



# Labour Force Equality Social Media Analytics Fact Sheet

## Overview

This report provides an overview of conversations about women and labour in South Africa for the period of 1 January to 1 April 2024. The conversation around women in the labour force is generally more polarised. Proponents for and against issues of the definition of work, progressive legislation in the workplace and labour force equality seem to align broadly within two camps. A religious-moral traditionalism juxtaposed with a perspective rooted in progressivism and gender equality. This mirrors an ongoing polarisation globally in relation to gender which identifies these two perspectives as antithetical, unable to be reconciled.

## Conversation Volume

From 1 January 2024 - 1 April 2024, our query identified 160,000+ mentions related to Labour and Gender (see Figure 1). Of these, 145,000+ or 91% of all mentions were classified as retweets. Indicating that the conversation was predominantly made up of retweets of existing content, as opposed to the posting of original content. 52,587 accounts took part in the conversation, representing an average mention volume of 3 mentions per account.

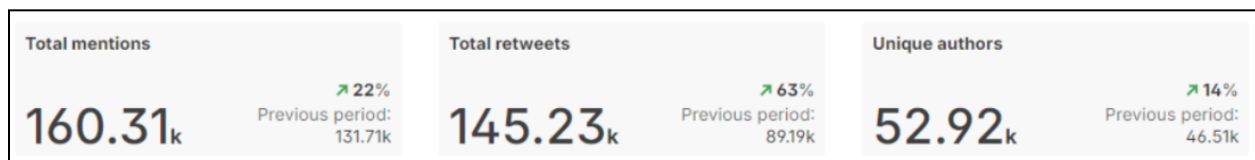


Figure 1: Key volume metrics

## Focus Areas

- Under the theme of Labour Force Equality: The CABC noted stereotypes about the competency of women in traditionally male industries. We furthermore noted Manosphere type content which sought to make the case that women were being psychologically manipulated to enter the workforce for the purposes of higher tax revenue and disrupting family structures.
  - There was pushback against the above perspectives on the basis of women being as capable as men, as well as the emancipatory nature of employment which provides independence.
- Under the Defining Work theme: Conversation around the decriminalisation of sex work and unpaid care work are similarly polarised. Perspectives for differing viewpoints are

split along a traditional and religious outlook, and a forward, progressive outlook on gender roles, household labour and sex work.

- Conversation around regulating the sex industry diverged from the core tenet of labour protection and the reduction of stigma, toward the belief that any formalisation of the sex industry would tacitly encourage individuals to engage in sex work.
- Conversation around unpaid care work engaged with themes such as Lobola as well as conspiracy theories around the 'destruction' of the family unit - narratives advanced under this sub-theme resembled those found in manosphere discourse online, as noted in the Labour Force Equality summary.
- Under the Regulatory Frameworks theme: Data gathered suggests that individuals consider the South African legislative framework sufficient to address gender inequality.
  - Concern was expressed regarding the lack of action from the Government in implementing the policies and laws required for equality.
  - With regard to redress policies and laws, gathered data indicates support for these policies and laws, but some noted that it impacts the previously advantaged groups (i.e. men) negatively.
  - Sex markers in the workplace centred largely around maternity and menstruation. We noted that some considered the South African business sector as too conservative regarding the implementation of progressive policies such as paid maternity and menstrual leave.
  - The Gender Pay Gap remains a contested topic with strong views being expressed on both ends of the debate.

## **Summary of Recommendations**

Intervention in this space should seek to first build a broader understanding of this proposed dichotomy as it is present in the South African context, while holding space for a strong international and comparative perspective which can assist in further understanding and analysing conversations of this nature.

### *Changing, Shifting and Deconstructing Traditional Gender Roles*

- Traditional and Religious Ideas around Gender Roles
  - We've noted that the conversation around labour force equality is polarised. The 'divide' seems to relate more so to considerations of gender roles stemming from traditional viewpoints and religious ideas. Conversation starters may include an expression of interest in individuals' ideas of traditional and religious roles and where the point of tension stems from. Designs may centre around positive messaging and conversation around what these roles represented at the times that they were commonplace and how they may be understood in a more equitable context.

- Disruption of the Family and Family Values
  - Conspiracy and externalisation to 'forces' were commonplace. Conversation here may seek to engage individuals on the veracity of the claims they make in relation to an unseen other, i.e. the 'New World Order' or 'Feminism'. Designs may seek to promote conversation around women's independence and equality as well as diverse understandings of the concept of 'family'.

### *Changing Ideas around what constitutes 'Work'*

- Stigma around Sex Work(ers)
  - Arguments in relation to sex work drew from moral or religious ideas, as well as expressed fears of 'normalisation' of the sex work industry should the industry be regulated. Conversation starters and designs in relation to sex work should seek to draw the conversation away from individual moral and ethical concerns to a point of understanding around how best to protect and give agency to sex workers. Here, concerns around trafficking and drug abuse among others can be highlighted as symptoms of problems related to sex work being unregulated, which could be stemmed should labour protections be put in place.
- Unpaid Care Work is Not 'Work'
  - Conversations in relation to unpaid care work drew heavily on traditional gender roles explored under Vector 1a. Conversation in this domain should seek to better understand the distribution of household labour. Entry points here may include relating that in a dual income household, both partners are equally exhausted from working during the day and that this does not depend on how much each partner earns. Designs should seek to start conversation on the various tasks that constitute unpaid care work e.g. picking children up from school, cleaning the dishes, doing the laundry etc. There are a variety of tasks which could be equitably split between partners depending on each partner's preferences.

### *Women in the Workplace*

- Progressive Legislation - Menstrual and Maternity Leave
  - Conversations around progressive legislation were similarly polarised with some standing in support and others raising objections. Efforts may be directed towards better understanding the rejection of menstrual and maternity leave, as well as sensitising individuals towards such policies and why they are important.
- Women are not as Good, Strong or Intelligent as Men
  - Conversations here should focus on why individuals perceive women to be less competent and intelligent than men while research indicates the exact opposite. An entry point to the conversation may be around intelligence as this frequently

appears on the timeline. Dialogue and designs should provide factual information while deconstructing harmful, negative perceptions.

- Intersectional Pay Gaps - Where, When, How
  - Conversation on X seemed quite aware of the intersectional nature of discrimination but, it seems largely driven by those who have experienced it. This, however, is a polarised and politicised debate and as such, dialogue and designs must be carefully considered and seek to bring in a logical approach to explaining the complexities around marginalised communities.

### Future Research Areas

- Future research in this vein should seek to build an understanding of employment in relation to the 'Gig' economy. Gig work is defined through the following core features: irregular work schedules; self-provision of equipment used for work; the provision or definition of one's own working environment; payment based on piecework i.e. in relation to completed tasks; and organisation around digital platforms<sup>1</sup>. Examples are on-demand services, such as Uber, SweepSouth, Mr. D, Checkers Sixty/60 etc.
- A deeper analysis of conversation related to precarious employment, which is defined as unprotected and insecure work or low paying work is also needed.



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To read the full report, please follow the link:

<https://cabic.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Labour-Force-Equality-Social-Media-Analytics-Report.pdf>

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<sup>1</sup> [Steward & Stanford \(2017\)](#)