

The gender divide: Fact or myth?

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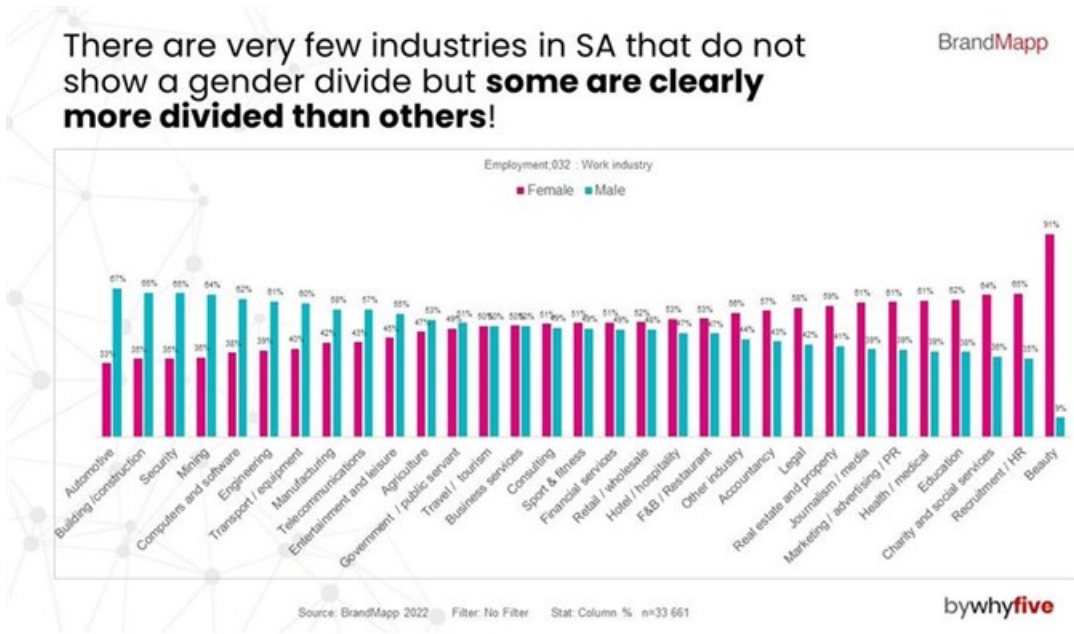
29 May 2023

Whether you believe that the behaviours of women and men are biologically determined or socially constructed - or a nuanced blend of these two often competing perspectives, South African men and women of the middle class tend to toe the line when it comes to gender typecasts.

The annual BrandMapp survey, the country's largest online study targeting those living in households with R10k+ monthly income, has applied a gender lens to its extensive datasets to reveal all-too familiar gender predispositions. South Africa's female to male ratio is 51:49, almost a clean split down the middle of our society, so being able to see the consumer landscape through a gender filter is important for brands aiming for inclusivity and wider appeal across the entire middle-income target market.

As BrandMapp's director of storytelling, Brandon de Kock explains: "It's simple maths: any time a brand, service or activity shows a gender skew, it is not appealing to the whole consumer market, which in our case is roughly 13 million consumers who comprise 100% of the South African personal tax base. While we can't confirm or deny whether men are from Mars and women are from Venus, we can certainly shed light on the gender divide with respect to consumer behaviour which, it turns out, ranges in size from a crack in the pavement to the Grand Canyon!"

Where SA women and men work

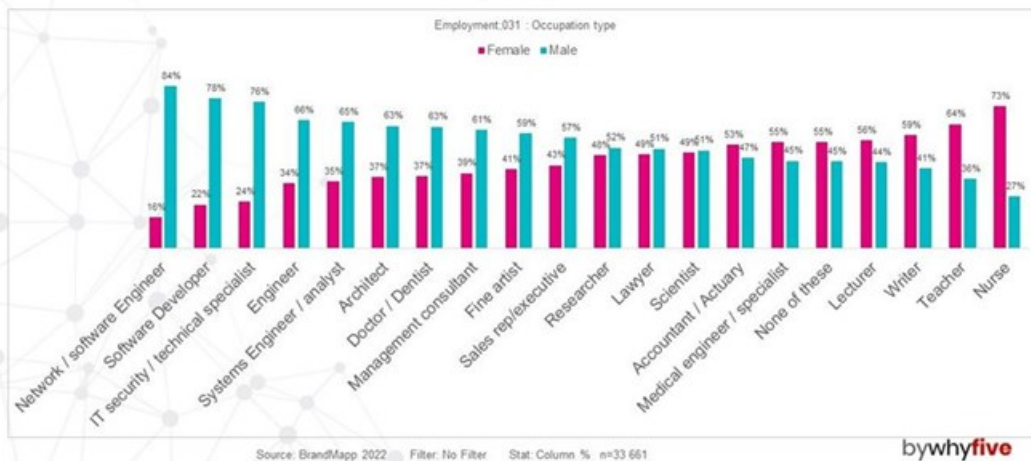


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While men and women are more or less equally represented in some SA industries such as government, financial services, travel and tourism, and sports and fitness, there are sectors where the gender gaps are striking. De Kock says: "In line with gender stereotypes, we see women dominating in the beauty, human resources, education and NGO fields, while it's a cliched 'man's world' in the automotive, construction, security and mining industries."

The professional world also reveals how men seem drawn to the **'engineering' side** of the workplace while women dominate the **'people' side**.

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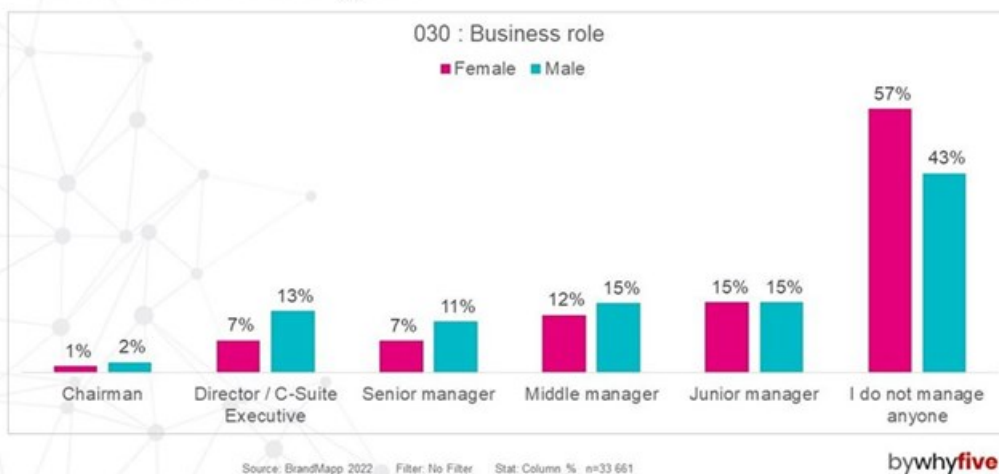


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De Kock continues: “And when we look at specific professions, it appears that the controversial YouTube psychologist Jordan Peterson might actually be right when he says that women naturally tend towards jobs that involve people while men seem drawn to machinery and things. Women dominate in very few professions outside of nursing and teaching while men dominate more job categories and are over-represented in tech jobs and as engineers, architects, doctors and dentists.”

Women in business are **30% less likely to be managers of any sort** and half as likely to be C-Suite execs or higher.

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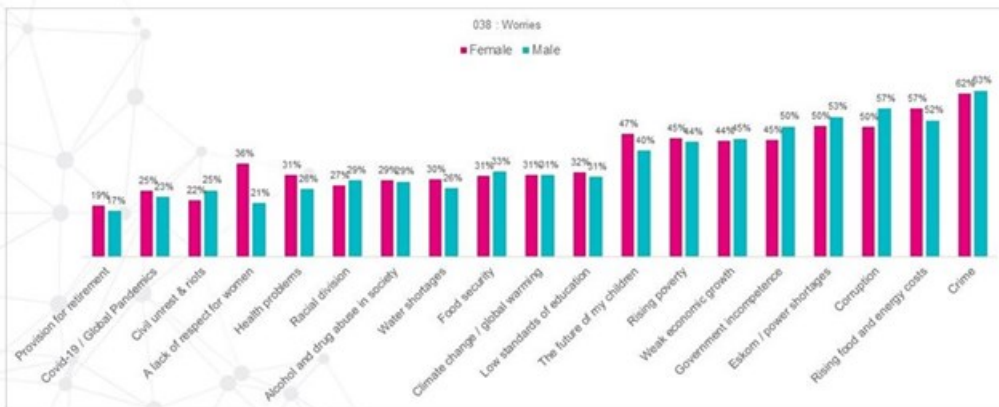


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It is also clear from the data that the higher up the corporate ladder you go, the wider the gender gap becomes. Women are 30% less likely to be managers of any sort, and half as likely to be c-suite executives. “From the early days of employment equity to all the recent chatter about DEI initiatives emanating from corporate South Africa, you’d think we were making huge strides forward, in high heels!” De Kock muses. “But there are still glass ceilings in place in the corridors of corporate power and it’s important because it means that women are not only struggling to make it into the corner office, they’re also missing out on the top salaries that come with leadership positions.”

While some things worry everyone to the same degree, women are more worried about **social issues** while men are more worried about **political issues**

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What keeps SA women and men up at night?

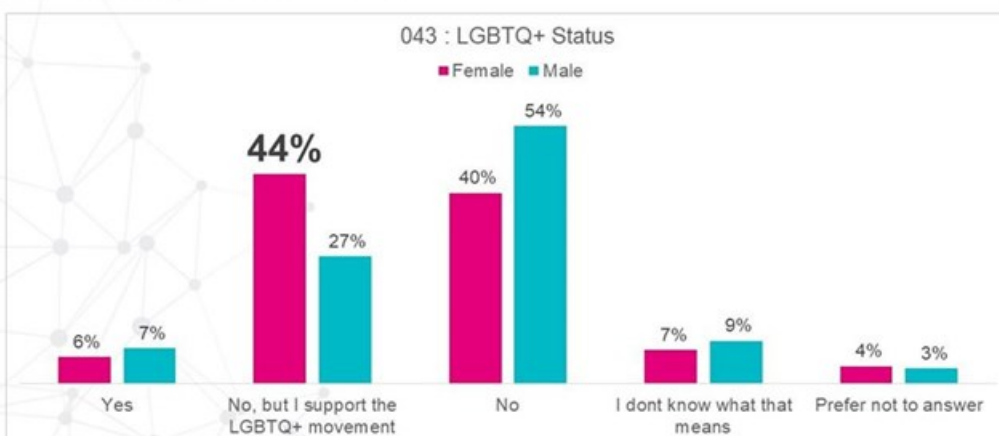
“Moving from the boardroom to the bedroom, it’s good to see that men and women have plenty in common, or at least they do when it comes to the things that keep them awake at night. That said, there are a few interesting, if slightly predictable, gender skews,” says de Kock. “Women are notably more worried about the future of their children and the lack of respect for women. Men, on the other hand are more concerned about government, politics and corruption.”

These differences also manifest in rather different outlooks on the future for men and women. For example, in answer to the question ‘How likely is it that you would emigrate?’ 40% of women said it was likely or very likely, versus just 32% of men. “At first that seems at odds with the stereotype view that women are more risk-averse than men,” wonders de Kock. “But could it be that this goes hand in hand with women being more concerned for the future of their children, and looking at other countries as safer havens with better prospects?”

Are SA women more inclined to be ‘woke’?

It’s a fact: women are **far more tolerant** than men!

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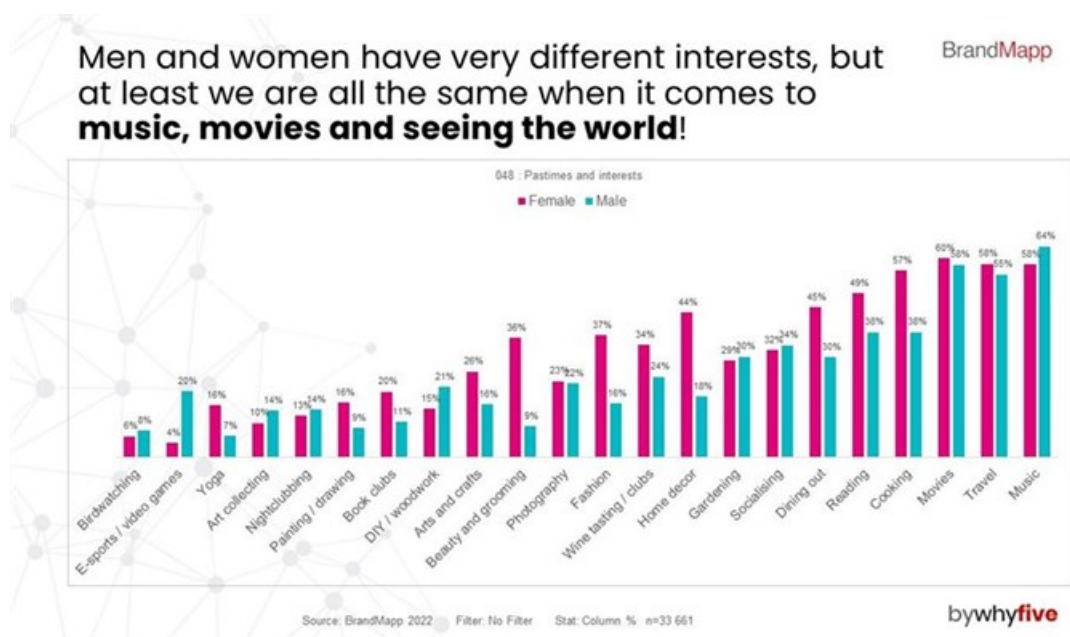
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Another significant mind-set chasm between the sexes was revealed in BrandMapp for the first time with a question

regarding people's perspective on sexual orientation. "With gender and identity issues hitting headlines on a regular basis, we were interested to how tolerant different groups of South Africans are and hopefully get insight into our relative levels of 'wokeism'" says De Kock. "This one turned out to be a bit of a slam-dunk and I think we can safely say that when it comes to support of the LGBTQ+ community, straight women are far more supportive than their male counterparts."

Interests and pastimes are pigeon-holes for SA women and men



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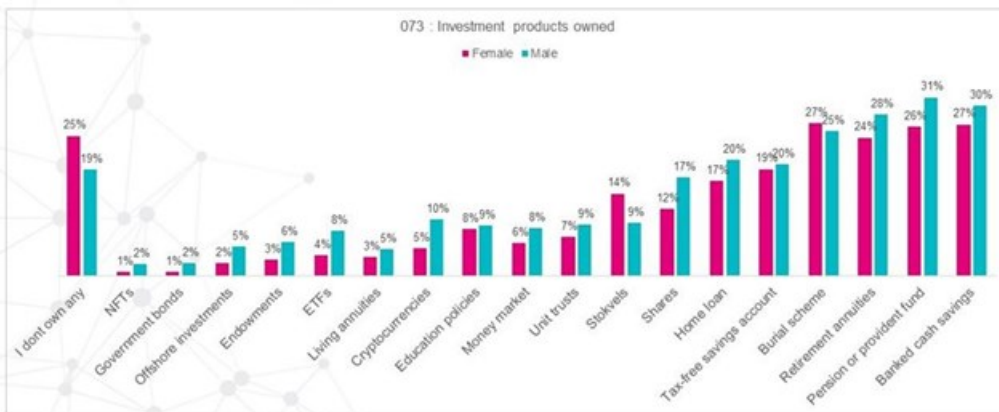
In many instances, the results simply validate what we assume to be 'common knowledge' and nowhere is this more true than when it comes to the playing fields of life. South African men are more interested in more sports than women, and when we consider other interests and favourite activities, the story plays out exactly as you would expect. Women are more involved in pastimes and have a wider range of interests than men, including cooking, reading, eating out and home decorating and they are more likely to be interested in fashion, beauty and arts and crafts as well.

It's not surprising then that when you consider live events, women are more likely to have visited food markets while more men go to watch live sports. The good news is that there are some very big, very common interests and there are three things that men and women would be happy to do together: listening to music, travelling and going to watch a movie!

The question of money

Women are **a lot less likely to have investments**, particularly those that are associated with risk, like shares and crypto.

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“One of the most interesting areas of this study concerns finance and investments,” says De Kock. “According to Stats SA, about 20% of our children live with someone other than their parents, another 20% live with both parents and a staggering 40% live with only their mothers. The more financially stable those single mums are, the brighter our future will be, but our results show that there are some worrying skews in the area.” For instance, women are more likely to have accumulated retailer debt and are significantly more risk-averse when it comes to investments.

Men are much bolder and twice as likely as women to invest in new generation finance products such as NFTs and ETFs. By contrast, the only places where women are more invested than men are in stokvels and burial schemes.

“It really feels like there’s a huge opportunity for financial service providers to understand what women really want and need and service them appropriately,” De Kock adds, “but when you take a step back and join all the dots, the picture’s the same across multiple segments and categories. Women are much more likely than men to buy hatchback cars, while men are more interested in single and double cab bakkies.

“When it comes to alcohol, men prefer grains and women prefer apples and grapes. Men are more likely to tweet while more women can be found on Instagram and Pinterest. In fact, it’s fair to say that in the SA consumer universe, men really are from Mars and women from Venus. Brands who understand that and find ways of connecting with 100% of the possible market are always going to have a competitive edge, don’t you think?”

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