

# AMY JULIA THORNTON

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**INTRODUCTION** I am an applied microeconomist with experience applying advanced statistical methods to household survey data. My work so far has covered a range of topics including households, labour markets, gender, crime and data quality with South Africa as a regional focus. I have published both single- and co-authored articles in local and international journals. Projects I'm currently working on include estimating labour supply elasticities for married women in South Africa and data quality analyses of the 2022 Census. Currently, I am a Researcher at DataFirst based at the University of Cape Town.

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<b>EDUCATION</b>	<b>PhD in Economics</b> <i>University of Cape Town</i>	2018-2020
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Supervisor: Prof. Martin Wittenberg</li><li>• 2022 ESSA Founder's Medal for Best PhD</li></ul>	
	<b>Masters in Applied Economics</b> <i>University of Cape Town</i>	2014-2015
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ERSA Prize for Top Masters Student</li><li>• Class medal: Econometrics</li></ul>	
	<b>Honours in Economics</b> <i>University of Cape Town</i>	2013
	<b>BSocSci in Politics, Philosophy and Economics</b> <i>University of Cape Town</i>	2010-2012

<b>RESEARCH POSITIONS AND EMPLOYMENT</b>	<b>Researcher</b> <i>DataFirst, UCT</i>	2026
	<b>Post-doctoral research fellow</b> <i>Southern African Labour and Development Research Unit, UCT</i>	2021-2025
	<b>Researcher</b> <i>Development Policy Research Unit, UCT</i>	2016-2020
	<b>Research Assistant</b> <i>Prof. Corne van Walbeek, UCT</i>	Nov 2014
	<b>Research Assistant</b> <i>African Microeconomic Research Unit, Wits</i>	Jan-July 2014

<b>CURRENT PROJECTS</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Kerr, A., Thornton, A., and Brown, C. (2026) <u>Using South African census data to identify poor households for the Local Government Equitable Share Formula</u>. Policy brief and related research commissioned by the Equality Collective (NGO) as inputs for a 2026 review of the white paper on the local government equitable share formula by National Treasury.</li><li>2. Kerr, A., Thornton, A., and Wachira, P. (2025) <u>How many people are employed in South Africa?</u> Forthcoming SA-TIED working paper.</li><li>3. Budlender J. and Thornton, A. (2025) <u>Households and Individuals in the 2022 South African census</u>. Forthcoming ESSA conference presentation.</li><li>4. Thornton A. (2025) <u>Households in the 2022 South African census</u>. Forthcoming DataFirst Technical Paper.</li></ol>
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JOURNAL  
ARTICLES

1. Mosomi, J. and **Thornton, A.** (accepted 2023) Childcare and labour market trajectories by gender during the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa. Accepted for publication by *Feminist Economics*.
2. **Thornton, A.** (2023). Trends in household formation and living alone in South Africa, 1995-2011. *Development Southern Africa*. Vol. 41 (2): 243-275. DOI: 10.1080/0376835X.2023.2243971.
3. **Thornton, A.** (2023). Leaving the parental home in post-apartheid South Africa. *Population, Space and Place*. Vol. 29(8). DOI: 10.1002/psp.2698.
4. **Thornton, A.**, Bhorat, B., Lilenstein, A, Monnakgotla, J. and van der Zee, K. (2022) Crime, income and inequality: non-linearities under extreme inequality in South Africa. *Economic Development and Cultural Change*. Vol. 72(1). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1086/719646>.
5. **Thornton, A.**, and Wittenberg, M. (2022) Reweighting the OHS and GHS to improve data quality: representativeness, household counts, and small households. *South African Journal of Economics*. Vol. 90(4): 513-534. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/saje.12319>.
6. Bhorat, H., Kanbur, R., Stanwix, B. and **Thornton, A.** (2020) Measuring Multi-Dimensional Labour Law Violation with an Application to South Africa. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*. Vol. 59(3): 928-961. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjir.12580>
7. Fleisch, B., Schöer, Roberts, G. and **Thornton, A.** (2016) System-wide improvement of early-grade mathematics: New evidence from the Gauteng Primary Language and Mathematics Strategy. *International Journal of Educational Development*. Vol. 49: 157-174.

BOOK  
CHAPTERS

1. Bhorat, H., Lilenstein, K., Oosthuizen, M., and **Thornton, A.** (2023) South Africa: employment and inequality trends. Chapter 6 in *Tasks, skills, and institutions: the changing nature of work and inequality*. Eds: Gradin, C., Lewandowski, P., Schotte, S. and Sen, K. Oxford University Press.
2. Bhorat, H., Stanwix, B. and **Thornton, A.** (2021) Changing dynamics in the South African labour market. Chapter 31 in *The Oxford Handbook of the South African Economy*. Eds: Oqubay, A., Tregenna, F. and Valodia, I. Oxford University Press.

WORKING  
PAPERS

1. **Thornton, A.** (2025) Own- and cross-price elasticities of married women's labour supply in South Africa. WIDER Working Paper 85/2025. Helsinki: UNU-WIDER, <https://doi.org/10.35188/UNU-WIDER/2025/644-5>
2. **Thornton, A.** (2023). Household formation, living alone, and not getting married in South Africa. Cape Town: Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit, University of Cape Town. SALDRU Working Paper Number 295.
3. Mosomi, J. and **Thornton, A.** (2022) Physical proximity and occupational employment change by gender during the COVID-19 pandemic. WIDER Working Paper 2022/90. Helsinki: UNU-WIDER. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.35188/UNU-WIDER/2022/224-9>
4. Mosomi, J., **Thornton, A.** and Branson, N. (2020) Unpacking the potential implications of Covid-19 for gender inequality in the SA labour market. SALDRU Working Paper 269. University of Cape Town.
5. Kerr, A. and **Thornton, A.** (2020) Essential Workers, Working from Home and Job Loss Vulnerability in South Africa. DataFirst Technical Paper 41. University of Cape Town.
6. Hill, R., Lilenstein, K. and **Thornton, A.** (2020) Job spells in an emerging market: Evidence from apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. WIDER Working Paper 2020/27. Helsinki: UNU-WIDER.

7. Bhorat, H., Kohler, T., Oosthuizen, M., Stanwix, S., Steenkamp, F. and **Thornton, A.** (2020) The Economics of Covid-19 in South Africa: Early Impressions. DPRU Working Paper No. 202004.
8. Bhorat, H., **Thornton, A.**, Kohler, T., and Oosthuizen, M. (2020) Jobs and COVID-19: Measuring Work-Related Physical Interaction. DPRU Working Paper No. 202003
9. Bhorat, H, Ewinyu, A., Lilenstein, K., Rooney, C., Steenkamp, F., and **Thornton, A.** (2019) Economic Complexity and Employment Expansion: the Case of South Africa. DPRU Working Paper 201905
10. Bhorat, H., Lilenstein, K., Oosthuizen, M., and **Thornton, A.** (2016) Vulnerability in Employment: Evidence from South Africa. DPRU Working Paper No. 201604.
11. **Thornton, A.J.**, Leibbrandt, M., and Ardington, C. (2016) Pathways to food security in South Africa: Food quality and quantity in NIDS Wave 1. SALDRU Working Paper No. 190.

OTHER  
RESEARCH  
OUTPUT

**Datasets**

1. Kerr, A., **Thornton, A.** and Wittenberg, M. (2025) Post-apartheid Socio-Economic Series [dataset]. Version 1. Cape Town: DataFirst [producer and distributor], 2025. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25828/49GK-P872>
2. **Thornton, A.** and Wittenberg, M. (2022) OHS-GHS Cross Entropy Weights 1995-2011 [dataset]. Version 1. Cape Town: DataFirst [producer and distributor]. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25828/0z05-cn37>

**Policy Briefs**

1. Mosomi, J. and **Thornton, A.** (2022) Labour market and unpaid childcare trajectories by gender during the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa: lessons for policy. Report and policy brief produced for African Economic Research Consortium (AERC)-Oxfam-IDRC project. Project title: Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on livelihoods in Africa.
2. **Thornton, A.** (2020) Job duration in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. Research Brief 2020/15. Helsinki: UNU-WIDER.

**Reports**

1. Bhorat, H., Stanwix, B., **Thornton, A.** and Allen, C. (2019) State Capture and the Economics of Corruption: The Case of Transnet. Report for the Royal Danish Embassy in Pretoria, the Open Society Foundation for South Africa (OSF-SA), and the Centre for Change.
2. Oosthuizen, M., Mudiriza, G., Khan, S., Rooney, C., and **Thornton, A.** (2017) Analysis on the Impact and Effectiveness of the BCEA Earnings Threshold. Report submitted to the Department of Labour.
3. Bhorat, H., Kimani, M., Lilenstein, A., and **Thornton, A.** (2016) Targeting Rules for Student Financial Aid: Suggested Guidelines for NSFAS. Report submitted to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme.
4. Bhorat, H., Kimani, M., Lilenstein, A., and **Thornton, A.** (2017) Revision of the Parameters of the NSFAS Means Test Recommendations on Household Allowances. Report submitted to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme.
5. Bhorat, H., and **Thornton, A.** (2016) The Early Impact of the Employment Tax Incentive: a Review of the Evidence. Report submitted to NEDLAC.

SHORT  
COURSES /  
TRAINING

1. DataFirst Short Courses (July 2022) *Measuring Consumption*. Instructor: Prof. Martin Wittenberg. and *Analysing spatial data in R*. Instructor: Dr. Takwanisa Machedmedze. University of Cape Town.
2. Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) Summer School (2019). Courses taken: Intro to Bayesian Modelling; Machine Learning; Regression III Advanced Methods; Advanced Maximum Likelihood. University of Michigan, USA
3. EU Erasmus Semester Abroad (Oct 2015-April 2016) University of Gottingen, Germany. Non-credit courses taken: International Trade, Development Economics, Econometrics

CONFERENCE  
PAPERS/  
PRESENTATIONS

1. Women and Work in History and Economics Online Conference (October 2020) *Implications of COVID-19 for gender inequality in the South African labour market*. Stellenbosch University. Conference presentation.
2. Households and Gender in South Africa Webinar. (October 2020) Webinar organized by myself and supported by the David & Elaine Potter Foundation. *Trends in household headship in South Africa, 1995-2011*.
3. International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP) 1st Conference on Population, Poverty and Inequality (June 2019) Ann Arbor, United States. *Untangling the Drivers of Rapid Household Formation in a High-Inequality Developing Country*. Conference presentation.
4. Economic Society of South Africa Conference (ESSA) (September 2019) Pretoria, South Africa. *Restoring Representativeness to South Africa National Survey Data using Cross-Entropy Estimation and Household Formation and Gender in a High-Income Developing Country*. Conference presentations.
5. Centre for the Study of African Economies (CSAE) Conference (March 2019) University of Oxford, England. *Wage Polarisation in an Emerging Economy: the Case of South Africa*. Conference Presentation.
6. SciDataCon (November 2018) Gaborone, Botswana. *Creating a Consistent and Reliable Data Series for Analysis of Household Size in South Africa*. Conference presentation.
7. Jobs in Development Conference (May 2018) Bogota, Colombia. *Measuring Labour Law Violation: the case of South Africa*. and *The Rise of the 'Missing Middle' in an Emerging Economy: The Case of South Africa*. Conference presentations.
8. International Economics Association World Congress (June 2017) Mexico City, Mexico. *Measuring Labour Law Violation: the case of South Africa*. Conference presentation.

## FUNDING

<b>SA-TIED II Workstream: structural transformation, labour markets &amp; and inequality dynamics</b> <i>with A/Prof. Andrew Kerr</i>	2025
<b>A/Prof. Andrew Kerr</b> <i>post-doctoral research fellow funding</i>	2025
<b>AERC-Oxfam-IDRC project on COVID-19 and livelihoods in Africa</b> <i>with Dr. Jacqueline Mosomi</i>	2021
<b>African Centre of Excellence in Inequality Research</b> <i>post-doctoral research fellow funding</i>	2021-2024
<b>DataFirst</b> <i>post-doctoral research fellow funding</i>	2021-2024
<b>David &amp; Elaine Potter Foundation</b> <i>PhD scholarship</i>	2018-2020

TEACHING / TUTORING	<p><b>AFLEARN Analysis of African Education Data for Policy and Practice</b> <i>Short Course Instructor, DataFirst</i> 2026 <i>Audience: international graduate audience</i></p> <p><b>Undergraduate Economics Course: ECO1007S</b> <i>Lecturer, School of Economics, University of Cape Town</i> 2025 <i>Audience: undergraduate students</i></p> <p><b>UNU-WIDER Workshop: Mapping Occupations to Tasks using O*NET</b> <i>Instructor, Cape Town</i> 2019 <i>Audience: International researcher consortium of book project authors</i></p> <p><b>SALDRU Intro to Stata Short Course</b> <i>Tutor, University of Cape Town</i> 2018 <i>Audience: postgraduate students, other professional researchers</i></p> <p><b>DPRU Intro to Stata Short Course for StatsBotswana</b> <i>Instructor, Gaborone</i> 2017 <i>Audience: StatsBotswana technical employees and researchers</i></p> <p><b>Tutor in the School of Economics, University of Cape Town</b> <i>Advanced Micro Macro (ECO3020F)</i> 2013 <i>International Trade and Bargaining (ECO3035S)</i></p>
SUPERVISION	<p><b>Economics Masters Dissertation: Taine Frost (FRSTAI001)</b> <i>Rapidly changing household size and welfare measurement in South Africa</i> 2025</p> <p><b>Economics Honours Long Paper: Cwenga Semane (SMNCWE001)</b> <i>Leaving the parental home in South Africa before and after the Covid-19 pandemic</i> 2026</p>
SKILLS	<p><b>Core Technical:</b> applied microeconomics; applying advanced statistical and econometric techniques to household survey data</p> <p><b>Programs:</b> Stata (advanced); L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X(advanced); R (basic);</p> <p><b>Language:</b> strong written and oral communication skills in English</p> <p><b>Teaching/tutoring:</b> intermediate; diverse</p>
ACADEMIC SERVICES	<p><b>Reviewer for:</b> <i>Journal of Labour Market Research,</i> <i>Population, Space, and Place,</i> <i>Development Southern Africa,</i> <i>Population Studies</i></p>