



CATHSSETA Track & Tracer

Cross- sectional Survey Study 2025/26

South Africa continues to face high youth unemployment and skills mismatches, making it critical to assess whether publicly funded training leads to meaningful outcomes. The 2025/26 Track and Tracer Study, commissioned by the Culture, Arts, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport Sector Education and Training Authority (CATHSSETA), evaluates the post-training pathways, relevance, and sustainability of funded learning programmes. The study supports evidence-based planning in line with the Skills Development Act and the National Skills Development Plan (NSDP) 2030, ensuring that CATHSSETA interventions contribute to improved employability and sectoral growth.

Internships Programme (HET WIL)

Workplace-based programmes designed for graduates and diplomates to gain practical, hands-on experience related to their field of study, improving work readiness and employability.

Learnerships

Structured learning programmes that combine theoretical training with practical workplace experience, leading to a SAQA-registered qualification. Learnerships support the development of occupationally relevant skills aligned to sector needs.

Work-Integrated Learning (WIL)

Placement opportunities for TVET college and university learners to complete the workplace component of their qualifications, enabling learners to apply theoretical knowledge in real work environments.

Bursaries

Financial support provided to learners pursuing qualifications aligned to CATHSSETA sub-sectors, typically offered through higher education institutions and employer partnerships, to enable access to education and training opportunities.

Skills Programmes

Short-term, accredited and credit-bearing interventions that focus on developing specific or critical skills, which may contribute towards full or partial qualifications.

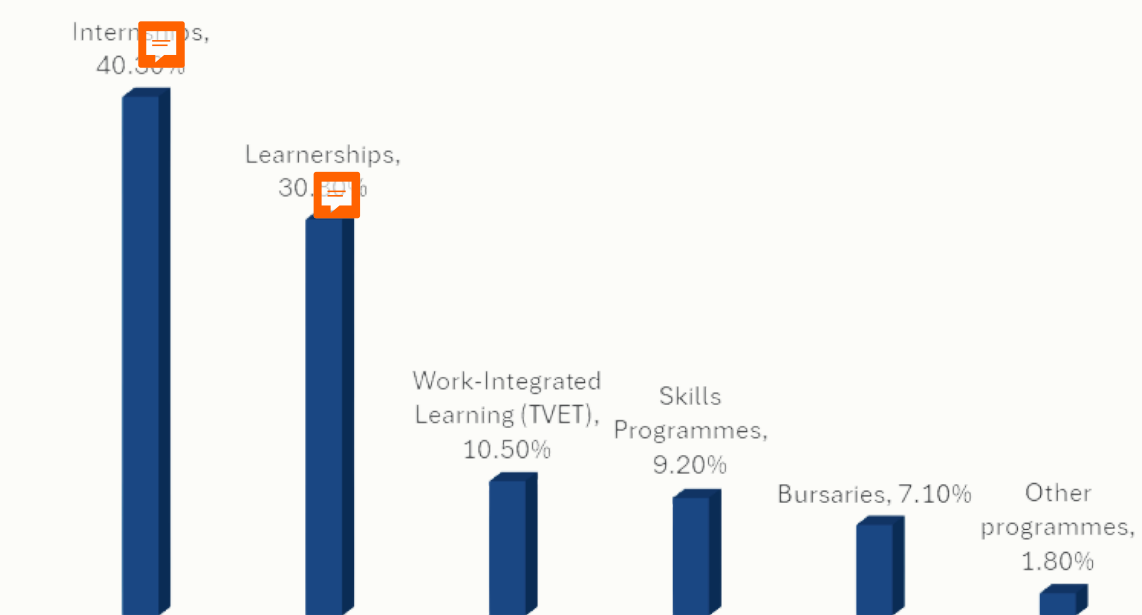
Apprenticeships

Trade-focused programmes that combine theoretical instruction and workplace training over a defined period, culminating in a trade test to certify occupational competence.

Learning Programmes Funded

2025/26 Financial Year

Learners were enrolled across a range of CATHSSETA-funded learning programmes, with participation concentrated in workplace-based interventions:



These programmes collectively strengthen work readiness, sector-specific skills, and employability across the tourism, hospitality, arts, culture, sport, and conservation sectors

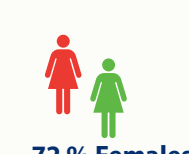
Methodology

The study applied a cross-sectional tracer survey design, targeting learners and employers who participated in CATHSSETA-funded programmes during the 2024/25 financial year. Data collection methods: Online surveys, Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI)

Sample achieved:
325 learners
118 employers

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations, allowing for comparison across programme types, demographics, and employment outcomes. All research activities complied with POPIA requirements and ethical research standards

Overview of Funded Learners



72 % Females



28% Males



2,084

Learners funded



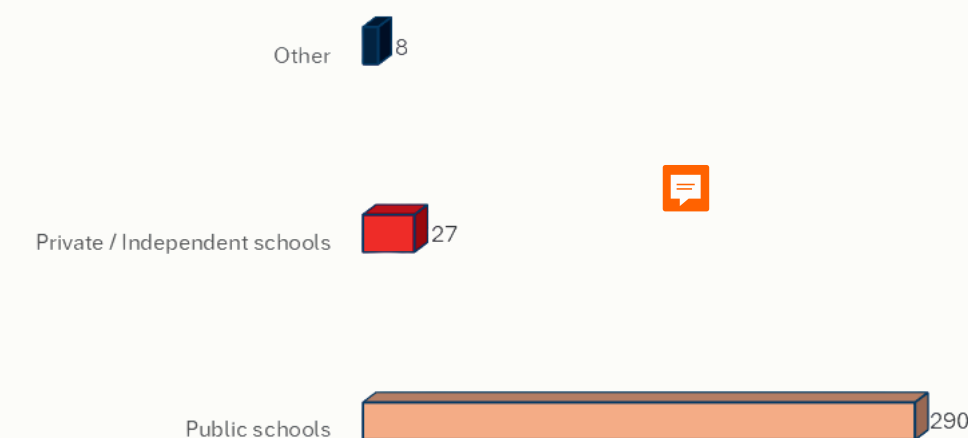
Ethnicity of Learners Enrolled

Black African: 83.1%
Coloured: 7.7%
Indian/Asian: 4.6%
White: 4.6%

During the 2025/26 financial year, the Track and Tracer Study assessed outcomes of learners who completed CATHSSETA-funded learning programmes in 2024/25. A total of 325 learners participated in the study, providing insights into learner demographics, programme participation, and post-training pathways.

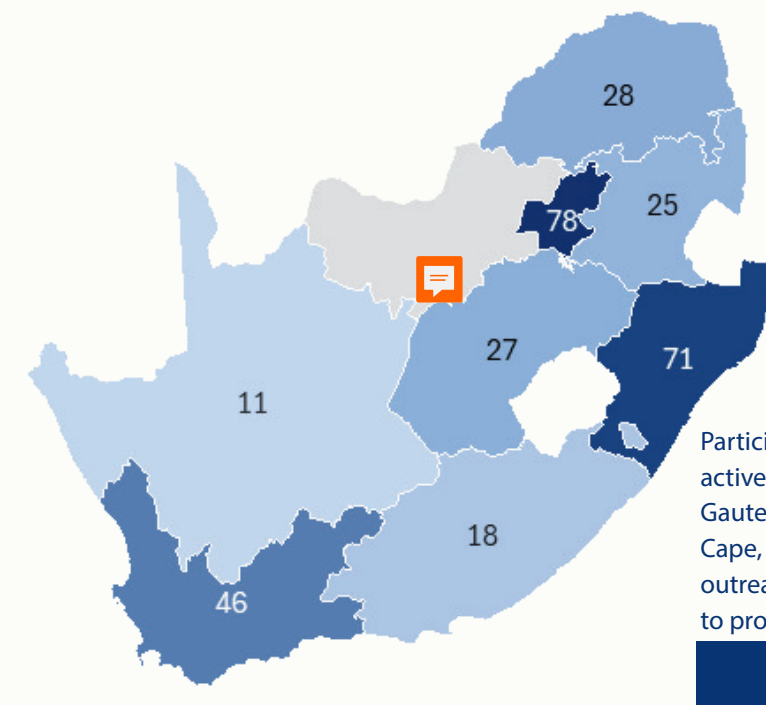
Type of School Previously Attended

89% of learners attended public schools, indicating strong reach among learners from the public education system.



The "Other" category includes a small number of responses where learners listed alternative education pathways such as TVET colleges, universities, colleges, or non-traditional institutions.

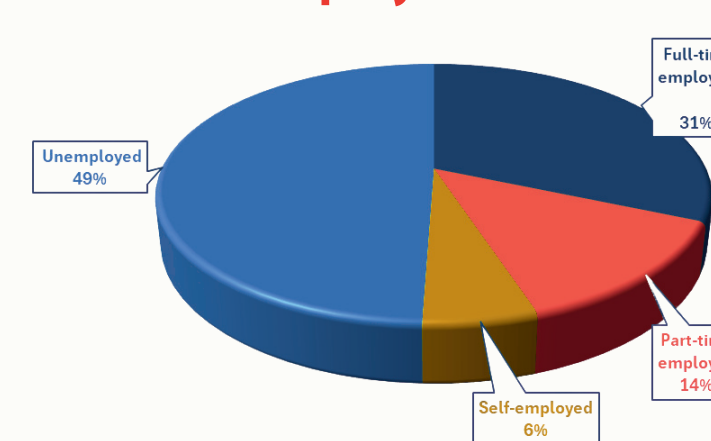
Provincial distribution of learner participation (n = 325)



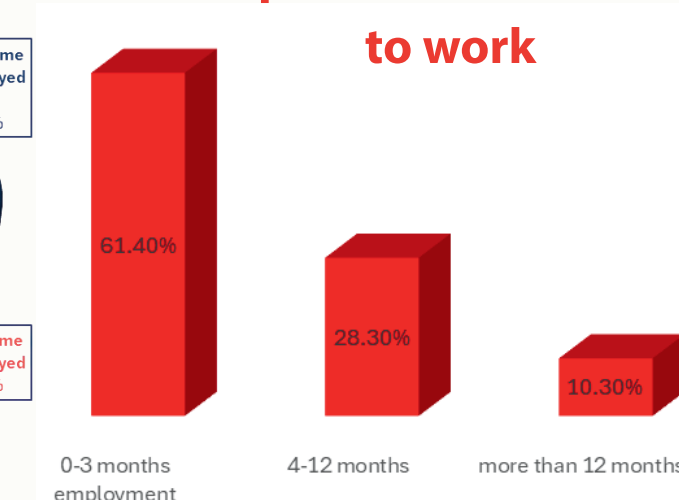
Participation is highest in economically active and urbanized provinces like Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, and Western Cape, highlighting a need to expand outreach and resources to rural provinces to promote equitable access.

Objective 1: Learner Pathways

Employment status



Speed of transition to work



- 55.3% retained by host employer after programme
- 56.9% absorbed by private sector
- 71.5% employed in jobs related to their training

The tracer study shows that nearly half of learners transitioned into employment or self-employment after completing CATHSSETA-funded programmes. Employment outcomes were strongest in the first three months post-completion, with over 60% of employed learners securing work within this period. Importantly, most employed learners (71.5%) reported working in roles aligned with their training, indicating effective skills matching. Employer retention was moderate, with just over half of learners remaining with their host organisations, highlighting both successful absorption and the need for strengthened post-programme placement strategies.

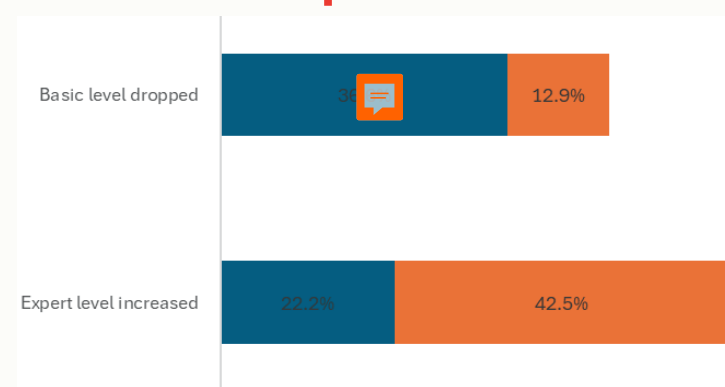
Objective 2: Relevance of the Learning Programme Interventions

Alignment with labour market needs & skills utilisation

Programme relevance & alignment

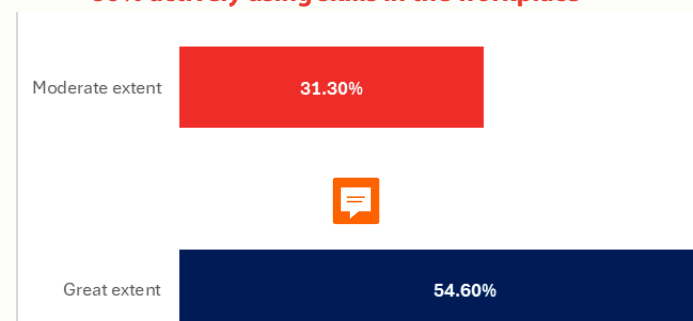


Skills improvement



Skills utilisation

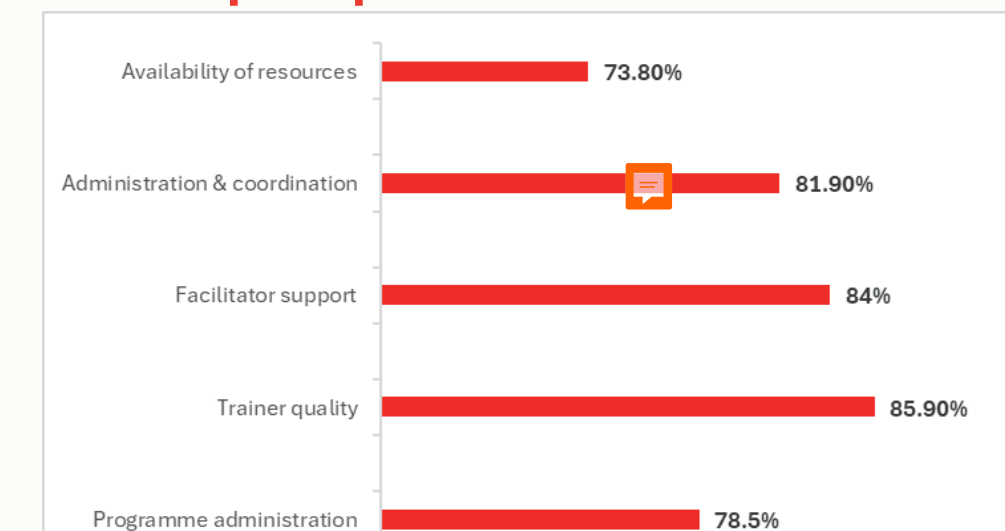
86% actively using skills in the workplace



These results demonstrate that CATHSSETA interventions are both relevant and responsive to sector needs, while highlighting opportunities to further strengthen digital and workplace-readiness skills. While relevance is high, digital and workplace-readiness skills remain priority enhancement areas for future programme cycles.

Objective 3: Relevance of the Learning Programme Interventions

Learner perceptions



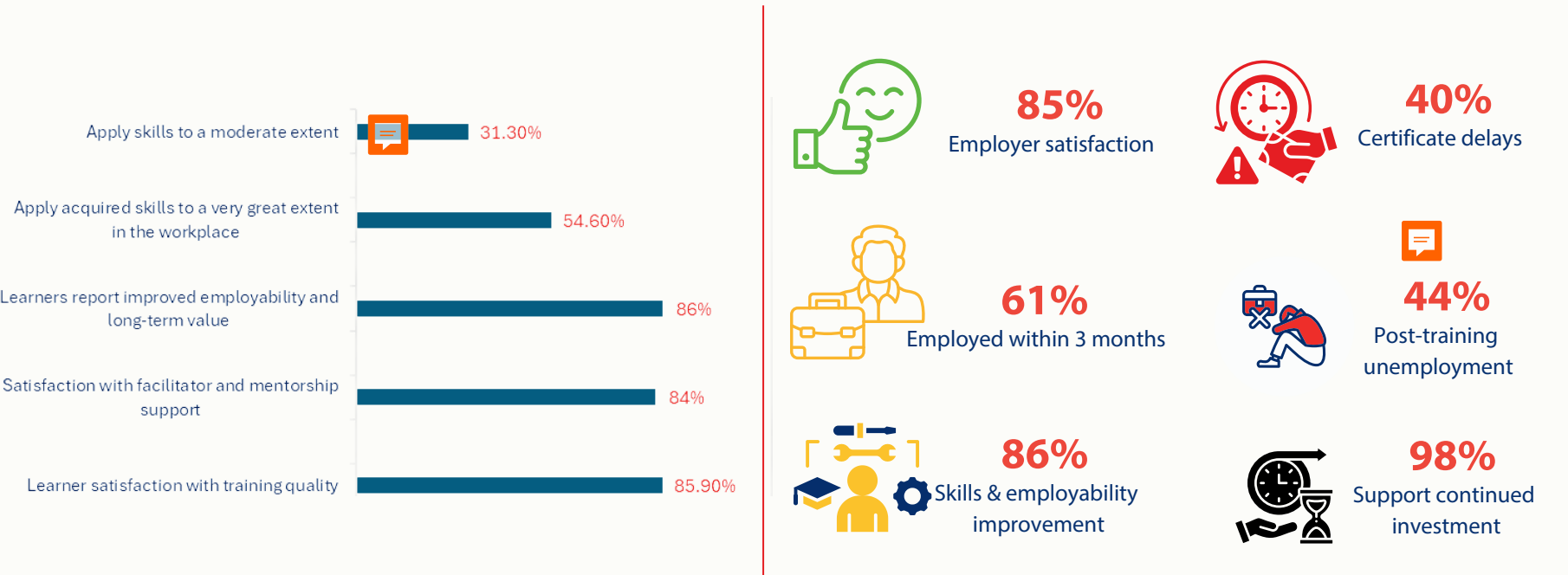
Employer perceptions

- 84.7% satisfied with quality of learners
- High ratings for coordination and support
- Employers confirm learners contribute positively to skills gaps



Objective 4: Programme Challenges and Successes

Implementation and enabling factors

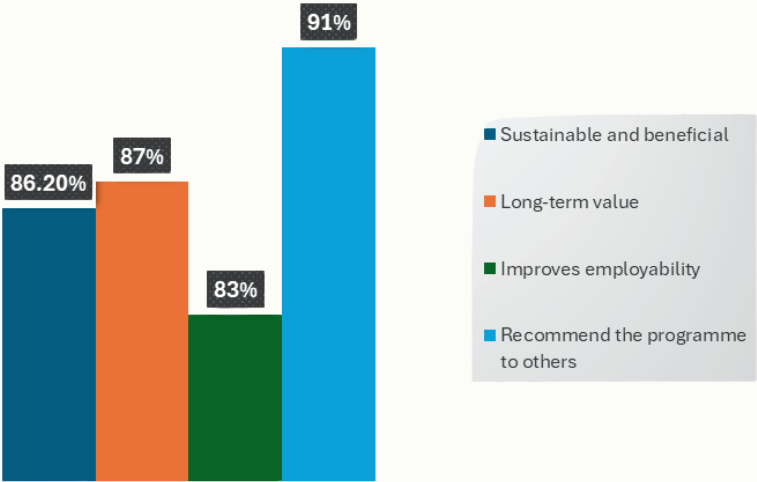


CATHSSETA-funded programmes demonstrate strong alignment with NSDP 2030 priorities, delivering high-quality, work-relevant skills and earning strong employer confidence. However, systemic challenges—particularly in learner absorption, certification turnaround, and employment sustainability—constrain the full realisation of long-term labour-market impact. Addressing these bottlenecks presents a clear opportunity to significantly enhance value for money and developmental returns.

Objective 5: Programme Sustainability and Long-Term Impact

Lasting value, employability, and future investment

Learner perspectives and Satisfaction levels



Over 86% of learners and 91% of employers believe the programmes create lasting value, improve employability, and justify continued investment. These findings demonstrate a compelling case for sustained funding, while highlighting the importance of strengthening post-programme absorption, administrative efficiency, and alumni engagement to maximise long-term impact.

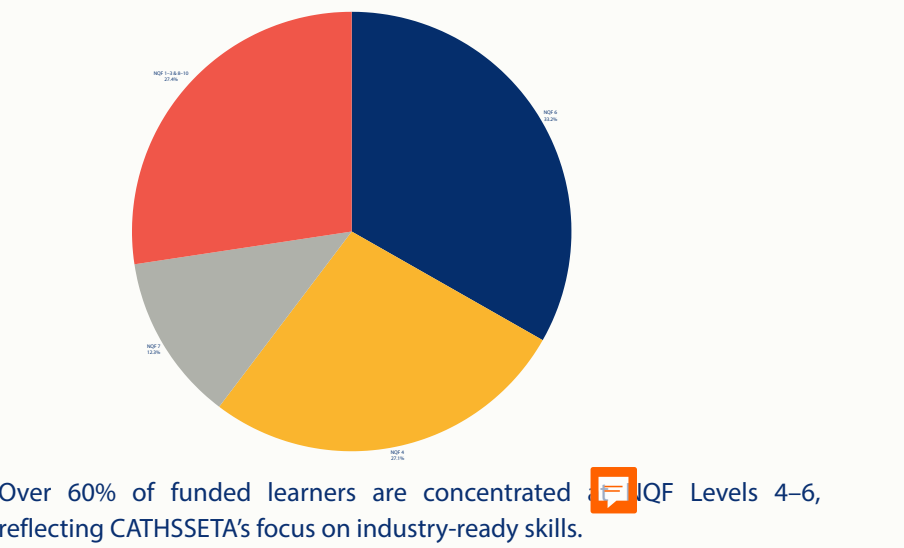
RECOMMENDATIONS



CATHSSETA programmes deliver significant benefits in skills development and employability, with 95% of learners recommending the programme and strong employer endorsement. High satisfaction levels confirm programme quality and relevance, but persistent challenges: 44% post-training unemployment, stipend delays, certificate backlogs, and gaps in workplace readiness limit full impact. Sustainability indicators are positive, with over 90% confidence in long-term value, yet systemic improvements in job placement, administrative efficiency, and curriculum alignment are essential to maximize outcomes. CATHSSETA programmes deliver real skills and value, but stronger job placement and system efficiency are critical to maximise impact.

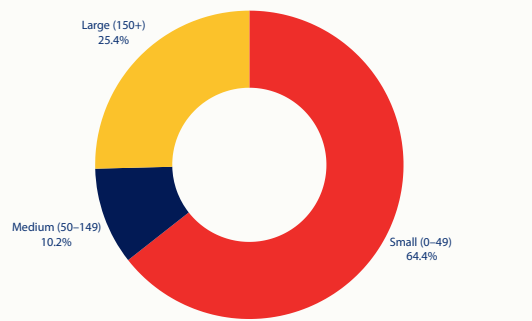


NQF Levels



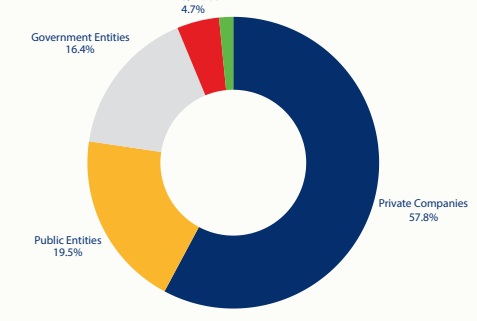
- Mid-level skills dominate**
CATHSSETA funding primarily supports NQF 4–6 qualifications aligned to labour market demand.
- Entry and advanced levels underrepresented**
Limited participation at NQF 1–3 and 8–10 highlights opportunities to strengthen access and progression pathways.
- Strong alignment with employability**
NQF 4–6 levels correspond with higher employability and sector absorption.

Organisational Size



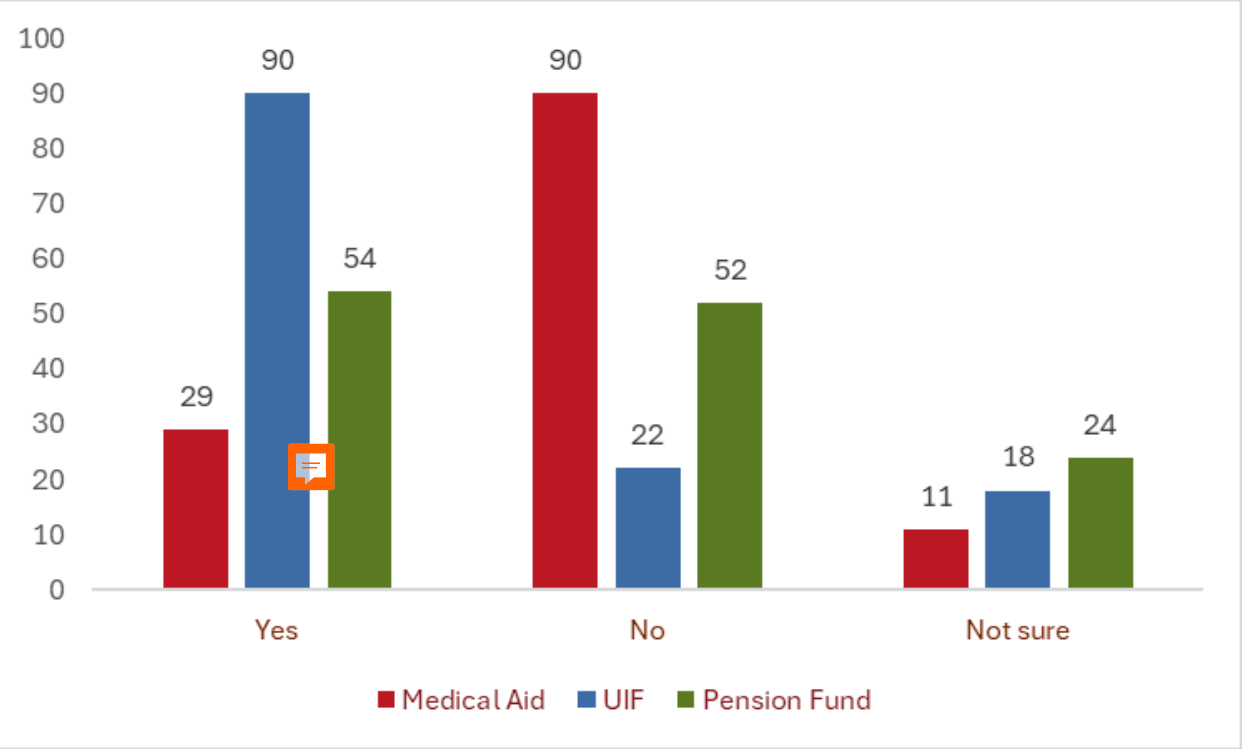
Nearly two-thirds of participating employers are small organisations, highlighting CATHSSETA's strong reach into SMMEs, while one in four learners are hosted by large employers with greater absorption capacity.

Organisational Types



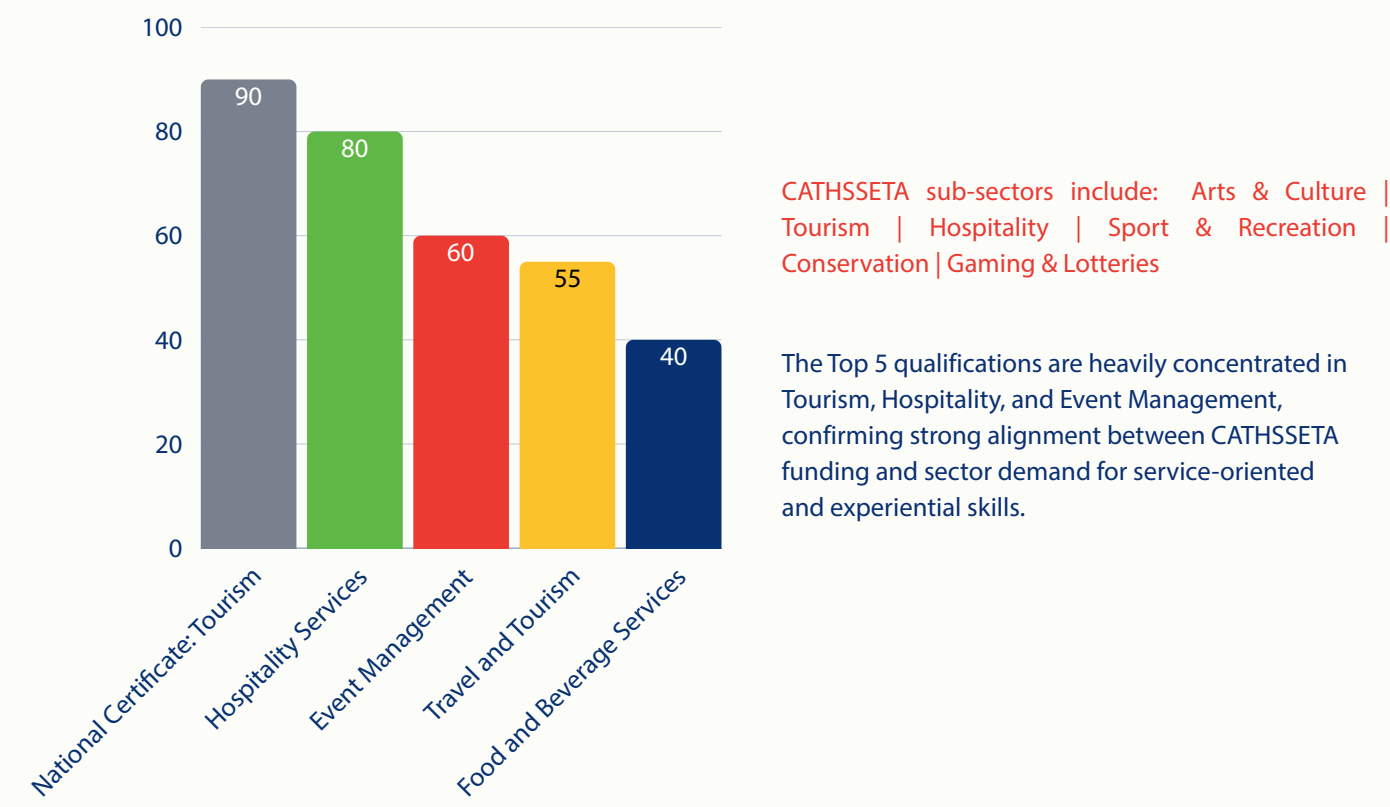
Private companies are the primary absorbers of learners, while public entities and government together account for over one-third (35.4%) of placements, showing meaningful public-sector participation.

Organisational Types

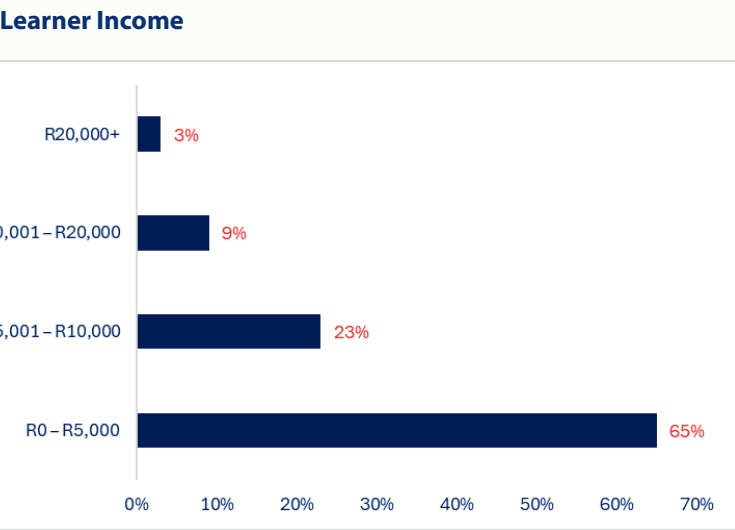


While UIF coverage is widespread among employed learners, access to pension and medical aid remains limited, highlighting gaps in long-term employment security.

Top 5 Qualifications Across CATHSSETA Sub-Sectors



Employment Benefits



Learner income increases sharply with employment stability, with permanent employment being the primary pathway out of the R0–R5,000 income bracket

6 LESSONS FOR PROGRAMME SUCCESS:

- Continuous Tracking**
Regular tracer studies identify gaps and guide improvements.
- Employer Engagement**
Strong partnerships enhance placements and mentorship.
- Workplace Readiness**
Soft skills-communication, and professionalism matter.
- Administrative Efficiency**
Timely stipends and faster certification improve experience.
- Urban–Rural Access**
Rural learners face greater barriers to placements and transport.

