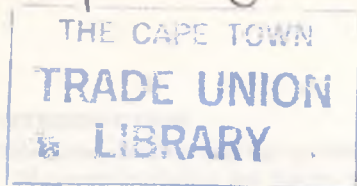


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# AFRICAN WAGES IN GRAHAMSTOWN

A SURVEY

by

JEREMY GREST  
Research Assistant,  
Eastern Cape Region.

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## INTRODUCTION

This survey was carried out in November 1973.

My grateful thanks are due to the Grahamstown officials of the Cape Midlands Bantu Administration Board for permission to use the records of the Labour Office, and for the assistance given me during the survey.

In particular I should like to thank the Area Manager, Mr. Bush, Mr. Freeman, the Manager, Mr. Hall, the Labour Officer, and the Clerks in the Labour Office who gave their help when needed.

## AIM

The aim of the survey was to provide up-to-date information on the basic rates being paid to African employees registered at the Labour Office in Grahamstown.

The survey was intended to provide an overall view of wages paid in Grahamstown by various groups of employers, and to give some information on differing wage rates for males and females, and for Africans recruited in Grahamstown and working in other centres.

## THE SURVEY: SAMPLE AND METHOD

The records of the Labour Office in Grahamstown provided the information used in this survey.<sup>1</sup>

The method of obtaining the information required on wages was as follows: information on wages and occupations of all those Africans recorded as having entered into employment contracts from the beginning of 1972 to the date of the survey (mid-November 1973) was extracted from the labour cards. Thus all new employment contracts for a period of approximately 22 months were included in the survey.

It was hoped that by restricting the sample to this period some idea of wages currently being paid to Grahamstown Africans would emerge.

At the outset, several points should be noted regarding the information obtained from the labour cards.

1. The records deal only with people in registered employment. Unregistered workers illegally employed do not feature in the findings. Actual employment may thus be greater than the figures given below.
1. Africans living in prescribed areas are compelled by law to take out a reference document (pass book) at the age of sixteen and to register as work-seekers at the local labour office, if qualified to do so under Section 10 of the Bantu (Urban Areas) Act as amended by the Bantu Laws Amendment Act 42 of 1964. Section 10 governs the right of an African to be in a prescribed area, and the conditions under which he may remain there. The work-seeker's permit enables the holder to remain within the prescribed area to look for work, provided that he reports back once a fortnight, in the event of his not finding employment, for his permit to be extended.  
When a work-seeker finds employment his prospective employer is obliged to return a form on which details of his contract are recorded. The employer notifies the labour office on the necessary form when the contract is terminated. Records of these transactions are kept by the labour office as individual case histories of registered workers.

2. As the survey was restricted to contracts made during the last two years, the results give no indication of wages currently being paid to employees of long standing. These might be higher depending upon the length of service. However, it is also arguable that in a situation of surplus labour supply, there is no real pressure on employers to offer competitive annual wage increments. This survey does not deal with this issue.
3. Labour cards reflect, for the most part, the basic starting rate of employees. There is thus no indication of:
  - (a) increments paid to employees within the two-year sample period;
  - (b) overtime paid where this is either offered or demanded by wage regulating instruments;
  - (c) payments in kind and other benefits, such as:
    - (i) food rations or meals;
    - (ii) accommodation for domestics—where applicable. (Due to the proximity of the location only a limited number 'sleep in');
    - (iii) bus fares;
    - (iv) uniforms, overalls, etc.;
    - (v) education of dependants;
    - (vi) health.

However, given these limitations the information presented is reasonably accurate. Informed guesswork on overtime rates and fringe benefits can partly compensate for the lack of this information at source.

## EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

### *Employed*

**Table 1:** Numbers in Registered Employment at June 1973  
(Source: Grahamstown Labour Office.)

Sex	No.	%
Men	4 579	58,29
Women	3 276	41,71
Total	7 855	100,00

Males constituted 58,3% of those in registered employment, and females 41,7%. These figures cover all workers registered over a number of years.

### *Unemployed*

From the number of work-seekers *registered* in the second week in November 1973 (not necessarily a true reflection of unemployment, as many unemployed are also unregistered), a different picture emerges.

**Table 2:** Registered Workseekers—2nd Week November, 1973.<sup>2</sup>  
(Source: Grahamstown Labour Office.)

Age Group	Men		Women	
	No.	%	No.	%
Under 18 years	242	22.74	380	9.15
18—34 years	639	60.06	2 128	51.24
35—64 years	183	17.20	1 207	29.06
65+ years	—	—	438	10.55
Total	1 064	100.00	4 153	100.00

Women comprise nearly 80% of registered workseekers, and men just over 20%.

The age breakdown of registered workseekers shows, as far as males are concerned a fairly normal distribution, the greatest proportion being in the 18-34 year bracket, with the age groups on either side each representing approximately one-fifth of the work-seekers.

In the case of women, however, the proportion of workseekers in the 35-64 year bracket, and over, is very large.

Thus a greater number of women than men are registered as workseekers, and a noticeable proportion of the women are in the older age brackets.

This suggests that women who would not normally work because of advancing years are also forced into a crowded labour market because of economic necessity.<sup>3</sup>

Over a twelve month period (December 1972 to November 1973), the unemployment figures for male and female fluctuate greatly (see Figure 1).

Unemployment among African men in Grahamstown reaches a peak over the June/July/August period, and drops and rises sharply in the months immediately before and after. The December/January male unemployment figures are partly explained by the school leaving population looking for work in this period.

2. It should be noted also that work-seekers failing to report to the labour office are taken off the records after a period of three months—and so do not feature in these figures.

3. See M. Roux and M. St Leger, *Fingo Village*, Johannesburg, S.A.I.R.R., 1971. In their sample, 40% of the households were headed by women. See also: N. Charton, *The Unemployed African in Grahamstown*, Grahamstown, the Author, 1970. 51% of the sample households in this investigation relied upon multiple breadwinners for their existence. These figures effectively point to the vital rôle played by women in Grahamstown in contributing to the family income.



In the case of women, the sharp rise in unemployment in May/June (see Figure 2) is explained by a registration drive undertaken by the Bantu Administration Board<sup>4</sup> after its take-over and a consequent change from the previous policy of non-registration of females.<sup>5</sup>

### THE SAMPLE: BREAKDOWN BY MAIN ACTIVITY

The breakdown by main activity in the wage survey sample in November 1973, is given in Table 3 below. Some explanation as to the composition of the sample is needed. In many instances, Africans registered in Grahamstown but working in other centres, e.g. Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage, have been included in the sample. These are migrant workers whose source of income lies outside Grahamstown. The inclusion of substantial numbers of such workers in the sample would tend to inflate the average wages recorded for Grahamstown.

**Table 3:** Sample Breakdown by Main Economic Activity, November 1973.

Main Activity	Men		Women	
	No.	%	No.	%
Manufacturing	197	11,64	126	9,97
Construction	577	34,08	0	0
Wholesale	51	3,01	0	0
Retail	128	7,56	6	0,47
Accommodation/ Catering	39	2,30	71	5,62
Transport/ Storage/ Communication	33	1,95	0	0
Motor Trade	70	4,14	1	0,08
Business/ Finance Service	12	0,71	7	0,55
Domestic	85	5,02	929	73,50
Education	173	10,22	59	4,67
Public Administration	328	19,37	51	4,03
Health Services <sup>6</sup>	0	0,00	14	1,11
Total	1 693	100,00	1 264	100,00

4. The Bantu Administration Board system which began to operate in June 1973 is allegedly designed to effect greater geographical mobility of the African labour force. Only time will show whether its practical implementation will indeed fulfil this aim. There are critics who suspect that it will reinforce and extend the present system of influx control. In theory, instead of being confined to a single prescribed urban area, a worker may now move within the larger scope of the Board's jurisdiction from one urban area to another, provided (a) he is filling a vacancy and (b) there is accommodation for him. While working in the other centre he does not forfeit his residential rights at home, and may transfer them after the period laid down in Section 10(1)6 of the Bantu (Urban Areas) Act, as amended, has run its course.

5. Personal communication, location Manager.

6. Other than national or provincial.

The construction industry employs the greatest number of men in the sample, while the majority of women are domestic workers.

Grahamstown is at present experiencing an upsurge in building activity. Construction companies have, in the last few years, helped to alleviate the city's chronic unemployment problem by employing large numbers of male labourers. However, this form of employment is a variable factor. The completion of major construction projects would be likely to have an adverse effect upon employment trends.

Women depend mainly upon domestic service—a very poorly paid form of labour in Grahamstown—as the source of their livelihood.

Public administration constituted the second most important source of employment for men (19.4%). This included, for purposes of grouping in the survey, municipal, provincial, regional and national bodies such as the municipality, hospitals, the Bantu Administration Board and the South African Railways and Harbours Administration. (The S.A.R. recruits a considerable amount of labour from Grahamstown to work in other centres.)

The importance of manufacturing for men is also explained to a large degree by the practice of recruiting labour from Grahamstown for employment in other areas. Grahamstown's industries would not employ as large a proportion as the Table above suggests because the manufacturing sector in the city is restricted to the clay and the dairy industries, dry cleaners, a few small-scale engineering works, a light-bulb factory and a gown-and-robe-making concern.

Of the men, 10.2% were employed in various capacities by educational institutions in Grahamstown, which employ a large number of black labourers. These must rank as Grahamstown's most important industries.

As far as the women are concerned, after domestic employment, the largest group work in the manufacturing industry. The clay industry in Grahamstown employs a number of women for work which is shunned by men.

Included in accommodation and catering are hotels, boarding establishments, and restaurants, employing 5.6% of the women.

Educational institutions employ 4.7% of the women, mainly in a domestic capacity. Those employed in public administration include nurses, nurse-aids, clerks and labourers.

To recapitulate: the largest numbers of men are found in construction, followed by public administration, manufacturing, and educational institutions. Women are very largely employed in domestic service, the only other groups employing over 5% of the sample being manufacturing and catering/accommodation.

No breakdown by skills has been given in this report, as it was found that by far the greatest proportion of workers in the sample were in the unskilled category. Such a breakdown would have been no more than a tentative estimate due to the lack of any real job description at the source of information—the labour cards.

## FINDINGS OF THIS SURVEY

Table 4 below shows the wages being paid to the workers mentioned in Table 3 above, expressed in rand-per-month. (These are basic starting rates and would not reflect commission, if any, payments in kind, where applicable, or any increments during the period of employment.)

**Table 4:** Monthly Cash Earnings, November 1973.

Rand per Month	Men		Women		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
0 — 10	3	0,18	175	13,84	178	6,02
10 — 20	62	3,66	782	61,86	844	28,54
20 — 30	308	18,19	244	19,30	552	18,67
30 — 40	718	42,41	34	2,69	752	25,43
40 — 50	403	23,74	15	1,19	417	14,10
50 — 60	71	4,19	3	0,24	74	2,50
60 — 70	28	1,65	1	0,08	29	0,98
70 — 80	95	5,61	5	0,40	100	3,38
80 — 90	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00
90 — 100	3	0,18	2	0,16	5	0,17
100 — 110	1	0,06	2	0,16	3	0,10
110 — 120	0	0,00	1	0,08	1	0,03
120 — 130	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00
130 — 140	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00
140 — 150	2	0,12	0	0,00	2	0,07
Total	1 693	100,00	1 264	100,00	2 957	99,99

The wages ranged from less than R10 per month to between R140 and R150 per month. The overall wage rates show that 6% of these workers fall into the lowest category (less than R10) while only two people were paid more than R140 a month. The combined wage distribution figures do not follow a normal curve, because of the differential wages paid to men and women. Of the combined sample, 29% received wages between R10 and R20 a month, while 19% received between R20 and R30.

The workers receiving less than R40 a month amounted to 79% of the sample. This percentage rises to over 99% if the cut-off level is taken at R80 a month. Basic wages of more than R80 a month account for only 0,4% of the sample, or 11 out of 2 957 workers.

The mean wage for men lies in the R30-R40 bracket, 42,4% of the sample receiving wages in this category. The distribution curve has been artificially inflated because large numbers of males are recruited to work in the manufacturing industry in Uitenhage which pays starting wages in the R70-R80 bracket.



The sample of women shows that wages range from less than R10 a month to between R40 and R50, with very few above this. Of all the women, 14% received less than R10 per month while cumulatively, 95% of them received less than R30 a month, and only slightly more than 1% topped the R50 a month mark.

Overall, the men are grouped around the R30-R40 bracket, with percentages rising and dropping sharply on either side. In the case of women, wage distribution is even more sharply graded, percentages plunging dramatically after the R10-20 bracket.

### *Male Wages*

Table 5 gives individual lowest and highest wages in each industry, and an average wage.

The lowest wage, apart from domestic workers, was paid to ice-cream vendors, who received a starting rate of 50 cents a day. This figure excludes earnings from commission on sales. (The figure of R12,90 a month was arrived at by assuming a basic 50 cents a day for a six day week and converting the weekly rate into a monthly figure.) The highest wage was paid to workers in Uitenhage in the manufacturing industry, as has already been mentioned.

The highest recorded wage in the construction sample was R74,10 per month, paid to a heavy-duty vehicle driver, whereas the average wage was R36,04 per month (often expressed in hourly rates and converted in Table 5 to a monthly figure based on a 45-hour week).

Sample sizes may be a possible reason for the apparent discrepancy between average wages in wholesale and retail, as the retail sample was twice as large as the wholesale sample. The highest wage of R150 per month was earned by a retail salesman.

Wages in the transport/storage communication group are generally low, the average being R32,04 per month, the highest wage being paid to a heavy duty vehicle driver. It would seem that drivers are in a short supply, and that since the inception of the Bantu Administration Board, recruiting in Grahamstown by outside organisations has caused local employers to pay more competitive wages. (They may also be determined by wage regulating instruments.)

The motor trade showed the highest average wage overall, and, with the exception of domestic work, relatively the least variation between the highest and the lowest wages. It should be noted, however, that the sample size comprised only 4,1% of the total.

Those employed in domestic service and in educational institutions received the lowest wages on average. It should be noted that the wages of male domestic workers—mainly gardeners—were sometimes shown as daily rates. In these cases I have assumed full employment for a five-day week.

Men employed in educational institutions were mainly labourers, doing work very similar to domestic workers. There were also some waiters, drivers and security guards in the sample.

Overall average wages for all men in the survey were R38,62 per month.

In the manufacturing industry 35% of the men received between R20 and R30 per month. The way in which the comparatively high average starting wage of R70-R80 per

month paid in Uitenhage artificially inflates the overall average wage in this sector is illustrated by Figure 3 which shows the beneficial effect to Grahamstown of increased labour mobility.

**Table 5: Basic Wages Paid to Men in Grahamstown, November 1973.**

Main Activity	Wages (Rand per Month)		
	Average	Lowest	Highest
Manufacturing	49,73	12,90	78,00
Construction	36,04	21,67	74,10
Wholesale	39,39	28,17	78,00
Retail	42,84	17,33	150,00
Accommodation/Catering	35,07	21,67	78,00
Transport/Storage	32,04	19,50	108,33
Motor Trade	52,01	32,50	69,33
Business/Financial	41,35	30,33	71,50
Domestic	22,25	7,00	43,33
Education	30,33	12,00	60,67
Public Administration			
A. Municipal	(41,13	26,91	61,00
B. Provincial	(33,17	25,00	51,50
C. National	41,45(42,47	23,00	62,00
D. Regional	(62,47	44,20	90,00
Overall	38,62	7,00	150,00

In the construction industry, 66,4% of the sample received wages between R30 and R40. A very large proportion of these were blacks recruited by outside organisations involved in the current construction projects in Grahamstown (see Figure 4).

In the wholesale trade the majority of the sample received wages in the R30-R40 bracket (see Figure 5 which illustrates the wage spread).

In the retail trade wage distribution is mainly between the R20-R30 and the R50-R60 bracket, forming a wider spread than the wholesale trade. As Figure 6 shows, the retail sample contained the broadest spectrum of wages, ranging from R10-R20 to R140-R150, the highest wage in the sample.

As has been mentioned above, the average wages in the accommodation/catering trade rank low in the sample, ranging from R20-R30 to R70-R80 per month, the average being R35,07.

Wages in the transport/storage/communications group range from R10-R20 to R100-R110 per month, averaging R32,04. The bulk of the employees sampled were labourers, wages in the higher brackets being paid to heavy-duty vehicle drivers.

The wages paid in the motor trade sample cover a small range, from R30-R40 to R60-R70 per month (Figure 7). The occupations here included labourers, pump attendants and parts strippers.

The business/financial service sample was very small (12) and its usefulness is thus

limited. The smallness of the sample would indicate either (a) limited employment opportunities or (b) low labour turnover in the two-year period covered by the sample. The type of occupations covered by the sample included messengers, cleaners, delivery men and an interpreter. The average wage was R41,35 per month.

Wages for male domestic workers ranged between R0-10 and R40-R50 per month. As has been mentioned above, wages were given in various forms. Hourly wages were calculated assuming a fully employed 45-hour week, which may tend to be over-generous, as workers may not necessarily be full-time employees when paid at this rate. The wage spread was narrow, the average being R22,25 per month (Figure 8).

In educational institutions, wages range from R10-R20 to R60-R70 per month, the average, which was the lowest in the sample with the sole exception of domestic workers, being R30,33 per month.

The public administration sample as a whole had an average wage of R41,45 per month. Grahamstown Municipality pays a basic daily wage of R1,75, plus a weekly bonus of R2,00 conditional upon full work attendance. In calculating these wages, I have again assumed full attendance for all employees in the sample.

Departments of the Provincial Administration, including the library and provincial hospital, pay the lowest wages in this group, averaging R33,17 per month.

As far as the Central Government is concerned, a large proportion of the employees sampled are employed by the S.A.R. and H. in centres other than Grahamstown, which serves as a labour recruitment pool. The wages paid to these recruits range from R30 to R45 with overtime opportunities. Food and housing costs are deducted from the basic wage.

It seems that Grahamstown is now popular as a recruitment centre, as the wages paid, though higher than those normally obtainable in the town, also tend to be lower than those paid in larger centres such as Port Elizabeth, to which much of the labour goes.

The sample dealing with the Bantu Administration Board was a small one, and included labourers and clerks. The average, on its own, is the highest of the public administration bodies, and also of the whole sample, at R62,47 per month. Figure 9 gives an overall picture of the wages in the public administration sample.

### *Female Wages*

Table 6 illustrates the wage structure by main activity of women working in Grahamstown or recruited from there.

Figure 10 gives the wage distribution of women employed in accommodation and catering services.

Domestic workers comprised 73,5% of all women workers in the sample. Figure 11 shows the wage distribution of this labour force.

Wages in this category of employment range from less than R5 to R40-R50 per month. Nearly 90% of the sample were receiving a *cash* wage of less than R20 per month.

**Table 6: Basic Wages Paid to Women in Grahamstown, November 1973.**

Main Activity	Wages (Rand per Month)		
	Average	Lowest	Highest
Manufacturing	22,51	7,58	26,35
Construction			
Wholesale			
Retail	25,72	6,00	45,00
Accommodation / Catering	20,08	7,00	34,67
Transport / Storage			
Motor Trade	21,67		
Business / Financial	16,94	10,00	25,00
Domestic	12,78	2,15	43,34
Education	17,88	8,00	40,52
Public Administration			
(a) Municipal	13,00)		
(b) Provincial	40,11)	15,00	97,00
(c) National	19,00) 33,66	19,00	19,00
(d) Regional	70,16)	61,00	73,33
Health *	54,00	19,00	117,00
Overall	15,79	2,15	117,00

\* Other than provincial and national.

A sample of contracts entered into in 1973 was taken, to determine whether or not there had been any significant wage increases since 1972. The results of this exercise were not conclusive, but indicated that although wages had not risen at the higher end of the scale, i.e. R20-R30 per month, more people were paying wages in the R15-R18 bracket than in 1972. In Roux's 1971 study of the Fingo Village she found that the average domestic wage was R8,44 per month. It would appear that wages have increased since then, if only in the middle group of those receiving from R10 to R18 per month.

Returning to the domestic wage breakdown, we see that 2,1% are still receiving wages of less than R5,00 per month; 18,2% of the sample received a cash wage of less than R10 per month, and 59,1% less than R15. Very few workers were receiving wages higher than R22 per month. Cumulatively, 96,6% of domestic workers sampled were paid less than R22 a month.

It is quite clear that women employed as domestic workers are the most poorly paid group of employees in the sample.

I have not attempted to estimate the value of rations or uniforms supplied to domestics, as the individual variation between employers makes this an extremely difficult exercise, necessitating the imposition of a rigid hypothetical standard upon a shifting and varied reality.

However, despite the real or potential value of rations, the position of the female domestic workers remains unrelieved, as the wages paid are not simply "pocket



money" as their value would seem to indicate, but form an essential part of the family income, due either to the absence of the male breadwinner for various reasons, or to the inadequacy of his own wages.

The education sample showed that 66,1% received wages of between R10 and R20 a month. The distribution curve falls and rises again at the R30-R40 bracket (see Figure 12) due mainly to wage increases at Rhodes University during 1973.

Wages paid in Public Administration to women were generally low. 56,9% received wages between R10 and R20 a month and 19% between R40 and R50 a month (Figure 13).

The highest wages in this category were between R90 and R100 per month. Included in the sample were labourers such as sweepers and cleaners, as well as clerks and nurses and nurse-aids, hence the uneven distribution pattern.

Health services other than national and provincial consisted of only 14 women. Again, the sample included both labourers and skilled workers, such as nurses. The group had a mid-range R30-R40 wage with a few receiving up to R120 per month.

## WAGES AND THE POVERTY DATUM LINE

The Poverty Datum Line (P.D.L.) is a hypothetical measure designed to reflect the lowest costs which a family must meet in order to maintain minimum standards of health and decency *in the short run only*. It is calculated at the lowest retail cost of a budget of necessities comprising only:

1. that quantity and variety of *food* which dietetic experts estimate to be necessary for health, taking into account the established food customs of the community;
2. the minimum of *fuel and lighting* compatible with health, and taking into account the availability thereof and the established customs of the community;
3. the minimum of *clothing* necessary for protection of health and conformity with standards of decency;
4. the minimum of *cleaning materials* for *personal and household* use, compatible with health;
5. the cost of *transport* for earning members of the household between home and workplace;
6. the cost of *housing*.

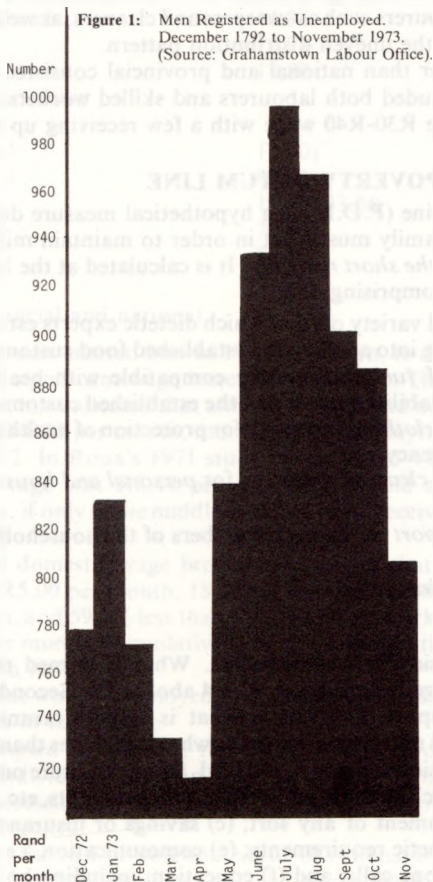
These form the basic PDL components. What is termed the Primary PDL is obtained by adding together the totals of 1-4 above. The Secondary PDL includes 5 and 6: rent and transport, and this is what is usually meant when the PDL is mentioned. The PDL is more remarkable for what it excludes than for what it includes. For example, no provision is made in the PDL for expenditure on the following items: (a) household goods such as furniture, a stove, crockery, pots, etc.; (b) tobacco, liquor, or recreation/entertainment of any sort; (c) savings or insurance; (d) personal care such as toilet and cosmetic requirements; (e) communication, i.e. stationery, stamps, reading matter, telephone calls; and (f) education, including books and fees.



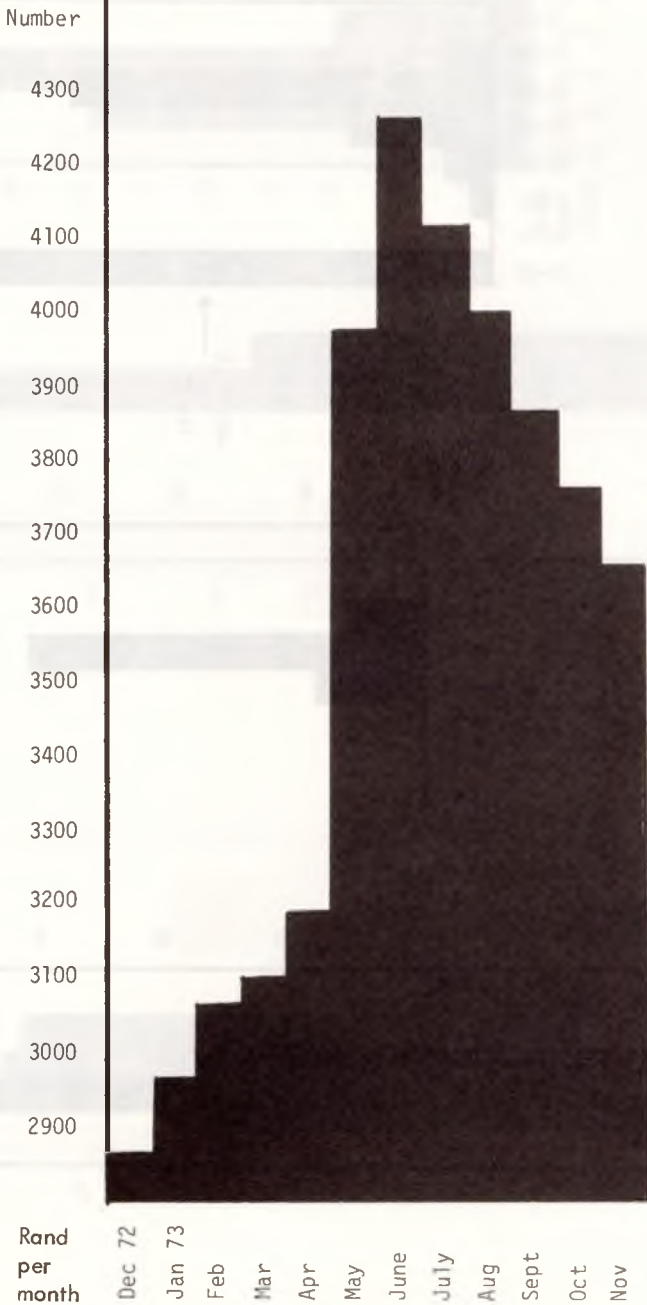
A *Primary PDL* for Grahamstown in March 1973 was calculated to be R66,32 by the Rhodes University Wages Commission. (This figure excludes rent and transport.)

Figure 14 gives the overall basic wage distribution of African workers in Grahams-town or recruited from Grahamstown. A tentative line drawn after the R60-R70 bracket, presents a picture which speaks clearly for itself.

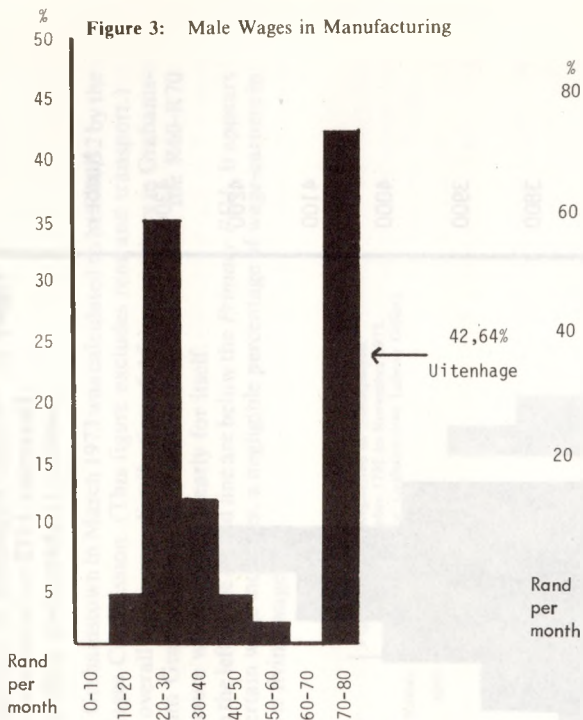
All starting wages to the left of the dotted line are below the *Primary PDL*. It appears that, even assuming certain wage increases, a negligible percentage of wage-earners in Grahamstown receive a living wage.



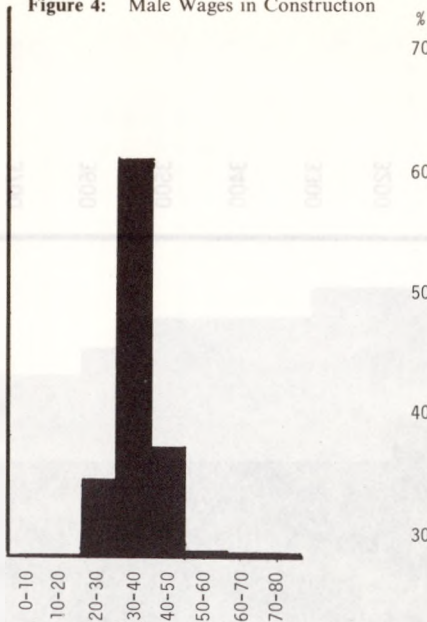
**Figure 2:** Women Registered as Unemployed.  
December 1972 to November 1973.  
(Source: Grahamstown Labour Office).



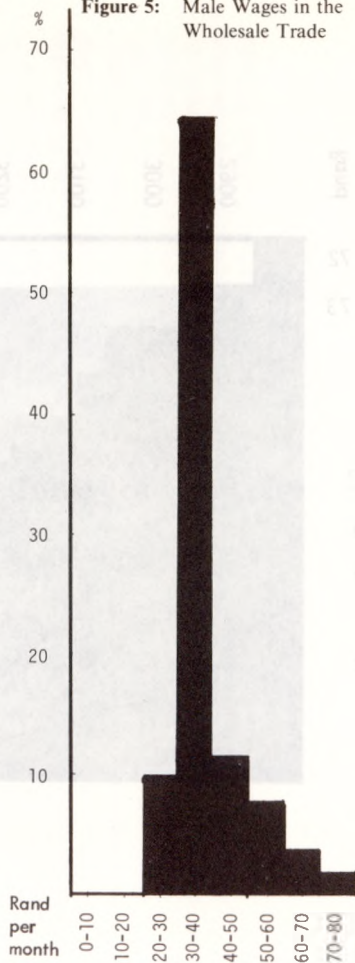
**Figure 3: Male Wages in Manufacturing**



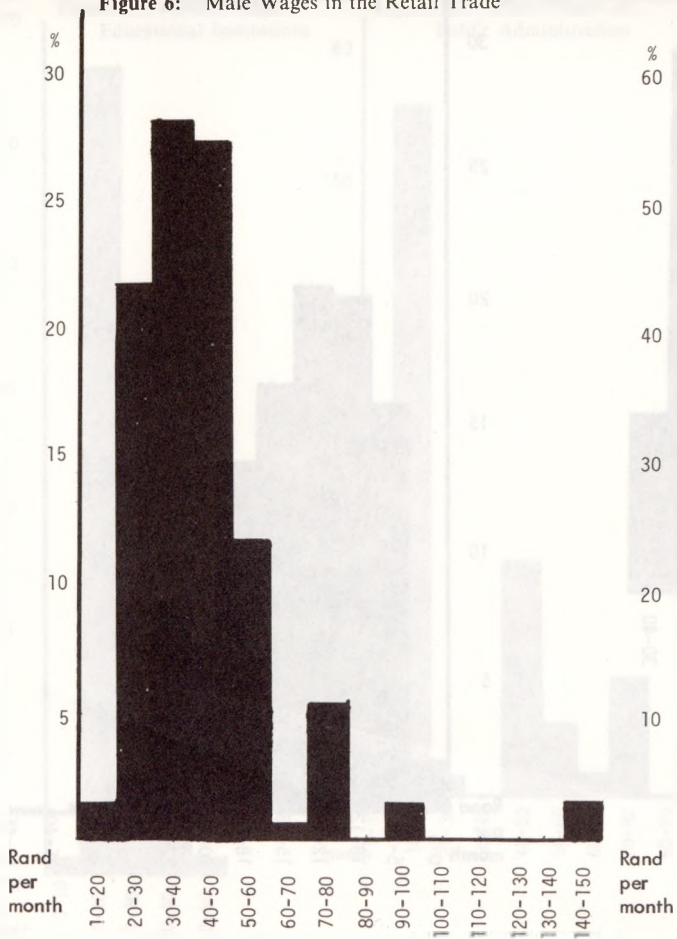
**Figure 4: Male Wages in Construction**



**Figure 5: Male Wages in the Wholesale Trade**

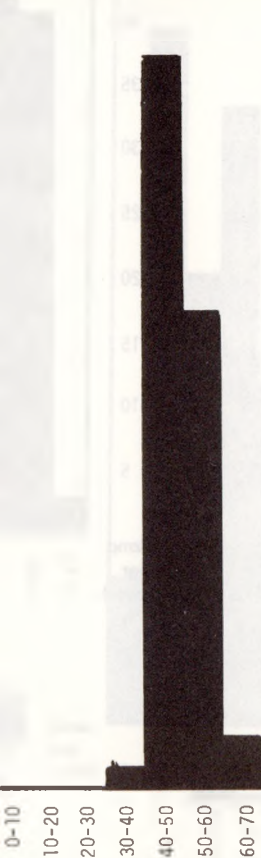


**Figure 6: Male Wages in the Retail Trade**

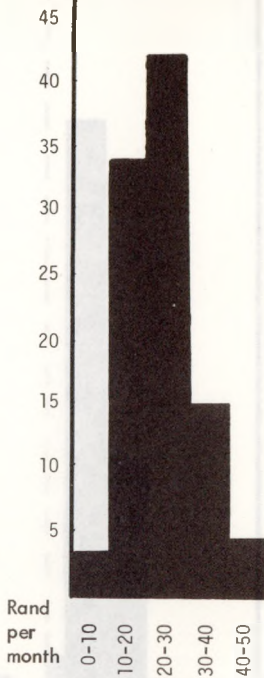




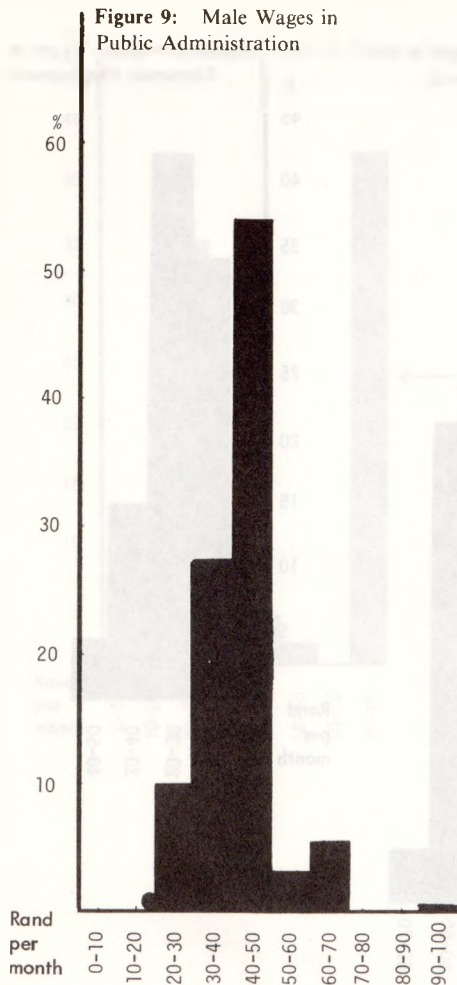
**Figure 7: Male Wages in the Motor Trade**



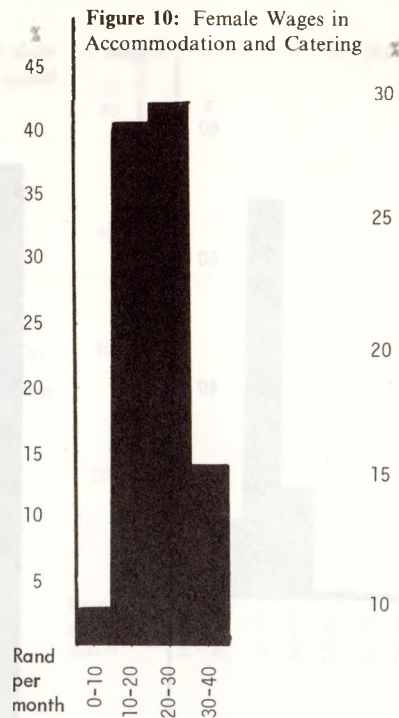
**Figure 8: Male Wages in Domestic Employment**



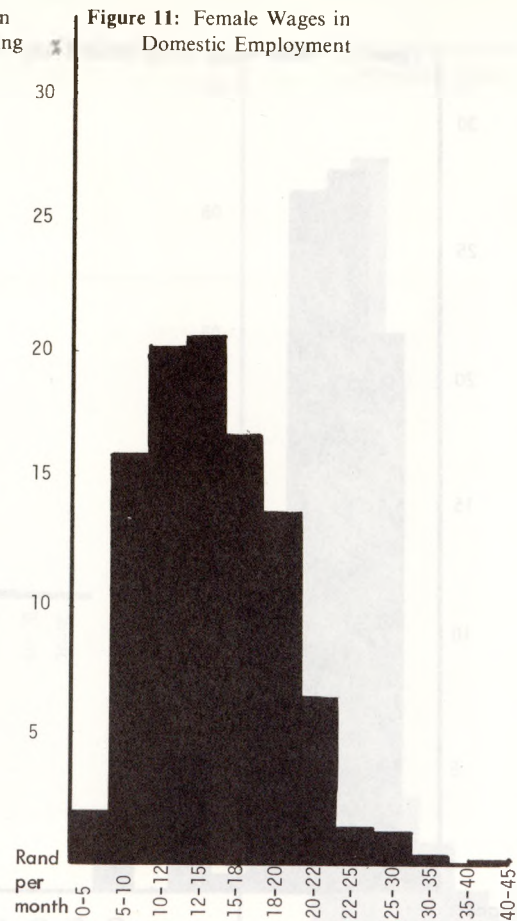
**Figure 9: Male Wages in Public Administration**

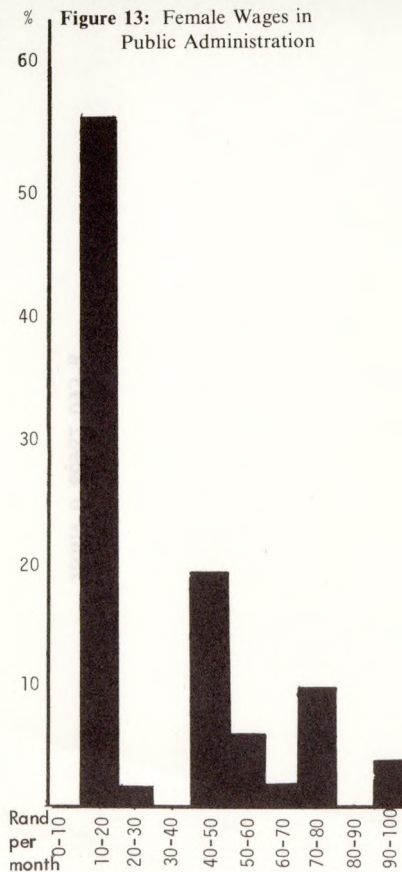
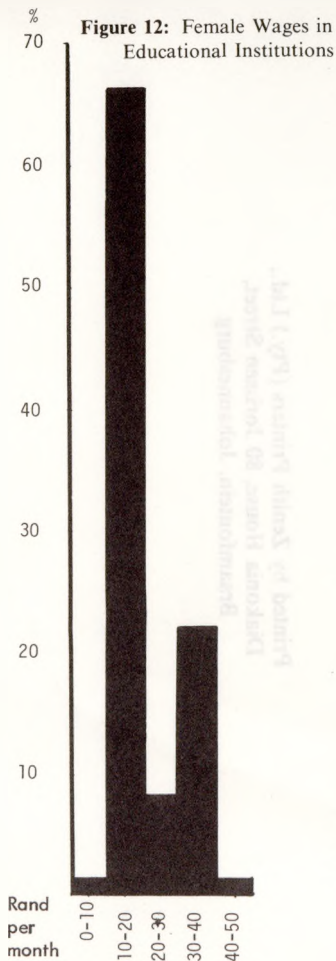


**Figure 10: Female Wages in Accommodation and Catering**

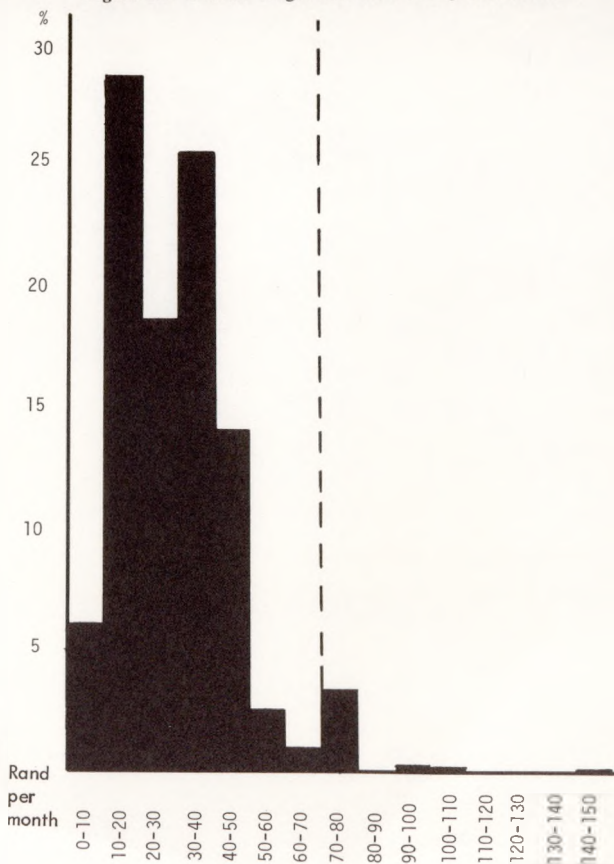


**Figure 11: Female Wages in Domestic Employment**





**Figure 14:** Overall Wages and the Poverty Datum Line



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