



*South Africa's
People*

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Pocket Guide to South Africa 2012/13

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People

It was Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu who coined the well-known phrase “the Rainbow Nation” to describe the melting pot of people and cultures living together in South Africa.

According to the Census 2011 data from Statistics South Africa, the country's population stood at 51 770 560 in 2011, of which 26 581 769 (51,3%) were female and 25 188 791 (48,7%) were male.

Nearly one third (31,3%) of the population was younger than 15 years and approximately 7,7% (3,9 million) was 60 years or older. Gauteng is the most populous province with 12 272 263 people (23,7% of the population), followed by KwaZulu-Natal with 19,8% and the Western Cape with 11,3%.

Africans are in the majority with just over 41 million, making up 79,2% of the population. The coloured population stands at 4 615 401 (8,9%), the number of white people stands at 4 586 838 (8,9%) and the Indian/Asian population stands at 1 286 930 (2,5%). In 2011, people from other origins were also included in the Census, and account for 280 454 or 0,5% of the total.

The South African population consists of the Nguni comprising the Zulu, Xhosa, Ndebele and Swazi people; Sotho-Tswana consisting of the Southern, Northern and Western Sotho (Tswana) people; Tsonga and Venda; people from mixed origin generally referred to as coloureds; people from European origin (Afrikaners and English-speaking South Africans); Indian/Asian; and those who have immigrated to South Africa from the rest of Africa, Europe and Asia and who maintain a strong cultural identity. A few members of the Khoi and the San are also part of South Africa's population.

Languages

Owing to its rich cultural diversity, South Africa is a multilingual country with 11 official languages, each of which is guaranteed equal status. Most South Africans are multilingual and are able to speak at least two of the official languages. These are Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sesotho sa Leboa, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda and Xitsonga.

According to Census 2011, the number of people who speak English as a first language has increased by more than 1 million to 4,9 million people (9,6% of the population). English is also most widely used for official and commercial communication.

IsiZulu is the most common home language spoken by 22,7% of the population. It is followed by isiXhosa at 16%, Afrikaans at 13,5%, and English at 9,6%, Sesotho sa Leboa (also known as Sepedi) at 9,1%, Setswana at 8%, Sesotho at 7,6%, and Xitsonga at 4,5%. SiSwati is spoken by 2,5% of the population, Tshivenda by 2,4% and isiNdebele by 2,1%.

Government developed the Use of Official Languages Bill in 2012, as part of promoting social cohesion. Another important part of promoting social cohesion was the protection and promotion of indigenous knowledge systems, which include promoting formal indigenous knowledge education and assisting indigenous communities to establish cooperative structures to organise themselves.

Religion

According to August 2012 polls released by the Win-Gallup International Religiosity and Atheism Index, which measures global self-perceptions on belief, South Africans who belong to a particular religion have dropped from 83% in 2005, to 64% in 2012.

