



SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

***WORK-RELATED QUALIFICATIONS
AND PART QUALIFICATIONS
REGISTERED ON THE NQF:
TRENDS 2002 TO 2011***

Analysis of the
National Learners' Records Database

Report 3

INTRODUCTION

“What’s my level?”

“Please can you count my credits?”

These are the questions most frequently asked by the people who contact SAQA to find out whether their records of learning appear on the National Learners’ Records Database (NLRD).

Each qualification registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) does have an NQF Level and a minimum number of credits that are required in order to achieve the qualification (with one credit being equal to ten notional hours of learning). However, a person does not have a level, and one cannot count credits (achieved via various part-qualifications including unit standards), in order to manufacture a qualification achievement out of these. Rather, the NLRD – as the repository of the records of learning of all South African institutions – is the source of transcripts of each person’s achievements of qualifications and part-qualifications, and also of aggregated analyses of these achievements.

There are twelve Organising Fields on the NQF, from Agriculture to Physical Planning and Construction: this analysis covers each field separately, as well as the aggregation of all of them. There are currently ten NQF Levels: this changed from eight levels in 2009, when the NQF Act of 2008 was promulgated. Because all but three of the years in this analysis fall in the period of the Pre-2009 NQF Levels, these are the ones referred to, throughout. Furthermore, all qualifications and unit standards that had been on NQF Levels 1 to 4 before the changeover, remained at their same levels on the ten-level framework. Approximately 80% of the qualifications, plus 83% of the qualification achievements, plus 80% of the unit standards that make up this analysis are at Levels 1 to 4: these NQF Levels are thus substantially in the majority. (When the NQF Levels for 2009 onwards have been in operation for long enough, future publications will refer to them.)

This publication is the third of its kind. The first two analyses of the NLRD data focused on the achievements of learners in the Public Higher Education System. The qualifications and unit standards included in this analysis fall under the former Education and Training Quality Assurance bodies (ETQAs), now referred to as quality assuring bodies. The achievements included herein do not fall under the Council on Higher Education (CHE), thus excluding all

Higher Education qualifications, public and private. This means that, for example, the achievements at higher levels in Curative Health (i.e. those studied at Higher Education Institutions) are not included in the analysis. The achievements analysed herein also do not fall under Umalusi, thus excluding the National Senior Certificate and the National Certificates (Vocational). In addition, the achievements loaded by the South African Nursing Council (SANC) have been excluded, as SANC has recorded all of these against qualifications that are not NQF-aligned.

A full list of the qualifications included is given in Annexure A, which shows, for each qualification, whether or not it has ever been awarded, its quality assuring body, and its NQF Sub-framework. (A small number of qualifications that did not go through the processes of standards generation and accreditation, but against which quality assuring bodies are reporting learners, is included. Trades are not on this list of qualifications: very little concerning the completion of trade tests has been loaded onto the NLRD, thus far.) Annexure B shows, graphically, the number of qualifications, and whether or not they have uptake, by NQF Organising Field and NQF Level. Annexure C consists of a grid that shows which quality assuring bodies have achievements in each of the twelve NQF Organising Fields.

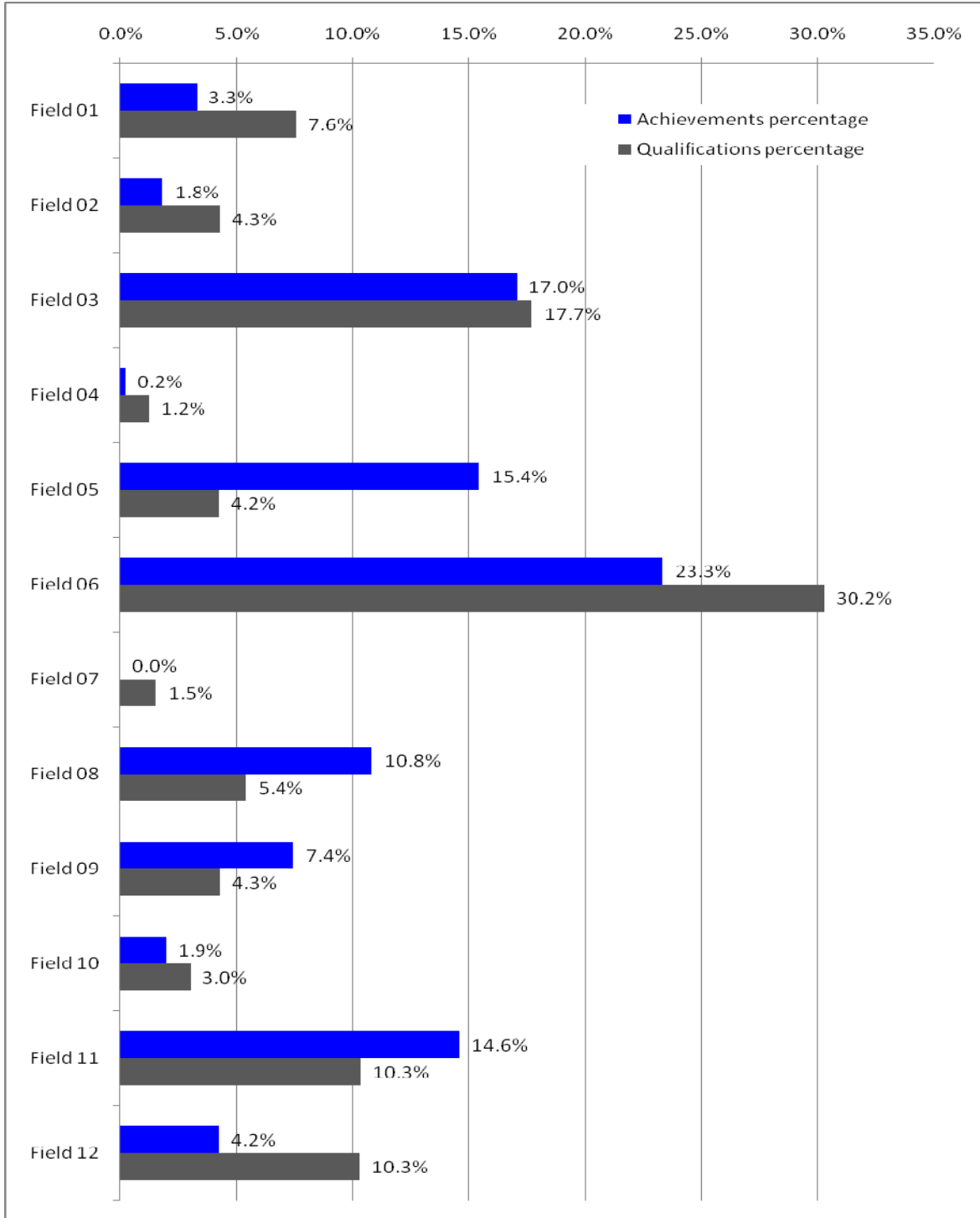
The analysis consists of the data loaded onto the NLRD by quality assuring bodies, up to February 2013. It comprises the achievement (completion) of qualifications and unit standards: although large numbers of enrolments have also been loaded onto the NLRD, these must not be analysed, as there is no guarantee that they will be completed.

Quality assuring bodies commenced loading learner achievement data onto the NLRD in 2001. Some of them immediately loaded both current and “legacy” data, but most only showed meaningful numbers from 2003, 2004 or 2005. Overall, there is enough information to enable the analysis of the trends over the decade from 2002 to 2011. It is intended that the analysis will be updated at regular intervals, for a “rolling” decade.

Across all fields, 316 783 qualification achievements were recorded over the decade, with 298 733 of these from 2005 onwards (an average of 42 686 per year). The achievements were against 649 qualifications, which is 38% of the 1 706 qualifications for which quality assuring bodies were responsible over the decade. Figure 1 shows this information graphically.

Figure 1:

Number of Qualification Achievements per Field as a Percentage of All Qualification Achievements, and Number of Qualifications (whether or not achieved) per Field as a Percentage of All Qualifications



These totals represent only about 10% of the people for whom the quality assuring bodies have loaded data onto the NLRD. This is because many of the learners on the NLRD have qualification enrolments, or unit standard enrolments or achievements, but not achievements of full qualifications, against their names. The majority of the learners have completed skills programmes, which are made up of groups of unit standards but are not registered on the NQF and thus cannot be reported on. (SAQA is addressing this with the QCTO, so that a mutually acceptable mechanism for gathering and reporting on this information will be agreed.)

This report includes analyses of the number of people completing unit standards per NQF Field, Subfield and Level. These differ from the qualification analyses: the number of people, rather than the number of completions, is referred to because the number of unit standards for different purposes in different fields, and their relative number of credits, has such a large range.

Figure 2 adds, to Figure 1, the percentages of people achieving unit standards, demonstrating that there is no correlation between the qualification percentages and the unit standard percentages, even when the fluctuations caused by the variations in the number of unit standards per person are removed. The graph shows that the majority of activity for unit standards is in Field 8 (Law, Military Science and Security), while for qualifications it is in Field 6 (Manufacturing, Engineering and Technology). The least activity for unit standards is in Field 2 (Culture and Arts); for qualifications there is no activity whatsoever in Field 7 (Human and Social Studies).

Figure 3 shows the total number of people per Field. Each person is shown once in each Field where that person has achieved one or more qualifications, or one or more unit standards, in that Field.

Figure 2:

Number of People Completing Unit Standards per Field as a Percentage of All People Completing Unit Standards, Number of Qualification Achievements per Field as a Percentage of All Qualification Achievements, and Number of Qualifications (whether or not achieved) per Field as a Percentage of All Qualifications

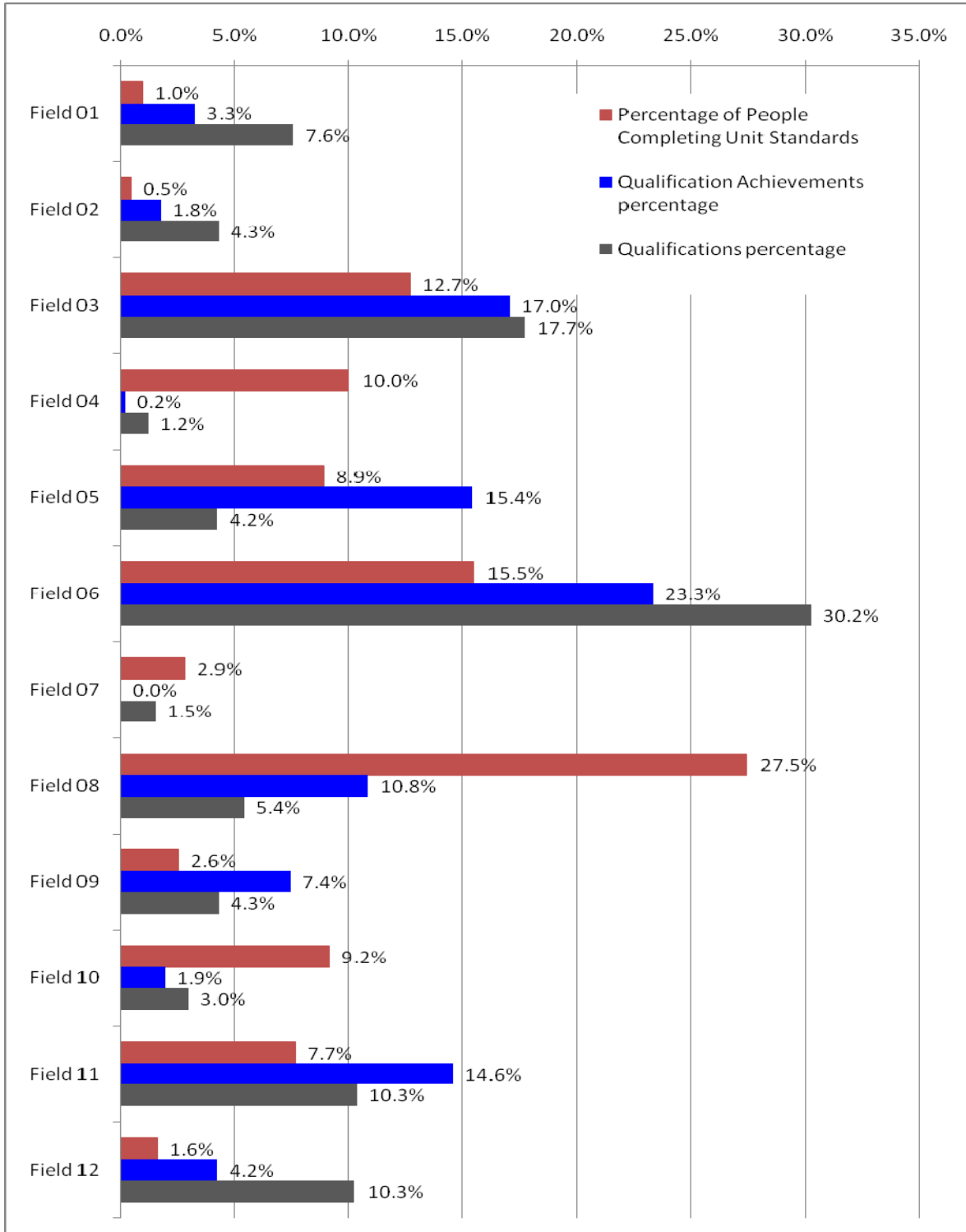
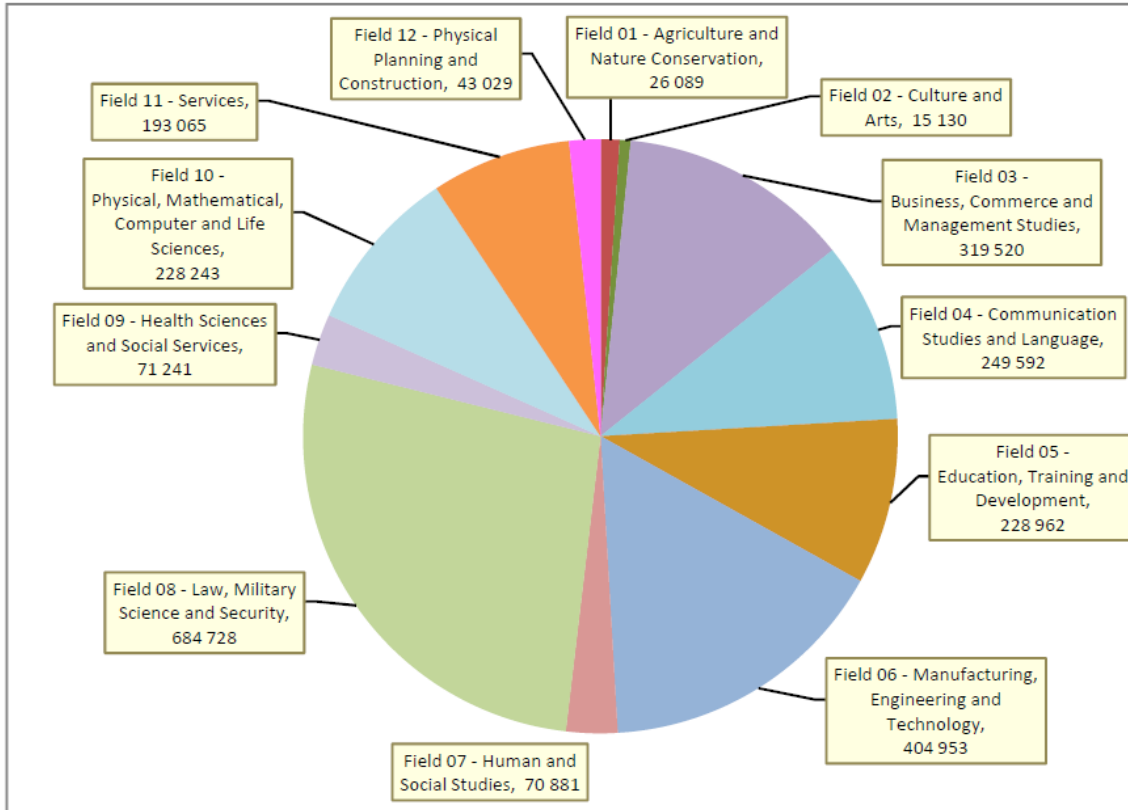


Figure 3:

Number of People per Field



The detailed analyses per year, Field and Subfield show that the achievement trends show sharp peaks and dips across all of the Fields. The numbers in this report are stated exactly as recorded in each quality assuring body's information system and transmitted to the NLRD: no smoothing techniques have been applied, as most of the peaks and dips are caused by events rather than by data gaps. The quality assuring bodies have been consulted, in order to obtain explanations for the variations in the number of qualifications awarded from one year to the next: some variations have known reasons, as stated below, while others have not yet been explained. The quality assuring bodies' information systems will need to mature further before all of the causes can be determined.

It has also been found that some quality assuring bodies are still submitting Learnership achievements without submitting the related qualification achievement records. (It is a requirement that both must be submitted, for accurate cross-checking.) At present, this is causing the qualification achievements to be understated by approximately 10 000 (3% of the total number of qualification achievements). The quality assuring bodies concerned have been asked to correct this in order to load correctly in the future.

Thanks to the nature of the gathering of learner information, it is expected that the number of recorded achievements shown even for previous years will increase in subsequent reports, whenever retrospective information is received from some of the providers that the quality assuring bodies have accredited to offer the qualifications for which they are responsible (and even after the Learnership issue has been corrected). This is illustrated in Annexure E, which shows that the data loaded in January-February 2013 has additional records for every year from 2002 to 2011, especially from 2006 onwards. However, every field – except Fields 8 and 10 – shows a marked decrease for 2011. The quality assuring bodies were asked to comment on whether this reflects a true downturn, or whether further records are still expected: they observed that the downturn coincided with the introduction of the new National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS). Furthermore, several SETAs were placed under administration at that time, which could have affected their performance.

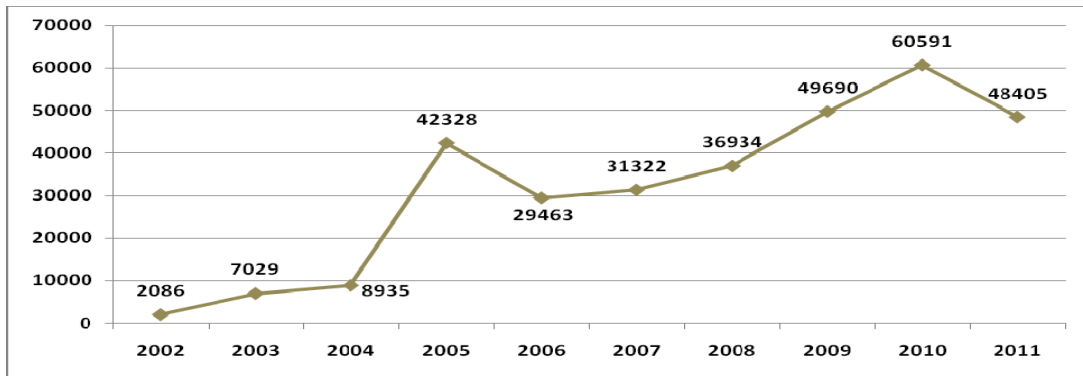
Future analyses will include a wide range of information, including the number of people with professional designations and, as mentioned in the preceding pages, the achievement of part-qualifications such as skills programmes.

All Fields

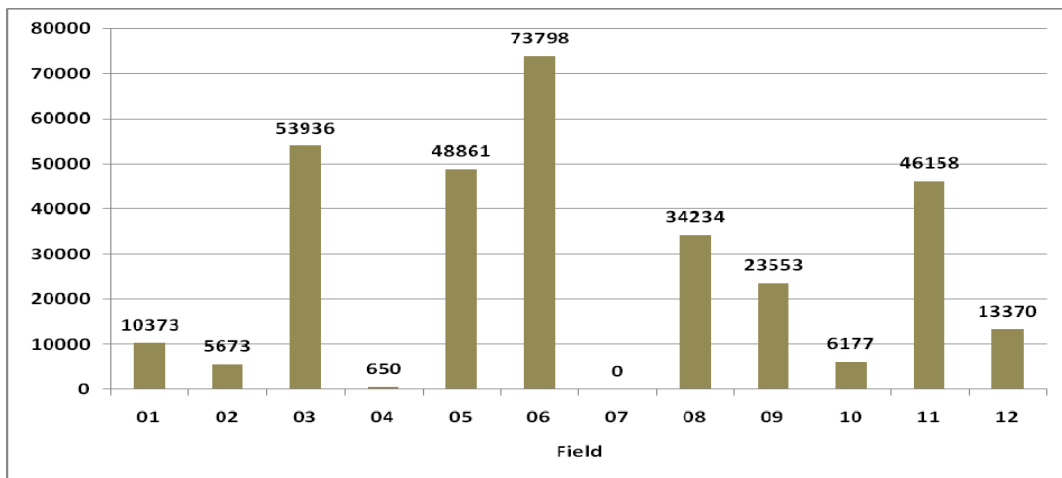
Fields
Field 01 - Agriculture and Nature Conservation
Field 02 - Culture and Arts
Field 03 - Business, Commerce and Management Studies
Field 04 - Communication Studies and Language
Field 05 - Education, Training and Development
Field 06 - Manufacturing, Engineering and Technology
Field 07 - Human and Social Studies
Field 08 - Law, Military Science and Security
Field 09 - Health Sciences and Social Services
Field 10 - Physical, Mathematical, Computer and Life Sciences
Field 11 - Services
Field 12 - Physical Planning and Construction

All Fields 2002 to 2011

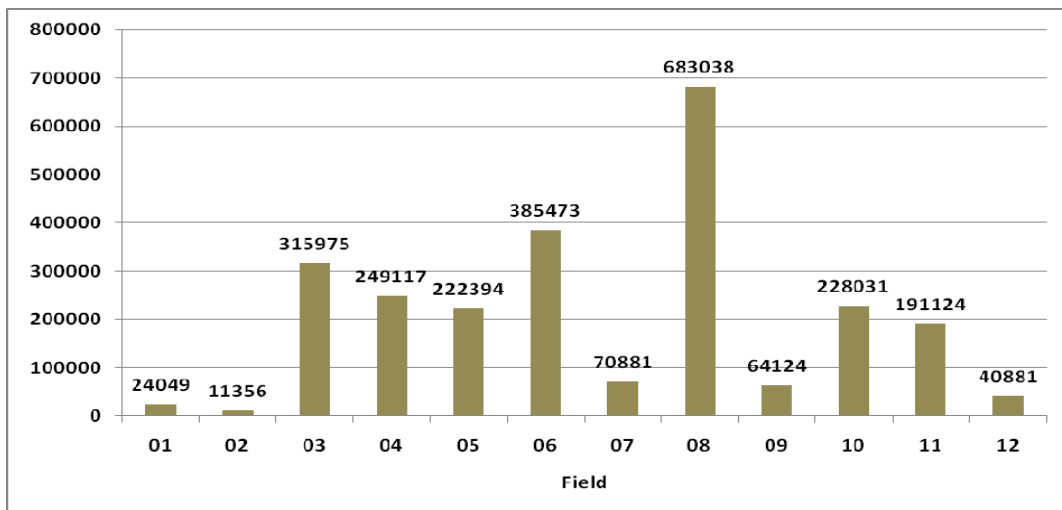
Total Number of Qualification Achievements per Year



Total Number of Qualification Achievements per NQF Organising Field



Per Field: Total Number of People Who Completed at least one Unit Standard in That Field



Total Number of People who Completed Unit Standards: 1 610 015

Total Number of People who Completed Qualifications: 281 843

Total Number of People who Completed Anything: 1 653 006

(each person counted once, no matter how many subfields /qualifications / unit standards per person)

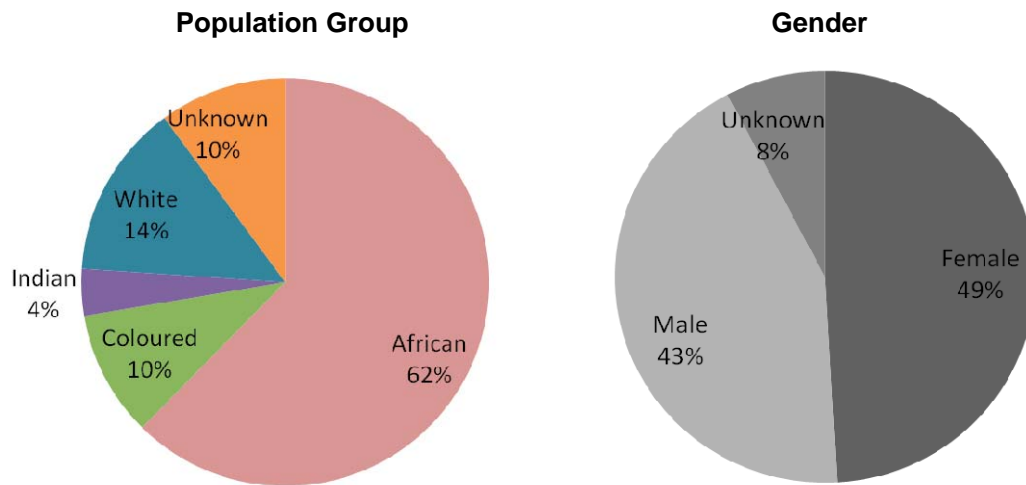
All Fields

Fields 6 and 11 were the earliest to show meaningful figures on the NLRD, in 2003, with 2 313 and 3 618 qualification achievements respectively. From 2005, Fields 5, 6, 8 and 11 showed substantial numbers, ranging from 10 454 down to 7 307. The average annual growth rate, from 2003 to 2011, was 54%. The achievements were against 649 qualifications, which is 38% of the 1 706 qualifications for which quality assuring bodies were responsible over the decade. A total of 1 610 015 people each achieved at least one unit standard in the same period; these achievements were against 6 256 unit standards. The total number of unit standard completions was 13 021 695, which amounts to an average of 8.1 unit standards per person. Overall, the number of people included in this analysis, each with one or more qualification or unit standard, is 1 653 006.

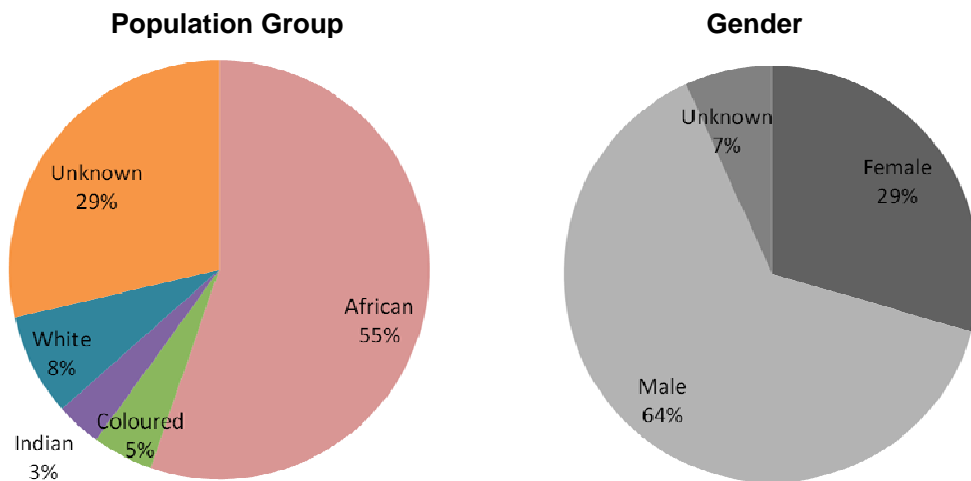
Most of the qualifications and unit standards were awarded at NQF Level 4: the number of qualification achievements for this level rose steadily from 1 756 in 2002 to 19 346 in 2011, with a peak of 20 786 in 2010. NQF Level 2 followed, increasing from 103 qualification achievements in 2002 to 6 587 in 2011, with a peak of 15 031 in 2010. Wherever known, the explanations for peaks and dips are stated in the introductions to the relevant fields.

Until 2003, most of the learners with qualification achievements were recorded as white or with unknown population group, and male. Thereafter, with more substantial numbers present, the ongoing trends for the decade were established: African people were consistently in the majority, followed by white people, and women slightly outnumbered men.

The proportions for **qualification** achievements over the whole decade were as follows:



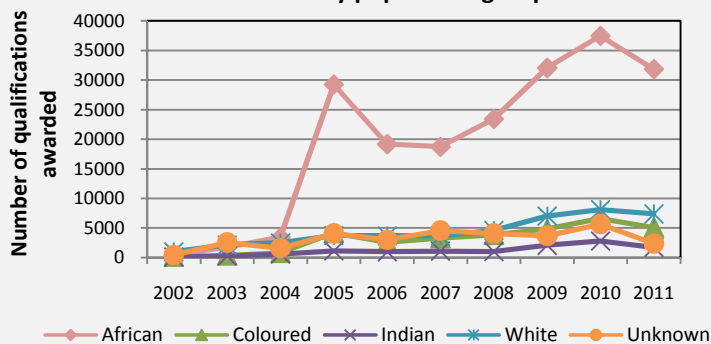
The proportions for **unit standard** achievements over the whole decade were as follows:



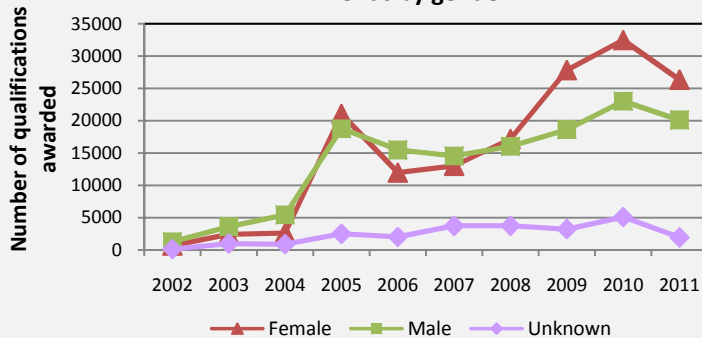
All Fields

Population Group	Gender	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
African	Female	78	492	1022	15721	8098	8686	12062	19997	22289	18403
	Male	324	1253	2403	13557	11086	10045	11356	12054	15188	13441
	Unknown	1	0	0	0	2	4	1	0	3	1
	Total	403	1745	3425	29278	19186	18735	23419	32051	37480	31845
Coloured	Female	31	62	270	1951	1045	1623	2454	2955	4392	3383
	Male	127	296	535	2203	1527	1659	1370	1883	2172	1680
	Unknown	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	158	358	805	4155	2572	3282	3824	4838	6564	5063
Indian	Female	12	44	117	326	273	370	339	1002	1394	769
	Male	87	218	491	783	717	720	668	1064	1397	966
	Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	99	262	608	1109	990	1090	1007	2066	2791	1735
White	Female	344	597	702	1806	1747	1683	2057	3553	3964	3473
	Male	652	1515	1799	1923	1951	1977	2539	3494	4153	3931
	Unknown	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	996	2112	2504	3731	3698	3660	4596	7047	8117	7404
Unknown	Female	208	1223	509	1243	802	662	238	320	436	310
	Male	72	329	186	307	188	155	101	138	111	103
	Unknown	150	1000	898	2505	2027	3738	3749	3230	5092	1945
	Total	430	2552	1593	4055	3017	4555	4088	3688	5639	2358
Total	Female	673	2418	2620	21047	11965	13024	17150	27827	32475	26338
	Male	1262	3611	5414	18773	15469	14556	16034	18633	23021	20121
	Unknown	151	1000	901	2508	2029	3742	3750	3230	5095	1946
	Total	2086	7029	8935	42328	29463	31322	36934	49690	60591	48405

Trends by population group

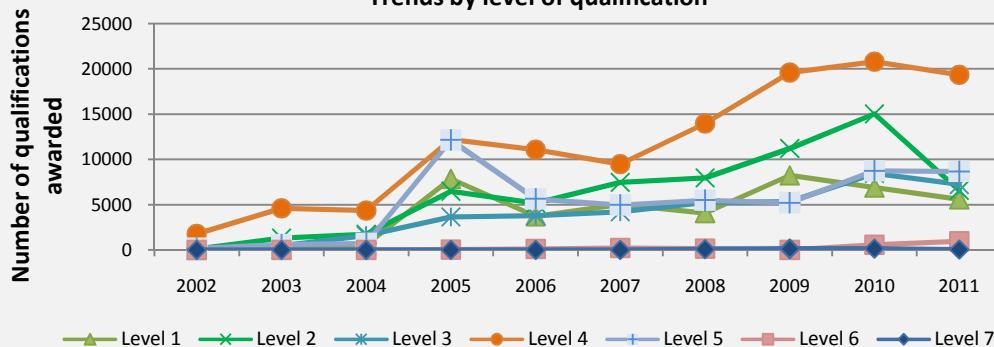


Trends by gender



NQF Level	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Level 1	4	79	558	7839	3724	5010	4079	8232	6887	5586
Level 2	103	1299	1738	6487	5169	7469	7953	11213	15031	6587
Level 3	35	466	1580	3637	3778	4212	5242	5335	8452	7237
Level 4	1756	4589	4327	12202	11060	9459	13973	19582	20786	19346
Level 5	188	596	732	12138	5643	4963	5494	5203	8737	8668
Level 6	0	0	0	25	89	209	129	5	563	944
Level 7	0	0	0	0	0	0	64	120	135	37
Total	2086	7029	8935	42328	29463	31322	36934	49690	60591	48405

Trends by level of qualification



All Fields

Number of People who achieved at least one Unit Standard in All Fields during this period

Population Group	Gender			Total
	Female	Male	Unknown	
African	275657	614499	257	890413
Coloured	35610	39534	6	75150
Indian	14558	41658	3	56219
White	135912	325336	18	461266
Unknown	12925	5184	108858	126967
Total	474662	1026211	109142	1610015

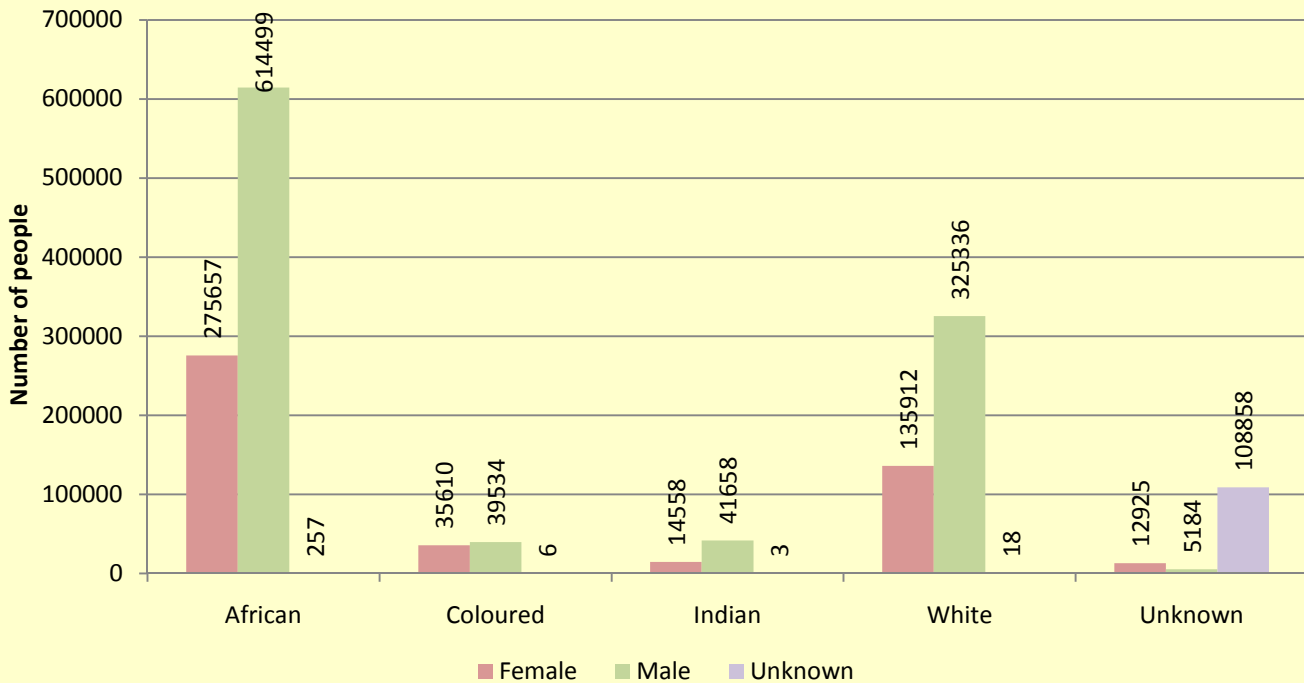
Percentage including Unknown
55%
5%
3%
29%
8%
100%

Percentage excluding Unknown
60%
5%
4%
31%
100%

Percentage including Unknown	Female	Male	Unknown	Total
	29%	64%	7%	100%

Percentage excluding Unknown	Female	Male	Unknown	Total
	32%	68%		100%

Total number of unit standard achievements for All Fields	13021695
Average per person	8.1



Number of Unit Standards in All Fields Achieved at each NQF Level during each Year by this group of People (each Unit Standard is counted once per year, no matter how many people achieved it)

