Employment, Skills and Covid-19: An Analysis of the DHET's SETA Employer Interviews

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Employment, Skills and Covid-19: An Analysis of the DHET's SETA Employer Interviews

Labour Market Intelligence research programme

Authors:

Morné Oosthuizen (Morne.Oosthuizen@uct.ac.za)

David de Villiers, Development Policy Research Unit, School of Economics, University of Cape Town

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List of SETAs

AgriSETA	Agricultural Sector Education and Training Authority
BANKSETA	Banking Sector Education and Training Authority
CHIETA	Chemical Industries Education and Training Authority
CETA	Construction Education and Training Authority
CATHSSETA	Culture, Arts, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport Sector Education and Training Authority
ETDP SETA	Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority
EWSETA	Energy and Water Sector Education and Training Authority
FP&M SETA	Fibre Processing and Manufacturing Sector Education and Training Authority
Fasset	Finance and Accounting Services Sector Education and Training Authority
FoodBev SETA	Food and Beverage Manufacturing Industry Sector Education and Training Authority
HWSETA	Health and Welfare Sector Education and Training Authority
Inseta	Insurance Sector Education and Training Authority
LGSETA	Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority
merSETA	Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services Sector Education and Training Authority
MICT SETA	Media, Information and Communication Technologies Sector Education and Training Authority
MQA	Mining Qualifications Authority
PSETA	Public Service Sector Education and Training Authority
SASSETA	Safety and Security Sector Education and Training Authority
SSETA	Services Sector Education and Training Authority
TETA	Transport Education Training Authority
W&RSETA	Wholesale and Retail Sector Education and Training Authority

PART 1

Introduction
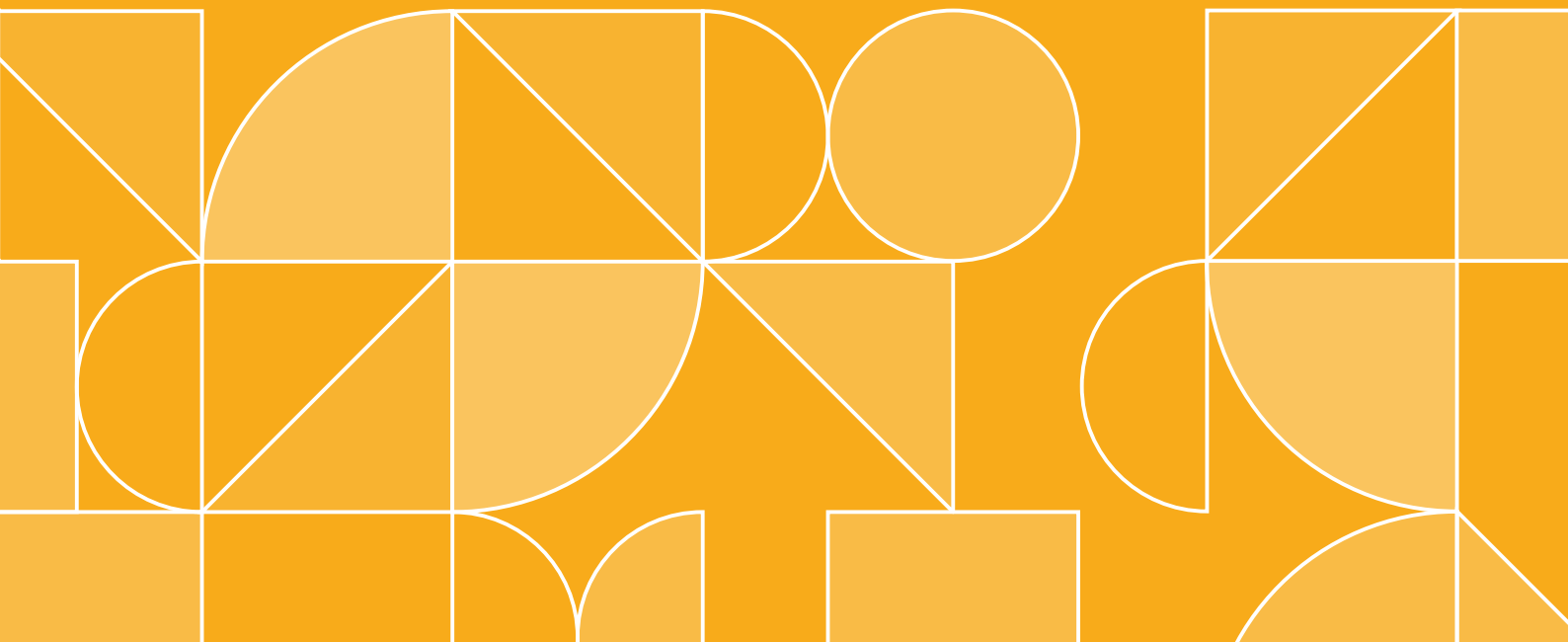
Employment is the outcome of the labour market process of matching the supply of labour (labour force participants who are willing and able to work) with the demand for labour (employers in the private and public sectors). Where this matching process is inadequate or incomplete, labour shortages or unemployment may result.

Within South Africa's education and training system, Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) are the primary interface between employers, representing the demand for labour, and the education and training system, which plays a key role in the skills pipeline. Indeed, the SETA system is designed to receive signals of labour demand from employers – such as the types and volume of skills required – and use them to design and prioritise particular types of skills interventions, in order to match the demand of skills to the supply of skills.

The past two years have been a challenging period globally, as the Covid-19 pandemic has swept the globe and disrupted economies. South Africa is no exception. Lockdowns of varying intensity, particularly during 2020, played havoc with businesses' ability to operate, as restrictions on mobility affected both workers and the businesses themselves. As a result of the lockdowns, remote working was necessary, where feasible, to ensure that businesses, government and other organisations could continue functioning.

This report analyses the data collected by the SETAs through a range of interviews conducted with employers during the latter part of 2021. The interviews covered a number of topics, including the impact of Covid-19 on the employers, hard-to-fill vacancies, skills gaps, change drivers, future skills, and priority education and training.
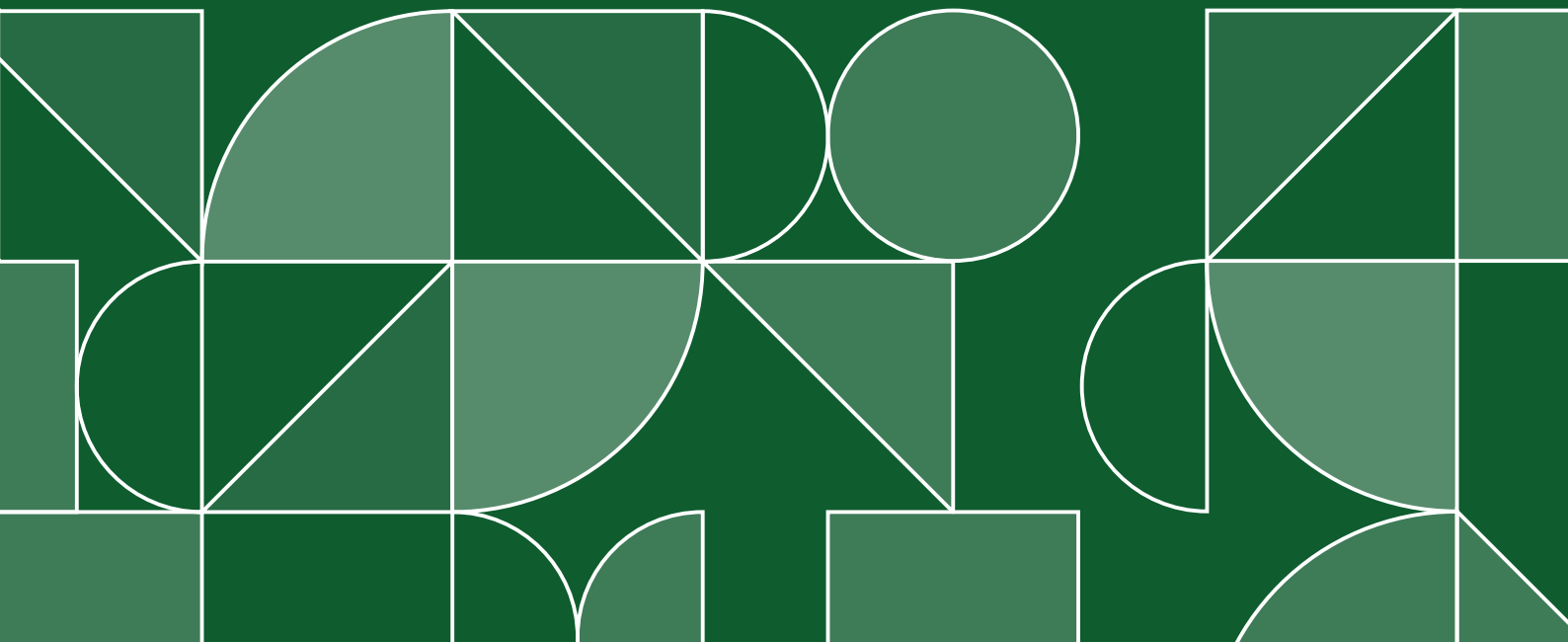
Data

The data that forms the basis of the analysis comes from employer interviews undertaken by the SETAs, as requested by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). These interviews were conducted in August 2021 and covered small, medium and large employers. Small employers are defined as those with 1–50 employees, medium employers as those with 51–150 employees and large employers as those with more than 150 employees. Respondents came from a variety of subsectors across the economy. The SETAs were requested to indicate the subsectors covered, although it is not clear how they interpreted this question (i.e., whether they listed the subsectors from which the respondents came or whether they listed the subsectors covered by the SETA itself). The full list of SETAs that submitted data, and the subsectors they listed on the template, are presented in Table 5 in the Appendix.

Data collected from the employer interviews were returned to the DHET in a consolidated format. Quantitative data was reported in tables, reflecting the breakdown of respondents across a given range of responses to a particular question. Qualitative responses comprised the combined responses across all respondents to a given question. As has been noted previously with respect to the Workplace Skills Plan/Annual Training Report data (Oosthuizen & Köhler, 2020), reporting quantitative data in this format constrains the types of analyses that can be performed.

The SETAs interviewed a total of 756 employers. However, there was substantial variation in the number of employers interviewed by each SETA and respondents are therefore not distributed evenly across SETAs or in proportion to the importance of the underlying economic sectors. Figure 1 provides an overview of the distribution of respondents across the SETAs and the differences in the number of respondents from each are clear. The SETAs that gathered responses from the largest numbers of employers were the Education, Training and Development Practices SETA (ETDP SETA) (149 employers, or 19.7% of all respondents); followed by the Finance and Accounting Services SETA (Fasset) (116 employers, 15.3%); the Media, Information and Communication Technologies SETA (MICT SETA) (74 employers, 9.8%); and the Safety and Security SETA (SASSETA) (56 employers, 7.4%). No other SETA interviewed more than 50 employers. The SETAs that interviewed the fewest employers were the Banking SETA (BANKSETA) (5 employers, 0.7% of all respondents); the Chemical Industries Education and Training Authority (CHIETA), and the Wholesale and Retail SETA (W&RSETA) (each with 10 employers, 1.3%); and the Food and Beverage Manufacturing Industry SETA (FoodBev SETA), and the Public Service SETA (PSETA) (each with 11 employers, 1.5%).

FIGURE 1: Number of interview respondents
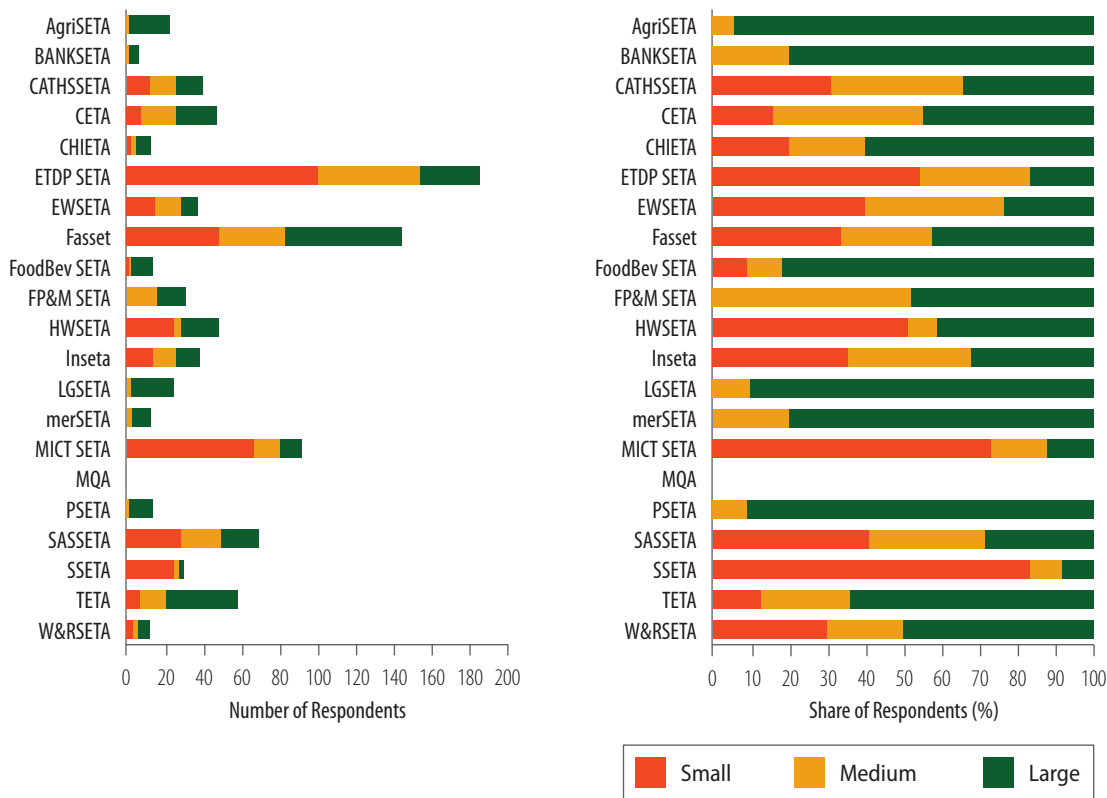
Source: Own calculations, SETA interviews with employers 2021 dataset.

Note:
Actual numbers of respondents and distributions across firm size are provided in Table 6 in the Appendix. Small employers are defined as having 1–50 employees; medium employers have 51–150 employees; and large employers have 151 or more employees.

Of the 756 respondents, 288 were small employers, 187 were medium employers and 281 were large employers. Thus, small employers slightly outnumber large employers within the group of respondents (38.1% and 37.2% of the total, respectively), while just under one quarter (24.7%) of respondents were medium employers. The figure also illustrates the differences in the distributions of respondents in terms of the size of the organisations between the SETAs. Thus, large employers accounted for the vast majority of respondents in the Agricultural SETA (AgriSETA) (94.4%); BANKSETA (80.0%); FoodBev SETA (81.8%); Local Government SETA (LGSETA) (90.0%); Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services SETA (merSETA) (80.0%); and PSETA (90.9%). In contrast, small employers were particularly dominant among respondents in the ETDP SETA (54.4%); Health and Welfare SETA (HWSETA) (51.3%); MICT SETA (73.0%); and Services SETA (SSETA) (83.3%), while the majority of respondents in the Fibre Processing and Manufacturing SETA (FP&M SETA) (52.0%) were medium firms.

Before proceeding to the analysis, it is important to consider the extent to which the interviews are representative of an underlying population of employers. As there was no overarching plan to sample respondents in a systematic way, these interviews are not a representative survey of employers in South Africa, nor are they representative of levy-paying employers. This means that one cannot generalise the findings from these interviews to the broader population of employers. Similarly, the same appears to be true for the findings within individual SETAs, as the SETAs do not indicate whether respondents were sampled to be representative of their levy-paying employers.

A further complication arises from the fact that the number of respondents varies significantly across SETAs. This variation is not simply because of differences in the number of levy-paying employers across SETA sectors. Instead, a wide range of factors might have influenced the SETAs' decisions on how many employers to include within the group of interviewees. Some might have adhered to the DHET guidelines in terms of numbers of respondents, while others might have decided to include more respondents because of intra-SETA considerations, such as ensuring participation across subsectors or the desire to use the results for the SETA's own research purposes. This means that, while ETDP SETA, for example, accounts for almost one fifth of respondents in the dataset, it does not account for this proportion of all employers or all levy-paying employers. Conversely, a SETA like merSETA is likely to account for a far larger proportion of employers than its 1.3% share of respondents would suggest.

As a consequence of these variations, analysing the results for the combined dataset can be misleading, simply because a small number of SETAs account for an outsized proportion of respondents. Thus, four SETAs account for more than half of all respondents in the dataset. To address this concern, certain analyses are presented in two ways: the first considers statistics for the full dataset, while the second presents statistics averaged across the SETAs. The first approach does not try to account for the distribution of respondents across the SETAs and calculates statistics across all respondents. In this case, the proportion of respondents that retrenched workers is calculated as the number of respondents in the dataset that retrenched workers divided by the total number of respondents in the dataset. The second approach – referred to below as 'equally weighted' – instead weights the SETAs equally, irrespective of the number of respondents. Here, the proportion that retrenched workers is calculated as the average across all the SETAs of the proportion of respondents within each SETA that retrenched workers. In other words, the proportion is first calculated for respondents within each SETA and these SETA-level proportions are then averaged. The first approach provides a sense of the distribution of responses across respondents, while the second does so across SETAs. However, this approach only works for the analysis of the impact of Covid-19; analyses of other questions are therefore subject to distortion by differences between the SETAs in the number of respondents interviewed.

PART 3

Impact of Covid-19
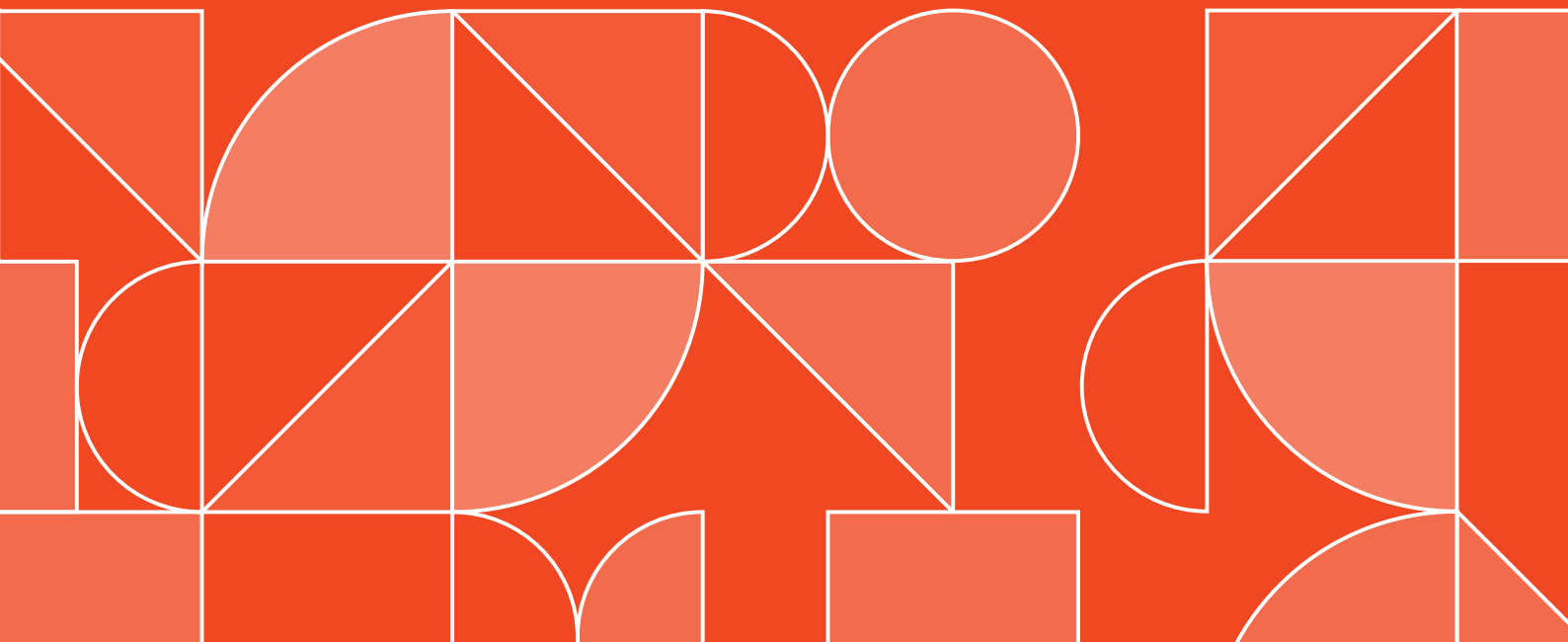
A key focus of the interviews was the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Specifically, the interviewers asked respondents about the extent of retrenchments, the proportion of staff working from home, and whether staff had new roles and responsibilities.

Figure 2 presents estimates of the proportion of employers retrenching staff, overall and across employer size. Among interview respondents, more than three quarters (77.4%) reported retrenching 10% or less of their staff. Roughly 1 in 10 employers (11.1%) reported retrenching 11–20% of their staff, while the remaining respondents were relatively evenly distributed across the remaining categories. Large-scale retrenchments within employers were relatively rare – only 6.7% of respondents reported that they retrenched more than 40% of their staff. Unfortunately, the phrasing of the question does not allow for an assessment of the proportion of respondents who made no retrenchments in response to the pandemic. Considering the equally weighted figures – where results for each SETA are weighted equally, irrespective of the number of respondents – the proportion of respondents that retrenched 11–20% of staff rises to 19.7%, while the proportions in each of the other categories fall. In other words, in the 'average' SETA, just under three quarters of respondents reported retrenching no more than 10% of their staff, while around one fifth reported retrenching 11–20% of their staff.

FIGURE 2: Proportion of staff retrenched by respondents, by employer size
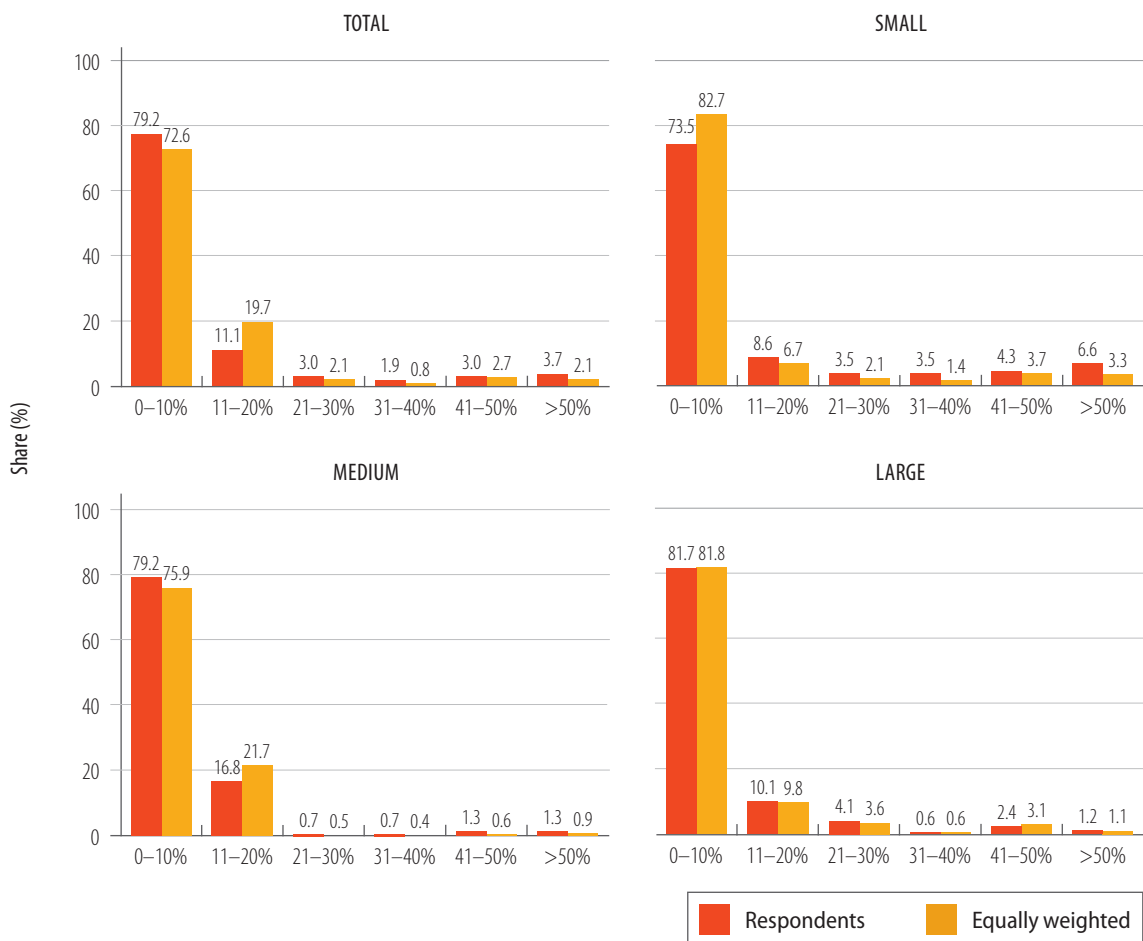
Source: Own calculations, SETA interviews with employers 2021 dataset.

Notes:
Equally weighted estimates are calculated by weighting the results within each SETA equally, irrespective of their number of respondents.

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Disaggregations by employer size reveal that large-scale retrenchments most likely occurred among small employers. Across all small respondents, 10.9% reported retrenching more than 40% of their staff (4.3% retrenched 41–50%, while 6.6% retrenched more than half of their staff). Medium employers were less likely to retrench more than 10% of their staff than small employers but were considerably more likely to retrench 11–20% of staff (16.8% of respondents), compared with both small employers (8.6%) and large employers (10.1%). Large employers were most likely (81.7%) to fall within the first category of retrenchments, pointing to their greater resilience in the face of economic shocks, when compared with smaller employers. Within the average SETA, however, 82.7% of small employers reported retrenching up to 10% of their staff, suggesting that larger-scale retrenchments were clustered in specific SETAs.

Figure 3 details the distribution of respondents within each of the SETAs in terms of the extent of staff retrenchments. Interestingly, in several of the SETAs (AgriSETA, CHIETA, Fasset, HWSETA, LGSETA and W&RSETA), no respondents reported retrenching more than 10% of their staff. In contrast, large proportions of respondents in the BANKSETA; Culture, Arts, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport SETA (CATHSSETA); and MICT SETA reported retrenching more than two fifths of their staff (20.0%, 21.9% and 20.3%, respectively). In addition, 3–5% of respondents in the Energy and Water SETA (EWSETA); Insurance SETA (Inseta); SASSETA; SSETA; and the Transport Education and Training Authority (TETA) reported retrenchments in excess of 50% of their staff. All respondents from the FoodBev SETA and PSETA reported retrenching 11–20% of staff.

FIGURE 3: Proportion of staff retrenched by respondents, by SETA
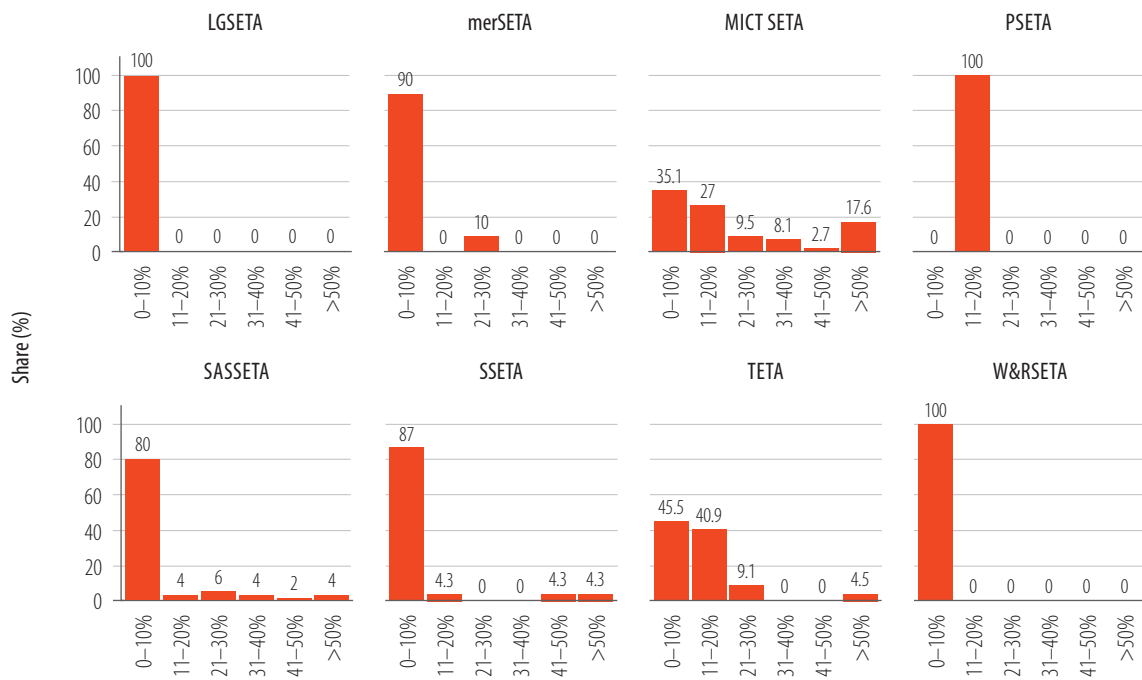
Source: Own calculations, SETA interviews with employers 2021 dataset.

Just under one third (32.5%) of respondents reported that more than half of their staff were working from home (Figure 4).[1] This proportion barely changes when considering all respondents as a group or weighting responses from each SETA equally. Among the respondents, small employers were less likely to report that more than half of their staff were working from home than either medium or larger employers (29.7%, compared with 31.8% and 35.1%, respectively). Within the average SETA, 26.2% of small employers who responded to the interview reported that more than half of their staff were working from home, with the proportion rising to 38.1% of responding medium employers; however, this proportion falls to 32.0% for large employers. Thus, while the proportion of firms who reported that more than half of their staff were working from home correlates positively with firm size when considering all respondents, this association breaks down when SETAs are equally weighted, with medium employers most likely to have reported that at least half of their employees were working from home.

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1   While it is clear there has been a major shift in the acceptance of remote work by both employers and employees, it is unfortunately impossible to determine the extent to which Covid-19 has affected rates of remote working using this data. Respondents were only asked about the current situation with respect to remote work and therefore did not provide any information on the extent of remote work pre-Covid-19, which would allow for such a comparison. Given the response categories, it is also impossible to identify where employers do not have any employees working remotely.

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FIGURE 4: Proportion of staff working from home, by employer size
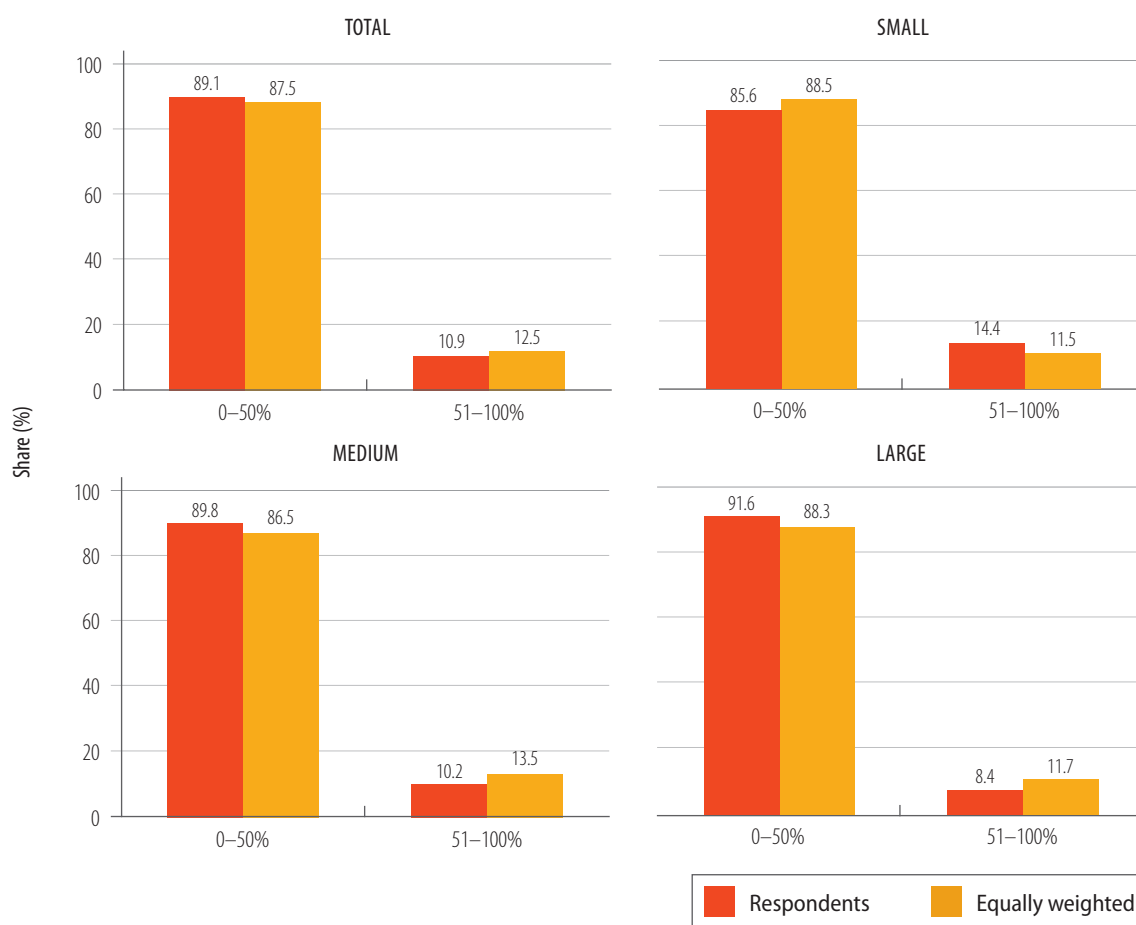
TOTAL

SMALL

MEDIUM

LARGE

Share (%)

Respondents   Equally weighted

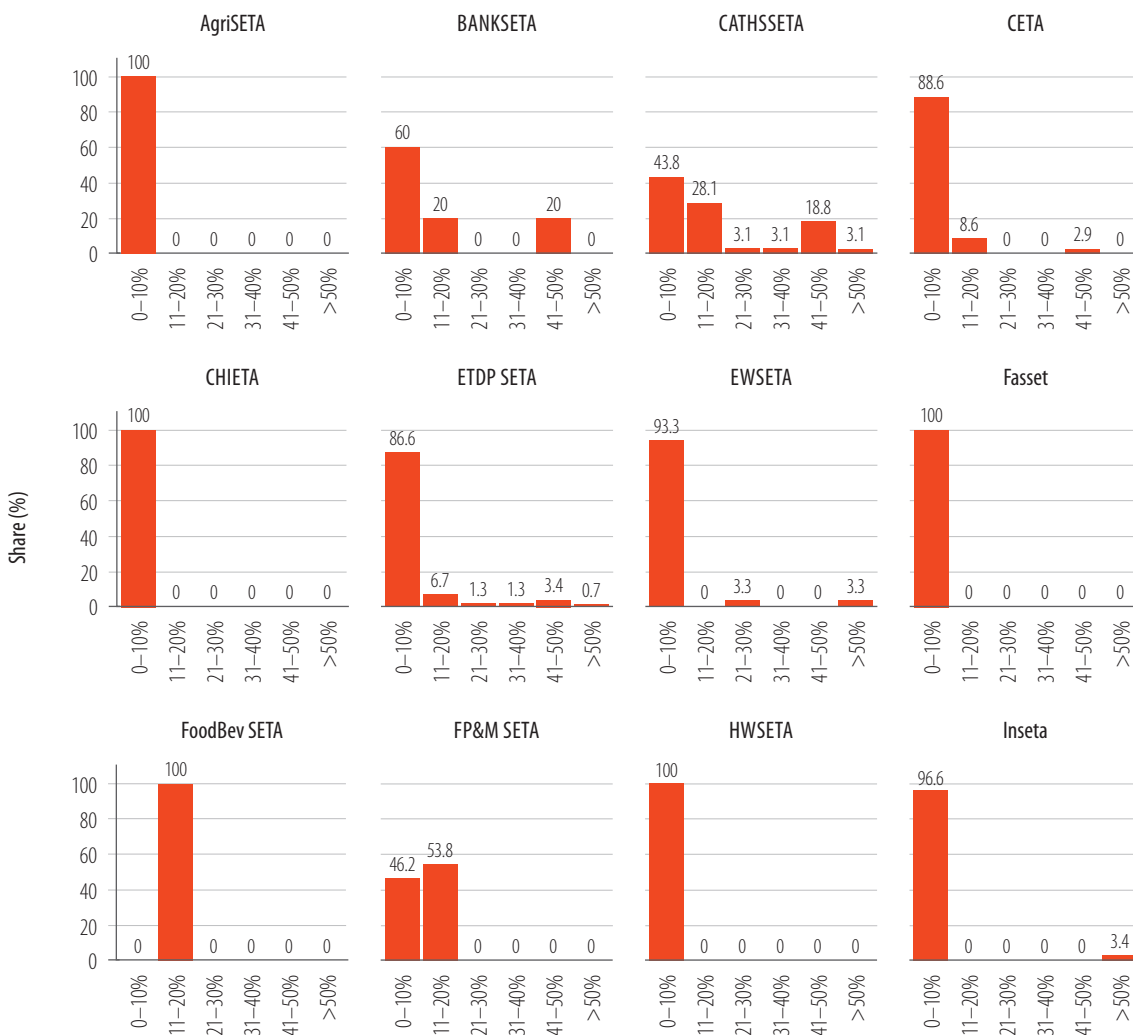*Source: Own calculations, SETA interviews with employers 2021 dataset.*

Notes:
Equally weighted estimates are calculated by weighting the results within each SETA equally, irrespective of their number of respondents.

Once again, there are important differences across the SETAs. The proportion of employers that reported more than half of their employees were working from home ranges from zero in the FoodBev SETA and HWSETA to as high as 90% in the PSETA. In general, it appears that employers within the primary and secondary sectors were less likely to have large proportions of their employees working from home. Thus, for example, fewer than 3 in 10 employers reported that the majority of their employees were working from home in the AgriSETA (11.1%), Construction Education and Training Authority (CETA) (19.4%), CHIETA (10.0%) and FoodBev SETA (0.0%). However, it is also clear that services that rely on face-to-face interactions were also characterised by relatively few employers reporting high rates of working from home. This can be seen in the ETDP SETA (26.8% of employers), HWSETA (0.0%), SASSETA (28.0%) and W&RSETA (10.0%). In contrast, other parts of the service sector appeared able to sustain high levels of remote working. This is true of the financial services SETAs – BANKSETA (60.0%), Fasset (52.1%) and Inseta (55.2%) – in particular, as well as MICT SETA (68.8%).

FIGURE 5: Proportion of staff working from home, by SETA

Source: Own calculations, SETA interviews with employers 2021 dataset.

Close to 9 out of 10 respondents reported that up to 50% of their employees were assigned new roles or responsibilities due to Covid-19 (Figure 6). However, the very broad response categories mean that it is

impossible to distinguish employers where no or very few employees were impacted. Nevertheless, the data indicates that Covid-19 impacted the roles and responsibilities of more than half of employees in roughly 1 in 10 employers interviewed. The data suggests slight differences across firm size. Considering all respondents, small firms were more likely to report that more than half of their employees have new roles and responsibilities (14.4% of small firms), compared with 10.2% of medium firms and 8.4% of large firms. However, this pattern disappears when SETAs are equally weighted. In this case, medium firms were more likely to report new roles and responsibilities for more than half of their employees (13.5%), with slightly lower proportions for small and medium employers (11.5% and 11.7%, respectively).

FIGURE 6: Proportion of staff with new roles or responsibilities, by employer size
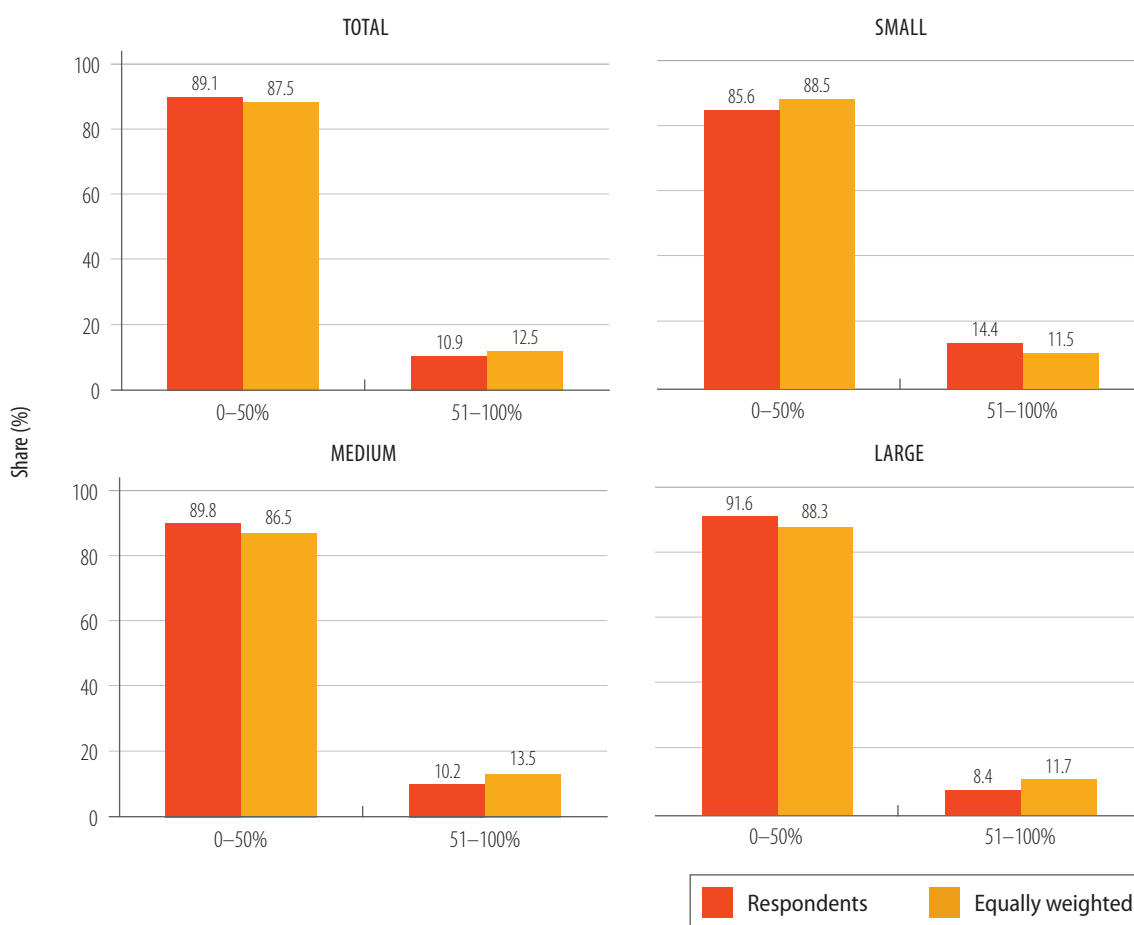
Source: Own calculations, SETA interviews with employers 2021 dataset.

Notes:
Equally weighted estimates are calculated by weighting the results within each SETA equally, irrespective of their number of respondents.

Looking across the SETAs, it is clear that there are relatively few where significant numbers of employers reported new roles and responsibilities for the majority of their employees (Figure 7). The FP&M SETA is something of an outlier in this regard, with half of respondents from the SETA having reported new roles and responsibilities for the majority of their employees. In only two other SETAs was this proportion above one fifth – MICT SETA (26.7%) and SSETA (21.7%) – while this was true of 20.0% of respondents in CHIETA and merSETA. In contrast, fewer than 1 in 25 respondents in a number of SETAs reported new roles and responsibilities for the majority of employees, including Inseta (3.4%), and CETA, FoodBev SETA, HWSETA and PSETA, where this was true of no respondents.

FIGURE 7: Proportion of staff with new roles or responsibilities, by SETA

Source: Own calculations, SETA interviews with employers 2021 dataset.

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Three out of five employers interviewed reported that skills development would be a high priority in the coming 12-month period, while only 1 out of 10 considered it a low priority (Figure 8). These estimates are unaffected when weighting the SETAs equally. Large firms were more likely to designate skills development as a high priority – around 70% of respondents for both estimates – followed by medium firms (approximately 56% for both estimates), and small firms at 59.5% of all respondents and 51.3% if equally weighted. Conversely, large firms were least likely to designate skills development as a low priority (5.9% of respondents or 6.7% for the average SETA), followed by medium firms (11.9% and 13.4%) and small firms (15.8% and 14.8%). These differences are consistent with the idea of the varying ability of firms of different sizes to weather the challenges presented by Covid-19 while still managing to prioritise skills development, although it is not possible to discern firm-size effects from Covid-19 impacts in this data.

FIGURE 8: Level of prioritisation of skills development over coming 12 months, by employer size
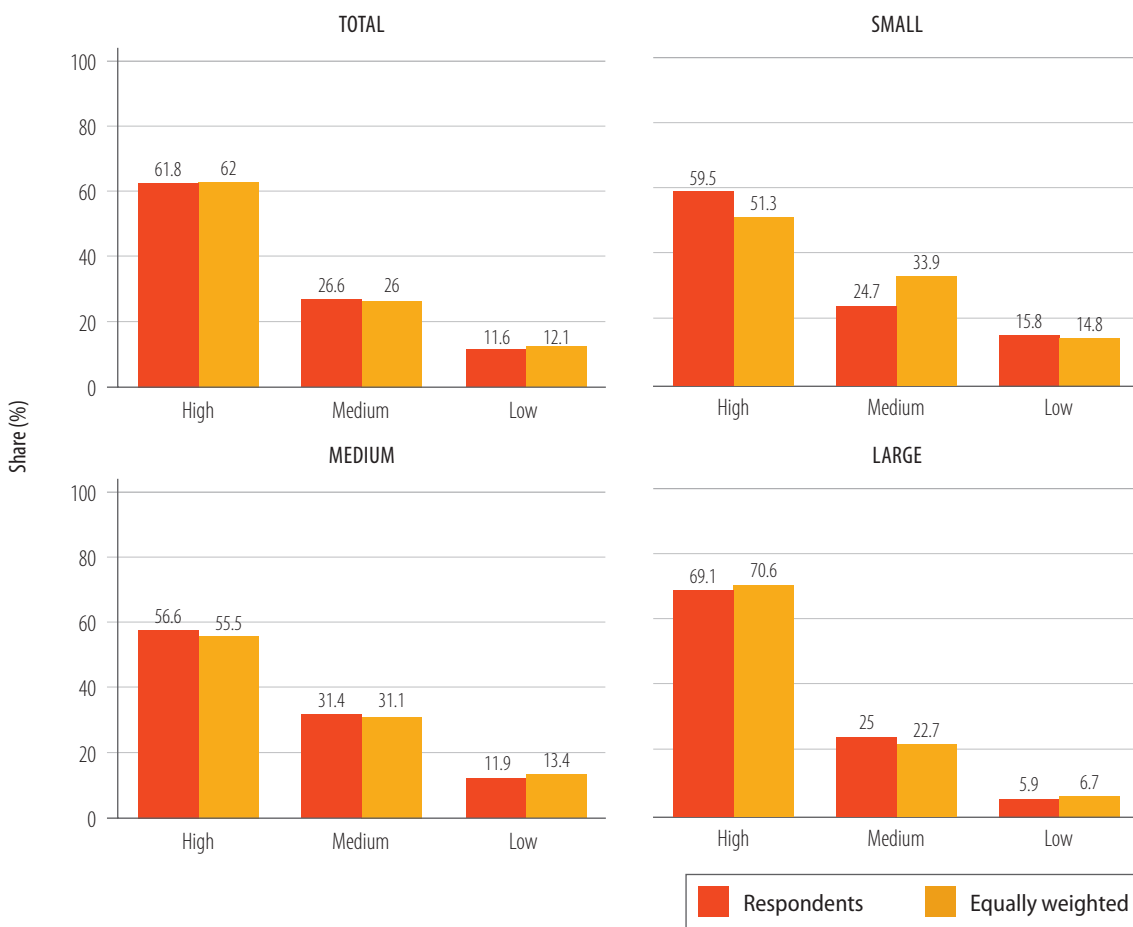
Source: Own calculations, SETA interviews with employers 2021 dataset.

Notes:
Equally weighted estimates are calculated by weighting the results within each SETA equally, irrespective of their number of respondents.

Given these proportions, it is not surprising that the majority of respondents in most SETAs viewed skills development as a high priority for the coming 12 months (Figure 9). The most notable exception is HWSETA, where only 9.5% of respondents indicated that it was a high priority. Only 37.9% of Inseta respondents viewed skills development as a high priority in the coming year, as did 42.3% of CATHSSETA respondents and 47.4% of CETA respondents. Conversely, this is true of all PSETA respondents, 87.0% of SSETA respondents and 80.0% of merSETA respondents. Looking at the data slightly differently, Inseta

respondents were most likely to attach a low priority to skills development in the coming year (55.2% of respondents), followed by CHIETA (50.0%), CETA (44.7%), CATHSSETA (42.3%) and AgriSETA (33.3%). SETAs where respondents were least likely to attach a low priority to skills development are FP&M SETA and PSETA (both 0.0%), SSETA (8.7%) and MICT SETA (10.5%).

FIGURE 9: Level of prioritisation of skills development over coming 12 months, by SETA
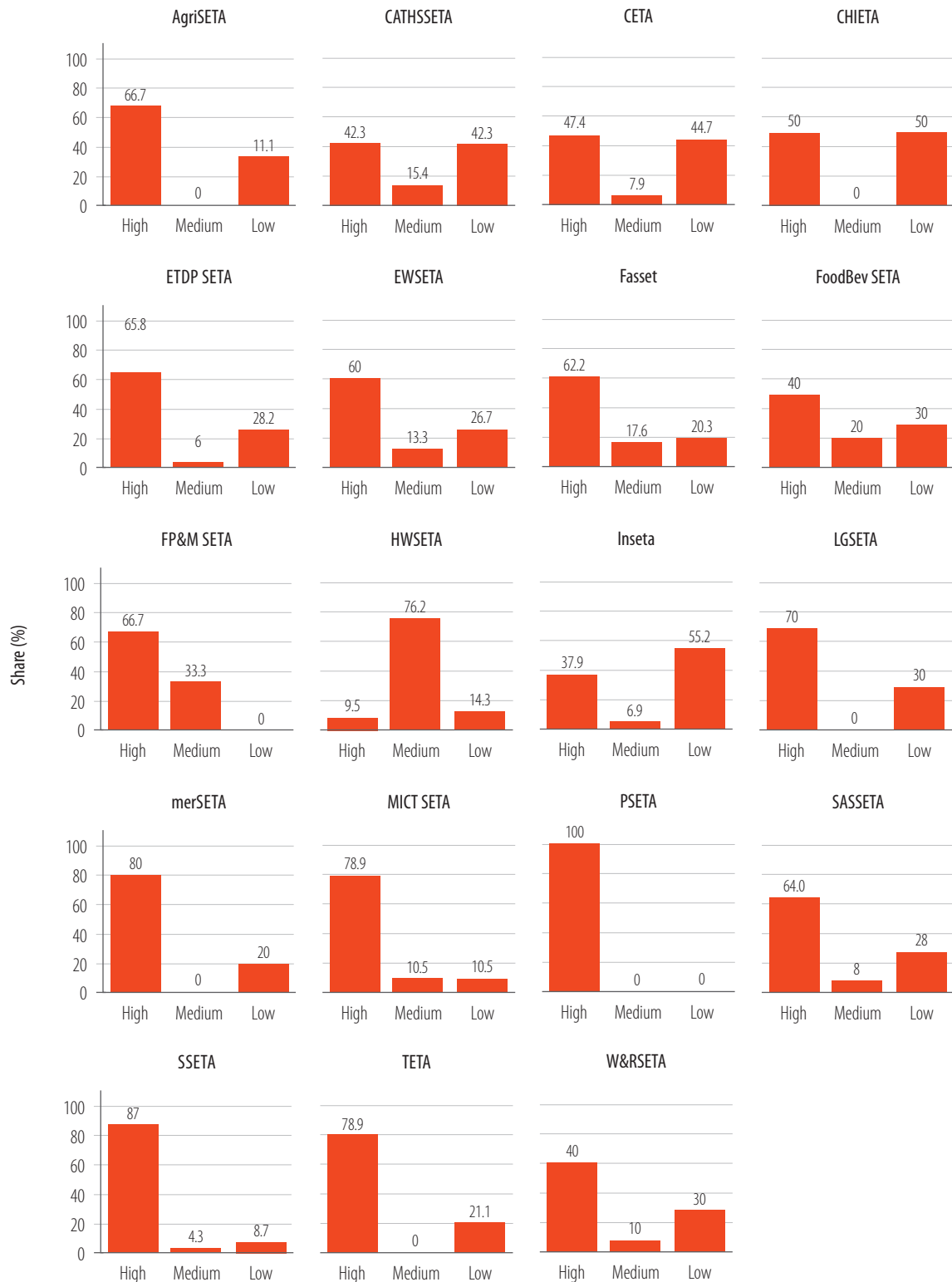
Source: Own calculations, SETA interviews with employers 2021 dataset.

The final question pertaining to the impact of Covid-19 asked respondents to provide a reason for the priority level they attach to skills development. Unfortunately, the available data does not allow one to link the reasons provided by respondents to the priority level they reported, making it difficult to analyse this data sensibly. Only a handful of the SETAs distinguished the reasons according to the priority indicated by respondents (or provided reasons where all respondents specified the same priority level) and only these results are described here:

CATHSSETA: Reasons provided by respondents were combined by priority level and it is therefore impossible to discern differences by firm size. Nevertheless, respondents that rated skills development as a high priority indicated that the impact of Covid-19 and reductions in staff numbers meant that upskilling was critical to enable the remaining workforce to multitask. Those that viewed it as a medium priority were focused on managing the impact of Covid-19 and upskilling workers to ensure operations continued under Covid-19 regulations. Finally, respondents who rated skills development as a low priority did so because they were focused on surviving the pandemic and did not have the resources for training.

ETDP SETA: Small firms that viewed skills development as a high priority did so because they experienced a shortage of skilled employees and needed to replace skills lost due to staff turnover to meet new business requirements. Medium firms cited the need for training to adapt in the face of a changing environment (in general and with respect to Covid-19), to maintain currency of skills and to improve efficiency. Large firms referred to the need for training to adapt in the face of a changing environment (in general and with respect to Covid-19), to respond to staff turnover and losses due to Covid-19, and as a way to motivate staff during the pandemic. Among firms that rated skills development as a medium priority, small firms cited their preference for continually refreshing and upgrading skills, while some indicated that Covid-19 had constrained budgets for skills development (and presumably lowered the priority to medium) or that they were time-constrained. Medium firms also cited financial constraints (in general or due to Covid-19) and the need for ongoing skills development. Large firms that indicated a medium rating cited financial constraints related to Covid-19. Finally, small and medium firms that rated skills development as a low priority typically pointed to Covid-19 and the consequent financial constraints, as they were struggling to survive the impact of the pandemic and avoid retrenchments. No large firm respondents rated skills development as a low priority.

FoodBev SETA: The small firm that identified skills development as a medium priority indicated that, while skills development was always a priority for them, the ongoing disruptions to activities caused by changing Covid-19 regulations and positive cases meant it would be a medium priority in the coming year.

FP&M SETA: Large and medium respondents that reported skills development as a high priority indicated that this was due to having identified organisational changes and gaps. No reasons were provided for those that rated it a low priority, while no respondents rated it a medium priority.

Inseta: Reasons reported were summarised by priority level, although only those that rated skills development as a medium priority provided reasons. These respondents spoke of difficulties finding suitable training providers, and that they evaluated training requests on an ad-hoc and individual basis.

SSETA: All medium and large respondents identified skills development as a high priority. Medium firms identified digitisation and modern technology as the reason, while large respondents cited the need for upskilling and reskilling. Small firms' reasons were combined across all three priority levels.

TETA: While TETA did not disaggregate reasons by priority level, all small firms rated skills development as a high priority in the coming year. Reasons provided included staff development and the need to keep skills current, to ensure safety and to comply with BBBEE scorecards.

In general, however, these responses paint a mixed picture of the impact of Covid-19 on the prioritisation of skills development. For some firms, the pandemic has led to changes in business and work environments that have re-emphasised the need for skills development. For other firms, however, the negative impact of the pandemic on operations, profitability and business continuity has meant that they have been constrained in their ability to focus on or finance skills development.

Skills
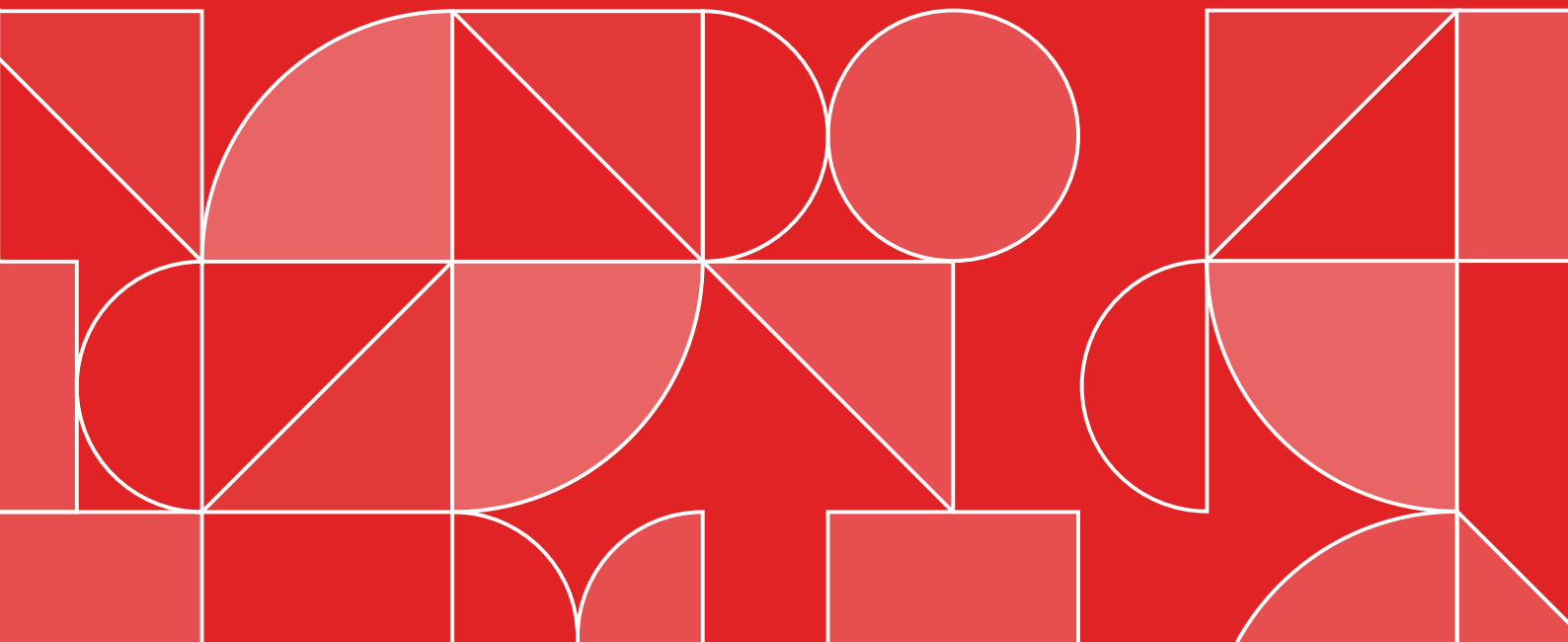
4.1 Hard-to-fill vacancies

Section 2 of the questionnaire focused on hard-to-fill vacancies (HTFVs), with employers asked to confirm whether they had experienced any. If they did, they were asked to identify the impacted occupations and the reasons for the HTFVs. Employers across the 21 SETAs identified more than 350 occupations as having experienced HTFVs. Given the large number of occupations specified and the high degree of variation across the SETAs, the occupations are listed in Table 7 in the Appendix. Instead, this section focuses on the reasons for the HTFVs.

Respondents' reasons for these HTFVs were categorised across 22 broad reasons. These reasons were in turn grouped into four main categories, namely worker-specific reasons, job-specific reasons, firm- or sector-specific reasons and other reasons. Worker-specific reasons are those related to worker characteristics, such as experience, qualifications and skills. Job-specific reasons are those related specifically to the job itself, such as the location of the job, remuneration and working conditions. Firm- or sector-specific reasons are those that relate specifically to the responding employer or to the broader sector, and include competition for workers (within and between sectors), equity considerations or slow recruitment processes. Finally, reasons relating to Covid-19, the skills pipeline and regulatory changes are grouped within the 'other reasons' category.

Figure 10 presents the number of SETAs where interviewed employers reported each of the 22 reasons. Since two SETAs did not report reasons for HTFVs, the maximum number of SETAs represented is 19. It is important to note here that the figure does not attempt to quantify the severity of particular reasons or the frequency with which they were experienced by employers. Worker-specific reasons and job-specific reasons tended to be the most-often cited reasons for HTFVs. Topping the list of reasons was a lack of relevant experience (16 out of 19 SETAs), followed by a lack of relevant qualifications (14), both of which are worker-specific reasons. Issues around remuneration were the third most-cited reason (12 SETAs). These concerns typically revolved around a mismatch between workers' expectations and what the employer viewed as reasonable or market-related, although some responses appeared to suggest that the salaries offered by employers are too low. Just under half of the SETAs (9) reported challenges around the geographical location of jobs. The latter reason covers concerns around lack of suitable applicants in the local area and candidates' resistance to relocating, either in general or with regards to the specific location of the job.

Other reasons that were relatively commonly cited across the SETAs included employment equity considerations (8 out of 19 SETAs); the fact that the occupation represents a scarce skill (8); competition for workers within and between SETAs, and with employers internationally (6); and a lack of qualifications aligned to the occupation (5).

WORKER-SPECIFIC

Lack relevant experience	16
Lack relevant qualification	14
Lack sector-sp. knowledge/skills	2
Lack soft skills	2
Over-/under-skilled	1

JOB-SPECIFIC

Geographical location	9
Remuneration	12
Working conditions	1
Emerging occupation	1
Changing job requirements	3

FIRM/SECTOR-SPECIFIC

Competition for workers	6
Equity considerations	8
Financial constraints	4
Firm-specific challenges	2
Sector less attractive	4
Slow recruitment processes	2

OTHER

Covid-19	4
Scarce skill	8
Problems in skills pipeline	4
No/few qualifications	5
Regulatory changes	4
Other	2

Source: Own calculations, SETA interviews with employers 2021 dataset.

Note:
Original responses recoded in the above categories. The EWSETA and MQA did not report reasons for HTFVs.

Table 1 provides a view of these reasons by SETA. Most of the SETAs cited around five reasons each, although SASSETA employers' responses covered 11 of the reasons, while those of HWSETA and TETA employers covered nine. It is perhaps worth highlighting some of the less frequently cited reasons here. Amongst the worker-specific reasons, Inseta and W&RSETA cited a lack of sector-specific knowledge and skills as a reason for HTFVs, while CATHSSETA and SASSETA were the only SETAs that highlighted a lack of soft skills as a constraint. AgriSETA was the only SETA that specifically mentioned candidates for positions being either over- or under-skilled relative to the job requirements.

Among the job-specific reasons, only employers within TETA highlighted working conditions as a reason for HTFVs. SASSETA employers cited as a reason the fact that the particular occupation is an emerging occupation, while employers within SASSETA, SSETA and TETA raised changing job requirements as reasons. The latter typically refers to rapid technological change, which may leave candidates' skills outdated or lacking for a particular position.

Employers within FP&M SETA and W&RSETA raised firm-specific challenges, while employers in LGSETA and PSETA, both public sector SETAs, raised the problem of slow recruitment processes as a reason for HTFVs. Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, Covid-19 was infrequently cited as a reason for HTFVs, having been raised only by employers within FoodBev SETA, MICT SETA, PSETA and SSETA. Employers within SASSETA viewed regulatory or legislative changes as a reason for HTFVs.

PART 4

TABLE 1: Reasons for hard-to-fill vacancies, by SETA

Category	REASON	AgriSETA	BANKSETA	CATHSSETA	CETA	CHIETA	ETDP SETA	EWSETA	Fasset	FoodBev SETA	FP&M SETA	HWSETA	Inseta	LGSETA	merSETA	MICT SETA	MQA	PSETA	SASSETA	SSETA	TETA	W&RSETA
Worker-specific	Lack relevant experience	X		X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Lack relevant qualification			X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	
	Lack sector-sp. knowledge/skills												X								X	X
	Lack soft skills			X															X			
	Over-/under-skilled	X																				
Job-specific	Geographical location	X		X		X				X				X			X				X	X
	Remuneration	X		X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X					X	X			X
	Working conditions											X										
	Emerging occupation																					
	Changing job requirements																				X	
	Competition for workers		X								X	X				X	X				X	
Firm/Sector-specific	Equity considerations				X	X		X	X			X	X					X	X	X		
	Financial constraints					X					X			X		X		X	X			
	Firm-specific challenges				X				X								X		X			
	Sector less attractive													X								X
	Slow recruitment processes													X				X				

REASON	AgriSETA	BANKSETA	CATHSSETA	CETA	CHIETA	ETDP SETA	EWSETA	Fasset	FoodBev SETA	FP&M SETA	HWSETA	Inseta	LGSETA	merSETA	MICT SETA	MQA	PSETA	SASSETA	SSETA	TETA	W&RSETA
Covid-19	X								X						X		X		X		
Scarce skill	X			X														X	X	X	X
Problems in skills pipeline					X			X			X	X						X		X	
No/few qualifications	X									X	X						X	X		X	
Regulatory changes																		X			
Other				X	X						X				X						
Count	6	1	5	6	8	–	4	5	5	4	9	6	5	–	5	5	7	11	5	9	6

Source: Compiled from SETA interviews with employers 2021 dataset.

Note:
Original responses recoded in the above categories.

4.2 Skills gaps

Skills gaps or top-up skills are defined as 'a situation where a worker lacks one or more of the particular skills required to effectively perform their job' (Khuluvhe et al., 2022: 19). The interview questionnaire asked employers to identify the three most common skills gaps within their organisation across three occupational groupings: high-level (managers and professionals), mid-level (technicians, associates, artisans and clerical) and lower-level (plant operators and elementary). Most SETAs listed all the responses they received across each of the occupational groupings, while a handful appear to have selected three within each grouping, resulting in wide variation in the number of skills gaps each SETA identified.

To facilitate analysis, the skills gaps within each occupational grouping were cleaned and simplified, resulting in a smaller number of different skills gaps. This resulted in 89 skills gaps for high-level occupations, 94 skills gaps for mid-level occupations and 63 skills gaps for lower-level occupations. Many of these skills gaps are interrelated, while different respondents might have used different levels of disaggregation when listing skills gaps (e.g., some mentioned 'soft skills', while others mentioned specific types of soft skills). We have not tried to re-aggregate skills within broader categories but have tried to keep them as close to their original form. These three sets of skills gaps are presented as word clouds in Figure 11 (high-level occupations), Figure 12 (mid-level occupations) and Figure 13 (lower-level occupations), with the size of the text indicating the frequency with which a particular skills gap was reported across the SETAs (not across respondents).[2]

FIGURE 11: Skills gaps in high-level occupations

Source: SETA interviews with employers 2021 dataset.

Note:
High-level occupations refer to managers and professionals.

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2   In other words, whether a skills gap is mentioned once or multiple times by employers within a given SETA for a particular set of occupations, that skills gap is only included once for that SETA.

For high-level occupations, leadership skills is the stand-out skills gap, mentioned by employers in 18 SETAs. This is followed by management skills (12 SETAs) and financial skills (10 SETAs). Other frequently cited skills gaps were emotional intelligence and strategic thinking (both 9 SETAs), change-management skills (8 SETAs) and people-management skills (7 SETAs). The need for individuals in these high-level occupations to lead and manage their respective organisations is clearly reflected in the types of skills gaps respondents identified, with technical and occupation-specific expertise typically less frequently cited.

For mid-level occupations, Figure 12 suggests a shift in emphasis. While leadership skills and management skills were still relatively frequently identified as skills gaps for these occupations (cited by employers within 9 and 10 SETAs, respectively), other skills gaps were more important. Technical skills were the most widely cited skills gaps within mid-level occupations, identified as such by employers in 12 SETAs. This was followed by communication skills and computer skills (e.g., computer literacy and familiarity with standard software packages), which were each cited by employers in 11 SETAs. Other important skills gaps for this level of occupation included supervisory skills, problem-solving skills, financial skills and information technology-related skills.

FIGURE 12: Skills gaps in mid-level occupations

Source: SETA interviews with employers 2021 dataset.

Note:
Mid-level occupations refer to technicians, associates, artisans and clerical occupations.

For lower-level occupations, there was a far greater emphasis on basic skills (Figure 13). Computer skills and communication skills were the most commonly cited skills gaps, with both mentioned by employers in 14 SETAs. Customer-service skills and technical skills were mentioned by employers in 9 and 7 SETAs, respectively. Other important skills gaps included writing skills (6 SETAs), health and safety-related skills (5 SETAs) and digital skills (5 SETAs). General literacy and numeracy skills, as well as IT skills and driving skills, were each mentioned by employers in 4 SETAs.

Source: SETA interviews with employers 2021 dataset.

Note:
Lower-level occupations refer to plant operators and elementary occupations.

4.3 Change drivers

Change drivers refer to pressures, either within organisations or outside organisations, that encourage change within an organisation. While change drivers can impact the way organisations operate, the types of activities they engage in and the technologies they employ, for example, they also hold important consequences for the types of skills organisations require and the types of training interventions they choose to engage in.

In the employer interview, respondents were asked to identify three major change drivers that their organisation experienced and then to highlight the implications of the change drivers for skills development within their organisation. Table 2 presents an overview of the types of change drivers employers across the 21 SETAs identified. Change drivers were classified into 11 broad types: Covid-19; remote working; technology; the political environment; the economic environment; the socioeconomic context; legislation, regulation and compliance; transformation; climate change, environment and green technologies; industry-specific change drivers; and other change drivers. It should be acknowledged that some of these change drivers are quite difficult to separate from each other; for example, Covid-19 and remote working go hand in hand and are also closely linked to technology, while the economic environment has been significantly impacted by the pandemic.

Three change drivers emerged as being particularly important across the 21 SETAs. First, employers in 17 SETAs cited technology as a change driver. Second, employers in 14 of the SETAs mentioned Covid-19, as well as legislation, regulation and compliance. While these three change drivers were relatively commonly experienced across the SETAs, a number of employers identified change drivers that were specific to their industry; these kinds of sector-specific change drivers were cited by employers across 11 SETAs.

TABLE 2: Major change drivers reported by employers, by SETA

REASON	AgriSETA	BANKSETA	CATHSSETA	CETA	CHIETA	ETDP SETA	EWSETA	Fasset	FoodBev SETA	FP&M SETA	HWSETA	Inseta	LGSETA	merSETA	MICT SETA	MQA	PSETA	SASSETA	SSETA	TETA	W&RSETA	COUNT
Covid-19	X		X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X					X	X	X	X	X	14
Remote working				X				X						X				X		X	X	6
Technology		X	X	X		X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	17
Political environment																	X		X		X	3
Economic environment				X			X						X	X		X	X		X	X		8
Socioeconomic context				X																	X	2
Legislation, regulation, compliance		X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X				X		X	X	X	X	14
Transformation				X																X	X	3
Climate change, environment, green tech	X								X	X				X		X				X		6
Industry-specific	X	X		X					X		X				X	X	X	X		X	X	11
Other				X									X	X	X				X	X		6
Count	3	3	3	9	–	3	3	4	3	4	3	3	3	5	3	5	5	5	6	9	8	

Source: Compiled from SETA interviews with employers 2021 dataset.

Note:
Original responses recoded in the above categories.

4.4 Future skills

The interview questionnaire asked three questions related to future skills. First, it asked respondents how Covid-19 and other change drivers impacted the kinds of skills required by the organisation. Second, it asked respondents to identify new and emerging skills gaps in the organisation. Third, it asked respondents to identify new and emerging occupations within the organisation.

In terms of the impact of Covid-19 and other change drivers on the kinds of skills required, there are some challenges in terms of formulating a coherent picture. First, it is clear that respondents interpreted the question slightly differently, with some having focused on skills while others focused on the impacts of the change drivers on the organisation. Second, it is not always clear whether respondents were talking about the impact of Covid-19 or some other change driver and, if it was another change driver, it is not clear which change driver they were referring to. As a result, we begin with an overview of the responses provided by each SETA to this question.

- **AgriSETA:** Workers need to be upskilled in areas including health and safety, computer skills, and communication and strategic planning; upskilling in occupational health and safety is required to reduce the numbers of Covid-19 cases in the workplace and to reduce workplace injuries; communication skills are required in response to the changing business environment, and to motivate employees and maintain good working relationships; and skills are needed in areas such as hydroponics operation, drone operation, and robotics and data analysis, in response to the Fourth Industrial Revolution.
- **BANKSETA:** More innovative, digital-centric programming skills are required; basic Information and Technology (IT) skills are required to enable employees to maintain seamless contact with both internal and external stakeholders, as the organisation moves towards remote working; and performance-management skills are required to ensure management is able to monitor and foster high performance within a remote working environment.
- **CATHSSETA:** No response provided.
- **CETA**: Covid-19 and the lockdowns impacted business sustainability; there is an increased need for computer skills and familiarity with video-conferencing and similar technologies; employers are looking for multi-skilled staff in order to continue meeting deadlines, since Covid-19 is impacting staff availability; Covid-19 impacted training, and has interrupted the face-to-face interactions and on-site training necessary within the construction sector; and there is a need for skills and upskilling in the areas of risk assessments and compliance, supply chain policy and cognitive skills (including problem-solving and innovation).
- **CHIETA:** Production processes need to adapt to evolving customer preferences, including the shift to purchasing products online; skills planning and skills priorities have been adapted in response to Covid-19 pressures; Covid-19 has negatively impacted the efficiency and pace of training; there is an increased need for teams that are able to collaborate across functions; and computer literacy skills are required.
- **ETDP SETA:** There is a need for flexibility in working patterns; skills related to virtual teaching and learning; Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills (and related infrastructure) to support online teaching and facilitation, for example; financial-planning skills; emotional intelligence and resilience; upskilling of managers with respect to human resources and labour law; and basic managerial skills.

- **EWSETA:** Computer literacy skills are required to facilitate remote working; adaptive project-management skills are required to ensure project continuity and completion; and austerity business-management skills are required to see organisations through difficult business conditions.

- **Fasset:** Trainees must be adaptable and able to handle change; there is a need for flexibility among employees; and employees need to be upskilled with respect to new legislation and how to utilise that knowledge to assist clients.

- **FoodBev SETA:** The sector has been significantly impacted by the lockdown alcohol bans, which have led to substantial reductions in investment in training and staff development; the pandemic and associated lockdowns have disrupted supply chains and employers' access to raw materials; Covid-19 has, in some instances, accelerated the need for technology but not all employers are in a position to implement new systems or invest in new infrastructure; and the pandemic is viewed as having increased the cost of doing business, as well as the level of competition within the sector.

- **FP&M SETA:** The necessity of being able to work and interact remotely due to the pandemic has increased the need for computer, technical and communication skills, particularly given that the sector has historically depended on face-to-face contact; Covid-19 has also resulted in lost training time; skills are needed to manage the impact on the sector of the Fourth Industrial Revolution; there is a need for digital literacy skills, good judgement and decision-making skills, emotional resilience, creativity, cognitive flexibility, software development and programming skills; and employers mentioned the need to embrace technology and upskill workers in order to minimise job losses.

- **HWSETA:** There is a need for online therapy skills, technology skills, innovation skills, change-management skills, occupational health and safety skills, and skills related to new and emerging diseases; and there is a need for staff to be multi-skilled.

- **Inseta:** Digital literacy and technical know-how are required; there is a need for training in understanding new legislation, specifically the Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act; linked to the POPI Act, good IT skills are required to ensure proper protection and processing of personal information; there is a need for upskilling generally in the area of understanding technology, in order for companies to properly integrate technology within their processes; change-management skills are required.

- **LGSETA:** Due to the pandemic, new skills are required, including IT, cybersecurity, occupational health and safety, and leadership skills; municipalities need to focus on emerging skills related to the Internet of Things, innovation and the Fourth Industrial Revolution; and employees need upskilling in computer skills.

- **merSETA:** No response provided.

- **MICT SETA:** Positive impacts include increased off-shoring of services, improvements in the ability to innovate and the fact that remote work has opened up a larger pool of skills in other provinces; on the negative side, employers list as impacts retrenchments, reductions in the numbers of students trained, closure of branches and reduced income.

- **Mining Qualifications Authority (MQA):** There is a need for skills in the areas of data interpretation, digital communication, solution architecture, drone piloting and Covid-19 compliance.

- **PSETA:** Covid-19 has had a strong impact through an increase in the demand for IT and computer skills; most employees, however, have been supported to shift to working from home in order to ensure business continuity; the ongoing trend of technological change means that skills strategies must emphasise the relevant skills; the pandemic has also had immediate impacts on workers in lower-level occupations; and there is a need for improvements to e-learning systems.

- **SASSETA:** The move to remote work has strained staff and resources while increasing the demand for computer literacy and management skills, as well as for online training to minimise Covid-19 exposures; Covid-19 has triggered a shift to digital marketing, often requiring skills that employers have typically not employed, and has increased employers' reliance on efficient IT platforms; lockdowns have had a negative impact in terms of completing projects; and there is a need for creativity and innovation.
- **SSETA:** Workers need to be able to adapt to remote working, particularly with regards to managing themselves and their time without supervision; Covid-19 has resulted in the shift to remote and online work but has also forced employers to suspend particular activities, including training activities; and Covid-19 has necessitated a shift in the focus of training activities towards health and safety-related topics.
- **TETA:** There are a range of impacts that speak to technology and technological proficiency; remote working has highlighted that travel is not always necessary and has increased the need for virtual working skills; at the same time, there are challenges with respect to equipping workers to work from home; there is increased demand for workers that are technologically proficient and computer literate, as more computer-based work is expected; and there is a need for skills related to IT, leadership, problem-solving, emotional intelligence and artificial intelligence.
- **W&RSETA:** There is a need for technology-related skills and computer literacy, due to the shift to remote and online working; in addition, emotional intelligence is highlighted as an important skill; and the rise of e-commerce has been an important trend and necessitates investment in relevant skills.

It is clear from the above that the pandemic has had a number of important impacts, some of the most immediate being the increased emphasis on skills to facilitate remote working, and the disruption of normal training and staff development activities. The latter was often due to the economic hardships experienced by employers during the pandemic, although mention was also made of the challenges around online learning as a reason for reduced training. While each sector has its unique concerns, it does appear that the Covid-19 pandemic has served to re-emphasise the trend towards digitisation, automation and computerisation of work.

In terms of new and emerging skills gaps, employers' responses as reported by the SETAs were classified using the same broad set of categories used in the analysis of skills gaps for the three occupational groups. In this question, however, respondents were not asked to identify skills gaps for particular occupational categories. Figure 14 presents these new and emerging skills gaps as reported by the SETAs. Once again, skills gaps repeated by employers within a particular SETA are only included once.

Source: SETA interviews with employers 2021 dataset.

At the top of the list are technical skills, mentioned by employers in 15 of the SETAs. This is followed by IT skills and leadership skills, which were highlighted by employers in 12 and 11 SETAs, respectively. Other commonly cited skills were digital skills (9 SETAs), and data analytics and industry-specific skills (each 8 SETAs). Computer skills, emotional intelligence, innovation and soft skills were all mentioned by employers in 7 SETAs.

Finally, Table 3 lists the new and emerging occupations identified by respondents.

TABLE 3: New and emerging occupations, by SETA

SETA	NEW AND EMERGING OCCUPATIONS
AgriSETA	Lab technician; Trainee silo operator; Trainee grain grader; Technical management infrastructure; Area manager; Risk officer; Compliance; Mapping/drone specialist; Sugar processing technologist; Wood chip specialist; e-Cigarettes marketing; Junior ginning manager; Cotton ginning technician; Drone pilot
BANKSETA	Data scientist; Project manager; Data steward; Policy specialist; Business analyst; Compliance; Big data; Financial analyst; Data analyst; Digital marketer; Product developer; Systems developer
CATHSSETA	Technical support; Developer; Credit controller; Head of audio-visual; Data analyst; Digital & IT expert; Instructional designer; Product designer; Covid-19 compliance officer; Food and beverage ambassador; Front office service ambassador; Guest experience manager; Guest experience ambassador; Mixologist; Safety officer; Health, safety and compliance officer; Digital specialist; Online facilitator, coach; Gaming manager; Electrician; Plumber; Artificial intelligence specialist; Organisational strategist; Wellness roles; Transformational HR staff; Business intelligence; Software developer; e-Learning specialist; Videographer; Web developer; ICT technician; Digital marketer
CETA	Civil and mechanical engineer; Consultant; Safety and risk management officer; Symtel operator; IT/Technology; Drop operator; Site administrator; Buyer/estimator; Information security officer; Contractor participation officer; Process artisans; Quirk deck level 1; Quick deck level 2; IRATA rope access; Safety officer; Commercial specialist; Electrician; Project manager; Professional engineer; Sales, designer and drafter

SETA	NEW AND EMERGING OCCUPATIONS
CHIETA	Line supervisor; Lab technician; Gas installer; Technical paint specialist; IT technician; Quality assurance; Applications support; Project manager; Covid-19 screening; Medical liaison; Mechatronics; Engineers with pharmaceutical expertise; Chemical operator; Process operator
ETDP SETA	Specialist robotics teacher; IT & remedial facilitator; e-Learning specialist; Online instructional designer; LMS administrator; Health and safety officer; Cybersecurity specialist; Data analyst
EWSETA	Alternative energy technician
Fasset	–
FoodBev SETA	Online logistics; Supply chain specialist; Packaging engineer; Production engineer; Food scientist/technologist; Logistics manager; Marketing and sales; Food technologist; Biotechnologist; Microbiologist
FP&M SETA	Big data analyst; Multi-skilled controller; Covid-19 officer; Data scientist; Industrial engineer
HWSETA	Screening station controller; Clinical facilitator; Nurse oncology; Nurse informatics; Nurse navigator
Inseta	Compliance officer; POPIA specialist; Actuary; Systems analyst; Data analyst; Complex claim handler
LGSETA	2019-252901: ICT Security Specialist (cyber-security); 2019-133101: ICT/IT Manager (e-learning, cyber security, systems, cloud computing); 2019-226302: Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Advisor/Coordinator/Officer/ Professional; 2019-121905: Programme/Project Manager (ICT); 2019-242305: Occupational Analyst
merSETA	–
MICT SETA	Cybersecurity engineer; Solutions architect; Cloud engineer; Software developer; Web designer; Programmer; Digital marketer; Content creator and blogger; Virtual reality; Retoucher
MQA	Data interpretation; Digital communication; Solution architecture; Drone pilot; Covid compliance officer
PSETA	Big data specialist; IT analyst; Public policy and planning manager; Knowledge worker; Software and application developer; Data analyst; AI and machine learning specialist; ICDL
SASSETA	Online facilitator, assessor and moderator; Occupational health and safety; Covid-19 compliance officer; Specialised technical staff; Advanced control room operator; Data analytics; Client centricity; Call and service centre operator; Security officer; Project manager; Lecturer; Road safety engineer; M&E practitioner; Law professional
SSETA	Cybersecurity; Digital marketing; Real estate NQF4 and NQF5; Auctioneer; Digital marketer; Health and safety; Marketing and sales training; Commercial cleaner; Data scientist; System engineer; Mobile app developer; Programmer; e-Commerce manager; Industrial engineer; Professional nurse; Wellness manager; Systems engineer; Junior designated agent; Operational manager; Sales manager; Technology officer
TETA	Training officer for vessel crew; Continuous improvement officer; Quality managers; Business intelligence; Employee wellbeing specialist; Software engineer; Data analyst; Hydraulic engineer; Energy efficiency manager; Transport clerk; Programme director; Health and safety manager; Social media manager; Communication specialist; Fleet controller; IT technician
W&RSETA	Finance manager; IT specialist; HR specialist; Artisan development; ICT administrator; Data analyst; Data visualisation; e-Commerce specialist; Tech specialist; Marketing practitioner

Source: SETA interviews with employers 2021 dataset.

4.5 Priority education and training interventions

Finally, respondents were asked to identify three priority education and training interventions necessary for their organisations to respond to skills needs. This question elicited a wide variety of responses. Some respondents identified particular training interventions (e.g., financial-management training or cybersecurity courses); others highlighted particular skills (e.g., technology skills or emotional intelligence); others identified specific occupations (e.g., social-worker supervision or social-media manager); while still others listed training modalities (e.g., learnerships, apprenticeships or on-the-job training). Apart from the latter types of responses, all responses were categorised into different types of education and training interventions, with the categories reflecting the focus of the intervention (as opposed to a particular modality). The broad types of interventions are focused on: leadership-related skills; management-related skills; occupation-specific skills; technical skills; administrative skills; computer-related skills; product-specific skills; skills related to legislation or regulation; health, safety and wellness skills; adult basic education and training (ABET) interventions; principles; and soft skills.

The numbers of SETAs whose employers identified interventions within these 12 broad categories, as well as a catch-all other category, are presented in Table 4. There are two types of interventions that stand out, having been cited by employers in 16 of the 18 SETAs that provided data on this question: technical skills, which are specialised skills that can be used across a relatively broad range of occupations (e.g., sales and marketing skills, data analysis skills or financial skills) and computer-related skills, which are typically computer literacy and general software skills. These were followed by occupation-specific skills, leadership-related skills, and skills related to health, safety and wellness, mentioned by employers in 12, 11 and 10 SETAs, respectively. Occupation-specific skills typically include skills that are closely tied to a limited set of occupations or occupation-linked qualifications, such as plumbing skills, IT technicians or Bachelor of Education. Leadership-related skills were typically listed as such by respondents, although they did differentiate between different levels (e.g., middle management or top management), or between different types of leadership (e.g., agile leadership or ethical leadership).

Soft skills were mentioned by employers in 9 SETAs, while legislation- and regulation-related skills were mentioned by employers in 7 SETAs. The remaining types of interventions were mentioned much less commonly across the SETAs.

TYPE OF INTERVENTION	AgriSETA	BANKSETA	CATHSSETA	CETA	CHIETA	ETDP SETA	EWSETA	Fasset	FoodBev SETA	FP&M SETA	HWSETA	Inseta	LGSETA	merSETA	MICT SETA	MQA	PSETA	SASSETA	SSETA	TETA	W&RSETA	COUNT
Leadership-related		X	X	X						X	X	X		X			X	X		X	X	11
Management-related		X	X	X	X			X			X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	14
Occupation-specific			X	X	X	X					X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	12
Technical skills		X	X	X	X					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	16
Administrative																		X				1
Computer-related skills		X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	16
Product-specific														X								1
Legislation-/Regulation-related			X	X							X	X					X	X		X		7
Health, safety, wellness			X	X		X					X		X			X	X	X	X	X		10
ABET			X	X														X				3
Principles					X																	1
Soft skills			X	X	X			X		X				X			X	X		X	X	9
Other			X	X															X		X	4

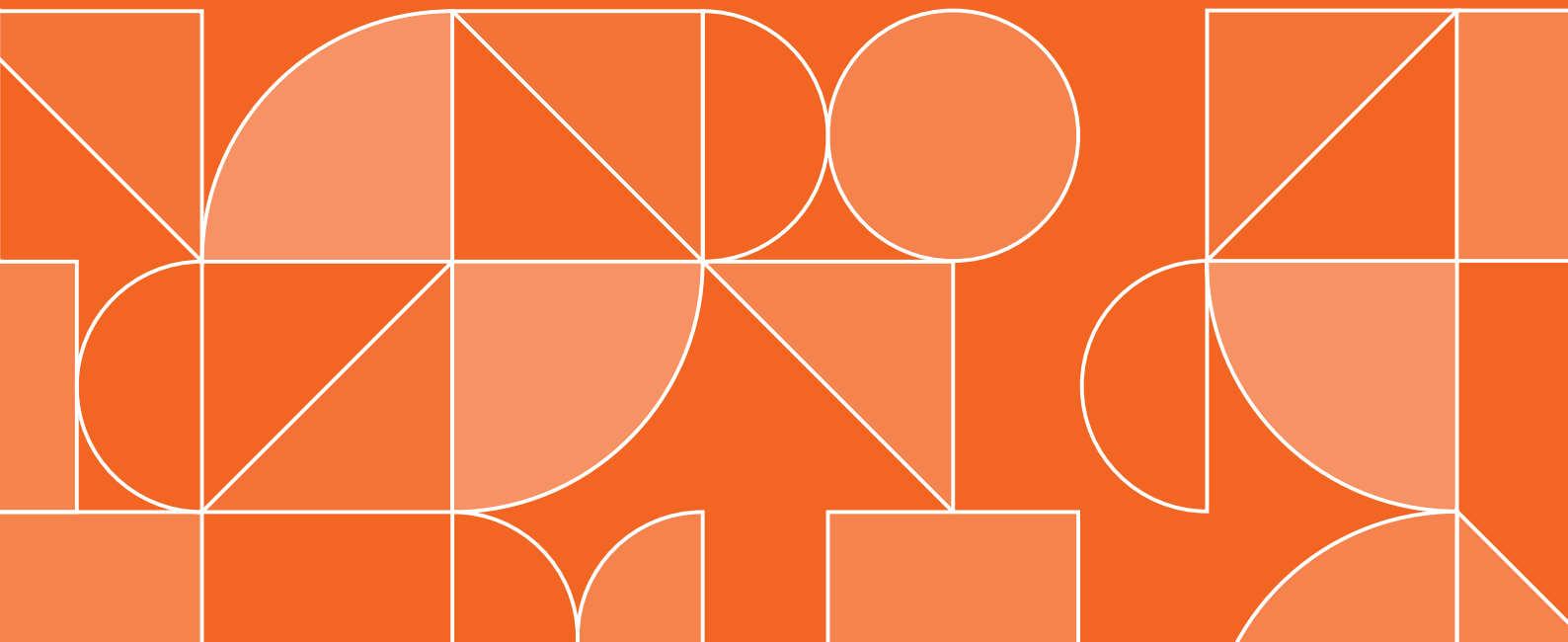Source: Compiled from SETA interviews with employers 2021 dataset.

Note:
Original responses recoded in the above categories. Some SETAs only provided education and training modalities (e.g., learnerships, apprenticeships), rather than describing the content or focus of the training.

PART 5

Conclusion

The aim of this report was to analyse the data collected by the SETAs through a series of interviews with employers in their sector and to provide an overview of the information that emerged.

In many respects, the impacts of Covid-19 on employers are evident in their interview responses. Employers made it clear in various parts of the interviews that Covid-19 has directly impacted their operations, by negatively impacting their revenues and profits, by forcing significant and oftentimes costly changes to their mode of operation in terms of remote working, and by necessitating a reassessment of priorities. These challenges have disrupted training programmes and complicated training provision.

These effects have directly impacted workers and work-seekers in various ways. First, employees have been forced to adapt rapidly to a significant change in the working environment and in the mode of work, while also having to navigate the practicalities of lockdown on a personal level. This is reflected in repeated references by employers to skills such as adaptability, flexibility, time management and self-management, as well as to things such as employee wellness and team management. Second, the changes associated with remote working have spawned demand for very specific skills centred on computer and remote-work technologies. This has necessitated an upskilling of employees in these areas, while also raising the profile of these skills within the context of recruitment. In turn, this increased demand for these skills has translated into greater demand for training interventions in these areas.

However, at the same time, it seems that Covid-19 has in many ways merely highlighted a narrow set of computer- and technology-related skills, which have become increasingly important. Technological change was the most commonly-cited change driver of the 10 broad categories, with employers needing to adopt new technologies in order to maintain competitiveness in an increasingly globalised economy. Technological change, the Fourth Industrial Revolution, automation and digitisation were frequently mentioned in employers' responses in terms of current and emerging skills gaps, and emerging occupations.
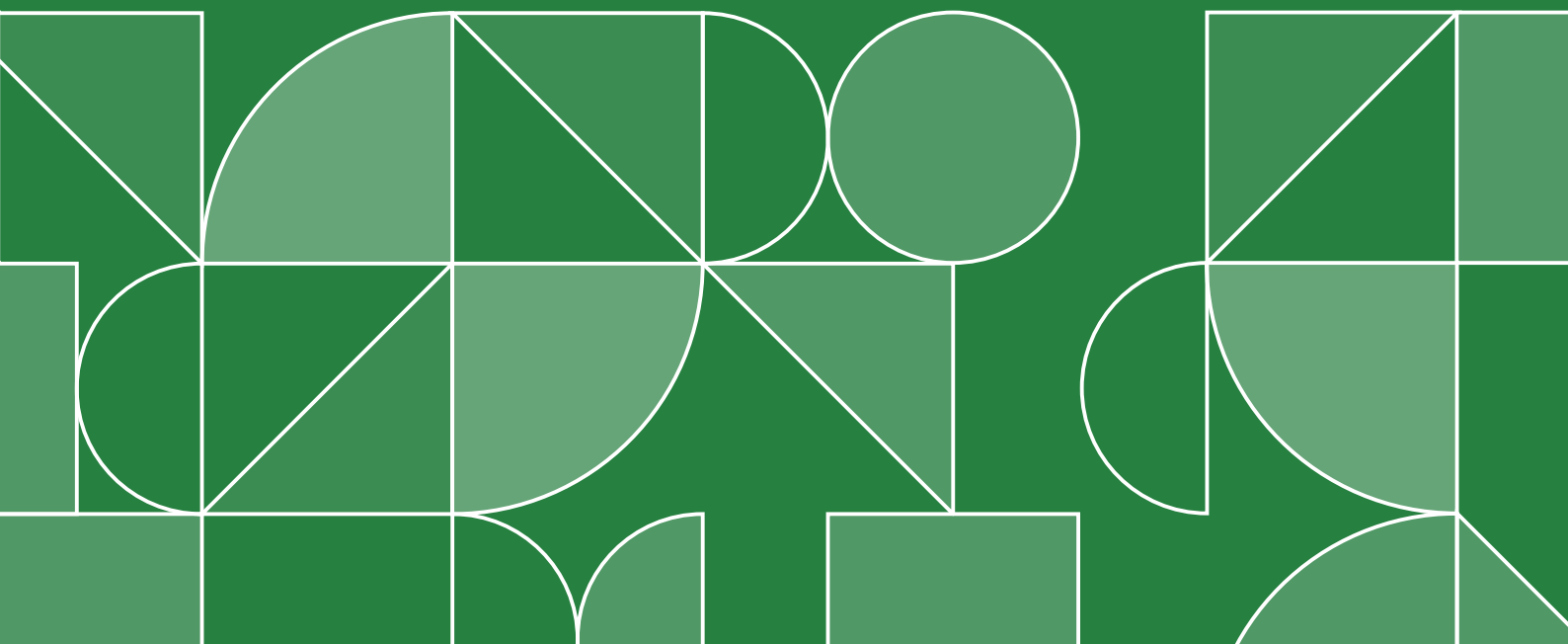
Unfortunately, however, there are some challenges with the interview instrument in terms of identifying the specific impacts of Covid-19 and there is scope to refine the interview guide to collect data in a way that can be analysed more usefully. Recommendations in this regard have already been made to the DHET.
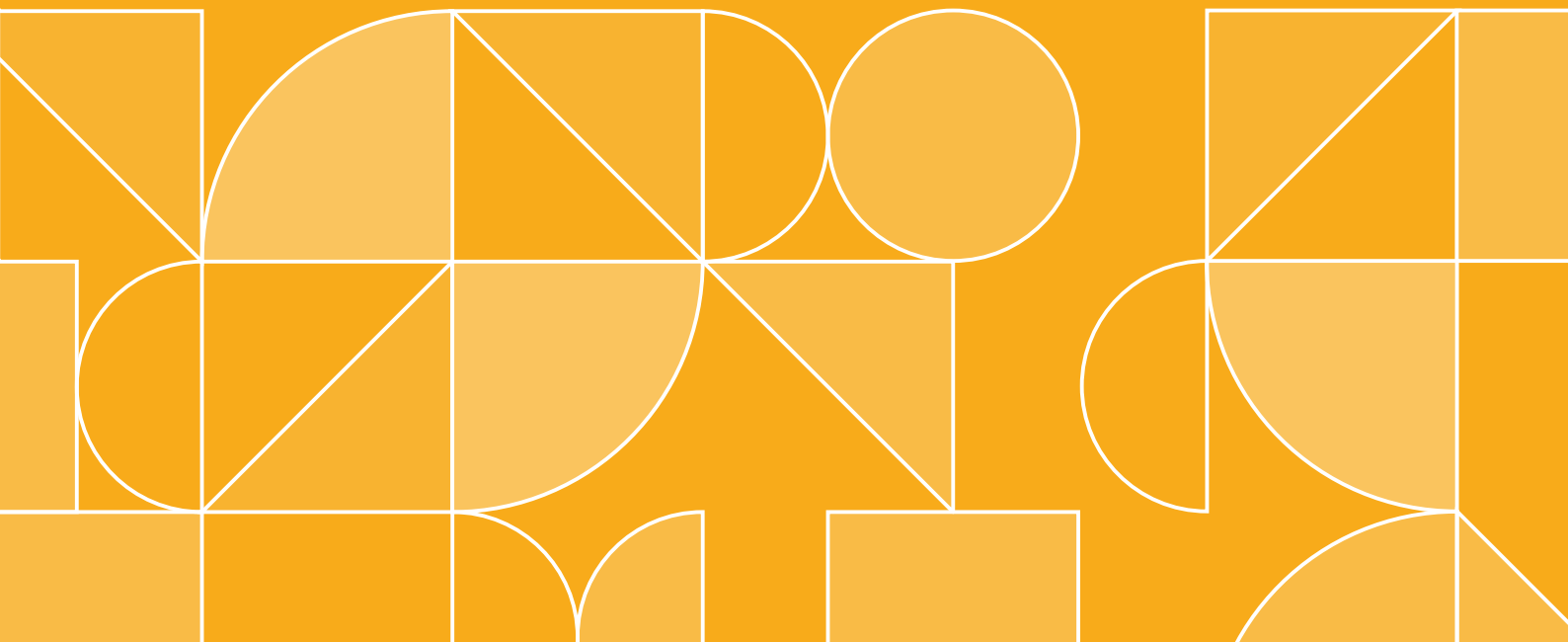
PART 6

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Appendix

TABLE 5: SETAs and subsectors covered

SETA	SUBSECTORS
AgriSETA	Tobacco; seed; poultry; red meat; pest control; milling, pet food and animal feed; sugar; fibre; aquaculture; grains and cereals
BANKSETA	Alternative banking; banking
CATHSSETA	Tourism and travel services; hospitality; gaming and lotteries; conservation and tourism guiding; sports, recreation and fitness; arts, culture and heritage
CETA	Built environment profession; material manufacturing; building construction; roads and civil construction; electrical
CHIETA	Fertilisers; explosives; petroleum; base chemicals; pharmaceuticals; FMCG; speciality chemicals; surface coatings; glass
ETDP SETA	Private schools; public schools; public higher education institutions (PHEI); technical and vocational education and training (TVET); private education and training (PET), higher education and training (HET), and further education and training (FET); statutory bodies; trade unions; political parties; early childhood development (ECD); non-governmental organisations (NGOs)
EWSETA	Generation of energy; generation of renewable energy; project management, maintenance and operation of electrical generation, transmission and distribution, plants, networks and systems; manufacturing of gas and distribution of gaseous fuels through mains; collection, purification and distribution of water; public water enterprises; private water companies; irrigation boards; water and sanitation services (potable water supply, domestic wastewater and sewage)
Fasset	Investment entities, trusts and company secretary services; stockbroking and financial markets; development organisations; accounting, booking, auditing and tax services; activities auxiliary to financial intermediation; business and management services
FoodBev SETA	Oils and fats industry; meat industry; fruits and vegetable industry; fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry; beverages; wine and spirits; dairy
FP&M SETA	Clothing and textiles; clothing manufacturing; pulp and paper; furniture; footwear and leather; paper packaging; printing, packaging, signage and visual communications; publishing; fibre processing; forestry
HWSETA	Health: hospital services; other human health activities – medical laboratories; retail sale of pharmaceutical and medical goods; other medical and dental activities; medical and vet research. Welfare: residential care activities (orphanages); social work activities
Inseta	Health care benefits administration; pension fund; life insurance; short-term insurance; risk management; unit trusts; activities auxiliary to financial intermediation; reinsurance; funeral insurance
LGSETA	Local government sector includes local, district and metropolitan municipalities, as well as municipal entities
merSETA	Auto; motor retail; plastics; new tyre; metal
MICT SETA	Telecommunications; film and electronic media; advertising; information technology
MQA	The data sources included information from the MQA such as the APR and SP, external reports from various institutions such as the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE), DHET, Department of Basic Education (DBE), and Minerals Council South Africa (MCSA), Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), different e-publications, newspaper articles and press releases and Successful Application of Technologies Centred Around People (SATCAP) stakeholder sessions.

SETA	SUBSECTORS
PSETA	National departments; provincial departments; legislative sector; public entities
SASSETA	Private security; legal; corrections; policing
SSETA	Hiring services; cleaning services; marketing and communication; postal services; labour recruitment services; collective services; business services; hair care; funeral services; fashion services; real estate services
TETA	Forwarding and clearing; freight handling; maritime; rail; road freight; road passenger; taxi
W&RSETA	Wholesale; education and training; retailers; wholesalers of fuel retail; staffing

TABLE 6: Respondents across SETAs, by employer size

SETA	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS				SHARE (%)		
	TOTAL	SMALL	MEDIUM	LARGE	SMALL	MEDIUM	LARGE
AgriSETA	18	0	1	17	0.0	5.6	94.4
BANKSETA	5	0	1	4	0.0	20.0	80.0
CATHSSETA	32	10	11	11	31.3	34.4	34.4
CETA	38	6	15	17	15.8	39.5	44.7
CHIETA	10	2	2	6	20.0	20.0	60.0
ETDP SETA	149	81	43	25	54.4	28.9	16.8
EWSETA	30	12	11	7	40.0	36.7	23.3
Fasset	116	39	28	49	33.6	24.1	42.2
FoodBev SETA	11	1	1	9	9.1	9.1	81.8
FP&M SETA	25	0	13	12	0.0	52.0	48.0
HWSETA	39	20	3	16	51.3	7.7	41.0
Inseta	31	11	10	10	35.5	32.3	32.3
LGSETA	20	0	2	18	0.0	10.0	90.0
merSETA	10	0	2	8	0.0	20.0	80.0
MICT SETA	74	54	11	9	73.0	14.9	12.2
MQA	0	0	0	0	–	–	–
PSETA	11	0	1	10	0.0	9.1	90.9
SASSETA	56	23	17	16	41.1	30.4	28.6
SSETA	24	20	2	2	83.3	8.3	8.3
TETA	47	6	11	30	12.8	23.4	63.8
W&RSETA	10	3	2	5	30.0	20.0	50.0
Total	756	288	187	281	38.1	24.7	37.2

Source: Compiled from SETA interviews with employers 2021 dataset.

TABLE 7: Occupations characterised by hard-to-fill vacancies, by SETA

SETA	OCCUPATIONS
AgriSETA	Millwright; Grain grader; Silo manager; Depot manager; Electrician; Assistant silo managers; Manager: Silo services; Grain traders; Grain marketers; Farm manager; Financial manager; Sales representatives; Product specialist; Plant pathologist; Plant breeder; Seed production officer; Farm inspector; Grower/Assistant grower; Seed analysts; Area manager; Innovation specialist; Management accountant; Engineering manager; Farm maintenance workers; Factory manager; Pan boilers; Market research analyst; Corporate communications manager; Tobacco grader; Tobacco valuator; Tobacco agronomist; Cotton ginning manager; Cotton gin technician; Cotton harvester driver
BANKSETA	Software developer; Chief financial officer; Chief commercial officer
CATHSSETA	Developers in the tourism industry; Instructional designers; Teaching and learning management specialist; Catering manager; (Executive) Chefs; Call centre agents; Traders; Branch manager; Production manager; Producer; Stage and lighting design
CETA	Construction site and project management; Experienced and qualified artisans and linesmen; Contacts managers; Senior estimators; Qualified South African Council for the Project and Construction Management Professions (SSACPCMP) site managers; Lab technician; Scaffolder/Erector inspector; Steel fixer; Registered water design engineers; Plant managers; Pump operators; Specialised press technicians; Scaffolding project manager; Fibre optic technician; Competent estimators; Qualified surveyor technician; Professional scientist (level 6); Senior scientist (level 5); Senior hydrologist (level 5); Hydrologist (level 5); Senior professional engineer (levels 5–6); Seniors digital modeller (levels 5–6); Mechanical engineer (levels 5–6); Associates (level 8); Technical director (level 9); Project manager(levels 5–6); Rock scientist (levels 5–6); Data science technologists (level 5); Commercial lead (level 8); Construction managers (middle-income project)
CHIETA	Lab technician; National sales manager; Technical paint; Specialist engineering/Maintenance; Managers; Clinical pharmacologist; Tax professional; Commercial analyst; Supply chain manager; Compliance manager
ETDP SETA	FET phase school teacher (Grades 10–12); School principal; Training and development professional; ECD practitioner; Programme/Project manager; University lecturer; TVET educator; Electrical/Telecommunication trades assistant; Data scientist; Research and development manager; Special needs teacher; Software developer; Faculty head
EWSETA	Civil engineer; Electrical engineer; Electrical engineering technician; Energy technician; Maintenance fitter; Mechanical engineer; Planning and development manager; Programme/Project manager; Water treatment plant technician
Fasset	Accountants; Audit manager; Head of tax; Cybersecurity specialist; Tax specialist
FoodBev SETA	Finance manager; Seafood packer; Account clerks; Laboratory technician; Manufacturing operations supervisor; Maintenance manager; Packaging engineers; Biotechnologists; Sales manager; Manufacturing operations manager; Quality controller; Warehouse manager; Food and beverage scientist/technician; Occupational instructor; Systems administrator; Stock clerk/officer; Millwright; Logistics manager; Chemical engineer; Dairy man; Production and operations supervisors; Engineering manager; Mechanical engineering technician
FP&M SETA	Accountant in trade union setting; Production managers; Garment engineering; Management positions; Senior brand manager; electrical and instrumentation (E&I) Engineer with Factory Government Certificate of Competence (GCC); Engineering managers; Pre-press; Printing; Packaging and print finishing subject-matter expert lecturers; Managerial positions; Finance managers; Project managers; Managing director; Engineering - Boiler Engineers; Millwrights; Services technicians
HWSETA	Medical superintendent (hospital manager); Nursing clinical director; Social services manager; Statistician; Biomedical technologist; Psychiatrist; Radiation oncologist; Registered nurse (paediatrics); Registered nurse (critical care and emergency); Registered nurse (operating theatre); Registered nurse (oncology); Midwife; Hospital pharmacist; Economist (health); Medical laboratory technician; Enrolled nurse; Vet nurse; Childcare worker; Phlebotomist

SETA	OCCUPATIONS
Inseta	Insurance brokers; Sales and marketing manager; Sales management-leadership; Actuarial analysts; Senior actuary (audit support); Senior claims representative – short term; Claims advocacy specialists; Claims surveyor (short-term) industry experience; Underwriters (complex underwriting – financial lines); Compliance officers.
LGSETA	Civil engineer; Finance manager; Electrical engineer; Electrical engineering technician; Internal audit manager; Community development manager; Corporate services manager; Municipal manager; Informationan and Communication Technology (ICT) security specialist; Health and safety officer
merSETA	Motor technician; Electronics technician; Financial skills; Diesel technician; Electrical engineering manager (senior level); Engineer; Certified service advisor; Sales manager (senior level); Manufacturing supervision; Finance management
MICT SETA	IT specialists; Web designers; Programmers; Coders; Principal network engineers; Rigging technical engineers; Animators; Retoucher; Advertising strategist; Data analysts; Sales assistants - B2B; Trainers – B2B
MQA	Mining manager; General manager; Rock engineers; Occupational hygienists; Auto electrician
PSETA	Cyber cadets; Librarians; Finance manager; Human resource manager; Policy and planning manager; Organisation and methods analyst; Corporate services manager; Applications programmer
SASSETA	National key point; VIP drivers; Riot control and bodyguard; Investigators; Candidate attorneys; Customer service manager; HR manager; Finance manager; Operational manager; Finance administrator; Pastel office clerks; COVID-19 compliance officer; Technicians; Control room operators; Anti-poaching staff; Innovation manager; Facilitator; Project manager; Risk manager; Conveyancing secretary; Call centre/ service centre operator; Security officer; Communications officer; Armed response officer; 2019-252301- Computer network and systems engineer; ICT Officer; Legal secretary; Attorney; Deployment officer; Software developer
SSETA	Drivers; Material development; Health and safety officers; Leadership and management development; Direct marketing; Graphic designer; Rental agents; Health and safety officer; Warehouse manager; Sales and marketing manager; Property valuer; Auctioneers; Facility management; Property management; Generic management; Health and safety manager; Commercial cleaner; Healthcare cleaner; Cleaning supervisor; Retail manager; Pharmacist; Buyer; System Application and Products (SAP) Systems engineer; Strategic sales; Consulting; Market share; Strategic marketer
TETA	Skippers, Engineers; Crane operators; Deck officers; Sales executives; Supply chain practitioners; Truck driver; Transport controller; Engineering operations (warehousing and distribution roles); Engineers, Industry salespeople; Depot manager; Hydraulic engineer; Business development manager; Sales estimators; Artificial Intelligence Manager/Developer; Transport Clerk: Drone Scheduler; Transport clerk: self-driving vehicle scheduler; Risk compliance manager; Data analyst; Health and safety officer; Customs compliance manager; Business improvement specialist; Fishing boat skipper; Ship mate; Boat driver/Coxswain; Project managers; Drivers with cryogenic experience; Professional drivers and freight handlers; Licensed Motorbike drivers; Tuk-tuk drivers; Fleet controllers; Customer Service executives; Crane Drivers; Production Supervisor; Operations Managers; Shipping Supervisor; Compliance and safety manager; Mechanical foreman; IR manager and rail operators
W&RSETA	Accountant; Marketing practitioner; Facilitator; Payroll administrator; Basic human resources; Butcher; e-Commerce (digital marketer); Retail manager; Finance manager; Artisan; Baker; Software developer; Data insights (Analytics); Blockman

Source: SETA interviews with employers 2021 dataset.

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