



The 1956 Women's Anti-pass march, Union Buildings.

Achieving South Africa's vision for gender equality

On Women's Day, 9 August 2013, South Africa marked the 57th anniversary of the 1956 Women's Anti-pass march. On this day in 1956, more than 20 000 women marched to the Union Building against the discriminatory pass laws which had restricted the movement of Black women in the country.

South Africa has taken bold steps to institutionalise gender equality and women empowerment

This year also marks 100 years since Charlotte Maxeke led the women's march against pass laws in Bloemfontein in 1913. It led to the establishment of the Bantu Women's League which was later re-launched by the African National Congress as its Women's League structure.

Just as we've passed another Women's month, South Africa salutes all the women who played a part in transforming our society towards being a truly non-racial and non-sexist democracy. Thanks to these brave women, gender equality is today a constitutional imperative and the Government has launched initiatives to empower women in a number of areas.

Statistics show that South Africa is making steady progress in achieving the vision for gender equality as outlined in the National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality of 2002.

Prior to 1994, there was a mere 2,7% representation of women in Parliament and today it stands at 42%. According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2012, this puts South Africa in fourth position worldwide for the greatest number of women in Parliament. Also interesting to note is that since the first democratic elections, government has made significant progress in empowering women in the spheres of politics, the public sector and education.

In addition, government has put in place legislation to create an enabling environment for women, and to improve their participation in the economy. The Government has prioritised the provision of basic services in rural areas, particularly to women. This is confirmed by public perception research that demonstrates that access to basic services is no longer the most pressing issue facing women. However, more still needs to be done to advance women in the workplace given the progress women have made in obtaining higher qualifications.

When taking media coverage on issues affecting women into account, it is interesting to note that stories on empowerment of women are generally covered in a balanced to positive manner. This comes as no surprise, when considering that government's track record on the promotion of women empowerment and gender equality has surpassed expectations. Where the challenge still lies is with the progressive policies of government that are yet to succeed in combating and eliminating violence against women. On the other hand, media has managed to expose and heighten awareness on the issue of violence against women.

In this section results from public perception research on issues affecting South African women are explored.

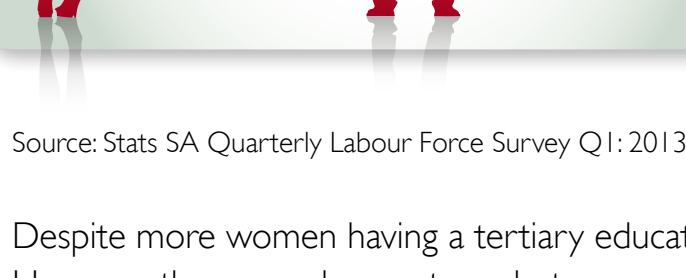
Significant challenges facing South Africa

GCIS National Tracker Research (Q1, 2013) results show that approximately two-thirds of respondents (62%), including women, rate unemployment as the primary concern. In addition, respondents identified crime as being in the top challenges (31%) and inadequate housing (28%). The results interestingly indicate that when it comes to challenges facing the country women are more concerned about poverty and destitution than their male counterparts. In previous research, the same trend was observed in which women consistently listed poverty and destitution among their top concerns, although in recent years their rating of poverty gradually decreased. This highlights the disparities in society, where the burden of raising children still lies more with women as the primary care-givers, and often the case being that more households (44%) are female headed. The findings indicate that women in particular continue to experience the effects of poverty and destitution in greater levels.

In the national executive, 14 Cabinet Ministers and 16 Deputy Ministers are women.

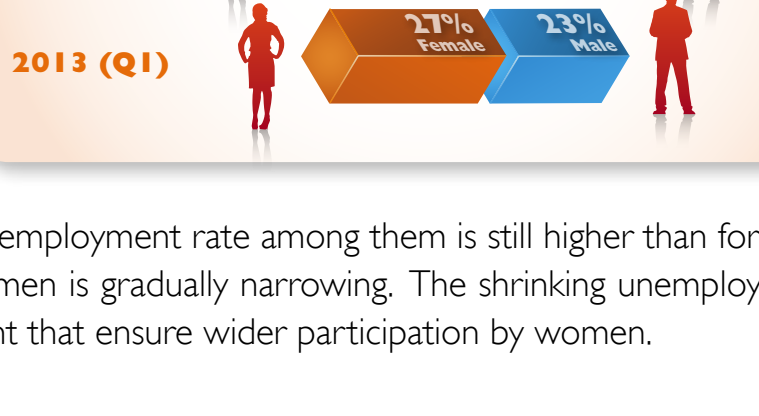
Education levels and employment status of women

Tertiary education COMPLETED



Source: Stats SA Quarterly Labour Force Survey Q1: 2013

Rate of UNEMPLOYMENT



Despite more women having a tertiary education, the unemployment rate among them is still higher than for men. However, the unemployment gap between men and women is gradually narrowing. The shrinking unemployment gap is attributed to the progressive policies of government that ensure wider participation by women.

Women in management

- 10% more men are in managerial positions as opposed to women.
- In the period January to March 2013 the percentage of women and men in the top employment categories (manager, professional, and technician) have increased by the same margin of 8%.
- This suggests that the scales are beginning to balance with regard to the appointment of women and men in managerial positions.
- Similarly the Development Indicators 2012 Report confirms an increase of female top managers from 12.4% in 2000 to 19.5% in 2012.

(Source: QLFS Q1:2013)

Increase of female top managers from 12.4% in 2000 to 19.5% in 2012.

Living conditions of South Africans



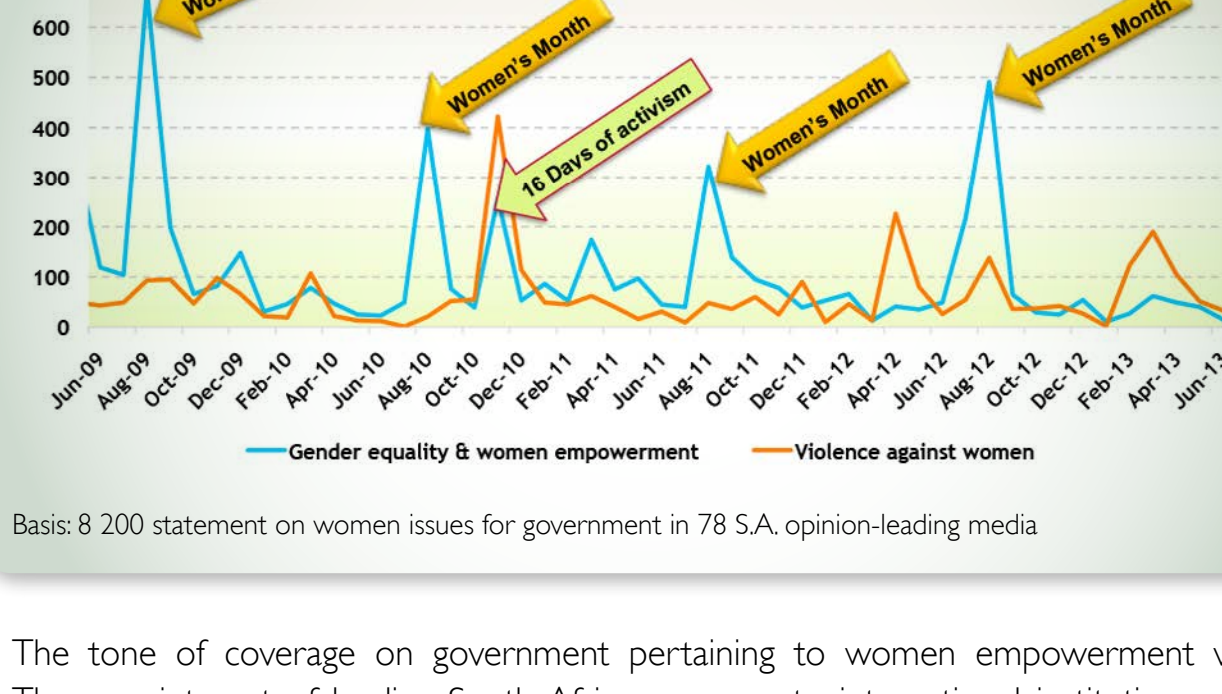
(Source: StatsSA Census 2011).

are almost twice as likely as males to collect water. The percentage of men and women living in households using wood or dung for cooking has declined from 27,1% in 2001 to 16,9% by 2011. As with water collection, the responsibility of collecting fuel is not equally shared between all men and women. Females are nearly twice as likely as males to collect fuel on any given day (Gender Statistics in South Africa 2011, Stats SA).

Women Issues in the Media

Media coverage on gender equality and women empowerment appears to be seasonal and event driven, increasing during Women's Month (August) each year and dropping in the subsequent months. From February 2013, reporting on issues affecting women has shifted from that of empowerment to issues of violence against women, i.e. rape. This was further fuelled by high profile cases of violence against women and children. The graph below shows that issues of gender equality and women empowerment generally received significant coverage during Women's Month.

Overall coverage on women issues, June 2009 – June 2013

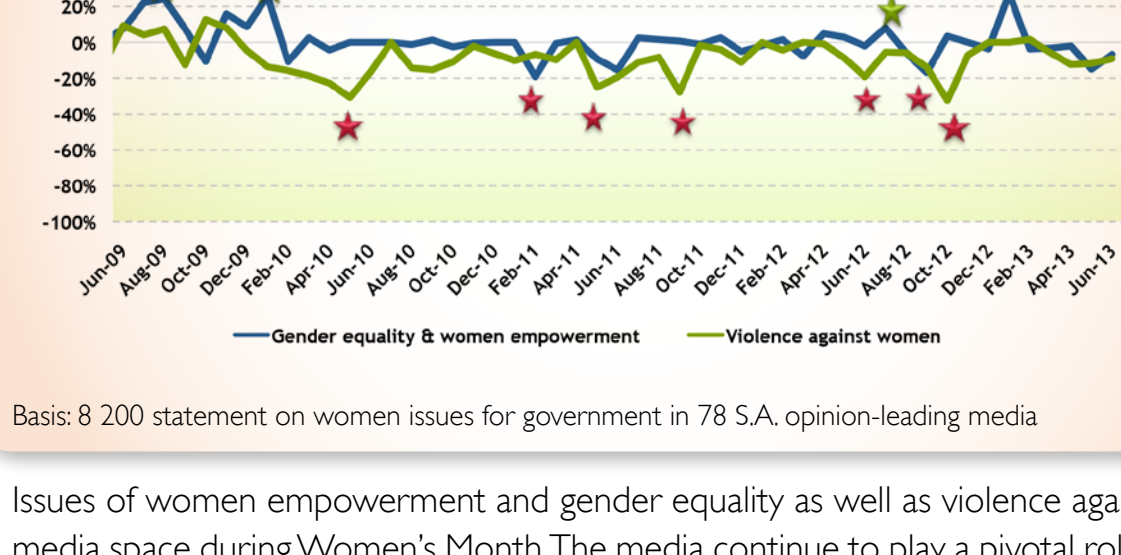


Basix: 8 200 statement on women issues for government in 78 S.A. opinion-leading media

Five out of nine premiers are women, which mean the majority of provinces are governed by women

The tone of coverage on government pertaining to women empowerment varies depending on the issue. The appointment of leading South African women to international institutions and organisations has effectively demonstrated their capacity and capability to compete in the international arena. Media coverage on these appointments has generally been positive and complimentary.

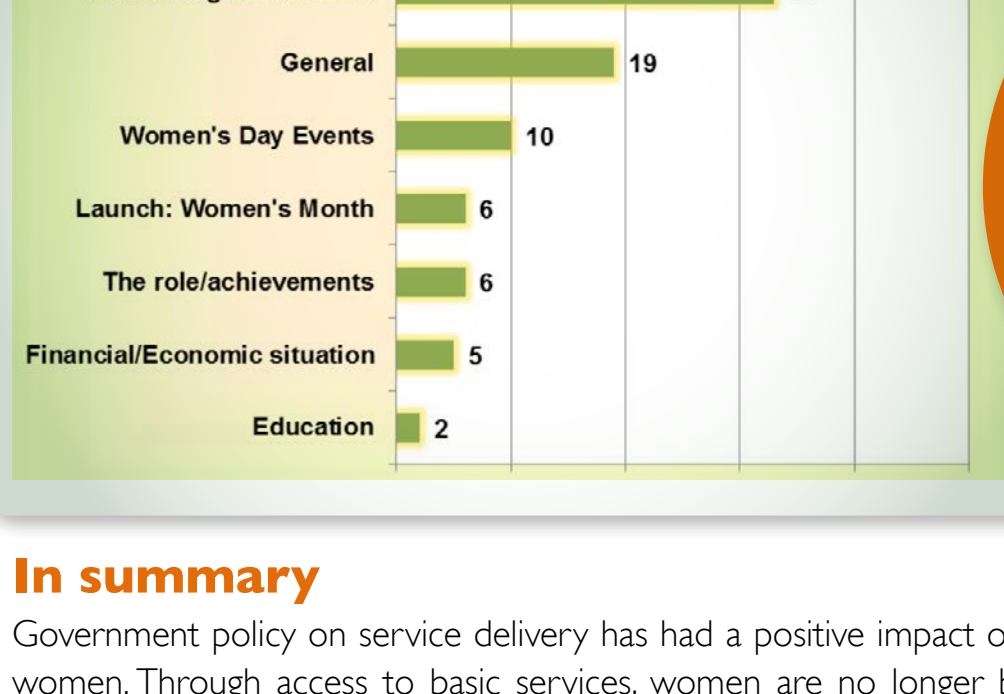
Overall tonality on women issues, June 2009 – June 2013



Basix: 8 200 statement on women issues for government in 78 S.A. opinion-leading media

Issues of women empowerment and gender equality as well as violence against women continue to dominate the media space during Women's Month. The media continue to play a pivotal role in escalating issues of violence against women and calling on the criminal justice system to take stringent action against perpetrators. The media also paid particular attention to a variety of events held in commemoration of Women's Day/Women's Month across the country, including the launch of Women's Month and the national event held in Bushbuckridge.

Top issues on the agenda: 01 – 12 August 2013



Violence against women still a major issue.

In summary

Government policy on service delivery has had a positive impact on the lives of most South Africans, particularly women. Through access to basic services, women are no longer burdened with the laborious tasks of fetching water or wood. Women have also made gains in the education arena, with more of them having qualified with tertiary qualifications. Women's progress has also been made with regards to narrowing disparities between men and women in the work place. These successes gained through the progressive policies of government should be celebrated whilst taking cognisance that more can still be done in other areas affecting women, in particular curbing the scourge of violence against women.

The Way Forward:

Information drive:

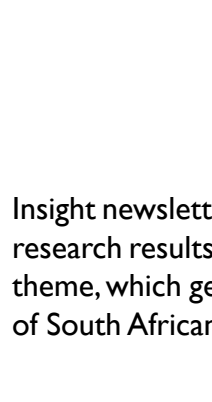


A concerted and joint effort should be made by all relevant stakeholders to promote a women's agenda throughout the year and to end the scourge of violence against women in society. Considering the fact that government has been the dominant voice on issues of gender equality, women empowerment and violence against women, and has effectively managed to stave off negative reporting, government messaging should be maintained and continually strengthened.

Talking to media:



Given the fact that gender equality and women empowerment take centre stage during Women's Month whilst issues around violence against women receive more attention during the 16 Days of Activism on No violence against Women and Children, there has to be a strong drive to promote women issues throughout the year. Media should be engaged to support and partner with government in furthering women and women empowerment.



government communications
Department: Government Communication and Information System
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Forward this to a colleague / Subscribe / Unsubscribe
We welcome your feedback and suggestions, which can be forwarded to insight@gcis.gov.za

Insight newsletter is produced by the GCIS Chief Directorate: Policy and Research. This newsletter provides a snapshot of important research results and media reporting on a range of government's programmes, initiatives and policies. Each issue is devoted to a single theme, which generally corresponds to key national milestones, events and priorities. It provides unique insight into the perceptions of South Africans and the media, as well as an understanding of government's implementation of policies and programmes.