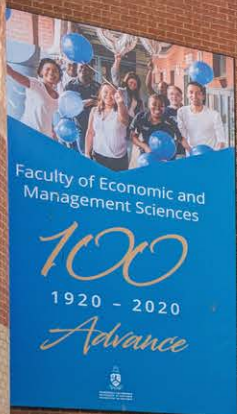


2022

Spotlight on **FUTURE WOMEN ECONOMISTS**



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

**Faculty of Economic and
Management Sciences**

Fakulteit Ekonomiese en Bestuurswetenskappe
Lefapha la Disaense tša Ekonomi le Taolo

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Women represent half of the world's population. As such, gender gaps of any form represent not only an underutilisation of women's potential in the economy but a concerning human capital efficiency loss, which has a bearing on overall growth and development.

In addition, key economic sectors, such as the political arena, are still lagging in including women. This underrepresentation of women presents an obstacle to their empowerment and to the meaningful contributions they can make to science and innovation necessary to drive economic and societal transformation.

While the proportion of women in tertiary education has been growing in South Africa, there is still a significant underrepresentation of women across various programmes, such as Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Recent data from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in Figure 1 on the following page shows that the female representation among economics graduates declines from undergraduate to doctoral studies. Within the social sciences, women are most underrepresented in the field of economics. By many standards, economics has the widest gender disparity of any field. As per [RePEc/IDEAS July 2022](#), 17 017 of 64 934 registered economists worldwide are female, or 26,2%. In South Africa, female economists account for only 31,1% of the total. Thus, understanding why women economists decide against continuing their studies further is critical to improving women's representation in our field over time.



Department of Economics academics from left: Dr Carolyn Chisadza, Dr Eleni Yitbarek, Dr Nicky Nicholls and Prof Roula Inglesi-Lotz

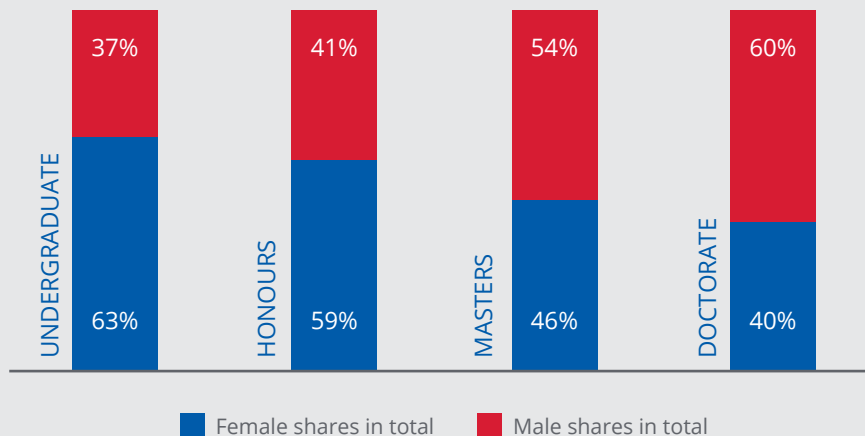


Figure 1: Female graduates in Economics in South Africa, 2020

Note: Undergraduate (1st Bachelor degree of 3 years + B Tech of 1 year + Advanced Diploma)

Source: [DHET \(2020\)](#)

As part of this Women's Month initiative, we shine a light on some of the hard-working women economists in the Department of Economics at the University of Pretoria's Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences that are busy with their doctoral studies or postdoctoral research. They all contribute uniquely to the economic and societal transformation of South Africa and the African continent.

We hope their stories encourage young women to further their studies in economics.





Nyemwererai Matshaka

I began the PhD journey focusing on macroeconomics and inequality in order to extend and polish my economics skills. I hoped to find my place in academia through carrying out significant research, but have found that other than the growth in academics, the journey moulds character and builds resilience.

It is a man's world in numbers yes, but with regards to relevance, women are making their mark, and this inspires me.

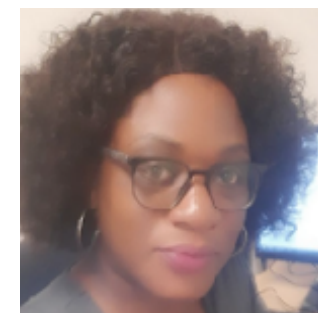
I look forward to making a contribution and impact, as well to see more women take up space in Economics.

Tendai Zawaira

My name is Dr Tendai Zawaira. I am a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Department of Economics (UP). My research focus is gender inequality in Africa, because I believe there is a lot of untapped economic and developmental potential in Africa that is being limited through inequality of the sexes. I believe with more discussion on the matter, societies will begin to conceptualise gender, not as a battle of the sexes, but rather an opportunity that can propel economies to better welfare outcomes.

Part of the reason why I have studied as far as I have is because I grew up in a family in which education was not only important, but also excelling at it a requirement, especially from my father's perspective. The other part is of course my own personal aspirations, especially as I got older, and became a mother.

Just like most sectors in any economy, the higher levels of education in Africa are still mostly male-dominated, so my greatest motivation in advancing my studies is to be part of the generation of women (and men) that contribute to research and policy shifts on the African continent. I am also largely influenced by my daughter and my realisation from my research on gender inequality in Africa, that among other factors, she will need a role model that looks like her for her to also contribute to her society meaningfully.





Pontsho Mathebula

Oh wow, where do I start. I have seven years working experience, during which I worked at National Treasury's budget office and Economic Policy division. Being exposed to macroeconomic policy, I realised policy makers on an aggregate level have limited information to answer why the South African economy battles with the sluggish low economic growth, besides arguing that it is due to structural economic constraints. So, as a curious person, I decided on an adventure to find out where some of the bottlenecks came from, on a disaggregated economic level. Hence, I joined the Competition Commission of South Africa and performed firm level analysis. This journey taught me that some of the bottlenecks constraining economic growth in South Africa are that the economy is highly concentrated and there is a lot to be done to deconcentrate markets. After resigning, I came out having both macroeconomic and microeconomic experience.

My main reason for resigning and joining the academic space as a PhD student, is because I realised that there are so many research questions that can't be rigorously answered by policy makers. Also, there is a lot of information and data in the government system that is not used, probably due to time constraints and/or lack of critical research skills. As I enjoy data analysis, I am hoping that I can answer some of the macroeconomic questions in my PhD studies by using disaggregated data. I believe the PhD will give me critical research data analysis skills. I hope I will be able to contribute to data and economic analysis and assist policy makers to make informed decisions about the South African economy and understand it better. I view the PhD as a journey rather than the finish line. Also, I didn't want to pressure myself to work and do the PhD, as you only experience the stress of both work and PhD deadlines. Thus, being an academic I get to have a healthy work-life balance and discover myself.

Frederica Simaanya

One of the modules that I took in my third-year undergraduate programme was Monetary Economics. This module was very interesting and hence made me write topics on both honours and master's levels in relation to monetary policy and how it helps to stabilise an economy so as to attain economic growth. During my research work, I became more passionate about monetary policy and decided to study further so that I can attain my PhD. My career goal is to be an academic and I believe that the PhD journey will enable me to acquire skills and knowledge that are required in analysis, critical thinking, and research, and help come up with ideas that can be essential to the banking sector as it strives to achieve economic stability. I am very humbled to be given an opportunity by the University of Pretoria to make my academic dream a reality.



To everyone that wants to study further, regardless of your area of interest, my word of encouragement would be to stay focused and trust the process.





Ekaterina Pirozhkova

I find monetary economics to be a fascinating area of study. It is about something rather intangible – interest rates, financial markets, uncertainty indices, etc. – and yet, it has an immense effect on our lives.

It's exciting to study and understand how monetary systems develop and operate.



Michelle Pleace

I have always been interested in 'untraditional' economics topics, where answers to my questions are not commonly found in the literature. To satisfy my curiosity, I needed to attempt to answer my questions and focused my PhD research on behavioural economics and gender. Also, I was learning so much from my supervisor that investing in a PhD was an easy decision!



Fadzayi Chingwere

As a first-born child, I have been a role model to my siblings – they have been looking up to me their entire life. I always felt that I have to always do my best to maintain the standards I had set for them. I am also very thankful to have a husband that is very supportive of me pursuing my education. I am proud to continue doing my studies, as I know for sure that this will make my family proud and better the life of my two kids. I had the opportunity to be a high school teacher for five years and when I was earning my master's degree, I tutored first-year and third-year students and quickly realised that I enjoy sharing my knowledge with others.

I also feel comfortable and energised in an academic environment.

These reasons made me continue my studies with a PhD, so I can pursue a career as a lecturer, and hopefully one day, as a professor.

I am passionate about my research in behavioural economics, mainly focusing on morality and prosocial behaviour, and I think it is a very relevant topic in our world today, where our societies are being hampered by moral decay. I am excited about furthering my knowledge in this field and hope to make a valuable academic contribution.





Saida Musyoki

Economics is all around us, dictating our every move from when we are born to when we die.

As a subject, it broadened my horizon to see how interconnected the world is. This awareness has helped me meaningfully engage with life, knowing that solutions to everyday problems are with us, we just have to search!

I have worn many hats in my short life: a corporate executive, an unemployed graduate, a full-time mother and housewife, a full-time student, small business owner etc. I would say that what I learned in economics made the journey through these worthwhile.

That's why I chose to further my studies in economics. To be part of a team that strives to uncover problems and offer solutions.



Belinda Frimpong-Wiafe

I have always been passionate about making the world a better place for all individuals, without any regards to race, age, gender, socioeconomic status or geographic location. In relation to this, I decided to do a PhD in Economics in order to equip me with the advanced knowledge and skills needed to do intelligent research and policy analysis, to assist governments, policymakers and the international economic body in their quest to achieve global prosperity. I am very happy that this dream is finally going to be materialised with this PhD in Economics from the University of Pretoria.

My advice to every young lady in a male-dominated field is to never stop dreaming, don't be scared, always stand tall and work hard towards your goal until it has been achieved.





Anna Maria Oosthuizen

I have many questions about the world, and continuing my studies in climate change and female empowerment allows me to align my passion and interest towards generating some answers. I believe that I can contribute toward positive change in the world. Empowering women is essential for the development of families, communities and countries. I appreciate the strong, intelligent, and fearless women in the Department of Economics whom I can learn from, be inspired by, support and be supported by.

"I found that ultimately, if you truly pour your heart into what you believe in — even if it makes you vulnerable — amazing things can and will happen." – Emma Watson.



Alanda Venter

Being passionate about a sustainable future, I find joy in asking new and innovative questions, thus generating new knowledge that may assist in preserving the earth for generations to come. My PhD was the prime opportunity to start asking such questions. In doing this degree I have found a place where my passion and knowledge for a sustainable future meet.



Sharon Modiba

I am an Executive Economist and Data Manager at the Automotive Business Council and my PhD research interests are industrialisation and structural change. The main motivation for researching this topic is to investigate the relevance of industrialisation in economic development and to understand why developing countries have not experienced rapid economic growth compared to the early western industrialisers and late Asian industrialised countries.



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