three years or more.²³ However, the youth are, in general, better educated than their parents, and there is a clear correlation between employment rates and education rates. The importance of a higher educational qualification in gaining employment is illustrated in Figure 5.

Figure 5

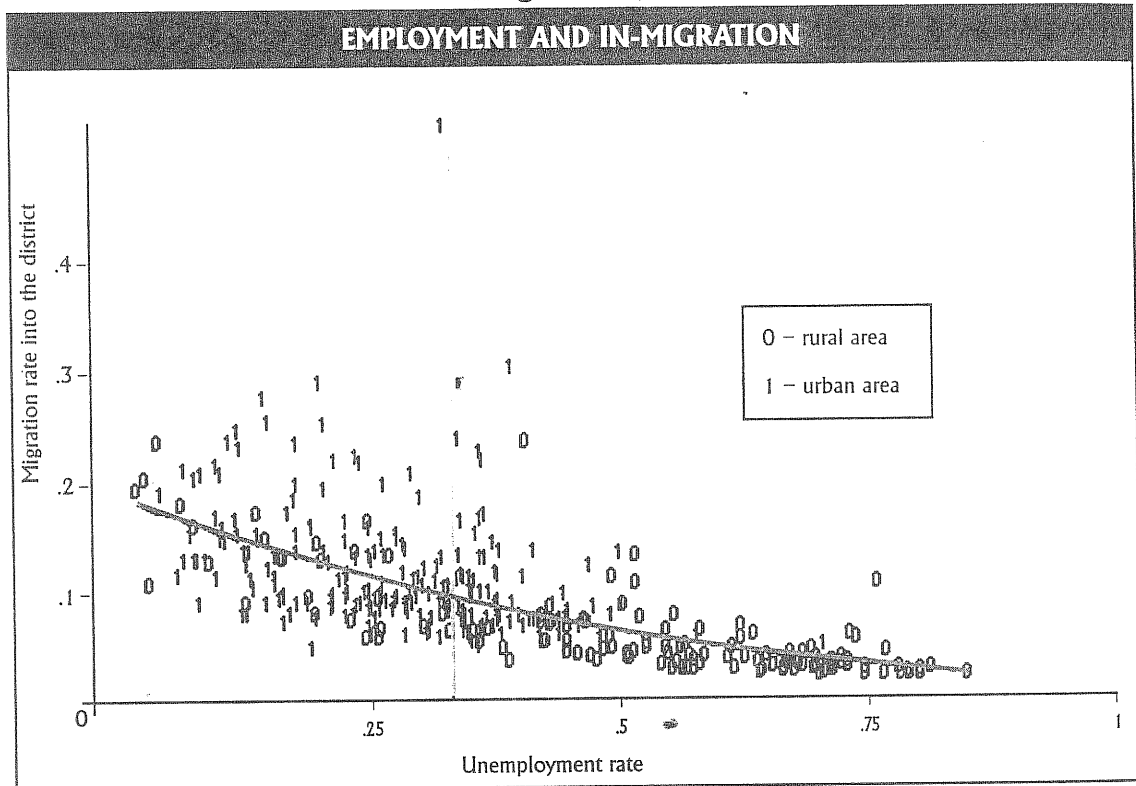


In Figure 5 unemployment rates are correlated with the proportion of the population with at least some post-matric education, per magisterial district. Those districts with better-educated populations have noticeably lower unemployment rates. With few exceptions, those areas in which less than 5% of the population have a higher education, also have unemployment rates in excess of 50%, and are overwhelmingly rural. Conversely, areas with low unemployment rates tend to have a larger proportion of better-educated residents. This reflects both the increased marketability of those with a better education and their ability to relocate to where the jobs are. Notably, provinces that provide relatively better employment opportunities tend to have the highest concentration of colleges, universities and technikons. The graph also displays how high unemployment rates and low education rates are concentrated in predominantly rural districts.

Labour Migration

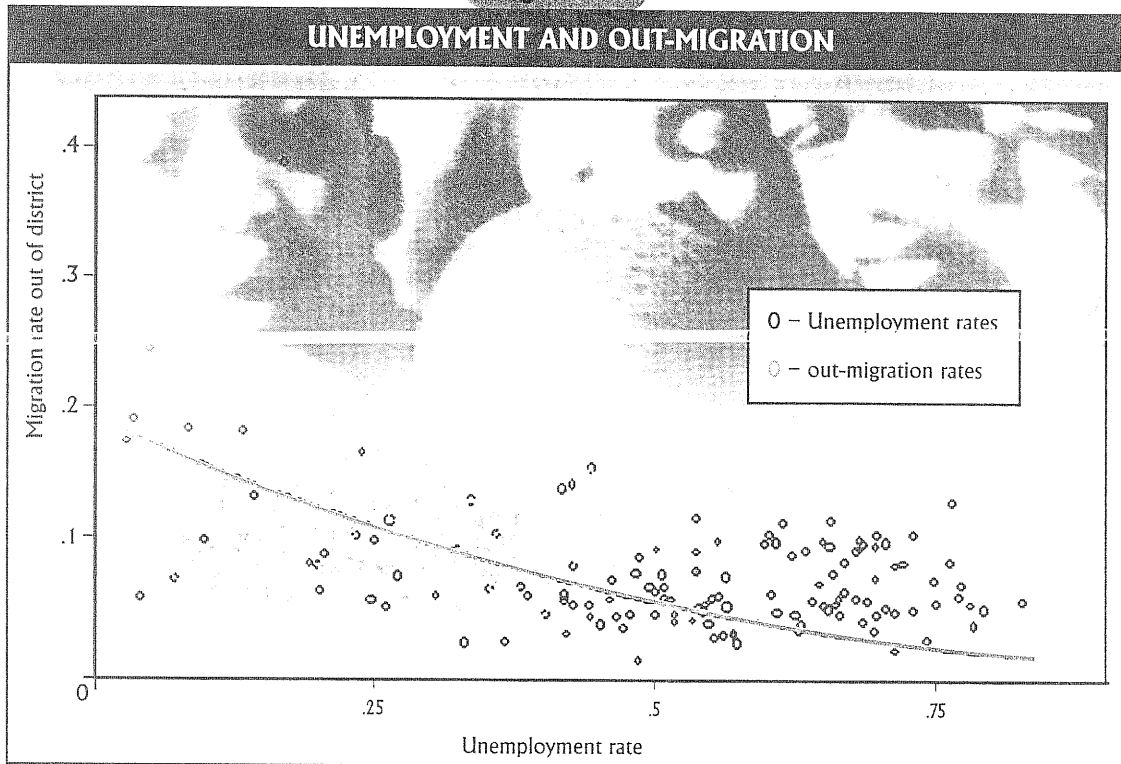
Migration is an effective means of accessing better jobs and dealing with low levels of services, uncomfortably high population densities and limited economic prospects. While high migration rates may be an index of social dislocation, it can also be seen as an efficient means of meeting opportunities offered by the employment market. The 1996 Census results reveal a clear relationship between employment levels and migration trends. Those regions with lower unemployment levels evidently draw migrants from elsewhere. This can be seen in Figure 6, where the lower unemployment rates are associated with higher in-migration rates.

Figure 6



While the attraction of migrants to areas with low unemployment rates is evident, researchers have not come out with a clear explanation of what compels migration in the first place. The causes of migration and non-migration are complex and go far beyond purely economic considerations. An important economic anomaly is illustrated in Figure 7: areas with higher unemployment rates are associated with lower out-migration rates. While increasing unemployment would generally be expected to cause increased out-migration as individuals and households seek economic opportunities elsewhere, this is clearly not the case in practice. Consequently, economic factors fail to explain all migration outcomes. A social explanation for the economic anomaly is that those already marginalised by social structures²⁴ and low education levels, may not be able to migrate.

Figure 7



IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

Migration policy is a highly contentious issue, especially in South Africa with its apartheid history that was characterised by policy measures that restricted the voluntary resettlement of blacks. The post-apartheid political, social and economic changes of the 1990s brought about some changes in employment and mobility patterns. These changes included increased access to a job market that was previously monopolised by a privileged few and more opportunities for residential and employment mobility, albeit in an environment of declining employment opportunities. This particular mix of accelerating immigration and in-migration amidst a declining economic situation has heightened sensitivity to the influx of migrants and has served to further problematise migration. As a result, many people believe that migration is an issue that needs to be addressed in policy, especially to deal with popular fears and misconceptions.

Governments often try to rectify the problem by attempting to curb migration. Mostly, however, migration is not a problem in itself, but a *manifestation* of a problem. The spread of HIV/AIDS and high unemployment are cases in point. First, the real challenge is changing attitudes and behaviour patterns, regardless of where people move to or who moves. Second, the movement of labour is as economically desirable as the movement of capital, investments, information, etc. In relation to the spread of HIV/AIDS, there is a perception among some analysts that this disease is spread by migration, with the result that population mobility is regarded as the problem. This is clearly an oversimplification of a highly complex issue. Preventing people from moving cannot solve the root causes of the problem. It should also be acknowledged in this context that inconsistency in policy is dangerous, because it tends to lead to the violation of only *some* people's human rights.

The process of migration, whether internal or international, should therefore not be viewed as problematic in itself. It is a product of circumstance, changing or fluctuating labour markets, social, economic and political conditions or legislation. Thus migration policies should not naively deal

NOTES

1. This chapter generally deals with patterns of internal migration in South Africa during a defined five-year interval to ensure comparability and consistency. Although there are some problems associated with migration intervals, the use of such intervals could not be avoided here. With regards to problems relating to migration intervals, see: Standing, G. 1984. Conceptualising territorial mobility. In: Bilsborrow, R. E; Oberai, AS & Standing, G (Eds.). *Migration surveys in low income countries; guidelines for survey and questionnaire design*. London: Croom Helm, pp. 31-59.
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14. Population Reference Bureau (PRB). 1997. *World population data sheet, 1997*. Washington, DC: PRB.
15. The three magisterial districts with the *highest* densities are "township" areas situated in the three main metropolises of the country: Soweto in Gauteng (10 625 persons per square kilometre), Umlazi in KwaZulu/Natal (7 426) and Mitchells Plain in the Western Cape (6 657).
16. Source: Census 1996 data obtained from Stats SA.
17. Female-headed households comprise 47% of all rural households (according to the 10% household sample of Census '96). This is high compared to the 32% in urban and 35% in semi-urban areas. The provincial breakdown is also enlightening. In the Eastern Cape and the Northern Province the majority of households (50% and 52% respectively) were female-headed, compared to mere minorities of the households in other provinces (ranging from 28% in the Western Cape to 39% in KwaZulu/Natal).
18. Massey, D S; Arango, J; Hugo, G; Kouaouci, A, Pellegrino, A & Taylor, J E. 1993. Theories of international migration: a review. *Population and Development Review*, 19(3):431-466.

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24. Gelderblom.
25. Crush, J & McDonald, D (Series Eds.). 1999. *The Southern African Migration Project (SAMP)*. Cape Town: Institute for Democratic Alternative in South Africa (IDASA).