

2023/24

OFFICIAL GUIDE TO
SOUTH AFRICA



PEOPLE OF
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People of South Africa

For 2024, Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) estimates the mid-year population at 63,02 million people. The female population accounts for 51,0% (approximately 32,13 million) of the population. Life expectancy at birth for 2024 is estimated at 63,6 years for males and 69,2 years for females. The infant mortality rate for 2024 is estimated at 22,9 per 1 000 live births.

The estimated overall HIV prevalence rate is approximately 12,7% among the South African population. The total number of people living with HIV is estimated at approximately 8,0 million in 2024. For adults aged 15–49 years, an estimated 16,68% of the population is HIV positive.

There is a reduction in international migration, which is indicative of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 travel restrictions and subsequent impact on migratory patterns since March 2020. Migration is an important demographic process, as it shapes the age structure and distribution of the provincial population (and so the country's population structure). For the period 2021–2026, Gauteng and Western Cape are estimated to experience the largest inflow of migrants of approximately, 1 381 024 and 492 427 respectively.

Gauteng still comprises the largest share of the South African population, with approximately 15,93 million people (25,3%) living in this province. KwaZulu-Natal is the province with the second largest population, with an estimated 12,31 million people (19,5%) living in this province. With a population of approximately 1,37 million people (2,2%), Northern Cape remains the province with the smallest share of the South African population.

About 27,50% of the population is aged younger than 15 years (17,33 million) and approximately 9,7% (6,13 million) is 60 years or older. The provinces reflecting the highest percentage of children younger than 15 within its structure are Limpopo (33,09%) and Eastern Cape (31,70%). The proportion of elderly persons aged 60 years and older in South Africa is increasing over time and as such policies and programmes to care for the needs of this growing population should be prioritised.

Registration of births

In South Africa, the right to identity – which includes nationality, name and family relations – is enshrined in Section 28 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996. The Births and Deaths Registration Act of 1992 governs the registration of births in South Africa.

The last amendment on the Births and Deaths Registration Act of 1992 was made in 2010. The registration of births in South Africa falls under the mandate of the Department of Home Affairs. To better enforce the registration of births, the Amendment Act of 2010 mandates the registrations of births within 30 days from date of birth.

The Constitution and the Act reaffirm South Africa's commitment to Articles seven and eight of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the rights and welfare of the child.

The agreements mandate the preservation of children's rights to identity, a nationality, to a name from birth, family ties and birth registration immediately after birth. The realisation of the right to be registered is closely linked to the safeguarding of a whole range of fundamental rights, including healthcare, social security, education, participation and protection.

The primary purpose of the records derived from the civil-registration process is to create a permanent record of the birth occurrence and for the issuing of a birth certificate, which is a personal document to attest birth registration and the most visible evidence of the government's legal recognition of the child. In essence, without a birth certificate the unregistered babies/children essentially do not legally exist.

Marriages

The Department of Home Affairs manages the solemnisation and registration of civil marriages, customary marriages and civil unions are managed. Civil marriages are governed by the Marriage Act of 1961 and regulations issued in terms of the Act. South Africa also recognises customary marriages through the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act, which became effective in November 2000. Civil unions are recognised in terms of the Civil Union Act of 2006.

Languages

South Africa is a multicultural society that is characterised by its rich linguistic diversity. Language is an indispensable tool that can be used to deepen democracy and contribute to the social, cultural, intellectual, economic and political life of the South African society.

The country is multilingual with 12 official languages – English; Afrikaans; isiNdebele; IsiZulu; isiXhosa; Siswati; Sepedi; Setswana; Sesotho; Xitsonga; Tshivenda and South African Sign Language. Each of the languages is guaranteed equal status. Most South Africans are multilingual and able to speak at least two or more of the official languages.

In terms of the Use of Official Languages Act of 2012, and as part of promoting social cohesion and nation-building, every government department, public entity and enterprise is expected to establish a language unit and adopt a language policy.

Religious beliefs

Religious beliefs in South Africa include Christianity; Islam; Traditional African religion; Hinduism; Buddhism; Bahaim; Judaism; Atheism, Agnosticism and Satanism.