



higher education  
& training

Department:  
Higher Education and Training  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



**SSACI**

# Report on the Tracking of Newly Qualified Artisans

*September 2016*

*Prepared by Bina Akoobhai, Ken Duncan & Dorothy Mogane*

## Contents

Background	
Sample and methodology	
Findings	
N	
M	
p	
r	
t	
y	
r	
y	
U	
J	
I	
L	
p	

## Background

The National Artisan Development Support Centre (NADSC) was established by the Department of Higher Education and Training in June 2012 with a mandate to collect, collate and analyse detailed, accurate and up-to-date data on artisan training and development. To this end, the NADSC operates a central, web-based database into which all available data on the registration, progression and assessment of apprentices is entered.

In 2016, the Swiss-South African Cooperation Initiative, a non-governmental organisation active in the field of technical and vocational education and training, was engaged to assist NADSC with three activities related to the data:

- i. **Analysis of data on the NADSC system** to identify and explore patterns and trends in artisan development and employment
- ii. **Tracking the progression through their training and development programmes of representative samples of apprentices on the database**, to determine typical rates of progress within different programmes and identify blockages, detours and loops within those programmes
- iii. **A tracer study of recently-certified artisans**, to establish their whereabouts in the labour market and typical employment trajectories

This report is on the third of these activities – namely, the tracer study of recently certified artisans.

## The Sample and the Methodology

As originally designed, the study was to comprise telephonic interviews with the 5'000 most recently qualified individuals from all provinces on the NADSC artisan database, working backwards in time from March 2015. The interview protocol, which focuses on the respondent's employment trajectory since qualifying as an artisan, is appended to this report

Telephonic interviews were chosen as a means of collecting data as the response rate in this method is usually higher than postal, e-mail or online surveys. The interview was kept to a maximum of ten minutes, so as to not take the individuals away from work for a prolonged period of time. This limited the number of questions which could be asked. The interviews were conducted out of the NADSC call centre during October–November 2015, using the attached script.

In practice, the intended sample size could not be met. Although well over 10'000 candidates pass their trade tests every year, most of the contact details on the NADSC database are either outdated, incomplete or otherwise inaccurate, so that records as far back as 2011 had to be mined in order to get close to the required number of potential interviewees. A total of 4'151 names and contact details were thus obtained, all of whom were phoned three times. From this, a total of 1'628 individuals, or 39.2% of the sample, agreed to be interviewed.

As shown in *Table 1*, almost two thirds of those interviewed had been registered on the NADSC database by INDLELA, the national trade test centre in Olifantsfontein, Gauteng. This preponderance is a very poor reflection on the completeness and accuracy of the records submitted by the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), which collectively enrol several times more apprentices, and hence candidates for trade testing, than does INDLELA. It suggests that the SETAs are either not collecting all the required information from apprentices at the time of registering their contracts or are not keeping their records up to date in the three or more years that elapse between initial registration and trade testing. INDLELA

does not have this problem. Its candidates for testing are almost all ‘walk-ins’, i.e. people who present themselves for trade testing without prior notification or registration. The administrator simply captures the applicant’s current details on the day of testing and usually has no need to update them thereafter. But INDLELA’s administrative advantage in this regard does not absolve the SETAs from their responsibility to maintain accurate and up-to-date records.

Table 1: Breakdown of sample and interviewees by registering agency

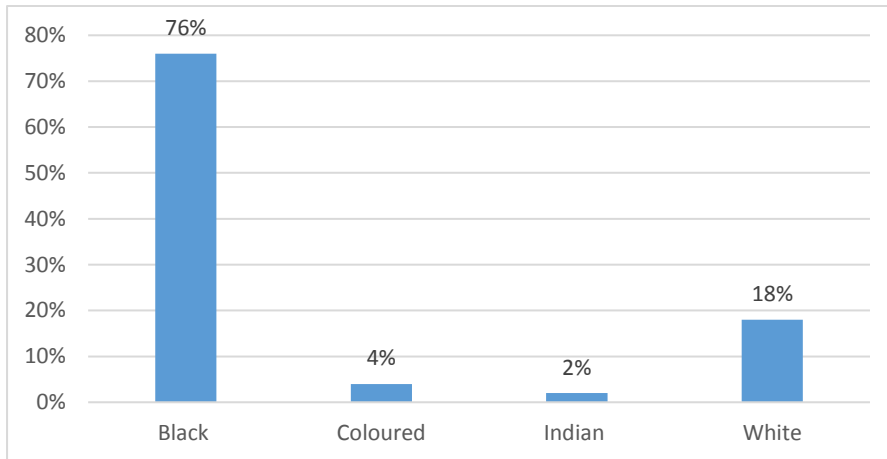
<b>Registering agency</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Interviewed</b>
INDLELA	2 421	1 023
AgriSETA	42	13
CETA	2	0
EWSETA	771	219
FP&M SETA	10	3
H&WSETA	3	1
LGSETA	275	154
MerSETA	27	0
MQA	246	105
SASSETA	114	22
Services SETA	164	81
TETA	76	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4151</b>	<b>1628</b>

## Findings

### Ethnicity, Gender and Disability

As shown in *Figure 1* below, 1'237 (76%) of the 1'628 individuals interviewed identified themselves as African, 293 (18%) as white, 65 (4%) as Coloured and 33 (2%) as Indian.

*Figure 1: Ethnic Distribution*



In terms of gender distribution, 1'416 (87%) of the interviewees were men and 212 (13%) women.

11% indicated they had a disability but were not asked to specify its nature.

These ratios reflect the pattern seen in enrolment and completion statistics generally and suggest that, in terms of these criteria, the sample was demographically representative of all artisans who have been trained in the past five years or so.<sup>1</sup>

### Geographic Distribution

Half of those interviewed live in Gauteng Province with the remainder distributed across the other eight provinces. This preponderance of respondents from Gauteng is a direct result of the fact that, as noted in Section 2 above, the research had to rely heavily on INDLELA records, which mostly comprise Gauteng residents.

*Table 2: Distribution by Province*

<b>Province</b>	<b>%</b>
Western Cape	3%
Eastern Cape	3%
Northern Cape	1%
Free State	4%
KwaZulu-Natal	7%
North West	6%
Gauteng	50%

<sup>1</sup> DHET/SSACI (2016)

Mpumalanga	10%
Limpopo	8%
Unspecified	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

### The Trades

Table 3 below shows the distribution of the interviewees across the 15 priority trades identified by the DHET, compared with the total number of people who qualified in those trades between 2011 and 2015.

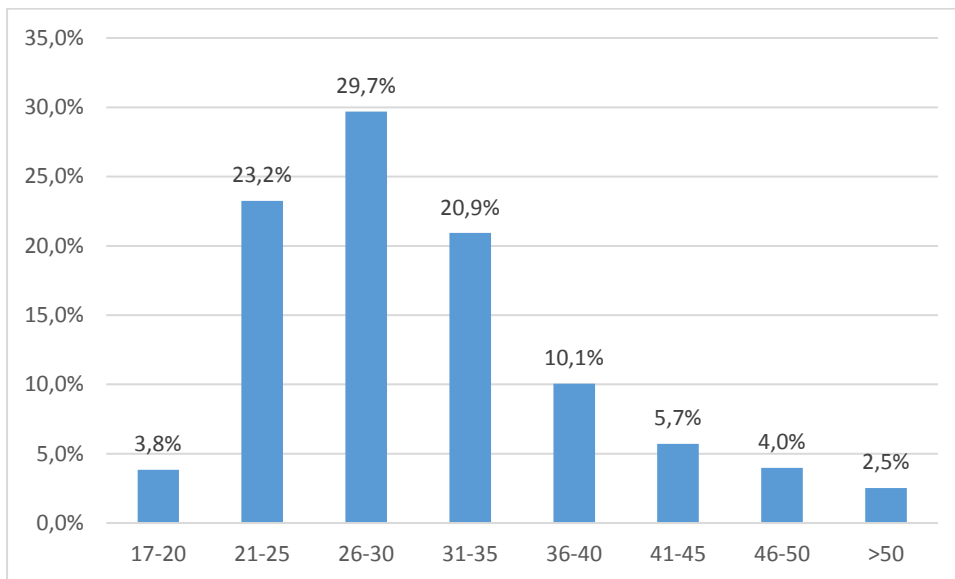
Table 3: Distribution across trades

<b>Trade</b>	<b>No. interviewed</b>	<b>Total Completions 2011-15</b>
Electricians	735	11 538
Boilermakers	177	3 516
Plumbers	129	1 314
Welders	115	3 876
Diesel mechanics	88	3 048
Fitters & turners	39	5 373
Millwrights	27	2 760
Riggers	22	1 804
Carpenters & joiners	13	284
Motor (petrol) mechanics	11	2 915
Instrument technicians	10	1 078
Toolmakers	3	358
Air-conditioning & refrigeration technicians	1	244
Metal fabricators / sheet metalworkers	0	317
Auto electricians	0	0
<b>Total in 15 priority trades</b>	<b>1 370</b>	<b>38 425</b>
Total Interviewed	1 628	
% of interviewees in priority trades	84%	

### Age Distribution

Figure 2 below shows the age distribution of recently-qualified artisans at the time they commenced their apprenticeships.

Figure 2: Age of individuals at start of apprenticeship



It is striking that the overwhelming majority (96%) of the interviewees were over the age of 21 when they entered their apprenticeships. They were therefore out of school for at least two years and usually much longer before commencing their training. Apprenticeships are typically thought of as a pathway to skilled employment for recent secondary-school-leavers. In South Africa, they are in theory open to Grade 9 graduates, though in practice employers usually require a Grade 12 pass. This graph clearly shows that apprenticeships in this country are not, in fact, catering to that population but rather to a much older one.

This may be due to a number of factors, including:

- A lack of career guidance and information about apprenticeships available to secondary school students and their parents
- The perceived unattractiveness of the artisan trades amongst young people
- Unclear or complicated application processes for entry into an apprenticeship
- The practice, common amongst employers, of recruiting apprentices from people who have already had some technical training and are not recent school-leavers, as the latter are widely perceived to require a great deal of supplementary training and acculturation to the world of work.

Whatever the reasons, it is cause for concern that so few 17-20 year-olds are accessing apprenticeships because it indicates that, in most cases, there is a lengthy gap between leaving school and entering artisanal training.

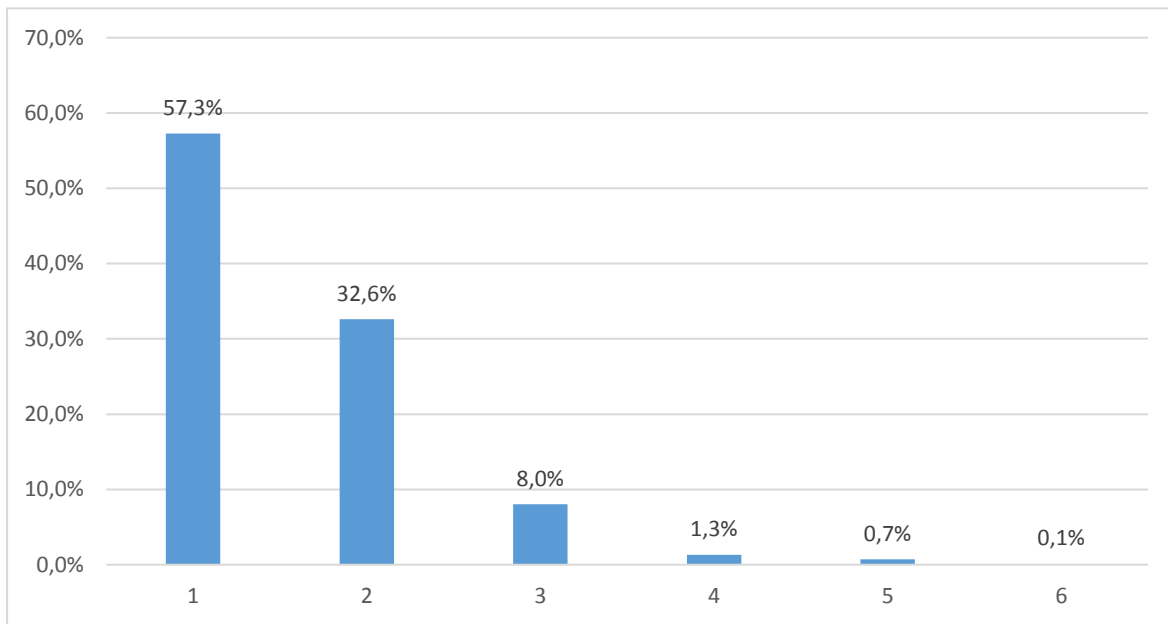
### Trade Test Pass Rate

As shown by *Figure 3* below, more than half the interviewees said that they passed the trade test on their first attempt, with around a third having to do it twice and a very small percentage coming through on subsequent attempts. This encouraging indication of a high success rate in apprenticeships was also found in earlier research<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>2</sup> DHET/SSACI (2016)

**Figure 3:** Number of times trade test was attempted before passing



### Delays in Certification

Interviewees were asked how long they had to wait between obtaining their trade test results and receiving formal certification as an artisan from the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO). Only 12% of them (195) could actually answer this question. Of these, more than half had received their certificates within a month of passing the test, about a third had to wait up to two months for their certificates and 5% had not yet received them at all. This is concerning as employers require a copy of the certificate when individuals apply for a job.

**Table 4:** Time elapsed between obtaining results and certificate

No. of Days	%
<5	9,9%
6-10	16,9%
11-20	21,8%
21-30	10,4%
31-40	9,0%
41-50	6,2%
>50	20,2%
Not yet received	5,3%
Total	100,0%

### **Current Employment status**

As shown in *Table 6* below, at the time of their interviews 73% of the respondents were in wage-employment, 6% were self-employed and 21% unemployed.



Table 5: *Employment status*

<b>Employment status</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
Wage-employment	1 183	73%
Self-employment	102	6%
Unemployed	343	21%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 628</b>	<b>100%</b>

These figures are impressive. The employment rate for matriculants and TVET college graduates alike is about 50%<sup>3</sup> and over 80% for university graduates. So apprenticeships are producing a relatively high rate of employment for successful completers. This is especially remarkable because the sectors of the economy where most artisans are to be found – manufacturing, construction and mining - have been shrinking for some time. Yet job prospects for a newly-qualified artisan are almost as good as for a graduate from tertiary education.

As shown in Table 6 below, both wage-employment and self-employment are higher amongst artisans who presented themselves for testing at INDLELA than amongst their counterparts from SETA-supported apprenticeships.

Table 6: *Employment status of INDLELA and SETA Artisans*

	<b>INDLELA</b>	<b>SETAs</b>
Employed by company	75%	68%
Self Employed	9%	2%
Unemployed	16%	30%
Total	100%	100%

One would certainly expect the rate of self-employment to be higher amongst the INDLELA cohort because many ‘walk-ins’ have worked for more than one employer in the years prior to being tested, have often had interruptions in their training and do not have a job waiting for them thereafter. So they are of necessity more entrepreneurial than people who have come through a three- or four-year continuous apprenticeship with a single, SETA-funded employer. The higher rate of wage-employment amongst the INDLELA cohort is more difficult to account for but may simply indicate that this group is ‘hungrier’ and therefore more persistent in job-seeking than the SETA cohort.

### **Patterns in wage-employment**

Looking more closely at the respondents in wage-employment, we see that almost half are still working at the company where they did their apprenticeship:

Table 7: *Employed at company where apprenticeship done?*

Yes	40%
No	28%
No Response	32%

---

<sup>3</sup> SSACI (2015)

Those who are not with their original host-employers mostly left of their own volition, as seen from Table 8 below:

*Table 8: Reasons for not being employed at company where apprenticeship done*

I found a better paying job	41%
The company did not offer me a job	34%
Other (please specify)	26%

Other reasons included ‘wanted to move closer to home’, ‘company re-located’, ‘company closed down’ and ‘wanted to open own business’.

Taken together, these data suggest that newly-qualified artisans have a fair measure of choice in where and for whom they work and are often able to find alternative employment when their existing contract ends. Strategies used to find alternative employment are listed in Table 9 below and indicate that newly-qualified artisans are able to use formal mechanisms (advertisements and employment agencies) and social networks (personal and workplace contacts) in more or less equal measure.

*Table 9: How did you go about finding your current job?*

Through a job advertisement (newspapers, magazines, online)	40%
Through personal contacts	34%
Through an employment agency	14%
Through links made where I did my apprenticeship	7%
Other (please specify)	5%

Even so, as shown in Table 10 below, less than a quarter found employment within a month of starting their search, while another third took up to three months.

*Table 10: How long did it take you to find your current job?*

Less than a week	17,5%
1 week - 4 weeks	5,1%
1 - 3 months	33,9%
4 - 6 months	16,2%
7 - 12 months	20,8%
> 12 months	6,2%
Do not remember	0,2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

If we consider three months to be a reasonable period for finding a job, then just over half of all new artisan entrants into the labour market found employment ‘easily’ (i.e. were offered a job on passing their trade test) or ‘fairly easily’ (i.e. found a job within three months thereafter).

Importantly, this is mostly ‘decent’ work, i.e. jobs that offer some permanency and a living wage. Three-quarters (76%) of all interviewees in wage-employment said they had a permanent position while 24% had temporary contracts of varying lengths, shown in Table 11 below:

*Table 11: Length of temporary contracts*

More than a year	47%
6 – 12 months	19%
3 – 6 months	18%
Less than 3 months	16%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

Regardless of the permanency or duration of their contracts, fully 90% of all interviewees reported that they were doing work related to the trade in which they were qualified. Most of the remainder were still doing technical/artisanal work of some sort, while only a handful were working at something completely different.

The private sector is the largest employer of newly-qualified artisans:

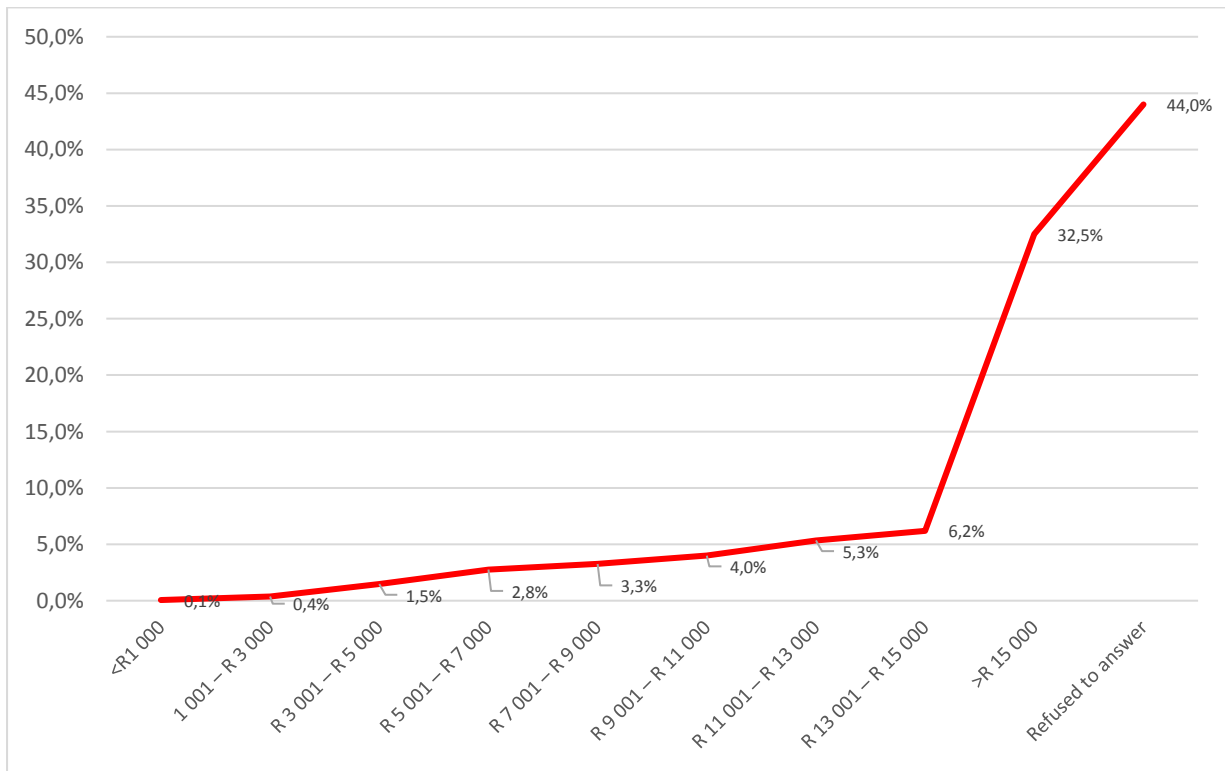
Table 23: Type of Employer

Private company	54%
Government department	41%
Non-profit organisation	5%

This distribution of employment reflects the fact that the industries where most artisanal jobs are found – manufacturing, mining and construction – are dominated by private companies. But the state remains a significant employer, principally in such large organisations as TransNet, Eskom, SAA, Denel and the garages and maintenance departments of government agencies and institutions.

Remuneration for newly-qualified artisans is shown in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Gross monthly earnings of newly-qualified artisans in wage-employment



The gross earnings of over half of the respondents exceed R15'000 per month, far more than NC(V) graduates who average less than R3000 per month<sup>4</sup> and comparable with university graduates with first degrees, who currently range between R11'000 per month for a B.A. or B.Com. graduate to R19'000 for a B.Sc.(Eng.) graduate.<sup>5</sup>

A third (33%) of interviewees said they had received a promotion since starting work and 73% said their wages had increased in the past year.

## Patterns in Self-Employment

Of the 102 self-employed interviewees, more than half (59.4%) are opportunity-driven rather than necessity-driven, as shown in Table 15 below:

*Table 3: Reasons for being self-employed*

<p><b>I wanted to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'I saw a business opportunity'</li> <li>• 'It gives more opportunity to do work that I want to do'</li> <li>• 'I prefer flexible working hours'</li> <li>• "I want to be my own boss'</li> </ul>	59,4%
<p><b>I had to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'I could not find a job in the field in which I am trained'</li> <li>• 'I am still looking for a job'</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	28,7%
<p><b>Other:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'My employer's company closed down'</li> <li>• 'I was retrenched'</li> <li>• 'I was temporary and my employer wanted more experienced people'</li> </ul>	11,9%

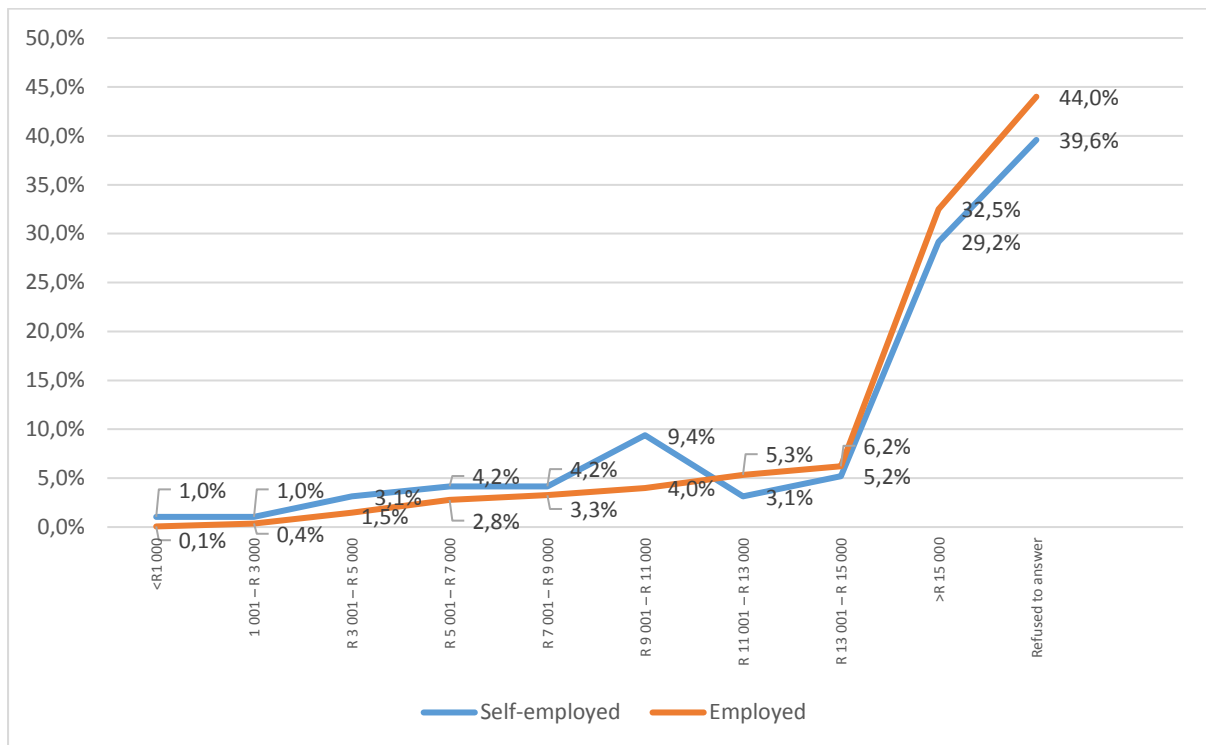
Earning-patterns amongst self-employed artisans is similar to that of their counterparts in wage-employment, as shown in Figure 7 below:

---

<sup>4</sup> SSACI (2015)

<sup>5</sup> MyBroadband (2015)

Figure 5: Gross earnings per month in wage-employment vs self-employment

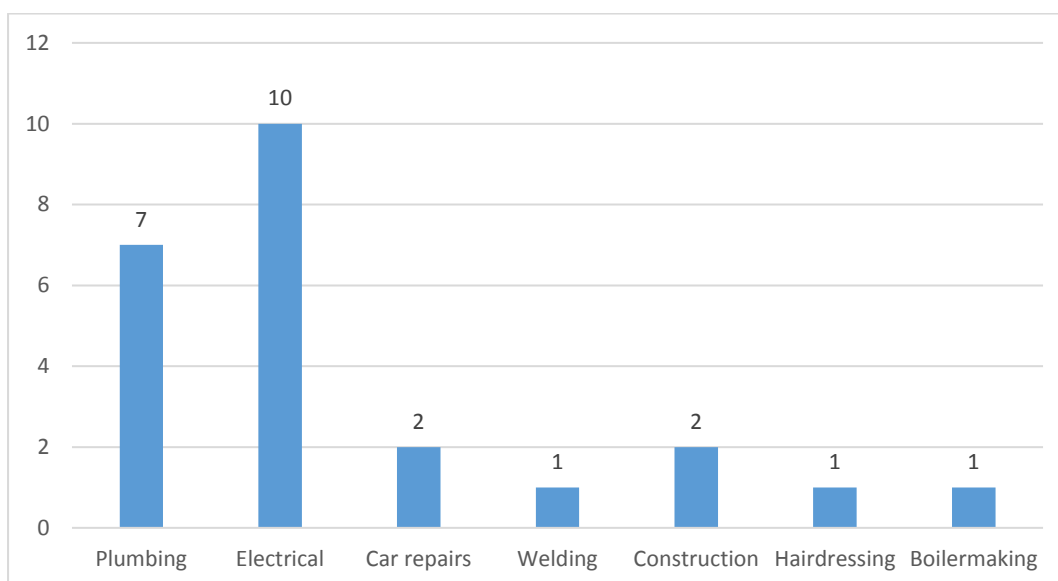


Encouragingly, 72% of the self-employed artisans reported that they now have employees of their own, indicating that their enterprises are generating enough work for others and probably have further growth potential.

**Twenty-four self-employed respondents agreed to in-depth questioning about their businesses and the following data was derived from them.** This sub-sample, though small, throws some interesting additional light on the world of the entrepreneurial artisan.

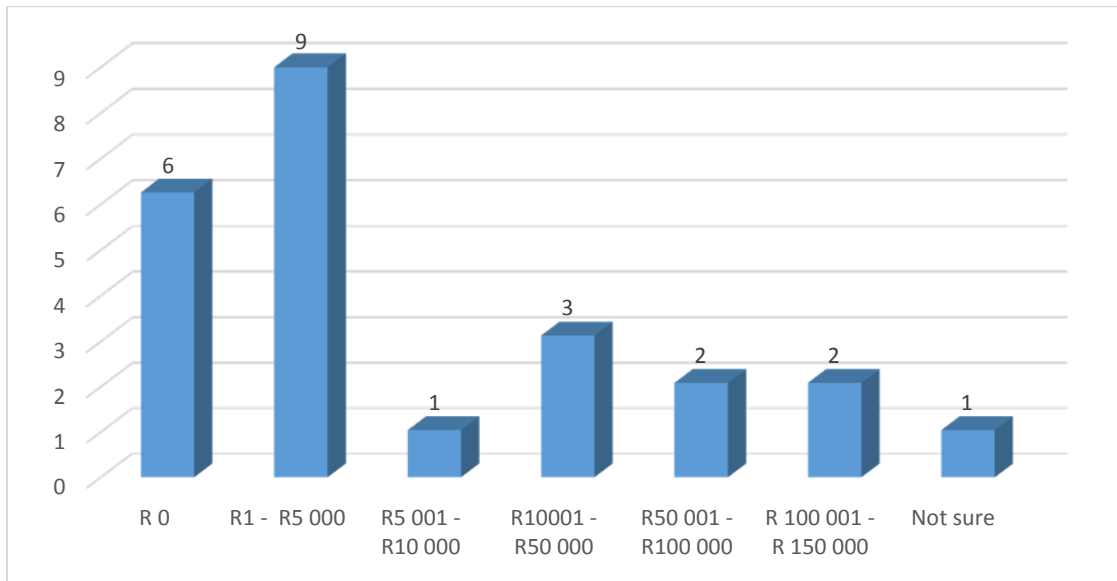
All the businesses are in the trade or field of work the respondent trained for, as follows:

Figure 6: Services provided by business



The businesses were mostly set up with very little capital, as shown in Figure X below

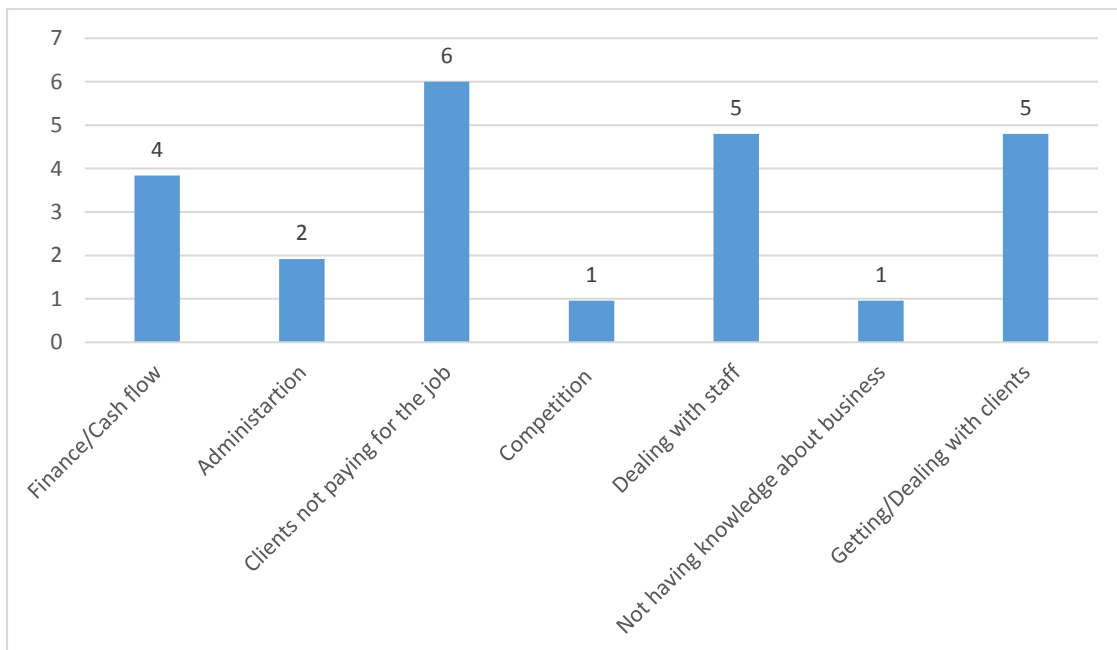
Figure x: Amount of Start-Up Capital



All the entrepreneurs said they were self-funded, i.e. they did not get any funding from someone else to start their business.

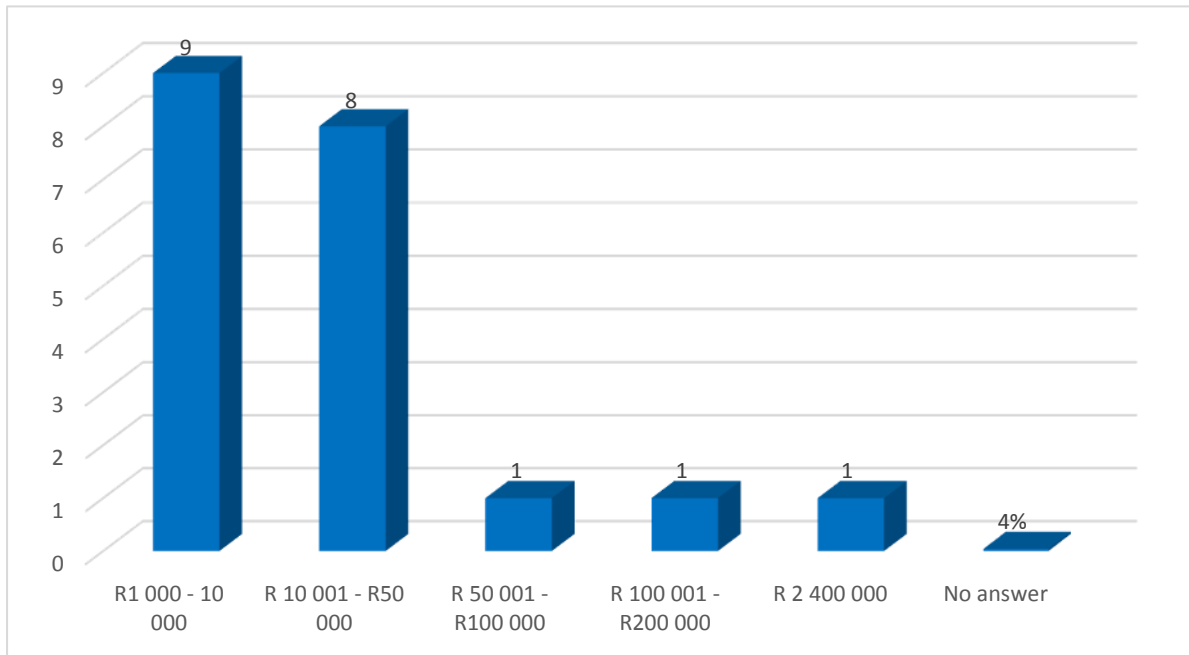
Difficulties that they face in running their businesses are shown in Figure Y below.

Figure y: Difficulties running a business



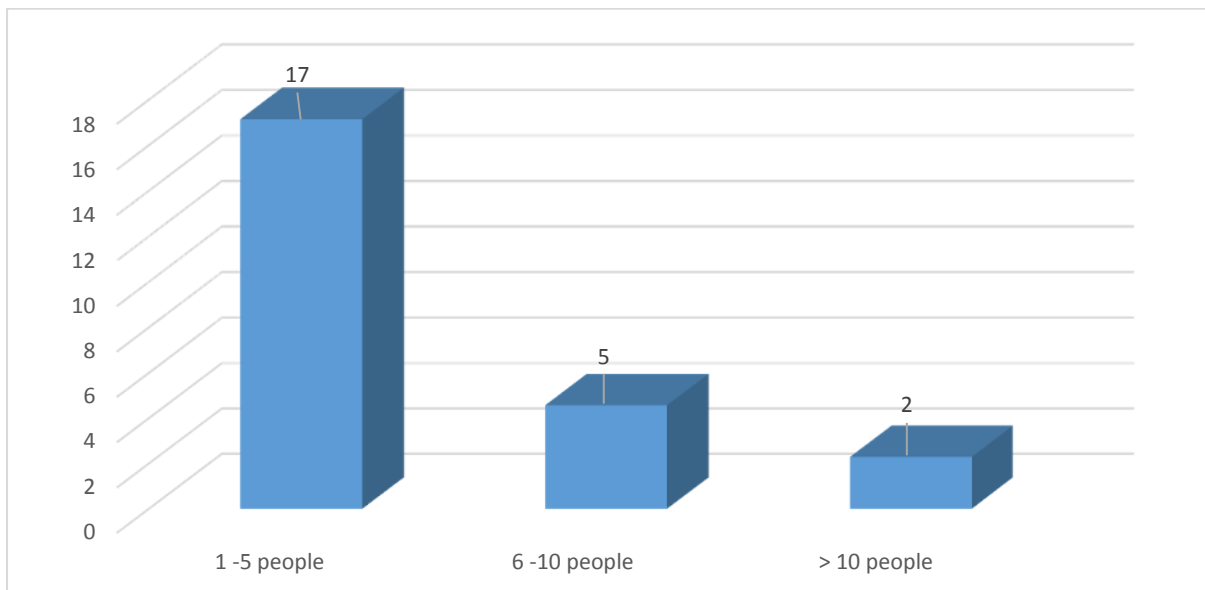
Though small, most of the enterprises seem to be financially viable, as indicated by their gross monthly revenues in Figure Z below:

Figure z: Monthly revenue



All the businesses employ at least one person in addition to the entrepreneur:

Figure AA: Number of people employed

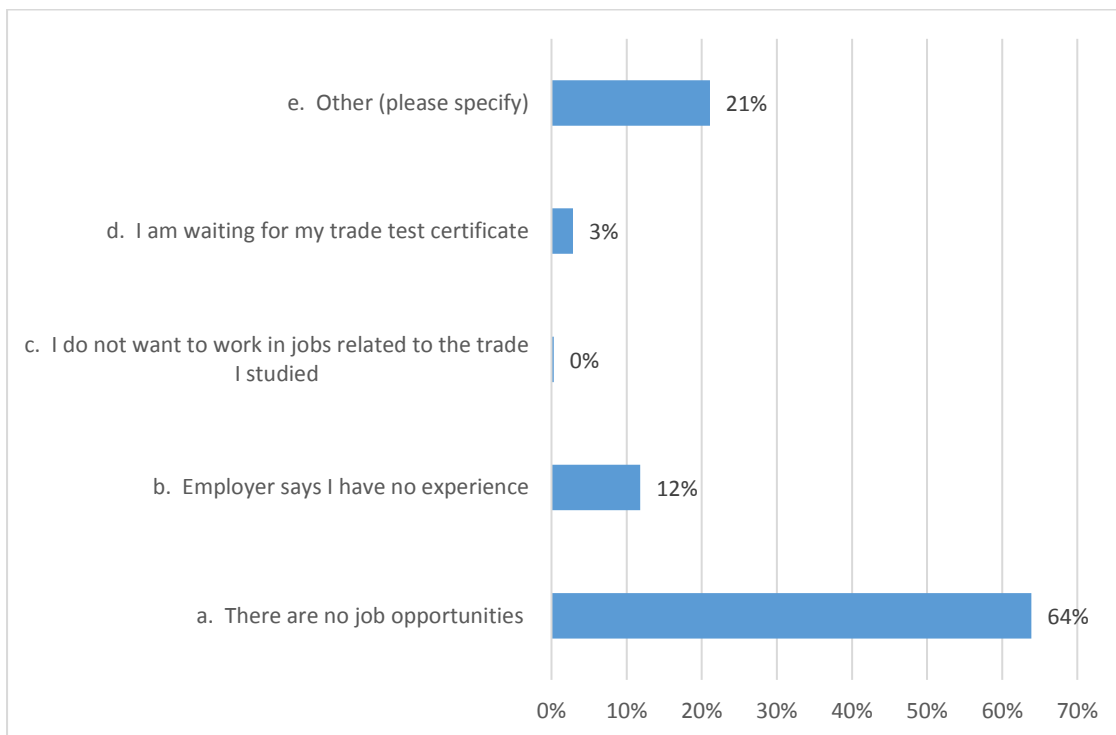


All the entrepreneurs say they want to grow their businesses. On the other hand, 20% of them are in some kind of wage-employment at the same time and 50% said they would consider taking up full-time employment if they found an opportunity to do so. This suggests that they do not feel very confident in the business's future potential to support them.

## Patterns in Unemployment

What follows is an analysis of 343 individuals (from 1628) that indicated they were unemployed. Majority (64%) of the individuals cited having no job opportunities as a reason for them not having a job (*Figure 8*). This may be indicative of the downturn in economy specifically in South Africa and generally internationally. None of them indicated they did not want to work in the trade they studied as a reason for not having a job. Of the 21% that cited other reasons for not having a job, the most common reason given was the contract ended. Other reason given which is important for the system is that they were awaiting their certificate. This point to inefficiencies in issuing the certificate once the person has passed the trade test. The other reasons given include retrenchment and company closed down. These reasons are symptomatic of the current economic conditions in the country.

*Figure 7: Reasons for not having a job*



\*\*\*\*\*



## Appendix A: SCRIPT FOR TRACKING NEWLY QUALIFIED ARTISANS

Agent: Good Morning/Afternoon. Is this Mr/Ms ..... You are speaking to ..... From the National Artisan Development Support Centre. Is this the convenient time for you to talk? (If not ask for time when you can call back). If NO ask : Are you employed?

We would like to know what you are currently doing in terms of work. Please be ensured that your name and responses will remain confidential. This interview will take approximately **10** minutes.

### 2. What are you currently doing?

a. Employed by company (EC) (Go to 2.1)		b. Self-employed (SE) (Go to 2.2)		c. Unemployed (U) (Go to 2.3)	
↓		↓		↓	
2.1 IF CURRENTLY EMPLOYED BY COMPANY		2.2 IF CURRENTLY SELF-EMPLOYED		2.3 IF CURRENTLY UNEMPLOYED	
<b>2.1.1</b> Are you employed at the same company where you did your apprenticeship?  <b>NO (N) (DO 2.1.2 – 2.1.10)</b> <b>YES (Y) (DO 2.1.5 – 2.1.10)</b>	<b>2.1.6</b> Is the work you doing, in the same trade as your apprenticeship? Yes (Y) No (N)	<b>2.2.1</b> Please state the reason/s why you self-employed? (Can tick more than one)  a. I could not find a job in the field in which I am trained b. I prefer flexible working hours c. I am still looking for a job d. It gives more opportunity to do work that I want to do e. I am entrepreneurial/saw an opportunity f. Other (please specify)	<b>2.3.1</b> What are the main reasons for you not having a job? (Can tick more than one)  a. There are no job opportunities b. Employer says I have no experience c. I do not want to work in jobs related to the trade I studied d. I am waiting for my trade test certificate e. Other (please specify)		
<b>2.1.2</b> If NO to Q 2.1.1, what are the main reasons? (Can tick more than one) a. The company did not offer me a job b. The company closed/moved c. I found a better paying job d. Other (please specify)	<b>2.1.6a</b> If NO, which trade are you working in?	<b>2.1.7</b> What kind of employer do you work for? a. Government organisation b. Non-government organisation c. Private company	<b>2.2.2</b> Do you employ others?  Yes (Y) No (N)	<b>2.3.2</b> How many times did you write the trade test before passing it?  (1, 2, 3, 4, etc.)	

<p><b>2.1.3 If NO to Q 2.1.1, how did you go about finding your current job? (Can tick more than one)</b></p> <p>a. Through an employment agency  b. Through links made where I did my apprenticeship  c. Through personal contacts  d. Through a job advertisement (newspapers, magazines, online)  e. Other (please specify)</p>	<p><b>2.1.8 How much do you earn a month, before Tax (Gross salary)?</b></p> <p>a. &lt;R1 000  b. 1 001 – R 3 000  c. R 3 001 – R 5 000  d. R 5 001 – R 7 000  e. R 7 001 – R 9 000  f. R 9 001 – R 11 000  g. R 11 001 – R 13 000  h. R 13 001 – R 15 000  i. &gt;R 15 000  j. Refuse to answer</p>
--	--

**2.2.3 How much do you earn a month, before Tax (Gross salary)?**

a. <R1 000  
b. 1 001 – R 3 000  
c. R 3 001 – R 5 000  
d. R 5 001 – R 7 000  
e. R 7 001 – R 9 000  
f. R 9 001 – R 11 000  
g. R 11 001 – R 13 000  
h. R 13 001 – R 15 000  
i. >R 15 000  
j. Refuse to answer

**2.3.3 When did you receive your certificate?**  
(year/month OR Pending (p))

<p><b>2.1.4 If NO to Q 2.1.1, how many months did it take to find your current job?</b>  (1, 2, 3, 4, etc.)</p>	<p><b>2.1.9 Since being employed,</b></p> <p>a. Have you been promoted? (Yes/No)  b. Did you get an increase? (Yes/No)</p>
---	--

**2.2.4 How many times did you write the trade test before passing it? (1, 2, 3, 4, etc.)**

<p><b>2.1.5 What kind of employment are you currently employed in?</b></p> <p>a. Permanent contract (PC)  b. Temporary Contract (TC)</p>	<p><b>2.1.10 How many times did you write the trade test before passing it?</b>  (1, 2, 3, 4, etc.)</p>
<p><b>2.1.5a If temporary is it:</b></p> <p>a. Less than 3 months  b. 3 – 6 months  c. 6 – 12 months  d. More than a year</p>	<p><b>2.1.11 When did you receive your certificate?</b>  ( year/month OR Pending (p))</p>

**2.2.5 When did you receive your certificate?**  
(year/month OR Pending (p))

## Appendix B

### Interview Questions for Self-employed individuals (from qualified artisans tracer study 2015-2016)

Hi, I am following up on an interview we (NADSC – National Artisan Development Support Centre) did with you with regards to your employment status. You had indicated that you are self-employed. Is this correct.

If yes

1. Background: Where was s/he born, how many sibilings, which school, did s/he complete matric. What other qualification s/he did before doing apprenticeship. When did s/he complete apprenticeship (month/date), etc.	
2. What was the reason/s for starting your own business?	
3. What products/services does your business provide?	
4. Is this related to the trade you studied? If not, why?	
5. Did you receive any funding when starting it up? If yes from who?	
6. What was the starting capital amount?	
7. Did you receive any training for running a business?If yes, what type, from who?	
8. What is the most difficult thing about running it?	
9. Do you have a partner?	
10. Do you employ others? If yes how many?	
11. Is your business registered with a government department?	
12. What is the gross income/month of your business?	
13. What do you like most about running a business?	
14. Where do you see your business in five years time? (Long term goals)	
15. What lessons have you learnt, which can help others wanting to start their own business?	

16. What do you wish you knew before starting your business?	
17. Are you also working while running the bussiness?	
18. If you were to find employment would you consider that over running a business? If YES/NO give reason/s	