



November 2022

UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME GUARANTEE FACTSHEET SERIES

HOW A UBIG CAN ADVANCE GENDER JUSTICE AND SOCIAL COHESION

Introduction to UBIG

A universal basic income guarantee (UBIG) is a regular government cash transfer or grant which everyone is entitled to receive on the basis of being a citizen or resident, to meet their basic needs. The benefits of a UBIG are not just economic. A UBIG can benefit society by improving gender equality, and boosting social cohesion and civic engagement.



THE FOUR ELEMENTS OF A UBIG

- ✓ **UNIVERSAL** – applies to all adults.
- ✓ **BASIC** – covers basic necessities.
- ✓ **INCOME** – a regular cash benefit.
- ✓ **GUARANTEE** – provided as a right.

UBIG and women's empowerment

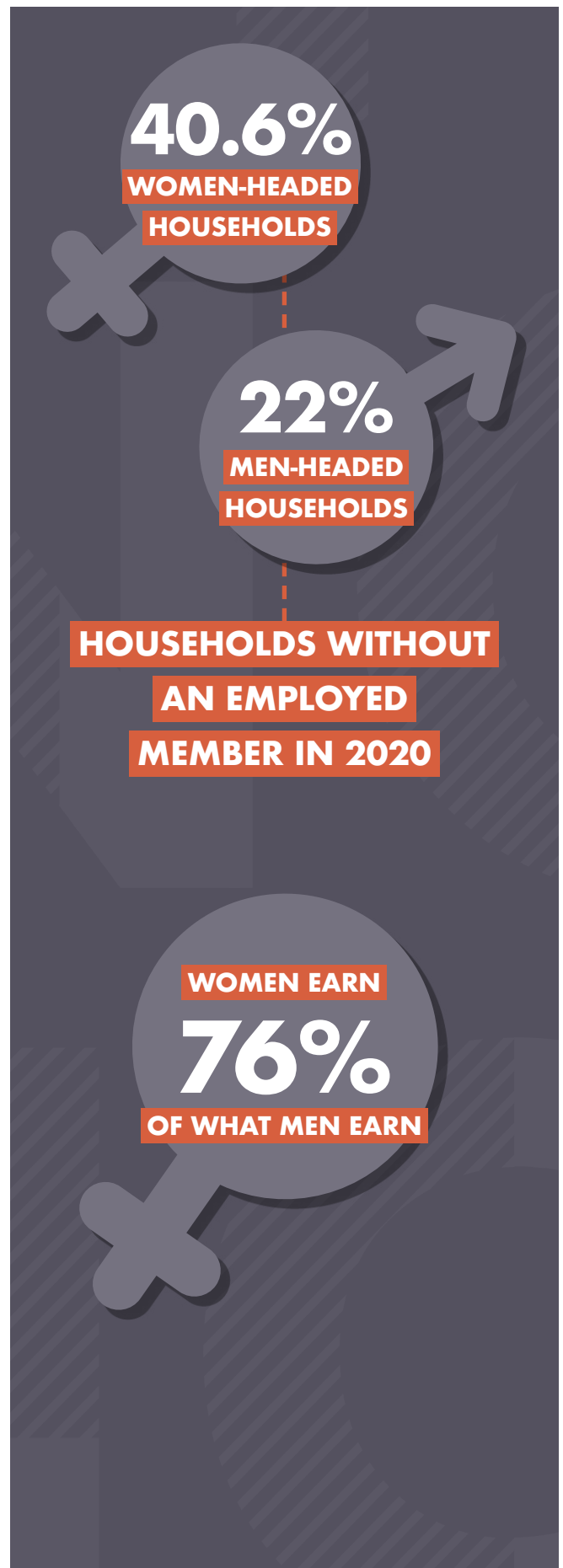
For many working age able bodied people in South Africa, employment is the only possible way to gain income and escape poverty. This reality especially disadvantages women, for several reasons:

- Women face higher barriers to entering the labour market and are overrepresented in unemployment statistics: In 2020, 40.6% of women-headed households did not have an employed member in contrast to 22% of men-headed households;¹
- Women carry a much higher burden of unpaid domestic and care labour. They have to spend a greater proportion of their time doing work like cleaning, cooking and caring for children, elderly and sick family members or persons with disabilities. Our economy would not function without this work, but it is unpaid. These responsibilities further limit womens' time and ability to take on paid work;
- Women who are employed, have poorer working conditions and lower pay. On average they earn only 76% of what men earn;²
- Because women are overrepresented in low wage work, and work that is not seen to be "productive", they are more likely to lose their employment during economic downturns or crises. This was seen in the COVID-19 lockdown period, during which women accounted for two thirds of job losses.³

As a result of all of these factors, women are more likely to experience poverty than men. In 2015, 26.5% of women in South Africa lived below the Food Poverty Line, compared to 23.7% of men.⁴ In addition, women are more likely to be economically dependent on men—relying on income earned (and often controlled) by a male partner. This reduces womens' agency and control over their own lives, and increases their vulnerability to financial abuse, and to intimate partner violence (IPV).

A UBIG has the potential to decrease these structural challenges that women face. Because a UBIG provides regular income to all adults, it can improve women's agency and independence. A basic income study in India has shown cash transfers to women have contributed to their financial independence allowing many to open up their own bank accounts for the first time.⁵ With the introduction of basic income transfers, women also gained more power over spending decisions.

Research also shows that a UBIG can decrease IPV by improving household economic security, reducing conflict around spending decisions, and by increasing women's self-worth, empowerment, and agency.



This was found to be true in 16 out of 22 cases in low and middle income countries.⁶ A recent study in Kenya found that cash transfers significantly reduced IPV.⁷ Cash transfers can also improve education and economic prospects for girls — they have been shown to increase school attendance for girls and reduce their drop-out rate.⁸

A UBIG would help to compensate much of the essential work in our economy that currently goes unpaid — domestic and care work performed by women. This is an important part of recognising that not all socially necessary work is tied to employment. While we need job creation for women and gender pay equity, it would inherently disadvantage women to link dignity and income solely to waged labour.

UBIG and social cohesion

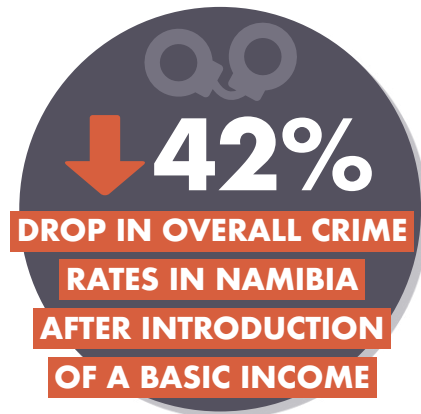
Extreme poverty and inequality often undermines social cohesion and threatens social stability. Social cohesion is understood to mean shared solidarity and loyalty between people in a country or a community. A UBIG can support social cohesion by recognising everybody's right to participate in our economy and society.

This is supported by evidence showing that cash transfers strengthened social inclusion and contributed towards more cohesive societies in five case studies across the Middle East and East Africa.⁹ A case study in Tanzania found that cash transfers increased trust in leaders and willingness to participate in community programmes.¹⁰

By addressing poverty and inequality, a UBIG may affirm recipients' sense of belonging. In receiving their rightful share of society's economic surplus people are more likely to exhibit civic mindedness and democratic participation at both the national and local level.

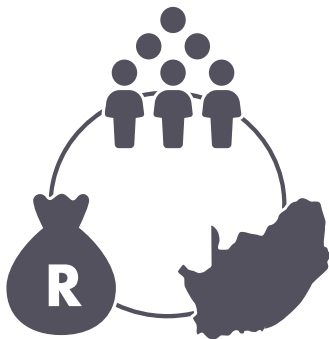
A UBIG can further aid social cohesion by decreasing crime rates, especially theft, which is most often linked to economic conditions. A basic income pilot in Namibia led to a 42% drop in overall crime rates.¹¹

The above evidence shows that basic income support has the potential to contribute to building more stable democracies and providing a greater sense of inclusivity and tolerance. These are all benefits South Africa needs more of. However, there are some important caveats to this — these outcomes depend on how the support is implemented.



Universality is key to realising gender and social cohesion benefits

International evidence shows that universality — or giving the grant to all adults with no strings attached — is key to these benefits being realised. Grants that have imposed eligibility criteria to exclude certain groups, have been shown to undermine social cohesion and create a social stigma against recipients.¹² With regard to the impacts for gender equality, it is critical that income support is directed towards all adults in order to increase women's agency — as opposed to giving it to (usually male) heads of households, or conditioning it on women being caregivers. A more detailed discussion on the benefits of universality can be found [here](#).



Endnotes

1. Stats SA. 2020. [Poverty in Perspective \[presentation\]](#).
2. Stats SA. 2022. [Quarterly Labour Force Survey \(QLFS\) - Q1:2022](#).
3. Casale, D., & Dorrit P. 2020. [Gender and the early effects of the COVID-19 crisis in the paid and unpaid economies in South Africa](#). National Income Dynamics (NIDS)-Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey (CRAM) Wave 1.
4. Stats SA. 2017. [Poverty trends in South Africa: An examination of absolute poverty between 2006 and 2015](#).
5. Schjoedt, R. 2016. [India's Basic Income Experiment](#). Pathway's perspective on social policy in international development.
6. Buller, A. M. et al. 2018. [A mixed-method review of cash transfers and intimate partner violence in low-and middle-income countries](#). *The World Bank Research Observer*.
7. Haushofer, J. et al. 2019. [Income changes and intimate partner violence: Evidence from unconditional cash transfers in Kenya](#). Working Paper.
8. Baird, S. et al. 2013. [Relative Effectiveness of Conditional and Unconditional Cash Transfers for Schooling Outcomes in Developing Countries: A Systematic Review](#). *Campbell Systematic Reviews*.
9. Pavanello, S. et al. 2016. [Effects of cash transfers on community interactions: Emerging evidence](#). *The Journal of Development Studies*.
10. Evans, D. K. et al. 2019. [Cash transfers increase trust in local government](#). *World Development*.
11. Haarmann, C. et al. 2019. [Making the difference! The BIG in Namibia](#). Namibia: Basic Income Grant Coalition.
12. Della Guardia, A. et al. 2022. [Selective inclusion in cash transfer programs: Unintended consequences for social cohesion](#). *World Development*.

Visit our special UBIG portal by scanning the QR code



Read more in the IEJ's Working Paper: [Can a Universal Basic Income Contribute to Breaking Structural Poverty in South Africa?](#), and accompanying [Annotated Bibliography](#).

This factsheet is part of our series on the universal basic income guarantee (UBIG) in South Africa.

Factsheets in this series are:

1. Why does South Africa need a Universal Basic Income Guarantee?
2. No one left behind: Why universal basic income makes more sense than targeted grants
3. Jobs versus Grants: Are employment and basic income a policy trade off?
4. How a UBIG can support healthier kids, happier adults, and lifelong learning
5. How a UBIG can advance gender justice and social cohesion
6. Not just a handout: How a UBIG gives people the power to prosper
7. "But how will we pay for it?" Financing a UBIG

Forthcoming factsheets in this series will focus on:

- Modelling pathways to a UBIG
- UBIG and the rising cost of living
- UBIG and the just transition

www.iej.org.za 

We are grateful for the support of Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in the production of these factsheets.

**FRIEDRICH
EBERT
STIFTUNG**
South Africa