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RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR  
WORK AND SOCIETY

# Developing a Multidimensional Youth Employability Index for South Africa

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# Employability

- ♦ McQuaid and Lindsay (2005): employability is the dynamic interaction between individual attributes, personal circumstances, and contextual factors that makes one more likely to progress towards, gain, sustain, and move on in employment.
- ♦ Employability = a concept with policy-oriented purposes that policymakers and practitioners already use across various sectors.
  - = benefit to increasing inclusivity and wellbeing -> does not regard employed and unemployed youth as opposites, nor treats these as internally homogenous groups.

# Youth Employability - Decent Work - Education

- ◆ Employability and decent work are *mutually reinforcing*
  - ◆ Decent work is not only about employment
  - ◆ Also involves opportunities for advancement & personal growth
  - ◆ Employability ensures that young people can access such opportunities
- ◆ Employability ~ a person's ability to gain and maintain employment
  - ◆ Having relevant skills and qualifications is important dimension of employability
  - ◆ Education & vocational training help to equip young people with relevant skills

# Motivation for the index

- ◆ **CURRENTLY:** A range of indicators [employment, unemployment, discouraged, NEET] are useful to evaluate and monitor youth outcomes in the labour market.
- ◆ **GAP:**
  - How to measure employability?
  - What drives low employability?
  - Multidimensional Poverty Index: no equivalent in the sphere of employability.
- ◆ **OBJECTIVE:** Exploring a multidimensional approach to employability to optimize support and follow-up for the most excluded and fragile youth populations.

# Methodology - index

“BIGGER PICTURE” with

- Three measures:
  - Incidence ( $H$ )
  - Intensity of deprivation ( $A$ )
  - Index ( $MO$ )
- Information-platform: contribution of indicators, subgroups, regional, ...

Case-study: South Africa

- Cross-sectional survey data from the Census 2011 10% sample, compiled by Statistics South Africa
- The final sample for analysis consists of 798 166 youths from 15 to 24 years old, a weighted representation of 9,5 million youth.

Alkire  
& Foster  
method

# Building the Index

Young person ~  
employability

- Individual
- Member of household
- Member of neighbourhood

# Employability deprivation measures - by population group, gender, residence

	<b>H (Incidence)</b>	<b>A (Intensity)</b>	<b>M0 (Index Score)</b>
All youth	47.34%	47.13%	0.22
Black African	53.34%	47.39%	0.25
Coloured	22.73%	42.56%	0.10
Indian or Asian	7.45%	41.62%	0.03
White	4.01%	39.85%	0.02
Other	31.91%	43.67%	0.14
Male	48.72%	47.43%	0.23
Female	45.98%	46.83%	0.22
Urban residence	28.13%	43.69%	0.12
Not in urban area	74.61%	48.98%	0.37

# Employability deprivation measures - by employment status & formality

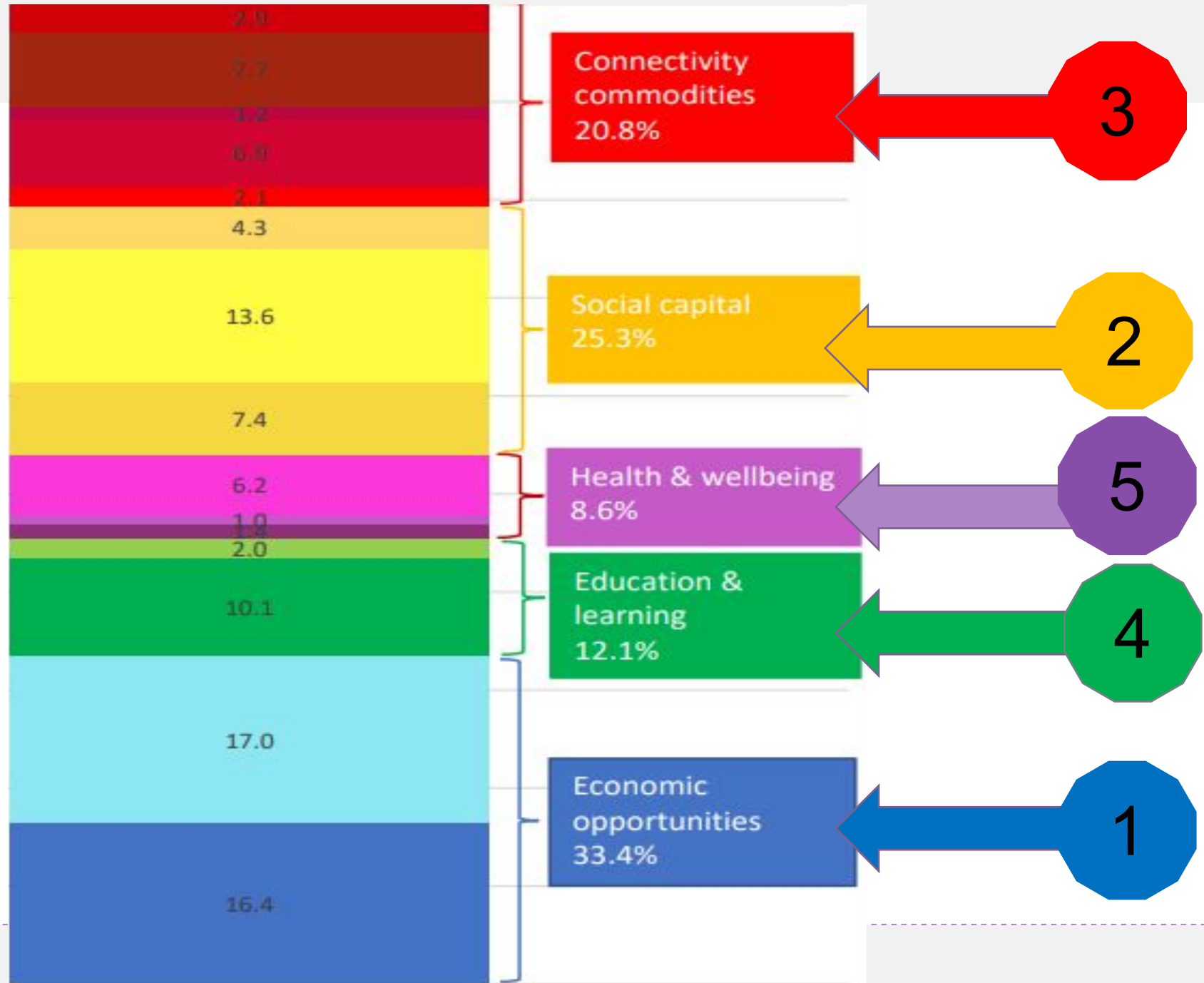
<i>Employment status</i>	<b>H (Incidence)</b>	<b>A (Intensity)</b>	<b>M0 (Index Score)</b>
Employed	0.337	0.449	0.151
Unemployed	0.462	0.460	0.212
Discouraged workers	0.626	0.494	0.309
Not economically active	0.498	0.476	0.237
Total	0.47	0.47	0.22

<i>Formality</i>	<b>H (Incidence)</b>	<b>A (Intensity)</b>	<b>M0 (Index Score)</b>
Formal Sector Employment	29.4%	44.3%	0.130
Informal Sector Employment	48.4%	46.2%	0.224



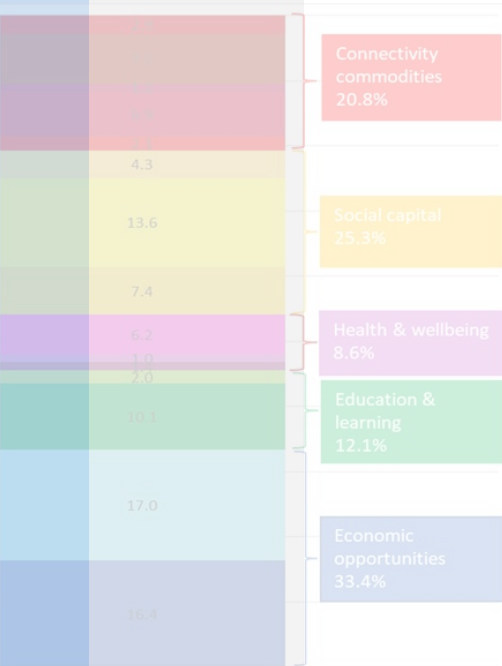
# What drives low employability?

*Contributions of indicators & dimensions to the Index*



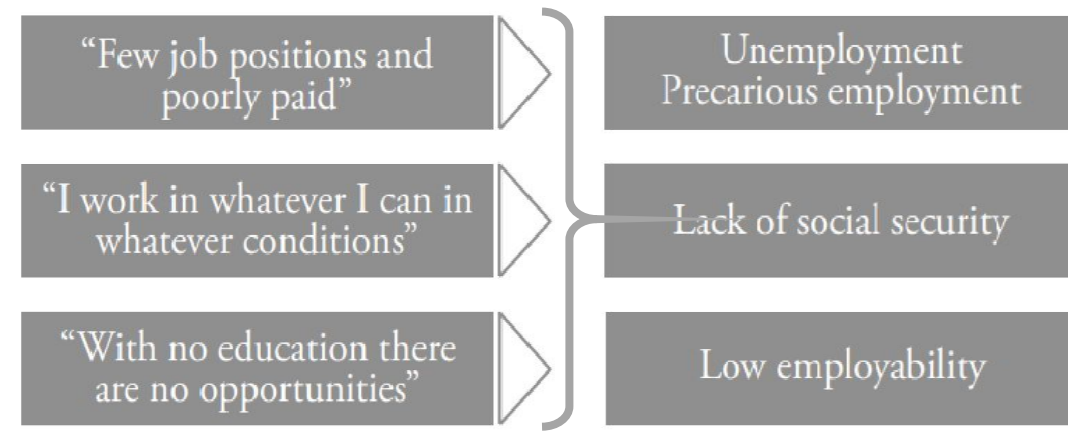
Source: Own calculations based on weighted data from the Census 2011 10% sample

# Conclusions of the research



- Low employability is lowest among employed youth. Discouraged youth are particularly vulnerable. Job offers protection?
- Employment has an ambiguous role in employability: not a guarantee
- Individual factors (skills and education, health) are important, but lack of supportive network at home and neighbourhood (economic opportunities, social capital, connectivity) weigh heavily on youth outcomes.
- Points to a transversal policy approach that encompasses the lifeworlds of youth.

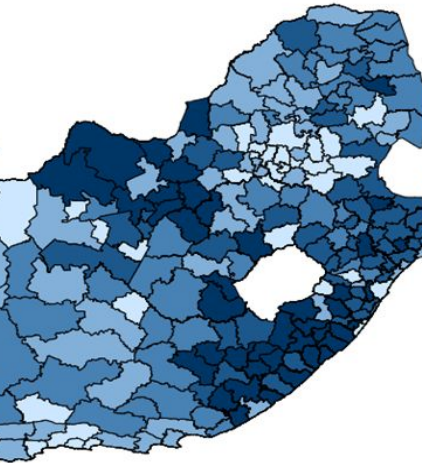
# What does the employability index offer to young people?



Example in El Salvador (OPHI, 2017:3)

- **A voice:** index allows for participatory analyses starting from young people's lifeworlds & personal experiences with work
- **Information-driven recognition and representation** of multiple, intersecting, and interlinked vulnerabilities

# What does the employability index offer to practitioners and policymakers ? (~Alkire, 2018)



- **Measuring and mapping low employability**
  - Can be tailored to different contexts (national, regional, project,...)
- **Building information platform**
  - Allows to zoom in on subgroups, regions, ...
- **Reflecting on budget allocation**
  - Bottlenecks/thematic focus in sectoral/regional budget
- **Highlighting cross-sectoral connections**
  - Useful for integrated and multi-sectoral policy and mapping of intermediary actors to shape actions

Comments and questions  
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# Statements & questions for discussion

- ◆ **Proposition:** Interventions focusing on education & vocational training are important but not sufficient by themselves to strengthen employability for the most deprived youth.
- ◆ **Proposition:** Employment by itself is not a good/sufficient indicator to measure the success of education & VOCTEC interventions. Youth are better served by policies and strategies that look beyond employment as a binary measure and that instead plan, implement, and evaluate from an employability perspective.
- ◆ **Question:** What opportunities do you see for education & VOCTEC interventions to use the youth employability index?
  - ◆ E.g. for context analysis, programme design, planning, theories of change, monitoring & evaluation?