FINAL REPORT

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The Educational Outcomes of The 2021 Grade 12 Learners Receiving Social Protection Services Annexure D

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Acronyms

CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer
CDG	Care Dependency Grant
CPS	Core Package of Services
CSG	Child Support Grant
CYCWs	Child and Youth Care Workers
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DSD	Department of Social Development
FCG	Foster Child Grant
ID	Identity Document
MTSF	Medium Term Strategic Framework
NACCW	National Association of Child Care Workers
NDP	National Development Plan
NISPIS	National Development Plan
NSFAS	National Integrated Social Protection Information System
NSC	National Senior Certificate
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PEI	Prevention and Early Intervention
SASSA	South African Social Security Agency
SGB	Social Grant Beneficiaries
SDIF	Sanitary Dignity Implementation Framework
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
TVET	Technical Vocational Educational Training
UNICEF	United Nation Children's fund
UCT	Unconditional Cash Transfer
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Executive Summary

Social protection support is an integral aspect of the South African welfare system, and a subject of analysis involving vulnerable part of the population. The social grants policy covers a wide variety of vulnerabilities and where possible, support existing social structures to cope with the socio-economic burdens afflicting communities and households. In a joint assessment involving the South African government and the World Bank necessitated by the emergence of Covid-19, it was found that overall, the country's welfare system of programmes is well targeted and provides notable benefits to the most deprived households (World Bank, 2021).

The impact of the social assistance system has been that it effectively reduces poverty and inequality rates, has positive effects on nutrition and food security, educational attainment of children, health and livelihoods (World Bank, 2021). In addition to existing social support in the form of cash transfers, Covid-19 Social grants formed an essential instrument of social protection in South Africa, with child-specific grants increasing from approximately 6 million in 2004 and reaching over 13 million South African children by the end of 2020. This substantial growth has primarily been driven by introducing and expanding the Child Support Grant (CSG). There is a myriad of social protection services to poor and vulnerable children which include "no-fee" schools in poor communities, school nutrition programmes, free primary health care at public facilities, free basic services, and subsidized housing for poor households.

Covid-19 continues to have devastating health, socio-economic, and psychosocial impact on all aspects of society's wellbeing, including pupils' educational performance (Statistics South Africa, 2021). Nevertheless, a substantial body of evidence has emerged which proves that social grants continue to be a valuable tool for improving children's situation in South Africa, more so during a crisis. This report adds to this literature as it presents the academic performance of the 2021 Grade 12 Social Grant Beneficiaries' (SGBs) in the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination.

This report uses matched NSC, National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), and with the Social Grant Pension (SOCPEN) data to identify all learners who have received a social grant at some point in their life and wrote their 2021 Grade 12 examinations. The report makes use of the national population (full dataset across all provinces). In addition, a sample of 26 learners were interviewed to ascertain their challenges and progression pathways Post-Grade 12.

The report documents positive educational outcomes amongst social grant beneficiaries, with a pass rate of 74.0% in the NSC examinations representing a 5.8% increase from 2020. A largest overall percentage of achievements for the SGBs was bachelor (31.9%) pass, followed by the diploma (27.2%) category. The results of this report outline the positive developmental effects of social grants on promoting educational outcomes. This further aids the advancement of human capital development, which will in the future assist with reducing risk, vulnerabilities, poverty and inequality. These results convey one key message: extending child-specific grants until children successfully complete their Grade 12 examinations as a critical educational indicator for the country. This is evident when comparing the active SGBs pass rate (86.0%) with the inactive SGBs (71.0%).

1. Introduction

South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 accords a central role to social protection in addressing the critical challenges of eradicating poverty and reducing inequality. The ultimate goal of social protection is to ensure that no one fall below the minimum standard of living. Also critical is its more transformative and developmental role of moving towards a more inclusive growth path and providing more inclusive development outcomes, especially for poor families and their children.

In keeping with addressing the multi-dimensionality of poverty and inequality, one of the key interventions by the Department of Social Development (DSD) and South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) has been the provision of social assistance to eligible caregivers and their children through the Child Support Grant, Care Dependency Grant, and Foster Child Grants. Impact evaluations have demonstrated significant improvements in children who are beneficiaries of social grants in food security, nutrition, health status, and education enrollment. However, as a government, we realize that we still face challenges of fragile family care situations of children, nutrition status, especially in terms of stunting, and we observe low learning outcomes as a result.

With a well-developed social assistance system with wide reach and coverage, it is becoming increasingly pertinent to ensure adequate tracking of services and precisely track children's wellbeing on the various child grants provided by the Government. Since the advent of democracy, South African Government has implemented a number of social protection interventions aimed at addressing risk, vulnerability, poverty, and inequality in the country. Subsequently, the Government has made notable strides in developing a social security system that addresses key risks faced by poor and vulnerable citizens across their lifecycle (Kidd et al., 2018).

One notable example of a social protection intervention is the government social grants focused on redistributing income more equitably in favour of vulnerable groups and reducing the country's poverty and inequality level (Kanbur, 2010). Other social security targets include achieving human development goals such as investment in health, education, and nutrition (Grosh et al., 2008). The influence of social assistance on the developmental impacts within households has facilitated their expansion and drawn research attention (Fiszbein & Schady, 2009). Social assistance in South Africa is now widely recognized, has transformed and increased its access to vulnerable individuals (Reddy & Sokomani, 2008).

South Africa has three grants targeted towards children comprising the Child Support Grant (CSG), Care Dependency Grant (CDG), and the Foster Child Grant (FCG). The CSG is the most common and has expanded considerably since 2003 due to the rise in the age eligibility criteria and changes in the means test and income threshold. Although much smaller in reach than the CSG, the other two grants have also grown in scale in recent years. As of the end of November 2020, over 18.2 million citizens were accessing social grants, with the child-specific grants reaching over 13.2 million children monthly, representing over 72% of the total grants distributed. This rise in income redistribution in South Africa has coincided with global trends towards increased publicly-funded cash transfers to the poor and vulnerable (Smit & Mpedi, 2010).

Social protection refers to a collection of programs that address risk, vulnerability, inequality, and poverty through transfers in cash or kind (Fiszbein, Ringold & Srinivasan, 2011)

Broadly, literature maintains that young people who do not complete their Grade 12 year are more likely to struggle to find work, remain unemployed for more extended periods, and prolong their dependence on social assistance (Bjerk, 2012; Branson and Kahn, 2016; Lund et al., 2018). The democratic Government has a robust and focused pro-poor policy. Therefore, it has created and expanded social protection programmes, such as the "no-fee" schools, school nutrition programmes, and the CSG to advance human capital development. This is done by ensuring poor and vulnerable children can go to school and acquire knowledge and skills that will assist them in raising their quality of life as well as addressing intergenerational poverty.

Covid-19 had a devastating health and socio-economic impact on the population, globally. This impact was felt in South Africa and to address the challenges lockdown restrictions, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) crafted policies meant to mitigate learning losses resulting from school closures. The four pillars underlying the department's policy direction were: remote learning, trimming curriculum content, rationalising or suspension of subjects and changing assessment methods. In comparison with other developing countries the department's policy position has been lauded for its clarity and consistency from the onset (Hoadley, 2020). The impact of the pandemic continues as more infection waves emerge. Moreover, access to remote learning, good quality virtual instruction and home support systems have become critical components of teaching and learning, which have further exacerbated the socio-economic gap in educational outcomes. While much of the research to date has focused on school enrolment and attendance, and education attainment levels (Ardington & Leibbrandt, 2010), very little work has been done to demonstrate impact of social support on learner outcomes. This report presents the academic performance of the social grant beneficiaries (SGBs) who have successfully completed their formal schooling learning years. In addition, the report highlights a critical achievement obtained by SGBs concerning their academic performance.

The remainder of this report is structured as follows: Section two discusses perspectives on social grants. Section three covers the impact of social security system on education. Section four discusses the methodological approach of the study. Section five National Senior Certificate data Class of 2021 Social Grant Beneficiaries, Section six performance of Grade 12 learners receiving National Association of Child Care Workers (NACCW) programmes. Section seven Qualitative inquiry on challenges and progression of former Grade 12 learners, and Section eight NSFAS funding support

2. Social support perspective

The relationship between education and social protection, inclusive of cash transfers commonly referred to as grants, has generated extensive research and policy interest over the years. More generally, overall findings from literature reveal clear evidence of the impact of cash transfers on educational outcomes across a large number of countries. While the impact of conditional cash transfers (CCTs) versus unconditional cash transfers (UCTs) on inter-generational poverty remains contested, there remains little evidence to prove that it is the conditions put in place that generate the impact of transfers, as the similar impact has been achieved with UCTs. However, empirical evidence maintains that the impact of cash transfers is likely to be greater the longer the duration of the transfer (Budlender, 2014). Delany, Grubsoun & Nyokangi (n.d.) also explain that social grants assist households in investing in their children's health and education, which is critical to longer-term poverty reduction.

2 Orphanhood and Schooling in South Africa: Trends in the vulnerability of orphans between 1993 and 2005

An impact assessment of the CSG in South Africa found that early receipt of the CSG significantly strengthens the positive developmental impacts on a child's educational, nutritional, and health outcomes, further aiding the reduction of poverty and vulnerability (DSD, SASSA & UNICEF, 2012). The study also found that adolescents receiving CSG are more likely to have some positive educational outcomes, are somewhat less likely to experience child labour, and are significantly less likely to engage in behaviours that put their health and wellbeing at serious risk. Case, Hosegood, and Lund (2005) further argue that CSG recipients are significantly more likely to be enrolled in school in the years after receiving the grant than equally poor children of the same age group who are without the grant. This begins to suggest that receipt of the CSG is positively related to earlier school enrolment, as Lund (2006) found. In support, Williams (2007) maintains that CSG increases primary school enrolment by just over 2 percent and reduces non-attendance by 54 percent. Furthermore, the CSG impact assessment found that children enrolled in the CSG at birth completed significantly more grades of schooling compared with those who were enrolled at age six. Early enrolment in the CSG was found to increase grade progression by 10.2 percent (DSD, SASSA & UNICEF, 2012). Interestingly, the CSG has also been found to play a compensatory role for children with less-educated mothers. The gender of the grant recipient has also been confirmed to play a critical role in the case of the old-age pension, as women have been found to allocate the expenditure of the grant more efficiently than men (Lund, 2006; Duflo, 2003).

The literature, however, maintains that the quality and equitable access to general services must improve if transfers are to have a positive impact on education performance (Lomel, 2008). Similarly, Ferreira & Robalino (2010) and Soares et al. (2010) maintain the importance of ensuring the supply-side interventions are in place, as children from more impoverished families may need more educational support than children from better-off families to achieve the same educational outcomes. Complementary interventions, commonly referred to as 'cash plus' or 'cash and care', thus accelerate the positive effects of cash transfers which can contribute to greater impact than cash alone (Patel et al., 2020; Roelen et al., 2017). The complementary interventions could further assist with "mitigating psychosocial, systemic and structural risks which compromise children's wellbeing in disadvantaged families" (Patel et al., 2017). They could further prompt effective behavioural change to ensure positive educational outcomes. Similarly, Fan & Chen (2001) argue that the involvement of a parent or caregiver in a child's education also plays a key role in improving children's success rate at school. In the same way, Latapi & de la Rocha (2006) emphasize the need for transfers to be accompanied with improvements in service delivery to ensure the grant has an impact on reducing inter-generational poverty.

Based on the literature, it can be concluded that social protection complemented by investment in quality and accessible public education, health care, and other basic services has the potential to promote human capital development, reduce the historical legacy of inequality and prevent poverty from being passed on to the next generation (UNICEF, 2014). This will, in the long-run, reduce citizens' dependency on state funds in the form of social grants (Nkosi, 2011). However, it should be noted that in as much as social protection benefits strengthen opportunities for human capital development, actual education outcomes and the likes will depend on the household demand for human capital services.

2.1 The Social Support System

This section analyses the social support system that prevails in South Africa. To build a comprehensive insight into such a support system, a general discussion of social support systems is first provided. In essence, this is a conceptualization of the social support system to define and outline the various typologies of such support systems. It also provides snapshots of such support systems through precedent studies. The conceptualization stage paves the way for the contextualization of such support systems using the South African case. Within this context, different types of social support systems are outlined; and the impact of these support mechanisms on the educational system (from primary to tertiary) is also interrogated.

2.2 Conceptualisation of Social Support System

Social support systems are an integral part of any society. The overall philosophy of the term "support" is found in a wide range of words that range from advancement to philanthropy as summarised in Box 1

Box 1: Words Associated with Support

Advancement, Encouragement, Facilitation, Forwarding, Furtherance, Furthering, Nurturance, Benefaction, Patronage, Promotion, Sponsorship, Advice, Care, Counsel, Guidance, Mentoring, Attendance, Attention, Hand-holding, Service, Beneficence, Charity, Favour, Kindness and Philosophy. Source: Author from various sources, 2021.

Source: Author from various sources, 2021.

The divergence of these words associated with "support" is also a pointer to the complexity of prevailing social support mechanisms and their impact on society as a whole.

Defining Support Systems

Social support systems are associated with government social welfare policies which are geared towards alleviating the plight of the poor, the unemployed and the marginalised segments of society. The idea of welfare stems from the need to achieve the "wellbeing of society" but more so, to achieve "what is good for people". In principle, the idea of welfare has been narrowly reduced to the provision of social services whose physical manifestation has shown immediate evidence of government caring. This is a moral obligation which most governments carry and the provision of social services is simply meant to fulfil this responsibility. Spicker (2013), commenting on the value of social services noted that they have two major dimensions:

Developmental: In any society where individuals are valued, facilities put in place (such as schools, health facilities etc) help individuals to realise their potential.

Safety net: This is an equally important service that is meant to eradicate anxiety associated with need such as those arising from poverty, old age and disability.

When analysed from a holistic perspective, the provision of welfare goes beyond individualism since services provided are developed and institutionalised by society in order to meet social woes (Spicker, 1976). This explains why social development is also grounded in egalitarian policies whose aim is to achieve equality by way of removing disadvantages. Inequality seems to be the driving factor to implement egalitarian policies which aim for equal treatment without prejudice, or stigma; equal opportunity, the means to achieve socially desired ends; and equality of results, in which disadvantages are removed altogether. The most common manifestation of inequality (more so common in South Africa) is vertical inequality which manifests itself in the form of the rich and the poor, people in different classes or statuses. Rae (1981), further noted that there are also "blocs" associated with inequality where disadvantaged subgroups emerge in the form of race, sex, the elderly, women and even children. This is not inequality of personal gifts but of access to social and economic environments.

2.3 The South African Social Support System

South Africa is one of the most unequal country characterised by high levels of inequality and structural poverty levels that surpass unprecedented levels. Such structural inequities stem from years of dominated white superiority and rule where others races were reduced to mere “objectives”. For this reason, poverty and social exclusion remain structure attributes of the South African population despite the Government’s relentless intervention since 1994.

An overview of prevailing inequality in South Africa show that it is a result of colonial-apartheid laws that were crafted to protect and cushion the white minority from the indigenous people. Under these regimes, the black indigenous people were reduced to mere subjects where they were forced to work under bare minimum rewards. The situation was aggravated by the fact that the system was driven by racial segregation in all sectors of the economy. As a result, most blacks were denied access to education, skills and well-paid jobs. Brockerhoff (2013) observes that this system was a deliberate machination by the then regimes meant to ensure the dominance of the white minorities. It is therefore not surprising that this resulted in social exclusion and marginalisation as seen through lack of education, land, credit, savings and business opportunities.

However, irrespective of the biased socio-economic system of the time, the then governments designed social security systems to cushion the poor whites while relegating the majority blacks to perpetual poverty. It is the emergence of “the poor whites’ problem” that led to the development of initial social security measures. Since the birth of democracy in 1994, this situation has been aggravated by under-employment and unemployment largely arising from the slow growth in the extractive industry (mainly agriculture and mining) coupled with the growth of the tertiary industry where the majority of the unemployed cannot qualify due to lack of appropriate skills (Brockerhoff (2013). It is in such a system that social support mechanisms emerge as one of the Government interventions measures that can be used to close the ever-growing gap of inequality in the post-1994 country.

The social support system offered by the Government of South Africa is comprehensive. The support offered to address socio-economic needs of citizens through social grants is summarized in the Table below.

Type of Grant	Brief Description
Old Age Grant	Granted to resident South African men and women. They must be permanent residents or recognised refugees above 60 years old. The grant supports the entire family.
War Veteran's Grant	It is meant for people who served in the First or Second World War or the Korean War.
Disability Grant	Has same value and conditions as the old age grant. It automatically converts to old age grant once the recipient turns 60years. Only those above 18 can apply.
Grant in Aid	This grant can be claimed in addition to another grant if the applicant requires full time care due to a mental or physical disability. The grant is intended to cover the cost of full-time care.
Foster Child Grant	This grant seeks to reimburse individuals for the cost of raising a foster child. It is not awarded subject to a means test of the guardian or of the child. The foster care status must be confirmed by a court order.
Care Dependency Grant	This grant is targeted at children living with disabilities and turns into the disability grant once a child turns 18. The Care Dependency Grant can be awarded in addition to the Foster Care Grant in order to avoid discriminating against children living with a disability.
Child Support Grant	A granted available to children up to the age of 18. The grant is said to 'follow the child' as it is paid to the primary caregiver of a child, usually the mother.
Social Relief of Distress Grant	The grant is aimed at people who find themselves in an unforeseen critical situation, where they are unable to provide for themselves or their dependents. Grants are awarded on a monthly basis of normally three months, but can, in exceptional cases, be awarded for up to six months. This grant can also be awarded in in-kind rather than cash form. For example, SASSA might pay for certain transport costs or provide food parcels.

Source: Brockerhoff, (2013:28-30)

3. The Impact of the Social Security System on Educational Performance

In principle, there is a very strong linkage between social security and educational performance of learners largely arising from the fact that social grants as part of income are consumed at household level. Maitra and Ray (2003) observe that sources of income affect the expenditure pattern at household level. The diversity of income at household level in the form of old-age pensions, household remittances, and various forms of social grants contribute towards the wellbeing of the household. Economic theory contends that since social grants raise household incomes they also impact on the educational system in various ways.

One such argument envisages that social grants boost household income which in turn is used to pay for various expenses required for attending school such as uniforms, tuition and transport (among others). Various expenses required for school should be seen as barriers to school attendance. In this regard, social grants are used to fight barriers to school attendance since households can now afford to pay for various costs associated with schooling. This in turn impacts positively on the child's ability to attend school without fear or failure to pay for such expenses. This is an important intervention measure which helps the child not to skip classes or lose valuable time while seeking financial support. It is the increase in attendance rate coupled with peace of mind which together help to boost children's performance at school which in the long run, results in better performance.

Social grants also relieve the unbearable costs associated with education. In traditional circles, they substitute a child's role to contribute to household income (such as through food production or other means). In poverty ridden households, children of school going age are supposed to economically contribute towards the welfare of their households by contributing financially towards household income directly or indirectly. Some of these activities such as vending or physically participating in household enterprises forces some children not to attend school while engaging in income-generating activities. This makes children skip classes thereby missing valuable lessons and topics; which eventually impacts negatively on their performance. Children who engage in some of these activities fail to cope or balance their school work with household activities thereby resulting in poor performance. The South African Income and Expenditure Survey 2000 and the Labour Force Survey equally observed that poverty and its associated consequences erode the opportunities for children and youth to attend schools thereby fomenting a vicious circle of destitution. It is this poverty trap that undermines the household's ability to invest in human capital necessary to break from it. In essence, social grants promote school attendance whose long-term effect is observable in the increase in enrolment figures and performance.

Schools as economic institutions require income to sustain themselves. The failure by some households to pay tuition impacts negatively on the schools' financial flows. This is reflected in some schools' failure to invest favourably in valuable school assets and manpower to boost the performance of their learners. Access to computers and other related accessories are among such assets that contribute

significantly to the education of learners. The situation is aggravated by poor physical infrastructure in some schools such as lack of electricity, proper toilets and classrooms which collectively impact on the welfare of learners. According Njue at al (2017), pupils who learn and live in clean and orderly, well-lit and ventilated, safe and noiseless classrooms and buildings have a higher academic motivation than those in poorly lit and uncomfortable facilities. They further opined that schools with better physical facilities and conditions report improved academic performance while those with fewer janitorial personnel and higher maintenance backlogs report poorer academic performance. Similar observations were made by Phillips ((2014) in the study of schools and the physical environment. The impact of such a difference is significant when public schools are contrasted with private schools which have superior school physical environments that impact positively on academic achievement of pupils. While it can be argued that social grants are not adequate to change significantly the financial status of learning institutions, they do have an impact at their own level since they help to stabilise school finances thereby contributing towards the quality of education of their learners.

Beyond such state-sponsored social mechanisms, there are also other social networks that operate at community level through voluntary mechanisms which equally impact on the performance of learners. One such social institution is the Prevention and Early Intervention Services (PEI) – Risiha (Previously known as Isibindi). The programme provides Core Package of Services (CPS) which has seven domains (food and nutrition, economic strengthening, educational support, psychosocial support, HIV and AIDS, Child care and protection and Health promotion) aimed to address the needs of these children emanating from the high level of poverty, inequality and social exclusion in the country. The domains seek to prevent abuse, child maltreatment and violence; to improve the life skills of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) and their care givers to improve health outcomes in terms of HIV and AIDS; to improve the food security and Nutrition intake of the OVC, increase the Economic potential of the households and to improve the educational outcomes of the OVCs. The programme uses various professionals to provide community-based prevention and early intervention services at a facility and within the children's households.

- Social Workers: support families by providing counselling an advice to promote social well-being.
- Child and Youth Care Workers: promotes and facilitates the most important developmental needs of children and families within the home, education setting, or community through psycho-social interventions. Furthermore link the children and their families with various resources according to their needs.
- Community Development Practitioners: assists in planning, exploring, and coordinating community networks and partnerships to improve livelihoods.
- Social Auxiliary Workers: support the social worker in collaborating with individuals, families, groups or communities.

4. Data and methodology

The report uses 2020 and 2021 annual administrative data from the National Senior Certificate database administered by the Department of Basic Education (DBE), NACCW data on the Isibindi programme wrote 2021 NSC exams, and data overseen by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). Monitoring and tracking are critical systems to measure performance and identify key risk areas. With the use of an Identity Document (ID) number as a unique identifier, all variables are matched with the Social Pension System (SOCPEN) data from the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) to identify the social grant beneficiaries who wrote their 2021 Grade 12 NSC examinations in the respective years. This approach is in line to the National Integrated Protection Information System (NISPIS) which is a Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) target to link the various government social protection systems to improve services to poor and vulnerable communities. . The Department of Social Development started measuring the educational outcomes of learners receiving social protection services with the view to locate and improve the well-being of vulnerable children through education which is an essential building block in South Africa's progress towards sustainable development agenda. Table 1(b) below provides a description of the data sources and the definition of variables.

Table 1(b): Data sources and definition of variables

	Variable	Source	Definition
A/BACH	Achieved Bachelors pass	NSC, DBE	A learner has met the minimum requirements for entry to any tertiary institution
A/DIP	Achieved Diploma pass	NSC, DBE	A learner has met the minimum requirements for entry into a college, university of technology or university, but can only study a diploma course not a degree course
A/HC	Achieved Higher Certificate pass	NSC, DBE	A learner has met the minimum requirements for entry into a college but not a university
A/NSC	Achieved National Senior Certificate	NSC, DBE	A learner has achieved the minimum pass requirements
A/SNE	Achieved National Senior Certificate with an endorsement	NSC, DBE	A National Senior Certificate, which has its own promotion requirements, issued to a candidate identified and registered as having special education needs
CSG	Child Support Grant	SOCPEN, SASSA	A grant given to parents or primary caregivers in need, who care for children who are under the age of 18
CDG	Care Dependency Grant	SOCPEN, SASSA	A grant given to those caring for children with severe disabilities and in need of full-time care. These people can be their parents, foster parents, or those who have been appointed as caregivers by the court
FCG	Foster Child Grant	SOCPEN, SASSA	A grant given in respect of a foster child who has been placed in the care of foster parents by a Children's Court. The grant is given to children under the age of 18, it can however be extended by Social Workers to the age of 21 or until the child completes secondary school
A/GB	Active Grant Beneficiary	SOCPEN, SASSA	An individual who is currently receiving some form of social grant from the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA)
IN/GB	Inactive Grant Beneficiary	SOCPEN, SASSA	An individual who is currently not receiving some form of social grant from the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), but has earlier in their lifetime
Qualitative study	Challenges and progression pathways	DSD – 26 learners	The study was conducted on a sample of 26 learners from the 2020 and 2021 Grade 12 cohort.

The study uses descriptive statistics to present and analyse the academic performance of the Social Grant Beneficiaries (SGB) Grade 12 Class of 2021. The analysis excludes and viewed as study limitations 1) learners' who did not write all their final NSC and IEB examinations in November and December of 2021, and 2) learners' final pass marks for those learners who re-marked and/or re-wrote certain subjects.

To augment the quantitative analysis, a qualitative study was conducted to understand challenges and progression path of Post Grade 12 learners that were supported through social development programs over the past few years. The study aimed to understand challenges faced by Post Grade 12 learners in pursuing tertiary education, employment, family life or other endeavours as means to a brighter future. In addition, information on socio-economic status was also requested from participants.

The analysis is delimited to SGB's who wrote the 2021 NSC in November and December 2021. This includes learners who were actively receiving a grant when writing their Grade 12 examinations as well as those learners who have received a grant at some point in their life but have been discontinued as they have reached the age limit of 18 years (commonly referred to as inactive learners). The analysis excludes learners who might have dropped out of their Grade 12, as not all registered learners sit for their examinations. The dropout rate can, however, only be accounted for after the supplementary examinations have been written by learners in 2021. Furthermore, the report is unable to account for learners, not in the secondary government schooling system.

5. Results: Social Grant Beneficiaries wrote 2021 NSC exams

This section outlines the academic performance of active and inactive social grant beneficiaries (SGBs) who wrote their final NSC examinations in November and December of 2021. The analysis provided below is disaggregated by province, grant status, age, gender, population group and disability status. An overview of the number of SGBs who received provisional NSFAS funding to further their higher education studies is also included. The report also show results from the National Association of Child and Care Workers (NACCW) Initiative, which is a household level programme that works with Child and Youth Care Workers (CYCWs) to support orphaned and vulnerable children as well as learners at risk to address aspects of vulnerability in especially poor communities.

5.1. SGBs academic performance in the 2021 NSC examinations

The table 2 below indicates the total number of SGBs enrolled for the 2021 NSC examination on a full-time basis, compared to the total number of full-time NSC enrolments. Overall, SGBs account for 70.4% of all full-time NSC enrolments.

Table 2: Total number of full-time SGBs enrolments

Province	SGBs Enrolments			NSC Enrolments
	Active	Inactive	Total	Total
Eastern Cape	12,680	42,504	77,118	91,500
Free State	4,239	19,236	27,755	35,055
Gauteng	15,607	51,481	84,482	127,523
Kwazulu-Natal	13,659	38,921	69,199	166,570
Limpopo	11,826	48,418	91,998	105,101
Mpumalanga	7,974	33,207	57,026	66,756
North West	5,363	20,379	33,595	41,081
Northern Cape	1,326	5,693	10,236	12,726
Western Cape	5,545	21,516	35,672	57,709
National	78,219	281,355	487,081	704,021

Source: SOCPEN (2021) & NSC (2021)

Tables 3 (a & b) below show the extent of the impact of Covid-19 on Grade 12 performance. Table 3a show overall performance for all learners who sat for the NSC examination in 2019 to 2021, while Table 3b shows performance of SGBs between 2019 and 2021. The rationale behind tracking performance of learners from 2019 is to observe the varying impact if Covid-19 on learner outcomes. The pre Covid-19 cohort of 2019 show an increase in the overall pass rate compared to previous years. The 2020 cohort on the other hand experience major challenges in teaching and learning and this was shown in lower overall performance. It is therefore prudent that the 2021 cohort be compared to both 2019 and 2020 learners given higher in contact learning received during the year compared to 2020.

Table 3(a): Total NSC pass rates per province for 2020 and 2021

Province	2019			2020			2021			Diff 2019-2020	Diff 2020 -2021	Diff 2019-2022
	Total Wrote	Total Passed	Pass Rate	Total Wrote	Total Passed	Pass Rate	Total Wrote	Total Passed	Pass Rate			
Eastern Cape	63 198	48 331	76.5%	72 926	49 691	68.1%	91,500	66 770	73.0%	-7.4%	4.9%	8.05%
Free State	25 572	22 602	88.4%	27 928	23 779	85.1%	35,055	30 037	85.7%	-3.3%	0.6%	8.23%
Gauteng	97 829	85 342	87.2%	110 191	92 285	83.8%	127,523	105 526	82.8%	-3.4%	-1.0%	18.10%
KwaZulu-Natal	116 937	95 017	81.3%	135 225	104 938	77.6%	166,570	127 990	76.8%	-3.7%	-0.8%	7.64%
Limpopo	70 847	51 855	73.2%	78 695	53 634	68.2%	105,101	70 124	66.7%	-5.0%	-1.5%	8.98%
Mpumalanga	43 559	34 995	80.3%	53 391	39 367	73.7%	66,756	49 133	73.6%	-6.6%	-0.1%	6.21%
North West	26 819	23 272	86.8%	36 871	28 093	76.2%	41,081	32 143	78.2%	-10.6%	2.0%	3.17%
Northern Cape	9 138	6 990	76.5%	11 608	7 665	66.0%	12,726	9 089	71.4%	-10.5%	5.4%	3.45%
Western Cape	50 404	41 502	82.3%	51 633	41 250	79.9%	57,709	46 875	81.2%	-2.4%	1.3%	8.36%
National	**504 303**	**409 906**	**81.3%**	**578 468**	**440 702**	**76.2%**	**704,021**	**537 687**	**76.4%**	**-5,1%**	**0.2%**	**9.06%**

Source: Department of Basic Education (2021)

Table 3(b): SGBs who wrote NSC examinations and passed per province

Province	2019			2020			2021			Diff 2019-2020	Diff 2020-2021	Diff 2019-2021
	Total Wrote	Total Passed	Pass Rate	Total Wrote	Total Passed	Pass Rate	Total Wrote	Total Passed	Pass Rate			
Eastern Cape	59 428	37 809	63.6%	66 184	39 769	60.1%	78 360	56 144	71.7%	-3.5%	11.5%	8.05%
Free State	21 532	16 461	76.4%	23 256	18 409	79.2%	28 070	23 757	84.6%	2.8%	5.4%	8.23%
Gauteng	79 305	48 750	61.5%	73 363	55 485	75.6%	87 296	69 486	79.6%	14.1%	4.0%	18.10%
KwaZulu-Natal	108 959	74 555	68.4%	119 626	83 342	69.7%	70 484	53 598	76.0%	1.3%	6.3%	7.64%
Limpopo	76 178	43 109	56.6%	69 211	44 176	63.8%	92 971	60 973	65.6%	7.2%	1.8%	8.98%
Mpumalanga	41 533	27 474	66.1%	48 367	32 622	67.4%	57 873	41 846	72.3%	1.3%	4.9%	6.21%
North West	23 686	17 429	73.6%	31 977	22 429	70.1%	34 378	26 393	76.8%	-3.5%	6.7%	3.17%
Northern Cape	7 767	5 075	65.3%	9 871	5 772	58.5%	10 383	7 138	68.8%	-6.8%	10.3%	3.45%
Western Cape	31 810	21 488	67.6%	33 399	22 261	66.7%	36 223	27 516	76.0%	-0.9%	9.3%	8.36%
National	**450 198**	**292 150**	**64.9%**	**475 254**	**324 265**	**68.2%**	**496 038**	**366851**	**74.0%**	**3.3%**	**5.8%**	**9.06%**

Source: SOCPEN (2021, 2020) & NSC (2021, 2020)

The results in Table 3(a) above show a marginal increase in performance between 2020 and 2021 in all provinces for overall NSC learners. The overall increase was 0.2%. The provincial trend is not the same. Northern Cape and the Eastern Cape had the highest increase of 5.4% and 4.9%, respectively. The Limpopo, Gauteng and Mpumalanga experienced a decline in performance between 2020 and 2021.This is a concern given that these provinces also experience declines in performance between 2019 and 2020.

Table 3(b) compares the total number of SGBs who wrote the NSC examinations in 2019 and in 2021, those that passed, and the respective pass rate per province. An overall increase in the pass rate from 64.9% in 2019; 68.2% in 2020 and 74.0% in 2021 is observed, which is not in line with the national trend of a decline between 2019 and 2020, and a slight increase between 2020 and 2021.

The provinces with the highest increase were Eastern Cape, Northern Cape and Western Cape at 11.5%, 10.3% and 9.3%, respectively. Limpopo, Gauteng and Mpumalanga had the least improvement, which average below 5%. The reasons for possible differences in performance for SGBs compared to the total learners that wrote NSC examination is not clear. This may show some evidence of social support for poorer households, especially given the stimulus provided to recipients during the lockdown periods of the Covid-9 pandemic.

Table 4: 2021 NSC and SGBs provincial performance

Province	Total NSC wrote	Total NSC achieved	% achieved NSC	Ranking	% Achieved SGBs	Ranking SGBs
Eastern Cape	91,500	66 770	73.0%	7	71.7%	7
Free State	35,055	30 037	85.7%	1	84.6%	1
Gauteng	127,523	105 526	82.8%	2	79.6%	2
KwaZulu-Natal	166,570	127 990	76.8%	5	76.0%	4
Limpopo	105,101	70 124	66.7%	9	65.6%	9
Mpumalanga	66,756	49 133	73.6%	6	72.3%	6
North West	41,081	32 143	78.2%	4	76.8%	3
Northern Cape	12,726	9 089	71.4%	8	68.8%	8
Western Cape	57,709	46 875	81.2%	3	76.0%	5
National	704,021	537 687	76.4%		74.0%	

Table 4 compares the performance of SGBs against the total enrolment for all students, and ranks provincial performance. The difference between the overall pass rates compared to that for SGBs may be evidence that socio-economic status has an impact on the educational outcome, if it is assumed that all qualifying children benefit from social support. The ranking of provincial performance varies somewhat for total NSC compared to the SGBs, probably favouring provinces with the largest beneficiaries. The Free State is the best performing province, whilst Limpopo has the lowest performance for both for SGBs and overall NSC learners. Further analysis of this with demographic and socio-economic information of recipients may shed more light on social support's educational benefits.

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Table 5: SGBs who wrote NSC examinations and passed by grant status

	Achievement Category								
Province	Active			Inactive			Grand Total		
	Total Wrote	Total Passed	Pass Rate	Total Wrote	Total Passed	Pass Rate	Total Wrote	Total Passed	Pass Rate
Eastern Cape	15,251	12,680	83.1%	61,867	42,504	68.7%	77,118	55,184	71.6%
Free State	4,652	4,239	91.1%	23,103	19,236	83.3%	27,755	23,475	84.6%
Gauteng	17,493	15,607	89.2%	66,989	51,481	76.9%	84,482	67,088	79.4%
Kwazulu-Natal	15,628	13,659	87.4%	53,571	38,921	72.7%	69,199	52,580	76.0%
Limpopo	14,327	11,826	82.5%	77,671	48,418	62.3%	91,998	60,244	65.5%
Mpumalanga	9,381	7,974	85.0%	47,645	33,207	69.7%	57,026	41,181	72.2%
North West	6,021	5,363	89.1%	27,574	20,379	73.9%	33,595	25,742	76.6%
Northern Cape	1,663	1,326	79.7%	8,573	5,693	66.4%	10,236	7,019	68.6%
Western Cape	6,525	5,545	85.0%	29,147	21,516	73.8%	35,672	27,061	75.9%
National	90,941	78,219	86.0%	396,140	281,355	71.0%	487,081	359,574	73.8%

Source: SOCPEN (2021) & NSC (2021)

The table above reflects the pass rate of SGBs by grant status (active vs. inactive). Active SGBs were found to have a substantially higher pass rate compared to inactive SGBs, with an overall pass rate of 86.0% and 71.0%, respectively. The above table reveal clear evidence of the significant effects of social grants on children's educational outcomes. This remains the case irrespective of the grant amount allocated to the recipient child/caregiver.

The DSD remains concerned about the inactive learners who did not achieve, as this begins to suggest that the removal of cash transfers has a negative effect on their academic performance. This trend has also been observed in previous years. The findings above show that the impact of social grants is likely to be greater the longer the transfer duration. For example, if child-specific grants are kept active until the learner completes their Grade 12, this is likely to improve overall performance levels. Nonetheless, while the inactive pass rates are lower, it is essential to note that just about 71% of inactive SGBs managed to pass their NSC examinations.

This highlight the critical role that cash plus interventions, also referred to as cash and care, play in children's wellbeing, specifically focused on educational outcomes. It is also important to note that most of the SGBs still managed to attain entrance into institutions of higher learning to further their studies (refer to table 6 below and Figure 1).

Table 6: SGBs academic performance by achievement category

Province	Achievement Category					Grand Total	
	Achieved Bachelor (A/BACH)	Achieved Diploma (A/DIP)	Achieved Higher Certificate (A/HC)	Achieved NSC (A/NSC)	Achieved Endorsed (A/SNE)	Total Achieved	% Achieved
Eastern Cape	24,988	19,460	11,679	15	2	22,213	71.65%
Free State	10,093	9,080	4,551	1	32	4,286	84.63%
Gauteng	32,603	24,829	12,031	0	23	17,809	79.60%
KwaZulu-Natal	25,356	18,258	9,967	17	0	16,886	76.04%
Limpopo	23,133	20,979	16,858	3	0	31,995	65.58%
Mpumalanga	16,928	14,863	10,035	20	0	16,026	72.31%
North-West	10,494	9,227	6,669	0	3	7,973	76.77%
Northern Cape	2,617	2,640	1,881	0	0	3,242	68.75%
Western Cape	12,020	9,871	5,610	1	14	8,702	75.96%
Total	158,232	129,207	79,281	57	74	129,132	73.96%

There was an impressive improvement in the number of Grade 12 learners receiving social grants in 2021 compared to 2020. Similar to the 2020 results, the table above and figure 1 below show that 158 232 (31.9%) learners attained admission to Bachelor Studies, 129 207 (27.2%) achieved admission to Diploma Studies, and 79 281 (9.4%) achieved admission to Higher Certificate Studies. There is however a concern with this level of performance when compared to the 2020 results. In 2020, "similar to the 2019 results, 116 944 (40%) learners attained admission to Bachelor Studies, 133 109 (41.0%) achieved admission to Diploma Studies, and 69 714 (37.4%) achieved admission to Higher Certificate Studies" (Department of Social Development, 2020). This is a concern as it indicates that the improvements in the overall performance of SGBs is not matched by an improvement in achievement category.

Figure 1: Percentage SGB performance by achievement category

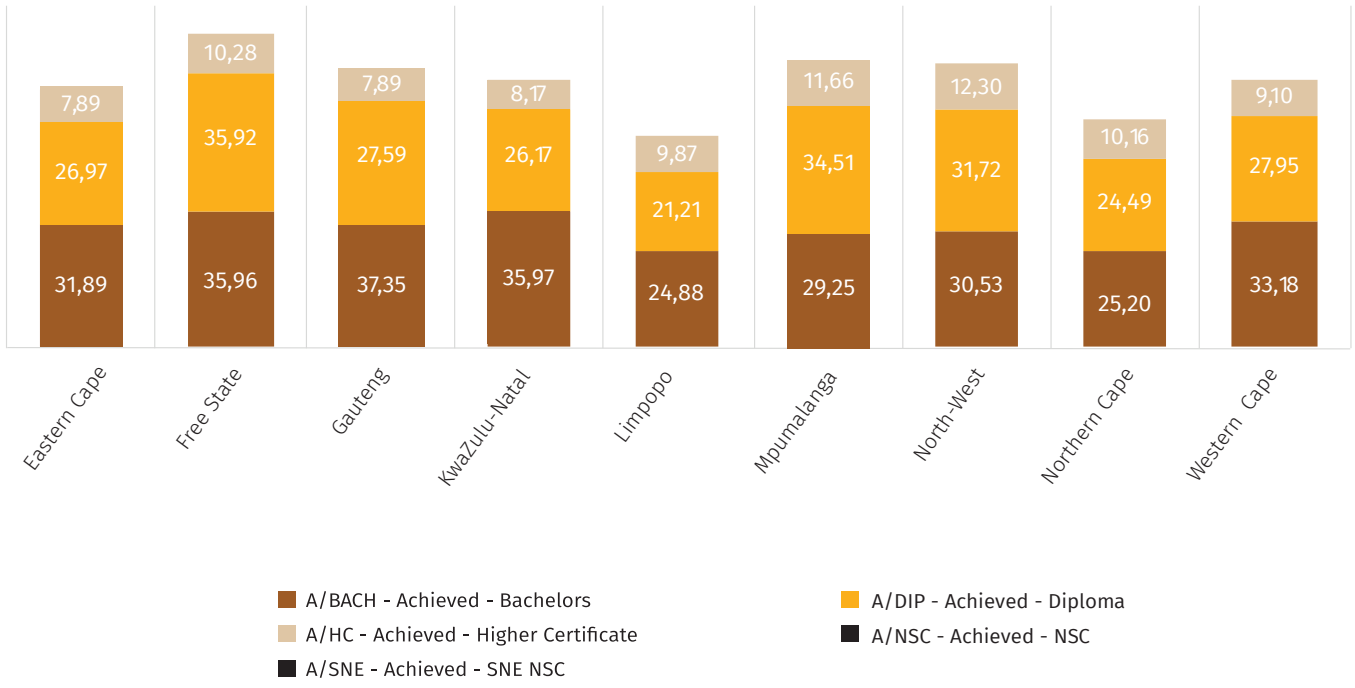
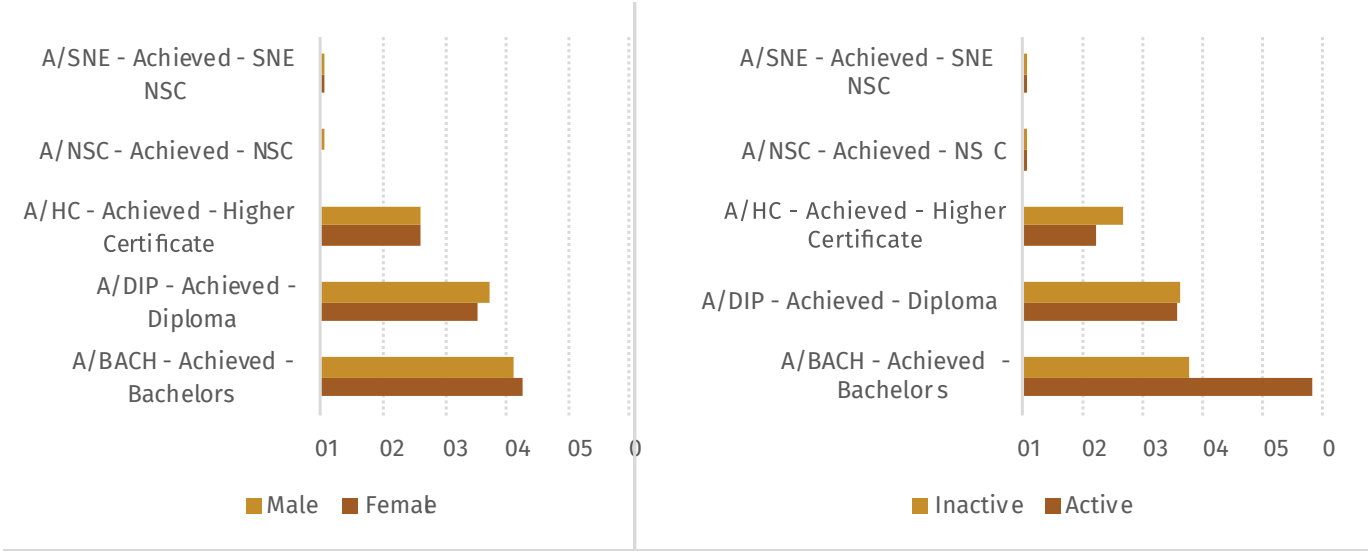


Figure 1 explores achievement categories for SGBs, presented in percentages per province. Social Grant beneficiaries in Gauteng, Free State and KwaZulu-Natal were more likely to receive a bachelor pass compared to other provinces, although the difference is small. A largest overall percentage of achievements for the SGBs was bachelor (31.9%) pass, followed by the diploma (27.2%) category. These levels together were achieved by 59.1% of the beneficiaries, which is lower than 2020 by about 20 percentage points. This is also lower compared to the 2021 total national NSC results, where 65.6% of the learners achieved a bachelor or diploma (Department of Basic Education, 2021).

Limpopo had the least percentage of SGBs achieving bachelor pass (24.9%) followed by Northern Cape and Mpumalanga at 25.2% and 29.3%, respectively. Limpopo also had the lowest percentage of SGBs receiving bachelor or diploma pass (46.1%), followed by Northern Cape at 49.7%. The two provinces were also the least performing overall as shown in Figure 1 above.

Figure 2: SGB achievement category by gender and grant status



Achievement categories disaggregated by grant type and gender are shown in Figure 2 above. Females (32.7%) had higher Bachelor achievement compared to their male (30.9%) counterparts. The reverse is observed for Diploma pass. The benefit of social support is more prevalent when observing a much higher Bachelors achievement for active (48.3%) SGBs compared to those that were inactive (27.9%).

Table 7: SGBs academic performance by gender

Province	Female			Male		
	Total wrote	Total passed	Pass rate	Total wrote	Total passed	Pass rate
Eastern Cape	45,218	32,332	71.5%	33,142	23,812	71.8%
Free State	15,638	13,091	83.7%	12,432	10,666	85.8%
Gauteng	49,977	39,852	79.7%	37,319	29,634	79.4%
KwaZulu-Natal	38,956	30,013	77.0%	31,528	23,585	74.8%
Limpopo	50,762	32,947	64.9%	42,209	28,026	66.4%
Mpumalanga	32,120	23,173	72.1%	25,753	18,673	72.5%
North-West	19,237	14,714	76.5%	15,141	11,679	77.1%
Northern Cape	5,923	4,036	68.1%	4,460	3,102	69.6%
Western Cape	21,639	16,310	75.4%	14,584	11,206	76.8%
Total	279,470	206,468	73.9%	216,568	160,383	74.1%

Table 7 above reflects the pass rate of SGBs by gender. While more females (279 470) sat for their NSC examinations than males (216 568), both gender had a similar pass rate. The overall male pass rate is 74.1% compared to that of females, which is 73.9%, both an average of 74% when rounded up. This is an improvement compared to 2020, where males performed better than females by 2.6 percentage points. Gender parity in performance demonstrate a positive outcome of programmes to increase retention of girls in school and improve their performance. Such programmes include Sanitary Dignity Programmes that ensure that every girl child and woman in the country can manage their menstruation in a dignified manner.

The South African government through the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disability committed to address the issue through the Sanitary Dignity Implementation Framework (SDIF) that recognised that "non-provision of adequate sanitary dignity may have a negative impact on indigent persons in terms of health, education and meaningful participation in society" Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disability (2019: 7). The framework was developed for the provision of sanitary products to indigent persons in an effort to ensure that such persons are afforded the opportunity to manage menstruation in a knowledgeable, safe and dignified manner.

The national programme, which started in 2019/20 financial year have improved retention of girls in school. This, among others, may be the reason for improvements in performance over-time. A recent study that explored menstrual health management and schooling experience amongst female learners in Gauteng found that there was a complex interaction between menstrual-related challenges (physical discomfort, teasing, and feeling distracted in class) experienced by female learners, often amplified or compounded by factors in the school environment (unhygienic sanitation facilities and inadequate rest areas), and schooling participation and attendance. The study further cautioned on the importance of "...consideration of other complex systemic and structural factors which can negatively impact the Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) of learners in the school context, and more broadly. These include the need for increased efforts to provide iterative, high quality and accurate SRH information and support to learners, increasing educator's reproductive health knowledge, ensuring that school sanitation facilities are hygienic, private and safe" (Crankshaw et al, 2020: 15).

There is a notable variation in the gender gap in performance by province. Eastern Cape, Gauteng, and Mpumalanga show marginal differences in performance by gender (less than 1%). KwaZulu-Natal had the highest difference of 3.4 percentage points, with women having higher performance. Gauteng is the only province with higher pass rate for women compared to men.

Table 8: SGB achievement by age

Province		Age congruent Age<18		Age 19		Over-age Age 20+	
	Mean age	Wrote	Pass rate	Wrote	Pass rate	Wrote	Pass rate
Eastern Cape	19.4	34,764	84.8%	17,055	70.7%	26,351	55.1%
Free State	19.5	11,580	93.5%	6,565	86.5%	9,842	73.0%
Gauteng	19.1	50,514	88.8%	19,788	75.0%	16,863	57.5%
KwaZulu-Natal	19.3	36,558	86.8%	13,709	73.6%	20,007	58.2%
Limpopo	19.9	38,095	83.1%	19,929	68.4%	34,749	44.8%
Mpumalanga	19.1	25,321	84.8%	12,450	72.9%	19,959	56.2%
North-West	19.2	15,837	91.1%	7,590	78.4%	10,844	54.9%
Northern Cape	19.6	4,719	84.2%	2,355	68.7%	3,252	47.0%
Western Cape	19.1	22,375	85.2%	8,302	68.8%	5,440	49.4%
Total	19.3	239,763	86.5%	107,743	73.0%	147,307	54.3%

Table 8 shows pass rate by age of the learners. Age-in-grade incongruence has implications for both pedagogy and child development, and these cannot be ignored. Learners may be in one of three positions relative to their age and grade: (a) at the appropriate age for the grade, (b) under-age for the grade, or (c) over-age for the grade. Both the over-age and the under-age status reflect age-in-grade inconsistency or incongruence. Under-age for the grade suggests that the child may have been grade accelerated, whereas over-age suggests that the child was 'held back' or deceleration. Over-age is often a result of late entry into school or repetition of some grades, which is often linked to poorer educational performance (Hossain, 2010).

The categorization of congruent age for Grade 12 used the UNESCO levels that suggest that official ages for this grade are between the ages of 17 and 18 (Statistics South Africa, 2017). Learners that were over this age were considered over-age. The number of SGBs were 19 years of age was considered large (107 743), therefore necessitating independent analysis of performance for learners of this age. Results confirm that SGB learners who were age congruent had higher performance compared to those who were age 19 and older. In fact, the learners that were 19 years had a -13.5 percentage points reduction in their pass rate compared to those who were age congruent. The learners that were 20 years and older had a -32.2 percentage point reduction in their pass rate compared to the age congruent learners. Some provinces experienced an average pass rates that is below 50% for over-age learners. These provinces are Limpopo (44.8%), Northern Cape (47.0%) and Western Cape (49.4%). This is a major concern and suggest that programmes to ensure that factors that lead to older age enrolment per grade are addressed.

Table 9: SGB achievement by population group

Province	Black/African		Coloured		White		Indian/Asian	
	Total wrote	Pass rate	Total wrote	Pass rate	Total wrote	Pass rate	Total wrote	Pass rate
Eastern Cape	74,381	71.7%	3,731	69.6%	201	93.0%	47	91.5%
Free State	27,299	84.5%	554	88.1%	198	97.5%	19	94.7%
Gauteng	83,499	79.5%	2,555	78.5%	752	95.5%	478	85.8%
KwaZulu-Natal	67,631	75.7%	601	77.5%	78	91.0%	2,173	85.3%
Limpopo	92,755	65.5%	68	89.7%	106	97.2%	41	70.7%
Mpumalanga	57,540	72.2%	138	79.7%	151	98.0%	40	92.5%
North-West	33,778	76.8%	373	67.0%	205	93.7%	22	90.9%
Northern Cape	6,527	66.8%	3,796	71.7%	51	100.0%	8	75.0%
Western Cape	18,503	75.3%	17,440	76.3%	217	98.2%	49	91.8%
Total	461,913	73.7%	29,256	75.2%	1,959	95.8%	2,877	85.6%

Differentials of SGBs performance by population group are shown in Table 9 above. Performance is highest among White (95.8%) SGBs, followed by Indians/Asian (85.5%), Coloured (75.2%) and Black/Africans (73.7%). The difference between the highest performing population group (White) and the lowest (African) is significant at 22.1 percentage points. Provincial levels also show a similar pattern by population group. This mirrors the historic socio-economic variations by population group in the country. This has also been noted with national data (population census 2011), where educational attainment had a similar pattern of highest levels for the White population and lowest for the African/Black population (Statistics South Africa, 2015).

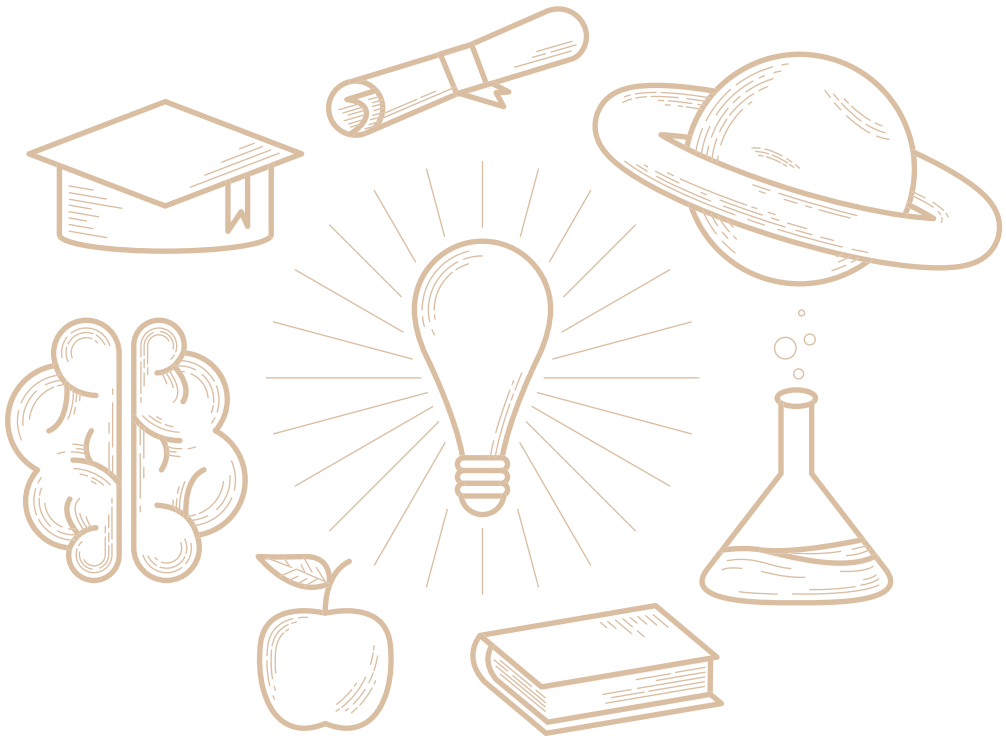


Table 10: SGBs achievement for learners with special needs

Province	Wrote	Achieved	Pass rate	Ranking
Eastern Cape	279	188	67.4%	4
Free State	78	71	91.0%	1
Gauteng	40	33	82.5%	2
KwaZulu-Natal	191	139	72.8%	3
Limpopo	184	113	61.4%	5
Mpumalanga	12	7	58.3%	6
North-West	5	1	20.0%	7
Northern Cape	4	0	0.0%	-
Western Cape	-	-	-	
Total	793	552	69.6%	

The pass rates of learners with special needs are presented in Table 10. A total of 793 SGBs in this category write NSC examination, which is 19.2% of the total NSC learners with special needs. The overall NSC report indicated that "a total of 879 learners with special needs attained admission to Bachelor studies, 636 achieved admission to diploma studies, and 314 achieved admission to higher certificate studies" Department of Basic Education (2021). The Western Cape had no SGB learners with special needs, whilst the Northern Cape and North West only had 4 and 5 learners, respectively. Learners in Free State performed the highest at 92%, which is higher than the overall SGB learners.

Table 11: SGBs and NSC achievement at 30% pass rate, by subject

Subject	SGBs			NSC Total[1]		
	Wrote	Achieved 30%&above	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved 30%&above	% Achieved
Accounting	81,463	58,366	71.7	105 894	79 093	74.7%
Business studies	190,980	149,762	78.4	243 843	196 233	80.5%
Economics	121,097	80,227	66.3	139 191	94 479	67.9%
Geography	302,294	218,019	72.1	358 655	266 402	74.3%
History	181,611	161,254	88.8	227 448	203 473	89.5%
Life sciences	329,232	228,466	69.4	384 216	274 584	71.5%
Mathematical literacy	366,036	264,745	72.3	441 067	328 382	74.5%
Mathematics	225,149	125,854	55.9	259 143	149 177	57.6%
Physical science	172,149	112,018	65.1	196 968	135 915	69.0%

[1]*Department of Basic Education (2021)*

Table 11 above shows the distribution of SGBs and total NSC performance for each of the selected subjects at 30% lower bound achievement per subject. The selected content subject shows lower pass rates for SGBs compared to overall NSC learners for all subjects except. It is worth noting that the differences are small (less than five percentage points), and have substantial reduced when compared to 2020, suggesting gains made by SGBs overtime. Lower pass rates for Mathematics and Physical Science achievements for SGBs and NSC learners provide evidence of inadequate resources for these subjects. Indeed, evidence shows that South African learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds perform better in Mathematics when given an opportunity to attend better-resourced schools (quantile 4 and 5) Van der Berg (2008).

Table 12: SGBs and NSC achievement at 40% and 50% pass rates, by subject

Subject	SGBs		NSC[1]		SGB	NSC[1]
	Wrote	%Achieved 40%&above	Wrote	%Achieved 40%&above	%Achieved 50%&above	%Achieved 50%&above
Accounting	81,463	49.3	105 894	51.5	32.3	
Business studies	190,980	59.4	243 843	60.4	41.5	
Economics	121,097	42.0	139 191	40.3	25.3	
Geography	302,294	43.5	358 655	-	23.5	
History	181,611	72.6	227 448	73.2	51.9	
Life sciences	329,232	50.4	384 216	51.3	34.5	
Mathematical literacy	366,036	48.5	441 067	49.1	30.1	
Mathematics	225,149	37.6	259 143	37.6	24.9	23.0
Physical science	172,149	43.4	196 968	44.8	28.1	27.3

[1]*Department of Basic Education (2021)*

Performance of SGBs compared to overall NSC learners presented in Table 12 above shows lower pass rates, but somewhat similar patterns as pass rates at 30% threshold, except in Economics. SGBs performed marginally higher in mathematics and physical science when the pass rate is 50. The levels are however very low and concerning. Only 24.9% and 28.1% of the SGB learners passed mathematics and physical science, respectively at a 50% pass rate.

Table 13: Logistic regression results of achieving

	N	Unadjusted odds	Adjusted odds: Demographic	Adjusted odds: Add grant status	Adjusted odds: Add province
Age	630,548	0.63 [0.62 – 0.64]***	0.61 [0.61 – 0.62]***	0.62 [0.62 – 0.63]***	0.63 [0.62 – 0.63]***
Gender					
Female (ref)	367,927				
Male	264,665	1.01 [0.99 – 1.02]	1.37 [1.35 – 1.39]***	1.38 [1.36 - 1.40]***	1.38 [1.36 – 1.40]***
Population group					
Black/African (ref)	592,014				
Indian/Asian	3,294	2.12 [1.91 – 2.35]***	1.14 [1.03 – 1.27]***	1.10 [0.99 – 1.23]*	1.02 [0.92 – 1.14]
Coloured	35,184	1.08 [1.05 – 1.11]***	0.79 [0.77 – 0.82]***	0.80 [0.78 – 0.82]***	0.86 [0.83 – 0.89]***
White	2,059	8.06 [6.47 – 10.04]***	5.47 [4.39 – 6.84]***	5.01 [4.21 – 6.69]***	4.97 [3.94 – 6.27]***
Grant type					
Child Support Grant (ref)	583,701				
Care dependency g	2,602	0.70 [0.64 – 0.78]***		0.85 [0.78 – 0.95]***	0.83 [0.75 – 0.92]***
Combination	533	0.76 [0.62 – 0.93]***		0.79 [0.64 – 0.99]*	0.78 [0.62 – 0.96]***
Disability Grant	2,044	0.48 [0.43 – 0.54]***		-	-
Foster care grant	43,712	0.76 [0.74 – 0.78]***		0.86 [0.83 – 0.88]***	0.82 [0.80 – 0.85]***
Grant status					
Active (ref)	96,605				
Inactive	524,484	0.38 [0.38 – 0.39]***		0.85 [0.83 – 0.89]***	0.84 [0.83 – 0.88]***
Province					
Eastern Cape (ref)	97,140				
Free State	35,372	2.18 [2.10 – 2.26]***			2.30 [2.21 – 2.40]***
Gauteng	122,614	1.54 [1.51 – 1.58]***			1.13 [1.11 – 1.16]***
KwaZulu-Natal	95,135	1.26 [1.22 – 1.29]***			1.12 [1.10 – 1.15]***
Limpopo	122,021	0.75 [0.74 – 0.77]***			0.77 [0.75 – 0.78]***
Mpumalanga	60,002	1.03 [1.01 – 1.06]***			1.14 [0.99 – 1.04]
North-West	39,579	1.31 [1.27 – 1.35]***			1.25 [1.21 – 1.29]***
Northern Cape	13,395	0.87 [0.83 – 0.91]***			0.84 [0.81 – 8.89]***
Western Cape	47,340	1.25 [1.22 – 1.29]***			0.93 [0.90 – 0.96]***
Log likelihood			-249826.29	-249771.81	-247517.48
LR chi^2			(5) 53572.15***	(9) 53681.12***	(17) 58189.78***
Note: OR is Odds Ratio. ***p < 0.05, OR: Adjusted OR, [95% CI]: 95% Confidence Interval					

6. National Association of Child and Care Workers Programme

A logistic regression models that estimates the odds of passing were estimated and the results are shown in Table 13 above. The aim was to establish factors that are associated with Grade 12 performance, which in turn will give light on interventions required to improve pass rates for SGBs. Independent models show that males have higher odds of passing compared to females. This effect was however not statistically significant, suggesting that males and females had similar odds of passing. Whites, Indians and Coloured have higher odds of achieving compared to Black/Africans, and the levels are in this order. SGBs receiving a Child Support Grant have higher odds of passing compared to those receiving care dependency, combination, disability or foster care grants. SGBs who were currently not receiving social grants (inactive) had a 62% lower odds of passing the NSC results. Lastly, SGBs in all provinces had higher odds of passing compared to those in the Eastern Cape, except for learners in Limpopo and the Northern Cape.

Models that control for other dependent characteristics were estimated in a nested pattern to observe changes in effects when other factors are controlled for. Males have a 37% higher chance of passing compared to women once demographic factors (age and population group) are controlled for. Also notable are 21% lower odds of passing for Coloureds compared to Black/Africans once age and gender are controlled for. The subsequent two nested models that add grant type and province make minor reductions in most odds that were already observed in the independent models. One critical change is reversal in the positive odds of passing for the Western Cape SGBs when compared to the Eastern Cape. The independent model showed a 25% benefit for learners in the Western Cape, whilst the model that control for all factors show a 7% decline in odds of passing for SGBs in the province compared to those in the Eastern Cape. This likely suggests that the benefit of the Western Cape in NSC outcomes may be linked to higher prevalence of characteristics with higher probability of passing, such that controlling for them eliminates the gains.

The National Association of Child and Care Workers (NACCW) initiative is a community-based programme that works with Child and Youth Care Workers (CYCWs) to support orphaned, vulnerable children at a household level as well as to support learners improve their educational outcomes. This programme helps the learners realize their developmental goals regarding education, health, development, and adulthood transition. According to the NACCW (2022), the programmes provided through this initiative are:

- Prevention and Early Intervention Services (PEI) – Risiha (Previously known as Isibindi): This model deploys CYCWs to provide prevention and early intervention services in communities. NACCW currently implements components of this model in partnership with DSD, local implementing partners, the De Beers Fund, and Mainstream Renewable Power SA.
- Youth Forums: This programme brings youth together as capable change agents within their lives and communities. Youth meet in groups, supported by CYCWs, to identify priorities to discuss and organize activities including child rights awareness campaigns monthly. This programme is in partnership with the NACCW provincial and national membership structures and Adoptions centrum.

Through these programmes, learners receive support through individual, group, class, and whole-school activities. According to the National Association of Child and Care Workers (2021), in response to the lockdown period in 2020, CYCWs also connected with learners through a Virtual Connection Programme by connecting with learners through phone calls, texts, and WhatsApp group chat activities.

The CYCWs provided various forms of educational support to learners, which include:

- Ensuring that learners were enrolled and attending school.
- Re-integrating learners that dropped out of school or displayed signs patterns of irregular school attendance.
- Providing homework/assignment support.
- Co-creating school study timetables and exam preparation routines.
- Ensuring learners have access to virtual and/or face-to-face study groups.
- Ensuring learners have access to and work on past exam papers and other study material distributed by NACCW and other stakeholders.
- Motivating and encouraging learners to focus on their school work.
- Keeping learners informed about the school operations based on national lockdown levels.
- Engaging in discussions with learners about the anxieties they felt with regards to returning to school amidst the COVID-19 pandemic as well the new teaching strategies and the disruptions to teaching time during the year.
- Supporting learners to access tertiary education.

Table 14: Performance of learners enrolled in NACCW programmes

Programme	Province	District	Total Wrote	Total Pass	Beneficiary Pass Rate	Quinlile 1/2/3 Pass Rate	Provincial Pass Rate	Provincial Pass Rate	Provincial Pass Rate
Prevention and Early Intervention Services	Northern Cape	Frances Board	35	14	40%	"70.5/72.7/73.5%	69.6%	71.4%	59%
		Nomaqua	19	14	74%	70.5/72.7/73.5%	81.2%	71.4%	38%
		Total Northern Cape	54	28	52%	70.5/72.7/73.5%		71.4%	53%
	Western Cape	Central Karoo	1	1	100%	70.5/72.7/73.5%	84.4%	81.2%	89%
		Cape Town Metro	21	13	62%	70.5/72.7/73.5%	80.3%	81.2%	85%
		West Coast	18	15	83%	70.5/72.7/73.5%	80.7%	81.2%	90%
		Total Western Cape	40	29	73%	70.5/72.7/73.5%"		81.2%	87%
	"Total PEI"		94	57	61%				70%
Youth Forum"	Eastern Cape	Nelson Mandela Bay	2	2	100%	"70.5/72.7/73.5%	78.2%	"73.0%	100%
	KwaZulu-Natal	eThekwini	5	4	80%	70.5/72.7/73.5%	9/70.5%	76.8%	-
		uMgungundlovu	1	I	100%	70.5/72.7/73.5%	76.5%	76.8%	-
	Limpopo	Vhembe	7	7	100%	70.5/72.7/73.5%	1.8/80.0%	66.7%	100%
	Mpumalanga	Nkangala	21	20	95%	70.5/72.7/73.5%	72.2%	73.6%	-
	North West	Dr Kenneth Kaunda	2	2	100%	70.5/72.7/73.5%	79.3%	78.2%	100%
	Western Cape	Frances Board	1	1	100%	70.5/72.7/73.5%	69.6%	71.4%	-
	Northern Cape	Central Karoo	7	7	100%	70.5/72.7/73.5%"	84.4%"	81.2%"	-
	Total YF"	Total	46	44	96%				100%3
			140	101	72%				171%

Source: NACCW Exam Results (2022)

Table 14 shows the results of the 140 learners that wrote Matric, with 101 learners passing Matric. This yields a pass rate of 72%. The report indicate that the 2021 beneficiary pass rate is lower than the official national pass rate (72% compared to 76.4%). Table 14 also compares the beneficiary pass rate to the quintile, district, provincial and 2020 beneficiary pass rates. Highlighted in green are the beneficiary pass rates that surpass either their quintile, district, provincial and/or 2020 beneficiary pass rates. The data for several districts is to be viewed with caution where numbers are small, as this impacts meaningful comparisons with larger data levels. The pass rates in orange indicate pass rates that were lower than their quintile, district, provincial and/or 2020 beneficiary pass rates. Northern Cape had the lowest pass rate (52%) which is consistent with 2020 results. The highest pass rate is shown for Youth Forums (96%).

7. A Qualitative Inquiry: Challenges and progression path Post Grade 12

The Department of Social Development conducted a qualitative study designed to gain insight into the challenges and progression paths of Post Grade 12 learners who received social protection services from government over the years. A key part of the Social Development sectors mandate is to provide social protection services and lead government efforts to forge partnerships through which vulnerable individuals, groups and communities become capable and self-reliant participants in their own development. In light of this, it is important for the department to establish whether the Grade 12 learners who have received numerous social protection interventions are able to attain their career goals and contribute to society in the long run. Insights gained from such studies assist the DSD to enhance its social support programme offerings to ensure effective utilisation of the vast amounts of money spent on social support programmes annually.

The current study collected information from Post Grade 12 learners in the Eastern Cape, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and Northern Cape. Information collected from the learners included socio-economic status, knowledge and skills acquired Post Matric, employment and other opportunities and challenges. Given the qualitative nature of this study, the sample comprised of 26 Post Matric learners from the provinces mentioned earlier. The respondent learners were chosen from a database used for a study entitled, "Rapid Assessment of the Covid-19 Impact on the 2020 Grade 12 Learners Receiving Social Protection" and from a database of the Top 20 Performing Social Grant Beneficiaries in the 2019 Grade 12 class.

7.1 Profile of Respondents

As noted elsewhere in this report, the survey respondents were chosen from two databases namely the database that used for the "Rapid Assessment of the Covid-19 Impact on the 2020 Grade 12 Learners Receiving Social Protection" and, a small sample of the top achievers among Social Grant Beneficiaries in the 2019 Matric class. Hence, the respondents were drawn from the 2019 and 2020 Grade 12 classes. The difference in the nature of the databases used for the 2019 and 2020 Grade 12 classes is worth noting. The former is a database of the top performing social grant beneficiaries in the 2019 Grade 12 class. In other words, it is a small subset of all the 2019 Grade 12 learners – the sample comprised of 20 learners.

On the other hand, the database for the 2020 Grade 12 class is much broader as it captures all the grade 12 learners resident in KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, and Gauteng provinces. This partly explains why a greater proportion of the respondents in the survey, about 69%, are from the 2020 Grade 12 class and why it appears that a greater proportion (65.4%) of the respondents completed Matric in 2020.

In terms of the respondent's gender, 50% were males and 50% females. Concerning age, the respondents' ages ranged from 18 years to 21 years as reflected in figure 2 below.

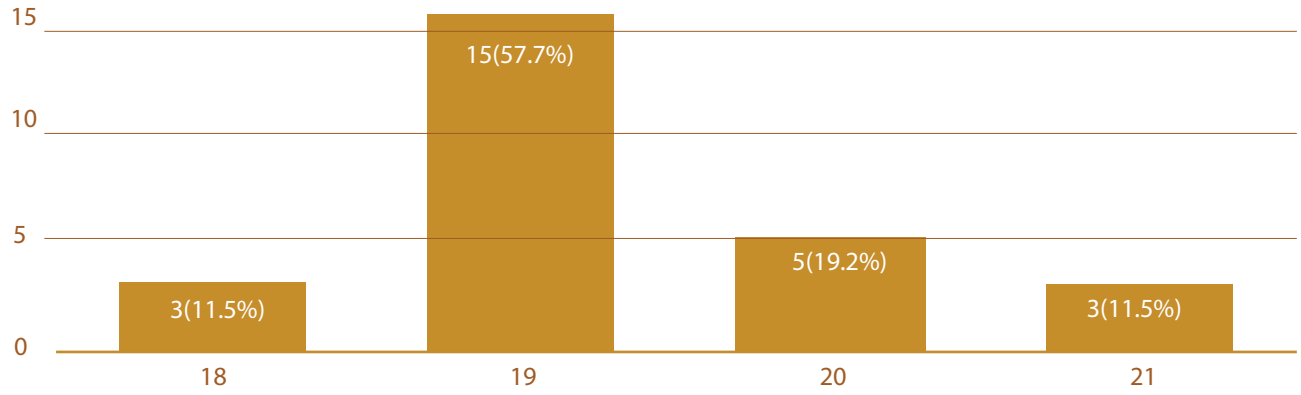


Figure 3 above reflects that about 58% of the respondents were 19 years old while 19% were over age for Grade 12 at age 20 years old. The outlier groups were the 21-year-olds and 18 olds both of which groups comprised 11.5% respectively.

About 96% had completed their Matric/National Senior Certificate Qualification. Only one learner out of the sampled group did not complete Matric. On the face of it, this looks like a very high completion rate. However, it is noteworthy that the sample population was not chosen randomly. Eight (8) of the 26 respondents that is, about 30,8% of the respondents were chosen from the database of the Top 20 Performing Social Grant Beneficiaries in the 2019 Grade 12 class. In other words, it is a given that these respondents completed their Matric. It is possible that the result could have been different had all the respondent's names been randomly chosen from a general database of all 2019 and 2020 SGB grade 12 learners. The period of study was the most severe for learners due to the Covid-19 pandemic and certainly a significant number of learners had challenges as noted in the research report- "Rapid Assessment of the Impact of Covid-19 on Grade 12".

Figure 4 below shows that most of the respondents, 92% identified themselves as Black African. A very small percentage 8% identified themselves as Coloured. There were no Indian/Asian or White grade 12 learners amongst the interviewed learners.

Figure 4: Population Group of respondents

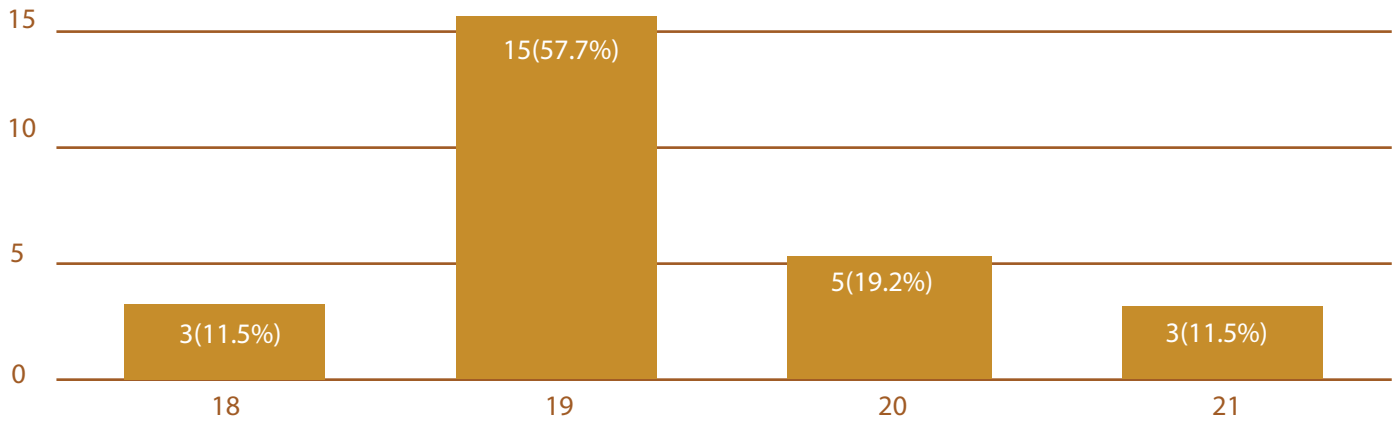
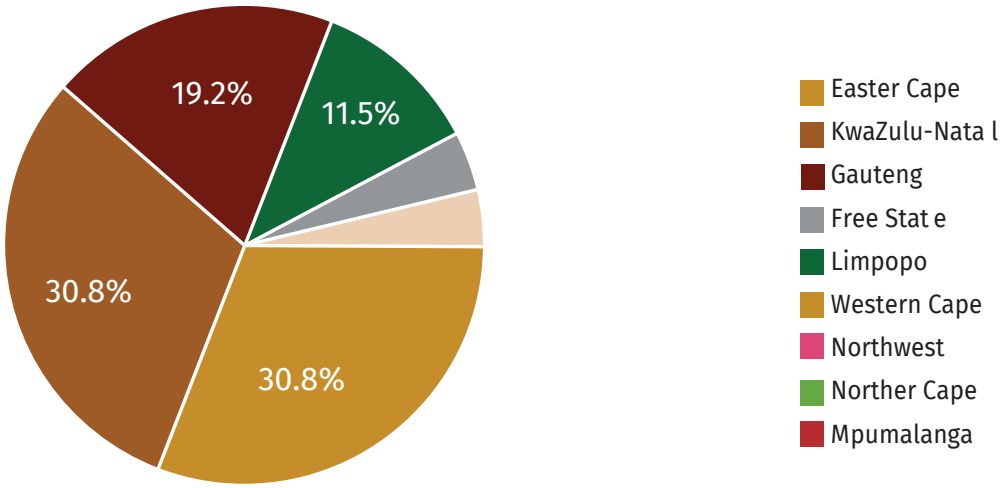


Figure 5 below depicts the proportion of respondents by province. KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape Provinces each had 30,8% of the respondents, followed by Gauteng with 19,2% while Limpopo had 11,5%. Mpumalanga and Northern Cape each had about 4% of the respondents. There were no respondents from Free State, Northwest, and Western Cape Provinces. Moreover, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and Northern Cape provinces were only included in the much smaller database of Top 20 Performing Social Grant Beneficiaries in the 2019 Grade 12 class.

Figure 4: Population Group of respondents



7.2 Household structure and support system of learners

Regarding the respondents' family situation, about 65,3% - hail from families with 6 or more family members, which is much higher than the national and Black/African average of 3.3 in the Community Survey of 2016 (Statistics South Africa, 2016). The rest of the respondents come from families with 4 or less family members. Over 80% of the respondents live in households that have at least one child under the age of 17 years. Most respondents (85%) reported that they live with their mothers while only 27% indicated that the fathers were part of the household. About 50% indicated their father was alive. The statistics suggest that most of the households are headed by the mother, and that fathers are mostly absent due to death or other reasons.

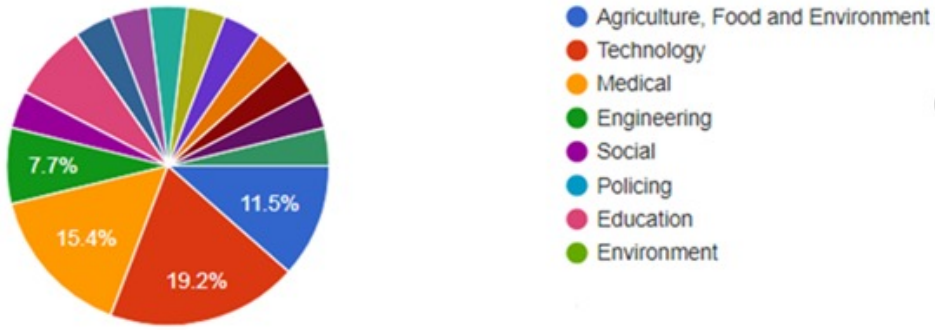
The Child Support Grant was received by the learner's parent or guardian. Other grants received by the respondents' parents or guardians included the care dependency grant (8%), disability grant (12%), foster care and old age grant (11%).

7.3 Personal Growth Path

In this section of the questionnaire respondents were asked questions designed to establish the respondent's personal growth path concerning the Post Grade 12 programme they wished to study for and the type of career they planned to pursue. It is interesting to note that the respondents who were admitted to Colleges or Universities chose to study degree or diploma programmes in diverse areas of human endeavour. These include programmes in medical science, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, education, business management, human resources management, actuarial sciences, information technology and accounting. Figure 6 below highlights some of the respondents' areas of interest. Technology and medical studies were most preferred. The medical field is considered lucrative, is familiar to most youngsters because of the exposure to medical services from the time of birth and through childhood. Opportunities for work in this field were also a consideration.

The field of technology is a driver to global growth with untapped potential that new generations are more conversant with, unlike the 1st, 2nd and 3rd industrial revolution and green revolution which were more inclined to use manual labour. The 4IR offers opportunities for self-development and employment. The response of 19% is rather low when considering the level at which the younger generations engage with technology. What is reflected in this study is of concern as it shows that there is a gap in terms of access to technology among the learners on the social support systems, which further indicate the growing digit divide in access. These learners are from the most disadvantaged populations hence technology is secondary to basic needs. Although most learners are exposed to farming as a livelihood strategy in non-urban settlements, interest in pursuing this career path was low. Agriculture is still more conventional in Africa and other developing countries and has limited growth paths especially in the context of South Africa.

Figure 6: Career preferences

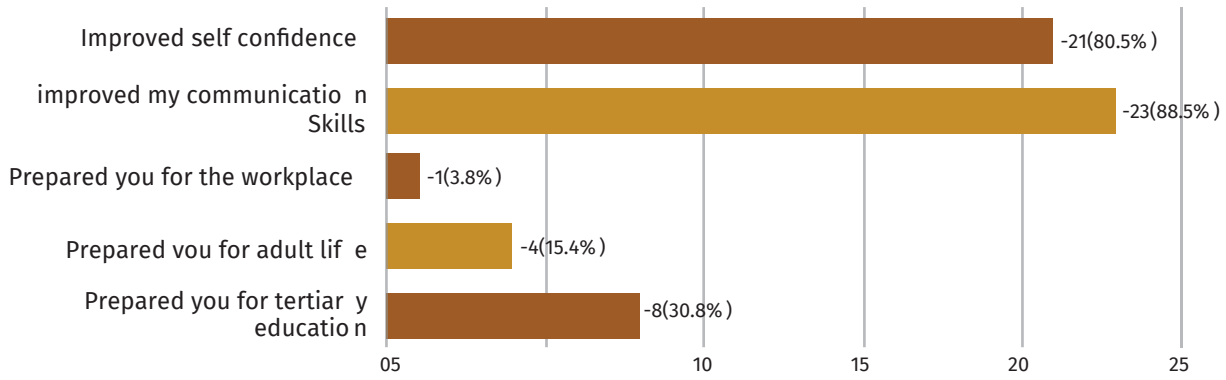


With the right interventions and exposure to career fairs, motivation and role modelling, the respondents could attain their career objectives and contribute to South African society resulting in reduction on the financial burden placed on the Department of Social Development in future generations. In the process the DSD's new mandate to "provide social protection services and lead government efforts to forge partnerships through which vulnerable individuals, groups and communities become capable and self-reliant participants in their own development," would be realised leading to the socio-economic development of South Africa. The "smart city" development strategy for rural settlements set by President Ramaphosa, would see a reduction in urban migration as the younger generations become more drivers of innovation, and business development.

7.4 Post Grade 12 trajectory

This section of the questionnaire was designed to gain insight into the experiences of Grade 12 learners as they transitioned from high school to tertiary education or into the employment sector. One question in this section asked the respondents to indicate whether they felt that high school education had prepared them for future endeavours. The learners' responses are reflected in Figure 7 below.

Figure 7: Did High School prepare learners for tertiary and work life

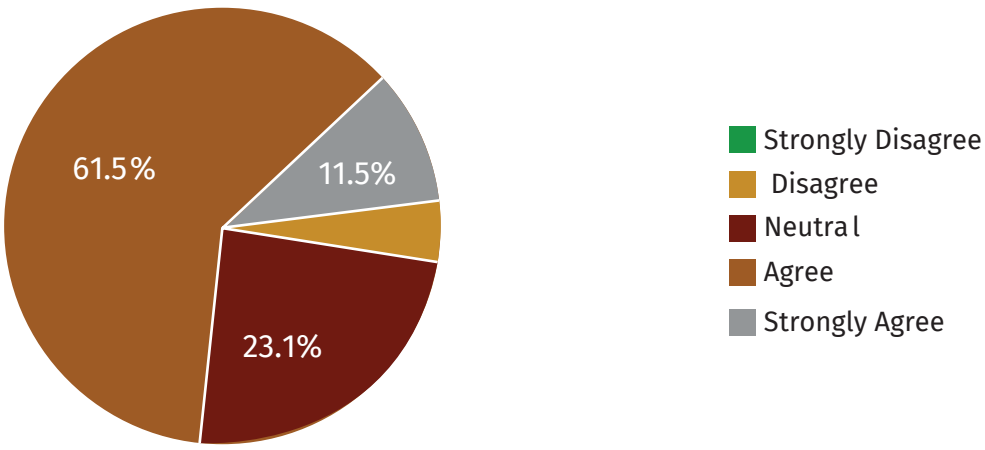


Generally, all the respondents felt that high school education added value to their lives. While over 80% of the learners indicated that they felt high school education had improved their self-confidence and improved their communication skills, there were some interesting responses in relation to whether high school education prepared learners for tertiary education. Only 31% felt that their high school life had prepared them for the rigors of tertiary education. The rest had other views. Some felt that although high school education had improved their self-confidence and communication skills, it had not adequately prepared them for tertiary education. A couple of the learners highlighted the lack of training in computer skills at high school as a problem. They indicated that when they started at the university, teaching and learning was conducted on computers, but they did not have any computer skills and had to start learning computers from scratch. It must be noted that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, most university teaching and learning took place online in 2020 and 2021. This presented challenges for learners without computer skills.

One respondent studying for an engineering degree mentioned that the National Senior Certificate education did not prepare them as well as the Cambridge Advanced Level system. She mentioned that in class she found that her colleagues who had done Cambridge 'A' Level, were better prepared for some of the courses than she was. There is a gap in what the current system provides and the landing platform at tertiary levels. Most tertiary institutions have courses for Maths and English language and sometimes science to close the gap in knowledge among learners coming from various educational systems. Self-learning programmes are also available via online platforms e.g., YOUTUBE and several learning platforms that are free of charge.

When asked whether teachers provided support, about learners 84,6% of the respondents answered in the affirmative with over 30% agreeing strongly with that sentiment. About 73% indicated that their high school teachers continued to encourage them beyond Grade 12. A small percentage, about 4% only categorically stated that their teachers did not support them as per Figure 8 below. Teachers are a critical component of learner development and are seen as role models in communities. Their roles go beyond technological aspects of educational materials. Some learners embraced them as parents, sisters, brothers, uncles and aunties or guardians hence they have a huge impact on future outcomes. The negative can also be true as conduct of some teachers may discourage or mislead learners. This study however shows that the positive aspect of teacher influence dominated.

Figure 8: Support given by teachers/educators



About 34% of respondents indicated that their friends played a role in influencing their careers choices. Most of the respondents (54%) were ambivalent about the role of peers in the development. This suggests that for most of the respondents, friends did not play a significant role in shaping their careers, which is worrisome as peers are expected to share information and motivate their school mates. This could be an indicator of a lack of exposure and knowledge of the local and global drivers; organized structures that enable learners to have meaningful platforms for sharing information such as debate clubs; organized trips to industries; and engagements with school alumni that are playing a significant role in community or local or national development among others.

All the learners agreed with the statement that family, parents, or caregivers supported them during their high school education in many ways. Incidentally, one respondent who faced challenges in the transition to university life made the following comment:

"I was used to living with my family. Going to university was the first time I got to be alone by myself. Therefore, when I was experiencing some challenges at university, I did not have anybody that I could talk to. Calling home and speaking on the phone is not the same as having someone to talk to face to face about your challenges. I wish there could be a program to assist students transitioning from high school to university who may not have someone to talk to about the challenges they are facing."

This suggests that family, parents, or caregivers play a key supportive role in the lives of learners without which support learners would struggle to attain their career goals.

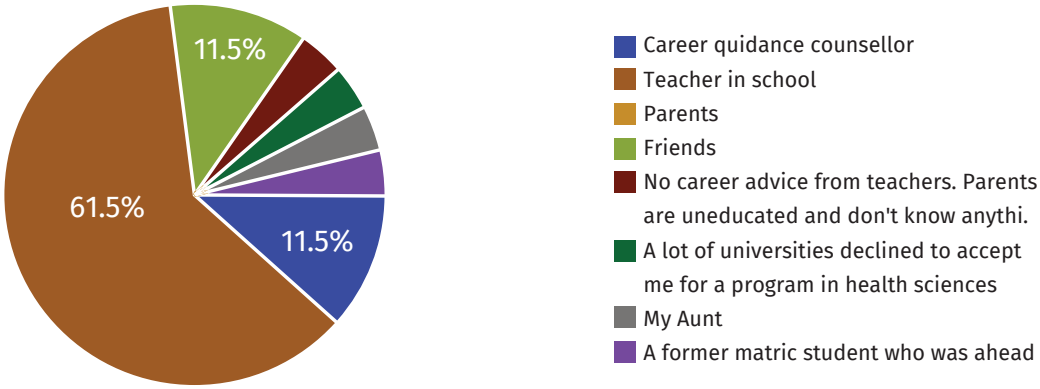
Furthermore, all respondents agreed with the statement that social grant support was beneficial for them. One responded said the cash transfer was of great help to her in meeting transport costs as she lived quite a distance from her high school, otherwise she would have failed to complete her Matric education. Her sentiments are confirmed by the response regarding school attendance, as 35% indicated that they never missed classes while 40 % rarely missed classes. Less than 25% sometimes missed classes for various reasons, this needs more prompting. Only one (1) respondent indicated that he missed school more often although reasons were not elaborated on even after probing. Generally, the respondents were conscientious about attending classes and valued education as a benchmark to their development. All the learners indicated that they did not take up a job while they were still in school. Hence, they were focused on their learning in that time.

One learner that did not complete Matric indicated that the reason she dropped from school was that schoolwork was hard. Dropouts occur especially where support is limited or other reasons associated with societal, cultural or delinquency. However, no learner should be left behind and loss of one candidate is already one too many. When they do not complete high school education, learners fall into the category of unskilled workforce and hence struggle to secure meaningful employment or run successful businesses.

7.5 Decision Making

Figure 9 below shows the sources of career advice that Grade 12 learners turned to when they were deciding on what to do.

Figure 9: Sources of advice on career choices



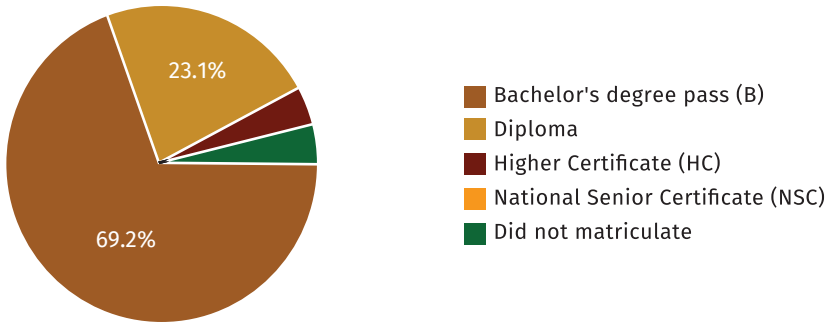
As can be seen from Figure 9, teachers played a prominent role in advising Grade 12 learners on what to do after Matric. 62% of the respondents received career advice from their teachers. Career guidance counsellors played a very insignificant role as only 11% of respondents indicated that they had interactions with these. This is contrary to their roles as careers counsellors, the SGBs are the most disadvantaged and therefore more meaningful interventions through career counselling. Friends also provided some guidance to peers in choosing career pathways, the level was low at 11%. Other respondents indicated that they received advice from an aunt, a former Matric learner at their school. Another 9% indicated that they received no career advice from anybody, they basically conducted their own research and chanted their own pathway. Notably, none of the respondents reported having received career guidance from their parents. In fact one respondent said something to the effect that:

'our parents are uneducated; they don't know anything about these things so they can't give any career advice.'

This is already reflected in various reports on demographics of grant-supported households, that parents and guardians have low levels of education or are not educated due to deprivations created by the apartheid system and hence are not able to support or guide the learners in any career path. Apartheid created high levels of inequality and adult unemployment still present in the country as racial segregation served to inhibit education, health, income and employment opportunities for non-white South Africans (Child 2016). This generation of learners are responsible for effecting a change in parent -learner relations as they have received support to take them to the highest levels of educations.

Figure 10 below depicts the 2019 and 2020 Grade 12 results received by the sampled SGBs. 69.2% of the survey respondents had a bachelor's degree pass while 23% had a diploma pass, basically 83% pass which is remarkable for learners living under conditions of bare necessities. It is important to keep in mind that these statistics do not reflect the general SGBs Grade 12 pass rate across the country, whose results are shown in section 5 above. As mentioned earlier, the survey sample was drawn from two databases that are limited in terms of their qualitative and geographical reach in that they do not include Grade 12 results for all the provinces. Moreover, the databases are focused on Grade 12 learners that were grant recipients. In addition, one of the databases related to top performing grant recipients. Hence, there is an element of bias in that learners from that database are most likely to have obtained a bachelor's degree pass since they are already characterised as top performers. The national database therefore holds the most accurate reflections of pass rates for the 2019-2020 beneficiaries on DSD support.

Figure 10: Pass levels following Matric examinations



Most of the respondents (75%) applied to university for further studies after Grade 12. About 21% applied to Technical Vocational Educational Training (TVET) Colleges. Since leaving high school over 76% of the students of the respondents have undertaken some form of education or training while 19.2% have not done so. Figure 11 below shows that about 73% of the respondents were offered places at university to study for a bachelor's degree and a small proportion a place for diploma studies (8%). About 15.4% did not get admission to either a university or college. Of those that have or are undertaking some education or training, 54% have done so with some form of government funding through the NSFAS programme or Internship programmes.

The range of degree or diploma study programmes that the respondents chose to study is diverse. It includes programmes in mechanical engineering, architectural technology, information technology, computer science, actuarial sciences, Bachelor of Arts General Studies as well as accounting. Their motivations for choosing the study programmes that they did are also diverse. Below is a sample of some of the respondents' answers as to why they chose the study programme that they did:

"The job opportunities in the field and the range of interesting work that actuaries do"

"I was good at science in school, and I was one of the top achievers so I felt like this was something I could handle"

"Advice from a former Matric student at my school"

"Electronic Engineering was not the program of my choice, it was rather a compromise after I failed to get admission to health sciences at many universities"

"I had to choose HR Management as a fall-back plan because I failed to get admission to nursing due to not attaining the required Matric results"

"So that I can become an actuary and have my own firm one day that do consulting and also specialize in risk management"

It appears that 62% received some kind of funding for their studies while a quarter of the respondents had no funding. About 54% of the respondents relied on the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) for funding their university or college education. This figure could be higher because as at the time the survey was conducted some of the students indicated they had applied for NSFAS funding, but they had not yet received a response as to whether they would be funded or not. Other sources of funding that respondents are reliant on included the Thuthuka bursary fund for students studying to become Chartered Accountants (5.3%) as well as the South African Actuaries Development Program (5.3%).

7.6 Economic Activity since Leaving School

Since leaving high school 80,7% of the respondents are studying at a university, college, or other training institution. Some of the respondents who are now at college or university did experience a period of unemployment soon after completing high albeit for a short period. This situation arose either, because the learner was not admitted to university or college straight away or, they were admitted but were not funded by NSFAS in the year they had hoped to enter college or university. However, such students eventually enrolled at a college or university, so their status is that they are in training. About One in every 6 Post-Matric learners (15%) are currently not working and only one respondent was employed as a semi-skilled worker.

7.7 Work-Related Education and Training

Given that not many of the respondents were employed, none of them underwent any on-the-job training. Surprisingly, about 60% of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with their current economic situation, 40% were very dissatisfied with their current economic situation, and indicated some measure of desperation. Some of the respondents expounded on their dissatisfaction as follows:

"I am not satisfied with my current economic situation. My father passed away in December 2021. I have no financial assistance from NSFAS to help fund my studies so I am struggling financially even though my mother is trying her best"

"NSFAS takes time to respond whether they will fund you or not but meanwhile one is supposed to register at college and start studying. This brings about severe economic pressure"

"I am not satisfied with my current economic situation because I have financial challenges. NSFAS funding is not enough to cover my needs"

"Although I got a diploma pass at Matric I have not been accepted to any college and I cannot get a job. I have approached a number of shops in my area but there are no jobs for me"

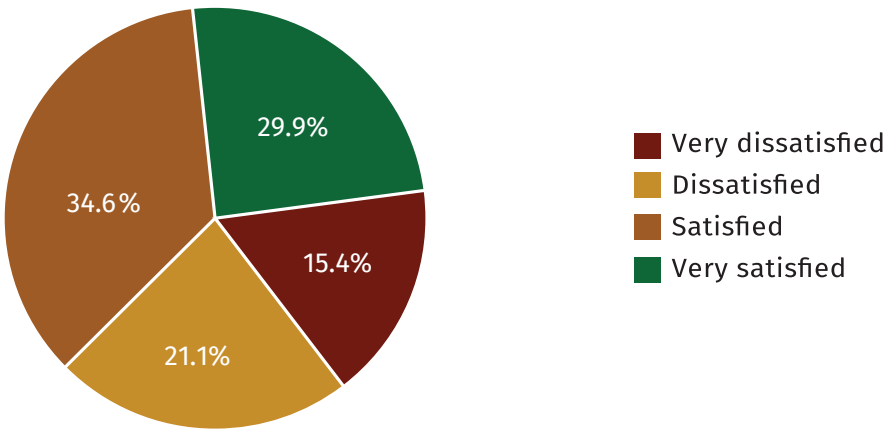
"I feel my hope of becoming something just waning away. I did not get accepted to College"

"I am just sitting at home. Even though I had a diploma pass at Matric Majuba Tvet College did not accept me. They say they do not have space. Because of my financial situation, I cannot afford to apply to colleges far from my home area. Further, there are no jobs"

"I have attended several interviews but I am still waiting for responses and do not know how to follow up"

Figure 12 below reflects the level of the respondents' satisfaction or otherwise with their career progression so far. 62% expressed satisfaction with their career progression while 23.1% were dissatisfied and 15.4% were very dissatisfied with their career progression as also reflected by the status on economic outlook of the respondents.

Figure 12: Level of satisfaction among Post Matric learners in relation



Main reasons for dissatisfaction with career progression ranged from:

- failure to enter university/college for studies,
- having to settle for a compromised study program because they were not offered their first choice of study program,
- not having the financial means to pay for tertiary education at university,
- not getting a response from NSFAS concerning their application for funding, and
- not completing Matric education.

The respondents also highlighted the interventions they would like to see in order to address the challenges they face. Some of the interventions are presented as part of the recommendations made in the paragraph below.

As noted by Sen (2004) education, longevity, and income are vital for human development. These aspects are central for child development specifically, but also translate into positive well-being effects in the later life stages of an individual. The challenges associated with South African education are well documented (Child 2016). Improvements in teacher competencies, improvement in subject and curriculum knowledge, management of schools and educational offices are critical for transformational change in education in the context of 4th industrial revolution.

7.8 Recommendations

Despite the limitations of this study, which are alluded to in the preceding discussion, this study provides useful insights into some of the challenges faced by Post-Matric learners and their career progression. Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that:

R1: A more comprehensive study should be undertaken to gain in-depth knowledge and understanding of the challenges faced by Post-Matric SGBs across the country. Such a study should track the career progression of learners from when they leave high school through university and into their early working life.

R2: DSD may consider working together with the NSFAS by linking social grant information to NSFAS funding with a view to streamlining the NSFAS funding application process to facilitate a smooth transition from high school to tertiary education by ensuring continuity of financial support to needy learners. This will ensure the significant investment made by Social Development Sector in the lives of learners from primary school through to high school will not go to waste because deserving learners fail to get assistance to fund university or college education. In addition, the digital support should be provided especially in rural areas to enable learners to access NSFAS online application platforms.

R3: Methods of delivering career guidance services to grade 12 learners should be explored, especially in rural areas. Findings from the study suggest grade 12 learners particularly those in rural areas have very little, if any career guidance. Most are reliant on their teachers for guidance. If the teachers are not well informed or are not able or willing to assist the learners for whatever reason the learners in question will have to figure things out by themselves. This is not ideal because not many grade 12 learners in the rural areas have sufficient exposure to the working world to enable them to make informed choices concerning their career paths.

R4: Strengthening support services for grade 12 learners to assist them with university application, including the provision of data and information communication technologies to ensure learners are able to make the necessary application should be prioritized. In this regard, DSD could make use of its social workers and child and youth care workers within communities to deliver the proposed service.

R5: Collaborations with institutions of higher learning to ensure that the latter offer counselling services, including psychosocial support to the learners should be strengthened. This will ensure that learners who are finding university or college education difficult to cope with have somebody to talk to about the challenges they are facing.

R6: It is crucial to ensure that Grade 12 learners receive computer training while in school. Covid-19 and the attendant lockdown caused the delivery of university or college education to move online hence university or college students had to adjust quickly to that style of teaching and learning. Learners without computer skills struggle in this new online environment.

R7: Linking learners to online platforms related to work, training and internship opportunities.

7.9 Overall summary of the study

This qualitative study set out to understand the challenges and progression paths of Post Matric learners who received support from DSD through social development programmes over the past few years. The study was limited in nature and geographic reach. Nevertheless, the findings highlighted that learner face a myriad of challenges in transitioning from high school to university, college or working life. The challenges include poor information communication technologies which makes it difficult for the learners to apply for admission to university online or once accepted, to register online. Lack of funding to finance university or college education is also a major obstacle for students. Although there is the NSFAS to assist needy learners, there appears to be some glitches in the processing of applications. This results in learners not being able register for their study programs on time, struggling financially during their studies or not being funded at all. In terms of career progression, it is heartening to see that despite the odds being against them, some learners supported through one other DSD social programmes are thriving in various fields of study including engineering, information technology, health sciences, accounting and actuarial sciences. Admittedly, not all learners supported through DSD's programmes are making good progress along their chosen career path. Some have fallen off or stalled on their career path for one reason or another.

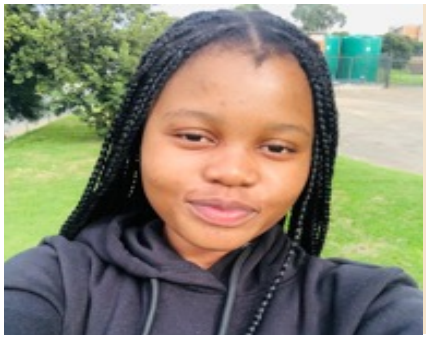
The DSD impact on societal development should be measured by a non-return of former beneficiaries to the list of dependants when they enter work life or have their own families, rather they should be in occupations that enable them to contribute meaningfully to fiscus as employees or businesspersons, integration in the local, national, and international platforms.

Notwithstanding this, there is evidence that the DSD social support programmes including the various grants have a positive impact in the lives of learners as noted in many research publications which allude to the fact that the CSG has positively impacted education and health capabilities of children in South Africa. What is important is for the department to gain more insight into the challenges faced by learners so it can enhance its social support programmes to ensure that a lot more learners are able to progress satisfactorily on their chosen career path and become self-reliant. In this regard, a broader study to investigate pathways, bottlenecks and challenges faced by learners their progression on their career paths and opportunities for streamlining or preparing learners prior to high school exit would be beneficial.

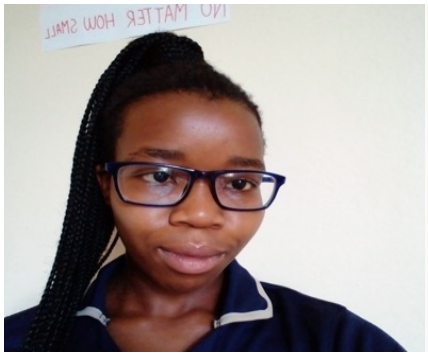
Top Achievers 2021 Grade 12 Learners Receiving Social Protection Services

Bonga Msomi
Phendukani Full Service High School
Child Support Grant, Kwa Zulu Natal
Studying Bachelor of Business Science in Actuarial Science at University Of Cape Town
NSFAS Bursary
Netball, journaling, reading

Sibongile Sithole
Harry Oppenheimer, Limpopo
Child Support Grant
Studying MBCHB at University of Stellenbosch
NSFAS Bursary
Hiking, Running and Ready



Morongwa Chepape
Derek Kobe Technical High School, Limpopo
Child Support Grant
Studying MBCHB at University of Witwatersrand
NSFAS Bursary
Playing chess, softball & hiking



Zimase Sigede
Merlewood, Kwa Zulu Natal
Child Support Grant
Studying Medicine at University of Pretoria
NSFAS Bursary
Hobbies : Reading

Mhlengi Shange
Menzi High School, Kwa-Zulu Natal
Child Support Grant
Studying BSC Chemical Engineering at University of Cape Town
Private Bursary
Hobbies : Playing Pool game and listening to Soul Music

8. NSFAS funding in supporting poor and vulnerable youth

This section presents the number of poor and vulnerable learners who applied and successfully attained the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) funding to further their Post-school education and training. Through the partnership between DSD and NSFAS, the number of learners presented in the table below has not been subjected to double means-testing to assess their financial eligibility, and their family household income assessment has been waived as they emanate from households that receive social grants. Interpretation of results shown below should take cognisance that they are not limited to those who sat for their Grade 12 examination in 2021. Instead, they reflect all applicants in 2021/2022, including those that may have completed Grade 12 in previous years.

As reflected in the table 15 and 16 below, the number of SGBs funded to further their studies in post school education and training institutions have increased substantially over the years. This shows the extent to which identification and targeting of potential eligible students has improved, thus enhancing poor and vulnerable learners' access to institutions of higher learning.

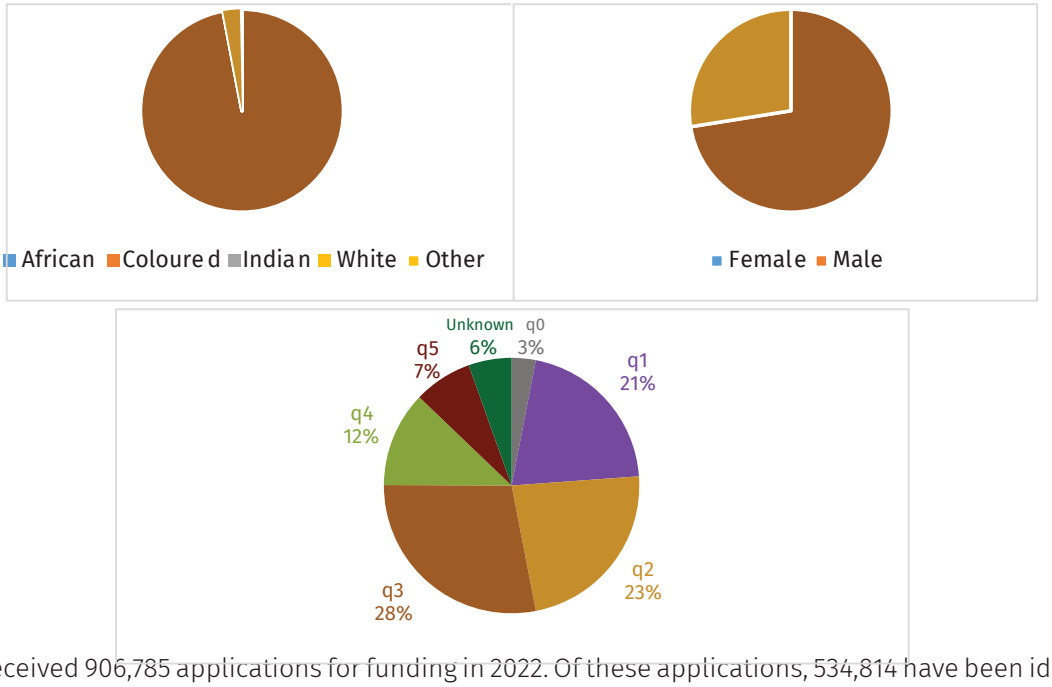
Table 15: Number of Social Grant Beneficiaries provisionally funded per province

Province	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Eastern Cape	3,219	7,879	12,816	34,678	53,377	60,287
Free State	1,846	4,371	6,600	18,074	28,161	31,431
Gauteng	4,917	13,393	20,672	58,220	88,076	95,182
KwaZulu-Natal	6,728	18,456	29,533	85,890	130,890	129,179
Limpopo	3,536	9,288	15,765	44,386	71,953	74,457
Mpumalanga	2,071	5,488	9,125	25,101	43,907	49,116
North-West	866	3,043	4,980	13,047	23,576	24,142
Northern Cape	242	799	1,725	3,485	5,470	5,339
Western Cape	1,371	4,339	6,992	19,562	26,640	25,227
Unknown		440	11	2,607		
Total	24,796	67,496	108,219	305,050	472,050	494,360

Table 16: Number of Social Grant Beneficiaries funded per province

Province	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Eastern Cape	2,748	5,216	7,789	20,621	26,062
Free State	1,512	3,464	4,685	10,964	13,209
Gauteng	4,127	10,039	11,563	36,959	36,692
KwaZulu-Natal	5,325	12,951	15,098	47,398	52,680
Limpopo	2,862	6,889	8,134	24,367	28,090
Mpumalanga	1,683	4,075	4,860	14,790	18,095
North-West	658	2,239	2,959	7,908	9,990
Northern Cape	181	597	1,304	2,437	2,994
Western Cape	1,048	3,607	4,939	13,192	15,042
Unknown		424	11	1,725	
Total	20,144	49,501	61,342	180,361	202,854

Figure 13: Distribution of 2022 NSFAS provisionally funded learners



The NSFAS received 906,785 applications for funding in 2022. Of these applications, 534,814 have been identified as social grant beneficiaries (SGBs) or alternatively referred to as South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) beneficiaries. A total of 637,371 have been provisionally funded, with 77.6% being Social Grant beneficiaries. This shows a long and sustained commitment by the South African Government to support learners from a disadvantaged background in accessing education. This is further evidence by the breakdown of NSFAS funded applicants by population group as depicted in Figure 13 above, where almost 97% SGBs provisionally funded applicants were African, compared to 2.6% of Coloured and less that 1% for White and Indian applicants (NSFAS, 2021). Important to note is that funded beneficiaries are predominantly female and comprising learners coming from the poorest communities who attended Quintile 1 to 3 schools.

9. Conclusion and recommendations

A substantial body of evidence has emerged which proves that social grants are a valuable tool for improving children's situation in South Africa. This report adds to this literature as it presents the 2021 Grade 12 Social Grant Beneficiaries' academic performance in the NSC examinations. The impact of Covid-19 is evident through a general decline in the pass rate for all NSC learners, included SGBs in selected provinces.

The report provides an opportunity to consolidate the existing evidence on the effects of grants on children's educational outcomes in South Africa. It demonstrates that 496 038 SGBs wrote the NSC examinations and 366 851 passed, reflecting a 74.0% pass rate. The significant effect of social grants (alone) as well as cash plus interventions is illustrated by the different pass rates amongst the active SGBs (86.0% pass rate) vs. inactive SGBs (71.0%). It is also shown that SGBs are passing their Grade 12 with admission into Bachelor Studies (31.9%), Diploma Studies (27.2%), and Higher Certificate Studies (9.4%), with some beneficiaries obtaining distinctions. The potential effect of cash transfer with a care component is shown by the pass rate of the NACCW programmes, which is 72%.

Based on this report's results, it is recommended that more significant effects can be expected in the future on educational attainment and improved labour market outcomes, which will, in turn, assist Government in its fight against poverty. However, for this to occur, social grants will need to form part of an integrated social protection strategy that considers both children and their caregivers' wellbeing.
It is recommended that further work should look into the:

- Developing linking administrative data systems and creating digital platforms to ensure young people access work and on the job training and learning opportunities is critical for long term benefit of the social support system
- Tracing the long-term impact of Covid-19 on the 2021 Grade 12 learners as they enter tertiary education. Support in coping with the long impact is critical to mitigating possible adverse outcomes on performance at the tertiary education level.
- Throughput rates of SGBs in primary and high school. This can be achieved through the use of an age analysis as learners in Grade 12 should be either 18 or 19 years old if they progress through the schooling system without failing a grade and having appropriate interventions across the social sector to address drop outs;
- Throughput rates of learners receiving Social Protection Services at tertiary institutions as well as their career pathing.
- The extension of child-specific grants until learners complete their Grade 12, just as the FCG can be extended to the age of 21 or until the child ends secondary school as a large proportion of learners complete Grade 12 after the age of 18 years.
- Developing and strengthening the collection of real-time information on the services provided to low-income families and their children should be prioritized so that we can pick missed opportunities and exposure to possible risk factors such as abuse with a build in referral system.
- Explore the possibility of including data on Learners receiving Social Behaviour Change programmes and other HIV related programmes.
- Assess psychosocial support provided at tertiary institutions to students who are beneficiaries of Social Protection Services

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