

Street waste pickers in South Africa

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Aim

Aim of this presentation is:

To provide an overview of some socio-economic aspects of **street waste pickers** in the recycling industry in South Africa

and

to share some of their **concerns, opinions and views** with you

Quantitative and qualitative data was collected from **SWPs & Buy-Back Centres (BBCs)** in 13 major cities in South Africa - 19 April 2011 and 28 June 2012

Johannesburg (291), Pretoria (227), Cape Town (154), Durban (81), Bloemfontein (58), Buffalo City (36), Port Elizabeth (21), Kimberley (15), Polokwane (11), Mafikeng (7), Upington (6), Pietermaritzburg (5), Nelspruit (2)

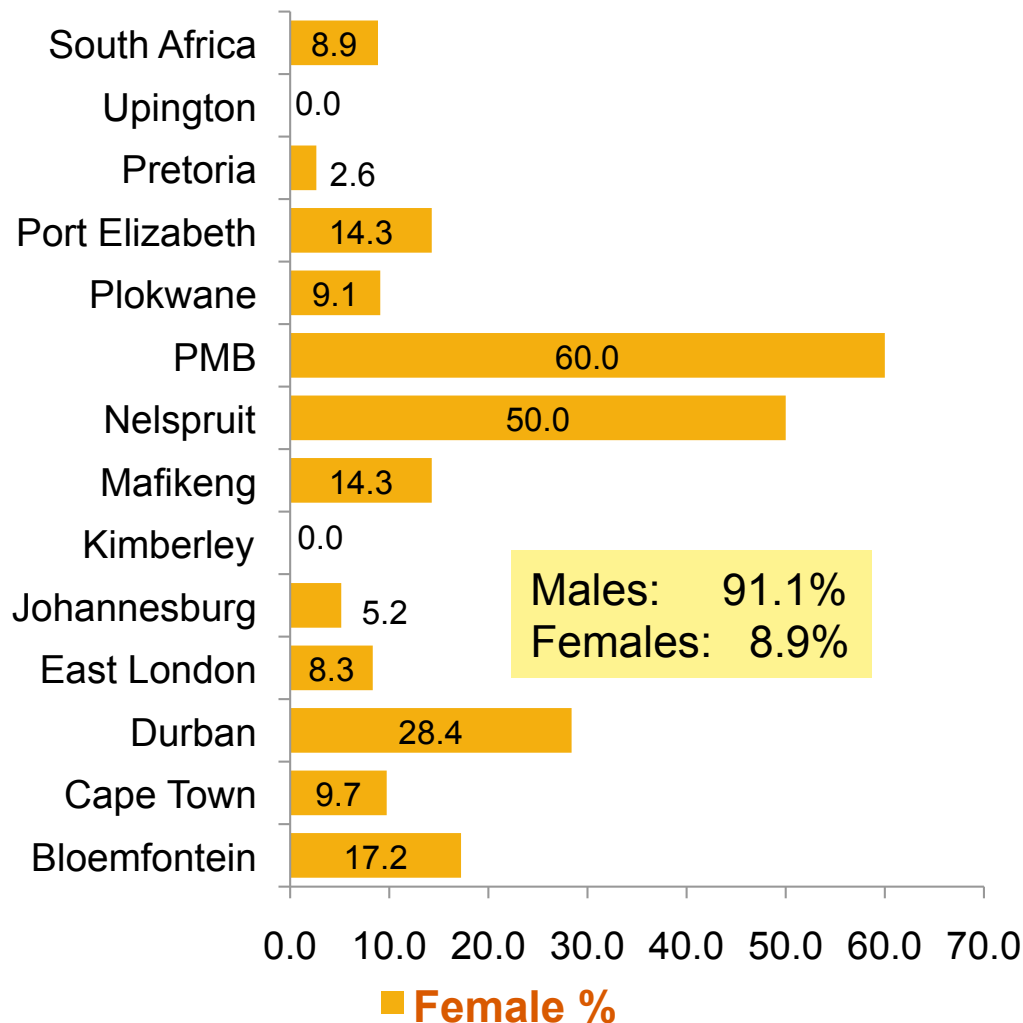
Comparative study amongst LWPs, SWPs in the Free State (2012)



Background

- Waste pickers (WPs) around the world, **make a living** collecting, sorting and selling recyclable waste
- Most WPs come from **poor social backgrounds** (Sarkar, 2003:451)
- High unemployment rates and increased competition for jobs force many people to **explore the possibilities of self-employment**
- Many self-employment opportunities require certain **entrepreneurial skills and capital** which makes it difficult for many of the poor and unemployed to explore these opportunities
- Many have no other choice but to turn to **marginal forms of informal self-employment** (Heintz and Jardine, 1998:32)
- Waste picking is such a form of self-employment
- There are almost **no barriers** preventing them from entering the informal activities in the recycling industry (Langenhoven and Dyssel, 2007:115)

Results: Gender (city level)



Physically strenuous

“Hard work physically”

“It is hard work for a woman”

“Hard work and long walks looking for cardboard”

“Heavy loads to carry and dirty work”

Free State : Landfill waste pickers

- 212 male (51.7%)
- 198 female (48.3%)

Upington (6), Pretoria (227), Port Elizabeth (21), Polokwane (11), **Pietermaritzburg (5), Nelspruit (2)** Mafikeng (7), Kimberley (15), Johannesburg (291), Buffalo City (36), Durban (81), Cape Town (154), Bloemfontein (58),



Age of SWPs

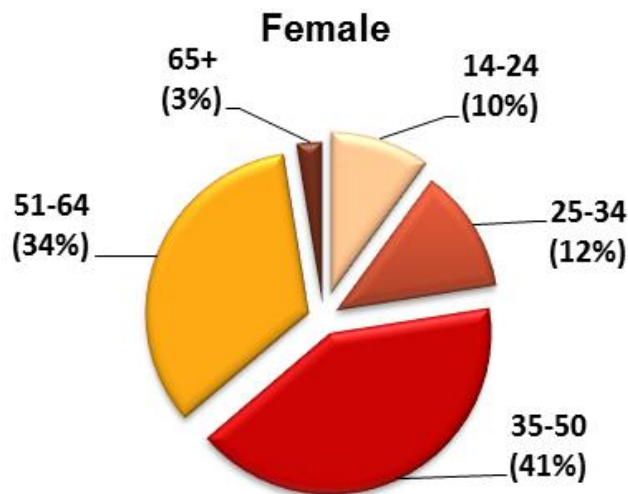
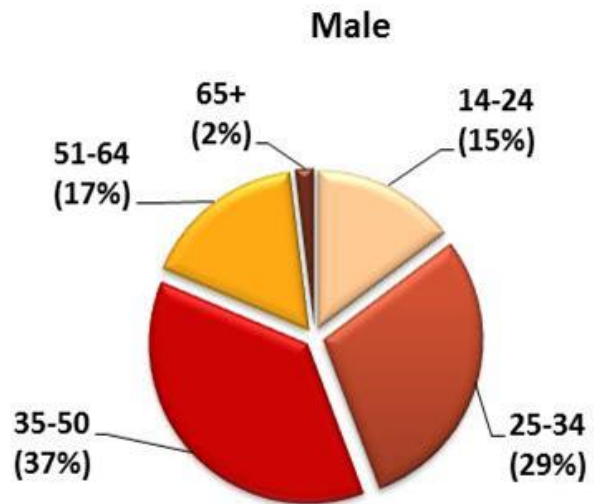
44% Males 22% Females
Between 14 -34 years of age ¹⁾

1) – Broad definition of youth in South Africa

Hard work

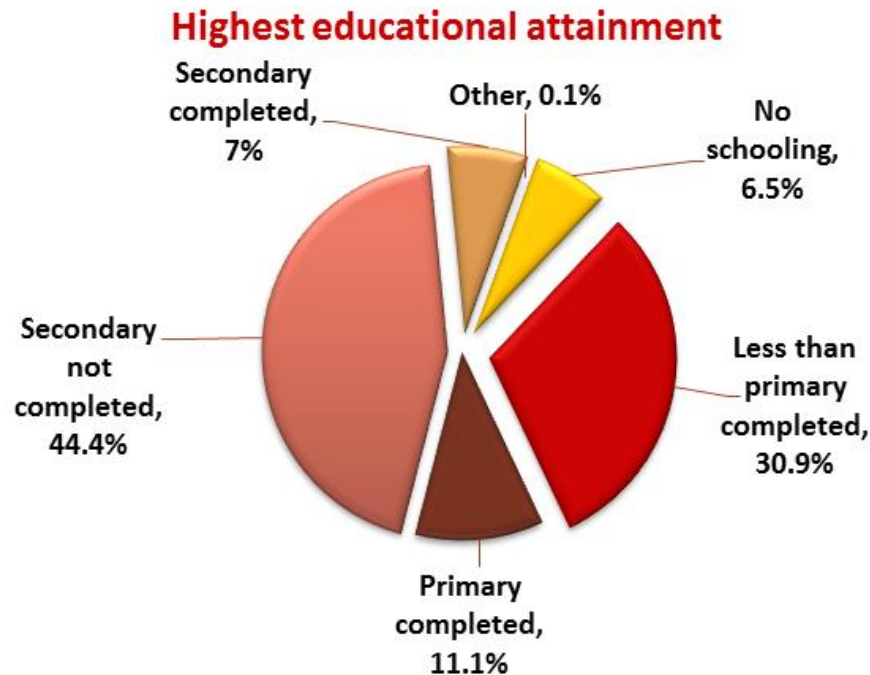
Youth can move quicker over longer distances, and can carry heavier loads

19% Males 37% Females
older than 51 years of age



Source: Survey data

Results: Educational attainment levels



- 6.5% do not have any schooling
- 7% completed formal schooling
- 86.5% - not completed formal schooling
- 30.9% did not complete primary schooling
- 44,4% some secondary level (Free State: 54% LWPs & 35.8% SWP)

Poor educational attainment :
hamper prospects of finding a job

Free State : LWPs generally attained higher levels of school education than their counterparts on the streets.

46.3%

Understand English well
 (11.2% not at all)

44%

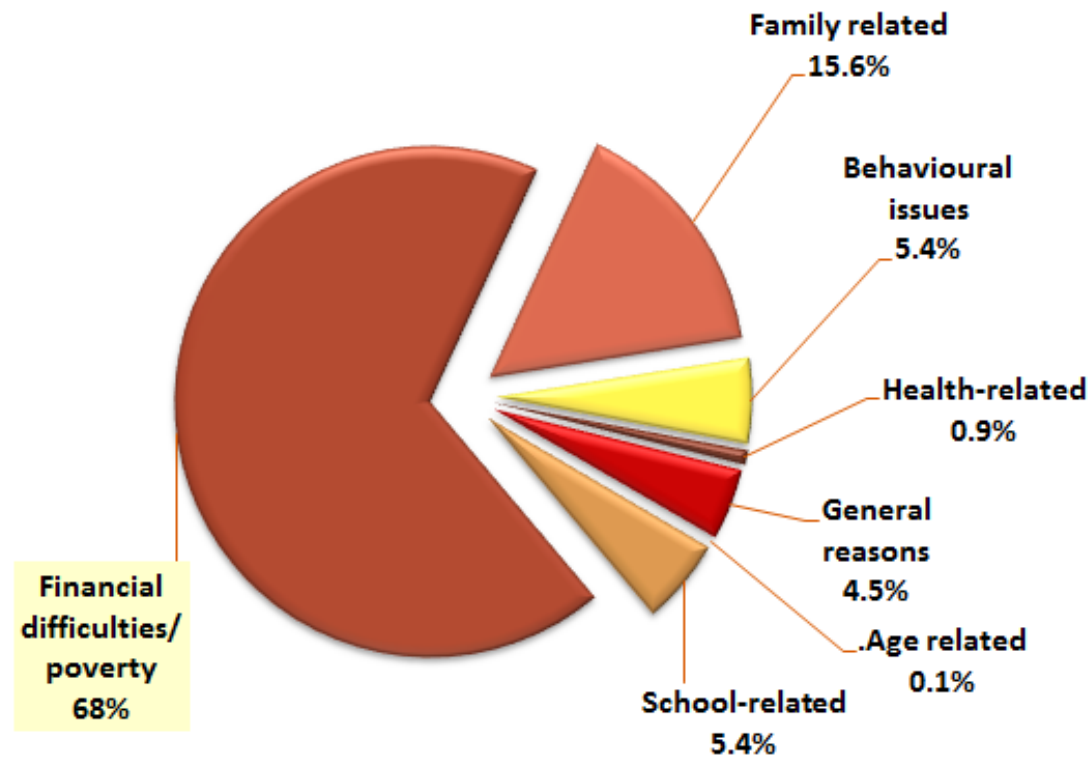
Speak English well
 (14.7% not at all)



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Reasons for leaving school early

It is generally accepted that poverty has a detrimental effect on the capability to achieve the productive functioning such as schooling (Fryer and Hepburn, 2010:6).



Few left by choice
68%

- **Financial difficulties/ poverty** most prominent reason
 - lost one or both parents
 - no-one to care for them
- **Family related issues**
 - Problems at home
- **Problems related to behaviour / characteristics**
 - might decrease employability

Source: Survey data



Income of SWPs

- Most important factors that **influence the income** of WPs:
- **Prices** of recyclable waste; and
- **Quantity** of each recyclable product collected

- Prices of recyclable waste differs from **product to product, from BBC to BBC as well as between cities**
- Influenced by:
 - - Supply and demand
 - - Exchange rate
 - - Cost structure of each BBC
 - - Distance between BBC and recycling companies

- The quantity of recyclable waste collected by a SWP is determined by:
 - - the **ease of access** to recyclable waste,
 - - **competition** amongst the SWPs and
 - - who gets to the more **valuable waste** first.



Recyclable products collected and prices (n=67)

Type	<i>f</i>	%	Mean	Standard deviation	Min (Rand)	Max (Rand)
White paper	55	79.7	1.03	0.545	0.20	2.30
Coloured Paper	39	56.5	0.45	0.327	0.10	1.50
Magazines/books	47	68.1	0.24	0.132	0.05	0.80
Newspapers	49	71.0	0.22	0.115	0.05	0.60
Mix paper	46	66.7	0.26	0.199	0.05	1.00
Cardboard	48	69.6	0.37	0.146	0.15	0.70
PET	33	47.8	1.22	0.692	0.15	3.20
HDPE	28	40.6	0.72	0.317	0.15	1.60
PVC	14	20.3	1.01	1.232	0.10	5.00
LDPE	28	40.6	0.99	0.507	0.15	2.00
Cans	38	55.1	0.63	0.350	0.10	1.50
Glass	31	44.9	0.23	0.085	0.10	0.40

Incomes per day/ week								
Cities	Day				Week			
	<i>f</i>	Min (R)	Max (R)	Mean (R)	<i>f</i>	Min (R)	Max (R)	Mean (R)
Bloemfontein	39	10	250	61.74	6	140	400	220
Cape Town	152	10	300	64.05	1	200	200	200
Durban	65	2	200	58.06	15	14	700	226.6
East London	36	5	175	44.58	-	-	-	-
Johannesburg	188	2	500	80.65	84	60	2000	621.23
Kimberley	14	9	95	40.79	-	-	-	-
Mafikeng	6	40	175	79.17	-	-	-	-
Nelspruit	1	65	65	65	1	350	350	350
Pietermaritzburg	3	25	120	73.33	2	300	600	450
Polokwane	11	45	100	66.82	-	-	-	-
Port Elizabeth	18	4	125	43.22	1	100	100	100
Pretoria	212	3	300	68.4	12	100	500	301.67
Upington	6	12	150	84.5	-	-	-	-
Total	751	2	500	67.26	122	14	2000	505.06

Income of SWPs

Large differences in the mean incomes between the cities
No relationship between the mean income and the size of the cities

More waste is available in the larger cities but the competition for the waste is also greater

Median incomes:

Day = R50

Week = R300

Mean incomes:

Day = R67.26

Week = 505.06

Mean daily income of SWPs is much lower than that of the LWPs - Free State

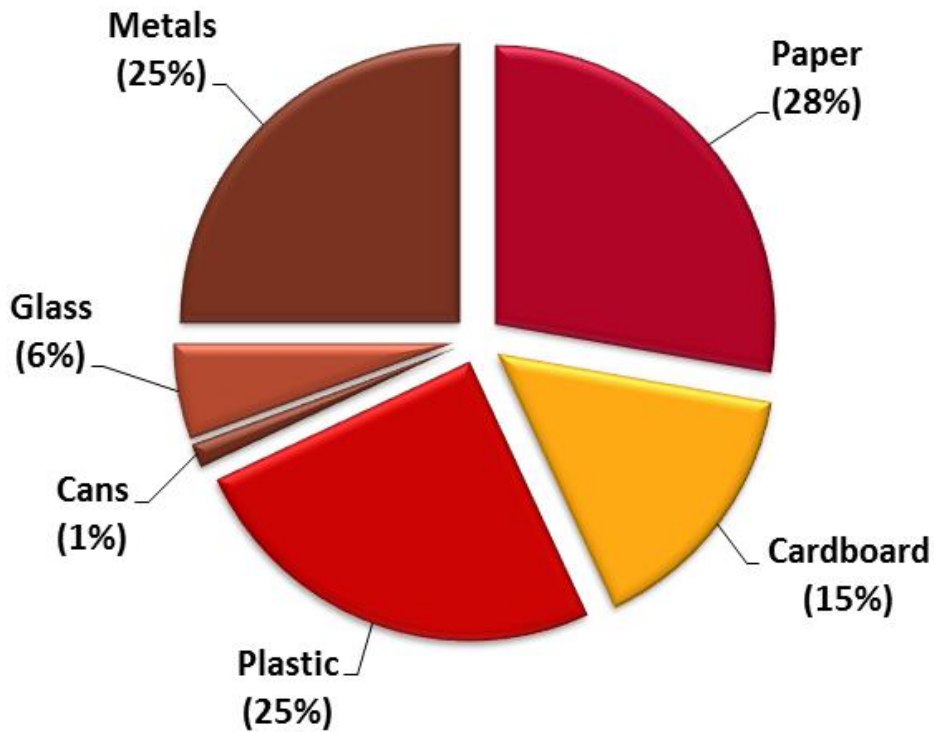


Specialising in collection one recyclable waste product

72 SWPs
specialise in one type of recyclable waste

Low levels of specialisation
higher valued recyclable
products are **scarce** /
not freely available

Product specialisation



- Plastic earn highest mean income
R86.50 day / R686.43 week
- Metal R69.06 day
- Cardboard R66.60 day / R350 week

Most 28% specialise in paper
only earn mean income of
R43 day / R140 week

Cans: R11 day
Glass: R20 day

Minimum, maximum and mean income for collecting different combinations of products

Combinations	Income interval	<i>f</i>	Min (R)	Max (R)	Mean (R)
Paper, plastic, metal	Day	66	2	200	57.76
	Week	14	100	2000	597.86
Paper, cardboard, plastic	Day	80	2	400	58.27
	Week	14	95	1400	435
Plastic, cardboard, cans	Day	24	2	200	68.25
	Week	11	95	1400	499.55
Plastic, cans, glass	Day	14	2	200	56.21
	Week	9	100	1400	591.67
Plastic, paper, glass, metals, cans	Day	430	2	420	63.80
	Week	74	50	2000	604.10

Number of dependants

	Number of dependents		Number of children	
	<i>f</i>	Mean	<i>f</i>	Mean
Never married / Single	303	2.7	160	2.2
Separated / Divorced	58	3.3	75	2.7
Married (Traditional or Western)	263	3.9	258	2.7
Widowed	40	3.1	48	2.9
Living with a partner	60	3.3	44	1.8
Total	724	3.2	585	2.5

Free State
LWP = 3.6 SWPs = 2.6



Access to basic needs

Additional food sources	%
From dustbins/waste	32.8
From other waste pickers	13.9
Somebody else, e.g. church/ individuals/restaurants etc.	43.6

Source: Survey data

No access to basic facilities such as	%
Drinking water	10.8
Sanitary facilities	20
Place to wash yourself	30.5

Source: Survey data

“I am thankful to all the people who bring food to us after hours”

“... My concern is a place to live and a place to bath...”



Other aspects raised by SWPs

“We need a place to store our work”

“My concern is the shelter where we can work on when it is raining”

“ Government must help us to enhance our jobs, for example provide trollies ”

“ We would like to have jackets to be more visible ”

“...would like an open place where we can live and keep our waste ”

“I would like transport for us sometime we get too much to carry”



Conclusions

The challenge is to:

- **Acknowledge the work done by the WPs**
- **Protect and increase the income earning opportunities of the poor**
- **Involve all role players that have an influence or impact on the WPs socio-economic conditions**
- **Increase access to waste products**
- **Provide storage space for the waste**
- **Provide a place where WPs can sort their waste**
- **Add value to the waste**



Thank you

