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## Less than 30,000 Jobs in Ten Years? Employment Trends in Namibia since 1991

Peya Sheefeni, Jessica Humavindu and Robin Sherbourne<sup>1</sup>

**Recent opinion surveys by the Institute for Public Policy Research show that unemployment continues to be the number one issue of concern to most Namibians. This paper assesses how employment has changed in the ten year period between 1991 and 2001 using the most recent official statistics. The 1991 and 2001 Population and Housing Censuses show that, if unpaid family workers are excluded, the number of employed people rose by less than 30,000 people in ten years. Agriculture is becoming much less important as a provider of incomes while employment in mining and manufacturing has also fallen. Most new employment opportunities have been created in service sectors which are hard to categorise. Employment in Government and state-owned enterprises has remained almost constant although the numbers seem to be considerably underestimated. The growing labour force and the slow growth of employment have combined to push the rate of unemployment up sharply.**

### Introduction: Employment Creation is Critical

Employment creation has been a national development objective in Namibia since independence specifically included in the Transitional National Development Plan (TNDP), and the First and Second National Development Plans (NDP1 and NDP2). NDP1 aimed to achieve “growth with equity” and create some 70,000 formal new jobs, 30,000 jobs in subsistence agriculture and 10,000 jobs in the informal sector in the space of five years. NDP2 dispensed with numerical employment targets preferring a more vague commitment to create jobs. SWAPO’s 1994 election manifesto entitled “Better Opportunities for All Namibians” promised “to accelerate change by creating new opportunities for Namibians through economic growth, better education, better health services and more jobs”.

Empirical studies (for example, Bruno: 1996) suggest that economic growth helps reduce poverty but does not necessarily increase or reduce inequality. The relationship between growth and inequality remains the subject of much debate. The general conclusion seems to be that, in most countries, income inequality remains remarkably stable over time. Some countries, such as Malaysia, have succeeded in achieving high rates of economic growth without increasing inequality and the labour market is crucial in making this happen (Milanovic: 2003). As another recent paper (Quibria 2002: 34) states “the impact of economic growth on poverty works primarily through the labour markets by means of the impact on wages and employment”. Other studies show that employment is the key to improving welfare and happiness in rich countries. One paper for instance (Oswald: 1997) concludes that unemployment appears to be the primary economic source of unhappiness and that economic growth should therefore not be a government’s primary concern. The degree to which this conclusion translates to lower income countries is unclear. Intuitively, it is hard to think of any social problems which would not be positively affected through the creation of more jobs.

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<sup>1</sup> Peya Sheefeni and Jessica Humavindu are final year economics students at the University of Namibia who worked as interns at the IPPR from July to September 2003. Robin Sherbourne is Director of Public Policy Analysis at the IPPR.

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## Public Opinion: Unemployment is the Number One Issue

The national opinion surveys conducted by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) consistently rank unemployment as the most important issue to the Namibian people, well ahead of HIV/AIDS or land reform. Table 1 shows the results from the 2002 Afrobarometer survey, a nationally representative survey which asks people a variety of questions about democracy and governance including what they think are the most important problems facing the country. This response is typical of the responses the IPPR has received over the last few years in its regular national surveys.

**Table 1: Highlights from 2002 Afrobarometer survey**

<i>Issue</i>	<i>% of Responses</i>
Unemployment	25.5
AIDS	11.6
Education	9.6
Health	7.0
Poverty/destitution	6.6
Crime and security	4.9
Water supply	4.8
Food shortage/ famine	4.1
Wages, income and salaries	4.1

*Question: In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that government should address?*

With these points in mind, a critical question for policy-makers is therefore: how many employment opportunities has the economy generated as a result of the economic policies the Government has pursued since independence? Has the number of employment opportunities kept pace with the number of people looking for work? Have particular sectors generated more jobs than others? Who has benefited most from the employment opportunities that have been created? What has happened to unemployment?

## Data: Five National Datasets Now Exist

The recent publication of the 2001 Population and Housing Census allows a longer-term assessment of employment trends to be made. Five important and nationally representative sets of data are now available which provide a detailed breakdown of employment trends: the 1991 and 2001 Population and Housing Censuses (PHC see Republic of Namibia 1994 and 2003), the 1993/94 Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES see Republic of Namibia 1996), and the 1997 and 2000 Namibia Labour Force Surveys (NLFS see Republic of Namibia 2001a and 2002). The PHC is a comprehensive dataset which has attempted to count each and every individual resident in Namibia during a particular point in time. The NLFS, on the other hand, is a sample survey which collects data on a smaller sample of individuals and then uses statistical techniques to “gross up” these numbers to provide a national picture. An important point to remember about the 1991 PHC is that it excluded Walvis Bay which was only reintegrated back into Namibia in 1994. The 1993/94 HIES was the first national survey to collect data for the whole of Namibia, including Walvis Bay.

## Classifications: Some Basic Concepts

Chart 1 shows the different categories used to classify individuals in the datasets mentioned above<sup>2</sup>. The entire population (Namibians and non-Namibians) is broken down into those under 15 and those aged 15 and above. The 15 and over age group is then divided between the economically inactive population and the economically active. Economically inactive applies to those people 15 and over who, for one reason or

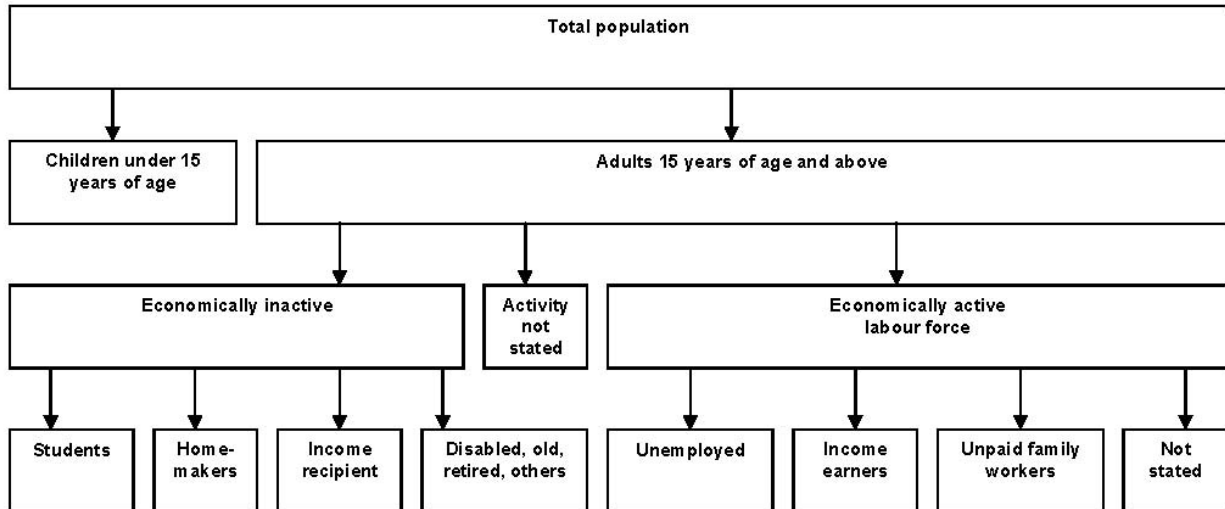
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<sup>2</sup> For detailed definitions see pp 83-84 in the 2001 Population and Housing Census National Report.



another, are not available for work. They include students, homemakers, retired people, disabled people who cannot work, and other income recipients who are not in paid employment but who receive income from rents or other investments. These people are not counted as part of the labour force. Economically active applies to the other group of people 15 and over who are available for work. These include unemployed (those who were not in any paid or self-employment and were actively looking for work during the previous seven days), employed (those who worked for at least one hour for pay, profit or family gain during the previous seven days), and unpaid family workers (those who worked without pay on the family farm or in the family enterprise). These categories are mutually exclusive meaning that individuals cannot be placed in more than one category. Sub-categories therefore add up to the category above.

Chart 1: Population by activity status



Source: National Planning Commission

## Population and the Labour Force: Labour Force Growth Was Lower than Population Growth

Table 2 presents a number of key characteristics of Namibia's labour force found in the five datasets. Totals are also broken down by female and male where possible. The table shows that the total population of Namibia (including non-Namibians) rose from just over 1.4 million to just over 1.8 million people in the space of ten years. The number of non-Namibians rose from 49,404 to 56,923 or from 3.5% of the total population to 3.1%. The number of people aged 15 and over increased by 278,892 over the same period. The number of economically active people rose from 479,779 in 1991 to 594,849 in 2001, a rise of 115,070. Thus, while the total population grew by almost 30% in ten years, the number of economically active people grew by less than 24%. Furthermore, the number of economically active women rose more than twice as much as men, 34% compared to 16%. At the same time, the number of economically inactive people rose by 91,918 from 340,965 in 1991 to 432,883 in 2001. The number of economically inactive men rose by over 37% compared to just under 21% for women.

Within the economically active population, the number of employed people has risen by 22,337 from 387,254 to 409,591 in the same period. As a percentage of the economically active population, employment fell from 80.7% to 68.8%. The number of people classified as unemployed rose from 91,765 to 185,258, an increase of 93,493.



**Table 2: Characteristics of Namibia's labour force**

	'91 PHC	'93/94 HIES	'97 NLFS	'00 NLFS	'01 PHC
Total population	1,409,920	1,389,017	1,560,419	1,669,640	1,830,330
Female	723,593	731,562	811,499	882,555	942,572
Male	686,327	657,454	748,919	785,910	887,721
15 years and over	821,533	795,471	931,384	888,009	1,100,425
Female	428,015	430,843	490,463	473,175	575,603
Male	393,518	364,820	440,920	414,833	524,818
Active	479,779	434,678	498,324*	541,447*	594,849
Female	209,872	207,299	230,000*	261,264*	281,710
Male	269,907	227,379	268,324*	280,182*	313,139
Inactive	340,965	353,802	421,824*	346,157*	432,883
Female	217,778	220,063	254,565*	211,718*	263,428
Male	123,187	133,740	167,259*	134,439*	169,454
Not stated	789	6,991	11,236	405	72,693
Female	365	n/a	5,898	193	n/a
Male	424	n/a	5,337	212	n/a
Employed	387,254	350,280	401,203	431,849	409,591
Female	170,879	163,547	181,755	205,021	180,459
Male	217,135	186,733	219,447	226,828	229,132
Unemployed	91,765	84,398	97,121*	109,598*	185,258
Female	38,993	43,752	48,245*	56,243*	101,251
Male	52,772	40,646	48,877*	53,354*	84,007
Not stated	760				

\* strict definition

Sources: 1991 and 2001 Population and Housing Censuses, 1993/94 Household Income and Expenditure Survey, 1997 and 2000 Namibia Labour Force Surveys

### Unpaid Family Workers: Need to be Excluded from the Picture

It is important to understand that the definition of employment used in the above Table 2 includes "unpaid family workers (subsistence farming)" and "other unpaid family workers". Policy-makers are presumably more interested in creating paid employment or subsistence farming rather than creating unpaid family employment. Table 3 provides details of employment status and strips out both unpaid family workers and subsistence farmers from the five datasets. Doing this reveals that the number of employed people excluding unpaid family workers rose from 303,943 in 1991 to 340,480 in 2001, an increase of



36,537. It is worth noting that the 1993/94 HIES estimate is lower than the 1991 PHC figure and that the PHC figure for 2001 is lower than the estimates from the 1997 and 2000 NLFS. If both unpaid family workers and subsistence farmers are excluded, the employed population increased from 166,104 in 1991 to 310,324 in 2001, an increase of some 144,220.

**Table 3: Employed population aged 15 and over by employment status**

	'91 PHC	'93/94 HIES	'97 NLFS	'00 NLFS	'01 PHC
1. Employed population	387,254	350,280	401,203	431,849	409,591
2. Communal farmer (with paid employees)	n/a	n/a	6,288	12,875	8,641
3. Communal farmer (without paid employees)	137,839*	n/a	49,583	65,122	21,515
4. Other employer (with paid employees)	7,737	3,069	13,678	22,450	14,924
5. Other own account workers (without paid employees)	78,751	69,289	21,922	39,980	20,362
6. Employee (government or parastatal)	72,541		80,297	99,166	76,941
7. Employee (private)	145,536	192,792	175,907	169,437	174,972
8. Unpaid family worker (communal farmer)	82,153	78,587	38,125	9,892	50,671
9. Other unpaid family worker	n/a	n/a	8,982	4,450	18,440
10. Other	1,296	n/a	1,086	1,253	1,896
11. Not stated	n/a	6,544	5,335	7,201	21,229
12. Employed population excluding unpaid family workers	303,943	271,693	354,096	417,507	340,480
13. Employed population excluding unpaid family workers and communal farmers	166,104	n/a	298,225	339,510	310,324

\* includes subsistence farmers with and without paid employees

Sources: 1991 and 2001 Population and Housing Censuses, 1993/94 Household Income and Expenditure Survey, 1997 and 2000 Namibia Labour Force Surveys

### Walvis Bay: Excluded from the 1991 Census

However, bearing in mind that Walvis Bay was excluded from the 1991 PHC, the increase in employment over the ten years between the 1991 and the 2001 PHC is actually significantly lower. The HIES estimated the population of Walvis Bay to be 20,845. Of this population a total of 9,949 were estimated to be economically active of whom 7,132 were employed. If this number is added to the 1991 PHC number, employment has grown by only 15,205 between 1991 and 2001. If it is assumed that this estimate for Walvis Bay excludes unpaid family workers and subsistence farmers then employment appears to have grown from 311,075 in 1991 to 340,480 in 2001 or by about 29,405.

The HIES estimated that there were 350,280 employed individuals in 1993/94 of whom 78,587 were unpaid family workers. Excluding unpaid family workers gives a total of 271,693 employed persons or 265,149 income earners if the "not stated" category is excluded. Excluding unpaid family workers suggests that the



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number of employed individuals rose by 68,787 between 1993/94 and 2001, a much higher figure than the estimate for the ten year period 1991 to 2001.

Table 3 presents a breakdown of employment by the status in employment. Since 1997 a more detailed breakdown has been provided than the one in the 1991 PHC or the 1993/94 HIES.

- Estimates for the number of subsistence farmers with paid employees (Row 2) varied dramatically between 1997 and 2000. The number from the 2001 PHC is almost exactly in the middle of the 1997 and 2000 estimates.
- The 2001 PHC suggests the number of subsistence farmers without paid employees (Row 3) has dropped significantly from previous estimates. The reason for this is unclear.
- The number of employers with paid employees (Row 4) appears to be much higher now than in 1991 although the 2001 figure is lower than the estimate for 2000.
- Other own account workers (Row 5) in 2001 was about the same as in 1997 but half of the estimate for 2000. The figures for 1991 and 1993/94 include communal farmers making comparison impossible.
- Government and parastatal employment (Row 6) in 2001 is almost at the same level as in 1991 which excluded Walvis Bay. These figures are much lower than those provided in the annual budget document. The 2002/03 budget document puts central government employment (that is excluding parastatals) in December 2001 at 75,329. The 2001/02 annual report of the Public Service Commission puts public sector employment at 74,811 including political office bearers, members of the Namibia Defence Force, the Namibia Police, Prisons and Correctional Services, and the Electoral Commission. The number of parastatals has grown considerably since independence.
- The number of private employees (Row 7) appears to have risen since 1991. It has remained almost constant in the three years 1997, 2000 and 2001.
- The number of unpaid family workers (Rows 8 and 9) has fallen somewhat from 1991 and 1993/94. The figures for 1997 and 2000 appear vastly underestimated compared to the 2001 PHC.

Placing individuals in the employment status categories given above is likely to be difficult. However, three of the ten categories are likely to be much clearer to identify: other employer with paid employees, government or parastatal employee and private employee. Employment in all three categories has increased since 1991. Private sector employment appears to have increased most in absolute terms – by some 29,436. By contrast, public sector employment appears to have peaked although the figure from the 2001 PHC is likely to be vastly underestimated for the reasons stated above.

Table 4 presents information on parastatal employment. The list of parastatals has been taken from the Report on State-Owned Enterprises 2001 (Republic of Namibia 2001b) which estimated that parastatal employment in Namibia was 2% of total employment in 1997 or about 8,000 people. As far as possible, data has been taken from parastatal annual reports for 2001. Where this was not possible data was provided by the Employment Equity Commission for 2002. The total number of parastatal employees for the 41 parastatals listed is 12,540. It appears that the figures contained in the 2001 PHC are much lower than data derived from other sources. Is it possible that many people working for parastatals believe they are private sector employees?



**Table 4: Parastatal employment in 2001**

<i>Parastatal</i>	<i>Employment</i>
Agribank*	161
Air Namibia	n/a
August 26 Holdings Company	n/a
Bank of Namibia*	229
Caprivi College of Education	n/a
Development Brigade Corporation Namibia Bricks Enterprise Patriot Construction Star Protection Services	n/a
Development Fund	n/a
Law Reform and Development Commission	n/a
Meat Board of Namibia	n/a
Meat Corporation of Namibia	n/a
Namibia Airports Company	211
Namibia College of Open Learning*	63
Namibia Development Corporation*	320
Namibia National Reinsurance Corporation	5
Namibia Press Agency	n/a
Namibian Agronomic Board	n/a
Namibian Broadcasting Corporation	487
Namibian Trust for Maritime and Fisheries	n/a
Namibian Wildlife Resorts	792
Namport*	439
Nampost*	553
Nampower	831
Namwater	982
National Housing Enterprise*	104
National Petroleum Corporation of Namibia	n/a
National Theatre of Namibia	17
New Era Publication Corporation	37
Ongwediva College	n/a
Polytechnic of Namibia	298
Premier Electric	110
Road Fund Administration	11
Roads Authority*	218
Roads Contractor Company	2,000
Rundu College	n/a
Seaflower Whitefish Corporation	n/a
Social Security Commission	165
Telecom*	1667
TransNamib*	2,146
University of Namibia	694
Windhoek College of Education	n/a
Windhoek Machinen Fabrik	n/a
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,540</b>

\*from Employment Equity Commission

Sources: Annual Company Reports for 2001 and Employment Equity Commission



## Sectoral Employment: Decreasing in Traditional Sectors and Increasing in Services

Table 5 presents data on employment of individuals aged 15 years and over by industry according to International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC). Unpaid family workers have been excluded from all but the 1991 PHC numbers.

**Table 5: Employment by industry excluding unpaid family workers**

	'91 PHC*	'97 NLFS	'00 NLFS	'01 PHC
1. Agriculture, hunting and forestry	181,426	107,362	115,764	60,690
2. Fishing	2,784	6,771	7,579	8,918
3. Mining and quarrying	14,682	6,592	3,868	4,867
4. Manufacturing	22,837	24,432	22,445	15,409
5. Electricity, gas and water supply	2,974	4,496	4,142	4,234
6. Construction	18,609	18,538	21,387	22,926
7. Wholesale and retail trade	33,705	32,985	38,168	17,434
8. Hotels and restaurants	4,023	2,988	7,677	5,163
9. Transport, storage and communications	9,322	13,480	14,154	13,026
10. Financial intermediation	3,935	7,817	4,888	5,626
11. Estate, renting and business activities	4,612	19,637	38,485	48,661
12. Public administration	27,133	21,993	24,419	24,697
13. Education	22,384	24,023	30,538	22,906
14. Health and social work	10,743	10,872	13,135	9,895
15. Other community, social and personal	5,824	23,372	45,812	41,641
16. Households with employed persons	21,458	26,541	22,135	29,120
17. Extra-territorial organisations and bodies	608	229	327	404
18. Not stated	955	1,906	2,586	4,863
19. Total	388,014	354,032	417,508	340,480
20. Total excluding unpaid family workers	305,101	354,032	417,508	340,480
21. Excluding agriculture	206,588	246,671	301,744	279,790
22. Agriculture, business and services	191,862	150,371	200,061	150,992
23. Excluding agriculture, business and services	196,152	203,661	217,447	189,488

\*includes unpaid family workers

Sources: 1991 and 2001 Population and Housing Censuses, 1993/94 Household Income and Expenditure Survey, 1997 and 2000 Namibia Labour Force Surveys

- Employment in agriculture (Row 1) fell by a massive two-thirds between 1991 and 2001. However, according to the 1991 PHC 45% of all those employed in agriculture are unpaid family workers which have been included in the 1991 column. If these are deducted from the total of 181,426 this leaves 99,784. If this figure is compared to the 2001 PHC then employment in agriculture has fallen by over one third.
- Fishing (Row 2) has seen a modest increase in employment since 1997. Since the 1991 figure excludes Walvis Bay, it is impossible to compare with the subsequent figures.
- The mining sector (Row 3) has seen a significant fall in employment by about two-thirds. These numbers are lower than those presented in the annual reports of the Chamber of Mines of Namibia which put membership employment at 6,026 at the end of 2001.





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- Manufacturing employment (Row 4) appears to have fallen by a third since 1991. The actual decline is likely to be much larger since Walvis Bay, a manufacturing centre, was excluded from the 1991 PHC. It may also be possible that workers in on- and off-shore fishing factories have been included under fishing rather than manufacturing.
  - The electricity and water sector (Row 5) has remained fairly constant since 1997.
  - Employment in the construction sector (Row 6) appears to have remained constant throughout the last ten years.
  - Employment in the wholesale and retail sector (Row 7) appears to have fallen dramatically in 2001. This is difficult to explain.
  - Hotels and restaurants (Row 8) appear to have experienced a modest increase in employment over the period. The estimate for 2000 appears particularly high.
  - The number of jobs in transport, storage and communications (Row 9) has remained fairly constant. Again the 1991 figure is likely to be significantly underestimated due to the exclusion of Walvis Bay.
  - Employment in financial intermediation (Row 10) looks to have grown slightly.
  - There has been an explosive increase in employment in the sector real estate, renting and business activities (Row 11).
  - The number of employed people in public administration and the education and health sectors (Rows 12-14), which are primarily government jobs, has seen a slight decline although estimates for 1997 and 2000 appear high.
  - Employment in other community, personal service activities (Row 15) has grown dramatically.
  - There has been growth in the number of people employed in private households (Row 16).
  - Employment in extra-territorial bodies (Row 17) has fallen somewhat from its post-independence high.
  - In total, employment has risen by 35,379 between 1991 and 2001 if unpaid family workers are excluded. If workers in agriculture are also excluded, employment has risen by about 73,202 over the period.

Many of these changes are hard to relate to developments in the economy. Agricultural employment is highly seasonal and respondents may have been asked to provide information at different times of the year. What is likely to have happened is that people who traditionally worked in agriculture are trying to diversify their activities by starting their own informal businesses. These may be hard to allocate to particular sectors. It is possible that many of these activities have been categorised under “other business activities” or “personal services” since they do not fit in anywhere else. Furthermore, certain activities previously captured under trade may now have been included in “other business activities” or “personal services”. This would explain the extraordinary decline in agricultural and trade employment and the equally extraordinary increase in certain rather intangible service activities.

Overall it is the service sectors that have created by far the most employment opportunities over the ten year period. The primary sectors (agriculture, fishing and mining) and secondary sectors (manufacturing, electricity and water and construction) have generally performed poorly in comparison. If there is one clear



trend it is that agriculture is becoming steadily less important in providing employment opportunities for people.

### Women and Employment: Women Have Improved Their Situation

It is interesting to compare the performance of females and males in activities outside communal agriculture. Table 6 selects those categories that we suspect are more clearly identifiable. In all categories, females appear to have improved their situation whilst the number of female unpaid family workers has declined considerably.

**Table 6: Female and male employment by status excluding communal farmers and unpaid family workers**

	'91 PHC	'97 NLFS	'00 NLFS	'01 PHC
Other employer (with paid employees) female	1,364	4,474	8,895	5,670
Other employer (with paid employees) male	6,496	9,203	13,556	9,254
Other own account worker (without paid employees) female	n/a	13,331	26,489	11,344
Other own account worker (without paid employees) male	n/a	8,591	13,491	9,018
Employee (government or parastatal) female	26,209	32,648	45,558	34,634
Employee (government or parastatal) male	51,977	47,649	53,608	42,307
Employee (private) female	49,838	63,137	69,481	64,493
Employee (private) male	112,964	112,770	99,957	110,479
Unpaid family workers female	58,783	33,170	8,475	39,738
Unpaid family workers male	24,528	13,937	5,868	29,373

Sources: 1991 and 2001 Population and Housing Censuses, 1993/94 Household Income and Expenditure Survey, 1997 and 2000 Namibia Labour Force Surveys

### Unemployment: Female Unemployment has Risen More than Male Unemployment

The unemployment rate is an important indicator of economic performance. According to international statistical definitions, the unemployment rate is strictly defined as the percentage of the economically active population that is 1) without work, 2) available for work and 3) actively looking for work. The 2001 PHC used this strict definition. A broader definition has been used in the 1993/94 HIES and the 1997 and 2000 NLFS which drops the third criterion. These are shown in Table 7 below.

**Table 7: Unemployment rates**

	'91 PHC	'93/94 HIES	'97 NLFS	'00 NLFS	'01 PHC
Unemployment rate (broad)	n/a	60.4%	34.5%	33.8%	n/a
Female	n/a	63.2%	40.4%	39.0%	n/a
Male	n/a	57.9%	28.6%	28.3%	n/a
Unemployment rate (strict)	19.1%	19.4%	19.5%	20.2%	31.1%
Female	21.8%	21.1%	21.0%	21.5%	35.9%
Male	22.5%	17.9%	18.2%	19.0%	26.8%

Sources: 1991 and 2001 Population and Housing Censuses, 1993/94 Household Income and Expenditure Survey, 1997 and 2000 Namibia Labour Force Surveys



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The unemployment rate suggested by the 2001 PHC is similar to the unemployment rates using the broad definition calculated from the 1997 and 2000 NLFS. Although the 2001 PHC used the strict definition, the national report states that “in some cases, the interviewers did not probe very well to filter out those who did not look for work. Therefore, those who are without a job, available to take up a job and did not look for work may be included in the reported figures for the unemployed.”<sup>3</sup> However, if the 2001 numbers more accurately reflect the strict rather than the broad definition, it very much looks as though unemployment has increased during the ten year period. In particular, the rate of unemployment for females has risen significantly and diverged from the rate of unemployment for males.

## Conclusions

This short paper has examined trends in employment between 1991 and 2001. It has attempted to do this by comparing five sets of data produced by government agencies. To some extent this comparison has been hampered by differences in definitions and the levels of detail of the data available from public documents. A more detailed analysis would have been possible if the raw datasets had been available to the IPPR rather than just the standard published documents. The one unambiguous recommendation that can be drawn from this study is that Government should put more effort into making datasets available to outsiders in an accessible form for them to conduct their own analysis without having to go through the cumbersome procedure of formally requesting permission for what should be accessible to the public.

Taking these difficulties into account, the picture that emerges is of an economy that is failing to create significant numbers of what may be termed formal jobs. The absence of Walvis Bay from the 1991 PHC complicates the interpretation of the numbers. People appear to be moving out of agriculture into a variety of services, the exact nature of which is unclear. Primary and secondary industries have generally not created significant numbers of new employment opportunities. Tertiary industries or services appear to have generated the lion’s share of new opportunities. However, simple comparisons with other data sources throw doubt on the quality of the data on government and parastatal employment as well as mining employment. The data presented above suggests public sector employment has remained almost constant during the ten year period under examination. It is important to strip out the significant number of unpaid family workers who distort the headline employment figures considerably. Once this is done, it appears that the total number of employment opportunities has increased by less than 30,000 in the ten years between 1991 and 2001. If subsistence agriculture is also excluded, the increase in the number of employment opportunities rises to 144,000. However, these do not appear to be jobs in sectors which government policy has prioritised such as fishing, manufacturing and tourism. Finally, although women appear to be improving their employment situation, female employment has been outstripped by the large rise in the number of economically active women resulting in a higher female unemployment rate.

The five datasets used in this analysis contain a wealth of information which has not been fully examined here. Future IPPR research will examine these datasets in more detail to better assess independent Namibia’s employment record.

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